CITY OF BIG SPRING, TEXAS

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

2030



Big Spring
Texas

Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge the following people who were instrumental in guiding the Comprehensive Plan process. Also, thank you to the citizens of Big Spring for their vision and contribution to this plan through enthusiastic participation in the community survey and focus groups.

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Big Spring's 2030 Comprehensive Plan is a long-range plan containing suggested future land use and transportation maps. The Plan serves as a public policy document that guides City staff, stakeholders and decision makers in future development and is making its timely debut nearly twenty years since the adoption of the City's 1996 Master Plan. Typical of plans of the time, the former 1996 Master Plan identified through a committee, many of the challenges seen as obstacles to be overcome within the community.



Some of the challenges identified in the 1996 Plan remain relevant today. These include but are not limited to; the need to update our housing stock and demolish unsafe and unsalvageable buildings, diversifying our economic base to ensure sustainability in the face of unsure crude oil production, capitalizing on infill development in order to maximize our existing infrastructure, overcoming natural and manmade barriers that prevent pedestrian and non-vehicular connectivity and access from areas within the community, and working towards improving the aesthetic and perceived image of our community.

The 1996 Plan also addressed key elements related to parks and recreation, water and sewer facilities and delivery systems, education, local finance and taxation, quality of life, existing zoning and land use, housing, population, transportation, community environmental issues, fire protection, physical and geographical features, storm water drainage, and lastly, subdivision rules and regulations. Each topic contained a framework for how to address what was identified as issues and assets within. The task to fix many of the issues was assigned to City staff, although some of these relied on the assistance of other governmental agencies as well as the general citizenry. Many of these challenges have been tackled and overcome, although many will still be carried forward into this 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

New to the 2030 Comprehensive Plan is the concept of increased connectivity through alternative transportation such as walking and bicycle trails and routes that should tie in to important activity nodes within the community. Such nodes include Howard College, schools, properties north of the Union Pacific Railway and the downtown, to name a few

INTRODUCTION



During the creation processes of this Plan, the latest of several oil booms was taking place, which had an enormous impact on the area. Where Big Spring is located in one of the nation's largest oil producing regions, it experienced the construction of multiple hotels that primarily serve the oil industry at this time. Consequently, the City has been able to dodge, through ordinances, some of the potential pitfalls of the boom that include the overabundance of RV parks intended for workforce living typically located at the gateways of cities near communities experiencing similar boom effects. Although such development is temporary, visual scars may remain long after the boom; scars which are not welcoming to future developers seeking to invest here.

Another key idea the 1996 Master Plan identified is accountability. While the community has changed in some areas throughout the last twenty years as some of the challenges within the topics have been met and completed, many challenges continue to exist. For example, it was suggested the then-vacant Settles Hotel serve as a new City Hall. In reality, it has since been restored by a private investor and is once again a vibrant landmark and destination for the community as well as tourists. Therefore, it is important that current and future stakeholders within the community strive to build on what has been accomplished yet also be able to have the tools to meet the vision set forth through this comprehensive plan as it moves into the next several decades. The City of Big Spring, alone, does not contain all the resources to address these challenges; therefore, it is through citizen involvement individually and in groups through a sense of civic pride, to own the responsibility for shaping our community and ensuring that by the time the next comprehensive plan is adopted, that a good deal, if not all, of the concerns and challenges are addressed.

What is the Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan?

As discussed in the Introduction, the 2030 Comprehensive Plan is a public policy document intended to guide and direct future development decisions made by City staff, elected officials and all other decision makers. It also tells the story of the community and targets what it wishes to become. This document is intended to serve as a flexible, long-range planning tool that guides the growth and physical development of Big Spring for the next fifteen years and beyond.

The key role of the plan is to present an all-encompassing comprehensive, area-wide framework that guides and coordinates the many separate and incremental development and redevelopment decisions. This Plan is not intended for the purposes of down-zoning any property nor to limit or diminish any existing property rights of landowners. Rather, it is intended to protect property rights by establishing a long-term plan that lessens the negative impacts of incompatible land uses, improves our key retail corridors and enhances our new and historic neighborhoods. The purpose of the Plan is also to create an environment where private investment in property is attractive and appealing. This is done by allowing investors to understand how their investments will fit into the City's long-term objectives.



As a public policy guide, the 2030 Comprehensive Plan's primary function and objectives are to accomplish the following:

- Efficient delivery of public services;
- Coordination of public and private investment;
- Minimization of potential land use conflicts;
- Management of growth in an orderly manner;
- Cost-effective public investments; and
- A rational and reasonable basis for making decisions about the community.

Important to note is that the 2030 Comprehensive Plan is not a Zoning Ordinance. Our Zoning Ordinance, which is a set of adopted land use laws, and the 2030 Comprehensive Plan serve different purposes. Where the 2030 Comprehensive Plan sets generalized policies and recommendations for the **long-range** development of the City, the Zoning Ordinance specifies what land uses are **currently** permitted and the specific development standards of property. Zoning decisions are made on a parcel-by-parcel basis and they serve as a method of carrying out the policies of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

INTRODUCTION

What is contained within Big Spring's 2030 Comprehensive Plan?

Community Snapshot

This section is intended to provide a general history of Big Spring, highlighting some of the significant events which shaped the growth and development of the community. The community profile gives an overview of some of the key demographic attributes of Big Spring including its historical growth patterns. The Community Snapshot looks at the city's current development framework, its physical and man-made constraints and sets the framework from which decisions about Big Spring's future can be made.

Future Land Use

This element establishes the future land use categories. The Future Land Use element is a visual map of what Big Spring could look like if full build-out is ever reached, with an eye on using each piece of land to its fullest potential given that the uses are harmonious to surrounding land uses. The Future Land Use section also provides land use concepts that should be utilized within the community as future development occurs.

Transportation

Much of Big Spring's transportation network is already in place. The Transportation element draws upon the projected growth patterns of the Future Land Use Plan by providing a network of roadways to be designed according to the intensity of their uses and with an eye on how they can accommodate future outward growth of the community. The end result of this combination is the Transportation Plan Map. Thus, the Transportation section outlines roadway design techniques that improve traffic safety and enhance aesthetics.

Livability

The Livability component of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan discusses the many intangible characteristics that make Big Spring a great place to live and work. The Livability section focuses on the overall image and aesthetics of Big Spring.

Downtown Big Spring

Downtown Big Spring is the physical and cultural center of the community. At the current time, redevelopment efforts are re-shaping downtown and can be leveraged to bring life, energy and vibrancy back to the storied downtown. This chapter provides high-level guidance on how downtown can redevelop in the future.

Parks & Recreation

Big Spring's topography provides a multitude of outdoor recreational opportunities. Future investments in parks and recreational facilities will help stabilize existing neighborhoods and facilitate investment in new residential areas. Ultimately, parks and recreation will help to preserve and enhance Big Spring's quality of life. The Parks & Recreation element provides an overview of the types of park facilities that should be considered within Big Spring.

Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC)

A Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee was compiled by the City at the beginning of the planning process. The CPAC is a diverse group of individuals tasked with the responsibility of providing input and direction on the plan's vision and comprehensive plan recommendations.

The CPAC contained individuals from the City of Big Spring, Economic Development, Big Spring-McMahon Airport, Howard College, Downtown Big Spring, City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission. The CPAC also contained long-time and new residents of Big Spring.

The CPAC committee was guided through a total of seven meetings on a variety of different topics related to the comprehensive plan and its recommendations.

Implementation Plan

A plan must be more than simply a vision—it must provide attainable objectives for Big Spring to incrementally work towards and achieve. The Implementation Plan is a culmination of action items related to each element of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan. Each action item is prioritized and given a responsible party for oversight. The Implementation Plan also contains five bold step that are considered priorities for implementation in order to help get the 2030 Comprehensive Plan objectives rolling. These five bold steps include:

- Amending the City's development regulations to reflect comprehensive plan recommendations;
- Annexing strategic areas into the City Limits;
- Creating a housing infill program to facilitate new housing within Big Spring's core;
- Building a downtown park for community festivals, events and gatherings; and
- Improving the aesthetics and image of Big Spring in highly-visible areas.





COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

In order to plan for the future, it is important to understand where Big Spring has come from and to review some of the driving forces impacting the growth and development of the community. The following section provides an overview of Big Spring's history, demographics, physical constraints and primary issues.

Regional Relationship

Big Spring is located in Howard County in West Texas. It is situated on the eastern edge of the oil-rich Permian Basin. Just to the north of Big Spring lie the Llano Estacado region and the southern parameters of the American Great Plains. The area around Lubbock continuing down to just north of Big Spring is the largest contiguous cotton producing region in the world. Energy and agriculture are integral parts of Big Spring's history, economy and culture.

Big Spring is located at the convergence of Interstate 20 and US Highway 87 (Interstate 27 from Lubbock County north). Highway 87 through Big Spring is a part of a proposed Ports-to-Plains corridor which is a trade route projected to connect Mexico to Colorado. The Union Pacific Railroad also operates a predominant line through Big Spring. The city's location along Highway 87, Interstate 20 and the railroad make it a prime location for manufacturing and warehousing.

Big Spring is located approximately 40 miles east of Midland, 86 miles northwest of San Angelo, 106 miles south of Lubbock and 108 miles west of Abilene. Midland International Airport is approximately 52 miles to the west of Big Spring and provides daily direct service to Dallas/Fort Worth, Austin and Houston. Additionally, Big Spring's McMahon-Wrinkle Airport, owned by the City, provides an array of services to private planes.

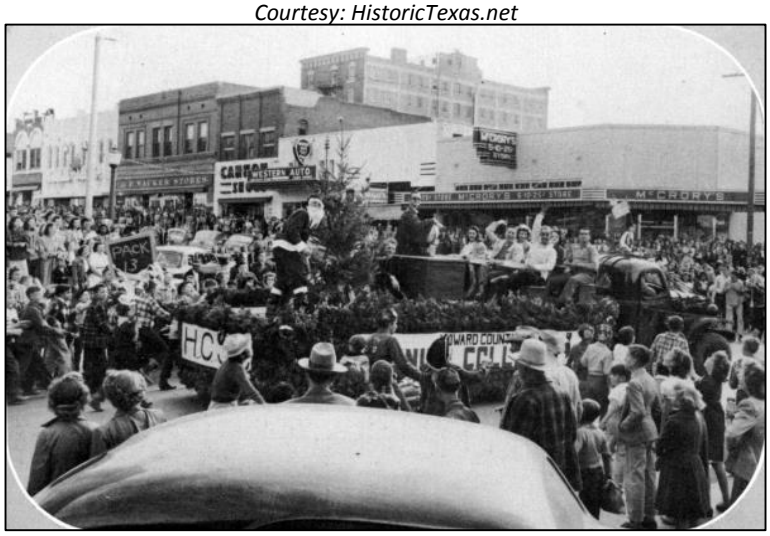


COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

History of Big Spring

Although the area had long been a popular watering hole for Native Americans and other residents and nomads, the first European to view the site now known as Big Spring was probably a member of a Spanish expedition, possibly that of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, although the record of his travels cannot confirm his visit. United States Army Captain Randolph B. Marcy's expedition was the first United States sponsered expedition to explore and map the area in 1849. Marcy marked the actual natural spring as a campsite on the Overland Trail to California. The site began to collect inhabitants and by the late 1870s, a settlement had sprung up to support buffalo hunters who frequented the area. The original settlement consisted largely of hide huts and saloons. Ranching quickly became a major industry in the area.

Downtown Big Spring, 1949
Courtesy: HistoricTexas.net



The early 1880s completion of the Texas and Pacific Railroad led to the founding of Abilene, Colorado City, and Big Spring, which were then railroading and ranching cities where saloons and gambling dens flourished.

One notable early rancher was Briton Joseph Heneage Finch, the Seventh Earl of Aylesford. Finch purchased 37,000 acres of ranch land in the area in 1883 and is credited with building Big Spring's first permanent structure, a butcher's shop, which was located along what later became the Historic Bankhead Highway and what is more commonly known now as both Business Route 80 or 4th Street.

After the completion of the railroad, two contributing factors leading to the city's growth occurred. The first of these included the discovery of oil in the region during the 1920s, which marked the beginning of the oil industry in the Permian Basin area of West Texas. Since that time, the oil industry has continued to be a dominant part of the area's economy and growth. The oil industry in Big Spring reached its peak during the oil boom of the 1950s.

The second most important contributing factor to Big Spring's growth, economy and life during the 1950s, and then into the 1960s, and 1970s was the construction of Webb Air Force Base. It initially opened during World War II as the Big Spring Bombardier School. Following the war, it was converted to a US Air Force training base and was named for James Webb, a Big Spring native who died in action during World War II. Webb Air Force Base remained active until 1977, when the base facilities were decommissioned and the base was deeded to the City by the federal government in an effort to cut military costs.

The closure of Webb Air Force Base in 1977 had a dramatic impact on Big Spring. Three decades of stagnant growth and population declined followed. At the 2000 Census, Big Spring reported its first population increase since the 1960 Census. This trend continued into 2010 and the resurgence of the oil and gas industry had fueled growth and development of the region, including Big Spring.

Big Spring was featured in the 1969 film Midnight Cowboy, which starred Dustin Hoffman and Jon Voight and received the Academy Award for Best Picture of 1969. The opening scenes, featuring Voight (then a relatively unknown actor playing the character Joe Buck) were filmed in Big Spring and the neighboring city of Stanton.

Another film that used Big Spring as a location is “Hanger 18.” This 1980s science fiction movie that contains a government cover-up of UFO activities starred Gary Collins, Robert Vaughn and Darren McGavin, to name a few. Although the movie did poorly at the box office, in 1998 it was later spoofed in an episode of Science Mystery Theater 3000.

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Oil & Gas Resurgence

The relatively high price of oil led to the creation of new drilling technologies which allowed areas that were previously too expensive to explore to now be tapped. The emergence of innovations in horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracking technology has dramatically impacted the Permian Basin and West Texas over the past decade. Horizontal drilling technology, which essentially provides capabilities for drilling deeper and sideways into shale formations, has led to a rapid resurgence in the oil and gas industry within the region. While Big Spring has historically experienced less oil and gas drilling than the adjacent Permian Basin, this new drilling technology is advancing the drilling possibilities and production output in and around Big Spring as well.

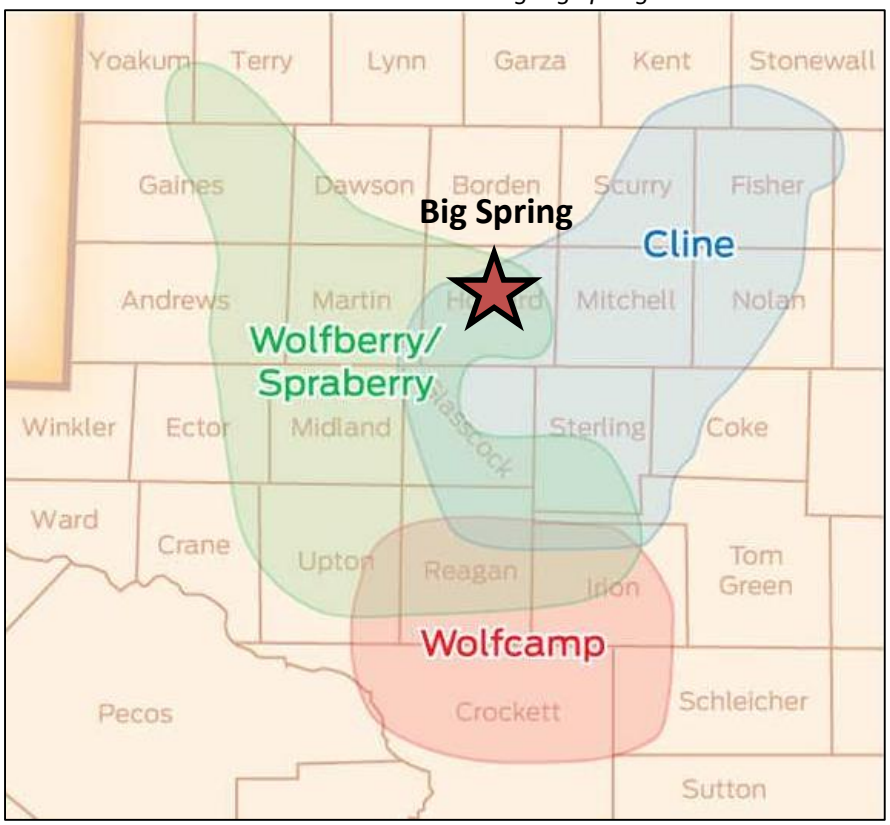
As of 2013, Texas produced more oil than the U.S. imports from Saudi Arabia. With the occurrence of additional drilling and experimentation, the Texas Railroad Commission projects that the United States could completely eliminate the need for foreign oil over the next 10 to 15 years. While 2014 experienced a dramatic decline in oil prices, and sent shock waves through the oil and gas industry, most indications are that prices will increase and oil and gas drilling will resume. If so, Big Spring's location on a large shale formation could have dramatic impacts on the community as a whole.

Big Spring is located on the convergence of two significant shale formations, the Wolfberry/Spraberry Shale and the Cline Shale. Shale formations, simply put, are stratified rock formations containing oil and gas reserves.

Oil and gas drilling brings a tremendous economic impact to the city. There are, however, development issues related to a rapid increase in economic activity. Issues related to industry and where related uses should be located in the community, provision of housing, trucking traffic and community appearance are just a few of these issues.

In anticipation of the economic impacts of oil and gas drilling in and around Big Spring, the 2030 Comprehensive Plan seeks to be proactive by identifying Big Spring's future vision and objectives and by using this period of economic prosperity to work towards those objectives.

Shale Formations Surrounding Big Spring



Historical Population Growth

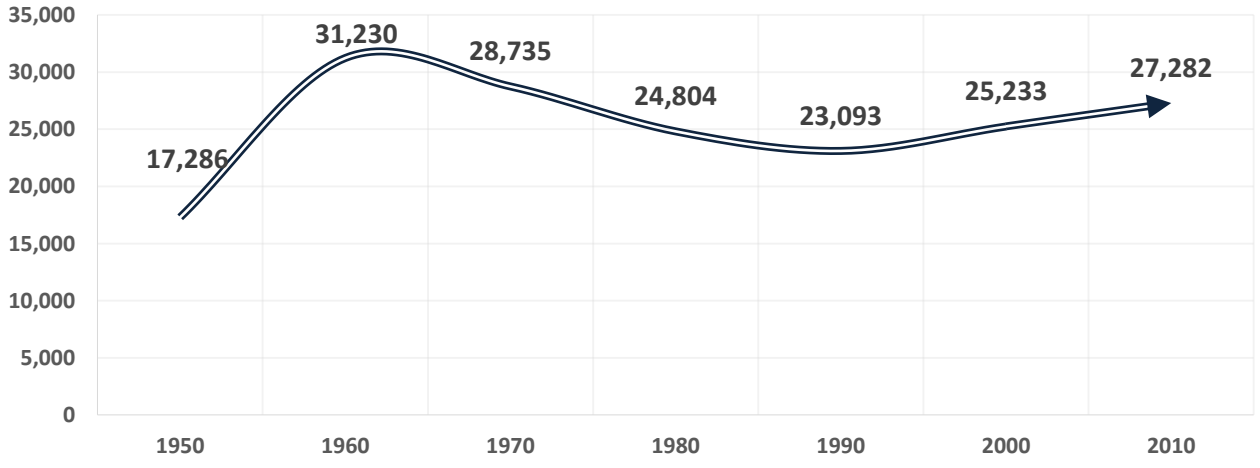
Big Spring's historic population trends are characterized by periods of rapid growth followed by decades of slow population decline. The location of Big Spring Air Force Base/Webb Air Force Base had a dramatic impact on the community, both positively and negatively. The base was officially commissioned in 1951 and that decade was characterized by rapid population growth within the community. Between 1950 and 1960, Big Spring nearly doubled in size from 17,000 to over 31,000 residents. The highest census population count of Big Spring occurred in 1960 when the City had 31,230 residents.

The reduced operations and eventual closure of Webb Air Force Base in 1977 led to decades of population decline in the community. At the 1990 Census, Big Spring had a population of 23,093—a loss of 8,000 residents since its peak in 1960. This loss of residents had a significant impact on the city's form and left many housing units dilapidated and abandoned.

Since 1990, however, Big Spring's population has been on a slow yet steady increase. As of the 2010 Census, Big Spring's population was 27,300, an increase of 5,000 residents since 1990. The resurgence of the oil and gas industry, and Big Spring's location on the Wolfberry/Spraberry and Cline Shale, will likely continue this upward trend in population growth.

Historical Population Trends in Big Spring

Year	Population	Change	Percent Change
1950	17,286	-	-
1960	31,230	13,944	80.7%
1970	28,735	-2,495	-8.0%
1980	24,804	-3,931	-13.7%
1990	23,093	-1,711	-6.9%
2000	25,233	2,140	9.3%
2010	27,282	2,049	8.1%



COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Demographic Profile

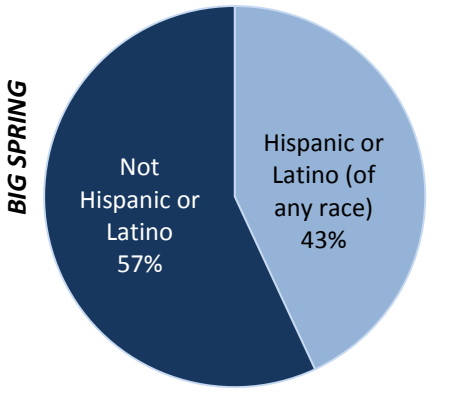
Race & Ethnicity

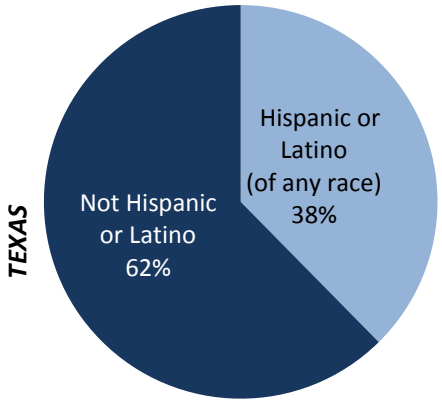
The racial composition of Big Spring as of the 2010 Census was nearly 70% White, 8% Black or African American and over 18% from Some Other Race. Ethnicity looks at the Hispanic population of the community since the Hispanic population can involve a number of different races. Approximately 43% of residents in Big Spring classify themselves as Hispanic. This is slightly higher that the statewide average of 38%.

Big Spring Racial Composition, 2010 Census

RACE	Number	Percent
Total population	**27,282**	**100%**
One Race	26,664	97.7%
White	19,013	69.7%
Black or African American	2,123	7.8%
American Indian and Alaska Native	246	0.9%
Asian	248	0.9%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	11	0.0%
Some Other Race	5,023	18.4%
Two or More Races	**618**	2.3%

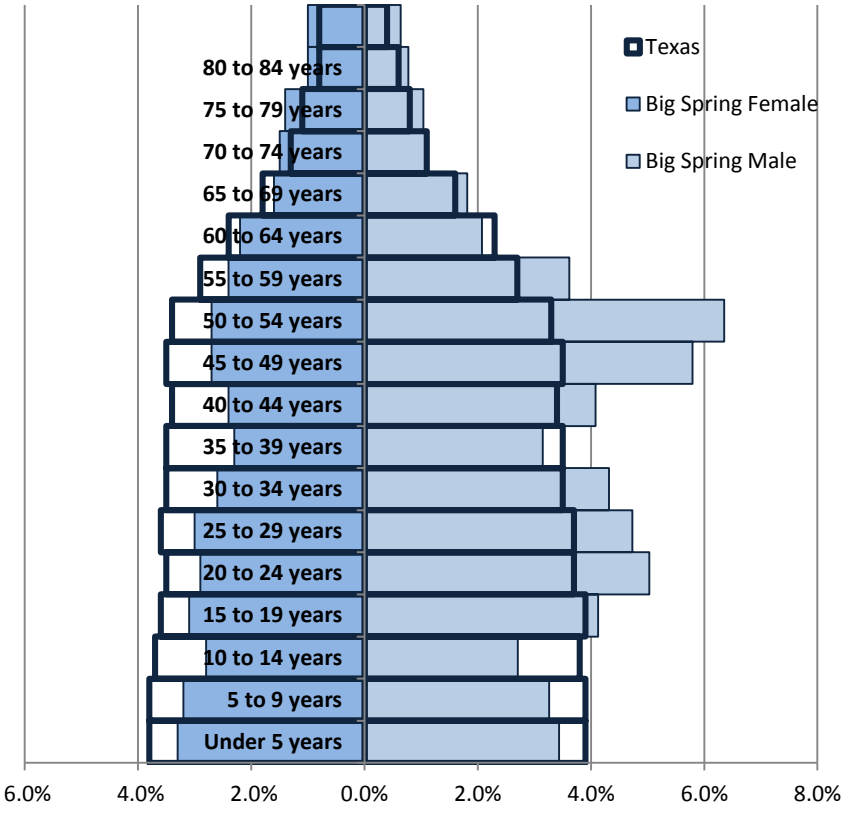
Ethnic Composition, 2010 Census





Age Breakdown

Big Spring Age Breakdown, 2010 Census



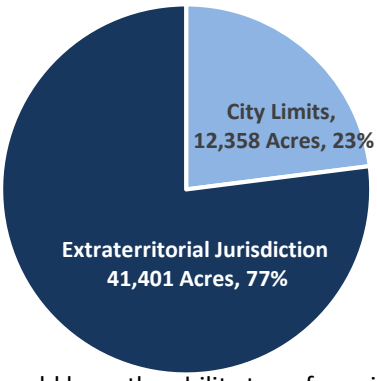
The age cohort pyramid of Big Spring is shown to the left. The dark blue line represents the State of Texas age breakdown. Big Spring has a significantly higher percentage of males than the state of Texas, particularly between the ages of 20 and 59. This is reflective of the fact that the US Census includes the institutional populations. The presence of both private and public correctional institutions in Big Spring, as well as the Big Spring State Hospital, influence the overall age breakdown of the community.

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

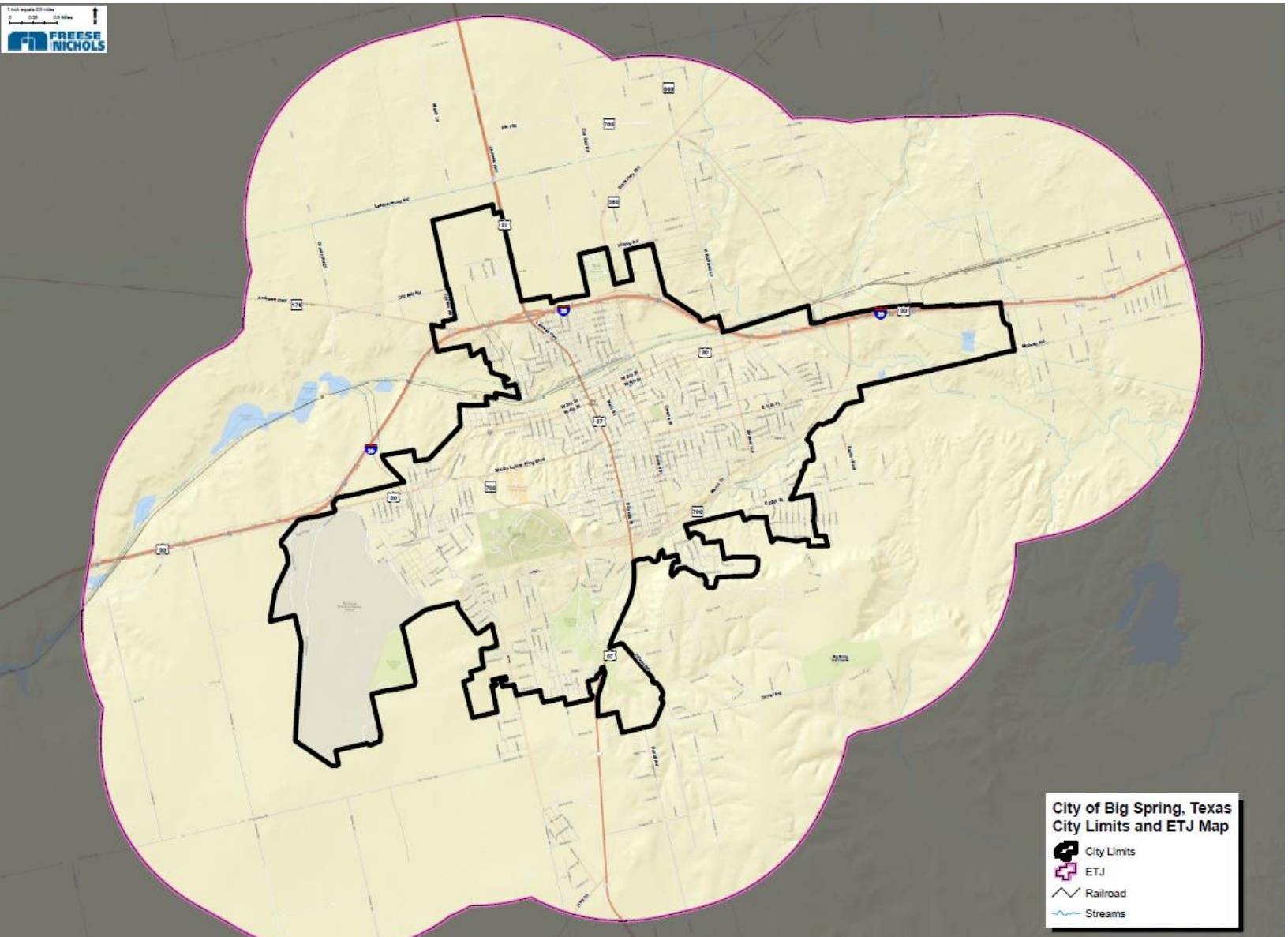
Planning Area

When we think of Big Spring, we generally think of land that is within the City limits. The City has the constitutional right, granted by the State of Texas, to enforce zoning and other development related ordinances within the City limits. In addition to Big Spring's City limits, the State of Texas also gives the City limited authority over an area outside of its City limit boundaries called the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). The expanse of the ETJ is determined by the city's population. At a population of 27,000, Big Spring's ETJ extends two miles from the City limit boundary.

Big Spring Planning Area



While the City of Big Spring cannot zone land within the ETJ, it would have the ability to enforce its Subdivision Ordinance within ETJ lands providing an interlocal agreement with Howard County officials was in place. The Subdivision Ordinance governs property division as well as infrastructure and roadway provisions. The planning area for this comprehensive planning process includes both the City limits and ETJ. As land is annexed into the City limits, the comprehensive plan should provide guidance on how that newly annexed land should be zoned.



COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

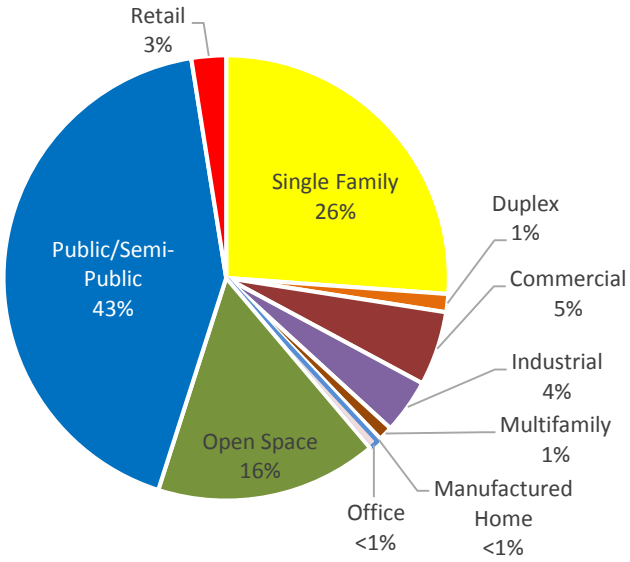
Existing Land Use

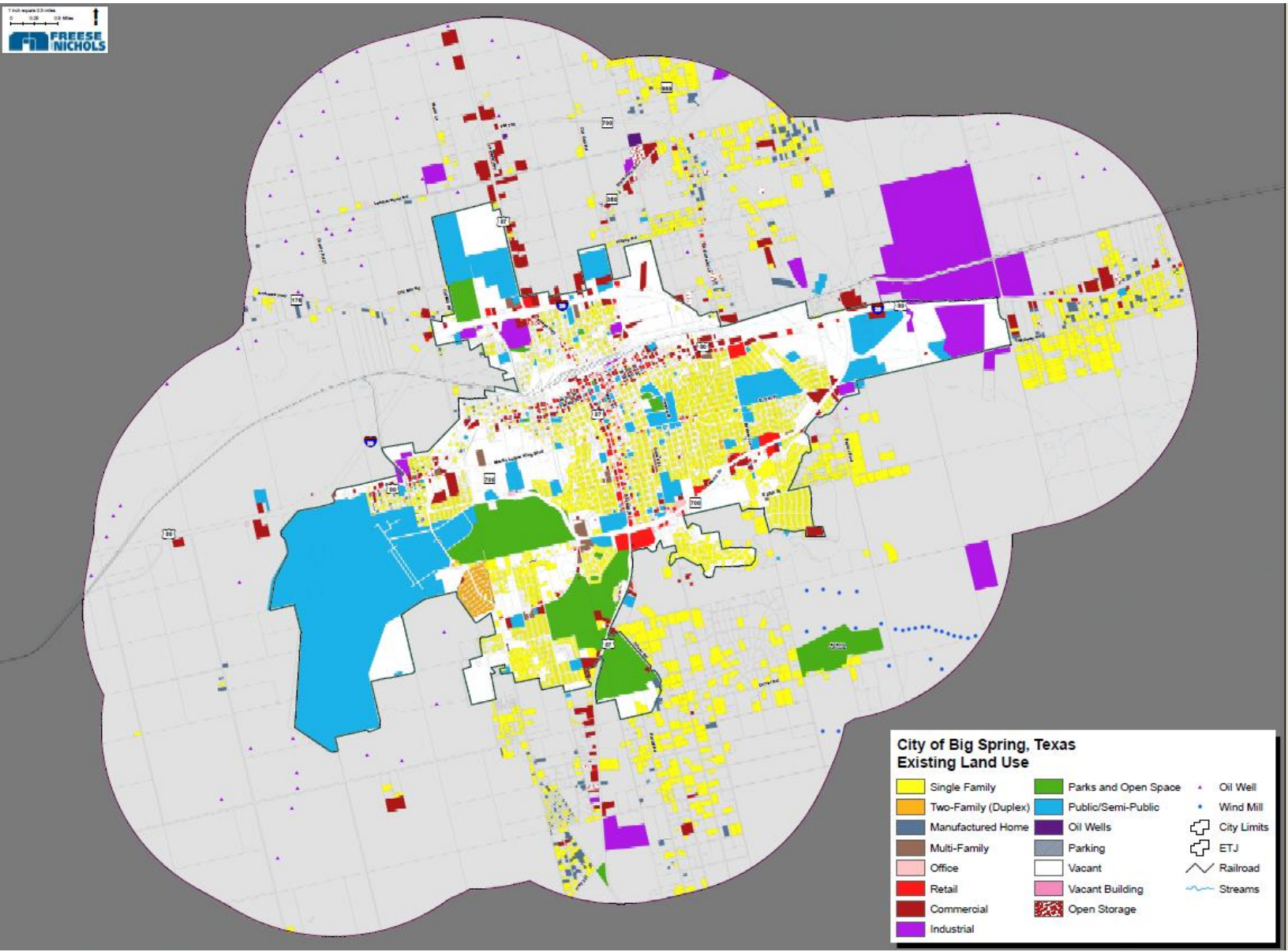
Big Spring's existing land use framework is a product of its historical development patterns. Future development within the community will build upon the City's existing physical structure.

When looking at developed land within Big Spring,43 % is Public/Semi-Public. This is primarily due to the McMahon-Wrinkle Airport, Howard College, the Big Spring State Hospital and other public facilities. Single Family residential housing represents the second largest developed land use at 26 % followed by Open Space at 16 %.

When vacant acres within the City limits are incorporated, approximately 26 % of the total land area in Big Spring is vacant. This presents room for growth within the existing community framework without the immediate need for annexation.

