



# Downtown Master Plan

July 2024

City of

*Wharton*  
TEXAS





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*Courthouse, City of Wharton*

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*Downtown, City of Wharton*



**1**

# Acknowledgments

## 1 Acknowledgments

This Wharton Downtown Master Plan has been developed by the City of Wharton and Wharton Economic Development Corporation, with the assistance of the Downtown Stakeholder Committee, City staff, and the planning team of Ardurra, Kimley Horn and Community Development Strategies. This Downtown Plan is a result of invaluable input, expertise, and collaboration among many organizations and individuals. It would not have been possible without their assistance, guidance, time, and dedication.



*Downtown Stakeholder Committee Members attending a meeting. Pastor Sterns, Joshua Owens, Debbie Folks, Michael Roberson, Ryan Simper, Joseph Pace, Jim Maddox, Judy Nichols, Leland Dykes, and Gwyneth Teves*

### **City of Wharton City Council**

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- Burnell Neal, Councilmember
- Steven Schneider, Councilmember
- Terry Freese, Councilmember
- Donald Mueller, Councilmember, Mayor Pro-tem
- Russell Machann, Councilmember
- Larry Pittman, Councilmember

### **Planning Commission**

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### **City Staff**

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- Joshua Owens



## 1 Acknowledgments



*Downtown Stakeholder Committee Members attending a meeting. Kristi Kocian, Russell Baird, Ron Sanders, Michael Roberson, Joshua Owens, Ryan Simper, Jeffrey Blair, Debbie Folks, with Tina Israel and the consultant team*

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- Ryan Simper, TxDOT
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# 2

## Introduction



## 2 Introduction

### Purpose of the Plan

The City of Wharton updated its Comprehensive Plan in 2018. A key recommendation of the Comprehensive Plan update was to prepare a Downtown Master Plan to guide revitalization efforts in Wharton's historic downtown area. This Downtown Plan is the result of this recommendation, and is intended to augment, rather than duplicate, the Comprehensive Plan.

Wharton is a classic Texas courthouse town, with a central square containing the county courthouse, surrounded by blocks of one and two-story brick commercial buildings from the late 1800s and early 1900s. The 1889 Wharton County Courthouse was fully restored to its original appearance in 2007 and is a significant historic landmark in the city. Courthouse Square sits only two blocks from the banks of the Colorado River, one of Texas' major rivers.

Despite these two major assets, the downtown area currently suffers from empty storefronts, struggling businesses and heavy truck thru-traffic on S.H. 60/West Milam St and U.S. 59/Richmond Rd, both of which cut through the heart of downtown. Major flooding in recent years has mostly spared downtown's historic core, but has caused millions of dollars in damage to the surrounding neighborhoods and left Riverfront Park and its amenities in a state of disrepair. In response to the repeated flood losses, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers just broke ground on a new levee designed to protect the city from flooding, but the levee threatens to cut off the city from the riverfront, both physically and visually.

The purpose of this plan is to create a vision for Downtown that captures and reflects the priorities and preferences of the community and provide a realistic roadmap to achieving that vision. The plan will serve as a guide for decision-making about future development, ordinances and initiatives, and provides coordinated strategies to reinvigorate downtown.

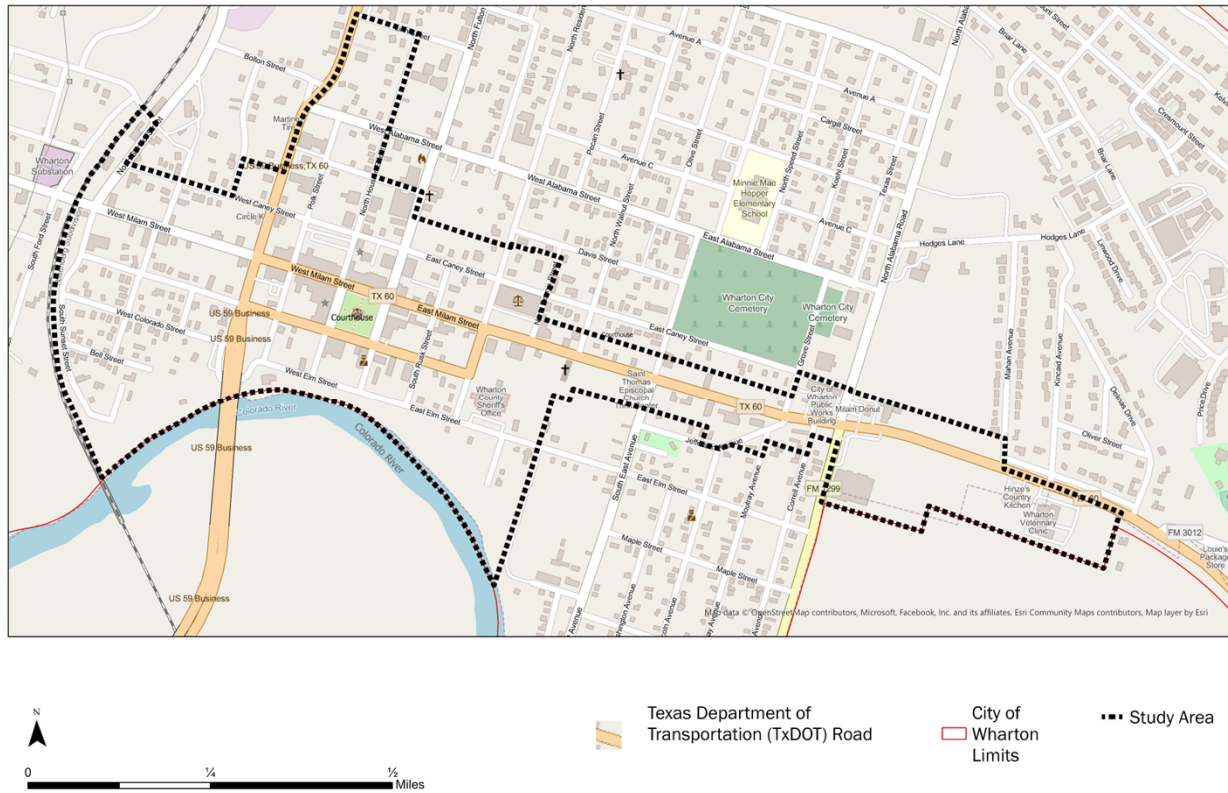
This Downtown Master Plan makes numerous recommendations to revitalize downtown and create a true city center with thriving local businesses, where residents and visitors of all ages can gather to socialize, dine, shop and have fun. This plan proposes urban design strategies to beautify the streetscape, calm highway traffic, provide safe walking and biking connections to surrounding neighborhoods and to the riverfront, and capitalize on downtown Wharton's authentic historic character. The plan also examines the city's development regulations and proposes specific code changes to ensure that infill development is compatible with the area's historic blockfaces and furthers the vision of this plan. In addition, the plan identifies resources to help downtown property owners to maintain and improve their buildings and to increase activity and investment in downtown.

### Plan Elements

The plan elements include:

- Land use
- Existing site development and building standards
- Streetscape and activation
- Infrastructure, including drainage, utilities, mobility, circulation and parking
- Economic development and market analysis
- Implementation and funding strategies

## 2 Introduction



Map showing the study area boundaries

### Study Area

Several study area boundaries were considered during this planning process. The final boundary was chosen based on input from city staff, officials and community stakeholders, combined with analysis of the characteristics of the area. The final chosen study area expands beyond the traditional 'Central Business District' to include the West End residential neighborhood between Sunset St. and Richmond Rd., as well as some of the mixed residential and commercial blocks north of Caney St. The intent of this plan is to better integrate these neighborhood areas with the dense downtown core around Courthouse Square as well as the riverfront. Finally, the S.H. 60 and U.S. 59 corridors leading into downtown are also included, with the goal of creating a more attractive, safe, and welcoming streetscape along these important gateways.

### Sub-areas

This plan identifies three 'sub-areas' based on density, built character, and land uses:

1. **Historic Downtown** – the densely-built area within one to two blocks of Courthouse Square, and generally located between Richmond Rd., Caney St., Resident St. and the Colorado River.
2. **Neighborhoods** – the less dense areas surrounding the historic downtown core, containing a mix of residential, commercial, and governmental uses.
3. **Corridors** – the properties adjacent to S.H. 60 and U.S. 59, which are developed mainly with auto-oriented nonresidential uses.

This report will use the terms 'downtown' or 'downtown area' to refer generally to the entire study area. When addressing specific subareas, the above terms will be used.



## 2 Introduction



### Planning Process and Timeline

After consultants were chosen through an RFQ process, a Downtown Stakeholder Committee (DSC) was assembled, consisting of seventeen downtown business owners, residents, property owners and other stakeholders, to help guide the process. The preparation of this Downtown Plan was a collaborative effort and was greatly helped by the participation of the DSC.

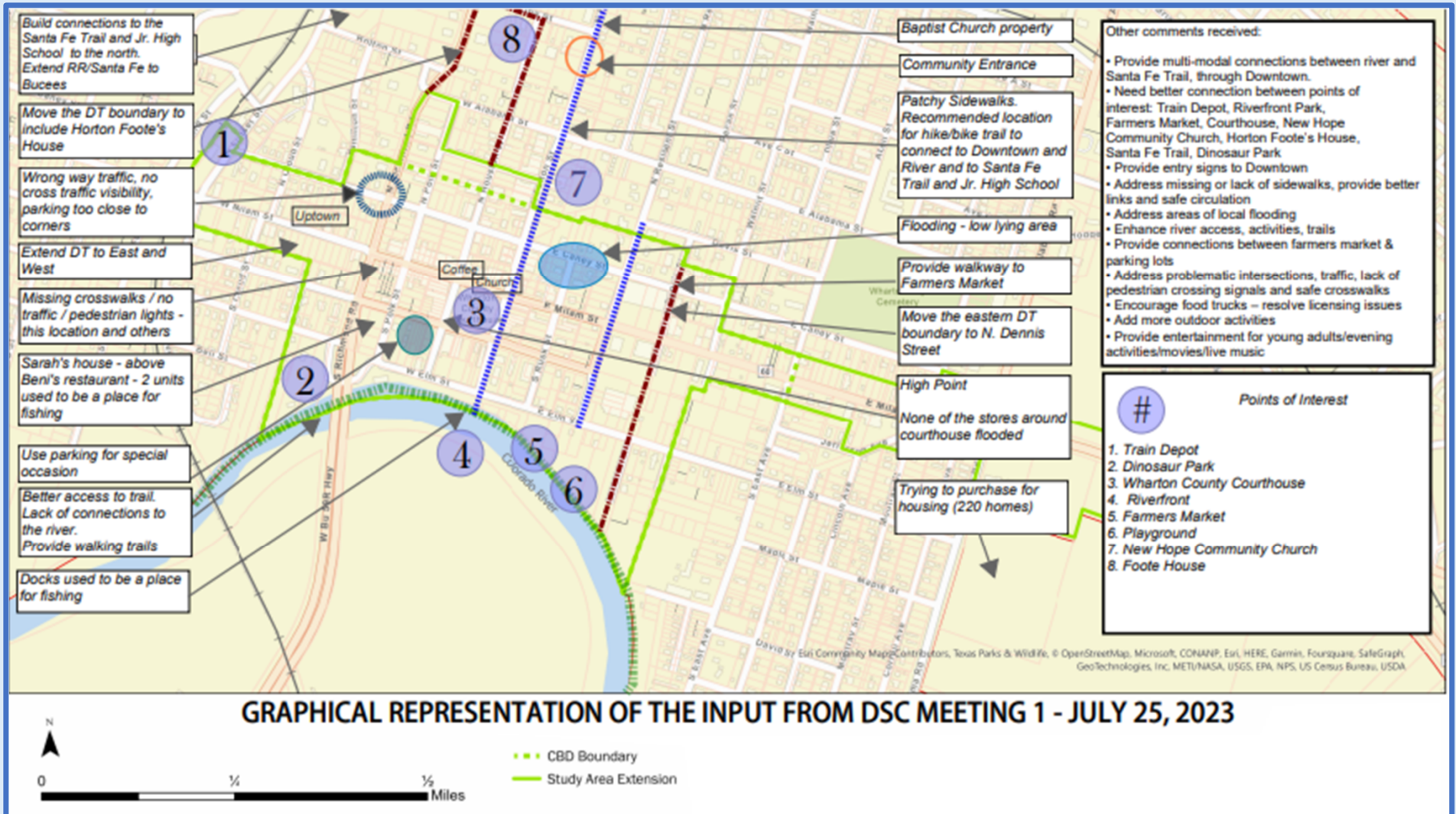
The planning process started with a City Council presentation on June 26, 2023, followed by meetings with the Wharton Economic Development Corporation and Planning Commission on July 17, 2023. The DSC met with the consulting team on July 25, September 26, and November 14, 2023, and provided valuable insight and guidance throughout the process. The meeting agendas are included in the Appendix.

The planning process was broken into four phases over a period of ten months. Community involvement and engagement was a key component and included stakeholder interviews, online questionnaires and a public informational webpage to ensure that the final plan's recommendations and implementation strategies respond directly to the needs and desires of residents, businesses and visitors, and captures the spirit of the City.



## 2 Introduction

The map shown below summarizes the strengths, opportunities and areas of improvements identified by the Downtown Stakeholder Committee (DSC). Most of the comments are as stated at the meeting



Input received from the DSC meeting on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023



# 3

## Vision & Guiding Principles

### 3 Vision and Guiding Principles

## Vision

**Revitalize** downtown as the **heart of Wharton** with activities centered around **Courthouse Square** and **Riverfront Park** for **all** residents and visitors by celebrating the **historic architecture and culture**.

The Vision Statement articulates the City of Wharton's values and aspirations for the Downtown and paints a picture of the desired future. Developing a vision statement was an essential early step in creating the Downtown Plan.

The Guiding Principles establish overarching themes that express the values of the Plan and apply to all policies and actions. These principles are not intended to stand alone, but to be used in concert with one another and to carry across the Downtown Plan as a whole. The Guiding Principles will inform Downtown's future as a sustainable, equitable, inclusive, and healthy community for residents and visitors alike. The Guiding Principles aim to accommodate anticipated growth through 2040 and to support and sustain Downtown's ongoing revitalization.

These Guiding Principles, listed in the following page, were developed based on the input from the Downtown Stakeholders Committee and public engagement.

## Guiding Principles

- Create a sense of place** – Preserve and enhance Courthouse Square as a focal point of Downtown by providing an attractive, accessible and comfortable gathering place to attract residents and visitors.
- Maintain Downtown Wharton's unique character** – Undertake urban design improvements to enhance streetscapes, and adopt standards to ensure that new development is compatible with the existing fabric.
- Preserve historic buildings** – Protect historic buildings and encourage renovations and building expansions that are consistent with the historic character.
- Encourage activity through a diverse mix of uses** – Promote both daytime and nighttime activities through a mix of office, retail, residential units, civic uses, community facilities, restaurants, and entertainment
- Promote special community events** – Revive and introduce new festivals, community programs, and food truck courts
- Connect Downtown to surrounding neighborhoods** – Improve safe access to Downtown for everyone, including those on foot, bicycles or using wheelchairs.
- Promote economic development** – Encourage and incentivize small businesses, as well as adaptive reuse of older buildings.
- Provide multimodal mobility options** – Enhance safety, reduce conflicts with truck traffic, provide wider and safer sidewalks and routes for bikes and pedestrians, and ensure easily accessible parking.
- Enhance the river front** – Redevelop Riverfront Park and link the riverfront to downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Address dilapidated buildings** – Examine measures to eliminate decay, and to revitalize vacant, abandoned or neglected buildings.
- Coordinate efforts of various stakeholders** – Formulate strategies for unified, seamless and continued implementation efforts.
- Support inclusive approaches** – Celebrate the town's diversity and welcome Whartonians of all ages and backgrounds.

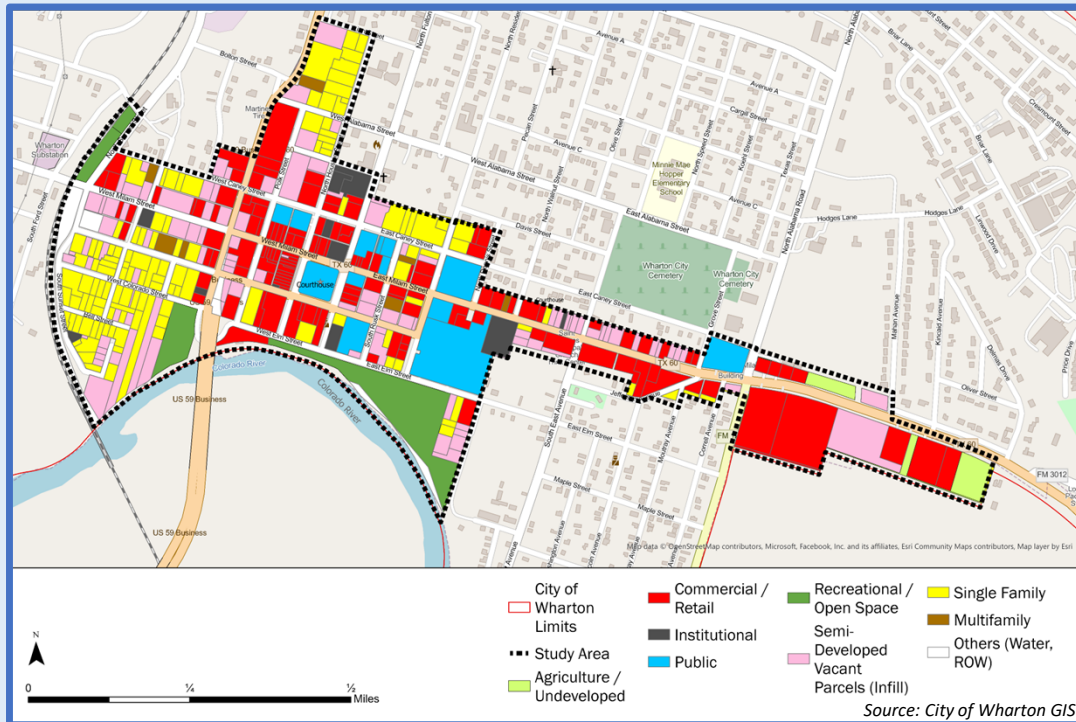
4

Existing  
Downtown



## 4 Existing Downtown – Character

### Land Uses



Existing Land Use Map

Wharton's downtown is anchored by the 1889 Wharton County Courthouse. The blocks surrounding the courthouse are densely built and contain a mix of retail, office and other nonresidential uses, sometimes with residential units on upper floors.

Most government offices in Wharton are also located downtown, including City Hall, various county and state departments, the sheriff's office and jail, and the post office. These facilities are a key generator of activity downtown, although this is limited mostly to weekday hours.

The study area also includes many older single-family homes mixed in with businesses, churches, community organizations, surface parking and vacant lots. There are also several parks and other public spaces, such as the plaza at Courthouse Square, scattered around downtown. New development activity in downtown has increased in the recent years, with two new three-story multifamily buildings on the 500 block of W Milam St. It is anticipated that Downtown Wharton will continue to attract more residents and visitors with the growing presence of the Plaza theatre, increasing activities in and around the Courthouse Square, and gaining popularity of restaurants such as The Ranch and Sorellas.

Land Use Breakdown

Land Use	Area in Acres	Percentage
Agriculture/Undeveloped	4.3	2.7%
Commercial/Retail	48.6	30.7%
Institutional	5.1	3.2%
Public	17.1	10.8%
Recreational / Open Space	13.7	8.7%
Others (Water, ROW)	4.2	2.7%
Semi-Developed Vacant Parcels (Infill)	31.1	19.6%
Single Family	32.1	20.3%
Multifamily	2.1	1.3%
Total	158.3	100.0%

## 4 Existing Downtown – Character

### Land Uses

A high-level Market Assessment Update was conducted in 2023, as part of this project. The report includes updated demographic and economic information, city-level economic activity trends, and real estate market conditions for housing and retail. The entire report is attached as Appendix K. Some excerpts of the report are included here.

#### Findings

##### Single Family

- Currently, the City of Wharton contains 19.98% (2,813) of all single family homes in Wharton County (14,073).
- Given the recent sale of 250 lots for workforce housing, the demand for additional housing appears to be negative through 2030.
- The study area would be the first choice to introduce new townhomes, duplexes and rental homes.

##### Multifamily

- Currently, the City of Wharton has 62.2% (919) of all multifamily units in Wharton County.
- Considering the project pipeline of multifamily units in Wharton (184 units), there is expected negative demand through 2030.
- The study area would be the first choice to introduce new apartment units above retail and office.

##### Retail

- A quantitative analysis indicates that demand in the immediate future for 31,517 square feet of small retail development in the city overall.
- The study area includes 40.8% of all retail., which translates to demand for 12,868 additional square feet of retail space in the downtown area.

##### Office

- The estimated demand for new office in the city is 69,973 square feet by 2025, and an additional 34,064 square feet by 2030.
- The study area contains 29.4% of all Wharton office space. The study area could capture 20,601 square feet by 2025 and 10,014 square feet by 2030 for a total of 30,615 square feet over the next seven years.



*Single Family*



*Multifamily*



*Office*



*Retail*

## 4 Existing Downtown – Character

### Built Environment – Historic Downtown



*Courthouse Square with the Wharton County Courthouse, built in 1889, a Victorian/Italian style building designed by Eugene T. Heiner.*



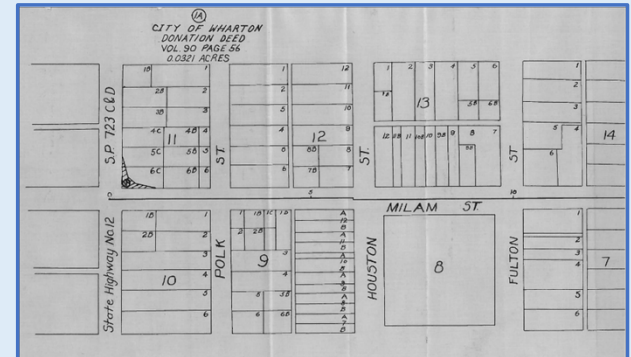
*Buildings on S. Fulton St. facing the Courthouse Square*

Courthouse Square and the surrounding blocks are approximately 300 feet square, with most blocks bisected by a 10-foot-wide alley, creating a highly walkable grid. The lot and block pattern in downtown was laid out over a century ago, long before the city's subdivision codes was adopted. The underlying lots were generally 50 feet wide by 145 feet deep, with the longer side running east-west on most blocks. The actual development of these blocks, however, does not necessarily reflect the original lot lines.

The blockfaces surrounding Courthouse Square are almost fully built out with one and two-story historic brick buildings facing the courthouse. Many are on 25-foot-wide lots, although there is some variation in size. On the four blockfaces facing the courthouse, only three properties – two narrow lots on S. Fulton St. and one mid-block parcel on W. Burleson St. – are without a structure and are being used for parking.

Milam St. has a similar development pattern of historic buildings on narrow lots, with an intact row of buildings from Fulton St. up to the corner lot at Richmond Rd.

The buildings on Milam St and facing Courthouse Square are all built to the front property line with no gap between buildings. Most buildings have awnings or canopies over the sidewalk, which provide protection from rain and summer heat. Virtually all of the buildings date from the late 1800s through the early-to-mid 1900s, although some have been altered over the years.



*TxDOT Right-of-way map showing the lots surrounding the Courthouse, 1931.*



*Plaza Theater, a two-story brick structure built in 1904 as the Plaza Hotel, and buildings on S. Houston St. facing the Courthouse Square*



## 4 Existing Downtown – Character

### Built Environment – Historic Downtown



*The historic Courthouse Square (Monterrey Square) – A venue for the popular Wine and Arts Fair.*

### History of Courthouse Square (Monterrey Square)

Wharton County was established in 1846 as a full-fledged county named Wharton and entitled to a county seat of government also named Wharton; both after the two Wharton brothers (William Harris and John Austin) who were instrumental in the revolution against Mexico's rule and the creation of the Republic of Texas.

A handful of person resided on the east bank of the Colorado River within the grant given by William Kincheloe. As part of his original land grant, William Kincheloe deeded property to Wharton that includes the county courthouse to the banks of the Colorado. The deed also named the “square” surrounding Wharton County Courthouse as Monterey Square.

Kincheloe's sons offered to allow the county seat to be established on their land grant, with one block set aside for the construction of a county courthouse.

March 1846 marked the beginning of the Mexico War with troops led by General Zachary Taylor to settle a dispute between Mexico, Texas, and the US regarding the southern boundary division between Texas and Mexico. On July 7, 1846, at a battle in Monterey, Mexico, the Mexican army was defeated. One of the participants in this battle was J Pickney Henderson, first elected governor of the state of Texas, who stepped down as governor to join Gen Taylor, while his Lieutenant Governor, A C Horton served as interim governor. A C Horton owned a large plantation in Wharton County and may have been instrumental in suggesting the new courthouse square be named Monterey for the successful 1846 battle. The first courthouse for the county was not built until 1848. Savannah, Georgia has numerous "squares" within its boundary used for parks and one is named Monterey for the same 1846 battle in Mexico. The town of Monterey, Mexico is spelled with two "r"s but the Monterey squares in Wharton and Savannah have only one "r", as does the city of Monterey, California.



