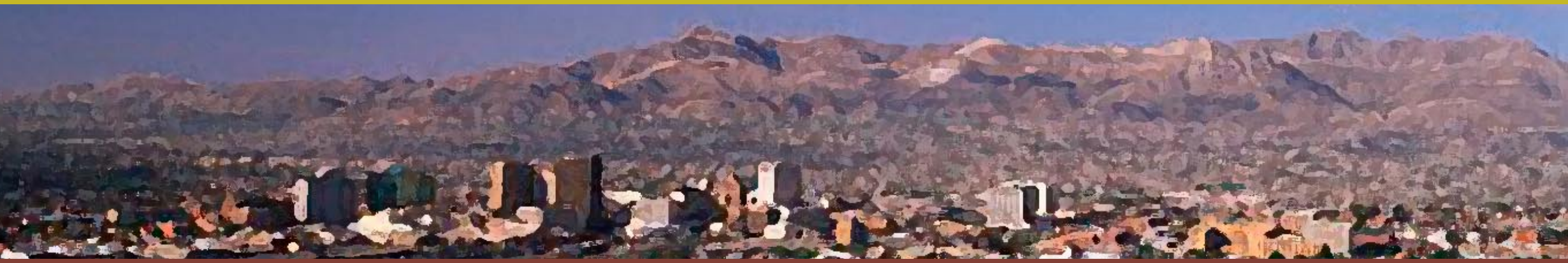

October 2006

El Paso

DOWNTOWN 2015 PLAN

The City of El Paso | Paso del Norte | SMWM

Draft

Recommended for approval
City Plan Commission

October 5, 2006

ElPaso

DOWNTOWN 2015 PLAN

The City of El Paso | Paso del Norte | SMWM

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1 Introduction to the Downtown Plan

El Paso has the potential to lead the country toward creative planning for a bi-national economy and a vibrant multi-cultural future. The city setting is striking; sunsets spotlight the Paso Del Norte Region, the Franklin Mountains, the vast and expansive growth of the region, and the distinctive buildings of downtown. The city heritage is profound; modern El Paso blends four hundred years of Native American, Spanish, Mexican and American

Southwest traditions and populations with the explosive growth of the border region, the military presence, and the sun-seeking settlers of recent decades. It is the drama of the City's physicality and the richness of its layered history that persist within the legacy of El Paso.

Missing today is a vibrant heart—a place of common ground, constant reinvention, living, commerce and entertainment. At its prime, downtown El Paso was the place to work, meet, live and build a distinctive cultural scene. Four department stores, a dozen theaters, festivals, family celebrations, and visitors from across the U.S. and Mexico, all brought life to the downtown. Much of that former life remains only in memories and stories. El Paso now needs to roust that richly nuanced, attractive, and energetic downtown out of the realm of memory and into action.

Introduction to the Downtown Plan

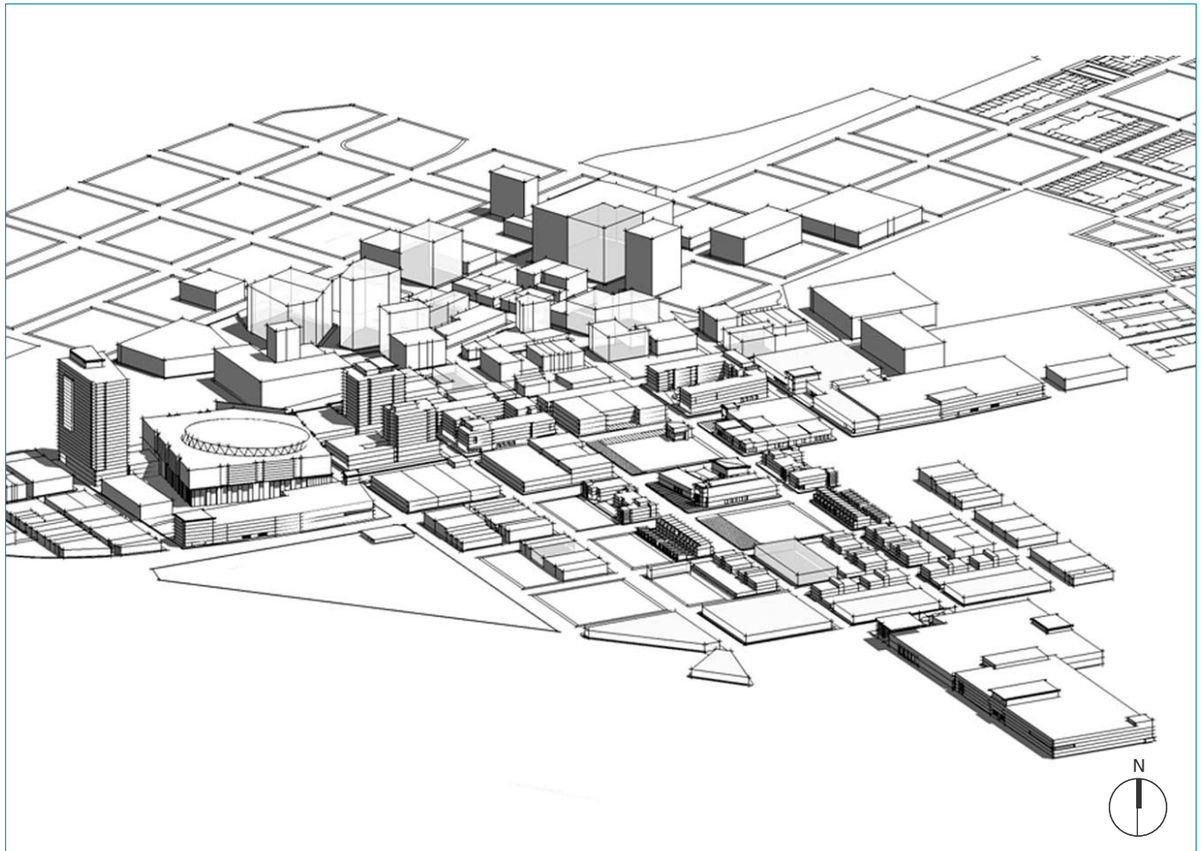
1

El Paso downtown is ready to re-emerge as the heart of the region

With the City of El Paso Downtown 2015 Plan, the City begins to tell the stories of tomorrow - continued celebration of the best of downtown, major new investment in commerce, living and arts, an entertainment destination, beautiful parks, plazas and streets - and bring them to life with a block by block blueprint for change.

The key elements of the Plan include a broad commitment to positive change by 2015, a respect for the historic texture and cultures of downtown, and a district by district, use by use program for action. The elements have been reviewed in open and spirited public discussions, revised to respond to new information, clarity in public priorities and values, and expanded investigation of plan potentials. With the publication of the Downtown 2015 Plan, the City sponsors will open the discussion on an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan, The Plan for El Paso, with a new perspective and action plan for downtown.

The Downtown 2015 Plan will serve as a "Study Area Plan" addendum providing more detailed goals, policies and guidelines; describing land use patterns specifically; and proposing a shorter program for implementation. Once the Plan is reviewed, revised and approved, it will take its place in a suite of documents and policies laid out to guide the City, owners, tenants, downtown interest groups and City-wide stakeholders in their actions to realize the goals of the Plan.



El Paso 2015: Opportunities for major investment can be integrated with downtown's existing assets

The Opportunity for El Paso

Where are We Now?

The City of El Paso, its leadership and its many devoted civic participants, have made significant public and private investment in the downtown area. The last decade alone has brought celebrated cultural and civic improvements such as the Art Museum of El Paso, new main public library, new U.S. federal courthouse, and the beautiful, renovated Plaza Theater. Street improvements are also ongoing and expand from San Jacinto Plaza.

However, downtown El Paso currently lacks the life and commerce increasingly evident in many older city centers across the United States. Amidst the improvements, growing businesses continue to relocate outside downtown, new businesses select other homes, and shopping experiences remain relatively limited in variety. Residents in surrounding neighborhoods suffer the hardships of poor services, limited public open spaces, and deteriorating housing conditions.

Residents and business people have strived to enact change by sharing information about El Paso's best assets, improving their own buildings, raising housing funds, and sponsoring civic events. These efforts have just not created enough momentum to put the downtown on the path to economic health. Private investment in the downtown has not matched public investment. Public investment alone will not attract private investment.

What are the Primary Challenges?

Despite these downtown initiatives and substantial public improvements, the last several decades have not yielded substantial private investment. In fact, the City has faced years of private sector disinvestment in downtown, and, as a result, the City is still faced with challenges including:

- A long list of unimplemented downtown planning efforts and downtown plans yet no comprehensive vision for realistically attracting private investment
- Historic buildings and established historic districts in disrepair, with substantial and noticeable vacancy in the upper floors
- Years of disinvestment in buildings
- Deteriorating and sub-standard housing
- Weak commercial demand and difficulty in attracting new business
- Many vacant lots
- Multiple small-scale private holdings that are not of sufficient scale to attract new investment and uses
- Long-term decline in numbers of residents and businesses
- Private development investment has not followed public investments

What are the Downtown's Assets?

The raw material for a revitalized downtown El Paso will come from the assets of yesterday, the demographics of today, and the civic, political and commercial will to make significant investment in strategic places that catalyze positive change. Key assets include:

- Rich history and a fabric of significant, early and mid-twentieth century historic buildings
- Strong lower-end retail base centered in the Golden Horseshoe area, framed by El Paso and Stanton Streets and stretching from the international border to the downtown
- On-going significant growth in the El Paso/Juarez Region with the population of El Paso increasing 9.3% annually in the past two decades to a population of 721,598 in 2005
- Proximity to rapidly growing City of Juarez with 12,000 to 15,000 Mexican residents traveling into El Paso daily for work, shopping, recreation, and travel
- Compact and walkable downtown with a street grid and block pattern that support pedestrian movement
- Center of Mexican immigration bearing strong cultural traditions that represent El Paso's history including the Mexican Revolution and the growth and influence of the Latino community
- Significant public investment in civic amenities downtown over the past decade
- Location within walking distance of main campus of the University of Texas at El Paso and several other educational facilities, as well as a short bus ride away from new Texas Tech Medical Campus
- Historic downtown neighborhoods, such as Segundo Barrio, Magoffin, Old San Francisco, and Chihuahuita neighborhoods, with some significant examples of early 20th century residential architecture and grassroots activism
- Historic center of the City and County of El Paso, State, and Federal government operations just east of the traditional downtown
- Destination as the terminus of several public bus routes and the location of several private international bus terminals

This Page

Top Recent Street and Transit Improvements

Bottom El Paso Retail Street

Facing Page

Top Left Historic Buildings

Top Center Stanton Street Retail

Far Right El Paso Museum of Art

Bottom Left Border Traffic

403

WELLS FARGO
106
INTERNACIONALES
RED BUSES

Where is the Inspiration?

The inspiration for a revitalized downtown can be found in cities across the United States and in El Paso itself. Across the United States older cities have crafted comprehensive visions, adopted proactive policies and created redevelopment opportunities that have fueled a new generation of growth and vitality. This has attracted private investment for new and rehabilitated distinctive shopping streets, expanded entertainment, sports, and cultural venues, and residential destinations for young couples, seniors, students, and families alike. There is a generation, in other cities and El Paso, that seeks another way of living in the city they love. This generation seeks a diverse and active community in which residents meet at cafés, restaurants, and events; locals walk to work, the theater, and the neighborhood park; families, older people, and people of different cultures interact in daily life; stores offer a wide variety of food, apparel, books and household items at many price points; and young entrepreneurs grow or start businesses to experience their share of growth.

In light of the lessons learned from cities across the nation, El Paso's and Juarez's continued bi-national economic growth, and the public's strong interest in creating a vibrant downtown - the time has come for a dynamic new development plan.

What are the Opportunities Ahead?

El Paso is ready to deliver on this vision, as it takes advantage of the major opportunities ahead:

- Create a multi-faceted downtown of commerce and culture that takes advantage of an accessible and visible location
- Utilize the downtown's fine grain of city blocks to create a memorable, pedestrian oriented in-town retail experience
- Connect unique and diverse, downtown destinations in a fabric of lively urban activity
- Generate real opportunities for private investment

What are the Objectives for the Downtown 2015 Plan?

The downtown planning effort began with a set of broad objectives developed by the City and civic leaders:

- Build on El Paso Strengths
- Create a Dynamic, Mixed-use Downtown that Invites all El Pasoans
- Introduce New Investments that are Catalysts for all Downtown
- Create Opportunities for Private Investment
- Enhance the City's Cultural and Historic Heritage
- Develop High Quality Housing for Area Residents
- Create Jobs for El Pasoans
- Increase the City's Tax Base

What are the Principles that Will Define Downtown's Redevelopment?

Downtown Hub
Define and reassert the downtown's role in the region as a major retail and cultural destination that is vibrant throughout all times of the day

Variety of Uses and Activities
Offer a diverse mix of retail, residential, cultural, and community land uses and activities

Diversity of Retail Uses
Promote retail as a great driver of downtown redevelopment. The retail mix should be the most diverse and interesting assortment of small and large stores in the entire El Paso region

Real Urban Place
Advance a great mixed use urban environment with distinctive urban spaces, buildings and streets, services and amenities that encourage a range of opportunities and experiences that attract residents and visitors

Authentic El Paso
Highlight El Paso's distinct character and heritage by spotlighting and integrating its unique cultural and historic resources with new opportunities for development

Dense Urban Fabric
Encourage infill development on vacant parcels and underutilized properties that meet and embrace the street to create dense and contiguous urban fabric

Major Attraction
Allow for and encourage major private investment projects that jumpstart and anchor downtown redevelopment

Transit Options
Make the downtown more accessible by expanding existing transportation networks and parking opportunities and creating better public transit options to facilitate access to the downtown, City, and region

Great Pedestrian Focused Streets
Prioritize the realm of the public street with traffic measures, wide sidewalks, pedestrian amenities and streetscape opportunities

Vibrant Neighborhoods
Create vital urban neighborhoods with diverse residential options with integrated neighborhood retail and public open space opportunities

The Downtown Plan Process

In order to articulate this vision for City of El Paso Downtown 2015, the Paso del Norte Group (PDNG) initiated a downtown planning process in 2004. The PDNG's goal was to step beyond the many research and design studies completed in years past, to a civically supported plan to address real and perceived barriers to private investment. The PDNG funded the initial plan work and presented the preliminary Downtown 2015 Plan to the public on March 31, 2006. The City Council viewed the concept plan positively and instructed the City to further refine the Plan for formal public comment. The City funded just under one third of the costs of the Plan, with the balance raised from federal grants, private individuals, and organizations seeking a better downtown. The SMWM team was retained in 2005 to assist the City in developing its vision for Downtown 2015.

SMWM was contracted by the PDNG to develop the initial plan concept and perform a study of other successful downtowns. Following acceptance of the initial plan work by the City in late March 2006, SMWM then worked with the City (with PDNG assistance) within the City's comprehensive planning process. The SMWM team prepared the preliminary framework plan, suggested strategies and assisted the City in conducting the public outreach program. SMWM also assisted the City with its formal review process and plan adoption. The redevelopment concepts in the Plan are based on extensive research and in-depth examination of El Paso and its setting; close collaboration with the PDNG and other community representatives; and similar project experience that includes national, proven best practices. Specific planning activities included the following:

Drivers Study and Development of Preliminary Concept Plan

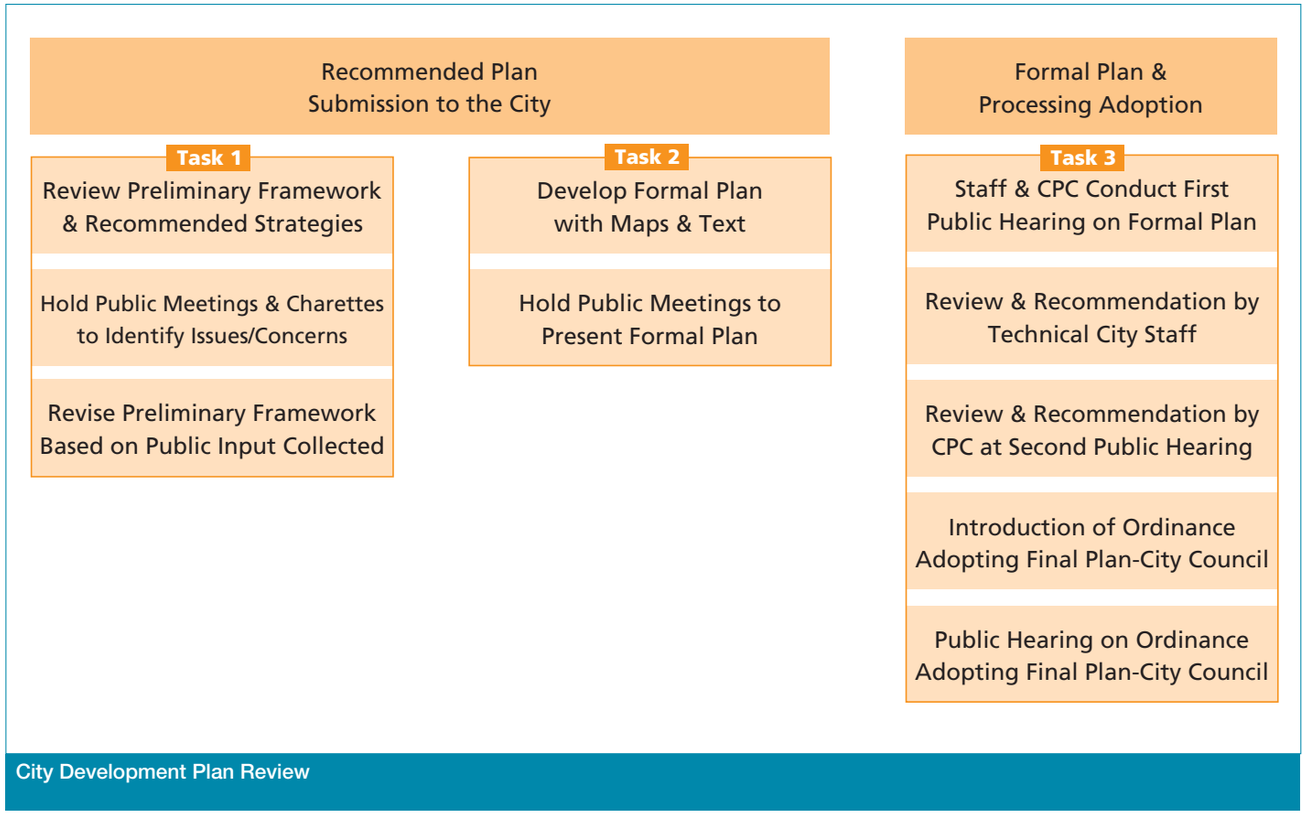
A study of similar downtown redevelopment efforts by other US cities began this phase in order to determine the appropriate "drivers" for change for downtown El Paso. This was followed by a thorough investigation of the physical and planning issues in the downtown and the region, recommendations for a downtown concept, and a preliminary vision plan to be presented to the Community (referred to as the Framework Plan).

Community Outreach Effort

A community outreach effort brought the results of the drivers study and initial vision plan into public view for comment, discussion, and input. A series of meetings and community workshops was held in downtown and neighborhood locations.

Land Use Plan Refinement and Design Guidelines

The results of the community outreach effort were considered and integrated into the downtown plan vision, where appropriate. A revised Downtown 2015 Plan was brought before the City Council for approval on July 10, 2006. The City Council approved the Plan, brought forth City Value Statements to guide the Plan content and implementation, and instructed the SMWM team to complete the Plan and prepare design guidelines and development standards.



Comprehensive Planning Process

The City of El Paso guides its growth and development through The Plan for El Paso, a policy document approved in 1999. Supplements to The Plan for El Paso, referred to as Study Area Plans, are periodically approved by the City Council and the City Planning Commission to address changing city conditions.

The Downtown 2015 Plan will be one such supplement to The Plan for El Paso. The City of El Paso Downtown 2015 will propose a plan for implementation, which may involve City funding through the establishment of Redevelopment Areas or other funding mechanisms.