Developed Land Within Big Spring City Limits





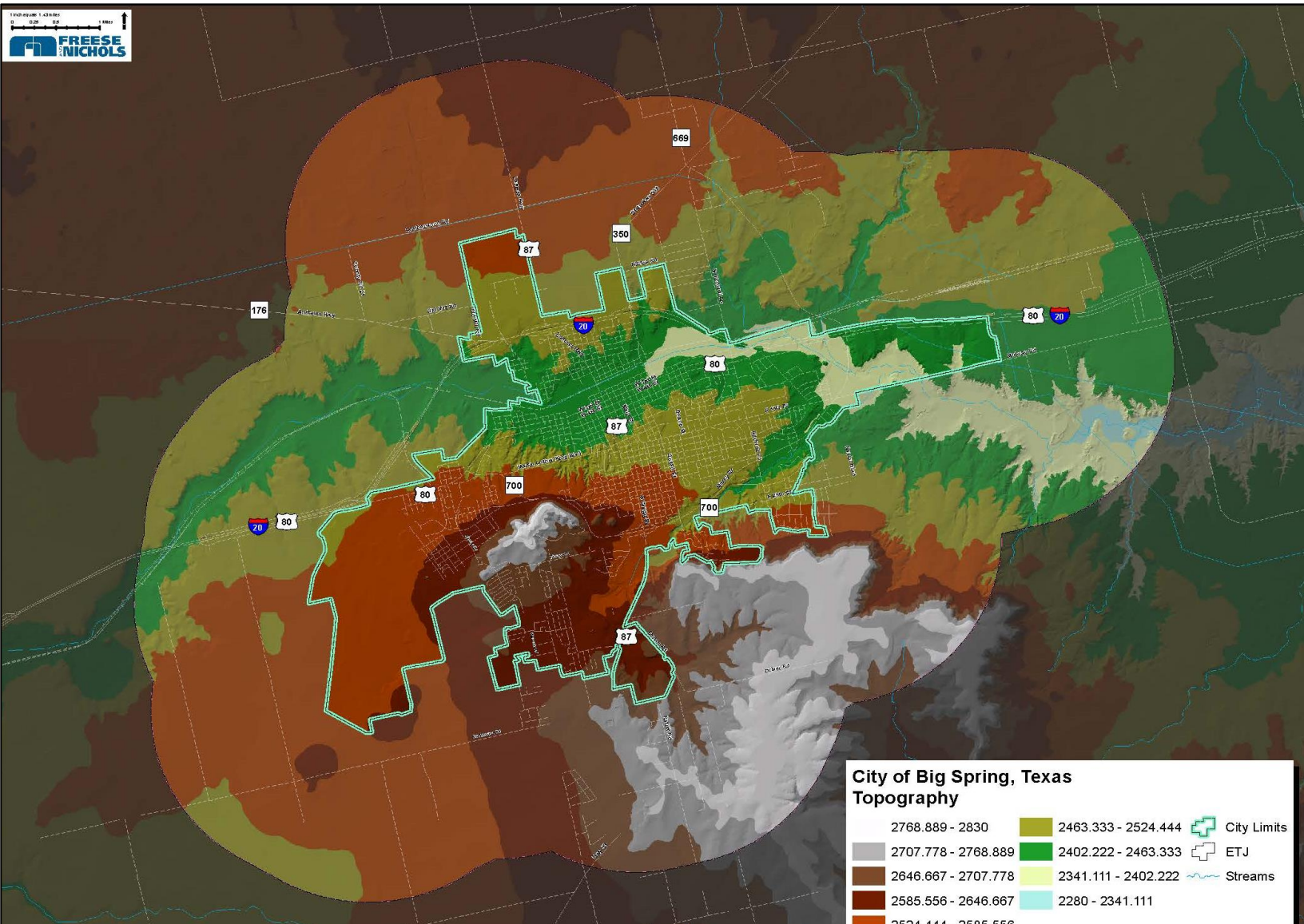
Physical Constraints

In contrast to many West Texas/Permian Basin communities, Big Spring has significant topographical features. The escarpment running along the southern part of the community provides terrain, views and open space. The topography to the south does, however, make development more expensive due to the cost of roadway and infrastructure provisions in such areas.



The topography and its drainage in particular, also impact the lower elevation areas near downtown and along Business 20. Floodplain areas have recently expanded to include portions of downtown and a significant portion of land directly to the east of downtown.

The combination of floodplain through the heart of the community (including parts of downtown) and topographic features to the south make development on the north side of Big Spring more attractive, particularly when thinking about larger-scale neighborhood developments. These development limitations also make infill development appealing due to the existing infrastructure connections, such as streets, water and sewer lines, on infill sites.



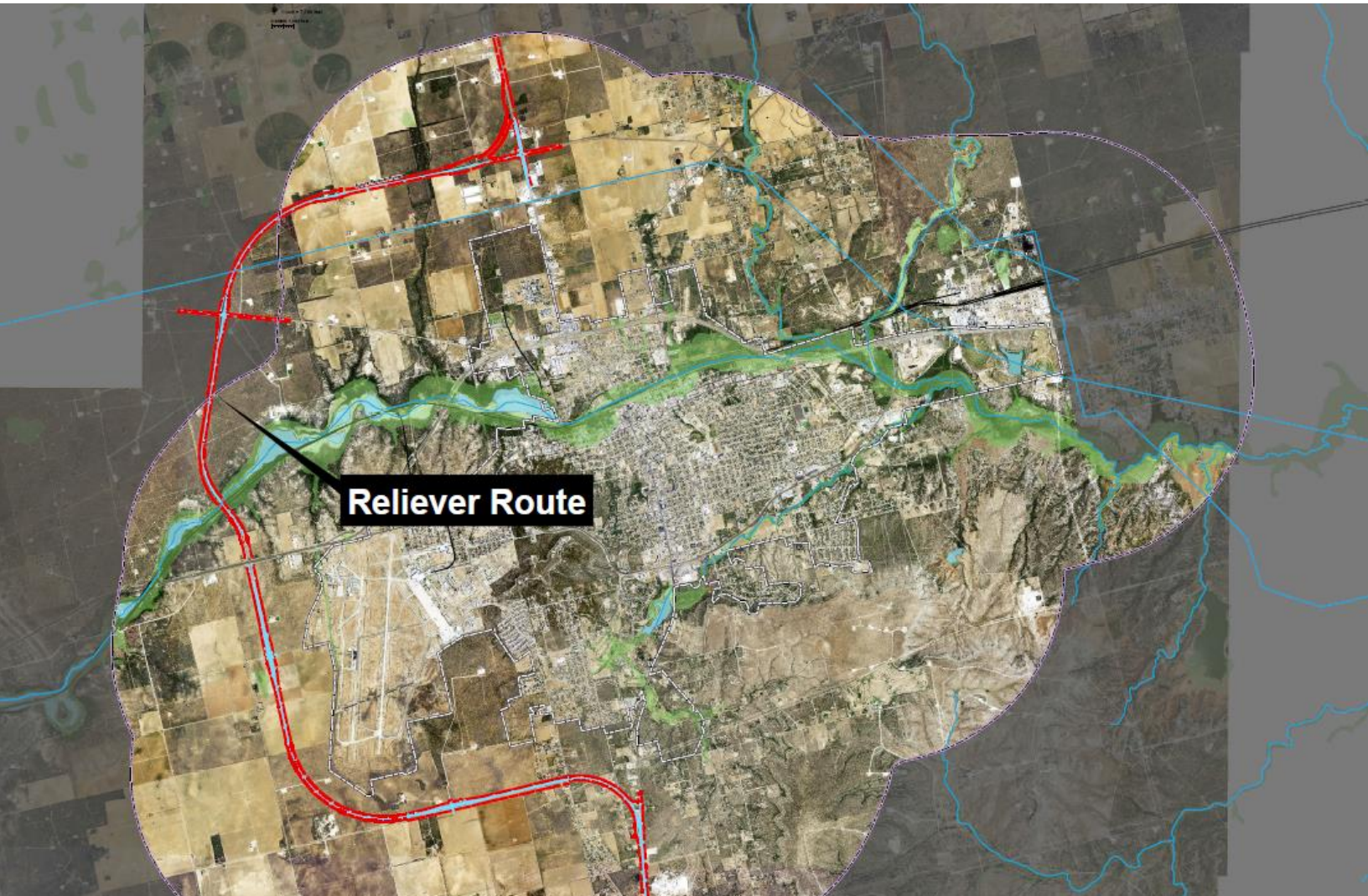
COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Planning Context

Ports-to-Plains/West Loop

The Ports-to-Plains highway corridor was established by the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. It extends from Laredo, Texas to Denver, Colorado and was created to provide an additional trade route between the United States and Mexico. Ports-to-Plains has partnered with the Roosevelt Expressway and Heartland Express to complete the connectivity between Mexico and Canada. Ports-to-Plains is designated as a high priority corridor by the Federal government.

A segment of the corridor is US Highway 87 between San Angelo and Lubbock is currently a discussion and campaign, but has not formally been allocated by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) as such. A western loop (also referred to as the "Reliever Route") is in the process of being constructed outside Big Spring that would allow much of the heavy trucking traffic which currently concentrates travel on Gregg Street through Big Spring to thus bypassing the core of the city. Initially, plans indicated the construction of the southern half of the loop, the segment between South Highway 87 and Interstate 20, within the next 3-5 years and the northern half, the segment between Interstate 20 and North Highway 87 within the next twenty years. Currently, plans have changed to have the south relief route complete in March of 2016 and begin construction of the north route shortly after. Oil and gas exploration combined with the "high priority" status of the Ports-to-Plains corridor have appeared to expedite full loop construction. It is anticipated that the loop will be a limited access highway, meaning that there will be few access points to the loop in and out of the City in order to ensure both safety and compatible land use. Therefore, land use and transportation implications of the loop are assessed as part of this 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

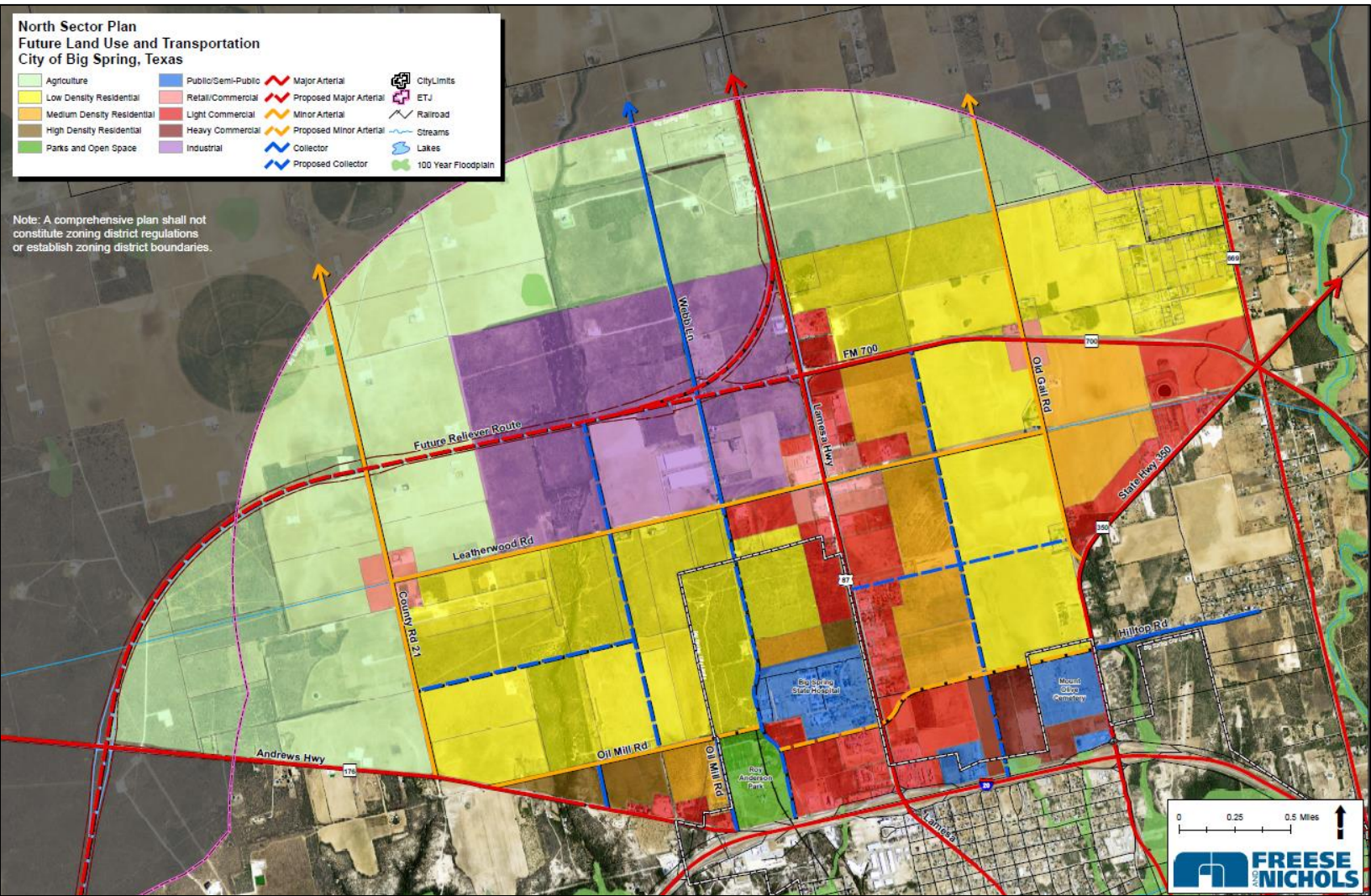


North Sector Plan

At the beginning of the planning process for this document, the City identified the northern sector of the community as a high-profile task. Planned infrastructure improvements required an immediate assessment of future land use within the northern sector in order to ensure that infrastructure planning expenditures considered future growth projections. As a result, the comprehensive planning process kicked off with the creation of the North Sector Plan. This Plan considered input received at the first public input meeting as well as input from City staff and the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC).

The North Sector Plan contains a mixture of residential, commercial and industrial uses. The commercial nature of Highway 87 was protected. The western loop will provide a limited access highway that will be opportunistic for warehouse-trucking facilities. A large area of land targeted for industrial use has therefore been included along the loop. Highway commercial uses are strategically placed along Interstate 20 to leverage the high traffic volumes along the interstate for sales tax capture. Finally, a diverse range of residential uses are proposed to accommodate future growth and development within Big Spring, leveraging the relatively flat nature of the north sector for new residential neighborhoods.

The North Sector Plan ultimately becomes one component of the overall city Future Land Use Plan.



COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

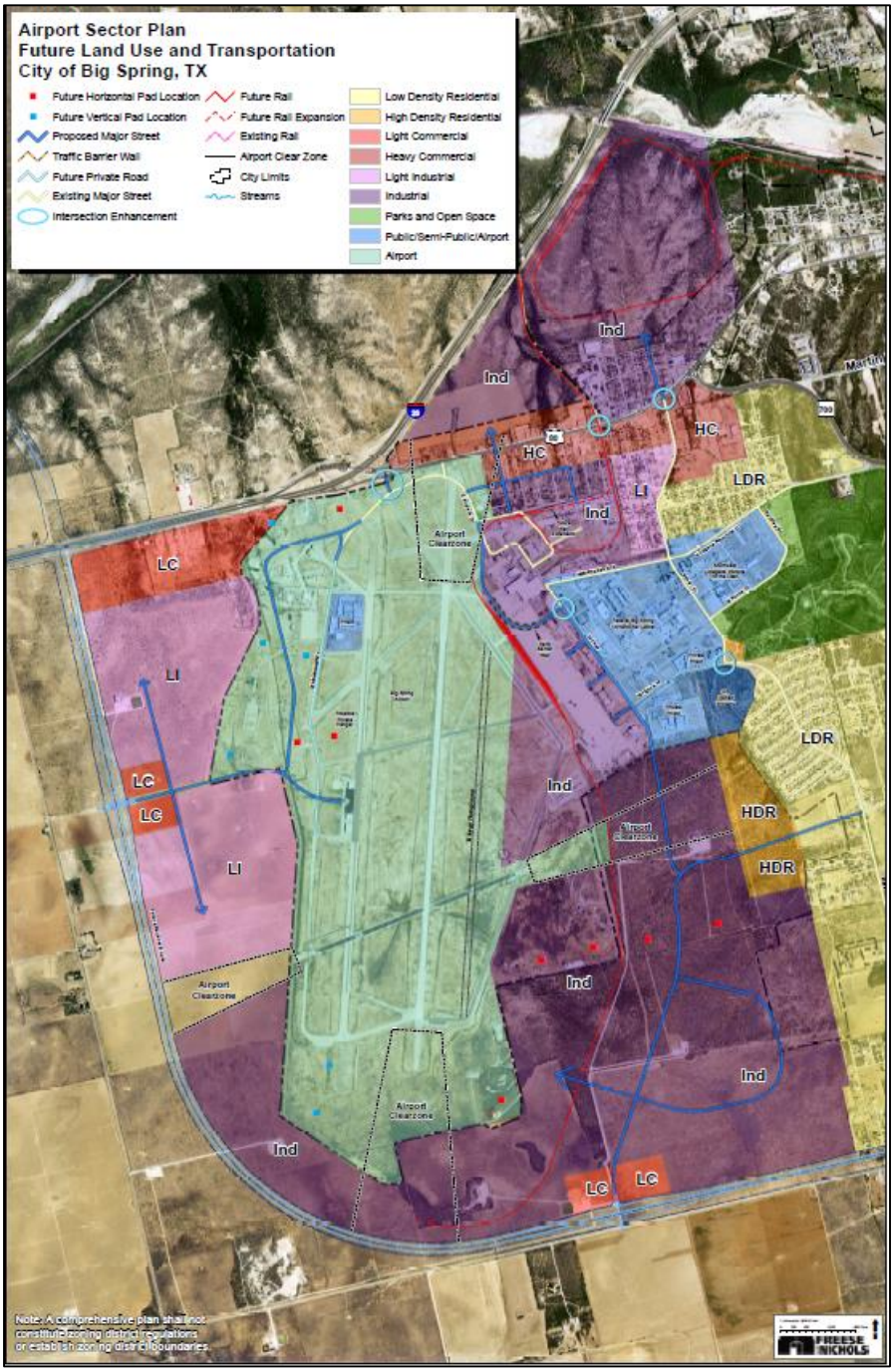
Airport Sector Plan

Similar to the situation surrounding the North Sector Plan being an initial priority, industrial development necessitated an immediate evaluation of transportation and land use strategies around Big Spring McMahon-Wrinkle Airport.

The airport and its ancillary land uses contain a wide variety of existing uses ranging from industrial manufacturing, pipe-yard storage and correctional facilities. The vast amount of vacant acreage around the airport offers opportunity for the future. The greatest asset of the airport area is its multi-modal characteristics—air, rail and highway access. The privatization of the airport after the 1977 base closure makes it open for commercial activity. The reconstruction of the runways to concrete also enables the airport to be used for heavier freight transport activity.

Major rail expansions are planned in and around the airport. Initial additions would extend rail along the entire extend of the eastern side of the airport, creating attractive industrial sites with both air and rail access.

Finally, the proposed western loop would traverse directly to the south and west of the airport. Current configurations provide for two access points to the airport area from the limited-access loop. The western access point, in particular, has the potential to provide a new main access point to the airport. The southern access point would serve to move trucking traffic from industrial sites to the Ports-to-Plains corridor. (Note: Although the Airport Sector Plan Future Land Use and Transportation Maps currently show a central western connection between the Airport and the loop, this is subject to change.)



Land use and transportation recommendations within the Airport Sector have been included in the City-wide Future Land Use and Transportation Plans.

Industrial Development



The oil and gas industry generates a significant amount of industrial activity. The industrial uses seek to maximize accessible sites along highways in order to have quick access to the oil fields. While industrial development is critical to drilling operations, many communities are dealing with the issue of unregulated industrial activity along major corridors immediately outside of the City limits. In addition to industrial development, other types of unregulated activity are occurring, such as instances whereby a concentration of unsightly and unregulated RV parks pop up along major routes and gateways into the city thereby becoming an overall blight to the community as a whole. Once the oil booms are on the downside, or bust cycles, and the RV's leave, what is left behind reveals large vacant tracts of land that potentially become overgrown with vegetation and therefore looks out of place in respect to the rest of the community.

Due to these oil boom and bust situations, the neighboring cities of Midland and Odessa have taken proactive steps to take control of prime areas along their corridors through annexation. Rapid industrial growth began to occur along SH 191 between Midland and Odessa. Significant investments have been made along the corridor, such as the Wagner Noel Performing Arts Center. The long-range plans for that corridor, for example, are the emphasis of retail, commercial, office and residential uses. In response to the rapid industrial growth along SH 191, the cities annexed the entire portion of the highway within their respective extraterritorial jurisdictions. In the same way, Big Spring should also be proactive in annexing areas along key corridors to protect its image and economic interests so the 2030 Comprehensive Plan provides areas intended for commercial, industrial and residential activity. As development seeks connection to City utilities, the Plan also provides a basis for protecting the community's interests.

Housing Shortages



Big Spring is once again growing, reversing the trends of population decline between 1960 and 1990. One of the most significant issues impacting Big Spring is housing. The City currently has a lack of housing options. One of the primary causes of the housing shortage was the population decline between 1960 and 1990. The stagnation of development within Big Spring led to hundreds, if not thousands, of dilapidated and abandoned housing units. The growth pressures resulting from the regional economic prosperity are being met with limited housing supply, causing a supply and demand issue.

Land use strategies within this 2030 Comprehensive Plan address this issue. The Housing component of the Plan includes a diverse range of housing types and the Future Land Use Plan creates areas in the community where housing should be incorporated. Finally, housing infill is a cornerstone of the Plan. There are areas of redevelopment opportunity within the core of Big Spring that should be leveraged due to existing roadway, water and wastewater infrastructure.

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Downtown Big Spring

During the public input process, the continued development of Downtown Big Spring was one of the key issues identified. Downtown was once the heart and core of the community. It was where locals went to shop, dine, work and play. Great residential neighborhoods were once located around downtown and the interaction between the two created vibrancy and life. Downtowns across the nation are experiencing a strong resurgence. Big Spring's Downtown, too, has seen significant investment with the Hotel Settles serving as a catalyst for downtown redevelopment. This comprehensive plan looks at Downtown as a separate element and provides land use and investment strategies to continue to help bring back the Downtown as the heart, soul and identity of Big Spring.



Bankhead Highway

As a precursor to the Interstate Highway System, the Federal government created a plan for a National Auto Trail System. The longest and most significant Auto Trail created by the system was the Bankhead Highway. The Bankhead Highway Association was started in 1916 to promote the development of the coast-to-coast highway. The highway was constructed in segments with the eventual goal of providing a continuous automobile connection between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The Bankhead Highway's eastern terminus is the Zero Milestone in central Washington D.C. The highways western terminus is at 5th and Broadway in San Diego, CA.

In Texas, the Bankhead Highway stretches between Texarkana and El Paso, a length of approximately 850 miles. The roadway generally follows the Interstate 30 corridor from Texarkana to Dallas. It then continues west along the Interstate 20/Interstate 10 corridor from Dallas to El Paso, passing through Big Spring.

In Big Spring itself, the Bankhead Highway follows Business 20/3rd Street. Although developed after the Bankhead Highway in 1926, the well-known Route 66 has been the most significant and famous automobile corridor in the United States. Route 66 is synonymous with diners, drive-ins and in depicting the automobile design of the 1940s through 1960s. Non-profit historical societies have been gaining traction in their efforts to promote the Bankhead Highway as a precursor to the infamous Route 66, concentrating on the history and era of the early 20th Century, particularly the pre-WWII roaring 1920's where many downtowns experienced their golden eras.

A revitalized Bankhead Highway (3rd Street/Business 20) Through Big Spring



The continued advocacy of the Bankhead Highway will likely have a variety of positive impacts on Big Spring, such as public interest in the downtown, which in turn spurs development and spending. Big Spring's historic Downtown is one of its greatest assets. Before the resurgence of interest in the Bankhead Highway route, and in recent years, significant investment has occurred within downtown. The restoration of the Hotel Settles has been the most visible example. Many historic buildings Downtown are envisioned to be protected and restored and, if successful, downtown Big Spring's historic buildings could be a major attraction. The Bankhead Highway project could be leveraged as an additional catalyst for historic restoration and overall downtown revitalization, particularly since the Bankhead Highway traversed many historic downtown areas.

Although the historic Bankhead Highway will be celebrating its 100h birthday in 2016, the City of Big Spring hosted an early kick-off celebration by its "Summers on the Green" program which featured a transportation-themed outdoor movie venue for families on the grounds of the Hotel Settles with a vintage car show, fair food and other activities engaged in educating the public about the Bankhead Highway.



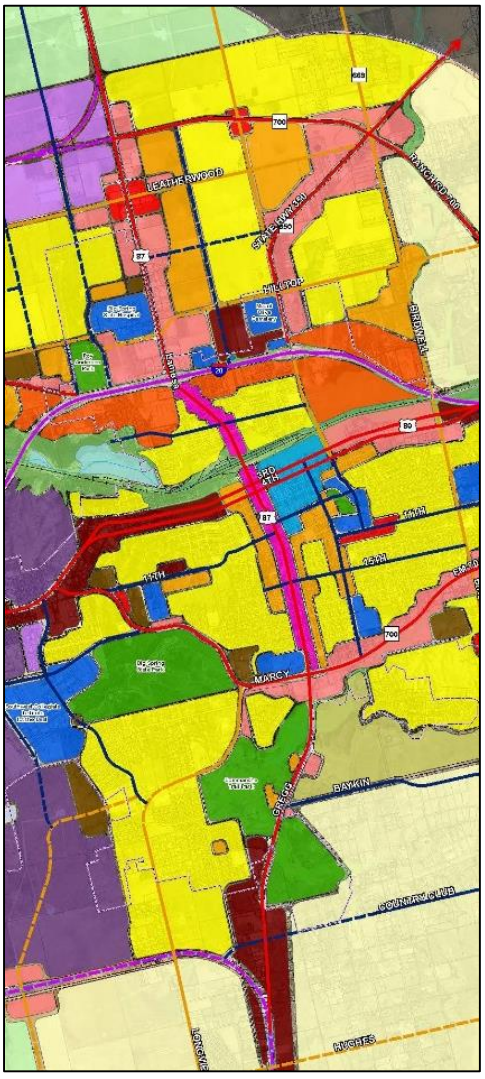
FUTURE LAND USE

The right of a municipality to coordinate growth is rooted in its need to protect the health, safety, and welfare of local citizens. An important part of establishing the guidelines for such responsibility is the Future Land Use Plan, which establishes an overall framework for the preferred pattern of development within Big Spring. In general, the Future Land Use Plan is intended to be a comprehensive blueprint of Big Spring's vision for its future land use pattern. Specifically, the Future Land Use Plan designates various areas within the City for particular land uses, based principally on the specific land use policies outlined herein.

The Future Land Use Plan is graphically depicted in map form for use during the development review process. The Future Land Use Plan Map should ultimately be reflected through the City's policy and development decisions. The Future Land Use Plan Map is not a zoning map, which deals with specific development requirements on individual parcels. The zoning map and changes in zoning should, however, be based on the Future Land Use Plan Map and related Future Land Use Plan.

Legal Authority

Authority of a City to create a comprehensive plan is rooted in Chapters 211, 212 and 213 of the Texas Local Government Code.



Chapter 211
Chapter 211 of the Texas Local Government Code allows the government body of a community to regulate zoning.

Chapter 212
Chapter 212 of the Texas Local Government Code allows the governing body of a community to regulate subdivision development within the City limits and also within the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) which varies depending upon the population of the community. Big Spring's ETJ is two miles.

Chapter 213
Chapter 213 of the Texas Local Government Code allows the governing body of a community to create a comprehensive plan for the "long-range development of the municipality." Basic recommendations for comprehensive planning are to address land use, transportation and public facilities, but may include a wide variety of other issues determined by the community.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Future Land Use Process

The Future Land Use Plan (FLUP) was derived through a defined and deliberate process. Existing land uses, development agreements and planned developments were combined with public and Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) input in order to create a Future Land Use Plan that is both realistic, attainable and reflects the public's vision for Big Spring's future.

The first consideration in developing the FLUP was existing land use. Existing land use includes analyzing past development trends and working to ensure that future growth occurring within the community coincides with existing development patterns and does not negatively impact the integrity of existing neighborhoods.

An examination of potential planned developments was the second step. This involved an understanding of examination of future development activity in Big Spring as the CPAC, City staff, and others involved in the process to produce this Plan understood it to be at the time. Understanding what types of development may occur in the future helps to determine what the adjacent land uses should be.

The North Sector Plan and the Airport Sector Plan efforts were brought into the overall City's FLUP. The extensive work undertaken during those two steps was integrated with only minor adjustments.

Public input received at the public input meeting held on April 21st, 2014 at the Dorothy Garrett Coliseum as well as input received from the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC), was integrated into the future land use framework. The public and CPAC highlighted the overall community vision and the future land use needs within Big Spring and that input served as a basis for land use projections.

The results of this process ultimately concluded in a land use scenario for Big Spring. This land use scenario is not a mandate, but should be used to guide City staff and decision makers as development continues to intensify with the energy resurgence. City staff will only be able to support a zone change request, for example, if the request is in line with the Future Land Use Plan and the zone change proposal is in concert with other area uses and zoning. Most certainly, there will be instances in the future when an amendment to the FLUP will be necessary. Such an amendment of the Plan will require an extensive area study by staff with regard to a variety of variables such as current development trends and changes in demographics, whereupon the amendment recommendation would subsequently need final approval by the City Council.



Land Use Issues

Part of the process of creating the Future Land Use Plan involves examining current land use issues. The following primary issues are based on feedback received from the CPAC, public and City staff.

Sales Tax Generators

Big Spring has a prime location at the intersection of Interstate 20 and Highway 87. Interstate 20, in particular, is heavily underutilized. It is currently lacking commercial activity that would generate sales tax revenue. As infrastructure is expanded to the north of Interstate 20, uses along the Interstate should include hotels, restaurants and highway stop conveniences.

Commercial & Retail Activity

There is no concentrated shopping and commercial center in Big Spring. Retail and commercial activity is dispersed throughout the community. Retail and commercial uses require high visibility and either high levels of vehicular or foot traffic. Residents participating in the public meeting launching the comprehensive plan study expressed a desire for more shopping, dining and retail.

Housing Diversity & Infill

Feedback from the public meeting also indicated that there were very few residential choices in Big Spring. Comments indicated that in addition to a low supply of housing, there is very little variation in types of housing. Infill development of vacant areas in the core was also seen as a priority.

Apartments

The quickest way to create workforce housing is through the construction of apartments. Big Spring does not contain a variety of apartment choices and very few, with the exception of two complexes which were built in the 1990s, have been constructed since the 1970s. Since that time, building codes and required building materials have changed and many, if not all local apartment complexes do not reflect those changes. Such changes include the requirements that accommodate special needs, and also fire suppression systems, such as fire sprinklers. Additionally, asbestos and lead paints are sometimes found in the older buildings and removal of these can be costly. Currently, new apartments are being constructed in Big Spring.

Entertainment Options/Downtown

Residents indicated that there is a general lack of entertainment options for all ages. There is a need for youth activities as well as entertainment options for adults, such as dining, nightlife and dancing. Downtown was viewed by the CPAC as the most optimal place for more entertainment options.

Industrial Development

Concern was expressed over new industrial development occurring within and around the community. Designated industrial areas will help Big Spring to welcome industrial activity in appropriate locations.

What's missing in Big Spring?

At the April 21st Public Meeting, we asked the public what types of development was missing in Big Spring. Here were the top answers:

- Restaurants
- More Housing Options
- Parks & Recreation
- Retail Shopping
- Downtown Shopping
- Live, Work, Play
- Infill Housing
- Rental Apartments
- Performing Arts
- Entertainment Venues
- Farmers Market
- Downtown Living
- Office Uses
- Retirement Options

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Future Land Use Types

Escarpment

Development within the escarpment areas should remain low density in nature. The topography of the area is not conducive to more dense residential development. Residential development within the escarpment areas should be at a density of one dwelling unit per acre or less. Limited public infrastructure will be provided in escarpment areas, particularly given the expense of adding this infrastructure due to the elevations and bedrock content.



Agriculture

Agriculture uses generally include farming and land grazing. In Big Spring, agriculture uses are those on the fringes of the City. Expanding City infrastructure services to these areas would be difficult at the current time and therefore these areas will remain low density in nature.



Residential Estate

Residential estate represents single-family neighborhoods with densities at one dwelling unit per acre and under. Residential estate areas may or may not have access to City infrastructure, such as water and wastewater. Where no such service exists or is planned, the minimum lot size should be a minimum of one acre to allow for septic and well service.



Low Density Residential

Low density residential reflects traditional single-family neighborhoods. Generally, single-family neighborhoods will range between two and four dwelling units per acre. Low density neighborhoods will mostly occur in residential subdivisions requiring water and wastewater utility connections and containing sites for schools, parks and supporting public facilities, such as fire and police. In areas where public utilities are not able to be provided, private utilities may be utilized if lots are greater than one acre in size.



Medium Density Residential

Medium density residential is indicative of slightly denser residential neighborhoods. These areas will be a mixture of a variety of residential types. Single-family detached options, such as patio homes and zero-lot line homes, may be appropriate and will generally have densities ranging from four to six dwelling units per acre. Single-family attached residential types, such as duplexes and townhomes, are also medium density residential prototypes. These housing types will generally be between four and eight dwelling units per acre.



High Density Residential

High density residential is indicative of multifamily options. Multifamily units should be between 16 and 25 dwelling units per acre. High density should be utilized as a buffer between low density areas and more intense light commercial and industrial uses with proper screening. High density residential should be located with nearby access to a primary roadway for traffic control.



Parks & Open Space

Parks & Open Space represents Big Spring's existing parks, golf courses, floodplain and natural preserve areas. Future parks are typically not included on the Future Land Use Plan Map as they are incorporated as development occurs. Predominant Parks & Open Space areas within Big Spring include Comanche Trail Park and Golf Course, Big Spring State Park and Big Spring Country Club.



Public/Semi-Public

These uses represent larger public facilities in Big Spring, such as Howard College, West Texas VA Medical Center and area correctional facilities, among others.



FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Airport

Airport uses represent areas at Big Spring McMahon-Wrinkle Airport that are used directly for aviation operations, such as runways, hangars and support facilities.



Downtown

The Downtown area of Big Spring is a mixed-use area that will contain a combination of dining, shopping, office and residential. The main focus within the downtown district should be on building form. New construction and infill should be compatible with the historic framework of downtown and its existing structures. Specific components of the Downtown area are included within the Downtown element of this 2030 Comprehensive Plan.



I-20 Corridor

Interstate 20 is Big Spring's most visible and lucrative corridor. Development along the interstate should incorporate sales tax generating activities in order to capture pass-through trips. Hotels, restaurants, fueling stations and retail should be the primary uses within the I-20 corridor. Industrial uses should be limited, particularly in highly visible and accessible sites that would be better suited for sales-tax capture. Uses along the interstate should incorporate higher levels of landscaping due to its high visibility. Gateway signage and other signage should contain a consistent theme to create visual interest.





US 87 Corridor

US 87, and segments labeled Gregg Street and Lamesa Highway, is Big Spring's primary commercial and retail corridor. The activity along Gregg Street is auto-oriented in that it is designed for quick and convenient access. Gregg Street and the Lamesa Highway to the north of the city contain the majority of Big Spring's small business establishments and are attractive for commercial activity due to the high traffic volumes along the roadway. Both sections will continue to serve as small-business activity corridors in the future. Due to the high-visibility of these corridor segments, landscaping enhancements should be encouraged along with property upkeep and maintenance.



Retail

Retail/Commercial uses are to be situated at important corners, primarily at the intersections of major arterials. These uses will be retail in nature and will provide services to adjacent neighborhoods. Examples would include grocery stores, dry cleaners, small office uses and banks. No commercial or industrial activity should occur at these locations as they should be reserved for neighborhood service and retail uses that capitalize on the high visibility and traffic volumes that would occur at these locations.



Light Commercial

Light commercial uses are those that provide services or goods for sale. They are generally more intense than retail uses, in that they may contain screened outside storage, typically experience heavier traffic demands and are less compatible with low density residential areas. Uses that may be contained within light commercial areas would include shopping centers, hotels, gas stations, restaurants, big box stores, auto repair shops where the customer waits for the repairs, storage units and equipment sales.



FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Heavy Commercial

Heavy commercial uses typically involve wholesale of machinery and equipment used in industries such as those related to oil and gas and agricultural industries yet may contain more intense auto repair businesses or machine shops where the customer is not waiting for the job to be completed in the same day. They also generally have large outside showroom areas. Examples would include tractor trailer supply stores and manufactured home sales. They are typically located along highways and other highly visible areas.



Light Industrial

Light Industrial land uses generally support the oil and gas and agricultural industries. They include pipe yards, storage yards, manufacturing facilities and warehouse uses. Industrial uses often utilize metal building facilities. When metal buildings are used, masonry should be incorporated on sides facing primary roadways.

