IMPLEMENTATION 3

Policies and Action Items

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Chapter 2 presented a series of changes to restore and revitalize downtown. This chapter discusses the "how," outlining the necessary steps to implement the Plan through a multi-pronged approach that includes three recommended actions:

1. Oversee the development of catalytic projects
2. Adopt and implement a Form Based Code
3. Adopt and implement Plan-wide policy initiatives

Recommended Policy Action Items Charts are included at the beginning of this Chapter, which lay out these three steps in more detail.

This Plan replaces preceding Plans for the indicated downtown area. Until the Form Based Code is adopted, this Plan should be used as a development guide, informing decisions about building styles, locations, uses, and form, and what sorts of policy changes should be pursued to encourage the type of environment desired by the community.

1. Catalytic Projects

Seven projects are identified that are critical to the success of a revitalized downtown Round Rock. These projects are called "catalytic" because they have the potential to activate downtown with new dynamic uses. They can also create a positive "domino effect" of redevelopment in adjacent areas. The projects are located within the public realm. An estimation of probable cost is included for each catalytic project.

The seven catalytic site areas described in this chapter include:

- Main Street Bridge
- Town Green
- Main Street Historic Core Streetscaping
- Mays Streetscaping
- Round Rock Avenue Streetscaping
- Georgetown Streetscaping
- Heritage Trail

2. Form Based Code

As stated in the Introduction, the intent of this Master Plan is to lay a strong foundation of visions, design guidelines, and policy recommendations that can later be refined and integrated into the City's regulatory framework through a Form Based Code. The concepts presented throughout this Plan should be synthesized and spliced into the future Code, which will include design guidelines, use regulations, and standards for building form and placement within the downtown area. The Code will be the tool through which the vision for downtown, articulated by the City Council, will be achieved. The Code will encourage quality development that is compatible with the urbane and pedestrian-friendly vision for downtown presented here, which includes ground floor retail, mixed-uses, and activated public spaces.

One of the benefits of this Master Plan is that the concepts presented can be vetted by the Round Rock community before the Form Based Code is implemented. Movement can be made to adopt the recommended policies and get started on the catalytic projects so that the Form Based Code is more easily integrated into the City's existing regulatory framework. The Form Based Code will, in turn, give enforceable, regulatory power to the vision. The Form Based Code Recommended Action Items included in this chapter outline the path forward for the new Code.

This chapter also offers details about the options for how the city may transition to a new Code and how to introduce the Code itself, whether all at once, phased through identified priority areas, or adopted as an optional code. The preferred route is to adopt the Code in phases.

3. Policy Initiatives

One of the roles of the public sector is to put in place policies that guide development and inform design and capital investment decisions. The policies recommendations described in this chapter seek to ensure that Master Plan design interventions are compatible with City code and that they are attractive to potential developers.

The priorities for policy changes described include:

- Historic preservation and adaptive reuse
- Parking reform
- Public financing mechanisms
    - *Tax Increment Finance (TIF) or Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ)*
    - *Public Improvement Districts (PID)*
    - *Capital improvements programming*
    - *New Market Tax Credits*
- Retail development tools and leasing strategies
    - *Downtown retailer, restaurant, entertainment and cultural recruitment*
    - *Potential incentives and funding assistance*
- Vacant lots and infill development opportunities
- Quality-of-life performance standards
- Incentives for Green Development
- Re-platting

The following pages include the Recommended Action Items that lay out the steps necessary to achieve the Form Based Code, catalytic projects, and policy initiatives.

1. CATALYTIC PROJECTS - RECOMMENDED ACTION ITEMS

The first set of Recommended Action Items outlines the steps necessary to identify and oversee the development of catalytic projects.

Catalytic projects refer to projects described broadly in Chapter 2 and discussed more specifically here in Chapter 3, which have the potential to stimulate economic development and growth in downtown, activating the public realm, bringing tourists, improving quality of life for residents, and attracting business.

The projects include: an iconic entry bridge on Main Street to increase circulation and view of downtown from the Interstate; a town green as the heart of historic downtown around the Round Rock water tower; and streetscaping and street improvements to enhance the pedestrian realm along Main, Mays, Round Rock, Georgetown and Sheppard.

For each Catalytic Project, the City will develop and maintain a dynamic "programming document" that will include the following types of information:

- A critical path timeline, with milestones
- Zoning, infrastructure and public space needs
- Potential sources of funding, including identification of anticipated timing
- Summaries of input from developers regarding which public investments and other actions are likely to spur economic activity

Catalytic Site: Main Street Bridge and Reconfiguration				
Action	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source	Reference Page
a: Design streetscape plans and bridge plans.	$	City	CIP	Ch 2, page 44 and Ch 3, page 70
b: Direct staff to work with developers on development incentives (e.g. hotel and theater as iconic entry feature).	$	City	CIP	
c: Undertake above-ground street improvements.	$$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID	
d: Undertake at-ground street improvements.	$$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID	
e: Undertake underground street improvements.	$$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID	

Catalytic Site: Town Green and Reconfiguration of Round Rock Ave				
Action	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source	Reference Page
a: Design streetscape plans.	$	City	CIP	Ch 2 page 46 and Ch 3, page 71
b: Direct staff to work with TxDOT to acquire RM 620 Right-of-way.	$	City	CIP	
c: Design town green plans.	$	City	CIP	
d: Direct staff to work with developers on land assembly.	$	City	CIP	
e: Undertake above-ground street improvements.	$$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID	
f: Undertake at-ground street improvements.	$$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID	
g: Undertake underground street improvements.	$$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID	

Catalytic Site: Main Street streetscaping				
Action	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source	Reference Page
a: Design streetscape plans.	$	City	CIP	Ch 3, page 72
b: Undertake above-ground street improvements.	$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID	
c: Undertake at-ground street improvements.	$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID	
d: Undertake underground street improvements.	$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID	

Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source
$ = < $100,000 $$ = $100,000 - $500,000 $$$ = > $500,000	City = Appropriate City Department(s) PPO = Private Property Owner	ND = New Development GF = General Funds CIP = Capital Improvement Project TIRZ = Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone PID = Property Owners District MSP = Main Street program NP = Non-profit HTC = Historic tax credits PL = Pooled loan program Other = Other Federal, State, County Grants

Catalytic Site: Mays Streetscaping				
Action	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source	Reference Page
a: Design streetscape plans.	$	City	CIP	Ch 3, page 73
b: Undertake above-ground street improvements.	$$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID	
c: Undertake at-ground street improvement.	$$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID	
d: Undertake underground street improvements.	$$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID	

Catalytic Site: Round Rock Avenue Streetscaping				
Action	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source	Reference Page
a: Design streetscape plans.	$	City	CIP	Ch 3, page 74
b: Direct staff to work with TxDOT to acquire right-of-way.	$	City	CIP	
c: Undertake above-ground street improvements.	$$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID	
d: Undertake at-ground street improvements.	$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID	
e: Undertake underground street improvement.	$$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID	

Catalytic Site: Georgetown Streetscaping				
Action	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source	Reference Page
a: Design streetscape plans.	$	City	CIP	Ch 3, page 75
b: Undertake above-ground street improvements.	$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID	
c: Undertake at-ground street improvements.	$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID	
d: Undertake underground street improvements.	$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID	

Catalytic Site: Heritage Trail				
Action	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source	Reference Page
a: Design Trail: location, path, amenities.	$	City	ND, CIP, Other	Ch 3, page 76
b: Direct staff to work to acquire right-of-way	$$	City	ND, CIP, Other	
c: Build trail	$$$	City	ND, CIP, Other	

Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source
$ = < $100,000 $$ = $100,000 - $500,000 $$$ = > $500,000	City = Appropriate City Department(s) PPO = Private Property Owner	ND = New Development GF = General Funds CIP = Capital Improvement Project TIRZ = Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone PID = Property Owners District MSP = Main Street program NP = Non-profit HTC = Historic tax credits PL = Pooled loan program Other = Other Federal, State, County Grants

Catalytic Site: City Hall Plaza			
Action	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source
a: Design Plaza: amenities, program.	$	City	CIP
b: Undertake underground improvements.	$	City	CIP
c: Undertake at-ground improvement.	$	City	CIP
d: Undertake above-ground improvements.	$$	City	CIP

Catalytic Site: Sheppard Streetscaping			
Action	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source
a: Design streetscape plans.	$	City	CIP
b: Undertake underground improvements.	$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID
c: Undertake at-ground improvements.	$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID
d: Undertake above-ground improvements.	$$	City	CIP, TIRZ, PID

Catalytic Site: Municipal Office Campus Green/Amphitheater			
Action	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source
a: Design Campus Green, Amphitheater improvements.	$	City	CIP
b: Undertake underground improvements.	$	City	CIP
c: Undertake at-ground improvements.	$	City	CIP
d: Undertake above-ground improvements.	$$	City	CIP

Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source
$ = < $100,000 $$ = $100,000 - $500,000 $$$ = > $500,000	City = Appropriate City Department(s) PPO = Private Property Owner	ND = New Development GF = General Funds CIP = Capital Improvement Project TIRZ = Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone PID = Property Owners District MSP = Main Street program NP = Non-profit HTC = Historic tax credits PL = Pooled loan program Other = Other Federal, State, County Grants

2. FORM BASED CODE - RECOMMENDED ACTION ITEMS

The second set of Recommended Action Items broadly outlines steps to adopt and implement a future Form Based Code. The list presents general recommendations rather than defining all of the specific steps that are necessary.

As stated in the Chapter Introduction, the intent of this Plan is to lay a strong foundation of visions, design guidelines, and policy recommendations that can later be refined and integrated into the city's regulatory framework through a Form Based Code. The concepts presented throughout this Plan can be synthesized and spliced into a future Form Based Code that can regulate the form of downtown Round Rock.

A Form Based Code will include design guidelines and standards, it will regulate uses, and require certain building forms and placements within the downtown area. The Code will be the tool through which the vision for downtown that has been articulated by the City Council, will be achieved. The Code will encourage Quality Development that is compatible with the urbane, pedestrian-friendly, and vibrant vision for downtown, presented here, which includes ground floor retail, mixed-uses, and activated public spaces. The Form Based Code will give enforceable, regulatory power to the vision.

Note that the Form Based Code will require separate standards for different areas or phases.

Page 74 discusses the ways in which the Code can be adopted whether all at once, phased through identified priority areas, or adopted as an optional code. The preferred route is to adopt the Code in phases.

Form Based Code (FB)					
Action	Timeframe	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source	Reference Page
FB1: Create and adopt Form Based Code as the guiding and regulatory document for the downtown area.*	S	$	City	GF	Ch 3, page 77
FB2: Train staff in enforcement of the Form Based Code.	S	$	City	GF	Ch 3, page 77
FB3: Conduct Code workshops with local architectural and development community.	S	$	City	GF	Ch 3, page 77

*Implementation strategies to consider during (FB) include:

- Defining how to adopt the Code whether all at once, phased through identified priority areas, or adopted as an optional Code. The preferred route is to adopt the Code in phases.
- Identifying a list of Goals, Objectives, and Policies based on this Master Plan that can form the basis of the Code.
- Analyzing which aspects of the Master Plan to preserve, which to modify, and which to add to.
- Identifying the "Standards" and "Guidelines" that should be included in the Code.
- Identifying the relationship between the Code to the city's General Plan, Southwest Downtown Plan, Design Guidelines for Round Rock Historic Districts, Sign Ordinance, and other relevant regulatory documents.
- Reconciling the Code with existing zoning ordinance including: Zoning Districts, Development Standards, Non-conformities, Enforcement, and Definitions.
- Define how the Code will function in terms of the Zoning Ordinance's: General Provisions, Development Review Procedures, and Development Review Bodies.

