

CENTRAL CITY COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR RECOMMENDATIONS



REVITALIZATION PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES

Village Analysis

Village plans and analysis were developed through research and more than 60 meetings with stakeholders, developers, regulators, lenders and others, as well as three public forums held during 2001 at the Fort Worth Convention Center. Well over 200 interested citizens and stakeholders, representing a cross-section of the city, attended each of the public forums.

The first public forum, “Setting the Stage,” was held in January. The character, opportunities and barriers of each commercial corridor were discussed, potential urban villages were identified, and participants prioritized issues and potential village areas using colored dots to “vote.” Using consultant analysis and the public “vote,” the Task Force selected two villages on each of the five corridors on which to focus.

During the second forum in April, “Making Choices,” participants made visual preference choices about the land uses, landscaping, and urban design they wanted for the urban villages in their areas. They also used an interactive exercise to plan the preferred land uses for each village. These land use and urban design recommendations served as the foundation for the redevelopment strategies for the corridors and villages.

In October, the final forum, “Bringing It Home,” was held, in which the consultant team presented redevelopment plans and strategies for public comment. Their recommendations joined the community vision developed through the forums and meetings with the identified market opportunities and development barriers and included an action plan for implementation.

Implementation

Following completion of the village concept plans and analyses came the challenge of outlining an implementable strategy for promoting investment in the central city corridors.

As explained throughout the process, no single project will revitalize the commercial corridors. Rather, a series of projects that occur over time and promote excitement and capture the interest of potential investment partners will do so. Therefore, part of the recommended positioning and investment strategy for the commercial corridors is designing a process that keeps multiple projects moving forward simultaneously.

Project definition is broad – it includes public, private or public-private physical projects, social programs, educational programs, public relations and goodwill-building programs, and policy reform. What is most important strategically is to continually introduce and move forward a number and variety of programs. This strategy builds community goodwill, enhances quality-of-life, provides opportunities for public participation, allows special-interest groups to have a role in the revitalization effort, sends a message that the corridors are making positive strides towards success, and creates an increasingly attractive environment for investment and development. Investors, developers and lenders seek out environments with market opportunity and prospects for success, devoid of obstacles and sound in sustainability.

Guiding Principles

From the assessment of the commercial corridors’ opportunities and challenges, conclusions of the market analysis, and input from stakeholders, it was determined that central city reinvestment activities must be directed by the following principles:

- City Council will be proactive and entrepreneurial.
- Efforts will be market responsive.
- Villages will be collectively managed as a “portfolio of assets.”
- Neighborhood assets will be enhanced.
- Revitalization “tool bag” will have many tools.
- Public investment will leverage private investment.
- Public/private partnerships are essential.
- Regional public policy will support corridor redevelopment.
- Land use planning and zoning will be supportive.
- Effective stakeholder efforts will be coordinated and leveraged.
- Catalyst projects will be publicly supported.



First Commercial Corridors Public Forum, January 2001

REVITALIZATION PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES (Cont.)

Strategy Elements

Just as the challenges or barriers to investment are multifaceted, so too are the solutions. As the central city commercial corridors compete in the local and regional marketplace, their “tool bag” must contain a variety of mechanisms to attract investment. Given the obstacles or barriers associated with commercial development, it is imperative that whatever mix of tools is put in place be comprehensive, flexible and creative. This study identified a variety of incentives and resources that can be packaged together in a cohesive strategy. They can be used independently or in various combinations.

Tools used for corridor revitalization fall into several broad categories including: assistance with site acquisitions and building and facade improvements, start-up capital, operating assistance, and business counseling.

Strategy elements are organized into two broad categories: standard strategies, which are a necessary foundation for reinvestment within all of the corridors and villages, and customized or village-specific strategies. Both the standard strategies and village-specific strategies have been developed specifically for the City of Fort Worth central city commercial corridors. They are responsive to the market opportunities, village concepts and development programs, financial analyses and broad stakeholder input provided by the community and presented throughout this process.