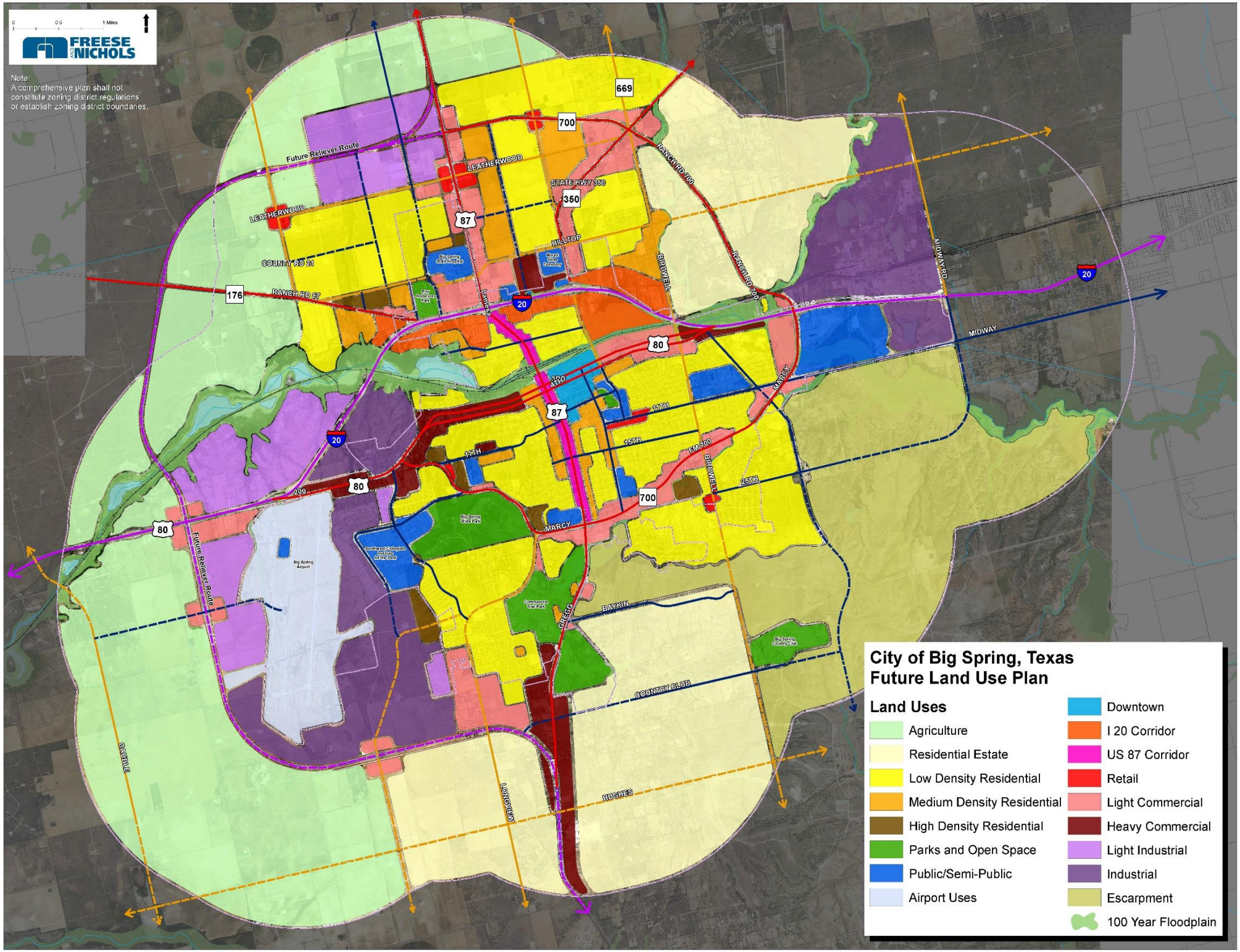


Industrial

The industrial category represents the most intense industrial uses. These would include refining, assembly and manufacturing facilities. Industrial facilities are often served by rail or are near major trucking routes. Industrial land uses are the least compatible with residential land uses.






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Note:
A comprehensive plan shall not constitute zoning district regulations or establish zoning district boundaries.
City of Big Spring, Texas
Future Land Use Plan
Land Uses
Agriculture
Residential Estate
Low Density Residential
Medium Density Residential
High Density Residential
Parks and Open Space
Public/Semi-Public
Airport Uses
Downtown
I 20 Corridor
US 87 Corridor
Retail
Light Commercial
Heavy Commercial
Light Industrial
Industrial
Escarpment
100 Year Floodplain
Future Reliever Route
LEATHERWOOD
STATE HWY 350
HILLTOP
COUNTY RD 21
RANCH RD 87
RANCH RD 700
BIRDWELL
MIDWAY RD
MIDWAY
MARCY
FM 700
25TH
BAYLOR
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FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Future Land Use Acreages

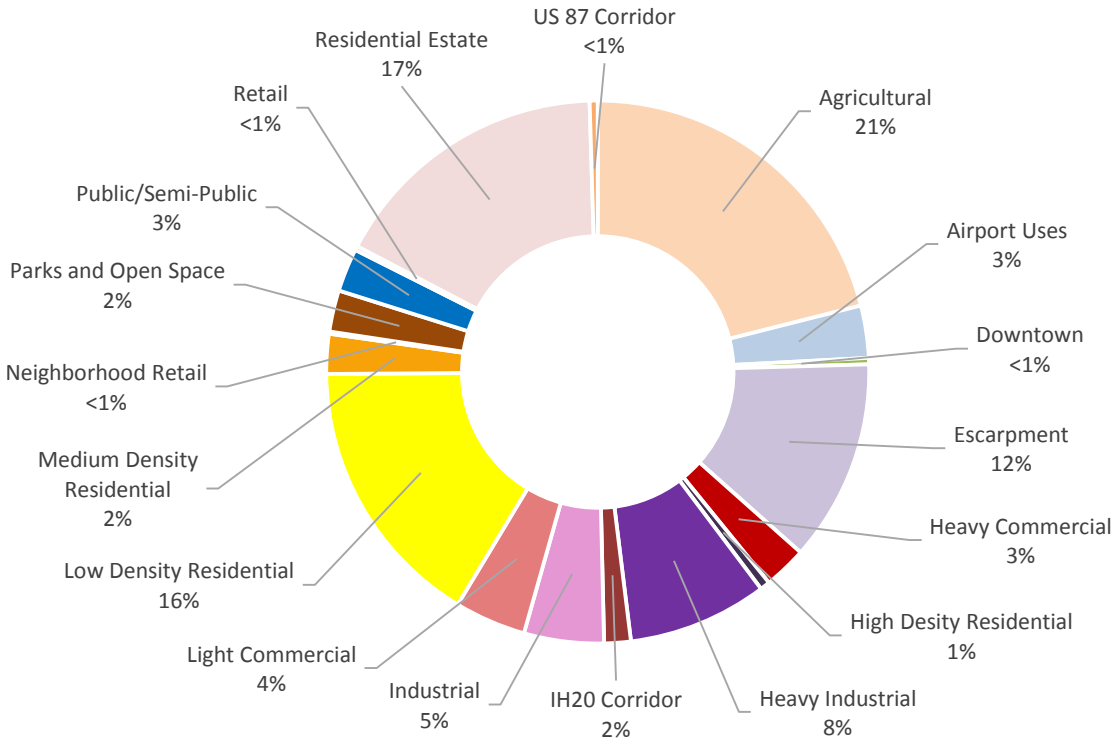
Currently, residential development is the largest land use in Big Spring. The Future Land Use Plan shows a continuation of that trend. When combined, residential land uses represent approximately 38 % of Big Spring's future land use composition. Agricultural uses represent the second highest land use followed by the Escarpment. The Agriculture and Escarpment zones represent very low density development and open space.

Industrial uses make up approximately 12 % of the future land use plan and commercial uses total approximately 7 %. This healthy diversification of land uses will ensure that Big Spring is able to provide a variety of residential, employment shopping and recreational uses in the future.

Future Land Use Acreages

Future Land Use Categories	Acres	Percent
Agricultural	10,057	21.1%
Airport Uses	1,484	3.1%
Downtown	181	0.4%
Escarpment	5,739	12.0%
Heavy Commercial	1,227	2.6%
High Density Residential	280	0.6%
Heavy Industrial	3,972	8.3%
IH20 Corridor	756	1.6%
Industrial	2,270	4.8%
Light Commercial	2,027	4.2%
Low Density Residential	7,762	16.3%
Medium Density Residential	1,133	2.4%
Neighborhood Retail	62	0.1%
Parks and Open Space	1,178	2.5%
Public/Semi-Public	1,229	2.6%
Retail	116	0.2%
Residential Estate	8,047	16.9%
US 87 Corridor	229	0.5%
Total	**47,750**	**100.0%**

Future Land Use Breakdown



Ultimate Capacity

The Future Land Use Plan depicts how Big Spring could potentially grow and develop. Buildout occurs when a community reaches a point where very little vacant land remains for growth. Most communities never reach a state of complete buildout since development and redevelopment are a continuous and cyclical process. The ultimate capacity refers to the population of a community if the city reached complete buildout. It is sometimes called the carrying capacity of the city.

Big Spring's Future Land Use Plan contains four residential districts, as described in more detail, above; residential estate, low density, medium density and high density. In order to calculate the ultimate capacity, vacant acreage within each of those districts is combined with dwelling unit per acre (DUA) and persons per household (PPH) assumptions. This allows us to estimate the additional population that could be accommodated within vacant land in each of those categories.

If Big Spring were to fully develop according to the Future Land Use Plan, the ultimate capacity is estimated to be roughly 83,700 residents.

Ultimate Capacity

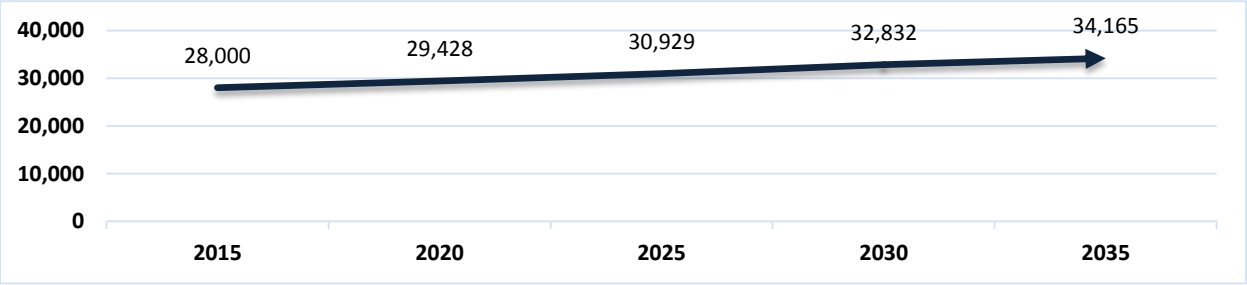
Future Land Use Category	Vacant Acres	DUA	Units	PPH	Population
Residential Estate	6,343	0.3	1,902	2.7	5,138
Low Density Residential	4,555	3	13,665	2.7	36,896
Medium Density Residential	852	5	4,260	2	8,520
High Density Residential	243	16	3,888	1.5	5,832
Existing Population					27,282
Ultimate Capacity					**83,667**

Population Projections

Population projections help to put growth pressures into perspective and help to prioritize and plan infrastructure and public facility needs. Population projections are generally based on historical growth patterns but also take into consideration the existing economic climate.

Between 1960 and 1990, Big Spring's population declined by approximately 8,000 residents. Since 1990, the City has experienced slow population growth. The compound annual growth rate (CAGR) is used for population projections because it averages out various growth patterns (i.e., rapid growth, slow growth and decline). Over the past 60 years, 20 years and 10 years Big Spring's growth rate was 0.76%, 0.48% and 0.78% respectively. The resurgence of the energy industry will likely have an impact on the community's growth patterns over the planning period of this plan—approximately 20 years. Therefore, the projected CAGR for Big Spring over the next 20 years is 1%. At this rate, the population of Big Spring would be approximately 31,000 residents in ten years and 34,000 residents in 20 years.

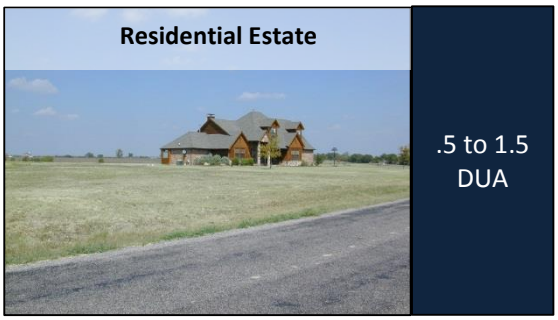
Population Projections at 1% Compound Annual Growth Rate

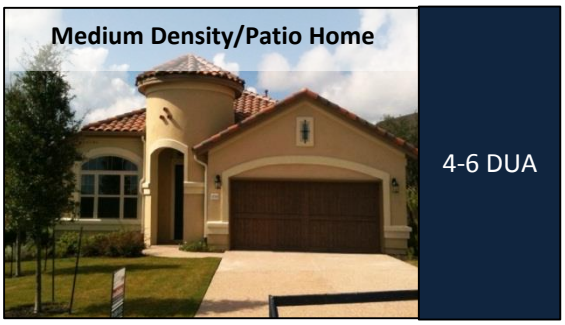


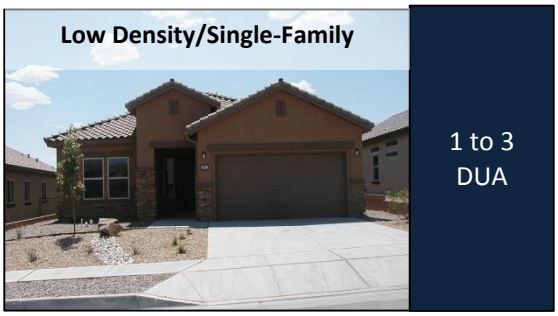


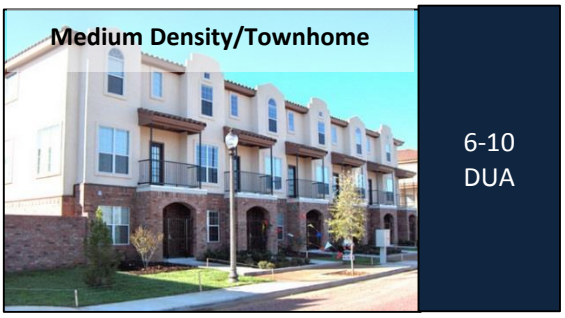
Density

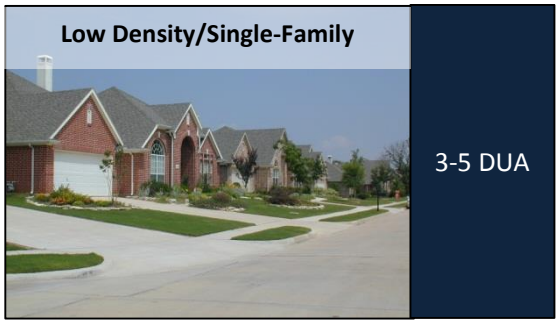
The Future Land Use Plan Map contains several different categories where residential development may occur. Within each of those particular categories, there may be a variety of different development products. The following is a list of several different development examples that may be included within the various land use categories. The following list, however, is not exhaustive—it is only meant to provide examples of various housing types and which category they would best fit.

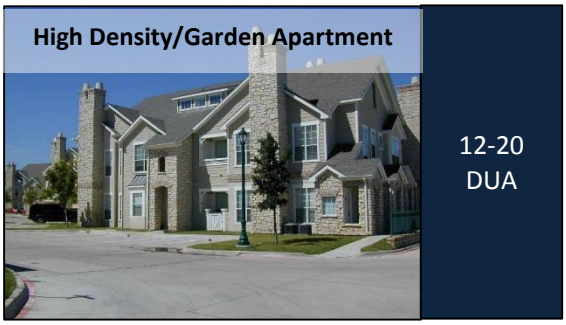


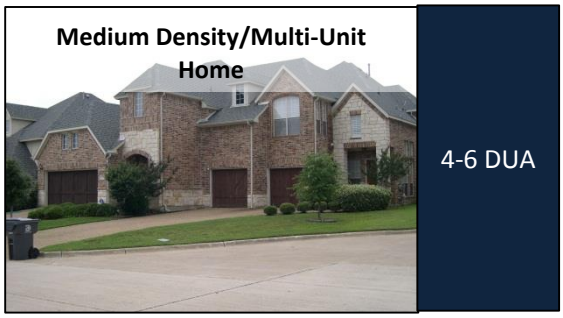














FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Land Use Concepts

Mixed-Use Development

Mixed-use refers to a development style that combines a mix of land uses within one defined zoning district. For example, residential, retail, restaurants, office and public uses may be allowed in the same building, same lot, same tract, block or zoning district. Such development is often seen in downtown and college campus areas. Benefits of mixed-use development include:

- Flexibility of building spaces over time;
- Long term viability of commercial districts;
- Providing higher quality high density residences;
- Inclusion of public facilities;
- Reduction in the frequency of vehicular trips; and
- Minimizing land consumption.





Mixed-use developments are defined by their design—building orientation, roadway configuration and amenities such as shade trees, benches and lighting, create a safe environment that is conducive for walking. Intentional integration of diverse land uses within one localized area creates a lifestyle option where a person can perform many of their daily needs and recreational desires within a short distance of home. Such environments are particularly attractive to young singles, young couples and empty nesters.

Demographic trends have indicated a trend towards "in-town" living. Downtown Big Spring was once an active neighborhood with residential living options. In some ways, downtown Big Spring in its heyday was an example of a great mixed-use development. As we work to redevelop downtown, mixed-use development should be emphasized in order to create activity at all times of the day and to create options to live, work and play downtown Big Spring.

Mixed-uses are either horizontal or vertical in nature. Horizontal mixed-uses involve retail, office and residential all located within one defined area, but within separate buildings. Vertical mixed-use developments would include any combination of retail, office and residential within the same building. A common example is residential lofts and apartments above street-level retail and office space. The downtown area will have a mixture of both. In some cases, separate residential areas will be within walking distance of shopping and dining. Buildings in downtown's core, however, should consider living options over ground-level retail spaces.

General Guidelines

- **Maximum Setbacks: B**ring building facades closer to the street.
- **Central Gathering Space or Focal Point:** Create an identity through public space.
- **Pedestrian Orientation:** Facilitate the pedestrian experience through quality urban design. Ensure access and connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods.
- **Architecture:** Moldings, spires, canopies, balconies and building locations all create a sense of identity and contribute to the experience.
- **Strategic Parking:** Utilize shared parking, on-street parking, parking behind buildings and structured parking.
- **Connectivity:** Mixed use areas should be tied in to adjacent residential development.

Development Trends

Heading Downtown

One of the biggest trends over the past ten years has been the movement of people back to the core of the city. From small towns to large cities, downtown revitalization is transforming the way we think about downtown once again. Downtown is once again becoming attractive for investment as new shopping, dining and residential living options fill vacant buildings and sites.







Housing Choice

The way we look at housing is also undergoing significant changes. For decades, single-family residential neighborhoods were built to accommodate the family unit which dominated American demographics after World War II. Today's demographics are changing the types of housing cities provide. Younger demographics are getting married and having children later in life. Huge portions of the population that once had children at home no longer do. There are more non-family households in the United States than married-family households. All these changes impact housing demand, specifically the types of housing to meet the various stages of life.

"Live, Work & Play"

Downtown's once served as the core of community activity. The automobile gave a new sense of independence and transformed our cities. For decades, strip center development dominated due to its convenience. Recent development trends, however, have shown the rapid rise of "live, work & play" developments, sometimes referred to as "town centers."



FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Building Orientation

Over the past several decades, strip shopping centers have been defined by large setbacks and with parking areas located between the building and the roadway. With this type of design, much of the visual identity of the corridor is placed on the parking lots and vehicles, rather than on the architecture and identity of the community and the buildings themselves.

During visioning exercises, many Big Spring residents indicated that more destination areas were needed in the community. Destination places are those that create a sense of place and that cause patrons to park their cars, walk around and stay for a while. The orientation of buildings plays a significant role in creating a sense of place.

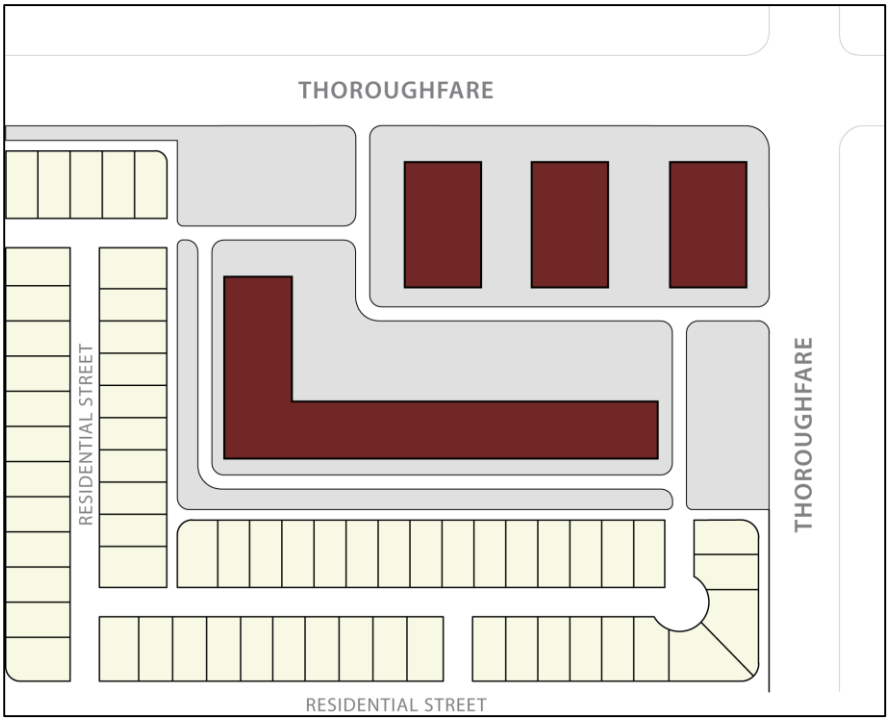
Retail centers should be clustered together, when possible, creating nodes of activity rather than strips of activity. Neighborhood retail centers will most likely be located at major intersections within Big Spring. Clustering of buildings into nodes of activity can help to define outdoor spaces such as plazas and courtyards and the strategic orientation of buildings can also minimize circulation conflicts.

Nodal retail areas are depicted on the Future Land Use Plan Map, primarily as new development occurs in the North Sector.

Shopping Oriented Inward Creating Sense of Place



The graphic to the right represents clustered or nodal retail activity. This is often part of a "four corner" retail configuration typically located at the intersection of two major roadways. Vehicular access is provided through parking lots within the shopping area and connections to adjacent neighborhoods provide additional connectivity.



Traditional Neighborhood Design

Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) is a design prototype that can be used for infill development in and around downtown Big Spring. TND utilizes design patterns from the early 20th century, placing emphasis on a grid street pattern rather than the use of cul-de-sacs, incorporating a variety of housing types and sizes within the neighborhood, integrating neighborhood retail within the neighborhood at appropriate areas, strategically placing parks at locations that maximize value and creating distinct architectural characteristics that enhance public space.

Homes are typically situated closer to the street by reducing setback requirements. When alleys are present, the use of rear-entry garages can reduce the appearance of garages lining the street. Front porches are typically included to facilitate neighborhood interaction and crime prevention. Medium density residential, such as townhomes, is placed along collector roadways with single-family homes of various lot sizes placed along local roadways. Neighborhood services, such as a pharmacy and a neighborhood grocery store, are placed at locations within easy walking distance.

The challenge of infill development stems from combining new construction with existing homes. TND's historic feel and design would match up seamlessly with Big Spring's core, historic neighborhoods.



General Guidelines

- **Grid/Connected Street Pattern**
- **Different housing types and sizes integrated within the neighborhood**
- **Integrated pocket parks and neighborhood parks**
- **Unique architectural design including front porches and reduced setbacks from the street**
- **"Small town" design**



The images above and to the left are from The Vintage of Lubbock. The neighborhood is located at 110th Street and Quaker Avenue and has been hugely successful. The neighborhood provides a variety of housing types, sizes and prices and incorporates common space, pocket parks and neighborhood parks. The Vintage recently began its third phase of development.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Livable Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods are the most important element within Big Spring. They are the backbone of the City and the quality of neighborhoods is the single greatest priority of residents. Livable neighborhoods, regardless of what type of environment, have some common characteristics. The following are some of these common characteristics as well as strategies to ensure that neighborhoods are protected, preserved and enhanced in the future.



Life-Cycle Housing

Encourage a variety of housing types and sizes to accommodate different stages of life within Big Spring. From downtown, the North Side and South Side ensure that a variety of housing options are provided.



Connectivity

Encourage connected neighborhoods emphasizing both internal and external connectivity. Neighborhoods should be linked to each other as well as to the community as a whole.



Identity

Encourage neighborhood events, such as national night out, block parties and other neighborhood events to promote social interaction among neighbors and to foster a sense of community.



Recreational Access

Provide outdoor recreational opportunities for Big Spring's residents and ensure that the recreational areas are connected to residential neighborhoods when possible.



Quality Development

Work to ensure that future development and redevelopment in Big Spring contributes to the community's objectives and enhances the overall community image by including aesthetic enhancements and landscaping.



Neighborhood Conveniences

Provide neighborhood retail at major intersections that serve adjacent neighborhoods.



Open Space

One of Big Spring's greatest assets is its topography. Ensure that escarpment areas and other natural areas are preserved for community benefit.

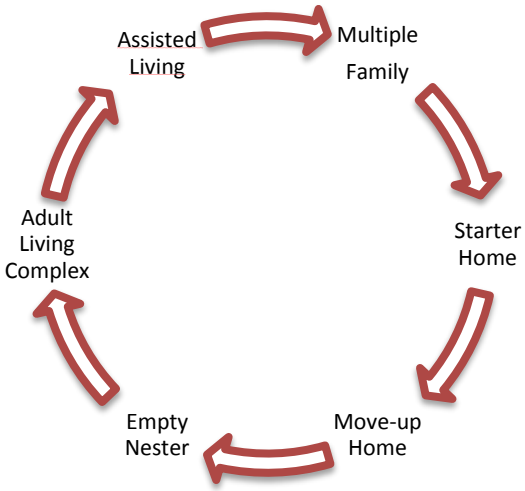


Neighborhood Signage

Big Spring's original and historic neighborhoods had a sense of identity and were well-defined. Improve neighborhood pride by defining and delineating various neighborhoods throughout the community.

Diverse Housing Mix

It is important for Big Spring to provide a variety of housing for its citizens and to meet the needs of different segments of the population. The "full-life cycle" is intended to describe all stages of life—young singles, professionals, families with children, families without children, singles, empty-nesters, retirees and seniors. While single-family homes will be the majority residential use in Big Spring, the following is a list of housing options which may be utilized to create full-life cycle options within the community.





Mixed-Use Apartment/Loft: High density dwelling units for rent which are typically located above ground level retail uses. May be renter or owner occupied. Generally speaking, these housing types appeal to young singles, young couples and empty-nesters. Mixed-use Apartments should be utilized in Downtown Big Spring.



Traditional Neighborhood Design: A single-family detached residential unit with a rear-entry garage and reduced setback from the street. The smaller housing size provides a high quality and slightly more affordable housing option for young families and starter families.



Duplex Home: A single-family attached dwelling unit. It is a single residential structure containing two separate units, separated by a firewall. Duplex homes provide single-family housing types and are typically more affordable than a single-family detached home.



Patio Home: Typically a zero-lot line home or single-family attached home with a reduced setback from the street and a lot width under 50 feet. Such uses are becoming increasingly popular with empty nesters who seek a quality residential structure with less yard maintenance and living space.



Mother-in-law Suite: This is an accessory residential unit located on a single-family lot that does not have a presence on the front street. It will also include a separate entry from the main house. These residential options, while affordable, are often fairly limited.



TRANSPORTATION

The transportation thoroughfare system forms one of the most visible and permanent elements of Big Spring. It establishes the framework for community growth and development and, along with the Future Land Use Plan, forms a long-range statement of public policy. As the alignment and right-of-way of major transportation facilities are established and adjacent property developed, it is difficult to facilitate system changes without significant financial impacts. Proactively planning for future roadways based upon projected land uses within the Future Land Use Plan help to more effectively leverage limited resources and maximize the land use/transportation relationship.

The Transportation Plan will serve as a blueprint for future right-of-way acquisition as development occurs. Several key principles should guide the overall transportation framework:

- The thoroughfare network should be expanded to address continued growth and strategic initiatives. The Plan should leverage Howard County and TxDOT partnerships.
- Big Spring should have a safe and convenient internal circulation system providing access to neighborhoods, retail areas, recreational areas and key community assets. Transportation facilities should connect the community, not divide it.
- The thoroughfare network should consider multi-modal options, such as the incorporation of trails in key areas.
- The context of the community and adjacent land uses should be considered. The Transportation Plan should not only provide for mobility but also support strategic planning and economic development objectives.



The Transportation section of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan is intended to serve as a guide for transportation decisions within Big Spring. It was developed through a combination of using the existing roadway network and design criteria along with future land use projections.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Issues

Trucking Traffic and Congestion

Interstate 20 and Highway 87 create high volumes of trucking traffic in Big Spring. Recent oil and gas drilling activities have created additional trucking traffic in and around the community. As oil and gas drilling increases, the enforcement of designated trucking routes will become even more critical for safety within the core of the community.

Interstate 20 Circulation

Currently, Interstate 20 frontage roads are two-way roadways. TxDOT is placing an emphasis on converting two-way frontage roads in populated areas to one-way frontage roads. Frontage roads along Interstate 20 in Big Spring will likely be converted to one-way roads. Once this occurs, backage roads will be needed to facilitate development along Interstate 20. Backage roads are two-way facilities that run parallel to frontage roads at a distance of approximately 1/2 mile. The area between the backage road and the frontage road becomes prime commercial real estate due to the accessibility the two roads provide. As development and redevelopment occur along Interstate 20 in Big Spring, particularly in the Interstate 20 District, backage roads should be integrated.

Western Loop

The western loop of Big Spring is a four-lane limited access roadway. It is part of the possible Ports-to-Plains corridor. To date, the Big Spring City Council has passed a resolution welcoming Interstate 27 in the event our community is selected to be along the proposed Ports-to-Plains route. The western loop will divert heavy trucking traffic around Big Spring and will open up areas near McMahon-Wrinkle Airport for industrial development, particularly manufacturing and warehousing that benefit from access to primary trucking routes and trade corridors.

The western loop was originally scheduled to be completed in two phases. The first scheduled phase was the southern segment from South Highway 87 to Interstate 20 and is currently underway. This phase was anticipated to be completed by March of 2016. The second phase was the segment between Interstate 20 and North Highway 87. This was anticipated to be a 20-year project. Due to the increase in trucking traffic in and around Big Spring as well as the "high priority" status of the Ports-to-Plains corridor, the entire segment has been expedited.

The western loop will provide a bypass route for trucking traffic. The Future Land Use Plan has oriented industrial development along the loop. The purpose of this configuration is to ensure that future retail and commercial activity is located within the core of Big Spring.

Airport Sector Circulation

As industrial development expands around the McMahon-Wrinkle Airport, circulation will become even more critical. The Airport Sector Plan outlines a circulation concept that has been included in the Thoroughfare Plan Map. Two interchanges will be provided to via the western loop. The attractiveness of the Airport S
ector for future industrial development will directly depend upon the area's accessibility.

Roadway Aesthetics

While roadways aren't necessarily seen as "public space," they usually represent the largest publically owned portion of the community when right-of-way is factored in. Roadways, therefore, have the ability to dramatically impact the overall look and feel of Big Spring. Input received from the public indicated that more attractive roadways and corridors would help to maintain and improve Big Spring's image.



“For all its enormous range of space, climate, and physical appearance, and for all the internal squabbles, contentions, and strivings, Texas has a tight cohesiveness perhaps stronger than any other section of America. Rich, poor, Panhandle, Gulf, City, country, Texas is the obsession, the proper study and the passionate possession of all Texans."

--John Steinbeck, 1962

TRANSPORTATION

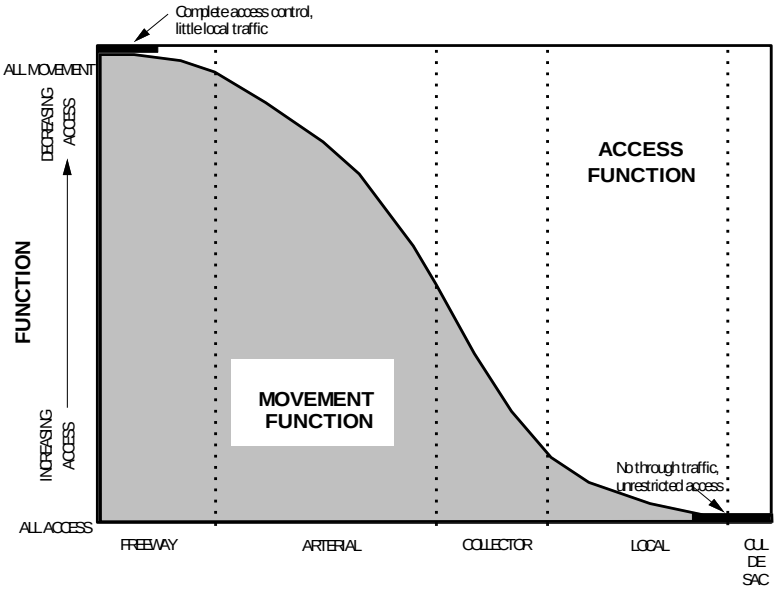
Transportation Planning Concepts

Functional Classifications

Functional street classification recognizes that streets are part of a system having diverse origins and destinations. Functional classifications also describe and reflect a set of characteristics common to all roadways within each class. Functions range from providing mobility for through traffic and major traffic flows, to providing access to specific properties. Characteristics unique to each classification include the degree of continuity, general capacity, and traffic control characteristics.

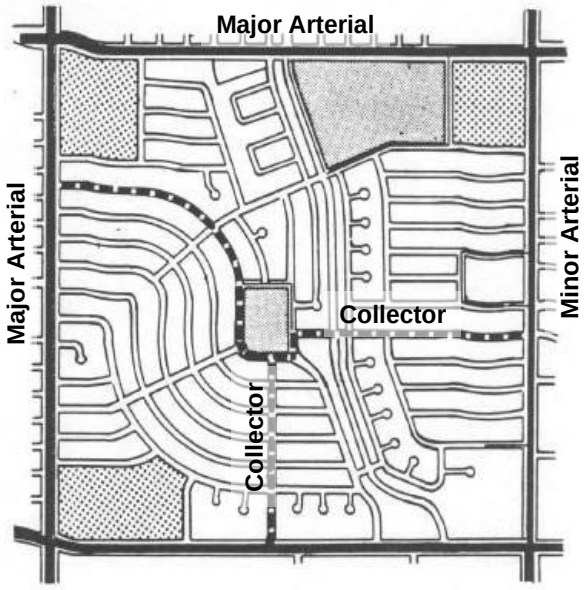
In short, the functional classification of streets provides for the circulation of traffic in a hierarchy of movement from one classification to the next. Functional classes can be subdivided further into major and minor designations to further detail their role in the community.

Access and movement functions are directly related in that as inhibited movement increases (speed), points of access decrease and vice versa. This is typically why freeways, with a high level of movement, have limited access points where as streets in neighborhood areas have more access points and reduced speed.



The graphic to the left depicts the relationship between traffic speeds and controlled access. Freeways have the highest speed and therefore have the most controlled access—a vehicle may only enter a freeway through a network of ramps. On the other extreme, local roadways have the lowest rate of speed due to the number of driveway connections onto such streets.

The Neighborhood Unit concept is shown to the right. A diverse system of roadways provide connectivity around and within the neighborhood unit. Arterial roadways provide community-wide and regional access. Collector roadways distribute traffic from local streets to the arterial roadway network. Finally, local streets provide direct access to housing.



Functional Roadway Matrix

Type of Roadway	Function	Spacing (Miles)	Direct Land Access	Roadway Intersection Spacing (3)	Volume Ranges (Veh./Day)	Speed Limit (MPH)	Parking	Comments
Freeway/ Tollway	Traffic Movement; long distance travel.	3-5	None	1 mile	45,000 to 125,000	55-70	None	Supplements capaCity of arterial street system and provides high speed mobility.
Major Arterial	Moderate distance inter-community, intra-metro area, traffic movement. Serves long trip lengths.	½ -1 ½ (2)	Restricted – some movements may be prohibited; number and spacing of driveways controlled.	1/4 mile	36,000 to 45,000	40-55		"Backbone" of the street system.
Minor Arterial	Mobility function is primary; access function is secondary. Serves moderate trip lengths.		May be limited to major generators; number and spacing of driveways controlled.	1/8 mile	20,000 to 34,000	30-45		Provides route and spacing continuity with major arterials.
Major Collector	Primary – collect / distribute traffic between local streets and arterial system. Secondary – land access; inter-neighborhood traffic movement.	¼ -½ (2)	Safety controls; limited regulation.	300 feet	12,000 to 28,000	30-40	Limited	Through traffic should be discouraged.
Minor Collector	Primary – internal to one neighborhood; serves short trip lengths. Secondary – land access.				1,000 to 15,000	30-35	Limited	
Local	Land access.	2 lot lengths	Safety control only.		200 to 1,500	20-30	Permitted	

(1) Spacing determination should also include consideration of (travel within the area or corridor based upon) ultimate anticipated development.

