

L²⁰₂₀ **LAREDO**
CITY OF THE FUTURE

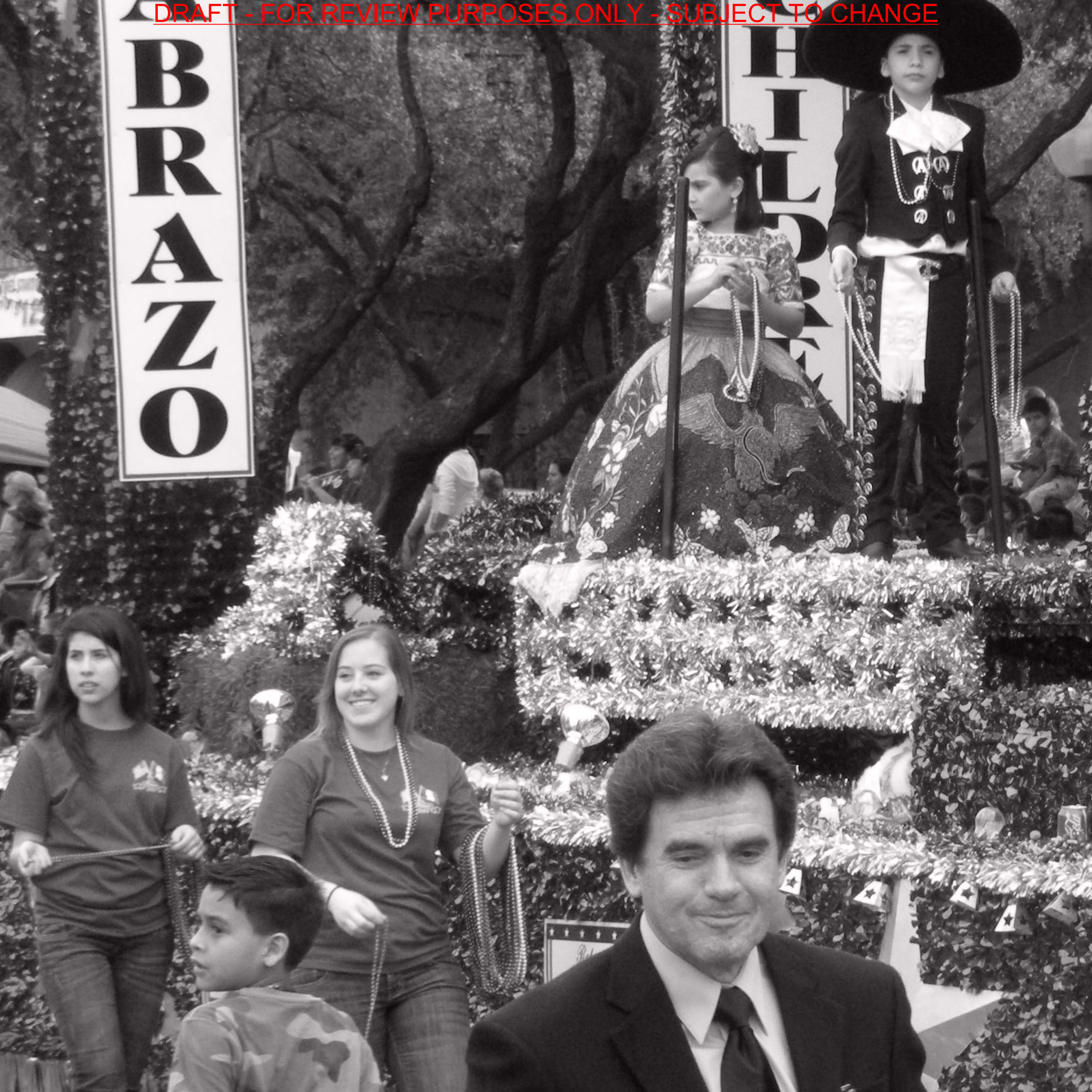
KELL MUÑOZ ARCHITECTS, INC.

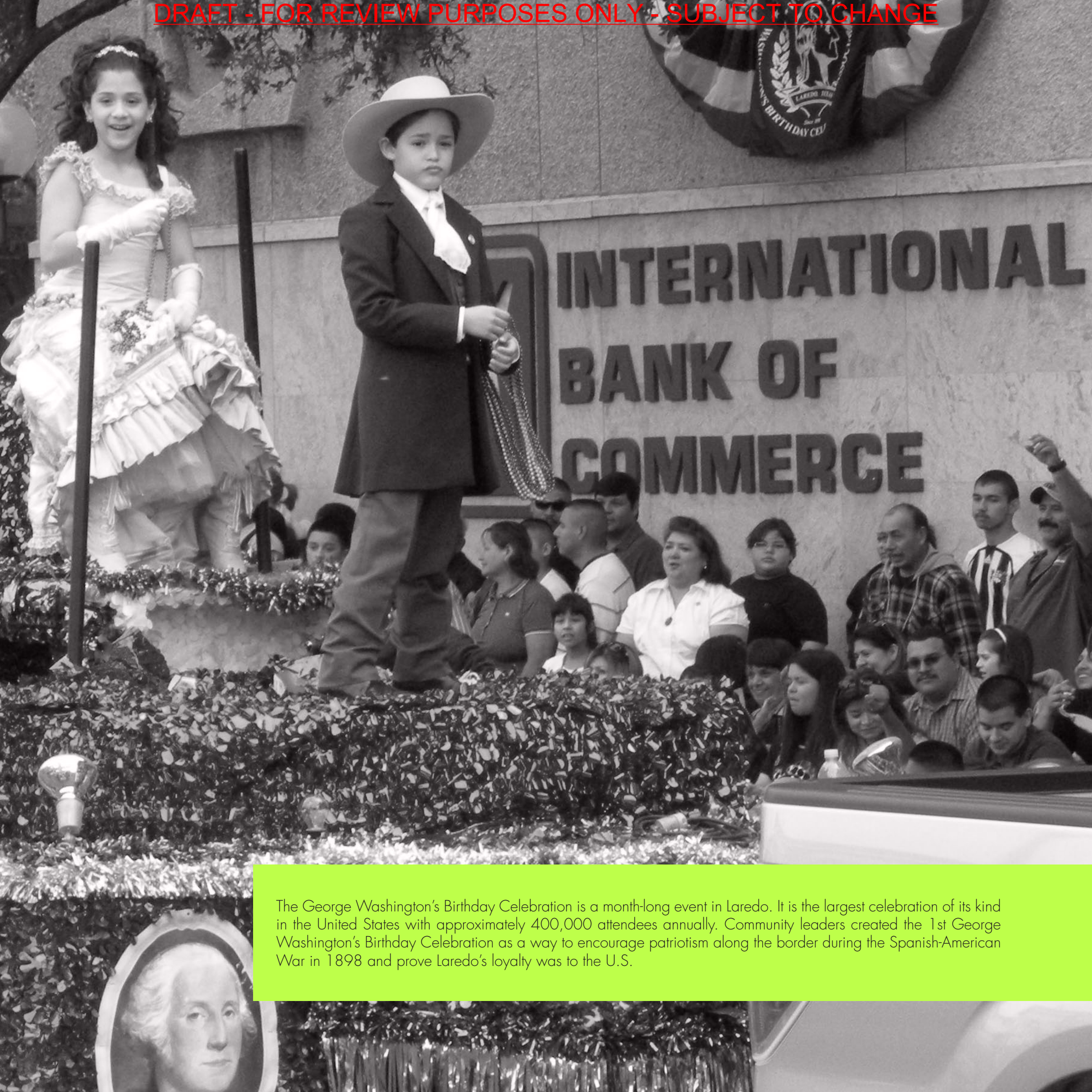


In many ways, Laredo, Texas is a reflection of our Nation in the 21st century. A city of great challenges and greater opportunity. Located at the center of the Americas, Laredo is the fastest growing border city in the United States and our largest inland port. The 2010 census confirms that the minority/majority population is a signifier of the demographic shift in our country.

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The George Washington's Birthday Celebration is a month-long event in Laredo. It is the largest celebration of its kind in the United States with approximately 400,000 attendees annually. Community leaders created the 1st George Washington's Birthday Celebration as a way to encourage patriotism along the border during the Spanish-American War in 1898 and prove Laredo's loyalty was to the U.S.





Laredo is the largest inland port in the United States, processing more than \$173 billion in trade in 2010.

LABOR



CITY OF THE

EDDO



THE FUTURE



June 2011

Laredo is The City of the Future. A city of global commerce and a multi-ethnic, minority/majority population built on a foundation of innovative means of transportation. The primary focus of my public service since 2006 has been to ensure the world gets to know the real Laredo, the Laredo where we live, the Laredo we love, the Laredo that is friendly, prosperous, beautiful and safe for its residents and visitors. This community master planning process has reminded the City where we came from and where we will be in 2020.

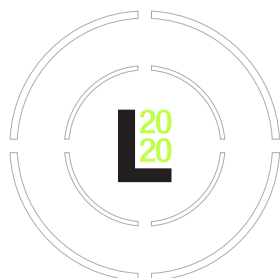
I am honored to have shared with you this once in a lifetime opportunity to re-envision and re-imagine one of the most historic cities in the United States. Downtown is Laredo's historic heart, the development and implementation of this plan will ensure downtown prospers as the spirit of our community. This shared process developed a vision for downtown that features a viable mix of residential, commercial, entertainment and public space uses that integrates mobility in a workable environment and enhance Laredo's economy, quality of life and unique sense of place.

The hard work and real rewards of this community process lie ahead of us. We must continue to work together to guide public and private investment and implement specific strategies related to economic development to achieve the vision of Laredo 2020. I ask for your continued support as the implementation will present various issues, strategic decisions and tireless efforts from all of us. We are all a part of this vision and we are all personally accountable to future Laredoans to make this a reality. I look forward to standing by your side when we achieve our Laredo 2020.

CITY OF LAREDO

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Raul G. Salinas".

Raul G. Salinas
Mayor





June 2011

The Laredo Downtown Master Plan aims to present contemporary options by defining present conditions and collaborating with the community to discover new ideas to revitalize one of the most historic downtowns in the United States. Laredo, Texas is the largest inland port in the Americas and the fastest growing city along the US/Mexico border. This plan collaboratively developed a vision for downtown Laredo to serve as the economic, civic, social, and cultural center for Laredoans and revive its legacy as a Pan American destination for people and trade.

For generations Laredo and Nuevo Laredo have shared a common past as they were one city until 1848. The goal of this plan is to define the character, vision and elements to enhance and sustain a vibrant downtown in the context of land use, growth objectives and development patterns. Downtown's vitality has been diminishing for over a decade beginning with the post 9/11 border security issues and most recently the drug-trafficking violence. This plan acknowledges the challenges and assumes an optimistic view of the future to create a stable, accessible transnational landscape.

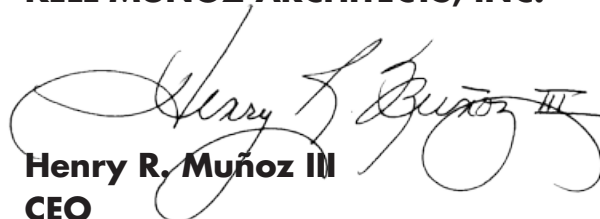
We are proud to present a comprehensive understanding of character, issues and prospects based on a definitive collection of data that quantifies downtown's existing uses, capacity, transportation, infrastructure, and environmental qualities. The result of our field work is an overarching vision for downtown as a destination, comprised of a series of themes that embrace Laredo's position and potential as a border metropolis and regional destination: Destination City, Border Stability, Effective Transportation, and Sustainable Infrastructure.

On behalf of Kell Muñoz, I would like to thank the City of Laredo for giving us the opportunity to submit this Master Plan. This monumental effort would not have been possible without the gracious contributions of the task force, stakeholders, community at large and city staff. Our firm has proudly maintained a working relationship in Laredo since the 1942 commission for Hachar's Department Store. We are committed to exploring the uniqueness of the Texas/Mexico border as we continue to define *Mestizo Regionalism*, our perspective on an appropriate architectural expression for our region.

We look forward to working together to design the City of the Future.

Sincerely,

KELL MUÑOZ ARCHITECTS, INC.



Henry R. Muñoz III
CEO

***“ESTE PLAN MAESTRO ESTA DEDICADO
A TODO LAREDOENSE, AL FUTURO DE
NUESTRA CIUDAD Y A SU PROSPERIDAD.”***

RAUL G. SALINAS
Mayor
City of Laredo

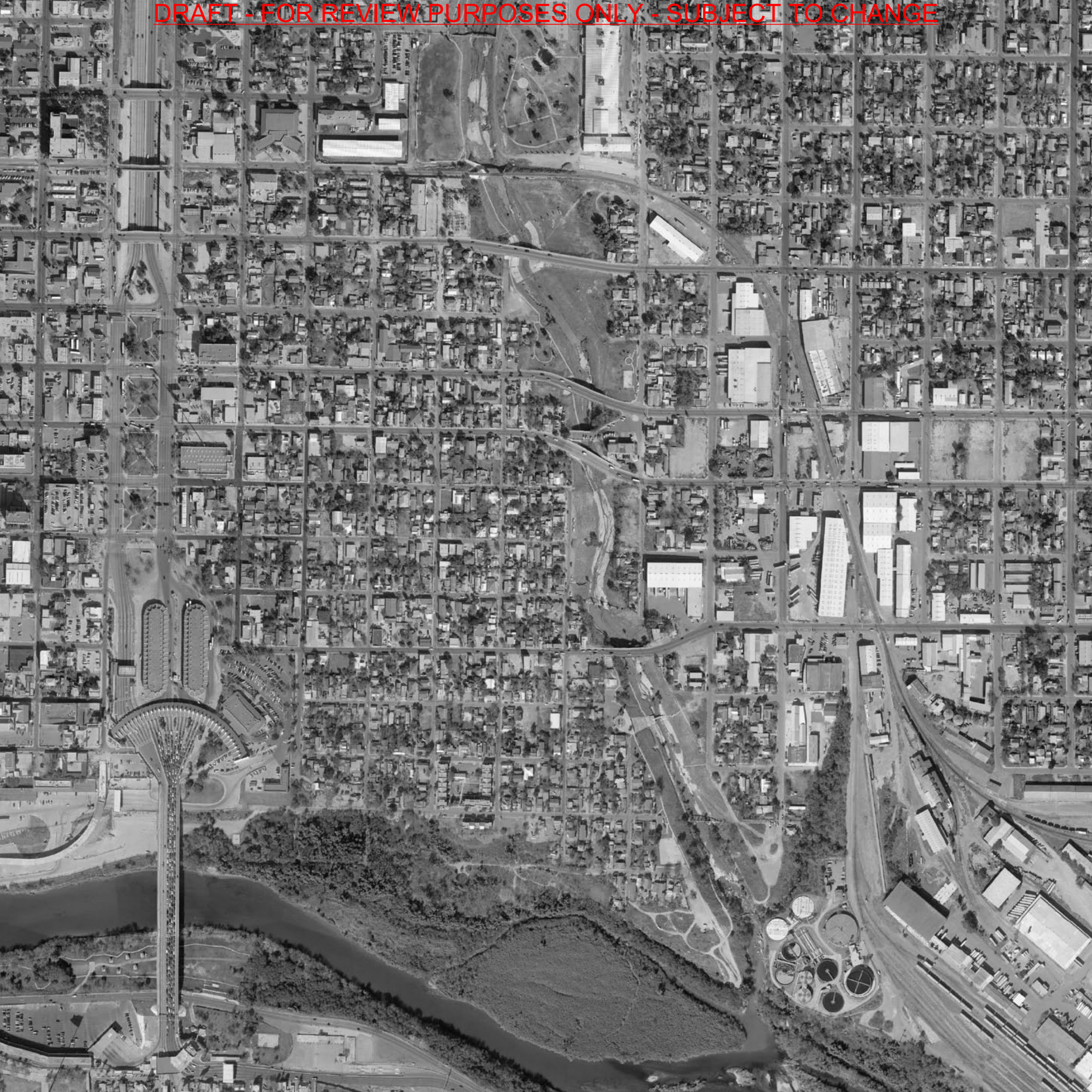


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Master Plan for Downtown Laredo presents a multifaceted vision of increasing its economic vitality, enhancing its historic character, reconstructing a sustainable infrastructure, and repositioning Downtown as the cultural center of the border metropolis and a regional destination for Texas and Mexico.

For generations the downtowns of Laredo and its sister city Nuevo Laredo have shared a complementary dynamic common to many border cities. The particulars have changed over time, and although subject to occasional currency-related disruptions, “Dos Laredos” have grown as conjoined twins sharing vital organs. As the largest inland port of entry in the U.S. and with the greatest share of U.S. – Mexico trade, their strategic location relative to surface transportation networks provides some assurance of future continuance.

The future of Laredo’s Downtown however is less certain. Its vitality has been diminishing for more than a decade and is challenged by a post 9/11 relationship with the international border and security issues; an extraordinary but deteriorating historic urban fabric; the cost of improving an aging urban infrastructure with limited public funds; new growth favoring suburban expansion with the creation of competing commercial, cultural and residential outliers; and the insecurities of the private sector to invest in Downtown.

Furthermore, the recent spread of drug-trafficking violence in Mexico’s border states has decimated tourism, virtually barring visitors to Nuevo Laredo and suppressing its downtown economy. The effect on Downtown Laredo has been devastating. Compounded by a struggling national economy and global competition, the obstacles to revitalizing Downtown Laredo seem insurmountable. This Master Plan, while acknowledging the enormous present challenges, assumes a more optimistic view of the future in which the divisive character of the U.S. – Mexico Border is positively reconstituted as a stable and accessible transnational landscape.

The goal of this Master Plan is to define the desired character, vision and elements to enhance and sustain a vibrant and attractive Downtown in the context of land use, growth objectives, and development patterns. A planning horizon of thirty years was used as a timescale to factor in future local population growth; identify how Downtown can benefit from capturing the consequential market demands of this growth, and determine what initiatives and improvements will be most beneficial.

The Master Plan understanding of Laredo’s Downtown character, issues, and prospects is based on a definitive collection of data of existing conditions that quantifies the extent of Downtown’s existing uses, capacity, transportation, infrastructure, and environmental qualities. The planning process utilized a multi-tiered involvement of the Task Force, individual and group Stakeholders, participation of the community in Public Workshops, and input from City staff. This was initiated with presentation of the exiting conditions documentation stakeholder interviews, task force meetings and public workshops to identify and articulate problems and opportunities. This was followed with a series of graphic responses to stated values/problems/goals, which visualized different planning and design options and were presented at subsequent meetings and workshops. Citizen and stakeholder reaction and comments provided the planning team with particular and preferred outcomes and shaped the salient direction of the master plan. Interwoven in the process were the impressions and inspirations of the planning team members, each of whom brought their expertise to bear.

The result is an overarching Vision for Downtown as a Destination, and is comprised of a series of thematic visions embracing Laredo's position and potential as a Border metropolis and regional destination. Each of these visions: Destination City, Border Stability, Effective Transportation, and Sustainable Infrastructure; are further defined by recommended goals and objectives that are mutually supportive, and lay the foundation of an overall economic revitalization and urban design framework for Downtown.

Similar to other master plans, this plan identifies initiatives and projects intended for incremental implementation in the short, mid, and long-term. Projects that are the most likely to attract private investment and have a transformational effect are identified as catalytic projects and explored in greater detail. It can be expected that some initiatives and projects may never be implemented, and that some may take on a different trajectory than originally predicated. This is the nature of the urban process, where unforeseen events and circumstances alter a previous set course or sense of understanding.

But this Master Plan attempts to embrace the perennial values of Laredo's historic and cultural landscape, and articulates the aspirations both modest and grand that Laredoans have expressed for their Downtown. Downtown needs to be the place where Laredoans' ultimate sense of place is truly manifest and felt, thus the fundamental aspects of the Master Plan call for an authentic continuity from the present forward.

To accomplish this Downtown will need to provide more opportunities for working, living, and socializing for Laredoans. There is ample capacity to accomplish this, both in existing buildings and in new infill development. Redevelopment of Downtown as a more livable, profitable, and enjoyable place will require a substantial reinvestment in its infrastructure, transportation systems, and urban open space. These will need to be publicly funded and associated with private investment with a reasonable return in revenues and economic benefits.

Downtown first and foremost serves the needs of Laredoans, but it is also in the local interest to revive and expand tourism in Downtown. The economic benefit provided by tourism is a critical aspect in the revitalization of Downtown and will need to be a factor in balancing public and private investment.

The magnitude of overseeing and managing Downtown's 700-acre site is indeed daunting and can only be accomplished if there is an equitable and accessible process that fosters understanding, cooperation, and collaboration among the multitude of public and private interests. Currently there is no entity that is solely dedicated to such a comprehensive oversight, and so a key component for implementation is the formation of a Downtown regulatory and revitalization mechanism.

This Master Plan is a critical step forward for revitalizing Downtown but also has implications that exceed its immediate boundaries. As Laredo and the Border Metropolis continue to grow the need to provide better efficiency, longevity, and value in the built environment will be increasingly important. The alternative to current inefficient patterns of new development is to redevelop the inner city areas with greater mixed-use density in which walkable neighborhoods, access to public transportation, proximity of employment, and splendid places to enjoy are a part of everyday life. This is what nearly two-thirds of Laredo's area can be, not just its Downtown, but the city of the future.

CHAP

INTROD

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

For generations Laredo has occupied a strategic location astride the movement of people and goods to and from other destinations. It is the 13th largest city in Texas and ranks 81st in the U.S. and is the largest inland port of entry on the U.S. - Mexico Border. Laredo and its border twin city, Nuevo Laredo, share a common heritage originating from a Spanish Colonial past and have mutually benefited from their transnational relationship.

But in the last several years the civil and economic conditions in the northern states of Mexico have deteriorated such that Nuevo Laredo has lost much of its economic and cultural vitality, closed the doors of its downtown businesses and suppressed access. The pervasive instability along the Mexican border has forced the U.S. to greatly increase its security infrastructure and personnel.

Paired cities along the U.S. - Mexico Border exhibit an urban symbiosis distinct from their interior counterparts, and for Laredo and Nuevo Laredo it is a uniquely interdependent and complementary relationship. For generations downtown Nuevo Laredo has attracted Laredoans and visitors from beyond for shopping, dining, and entertainment. Without this vital cultural infrastructure, Downtown and greater Laredo is not just bereft of the assets, but has lost their economic benefits as well.

Laredo's Downtown retains much of the urban character and historic fabric from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In those years Downtown was immediate and a part of everyday life. A century later and tenfold the population and area, Downtown is more remote from everyone's life. Its prime businesses and entertainment venues have moved and much of the life of Downtown so fondly remembered is changed. There is more to this than pangs of nostalgia, suburban sprawl, or the ephemera of economic conditions – Laredo has survived difficult times and been able to grow and transition.

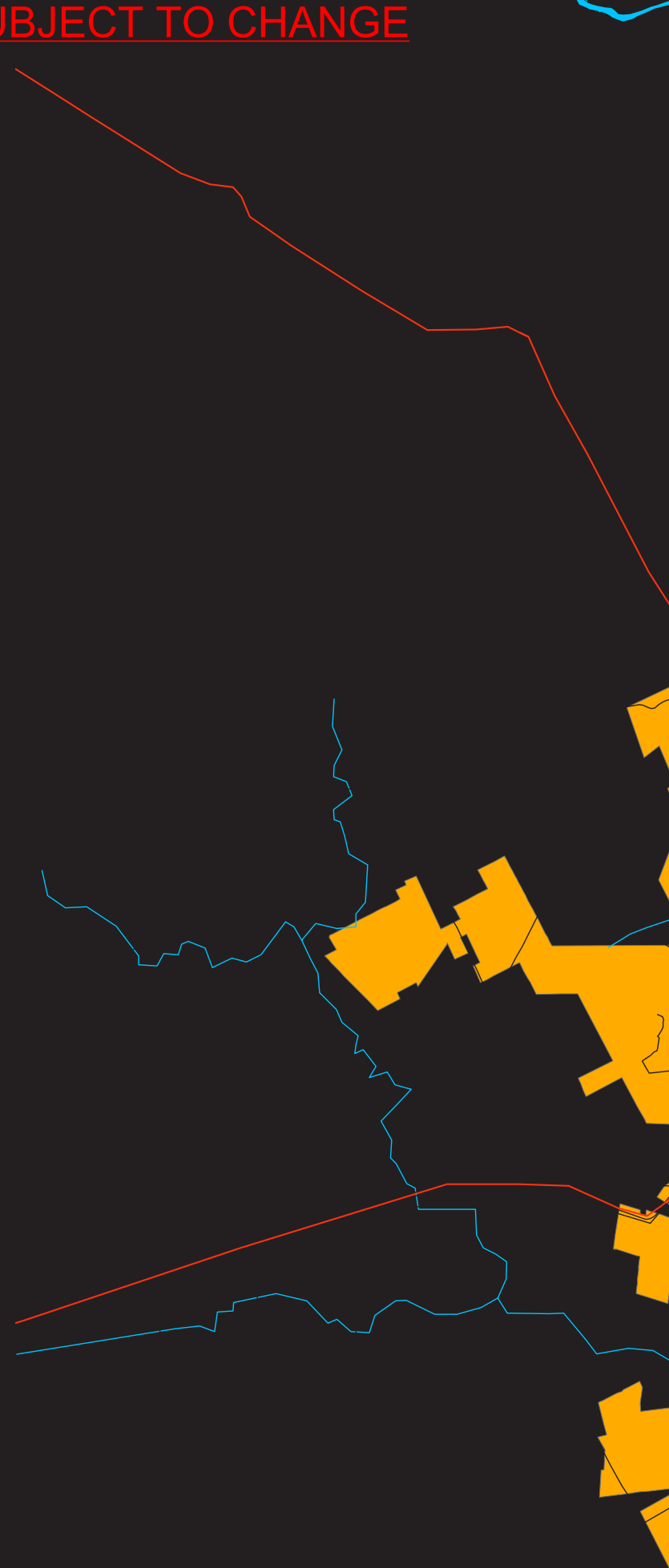
These conditions constitute a most serious economic and cultural challenge for a Laredo already beset with the problems of the U.S. economy and of hosting border security as a normal part of daily life. To paraphrase the common comments from many Laredoans, Laredo needs to reinvent itself and redefine its future. And so they have. Through this planning process whose objective is the revitalization of Downtown Laredo, a series of visions have been collected, articulated, and defined that express a renewed destiny. The thematic components of this vision are to:

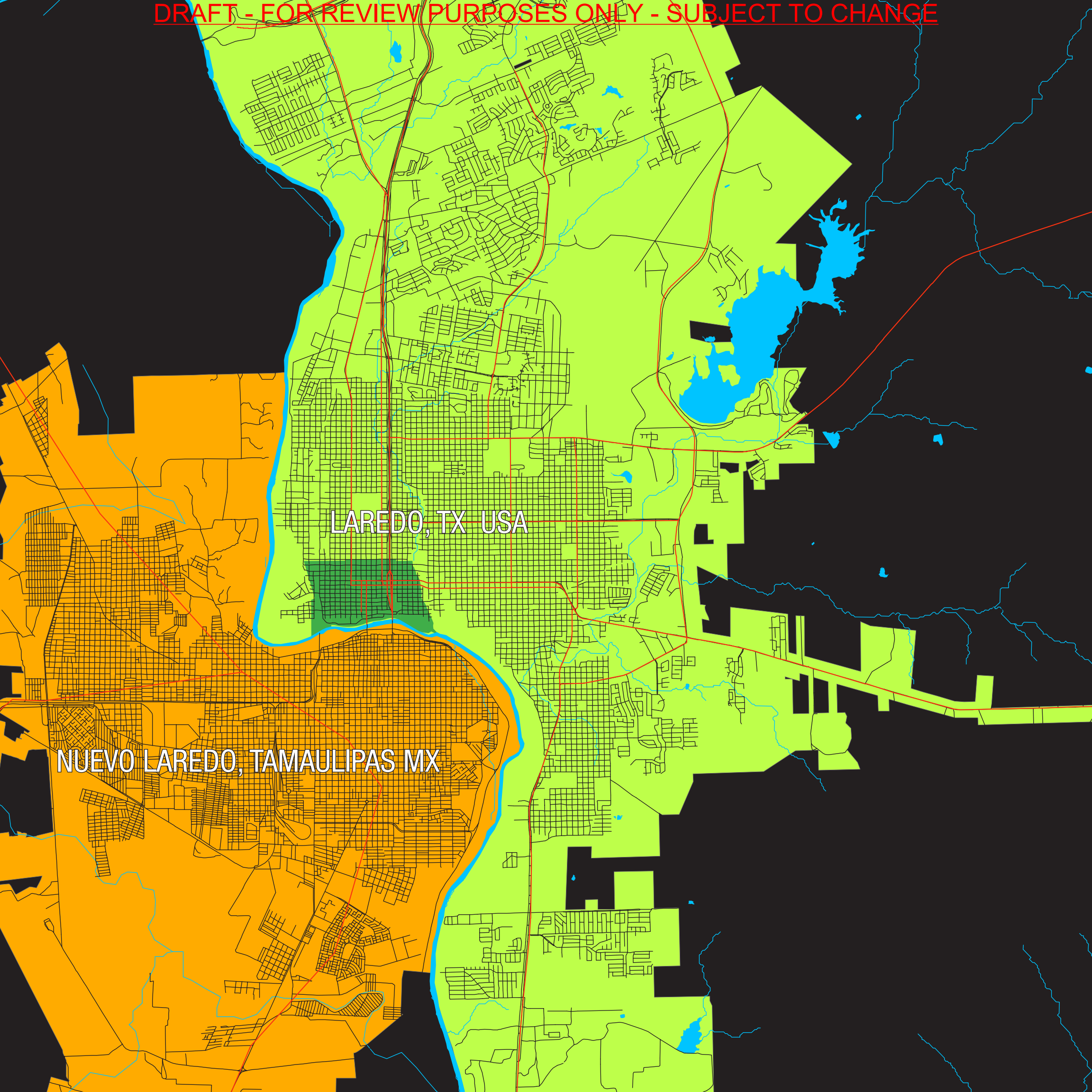
CREATE A DESTINATION CITY

PROVIDE A SECURE BORDER

ESTABLISH A COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

CULTIVATE A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE





LAREDO, TX USA

NUEVO LAREDO, TAMAULIPAS MX

2020 LAREDO

CITY OF THE FUTURE



VISION STATEMENT

THE OVERARCHING VISION FOR DOWNTOWN LAREDO IS TO SERVE AS THE ECONOMIC, CIVIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CENTER FOR LAREDOANS AND REVIVE ITS LEGACY AS A PAN AMERICAN DESTINATION FOR PEOPLE AND TRADE.

Laredoans have expressed a sense that this is their moment to change their city from being a way station to a destination. Of equal concern is that whatever changes are to be made should be in keeping with their core values and genuine within Laredo's cultural landscape. This means that Downtown should first serve the needs of Laredoans as its economic, government, social and cultural center in order to maintain an authenticity that can be shared with others.

Laredo's geographic association with the Pan American Highway, especially in Downtown, infers a Pan American theme. Laredo's position relative to the Pan American Highway can be more than an historical footnote; it can be the basis for reconstituting Laredo's identity and projecting this image beyond. Downtown can therefore be both a crucible that shapes Laredo's cultural content and a reflection of its spirit abroad. Embracing its Pan American cultural framework allows Laredo to reconcile the different markets to which it promotes while maintaining its own unique identity: *somos los dos*.

Ideas and comments from the Task Force, Stakeholders, and from the community have been instrumental in forming this Vision, which through expressed Values and Goals provides a thematic framework. Reestablishing Downtown as the city's economic and cultural center and creating a destination place; attracting more people Downtown to shop, work, play, and live; providing efficient and healthy transportation choices; capitalizing on its historic resources, riverfront, and border relationships; are complicated interdependent issues.

These issues are addressed through four Vision Themes to clarify the complexity of revitalizing Downtown as a series of broad challenges for Laredo to:

CREATE A DESTINATION CITY

PROVIDE A SECURE BORDER

ESTABLISH A COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

CULTIVATE A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

In support of each Vision Theme a series of Goals and Objectives are recommended to enable the policies, strategies and actions necessary for implementation. This Master Plan also identifies specific areas and projects that are especially important, if not absolutely critical, for Downtown revitalization. Such projects are catalytic in nature, often combining more than one Theme and fulfilling multiple goals within and beyond their site-specific objectives.

The inauguration of the Gateway to Mexico International Bridge in 1906.





HISTORIC CONTEXT

Laredo is the seat for Webb County located in South Texas along the U.S. – Mexico Border on the north bank of the Rio Grande River. Current estimated population is near 250,000 and with the population in Nuevo Laredo forms a border metropolis of about three-quarters of a million people. Laredo was founded as San Agustin de Laredo in 1755, relatively late in the Spanish Colonial Empire, and its relationship with Nuevo Laredo is unique in the Borderlands as Laredo is older by nearly a century.

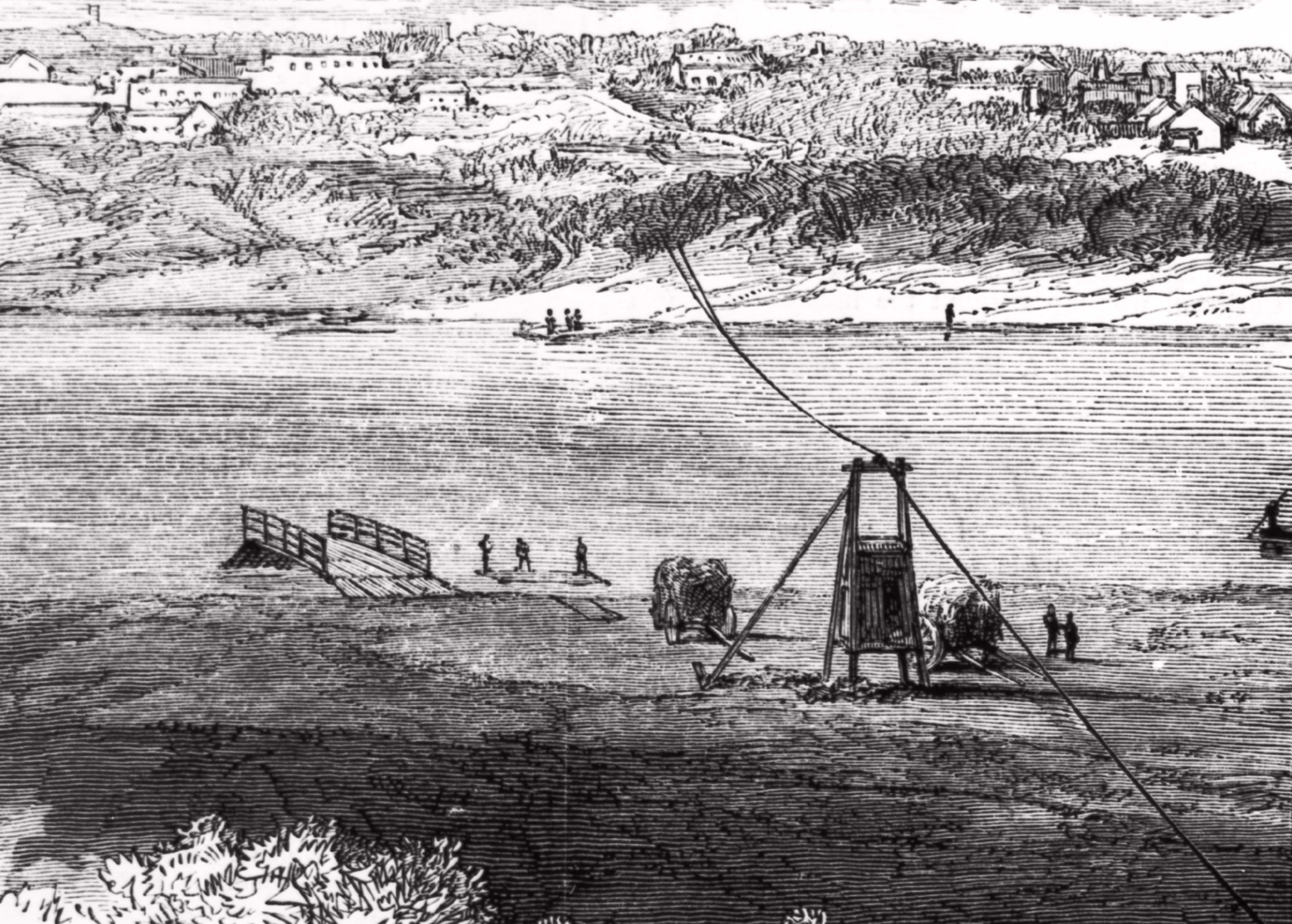
Laredo's location and availability of coal reserves enabled its securing of the first rail road linkage between the U.S. and Mexico in the late nineteenth century. Soon after, a rail line was extended to the seaport at Corpus Christi, Texas. In the early twentieth century Laredo was also positioned for highway linkage north and south; first with the Meridian Highway in 1911, then with the Pan American highway in 1928, and from 1965 to the present with U.S. Interstate Highway 35. Positioned equidistant between San Antonio, Texas and Monterey, Nuevo Leon, trade has been Laredo's primary source of economy and has grown to be the largest inland port of entry in North America with about half of all trade entering Mexico and a third of that entering the U.S.

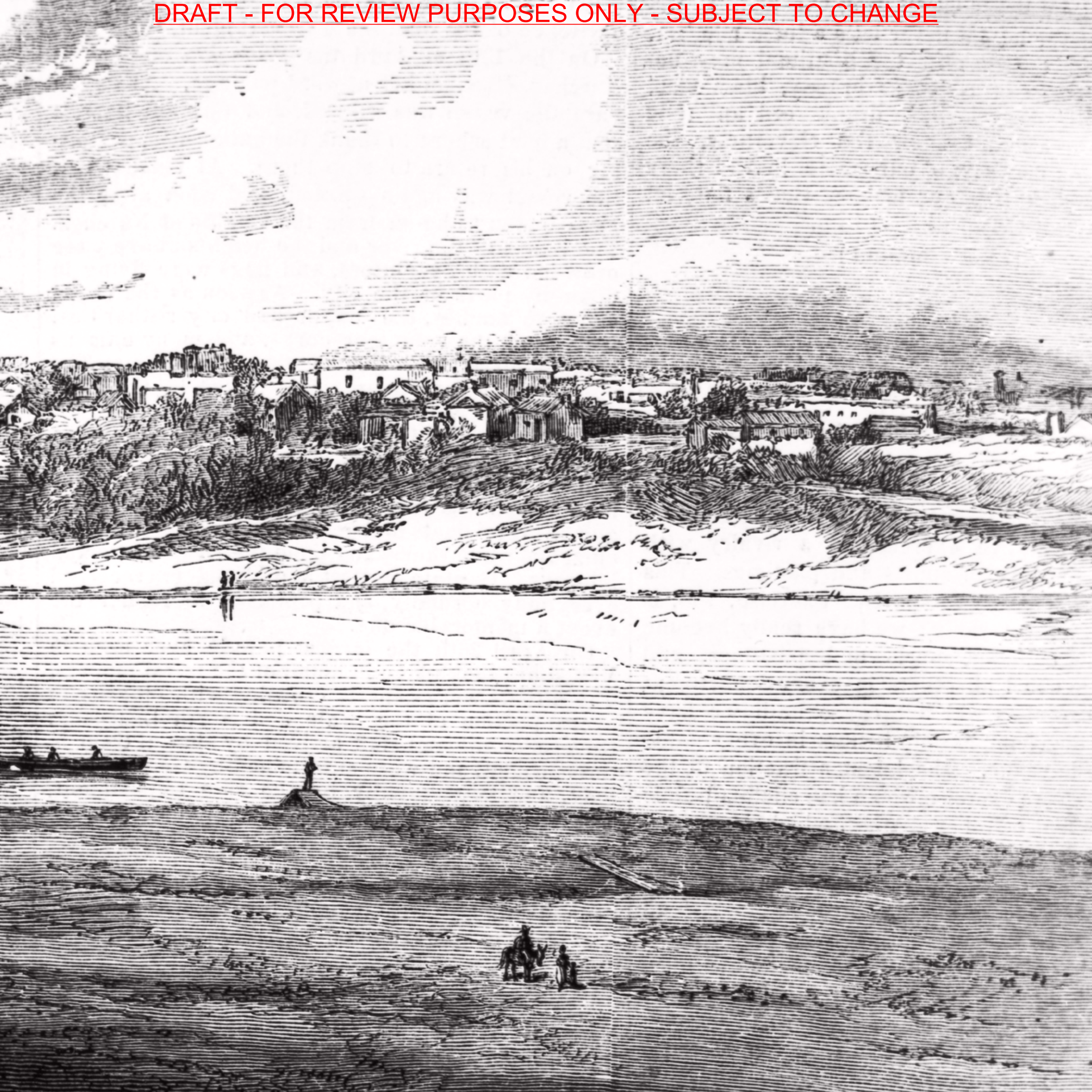
Downtown maintains the geographic center of the expanding metropolis and holds the nascent form of Laredo, a classically derived Laws of the Indies grid neatly aligned with a latitudinal course of the Rio Grande River. The urban form of the villa was defined by walled building compounds that took up their entire property to form open interior patios and courtyards. When the first bridge was built in 1889, the grid expanded as Laredo grew and its urban core emerged as a compact series of blocks pierced by a multitude of plazas and park-like town squares.

Laredo's ascendancy in capturing regional and international trade was manifest in the increase of traffic and led to opening up a second bridge and linkage with IH 35 in the mid twentieth century a quarter mile downstream. The route was accommodated by razing a block-wide swath from the Rio Grande northward, much to the benefit of the flow of traffic and goods but still detrimental to those isolated from the event. Now, with the commercial truck traffic directed to additional and peripheral bridges, traffic plays a different role in Downtown.

People still cross in great numbers, and the typical Downtown shopper is Mexican in nationality and pedestrian in mode. Now that Mexico's instabilities have reduced tourism originating from both sides of the Border, it is evident that Downtown has more than its share of urban issues with which to grapple.

The ferry foreshadowed that the transportation industry would make Laredo one of the most important cities in the global economy.





T I M E

MAY 2010 JUN JULY AUG SEPT OCT NOV DEC

May 18, 2010
Keil Muñoz Receives Notice to Proceed

June 25, 2010
Official Masterplan Kick-Off

July 15, 2010
Task Force Meeting

August 26, 2010
Task Force Meeting & Public Workshop #1

September 1, 2010
Planning Team Design Charrette

September 16, 2010
Delegation to Washington Dc for Border Security

September 22, 2010
Public Workshop #2

October 21, 2010
Presentation to Planning & Zoning Commission

October 22, 2010
Presentation To The Historic Landmark Board

October 27, 2010
Task Force Meeting

November 17, 2010
Task Force Meeting #2

June - September 2010 Data Collection & Outreach

August - December 2010 Meetings With Stakeholder Groups

M A S T E R P L A N

A Spanish Army officer establishes a fort on the Rio Grande and named it El Paso de Jacinto in the future site of Laredo

Las Villa de San Agustin de Laredo established by Tomas Sanchez under Spanish rule

Laredo's first public school was established

San Agustin Church established

Mexico gains Independence from Spain

Laredo becomes part of the Republic of Texas

Laredo becomes Capital of Republic of the Rio Grande

Republic of the Rio Grande collapses/
Laredo becomes part of the United States of America
Treaty of the Guadalupe Hidalgo names Laredo as a part of Texas
Laredo becomes county seat for Webb County
Laredo becomes an incorporated city

100th Anniversary of Laredo's founding

Laredo becomes part of Confederate States of the America

Confederate States of the America Collapses
Laredo becomes part of United States of America

H I S T O R I C

1740 1745 1750 1755 1760 1765 1770 1775 1780 1785 1790 1795 1800 1805 1810 1815 1820 1825 1830 1835 1840 1845 1850 1855 1860 1865 1870 1875

1746

1755

1783

1789

1821

1836

1840

1846

1848

1852

1855

1861

1865



Public Workshop #3

JAN

FEB

2011
MAR APR

MAY

JUN

JULY

January 24, 2011
Presentation to City Delegation in Austin

February 22, 2011
City Council Approves the Master Plan's Focus

March 7-10, 2011
Delegation to Washington Dc for
Federal Funding Exploration

May 6, 2011
Task Force Meeting

March - May 2011 Preparation of Master Plan

Laredo International Foot Bridge built
International and Greater Northern Railroad reached Laredo
Texas Mexican Railway International Bridge built

Mexican National Railway links Nuevo Laredo with Mexico City
Laredo builds the 1st street railway system west of the Mississippi

Onion farming starts in Laredo
Inaugural George Washington Celebration in Laredo
to promote US Patriotism on the border

Laredo International foot bridge destroyed by flood
Gateway to Mexico International Bridge built

Gateway to Mexico International Bridge destroyed by flood

Laredo Junior College established
Fort McIntosh closes

Laredo Air Force Base opens
Gateway to Mexico International Bridge destroyed by flood
200th Anniversary of Laredo's founding

Texas A&I University established

Laredo Air Force Base closed

Juarez-Lincoln International Bridge built

Laredo Comprehensive Master Plan
Colombia Solidarity International Bridge built
City of Laredo Preservation Plan
Texas A&M International University established
City of Laredo Historic Urban Design Guidelines
Diocese of Laredo established

World Trade Internation Bridge built
250th Anniversary of Laredo's founding

Rio Grande Vega Lands Master Plan
Kell Muñoz Architects Awarded City of Laredo Downtown Master Plan

1880
1881
1883

1887
1889

1898
1898

1905
1906

1932

1946
1947

1952
1954
1955

1969

1973

1977

1991

1994
1995

1997
2000

2004
2005

2008





PLAN OVERVIEW

The goal of this Master Plan for Downtown Laredo is to define the desired character, vision and elements to enhance and sustain a vibrant and attractive Downtown in the context of land use, growth objectives, development patterns and form-based urban design. The objectives, as defined in the scope of services, are to:

- Identify the importance of economic development in the redevelopment and revitalization of downtown Laredo.
- Define the desired social, cultural and economic connections between surrounding neighborhoods, downtown and the region.
- Define capital improvements and a regulatory framework to guide public and private investment toward the vision of Downtown.
- Provide an implementation plan outlining specific strategies related to economic development and redevelopment that will achieve the desired vision, goals and future land use scenario.

Additionally, the Master Plan addresses general planning issues as requested in the scope of services to include:

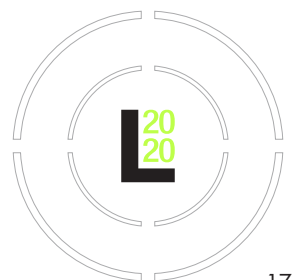
- Public Safety and Security Issues
- Form-based Zoning; Architectural Guidelines and Design Standards
- Economic Development and Market Analysis
- Capital Improvements/Infrastructure
- Tax Incentives including, but not limited to, Tax Abatements and Tax Increment Financing

PLAN PURPOSE & ORGANIZATION

The purpose of this Master Plan is to determine a clear vision and policy direction for the future of Downtown Laredo and to define a path to achieve that vision. Like all master plans, this Master Plan is conceptual in nature and is to be utilized by the City and stakeholders as a guide to inform the decision-making process. This Master Plan consists of four main elements.

CHAPTER 1 describes the planning area and the process that was based upon evaluation of existing conditions and the involvement of City staff, an appointed task force, public and private stakeholders and public participation.

CHAPTER 2 describes the vision for Downtown within the context of a Destination Border City that embraces distinct yet mutually dependent visions of destination, border security, transportation, infrastructure and the environment. These visions are presented in terms of a series of catalytic transformations of specific places throughout Downtown. Each of these envisioned transformations integrates the improvements to the public realm – the streets, plazas, parks, and other public places in Downtown – with improvements to the private properties and buildings, such that the value of public and private investments support and leverage one another.



CHAPTER 3 focuses on the implementation strategy for the proposed transformation and organizes that extensive work into feasible increments of action and investment by public and private entities. Strategies for financing and coordinating those activities are outlined to form a foundation for the on-going management of the complex urban regeneration process.

CHAPTER 4 includes all the relevant data gathered by the consultant team and the research and analysis that led to the identification of strategic and urban design revitalization options. A fifth element of this Master Plan was the “construction” of a 3-dimensional model and geospatial data base by the team consultants and forms a substantial part of this documentation and research. The digital nature of the GIS model and database was transferred to the City as a separate deliverable with the idea that it can be used by others to analyze and manage Downtown resources and revitalization progress.

MASTER PLAN AUTHORITY

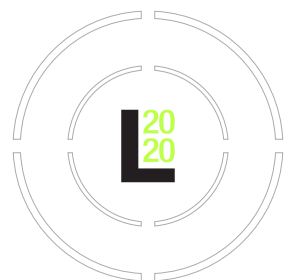
This Master Plan is drafted pursuant to Chapters 211 and 213 of the Texas Government Code that provides cities with planning and zoning authority and is intended to fulfill the Section VI “Urban Design and Central Business District” element in the Laredo Comprehensive Plan [i]. This Master Plan does not constitute the basis for, or the authorization of, the use of eminent domain for private use.

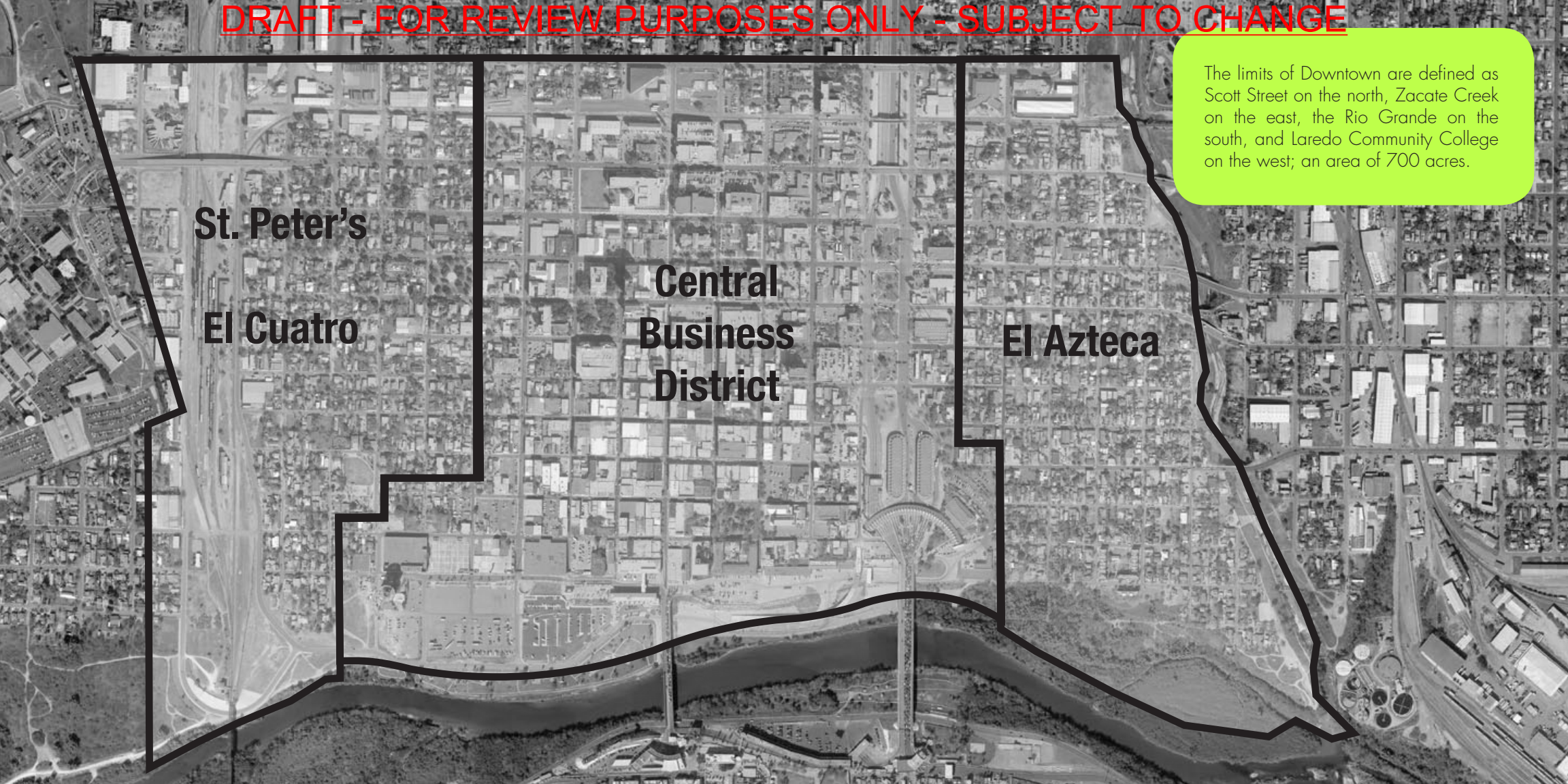
RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

This Downtown Master Plan recognizes the essential content of the 1995 City of Laredo Preservation Plan and 1997 City of Laredo Historic Urban Design Guidelines. The historical narrative and description of Laredo’s urban character found in these documents is vast and deeply informative, which are referenced in this Master Plan but not extensively replicated. The 2008 Rio Grande Vega Lands Master Plan is a concept plan for the redevelopment of Laredo’s two and a half mile-long riverfront to promote tourism, job creation and downtown revitalization, which this Master Plan addresses in further detail and integration with an overall framework of Downtown revitalization.

PLANNING HORIZON

This Master Plan serves to coordinate impending projects over the next five years; addresses future revitalization over the subsequent ten to fifteen years; and looks at long-range affects to the year 2050.





The limits of Downtown are defined as Scott Street on the north, Zacate Creek on the east, the Rio Grande on the south, and Laredo Community College on the west; an area of 700 acres.

**St. Peter's
El Cuatro**

**Central
Business
District**

El Azteca

PLAN STUDY & FOCUS AREA

Downtown is considered in this Master Plan as the Central Business District (CBD) and its flanking neighborhoods of Barrio El Azteca and El Cuatro-St. Peter's.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

The CBD is the main focus of this Master Plan and includes the high-activity areas of the shopping district and government offices. The oldest and most historic portion is centered on the church and plaza of San Agustin and is considered the Villa Antigua. Plaza San Agustin is arguably Laredo's finest urban space and is fronted by the non-historic but romantically set La Posada Hotel. The Old City Market Building takes up its market square and now serves as the Laredo Center for the Arts.

Laredo's most active area is its shopping district, which gravitates from several blocks either side of Convent Avenue from Bridge 1 to City Hall. The government zone has a full spectrum

of national, county and municipal offices and then dissipates to banks and regional bus lines on the east, merges with St. Peter's to the west, and stops at the tracks on the north.

EL AZTECA

The Azteca barrio is considered one of the oldest residential areas in Laredo, a mid to late nineteenth century outgrowth from a settlement called El Ranchero, but after 1922 became known as El Azteca from the Azteca Theater in the neighborhood on Lincoln Street. Defined by Scott Street on the North, San Dario Avenue on the west, the Rio Grande River on the South, and Zacate Creek on the east, much of El Azteca lies within the Azteca National Register Historic District. Historically the neighborhood was centered on the Escuela Amarilla, a public school constructed of yellow brick and the adjacent Plaza de Noria, where freighters watered their horses and residents drew their drinking water.

EL CUATRO-ST. PETER'S

El Cuatro developed as a residential neighborhood in the mid to late nineteenth century, its name derived from the voting precinct in which it was located - the Fourth Ward. Expansion of the CBD has diminished El Cuatro's eastern margins and in the latter twentieth century the southwest portion became known as El Rincon del Diablo for its reputation as a rough neighborhood. Although El Cuatro has not been considered as historic as other parts of Downtown, there is an ongoing evaluation of its resources and potential eligibility for designation. St. Peter's adjoins El Cuatro north along Lincoln Street and is a City historic district centered on St. Peter's Church and the Plaza. The aggregate area is defined in this Master Plan as Scott Street on the north, Santa Maria Avenue on the east, the Rio Grande River on the south, and Laredo Community College on the west.

CURRENT PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

One of the objectives of this Master Plan is to evaluate and make recommendations for the effective coordination of ongoing projects, plans and planning initiatives including:

1. STREET LIGHTING - Analysis of the street lighting conditions in Downtown determined that more than half of the streets and intersections had substandard illumination. The cost of replacing and adding additional lighting is estimated at around \$6,000,000.

2. TRAFFIC SIGNALIZATION - The 2008 City of Laredo ITS Master Plan recommended the establishment of a new closed loop system to connect signals on designated approach routes in Downtown to improve signal coordination and progression in the key traffic corridors. The first phase would address the approaches to Bridge 1 and the existing closed loop signal system reorganized during the implementation of Phase 2. Estimated costs for both phases are approximately \$1,400,000.

3. DOWNTOWN TROLLEY - The "Hop and Shop" free fare trolley had four designated stops but could be stopped on request anywhere on the route for boarding or dropping off. It was put into service in 2009 but halted after six months due to low ridership.

4. SAN BERNARDO CORRIDOR - The 2008 San Bernardo Avenue Restoration and Renovation Project evaluated traffic and streetscape options to create a destination corridor from Calton Road to Hidalgo Street. The preferred option calls for eliminating any south bound traffic and would alter the existing 2 - way condition for a portion in Downtown.

5. RIO GRANDE RIVER ACCESS - The Rio Grande River serves as the line of sovereignty between Mexico and the U.S. as administered through the International Boundary Water Commission and designated an American Heritage River by Executive Order in 1997. The revegetation of River Bend Park was a U.S. Army Corps

of Engineers project that removed carrizo canebrakes along a 2.7 mile stretch of the Rio Grande in the park between Military Road and the riverbank and reestablished native riparian and upland plant species. The project was nearly completed in July 2010 when the flood damaged much of the landscape and irrigation installation.

6. LAREDO CONVENTION CENTER - The 2005 Feasibility Study of a Potential New/Expanded Laredo Convention Center recommended 40,000 SF of exhibit space, 15,000 SF of meeting space and an 18,000 SF ballroom which would require a facility of approximately 120,000 SF total building area. A subsequent study identified four potential sites in Downtown with the site at Santa Cleotilde and Water Street as having the most desirable attributes.

7. RIVER VEGA - The 2008 Rio Grande Vega Lands Master Plan project addresses Laredo's Downtown riverfront to guide the long-term development of a regional, interconnected system of parks, greenways and nature trails. The plan identifies recreational, social, economic, environmental and educational opportunities and the infrastructure necessary to facilitate pedestrian and automobile access.

8. BRIDGE 1 GATEWAY TO THE AMERICAS PORT OF ENTRY - Opened in 1954 after two previous bridges, daily traffic is over 11,000 pedestrians and 2,300 non-commercial vehicles. New outbound processing facilities were added in 2008 as part of the El Portal project, which included a retail component, plaza and esplanade; along with street and traffic flow alterations. The General Services Administration is planning on a second phase to complete the inbound processing facilities.

9. BRIDGE 2 JUAREZ-LINCOLN PORT OF ENTRY Constructed in 1976, it is limited to non-commercial vehicles and buses, with average daily traffic of about 13,000 and 100, respectively. A study for expanding the bus

processing facilities identified several preferred options within the security perimeter but an alternate plan that closes Hidalgo Street and extends into the block immediately north of the port of entry is being considered.

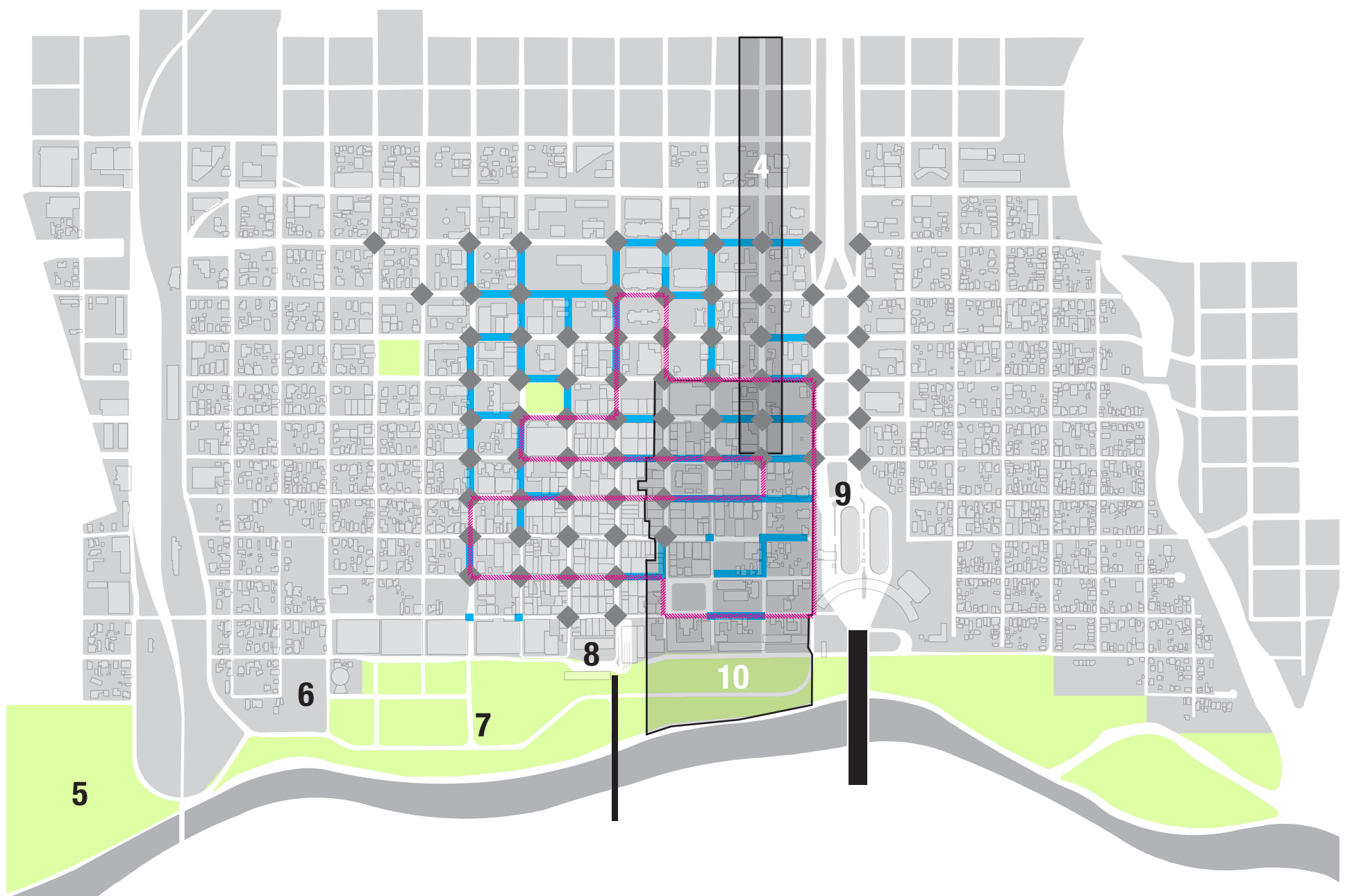
10. ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT - The Arts and Entertainment District is a zoning overlay district adopted in 2010 to help foster arts and entertainment activities and uses in Downtown that include waiver of on-site parking requirements and commercial use of public rights-of-way.




11. FLORES STREET DRAINAGE PROJECT - The drainage improvements include design and rehabilitation of water, sewer and storm drainage systems from Hidalgo to Water Street. The existing 24" pipe along Flores was rehabilitated & converted to a sanitary sewer main. Existing sewer manholes and services either replaced or repaired and connected to the 24" line. A new 42" storm drainage pipe was installed on Flores Street and connected to the storm sewer laterals and inlets.

LAREDO MAIN STREET (LMS) PROGRAM - Incorporated in 2009, LMS is a charitable and educational coalition of public and private interests operating under the National Main Street Center's approach of organization, promotions, design and economic restructuring. LMS works through grants, public relations, promotions, festivals and special events to improve the business district for retailers, shoppers, investors and tourists.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION - The historicity of Laredo's town plan and buildings is an important asset for economic and cultural revitalization of Downtown. The 1995 Historic Preservation Plan established a philosophical and regulatory framework for Laredo's historic resources and has been supplemented by the 1996 Historic Urban Design Assessment Report and the 1997 Historic and Urban Design Guidelines.

PROJECT MAP



-  1. STREET LIGHTING
-  2. TRAFFIC SIGNALIZATION
-  3. DOWNTOWN TROLLEY



PLANNING PROCESS

The Laredo Master Plan Task Force provided direction for the consultants and the process including meetings with various stakeholders and public workshops.

TASK FORCE

The planning process engaged the community of Laredo in several different ways. Laredo's City Council nominated local citizens to a Task Force that both represented a variety of interests in and concerns about Downtown. Task Force meetings were held at intervals during the process that assisted the planning team in determining what issues were most important in the community.

WEBSITE

The website www.rediscoverlaredo.com was maintained throughout the planning process to provide information about the Master Plan, post announcements and progress and provide a place for comments.

STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders were individuals, groups and associations with whom the consultants held private interviews in order to understand their view and interest in Downtown and included:

- Laredo Chamber of Commerce
- Laredo Community College
- Webb County
- Laredo Center for the Arts
- Laredo Development Foundation
- Laredo Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Downtown Merchants Association
- Laredo Main Street
- U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement
- El Metro Transit
- Laredo Historic Landmarks Board
- Webb County Heritage Association
- El Azteca Economic Development and Preservation Corporation



PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

Three public workshops held at the Laredo Civic Center were well attended and allowed the consultant team to hear directly from Laredoans about their concerns, ideas and opinion on the content of the Master Plan as it developed.

Workshop I covered the initial findings of researching existing conditions and opportunities for attendees to voice their concerns and ideas about Downtown. Attendees participated in a small group exercise to validate Values, Problems and Goals and articulate a Vision for Downtown.

Workshop II consisted of a presentation of ideas and options regarding the physical settings of Downtown. Attendees participated in a polling exercise to determine the relative merits of the options presented and provided additional comments.

Workshop III was a presentation of options the consultants understood to have had the greatest support and acceptance and thus an indicator of the preferred direction.

In addition to the insight and comments voiced by the Task Force, members participated in an exercise that asked three simple questions:

- What do we love about Downtown Laredo?
- What don't we like about Downtown Laredo?
- What do we want Downtown Laredo to be?

Things loved about Downtown Laredo connote VALUES, deeply held thoughts and feelings associated with one's experience with downtown. Things not liked indicate PROBLEMS, real or perceived about downtown. A thing that one would want Laredo to be infers GOALS for Downtown Laredo's future. The same exercise was repeated in the first public workshop. The statements were evaluated to determine common associations within and among these categories and subsequently grouped along common themes.

The themes identified are the Consultant's initial impression, recognizing that alternative groupings and theme definitions are possible. This draft lists the themes with the greatest number of qualifying statements in descending order, which does indicate varying degrees of intensity, but not necessarily priority. Following each category is a summary narrative that explores their meanings and implications for the Master Plan.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION & PLAN PREPARATION

The Downtown Master Plan was prepared through a community-based process that began in July 2010. Task Force meetings and Public Workshops were scheduled in tandem so that the Task Force was provided with the materials prior to the workshops. A series of meetings with stakeholders and city staff augmented the information throughout the process.

OFFICIAL MASTERPLAN KICK-OFF: JUNE 2010

The project kicked off today when the website was unveiled to the City of Laredo and other key downtown stakeholders. The website, www.rediscoverlaredo.com, invites members of the Laredo community to participate in a survey to see what kind of elements they would like to see as part of the plan.

DATA COLLECTION & INITIAL OUTREACH: JULY - SEPTEMBER 2010

The consultant team gathered and analyzed data on Downtown including past and recent studies to gain a thorough understanding of the technical issues affecting Downtown and discussed these findings with Downtown stakeholders and City officials. City Council members appointed a Task Force to provide information and guidance to the consultant team. Data gathering and documentation continued through August and September.

TASK FORCE & PUBLIC WORKSHOP: JULY - AUGUST 2010

Documentation on the existing conditions of Downtown were presented and discussed.

A visioning exercise identified the values and problems with Downtown and articulated goals.

BORDER SECURITY: SEPTEMBER 2010

Meetings with Department of Justice, the Office of the Vice President of the United States, the Department of State and congressional leaders to discuss Border Security as it relates to the Master Plan.

PLANNING TEAM CHARRETTE: SEPTEMBER 2010

Team consultants and the City Planning Director participated in a charrette that identified revitalization strategies and opportunities. These ideas and strategies were followed up with more detailed evaluation by the team consultants and subsequent graphic visualization.

TASK FORCE MEETING & PUBLIC WORKSHOP: SEPTEMBER 2010

Ideas and options for various strategies and opportunities were presented and discussed. A preference exercise enabled participants to vote on thirty different ideas that provided instantaneous tabulation of the results. Additional presentations were made to the Historic Landmarks Board and the Planning and Zoning Commission.

MEETINGS WITH STAKEHOLDER GROUPS: AUGUST - DECEMBER 2010

Stakeholders were individuals, groups and associations with whom the consultants held

private interviews in order to understand their views, interests and expectations for the revitalization of Downtown Laredo.

TASK FORCE MEETING AND PUBLIC WORKSHOP: NOVEMBER 2010

Further development of the preferred revitalization ideas were presented and discussed. Additional follow-up meetings with stakeholders provided additional insight and comments.

CITY COUNCIL PRESENTATION: FEBRUARY 2011

City Council was briefed on the Master Plan and approved the basic vision and direction of the plan.

FEDERAL FUNDING EXPLORATION: MARCH 2011

An unanticipated opportunity to approach federal agencies for funding projects identified in the Master Plan opened up in January 2011. This resulted in an interim report formatted for federal officials and a series of meetings with the Departments of State, General Services Administration (GSA), Homeland Security, the Federal Highway Agency and congressional leaders.

PREPARATION OF DRAFT MASTER PLAN: MARCH - MAY 2011

This document was prepared based on the preferred revitalization options and comments from Task Force and Stakeholder meetings and suggestions from federal and local government officials and staff.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Initial input from the task force meetings, stakeholder interviews, and community workshops provided the basis for an array of ideas that the planning team conceptualized as potentially applicable to Downtown Laredo. These ideas were developed in graphic form with site specific concept plans, three dimensional graphic models, and comparable examples from other places, and presented in the subsequent meetings. In the second community workshop the presentation of revitalization ideas was followed with an electronic polling process that measured the participants' response to these ideas and was instantly tabulated and displayed. The summarized results are herein shown and assisted the planning team in further developing these ideas.

The second and third community workshop also gave participants an extended time to voice particular concerns and specific ideas for Downtown revitalization. The planning team also considered these ideas and incorporated many into the master plan as follows:

- Recreational kayaking and canoeing
- Ecotourism
- Sustainable design
- Alternative energy sources and use
- Water conservation
- More shade and reduce heat effect
- Hike and bike trails and linkage at Moctezuma
- Escuelitas in St. Peter's/El Cuatro
- New Downtown residential

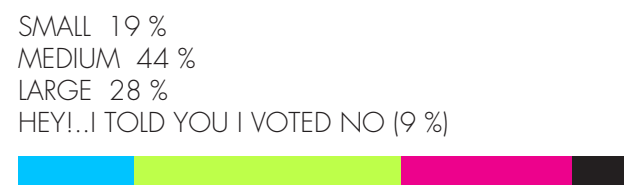
Is it a good idea to define the boundaries of Downtown with open space, parks, landscape, and signage improvements?



Should the 4-block area of I-35 at Santa Ursula and San Dario be redeveloped as a more attractive gateway and as a major urban place (Pan American Plaza)?



If you like the Pan American Plaza redevelopment concept, at what magnitude of scale would you like to see its ultimate development?