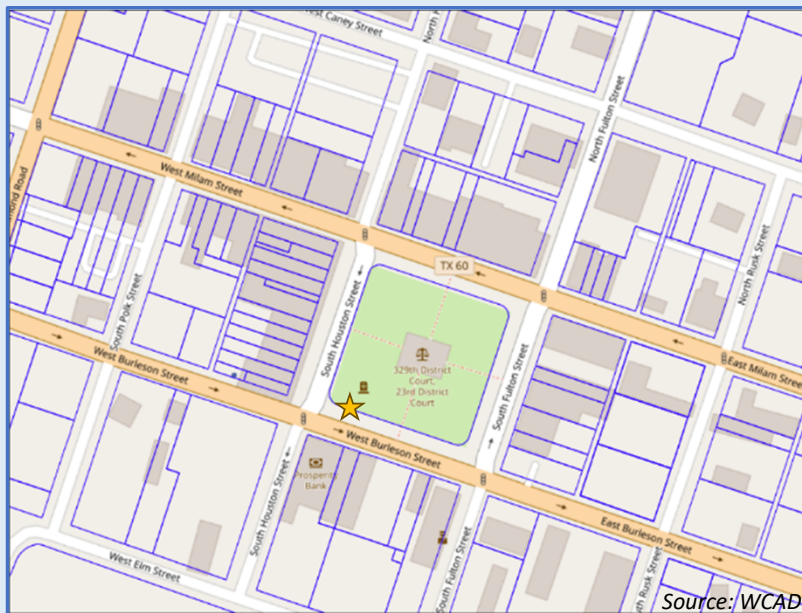
*Community event flier – Event at Monterey Square*



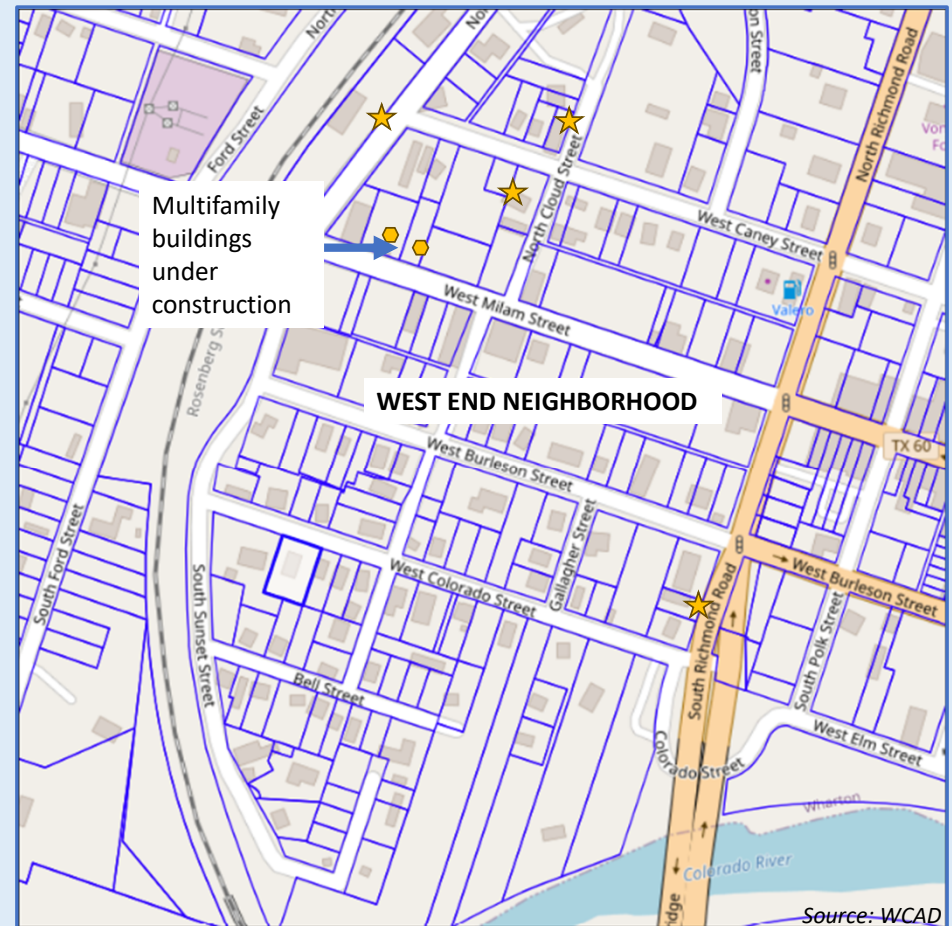
## 4 Existing Downtown – Character

### Built Environment – Neighborhoods

Outside of the downtown core, lots and blocks vary in size, but 50-foot lots are common. Buildings have more separation, and many lots are empty or used for surface parking. The West End neighborhood is primarily residential with older one and two-story homes, although W. Milam St. has several older commercial buildings built to the front lot line. The two new multifamily buildings being built on W. Milam St. will be approximately 40 feet tall and will be the largest structures in the vicinity. The neighborhood east of Richmond Rd. and north of Caney St. has a similar pattern of development, although with more churches and commercial uses woven into the fabric.



*Lots and Building Footprints around the Courthouse Square.*



*Lots and Building Footprints – West End Neighborhood located west of Richmond Rd.*

## 4 Existing Downtown – Character

### Historic Resources

Downtown Wharton's authentic and relatively intact historic character is an irreplaceable asset. The downtown study area contains dozens of buildings, both commercial and residential, from the late 1800s and early-to-mid 1900s. Two of the most significant include the 1889 Wharton County Courthouse and the 1930 Colorado River Bridge, both fully restored in the last 20 years.

The study area also contains three National Register Historic Districts established in 1993 – the Wharton County Courthouse Historic Commercial District, West Milam Mercantile Historic District on the 600 block of W. Milam St., and the Linn Street Historic District, which includes Horton Foote's boyhood home. The inventories prepared for these three districts identified almost 70 'contributing' structures. Although some of these buildings have been lost, most are still standing.

### Historic Districts in Wharton

Wharton County Courthouse Historic Commercial District (added 1991 -- #91001624)  
Roughly bounded by the alley N of Milam St., Rusk St., Elm St. and Richmond St., Wharton

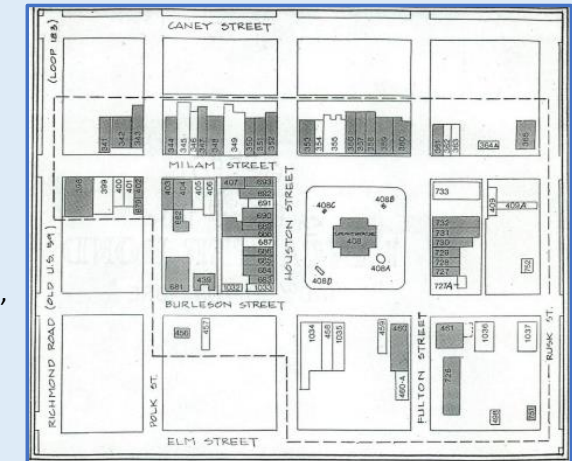


Historic Significance: Architecture/Engineering, Event  
Architectural Style: Romanesque, Italianate, Moderne  
Period of Significance: 1925-1949, 1900-1924, 1875-1899

Linn Street Historic District (added 1993 -- #93000124)  
Roughly, the 500 blocks of Richmond Rd. and Houston St. and the 100--200 blocks of Linn St.



Historic Significance: Architecture/Engineering  
Architectural Style: Late 19th And 20th Century Revivals, Late 19th And Early 20th Century American Movements, Bungalow/Craftsman  
Period of Significance: 1925-1949, 1900-1924



WHARTON COUNTY COURTHOUSE HISTORIC COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

*City Layout of Historic Commercial District*

West Milam Street Mercantile Historic District (added 1993 -- #93000125)  
Roughly 637--668 W. Milam St., Wharton



Historic Significance: Architecture/Engineering  
Architectural Style: Late 19th And Early 20th Century American Movements, Late Victorian  
Area of Significance: Architecture  
Period of Significance: 1925-1949, 1900-1924

*Source : National Register of Historic Districts*



## 4 Existing Downtown – Character

### Historic Resources

Another dozen or so buildings within or adjacent to the study area are individually 'listed' or landmarked at the state or national level, including the Texas & New Orleans Railroad Depot and New Hope Community Church. Many other buildings of the period that may not have the same degree of significance still retain their historic features and add value to the downtown area. A complete list of historic buildings is included in the following page.

These historic resources are an incredible opportunity to attract visitors. Although some of downtown's older buildings need rehabilitation, century-old buildings were generally built of sturdy materials, including old growth lumber, which has helped them survive despite periods of neglect. Structures of historic age, whether officially 'listed' or not, should be considered for rehabilitation over demolition. **'Contributing' and individually listed historic buildings may qualify for state and federal tax credits to help cover the costs of rehabilitation.**



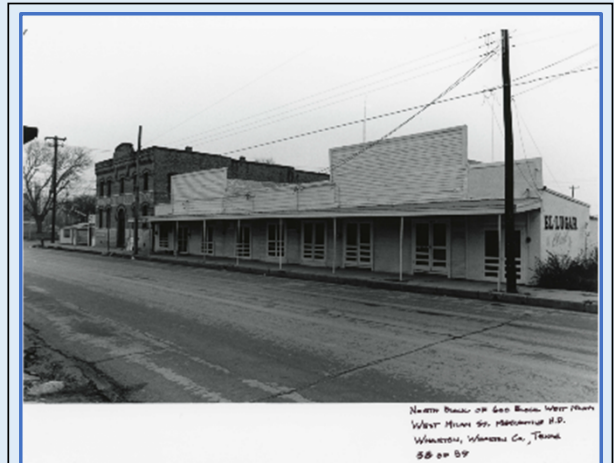
Gifford House, George C. Gifford, 1914



Individually landmarked historic buildings in the West End neighborhood (left to right, Gifford House, Texas and New Orleans Railroad Depot, Harrison-Dennis House).



Harrison-Dennis House - 1914



West Milam Mercantile Historic District, 600 block. The other structures in the district have been demolished.

Contributing buildings in the West Milam Mercantile Historic District, 600 block. The other structures in the district have been demolished.

Source : National Register of Historic Districts, List of Historic Sites in Wharton County, Texas – [www.gohistoric.com](http://www.gohistoric.com)

## 4 Existing Downtown – Character

### National Register of Historic Places listings in Wharton County, Texas

There are three districts and 29 individual properties listed on the National Register in Wharton county. Two individually listed properties are Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks while one district contains several State Antiquities Landmarks including one that is also a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark. Of the individual properties, the following are located in Wharton.

- Ben and Mary Davis House Wharton, Texas 1933
- Bolton-Outlar House Wharton, Texas 1910
- Edwin Hawes House Wharton, Texas
- F. F. Dannon House Wharton, Texas 1905
- First Methodist Episcopal Church South, Old Wharton, Texas 1927
- George C. and Annie Gifford House Wharton, Texas 1900
- Hawes, Edwin, Jr., House Wharton, Texas 1900
- Henry B. Garrett House Wharton, Texas 1905
- House at 401 North Richmond Wharton, Texas 1935
- J. H. Speaker House Wharton, Texas 1904
- Joseph Andrew Hamilton House Wharton, Texas
- Leon Abovitz House Wharton, Texas 1933
- Merrell-Roten House Wharton, Texas 1930
- St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church Wharton, Texas 1929
- Texas and New Orleans Railroad Bridge Wharton, Texas 1903
- Wiley J. Croom House Wharton, Texas 1888



*J.H. Speaker House*



*Joseph Andrew Hamilton House*



*St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church*



*Ben And Mary Davy House*



*George C & Annie Gifford House*



*Henry B. Garrett House*



*F.F. Dannon House*



*Bolton-Outlar House*



*Texas and New Orleans Railroad Bridge*



*First Methodist Episcopal Church South*



*Edwin Hawes House*



*Wiley J. Croom House*



*Merrell-Roten House*



*Leon Abovitz House*

Source : National Register of Historic Districts, List of Historic Sites in Wharton County, Texas – [www.gohistoric.com](http://www.gohistoric.com)



## 4 Existing Downtown – Development Standards

### Setbacks and Height

The character of a street or neighborhood is shaped to a large extent by the size and placement of buildings, especially building height and setbacks.

Modern auto-oriented development is characterized by buildings set away from the street, usually with a parking area in front. One reason for this pattern are city ordinances requiring buildings to be ‘set back’ a certain distance from property lines. Wharton’s development code requires a front setback of at least 25 feet, or 35 feet on major thoroughfares such as Richmond Rd., Milam St. and Fulton St. The city’s side setback requirements vary, but are never less than 5 feet for residential and 10 feet for commercial uses. These requirements result in the type of ‘suburban-style’ commercial and residential development found outside of downtown, which generally prioritizes vehicles and parking over pedestrians.

In contrast, the historic buildings around Courthouse Square have no front or side setbacks – they are built up to the front property line abutting the sidewalk and have no separation between them. This type of development is ideal for creating a vibrant, walkable environment. However, Wharton’s current development regulations prevent new development from being built in this same pattern unless variances are granted, a process that adds time, money, and uncertainty to development costs.

Wharton’s code does not currently impose any height limits on new buildings. The new multifamily buildings on W. Milam St. will be three stories and almost 40 feet tall, which is taller than most buildings in the downtown area. Buildings of any height could conceivably be built anywhere in the study area with no restriction.

Current Building Setback Requirements in Wharton (Sec. 18-77)

	Single Family/ Duplex	Multifamily	Commercial/ Industrial
Front	25/35	25/35	25/35
Side, Exterior	15/25	15/25	15/25
Side, Interior	5	5 (10 next to single family)	10 (20 next to single family)
Rear	5/15/25	5-25	10-25

*By requiring a minimum setback of at least 25 feet, or 35 feet on major thoroughfares such as Richmond Rd., Milam St. and Fulton St, Wharton’s development standards do not allow commercial site design that is compatible with its historic downtown character and contrary to a pedestrian and bicycle-friendly neighborhood.*



*The Plaza Theatre, Wharton, Texas*

## 4 Existing Downtown – Development Standards

### Building and Site Design

Some common types of private property development standards adopted by cities include requirements for:

- Building height and bulk
- Building setbacks
- Landscaping
- Buffers and screening
- Curb cut and driveway widths
- Building placement and orientation
- Main entrance location
- Building façade ‘transparency’ (windows)
- Awnings and canopies
- Sidewalks and street trees
- Pedestrian walkways
- Parking location
- Outdoor displays
- Outdoor storage and dumpster location (screening, enclosures)
- Fences (location, height, materials)
- Outdoor lighting
- Detention (location, screening)

Wharton currently has very few of these requirements in its development code, other than setbacks, parking minimums, and sidewalk construction.



*Fredericksburg, TX  
Example of zero building setbacks in Fredericksburg, TX. that encourage location buildings along the street in downtown.*

Front Yard	Minimum Required Setback, 0 feet
Street Side Yard	Minimum Required Setback, 0 feet
Interior Side Yard	Minimum Required Setback, 0 feet; or 10 feet when abutting R1, R1A, or R5 zoning districts
Rear Yard	Minimum Required Setback, 0 feet; or 10 feet when abutting R1, R1A, or R5 zoning districts

*City of El Campo, TX. Is another example, where due to the character of the downtown, there are no minimum regulations governing height of buildings, lot size, setbacks, and parking requirements. The buildings and structures are encouraged to be compatible with existing structures on either side.*



*El Campo, TX*

## 4 Existing Downtown – Development Standards

### Signage

The City's current sign ordinance is not tailored to the need or character of Downtown. Signs that add character and vibrancy to a downtown, such as horizontal signs projecting over walkways and sidewalks, portable signs, banners, flags, awning signs, and other similar signs are not permitted. In addition, existing signage for downtown businesses is frequently obscured by visual impediments such as the utility poles along W. Milam St.

### Landscaping

The City of Wharton does not currently require new development to provide landscaping of any type. Adopting landscaping requirements for nonresidential and multifamily uses would improve aesthetics in downtown, especially along the corridors.

### Parking

The City of Wharton requires a minimum number of parking spaces for new development, based on the proposed use. The city's code of ordinances, however, contains the following provision for downtown:

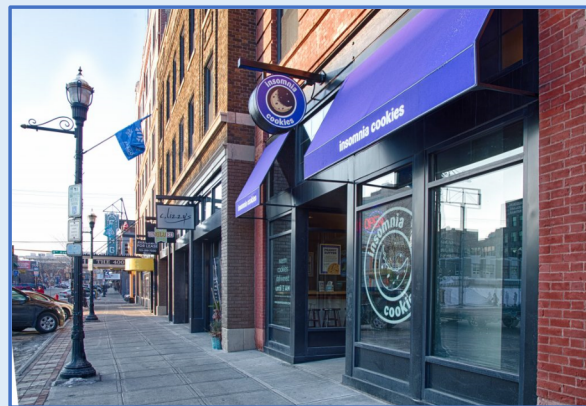
***Sec. 18-79 (a) Off-street parking required.*** *The provisions of this section may not apply to properties located in the downtown business area.*

The code provision is unclear whether parking requirements downtown are waived as of right, or at the discretion of the city. Furthermore, the boundaries of the 'downtown business area' are not explicitly stated. Currently, decisions about parking requirements downtown are handled by the city's Building Official.

Downtown currently has ample on-street parking – parallel parking is available on most streets, as is angle-in parking around Courthouse Square. The City also owns several large parcels on Caney St. and Richmond Rd. that are available for free public off-street parking. According to the 2018 Comprehensive Plan, the central business district contains almost 2,000 parking spaces, both on- and off-street, which is more than enough to meet downtown's current needs.



*Example of development with lack of landscaping requirements*



*Examples of signs shown here, such as horizontal signs projecting over walkways and sidewalks, portable signs, banners, flags, awning signs, and other similar signs are not currently permitted*



## 4 Existing Downtown – Development Standards

### Parks and Public Space

The downtown study area contains multiple parks and public spaces:

- Riverfront Park – 12.32 acres with ½ mile of waterfront, but aging facilities and flood damage. The planned levee and flood wall will partially impair access to the river, but there is still the opportunity for an extended hike and bike trail, improved sports courts, a new fishing dock, scenic views, and passive recreation.
- Dinosaur Park – 2.96 acres, has a basketball court and playground, but no restrooms. Hesed House, a local community nonprofit organization, occupies the area immediately adjacent to the park.
- Train Depot – 1.2-acre site with the restored 1912 Southern Pacific Railroad Depot, with benches and decorative lighting. The property is in excellent condition but is isolated.
- Guffey Park – This property at W. Caney St. and N. Houston St. is currently used as a public parking lot. The city had plans to develop the property with a public pavilion and restrooms, but this project is now dormant. The farmers market that used to meet here has moved to Riverfront Park, which has more shade. Based on public input, residents would still like at minimum to have public restrooms at this location.
- Courthouse Square – The public plaza contains trees, decorative lighting, seating, and several memorials. The gazebo at the southeast corner is a popular spot for photographs.

Although these multiple public spaces have great potential, they are disconnected from each other and from the heart of downtown. Most also need upgrades in facilities, restrooms, and other amenities.

Colorado Street and the adjacent sidewalk that currently extend under the Colorado River Bridge, connecting Dinosaur Park and Riverfront Park, will be cut off by the new levee, which will eliminate the only safe walking route from the West End neighborhood to the Historic Downtown core.

The 2018 Comprehensive Plan recommended the development of a network of sidewalks and trails linking residents to parks, schools, and businesses as a top priority for the city. Other park priorities include safety lighting and new and renovated restrooms in all parks.

The Santa Fe Trail is one of the city's most visited parks – linking this trail to downtown and the riverfront would greatly increase the city's recreational opportunities and allow residents to walk and bike safely to downtown.

### Arts and Culture

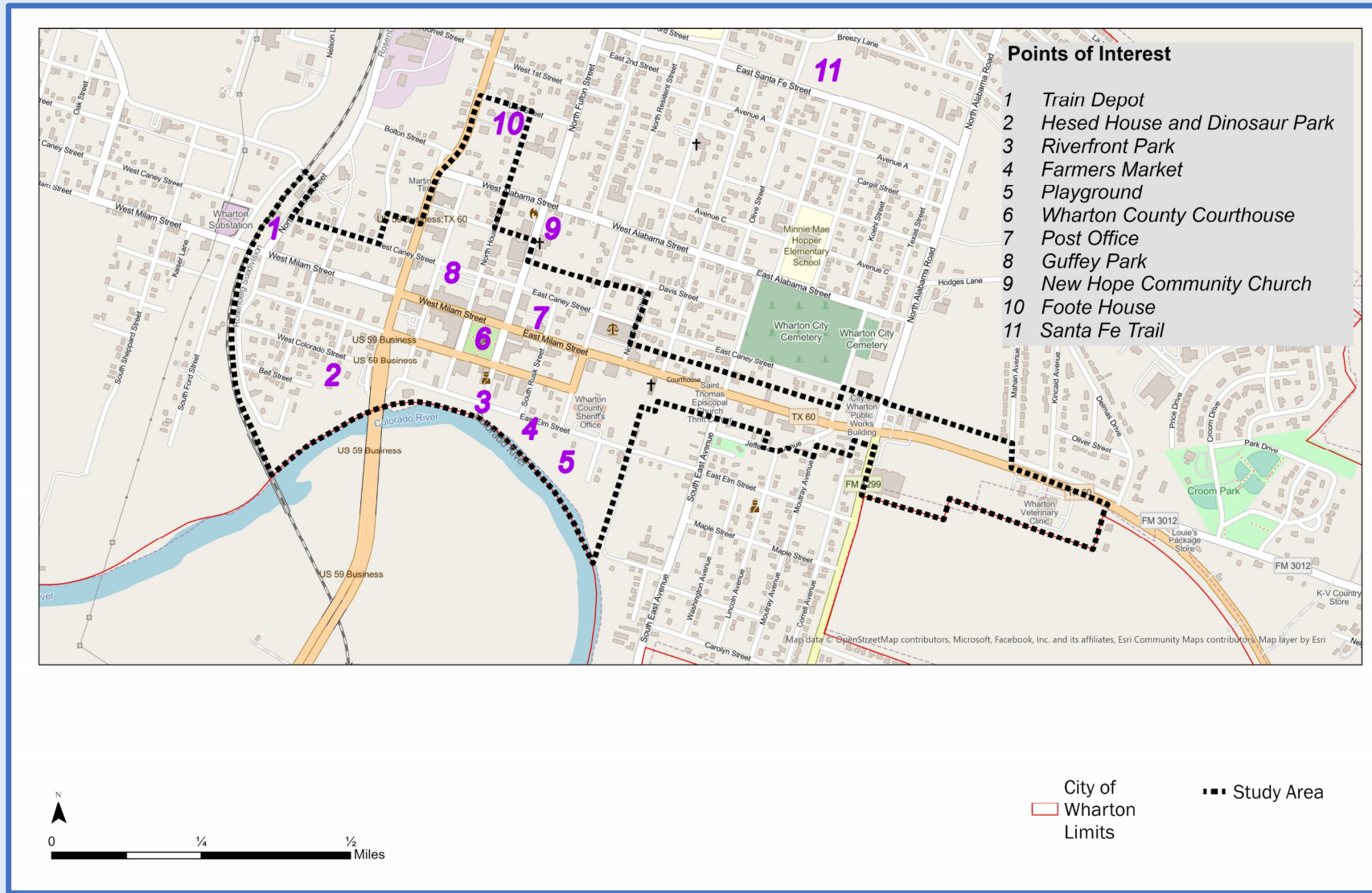
Downtown has numerous murals celebrating the history and culture of the city. The new flood wall on Elm St. in Riverfront Park will present another opportunity for a mural or other artwork.

Hesed House on W. Colorado St. offers community activities and cultural programming and is a valuable community resource. The organization is currently expanding its capacity by renovating three older houses that were relocated to the site by the city after flood buyouts on S. Sunset St.

These assets are shown on the map on the next page.