(2) Denser spacing needed for commercial and high-density residential districts.

(3) Spacing and intersection design should be in accordance with state and local thoroughfare standards.

TRANSPORTATION

Context Sensitive Solutions

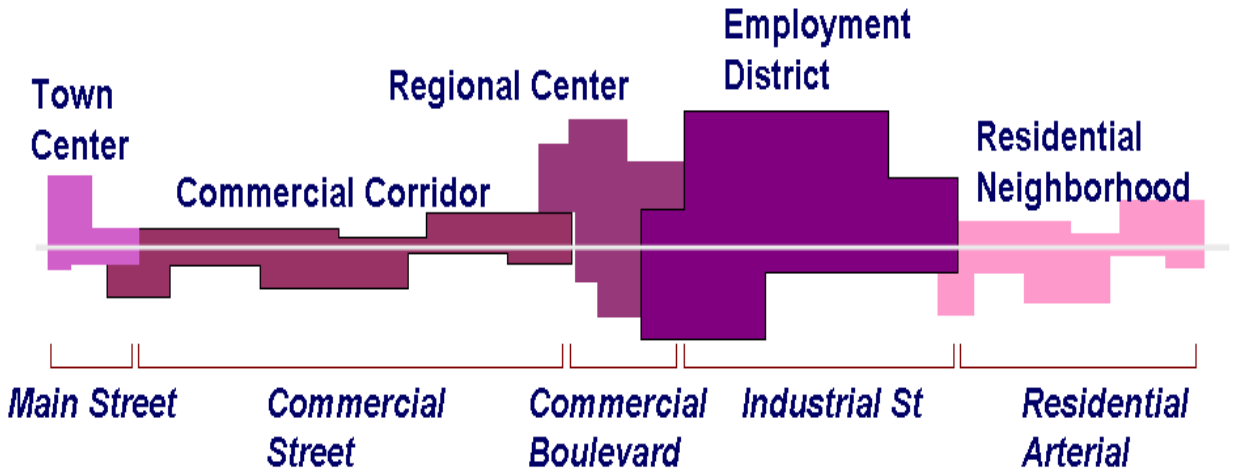
Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) is the practice of developing transportation projects that serve all users and meet the needs of the neighborhoods through which they pass. It is a collaborative process that involves all stakeholders in developing street designs that fit into the character of surrounding neighborhoods while maintaining safety and mobility. The key is that elements of the street should complement the context of surroundings or adjacent development to generate a "roadway experience" and therefore take on certain characteristics to support adjacent development (i.e., vehicular and pedestrian realms, specific on-street parking areas, etc.). The process of designing CSS Roadways is similar to the process of designing traditional thoroughfares in that automobile traffic is considered with traffic counts, traffic demand and level of service information-gathering efforts. The difference is that automobile traffic is only one element considered, among other users, in the utilization of roadway corridors.

The most notable publication and guidebook for Context Sensitive Solutions is *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach* published in 2010 by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) in conjunction with Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU). This publication includes information on balancing the transportation needs of the community with adjacent land uses. In particular, the CSS approach recommends designing thoroughfares based upon:

- Community Objectives
- Functional Classes
- Thoroughfare Type
- Adjacent Land Use

In order to design accordingly, decision makers must understand the key relationship between transportation and land use, particularly the flexibility that may be needed in roadway design in order to accommodate a thoroughfare to changing urban form within the community. Understanding key community objectives for land use within community is also important in order to ensure that public infrastructure investments are in step with ultimate land use objectives.

A Context Sensitive Roadway will change its character as is it traverses neighborhoods with different characteristics



Complete Streets

Complete Streets is a relatively new initiative that aims to maximize the utilization of public rights-of-way for all transportation users regardless of age or ability. This method uses high-level policy direction to influence everyday decision-making processes in roadway design, rather than design prescription. Complete Streets is not about special projects, but about changing the approach to projects on all streets. It is an incremental approach aimed for long-term results. These policies utilize the entire right-of-way while focusing on safety, comfort, and convenience as well as cohesiveness with the context of the community. Complete Streets make it easier to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work, which in turn makes the city a better place to live.

By considering the many different users of the roadway, streets can be designed to accommodate everyone and improve the livability of the community. The primary benefits of Complete Streets include:

- **Improved Safety**—Reduced travel speed which lowers risk to pedestrians and cyclists as well as including pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalks, crossings, medians and curb extensions.
- **Provide Choices**—By building safe, comfortable and convenient infrastructure for other modes of transportation, residents are more willing to use them. Providing sidewalks, for example, allows a pedestrian to know the road was designed with their safety in mind.
- **Better Health**—Walkability has no income or demographic barriers. Walking improves health, whether done out of necessity or recreationally.
- **Stronger Economies**—Areas that provide safe and comfortable walkability have lower commercial vacancies as well as higher incomes and values. Walkability helps to create a sense of place.

While some of Big Spring's most high-volume corridors, such as Gregg Street, would not likely be appropriate for Complete Streets, other lighter traffic corridors could be considered. Goliad Street and 10th Street/Martin Luther King Boulevard would provide excellent complete streets corridors. Sidewalks and bicycle facilities would turn these streets into Complete Streets.

Sidewalk/Walking Trail

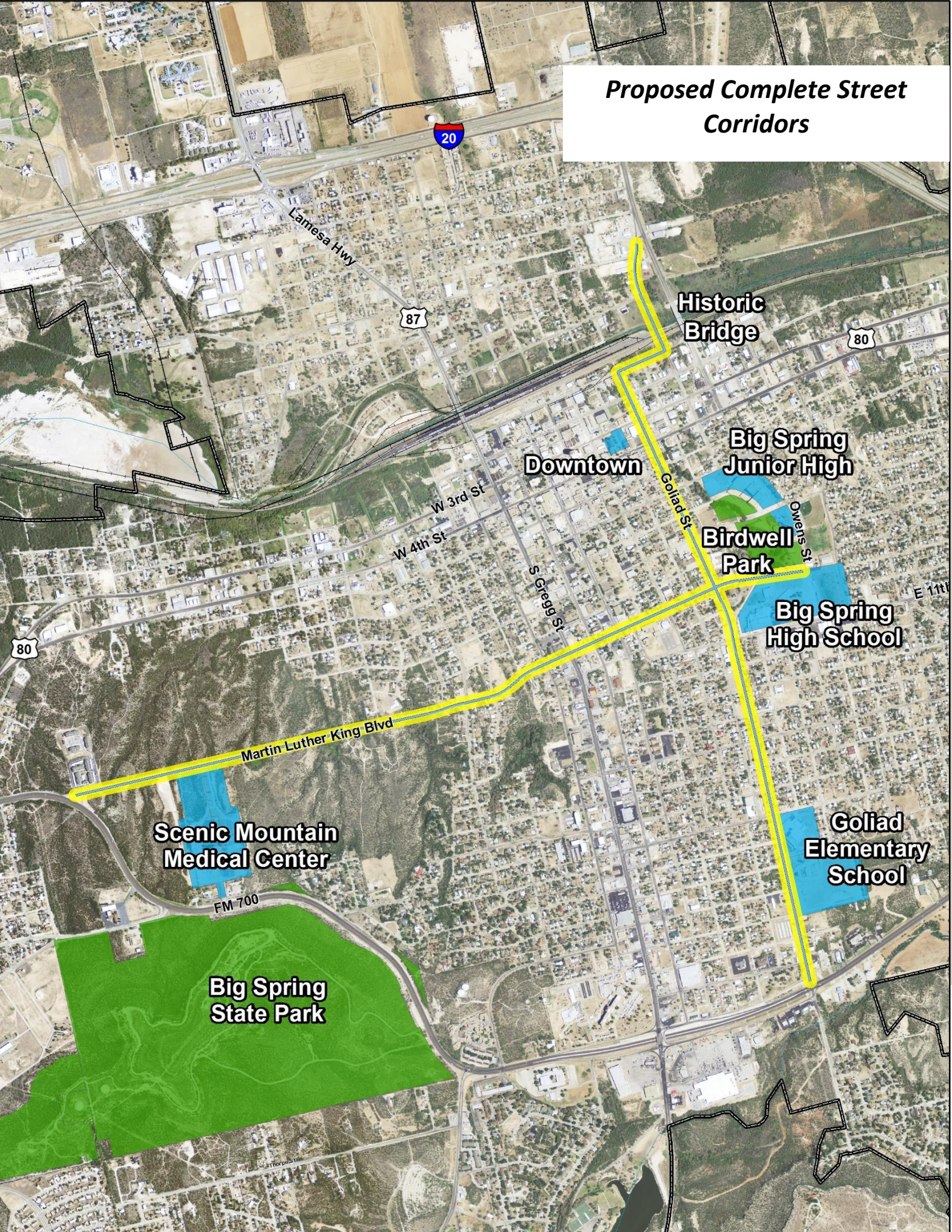


Bicycle Route (Sharrow)



Complete Street: Traffic Lanes, Bike Lane, Parking and Sidewalk




Proposed Complete Street Corridors
20
Lamesa Hwy
87
80
Historic Bridge
Downtown
Big Spring Junior High
Goliad St
W 3rd St
W 4th St
S Gregg St
Owens St
Birdwell Park
Big Spring High School
E 11th
Martin Luther King Blvd
Scenic Mountain Medical Center
FM 700
Goliad Elementary School
Big Spring State Park

Traffic Calming

Studies have shown that the physical design of roadways is directly related to speeds of travel, regardless of legal speed limit. Users along wide and straight roads travel at much higher speeds than those of curvilinear roadways or narrow roadways. Traffic calming devices are roadway design elements put in place to reduce traffic speeds and increase pedestrian and vehicular safety.

West Texas roadways, particularly local streets, are notoriously wide. Speeding traffic on local streets was identified as a problem in Big Spring. Traffic calming techniques can be utilized to reduce traffic speeds through design, particularly in safety concern areas such as near schools and parks.

The following are traffic calming elements that should be considered in Big Spring.

Speed Humps

Speed humps, while unpopular, are the most common and economical way to reduce traffic speeds. If speed humps are considered for a particular area, neighborhood residents and business owners should be involved with the process to gather feedback prior to implementation.



Bulb-Outs

Bulb-outs are intersection sidewalk extensions that protrude into the roadway. These are typically used in more urban areas with higher volumes of pedestrian traffic. The curb extensions serve two purposes. They improve visibility between pedestrians and vehicles and they lower traffic speeds by making the road appear narrower.



Chicanes

Chicanes are curb extensions used to provide an S-shape into a wide roadway where speeding may occur. These occasional curves in the roadway reduce speeds and provide aesthetic enhancements.



Raised Crosswalks

These are “speed tables” similar to a flattened speed hump used at important crosswalks. The raised crosswalk reduces the speed of an approaching vehicle and provides a clearly delineated crossing for pedestrians.



Islands/Medians

Landscaped islands and occasional medians, particularly in congested areas, slow vehicular speeds and enhance roadway aesthetics.



TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Plan

The Transportation Plan is intended to serve as a guide for transportation decisions within Big Spring. It was developed based upon past transportation planning efforts, regional initiatives, and staff recommendations. This Plan should be used as a reference as future roadway projects are planned or when design ordinances are created. Transportation decisions do not exist within a vacuum, but are directly related to decisions regarding land use and building form. Therefore, the ultimate objective of this plan is to create a balanced transportation system within Big Spring that provides for the safe mobility of residents, considers both current and future needs, enhances connectivity and mobility options and promotes a more livable community through a proactive approach to the city's appearance.

The following are the primary roadway classifications associated with the Transportation Plan:

Limited Access Freeway

Limited access facilities are regional or interstate roadways where direct access to adjacent properties is limited. Property is accessed via interchanges and frontage roads.

Major Arterial

Major arterials are four to six lane divided roadways with 120' of right-of-way. These streets are designed to provide a high degree of cross-city and regional mobility. Major arterials typically include US highways and are often operated by TxDOT.

Minor Arterial

Minor arterials are four-lane divided or five lane undivided (four travel lanes and a center turn lane) roadways with 80' to 100' of right-of-way. They provide cross-city access. Due to the high volumes of traffic, direct residential driveway access should be prohibited. Access management and shared driveways should be utilized for commercial activity.

Major Collector

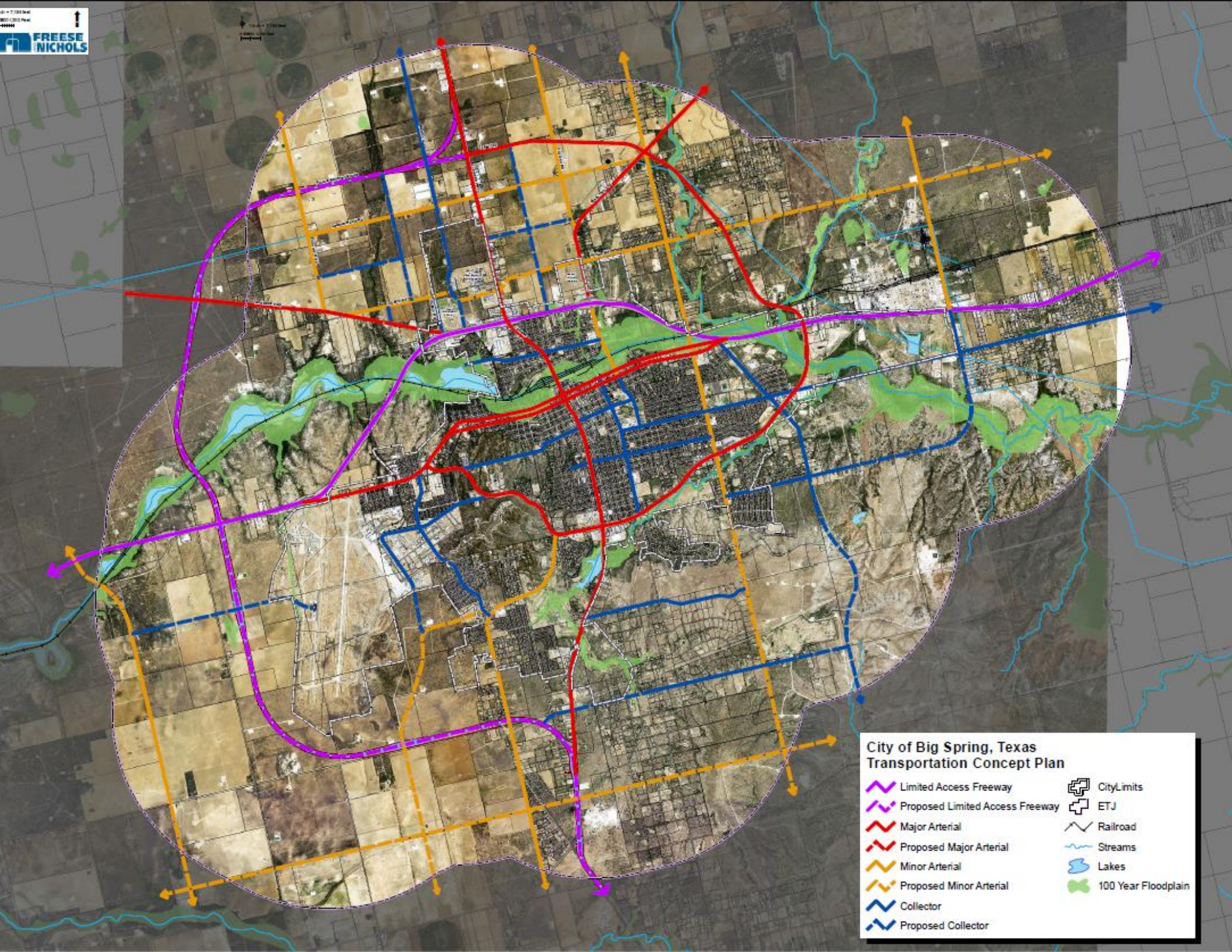
A major collector is typically a three or five lane (two/four travel lanes with a center turn lane) roadways with 60' to 80' right-of-ways. Major collectors collect and distribute traffic from local streets within a neighborhood or development to the arterial roadway network. Due to the higher volumes of traffic along major collectors, direct driveway access should be minimized and access management strategies should be utilized.

Minor Collector

A minor collector roadway is typically a two-lane street with a 50' to 60' right-of-way that serves to collect and distribute traffic from local streets within a neighborhood or development to the arterial roadway network. Driveway access is permitted on minor collector roadways.

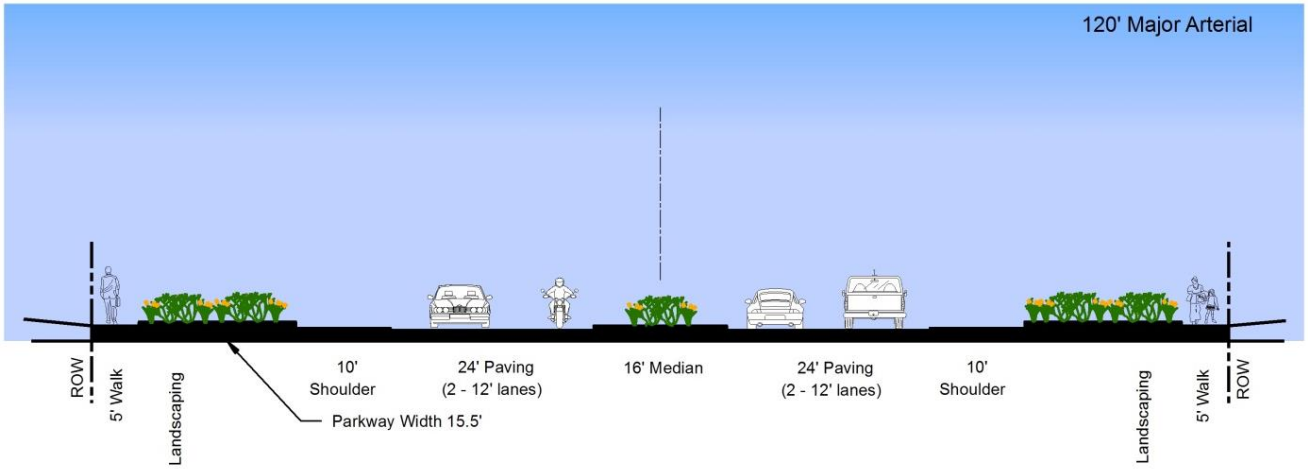
Local Street

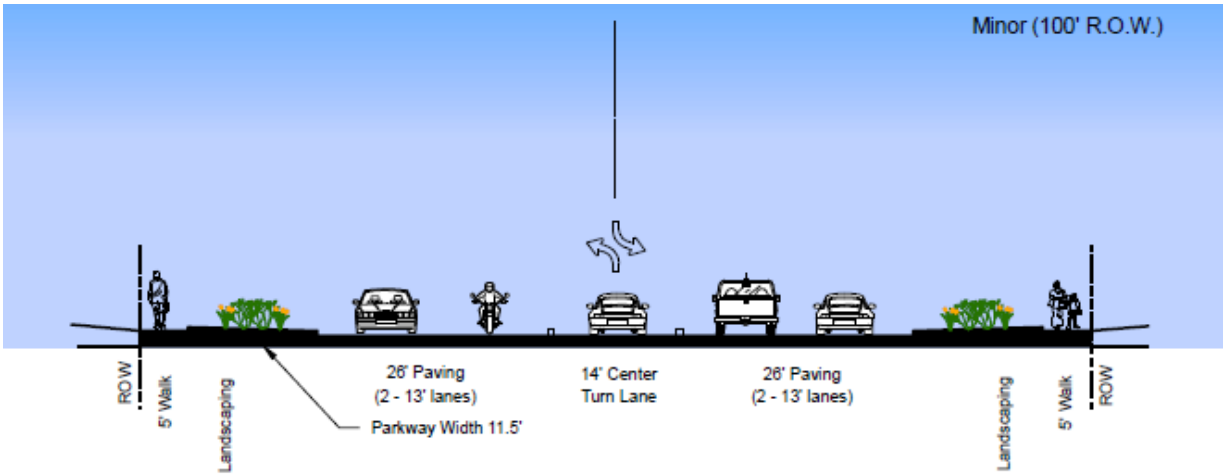
Two-lane streets with 50' right-of-way provide direct access to homes, business or industrial establishments. Driveway access is permitted along local streets.

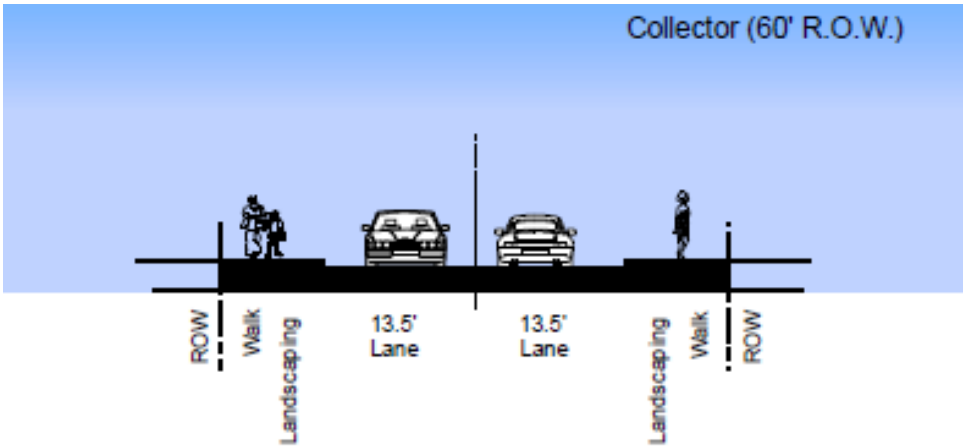

FREESE NICHOLS
City of Big Spring, Texas
Transportation Concept Plan
Limited Access Freeway
Proposed Limited Access Freeway
Major Arterial
Proposed Major Arterial
Minor Arterial
Proposed Minor Arterial
Collector
Proposed Collector
CityLimits
ETJ
Railroad
Streams
Lakes
100 Year Floodplain

TRANSPORTATION

Cross-Sections







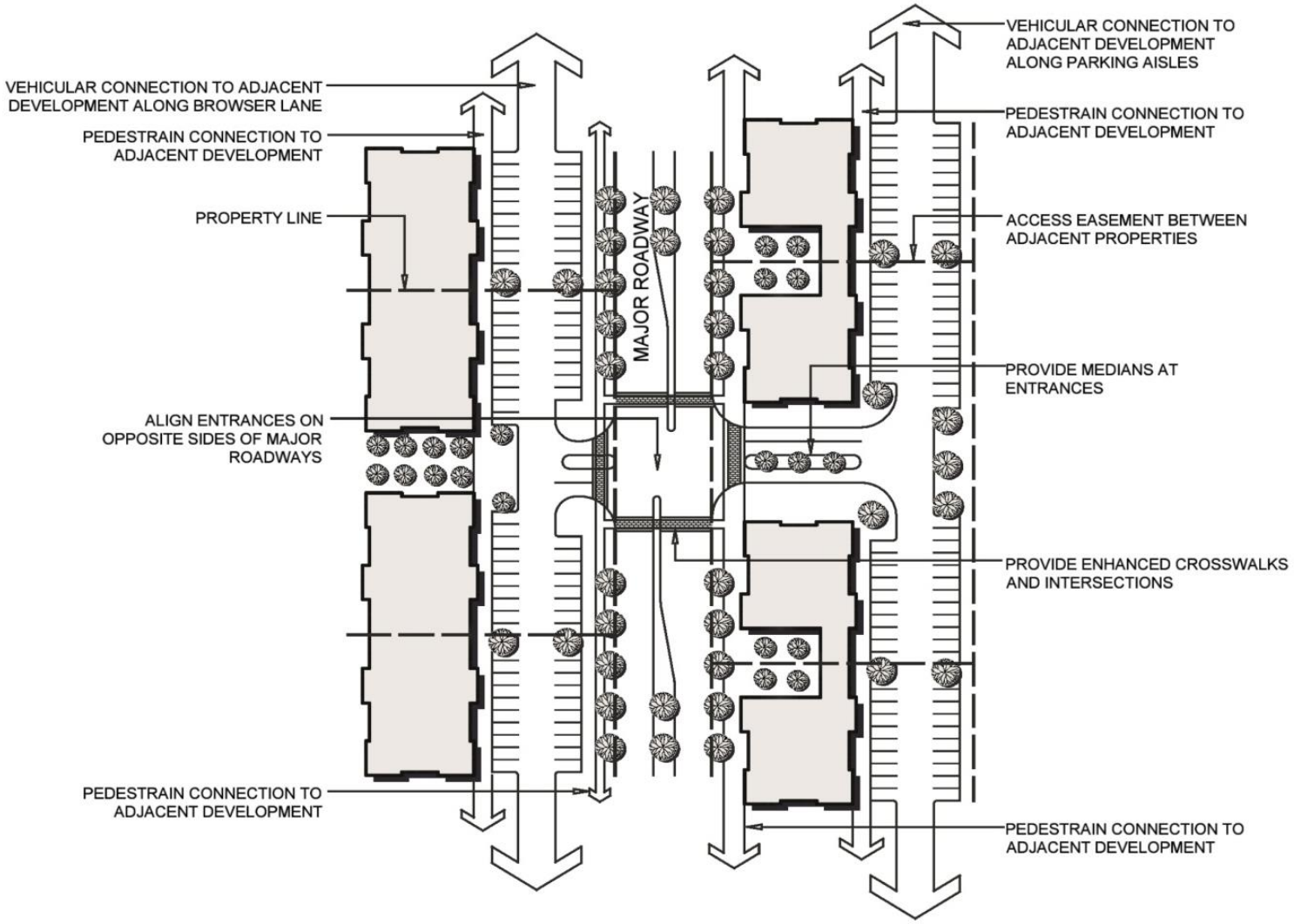
Design Elements

Access Management

Access management refers to the practice of coordinating access connection points onto a roadway by considering specific design criteria for the location, spacing, design and operation of driveways, median openings and intersections. Generally, as the mobility and capacity of a roadway are increased, the access to a specific facility is decreased in order to maintain the roadway efficiency and enhance traffic safety.

Access management provides a significant benefit to the mobility and function of the roadway, and more importantly, reduces the potential for accidents by minimizing speed differentials between vehicles and turning movements. Research has shown that accident rates increase consistently with an increase in the number of roadway access points, while accident rates decrease with the construction of raised medians and controlled signalized cross access.

Various Components of Access Management



TRANSPORTATION

Pedestrian Orientation

Some areas of Big Spring will not be conducive for walking. Others, however, should incorporate sidewalks to enhance walkability. Roadway projects within the following areas should consider including sidewalks:

- All roadway improvements within the community core, particularly within the Downtown District. As Complete Streets, Goliad and 10th Streets should also include sidewalks.
- Roadway improvements within the Medium Density or High Density Districts.
- Roadway improvements near schools in order to provide safe walks to school.
- Roadway improvements near parks and recreational facilities.

Shade Trees along Residential Sidewalk



Aesthetic Enhancements

Roadway aesthetics were a top issue from the public input meeting. As future roadway improvements are made, an aesthetic element should be considered along with overall mobility. The following design enhancements should be considered:

- Decorative lighting fixtures
- Enhanced traffic signals
- Intersection enhancements, such as corner clips
- Public artwork, preferably from local artists
- Enhanced crosswalks
- Bulb-outs (in downtown and higher density areas)

Intersection Artwork in Big Spring



Landscaping

Landscaping elements are an additional way to improve corridor aesthetics. Most landscaping will be outside of the City right-of-way. There will be situations where landscaping may be located within the right-of-way, such as in divided medians. Landscaping elements should be considered for:

- Roadway medians
- Entrances into the City at Business 20, Highway 87, Owens Street and Marcy Drive
- Gregg Street at Marcy Drive interchange
- Gregg Street at 3rd Street intersection
- Goliad Street
- 10th Street

Landscaped Median



All landscaping should apply xeriscaping features, which preferably incorporates the use of native drought resistant plants which saves water and can also make the project low maintenance when applied correctly.

Roadway Aesthetics

Decorative Features

Design elements improve the physical appearance and can brand Big Spring. When we visit other communities, we remember unique features about it. Decorative lighting elements, benches, local art and murals, among others, will make Big Spring's roadways more attractive for residents and visitors.





Landscaping

While most corridor landscaping takes place on the private side, there are some areas within the public right-of-way where small landscaping additions can help to improve the overall look of the corridor. Landscaping should use xeriscape principles and be native to West Texas.

Intersection Enhancements

Intersections, particularly in highly visible areas, can be enhanced to improve appearance. Major intersections in Big Spring, particularly in the community's core, should integrate elements that brand Big Spring and showcase its history.





Medians

While not widely used in West Texas, medians are gaining popularity as a way to dramatically enhance the look, feel and safety of corridors. Medians with low-maintenance xeriscape landscaping should be considered, particularly in lower-speed traffic areas.


TEXAS
ROUTE OF
MARCY'S TRAIL
MAPPED BY CAPTAIN RANDOLPH B. MARCY, IN CHARGE OF U. S. ARMY DETAIL GUARDING CITIZENS BOUND FOR CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH.
CAPTAIN MARCY EXPLODED THEORY THAT WEST TEXAS WAS A DESERT. IN MAKING HIS MAP, HE TRAVELED ALONG A CHAIN OF SPRINGS AND LAKES KNOWN TO COMANCHE GUIDE, MANUEL. IN OCTOBER 1849, REACHED THE BIG SPRING-A SITE MARKED BY MANY CONVERGING INDIAN TRAILS.
FROM HERE HE WENT NORTHEAST, TOWARD THE RED RIVER.
TRAIL WAS LATER USED BY MANY EMIGRANTS AND WAS FOLLOWED BY A TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD AND STAGECOACH LINE.

LIVABILITY

Urban design principles strive to improve the quality of life, or "livability", within a community by enhancing the man-made environment and by creating new opportunities for social interaction among residents. Quality urban design practices also help to create a legible development pattern that makes the community understandable to residents and visitors alike. They often deal with the sensory response of people to the community's physical environment: its visual appearance, its aesthetic quality, and its spatial character.

Urban design can be used to bolster people's sense of well-being, community identity, civic pride, and awareness of different places within the community. The creative application of specific urban design improvements, no matter how large or small they may be, should result in a more aesthetically and functionally stable community, which is a more desirable place to live.

Promoting livability also has long lasting financial benefits. Creating desirable places encourages reinvestment into the community. This reinvestment in turn helps to keep taxes low because property values tend to increase which lessens the need to raise tax rates. Quality, sustainable development attracts businesses and residents, expanding the tax base. Financial investments promote a sense of ownership of the community.

This Livability element of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan integrates urban design considerations into Big Spring's growth and development processes to create an attractive and recognizable physical environment that complements the functional organization of the City, and to reinforce a sense of "community" among the people who live here. The intent of this Livability element is to provide recommendations for maintaining and improving Big Spring's physical appearance and leveraging the City's physical and social assets.



LIVABILITY

Non-Residential Design Enhancements

Commercial, retail and industrial operations serve a very important function in Big Spring. They provide jobs, services and essential goods for residents and they serve as the economic base for the City. The primary objective for business operations are to be successful and the City seeks to create an environment where private investment flourishes.

Commercial, retail and industrial uses surround Big Spring's most visible corridors. They are Big Spring's curb appeal because they are what visitors see as they pass through the community. Due to their high visibility, development in Big Spring should consider the following design standards.

Screening and Buffering

Screening and buffering techniques are used to improve overall site aesthetics and to reduce any potential conflicts between land use types of varying intensities. Screening and buffering is particularly important when higher intensity uses abut residential areas, such as is the case along Gregg Street/Lamesa Highway and Marcy Drive.

The following screening and buffering guidelines may be used to mitigate visual incompatibilities:

- Screening wall should be constructed of brick, masonry or other similar materials that are consistent with the exterior finish of the primary structure;
- Wood screening walls should be discouraged, especially in highly visible areas, due to their higher maintenance;
- Utility boxes and refuse containers (dumpsters) should be screened from public roadways and adjacent residential areas by use of a screening wall and/or landscaping;
- Utility boxes and refuse containers should be screened on three sides and should be equipped with a gate that remains closed when the refuse area is not in use;
- Trees may be utilized along the rear sides of properties that lie directly adjacent to residential homes in order to shield neighborhoods from lighting located on-site; and
- On larger sites, especially big-box or warehousing sites, landscape berms may be utilized to screen commercial loading areas. Berms should have a maximum slope of 3:1 and should generally be three to four feet in height at the center.

Masonry Screening Wall



Refuse Container Screening



Utility Box Screening



Screening Examples

Screening Wall

Screening walls are commonly used to buffer abutting uses that are not traditionally compatible. They are also used to hide outside storage areas from the public view. Wood screening walls are often attractive in the beginning, but they quickly wear in the elements. If wood is used, masonry supports should be incorporated.





Living Screening Wall

Evergreens may be used as a substitute for a masonry screening wall in certain cases, particularly within and surrounding residential areas. While evergreens provide greenery and vegetation, they are also higher maintenance than a masonry wall and often require replacement during severe droughts.

Landscaping

When two less compatible uses lie adjacent to one another, enhanced landscaping can be used to screen and buffer the two uses. Enhanced landscaping elements work to lessen the impacts of noise, light and other nuisances caused when a non-residential use abuts a residential area.





Outside Storage Screening

Many commercial and industrial uses require outside storage areas for materials or merchandise. In highly visible areas, screening walls should be required for outside storage. When possible, outside storage areas should be located behind the primary operating facility.

LIVABILITY

Outside Storage Areas

Outside storage is a common occurrence associated with commercial and industrial activity. It is particularly prominent in West Texas due to the types of industries present in the area. Outside storage areas are defined as areas where goods and materials are displayed or stored outside of a building for more than 24 hours on a permanent basis. Common examples of outside storage materials include pre-fabricated storage sheds, pipe/lumber yards, pipe yards, truck yards and landscaping material storage.

While these areas are vital for the operation of their associated industries, their presence can sometimes significantly detract from the overall appearance of corridors in Big Spring. For this reason, the City should encourage the following outside storage standards, particularly on businesses located along Gregg Street/Lamesa Highway, Marcy Drive, Business 20 and Interstate 20:

- Require all new businesses to locate outside storage away from public view, such as in the back of the operations facility. The outside storage facility should contain a screening wall if any part of the storage yard is visible from the primary street.

- If outside storage cannot be located behind the primary structure due to lot size issues, a masonry screening wall should be utilized in front of the building along the right-of-way to screen front stored materials from the public view.

Screening Wall and Access Gate



An evergreen screening wall may be utilized as a supplement to a masonry or brick screening wall. Shrubs should be a minimum of 3 feet in height when planted, must grow to a minimum of six feet in height at maturity and should be planted to completely shield outside storage from the public view. Shrubs must be continuously well-maintained and replaced, when necessary.

The City should prohibit outside storage when the establishment and its outside storage area directly abuts a residential use. Outside storage may be permitted only when screened by the building itself or when additional landscaping beyond base requirements is proposed between the outside storage area and the residential neighborhood. The Zoning Ordinance should be updated to contain these screening and buffering regulations, especially for districts in highly visible corridors.

Metal Screening Wall



Pipeyard Screening Wall

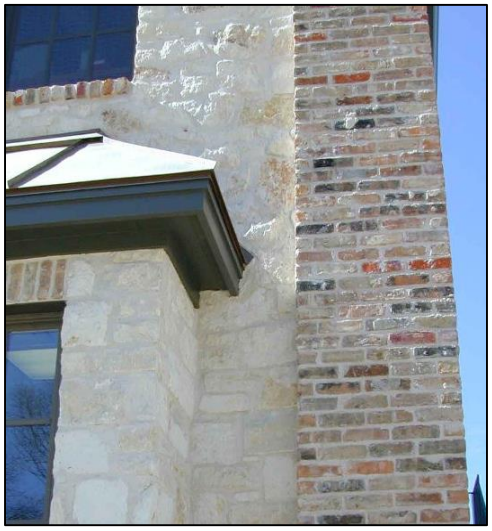


Building Materials

The use of quality building materials has long-lasting impacts on a particular development and on the city as a whole. Quality materials make a building attractive and appealing when new but also help the building whether the elements and keep its appearance longer. The use of quality building materials will enhance the overall physical environment of Big Spring as a whole.