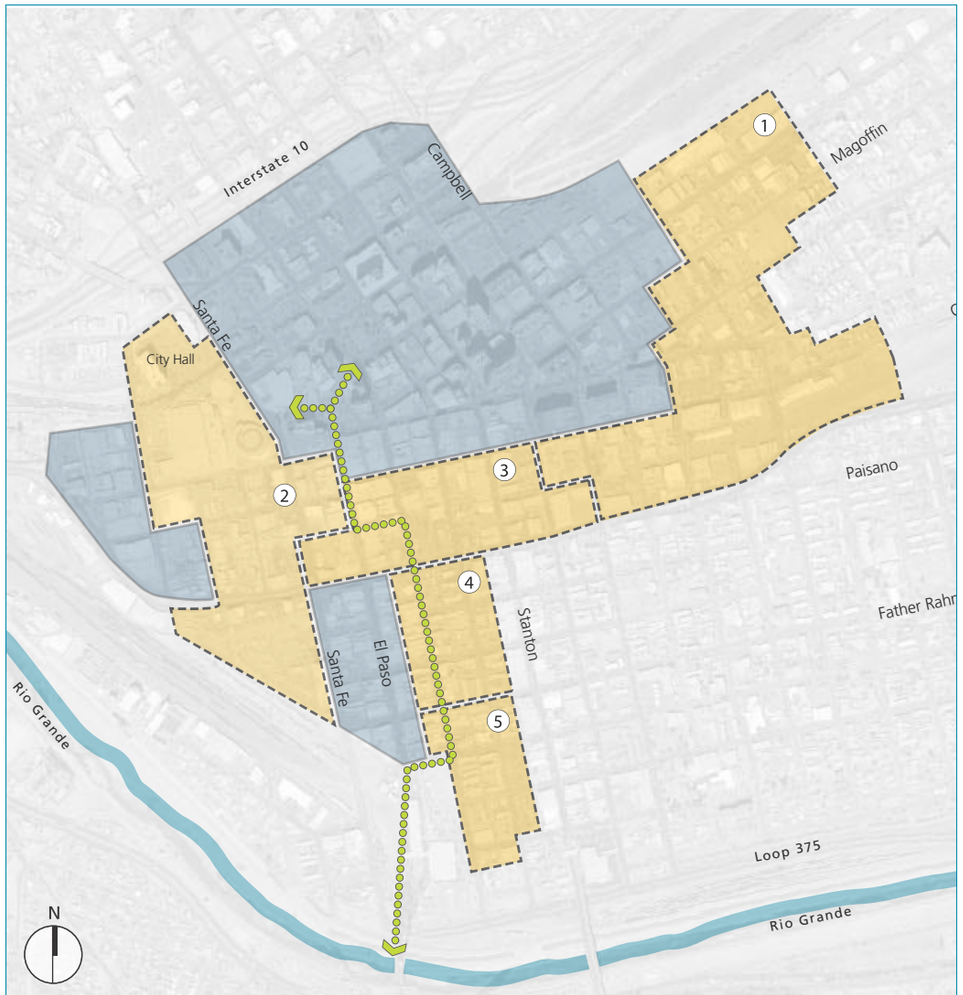
Before the City approves any Study Area Plan supplements, they stringently review and evaluate the proposed plan. Their review is broken into three tasks which allow a preliminary Study Area Plan to be presented to the public, revised based on their comments, formally presented in its updated format and finally approved by the City Council as a supplement to The Plan for El Paso.

Throughout the duration of the project, the City of El Paso was tireless in their focus and commitment to the objectives and completion of the Plan. The City was dedicated to enacting an efficacious and candid planning process, with open communication and public participation. With the understanding that the Preliminary Framework may undergo revisions, the City vetted critical issues with stakeholder groups and held multiple public meetings. These large public meetings and workshops were used to review the proposed concept plan, disseminate information, provide a forum to generate ideas and express feelings; and create a record of recommendations.

City Council Value Statements

On July 10, 2006, the City Council approved a resolution that provided value statements to serve as the basis from which the formal plan development, phasing, and implementation strategies are prepared and an adopted plan is executed. The following are the value statements:

- To produce a feasible plan that has private investment options and potential, and that does not depend entirely on government or taxpayer subsidy.
- To identify and pursue opportunities within the plan to preserve historically, socially, culturally and architecturally significant structures and places within the area.
- To create design standards for renovation and construction within the area that reflects the integrity and character of the existing urban form.
- To build upon and create new opportunities for public spaces and walkable environments throughout the area, and maximize regional and international art forms.
- To add new residential development that includes a mix of housing markets, including a substantive affordable housing component to allow new relocation opportunities for displaced residents within the area.
- To establish a rent stabilization program so that affordable housing units are replaced long term.
- To offer replacement value for all housing displacement and relocation assistance to homeowners within the area.
- To provide a relocation strategy that includes financial assistance for businesses and commercial tenant displacement within the area, including allowing property swaps wherever possible to promote local private investment within the area.
- To develop a workforce implementation strategy that includes job development, training and placement for area residents, including location of a job placement and redevelopment office within the area.
- To celebrate the cultural diversity throughout the area by allowing for the creation and development of special districts.
- To look at financial strategies that allow for and promote open investment opportunities to all El Pasoans as part of the plan implementation.
- To allow national chain operations that foster modified prototypes that preserves local business activities and fit the El Paso urban scale.
- To encourage new public and private investment to the area through the use of financial and development incentives.
- To require that, if a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone is created as part of any plan implementation strategy, at least one member each representing the residential and commercial segments of the area shall be included on the Board of Directors.
- To require that, if any real estate investment trusts that are created as part of any plan implementation strategy, all investments and development undertaken within the area shall be in accordance with the approved plan.
- To host regular community and stakeholder work sessions to allow adequate public review, critique and refinement of the plan elements going forward.
- To produce an inventory of historical, cultural and other significant properties within the study area
- To explore 21st Century mass transit and other transportation options an integral component of the formal plan development, including light rail
- To encourage location/relocation of all public sector entities into the study area
- To create opportunities after revitalization that allow displaced residents near and adjacent to Sacred Heart Church to return to the area, including senior housing
- To explore alternative opportunities to the arena for catalyst projects within the entertainment/arena district that would serve as an anchor tenant or consider relocation the arena.



Downtown El Paso Redevelopment and Incentive Districts

Summary of What this Plan Provides

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the strategic planning efforts for the Downtown 2015 Vision including the Plan's objectives, principles and planning process. Chapter 2 highlights the key issues abstracted from an analysis of the regional and local issues that was conducted for the downtown. Chapter 3 translates these findings into a compelling vision for downtown's redevelopment.

Chapter 4 details design guidelines and development standards for residential and commercial development and improvements to the public realm while maintaining flexibility for the private market. Chapter 5 presents options for an action plan with phasing and implementation recommendations within the context of the City's development process. The last section is a series of appendices providing background information and analyses utilized to formulate the Plan.

1. Mixed Use/Residential
2. Exhibition/Convention/Arena
3. Lifestyle Retail
4. Mercado
5. Urban Retail

Historic Incentive District

Redevelopment District

Bi-National Arts Walk

Quick Summary of the Plan

Planning efforts resulted in the recommendation for the creation of a major downtown redevelopment district and ancillary "Incentive District" area. The redevelopment district would be the focus of significant public and private investment guided by a new land use framework. Within the redevelopment areas, new major investments would be encouraged through catalyst projects. The "Incentive District" would allow property owners to take advantage of publically supported programs for the renovation and upgrading of existing buildings.

The redevelopment district boundaries have been carefully drawn to include those areas which will best benefit from redevelopment actions. These are the areas that are in most need of reinvestment; where lots are vacant, tenancy is low, and where commercial spaces are underutilized. These are the areas with the most potential for the aggregation of parcels for significant new investment; where public monies can be made available for much needed public improvements; and where current land owners and tenants have the most need for opportunities to expand, renovate, or relocate into new spaces if appropriate. These are also the areas with the best potential to create new downtown neighborhoods, where new mixed use projects with upper floor residential units can blend in with the new ground floor commercial activity. Also, the boundary includes only those areas of the Segundo Barrio where selective infill of new mixed use projects can integrate with the existing historic fabric.

The redevelopment boundaries are careful chosen to avoid existing designated historic districts such as the Downtown District and the Magoffin District, and the thriving retail area within the Segundo Barrio. However, by proposing redevelopment possibilities adjacent to these areas, new opportunities are created for these areas to capitalize on new downtown investment, increased visitation, and spending. These historic areas with significant underutilized buildings and parcels have been designated the "Incentive District", where a specific package of City programs will encourage the redevelopment and renovation of downtown buildings with an emphasis on diverse uses and activities.

Five distinct redevelopment "districts" were configured; each closely related to an existing area of downtown and each with a different focus to promote retail diversity and a specific neighborhood and commercial development objective. Three of the five districts have a distinct retail focus to diversify and expand the retail opportunities, the fourth is expressly for the entertainment/event center location, and the final is for major mixed use/residential opportunities. These districts and the land use framework which guides their future development are described in Chapter 3.

Summary of Development Potential

Fives districts were proposed within the redevelopment district. Each presents opportunities for increased retail, commercial, mixed use, and residential development. Additionally, new open space is required along with adequate parking and other public improvements. This potential can be captured both by new development and the renovation and adaptive reuse of existing buildings. For each district, the gross area, amount of dedicated open space, retail square footage, retail parking (both ratio and number of spaces), residential units, and residential parking ratio is given. It is expected that the overall development potential for downtown El Paso will be realized over a period of many years.

Redevelopment Districts	GROSS AREA (acres)	OPEN SPACE (acres)	RETAIL Sq. Ft. (approx sq.ft.)	Parking (ratio)	Parking (count)	RESIDENTIAL Units (units)	Parking (on-site, 1:1 ratio)
First Street: Lifestyle Retail District	24.5	1.5	600,000	3.0	1,800	150-300	150-300
Santa Fe Street: Convention/Entertainment/Arena	48	1.5		1sp,/4 seats	4,500	0	0
Oregon/Mesa: Mercado District and Residential Infill	15	1.7	200,000			150-300	150-300
Rio Grande: Border Retail	13.5	0	300,000	4.0	1,200	150-300	150-300
Magoffin/San Antonio Neighborhood: Residential Mixed Use	67	7	195,000			700-1,400	700-1,400
TOTAL	**168**	**11.7**	**1,295,000**		**7,500**	**1,150-2,300**	**1,150-2,300**

Historic Incentive District	
	157

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2

Issues & Opportunities

A City reveals itself often in the simplest terms; the number of people who walk the street in the evening, what it costs to park a car, how many older buildings have active upper floor uses, or how many restaurants are open for lunch in a four block area. It is critical to understand the physical fabric, setting, character, and inhabitants of a place before concepts and strategies are developed. The SMWM team surveyed the downtown, met with City officials and local

community members, and gathered relevant physical data. The team reviewed past reports and studies and culled information relevant for the current planning effort. Following is a summary of the key issues and factors that impact the downtown planning effort.

Top Riverwalk, San Antonio, TX
Bottom Las Americas, San Diego, CA

Top Sundance Square, Fort Worth, TX
Bottom Arena, Columbus, OH

Santa Fe, NM

Downtown Success Stories in Other Cities

The rebirth of downtowns has become a national success story. Seeking a sense of what had driven success in other downtowns, the project team looked at relevant downtown redevelopment efforts across the nation to understand what type of approach and projects would work best for El Paso.

San Antonio, TX

For decades the Riverwalk has showcased Texas' Mexican heritage in downtown while providing a memorable center for activity. Residents have reaped the benefit via a healthier job market, increased city tax revenue, and greater investment in their schools and infrastructure.

Fort Worth, TX

Fort Worth took a few blocks of abandoned warehouses and remade them into upscale stores, galleries and great places to live. Today, Sundance Square and the historic Fort Worth Stock Yards district are alive with people and activity, serving as hubs of the city's economy.

San Diego, CA

San Diego harnessed the power of neighboring Tijuana to develop Las Americas, a revitalization that created over 1,000 new jobs, $33.7 million in additional sales tax revenue, and an additional $14.8 million in property tax revenue.

Columbus, OH

Columbus, Ohio's Arena District grew around its Nationwide Arena, a major venue for sports and concerts. With urban residences, parks, an abundance of shopping, entertainment, restaurants and hotels, today the Arena District attracts over 2.7 million visitors a year.

Santa Fe, NM

Santa Fe's historic plaza is the heart and soul of activity in Downtown Santa Fe. The development of the downtown plaza has lead to the creation of an art district that has become the 2nd largest art market in the nation, a vital part of a billion-dollar industry that attracts 1.7 million visitors a year.

Lessons for El Paso

The research on catalysts and strategies for success in other downtowns was valuable to the Downtown Plan effort in a number of ways. The findings identified the types of projects which have been demonstrably successful as catalysts for significant positive change in downtowns – physical change, economic change and procedural changes. In addition, they provided a resource of strategies and timelines that had been applied and could be considered for the El Paso action plan. Finally, contacts with individuals, collection of articles and photographs, and summary documentation will continue to provide reference points for best practices at the next stages of El Paso plan implementation.

The Region, the Border and Downtown El Paso

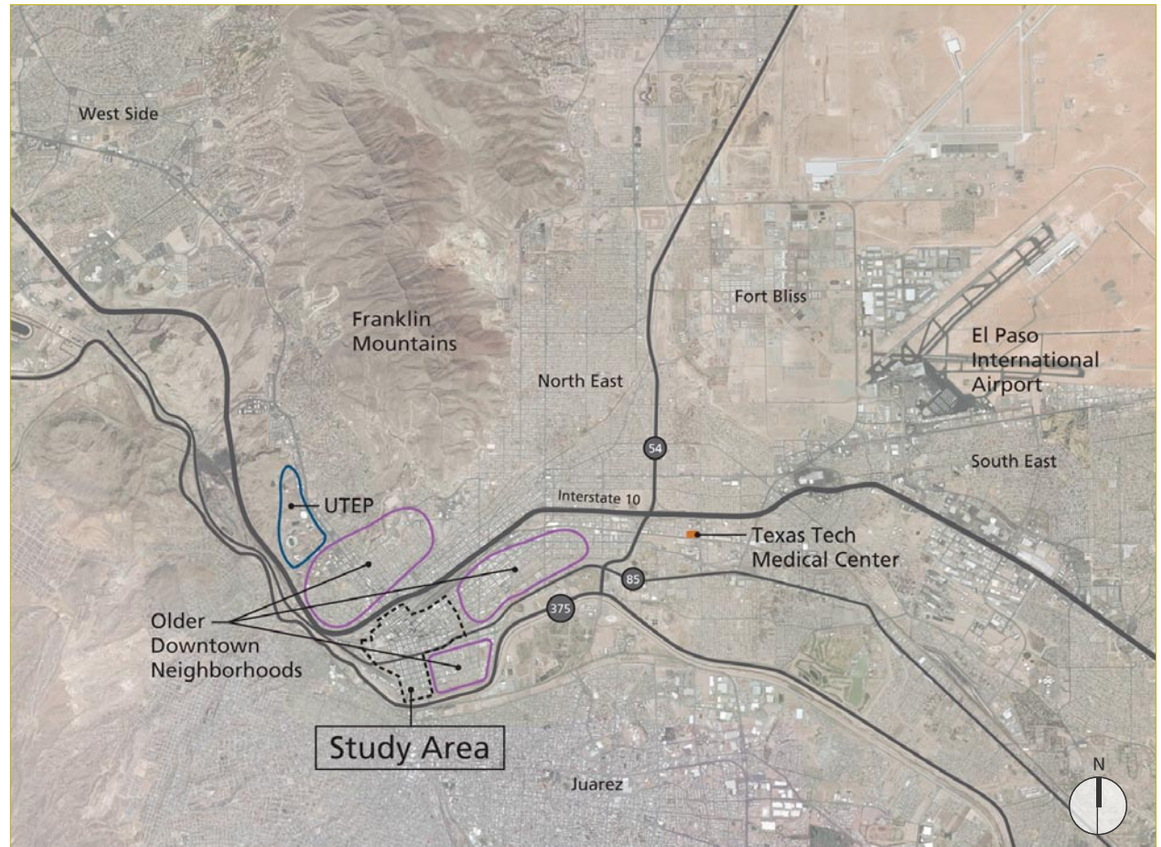
International Gateway

Since its founding in 1873, El Paso has been a gateway to the Western United States and Mexico. For over a century Downtown was a vibrant center of industry, commerce, and social interaction for the region. Located between the Ciudad Juarez and the Franklin Mountains along the banks of the Rio Grande river channel, the downtown has three international ports of entry to Mexico along its southern border. Cross border traffic in the last several years has an average 366,000 vehicles and 463,000 pedestrians per month at these crossings. El Paso is truly an international gateway that has not yet capitalized on the economic and cultural energy that passes through this growing region.

Growth in Suburbs and Juarez

El Paso's population has grown steadily throughout the 1990s; an average of almost 14,000 people per year resulting in a 9.3% increase for the years 1990 to 2000. However, during the same period the County population outside the city limits grew 52%. As in many areas of the US, the spread of population into suburban areas continues unabated. The city population is 563,662 (2003) while the County is 721,598 (2005). According to the City of El Paso's Development Services Department – Planning Division, El Paso County's population is projected to increase by 1.86% annually over the next ten years, increasing to 772,200 by 2012. Juarez by contrast has grown from 800,000 people in 1990 to 1,300,000 in 2003. By 2011 the combined population of El Paso and Juarez is expected to exceed 2.5 million people.

El Paso's median house value in 2005 was $71,000, just about half the national average of $140,000. With land and inexpensive housing available in the suburbs, there has been little impetus to renovate and infill the traditional downtown neighborhoods.



El Paso Region and Downtown Study Area

Downtown El Paso Study Area

The Downtown Study Area

There is a wide area worthy of study and redevelopment efforts in downtown El Paso. A focused study area was established that represents key downtown business areas and neighborhoods that will form the core of an integrated urban place. This area stretches from Interstate Highway 10, north of the historic downtown area, to the International border in the south. The western boundary is defined by the Union Pacific rail yards and Union Plaza area and the Magoffin Historic District and Dallas rail yards formed the eastern reach of the study area.

The study area is bisected by Paisano Drive, the major east west arterial other than Interstate Highway 10. The areas north of Paisano are traditionally referred to as “downtown” and have the greatest concentration of historic buildings as well as numerous vacant lots and surface parking areas. The neighborhood to the south of Paisano Drive has long been referred to as Segundo Barrio, the Second Ward, and represents the first stop across the border for many immigrants.

Downtown Setting: Neighborhood Character

Through the course of the analysis, the team examined the character and built form of areas commonly recognized as distinct downtown neighborhoods. Following is a description of each of these areas:

Historic Downtown

The large buildings concentrated in the area around San Jacinto Plaza represent the downtown's past and are at the same time a major resource for the future. Large commercial structures, many of them architecturally significant and stately, establish a memorable central city character and image but require creative design and development strategies and a more robust downtown market for reuse. Throughout the U.S. these large-scale commercial building types, which were long ignored as inappropriate to the standards of current private office users, are now being considered for adaptive reuse – for smaller start-up and service businesses and for dramatically different uses such as residential. In the traditional downtown of El Paso there is also extensive, available vacant land or parking lots which are a resource for future construction and infill development, sensitively designed to be compatible with the historic downtown fabric.

As another outstanding asset, this urban fabric graces blocks that are square and small in size, offering pedestrian access and a unique perspective not found anywhere else in the region outside of Juarez. The planning team recognizes that the adaptive reuse potential of these culturally and historically significant areas is critical to the long term success of the overall downtown redevelopment effort.

East of the downtown core is a center of government facilities including a complex of Federal, County and City facilities along San Antonio and Santa Fe Streets. Many of the buildings are contemporary and include large structured parking garages. Additional government buildings are planned for this area. A new federal courthouse building designed by Antoine Predock is under construction between Myrtle and Magoffin Streets.

Recent public improvements in the downtown include rubber tire trolley system that connects major downtown activity centers with the international border. Recent city funded infrastructure improvements, including covered walkways, benches, and widened sidewalks, have improved the public realm within Downtown. Recent publically financed projects are shown on page 26.

