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Oakwood moves ahead with neighborhood traffic program

Speed bumps and stop signs may not be the cure to neighborhood traffic woes.

A new program approved Monday night by Oakwood City Council will attempt to get to the root of the problems and involve residents in the solutions.

"When you deal with roadways, you need to be very careful with what type of obstacles you put out there and ... how you're going to cause negative impacts to traffic safety by first really looking at what is the problem," City Manager Stan Brown told the council.

The city's new Neighborhood Traffic Management Program sets policy and procedures for dealing with road issues that crop up in residential areas.

"My experience is that (speeding) may not be the problem. It may be a ... neighborhood problem," Brown said. "It may be a cut-through problem. It may be a number of things that could be addressed besides putting in speed humps or multi-way stop signs.

"The worst thing you can do is take a traffic-control device and misapply it, and then you have accidents and you got a faulty situation."

Brown said he has carried out such policy in other places, such as in Athens-Clarke County and Colorado.

"What we're trying to do is make sure we have a safe neighborhood for pedestrians, for motorists and bicyclists, and that we have a good quality of life," Brown said.

City officials could look at speed-control devices but also changes to the road itself.

"Sometimes, you can put a traffic circle in an intersection," Brown said. "There's a lot of tools you can use besides jumping to one."

One of the key elements to the program is neighborhood involvement.

"I've put speed bumps in and taken (them) out that didn't really have the support of the neighborhood," Brown said. "What this program calls for is that you have at least a majority of the owner-occupied homes ... to say (they) think they have a problem."

City officials could meet with residents and then try to nail down possible solutions that would go "back to the neighborhood to make sure that you've got at least two-thirds majority in support."

Council would have final say on publicly funded improvements.

"If you're going to do something different that's above and beyond the level of service we provide everybody else, the neighborhood really should participate in the funding of it," Brown said.

Crawford Oaks neighborhood, which has met with city officials on traffic issues, "will probably be the first one to go through the process," Brown said.

Brown said that in Athens, a similar proposal went through a couple of public meetings, as well as "all kinds of public involvement and input."

Council members threw their immediate support to the idea.

"I think this is a good approach that would work great for the city," Councilman Ron McFarland said