



May 2010

MASTER PLAN for

SOUTH DOWNTOWN ABILENE

restoring value | place | community



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The South Downtown Master Plan would not have been possible without the feedback, input, and support provided by Abilene's citizens. We'd like to thank all participants in the planning process who live, work, play, or use South Downtown, other interested individuals who gave their feedback on this planning effort, and members of City staff who made themselves available to answer technical questions and provide information on specific topics related to this master plan.



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A Vision for South Downtown Abilene

*A people place that entices you
To play, shop, eat,
To come during the day,
To come in the evening,
To come spend the weekend.*

*A part of Downtown Abilene that
Looks terrific and “lives terrific”
It’s fun, safe, open, and alive.*

*A great destination -
It’s cool and unique,
Friendly, vibrant, and diverse,
Entertaining and fun.*

*You’ll want to come back next weekend
You’ll want to move right in and never leave.*

It’s the heart and soul of West Central Texas!

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Master Plan Report communicates the vision of South Downtown Abilene. It is an account of the current conditions in South Downtown, the process that discovered the vision for its future, and a pathway to realize that future.. Components of this report include assessment of the regional context and existing conditions of South Downtown; the framework and principles that guide the recommendations of the master plan; and strategies for successful implementation.

Over the past year, Halff Associates has worked with the City of Abilene to develop a master plan for South Downtown Abilene. The vision and goals for the future of South Downtown came about through various public inputs, including focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and a public workshop. During the process, a specific team of South Downtown stakeholders was formed, known as the Process Committee. This team guided and facilitated the planning process to create this master plan, and is expected to grow into facilitators of plan implementation.

An economic, physical, and cultural assessment revealed characteristics of South Downtown that either aid or reduce the potential for revitalization of this area. Current land uses, building conditions, transportation opportunities, and property ownership establish the physical foundation of South Downtown. Interviews with stakeholders and users of South Downtown identified underlying forces at play, which will affect implementation. And an economic assessment, performed by HyettPalma, identified the current economic markets of South Downtown. This input directly affected the recommendations and action plan for South Downtown.

The concept of the master plan builds off three broad goals:

- create a sense of community
- create a sense of place
- create a sense of value

The principles and components of this master plan all seek to achieve these goals. Chapter 4 discusses

in detail the guiding principles of the master plan and the specifics of the components, which include:

- Transportation - This component establishes a hierarchy of streets and design recommendations to facilitate their use. It also addresses traffic flow and recommends converting the one-way streets to two-way, and ways to improve pedestrian connectivity.
- Built Environment - This component addresses the needs of the built environment that the current zoning standards don't address: sense of place. The built environment is a critical factor in creating an environment that people want to be in. Character districts are identified based on land use, boundaries, and building condition, and general form standards are discussed to guide future development.
- Housing - Urban living is on the rise, and planning for downtown living is essential to ensure that it is available to everyone. Offering a range of housing choices is important to ensure that all demographic groups and income levels have the choice of living in South Downtown Abilene.
- Open Space - In a dense urban environment, people need a place to escape and a place to gather. Open space serves both. The concept of open space in South Downtown should be a well-connected network of public and private spaces distributed throughout the study area and accessible to everyone. Furthermore, it should connect to the regional system of trails and open spaces in Abilene.

Finally, strategies were developed for implementation that focus on prioritizing physical improvements, necessary policy actions, and innovative funding opportunities. The South Downtown Abilene Master Plan is intended to establish a vision for the future of South Downtown Abilene and outline a framework of actions to realize that vision. Future funding and development decisions in the area should be guided by the vision and goals of this master plan.



1 INTRODUCTION

PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

A review of previous planning efforts provides an idea of the community's interests based on historical actions and goals identified in these plans. Previous efforts included:

DOWNTOWN ABILENE TAX INCREMENT FINANCE DISTRICT, 1984-2009

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 district.

DOWNTOWN ABILENE STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN, MAY 1998

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:

Downtown Abilene should:

- 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; and
- preserve, enhance, and adaptively convert great civic and historic landmarks to uses that attract citizens and other visitors to Downtown.

(Gideon Toal, 1998)

DOWNTOWN STREETSCAPE PLAN, AUGUST 1998

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

This plan supports the vision and ideas for Abilene established in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan. First, the Abilene Comprehensive Plan strives to focus growth in developed areas of the city that area already serviced. One of the guiding principles of the Comprehensive Plan is to "promote infill and redevelopment projects that are targeted to underutilized or vacant areas of the city [and] prioritize the redevelopment of older facilities that might not otherwise have an economically viable use, such as distressed retail shopping centers, industrial sites, and vacant schools" (p. 9). Moreover, the Comprehensive Plan calls for encouraging infill development to avoid leapfrog development (p. 22).



Graphic from 2004 Comprehensive Plan that illustrates the concept of infill development.

The Comprehensive Plan identifies downtown Abilene as the "primary center of finance, culture, and government" (p. 34). Strategies of the Comprehensive Plan for downtown include:

- implement the Downtown Streetscape Master Plan and Toal Plan;
- induce residential development in downtown through incentives;
- improve downtown infrastructure (sidealks, street lighting, landscaping) in a manner compatible with historic character; and
- 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 enhancing the overall identity and image. The Comprehensive Plan identifies several function 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, and promoting urban design standards, such as building placement, scale, and massing, that improve the community image and character.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The development of the South Downtown Abilene Master Plan could not have been developed without the participation and input of the downtown stakeholders and residents of Abilene. A combination of focus group meetings, issue sessions, stakeholder interviews, and a visioning session allowed interested citizens of Abilene to participate in the planning process. Through these meetings, we identified issues, opportunities, and desires of interested Abilenians regarding South Downtown.

PROCESS COMMITTEE

Throughout the process, the planning team periodically reported to a Process Committee made up of local leaders in the South Downtown and surrounding area. Early in the process, the Process Committee helped identify the key issues; later presentations allowed the Process Committee to review recommendations.



ISSUE SESSIONS

Three issue sessions were held early in the planning process with the Process Committee, city staff directors; and South Downtown-related organizations.

- The Process Committee was asked to discuss key issues, concerns of the future, and current or potential projects in the South Downtown area.
- City staff were asked to discuss programs, projects, or actions being undertaken by their departments that impacted the South Downtown area.
- South Downtown-related organizations discussed how their organization is currently involved in the area and how it might be involved in the future, as well as issues in South Downtown that are of concern to their organization.

These discussions helped form a foundation of key issues and concerns in South Downtown.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus group meetings allow for specific patrons of downtown to discuss their specific issues as users of the South Downtown area. Two focus groups were held: a retail customer focus group and a non-retail employee focus group. The focus group participants discussed:

- how often they shop in or use services in South Downtown;
- when they shop or use services;
- other reasons they come to South Downtown;
- what they like least and most about the area;
- what changes or improvements might increase their patronage; and
- what their image of South Downtown would be like in five years.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

The Process Committee identified six individuals who they felt were critical in the implementation of the plan and future of South Downtown, such as major property owners or business owners; representatives of a major institution or organization; key lenders or developers; or highly influential community leaders. Interviewees were asked to discuss:

- their opinion of South Downtown as it stands today;
- their opinion of the key issues facing South Downtown; and
- their opinion of the current image/reputation of South Downtown.

COMMUNITY VISIONING SESSION

The Community Visioning Session, held on Tuesday, May 5, 2009 at the Historic Elks Building Ballroom, was open to the public. The purpose was to engage the community in discussing the future of South Downtown.

Advertisement of the public meeting was through:

- flyers handed out door-to-door to business owners in the greater downtown area, who were asked to tell patrons and post in their window;
- an e-mail blast announcing the meeting to members of the business association and neighborhood associations;
- an ad and story printed in the local newspaper, *The Reporter News*; and
- posting the announcement on the City's web site.

Abilene residents who attended the Visioning Session were asked to consider what they would like South Downtown Abilene to be like in five years: what would it look like; what would the mix of uses be; what kind of services would be offered; and who should be the customers and users of South Downtown?



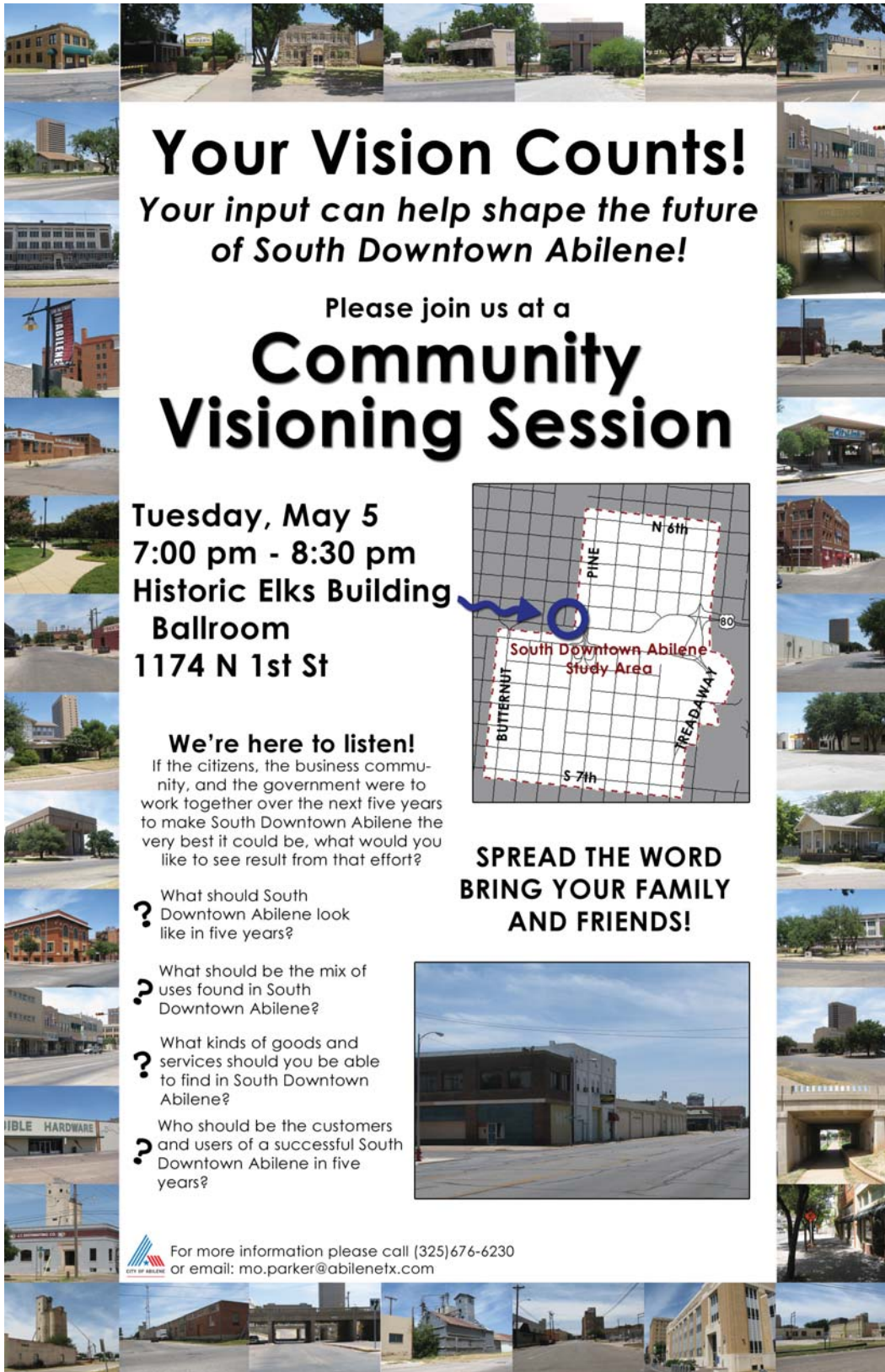
Dolores Palma of HyettPalma leads the audience in a discussion of the future of South Downtown Abilene.



Mayor Norm Archibald welcomes attendees to the Community Visioning Session.



Abilene citizens discuss their vision for the future of South Downtown.



Your Vision Counts!

Your input can help shape the future of South Downtown Abilene!

Please join us at a

Community Visioning Session

**Tuesday, May 5
7:00 pm - 8:30 pm
Historic Elks Building
Ballroom
1174 N 1st St**

We're here to listen!
If the citizens, the business community, and the government were to work together over the next five years to make South Downtown Abilene the very best it could be, what would you like to see result from that effort?

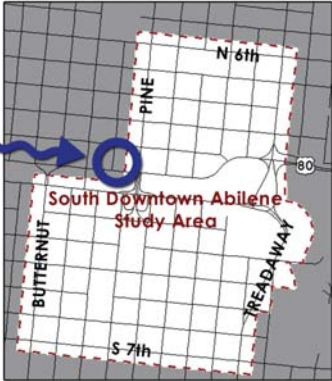

? What should South Downtown Abilene look like in five years?

? What should be the mix of uses found in South Downtown Abilene?

? What kinds of goods and services should you be able to find in South Downtown Abilene?

? Who should be the customers and users of a successful South Downtown Abilene in five years?

**SPREAD THE WORD
BRING YOUR FAMILY
AND FRIENDS!**

For more information please call (325) 676-6230
or email: mo.parker@abilenetx.com

Flyer posted around the City of Abilene to promote the Community Visioning Session.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ABILENE

Abilene is located in the northeast corner of Taylor County on Interstate 20. Approximately 150 miles west of Fort Worth, Abilene is in the West Central region of Texas, also known as the "Big Country" by locals. It is also connected to the region by US Hwy 80, US Hwy 83, US Hwy 84, US Hwy 277, State Hwy 36, and the T&P Railroad.

In its early years, Abilene served as a cattle-raising area. (Earlier settlements were attempted, but the difficult farming climate stumped these efforts.) Despite hardships, cotton became a major industry. Abilene was officially founded by a group of ranchers and businessmen who made an agreement with the T&P Railroad to route the railroad through their properties in the northern portion of Taylor County. In 1881 the town was subdivided and 300 lots were sold; in 1883 the residents of Abilene voted to incorporate and became the Taylor County seat (City of Abilene, Historic Preservation Plan).

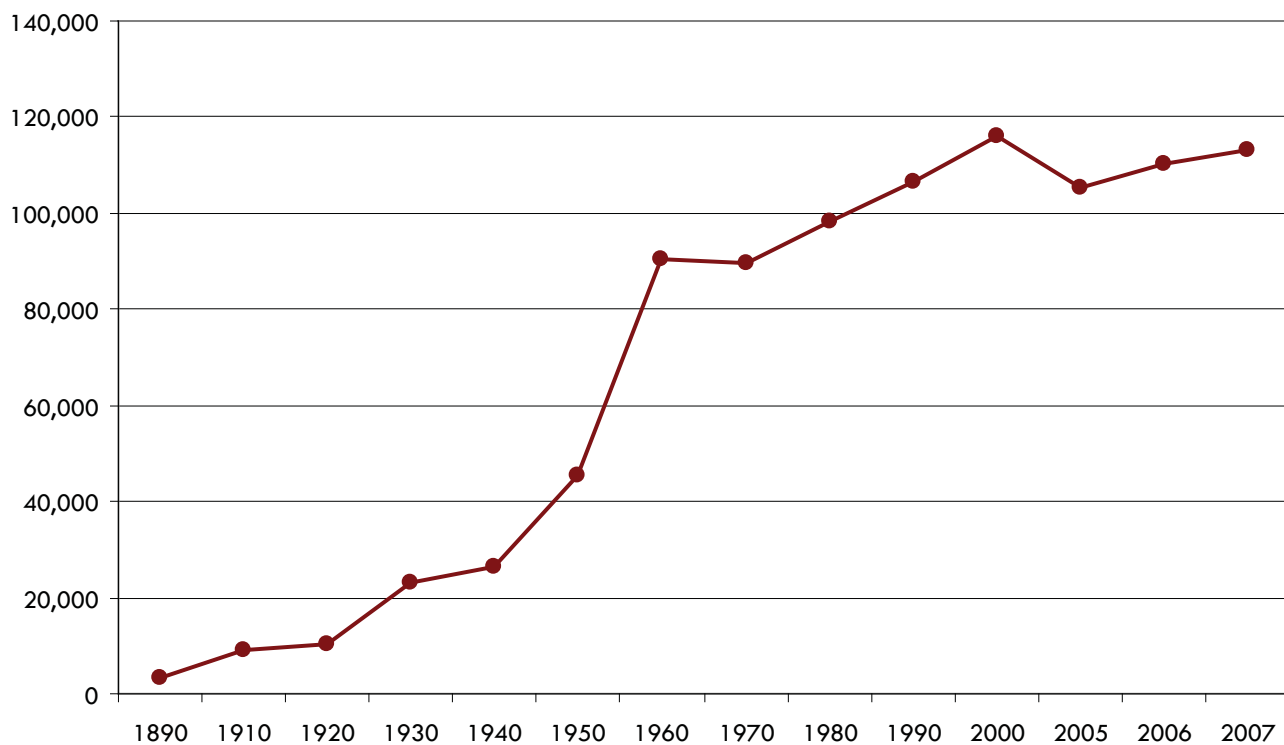
The most recent Decennial Census estimate from the U.S. Census Bureau is 2000. The next decennial is 2010, and release is anticipated in April 2011. American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing annual survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau to estimate annual population counts. While the Decennial Census is more statistically accurate, the ACS data set helps see the continuation of population trends in recent years.

Table 1.1
Historic Population Growth
City of Abilene

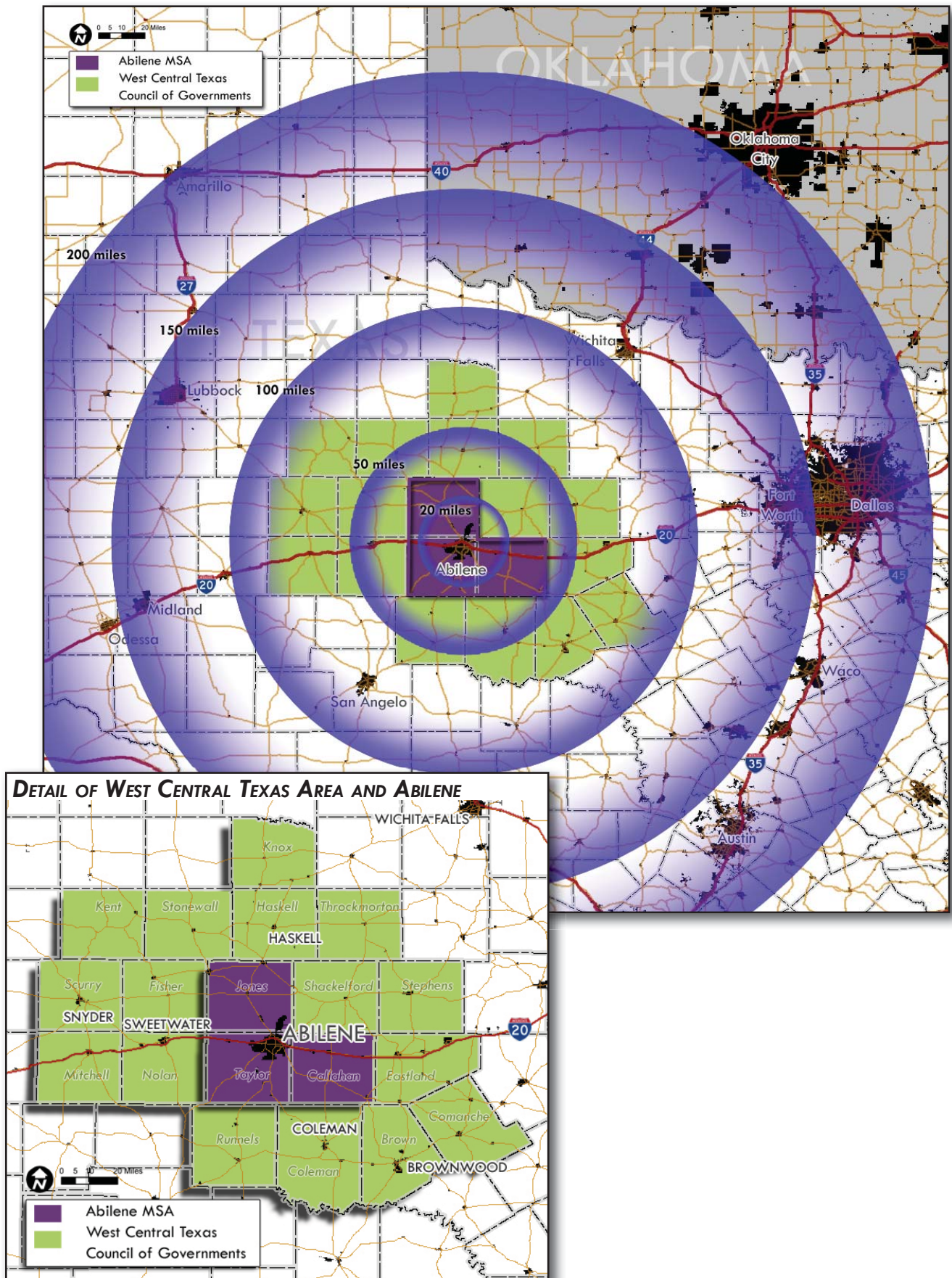
Year	Population	Annual Growth
1890	3,194	-
1910	9,204	9.41%
1920	10,274	1.16%
1930	23,175	12.56%
1940	26,612	1.48%
1950	45,570	7.12%
1960	90,638	9.89%
1970	89,653	-0.11%
1980	98,315	0.97%
1990	106,654	0.85%
2000	115,930	0.87%
2005	105,165	-1.86%
2006	110,142	4.73%
2007	113,151	2.73%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, www.census.gov
1890-2000 - Decennial Census
2005-2007 - American Community Survey

City of Abilene Population Growth
1890 - 2007



WEST CENTRAL TEXAS AREA - DISTANCE FROM ABILENE

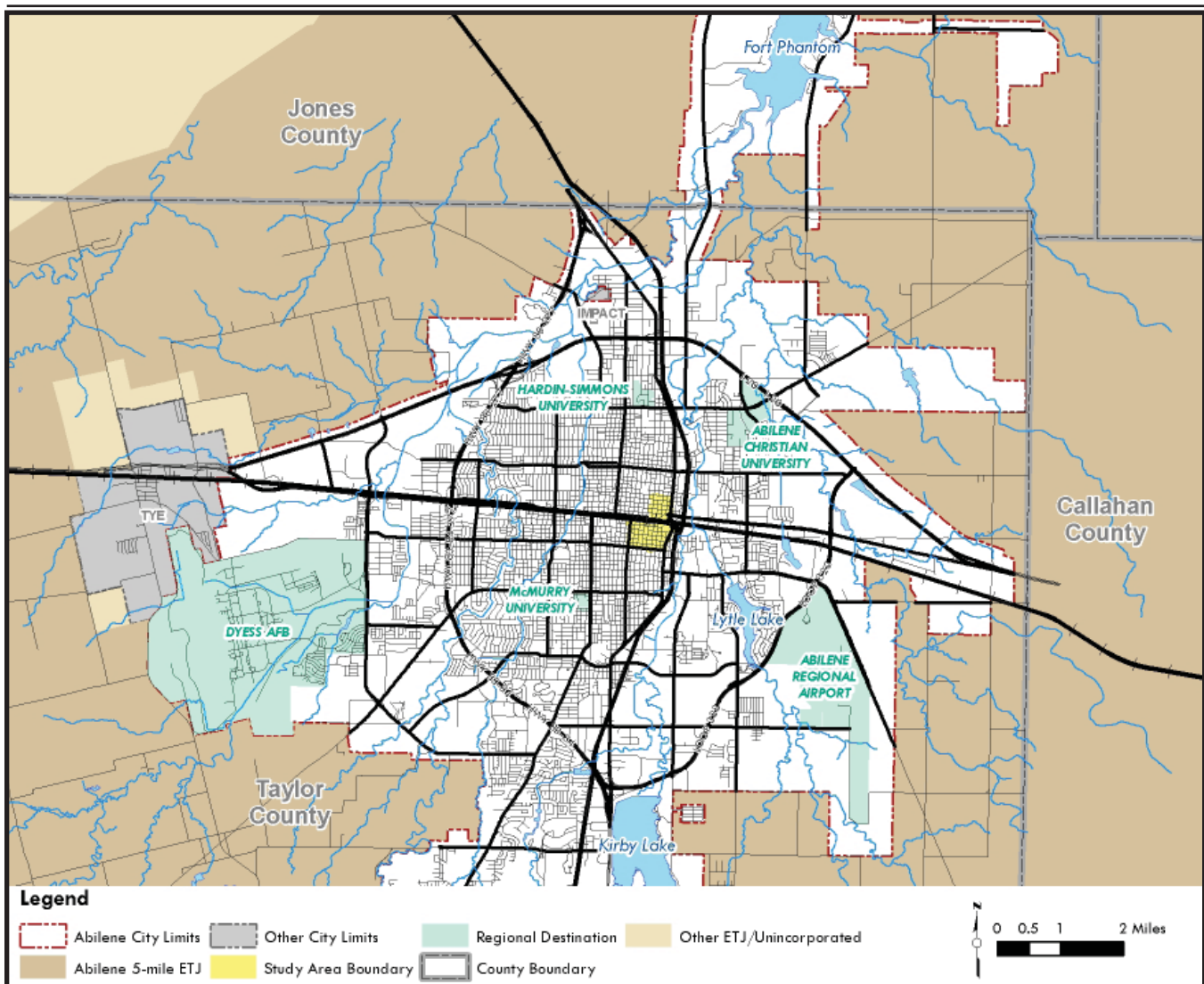


Its location on a rail corridor stabilized the economy and spurred growth in Abilene. In 1890 Abilene had a population of 3,194, and by 1910 it had grown to 9,204. Aggressive growth continued until the 1960s and has since slowed (Handbook of Texas Online).

Growth trends in the 1970s and 1980s toward the south impacted the downtown area. The Mall of Abilene, Cooper High School, and Fairway Oaks attracted people and businesses away from downtown.

Despite the slowing, and possibly declining growth, Abilene remains home to significant entities that continue to sustain its economy and business and residential base. It is home to Dyess Air Force Base, Hendrick Health System, three major universities (Abilene Christian, Hardin-Simmons, and McMurry), and six community colleges or technical schools.

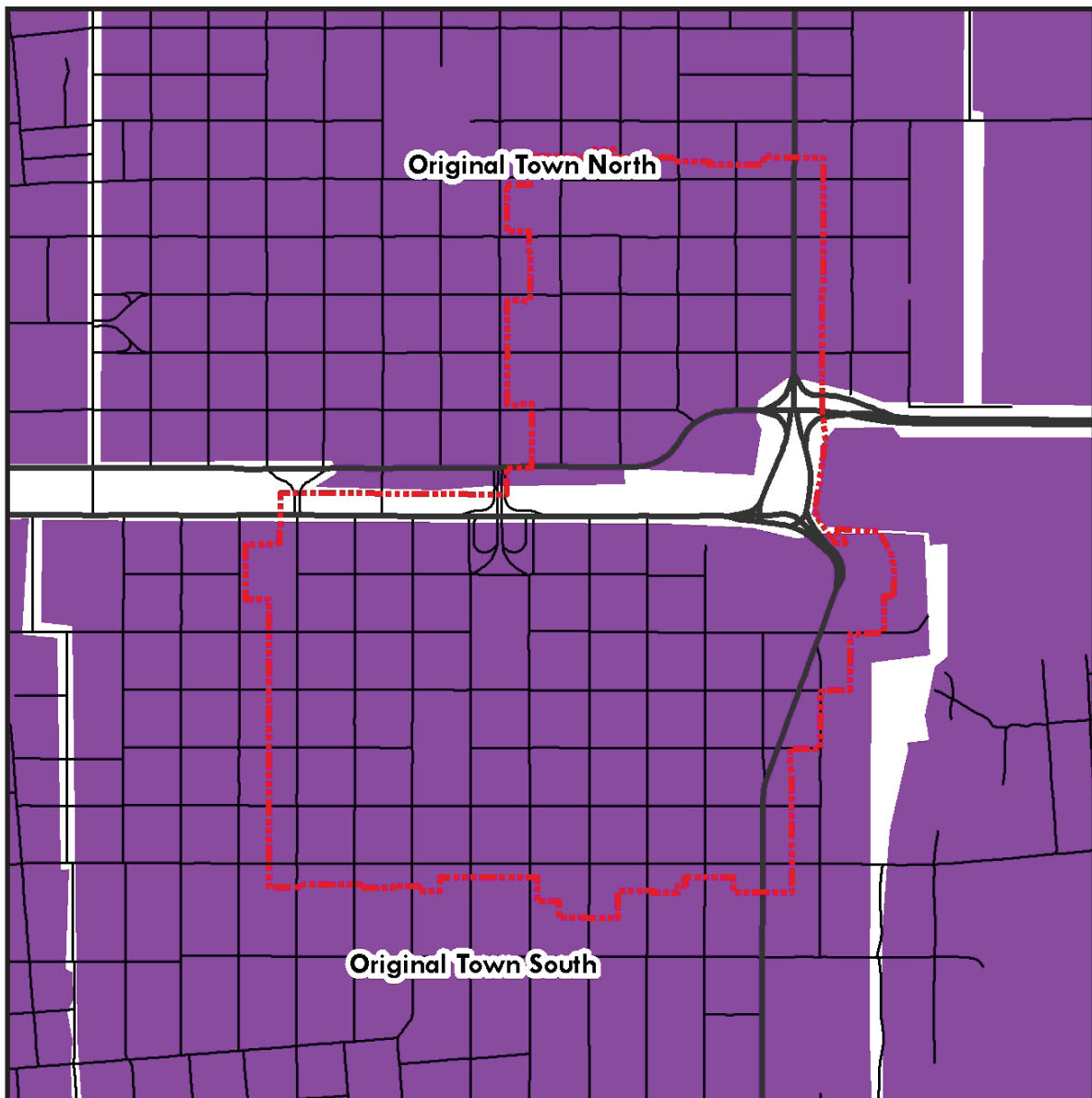
CITY OF ABILENE



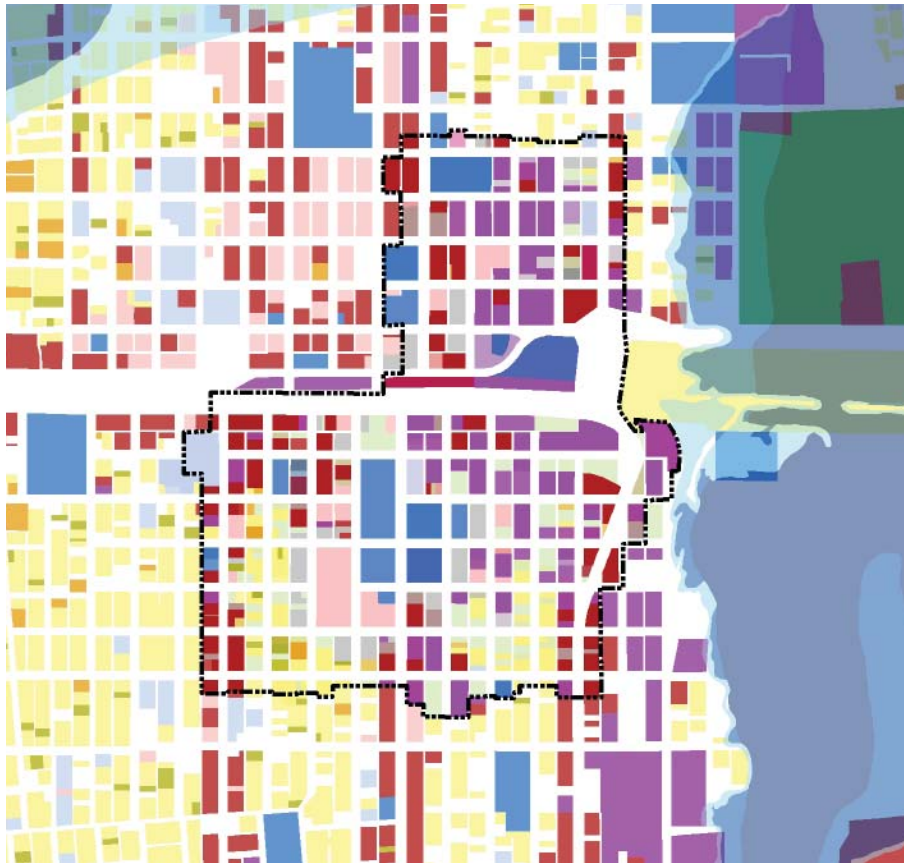
SOUTH DOWNTOWN ABILENE STUDY AREA

The South Downtown Abilene Study Area (Study Area) is located in central Abilene and includes portions of the greater downtown area. The Study Area is made up of two neighborhoods: the Original Town North and the Original Town South, which meet at the T&P Railroad tracks. For the purpose of this planning effort, portions of these two areas are planned as one unit. See the map to the right.

The Study Area is bounded by North 6th Street to the north, Treadaway Boulevard to the east, South 7th Street to the south, and Butternut and Walnut Streets to the west, and it is bisected by the T&P Railroad and Business I-20. It encompasses approximately 185 acres, which is made up of 517 parcels. For purposes of this planning effort, the Study Area has been divided into three planning districts: Warehouse District, Treadaway District, and South Downtown District.



