

Central City Commercial Corridors **Revitalization Strategy**

**Final Report of the
Commercial Corridors Task Force**



Planning Department

Leland Consulting Group

HNTB Urban Design and Planning

InterStar Marketing & Public Relations



June 2002

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



June 2002

Dear Reader,

A community's central city is a barometer of its overall economic well being. Regional and local chamber of commerce executives, economic development specialists, and industrial recruiters have found time and again that projects are often won or lost based on one single criterion – the physical condition and economic health of a community's core. A vibrant central city significantly increases employers' ability to attract and retain a high-quality work force – whether or not the business is located in the core – thereby minimizing turnover and associated personnel costs. City officials have found that bond rating companies often include the economic prosperity of the central city as one criterion they consider when determining a city's bond rating.

Throughout the country, public and private entities are participating in the revitalization of their central city and the commercial corridors within them. In a report prepared for the American Public Power Association, several utility companies explained the basis for their participation in central city revitalization efforts, citing the following: a thriving central city is a good recruitment tool for industry; central city enhancements stimulate the economy and adds jobs; economically, everyone benefits from a healthy central city; a viable central city infrastructure is essential to economic development in the whole area; a better central city increases tourism in the area; and, the central city is a good investment. Cities throughout the country that have undertaken similar efforts have found that benefits to the community are multi-faceted and multiplying. Specifically, quality-of-life is enhanced, the number and diversity of job opportunities are increased, and dollars are invested. According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, every dollar a community spends on central city revitalization brings in \$30 in new investment.

The City of Fort Worth is committed to a revitalized central city. On behalf of the citizens of Fort Worth, we want to thank all those individuals who have dedicated themselves to advancing this community goal. In addition to the many business and neighborhood advocates who attended meetings, participated in surveys, and shared their insights and direction, the Commercial Corridors Task Force provided leadership to the process. The contributions of all these individuals and the organizations they represent have been invaluable.

Thank you again,

Ralph McCloud
Chair, Commercial Corridors Task Force

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West 7th and University looking east, 1938.



Hemphill at Magnolia, looking south, 1939.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N



FORT WORTH VISION AND STRATEGIC GOALS

During the summer of 2001, the Fort Worth City Council conducted a strategic planning process – “to deal proactively with the many opportunities and challenges facing the community.” The process resulted in a clear and concise statement about “where the Council wanted the City to go” over the next five years, as well as “to stimulate a broader discussion of the important issues facing Fort Worth now and in the future.” The Commercial Corridors Revitalization Strategy directly supports the community vision and strategic goals identified by the City Council.

Community Vision

By the year 2020, Fort Worth will be commonly recognized as the most livable city in Texas. Residents will be able to enjoy Fort Worth’s friendly atmosphere and the opportunities that are associated with a growing economy and diverse community. Fort Worth’s public schools will produce well-rounded citizens and a skilled workforce to fill high-paying jobs in local businesses. Fort Worth’s environmental quality also will be superior, meeting the highest national standards.

Strategic Goals

- Become the nation’s safest major city.
- Create a cleaner and more attractive city.
- Diversify the economic base and create job opportunities.
- Revitalize central city neighborhoods and commercial districts.
- Promote orderly growth in developing areas.
- Ensure quality customer service.

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Commercial districts located on commercial corridors are reemerging as regional destinations in cities throughout the nation. In virtually every story of success, redevelopment and new development within these districts has been the result of nurturing and growing each diverse segment of the local economy, eliminating barriers to investment, and marketing positive changes through an overall image of vitality.

As varied as the markets are within these districts, so too are the solutions to their challenges. A community cannot rely on a single economic engine to propel its future; neither can it rely on a single project. Forming and advancing the development agenda requires a keen understanding of the goals and aspirations of the community, the realities of the marketplace, the peculiarities of the political landscape and the constraints of local public and private resources. With this understanding, a community is positioned to establish action and investment priorities. The City of Fort Worth has sought to achieve this end through a process which involved educating stakeholders, soliciting their input, identifying barriers and designing a program of actions to move the community towards a vision.

PURPOSE

The City of Fort Worth seeks to revitalize its central city and commercial corridors by promoting redevelopment in mixed-use growth centers – districts that are compact, contain a mix of land uses, and give emphasis to pedestrian and transit access. Encouraging new investment to develop a mix of land uses in an

environment that promotes pedestrian and transit access and that creates a unique sense of place has been identified as the central goal in the renaissance of these mixed-use growth centers. The *Commercial Corridors Revitalization Strategy* provides the direction to move this vision towards reality.

BACKGROUND

As detailed in the City’s Comprehensive Plan, many of Fort Worth’s older commercial areas developed along corridors, linear in shape and located along arterial streets. Today these corridors tend to be characterized by segregated land uses, many curb cuts, inconsistent signage and expanses of impervious surfaces, including large parking lots in front of commercial structures. This condition has been exacerbated by an historical movement of higher-income populations out of the central city.