Summary of Standard Strategies

- Public, private and non-profit advocates implement the reinvestment strategies.
- Central city and corridor projects provide leveraged financial return – “village portfolio.”
- City maintains a pro-business attitude towards redevelopment in the central city.
- Surplus properties are returned to tax rolls at an accelerated rate.
- Existing resources are fully utilized.
- Neighborhoods are extensively involved.
- Comprehensive financial resources are made available.
- Commitment is made to remedy existing problems and prevent future ones.
- Higher-density urban infill projects in the central city are encouraged.
- Central city business recruitment, retention and expansion are promoted.
- Public commitment is long-term.
- Development framework is established with short-term standards and long-term guidelines.
- Cultural and historic resources are preserved.
- Physical environment balances role of vehicles and pedestrians.
- Officials and leaders continue public outreach effort to increase awareness of redevelopment goals and strategies.

Actions and Timeframe

The final step in the *Commercial Corridors Revitalization Strategy* was development of an action plan for the village plan strategy elements. The action plan describes the roles and responsibilities of those departments, organizations and individuals identified to implement the strategy elements, as well as the City’s role relative to their implementation. The plan addressed timing – which strategies can be implemented immediately (1 to 2 years), in the near-term (3 to 5 years) and long-term (6 to 10 years). Many of the strategies should continue for years to come.

Historically, the planning, financing and implementation of projects in the city were the primary responsibility of public sector entities. The City was understood to have the largest and longest-term interest and responsibility, making it the obvious lead in any revitalization or investment effort. However, while the public sector will continue to play a significant role in the implementation of this strategy, a critical component to its success will be participation by private, non-profit, neighborhood and other advocacy organizations. The City’s role will be to shepherd this endeavor, acting as an advocate, promoter, facilitator, policy maker, financier and educator. City efforts will need to work in concert with those of the advocacy organizations. The central city maintains a diverse mix of stakeholder groups, each one an anchor that has chosen its central city location. This plan is *their* strategy, *their* road map for a vital central city.

COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS REINVESTMENT STRATEGIES

STANDARD STRATEGIES

Key word presented in bold for reference to glossary.

Regulatory	Financial	Market	Physical
<p>Immediate (1)</p> <p>Identify city designee to facilitate coordination of permitting and approval process, resource allocation, and elimination of obstacles – for projects within priority areas (empowered to negotiate on behalf of City) (1)</p> <p>Encourage and support demonstration projects within urban village areas (1)</p> <p>Use petition-based process to rezone parcels for compliance with village plan, encouraging higher density housing and mixed-use (1)</p> <p>Assign Neighborhood Empowerment Zone (NEZ) designation to villages and qualifying surrounding neighborhoods (1)</p> <p>Assign priority to the villages in the allocation of capital improvement funds (1)</p> <p>Actively apply Chapter 34 of International Building Code (IBC) in an effort to offer relief to owners of historically significant properties (1)</p> <p>Revise enterprise zone boundaries based on 2000 Census results; include qualifying villages and applicable NEZ area (1)</p>	<p>Immediate (1)</p> <p>Support creation of a community development public-private partnership (funding intermediary) for corridor-based advocacy entities. Funding intermediary promotes and supports corridor projects: coordinates with City designee, provides technical assistance-Research the application of Economic Development Administration (EDA), HUD and other federal grant funds for predevelopment and development assistance (1)</p> <p>Aggressively research multiple transportation funding sources given variety of modes potentially available within the village (1)</p> <p>Encourage innovative bank participation in project financing through establishment of loan pools, greater use of:</p> <p>Historic Preservation Investment Tax Credits (Federal); Historic Site Tax Exemption (Municipal); Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) Program dollars; Reverse Mortgage, etc. (See glossary) (1)</p> <p>Work with lenders to establish a low-interest loan pool for projects within the village (1)</p> <p>Approve qualified requests from village areas for Tax Increment Finance (TIF) designation to assist with funding capital projects (1)</p> <p>Use Low Income Housing Tax Credits in CDBG-eligible areas for relevant projects (1)</p> <p>Encourage the use of historic preservation investment tax credits among qualifying projects in priority areas (1)</p> <p>Encourage application of historic site tax exemption program among qualifying projects in priority areas (1)</p>	<p>Immediate (1)</p> <p>Encourage the provision of community development advocacy/services to unserved urban village areas in order to direct and manage implementation of projects, collaboration of relevant entities, etc. (see advocacy entity) (1)</p> <p>Support neighborhood associations to take on an expanded role in neighborhood improvement efforts (e.g., adopt-a-block, nuisance abatement, community policing, etc.) (1)</p> <p>Use CDCs (Community Development Corporations) and other community liaison organizations as holding entities for market information (1)</p> <p>Distribute all market information (MPF, Commercial Corridors, etc.) to local developers (1)</p> <p>Facilitate the offering of educational seminars promoting investment and eliminating barriers to investment within the central city (1)</p>	<p>Immediate (1)</p> <p>Establish a five-year capital improvement plan for each village to fund infrastructure (1)</p> <p>Assist neighborhood associations, CDCs and other advocacy entities to market design elements of the village plans to developers as an interim step before mixed-use zoning and design standards are in place (1)</p> <p>Encourage the development of design guidelines tailored to each village with board representation from contiguous neighborhood groups (1)</p> <p>Establish urban renewal districts in select commercial areas for the purpose of acquiring and retrofitting commercial properties (1)</p> <p>Inventory historic properties within village; prepare zoning overlay; Retain significant buildings (1)</p>

COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS REINVESTMENT STRATEGIES

STANDARD STRATEGIES

Key word presented in bold for reference to glossary.

Regulatory	Financial	Market	Physical
<p>Near Term (2)</p> <p>Institute a streamlined development approval process including use of the key staff person to serve as liaison between the applicant and appropriate city departments (2)</p> <p>Establish project thresholds whereby smaller projects can be rapidly permitted (2)</p> <p>Provide regulatory options that facilitate land assembly (property purchases, road vacations) (2)</p> <p>Return City surplus properties to the private sector through a number of different avenues, including the use of community development corporations (CDCs), and developer Request for Proposals (RFPs) (2)</p> <p>Maintain publicly-held properties until returned to the tax roles; ensure code compliance through commitment of appropriate resources (2)</p> <p>Establish dispersion policies or regulations that prevent the concentration of homeless shelters, halfway houses, and social service organizations (2)</p> <p>Direct appropriate public facilities (libraries, schools, cultural facilities, community meeting places, government administrative buildings) to villages (see concentrated public facilities); lease space in village developments to encourage other public entities to locate within villages (2)</p> <p>Establish a self-certification program to speed up compliance with regulations (2)</p> <p>Develop Intergovernmental Agreements with taxing entities in order to allow for the accelerated return of surplus properties to the tax rolls at below market value (2)</p> <p>Allow multiple use of plans as qualifying element for various programs (e.g., village plan NEZ designation) (2)</p>	<p>Near Term (2)</p> <p>Work with private foundations and banks to expand the availability of predevelopment funding grants beyond EDA dollars (2)</p> <p>Establish facade maintenance program – (local, state, federal) low interest loans and grants (2)</p> <p>Delay and/or waive development fees until NEZ designation implemented within the villages (2)</p> <p>Research the logistics of establishing low-interest, patient capital project financing in priority areas through programs such as a “linked deposits program” in other states, public subordination of debt, and other vehicles (2)</p> <p>Promote more aggressive application of tax abatement among qualifying projects in the villages (2)</p> <p>Make available CDBG, HOME and HIP dollars for affordable housing new construction and rehabilitation independent of the Model Block Program (2)</p> <p>Consider tax exempt bond financing to supplement financing options for projects in the villages (2)</p> <p>Encourage and support expansion of Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) and designation of existing institutions as CDFIs to promote lending in challenged priority areas (2)</p> <p>Establish a task force with lender and insurance company representation, to discuss rate differentials and provide public support to offset impacts on operating cashflow (see insurance redlining) (2)</p> <p>Monitor the space needs of businesses within priority areas, providing assistance with assemblage where feasible (2)</p> <p>Commit to creative financing strategies including infrastructure cost participation where feasible (2)</p> <p>Long Term (3)</p> <p>Evaluate the feasibility of disincentives designed to discourage landowners from practicing land speculation (e.g., speculator tax, etc.) (3)</p>	<p>Near Term (2)</p> <p>Encourage local utility companies to bury overhead wires (underground utilities) and/or provide low-interest loans for projects in priority areas (2)</p> <p>Utilize available financial incentives to facilitate brownfields redevelopment (see Environmental Impact Report (EIR)) (2)</p> <p>Establish a parking district to manage shared parking facilities once development reaches a certain point, as well as protect neighborhoods from impacts associated with commercial development (2)</p>	<p>Near Term (2)</p> <p>Encourage structured and/or shared parking through regulatory or financial assistance that supports a mix of uses when cost effective (2)</p> <p>Promote pedestrian environment through a number of mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimizing curb cuts, encouraging larger assemblages and projects; • surrounding big box style development with first-floor retail space; • minimizing blank walls and dead spaces; • encouraging parking behind buildings (interior to projects); • offering fee incentives to projects which meet this goal (2) <p>Use petition-based process to rezone districts for compliance with village plan, encouraging higher density housing and mixed use (2)</p>