Surrounding neighborhoods



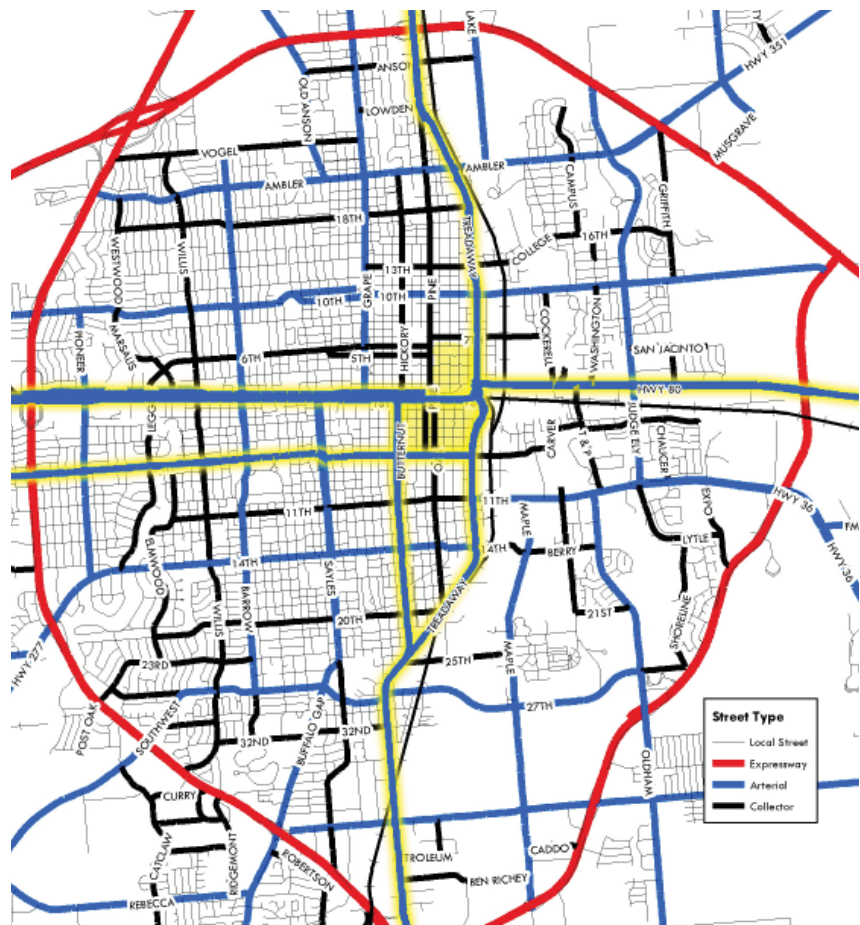
Surrounding Land Uses

Surrounding uses include the Historic Downtown to the northwest, which has a number of cultural uses, offices, specialty retail, and restaurants; residential neighborhoods to the west and south; floodplain to the east, which is relatively undeveloped; and industrial uses to the east. Commercial uses follow along the arterial and collector streets and continue into the Study Area.

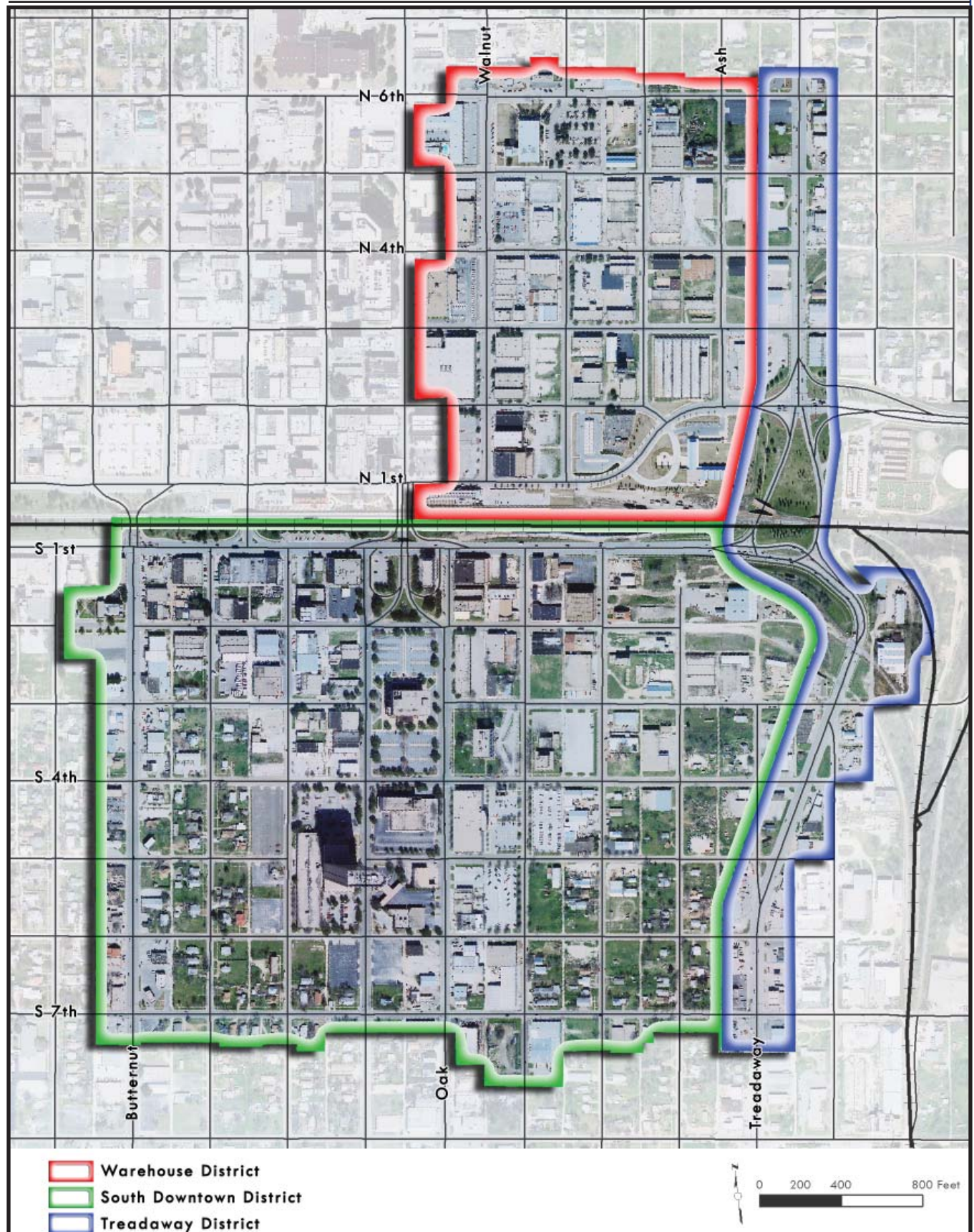
With few exceptions development has occurred within the traditional downtown grid pattern. In fact, many properties still have access to an alley. This grid and alley pattern promotes walkability and opens the door to a variety of future development opportunities.

Transportation Framework

The study area is accessible to the surrounding region via several arterial and collector streets that come into the study area, including Butternut Street, Treadaway Boulevard, Oak Street, Chestnut Street, South 7th Street and South 1st Street. Freight rail and Amtrak are users of the rail line. One rail spur off the main line is still active for freight, but there is no Amtrak stop in the downtown area.



SOUTH DOWNTOWN STUDY AREA AND DISTRICTS



REGIONAL CONTEXT

As discussed in the previous section, the South Downtown Study Area is connected to the rest of the Abilene region by several arterials and collector streets. The high amount of traffic and good visibility where these roadways enter the Study Area create opportunities for gateways. Gateways express that travellers are entering a new, special place, worthy of celebration. Gateways could include intersection improvements such as the one at North 1st Street and Cypress Street in the Historic Downtown area, or linear street improvements such as the creation of a boulevard. This framework is discussed in more detail later in the report.

Another component to the regional transportation system is the trail network that connects the recreational opportunities throughout the city. There are currently very few recreational opportunities in the South Downtown Study Area, making the connection to existing and planned parks and trails more critical.

Immediately east of the Study Area is Cedar Creek, along which a trail is planned per *Rediscovering Our Parks: The Abilene Parks, Recreation and Senior Facilities Master Plan*. East of this creek are three parks that could be easily accessible from the South Downtown study area if the connections were provided. Those parks are Cal Young, MLK Park (south of Highway 80), and Stevenson Park (north of Highway 80).

Cal Young Park is a 72.8-acre special use park with a disc golf course, softball fields, little league fields, and an in-line hockey court, in addition to picnic facilities. MLK Park has two lighted softball fields with a concession stand and restrooms on 40 acres. Finally, Stevenson Park is a 20.7-acre community park with swings, a pavilion, picnic facilities, a basketball/multi-use court, tennis courts, swimming pool, and backstops. All three parks are accessible to the creek. Future trail development could provide a much needed connection among these three parks and the South Downtown Study Area.



Trails provide the means for alternative transportation and promote healthy activities

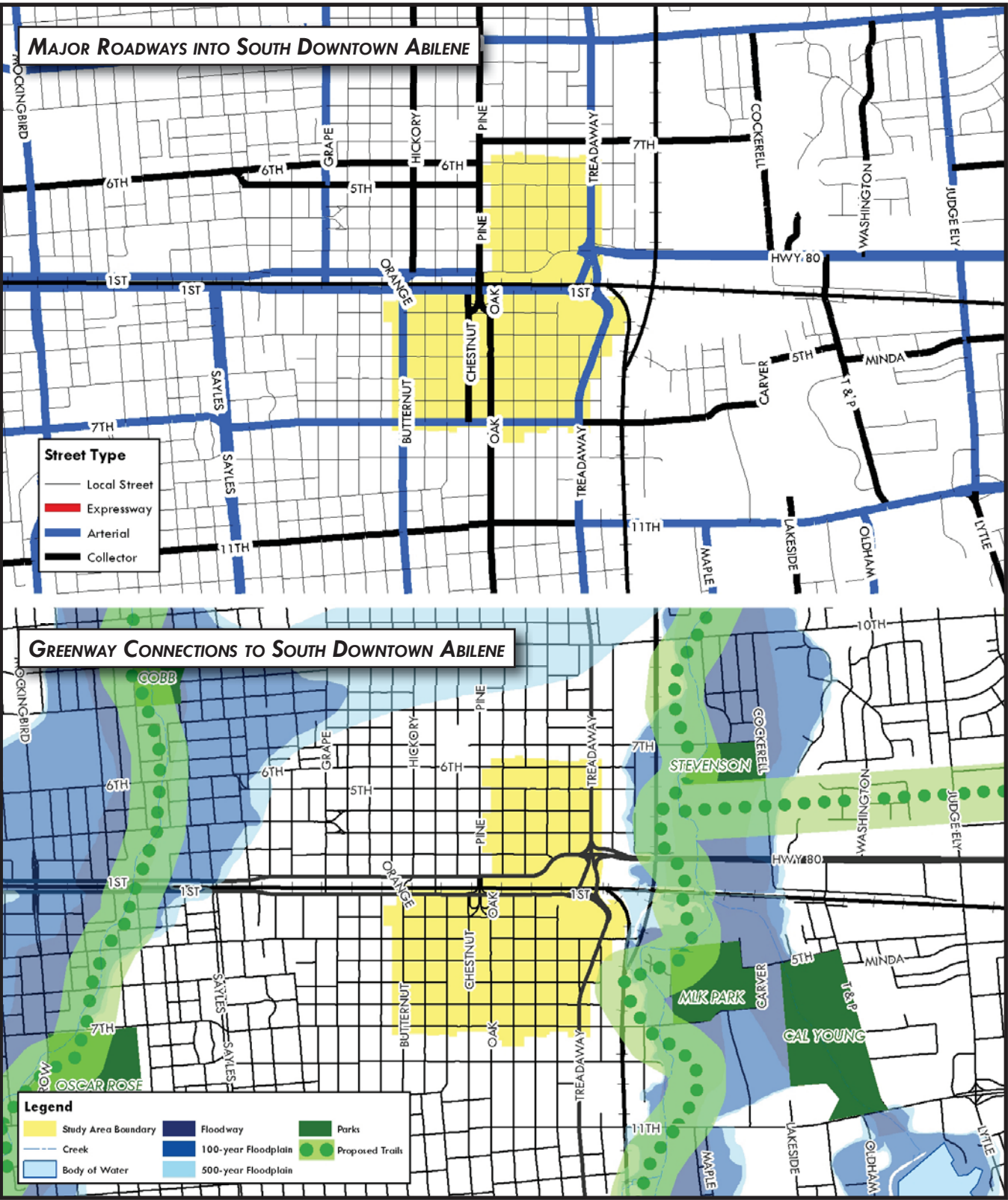


Cedar Creek runs along the eastern edge of the South Downtown Area



Cedar Creek will provide connectivity to the parks located along the amenity

TRANSPORTATION AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES



WHY INVEST IN SOUTH DOWNTOWN?

Revitalization is a risky venture with questionable success. Few investors are willing to put their money where the City won't. The City's investment in downtown can be reassuring to a private investor and may help encourage them to make the investment.

Historic investment in Historic Downtown Abilene along Cedar Street, Cypress Street, Pine Street, and North 1st Street has proven successful as illustrated by high property values. The map to the right illustrates higher property values in the historic downtown area, a direct reflection of the private investment in properties in this area. Most likely, this wouldn't have happened if the City didn't make investments with revenue from the TIF District. On the other hand, properties in the remainder of the downtown area, including areas in the South Downtown Study Area, have not seen the same City investment nor benefitted from significant private investment.

On average, assessed land value (taxable value) of properties in the Historic Downtown are 422% higher than average land values in the South Downtown Study Area. Assessed land values in Historic Downtown range from \$1.72 per square foot of property size to \$16.27 per square foot and average \$6.37 per square foot, while properties in the South Downtown Study Area range from \$0 (no assessed value) to a high of \$8.75 per square foot.



The data also shows that the Warehouse District (east of Pine Street and north of the railroad) has benefitted from its proximity to Historic Downtown, with an average land value per square foot of \$1.85, compared to an average land value of \$1.06 per square foot in the South Downtown District (south of the railroad) and \$1.35 per square foot in the Treadaway District (properties along the Treadaway Boulevard corridor).

Moreover, successful downtowns have direct and indirect benefits to the rest of the City. A strong central core is a sign of a strong, healthy city. The growth projection for the city of Abilene indicates a slowing growth rate until 2040, and the Water Development Board projects a decline in population after 2040. This trend is expected to occur across the Abilene MSA. Likewise, the Texas State Data Center projects that population in the Abilene MSA will start to decline between 2035 and 2040.¹

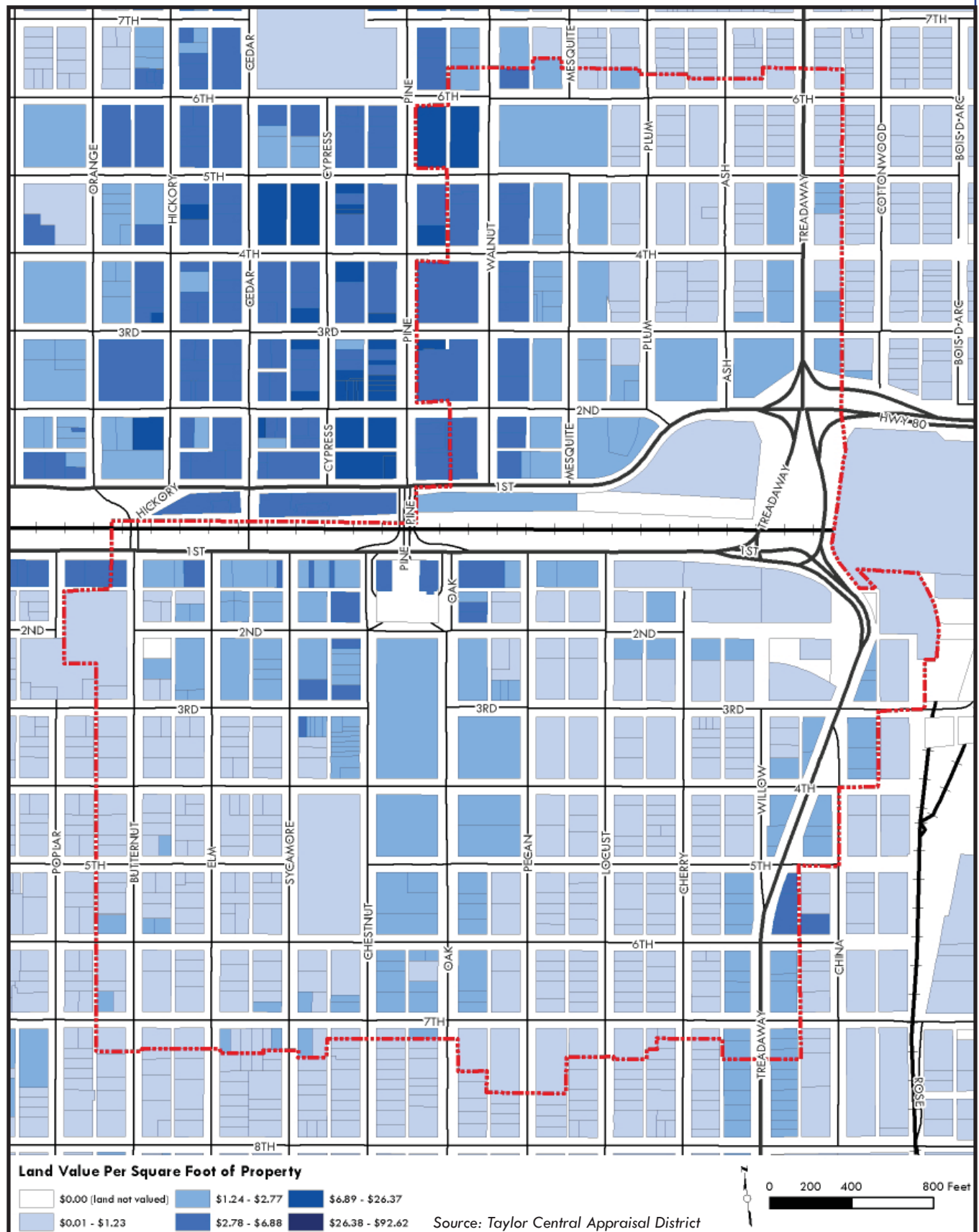
Studies have shown that investments in downtown have had city-wide benefits. A study conducted in Norfolk, Virginia that researched the economic and fiscal benefits of downtown investment found that investment in downtown "extended to all areas of the city in the form of new businesses and jobs, new residents, increased spending by visitors, and increased tax revenue" (Chmura Economics & Analytics, 2007, p. 3). By carefully and successfully revitalizing the South Downtown Study Area, the entire city of Abilene could see benefits such as increased tourism, sales tax revenue, population growth, and an increase in property tax revenue.



South 1st Street and Everman Park are examples of public investment in the Historic Downtown

¹ The Texas State Data Center does not have population projections after 2040.

LAND VALUE PER SQUARE FOOT OF PROPERTY AREA





2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

POPULATION & HOUSING TRENDS

Based on field analysis in 2009, there are approximately 115 housing units in the South Downtown Study Area. A majority of the housing units in the Study Area are single-family homes and duplex homes, and there are two multi-family units with ten and eight units each. Based on an average occupancy rate of 83.1% and household size of 2.3 persons per housing unit, the population is estimated at 220 persons (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). This is merely 0.19% of the most recent population estimate for the city of Abilene.

Table 2.1 Current Population, Study Area, City of Abilene, Taylor County, and Abilene MSA		
Area	Current Population Estimate	Study Area Percent Share
Study Area	220	-
City of Abilene	113,151	0.19%
Taylor County	126,540	0.17%
Abilene MSA	159,343	0.13%

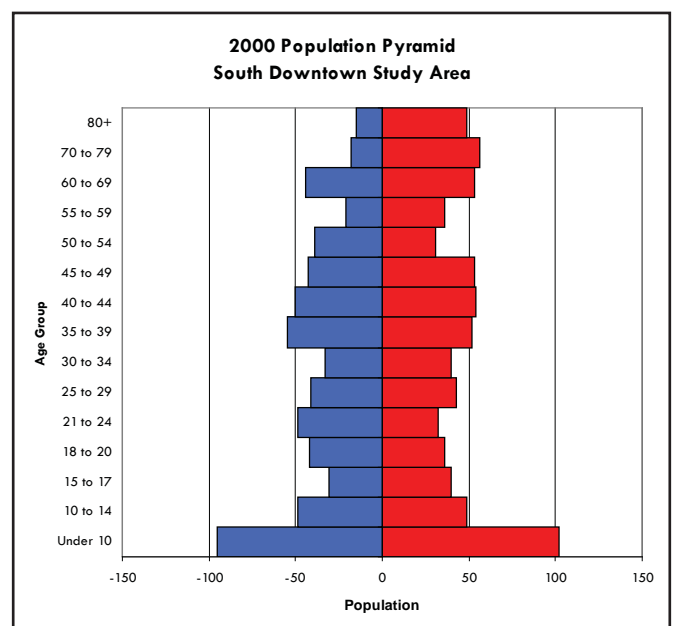
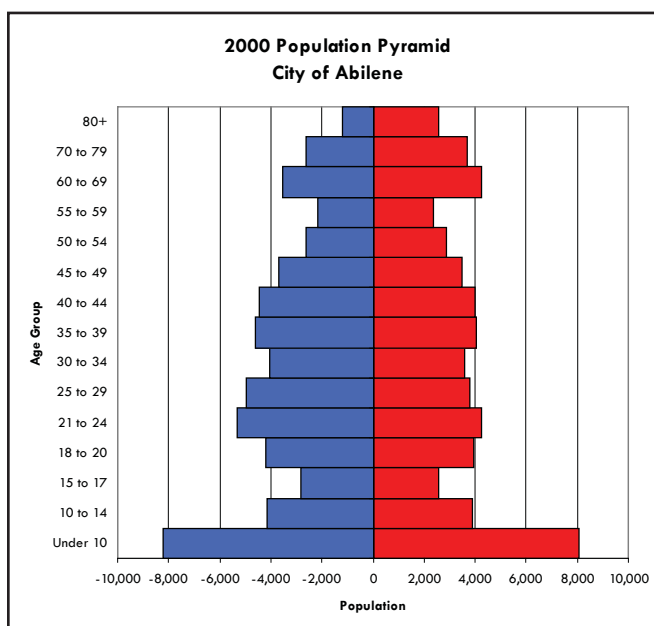
Source: Study Area population estimate based on field observations done in March 2009; City of Abilene, Taylor County, and Abilene MSA from U.S. Census Bureau

Housing characteristics of households in the South Downtown Study Area are slightly different than those citywide. The average household size is slightly smaller than the citywide average size, indicating that there are fewer families with children. Furthermore, a majority of households are renters compared to the City (38% are owners in South Downtown, compared to 59% citywide). And finally, the median household income is 49% lower among households in the Study Area (\$16,889) compared to the citywide median household income (\$33,007).

Table 2.2 Household Characteristics		
	South Downtown	City of Abilene
Average Household Size (persons per household)	2.3	2.5
Percent Owner Occupied Housing	38.3%	58.6%
Median Household Income*	\$16,889	\$33,007

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, SF 1 and SF 3, Abilene city and South Downtown blocks

**Median Household Income for South Downtown study area for Block Group 1 of Taylor County Census Tract 110 and Block Group 2 of Taylor County Census Tract 117.*



CHANGING POPULATION AND HOUSING TRENDS

Several studies have indicated changing demographic trends among cities leading to an increase in downtown living. A report by FannieMae and The Brookings Institute, *Downtown Rebound*, identifies two key populations that are interested in downtown living:

- **Empty Nesters** A growing number of empty nesters among the baby boomer generation are preferring a new living environment to accompany their new childless lifestyle, “trading in the lawn care and upkeep of a large home for the convenience of living in a downtown condominium” (Sohmer and Lang, 2001, p. 9).
- **Young Professionals** Another emerging population the report suggests is lending to the growth re-emergence of downtowns are young professionals in their 20s and 30s who have yet to start a family (Sohmer and Lang, p. 9). This segment is attracted to the downtown-friendly amenities such as coffee houses and nightclubs and the low-maintenance housing option close to work.

Population pyramids (see bottom of page 21) help illustrate trends in the age of the population. As the charts show, a large portion of the population (22.7%) in the South Downtown study area is between the ages of 35 and 49. However, the citywide population pyramid indicates that there is a more significant portion of the population between 21 and 34 living outside of South Downtown. This age group makes up 22.4% of the population of Abilene, and approximately only 1% of them live in South Downtown. This suggests that there is a large segment of the population in Abilene who are potential residents of South Downtown that do not currently live there. This is discussed in more detail below.

COMMUNITY TAPESTRY IN ABILENE SUPPORTS DOWNTOWN LIVING

Review of the population trends in Abilene suggests that there are segments of the population, called community tapestries, that are potential residents

of downtown Abilene. In a community tapestry, developed by ESRI, portions of a population are categorized based on different demographic factors such as age, size of family, household income, education level, etc. From this, ESRI is able to make generalizations about each tapestry in terms of the type of recreation they enjoy, the type of car they would like to purchase, and where and how they prefer to live. ESRI’s description of some of the community tapestries existing in Abilene that could support downtown living are below:



Young and Restless

Change is the constant in this diverse market. With a median age of 28.7 years, the population is young and on the go. About 85 percent of householders moved in the last five years. Young and Restless householders are primarily renters, living in apartments in multiunit buildings. Almost 60 percent are single-person or shared households. This educated market has the highest labor force participation among all the Community Tapestry segments, at 76 percent, and the highest female labor force participation, at 73 percent. The median household income is \$45,236. Residents use the Internet daily to visit chat rooms, play games, obtain the latest news, and search for employment. They read computer and music magazines and listen to public radio. They watch movies in the theater and on DVD, attend rock concerts, play pool, go dancing, and exercise weekly at a gym.¹



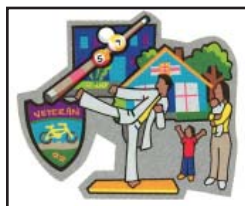
College Towns

Education is the key focus for College Towns residents. The median age for this market is 24.4 years, with a high concentration of 18 to 24-year-olds. One out of eight residents lives in a dorm on campus. Students in off-campus housing rent low-income apartments. Twenty-nine percent of the households are occupied by owners, who are typically town residents living in single-family dwellings. The median home value is \$148,030.

¹ Source: ESRI Tapestry Segmentation

Convenience is the primary consideration for food purchases; residents frequently eat out, order in, or eat easy-to-prepare food. Many own a laptop computer. In their leisure time, they jog, go horseback riding, practice yoga, play tennis, rent videos, play chess or pool, attend concerts, attend college football or basketball games, and go to bars. They listen to classical music and public radio programs.²

Table 2.3 Local College and University Enrollment, Fall 2006 Enrollment	
Institution	Enrollment
Abilene Christian University	4,698
Hardin-Simmons University	2,372
McMurry University	1,383
Texas Tech University at Abilene	14
Texas State Technical College	338
American Commercial College	182
Cisco College	2,734
TOTAL COLLEGE ENROLLMENT:	11,721
Source: Abilene Industrial Foundation, Universities.	



Great Expectations

Great Expectations neighborhoods are located throughout the country, with higher proportions found in the Midwest and South. Young

singles and married-couple families dominate. The median age is 33.2 years. Labor force participation is high. Manufacturing, retail, and service industries are the primary employers. Approximately half of the households are owners living in single-family dwellings with a median value of \$110,922; the other half are renters, mainly living in apartments in low-rise or mid-rise buildings. Most of the housing units in these older, suburban neighborhoods were built before 1960. Residents enjoy a young and active lifestyle. They go out to dinner, to the movies, to bars, and to nightclubs. They enjoy roller skating; using Rollerblades; playing Frisbee, chess, and pool; and attending auto races. They read music magazines and listen to rock music on the radio.³

² Source: ESRI Tapestry Segmentation

³ Source: ESRI Tapestry Segmentation

ATTRACTING POPULATION GROWTH IN ABILENE TO DOWNTOWN

Based on historic population trends and population projections prepared by the Texas Water Development Board, the city of Abilene is projected to grow to over 130,000 persons by 2040 (see Table 2) (Texas Water Development Board, 2006). In order to create a viable and sustainable area, South Downtown must move beyond simply a commercial and business district and begin to accommodate residential uses by providing a variety of housing in the study area.

It is generally believed that in order to achieve “critical mass,” or the necessary population, retail, office, etc, for a successful downtown, **the downtown area should account for 2% of the population of the metropolitan area** (Katz, speech transcript, Brookings Institute). Based on this, the city of Abilene should strive to have approximately 1,335 persons living in the greater downtown area, or 1,001 persons in the South Downtown Study Area (assuming the Study Area can accommodate 75% of the critical mass).

Table 2.4 Population Projections: City of Abilene and Abilene MSA		
Year	City of Abilene	Abilene MSA
2000	115,926	160,241
2010	124,607	170,410
2020	130,220	177,354
2030	132,820	180,079
2040	133,514	180,387
Source: Texas Water Development Board, 2006 Regional Water Plan Population Projections for 2000-2060.		

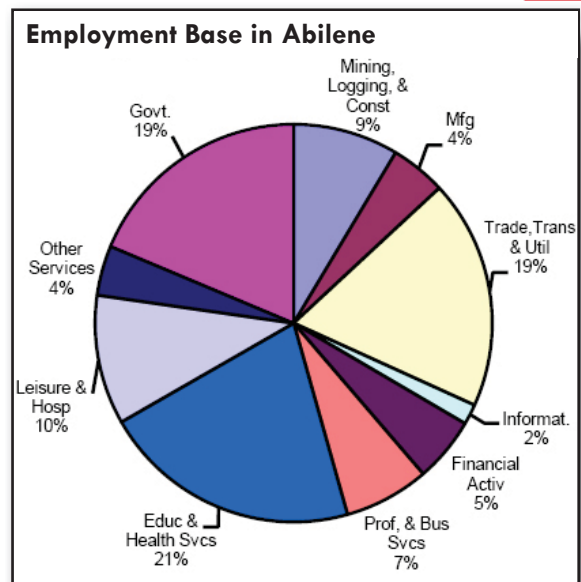
ABILENE EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMY

OVERALL MARKET CONDITIONS

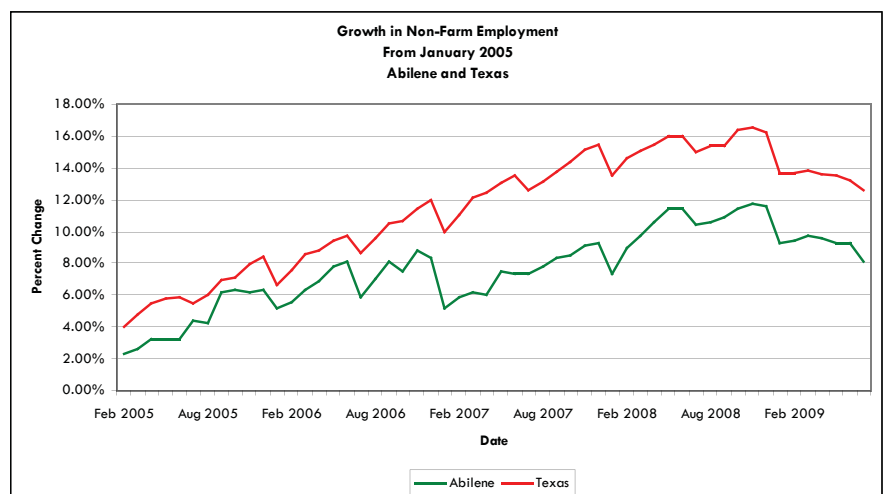
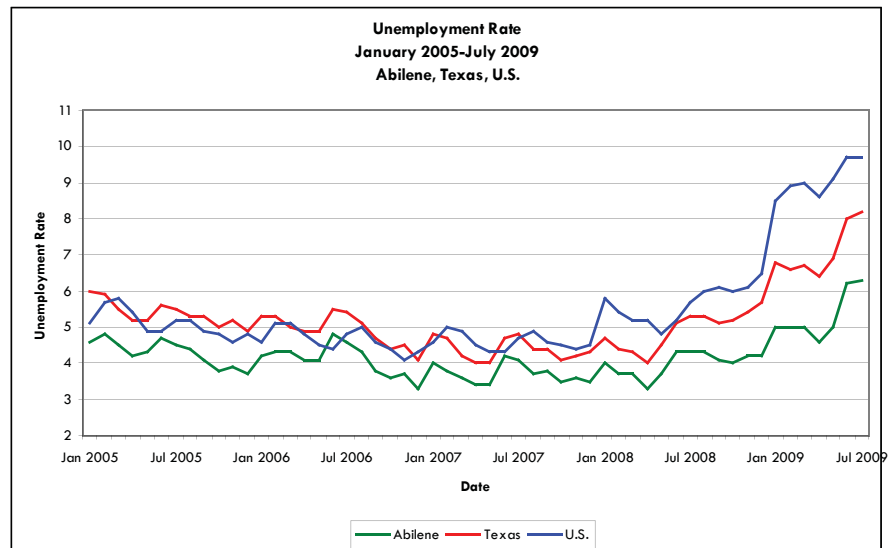
The major employment industries in the Abilene MSA are Education & Health Services, Government, and Trade, Transportation, & Utility. The Texas Workforce Commission tracks workforce trends such as nonagricultural employment and unemployment on a monthly basis. As of July 2009, nonagricultural jobs in the Abilene MSA totaled 66,400, a loss of 700 from June 2009 and down 1,500 from July 2008.

Like the rest of the nation, Abilene has been facing a rising unemployment rate; however it still remains below the national and state average. It has not seen as rapid growth in jobs as the state since January 2005.

The Texas Workforce Commission 2006-2016 employment projection estimates that total employment in the West Central Workforce Development Area (WDA)¹ will increase to 173,700 total jobs, an 11.9% increase over the current total employment of 155,270 (Texas Workforce Commission). Historically, jobs in the city of Abilene have accounted for approximately 36% of the jobs in the WDA. This growth is projected to occur primarily in the following industries: Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; Management of Companies and Enterprises; Health Care and Social Assistance; Arts, Recreation, and Entertainment; and Educational Services.



Source: Texas Workforce Commission, Tracer Report - Abilene MSA, July 2009



¹ Includes the 19 counties that make up the West Central Texas Council of Governments.

Abilene is home to many major employers that help keep the economy steady, several of which are located in the South Downtown Study Area.

