

# ABILENE CENTER CITY GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

---

## PHASE I VISION PACKAGE

11 MAY 2017

FINAL DRAFT  
04.26.17





# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## PREPARED FOR

Abilene Industrial Foundation  
Spring 2017

## THANKS TO

- City of Abilene**
- Abilene City Council
  - Molly Moser, Convention Center Manager

- Dian Graves Owen Foundation**
- Tucker Bridwell
  - Jane Beard

- Dodge Jones Foundation**
- Joe Ed Canon
  - Larry Gill

- Abilene Chamber of Commerce and Abilene Industrial Foundation**
- Yvonne Batts, Chair
  - Scott Hibbs, Chair, AIF
  - Laura Moore, Chair, Downtown Task Force
  - Charlie Black, Immediate Past Chairman

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- Promotions Chairs**
- Lynn Barnett
  - Molly Moser

- Design Chairs**
- Taylor Sturgis
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  - Dana Schoening

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# PREFACE: USING THIS DOCUMENT

This document represents the Phase I “Vision” portion of a two-phase planning initiative. The purpose of this “Vision Package” is to:

- Articulate the creative thinking, dreams and interests expressed by numerous stakeholders and downtown Abilene supporters engaged with us throughout a twelve-month process and
- Identify key opportunities for development and infrastructure projects as well as governance measures which will play an important role in the successful redevelopment of the core area of Abilene.

It should be noted that the collection of plan diagrams and illustrations in this document depict a general character and quality envisioned for both public and private areas of downtown.

On the public side you will see design thoughts for the public elements in downtown including streets, sidewalks, alleys, public green spaces, public parking lots, and public parking garages.

The illustrations also suggest design themes and architectural expression for the privately owned buildings lining the streets of downtown Abilene.

Common to both are the placemaking elements such as functional public amenities, public art, and continued integration of the storybook sculptures and references. The illustrations are very conceptual and not to be misconstrued as final design solutions but rather a point of departure from which refinements will be made to arrive at the appropriate solution.

Our ongoing work on urban initiatives in cities large and small has taught us that successful urban redevelopment cannot happen on the shoulders of government or the private sector alone. Public/private partnerships are critical to the long-term success of a city's urban core. Leveraging what each faction can bring to the table will yield tremendous results and set the stage for continued investment into the downtown.

We hope your review of this document will trigger additional thoughts that will help to bring about positive change and identify catalytic development opportunities for the Center City of Abilene.



# ABILENE CENTER CITY GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

## PHASE I VISION PACKAGE

The Abilene Center City Growth and Development Plan: PH1 Vision Package is a #-part planning document that identifies key development, infrastructure, and public/private partnership opportunities to spur the successful redevelopment Abilene's downtown core.

what else would someone need to know if they only had one section??

# 01 INTRODUCTION

FINAL  
04.26.17



# INTRODUCTION

In September of 2016 The Abilene Industrial Foundation and the City of Abilene engaged the Gossman Group design & planning team to lead a planning initiative to help delineate a **VISION** for Downtown Abilene. Critical to the effort was the integration of the community to gain insight into Abileneans concerns and thoughts regarding the future of their downtown.

A key caveat to the exercise was the importance of creating an authentic vision for Abilene; A vision that would not be confused with other cities and was reflective of Abilene's values, pride and style. A **VISION** that would set the stage for new chapters in the Abilene Story while celebrating Abilene's storied past and significant place in the frontier Texas history.

As our planning team and community leaders embarked on this planning initiative, the Abilene Development Corporation and Chamber of Commerce were implementing their Economic Development Strategic Plan [TAPP Plan]. The focus of the plan is to strengthen Abilene's position in the marketplace through business retention, recruitment and job creation for the region. A key observation of the Economic Development Strategic Plan is the importance of enhancing the quality of life in the urban core of Abilene. A redeveloped Center City will help to attract businesses, entrepreneurs and start-up companies

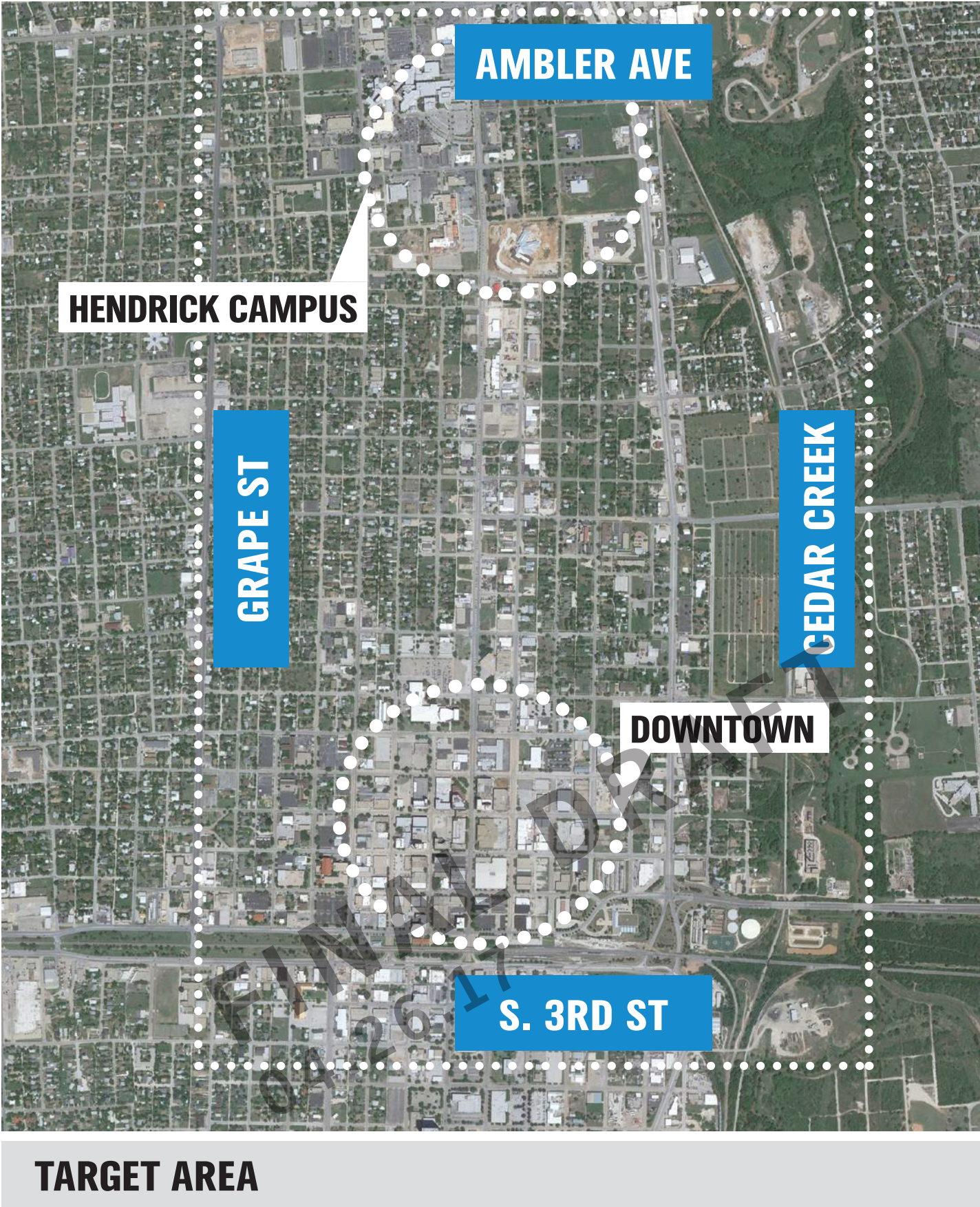
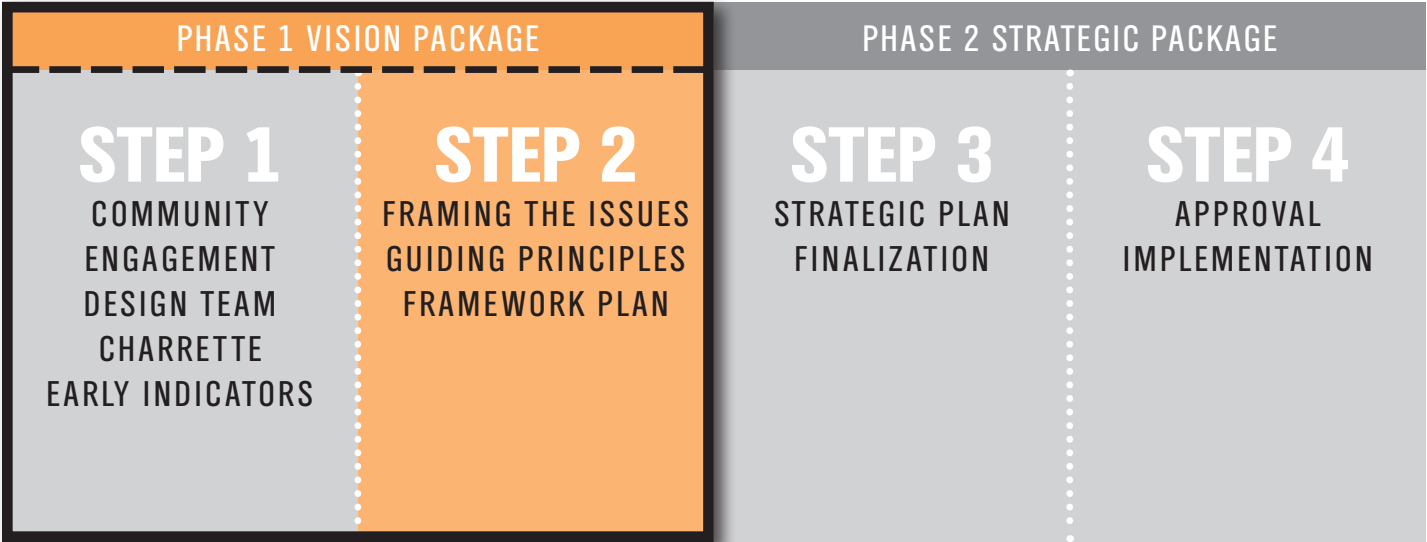
to Abilene whose core values embrace urban life styles and sustainability for the economy and built environment. Critical to this agenda is the retention and recruitment of skilled young professionals to fill the demands for a larger skilled labor force pool.

A key take-away from this observation is the importance of downtown Abilene to evolve into an 18 hour city; To become more than a business or government center and to become a desirable place to live, work, play and learn.

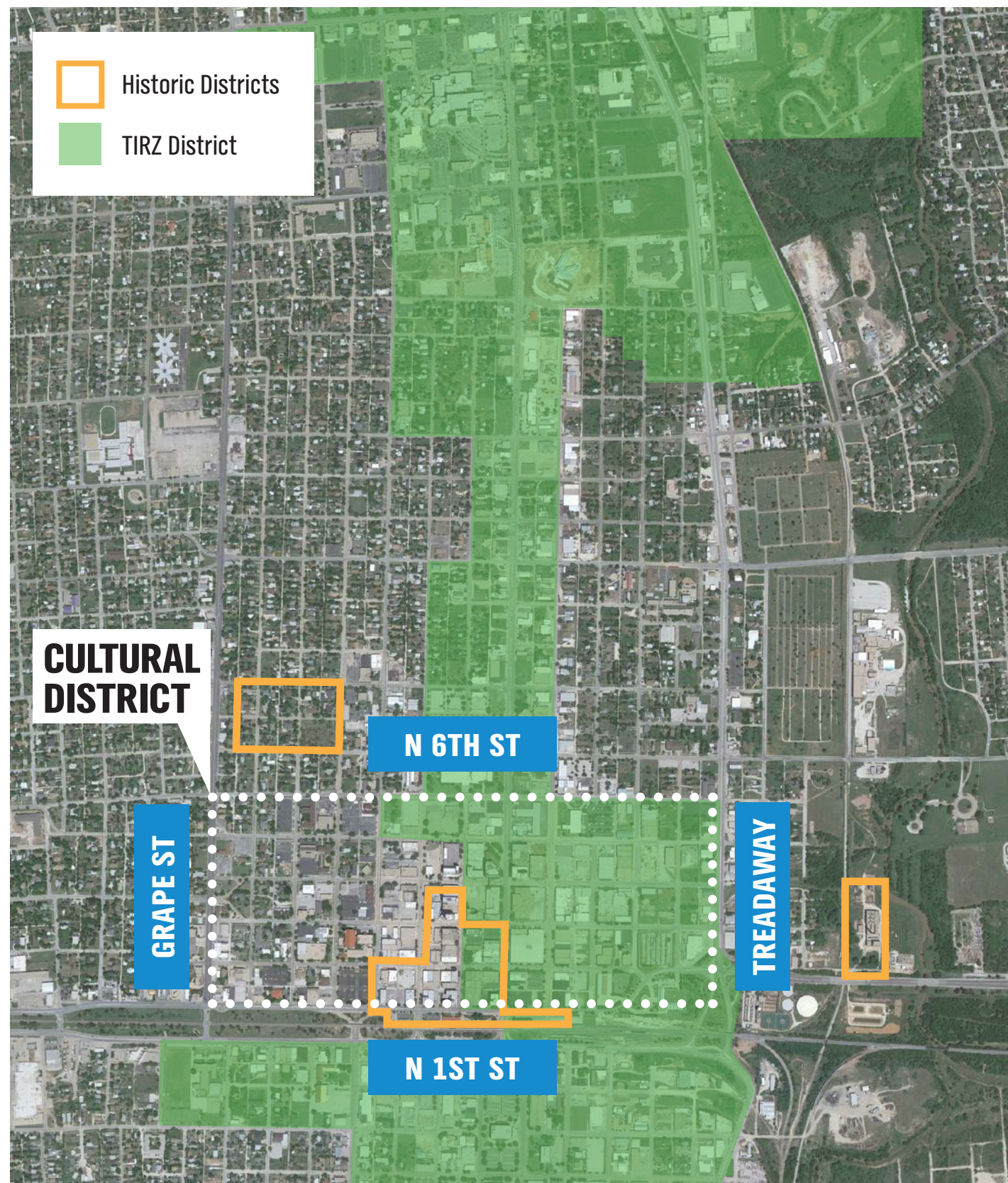
The urban phenomenon sweeping the country, is driven by the "Back to the City" movement practiced by young professionals and empty nesters alike who are seeking the benefits of an urban lifestyle. **A quality urban environment allows residents to live in a vibrant Center City neighborhood where you can walk, bike or take public transit to your place of employment and find goods & services, entertainment, and quality food & beverage choices close-by are all important environmental traits of these urban dwellers.**

The following document represents Phase I of a two-phase process to prepare a roadmap delineating a vision and Implementation strategy to allow goals and ideals echoed throughout this planning initiative by stakeholders and citizens of Abilene to reach fruition.

## PROCESS







## OVERLAY DISTRICTS

## DESIRED OUTCOMES



*Articulate a clear vision to the stakeholders and citizens for a successful repositioning strategy for Downtown Abilene*



*Develop a creative Urban Framework Plan and Action Agenda that will:*

1. *Strengthen public & private support for the target area*
2. *Broaden development interest*
3. *Provide insight into the challenges & opportunities for future reinvestment*



*Prepare a Summary of key concerns/issues, critical success factors and preliminary opportunities*



*Develop a Downtown Urban Framework Plan that will identify key redevelopment sites & focus areas of the downtown, development opportunities and public realm enhancements*



*Develop Guiding Principles for the repositioning of downtown reflective of the values and vision of the community*



*Step 2 will culminate with a presentation of development concepts, preliminary strategies and recommendations for implementation of the action agenda moving forward*





# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## INTRODUCTION

Community engagement is an important part of any planning initiative. Our firm believes that strong community involvement will ensure quality results and lead to sensible strategic planning, action and implementation.

The community involvement employed during the Abilene Center City Growth & Development planning initiative occurred over a six-month period and came in different forms: Individual and group leadership discussions, key stakeholder interviews, coffee & lunch sessions and written communications. All of these encounters provided important insights into the interests and concerns of Abileneans regarding their downtown.

## PUBLIC WORKSHOP

A large scale "Town Hall" meeting was held on October 19, 2016 in the Convention Center to bring people together and engage in meaningful dialogue about the Center City area. The event was a huge success and yielded substantial information that the planning team used as a basis for an interactive design & planning Charrette held on the two days that followed.

The following pages will provide a glimpse of the highlights of the Town Hall meeting and key thoughts for the planning team to move forward.

## STUDENT SURVEYS

In an effort to gain access to the thoughts teenagers might have regarding the future of Abilene, an online survey was developed and shared with several local high schools. Over 600 students responded with input on a variety of topics. From the fantastic response, it's clear that the young residents of Abilene love their town.

## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

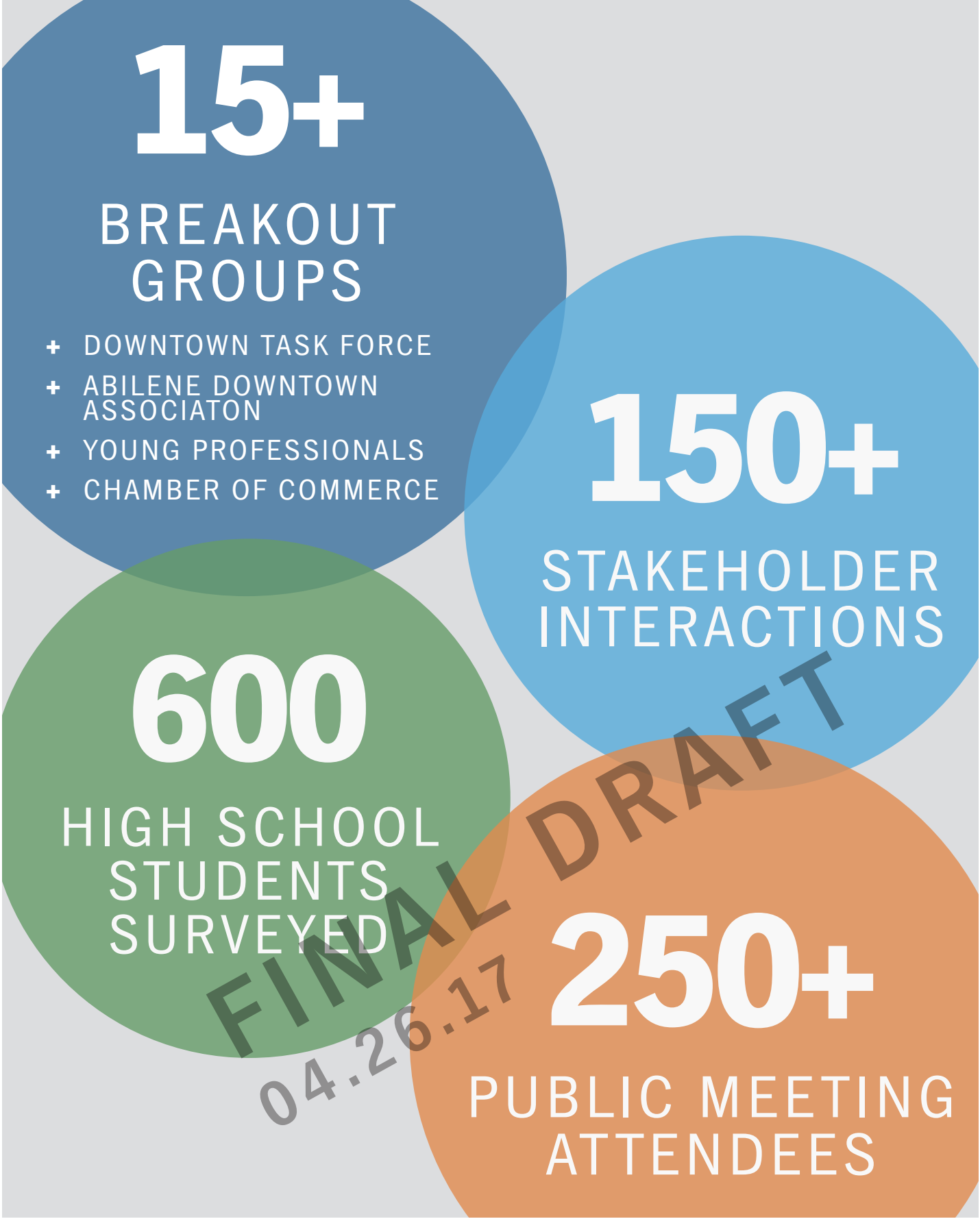
Stakeholder interest in downtown is growing quickly. Property owners, tenants, business owners and government leadership have downtown on their radar and are pushing initiatives to raise the quality of life for downtown. In addition to downtown stakeholders, the planning team met with area leaders to gain their perspective on downtown and challenges that should be addressed. Area

educators, business owners, Dyess Air Force Base and area developers were interviewed to understand their concerns for downtown redevelopment.

## BREAKOUT GROUPS

Throughout the length of the project, numerous groups were anxious to meet with the planning team and share their interests and concerns for the future of Downtown Abilene.

Two organizations that provided important input to the planning initiative are the Abilene Downtown association and the Abilene Young Professionals. The Abilene Downtown Association has been the primary gatekeeper for downtown activities and events through their membership and have helped to raise downtown awareness. The Abilene Young Professionals have a passion for downtown and have organized themselves to take on an additional role representing their interests in downtown as a live, work, play and learn environment.







Public “Town Hall” Workshop held at the Abilene Convention Center on 19 Oct 2016



# PUBLIC “TOWN HALL” WORKSHOP ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

**PURPOSE: WHY  
CREATE A PLAN?**

“If you don’t know where you are  
going, you’ll end up someplace else.”

-Yogi Berra

**PURPOSE: WHY  
CREATE A PLAN?**

- + There is a **Vision**, clearly stated and shared by all, that describes the **Future** of Abilene
- + To ascertain **Community Values** are integrated into our future
- + Our **Quality of Life** is maintained and improved
- + **Strategic Economic Development** is encouraged and supported defining where it will occur, what it will be, when it will happen, and how the costs of development will be met.
- + To Be **Pro-Active** instead of Re-Active

**PUBLIC WORKSHOP  
ACTIVITY**

## Tonight's Agenda Engagement Activities

**PET**

**PRESERVE**  
DOWNTOWN ASSETS THAT ARE WORLD CLASS & NEED PROTECTION

**ENHANCE**  
DOWNTOWN ASSETS THAT COULD BE GREAT, BUT LITTLE TLC TO SHINE

**TRANSFORM**  
AREAS THAT ARE UNDERUTILIZED OR NEED IMPROVEMENT TO BENEFIT DOWNTOWN ABILENE

**QA BOARDS**

**YOUR VNTOWNS**

IT PRACTICE" STUDY AREAS. DO YOU SHOULD STUDY? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO THIS BOARD.

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO  
ST. LOUIS, MO  
MONROVIA, CA

**WHATS ON YOUR RADAR?**

Topic 4  
Topic 3  
Topic 2  
Topic 1

**PUBLIC WORKSHOP  
ACTIVITY**

## Brainstorming Ideas The Categories

- #1 Infrastructure + Transportation
- #2 Placemaking
- #3 Catalytic Projects
- #4 Entitlements + Governance + Partnerships



## STUDENT SURVEYS

Q

HOW OFTEN  
DO YOU VISIT  
DOWNTOWN  
ABILENE?

31%

OF STUDENTS  
SURVEYED SAID  
**1-2X PER  
MONTH**

38%

OF STUDENTS  
SURVEYED SAID  
**AT LEAST 1X  
PER WEEK**

Q

DO YOU PLAN  
TO ATTEND  
COLLEGE?

95.3%

OF STUDENTS  
SURVEYED SAID  
**THEY PLAN  
TO ATTEND  
COLLEGE**

34.7%

OF STUDENTS  
SURVEYED SAID  
**THEY WILL NOT  
RETURN TO ABILENE  
AFTER COLLEGE**





# PLANNING AND DESIGN CHARRETTE

## CHARRETTE RESULTS

After a very successful Public “Town Hall” Workshop, the planning team worked to bring “first thoughts” to life over an intensive two day Design Charrette. The team aimed to convey and refine the essence of the ideas/key success factors generated at the public workshop through illustrations, photography and graphics. The Descriptions shown to the right represent the primary categories of information collected and recorded during the Town Hall Workshop. At the conclusion of the charrette, the planning team provided a full listing of the information collected and reported back to the Downtown Committee. We have provided a summary of the comments on this page, understanding more information was recorded and used by the planning and design team during their Design Charrette.

## DESIGN

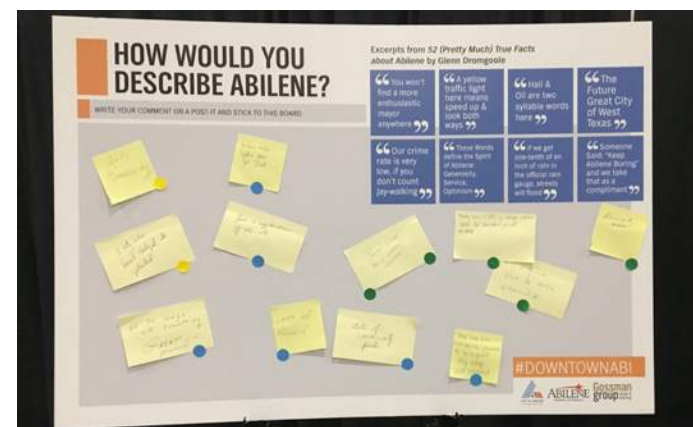
- Revitalization and re-purposing of historic buildings is important - needs to be emphasized
- One-way streets are a hindrance
- Art & history are important parts of this community
- Need more landscaping and parks
- Need more retail and restaurant options

## PUBLIC REALM

- Better parking options, including parking garages
- Need more public space, parks and green space
- Increase walkability and fix sidewalks
- More public restrooms, water fountains and amenities
- Downtown feels unsafe at night due to poor street lighting

## ECONOMICS + MANAGEMENT

- Give business owners an economic break, grant program or incentive to start a business downtown
- Ease the requirements for small business owners to operate downtown
- Need things to do- Consider free activities
- Downtown businesses need evening business hours
- Cleanliness should be a priority for downtown public areas



## GOVERNMENT + PARTNERSHIPS

- Minimize/change downtown zoning and other regulations
- Use city funding to encourage renovation of historic buildings
- Explore public/private partnerships to incentivize investment

## CATALYTIC PROJECTS

- Downtown Hotel & Convention Center
- Revitalization of historic buildings
- Lincoln Middle School (Old Abilene High)
- Burlington Depot
- Warehouses on N. 2nd, 3rd, & 4th (north of Frontier Texas)
- Cedar Creek Project



# LOOKING BACK: PAST DOWNTOWN STUDIES

## DOWNTOWN ABILENE TAX INCREMENT FINANCE DISTRICT, 1984-2009<sup>1</sup>

In 1984, Abilene formed a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district that included the Study Area and other parts of downtown Abilene west of the Study Area. Over the 25-year period, this TIF district generated nearly \$15 million in revenue that was directed back into the historic district.

## DOWNTOWN ABILENE STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN, MAY 1998<sup>1</sup>

This effort is often referred to as the “Toal Plan” after Gideon Toal, the consultant who helped the Downtown Abilene TIF Board write this strategic plan. Through ten visioning sessions with Downtown stakeholders and four workshops with the TIF Board, the Toal Plan established a vision and agenda for Downtown Abilene and an action plan for implementing the broader goals, listed below:

- Be a vibrant urban area where people work, shop, play, live, and learn
- Further strengthen its position as the business and governmental center of the greater Abilene region
- Have an 18 hours per day life with shopping, cultural events, restaurants, and entertainment extending into the evening and weekends
- Have a business and cultural diversity that serves to enrich the lives of all citizens of Abilene
- Preserve, enhance, and adaptively convert great civic and historic landmarks to uses that attract citizens and other visitors to Downtown. (Gideon Toal, 1998)

<sup>1</sup>Plan summary excerpted from the 2010 Master Plan for South Downtown Abilene

## DOWNTOWN STREETScape PLAN, AUGUST 1998<sup>1</sup>

The Downtown Streetscape Plan, prepared by the SWA Group, helped to guide streetscape improvements in the Downtown TIF District. The process focused on prioritizing improvement zones and expenditures, based on existing business and residential activity, potential visual impact on the TIF District, and the potential to enhance the value of the TIF District.

## CITY OF ABILENE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, 2004<sup>1</sup>

This plan strives to focus growth in developed areas of the city and identifies downtown Abilene as the “primary center of finance, culture, and government” (p. 34).

One goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to “promote infill and redevelopment projects that are targeted to underutilized or vacant areas of the city” (p. 9), and recommends encouraging infill development to avoid leapfrog development (p. 22).

Key downtown strategies mentioned include:

- Implement the Downtown Streetscape Master Plan and Toal Plan
- Induce residential development in downtown through incentives
- Improve downtown infrastructure (sidewalks, street lighting, landscaping) in a manner compatible with historic character
- Promote land use, transportation, and urban design improvements that will link downtown with the Butternut corridor and Hendrick Medical Center. (p. 34)

Another goal of the 2004 Comprehensive Plan is to enhance the overall identity and image of Abilene. The plan identifies several functional and design objectives to achieve this goal, including:

- Establishing gateway corridors
- Designing streets to be more functional, safe, and appealing to pedestrians
- Improving sidewalks and pedestrian linkages, promoting historic preservation
- Promoting urban design standards, such as building placement, scale, and massing, that improve the community image and character

## MASTER PLAN FOR SOUTH DOWNTOWN ABILENE, 2010

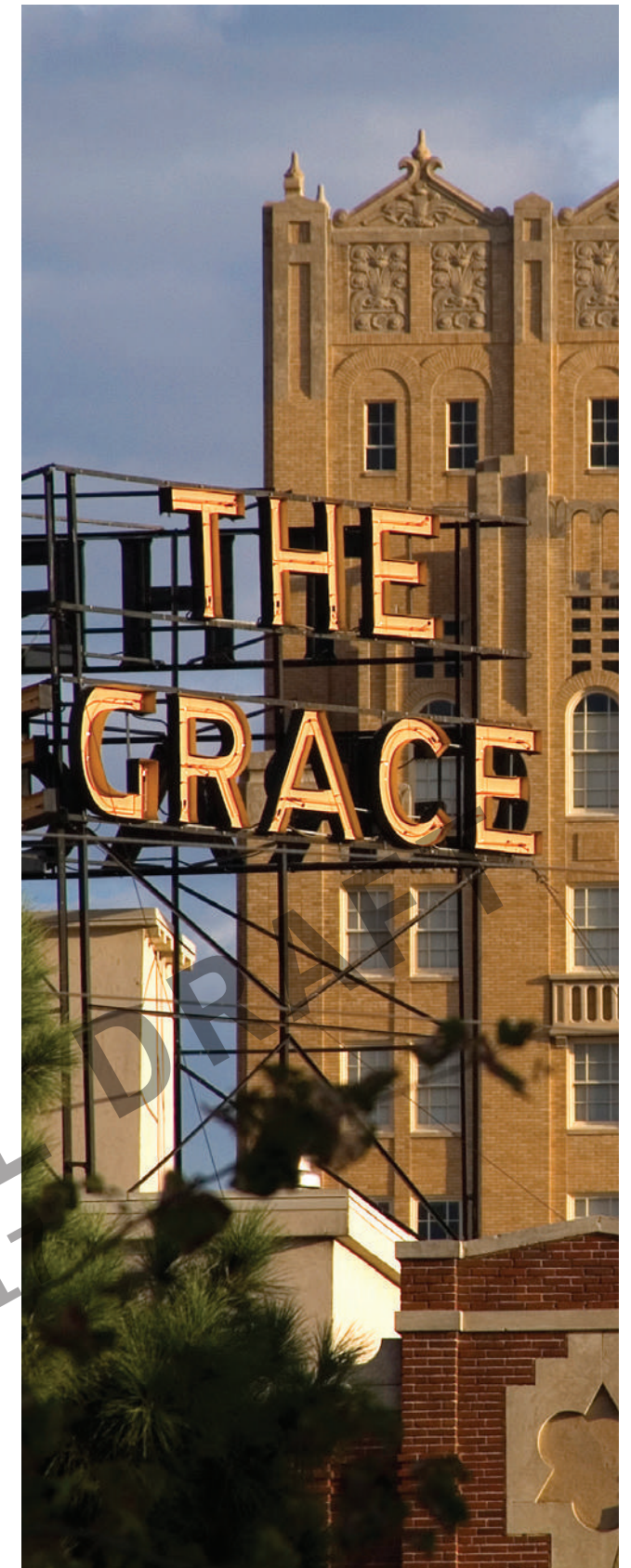
The 2010 South Downtown Master Plan, prepared by Halff Associates, focused in on a 185 acres portion of downtown that is bisected by the railroad line and Business I-20.

This plan primarily focuses on recommendations for strengthening connectivity between the north and south sides of the study area including connectivity and mobility issues for cars and pedestrians. It also identifies potential locations for new parks and plazas.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN, 2016

The 2016 Economic Development Strategic Plan, prepared by TIP Strategies, was intended to serve as the basis for a comprehensive approach to economic development for the Development Corporation of Abilene and its community partners for the next 5-10 years.

The plan postulates that Abilene’s long term prosperity will not be secured through industry attraction/new job creation, but instead by attracting and retaining talented employees. TIP recommends building on Abilene’s base of higher education and healthcare institutions to attract investment. They also call for a “Quality of Place” initiative to create the features, amenities and attractions necessary to attract and retain talent, which will ultimately make the envisioned economic transition a reality.





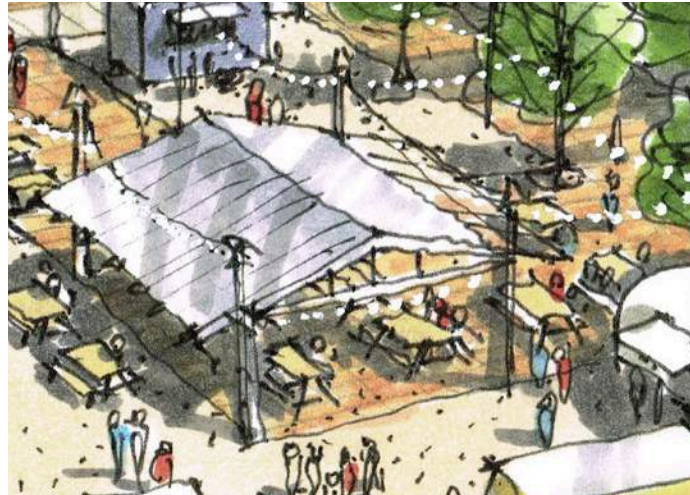
An aerial photograph of a city grid, showing streets, buildings, and green spaces. A central horizontal banner in a solid orange color contains the title text. The text is white, bold, and sans-serif. In the bottom right corner, there is a diagonal stamp in a dark grey font.

# 02 FRAMEWORK PLAN

FINAL DRAFT  
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# FRAMEWORK PLAN



The purpose of the Framework Plan for Abilene is to encourage new thinking for old places. Generically speaking, this exercise could apply to an entire city, town, neighborhood, district or just an important street. The Framework Plan is a high-level strategy to create tangible related improvements to be implemented. This should be thought of as holistic approach that recognizes the relationship between place, real estate value, function and people.

Key ideas of the Framework Plan include:

- Great Streets
- Catalytic Projects
- Beyond the Core
- Transportation Enhancements

The following sections will explore these topics through graphic depiction of key opportunity sites within the center city territory and beyond into distinct destinations.

In the end, our goal is to creatively enhance the currently nondescript areas of the Center City while transforming downtown to a place of distinction. A place reflective of its storied past, but anxious to share fresh chapters thanks to a new spirit and vigor that will keep it forever uniquely Abilene.