A class system of building materials should be considered. This system provides a list of acceptable building materials for front facades and places various requirements on what percentage of each class must be used based upon location and zoning district. The following are examples of the various building material classes that should be considered:







Class One: Brick and natural or manufactured stone.

Class Two: Brick, natural or manufactured stone, architectural concrete block, 3-step stucco and tilt wall concrete panels.

Class Three: Brick, natural or manufactured stone, architectural concrete block, 3-step stucco, tilt wall concrete panels, Exterior Insulation Finishing System (EIFS) and sealed and painted concrete block.

The following are guidelines for how the classes of building materials are implemented:

Residential Front Facades:
Single-Family, Duplexes, Townhomes—75% Class One building materials

Multifamily over 4 Units—80% Class Two or 60% Class One building materials

Manufactured Homes—20% Class One building materials

Office and Retail Front Facades:
100 % Class Two building materials

Commercial Front Facades:
75% Class Two building materials

Industrial and Light Industrial Front Facades:
50% Class Three building materials.

LIVABILITY

Building Design

In addition to building materials, building design can have a dramatic impact on the appearance on the city's overall appearance. Building design refers to the architectural design of the building itself by adding planes, pitches and architectural elements to building design. Building design elements can be mandated for each zoning district. A more effective way of implementing building design while also leaving developer flexibility is mandating a number of design elements based upon building square footage and allowing the designer to select which design features they desire.

Possible design elements would include but are not limited to the following:

- Canopies, awnings or porticos
- Overhangs
- Recess or projections
- Arcades
- Peaked roof forms
- Arches
- Outdoor patios
- Display windows
- Architectural details such as tile work or moldings into façade
- Integrated planters or wing walls that incorporate landscape or sitting areas
- Offsets, reveals or projecting ribs used to express architectural or structural variations
- Variations in depth and height







The number of design elements would be implemented based upon the building size. The following criteria serve as an example for implementing building design standards:

Building Square Footage under 50,000 Square Feet:
Minimum of three design elements

Building Square Footage between 50,000 and 100,000 Square Feet:
Minimum of five design elements

Building Square Footage Greater Than 100,000 Square Feet:
Minimum of seven design elements

Metal Building Standards

Metal buildings are widely used in Big Spring and throughout West Texas due to the oil and gas industry as well as the prominence of farming and ranching in the area. Metal buildings are generally attractive for use due to their cost efficiency. There are certain areas in Big Spring where metal buildings will likely continue to be used such as in commercial and industrial areas.

The inclusion of masonry when a metal building is used can dramatically change the appearance of the building. Due to the prominence of metal buildings in Big Spring, metal building standards will have one of the greatest aesthetic impacts on the community. The costs associated with adding masonry to exterior sides of metal buildings is typically minimal.

The following are minimal standards that should be utilized to enhance the visual appeal of metal buildings along Big Spring's primary corridors:

- Use of masonry along the front sides of metal buildings. Require a 75% masonry standard to the front of buildings that face Gregg Street/Lamesa Highway and Marcy Drive and a 50% masonry standard to the front of buildings that face Business 20 and Interstate 20. Less visible areas, such as industrial development surrounding the airport, should contain a minimum of 25% masonry on the sides facing the public view.

- Encourage horizontal or vertical building articulation by offsetting the front face of a metal building. In addition, pitched roofs, awnings and/or a prominent building entrance may also be utilized. The articulation should be required along Gregg Street/Lamesa Highway and Marcy Drive and should be encouraged in other areas.

Building Articulation



Metal buildings along Gregg Street/Lamesa Highway should only be permitted by a special use permit (SUP) or other similar future process depending on a future revision on the Zoning Ordinance.

Masonry Enhancements and Articulation





LIVABILITY

Landscaping

The purpose of landscaping standards is to enhance the view and image of Big Spring for both residents and visitors. The quality and appearance of corridors throughout the city is often the impression that visitors will have of Big Spring. Small improvements to landscaping, particularly along S. Highway 87/Andrews Highway and Interstate 20, will have a significant visual impact. These landscaping standards should be encouraged as new non-residential development occurs and as significant improvements to existing buildings are made, such as parking lot reconstructions. The following are standards that should be encouraged in non-residential developments:

- 6' to 8' xeriscape landscaping buffer between the street right-of-way and business parking lot;
- A 300 square foot landscaping area if the 6' to 8' buffer is not possible due to site constraints;
- Spacing one 3" caliper tree every 50 feet along the right-of-way;
- Drought resistant/West Texas appropriate trees such as the Texas Oak, Bur Oak, Live Oak and Bigtooth Maple; and
- Utilization of Xeriscape techniques, such as decorative rock, as a replacement for grass landscaping. In such cases the 50 foot tree spacing along the right of way requirement should still be maintained.

A Xeriscape ordinance may be considered by the City to encourage water conservation. Such ordinance should address the major principles of Xeriscape design which include:

- Soil evaluation (ensure that soil is compatible with the types of plants used);
- Practical turf areas (minimize the use of grass and turf);
- Use appropriate plants (those adaptive to West Texas);
- Water efficiently (ground irrigation over spray irrigation);
- Use organic mulch (retains soil moisture); and
- Maintain appropriately (aesthetic maintenance).

Landscaping Islands



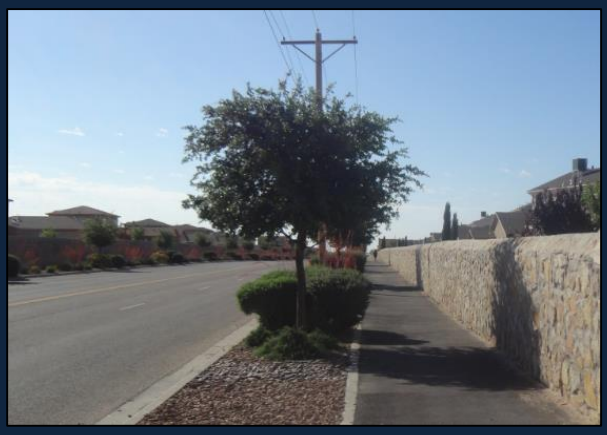
Xeriscape Landscaping

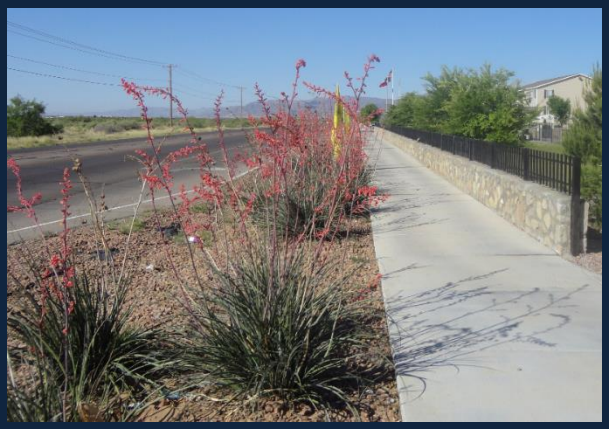


Community Landscaping

Trees

Trees provide shade, clean the air and enhance the overall aesthetics of Big Spring. Many tree species are not appropriate in West Texas; however, a variety of oak, ash and evergreen species can thrive after rooting assistance. A list of appropriate trees should be developed and used as development occurs. Any plants outside of the approved list should be approved by the Planning & Zoning Commission.





Shrubs

The predominant vegetative features in West Texas are grasses and shrubs. There are many attractive native species that can be used for decorative purposes. The use of native shrubs not only reduces water consumption but also provides low-maintenance and drought tolerant landscaping options. A list of appropriate shrubs should be created and used as development occurs.

Groundcover

Groundcover often refers to turf grasses, such as what is found in the front yards of most homes. Due to the arid climate of West Texas, the use of turf grasses should be discouraged and limited to only native or drought resistant grasses. The use of rocks, crushed granite and other non-water consuming groundcovers should be encouraged.



LIVABILITY

Signage

Regulating commercial signage can greatly enhance the aesthetic appeal of corridors in Big Spring by reducing the overall visual clutter of the City's roadways. Cities generally regulate signage by defining the type, height and style of signs. The size of signs is generally related to the speed of traffic. Taller pole signs are required for higher traffic corridors and ground-level signs are appropriate for lower-speed corridors.

Pole signs are and will continue to be used along Interstate 20. The benefit of pole signs along the Interstate corridor not only benefit the individual businesses but also benefit the City through increase sales tax revenue from pass-by trips along the Interstate. When multiple businesses are located on the same lot, a combined sign should be utilized. This will limit the visual clutter along the Interstate.

Pole signs are also heavily used along Gregg Street/Lamesa Highway. The average speeds of traffic are between 35 and 45 miles per hour. At these rates of speed, monument signs would adequately allow a business to advertise to pass-by traffic. Monument signs are now being used in nearly all interior commercial corridors in cities large and small throughout Texas. The use of monument signs can dramatically improve the appearance of a corridor by reducing the amount of visual clutter.

Big Spring should consider adopting a sign ordinance utilizing the following guidelines:

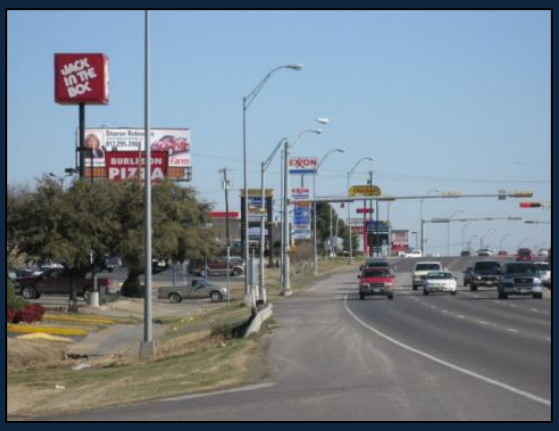
- Each business along Gregg Street a should be entitled to one six foot monument sign;
- Each business along Lamesa Highway and Marcy Drive should be entitled to one six foot monument sign or one 15' maximum pole sign. If a business uses a monument sign in lieu of a pole sign, they will be entitled to two monument signs given that the establishment's frontage along Lamesa Highway is more than 80' in length;
- The materials used on a monument sign should be complimentary to the materials used on the building itself (i.e.; brick to brick, stone to stone);
- The monument sign should utilize colors that are complimentary to colors used on the building itself;
- Internal signage lighting should be utilized over external signage lighting;
- Neon lighting should not be permitted;
- When multiple businesses are present at the same facility, combined signage should be utilized;
- Pole signs erected along Interstate 20 should not exceed 50' in height;
- When multiple businesses are present at the same facility, combined signage should be used.

As new development or redevelopment occurs along Gregg Street, monument signs should be required. Incentives for replacing existing pole signs with monument signs should be considered.

Community Signage

Pole Signs

Pole signs are used on corridors with the highest speed. They allow an establishment to be seen from a distance. Pole signs, however, can negatively impact corridor aesthetics. Pole signs should be permitted through the Interstate 20 corridor in Big Spring. Additional pole signs should be discouraged in other areas, particularly along Gregg Street, Big Spring's primary commercial corridor.





Monument Signs

Monument signs are used along low speed commercial and retail corridors. Monument signs use similar building materials as their accompanying structure and generally do not exceed six feet in height. Due to their lower heights, they are less obtrusive and enhance corridor aesthetics. This is particularly important along corridors with high visibility and through traffic.

Combined Signs

Both pole signs and monument signs should utilize combined signage when possible. Combined signage allow for increases in the size of signage in exchange for reducing the number of signs. This is particularly important when numerous businesses are operating out of the same establishment.



LIVABILITY

Oil and Gas Screening

While Big Spring lies outside of the Permian Basin oil fields, the oil and gas industry still remains is an important component of the city's economy. As the price of oil rises and shale oil and gas drilling becomes more economical, drilling facilities and oil and gas operation facilities will impact land use decisions in Big Spring.

Oil and gas operations include the drilling facilities themselves but also the many ancillary operations that support oil and gas drilling and collection. Those facilities include pipe yards, tank storage yards, trucking yards and rig storage yards, among others. The majority of these types of uses will likely lie outside of the City Limits. When these uses lie within Big Spring's City Limits, additional regulations and standards should be considered beyond the standard screening and buffering requirements. They include:

- Minimum of 500' setbacks from adjacent residential areas;
- Avoidance of placing drilling facilities and support facilities in highly visible areas, such as directly adjacent to major roadways and on top of hills or escarpment features;
- Minimizing the heights of tanks at facilities to no greater than 20' in height;
- Instalation of electrical and collection lines below ground;
- Earthen berm located around the perimeter of the security fence planted with ground cover and shrubs;
- Installation of a 6' minimum masonry screening wall with one tree and five shrubs for every 25 linear feet of buffer when the drilling facility is located in a highly visible area;
- Inclusion of evergreen trees for year-round screening;

Evergreen Screening



Oil Derrick Screening Wall and Park



When oil and gas drilling is located along Gregg Street/Lamesa Highway, Marcy Drive or Interstate 20, the site should be designed to accommodate both drilling and development. These corridors are Big Spring's primary economic gateways and therefore the ability for such sites to develop is important. When drilling is to occur on land along these corridors, the drilling facility should be set back to the rear of the property, if possible, leaving the front of the property for development and using the building to screen the production site. Some screening requirements may be removed as an incentive for arranging a site in this manner.

Drill Site without Screening



Enhanced Screening in Parking Lot



Residential Design Enhancements

Single-Family Design Standards

Single family neighborhoods represent the largest land use in Big Spring. This will continue to be the case in the future. The best way to ensure the long-term stability of the City's neighborhoods is by creating quality neighborhoods that are able to maintain continued investment and reinvestment. The following design considerations should be made for single-family residential subdivisions:

- A variety of lot sizes within a subdivision by allowing a range of densities within the Zoning Ordinance;
- A variety of single-family housing types within a subdivision;
- Inclusion of neighborhood parks or entertainment spaces;
- Roadway connections between the subdivision to neighboring or future subdivisions;
- Single-family homes should not directly access arterial roadways;
- If a subdivision lies adjacent to a major roadway, a masonry screening wall should be used and xeriscape, low-maintenance landscaping should be installed between the roadway and the screening wall;
- Use of low maintenance materials such as masonry and Exterior Insulation Finishing System to ensure the long-term attractiveness of neighborhood areas;
- Use of xeriscape landscaping materials for front landscaping;
- Use of masonry walls on exterior of the subdivision, particularly when adjacent to major roadways;

In addition to the above design criteria, the City should encourage unique and innovative neighborhood design concepts through the use of planned developments for large scale development. Examples of innovative neighborhood design includes Traditional Neighborhood Design, mentioned in the Future Land Use Section, as well as clustering. Clustering, in particular, could be used on the southern areas of Big Spring where the greatest topographic variations are present. Clustering allows for higher densities than what would normally be permitted in exchange for the preservation of open space areas and topographic features.

Optimal Subdivision Layout Prototype



LIVABILITY

Manufactured Home Standards

Manufactured homes are attractive as a means of providing workforce housing in a community, particularly when residence in an area is short-term. Manufactured homes also include modular and ready built homes. The Future Land Use Plan discourages additional manufactured home facilities in Big Spring. If, however, manufactured homes are used in the future, they should follow the following criteria.

When the aesthetics of mobile homes are regulated, their appearances within the community can be vastly improved. The following design features should apply:

- The manufactured home skirting materials should match the siding of the manufactured home structure;
- The roof should have a required minimum pitch of 3:12;
- The trailer tongue should be removed;
- The minimum dwelling unit size should be 1,000 square feet;
- If the space between the manufactured home and the foundation is visible, skirting must be used to visibly hide the space;
- The use of an improved surface as determined by the City that complies with the City's building codes for residential structures should be encouraged; and
- Manufactured homes should not front a major thoroughfare.

If a Manufactured home is being added to an existing single-family neighborhood (only where manufactured homes constitute the majority), the following additional standards should apply:

- Stone, masonry or similar treatment comprising a minimum of 20% of the front elevation.
- All development standards of the base zoning district (setbacks, driveway construction, etc) shall apply;
- The addition of the manufactured home should not degrade the character of the neighborhood and the structure must be of equal or greater quality than he majority of existing residences in the vicinity;
- The use of an improved surface as determined by the City that complies with the City's building codes for residential structures should be encouraged;
- The manufactured home should contain an attached garage;
- The manufactured home should have a minimum width of 28 feet; and

Manufacture Home on Concrete Foundation



Manufactured Home with Masonry



Manufactured Home with Garage



Multiple Family Guidelines

Multiple family uses, defined as High Density on the Future Land Use Plan Map, serve an important function in Big Spring. Multiple family provides workforce housing, something that is critically important in Big Spring and other West Texas communities during periods of intense oil and gas production. Across Texas and the country as a whole, multiple family options are gaining a certain degree of popularity and are generally being built to a significantly higher standard than in previous decades. The following are guidelines that the City should utilize for future multiple family developments:

- The proposed multiple family tract should be adjacent to a collector or major thoroughfare and all access into the complex should be from collectors or major thoroughfares to reduce traffic on local neighborhood streets;
- All structures within the multiple family development should be at least 80% masonry on the first floor and at least 60% masonry on any floor above the first. Masonry includes brick and stone;
- At least 25% of multiple family units should have a garage, either attached or on the community's premises;
- A minimum 30 foot building setback from an adjacent residential property line should be encouraged;
- If the development is adjacent to a single-family neighborhood, open space or landscape screening should be used to buffer complex from adjacent homes;
- All future multiple family developments should have recreational facilities for residents, such as a playground or pool, and should have a common gathering facility such as a clubhouse;
- A maximum number of dwelling units per acre should be raised to 21 dwelling units per acre.

Garage Accessories



Community Amenities



Masonry Exterior



LIVABILITY

Quality of Life

Community Identity & Branding

We often think of community in a physical sense—we think of the physical city in which we live. Community, however, refers to the sense of belonging and attachment that people have to a particular place and to each other. Branding is an effective way to show community pride in the city. It allows visitors to see and feel a sense of pride by the community for their city. It also sends a message to residents that the City government and fellow residents also take pride in their city.

There is no single thing that can be done to brand the City—it is a product of the community's values, history and physical framework. The following are standard elements that are commonly used to brand Big Spring:

- **Community Theme:** The single greatest branding opportunity is developing a community theme. The theme could be based on historical or physical elements of the community. Big Spring's topographic features are currently highlighted in its City logo. The community theme sets the high-level guidance for all other aesthetic enhancements and design additions.

- **Intersection Enhancements:** The most visible element of the city is its roadways. Major intersections along Gregg Street, Lamesa Highway, Marcy Drive, Business 20 and Interstate 20 present an opportunity for Big Spring to make a statement to visitors and residents.

- **Public Art and Murals:** Downtown Big Spring has several murals depicting the city's past. Murals and public art should continue to be placed in highly visible areas and intersections. Public art should feature local artists or those with roots in West Texas.

- **City Logo:** Big Spring has placed its logo on entrance monuments into the city. Continued use of the logos on City signage, attraction signage, intersection signage and City facilities will continue to help brand Big Spring.

- **Big Spring Festivals:** Many communities use festivals, street fairs and other events to provide entertainment for City residents and to bring visitors in from out of town. As downtown Big Spring continues to redevelop, community festivals should be organized within the core, particularly at the downtown park.

- **Consistent Building Materials:** One of the most effective visual ways to brand a City is through the use of consistent building materials and/or design. Many cities in the Texas Hill Country use Austin Stone. Santa Fe, New Mexico requires pueblo architecture in all development from high end resorts to a new McDonalds.

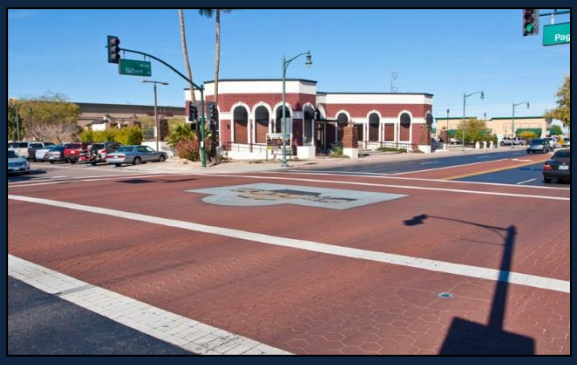
- **Code Compliance and Maintenance:** The maintenance and physical condition of the city can have a dramatic impact on the way the city is seen to outsiders and residents alike. Code compliance programs can be set to target specific issues in defined areas.

- **Attractive Roadways:** Special consideration should be given to the design of major roadways in Big Spring. Gregg Street/Lamesa Highway and Business 20 through the downtown area should receive the greatest priority for aesthetic enhancements due to their location through the community core. Similar to the community theme, roadway improvements should all be coordinated and consistent containing similar elements and design features.

Community Branding & Identity

Intersection Enhancements

Placing consistent design elements at intersections along Gregg Street/Lamesa Highway and at Interstate 20 overpasses/intersections will help to brand Big Spring. Consistent colors and features should be used including decorative lighting features and landscaping.





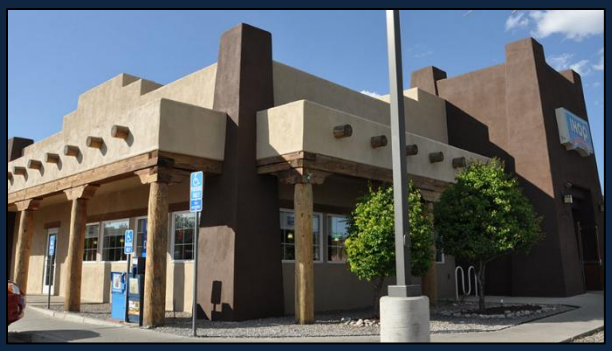
Public Art

Public art can make a dramatic impact in the community. It should be included in the highest visible areas such as along Gregg Street/Lamesa Highway and along Interstate 20. The commissioning of local artists should be encouraged.

Festivals

Big Spring currently has a variety of community festivals. The City should continue to work with the Convention and Visitors Bureau to grow and brand these events as community and regional celebrations.





Building Materials

Many cities set themselves apart by incorporating a Citywide theme that is carried over into design standards and materials. Santa Fe, NM is one of the best examples of branding through design. Many Texas Hill Country towns do the same through the use of Austin stone.

LIVABILITY

Social Interaction

The most active cities are those that have the strongest sense of community. They are cities that help to provide activities for residents. While the City can't bear the burden of providing all means of social interaction, it can take part in helping to facilitate private events either through coordination, sponsorships or facilitation.



Numerous public events take place each year in Big Spring. The most notable annual events are Funtastic Fourth, Pops in the Park, the Big Spring Rodeo and the Festival of Lights. These events should continue to be supported by the City. Events and festivals should also be encouraged to take place within the downtown area, particularly if a downtown park is constructed.



During the public input process, the following ideas related to social interaction were proposed:

- Downtown farmers market
- Upgrades to the Fairgrounds
- More activities for youth (skate park)
- Movie theater
- Downtown park
- Downtown revitalization
- Community gardens
- Dance venues
- Neighborhood park

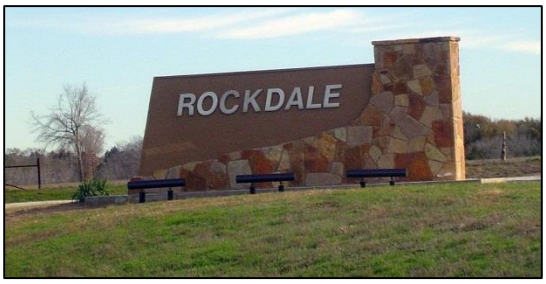


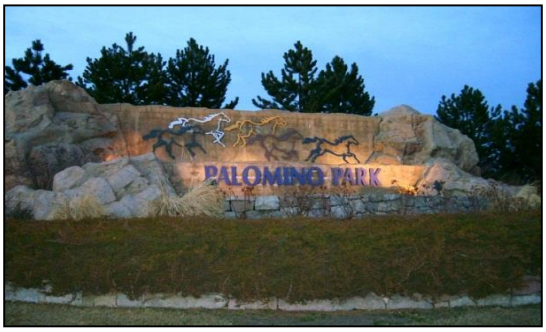
At the neighborhood level, activities such as National Night Out can be promoted and facilitated by the City. Neighborhoods themselves can organize the event and can work with the City to close down appropriate roadways for the night in order for the block party to take place. These types of events help neighbors meet and help to create a sense of pride and identity not only with their particular neighborhood but with the city as a whole.



Gateways

Gateways are community entrance and welcome signs. Big Spring currently has gateway entrances along Highway 87. The most visible gateway is at Interstate 20 and Lamesa Highway. Gateways are a simple but effective way for the City to make a statement to pass-by traffic.





Design of gateways into Big Spring should be guided by several factors. One factor is the number of people using a particular entry point. The most heavily traveled roadway entering the community is Interstate 20. Welcoming signage should be located at the east and west entrances into the City limits to greet visitors into Big Spring. Additionally, the bridges and the frontage roads along Interstate 20 are alternate options that may be accomplished through coordination with TxDOT. Improved overpasses with decorative rails, landscaping, lighting, and signage are possibilities to be considered, particularly as frontage roads along Interstate 20 are reconstructed in conjunction with the transition from two-way to one-way streets.



Another important factor in the design of gateways is to develop an entryway that provides a sense of identity for the community. Consideration should be given to establishing a uniform design concept for all gateway areas, and hierarchical distinction between major and minor gateways can be achieved through design modification and scaling for each type of entry feature.

Priority for funding entry features, both in terms of total dollars spent per entry and in terms of the timing of expenditures, should be directly related to the number of people using a particular entry point. Donations can often be solicited from civic groups to assist in the funding of specific gateways and/or their maintenance (e.g., an "adopt a gateway" program).

LIVABILITY

Neighborhood Strategies

Ultimately the livability of Big Spring as a whole begins with its individual neighborhoods. Big Spring's neighborhoods were assessed and divided into three categories—preservation, conservation and rehabilitation. The purpose of dividing the neighborhoods into three separate categories is to avoid a one size fits all approach to neighborhood health and housing. The City has limited financial resources and manpower. Concentrating strategies in areas where they have the most impact creates more effective strategies that best utilize limited financial resources.

Preservation

Preservation strategies are appropriate for areas designated as predominately sound, quality housing. These are typically indicative of newer neighborhoods. Strategies in these areas should encourage uptake and maintenance of housing and quickly addressing any code violations in order to maintain a positive visual image. Infill development and adjacent land uses should be evaluated for compatibility in order to protect neighborhood integrity and facilitate long term re-investment and attractiveness. New residential developments should include quality building materials, neighborhood amenities, and access to parks, open spaces and public facilities in order to ensure long term neighborhood sustainability. The following strategies should be utilized for preservation areas:



- Code Enforcement
- Access to Parks and Recreation
- Neighborhood Organizations (HOA)
- Quality Design and Building Materials
- Compatible Adjacent Land Uses

Conservation

Neighborhood maintenance strategies are typically associated with minor repairs which can be performed by the property owner—painting, yard maintenance, fence repair, etc. Minor defects should be addressed quickly in order to prevent continued deterioration of both the housing structure and neighborhood perception. The City may establish code enforcement programs which are aimed at addressing a specific issue or area at a time. Grant funding programs aimed at neighborhood maintenance are also available and should be considered by the City. Finally, volunteer organizations may be utilized to help the elderly or those unable to perform basic home repairs. Volunteerism not only allows issues to be addressed, but also creates an avenue for social interaction and public engagement. The following strategies should be utilized for conservation areas:



- Code Enforcement
- Housing Maintenance Programs (Grants)
- Housing Maintenance Incentives (Minor Repairs)
- Landscape Program Incentives
- Neighborhood Branding and Organization

Rehabilitation



The final and most extreme neighborhood strategy is rehabilitation. Housing rehabilitation is needed when structural issues are present—those not able to be performed by the owner and where contracting assistance will be required. Grant funding is available to communities to aid in rehabilitation projects and may be used as financial assistance (zero-interest loans) to encourage private solutions to rehabilitation issues. If and when a structure reaches a point where it becomes physically unsafe, the City may be forced to take extreme action by demolishing the structure. This strategy has been used in Big Spring and should be continued. Removing dilapidated structures not only protects public safety, but also reduces community eye sores making reinvestment and development more possible. The following strategies should be considered for rehabilitation areas:

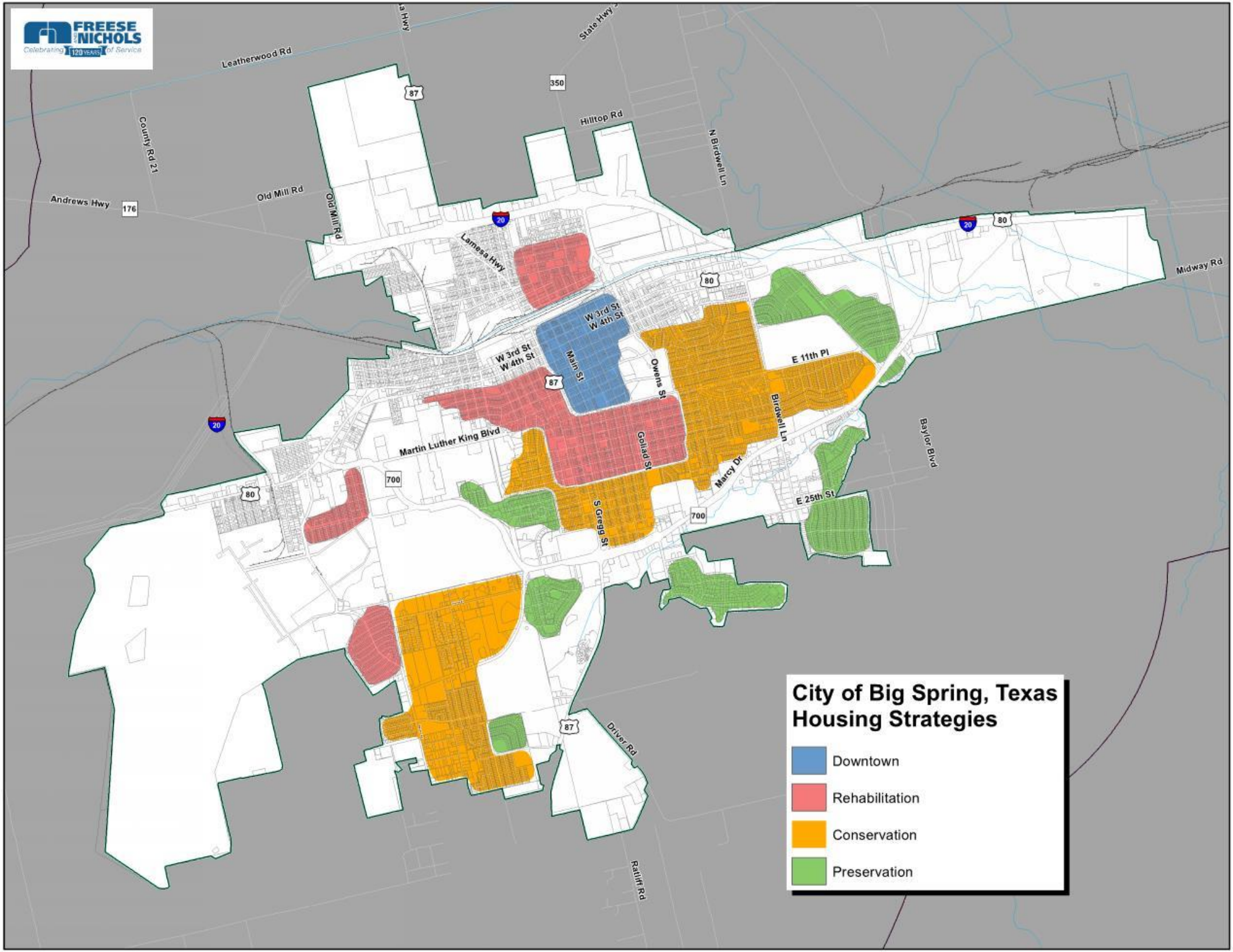
- Prevention Through Proactive Maintenance
- Housing Demolitions
- Property Acquisition
- Developer Partnerships and Incentives
- Prototype Housing Program for Infill Homes
- Property Tax Abatements for New Construction
- Public Investment in Public Projects

Downtown



A more detailed discussion of housing in Downtown Big Spring is located in the Downtown Plan of this Comprehensive Plan. Housing strategies within the downtown area are focused on redevelopment rather than rehabilitating existing housing stock. Adding residents and rooftops to downtown Big Spring will be one of the most critical elements of downtown revitalization, along with creating entertainment and places where people want to be. Just as downtown is going through the process of re-imagining itself, the neighborhoods within downtown are also doing the same. The following strategies should be utilized for downtown:

- Housing Incentive Programs for Multifamily
- Higher Density Zoning Changes
- Traditional Neighborhood Design (Housing Prototype)
- Housing Demolition
- Tax Abatements for New Construction
- Public Projects (Downtown Park and Entertainment)


FREESE NICHOLS
Celebrating 120 YEARS of Service
Leatherwood Rd
State Hwy
350
87
Hilltop Rd
N Birdwell Ln
County Rd 21
Andrews Hwy
176
Old Mill Rd
Old Mill Rd
20
Lamesa Hwy
80
Midway Rd
W 3rd St
W 4th St
Main St
W 3rd St
W 4th St
Owens St
E 11th Pl
87
Birdwell Ln
Baylor Blvd
Martin Luther King Blvd
Goliad St
700
Marcy Dr
E 25th St
80
S Gregg St
700
87
Driver Rd
Ratliff Rd
City of Big Spring, Texas
Housing Strategies
Downtown
Rehabilitation
Conservation
Preservation

Housing Programs and Funding

Sometimes community participation is required to rehabilitate dilapidated neighborhoods. Community participation in neighborhood revitalization typically takes the form of grant funding programs, volunteer partnerships, non-profit partnerships and housing incentives. As mentioned in the housing strategies section, three distinct strategy areas (Preservation, Conservation and Rehabilitation) were defined to help leverage the City's resources. The following housing programs are to be used for Rehabilitation and Conservation areas.

Housing Demolition

Big Spring has a policy of actively removing housing that has become a nuisance and danger to the community. This program should be continued. Severely dilapidated housing, when vacant, can pose significant health, fire and public safety hazards. When a structure is demolished, possession of the land should become under City control. This acquired property can be offered to developers and home builders at reduced cost, often for the cost of the housing demolition itself. If there are numerous acquired properties within a given area, a consolidated housing program should be utilized to accumulate and redevelop several blocks. Typically the development of several conjoining lots has much more of an impact than sporadic infill housing efforts. The City budget should continue to include funding for housing demolition and should consider attaching incentives for new development that accompany housing demolition in order to recoup the cost of demolition as well as increase the property tax base. The City should also consider establishing a Community Development Corporation that could raise funding to be strictly used for housing rehabilitation.

Housing Incentives and Programs

The most effective way to change the course of deteriorating neighborhoods and rehabilitate dilapidated neighborhoods is through housing incentives. Housing rehabilitation requires active participation by the City. Without City participation in some form, rehabilitation will not likely happen.

While the City will be required to participate in neighborhood revitalization, there are significant long-term benefits to this participation. Expenditures by the City today that stabilize and rehabilitate neighborhoods stabilize the City's property tax revenues. Over time, blighted areas with vacant housing are reinvigorated. The addition of structures creates value that did not previously exist. That value increases the city's tax base and, over time, the City's investments can be recuperated.

Since housing programs require the use of public funds, it is important that the strategies be used in areas where they can be the most effective. This is discussed in the Housing Strategies breakdown previously. The following housing incentive programs should be considered.

Land Exchange: As property is acquired by the City, it can be used for a development incentive. If the property sits vacant, the City and other entities are not collecting the taxes from that property. Additionally, the City is required to maintain the vacant land through weed control and mowing. If, instead, the land is given to a developer at a significantly reduced cost, the developer benefits through acquisition of cheap land for development.

Property Tax Freeze: As part of the land exchange program, or as a separate incentive, the City can freeze taxes for new housing in rehabilitation areas. For example, if a developer tears down a dilapidated home or builds a new home on a vacant property that was City-owned/acquired, the property taxes can be kept at the existing rate for a period of five years if a structure over $100,000 in value is constructed. A potential owner that may not typically look at a dilapidated area may choose to do in order to have a new home and pay a significantly less than what the home is worth in property taxes.

LIVABILITY

Tax Abatement: Similar to a property tax freeze, a Tax Abatement can be offered as an incentive to lure new housing development. The City can set the boundaries for an incentive area, typically limited to a few blocks in order to have a more concentrated impact. A tax abatement is a collection of City taxes less than what the property is appraised. The terms of the abatement, such as the length and amount, are set by the City and can be tiered to match the level of need for a given area. For example, areas near downtown Big Spring could receive a higher tax abatement term than other areas.