Table 2.5		
Major Employers in South Downtown Abilene		
Employer	Sector	# of Emp.
City of Abilene	Government	1,179
Taylor County	Government	546
US Postal Service*	Government	340
Lauren Engineers	Engineering	200
AEP	Utilities	181
Abilene ISD*	Education	175
Genesis Networks	Telecommuni- cations	76
Atmos Energy	Utilities	50
Bank of America	Finance	14
*Abilene ISD Administration offices and U.S. Postal Service are located on the edge of the study area.		

Based on a current estimate of 66,400 jobs in the Abilene MSA, these 9 downtown major employers count for 7.9% of the jobs in the Abilene MSA. This strong center of commerce located in the downtown area bodes well for the future success of South Downtown Abilene. As employment grows, Abilene should strive to ensure that downtown remains a viable option for locating major employers.

Attracting jobs and population to the South Downtown Study Area will result in a demand for housing units and non-residential space. In order to ensure that downtown is a place where people can live, work, shop, and play, South Downtown must accommodate a variety of housing choices, office space for employers, retail space for “everyday” commercial services, and parks and open space for recreation.

CURRENT MARKET ORIENTATION OF THE SOUTH DOWNTOWN STUDY AREA

The Economic Enhancement Strategy conducted by HyettPalma in May 2009 identified the current market orientation of South Downtown. This study identified:

- 63 retail businesses that occupy 453,000 square feet of building space;
- 121 office businesses that occupy 1.1 million square feet of building space;
- 103 other non-retail and non-office commercial space that occupy 970,000 square feet of building space;
- Approximately 462,000 square feet of vacant commercial space, yielding an occupancy rate of approximately 85% for the South Downtown Study Area.

As a whole, the study area has a wide variety of uses, including professional offices, restaurants, specialty retail, warehouses, light industrial, and auto-oriented businesses. Although a majority of the building uses are office (37.2%), a significant portion of the buildings are used for light industrial or warehouses (32.3%). The report describes the market orientation for the study area by district:

The **Warehouse District** currently contains an eclectic mix of warehousing, light manufacturing, and institutional uses, including the U.S. Post Office, City Hall, and Frontier Texas! Museum.



Historic buildings renovated for commercial use in the Warehouse District

The **South Downtown District** currently contains an intense cluster of government uses, professional offices, and transportation facilities, with some limited amount of convenience retail, dining, warehousing, light manufacturing, open storage, and single- and multi-family housing. The physical condition and use of some buildings and lots in this district, particularly some number of housing units, vacant commercial structures, and open storage lots, are unsightly and in an advanced stage of deterioration, resulting in a significant blighting influence in parts of the district.

The Butternut Commercial Corridor extends along the western boundary of the South Downtown Abilene District. The corridor currently contains auto-oriented and convenience retail businesses serving, primarily, through-vehicle traffic and adjacent neighborhood residents.

The **Treadaway District** is best characterized as a high traffic, north/south auto-oriented commercial corridor of aging commercial structures that contain auto service and repair shops, construction materials businesses, and light-manufacturing businesses.



The Taylor County Courthouse is in the South Downtown District



Unscreened outdoor storage along South 1st Street



Treadaway Boulevard is a major thoroughfare in Abilene and businesses along the roadway are auto-oriented



Treadaway Boulevard lacks sidewalks

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ZONING

The existing zoning in Abilene is conventional use-based zoning. Conventional zoning defines districts based on land use, while properties are geographically segregated based on appropriate use. Standards then regulate setbacks, height, lot size, coverage, etc. The Abilene zoning ordinance also establishes additional overlay zones to help preserve certain qualities of a neighborhood. These overlay zones establish additional requirements for certain properties where the conventional district regulations don't respond to the particular character of a neighborhood.

The majority of the South Downtown Study Area is in the Central Business (CB) and Light Industrial (LI) zoning districts. Other zoning districts in the study area include Heavy Commercial (HC); Heavy Industrial (HI); Residential Multi-Family District 2 (RM2) and District 3 (RM3); and Residential Single-Family District 6 (RS6). There is also an Historic Overlay Zone over nine of the properties.

A majority of the properties in the South Downtown study area are zoned for CB District. According to the City of Abilene Zoning Ordinance, the purpose of the CB District is "to provide a wide range of retail goods and consumer services to residents of the metropolitan area and trade area" (City of Abilene, p. 23-303-5).

A significant number of properties are zoned LI, primarily on the eastern side of the study area, north of South 5th Street and east of Walnut Street and Pecan Street. The purpose of the LI District is to permit a range of manufacturing, wholesale and medium intensity industrial uses that are of a non-nuisance type. Generally, residential uses are not allowed in this district. Only patio homes and single-family homes are allowed with special exception and as approved by the Board of Adjustments. Other limitations exist to protect nearby lower intensity residential and commercial properties (City of Abilene, p. 23-303-6).

Other zoning districts occur at the fringes of the study area, where it reflects a transition out of the downtown area. HC Districts are primarily at the

edges of the study area along the thoroughfares. This district exists to accommodate the sale, service, display, and storage of certain commodities which by their nature may not be compatible with other sales and display operations. These might include building material yards, contractor yards, and open storage and warehousing (City of Abilene, p. 23-303-5). Multi-family and duplexes are allowed by right, and other residential uses are allowed with special exception.

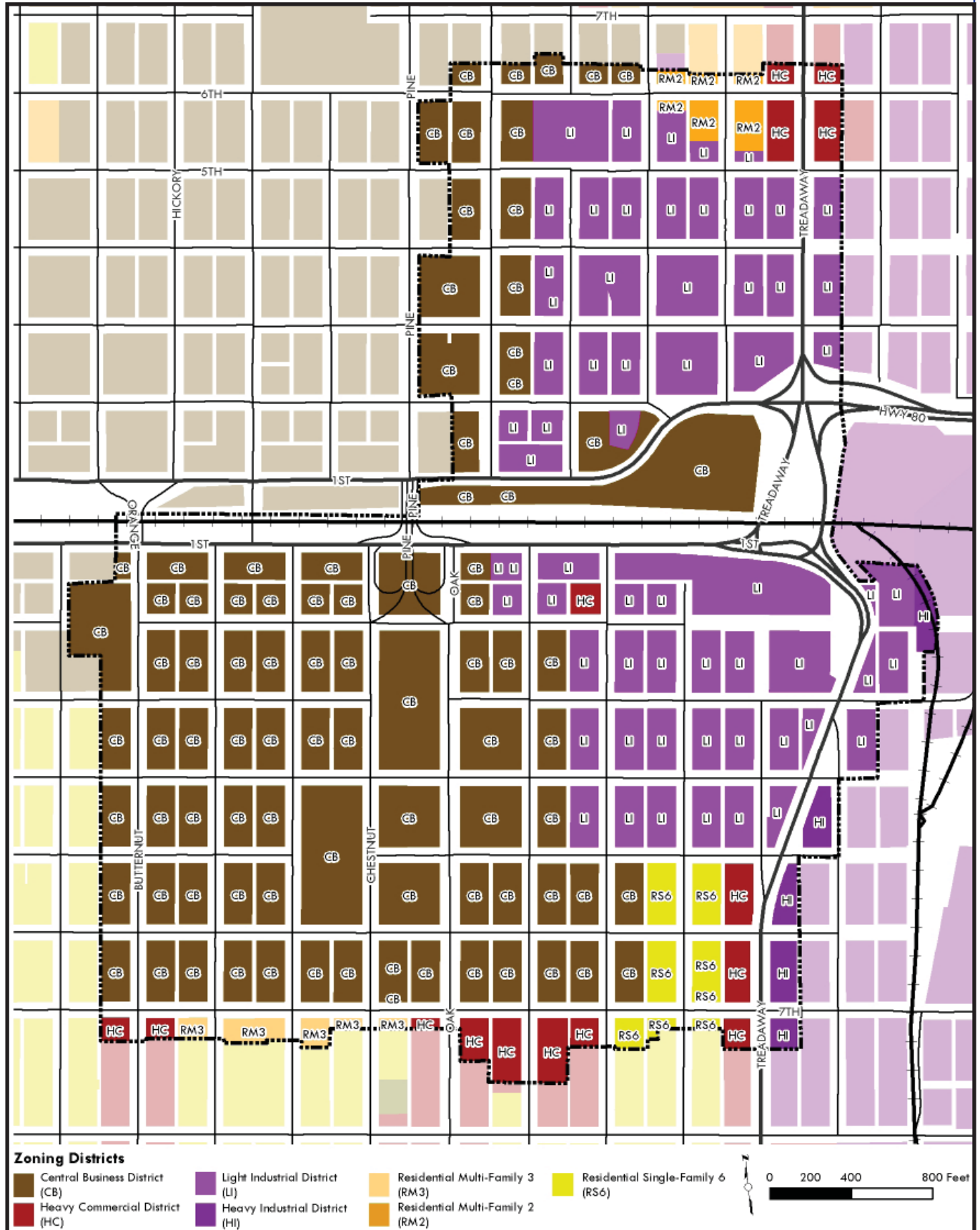
A few properties on the east side of Treadaway Boulevard, south of South 4th Street are zoned HI, allowing manufacturing and industrial activities that have the potential to generate a higher degree of nuisance (City of Abilene, p. 23-303-6). Like light industrial, patio homes and single-family homes are allowed with special exception.

Residential districts in the South Downtown study area include RS6, a single-family residential district that allows a minimum lot size of 6,000 square feet; RM3, a multi-family district that allows single-family units, two-family units, and multi-family development up to eight (8) units per acre; and RM2, a multi-family district that allows single-family units, two-family units, and multi-family development up to twenty-four (24) units per acre (City of Abilene, pp. 23-303 and 2-23-303-3).

The Historic Overlay Zone that exists on nine of the properties is established to provide protection of properties that are historically, architecturally, and culturally significant. Regulations are intended to promote enhancement and use of these buildings and sites while conserving the historic value of the property. Regulations speak to the type and character of work one may do to the exterior of a zoned structure (Abilene, 1999, p. 18).

It should be noted that at the time of this Master Plan, the city of Abilene was in the process of writing a new Land Development Code, including the Zoning Ordinance. As of December 2009, a draft version of this new Code was available for public review and undergoing review by the Land Development Code Review Committee.

CURRENT ZONING DISTRICTS



TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is more than the movement of motor-vehicles. The transportation network should be planned and designed for all modes of transportation including motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and mass transit. Following is an evaluation of the existing transportation system and how it serves its multiple users.

MOTOR-VEHICLE TRANSPORTATION

Currently, there are three primary road classifications that exist in the South Downtown Study Area: arterials, collectors, and local streets. These streets include Butternut Street, Chestnut Street, Oak Street, Treadaway Boulevard, South 1st Street, and South 7th Street.

Arterials and collectors are designated as thoroughfares to carry traffic, and as such are designed primarily for this purpose. However, this is often done at the expense of pedestrian and bicyclist safety.

For the most part, streets are two-way. There are a few one-way streets in the Warehouse District and along part of Chestnut Street and Oak Street. Chestnut and Oak Streets are one-way because of how Pine Street comes under the existing rail road and South 1st Street. There seems to be no reason

for one-way streets in the Warehouse District area, except for extension of the one-way system from the Historic downtown.

The quality of the roadways reflects the public investment made in the infrastructure. The most well-maintained streets are along Walnut Street, North 1st Street, South 1st Street, Chestnut Street, and Oak Street. Other streets have signs of deterioration, including overtaking of curbs by the landscape and potholes (especially along roads with remnants of railroad tracks).



Curb overtaken by grass



No curb along N 1st Street



Curb along S 6th Street overtaken by grass and landscape

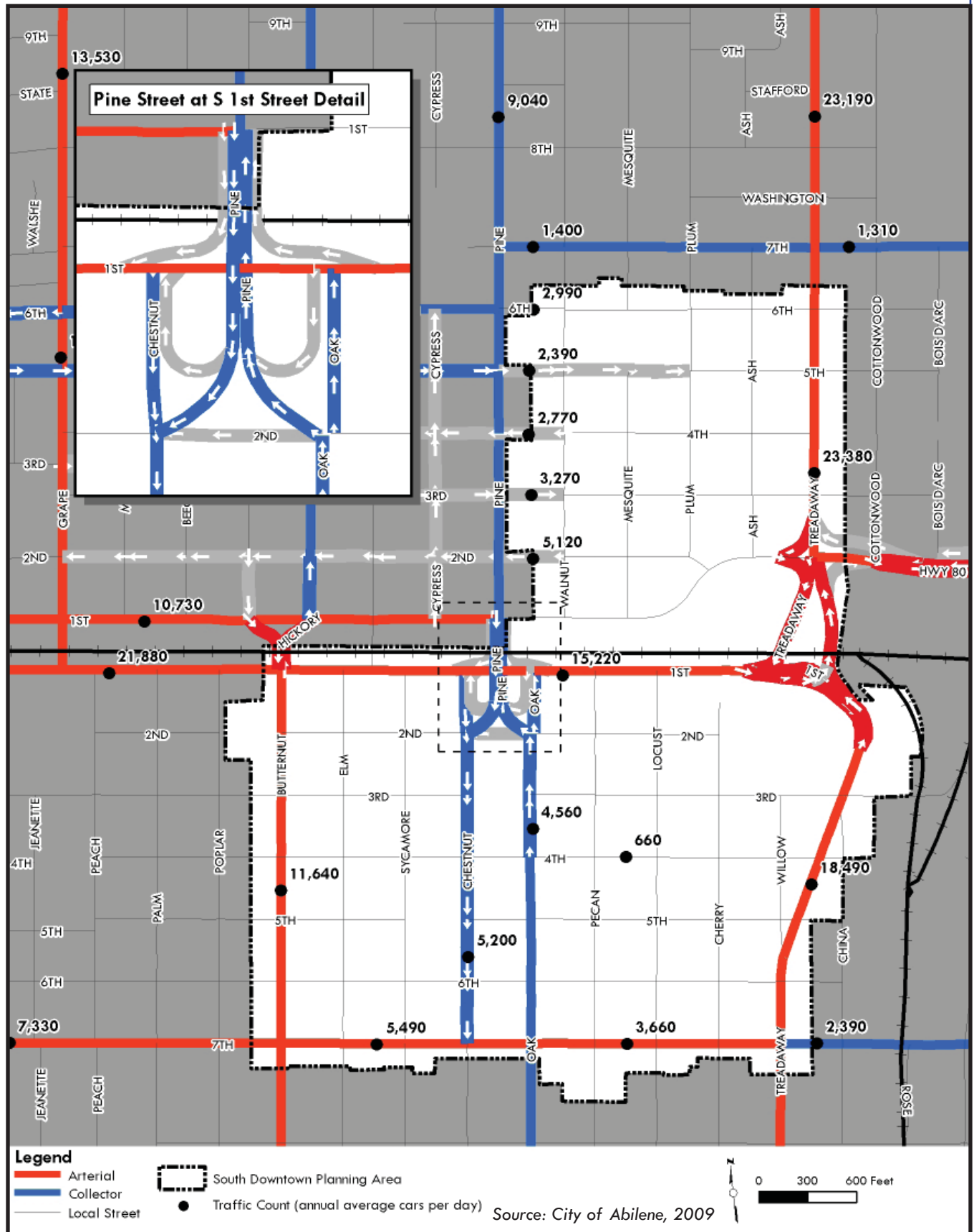


Old railroad tracks along N 4th Street



Street improvements along N 1st Street

STREET DIRECTION & TRAFFIC COUNTS



BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN TRANSPORTATION

Sidewalk quality varies drastically throughout the Study Area, and reflects the investment made in more developed areas. The map to the right indicates the quality of sidewalk by its width. While not the only determining factor in quality, width does to a certain extent reflect investment.

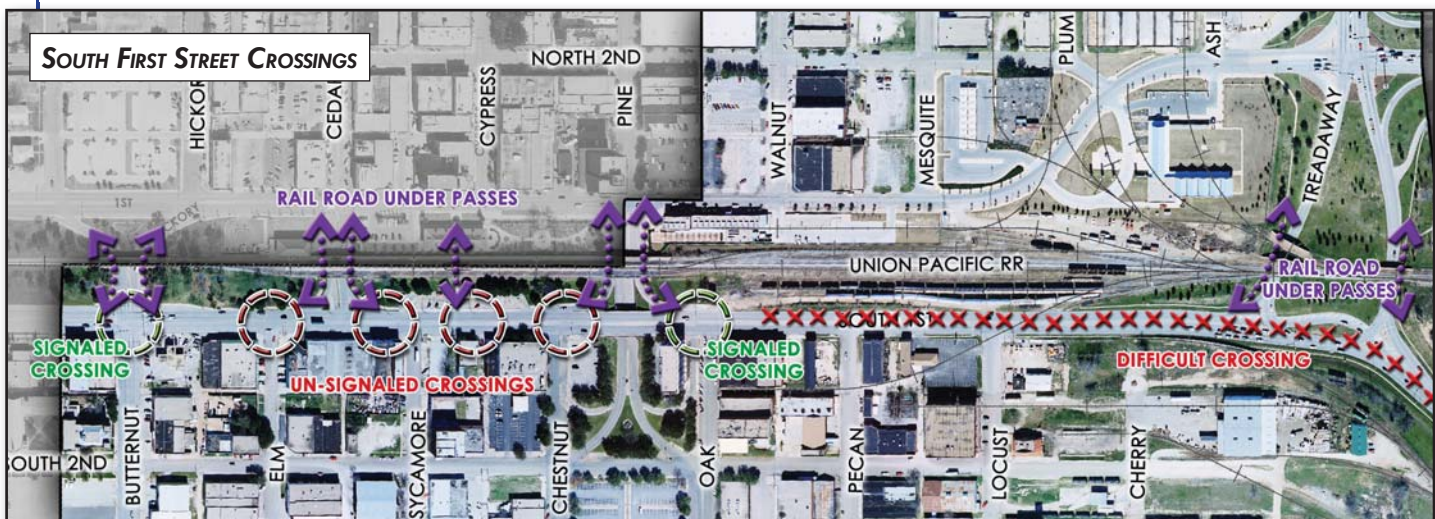
Other factors that affect the quality of a sidewalk include streetscaping, material (aesthetics), maintenance, intersection crossings, and clarity of defined space. The best sidewalks in the Study Area are along Walnut Street, North 1st Street, Oak Street, and Chestnut Street. These are streetscaped with trees for shade, and in some places a form of textured pavement. Maintenance of the sidewalks in these areas is generally satisfactory, with the best maintenance apparent along North 1st Street.

For the most part, existing sidewalks are narrow (less than 5' in width), with Walnut Street having the widest sidewalks. However, these sidewalks are lacking in streetscaping elements such as trees, benches, and waste receptacles. In the Study Area, North 1st Street may be the best example of a sidewalk, with acceptable widths that allow two persons to pass, textured pavement to improve aesthetics, and trees. Generally, however, streetscaping elements used along streets in the study area as well as the Historic Downtown should be broadened to include, at a minimum, waste receptacles and benches.

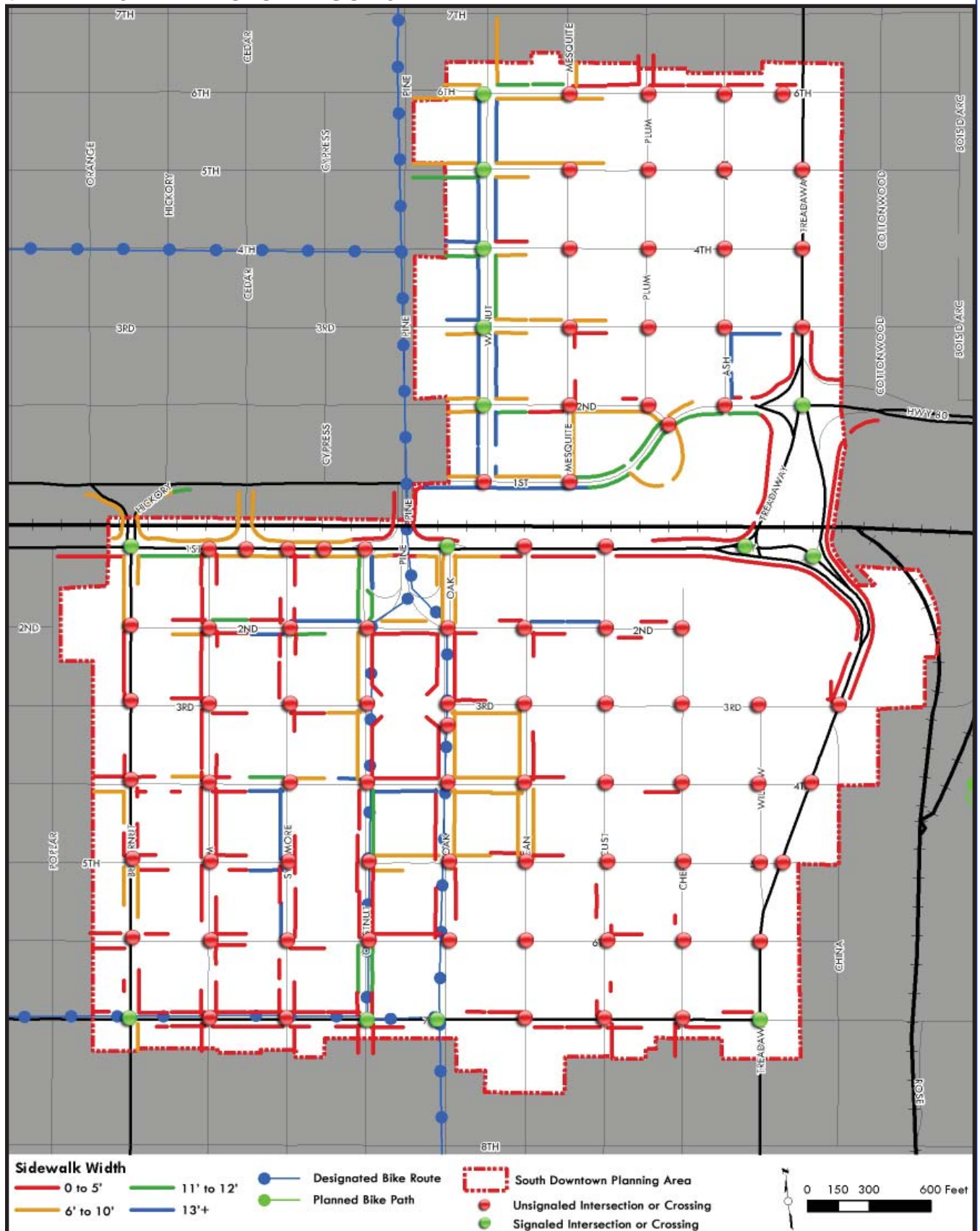
With the exception of these streets, sidewalks are generally lacking throughout the Study Area. In many areas, sidewalks have been overtaken by the landscape because of lack of maintenance. Furthermore, it is common for businesses to use the paved area reserved for a sidewalk as parking for customers. Frequent driveways and exceptionally wide driveways reduce the quality and safety of sidewalks.

There are very few protected pedestrian crossings. Walnut Street has signaled intersections from North 2nd to North 6th Streets, and most intersections at arterials and collectors are signaled. This is most apparent along South 1st Street, where crossing is very important in order to promote connectivity between the northern and southern areas of the downtown area. Passageways under the railroad exist at Butternut Street, Cedar Street, Pine Street, and Treadaway Boulevard, with a pedestrian tunnel between Cedar and Pine Streets from the historic T&P Station. These underpasses are littered with trash and graffiti and lack lighting, reducing the sense of security. Despite the multiple crossings, only three are signaled, allowing pedestrians to safely cross South 1st Street.

Finally, while there are no striped bicycle lanes in the area, some streets have been designated as bicycle routes per the transportation plan.



SIDEWALKS AND BICYCLE ROUTES



MASS TRANSIT

There is a CityLink transfer station in the South Downtown District. CityLink operates on a pulse mode, with the pulse coming from downtown and traveling outward. Buses travel to various destinations throughout the city, including ACU campus, the Mall of Abilene, Dyess Visitors Center, the Abilene Zoo, and various neighborhoods throughout Abilene. Additionally, CityLink has a "Downtown Trolley" route that runs through Historic Downtown and on west side of the South Downtown Study Area. Other services offered by CityLink include paratransit service and an evening service, which runs from 6 p.m. till midnight, Monday through Saturday.

According to CityLink, the system generates approximately 480,000 trips per year on the fixed routes, approximately 80,000 trips per year on the paratransit service, and approximately 20,000 trips per year on the evening service.

Buses run weekly, generally from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., with some buses also running on Saturday. The table below indicates the frequency of each route during peak (generally morning and evening rush hours) and non-peak times.

Table 2.6
CityLink Bus Frequency by Route

Route	Time Between Buses (minutes)	
	Weekday	Weekend
WEEKDAY SERVICE		
1 Downtown Trolley	30	
2 ACU/Walmart	60	
3 Radford Hills	60	
5 S Treadaway/Cisco	30	
6 Mall/ARMC	60	
7 Barrow/Southwest	60	
8 S 14th/S Clack	60	
9 Westgate	60	
10 N Willis	60	
11 Grape/Mockingbird	60	
12 Hickory/Grape	60	
13 Hickory/Pine	60	
WEEKEND SERVICE		
22 Judge Ely/Walmart NE		60
26 Buffalo Gap/Mall		60
28 S 14th/Walmart SW		60
29 Westgate		60
30 Crosstown Ambler		60
31 Grape/N 12th		60
32 Hickory		60

Source: CityLink, 2010 Transit Guide & System Map, November 2009

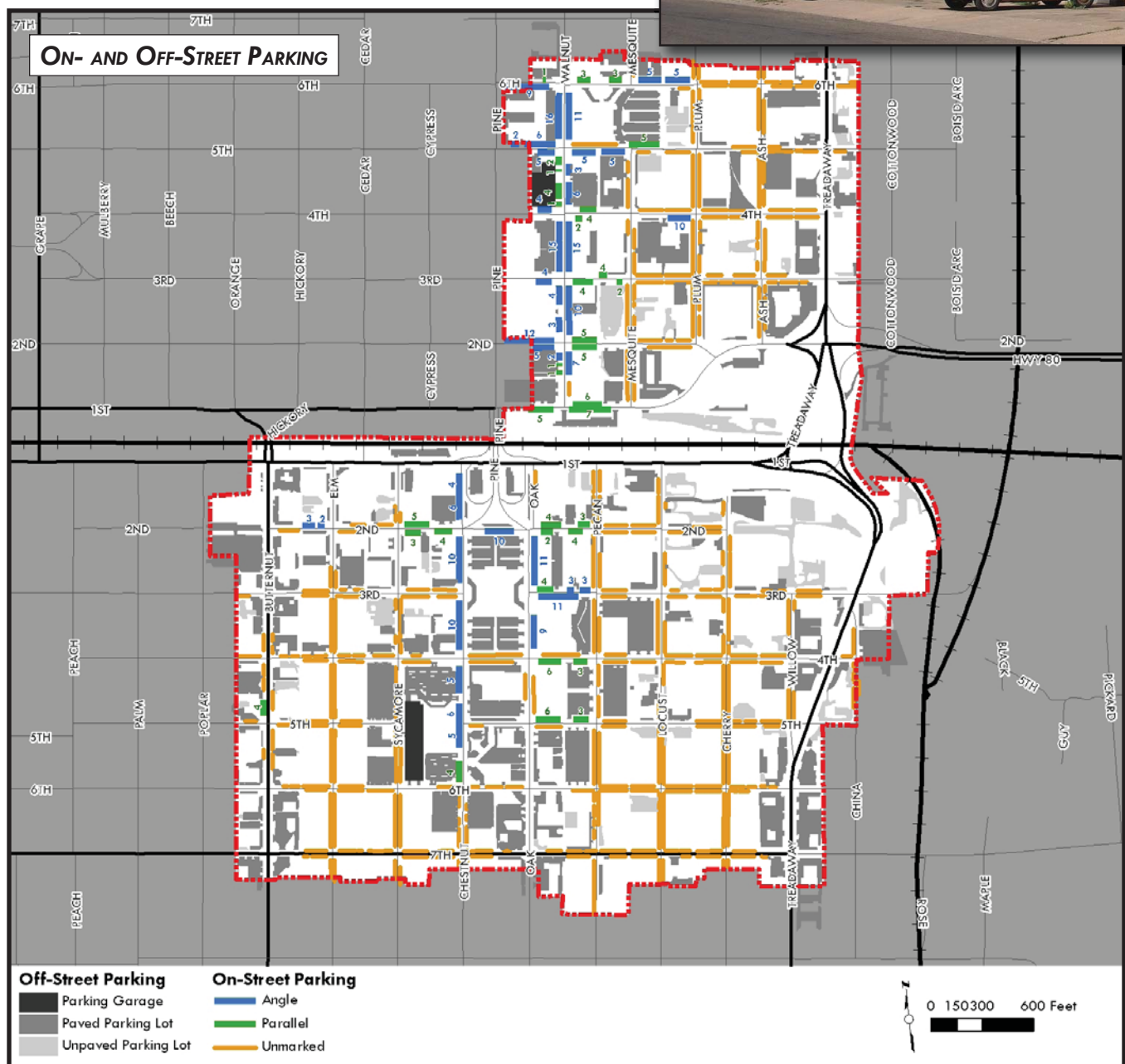


Weekday Service	
Route	Route Name
1	Downtown Trolley
2	ACU/Walmart NE
3	Radford Hills/Judge Ely
5	S. Treadaway/Cisco
6	Mall/ARMC
7	Barrow/Southwest
8	S. 14th/S. Clack
9	Westgate
10	N. Willis
11	Grape/Mockingbird
12	Hickory/Grape
13	Hickory/Pine
Saturday Service	
Route	Route Name
22	Judge Ely/Walmart NE
26	Buffalo Gap/Mall
28	S. 14th/Walmart SW
29	Westgate
30	Crosstown Ambler
31	Grape/N. 12th
32	Hickory

ON-STREET PARKING AND OTHER PARKING ISSUES

Generally, there is currently an adequate supply of parking, except around the County facilities where there is the highest demand for parking. Parking in the Study Area often reflects the development around it. On-street parking in more developed areas such as along Walnut Street, around City Hall, and around the Taylor County campus is clearly marked and often time restricted parallel or angled parking. In less developed areas on-street parking is neither marked nor signed. This pattern reflects the attention given to highly developed areas.

Patterns of off-street parking occur in a similar fashion, although most off-street parking is private. Most off-street parking is in a paved lot, although there are two private parking garages and several unpaved lots where parking occurs. Moreover, many businesses have created “parking areas” in the right of way, blocking pedestrian travel along roadways (see photo below). This is discussed in more detail in the Existing Land Use section.



EXISTING LAND USES

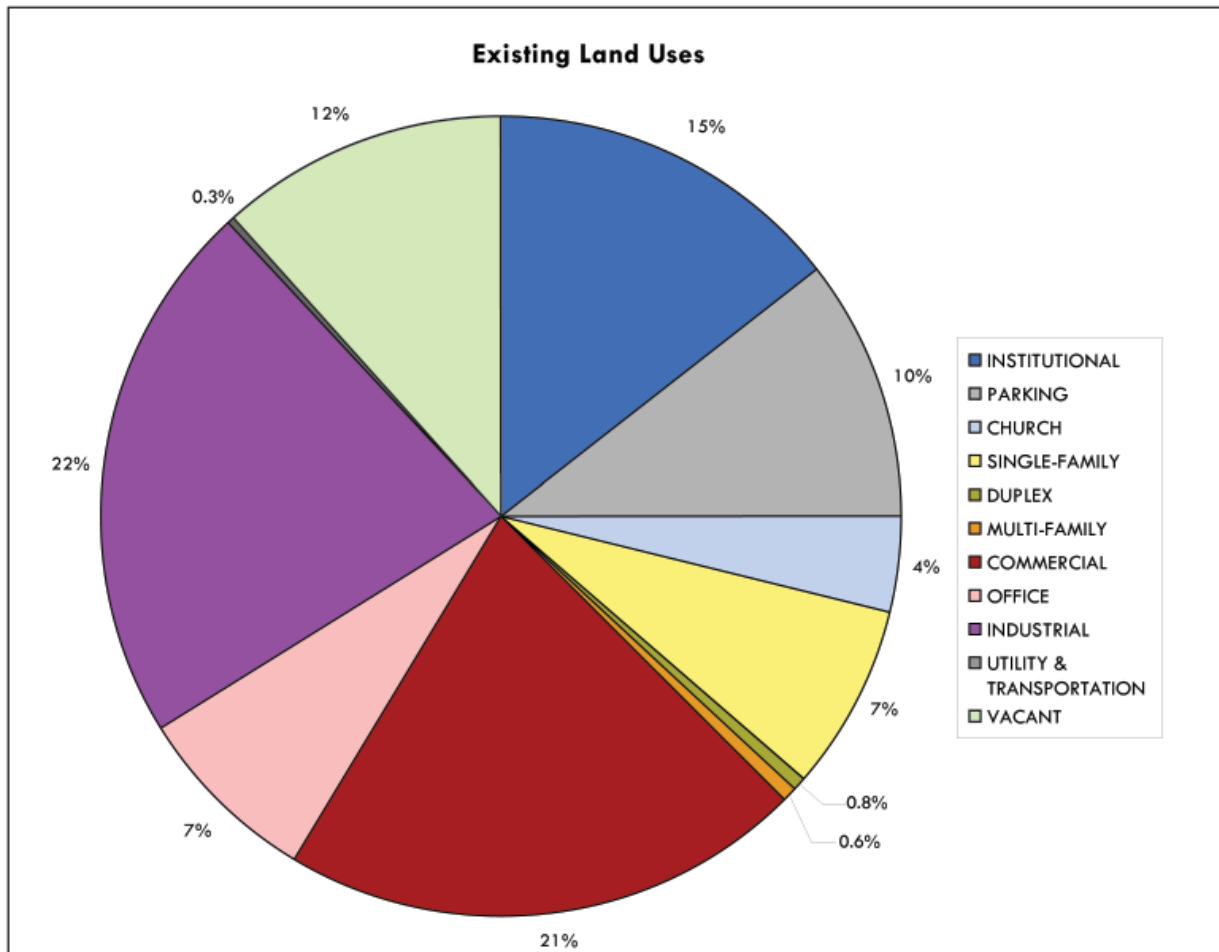
The South Downtown Study Area contains a mix of industrial, commercial, cultural, governmental, and residential uses. Field work conducted early in the planning process identified specific building uses for properties in the South Downtown Study Area. This helped identify the existing and potential market orientations of the Study Area discussed in the economic study conducted by HyettPalma (see Chapter 3). The following discussion describes the general land uses in the Study Area.