Top Kress Store

Bottom Downtown Trolley

Top Overland Street Apartments
Bottom Union Plaza Improvements

Cultural and Civic Area/Union Plaza District

El Paso has invested considerable energy in expanding and developing cultural and civic assets in the area bounded by the Civic Center to the north and Paisano and Union Railway yards to the south. Current exciting improvements include the construction of the Main Library and park and planned Museum of History. This complements the recent streetscape and park improvements to the Union Plaza area, the opening of the Art Museum of El Paso, and the recent renovation of the Plaza Theatre. Within the area south of the convention center and west of Santa Fe Street the City has constructed a new district Fire Station along Leon Street and a new public parking facility along San Antonio. The Convention Center was expanded and renovated in 1999. South of Paisano Drive a new international transit terminal is proposed to serve as a central terminal for international and long haul bus facilities.

Despite this public investment, the area still lacks energy and street life one would expect to find in an active area of cultural and entertainment uses. Very little retail or commercial development has made its way into the Union Plaza area. This area continues to be a fragmented neighborhood of partially occupied warehouses, bus yards, scattered single family and multi-family residences, and vacant lots. The street improvements to this area and new Union Plaza park has sparked some entertainment uses in the blocks bounded by San Francisco, San Antonio, and Durango, but the district has gone largely unchanged.

East of Downtown/Magoffin Neighborhood

This area east of downtown has a mix of government buildings on the western edge and is dominated by vacant lots and older residential buildings as one moves east. Beyond the mix of government buildings, warehouses, and occasional pre-war building, the area is pocked by empty lots, surface parking, and buildings in poor condition. Retail or commercial establishments are limited to commerce that services County judicial activities, automobiles, and limited light industry. The Magoffin Historic District, with its collection of restored and hopefully to be restored brick bungalows and stately homes lies further to the east. Many of these homes have become professional offices while the majority remain in poor repair or vacant. The District poses a significant opportunity for a mixed use and urban residential district due to its proximity to downtown, available land opportunities, and remnants of historic character.

Area North of Paisano and South of Overland

The retail area currently bounded by Santa Fe and Kansas Streets, Overland and Paisano is occupied by one and two story retail buildings and parking lots. A modest amount of attractive historic buildings are surrounded by one story retail storefronts. Most buildings are post-war structures of neither historic nor architectural significance. The retail composition is largely clothing, health and beauty supply, pawn and second hand shops, gifts and housewares. Storefronts have been altered and adapted to their current retail use and there are very few observed upper floor uses. Upper floor windows are often boarded or bricked suggesting no intent for future use. The two major shopping streets are El Paso and Stanton and the retail energy found on these streets extends several blocks to the Border. Significant retail outlets in this area include Star Western Wear and Holland's Department Store. There are very few restaurants with only one or two establishments open in the evening.

Top Magoffin Historic District Houses
Bottom Vacant Upper Floors

Top Large Warehouses and Empty Lots
Bottom Retail Along El Paso Street

Top Segundo Barrio Apartments

Bottom Flea Markets Near Paisano Drive

Top Active Retail Along El Paso Street

Bottom Center for Farmworkers

Segundo Barrio

The Segundo Barrio found south of Paisano is rich in the history and culture of the immigrant experience. It served as one of the centers of resistance during the Mexican Revolution and today remains a landing ground and one of the important neighborhoods for arrivals once they first settle in the El Paso area. The Segundo Barrio serves as an important reminder for many Mexican-Americans who journeyed across the border, lived in the Barrio, and eventually moved to other parts of the region. This history, outside the memory of most American born El Pasoans, is still evident in the crumbling turn of the century buildings that housed many important historical figures and commercial ventures of that time.

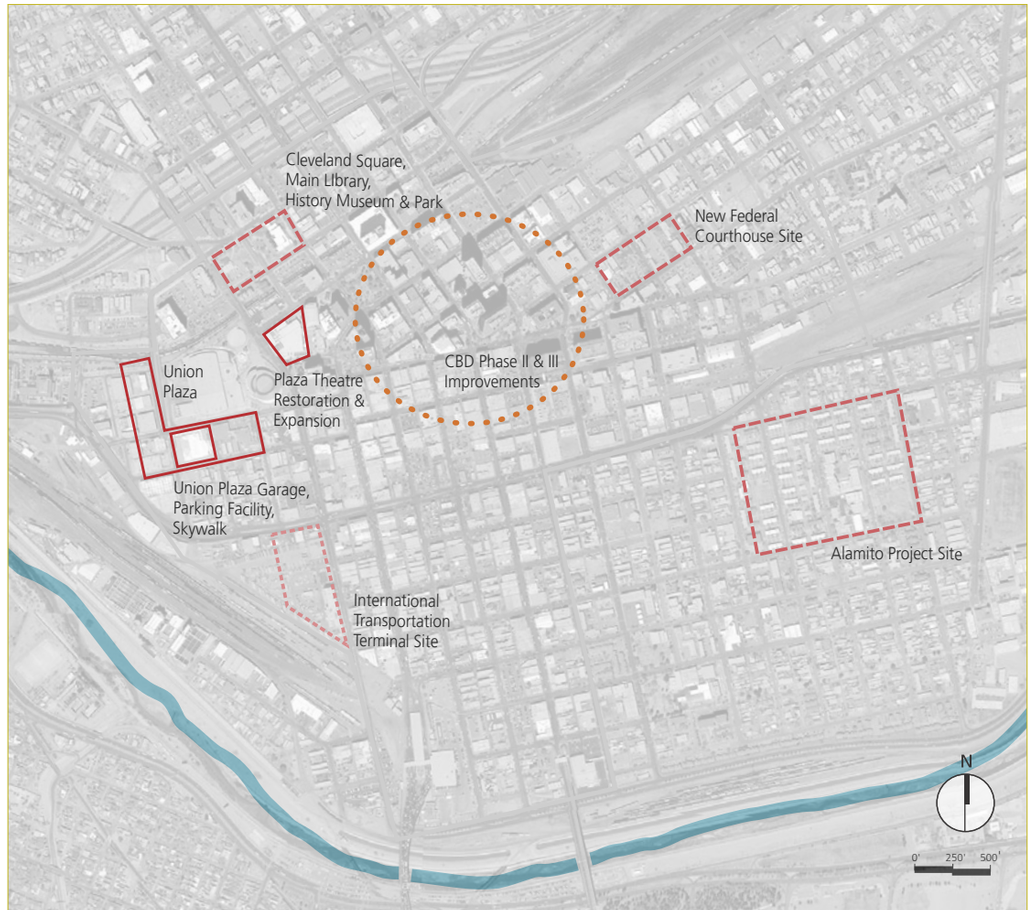
The population and density of the area has declined in recent decades leaving a patchwork of vacant lots and buildings, substandard housing, and limited retail and commerce. Families who have been able have moved out to suburban areas of El Paso, following the regional growth pattern. Others have stayed or continued to move into the area, have benefited from some exemplary community efforts to improve housing and services, but in large part continue to suffer from poor housing conditions, lack of public infrastructure such as open space, and continuing economic advantage. This area, however, is the home of many community service organizations that administer to the needs of the people of the Barrio and are a critical part of the neighborhood.

Border Area

The border area between El Paso Drive and Stanton Street is a fragmented series of blocks bordered to the east by the imposing U. S. Immigration entry station on El Paso Street; to the south by the Border Highway, rail Right of Way and Rio Grande; and typical neighborhood blocks of the Segundo Barrio to the north and east. This area is home to the El Centro de los Trabajadores Agricolas Fronterizos, the Farm Workers' Center, which provides services to recent immigrant workers. The large United States Customs Center where thousands of Mexican citizens and few Americans move through on foot and by vehicle every day poses a significant barrier to pedestrian and vehicular movement to the east.

Top San Jacinto Park

Bottom Downtown Improvement



Recent Publically Financed Projects

Proposed & Constructed Projects

- Recently Developed (After 2000)
- Construction
- Proposed
- Ongoing CBD Improvements

Urban Form and Character

An examination of the existing urban form of downtown is revealing in both the deterioration of the urban fabric, the existing condensed street grid pattern, and the opportunities for infill and new development. These gradual developments are not unique to El Paso. Most every downtown nationally where the economic base of office, manufacturing, and retail has left for the suburbs has encountered gradual deterioration of the urban fabric.

A noticeable form downtown is the highly regularized grid of recurring 260' x 260' blocks providing distributed pedestrian and vehicular access that allows the streets to be both light in traffic and comfortable for walking. Many of the blocks are also bisected by narrow service alleys.

Figure Ground of Downtown El Paso

Figure Ground

A figure ground diagram shows the existing building and structures as dark and all the at-grade features such as ground spaces, streets, alleys, and vacant lots as white. This type of diagram is an indicator of the current state of a City's fabric and building density. With density of fabric comes a walkable downtown scaled for pedestrian movement. Historic photos confirm that El Paso once had a consistent fabric of buildings fronting the streets and extending back to the alleys. This fabric has declined in recent decades as there has been little new building development downtown other than public structures. The building fabric is most intact along El Paso, Stanton, Overland and Texas Streets, areas with an active retail environment. Significant holes in the fabric exist in north of downtown near Interstate Highway 10, and both north and south of Paisano Drive. The area east of downtown and the Government Center also have experienced significant loss of structures.

Open Space

While in some cities a figure ground diagram reveals significant patterns of open space, this is not the case in El Paso. Limited open space exists in the downtown. There are few parks, particularly in the areas north of Paisano Drive and to the south in the Segundo Barrio, that could serve visitors and residents. There is little evidence of an organized open space system that might link natural features such as the Rio Grande to urban parks or linear parks that link open space areas. The exception is San Jacinto Plaza, a two acre public plaza that has served as the center of Downtown for over 100 years and currently functions as the hub for public transportation in the area. Additionally a small park has been added in the Union Plaza area along with streetscape improvements.

Existing Open Space

Vacant Parcels

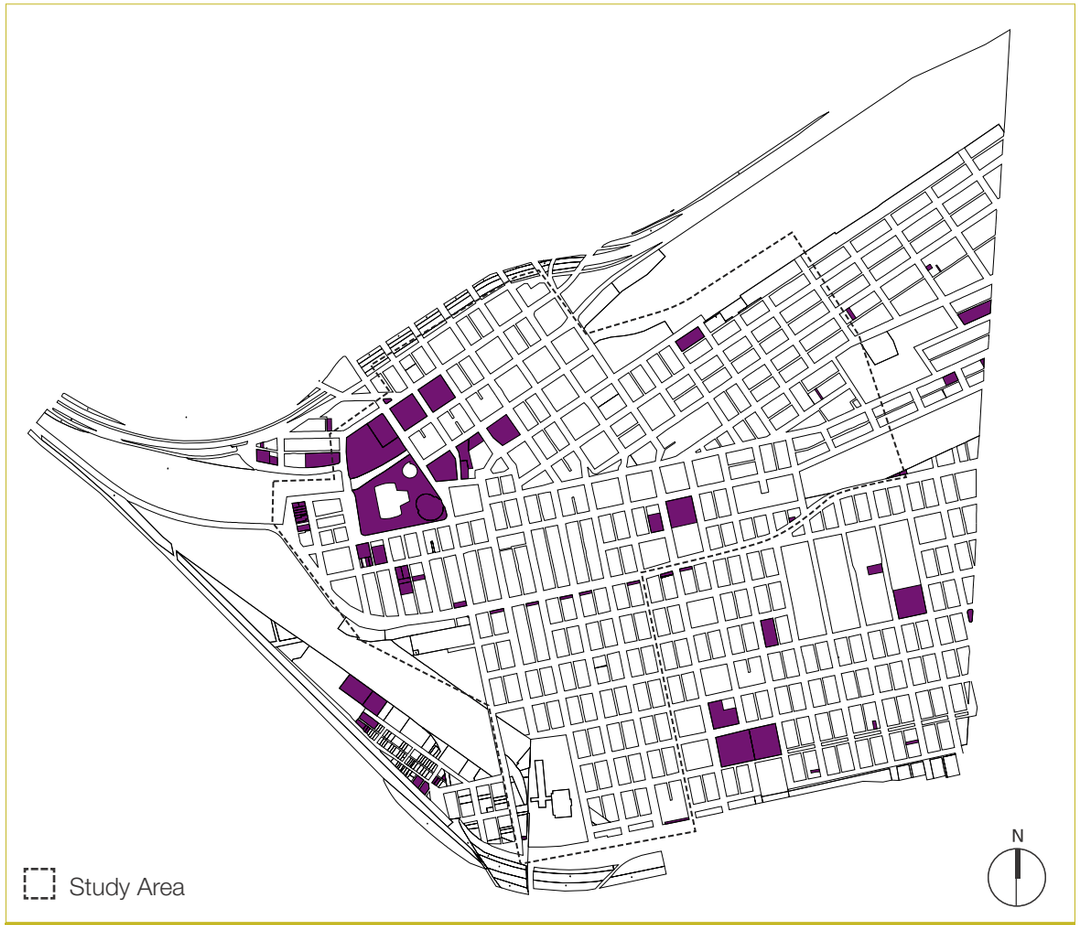
Vacant Parcels

Through the site survey and examination of recent aerial photos, the number of vacant parcels became readily apparent. The collective message of vacant parcels is one of very low economic activity and unlit and unsafe voids in the urban fabric. In addition to substantial vacant parcels downtown, there are a number in the current residential neighborhoods south, west, and east of downtown. These parcels provide an opportunity for infilll development throughout the downtown.

Surface Parking Lots

Similar in impact to the vacant parcel is a surface parking lot. It is noticeable that parking lots occupy much of the landscape north of the central business district and in the retail area just north of Paisano. What would be fully vacant parcels just a few blocks away subsist as inexpensive all day parking for downtown workers and visitors. A few surface parking lots north and south of Paisano Drive operate as flea markets bringing some activity and pedestrian activity to these spaces. These parking lots also present opportunities for on-going infill development.

Surface Parking Lots



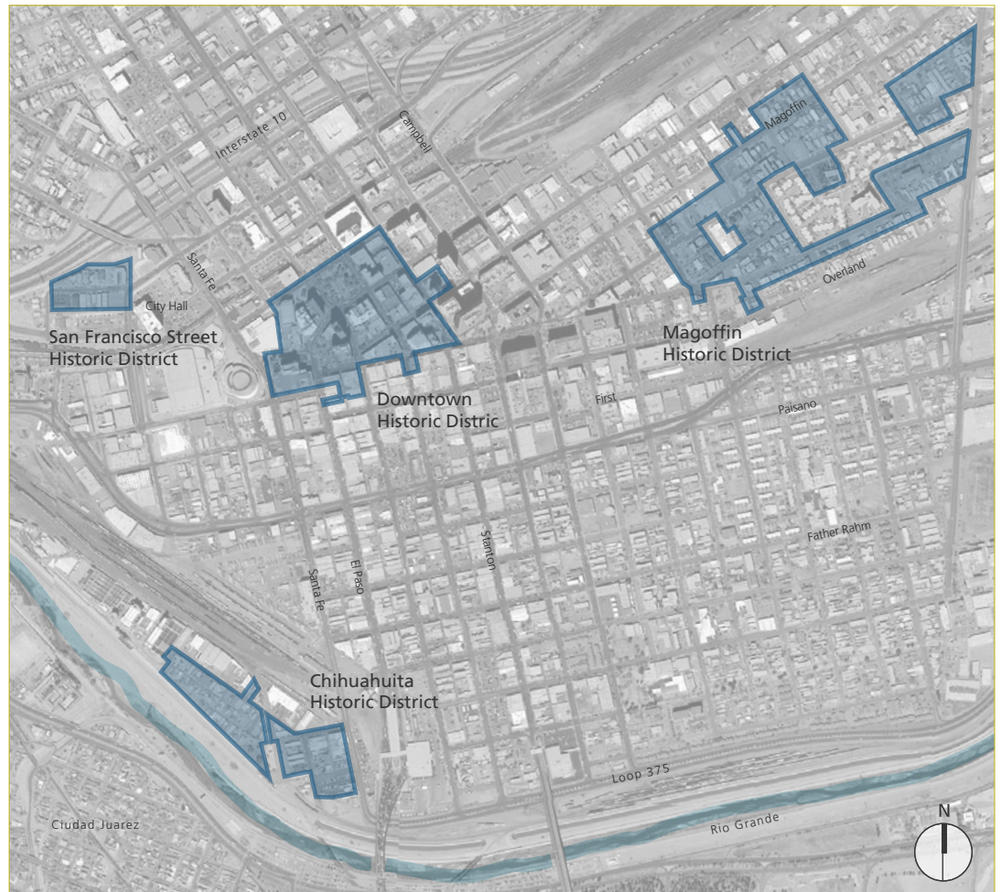
City Owned Land

City Owned Parcels

Clustered around the Convention and Civic Center are various city owned parcels. The City has aggregated these parcels for civic uses including the Convention Center, Civic Center, new library and history museum, Museum of Art, and parking structures. Other significant vacant parcels are associated with the Dallas Rail Yards. The City owns few parcels that are vacant and valuable for redevelopment purposes within the Downtown proper.

Historic and Significant Places

El Paso has a four hundred year history, and much of it is still evident downtown. The City has had the foresight to establish several historic districts that occupy the most architecturally significant residential neighborhoods: the Old San Francisco, Chihuahuita, and the Magoffin Historic Districts. The Downtown Historic District contains an impressive array of pre-war brick and stone clad buildings many of which were hi-rise buildings in their time. Additionally there is the Palace Theatre, recently renovated Plaza Theatre, and several smaller structures of note. The historic districts and historic buildings will be respected in any downtown planning effort. They need to form the basis of a future downtown that celebrates the past yet finds current contemporary active uses.