Infrastructure Assistance: Infrastructure cost can be one of the biggest expenditures for new development. In order to incentivize development in key areas, infrastructure incentives can be offered to developers. For example, the City can provide infrastructure upgrades that would be needed to serve new development within a targeted redevelopment area if a builder constructs five or more new dwelling units.

Chapter 380 Incentives: Chapter 380 of the Texas Local Government Code enables cities to provide incentives for economic development and redevelopment. Chapter 380 gives cities the flexibility to develop programs that would meet their particular need. Cities can offer low interest loans and rebates to developers who are willing to invest in underutilized areas. Cities can also directly participate with developers in some instances creating public-private partnerships that serve overall community objectives.

Waiving Development Fees: Development fees can be daunting; particularly to developers for low to moderate priced housing. One way to attract such development to a targeted area for redevelopment is to create a program where the City can waive certain or all development fees.

Prototype Housing Book: A prototype housing booklet lists a number of different housing options that could be used for redevelopment within a given area. The City would do the background work in assessing which types of new homes would be most cost effective within the redevelopment area given the characteristics of the land, such as topography, infrastructure and lot sizes. The list of preferred houses would be listed within the prototype housing book and home builders could use the prototypes, with variations on the same design themes to prevent monotony, as a form of tract housing, minimizing their expenditures on architectural drafting and design.

Housing Grants

Non-profit and Volunteer Organizations

- Habitat for Humanity—A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that builds and rehabilitates homes in partnership with low-income residents. Houses, sold at no profit to pre-qualified, low-income families, are financed through no-interest mortgages. Mortgage payments are returned to a revolving fund, which is used to finance more construction. Pre-qualified homeowners are required to invest hours directly working on the Habitat project. The organization utilizes volunteer labor, monetary, and in-kind donations to build houses.
- Community Development Corporation (CDC)—A 501(c)(3) private, non-profit corporation formed to address special needs of a community, such as the revitalization of low and moderate-income neighborhoods; generally rely upon fundraising efforts for capital, funding may also include CDBG or HOME funds from the local government or State grants; typically undertake smaller projects that are less profitable to a bank lender by lending money directly or utilizing funds as a guarantee for conventional bank loans; usually comprised of a group of active community volunteers or developers and managed by financial administrators.
- Christmas in April Program/Paint Your Heart out Program—Non-profit, "grassroots" efforts; typically begins by identifying properties and by putting willing volunteers together with donated supplies. Cities can participate by helping identify housing units in need, prioritizing properties in need of improvement, and obtaining donations from local businesses. These programs have been proven to help to improve numerous homes on an annual basis.

Grant Funding Programs

- The Fair Housing Initiative Program (FHIP)—Federal; administered by the Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity Office; allocates funds on a competitive/discretionary basis; generally no requirement for matching funds on the part of the receiver.
- The Healthy Homes Initiative Program (HHIP)—Federal; administered by the Lead Hazard Control Office and builds upon the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Department's existing housing-related health and safety issues; generally no requirement for matching funds on the part of the receiver.
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)—Federal, State, and County; administered by the Community Planning and Development Office (a department of HUD); allocates funds on a formula/entitlement basis; funding for activities directed toward neighborhood revitalization, economic development and the provision of improved community facilities and services; participation can be through funds allocated by the State or County; generally no requirement for matching funds on the part of the receiver.
- The HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME)—Federal, State, County, and Local; administered by the Community Planning and Development Office (a department of HUD); allocates funds on a formula/entitlement basis; funding may be used for a variety of activities, including housing rehabilitation, tenant-based rental assistance, assistance to homebuyers, acquisition of housing, new construction of housing, site acquisition, site improvements, demolition, and relocation; generally a requirement of matching funds on the part of the receiver equal to 25 percent of the grant amount.
- Neighborhood Initiatives Grants—Federal, State, County, and Local; administered by the Community Planning and Development Office (a department of HUD); allocates funds on a competitive/discretionary basis; generally no requirement for matching funds on the part of the receiver.



DOWNTOWN BIG SPRING

Downtown is one of Big Spring's greatest assets. Historically, downtown Big Spring was the center of the community both from an identity and activity standpoint. Downtown's streets were once filled with people walking, dining, shopping and experiencing downtown. Downtown was the economic hub for Big Spring and was a vibrant center that differentiated Big Spring from other neighboring communities.

The 1950s and 1960s brought significant change not only to Big Spring but to communities nationwide. Cities began to experience rapid outward growth as the automobile began to define how our cities were designed. Highway corridors and their associated strip centers replaced downtowns as the focal points for retail and commercial uses. Many retail and commercial uses in Big Spring, in the same manner, left downtown for Highway 87/Gregg Street due to the visibility and quick access that the highway provided.

This earlier trend in outward growth significantly impacted downtown Big Spring. Many buildings were left vacant and underutilized. Over time, many of these vacant and underutilized structures began to experience the effects of weathering and a lack of maintenance. The vibrancy and image of downtown as a place where people wanted to be was lost.

Over the past decade, downtowns nationwide have begun to experience a resurgence. Most communities that lost their downtown areas have realized that it was more than a loss of a physical area of their community, it was also a loss of the heart, soul and identity of the city. During the public input process, downtown Big Spring was identified as a high-priority opportunity for the community. Significant investments have begun to take place in downtown, specifically with the redevelopment of the Hotel Settles, downtown's most significant landmark. This investment, however, is only one piece of the redevelopment puzzle.

This section outlines a land use framework strategy that should be used to guide the growth and development of downtown. It is a holistic view of the land use potential for downtown and should be used by decision-makers for the implementation of ordinances, guidelines, incentives and strategies.



DOWNTOWN

Existing Conditions Downtown

Over the past decade, the City has made significant investments in Downtown. Most of the core streets of downtown have gone through streetscape improvement projects. These enhancements have improved the physical framework of the downtown by focusing on walkability. Sidewalk enhancements, curb extensions, decorative lighting fixtures and street trees have all dramatically improved downtown's appearance. These are vital investments in downtown's future. As potential businesses entertain the idea of moving downtown, the streetscape improvements send the message the Big Spring desires a revitalized downtown and will support that business owner's investment. City investments help to create an environment where private investment can thrive.

The reopening of the Hotel Settles has been the highest visible change to downtown. The opening of the hotel generated not only local but regional interest. Many historic preservation enthusiasts and people who remember the hotel from its glory days have traveled to Big Spring to see the reopened hotel. The importance of the Hotel Settles investment cannot be understated. It, along with continued investment in the core of downtown, will be the impetus for a vibrant and revitalized Downtown. Additional historic structures should be preserved and should receive the focus for investment and partnerships.

Downtown's biggest physical issue pertains to the condition of many of its structures. Vacancy issues have led to a deterioration of many buildings making rehabilitation of the structures more expensive. In some cases, buildings have reached a point of deterioration where they are no longer functional. Dealing with the level of building decline will be the single greatest piece of the downtown revitalization puzzle. Without City participation in building rehabilitation it will be virtually impossible for private investment to take place. A private investor is unlikely to incur the financial burden of building rehabilitation when a much less costly facility could be constructed in other areas. This dilemma can only be mitigated through public/private partnerships and incentives.

Despite the condition of many structures, the framework in downtown Big Spring is strong and relatively intact. This framework provides a strong base for rehabilitation and infill development.

What We Heard About Downtown

- More Outdoor Concerts and Family Events Downtown
- Downtown Farmers Market
- More Retail Stores
- Removal of Dilapidated Buildings
- More Downtown Dining
- Bigger Downtown Park
- Restore Historic Buildings
- Art Galleries Downtown
- Pedestrian Traffic and Lively Streets
- More Businesses

**From the Public Input Meeting*

What would you Preserve about Big Spring?

- Historic Buildings (14)
- Downtown (6)
- People of Big Spring (2)
- Parks (2)
- The Spring (2)

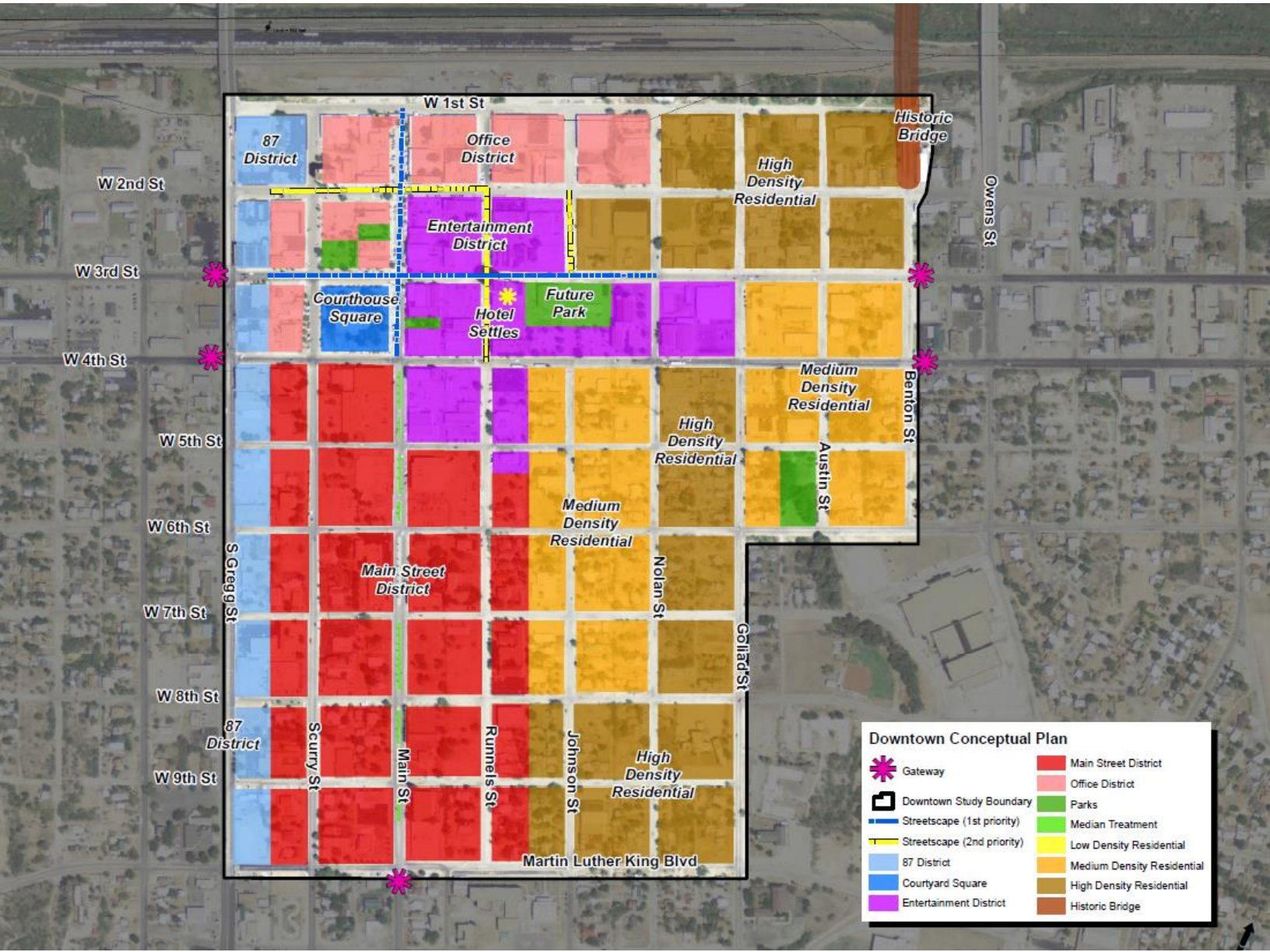
**Top 5 responses out of a total of 112. Number in parentheses represents number of votes for that priority)*

Downtown Strategy

In order to maximize development potential in downtown, a land use strategy was created. The land use strategy is intended to provide a high-level framework for the overall redevelopment strategy. The Downtown Strategy also provides a framework for urban design. The primary purpose of the Downtown Strategy is to thoughtfully leverage business activity in the best way possible. Big Spring can only accommodate a certain number of entertainment uses, offices and retail. The purpose of this concept is to best organize those establishments in a way that benefits initial downtown revitalization efforts.

The Downtown Strategy was developed based on public input, staff input, existing development patterns and potential redevelopment plans and opportunities. The strategy is divided into seven districts. Each of the following districts are discussed in more detail on the following pages:

- Entertainment District
- Office District
- Highway 87 District
- Main Street District
- High Density Residential District
- Medium Density Residential District
- Low Density Residential District



DOWNTOWN

Entertainment District

There are only a certain number of entertainment establishments that Big Spring's population can support. If each of these establishments are scattered throughout downtown, they do not have the ability to work off of one another to create a vibrant Entertainment District. When we think of activity districts, images of streets lined with activity come to mind. These districts concentrate like-uses close to one another to generate activity, a concept called "agglomeration."

The Entertainment District is envisioned to be the heart of downtown. It should be the activity core that drives the rest of downtown. Uses within the activity district should include a mixture of restaurants, bars, art galleries and uses that provide entertainment and bring residents to downtown.

At the center of the Entertainment District is the Hotel Settles and a future park. The park is a vital element of downtown revitalization. Downtown currently has a variety of pocket parks but does not possess an area large enough to be used for festivals and community events. The park should be designed to attract users and accommodate larger events and festivals, including summer movies and holiday programs. In order for the park to attract visitors, it is imperative that the park designed to be active and engaging. Examples of active features include playgrounds, interactive water features, food truck accommodations, amphitheaters and performance stages.

Due to the unique characteristics of uses within the Entertainment District, flexibility should be given to new building design in order to allow creative design to be utilized. Wayfinding signage within the Entertainment District should be unique from other downtown areas. Additionally, sidewalks through the area should be significantly wider than other portions of downtown to accommodate outside seating and higher pedestrian traffic. A minimum of 15' sidewalks should be encouraged as roadway enhancements are made.







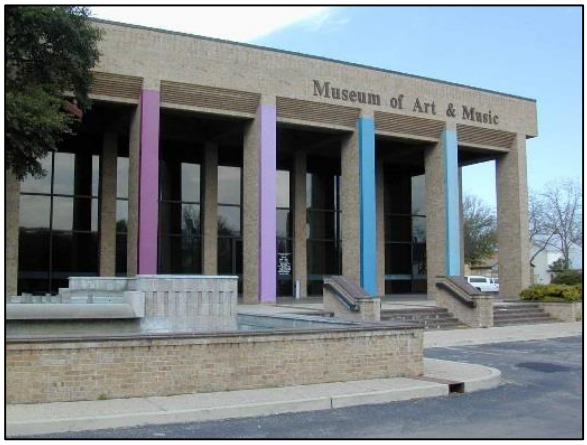


Main Street District

The Main Street District includes the area of downtown around and along Main Street. This district currently contains a number of governmental uses including the Howard County Courthouse and the U.S. Federal Building. Additionally, a large number of banks and churches are located within the district. These types of facilities generally operate from 8am to 5pm and bring people Downtown during normal working hours. They do not, however, generate activity into the evening hours. For this reason, the Main Street District will be characterized as being active during the day and generally quiet at night.

Due to most of the activity leaving after working hours have ceased, entertainment, retail and uses that demand higher visibility and/or pedestrian traffic should be avoided. Those types of uses should instead be concentrated in the entertainment district which is envisioned to remain active after working hours.

The Main Street District should continue to encourage governmental and financial uses. Future City facilities should consider a location within the district. Additional museums and other civic uses should also be located within the Main Street District.









DOWNTOWN

Office District

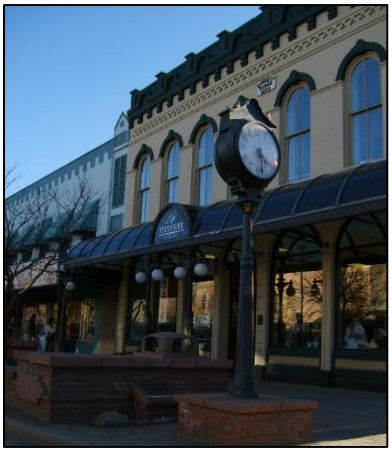
The Office District is located to the north of the courthouse square. This area contains a variety of uses but is predominantly oriented around offices that support courthouse activities, including County offices and legal services. It is imperative that the Howard County Courthouse remain in downtown Big Spring. As many counties rebuild and modernize their courthouses, they receive pressure to leave their existing locations, often within their community's downtown core, to capitalize on cheaper land costs and the potential to incorporate added parking. The Howard County Courthouse is one of downtown's largest activity generators and if and when new facilities are desired they should be located within downtown Big Spring.

Office uses should be the predominant activity in this part of downtown. Some retail and service establishments may be mixed in, but retail, restaurant and entertainment uses should be encouraged to locate within the Entertainment District. Most of the existing buildings within the Office District should be preserved, particularly ones with historical significance. The City's efforts in this area should be primarily focused on rehabilitating existing structures. Rehabilitation will likely require City participation due to the high cost of remediation. While no large scale infill development is expected within this district, any infill development that does occur should receive strict architectural review. The prevalence of historic structures within the Office District highlight the need for all new development to be compatible and respective of the existing building framework and character.









Highway 87

Highway 87 lies along the western edge of downtown. While it is located directly adjacent to downtown, it is oriented in a way that does not interact with downtown itself. All other downtown districts are somewhat integrated inward and are more relevant in terms of accessibility to each other. Highway 87, on the other hand, is oriented outward. The existing businesses along the corridor are oriented towards Highway 87 itself rather than towards the core of downtown. Establishments along Highway 87 are a mixture of retail, restaurant and service uses with front parking and easy access. The rest of downtown is different in that parking is located along the street and urban design is more focused on the experience rather than on quick access.

In the future, uses along Highway 87 should be designed to contain some downtown elements, such as consistent building materials, colors and landscaping elements as the core of downtown. Overall, however, uses along the district will remain focused on quick accessibility and will be more oriented towards the highway itself.

The most important design consideration for Highway 87 will be signage and gateways into downtown, particularly at 3rd Street and 4th Street. Murals, signage and gateway features should direct attention to downtown from those passing through Big Spring. The appearance of Highway 87 through downtown will impact the way downtown is viewed. If a negative impression is perceived, it will be less likely for visitors to stop and explore downtown itself. Public art, murals and other design features should be encouraged through this district.









DOWNTOWN

High Density Residential

In order to make downtown Big Spring truly vibrant, it is imperative that residential options be provided. Residential uses not only support downtown businesses, but they provide activity within the downtown core after the majority of daytime activity has ended.

High density residential in downtown should take the form of apartments and multifamily structures and will range between 12 and 20 dwelling units per acre. There is a need for apartments in Big Spring. Encouraging multifamily uses downtown will create a residential base and will help the City revitalize and redevelop dilapidated neighborhoods. One of the most prominent needs of the community is to redevelop core neighborhoods that lie largely vacant. Providing multifamily uses will help the community achieve this goal.

High density residential is located near the core of downtown where it is most compatible. High density residential facilities should be designed to fit into the existing fabric of downtown. Facades, building materials and architectural features should match the historical nature of downtown. Buildings should be brought to the street in order to create a walkable urban framework. Streetscape enhancements should be required as development occurs, calling for wide sidewalks and street trees.









Medium Density Residential

In addition to high density residential options, such as apartments, medium density residential should be a component of downtown revitalization. Medium density residential will provide a transition between the higher density and more active core of downtown into the low-intensity single-family neighborhoods on the fringes of downtown. Medium density residential will likely take the form of duplexes, patio homes and townhomes. The density will range between 5 and 12 dwelling units per acre.

Differing from multifamily uses that are typically renter-occupied, medium density residential options have a greater likelihood of being owner-occupied. The design of medium density uses should also fit the historic framework of downtown. All future development within the downtown core should respect this history and contribute to it rather than detract from it in terms of access and design.









DOWNTOWN

Low Density Residential

Low density residential is depicted on the downtown strategy to show the transition from the active core to lower density and less active neighborhoods. Low density residential is depicted on the fringes of downtown to show that the majority of neighborhoods outside of the downtown boundary are single-family neighborhoods.

Low density residential is representative of single-family detached housing units. The density of these areas will range between four and six dwelling units per acre. Low density infill should be designed with a historic element in order to fit into the overall character of downtown. Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND), discussed in more detail previously, should be encouraged.

Low density infill, as with medium and high density residential, will likely require participation by the City in some form. City participation could involve a variety of different strategies including creating development incentives, infill incentives or prototype housing guidebooks.









Downtown Strategies

Temporary Uses

West Texas' low humidity and relatively cool summer evenings and nights make outdoor concepts attractive, such as those that attract the public to the downtown. Revitalization happens when we create spaces where people want to be. Downtown revitalization should promote concepts that create activity, both permanent and temporary, in downtown Big Spring. Temporary uses are a quick and economical way to create activity and vibrancy within a particular area. As activity is created, private investment typically follows. Temporary uses should be encouraged on vacant land in downtown. Temporary uses can refer to sites with no physical structure or sites where a low cost structure, such as a decorated metal building, are placed. Temporary uses operate on ground leases and are not envisioned to be permanent fixtures. In order to qualify, the proposed use must generate activity.





Temporary use examples include:

- Shipping container venues
- Metal building restaurants
- Outdoor entertainment venues
- Food truck parks
- Concert/festival space
- Dog parks

Adaptive Reuse

Adaptive reuse is redevelopment that utilizes an existing structure, especially for a use different than what the establishment was originally designed to accommodate. For example, mechanic garages and automobile service facilities have become popular for use as open air restaurants—when the weather is appropriate, garage doors are opened.



One of the biggest obstacles for downtown is creating reasons for people to come back to the core. Public input at the downtown event indicated that there is a lack of activity downtown, particularly after 5 P.M. Encouraging adaptive reuses in downtown Big Spring would be a resourceful and economical way to create energy and activity within the core, particularly if restaurants and entertainment uses are established.



The biggest challenges for adaptive reuse are zoning and building codes. Zoning within downtown should encourage a mixture of land uses, including adaptive reuse of existing buildings. An adaptive reuse checklist should be created to guide applicants on the process. Entertainment and restaurant establishments, in particular, should be encouraged or incentivized.

DOWNTOWN

Infill Development

Infill development takes advantage of existing infrastructure. It takes place on vacant lots amidst existing development. It also includes situations where an existing structure is demolished and a new structure is built.

The most important design consideration for infill development within downtown is uniformity. New development downtown should be compatible with the existing framework and should conform to long-range objectives and theme. All infill in downtown should be urban and historical in design and appearance.

The following are uniformity guidelines that should be followed for infill development within the downtown core:

- Construction should be respective of prevalent scale, massing and height of nearby buildings;
- Buildings should be brought to the lot line along the primary facing street;
- Parking should be located on the side or rear of building;
- Buildings should be oriented to encourage street-level, pedestrian-oriented uses; and
- A minimum of 50% of a new building's ground level facing the primary street should be devoted to doors and windows.





Historic Preservation

The most critical strategy for downtown is historic preservation. The rehabilitation of the iconic Hotel Settles is a testament to how a public/private partnership can be used to effectively restore historic structures. It is important that key historic buildings downtown continue to be protected and preserved. The existing ordinance provides a framework for protecting the city's historic buildings. This is an important first step. A historic preservation ordinance also places a burden on rehabilitating downtown buildings. In order to make rehabilitation financially feasible, the City must also participate in restoration by offering incentives, rebates, low interest loans, tax abatements and other carrots to attract investment. Without a means for facilitating rehabilitation, many of the historic buildings downtown will likely remain vacant.





Parking

Parking within downtown should be accommodated by a variety of methods including on-street parking, surface parking lots and parking structures.

A significant number of roadways within downtown currently provide on-street parking. On-street parking should be continued and expanded to additional streets when possible.

Surface lots are typically privately operated. Surface lots in downtown should be seen as infill development opportunities rather than permanent features. While no structure may be present on a surface lot, they should contain landscaping buffers around the perimeter of the lot.

Parking structures should be encouraged in the downtown core. Parking structures in highly visible areas should either contain first level retail or design elements that make the parking garage less obtrusive.





Downtown Park

The development of a downtown park is a critical component to downtown revitalization. A downtown park will provide a place for community events and festivals to be held. The area between the Hotel Settles and the Municipal Auditorium would provide a centrally located area for a downtown park. The park, in combination with the Municipal Auditorium, would create a multiuse entertainment venue. Concerts held at the Municipal Auditorium could be accompanied by outside events and vice versa. The two event spaces could build off of each other to create a unique entertainment opportunity.

The downtown park should be designed to be active rather than passive. This will ensure that the park is able to attract visitors when no events or functions are taking place. In addition to an open lawn area for events, the park should also contain other attractions such as a playground, water feature, public art and interactive spaces.





DOWNTOWN

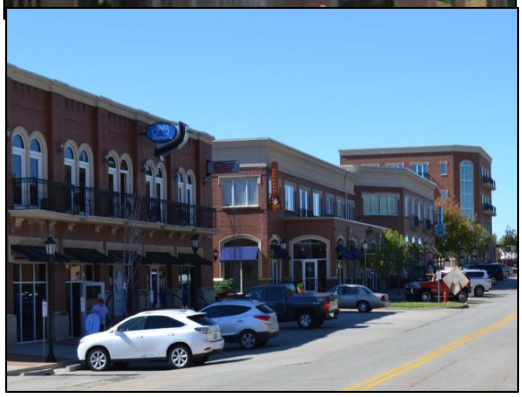
Design Guidelines

Facades

A combination of masonry, EIFS and engineered stone/brick should be required on all street fronting wall planes. In order to create unique buildings and break monotony, no single material should make up the entire front façade treatment. Changes in materials and the use of architectural enhancement elements should be required. Changes in materials for façade treatments should be used to identify a building's individual floors, highlight building features and define building forms and elements.



Exterior building colors should avoid the use of bright neon lights, fluorescent colors and florescent paints, unless incorporated in murals. Colors should complement the architectural elements and style of the building. Colors used should also complement and be respective of the area where it is located. No single color should be used for the entire exterior façade in street fronting areas.



Architectural Features

The historical aspect of downtown Big Spring is its most significant design characteristic. The restoration of the Hotel Settles was a significant investment and in order to maximize this investment it is imperative that all new construction within the downtown core fit into the historical framework of downtown, particularly as more historic structures are restored.



New downtown buildings should contain a variety of architectural features and design elements including cornices, awnings, pilasters and friezes, among others. The design should be compatible with early 20th century design. In order to ensure consistency in architectural characteristic, design and color, an architectural guidebook should be created for the core of downtown, particularly for the Entertainment and Office Districts where the majority of Big Spring's historic structures are located. The architectural guidebook will help to protect historic restoration efforts by the private sector and will encourage additional investment in historic preservation.



Downtown Design Enhancements



Cornice—A continuous, molded projection that crowns a wall or divides horizontally for compositional purposes.



Pilasters—Shallow rectangular features projecting from a wall, having a capital and a base and architecturally treated as columns.



Quoin—An exterior angle of masonry wall, or one of stone bricks forming such an angle, usually differentiated from adjoining surfaces by material, texture, color, size or projection.



Frieze—The horizontal part of a classical entablature between the cornice and architrave, often decorated with sculpture in low relief.



Belt Course—A horizontal course of brick or stone flush with or projecting beyond the face of a building.



Canopy—An ornamental protrusion from the base level of a building providing both a decorative addition and shade for pedestrians.



Awning: A sheet of solid material stretched on a frame and used to keep the sun or rain off a storefront, window or doorway.



Balcony: Balconies can be used as patio space or as a faux design. In addition to their design function, they also help with crime prevention in urban areas by creating the feeling of eyes on the street.

DOWNTOWN

Signage

Signage within downtown is significantly different from other parts of the City. Monument and pole signs dominate most corridor signage. In downtown, however, signage will likely be attached to the building itself. Building signage should match the architectural design of both the building it is attached to as well as the area in which it is located. The following are the types of signs that should be permitted and regulated within downtown Big Spring:

- Wall signs
- Awning and canopy signs
- Projecting signs
- Hanging signs
- Marquee signs
- Window signs
- A-frame signs
- Murals
- Temporary signs



Wayfinding

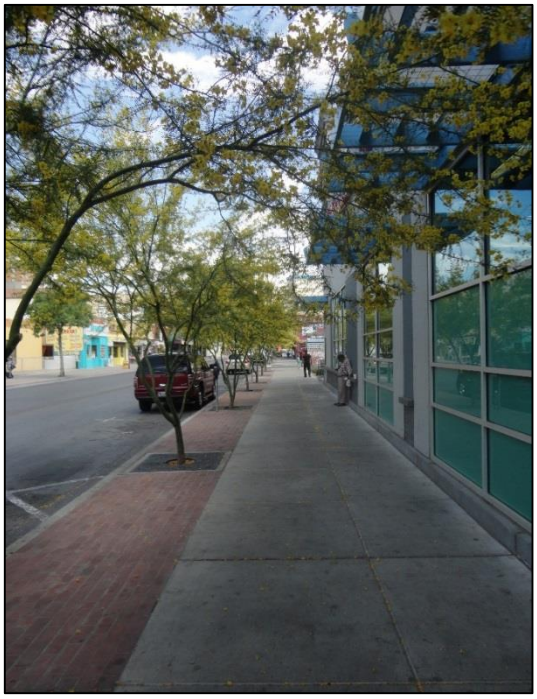
Wayfinding signage serves two purposes. First, it helps to direct downtown visitors to places of interest including parks, plazas, public facilities and major activity generators. The second purpose is for downtown branding. Consistent wayfinding signage reinforces downtown's design characteristics and helps to establish a sense of place. Wayfinding monuments are pedestrian-level signage—they are designed to be seen and read by pedestrians, not motorists.







Pedestrian Orientation



The vast majority of Big Spring is designed to be low density and auto-centric. Downtown, on the other hand, must incorporate different design principles. By nature, downtown is inherently urban and the design of the area must be geared to foster an urban environment. One of the biggest differences between an urban and suburban environment is pedestrian orientation and walkability. Walkability refers to how conducive an area is for walking.

There are a variety of design features that should be incorporated downtown. These design features should be considered for streetscape improvements and redevelopment projects. They include:

- Minimum of 10' Sidewalks
- Street Trees between Walkway and Street
- Pedestrian Lighting/Decorative Lighting
- Enhanced or Raised Crosswalks
- Curb Extensions/Bulb Outs
- Street Furniture, Including Benches and Refuse Containers
- Downtown Signage, Monuments and Public Art

Incorporating these features into streetscape design creates a sense of safety for pedestrians by clearly indicating the space was designed with their safety in mind.

Streetscapes





Downtown streetscapes should be different from other areas of Big Spring. Streetscapes should reflect the area's urban character. The following design characteristics should be considered for streetscape improvements:

- Bulb outs and curb extensions
- Landscaping for traffic calming
- On-street parking
- Removing middle lane in low-traffic areas
- Enhanced crosswalks

Streetscape design should consider the following three areas during design:

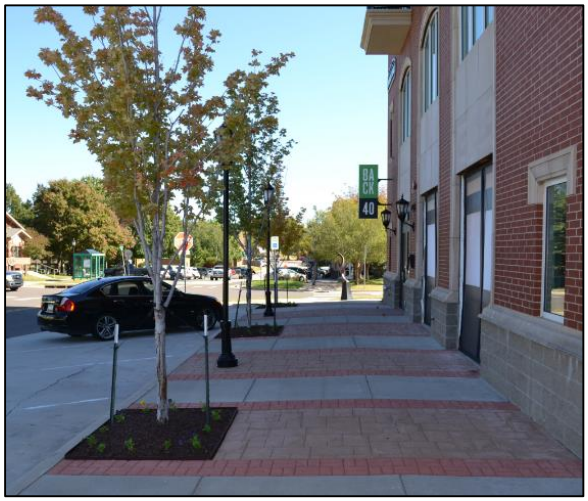
- Pedestrian Zone: Sidewalks and landscaping between the building line and the curb.
- Parking: When possible, on-street parking should be included.
- Travel Lane: Reducing travel lanes from 12' to 11' in high activity areas will naturally slow traffic.

DOWNTOWN

Building Orientation

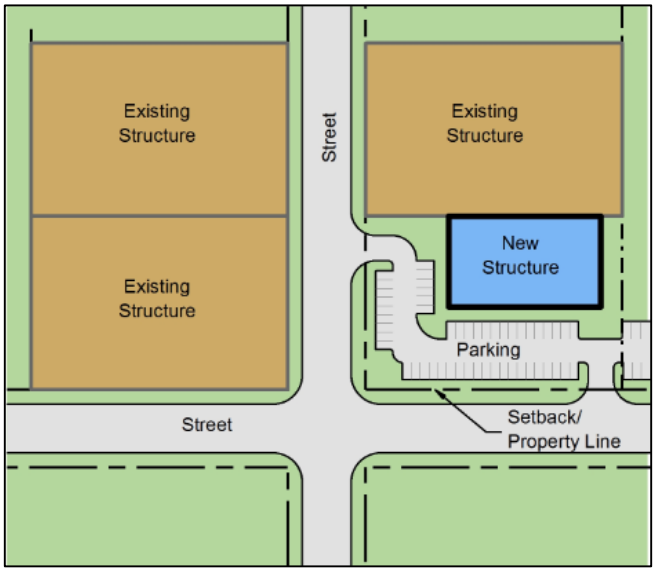
The orientation of new buildings is one of the most critical design considerations within downtown. Downtown Big Spring has a much different physical framework than other parts of the city; therefore, different development guidelines should be used. The area's urban framework should be continued, in particular the orientation of buildings and how those buildings interact with the street.

New buildings, or a large portion of new buildings, should be brought to the property line. Setback requirements, if any, should be minimal. If on-site parking is required, parking areas should be located to the side or back of the building. Walls facing primary streets should contain windows and doors to avoid a solid wall.

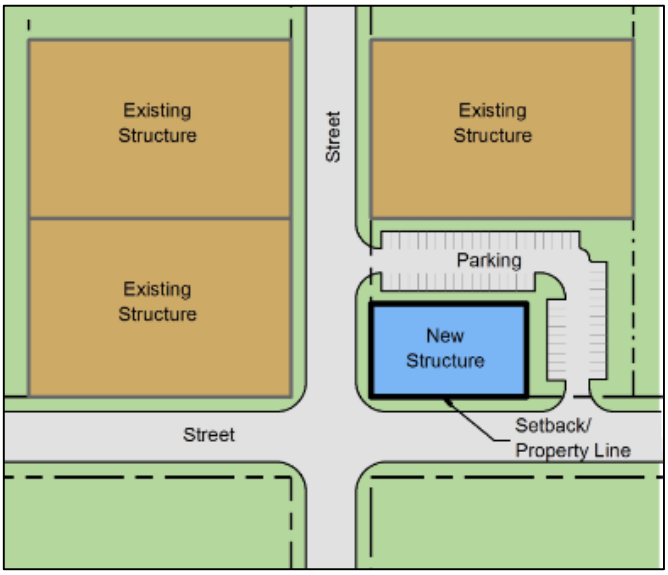




Suburban style infill with parking separating the building pedestrian areas should not be permitted within downtown Big Spring.



Urban style infill brings the building to the property line and places on-site parking either to the side or rear of the building. This orientation should be required in downtown Big Spring.



Downtown Housing

A critical element to revitalizing downtown Big Spring will be including a variety of housing options for people who are seeking opportunities to live downtown. In 1970, 40 % of US households were married-couples with children living at the home. In 2012, this number was down to just under 20 %. Less than 50 % of all US households are now married couples. These demographic changes directly impact the type of housing that we provide. While single-family neighborhoods are attractive and will continue to be built, there is also a demand for alternative housing types that meet the needs of singles, couples without children and empty nesters—those who no longer have children living at home. Downtown is one of the best places to accommodate a diverse range of housing types. The following are housing options that should be promoted within downtown Big Spring.

Small-Lot Homes

Many people want to live near downtown but still value the yard and privacy of a single-family detached home. Small-lot homes, such as patio homes, help to fill this void. Traditional Design (TND) is a type of housing design that fits well near downtowns.



Townhomes, Brownstones & Duplexes

Townhomes, brownstones and duplexes are single-family attached housing products. Each sits on its own subdivided lot and is typically owner-occupied. They help to serve as a transition from the core of downtown into adjacent neighborhoods.



Live-Above Lofts

Live-above lofts typically involve first level retail uses with a residential unit above. These are popular for business or studio owners who want to be close to their shop for flexible business hours. Zoning codes that prohibit mixed-uses often result in the second floor remaining vacant. Many existing buildings downtown buildings are suitable for this type of conversion, especially as infill development is encouraged.



Urban Style Apartments

This housing product is typically new construction. It is designed to have ground floor retail if located on a high-traffic street and has several stories of apartments above the retail. These are generally renter-occupied housing products. These types of housing products should be located along Goliad Street.



DOWNTOWN

Adaptive Reuse

May historic structures downtown that once served as office or industrial uses are being converted to residential units. These structures and warehouses make attractive residential products due to their unique character. There is typically a higher cost in retrofitting existing structures and therefore City participation and incentives are often involved, at least initially.