## 4 Existing Downtown – Development Standards

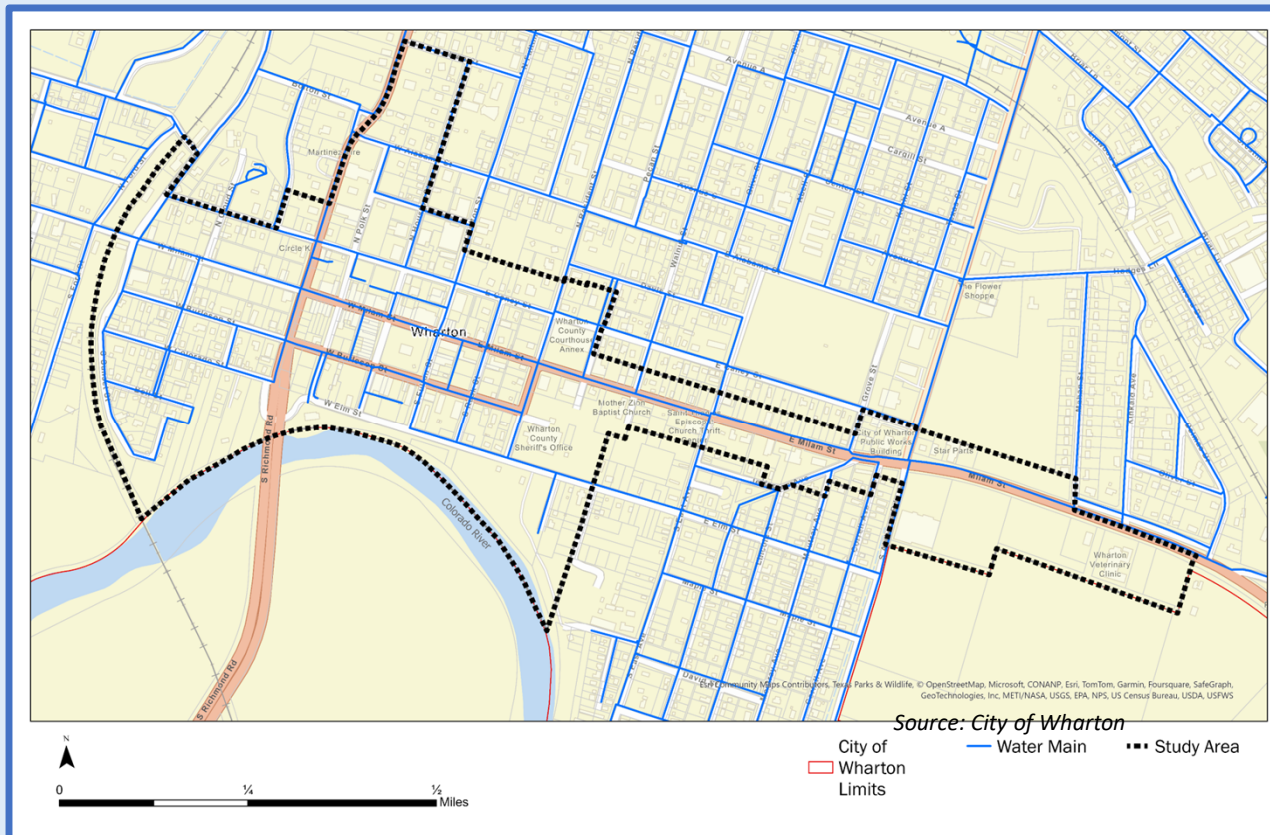
### Downtown Assets and Points of Interest



Map showing the assets in Downtown



## 4 Existing Downtown – Infrastructure



Map showing existing water lines

Infrastructure includes storm sewer, water lines and wastewater systems.

### Water Lines

The City of Wharton uses groundwater and five wells as its source for potable water. The City operates four wells that pump into groundwater storage tanks, which is then pumped out to a distribution system of approximately 400,000 linear feet of pipes city-wide. The pipes vary from 1 inch to 16 inches diameter. According to city staff, the city does not have comprehensive data about the age and condition of existing water lines, but most of the system pipes were installed prior to 1960.

In the downtown area, the water system consists of approximately 28,000 linear feet of distribution pipes.

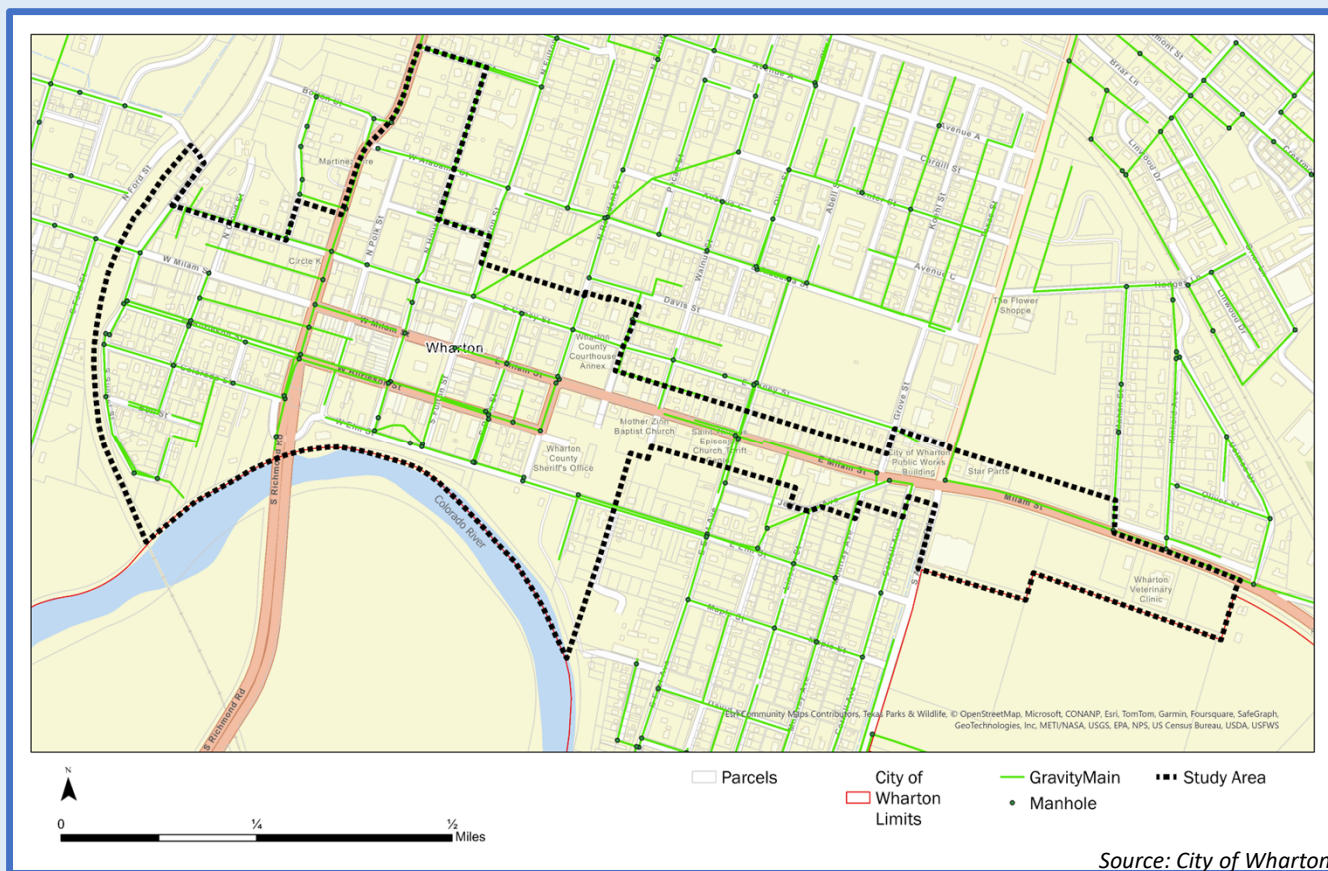
A major concern for the future of downtown is the age and condition of water and wastewater lines. **Approximately 75% of the city water lines are original pipe of cast iron, galvanized steel and asbestos.**

Wharton does not have an established program for routine maintenance or a dedicated fund for annual repair and maintenance. The city replaces water lines as needed, such as for breakage, valve malfunction or other system failures. The city is in the process of mapping its water and wastewater assets

## 4 Existing Downtown – Infrastructure

### Wastewater

According to the 2018 Comprehensive Plan, the City of Wharton's wastewater system consists of two wastewater treatment plants and ten lift stations. The city maintains approximately 38,000 linear feet of force main ranging in diameter from 3 to 14 inches and approximately 370,000 LF of gravity lines ranging from 4 to 27 inches in diameter. As with the city's water lines, data about the system is incomplete, although age and condition of the wastewater lines is of concern.



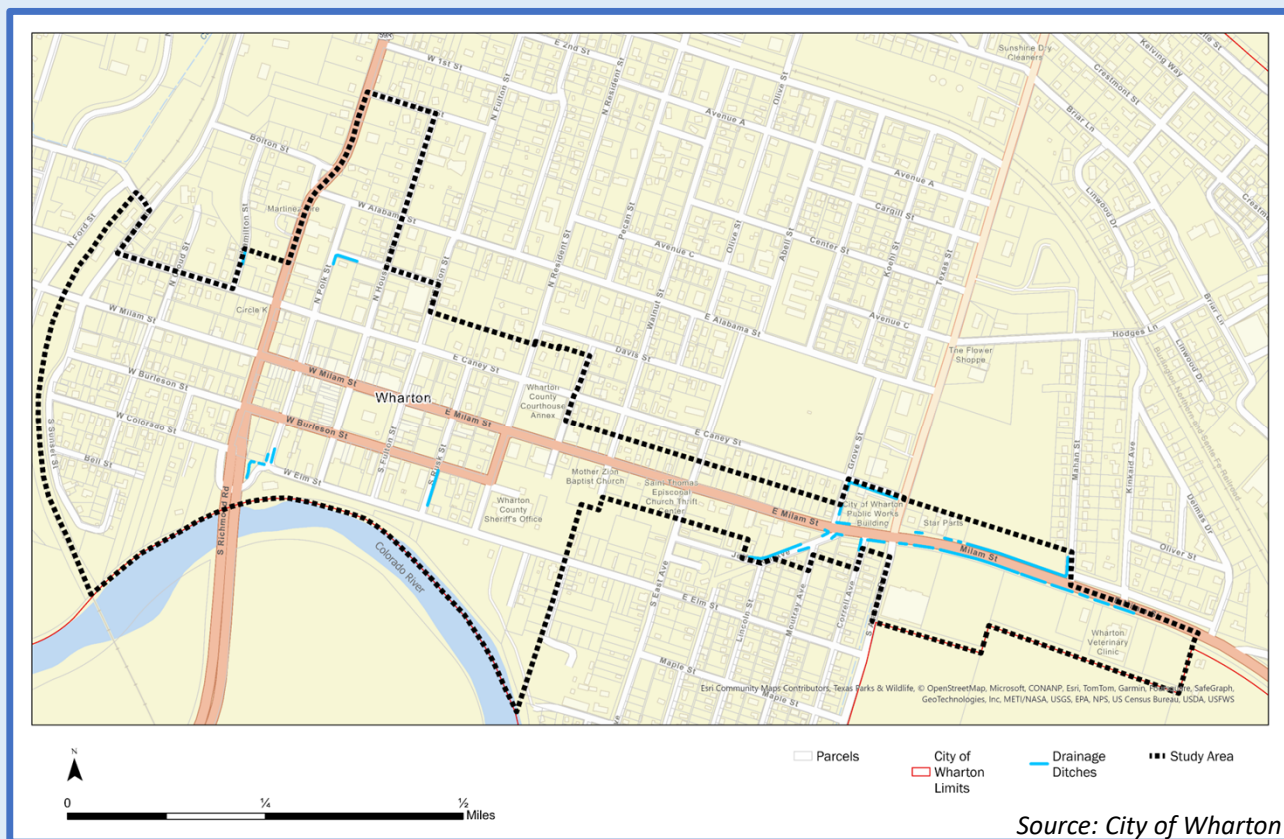
Map showing existing wastewater system

## 4 Existing Downtown – Infrastructure

### Drainage

The drainage systems that serve the City are controlled by three separate entities: Wharton County, TxDOT and the City of Wharton. The City is responsible for roadside ditches, culverts and underground storm sewer systems along the city-maintained local streets. TxDOT is responsible for drainage infrastructure along SH 60/Milam St. and US 59/Richmond Rd. Based on previous studies, the City maintains approximately 300,000 linear feet of roadside ditches.

Most of the downtown area is served by underground storm sewer, although roadside ditches are found on the eastern side of downtown along E. Milam St./SH 60, as well as on a few blocks scattered throughout the study area. The roadside ditches have relatively shallow depth and may not have capacity to effectively convey runoff during a larger rainfall event.

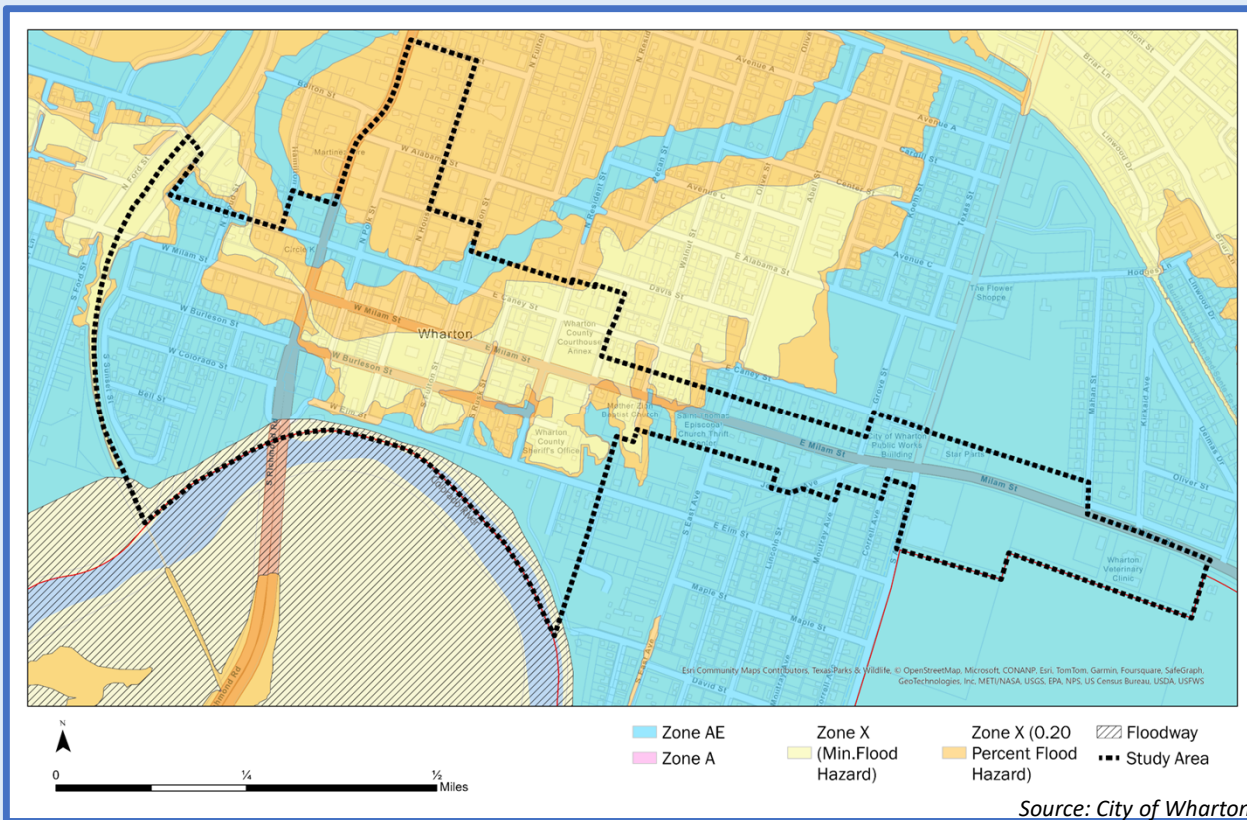




## 4 Existing Downtown – Infrastructure

### Floodplain

Based on Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM), approximately 60% of the City is in the 100-year floodplain (1% annual chance of flood) and a portion of the city is in the Colorado River floodway. Development is possible in the floodplain, but buildings must be elevated or floodproofed to withstand future flood damage, and added fill must be mitigated to avoid increasing flood levels downstream.



Floodplain Map

Because of its location close to the Colorado River, a relatively substantial portion – roughly half – of Wharton’s downtown area is in the FEMA 100-year floodplain, with smaller portions in the floodway or 500-year floodplain. Only a quarter of the study area is not in a flood zone.

Of the portion that is in a flood hazard area:

- Two-thirds is in the 100-year floodplain (Zone AE).
- Roughly a third is in the 500-year floodplain, with a .02 percent annual chance of flooding (Zone X-shaded). This includes portions of the historic downtown.
- 4 acres along the riverbank are in the Colorado River floodway.

The area close to Courthouse Square has been mostly spared from recent flooding, although homes and businesses in the adjacent neighborhoods, especially the West End neighborhood, have suffered significant damage in recent flood events.

## 4 Existing Downtown – Infrastructure

### Hurricane Harvey

Hurricane Harvey in August 2017 was the city's most damaging recent storm event, although Wharton also experienced significant floods in 2004, 2015, and 2016. Harvey dropped approximately 60 inches of rainfall over four days and flooded areas of the city that hadn't flooded in decades. The Colorado River overflowed its banks and inundated houses across the city. Over 700 properties were affected, with the West End neighborhood the most significantly impacted.



*Homes affected by flooding from Hurricane Harvey - West Wharton*  
Source: City of Wharton

Most of the flood-damaged structures have now been repaired, but the City bought out three residential properties along S. Sunset St. close to the river to accommodate the new levee. The three houses were relocated to the city-owned property occupied by Hesus House on W. Colorado St. and are being renovated as part of the organization's campus.

### Levee and Flood Wall

In response to the extensive flooding of recent years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is building a levee along the Colorado River to mitigate future flood damage. The first phase of the levee will be built to the west of the Colorado River Bridge. Design work for Phase I is completed and groundbreaking took place in November 2023.

Phase II of the project includes the stretch of river east of the bridge, including Riverfront Park. The Phase II flood improvements are currently in design, but will continue the levee along the river bank adjacent to downtown. In addition, a six-foot-tall flood wall approximately two blocks long will be constructed immediately south of Elm St. between S. Polk St. and S. Rusk St.



*Area around the bridge and downtown affected by flooding from Hurricane Harvey - West Wharton*



## 4 Existing Downtown – Infrastructure

### Utilities

CenterPoint, AT&T, and Sparklight are the primary providers in the city.

Most of downtown is crisscrossed by overhead utility lines on large utility poles placed along the street front. In some cases, utility lines have been moved to the rear of properties, but the unused poles are still in place.

### Broadband

Access to broadband internet is an issue city-wide. In addition to services provided by private companies, Wharton EDC and the City have commenced work on expansion of broadband across the City. However, based on the input received by the community, downtown still suffers from spotty internet service. The lack of reliable internet is an inconvenience to current businesses and residents and a hindrance for attracting new business to downtown. It is anticipated that the undergoing efforts by private companies, Wharton EDC and the City will address this problem.

Ultimately, the city would like to provide free Wi-Fi downtown, which would benefit downtown businesses and residents and would also encourage the public to visit and spend time downtown. However, the EDC is no longer prioritizing free WiFi downtown because of the cost of pole attachments with CenterPoint, the only logical provider.

There are many ways that having access to high-speed internet can help downtown. From economic opportunities to better health and education, residents can see the benefits of high-speed internet service every day. Businesses can create a bigger market for their goods and services, driving the success of the community. Businesses can run more efficiently, flourish, and create greater economic opportunities for the downtown. Educational opportunities can grow, from online learning for children to continuing education for adults. Residents can quickly get the information they need to stay safe. Small town communities are able to remain independent without feeling isolated from the rest of the world. Residents can stay connected with family and friends, and even create new networks around the globe. Reliable and faster internet service can attract remote workers to live in the downtown and its surroundings.



*Utility pole in the middle of the sidewalk on E. Milam St.*

## 4 Existing Downtown – Mobility & Connectivity

Safe and efficient circulation that includes pedestrian and bicycle mobility, traffic safety, improved functionality for events, aesthetic enhancements, and infrastructure improvements is important to the success of Wharton's downtown revitalization. Currently, sidewalks are intermittent and there is no bicycle infrastructure downtown. Highway through-traffic on US 59 and SH 60 creates an unpleasant and unsafe environment for people downtown.

### Road Network

The downtown study area is intersected by numerous local streets and two TxDOT highways – Richmond Road or US 59 (Business) and State Highway 60 (SH 60). US 59 runs north to Rosenberg and Houston, and south to El Campo and Victoria. SH 60 leads south to Bay City and Matagorda and north to Wallis.

US 59, which is named Richmond Rd. in Wharton, runs north-south through the west portion of the study area. From the south, US 59 enters downtown over the Colorado River Bridge, a divided roadbed bridge whose arms merge into a single roadbed north of W Burleson St.

SH 60 is generally a north-south state highway, but runs mostly east-west through Downtown Wharton. It enters the study area from the east as a single roadbed named Milam St., but splits into a one-way couplet between Residence St. and Richmond Rd. – westbound (North) on Milam St and eastbound (South) on Burleson St. At Richmond Rd, SH 60 and US 59 run coterminal from Burleson St. towards the north of the study area.

Also important to downtown's road network is the historic Colorado River bridge on US 59, which was refurbished by TxDOT and reopened in 2018.

Other key roads within the study area include Caney St., Fulton St., Residence St., Sunset St., and Elm St.



*US 59 over the Colorado River*



*SH 60 is a state highway that runs east-west through Downtown*

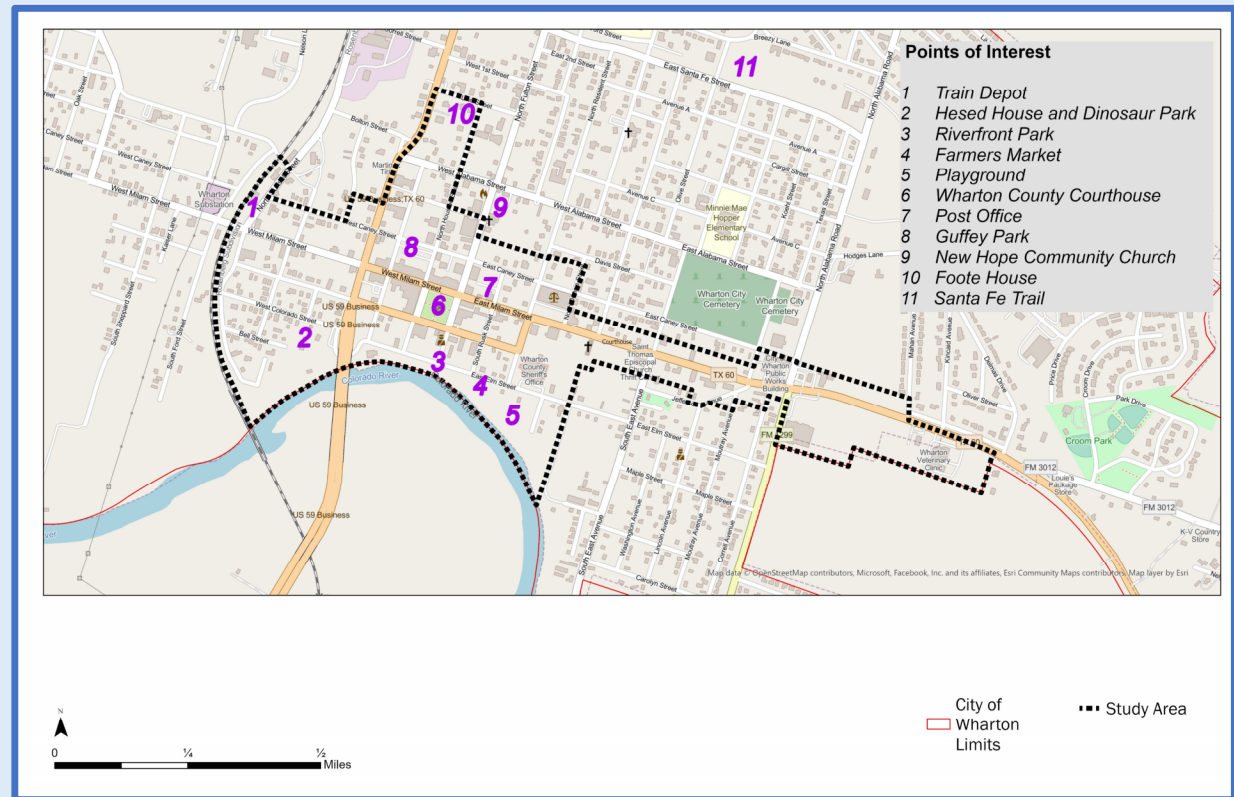
## 4 Existing Downtown – Mobility & Connectivity

### Traffic Attractors and Generators

The downtown study area contains numerous **points of interest** that act as significant traffic attractors and generators of traffic.

In addition to those listed and shown on the map, other significant establishments are:

- City Hall – E. Caney St and N. Houston St., one block north of SH 60/W. Milam St.
- Wharton County Courthouse – occupies a whole city block on SH 60/W. Milam St. and S. Houston St.
- Courthouse Annex (and adjoining parking lot) – occupies a city block on SH 60/E. Milam St. and N. Resident St.
- Plaza Theater – Houston St. across the street from Courthouse Square
- Central Appraisal District Offices – E. Milam St.
- Wharton County Sheriff's Office and County Jail – Elm St.