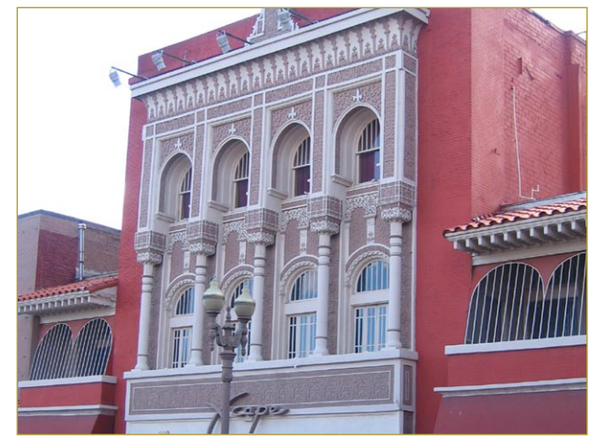


Historic Districts in Downtown El Paso

Historic Landmarks in Downtown El Paso

- Historic Districts
- Historic Registered Building

1. U.S. Post Office
2. Hotel Cortez
3. Martin Building
4. J.J. Newbury Company
5. Singer Sewing Company
6. O.T. Bassett Tower
7. Plaza Theatre
8. White House Department Storeanc McCoy
9. Mills Building
10. Plaza Hotel
11. Cortez Building
12. Roberts-Banner Building
13. First Mortgage Company Building
14. W.S. Hills Commercial
15. Abdou Building
16. Popular Department Store
17. Hotel Paso del Norte
18. Star Jewelry
19. State National Park
20. Richard Caples Building
21. Palace Theatre
22. St. Charles Hotel



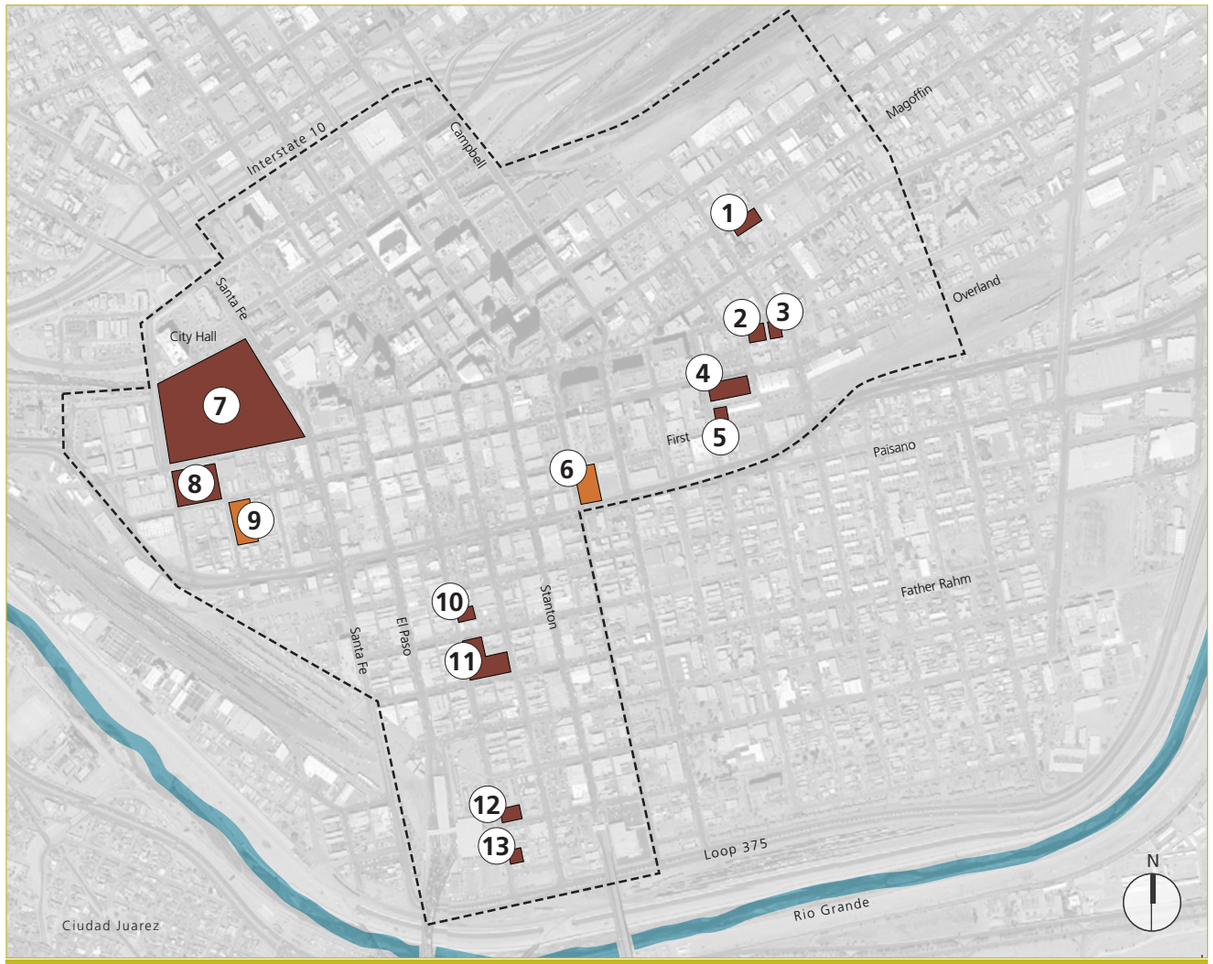
Top Hotel Cortez

Bottom Palace Theatre

Many sites of cultural interest or locations of important community facilities also have been identified for consideration in the downtown planning effort. These include religious and community services facilities such as churches, senior centers, daycare, fire stations, and other public facilities. These facilities often are the heart of underprivileged neighborhoods and will fill an important role in their redevelopment.

A team made up of local architects and historic preservation experts has recently made an inventory of the buildings within the Downtown Plan area. They gathered information concerning the integrity, architectural merit and cultural significance, if any, of each building. After a peer review by an outside expert, the team presented a report, with pictures, maps and listings, to the City. In future detailed planning efforts for the downtown this survey will be utilized to determine the importance of individual structures in specific project proposals.

Sacred Heart Church



Sites of Cultural or Community Importance

- Cultural and Social Significance
- Special Treatment Site
- Study Area

1. Veteran's Living Facility
2. Mexican Consulate
3. Annuncitation House
4. Sherrif's Department
5. GLCC
6. Las Alas Prayer & Christian Community
7. Convention Center
8. New Garage
9. New Fire Station #11
10. Krakauer Building (El Paso Daycare)
11. Sacred Heart Church, School & Gymnasium
12. Villa Maria
13. El Centro de los Trabajadores Agricolas Fronterizos

Market Opportunities for Expansion in the Downtown

The current downtown planning effort used as a take off point the many studies of downtown economics and market that had preceded its initiation, and then focused on uses that offered real promise for a downtown turn around. Resources to identify those catalyst market components included the record of achievement in relevant cities across the United States, closer to home Texas and border city examples, and the direction of the city and PDNG leadership team in refining the focus and establishing a likely sequence for success. A brief summary of the studies and statistics that provided a base for downtown planning work is included here.

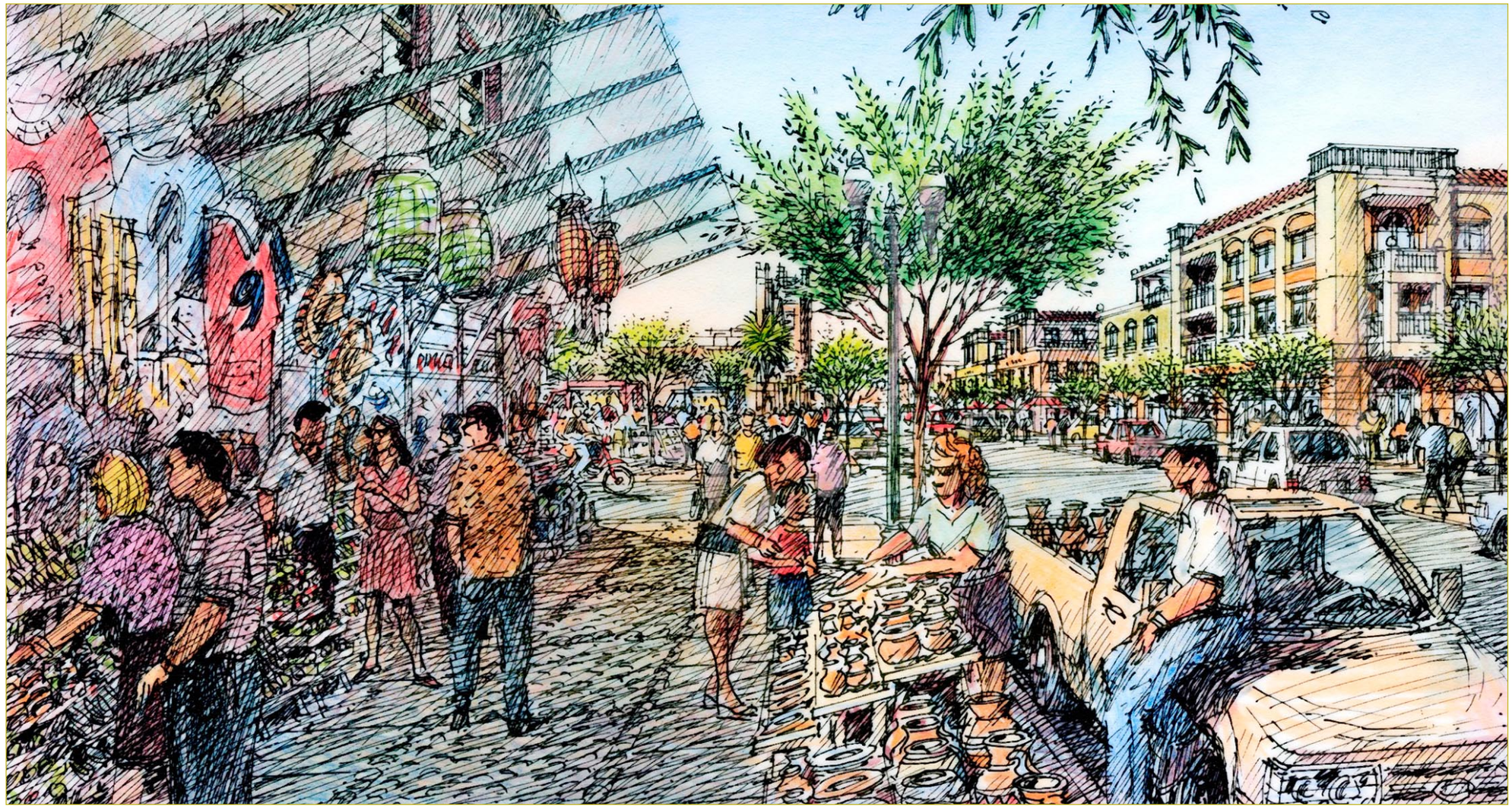
Following an evaluation of the current market downtown and an analysis of potential future development, the Leinberger-Lesser Study for the El Paso Downtown Partnership determined that in light of its proximity to Juarez, the significant volume of expenditures by Mexican nationals, convention delegates to the City, ease of access, and an underserved local population, significant demand potential existed for expanded retail space downtown. Managers at the existing malls in El Paso estimated that 30% to 40% of their overall retail sales were attributed to visitors from Mexico, with some retailers estimating as high as 90% of their sales. "The combination of these factors creates an ideal opportunity for an urban retail outlet experience." In their expert opinion, these demand sources were sufficient to support the immediate development of a retail center.

Such a development would serve as a marquee example of the renewed strength of Downtown and the dedication by the City to provide an environment that serves the needs of residents and visitors. According to the Leinberger-Lesser Study "attracting quality retail into Downtown is a critical catalyst to the area's revitalization. With a strong mix of retail, dining, and entertainment, Downtown El Paso has the potential to evolve into an area where residents shop, dine, and play."

Following retail development, additional opportunities could exist in a later phase for entertainment establishments as the momentum of Downtown accelerates. Likewise, while current occupancy rates may not justify new hotel construction, as the convention center, performance and exhibition space expands and Downtown's retail market grows, a 200 room hotel could be an important anchor for a revitalized Downtown. Aggressive marketing and recruitment to attract larger regional and national conventions could further accelerate this opportunity.

Currently there has been very little residential construction with the majority of existing supply concentrated in several small neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown including Sunset Heights, Old San Francisco, and Magoffin Street. However, these districts offer little in the way of services or retail, and nothing has been done to create the mixed-use, youth-focused buzz that would bring students and young professional downtown. At the same time, families seeking a downtown home see a major deficit of parks, recreation and services to support their children and family life. And finally, a housing product fitting for empty-nesters ready to move out of a large family home in the suburbs has yet to be offered. Future public/private investments, however, could capture a number of these new segments of the potential downtown market.

Further studies of market potential for both retail and residential is necessary for specific project proposals. The potential for new retail, housing and related commercial development will depend in part on the ability to consolidate parcels to create a critical mass of available properties for new projects.



Active sidewalks and ground floor retail

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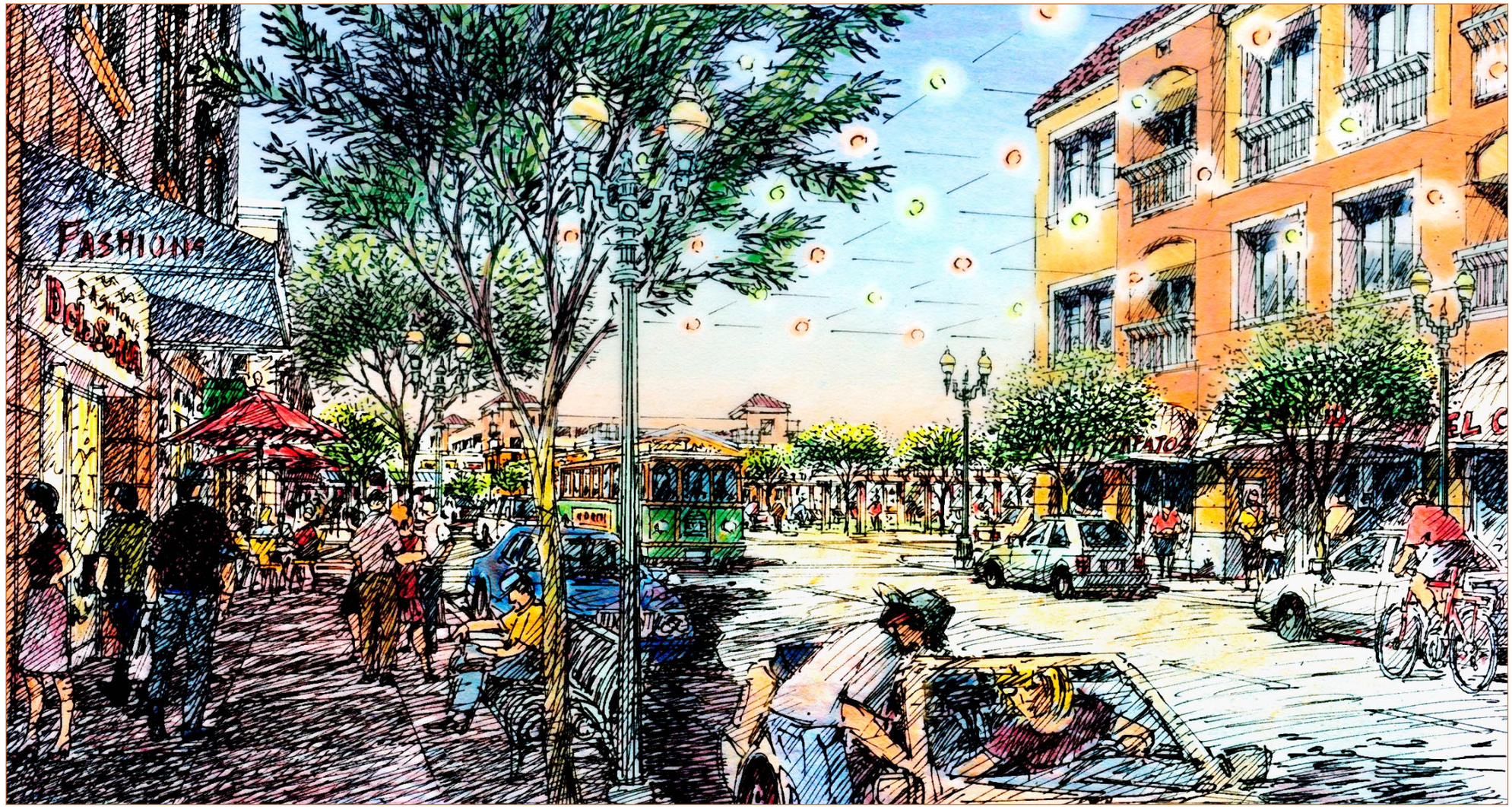
3

Re-imagining Downtown El Paso

The basic elements for a renewed Downtown El Paso already exist—an urban fabric with a pedestrian scaled street network; a wealth of interesting buildings; a unique retail energy fueled by significant border foot traffic; and civic and private sector support for change. The key is to build on these resources and create new opportunities for significant change and private investment that will link and energize the downtown.

This section describes the redevelopment concept for the Downtown 2015 Plan and how it will be expressed as a series of private and public projects guided by a land use framework and development standards. This section includes redevelopment concepts for Downtown 2015; the vision; urban design objectives, and character of proposed redevelopment districts; a description of the land use framework; and the development standards for each of land use category and building type.

Arena and Entertainment: View North on Sante Fe



New Mixed Use along First Street

Concepts Guiding Downtown 2015

As mentioned previously in this report, significant positive change to El Paso's Downtown will neither come easily nor will it happen within the boundaries of normal market forces - it has not happened in an era of relative economic prosperity. Downtown El Paso needs a strong vision to attract the significant private investment that has to-date bypassed downtown. This vision requires strong public and private consensus guided by redevelopment principles which have been proven in other downtown contexts and will be successful in the context of El Paso and the region. These concepts include:

Diverse Retail Districts

Retail in the context of real urban amenities has been a major driver in many recent downtown renaissances. El Paso has an opportunity to create varied retail experiences that address the diverse market potential within different urban environments.

Catalysts Projects

The big picture solution includes a framework for a series of major private investments that bring significant commercial energy downtown to kick-start related development, in-fill development and reuse and renovation of existing buildings.

Mixed Use Imperative

Successful downtowns attract new businesses because they have energy that is evident day and night. Downtown residents provide demand for neighborhood retail and services, fill upper floor uses, and promote urban living which includes pedestrian environment, transit, and a safe, comfortable environment.

Open Space/Public Improvements

El Paso needs better and more public spaces for its downtown visitors and residents. These public space improvements will form the pathways for pedestrian movement and frame the downtown - and will be the stage for public art, markets, and diversity of downtown life.

Bi-National Arts Walk/Pedestrian Focus

Within the focus of a walkable downtown is the need for a major public realm attraction, one that inspires and links together the many districts and features of a renewed downtown. A Bi-National Arts Walk is envisioned that is a forum for the art and history of the Southwest and Chihuahua that both attracts visitors from near and far and is a source of pride for the current residents.

Transportation/Parking Strategy

El Pasoans need to feel that getting to downtown, by car and on foot is a comfortable and efficient experience. This is a key element for both accommodating cars and pedestrians and structuring how people have ready access to all areas of downtown. Included in this Plan are expanded mass transit options and continued integration of the private bus company operations in downtown.

Historic /Adaptive Reuse Potential

The wealth of historically and culturally significant buildings downtown, and older buildings which are just plain beautiful, provide a basis for reuse and adaptive conversion to current uses that fit the Downtown 2015 Plan.

Infill Development

Numerous underutilized vacant lots and surface parking lots within downtown provide opportunities for infill development both within the redevelopment area and the larger incentive district. Infill development throughout downtown will preserve and enhance existing downtown fabric.

Community Workshop #4:
Ideas for Downtown

Bringing the Downtown 2015 Plan before the Community: Outreach Process

The preliminary Downtown 2015 concept plan was presented on March 31, 2006 at the restored Plaza Theater in downtown El Paso. The concept plan was warmly received and the City Council gave direction for further planning and a formal community input process.

The initial plan framework and strategies for the downtown plan were brought to the general public for comment and discussion during May and June of 2006. A series of nine community meetings and workshops were held at downtown locations as well as in local and Westside, Northeast, and Eastside neighborhoods. More focused community meetings were conducted to discuss specific topics (e.g. the arena) and the interests of local neighborhood groups.

The general community meetings were conducted in two formats: 1) open meetings where the City's consultants presented the Plan concepts followed by open community comment, and 2) workshops where participants engaged in a downtown planning exercise. The workshops allowed participants to create their own vision for a great downtown and a typical mixed use residential neighborhood. Through the exercise, participants gained a better understanding of the significant opportunities and limitations inherent in creating a renewed downtown.

Virtually all who spoke at the meeting voiced a need for change and renewal in the downtown. Many residents were concerned about the Plan's impacts on local residents, business owners and tenants. Others were concerned the Plan would impact existing cultural and historic resources. Others spoke eloquently about the downtown they once knew, truly the vibrant center of El Paso, and wondered how it could regain that status. The Segundo Barrio was noted as a neighborhood of particular cultural and historic value to El Paso and in the City's role as a border town. Others worried about the financial feasibility of such a wide reaching concept; Who would pay for it? Would taxes be raised? Was this just another plan that would not reap the benefits promised? The location of the arena in particular raised concern as it might affect the Union Plaza area.

We also heard that El Pasoans long for a vibrant and distinctive downtown that reflects their border location. Many residents and business owners recognized that change is necessary to bring life back into the downtown. They embraced the Plan Framework as an opportunity to provide new community services and amenities and build downtown as a both a neighborhood for future generations and a regional asset. Many spoke of the importance of cultural, community, and historic resources as major features of a distinctive, revitalized downtown.

The input received in the meetings was recorded, discussed, and considered carefully. Many suggestions made by the community were integrated into a revised preliminary Downtown Plan that was presented and discussed before the City Council on July 10, 2006. Residents brought many of their same concerns to this public meeting. The Plan was discussed and approved in concept by the City Council that evening.

A more complete description of the community outreach program is contained in Appendix B.