INSTITUTIONAL

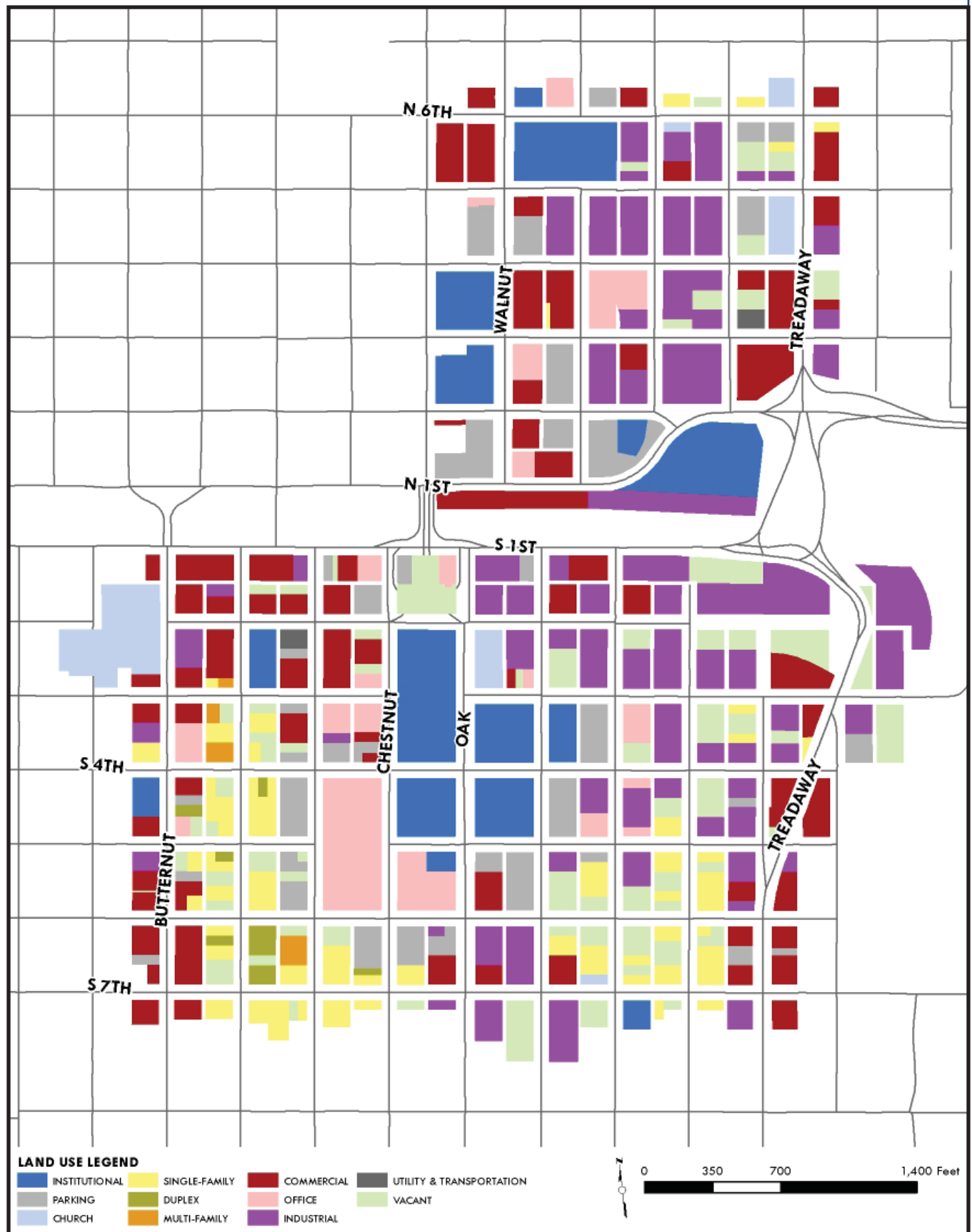
The South Downtown Study Area is home to most of the municipal buildings in the downtown area, including:

- **Abilene City Hall** - Located in the northern section of the Study Area on Walnut Street between North 5th and North 6th Streets.

- **Taylor County Courthouse, Offices, and Police Department (Taylor County and Abilene City Police)** - Located south of the railroad tracks between Chestnut and Pecan Streets, south of South 2nd Street and north of South 5th Street. The concentration of Taylor County offices and services is a key destination to users of South Downtown, including employees and visitors using county services.
- **Frontier Texas! Museum** - Located on N 1st Street at Ash Street, immediately west of Treadaway. It attracts approximately 43,000 visitors a year, of which approximately two-thirds are tourists from outside of the city of Abilene, contributing to the local economy.
- **The Abilene Farmer's Market** - Open three mornings per week in a portion of the Frontier Texas! parking lot on the north side of N 1st Street at Mesquite Street. Farmers come from all over the West Central Texas area as far away as 100 miles to sell their produce.



EXISTING LAND USES IN THE SOUTH DOWNTOWN AREA



- **The CityLink Transfer Station and Offices -**
Located at South 2nd Street at Sycamore.

OPEN SPACE & RECREATION

Current open space and recreation opportunities in the South Downtown Study Area are limited. There is currently one programmed area in the Study Area; the historic Taylor County Courthouse at Sycamore and South 4th Street has a memorial garden surrounding the building. However, there are nearby parks and open spaces outside of the study area that present opportunities to connect South Downtown to recreational uses.

RESIDENTIAL

A majority of the residential uses in the Study Area are low-density single-family and duplex housing units, which are located in the southern portion of the Study Area, surrounding the Taylor County campus and office uses, primarily along South 7th Street, Elm Street, and Cherry Street. With a few exceptions, most single-family housing units are in poor condition and are opportunities for redevelopment for a more appropriate urban-intense use. There are also three multi-family developments, with the largest having ten units.

OFFICE

A majority of the office use in the South Downtown Study Area are government offices. Other office uses in the South Downtown Study Area exist around the courthouse in the southern portion of the Study Area. Most of these include government-related offices such as legal services. Other multi-tenant professional office buildings exist in the South Downtown Study Area, such as the Enterprise Tower and Hines Building. See the Economic Study for a more detailed discussion of office uses in the South Downtown Study Area.

COMMERCIAL

Retail uses in the Study Area are concentrated along the arterial and collector streets, including Butternut Street, Walnut Street, S 1st Street, and Treadaway Street. Most of the commercial uses are auto-oriented businesses, such as auto-repair or supply stores, furniture or home furnishing stores, and antique dealers. See the Economic Study for a more detailed discussion of retail uses in the South Downtown Study Area.

INDUSTRIAL

There are a number of warehouses in the Study Area that house a variety of industrial uses such as light manufacturing, general contractors, automobile repair, and sheet metal services. Industrial uses are concentrated in the northern and eastern portions of the Study Area, including areas north of North 1st Street east of Walnut Street, and between South 1st Street and South 6th Street, east of Oak Street.

PARKING

As discussed earlier, there is an adequate supply of parking in the South Downtown Area. Parking is provided by on-street parking areas and off-street parking lots.

Off-street parking consumes 39% of the land area in South Downtown Abilene. Ten percent of the parcels are developed solely as parking lots, while many other land uses types have parking lots and garages as an accessory use. Off-street parking in the South Downtown Study Area exists as:

- parking garages;
- paved parking lots; and
- informal parking on paved and unpaved lots.

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EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

The existing water and wastewater infrastructure in South Downtown will be able to provide services to a dense urban environment with

minimal improvements. Directing growth toward downtown and South Downtown will save the city money by using the existing infrastructure.

EXISTING WATER AND WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

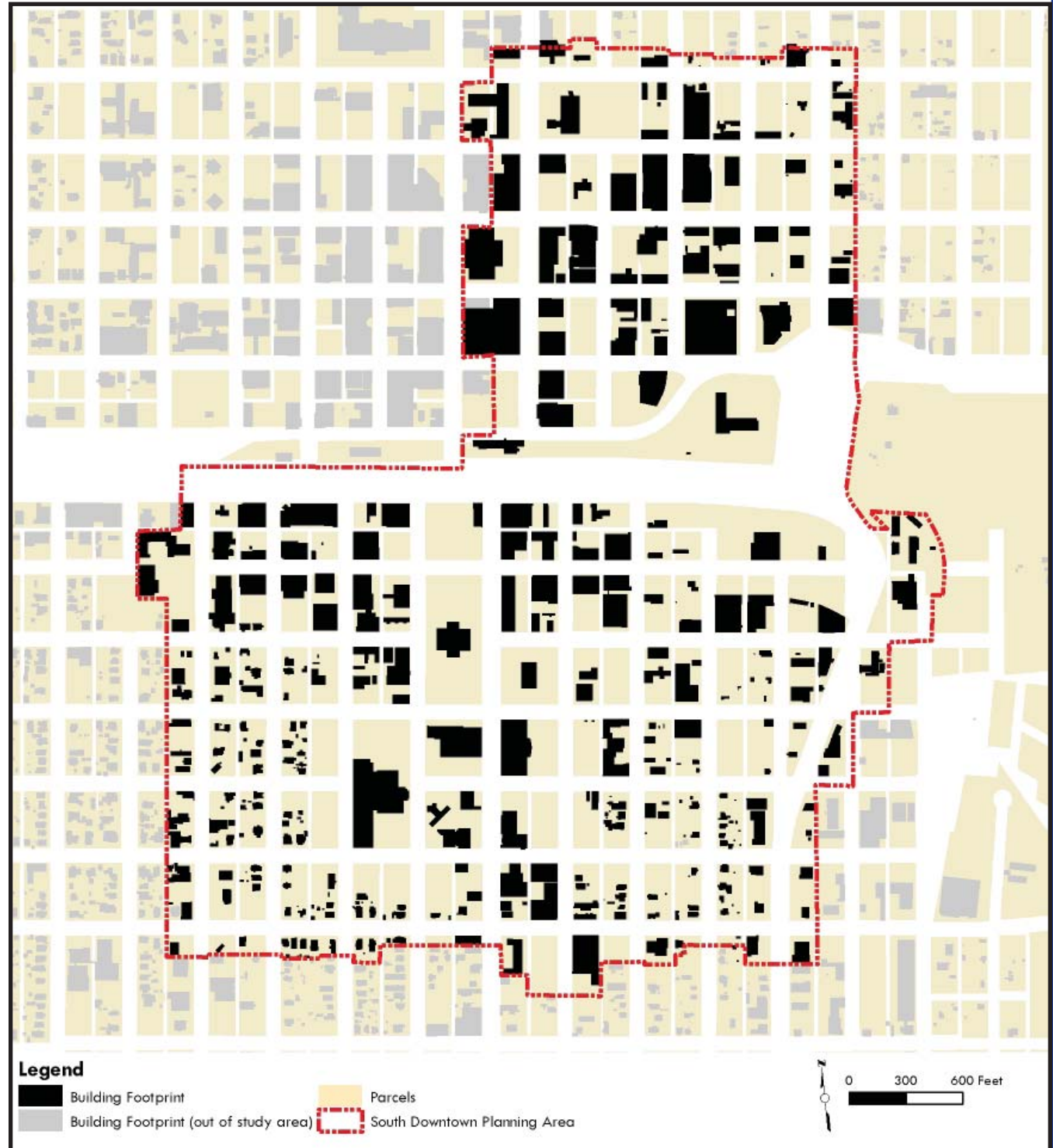


DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

There is a significant amount of vacant parcels in the southern portion of the Study Area. Remnants of residential areas and increases in office and commercial uses indicate a shift from low-intensity uses such as single-family housing to

more urban uses such as office buildings and commercial services. Additional redevelopment opportunities exist among older buildings that have passed their life expectancy, such as condemned buildings or older buildings with no significant historical features. Their redevelopment potential will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

DEVELOPED VERSES UNDEVELOPED SPACE



LAND ASSEMBLY

Land ownership may present an opportunity to encourage redevelopment of property in South Downtown Abilene. When an area has multiple property owners, development occurs piece-meal and at a level of lower intensity, such as single-family homes or small buildings. However, the occurrence of property owners who own a significant amount of land in one area facilitates assembling properties for more significant development such as mixed-use developments.

There are five major land-owners that own a majority of the land in the South Downtown Study Area: two private entities and various government entities.

Most of the city of Abilene properties are currently developed, and future development potential is limited. The city owns approximately 16.6 acres (9.1%) including City Hall, Frontier Texas! Museum (including the parking lot on the north side of South 1st Street), CityLink Offices and Transfer Station, the old T&P Station, the Enforcement Center that the city shares with Taylor County, and a Fire Station. Some of these sites could accommodate more intense development or programming.

Taylor County occupies a significant part of the South Downtown District, with its campus in the center. Most county properties are developed, but a few parcels are parking lots and potential sites for redevelopment. Total acreage belonging to the county is 16.6 acres (9.1%).

The Federal Government owns three sites in the Warehouse District: the Federal Postal Office, a federal vehicle service station; and a parking lot. Total acreage in federal ownership is 4.0 acres (2.2%).

There are two private entities that own significant portions of land in the Study Area. Bixby Enterprises owns 12.0 acres (6.5%) in the South Downtown District. With the exception of two office buildings, most properties here are vacant or underutilized.

The Lone Star and Union Pacific Railroad companies own a total of 8.4 acres (4.6%). For the most part, these properties are vacant or underutilized with outdoor storage.

The City of Abilene should take an active role in assisting with land assembly to facilitate land development. This concept is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, Action Plan.

MAJOR PROPERTY OWNERS



HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Historic preservation in Abilene is spearheaded by the Abilene Preservation League (APL) and Abilene Landmarks Commission (ALC). APL was formed in 1975 as a nonprofit organization to promote preservation in Abilene. It provides leadership in the restoration of buildings, and gives the community a voice for historic preservation (Abilene, 1999, p. 16).

The ALC was created out of a landmarks ordinance that was adopted in 1984 after the APL asked the Planning and Zoning Commission to draft the ordinance to further protect historic properties and sites. The ALC has the authority to review all permits that could alter a historic landmark as identified in the City Council Adopted List of Historic Properties. The Commission can also start the process to apply historic overlay zoning onto a property they feel is threatened, which subjects properties to additional regulations and scrutinization.

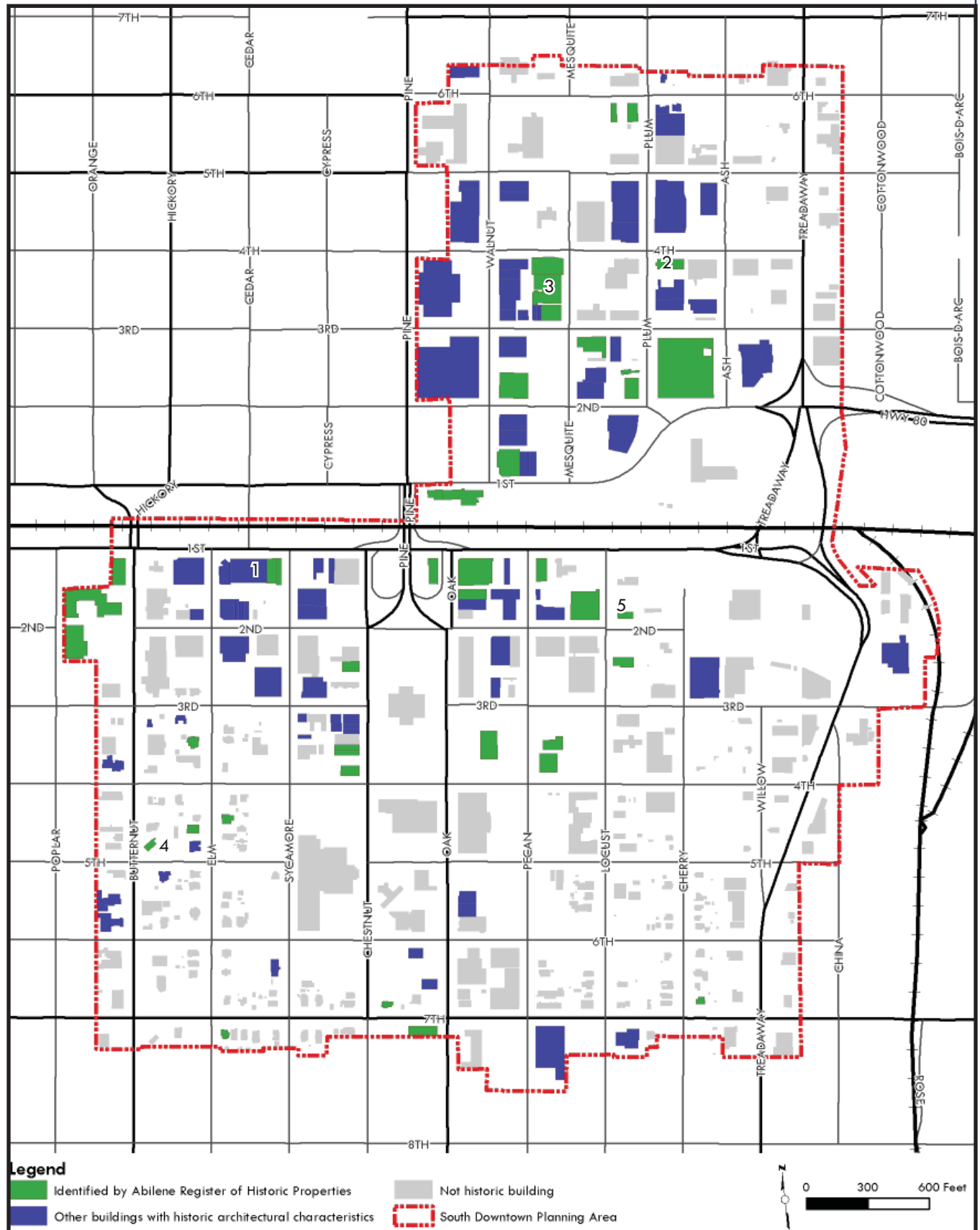
Finally, the city staffs a historic preservation officer, per the zoning ordinance, as amended in 1993. The officer administers the ordinance, acts as staff to the Landmarks Commission, reviews demolition permits, and inspects condemned properties (Abilene, 1999, p. 19).

In 1989, the city and APL hired a consultant to prepare a survey of historic properties. This created the Abilene Register of Historic Properties, which identified properties as having National Register designation, historic overlay zoning, or "high priority" criteria by the survey. The green properties on the map to the right identify properties on the Abilene Register of Historic Properties.

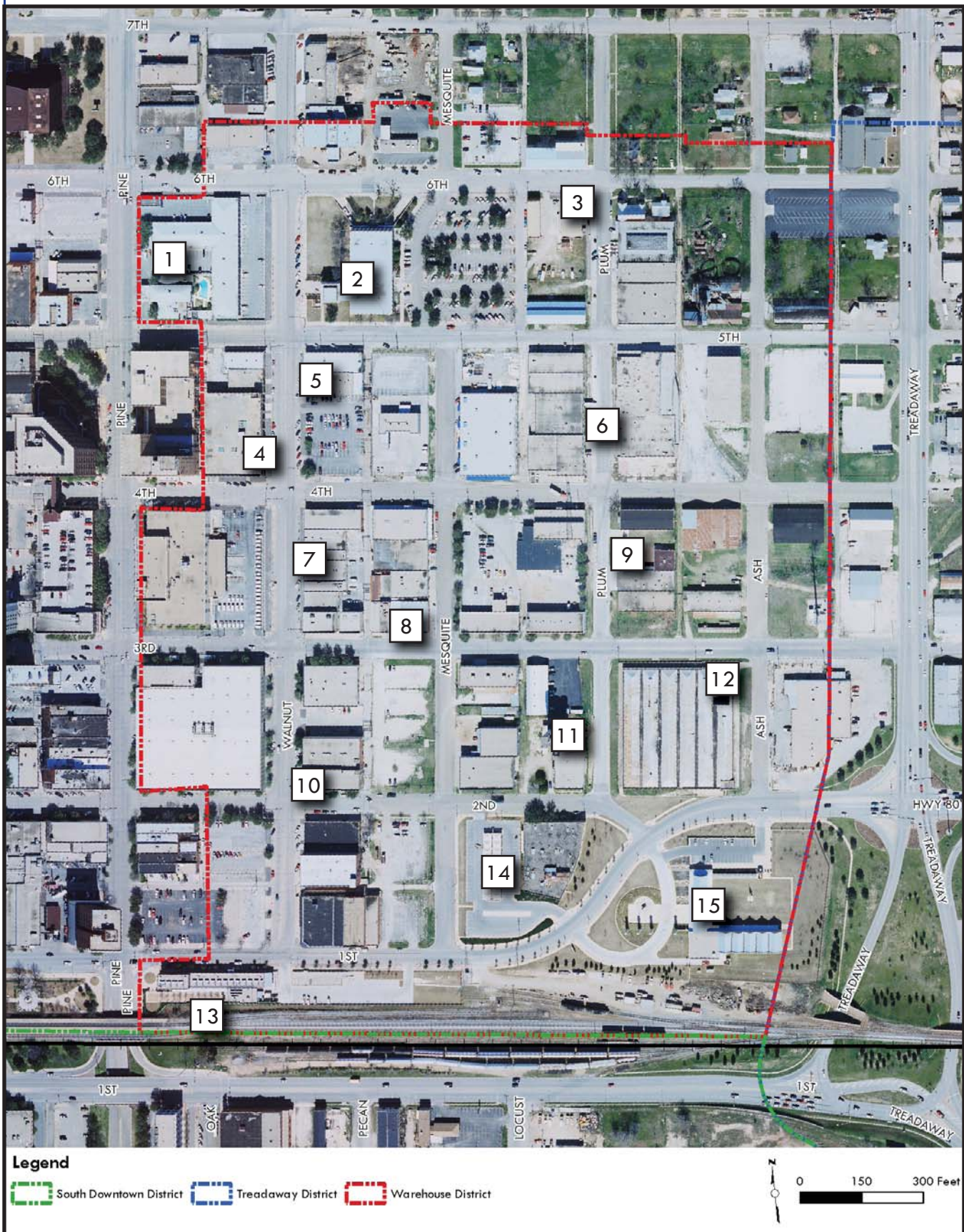
Field work during the South Downtown planning process identified additional buildings that have architectural features that add to the character of the environment. While these buildings may not be historically significant, they offer characteristic attributes that contribute to a sense of place. These properties are indicated in blue on the map to the right.



HISTORIC BUILDINGS

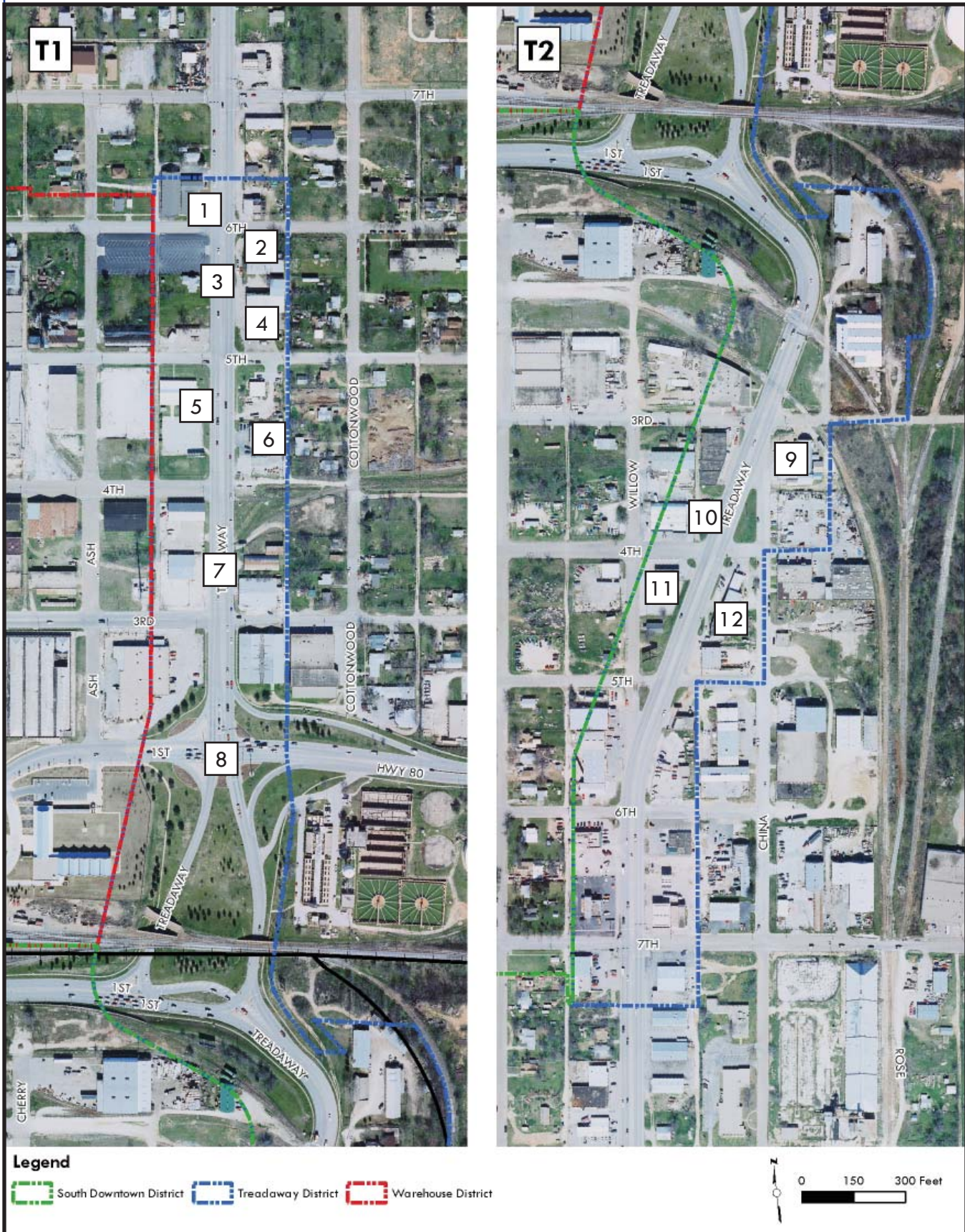


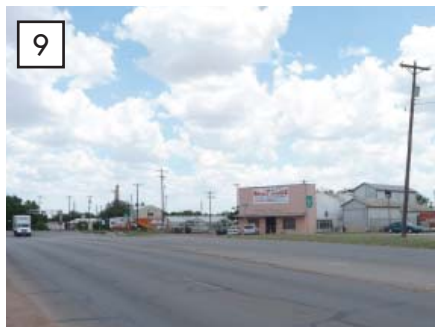
EXISTING CONDITIONS PHOTO SURVEY: WAREHOUSE DISTRICT



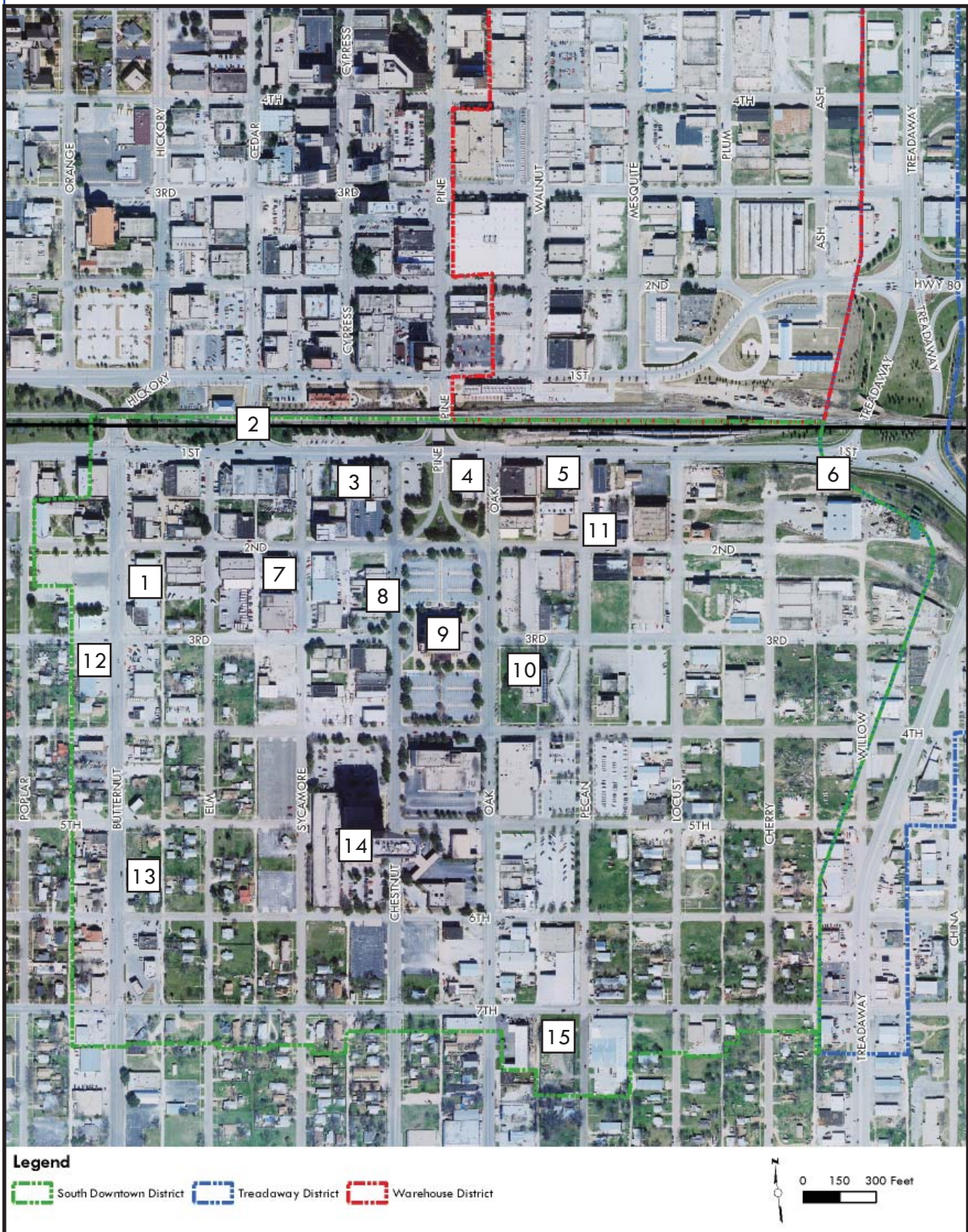


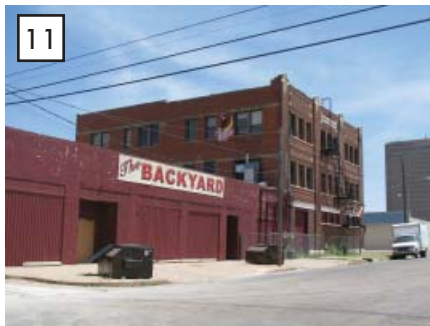
EXISTING CONDITIONS PHOTO SURVEY: TREADAWAY DISTRICT





EXISTING CONDITIONS PHOTO SURVEY: SOUTH DOWNTOWN DISTRICT





A photograph of the Historic Taylor County Courthouse, a large, multi-story brick building with white trim and dark shutters. The building is partially obscured by several large, leafy green trees in the foreground. The scene is set on a grassy lawn under a clear blue sky.

3 ECONOMIC STRATEGY

BACKGROUND

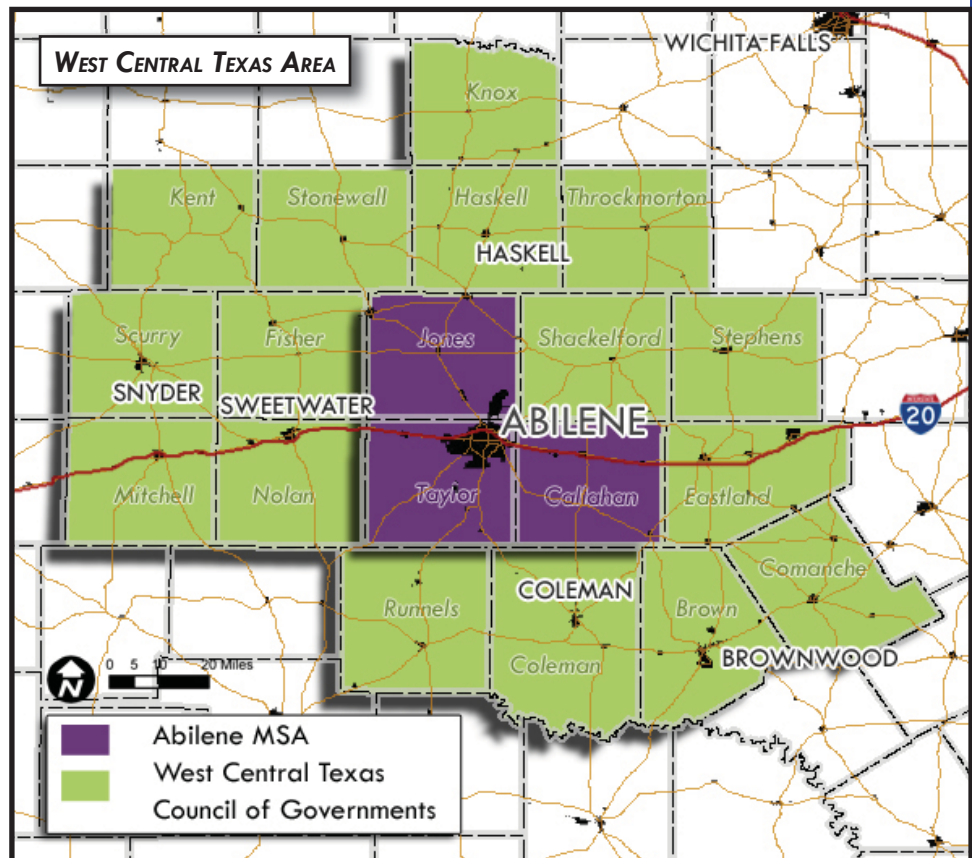
In June 2009 an Economic Enhancement Strategy was completed for the South Downtown Abilene Study Area. Recommendations were drawn from the public input gathered through the issue sessions, focus groups, interviews, and visioning session done in May 2009. The recommendations of the Economic Enhancement Strategy are summarized in this chapter; the complete report is included in the appendix of this document.