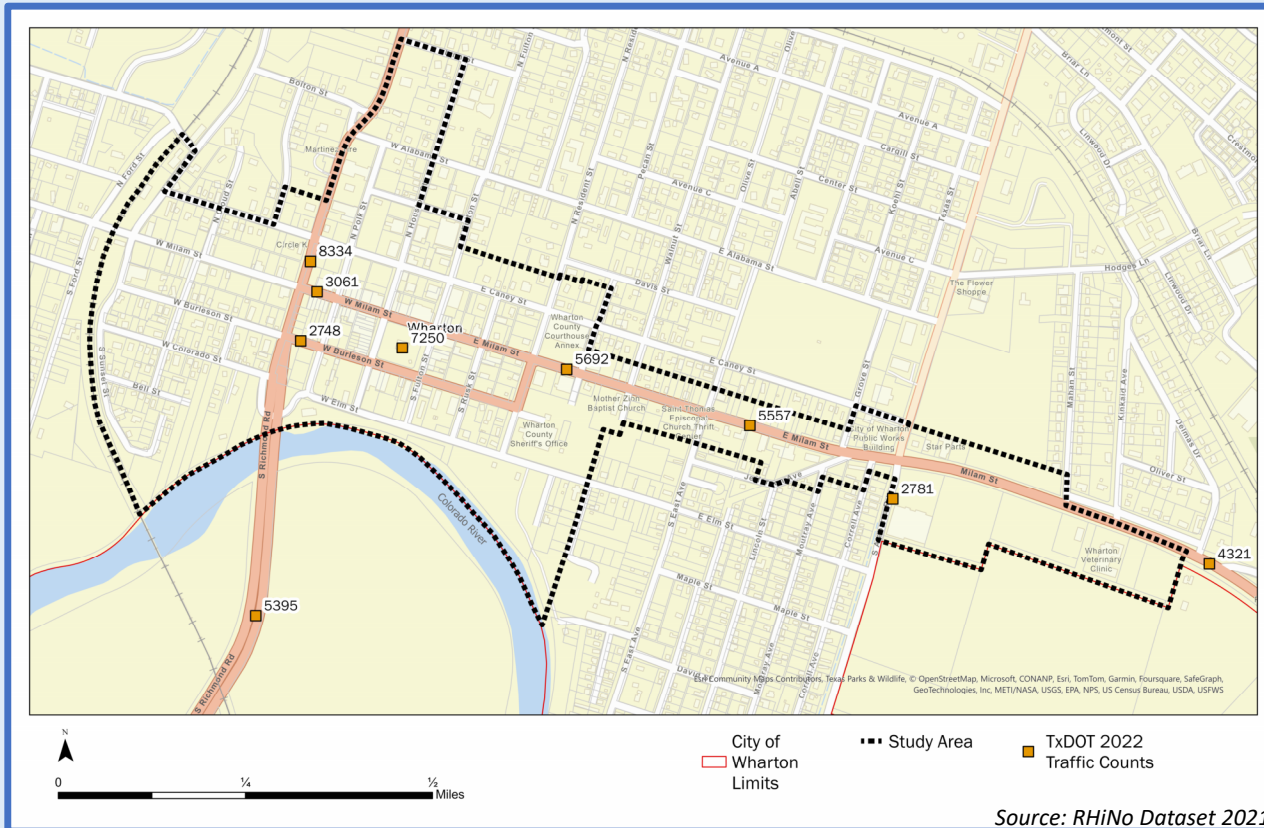


Traffic Generators – Points of Interest



## 4 Existing Downtown – Mobility & Connectivity

### Traffic Volume



### Traffic Counts

The volume of traffic along roads in the study area can be distinctly divided into two types:

- *High-volume thoroughways (red)*: 6,500 vehicles per day.
- *Low-volume local streets (green)*: fewer than 200 vehicles per day.

The high-volume thoroughways in Downtown Wharton are US 59/Richmond Rd. and SH 60/Milam St. and Burleson St. All other roads in the downtown area are local streets.

In 2021, traffic volumes in the Central Business District varied between 150 vehicles per day on local streets, to 13,000 vehicles per day on SH 60.

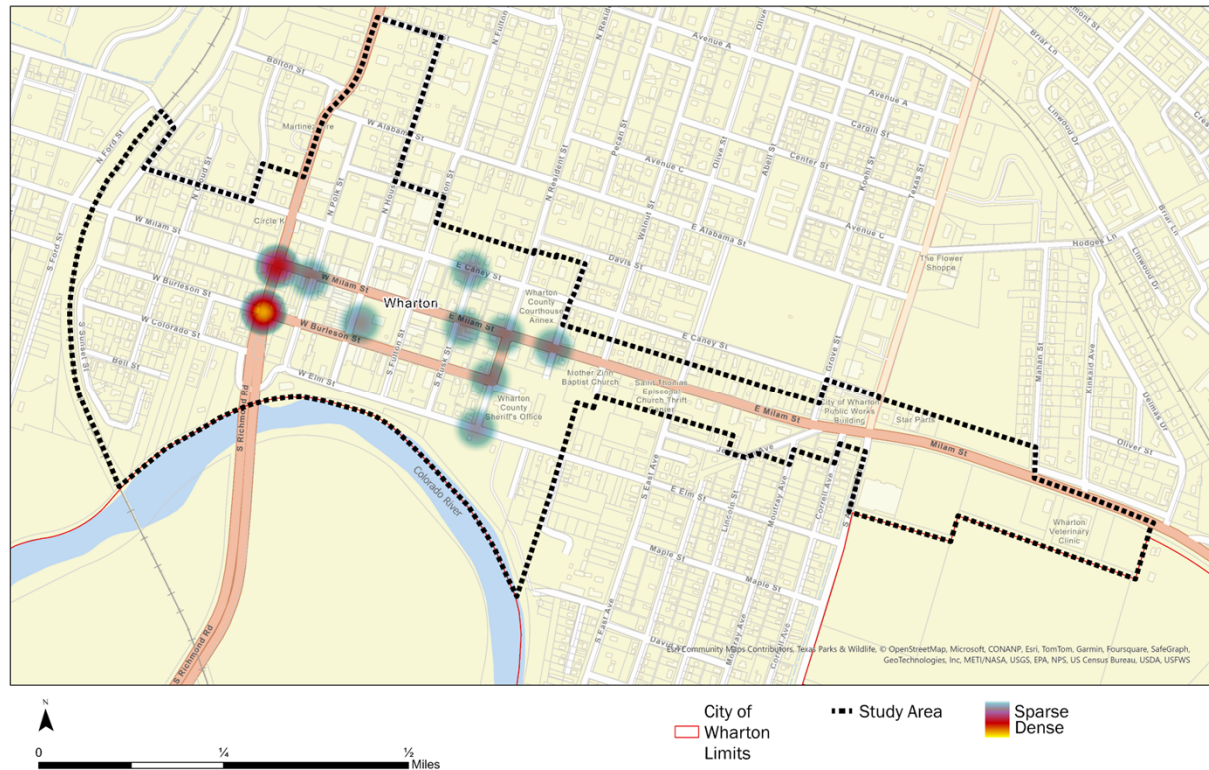
The thoroughways had the highest percentage of commercial trucks in the traffic mix, at around 10%. On local streets, this percentage was 3.2%.

Combining the volume of traffic, with percentage of trucks, and other variables such as number of lanes and speed of traffic, the estimated Level of Service across the study area is 'A' [free flow]. While traffic density is much higher along the thoroughways, the traffic volume is low enough to not be impeded.



## 4 Existing Downtown – Mobility & Connectivity

### Crashes and Traffic Safety



### Crash Analysis

Between 2018 and 2022, sixteen vehicle crashes occurred in the Central Business District, six of them occurring in 2022. Seventy five percent (75%) of all crashes since 2018 occurred after the COVID-19 pandemic. Only one crash involved a commercial vehicle, which happened at the intersection of W. Milam St. and S. Rusk St. A crash in January 2022 involved a construction worker, which occurred at the intersection of W. Milam St. and Richmond Rd.

One of the 16 crashes was caused by speeding. Other causes included jumping a stop-and-go signal, driver inattention, distraction in vehicle, and impaired visibility. Other causes included jumping a stop-and-go signal, driver inattention, distraction in vehicle, and impaired visibility.

Fourteen crashes involved a vehicle 'rear-ending' another. In 12 of these rear-end collisions, one of the vehicles was at rest. Two crashes involved left-turn maneuvers. Six occurred at intersections.

Ten crashes occurred at signals and four at stop signs, making traffic control the leading contributor to vehicle collisions. In all these crashes, only one person was injured (Severity C – Possible Injury).

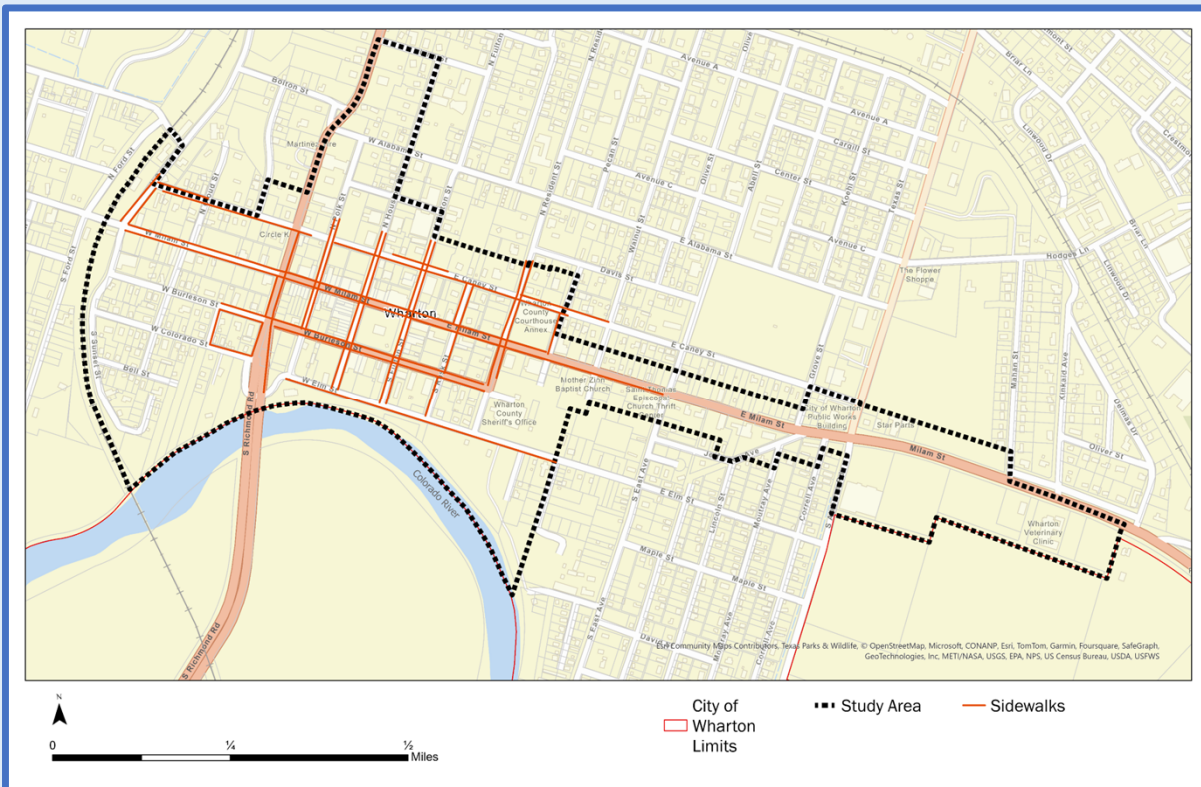
Road hierarchy also was an important factor in explaining crash occurrence – 11 of the 16 crashes occurred on US 59 and SH 60, while 5 occurred on local streets. More crashes occurred on wider roadways with 4 lanes or more. A majority (at least 9) of the crashes occurred on undivided roadways. No pedestrians or bike riders have been hit in the last five years.

## 4 Existing Downtown – Mobility & Connectivity

### Pedestrian Connectivity

Most downtown streets east of Richmond Rd. have sidewalks on both sides of the street, although the width and condition of these sidewalks vary. The northside of Elm St., and a few blocks along the northside of Caney St., are notable exceptions.

The neighborhood west of Richmond Rd. has sidewalks on roughly half the blocks. Richmond Rd. itself is notable for having few segments of sidewalk, mainly on its east side. Several blocks on Richmond Rd. have large areas of continuous driveway pavement with no curbs or dedicated sidewalk. Most corners have ADA ramps, however, even where there is no sidewalk connection.



*Pedestrian Mobility  
Approximate location of sidewalks in the Central Business District*

Overall, the downtown study area has approximately 5.7 mi of sidewalks. Among the seven traffic attractors and generators noted in this document, only the Sheriff's Office is inaccessible by a dedicated sidewalk.

### Bicycle Lanes

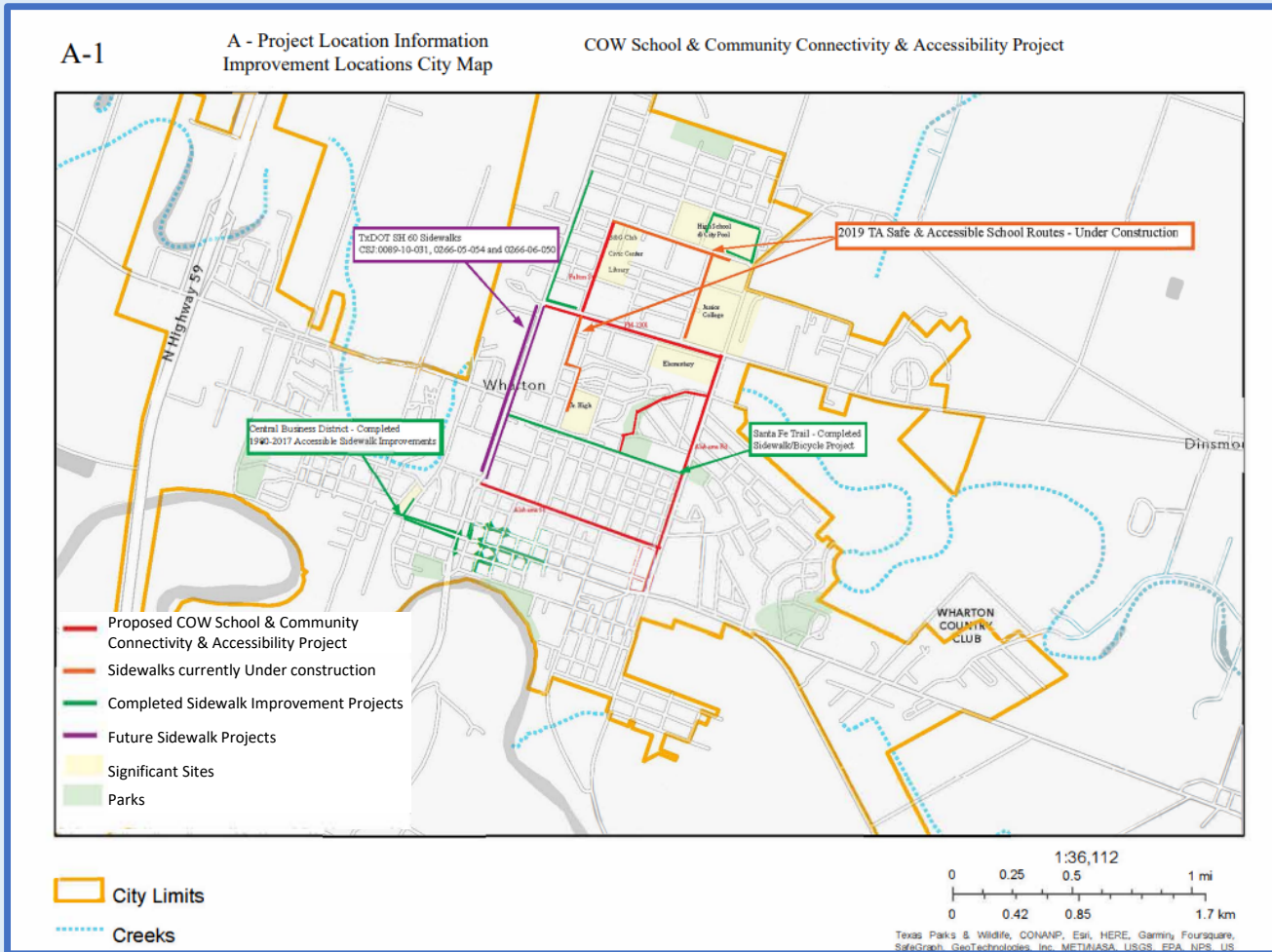
Except for those on the Colorado River Bridge, the City of Wharton Downtown has no dedicated bike lanes.



*Poor condition of sidewalks – E. Burleson Street*

## 4 Existing Downtown – Mobility & Connectivity

### Pedestrian Connectivity – Coordination With Other Initiatives



Safe Routes to School

The city is implementing the Safe Routes to School initiative, through a grant received by the U.S. Department of Transportation. The map below shows the proposed improvements. All future improvements should tie into these proposed improvements and connect to other corridors such as the Santa Fe trail.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is an approach that promotes walking and bicycling to school through infrastructure improvements, enforcement, tools, safety education, and incentives to encourage walking and bicycling to school. Nationally, 10%–14% of car trips during morning rush hour are for school travel. SRTS initiatives improve safety and levels of physical activity for students. SRTS programs can be implemented by a department of transportation, metropolitan planning organization, local government, school district, or even a school.

For more information, please visit the er website at [Safe Routes to School Programs | US Department of Transportation](#)



## 4 Existing Downtown – Mobility & Connectivity

### Crosswalks

Few intersections in downtown have marked crosswalks and none have crossing signals. Richmond Rd. is the widest road in the study area, and although Richmond's intersections at Milam, Caney and Burleson streets have four-way traffic signals, none of them have pedestrian crossing signals or even marked crosswalks, creating very unsafe conditions for pedestrians attempting to cross to or from downtown. With the removal of the Colorado St. bridge underpass, pedestrians and cyclists will have no other option for reaching downtown.

W. Milam St. has the most crosswalks of all downtown streets, although few intersections have crosswalks on all four sides. The crosswalks and traffic signals in downtown are listed below.

Traffic signals downtown:

- Milam St. and Rusk St.
- Milam St. and Fulton St.
- Milam St. and Houston St.
- Burleson St. and Houston St.
- Richmond Rd. and Burleson St.
- Richmond Rd. and Milam St.
- Richmond Rd. and Caney St.

Marked crosswalks (one or more sides):

- Milam St. and Rusk St.
- Milam St. and Fulton St.
- Milam St. and Houston St.
- Burleson St. and Houston St.



*Example of a street intersections without clearly marked crosswalks. Intersection of N. Houston St. and W. Caney St.*



5

# Future Downtown

## 5 Future Downtown – Development Standards

Downtown Wharton has had little new development in recent years, but with numerous vacant lots, as well as no zoning or historic preservation ordinance, any property can be developed or redeveloped at any time. Development regulations based on use can offer the city some control over new development.

The city's current standards are one-size-fits-all: with few exceptions, they apply equally to historic areas such as downtown Wharton as to large tracts along the city's major thoroughfares or on the outskirts of town. These standards control how far a building must be from the street, how much parking a business or residence must have, and what types of signage are allowed.

The current rules promote a suburban, car-dependent style of development rather than the mixed-use, walkable traditional pattern of downtown Wharton. Without a change to the current standards, future development in Downtown Wharton will be required to be setback at least 25 feet (35 feet on Milam St. and Richmond St.) with a minimum 20-foot separation between nonresidential buildings on neighboring lots.

Separation of uses and car-oriented site design make it difficult for residents to get to work, school, church, shopping, sports activities, or medical visits without a vehicle, whereas mixed-use, denser neighborhoods allow children, teens, seniors, and anyone else who can't, or doesn't want to drive to reach their destination by walking, using a wheelchair or riding a bicycle.



*Auto-oriented commercial development that is uncomfortable and unsafe for pedestrians – building set back from the street, and continuous driveway with no curb, sidewalk or shade.*

To ensure that infill development is compatible with downtown's historic character and helps to create a more attractive and walkable environment, Wharton should establish two overlay districts – a **Downtown Overlay District** and a **Corridor Overlay District** – with specific development standards designed to protect and reinforce the desired character for each district.

Some examples of cities that have adopted overlay districts are Pearland, El Campo, Waco, Georgetown, Harlingen, and Columbus.

The city may also want to consider tailored development standards for the **Neighborhoods** to protect the mostly residential character while encouraging increased density.

## 5 Future Downtown – Development Standards

### District-Specific Standards Recommendations

A **Downtown Overlay District** with development standards that reinforce the historic character is recommended for the downtown area near Courthouse Square, as well as along W. Milam St. west to the Train Depot. Recommended standards in the overlay district include:

- Eliminate front and side setback requirements for buildings, and/or adopt a ‘build-to’ line requiring buildings to be placed at or close to the street.
- Establish a building height limit (35 feet recommended).
- Update the city’s subdivision code to allow for platting of lots downtown consistent with long-time property boundaries without requiring variances.
- Allow subdivision of larger parcels into new lots that are consistent with the historic lot sizes and lot layout in the vicinity.
- Encourage mixed-use buildings with nonresidential uses on the ground level and residential above.
- Adopt standards for building design, site design and building placement.
- Develop design standards and cross-sections for sidewalks, curbs and planting strips, where space is available.
- Encourage medium-density residential uses, including multifamily buildings, duplexes, fourplexes, cottage-style cluster housing, and single-family housing on small lots on downtown’s side streets as well as in the neighborhood sub-areas.
- Adopt standards for maximum driveway widths and curb cuts to prevent continuous strips of pavement without curb or sidewalk.



*New commercial building in Gruene, Texas, with pedestrian-oriented building and site design – minimal or no front setback, storefront windows, wide sidewalks, building canopy, trees and landscaping, and covered outdoor seating. Parking is located at the rear and on the side away from the corner.*



## 5 Future Downtown – Building Design Standards

### Building Design Standards Recommendations

In addition to appropriate building placement, good building design helps create a vibrant, comfortable environment for pedestrians, diners and shoppers. The following building design standards will help achieve these goals, and are recommended for all parts of the study area, with variations appropriate to the specific sub-area (e.g. no setbacks in Historic Downtown; reduced or no setbacks in Neighborhood areas or Corridors).

- Façade transparency on the front of buildings. Adopt a transparency standard for storefront windows to allow people on the street to see inside businesses and to provide 'eyes on the street' to increase both actual and perceived safety.
- Building entrance on street-facing façade. Orienting the building to the street enhances pedestrian access. Secondary entrances on other elevations are acceptable, but the primary building entrance should be close to and connected to the front sidewalk.
- Covered entries. Encourage awnings and canopies on all buildings adjacent to sidewalks to provide weather protection for pedestrians as well as to help identify the entrance location. Encourage covered seating areas in the front and sides of downtown buildings.
- Building design. Although cities can no longer require specific façade materials per state law, it may still ask for a mix of materials on new commercial buildings, as well as building articulation at proper intervals.

*Neighborhood-oriented retail with pedestrian-oriented building and site design – reduced front building setback, ample storefront windows for transparency, sidewalks, an outdoor seating area.*



*Examples of recommended building design standards*

*Façade transparency on the front of buildings -storefronts*

*Building entrance on street-facing façade*

*Covered entries – awnings, canopies*

*Building design – mix of materials, articulation.*



Wharton Downtown

## 5 Future Downtown – Site Design Standards

### Site Design Standards Recommendations

Site design regulations can improve the built environment by setting standards for signs, fences, screening of outdoor storage and mechanical equipment, buffers between residential and nonresidential uses, on-site detention, impervious cover, and landscaping. Standards can also encourage outdoor activities, such as patio dining, and amenities such as street furniture and decorative lighting.

The following site design standards are recommended for both the Downtown and Corridor Overlay districts:

- Signs. Update existing sign regulations as needed to restrict undesirable sign types, establish sign area and height limits, and set standards for materials, placement and landscaping around sign bases. Within downtown, permit the safe extension of signs into the right-of-way. Allow portable signs, banners, flags, and awning signs with established standards.
- Screening. Locate dumpsters and electrical and mechanical equipment away from view as much as possible and screen with fencing or landscaping.
- Fences. Establish standards for fence height, placement and materials for both commercial and residential uses.
- Landscaping and Trees. Adopt requirements for on-site landscaping and trees where appropriate. Require street trees at intervals along all street frontages to beautify the streetscape and provide shade to pedestrians. Encourage sustainable landscaping by requiring native or drought resistant vegetation.
- Outdoor seating. Encourage covered outdoor seating. Consider adopting sidewalk dining provisions that would allow outdoor seating within the public right-of-way under certain conditions.
- Outdoor storage and display. Require outdoor storage to be screened and located out of view as much as possible. Allow outdoor displays only adjacent to the building. Encourage sidewalk displays if mobility is not impaired.
- Lighting. Adopt standards for outdoor lighting for nonresidential uses, including anti-glare provisions.
- Detention areas: Require on-site detention ponds to be located away from street frontage to the extent possible. Where visible from the street, require landscaping and trees to soften views.