## GREAT STREETS

- Gateways
- Comfortable pedestrian mobility
- Creature comforts
- Quality lighting
- Stimulating environment
- Building facades
- Intersection enhancements
- Tenant storefronts

## CATALYTIC PROJECTS

- Minter Park Redevelopment
- Paramount Plaza Development
- Convention Center & Festival District
- City Hall Connector
- "The Reserve" Park

## BEYOND THE CORE

### CONNECTIONS TO:

- Hendrick Medical Campus
- Hardin Simmons University
- Abilene Christian University
- Taylor County Government
- Cedar Creek
- Key Neighborhoods:
  - Core neighborhoods revitalization
  - South downtown district

## TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENTS

### STREETS:

- Focus on 2nd and Cypress streets
- One- to two-way street conversions

### PARKING:

- Expanded on-street parking, existing garages
- Parking garage opportunities



# FRAMEWORK PLAN





An aerial photograph of a city grid, likely San Francisco, showing a dense pattern of streets and buildings. A horizontal orange band is superimposed over the center of the image. The text '03 GREAT STREETS' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font across the orange band. In the bottom right corner, the text 'FINAL DRAFT' is written in a large, black, sans-serif font, tilted diagonally, with the date '04.26.17' written below it in a smaller, black, sans-serif font.

# 03 GREAT STREETS

FINAL DRAFT  
04.26.17



# GREAT STREETS: INTERSECTION ENHANCEMENTS



CONCEPT

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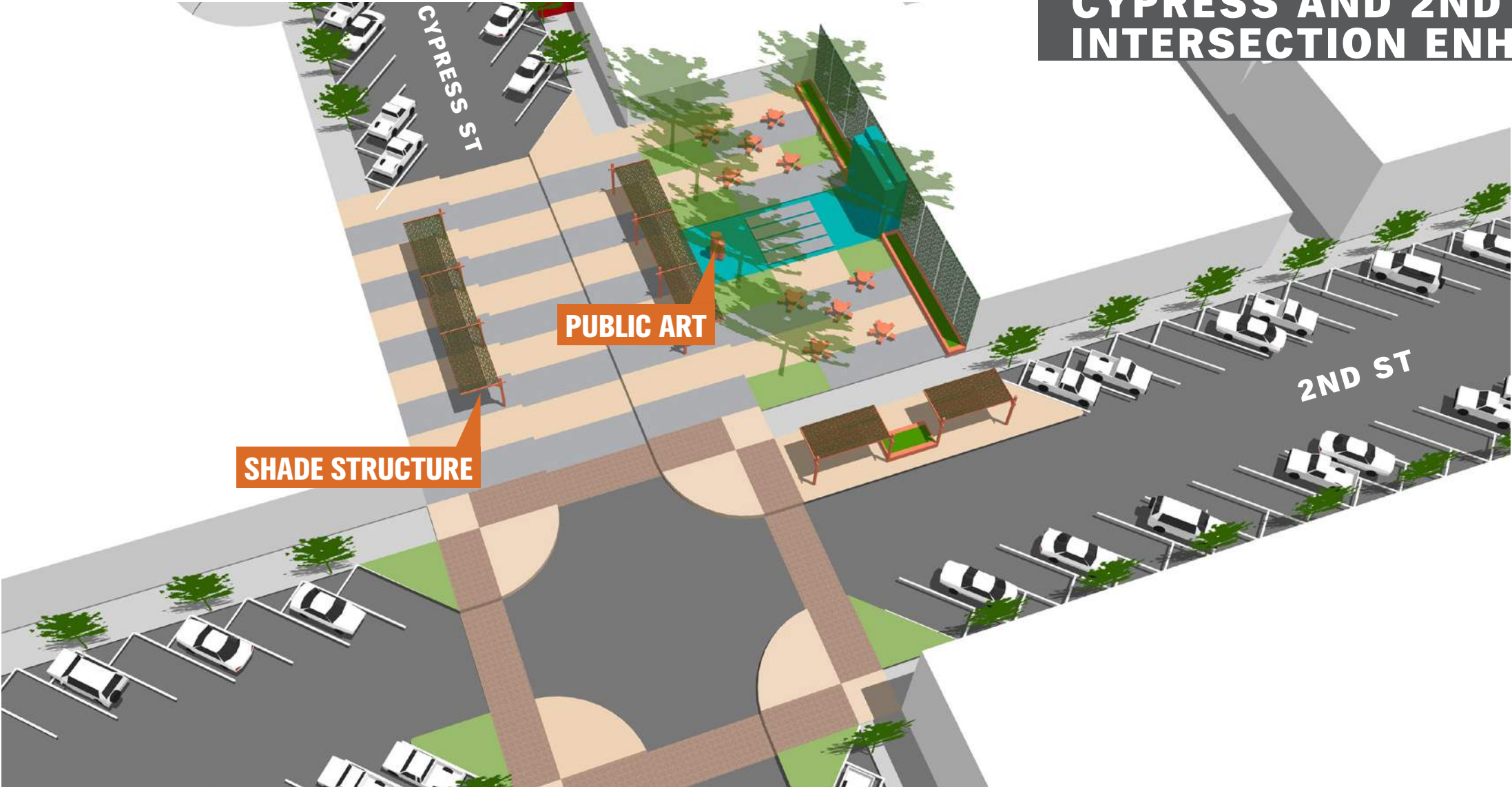
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GREAT STREETS:  
CYPRESS AND 2ND ST  
INTERSECTION ENHANCEMENT



CONCEPT

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# GREAT STREETS: WALNUT AND 2ND ST INTERSECTION ENHANCEMENT



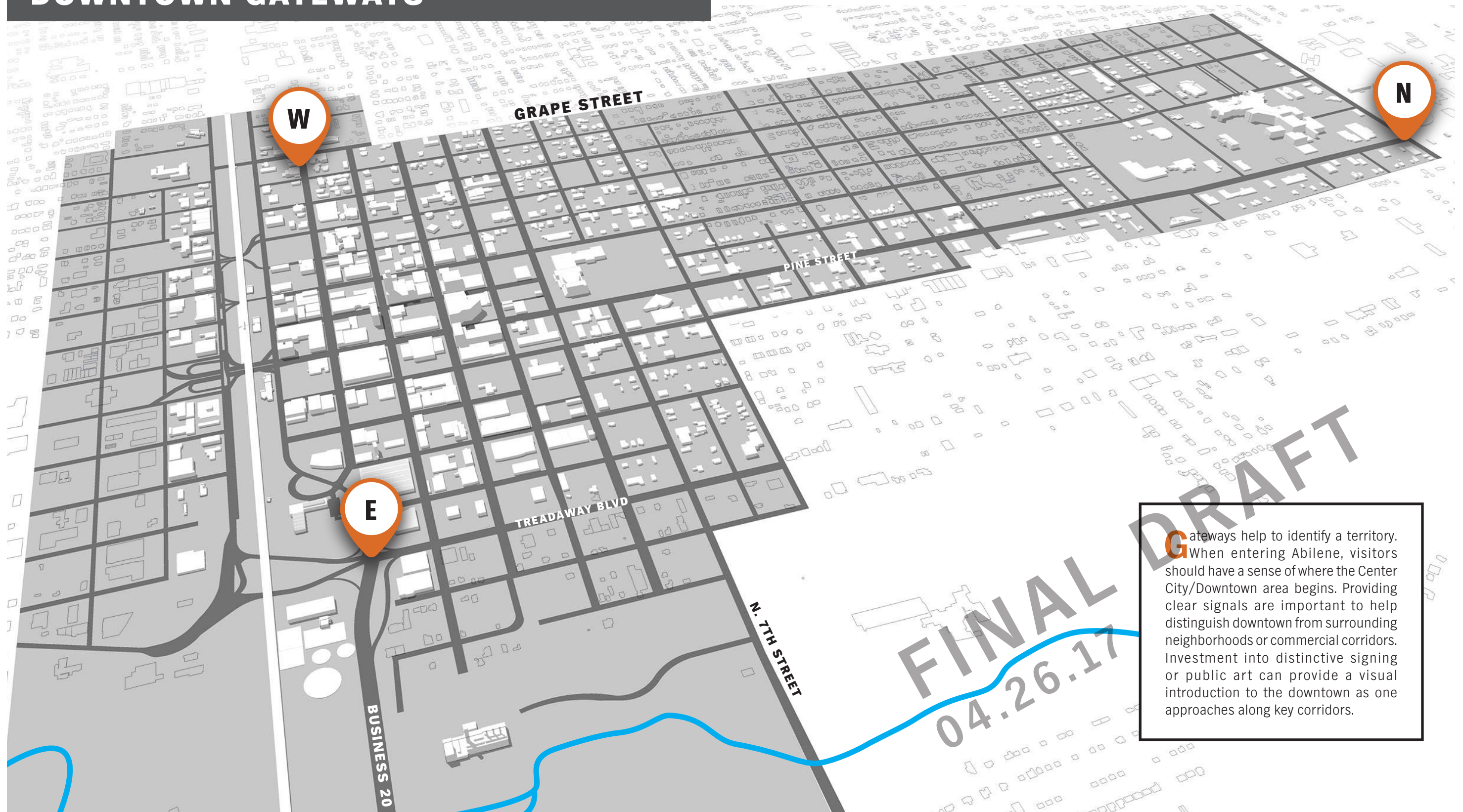


## GREAT STREETS: 2ND STREET PORTAL INTERSECTION ENHANCEMENT





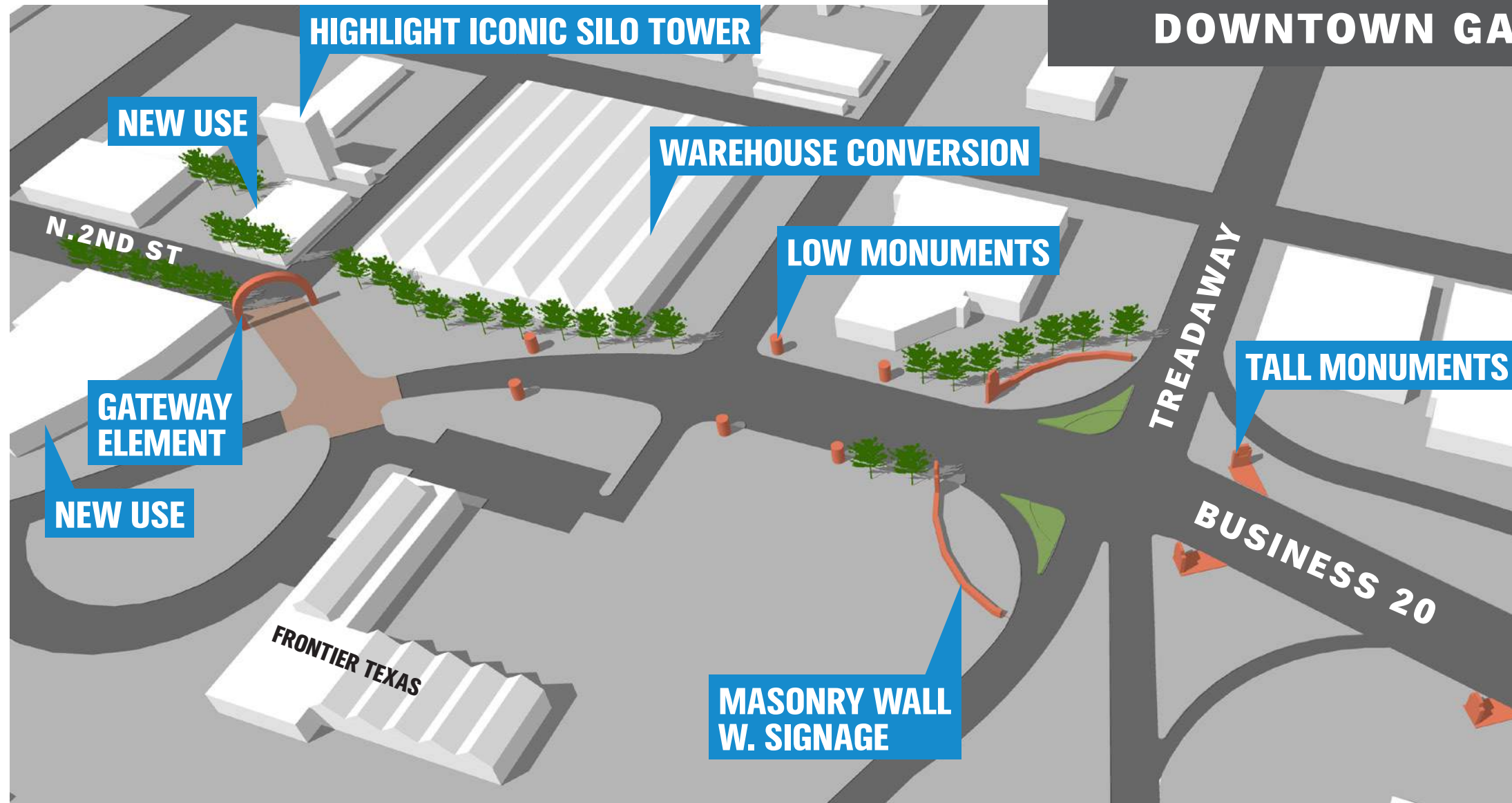
## GREAT STREETS: DOWNTOWN GATEWAYS



**G**ateways help to identify a territory. When entering Abilene, visitors should have a sense of where the Center City/Downtown area begins. Providing clear signals are important to help distinguish downtown from surrounding neighborhoods or commercial corridors. Investment into distinctive signing or public art can provide a visual introduction to the downtown as one approaches along key corridors.

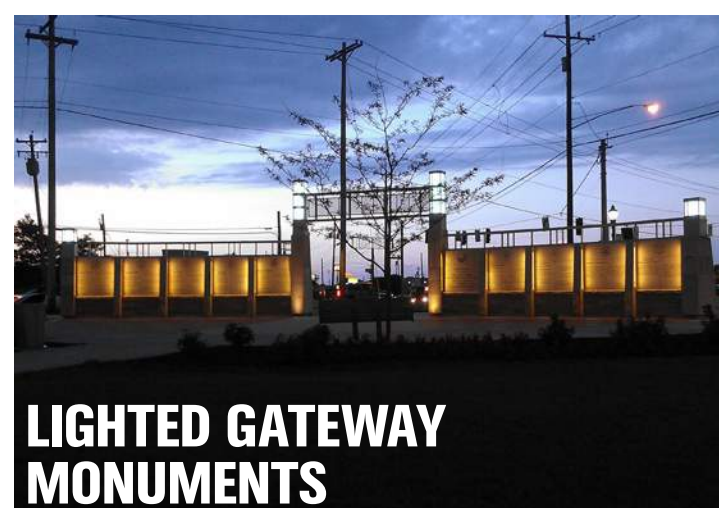


**GREAT STREETS:  
DOWNTOWN GATEWAY WEST-BOUND**



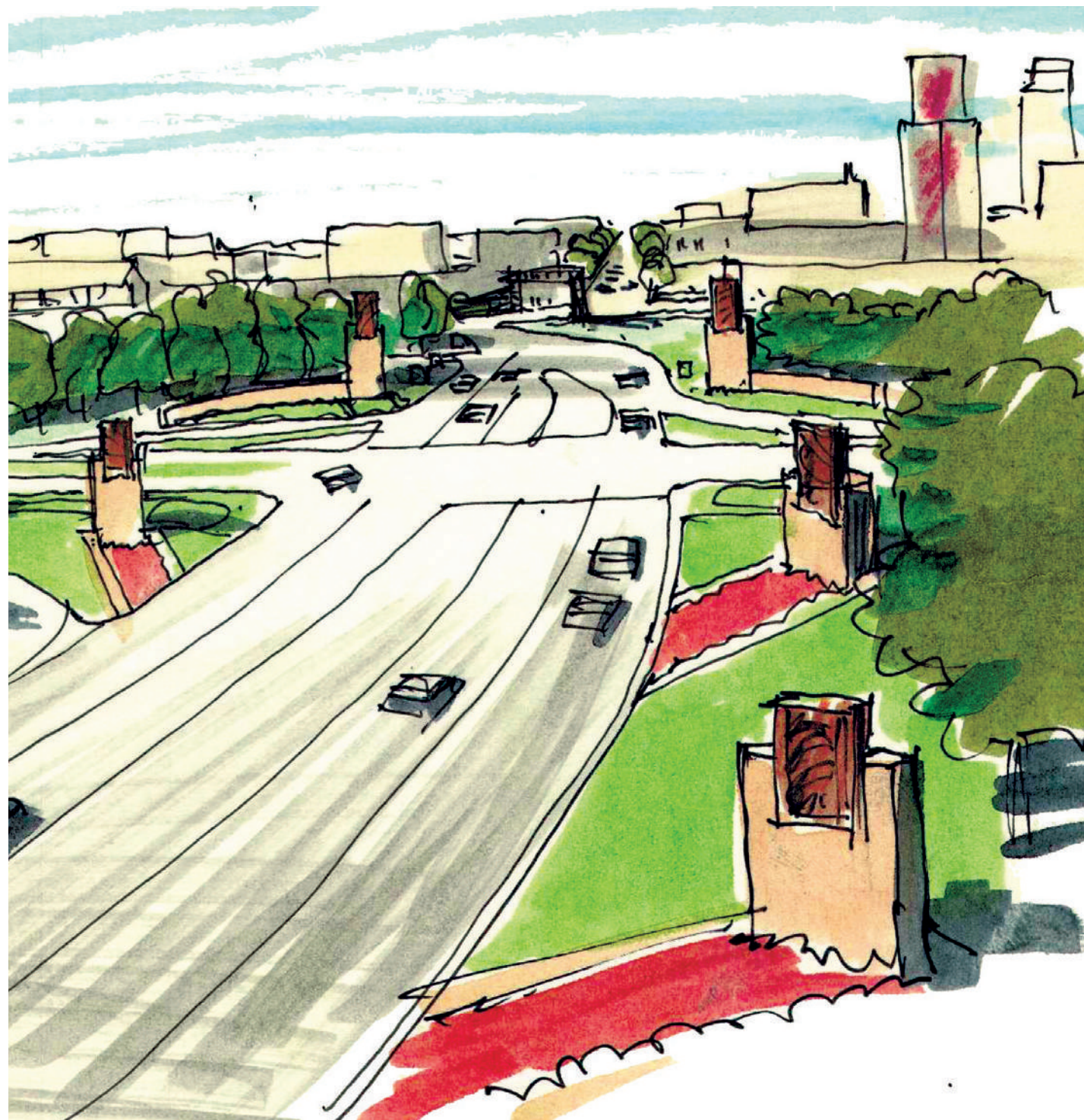
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## GREAT STREETS: DOWNTOWN GATEWAYS