IMPLEMENTATION TO DATE

After more than a year of intense study and community outreach by the Leland team and City staff under the direction of the Commercial Corridors Task Force (CCTF), the City Council accepted the conceptual redevelopment plan of the Commercial Corridors Revitalization Strategy in November 2001. It is a central element of Fort Worth's efforts to revitalize the central city. The principal strategies that the City is employing for this revitalization are to:

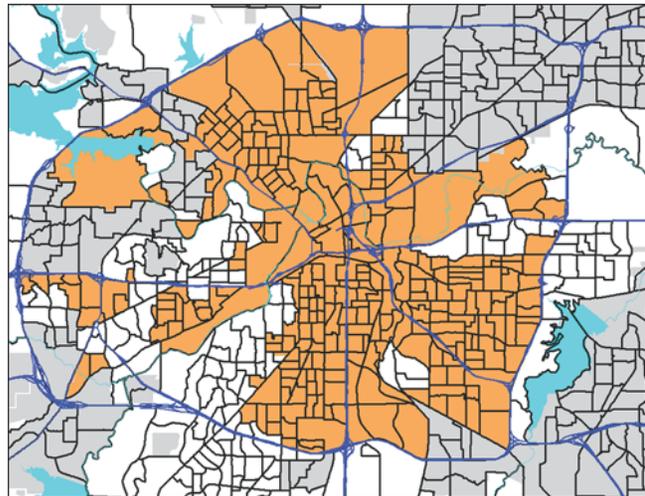
- Develop compact, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use growth centers.
- Revitalize distressed commercial corridors by developing mixed-use villages along those corridors.
- Develop a light-rail transit system to connect the growth centers and villages.

All three of these strategies are addressed in the Commercial Corridors Revitalization Strategy.

A major piece of the Revitalization Strategy is the 65-item Reinvestment Strategies action plan for achieving reinvestment in the commercial corridors. (See previous section of this Final Report for the list of the standard strategies.) Strategies for individual villages are found in the Village Plan section.

The reinvestment strategies support the City Council's six strategic goals for 2002-2005:

- Create a clean, attractive city and neighborhoods
- Make Fort Worth the safest major city
- Diversify the economic base and create jobs
- Revitalize the central city neighborhoods and commercial districts
- Promote orderly growth in developing areas
- Create a user-friendly government



Fort Worth Central City

Since October 29, 2001 when the CCTF was first briefed by the Leland team on the strategies action plan, much has been accomplished. The action items have been refined, with extensive Task Force, community, and staff participation.

The Task Force has made several specific recommendations on which City Council has taken action, and staff is in the midst of implementing the list of the immediate and near-term strategies.

The City structure has been realigned to address central city issues more effectively and efficiently. To that end, the Economic Development Division of the City Manager's Office has become the Economic and Community Development Department. The position of Community Development Manager has been created within that department to facilitate coordination of the revitalization efforts of the central city and commercial corridors.

In addition, the City is seeking additional public partnerships to help leverage the needed private investment to make the village plans a reality. Since 1998, the City has secured approximately \$33 million towards key catalyst projects within the urban villages to trigger broader revitalization within the commercial corridors. These funds have the potential to leverage \$276 million for development projects that are currently in the planning stages.

IMPLEMENTATION TO DATE (CONT.)