Creating a Structure for the Downtown

The Foundation

In developing the vision for the future downtown, it is important to recognize the existing significant resources; those urban places, cultural and historical sites, and neighborhood character that have potential to inspire and form the basis of significant change. These include:

- Historic Downtown: A wealth of significant buildings is situated within an urban fabric of small, pedestrian friendly blocks and streets, with a civic, public realm character set by the Jacinto Plaza and surrounding streets
- Civic and Cultural Area: A civic and cultural area of growing importance has emerged on the west side of downtown, showcasing El Paso's history, culture, performance and visual art, offering civic and convention facilities, and anticipating a major new destination with the new library
- Government Center Concentration: Several blocks of government buildings and supporting offices and services is a powerful force at the eastern edge of downtown with significant new construction and potential users of retail and commercial services nearby.
- Interstate Highway 10 and Paisano Drive: These major east west arterials provide access to the heart of downtown, linking it to the rest of El Paso
- Golden Horseshoe: The major shopping streets of El Paso and Stanton stretch from the border north into downtown, link to the Jacinto Plaza and attract significant foot traffic
- Border: The relationship with Juarez generates significant numbers of people moving back and forth across the border on a daily basis

Framing

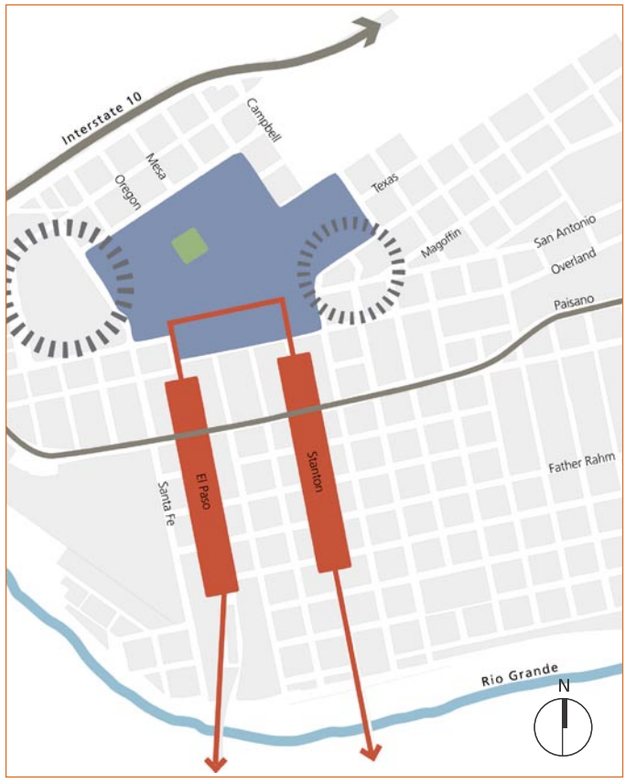
Building on the foundation of regional access routes and primary downtown circulation, the Plan calls for a critical intervention to facilitate major new retail and entertainment investment at the heart of downtown. Two anchors – east at Stanton and west at Santa Fe – and a new signature mixed-use street corridor linking the two will lead the revival of a vibrant urban life. The result will be the transformation of largely underutilized buildings and blocks for two major catalyst projects; a significant, double-sided retail street with a retail anchor at the east end; and a major entertainment venue and arena at the west end of the new corridor.

A new retail street, on the alignment of First Street, forms the basis for new development and retail opportunities. This extension of First Street will achieve four objectives; 1) create a significant new retail street that bisects the existing long blocks between Paisano and Overland; 2) avoid yet complement the significant buildings and existing retail on Overland; 3) allow pedestrians a comfortable and engaging east-west experience rather than routing them along a major traffic corridor at Paisano Drive; and 4) spur a development opportunity of significant scale to attract private investment. Creating a center of gravity and heart of activity for this new retail development will be a major new public open space connecting the various surrounding districts.

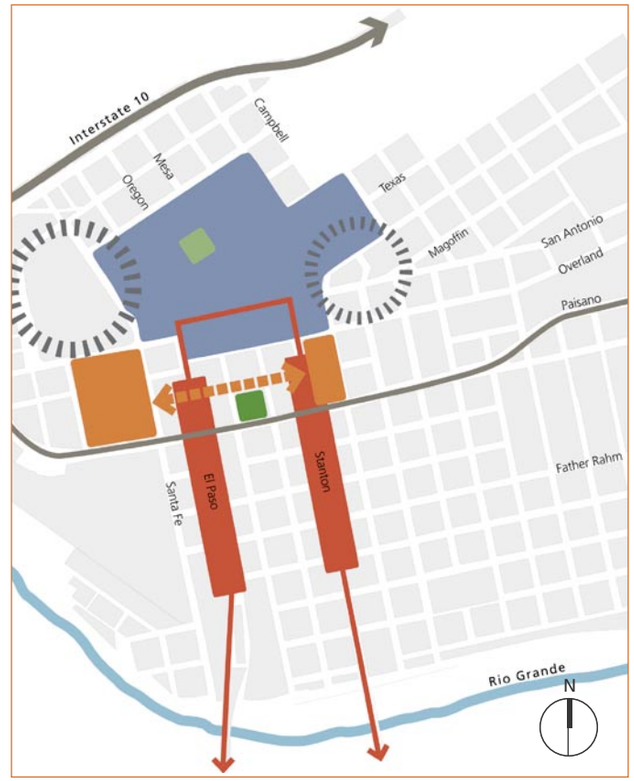
Finishes

The strategic placement of significant investments, including public improvements along the First Street extension, opens the door for other complementary projects. As shown, the Mercado south of Paisano Drive both anchors the new open space on First Street and creates a significant place of commerce and culture in the northern reach of the Segundo Barrio. This may also provide an impetus for a larger retail center adjacent to the International Border to complement existing retail energy along El Paso and Stanton Streets. This economic activity, created by finding key locations for major private investments, then opens the door for reinvestment in the neighborhoods.

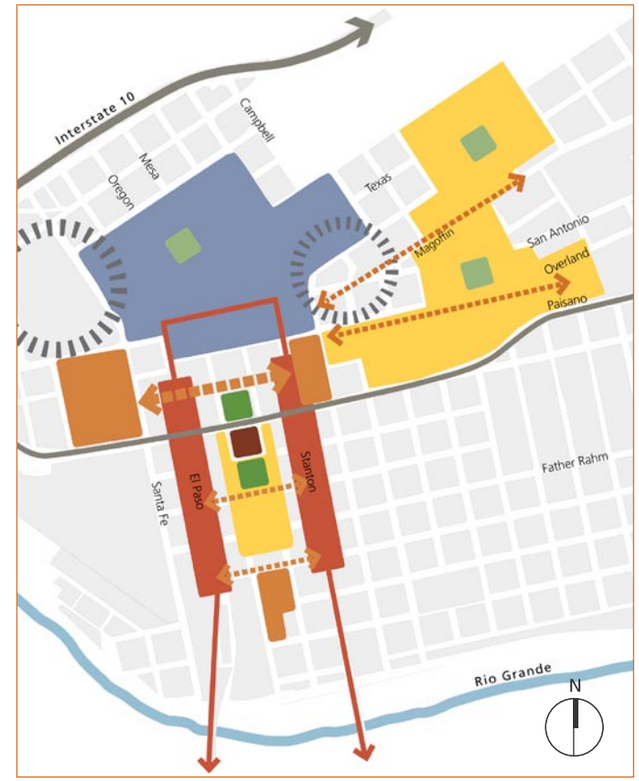
A significant component of every downtown redevelopment project across the country has been the creation of significant new housing opportunities for local residents. Existing neighborhoods surrounding downtown have the opportunity to grow into mixed use neighborhoods anchored by new open spaces. These downtown residential neighborhoods can significantly increase the quality and amount of housing for families, singles, and empty-nesters in areas with gracious new community parks, ground floor retail, community services, and new community facilities.



Foundation



Framing



Finishes

Key

- Historic Downtown
- Existing Park
- New Park
- Residential/Mixed Use Infill in Existing Neighborhoods
- Major Anchor Projects
- Golden Horseshoe
- Mercado
- First Street Retail Corridor
- East/West Retail Connectors
- Golden Horseshoe Retail Streets
- Existing Government and Civic/Cultural Areas

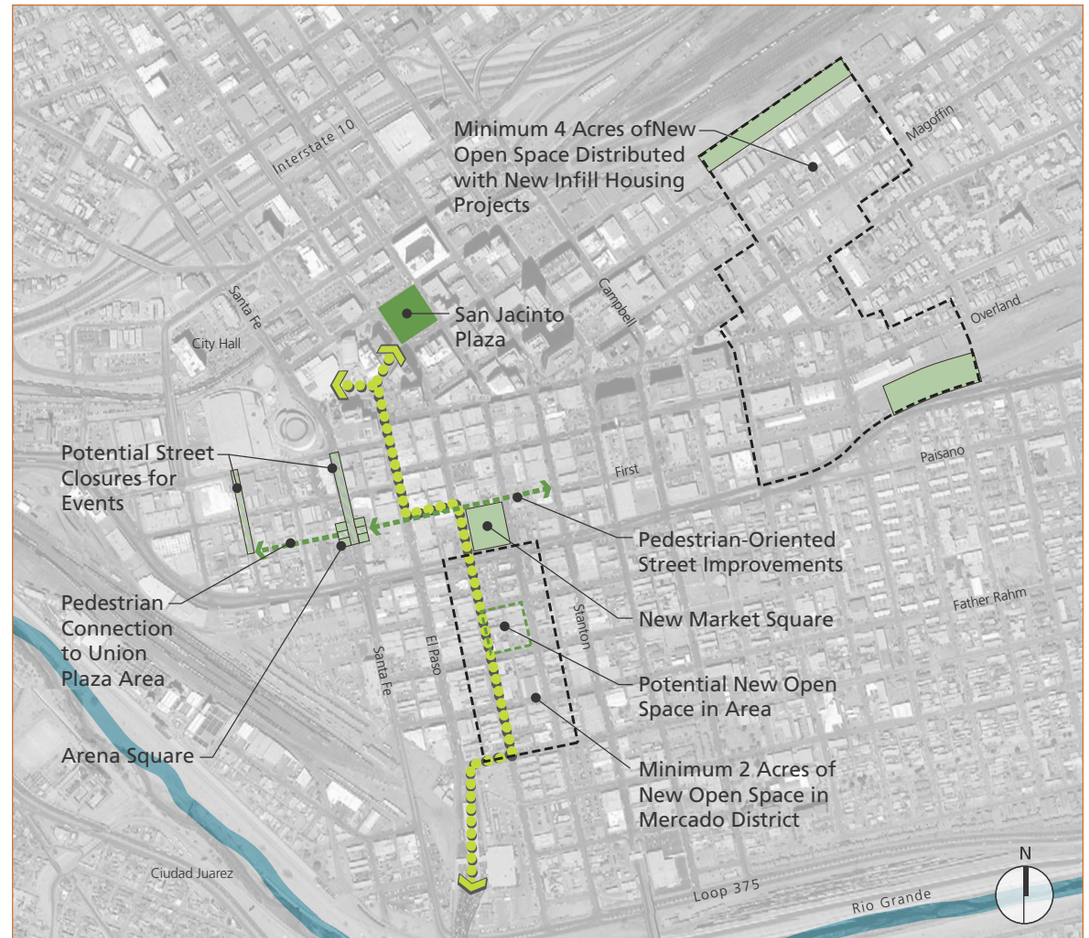
Expanding The Public Realm

Critical to connecting and accessing all these new improvements will be an open space system designed to unify the downtown and articulate its historic and future identity. The public realm will offer shade and places to sit, wait for the bus, or meet friends.

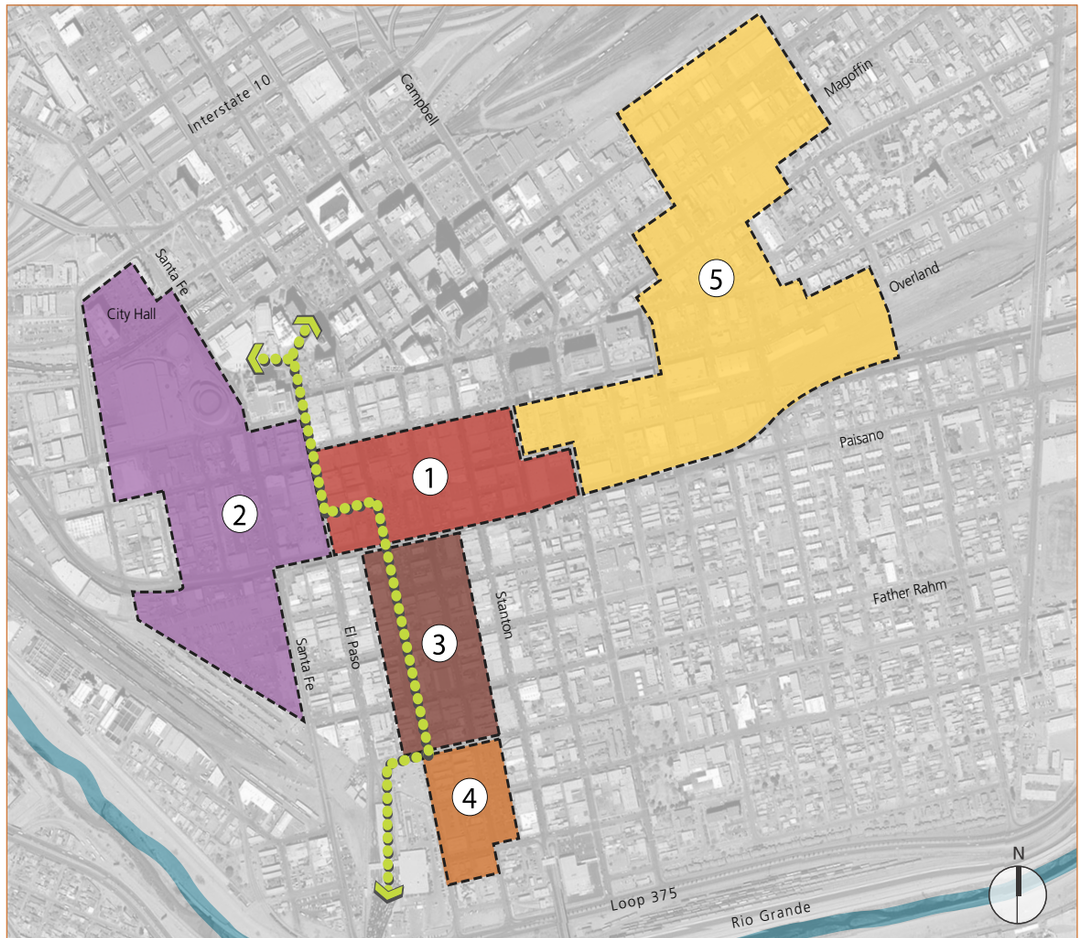
The linkages, connections, and movements of downtown will be framed by wide sidewalks and street trees, public parks and plazas, and other public areas designed to be comfortable and inviting. It will be the spontaneous environment that defines the experience of downtown El Paso, with a character all its own. The public realm will largely define the urbanity of the downtown through the quality of its spaces, the focus on the pedestrian, the character and feel of the spaces, and the quality of the surfaces, materials and amenities.

A critical element of the public realm linking the existing and new nodes of activity downtown is the Bi-National Art's Walk. Similar to other successful urban trails such as the Freedom Trail in Boston, the Barbary Coast Trail in San Francisco, or the Santa Fe Trail and Canyon Road in Santa Fe, this trail will both connect and celebrate the history and places in downtown by highlighting El Paso's history, art, and cultural link to Mexico.

- Mixed Use Area with New Open Space Requirements
- Potential Open Space/Urban Plaza
- New Park
- Potential Street Closures for Events
- Major Pedestrian Street Improvements
- Bi-National Arts Walk



Open Space Concept for Downtown



Proposed Redevelopment Districts

Defining the Redevelopment Area

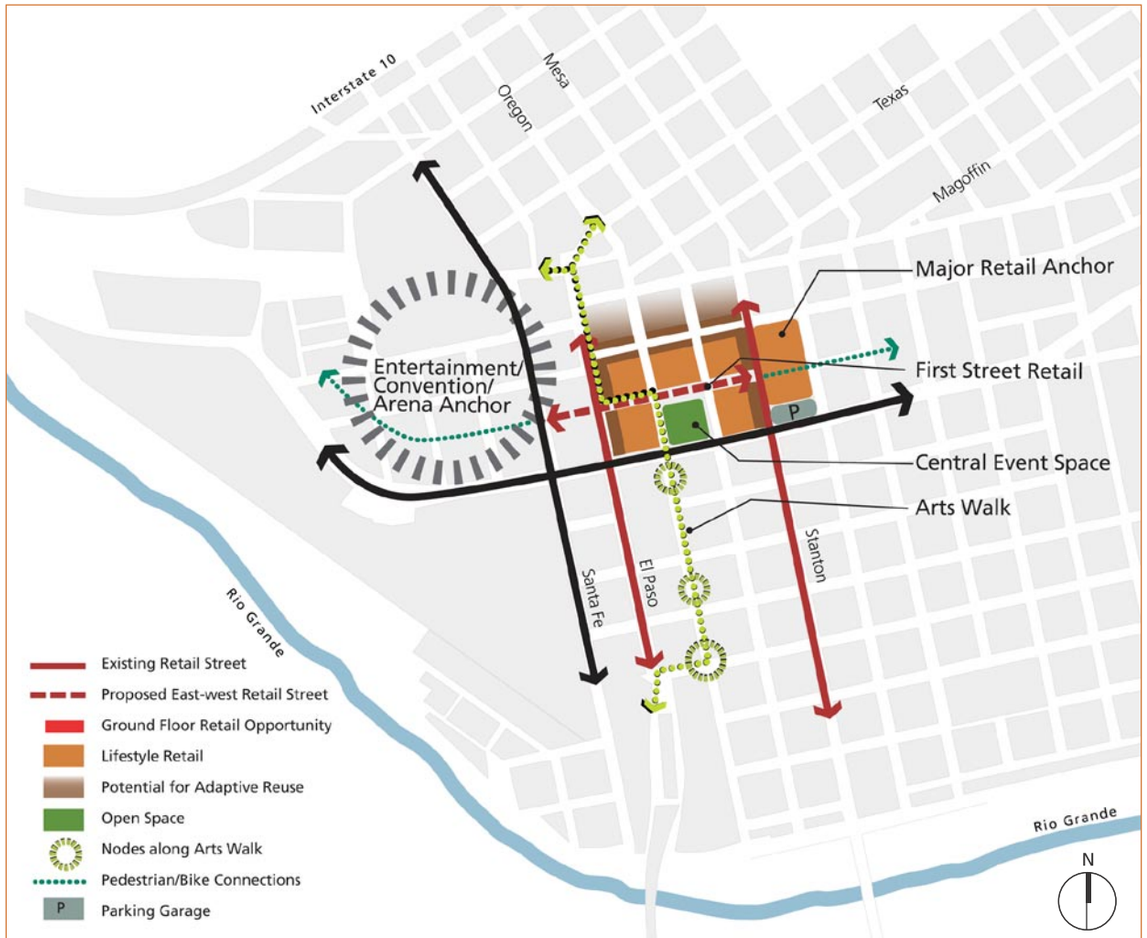
The redevelopment area was defined after much discussion with city staff, the PDNG, and public comment. Five distinct redevelopment "districts" are outlined; each closely related to an existing area of downtown and each with a different focus to promote diversity and a specific neighborhood and commercial development objective. Three of the five districts have a distinct retail focus to diversify and expand the retail opportunities. The fourth district focuses expressly on an entertainment/event center location, and the fifth focuses on infilling residential/mixed-use opportunities. Following is a description of each district, including the overall vison, urban design objectives, and development characters.

1 Lifestyle Retail District
2 Exhibition/Convention/Arena
3 Mercado District and Residenti
4 Border Retail
5 Residential Mixed Use
Bi-National Arts Walk

District 1: First Street: Lifestyle Retail District

Imagine shopping in a place with a broad array of choices, from everyday needs to that special gift– where the ingenuity of local retailers is featured and the best of national retailers bring their urban stores into the mix. Imagine working in a place where you can enjoy a convenient cup of coffee, a great lunch, and an exciting after work destination with friends and family. The Lifestyle Retail district, centered along an extended First Street, will provide just that volume of new retail activity to spread its economic benefits and dramatically increase the number of people downtown, increase the use of cultural facilities, and make the downtown more attractive for businesses and residents. As such, the new First Street will be a lively, pedestrian-oriented shopping street that links the Entertainment District to the historic downtown and the new Magoffin/San Antonio Mixed Use/Residential District to the east.