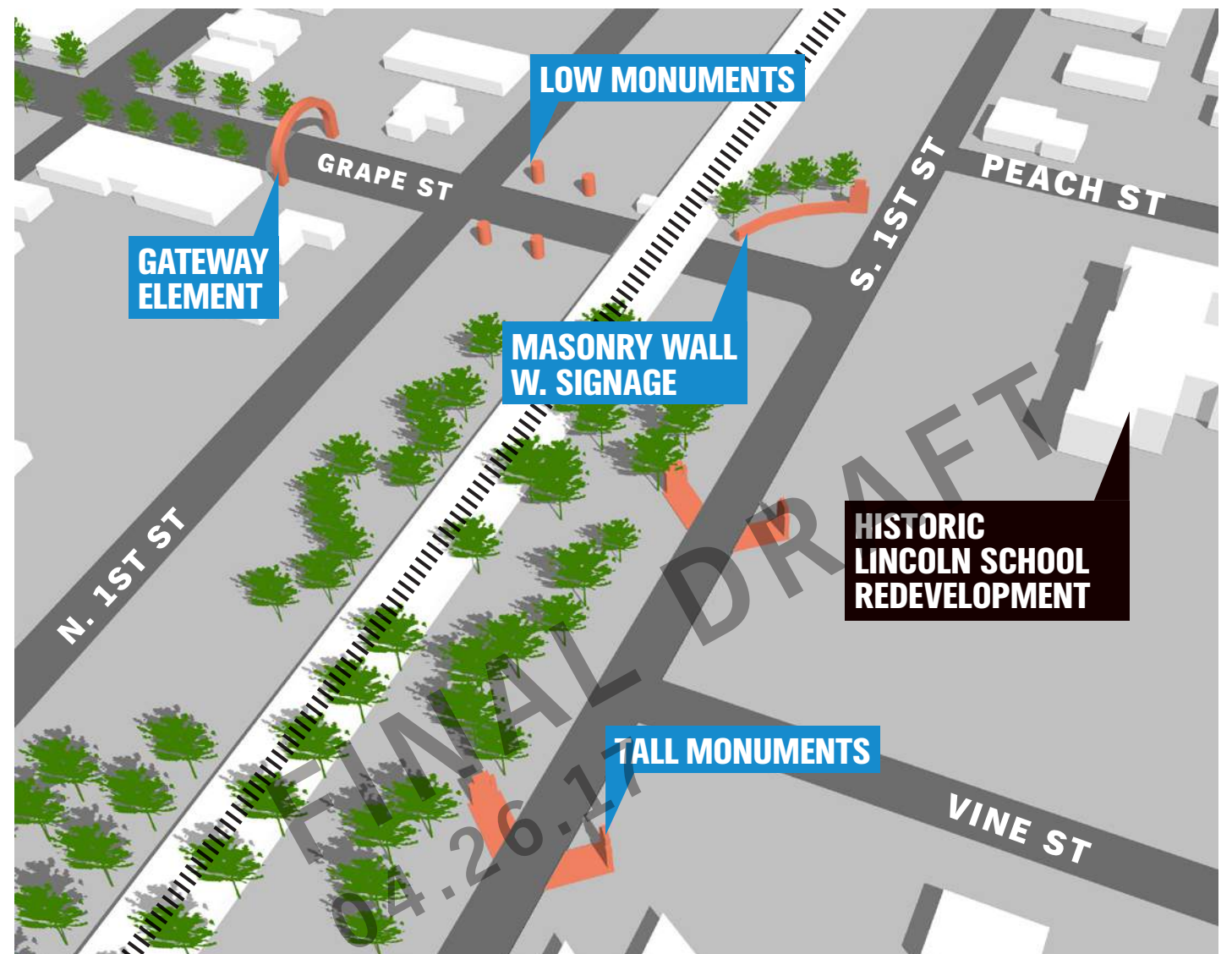
**WEST-BOUND GATEWAY: BUSINESS 20 APPROACH**



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**DOWNTOWN GATEWAY: EAST-BOUND**



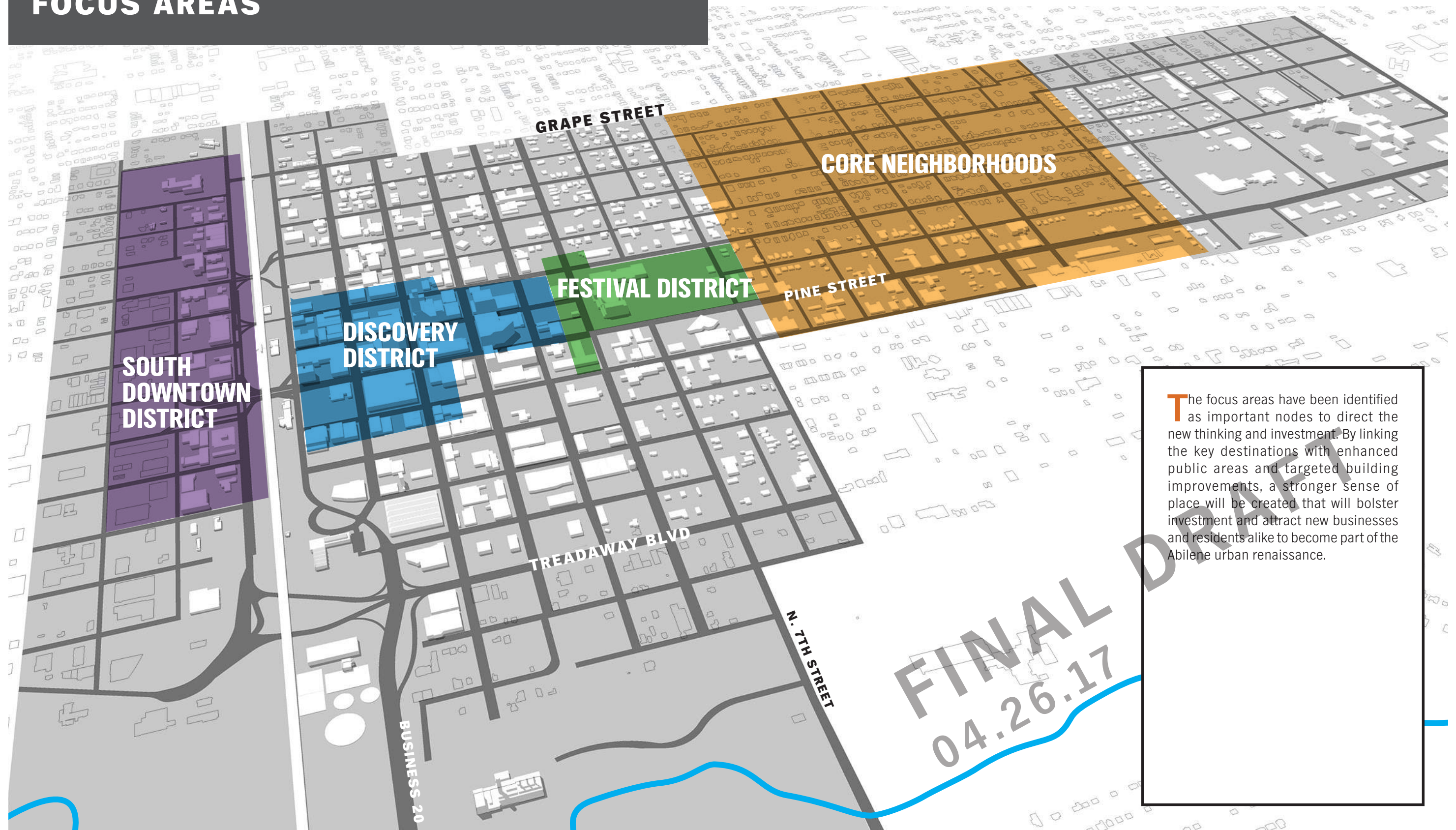
The background is a grayscale aerial photograph of a city grid. A solid orange horizontal band is centered across the image. The text '04 CATALYTIC PROJECTS' is written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters within this band.

# 04 CATALYTIC PROJECTS

**FINAL DRAFT**  
04.26.17



## FOCUS AREAS



The focus areas have been identified as important nodes to direct the new thinking and investment. By linking the key destinations with enhanced public areas and targeted building improvements, a stronger sense of place will be created that will bolster investment and attract new businesses and residents alike to become part of the Abilene urban renaissance.





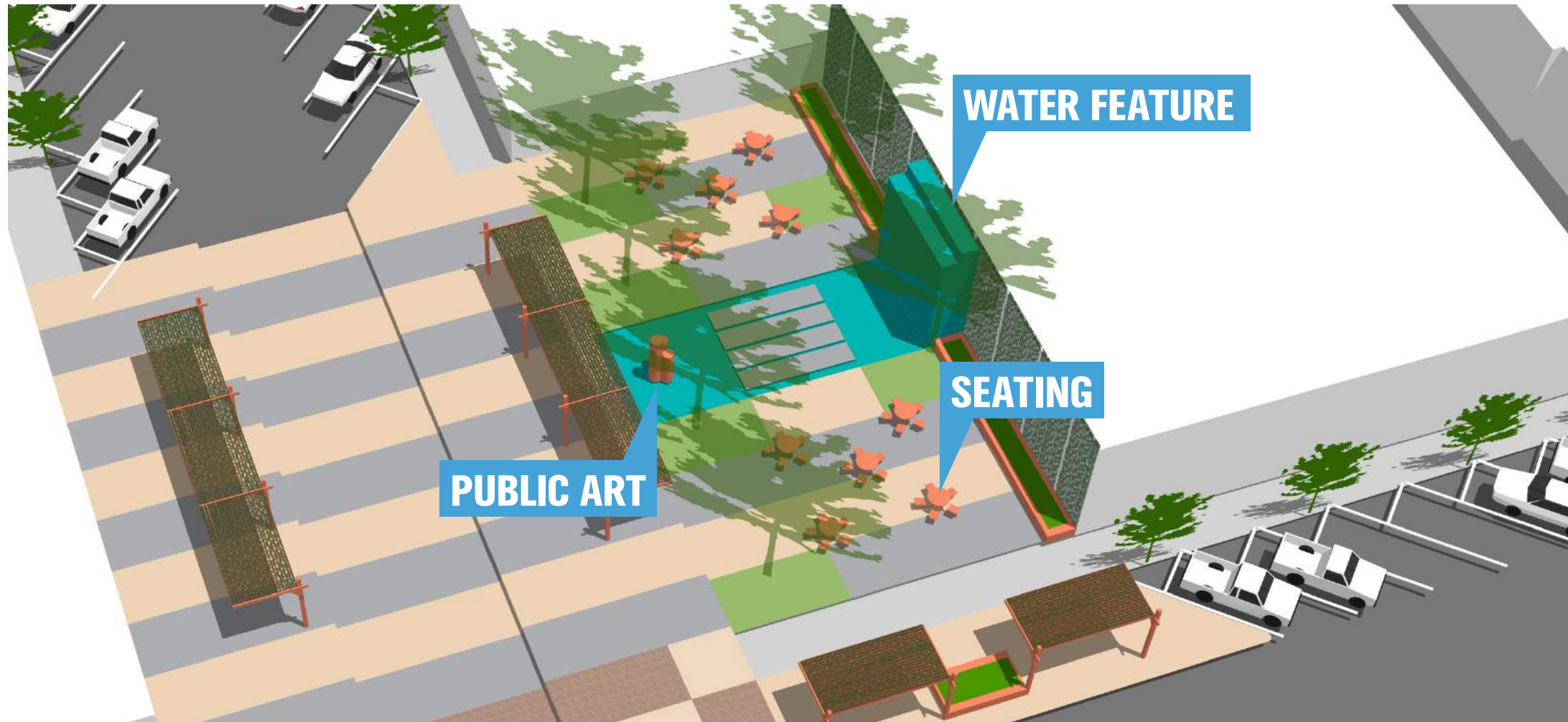
## DISCOVERY DISTRICT

### DISCOVERY DISTRICT

The Discovery District is home to wonderful artistic & educational destinations such as the The Grace Museum, 12th Armored Division Memorial Museum and the The National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature. **Art galleries bring contemporary arts to the district.** There are also many retail and eating establishments that compliment these great centers of discovery. With the draw of these cultural destinations, it is important that this District is inviting and pedestrian-friendly to cater to both visitors and residents of Abilene alike.



# DISCOVERY DISTRICT: MINTER PARK REDEVELOPMENT



CONCEPT



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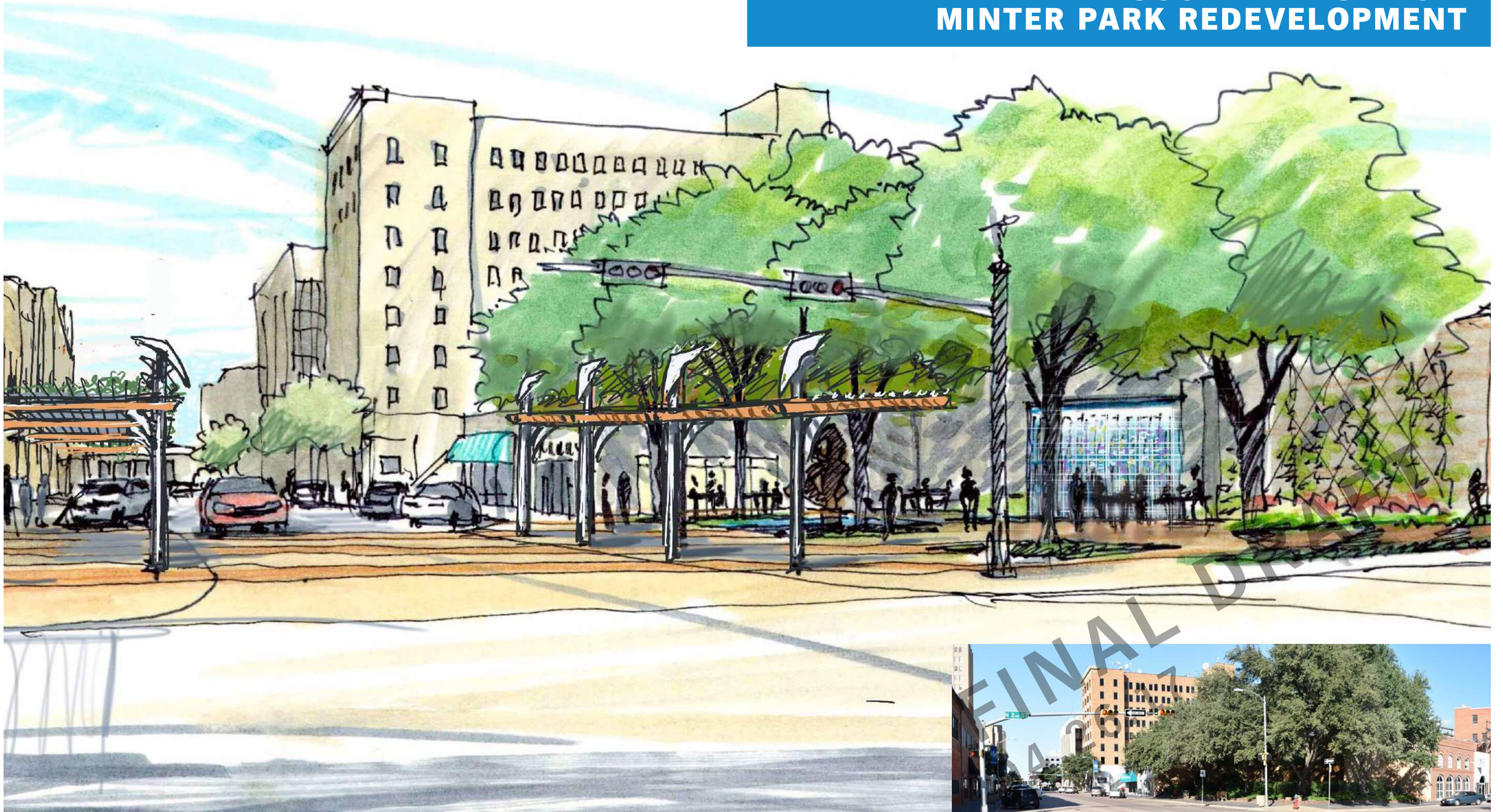
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## DISCOVERY DISTRICT: MINTER PARK REDEVELOPMENT