Timeframe	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source
Short (S) = 0-3 years Medium (M) = 3-5 years Long (L) = 5+ years	$ = < $100,000 $$ = $100,000 - $500,000 $$$ = > $500,000	City = Appropriate City Department(s) PPO = Private Property Owner	ND = New Development GF = General Funds CIP = Capital Improvement Project TIRZ = Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone PID = Property Owners District MSP = Main Street program NP = Non-profit HTC = Historic tax credits PL = Pooled loan program Other = Other Federal, State, County Grants

3. PLAN-WIDE POLICY INITIATIVES - RECOMMENDED ACTION ITEMS

The third set of Recommended Action Items outlines the specific steps necessary to adopt and implement Plan-wide policy initiatives to fulfill the visions presented throughout the Plan.

The list is organized into General Action Items (GA), followed by a series of topic-specific action items that relate to the different areas of the Plan: Green and Open Space (OS), Parking (PR), Historic Preservation (HP), Signage (SN), and Economic Development (ED).

The list is meant to be a guide of recommendations, rather than a list of items that must be fulfilled. The city will decide which policies to move forward with and the appropriate timing of these action items.

Master Plan General Actions (GA)					
Action	Timeframe	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source	Reference Page
GA1: Adopt the Master Plan as the guiding document for the downtown area.	S	$	City	GF	-
GA2: Direct staff to review General Plan, Zoning Code, and other regulatory documents for inconsistencies with Master Plan. Revise these plans to be consistent with Master Plan.	S	$	City	GF	-
GA3: Direct staff to work with developers on land acquisitions and site-specific incentives.	S-M	$	City	GF	-
GA4: Join the Texas Main Street Program and appoint 2 full-time Main Street staff people. Assign these staff members to work on "activation of the downtown core," initiating programs that seek to enliven downtown, e.g. tree planting, Artisan Stroll, holiday events, urban sports events, movies in the park, etc.	S	$$	City	GF, MSP	Ch 3, page 83
GA5: Formulate and implement branding and marketing campaign for downtown.	S	$$	City	CIP, PID	Ch 2, page 51
GA6: Initiate a comprehensive signage program including signage for gateways, parking, and wayfinding.	S	$$	City	CIP, PID	Ch 2, page 51
GA7: Prioritize key Master Plan capital improvement stimulus priority projects so that there are dedicated available funds in the near term as part of the CIP.	S	$	City	GF	Ch 3, page 69-76
GA8: Implement Utility Upgrade Plan.	S-L	$$$	City, PPO	ND, CIP, Other	Ch 2, page 52

Green and Open Space (OS)					
Action	Timeframe	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source	Reference Page
OS1: Enhance existing greenspaces (e.g. creek, vacant lot at 205 East Main Street, ball fields on Main Street).	S	$$	City	ND, CIP, PID, Other	Ch 2, page 42 and Ch 4, page 134
OS2: Initiate a comprehensive tree planting program downtown.	S-M	$$	City, PPO	ND, CIP, PID, Other	Ch 2, pages 42, 47 and Ch 4, page 136
OS3: Design and construct new civic green near future City Hall / Policy Center.	S	$$	City	ND, CIP, PID, Other	Ch 2, page 45
OS4: Design and construct alterations to Veterans Park and Heritage Trail.	S-L	$$$	City	ND, CIP, PID, Other	Ch 2, page 43
OS5: Design and construct new park north of the creek, linking south to Veterans Park via bridge.	S-L	$$$	City	ND, CIP, PID, Other	Ch 2, page 43
OS6: Design and construct new Main Street entry green at bridge.	S	$$	City	ND, CIP, PID, Other	Ch 2, page 44

Timeframe	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source
Short (S) = 0-3 years Medium (M) = 3-5 years Long (L) = 5+ years	$ = < $100,000 $$ = $100,000 - $500,000 $$$ = > $500,000	City = Appropriate City Department(s) PPO = Private Property Owner	ND = New Development GF = General Funds CIP = Capital Improvement Project TIRZ = Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone PID = Property Owners District MSP = Main Street program NP = Non-profit HTC = Historic tax credits PL = Pooled loan program Other = Other Federal, State, County Grants

Historic Preservation (HP)					
Action	Timeframe	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source	Reference Page
HP1: Adopt the International Existing Building Code to encourage rehabilitation of existing buildings.	S	$	City	GF, HTC, PL	Ch 3, page 79
HP2: Update and expand the Inventory of Historic Sites in the key areas of downtown.	S	$$	City	CIP, HTC, PL	
HP3: Coordinate the existing Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial and Residential Districts and Properties with new recommendations and update the Form Based Code.	S	$	City	GF, HTC, PL	
HP4: Update the Inventory of Historic Sites to include structures built before 1960.	M	$$	City	GF, CIP, HTC, PL	
HP5: Research and document the Historic Residential-Character District area in anticipation of historic designation.	S	$	City	GF, CIP, HTC, PL	
HP6: Enhance the current property tax exemption incentive mechanism available to designated landmarks to include property tax freezes for qualified rehabilitation projects and grant or loan programs.	S	$	City	GF, HTC, PL	
HP7: Establish a matching fund or low interest loan program for preservation.	S-M	$	City	GF, HTC, PL	
HP8: Revise codes to actively encourage quality adaptive re-use.	S	$	City	GF, HTC, PL	

Parking Reform (PR)					
Short Term Action	**Timeframe**	**Cost**	**Responsibility**	**Potential Funding Source**	**Reference Page**
PR1: Promote City's shared parking ordinance and consider expansion of the policy.	S	$	City	GF	Ch 3, page 80-81
PR2: Enforce on-street parking time limits.	S	$	City	GF	
PR3: Make use of existing park once garage in east downtown (includes new signage work currently underway) and develop strategy for future "Park Once" garage in west downtown.	S	$	City	GF	
PR4: Establish parking review process in Planning Department to review innovative parking reduction requests.	S	$	City	GF	
PR5: Allow developers to satisfy parking requirements through "in lieu" fees.	S-M	$	City	GF	
PR6: Reduce parking requirements for desired development (retail, mixed-use development, adaptive re-use of historic buildings, town square, TOD, creative/cultural industries).	S-M	$	City	GF	
Longer Term Action	**Timeframe**	**Cost**	**Responsibility**	**Potential Funding Source**	
PR7: Create Downtown Parking Benefits District (including Southwest Downtown Plan Area with Parking Strategies).	M	$	City	GF	
PR8: Price curb and public garage parking and enforce time limits in the Parking Benefits District.	M	$	City	GF	
PR9: Price on-street (curb) parking and enforce time limits in the Parking Benefits District.	M	$	City	GF	
PR10: Update minimum parking requirements to reflect trip generation numbers.	S-M	$	City	GF	
PR11: Create Residential Permit Parking District to protect residents from spillover parking.	M	$	City	GF	

Timeframe	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source
Short (S) = 0-3 years Medium (M) = 3-5 years Long (L) = 5+ years	$ = < $100,000 $$ = $100,000 - $500,000 $$$ = > $500,000	City = Appropriate City Department(s) PPO = Private Property Owner	ND = New Development GF = General Funds CIP = Capital Improvement Project TIRZ = Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone PID = Property Owners District MSP = Main Street program NP = Non-profit HTC = Historic tax credits PL = Pooled loan program Other = Other Federal, State, County Grants

Economic Development - Public Financing (ED)					
Action	Timeframe	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source	Page in Plan, Reference
ED1: Form a downtown district TIF/TIRZ or PID.	S	$	City, PPO	Private, PID	Ch 3, page 82

Economic Development - Retail Leasing and Investment (ED)					
Action	Timeframe	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source	Reference Page
ED2: Appoint a Redevelopment Representative to work with Chamber of Commerce, local brokers, property owners, and representatives of the real estate and financial community to identify priority and secondary retail locations and recruitment of new retailers, restaurants and entertainment providers. Work with Chamber to provide marketing information to prospective tenants regarding the public approval process and potential incentives.	S	$	City	GF	Ch 3, page 83

Economic Development - Vacant Lots (ED)					
Action	Timeframe	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source	Reference Page
ED3: Create a well-publicized City-led pilot project to demonstrate the opportunities for activity and to build community support and momentum.	S	$	City	CIP, combination City (GF) and non-profit	Ch 3, page 84
ED4: Develop priority program for neighborhood groups or businesses– making acquisition easier for neighborhood groups and small businesses intent on expansion.	S	$	City	CIP	
ED5: Undertake a Vacant Lot / Structure Inventory and Plan.	S	$	City	CIP	

Economic Development - Performance Standards and Green Development Incentives (ED)					
Action	Timeframe	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source	Page in Plan, Reference
ED6: Assign staff member to investigate the potentials of adopting a set of quality-of-life performance measures.	See ED 2, above				Ch 3, page 85
ED7: Assign staff member to initiate other incentives (e.g. incentives for green development, incentives to attract creative industries.	See ED 2, above				

Economic Development - Re-Platting (ED)					
Action	Timeframe	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source	Page in Plan, Reference
ED8: Create a comprehensive plan to rectify un-platted properties in downtown.	S-M	$$	City, PPO	CIP	Ch 3, page 85

Timeframe	Cost	Responsibility	Potential Funding Source
Short (S) = 0-3 years Medium (M) = 3-5 years Long (L) = 5+ years	$ = < $100,000 $$ = $100,000 - $500,000 $$$ = > $500,000	City = Appropriate City Department(s) PPO = Private Property Owner	ND = New Development GF = General Funds CIP = Capital Improvement Project TIRZ = Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone PID = Property Owners District MSP = Main Street program NP = Non-profit HTC = Historic tax credits PL = Pooled loan program Other = Other Federal, State, County Grants

1. CATALYTIC SITES

Seven catalytic projects are identified, which are integral to the success of a revitalized downtown Round Rock. These projects are called "catalytic" because they have the potential to activate key sites in downtown with new dynamic uses. They can also create a positive "domino effect" of redevelopment in adjacent areas. All of the projects are located within the public realm.

The seven catalytic site areas include:

- Main Street Bridge
- Town Green
- Main Street historic core streetscaping
- Mays streetscaping
- Round Rock Avenue streetscaping
- Georgetown streetscaping
- Heritage Trail
- City Hall plaza
- Sheppard streetscaping
- Municipal Office Campus green/amphitheater

The projects are described on the following pages and are discussed generally throughout Chapter 2.

A map, key features, and an estimation of probable cost are included for each catalytic project area.

