Design guidelines or standards can work in conjunction with mixed-use zoning standards to help ensure a uniform level of development throughout an urban village. Village plans in the Commercial Corridors Revitalization Strategy recommend basic design guidelines for each village.

Several community groups, following the lead of Downtown Fort Worth, Inc., are preparing detailed design standards and guidelines for their respective urban village areas. For example, Fort Worth South, Inc. is seeking to secure City Council adoption of design standards for the Medical District, which includes Magnolia Village. This overlay design district will assure property owners, developers, and local neighborhoods that future development will conform to the unique character of that urban district.

Economic Incentives
Economic incentives greatly increase the success of the urban villages by promoting desirable residential and commercial development and density. Household growth in and around the villages strengthens the market for area businesses. These businesses in turn provide goods, services and jobs for area residents. Central city economic redevelopment expands the City’s tax base.

The City’s principal incentive for urban village revitalization is the Neighborhood Empowerment Zone (NEZ) program. In 2002, the City Council endorsed the designation of NEZs for twelve eligible urban villages and surrounding lower-income neighborhoods, along several central city commercial corridors, with a prerequisite that villages be rezoned to mixed-use before NEZ designation. Citizens are leading the rezoning petition drives. With NEZ designation come incentives to qualified mixed-use, residential, commercial and industrial projects. Incentives include, but are not necessarily limited to, municipal property tax abatement, development fee waivers and release of city liens.

Hypothetical Neighborhood Empowerment Zone

Arterial Streets
Surrounding Lower-Income Neighborhoods

The City is using other strategies in addition to capital improvements, mixed-use zoning, and the NEZ program to encourage investment in the villages. These include seeking state and federal grants, partnering with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and Fannie Mae on multifamily and senior housing, supporting establishment of community development corporations, working with lenders to establish low-interest loan pools, encouraging the use of historic preservation investment tax credits, streamlining the development process, and more.

Fort Worth’s Urban Village Development Program

The Fort Worth City Council is working with private developers, business groups, and neighborhood associations to transform many of the central city’s older commercial districts into vibrant “urban villages.” These active, diverse, prosperous, and memorable urban villages will help promote the central city as an appealing alternative to the generic and often congested office parks and subdivisions of the suburbs.

This brochure provides information on the benefits of mixed-use urban development, the community planning process behind the program, the locations of sixteen urban villages, and three principal development strategies.

Urban villages are characterized by a mix of uses and open space with densities and designs that encourage transit and pedestrian activity.

Vision and Benefits
Urban villages are urbanized places that have a concentration of jobs, housing, commercial uses, public spaces, public transportation and pedestrian activity. They are frequently centered around significant intersections. Although the vision for each of Fort Worth’s villages is unique, they all share certain characteristics. Within these relatively compact geographical areas, different land uses are found side-by-side or within the same structures. This mix of uses in the village, including a variety of owner- and renter-occupied multifamily residential products, is located in taller buildings with minimal setbacks from the street and reduced parking requirements, achieving the densities necessary to support transit and pedestrian activity.

In 2002, the Mayor-appointed Commercial Corridors Task Force, with guidance from neighborhood stakeholders and community leaders, identified thirteen urban villages along several high-priority commercial corridors. These villages were referred to as “vistas” due to their potential to serve as an appealing alternative to the generic and often congested office parks and subdivisions of the suburbs.

The resulting Commercial Corridors Revitalization Strategy provided specific recommendations and strategies for revitalization that were adopted by reference into the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

In 2005, the City Council directed the City Plan Commission to evaluate existing and potential new urban villages. As a result, several villages have been added or combined, and two have been eliminated from the original thirteen. Currently, the City is implementing strategies from the original report for sixteen urban villages. Three strategies – capital improvements, mixed-use zoning, and economic incentives – are central to the revitalization effort.
This vibrant, walkable, live/work environment is an important link between Downtown and the Cultural District. Mid- and high-rise housing, retail, and offices overlook the Trinity River.

This village includes a main street corridor with historic structures and is anchored by Texas Wesleyan University, Polytechnic High School, and William James Middle School in an ethnically diverse neighborhood.

The village reemerges as an important Eastside commercial center, with neighborhood-supporting retail anchored by a grocery store. The vision includes mixed-income and multi-generational housing.

This village offers a higher quality of life, and a friendlier, more pleasant place to live, work, shop and play. This village serves as the east gateway entrance to the Berry Street Corridor and provides all that pass through it a pleasant place to live, work, shop and play. This village serves as the east gateway entrance to the Berry Street Corridor and provides all that pass through it a vibrant, compact, walkable village atmosphere.

The village offers destination retail, office space, and housing supported by structured parking within a historic main street environment. This successful live-work village is connected to surrounding neighborhoods, Downtown, and the Medical District.

A mix of neighborhood and destination retail are housed in two- and three-story mixed-use buildings, with office and residential above, in an environment reflecting Handley’s small-town origins. A proposed commuter rail stop improves connections to this historic area.

This village includes a main street corridor with historic structures and is anchored by Texas Wesleyan University, Polytechnic High School, and William James Middle School in an ethnically diverse neighborhood.

The mix of residential, retail, office, and entertainment is strengthened with the redesign of Berry Street, emphasizing a pedestrian orientation with wide sidewalks, landscaping, and urban streetscapes. Connected to TCU, Paschal High School, and adjoining neighborhoods, this village is truly connected to the vibrant, compact, walkable atmosphere of the Central Business District. Close proximity to the Medical District, Trinity Railway Express and commercial and entertainment centers make this village’s location ideal for activity both day and night.