Condominiums

Condominiums provide ownership opportunities in urban settings. They are owner-occupied and are required to create a Homeowner's Association (HOA) to guide maintenance of the structure and associated facilities.





PARKS & RECREATION

Parks and recreational facilities are the most visible amenity that a community can provide. In today's competitive and mobile economy, quality of life plays a significant role in attracting additional businesses and residents. The quality of a park system, both in terms of the types and condition of facilities, can significantly impact the overall quality of life perception.

Big Spring is unique from its West Texas neighbors in that it is located along a natural escarpment which lends the area to a variety of hills and open spaces. This characteristic has enabled Big Spring to provide a great deal of outdoor recreation opportunities. Big Spring State Park and Comanche Trail Park provide large amounts of space for hiking, golfing and swimming. They provide spaces and activities for residents to go outside and enjoy the outdoors. The parks and open spaces provided in Big Spring are a vital asset to the community.

The following chapter provides an assessment of the City's park and recreational facilities based upon national standards. The assessment and recommendations are intended to guide not only the provision of future parks to meet growth projections, but also how to more effectively use and maintain the City's existing network.



Parks and Recreation

The Benefits of Parks in Advancing the Development of Healthy Communities

According to the National Recreation and Park Association, parks and recreation possess three values that make them essential services to communities:

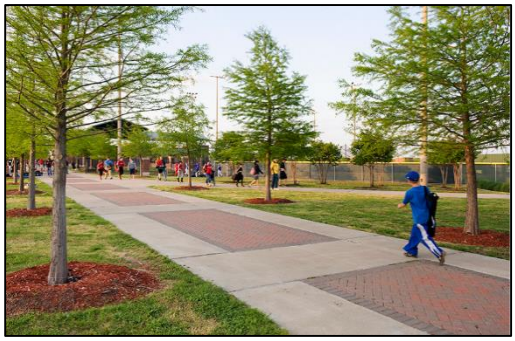
Economic Value

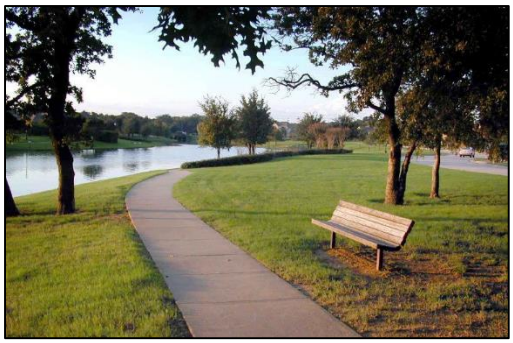
- Parks increase property values.
- Cities can use parks to reduce public costs for stormwater management, flood control, transportation, and other infrastructure.
- Quality parks and recreation are identified as one of the top reasons for business relocation decisions.
- Parks and recreation programs generate revenue from operating costs.
- Indirect revenues are generated for the local and regional economies through the hosting of sports tournaments and special events such as arts, music, and holiday festivals. Economic activity from hospitality expenditures, tourism, fuel, recreational equipment sales, and many other private sector businesses yields more sustainable local and regional economies.



Public Health and Environmental Benefits

- Parks are the places people go to get healthy and stay physically fit.
- Parks and recreation programs and related services contribute to the health of children, youth, adults, and seniors.
- Designing places within which people can become physically active can improve individual and community health, and result in an increase of residents who exercise regularly.
- Research shows correlations between the reduction of stress, lowered blood pressure and perceived physical health and the length of time spent in parks.
- Parks and open spaces help to improve water quality, protect groundwater, prevent flooding, improve air quality, produce wildlife habitat and provide places for individuals to connect with the natural environment and recreate outdoors.
- Cities can use parks to help preserve essential ecological functions and to protect biodiversity.





- When planned as part of a system of green infrastructure, parks can help shape urban form and buffer incompatible uses.

Social Importance

- Parks are a tangible reflection of the quality of life in a community; providing identity for citizens and enhancing the perception of quality of life in the community.
- Parks provide gathering places for social groups and families, as well as for individuals of all ages and economic status, regardless of their ability to pay for access.
- By providing gathering places, parks facilitate social interactions among residents that are critical to maintaining community cohesion and pride, as well as developing social ties that become the glue that holds the community together and drives future actions.
- Voter approval rates for bond measures to acquire parks and conserve open space has exceeded 75 percent in recent years, revealing the public's prioritization of parks in government spending.
- Parks and recreation programs provide places for health and well-being that are accessible by persons of all ages and abilities, especially to those with disabilities.
- Community involvement in the planning and design of neighborhood parks, as well as access to parks and recreation opportunities are positively associated with lower crime rates, vandalism, and juvenile delinquency.
- Parks have a value to communities in the formation of a sense of public pride and cohesion.







Source: National Recreation and Parks Association. "Why Parks and Recreation are Essential Public Services." http://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Advocacy/Resources/Parks-Recreation-Essential-Public-Services-January-2010.pdf

Parks and Recreation

Facility Standards

Local classifications were developed based on a variety factors. First, the National Recreation and Park Association's Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines, published in 1995, were used as a baseline tool to determine park types but with some modifications. Justification for modifications were based on the 1999 Big Spring Master Park Plan, community size, local input and a realistic approach to implementation. Only the park types selected for Big Spring are shown in this section. In addition, the classifications consider local resources, cultural factors and physical land attributes.

Traditionally, the most common standards used for park planning used by cities throughout Texas and the United States have been the published guidelines by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). As the NRPA guidelines provide in their introduction, they recognized the importance of establishing and using park and recreation standards as:

- A National expression of minimum acceptable facilities for the citizens of urban and rural communities;
- A guideline to determine land requirements for various kinds of park and recreation areas and facilities;
- A basis for relating recreation needs to spatial analysis within a community wide system of parks and open space areas;
- One of the major structuring elements that can be used to guide and assist regional development; and
- A means to justify the need of parks and open space within the overall land use pattern of a region or community.

The purpose of the facility standards is to establish guidelines for parks and trails in Big Spring. These classifications balance amenities and access yet are appropriate for the community's size and existing conditions. The following classifications and general considerations were developed to promote a park system that is measurable and supports the community's vision. The classifications create a hierarchy of park types through sizes, location, recreational types and service areas.



Mini/Neighborhood Parks

Mini and Neighborhood Park types have been combined for Big Spring. These parks are the smallest park unit for the City's park system. These parks are used to address limited, isolated or unique recreational needs. These park types are generally centrally located in a neighborhood. Mini/neighborhood parks serve a limited population or smaller group of residents. They often serve as a neighborhood center to define character or as a place-making element. In addition, these types of parks can be used as a neighborhood stabilization technique to increase branding, property values and the livability of a specific neighborhood. These parks should be very accessible. Mini/neighborhood parks are limited in purpose and provide close-to-home park services. They can offer a range of passive and active recreational amenities but are usually not designed for organized team sports.

Size, Service Area and Service Levels

Mini/Neighborhood parks should be a minimum of one acre in size and may up to 10 acres in size. Their service area includes a half-mile radius. The recommended service level is 1.25 to 2.50 acres per 1,000 residents.

Locations and Site Selection

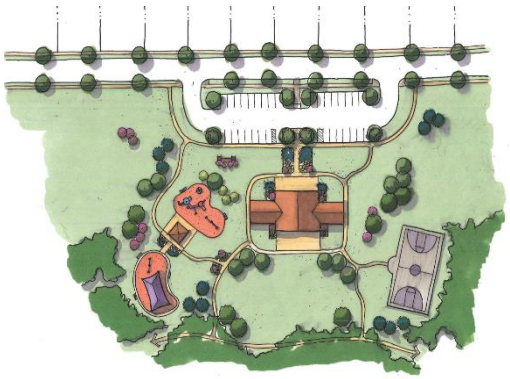
These parks are best located near the geographic center of a residential neighborhood. Mini/Neighborhood parks should be integrated to maximize service areas and accessibility while minimizing unnecessary overlap in service level coverage. Their service area needs to consider physical barriers such as major roadways. Adequate vehicular access and parking should be provided.

Neighborhood parks are best located near the geographic center of residential areas or central to several neighborhoods. While population densities play a role in their position in the community, their location selection is often justified upon spatial need based on a 0.50 miles service area.

These park types should not be located along heavily traveled streets, but in some cases this is necessary. Accessibility by way of trails and sidewalks or low-volume residential streets increases use and viability. The park should have adequate soils for sustaining plantings. Generally, their sites should be a gentle slope to increase usability and should properly drain to allow safe use. Street access should be required on at least one side of the park. Placement near greenbelts and trail corridors will help to provide trail access and connectivity to parks throughout the community's system. The site may include preserved areas for passive recreation but the site's slopes and soils should accommodate safe use for park facilities and allow proper drainage.

Mini/Neighborhood Park Examples





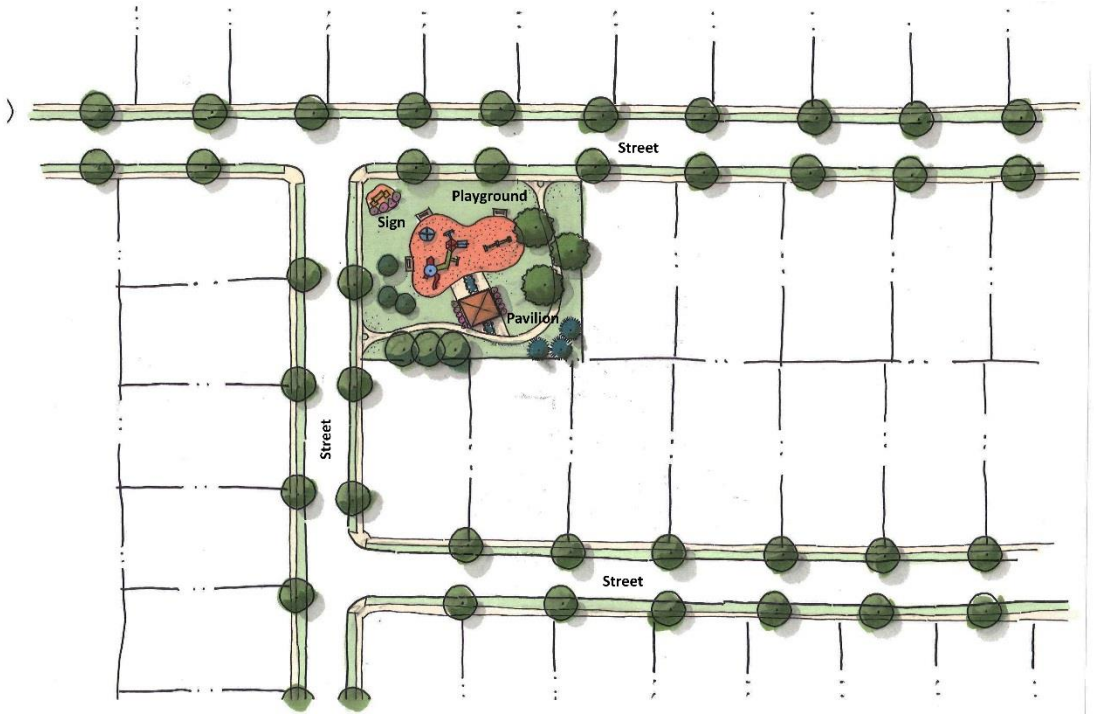


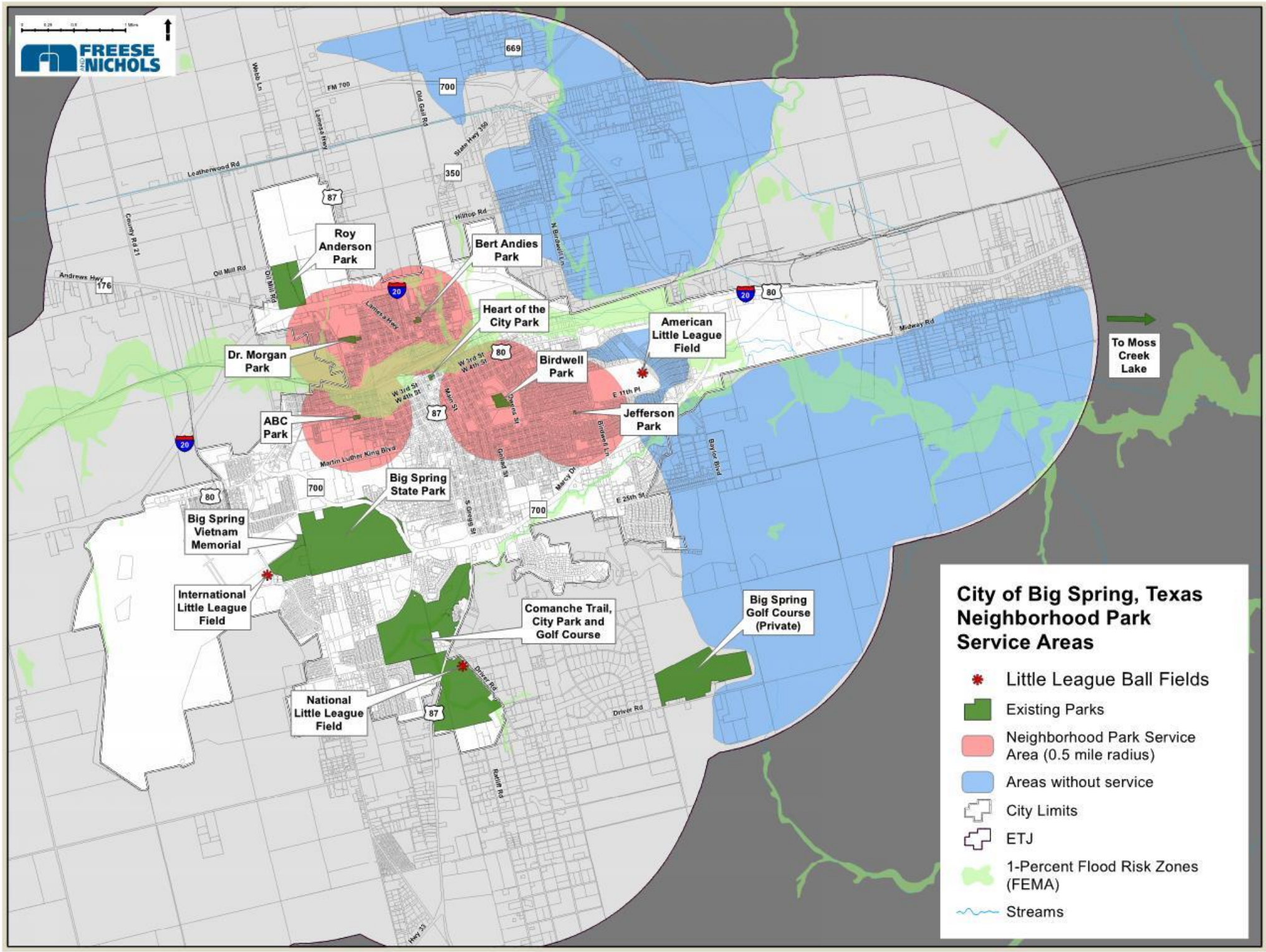
Parks and Recreation

Development Considerations

- Additional resident input could be considered during design phases.
- Some vehicular surface parking, in addition to on-street parking, may be needed and should be based on the individual park design, users and programming.
- Safe pedestrian access should be provided to the park and as internal circulation.
- Parks may be located along a trail system and serve as trail access sites.
- Protection from the sun should be considered through shade structures or trees.
- Facilities should have aesthetic landscape plantings and trees.
- Park signage should include monument park sign, necessary trail signs and posted administrative requirements.
- Typical amenities provided for neighborhood parks could include:
  - Children's playground with fall surface and equipment
  - Hard surface play areas or court games such as basketball, tennis and volleyball
  - Limited sport field(s)
  - Walking trails, access to trail systems and trail head site
  - Splash pads or swimming pool
  - Open lawn for passive non-organized team sports such as toss or Frisbee
  - Passive recreation elements such as picnic areas, tables, benches, trash receptacles, and walks
  - Pavilions or multi-purpose structures for family events or activities
  - Support facilities such as maintenance buildings
  - Natural or preserved areas including ponds, unique terrain, floodplains, greenbelts or other water features
  - Water fountain for people and pets

Neighborhood Pocket Park Example




FREESE AND NICHOLS
Roy Anderson Park
Bert Andies Park
Heart of the City Park
Dr. Morgan Park
American Little League Field
Birdwell Park
ABC Park
Jefferson Park
Big Spring State Park
Big Spring Vietnam Memorial
International Little League Field
Comanche Trail, City Park and Golf Course
Big Spring Golf Course (Private)
National Little League Field
To Moss Creek Lake
City of Big Spring, Texas
Neighborhood Park Service Areas
Little League Ball Fields
Existing Parks
Neighborhood Park Service Area (0.5 mile radius)
Areas without service
City Limits
ETJ
1-Percent Flood Risk Zones (FEMA)
Streams

Parks and Recreation

Community Parks

Community Parks are larger in size than neighborhood parks. Their focus is on serving a broad population to meet the recreational needs for a large geographic section of the community. Community parks include a wide range of active and passive recreation opportunities. They can help to provide those recreational needs not featured at neighborhood parks. These parks may also serve to preserve natural resources including creeks, streams, slopes, greenbelts or floodplain areas. Community parks consist of amenities for all user groups and should include facilities for organized team sports. Community parks can also include an array of special recreational amenities like sports complexes, a trail network, fitness-focused equipment and educational facilities.

Size and Service Area

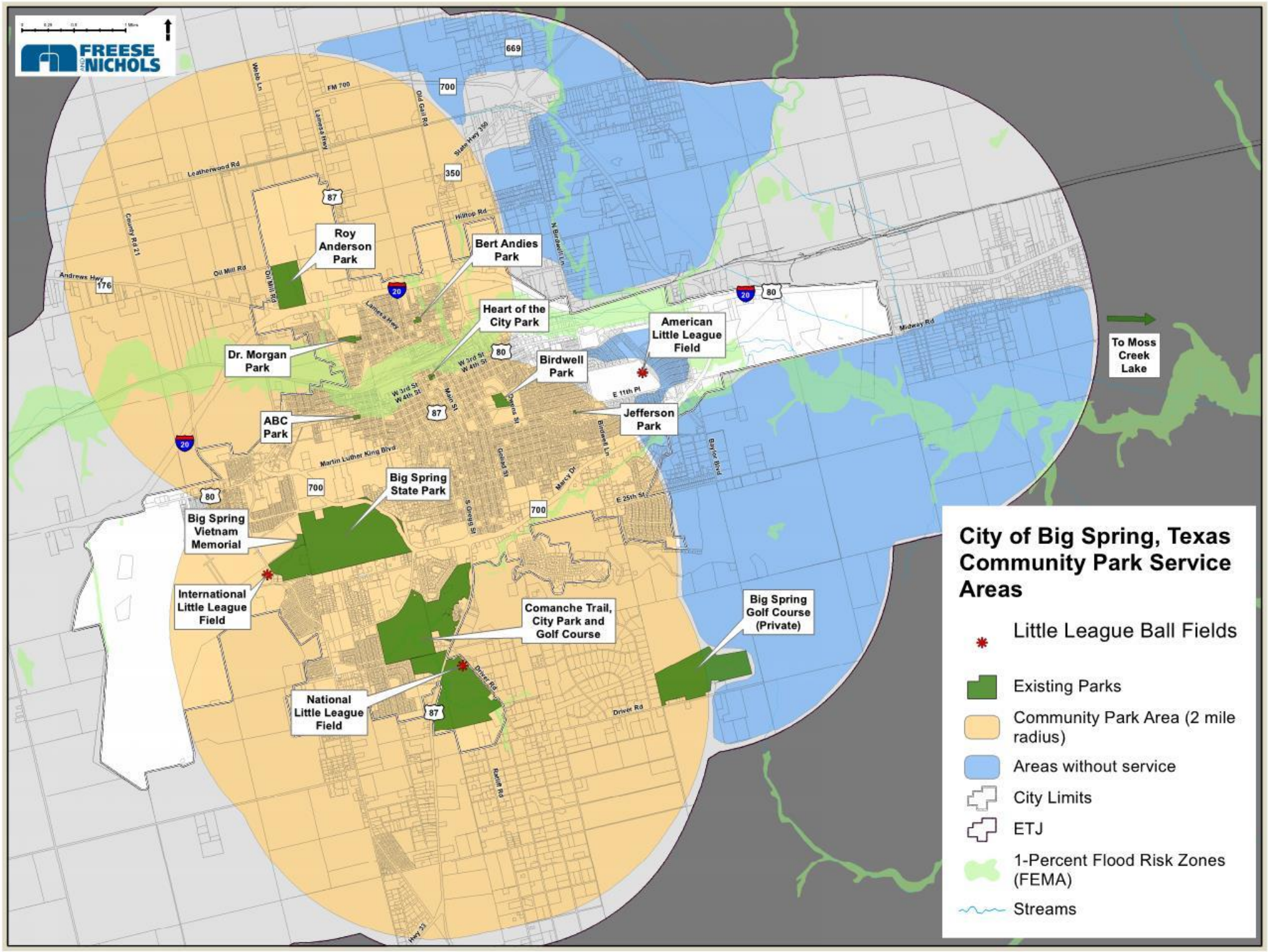
Optimal size for Big Spring's community parks are 50 acres or greater. Their sizes should be determined based on intended uses and populations being served. The service area should be approximately a two-mile radius but could increase based on physical barriers and the park planning area. The recommended service level is seven acres of neighborhood parks per 1,000 residents.

Locations and Site Selection

Community parks should be integrated to maximize service areas and accessibility while minimizing unnecessary overlap in service level coverage. Site selections should consider the physical barriers such as highways. Adequate vehicular access and parking should be provided. The site may include preserve areas for passive recreation but the site's slopes and soils should accommodate safe use for park facilities and allow proper drainage. Community parks should incorporate nature features when possible and could be situated along greenbelts to include nature areas and access to adjacent trail systems.

Development Considerations

- Additional resident input may be considered during design phases.
- Vehicular parking should be required based on the individual park's programming.
- Parks may be located along a trail system and serve as trail access sites.
- Protection from the sun should be considered through shade structures or trees.
- Park signage should include monument park sign, necessary trail signs and posted administrative requirements.
- Typical amenities provided for community parks could include:
    - Children's playground with fall surface and equipment
    - Hard surface play areas or court games such as basketball, tennis and volleyball
    - Sport and practice fields for organized team sports
    - Walking loop trails, access to trail systems and trail head connections to any adjacent City-wide trail system
    - Splash pads or swimming pool
    - Open lawn for passive non-organized play such as toss or Frisbee
    - Passive recreation elements and site furnishing such as tables, benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, walks and small shade structures or pavilions
    - Pavilions or multi-purpose structures for family events or activities
    - Restrooms
    - Support facilities such as maintenance buildings
    - Natural or preserved areas including unique terrain, floodplains, greenbelts or water features
    - Drinking fountains for people and pets


FREESE NICHOLS
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City of Big Spring, Texas Community Park Service Areas
Little League Ball Fields
Existing Parks
Community Park Area (2 mile radius)
Areas without service
City Limits
ETJ
1-Percent Flood Risk Zones (FEMA)
Streams

Parks and Recreation

Special Use Parks

Special use parks can cover a wide range of facilities and descriptions but are most likely oriented for a single purpose. These types of parks serve the community in many ways including economic development, defining character and promoting community pride. Their activities can include single uses such as performing arts, gardens or a community center. Special use parks generally fall into three categories:

- Social/Cultural/Historic Sites - Plazas, squares, municipal sites or historic sites;
- Recreational Facilities - Senior center, golf course, nature center, community center or aquatic facility; and
- Outdoor Recreational Facilities - Stadium or sports complex for single type event.

Size and Service Area

Special use parks vary in size depending on programming, location and natural features. Generally a destination point, their service area is the entire community.

Special Use Park Example



Locations and Site Selection

Due to the targeted program element of these parks, there are no specific site selection criteria. However, the site should consider existing points of interest and available land. Special use parks should be visible and fit into the community's existing development patterns. Their locations should serve as a hub to surrounding uses.

When possible, new parks and park expansions should consider park visibility from adjacent roadways. In some cases, existing parks could be expanded towards major roadways as a place making technique and revitalization effort.

Development Considerations

- Additional residential input could be considered during design phases.
- Vehicular parking should be required based on the individual park's programming.
- Safe pedestrian access should be provided to the park and as internal circulation.
- Design for special use parks should consider the communities overall character and their impact for economic development.
- Facilities should have aesthetic landscape plantings and trees.
- Park signage should include monument park sign, necessary trail signs and posted administrative requirements.
- Drinking fountains for people and pets.

Regional Parks

Regional Parks are the largest park classification for Big Spring's park system. They provide recreational amenities to the entire community and even serve as a hub for surrounding communities. Often, regional parks help to protect and showcase valuable natural resources such as habitat preserves or bodies of water. Regional parks include a very wide range of active and passive recreation opportunities. They can help to provide those recreational needs not featured at neighborhood or community parks. These types of parks can be an economic generator by attracting visitors from several communities or even other parts of the state.

Size and Service Area

Their sizes should be determined based on intended uses, available lands, natural resources and other special programming requirements. The service area is the entire community.

Locations and Site Selection

Regional park locations are often solely based on available lands to accommodate such large sites. Site selections should consider regional access and convenient wayfinding for visitors. Also, highly visible locations support the greater economic impact regional parks can have.

As with other parks, adequate vehicular access and parking should be provided. The site may include preserve areas for passive recreation but the site's slopes and soils should accommodate safe use for park facilities and allow proper drainage. These parks should incorporate nature features when possible and could be situated along greenbelts to include nature areas and access to adjacent trail systems.



Parks and Recreation

Park Inventory

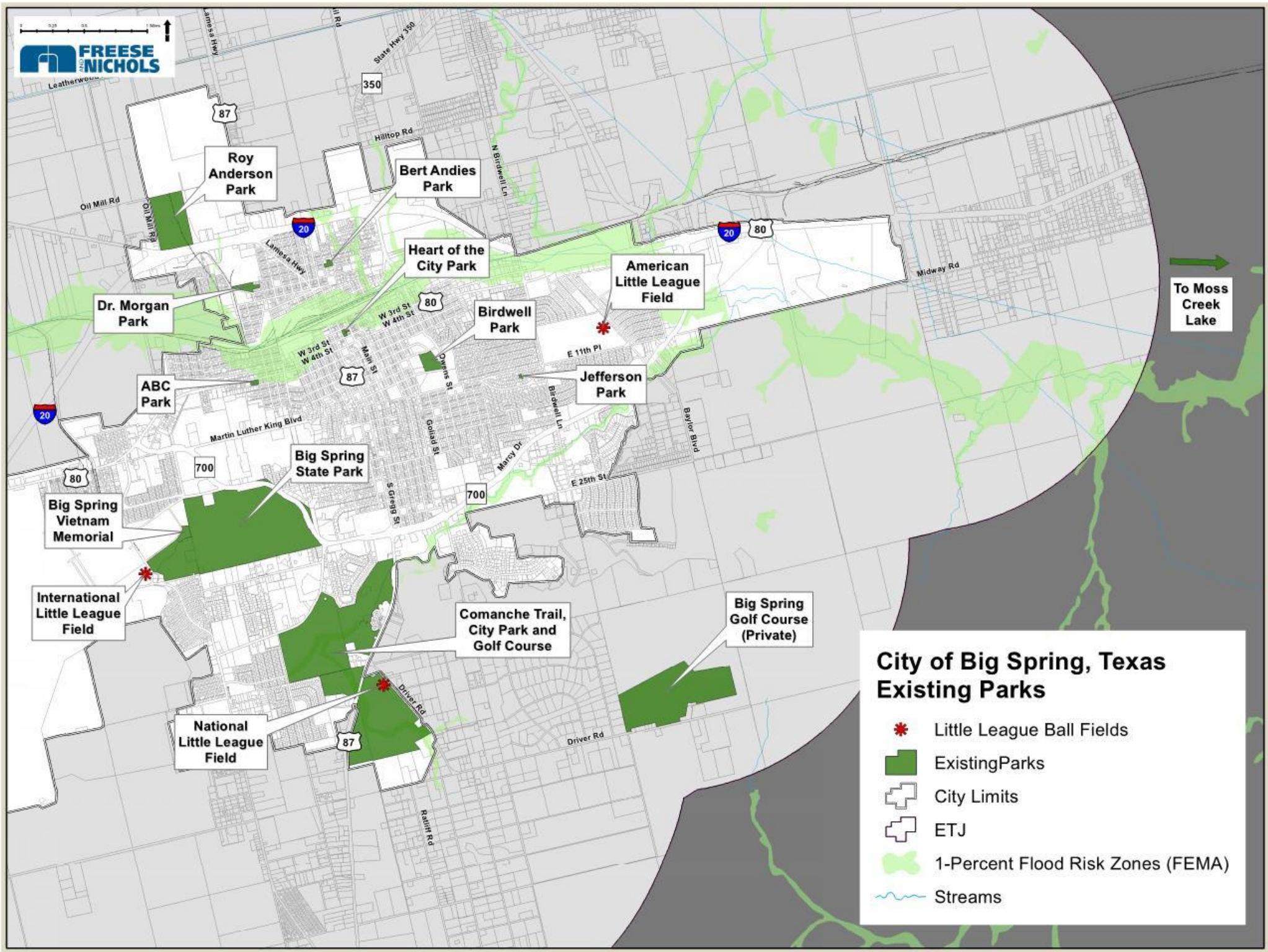
An inventory of all existing recreation sites was conducted through aerial interpretation and existing City data. The city currently has 12 recreation sites. Within this inventory include the existing Big Spring State Park, the Moss Creek Lake area and three little league baseball fields that are not within an existing park. Existing school facilities, private golf and HOA parks are not included. Planning for future livability requires an assessment and understanding of existing recreation facilities. In order to understand deficiencies based on the developed classifications, the following inventory provides a baseline understanding for parks as they existed at the beginning of the comprehensive planning process.

Existing Park Facilities in Big Spring

Existing Recreation Sites		
Park Type	**Number of Parks**	**Total Parkland Acreage**
Mini/Neighborhood Parks	5	27
Community Parks	2	207
Special Use Parks	3	189
Regional Parks*	2	1022
Total	**12**	**1,445**

Existing Park Facilities Assessment

Park Name	Classification	Acreage	Parking	Facility	Trails	Large Pavillion	Restroom	Lake or Pond	Play Area/ Play Equiptment	Basketball Court	Volleyball	Tennis Court	Baseball Field	Softball Field	Football Field	Soccer Field	Water Rec. Center	Golf Course	Frisbee Golf	Camping	Amphitheater
Big Spring Vietnam Memorial	SP	4.00	Yes	City																	
Comanche Trail Golf Course	SP	184.20	Yes	City			Yes											1			
Heart of the City Park	SP	0.50	Yes	City		1	Yes														
Special Use Park Sub Total		**188.70**				**1**												**1**			
ABC Park	NH	3.15		City					1	1			1								
Bert Andries Park	NH	1.20	Yes	City		2			1	1											
Birdwell Park	NH	15.04	Yes	City					1										1		
Dr. Morgan Park	NH	7.50	Yes	City	0.20	2			2	1	1										
Jefferson Park	NH	0.50		City					1												
Mini/Neighborhood Park Sub Total		**27.39**			**0.20**	**4**			**6**	**3**	**1**		**1**						**1**		
Comanche Trail Park	COM	136.00	Yes	City	0.75	7	3	1	5		1	9		1			1			Yes	1
Roy Anderson Park	COM	70.67	Yes	City		2	3						5	5	2	5					
Community Park Sub Total		**206.67**			**0.75**	**9**	**6**	**1**	**5**		**1**	**9**	**5**	**6**	**2**	**5**	**1**				**1**
Moss Creek Lake	REG	640.00	Yes	City		2	Yes	1	1											Yes	
Big Spring State Park	REG	382.00	Yes	State	1.00	1	Yes		1											Yes	
Regional Trails Total		**1022.00**			**1.00**	**3**		**1**	**2**												
Total		**1444.76**			**1.95**	**17**	**6**	**2**	**13**	**3**	**2**	**9**	**6**	**6**	**2**	**5**	**1**	**1**	**1**		**1**


FREESE NICHOLS
Roy Anderson Park
Bert Andies Park
Heart of the City Park
American Little League Field
Dr. Morgan Park
Birdwell Park
Jefferson Park
ABC Park
Big Spring State Park
Big Spring Vietnam Memorial
International Little League Field
Comanche Trail, City Park and Golf Course
Big Spring Golf Course (Private)
National Little League Field
To Moss Creek Lake
Oil Mill Rd
Lamesa Hwy
State Hwy 350
Hilltop Rd
N Birdwell Ln
Midway Rd
W 3rd St
W 4th St
Main St
Owens St
E 11th Pl
Martin Luther King Blvd
Goliad St
Marcy Dr
Birdwell Ln
Baylor Blvd
E 25th St
S Gregg St
Driver Rd
Ratliff Rd
City of Big Spring, Texas
Existing Parks
Little League Ball Fields
ExistingParks
City Limits
ETJ
1-Percent Flood Risk Zones (FEMA)
Streams

Parks and Recreation

Needs Assessment

The needs assessment is a multifaceted analysis used to identify whether parks and trails are being effectively supplied to meet the needs of the community. The data and information being assessed is based upon community input, existing park conditions and facilities. Results are quantified and later matched with available lands and future amenities to ultimately determine current and future needs. The desires and deficiencies identified form the basis for recommendations.

It is often the case that park assessments rely heavily on national standards, but those are only a portion of the overall needs assessment. The needs assessment is part science and part art, having to balance data with community desires. While many national standards appear difficult to apply, they are only a guideline; therefore, this planning effort finds them valuable as a benchmark but will use additional methods of assessment to aid in determining the community's needs.

Assessment Methodologies

This park analysis has employed two methods for assessing current and future park needs. The methods are demand-based and standards-based. The results of the assessment methods are not weighed equally. However, both assessments provide a broad range of planning information that will be blended into the recommendations and priorities, with the most weight applied to the demand-based information.

The needs assessment and recommendations relied heavily on local input, demand-based results, to determine specific amenity types and facilities within parks.

Standards-Based Assessment

The standards-based assessment uses established guidelines set by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and refined for the 2030 Master Plan. A Level of Service (LOS) is described for park types and how they serve the community. LOS figures represent a specific acreage of parkland, facility or number of parks needed per given population or area. Three types of standards were examined.

The first standard is Acreage Level of Service (ALOS) is based on NPRA park acreage and is applied to only the identified park types for Big Spring. The results are expressed as park acreage per 1,000 residents. The ALOS is the standard. A Target Level of Service (TLOS) is defined through refinement of the NPRA standards to better align with the community's goals, local challenges and trends. The TLOS is then used to determine park acreage needs based on existing park acreage, current populations and future populations. The second is a Spatial LOS assessment and identifies LOS-based on spatial distributions. The standards are based on service radius and are illustrated per park type within a specific distance. The Spatial LOS helps to identify underserved areas.

A third type, Facility LOS assessment, was conducted to identify general park facility needs based on refined local standards. This type of assessment projects the needed quantity of a specific facility, i.e. baseball field, per an established local standard. In this case, the 2030 recommended Facility LOS was determined through study of current level of service, NRPA recommendations and by examining similar levels of service for cities throughout Texas.

Acreage Level of Service

It should be noted that a minimum of 10 acres per 1,000 residents as a general rule of thumb has been used in planning for decades. While this is a basic standard and has since been scientifically refined, it remains a nice checkpoint to see if standard assessment are on course. According to the NRPA, close-to-home parks (mini, neighborhood and community) park acreage should be between 6.25 and 10.25 per 1,000 residents.

Recommended Park Level of Service

Park Type	NRPA Recommended Standards Acres per 1,000 Persons	Recommended Size	Recommended Service Area	Recommended Acres per 1,000 Persons
Mini/Neighborhood Park	1.25 to 2.5 acres	1 acres to 10 acres	About 0.5 mile radius	1.5 acres
Community Park	5.0 to 8.0 acres	50.0 acres and greater	About 2.0 mile, multiple neighborhoods	7.0 acres
Sub total	**6.25 to 10.5 acres**			**8.5 acres**
Other Parks				
Special Use Park	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies
Regional Park	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies
Sub total	**5.0 to 10.0 acres**			**10.0 acres**
TOTAL	**11.25 to 20.5 acres**			**18.5 acres**

For close-to-home park types, the current level of service for Big Spring is approximately 8.35 acres per 1,000 persons. Based on input during this process and other park assessments and coverage analysis, it is recommended that the close-to-home parks ALOS be increased to 8.50 acres per 1,000 persons (1.5 acres for mini/neighborhood parks and 7.0 acres for community). The 8.50 acres per 1,000 residents would include mini, neighborhood and community park types. When compared to similar cities across Texas, Big Spring's recommended TLOS for park acres is in the middle or high-end and are appropriate based on current LOS.