Main Street Bridge
Town Green
Main Street historic core streetscaping
Mays streetscaping
Round Rock Avenue streetscaping
Georgetown streetscaping
Heritage Trail
City Hall Plaza
Sheppard Streetscaping
Municipal Office Campus green/amphitheater

CATALYTIC PROJECT: MAIN STREET BRIDGE

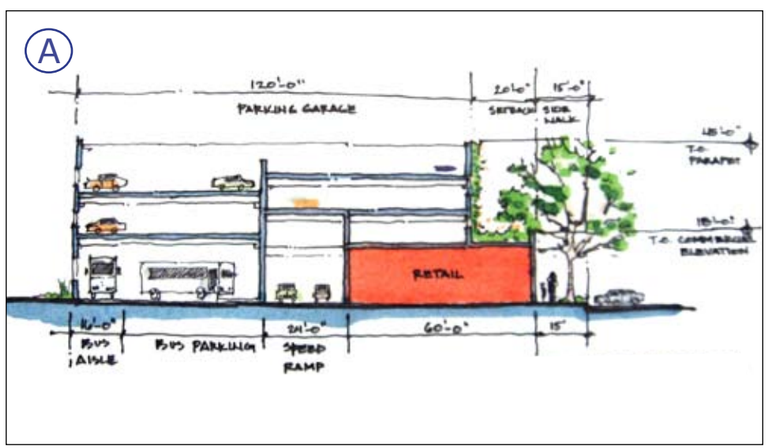
Key

Cost Information:*	
A. Above Ground (including sidewalks) (Street trees, tree pits, concrete sidewalk, bulbouts at intersections, enhanced concrete crosswalks, benches, bicycle racks, trash receptacles, pedestrian street lights, entry landscape element.)	$ 1,417,972.50
B. At Ground (Main Street extension, new bridge, roadway construction, splitter island, relocate hotel driveway and entrance, Main Street Reconstruction, engineering, right-of-way, TxDOT coordination and permits, contingencies, construction management.)	$ 3,958,000
C. Below Ground (Wastewater, water, drainage, electrical)	$ 601,641
	$5,977,613.50

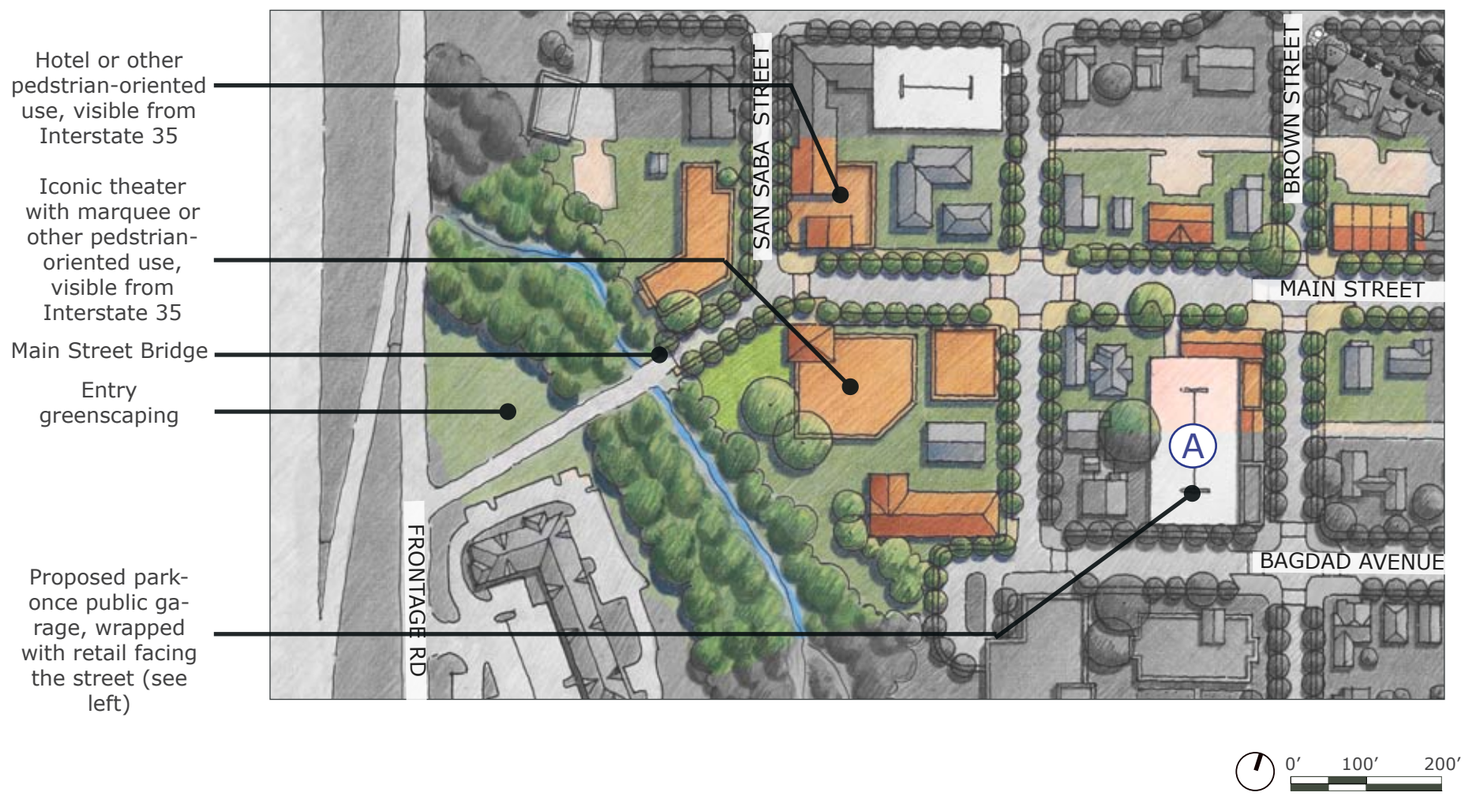
** Dry utilities are not included in the cost estimate*

Description:

- New iconic bridge that extends Main Street to the Interstate 35 frontage road to attract visitors and increase circulation.
- Gateway green space and welcome features at the head of the new bridge.
- Streetscaping of Main Street from San Saba to Brown.
- This is the preferred location for iconic hotel and theater, due to visibility from the Interstate and location along historic Main Street. Other iconic and pedestrian-oriented buildings are also appropriate for this location.



Section of a retail/ garage block in West Main Street Bridge area. (See A to the right)



CATALYTIC PROJECT: TOWN GREEN

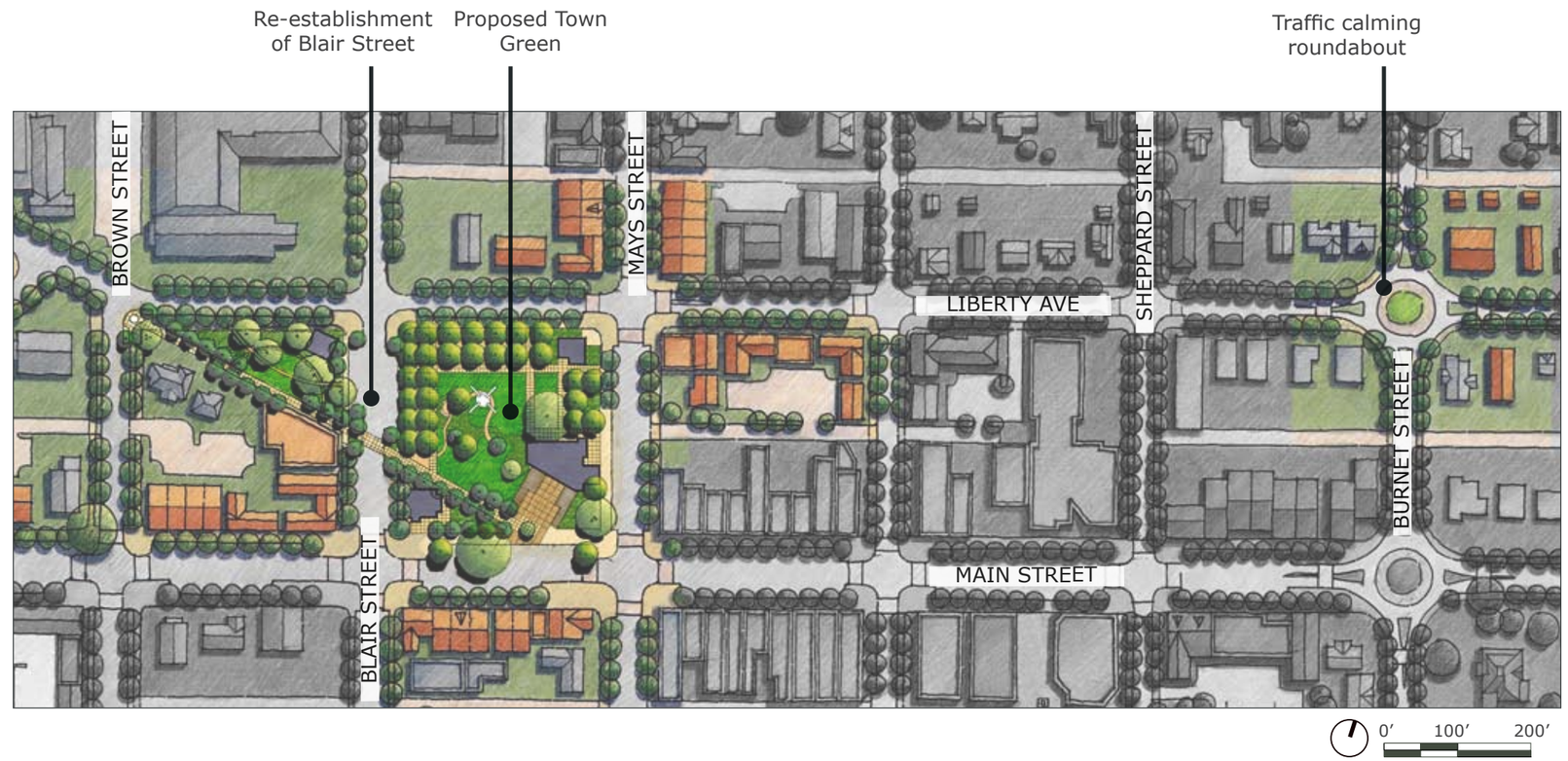
Cost Information:*	
A. Above Ground (including sidewalks)	$ 3,878,651.25
(Street trees, tree pits, planted parkway, planted roundabout at Liberty and Burnet, concrete sidewalks, bulbouts at intersections, enhanced concrete crosswalks, benches, bicycle racks, trash receptacles, pedestrian street lights, public open space.)	
B. At Ground	
Option 1: Roundabout (preferred)	$ 3,576,000 (Option 1)
Option 2: Diagonal diverter	$ 2,373,000 (Option 2)
Option 3: Cul-de-sac (not recommended)	$ 2,457,000 (Option 3)
C. Below Ground	$ 1,253,562.75
(Wastewater, water, drainage, electrical)	---
	$ 8,708,214 (Option 1)
	$ 7,505,214 (Option 2)
	$ 7,589,214 (Option 3)

** Dry utilities are not included in the cost estimate*

Key

Description:

- Creation of a town green as the "heart of Round Rock." The town green will include recreation space, outdoor meeting space, event space, and will be surrounded by pedestrian-oriented retail and mixed-use buildings. The town green is located around the historic Round Rock water tower.
- Realignment of Round Rock Avenue to make way for the new town green.
- Improvements to Main Street from Brown to Mays.
- Safe pedestrian crossings should be introduced at all four corners of the town green.
- Modifications to Liberty Avenue to promote traffic calming:
    - *3 different options for the treatment of the Liberty and Burnet intersection to mitigate potential cut-through traffic in the neighborhood east of Burnet include a roundabout (preferred), a diagonal diverter, and a cul-de-sac (not recommended).*
- The project should include signage that directs Round Rock motorists to "Historic Main Street shopping and dining."
- The benefits of this project outweigh its costs and the affects it will have on traffic patterns to some businesses. The town green will be the heart of Round Rock, creating a real destination for the city.



CATALYTIC PROJECT: MAIN STREET HISTORIC CORE STREETSCAPING

Cost Information:*	
A. Above Ground (including sidewalks) (Street trees, tree pits, planted parkway, planted roundabout at Main and Burnet, concrete sidewalk, bulbouts at intersections, enhanced concrete crosswalks, benches, bicycle racks, trash receptacles, pedestrian street lights.)	$ 713,340
B. At Ground (Remove median, construct concrete roadway, new roundabout at Main and Burnet, engineering, coordination and permits, contingencies, construction management.)	$ 1,023,000
C. Below Ground (Wastewater, water, drainage, electrical)	$ 784,957.50
	$ 2,521,297

** Dry utilities are not included in the cost estimate*

Description:

- Main Street streetscaping through the historic core of the downtown area from Main Street to Burnet Street.
- Improvements include addition of bulbouts, sidewalks, and landscaping, and removal of the center parking median.
- See Recommended Street Sections in Chapter 4 for details.