The newer suburban shopping centers and the big-box developments attracted their dollars, leaving the linear commercial corridors and commercial districts within Loop 820 (beltway that denotes the limit of the central city) unable to maintain their economic viability.

Recognizing the importance of a healthy central city, the Comprehensive Plan recommends policies and strategies to promote revitalization of central city commercial corridors.

Mayor Kenneth Barr, in January 2000, established the Commercial Corridors Task Force. The mission of the Task Force is “to create economic development opportunities in selected commercial corridors that can be

measured by increases in employment, tax base, and business growth and quality-of-life improvements, particularly in low and moderate income areas.”

The Task Force was given the responsibility of coordinating commercial corridors revitalization efforts including prioritizing the commercial corridors, creating redevelopment plans for five high priority corridors, seeking resources to implement the plans, and generally addressing revitalization issues facing all central-city commercial corridors.

As one of its first tasks, the Task Force, with input from a broad range of civic leaders, prioritized 31 central city commercial corridors based on a preliminary review of economic barriers and development opportunities on each corridor. The result was the identification of five high-priority corridors for which conceptual redevelopment plans would be developed. The City was awarded a grant from the Federal Highway Administration through the Transportation and Community and System Preservation Pilot Program in September 2000 to be used to finance development of the plans and future efforts of the Task Force.

After reviewing proposals from several consultant teams, the Task Force selected the Leland Consulting Team, consisting of Leland Consulting Group, HNTB and InterStar.

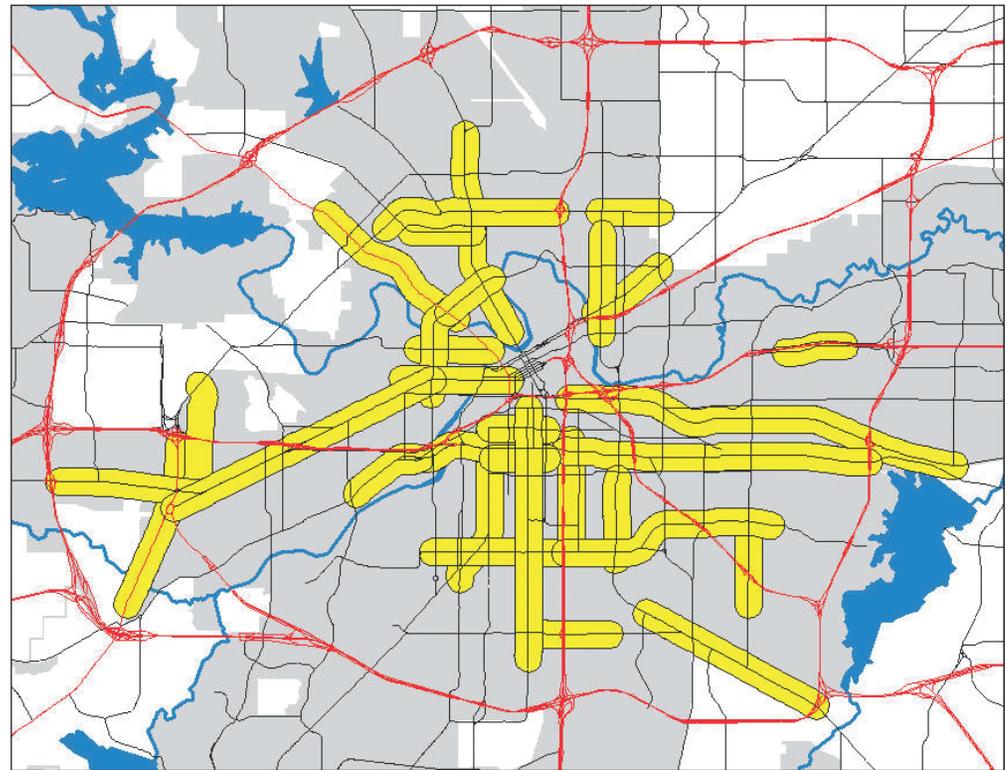
COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

The first task of the Commercial Corridors Task Force was to identify and assign priority to commercial corridors located in the central city. City staff identified 31 corridors, based on three criteria:

- Corridors must be located along a designated arterial street;
- Corridors must be one mile or greater in length; and
- Corridors must be characterized by predominantly commercial land uses.

Given the large number of corridors and limited City resources, the Task Force asked staff to analyze the corridors according to criteria related to economic distress and development potential. Based on this analysis, the Task Force assigned priority to 15 corridors. In an effort to further concentrate revitalization efforts, the Task Force then assigned top priority to five corridors: East Lancaster Avenue, East Rosedale Street, Hemphill Street, West Seventh Street, and Camp Bowie Boulevard.