When combined with other park types (special use and regional parks) an additional 10.0 acres per 1,000 residents is recommended. The overall park service level for Big Spring is recommended at 18.5 acres per 1,000 persons.

Parks and Recreation

Parkland Service Levels

Based on the recommended TLOS, The table below takes Big Spring's 2030 established TLOS a step further to identify park acreages needed for the current populations. The current are based on the baseline analysis' growth projections. The Current Levels of Service (CLOS) for close-to-home parks area 8.35 acres per 1,000 residents, just below the recommend 8.5 acres. Big Spring's other park type category has a CLOS of 43.24 acres per 1,000 residents, and extremely high service level and well beyond the recommended 10.0 acres per 1,000. It is obvious based on pure park acreage that Big Spring is currently well served at 51.59 acres per 1,000 residents.

In the close-to-home park category, for the current population of 28,000, 238.00 acres are needed consisting of 42.00 acres for mini/neighborhood parks and 196.00 acres of community parks. In the other parks category, 280.00 acres are needed for the current population. This results in a total of 518.00 acres of parkland needed to meet current demands. Again, based on pure acreage, Big Spring is currently meeting 18.5 acre per 1,000 goal.

Big Spring Park Needs Assessment

Park Type	Existing Park Acres	NRPA Recommended Acres per 1,000 Persons (ALOS)	Current Level of Service per 1,000 Persons (CLOS)*	Recommended Acres per 1,000 Persons (TLOS)	TLOS Park Acres Needed for Existing Population*
Close-To-Home Park					
Mini/Neighborhood Park	27.39 acres	1.25 to 2.5 acres	0.97 acres	1.50 acres	42.00 acres
Community Park	206.67 acres	5.00 to 8.00 acres	7.38 acres	7.00 acres	196.00 acres
Sub Total	**234.06 acres**	**6.25 to 10.00 acres**	**8.35 acres**	**8.50 acres**	**238.00 acres**
Other Parks					
Special Use Park	188.70 acres	Varies	6.74 acres	Varies	Varies
Regional Park	1,022.00 acres	Varies	36.5 acres	Varies	Varies
Sub Total	**1,210.70 acres**	**5.00 to 10.00 acres**	**43.24 acres**	**10.00 acres**	**280.00 acres**
Total	**1,444.76 acres**	**11.25 to 20.00 acres**	**51.59 acres**	**18.50 acres**	**518.00 acres**

Close-to-Home Parkland Acreage Needed to Close the Gap

The table below examines Current Level of Service (CLOS) and TLOS for close-to-home park categories in order to determine land acquisition needs. Big Spring's existing population has a CLOS of 8.35 acres per 1,000 persons for mini, neighborhood and community parks combined. This shows that mini/ neighborhood parks are below the recommended standards while community parks are currently meeting park acres needed. Based on the TLOS, mini/neighborhood parks will have a deficiency of 16.75 acres by 2020. The table also projects a total of 28.83 acres deficient by 2025 in total. Based on this chapter's standards; Big Spring would be short approximately three mini/neighborhood by 2025. Community parks acquisition is not needed.

Park Acreage Needs

Close-To-Home Park Type	Existing Park Acres	Current Level of Service per 1,000 Persons (CLOS)*	Recommended Acres per 1,000 Persons (TLOS)	TLOS Park Acres Needed for 2020 Population	Total Acres Needed to Acquire to Meeting 2020 TLOS	TLOS Park Acres Needed for 2025 Population	Total Acres Needed to Acquire to Meeting 2025 TLOS
Mini/Neighborhood Park	27.39 acres	0.97 acres	1.50 acres	44.14 acres	16.75 acres	46.39 acres	19.00 acres
Community Park	206.67 acres	7.38 acres	7.00 acres	205.99 acres	(0.68) acres	216.50 acres	9.83 acres
TOTAL	**234.06 acres**	**8.35 acres**	**8.50 acres**	**250.13 acres**	**16.07 acres**	**262.89 acres**	**28.83 acres**

Parks and Recreation

Facility Level of Service

Big Spring's facilities were equated to NRPA and comparable cities standards. This Facility LOS is used to determine current and future needs by defining how many people are serviced by a particular amenity type. An example would be one soccer field per 6,000 residents. Big Spring's Facility LOS was determined by examining LOS recommended in NRPA standards, existing public demand, current LOS and by studying the facility standards for similar cities. The recommended TOL for this community was then adjusted and a target number of facilities were projected for the 2020 and 2025 populations. These projected numbers of facilities needed per amenity types identify deficiencies or gaps in future service. This is critical information for park staff to identify how future parks funding will be invested and how existing and future parks will be improved.

Note: This facility assessment does not include the needs for renovation and redevelopment of existing equipment and facilities.

Big Spring Amenity/Facility Analysis

Facilities Analysis					
Facility	**Existing Facilities**	**Current Level of Service**	**Recommended Total Level of Service**	**2020 Target Number of Facilities (Current Gap in Parentheses)**	**2025 Target Number of Facilities (Current Gap in Parentheses)**
Soccer Fields	5	1/5,600	1/6,000	5 (0)	5 (0)
Softball Fields	6	1/4,600	1/5,000	6 (0)	6 (0)
Baseball Fields	9	1/3,111	1/5,000	6 (0)	6 (0)
Football Fields	2	1/14,000	1/15,000	1 (0)	2 (0)
Disc Golf Course	1	1/28,000	1/30,000	1 (0)	1 (0)
Swimming Pools	1	1/28,000	1/30,000	1 (0)	1 (0)
Large Pavilion	17	1/1,647	1/2,000	15 (0)	15 (0)
Play Area	13	1/2,154	1/2,000	15 (2)	15 (2)
Tennis Courts	9	1/3,111	1/5,000	6 (0)	6 (0)
Basketball	3	1/9,333	1/10,000	3 (0)	3 (0)
Volleyball area	2	1/14,000	1/10,000	3 (1)	3 (1)
Amphitheater	1	1/28,000	1/30,000	0 (0)	0 (0)
Trails	1.95 miles	1 mile per 14,359	1 mile per 10,000	2.94 (0.99)	3.09 (1.14)

Comparable Level of Service Provisions

Comparable Facilities Level of Service					
Facility	**Lewisville**	**Rowlett**	**Midland**	**Mckinney**	**Frisco**
Soccer Fields	1/5,000	1/3,000	N/A	1/5,000	1/4,000
Softball Fields	1/13,500	1/5,000	N/A	1/12,000	1/2,500
Baseball Fields	1/6,500	1/4,000	N/A	1/8,000	1/2,500
Football Fields	1/15,000	1/25,000	1/20,000	1/60,000	1/20,000
Disc Golf Course	1/30,000	N/A	N/A	1 hole per 4,500	N/A
Swimming Pools	N/A	1/20,000	1/20,000	1/20,000 aquatic center outdoor 1/85,000 indoor aquatic	1/20,000, aquatic center 1/50,000
Pavilion	1/3,500	1/4,000	1/2,000	1/2,000	1/3,000
Playgrounds	1/3,500	1/1,000	1/1,000	1/2,000	1/1,000
Tennis Courts	1/6,000	1/3,000	1/2,000	1/8,000	1/2,000
Multi-use Courts	N/A	1/3,000	N/A	1/25,000	N/A
Volleyball court (sand)	N/A	1/8,000	1/5,000	1/25,000 sand	1/7,000 court, 1/5,000 sand
Amphitheater	1/55,000	N/A	N/A	1/75,000	N/A
Trails	1 mile per 3,500	1 mile per 2,000	1 mile per 10,000	1 mile hard trail per 2,500 and 1 mile of soft trail per 5,000	1 mile hard trail per 4,000 and 1 mile of soft trail per 10,000

Conclusions

Generally, service gaps for 2020 and 2025 are not projected for much of the facility types. In terms of total park acreage, the City greatly exceeds national standards. The focus, therefore, should not be on the acquisition of new park spaces but rather on improving and enhancing the City's current facilities.

Parks and Recreation

Recommendations

Big Spring's parks and trail needs to not only respond to future demands but also should address current park facility conditions and the existing populations' needs. The overall park service level is currently 51.59 acres per 1,000 residents, above set national standards. While additional park acreage is not needed in Big Spring based upon this analysis, mini/neighborhood park service levels and coverage should be enhanced.

Parks and trails are part of a service hierarchy system. Mini/neighborhood parks are Big Spring's base unit but Community Parks provide critical service areas for a majority of the city. Community parks provide recreational opportunities to the entire City region. With the service levels established, it is vital to connect residents to major destination points. Existing off street and future trails will provide access to destination points and promote natural areas. While expectations have been established, these parks and trails should not be viewed as minimum standards but rather essential elements to fulfill the community's needs.

Top Priority Park Recommendations
1. Provide increase trails
2. Make improvements to existing parks, repair and update existing facilities
3. Acquire new parkland and increase mini/neighborhood parks in most underserviced areas
4. Consider new park signage to provide continuity between sites
5. Provided new facilities based on identified deficiencies: a. Trails b. Volleyball c. Play areas
6. Increase park funding and annual budget and continue to provide exceptional park maintenance
7. Continue to explore alternative funding opportunities

Focus Areas for Improved Parks and Trails

Increase Trail with Focus on Expanding Existing Trails and Creating New Loop Trails at Strategic Locations

Trails were a top priority identified by the community during public input and the needs assessment. The key concept for Big Spring's trails is to improve trails at Comanche Trail Park. This should include trail surface enhancements and trail extensions. As a secondary trail implementation priority, Birdwell Park's size and natural setting has great potential for a new 1/2 mile loop around the park.

Provide Updates, Repairs, and Renovations to Existing Parks

The operation of improving existing parks a will need to be overseen by park staff with this document serving as a resource. It will require steadfast commitments from elected and appointed officials to make certain appropriate funding is provided.

Mini/neighborhood and community parks are the foundation for the park system. Both provide important close-to-home amenities for their surrounding residential areas. Due to their existing age and facility conditions, it is time to reinvest in these vital community assets. In general, community parks are in better condition than neighborhoods parks in the community. The fair to poor quality of existing mini/neighborhood parks, along with other City efforts to revitalize residential areas, form the foundation for the recommendation to focus on improving existing neighborhood parks.

Parks & Recreation

The following are general strategies related to each of the community's parks.

Big Spring Vietnam Memorial

- Increase general maintenance
- Update site furnishing such as benches and trash receptacles
- Provide updated landscaping and trees
- Provide updated park signage to match other parks

Comanche Trail Golf Course

- Continue general maintenance and operations
- Update site furnishing such as benches and trash receptacles
- Provide updated landscaping and trees
- Provide updated park signage to match other parks

Heart of the City Park

- Continue general maintenance
- Continue to use as highly programmed area to increase visitors to downtown
- Provide updated landscaping and trees
- Provide updated park signage to match other parks

ABC Park

- Increase general maintenance
- Update play equipment and fall surface
- Resurface parking area
- Provide new perimeter fencing, backstop and new basketball fencing at greater distance from court surface
- Update site furnishing such as benches and trash receptacles
- Provide updated landscaping and trees
- Consider shade structure on play equipment
- Consider new pavilion for family events
- Provide updated park signage to match other parks



Parks and Recreation

Bert Andres Park

- Increase general maintenance
- Update older play equipment and provide fall surface
- Consider removing pool facility and replacing with open play area or additional court games
- Update site furnishing such as benches, tables and trash receptacles
- Provide updated landscaping and trees
- Consider shade structure on play equipment
- Consider updates to existing pavilions
- Provide updated park signage to match other parks

Birdwell Park

- Increase general maintenance
- Resurface parking area
- Update older play equipment and improve fall surface
- Update site furnishing such as benches, tables and trash receptacles
- Provide updated landscaping and trees but maintain nature character
- Provide trails for walking and jogging
- Consider shade structure on play equipment
- Provide updated park signage to match other parks

Dr. Morgan Park

- Increase general maintenance
- Update older play equipment and provide fall surface
- Consider removing pool facility and replacing with open play area or additional court games
- Update site furnishing such as benches, tables and trash receptacles
- Provide updated landscaping and trees
- Consider shade structure on play equipment
- Repair volleyball area
- Provide updated park signage to match other parks

Jefferson Park

- Increase general maintenance
- Update older play equipment and provide fall surface
- Update site furnishing such as benches, tables and trash receptacles
- Provide updated landscaping and trees
- Consider shade structure on play equipment
- Provide updated park signage to match other parks

Comanche Trail Park

- Increase general maintenance
- Update older play equipment and provide fall surface
- Update site furnishing such as benches, tables and trash receptacles
- Provide updated landscaping and trees
- Consider shade structure on play equipment
- Update older pavilions and restroom buildings
- Provide general trail maintenance
- Provide updated park signage to match other parks

Roy Anderson Park

- Continue general maintenance
- Continue to use as highly programmed area to increase out of town visitors
- Consider long term to increase landscaping and trees
- Consider the addition of a play area with fall surface

Moss Creek Lake

- Continue general maintenance
- Update older play equipment and provide fall surface
- Update site furnishing such as benches, tables and trash receptacles
- Update older pavilions and restroom buildings
- Consider new park and wayfinding signage

Acquire New Parkland and Increase Mini/Neighborhood Parks in Most Underserviced Areas

Existing community parks provided full service coverage to the entire City. It is unlikely an additional community park will be needed in the near future. This isn't to suggest the existing community park do not need continued maintenance and updates to outdated facilities.

Mini/neighborhood parks are in need of a different service level focus. While the entire City is well served by parks based on facility and acres. Close-to-home type parks, on the other hand, have service level gaps. Over the next five to ten years, two to three new mini/neighborhood parks are recommended in the neighborhoods without current service. New neighborhood parks should be smaller in size, likely one to five acres, and should be highly accessible from existing homes. They will likely include areas for open play, playscape equipment and smaller passive areas.

Parks and Recreation

Advance Funding and Sources

Big Spring's current recreation budget is targeted at maintenance cost only. The existing budget does not include funds for new parks, significant park improvements or expanded trails. Based on the Comprehensive Plan process and community input, parks are a vital part of community livability. For parks and recreation to remain prominent for its citizens, increases to the annual park budget for parks must be realized.

Small increases to the annual park budget are need to accomplish even minor upgrades such as resurfacing parking lots, repairing facilities and replacing outdated equipment. Conversely, significant budget increases are needed to expand the City's parks, meet resident's expectations and improve visitor's perceptions.

Additional sources of park revenue need to be assessed. A multi-tool approach is recommended, in which multiple strategies, funding sources and partnerships are employed in order to collectively work to achieve the desired results. A range of strategies may be appropriate within a given location.

General Funds

This source of funding is supported by ad valorem tax revenues and is generally the primary source of funds for maintenance and operation of the existing park system. The general fund is also the source for projects requiring smaller amounts of capital investment. Although projects funded by this source make a small annual contribution to the expansion of the park system, analysis over a number of years usually reflects a major accomplishment in improvements to the park system. It is important to include funding for on-going maintenance and staff requirements for new trail and park improvements.

Economic Development Corporation

Economic Development Corporations (EDC) are often utilized in communities as a means of concentrating resources towards economic development and creating new jobs. The advantages to EDCs are that they may exist as a public entity (directly associated with municipal government) or may exist as a non-profit organization. EDCs may be created to promote and attract economic development for the City as a whole, or they may be created to specifically address issues within a particular neighborhood or area within the community. EDCs often receive funding from both public and private sources, such as funding by Type A and Type B sales tax revenues, and essentially act as an ambassador for the area that they serve. Advocacy and proactive outreach are important functions of EDCs in their attempt to explain and reach out to potential development and provide reasons and offer incentives for choosing to locate within the identified area.

Bonds

Bonds are generally the most common source used by cities for the purchase of land and for providing development monies. Debt financing through the issuance of municipal bonds is one of the most common ways in which to fund park, recreation and open space projects. This type of funding is a strategy wherein a City issues a bond, receives an immediate cash payment to finance projects, and must repay the bond with interest over a set period of time ranging from a few years to several decades.

A General Obligation Bond is amortized using ad valorem taxes and is used for the funding of capital projects which are not supported by a revenue source. These projects include water service, sanitary sewer service, and park acquisition and development. The availability of bonding for parks is often dependent upon the overall municipal needs financed by this source. Capital items such as purchase of land and physical improvements with a usable life expectancy of 15 to 20 years can be funded with general obligation bonds.

A revenue bond finances projects which produce enough revenue to retire their debt, such as golf courses, batting cages and enterprise-oriented park projects.

Developer Requirements
This involves requiring new development to provide a dedication of land for parks (or fee-in-lieu of land), park development fees, and trail rights-of-way or easements to offset the City's costs.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Outdoor Recreation Grants
This grant provides 50% matching grant funds to municipalities, counties, MUDs and other local units of government with populations less than 500,000 to acquire and develop parkland or to renovate existing public recreation areas. Eligible sponsors include cities, counties, MUDs, river authorities, and other special districts. Projects must be completed within three years of approval.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Indoor Recreation Grants
This grant provides 50% matching grant funds to municipalities, counties, MUDs and other local units of government with populations less than 500,000 to construct recreation centers, nature centers and other indoor recreation-related buildings.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Community Outdoor Outreach Program (CO-OP) Grants
The CO-OP grant helps to introduce under-served populations to the services, programs, and sites of Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. This is not a land acquisition or construction grant; this is only for programs. Grants are awarded to non-profit organizations, schools, municipalities, counties, cities, and other tax-exempt groups. Funds may be used for direct program costs for outdoor recreation or environmental education and conservation programs.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Recreational Trail Grants
TPWD administers the National Recreational Trails Fund in Texas under the approval of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). This federally funded program receives its funding from a portion of federal gas taxes paid on fuel used in non-highway recreational vehicles.

Private Donations
This source of financial assistance would usually come from a citizen, organization, or business which has an interest in assisting with the development of the park system. Land dedication is not an uncommon occurrence when property is being developed. The location of a neighborhood park within a residential development offers additional value to residential units within that neighborhood, especially if the residential development is occupied by younger families with children. Once property is acquired through this method, the City should be prepared to improve the facility for use within a reasonable length of time.

Private donations may also be received in the form of funds, facilities, recreation equipment, art or in-kind services. Donations from local and regional businesses as sponsors for events or facilities should be pursued. A Parks Improvement Trust Fund may be set up to manage donations by service organizations, benevolent citizens, willed estates and other donated sources. The purpose of this trust is to establish a permanent source of principal value that will increase as donations occur. The principal cannot be decreased; however, the annual interest can be used for park development.

Public Improvements District (P.I.D.)
When authorized by City Council in compliance with state laws, new developments can establish a Public Improvement District (P.I.D.). As a taxing district, the P.I.D. provides funds specifically for the operation and maintenance of public facilities such as parks and major boulevards.

Parks and Recreation

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (T.I.R.Z.)

A T.I.R.Z. is a tool used by local governments to finance public improvements in a defined area as approved by the City Council. When an area is designated as a T.I.R.Z. district, the tax base is frozen at the current level. As development occurs within the T.I.R.Z., the increased value of property, or the tax increment, is captured. The tax increments are posted to a separate fund to finance public improvements within the district.

Partnership with the School District and County

The City should investigate opportunities to share park facilities and their associated cost with both the local school districts and counties. The City, school districts and County have many common goals. Additionally, assets and costs can be shared between the entities to help meet each entity's specific needs. For example, the City may purchase land next to future school site and a school district may install the facilities, such as a playground, which can be enjoyed by the entire community. As a result, the entire community benefits because each entity can generally save tax dollars than if a park site is developed individually.



IMPLEMENTATION

The City of Big Spring has taken an important leadership role in defining its future, with the adoption of this 2030 Comprehensive Plan. The importance of long-range planning can never be overstated—planning provides for the protection of private property and ensures future development occurs in a coordinated and organized fashion, consistent with this Plan. The future of Big Spring will be shaped in part with the policies and recommendations developed herein. Decisions will be made based on what is outlined in this Plan that will influence many aspects of the city's built and social environments. The Plan will therefore provide a vitally important tool for City staff and civic leaders to use in making sound planning decisions regarding the long-term growth and development of Big Spring. The future quality of life in Big Spring will be substantially influenced by the manner in which the Plan recommendations are administered and maintained.

Planning for the City's future should be a continuous process, and this Plan is designed to be a dynamic tool that can be modified and periodically updated in order for to keep it in tune with changing conditions and trends. Changes in Big Spring's economic climate and in development trends that were not anticipated during preparation of the Plan will most definitely occur from time to time, and therefore subsequent adjustments will be required. Elements of the city that were treated in terms of a general relationship to the overall area may, in the future, require more specific and detailed attention.

Plan policies and recommendations may be put into effect through adopted development regulations, such as those related to zoning and subdivisions, and through capital improvement programs. Many recommendations within the Plan can be implemented through simple refinement of existing City regulations or processes, while others may require the establishment of new regulations, programs, or processes. This final section of the Comprehensive Plan describes specific ways in which Big Spring can take the recommendations within this plan from vision to reality.

Proactive and Reactive Implementation

There are two primary methods of plan implementation: proactive and reactive methods. To successfully implement the 2030 Comprehensive Plan and fully realize its benefits, both methods must be used in an effective manner. Both proactive and reactive actions that could be used by decision makers are described within this Implementation chapter.

Examples of proactive methods include:

- Establishing or updating subdivision regulations;
- Establishing or updating zoning regulations; and
- Developing a capital improvements program (CIP), by which the City expends funds to finance public improvements to meet objectives cited within the Plan.

Examples of reactive methods include:

- Approving a rezoning application submitted by a property owner consistent with the Comprehensive Plan;
- Site plan review; and
- Subdivision review.

IMPLEMENTATION

Roles of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan

Guide for Daily Decision-Making

The current physical layout of the city is a product of previous efforts put forth by many diverse individuals and groups. In the future, each new development that takes place, whether a subdivision that is platted, a home that is built, or a new school, church or shopping center that is constructed, represents an addition to Big Spring's physical form. The composite of all such efforts and facilities creates the city as it is seen and experienced by its citizens and visitors. If planning is to be effective, it must guide each and every individual development decision. The City, in its daily decisions pertaining to whether to surface a street, to approve a residential plat, to amend a zoning ordinance provision, to enforce the building codes, or to construct a new utility line, should always refer to the basic proposals outlined within the Comprehensive Plan. The private builder or investor, likewise, should recognize the broad concepts and policies of the Plan so that their efforts become part of a meaningful whole in planning the city.

Flexible and Alterable Guide

This 2030 Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a dynamic planning d-ocument for Big Spring – one that responds to changing needs and conditions. Plan amendments should not be made without thorough analysis of immediate needs, as well as consideration for long-term effects of proposed amendments. The City Council and other City officials should consider each proposed amendment carefully to determine whether it is consistent with the Plan's goals and policies, and whether it will be beneficial for the long-term health and vitality of Big Spring.

Annual Review

At one-year intervals, a periodic review of the Plan with respect to current conditions and trends should be performed. Such on-going, scheduled evaluations will provide a basis for adjusting capital expenditures and priorities, and will reveal changes and additions that should be made to the Plan in order to keep it current and applicable long-term. It would be appropriate to devote one annual meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission to reviewing the status and continued applicability of the Plan in light of current conditions, and to prepare a report on these findings to the City Council. Those items that appear to need specific attention should be examined in more detail, and changes and/or additions should be made accordingly. By such periodic evaluations, the Plan will remain functional, and will continue to give civic leaders effective guidance in decision-making. Periodic reviews of the plan should include consideration of the following:

- The City's progress in implementing the Plan;
- Changes in conditions that form the basis of the Plan;
- Community support for the Plan's goals, objectives & policies; and
- Changes in State laws.

The full benefits of the Plan for Big Spring can only be realized by maintaining it as a vital, up-to-date document. As changes occur and new issues within the city become apparent, the Plan should be revised rather than ignored. By such action, the Plan will remain current and effective in meeting the City's decision-making needs.

Complete Review and Update with Public Participation

In addition to periodic annual reviews, the 2030 Comprehensive Plan should undergo a complete, more thorough review and update every 5 or 10 years. The review and updating process should begin with the establishment of an Advisory Committee, similar to the one that was appointed to assist in the preparation of this Plan. If possible, this committee or the Planning and Zoning Commission should be in charge of periodic review of the Plan. Specific input on major changes should be sought from various groups, including property owners, neighborhood groups, civic leaders and developers and business owners.

Regulatory Mechanisms

The usual processes for reviewing and processing zoning amendments, development plans, and subdivision plans provide significant opportunities for implementing the 2030 Comprehensive Plan. Each zoning, development and subdivision decision should be evaluated and weighed against applicable proposals contained within the Plan. If decisions are made that are inconsistent with Plan recommendations, then they should include actions to modify or amend the Plan accordingly in order to ensure consistency and fairness in future decision-making. Amending the Subdivision Ordinance and Zoning Ordinance represent two major proactive measures that the City can take to implement Comprehensive Plan recommendations.

Zoning Ordinance

Zoning is perhaps the single most powerful tool for implementing Plan recommendations. The City's Zoning Ordinance should be updated with the recommendations contained within the chapters of this 2030 Comprehensive Plan. All zoning and land use changes should be made within the context of existing land uses, future land uses, and planned infrastructure, including roadways, water and wastewater.

Zoning Text Amendments

Consideration should be given to updating areas of the Zoning Ordinance that may allow ideas, principles or design standards identified within this 2030 Comprehensive Plan to be more easily achieved. Their implementation will not only improve future development and interaction between land uses, but will also improve Big Spring's overall image and livability. Such changes may involve landscaping setbacks, non-residential building design, and additional tree requirements, to name a few. These recommendations should be itemized and prioritized, and should be incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance accordingly.

Zoning Map Amendments

State law gives power to cities to regulate the use of land, but regulations should be based on a plan. Therefore, Big Spring's Zoning Map should be as consistent as possible with the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, specifically the Future Land Use Plan component. It is not reasonable, however, to recommend that the City make large-scale changes in its Zoning Map immediately. It is therefore recommended that the City prioritize areas where a change in current zoning is needed in the short-term and that efforts be concentrated on making such changes. In the long-term, consistent zoning policy in conformance with the Future Land Use Plan will achieve the City's preferred land use pattern over time.

Subdivision Ordinance

The act of subdividing land to create building sites has a major effect on the overall design and image of Big Spring. Much of the basic physical form of the city is currently created by the layout of streets, easements, and lots. In the future, the basic physical form of Big Spring will be further affected by such action. Requirements for adequate public facilities are essential to ensure the city's orderly and efficient growth. Plan recommendations related to the subdivision and layout of land should be incorporated within the Subdivision Ordinance.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation Goals and Objectives

Implementation is one of the most important, yet most difficult, aspects of the comprehensive planning process. Without viable, realistic strategies for implementation, the recommendations contained within this 2030 Comprehensive Plan will be difficult to realize.

Land Use

Land Use	Priority			Lead
	First	Second	Ongoing	
Re-Establish a Building Removal Program for Dilapidated Structures to Improve Community Aesthetics				Planning
Revise the Subdivision Ordinance for Updated Standards				Planning
Create a Land Banking Program to Assemble Vacant Areas in the Core for Redevelopment Projects				Planning
Create Outside Storage Screening Standards				Planning
Work with Big Spring EDC to Facilitate and Market Tax/Economic Incentives for Targeted Business				City Manager
Update Multifamily Design Standards and Encourage Multifamily Development for Workforce Housing, Especially within Downtown Big Spring				Planning
Revise and Restructure Zoning Ordinance				Planning
Target Areas for Rezoning to Reduce Inconsistencies Between the Zoning Ordinance and Future Land Use Plan Map				Planning & City Council
Remove Cumulative Zoning Criteria from Zoning Ordinance during Revision Process				Planning & City Council
Select and Purchase Municipal Complex Site within the Downtown Area				City Manager & City Council
Ensure Periodic Review of Comprehensive Plan by the Planning & Zoning Commission so that Plan Remains Relevant and Updated				Planning & Zoning
Ensure Periodic Review of Implementation Strategies by City Staff				City Manager
Continue Coordination between the City, Howard County and Big Spring Independent School District				City Manager

Transportation

Transportation	Priority			Lead
	First	Second	Ongoing	
Continue Working Relationship with TxDOT on Roadway Improvements and Reconfigurations to Interstate 20, Business 20 and Highway 87			■	Public Works & Planning
Create a Pavement Management Program to Maintain Data on Roadway Conditions and Replacement Needs	■			Public Works
Create a Street Rehabilitation Plan to Prioritize Funding for Street Rehabilitation		■		Public Works
Continue Efforts to Bring Ports-to-Plains Corridor Through Big Spring by Maintaining Active Representation in Discussions and Committees			■	City Manager & City Council
Update the Roadway Design Standards to Reduce Collector and Local Street Widths		■		Public Works
Update the City's Roadway Classifications and Right-of-Way Standards	■			Public Works
Create Complete Street Connections Utilizing Goliad and Martin Luther King as Community Connectors		■		Planning & Streets
Create a List of Traffic Calming Devices for use within Big Spring, Particularly Within Neighborhood Areas	■			Planning & Streets
Incorporate Access Management Requirements into the Subdivision Ordinance	■			Planning
Incorporate Cross-Access Easements into the Subdivision Ordinance	■			
Ensure Pedestrian Facilities are Included in New Roadway Projects and that Sidewalks are Added to Existing Streets			■	Planning & Streets
Ensure that 1% of Roadway Project Funding is Allocated for Aesthetic Enhancements	■			City Council & Public Works

IMPLEMENTATION

Livability

Livability	Priority			Lead
	First	Second	Ongoing	
Improve Entryways into Big Spring and Create Gateways Along Interstate 20				Planning
Market the City's Environmental Assets and Outdoor Recreational Opportunities for Tourism				Parks & Big Spring Chamber
Re-Create a Clean Alley Program				Planning & Code Enforcement
Establish a Tree Planting Program utilizing Native and West Texas Appropriate Vegetation				Planning
Preserve Escarpment Areas as Natural Features and Limit Development in the Escarpment Zones				Planning
Build Community Support for the Keep Big Spring Beautiful Campaign and Encourage "Adopt a Median" Programs				Planning, Streets & City Council
Provide Recreational Options for Residents of All Ages Utilizing Parks, Trails and Hike/Bike Facilities				Parks
Repair City Auditorium and Market the Venue for Concerts and Festivals to Bring Activity Back Downtown				City Manager
Create an Official Marketing Plan and Website for the Use of City Auditorium				City Manager
Encourage and Facilitate Community Activities and Entertainment Options in Downtown Big Spring				Planning & Parks
Create a Marketing Plan for the Bankhead Highway and Provide Information and History on Downtown Big Spring's Attractions, Buildings and Historical Features				Planning & Chamber of Commerce
Utilize Howard College to Provide Continuing Educational Opportunities for Retirees and Veterans				Community Services
Update all Design Standards in Zoning Ordinance to Improve Aesthetics in New Construction				Planning
Update Building Material Standards for New Construction in Big Spring				Planning

Create a Building Design Menu for Developers Providing Flexibility and Options for Building Design	■		Planning
Create Metal Building Masonry Standard Requirements for Highly Visible Areas and Corridors	■		Planning
Create a Landscaping Ordinance Using Native and West Texas Appropriate Vegetation	■		Planning
Create a Sign Ordinance and Offer Incentives for Sign Replacement along Highway 87		■	Planning
Develop Oil & Gas Screening Standards for Oil and Gas Facilities	■		Planning
Amend and Raise the Manufactured Home Standards and Prohibit New Manufactured Homes as Infill within Core Neighborhoods	■		Planning
Create an Infill Housing Program Providing Incentives for Infill Housing and Market the Program at a Regional Level	■		Planning & City Manager
Develop a Community Brand and Theme and Ensure that All Aesthetic Enhancements to Corridors and Streets Match the Community Brand		■	City Manager

IMPLEMENTATION

Infrastructure

Infrastructure	Priority			Lead
	First	Second	Ongoing	
Create a Water Conservation Program to Encourage Water Conservation in Landscaping				Public Works
Create a Water and Wastewater System Master Plan to Assess Deficiencies, Needs and Funding				Public Works
Reduce Infrastructure Sizing Requirements				Public Works
Consider a Joint Facility for City, County and Law Enforcement Offices				Fire, Police & City Council
Select and Purchase a Site for a Modern City Hall				City Council
Create Incentives and Rebates for Infrastructure Improvements, Particularly in Core Areas				City Manager
Develop a Comprehensive Mapping System in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for the City's Water, Wastewater and Stormwater Systems				Public Works
Develop a Prioritized List of Infrastructure Line Replacements as part of a Capital Improvement Program				Public Works & Finance
Evaluate Capital Improvement List and Determine Which Projects can be Performed In-House and Which Require a Consultant				Public Works
Renew Capital Improvement Program Funding and Consider a Bond Election for Significant Capital Improvements and Neighborhood Revitalization Efforts				Public Works

Housing

Housing	Priority			Lead
	First	Second	Ongoing	
Utilize Foreclosed Lots for Affordable Housing & Development Incentives				Planning
Encourage Innovative Residential Development Layout Designs Such as Traditional Neighborhood Design				Planning
Create a Neighborhood Beautification Program and Offer Participation Incentives Such as Porch Improvement Contests				Planning
Create and Maintain a Listing of Vacant and Dilapidated Buildings for Public Safety				Planning
Facilitate the Formation of Neighborhood Organizations				Planning
Inspect Rental Properties at Water Change for Property Maintenance Compliance				Code Enforcement & Permits
Facilitate the Coordination of Community Organizations and their Respective Services				Planning
Designate a Central Grant Writer for Housing and Neighborhood Issues				City Manager
Determine Five Potential State or Federal Housing Grants for Pursuit and Submit Applications within 3 Years				Planning
Require Masonry on the Front of All New Residential Structures				Planning
Organize Quarterly Home Repair Volunteer Events				Planning & Community Services
Develop Incentives for Major and Minor Home Repairs and Yard Improvements				Planning
Develop a Methodical Housing Demolition Program				Planning
Create a Housing Prototype for Core Infill Areas Based on Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) Architectural Features				Planning

IMPLEMENTATION

Downtown

Downtown	Priority			Lead
	First	Second	Ongoing	
Convert 3rd and 4th Streets to Two-Way Facilities				Streets & Planning
Continue Demolition of Dilapidated Structures in Downtown and Core Neighborhoods				Planning & Code Enforcement
Ensure that Key Historic Structures are Preserved and Enhanced				Planning
Continue Downtown Beautification Efforts				City Council, City Manager & Planning
Create an Inventory of Downtown Parking Facilities and Ensure Adequate Signage to Such Facilities				Streets
Create a Downtown Art Program for Public Art and Murals in Visible Areas				Planning
Build an Active Downtown Park/Plaza for Downtown Events Between City Hall and City Auditorium				Planning
Create a Housing Incentive Program for Multifamily Housing in and Around Downtown Big Spring				Planning
Develop a Detailed Downtown Master Plan for Specific Development, Redevelopment and Infill Requirements				Planning
Create a Downtown Tax Increment Financing District to Support Redevelopment and Rehabilitation Efforts				Planning
Allow Temporary and Transitional Uses that Generate Activity and Provide Entertainment				Planning
Encourage the Creative Use of Existing Structures, Including Dilapidated Structures				Planning
Create Downtown Design Standards to Ensure that New Development is Compatible with and Respects Key Historic Buildings				Planning

Five Bold Steps

The strategies, guidelines and recommendations contained within this comprehensive plan intended to help the City take its next steps forward. The lists of recommendations and strategies can often seem daunting and it is not expected that the City will be able to accomplish every recommendation listed previously.

In our own lives, the first few steps we take towards a goal are often the most difficult and the comprehensive plan is no different. If the City were to attempt to tackle each and every recommendation, it would find itself without the resources or labor to accomplish them. Focusing, however, on the initial first steps of implementation can help to create momentum and public support. The initial actions within this comprehensive plan are referred to as the *Five Bold Steps*.

It is recommended that the City consider the following items a priority for implementation over the first 1-3 year period. The following items are not listed in order of priority or importance.

1. **Amend the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances to incorporate the primary recommendations of the comprehensive plan, with particular attention to design standards, such as building materials and screening.**

2. **Continue annexation of key areas into the City, including areas along the Reliever Route and areas north of Interstate 20 where the City is currently investing significant resources in infrastructure connections.**

3. **Create a Housing Infill Program that will offer incentives to housing developers for building within the community core. Leverage a partnership with Big Spring EDC and ensure that the infill program is marketed beyond Big Spring.**

4. **Facilitate the creation of an active downtown park. The park should be available for use to the public and should contain a variety of year-round festivals and events.**

5. **Create a program and committee that focuses on community aesthetics. The program should define gateways into Big Spring and should provide strategies for improving the City's corridors, such as incorporating aesthetic enhancements into major intersections and future roadway projects.**



FREESE AND NICHOLS