CATALYTIC PROJECT: MAYS STREETSCAPING

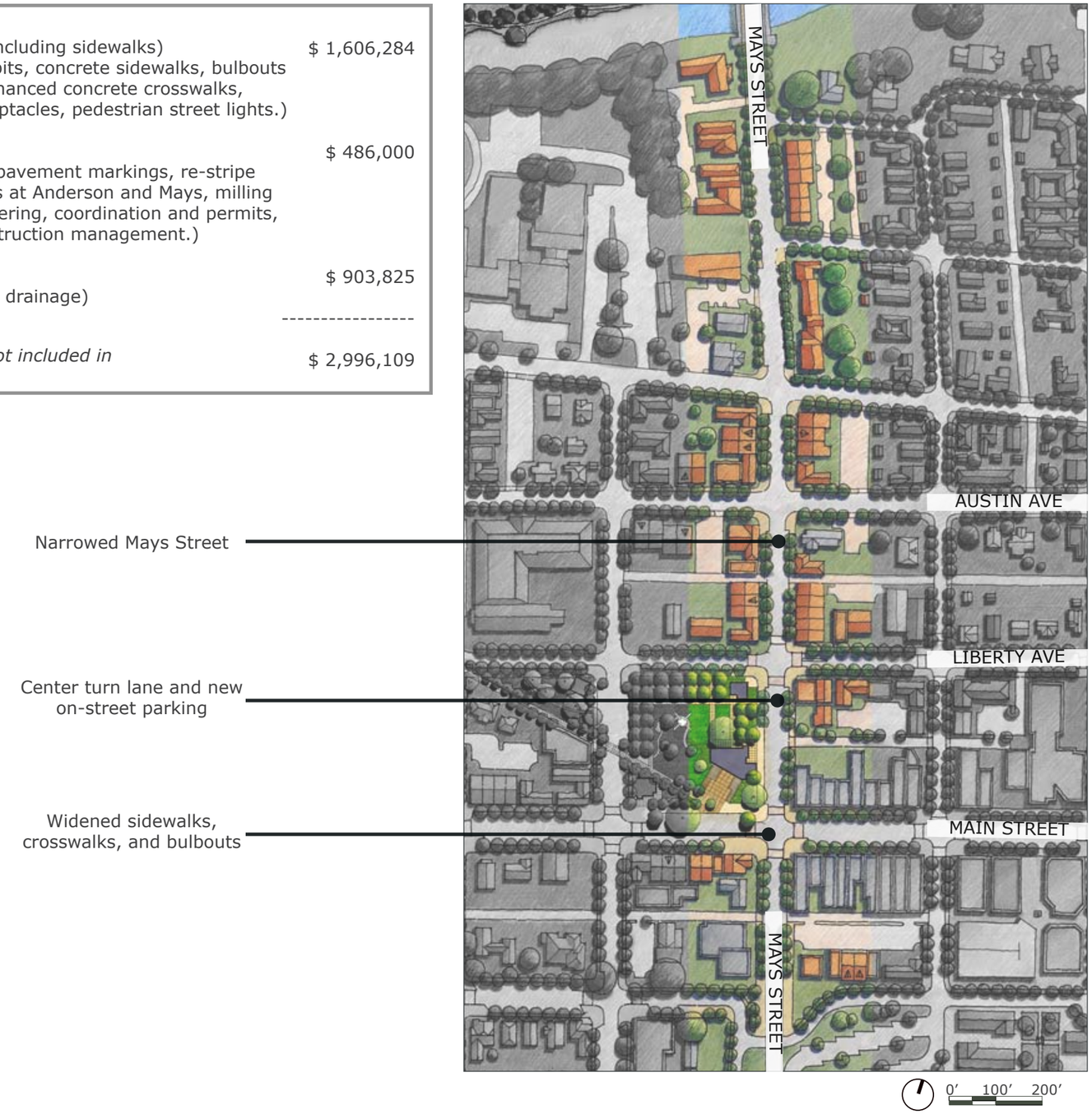
Key

Cost Information:*	
A. Above Ground (including sidewalks) (Street trees, tree pits, concrete sidewalks, bulbouts at intersections, enhanced concrete crosswalks, benches, trash receptacles, pedestrian street lights.)	$ 1,606,284
B. At Ground (Eliminate existing pavement markings, re-stripe road, improvements at Anderson and Mays, milling and overlay, engineering, coordination and permits, contingencies, construction management.)	$ 486,000
C. Below Ground (Wastewater, water, drainage)	$ 903,825

** Dry utilities are not included in the cost estimate*	$ 2,996,109

Description:

- Improvements to Mays Street, the main connector between the area north of Palm Valley Boulevard (Highway 79) and historic downtown.
- Improvements include addition of on-street parking, bulbouts, sidewalks, and landscaping.
- The "road diet" proposed here will improve the capacity of the Main-Mays intersection. It will improve the through-put on Mays while at the same time make the street easier and safer for pedestrians to cross.
- Currently Mays is difficult to cross and unsafe and unpleasant for pedestrians. The changes proposed here along Mays are critical to achieving the economic goals of the Plan to create a walkable downtown district.
- See Recommended Street Sections in Chapter 4 for details.



CATALYTIC PROJECT: ROUND ROCK AVENUE STREETSCAPING

Key

Description:

- Reconfiguration of Round Rock Avenue from Interstate 35 to Liberty Avenue.
- Improvements include: a new median, on-street parking, bulbouts, sidewalks, and landscaping.
- Round Rock Avenue tapers down in width and scale as it moves away from Interstate 35 towards the town green.
- See Recommended Street Sections in Chapter 4 for details.

Cost Information:*	
A. Above Ground (including sidewalks) (Street trees, planted parkway, planted median, concrete sidewalks, bulbouts at intersections, enhanced concrete crosswalks, benches, bicycle racks, trash receptacles, pedestrian street lights, entry landscape element.)	$ 797,900.63
B. At Ground (Eliminate existing pavement markings, re-stripe road, construct median, engineering, coordination and permits, contingencies, construction management.)	$ 124,000
C. Below Ground (Wastewater, water, drainage, electrical)	$ 443,056.50
	$ 1,364,957.13

** Dry utilities are not included in the cost estimate*

CATALYTIC PROJECT: GEORGETOWN STREETSCAPING

Key

Description:

- Georgetown Street improvements include: introduction of on-street parking, bulbouts, widened sidewalks, and landscaping.
- Project also includes street improvements on Main from Lewis to Georgetown.
- See Recommended Street Sections in Chapter 4 for details.

Cost Information:*	
A. Above Ground (including street trees, planted parkway, planted roundabout at Georgetown and Main, concrete sidewalk, bulbouts at intersections, enhanced concrete crosswalks, pedestrian streetlights.)	$ 1,013,006.25
B. At Ground (Remove median, re-stripe road, splitter island, roundabout at Georgetown and Main, engineering, coordination and permits, contingencies, construction management.)	$ 1,445,742
C. Below Ground Wastewater, water, drainage, electrical)	$ 1,445,742

	$ 3,465,748.25

** Dry utilities are not included in the cost estimate*

CATALYTIC PROJECT: HERITAGE TRAIL

Description:

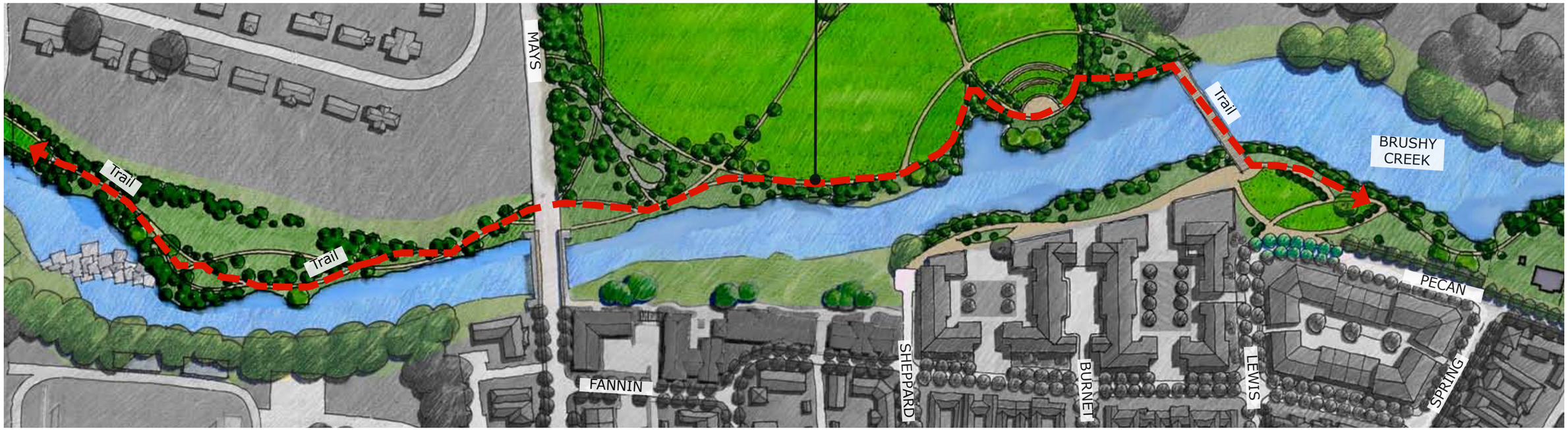
- Game Plan 2020: Building an Active Community, the Round Rock Strategic Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2009), includes an update of the 2004 Trails Master Plan. The plan looks at existing trail systems and plans future trail and on-street connection opportunities. The City would like to triple the miles of trails in Round Rock by 2020.
- The Heritage Trail is part of this larger Master Planning vision and represents a major opportunity for downtown.
- The Trail passing along the banks of Brushy Creek, linking existing and proposed greenspaces with active recreation corridors.
- See page 48 for discussion.

Cost Information:

Cost information for the Heritage Trail has not yet been developed.

Key

Conceptual path for Heritage Trail



0′ 100′ 200′

2. FORM BASED CODE

This Master Plan lays a foundation of visions, design guidelines, and policy recommendations that should later be refined and integrated into the city's regulatory framework through a Form Based Code. The Code will be the tool through which the vision for Downtown articulated by the City Council will be achieved. The Code will encourage quality development that is compatible with the urbane and pedestrian-friendly vision for Downtown, which includes ground floor retail, restaurants, entertainment, mixed-uses, and activated public spaces. It will give enforceable, regulatory power to the vision.

When adopted, the new Form Based Code will apply to individual properties when a renovation or new construction is proposed such that the proposed square footage increase is 35 percent or more of the building footprint.

There are three strategies for adopting and implementing a Form Based Code. The city may chose to implement the Code:

- In phases (preferred)
- All-at-once
- As an optional code

The preferred option is to adopt the Code in phases, in order to achieve the visions articulated by the City Council and laid out in this Master Plan.

Option 1: Phased Implementation (Preferred)

The first option is to time certain Code changes based on when certain improvements are planned by City Council. This assures proposed increases in allowable density are planned with necessary infrastructure improvements. In this case a specific geographical area would be selected for adoption of the Form Based Code. This would reflect the geographic area where the city has already constructed the necessary infrastructure improvements, or has a plan to do so. As infrastructure plans are in place for additional areas of downtown, the Form Based Code would be phased in. See diagram bottom right for the proposed Phase 1 Code area.

The advantage of this option is that it provides more certainty that public and private investments are timed in-sync with one another. It also allows the city to vet some components of the Code without fully committing to them throughout the downtown, to test them for workability.

The disadvantage to this method is the potential of stifling development as land areas not covered by the Form Based Code would fall under the density provisions and limits of the existing zoning ordinance, which allow less development than proposed in the new Code. Also, without the benefits of the Form Based Code, new construction in areas not yet covered by this new code may not live up to the expectation of the Plan in form or density. The potential for redeveloping much of the downtown area in a denser, more urban fashion would thereby be lost for several generations, thus diminishing the value of the Master Plan.