The *South Downtown Abilene Economic Enhancement Strategy 2009* was completed by HyettPalma, Inc., with research conducted by Halff Associates, Inc. and the city of Abilene. The methodology used to define the *South Downtown Abilene Economic Enhancement Strategy 2009* was developed by HyettPalma, Inc. and has been used extensively by the firm in downtowns throughout the United States.

The primary retail trade area of the South Downtown Abilene study area was defined as the geographic area that presents the greatest opportunity in the immediate future for gaining additional retail customers. HyettPalma, Inc. identified the primary retail trade area as the Abilene Metropolitan Statistical Area. The following market indicators were identified by HyettPalma, Inc. regarding the South Downtown Abilene primary trade area:

- Estimated population of the primary trade area is 162,165 persons and an estimated 60,233 households;
- The total combined income of households within the primary trade area is approximately \$3,296,000,000 per year;

- The average annual household income for households in the primary trade area is approximately \$54,724;
- The total estimated demand for retail products in South Downtown Abilene's primary trade area is approximately \$1,018,000,000 per year.



The Study Area is divided into three districts identified on the map to the right. Evaluation of the current economic markets and recommendations for future economic orientations of the *South Downtown Abilene Economic Enhancement Strategy 2009* were made at this district level.

A detailed inventory of businesses and building uses identified the following information about the South Downtown Abilene Study Area:

Table 3.1 Current Building Uses in the South Downtown Area		
Use	Number	Square Feet
Retail Businesses	63	453,000
Office Businesses	121	1,115,578
Other Commercial Businesses	103	970,000
Vacant Commercial Space	-	462,000
Single-Family Housing	78 d.u.*	-
Multi-Family Housing	37 d.u.*	-

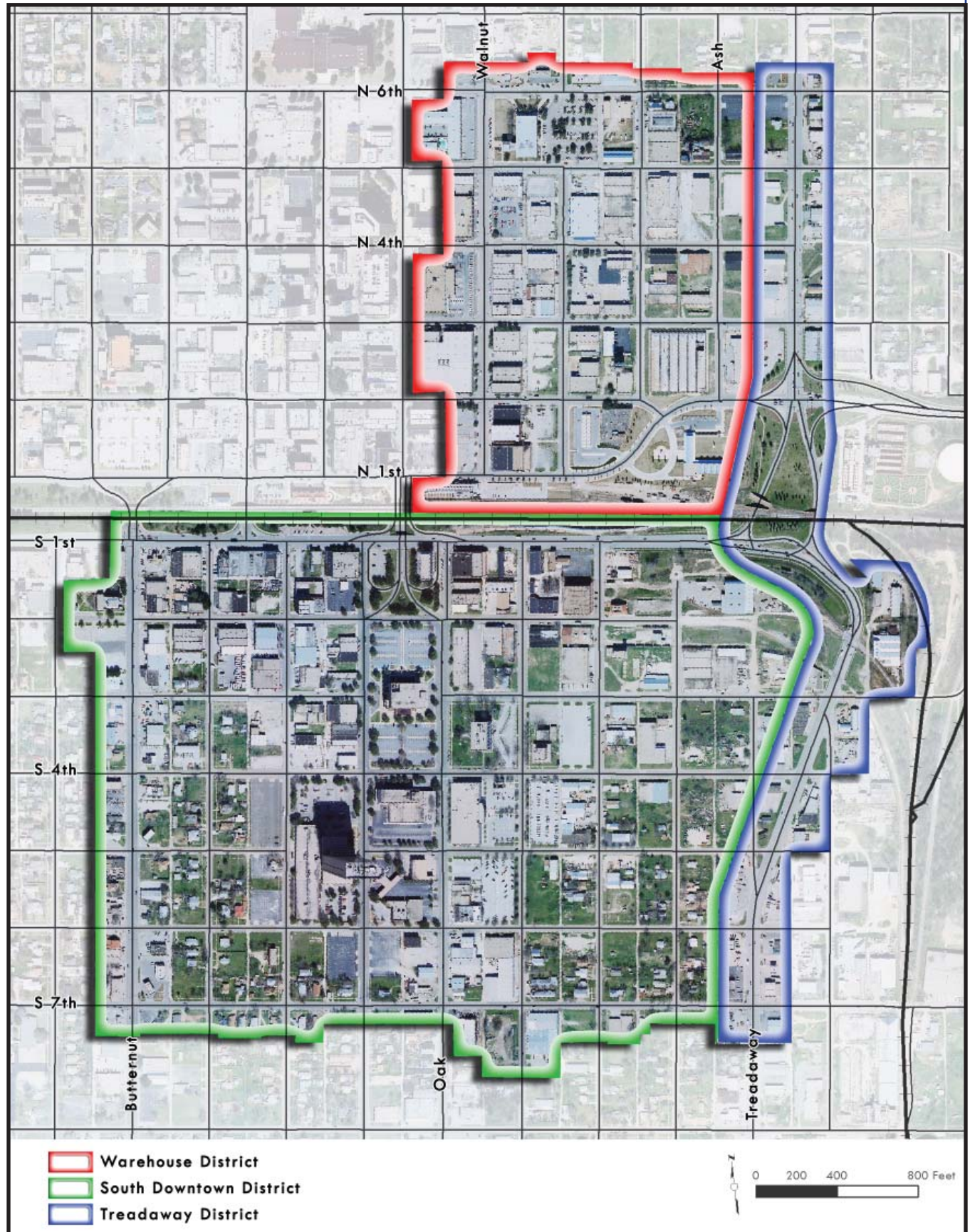
*d.u. refers to dwelling units

Recommendations generally call for identifying and creating separate and unique identities for the areas north and south of the railroad tracks. The entire project area would offer destinations and reasons to walk, and walkability and connectivity within and between the districts and between the historic downtown and South Downtown areas will be improved. Overall, the area needs to be cleaned-up of graffiti, unsalvageable buildings, and unscreened storage. Historic buildings would be recognized as assets and rehabilitated or restored and reused.

Overall actions to achieving the market strategy include aggressive marketing through the Downtown Trolley, wayfinding, story placement, and the city advertisements; management of downtown through new city staff; funding through a downtown Tax Increment Finance District and other sources; and formation of a downtown partnership.

A more detailed discussion of the current economic orientation, potential future economic orientation, and specific economic enhancement approaches and actions for each district is included on the following pages.

SOUTH DOWNTOWN ABILENE DISTRICTS



WAREHOUSE DISTRICT

CURRENT AND FUTURE MARKET ORIENTATION

This district currently contains an eclectic mix of warehousing, light manufacturing, and institutional uses, including the Post Office, City Hall, and Frontier Texas Museum.

The Warehouse District should be further enhanced and developed as a mixed-use center of offices, storage, general warehousing, institutions, lodging (if market conditions support), art incubation/production/classes, upper floor loft housing, and dining establishments (located close to the historic downtown area).

Over time, light manufacturing should be phased out of the Warehouse District. Current businesses of this type should be considered non-conforming uses and allowed to continue operation in their present locations, but should not be allowed to expand operations within the Warehouse District. If and when these uses discontinue operation (for the timeframe specified in Abilene's zoning ordinance related to nonconforming uses) then buildings and property now used for these non-conforming purposes should instead be used for, or developed to house, the above noted appropriate uses.

Storage and general warehousing uses in the Warehouse District should gradually be reduced so that these uses constitute a smaller percentage of the overall use in the area. Any such remaining, refurbished, or rebuilt buildings should conform to design guidelines to be adopted by the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council of Abilene that preserve the historic character of the area, promote walkability, and create a strong sense of place as presented in this master plan.



The Abilene Farmers' Market is open two days a week near the Frontier Texas Museum

ACTIONS

Examine traffic flow to determine potential for converting traffic flow through the district to two-way, which would make the district much more pedestrian- and motorist-friendly.

Strengthen pedestrian links between the Warehouse District and historic downtown by:

- Maintenance of sidewalks connecting the Warehouse District and historic downtown;
- Installation of streetscaping to underscore connectivity and enhance street ambience; and
- Maintenance of appropriate street lighting throughout the district.

Transform existing farmers market into a year-round market offering full range of produce, meats, cheeses, prepared food, art, crafts, flowers, plants, etc. Consider moving the farmer's market into an enclosed or covered building to enable year-round operation.

Make a concerted effort to repair structurally-sound buildings.

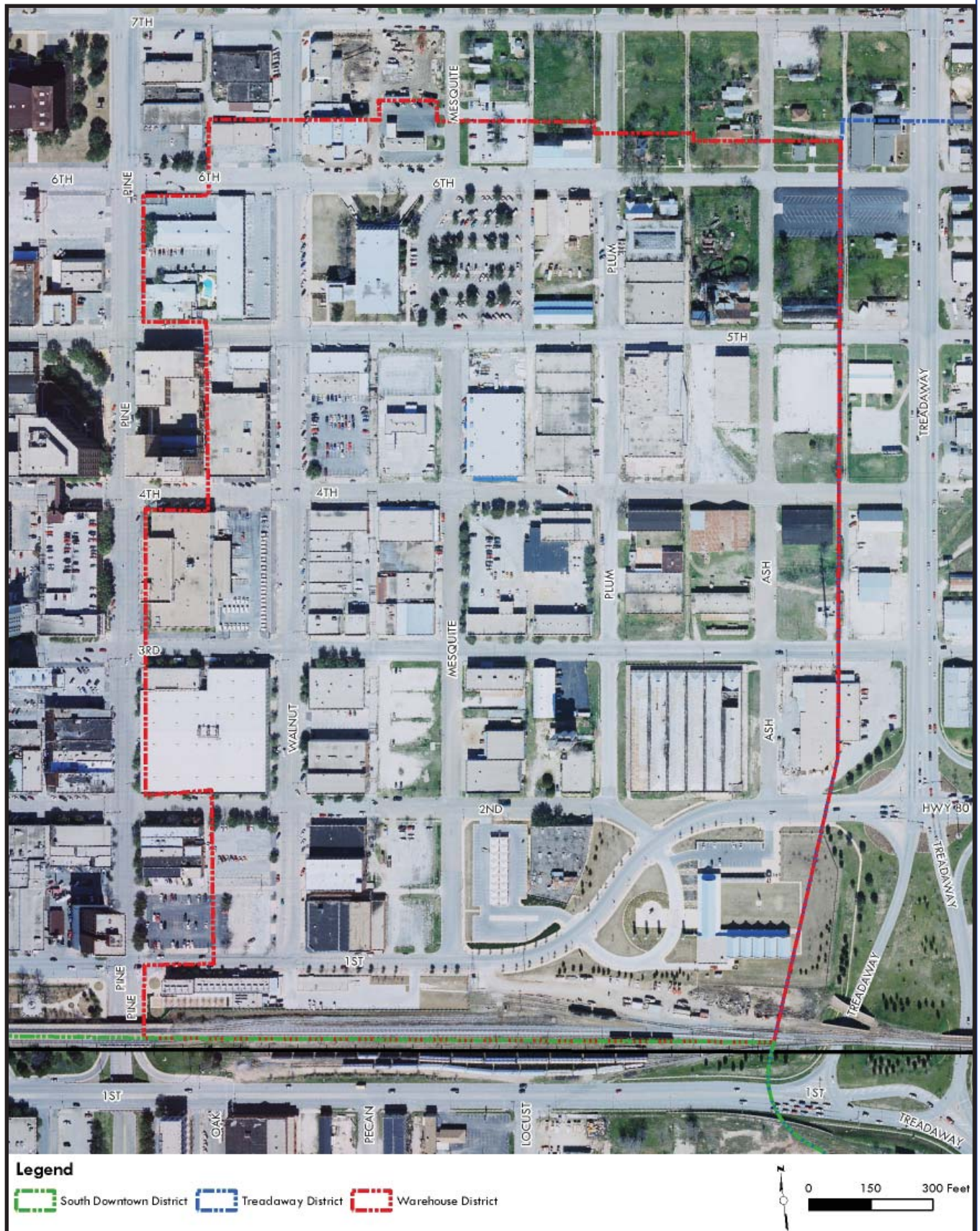
Enforce screening requirements for property owners of all exterior storage areas. Some amount of grant assistance might be appropriate to assist owners who desire to screen storage areas within a reasonably short window of time to induce immediate action.

Conduct feasibility study for development of a convention center and associated hotel. Many in the downtown area desire a convention center and associated hotel. If such a facility is developed, consideration should be given to development of at or near the northwestern edge of the Warehouse District.



An historic building was renovated for a home decor store on Walnut Street

WAREHOUSE DISTRICT



SOUTH DOWNTOWN (SoDA) DISTRICT

CURRENT AND FUTURE MARKET ORIENTATION

This district currently contains an intense cluster of government uses, professional offices, and transportation facilities, with some limited amount of convenience retail, dining, warehousing, light manufacturing, open storage, and single- and multi-family housing. The physical condition and use of some buildings and lots in this district, particularly some number of housing units, vacant commercial structures, and open storage lots, are unsightly and in an advanced stage of deterioration, resulting in a significant blighting influence in parts of the district.

The Butternut Commercial Corridor extends along the western boundary of the South Downtown Abilene District. The corridor currently contains auto-oriented and convenience retail businesses serving, primarily, through-vehicle traffic and adjacent neighborhood residents.

The South Downtown Abilene District should continue to be developed as a government and professional office center, with convenience retail, personal services, and food, to accommodate the needs of those who work in, live in, or live near the district.

In addition, the residential base of the district should be increased through multi-family housing development, making the district more of a neighborhood.

If the transportation center currently located in the district is relocated in the future, as is currently being considered, an appropriate location for a new center would be at the eastern edge of this district, on or near Treadaway Boulevard.

Non-screened outdoor storage, light manufacturing, and general warehousing uses should be phased-out over time in this district. Current businesses of this type should be considered nonconforming uses and allowed to continue operation in their present locations, but should not be allowed to expand operations in the district. If and when these uses

discontinue operation (for the timeframe specified in Abilene's zoning ordinance related to non-conforming uses) then buildings and property now used for these non-conforming purposes should instead be used for or developed to house the above noted appropriate uses.

The Butternut Commercial Corridor should continue to contain, primarily, auto-oriented uses, convenience retail, and food establishments.

ACTIONS

The entire district is in critical need of massive clean-up, including: derelict building removal; clean-up of residential yards; removal of discarded items (general trash, scrap, abandoned vehicles) from building grounds; grass cutting on vacant lots; screening of outdoor storage areas; and pick-up and care of feral animals.

Enforce city's building, health, and safety codes. This includes, among other things: starting the process of removal and cleaning condemned properties; creating an inventory of occupied commercial and residential buildings that do not meet current building codes; and screening all outdoor storage areas of commercial materials and equipment.

Maintain the highest level of public safety and perception of public safety through graffiti removal and friendly police presence.

Move forward on consolidating the Greyhound Bus facility and CityLink bus transfer station. Consideration should be given to locating a new transportation center on a major thoroughfare, such as Treadaway, and not on smaller, more pedestrian-oriented streets.

Enhance linkages into the district and create better connections between the SoDA District and the balance of downtown. Specific areas of concern include:

- Pine Street entrance into the SoDA District;
- South 1st Street landscaping and pedestrian access; and
- Pedestrian tunnels.

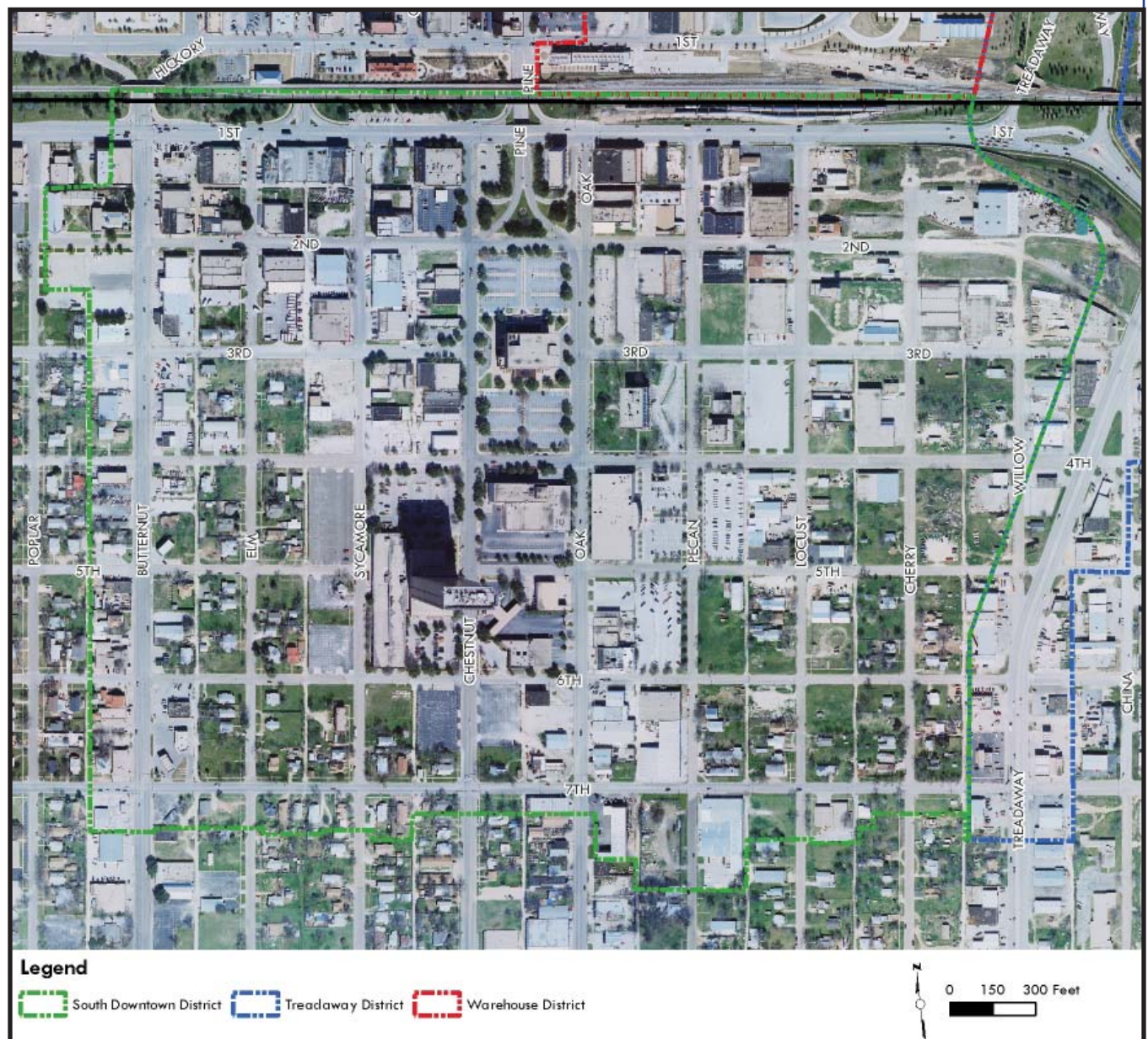
Following the completion of the Butternut Corridor

study, enhance Butternut Street in accordance with efforts to further enhance South Downtown Abilene.

Seek a master developer to assemble property and develop and/or seek developers to implement the master plan.

Create and implement a Taylor County Master Plan for all Taylor County properties within the South Downtown area.

SOUTH DOWNTOWN (SoDA) DISTRICT



TREADAWAY DISTRICT

CURRENT AND FUTURE MARKET ORIENTATION

The Treadaway District is currently the eastern boundary of the South Downtown Abilene project area. The district is best characterized as a high traffic, north/south auto-oriented commercial corridor of aging commercial structures that contain auto service and repair shops, construction materials businesses, and light-manufacturing businesses.

The further enhancement and development of this district will depend on what occurs both north and south of this portion of the Treadaway Commercial Corridor which extends well beyond the boundaries of the South Downtown Abilene project area.

While this district serves as the eastern boundary of downtown, its character and economic orientation are very different from downtown. The needs of the entire corridor should be examined as a whole and enhancement initiatives should be planned for the entire corridor, much like the recent initiative along the Pine Commercial Corridor and the anticipated initiative along the Butternut Commercial Corridor. In the interim, the current economic orientation of the district is appropriate.

ACTIONS

The economic study recommended that the city of Abilene conduct a corridor study for the entire Treadaway Commercial Corridor, from Pine Street to Loop 322, just as was recently completed for the Pine Commercial Corridor and as is anticipated for the Butternut Commercial Corridor. The study should address:

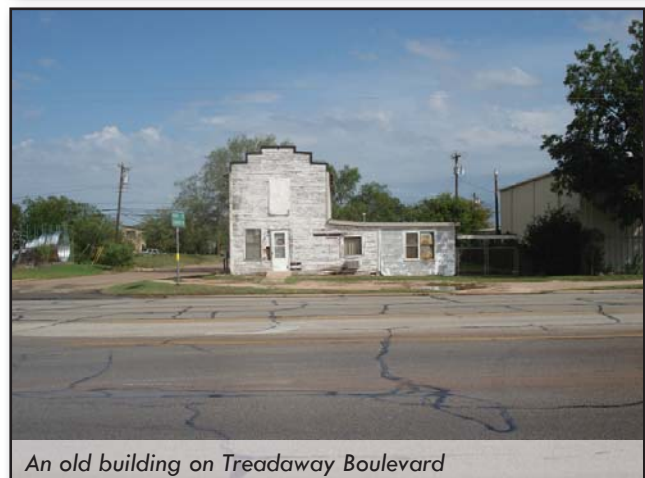
- Appropriate economic orientation for the corridor;
- Physical appearance of buildings, signs, and landscaping along the corridor; and
- Traffic flow, including ingress and egress for corridor businesses (curb cuts along Treadaway Boulevard).



Treadaway Boulevard lacks good pedestrian facilities



Treadaway Boulevard is a major transportation corridor and businesses and design are oriented toward the automobile



An old building on Treadaway Boulevard

TREADAWAY DISTRICT





4 MASTER PLAN CONCEPT

VISION AND GOALS

The vision of the South Downtown Master Plan is to make South Downtown Abilene a safe and appealing destination to Abilene's citizens and visitors of all ages. At the same time, the history and character of the neighborhoods that make up the Study Area should be preserved and even enhanced. The public input is summarized around three broad goals.

CREATE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Building and reinforcing a sense of community is important in the success of South Downtown. The quality and livability of a place is impacted by the presence and activity of a community. Community is a support system, providing individuals with a sense of identity, connectedness, and belonging. Without a sense of community, individuals can feel disconnected and lonely, leading to social disintegration. With the growth of technology and busy schedules it is too easy to be isolated in our home, and community is increasingly vital.

In downtown Abilene, there are several communities that exist: the Farmer's Market, Abilene Downtown Association, and the artists' and cultural communities to name a few. A sense of community is more than just the existence of a community. That community should be visible, or "sensed," in order to benefit the society. Activity and events help make that community more visible and give individuals within the community an opportunity to be involved. For example, Downtown Dayz and the monthly Art Walk generate activity and opportunities for individuals to commune. Efforts to expand and promote the existing communities and their events should be made to strengthen the sense of community in downtown and South Downtown Abilene.



*People of all ages
who feel a sense of
belonging tend to lead
happier and healthier
lives, and strong
communities create
a more stable and
supportive society.*

-APS Healthcare



CREATE A SENSE OF PLACE

“Sense of place” describes the characteristics of a place that make it special or unique. Places with a strong sense of place have a strong identity. This is created through a variety of ways: public activity, land uses, building quality, architecture, cleanliness, safety; the list of qualities goes on and on.

Research by the Project for Public Spaces has led to the development of a model of qualities that create great places. Their evaluation of thousands of public spaces around the world has found that there are four key qualities for a successful place: the space is accessible; people are engaged in activities there; it is a comfortable space with a safe image; and it is a sociable place where people can meet each other.



Model of qualities that create great public places by the Project for Public Spaces.

A sense of place cannot exist in isolation, that is building by building; place is often defined geographically, influenced by existing conditions, architecture, businesses, and major barriers that divide areas. This is the primary reason for identifying the three districts: to identify and establish a sense of place unique to each district. Hints of place exist in each district, but they are dominated by the placelessness of vacant buildings and lots, outdoor storage, a lack of public space, and blank walls of windowless buildings or boarded-up windows.



CREATE A SENSE OF VALUE

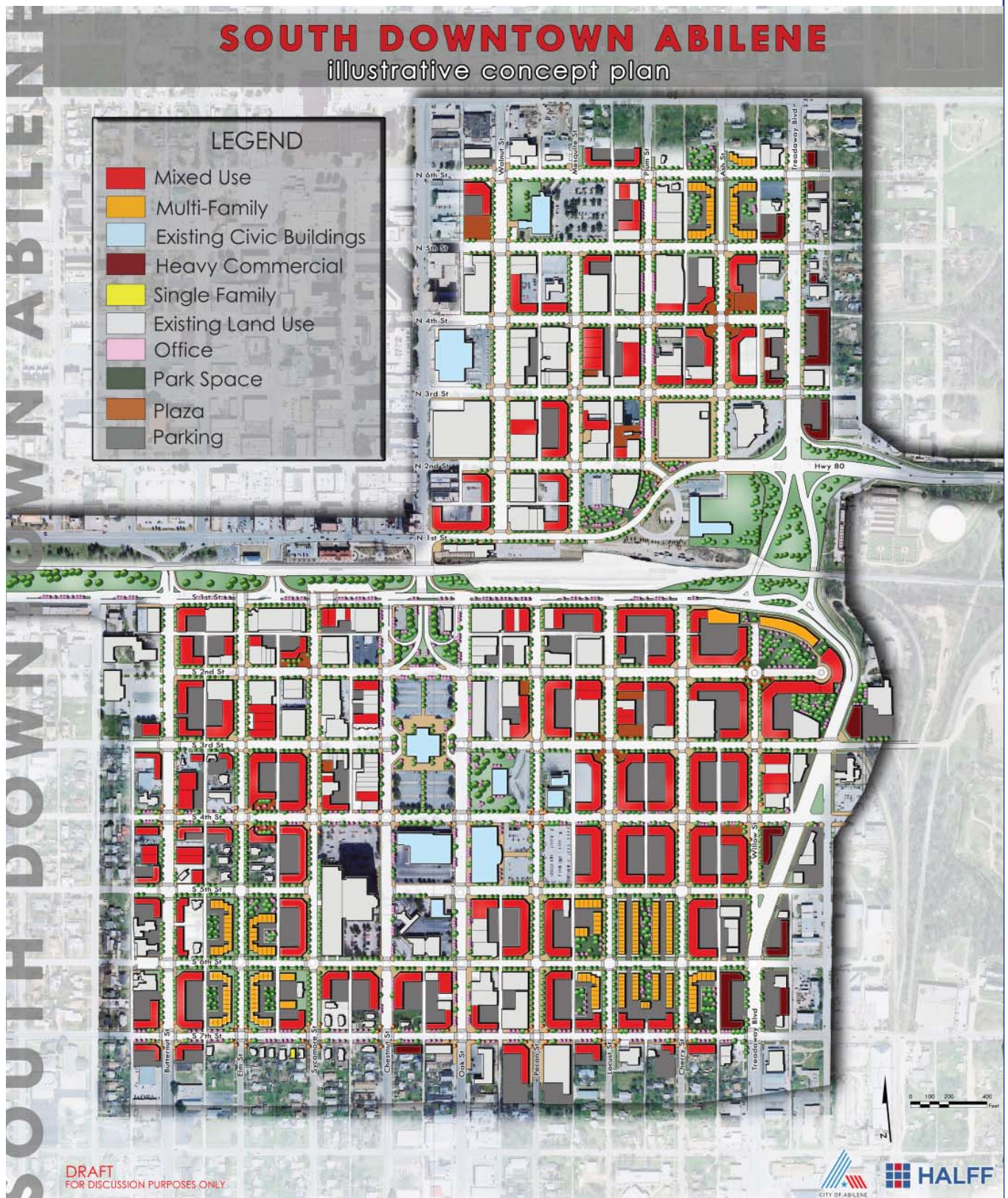
People often express value with attention and money. A place is valued in the same way: through visitation and investment. South Downtown Abilene used to be a place full of value: longtime South Downtown business owners recall in the 1940s that South Downtown had three theatres, three restaurants, two hotels, a barbershop, and other miscellaneous businesses (Myers, Reporter-News, October 7, 2009, p. 4A). Businesses found value in operating in South Downtown, property owners found value in investing their money in South Downtown, and people found value in visiting South Downtown.

Today, there is very little sense of value apparent in South Downtown. Activity is limited to business hours, and even during those hours activity tends to happen within buildings. There is also a lack of investment in South Downtown. Over time, businesses have abandoned the area either because of a lack of activity or because there are better, more “valuable” places to operate. This master plan seeks to revitalize South Downtown and restore the sense of value that once existed here.



Photo courtesy of the Abilene Photograph Collection at Hardin-Simmons University

ILLUSTRATIVE MASTER PLAN



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Master Plan concept illustrates an urban neighborhood surrounding an intensified downtown business district. It embodies a mix of uses including a range of residential types, cultural destinations, various commercial centers, offices, and public gathering spaces. The ideas of the future concept plan for South Downtown Abilene are built around the idea of form and character rather than the idea of land use. While land use is an important component of a successful place, it is something that the market should regulate. Rather, the city should focus on regulating the form the built environment takes as it is developed. This idea recognizes that the space between buildings is another important component of the urban environment that lends itself to the success of a place.

CLEAR HIERARCHY OF STREETS

The street framework identifies a hierarchy of access into and mobility within South Downtown. The framework reflects the current function as it fits into the hierarchy of vehicle travel, as well as its future position in the transportation system within the Study Area. It reflects corridors at different intensities of activity, with a variety of designs for sidewalks, parking, and travel lanes. These typologies are generic, so within each may be multiple designs to fit various pavement widths, but the function of the roadway within each typology is consistent.

CHARACTER SUBDISTRICTS

Urban areas tend to develop into subdistricts that have a uniqueness unto themselves. This often happens organically, but the Master Plan recommends facilitating these subdistricts through development standards that vary in physical form and density of development. These subdistricts are defined in large part by the existing character and land uses of the area, and in some cases beyond the Study Area boundary where a neighborhood character might blend into and impact the South Downtown Study Area.

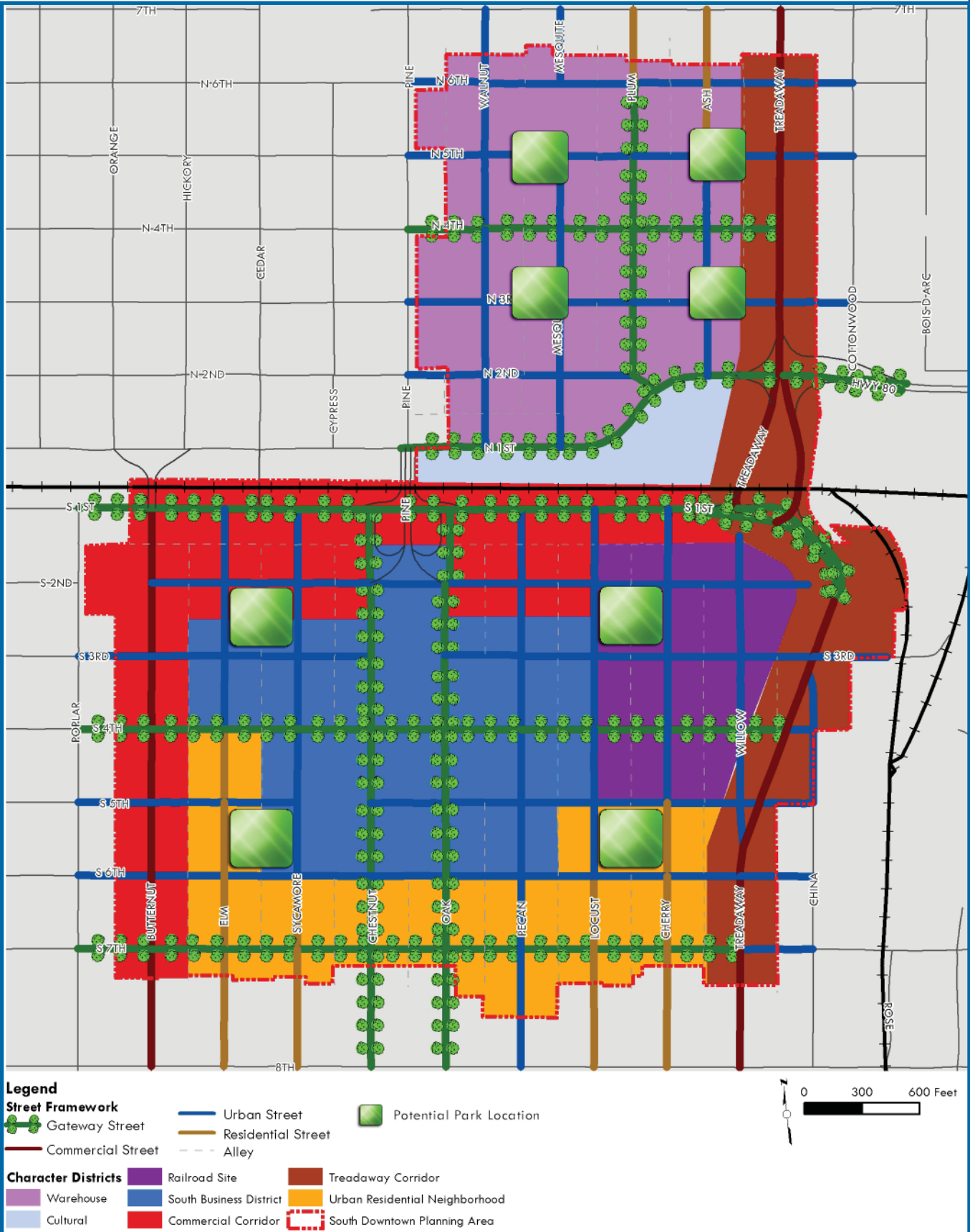
PUBLIC SPACES

Historically, there has been no real demand for parks or public open space in South Downtown area the residential base is very little. It will become increasingly important to provide public open space for gathering as the number of people living, working, and visiting South Downtown increases. Places to socialize, relax, play, and celebrate are a vital component of making South Downtown inviting and successful. The network is dispersed throughout the Study Area as to be accessible to all subdistricts. Furthermore, a variety of open spaces should be provided, including neighborhood parks, pocket parks, access to trails, and plazas and squares.