Attracting visitors from Mexico, New Mexico, and throughout the wider El Paso region, First Street will be a magnet for shopping with a wide range of stores centralized in one location. This nine-block area will be anchored by a major retail outlet at the eastern end of First Street and by new hotels and the entertainment venue and potential arena at the west end. In between will be a walkable, highly amenitized shopping street with three blocks that will face a new downtown park creating an environment not found anywhere in El Paso. Retail spaces will be designed for a variety of uses including mid-size retail stores in an urban on-street configuration, smaller retailers (called in-line stores) along the streets, restaurants, coffee shops, galleries, and smaller boutiques. The example of other cities suggests that a critical mass of new retail, restaurants, and a potential theater complex will generate thousands of new visitors to downtown and provide a catalyst to the adjacent Incentive Districts and local neighborhoods, establishing downtown El Paso as the retail destination in the region and a new neighborhood for singles, seniors, and families.



District 1 Concept

Top Santana Row, San Jose, CA

Bottom Colorado Boulevard, Pasadena, CA

Urban Design Objectives

- Connect the Magoffin/San Antonio Residential Mixed Use District to the Entertainment/Convention/Arena District with public realm improvements and unified design elements
- Design unique public realm open spaces and amenities that give the district a distinct El Paso character and feel
- Provide a major new public park to provide event and gathering space and insert much needed green space
- Design building typologies that allow for the combination of larger anchor retail tenants with a variety of mid-size and smaller retail spaces
- Build a streetscape favoring pedestrians yet allowing vehicular drive by and limited on street parking
- Renovate or adaptively reuse significant existing buildings where possible
- Develop streetscape, transportation, parking and infrastructure improvements that make downtown safe, accessible, convenient, and attractive
- Prevent surface parking from interrupting the fabric and creating voids in activity and use
- Focus buildings on the street with setbacks only for entries, corners, and intimate public spaces
- Encourage a high degree of transparency to allow the energy of the street and shops to be visible to each other

Development Character

Given its location serving the City's cultural and civic center, its historic downtown, and the border to the south, this area has a high potential for diverse retail to include local and national stores meeting a variety of needs. Depending on the market, opportunities exist for a mixture of uses on upper floors including additional retail, commercial/office uses, and residential. Allowing for increased connectivity, larger development parcels, additional retail street frontage, and the opportunity to integrate upper floor residential uses will increase the density and activity of the District. Improvements to the public realm will encourage mid- and larger-scale urban retail that can augment the successful existing retail both within the district and in adjacent areas north of Overland and south of Paisano in the Golden Horseshoe area.

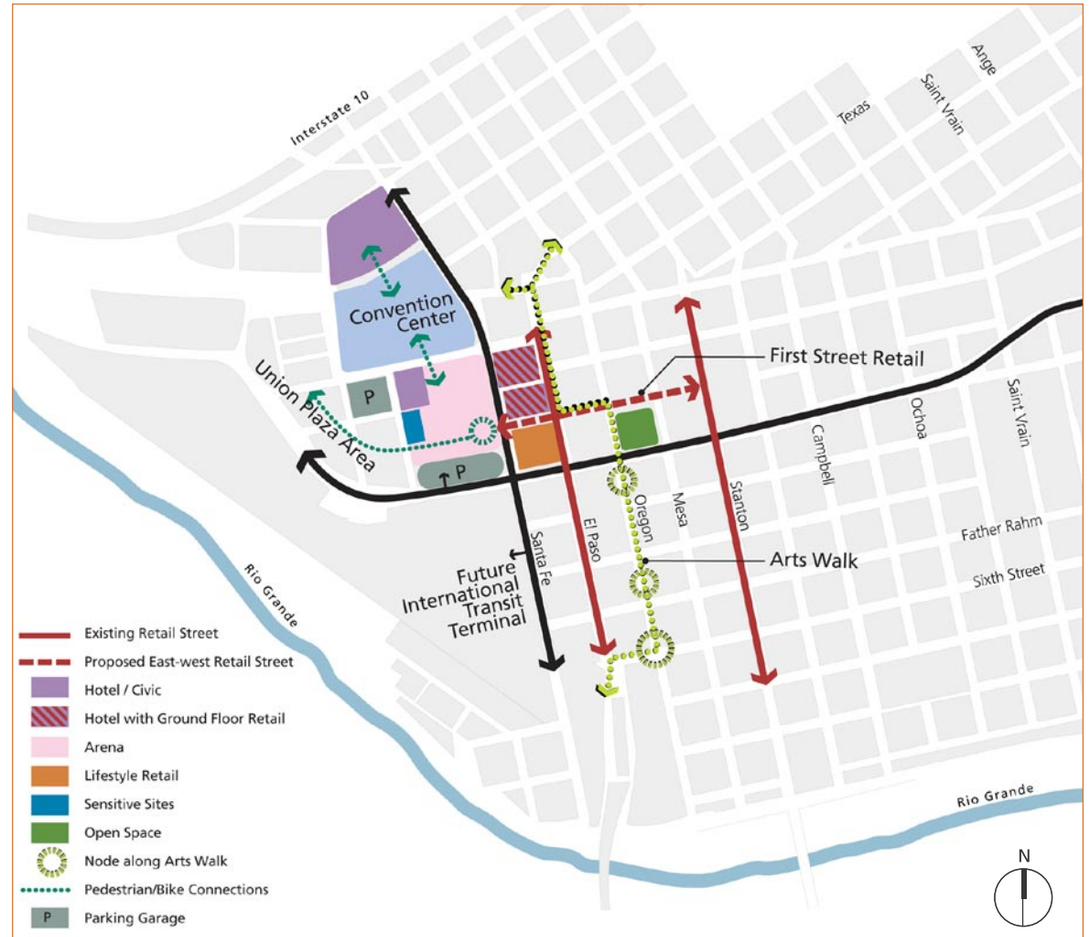
Key to the success of this District is a unique shopping environment found nowhere else in the region. This will only be realized through the assemblage of parcels that facilitates a comprehensive redevelopment of the entire street and attention to the quality of its public environment and the character of its design: its parks, its streets and sidewalks, and its blocks.

The extension of First Street, through the center of the elongated blocks between Overland and Paisano, will create a highly walkable pedestrian-oriented shopping district that invites visitors to stroll along its sidewalks. At the center of the District will be a new full block open space visible from the busy artery of Paisano, and offering a glimpse into the new retail area. This space will be a major new downtown park featuring passive activities, while also providing space for special downtown events such as noontime concerts and open-air, themed events. Pedestrian amenities will include widened sidewalks to accommodate foot traffic, outdoor dining, and landscape and pedestrian amenities.

Signage and wayfinding will capture the character of downtown and link to the Bi-National Arts Walk. The Arts Walk will be a collage of color, textures, art, and lively information that draws the visitor through downtown.

District 2: Santa Fe Street Convention/Entertainment/Arena

The new downtown arena will become the hub of the region's most exciting entertainment destination, one that attracts national shows and events and shines a spotlight on the region's wealth of local music talent. Leveraging existing cultural, civic and entertainment uses, and the investments in the Union Plaza area, this major venue will energize the western side of downtown with frequent events and new street energy. The arena will also serve as an adjunct facility to the existing El Paso convention center, increasing the overall event capacity to attract major conventions. For the first time ever, El Paso will be able to host national sporting events, trade shows, national conventions, even blockbuster shows. Event goers will spill into the adjacent retail districts and Union Plaza and Golden Horseshoe districts staying downtown to shop, dine, and enjoy the nightlife, creating jobs and bringing considerable revenue to the city.



District 2 Concept

Top Sixth Street, Austin, TX

Bottom Nationwide Arena, OH

Urban Design Objectives

- Emphasize the public face and street frontage of convention, hotel, and arena development and embrace public streets and places to increase street level activity
- Design attractive, engaging public plazas and lively spaces to animate the district
- Provide an opportunity for a major architectural statement with the design of the arena
- Accommodate existing sensitive sites in the design of the arena
- Minimize the impact of vehicular and parking requirements on pedestrian oriented streets
- Reflect the urban fabric and design elements of the adjacent First Street District and historic downtown as the new development faces east
- Integrate recent public improvements and create strong pedestrian connections to the west to realize positive synergies with Union Plaza entertainment venues and mixed-use areas
- Orient parking structures serving the arena away from pedestrian focused streets

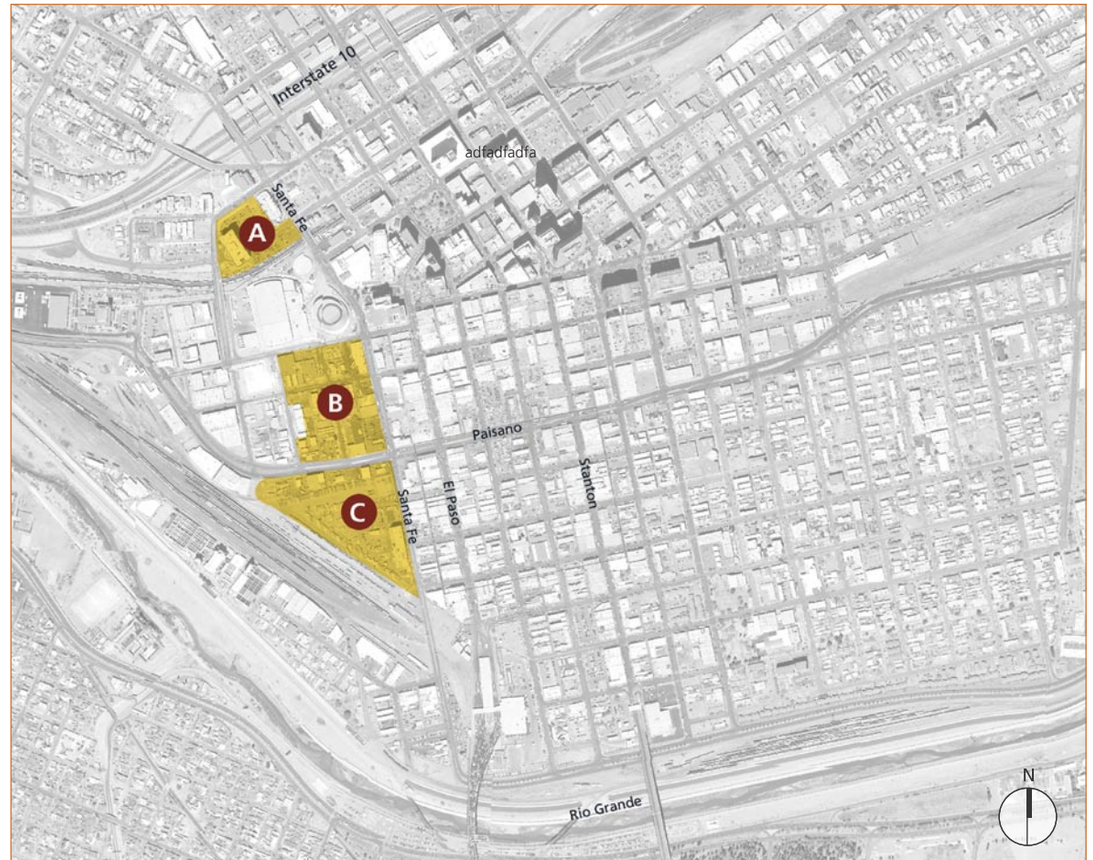
Development Character

The arena itself provides an opportunity to create a significant, memorable, architectural statement different from the traditional fabric of downtown, speaking to the future of El Paso. The arena will be a prominent architectural form visible from the freeway, Juarez, and the main street terminus of First Street. Such a notable building will provide a striking contrast to the backdrop of the traditional downtown and newer infill development, generating the diversity of built form that distinguishes quality urban environments. Adjacent development could follow this modern architectural theme or provide a striking change of pace.

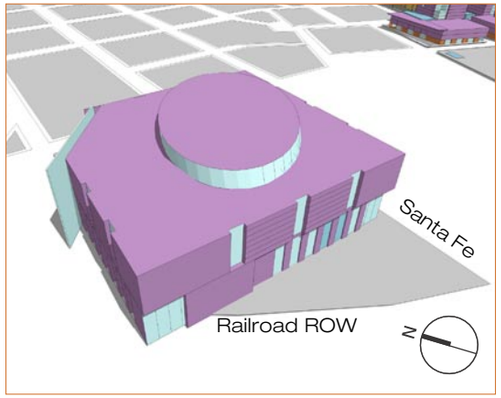
A flexible arena of 15,000-18,000 seats will provide ample seating for local and regional sports teams and offer conversion for large-scale cultural events and convention/exhibition uses. Arising from this new venue and expanded convention space is the opportunity for at least two major hotels and related retail/restaurant/entertainment uses at the ground floor. These uses will animate the district even when there is not an event at the arena. Strong connections will be made to surrounding cultural sites and entertainment and retail districts, at Union Plaza, the new First Street retail, and El Paso Street, linking this site to the rest of the energy of downtown and the border.

Arena Site Location Study

The opportunity to locate a major event/entertainment venue in District 2, Entertainment/Convention/Arena, is seen as a key to energizing the downtown. The City has identified three potential arena sites, each different in terms of site size, configuration, access, and connectivity to transportation and the downtown. Shown here is how a prototypical arena might fit on each of the three sites and a comparison of the key issues. The arena prototype for this study is a multi-use arena with a maximum capacity of 18,000 persons. The arena footprint is 425 feet on each side and would require at least a six acre site not including parking structures or related buildings.

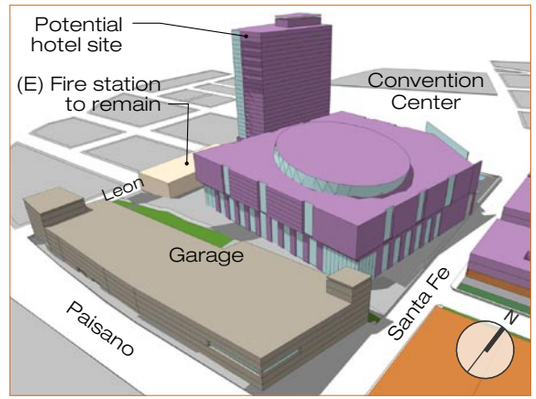


Potential Arena Sites



Site A: Civic Center Site

This site has great access to Interstate 10 but is detached from the current downtown and future downtown development. The site is also too small to accommodate the prototype arena footprint and any ancillary development such as parking structures or major plazas. A smaller arena, in the range of 10,000 to 12,000 person capacity, could fit on the site. If the Civic Center functions were relocated this site might better serve as a future hotel site to support the convention center and arena



Site B: Leon and Santa Fe Streets

The site is in the Union Plaza area which has recently received extensive streetscape improvements and a new parking structure. This site is adjacent to existing downtown retail and commercial areas and would serve as a terminus to the proposed First Street extension. It also is just adjacent to the existing Convention Center and downtown hotels. The site covers a four block area which is currently a combination of vacant lots, warehouses, and some commercial and residential uses. As shown, the new District 11 Fire Station is integrated into the site plan.

Site C : Triangle below Paisano

This site is currently vacant and adjacent to the extensive Union Rail Yards. It's triangular shape fits the arena footprint but poses issues for parking structures or other structures. It has both good vehicular access to Paisano Drive and is yet bisected from Downtown by this major east west boulevard. The International Bus Terminal is currently proposed for part of this site adjacent to Sante Fe Street.

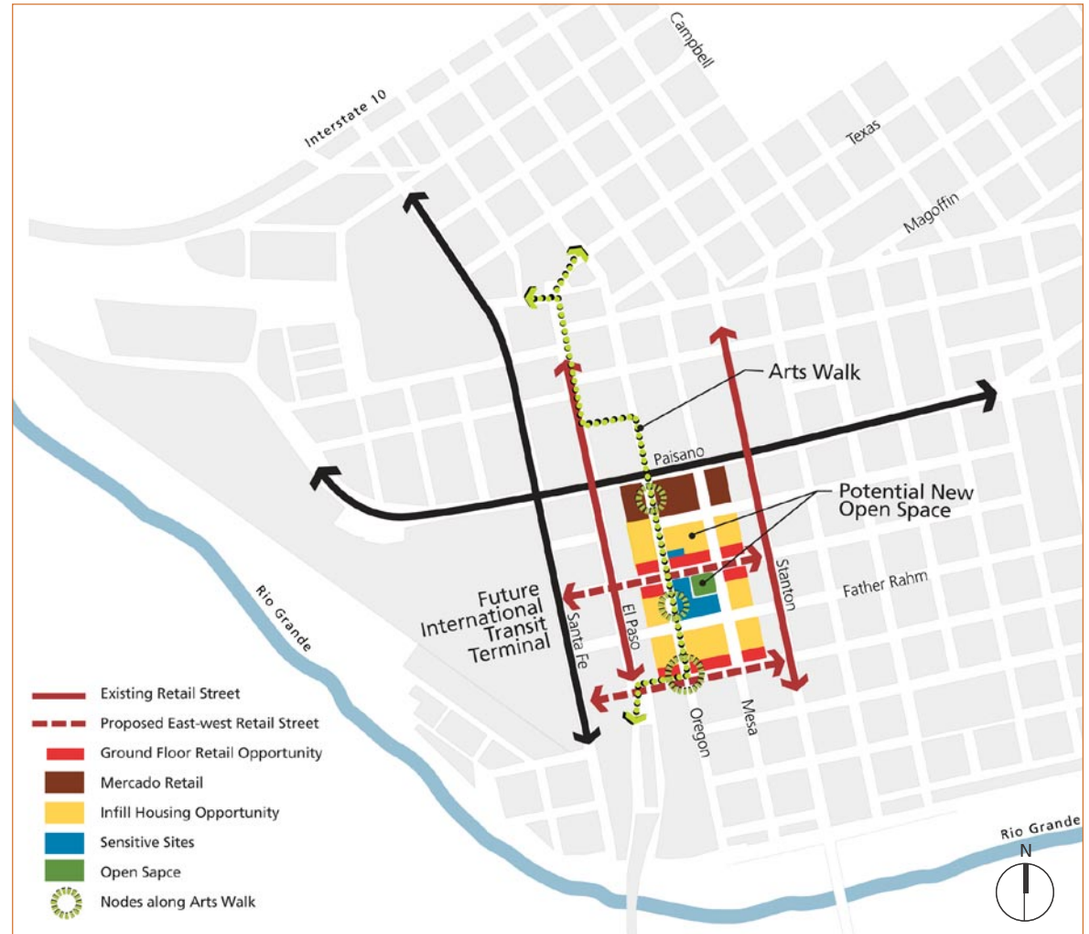
Arena Location Comparative Matrix

	Site Size	Vehicular Access	Pedestrian Access	Relationship to Downtown	Relationship to Existing Convention Facilities	Displacement of Existing Uses	On-Site Parking Accommodation	Distributed Parking Access	Parcel Availability	Hotel Accessibility	Retail/ Entertainment Use Potential
Site A: Civic Center Site	Poor	Excellent	Poor	Poor	Fair	Fair	Fair	Poor	Excellent	Fair	Poor
Site B: Leon and Sante Fe	Good	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Fair/Poor	Fair	Excellent	Fair/Poor	Excellent	Excellent
Site C: Triangle below Paisano	Excellent	Good	Poor	Fair	Poor	Excellent	Good	Fair	Excellent	Fair	Fair

District 3: Oregon/Mesa
Mercado District and Residential Infill

The colorful, arts-inspired Mercado on Oregon Street will be an exciting attraction for residents and visitors to experience local artisans and small retailers. It will be an interesting and surprising destination for shopping, strolling, eating, and attending cultural events in the adjacent park and amphitheater. On nearby blocks, opportunities for compatible new mixed-income housing, expanded open space, and neighborhood services will be identified in collaboration with community leadership and institutions.

Inspired by the major city markets of Mexico, Central America, and throughout the United States, residents will find fresh produce, visitors will seek out the diverse crafts, and people from throughout the region at the Mercado. This dynamic, locally-based environment with a distinctive local flavor will offer new or supplementary venues for smaller merchants now found throughout downtown and combine with new food venues, artisans, and specialty retail. Building on the history and tradition of the Segundo Barrio, this new marketplace will give the community a center for meeting, shopping and connecting, while also creating considerable economic benefits for the city. Benefits include jobs for residents, sales tax, increase in property values, and increase in affordable housing in the adjoining neighborhood.