Option 2: Implementation at Once

Most Form Based Codes take affect all-at-once. They are mandatory and replace the existing zoning for a specified area. An all-at-once strategy is advantageous because it will assure that development moves forward in a way that is compatible with a cohesive Master Plan vision. This point cannot be over emphasized. The existing zoning ordinance does not ensure, prioritize or, in some cases, even permit, the kind of mixed-use pedestrian oriented new development envisioned by the plan. Thus, the lack of a Form Based Code exposes the downtown to new development that is inconsistent with a walkable, pedestrian-oriented district.

Because Form Based Codes rarely affect land-uses in a negative way (i.e, they are usually more flexible than existing zoning), they usually avoid the problem of non-conforming uses. Moreover, typically they result in no loss of buildable area and often some sort of up-zoning. While many existing structures may be out of conformance with building form or lot arrangement (e.g., parking in the wrong place), this does not usually represent a problem as these non-conforming forms are allowed to remain as is until such time as the building is remodeled and/or added-onto, such that the square footage increase is 35 percent or more, at which time they must be brought into conformance with the new code. Where conformance would be impractical or nearly impractical, staff will usually work with the owner/architect to achieve the spirit of the code (the intent), if not the letter. Therefore it is important that the Applicability and Intent portion of the Code is clear and strong, and ties directly to a Master Plan. This will require ordinance language that provides a process for alternative compliance

An important part of the process will be early meetings between planning staff and developer/architects. Designs for buildings would be reviewed in their conceptual phase, for consistency with urban design intent. Only after some agreement is achieved there, would staff begin to look at design detail, usually after Schematic Design. This alignment of the design decision-making with the approvals process results in two benefits. Less time is wasted by developers/architects going "back to the drawing board" after a substantial investment in design time has been completed. The second advantage is that it reduces the pressure of the learning curve required by plan-check staff. These designs are pre-approved by planning staff familiar with the code, and can therefore be reviewed at permit time for building code compliance alone. However, all staff reviewing building permits as well as planning staff will need to be trained in the code not only for understanding the letter of the code, but the spirit. Ideally, a checklist can be created for staff as well as for land-owners, developers, and architects to make it easier to interpret and use.

Adopting a Code all at once requires an up front investment of time and resources to implement the Plan, change necessary policies and regulatory documents, and train staff.

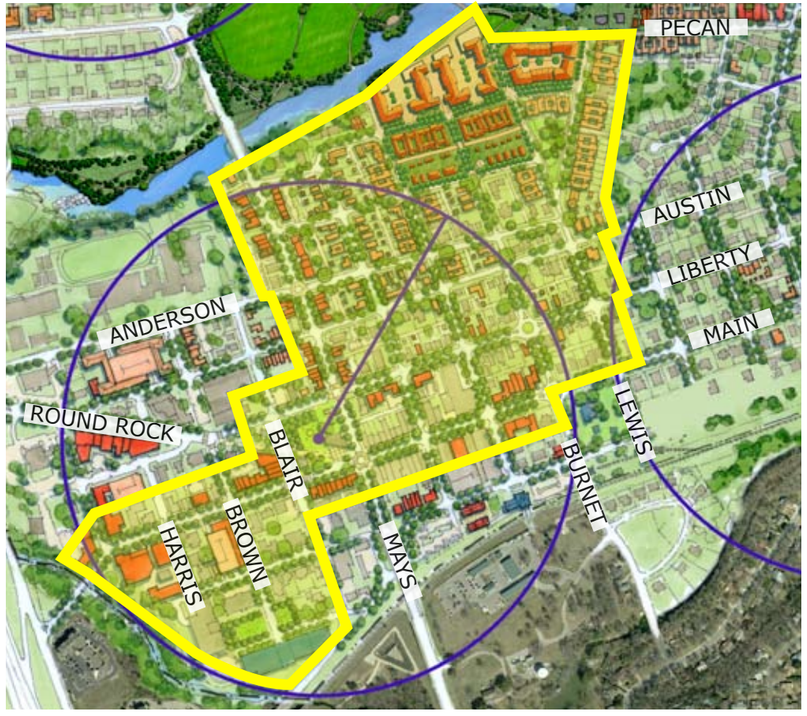
Option 3: An Optional Code

The third alternative is to adopt the Code as an "Optional Code." Developers could chose whether or not to follow it.

An optional code would have to be carefully linked to particular incentives so that developers who chose to follow the code would receive density bonuses or other benefits. The key to any "optional" code is that it presents a compelling reason to use it, rather than to use the existing zoning ordinance. Along with density bonuses, some jurisdictions give optional code users the incentive of moving to the head of the permitting line.

If the optional code is easier to use and understand that the existing code or if the optional code gives greater flexibility, developers are encouraged to use it. Likewise, developers may be encouraged to use the optional code because they may feel it is easier to get the vote of approval from the Planning Commission and/or Design Review Commission, when such bodies have jurisdiction. By no means, can an "optional" code be made to have a slower or more cumbersome process than the "by-right" zoning for it to achieve value.

Adopting the Code as Optional is not preferred. There would be nothing to assure that new developments would be compatible with the vision for Downtown Round Rock, nor would it necessarily solve the concurrency issue between infrastructure enhancements and density.



Right: Proposed Phase 1 Area for Option 1, Phased Approach (in yellow)

3. PLAN-WIDE POLICY INITIATIVES

One of the roles of the public sector is to put in place policies that guide development and inform design and capital investment decisions. The policy recommendations contained here seek to ensure that Master Plan design interventions are compatible with city code and that they are attractive to potential developers.

The priorities for policy changes described include:

- Historic preservation and adaptive reuse
- Parking reform
- Public financing mechanisms
    - *Tax Increment Finance (TIF) or Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ)*
    - *Public Improvement Districts (PID)*
    - *Capital improvements programming*
    - *New Market Tax Credits*
- Retail development tools and leasing strategies
    - *Downtown retailer, restaurant and entertainment recruitment*
    - *Potential incentives and funding assistance*
- Vacant lots and infill development opportunities
- Quality-of-life performance standards
- Incentives for green development
- Re-platting

General Discussion

The City of Round Rock will have the critical role in implementing several primary functions necessary to generate positive change. It is up to the city to chose which of the policies on this and the following page that are priorities, and in what way they should be accomplished.

General Recommended Actions

The city should:

- Adopt the Master Plan as the guiding document for the downtown area.
- Direct staff to review General Plan, Zoning Code, and other regulatory documents for inconsistencies with Master Plan. Revise these plans to be consistent with Master Plan.
- Direct staff to work with developers on land acquisitions and site-specific incentives.
- Consider joining the Texas Main Street Program and appointing 2 full-time Main Street staff people. These staff members would work on "activation of the downtown core," initiating programs such as tree planting, the Artisan Stroll, holiday events, urban sports events, movies in the park, etc.
- Formulate and implement branding and marketing campaign for downtown.
- Initiate a comprehensive signage program including signage for gateways, parking, and wayfinding.
- Prioritize key Master Plan capital improvement stimulus priority projects so that they are dedicated available funds in the near term as part of the CIP.
- Implement Utility Upgrade Plan.
- Prioritize and undertake proposed green space / open space improvements.
- Invest in streets and streetscapes to improve the basic condition of curbs and sidewalks, while also improving the district character with consistent tree planting, lighting, street furniture, and signage. This includes initiating the capital budgeting needed to ensure public funding of key projects. It will also be important to coordinate critical street improvements with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), both because state highways run through downtown Round Rock but also because improved public realm enhancements on those highways (principally Mays Street) may require a different interpretation of typical controls exercised by TxDOT.
- Consider reduction of or exemption from taxes for a certain period would encourage investment.

Timing

- The current economic cycle presents challenges although the long term nature of a Master Plan allows for some flexibility in terms of phasing and timing.
- Establishing funding for the streetscape and traffic calming measures first will allow the city to move forward with public improvements that can in turn signal to property owners and others with a vested interest in downtown that real change is occurring. The streetscape improvements include those mentioned as catalytic projects as well as creation of the town green.
- Public funding considerations need to be addressed early in the process given the lead time required to implement various funding alternatives.
- Retail, restaurant and entertainment recruitment should continue on an ongoing basis. As part of this process, the city and chamber should discuss a potential incentives strategy or program for recruitment.
- As public improvements are made, and access and visibility are improved, it will become important to create a cohesive mix of viable commercial tenants in the downtown core in order to retain existing tenants as well as increase pedestrian activity and continue to attract new tenants into the downtown core. Before this occurs, it will also be critical to address necessary zoning changes to attract new capital investment into the area.
- The Urban Land Institute projects that mixed-use and infill development and neighborhood retail centers will be favored in the next round of retail development. This will put downtown Round Rock in a good position moving forward in terms of mixed-use development within the downtown core.

Historic Preservation and Adaptive Reuse

To date, the City of Round Rock has shown great foresight with regard to historic preservation issues. The city's Historic Overlay zoning and associated Design Guidelines are useful tools to encourage the preservation of historic structures and the Inventory is valuable documentation of pre-1946 historic resources. The Historic Preservation Commission and the Local Preservation Officer provide property owners with assistance in city designation and permitting for historic structures.

To strengthen and complement these tools, the City should:

- *Adopt a nationally-recognized building code to address the preservation of existing buildings.* Currently, the City of Round Rock has adopted the 2006 International Building Code, published by the International Code Council. The ICC also publishes the International Existing Building Code, intended to encourage the use and reuse of existing buildings, achieving appropriate levels of safety without requiring full compliance with the new construction requirements of the International Building Code. City building officials should review and adopt the International Existing Building Code, including any local amendments that might be desired, to encourage the rehabilitation of existing buildings.
- *Prior to the adoption of any new zoning code for downtown, update and expand the existing historic resource inventory in the western part of downtown.* The area bounded by Lewis, Liberty, Round Rock, the east frontage road of IH 35, McNeil, Mays and Bagdad is one identified for both historic preservation and redevelopment community goals. Current information about historic resources in this area will assist in determining preservation priorities and in aligning the preservation and redevelopment goals.
- *Prior to the adoption of any new code, coordinate the existing Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial and Residential Districts and Properties with new recommendations.* Update the Guidelines as needed to resolve issues that may be in conflict.
- *In the longer term, update the Inventory of Historic Sites to include structures dating from 1946 to 1959.* The updated inventory should include information on the history, development and condition of the buildings and context statements for the areas, as well as a standard rating system for building significance. This update will provide documentation for buildings that are 50 years old, the basic age criterion for historic designation. The update should also indicate structures that have been demolished since they were documented in 1992. (It appears that approximately 15% of the structures in the Downtown area recorded in the Inventory have since been demolished.)
- *Restore the ability to access the Inventory data on City GIS information, from the city's website.* The Inventory serves to inform the public of the location and type of historic resources found in downtown.
- *Further research and document the Historic Residential-Character District area, including documentation of the history and development of the district, and definition of historic contexts, architectural styles and periods of significance, in anticipation of either a National Register Historic District or a local historic district designation at some future date.*
- *To further community goals for preservation, consider enhancing the current property tax exemption incentive mechanism* available to designated landmarks to include property tax freezes for qualified rehabilitation projects and grant or loan programs funded with a portion of the hotel occupancy tax revenue, allowed under Chapter 351 of the Tax Code for heritage tourism.

Renovating and preserving historic buildings supports economic development by increasing property value, creating jobs, drawing tourists, and helping revitalize main streets.

Property Tax Exemption

Local property tax exemptions can encourage revitalization and reinvestment in historic buildings. This includes a process for forgiving or releasing back taxes, maintenance, and water bills could be exchanged for property improvements to historic structures. The city already has a tax exemption program in place, which should be expanded. Local property tax exemptions, intended to encourage revitalization and reinvestment in historic buildings, are available to landmark buildings under the current historic preservation ordinance. To ensure the preservation of the two-block Round Rock Commercial National Register Historic District, additional incentives may be desired, such as a property tax freeze at pre-rehabilitation values for qualified rehabilitation projects. Also, adopting a process for forgiving or releasing back taxes, maintenance and water bills, in exchange for property improvements to historic structures, may be beneficial.