Should Convent Avenue be improved to be more of a pedestrian shopping street by the following:

1. Widen the sidewalks a little more and keep TWO lanes of traffic? 22%
2. Widen the sidewalks a little bit more and keep ONE lane of traffic? 28%
3. Eliminate the traffic lanes and make it pedestrian only? 50%



Should the switchyard be relocated so the land can be redeveloped as public parks and recreation open space?



Should the Union Pacific Station (International & Great Northern Train Depot) be acquired and renovated for community use and linkage between Laredo Community College and Downtown?



Should future street improvements be done in such a way that gives a more distinct identity to the different districts and neighborhoods in Downtown?



Should there be an underpass where Santa Maria Avenue crosses the railroad line?



Should Hidalgo Street be extended west to connect to Laredo Community College?



If the streets are rehabilitated to provide a safe and more pleasant and attractive pedestrian environment, would you be encouraged to walk further?



Should the City take the initiative to make up the shortage of parking spaces in Downtown?



Should there be trolleys/street cars that connect parking and office areas with Downtown destinations?

YES 85%, NO 15%

Should there be an underground bypass for Bridge No. 2 traffic?

YES 58%, NO 42%

Should Bridge No. 1 be for pedestrians only?

YES 56%, NO 44%

Should there be more programmed activities and events for Downtown Plazas?

YES 91%, NO 9%

Should the Plaza and Royal Theaters be renovated for performance use?

YES 94%, NO 6%

If there is a need for a state-of-the-art theater, should it be located in Market Square?

YES 45% NO 55%

Should Hidalgo Street be redeveloped as an arts and entertainment corridor that extends through Barrio El Azteca and St. Peter's/El Cuatro neighborhoods?

YES 69%, NO 31%

Should the Azteca Theatre be renovated for community and/or performance use?

YES 77%, NO 23%

Should restoration of vacant historic buildings be combined with an artist/artisan development program in Barrio El Azteca and St. Peter's/El Cuatro neighborhoods?

YES 72%, NO 28%

Should the Union Pacific Train Station be renovated for community and/or performance use?

YES 81%, NO 19%

Should the City support funding for façade restoration of historic structures?

YES 88%, NO 13%

Should the upper floors of buildings be renovated for residential and office uses?

YES 93%, NO 7%

In support for downtown living, should there be more produce/food market uses in or around Market Square?

**YES 23%
YES, in downtown, but not necessarily at Market Square 70%
NO 7%**

Should there be more patio spaces within Downtown blocks and properties to enhance shopping, entertainment, office and residential uses?

YES 90%, NO 10%

Should Zacate Creek be treated as an entire linear creek with a balance of more natural areas and more developed park areas?

YES 97%, NO 3%

Do you think that relocating the waste treatment plant is important for improving quality of Downtown?

YES 93%, NO 7%

Should the parking lot at the historic courthouse block be reduced and be landscaped to be more of a people place?

YES 69%, NO 31%

Should there be a plaza in Barrio del Azteca?

YES 93%, NO 7%

Should the Downtown Plazas be renovated to be more attractive and useful?

YES 100%, NO 0%

Should there be public restrooms in Downtown?

YES 87%, NO 13%

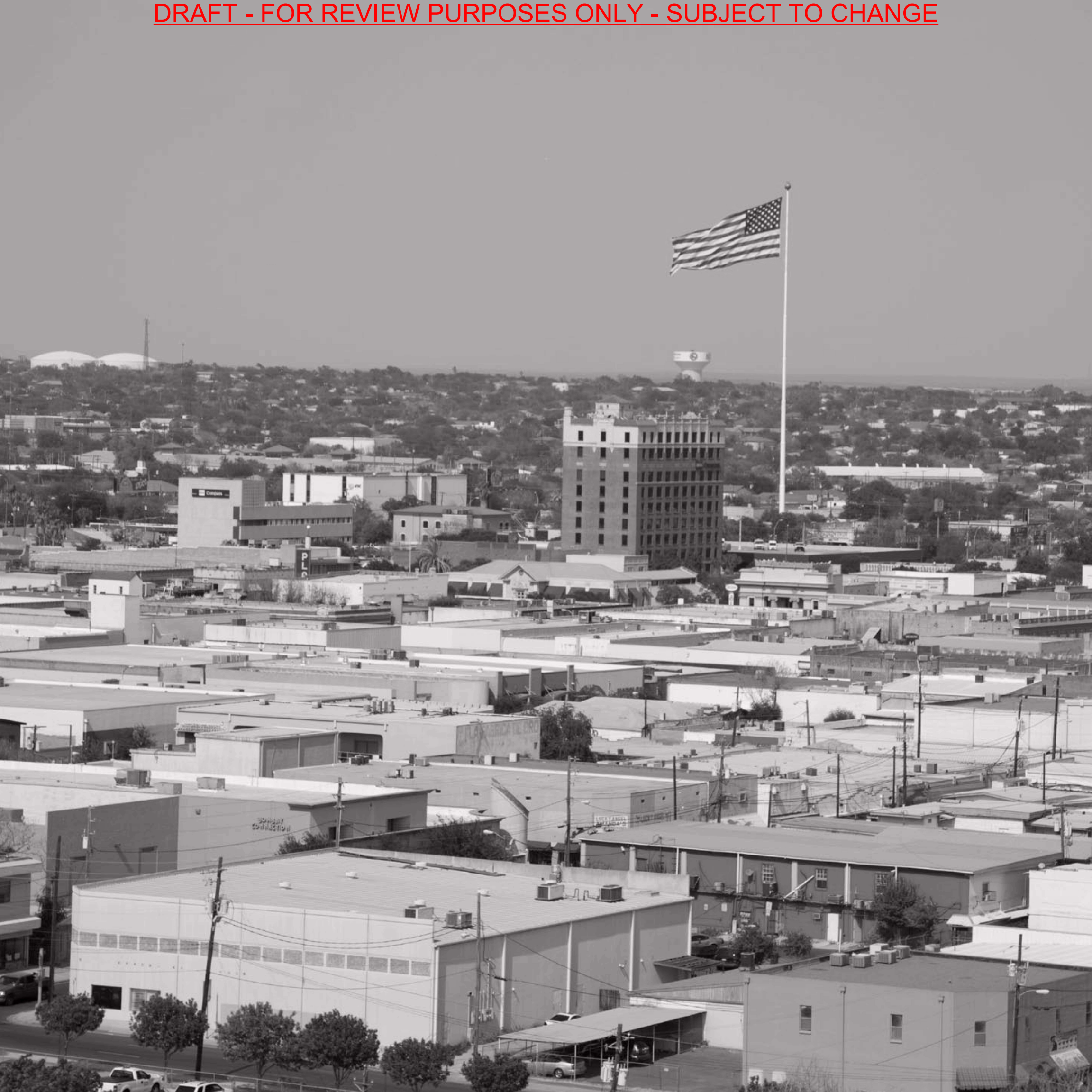
CHAMP

DESTINAT

ARTICLE 2

UNION CITY

Downtown first and foremost needs to be a destination for Laredoans, with great places and opportunities for shopping, working, dining, living, socializing, and entertainment. This is the essence of a great place to be and to visit, where one is drawn to be part of the life enjoyed by those living there. Even in the midst of a desolate tourism market, Downtown Laredo has a unique opportunity to establish itself as the center of the border metropolis and regional cultural destination, and capitalize on its historical association with the Pan American Highway and international exchange.



L A R E D O



SAN IGNACIO

EAGLE PASS

SANTA ISABEL

SCOTT

SANTA RITA

SANTA CLEOTILDE

MAIN

DAVIS

SANTA MARIA

JUAREZ

CONVENT

FLORES

SAN AGUSTIN

SAN BERNARDO

SANTA URSULA

VIDAURRI

MOCTEZUMA

WASHINGTON

VICTORIA

HOUSTON

MATAMOROS

FARRAGUT

HIBALGO

LINCOLN

TURBIDE

GRANT

ZARAGOZA

WATER

VENTURA

RIVER

2

SALINAS

3

1

SAN DARIO

M E X I C O

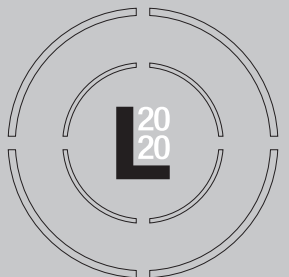
CHAPTER 2

DESTINATION CITY

CATALYTIC PROJECTS

1. LAREDO CONVENTION CENTER
2. LA VENTA MARKETPLACE
3. PLAZA THEATER

 PARKS AND RECREATION





VISION 1: DESTINATION CITY

REMAKE DOWNTOWN AS THE CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC CENTER OF THE BORDER METROPOLIS AND AN INTERNATIONAL DESTINATION

In the past Nuevo Laredo was the dominant cultural and entertainment center of the border metropolis. Now nullified by Mexico's instability, there is a strong sense of opportunity to reconstitute the former destination qualities of Nuevo Laredo in Downtown Laredo. To do so, cultural and entertainment offerings will need to be expanded to attract more people Downtown and extend into the evening hours.

Downtown's capacity for growth can accommodate new uses, and for Downtown to be truly alive, it has to have people living there and as well in its residential margins: El Azteca, Saint Peter's and El Cuatro. Downtown as a physical setting will need to be more attractive, and feel safe and secure. Walking the streets of Laredo will have to be more than tolerable; it will need to be pleasurable.

Laredo figures prominently in the saga of the Border and the West and begs the question of how Laredo can benefit from marketing its own story. Faithfulness to Laredo's enduring values – its people and cultural landscape, needs to guide and authenticate Downtown revitalization. Downtown as a destination will need to be more than a place, but also a new way of thinking about its own border.

VILLA ANTIGUA

The historic character of Downtown is most strongly associated with Plaza San Agustin with the church as its most prominent landmark and non-commercial activity generator. The Border Heritage and Republic of the Rio Grande Capitol Building museums are small but important anchors for Laredo's cultural memory and heritage tourism. Expanding support for their maintenance and programs is an immediate step towards increasing heritage tourism activity in Downtown. Various historic plaques are scattered throughout the historic district, and the Villa Antigua should be treated as an outdoor museum through coordinated interpretation, programs, events, exhibition, and graphics.

ACTIVITY CENTERS AND ZONES

Pan American Plaza and El Portal are important, but only as part of a mutually supporting matrix of activity generators and zones. The most significant existing generators of activity in Downtown constitute most of the CBD and are the merchandising zone along Convent Avenue, the historic zone around San Agustin and Market Plazas, and the government zone with the federal and county courthouses, jail, city hall, and office buildings. These are the vital functions for Laredo and retain the relevancy of Downtown. Improvements, enhancements, and investments in the CBD are needed and should be accomplished to reinforce the economic vitality and cultural authenticity of Downtown.



THE RIO GRANDE RIVERFRONT

Redevelopment of Downtown's riverfront, the Rio Grande Vega Lands, is the best opportunity to combine new residential, retail, entertainment, leisure, and office uses with public urban and recreational space. Initiatives for redevelopment are ongoing and need both public and private investment to succeed. A new convention center will be a critical anchor on the western margin.

THEATER ZONE

Performance arts activity in the A&E District is primarily generated by the Laredo Center for the Arts, LCA and the Border Heritage Museum. The City-owned Plaza Theatre is a vacant historic movie house with minimal support facilities. With moderate funding to restore its film capability the Plaza is the most immediate candidate for advancing performance arts activity and collateral development in Downtown.

INCREASE ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT VITALITY

Increasing the cultural and economic vitality of the A&E District will depend on expanding the arts and entertainment community and patronage in Laredo. An A&E strategic development plan that includes public and private institutions and interests can enable and guide the incremental growth of arts education, training, employment, and economic

development. This is beyond the scope of this master plan, but is seen as the driver for revitalizing A&E activity and resources in Downtown. There is ample capacity for redevelopment of vacant buildings, historic preservation, and expanding entertainment opportunities in the A&E District. Investment should be focused on building up a concentration of diverse offerings on and in close proximity to both plazas and the riverfront between Bridges 1 and 2.

CULTURAL CORRIDOR

Should the A&E District need to expand further it could be beneficial to direct that growth in such a way as to enhance opportunities in the CBD and the El Azteca and El Cuatro/St. Peter's neighborhoods. Several locations were identified; the Royal, and the Azteca theaters, and their linkage with the A&E District suggest a corridor from Zacate Creek east to Laredo Community College west. Other potential urban settings along this corridor are identified: the historic Methodist Church on Farragut now used as a warehouse, and the historic I&GN Train Depot now used for UP offices and storage.



REMAKE DOWNTOWN AS THE CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC CENTER OF THE BORDER METROPOLIS AND AN INTERNATIONAL DESTINATION

ESCUELITAS

The possibility of community access to art and craft can be inspired by the historic Escuelitas; the one room private school houses that were pervasive in the first half of the twentieth century, and the obvious need to find appropriate use for some of the historic masonry corner houses in El Azteca. These high character but poor condition houses are not marketable as a conventional residence or corner store. But they could provide studio/residence opportunities for artists and craftsmen where living, working and exhibiting is a shared personal and social experience.

INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DOWNTOWN LIVING

Laredoans expressed a strong desire to reclaim Downtown as a Place to Live – not how it used to be – but as it can be for new and future generations. Downtown is therefore envisioned as Laredo’s metropolitan center with vital, mixed-use, mixed-income places in a wide range of types, sizes and means in which residents can live, work, shop and enjoy the cultural amenities in a pedestrian and transit-oriented urban environment.

Downtown has the basic components to support urban living: most importantly a diverse mix of land uses; a well connected street system; an array of parks, plazas and squares; a large grocery store; and cultural/historic resources. But their current conditions and the lack of several critical components inhibit the development of a robust residential environment.

Street and infrastructure improvements are needed in the existing residential neighborhoods of El Azteca, St. Peter’s and El Cuatro, as well as improvements to neighborhood parks and open space. A strategic program of facilitating private investment in high profile properties should be coordinated with public improvements in the near margins of the CBD to encourage market interest in residential redevelopment. Although Downtown does have a diverse mix of uses, there is not a wide range of complementary goods, services, and experiences to attract and support desirable urban lifestyles.

People need to have a sense of safety and comfort in being Downtown. Much has to do with the perception of security, as the incidence of crime is actually below the average of greater Laredo. But public lighting, police patrols, graffiti control, street and park maintenance need to be vigilantly maintained in Downtown. Sidewalk and crosswalk conditions



are especially important, not just for safety, but also in a comprehensive inclusion of amenities for shade, recreation and relaxation.

DOWNTOWN GATEWAYS

IH35, the KCS rail line and Moctezuma, the West Switchyard, and Zacate Creek form the boundaries of Downtown in Laredo. Urban gateways should be created at the juncture of major thoroughfares and at the Zacate Creek bridges to indicate the portals to Downtown and distinguish Downtown from the greater metropolis.

PAN AMERICAN PLAZA AND EL PORTAL

If there were only one place to demonstrate Laredo as a Destination City, it would be here; where the IH35 and Juarez-Lincoln Bridge exemplify Laredo's international continuum of trade, successor to the Pan American Highway and the Camino Real. It is a place that needs to be healed and ennobled; where one is compelled to linger and moved to remember; fulfilling as an experience and rewarding in value. The name is derived from the Highway, and the public space and adjacent blocks should be redeveloped with mixed-use buildings that host trade, retail, cultural and residential uses and activities.

El Portal at the Gateway to the Americas Bridge is Downtown's most significant approach and port of entry for pedestrians, and offers a strategic linkage between the shopping zone and riverfront. The impedances along Water and Zaragosa Streets need to be eliminated to enable a more accessible and friendly environment for pedestrians and merchants. Renovation of the customs facilities that resolve security and aesthetic issues is critical; and vehicular access to IH35 northbound is needed to complete the functional value of El Portal at River Drive.

The historic Hamilton Hotel on Salinas Street.

GOALS

1.1

STRENGTHEN THE HISTORIC CHARACTER OF DOWNTOWN.

OBJECTIVES:

Update the inventory of historic resources in Downtown and the designation of national, state, and local districts and individual properties.

Amend building code and design review criteria to clarify the historicity and interpretation of historic resources and simplify construction permitting.

Target key historic properties for restoration/rehabilitation as recommended in the Historic and Urban Design Guidelines.

Supplement and promote the building façade rehab loan program.



1.2

STRENGTHEN DOWNTOWN ACTIVITY GENERATORS AND ZONES TO ATTRACT MORE PEOPLE AND INVESTMENT

OBJECTIVES:

Renovate and improve the streetscape and plazas in the San Agustin and Old Mercado Historic Districts.

Renovate Convent Avenue to accommodate and attract more people to the shopping district and redevelop the Southern Hotel and adjacent buildings as a marketplace and plaza.

Coordinate future expansion and improvements of federal, state, county and city operated facilities to maximize the population of government employees, centralized services, and public activity.

Coordinate with U.S. and Mexico agencies to improve security and aesthetic conditions of the bridgeheads and customs facilities.

1.3

STRENGTHEN HISTORIC RESOURCES AND HERITAGE TOURISM IN VILLA ANTIGUA.

OBJECTIVES:

Expand support of the Border Heritage Museum, Republic of the Rio Grande Capitol Building Museum, and the Laredo Veteran's Museum as cultural anchors and activity generators for heritage tourism.

Treat Villa Antigua as an historic site with a didactic program of interpretation with a continuity of content and graphics.

A new museum should be considered in an A&E strategic development plan located in the A&E District and providing the capacity for future expansion of appropriate programs and exhibition.

1.4

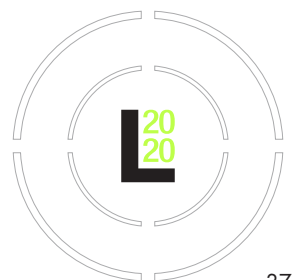
REDEVELOP THE RIO GRANDE RIVERFRONT AS A MIX OF RETAIL, OFFICE, LEISURE, AND RESIDENTIAL MIXED-USE BUILDINGS, WITH A CONVENTION CENTER AND DIVERSITY OF PUBLIC PLACES FOR GATHERING, ENTERTAINMENT, AND RECREATION ACTIVITIES.

OBJECTIVES:

Develop the riverfront esplanade between Santa Cleotilde and Juarez Avenues to connect El Portal to the recommended site for the convention center and River Bend Park. This effort will need to address commercial frontage redevelopment, structured parking, and the development of open space between Bridge No. 1 and the KCS railroad Bridge.

Design and construct a new Convention Center between Santa Rita and Santa Cleotilde Avenues that faces the River.

Develop the riverfront between Bridges No. 1 and No. 2 with structured parking and public open space as a terminus for San Bernardo Avenue, with options for residential, lodging and cultural uses.



GOALS

1.5

CREATE A THEATRE ZONE IN AND AROUND OLD MERCADO PLAZA THROUGH THE REVITALIZATION OF EXISTING VENUES AND RESOURCES.


OBJECTIVES:

Renovate the Plaza Theatre primarily as an arts and cultural film theater with limited live performance ability.

Restore the architectural integrity of the City Market Building and ancillary structures, and renovate the Laredo Cultural Arts Center to maximize utilization of interior and exterior spaces.

Evaluate the feasibility of reactivating the Royal Theatre as a music and performance venue.

Evaluate the feasibility of a new performance arts/music theatre that adds to the diversity of A&E venues and is located in the A&E District.

A large, dark bronze statue of General Zaragoza, a hero of the battle of 5th of May, 1862, in San Agustin Plaza. The statue depicts a man in a military uniform, wearing a bicorne hat and holding a sword. The background shows trees and a building.

Statue of General Zaragoza, hero of battle of 5th of May, 1862 in San Agustin Plaza.

1.6

CULTIVATE COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR ARTS EDUCATION

OBJECTIVES:

Conduct an A&E strategic development plan to formally assess needs, identify resources, and chart a course for developing A&E opportunities and initiatives.

Involve local educational institutions in Downtown A&E initiatives and collaborate on arts education, training and employment.

Establish a strategy and process for programming cultural and entertainment activities in public places throughout Downtown and coordinate with private utilization of public space.

1.7

EXTEND ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT ACTIVITIES BEYOND THE A&E DISTRICT TO INVIGORATE OTHER AREAS OF DOWNTOWN.

OBJECTIVES:

Establish an Escuelitas program of rehabilitating key historic structures in El Azteca and St. Peter's/El Cuatro neighborhoods for use as artisan-in-residence studios and workshops.

Renovate the Zacate Creek Amphitheatre and Old Matamoros Street Bridge for A&E uses; provide A&E capacity to the recommended San Pablo paseo; and include public art in strategic improvements.

Evaluate the feasibility of renovating the historic Methodist Church and attached warehouse as a cultural/community center, including redeveloping adjacent property as a public plaza.

Evaluate the feasibility of restoring and adapting the I&GN Train Depot as a cultural/community center, including a public plaza and college-oriented mixed-use development.

1.8

MAKE DOWNTOWN A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND MEANS.

OBJECTIVES:

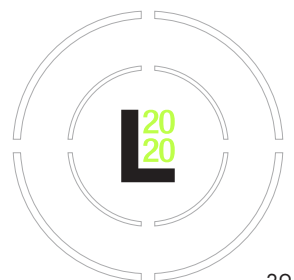
Designate El Azteca, St. Peter's, El Cuatro and El Rincon del Diablo as Conservation Neighborhoods; and develop housing rehabilitation policies to strengthen and enhance their residential character and value.

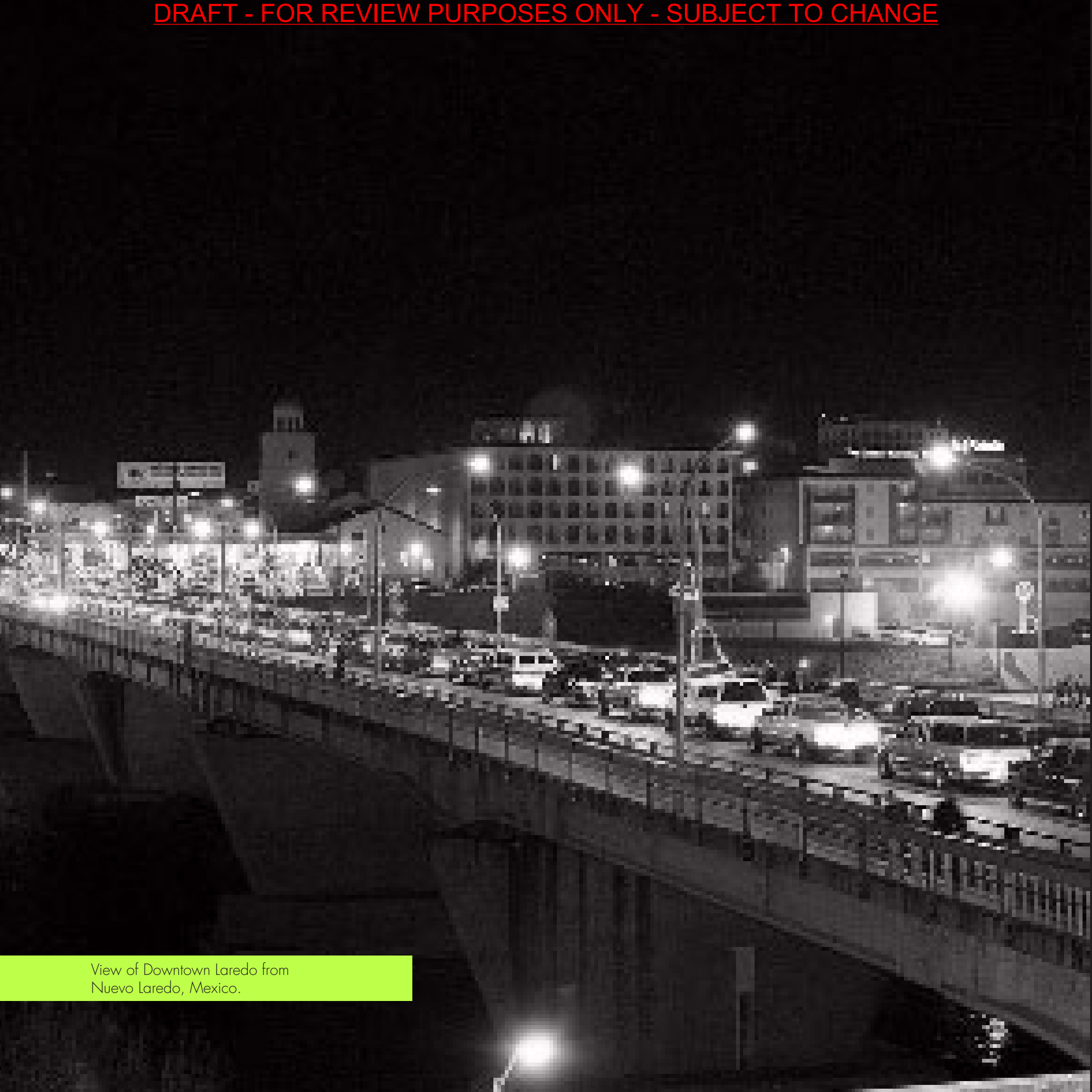
Identify vacant and underutilized properties for infill residential and mixed-use residential development that reinforce the surrounding neighborhood.

Encourage the retention of existing and the establishment of new uses such as grocery stores, household retail, child care centers, education, and employment opportunities that enable living Downtown.

Develop a Downtown security plan that anticipates an increased level of public use and access along the urban and park riverfront, incorporates increased live/work condition in Downtown, and coordinates federal, state, county, city, and private security providers

Formulate an overall Downtown Living strategy, enact appropriate policies, and create public/private partnerships to incrementally increase residential capacity and diverse housing choices.





View of Downtown Laredo from
Nuevo Laredo, Mexico.



GOALS

1.9

ESTABLISH GATEWAYS TO DOWNTOWN AS WELCOMING PLACES FOR PEOPLE FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER AND THAT DISTINGUISH DOWNTOWN FROM THE GREATER METROPOLIS.

OBJECTIVES:

Renovate and enhance the IH35 highway signage, embankments, and landscape; the Scott and Washington Street bridges; and the KCS railroad bridge to establish a main gateway to Downtown.

Renovate and enhance the KCS railroad line, Moctezuma Street, and avenue crossings as a series of Downtown gateways.

Create a grade level linkage between Santa Isabel Avenue and Laredo Community College in the vicinity of the historic I&GN Train Depot and improve and enhance the Zaragosa Street crossing through the west switchyard.

Renovate and enhance Zacate Creek bridges at Washington, Houston, Matamoros, and Iturbide Streets; and the adjacent portions of the creek to establish east gateways to Downtown.

1.10

ESTABLISH A STRONG SENSE OF DESTINATION AT THE 4-BLOCK AREA OF IH35; AND AT THE PORTS OF ENTRY THAT MANIFESTS A PAN AMERICAN THEME AND INCREASES POSITIVE ACTIVITY.

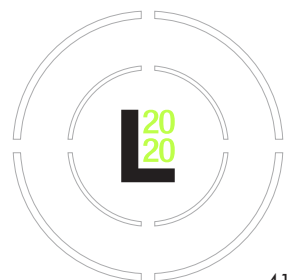
OBJECTIVES:

Rededicate the 4-Block Area as Pan American Plaza and international gateway that celebrates and capitalizes on Laredo's status in cultural and economic exchange and reconnects Barrio El Azteca with the CBD. Enhance the median parks to be more attractive, reconstitute and rededicate memorials, and be more hospitable for people. Redevelop the blocks on each side of the Plaza with commercial office, retail and residential mixed-use buildings and coordinate with infrastructure and port of entry improvements.

On the site of Noria Plaza, construct a building to house international trade organizations and agencies that includes public exhibition space. On the adjacent blocks construct office and retail mixed-use buildings with structured public parking.

Host a Pan American Exposition in 2020 that utilizes Pan American Plaza as the primary center and has events and venues throughout Downtown and along the riverfront.

Complete the vehicular linkage of El Portal to San Dario/IH35 northbound and coordinate improvements of the port of entry with improvements at Water and Zaragosa Streets and Convent Avenue.



LAREDO CONVENTION CENTER

A Downtown location for a convention center would provide the greatest benefit for Laredo as it adds a much needed destination use to stimulate cultural, retail and leisure activity. A convention center might well operate successfully in a suburban location but in lacking the immediate proximity and density of Downtown's cultural assets and border setting would have less impact and perhaps less allure.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The 2005 Laredo Convention Center Feasibility Study recommended a facility space program with 40,000 SF divisible prime exhibit space with 30' clear ceiling height, 18,000 SF ballroom space, and 15,000 SF breakout meeting room space. A separate study identified and evaluated four sites in Downtown along the riverfront at the Four-Block Area between Santa Ursula and San Bernardo Avenues. Ancillary trade exhibit space as recommended in the feasibility study could be incorporated with an exposition at Pan American Plaza, but the greater intensity of convention operations and potential for future expansion suggests that the site adjacent to the Rio Grande Hotel would be most suitable for the convention center.

This master plan concurs with the general scope and location at the largely vacant block along Water Street and Santa Cleotilde as an opportunity site, although closure of Water Street east of Santa Cleotilde and Santa Rita, as well as acquisition of occupied residential properties may be needed to provide enough area for the building and site operations. This residential area is zoned Community Business, an apparent anticipation of future expansion of the Central Business District, and future expansion should also be a consideration for further site and facility evaluation.

The Laredo Convention Center rendering depicts a building that places public circulation spaces along Santa Cleotilde Street facing east and on the south overlooking the river. A broad terrace would offer splendid overlook. The topography slopes toward the river and could accommodate parking under the building, but flood plain issues would need to be verified. It is critical that the center's entrances, circulation and prefunction spaces interface with surrounding urban and riverfront spaces so that pedestrian access and linkage is direct and distinct from service and back of house functions.





SANTA ISABELL AVE.

VIDAURRI AVE.

WATER ST.

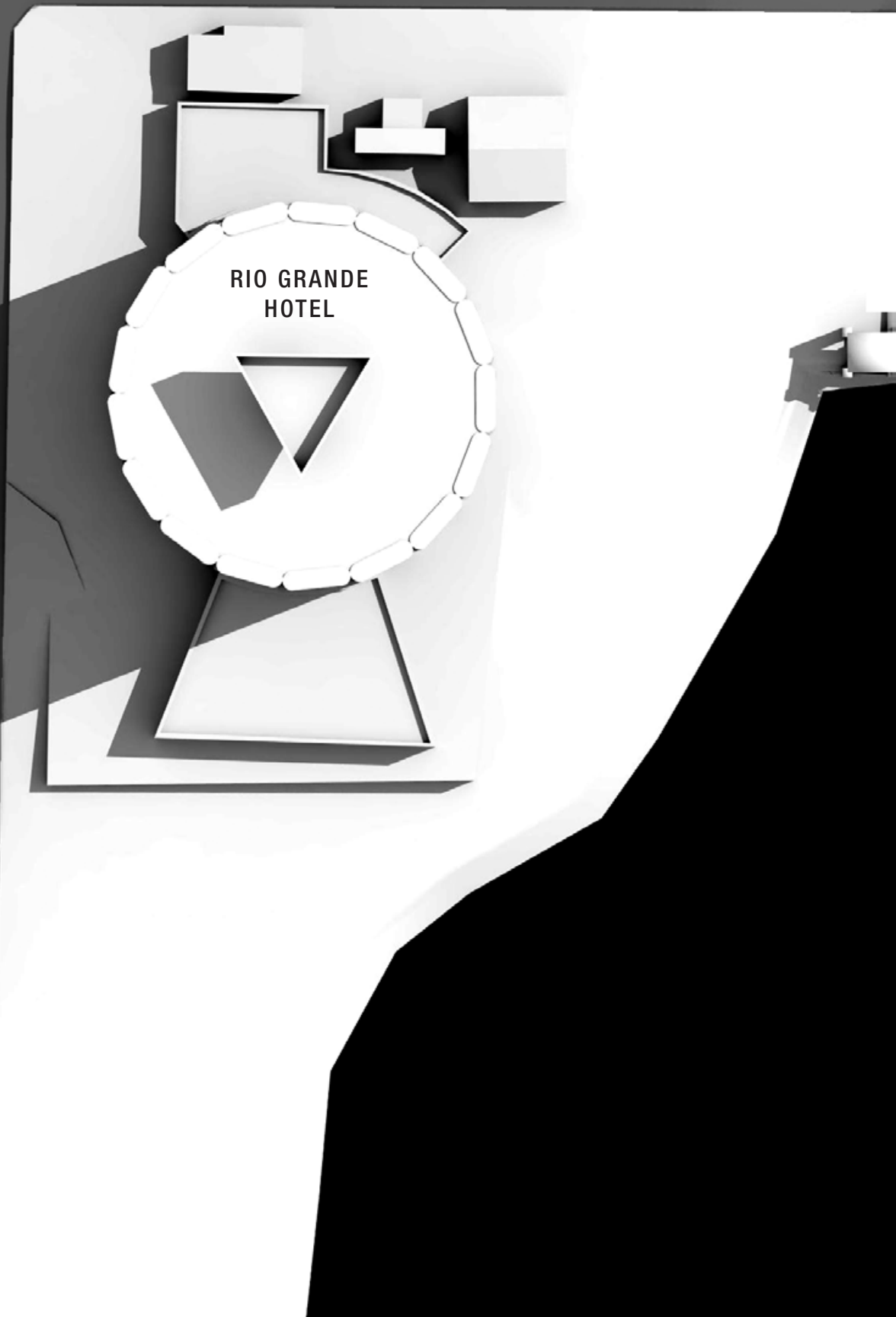
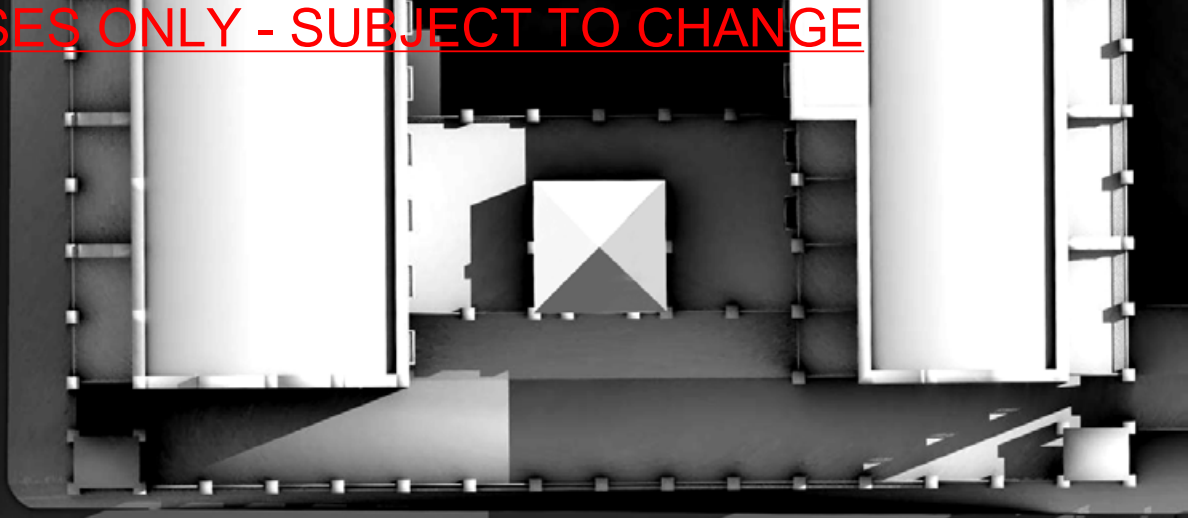
SANTA RITA AVE.

VENTURA ST.





SANTA CLEOTILDE



LA VENTA MARKETPLACE

Historically the City provided a public market space that was incorporated with its City Hall. Now that traditional patterns of shopping, dining and entertainment in Nuevo Laredo are disrupted, there may be no better time than the present to regenerate this activity in Downtown Laredo.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The City's ownership of the historic and vacant Southern Hotel building and its attached covered garage provides the best opportunity to establish a marketplace that reconstitutes the types of goods and shopping experiences that were previously available across the border. The building's proximity to Convent Avenue, City Hall, and Jarvis Plaza, and access from Matamoros and Houston Streets is well situated for access by local and visitors.

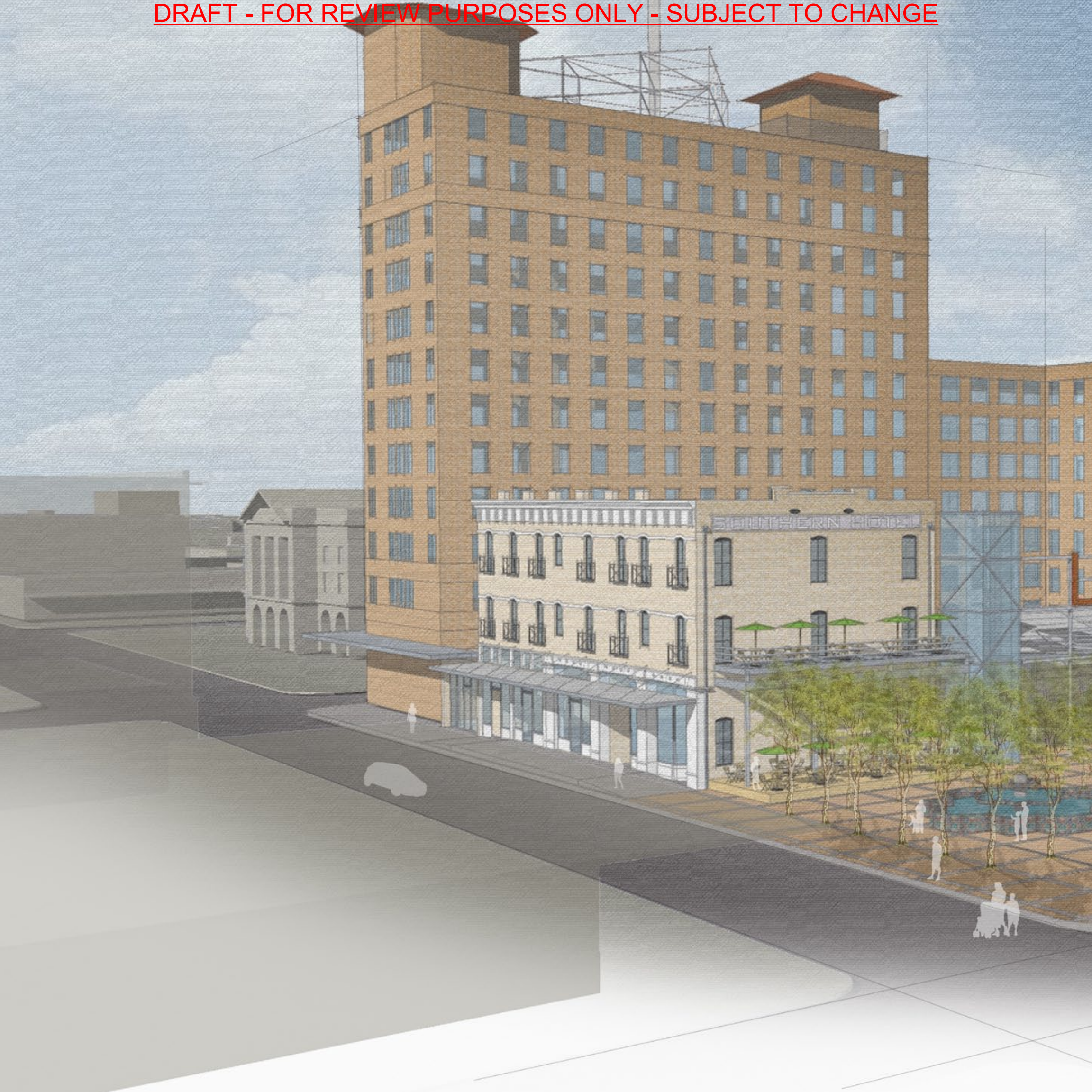
The 12,000 SF parking garage is roofed with long-span steel trusses, which keeps the floor open and brings an appealing spatial quality to the now open structure. The 15,000 SF three-story brick masonry Southern Hotel is contiguous with the garage and would allow marketplace activity to flow into the first floor. Careful removal of portions of the upper floors to create an atrium can extend retail uses to those levels.

Unlike the historic City Market Building however, the Southern Hotel does not have any outdoor area to provide a plaza or square as part of its setting and function. This is seen as a critical component of such a public marketplace but can be resolved if the adjacent parking lots and small buildings are acquired and the site remade as a plaza. This would provide outdoor space for market stalls, pedestrian amenities, events, and importantly provide direct access and view from Convent Avenue. A plaza area also makes redevelopment of the adjacent two-story building facing Houston Street more viable for expansion of market uses, complementary retail, and dining.

Called "La Venta Marketplace" in this master plan so as not to overuse "Mercado" as a place name, the goal of this endeavor is to attract new shoppers to Downtown and therefore will need to establish an appropriate business plan and marketing strategy. La Venta is intended as an anchor on the north end of Convent Avenue complementary to El Portal on the south.



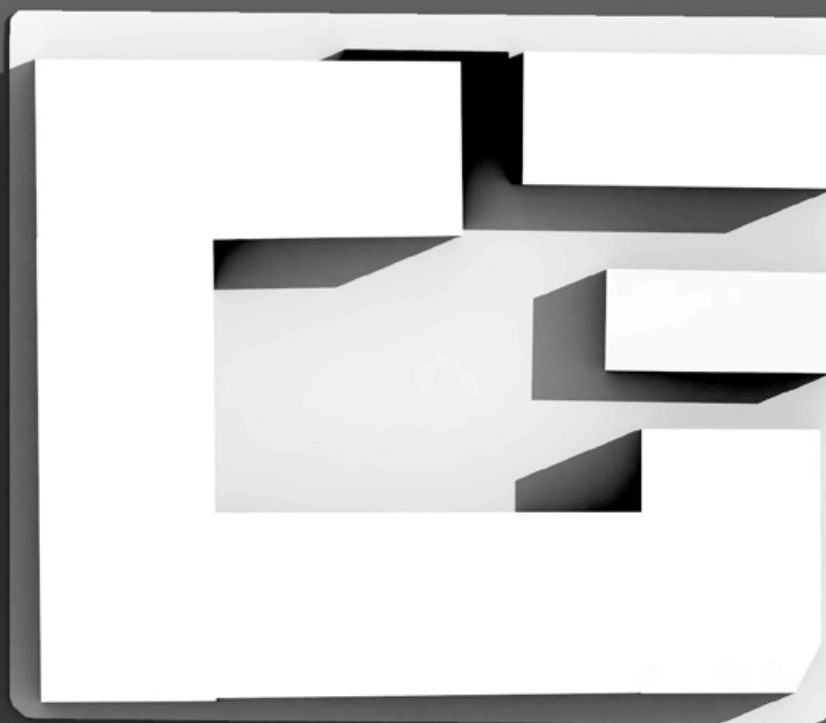








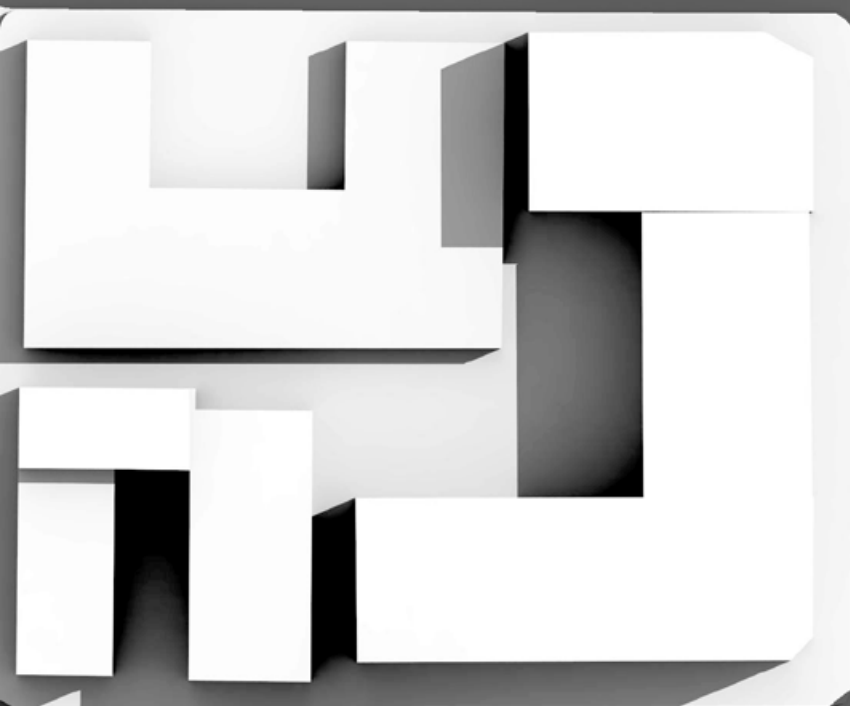
JUAREZ ST.



SALINAS ST.



HOUSTON ST.

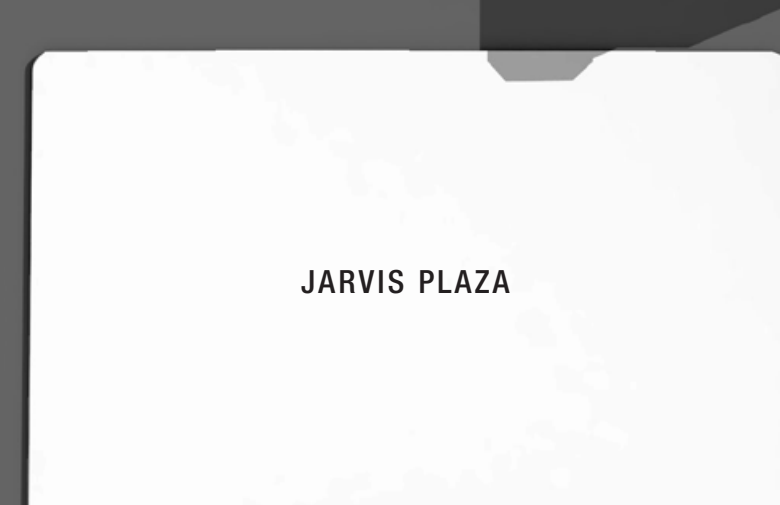


US POST OFFICE



HAMILTON HOTEL

MATAMOROS ST.



JARVIS PLAZA

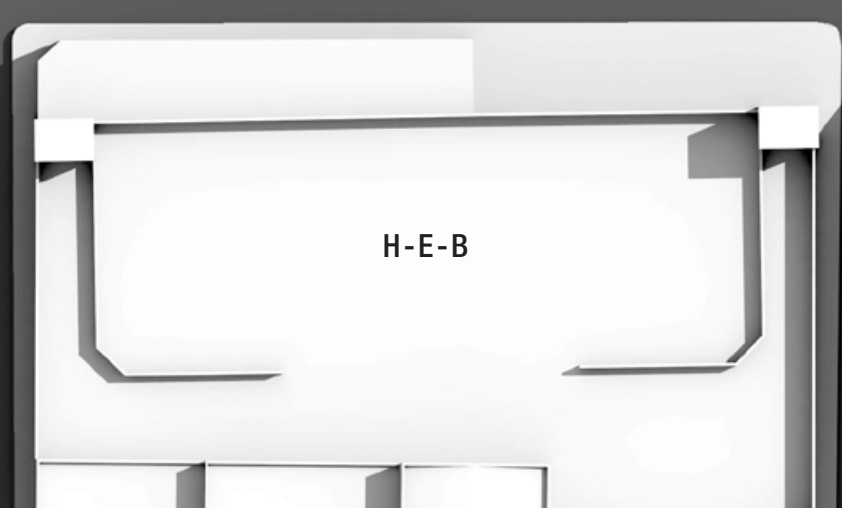
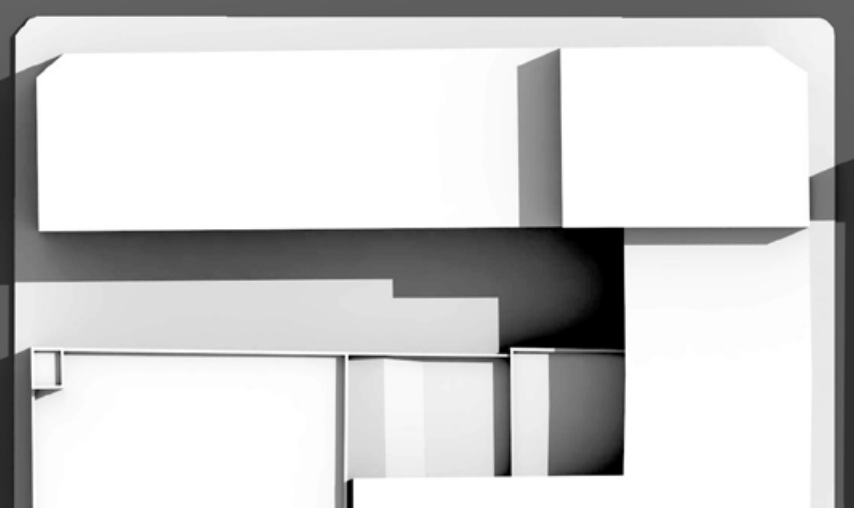
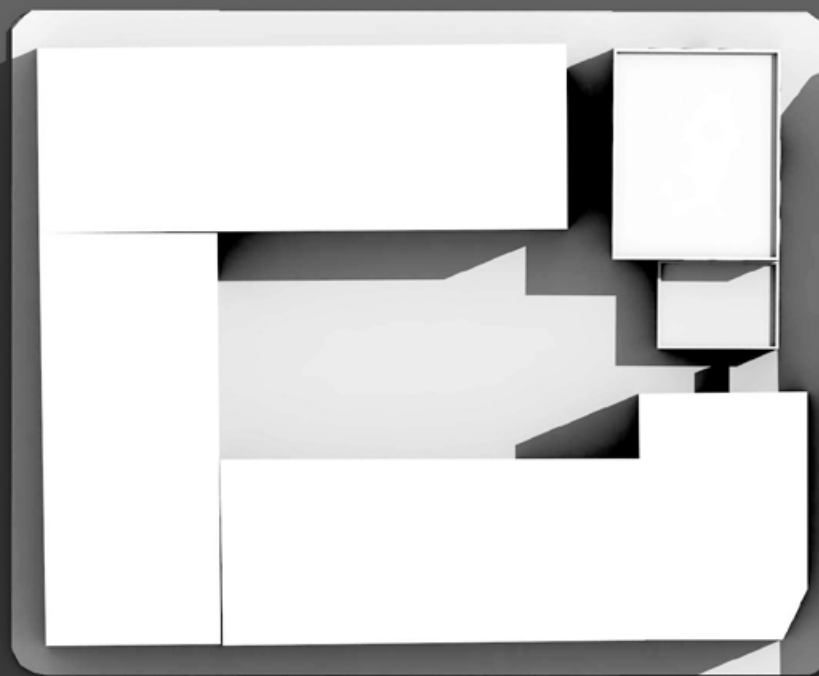
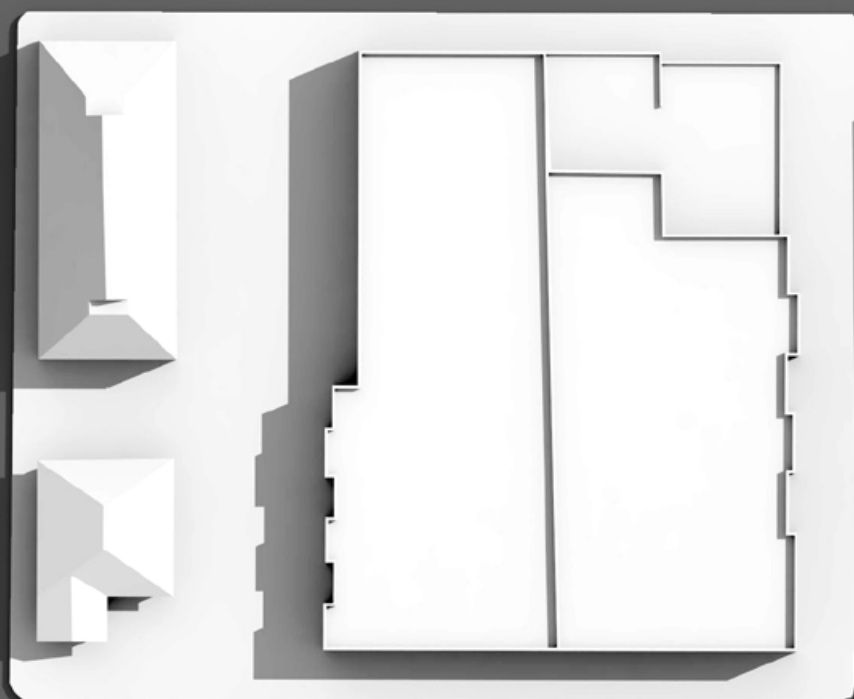
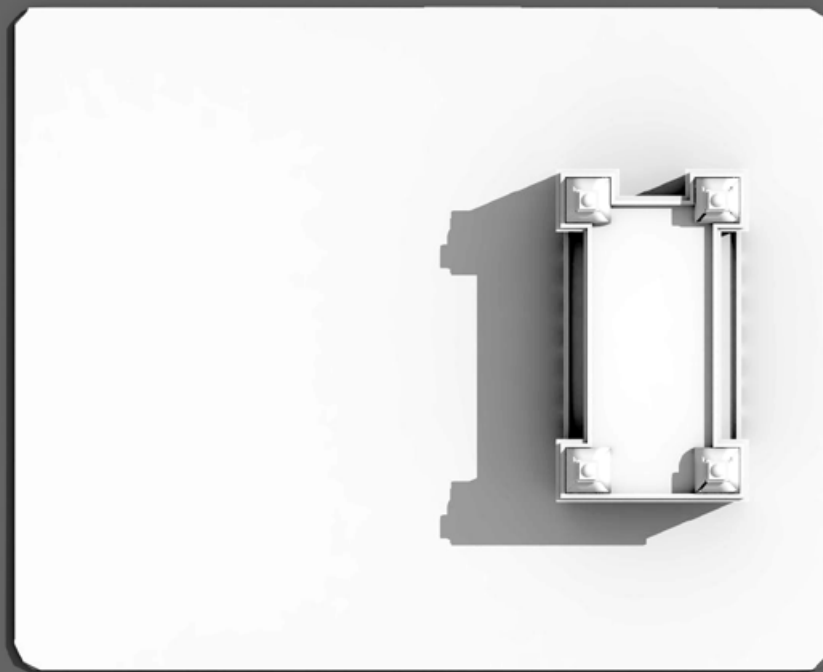




CONVENT AVE.



FLORES ST.



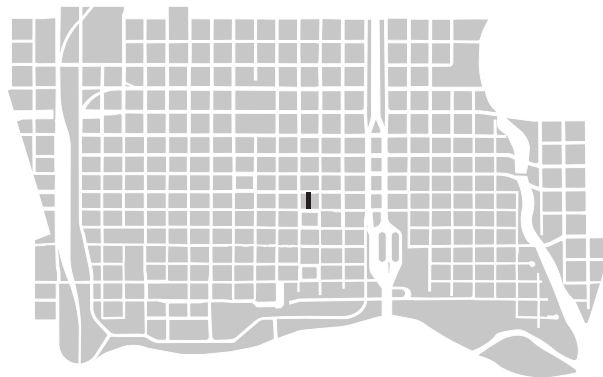
PLAZA THEATER

The City-owned but vacant Plaza Theater can be a catalyst for revitalizing the A&E District and Downtown if it can be reactivated as its original use for movies or adapted as a performance arts venue.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The 1,586-seat Plaza Theater opened as a movie house in 1946 featuring first-run American films and was one of Downtown's major attractions. Purchased by the City in 1999 using GDBG funds, the feasibility of adapting the building to performance arts was studied and concluded that it was possible, provided that additional space be added for storage, scenery, rehearsal, and support facilities; and provide 890 seats with an expanded stage. The projected cost in 1999 was \$6.1M, which would be approximately \$10M in current dollars.

As a performance theater the Plaza would be adequate but not as well-equipped as the Laredo Community College Fine Arts Theater, which has close proximity to Downtown. An alternative might be the Plaza's restoration as a movie theatre, which could be programmed to provide film, small-scale performance and lecture assembly. The cost of this would be around half the cost of a live performance hall and may generate sufficient activity to warrant consideration.





The Plaza Theater opened as a movie house in 1946.

CHAMP

SECURE

TEER 3

BORDER



Pedestrians and vehicular traffic cross the Gateway to Mexico International Bridge #1 ca. 1950.

Laredo and Nuevo Laredo were exemplary of the social cohesion between U.S. - Mexico Border communities. But the rapid and vast changes in border conditions and security have outpaced the ability of local economic and cultural institutions to adjust. Closing this gap will require a deeper understanding between national and local needs that defines border security within a greater framework of border stability. How Downtown is both a setting for and expression of such an understanding is the subject of this vision.

L A R E D O



M E X I C O

CHAPTER 3

SECURE BORDER

CATALYTIC PROJECTS

1. LOS DOS LAREDOS RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT
2. PAN AMERICAN PLAZA
3. INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTER LA PORTADA

 PARKS AND RECREATION





VISION 2: SECURE BORDER

RECREATE THE BORDER ENVIRONMENT AS A PLACE OF SHARED PRIDE, ECONOMIC EQUITY, CULTURAL VITALITY, AND AS AN INTERNATIONAL MODEL FOR OTHER BORDER COMMUNITIES.

The U.S. – Mexico Borderlands is a unique cultural province with transnational relationships of kinship, trade and culture; a complexity unfortunately little understood or appreciated beyond the region. Border Security in the U.S. has dramatically changed during its history, especially in the past decade. The expeditious deployment of more security forces and tactical infrastructure has greatly increased as the civil and economic conditions in Mexico’s bordering states and in Nuevo Laredo have deteriorated. This intensification has resulted in more rigorous and time-consuming customs processing and overall vigilance that has changed the way people experience the border environment.

HISTORICAL REFERENCE

In his examination of how civilizations consolidate their borderlands, the British historian Arnold Toynbee observed that:

“As long as [a] civilization is still in growth, it has no hard and fast boundaries...for the light with which it illuminates its own society radiates beyond its frontiers to the...communities around it...A growing civilization, therefore...can exercise the same power of attraction upon its neighbors as it does upon the community

in whose midst it has arisen...Once a civilization has broken down, however, it ceases to exercise this attraction over adjacent communities, for, if it has lost its power of self-determination, then...it has also lost the power both of exercising any creative influence upon outsiders and of presenting a harmonious whole which can serve as a model for other communities. The result is...two estranged communities...and the fluid zone of contact between...freezes into an impenetrable military frontier as the civilization declines, neighbors become enemies, and cultural exchange ceases.” – *A Study of History*, p. 321.

Toynbee’s conclusion does not describe the specific conditions of the U.S. – Mexico Border, but does speak to the larger dynamic of how border space is both subject to and manifest of the conflicts between greater forces. The magnitude of illegal entry and trafficking is clearly beyond the resources of Laredo’s control, and yet the access to open space, parks, rivers that other U.S. cities are able to utilize are more restricted for Laredoans and visitors because of border security considerations.

In *Hyper-Border, The Contemporary U.S. – Mexico Border*, author



Romero/Lar states that...“The traditional functions of international borders are being tested by globalization – a phenomenon whose momentum has the potential to severely alter the future state of the world. A new framework is needed; one that embraces complexity and multilateral viewpoints yet considers common values that connect people throughout the world. Borders play a significant role in this context, in the way they pertain to issues like sovereignty, natural resources, human rights, trade, religion, culture, and so forth. It is through this humanitarian perspective that our notions about borders can change, and where local communities can connect directly to the global community.” The challenge for Downtown Laredo is not just what it can do to survive current conditions, but to begin cultivating a new border space that promotes positive activity and redefines bi-national and bicultural relations.

RIO GRANDE RIVERFRONT AND THE VEGA LANDS PLAN

The Rio Grande River is Laredo’s greatest and most underdeveloped destination resource. It is also a vital and security sensitive zone that in the River Vega Lands Plan establishes a framework for mutually resolving and integrating security and redevelopment needs along Laredo’s urban riverfront. A restricted access zone is the most expedient means of security monitoring as anyone within that zone is categorically suspect. But in an urban environment, such a zone is negative space where the absence of positive activity devalues property values and quality of life. The projects that are most relevant to security and public use conflicts are those along the riverfront. In such an urban setting, where the presence of the river needs to add value to land and human experience,

access and activity need to be intensified as a countermeasure against illegal entry and activity. Positive activity 24/7; meaning that mixed use development incorporating residential, office, retail and leisure uses is essential. The security quality of passive surveillance is a natural attribute of thoughtfully planned development that integrates defensive design strategies, and can be considered as a deployment of security measures.

PAN AMERICAN PLAZA AND EL PORTAL

If there were only one place to demonstrate Laredo as a Destination City, it would be here; where the IH35 and Juarez-Lincoln Bridge exemplify Laredo’s international continuum of trade, successor to the Pan American Highway and the Camino Real. It is a place that needs to be healed and ennobled; where one is compelled to linger and moved to remember; fulfilling as an experience and rewarding in value. The name is derived from the Highway, and the public space and adjacent blocks should be redeveloped with mixed-use buildings that host trade, retail, cultural and residential uses and activities.

El Portal at the Gateway to the Americas Bridge is Downtown’s most significant approach and port of entry for pedestrians, and offers a strategic linkage between the shopping zone and riverfront. The impedances along Water and Zaragosa Streets need to be eliminated to enable a more accessible and friendly environment for pedestrians and merchants. Renovation of the customs facilities that resolve security and aesthetic issues is critical; and vehicular access to IH35 northbound is needed to complete the functional value of El Portal at River Drive.

An average of 10,000 people cross the Pedestrian Bridge daily.



GOALS

2.1

RENOVATE AND RENEW THE PORTS OF ENTRY AS EFFICIENT, SECURE AND WELCOMING INTERNATIONAL GATEWAYS.

OBJECTIVES:

Replace ad hoc and temporary perimeter security barriers, signage, and landscape materials with a comprehensively designed secure perimeter appropriate to the surrounding urban, historic, and neighborhood character.

Renovate existing and add new facilities to improve security and processing functions through a program of architectural excellence embracing bi-national ideals, Laredo's cultural context, and sustainable design.

Develop a plan for the more efficient utilization of federally owned and leased riverfront property and to provide more opportunities for extending public open space and facilities and market redevelopment.

2.2

EXTEND AND ENHANCE THE INTERNATIONAL SENSE OF PLACE FROM THE PORTS OF ENTRY INTO DOWNTOWN AND PRIMARY APPROACHES.

OBJECTIVES:

Recreate the Four-Block Area as Pan American Plaza - an international urban space that celebrates Laredo's historic and future position in border markets and culture.

Establish an international and multi-cultural center for exhibition and offices for regulatory, public and private interests in trade.

Redesign the Zaragosa/Convent intersection to improve pedestrian and vehicular circulation and create an appropriately scaled urban gateway and sense of place.

2.3

EXPAND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BORDER SECURITY THROUGH POSITIVE URBAN PLANNING AND DEFENSIVE DESIGN STRATEGIES IN THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE RIVERFRONT.

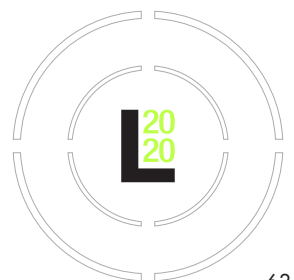
OBJECTIVES:

Coordinate with law enforcement agencies in the planning of public and private improvements that interface with the riverfront and integrate security infrastructure in the design of public infrastructure as appropriate.

Integrate defensive design strategies and techniques to enhance the safety and security of riverfront and public space redevelopment in Downtown and utilize passive surveillance benefits of increased evening and night shopping, dining, entertainment, and residential uses and activities.

Reclaim and restore the natural riparian and scenic character of the Rio Grande River with opportunities for cultural and recreational enjoyment.

Identify places that can manifest new ideas and expressions of shared border space.



LOS DOS LAREDOS RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

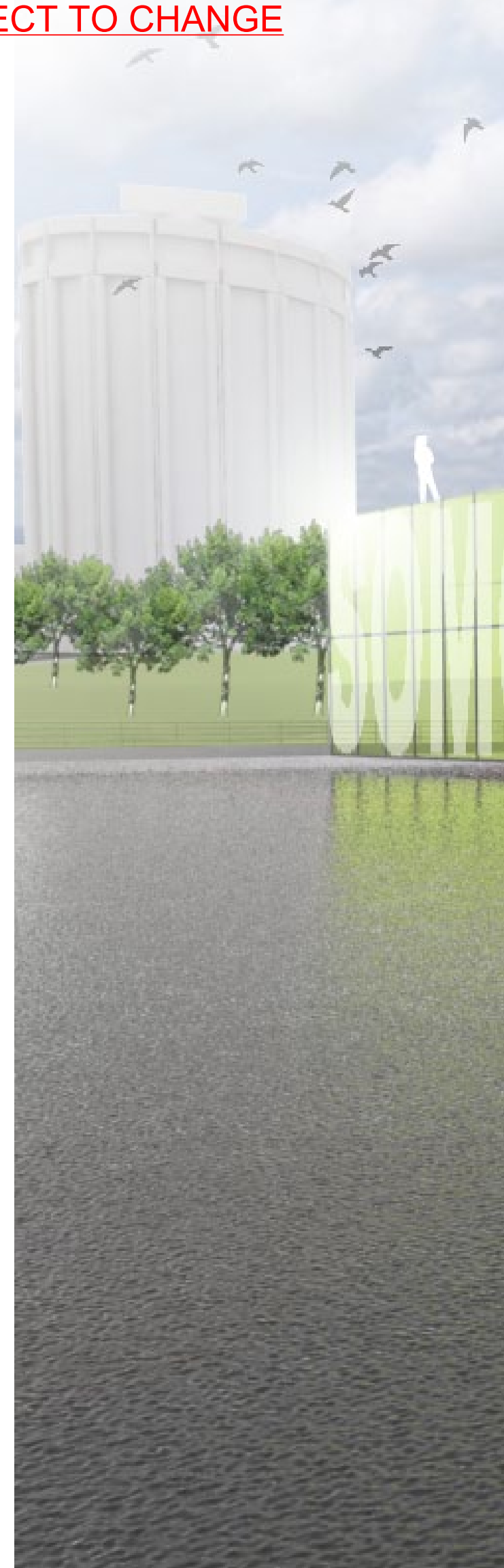
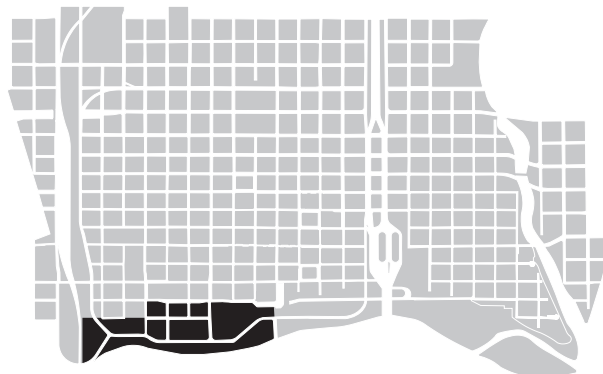
The River Vega Lands Concept Plan identified the essential public components for redevelopment of Downtown Laredo's two and a half mile long riverfront: urban and recreational open space, rerouting of streets, converting surface parking into structured parking, access, convention center site location, and infrastructure improvements. This phase will need to involve initiatives that insure the redevelopment of private properties that front the public spaces.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

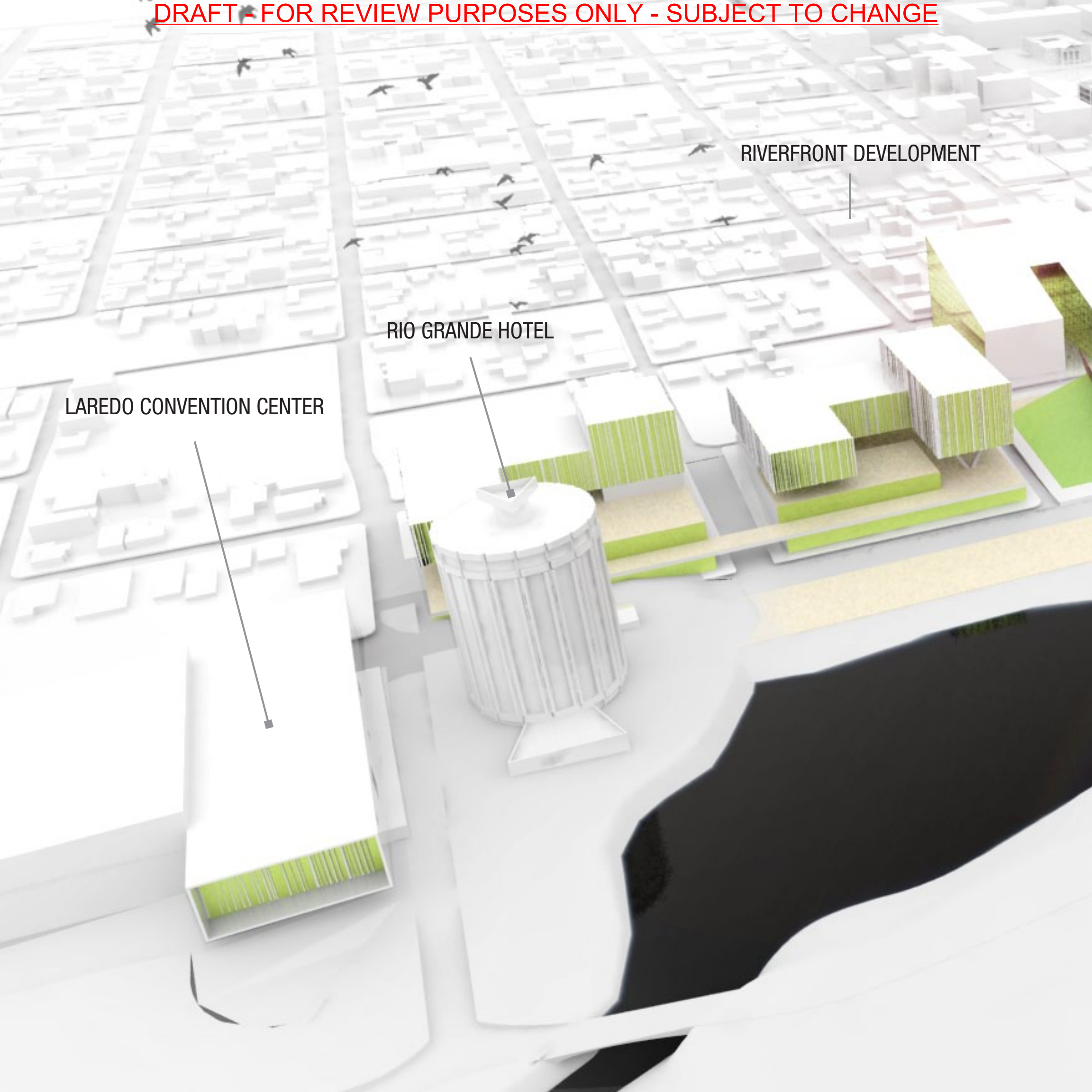
This project focuses on the area of Los Dos Laredos Park, the stretch of the Rio Grande River and urban edge between the railroad bridge and Bridge 1. The basic challenge is to establish a contiguous relationship between the water and riverfront development where the public space between the water and occupied buildings is not too wide. The distance between Water Street and the river is more than 800 feet and as neither the river edge nor the 100-year floodplain line can be shifted from their present positions, the only option is to introduce a body of water between Water Street and the river. A natural flood channel once existed in what is now Los Dos Laredos Park and the Vega was originally an island, similar to the present natural condition of Las Palmas.