In addition to the five commercial corridors selected by the Task Force, the City Council had previously assigned priority to Berry Street, North Main Street, and the Downtown portion of Lancaster Avenue. In 1998, the City allocated capital improvement bond funds to these three corridors, and has subsequently secured significant amounts of federal and state funding to provide streetscape and landscape improvements. Maps and information on these corridors can be found in the Village Plans section of this report on pages 83-89. Full reports for these corridors can be obtained from the Planning Department in City Hall.



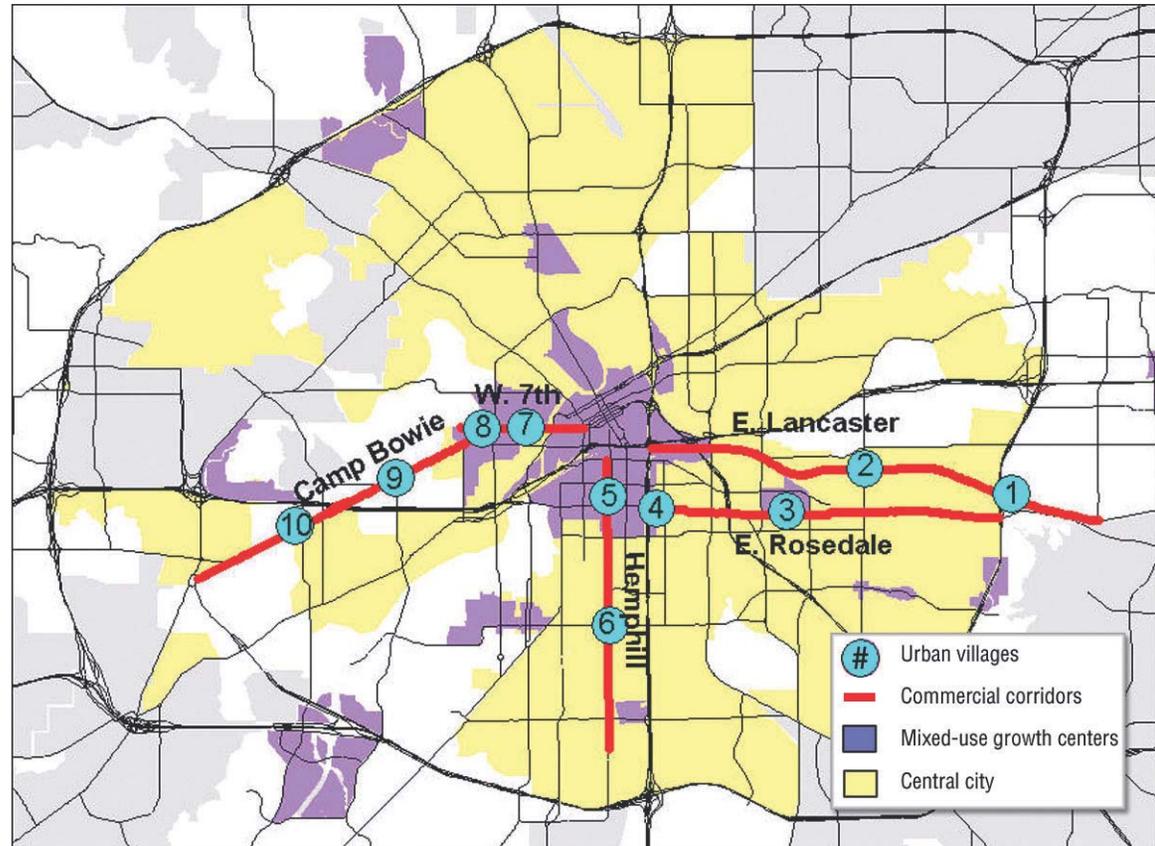
Central City Commercial Corridors

THE STUDY AREA

The study area for the conceptual redevelopment plans includes five high priority commercial corridors. These are the areas targeted by the City Council, Commercial Corridors Task Force, and City of Fort Worth Comprehensive Plan for investment and future revitalization efforts. Although there are 26 other viable corridors that were peripherally the subject of this analysis, this initial effort focused on the corridors and villages considered to have the most immediate potential for development or redevelopment, and those that can provide templates for future projects.

Ten opportunity investment areas, or “villages,” within these five high priority corridors were evaluated and village plans prepared for each. The specific villages selected for evaluation in this report are shown in the map to the right. All but the Historic Handley Village are located inside Loop 820.

In addition, information on the Berry/University village on the Berry Street corridor, and the Mercado and Paddock Bend villages on the North Main Street corridor is included in this report.



- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Historic Handley | 6. Hemphill/Berry |
| 2. Oakland Corners | 7. Trinity Park |
| 3. Polytechnic/Wesleyan | 8. West 7th/University |
| 4. Evans & Rosedale | 9. Camp Bowie/Hulen |
| 5. Magnolia | 10. Ridglea |