Matching Fund or Low Interest Loan Program

A matching fund or low interest loan program can also be put in place to facilitate various façade improvements. Typically a public agency or local development corporation provides a dollar for dollar match for approved façade improvements up to a defined maximum amount. Improvements are typically subject to review and eligible improvements usually include masonry repair, exterior painting, sign improvements, etc. These loans can be combined with historic tax credits to maximize tax benefits for the investor.

If such a program is considered for Round Rock, establishing geographic boundaries for the eligible buildings area will be critical, both because historic properties can be identified and prioritized as well as to understand a range of amounts of funding which may be required over time to stimulate these investments. It may also be necessary to stipulate design, maintenance and materials standards which would be required in order to participate in a façade grant or loan program to assure that the funds are leveraging a high quality improvement by the property owner and/or tenant.

Historic preservation requires approval from multiple departments and agencies including - the State preservation office, the National Park Service, and the Federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Streamlining this approval process of applicants would help reduce red tape.

Facilitating Adaptive-Reuse

Converting historic buildings to support new uses often face zoning barriers such as non-conforming floor area, setbacks and height. By "grandfathering in" the building envelope, developers can avoid costly and time consuming variance requirements. Eliminating cumbersome requirements for loading zones, parking requirements, and providing flexibility in meeting the building code, disabled access, electrical code, fire code, and mechanical code makes adaptive reuse more feasible. Zoning changes which allow for flexibility will incentivize certain types of mixed-use development. For example, it may be beneficial to vary parking requirements and setback and height restrictions for joint live/work development proposals. Similarly, an expedited review process (flexibility in meeting building or disabled access codes) for adaptive reuse projects can also help to generate development interest in older buildings.

While a number of adaptive re-uses have occurred in the downtown area (particularly west of Mays Street), it may be useful in the future to also consider reconfiguration of former residential properties in the way in which they address the adjacent street. For example, residential setbacks and lot coverage percentages are not the same as the more dense 'traditional' street-oriented commercial blocks in the historic core of downtown Round Rock.

As downtown growth continues and new retail/ commercial properties are developed, it will be increasingly important that new projects also respect the traditional commercial character of downtown Round Rock in new growth/redevelopment properties and new infill projects.

Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits

The Federal government established historic rehabilitation tax credits in 1976 as a means to 'level the playing field' from an investment standpoint between existing and historic structures and new construction projects, which could claim a faster tax benefit than older structures. Historic tax credits can be used to provide tax incentives for investors to consider renovation of older commercial buildings within the historic core. The program provides for a 10 percent tax credit for substantial rehabilitation of income producing buildings over forty years old and a 20 percent tax credit for substantial rehabilitation of income producing buildings which are over 50 years old and eligible for, or already listed on, the National Register of Historic Buildings.

The two step approval process requires that first, the building meets the standards established by the US Department of the Interior for eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. The second part of the approval process requires that the modifications meet standards put in place by the Secretary of the Interior ("The Secretary of Interiors Standards for Certified Rehabilitation of Certified Historic Buildings"). In general, a tax credit is a dollar for dollar reduction in the amount of taxes owed.

Up to the approved amount of the tax credit, a property owner can eliminate federal tax obligations, and can carry the unused credit forward for up to five years. As an example, if a 2,000 square foot commercial use historic structure in downtown Round Rock were renovated according to the Secretary's Standards at a cost of $500,000 (including both hard costs and soft costs such as permits, design and engineering fees, etc.), the available tax credit would equal $200,000. If the property owner owed $130,000 in the first tax year after approval of the credit, the dollar for dollar credit would completely eliminate any payment obligation. The remaining $70,000 in unused credits could be applied to taxes owed in the following tax year.

While use of historic tax credits does require additional approvals and the need to meet certain design and construction standards, saving 20% of the approved project cost against tax obligations can greatly improve the viability of a commercial restoration project. In Texas, the historic credits are administered by the Texas Historical Commission.

Parking Reform

Parking policy plays an essential role in the redevelopment process. Parking structures and surface parking increase the cost of development, influence the quality of urban design, and express the city's approach to responsible and sustainable development. The city should support smart parking policies that will:

- Incentivize efficient land use to eliminate unnecessary parking.
- Promote good urban design.
- Provide developers with flexibility in parking requirements.
- Create a parking strategy that addresses gradual change over time.

Economics:

- While parking is free to motorist, it is not free to the city and developers who spend large amounts of money building and maintaining parking spaces, lots, and garages.
- Recent studies show that parking facilities cost on average approximately $20,000 per space for above-grade garages (structures), $30,000 to $40,000 for below-grade (underground) garages and $4,000 per space for surface parking lots, depending on land values.
- Hidden or "bundled" in the cost of development, parking is a cost shared by all, through higher costs for housing, goods, and services.
- Free parking does not incentivize walking, biking, carpooling, or using transit. This is because free parking encourages people to drive to their destinations. Alternative forms of transportation would help alleviate congestion to make downtown Round Rock a more pedestrian-oriented, commercial district. And in the long term, pricing parking would help to encourage alternative transportation infrastructure development and appropriate usage of parking spaces for daily visitors and shoppers.

Urban Design:

- The placement and design of parking plays an important role in urban design. Parking lots can break up the street front – creating a gap-toothed streetscape, interfering with pedestrian circulation and safety, occupying valuable land in downtown blocks that could be developed into more efficient and attractive uses, and blighting neighborhoods when the lots are not appropriately landscaped or buffered from the public realm.

Environment:

- Parking also affects the environmental quality of the city. While surface lots are the least expensive form of parking, they are also the worst for the environment.
- Surface parking lots absorb sunlight raising area temperatures, known as the "urban heat island effect."
- As impervious surfaces, they divert rather the absorb rainwater, which can cause flooding and prevents ground water sources from being recharged. They also collect pollutants that enter river streams through stormwater runoff.

Short- and Long- Term Strategies

Future parking policies adopted by the city should encourage new transit lines, transit-oriented development, and alternative forms of transportation. There are both short- and long- term parking strategies that the city should pursue.

In the short-term, the city should:

- Capitalize on city's shared parking ordinance.
- Enforce on-street parking time limits.
- Make use of existing park once garage in East Downtown and develop strategy for future "Park Once" garage in West Downtown.
- Establish a parking review process in the Planning Department to review innovative parking reduction requests.
- Encourage or require developers to satisfy parking requirements through "in lieu" fees.
- Update minimum parking requirements to reflect trip generation numbers rather than outdated zoning code and standards.
- Reduce parking requirements for desired development (retail, mixed-use development, adaptive re-use of historic buildings, town square, TOD, creative/cultural industries).

In the longer-term, the city should:

- Create a downtown Parking Benefits District.
- Price both on-street (curb) parking and garage parking, and enforce time limits in the Parking Benefits District.
- Provide downtown employees with discount to "Park Once" garage(s).
- Create Residential Permit Parking District to protect residents from spillover parking.

Short-Term Strategies:

Capitalize on city's existing shared parking ordinance

Existing

- The city's shared parking ordinance allows non-residential uses to satisfy minimum parking requirements by sharing parking spaces that are used at different times.

Proposed

- City staff should encourage all developments to attempt to satisfy parking requirements through a shared plan before building any new parking.
- This policy could be expanded to include residential uses wherein businesses use the parking during the day and residences use the parking at night.

Enforce on-street parking time limits

Existing

- Currently on-street parking is free and downtown employees park for the day in front of stores, preventing turnover of spaces.

Proposed

- Enforcing time limits through ticketing will help encourage long-term visitors and employees to park in the free pubic garage.
- City can use ticket revenues to administer the program.
- Prohibits feeding the meter and requires vehicles to vacate a space after a set time period.
- Related to this policy is a concurrent signage program that can direct people to the existing park-once garage. A signage program is currently underway at the city.

Make use of existing park once garage in East Downtown and develop strategy for future public garage in West Downtown.

Existing

- A public parking garage exists directly off Main Street and offers free parking.

Proposed

- The city should introduce time limits on the first one or two floors of the existing garage. This will encourage long-term parkers to use upper floors, leaving the bottom floors open for visitor parking. This will help combat the perception that the garage is always full.
- Directly related to this policy is a concurrent signage program that can direct people to the existing park-once garage. Many people feel the garage is hard to find and others do not know it exists. A signage program is currently underway at the city.
- A future garage is proposed in Southwest Downtown. This parking garage should be used for visitors (on lower floors) and employees planning to enter the downtown area for an extended period of time (on upper floors).
- Building parking garages rather than surface lots centralizes parking for better traffic circulation and reduces the amount of valuable land dedicated to surface lots for a more attractive downtown area.

Establish Parking review process in Planning Department to review innovative parking reduction requests

Existing

- Developers often request parking variances that slow the development process – increasing costs for developers and using city time and resources to process.

Proposed

- A parking review process would streamline the approval process, reviewing and processing innovative parking requests through a permit rather than requiring a variance.
- The parking review process staff would also serve as a committee to evaluate ongoing parking issues and innovate policies.

Encourage developers to satisfy parking requirements through "in lieu" fees

Existing

- All development requires off-street parking.

Proposed

- Provide "in-lieu" fees as an alternative.
- Required parking spaces would be counted as part of city pool (pubic garages, on-street, surface lots).
- In-lieu fee to be determined by the city, would reflect the estimated cost of building a parking space in a nearby lot or garage.
- Collected fees would go toward maintaining and building new public parking garages to ensure adequate centralized parking for the area.
- In-lieu fees help ease burdensome parking requirements for the development of small and awkwardly-shaped lots, as well as the adaptive reuse of historic buildings, for which satisfying parking requirements can be prohibitively expensive.
- Centralizing parking in garages rather than building separate parking for each development allows for better traffic circulation and more pedestrian-oriented urban design, a primary goal of the Master Plan.

Update minimum parking requirements to reflect trip generation numbers rather than outdated standards

Existing

- The city's zoning attempts to guess at the amount of parking needed for any given land use at any given time.
- Parking requirements are based on parking demand per square foot of floor area, rather than trip generation rates.

Proposed

- Update minimum requirements based on trip generation standards, which look at the number of trips a development generates at various points of the day.
- Parking requirements are based on the number of trips at a given period, rather than the sum of the entire day.
- Updated parking requirements would distinguish between auto, walking, and transit trips to further reduce parking requirements to maximize the amount of land available for development and open space.

Reduce parking requirements for desired development

Existing

- All new development must satisfy minimum parking requirements with some exceptions:
    - Parcels fronting Round Rock Ave., Mays and part of South Lampasas may use on-street parking spaces to satisfy off-site parking requirements.
    - Property owners of Block 8: lots 11-19, Block 9: lots 8-19, and Block 22: lots 1-9 are not required to comply with off-street parking requirements (see Code, section 11.502 (4) and (5)).

Proposed

- Reduce parking requirements to incentivize desired development by reducing the cost of construction and development.
- Good candidates for parking requirements include dynamic developments that make downtown a more vibrant community such as storefront retail uses, creative industries, local restaurants, mixed-use restaurants, adaptive-reuse buildings, and businesses, and developments pursuing innovative sustainable design.

Long-Term Strategies:

Create a Downtown Parking Benefits District

Existing

- All parking is counted separately for properties in downtown Round Rock.

Proposed

- Create a parking benefits district that would count on- and off-street parking as within a set boundary as a separate "pool" of parking.
- Area would include the Southwest Downtown Plan area.
- All parking revenues generated within the boundaries would remain in the bounded area to make and maintain streetscape improvements.
- District boundaries would also determine which businesses and developers could participate in parking incentives, such as employee discounts for the park-once garage or developer in-lieu fees.
- Parking district centralizes downtown parking decisions by looking at the district as a collective pool of parking rather than separate spaces, lots, and garages. This allows for more innovative and efficient parking decisions.