An urban park in Chicago, IL

CONCEPT FRAMEWORK



REVITALIZATION

South Downtown used to be a bustling place of commerce. Historic accounts tell of thousands from all over Jones and Taylor County, arriving by train, at the depot on the south side (Greene, pp. 321-324). And while it may not have been the sophisticated part of town, it was unique. This Master Plan strives to be reminiscent of the old South Downtown, restoring its vitality and maintaining its uniqueness.

ADAPTIVE REUSE

The Study Area, both north and south of the railroad, has a strong stock of historic buildings that are prime for adaptive reuse. Nearly 15% of the building space is vacant, much of which is historic. Adaptive reuse of historic buildings should not be discouraged, but encouraged so that more people have the opportunity to enjoy them. Homes in good condition should be encouraged to evolve from residential to commercial use. This will broaden their viability, particularly where the residential areas phase into the commercial and business districts of the area.

BUILD OFF EXISTING EFFORTS

Successful efforts have been made to maintain life and activity in the historic downtown area. This master plan strives to build off those efforts, while establishing a unique character for the areas that make up the South Downtown Study Area. Building upon the civic amenities engages the public and becomes a catalyst for creating a community in the greater downtown.

“The South Side was the ‘country’ part of town and contained most of the feed and grain stores, with their marvelous dusty, sweet smells, the wool and hide warehouses, the big farm-implement firms, the hock shops, whorehouses, hamburger and chili parlors, questionable medical services, and third-run picture shows...”

- Excerpt from *A Personal Country* by A.C. Greene, pp. 321-324



MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT

Mixed use developments contribute to creating a sustainable, flexible, and vibrant downtown. Buildings must be flexible and have the ability to change in use as market conditions change. Downtown residents and employees will often use retail and restaurant uses during different times of day, making it important that compatible uses share space rather than be separated.

HOUSING CHOICES

Having a wide range of housing choices is essential to having a sustainable downtown. Housing choices allow people from all income levels and all generations to live in South Downtown. High-density apartments, high-end condos, small-lot garden homes, and attached townhomes are just some of the proposed housing choices.

EMPHASIZE THE PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

The quality of the pedestrian environment is influenced by the design of streets and form of buildings. Pedestrian interest occurs at the interaction of the sidewalk and groundfloor activity. A few tools to improve the pedestrian environment include tree-lined streets with wide sidewalks that create shade and a wide area for easy passing; on-street parking that buffers pedestrian activity from the nearby moving traffic; and curb extensions, or “bulb-outs,” that allow pedestrians to step out and see past parked cars and increase their visibility to motor vehicles.

CONNECTIVITY

Connectivity is the cornerstone of access into and mobility with the South Downtown Study Area. It should be considered the movement of motor-vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and mass transit.



TRANSPORTATION

STREET HIERARCHY

Downtown Abilene's gridded street pattern promotes excellent connectivity and accessibility throughout the downtown area, including South Downtown. A street hierarchy was created for the streets in South Downtown, identifying them as either gateway streets, commercial corridor streets, urban streets, or residential streets. The purpose of creating the hierarchy is to identify the role of individual streets in the larger transportation network of South Downtown, and establish design standards that improve the street for all users, based on its role in the system.

Gateway streets are those streets that are primary entry portals into the South Downtown area and should be designed as such. Intersections should be enhanced with gateway monuments and the street should be landscaped to the highest extent. Intersections of gateway streets with other gateway streets, arterials, or collector streets are considered gateway intersections.



For the most part, streets identified as gateway streets have the necessary right of way; they just need improvements to the quality of the roadway and enhanced landscaping and streetscaping to promote them to a gateway street. A few streets are in need of more extensive improvements, which are discussed below.

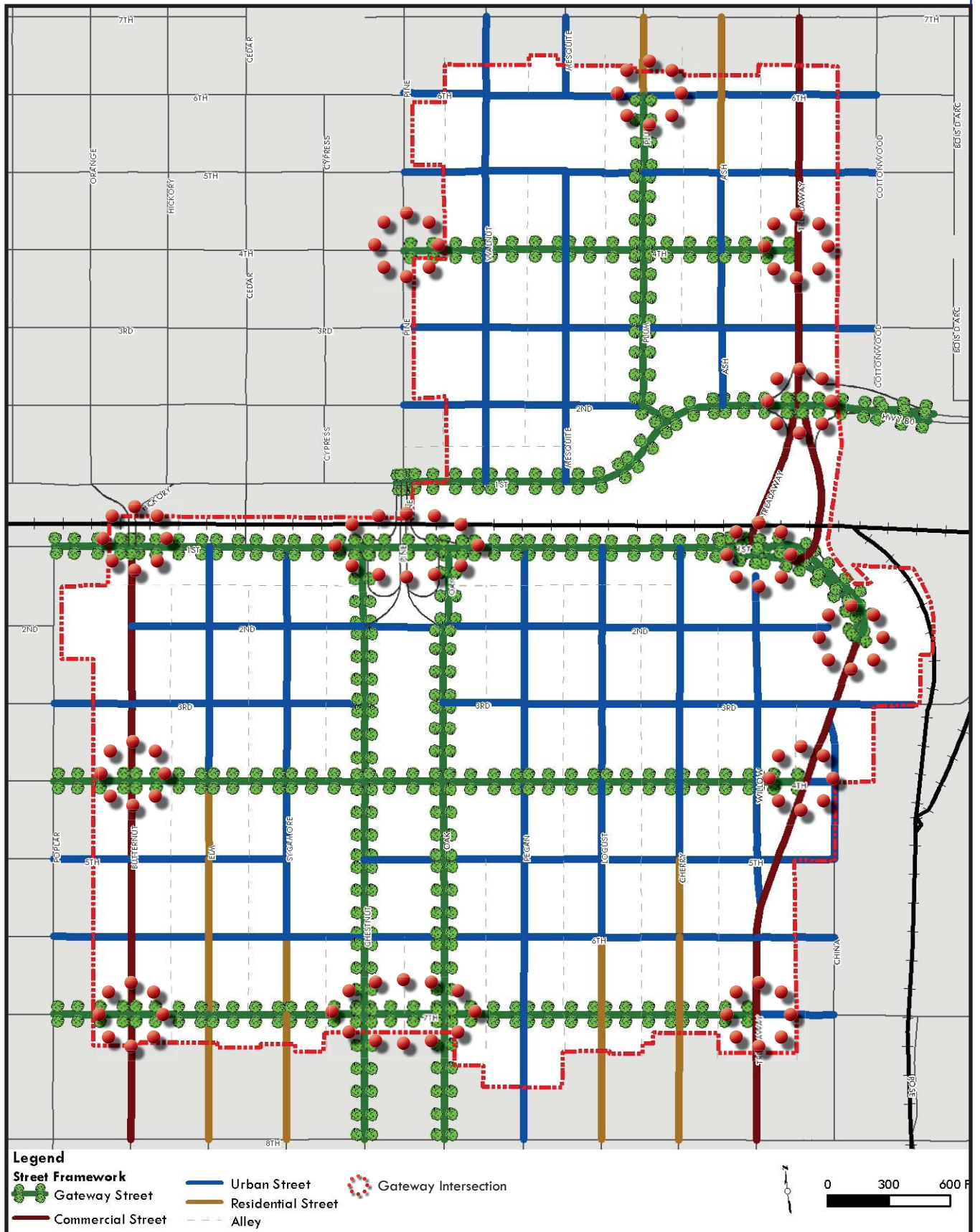
Commercial streets are more auto-oriented with visible business signage and easily-accessible parking. Sign standards and landscaping standards should be used to enhance these corridors. Despite auto-oriented design, pedestrian accessibility and safety should still be ensured with sidewalks, limited curb cuts to control ingress and egress, and landscaping that buffers the sidewalk from auto traffic. The term "commercial street" does not dictate that uses along the street should be limited to commercial uses only. Mixed use development should be encouraged in the downtown area. The commercial streets identified in South Downtown include Butternut Street and Treadaway Boulevard.



Residential streets are located at the fringes of the South Downtown Study Area where urban downtown transitions into residential central neighborhoods. The streets should reflect the highly residential character of these areas. Streets are more narrow and accommodate on-street parking, which slows traffic through these areas. Sidewalks do not need to accommodate large groups of people through these areas, so it is not necessary to have very wide (13+ feet) sidewalks; however, 6- to 8 foot-wide sidewalks are preferred to allow people to easily walk side-by-side.



STREET Hierarchy



Urban streets are the “typical” downtown street and make up the majority of streets in the downtown area. Urban streets should be designed for low speeds with on-street parallel or angled parking. This provides a desired configuration for a mixed use, pedestrian-friendly environment. The downtown streets should be able to comfortably accommodate large numbers of pedestrians with wide sidewalks that have extensive streetscaping elements. Sidewalks along urban streets have three zones: a commercial zone where businesses can spill out onto the street (such as tables and chairs for outdoor eating or a rack of clothes that might entice a passer-by to shop); a travel zone where large numbers of pedestrians can travel along the sidewalk; and a landscape zone where streetscape elements such as trees, benches, public art, trash receptacles, etc. are located for relaxing or socializing. For the most part, streets are two-way, but those streets that are not should be converted to two-way. Two-way streets improve accessibility, as well as calm traffic conditions, enhancing the pedestrian environment.



South 1st Street

At a minimum, South 1st Street should be enhanced to the quality of North 1st Street. Currently, South 1st Street is a five lane roadway, with two lanes of travel in both east and west directions, and a center left-turn lane.



A landscaped median should be installed in the existing center turn lane, with designated left turn lanes at each intersection. The landscaping and street trees will soften the major roadway, as well as control left turning along the road. Furthermore, the median will provide a pedestrian refuge for those crossing South 1st Street.



TWO-WAY STREET CONVERSION

There are a number of streets that are one-way streets that should be converted to two-way streets. Two-way streets improve accessibility by allowing more vehicular and pedestrian traffic and improved circulation. Streets where two-way conversion is recommended include:

- North 5th Street, west of Plum Street
- North 4th Street, west of Walnut Street
- North 3rd Street, west of Walnut Street
- North 2nd Street, west of Walnut Street
- South 2nd Street, between Chestnut Street and Oak Street
- Chestnut Street, between South 1st Street and South 7th Street
- Oak Street, between South 1st Street and South 4th Street

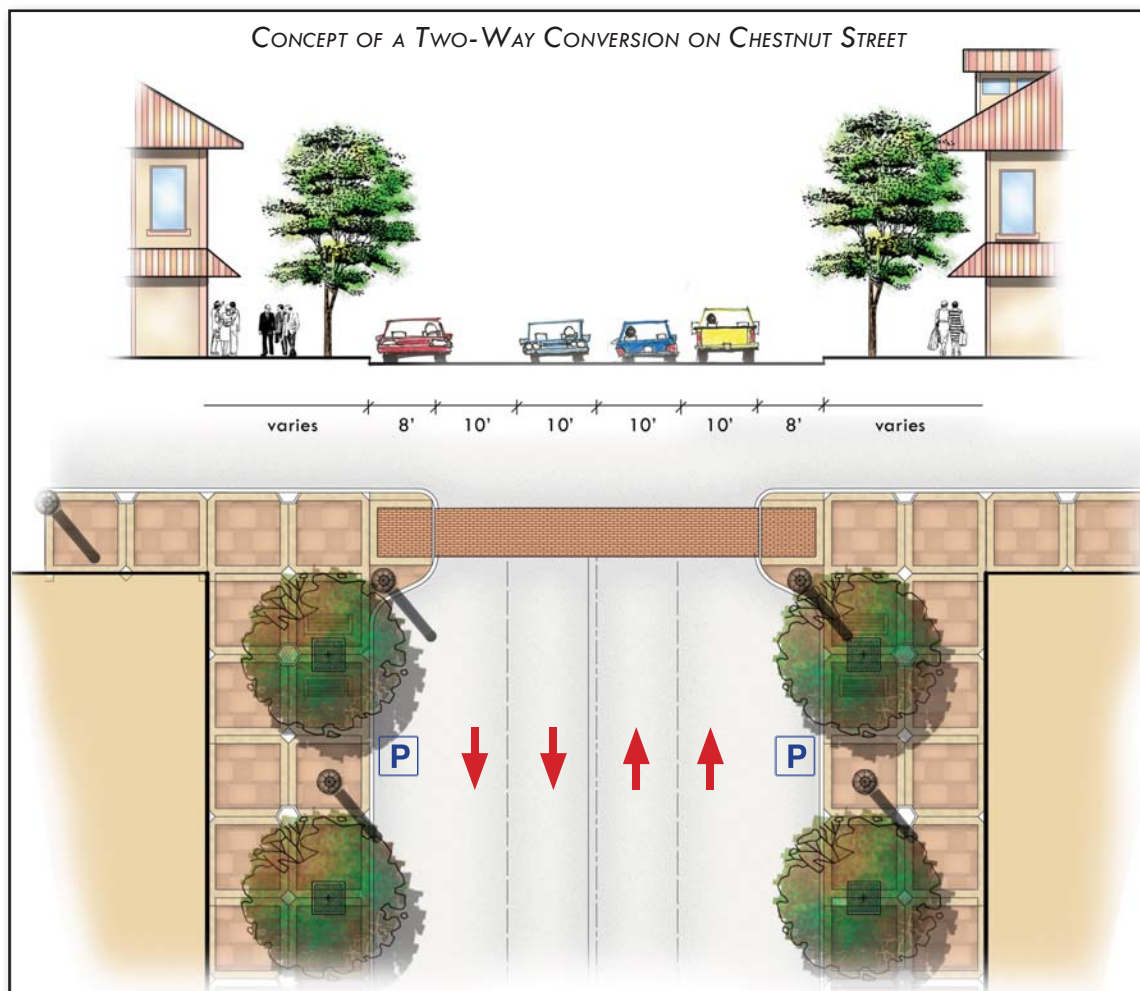


Chestnut Street



South 2nd Street is one way in between Chestnut and Oak Streets, which hinders traffic flow.

Many of the one-way streets are only a portion of an otherwise two-way street, making the overall traffic flow confusing. The streets in South Downtown Abilene are wide enough to accommodate two-way traffic.



PINE STREET UNDERPASS RECONFIGURATION

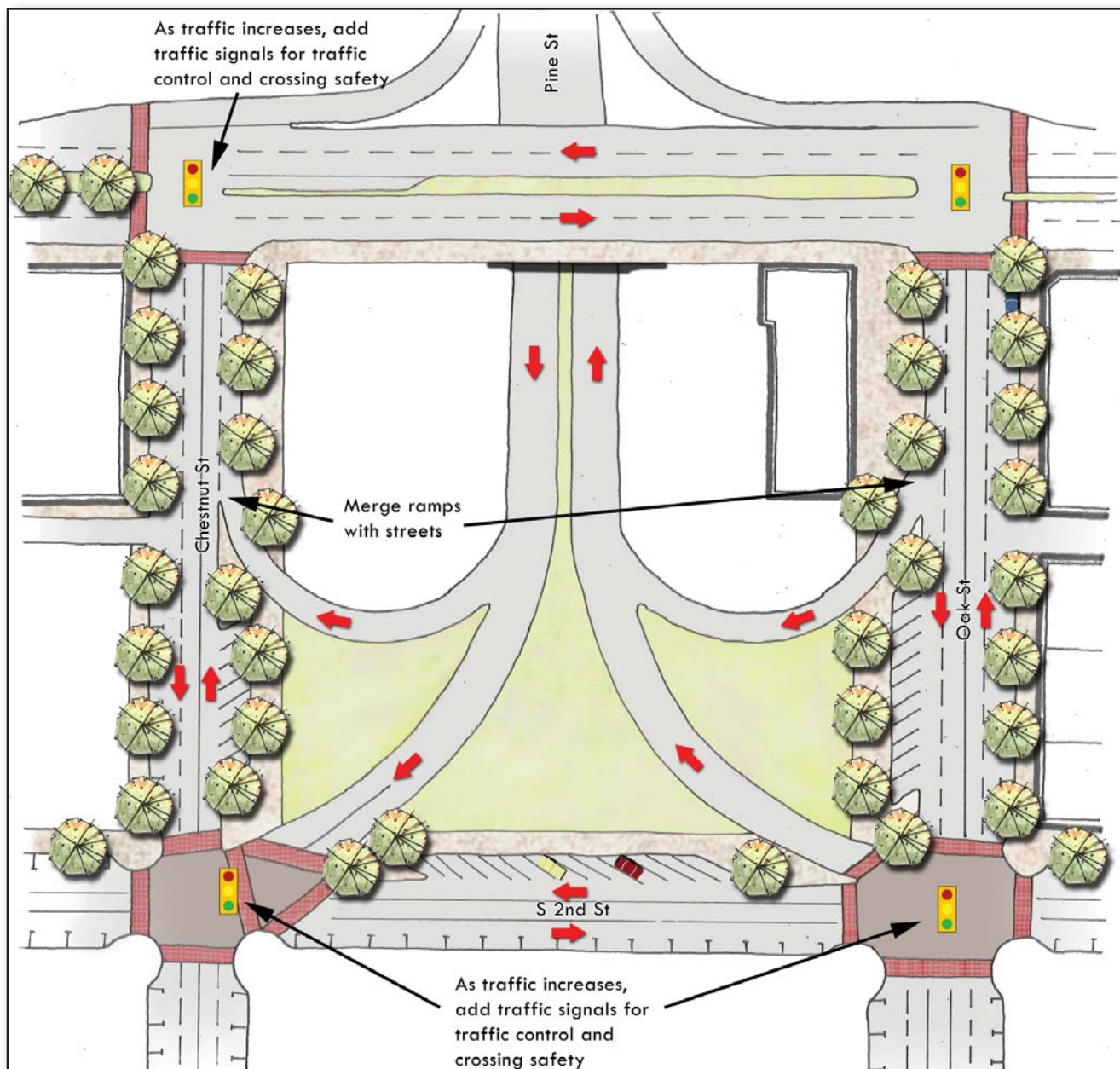
The Pine Street underpass is a necessary but confusing clover-leaf connection between the north and south sides of downtown. Problems with the current configuration include:

- The separated lanes from the underpass at South 1st Street require that Chestnut Street and Oak Street remain one-way streets. The median also unnecessarily takes right of way space.

- The free flow of traffic across South 2nd Street onto and off of the underpass impedes pedestrian crossing at the intersections of South 2nd Street and Oak Street or Chestnut Street.
- The lack of a signal at the intersection of South 1st Street and Chestnut Street impedes pedestrian crossing of this intersection.

The reconfiguration would merge the clover-leaf ramps with Chestnut Street and Oak Street. Chestnut Street and Oak Street would then need to be converted to two-way.

PROPOSED CONCEPTS FOR CONVERSION OF THE PINE STREET UNDERPASS

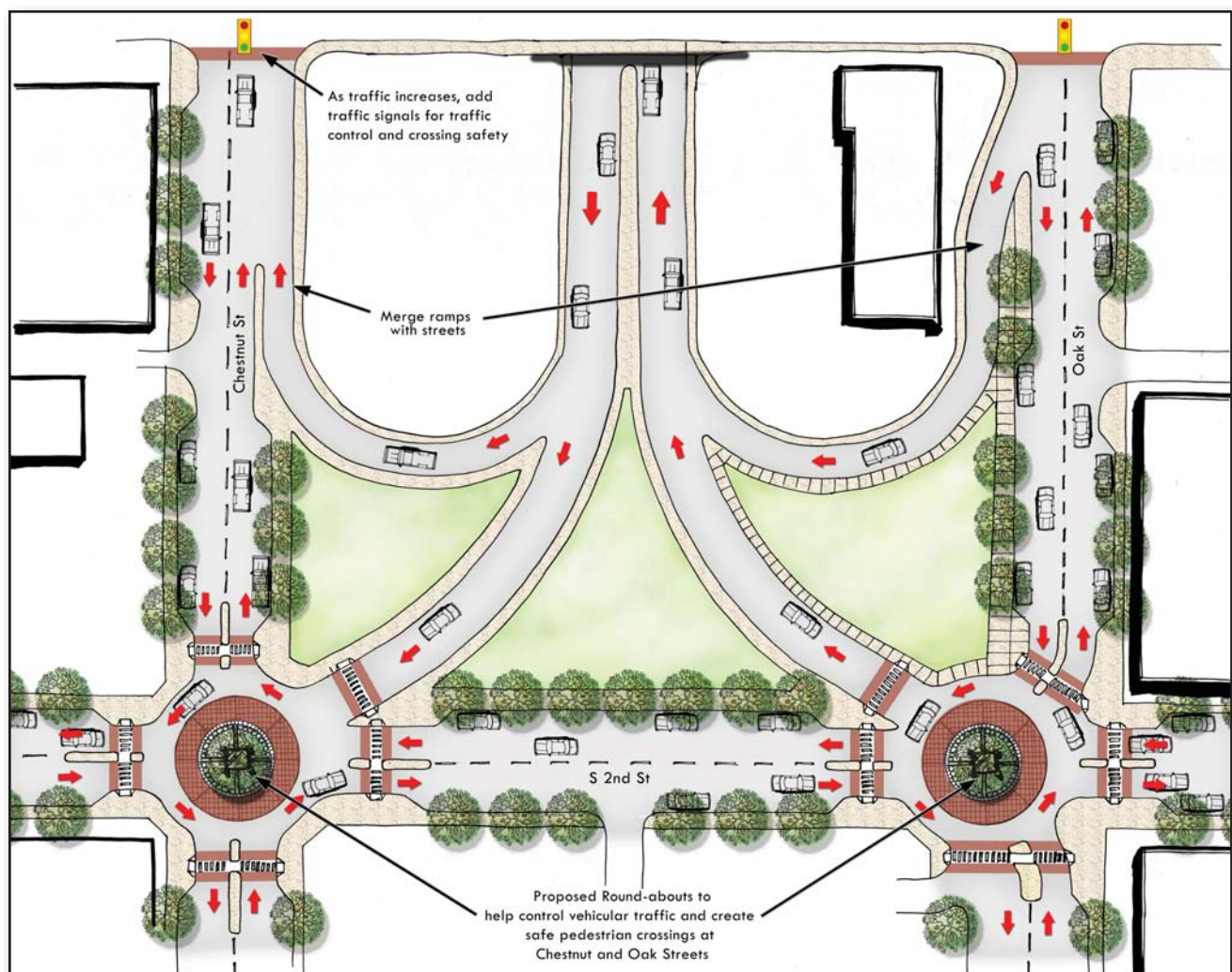


Traffic should be controlled with traffic signals at the four intersections around the underpass: South 1st Street at Chestnut Street; South 1st Street at Oak Street; South 2nd Street at Chestnut Street; and South 2nd Street at Oak Street. This would help improve pedestrian safety by facilitating crossing these busy intersections.

Where the ramp from Pine Street intersects with South 2nd Street and Chestnut or Oak Streets would be a five-way intersection. A signal or a roundabout would control traffic at these intersections. This

is especially important at Chestnut Street, where traffic coming from Pine Street via the south-bound underpass has lower visibility.

These signals or roundabouts will control traffic as well as provide an opportunity for safe pedestrian crossings at these intersections. They will also improve accessibility to the open space in the underpass, which could further be enhanced with public art, shaded benches, etc. to create a “town square” as proposed in the 2009 *Economic Enhancement Strategy*.



PROPOSED CONCEPTS FOR CONVERSION OF THE PINE STREET UNDERPASS

These graphic are for illustrative purposes only. Actual design may vary as more detailed analysis is performed.

IMPROVED PEDESTRIAN MOBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY

Pedestrian mobility and connectivity within South Downtown is hindered by a lack of quality sidewalks (or any sidewalks); poorly maintained railroad underpasses; and difficult street crossings because of a lack of signals. The Federal Highway Administration Bicycle and Pedestrian Program has a number of publications pertaining to facility planning and design for pedestrians and bicyclists. A few of these techniques are discussed below.

A Need for Sidewalks

Sidewalks should line both sides of every street in South Downtown. Design is generally reflective of the street hierarchy classification as discussed earlier. In some areas, depending on the anticipated level of pedestrian traffic, wider sidewalks are necessary with enhanced streetscape elements. Other areas, such as residential areas, will not require such wide sidewalks, but rather more narrow, 6- to 8-foot sidewalks where people can comfortably walk beside or pass one another. Furthermore, areas considered “auto-oriented” should not ignore the needs of pedestrians and should be designed to include pedestrian facilities to promote their safety.

Overcoming Barriers

Some of the most significant pedestrian barriers in South Downtown are South 1st Street, Butternut Street, and Treadaway Boulevard. These are streets that carry a large number of vehicles at relatively high speeds. Pedestrian access along these streets should be improved with sidewalks, crosswalks, and other innovative design techniques discussed on the following page. The use of stoplights; highly visible crosswalks such as lighted, textured, or colored crosswalks; and crossing signals can also improve the effectiveness of crosswalks along these streets.

The underpasses need to portray a sense of security with excellent lighting and removal of graffiti. Graffiti can often be averted with murals that take away the “blank canvas” vandals seek. The underpasses would be a great place to engage the artist community to create a mural or mosaic of the story of downtown and South Downtown Abilene.



Second Street in Downtown Austin, Texas



Textured and colored crosswalks are highly visible

Image Source: www.pedinfo.org, Dan Burden



An artist works on a mural in a Chicago underpass

Image Source: Anita Rose



Lights under a highway bridge in San Antonio

Image Source: City of San Antonio, www.publicartsa.com

Innovative Design Technique: Curb Extensions

Curb extensions, or bulb-outs, are a paved area that extends into the street that have multiple features that benefit both the pedestrian and automobile:

- Curb extensions improve the ability of pedestrians and motorists to see each other. At intersections without curb extensions, parked cars along the street can block the vision between vehicles and pedestrians, making each unaware to the other.
- Curb extensions shorten the street-crossing distance. By “bulbing” the curb edge and sidewalk out, the crosswalk can be shortened across the street.
- Curb extensions help calm traffic. They help slow turning vehicles at the intersection corners, and the “squeeze” between the curb entices drivers to slow as they approach the intersection.

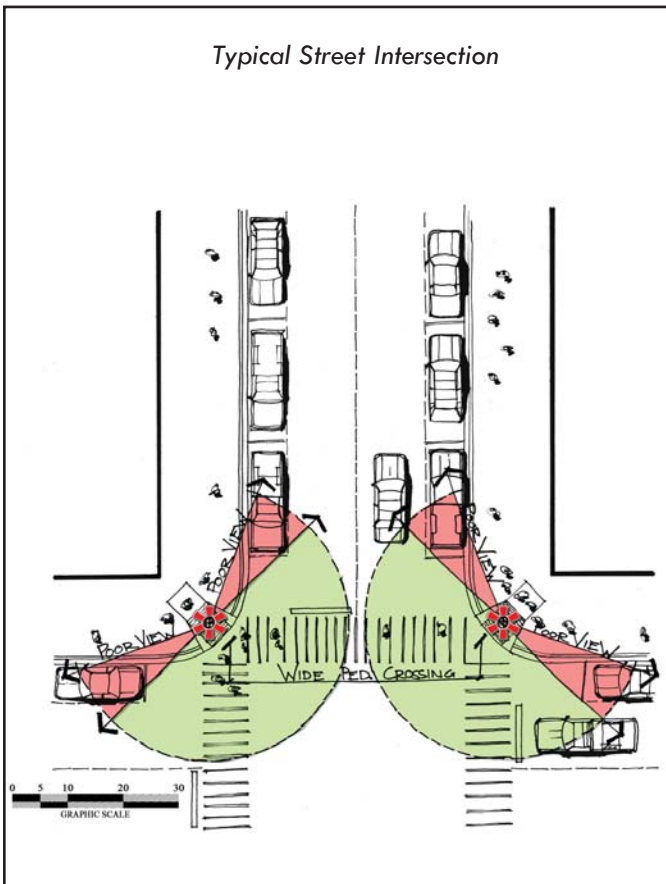
Curb extensions shorten the crossing distance and increase pedestrian visibility

Image Source: www.pedbikeimages.org, Dan Burden

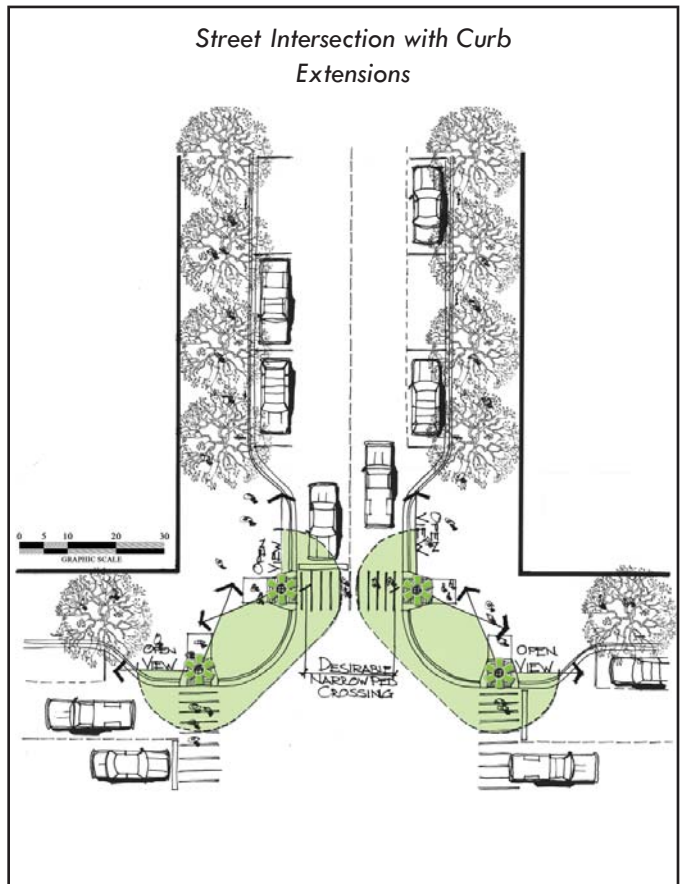


Curb extensions are most appropriate along streets that have on-street parking, as cars are not permitted to park at corners, allowing space to bring out the curb and sidewalk. Along streets without on-street parking, drivers would not expect sudden changes in the roadway width.

Typical Street Intersection



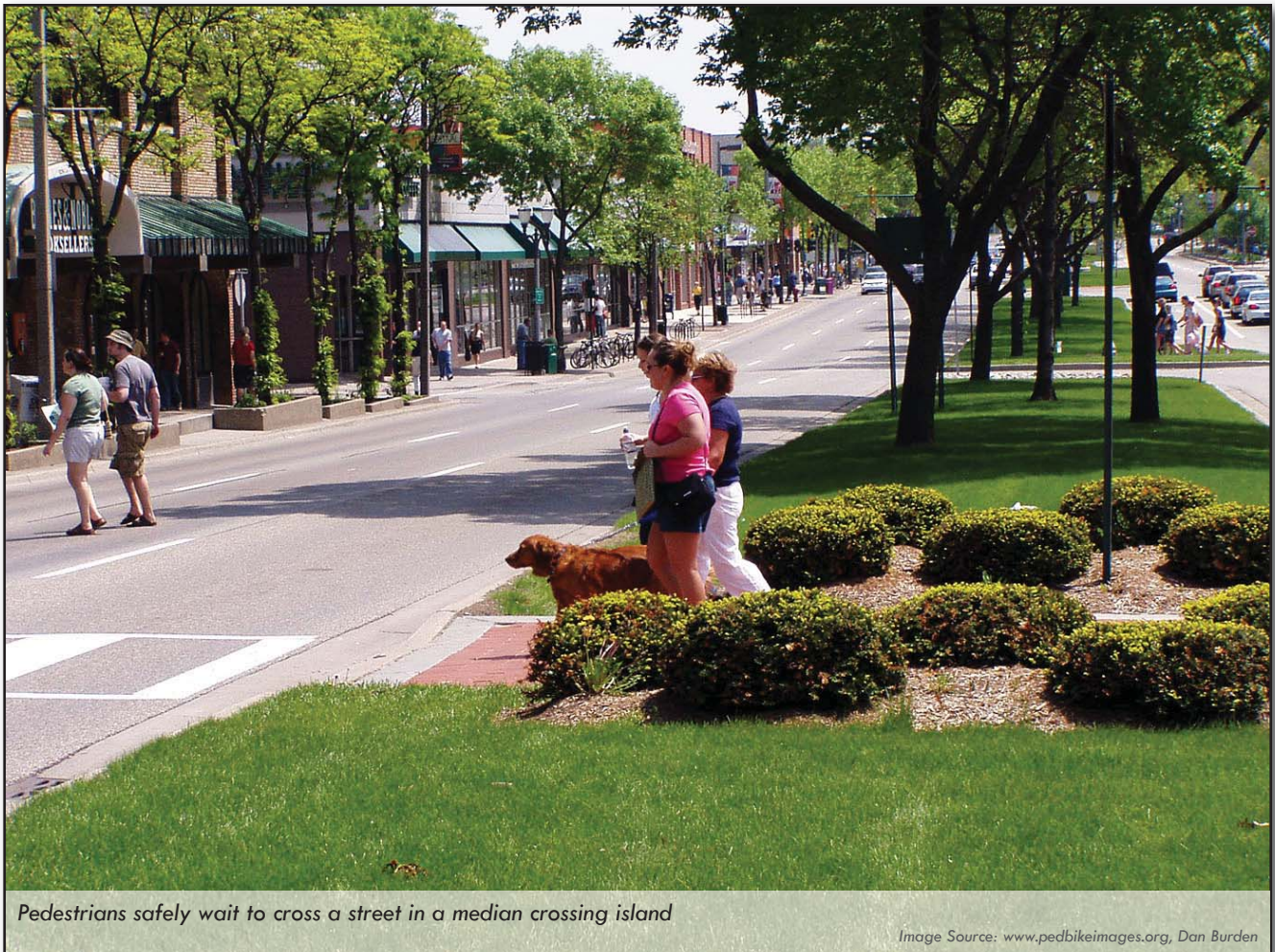
Street Intersection with Curb Extensions



Innovative Design Technique: Median Crossing Island

Median crossing islands, also known as pedestrian refuge islands, provide pedestrians with a safe place to wait while crossing a street, allowing pedestrians to cross one direction of traffic at a time. This is especially the case at a mid-block crossing where a signal does not control traffic, yet pedestrians are permitted to cross. According to the Pedestrian Bicycle Information Center, median crossing islands “enhance pedestrian crossings, particularly at unsignalized crossing points; reduce vehicle speeds approaching pedestrian crossings; and highlight pedestrian crossings.”