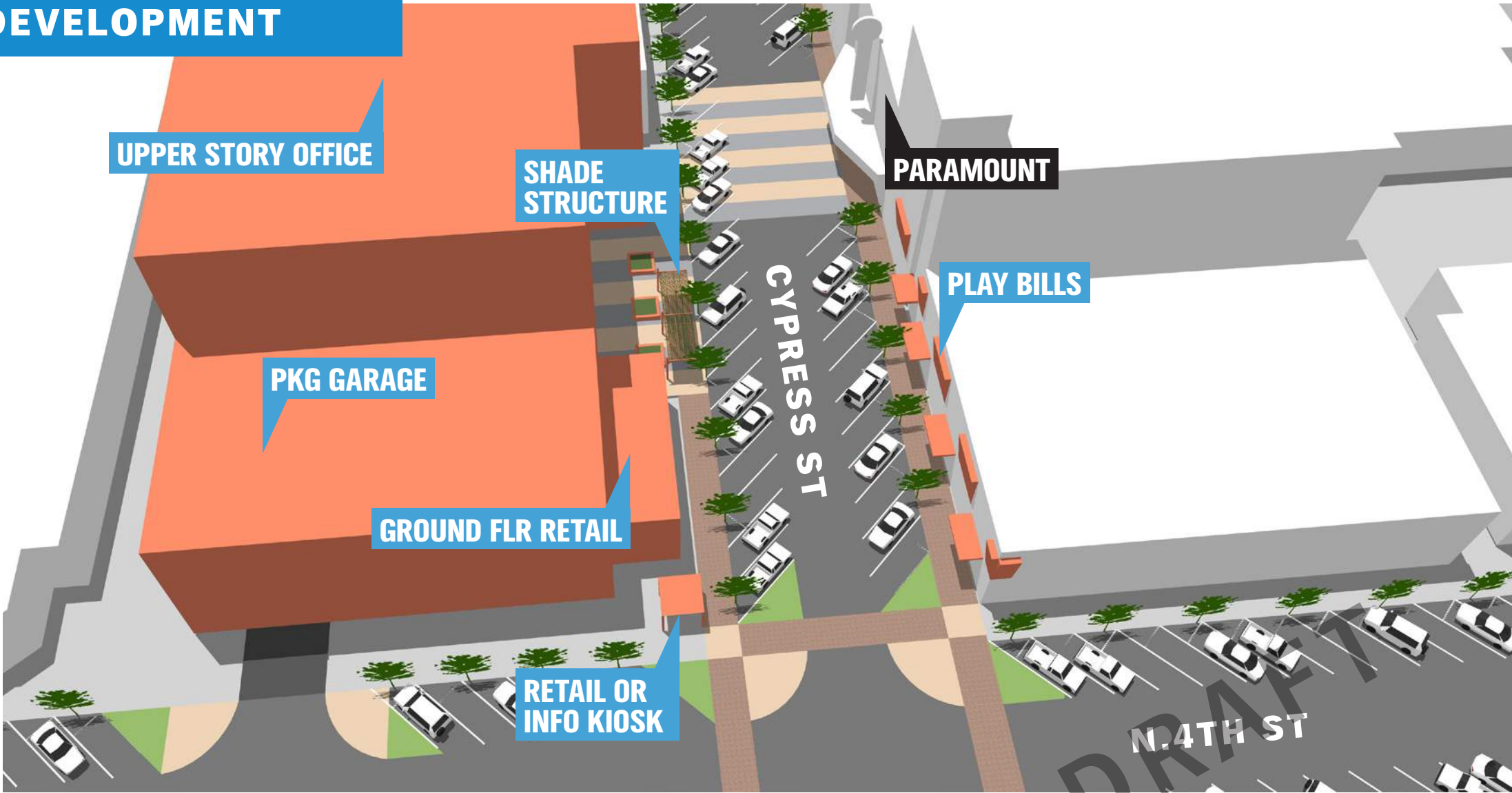




# DISCOVERY DISTRICT: PARAMOUNT PLAZA DEVELOPMENT

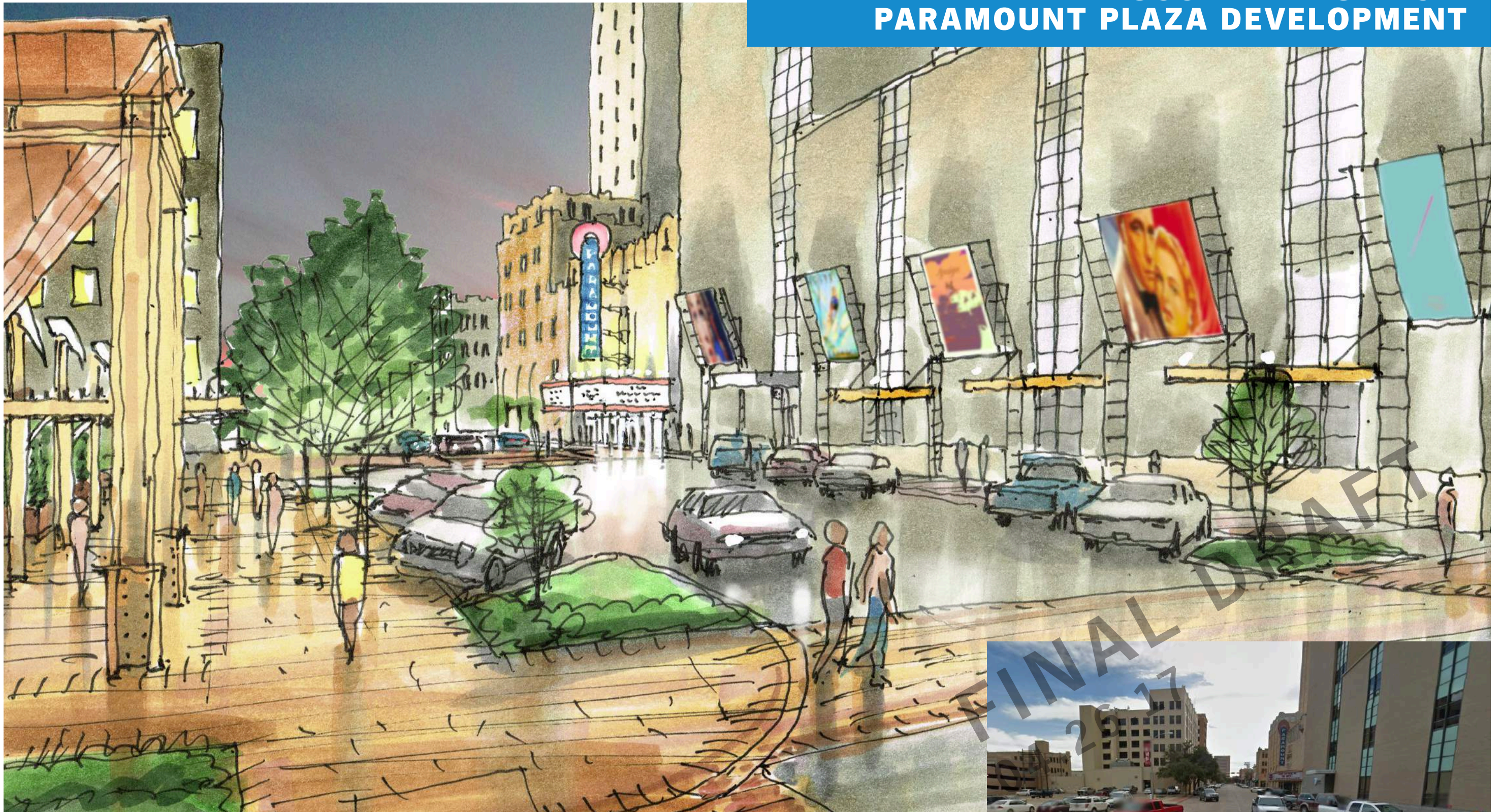
CONCEPT

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## DISCOVERY DISTRICT: PARAMOUNT PLAZA DEVELOPMENT





# FESTIVAL DISTRICT



**D**owntown Abilene's Festival District is envisioned to provide a unique visitor experience with the Convention Center serving as it's anchor. Expanding on the success of the Convention Center and the proposed hotel, the Festival District will offer an eclectic setting for hotel guests, convention attendees and locals to enjoy the sights, sounds and activities of a hip & historic urban district. The Festival District will be designed to link seamlessly to the Discovery District to the south along Cypress Street providing food and entertainment options for hotel guests, convention goers and visitors.



## FESTIVAL DISTRICT: CONVENTION CENTER HOTEL



### CONCEPT

- Street trees, shade structures, public art, awnings & outdoor seating provide an inviting & comfortable pedestrian environment.
- Small spaces become places of interest.
- Cafés along Cypress Street serve as great people watching spots.
- A pedestrian dominated civic plaza helps establish a strong local sense of place.
- Inviting, activated development at a human scale along the street is complemented with taller residential development set back from the street.

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## FESTIVAL DISTRICT: CONVENTION CENTER HOTEL





## FESTIVAL DISTRICT: CONVENTION CENTER HOTEL

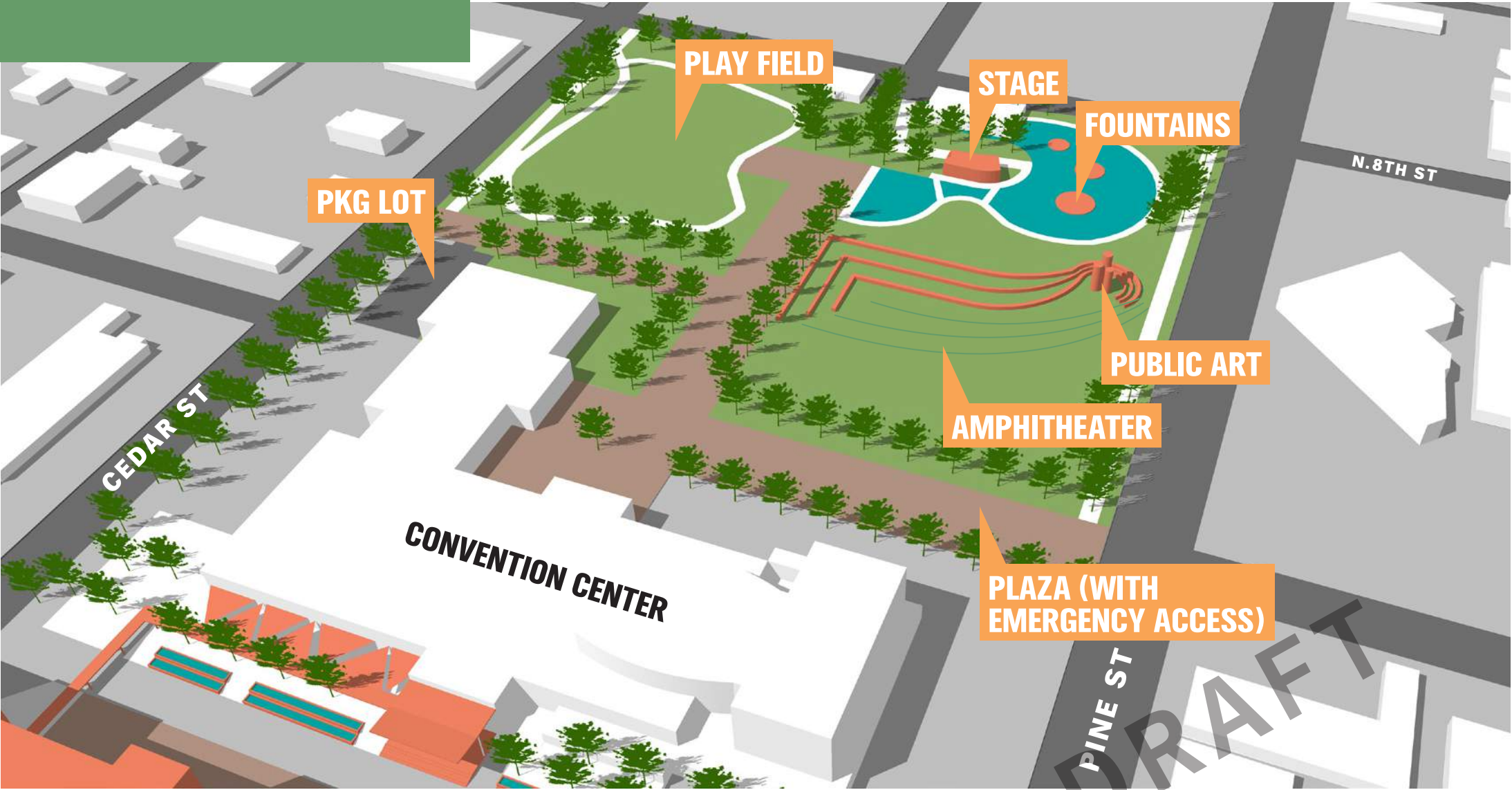




FESTIVAL DISTRICT:  
THE RESERVE PARK

CONCEPT

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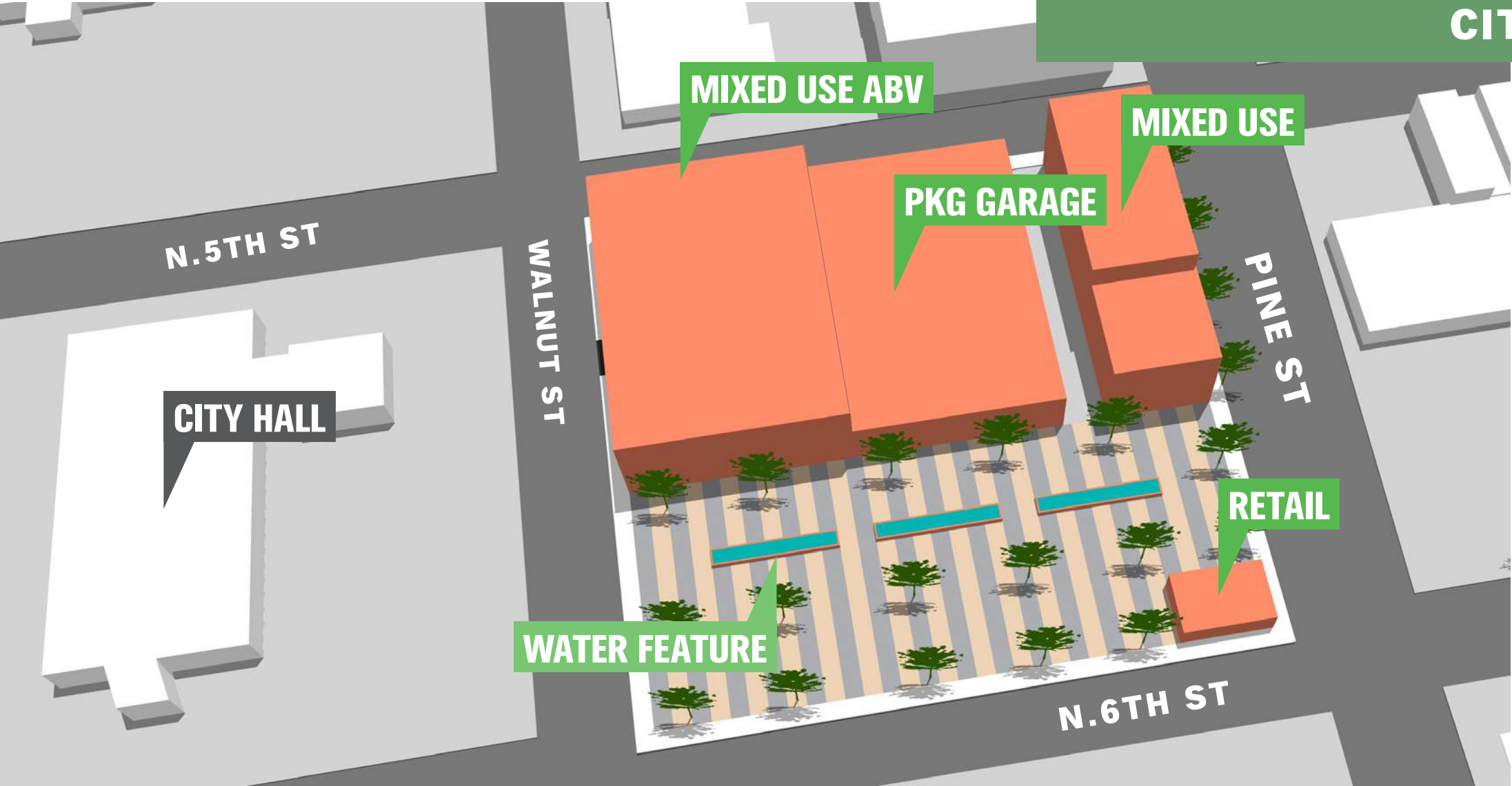
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FESTIVAL DISTRICT EXPANSION:  
CITY HALL CONNECTOR



- CONCEPT**
- Connection to City Hall will bring a Civic Sub-District to the Festival District.
  - Open Plaza with water features and shade elements would extend the City Hall Green toward the Convention Center.
  - New Parking Garage would provide critical need for re-tenanting adjacent office buildings.
  - New multi-story mixed use buildings will bring much needed investment to this block and compliment the redevelopment of the Pine Street corridor.

DRAFT

FINAL  
04.26.17

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An aerial photograph of a city grid, likely San Francisco, showing a dense pattern of streets and buildings. A horizontal band of solid orange color is overlaid across the center of the image. The text '05 BEYOND THE CORE' is written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across this orange band. In the bottom right corner, the text 'FINAL DRAFT' is written in a large, black, sans-serif font, tilted diagonally upwards. Below it, the date '04.26.17' is written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font, also tilted diagonally.

# 05 BEYOND THE CORE

FINAL DRAFT  
04.26.17



## BEYOND THE CORE

**DOWNTOWN CORE**

**CORE NEIGHBORHOODS**

**SOUTH  
DOWNTOWN  
DISTRICT**

**BEYOND THE CORE**

GRAPE STREET

PINE STREET

TREADAWAY BLVD

BUSINESS 20

N. 7TH STREET

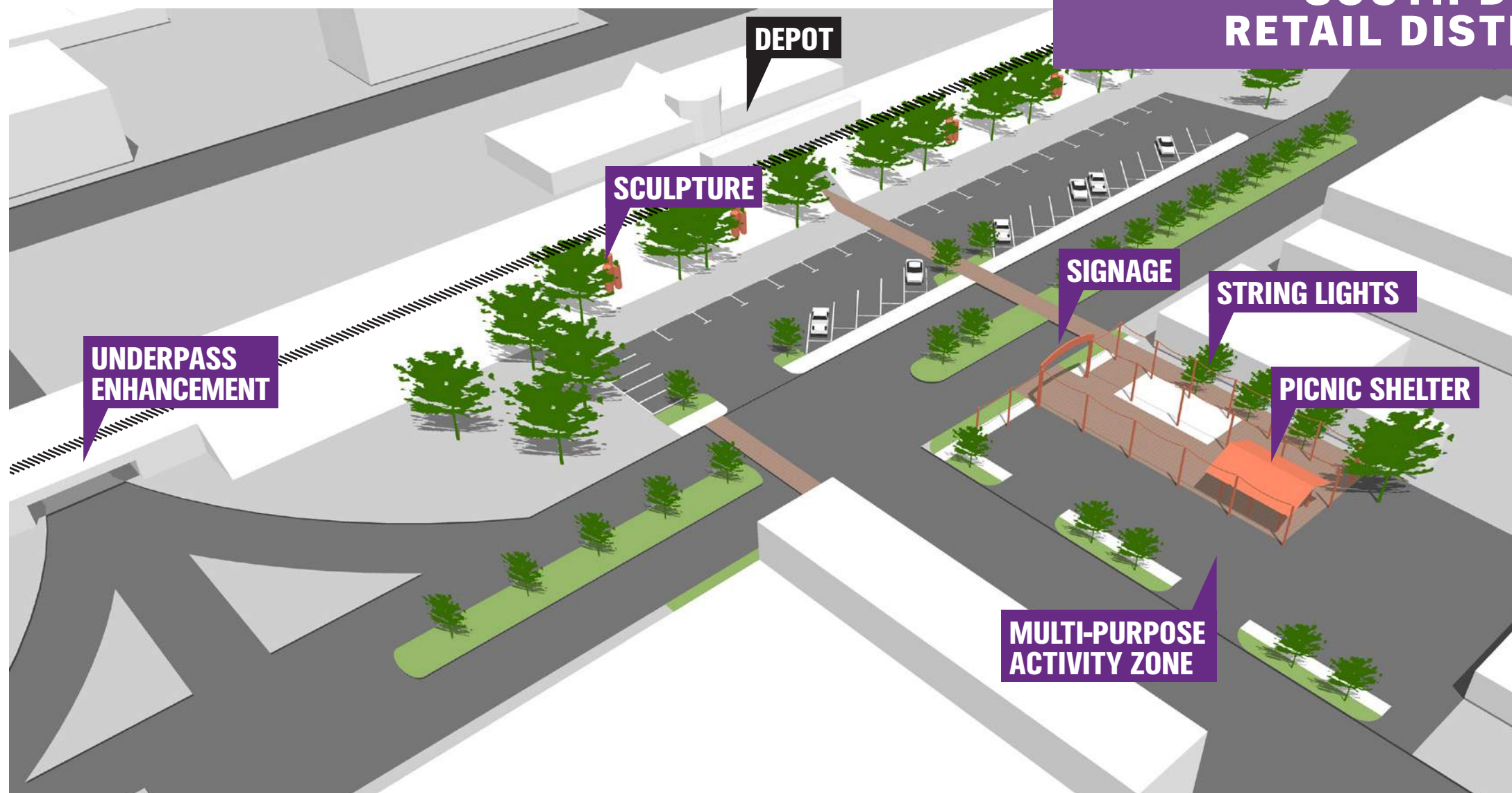
**W**hile the focus of this plan has been on the Downtown Core, there are two areas that represent opportunities “Beyond the Core” which could add to the greater success of the Center City.