The problematic concept to construct a weir to raise the river level has thus been re-imagined as an embayment that creates a body of water between the river and Water Street, which establishes the critical relationship between water, public space, and redevelopment that is not too wide: a true waterfront. This would keep the existing river edge and bank intact and provide a solution less constrained by the regulatory criteria of the IBWC. The embayment would be engineered so that the water would be at a relatively constant elevation with a consistent and controlled flow of water and can be accomplished by acquiring water rights to supply the embayment and structured controls to control flood stage recharge, discharge and recirculation. The embayment would be part of a larger connected system of engineered wetlands, roads, and hike and bike trails from River Bend Park to Zacate Creek

A substantial margin of dry ground would remain between the river and the embayment to maintain the integrity. Access would occur along a reconstructed route of River Road and Water Street. It is important to remake this park setting that has been much damaged by years of institutional use and flood events. Appropriate flood-resistant trees, such as cypress and sabal palm, can be strategically planted to recreate the riparian character, provide shade, and provide surveillance cordons.







RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

RIO GRANDE HOTEL

LAREDO CONVENTION CENTER



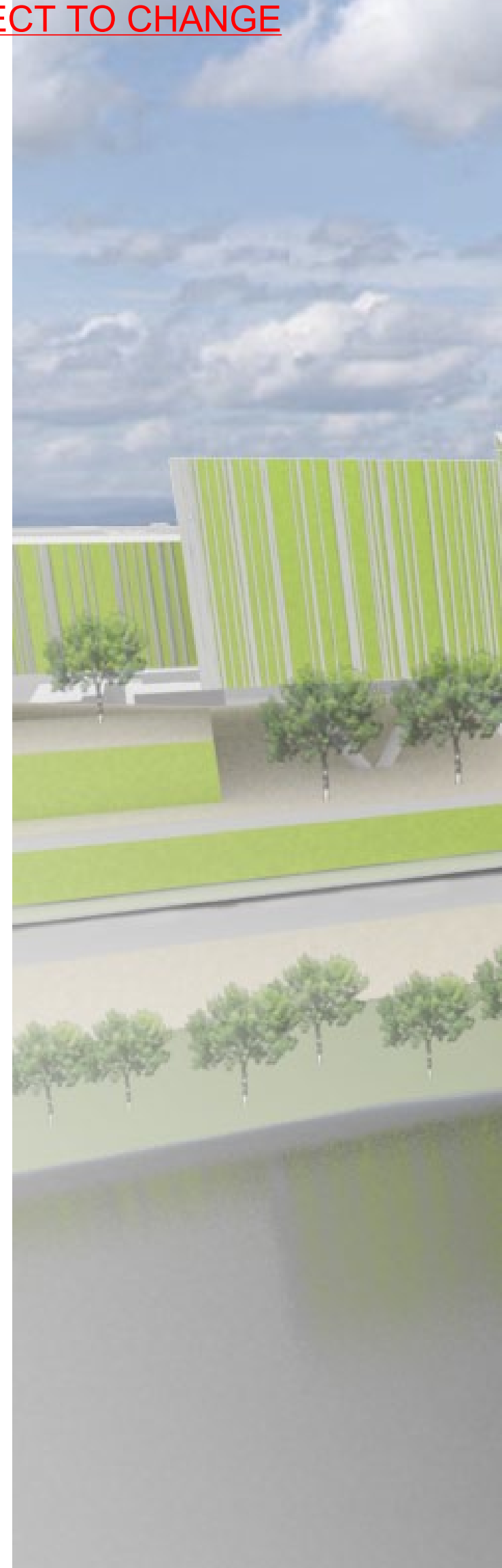
LOS DOS LAREDOS RIVERFRONT

The sectional ordering of river, bank, park, channel, and urban edge can vary in width and character but can establish a fundamental hierarchy of zones to support security and access. An aspect of the Los Dos Laredos park area that feels lacking is a treatment of the landscape that would manifest its reference to the two cities. One idea that was explored was to establish a sense of common space by planting a half ring of trees on the U.S. side that could be mirrored by Nuevo Laredo on the other. The typological urban space fronting and parallel to a river is an esplanade, which along Water Street would simply be an extension of El Portal's riverside plaza west to the Rio Grande Hotel and approximately sixty feet in width. As the 2010 July flood covered Water Street and flooded the lower levels of Riverside Mall, the establishing ultimate floor, sidewalk, street, and esplanade elevations will be important.

The frontage blocks between Water and Zaragosa Streets are envisioned as being completely redeveloped. Few if any of the existing buildings would remain. In their place there should be new buildings that contain commercial uses on the Water and Zaragosa Street levels with whatever mix of residential and office uses are appropriate in what is thought to be the three to four stories above. The difference in elevation between Water and Zaragosa Streets offers the rare opportunity for two levels of commercial floors activated at grade. Storefronts would have a generous use of glass and arcades can occur at both levels, which from Zaragosa Street could be an upper level esplanade that overlooks the lower esplanade, the water and the river beyond. On-site structured parking is essential for market rate residential, and with the grade elevations two levels of parking can be accommodated. In those redeveloped blocks between Santa Cleotilde and Salinas Avenues, the density, mix of uses, and quality of construction will be critical to the success of the public investment and use of the riverfront.

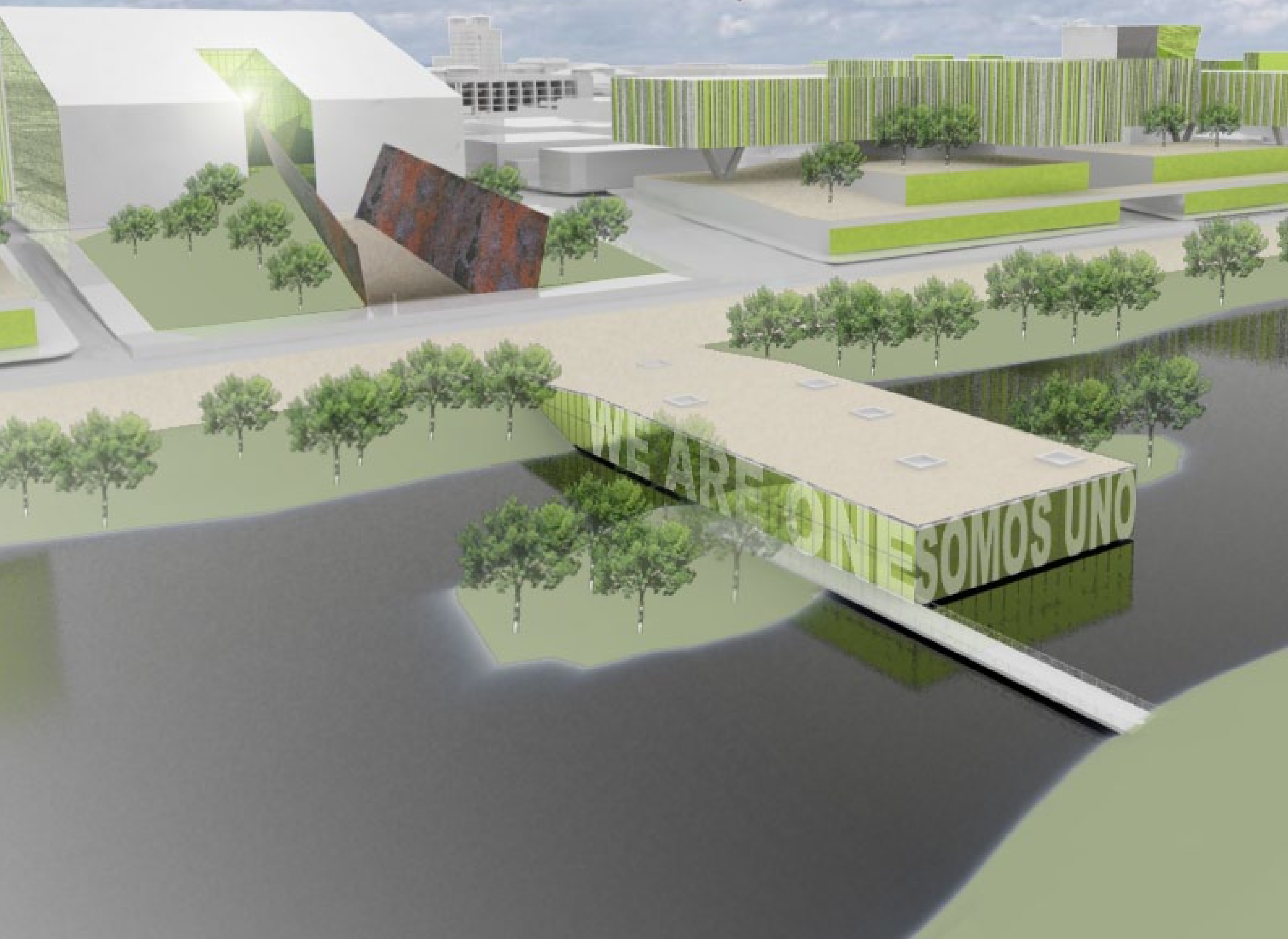
It is recommended that the block between Santa Maria and Davis Avenues be developed as an open plaza to open up a panoramic vista of the river from Zaragosa Street. This plaza could be either level with Zaragosa Street or with Water Street, or be terraced to follow the slope of Santa Maria and Davis Avenues. Public parking could be integrated along with public toilets, and the site design should consider options for pedestrian amenities, assembly events, water features, plantings and public art. This plaza would be a spatial and functional linkage that could reinvigorate retail activity along Zaragosa Street from Convent to Main, just one block short of the recommended site for a new convention center, and thus would be consequential for a host of economic reasons.

The block immediately north across Zaragosa has been identified as the site for a future public parking garage, and with the River Vega parking garage being a pending project, a configuration that places structured parking in the northern and middle portions of the block, and reserves a portion of the south frontage for market development should be considered. This would be somewhat similar to the El Centro parking garage facing Jarvis Plaza and could be an ideal arrangement for a future hotel and suitable for a mixed use retail/residential development as well. Redevelopment value of the adjacent blocks to the east and west would also be enhanced as they would define the northeast and northwest corners of this public plaza and take advantage of the views and activity.



Riverfront development can exploit the difference in elevation between Zaragoza and Water Streets in the vertical layering of publicly accessible esplanades. This view depicts a portion of an esplanade that is accessible from and level with Zaragoza, but overlooks a large esplanade along Water Street and the river beyond.

Creating a public plaza on the block between Santa Maria and Davis Avenues would open up a panoramic vista for the river from Zaragoza Street and add diversity of use and character to the riverfront public spaces.



INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTER LA PORTADA

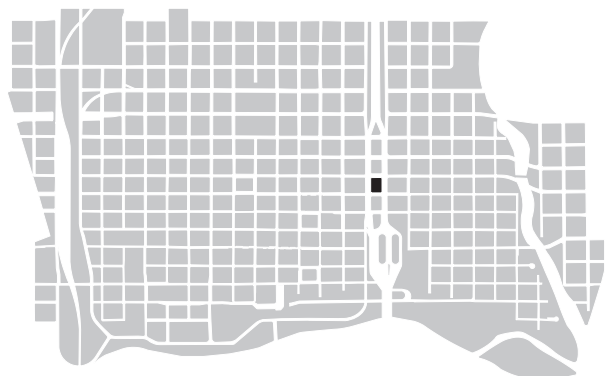
Laredo's position as the largest U.S. inland port of entry is well established, but has little physical or visible expression other than the associated facilities and infrastructure dispersed throughout Laredo. The organizations, authorities and enterprises engaged with international trade are likewise disparate.

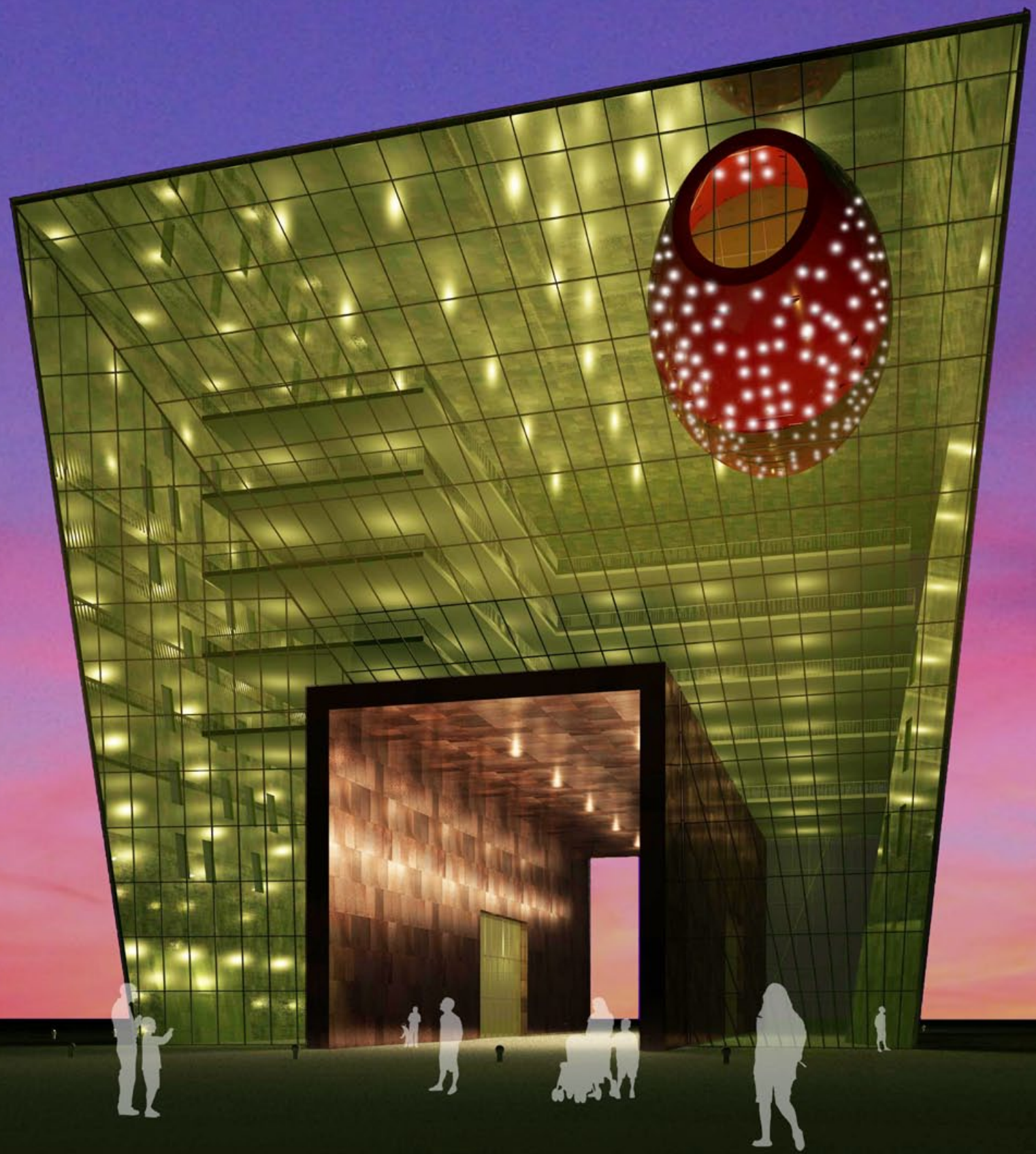
PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

This recommended project envisions a singular and iconic manifestation of Laredo's strategic significance in international exchange that functions as an office and exhibition building. Anticipated occupants would be the various public and private entities that regulate international trade and operate in those markets, and would include facilities for meetings and exhibition.

The location would be in Pan American Plaza on the median block that was historically the site of Noria Plaza, and should be an architectural landmark in the plaza and on the approaches to and from the port of entry. La Portada is a suggested name that compliments El Portal and recalls the Spanish architectural term of an embellished main entrance. The flanking blocks across Santa Ursula and San Dario are necessary ancillary buildings that would provide structured parking for occupants and public use, with ground floor space for exhibition and commercial use. Matamoros Street is the north frontage for the complex and is identified as a favorable eastbound streetcar route.

In context of a Pan American Exposition, La Portada would serve as its primary landmark and center of expo activity. A scope of such magnitude is beyond local funding capacity and will require considerable support at the national level.





PAN AMERICAN PLAZA

The 4-block area is unquestionably where the metropolitan, regional and international routes of access to Downtown are the most concentrated. It is among Laredo's most valuable pieces of infrastructure, but despite its large open space and memorials is monumentally unimpressive. This project is intended to transform the space into a grand entrance plaza that celebrates and capitalizes on Laredo's position as a Pan American destination.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

This project would make permanent improvements that also serve as the temporary setting for a Pan American Exposition in 2020, and it would be best if coordinated with the construction of the recommended IH35/Bridge 2 Bypass Tunnel. Improvements to remake the space into a functional and attractive plaza include all new street paving, directional signage, curbs and sidewalks, landscaping, street and pedestrian lighting, benches and streetscape accessories. The present condition was a result of razing the many historic buildings that once occupied the blocks between Santa Ursula and San Dario Avenues, and the subsequent landscape improvements intended to create a more parklike setting. The design challenge for this area is that by sheer size is a monumental space, but perceptually is a barrier between Barrio EL Azteca and historic downtown. Future design decision-making will need to consider several site-specific issues.

First is the need to heal what many feel is a wound in Laredo's cultural landscape that effectively severed Barrio El Azteca from the rest of historic downtown. A Pan American Plaza may denote Laredo's international context, but the new plaza needs to facilitate a greater sense of local connection and continuity between its east and west sides.

Second is the need to assess and rededicate the different memorials scattered about the median blocks. Historical reference and commemoration can be incorporated into the design approach, but should not dominate or conflict with a more future-oriented Pan American theme.

Third is the need to provide a landscape and program of use that is compelling and capable of attracting people to spend time in the plaza. New water features that provide environmental cooling and mask traffic noise should be considered as a major design element. A greater sense of accommodation for people to relax and refresh, enjoy programmed and spontaneous activities, and feel safe and secure will be essential. The perimeter of the plaza needs to relate to the overall plaza but also provide sufficient space and amenity to activate the ground floors of surrounding buildings.

The feasibility and timing of the IH35/Bridge Bypass Tunnel will have a substantial bearing on the plaza design. Reduction of bridge-interstate traffic from Santa Ursula and San Dario Avenues would allow the removal of one lane from each avenue, whose width can expand the perimeter and/or median streetscape for pedestrians. Equally influential is the final design of the Bridge 2 bus processing facility.

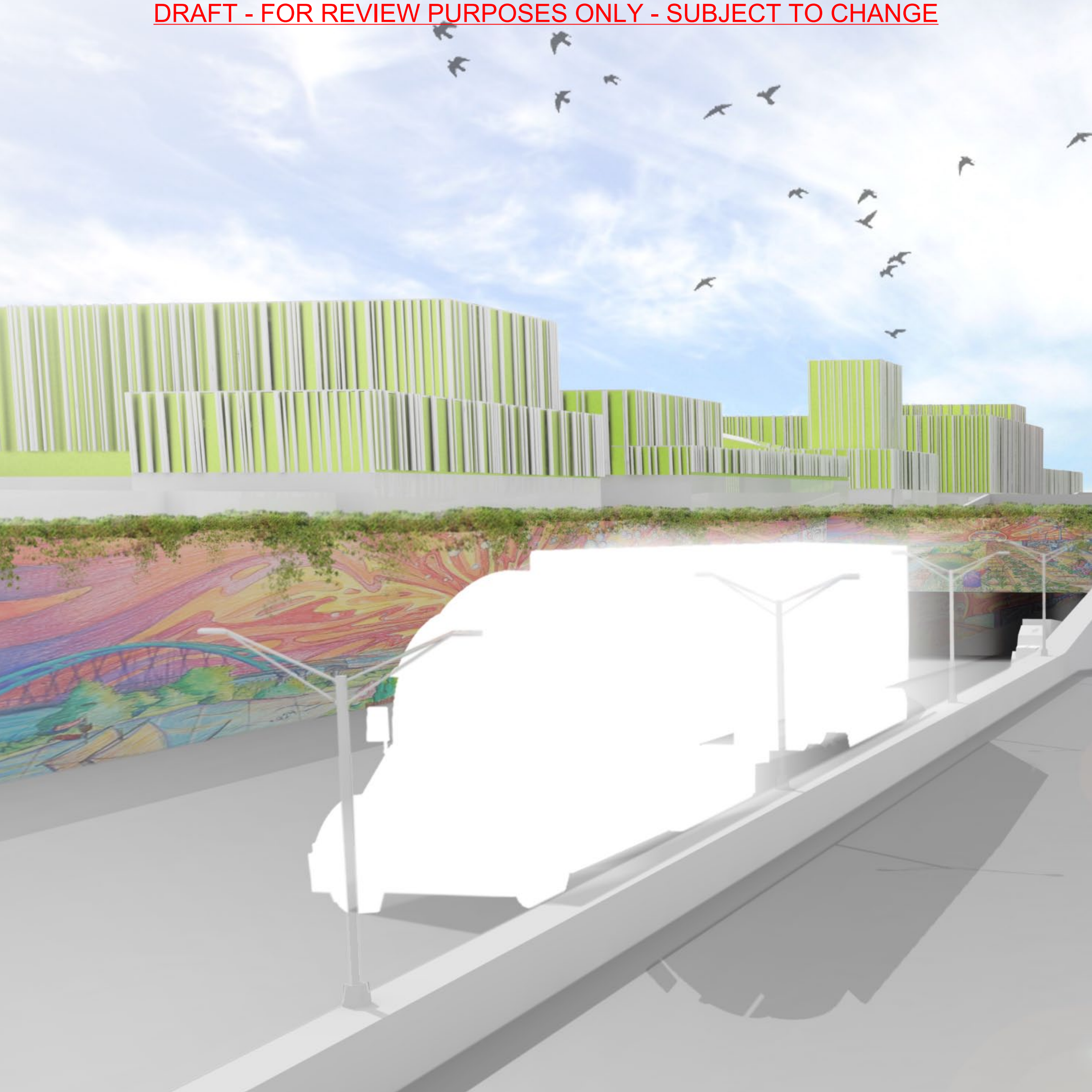




VICTORIA

SAN DARIO

SANTA URSULA



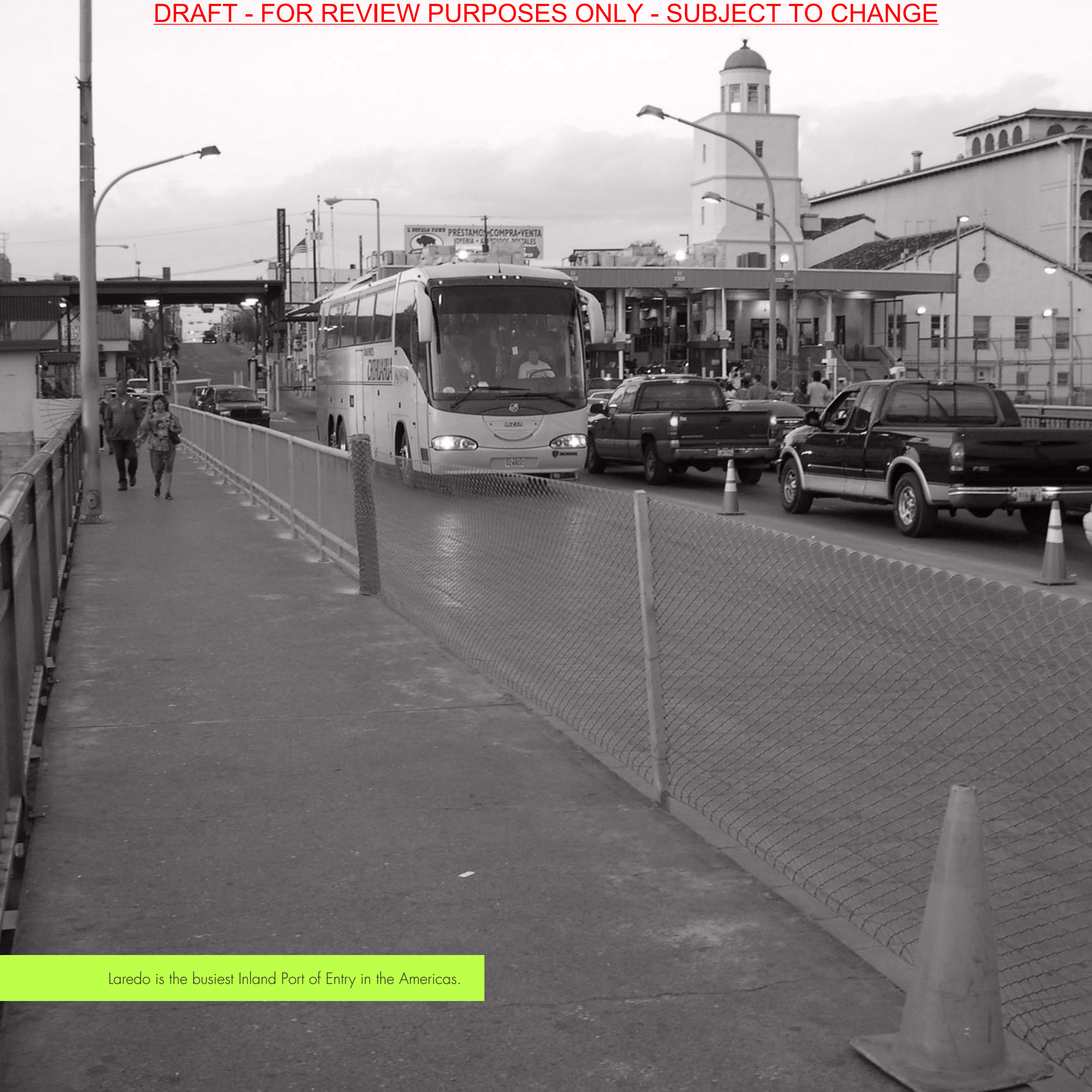


CHAMP

TRANSPC

CHAPTER 4

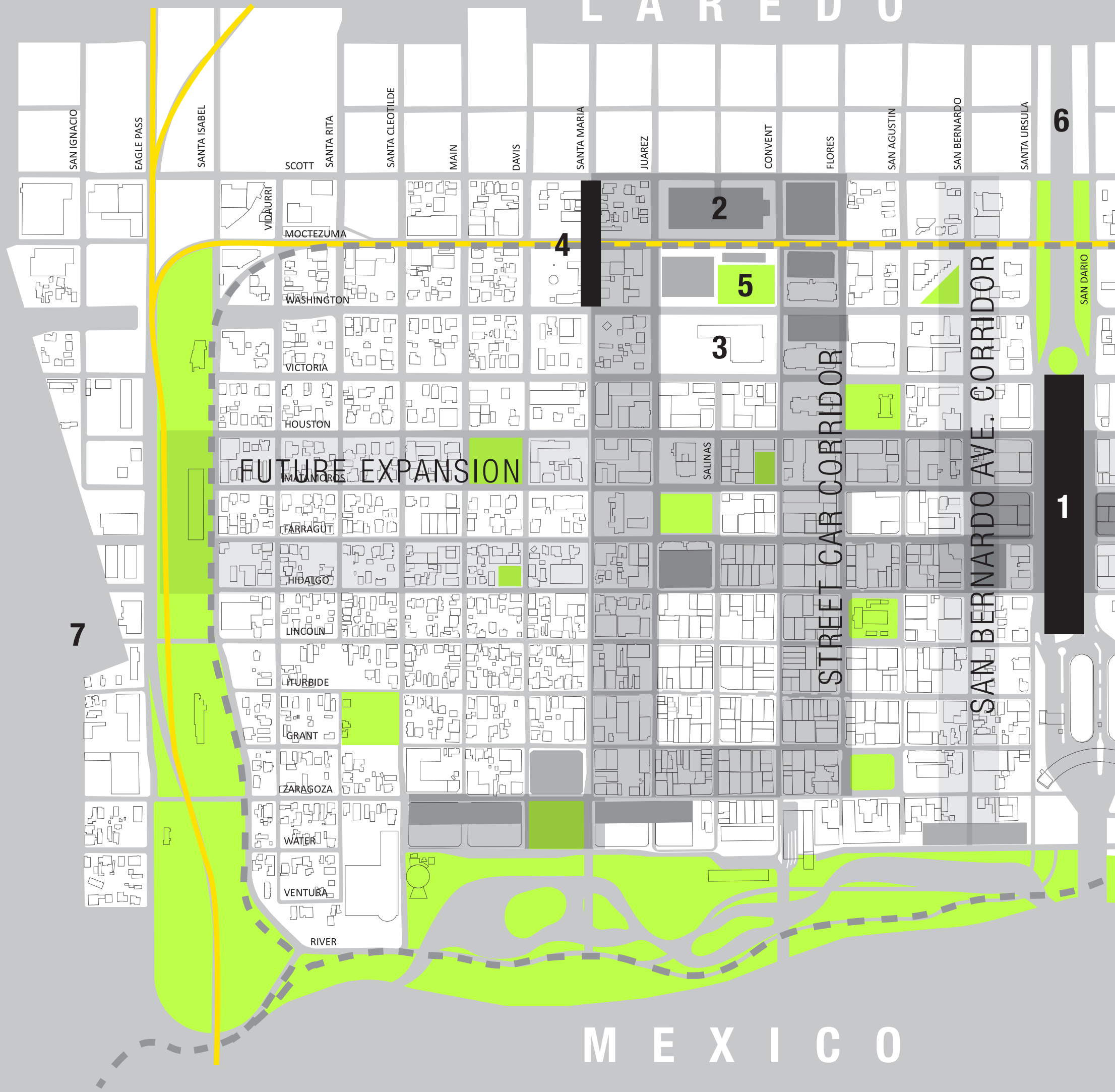
DISCUSSION



Laredo is the busiest Inland Port of Entry in the Americas.

Laredo and Nuevo Laredo were exemplary of the social cohesion between U.S. – Mexico Border communities. But the rapid and vast changes in border conditions and security have outpaced the ability of local economic and cultural institutions to adjust. Closing this gap will require a deeper understanding between national and local needs that defines border security within a greater framework of border stability. How Downtown is both a setting for and expression of such an understanding is the subject of this vision.

L A R E D O



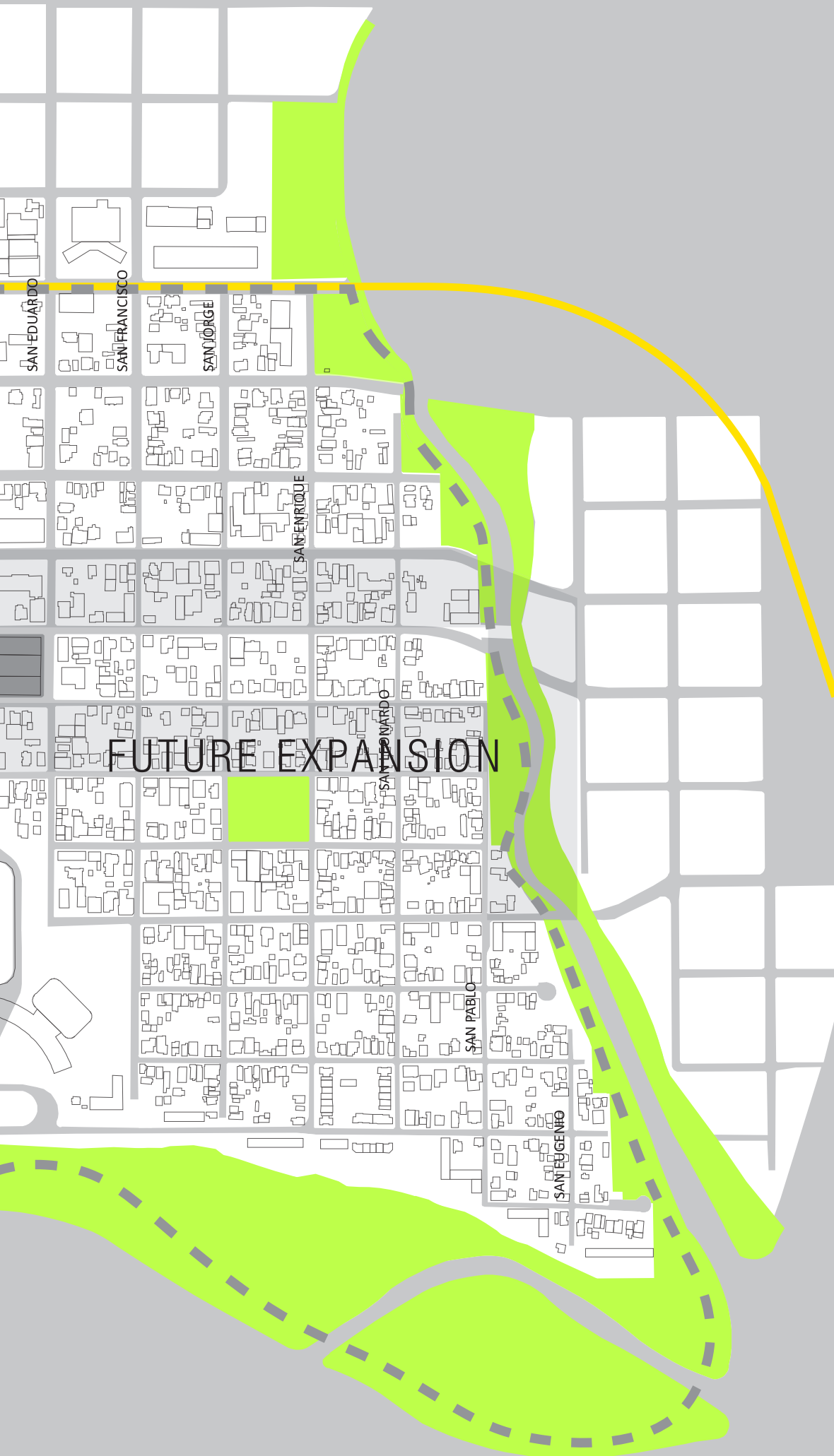
FUTURE EXPANSION

STREET CAR CORRIDOR

SAN BERNARDO AVE. CORRIDOR







M E X I C O

CHAPTER 4 TRANSPORTATION



CATALYTIC PROJECTS

1. IH35 BRIDGE/BYPASS TUNNEL
2. MULTI MODAL
3. TRANSIT CENTER
4. SANTA MARIA UNDERPASS
5. TEXMEX DEPOT
6. IH 35
7. LAREDO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

-  PARKS AND RECREATION
-  MASS TRANSIT ROUTES
-  HIKE/BIKE TRAIL
-  TUNNEL/UNDERPASS
-  K.C.S. & U.P. RAIL LINES
-  PARKING GARAGE/ALTERNATIVE ENERGY PRODUCTION



MAKE A COMPLETE STREET AND TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM FOR THE EFFICIENT AND COORDINATED MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE, WITH STREETS THAT ACCEPT VARIOUS MODES AND MOVE PEOPLE SAFELY AND EXPEDITIOUSLY.

Coupling transit improvements with pedestrian and bicycle investments and re-routing buses to feed the transit lines from adjacent neighborhoods creates a multi-modal system that enhances the greater downtown experience as well as the quality of life of all residents. Linked to the rest of the city and region, such a system minimizes the physical and energy footprint and maximizes adjacent land values.

EXPANDING MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

Laredo's Downtown is well-served by city's El Metro Transit bus system and its El Metro Multimodal Center with central hub, regional bus terminal, parking structure, and transit administrative offices. Current plans are to relocate transit offices and transition to a spoke and hub network, which will reduce bus traffic in Downtown and increase the number of parking spaces available for public use.

Future growth in Downtown is seen as a mix of commercial, leisure, and residential uses that will refill current vacant space and infill underutilized properties with greater density. There is not enough street and potential parking capacity for the future increase in workers, residents, shoppers

and visitors if the current single-occupant modal share of 77% is unaffected. A critical component of Downtown growth and revitalization will be the ability to move more people using less space and fuel. This will mean improving the environment for transit, pedestrians, and bicyclists, so that the accommodation of single-occupancy vehicles is manageable. An appropriately scaled and routed Downtown circulator, preferable a fixed rail system similar to Laredo's historic streetcars, would greatly enhance circulation and the movement of people in Downtown.

Should ultimate growth scenarios become apparent then relocating the Downtown bus hub and multiple regional bus terminals should be considered. Consolidating public and private local and regional mass transit in a new multimodal facility in the vicinity of Santa Maria/Moctezuma/Convent would be readily accessible and positioned for future potential use of the KCS line for commuter rail.



PROVIDE ADEQUATE PARKING

Parking for private vehicles remains a critical issue for Downtown, particularly as a more urban and efficient transit system will require substantial time and investment. Analysis of Downtown parking indicates that there is currently sufficient capacity but marginal convenience for the merchandise zone. Additional parking space will become available in the short-term at the El Metro parking garage, which with some minor signage and Wayfinding improvements will benefit shoppers and merchants. Additional parking will be available when the River Vega parking garage becomes available in the mid-term.

IMPROVING ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

Nearly all the traffic entering Downtown does so at the Four-Block area that connects IH35 to Downtown and Bridge 2 and thus has the most congested intersections in Downtown. Traffic analysis indicates that as little as a 10% increase in traffic will make the critical intersections untenable. The current plan for the future restriction of vehicular traffic at Bridge 1 would therefore increase Bridge 2 traffic volume, and with additional redevelopment in Pan American Plaza and Downtown there

will not be enough capacity. Additional problems occur when trains waiting to clear customs block the grade crossings along the north edge of Downtown for prolonged periods.

The critical transportation infrastructure improvements identified to resolve current and future problems are to create a grade separated bypass for IH35/Bridge 2 traffic and a grade separated bypass at the KCS line. More direct access from Downtown to Laredo Community College is desirable, especially as redevelopment values spread outward from the CBD and increased enrollment enables more student-oriented residential and ancillary college development.



In 1889, Laredo built the first street railway system in the United States west of the Mississippi River. Today, El Metro provides high quality, cost-effective public transportation services that address the needs and demands of the citizens of Laredo, Texas.

GOALS

3.1

DEVELOP A PHASED STREET AND TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND FUNDING MECHANISM.

OBJECTIVES:

Plan for the reconstruction and resurfacing of streets and avenues

Determine the feasibility of constructing a tunnel from IH35 to Bridge 2 under Pan American Plaza to enable traffic the option to bypass Santa Ursula and San Dario Avenues for access.

Determine the feasibility of adapting the Santa Ursula down ramp to 2-way traffic before proceeding with construction of a second access route to connect River Road to IH35 northbound.

Reconsider previous options for constructing new bus processing facilities at Bridge 2 without closing Hidalgo Street.

Determine the feasibility of constructing an underpass at Santa Maria and the KCS rail line to eliminate the grade crossing and alleviate blockage of traffic access to Downtown from stopped trains.

Convent Avenue Pedestrian Improvements

Determine the feasibility of eliminating curb parking along San Bernardo Avenue south of Lincoln Street to extend 2-way traffic to Zaragosa Street.

Construct a grade level crossing through the west switchyard by extending Hidalgo Street as a linkage to Laredo Community College.

3.2

IMPROVE AND DIVERSIFY THE PUBLIC TRANSIT SYSTEM

OBJECTIVES:

Construct a fixed guideway transit system for electrically powered streetcars or trolleys that serves the CBD streets with other modes of transportation and operates in mixed-flow lanes at low speeds.

Construct a new multimodal station with adjacent structured parking to be the main stop for the fixed guideway transit system/street car, while also consolidating local, regional and international bus carriers.

Utilize a "Park Once" strategy of dispersed parking structures linked by streetcar routes

3.3

PROVIDE ADDITIONAL PUBLIC PARKING TO ACCOMMODATE NEW CUSTOMERS AND VISITORS TO DOWNTOWN, AND IMPROVE COMMERCIAL SERVICE ZONES.

OBJECTIVES:

Retain metered curb parking as much as possible in targeting a goal of providing 7,500 – 8,000 parking spaces to serve the CBD and immediate margins of Downtown.

Allow access to government parking structures after weekday working hours, on weekends and on holidays for public parking when appropriate to meet demand.

Determine the feasibility for developing structured parking along the riverfront between Santa Ursula and San Agustin Avenues.

Determine the feasibility of structured parking with redevelopment on the blocks fronting Santa Ursula and San Dario in Pan American Plaza.

Determine the feasibility of structured parking in association with a new multimodal center and expansion of facilities in the government zone.

Inventory and assess the functionality of commercial loading zones and enforcement of traffic regulations.

3.4

IMPROVE MULTIMODAL SYSTEMS AND INTERMODAL LINKAGES

OBJECTIVES:

Plan and implement a Hike and Bike Trail network routed along Santa Maria and Moctezuma and the open space of Zacate Creek and River Vega; which loops Downtown and links with other and future pedestrian, bicycle, and transit routes.

Determine the feasibility of dedicated bike lanes for a north/south avenue and an east/west street that accommodates bicycle traffic through Downtown.

Convert Bridge 1 to exclusive use for pedestrians and public transit.



STREETCAR SYSTEM

Laredo's historic street cars provide a precedent for a new urban transit system that can make a fundamental change in the market and livability of Downtown.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

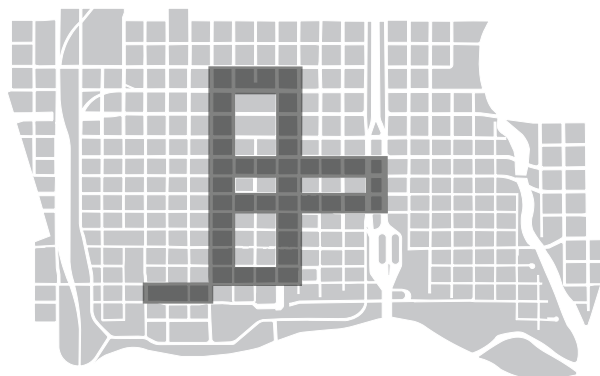
Streetcars or trolleys are fixed guideway transit systems with electrically powered vehicles that may share the street with other modes of transportation and operate in mixed-flow lanes. Streetcar routes are relatively short and self-contained, and generally provide service along a two- to three-mile route. If streetcar operations are disrupted by stalled vehicles, motor vehicle accidents, or other obstructions along the route, passengers are still within walking distance of their destination. To increase safety, streetcars operating in mixed traffic operate at very low speeds, between six and seven miles per hour, to minimize potential conflicts with unpredictable motor vehicle stopping and turning movements.

While the cost for a streetcar system is on average \$15 million per mile, streetcars provide a tremendous asset to the quality of urban development and vitality. Streetcars have proven to positively impact land values by strengthening the connection of adjacent neighborhoods to downtown areas and providing an amenity that makes adjacent uses attractive to businesses. The positive economic impacts of streetcars have been shown to significantly exceed the impact of bus services.

Though streetcars do not themselves promote development, they do fundamentally change the character of the market. Proximity to a streetcar system enables development sites to be less dependent on automobile parking requirements and large roadway access. Easy pedestrian access and connectivity increases desirability of real estate, and streetcars help to expand the market area of desirable properties. Coupling transit improvements with pedestrian and bicycle investments and re-routing buses to feed the transit lines from adjacent neighborhoods creates a multi-modal system that enhances the greater downtown experience as well as the quality of life of all residents.

Assuming that the goal is to fund locally, or pursue very small starts funding for each route, two routes should be considered: One running North/South and one running East/West and use the one-way street structure and use a vehicular travel lane, converting it to streetcar operations, resulting in a shared lane. Crossing the railroad tracks along Moctezuma at grade results in numerous operational difficulties, so the route should be terminated along Washington Street as an interim solution. Also, the pair of Convent and Santa Maria could be used as the north/south route, given the direction of Washington. The route would be separated by three blocks, or less than 1,000 feet.

For the east/west route, crossing IH 35 at this point puts the system over the very small starts project amount of \$50 million. Ending the route at San Bernardo provides an interim step and once ridership justifies an expansion, crossing IH 35 can be examined. The pair of Matamoros and Hidalgo provides an option for one-way operations and circulation.



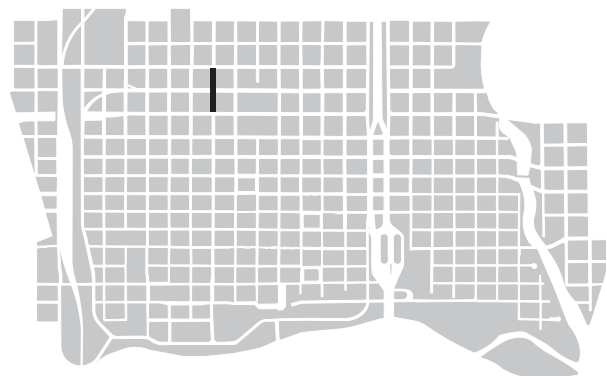


SANTA MARIA AVENUE RAILROAD UNDERPASS

A major problem to Downtown access is along the KCS rail line as trains stop before crossing the bridge and block the grade crossings. The major thoroughfares affected are San Bernardo, Convent, and Santa Maria Avenues, but with the proximity of San Bernardo to IH35, and the relatively short length of Convent, Santa Maria Avenue is the most appropriate thoroughfare to convert to a grade-separated crossing.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Initial analysis indicates that an underpass would be more feasible than an overpass, due to the distance between Washington and Scott Streets, acceptable incline, and required clearance for the railroad. There would be a greater expense as the railroad tracks would have to be shored and replaced with a structural bridge.



DAVIS AVE.



SANTA MARIA AVE.

JUAREZ AVE.

WASHINGTON ST.



MULTIMODAL CENTER

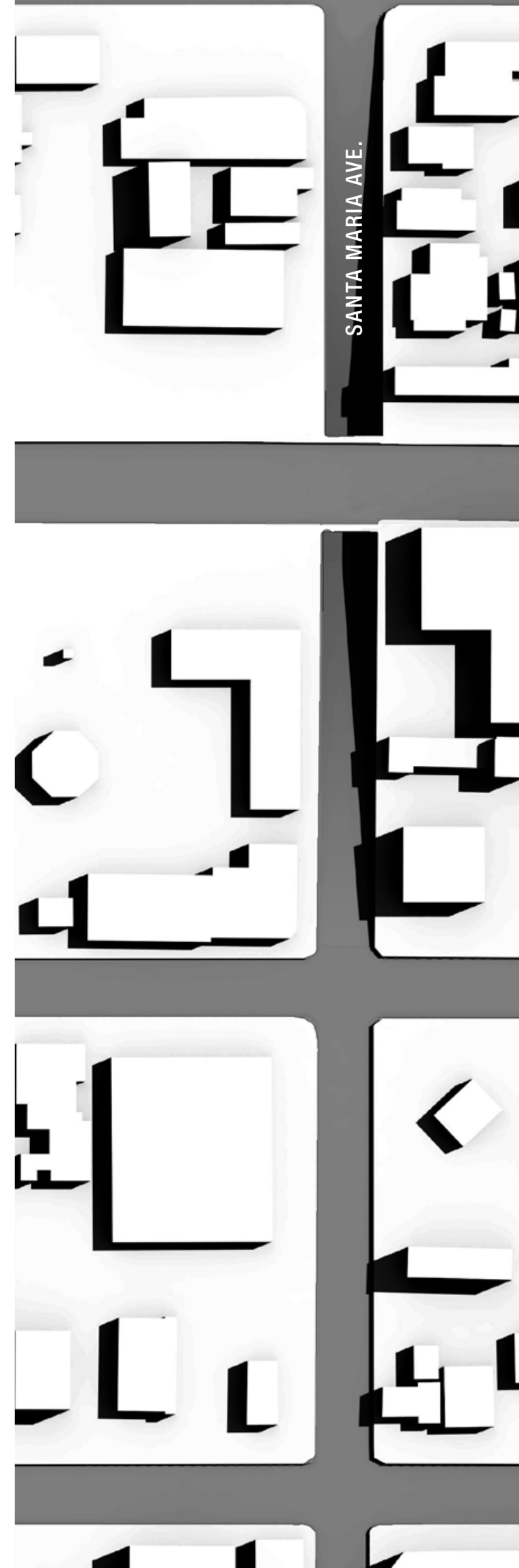
PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

A multimodal station with adjacent structured parking is proposed just north of the KCS Rail Line, north of the TexMex train depot on Moctezuma, between Juarez and Convent. The station will be the main stop for the fixed guideway transit system/street car while also providing a central area for all other modes of transportation, including local, regional and international bus carriers.

Relocation of the bus stations will provide a convenient facility for regional and international passengers who want to use the fixed guideway transit system or the hike/bike loop once they arrive in Laredo. El Metro will also use the multimodal station as its hub. This will consolidate these international, regional, and local services, allowing easy transfer between them, and offering a one-stop location within walking distance of the multimodal station.

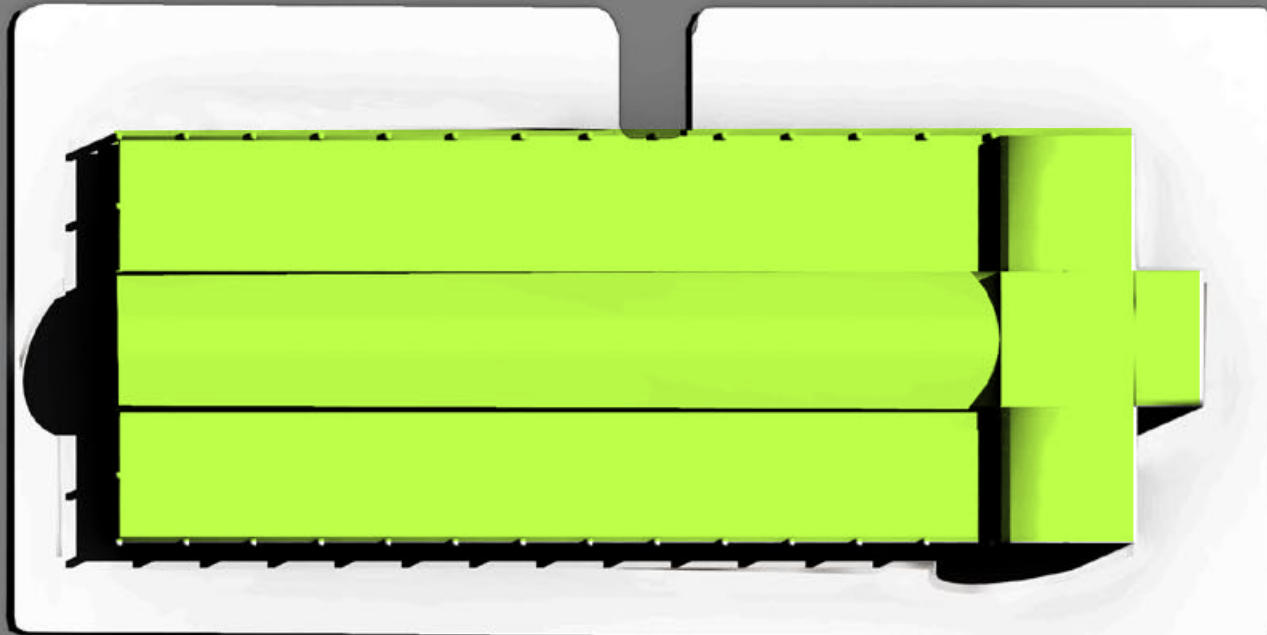
Linking the multimodal station with the streetcar extends the area served by the bus systems, and allows both downtown workers and visitors to easily access the downtown area. An adjacent parking structure will provide consolidated parking for streetcar and bus users, who work or visit downtown. Combining transportation modes into a consolidated multimodal facility will enhance access to commercial and office developments in the downtown area, allowing workers, shoppers, residents and visitors easy access to services and businesses.

Recreating the historic TexMex train station into a lively plaza provides an interesting public gathering space and will help make the multimodal station an attractive destination for locals and visitors alike.





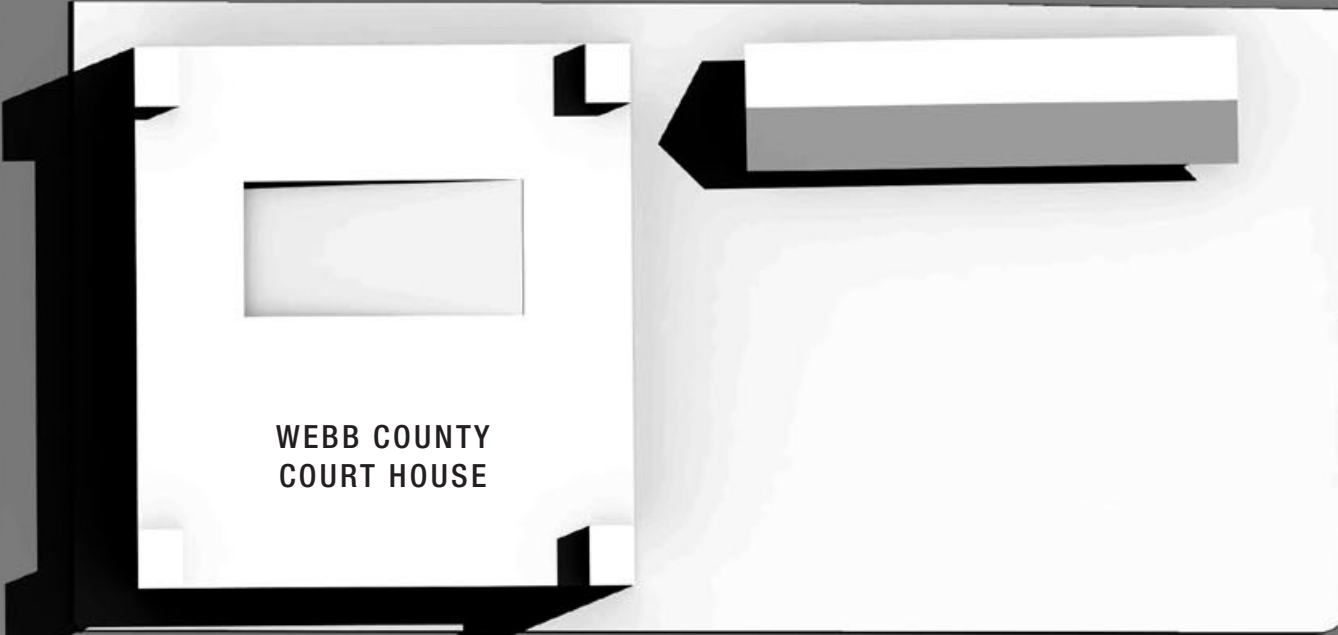
JUAREZ AVE.



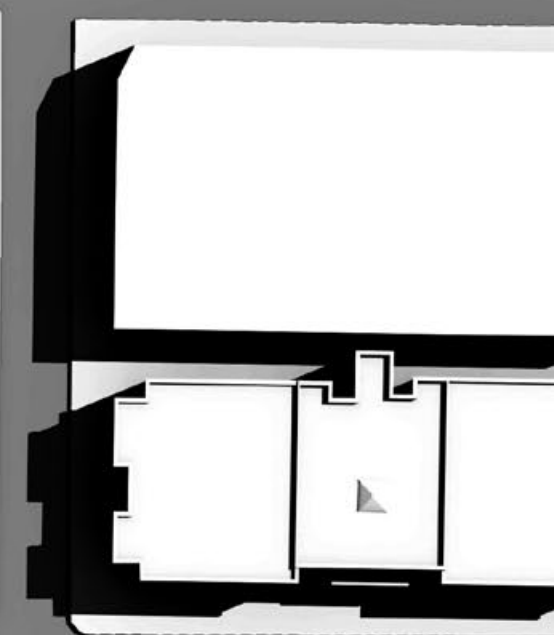
CONVENT AVE.



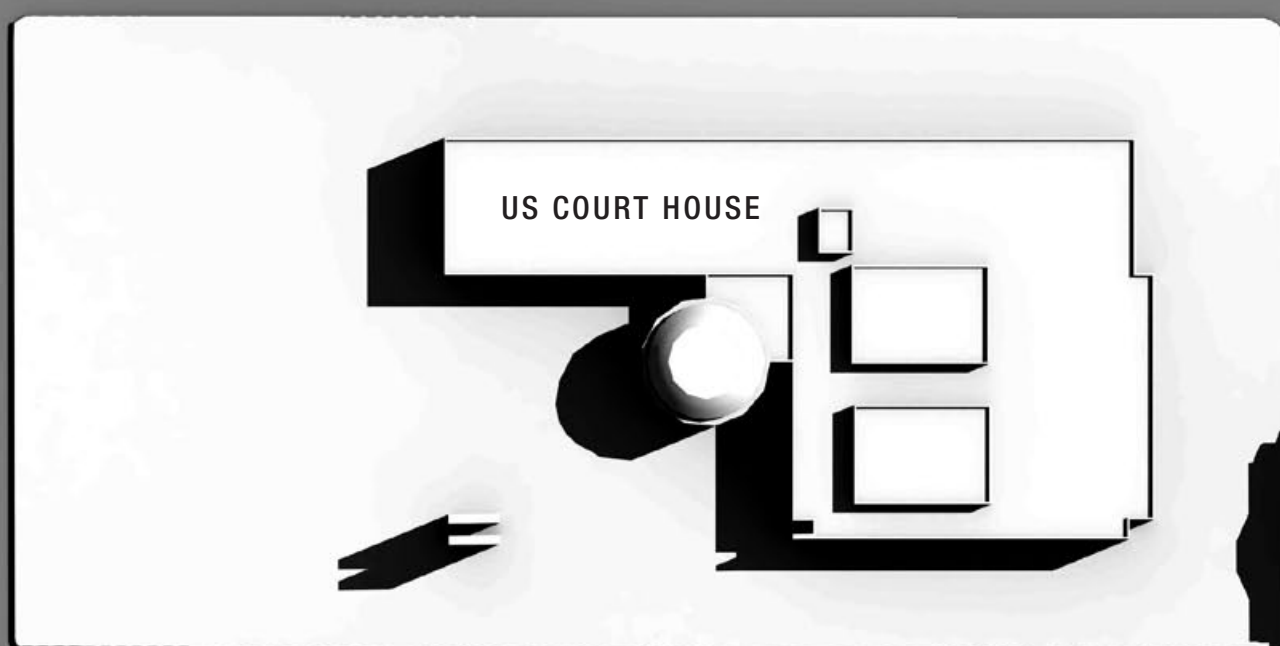
MOCTEZUMA ST.



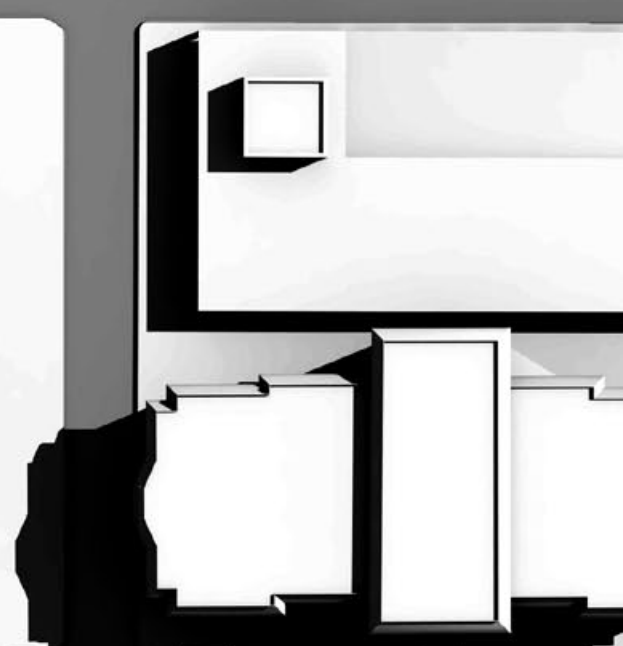
WEBB COUNTY
COURT HOUSE



WASHINGTON ST.



US COURT HOUSE



VICTORIA ST.

LINKAGE TO LAREDO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The students attending Laredo Community College are almost entirely commuters who primarily utilize the Washington Street Bridge for access. Other than the Zaragosa Street grade crossing, there is no direct link between the campus and Downtown. The west rail yard is still active with three mainlines converging at the rail bridge with the historic I&GN Railroad Depot along its eastern edge. The Laredo Parks/Green Spaces Master for Downtown identifies the rail yard as potential for future open space and recreational development, although there are no definitive plans to relocate the rail facilities or to discontinue the use of the rail bridge.

An intermediate goal could be the continued use of the mainlines and bridge, which does not require an expansive ROW, and relocating the freight yard for its conversion to public open space. A new grade crossing could be allowable with the elimination of the Santa Maria grade crossing, establishing a direct connection between Downtown and LCC. This would lay the groundwork for preservation of historic resources in St. Peter's and El Cuatro neighborhoods and redevelopment of the vacant and underutilized warehouse and industrial properties along Santa Isabel and Eagle Pass Avenues. Increased enrollment and programs at LCC can generate demand for adjacent student housing and college-oriented development. The availability of neighborhood recreational space, adaptive reuse of the historic depot and Montemayor warehouse for community use, and access to Downtown employment and entertainment would elevate the market opportunities for El Cuatro/St. Peter's and contribute to Downtown's revitalization as well.



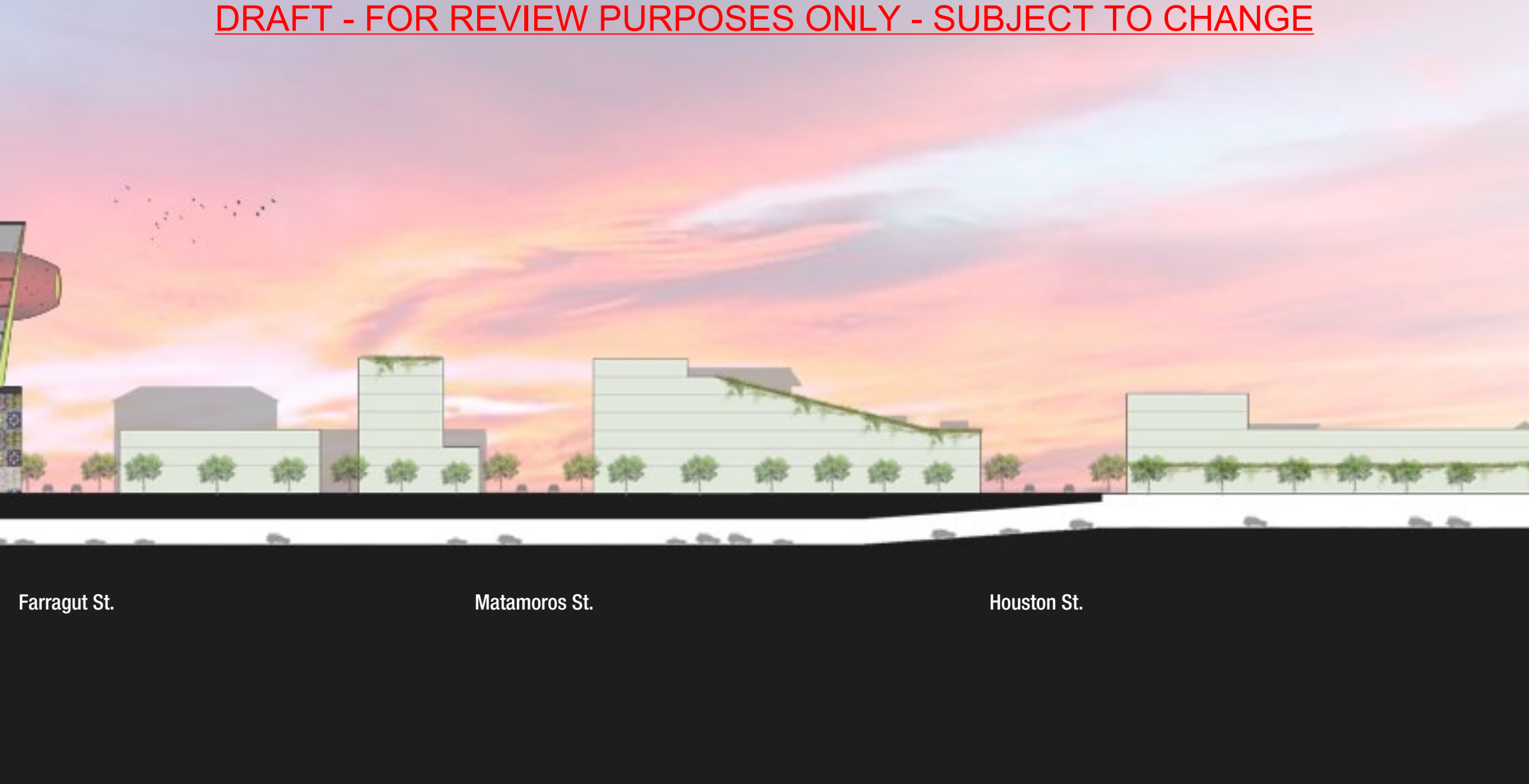




IH35/BRIDGE 2: BYPASS TUNNEL

Nearly half of all vehicles entering and exiting the Four-Block area are associated with IH35/Bridge 2 traffic. Traffic analysis indicates that an increase of 10% or more in traffic volume will degrade the already marginal levels of service at the critical intersections of Santa Ursula, San Dario, Houston and Victoria. Even with increased use of alternate transportation modes the Four – Block area will need additional capacity as Downtown experiences additional growth and visitors. Widening San Ursula and San Dario is possible by reducing the width of the median parks but widening Victoria and Houston Streets will require additional ROW. The result may keep the higher traffic volumes efficiently moving but is likely to further degrade the already hostile pedestrian environment and sense of separation between Barrio El Azteca and the CBD.





PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

This project would create a direct and grade-separated linkage between IH35 and Bridge 2 Port of Entry via a tunnel underneath the median blocks. The best cost scenario would be to excavate each of the median blocks and bore under the streets, rather than boring the entire 1,200 feet, to coordinate with improvements remaking the area as Pan American Plaza. A project of this magnitude and complexity will need considerable study, especially how traffic interfaces with the Port of Entry, the sequencing of construction to maintain access and circulation, and resolving the immediate conflict between the bus processing options that locate that facility where the tunnel would logically connect with the Port of Entry.

CHIAAP

INFRASTI

& SUSTAI

TEER 5

STRUCTURE

INABILITY

Undeveloped wetlands along the Rio Grande.



Meeting the future demands of a revitalized and historic Downtown will require a 21st century environmental and utilities infrastructure, one that is more sustainable, durable, and efficient; and that supports new urban lifestyles, uses and activity. Laredo has benefited in the past from its coal, oil, gas, and water resources; but the future of energy and water is shifting to more renewable and sustainable sources. Opportunities to advance solar and wind generated power to supplement Laredo's energy production should be sought in Downtown that do not adversely affect its historic landscape.

L A R E D O



M E X I C O





CHAPTER 5

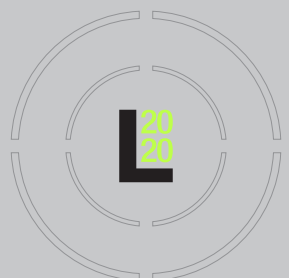
INFRASTRUCTURE & SUSTAINABILITY



CATALYTIC PROJECTS

1. Riparian/Wetlands Restoration
2. Wetlands Restoration
3. Waste Water Plant Conversion to recycled Water Station

-  PARKS AND RECREATION
-  ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCE
-  ENGINEERED STORMWATER WETLANDS RESTORATION
-  RECYCLED WATER LINE





VISION 4: INFRASTRUCTURE & ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

CULTIVATE A SUSTAINABLE DOWNTOWN ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

SUPPORTING DOWNTOWN LIVING, WORKING, SHOPPING & ENTERTAINMENT

Remaking Downtown as a more livable place means that people need to enjoy living Downtown. Quality urban lifestyles of all incomes, interests, and ages need public open space for everyday living: for exercise, to walk the dog, for children to play, and just to get out of the house. Public space in the urban setting needs to be an extension of the domestic domain and thus becomes the crucible for social activity and well-being. Public plazas and parks in Downtown therefore need to first and foremost satisfy the needs of people who live and work in Downtown, and the fundamental element for maintaining an authentic setting and experience. Loved and well-used places are intrinsically safer and more enjoyable, which further legitimizes their cost of operations and maintenance.

Positive activity is a great attractor – increasing the quantity of visitors to Downtown will depend on the quality of the experiences offered, and so the accommodation of the visitor should be anticipated but not initially catered to as the primary user. Great urban places to visit are those where the residents themselves conduct and enjoy everyday life, and they enable outsiders to share in those experiences. Progressive advancement of local use and visitor attractions is seen as flow of incremental and mutually supportive steps; with each improvement providing multiple and shared benefits.

A 21ST CENTURY UTILITIES INFRASTRUCTURE

Downtown growth and development will create more demand for water, energy, and communications. Provision of an expanded and efficient utilities infrastructure will be essential. Laredo has benefited in the past from its coal, oil, gas, and water resources; but the future of energy and water is shifting to more renewable and sustainable sources. Opportunities to advance solar and wind generated power to supplement Laredo's energy production should be sought in Downtown that do not adversely affect its historic landscape. The historic character of Downtown also can be enhanced by converting more of its overhead power and communications lines to underground.

MAKING DOWNTOWN MORE COMFORTABLE

Except for parking, the condition most mentioned as deterring people from Downtown is the heat. Although Laredo is unavoidably subject to the South Texas climate, the heat island effect of Downtown can be partially mitigated through the use of shade structures and plantings, sensitive building design and retrofits, and the incorporation of heat reflective materials, admixtures and coatings for pavements and roof coverings. Just a slight reduction of the ambient temperature in Downtown provides substantial savings in energy costs and increases the level of outdoor comfort. Aesthetic use of water in plazas, parks, and along the riverfront also contributes to the perceived heat and comfort.



WATER AS THE DENOMINATOR OF SUSTAINABILITY

Water demand and conservation is a basic metric for predicting growth and the future of Laredo and the region. Water in all its forms: for habitat, recreation, drinking and bathing, irrigation, waste and surface runoff should be approached as an entire system. Water conservation is important, but so is its use in public spaces. Future relocation of the Zacate Creek wastewater treatment plant will have a profoundly positive effect on the quality of life in Barrio El Azteca and the rest of Downtown, but also could provide an opportunity for other water related treatments and ecological reclamation and recreation. Provision of recycled water to irrigate Downtown parks and plantings can be a cost-effective means of sustaining a green environment. The urban contaminants from Downtown's streets can be reduced with bio-filtration through the use of engineered wetlands in the Vega. Balancing the different forms and uses of water can be a defining feature of Downtown, and establish a resourceful model for other border cities.

Kayaking along the Rio Grande, photo courtesy of Big River Outfitter's.

GOALS

4.1

CREATE A SUPERB AND ACCESSIBLE NETWORK OF PLAZAS, PARKS, AND OPEN SPACE THAT DEFINES DOWNTOWN AND PROVIDES DIVERSE USES, CHARACTER, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECREATION, RELAXATION, AND CULTURAL ACTIVITY.

OBJECTIVES:

Amend and expand the City master plan for parks and green space in Downtown as an integral network of public spaces connected by paths, streets and transit, with sufficient detail to guide improvements and strategy for phased implementation.

Rehabilitate and renew Plaza San Agustin, Market Square, Bruni Plaza, Jarvis Plaza, St. Peters Plaza and El Cuatro Park.

Create new urban and recreational spaces in conjunction with new public and community facilities and redevelopment.

Develop a mechanism for the planning and coordination of public space utilization, event programming and management for Downtown plazas and parks.

4.2

ESTABLISH PUBLIC POLICIES AND PRIVATE INCENTIVES FOR BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND DESIGN STRATEGIES TO REDUCE THE HEAT ISLAND EFFECT IN DOWNTOWN.

OBJECTIVES:

Utilize light and reflective roof coverings in the building mass of Downtown, and determine appropriate street and sidewalk pavements to reduce overall heat gain.

Utilize tree plantings, building canopies, awnings, and arcades to increase shade in the Central Business District.

Incorporate patios and courtyard in rehabilitation and new construction to provide shade and cooling of air.

4.3

PROVIDE A UTILITIES INFRASTRUCTURE THAT IS ENERGY EFFICIENT, DOES NOT DETRACT FROM HISTORIC AND AESTHETIC QUALITIES OF THE TOWNSCAPE, AND INCORPORATES ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES.

OBJECTIVES:

Eliminate overhead utilities in all of the Central Business District by extending the underground power and communications lines to Santa Maria and San Bernardo Avenues.

Establish public policies and private incentives for installation of solar, wind, and geothermal energy collection with new construction and rehabilitation that are visually unobtrusive or otherwise compatible with the surrounding townscape.