It should be noted that landscaped medians affect visibility between pedestrians and vehicles. Therefore, along landscaped medians, such as the one recommended along South 1st Street, the landscaping should be light around pedestrian refuge islands.



Pedestrians safely wait to cross a street in a median crossing island

Image Source: www.pedbikeimages.org, Dan Burden

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PARKING

One of the challenges in a downtown is balancing the need for sufficient parking with creating and maintaining an attractive pedestrian environment. If planned separately, these two elements contradict each other. Poorly located and poorly designed parking facilities will negatively impact a downtown's attractiveness, pedestrian-friendly qualities, and sense of place. Rather, these two transportation elements should be balanced, which is achieved in the location and design of parking.

Planning for off-street parking needs to be done in a more efficient manner. Typically, parking demand is the aggregate of the peak parking demand for each use. However, different uses experience heavy parking at different times of day. The concept of shared parking lets adjacent

land uses that have different peak periods share some or all of the same parking spaces, reducing the overall number of spaces.

Another way of reducing the excessive amount of parking is to reduce parking requirements for land uses. In an urban environment, it is assumed that more people will choose to walk to their destinations, given the walkable environment. Furthermore, on-street parking, while it is often the most convenient, is not often considered in the equation for parking needs. Given these characteristics of a downtown, the zoning code for downtown parking can be modified to reduce parking requirements or establish maximum parking caps to reduce the amount of land devoted to parking.

Location and design of parking facilities will also help achieve a balance of parking demand with

PARKING BY DESIGN

Despite aiming to increase the residents in downtown Abilene, the majority of patrons of downtown are and will continue to be visitors who arrive by car, leading to increasing demands for parking. But people don't come to downtown because there is ample parking. They come because of the strong sense of place and multiple uses located closely together: shopping, restaurants, entertainment, government services, etc. So how can the demands for parking coincide with maintaining a strong sense of place and pedestrian-friendly environment? Here are seven core principles that strive to balance these two elements.

- **Understand that parking is subservient to the uses and environment that draw people downtown.** While the downtown environment drives the demand for parking, simply increasing the supply of parking will damage the sense of place in downtown, eventually decreasing downtown patronage and parking demand.
- **Strategically locate parking facilities where they have minimal disruption of the downtown environment.** Avoid placing them directly on major commercial streets or along corridors and areas with high pedestrian traffic. Rather, parking lots and structures should be placed in the interior of a property, wrapped by buildings where they are close to destinations, but not impacting the street. Well-marked signage will indicate to drivers the location of parking.
- **Recognize the value of on-street parking.** Drivers prefer on-street parking because of its visibility, accessibility, and the proximity to their destination. On-street parking has the added benefit to pedestrians because it buffers them from auto traffic on the street and slows vehicles. On-street parking should be taken into account when evaluating the supply of parking in downtown.
- **Emphasize quality design of parking facilities.** Blank walls and vast parking lots create dead zones in the downtown fabric and disrupt the pedestrian environment. Guidelines should be adopted that establish standards for the exterior of parking structures; wrap parking structures with street-level commercial establishments; and implement landscaping requirements to soften the visual impact of surface parking lots.

pedestrian-friendliness. Off-street parking should happen in the interior of a lot, reserving the street frontage area of a block for the building and active uses. Likewise, the ground floor of structured parking should be wrapped with active pedestrian uses along the street.

There are cases where parking is appropriate adjacent to the street, such as auto-oriented streets like Treadaway Boulevard. Along these roadways, visible parking is desired for easy access to businesses and other commercial uses. In these cases, the visual impact of the lot should be minimized by locating it in the interior of a lot, screening with landscaping, and limiting the length of frontage along a street. Driveways should also be limited to reduce conflict between the pedestrian along the sidewalk and the ingress and egress traffic.



A structured parking garage wrapped with groundfloor retail

Once parked, the driver becomes a pedestrian, and design elements of parking facilities should reinforce the transition from driver to pedestrian. This includes providing pedestrian pathways within parking lots and structures; increasing pedestrian safety by protecting walkways from parking spaces; slowing vehicles with landscaping, textured or colored paving, and tight curb radii; including wayfinding signage to direct pedestrians to downtown destinations; and providing pedestrian amenities such as benches and lighting.

- **Make better use of existing spaces.** Many times, perceived parking shortages are a result of unawareness of where parking exists. A detailed evaluation of all existing parking should be conducted. If this inventory reveals that there is a significant amount of vacant spots, the goal should be to increase awareness of these parking spaces rather than simply increasing parking. This can be done through strong directional signage, publicizing the locations on web sites, and providing information through businesses.

Another option is to promote shared parking, which was discussed earlier. This is where multiple uses with different peak parking periods share parking spaces.

- **Control total volume of downtown parking.** Often, cities have minimum off-street parking requirements for new construction. However, this often leads to decreasing density and increasing the ratio of parking land to total land area in downtown. Eventually, downtown would become a sea of parking to serve the limited number of businesses. Rather, cities should require maximum parking requirements and utilize flexible parking arrangements such as shared parking for new downtown construction and businesses.
- **Finally, parking should be planned comprehensively and in its downtown context.** Downtown parking should understand its impact on the downtown environment and support the principles of a strong sense of place and pedestrian-friendly environment.

Source: Robertson, Smart Downtown Parking: Core Principles to Support Downtown Development, May 2005

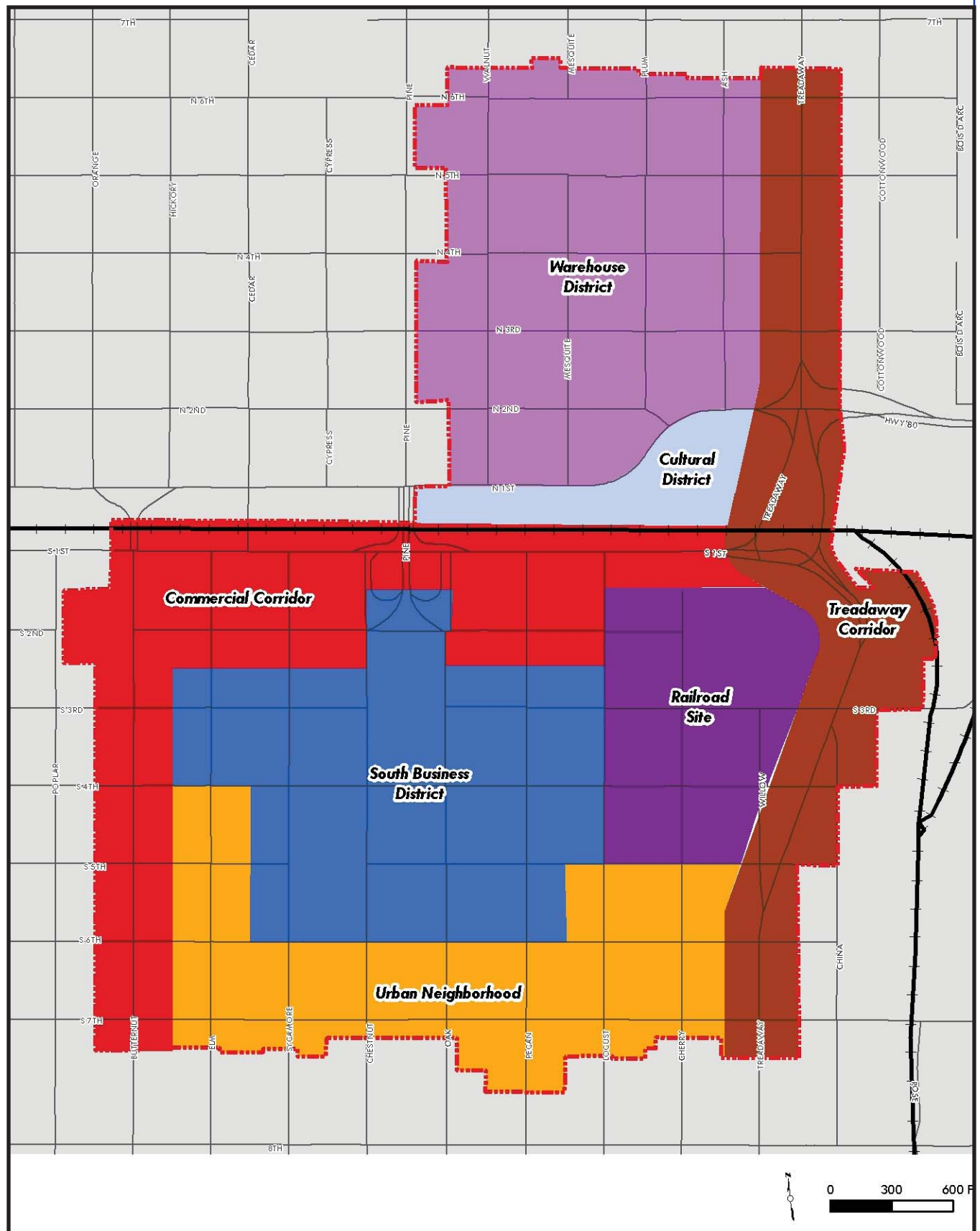
THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The existing zoning in Abilene follows conventional use-based zoning where land use is segregated. The form-based approach to zoning seeks to regulate based on creating a specific urban form. Character districts within the South Downtown are identified below. This often happens organically,

but the Master Plan recommends facilitating these subdistricts through development standards that vary in physical form and density of development. These subdistricts are defined in large part by the existing character and land uses of the area, and in some cases beyond the study area boundary where a neighborhood character might blend into and impact the South Downtown study area.

	Character Districts			General Character
Cultural/ Warehouse				Preserve existing historic fabric; adaptive reuse of warehouses; predominantly attached buildings; strong mixed-use component; connect to cultural district in historic downtown with farmer's market and other cultural uses
Commercial Corridor				Enhance pedestrian environment with wide sidewalks, on-street parking; mixed use developments; attached buildings for continuous street wall; maximum height of 3 floors
South Business District				Maintain strong presence of local and federal governments; opportunities to share parking and meeting facilities; mix residential, retail, and office uses in 5 to 8 story buildings; attached buildings for continuous street wall
Railroad Site				High-end, "new urbanist" destination center with a mix of residential, office, and commercial uses; attached buildings for continuous street wall; height range between 3 and 5 floors
Treadaway Corridor				Mix of uses in auto-oriented buildings; Enhance and safe facilities for pedestrians; landscaping and sign regulations to create appealing aesthetics; height range between 1 and 3 floors
Urban Neighborhood				Mix of houses, townhomes, and small apartments with neighborhood-supporting commercial; encourage adaptive reuse of older houses as office or commercial uses; heights between 1 and 3 floors

CHARACTER DISTRICTS



Design standards, such as maximum setbacks, height limits, landscaping and streetscaping standards, etc. help regulate the physical form that the built environment takes, creating a functional and appealing public space between buildings. Form-based design regulations can be implemented by adopting new standards for the CB zoning district or an overlay zone over the South Downtown.

MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT

The primary development type that should occur in South Downtown Abilene (and greater downtown) is mixed use. Mixing land uses brings different uses, residential, restaurants, shopping, work, etc., together in a convenient way, enabling a more walkable and sustainable environment. It also brings people to an area at different times of day: employees use commercial service during the weekday, residents use them during the evening and weekend, and tourists come during the weekend. Reducing restrictions on land use by allowing mixed use also gives the built environment the flexibility to adapt to changing market conditions. Mixed use developments should strive to have commercial uses on the ground floor, with office and/or residential above. Another component of mixed-used development is to allow neighborhood stores in residential areas. This is particularly true of the urban neighborhood, where neighborhood uses such as convenience retail, restaurants, or laundromats, provide nearby services to the residents of the downtown area.

ADAPTIVE REUSE

Part of creating a sense of place is highlighting the historical and cultural attributes of the area, often found in the historic buildings that make a place unique. The master plan calls for historic renovation and adaptive reuse of existing buildings, including those that have been designated as historic, or buildings that offer architectural character to the environment. In order to protect buildings with historic significance or character, the city should update its Register of Historic Properties, which was last updated in 1989. Additionally, homes in South Downtown that are transitioning from residential to commercial uses are encouraged to be preserved and reused to reinforce the transition between the historic neighborhoods and downtown.



INCREASING DENSITY

Density can be increased two ways: by increasing building height and by building more compactly. According to the Smart Growth Network, higher density development supports walkable environments, transportation options, and a wider range of housing choices. More density means more people to support commercial uses within the South Downtown and to use the CityLink bus network. Higher density developments also reduce per-unit construction costs, allowing developers to offer a range of housing options for a variety of consumers. It also has the potential to keep the cost of housing affordable so that residents aren't priced out of downtown. Finally, higher-density housing and compact development allows for more open space to be set aside while enabling more people to live in South Downtown.

However, height is a point of controversy when it comes to increasing density. Height is necessary to offer a feasible number of housing units and mix land uses. But too much height can make streets feel like canyons and ruin a sense of place. By focusing on the form of a building such as height, density, and building placement, the character districts identify appropriate transition of density from the downtown core to the surrounding neighborhoods.



From a retail standpoint, more density means more customers. A neighborhood that includes more compact development can support more stores and restaurants within its boundaries.

-Smart Growth Network



BENEFITS OF DENSITY

Creates walkable neighborhoods by bringing destinations closer together so that they are in walking distance of each other.

Supports housing choice and affordability through the ability to offer a wider variety of housing types.

Expands transportation choices by providing the ridership needed to make bus and rail transit a viable option. This can also result in decreases in automobile transportation.

Supports community fiscal health by making efficient use of infrastructure and reducing need to expand existing infrastructure.

Improves security by increasing the area's social interaction and deterring crime.

Protects the environment by reducing the impact of the built area by concentrating development.

Adapted from Creating Great Neighborhoods: Density in Your Community by the National Association of Realtors

HOUSING

There is a growing number of people who desire to live downtown: young singles and couples desire the activity of the downtown environment and empty nesters enjoy the convenient lifestyle of dense, urban living (Lind, 2007).

Offering a range of housing choices is important in ensuring that all demographic groups and income levels have the choice of living in South Downtown Abilene. Different demographic groups and income levels have different desires and needs. A variety of housing types and price ranges should meet those varying needs and preferences.

Finally, housing choices such as higher-density housing contributes to increased affordability because the cost of land is spread over more units. This reduces the overall per-unit cost of the land, site preparation, and infrastructure.

The Master Plan recommends a variety of housing options, including preservation of existing single-family homes; attached rowhouses or townhomes; and multifamily units for both renters and owners in low-rise and mid-rise mixed-use developments.



Residential over retail in mixed-use development



Mid-rise multifamily



Historic warehouse lofts



Townhome/row-houses

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OPEN SPACE

In a dense urban environment, people need a place to escape and a place to gather. Open space serves both. The concept of open space in South Downtown should be a well-connected network of public and private spaces.

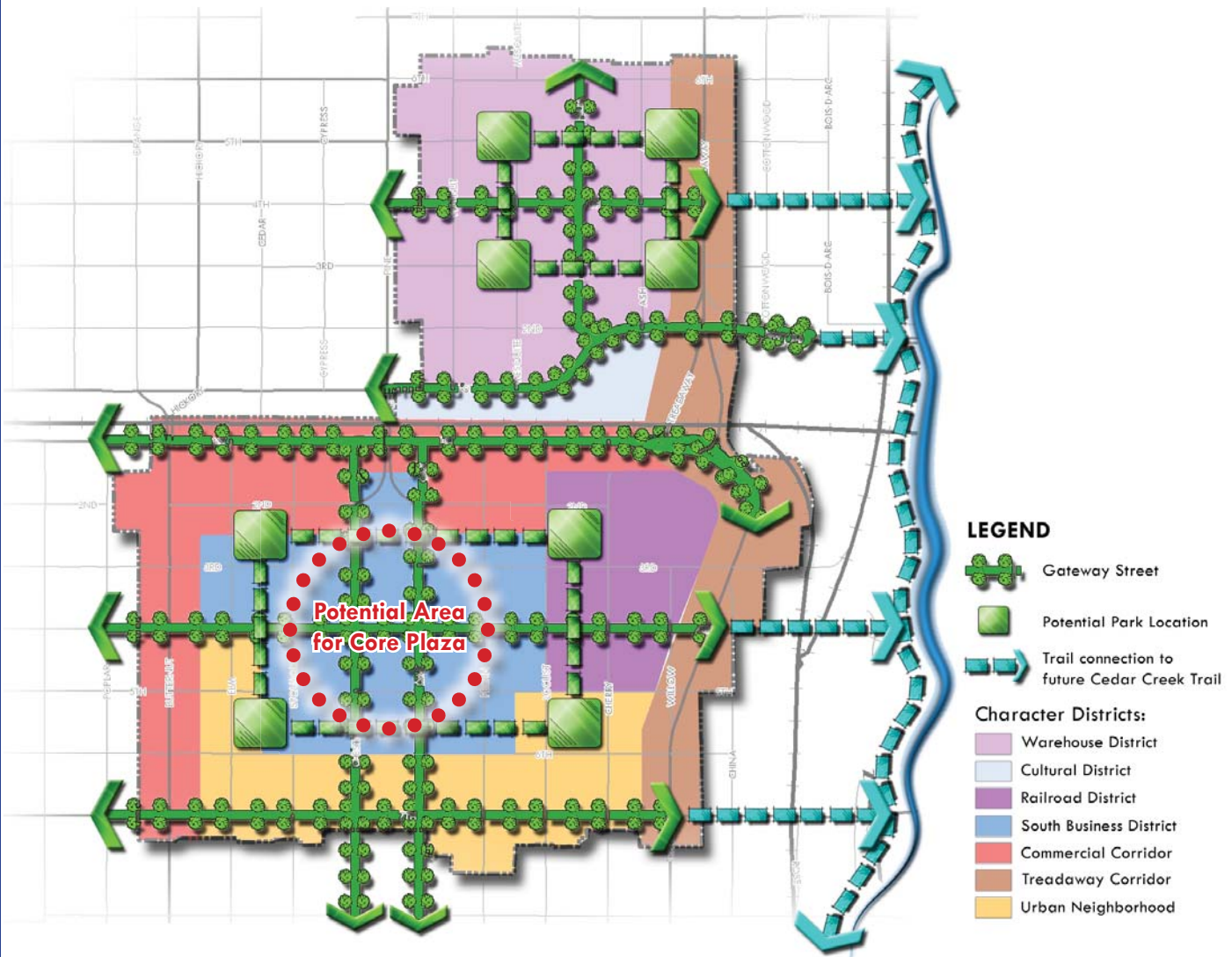
Open spaces should be distributed throughout the study area to be proximate to all land uses. South Downtown should offer access to the future trail along Cedar Creek, providing a connection to nearby parks surrounding downtown such as Stevenson Park, MLK Park, and Cal Young Park.

Open spaces in South Downtown should be built in a variety of ways, including: neighborhood parks, pocket parks and plazas, civic plazas, squares,

and large greens. Naturally-landscaped open spaces soften the urban environment and provide breathing room for employees and residents of the downtown area.

Plazas and squares provide important community gathering spaces in an urban context. A plaza is typically an open area adjacent to or part of a civic building. A majority of a plaza site is usually paved with concrete, pavers, or stone and can incorporate temporary activities. Squares, sometimes found at the corner of intersections or between buildings, are typically defined by the surrounding buildings. Like plazas, a portion of the site is typically paved, and plantings on the square help define the space.

OPEN SPACE NETWORK



Connect to urban pathways along Cedar Creek



Connection to Cedar Creek opens the door to recreational activities for residents and employees of Downtown Abilene



A core plaza area can become a focal gathering point for the South Downtown area



Open spaces give users of downtown a place to socialize and relax



Renovate the grounds around the historic courthouse

A transit plaza can be designed to be a more interesting and functional place to wait for a bus

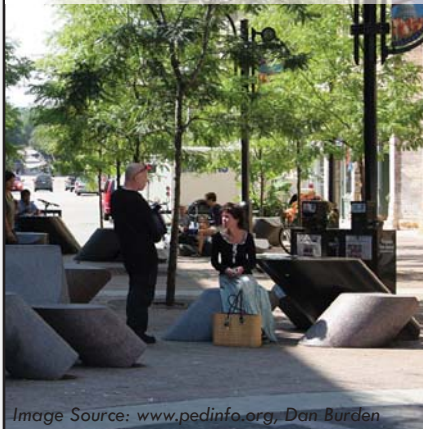


Image Source: www.pedinfo.org, Dan Burden

A neighborhood park serves residents of the South Downtown area



CITY HALL GREEN

The grounds in front of Abilene City Hall should be improved to be more accessible to employees and visitors. This area would become the “front door” to city government, and the green could be used for a variety of daytime activities such as speeches or live music. This plaza could be built on the existing site in front of City Hall, where there is ample room, or across the street if the site where the current Knight’s Inn is located is redeveloped. Sustainable practices should be encouraged in the design of

this green, such as using permeable pavement or pavers for the “hard surface” areas.



COUNTY SQUARE

Similarly, the Taylor County campus would benefit from a square that becomes a focal gathering place in the South Downtown District. The historic courthouse on Oak Street already has landscaped grounds in front of the building, but it needs to be designed in a way to make it a functional place for gathering. Around the County Square would be an ideal location to build a replica of the bandstand that was on the site the Federal Building is now located. The history of the bandstand could tie the north and south sides together.



Photo courtesy of the Abilene Photographic Collection at Hardin-Simmons University

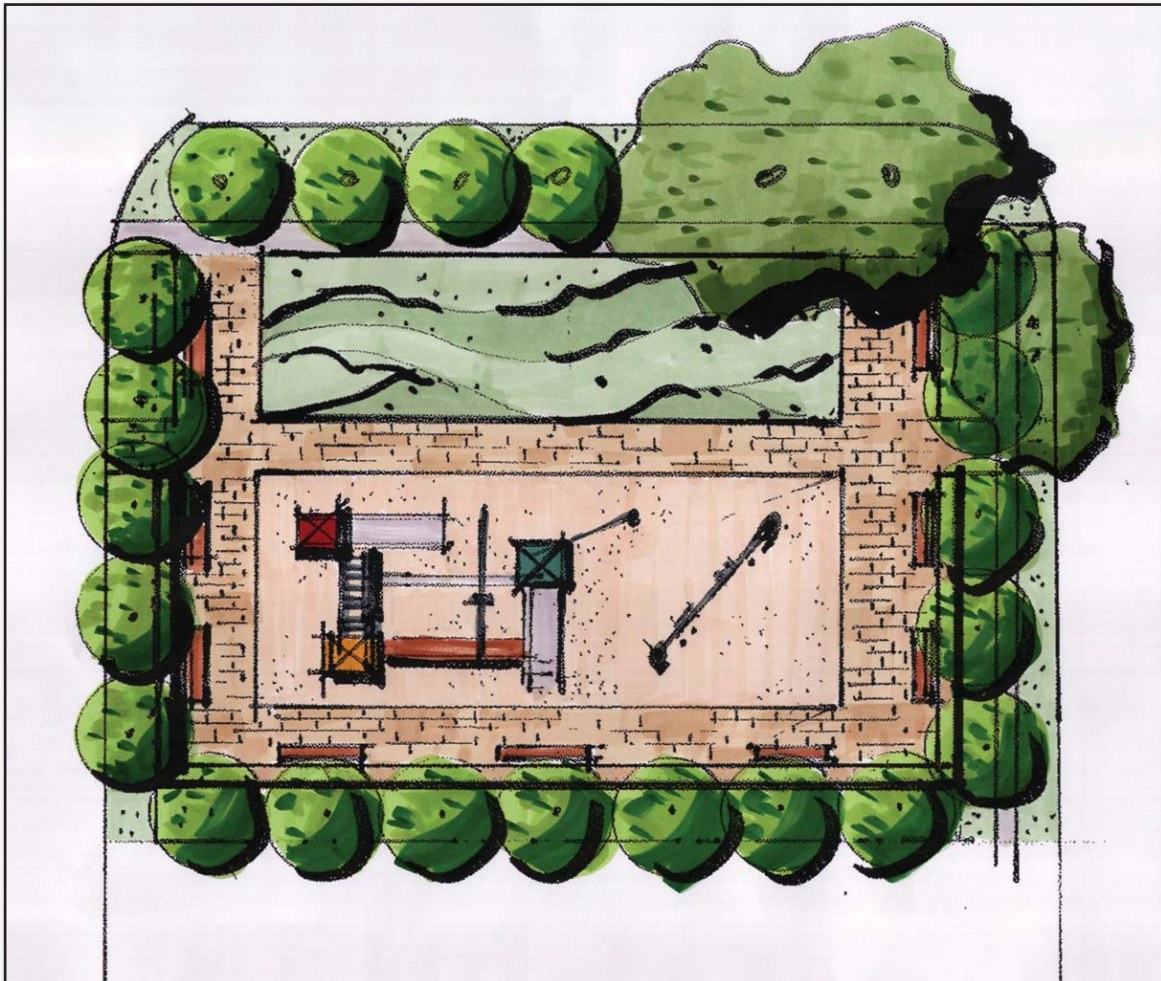
FARMER'S MARKET PARK

Finally, the Master Plan recommends an urban park or green to complement the Farmer's Market and Frontier Texas! Museum. The park would reinforce the area and uses as a destination place. Portions of the Frontier Texas! parking lot on the north side of North 1st Street should be converted to a more aesthetically pleasing and inviting park. The parking removed should be replaced by on-street parking and a central public parking garage serving the Warehouse District.



NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

Neighborhood parks located in the more residential areas of the downtown area will provide residents with a place to relax and recreate.



Historic building in Warehouse District

5 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This chapter outlines a strategy to begin to implement the recommendations of the Master Plan. The chapter discusses:

- Implementation Guiding Principles
- Physical Improvement Actions
- Policy Actions
- Potential Funding Mechanisms
- Action Prioritization, Timeline, and Cost Estimates

IMPLEMENTATION PRINCIPLES

Partnership driven. Almost all of the actions in this plan include the possibility of multiple partners - including the City of Abilene - coming together to make efforts happen faster and with more reliable funding. The City's role will be to bring those partners together and to create common themes.

Significant investment by the private sector and individual property owners. The City's role in improving South Downtown Abilene is to unify individual property owner interests and to guide all entities in one direction. However, most of the major planned improvements will actually be constructed by the private sector as development occurs.

Incentive based. Where appropriate to promote the city's goals, the city will use zoning or reimbursement incentives to accelerate key components of the plan. However, the City will only assist where significant benefits occur.

Promotion of a common theme. The City will seek to unify the area by developing and implementing a series of guidelines for new buildings and for existing structures as they are redeveloped.

Include significant citizen and stakeholder participation. All actions related to this plan will be reviewed by the citizens of Abilene and will include extensive property owner participation.

RECOMMENDED PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

This section focuses on the recommended physical improvements implemented by all participating partners, including the City of Abilene, Taylor County, community organizations such as the Abilene Downtown Association, and individual property owners. The table illustrates large-scale actions, that improve the physical setting of the South Downtown, such as improvements to sidewalks and streets, landscaping, and pedestrian connectivity. This helps reinforce private investment. Individual lot improvements should be guided by design guidelines for the area, which is discussed in the next section, Recommended Policy Actions.

The importance of public investment. Investment is a risky business, and before private investment occurs, it needs to be reassured of the future conditions and status of an area. The City of Abilene needs to take the first step in making that reassurance by investing public monies into the South Downtown. Public investment not only creates a more appealing environment to generate private investment, but it also demonstrates to private investors the importance of the South Downtown area to the City.

The table on the following page identifies the major physical improvement recommendations. Priority levels, recommended timeline, and potential cost estimates have been identified for each recommendation. These priorities and timeline may be re-evaluated as new opportunities occur in the future.

Item #	Recommendation	Responsibility/Potential Partners	Potential Cost Range	Priority	Need for Improvement	Timeframe
1	Conduct clean up of entire South Downtown area	Primary: City of Abilene Partner(s): Property owners	N/A	High	Cleanliness of the area is of concern for economic, public health, and safety reasons.	Within 1 year
2	Install median and streetscaping along South 1st Street	Primary: City of Abilene Partner(s): TXDOT	\$1,000,000 to \$1,500,000	High	Major gateway into South Downtown Abilene	Within 3-5 years
3	Improve pedestrian underpasses	Primary: City of Abilene Partner(s): Railroad	\$50,000 to \$75,000	High	Major element to improve connectivity between north and south sides of downtown	Within 2-4 years
4	Install high-visibility crosswalks across South 1st Street	Primary: City of Abilene Partner(s): TXDOT	\$275,000 to \$325,000	High	Major safety issue to improve connectivity between north and south sides of downtown	Within 2-4 years
5	Roadway improvements in the Warehouse District	Primary: City of Abilene	\$250,000 to \$500,000	High	Need for general maintenance of infrastructure; improve appearance and quality of roadways	Within 3-5 years
6	Roadway improvements in the South Downtown District	Primary: City of Abilene	\$500,000 to \$750,000	High	Need for general maintenance of infrastructure; improve appearance and quality of roadways	Within 3-5 years
7	Roadway improvements along Treadaway Boulevard	Primary: TXDOT Partner(s): City of Abilene	\$500,000	High	Need for general maintenance of infrastructure; improve appearance and quality of roadways	Within 3-5 years
8	Convert N 2nd, N 3rd, N 4th, and N 5th Streets in the Warehouse District to two-way streets	Primary: City of Abilene	\$30,000 to \$50,000	Medium	Improve traffic flow through South Downtown	Within 5 years
9	Establish more permanent Farmer's Market location in building at Ash Street and North 2nd Street	Primary: City of Abilene Partner(s): Abilene Farmer's Market	\$500,000 to \$750,000	Medium	Promote Farmer's Market as vital community and placemaking entity	Within 5 years
10	Develop park near Farmer's Market as public gathering area for visitors to the Farmer's Market and Frontier Texas! Museum	Primary: City of Abilene Partner(s): Abilene Farmer's Market; Frontier Texas! Museum	\$400,000 to \$650,000	Medium	Enhance environment around Farmer's Market to create destination	Within 5 years
11	Establish wayfinding system utilizing accepted branding	Primary: City of Abilene	\$75,000 to \$100,000	Medium	Helps establish identity for South Downtown	Within 5 years
12	Enhance gateway intersections into South Downtown District	Primary: City of Abilene	\$300,000	Medium	Improve appearance and entry into South Downtown at major intersections	Within 5 years
13	Enhance gateway intersections into Warehouse District	Primary: City of Abilene	\$250,000	Medium	Improve appearance and entry into South Downtown / Warehouse District at major intersections	Within 5 years
14	Work with Greyhound to create a transit facility integrating CityLink and Greyhound bus services	Primary: CityLink Partner(s): Greyhound	\$7,000,000 to \$8,000,000	Medium	To encourage use of mass transit, enhance transit station by moving the CityLink bus storage out of South Downtown, incorporate Greyhound into transfer center, and build transit plaza	Within 5 years
15	Enhance gateway streets in Warehouse District with heavy landscaping and enhanced intersection design	Primary: City of Abilene Partner(s): Adjacent property owners	\$750,000 to \$1,500,000	Medium	Improve appearance along major entry streets into South Downtown	Within 5-10 years
16	Enhance gateway streets in South Downtown Abilene with heavy landscaping and enhanced intersection design	Primary: City of Abilene Partner(s): Adjacent property owners	\$1,250,000 to \$1,750,000	Medium	Improve appearance along major entry streets into South Downtown	Within 5-10 years
17	Enhance pedestrian facilities / improve sidewalks along Treadaway Boulevard	Primary: City of Abilene Partner(s): Adjacent property owners	\$500,000	Medium	Major safety issue to improve pedestrian mobility and crossing along Treadaway Boulevard	Within 5-10 years
18	Reconfigure Pine Street underpass by merging "ramps" with Chestnut and Oak Streets; requires two-way conversion	Primary: City of Abilene Partner(s): TXDOT	\$400,000 to \$650,000	Medium	Minor safety issue for pedestrian connectivity across South 1st, South 2nd, Oak, and Chestnut Streets	Within 5-10 years
19	Convert Chestnut, S 2nd, and Oak Streets to two-way streets; required with Pine Street underpass reconfiguration	Primary: City of Abilene	\$50,000 to \$75,000	Medium	Minor safety issue for pedestrian connectivity across South 1st, South 2nd, Oak, and Chestnut Streets	Within 5-10 years
20	Renovate historic courthouse and improve grounds	Primary: Taylor County Partner(s): City of Abilene	To Be Determined	Medium	Public investment demonstrates importance of area to city & county and encourages private investment; establish gathering space for employees and visitors	Within 5-10 years
21	Create pedestrian and bicycle linkages to Cedar Creek	Primary: City of Abilene	\$150,000 to \$200,000	Long Term	Concurrent with development of Cedar Creek Trail	As soon as feasible
22	Enhance lawn in front of City Hall (along Walnut Street) to be more usable and accessible as a public space	Primary: City of Abilene	\$250,000 to \$300,000	Long Term	Create gathering space in front of Abilene City Hall	As soon as feasible

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RECOMMENDED POLICY ACTIONS

Public investment and improvements only go so far; creating South Downtown will be implemented in large part by the private community, including developers, community leaders, organizations, etc. Therefore, the city must take steps to create the right regulatory environment and incentives for private-sector development.