The connection to the South Downtown District must be strengthened since the railroad acts as a barrier between North and South.

The Core Neighborhoods connect Downtown and the Hendrick Medical Campus. This area could benefit from the creation of Abilene’s version of Central Park described here as “The Reserve” to help revitalize the surrounding residential neighborhoods and increase property values.



## SOUTH DOWNTOWN DISTRICT: RETAIL DISTRICT ENHANCEMENTS



- Retail destinations along South 1st Street could benefit from streetscape improvements
- Inviting, activated development at a human scale is complemented with taller residential development set back from the street.
- A pedestrian court helps establish a strong local sense of place.
- The existing Food Truck Area could be enhanced to create an Activity Court for promotional gatherings, "Street Food" offerings, and more.

### CONNECTIONS THROUGH THE RAIL LINE

Connecting North & South downtown is somewhat problematic because of the barrier created by the rail line. Although the underpasses provide physical connections between the two areas, the disruption of vehicular and pedestrian flow along the grid of streets, interrupts the pedestrian experience and suggests downtown is limited to one side or the other.

- Underpass illumination for safety & pedestrian comfort
- Art panels or murals to draw people into the space
- Decorative accent lighting to suggest movement



UNDERPASS ENHANCEMENT



NIGHT LIFE



STREETSCAPING



UNDERPASS ENHANCEMENT

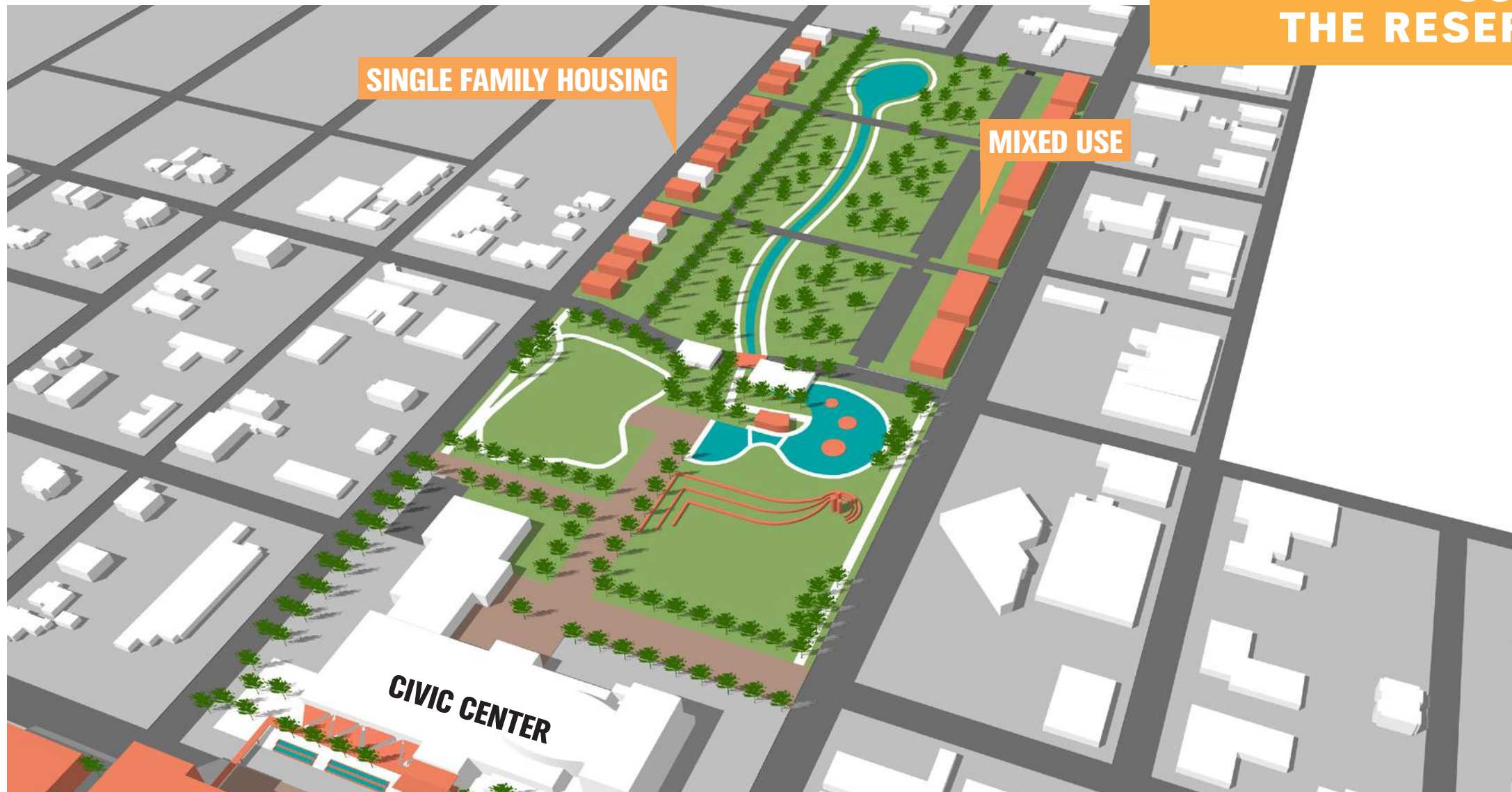


## SOUTH DOWNTOWN DISTRICT: RETAIL DISTRICT ENHANCEMENTS





## CORE NEIGHBORHOODS: THE RESERVE PARK EXPANSION



### CONCEPT

- The Reserve in Central Abilene
- A new Ampitheater
- Integration of Water Concourse
- Zero-Scape Lanscaping
- Iconic Art Elements and Storybook Sculptures Integrated
- Decorative Lighting
- Neighborhood Revitalization
- New Urban Neighborhoods

DRAFT



OUTDOOR ENTERTAINMENT



WATER ELEMENTS



NATIVE PLANTS



INCORPORATING ART



The background of the slide is an aerial photograph of a city grid. A solid orange horizontal band is centered across the image. The text '06 TRANSPORTATION' is written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters within this band.

# 06 TRANSPORTATION

**FINAL DRAFT**  
04.26.17



# TWO-WAY STREET CONVERSIONS

## INTRODUCTION

The Territory we have identified as the Center City and in particular the Downtown, have maintained a grid of streets that serve the area well. The grid has only been interrupted at the Convention Center for the benefit of aggregating enough land to house the facility. Our planning team has made several preliminary recommendations that we feel will greatly improve the vehicular circulation, pedestrian mobility and overall livability of downtown.

## ROAD DIET & ONE-WAY TO TWO-WAY STREET CONVERSIONS

Recapturing under-utilized space from circulation lanes along with street circulation conversions of three streets are easy ways to improve the public realm experience for the pedestrian and to provide more convenient on-street parking for customers visiting downtown stores and restaurants. These concepts are outlined on the following pages and illustrate the recommended changes in and around Cypress Street, 2nd Street & 3rd Street.

## ON-STREET PARKING

We have prepared some preliminary diagrams that illustrate the increase in on-street parking spaces by simply changing the angle of the diagonal parking located along Cypress Street and 2nd Street. These sketch studies will need further exploration to confirm the increased parking yields and to ascertain the steeper angle of parking is achievable with compromising large delivery and emergency vehicles.

All downtowns insist that they have a parking problem, but that problem is not as simple as just supply and demand. More often it is an issue of location. Car culture has bred a behavior that has caused people to insist on parking in a close location, preferably with their destination entrance within sight. Customers prefer on-street parking that is adjacent to their destination. However, using signage can show that a quick five-minute walk from a parking lot can get pedestrians too many destinations. Implementation of parking strategies can help relieve congestion during times of high demand, provide convenient and easy-to-find parking for shoppers, and ensure efficient use of parking infrastructure.

Modern downtowns are no longer just concerned about

traffic and parking. Instead, they enhance their rich history and cultural traditions by creating a complete street mobility system that responds to the demands of a growing population, changing economies and new technologies. Today's transportation networks, particularly in downtowns, accommodate multiple users and connect to broader street and pedestrian networks.

Downtown transportation includes designing safe access for all users, including pedestrians and bicyclists of all ages and abilities. Downtown transportation goals include not just moving traffic and ease of parking but also making it easy to cross the streets and walk to work, attractions and shops. Integrating opportunities for pedestrians and bicyclists to migrate the urban environment efficiently and safely are critical to the health of downtowns.

As future demands for mobility throughout the Center City territory increases, alternative public transit options should be explored to provide fast and dependable service. A basic shuttle system connecting Downtown, Hendricks, Hardin Simmons, Abilene Christian and SODO destination(s) and the historic Lincoln School (future project) would provide the critical connections.

Land uses and transportation systems function interdependently. Establishing a link between transportation and planning practices ensures the protection of community character and a minimum level of service that is expected to move people and goods. This balance and good planning ensures a properly functioning transportation network

The network is more than just the street itself; it also includes alleys and sidewalks that, together, provide an effective means for pedestrian and vehicular circulation. The following recommendations are based on an analysis of existing conditions by transportation planners to more efficiently use this public space to provide a balanced network that meets the needs of all users, including autos, trucks, pedestrians and bicyclists.

In addition, visitors are more likely to stroll the streets of Downtown when they feel safe, are engaged, and are provided with amenities such as benches. Increasing the amount of pedestrian activity piques curiosity of drivers passing by and is generally good for business.

# QUALITIES OF A GREAT STREET

- Accommodate multiple users and connect to the broader street network
- Accommodate social interaction, encourage pedestrian activity, or serve as a social network
- Use hardscaping, landscaping, street furniture, or other physical elements to create a unique personality and capture a sense of public space
- Capitalize on building design, scale, architecture, and proportionality
- Benefits from community involvement and participation (festivals, parades, open-air markets, etc.)
- Reflect the local culture or history
- Provide interesting visual experiences, vistas, natural features, or other qualities

<https://www.planning.org/greatplaces/streets/characteristics.htm>





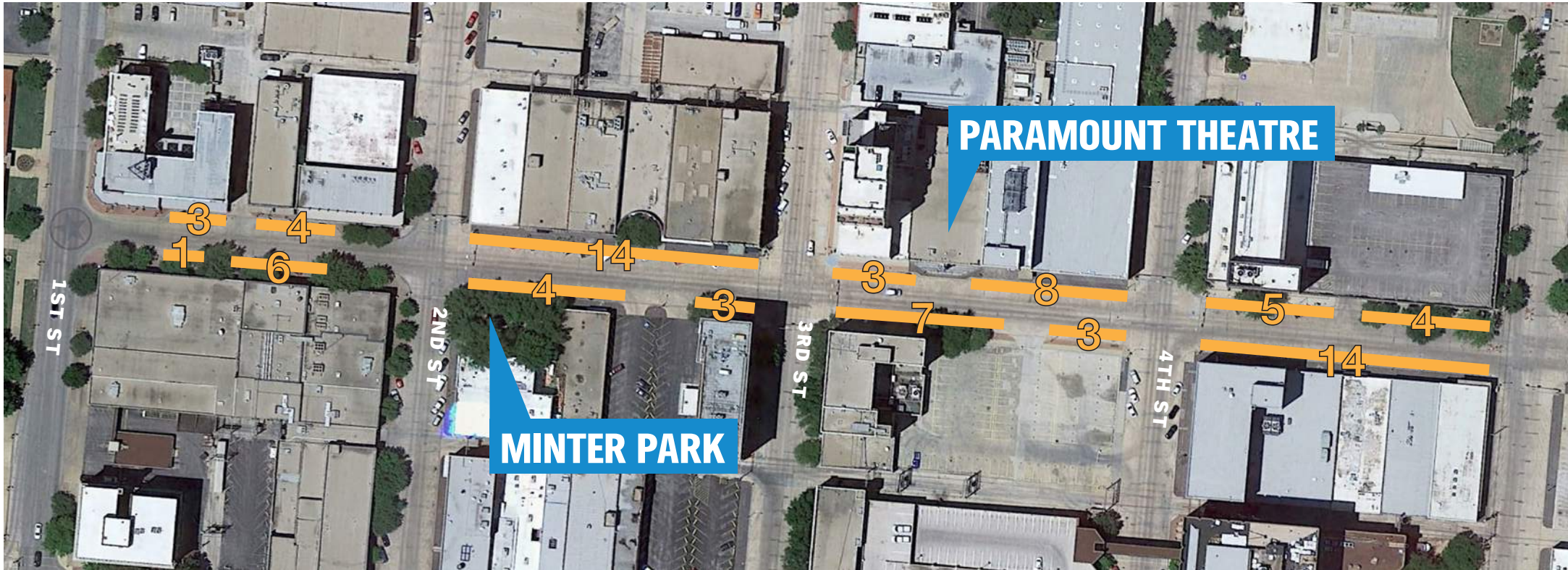
## TWO-WAY STREET CONVERSIONS





# CYPRESS ST PARKING

Although the Vision package in this document is intentionally non- technical, the planning team wanted to explore the impact of narrower circulation lanes, steeper angled parking and pedestrian placemaking for the sidewalks. As you will discover in this example illustration, the use of steeper parking angles, will provide a substantial increase in parking while allowing for generous public realm space improvements for Cypress and 2nd Streets.