Establish wireless internet service in the Central Business District

4.4

IMPROVE WATER USE EFFICIENCY AND QUALITY

OBJECTIVES:

Establish public policies and private incentives for the provision of on-site condensate capture and rainfall harvesting for landscape irrigation.

Reduce non-point pollution of Downtown stormwater through the use of best management practices and design strategies to detain and filter stormwater before it reaches the Rio Grande River and Zacate Creek.

Investigate options to adapt the Zacate Creek treatment plant to produce recycled water for landscape irrigation in Downtown parks and open space, engineered wetlands, and in maintaining an appropriate flow of water in Zacate Creek.



RECYCLED WATER SYSTEM

Improving parks and street landscaping in Downtown will create a larger water demand. Using potable water for irrigation is often not cost-effective; so many cities treat their wastewater to produce lower cost non-potable but relatively safe recycled water for irrigation and industrial use.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Downtown would benefit from using recycled water regardless of its source, but plans to ultimately decommission the Zacate Creek treatment plant prompted the idea to maintain some of its treatment capacity for the production of recycled water. Such a conversion would require the absence of smell and nuisance that has been a detriment to El Azteca and Downtown. The methods used to achieve a totally contained operation is to not just produce recycled water but also capture the solids and gases to produce compost and methane gas. Perhaps the best use for Zacate Creek treatment plant is for it to operate at a sustainable scale and relationship to Downtown.

The onerous aspects of wastewater treatment can be overcome with new technologies that are by far cleaner and safer facilities. Re-imagining wastewater treatment in a new cultural landscape could provide other opportunities as an environmental center that for public use, research and demonstration. It could be the central facility for ecotourism, demonstrating how urban and natural systems can interact.

However the treatment site is reused, it will be important for Laredo to embrace and advance a more sustainable approach to its infrastructure as part of redefining its economic and cultural landscape.



The City of Laredo Water Treatment Plant.



ZACATE CREEK LINEAR PARK

Zacate Creek is an extraordinary natural and urban resource that is marginally maintained and underutilized. Past improvements have outlived their useful purpose and are in poor condition. Portions of the creek are dedicated parks connected by a trail but lack a sense of continuity and ecological integrity.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Improvements to Zacate Creek will need to take into account its diverse settings as it courses from Houston Park to its confluence with the Rio Grande. The drop in elevation and changes in the channel width provide a dramatic landform and edge to Downtown's eastern margin. Its linear quality should provide not just north/south circulation, but serve as an open space linkage to the surrounding community. Its trail system should connect with the trails along the Rio Grande and to the recommended open space corridors along Moctezuma and Santa Isabel.

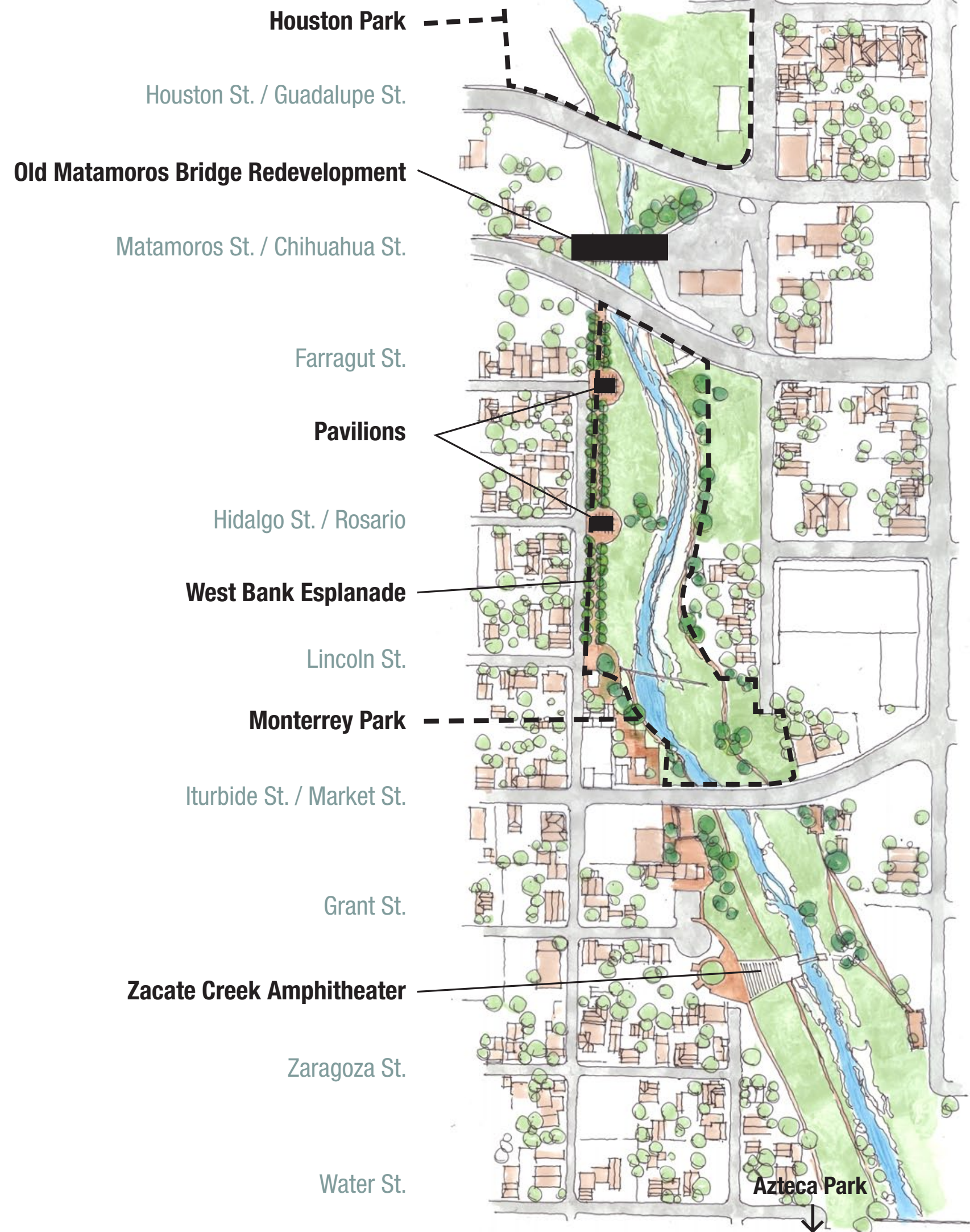
Periodic flood events can be quite severe and any improvements will need to consider the creek's hydraulics and flood limits. Within these constraints the creek needs to have its riparian character reclaimed and its existing and restored habitat protected. Limited tree plantings can occur at the mid levels of the banks, which with wetlands restoration and high bank landscaping will help dispel the engineered channel appearance.

There will need to be a range of improvements designed to attract people and positive activity. The amphitheater needs to be reactivated with assembly events and performance, and linked with other arts and cultural activities in Downtown. Further upstream the area along San Pablo, the only place where a public street parallels and fronts the creek, a paseo can be accommodated for social and entertainment activity. Pavilions for picnicking and food service concessions would attract people as long as there is suitable security and a sense of safety. Laredo's climate makes evening and night use more desirable for outdoor activity, so adequate lighting and access is critical.

A restored and accessible old Matamoros Street Bridge has the potential as a destination place for public use or redeveloped as a restaurant – its unique overlook of the creek would be better suited for people than for parked cars. There is precedent for public art as seen in the colorful treatments of historic concrete piers, and similar treatments of art and landscape can be extended to other features in the creek.

Such improvements not only improve quality of life, they also add value to adjacent properties. Relocation of the treatment plant and improvements to Zacate Creek will greatly enhance Barrio El Azteca as a place to live and consequently the viability of investment and increased residential in the rest of Downtown.





Houston Park

Houston St. / Guadalupe St.

Old Matamoros Bridge Redevelopment

Matamoros St. / Chihuahua St.

Farragut St.

Pavilions

Hidalgo St. / Rosario

West Bank Esplanade

Lincoln St.

Monterrey Park

Iturbide St. / Market St.

Grant St.

Zacate Creek Amphitheater

Zaragoza St.

Water St.

Azteca Park

RIVER VEGA - ENGINEERED STORM WATER WETLANDS

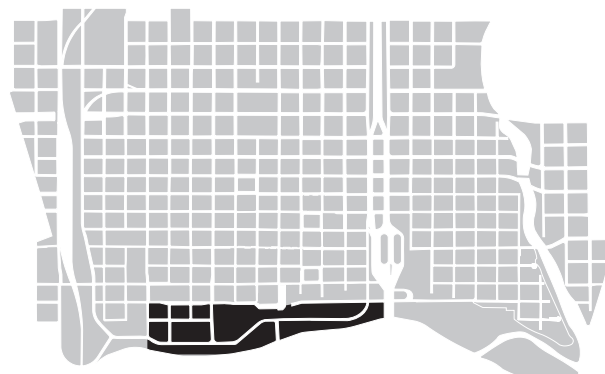
Constructed wetlands are engineered, man-made ecosystems specifically designed to treat wastewater, mine drainage, and storm water runoff as well as other waters by optimizing the biological, physical, and chemical processes that occur in natural wetland systems. Constructed wetlands can provide effective, economical, and environmentally sound treatment of wastewater and storm water runoff, as well as being used as a water source for the creation of wetland habitat for wildlife use, environmental enhancement, and public recreation. Stormwater wetlands are constructed primarily to provide a water quality function. They are promoted as stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) because they can trap nutrients and metals associated with suspended solids

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The design approach to riverfront development that creates an embayment or impoundment of water in Dos Laredos and Dos Puentes Parks offers the opportunity to develop more than its urban and park settings. The extension of a water course embayment adds additional bank length within the Vega and greatly increases the area of potential wetlands habitat.

There are multiple benefits to be derived from this approach. Properly vegetated banks are proven means of stabilizing the earth form as the roots reinforce the earth. Creation of wetlands also provides habitat and nutrients for wildlife. This biological dynamic absorbs and metabolizes a host of stormwater-borne solids and particulates, thus improving water quality. With nearly half of Downtown's stormwater load discharging as surface runoff and in storm drains into the Vega, then the provision of engineered wetlands as a natural filter has great benefits.

Expanding the habitat qualities adds scenic value and enhances interest in expanding ecotourism as an economic development.



Undeveloped wetlands along the Rio Grande.



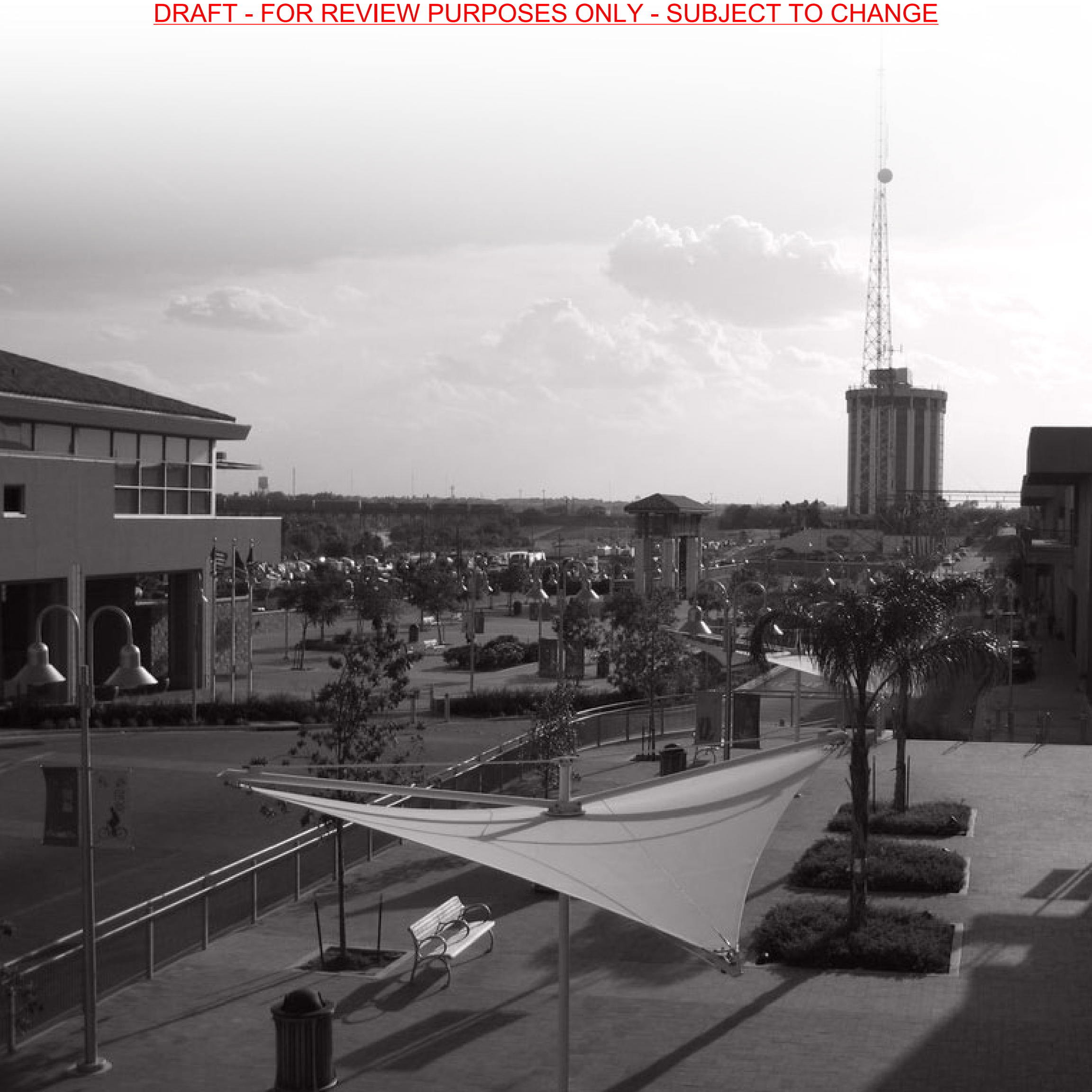
CHAPTER



IMPLEMENTE

ARTICLE 6

PRESENTATION



The master plan envisions what Downtown Laredo could be in thirty years, describes the desired outcomes of the community-based planning process, recommends goals and objectives, and visualizes some of the major public projects designed to catalyze economic redevelopment. The overwhelming scale and complexity of such a vision can only be accomplished through an incremental and organized process involving multiple public and private interests.

The implementation plan is based on the steps listed below:

- Identification of Laredo's economic prospects, predictable population growth and consequential demand for office, retail/leisure, and residential space
- Analysis of the capacity in Downtown for absorbing local demand
- Quantification of the economic impact of that absorption
- Qualification of preferred outcomes as actionable projects and initiatives
- Listing the Order of Magnitude relative to near, mid, and long-term timescales

The articulation of the Vision was purposefully framed for implementation into the four themes of Destination, Secure Border, Transportation, and Infrastructure Sustainability to reach a broad spectrum of local, regional, and national interests and funding opportunities. Each theme has a combination of small, medium, and large-scale projects conceived as having multiple benefits beyond their thematic association and have timelines that vary from the near to mid and long-term completion. There are also recommended initiatives to recalibrate policies and regulatory criteria to better administer Downtown revitalization.

ECONOMICS

THE MARKET ENVIRONMENT - NEAR-TERM

As the nation struggles to emerge from recession, there is no question that the Laredo and Border communities have felt the impact. The numbers tell the story, as job growth has slowed, sales tax revenue is stagnant, and development has more or less come to a halt. However, there are some signs of life in the local economy, as sales tax revenue has turned positive in recent months, a trend enhanced by the continued movement of consumer activity to the U.S. side of the Border. Factors that will contribute to the resurgence over the longer term, aside from recovery of the national and Mexican economies, include continued in-migration and overall population growth and some resolution of the security issues. In addition, relatively low current market values, competitive labor costs, and a comparatively modest overall tax burden all indicate a cost environment that accommodates future development and growth.

MARKET AREA REAL ESTATE DEMAND SPECIFIC ASSUMPTIONS

- Base data was derived from a number of sources, including County Business Patterns, the Texas Comptroller’s Office, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Census Bureau, and the Texas Real Estate Research Center.
- Market area population projections were based on both the 0.5 and 3.0 Migration Scenarios from the Texas State Data Center, updated to reflect base data through 2009 for the county. The estimate of the number of people per household comes from the Census Bureau, and is very gradually reduced over time in line with both historical patterns and anticipated demographic trends.
- Employment forecasts were developed using 2009 base data from the QCEW series. A twenty-year time planning horizon was assumed. Office-related employment includes the public sector.
- Current data indicates an average of 683 hotel employees in the Laredo MSA for 2009, with a room base of approximately 4,100, the equivalent of one employee for every six rooms. Over the next thirty years, the lodging job base is projected to grow to about 1,200 workers, indicating (using current ratios) of an additional 3,150 rooms across the area.
- A blended American Planning Association (APA) ratio of 650 sq. ft./employee was used to estimate aggregate new development required for retail/restaurant/entertainment. Similarly, an adjusted APA ratio of 200 sq. ft./employee was used to estimate aggregate new development required to meet office/commercial demand.

Table 2: Laredo/Webb County Annual Indicators

Year	A. Sales Tax (Millions)	B. Total Population	C. Unemployment Rate	D. Permitted Housing Units
2000	\$15.68	194,538	6.1%	1,863
2001	\$20.08	199,880	6.6%	1,759
2002	\$21.47	205,064	7.3%	1,805
2003	\$22.86	210,306	7.4%	1,671
2004	\$24.57	215,737	6.7%	2,193
2005	\$27.03	220,913	6.0%	2,176
2006	\$30.60	225,839	5.4%	2,395
2007	\$31.81	230,618	4.8%	1,581
2008	\$32.76	235,733	5.4%	1,087
2009	\$29.46	240,754	8.5%	786
2010	\$29.91	245,960	8.6%	663

Sources: A. Texas State Comptroller’s Office; B. Census Bureau; C. Bureau of Labor Statistics; D. Census Bureau

Figure 5: Recent Year-Over-Year Sales Tax Growth in Laredo

Source: Texas Comptroller’s Office, TXP

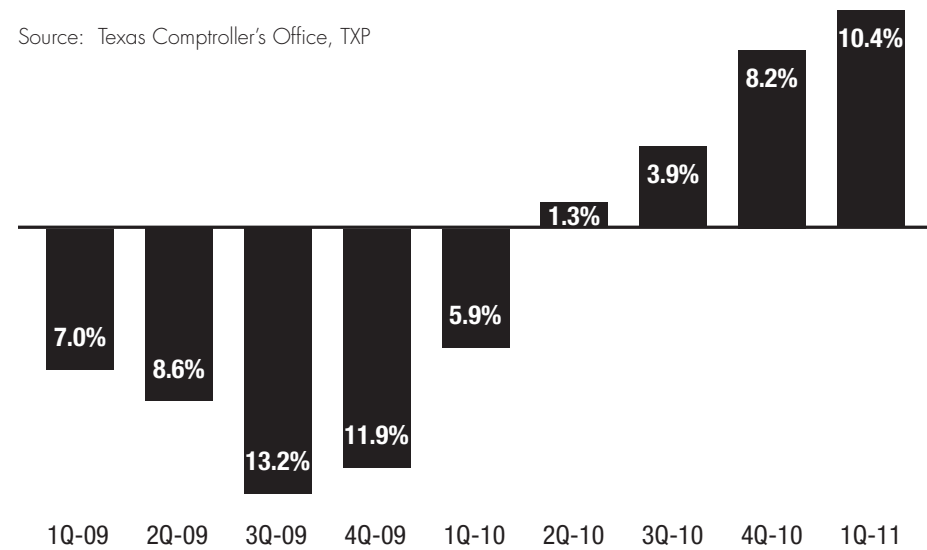
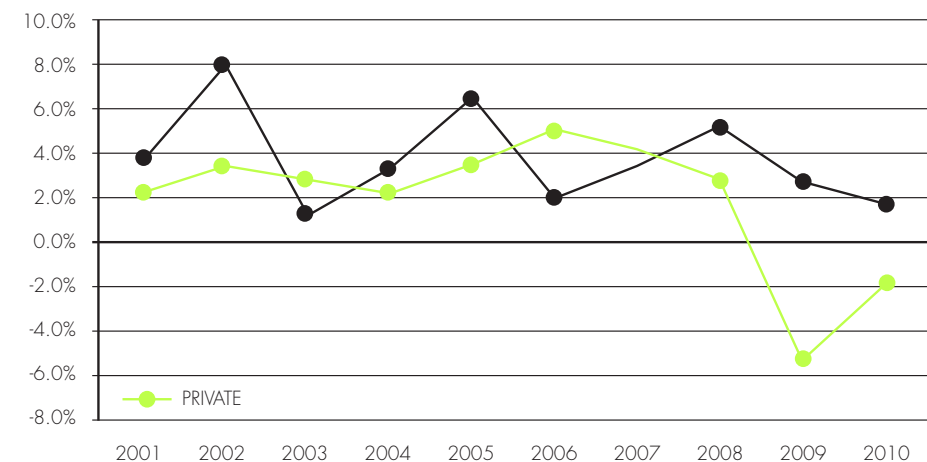


Figure 6: Annual Year-Over-Year Employment Growth in Laredo



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, TXP



Pedestrians shopping on Convent Ave.

ABSORPTION & CAPACITY

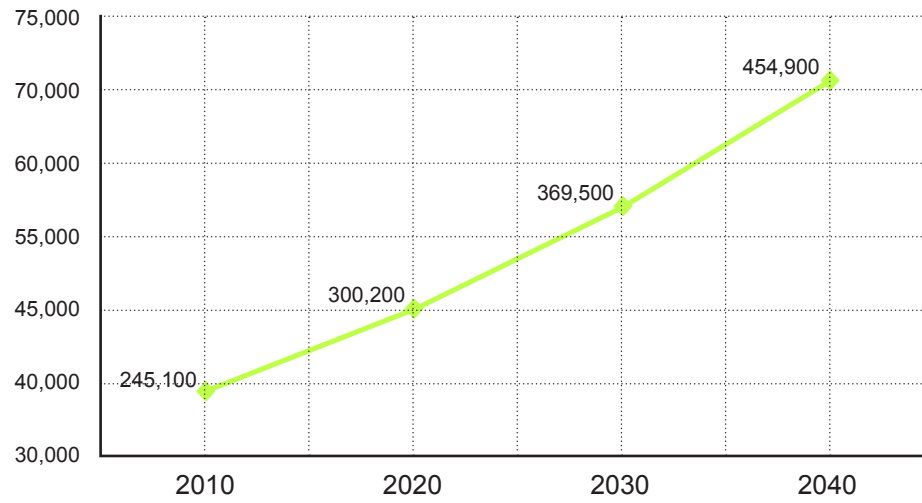
The value of Downtown is more than economic but economics underlies its revitalization and the well-being for all of Laredo. The planning horizon of 2040 gave impetus to identify a sustainable economic framework to help inform short and mid term decision-making so that all efforts are mutually and progressively supportive. The basic framework is supported by local population/job growth and the consequential demand for housing, office, and retail/leisure space. The essential strategy for revitalization therefore is to attract a greater share of this growth in Downtown rather than letting it slip further outward.

To understand the potential capture of local growth, the area within ZIP Code 78040 relative to Webb County was evaluated as a reasonable approximation of Downtown. In 2008 organizations in 78040 accounted for: 13.9 percent of payroll, 17.5 percent of employment, and 19.6 percent of firms. Headquartered organizations such as Webb County, City of Laredo, and Laredo ISD do not have all their employees in Downtown, but the 78040 numbers reflect a significant economic share and suggest that Downtown Laredo could expect to capture somewhere between 10 and 20 percent of the net new commercial development in Webb County. This translates as 2 to 4 million square feet of commercial (office, retail, and restaurant) space as well 315 to 630 additional hotel rooms.

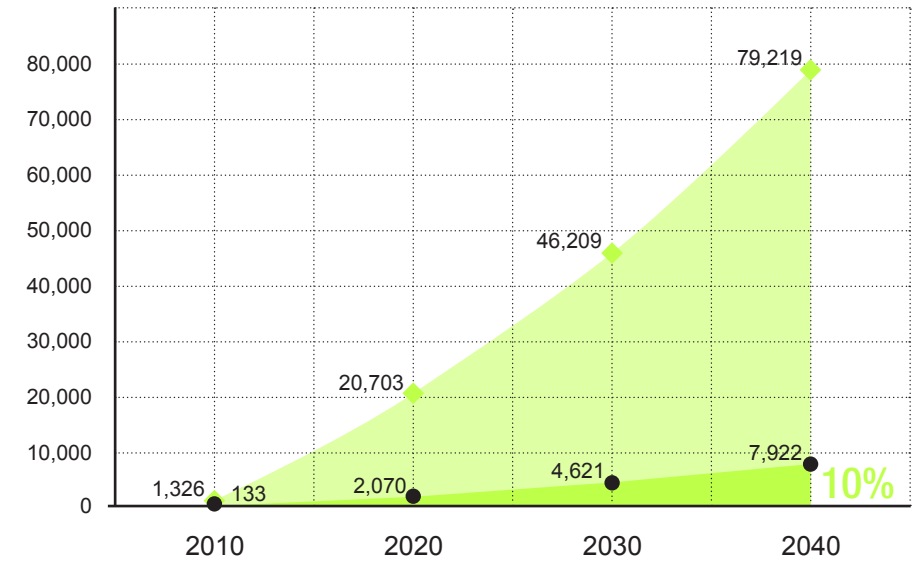
Relative to residential redevelopment, of the 715 NAR-listed homes for sale in Laredo in 2008, 24 were located in ZIP Code 78040, representing 3.5 percent of the total. Using this ratio, Downtown could capture approximately 2,750 net new housing units over the next forty years. This could probably be viewed as a floor, for as the vision for Downtown gains momentum, then demand could double, especially in light of efforts to attract activity from Nuevo Laredo back across the Border. As a result, downtown housing demand is projected to be between 2,750 and 5,000 units between now and 2040.

Downtown's essential economic strategy can be simply postulated as supplying 10% of future local growth in housing, office, and retail/leisure space demand. The critical variable is Downtown's capacity.

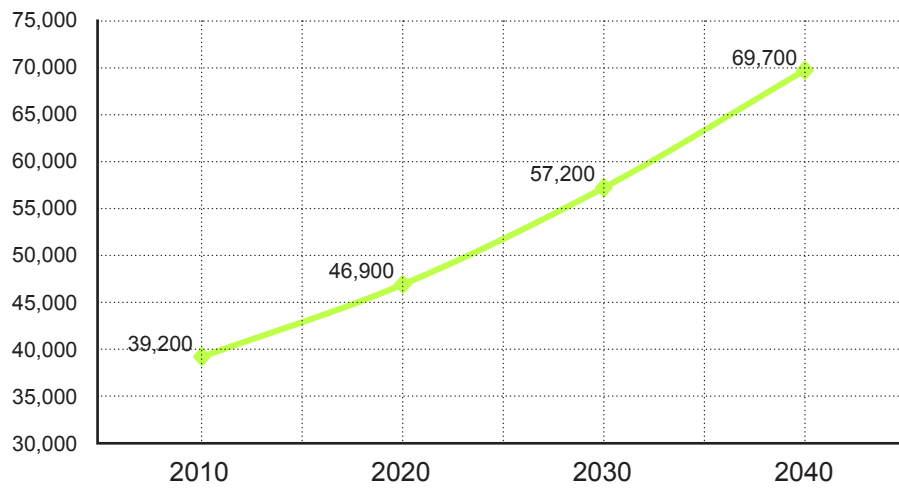
POPULATION



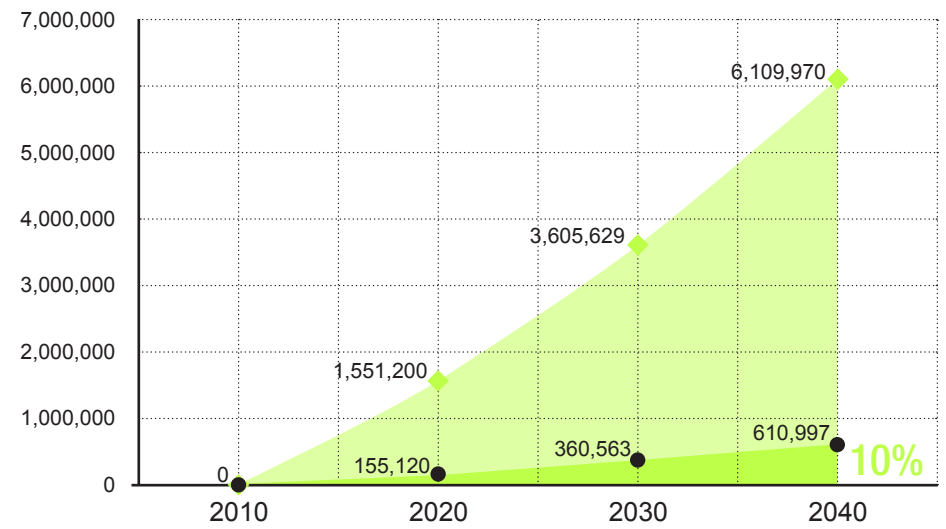
HOUSING UNITS



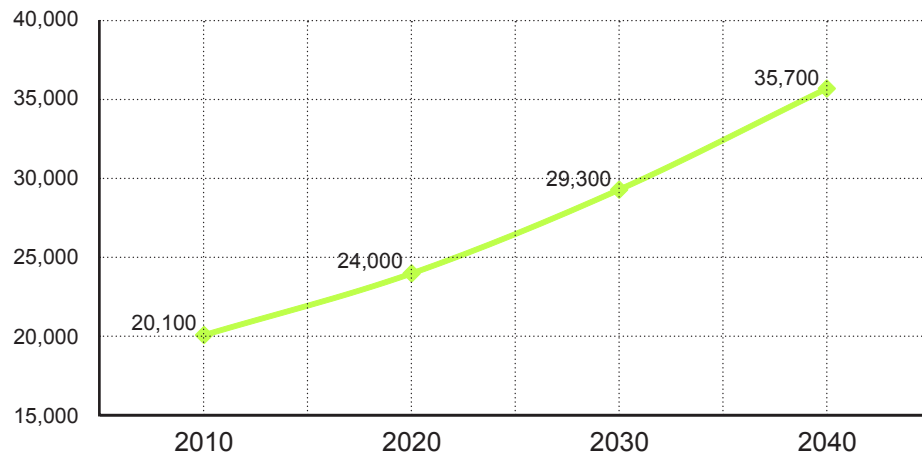
OFFICE RELATED JOBS



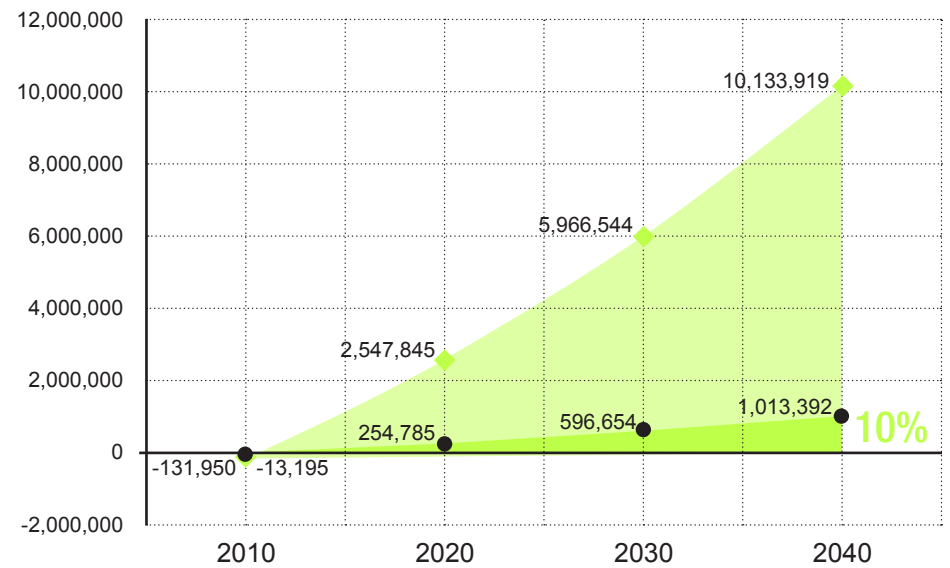
OFFICE RELATED SQ.FT.



RETAIL / LEISURE



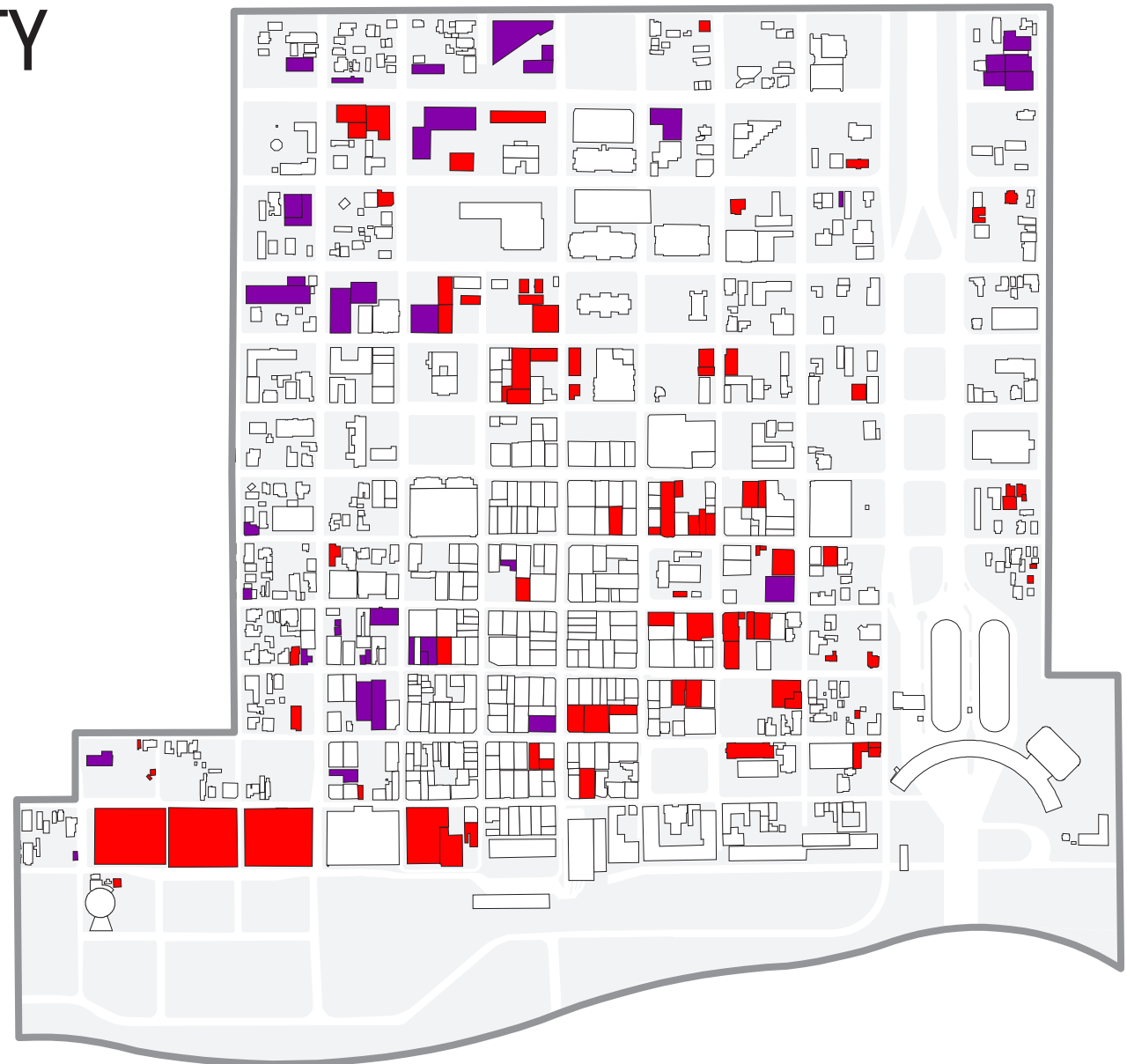
RETAIL / LEISURE SQ. FT.



EXISTING CAPACITY

GROUND LEVEL (824,935 SF)

- STORAGE & WAREHOUSE (253,884 SF)
- VACANT (571,051 SF)



Vacant shops are more symptomatic than the cause of economic conditions in Downtown but do in themselves detract from a general sense of vitality. Reoccupation of vacant ground floor shops and stores is therefore both a goal for and evidence of improving Downtown's economy. Storage and Warehouse uses are also declining in Downtown as new industrial facilities are added in outlying industrial zones. Their combined total area is 824,935 SF, about 22% of the 3,687,202 SF of ground floor area in the Central Business District.

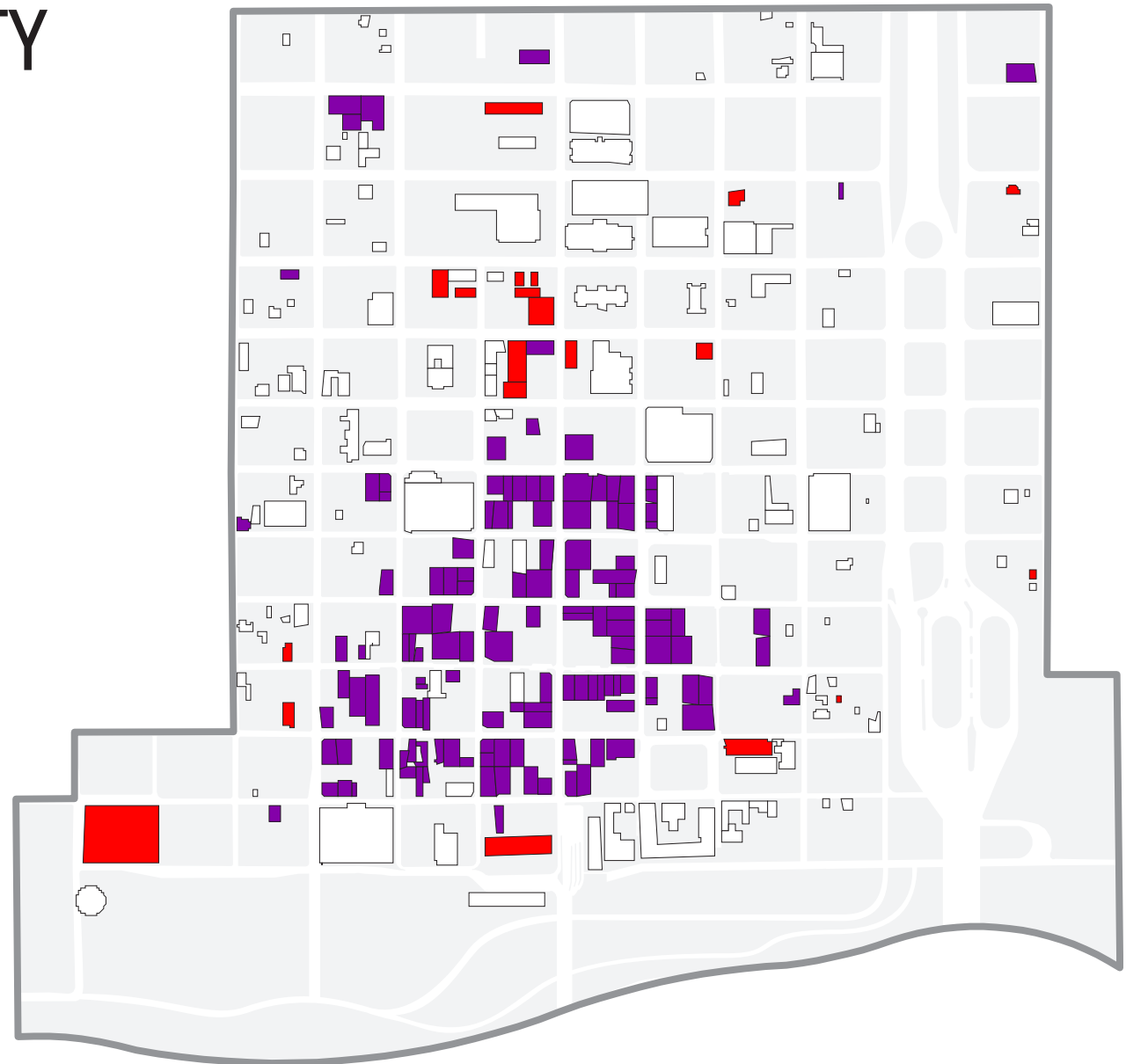
The vacant Riverside Mall is a substantial portion of the vacant area, about 180,000 SF at its ground floor, and so if discounted the sum of vacant, storage and warehouse area is 644,935 SF (17.5%). Reoccupation of vacant and soon to be vacant properties is the expected result as Downtown rebounds, but is predicated on a resumption of previous demands in retail/leisure markets. A goal of Downtown capturing 10% of local growth in retail/leisure demand would mean that existing vacant space could be reduced by about 50% in 10 years and by 2030 to less than 10%.

This is a conservative scenario that precludes Riverside Mall vacant area, excludes retail/leisure reuse of storage/warehouse uses, and assumes that supply is entirely driven by local growth demands. This scenario also infers that Downtown revitalization will be a slow process and makes no assumptions as to the character and value of merchandising activity. Refilling vacant ground floor space more quickly would require a greater capture of local growth and/or regional market demand. This would be a more ambitious scenario of created demand and the basis for making Downtown a more desirable destination.

EXISTING CAPACITY

2ND LEVEL (832,164 SF)

- STORAGE AND WAREHOUSE (575,568 SF)
- VACANT (256,596 SF)



Most of Downtown's commercial multi-story buildings were constructed before WWII and designed for ground floor merchandising with office, residential and storage uses on the upper floors. Upper floor areas have since been utilized more for wholesale uses, retail storage, or are vacant. In the past decade market changes have negatively impacted wholesale practices in Downtown and their economic viability. Wholesalers are downsizing, transitioning to retail, creating hybrid operations, or moving out. Retailers use upper floors for storage often inefficiently as there are few demands for that space. As a result, upper floor utilization is likely to diminish and the economic performance of

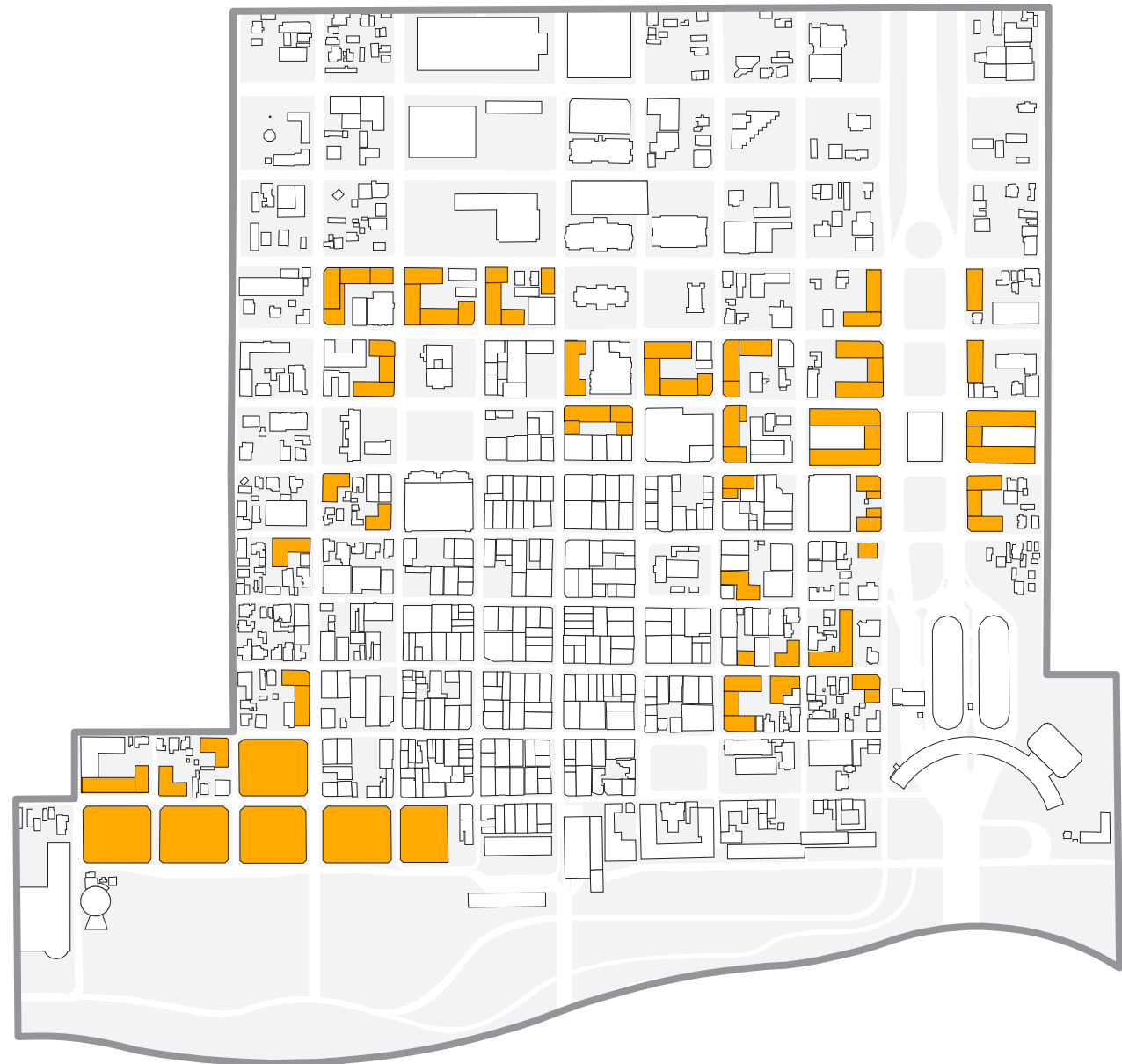
these properties likely to degrade relative to lease income and tax revenues. Empty space, wherever it is, is an economic burden for those whose interests are invested, and if not maintained is a blight to Downtown. Future demand for upper floor area will depend on recreating these floors as desirable spaces for office, residential, hospitality, entertainment, and other non-retail activities.

The CBD contains around 90% of Downtown's upper floor area with nearly two million square feet occurring at the second floor level. The combined area of second floor wholesale, storage and vacant space is 832,164 SF and represents a latent capacity for redevelopment.

Back office and storage use is expected to continue in second and upper floors over the more valuable ground floor commercial use, but on average is typically 25% of total retail area. Given that traditional wholesale operations decline and back office/storage area for retail and hybrid wholesale is more efficiently deployed, second floor capacity could be 400,000 to 600,000 SF for redevelopment.

INFILL CAPACITY

■ INFILL DEVELOPMENT (2,332,304 SF)



Emerging cities typically dismantle their aging urban centers and build ever taller buildings over time. Laredo followed this pattern until the past several decades, when outward development effectively arrested Downtown’s physical growth. Reoccupation of existing vacant and underutilized building capacity is the foundation of Downtown revitalization and essential for the retention and conservation of historic buildings. This could restore the intensity of use Downtown had throughout the first half of the 20th century, but reoccupation of Downtown’s existing capacity cannot restore its past singular predominance – Downtown now and in the future will have to compete with other city and regional centers.

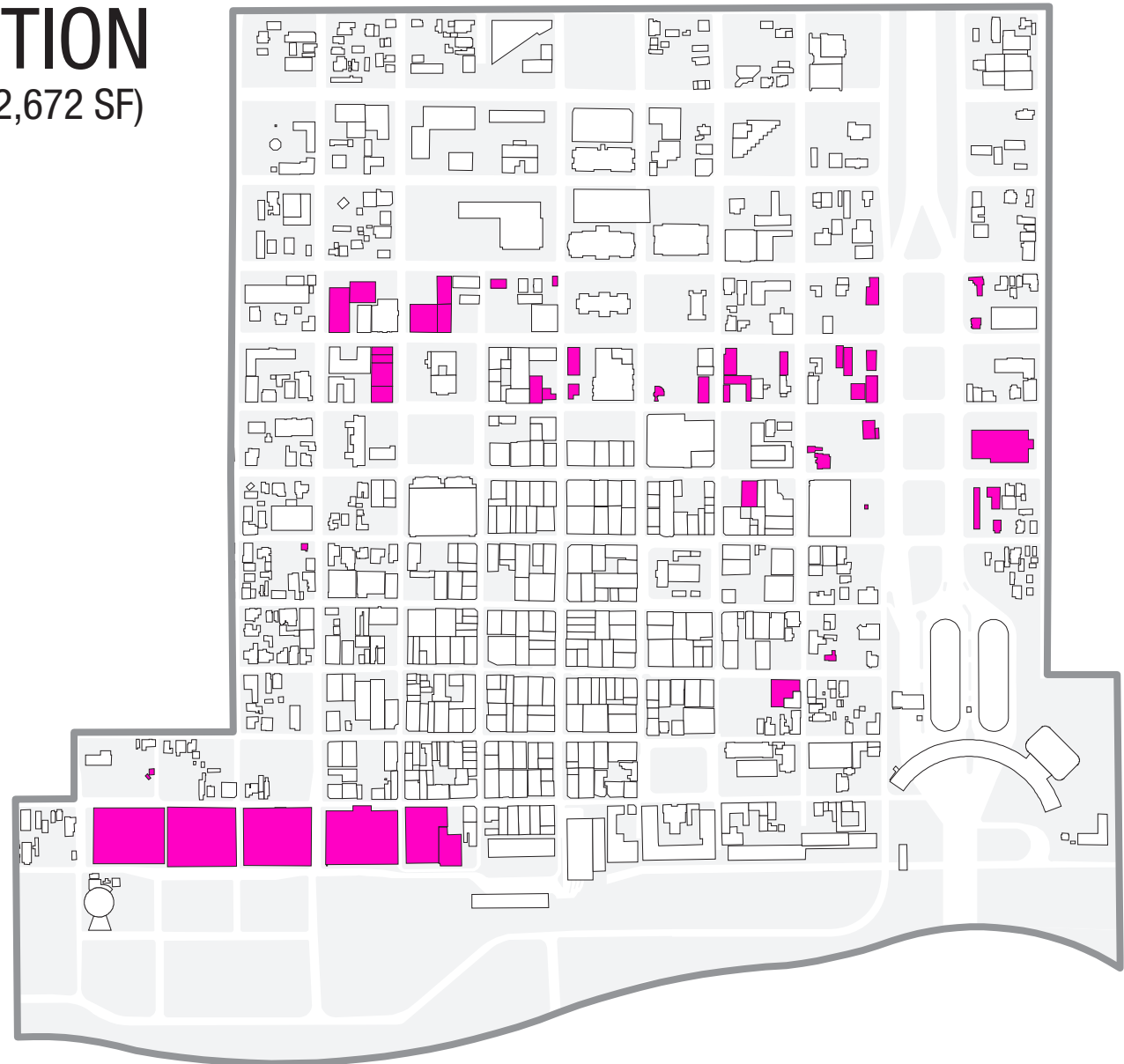
The potential for added capacity is useful as it keeps the door open for continued growth beyond existing constraints. It also enables the development of new buildings more responsive to contemporary needs. This is particularly true for residential use where efficient floor configurations and integration of parking and access is more easily attainable and affordable than in renovation. Mixed-use infill development combining commercial office and retail/leisure on ground floors with upper floor residential is a vital urban building type that increases capacity and intensity.

Increasing the residential population of Downtown, especially in the CBD, is an important strategy that can fulfill a multitude

of economic, security, cultural, and energy goals. New residential in the CBD is important as it would close the residential gap between St. Peter’s/El Cuatro and El Azteca neighborhoods. Additional capacity without diminishing the historic character of Downtown means that new infill development has a continuum of appropriate urban scale and architectural character. The modeling of infill development assumed a mix of 2, 3 and 4-story buildings with an average of one on-site structured parking space per dwelling unit. Redevelopment of the Riverside Mall site offers an extraordinary opportunity for Downtown living, but other underutilized properties along Houston, Victoria and Matamoros Streets provide great opportunity for infill development.

BUILDING DEMOLITION ASSOCIATED WITH DEMOLITION (492,672 SF)

■ REMOVED / RELOCATED



Infill development generally works within the restraints of existing building fabric but the gradual replacement of underutilized buildings is a normal part of the urban process. Based on the infill development model, half of the projected demolition would be the 240,000 SF Riverside Mall. Other properties consist of aging storage and warehouse buildings, regional bus terminals that could be consolidated in a future multimodal center, and select non-historic buildings along Santa Ursula and San Dario Avenues.

The demolition indicated represents a reasonable assumption that correlates with the infill development plan, but is entirely conjectural and in no way mandates future demolition of any particular building. Potential demolition relative to new public facilities is not depicted in this plan as the infill development component is to be primarily driven by the market and private investment.

REVITALIZATION CAPACITY AND DEMAND IN THE CBD

Space Uses	% Growth	Existing Capacity SF	% Capacity	Infill Capacity SF	% Capacity	Total SF	Projected Demand @ 10% Webb County Growth SF
Retail / Leisure	25%	206,414	25%	144,086	25%	350,500	1,013,392 SF
	50%	412,829	50%	288,172	50%	701,001	
	75%	619,243	75%	432,257	75%	1,051,501	
	100%	825,658	100%	576,344	100%	1,402,002	
Office	25%	124,644	25%	120,072	25%	244,715	610,997 SF
	50%	249,288	50%	240,143	50%	489,431	
	75%	373,932	75%	360,215	75%	734,146	
	100%	498,576	100%	480,286	100%	978,862	
Residential	25%	83,216 SF- 128 DU	25%	421,708 SF- 421 DU	25%	504,925 SF- 549 DU	5,545,400 SF
	50%	166,433 SF- 256 DU	50%	843,416 SF- 842 DU	50%	1,009,849 SF- 1,098 DU	
	75%	249,649 SF- 384 DU	75%	1,265,125 SF- 1,263 DU	75%	1,514,774 SF 1,647 DU	
	100%	332,866 SF- 472 DU	100%	1,686,833 SF- 1,684 DU	100%	2,019,699 SF- 2,528 DU	
COMBINED 100%		1,657,100 SF		2,743,463 SF		4,400,563 SF	7,169,789 SF

Residential use in existing capacity was calculated at 650 SF/DU, in infill development at 1,000 SF/DU and population at 2 people/DU. *SF: SQUARE FEET ** DU: DWELLING UNITS

An ideal economy for any urban center is stability with some measure of constant growth that sustains a dynamic equilibrium. The reality is a more erratic pattern of peaks and troughs, but for planning purposes the baseline for Downtown revitalization is a gradual ascent of local population growth and consequential space demands. The capacity to absorb those demands is explored in the previous analytical maps and their quantifiable results consolidated in the table above. Space uses are market-based Retail/Leisure, Office, and Residential, and do not include government offices and other public facilities. Existing and Infill capacities are tabulated at 25% absorption intervals representing generic milestones in the incremental progress of revitalization, but can be correlated either with strategic goals or a timeline. Existing and Infill area capacities are summarily tabulated and adjacent to the area of postulated 10% capture of future space demands.

This comparison enables a host of observations, the first of which is an excess of assumed 100% Retail/Leisure and Office capacity relative to their projected future demands; and second the lack of capacity relative to 100% Residential demand. Office space is likely to be unaffected by other than local demand, but Retail/Leisure capacity, particularly in context of Downtown’s aspiration as a regional and international destination, may not be excessive. Indeed it may be important to reserve Retail/Leisure capacity for growth beyond 2040. The apparent lack of Residential capacity may be simply an overambitious goal of capturing 10% of future local demand: perhaps a 5% capture is more realistic and fairly comparable with projected capacity. It should be noted however

that the majority of Residential capacity is supplied through low-rise Infill mixed-use development in keeping with the historic scale of Downtown – several residential buildings the size of the Hamilton Hotel could easily make up the difference. Provided that population growth in Downtown is a mix of age and income levels, residential development is a critical component to support Downtown businesses and services.

EL AZTECA AND ST. PETER’S/EL CUATRO Capacity was modeled only in the Central Business District and not in El Azteca and St. Peter’s/El Cuatro neighborhoods. The incidence of vacant and underutilized properties is not as great as in the CBD but there is existing and infill capacity. Their smaller residential scale and historic quality is less receptive to the type of urban infill used in the CBD capacity assumptions. The magnitude of redevelopment in El Azteca and St. Peter’s/El Cuatro can and should be of modest proportions and ultra sensitive to the cultural landscape. The potential for redevelopment adjacent to Laredo Community College could be an exception however and provide a new market for college-oriented residential, retail/leisure and office redevelopment.

LOCAL ECONOMIC IMPACT Data on the capacity for development/redevelopment outlined was used as the basis for estimating the level of direct economic activity. This capacity is consistent with a reasonable share of market demand and is divided into four equal increments. Standard ratios on jobs/SF for retail/entertainment, office, and lodging were used to estimate the number of direct jobs associated with development/redevelopment. New residential will add to the tax base

directly as well and indirectly contribute to the viability of other uses. However, as there are no permanent jobs attributable to residential activity, there is no ongoing economic impact. Local data on sales/job drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau was used to complete the estimated direct “footprint” of development/redevelopment in Laredo. The results found in the table below are cumulative and substantial. At full capacity Downtown revitalization promises to bring more than \$1 billion in annual economic activity and more than 11,000 permanent jobs to Laredo. This can be accomplished in large part by attracting an increased share of Laredo’s local population and economic growth, and costs associated with making Downtown attractive enough to fulfill market demand can be weighed with the benefits of revitalization. The projected increase in Downtown population based on residential capacity is significant and well within potential demand. Having a permanent Downtown mixed-income population supporting Downtown businesses and walking to work or school sustains authentic urban life.

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACT Making Downtown more attractive for Laredoans will make it attractive for others as well, and drawing in more people from outside Webb County for shopping and entertainment adds to the local economy in different ways.

Direct effects are production changes associated with the immediate effects or final demand changes. The payment made by an out-of-town visitor to a hotel operator is an example of a direct effect, as would be the taxi fare that visitor paid to be transported into town from the airport.

Indirect effects are production changes in backward-linked industries caused by the changing input needs of directly affected industries – typically, additional purchases to produce additional output. Satisfying the demand for an overnight stay will require the hotel operator to purchase additional cleaning supplies and services, for example, and the taxi driver will have to replace the gasoline consumed during the trip from the airport. These downstream purchases affect the economic status of other local merchants and workers.

Induced effects are the changes in regional household spending patterns caused by changes in household income generated from the direct and indirect effects. Both the hotel operator and taxi driver experience increased income from the visitor’s stay, for example, as do the cleaning supplies outlet and the gas station proprietor. Induced effects capture the way in which this increased income is in turn spent by them in the local economy. Calculating the potential financial effects from visitors and tourism is beyond the scope of this master plan. The interdependence between different sectors of the economy is reflected in the concept of a “multiplier.” The higher the multiplier, the greater the interdependence among different sectors of the economy. An output multiplier of 1.4, for example, means that for every \$1,000 injected into the economy, another \$400 in output is produced in all other sectors. Downtown improvements executed for the primary purpose of attracting out-of-town visitors, like a convention center, need to be analyzed for their multiple effects and not just on direct rental income.

Table 1: Direct Jobs & Economic Activity Associated with Downtown Revitalization (by Phase - \$2010)

Economic Activity	Phase 1: 25%	Phase 2: 50%	Phase 3: 75%	Phase 4: Buildout
Retail/Entertainment	\$102,600,080	\$205,200,160	\$307,800,239	\$410,400,562
Office-Related	\$89,903,578	\$179,807,155	\$269,710,733	\$359,614,427
Lodging	\$4,149,674	\$8,299,347	\$12,449,021	\$16,598,705
TOTAL	\$196,653,331	\$393,306,662	\$589,959,994	\$786,613,694
Employment	Phase 1: 25%	Phase 2: 50%	Phase 3: 75%	Phase 4: Buildout
Retail/Entertainment	526	1,052	1,577	2,103
Office-Related	979	1,958	2,937	3,915
Lodging	97	195	292	389
TOTAL	1,602	3,204	4,806	6,408
Population Increase	1,264	2,528	3,792	5,056

Table 2: Summary Economic Impact (by Phase - \$2010)

Economic Activity	Phase 1: 25%	Phase 2: 50%	Phase 3: 75%	Phase 4: Buildout
Total Jobs	2,757	5,514	8,271	11,028
Total Earnings	\$76,479,501	\$152,959,001	\$229,438,502	\$305,918,131
Total Economic Activity	\$250,601,517	\$501,203,034	\$751,804,552	\$1,002,406,491

LIST OF PROJECTS & PRIORITY

PROJECT/INITIATIVE	SHORT TERM		
	CITY OF LAREDO	LEVERAGED FUNDS	PROJECT SCOPE
DESTINATION CITY			
Plaza Theater	\$2,000,000 w	\$4,000,000	Revise feasibility study & Phase 1 Renovation
City Market/LCA Renovation	\$1,000,000	\$2,000,000	Renovation
A&E Strategic Plan	\$10,000	\$40,000	Formulation & Implementation
Royal and Azteca Theaters	\$25,000		Stabilization/secure from demolition & deterioration
Historic district signage & interpretation	\$150,000		Villa Antigua interpretative graphics & signage
Convention Center	\$15,000,000		Acquisition, Infrastructure & Sitework, Design
Downtown Living Strategic Plan	\$25,000	\$25,000	Formulation & Implementation
La Venta - Southern Hotel Restoration	\$1,200,000	\$-	Acquisition & design
Escuelitas El Azteca & St. Peter's/El Cuatro neighborhoods	\$50,000	\$200,000	Establish program, secure initial funding, acquisition
Historic resources inventory, regulations, designations, urban design guide-lines	\$400,000		Update inventory, designations, preservation & design standards
Historic building façade rehab program	\$500,000	\$-	Target key historic properties
Moctezuma Street Hike&Bike Tail - RR crossings at KCS line	\$50,000	\$100,000	Planning & design
Enhancements to IH35 approach to Downtown	\$50,000	\$150,000	Design
Zacate Creek Amphitheater	\$25,000		Feasibility/Design studies
Old Matamoros Street Bridge	\$25,000		Feasibility Study
Historic Methodist Church/warehouse cultural/community center	\$25,000		Stabilization/secure from demolition & deterioration
I&GN Train Depot cultural/community center	\$25,000		Stabilization/secure from demolition & deterioration
New Performance arts/music theater			Feasibility study contingent on Plaza Theater use & A&E Strategic Plan
TOTAL	\$20,435,000	\$6,515,000	
SECURE BORDER			
Street lighting improvements	\$6,000,000	\$-	Implementation - CBD
Los Dos Laredos Riverfront Redevelopment & Embayment	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	Design
Los Dos Puentes Riverfront Redevelopment & Embayment	\$25,000	\$25,000	Feasibility study, GSA lease negotiation/land acquisition
Pan American Plaza	\$100,000	\$200,000	Design
La Portada Border Center	\$-	\$-	Feasibility study, GSA lease negotiation/land acquisition
Bridge 2 Port of Entry Bus Processing Improvements	\$-	\$5,000,000	Design & Construction
Bridge 1 Port of Entry Improvements	\$-	\$5,000,000	Design & Construction
Bridge 2 Port of Entry Improvements	\$-	\$500,000	Planning & Design
TOTAL	\$7,625,000	\$12,225,000	

MID TERM			LONG TERM		
CITY OF LAREDO	LEVERAGED FUNDS	PROJECT SCOPE	CITY OF LAREDO	LEVERAGED FUNDS	PROJECT SCOPE
		Phase 2 renovation contingent on Phase 1			
		Update			Update
\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	Feasibility studies, acquisition, programming & design	\$2,000,000	\$6,000,000	Renovation
\$150,000		Old Mercado & El Azteca interpretative graphics & signage	\$150,000		St. Peter's/El Cuatro interpretative graphics & signage
\$40,000,000		Construction	\$20,000,000		Phase 2 expansion
\$50,000	\$50,000	Update			Update
\$2,000,000	\$4,000,000	Construction			
\$1,000,000	\$4,000,000	Redevelopment	\$1,000,000	\$4,000,000	Redevelopment
\$50,000		Update	\$50,000		Update
	\$-	Target key historic properties	\$100,000	\$-	Target key historic properties
\$1,000,000	\$2,000,000	Construction			
\$500,000	\$1,500,000	Construction			
\$250,000	\$1,000,000	Renovation			
		Disposition/Renovation			
\$1,000,000		Feasibility studies, acquisition, programming & design	\$500,000	\$2,500,000	Renovation
\$1,000,000		Feasibility studies, acquisition, programming & design	\$500,000	\$2,500,000	Renovation
\$48,000,000	\$13,550,000		\$24,300,000	\$15,000,000	
\$3,000,000		Implementation - El Azteca & St. Peter's/El Cuatro neighborhoods	\$3,000,000		Implementation - El Azteca & St. Peter's/El Cuatro neighborhoods
\$5,000,000	\$20,000,000	Construction			
\$5,000,000	\$1,000,000	Construction			
\$800,000	\$2,000,000	Construction			
	\$60,000,000	Design & Construction			
					Alterations contingent on Bridge 5 and pedestrian-only Bridge 1
	\$5,000,000	Construction			
\$13,800,000	\$88,000,000		\$3,000,000	\$-	

PROJECT/INITIATIVE	SHORT TERM		
	CITY OF LAREDO	LEVERAGED FUNDS	PROJECT SCOPE
TRANSPORTATION & PARKING			
Traffic signalization improvements	\$2,000,000		Implementation CBD
Downtown transportation, mobility, access & study	\$250,000		Planning study & initial phase implementation
San Bernardo Avenue improvements	\$50,000		Eliminate curb parking and convert to 2-way south of Lincoln
Convent Avenue improvements	\$1,500,000		Sidewalk improvements & storefront rehabilitation
Zaragosa Street improvements	\$150,000	\$-	Planning & Design
Santa Maria Avenue improvements	\$25,000		Feasibility study rail underpass
General sidewalk/streetscape/signage improvements	\$4,000,000	\$1,000,000	A&E District
Hike & Bike Trail Network	\$250,000	\$250,000	Zacate Creek-Las Palmas Design & Construction
IH35/Bridge 2 Bypass Tunnel	\$15,000	\$45,000	Feasibility Study
Streetcar System	\$25,000	\$25,000	Feasibility Study
Texas/Mexican Train Depot	\$500,000		Acquisition
Relocate KCS rail line at West Rail yard	\$25,000		Feasibility Study and KCS negotiation
River Drive/IH35 northbound upramp	\$15,000	\$45,000	Feasibility Study
Pan American Plaza parking structures		\$2,000,000	Part of Pan American Plaza feasibility & planning study
New Multimodal center			Part of Downtown Mobility Study
TOTAL	\$8,805,000	\$4,585,000	
INFRASTRUCTURE & ENVIRONMENT			
Infrastructure rehabilitation and replacement plan	\$150,000		Downtown Improvements Plan
Storm & sanitary sewer replacement	\$5,000,000		Repair & replacement
Overhead utilities conversion to underground	\$5,000,000		Phase 1 Improvements - CBD
Downtown Parks & Green Space Plan	\$250,000		Planning study
Zacate Creek Improvements	\$100,000	\$300,000	Planning & Design
Reduce heat island effects Downtown	\$20,000	\$30,000	Feasibility study
New urban and recreational spaces		\$800,000	Historic County Courthouse square rehabilitation
Water use efficiency & quality strategic plan	\$20,000	\$30,000	Feasibility study & policies
Stormwater biofiltration/engineered wetlands	\$20,000	\$30,000	Feasibility study
Zacate Creek treatment plant conversion to recycled water production plant	\$50,000		Feasibility study
Alternative Energy Initiatives	\$20,000	\$30,000	Feasibility study
TOTAL	\$10,630,000	\$1,220,000	
TOTALS	\$47,495,000	\$24,545,000	\$72,040,000
TOTAL CITY INVESTMENT: \$220,855,000		TOTAL LEVERAGED FUNDS: \$571,220,000	

MID TERM			LONG TERM		
CITY OF LAREDO	LEVERAGED FUNDS	PROJECT SCOPE	CITY OF LAREDO	LEVERAGED FUNDS	PROJECT SCOPE
\$500,000		Implementation El Azteca & St. Peter's/El Cuatro	\$500,000		Implementation El Azteca & St. Peter's/El Cuatro
					Update
\$1,000,000		Improvements Lincoln to Scott			
					Response to excluding traffic from Bridge 1 when Bridge 5 is opened
\$1,000,000	\$2,000,000	Santa Ursula to Santa Cleotilde construction			
\$2,000,000	\$8,500,000	Construction Rail Underpass, improvements to River			
\$4,000,000	\$1,000,000	CBD & portions Barrio El Azteca and St.Peter's/El Cuatro	\$4,000,000	\$1,000,000	Portions Barrio El Azteca and St.Peter's/El Cuatro
\$500,000	\$500,000	River Vega construction	\$500,000	\$500,000	West rail yard construction
\$5,000,000	\$50,000,000	Design & Construction			
\$5,000,000	\$40,000,000	Design & Construction 3 miles in the CBD	\$5,000,000	\$40,000,000	Route extensions to Zacate Creek & LCC
\$500,000	\$2,000,000	Renovation as street car terminal & transit plaza	\$250,000	\$250,000	Linkage to new Multimodal center
\$1,000,000	\$4,000,000	Realignment construction & acquisition	\$2,000,000	\$4,000,000	Design & construction new open space
\$1,000,000	\$4,000,000	Design & Construction			
	\$30,000,000	Construction			
\$10,000	\$20,000	Feasibility Study	\$2,000,000	\$10,000,000	Design & Construction
\$20,510,000	\$140,020,000		\$14,250,000	\$55,750,000	
\$15,000,000	\$-	Repair & replacement	\$15,000,000	\$-	Repair & replacement
\$5,000,000		Phase 2 Improvements - CBD	\$5,000,000	\$-	Phase 3 Improvements - portions El Azteca and St. Peter's/ElCautro neighborhoods
		Update			Update
\$1,000,000	\$2,000,000	Construction			
TBD	TBD	Implementation	\$-	\$-	Implementation
\$500,000	\$1,000,000	TexMex Station plaza			
TBD	TBD	Implementation	\$-	\$-	Implementation
\$500,000	\$3,000,000	Implementation w/ river vega improvements	\$-	\$-	
\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	Phase 1 Implementation	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000	Phase 2 Implementation
TBD	TBD	Implementation	\$-	\$-	Implementation
\$27,000,000	\$11,000,000		\$22,500,000	\$2,500,000	
\$109,310,000	\$252,570,000	\$361,880,000	\$64,050,000	\$73,250,000	\$137,300,000
TOTAL POSSIBLE INVESTMENT: \$792,075,000					

DESCRIPTIVE LIST OF PROJECTS & PRIORITY

The economics portion determined an overall feasibility and this section identifies the order of magnitude of projects for implementation and is primarily directed to the public sector and the many public agencies and entities that have important roles in funding and managing the area of Downtown Laredo. The ultimate realization of this master plan however will be implemented mainly by private investment that is guided and supported by public entities.

Laredo's vision for Downtown is that of a destination for its citizens, the greater border metropolis, and extending as far as the power of its allure can reach. This vision is articulated by site-specific choices that can be assembled according to the funding resources available at the time. The essential economic framework is to claim a targeted share of local growth demand where associated public improvements can be largely locally financed over the next 30 to 40 years. Within that timeline there are Short-Term projects and initiatives that can or should be implemented within the next five years; Mid-Term over the next ten to twenty years; and Long-Term over the next thirty years.

This strategy will need to be supplemented by other resources to finance particular projects whose scope far exceeds local interests and financial capabilities. Projects like the IH35/ Bridge 2 Bypass Tunnel, La Portada Border Center, and Vega Lands embayment/engineered wetlands engage border access and security at the national level and will require significant federal assistance. Funding for other projects such as the renovation of the Plaza Theatre and Laredo Center for the Arts can be implemented through public/private partnerships that reduce public expenditures and financially invest those partners. Mid and long term projects can begin implementation through planning and feasibility studies, programming, securing funding, and design. Large or complicated projects can take years to complete from inception and planning should be initiated in the short-term.