Price curb and garage parking

Existing-

- All parking in downtown Round Rock is free.
- Time limits are rarely enforced.

Proposed-

- Designated streets in the parking benefits district where parking would be priced.
- Charge fees for the park-once garage(s) that are less than curb parking rates.
- The price of parking should be set to maintain a 15% vacancy rate. This ensures that a majority of parking spaces are used, while leaving space for new cars to reduce congestion created when drivers "cruise" for free parking.
- To ensure a 15% vacancy rate, the price of parking can vary throughout the day and week – reflecting peak use.
- Appropriately-priced parking ensures that there will be continuous turnover at on-street and park-once garage spaces, allowing visitors to frequent the businesses.
- Drivers wanting to make quick trips would be willing to pay for on-street parking for convenience, while those looking to stay in the downtown area for longer periods of time would use the cheaper "park once" garage.
- All parking revenues earned by curb meters would be returned to the district to fund streetscape maintenance and improvements, such as repairing sidewalks and crosswalks and maintaining street trees, landscaping, and lighting.
- To encourage use and support of metered parking, convenience to the user is key. Consider meters that accept cash or credit cards. These are typically a single unit in a block, which prints a receipt that is placed on the dash of the vehicle.
- Keeping the parking revenue within the downtown district for streetscape improvements and maintenance helps overcome the political challenge of charging for parking, which was previously given away for free.
- This policy creates a funding stream for maintenance that would help the city offset the costs of maintaining the improvements set forth in the Master Plan, and provide residents and businesses in downtown Round Rock with a more attractive district, helping to raise property values and rents in the area.

Establish Residential Permit Parking

Existing

- All parking in residential neighborhood is free and unregulated.

Proposed: Phase A

- Create permit parking in a Residential Parking District.
- Offer residents parking permit at nominal fee to prevent non-residents from parking in the area.
- Parking permits are intended to protect rather than burden residents from spillover parking as downtown becomes a more populated area over time.

Proposed: Phase B

- As downtown area becomes more trafficked, residential streets could be metered (for non-residents).
- Meter revenues within the residential permit parking district would go to improve neighborhood infrastructure and streetscape through better lighting, landscaping, sidewalks, etc.

Public Financing

Tax Increment Finance/Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIF/TIRZ)

TIF has been widely used throughout the country and is a tool that allows local governments to publicly finance needed public improvements within a defined area. The initial capital costs for improvements are repaid by the collection of future property and/or sales tax revenues by each of the taxing units that levy taxes against the future developments. In Texas, TIFs are also known as Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ), which are funded and operated under the same regulatory requirements as TIF districts.

It is up to each taxing unit to dedicate all or a portion of the tax revenue that is attributable to the increase in property values due to the improvements within the designated zone. Under Texas law, a TIF may be initiated through two methods: (1) a property owner petition representing at least 50 percent of the appraised value of property within a defined zone, or (2) by a city council and/or county government. Once initiated, counties, school districts and other districts may consider participating based on the impact to their anticipated long-term revenues resulting from future growth. These agreements are sometimes called Interlocal Agreements.

In Williamson County, at least two TIF/TIRZ areas have been established. In Georgetown, a TIF was created to foster development of the Wolf Ranch project as a basis for negotiations with the Simon Companies to defray site preparation costs. The fund had generated over $105,000 in revenues in late 2008. The City of Taylor also approved creation of a TIF district in 2005.

According to Chapter 311 of the Texas Tax Code, the collected TIF revenues can be applied as direct cash payments to fund project costs or through the sale of TIF bonds that will be repaid over time with the tax increments. The legislation requires that the designated area meet certain criteria. For example, "the area's present condition must substantially impair the city's growth, retard the provision of housing, or constitute an economic or social liability to the public health, safety, morals or welfare. Further, this condition must exist because of the presence of one or more of the following conditions: a substantial number of substandard or deteriorating structures, inadequate sidewalks or street layout, faulty lot layouts, unsanitary or unsafe conditions, a tax or special assessment delinquency that exceeds the fair market value of the land; defective or unusual conditions of title, or conditions that endanger life or property by fire or other cause".

There are also limitations on the percentage of taxable property in a designated TIF/TIRZ area that are residential, in that no more than 10% of the appraised property value in a reinvestment zone can be in residential, and no more than 15 percent of the total appraised taxable real estate is taxable by a City or County school system (see Chapter 311 of the Texas Tax Code for more detail).

If the area qualifies for tax increment financing, there is a ten step process that must be followed in order to secure financing. The steps include preparation of a preliminary financing plan, a hearing held for other taxing jurisdictions in the area, a formal presentation to the other taxing units, a public hearing regarding the creation of the zone, and creation of a project plan by the board of directors of the zone. The TIF process would require dedication by the city to initiating and implementing the detailed approval requirements. The city must also justify the use of TIF by meeting the threshold standards enumerated in the legislation and must report annually to all of the affected taxing districts.

For Round Rock, it may be useful to create a TIF district as a means of leveraging intended future development to pay for specific traffic and/or pedestrian enhancements, encouragement of redevelopment of historic properties and/or appropriate infill of vacant land, or other redevelopment/ project stimulus actions in the study area.

It is important to remember that the size of the tax increment is completely based on allocations of future development; if the market is soft or the future project's density is limited, the increment generated may not be sufficient to cover the debt service for the infrastructure.

Public Improvement Districts (PID)

Public improvement districts allow cities to levy and collect special assessments on properties within an identified area to pay for a variety of improvements. It is a type of "self-tax" and can be formed to "create water, wastewater, health and sanitation, or drainage improvements; street and sidewalk improvements; mass transit improvements; parking improvements; library improvements; park, recreation and cultural improvements; landscaping and other aesthetic improvements; art installation; creation of pedestrian malls or similar improvements; supplemental safety services for the improvement of the district, including public safety and security services; or supplemental business-related services for the improvement of the district, including advertising and business recruitment and development."[1] PIDs are established by the Texas Legislature.

Establishing a PID in downtown Round Rock would require building a consensus among downtown property owners within a designated area and formalizing a cooperative agreement with the City of Round Rock to collect and distribute the special PID tax. It is not clear if a consensus exists among key property owners, but it may be an effective longer term strategy once key owners have agreed fundamentally with the Master Plan concepts.

Capital Improvements Programming

The City of Round Rock has a multi-year Capital Improvement Program that includes forecasts for future capital projects and is included in the city's annual budget. *The city needs to prioritize key Master Plan capital improvement stimulus priority projects so that they are dedicated available funds in the near term.*

New Market Tax Credits

New market tax credits (NMTC) were enacted in 2000 as part of the Community Renewal Tax Relief Act and are intended to spur investment in low income communities. The investment vehicle is known as a Community Development Entity (CDE) and investors contributing to a qualified CDE are rewarded with a tax credit worth 39 percent of the initial investment (distributed over seven years). The CDE will in turn make Qualified Low Income Community Investments (QLICI) in the businesses in the underserved area.

The CDE can be a community development financial institution or a non-profit organization and must be certified. Non-profits need to form a for-profit subsidiary or other similar arrangement in order to receive credits. The CDE must have a proven track record and accountability to the community. After a CDE is certified by the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (a division of the US Treasury), the CDE must apply for tax credits through a competitive process. In order to be successful, CDEs must have a strong business plan, good management, a proven track record in working with investors, and a proposed project that will have a substantial impact in low income communities.

Areas eligible for tax credits are low income communities defined as a census tract with a poverty rate of at least 20 percent or with median income of up to 80 percent of area median or statewide median. Qualified investments include loans, lines of credit, direct equity investments, etc.

For Round Rock, the opportunity may exist to use new market tax credits for retail or mixed-use or economic development projects located in low income census tracts within the defined study area. Tax credits help bridge moderate gaps in financing various business and commercial real estate investments.

The city could consider appointing a Redevelopment Representative to: work with Chamber of Commerce, local brokers, property owners, and representatives of the real estate and financial community to identify priority and secondary retail locations and recruitment of new retailers. Staff members could work with the Chamber to provide marketing information to prospective tenants regarding the public approval process and potential incentives. Staff members could work with the team on downtown retail recruitment and developing financial or other incentives.

1 *www.texasahead.org. A one-stop portal for economic resources for the State of Texas, tax programs and incentives.*

Retail Leasing and Investment, Creative Industries

In order to create synergy and develop critical mass within downtown, it is important that desired retailers be located adjacent to or within close proximity to one another. Street frontage which is broken up by office space and other service uses will oftentimes not perform as successfully as consistent retail frontage. Clusters which have proven successful in other regions include restaurants grouped with other entertainment uses (e.g. theaters, wine bars) and certain selected retailers such as bookstores. *Main Street west of Mays and streets around the town green should be targeted first for concentration of retail and pedestrian-oriented commercial uses. The first two blocks of Liberty east of Mays, are a secondary place to target.*

Downtown Retailer and Restaurant Recruitment

Given the relatively small scale of the downtown area and rapidly changing market dynamics of the Round Rock area, the most appropriate retail niche for retail recruitment in the downtown area is regional and Texas-based retailers and restaurant operators. There are many chain-affiliated restaurants and discount/off-price brand operations in the Interstate 35 retail corridor through Round Rock.

In order to provide a differentiated store mix, downtown Round Rock's positioning strategy should only include selected national/credit tenants, with a greater emphasis on recruiting local and regional retail and dining operators who will also best understand local market conditions and operating requirements. The Texas Restaurant Association may help by providing contact information regarding potential restaurant owners who are looking to expand in the region. A 'wish list' of potential retailers is included in the appendix of this report (the 'wish list' categories were determined through local stakeholder interviews).

It is important that the city maximize the abilities of the Chamber of Commerce liaison in terms of working with local brokers, the city and a representative of the financial community (to explain financing options) to secure the most appropriate tenants for retail space within the downtown district. The Chamber of Commerce can continue to act as the clearinghouse for prospective tenants searching for space in the downtown area by providing information regarding available properties, prevailing lease terms in the downtown region, access, permitting, etc. The Chamber should also work with the city to provide marketing information to prospective tenants regarding the public approval process and potential incentives.

The City should appoint a Redevelopment Representative to work with Chamber of Commerce, local brokers, property owners, and representatives of the real estate and financial community to identify priority and secondary retail locations and recruitment of new retailers. Staff members should work with Chamber to provide marketing information to prospective tenants regarding the public approval process and potential incentives.

Since the downtown area does not have the leverage of a single landowner to require cooperation (as in a shopping mall, where all of the leases are controlled by one company), downtown efforts will be largely voluntary (with the assistance of incentives and effective zoning and land use controls) and based on persuasion and volunteer efforts rather than a mandated tenant/merchandise mix.

Other downtown districts have successfully developed a cohesive tenant mix over time by devoting a dedicated team (as described above to include key representatives from the city, banking industry, and local retailing community) to the effort. *Given the scattered land ownership patterns of downtown districts, it must be emphasized that the effort to recruit retailers will take time and dedication by those involved.*

Retailers themselves can also play an important part in Round Rock's downtown revitalization. For example, existing retailers can be included as part of recruitment efforts by sharing their experiences in operating in the downtown area on team recruitment visits to target cities, or by sharing information in marketing materials about their customers, how downtown is improving and their use of financial incentives and/or technical assistance.

Retail recruitment efforts should focus on selected cities such as Austin, in which start up businesses such as Amy's Ice Cream and Jo's Coffee have succeeded well enough to expand to multiple locations. Round Rock's current downtown mix includes mostly food and beverage businesses and professional and governmental offices and facilities. Retail shoppers goods are largely absent; this is a typical condition in older downtowns, in which restaurants are the first category to re-appear, with retail shops following once foot traffic has increased and operator interest has stabilized.