*Example of developments without any requirements for street trees or other landscaping*



*Examples of signs (awnings and sandwich) projecting or located on City right-of-way, that are prohibited by the current codes.*





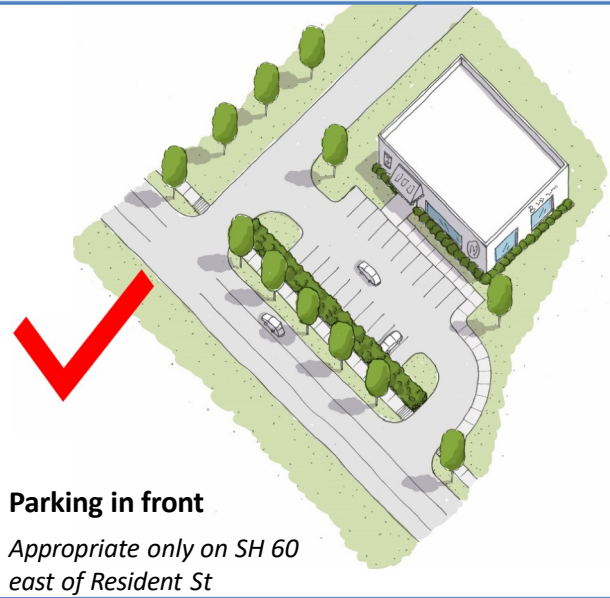


## 5 Future Downtown – Building Placement Standards

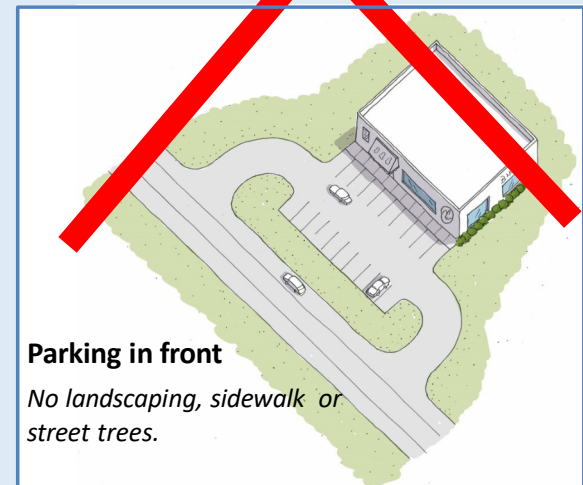
### Corridors

A more auto-oriented building placement standard is appropriate on the SH 60/E. Milam St. corridor east of Resident St. Limited parking in front of buildings may be allowed, although rear and side parking should still be encouraged and incentivized.

All other downtown development standards, including as building facades, pedestrian connectivity, landscaping and street trees, should still be required.



*An example of commercial development with pedestrian-oriented building and site design – ample storefront windows for transparency, wide sidewalks separated from the street and sheltered by building canopies, public benches, decorative paving and lighting, landscaping and street trees, and angle-in parking.*

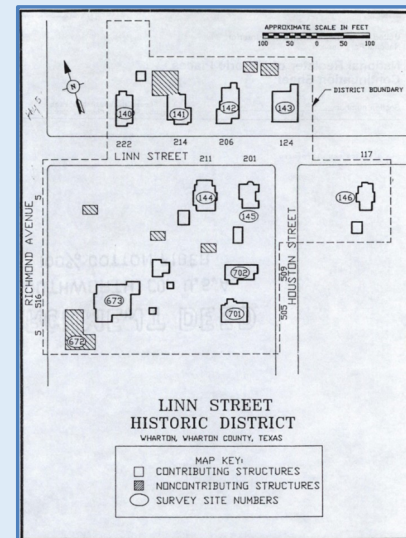


## 5 Future Downtown – Historic Preservation

### Historic Preservation Recommendations

As indicated in Chapter 5, Wharton's three National Register historic districts and an additional dozen individually-listed buildings in or within a block of downtown are an irreplaceable resource. National Register listing provides eligibility for financial benefits, but offers no protection from unsympathetic alterations or demolition. To ensure that Wharton's historic downtown is preserved for future generations, the City should consider adopting a local preservation ordinance. Other recommendations include:

- Prepare a **preservation plan** for downtown Wharton – update historic district inventories and identify important buildings and features that are not currently listed.
- Require notification of a permit application for a listed property, to enable notification to the applicant of the availability of **federal and state tax credits** and other **resources** for historic properties.
- Reconsider participation in the **Texas Main Street** program.
- Modify or waive **development standards** for historically designated properties (e.g. parking requirements)
- Plan for **disaster recovery** for historic resources.
- Adopt **International Existing Building Code (IEBC)** to encourage rehab and reuse of older buildings. IEBC allows owners to make building improvements without triggering full compliance with modern codes.
- Create **Design Guidelines** for Historic Buildings to help owners rehab and restore buildings appropriately.
- Consider appointing a dedicated staff such as a **Downtown Manager** to assist with implementing the recommendations and foster coordination with all stakeholders.
- Explore creating a vocational education program through the local high school or junior college to train workers in **preservation building trades**.



Homes in the Linn Street Historic District



## 5 Future Downtown – Parking

### Parking and Driveway Recommendations

Wharton's downtown has ample parking on-street and off-street in public lots. The following recommendations will help minimize the negative impacts of parking areas on downtown's character:

- Eliminate off-street parking requirements downtown. Revise the code language as needed to clarify the parking exemption.
- Require off-street parking areas provided by property owners to be located to the rear or side of buildings, and restrict or prohibit off-street parking areas in front of buildings, except in the Corridor Overlay District.
- Consider adopting a *maximum* parking standard for new construction downtown to avoid large expanses of paved parking.
- Encourage shared parking arrangements between properties.
- Adopt requirements for shade trees and landscaping in all parking areas visible from the street.
- Require safe, clearly marked circulation for pedestrians and bicyclists that is separated from on-site vehicle circulation.
- Limit the number and width of driveways and curbcuts. Clearly delineate pedestrian routes across driveways with crosswalks or visible pavement markings.

For public off-street parking lots:

- Improve signage and wayfinding so that drivers are aware of parking availability.
- Install shade trees and landscaping in public off-street parking areas.
- Maximize availability of on-street parking.
- Ensure appropriate lighting at night for safety.



*Street sections that are not conducive to pedestrian circulation will not support the desired character for downtown.*



*Example of recommended standards.*

*Source: <https://www.letstalkwilsonville.com/streetscape>*



## 5 Future Downtown – Infrastructure

### Infrastructure Recommendations

#### Water Lines

- Analyze existing water lines and select for replacement based on age, condition and material.
- Prioritize aging water lines for replacement to prevent leaks, bursts, and other water line failures that compromise the integrity of the water supply system.

#### Wastewater

- Monitor the city's two wastewater treatment plants to ensure that 90% capacity is not exceeded for three consecutive months, which would trigger TCEQ regulations requiring treatment plants to be replaced or expanded.
- Prioritize aging gravity and force main lines for replacement, as deterioration and contamination are of concern.

#### Drainage

- Replace missing section of curbs and gutters in all streets.
- Consider replacing roadside ditch systems with curb and gutter.
- Analyze areas of local flooding downtown and address problem areas with new drainage infrastructure, such as detention ponds, new inlets and upsized gravity storm sewer.

#### Private Utilities

- Coordinate with local utility companies to provide continuous and reliable service in downtown.
- Remove any unused utility poles from downtown streetscapes.
- Place electrical lines underground wherever active poles are located in front of buildings.
- Expand high-speed internet access throughout the downtown area.

## 5 Future Downtown – Mobility & Connectivity

### Mobility Recommendations

The following actions are recommended to ensure pedestrian and vehicular safety and to achieve the vision articulated by the residents. These recommendations are illustrated in the Design Concepts included in this chapter. A detailed analysis based on data and public outreach activities is recommended to finalize these improvements. It is highly recommended that all street improvements made in study area be built in conformance with the Complete Streets principles for multimodal circulation.

### Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation

- Adopt a sidewalk and bike route master plan for downtown that connects with the rest of the city.
- Require all new development to install sidewalks and street trees along street frontages.
- Implement streetscape enhancements, landscaping, traffic calming measures, and pedestrian improvements (sidewalks, street trees, benches, raised road medians, crosswalks at intersections, curb bulbs) for safe pedestrian traffic and reduced vehicle speed.
- Add signalized crosswalks at key intersections, in particular all crossings on Richmond Rd. between the West End and downtown.
- Identify locations for pedestrian mid-block crossings to increase safety.
- Make Courthouse Square more pedestrian-friendly by reconfiguring parking spaces and adding marked crosswalks to all intersections.
- Add bike racks at Courthouse Square and consider installing a public bike maintenance stand.
- Encourage bicycle use with protected bike lanes, bike facilities (racks, repair station), and improvements such as wide shoulders, signage, and safety features.
- Establish a pedestrian and bike lane connecting the Sante Fe trail to Downtown, Riverfront Park, and other attractions, using North Fulton Street as a connector. Options include protected bike lanes, buffered lanes, 'sharrows,' and off-street paths. Sharrow (a mix of the words 'share' and 'arrow') is a lane shared by vehicles and bikes.
- Enhance pedestrian connectivity by requiring walkways linking building entrances to public sidewalks, separate from vehicle circulation and parking areas.
- Restrict width of driveway curb cuts to improve sidewalk safety.

**Complete Streets** are streets for everyone. Complete Streets is an approach to planning, designing, building, operating, and maintaining streets that enables safe access for all people who need to use them, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

[Refer to Appendix L for more information.](#)



*Example of a Complete Street - City of Erwin, TN  
Source: [smartgrowthamerica.org](http://smartgrowthamerica.org)*

## 5 Future Downtown – Mobility & Connectivity

### Mobility Recommendations

#### Traffic

- Consider installing a median with turn lane on Richmond Rd. to improve safety for both pedestrians and vehicular traffic.
- Install wayfinding signage to facilitate smoother traffic flow.
- Work with TxDOT to manage truck and freight traffic, including time restrictions.
- Coordinate with TxDOT on pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in downtown streets.

#### Others

- Prioritize capital improvements based on the recommendations outlined in this report.
- Develop a sidewalk maintenance and repair program. Include residential neighborhood in addition to the downtown's commercial area.

### Future Downtown Mobility Next Steps

A detailed access management analysis, including signal warrants and mid-block crossing warrant analysis based on field-collected data, will be required to identify median treatments, turn lanes, mid-block crossings, and intersection treatment options. This comprehensive analysis will also include traffic flow assessments, safety evaluations, and pedestrian and cyclist accommodations. The goal is to enhance overall traffic efficiency and safety while minimizing congestion and potential conflict points. Additionally, the study will consider future traffic projections, land use patterns, and community impact to ensure sustainable and effective transportation solutions.



## 5 Future Downtown – Economic Development

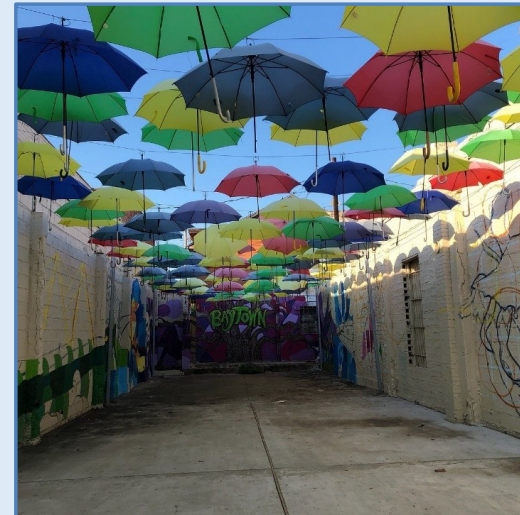
### Economic Development Recommendations

A Market Assessment Update was prepared as part of this project and is included in Appendix K. Some of the necessary components for a successful downtown revitalization were identified in that report and listed below. **These recommendations were incorporated in the Design Concepts and policy recommendations included in this report.**

- The City should use incentives for façade improvements and new retail and residential downtown – e.g. tax abatements, Enterprise Zone.
- New signage on buildings.
- Neon lighting signage on restaurants and bars for nighttime.
- Take over the state highway to gain control over downtown streets and improve safety.
- Alleviate traffic and speeding – add stop lights.
- Add crosswalks for pedestrians.
- Utilize second floors above commercial for residential units.
- Beautification of the downtown square.
- Provide developer incentives if necessary for downtown.
- New gateway into Downtown.
- Signage, wayfinding, streetscapes, lighting improvements.
- Consider enhancements at Depot Park – e.g. train memorabilia, original art works, antiques, and a model railroad.
- Dilapidated housing should be condemned or purchased by the City for new development opportunities.
- Add more programmed events in Courthouse Square.
- Celebrate the history of the city.



*Turn vacant space between shops into outside dining area with restaurant in adjacent space*



*Turn empty space into an Umbrella Alley, like Baytown, or some other art exhibit with murals on walls*

## 5 Future Downtown – Economic Development

### Economic Development Recommendations (continued)

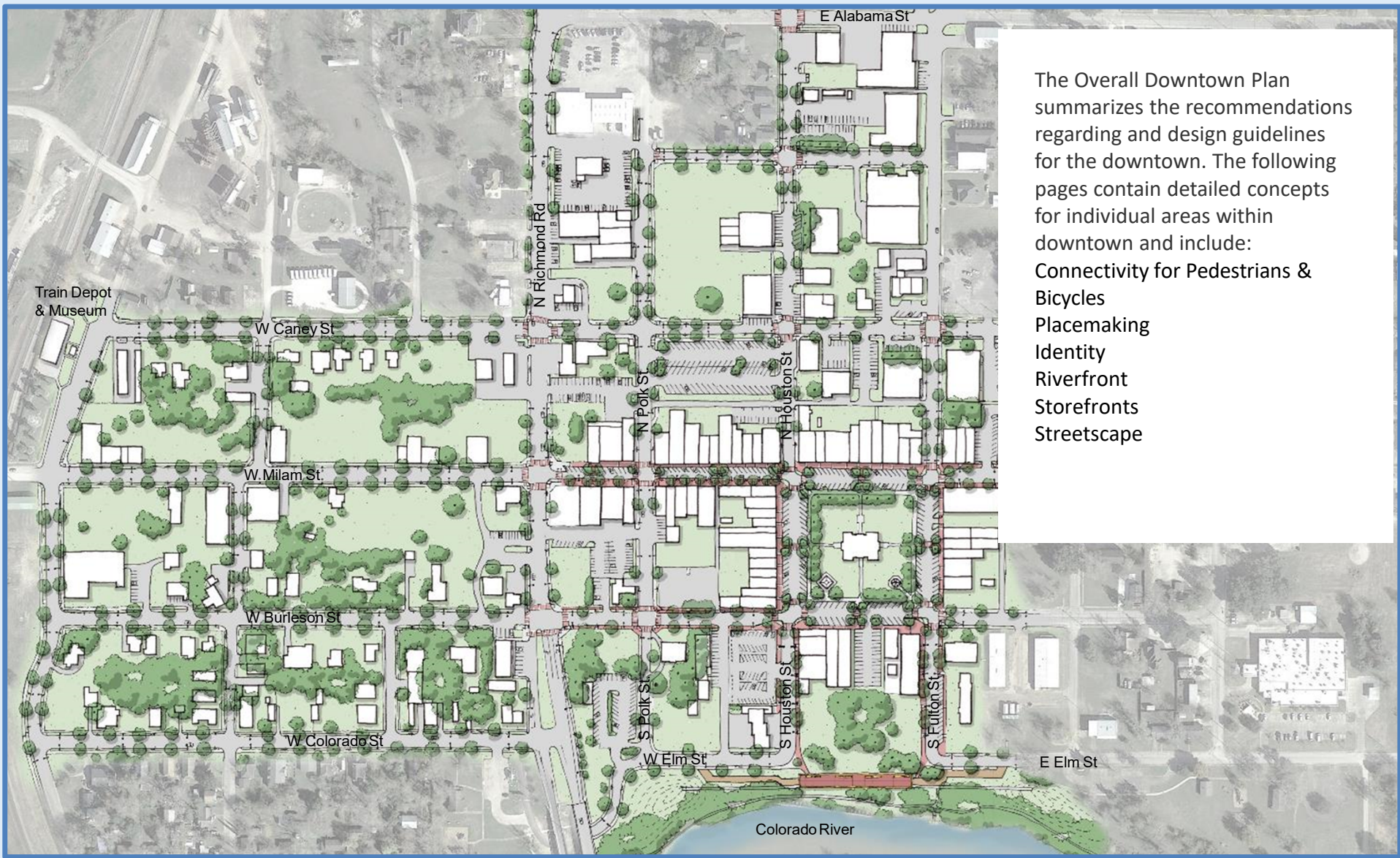
- New restaurants, eateries, cafes, bakeries, and bars should be a top priority, especially local mom and pop businesses.
- New shops, including boutiques, antiques, services, and spa should be incentivized for downtown.
- Restaurants, bars, cafes, etc., should use available street frontage for outside seating, a lesson learned during COVID.
- Incubators for entrepreneurs might be an incentive to the area – Food Halls are an example – small spaces with low rents
- The phenomenon of pioneering local businesses, such as bars or restaurants investing in the study area, is more likely to occur with incentives from the City.
- Relocating the church facing Courthouse Square would allow more retail space on a key block and increase daytime traffic.
- Careful tenant selection, combined with efforts to keep lease rates affordable, will help to curate a retail and dining environment that grows in value. Since dining uses have become popular as retail anchors, seeking out a café which can offer reliable, moderately-priced but reasonable quality evening service would help establish commercial activity after 5:00 p.m.
- Attracting a slightly more upscale dining and drinking establishment to downtown, possibly with incentives from the City, would help jump start downtown and serve as a catalyst for the entire area.



*An example of awnings and building facades with protected parking and pedestrian walking areas*

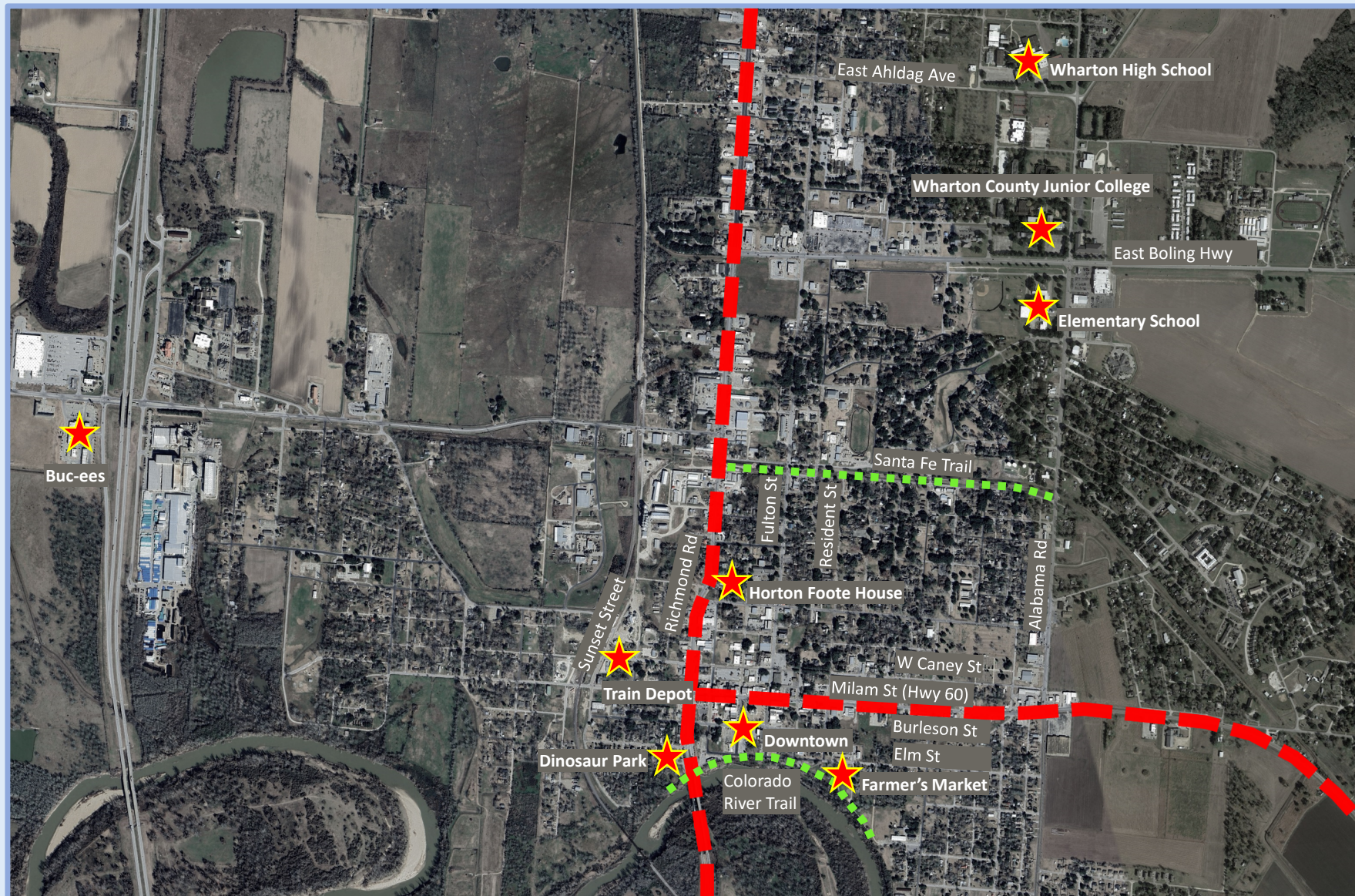


## 5 Design Concepts : Overall Downtown Plan

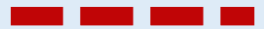




## 5 Design Concepts : Connectivity – Pedestrians & Bicycles Existing



### Major Barrier



### Major Destinations



### Existing Trails



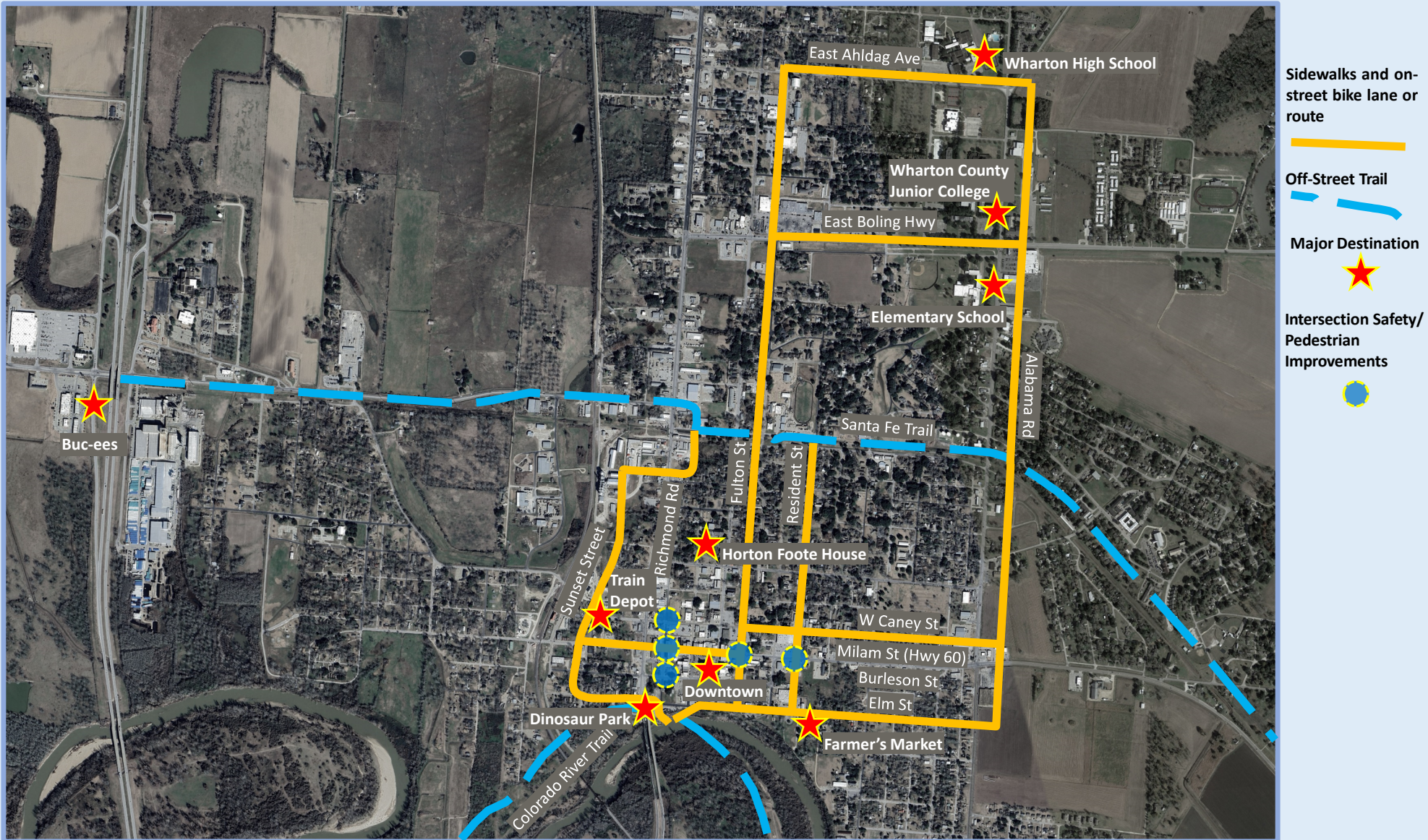
- Richmond Rd - Barrier to the West End neighborhood
- Milam Street - Barrier bisecting downtown

### Recommendation

- Consider long-term actions to reconnect Downtown



## 5 Design Concepts : Connectivity – Pedestrians & Bicycles Proposed





## 5 Design Concepts : Connectivity – Pedestrians & Bicycles Existing



Photo – White Oak Studio

*Example in Jasper, Texas: Before*



Photo – White Oak Studio

*Example in Jasper, Texas: After driveway and sidewalk changes*



Image – Google Earth

*Example of a poorly defined driveway with no sidewalk*

### Commercial Driveways

- Wide and poorly defined driveways
- Head-in parking from street
- Extensive pavement
- Unsafe pedestrian conditions
- Solutions:
  - Walks for pedestrians around parking bays
  - Defined driveways with islands and crosswalks



## 5 Design Concepts : Identity - Placemaking



*Courthouse Square*



*Riverfront*



*Plaza Theatre*

What makes Wharton unique?