SHORT-TERM PROJECTS

Near-term steps are necessarily modest in scope - even if financially challenging, considering current economic conditions and the City's limited resources – for it will be the provision of critical City projects and infrastructure improvements that will initiate activity and private investment. Near-term projects can be organized as a series of phased improvements to achieve incremental results.

Traffic signalization improvements - Near-Term Project Cost: \$2,000,000



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT Downtown first and foremost needs to be a destination for Laredoans and the border metropolis. The essential place to make this happen is in the A&E District. The City-owned Plaza Theatre needs to be renovated and reactivated to provide entertainment. The historic City Hall & Market building should be more appropriately restored and the Laredo Center for the Arts more fully utilize the interior spaces, ancillary buildings and plaza to generate activity. Other near-term actions that will support activity in the A&E District are:

- New signage for historic site and resource interpretation in Villa Antigua NRHD - Near-Term Project Cost: \$150,000
- Street lighting improvements entire A&E District - Phased Near-Term Project Cost: \$1,900,000 (31% of CBD upgrade)
- San Bernardo Avenue conversion to 2-way traffic between Lincoln and Zaragosa - Near-Term Project Cost: \$50,000
- Sidewalk/streetscape/signage improvements - Phased Near-Term Project Cost: \$1,000,000

- Rehabilitation of San Agustin and Old Mercado Plazas - Phased Near-Term Project Cost: \$500,000
- Overhead utilities conversion to underground (San Bernardo Avenue) - Phased Near-Term Project Cost: \$1,000,000

Total Near-Term Projects Cost - \$4,600,000

These actions are needed to make the A&E District more attractive, safe, and interesting. To attract more interest, people and private investment in the A&E District, energize existing businesses, and encourage the reoccupation of vacant buildings with the types of complimentary uses that build momentum for revitalization.

MERCHANDIZING ZONE Convent Avenue is the main axis of Downtown's merchandizing zone and should reflect its significance. Linkage from El Portal/Bridge 1 and the El Metro Center and parking garage should be clearly identifiable and accommodating. Directional signage for accessing the parking garage needs to be improved and wayfinding signage mark a clear route for drivers from IH35 to the El Metro. Street lighting and traffic signalization improvements in the CBD will have the greatest impact in the merchandizing zone. Storefront and canopy rehabilitation and assistance with window dressing, display, signage and graphics, will have an appreciable effect along Convent Avenue.

Street Lighting Improvements

Near-Term Phased Project Cost: \$1,560,000 (26% of CBD upgrade)

Street and Sidewalk Improvements

(7 blocks Convent and 6 blocks Zaragosa)

Near-Term Phased Project Cost: \$1,000,000

Overhead utilities conversion to underground (Zaragosa)

Phased Near-Term Project Cost: \$1,000,000

Signage/Wayfinding Graphics from IH35 to public parking areas

Phased Near-Term Project Cost: \$250,000

Total Near-Term Projects Cost - \$3,810,000



DESTINATION PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

The two projects listed below are seen as immediate opportunities as the properties are City-owned and have high interest and visibility in the community. Implementation would likely need to be a public/private partnership and operate as a not-for-profit operation.

PLAZA THEATRE RENOVATION This is a near-term project to renovate and reactivate the building for entertainment and/or performance use.

HISTORIC CITY HALL AND MARKET REHABILITATION This is a near-term project to more appropriately restore the historic architectural integrity of main and ancillary buildings and adjust the program of uses to maximize activity attraction.

The projects and initiatives listed below should have near-term studies of their feasibility as part of the evaluation and recommendations of the A&E Strategic Plan.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT STRATEGIC PLAN This is a near-term study and action plan to more thoroughly assess the conditions and goals for arts education, professions, resource development, public and private cultural and entertainment facilities including existing and new museums, public space activity programming, special events, collateral economic impacts and funding strategies.

EL AZTECA AND ST. PETER'S/EL CUATRO ESCUELITAS This is a near-term initiative to match subsidized housing and arts/vocational craft uses with historic preservation of existing vacant properties.

ZACATE CREEK AMPHITHEATRE This project is a near to mid-term

refurbishment or replacement of the facility with the goal of reactivating its use as an assembly and performance venue.

ROYAL AND AZTECA THEATRES This initiative is a near-term initiative contingent on the recommendations of the A&E Strategic Plan to secure the disposition of the theatre buildings with mid to long-term goal to reactivate with entertainment/performance use and preserve their historic value.

NEW PERFORMANCE ARTS/MUSIC THEATRE This initiative is contingent on the recommendations of the A&E Strategic Plan to develop in the long-term a state-of-the-art performance hall capable of attracting national tours and home for a professional theater or music organization.

HISTORIC METHODIST CHURCH/WAREHOUSE CULTURAL/COMMUNITY CENTER This initiative is contingent on the recommendations of the A&E Strategic Plan to develop in the long-term the half-block as a public plaza and reuse of the buildings for arts, entertainment, and community use.

HISTORIC I&GN TRAIN DEPOT CULTURAL/COMMUNITY CENTER This initiative is contingent on the recommendations of the A&E Strategic Plan to develop in the long-term the reuse of the historic train station for arts, entertainment, recreation, and community use that spurs college-oriented mixed-use redevelopment on adjacent properties.

The Laredo Convention Center has been the subject of marketing and site selection studies and being considered as a City CIP.

LAREDO CONVENTION CENTER This is a near-term acquisition, planning, and design project with a near to mid-term goal of construction. The projects and initiatives below address the conservation and management of historic resources, Downtown design standards, development of



residential capacity and targeted demand, and the provision of urban space and amenities to support Downtown living and heritage tourism.

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY, REGULATIONS, DESIGNATIONS, AND URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES This is a near-term initiative to update all the documentary, archival and field information on historic resources in digital and GIS form, along with detailed urban design and preservation guidelines for Downtown.

HISTORIC DISTRICT SIGNAGE AND SITE INTERPRETATION This a near-term project to install a signage and graphics package for Villa Antigua NRHD, and a mid to long-term project for other historic districts and sites in Downtown.

MOCTEZUMA STREET HIKE & BIKE TRAIL AND RAIL CROSSING AT THE KCS RAIL LINE This is a near-term initiative to improve and enhance Downtown's north boundary with near or mid-term construction. It is linked with the Hike & Bike Trail Network described in the Infrastructure Sustainability list.

ENHANCEMENTS TO IH35 APPROACH TO DOWNTOWN This is a near-term initiative to improve the design and landscape of the concrete embankments between the Scott Street overpass and Victoria Street intersection with mid-term construction. It should be coordinated with any work related to the IH35/Bridge 2 Bypass Tunnel but is possible it can be constructed separately.

DOWNTOWN LIVING STRATEGIC PLAN This is a near-term initiative to determine the conditions for the development of market rate and affordable housing in existing buildings and new infill development for near, mid, and long-term implementation. Local residential developers may not be familiar or confident in developing market rate urban

housing for Downtown and will need to be part of a strategic process to accomplish this goal.

SOUTHERN HOTEL REHABILITATION This is a near-term initiative to rehabilitate the historic building and reoccupy with mixed-use commercial/residential as an anchor for Convent Avenue and create public open space with a plaza. The City can choose to use the property value as equity in a public/private partnership to redevelop the buildings and public open space. The idea to remake it as La Venta marketplace is conceptual and the ultimate uses are yet to be determined.

OLD MATAMOROS STREET BRIDGE This is a near-term initiative to determine a suitable activity-generating reuse of the bridge structure as a unique public or publicly accessible entertainment venue.

SECURE BORDER PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

These projects provide public safety and security measures within the broader national interest in international cooperation, economic and cultural exchange, and regional stability.

STREET LIGHTING IMPROVEMENTS

This is a current project that can be implemented in phases that target the most critical areas of the CBD, and should be extended in the mid-term to El Azteca and St. Peter's/El Cuatro neighborhoods.

LOS DOS LAREDOS RIVERFRONT REDEVELOPMENT AND EMBAYMENT

This is a massive implementation of the Vega Lands Concept Plan that engages all governmental levels and will need to be designed in collaboration with private investment. It involves flood control, border



security, new roads and infrastructure, and public urban and recreational space. The 600-space parking garage component is currently in design.

DOS PUENTES RIVERFRONT REDEVELOPMENT AND EMBAYMENT

This is a continuation of the Vega Lands Concept Plan between Bridges 1 and 2 to reform land utilization, provide public structured parking with access from San Bernardo and secured access between the ports of entry; and involves flood control, border security, new roads and infrastructure, and public urban and recreational space.

PAN AMERICAN PLAZA This is a near-term planning project with mid-term construction to improve and enhance security and safety in the public space adjoining Bridge 2 port of entry, and to better reconnect the CBD and El Azteca neighborhoods.

LA PORTADA BORDER CENTER This is a mid-term construction project to establish a center to house programs and entities connected with the economic, security, and cultural issues of the U.S. – Mexico Border. It would primarily consist of office space but have some provision for training, exhibit, and assembly functions.

BRIDGE 2 PORT OF ENTRY BUS PROCESSING FACILITY This is a near-term construction project to provide expansion and better accommodation of customs operations processing buses entering the U.S.

BRIDGE 1 PORT OF ENTRY IMPROVEMENTS This initiative will include the renovation of customs facilities with renovation of the bridge and likely has a mid-term construction timeline.

BRIDGE 2 PORT OF ENTRY IMPROVEMENTS This is a recommended



initiative to design and remodel the security perimeter that recognizes the proximity of Downtown's historic character and urban activity.

TRANSPORTATION & PARKING

TRAFFIC SIGNALIZATION IMPROVEMENTS This modest project will improve circulation in most of the CBD and should be considered near-term.

DOWNTOWN TRANSPORTATION, MOBILITY AND ACCESS STUDY

A recommended near-term planning study to reassess transportation future needs for Downtown. Some of the projects and recommendations in this master plan will have to be more thoroughly evaluated such as a recommended streetcar system. The study will need to address how to mitigate circulation and access conflicts with street, infrastructure, and utilities rehabilitation and replacement.

SAN BERNARDO AVENUE IMPROVEMENTS This is recommended as a near-term project due to its extremely low cost and benefit of extending 2-way circulation to Zaragosa by removing a handful of parking spaces.

CONVENT AVENUE IMPROVEMENTS This is a recommended near to mid term project to improve the sidewalk and pedestrian conditions. Closure of Convent to vehicular traffic was among several options discussed not a recommended project.

ZARAGOSA STREET IMPROVEMENTS This project will be best coordinated with mid-term implementation of Bridge 1 port of entry facilities and the redevelopment of the Los Dos Laredos Riverfront Redevelopment project.



SANTA MARIA AVENUE IMPROVEMENTS Santa Maria has been identified as a strategic linkage on the north side of Downtown and location to create a grade separation at the KCS rail line. This will require a near-term feasibility study to evaluate conditions and other possible option in coordination with the Downtown Transportation, Mobility and Access Study.

GENERAL SIDEWALK/STREETScape/SIGNAGE IMPROVEMENTS Most of the streets in Downtown will need new road pavement and sidewalks within the next thirty years and this project represents a scope are in addition to the specific street projects above mentioned. These are near, mid, and long-term projects that will need be implemented as systematic process and predictable process.

HIKE & BIKE TRAIL NETWORK Provision for expanding Laredo's multimodal activity and capacity is the basis for a circumferential trail that is largely routed through open space parks, and implemented in near, and mid-term timelines.

IH35/BRIDGE 2 BYPASS TUNNEL Feasibility study of this project should be a near-term action. It is a massive and costly transportation infrastructure project that requires substantial time and resources to implement for delivery in coordination with mid-term Pan American Plaza improvements.

STREETCAR SYSTEM This 3-mile fixed guideway circulator system is the most costly transportation project identified for Downtown whose initial feasibility can be determined in the near-term. Other options like a less expensive bus trolley should be part of that study.

TEXAS/MEXICAN RAIL DEPOT The historic building is strategically situated as a future transit station for a Downtown circulator system. This project is conceived to serve as a transit station with complimentary mixed-uses

and a public transit plaza. Feasibility study is a near-term action that will inform subsequent steps to secure and reuse the building.

RELOCATE KCS RAIL LINE AT WEST RAIL YARD This is the essential step in realizing the past recommended disposition of use as public park and green space. Contact with rail line officials and exploration of this as a project can be a near-term action with long-term implementation.

EL PORTAL PARKING STRUCTURES WITH GROUND LEASE EXHIBIT/TRADE Meeting the future parking deficiency in Downtown, and in particular the A&E District would be accomplished through this project in association with the La Portada Border Center. The parking structures would contain trade and exhibit space on the ground floor and parking decks above for combined total of 1,000 parking spaces.

NEW MULTIMODAL CENTER The vacant and underutilized blocks across the KCS rail line from the Tex-Mex Rail Depot are seen as a potential location for a new multimodal center that consolidates all of the regional bus carriers with local service, a Downtown circulator and the distant future opportunity for regional passenger rail service. This can be evaluated in the near-term Downtown Transportation, Mobility and Access Study

INFRASTRUCTURE SUSTAINABILITY

INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITES REHABILITATION & REPLACEMENT PLAN This is a near-term study to comprehensively assess rehabilitation and replacement of existing streets, sidewalks, lighting, water and sanitary sewer, stormwater drainage, and overhead and underground utilities to meet what the ultimate capacity needs will be for Downtown. The study should outline a strategic approach that optimizes the various street,



infrastructure, and utilities improvements into consolidated projects. The study should include means and methods for reducing the adverse effects on traffic circulation, pedestrian access and safety, access to businesses, and emergency access caused by public works and utilities projects. Although such work is needed now and in the future to support Downtown revitalization, street closures and construction activities are disruptive and, if not properly managed, can cripple businesses and the Downtown economy.

WATER, SANITARY SEWER & STORMWATER REPLACEMENT

All of the 6-inch water lines will need to be replaced with 8-inch lines and the majority of larger lines replaced to properly service full utilization of existing capacity. Added capacity should also be considered for larger lines that serve Downtown and areas of concentrated infill development. This massive reconstruction of Downtown's infrastructure will need to occur as a series of projects extending from near to long-term.

OVERHEAD UTILITIES CONVERSION TO UNDERGROUND

Conversion of overhead utilities to underground is recommended to San Eduardo to the east and Davis and around the convention center site to the west, to Victoria Street on the north and all along the Vega Lands. This will have a substantially positive effect on the historic townscape and visual/aesthetic qualities of adjacent properties where redevelopment and infill development are most opportune.

DOWNTOWN PARKS & GREEN SPACE PLAN

This should be a near-term initiative that recognizes the importance of having positive urban space and parks to increase the attraction of living in Downtown. The study should further define the character and scope of Downtown's plazas, parks and open spaces. It can be part of an all-encompassing City parks master plan, but with Downtown's historic urban fabric and border security issues Downtown open spaces are a

unique category and should not be lost amid broader considerations.

ZACATE LINEAR PARK IMPROVEMENTS

This is a near-term planning and design project with near, mid, and long-term implementation. There will need to be a range of improvements designed to attract people and positive activity, and interest in historically-sensitive revitalization of Barrio Azteca. Achieving adequate water quality and flow in the creek is an essential component to improve the environment for human activity and habitat for wildlife.

HISTORIC PLAZAS REHABILITATION

The plazas and parks in Downtown are anchors for activity and critical urban open spaces. These projects are near and mid-term that can be approached on a place or phase basis.

NEW URBAN AND RECREATIONAL SPACES

These are projects generally associated with the parks and green space master plan for Downtown and are near, mid, and long-term.

HEAT ISLAND EFFECTS REDUCTION

Although Laredo is unavoidably subject to the South Texas climate, the heat island effect of Downtown can be partially mitigated through the use of shade structures and plantings, sensitive building design and retrofits, and the incorporation of heat reflective materials, admixtures and coatings for pavements and roof coverings. Just a slight reduction of the ambient temperature in Downtown provides substantial savings in energy costs and increases the level of outdoor comfort. This can be implemented in the near-term by adopting appropriate policies and building code amendments.

WATER USE EFFICIENCY & QUALITY STRATEGIC PLAN

Expanding open space in Downtown that will attract people and positive activity infers that there will be ample shade and planting.

Policies and BMP's – best management practices - that support both the expansion of and efficiency of irrigation are likely to be progressive over time and thus necessary in near, mid, and long-term planning. The urban condition also affects the quality of stormwater flowing into the Rio Grande and should be addressed as a continuum of progressive policy and BMP measures.

STORMWATER BIOFILTRATION/ENGINEERED WETLANDS

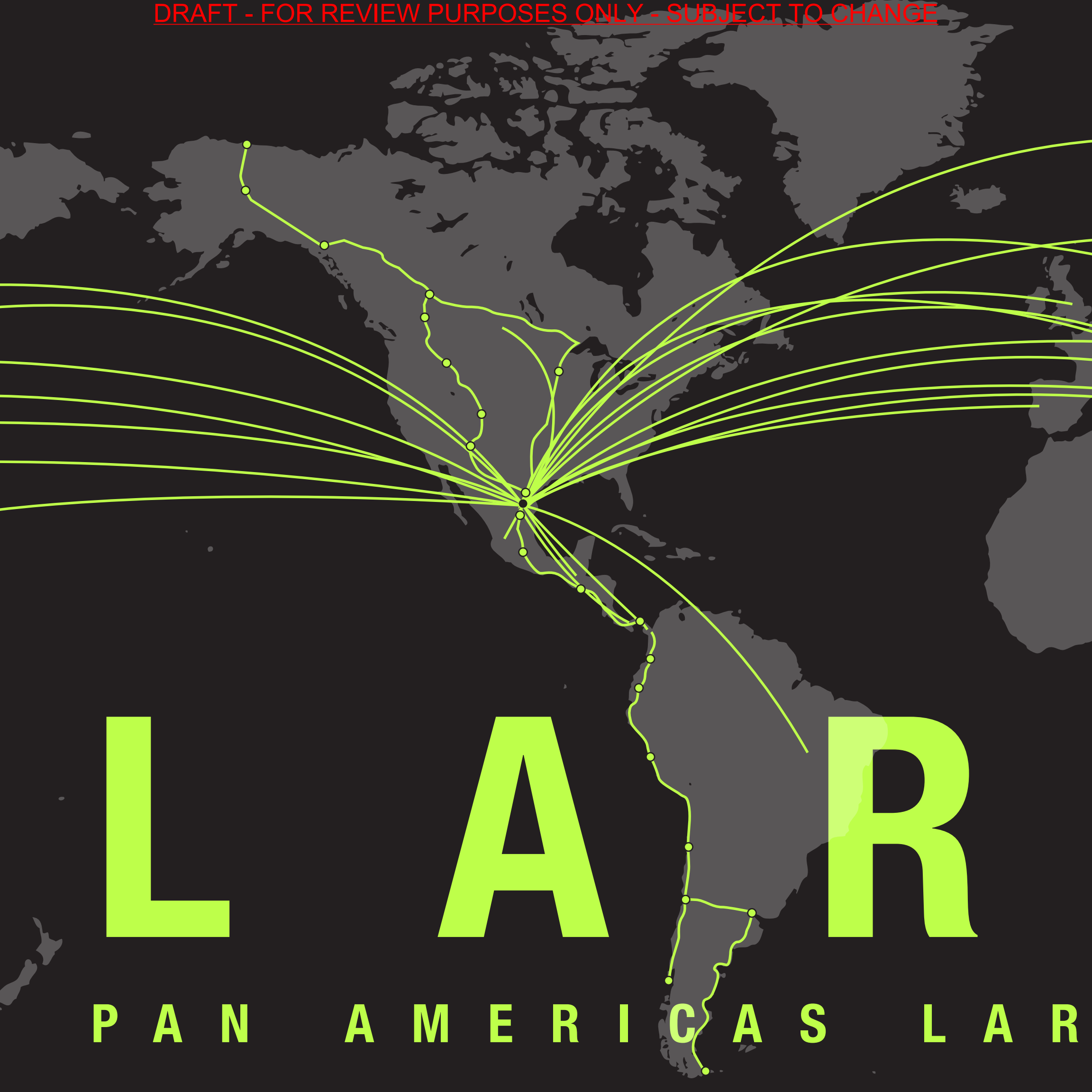
Targeting the stormwater outfalls from Downtown into the Rio Grande to mitigate pollution and enhance the environmental qualities of the Vega will ultimately add value to adjacent properties and attract people for recreational and cultural use. Constructed wetlands can provide effective, economical, and environmentally sound treatment of wastewater; and storm water runoff, as well as being used as a water source for the creation of wetland habitat for wildlife use, environmental enhancement, and public recreation. The design approach to riverfront development that creates an embayment or impoundment of water in Dos Laredos and Dos Puentes Parks offers the opportunity to develop more than its urban and park settings. The extension of a water course embayment adds additional bank length within the Vega and greatly increases the area of potential wetlands habitat. Planning and design is near-term with implementation as a mid-term project.

ZACATE CREEK TREATMENT PLANT CONVERSION TO RECYCLED WATER PRODUCTION & RECYCLED WATER LINE

The imminent decommissioning of the Zacate Creek treatment plant prompted the idea to maintain some of its treatment capacity for the production of recycled water. Re-imagining wastewater treatment in a new cultural landscape could provide other opportunities as an environmental center that for public use, research and demonstration. It could be the central facility for ecotourism, demonstrating how urban and natural systems can interact. A strategic reuse plan would need to be developed as part of the decommissioning plan in the near-term, with implementation as mid and long-term projects. As recycled water would be a critical resource to support Downtown parks and open space, the timing of any conversion will be an important factor.

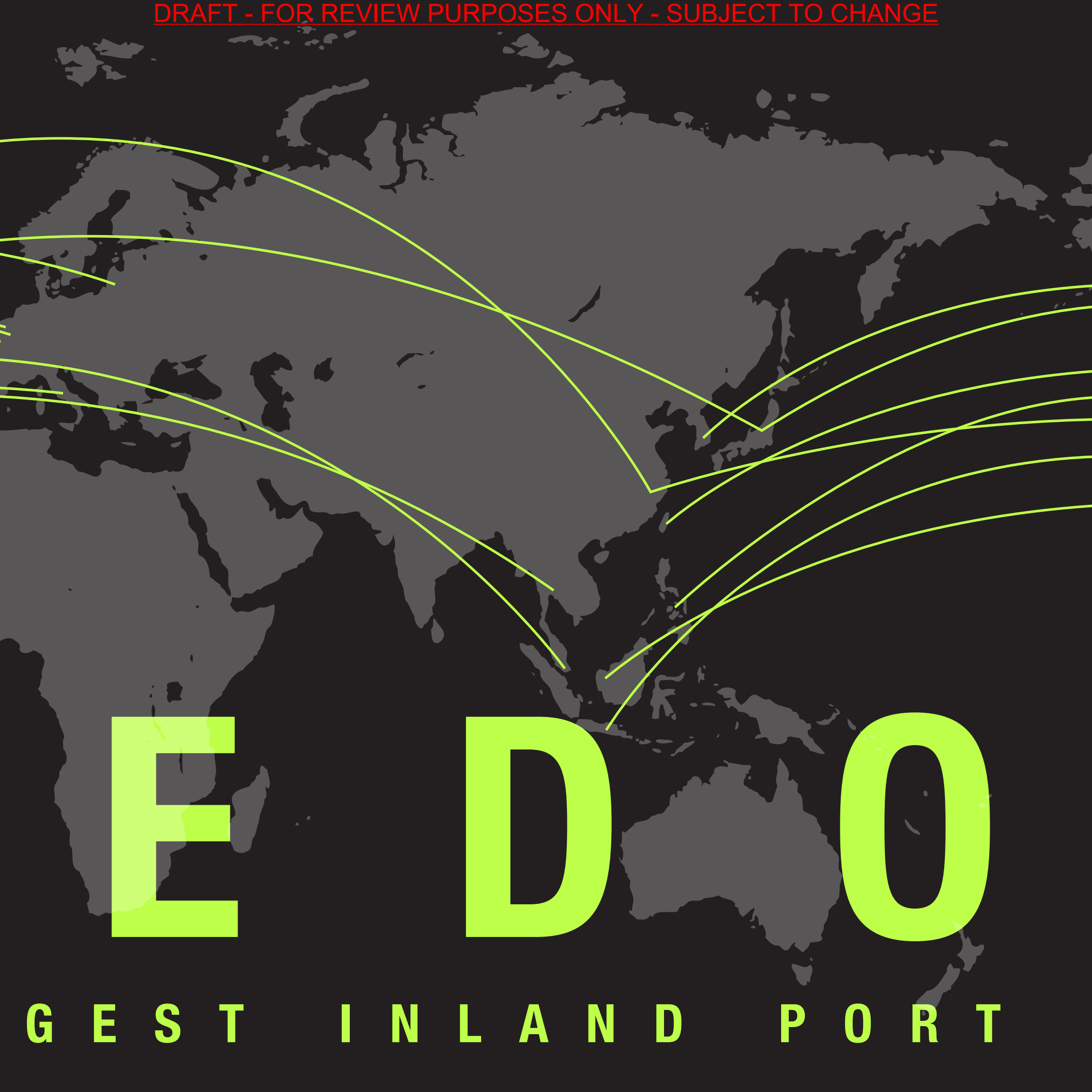
ALTERNATIVE ENERGY INITIATIVES

Although the smokestacks for coal-fired generators are prominent features in Laredo's historic skyline, the use of windmills is also in evidence. The future provision of wind and solar energy generation in Downtown can take advantage of the conversion of the west switchyard to park and open space and expanses of future roofs and parking decks. This can be a near-term policy plan with mid to long-term implementation.



L A A R

P A N A M E R I C A S L A R



EDDO

G E S T I N L A N D P O R T

LAREDO 2020: A BIG IDEA

Since 1853, 21 American cities have hosted 32 world's fairs, the most recent one New Orleans in 1984. They have ranged in size and ambition from modest to the largest possible (New York City). One thing they all have in common is the built legacy and civic boost created in host cities. Fairs bring great international attention and other long-term benefits.

In the words of Robert Rydell, a professor of history at Montana State University and author of several books on world's fairs (including *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions*): “[World's fairs] leave behind museums, parks, urban corridors, transportation facilities. That's one of the reasons nations of the world are vying for the next world's fair because these are tremendous boons for economic development.”

In one specific case, San Diego became a major Navy center as a result of visits to the 1915 fair by American military brass. The fair distributed positive national images of southern California that were unsurpassed at the beginning of the twentieth century.

“Lots of people didn't know much about San Diego until the 1915 fair and the same with the 1935 fair,” according to Matthew F. Bokovoy, editor at University of Oklahoma Press, who wrote *The San Diego World's Fairs and Southwestern Memory, 1880-1940*. “It paid off in other ways over the 20th century that we really can't quantify.”

AMERICAN EXPOSITIONS AFTER MID-20TH CENTURY

1962 SEATTLE, WASHINGTON (CENTURY 21 EXPOSITION)

Attended by over 10 million people during its run, the exposition left behind a centrally located fairground with numerous public buildings and public works. Many experts credit the fair with revitalizing Seattle's economic and cultural life.

The site selected for the Century 21 Exposition had originally been contemplated for a civic center. The idea of using it for the World's Fair came later and brought in federal money for the United States Science Pavilion (now the Pacific Science Center) and state money for the Washington State Coliseum (later Seattle Center Coliseum).

The fair saw the construction of the Space Needle and the Alweg monorail, as well as several sports venues and performing arts buildings. The site, slightly expanded since the fair, is now called Seattle Center. The United States Science Pavilion is now the Pacific Science Center. The Experience Music Project, which opened in 2000, was deliberately designed to fit in with the fairground's atmosphere.

1968 SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS (HEMISFAIR '68)

Held in conjunction with the 250th anniversary of San Antonio's founding, HemisFair was built on 96 acres on the southeastern edge of downtown. It was the first officially designated international exposition held in the southwestern United States.

The fair's theme structure was the Tower of the Americas (750 feet tall), which is still a popular visitor attraction, housing a revolving restaurant and outdoor observation deck. The fair's largest building, the Texas Pavilion, remained after the fair to become the Institute of Texan Cultures, an important ethnic history museum. The United States Pavilion was successfully converted into a United States District Courthouse and the Mexico Pavilion is now the home of the Mexican Cultural Institute.

HemisFair '68 attracted 6.3 million visitors and brought international attention to San Antonio and Texas. The project was partially developed with federal urban renewal funds. Today's urban park, the exposition's lasting legacy, continues to benefit the city's cultural life.



1974 SPOKANE, WASHINGTON (EXPO '74)

Spokane was the smallest city (2010 population: 208, 900) to host a world's fair until the 1982 World's Fair in Knoxville, Tennessee (2010 population: 178,874). The fair had 5.2 million visitors.

The heart of the fair grounds was located in the center of the city, on Canada and Havermale Islands, and on the adjacent bank of the Spokane River. With the exception of the two major pavilions, all other buildings were modular structures assembled on-site.

After the fair's closing, the exposition site became the city's 100-acre Riverfront Park. The former U.S. Pavilion now houses an IMAX theater, and the original Washington State Pavilion is now the Spokane Convention Center and adjoining Opera House. A renewed downtown Spokane is one of the major legacies of Expo '74.



1982 KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE (INTERNATIONAL ENERGY EXPOSITION)

Attended by 11 million visitors, the fair was constructed on a 70-acre site between downtown Knoxville and the University of Tennessee. The core of the site consisted primarily of a deteriorating section of the city.

The former fair's site is now home to the Knoxville Convention Center and the Knoxville Museum of Art. The theme structure, the Sunsphere, a 266-foot steel tower topped with a five-story gold globe, still stands and is today a prominent civic symbol. The locations of several national pavilions later reverted to the University of Tennessee.



1984 NEW ORLEANS (LOUISIANA WORLD EXPOSITION)

Built on an 84-acre site along the Mississippi River, the fair received 7 million guests during its six-month operation.

Several old warehouses were renovated for New Orleans's fair, which helped revitalize the city's Old Warehouse District. Two structures originally built for the fair, the Riverwalk Marketplace and Building One of the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, continued to play an important role in the city's vitality.



PAN AMERICAN EXPOSITION

▼ **Pan-American Exposition, 1901**

Buffalo, NY. Courtesy of the Frances Loeb Library, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University.



PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

In 1920 future Mexican President Ortiz Rubio, in his role as Secretary of Communications, worked to extend the Meridian Highway (est. 1911) as part of the International Pacific Highway — the future Pan American Highway — from Canada to Argentina.

This being 2011, the 100th anniversary of the Meridian Highway that is now IH35, offers a rare historical moment for Laredo. Pan American Plaza can be a significant urban space as proposed, but with 2020 being the anniversary of the inception of the Pan American Highway, Laredo could look towards an event that would be both commemorative and visionary by hosting a Pan American Exposition in that year.

The monumental scale of Pan American Plaza and its unique linkage with international trade and the transnational phenomenon elevates the potential for a profoundly meaningful celebration of international relations, trade and cultural ties. Such an event would magnify interest and investment in Laredo that would otherwise be unattainable, and have a global impact in distinguishing the city.

The prospect for a rapid transformation of the '4-block area' from its current inhospitable and underdeveloped condition into a grand plaza gateway and substantial urban infrastructure is unique. The commemorative focus provides an historical and meaningful basis for redevelopment, and the Pan American theme extends beyond Laredo so that other countries can participate. Exposition space can be provided in building forms that can be converted to conventional commercial and residential uses after the event, thus leveraging funding.

CHAPTER

CONDITIONS

TER 7



TIONS



The San Agustin Cathedral is one of the oldest in the Southwest. A French priest, Father Pierre Yves Keralum, was the designer and architect for this historical monument which opened on December 12, 1872. In 2000, the Diocese of Laredo was established and the San Agustin Church was made its Cathedral by orders of His Holiness Pope John Paul II.

Laredo's Downtown is a constantly evolving place, interwoven with the activities and relationships of people and systems. While it is expedient to identify individual urban components Such as streets, movement, buildings, parks and utilities, the reality is that Downtown is an assemblage whose sum is more than its parts, and includes two hundred and fifty six years of cultural heritage, values, and meanings.

CONDITIONS

Downtown's material landscape can be grossly quantifiable: its area, land and building uses, zoning, property values, extent of enclosed buildings, and ownership. The safe and efficient movement of vehicles and the capacity of streets is always a major concern and are to some degree documented. Of no less concern are the systems that support Downtown: power, water, sewers, gas, communications; and knowledge of these utilities are generally but not absolutely determined.

The economy of Downtown can be somewhat understood in terms of sales tax receipts and property taxes, although some transactions may go unrecorded and valuations may not correspond with the real estate market. Merchandizing drives the economy of Downtown and so it was important in the planning process to produce a detailed inventory of uses identifying the types and magnitude of businesses. Downtown cannot be operated as a single enterprise, but it does compete with shopping malls and commercial centers that are singularly controlled and managed.

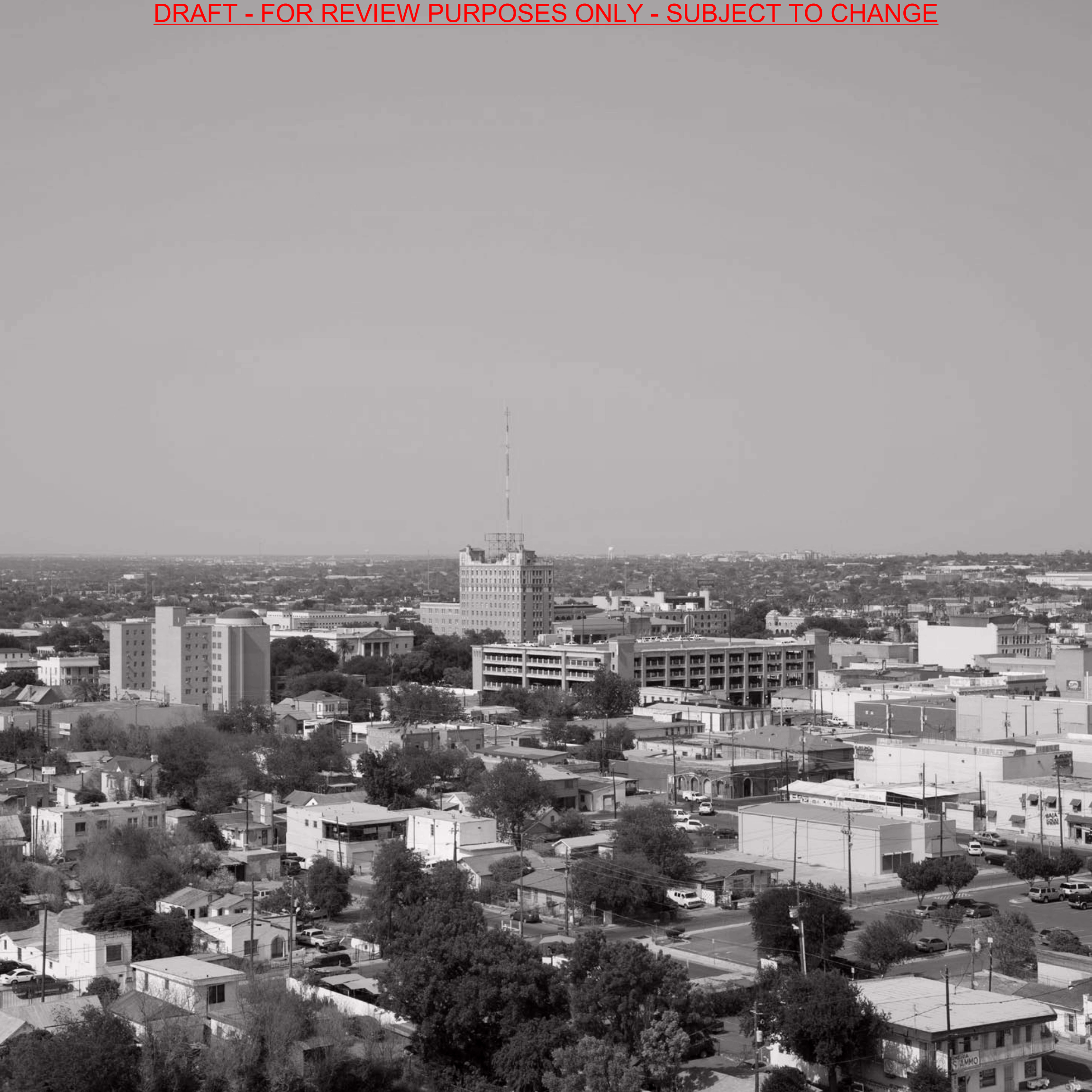
Less known is the movement of people when they are not in vehicles: how many are going to what, and why, and for how long; whether they feel comfortable, safe, satisfied (or not) with their immediate environment, and again, why. Answers can be inferred to some extent, but far less known about Downtown's most fundamental activity – walking, than about nearly everything else.

The imperative of gathering relevant data on Downtown is to understand the phenomena beyond the reality, and this is accomplished by looking for patterns in the data and the townscape. The consultants spent several months researching and documenting Downtown as part of the planning progress. The foundation of the research rests upon the data entered into a geospatial information model utilizing Geographic Information System software GIS, and included as much as practical the field verification of building configurations, areas, and uses.

The collected data enables a more complete understanding of how Downtown functions as an economic, ecologic, and social facility, and provides a relatively accurate model for the visualization of data, display of information, and the testing of proposed interventions in virtual form. The geospatial information model will be useful after this particular master plan as it establishes a baseline to incrementally measure changes and progress, thus supporting an evidence-based planning and urban design process at strategic as well as tactical intervals.

Such information does not however substitute for the sensory experience of Downtown and reflectance on its phenomenological effects. The benefit of spending time "in the field" was having the opportunity to be either purposefully or randomly involved, active or passive. The data collection was essential to absorb the character of Downtown as a participant and not just an observer.







HISTORIC URBAN FABRIC

Downtown largely captures the extent of historic Laredo as depicted in this c.1888 view. Although the rendering has embellishments, the essence of Laredo's historical use, form and character is apparent, and clearly reveals Laredo's historical urban antecedents. Downtown is for many the principal repository of Laredo's history and cultural memory. As such, revitalization of Downtown is integral with protecting and conserving historic resources as a means of enhancing overall character, economic value, and sense of place.

The original c.1755 Townsite had eroded during the turmoil of the Mexican and Texas Revolutions and was shifted to the present plazas of San Agustín and the Market before the Civil War. The gridiron pattern of blocks and streets appears little different than most other U.S. towns, but is measured in varas and a testament of its Spanish Colonial heritage.

The streets in the earlier and lower portion of the town were laid out in 10 vara widths (28 feet). Blocks were subdivided into lots measuring 20 by 40 varas (56 by 112 feet), which resulted in blocks 100 by 80 varas (280 by 224 feet). As the town expanded north of Farragut Street the street widths were doubled to 20 varas and new lot widths narrowed to 19 varas. North/South streets are avenues and predominately named for Catholic saints, and East/West street names alternate between U.S. and Mexico military figures and heads of state. Although some of the

narrow streets have been widened, Downtown, in concert with dense blocks of low-rise historic buildings maintains an intimate pedestrian scale. Downtown streets were largely unpaved until the 1920's and in El Azteca well into the 1950's.

As the Mexico-Texas border stabilized along the Rio Grande River, Laredo's position as a port of entry was secured, but was not realized until the 1880's when the railroads reached the town, bridges were built, and the declaration of a Zona Libre between Laredo and Nuevo Laredo established export and import trade as a formidable market.

Late 19th century Laredo was a compact town of 13,000 people who lived and worked within a 700-acre area circumvallated with railroad lines, the Rio Grande and its tributary Zacate Creek. Businesses congregated around the two plazas and along Flores Street, but expanded to and along Convent Street as the bridge drew increased traffic.

Fort McIntosh lies across the tracks to the west along the river bend. Across the Rio Grande to the south is Nuevo Laredo, a result of the Texas Revolution and U.S.-Mexican War. The separation was more a political divide, as bonds of kin, culture and trade continued unabated. Nuevo Laredo's downtown evolved as a center for Mexican goods, entertainment and night life that attracted generations of Laredoans and U.S. tourists.



The Rio Grande is rendered as a wide river before upstream diversions reduced its flow. The river was normally low yet prone to ferocious floods and quite deserving of its Mexican name Rio Bravo. Navigation was limited to the immediate region and unreachable from the Gulf of Mexico without portage. The view also shows extensive bank erosion as the river's thin margin of riparian forest was cleared for timber early in Laredo's history. The river has always provided for Laredo's water needs but it has taken two centuries for Laredoans to consider the Rio Grande's other habitat, recreational and scenic attributes.

Laredo's expansion throughout most of the 20th century simply extended the street and block grid pattern, which makes Downtown's promise of a more livable and productive urban environment consequential for the City as a whole. If revitalization of Downtown can successfully raise the quality of life, increase economic value, and expand cultural vitality, then its success can serve as a model in developing other urban centers in greater Laredo.

1. BUILDINGS

Downtown's urban fabric is composed of its streets, plazas, parks, and buildings, and its historic form has survived largely intact despite the replacement of more than half of the buildings depicted in this view. The increased building density that diagonally trends from San Agustin Plaza to Jarvis Plaza is apparent and prevails today.

Laredo's first permanent buildings were typically one-story and built tight to the lot line enclosing a patio using locally quarried sandstone for masonry walls and flat roofs. The use of locally quarried sandstone diminished as Laredo's brick industry grew but the patio house/store pattern persisted well into the 19th century with little architectural distinction between residential and commercial uses. The Republic of the Rio Grande Museum is exemplary for its exterior and interior authenticity, but the more altered Leyendecker House, Casa Ortiz and the VFW Hall, all on Zaragosa Street, retain their enclosed patios and zaguanes (gated entrances).

As Laredo's growth and rise in property values, availability of building materials, and acceptance of design trends progressed, its urban scale and architectural character advanced. Two and three-story buildings with commercial ground floors and upper floor office and residential uses were common, and a host of specialized private, public, and institutional buildings manifested Laredo's trajectory towards a complex and differentiated Downtown.

Laredo's spare Neo-classically influenced Border Brick Architecture found higher expression in government buildings such as the Webb County Courthouse and the U.S. Post Office. More exuberant stylistic interpretations of Spanish Colonial and Mission Styles emerged in the early 20th century, along with a spatter of Art Deco and Moderne commercial buildings.



Figure 1. Buildings

The resilience of Downtown Laredo however, lies in its pedestrian-supported urban pattern, where even non-historic undistinguished buildings play a supporting role in providing a viable setting for urban life. More than a century after this view, this Master Plan aspires for a townscape of similar form and character.

2. PLAZAS, SQUARES, AND PARKS

Laredo's distinction for having multiple plazas may be due to its urban formation occurring after the Spanish Colonial and Mexican Republic planning precepts that called for a single plaza major and multiple secondary plazas. An 1888 City Ordinance established an astonishing twenty three public plazas, squares and parks throughout Laredo, but initially equitably balanced its religious and secular functions with San Agustin Plaza and Market Square located separately but in close proximity. Plaza San Agustin more closely represents Laredo's Spanish Colonial heritage, particularly with the dominating presence of San Agustin Church, but was historically used for everything from corralling cattle, public announcements, ferias (celebrations), even gunfights. Market Square is more indicative of Anglo-American use of public space, which was to put a building (City Hall) in its center rather than leaving it as open assembly space.

The character and scale of Plaza San Agustin is exemplary of a functional and meaningful urban space. The vintage layout belies its contemporary intensity of use. Although there are significant detriments in its current condition, the historicity of its space, iconic presence of the church, lovely shaded seating, character of paving, and continuum of activity provides a potent sense of place for Downtown. The open space of Market Plaza consists of the residual area around the City Market building, its ancillary structures, and surrounding commercial buildings. Ample shading from trees and building canopies, water

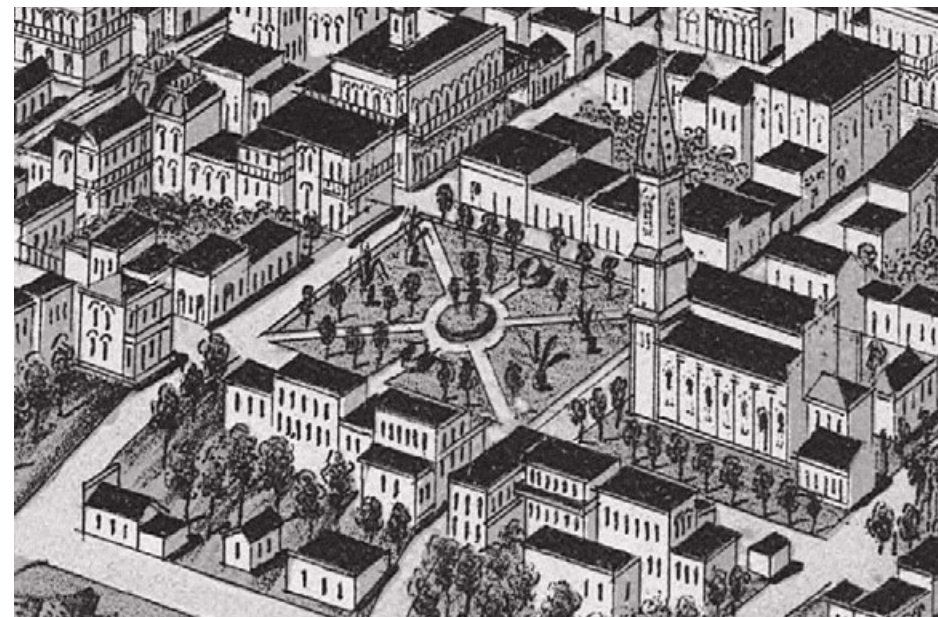


Figure 2. Plazas, Squares, and Parks

fountains, make this plaza a pleasant destination.

Laredo wasted little time in dedicating additional plazas and squares: Jarvis, Bruni, Noria, and St. Peters were established in the 1880's and provided open space for different public uses. Jarvis Plaza was initially fronted by hotels and stores, and later became the formal space in front of the U.S. Post Office. Bruni Plaza was first dedicated as a "Public Square", was subsequently referred to as Juarez Plaza, and rededicated in the 1930's for the benefactor of its improvements. Noria Plaza was initially a watering place for cattle droves and latter served more as a playground for an adjacent school. St. Peters was and continues to be more a grassy neighborhood park. A City Ordinance in 1911 called for providing public concerts in the city parks and plazas. Evidence of Laredo's historical attitude with the Rio Grande is evidenced by the lack of any park or public space along its banks.

3. TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Laredo was one of several competing way station/river crossings for a century before the arrival of railroad in the 1880's. The Spanish Colonial highway network was formed by the Caminos Reales, dedicated routes typically established by Spain's military engineers. Laredo emerged along the preferred route between San Antonio and Monclova, and later between San Antonio and Monterrey. The Old Laredo-San Antonio Road followed the colonial route and entered north Laredo along San Bernardo Street. As cars succeeded wagons, this route evolved as the Meridian Highway, U.S. Highway 81, the Pan American Highway, and today's IH 35.

Of equal historic importance was the military road that paralleled the Rio Grande and connected Laredo's Fort McIntosh to Fort Duncan (Eagle Pass), Ringgold Barracks (Rio Grande City) and Fort Brown (Brownsville);



Figure 3. Transportation and Infrastructure

and the military supply route to Fort Ewell and the port of Corpus Christi. All of these early routes blazed the path for current state highways and railroads that converge on Downtown from the east.

There were four different railroad lines providing freight and passenger service. An extensive switchyard was built up on the west edge of town where a coal terminal and brick manufacturers (Ladrillera) were located. The Mexican National Railroad line ran along the north edge of town and extended to a switch and service yard across Zacate Creek.

Crossing the Rio Grande was a critical link in the transport network, first accommodated with ferries and later with high span bridges. In the late 1880's two bridges were constructed for rail and general purpose that have since been replaced by the current steel rail bridge and concrete Gateway of the Americas Bridge (No.1). In this view, Bridge 1 lands at both ends of Laredo's and Nuevo Laredo's prime commercial streets, which also shared a streetcar line.

Laredo's streetcar system was among the earliest electrified systems west of the Mississippi and unique among border cities for its bi-national service area. Initial routes were relocated and expanded in the early 20th century with the main east/west line on Farrugut Street with north/south runs along Santa Maria, Convent and San Bernardo Avenues in Downtown. The streetcars were replaced with buses in 1938. Concrete piers that once supported the street car bridges across Zacate Creek still remain.

The abundance of coal and water made steam-driven generators an ideal energy source and enabled a late-arriving but rapid industrialization of Laredo's utilities infrastructure and economy. The water works pump house was built at the base of Bridge 1 and supplied domestic needs

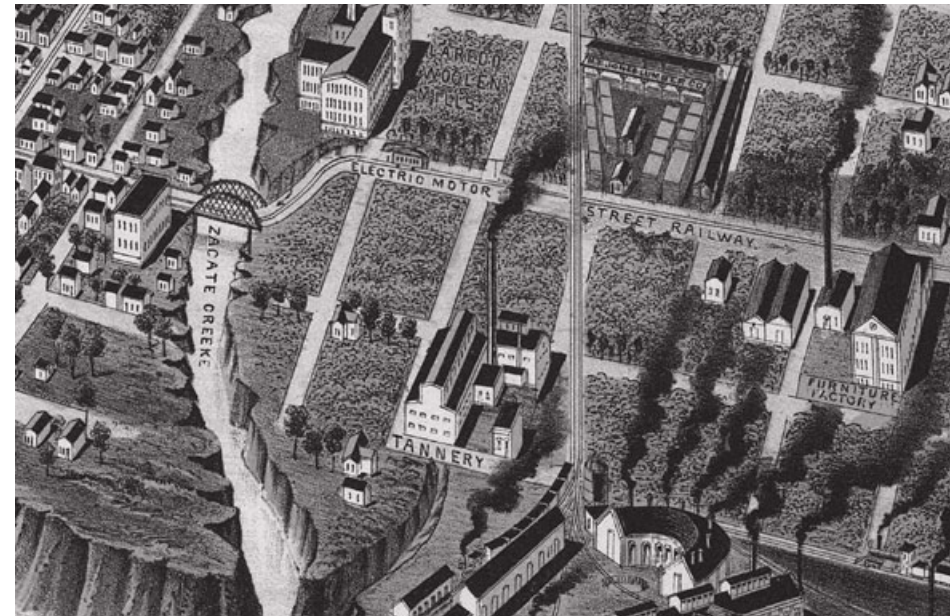


Figure 4. Economy

and fire lines. A sanitary sewer system followed soon after but a treatment plant was not installed until the early 20th century.

4. ECONOMY

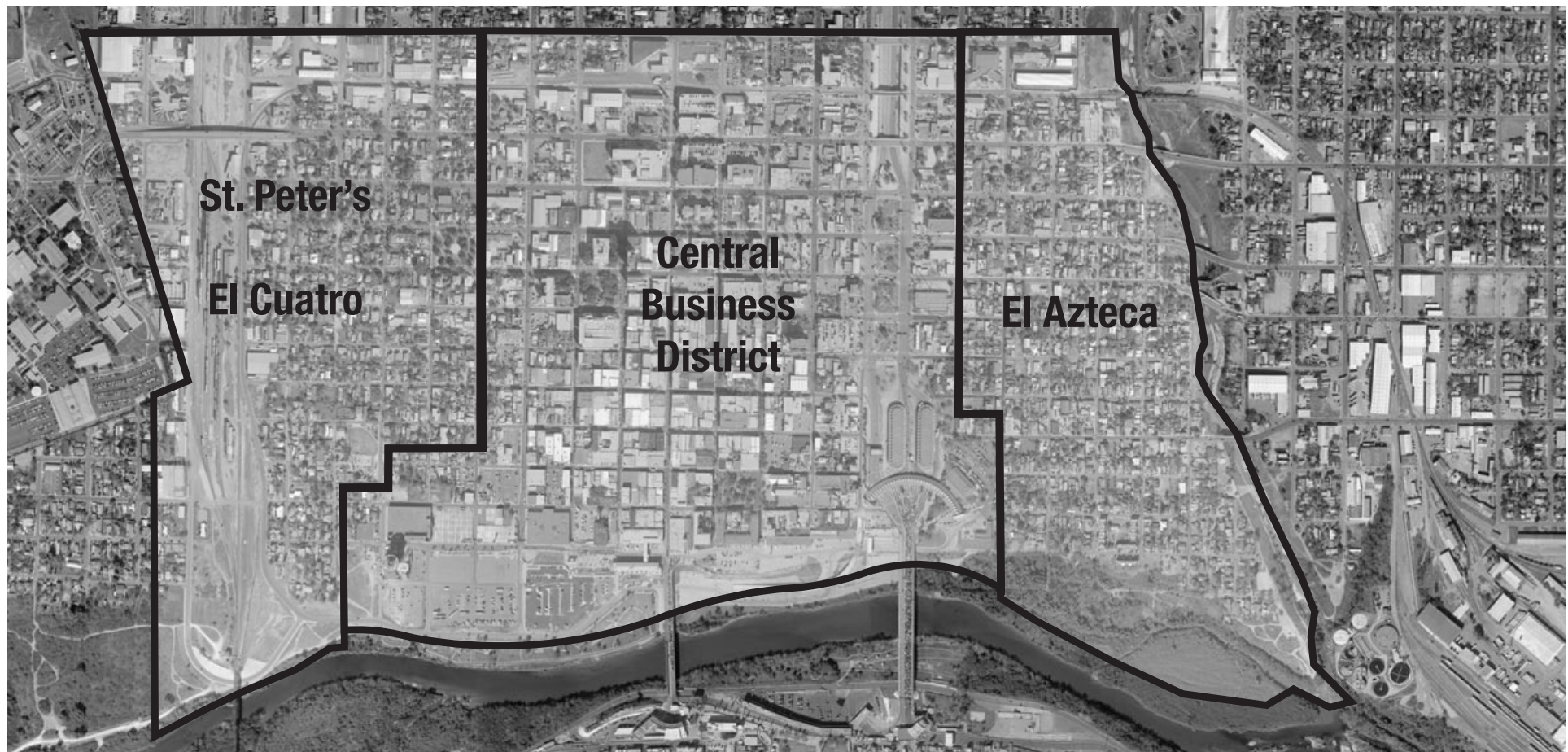
Laredo's initial economy was based on ranching, but it was the availability of coal, unique in Texas settlements, that enabled industrialization after the Civil War. Laredo's clays were extracted for making brick, trees harvested for lumber, and livestock provided hides and wool for the manufacturing of furniture, mattresses, soap, hats, and leather goods for local needs and export.

The water system also allowed expansion of irrigation and cultivation of food and feed crops for local use; cornmeal, feed corn, and notably onions were prolific and widely exported. As coal reserves played out in the 1920's the timely discovery of local oil and gas reserves accelerated the pace of Laredo's growth. Expansion of the military presence in WW's I and II contributed a stabilizing factor to a relatively prosperous economy.

The broad view shows a dramatic multitude of factory smokestacks, intended no doubt to impress would be investors in Laredo's prospects. Less conspicuous are the half dozen windmills which were historically important energy generators in the South Texas wind shed. Downtown is wealthy regarding the energy imbedded in its buildings and infrastructure. How well this investment provides future dividends is an overarching challenge for Laredo.

PATTERNS OF LAND USE, REGULATION, VALUE & TENURE

Downtown land use is characteristic of a metropolitan urban core with concentrations of retail and government uses surrounded by mixed-use residential, office and retail. There is a substantial area of developed and undeveloped Vacant Use that is taken up by railroad R.O.W., public and private parking, ports of entry and floodplain; which generally follows the east, south and west margins of Downtown. Zoning is applied more broadly as contiguous areas or districts, with a CBD zoning designation for the core area, and various Mixed-Use designations to the east and west. As might be expected, valuations are highest in the center of the CBD and decline toward the outer margins. The majority of private and public properties have ownership addresses in Laredo and Webb County.



DOWNTOWN AS NEIGHBORHOOD

Flanked by Barrio El Azteca on the east and on the west by St. Peter's/El Cuatro, the Central Business District is the core area of Downtown; for many it is the Downtown. Notwithstanding the concentration of commercial and government uses, any downtown that is or strives to be more attractive and vital in the greater community needs to have a viable residential population.

Residential uses in Downtown is limited and dominated by senior housing. Residential property values and housing conditions in Azteca and St. Peters/El Cuatro are below

Laredo, state, and national medians but have much larger populations. The sense of community in Azteca is quite strong; there is a discernable pride despite the obvious signs of neglect and deferred maintenance of its architecturally modest but historically significant building inventory. St. Peter's/El Cuatro has a greater architectural presence and is less isolated from the CBD, but its sense of community seems less vibrant than Azteca, possibly due to extensive non-residential encroachments.

ACTIVITY ZONES

The streets, plazas and buildings of Downtown

are relatively static and provide the setting for the life of Downtown: the movement of people and vehicles; and their various working, shopping and socializing activities. Downtown is sufficiently large to have developed a number of specialized areas of activity herein referenced as activity zones. Activity zones generally correspond with particular urban configurations and building types, but there are exceptions and places where a zone's margins are blurred, overlap with another, diminish by degrees or terminate sharply. Zones also have some correspondence with Districts - areas of special zoning overlay delimited by a legal boundary, but other than being in the CBD,

zones are more ad hoc and use-driven rather than existing by some official pronouncement.

MERCHANDIZE ZONE Downtown Laredo's primary activity occurs in the merchandise zone, a multi block area along both sides of Convent Avenue and anchored on the south at Bridge 1. The character of goods and services in merchandise zone has been and continues to be a dynamic phenomenon according to economic conditions, exchange rates, and consumer trends. In the 1980's and 90's the merchandize zone was largely occupied by deep discount stores, ropas usadas, and wholesalers. The past five years have seen a diminishment of high volume wholesalers and ropas usadas and an increase in building vacancy.

GOVERNMENT ZONE Laredo City Hall and various administrative offices are grouped with the Webb County Courthouse and county administrative offices, including the Jail. The U.S. Courthouse and main Post Office buildings contribute a federal presence; all collocated in nine or so blocks in the north central area. The main offices for government employees and elected officials are in Downtown and generate substantial activity and collateral uses such as offices for attorneys and legal services.

EL PORTAL: BRIDGE 1 AND 2 The two ports of entry are estimated to generate more than half of the non-commercial vehicular and nearly all of the pedestrian traffic in Downtown. Bridge 1 is the Gateway to the Americas Bridge, which lands ten to eleven thousand people from Mexico on foot and several thousand cars each day. Bridge 2 is exclusive for non-commercial vehicles with a daily average of about 11,000. Without these bridges Downtown would have far less intensity of use and traffic. Similar to other border cities, duty free stores are drawn to these locations.

VILLA ANTIGUA The Villa Antigua is centered on Plaza San Agustin and forms the core of Laredo's historic townscape. The historic San Agustin Church and picturesque La Posada Hotel are among Laredo's most significant landmarks and generate considerable activity. The plaza is also a traditional place for dropping off and picking up people crossing Bridge 1, located

one block west by an exclusively pedestrian segment of Zaragosa Street. Cars and people are active at all times of the day and night, and the only place in Downtown where there is constant activity.

MARKET PLAZA Market Plaza, only two blocks from Plaza San Agustin, nevertheless generates its own activity primarily around the Laredo Center for the Arts and the Laredo Convention and Visitors Bureau. There are several bar/nightclubs fronting the plaza that afford Downtown's limited evening entertainment. Vacancies in the surrounding buildings, particularly the Plaza Theatre, have suppressed the intensity of activity in recent years. The HEB grocery store is located one block north and generates considerable activity throughout the day and evening.

ST. PETER'S PLAZA Administrative offices and educational facilities of the Laredo Independent School District energize the zone around St. Peter's Plaza. A plan to relocate all but an adult education center includes the sale of surplus properties, which are generally suited for office use, but with current economic conditions may prove to be a protracted period of reoccupation.

ST. PETER'S/ELCUATRO

El Cuatro developed as a residential neighborhood in the mid to late nineteenth century, its name derived from the voting precinct in which it was located – the Fourth Ward. Expansion of the CBD has diminished El Cuatro's eastern margins, and in the latter twentieth century the southwest portion became known as El Rincon del Diablo for its reputation as a rough neighborhood. Although El Cuatro has not been considered as historic as other parts of Downtown there is an ongoing evaluation of its resources and potential eligibility for designation. St. Peter's adjoins El Cuatro north along Lincoln Street and is a City historic district centered on St. Peter's Church and the plaza. The aggregate area is defined in this Master Plan as Scott Street on the north, Santa Maria Avenue on the east, the Rio Grande River on the south, and Laredo Community College on the west.

El Cuatro, St. Peter's and El Rincon del Diablo.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

The CBD is the main focus of this Master Plan, and includes the high activity areas of the shopping district and government offices. The oldest and most historic portion is centered on the church and plaza of San Agustin, and is considered the Villa Antigua. Plaza San Agustin is arguably Laredo's finest urban space and is fronted by the non-historic but romantically set La Posada Hotel. The Old City Market Building takes up its market square and now serves as the Laredo Center for the Arts. Laredo's most active area is its merchandizing zone, which gravitates from several blocks either side of Convent Avenue from the Bridge 1 to City Hall. The government zone has a full spectrum of national, county and municipal offices and then dissipates to banks and regional bus lines on the east, merges with St. Peter's to the west, and stops at the tracks on the north.

EL AZTECA

The Azteca barrio is considered one of the oldest residential areas in Laredo, a mid to late nineteenth century outgrowth from a settlement called El Ranchero, but after 1922 became known as El Azteca from the Azteca Theater in the neighborhood on Lincoln Street. Defined by Scott Street on the North, San Dario Avenue on the west, the Rio Grande River on the South, and Zacate Creek on the east, much of El Azteca lies within the Azteca National Register Historic District. Historically the neighborhood was centered on the Escuela Amarilla, a public school constructed of yellow brick and the adjacent Plaza de Noria, where freighters watered their horses and residents drew their drinking water. The correspondence of Use, Form and Character in any urban setting is complex and dynamic. While one of the objectives of this master plan is to investigate the need for more form-based criteria in the City's zoning regulations, conventional land use and zoning categories needed to be understood as they are currently applied in Downtown.

L A R E D O



SAN IGNACIO

EAGLE PASS

SANTA ISABEL

SCOTT

SANTA RITA

SANTA CLEOTILDE

MAIN

DAVIS

SANTA MARIA

JUAREZ

CONVENT

FLORES

SAN AGUSTIN

SAN BERNARDO

SANTA URSULA

VIDAURRI

MOCTEZUMA

WASHINGTON

VICTORIA

HOUSTON

MATAMOROS

FARRAGUT

HIDALGO

LINCOLN

ITURBIDE

GRANT

ZARAGOZA

WATER

VENTURA

RIVER

SALINAS

SAN DARIO

2

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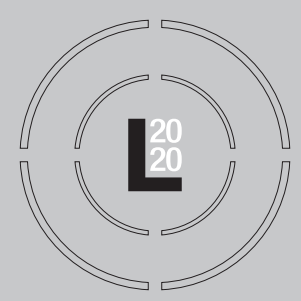
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M E X I C O

ACTIVITY ZONES

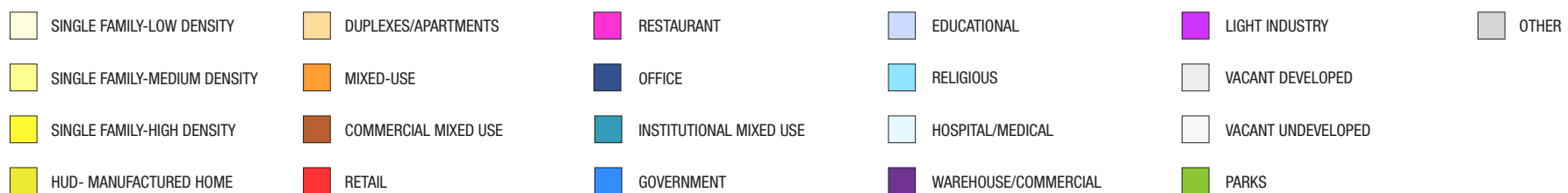


1. GOVERNMENT
2. ST. PETERS
3. JARVIS
4. MERCADO
5. CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
6. SAN AUGUSTIN
7. PORT OF ENTRY 1
8. PORT OF ENTRY 2



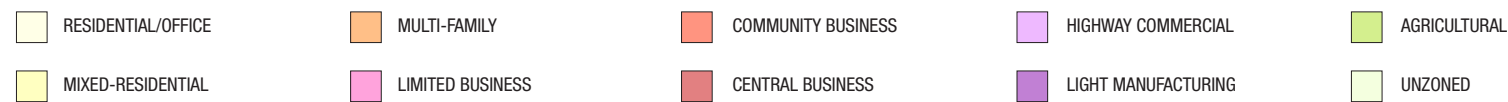
LAND USE

Land Uses are according to those categories adopted by the City of Laredo. The pervasiveness of Retail Use is evident in a diagonal swath from the approach of IH35 on the northeast to Riverside Mall on the southwest next to the River. This pattern reflects the historical movement of people and goods to and from Bridge 1, and the trajectory of how that path shifted in response to the succession of ever-larger highway infrastructure. Also evident are the uncolored zones on the west side rail yard and right center IH35, whose aim for Bridge 2 deeply pierced the urban fabric. Government uses adjoin north and south margins of the retail, but the character of the government office district (north) contrasts with the security zone of the port of entry facilities (south). Land within the Rio Grande floodplain is not zoned as park land, but as government and vacant undeveloped.



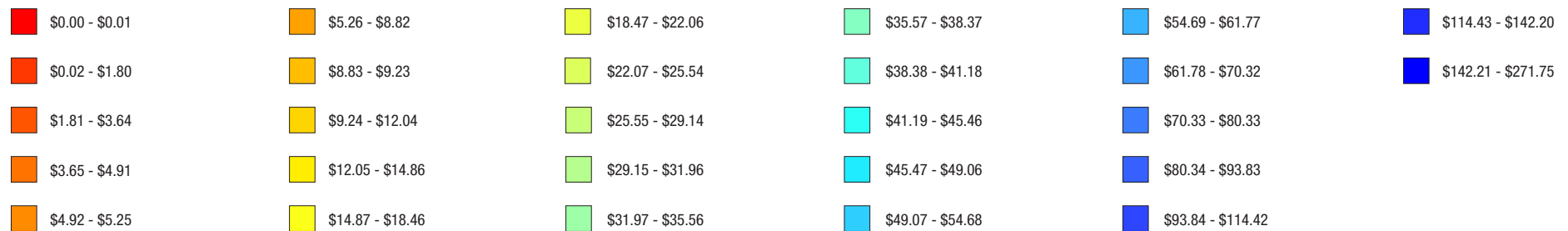
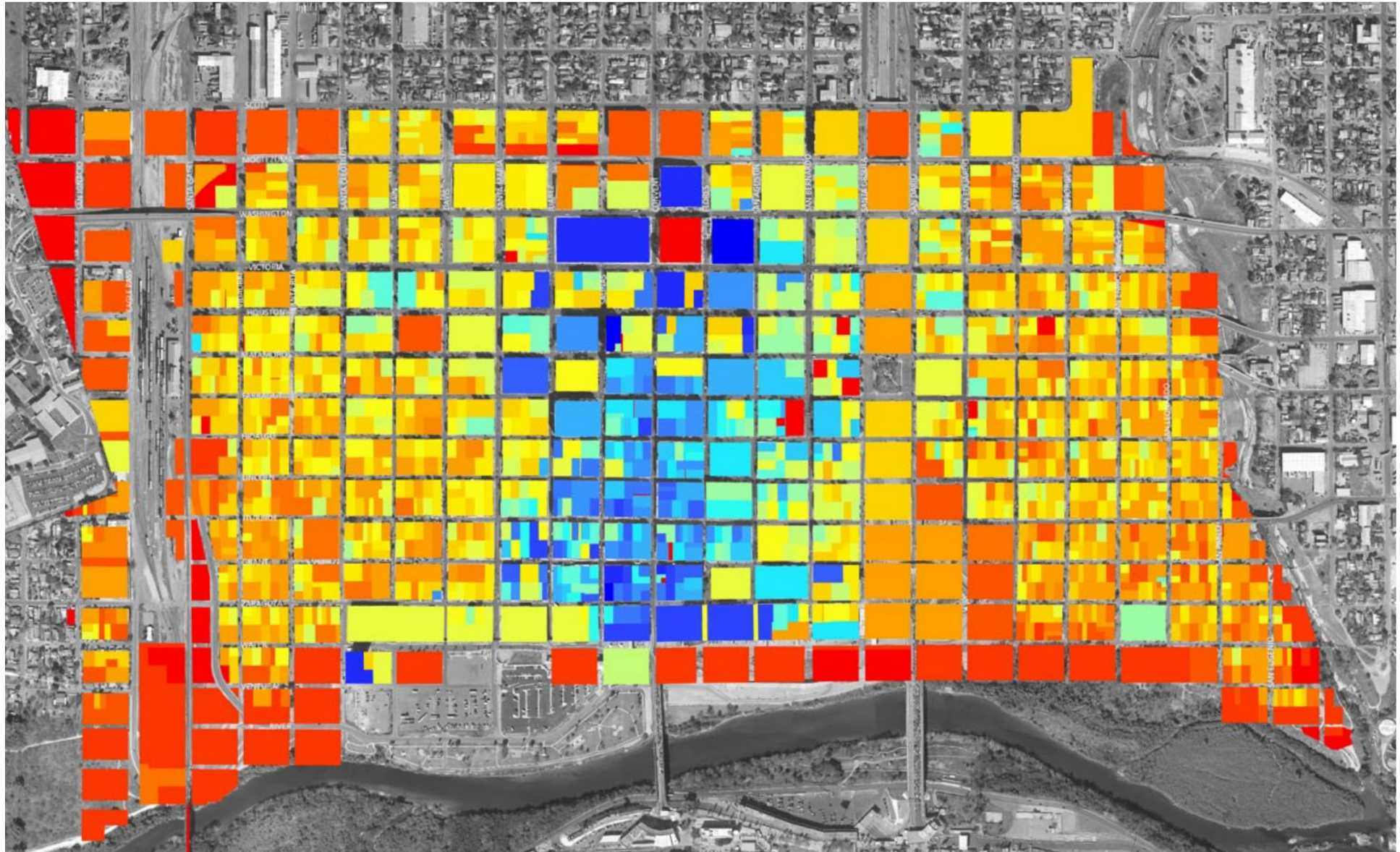
ZONING

The CBD has its own zoning designation, which keeps Downtown uses flexible. Although one third of all the buildings in Downtown are some type of housing, there is no exclusive residential category. Along the river, the zoning of vacant undeveloped and of government uses is zoned Agricultural. Residential/Office zones in Azteca are dovetailed with Community Business that follows the major thoroughfares. Also in Azteca is a nine-block area zoned Community Business, which is contiguous with the GSA-owned port of entry zoned the same. The same zoning occurs with the properties in El Rincon del Diablo and the Riverside Mall. This is the area usually discussed as the site for a new convention center.