Downtown retail recruitment is not an overnight process. *Experience has shown that it takes at least two to three years for substantive improvements to take place;* results are not immediate, but the sustained effort can attract new retailers if the general character of the public realm is improved and the retail recruitment effort is maintained.

Potential Incentives and Funding Assistance

If potential retailers are convinced of the general viability of the Round Rock area but prospective businesses are not fully financed, development of financial or other incentives may also need to be considered. Incentives can include tenant improvement allowances for interior space improvements or rent deferrals for the first few months of operation. Because a retail business is expensive in the early years due to costs of renovation and fit-up of interiors, purchase of merchandise and provision of operating costs while building a customer base (and even higher for food service locations due to the costs of commercial kitchens), *any incentives that can reduce initial costs will be most effective.*

These incentives can include access to reduced-cost financing, deferred or reduced rents (to allow tenants to recover some of their initial investments into the property) or direct subsidy of store improvements (such as the façade grants and loans described earlier). Another option which allows for flexible leasing terms is a percentage rent lease, or a lower minimum rent plus a percentage of sales after a specified break point. This approach also allows tenants to build to a stabilized business volume and remain viable during the start up phase. The minimum is typically set at a reasonable, but lower than typical level, to allow tenants to adjust to sales cycles. This also allows the property owner to share in the upside if tenant sales are strong.

Percentage leases are effective for restaurants since they typically require substantial early costs to finance kitchen equipment and supplies. While these types of leases are common in shopping centers, they are less common in downtown districts. In some cities, property tax exemptions have been offered in exchange for subsidized rents in order to encourage property owners to maintain affordable rents for retail tenants (and also encourage owners to rent to retailers as opposed to office tenants).

As part of this effort, the Chamber of Commerce and property owners could work together to identify suitable locations for tenants who are unable to pay premium rents in a prime location. A complete inventory of available spaces, spaces needing rehabilitation to be more attractive to prospective tenants or infill development sites should be included in a comprehensive retail inventory of downtown Round Rock to identify potential locations, leases about to expire or other factors.

A small business loan program is available through the State of Texas to help with financing for businesses that face challenges in accessing capital. The Texas Capital Access Program encourages banks to support small and medium-sized businesses (under 500 employees) that lack collateral to qualify for standard or conventional financing or do not meet other business requirements. The loan can be used for working capital or the purchase or lease of equipment and buildings. Loans are typically administered through local banks and generally available at reduced rates. Loan amounts are capped annually. Participation should continue to be encouraged through the City of Round Rock and/or the Chamber of Commerce.

Welcoming Mixed-Use Developments

Mixed-use projects face a series of challenges; they can be more challenging to design, more expensive to build, and more difficult to finance. For this reason, *the City of Round Rock needs to provide incentives to developers to encourage mixed-use in the Downtown Plan area.* Currently, mixed-use zoning is limited to the Southwest Downtown Plan area and PUDs.

The city should establish a mixed-use district in downtown to encourage:

- Diverse uses to locate in the neighborhood to provide a variety of housing options, retail and services.
- Placement of new buildings close to property lines with parking in the rear of the building in order to engage pedestrians and de-emphasize parking facilities with the goal of creating a dynamic streetscape.
- Developments with quality construction that buffer the impacts of parking facilities and vehicular traffic.
- Neighborhood-enhancing economic activity.

Attracting Creative Industries

- Partner with Round Rock Area Arts Council to develop "Open Studio" program modeled after successful program in Chicago.
- Attract artists to vacant buildings for interim use, helping to bring cultural uses to a commercial areas.
- Award temporary studio space to artists or creative industries who apply to the Round Rock Arts Council to receive temporary studio space, which would rotate to a new artist every month.
- Engage public by requiring the temporary studio space to be open to the public, who can interact with the artist and watch them make art. Artists must be willing to work during busy retail hours—between lunch and commute time, when foot traffic is highest.
- Provide stipend to artists (determined by city, $500/month in Chicago) to offset their costs.
- The city could pay for utility and insurance costs for the spaces.

Vacant Lots

Currently, there are approximately 14 acres of vacant land in the Downtown Master Plan Area and 6,020 linear feet of unused right-of-way. Developing, landscaping, and activating vacant lots and structures in downtown Round Rock will help revitalization of the area by reducing blight through visual signs of reinvestment – be that community gardens, art installations, or landscaped open space. *Temporary or "interim" uses for vacant lots and buildings can provide creative spaces for artists, start-up businesses, and innovative plans – increasing the desirability of the area to spur more permanent redevelopment projects.*

An example location for interim use, is the former senior center site (205 East Main Street, see photo, right). The site can temporarily continue to function as a public green space or courtyard for public events and activities until the town green is constructed and/or until the site redevelops. Ideally a part of the lot can serve as a connection to the pedestrian entrances to the main public parking garage behind Main Street, while part of the lot is redeveloped.

Allowing interim uses provides Round Rock with greater flexibility to adapt to community and market needs in which the city is "activating rather than regulating" land uses. A cost-benefit analysis report by the *Vacant Land Management* in Philadelphia found that improving vacant lots provides economic gains for cities through -

- Increased tax revenue from transferring title of a small percentage of restored lots to abutting owners
- Increased tax revenue due to increased assessed value of property immediately around the improved vacant parcels
- Reduced city costs for ongoing trash and brush removal efforts.

In some cities, land banks have been established in which vacant lots are acquired through the tax foreclosure system. With tracking of tax lien foreclosure, cities are able to put vacant land back into taxable status and more productive use. Unlike many states, Texas legislation allows cities to expeditiously foreclose on properties with property tax delinquencies. There is no redemption period (loss of all property rights) in Texas, shortening the foreclosure process. Land banks are typically operated by nonprofit entities and establish the bank to sell or give vacant lands to other interested parties, thus encouraging infill development. Depending on the scale of the program, land banking can require notable capital investment in the early stages, before properties are resold.

In other cities, adopt-a-lot programs enable neighborhood groups and organizations to qualify for a no-fee city permit to use vacant land on a temporary basis for recreational or community benefit use (e.g. community gardens, passive parks, public art displays, tot lots). Round Rock could:

- *Create a well-publicized city-led pilot project* to demonstrate the opportunities for activity and to build community support and momentum.
- *Develop priority program for neighborhood groups or businesses* – making acquisition easier for neighborhood groups and small businesses intent on expansion.
- *Support public/private partnerships to engage downtown businesses and create industries.* The city would get improved lot and the company would get free marketing and PR.

The density in downtown Round Rock could also be enhanced without compromising the scale and character of the town by encouraging carefully designed infill buildings that complement the scale and urban design relationship of Round Rock's traditional commercial buildings with the new structures.

Undertaking a Vacant Lot / Structure Inventory and Plan would help the city decide how to move forward with their valuable resources. The inventory could help to:

- Create searchable and accessible website inventory for interim use.
- Recommend inter-agency group to evaluate potential future uses for lots – engage local developers in process.
- Develop user-friendly brochures and model documents (design templates, budget estimates, and lists of planting materials) to support interim use to simplify the process for them.
- Dedicate staff members to act as 'door-openers' who get the process started.
- Install "pointing" signs on lots – showing contact information for party responsible for maintenance of lot.

The vacant lot at 205 East Main Street

Quality of Life Performance Standards

While currently the city uses Level-of-Service (LOS) indicators based on the flow of vehicles to measure the quality of their streets, *the Master Plan suggests adoption of a new set of performance measures based on residents' "quality of life."* In traditional LOS calculations, higher speeds indicate less congestion and thus better "performance". High LOS, however, can compromise the comfort and safety of the pedestrian for the sake of the automobile. See LOS discussion in Appendix for more information.

Quality of life performance standards balance automobile transportation with other factors such as pedestrian/bike mobility, environmental sustainability, design quality, and economic prosperity. The standards help to transform the abstract goal of a "high quality of life" into tangible indicators and measurable standards.

Many cities are starting to look at quality of life indicators. A detailed plan for such a framework is not discussed here, rather a series of concepts are presented, which convey the ideas behind adopting such a framework. *While not all of the suggested performance standards are appropriate in all cases, it is clear that the city should embrace a more expansive set of performance measures, if the Master Plan is to succeed.*

Pedestrian Level of Service

- Includes walkability measures as defined by indicators such as the size of the street grid, the availability and width of sidewalks, intersection safety, diversity and density of uses, and urban design quality.

Bicycle Level of Service

- Includes the availability and design of bicycle trails or lanes, bicycle storage facilities, workplace showers, and the ease of transferring bicycles to transit, among other factors.

Transit Level of Service

- Includes the speed of transit (trip length), frequency (how often buses come), location (proportion of area's residents served by transit) and reliability (consistency of quality service) of transit. It may also include inter-modality (how well the buses link potential trains), and transit-oriented design, (how well the surrounding area links to transit and the quality of "place" created at the transit station).

Incentives for Green Development

Along with the incentives described above (e.g. TIFs), the city should develop a set of incentives that can be used to attract sustainable design. Such incentives could include the following.

- *Establishment of the Round Rock "Green Tape" Zone.* The city could prioritize development and redevelopment in priority downtown corridors through a "Green-Tape" zone that expedites projects that are found to be in compliance with the Master Plan vision for the Master Plan. Green tape expedited permitting and inspection processes would occur for businesses in the Enterprise Zone. The Zone would assign a "permit technician" to the applicant to help with consultants, questions, and forms.
- *Reduction of Permit Fees for Green Design.* Such a policy would be based on one of the currently accepted benchmarks for sustainable design, such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) or any other Green Design policy that the city may adopt.
- *Adopting the 2030 challenge* would help Round Rock consider carbon emissions in future development projects. Released by the nonprofit organization, Architecture 2030, the 2030 Challenge aims to guide new construction toward carbon neutrality by the year 2030. See www.architecture2030.org/2030challenge/index.
- *Measuring a decrease in single-occupant drivers* – the least efficient form of transportation – helps demonstrate improved efficiency. Transportation Demand Management techniques such as parking cash-outs and through high quality urban design encourages alternative transportation.

Subdivision Regulations Regarding No-Plat Properties

Within the Downtown Master Plan area, there are a large number of properties that do not comply with the Texas statutes and the Round Rock ordinances regarding the platting of subdivisions. Much of the area was platted in the 1880s – shown on Unrecorded Plans (Anderson Addition). The lots were further divided by metes and bounds over the years, but not re-platted. Some of the legal descriptions on deeds for these properties refer to parts of the lots without defining what part of the lot was transferred.

As such, property owners can have trouble selling their properties because title insurance companies and banks require a recorded final plat for the sale and development of land. Round Rock regulations prohibit the issuance of a building permit without the recordation of a platted lot—which is expensive and cumbersome for individual property owners.

Redevelopment in parts of downtown Round Rock cannot move forward easily, without addressing this issue.

Round Rock Subdivision regulations require a plat to be filed if a tract of land is divided into two or more parts. The Subdivision regulations also require the property owners of platted lots to comply with all infrastructure requirements. The neighborhood's infrastructure does not comply with current infrastructure standards of sidewalks, curbs, street lighting, sewer, etc. Requiring the neighborhood to comply with the current standards in order to plat the properties would be prohibitively expensive. Ignoring the issue slows –– costing the city in lost economic development. This issue is not new to Texas and has been addressed in neighboring cities such as Austin.

The Downtown Implementation Plan recommends:

- *Creating a comprehensive subdivision plan* to designate all un-platted lots as legal subdivisions.
- *"Grandfathering" existing properties,* to exempt property owners from making infrastructure improvements required by the Round Rock's regulations.
- *Creating a Neighborhood Empowerment Zone or Public Improvement District,* which could help to pay for the costs associated with bringing the unrecorded and/or illegal lots into compliance.