DESIGN-BASED DEVELOPMENT CODES

The type of environment envisioned for the South Downtown Study Area will require modifications to the existing zoning and development regulations. The existing ordinances reflect conventional land use-based rules that are structured around segregating uses and quantitative limits on height, setback, and density.

Instead, development in South Downtown should be guided more heavily by design-based regulations. These regulations seek to establish a certain quality of place by focusing on the form of buildings and formation of quality public space such as streets and sidewalks. These development regulations go beyond traditional land use zoning by establishing rules that regulate street frontage, sidewalks, and building placement to create the public area between buildings.

New design standards should seek to:

- Allow a mix of uses to achieve the densities necessary for successful downtowns and construction of a variety of housing types; and
- Require better urban design through building placement, building character/material standards, and streetscape standards to create a unique and strong sense of place.

Design-based regulations may be adopted in the form of a new zoning district, changes to the existing zoning regulations, or with an overlay district that applies additional regulations on top of the existing regulations of the base zoning.

The guidelines should create a framework that governs the following key elements:

- Land uses, both permitted and not permitted
- Building placement on a lot
- Building relationship to adjacent streets and to other buildings
- Compatibility between adjacent land uses
- Building size, height, and volume
- Building setbacks, both minimum and maximum
- Building color and materials
- Facade articulation
- Streetscape elements along a street and adjacent to a building
- Location of parking and relationship of parking to the building and to the lot it serves
- Vegetation types and sizes
- Nighttime illumination
- Signage

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Redevelopment in South Downtown Abilene will not happen overnight. Rather, redevelopment is subject to several factors that influence the feasibility of a successful development, including market conditions, land assembly, and sufficient infrastructure.

The city might choose to be involved in the renovation of South Downtown Abilene through public-private partnerships. There are three opportunities for a public-private partnership in South Downtown Abilene: 1) infrastructure, 2) financial incentive programs, and 3) land assembly program.

Infrastructure

As development is planned in South Downtown, infrastructure needs should be identified. Generally, existing utilities are sufficient to support infill development, but they will need to be evaluated project-by-project depending on the intensity of new developments and historic renovations. Funding for infrastructure needs is likely to come from the Capital Improvement Program.

Financial Incentive Programs

To encourage investment and redevelopment in South Downtown, the city should consider providing assistance to private developers. For example:

- Grant programs could assist property owners in cleaning up properties, renovating historic buildings, and/or improving the aesthetics of buildings. Potential grant opportunities are discussed below.
- Another incentive-based mechanism is tax abatements to spur new development or redevelopment.
- Yet another form of assistance is streamlining the administrative and approval process for development, which will save an investor money and encourage redevelopment of properties.

In addition to grants, a variety of financial mechanisms are available to assist in redevelopment of an area, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Land Assembly Program

Land banking is a tool municipalities can use to acquire vacant and underutilized land and hold it with the future goal of developing it into a usable parcel that reinvests in the community's long-term vision. It can be a tool to achieve a variety of purposes, including land planning and development, affordable housing, civic facilities, economic development, among others. Historically, land banking was used for urban renewal purposes to revive blighted areas and aid urban growth. Benefits include revitalizing declining neighborhoods, preparing land for development, lowering the cost to both the private and public sectors, and enabling cities to ensure long-term land development in a fashion desired by the vision of the community.

For the purpose of South Downtown Abilene, land banking will be used to help assemble properties in a particular area to facilitate development. By acquiring and owning land in a desirable area for development, cities gain "bargaining" power to ensure some public benefit or desired development

design. Land banking can also facilitate brownfield redevelopment, such as the sites in the railroad district. Brownfield properties are often not pursued because of lack of funds for remediation costs. Whether it is for provision of affordable housing, returning vacant land to productive developments, or generally stimulating development of an area, land banking and assembly can be an invaluable tool to facilitate development of South Downtown Abilene.

One challenge to establishing a land assembly program in Abilene will be funding it. Land banks and land acquisition are generally funded by local governments' budgets. Eminent domain of private land cannot be done for economic development purposes, and Texas state law requires that tax-foreclosed properties must be used for affordable housing purposes (Chapter 379 of the Local Government Code); therefore, the most likely method of acquiring properties for the purposes of implementing the South Downtown Master Plan will be fee simple.

The three most plausible sources of funding the start of the program include the 4B sales tax revenue for economic development, capital improvement funds, and a bond. Tax increment finance revenue might also be available; however, the limited amount of revenue initially anticipated will not be enough to start a land bank program and will be better spent on improvements such as streetscaping and other efforts to enhance the environment and attract development.

In establishing a land assembly program for urban development, there are a number of things the city should consider other than how they are going to acquire the land:

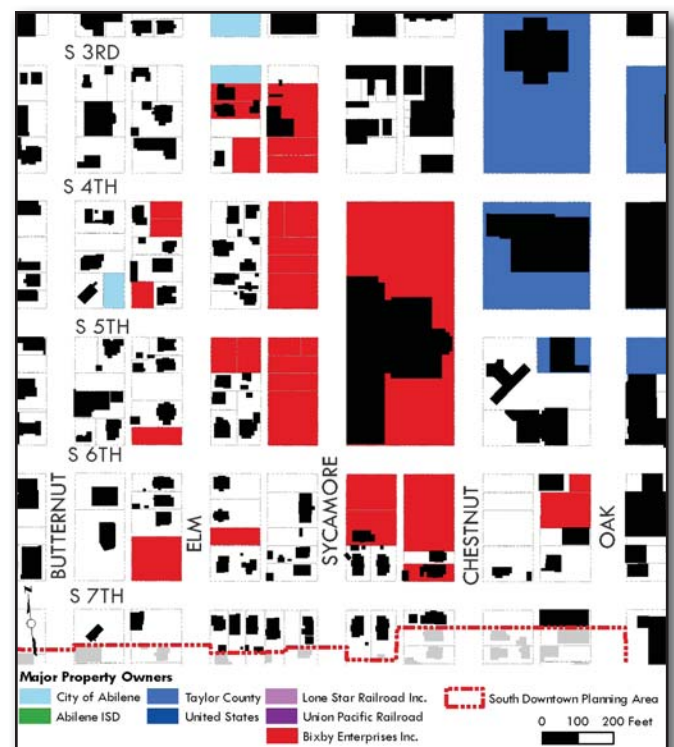
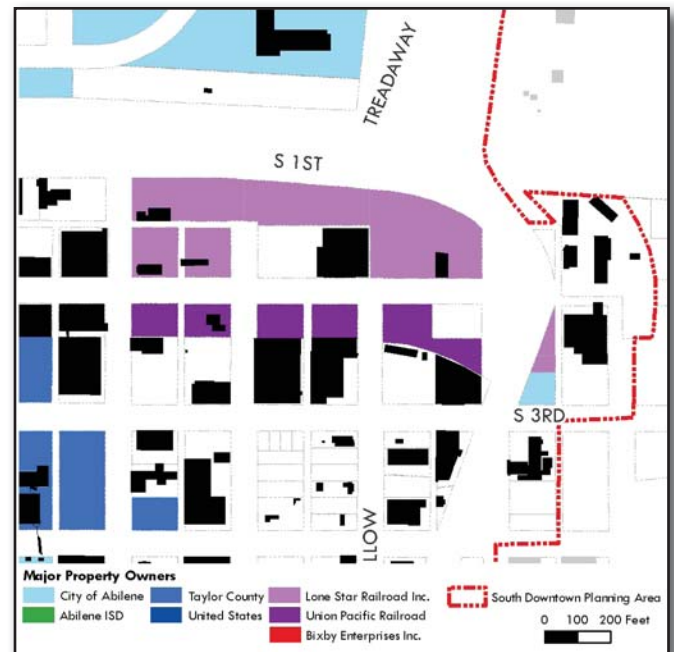
- The goals and objectives for vacant land utilization
- Integrate the citywide vision with land bank planning
- Strategy for acquiring, holding, and selling or leasing land banked properties
- Utilization of existing investment entity, such as

the city's economic development corporation (Industrial Foundation).

- Establish requirements for selecting developer (i.e., require redevelopment plan, need to conform to vision of the South Downtown Abilene master plan)
- Characteristics to look for when accepting properties into the land bank, such as location, liens, existing improvements or site condition
- Identify external partners with which the city will be closely coordinated and cooperative

A land assemblage program overseen by the City will be a critical component of implementing the South Downtown Master Plan. It offers valuable assistance to facilitate private development in a revitalization area and can ensure certain public benefits and goals are attained, leading to successful realization of the vision of South Downtown.

There are two obvious areas that are prime candidates for this program: the railroad area and the area owned by Bixby Enterprises. Both areas are of significant size and assistance with land assembly through this program could facilitate a significant development to jumpstart revitalization of South Downtown. See the map to the right or on page 43 of Chapter 2, Existing Conditions. Working together with these property owners to assemble land parcels and to select a master developer, facilitating redevelopment of a significant portion of South Downtown.



Parcels owned by Union Pacific and Lone Star railroad companies (top) and Bixby Enterprises (bottom)

POTENTIAL FUNDING MECHANISMS

Implementation of the South Downtown Master Plan will require actions on the part of the city in terms of funding. Investment on the part of the city will reassure private investors of the future of South Downtown. Texas law provides a number of ways to finance public improvements. The following discussion identifies potential funding mechanisms and grant opportunities that can assist with public improvements and encourage private development.

PUBLIC FUNDING MECHANISMS

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) / Tax Increment Finance District (TIF) - A TIF District is a zone where certain property tax revenue generated in the district is reinvested back into the district through development of infrastructure. TIFs operate on the idea that public investment helps stimulate and grow property values, justifying the reinvestment of property taxes back into the district generating the revenue.

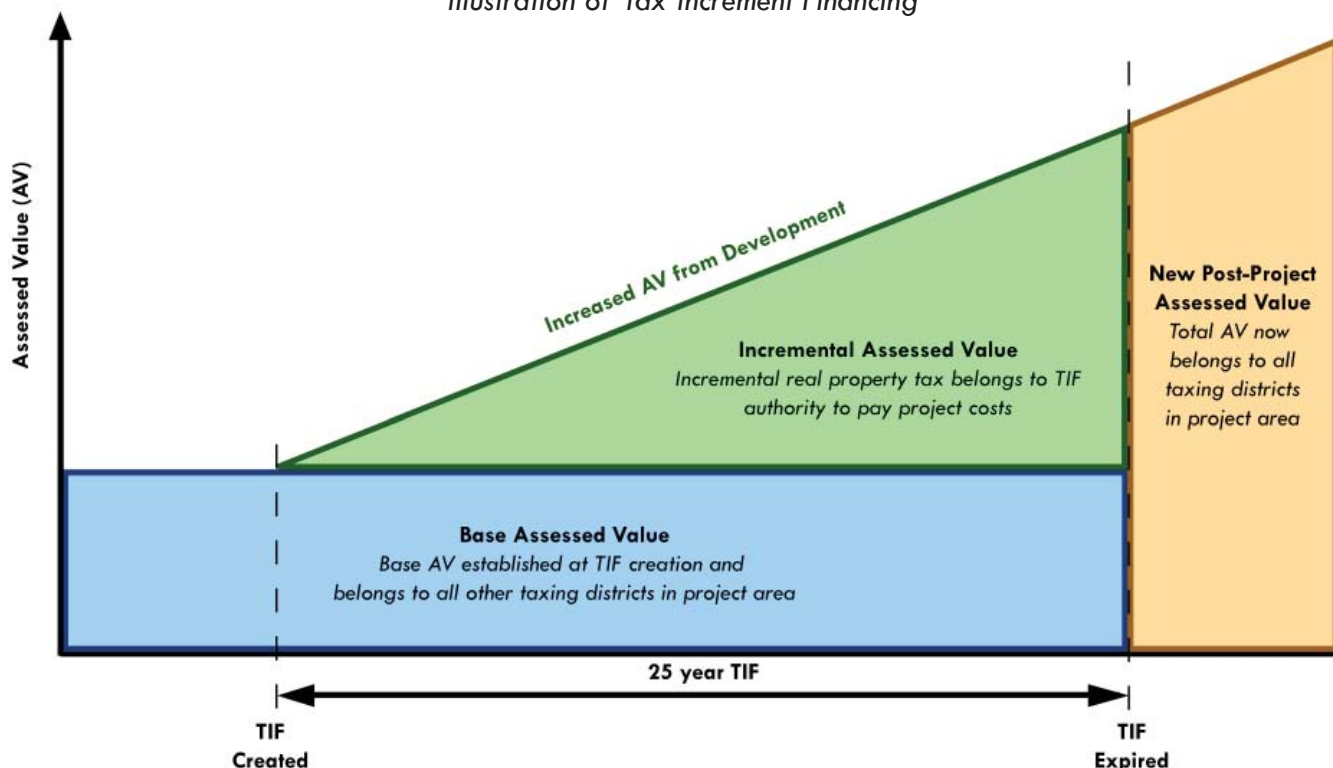
At the creation of a TIF, the assessed property value of properties of a defined area is set as the base value. Over the years, as the property values increase and property tax revenue increases, the property tax revenue generated by the incremental property value above the base is reinvested into the TIF district.

According to the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, a TIF district may be created in two ways. First, affected property owners may petition the city and city council to create a TIF district (also known as a TIRZ). The petition must be submitted by owners of property that constitutes at least 50 percent of the appraised property value within the proposed zone.

A second way of creating a TIF is by a city council without the need for a petition. If not initiated by petition, an area may be considered for tax increment financing only if it meets at least one of the following three criteria:

- The area's present condition must substantially impair the city's growth, retard the provision of housing, or constitute an economic or social liability to the public health, safety, morals

Illustration of Tax Increment Financing



or welfare. Further, this condition must exist because of the presence of one or more of the following conditions: a substantial number of substandard or deteriorating structures, inadequate sidewalks or street layout, faulty lot layouts, unsanitary or unsafe conditions, a tax or special assessment delinquency that exceeds the fair market value of the land; defective or unusual conditions of title, or conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other cause; or

- The area is predominantly open, and because of obsolete platting, deteriorating structures or other factors, it substantially impairs the growth of the city; or
- The area is in or adjacent to a “federally-assisted new community” as defined under Tax Code Section 311.005(b).

Within developed areas of the city, such as South Downtown Abilene, the reason usually cited to justify a TIF district is that the area’s condition substantially impairs the city’s growth because of a significant number of substandard or deteriorating structures.

The tax code places several further restrictions on the creation of a reinvestment zone for tax increment financing:

- No more than 10 percent of the property within the reinvestment zone (excluding publicly-owned property) may be used for residential purposes. This requirement, however, does not apply if the district is created pursuant to a petition of the landowners.
- A reinvestment zone may not contain property that cumulatively would exceed 15 percent of the total appraised property value within the city and its industrial districts. **The total appraised value of properties within Abilene is \$4.9 billion; therefore, any TIF district that is created must have a current value below approximately \$735 million.**
- A city also may not create a reinvestment zone or change the boundaries of an existing zone if the zone would contain more than 15 percent of the total appraised value of real property taxable by a county or school district.

Recommendation: Creating a Tax Increment Finance District is strongly recommended as a potential revenue source for public improvements within the district. It is further recommended that Taylor County participate in the TIF program.

Public Improvement District (PID) - Chapter 372 of the Texas Local Government Code permits the formation of PIDs, which allows a city and/or county to levy and collect special assessments on property that is within the city or within its extraterritorial jurisdiction. Funds generated by the PID tax are invested back in the district and may be used to fund the following types of improvements:

- Water, waste water, health and sanitation, or drainage improvements
- Street and sidewalk improvements
- Mass transit improvements
- Parking improvements
- Library improvements
- Park, recreation, and cultural improvements
- Landscaping and other aesthetic improvements
- Art installation
- Creation of pedestrian malls
- Similar improvements
- Supplemental safety services, including public safety and security services
- Supplemental business-related services for the improvement of the district.

Subchapter A of Chapter 372 of the Texas Local Government Code outlines the procedures by which a PID must be established.

A majority of the taxpayers in the proposed PID area must petition the local government to form a PID. This petition may be initiated by either the property owners or the local government, but still must be signed by at least 50 percent of property owners in the proposed district, or owners of at least 50% of the land area. The petition must also state:

- The general nature of the proposed improvement;
- The estimated cost of the improvement;
- The boundaries of the proposed assessment district;
- The proposed method of assessment;
- The proposed apportionment of cost between the PID and the municipality;
- The management of the district;
- That the persons signing the petition request or concur with the establishment of the district; and

- That an advisory body may be established to develop and recommend an improvement plan to the governing body of the municipality.

Additionally, before the district is established, a public hearing must be held to advise the community of the nature of the district.

Once the PID is established, actual construction of any improvements may not start till after the 20th day after authorization of the PID. This allows any public comment to be submitted to the municipality.

The PID advisory body must maintain and annually update a service plan for the PID, which must be presented to and approved by the municipality. The service plan must cover a minimum five-year period and define annual indebtedness and projected costs for proposed improvements.

Money generated for public improvements in a PID are done so through assessments on properties in the PID. An assessment plan must be included in the annual service plan. Exempt municipal or county properties in the PID area must pay assessments to the district. Assessments may be determined in the following ways:

- Equally per square foot or front foot;
- According to the value of the property as determined by the governing body, with or without regard to improvements on the property; or
- In any other manner that results in imposing equal shares of the cost on property similarly benefitted.



Public improvement districts have been created throughout Texas under Chapter 372 since its adoption in 1986. Below are examples of downtown PIDs in Texas.

Downtown Austin PID

Established in 1993, the Downtown Austin PID finances enhancements in the downtown area. Property owners pay a special assessment of \$0.10 per \$100 of value for services such as graffiti and litter removal, tourism and parking maps, the downtown Austin Rangers (downtown security), and streetscape and street design improvements.

Downtown Dallas District

The priority for the Downtown Dallas PID is public safety, funding a Downtown Safety Patrol. The PID also helps fund landscaping, streetscaping, trash and graffiti removal, and downtown marketing and events. The special assessment is \$0.1190 per \$100 of appraised value.

Centro San Antonio PID

The Centro San Antonio PID was established in 1999 to provide additional services and improvements in Downtown San Antonio as a supplement to services provided by the City of San Antonio. Programs of this PID include an ambassador program assisting visitors and residents; a streetscaping program; and a maintenance program. The special assessment is \$0.12 per \$100 of appraised value.

Downtown Fort Worth PID #1

In 1986, the first PID in Texas was established in Downtown Fort Worth. Property owners in the district pay a special assessment of \$0.11 per \$100 of value for maintenance, landscaping, promotions special events, marketing, market research, transportation, parking, and enhanced security.

Recommendation: Creating a PID is strongly recommended as a potential revenue source to supplement or be used in lieu of a TIF district. A PID can fund additional public improvements within the district as well as safety programs and marketing campaigns to reinforce South Downtown Abilene and the greater downtown as a destination.

On an annual basis, cities must prepare a Service Plan for the PID that identifies the potential budget and outlines how the funds will be spent. The table below illustrates how different PIDs distribute their budget among the various services.

Table 5.2 Distribution of Budget Among Services				
	Austin	Dallas	San Antonio	Fort Worth
<i>2010-2011 Budget</i>	<i>\$2.6 million</i>	<i>\$6.7 million</i>	<i>\$3.4 million</i>	<i>\$2.8 million</i>
Public Safety	31%	37%	24%	4%
Maintenance	14%	-	40%	46%
Streetscaping	3%	-	-	-
Transportation	-	25%	-	15%
Landscaping	-	-	8%	<i>part of maintenance</i>
Park Improvements	4%	17%	-	-
Marketing/Promotion	12%	-	4%	20%
Communication	10%	13%	-	-
Economic Development	11%	-	-	-
Administration	15%	6%	24%	15%

Citywide Bond Funding - A few of the improvements proposed for South Downtown can be considered as community-wide investments that benefit all of the citizens of Abilene. These include the creation of gateways into the South Downtown and Warehouse Districts, improvements along streets in the area, and new civic facilities.

Recommendation: Consider future bond programs within the next ten years to fund key South Downtown Abilene improvements.

DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES

Chapter 380 of the Texas Local Government Code allows the granting of certain economic development incentives by cities to encourage developers to build in their jurisdiction. Development incentives typically take the form of property tax abatements, loans or grants, commitments for infrastructure, or sales tax rebates.

Recommendation: Develop a formal Chapter 380 policy that will guide the use of Chapter 380 incentive funding.

Property Tax Abatement - A tax abatement is an agreement between a taxpayer and a taxing unit that exempts all or part of the increase in the value of the real property and/or tangible personal property from taxation for a period not to exceed ten years. Abatements recognize the potential for other benefits of property development other than increased property value, such as job creation and sales tax revenue. Abatements are typically tied to job creation and value of the investment.

Tax abatements would not work well with a TIF district, since a TIF relies on increasing property values to generate revenue while a tax abatement essentially freezes the property value.

Recommendation: If alternative sources for funding public improvements are accepted (such as a PID), then property tax abatements are recommended in lieu of the creation of a TIF district to serve as a significant incentive for specific investments in the area. However, without identifying a funding source for public

improvements, the TIF district is deemed to be a better method than tax abatement for increasing investment in the district.

Sales Tax Incentives - One type of incentive that Texas cities have used is sales tax incentives to develop commercial and retail projects. These agreements allow a city to attract development by refunding a portion of the sales tax the project generates back to the developer. The developer receives assistance to make the project viable, and the city benefits from growth in sales tax revenue, property taxes, and new jobs.

The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts recommends the following guidelines concerning Sales Tax Incentives:

- Place a limit on both the percentage of sales tax granted to the developer and the total amount of the grant. For example, the grant could be limited to a portion of the sales tax generated by the development, up to \$1 million.
- The agreement should have a termination date depending in part on the developer's total investment.
- Milestones and deadlines should be included in the agreement to ensure that the developer completes the project according to the city's expectations. The city should include terms by which the developer could be considered out of compliance or in default of the agreement, and consider possible penalties such as reductions in the sales tax incentive.
- The city should consider including terms in the contract to remedy adverse impacts caused by the development, such as increased traffic and increased demand for law enforcement and utilities.
- Payment of grants under the agreement should be based on the net sales tax allocation, after adjustments and fees, and not due to the developer until the city receives the funds from the comptroller.

Recommendation: Sales tax incentives are recommended as a form of incentive for commercial or retail developments.

Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive - The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive program encourages private sector rehabilitation of historic buildings. According to the U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service, current tax incentives for preservation include:

- A 20% tax credit for the certified rehabilitation of certified historic structures¹. The credit is available for properties rehabilitated for commercial, industrial, agricultural, or rental residential purposes, but not for properties used exclusively as the owner's private residence.
- A 10% tax credit for the rehabilitation of non-historic, non-residential buildings built before 1936. The credit is available only to buildings rehabilitated for non-residential uses.

In all cases, the rehabilitation must be substantial (determined by value of rehabilitation) and must involve a depreciable building.

Recommendation: Continue to promote the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive program to encourage historic preservation of buildings in South Downtown.

POTENTIAL GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

- **Transportation Enhancement Grants** - Federal enhancement funding allocated to the State of Texas could be used to fund streetscape or pedestrian mobility improvements in South Downtown, particularly along South 1st Street.
- **Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Grants** - The FTA sponsors grants related to mass transit. Grants sponsored by the FTA could provide financial assistance to expand the CityLink transit facility to incorporate Greyhound, move the bus storage facility out of South Downtown, and fund newer, clean fuel buses.
- **Historic Renovation Grants** - The Texas Historical Commission offers a variety of grants for preservation of historic buildings and areas in Texas. The Texas Preservation Trust Fund Grant is a matching grant awarded on a one-to-one match basis and can be used for acquisition, survey, restoration, and preservation of a site, or for the planning and education of preserving historic properties or archeological sites. The Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program provides partial matching grants to Texas counties for the restoration of historic county courthouses.
- **Future Stimulus Grants** - As other state and federal grants become available, the City of Abilene should pursue monies to implement components of the South Downtown master plan.

¹ A certified historic structure is a building that is listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places or a building that is located in a registered historic district and certified by the National Park Service as contributing to the historic significance of that district.

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<div>Table 5.3</div> <div>Scenario Illustrating Potential Revenue Sources for South Downtown Study Area</div>					
Source	Year One Estimate	Potential Revenue Over 10 Years	Potential Revenue Over 20 Years	Intended Use of Revenue Source	Advantages & Disadvantages
City of Abilene Revenue Sources					
Tax Increment Finance District <i>Assumptions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increment of \$75 million in 10 years and \$150 million over 20 years Full contribution by both City and County with City tax rate of 0.6932 and County tax rate of 0.4675 per \$100 of assessed value 	\$30,000	\$4,000,000	\$13 million	Infrastructure improvements, streetscaping, park and open space development	Must follow district establishment regulations
Public Improvement District <i>Assumptions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessed value of \$65 million (2008 tax roll) Special assessment of \$0.10 per \$100 value 	\$65,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,800,000	Safety, management of downtown, maintenance, promotion and marketing of downtown, supplement infrastructure and beautification improvements, park and open space development	
General Bond (Area improvements with citywide benefit)	N/A	\$2,500,000	\$5,000,000	Major area improvements	
General Fund	\$50,000	\$500,000	\$1,000,000	For improvements to public facilities in the South Downtown area	Can be used for grant leveraging
Capital Improvement Program Funds	\$250,000	\$2,500,000	\$5,000,000	For capital improvement projects in the South Downtown area	
Subtotal		\$10,500,000	\$25,800,000		
Potential Contribution from Other Entities					
Taylor County	N/A	To be determined	To be determined	Improvements to County facilities, including renovation of historic courthouse and grounds	
Abilene ISD	N/A	To be determined	To be determined	For education-related facilities in the downtown area	Must have a direct tie to education
TXDOT	N/A	To be determined	To be determined	Improvements to South 1st Street	
Union Pacific/Lone Star Railroad	N/A	To be determined	To be determined	Assistance with land assembly, master plan, and selection of master developer	
Private Sector	N/A	To be determined	To be determined	Improvements made as part of new development or building renovations as required by City Code	Improvements made as investment and construction occurs in the area
Subtotal	N/A	To be determined	To be determined		
Potential Grant Funding					
U.S. Department of Transportation Grants	N/A	\$2,000,000	\$4,000,000	For transportation-related projects, including, but not limited to: improvements to S 1st Street including gateway treatments and streetscaping; General sidewalk and pedestrian accessibility improvements throughout the district; Trail and pedestrian mobility enhancements; Expansion of CityLink transit facility to incorporate Greyhound, move the bus storage facility out of South Downtown, and fund newer, clean-fuel buses	Assumes district has funding available for cost sharing requirements; must conform to TXDOT standards and requirements
Historic Renovation Grants	N/A	\$250,000	\$500,000	Historic building renovation assistance	May only apply to a few structures in the area
Park Grant Sources	N/A	\$500,000	\$1,000,000	Renovation to historic courthouse grounds; neighborhood parks	Funding levels uncertain
Foundation Assistance	N/A	\$250,000	\$1,000,000	Will vary based on foundation area of focus	Area projects may be good match for foundations that are interested in downtown renewal
Subtotal	N/A	\$3,000,000	\$6,500,000		
Total Potential Funding Sources		\$13,500,000 +/-	\$32,300,000 +/-		

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Table 5.4 - Recommended Policy Actions

Recommendation	Description	Approximate Time Frame (from plan adoption)
Enforce screening of exterior storage areas*	Owners of all exterior storage areas throughout the district should be required to screen stored items from public view. Some amount of grant assistance might be appropriate to assist owners who desire to appropriately screen storage areas within a reasonably short window of time to induce immediate action.	Continually
Aggressively enforce city's building, health, and safety codes*	Condemned buildings should be removed, and non-compliant buildings should be brought up to the city building code. A substantial fine should be imposed on property owners who do not act within a specified timeframe to remove condemned buildings or building deficiencies corrected. Consideration should be given to creating a building code audit program where buildings must undergo a building code audit before being sold or before vacant buildings can be occupied. This audit will help the city create and maintain an inventory of non-compliant buildings and efforts to bring them up to code.	Continually; Establish audit program within 5 years
Update Abilene Register of Historic Properties	The city's Register of Historic Properties is dated (last update in 1989). Pursue grant from the Texas Historical Commission to survey properties in the South Downtown Area and update the Register of Historic Properties.	Within 1 year
Study the feasibility of a TIF district and if feasible, create the TIF district	Conduct a financial and legal review to determine the potential benefits of creating a TIF district. Determine the boundaries of the district, the potential revenue, and the mechanisms to establish the district.	Within 1 year
Develop a formal Chapter 380 policy for South Downtown District	Develop and adopt a policy that will guide the use of Chapter 380 incentive funding.	Within 1 year
Establish policy and funding source for land assembly program	A land assembly program will be a tool to assist in the redevelopment of South Downtown Abilene. The city needs to establish a policy for selecting properties for land acquisition, guidelines on selling, leasing, or developing those properties, and identify sources to fund the land assembly program.	1 to 3 years
Review existing zoning and make changes where necessary to facilitate implementation	In some ways, the existing zoning prohibits implementation of the master plan. For example, limited residential uses are allowed conditionally in LI and HI districts, where as this master plan recommends higher density housing. A review of the existing zoning should identify where zoning is incompatible with the recommendations of this master plan and rezoning or new zoning districts should be created to facilitate implementation of the master plan.	1 to 3 years
Create and adopt design guidelines for the South Downtown Abilene Districts	Develop a palette of guidelines for buildings, property sites, parking, signage, and lighting within the South Downtown and Warehouse Districts. Conduct test cases to ensure that the guidelines function correctly. Include both the public at large as well as the development community in the creation of the guidelines	1 to 3 years
Explore the potential of creating a Public Improvement District	A PID can either further supplement or replace a TIF district with funds to build necessary public infrastructure in South Downtown Abilene. A study should be conducted to research the feasibility and effectiveness of creating a PID for this purpose in downtown Abilene. This study should identify proposed boundaries, potential revenue, necessary improvements and programs, and required funding. The city should also work with property and business owners to inform them of the benefits and impacts of a PID to facilitate its creation.	1 to 3 years
Re-institute facade enhancement grant program*	A 50/50 matching grant program for facade enhancements will assist property owners with restoring their buildings. Participating owners should be required to follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, as a minimum, in order to receive grant assistance for building rehabilitation projects.	1 to 3 years
Aggressively pursue grant opportunities and provide information about grants available to the private sector	There are several grant opportunities available to both the public and private sectors to help realize the vision of the South Downtown Master Plan. The city should aim to apply for \$250,000 in grant funding for South Downtown, either through a single grant source or multiple grant sources. Information should be compiled, regularly updated, and made available to the downtown community, including businesses and the development community, about grant opportunities available to them. The city might consider offering grant writing assistance to individuals who wish to pursue a grant for improvements in South Downtown.	Begin pursuing grant opportunities within the year, and continue annually. Create grant assistance program within 2 years.
Conduct a corridor study for the entire Treadaway Commercial Corridor*	Conduct a corridor study for Treadaway Boulevard that addresses the appropriate economic orientation for the corridor; physical appearance of buildings, signs, and landscaping along the corridor; and traffic flow, including ingress and egress for corridor buildings.	1 to 3 years
Hire a professional, full-time Downtown Director*	The city of Abilene should hire a Downtown Director to oversee implementation of the South Downtown Master Plan and Economic Enhancement Strategy. The city should strongly consider joining the Texas Main Street Program to establish the position and work program. The downtown director will work with the entire downtown area to foster its overall enhancement; coordinate the actions and initiatives being implemented in each of the downtown districts; and ensure that each district in downtown Abilene is strengthened in a way that allows them to complement (rather than compete with) each other.	1 to 3 years
Assist with the development of a Civic Center Hotel*	In 2006 the Abilene Economic Development Corporation conducted a Downtown Hotel Market Analysis to study the feasibility of a downtown hotel associated with the Abilene Civic Center. The analysis found that there is sufficient market support for a downtown hotel, envisioned as a nationally-branded, upscale hotel. The analysis also suggested that its location adjacent to the Abilene Civic Center could increase the demand for convention activity and further revitalize downtown. The city should utilize incentives to assist with development of a downtown convention center hotel near the Abilene Civic Center. Consideration should be given to the development of this facility at or near the northwestern edge of the Warehouse District. In the future, as convention business grows in Abilene, the city should be aware of the need to update the civic center to accommodate existing and growing convention business with modern, first class facilities.	1 to 5 years
Establish a strong marketing campaign to aggressively market downtown Abilene as a whole*	A marketing effort should attract additional business prospects, developers, consumers, and residents. That effort should include City Trolleys, wayfinding, and story placement. Existing resources should be utilized and current efforts should be expanded to unify existing and future marketing efforts into a comprehensive downtown marketing campaign.	1 to 5 years
Develop the Railroad Site	Work with Union Pacific and Lone Star Railroad companies to hire a master developer to plan and develop sites in the northeast corner of the South Downtown District. Some properties may need to be acquired by the city to develop this area. Begin building relationship with railroad companies within year. Hire a master developer within five years.	1 to 5 years

*Indicates recommendations made by the Economic Enhancement Study

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