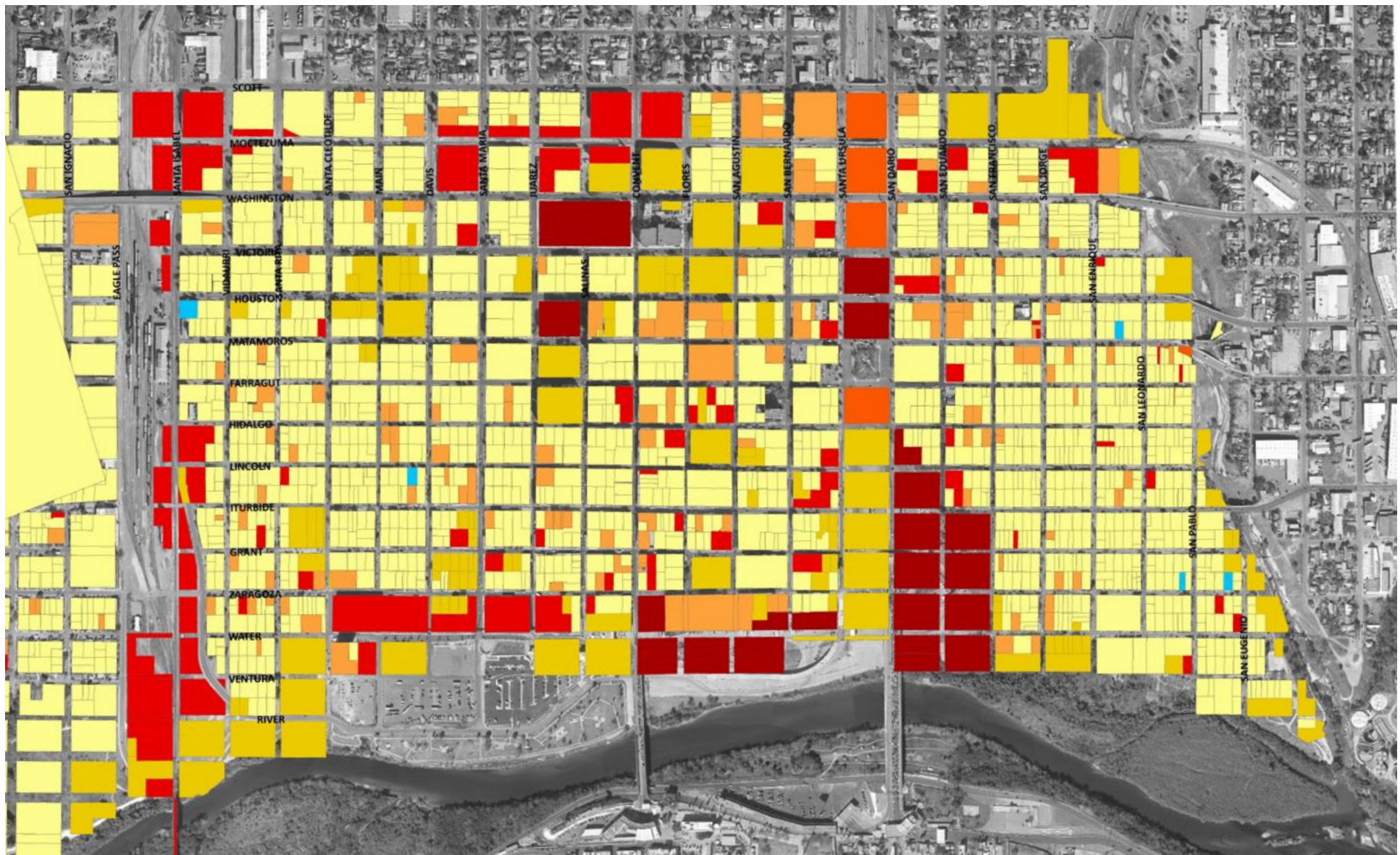
PROPERTY VALUES

The aggregate value of properties in Downtown is \$384,938,527. The highest \$/SF values occur in the CBD where retail is concentrated along Convent Avenue, but also on developed but exempted federal, county and city owned properties, as well as church and school owned properties. Assessed values are not necessarily equal to market values both high and low. The relatively low property values in El Cuatro and El Azteca indicate the impoverished condition of these neighborhoods despite their great historical and cultural qualities.



OWNERSHIP

One of the complaints heard was of neglected or vacant buildings whose owners lived out of town, and thus to whom some of the problems of Downtown were attributable. In evaluating patterns of ownership, it was evident that more than 90% of the land is either privately or public owned by someone with an address in Webb County. It is likely however that an unknown number of properties are locally managed but owned by people who live elsewhere and who may not have an active interest in Downtown issues. The majority of identifiable non-local owned land belongs to the federal government, most of which fronts on a quarter of Laredo's riverfront.



PUBLIC

- LOCAL
- STATE
- FEDERAL

PRIVATE

- LAREDO
- TEXAS
- U.S.
- MEXICO

EXEMPTED PROPERTIES

The aggregate value of exempted properties (not including residential exemptions) is \$141,457,780, about 37% of the total. Many of these properties are government owned and occupied; providing employment for Downtown workers, maintaining a high quality of facility maintenance, and contributing to the value of adjacent properties. But with more than one-third exempted from tax revenues, Laredo will need to exploit more than property tax revenues to capture Downtown's full economic value.

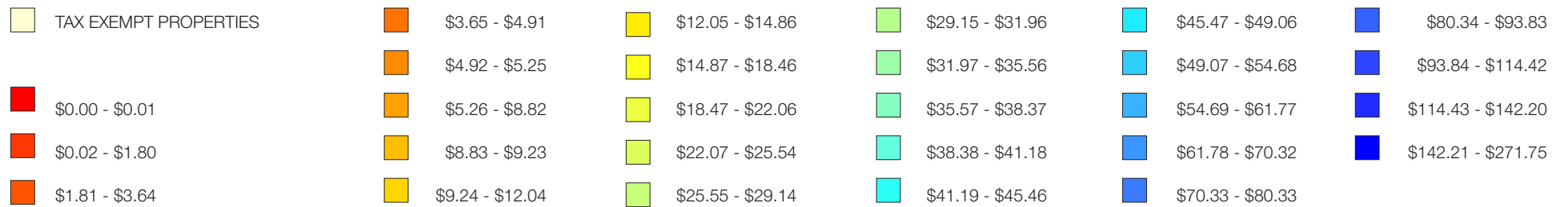
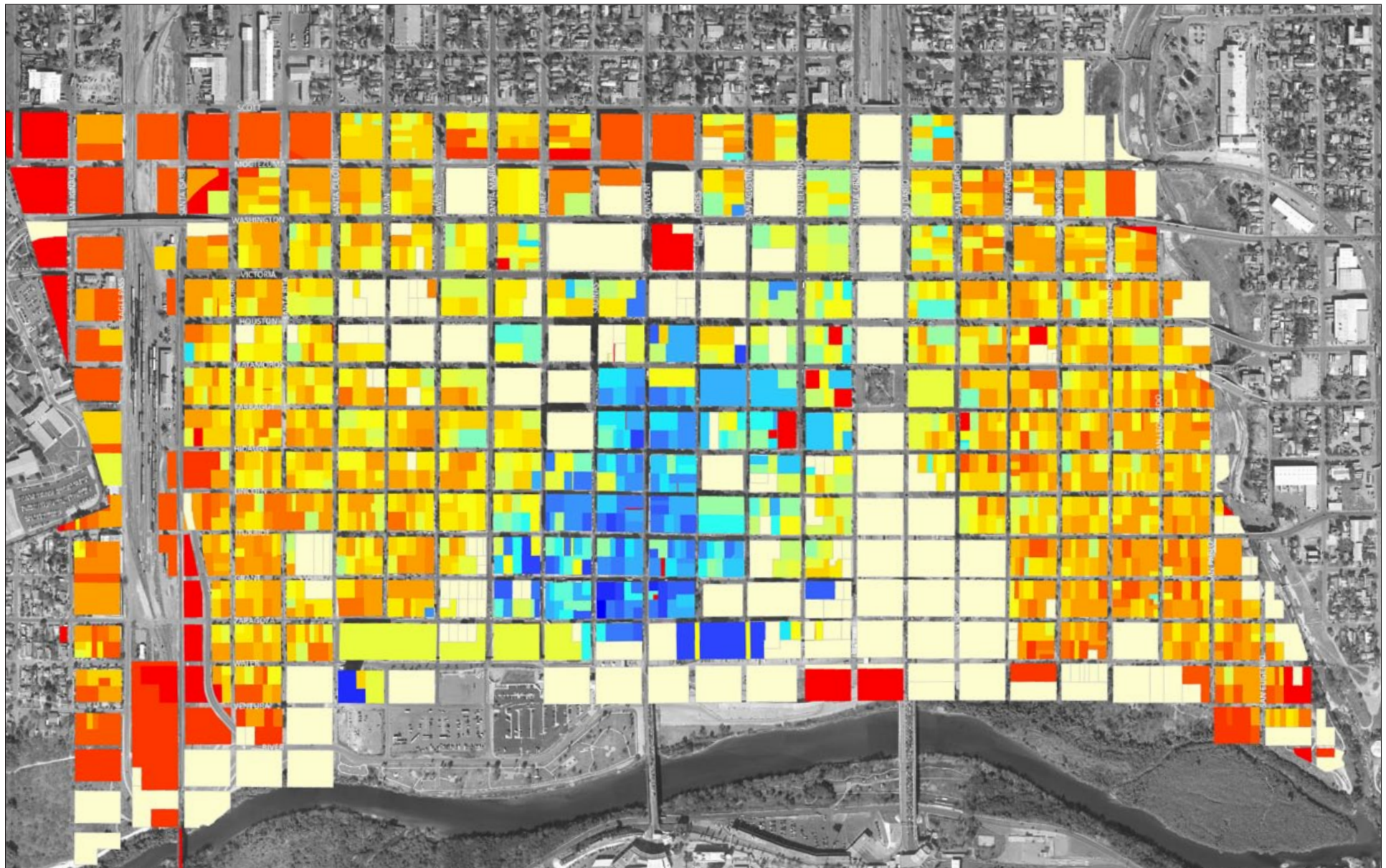
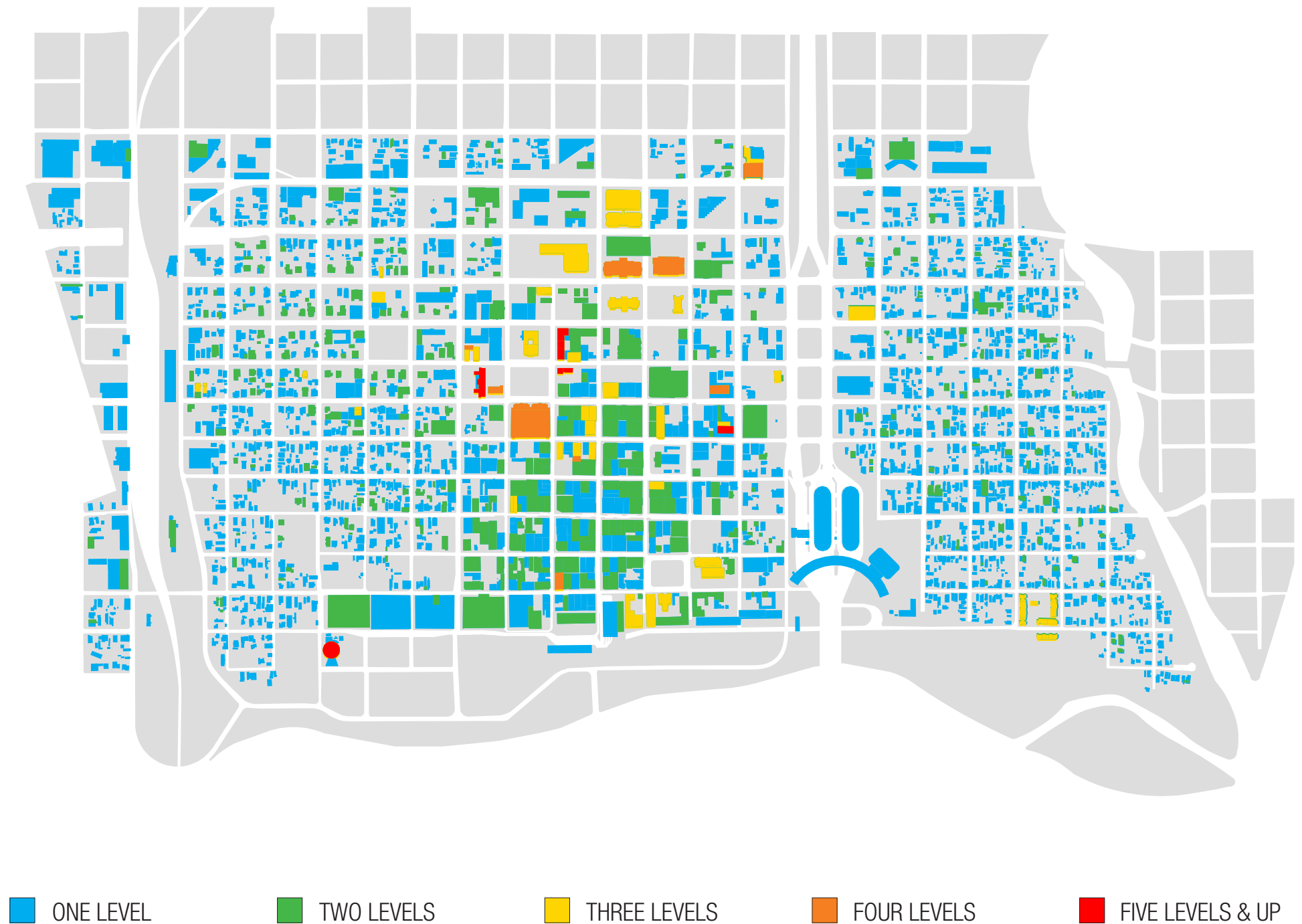


FIGURE GROUND AND DENSITY

An increased concentration of building area in the focus area is evident in this figure ground/density map. Nearly 70% of Downtown's total building area is at the ground floor and constitutes 22.6% of the Downtown footprint. Adding the second floor area of buildings represents 90% of the total study area building area with nearly all of that located in the CBD. Building density is highest in the merchandise zone where the intensity of pedestrian circulation and property values obviates on-site surface parking.



BUILDINGS

Buildings are the most prominent urban components and expression of Downtown character, both as individual landmarks and in ensemble along streets and plazas. The historic character of Downtown is compelling, especially in the Villa Antigua, Old Mercado and El Azteca historic districts. Buildings are also economic vessels that enclose a wide range of goods and services directly and indirectly associated with earning a living and generating revenues.

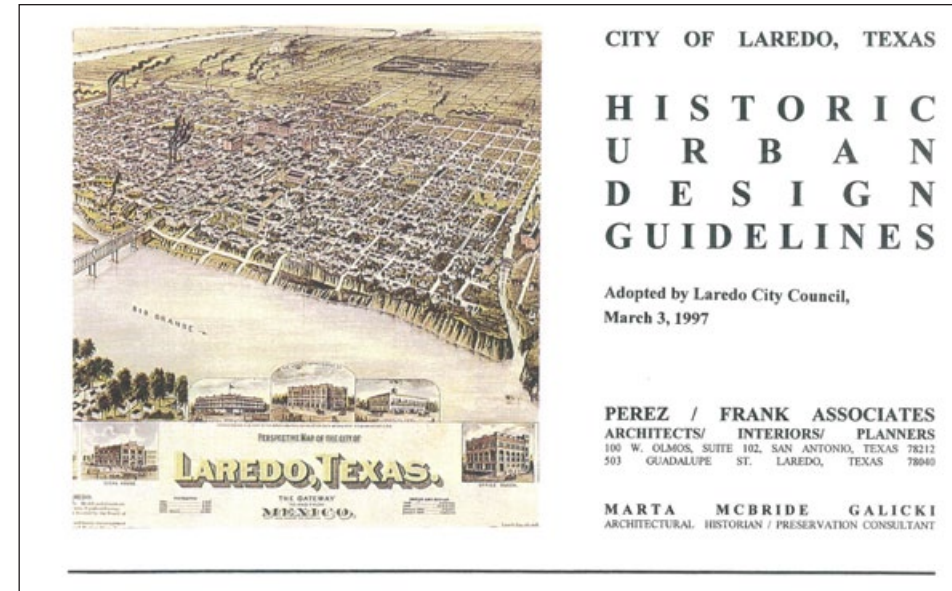
In order to determine a better understanding of Downtown's existing capacity all its buildings were inventoried as to their ground floor and upper floor Use and area. The data was entered into the geospatial model. Future use of this model and data base can be anticipated to benefit Laredo planning staff and those in other public and private planning capacities.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

Downtown Laredo largely captures the extent of what was all of Laredo during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Downtown is a remarkable historic townscape and the subject of preservation activity for the past four decades. There are two National Register Historic Districts; the San Agustin de Laredo NRHD added in 1973 and the Barrio Azteca NRHD in 2003. Individual National Register listings are the Hamilton Hotel, Webb County Courthouse, and the Laredo Federal Building (US Post Office, Courthouse and Custom House). Local historic districts are the San Agustin Historic District, designated in 1974 and extending beyond the NRHD boundary; and the Old Mercado and St. Peter's Historic Districts designated in 1985. Individual local landmarks in Downtown are the Hamilton Hotel, Bruni Plaza, Jarvis Plaza, and the Old Central Fire Station.

The Texas Historical Commission atlas contains cultural resource survey notes of historic resource properties in Downtown. Many of these properties were documented in advance of subsequent designations such as Old Mercado, St. Peter's, and Barrio Azteca historic districts. Other properties lie outside historic district boundaries and remain undesignated, although survey of historic resources in El Cuatro was being conducted at the time of this master plan. In addition to historic buildings, there are approximately 20 Texas historical markers in Downtown with most of them located in San Agustin and Old Mercado Historic Districts.

Laredo's regulatory framework was expanded in 1995 with the City of Laredo Historic Preservation Plan as an element of the Comprehensive Plan. The plan functions as a preservation guide and policy statement on proposed and adopted preservation strategies, and as a tool for the evaluation of existing preservation efforts through measurable goals



**Chapter 2:
Design Guidelines for All Projects**

- Preserve historic windows in the process. Install new windows behind existing ones, to create an air space that will dampen sound transmission.
- Isolate upper floor framing from lower floors to minimize transmission of sound.

AWNINGS & CANOPIES:

Horizontal, fixed canopies are encouraged where historic evidence demonstrates that a canopy once existed.

- Appropriate supporting mechanisms are wall-mounted brackets, chains, rods and posts.
- Wall-supported canopies also may be considered for new construction.

Fabric awnings are appropriate and encouraged for historic buildings and new construction.

- Operable awnings are encouraged.
- Rigid frame awnings may also be considered.
- Internal illumination is inappropriate.
- Lettering or logos on awnings are considered inappropriate.
- Use colors that are compatible with the overall color scheme of the facade. Solid colors of simple stripe patterns are appropriate.
- Simple shed shapes are appropriate for rectangular openings.
- Semi-circular shapes are appropriate for arched windows.
- Odd shapes, bull-nose awnings are inappropriate.
- Awnings that cover the lintel of an opening are considered inappropriate.
- Awnings at each window opening that fit within the opening are appropriate.

Trees should be planted on the street, on landscape islands, so that they do not cause any damage to the canopies.

Appropriate supporting mechanisms for canopies are wall mounted brackets, chains, rods, and posts.

2-2

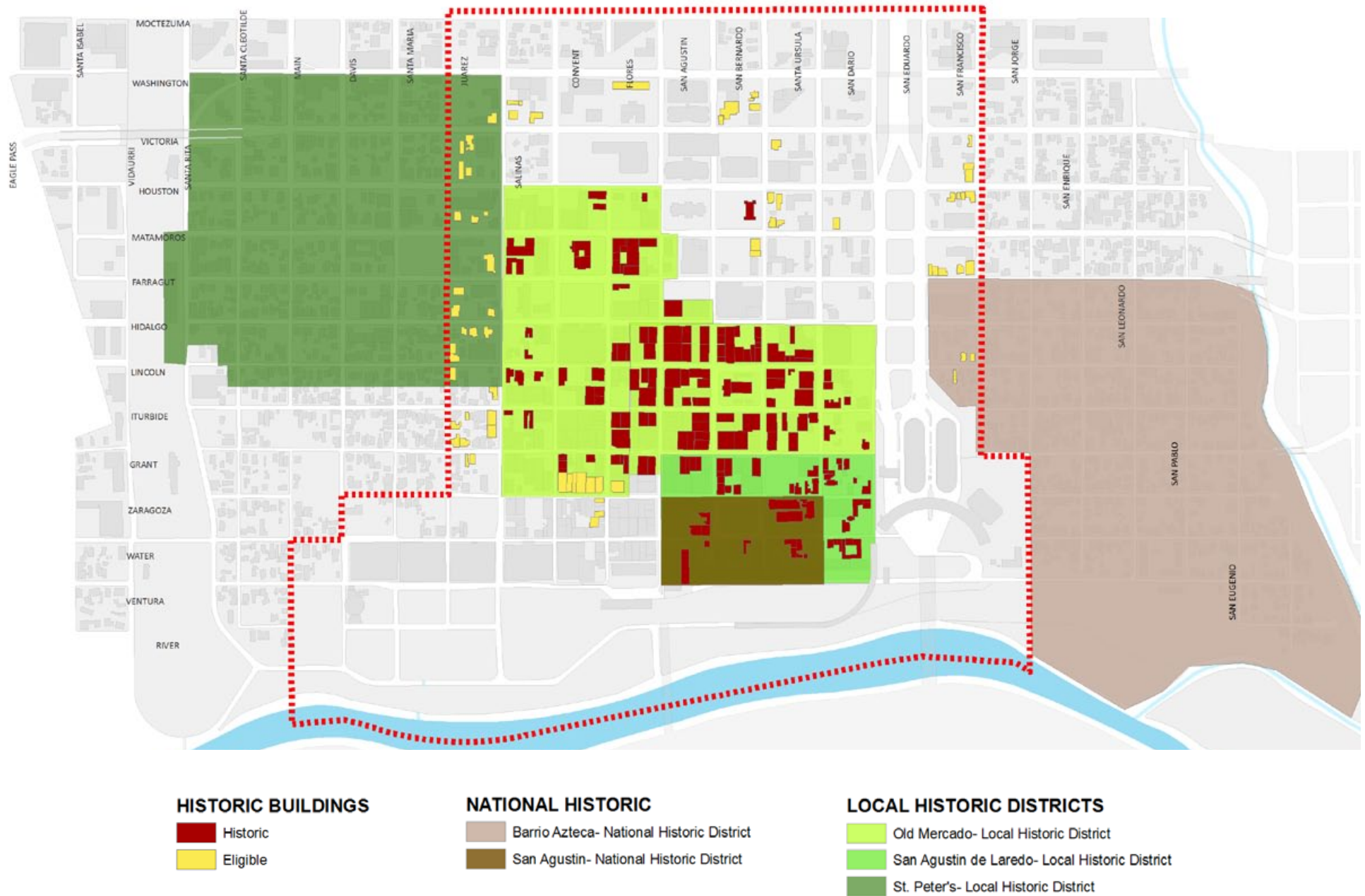
Former Werner Building, 508 Flores Ave.

This is a brick and stucco masonry, two-story building. It has storefront and clerestory windows at the lower level. There is cast iron ornamentation on the columns. There is a loggia with tall columns that support a balcony above. These columns used to be detailed in cast iron as well. The window openings above were recessed and were equally spaced. The lintel above the windows is defined in a raised brick pattern. There is an ornamental band across the facade that comes down approximately one third from the window top. The cornice is composed of Classic elements and details.

The building is currently occupied by Sports Americana. It is an example of Italianate Style.

- Restore the porch columns, storefront, architectural details and access to the balcony, provided it is structurally feasible.
- Provide awnings of historical character between the columns to shelter passers-by.
- Relocate the building sign to accentuate the architectural details.
- Replace and restore the window with slightly recessed windows.
- Restore the original color scheme.

6-10



and objectives. A more detailed inventory of historic resources in the San Agustin and Old Mercado historic districts was conducted in 1996 and included the survey of additional properties in a proposed and but unimplemented expansion of the Mercado District to and around Jarvis Plaza.

Historic Urban Design Guidelines were adopted in 1997 to aid in the preservation of historic buildings within the districts, and to assure that new construction is compatible with the character of the community. The report is a concise but comprehensive document that covers historical background and significance; historic building character, types and styles; as well as basic preservation theory and the treatment of character-defining features with specific guidelines addressing historic building materials and assemblies. Also covered is accessibility, awnings & canopies, color, energy conservation, landscaping, lighting,

mechanical equipment & utilities, parking, porches & balconies, rooftop uses, security devices, services areas, storefronts, street furniture; and design guidelines for new construction and for signage.

Despite available local, state, and federal tax incentives; excellence of the design guidelines, quality of cultural properties, and local pride of Downtown's historicity; visible signs of neglect and deferred maintenance are pervasive throughout the historic building inventory. Indeed, nearly all of the 16 exemplary buildings recommended for preservation treatment in the 1997 guidelines have not been rehabilitated. Similar to other border cities where low-value/high-volume sales dominate the downtown economy, building owners are generally reluctant to risk change and are wary of the regulations associated with historic preservation tax incentives.

NATIONAL REGISTER

The Spanish Renaissance Revival style Hamilton Hotel was built in 1900 as a three story building with nine floors added in 1923. At 151 feet high it is the tallest building in Laredo. In 1992 the building was added to the National Register and in 2002 awarded a Housing and Urban Development Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation.

Webb County Courthouse was designed by Architect Alfred Giles and constructed in 1909. Renovated in 1997 to its original structure, the court house is currently occupied and has been recognized by the Texas Historical Commission as one of the finest examples of "courthouse restoration in the State of Texas."

The Neoclassical Revival style Laredo Federal Building (US Post Office, Courthouse and Custom House) was initially constructed in 1907 and expanded in 1935. The handsome limestone building currently houses federal offices and is the post office for Downtown and 78040.





Hamilton Hotel



Former Laredo National Bank



Former Ugarte Building



Saint Agustin Parochial School



Former Werner Building



Plaza Theater



Former José Maria Rodriguez Residence



Former Union Bank



Former Treviño Wholesale Grocery



Former Benavides/Herrera Residence



Bender Hotel



Bridget Farrell Building

BUILDING USES

Buildings are the most evident expression of Downtown character: as individual landmarks or ensemble around plazas and along streets.

GENERAL BUILDING USES

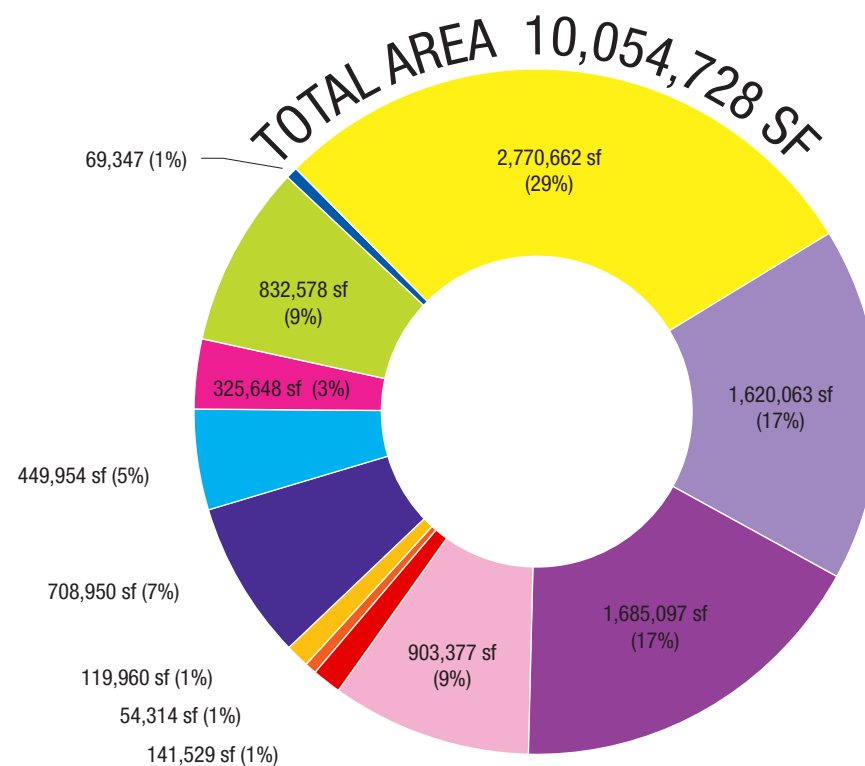
The total area of buildings in the study area is 10,054,728 SF. General uses for all buildings within the Study Area were identified according to the eighteen categories currently utilized by the City of Laredo to classify land use.

- RESIDENTIAL
- RETAIL
- FOOD AND DRINKING SERVICES
- HOSPITALITY
- ENTERTAINMENT
- OFFICE
- GOVERNMENT
- RELIGION
- INSTITUTIONAL
- WHOLESALE
- STORAGE & WAREHOUSE
- TRANSPORTATION

Building footprints were determined by the GIS map polygons and building areas above ground floors were estimated from field and aerial imagery and added as distinct fields according to general use in the data base and geospatial model. The total gross building area in the Study Area is calculated to be 10,054,728 square feet.

SPECIFIC BUILDING USES BY GENERAL USE CATEGORIES

The total Ground Floor Area of buildings in the Focus Area is 3,687,202 SF. In addition to general use the buildings were assessed as to their specific use.



- RESIDENTIAL**
 single family
 multifamily
 multifamily/high-rise

- RETAIL**
 general retail
 grocery store
 gas station
 duty free
 pawn shop
 mall
 fabrics
 furniture
 home store
 bookstore
 art
 jewelry
 purses
 perfumes
 clothing
 shoe store
 sports
 toys
 medical
 beauty supplies
 electronics
 automotive repairs

- FOOD & BEVERAGE**
 bar
 fast food
 restaurant - limited service
 restaurant - full service

- OFFICE**
 finance
 legal
 general office
 medical
 bank
 tax
 money exchange
 photography
 plasma services
 shelter

- HOSPITALITY**
 hotel
 motel

- ENTERTAINMENT**
 reception hall
 theater

- GOVERNMENT**
 fire station
 courthouse
 jail
 office
 GSA
 county
 state
 police department
 postal office

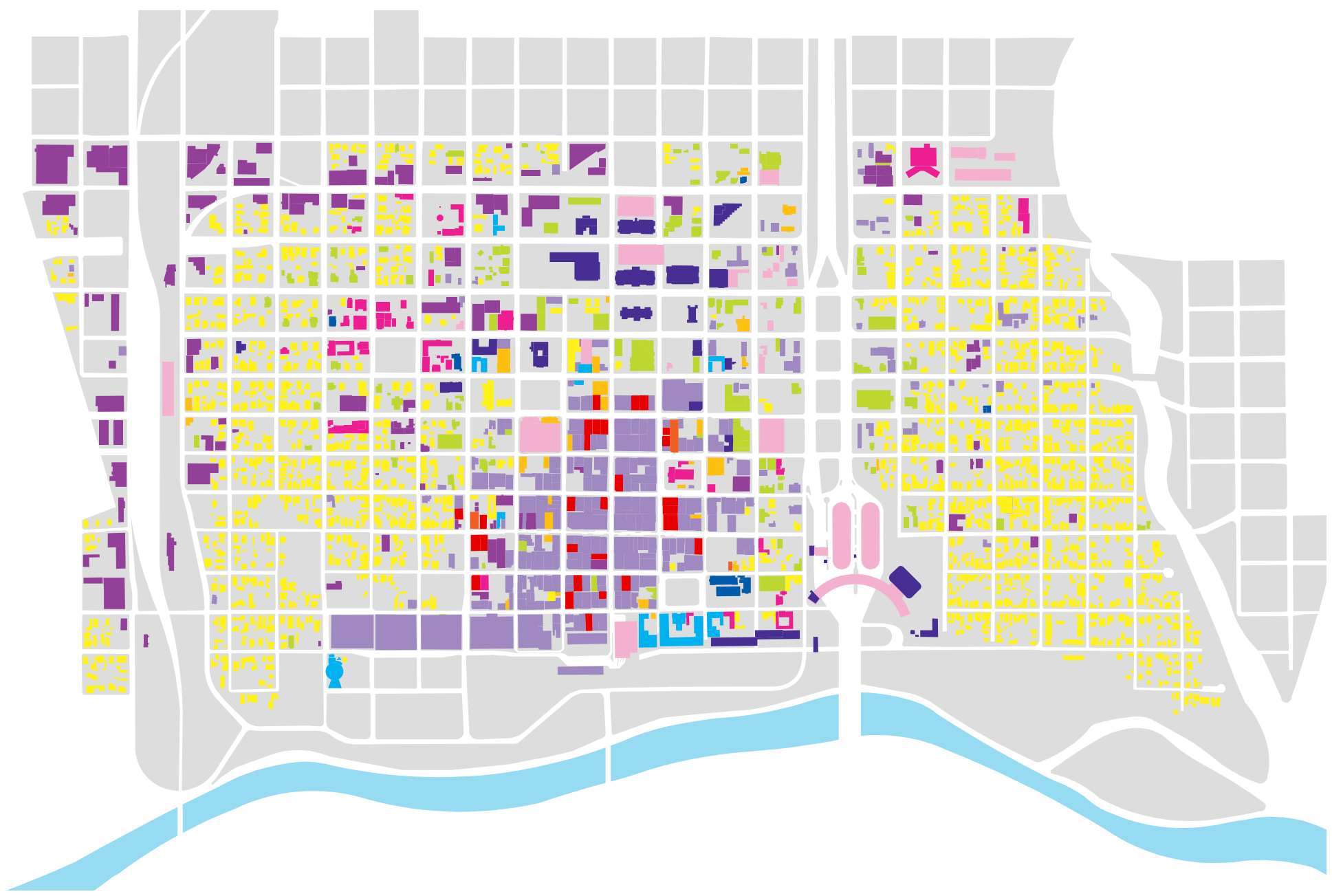
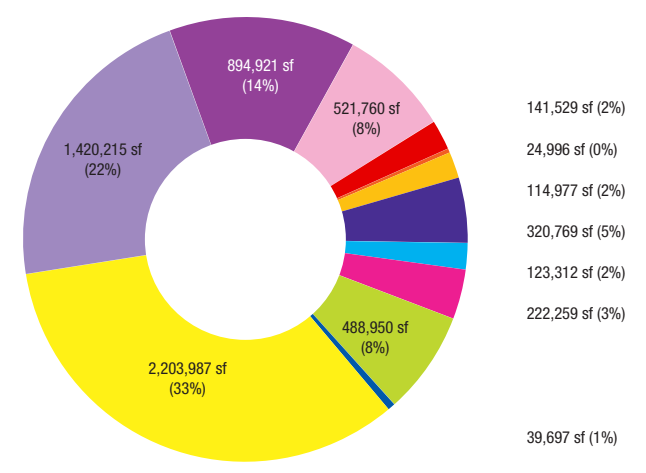
- RELIGION**
 assembly
 church
 office

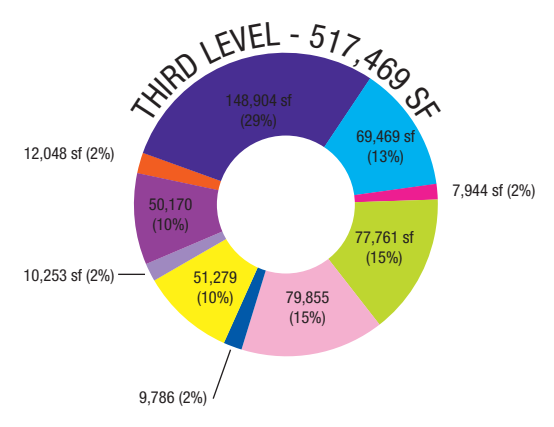
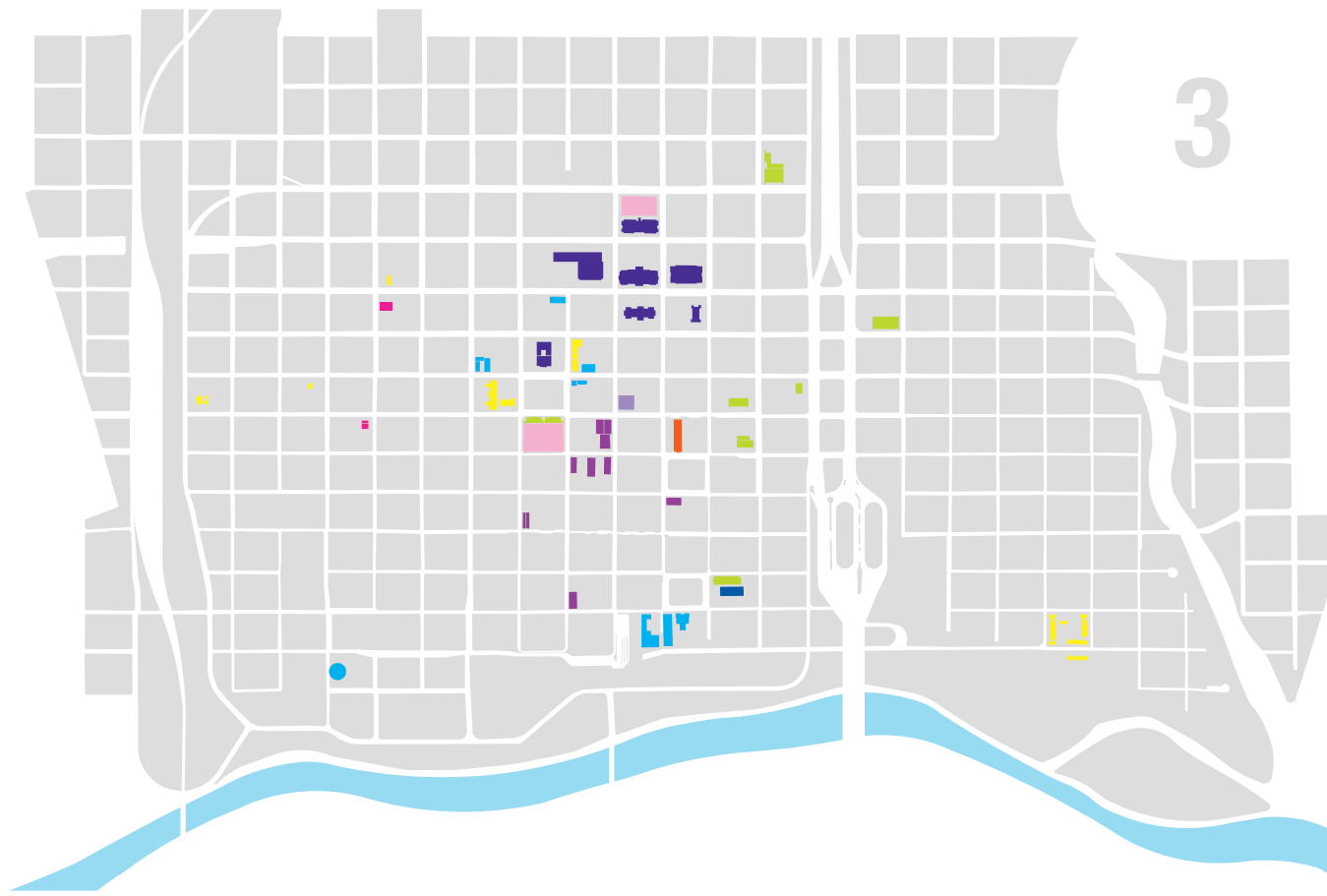
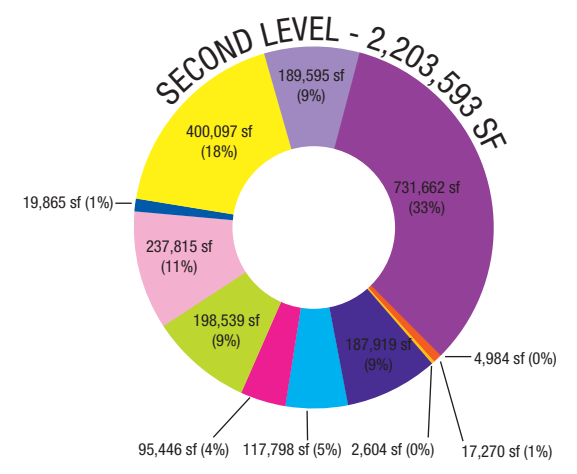
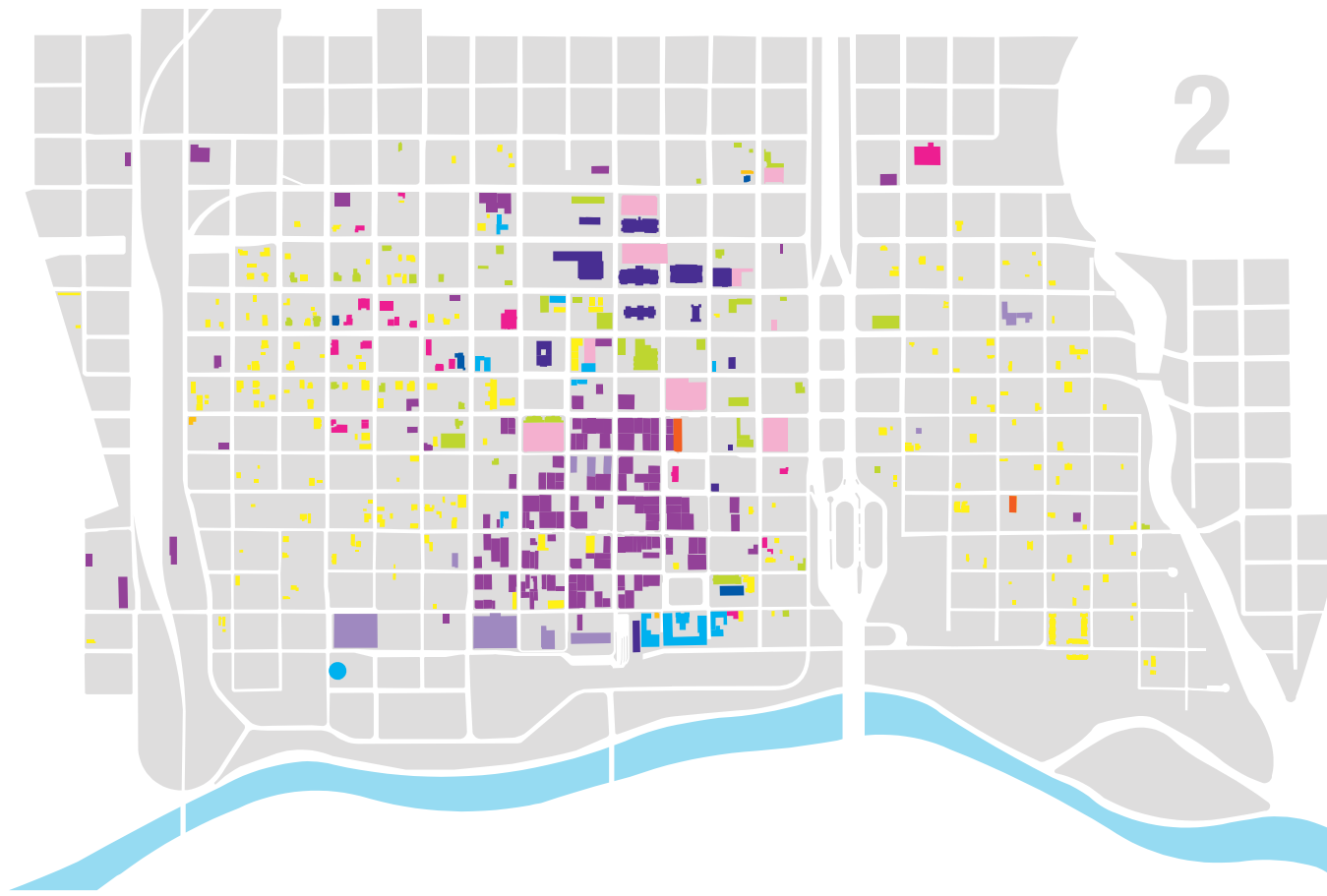
- INSTITUTIONAL**
 school
 arts center
 boys club
 community center
 convention and visitors bureau
 daycare - adults
 daycare - children
 office
 museum
 university
 shelter

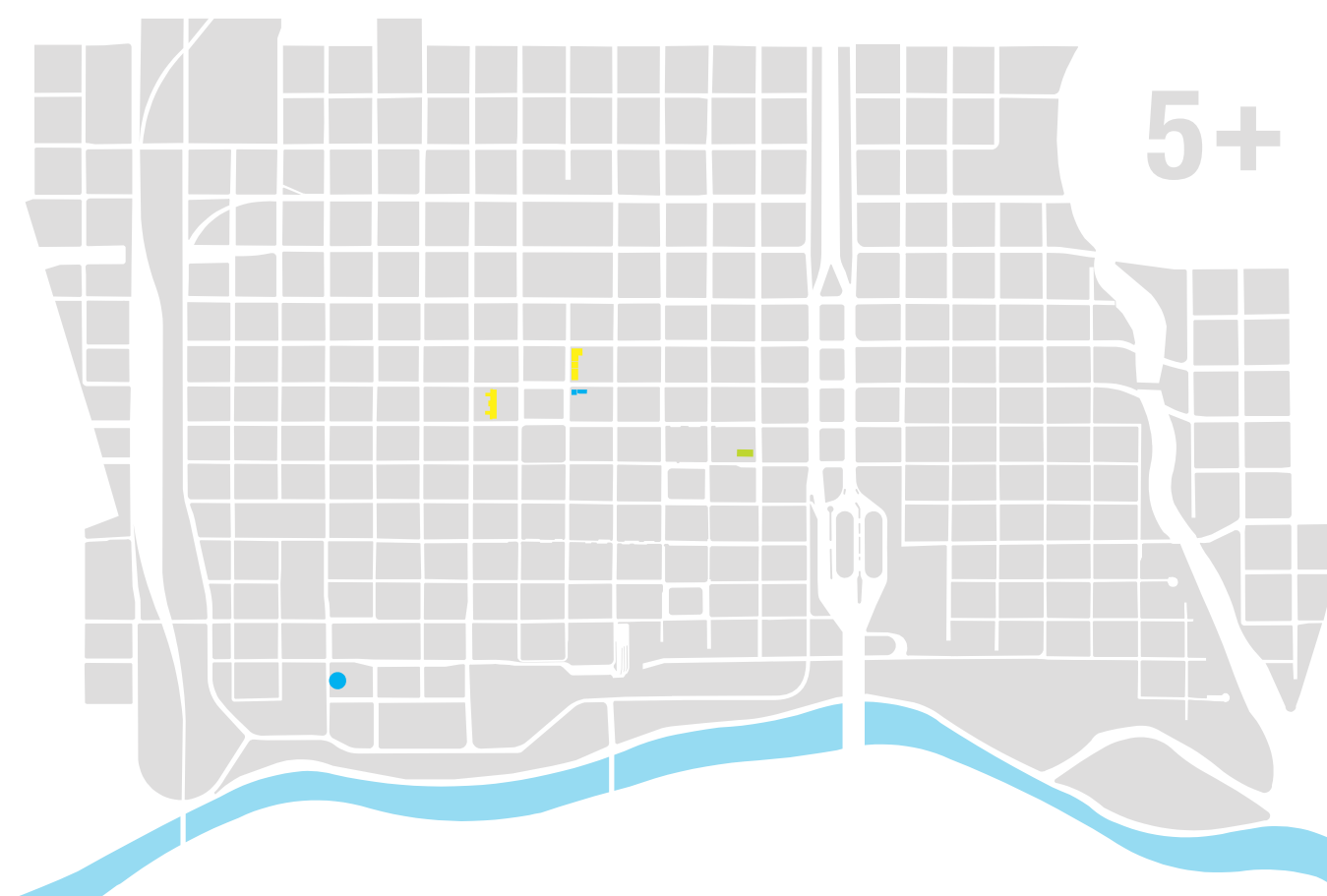
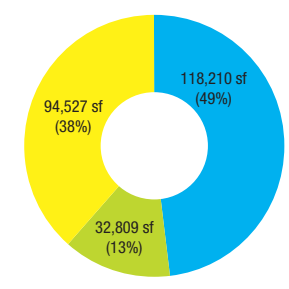
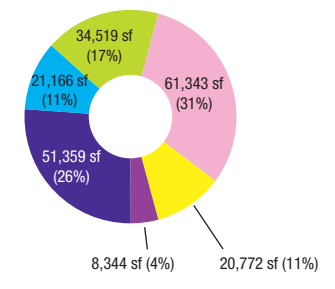
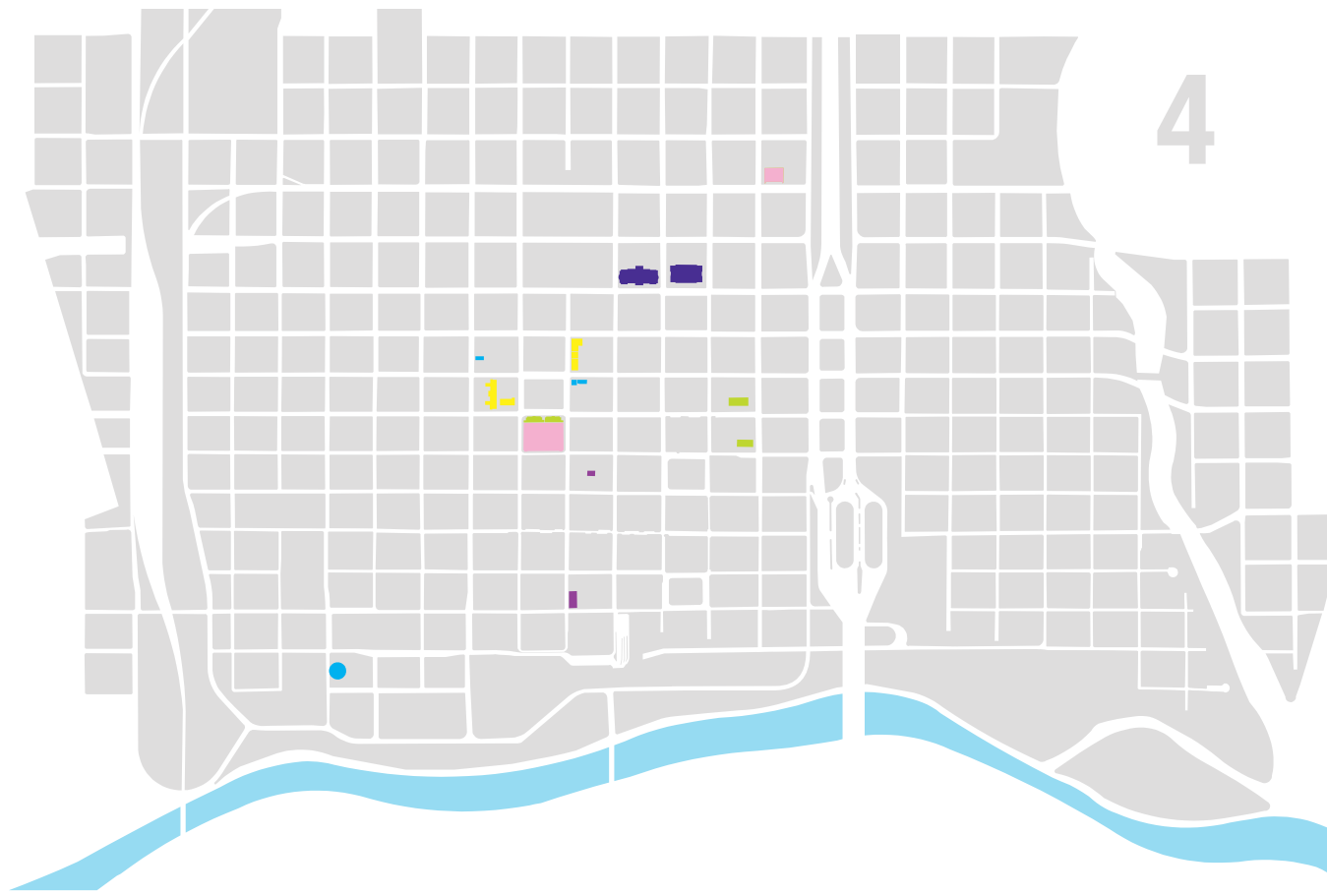
- WHOLESALE**
 wholesale
- STORAGE & WAREHOUSE**
 ropas usadas
 warehouse
 storage
- TRANSPORTATION**
 bus maintenance
 train station
 bus station
 port of entry
 parking garage

Buildings - General Use by Floor Level

- ENTERTAINMENT
- FOOD & BEVERAGE
- RESIDENTIAL
- HOSPITALITY
- INSTITUTIONAL
- OFFICE
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- RETAIL
- STORAGE & WAREHOUSE
- TRANSPORTATION
- WHOLESALE







- ENTERTAINMENT
- FOOD & BEVERAGE
- GOVERNMENT
- HOSPITALITY
- INSTITUTIONAL
- OFFICE
- RELIGIOUS
- RESIDENTIAL
- RETAIL
- STORAGE & WAREHOUSE
- TRANSPORTATION
- WHOLESALE

SPECIFIC BUILDING USES

The distribution of specific building uses in Downtown Laredo responds directly to the shifts and evolution of Border economics. As a consequence building typologies are constantly having to adjust to shifting patterns of use. The study reveals an struggling downtown that's been debilitated by global economics, violence across the border, and increasing competition by emerging border cities. These forces are rapidly changing Downtown dynamics, specifically Building Use patterns. The unbalanced distribution of specific uses is a reflection of downtown's health, and becomes apparent throughout the Specific Use Inventory.

Arts&Entertainment, Religious, Hospitality, and Residential uses, all components of a vibrant center, are virtually inexistent in Downtown. Laredo will need to increase its residential base and increase its entertainment venues to create a livable downtown. Today buildings used for entertainment contribute 1% percent to the total building area downtown, further hampering the tourism industry as visitors look for entertainment in the north.

In turn, Downtown Laredo's long lasting position as a Wholesale center has imprinted a heavy pattern of Storage and Warehouse use that is recorded by the inventory . Houses and commercial buildings in downtown where adapted to support storage and warehouse need. High vacancy levels reflected in the inventory reveal the pressures from local and global economics on downtown commerce.

The Government district exerts an additional level of influence, creating a demand for legal and professional services, that generate a ring of office and institutional uses around the district.

The total area of buildings in the focus area is 3,529,803 SF.

SPECIFIC BUILDING USES WERE INVENTORIED IN THE FOCUS AREA IN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:

RETAIL

general retail
grocery store
gas station
duty free
pawn shop
mall
fabrics
furniture
home store
bookstore
art
jewelry
purses
perfumes
clothing
shoe store
sports
toys
medical
beauty supplies
electronics
automotive repairs

FOOD & BEVERAGE

bar
fast food
restaurant-limited service
restaurant- full service

OFFICE

finance
legal
general office
medical
bank
tax
money exchange
photography
plasma services
shelter

HOSPITALITY

hotel
motel

ENTERTAINMENT

reception hall
theater

GOVERNMENT

fire station
courthouse
jail
office
GSA
county
state
police department
postal office

RELIGION

assembly
church
office

INSTITUTIONAL

school
arts center
boys club
community center
convention and visitors
bureau
daycare- adults
daycare- children
office
museum
university
shelter

WHOLESALE

wholesale

STORAGE & WAREHOUSE

ropas usadas
warehouse
storage

TRANSPORTATION

bus maintenance
train station
bus station
port of entry
parking garage

RESIDENTIAL

single family
multifamily
multifamily/high-rise

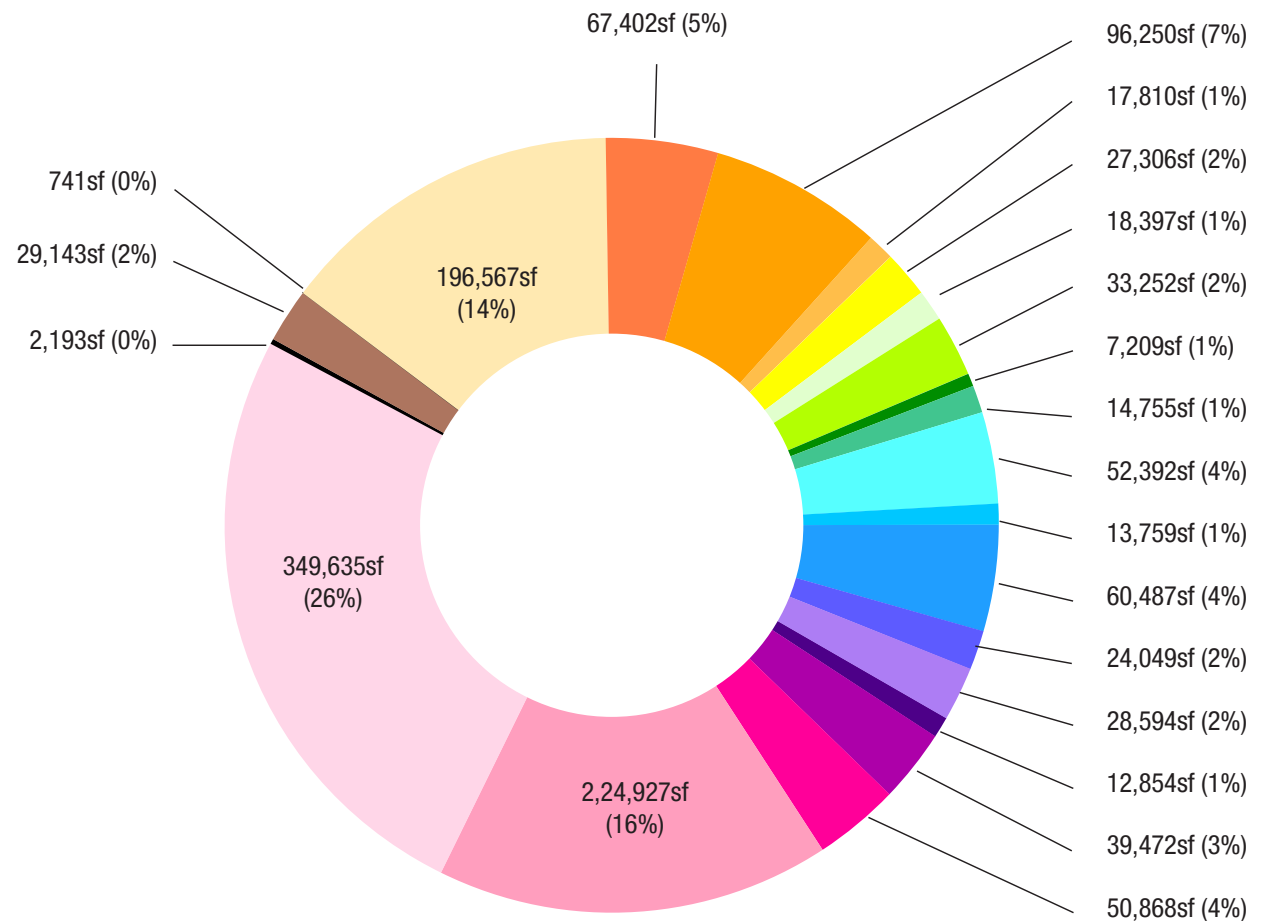
Retail 1,468,040 sf

General retail, grocery stores, gas stations, duty free stores, pawn shops, shopping malls, fabric stores, furniture stores, home furnishings, bookstores, art galleries and supplies, jewelry stores, purse stores, perfumeries, clothing stores, shoe stores, sports equipment, toy stores, medical equipment and supplies, beauty supplies, electronics stores, automotive repair.

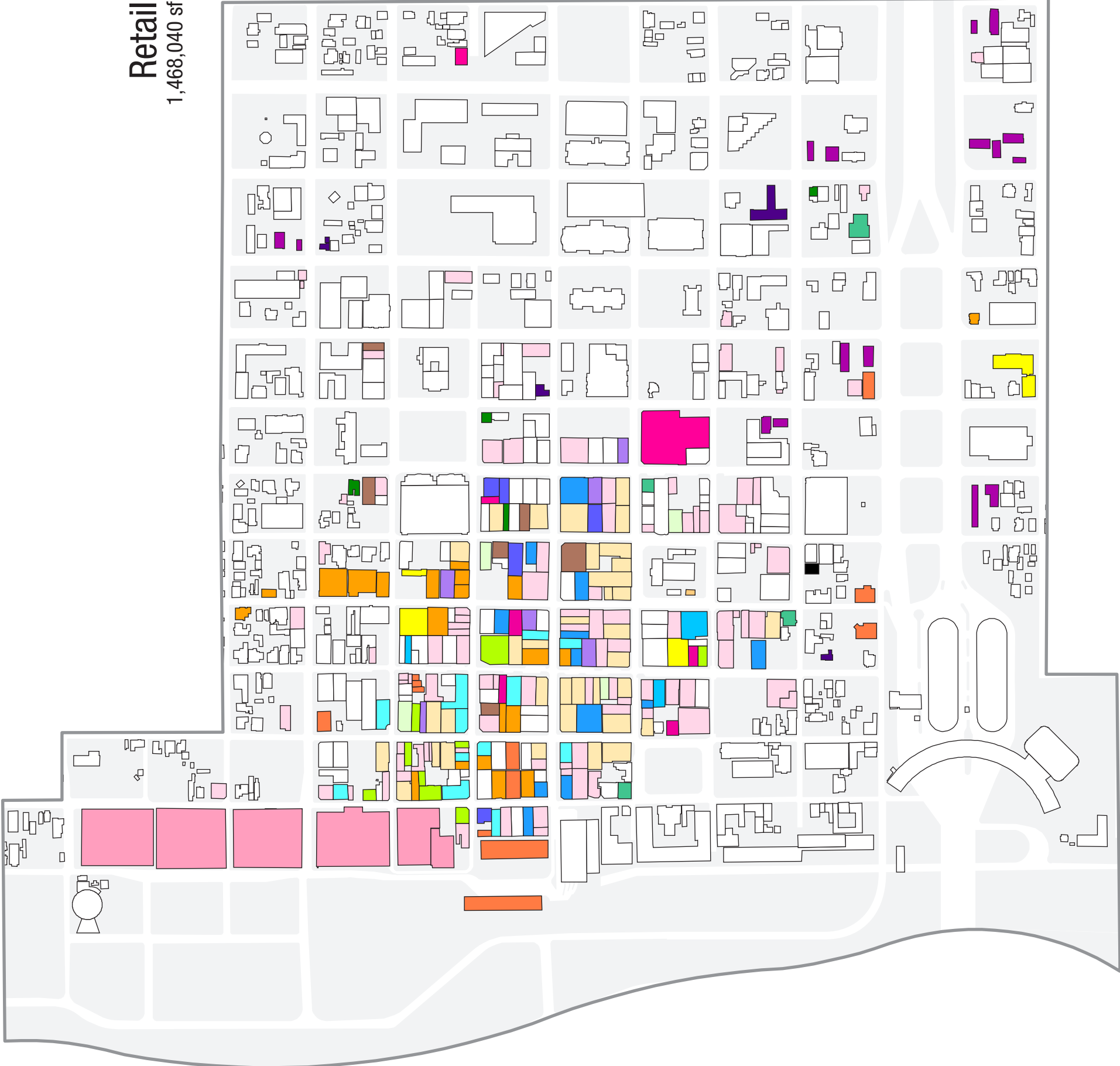
About 40% of the Study Area ground floor area is utilized for retail purposes and constitutes Downtown's largest share of uses. Most retailing is deep discount and bargain merchandise, but quality goods such as electronics and perfumes area found in specialty shops and duty free stores are concentrated near the ports-of-entry. Higher-end stores and major chains that previously occupied storefronts have largely moved out of Downtown and efforts to establish an outlet mall in the vacant Riverside Mall has not materialized.

There is no question that the negative effect of border instability and general economy has adversely affected Downtown's merchants. Coupled with a diminished wholesaler market and their attempts to transition to retail, Downtown retail is in jeopardy. In the past Laredo's Downtown merchants have weathered down markets caused by currency fluctuations and political upheaval, but that was before current globalization trends and rising internet sales.

Although merchandising activity occurs in almost every building type most occur in buildings originally designed for retail use and readily adaptable for a variety of goods. Should the retail economy fail to rebound however, there may be a significant inventory of buildings ill-suited for other uses like office and residential.



Retail
1,468,040 sf

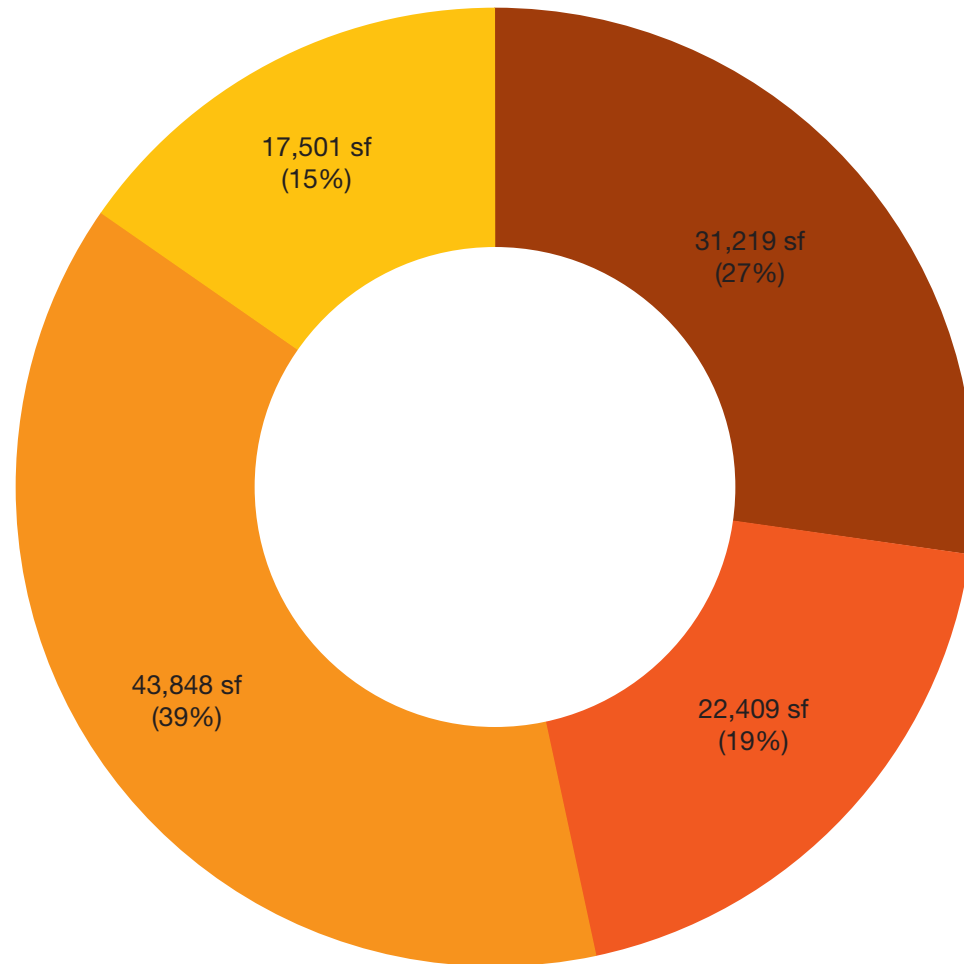


Food & Beverage 114,977 sf

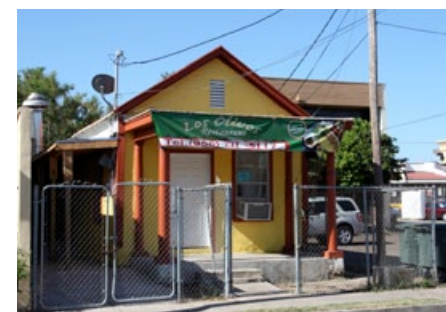
Bars, fast food, restaurants limited-service, and restaurants full-service

This important component of a conventionally active downtown occupies only 3% of first floor uses in the CBD. Even with the hotel dining facilities (not tabulated in this category), there are at most sixteen places for food and beverages in Downtown and, except for the two or three bars, none of them open in the evening hours. The dining services of hotels are not included in this category, but both major Downtown hotels – the La Posada and Rio Grande hotels, do have full service restaurants, with La Posada’s Tack Room restaurant being the only highly-rated restaurant and open in the late hours.

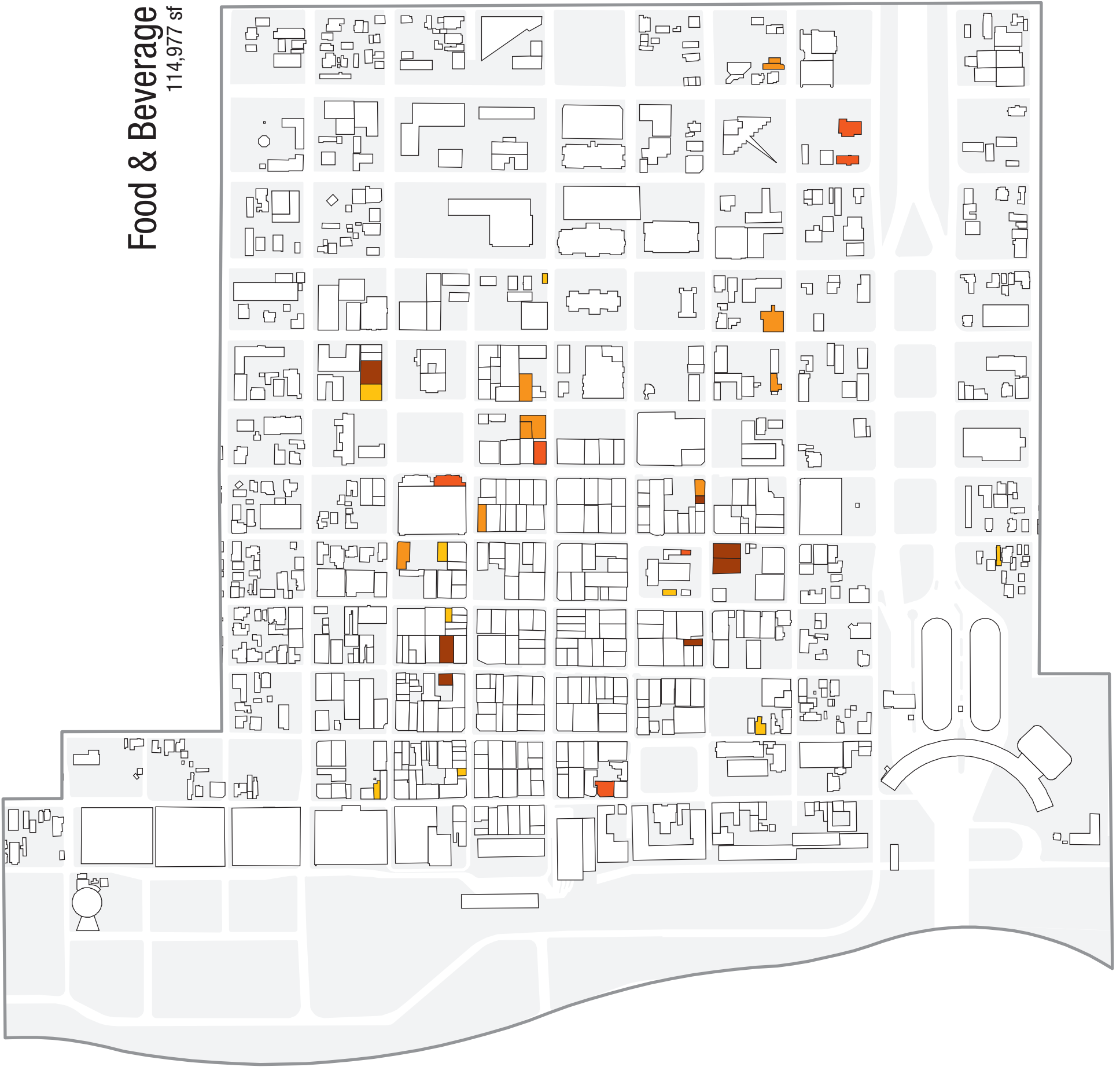
There were a greater number of food & beverage services uses in the past but with fewer tourists and downtown office workers restaurants have closed. In contrast, north of Downtown the number of restaurants and clubs is growing; indicating that there is a market demand and investors. But a goal to reconstitute the character of dining and entertainment activity in Downtown Laredo that once defined Nuevo Laredo’s downtown as a destination faces a strong challenge.