- Festivals and Events
- Wharton Movie Night
- Wharton Farmer's Market
- Architecture
- Unique Places



*Farmers Market*



*Teepee Motel*



*Train Depot*



*Dinosaur Park*



## 5 Design Concepts : Identity - Placemaking



*Special events & festivals*



*Flexible outdoor space*



*Short-term entertainment venue*

### What makes great downtowns?

- Walkable shopping and dining
- Easy access
- Festivals & Events
- Special public open spaces
- Safe, understandable and comfortable
- Beautiful authentic architecture
- Great restaurants and entertainment



## 5 Design Concepts : Identity - Placemaking



*Examples of Small Downtown Placemaking - Lake Jackson, Texas*

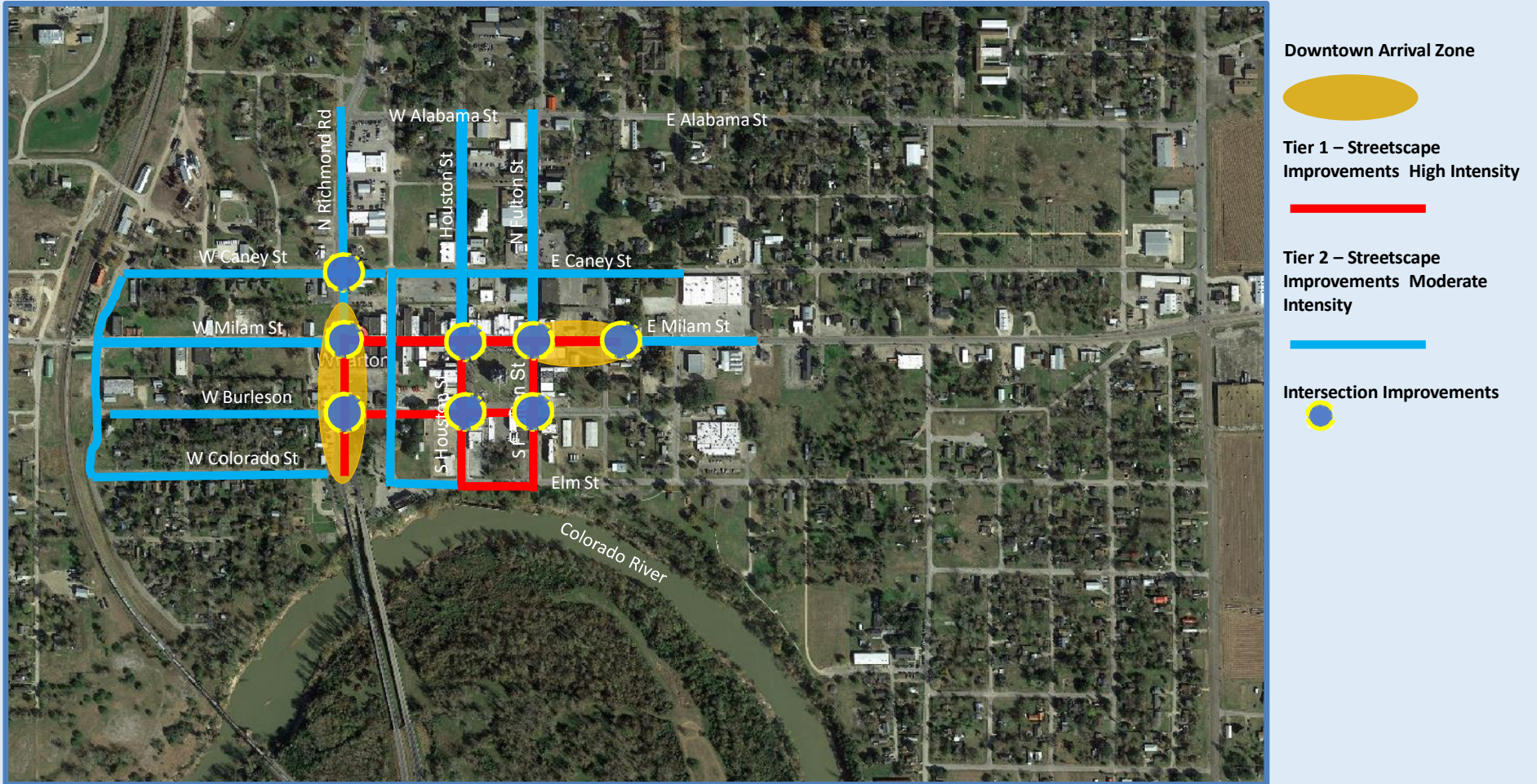
*Photos - White Oak Studio*

### Placemaking Tools

- Site Furnishings
- Lighting
- Banners
- Traffic Lights & Regulatory Signs
- Entry Signage & Monuments
- Public Art
- Sidewalks
- Crosswalks
- Special Paving
- Planting
- Way-finding



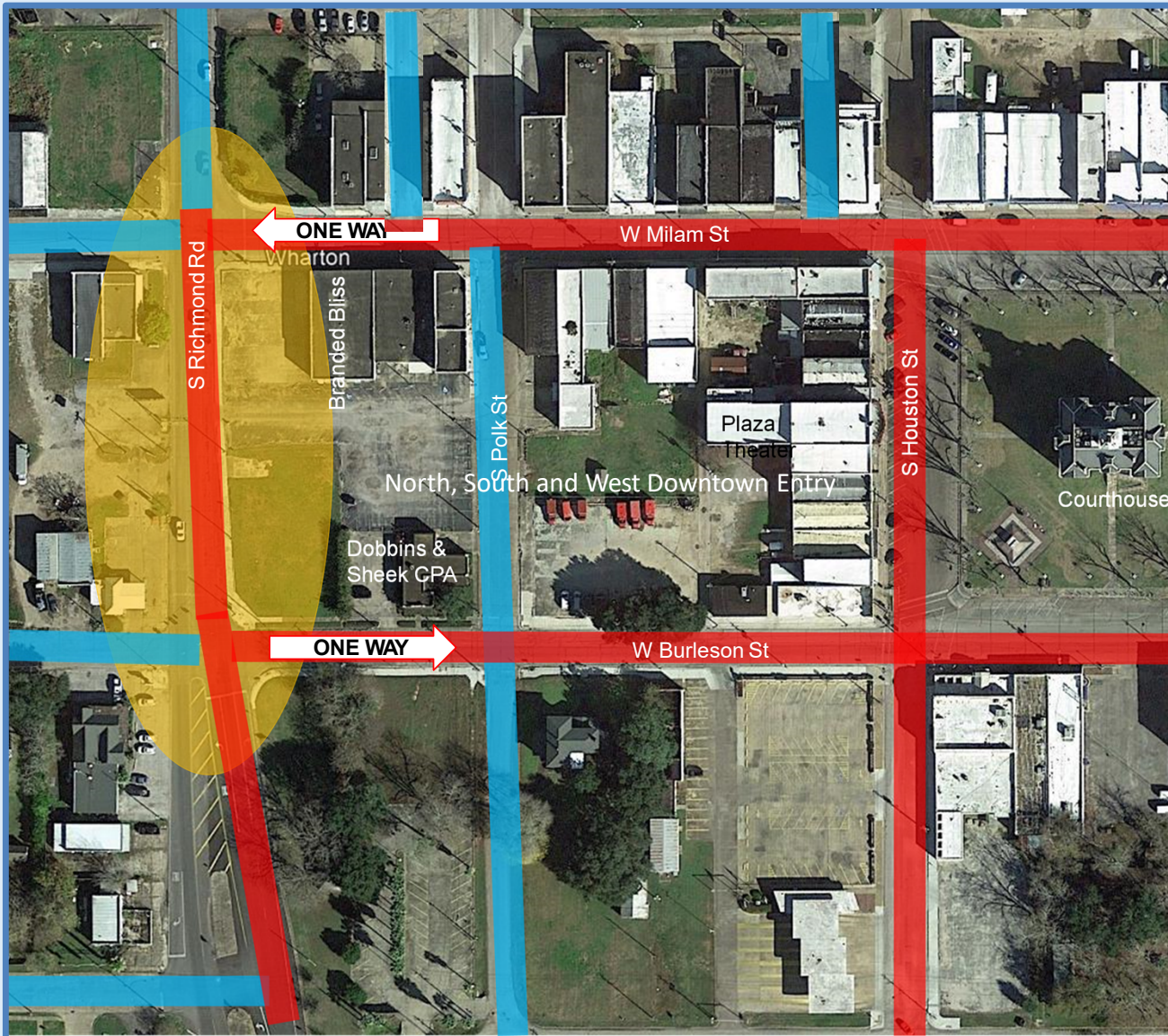
## 5 Design Concepts : Overall Identity Plan



Overall Identity Plan



## 5 Design Concepts : Identity – North, South and West Downtown Entry



North, South and West Downtown entry

- Richmond Rd. is primary arrival route to Downtown from the north, south and west.
- Connection from Richmond Rd. to Downtown is unclear.
- W. Milam St. is one-way westbound and its intersection with Richmond Rd. does not have downtown character.
- W. Milam St. and W. Burleson St. intersections with Richmond Rd. do not have crosswalks and are reported as unsafe for pedestrians.
- Visitors entering from the north have a sense of passing Downtown and leaving Wharton.
- W. Burleson St. connects to Downtown but has no visual clues of proximity.
- Entire block of Richmond Rd. from W. Milam St. to W. Burleson St. should mark the arrival to Downtown.

## 5 Design Concepts : Identity – North Downtown Entry – Proposed



*North, South and West Downtown entry – proposed placemaking elements*

### PLACEMAKING TOOLS

Utilize urban placemaking tools to create safe public streetscape with Downtown character:

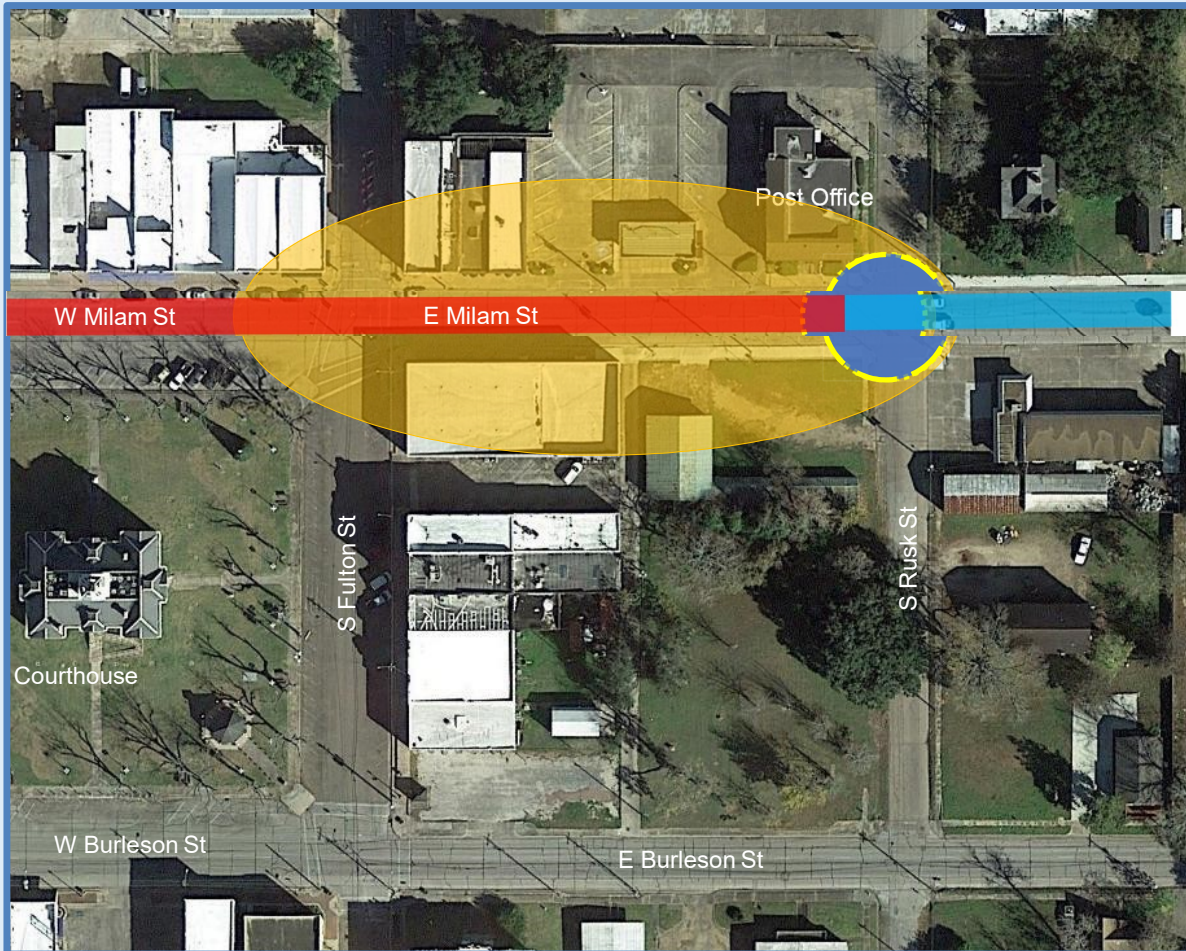
- Sidewalks
- Landscape & median
- Decorative crosswalks
- Decorative lights & banners
- Decorative traffic signals
- Wayfinding
- Furnishings

Encourage urban character in future private development:

- Narrow setbacks so buildings are close to street
- Rear parking
- Wide sidewalks
- Connections to street sidewalks
- Defined driveways



## 5 Design Concepts : Identity – East Downtown Entry



*East Downtown entry*



*Existing Conditions at Milam and Rusk*

- Approach from east along SH 60/E. Milam St. – arrival point to downtown is not clear.
- Rusk St – First traffic signal. Building density becomes more urban after Rusk St.

### **Recommendation**

- Develop E. Milam St. between Rusk St. and Fulton St. as an arrival zone.



## 5 Design Concepts : Riverfront



*Riverfront – existing conditions*

- Colorado River is adjacent to Downtown
- Unique identity and resource
- Current park
- Flood hazard
- Difficult access



Photo – Kimley-Horn



Photo – Kimley-Horn



## 5 Design Concepts : Riverfront – Future Flood Protection



Riverfront – proposed levees

- Levee and Flood Wall in design by US Army Corps of Engineers.
- Location and extent approximate.
- Flood wall estimated to be about 6' high above Elm Street and roughly two blocks long.
- Conversations with USACE indicate openness to City open space improvements along levee and wall. Advance coordination required.
- Significant impacts – positive and negative to Downtown.
- Important to seize opportunity to ensure flood improvements are positive civic amenities.



## 5 Design Concepts : Riverfront – Landmark Civic Space Examples



New York City High Line



San Antonio Riverwalk

### LANDMARK CIVIC OPEN SPACES

- Many cities are known for their landmark parks and civic spaces.
- Landmark should reflect a unique aspect of the city.
- Create a place for residents to enjoy and be proud of and to attract visitors.
- Important part of overall Downtown placemaking.

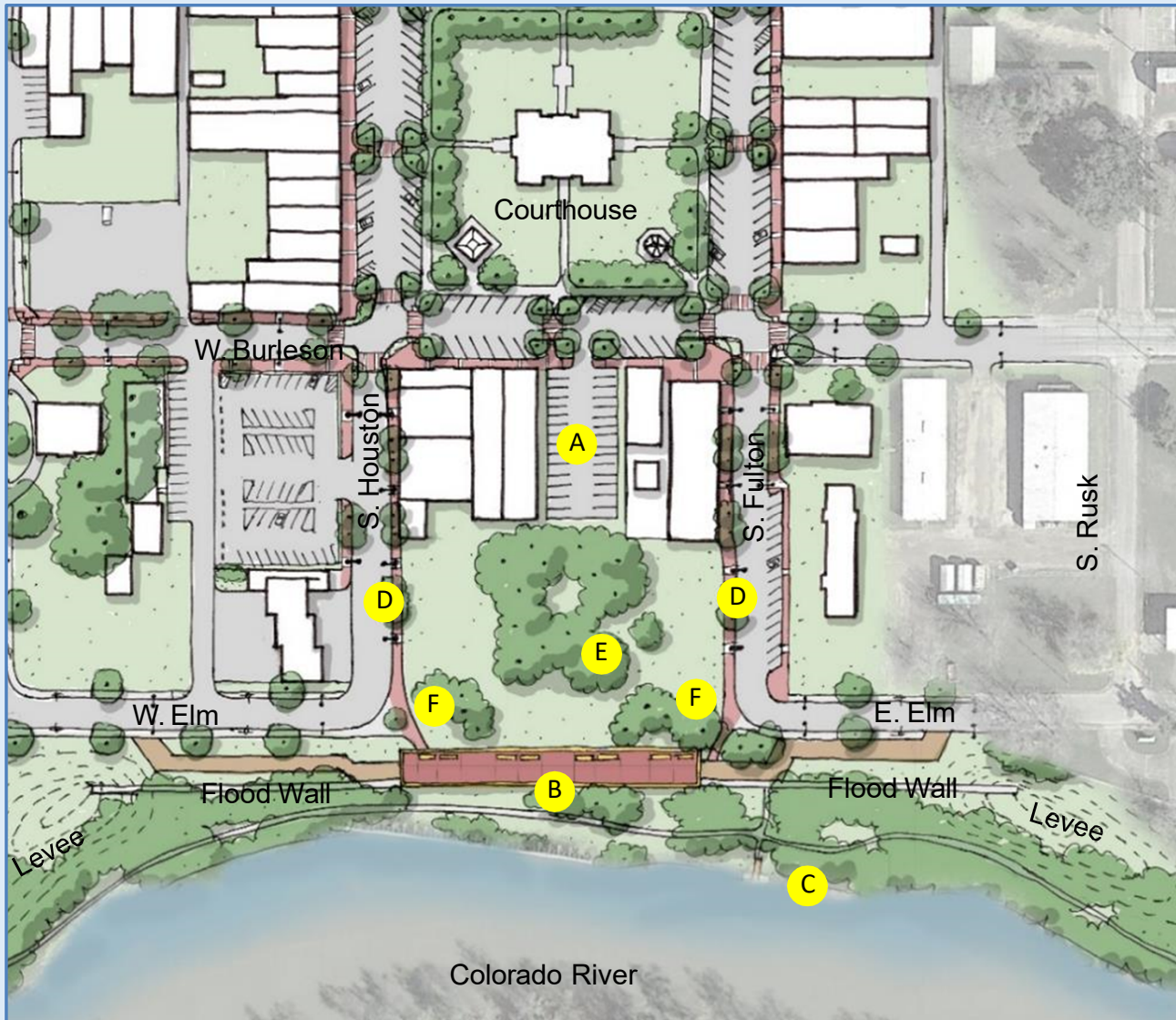


New York City Battery Park

*Riverfront and elevated areas developed as civic open spaces - Examples*



## 5 Design Concepts : Riverfront Park

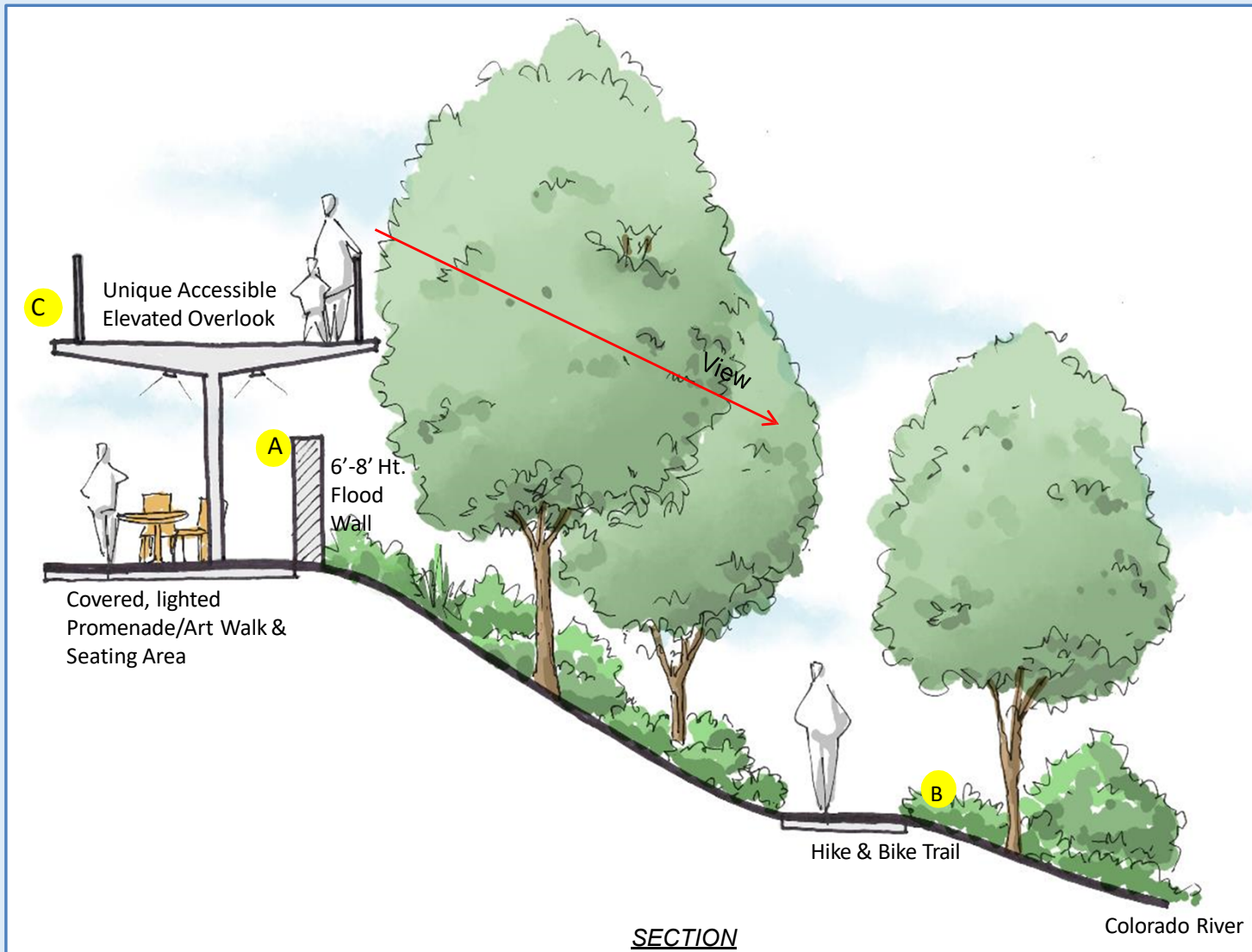


*Riverfront – proposed concepts*

### PROPOSED CONCEPTS

- A. Wharton Journal-Spectator Parking Lot – arrange for weekend parking and special event use.
- B. Riverfront Park Raised Promenade and Overlook.
- C. Riverside Hike & Bike Trail.
- D. S. Houston St. and S. Fulton St. streetscape and walk connections to Riverfront Park.
- E. Economic Development Corporation property – develop as public park integrated with Riverfront Park.
- F. Close Elm St. and remove roadway between S. Fulton St. and S. Houston St. for expansion of Riverfront Park.

## 5 Design Concepts : Riverfront Concept

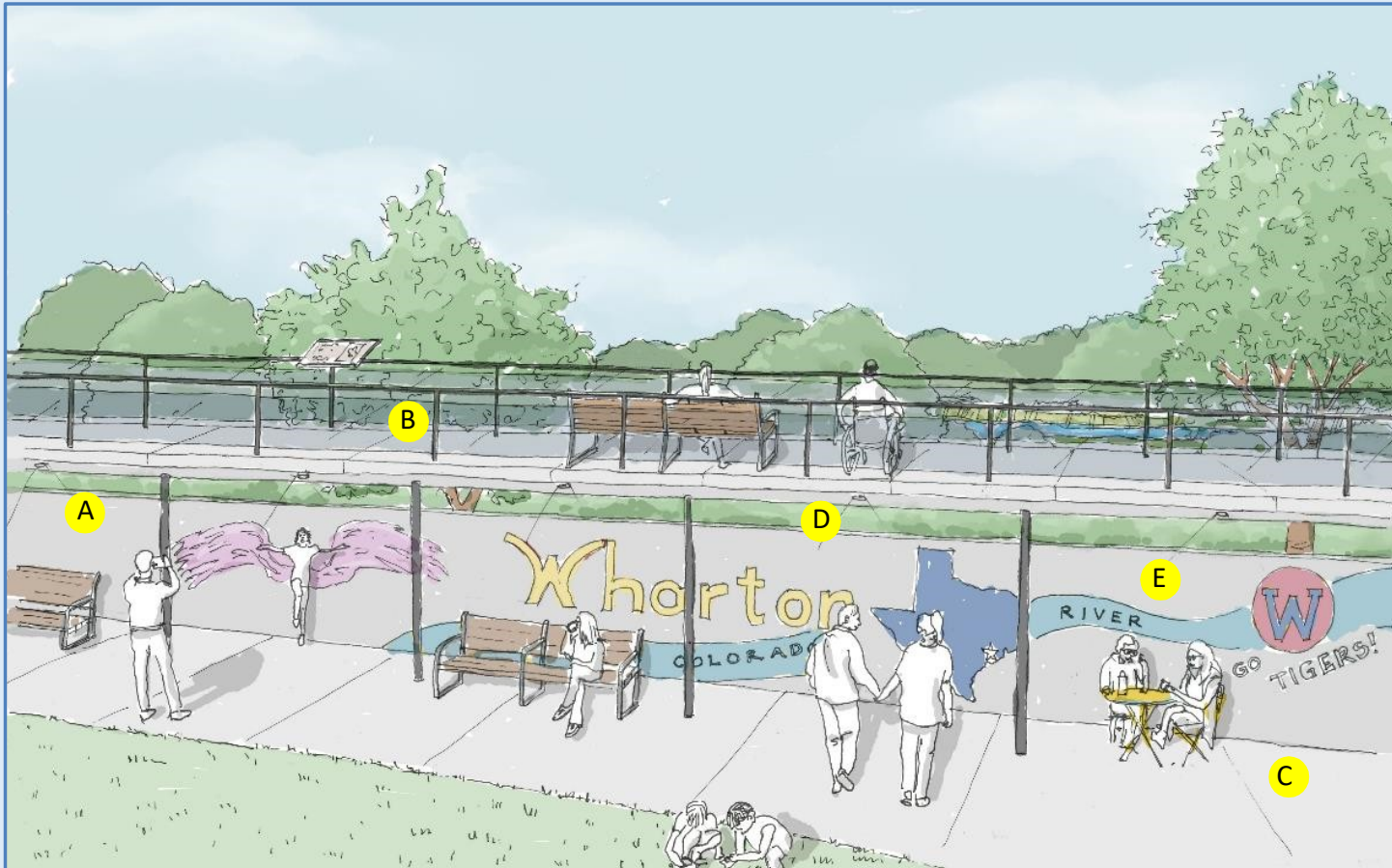


### PROPOSED CONCEPTS

- A. Urban Riverfront Promenade Park along top of river bank and flood wall.
- B. Natural environment and hike & bike trail along river slopes.
- C. Safe, attractive and unique civic open space.