District 3 Concept

Top Los Angeles Mercado

Bottom Municipal Market

Urban Design Concepts

- Design a locally-focused public market setting that can accommodate diverse retail activity of smaller sizes
- Create strong connections to the existing neighborhood
- Reinforce neighborhood character through the Mercado
- Develop residential infill of a scale to be significant to District and potential developers
- Insert a variety of open spaces to support existing and future residential development
- Respect, enhance and integrate historic and culturally sensitive sites in the design of the district's public realm

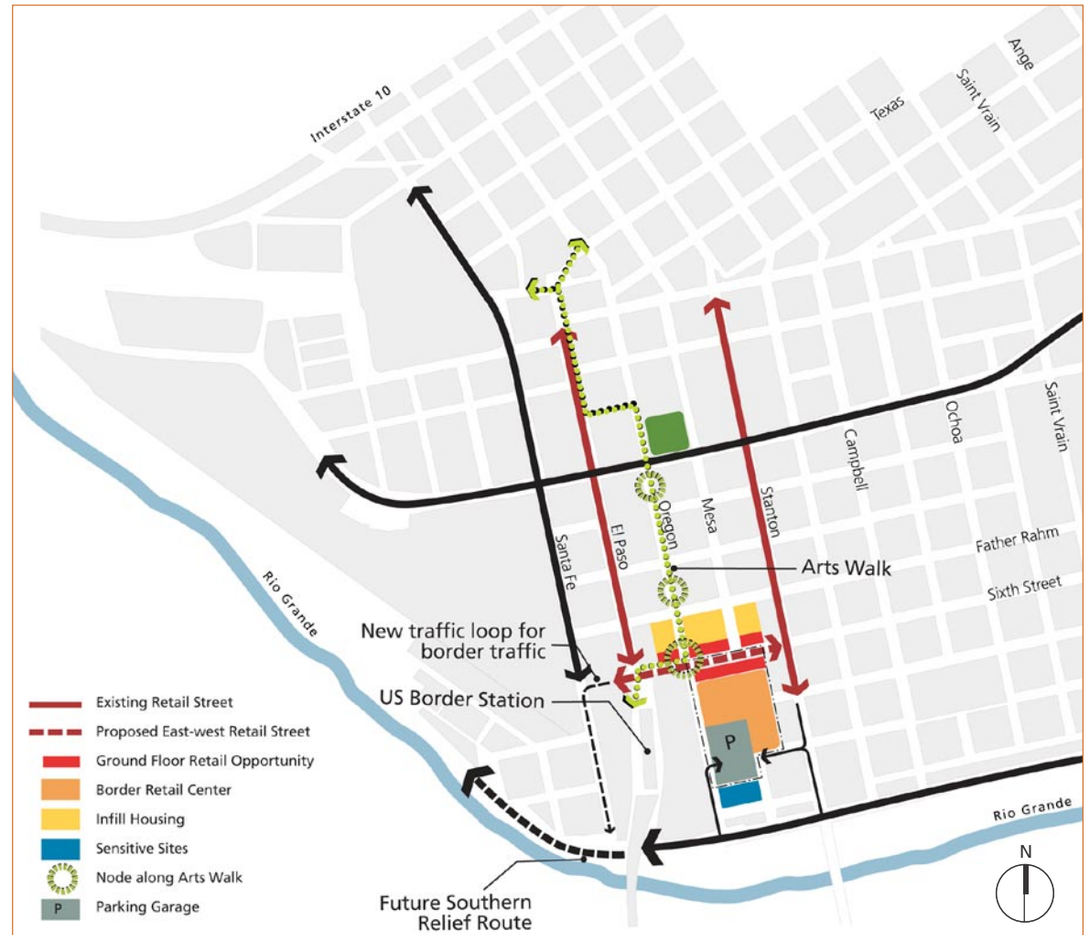
Development Character

Drawing on the culture, history, and current vitality of the Segundo Barrio neighborhood, the Mercado has the potential to be an authentic bi-national marketplace and will define the Downtown 2015 Plan as truly unique and reflective of El Paso and the region. The Mercado will offer something distinctly different from the new retail at the border to the south or along First Street to the north, while linking the two. The activity anchored by the Mercado will reinforce the existing El Paso and Stanton Streets retail energy.

While the Mercado will bring retail expansion and an increase in visitors to the District, it will also improve the quality of life in the neighborhood and create real housing and economic opportunities for its residents. The Church of the Sacred Heart and related facilities will remain the heart of the neighborhood and should benefit by new neighborhood parks and plazas and new quality housing for the residents. Other community service buildings such as the Farmworker's Center will also be preserved and integrated with new infill development. South of the Mercado along Mesa and Oregon Streets lies the opportunity for selective infill housing projects on underutilized or vacant sites. These projects are best expressed as full blocks or half block projects that integrate public open space, community facilities, and potentially ground floor corner retail. Smaller projects, which might include renovation of existing housing stock, are possible but few existing buildings will meet the minimal criteria for cost effective renovation.

District 4: Rio Grande Border Retail

Seeking to provide for a broad range of retail choices in downtown, a site for larger retail stores will meet a strong cross-border market demand. Urban border - focused retail - often with structured parking and potential two story stores - has proven quite successful in other cities such as Tucson, Austin, San Antonio, Fort Worth, and San Diego and will be a significant economic driver for downtown El Paso as well. This district, immediately adjacent to the border, can include a mix of national and local retailers that meet the needs of both the thousands of daily visitors from Juarez as well as the residents of the neighboring Segundo Barrio and greater El Paso. It will also serve as the southern anchor of the overall downtown redevelopment project, one which draws people into the area and to the start of the north-south Bi-National Arts Walk.



District 4 Concept

Top Target Center, Los Angeles, CA
Bottom Container Store, Pasadena, CA

Urban Design Concepts

- Articulate a different retail experience, building typology and pedestrian realm from the Lifestyle District and Mercado District to distinguish this shopping district
- Mitigate the larger scale of retail development with the existing fabric of the surrounding neighborhood through requirements for an urban retail model, additional ground floor retail and public realm improvements
- Create architecture and building form that reflects bi-national location and important border entry
- Maintain physical and economic linkages for the Farmworker's collective and El Segundo Barrio
- Design spaces for gathering to invigorate public activity

Development Character

Along the border, adjacent to the American border station, is an opportunity to turn approximately five underutilized blocks into a major retail location or themed retail center. This location will benefit from the significant border foot traffic and will also be located adjacent to the future Southern Relief Route. The border retail center should have a strong identifiable pedestrian entry with an urban public plaza that might be a significant node on the Bi-National Arts Walk. The retail center must also be compatible with the Segundo Barrio neighborhood to the north and east and include ground floor retail and a building scale that blend with the adjacent residential and commercial areas.

District 5: Magoffin/San Antonio Neighborhood Residential Mixed Use

Imagine being able to live in a gracious, lively downtown neighborhood where working, dining, and entertainment are all within easy walking or transit distance. The resurgence of the retail and cultural core of downtown El Paso will make possible the development of urban mixed use neighborhoods that offer all these opportunities with an array of housing choices and price ranges. The area east of the government center extending to the Magoffin Historic District poses the most immediate opportunity for a such mixed use and urban residential uses due to its proximity to downtown, available land opportunities, and distinguished historic character. Ground floor retail will grace the existing commercial corridors linked by quiet pedestrian oriented neighborhood streets. Space will be made available for future schools and other community facilities. Revitalized historic buildings, new development, improved streetscapes and gracious new parks will frame the public realm for this extension of downtown that is inviting and accessible for everyone.

District 5 Concept

Urban Design Objectives

- Design public realm improvements that provide services and amenities for a high quality urban neighborhood, including streets, landscape, lighting, parks, transit and public utilities.
- Develop housing with an emphasis on increased urban densities (15-50 dwelling units/acre) with integrated ground floor commercial where appropriate
- Facilitate the extension of mixed use corridors along San Antonio and Magoffin and the continuation of retail street frontage along San Antonio, while encouraging a sense of intense residential uses
- Orient residential development to the public realm, embracing the street and public open space with entries, porches, stoops, and shops
- Maintain a strong street presence with minimum setbacks for all structures
- Reflect the Magoffin Historic District architectural style where appropriate
- Preserve lower densities adjacent to the Magoffin Historic District and encourage potential reuse of historically significant buildings within the District
- Design significant open space oriented to neighborhood users including families, singles and seniors.
- Integrate parking into structures, no large surface parking lots

Development Character

District 5 occupies 67 acres over approximately 25 urban blocks. Immediate opportunities exist for new residential development; vacant parcels are found throughout the District, as well as City owned lots. These initial mixed use developments will provide a catalyst for further infill projects as the area becomes active with residents and land values increase. A mix of affordable and market rate housing is recommended. Ground floor retail or other commercial uses is encouraged, particularly along the Magoffin and San Antonio Street corridors, with sites for local amenity "corner" retail required within easy walking distance for residents. Upper floor uses in the blocks closer to downtown should remain flexible as increased office space demand may result from the adjacent new Federal Courthouse.

Open space is a critical element of the development of the District. Neighborhood park spaces will be developed according to City open space standards and each mixed use project will have public open space requirements. If the site is too small to incorporate a neighborhood public space, an assessment district will allow for developers on one site to contribute toward open space improvements on another neighborhood parcel.

A key element to successful urban neighborhoods is density; density that supports a variety of housing options, makes neighborhood retail viable, and allows the public realm to be an important place shared by all residents. While density will increase throughout the Magoffin/San Antonio District, the development opportunities and neighborhood character within the District will vary based on location and relationship to the downtown, existing commercial areas, and the Magoffin Historic District.

In those blocks closer to downtown, west of Virginia Street and adjacent to the government center, the opportunity exists for major full block residential development with ground floor retail uses. Given the new Federal Courthouse development and potential expansion of other related government and private activities in this area, the upper floors of these buildings may be more appropriate for commercial uses such as professional office, corporate or government office, or other non-residential use. The existing commercial corridors of Magoffin and San Antonio streets offer opportunities for ground floor retail and commercial or residential above. The remaining large blocks within the District are suitable for medium density housing with on-site parks and amenities and potential corner retail. Those blocks adjacent to the Magoffin single family neighborhood are more appropriate for lower density townhouses and other attached housing types. Overall new housing will take its cue from the Magoffin District, with stately brick facades and predominant bungalow style.

Pedestrian Friendly Street with Rowhouses/Corner Retail, Portland, OR

Greater Downtown: Incentive District

Imagine a greater El Paso Downtown where headquarter businesses see downtown as "the location" for attracting and holding the best young employees who seek a lively urban lifestyle. One where historic buildings, long vacant, find a new life as in-town residences, sites for start-up businesses or cultural venues, and where evening plans for all residents, students and visitors frequently begin in the restaurant and entertainment venues. This district, as envisioned, encompasses 175 acres with many of El Paso's most important architectural buildings, museums and San Jacinto Plaza. Revitalized historic buildings and new development are the setting for a downtown that is inviting and accessible to everyone. As in cities across the United States, with this incentive district in place, El Paso will be working to preserve its historic structures and retain and enhance a unique city environment.

Design Objectives

- Maintenance and enhancement of an attractive, consistent public realm with improvements expanding from the redevelopment area and linking all key destinations as private improvements are made.
- Sensitive restoration and reuse of significant structures enhancing their role in defining the street character of the downtown, while enabling them to serve new 21st century commerce or residential uses

Development Character

The existing historic buildings in the area, especially those around San Jacinto Plaza, are a major resource for the downtown, one which creates a unique identity and opportunity for the city. The adaptive reuse of these culturally and historically significant areas is critical to the long term success of the overall downtown redevelopment effort. Carefully located new development within and adjacent to historic districts will serve as a catalyst for subsequent preservation and reuse projects. By developing the adjacent entertainment and lifestyle districts and creating carefully targeted incentives, the stage will be set for adaptive reuse of existing historic buildings for local retailers and offices, as well potential residential conversions.

The areas of downtown El Paso adjacent to the redevelopment districts should benefit from the increase in occupancy, visitation, and commerce. A separate incentive district has been established for these areas to promote the renovation and adaptive reuse of existing buildings and infill development. The Incentive District will have a package of financial and redevelopment incentives which will allow owners and tenants to creatively redevelop and improve their properties.

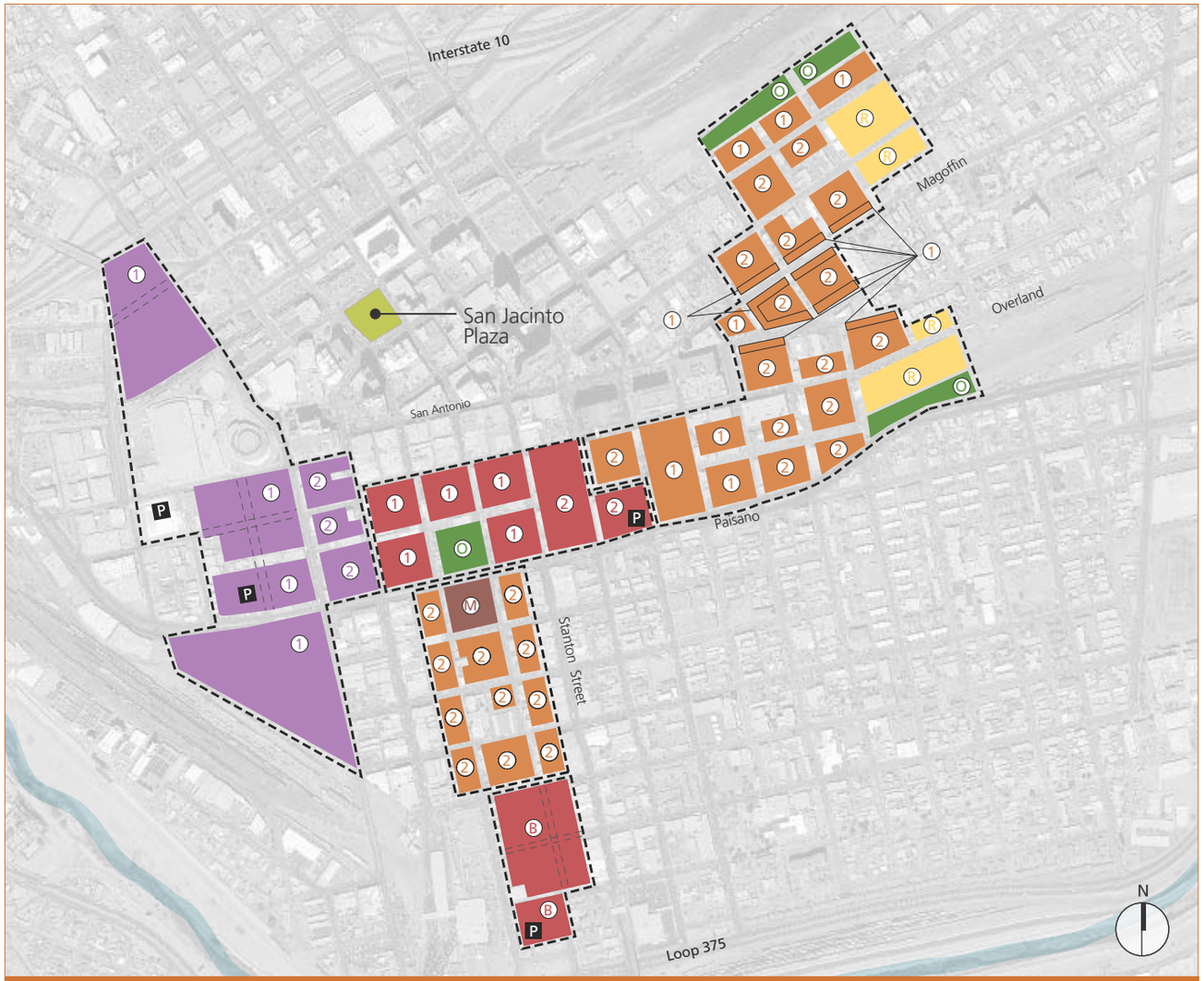
Land Use Framework

In an effort to further define and describe the vision for future development, a broad land use framework has been developed that identifies eight types of areas, or land use categories, within the five redevelopment districts. The land use framework provides additional guidance on the vision, development character, range of uses allowed, and allowable building types for each redevelopment district. The land use categories are crafted to encourage the creation of a new urban fabric and a diverse mix of retail, commercial, and residential uses that are appropriate for their location and relationship to the downtown as a whole.

The objective of the land use framework is not to restrict and dictate uses, but rather to provide more flexibility in the types of uses that are allowed in conventional comprehensive plans or zoning codes. As such, this Plan identifies a wide range of uses that are permitted or conditional within each district. The approach of a flexible land use framework (as opposed to specific land use designations) will allow for greater flexibility by the City of El Paso and the development community to respond to changing market conditions.

Despite the flexibility in the types of uses, this plan is more prescriptive than traditional zoning in the design of the buildings and the way that the buildings create and shape a strong urban environment. Indeed, the creation of a new, pedestrian-oriented and vibrant urban environment is tantamount to the success of this Plan and the type and location of buildings play a key role in this respect. For each land use category, specific allowable building types are identified. These building types, which are identified in a table on the following pages, range from single-family residential uses to apartment buildings to mixed use buildings (referred to as the commercial/residential block) to towers. The Design Guidelines section of the report provides more detailed information on each building type including height, setbacks, access, parking requirements and design guidelines.

The remainder of the section provides a description of the vision for each land use category, a table of the permitted and conditional uses and the allowable building types.



Land Use Framework

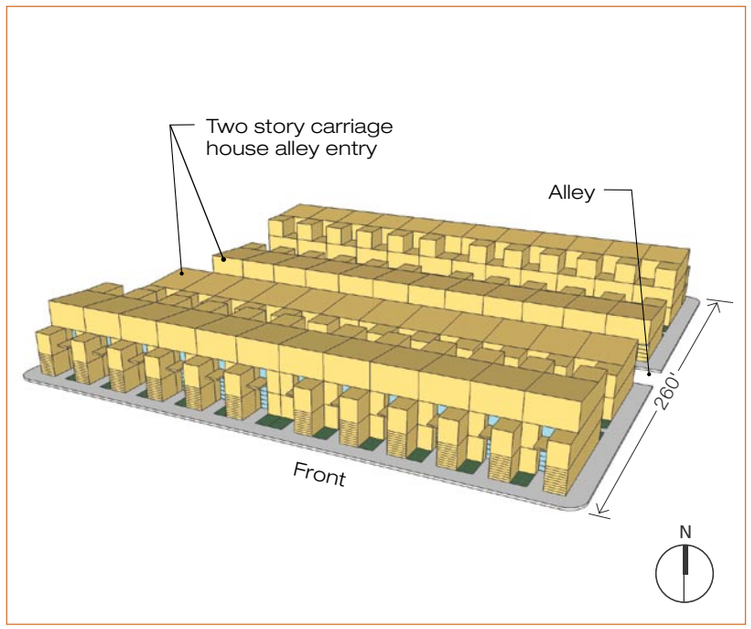
- Lifestyle Retail 1
- Lifestyle Retail 2
- Border Retail
- Mercado
- Convention/Entertainment/Arena
- Entertainment/Hotel
- Residential
- Mixed Use/Residential 1
- Mixed Use/Residential 2
- Open Space
- Parking Structure

Residential 1 (R)

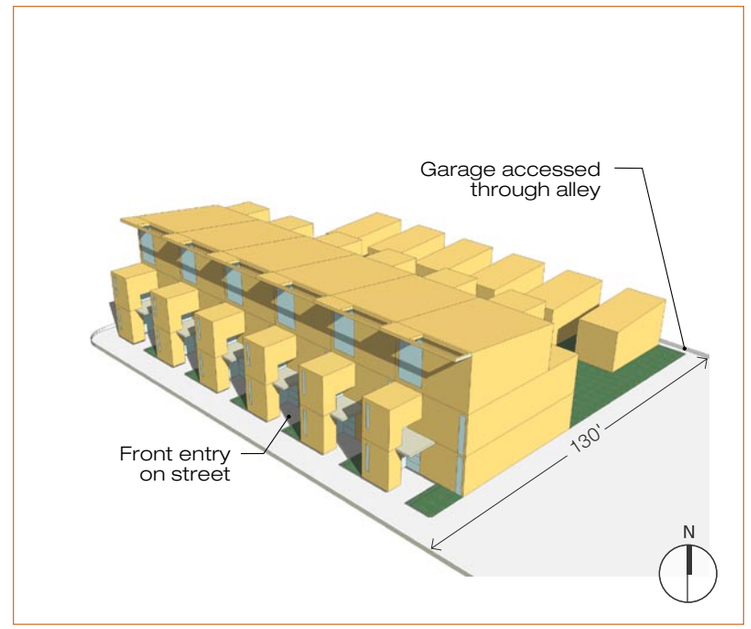
The Magoffin Historic District, which lies just east of the Magoffin/San Antonio District, has a wealth of brick bungalow single family homes. Many have been restored. This land use category recognizes the importance of allowing an appropriate transition in density and housing type for areas adjacent to the Magoffin District. Townhomes, rowhouses, and other attached housing types are appropriate for this area and should take their design cues from the character of Magoffin historic homes. Like the historic district homes, all entries should face the street. Parking for each unit should be accommodated via alleys or internal to the block to avoid repetitious garages facing the streets. Non-residential uses, especially those with a public component such as a recreational center or police station, are allowed as long as they enhance and support the residential character of the category and the Magoffin Historic District.