EXISTING PARKING - 79 SPACES



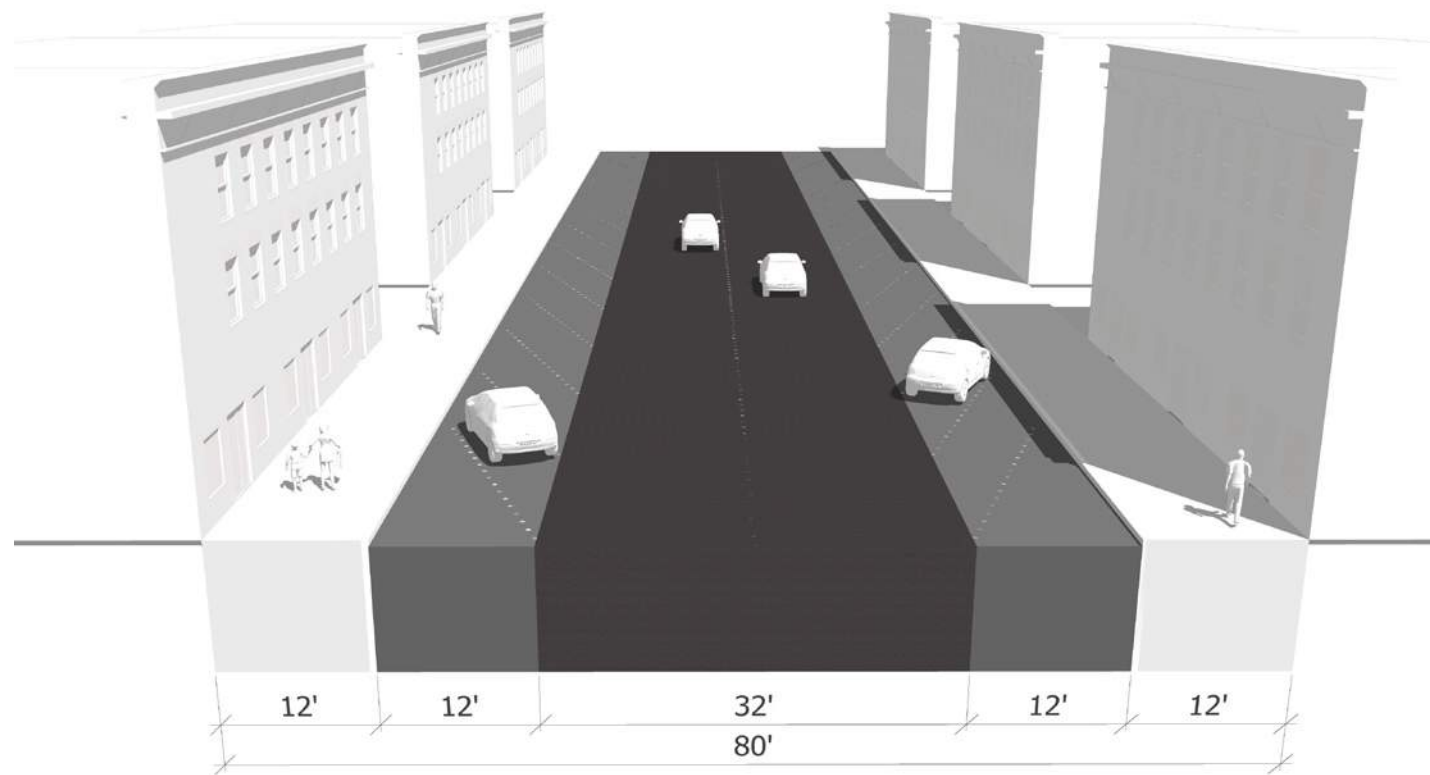
CONCEPT PARKING - 108 SPACES



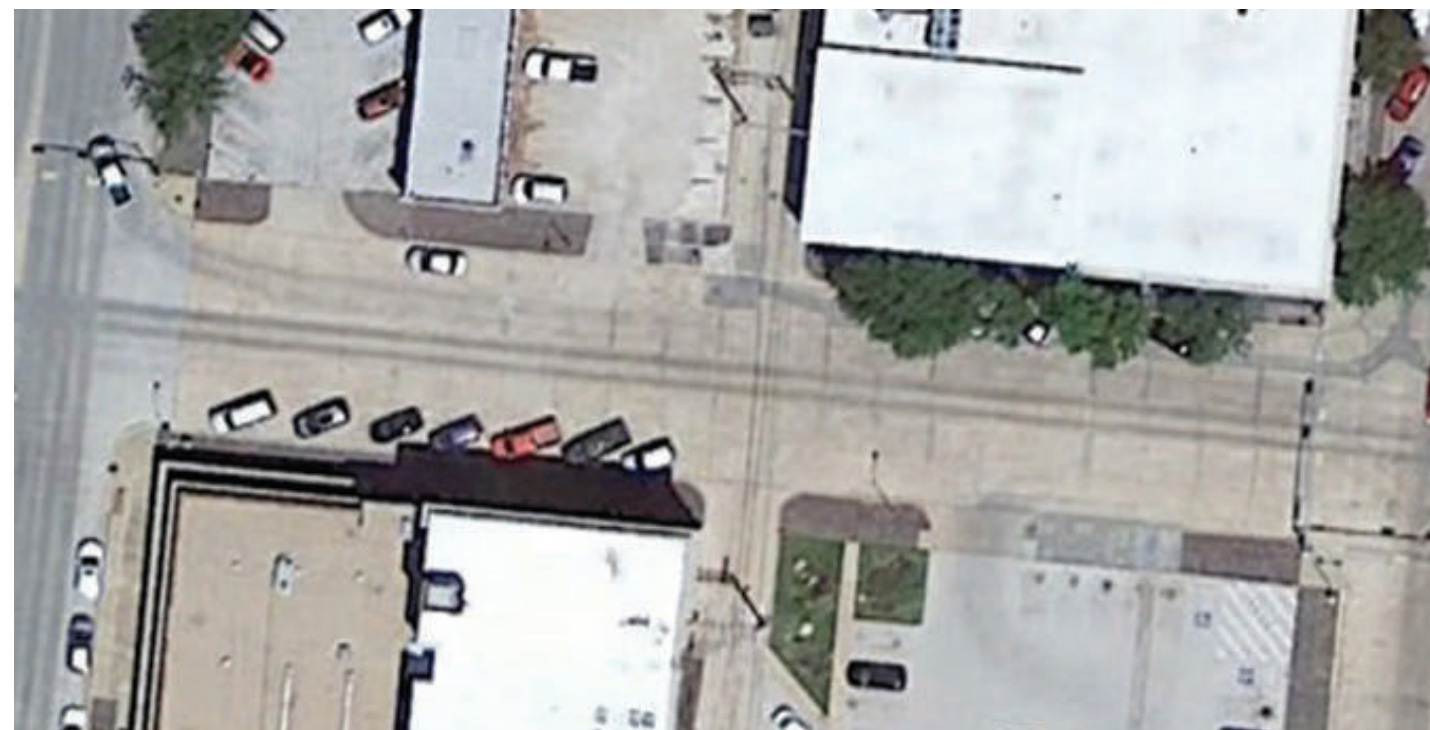
Steeper angled parking along Second Street will bring much more parking to the district. A center turn lane should be investigated during Schematic Design to ascertain traffic flow is not terribly impeded. Additionally, a traffic study should be performed to see if traffic signals could be eliminated in lieu of 4-way stop intersections for all streets except Pine Street.



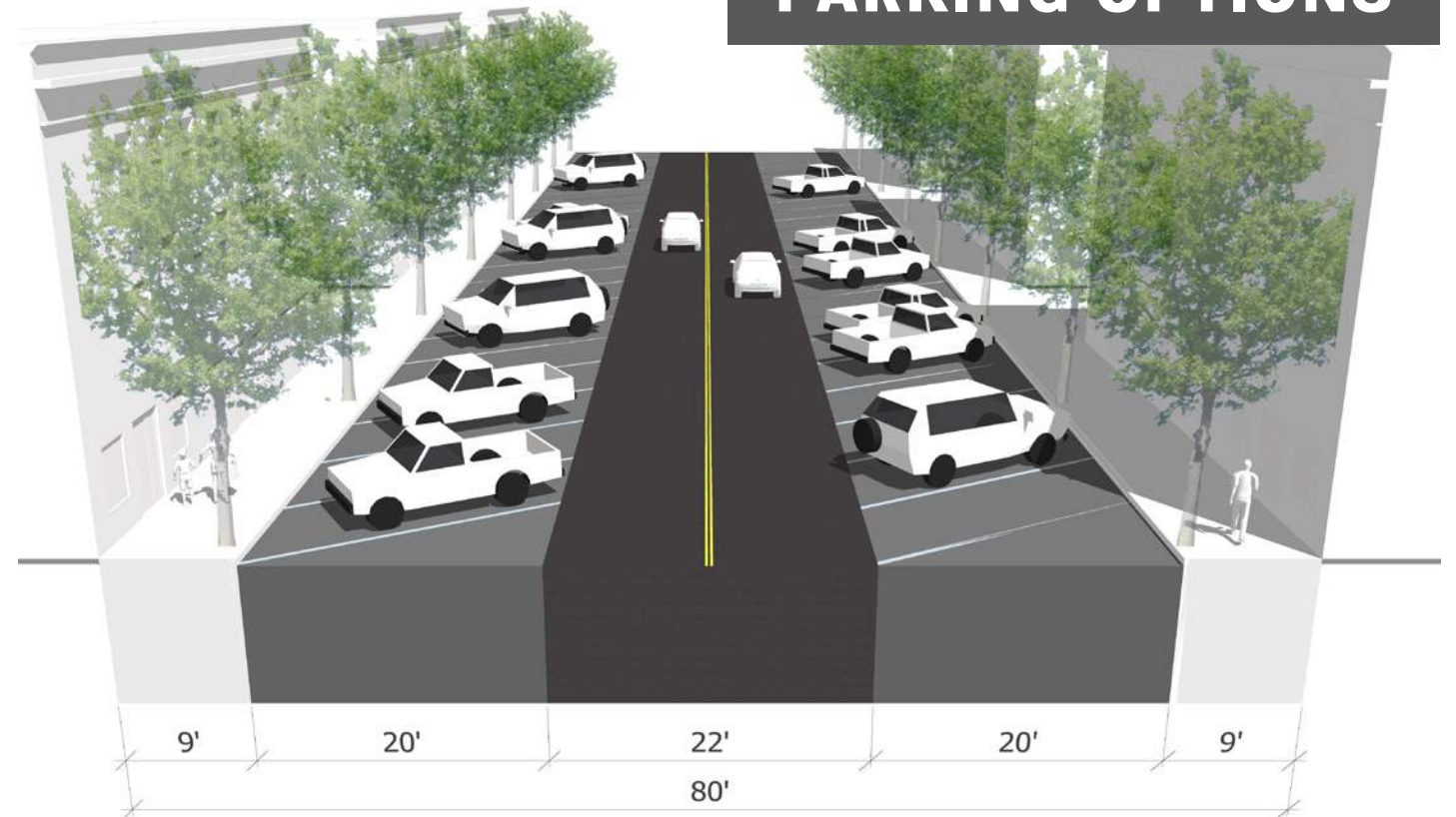




**30 DEGREES (EXISTING)**



**ON-STREET  
PARKING OPTIONS**



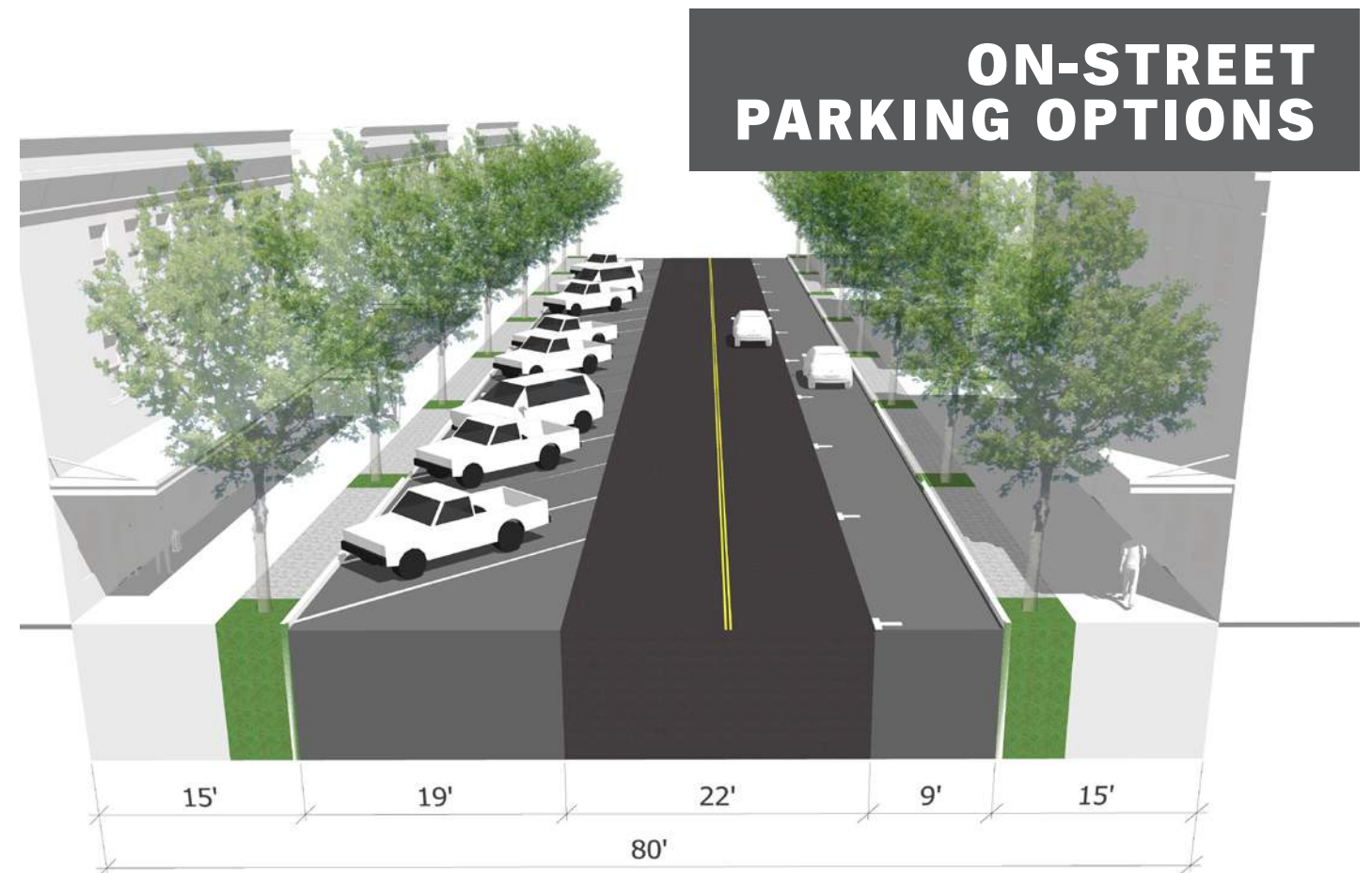
**45 DEGREES**



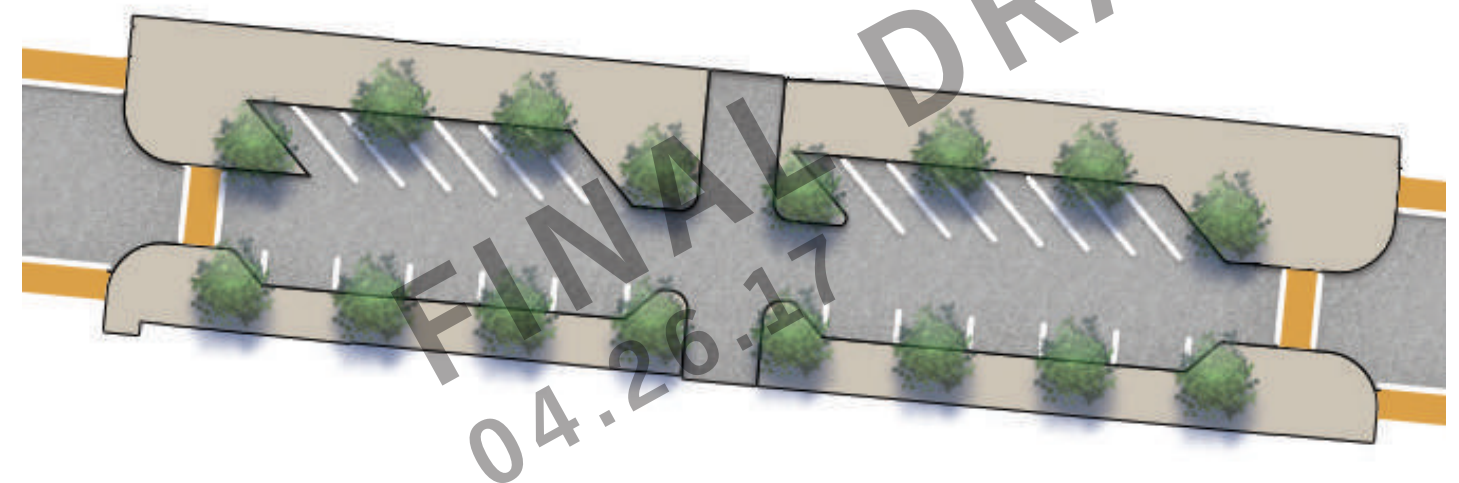
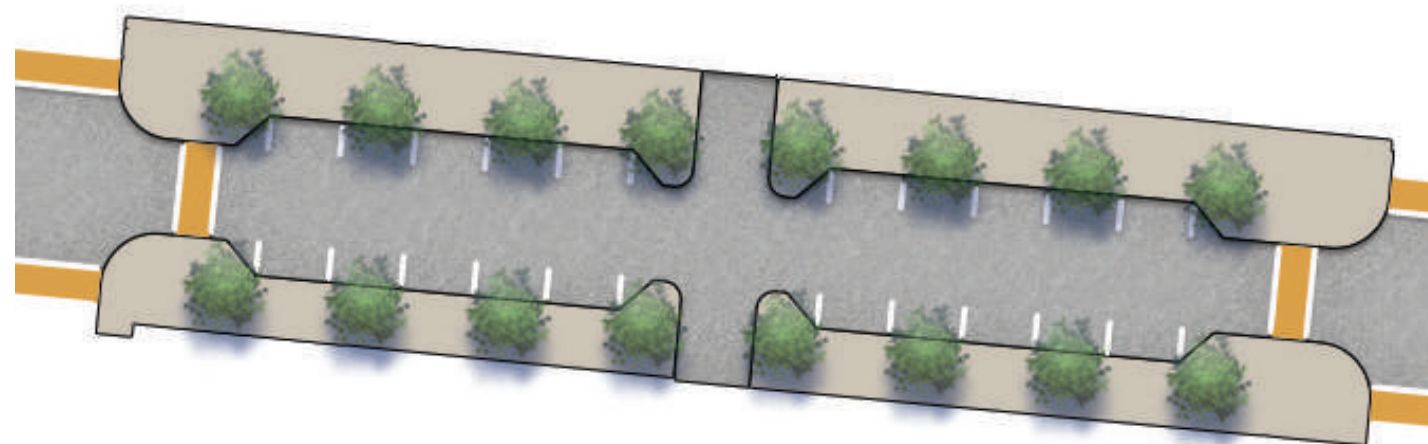




**PARALLEL**



**45 DEGREES & PARALLEL**





## EXISTING PARKING LOTS, GARAGES, AND VACANT LAND





An aerial photograph of a city grid, showing streets, buildings, and green spaces. A central horizontal banner in a solid orange color contains the text '07 CENTER CITY MANAGEMENT' in white, bold, sans-serif font. The banner is flanked by two lighter gray sections of the aerial image.

# 07 CENTER CITY MANAGEMENT

**FINAL DRAFT**  
04.26.17



# CENTER CITY MANAGEMENT

## INTRODUCTION

Without question, the Center City of Abilene is a unique collection of neighborhoods, downtown, commercial corridors, institutions, open space and historic assets that are significantly more valuable as a community & individual asset when there is evidence of a coordinated effort to manage and coordinate the entire area.

Throughout the length of the Phase I Vision initiative, the topic of management has been discussed. “Who is going to manage this?” is a common question when a strategic plan or vision is created.

## CURRENT EFFORTS

To date, the Abilene Downtown Association [ADA] has been providing coordination for events and communications for downtown retailers, commercial businesses & restaurateurs. The organization is a self-funded and volunteer led making it difficult to reach beyond these responsibilities to provide broader management services. Over the course of the last year, a group of downtown stakeholders have voiced their interest in becoming active in assisting with promotion of downtown development opportunities, catalytic funding, and community awareness. In an effort to become more effective, the group has identified three downtown committees and is beginning to identify initiatives to address their specific concerns & interests. This group is a volunteer organization as well and understands the importance of coordinating their efforts with ADA.

## A PROVEN APPROACH TO DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

It has become very apparent that no single technique or project (i.e. lavish public improvements, “name-brand” business recruitment, or endless promotional events) can successfully revitalize a commercial district or historic downtown. Commercial district revitalization is a complex process requiring a comprehensive strategy that deals with all of the unique issues affecting a particular downtown.

The first step is to institute a strong organizational foundation with dedicated personnel responsible for the effort. This organization can take many forms, from a standalone non-profit to a program housed in a public or private partner. The actual form will be much less important than that organization having the support of all public and private partners to effectively implement its goals and strategies to revitalize the downtown.