## 5 Design Concepts : Riverfront Concept



### PROPOSED CONCEPTS

- A. Riverfront Promenade Park converts flood wall into civic landmark and attraction.
- B. Raised walkway with views over flood wall to river.
- C. Shaded lower walk – potential for unique urban space including art and farmer's market.
- D. Lighted for safety and beauty.
- E. Turn levee wall into public art canvas.

## 5 Design Concepts : Storefronts – Concept for Connected Multi-Building



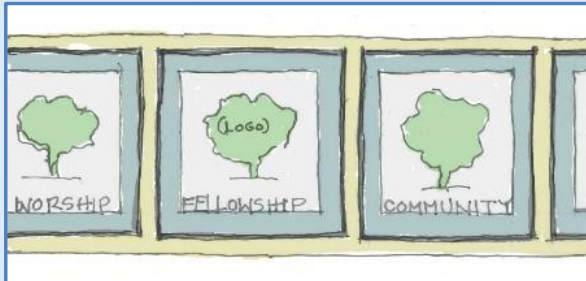
Existing Downtown Storefronts - Wharton



## 5 Design Concepts : Storefronts – Concept for Connected Multi-Building



Commercial doors with architectural window film and graphic signage



Architectural window film and graphic signage

### POSSIBLE PRIVATE ENHANCEMENTS

- A. Distinct building identity is important architectural character.
- B. Encourage color differentiation between buildings to accentuate historic architecture. Encourage combined canopies to be separated and replaced with different style and color.
- C. Tools to identify ownership/tenancy:
  - Architectural accents of same color.
  - Matching commercial doors with matching signage.
  - Clear glass windows and doors.
  - Add architectural films to windows and doors as needed for privacy.
  - Graphic architectural signage adds interest and connects buildings.
  - Matching commercial lighting at doors.
- D. Encourage seating and/or sidewalk displays.



## 5 Design Concepts : Storefronts - Analysis



Current conditions - S. Houston St.

### ANALYSIS

- A. Some contemporary window 'upgrades' are inconsistent with historic architecture style.
- B. Streetscape furnishings should be compatible with historic building architecture.
- C. Paver sidewalks add texture and interest, and should remain.
- D. Encourage original-style recessed entries with display windows, commercial doors and special flooring.



Photo - Kimley-Horn



## 5 Design Concepts : Storefronts - Analysis



*Existing entry at Wharton Plaza Theatre*

### ANALYSIS

- A. Some renovations incompatible with historic architecture:
- Bronze colored door & window frames
  - Colored or reflective glass
  - Residential doors
  - Residential window coverings
  - Residential-style lights
- B. Most canopies appropriate for architecture, but lack lighting and signage.
- C. Seating and window displays are inviting.
- D. Address numbers, lighting, and doors are inconsistent.

## 5 Design Concepts : Storefronts - Concepts

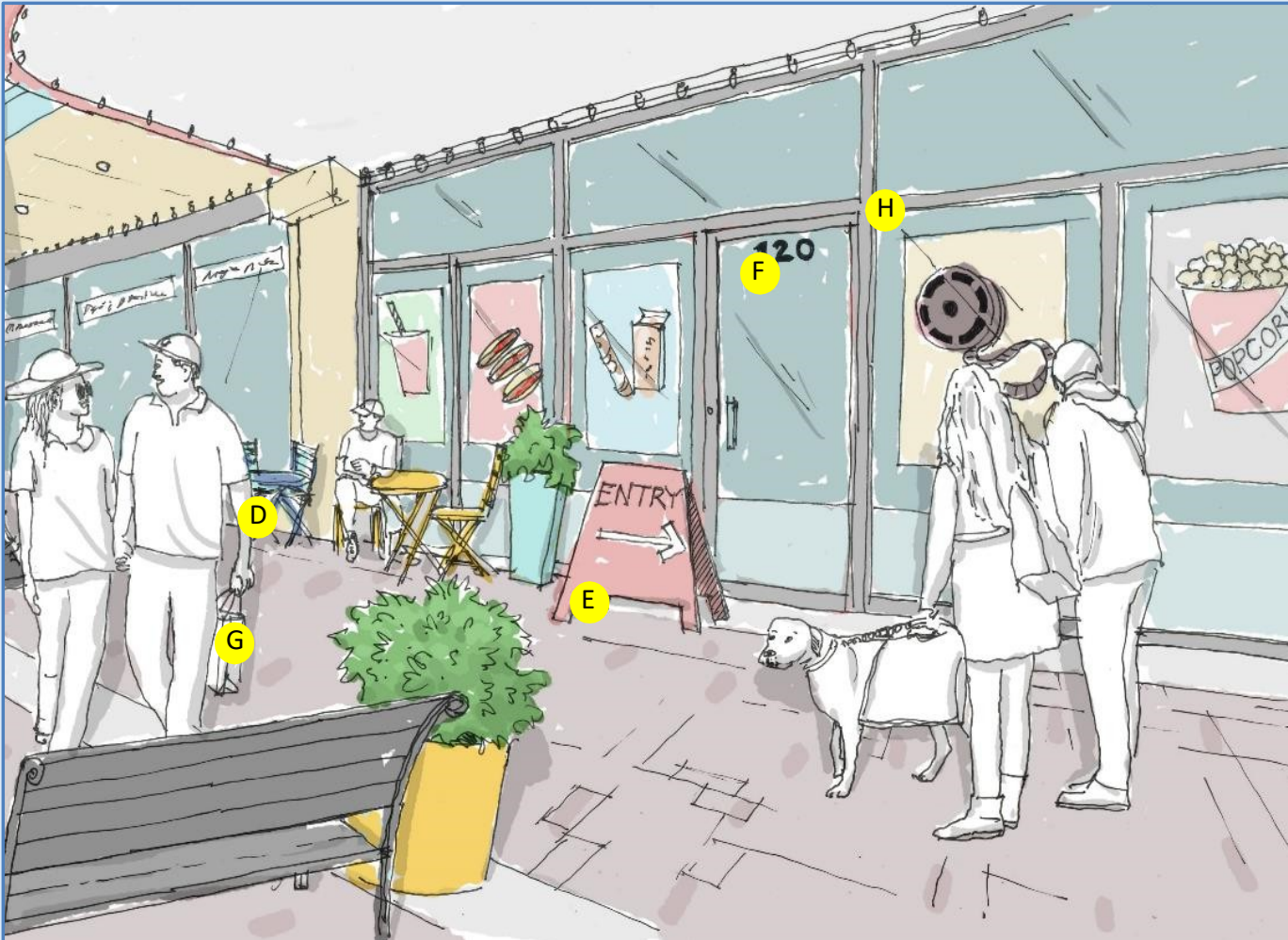


### PROPOSED CONCEPTS

- A. Encourage two-sided hanging signs visible to street and sidewalk.
- B. Encourage clerestory windows as period-appropriate features.
- C. Encourage period-appropriate private accent lighting under-canopy and on building face.



## 5 Design Concepts : Storefronts - Concepts



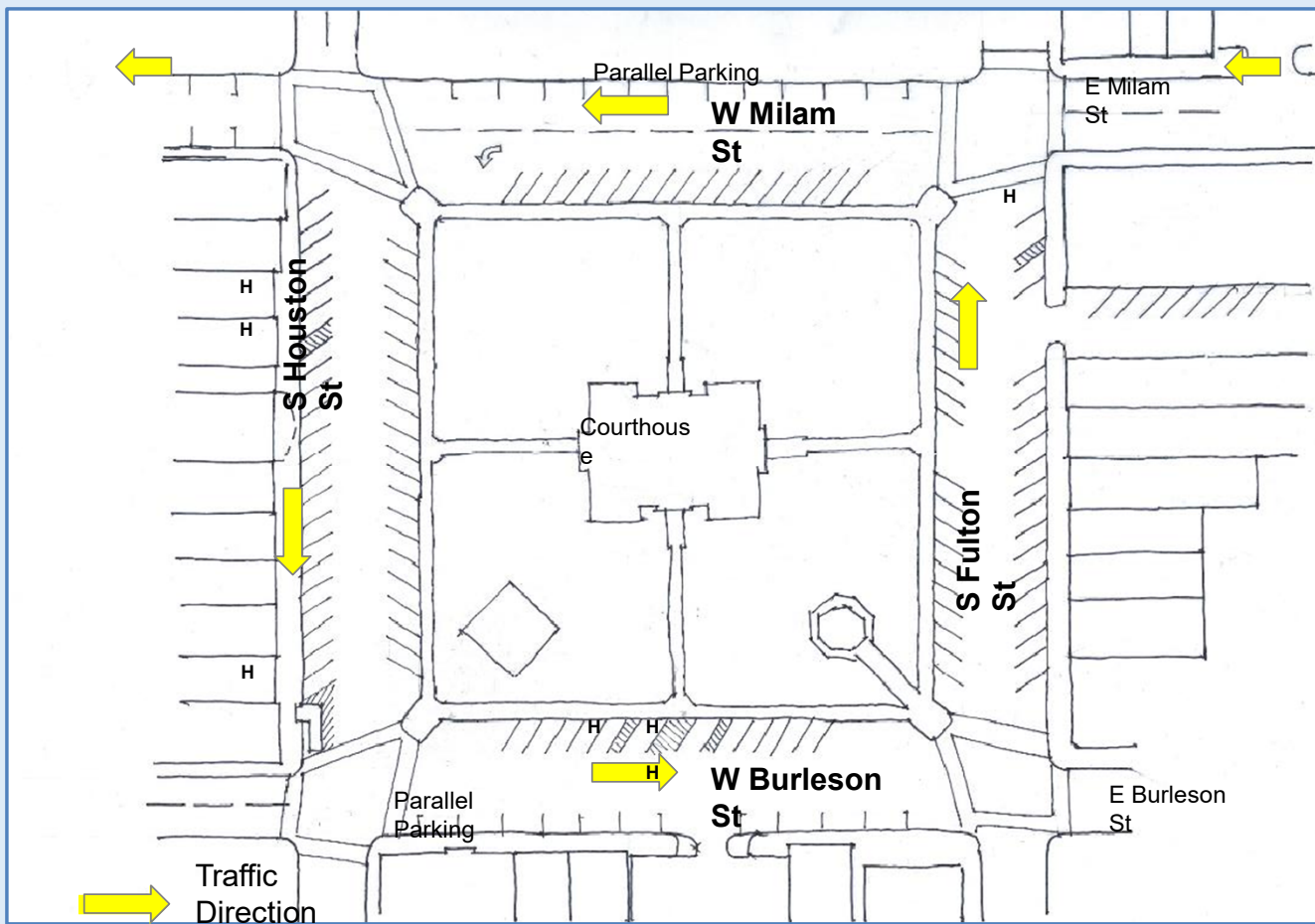
### PROPOSED CONCEPTS

- D. Encourage private outdoor dining. Private tables/chairs provide variety.
- E. Encourage sidewalk displays; advertising and sandwich boards add life and interest.
- F. Encourage consistent address numbers.
- G. Planting and streetscape furnishings should be public improvements to provide consistency.
- H. Windows:
  - Clear glass most appropriate.
  - Add architectural films for privacy.
  - Graphic displays add interest and connect stores to the street.

## 5 Design Concepts: Streetscape Courthouse Square – Streets and Parking

Placemaking Tools – These are elements that contribute to the street scape and creating a unique character. These elements include

- Furnishings
- Lighting
- Banners
- Traffic Lights & Regulatory Signs
- Entry Signage & Monuments
- Art
- Sidewalks
- Crosswalks
- Controlled Driveways
- Special Paving
- Planting
- Way-finding



### ANALYSIS

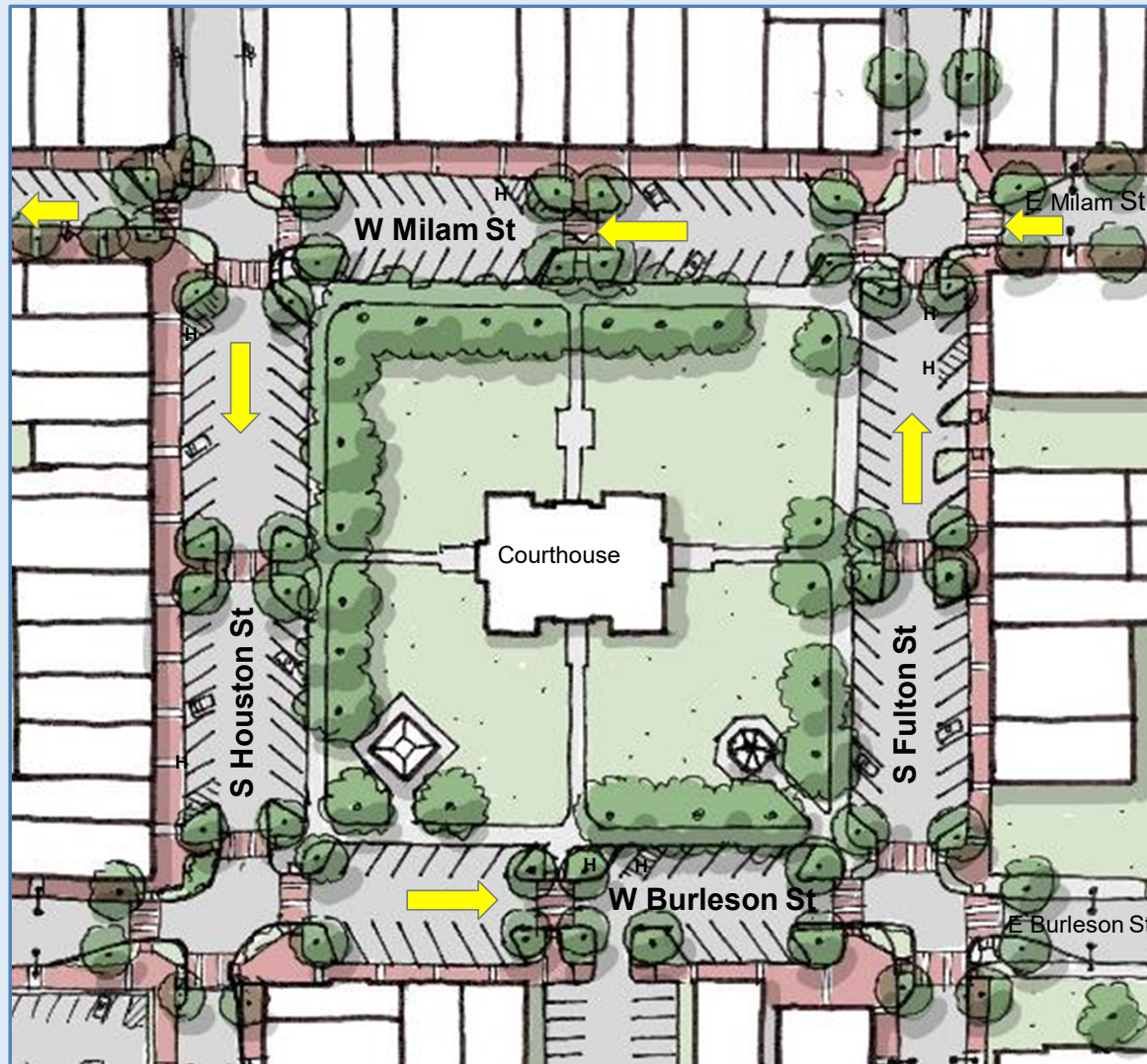
- W. Milam St. is TxDOT Right of Way.
- Traffic lanes on W. Milam and W. Burleson are wider than required (16' to 17').
- Wide lanes encourage fast driving speed, create unsafe pedestrian conditions and limit opportunities for sidewalk amenities.
- Long crosswalks are unsafe and inconvenient.
- Parallel parking on W. Milam and W. Burleson is inefficient.

- Total current parking:

Head-In Parking:	96
ADA Parking:	7
<u>Parallel Parking:</u>	<u>21</u>
Total Spaces:	124



## 5 Design Concepts: Courthouse Square – Streets and Parking



### CONCEPTS

- Reduce lane widths on W. Milam and W. Burleson to gain room for angled head-in parking. Change from parallel to angled parking, gain of two spaces.
- Change from parallel to angled head-in parking on W. Milam and W. Burleson. Gain parking spaces.
- Add intersection 'bump-outs' to sidewalks.
- Add mid-block sidewalk bump-outs and pedestrian crossings around square.
- Reduce W. Burleson from two lanes to one-lane, to match S. Houston and S. Fulton streets.
- Parking totals with changes:

Head-In Parking:	119
Handicap Parking:	7
<u>Parallel Parking:</u>	<u>0</u>
Total Spaces:	126

*Increase of 2 spaces*



## 5 Downtown Streetscape – Intersections



Existing conditions

### INTERSECTION ANALYSIS

- Long crosswalks are unsafe.
- Unsightly concrete bump-outs. No opportunities for pedestrian amenities.
- Inconsistent crosswalk markings.
- Suspended traffic signals add visual clutter and not visible to pedestrians.
- No crosswalk signals for pedestrians.
- Old-style cobrahead street lights do not contribute to the downtown character.





## 5 Downtown Streetscape – Intersections



*Proposed concepts overlaid on existing conditions*

### PROPOSED CONCEPTS

- A. Intersection bump-outs around courthouse square are reconfigured to provide space for amenities.
- B. Intersection bump-outs enable shorter crossings, safer and easier for pedestrians.
- C. Bump-outs define drive lane, calm traffic speeds, differentiate parking bays, and provide space for trees, landscape, seating, lighting, banners.
- D. Paver crosswalks help define the intersection and add to the overall downtown character. More visible to drivers and safer.

## 5 Downtown Streetscape – Intersections



*Proposed concepts overlaid on existing conditions*

### PROPOSED CONCEPTS

- E. Traffic signal poles located on far side of intersection for better visibility. Pedestrian-crossing signals included.
- F. Decorative traffic signal-arm poles contribute to the downtown character and reduce clutter.
- G. Decorative streetlights add character.



*Plan of intersection crosswalks*



## 5 Downtown Streetscape – Analysis

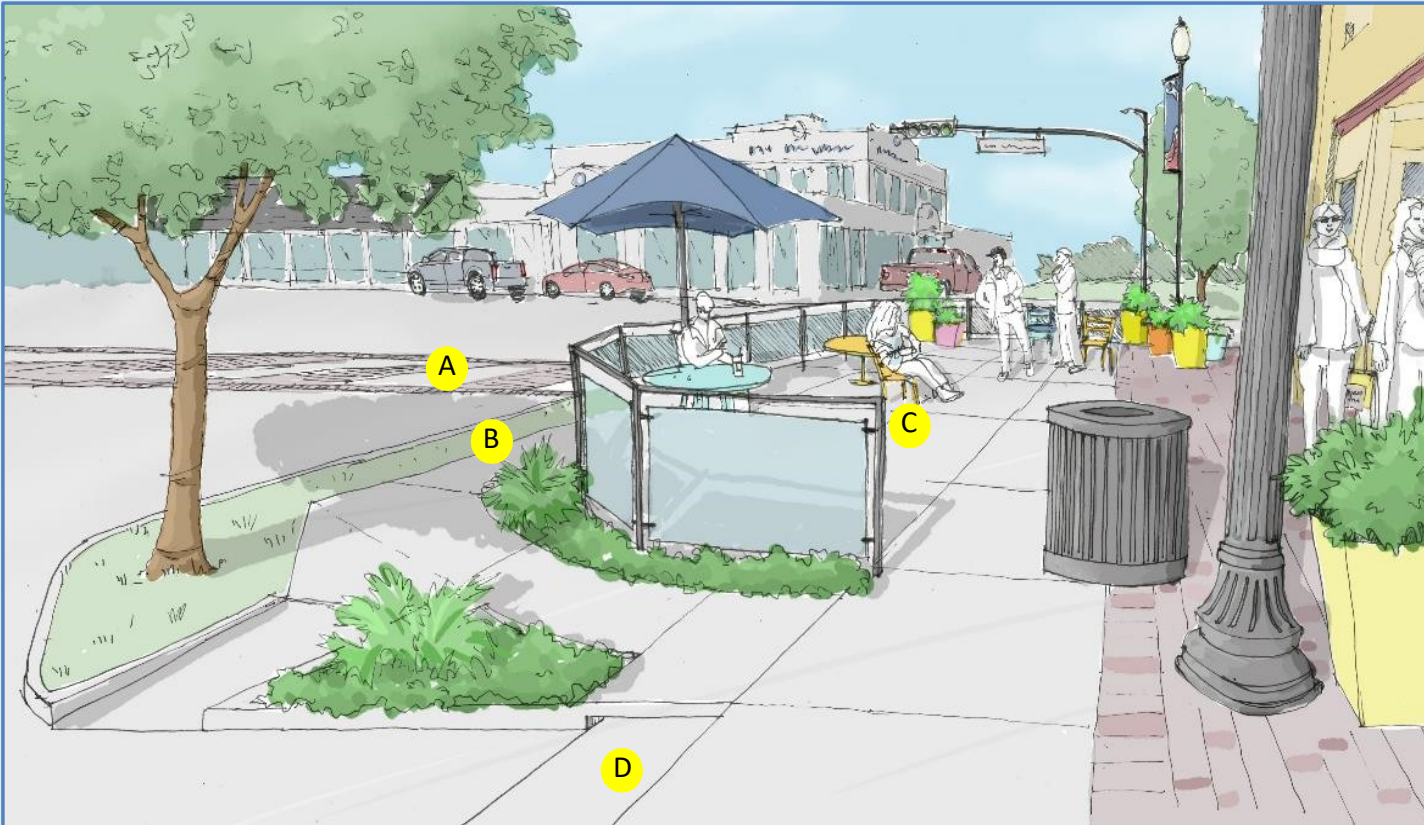


### ANALYSIS

- A. Retrofitted handicap ramps and railings are unsightly and not integrated with streets and sidewalks.
- B. Limited opportunities for sidewalk amenities such as trees, plantings, lights, seating and gathering areas.
- C. Street drainage to the curb creates inconvenient puddles during rain.
- D. Decorative pedestrian light poles enhance downtown character.

*Out-dated street furniture and existing conditions at S. Houston St.*

## 5 Downtown Streetscape - Corner Bumpout Concepts



*Proposed concepts overlaid on existing conditions*

### PROPOSED CONCEPTS

- A. Corner bump-outs create well-defined, shorter intersection crossings, and calm traffic.
- B. Bump-outs incorporate accessibility and reduce need for ramps.
- C. Bump-outs provide room for pedestrian spaces and streetscape amenities.
- D. Bump-outs reduce need for steps between parking and storefront sidewalk.



## 5 Downtown Streetscape – Analysis



*Existing entry at Wharton Plaza Theatre*

### ANALYSIS

- A. Brick sidewalk pavers are attractive upgrade.
- B. Overhead canopies provide shade for pedestrians.
- C. Steps from curb up to sidewalk limit access for many and pose safety hazard.

## 5 Downtown Streetscape – Mid-Block Bump-out



*Streetscape development at mid-block bump out*

### PROPOSED CONCEPTS

- A. Add mid-block sidewalk bump-outs to create defined, shorter crossings between storefronts and courthouse.
- B. Provide room for people spaces and streetscape amenities.
- C. Reduce need for steps between parking and sidewalk.