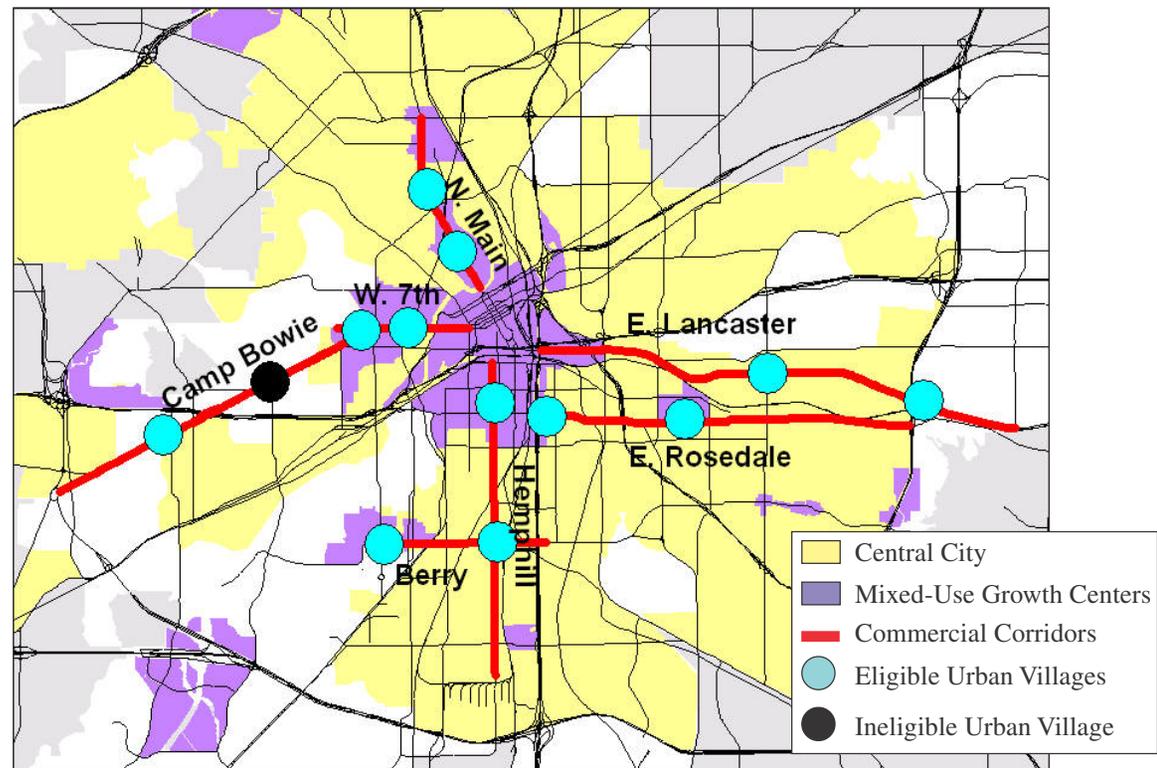
The City Council has also initiated a Neighborhood Empowerment Zone (NEZ) program targeted to eligible areas around 12 of the 13 urban villages. Other redevelopment strategies will be employed to revitalize the Camp Bowie/Hulen village, which does not meet eligibility requirements for the NEZ program. One other area, Stop Six, which does not contain an urban village, has NEZ designation. It is also a target of other City revitalization initiatives.

At the recommendation of the CCTF, the City Council has taken the following steps to implement the NEZ program for the urban villages:

- Streamlined the NEZ designation process from a two-step to a one-step process.
- Instituted a requirement that mixed-use zoning be in place as a prerequisite for NEZ designation.
- Prohibited automatic tax abatements in tax increment finance (TIF) districts that are also within NEZs.
- Designated the Ridglea NEZ and mixed-use village. (M&C G-13580) Accepted the