- BAR
- RESTAURANT-FAST FOOD
- RESTAURANT-FULL SERVICE
- RESTAURANT-LIMITED SERVICE



Food & Beverage
114,977 sf

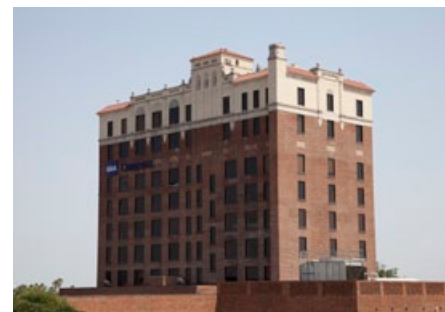
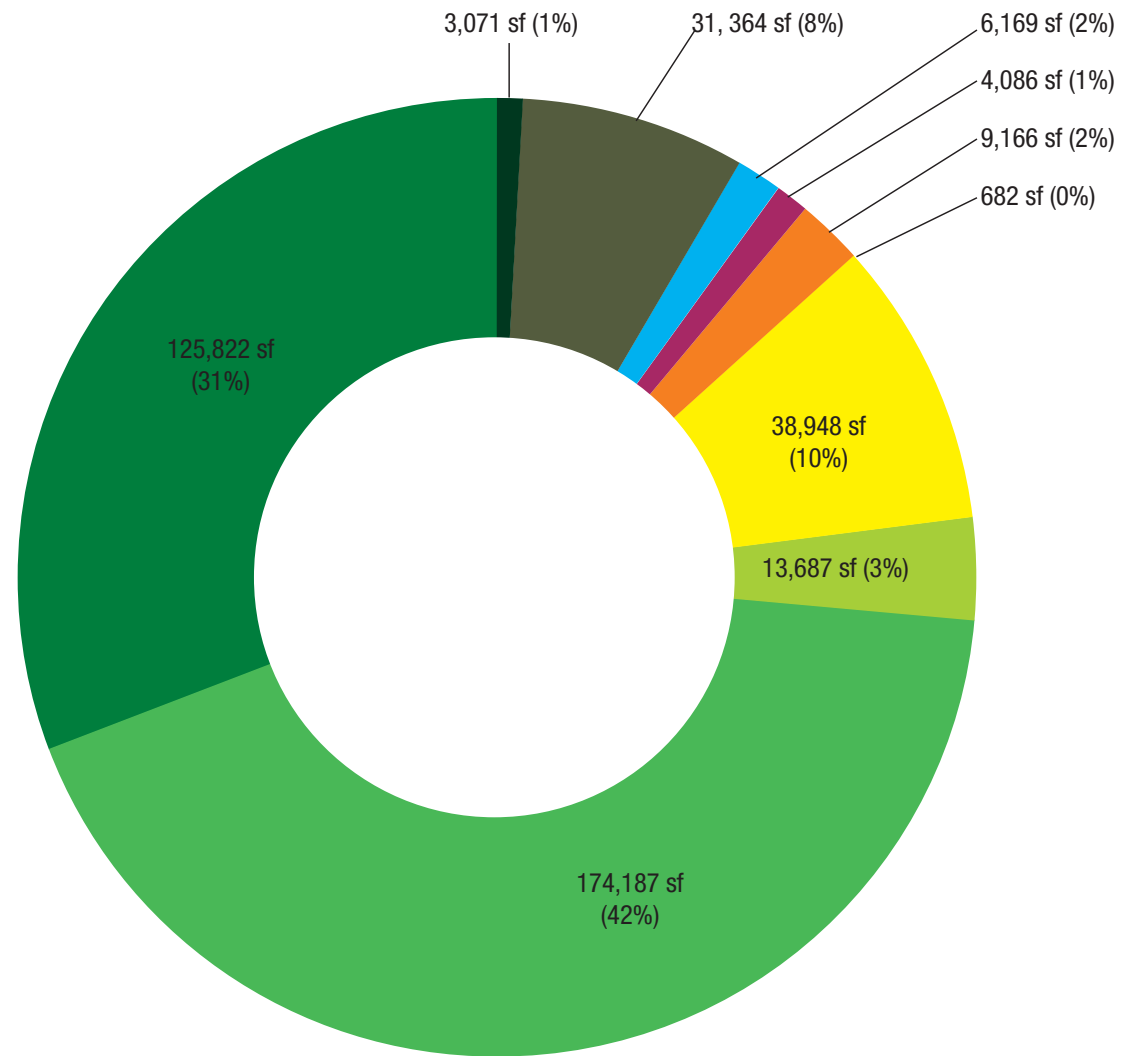


Office 407,181 sf

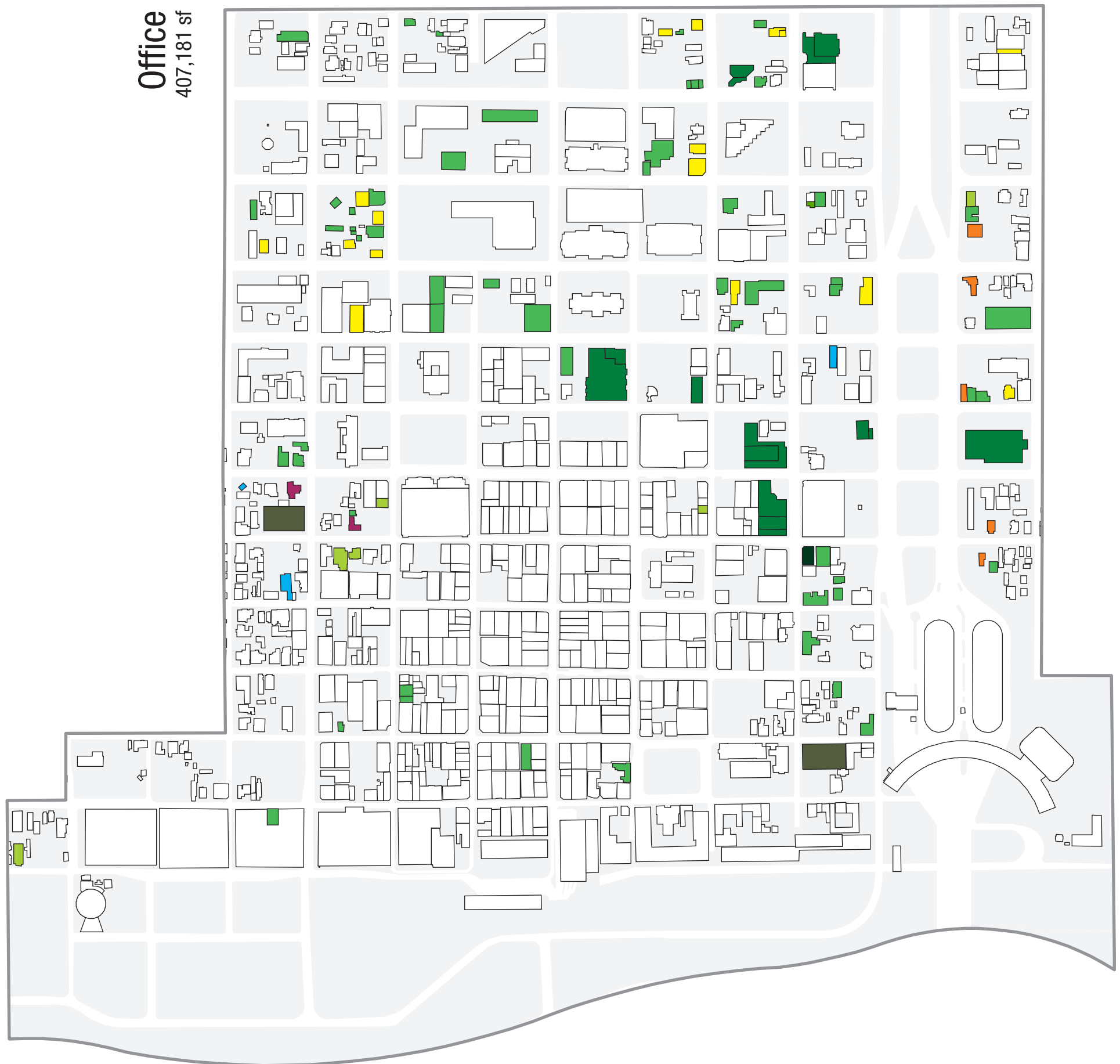
Finance, legal, general office, medical, bank, tax, money exchange, photography, plasma services

Banks and financial institutions have been a strong anchor for Downtown activity and provided substantial lease office space. Current conditions are less vital as banks adjust to new financial realities and office vacancies rise. The value in having full office space extends beyond the leasehold boundary to the scores of restaurants and cafes that profit from the customer proximity.

- BANK
- OFFICE
- FINANCE
- LEGAL
- MEDICAL
- MONEY EXCHANGE
- TAXES
- PHOTOGRAPHY
- PLASMA SERVICES
- SHELTER



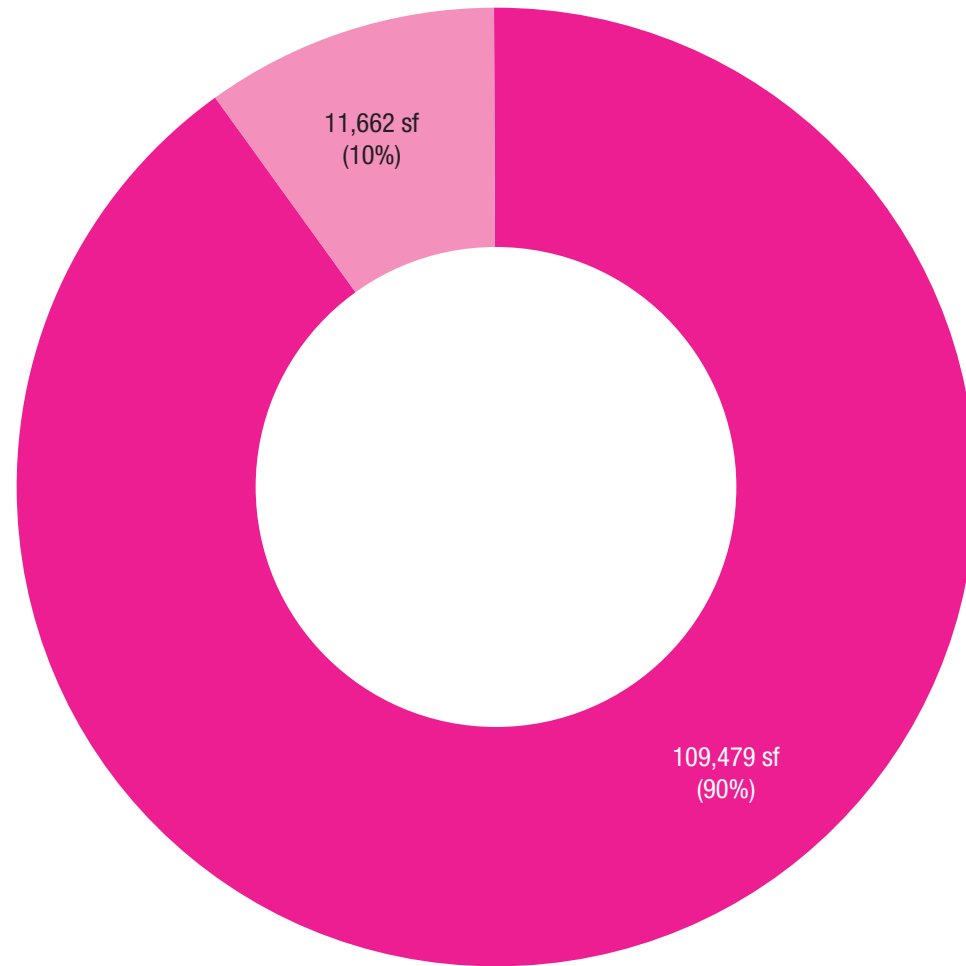
Office
407,181 sf



Hospitality 121,141 sf

Hotel, motel

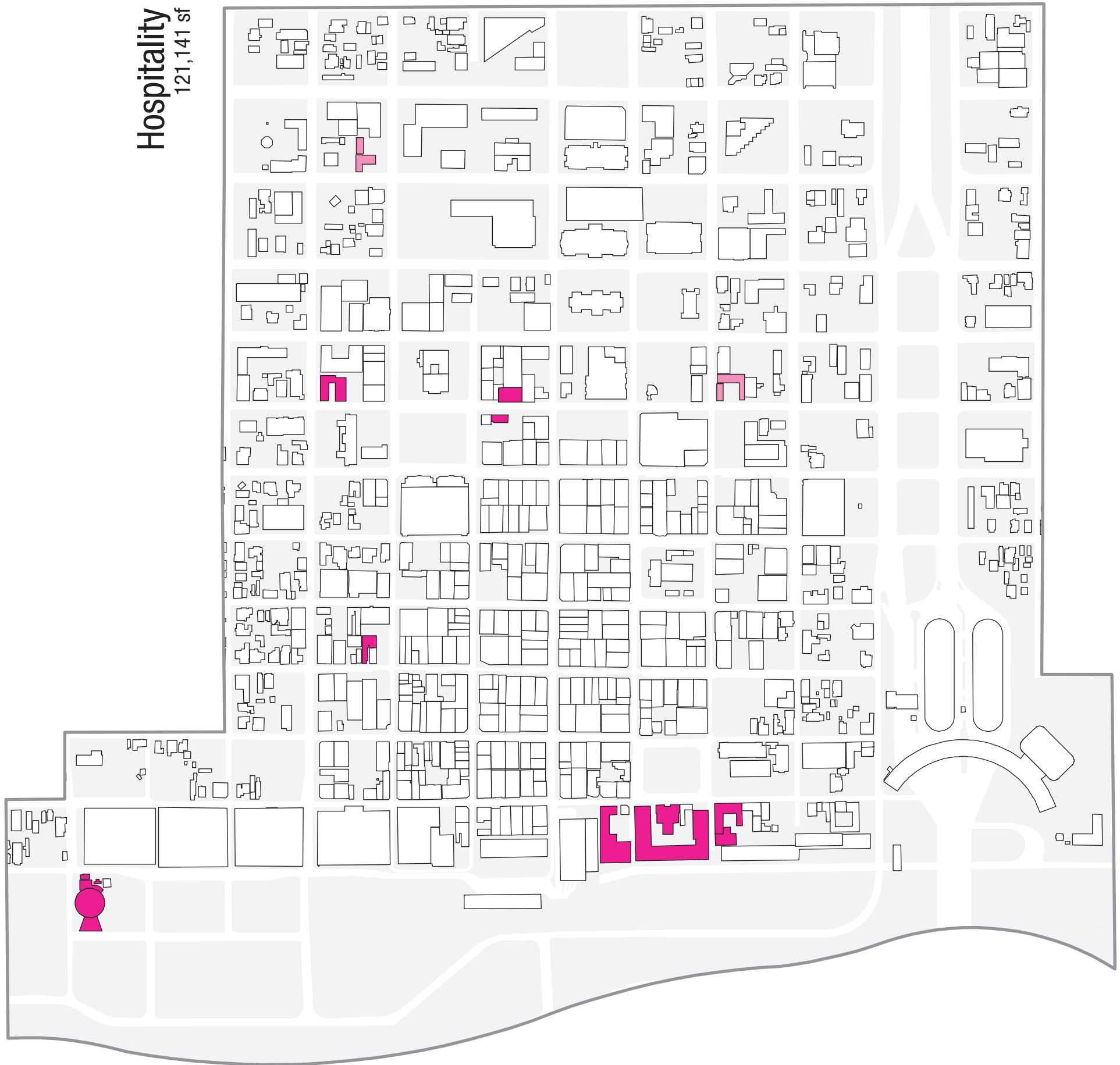
Downtown hospitality uses provide about 450 rooms and nearly all are to be found in the La Posada Hotel (208 rooms), and the Rio Grande Hotel (204 rooms). These hotels have adequately served Downtown in year's previous and likely years to come. Until tourism can not only recover but grow beyond past demand, a significant increase in room capacity is unlikely. Both hotels are immediately adjacent to the river, with the romantic La Posada oriented more to Plaza San Agustin and the dramatic Rio Grande claiming the high unrestricted views.



- HOTEL
- MOTEL



Hospitality
121,141 sf

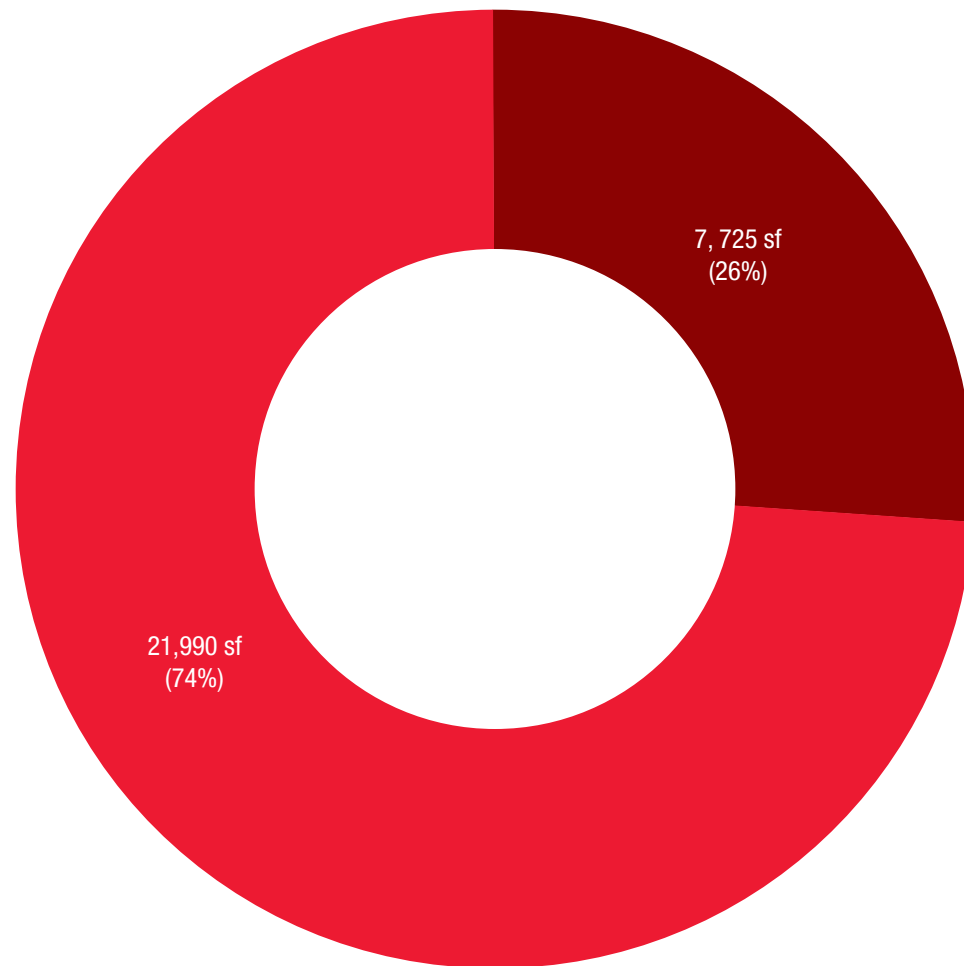


Entertainment 29,716 sf

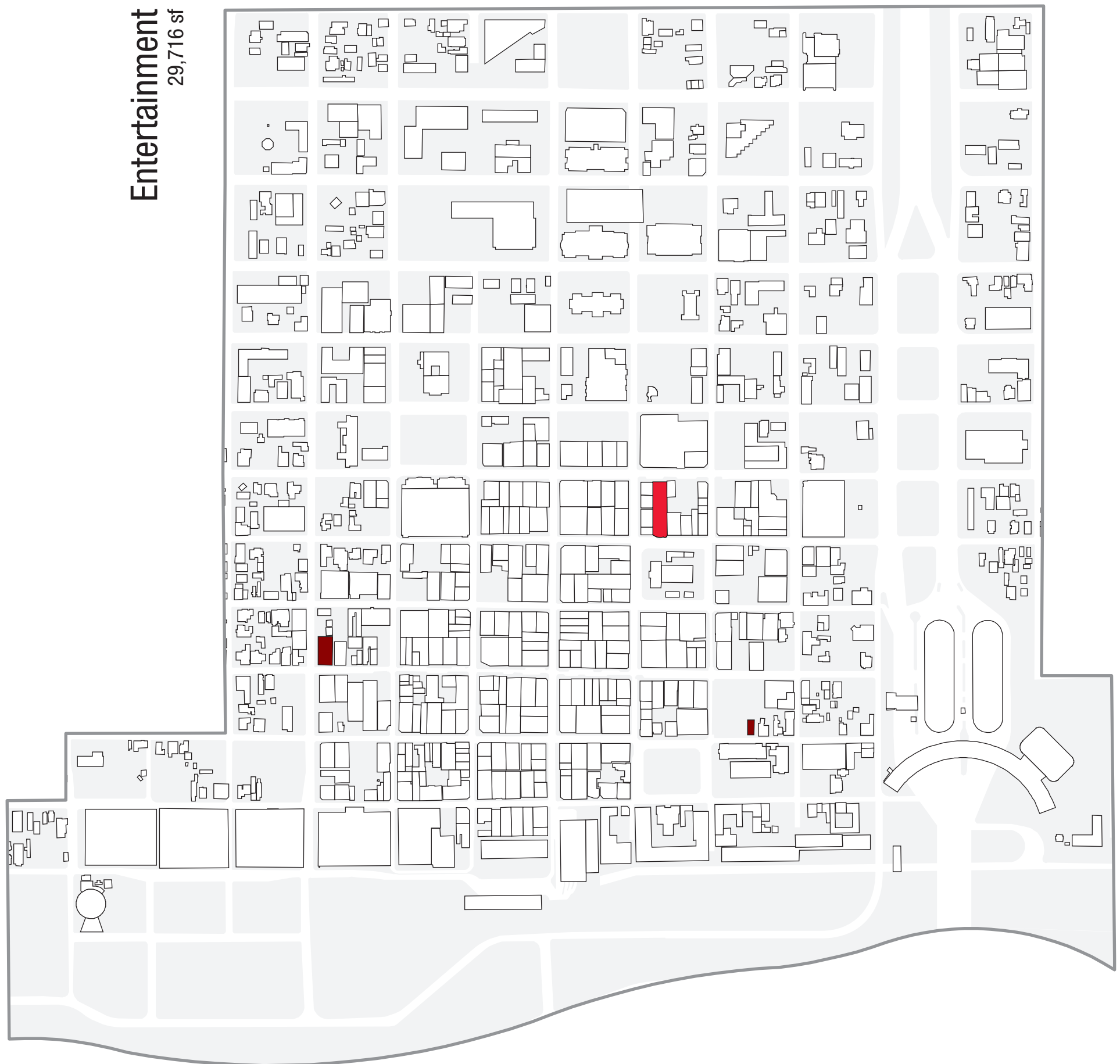
Reception hall, theater

Entertainment uses in Downtown are virtually nonexistent. Even though owned by the City the Plaza Theater remains vacant. Entertainment and food & beverage services uses are complimentary and mutually supportive

- RECEPTION HALL
- (VACANT) THEATER



Entertainment
29,716 sf

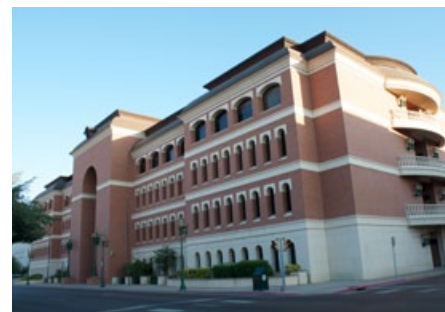
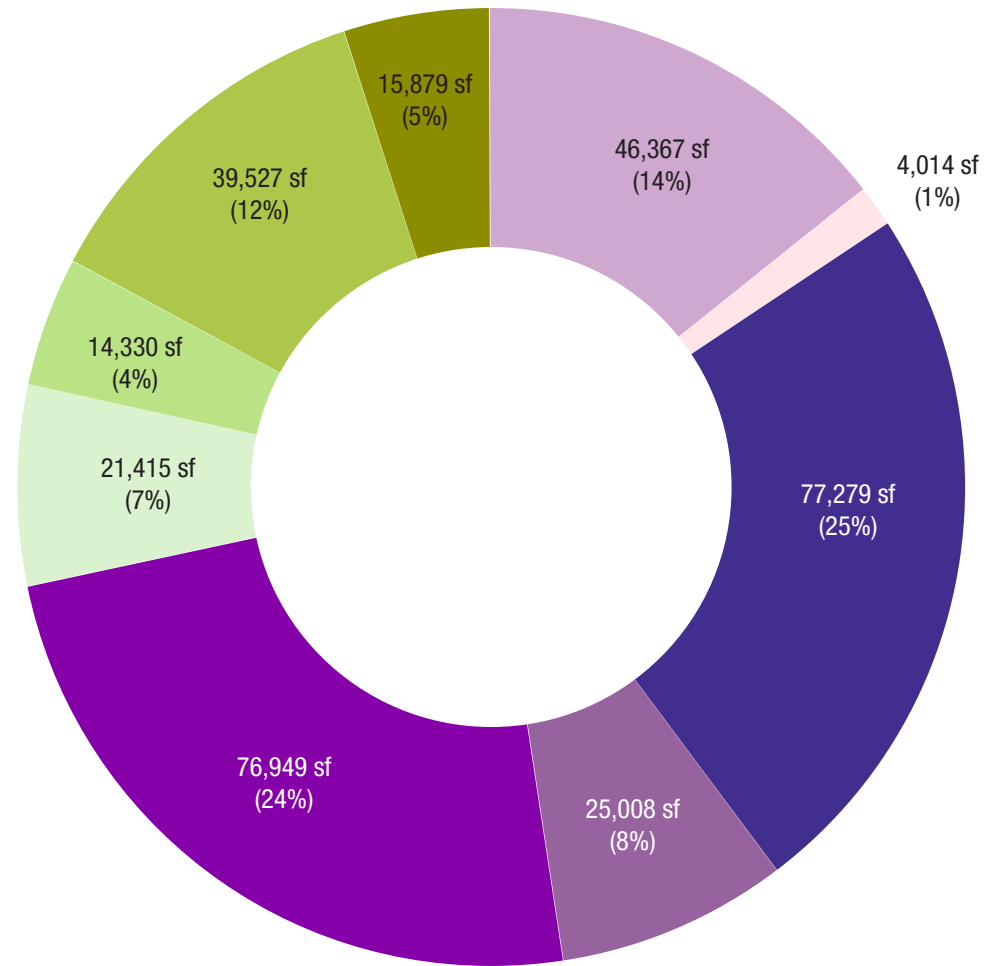


Government 320,769 sf

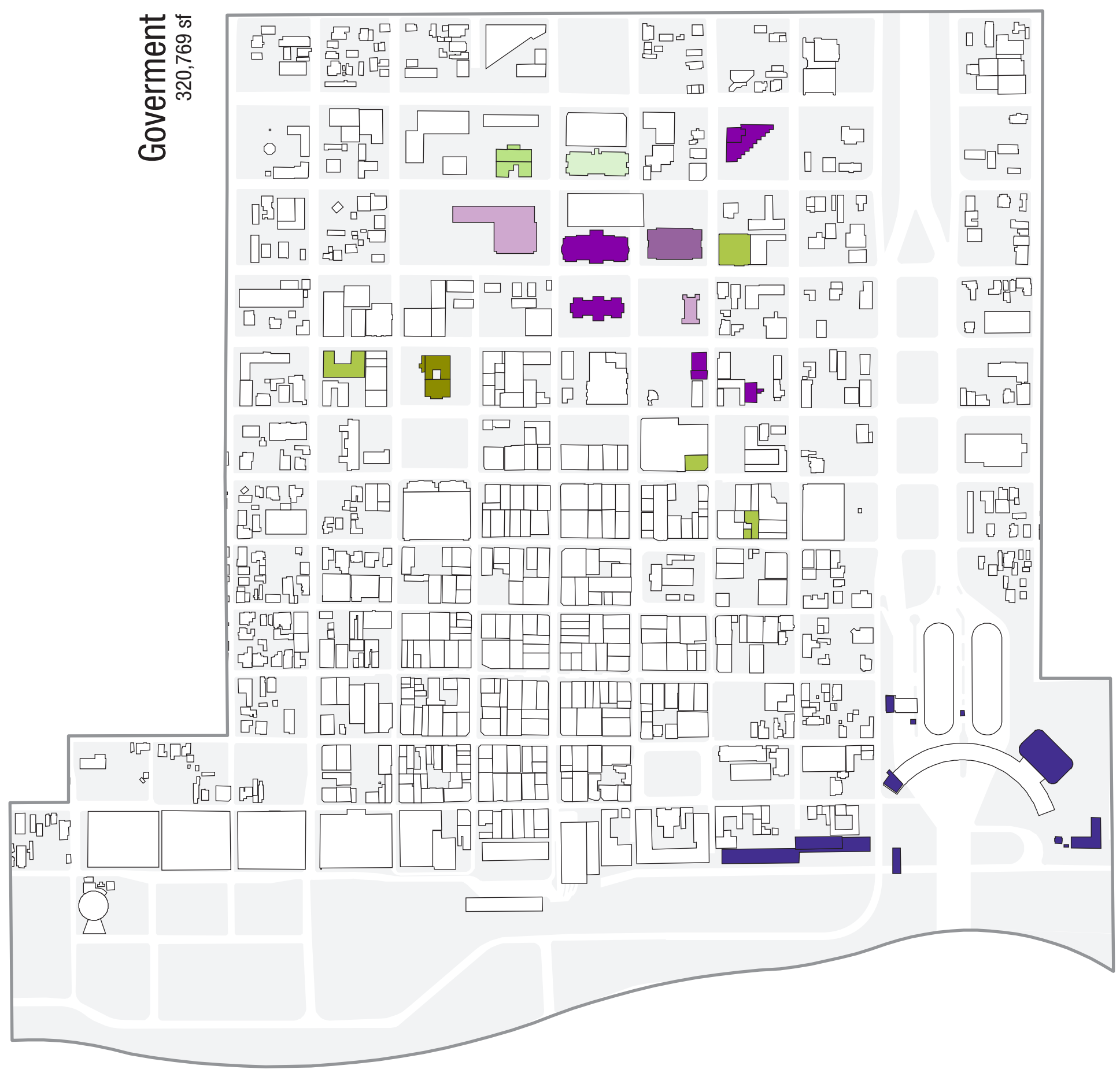
Fire station, courthouse, jail, office, GSA, federal/county/state facilities, police department, postal office

Downtown hosts most of Laredo's local, state and federal governmental offices, law enforcement and justice facilities, as well as the Mexico's consulate.

- COURTHOUSE
- FIRE STATION
- GSA
- JAIL
- OFFICE
- OFFICE - COUNTY
- OFFICE - STATE
- POLICE DEPARTMENT
- POST OFFICE



Government
320,769 sf

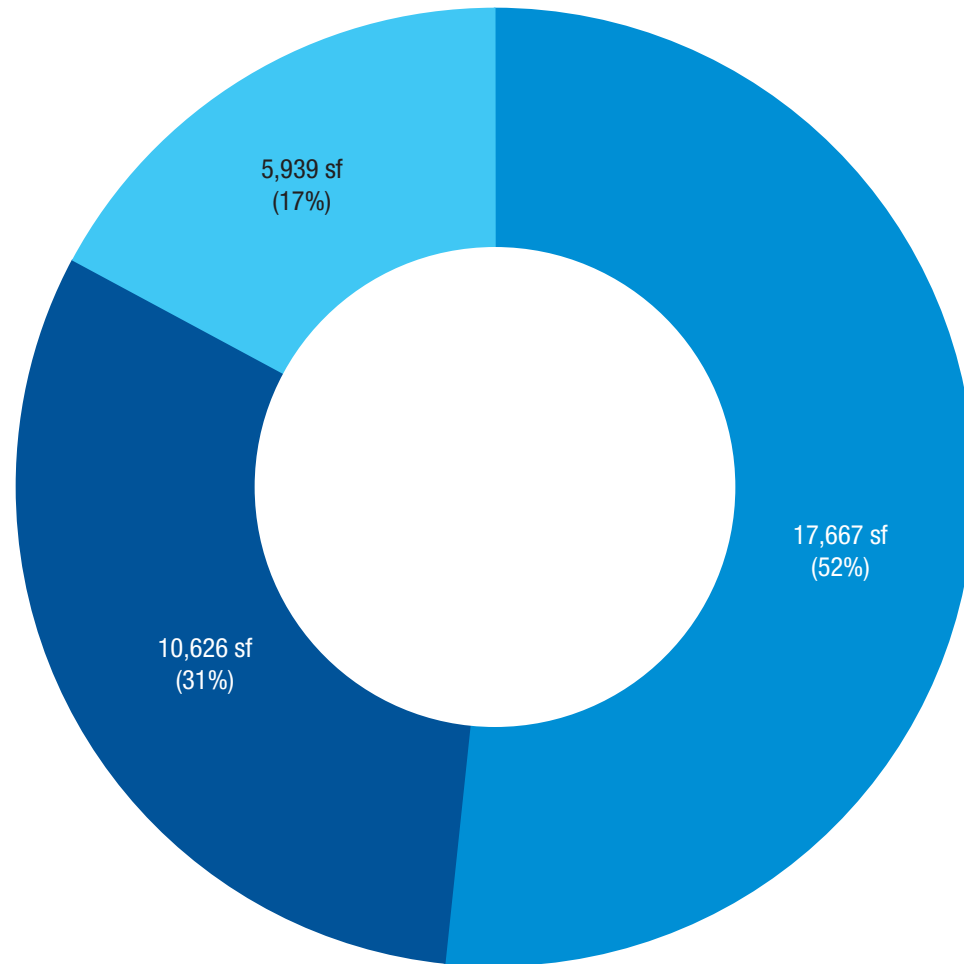


Religious 34,232 sf

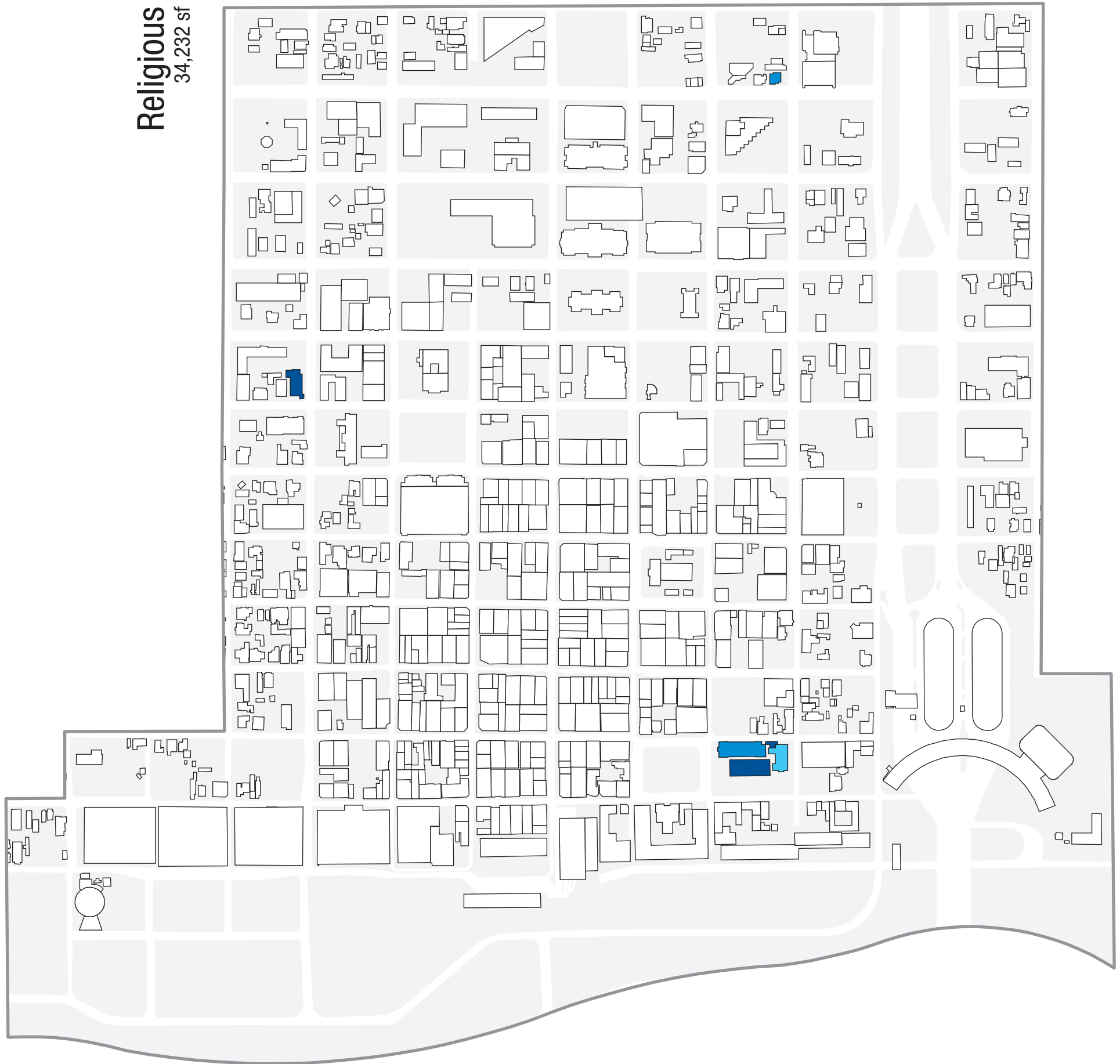
Church, religious assembly and offices.

Previously home to all the Laredo's religious institutions, only the catholic San Agustin Church and St. Peter's Church are functioning. Several other church buildings remain in Downtown but are used for other purposes.

- ASSEMBLY
- CHURCH
- OFFICE



Religious
34,232 sf



Institutional 93,678 sf

School, arts center, community center, convention and visitors bureau, daycare-adults, daycare-children, office, museum, university, shelter

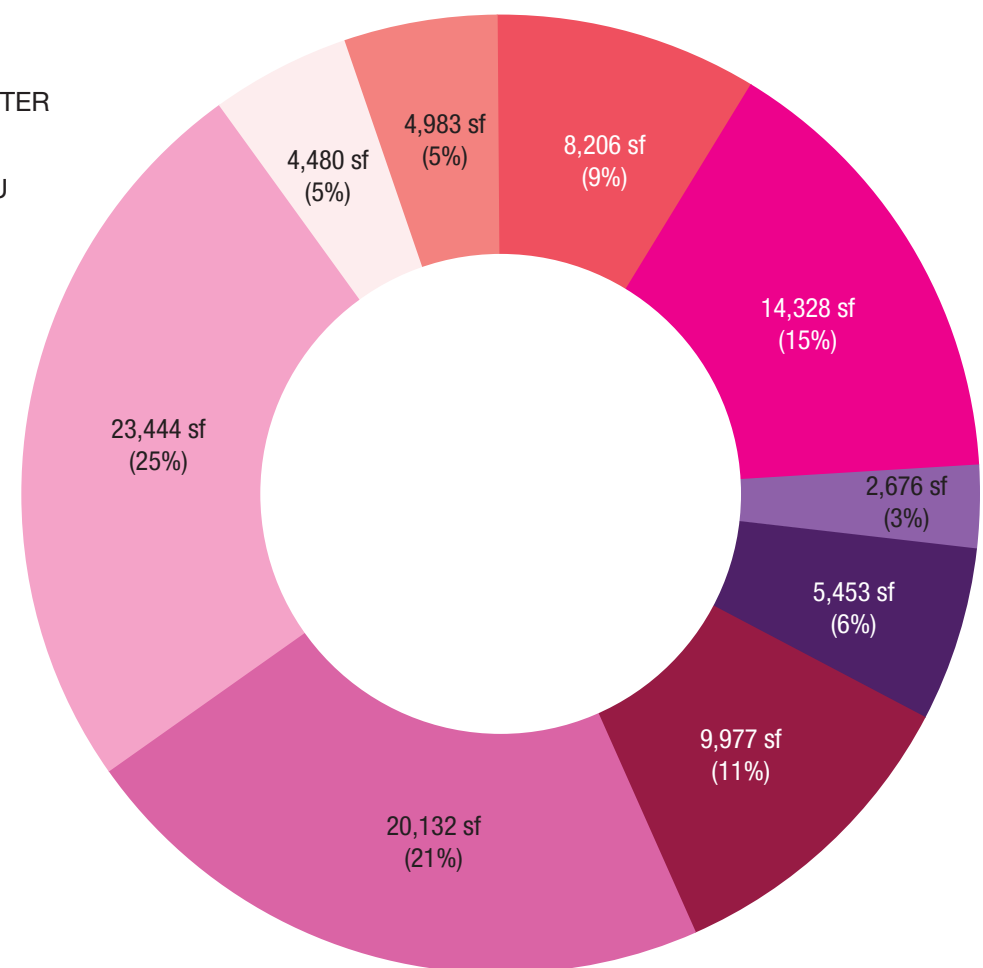
The Holding Institute is a privately operated community center that serves students on both sides of the border with vocational instruction, language skills, computer skills training and GED preparation.

The non-profit Laredo Center for the Arts was established with assistance from the City of Laredo to promote the artistic creativity of all people, and hosts a variety of artistic and cultural events, including international art exhibitions, dance performances, art history lectures, musical performances, and art education classes for adults and children. The Center also houses the Webb County Heritage Foundation and a gallery for the Laredo Art League. The Center manages three galleries: the Goodman Gallery, the Lilia G. Martinez Gallery and the Community Gallery which is dedicated to showing the work of local student artists.

The Villa Antigua Border Heritage Museum is housed in an Italianate style two-story brick residence that is representative of the grand houses that once populated the blocks around San Agustin Plaza in the early twentieth century. The Webb County Heritage Foundation operates and maintains the museum that serves to interpret regional history, culture, industry, and peoples through exhibits, seminars and special events.

The Republic of the Rio Grande Museum is located in the c.1830 Bartolome Garcia House; one of the oldest structures in Laredo and according to tradition the capitol building of the Republic of the Rio Grande. This historic house museum portrays interior finishes, furniture and appointments of its period of significance; is a Contributing Structure in the San Agustin NRD and a Recorded Texas Historical Landmark. As well as a historic house on San Bernardo Avenue that will be renovated to house a new Veteran's Museum.

- ARTS CENTER
- COMMUNITY CENTER
- CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU
- DAYCARE- ADULT
- MUSEUM
- OFFICE
- SCHOOL
- SHELTER
- UNIVERSITY



Institutional
93,678 sf



Wholesale 141,529 sf

Many of the apparent retail stores in Downtown are, or were actually wholesaler operations. Not unlike Storage & Warehouse uses, wholesale and retail are somewhat interchangeable regarding commercial sale space. Unlike retail where upper floors are often difficult and unprofitable to operate, the storage rather than display character of wholesale operations make upper floor utilization viable.

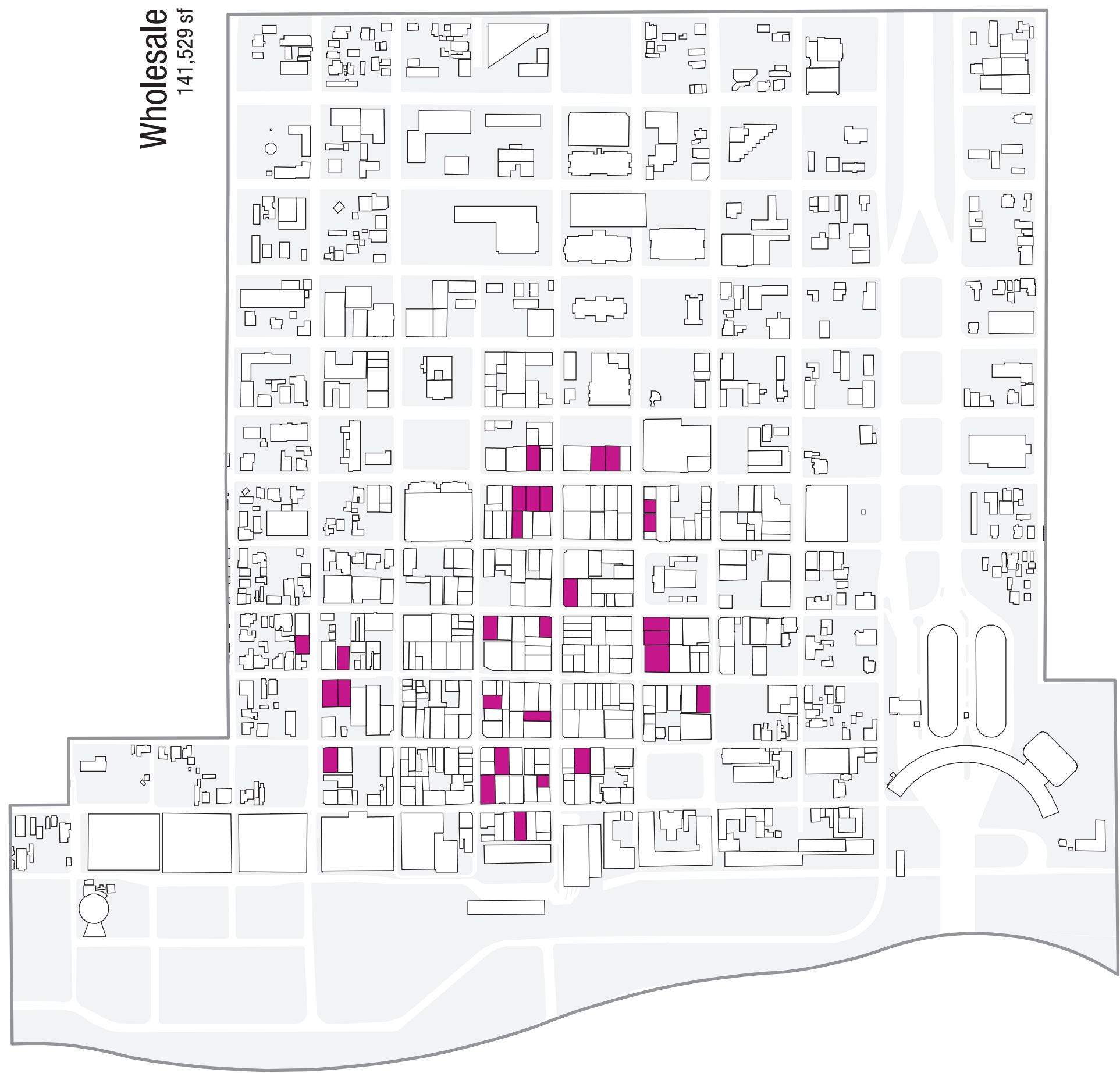
Concurrent with the financial stresses to Retail are changes in the wholesale market and practices. Some are getting out entirely and others are attempting transition to retail. Whatever adjustments may be made it is likely that wholesale uses will likely reduce and additional upper floor area will become more vacant.



■ WHOLESALE



Wholesale
141,529 sf



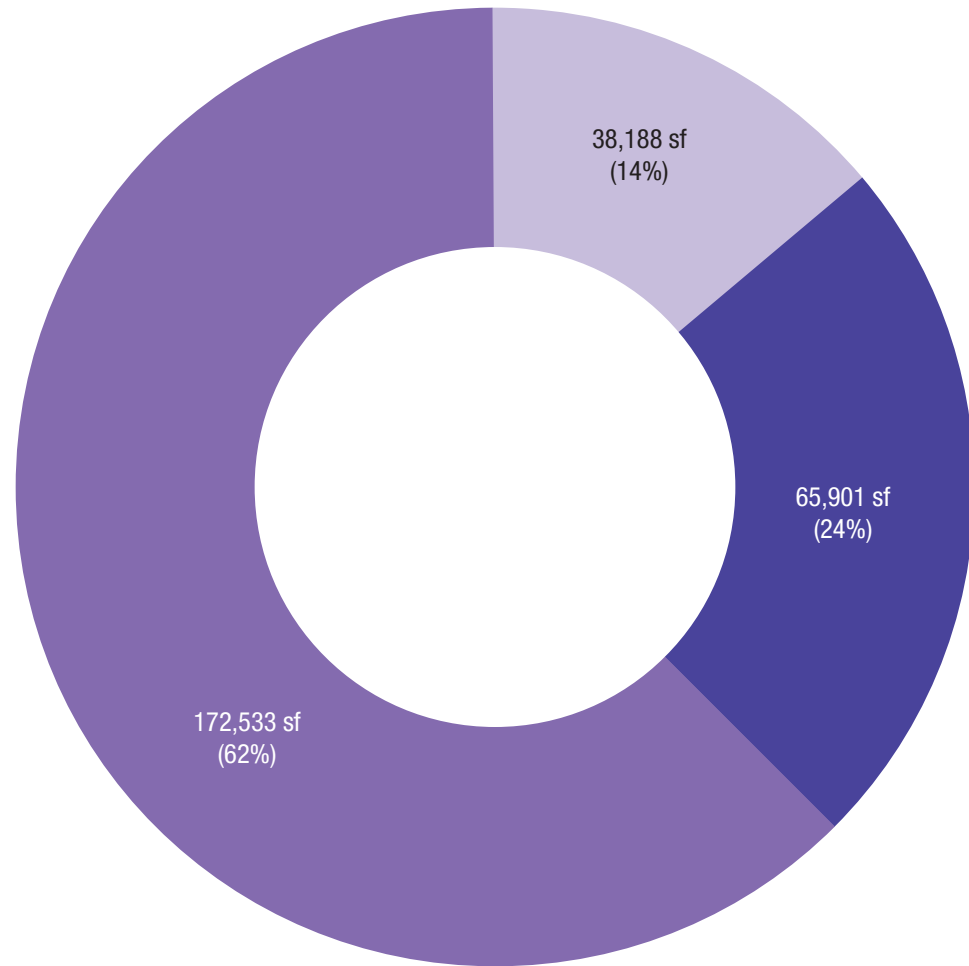
Storage & Warehouse

276,623 sf

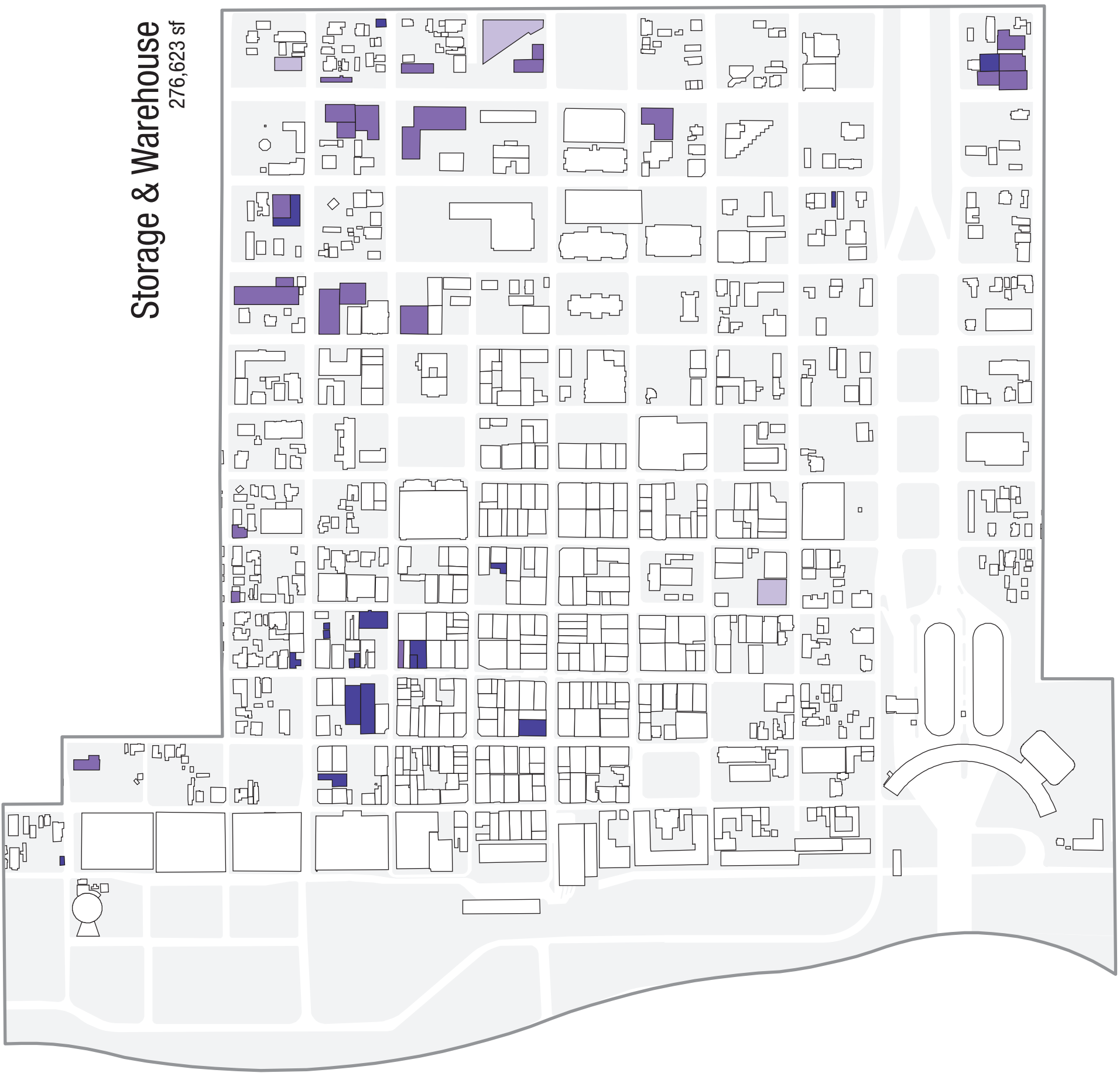
ropas usadas, warehouse, storage

Warehouse buildings are mostly remnants of rail-served distributors found along the west rail yard and Moctezuma rail corridor. Most of these warehouse buildings are utilized for light industrial uses and served by trucks. Warehouse and Storage uses are often interchangeable in the same building and overall have been diminishing in Downtown as more convenient access and facilities can be found elsewhere.

- ROPAS USADAS
- WAREHOUSE
- STORAGE



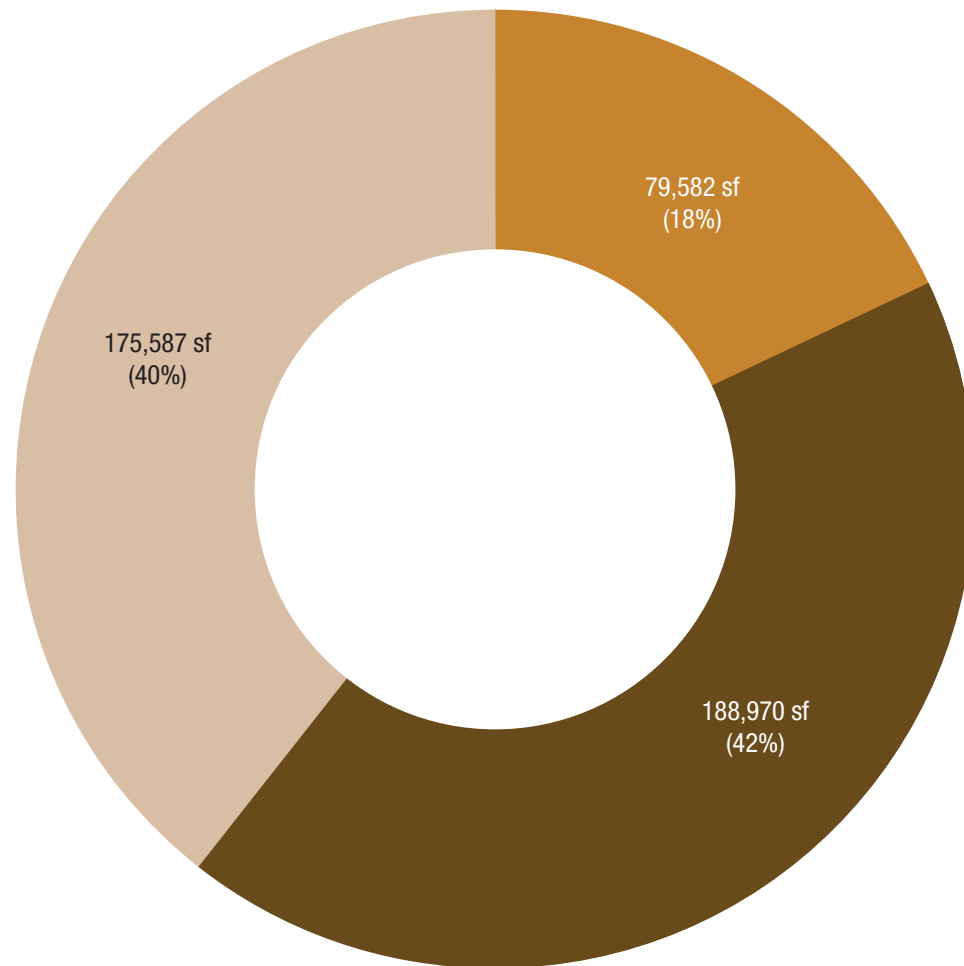
Storage & Warehouse
276,623 sf





Transportation 444,139 sf

Parking garage, bus station, bus maintenance, train station, port of entry

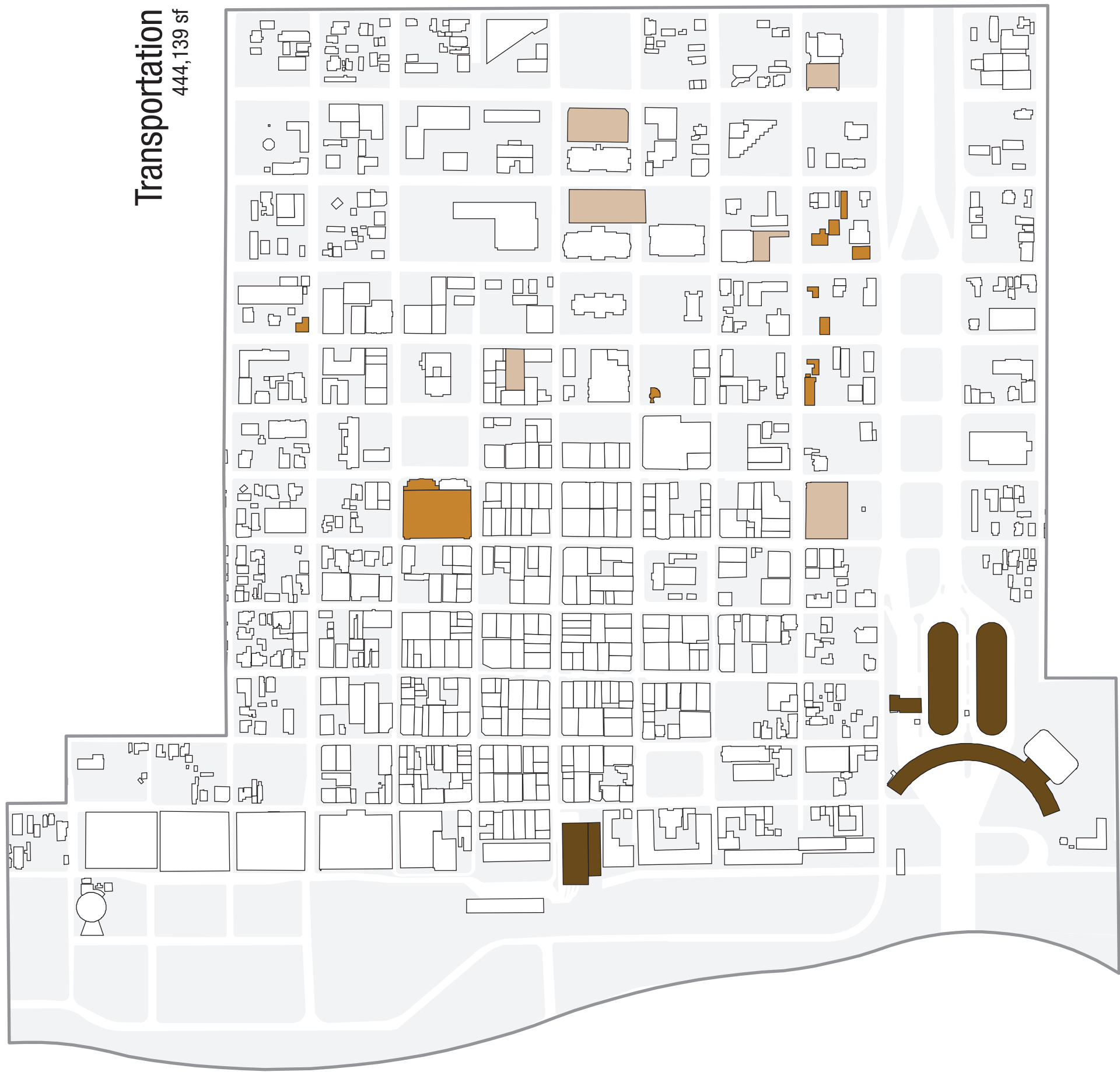
Although all of the commercial truck traffic has been rerouted out of Downtown both of its entry bridges are busy as well as the rail bridge. Commercial passenger bus traffic at Bridge 2 is heavy and a number of regional and international carriers maintain facilities in Downtown. El Metro – Laredo’s bus-oriented public transportation system operates out of a relatively sophisticated mixed-use office/retail parking structure that additionally provides a station for Greyhound Bus Line. The two train stations are significant historic structures. The I&GN Station is being used by Union Pacific as a maintenance office and the Texas-Mexican Rail Depot is vacant.



-  BUS STATION
-  PORT OF ENTRY



Transportation
444,139 sf



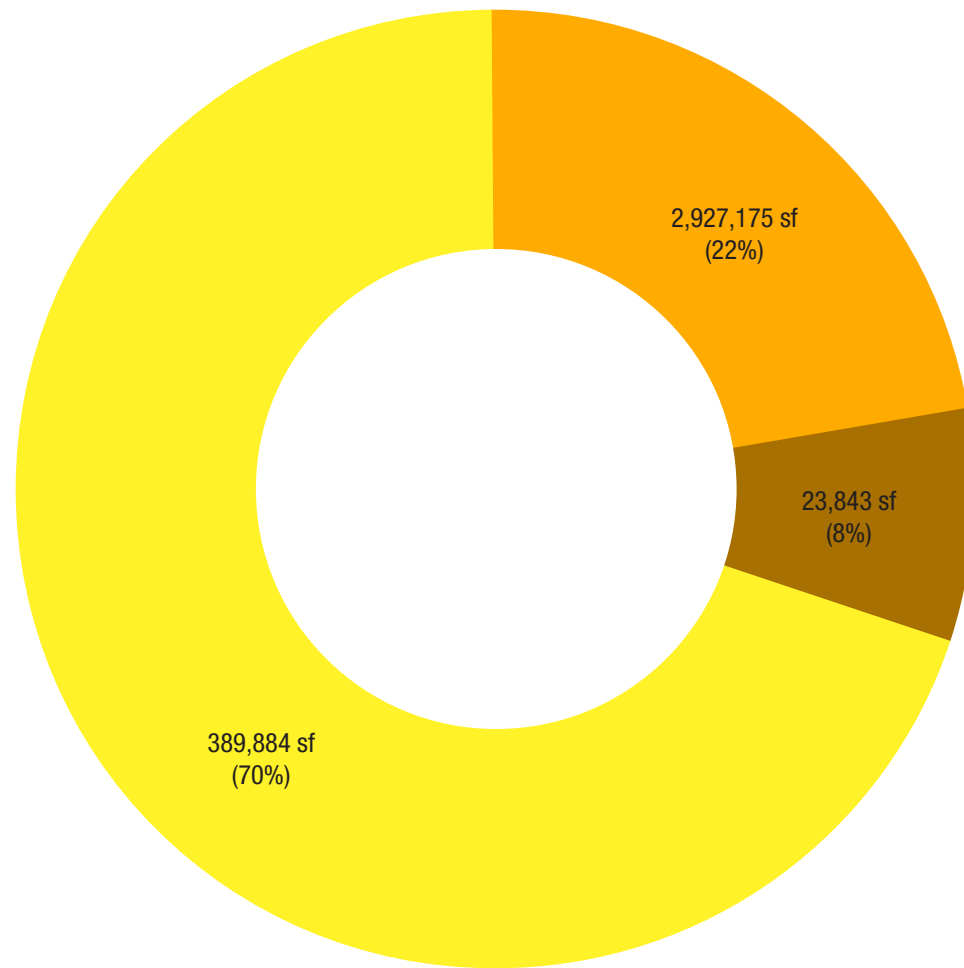
Residential 308,922 sf

Single family, multifamily, multifamily/high-rise

The single-family housing footprint in the CBD is a little more than two-thirds the residential ground floor area but constitutes only 75 out of the total number of 396 dwelling units in the Focus Area. Similar to the study area, approximately half of single family houses are rentals, and the majority of all residential units is for senior housing. The relatively low income levels associated with residential uses in the focus and adjoining study areas means there is little disposable income with which to support Downtown entertainment and food & beverage activity.

Single-family housing in the CBD can be expected to diminish in the future as the pressure for expansion of non-residential uses in the CBD increases. This does not mean that every house is endangered, but that most can be adapted to uses other than residential. This trend is apparent around St. Peter's Square, where the Laredo ISD has adapted homes for administrative offices and in the government zone where legal and other professional services occupy historic single-family houses.

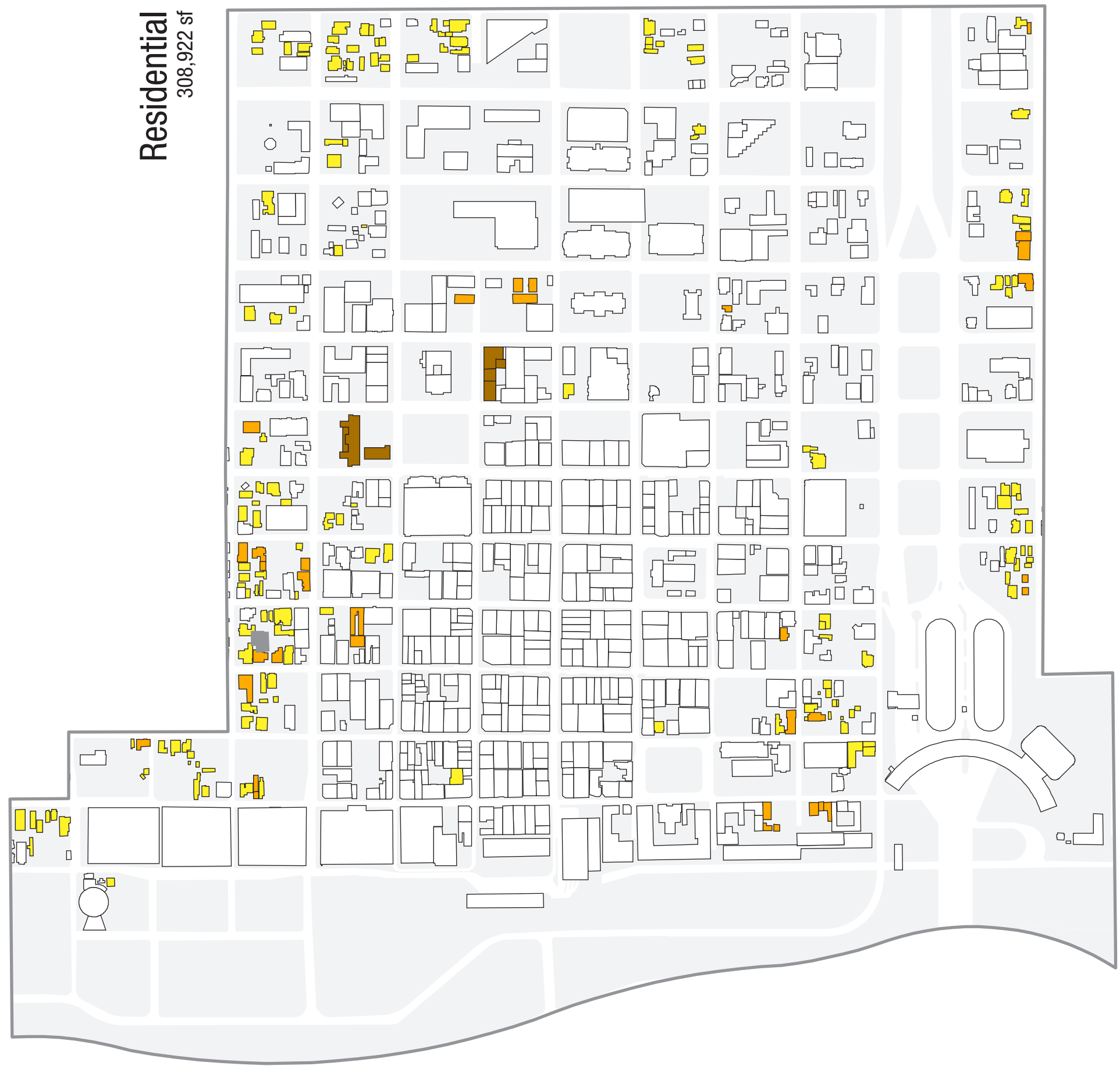
The overall lack of residential uses and preponderance of low-income households may keep otherwise vacant buildings occupied but have little contribution to the economic vitality of Downtown.