The primary goal of these kind of organizations is to build confidence in their downtown as a destination to live, work, play and, most importantly, invest. Implementation includes promotions, economic/community development and instilling a design sensitivity that is only satisfied when the physical appearance of downtown matches the vision of downtown developed by the community. It’s possible for these organizations to help reverse negative perceptions of the downtown through strong promotions, positive media relations, implementing special events that highlight the area’s unique culture, and encouraging local businesses to market cooperatively to build retail sales and increase store traffic.

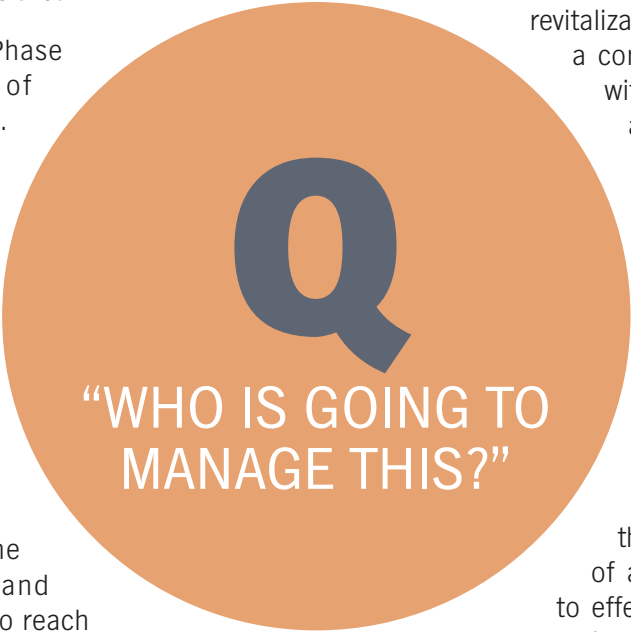
## CREATING A SPECIAL PLACE

Revitalizing any downtown or neighborhood commercial district requires focusing on the underlying economic vitality of the district. Residents and visitors alike want authenticity in the places that they live, shop and work. Making the most out of a community’s unique sense of place and historic assets, harnessing local economic opportunity and creating a supportive business environment for small business owners and the growing scores of entrepreneurs and innovators will lead the revitalization wave.

In addition to authenticity, people are attracted to areas that are physically beautiful and welcoming. A focus on good, quality design supports a community’s economic revitalization and transformation by making the place special and a place where people want to be. Creating an attractive, coordinated and quality visual image for the downtown takes into account ALL aspects of design that affect downtown’s physical image. Buildings, storefronts, benches, trash cans, street trees, planters, etc. all need to establish the image of a vibrant place where people want to be. Successful commercial districts pay attention to the appearance of public spaces through the creation of pedestrian friendly streets, the inclusion of art in unexpected areas, enlisting retailers to improve their storefront displays with exciting visual merchandising

and promoting the adaptive reuse of older and historic buildings. Facade and landscape grants from both public and private sources or a low-interest loan program for major building renovations can show private investors and property owners that public and private funders have faith and believe in the future of the downtown district.

However, none of this happens without personnel specifically tasked with coordinating the downtown revitalization effort. Staff is needed to take on the responsibility for data collection and dissemination that supports a robust business recruitment and expansion effort, attracts private investment and supports real estate development efforts. Dedicated staff would also coordinate promotional activities; assist individual property owners and tenants with building improvement projects through personal consultation or aiding with the involvement of professional design consultants and contractors. The staff must also be ready to provide the necessary information to downtown business and property owners regarding financial mechanisms, zoning and historic district ordinance information available to facilitate improvements to individual properties.





# WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Although the passion bourn by the volunteer organizations regarding the promise of downtown and the potential for the edge neighborhoods of downtown Abilene is high and providing the fuel to work toward a better place, it is imperative a funded professional organization be formed to bring a daily focus on the management and promotions of downtown.

Our planning team respects any community's right to customize a management authority around what the desires of the community it will serve. However, we suggest that a task force be assigned to explore several models for downtown management to help determine what course of action and organizational structure meets Abilene's needs.

**Possible Organizational Vehicles:**

- The Main Street Approach
- Downtown Management Authorities
- Community Development Corporations,
- Business Improvement Districts [Bid]

Final selection will require careful thought as to which organizational structure best meets Abilene's objectives. Additional consideration should be given to letting this organization reside within the local Chamber Commerce to take advantage of built-in staff and services.

6

STATE OF MAIN FALL 2016

YEAR IN REVIEW

THE MAIN STREET AMERICA NETWORK

Thank you to all of you who are a part of the Main Street America movement—community members, volunteers, board members, executive directors and state coordinators. A special thanks to the Main Street Coordinators Executive Council for their exceptional leadership:

**Pauline Eaton, Orlando Main Streets**  
**Bill Fontana, Pennsylvania Downtown Center**  
**Laura Krizov, Vice Chair, Michigan Main Street**  
**Diane Laird, Acting Chair, Downtown Delaware**  
**Beppie LeGrand, Past Chair, Main Street South Carolina**  
**Greg Phillips, Main Street Arkansas**  
**Tim Reinders, Design Representative, Main Street Iowa**  
**Sheri Stuart, Oregon Main Street**  
**Darrin Wasniewski, Wisconsin Main Street**  
**Rich Williams, New Mexico Main Street**

837

ACCREDITED PROGRAMS

387

28

72

ALLIED MEMBERS

44

COORDINATING PROGRAMS

OUR NETWORK

As of June 30, 2016

THE MAIN STREET FOUR-POINT APPROACH™

The National Trust Main Street Center offers a comprehensive commercial district revitalization strategy that has been widely successful in towns and cities nationwide. Described at right are the four points of the Main Street approach that work together to build a sustainable and complete community revitalization effort.

The Main Street approach is incremental; it is not designed to produce immediate change. Because they often fail to address the underlying causes of commercial district decline, expensive improvements, such as pedestrian malls or sports arenas, do not always generate the desired economic results. In order to succeed, a long-term revitalization effort requires careful attention to every aspect of downtown – a process that takes time and requires leadership and local capacity building.

Organization

Organization involves getting everyone working toward the same goal and assembling the appropriate human and financial resources to implement a Main Street revitalization program. A governing board and standing committee make up the fundamental organizational structure of the volunteer-driven program. Volunteers are coordinated and supported by a staff program director as well. This structure not only divides the workload and clarifies individual responsibilities, but also builds consensus and cooperation among the various stakeholders.

Promotion

Promotion sells a positive image of the commercial district and encourages consumers and investors to live, work, shop, play and invest in the Main Street district. By marketing a district's unique characteristics to residents, investors, business owners and visitors, an effective promotional strategy forges a positive image through advertising, retail promotional activities, special events and marketing campaigns carried out by local volunteers. These activities improve consumer and investor confidence in the district and encourage commercial activity and investment in the area.

Design

Design means getting Main Street into top physical shape. Capitalizing on its best assets – such as historic buildings and pedestrian-oriented streets – is just part of the story. An inviting atmosphere, created through attractive window displays, parking areas, building improvements, street furniture, signs, sidewalks, street lights and landscaping, conveys a positive visual message about the commercial district and what it has to offer. Design activities also include instilling good maintenance practices in the commercial district, enhancing the physical appearance of the commercial district by rehabilitating historic buildings, encouraging appropriate new construction, developing sensitive design management systems, and long-term planning.

Economic Restructuring

Economic Restructuring strengthens a community's existing economic assets while expanding and diversifying its economic base. The Main Street program helps sharpen the competitiveness of existing business concerns and recruits compatible new businesses and new economic uses to build a commercial district that responds to today's consumers' needs. Converting unused or underused commercial space into economically productive property also helps boost the profitability of the district.

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

**Friends of Main Street** - \$100 Annually  
Reserved for individuals, corporations and other Not-for-Profit Associations that support the work and Mission of the Mississippi Main Street Association (MMSA). Members receive limited services but are invited to receive limited phone consultation from MMSA Staff, subscription to the MMSA E-newsletter, invitation to the MMSA Annual Awards Luncheon and reduced registration fee to regularly scheduled training and educational meetings and workshops.

**Association Membership** - \$250 Annually  
The Association membership provides a range of services and assistance to meet a variety of community development and readiness levels. It is for communities that are either just starting a downtown revitalization effort or those that do not wish to become a designated Main Street community or a Mississippi Downtown Network Member at this time. Communities participating at this membership level may also take advantage of additional training opportunities by purchasing services from the MMSA Menu of Services at a discounted rate only offered to member communities.

Downtown

The MDN Main Street catalyst for change. Member to stakeholder member (a local business or organization) that guides the vitality of their levels of community development and readiness. The Associate level may also may not be in services from to member co

State of MAIN

A PUBLICATION OF MAIN STREET AMERICA

FALL 2016

FOSTERING A CULTURE OF HEALTH, INCLUSION AND INNOVATION ON MAIN STREET

04.26.17

FINAL DRAFT

MAIN STREET AMERICA™

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The Comeback: Manufacturers Finding New Homes along Main Street

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#DOWNTOWNABI

ABILENE CENTER CITY GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT PLAN: PH1 VISION PACKAGE | 57



The background of the slide is an aerial photograph of a city grid, showing streets, buildings, and green spaces. A solid orange horizontal band is superimposed over the center of the image, serving as a background for the main title.

# 08 RECOMMENDATIONS

**FINAL DRAFT**  
04.26.17



# RECOMMENDATIONS



## INTRODUCTION

The recommendations outlined in this section represent what our team feels are the most critical factors in the ongoing development of the center city area of Abilene. The recommendations also reinforce the importance of key topics we heard repeated by the citizens of Abilene throughout the 12 month process in the development of this Phase 1 Growth and Development Plan for the center city area. The recommendations will need further development by the “soon to be created” Center City management team including those who will serve as board and key committee members

A repeated theme found in the recommendations is the importance of public/private partnerships. Downtown development cannot be shouldered by any one entity. It will take a team effort by government and private enterprise to realize, maintain and enhance the Center City core. What one group cannot do, the other can and working together Abilene can discover ways to bring mutually beneficial ideas to fruition. And as a healthier center city core is realized, economic sustainability will occur thanks to ongoing investments being made by those who see the center city as the best place to invest development dollars. This will not happen overnight, but as the professional management of downtown is established and each build project appears, a confidence factor will surface by the stakeholders and investment capital will find its way into the center city area by those who had been investing elsewhere in the past.

# DESIGN

Design can be a powerful tool for the re-branding of a street, neighborhood or district. Design changes are perhaps most noticeable because of the visual change that comes about from the implementation of these ideas. As the Management entity explores priorities for their redevelopment plans, consideration should be given to gain the most impact possible within the available funding budget.

- Consider implementation of a well-funded Facade Improvement Program to provide financial resources to property owners interesting in enhancing their' buildings' facade while contributing to the overall preservation of the downtown's historic and urban architecture
- Prepare & codify “Downtown Design & Development Guidelines” to provide guidance and order to the renovation, new construction, storefronts, building signing & lighting within the targeted area.
- Prepare & codify goals, objectives and installation standards for public/private art
- Develop “Urban Landscape Design Standards” and “Implementation Strategy” for downtown.
- Continue integration of Storybook public art program into the downtown
- Develop creative gateway elements demarcating entry points into the Center City

# PUBLIC REALM

Public Realm is the areas of the built environment that is not assigned to private ownership. Streets, alleys, sidewalks, public parking lots & garages, public open space & parks make up the public realm that we use. The urban public realm is a very important component because it is the visual and functional introduction to the urban environment experienced by visitors regardless if by motorized vehicle, public transit, bicycle or on foot. The design, management and maintenance of the downtown public realm typically falls on the shoulders of the municipality and can have a low priority when given the city-wide responsibilities of the city. A visually stimulating public realm can energize the vibe of the downtown and can set the stage for private property owners to invest into their real estate. Special Improvement Districts have become a popular tool for downtown organizations to supplement city maintenance programs with privately funded services.

- Develop key public gateways into downtown
- Consider an “Extreme Makeover” of the public realm of key streets and Minter Park in downtown [paving, seating, shade, landscaping, lighting]
- Replace and/or repair existing sidewalks integrating new design standards
- Replace dated street, alley & sidewalk lighting systems with LED lighting
- Develop a high quality public parking signing system to complement the wayfinding system
- Develop a plan for public art installations
- Provide high quality public restrooms integrated into public parking lots or garages and/or downtown
-



# GOVERNMENT + PARTNERSHIPS

As the governing authority regulating land use, zoning, health, safety and welfare of it's businesses and citizens, the City of Abilene is a major stakeholder and property owner in downtown. The Planning Team strongly urges the City to explore zoning modifications to allow future development to more closely align with the vision provided in this document. This is most important in the Warehouse District. The Planning Team strongly urges the City of Abilene to explore Zoning changes that would allow future development to more closely align with the vision provided in this document. This is most evident in the Warehouse District east of Walnut Street. The city also recognizes the fiduciary responsibility it has to complement private investment and leverage public dollars for continued investment into it's core and to elevate the quality and character of downtown. The Abilene Economic Development Strategic Plan points out the importance of a healthy downtown that can attract new businesses, entrepreneurs and skilled workers seeking the urban lifestyle and the live, work, play & learn environment it conveys. Without question, the most successful downtown redevelopment programs in the country have utilized public/private partnerships to accomplish positive physical changes and increased livability.

The city is currently exploring a variety of public/private funding and entitlement programs to bring to the table in downtown. Leveraging the existing TIRZ District funding, searching for state funding or legislative vehicles to allow creative funding are a few legislative vehicles the city and it's partners are currently exploring for the benefit of downtown. Abilene foundations have been extremely generous over the years toward downtown and have providing significant capital to numerous public & private development projects. Hopefully as even more economic development occurs and private investment funds brought to bear on downtown, the foundations will continue to place available funds into downtown development initiatives. Private historic property owners should also note that they can utilize Historic Tax Credit funding on their own without any public entity involvement

# MANAGEMENT

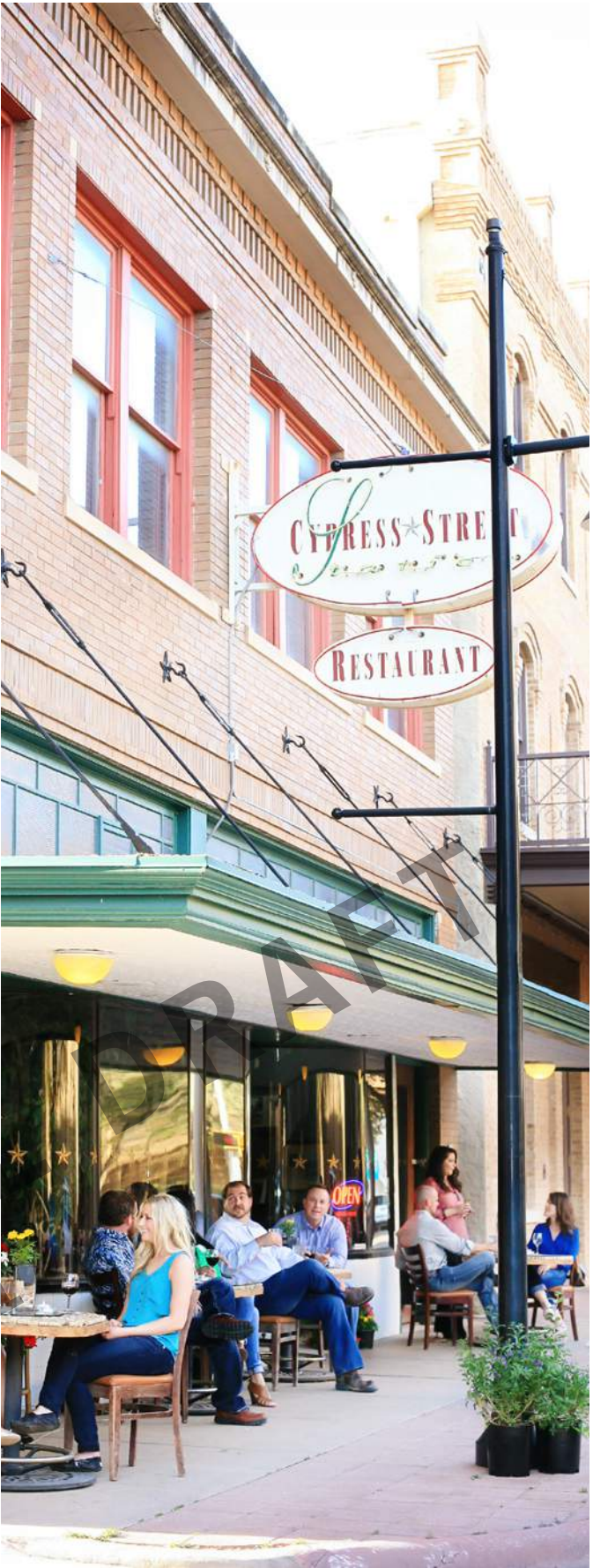
The day to day management of downtown is critically important to the long-term success of downtown as a cultural, shopping and entertainment destination. Although the volunteer groups and Abilene Downtown Association currently engaged with promoting downtown are doing an admirable job given the limited funds and resources, it is imperative a funded professional organization be formed to bring a daily focus on the management and promotions of downtown.

- Formalize an organization best suited for the management of downtown.
- Consider the organization's home to be located within the Abilene Chamber of Commerce for access to broader services and personnel.
- Consider the Main Street Approach as a template for the organization's committee structure and the executive director's responsibilities.
- Explore other models for downtown management organizational structure and operations such as Special Improvement Districts & Community Development Corporations.
- Develop a short & long-term strategy for the management operations

# CATALYTIC PROJECTS

Catalytic projects can be very effective in establishing an entirely new perspective on the downtown. Existing and prospective property owners, developers and tenants become more energized to invest into downtown when there is visual evidence that downtown is moving in a positive direction. These projects can be large and small, public and private however it is important they are being developed in a complementary fashion toward the vision for downtown.

- Continue to explore the feasibility of the proposed Convention Center Hotel.
- Prepare a Schematic Design package for streetscape improvements for key streets in downtown.
- Perform further engineering studies to confirm the proposed one-way to two-way street conversions will function properly along with necessary signalization modifications.
- Prepare a strategy for the public realm "theming" that would integrate Storybook elements with other streetscape elements including signing, lighting, seating and paving.
- Prepare a social media strategy for the promotions and marketing of downtown



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