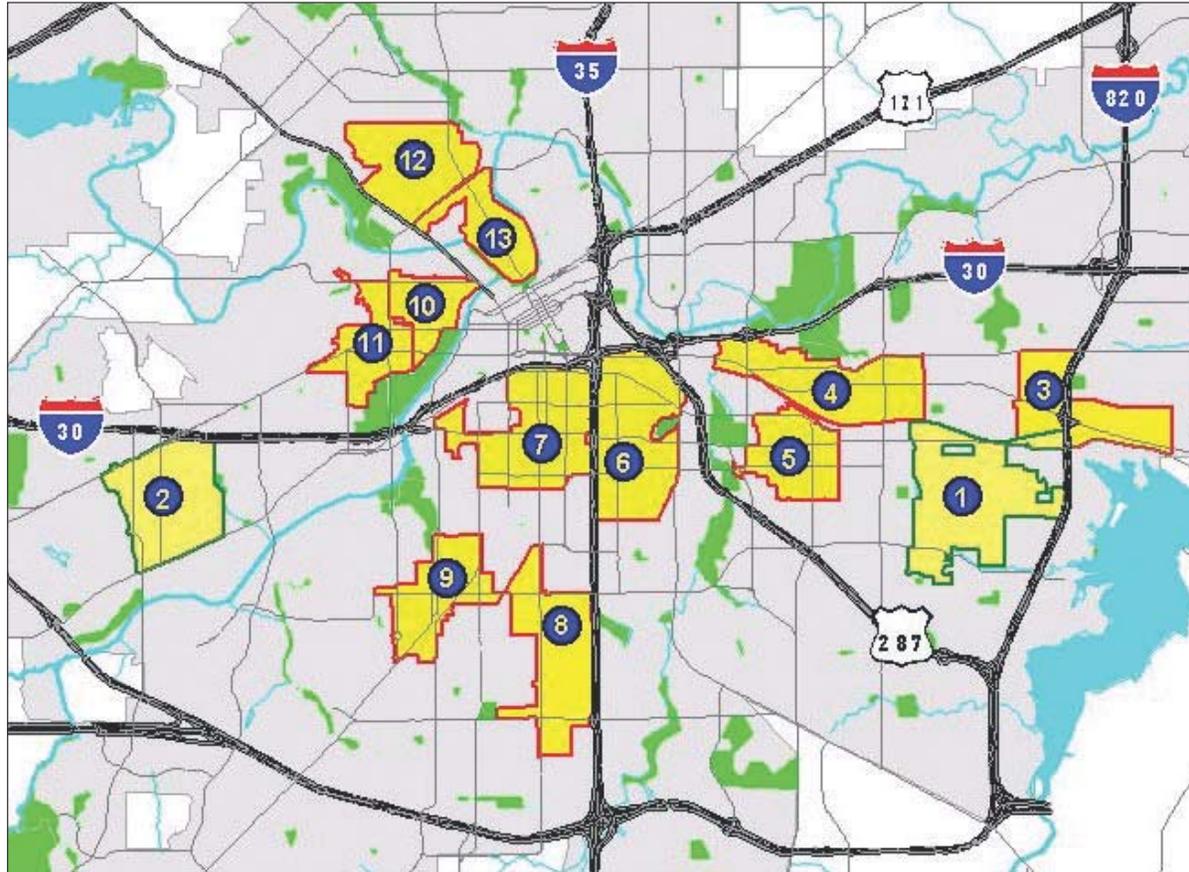
suggested mixed-use and NEZ boundaries for the remaining 11 of the 12 eligible villages.

- Agreed that NEZs be designated individually after mixed-use rezoning is in place for that village.
- Adopted a policy that the mixed-use rezoning be petition-based while reserving the discretion to use Council-initiated rezoning under extraordinary circumstances.



SUGGESTED NEZ BOUNDARIES

Neighborhood Empowerment Zones



Existing NEZs

- 1. Stop Six
- 2. Ridglea

Suggested NEZs

- 3. Historic Handley
- 4. Oakland Corners
- 5. Polytechnic/Wesleyan
- 6. Evans & Rosedale
- 7. Magnolia
- 8. Hemphill/Berry
- 9. Trinity Park
- 10. West 7th/University
- 11. Mercado
- 12. Paddock Bend

STATUS OF MIXED-USE REZONING

Rezoned to Mixed-Use

Ridglea

Petitions for Mixed-Use Rezoning in Circulation

- Historic Handley
- Oakland Corners
- Polytechnic/Wesleyan
- Magnolia
- Trinity Park
- West 7th/University
- Berry/University

Petitions Not Yet Circulated

- Evans & Rosedale
- Hemphill/Berry
- Mercado
- Paddock Bend