- SINGLE FAMILY
- MULTI FAMILY
- MULTI FAMILY - HIGH RISE



Residential
308,922 sf

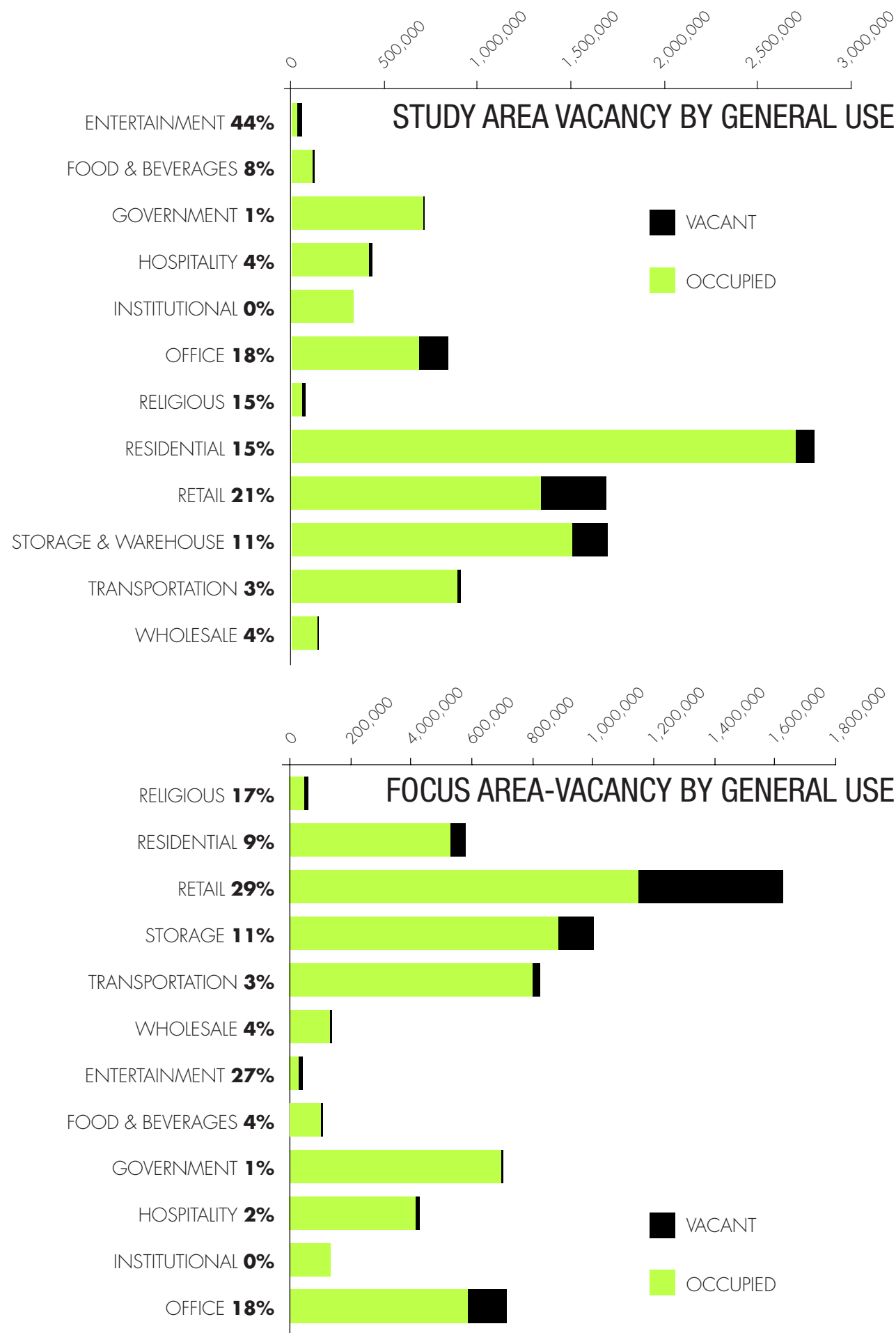


VACANCY

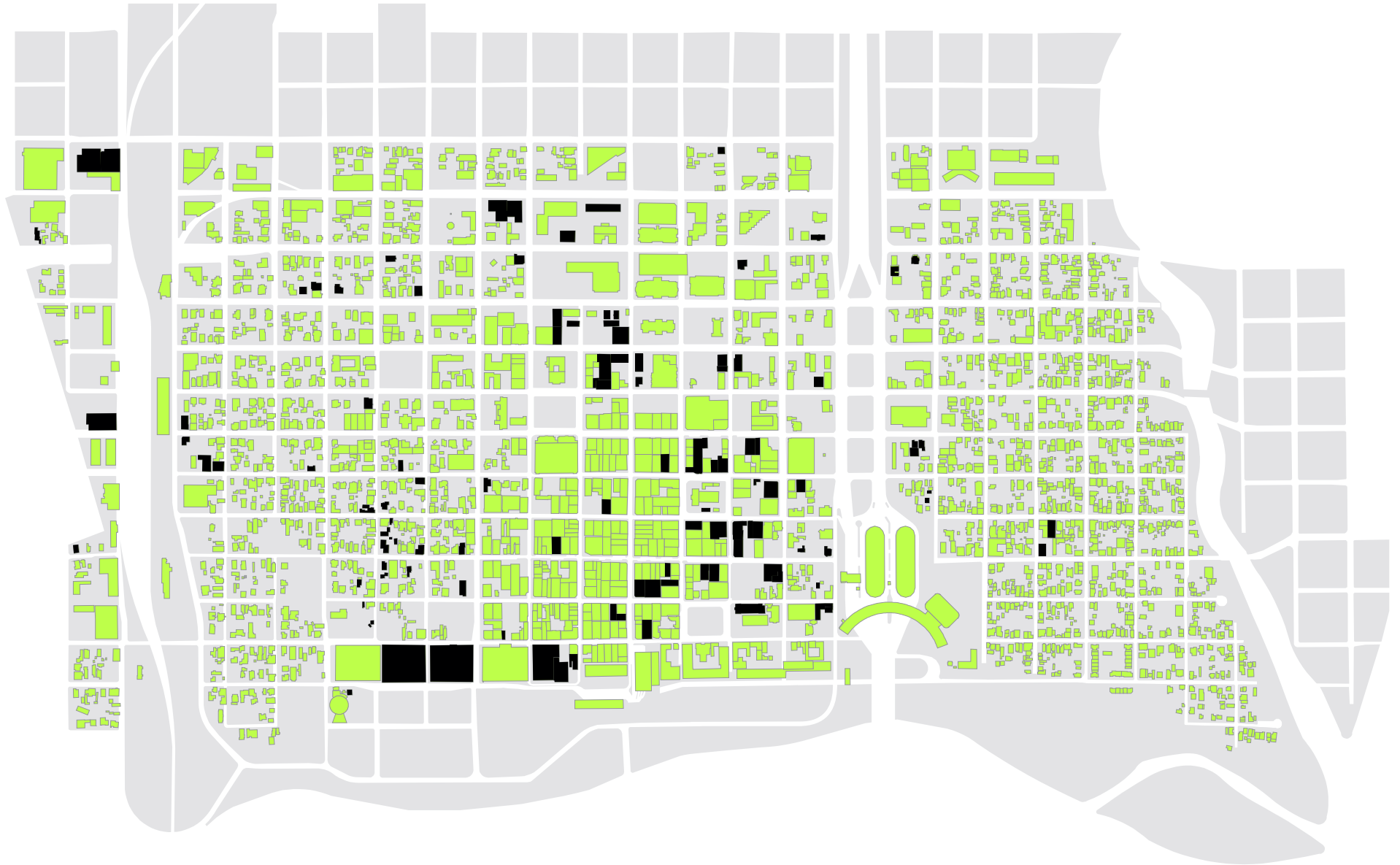
Identification of vacant building area is a critical metric in understanding Downtown's performance and capacity. Vacancy is traditionally categorized as a Building Use, which does not necessarily indicate what kind of use a vacant building provided or could be expected to host. This inventory documented vacancy as a Condition, rather than a Use, so that a more accurate profile of use and occupation could be determined. In so doing, the assumption is that a preexisting Use infers a particular building Type, such that retail uses occur in retail building types, residential uses occur in residential building types, etc.

There are however significant exceptions that will need to be further considered in comparing vacant conditions with buildings that have been adapted for uses not originally intended for its Type. This is most pervasive in the adaptation of houses to non-residential uses: offices, restaurants, stores, etc, but it also occurs with specific building types like a service station remodeled for a restaurant or a fire station converted to offices. To simplify this complication building areas were inventoried according to its immediate past Use as could best be determined.

Ground floor vacant area was usually apparent, but often difficult to identify in upper floor areas. In multi-story buildings with retail and wholesale uses the upper floors provide office and storage space, and though they might appear vacant from outside are actually usefully occupied. In gaining access to some upper floor areas there was variance between the efficient utilization of space for storage, with wholesale uses being more efficient than retail uses. But the amount of upper floor vacant area recorded was for the most part associated with multi-story buildings that were entirely vacant. The Condition of being vacant was not applied to office buildings with lease space. Vacancy rates for office lease space are reportedly high, but unless the building was closed the area of unoccupied lease space was not counted.



BUILDING VACANCY



PLAZAS, PARKS, AND OPEN SPACE

INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Plazas and the role public spaces have played in Laredo are part of the historic district’s appeal. The story of Laredo and the role that plazas served should be more richly explored. Laredo is the only south Texas town north of the Rio Grande with two plazas, the Plaza de Armas and the Market Plaza, that adhere to the syncretism of the Spanish & Mesoamerican traditions. Opportunities for cultural activities should be encouraged, which can provide enriching experiences thru music, dance and other art forms. Food vendors can round out the sensory experiences. Celebrating history adds the educational component that builds pride in its citizens. Restoring or renovating these treasures to add fresh visual appeal, comfort and safety can provide a great foundation for new uses while respecting historical significance.



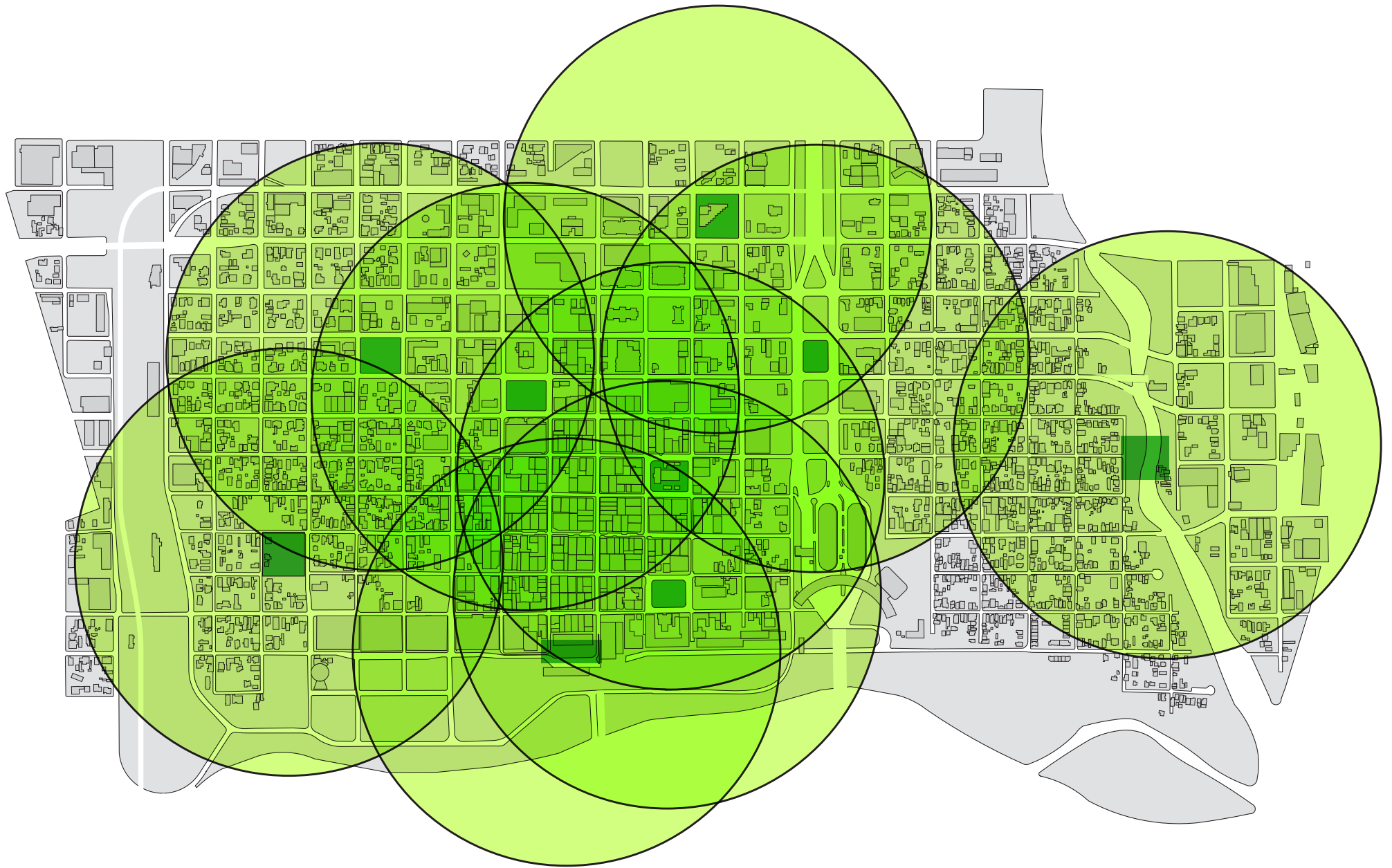
Downtown is punctuated by a series of public plazas and parks, and nearly surrounded by the open space associated with Zacate Creek, the River, and potential future development of the switchyard.

 POTENTIAL FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

- | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. EL CUATRO PARK | 5. SAN AGUSTIN PLAZA | 9. EL PASEO DEL ANTIGUO | 13. HOUSTON PARK |
| 2. ST. PETER’S PLAZA | 6. BRUNI PLAZA | 10. LAS PALMAS TRAIL | 14. SCOTT ST. PARK |
| 3. JARVIS PLAZA | 7. RIVER BEND PARK | 11. AZTECA PARK | 15. SEVEN FLAGS PARK |
| 4. EL MERCADO | 8. LOS DOS LAREDOS | 12. MONTERREY PARK | 16. BENAVIDES PARK |

PEDESTRIAN SHED STUDY

Pedestrian Sheds are the basic building block of walkable neighborhoods. This is the area encompassed by walking distance from a town or neighborhood center. Usually defined as the area covered by a 5 minute walk or a 1/4 mile or a 1,200 ft. radius. The open space network in Laredo's urban fabric currently provides appropriate pedsheds that connect spaces or parks within downtown.



PLAZA DE ARMAS (CIRCA 1860, ARREOLA)

Held arms and was used to corral cattle during early roundups for branding and for public gatherings such as readings of decrees. Called Church Plaza in 1885, Martin Plaza in 1902, then in 1990 its original name, San Agustin Plaza, was restored. The current San Agustin Plaza was relocated, circa 1860 (landscaped garden popularized during French Occupation of Mexico).



EXISTING CONDITIONS

- Raised Band Stand with boarded up restrooms beneath. Structural stability should be evaluated by a structural engineer.
- Other amenities include: precast concrete commemorative benches, drinking fountain, decorative pole lighting, street lighting, trash receptacles, mature trees, plantings, and irrigation. Some of these features are in poor condition.
- Decorative raised tile-clad planters providing seating are in disrepair.
- Historic markers and signage present on site.
- Bronze sculpture not lit properly.
- Clay pavers used for walkways and surrounding streets.
- Buildings, adjacent to all sides of the plaza, provide visual interest and draw pedestrians into the site. Places of business shops, restaurants, historic church with school and hotel provide interest.
- Limited view to Rio Grande flood plain. Hotel turns back to river.
- No kiosks and banners to display upcoming events or points of interest for tourists.

ANALYSIS

- Consideration should be given to whether the plaza is restored to a specific period or renovated honoring certain features of the plaza.
- Consider use of interpretive signage with accompanying illustrations of the plaza in different periods on site.
- Consider more appropriate paving such as limestone pavers.
- Restore raised tile planters and bandstand. Use these elements to enhance site furniture, plantings and irrigation. Add new elements such as pedestals for interpretive signage or light pole bases.
- Consider use of indirect lighting to highlight mature tree canopies to enhance nighttime views of the plaza. Encourage lighting of building facades.
- This is an ideal space for public art.
- Needs directional signage to plaza.
- Ideal opportunities for food vendors.
- Another ideal cultural events location with better utilized bandstand.
- Great location for Christmas and Easter celebrations/market.
- Consider connections to future riverfront development.

PLAZA (1885, JUAREZ PLAZA; 1931, JARVIS PLAZA)

Bounded by Salinas and Juarez Streets, Matamoros and Farragut Streets. Named after Samuel Jarvis who served as Laredo's Mayor from 1868-1872. The land for the Plaza was donated by Jarvis. A late Victorian bandstand remains on the Plaza.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

- It is a visually appealing space with mature tree canopy but very little additional shrub, perennial and seasonal plantings.
- Strong axial ties to Post Office and transit station.
- Brick clad seating walls throughout, which separates walks and landscaped areas. In addition there are individual benches.
- Bandstand with restrooms below it that are locked. Structural stability should be evaluated by a structural engineer.
- There is irrigation which is dated.
- There are period light poles and lamps.
- There is a large bus stop across from city transit station.
- Plaza attracts undesirable uses, vandalism is a problem

ANALYSIS

- Careful consideration should be given to whether the plaza is restored to a specific period or renovated and restoring certain features of the plaza.
- Use Indirect lighting to advantage, utilizing the mature tree canopies and highlighting the plaza features which will enhance night time views of the plaza.
- Another ideal space for public art.
- No kiosks and banners to display upcoming events or points of interest for tourists.
- No directional signage to plaza.
- Ideal opportunities for food vendors.
- Another ideal cultural events location with better utilized bandstand.
- Use benches that complement the period of restoration.
- Provide food vendors and tables to draw workers and tourists to plaza.
- Needs interpretive signage with accompanying illustrations of the plaza.

MARKET PLAZA/OLD CITY HALL (1885)

Bounded by Flores and San Augustin Avenues, Lincoln and Hidalgo Streets. This Plaza was used to sell produce as well as other goods. The Market Plaza has been newly envisioned.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

- Twin water features at entrance to Arts Building Complex.
- Other amenities include: seating and raised planters, drinking fountain, decorative pole lighting, street lighting, trash receptacles, mature trees, plantings, decorative steel fencing and irrigation.
- Signage present on site.
- Stores present on site.
- Old city hall repurposed as Arts Center.

ANALYSIS

- This plaza has not realized its full potential. It can be so much more festive with banners, art, enhanced lighting, new site furniture, more plantings, more dynamic water features and more attention given to plantings such as hanging baskets, and colorful perennials.
- Consider use of indirect lighting to highlight mature tree canopies and the complex which will enhance nighttime use and view of the plaza.
- Consider use of interpretive signage with accompanying illustrations of the plaza in different periods on site.
- Outdoor art is appropriate for this Plaza.
- No kiosks and banners to display upcoming events.
- No directional signage to plaza.
- No food vendors to attract daytime use.
- Consider more dynamic water features with new site furniture arranged to encourage day time seating.
- Remove fencing.

PUBLIC SQUARE (1885, JUAREZ PLAZA; 1931, BRUNI PLAZA)

A Public Library was built on the plaza site. Bounded by San Agustin and San Bernardo Avenues, Washington & Moctezuma Streets. This Plaza was referred to as Juarez Plaza due to the proximity of the Plaza to the Hijos de Juarez Building located at 1120 San Agustin. Prior to any design work for these plazas historical and archeological oversight will be required.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

- Tiled drinking fountain, large circular tiled water feature not in use, and raised tile walled terrace with small water feature not in use missing and cracked tiles.
- Other amenities include: drinking fountain, minimal lighting at building, street lighting, trash receptacles, mature trees as well as other plantings, and irrigation.
- Historic markers on site.

ANALYSIS

- This plaza has tile work that traces its roots to indigenous Mexican Arts and Crafts. It's a treasure that needs to be restored, protected and enjoyed.
- Consider using indirect lighting to enhance night time views of the mature tree canopies and lighting the tile work which will enhance night time views of the plaza.
- Consider decorative pole lighting that is historically appropriate.
- Restore tile-covered walls, portals, drinking fountain and water features.
- Make drinking fountain and water feature operational.
- Use benches and decorative pole lights that complement the tile-covered features.
- Build an outdoor classroom on the site.
- Use interpretive signage with accompanying illustrations of the plaza when freshly constructed and that provides a description of tiles production, artist's name and biographical information.

ST. PETER'S SQUARE PLAY GROUND (CIRCA 1890)

St. Peter's Square was designated a park on the early maps. Situated across from St. Peter's School it was also used as a playground by the school children. Early 20th Century photographs document a May Day Celebration in St. Peter's Plaza in which a May Pole was erected for the Spring Rite.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

- It was the playground for St. Peter's Catholic School.
- Has basketball court.
- Has mature tree canopy and turf.
- Is not irrigated.
- Is accessible to residents and workers.
- Has perimeter walkway.
- It has seating, minimal lighting, drinking fountains and trash receptacles as well as some street lighting.

ANALYSIS

- This plaza has a community park presence. It should be kept low key to provide a pocket of green for surrounding workers and residents.
- Plantings could be enhanced by encouraging community/demonstration garden development.
- Consider other uses such an exercise course and gathering place with benches, picnic tables and shade structures.
- Improve pedestrian circulation.
- Consider use of indirect lighting to highlight mature tree canopies to enhance night time views of the plaza and provide security lighting.
- Provide interpretive signage showing images from the 1930s.
- Provide signage to plaza.



EL CUATRO PARK (2005)

Is a small community park with an emphasis on active recreation and some passive recreation. Existing ball fields and playgrounds, as well as other site amenities, leave no room for changes or additions. It is used by residents in the surrounding neighborhood.



EL PORTAL (2005)

The El Portal project was a part of the proposed Bridge of the Americas (El Portal) modification project. El Portal is located along Water Street between Convent and Santa Maria Street. The project included a pedestrian bridge crossing, site improvements, on-site outdoor lighting, sidewalk ramp, plaza paving and landscape irrigation improvements.

PAN AMERICAN PLAZA (1980'S)

This 4-block area is unquestionably where the metropolitan, regional and international routes of access to Downtown are most concentrated. What most people see as they enter Downtown from the north are the monumental flags of Mexico and the U.S., and five lanes of traffic up ahead. Approaching from the port of entry, one sees the gas station to the right below the U.S. flag and four lanes of traffic headed north.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

- The avenues are lined with the usual array of border crossing businesses: duty-free stores, gas stations, regional bus carriers. There are several bank buildings, one of which has its drive-through facilities at the foot of the U.S. flag in combination with a veterans memorial and ceramic tile bench.
- One might be moved to reflect, but the flag and memorial borrows space from the asphalt parking lot and feels temporary.
- Between the avenues there are landscaped areas, the remnants of former city blocks whose areas are reduced by the widened lanes.
- All the elements needed for a park setting are present: grass, shrubs, trees, walks, benches, memorials of past generals and public figures, a fountain and even an eternal flame.
- Completed several decades ago, the landscape has more endured than matured. With the crush of surrounding traffic — its bulk, noise, and smell — it is both an enormous and inhospitable space.
- It's hard to imagine that Santa Ursula and San Dario Avenues were originally as narrow as most of the streets in Villa Antigua, or that they were lined with buildings of similar age and architectural character.
- One of the blocks had no buildings; it was the Plaza de la Noria in front of the now demolished "Escuela Amarilla", and before it was used as the schools playground it was where freighters watered their horses and residents drew their water.
- There is an historical continuity between those freighters and the present drivers who draw fuel from the gas stations, but there is no contemporary reflection of residents drawing their water.

ANALYSIS

- It is among Laredo's most valuable pieces of infrastructure, but despite its large open space and memorials it is monumentally unimpressive.
- There should be a project that is intended to transform the space into a grand entrance plaza that celebrates and capitalizes on Laredo's position as a Pan American destination.
- There is the need to provide a landscape and program of use that is compelling and capable of attracting people to spend time in the plaza.
- New water features that provide environmental cooling and mask traffic noise should be considered as a major design element.
- A greater sense of accommodation for people to relax and refresh, enjoy programmed and spontaneous activities, and feel safe and secure is essential.
- The perimeter of the plaza needs to relate to the overall plaza but also provide sufficient space and amenity to activate the ground floors of surrounding buildings.
- The four-block linkage did not just gouge through the urban fabric, it also disrupted the patterns of use and movement that activated that fabric.
- The rationale for Bridge 2 and its linkage with IH35 is apparent: access to Downtown and its economy would have been problematic without this valuable piece of transportation infrastructure however, the cultural and social cost to Downtown and Barrio El Azteca is incalculable.
- El Azteca residents have felt cut off from Downtown since, and Downtown has not benefited as it has from Plaza San Agustin or its other urban open spaces.
- It is a "neutral" ground with no community-based claim or purpose. Little wonder that its only official place name is TxDOT's Four-Block Area, a highway median between traffic.



ZACATE CREEK

Zacate Creek is a small stream of water that runs through Laredo, Texas until it connects to the Rio Grande. The vegetation surrounding the creek is mostly made of mesquite, coma cacti and grasses. The City of Laredo has developed the Zacate Creek Park and Zacate Creek Greenway, a 3 mile trail near the creek.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

- Zacate Creek has some trail development providing linkages to neighborhoods and schools along the creek.
- Improvements were funded by TxDOT, an important resource whose value has not been fully realized.
- As open space for the city and specifically for El Azteca neighborhood has the potential to increase property value and can provide multi modal access to and from downtown and other areas of the city via trails along the creek and the river.
- Zacate Creek highlights include: the development of art in the landscape, tree planting, new parks and amenities, trails and its connectivity from neighborhoods and schools. It has the beginnings of a great linear parkway.
- This creek way can be a green oasis that provides shade, wildlife habitat, a system for hiking, jogging and biking, a part of a system of multi modal transportation, an educational opportunity for schools, a community unifier.

ANALYSIS

- A comprehensive master plan should be undertaken for the creek way greenbelt from its headwaters to its confluence with the Rio Grande River.
- The following issues, items, existing conditions, disciplines and resources should be thoroughly investigated: vegetative restoration, fluvial geomorphology, hydrology, geology, storm water runoff, soils investigations, existing infrastructure, erosion control, as well as archeological, cultural and historical resource investigation.
- Connectivity and accessibility are important for the development of a truly functional and well used trail system.
- Community input is critical and should be encouraged thru a public forum.
- To foster a sense of ownership a 'Friends of Zacate Creek' community-based organization could be started, which would be a great way to develop community pride and keep concerned eyes on the park.
- Community groups should be encouraged to undertake a tree planting program in their neighborhoods, by educating them about the care of and the appropriate trees to plant regionally, and providing seedlings at no cost especially along the creekway.
- It can be a unifying excercize for the community.



RIO GRANDE VEGA LANDS

The Rio Grande River was designated as an American Heritage River by Executive Order in 1997. The natural beauty of the river remains hidden due to dense brush and inaccessibility. The City proposes to reveal the beauty of the river with preservation minded development such as the El Portal River Front Development Project. It includes necessary infrastructure improvements to facilitate pedestrian and automobile access.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

- The City of Laredo is responsible for 191.73 acres of River Vega parkland.
- Existing site amenities include playing or practice fields, walkways, rails adjacent to river, benches, picnic tables, drinking fountains, lighting, parking lots.
- The recent flooding of the Rio Grande River banks has caused scouring by flood waters. Large oak trees and other park amenities along its banks have washed away.
- Los Caminos Rio Heritage project is an organization dedicated to providing an enriching experience for tourism along the entire length of the Rio Grande River.
- This effort will bring more tourism to Laredo and is a catalyst for developing trails along the Rio Grande River Corridor.

ANALYSIS

- Although we were not there on the weekend it seems that park uses are not a good fit with the setting and are probably underutilized.
- There are more suitable locations for soccer fields in other parts of the city, such as at the switch yard.
- A sustainable approach to developing the Rio Grande River Front is part of the goals, objectives and vision of the City of Laredo. As stated in the executive summary, this is critical to the success of river front development.
- Restoring the river and allowing it the area it needs to function properly is not an option in a dense urban setting.
- Balancing both the manmade and natural, as seen with other rivers in dense urban settings, has proven to provide a more healthy and enjoyable riverfront experience.
- Laredo Riverbend Area is another opportunity that can serve the community with hiking, biking and horseback riding trails, as well as other opportunities for passive recreation in a natural setting.

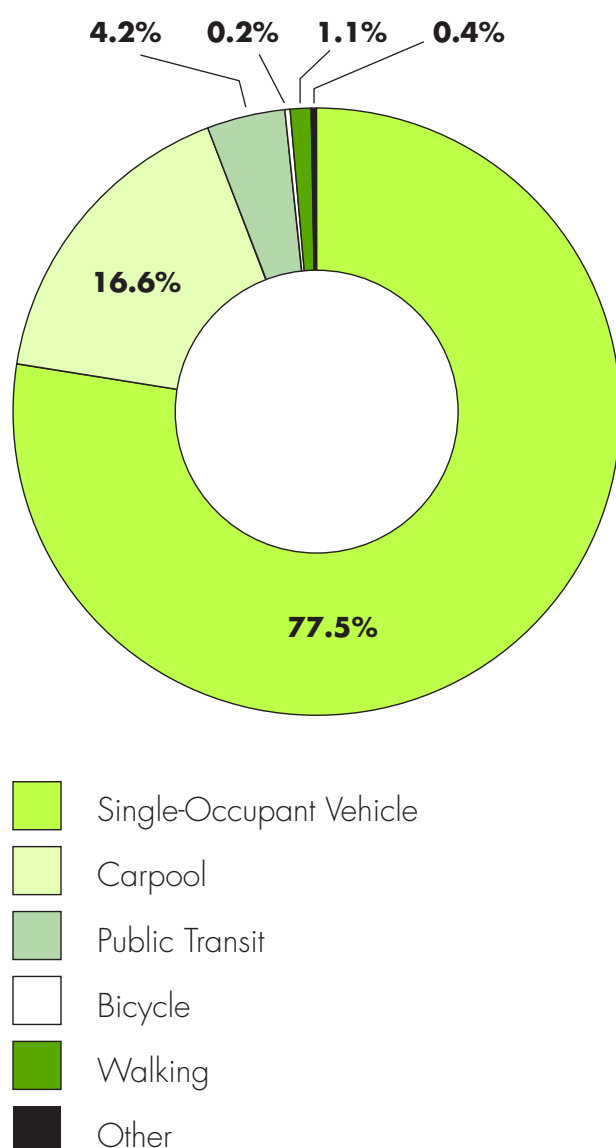




MOBILITY AND TRANSPORTATION

Downtown depends on people with a purpose for being there, and the majority of Laredoans use private vehicles to access Downtown. The direct pedestrian access from Nuevo Laredo at Bridge 1 is of great significance as it delivers shoppers and commuters in and out of Downtown with minimal vehicular impact.

TRANSPORTATION BY MODES IN GREATER LAREDO



CIRCULATION AND CAPACITY

The downtown Laredo transportation network is a tightly spaced grid of predominantly one-way roadways that generally decrease in width from north to south. Most intersections in the CBD are controlled by traffic signals and with two and four-way signs in El Azteca and El Cuatro/St. Peter's neighborhoods. Except for Farragut and portions of Santa Maria and San Bernardo Avenues, all of the streets are one-way.

All of the east-west streets south of Farragut are just wide enough to accommodate one lane of traffic and an adjacent parking lane.

The major route into and out of downtown is IH 35 via Santa Ursula and San Dario Avenues. Washington, Victoria, and Houston Streets serve as east-west connectors to IH 35, and carry a substantial number of vehicles accessing Bridge 2, Downtown and the Laredo Community College. The intersections of the aforementioned streets carry the highest traffic volumes in Downtown and operate at a C level of service.

TRAFFIC CHARACTER AND CAPACITY

Vehicular traffic is heavy as workers arrive during the morning and then leave after work in the afternoon. There is also a substantial midday peak during the noon hour as workers travel to and from lunch. Vehicular traffic is moderate during the remainder of the day. Pedestrian traffic is heaviest at the intersection of Convent Avenue and Zaragoza Street at the port of entry. Roughly half of those crossing are seeking transportation either at the El Metro Center or from a personal pick up vehicle. The absence of service alleys and relatively narrow street widths is operationally difficult for Downtown merchants. Commercial loading zones are mixed with parallel parking but timing, maneuverability, and enforcement remain challenging.

TRAFFIC AT BRIDGES 1 AND 2

Bridge 1 averages about 4,000 non-commercial vehicles and 10,000 pedestrians daily. Congestion occurs during holidays and special events but is normally a constant regulated flow from customs north to Convent Avenue. Outbound vehicles are routed south on Santa Maria and east on Water Street, which provides ample stacking depth. This rearrangement was part of the recently completed El Portal project, which also modified outbound pedestrian circulation with an up and over footbridge separate from vehicles.

To alleviate the pick-up/drop-off traffic in San Agustin Plaza, a ramp from Santa Ursula was built to route IH35 traffic directly down to River Drive and to the lower grade level of El Portal. This has had marginal success. Without a companion ramp up to San Dario and northbound IH35 vehicles are still obliged to cut back through Downtown, which leaves Plaza San Agustin the more convenient location.

Pedestrians are not allowed access to Bridge 2, which averages around 10,000 non-commercial vehicles and a little over 100 commercial vehicles (mostly passenger buses) daily. At least half of all vehicles entering Santa Ursula and San Dario intersections are related to Bridge 2 traffic, and thus limits any increases in traffic in this primary access to no more than 10% of current peak traffic volume. A planned bus processing center as part of Bridge 1 customs identified several options within the present security zone, but is looking at an option that would close Hidalgo Street and extend the facilities into the median blocks between Santa Ursula and San Dario Avenues.

SIGNALIZATION AND CONTROLS

Efficient traffic operations in the downtown area require that all traffic signals be coordinated. In 2010, the City installed a downtown wireless communications network to improve operational efficiency and by mid 2011 all of the signals will be tied into this network. Using a Federal grant, a separate project will upgrade the signal cabinets and controllers to allow the signals to use the new wireless network to communicate with a Traffic Management Center (TMC) at the Traffic Safety Department, and includes an upgraded signal control system at the TMC for more efficient signal operations and quicker response times if equipment fails in the field.

EL METRO

Laredo's public transportation is largely filled by the bus-based El Metro. Downtown acts as the City's hub, with operations located in the El Metro Transportation Center. This facility contains ground floor ticketing and waiting, retail, a regional bus terminal, administrative offices, and 400 spaces of structured parking. The facility has well served Downtown and the public, but the reorganization of routes is anticipated to keep up with Laredo's suburban expansion.

PARKING

Parking is a critical part of transportation and mobility, and the lack thereof is one of the greatest concerns expressed by Laredoans regarding Downtown, more specifically the Central Business District. There is a paradox in Downtown's parking conditions, which is that according to code the parking is deficient, but in reality is underutilized, yet will need to be increased relative to future expansion of Downtown capacity. Parking conditions in Downtown's CBD were inventoried and tabulated according to the following categories:

- Public On-Street Parking Spaces
- Public Off-Street Parking Spaces (surface)
- Private Off-Street Parking Spaces (surface)
- Public Off-Street Parking Spaces (structured)
- Private Off-Street Parking Spaces (structured)

There are a total of 4,313 parking spaces in the Downtown focus area to support its 1,529,803 SF of building uses. If the same uses were to be new construction, current regulations would require about 10,000 parking spaces. Parking is most limited in the sixteen-block area of the merchandise zone. The parking garage planned for the River Vega project would provide 600 additional spaces, and two smaller structured parking opportunities identified in the HUDAR amount to 450 parking spaces. This would increase the total parking spaces Downtown to 5,500, still 4,500 short of the regulatory suggestion.

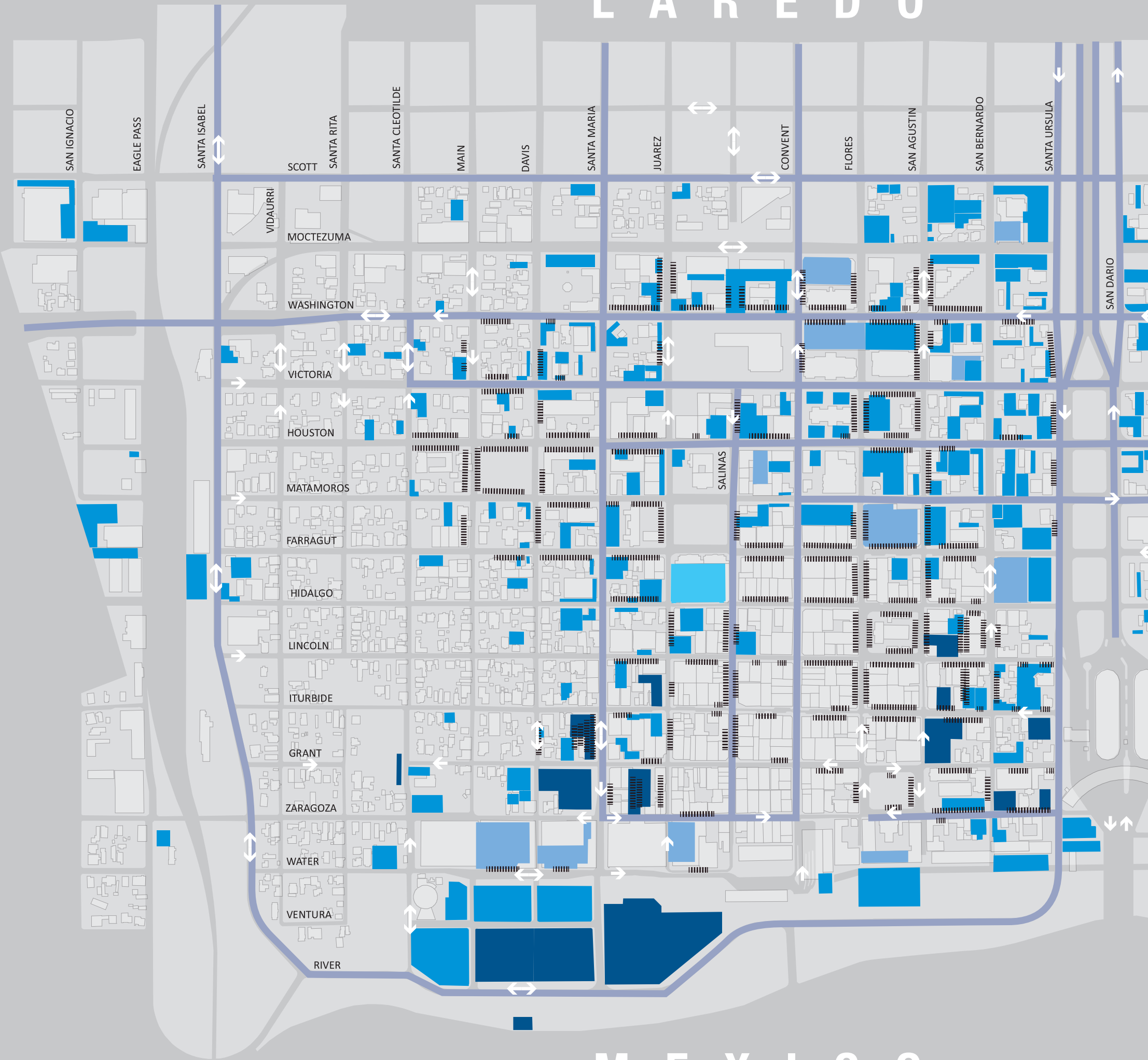
The reality is that many parking spaces remain empty during what would be considered peak shopping hours, and can be attributed to a reduction in building uses due to vacancies, and the perceived inconvenience of parking locations. Although on-street parking is limited compared with all other parking categories, it does contribute a level of perceived convenience in addition to forming a barrier between the narrow sidewalks and moving traffic.

Public and private parking spaces are distributed throughout the CBD except for the merchandise zone along Convent Avenue, where businesses have adapted their merchandise and services to non-motorized pedestrian customers. This condition is in stalemate: creating additional parking convenient for motorized shoppers would require demolition of occupied stores, thus reducing the economic footprint, and keeping conditions as they are and not expanding the customer base limits economic growth.

SERVICE AND DELIVERIES

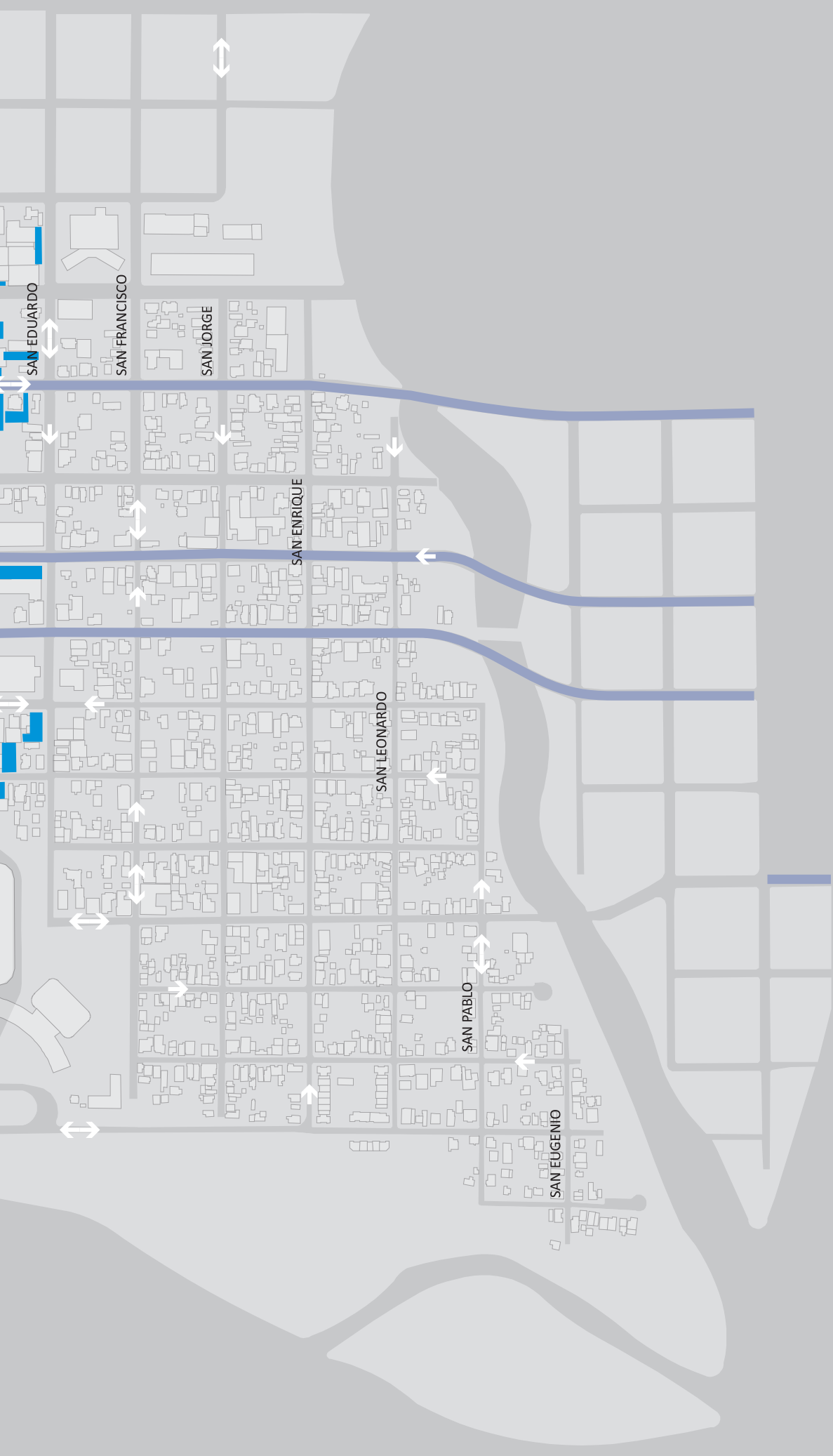
Merchants in the CBD, but especially in the merchandizing zone do not have the benefit of service alleys to receive deliveries, collect refuse, or consolidate utility entrances and access.

L A R E D O



M E X I C O

STREET MAP, PARKING STUDY & MAJOR THOROUGHFARES



-  SURFACE PRIVATE
-  SURFACE PUBLIC
-  STRUCTURED PRIVATE
-  STRUCTURED PUBLIC
-  STREET PARKING
-  TRAFFIC DIRECTION
-  MAJOR THOROUGHFARES

INFRASTRUCTURE/UTILITIES/SERVICES

UTILITIES

The majority of the water lines and sewer lines in the downtown area are older lines in poor condition. Through the years, sections of water and sewer lines have been repaired and upgraded as problems arose. The water demand for the downtown area is serviced from a 30" waterline that runs east & west along Callaghan Street. The available city maps and records indicate that there are 20", 16" & 12" lines that feed off of the 30" line to service the downtown area. After discussions with city staff, it is suggested that all of the existing 6" lines be upgraded to 8" lines. Additionally, a larger 12" line should be looped through downtown. All other water lines should also be replaced.

The scope of services did not include any studies on flow or pressures within the target area. However, based on conversations with staff there are flow and pressure concerns specifically for fire protection. It is recommended that all of the water lines in the project area eventually be replaced with each Phase of the project. The system should be able to absorb the increase in load from the existing capacity. However, the proposed infill area could increase demand by as much as 30%, as such we would recommend that a complete study be completed to determine the size and location of the larger lines that will be required to service the downtown area.

The vast majority of the sewer lines in the downtown area are old clay lines ranging in size from 6" to 18". From discussions with City staff, the only new line installed is a PVC line running along Matamoros Street. This line ranges in size from 12" to 18" and connects to the trunk line at Zacate Creek. Based on the location of the trunk line, it is our opinion that replacement of the existing lines with new 8" lines will properly service the downtown area. The new 8" lines should handle the build out of the existing target areas. The new 8" lines

would connect to the main line on Matamoros Street. The areas of heavy infill areas will have to be evaluated in more detail to determine the appropriate line size.

The City currently has a plan to decommission the existing Zacate Creek Plant. The City has hired consultants for design of (2) new wastewater plants in north Laredo. The construction of the 2 new plants will reduce the flow to the existing Zacate Creek Plant to about half its current capacity. Additionally, the City has design plans in place to increase the capacity of the south plant to receive the remaining flow from the Zacate Plant. The City's current plan is to hire a consultant to design a large lift station to pump the flow from the Zacate plant to the south Laredo plant. This final project will allow the city to decommission the plant and open up this area for redevelopment.

ELECTRICAL

AEP is the electric provider for Laredo's downtown area. Most of the downtown area is currently serviced by overhead power. The main overhead power lines generally run along north and south streets. The service to the downtown area is reliable and the area rarely has power outages of any substantial duration. Eliminating the overhead power lines and replacing them with underground lines would be very costly. It has been estimated by AEP to cost as much as \$1,000,000.00 per city block.

COMMUNICATION

Time Warner Cable is the main service provider for the downtown area. The communication lines mainly follow along the path and on the poles of existing electrical lines. Again, the communication lines/system provide reliable service and should handle the proposed growth anticipated with the redevelopment of downtown. There is approximately 3 miles of underground lines and 6 miles of aerial lines within the project area.

GAS

Centerpoint Energy is the gas provider in the downtown area. The majority of the gas lines within the downtown area have been upgraded or replaced with new gas lines over the last 5 years. The areas between Matamoros - Washington and Santa Maria - Santa Cleotilde have not yet been replaced. This portion of the system is over 85 years old and is planned to be replaced over the next 2 years. Due to Homeland Security regulations, maps of the overall gas system cannot be provided.

DRAINAGE

The area of the downtown master plan can basically be divided into (2) sub-drainage areas. The dividing line is generally along Santa Ursula. Everything south of Scott and east of Santa Ursula, drains to the east and into Zacate Creek at various locations. The downtown area west of Santa Ursula has series of inlets running along the east west streets that are interconnected to main lines that discharge into the river. The main lines to the river range in size from 6'x9' boxes to 24" pipes that run south along Santa Cleotilde, Santa Maria, Flores and San Bernardo. These lines all discharge freely into the river. Portions of the system have been upgraded in some areas through various CIP projects throughout the years. The most recent upgrade is the system along Flores Street. The re-development of downtown will not create additional runoff as most of the area is already developed. However, upgrades, repairs and complete replacement of older lines & storm inlets should be considered with each phase of the re-development.



STREETS

A windshield survey was performed for the project area. Photos were taken and street conditions assessed. The streets have been categorized according to the following four groups:

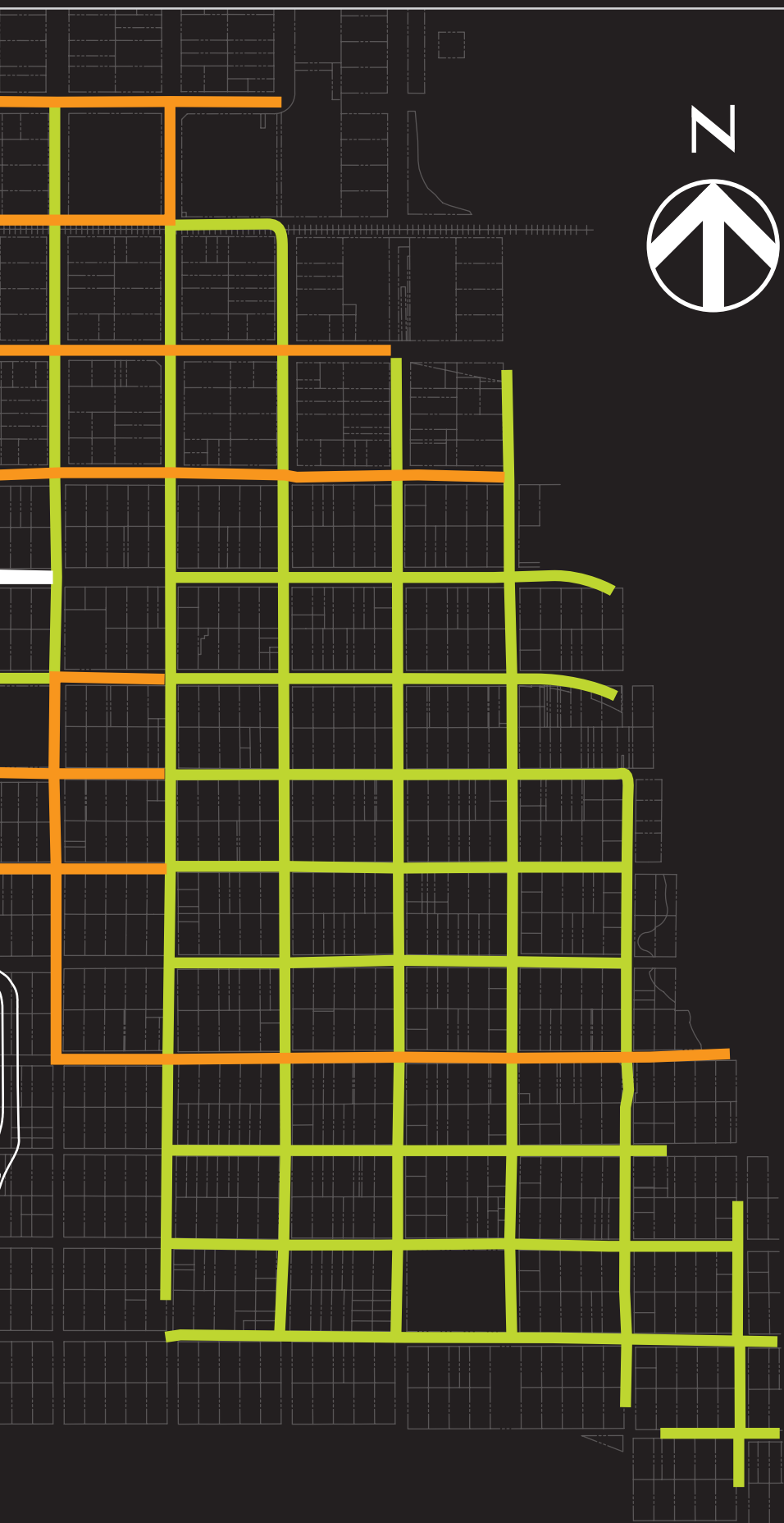
- No existing pavement
- Poor condition
- Satisfactory condition
- Good condition

Determining factors that were considered include amount of raveling, longitudinal & traverse alligator cracking, rutting, depressions, shoving and potholes.

There were just a few streets that are fairly new and rated in good condition. It is recommended that the streets rated "good" be cleaned and then treated with a seal coat that will extend the life of the street. The majority of the streets in the downtown area were rated in "satisfactory" condition. Streets rated as

satisfactory will require some minor pothole repair, sealing of alligator cracks and followed by a 3/4" slurry seal coat. Streets rated in poor condition should be completely reconstructed with existing base and asphalt removed and replaced. In most cases the curb and gutter will remain with minor sections being replaced or added as necessary.





STREET CONDITIONS

-  ASPHALT POOR CONDITION
-  ASPHALT MEDIUM CONDITION
-  ASPHALT GOOD CONDITION
-  NO ROAD
-  CONCRETE PAVEMENT
-  PAVERS

APPPE



INDEX



VALUES

Unique Shopping Experience
Uniqueness of being in business with international customers.
“Not regular U.S. department store – We’re different.”
Can bargain with merchants
Shopping bargains
Shopping variety
Diversity of merchants and personal service
Has character (not a box store)
Home and History
History
Good historic buildings
It’s home – Grew up in and near downtown
Downtown is Home
Churches
Vitality
Active – people coming and going (daytime)
Variety of activities; retail, office, government, residential, recreational
Not a lot of restaurants downtown, but have good menus and pricing
Sense of Place
Evocative of other pleasant places
Rio Grande River
Authenticity and Timelessness

Laredo’s inception was as a frontier town at the high tide of Spanish Colonial expansion and has since proudly served, and survived, a succession of national allegiances and challenges. The proximity to the Border has historically served both sides - Los Dos Laredos – to varying degrees, and current conditions favor a largely Mexican and pedestrian customer base. Downtown is full of daytime activity - it bustles, its too few restaurants nevertheless popular and long-lived. Downtown’s shopping district is valued by both merchants and customers. Stores are mostly owned and operated by local merchants who set their own policies and practices that enable a personal and flexible response to customer needs.

Downtown is a shared place and experience fondly remembered in personal and social histories: an urban fabric imbedded with historic structures; its plazas crowned with landmark buildings. The Plaza and Church of San Agustin, Market Square with the City Market Building, Jarvis Plaza with the U.S. Post Office; are iconic and full of memory. Laredo’s perennial qualities originate from it being a place where humans have been crossing the river for thousands of years; the routes of the railroads and IH-35 are essentially those used by aboriginal hunter gatherers. The technologies have changed, but the basic human and natural dynamic of trade and the river is indeed timeless, especially when and where Laredo has authenticated its sense of place.

PROBLEMS

Security and Safety
Poor lighting
Lack of sense of security – feels unsafe
Stores shuttering up their storefronts after hours
Vandalism
Homeless street life
Sidewalk Conditions – narrow...cracked
Zoning on bars (should not be downtown)
Vitality
Not enough restaurants
Lack of nightlife
Not enough grand stores
Ambience
Lack of Public Bathrooms
Smell (unpleasant)
Some parts are dirty
Parking
Don’t like not being able to park
No parking
Resource Management
Don’t like City buying buildings and leaving them vacant
Absentee landlords
Don’t capitalize on downtown history (other businesses use “Laredo” as their “brand”)
Ropas Usadas

GOALS

Parking is most often the first response of nearly everyone when asked what they don't like about Downtown. The town plan was established in a pre-industrial period that had little accommodation for automobiles at the scale of today's usage, but the lack of a positive pedestrian environment in the hot South Texas climate is a contributor.

Poor lighting was one of the common safety/security problems, but also more subtle conditions such as the shuttering of storefronts at night; a security measure by merchants that transforms the after-hours public realm into a blind and dark frontage. Daytime activity was cited as one of the things loved about downtown, and the lack of positive activity in the evening and night hours is as much an issue of security as it is of vitality. Although not explicitly stated, the lack of vitality in Downtown is attributable to Laredoans' needs for social, cultural and entertainment being met other places.

There is a sense that downtown is just not living up to its potential and not capitalizing on its assets. The vacant status of buildings is a clear indicator, but also the divergent goals among building owners, tenants, customers and the community that dilute the potential for strong consensus, support and direction.

Destination

- A Destination- an attraction
- More tourist related business
- Attract affluent visitors and tourists
- More conducive to visitors
- A unique attraction that nobody else has
- A "Nuevo Laredo" in Laredo
- A downtown that celebrates the river
- Convention center

Vitality

- Multi-use residential, arts, retail, etc.
- Shops, dining, & entertainment- 24 hours/day
- Living downtown- more residential
- A Mercado with lots of shops
- Unique events
- Safety and Security

- Want a downtown not marred by the stigma of problems in Mexico

- A secure and safe downtown - Pedestrian friendly - No graffiti

Responsive Resource Management

- A downtown that takes advantage of opportunities

- Economic support systems to attract new business

- Better signage regulations and enforcement

History and Home

- Promotes its historical patterns – history/recreation

- Better use of existing buildings (upper floors)

For generations downtown Nuevo Laredo has been downtown Laredo's major attraction. Mexico's current instability however has diminished Nuevo Laredo's attractions for tourists and Laredoans. There is a strong sense of opportunity to reconstitute the former destination qualities of Nuevo Laredo in Downtown. Offerings in retail, dining and entertainment will need to be expanded in quantity and quality to extend the hours of downtown activity. Activity can also be generated from events; like music in the plazas to large parades and festivals. And downtown needs to be the cultural center for Laredo, possibly even for the border region.

Downtown's capacity for growth can accommodate new uses, and for Downtown to be truly alive, it has to have people living in Downtown and its residential margins: El Azteca, Saint Peter's and El Cuatro. Downtown as a physical setting will need to be more attractive, and feel safe and secure. Walking the streets of Laredo will have to be more than tolerable; it will need to be pleasurable for people of all ages.

Laredo figures prominently in the saga of the Border and the West and begs the question of how Laredo can benefit from marketing its own story. Faithfulness to Laredo's enduring values – its people and cultural landscape, needs to guide and authenticate Downtown revitalization.

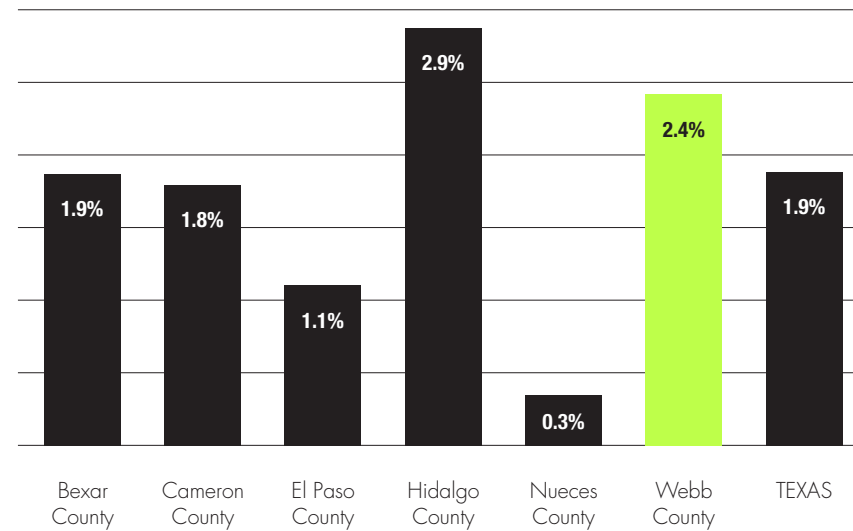
ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

The City of Laredo is contemplating an ambitious effort to revitalize downtown. As part of that effort, TXP has been given an initial task of conducting a market feasibility study to determine overall demand projections for the Study Area outlined in Figure One below. The analysis is broken into the following areas of discussion:

1. The Market Environment, including recent trends
2. Market environment, including the macro situation, overall economic and demographic forecasts, and projections of specific real estate demand
3. Review of both development orientation and impact of transit
4. TXP projections for absorption
5. Conclusions

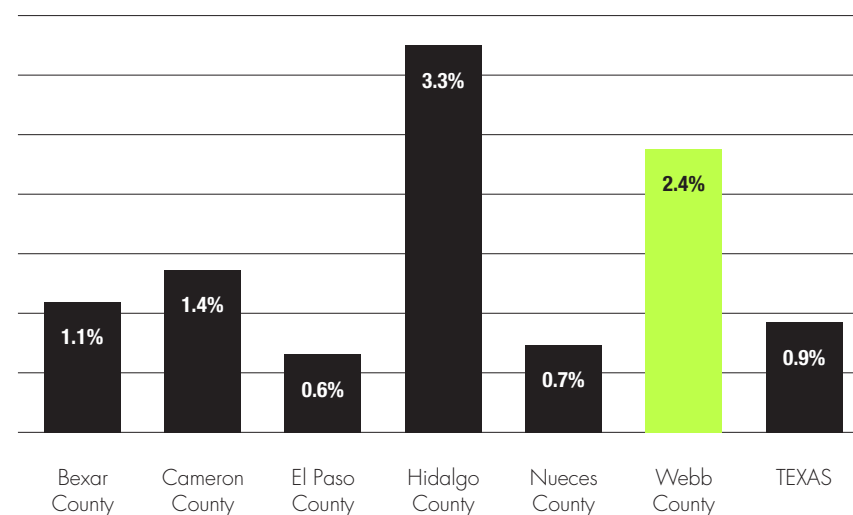
Webb County Baseline Context - Summary
 Webb County’s population has grown rapidly over the past decade, outstripping all Border regions except McAllen and the State as a whole. Employment growth has kept pace (unlike elsewhere in the region) and income and overall property value growth have also exceeded most comparable communities and Texas overall. While per capita income remains at slightly less than two-thirds the Texas average, it seems fair to say that Laredo/Webb County has improved its relative economic status over the past decade.

**Figure 1:
Compound Annual Population Growth (2000-09)**



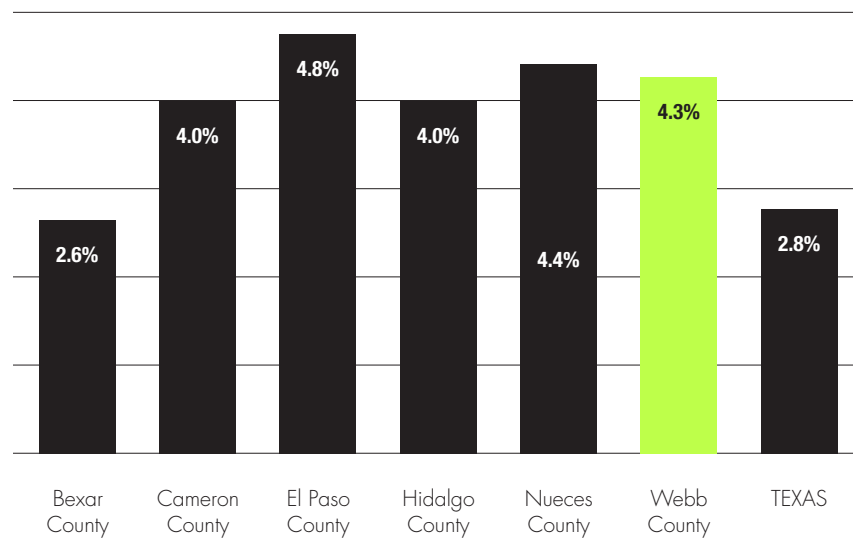
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, TXP

**Figure 2:
Compound Annual Employment Growth (2000-09)**



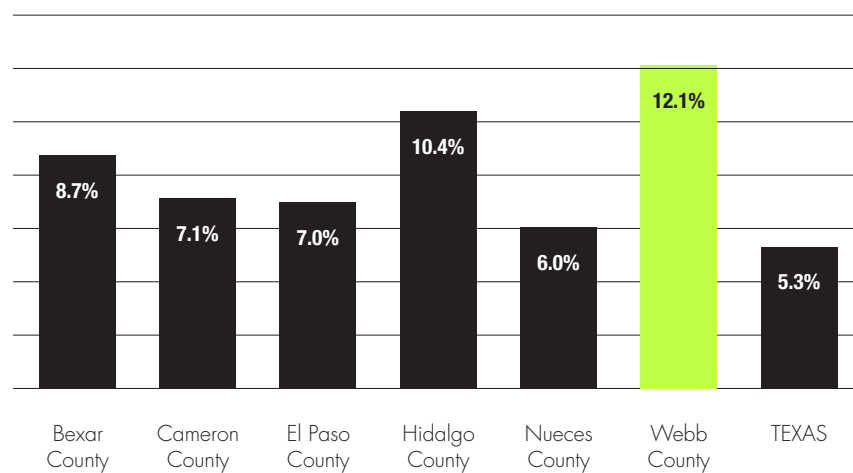
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, TXP

**Figure 3:
Compound Annual Per Capita
Income Growth (2000-09)**



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, TXP

**Figure 4:
Compound Annual Total Taxable
Property Value Growth (2000-09)**



Source: Texas Comptroller's Office, various appraisal districts, TXP

COMPOSITION OF TAX BASE

Among the comparison communities, the oil & gas share of Webb County's tax base is unusually high, which offsets to some degree the relatively low industrial share. Other is also somewhat higher than in San Antonio or the state as a whole, which largely reflects rural/agricultural land. Residential is much lower than anywhere else, which is probably an indication of both low housing values and relative strength in other segments.

Table 1: Shares of Taxable Property Value Growth (2009)

County	Residential	Oil & Gas/Utilities	Commercial	Industrial	Other
Bexar	63.8%	0.6%	26.4%	2.4%	6.7%
Cameron	60.6%	1.9%	18.8%	4.8%	13.9%
El Paso	62.4%	1.6%	23.7%	5.1%	7.1%
Hidalgo	51.4%	6.1%	24.0%	2.3%	16.3%
Nueces	61.8%	4.2%	18.7%	5.0%	10.2%
Webb	41.1%	16.0%	24.3%	3.6%	15.0%
Texas	63.3%	9.2%	24.2%	11.2%	3.3%

Source: Texas Comptroller's Office, various appraisal districts, TXP

Table 3: Projected Webb County Population, Households, & Employment

	Population (000s)	Households (000s)	Office-Related Jobs (000s)	Retail/Leisure Jobs (000s)
2010	245.1	67.3	39.2	20.1
2011	249.2	68.8	39.3	20.1
2012	254.2	70.5	39.9	20.3
2013	259.5	72.4	40.7	20.9
2014	265.0	74.2	41.7	21.3
2015	270.6	76.2	42.5	21.8
2016	276.2	78.2	43.3	22.2
2017	282.0	80.2	44.2	22.6
2018	288.0	82.3	45.1	23.1
2019	294.0	84.5	46.0	23.5
2020	300.2	86.7	46.9	24.0
2021	306.5	88.9	47.8	24.5
2022	312.9	91.3	48.8	25.0
2023	319.5	93.6	49.8	25.5
2024	326.2	96.1	50.8	26.0
2025	333.1	98.6	51.8	26.5
2026	340.1	101.2	52.8	27.0
2027	347.2	103.8	53.9	27.6
2028	354.5	106.5	55.0	28.1
2029	361.9	109.3	56.1	28.7
2030	369.5	112.2	57.2	29.3
2031	377.3	115.1	58.3	29.9
2032	385.2	118.1	59.5	30.5
2033	393.3	121.2	60.7	31.1
2034	401.6	124.4	61.9	31.7
2035	410.0	127.6	63.1	32.3
2036	418.6	131.0	64.4	33.0
2037	427.4	134.4	65.7	33.6
2038	436.4	137.9	67.0	34.3
2039	445.5	141.5	68.3	35.0
2040	454.9	145.2	69.7	35.7

Source: TXP

Table 4: Projected Webb County Overall Real Estate Demand

	Housing Units	Office-Related Sq. Ft.	Retail/Leisure Sq. Ft.
2010	1,326	0	-131,950
2011	1,488	39,150	0
2012	1,728	118,037	163,288
2013	1,842	159,744	330,658
2014	1,891	183,306	305,032
2015	1,940	166,605	277,241
2016	1,991	169,937	282,785
2017	2,043	173,336	288,441
2018	2,096	176,802	294,210
2019	2,151	180,338	300,094
2020	2,207	183,945	306,096
2021	2,265	187,624	312,218
2022	2,324	191,376	318,462
2023	2,385	195,204	324,832
2024	2,447	199,108	331,328
2025	2,511	203,090	337,955
2026	2,576	207,152	344,714
2027	2,644	211,295	351,608
2028	2,713	215,521	358,640
2029	2,784	219,831	365,813
2030	2,857	224,228	373,129
2031	2,931	228,713	380,592
2032	3,008	233,287	388,204
2033	3,086	237,953	395,968
2034	3,167	242,712	403,887
2035	3,250	247,566	411,965
2036	3,335	252,517	420,204
2037	3,422	257,568	428,608
2038	3,511	262,719	437,180
2039	3,603	267,973	445,924
2040	3,697	273,333	454,843
TOTALS	79,217	8,369,969	12,731,970

Source: TXP

STREET PAVING COST ANALYSIS

STREET NAME	STREET CLASSIFICATION				REHABILITATION ESTIMATED COST				TOTAL COST PER STREET
	NO ROAD CONDITION AREA (SY)	POOR CONDITION AREA (SY)	SATISFACTORY CONDITION AREA (SY)	GOOD CONDITION AREA (SY)	NO ROAD (\$32.00/SY)	POOR AREA (\$24.00/SY)	SATISFACTORY AREA (\$12.00/SY)	GOOD AREA (\$5.00/SY)	
Scott St.	0	7,784	6,874	0	\$0.00	\$186,808.00	\$82,493.33	\$0.00	\$269,301.33
Moctezuma St.	8,035	2,957	1,936	0	\$257,116.44	\$70,965.33	\$23,233.33	\$0.00	\$351,315.11
Washington St.	0	0	15,600	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$187,200.00	\$0.00	\$187,200.00
Victoria St.	0	967	14,530	0	\$0.00	\$23,200.00	\$174,362.67	\$0.00	\$197,562.67
Houston St.	0	7,680	4,904	0	\$0.00	\$184,325.33	\$58,853.33	\$0.00	\$243,178.67
Matamoros St.	0	7,551	5,908	0	\$0.00	\$181,218.67	\$70,900.00	\$0.00	\$252,118.67
Farragut St.	0	10,287	1,059	0	\$0.00	\$246,885.33	\$12,704.00	\$0.00	\$259,589.33
Hidalgo St.	0	10,028	1,020	0	\$0.00	\$240,661.33	\$12,236.00	\$0.00	\$252,897.33
Lincoln St.	0	9,778	397	0	\$0.00	\$234,664.00	\$4,768.00	\$0.00	\$239,432.00
Iturbide St.	0	9,122	0	0	\$0.00	\$218,930.67	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$218,930.67
Grant St.	309	9,024	727	0	\$9,902.22	\$216,573.33	\$8,729.33	\$0.00	\$235,204.89
Zaragoza St.	0	9,839	441	0	\$0.00	\$236,128.00	\$5,297.33	\$0.00	\$241,425.33
Water St.	0	2,800	4,860	2,452	\$0.00	\$67,200.00	\$58,324.00	\$12,258.33	\$137,782.33
Ventura St.	0	0	3,256	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$39,077.33	\$0.00	\$39,077.33
River Road/Santa Ursula Connector	0	0	17,426	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$209,113.33	\$0.00	\$209,113.33
Santa Isabel Ave.	0	14,785	0	0	\$0.00	\$354,832.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$354,832.00
Vidaurre Ave.	1,014	8,988	0	0	\$32,462.22	\$215,717.33	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$248,179.56
Santa Rita Ave.	0	6,543	2,964	0	\$0.00	\$157,026.67	\$35,566.67	\$0.00	\$192,593.33
Santa Cleotilde Ave.	0	9,750	1,208	0	\$0.00	\$234,008.00	\$14,494.67	\$0.00	\$248,502.67
Main Ave.	0	10,044	0	0	\$0.00	\$241,064.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$241,064.00
Davis Ave.	0	9,735	0	0	\$0.00	\$233,640.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$233,640.00
Santa Maria Ave.	0	9,041	3,419	0	\$0.00	\$216,992.00	\$41,026.67	\$0.00	\$258,018.67
Juarez Ave.	0	6,284	3,184	0	\$0.00	\$150,805.33	\$38,213.33	\$0.00	\$189,018.67
Salinas Ave.	0	5,336	2,415	0	\$0.00	\$128,064.00	\$28,974.67	\$0.00	\$157,038.67
Convent Ave.	0	6,810	2,167	700	\$0.00	\$163,437.33	\$26,001.33	\$3,500.56	\$192,939.22
Flores Ave.	0	4,092	1,711	0	\$0.00	\$98,210.67	\$20,534.67	\$0.00	\$118,745.33
San Agustin Ave.	0	5,210	0	0	\$0.00	\$125,029.33	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$125,029.33
San Bernardo Ave.	0	2,803	3,906	0	\$0.00	\$67,280.00	\$46,869.33	\$0.00	\$114,149.33
Santa Ursula Ave.	0	0	2,835	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$34,021.33	\$0.00	\$34,021.33
San Dario Ave.	0	0	0	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
San Eduardo Ave.	0	4,409	2,968	0	\$0.00	\$105,816.00	\$35,610.67	\$0.00	\$141,426.67
TOTAL STREETS									\$6,183,327.78

CITY COUNCIL - 2011

Mayor Raul G. Salinas
Councilmember Mike Garza - District 1
Councilmember Esteban Rangel - District 2
Councilmember Alejandro Perez, Jr. - District 3
Councilmember Juan Narvaez - District 4
Councilmember Johnny Rendon - District 5
Councilmember Charlie San Miguel - District 6
Councilmember Jose A. Valdez, Jr. - District 7
Councilmember Cindy Liendo Espinoza - District 8

CITY COUNCIL - 2010

Mayor Raul G. Salinas
Councilmember Mike Garza - District 1
Councilmember Hector Garcia - District 2
Councilmember Michael Landeck - District 3
Councilmember Juan Narvaez - District 4
Councilmember Johnny Rendon - District 5
Councilmember Gene Belmares - District 6
Councilmember Jose A. Valdez, Jr. - District 7
Councilmember Cindy Liendo Espinoza - District 8

CITY MANAGER

Carlos R. Villarreal

MASTERPLANNER

Kell Muñoz Architects, Inc.

Henry R. Muñoz III, Executive Principal
Steven Land Tillotson, AIA, Planner
Christopher Gonzales, Assoc. AIA, Visualization
Javier Paredes, Assoc. AIA, GIS
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Christopher Gutierrez, Graphic Design

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