*Plan of mid-block crossing*



## 5 Downtown Streetscape – 100 & 200 Blocks West Milam Street



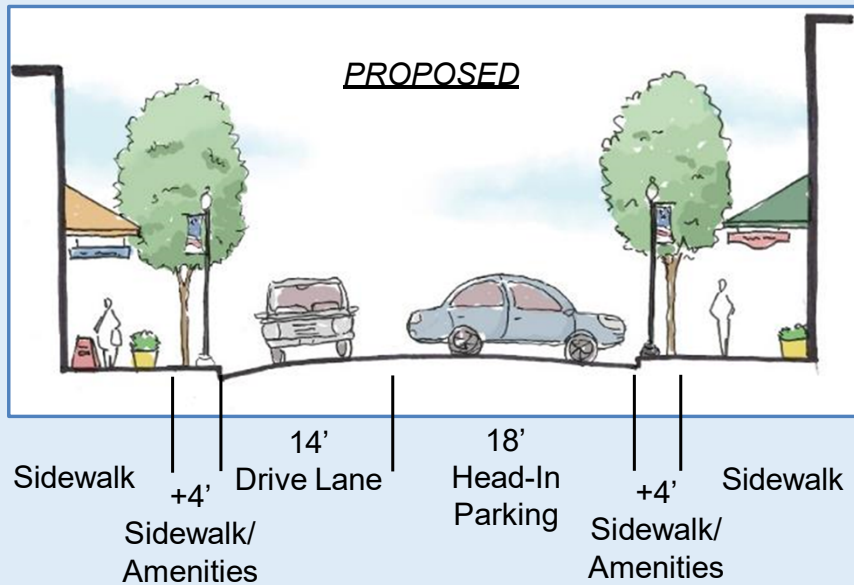
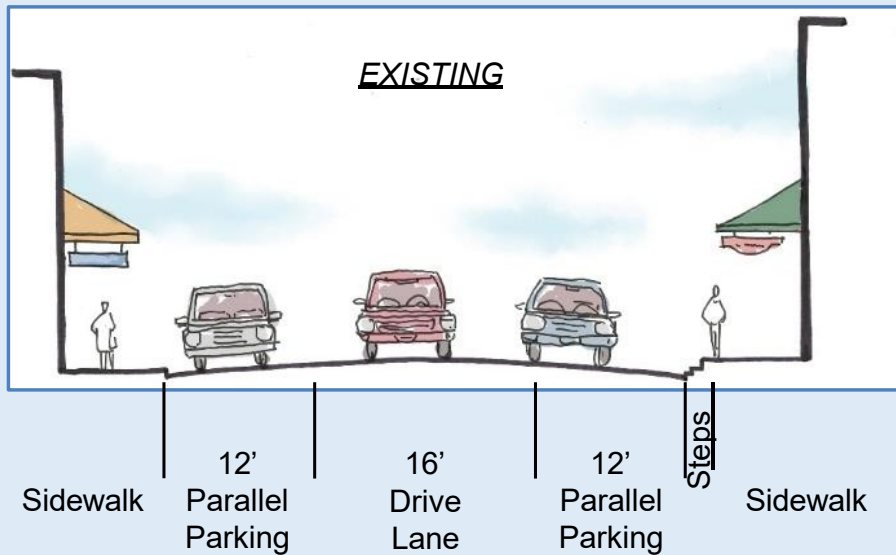
### ANALYSIS

- A. 16' wide drive lane encourages speed and limits sidewalk width.
- B. Long distance between pedestrian crossings.
- C. Steps up from parking on most of south side.
- D. Many beautiful old buildings with canopies, but canopies limit space for trees and pedestrian lights.
- E. Some 2-sided signage which helps identify businesses.
- F. Boarded windows and changes to original facades make buildings appear unkempt.



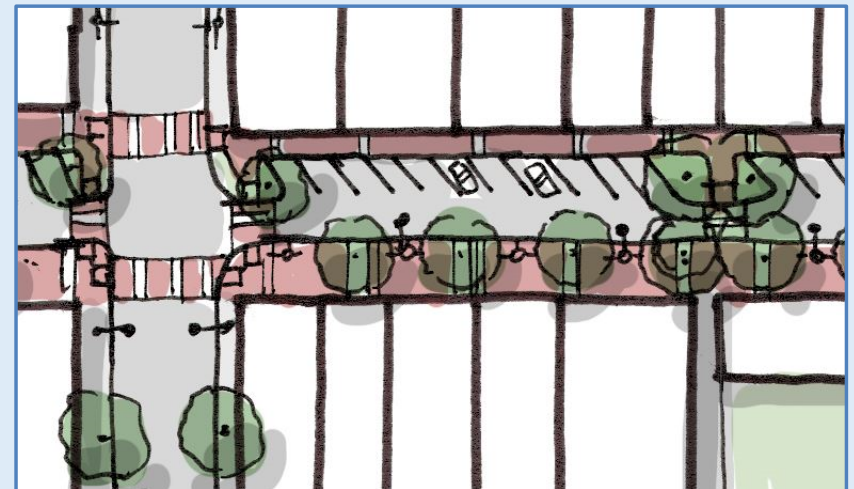
100 & 200 blocks - W. Milam St.

## 5 Downtown Streetscape – 100 & 200 Blocks West Milam Street



### PROPOSED CONCEPTS

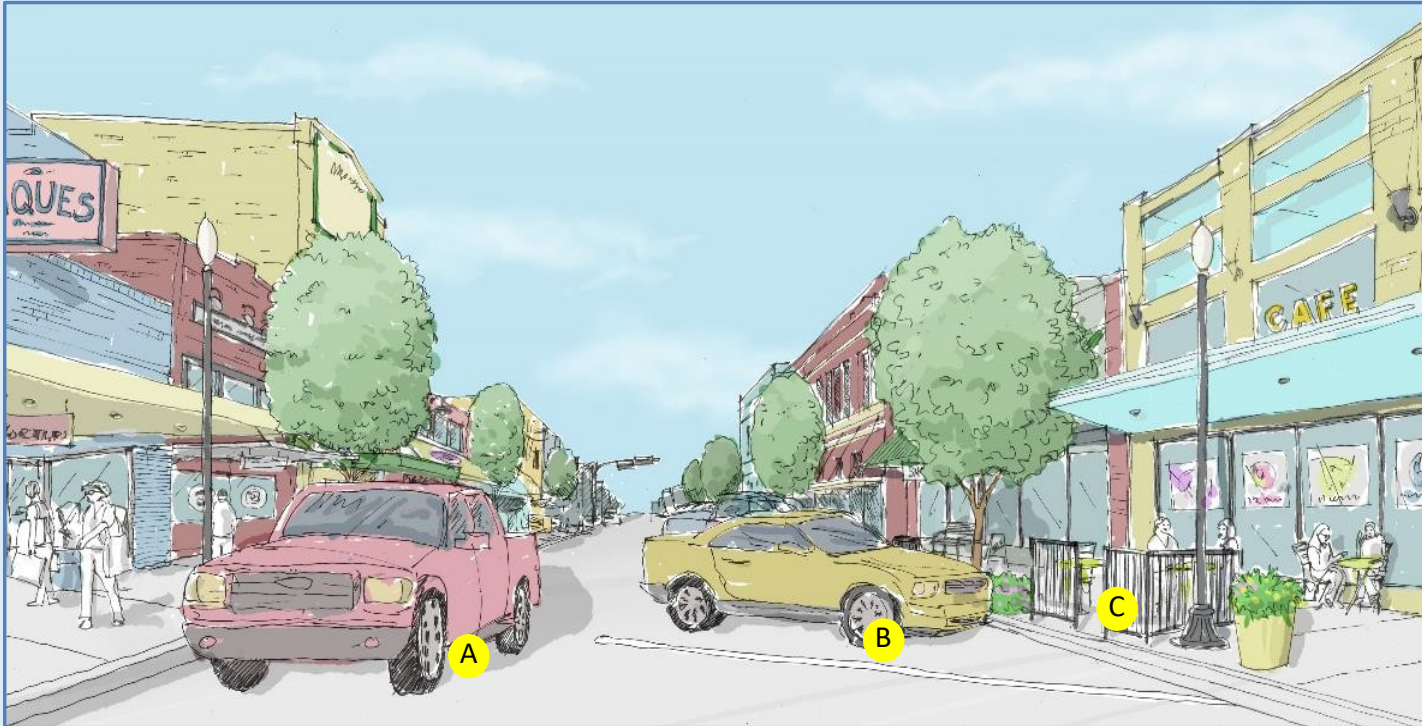
- Narrow traffic lane to 14' wide (wider than US 59 lanes) – calms traffic speed and shortens crosswalks.
- Reduce parallel parking width from 12' to 11'.
- Widen south sidewalk by 4'.
- Reduce or eliminate steps along curb.
- Create sidewalk amenity zone for decorative pedestrian lights, trees, seating, furnishings.



Plan of proposed head-in parking at W. Milam St.



## 5 Downtown Streetscape – 100 & 200 Blocks West Milam Street



### PROPOSED CONCEPTS

- A. Narrow drive-lane to reduce speed and add room for sidewalk amenities and reduce steps behind curbs.
- B. Remove parallel parking on both sides and add head-in parking on north side to increase parking spaces and consistency with courthouse square.
- C. Add street trees and pedestrian amenities.



View east on W. Milam St.

# 6

## Implementation



## 6 Implementation Plan

### Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan ensures that the ideas and policies articulated in a plan become reality. It prioritizes the key actions that need to be undertaken (*what*), the responsible entities (*who*), desired timeline (*when*), and available resources (*how*).

### Action Types

Implementation occurs through many actions:

- Regulation: Updating existing regulations or developing new ordinances to address issues.
- Coordination: Working with other agencies or groups to implement goals.
- CIP: Any capital investments or physical improvements.
- Program: Utilizing existing programs, processes or work plans.
- Development: Goals that can be implemented through the development process.
- Plan / study: Creating new plans or updating existing plans.

### Timing

The actions have been assigned a time frame for implementation. These represent ideal targets that are subject to prioritization over time as the city reacts to changing circumstances.

- Short-term: 0-1 years
- Intermediate: 2-3 years
- Mid-term: 3-5 years
- Long-term: 5-10 years
- Ongoing: tasks completed through existing programs or as the need arises.

### Funding Sources

The identified actions can be funded through varied sources such as the City's general funds, federal grants (e.g. Community Development Block Grants, Disaster Recovery Grants, Safe Routes to School, Safe Streets for All), state grants, and others. Participation in the Main Street program also offers resources to implement the Downtown Plan. Actual project completion may involve other funding sources. The City should actively seek external funding sources and explore public-private partnerships to implement the recommended actions.

## 6 Implementation

Recommendations (1 of 4)	Action Items	Responsible Entities	Time Frame
<b>Establish Downtown Overlay District</b>			
Amend existing or add new standards for the following: -Setback -Height -Lot sizes -Medium density residential -Driveway widths and curb cuts -Design standards for sidewalks, curbs and planting strips	Amend City Code	City	0-1 year
<b>Building Placement Standards</b>			
Modify requirements for building setbacks, parking lot placement, and landscaping	Amend City Code	City	0-1 year
<b>Building Design Standards</b>			
Add standards for facade transparency, building entrance, materials and articulation	Amend City Code	City	0-1 year
<b>Historic Preservation</b>			
Prepare a preservation plan - update historic district inventories	Prepare a preservation plan	City, EDC, Chamber, DT Association	2-3 years
Publicize availability of federal and state credits and other resources	Outreach and advertise resource	DT Coordinator, City, EDC, Chamber, DT Association	2-3 years
Consider participation in the Main Street program	Enroll in the program	DT Coordinator, City, EDC	2-3 years
Modify/waive development standards for historically designated properties	Amend City Code	City	2-3 years
Implement disaster recovery and disaster planning for historic properties	Implement programs	City	2-3 years
Adopt International Existing Building Code (IEBC)	Amend City Code	City	2-3 years
Create Design guidelines for historic buildings	Amend City Code	City	2-3 years
Consider appointing a dedicated Downtown Manager	Policy	City, EDC, Chamber, DT Association	2-3 years



## 6 Implementation

Recommendations (2 of 4)	Action Items	Responsible Entities	Time Frame
<b>Site Design Standards</b>			
Amend existing or add new standards for the following: -Signs -Screening -Landscaping -Outdoor seating -Outdoor storage and display -Lighting -Detention areas	Amend City Code	City	0-1 year
<b>Parking</b>			
Private parking lots  -Continue parking exemption -Require parking lots to be located to the rear or side of buildings -Encourage shared parking -Adopt landscaping requirements -Require safe and clearly marked circulation for pedestrians and bicyclists -Regulate driveway location and spacing and delineate pedestrian bike crossings	Amend City Code and design standards	City	0-1 year
Public parking lots  -Improve signage and wayfinding -Install shade trees and landscaping -Maximize availability and accessibility -Ensure appropriate lighting for safety	Amend City Code and design standards	City	3-5 years
<b>Infrastructure</b>			
Prioritize replacement of aging water and wastewater lines	Infrastructure Study and Plan	City (CIP), EDC	3-5 years
Install missing sections of curbs and gutters	Undertake improvements	City (CIP), EDC	5-10 years
Address local flooding	Undertake improvements	City (CIP), EDC	3-5 years
Ensure continuous and reliable service from local utility company	Coordination	City	Ongoing

## 6 Implementation

Recommendations (3 of 4)	Action Items	Responsible Entities	Time Frame
<b>Mobility</b>			
Coordinate with TxDOT for more pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure	Coordination	City (CIP), EDC	Ongoing
Connect Santa Fe trail to downtown and Riverfront Park	Undertake improvements	City (CIP), EDC	5-10 years
Undertake street scape improvements	Undertake improvements	City (CIP), EDC	5-10 years
Monterrey Square (Courthouse) improvements	Undertake improvements	City (CIP), EDC	3-5 years
Way finding signs	Undertake improvements	City, EDC	3-5 years
Bike accommodation and facilities	Undertake improvements	City	1-3 years
Pedestrian connectivity	Undertake improvements	City	1-3 years
Prioritize Capital Improvements Projects	Capital Improvement Plan		
<b>Economic Development</b>			
<b>Incentives/programs</b>			
Incentivize location of businesses, consider tools such as , tax abatements, Enterprise Zone	Establish programs	City, EDC	Ongoing
Add programmed events in the square, celebrate the history of the city		Chamber	1-3 years
Consider incubator for entrepreneurs as in incentive		EDC	0-1 year
Incentivize desired uses and tenants, and developers		EDC/City	Ongoing
Relocate/activate uses that do not add all day activity		EDC/City/ property owners/ stakeholders	1-3 years
<b>Improvements</b>			
Improve and activate Depot Park	Undertake improvements	EDC/City/ Canadian Pacific Kansas City Southern	1-3 years
<b>Policies</b>			
Condemn or demolish dilapidated buildings	Implement existing policies	City/Building Standards Committee	1-3 years
Explore the option of gaining control over state highway in downtown to provide safety	Policy	City/TXDOT/EDC	5-10 years
<b>Codes</b>			
Encourage neon lighting on restaurants and bars	Amend City Code	City	0-1 year
Encourage residential on second floor floors	Amend City Code	City	0-1 year
Promote outside seating	Amend City Code	City	0-1 year



## 6 Implementation

### Recommendations (4 of 4)

### Action Items

### Responsible Entities

### Time Frame

#### Streetscape and Urban Design Improvement Projects

Courthouse/Monterrey Square

Undertake improvements

City, EDC

1-10 years

River front

Undertake improvements

City, EDC

1-10 years

Streetscapes and parking configuration

Undertake improvements

City, EDC

1-10 years

Entry gateways

Undertake improvements

City, EDC

1-10 years

Public Parking lots

Undertake improvements

City, EDC

1-10 years

## 6 Implementation

### Cost Estimates

Refer to Chapter 6 Design Concepts: Overall Downtown Plan

Summary						Notes/Caveats
Estimate 1: Parking Lot Improvements				\$ 381,000.00		Costs should be considered high-level and preliminary ONLY to get a ballpark understanding of costs. Further design, detail and analysis is needed to accurately determine costs.
Estimate 2: Street Improvements				\$ 10,080,000.00		
Estimate 3: Downtown Surrounding Street Improvements				\$ 10,920,000.00		
Estimate 4: Arrival Zones				\$ 450,000.00		
Estimate 5: Riverfront				\$ 2,400,000.00		
Estimate 6: Courthouse Square Street and Parking Improvements				\$ 3,626,000.00		
<b>Grand Total</b>				<b>\$ 27,857,000.00</b>		

Refer to Chapter 6 Design Concepts: Overall Development Plan

Estimate 1: Parking Lot Improvements	#	Quantity Type	Unit Price	Total	Limits/Location	Notes/Caveats
Parking Lot 1	32	Spaces	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 32,000.00	Richmond&Polk (W-E); Caney&Milam (N-	Does not include utility relocations or replacements. Assumed resurfacing, paving and striping only.
Parking Lot 2	81	Spaces	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 81,000.00	Polk&Houston (W-E); Caney& Milam (N-	
Parking Lot 3	46	Spaces	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 46,000.00	Houston&Fulton (W-E); Caney&Milam (N-	
Parking Lot 4	38	Spaces	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 38,000.00	Fulton&Rusk (W-E); Caney&Milam (N-S)	
Parking Lot 5	64	Spaces	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 64,000.00	Richmond&Polk (W-E); Milam&Burleson St. (N-S)	
Parking Lot 6	46	Spaces	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 46,000.00	Richmond&Polk (W-E); Burleson&Elm (N-	
Parking Lot 7	58	Spaces	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 58,000.00	Polk&Houston (W-E); Burleson&Elm(N-S)	
Parking Lot 8	16	Spaces	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 16,000.00	East side of Fulton Street; Burleson&Elm	
<b>Estimate 1 Total</b>				<b>\$ 381,000.00</b>		

## 6 Implementation

### Cost Estimates

Refer to Chapter 6 Design Concepts: Identity Overall Plan

Estimate 2: Street Improvements	#	Quantity Type	Unit Price	Total	Limits/Location	Notes/Caveats
East Ahldag Avenue	0.62	Miles	\$ 1,500,000.00	\$ 930,000.00	Fulton St-Alabama	Does not include utility relocations, replacements, proposed storm, sanitary sewer or water distribution lines. Needed utilities would be determined in project design phases. Assumes proposed multi-modal streets with trees, sidewalks and bike lanes.
East Boling Hwy	0.63	Miles	\$ 1,500,000.00	\$ 945,000.00	Fulton St-Alabama	
Sunset Street	0.38	Miles	\$ 1,500,000.00	\$ 570,000.00	Sorrell-Caney St	
Sorrell Street	0.18	Miles	\$ 1,500,000.00	\$ 270,000.00	Sunset-Richmond	
N. Richmond Road	0.12	Miles	\$ 1,500,000.00	\$ 180,000.00	3rd St-Sorrell St	
Colorado St. Underpass	0.12	Miles	\$ 1,500,000.00	\$ 180,000.00	W Colorado-S Polk St.	
Fulton Street	1.24	Miles	\$ 1,500,000.00	\$ 1,860,000.00	E. Ahldag-E Alabama	
Resident Street	0.69	Miles	\$ 1,500,000.00	\$ 1,035,000.00	3rd St-Elm St	
Caney Street	0.50	Miles	\$ 1,500,000.00	\$ 750,000.00	Resident St.-Alabama Rd.	
Elm Street	0.65	Miles	\$ 1,500,000.00	\$ 975,000.00	Fulton St-Alabama	
Alabama Street	1.59	Miles	\$ 1,500,000.00	\$ 2,385,000.00	E Ahldag-Elm St	
<b>Estimate 2 Total</b>				\$ 10,080,000.00		



## 6 Implementation

### Cost Estimates

Refer to Chapter 6 Design Concepts: Connectivity – Pedestrian and Bicycles Proposed

<b>Estimate 3: Downtown Surrounding Street Improvements</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Quantity Type</b>	<b>Unit Price</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Limits/Location</b>	<b>Notes/Caveats</b>
Caney Street	0.55	Miles	\$ 2,000,000.00	\$ 1,100,000.00	Sunset-Resident	Does not include utility relocations, replacements, proposed storm, sanitary sewer or water distribution lines. Needed utilities would be determined in project design phases. Assumed proposed landscaping, lighting, etc. Intersections assume installation of new traffic signals.
Milam Street	0.5	Miles	\$ 2,000,000.00	\$ 1,000,000.00	Sunset-Houston; Rusk-Dennis	
Burleson	0.35	Miles	\$ 2,000,000.00	\$ 700,000.00	Sunset-Houston	
W Colorado St	0.25	Miles	\$ 2,000,000.00	\$ 500,000.00	Sunset-S. Richmond	
S Sunset St	0.2	Miles	\$ 2,000,000.00	\$ 400,000.00	W Caney-W Colorado	
Elm St	0.07	Miles	\$ 2,000,000.00	\$ 140,000.00	Polk-Houston St	
Richmond Rd	0.29	Miles	\$ 2,000,000.00	\$ 580,000.00	W Alabama-Milam;Burleson-Colorado	
Polk Street	0.21	Miles	\$ 2,000,000.00	\$ 420,000.00	Caney-Elm	
Houston Street	0.22	Miles	\$ 2,000,000.00	\$ 440,000.00	Alabama-Milam	
Fulton Street	0.22	Miles	\$ 2,000,000.00	\$ 440,000.00	Alabama-Milam	
Caney-Richmond Intersection	1	No. Intersections	\$ 650,000.00	\$ 650,000.00	Caney-Richmond Intersection	
Milam-Richmond Intersection	1	No. Intersections	\$ 650,000.00	\$ 650,000.00	Milam-Richmond Intersection	
Burleson-Richmond Intersection	1	No. Intersections	\$ 650,000.00	\$ 650,000.00	Burleson-Richmond Intersection	
Milam-Houston Intersection	1	No. Intersections	\$ 650,000.00	\$ 650,000.00	Milam-Houston Intersection	
Burleson-Houston Intersection	1	No. Intersections	\$ 650,000.00	\$ 650,000.00	Burleson-Houston Intersection	
Milam-Fulton Intersection	1	No. Intersections	\$ 650,000.00	\$ 650,000.00	Milam-Fulton Intersection	
Burleson-Fulton Intersection	1	No. Intersections	\$ 650,000.00	\$ 650,000.00	Burleson-Fulton Intersection	
Milam-Rusk Intersection	1	No. Intersections	\$ 650,000.00	\$ 650,000.00	Milam-Rusk Intersection	
<b>Estimate 3 Total</b>				\$ 10,920,000.00		

## 6 Implementation

### Cost Estimates

Refer to Chapter 6 Design Concepts: Identify – North, South and West Downtown Entry &  
Chapter 6 Design Concepts: Identity – East Downtown Entry

Estimate 4: Arrival Zones	#	Quantity Type	Unit Price	Total	Limits/Location	Notes/Caveats
N,S,W DT Entry	0.075	Miles	\$ 3,000,000.00	\$ 225,000.00	Richmond St from Milam to Burleson	Does not include utility relocations, replacements, proposed storm, sanitary
E DT Entry	0.075	Miles	\$ 3,000,000.00	\$ 225,000.00	Milam St from Fulton to Rusk	
<b>Estimate 4 Total</b>				\$ 450,000.00		

Refer to Chapter 6 Design Concepts: Riverstone Park

Estimate 5: Riverfront	#	Quantity Type	Unit Price	Total	Limits/Location	Notes/Caveats
Wharton Journal	30	Spaces	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 30,000.00	South side of Burleson between Houston	Does not include utility relocations, replacements, proposed storm, sanitary sewer or water distribution lines. Needed utilities would be determined in project design phases. Assumed proposed landscaping, lighting, street removal, resurfacing and striping.
Riverfront Park Raised Promenade & Overlook	8600	Square Footage	\$ 150.00	\$ 1,290,000.00	South of Elm in existing conditions between Houston&Fulton	
Riverside Hike & Bike Trail	2500	Linear Feet	\$ 10.00	\$ 25,000.00	Assumed from Richmond to S. of Elm-Rusk Intersection	
S. Houston St. & S. Fulton St. streetscape and walk connections	0.15	Miles	\$ 3,000,000.00	\$ 450,000.00	Along Houston & Fulton Streets from Burleson to Elm	
Economic Development Corporation property	50000	Square Footage	\$ 10.00	\$ 500,000.00	In between Houston&Fulton South of Burleson St.	
Close and remove Elm Street between S. Fulton St & S. Houston St.	0.07	Miles	\$ 1,500,000.00	\$ 105,000.00	Along Elm between Houston to Fulton St.	
<b>Estimate 5 Total</b>				\$ 2,400,000.00		

## 6 Implementation Plan

### Cost Estimates

Refer to Chapter 6 Design Concepts: Courthouse Square – Streets and Parking

<b>Estimate 6: Courthouse Square Street and Parking Improvements</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Quantity Type</b>	<b>Unit Price</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Limits/Location</b>	<b>Notes/Caveats</b>
Parking Lots	126	Spaces	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 126,000.00	Square block around Courthouse-Milam, Houston, Fulton, Burleson St.	relocations, replacements, proposed storm, sanitary sewer or water distribution lines. Needed utilities would be determined in project design phases. Assumed proposed landscaping, lighting, etc. Intersections assume installation of new traffic signals.
Street Improvements	0.3	Miles	\$ 3,000,000.00	\$ 900,000.00		
Intersection Improvements	4	No. Intersections	\$ 650,000.00	\$ 2,600,000.00		
<b>Estimate 6 Total</b>				\$ 3,626,000.00		