Top Attached Townhouses

Bottom Row Houses, Stoop Entry



Full block study of two/three story townhomes with carriage house/garages



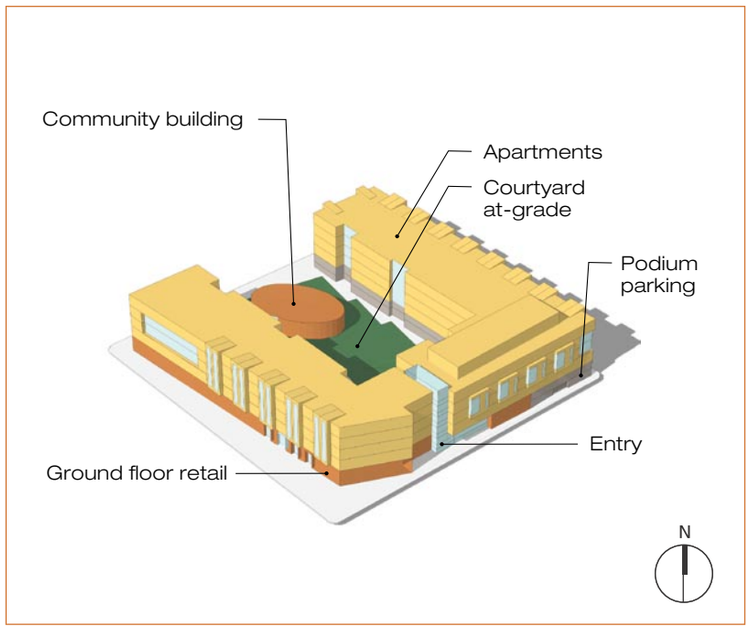
Half block study with three story townhomes with garages

Mixed Use 1 (MUR 1)

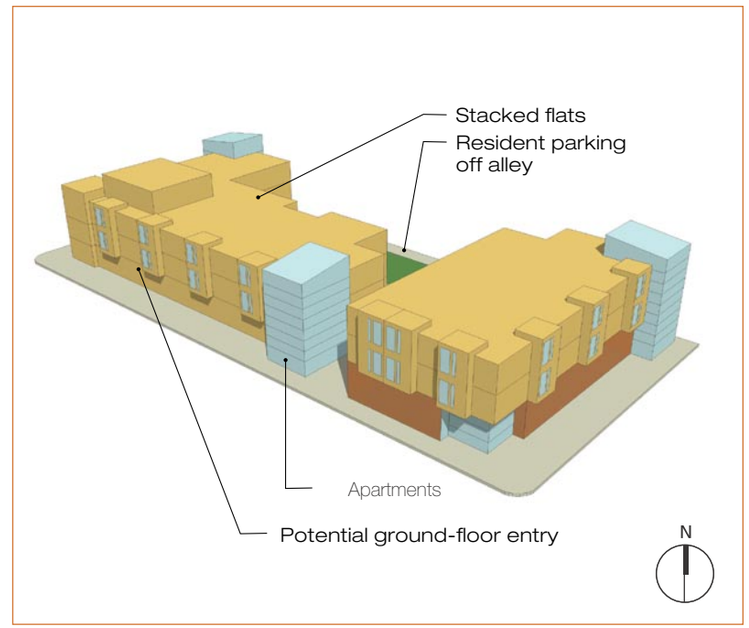
This land use category is applied to areas along existing commercial corridors and areas adjacent to El Paso's central business district. The designation allows for a wide range of residential and non-residential uses that will create vibrant commercial corridors as well as support an expansion of office and commercial uses in the historic downtown areas of El Paso. Buildings should be built to the street edge. Retail uses that activate the street must be located on the ground floor. Parking should be located away from the primary commercial corridors. In order to provide flexibility in the types of uses, a wide range of non-residential uses are allowed in the upper floors of buildings. Furthermore, to help enhance the vibrancy of the area, the buildings in this land use category should have at least three to six stories of uses above the ground-floor retail. Also, this category allows for the development of full blocks which may have a combination of retail, commercial, and residential uses. Live-work housing above retail may also be an appropriate development response near existing commercial and government areas.

Top Lofts Over Food Market

Bottom Apartments over Retail



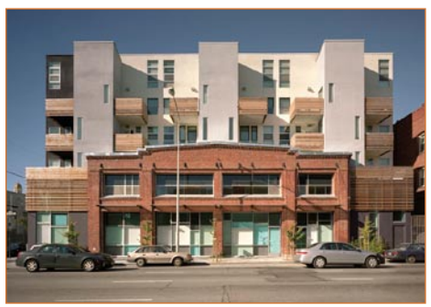
Full block study with residential over retail with podium structure



Half block study with stacked flats and corner retail

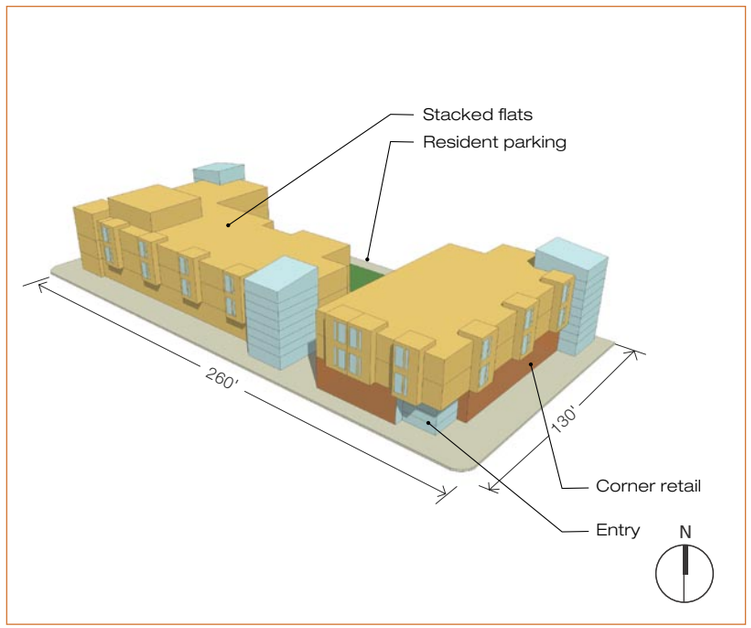
Mixed Use 2 (MUR 2)

This land use category allows for infill residential development at middle densities with a mix of affordable and market rate units. The vision is to create a significant base of new residential development in the area adjacent to the existing central business district as well as in the area surrounding the new Mercado, which is located just south of Paisano Drive. A wide range of residential building types are allowed in this land use category, including townhomes, apartments, and commercial/residential block. Ground floor retail is allowed, but not required, in many buildings. This area differs from the Mixed Use 1 land use category in that it is primarily residential and does not allow for a wide diversity of non-residential uses on the upper floors. Finally, the provision of new public and private open spaces is critical to this middle density residential area. Full blocks should provide public open space opportunities in addition to private common amenities such as interior courtyards. Smaller sites will be assessed for common open space.

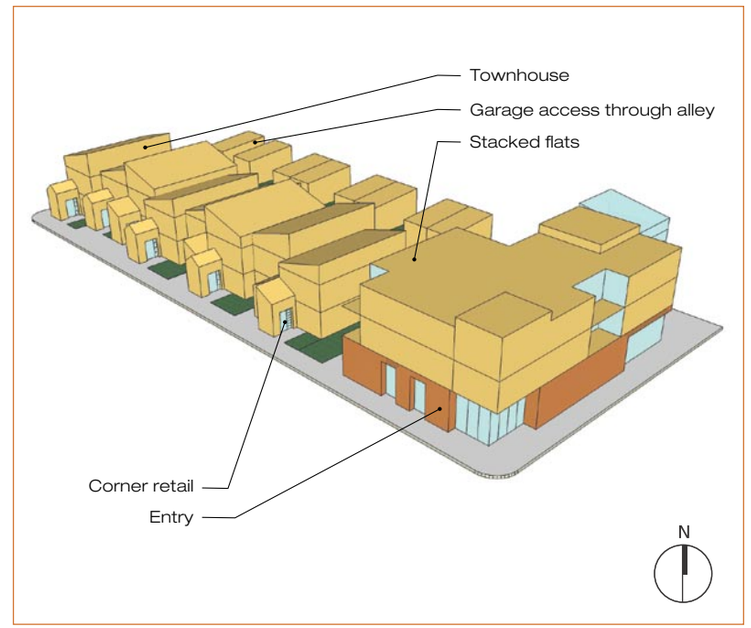


Top Residential Over Retail

Bottom Adaptive-Reuse/Residential



Half block study with stacked flats over corner retail



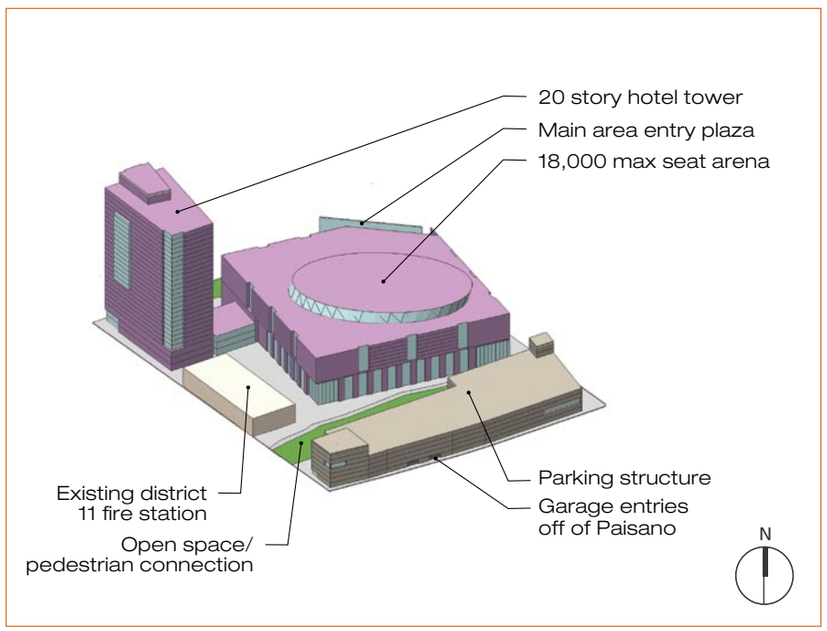
Half block study with townhomes and stacked flats over corner retail

Convention/Entertainment/Arena (E1)

The purpose of this land use category is to develop an entertainment and convention district that is a regional and national draw. At the core of this land use category is a new multi-purpose arena, the specific location of which will be determined at a later date. Additional new uses should be created that support the arena and the existing convention center. These include hotels, retail, night clubs and other related uses. The buildings in this district will likely have a large footprint and buildings of up to 30 stories are allowed to accommodate hotel or other significant uses. Parking garages that support the arena, convention center and adjacent lifestyle district are expected and allowed in this land use category. Strong visual and pedestrian-oriented connections should be made between the uses in this land use category, the historic business district and the lifestyle retail area.

Top MIller Park, Milwaukee, WI

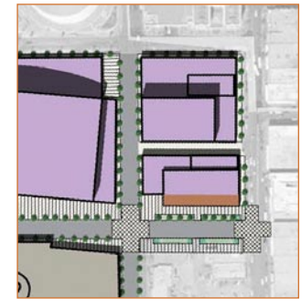
Bottom Columbus, Ohio

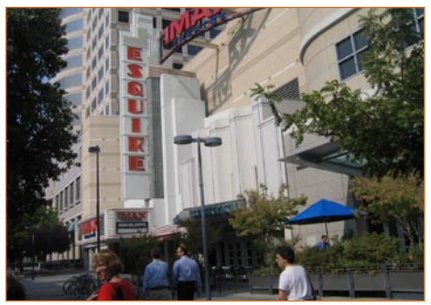


Study of arena on Leon/Sante Fe Site (Site B)

Entertainment/Hotel (E2)

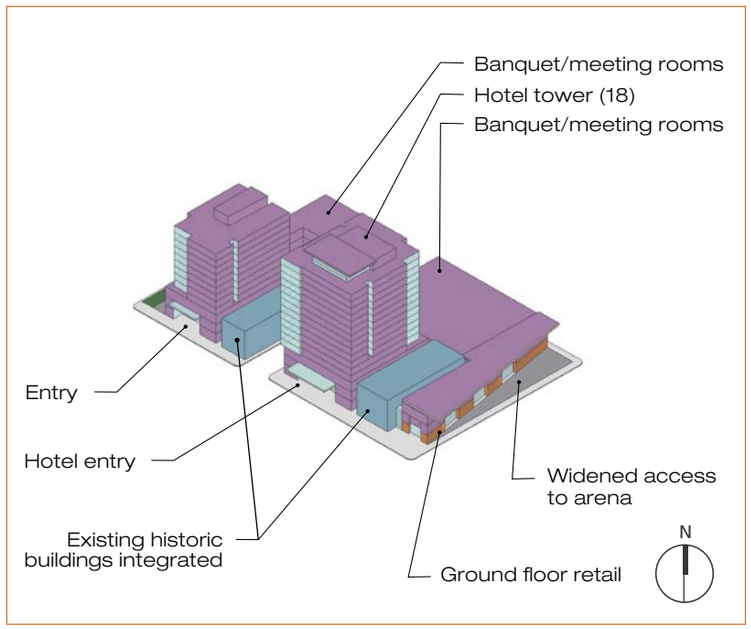
This land use category is located between the Lifestyle district to the east and the Convention/Entertainment/Arena area to the west. Its purpose is to provide a gradual transition between the large scale buildings in the entertainment area and the more pedestrian-oriented nature of the lifestyle retail area while allowing for uses that support both districtsBuildings up to 30 stories are allowed to acommodate hotels, retail, and entertainment uses. The primary building type allowed in this category is the commercial/residential block. Retail is expected on the ground floor of many buildings and art galleries that related to the Bi-National Arts walk are encouraged. Residential uses may be allowed on a case-by-case basis.



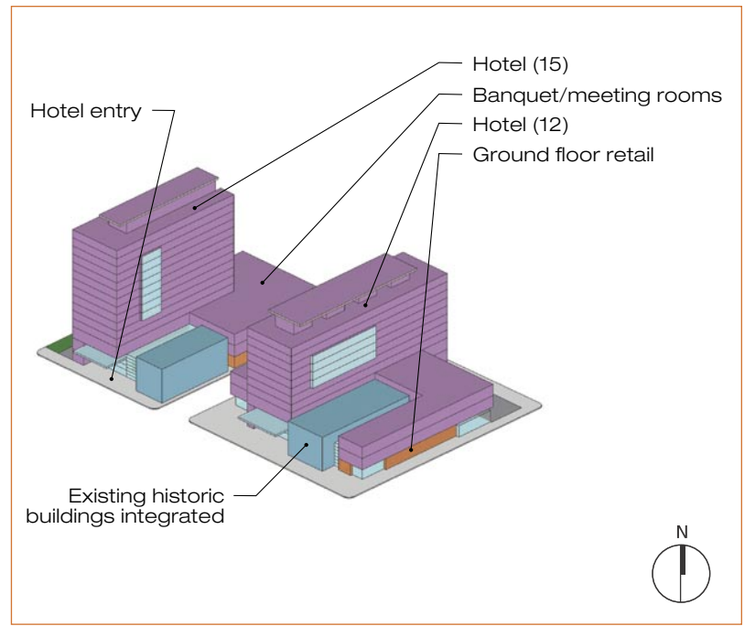


Top Boutique Hotel

Bottom Multi-Plex Cinema



Study on hotel site with 12-18 story hotel tower (core with rooms on all sides)



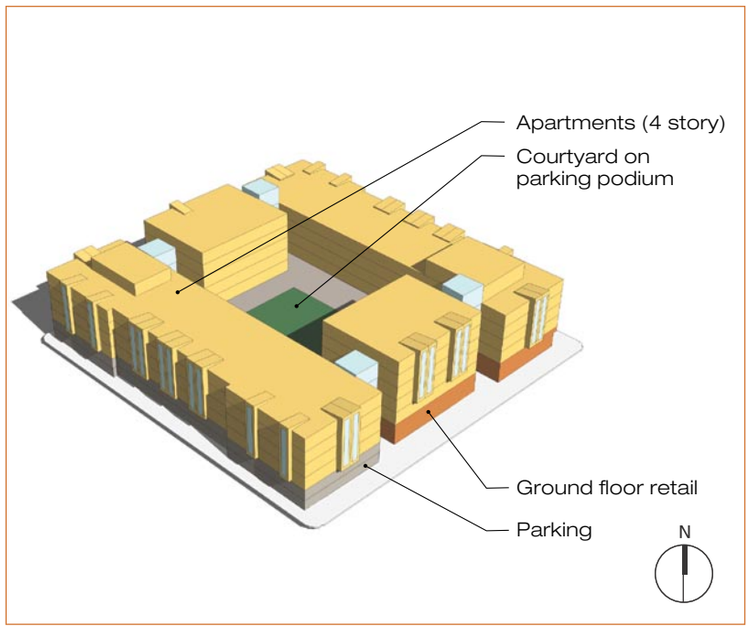
Study on hotel site with 10-15 story hotel (double-loaded corridor)

Lifestyle Retail 1 (LR 1)

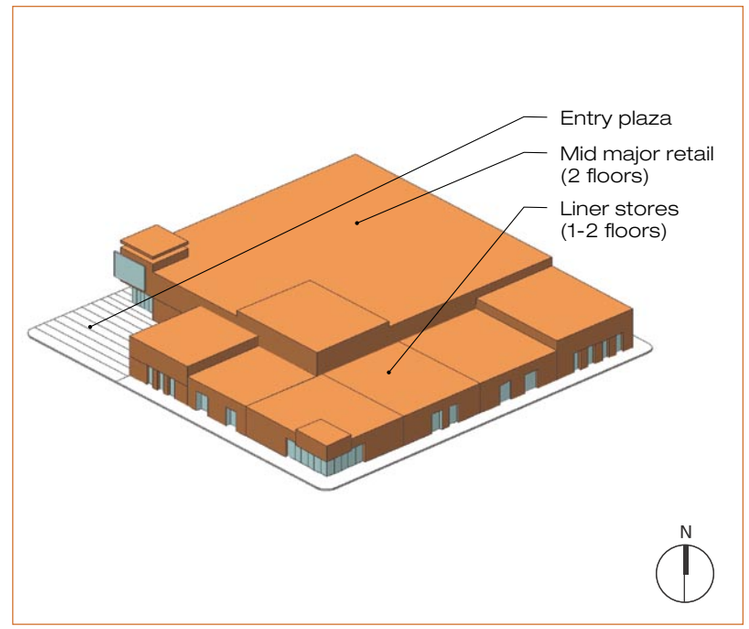
This land use category is designed to create a new, vibrant retail and residential district for downtown El Paso. The uses and design should be decidedly pedestrian in nature. Small-scale ground floor retail is required in all buildings and on all streets fronting the new First Street; upper floors with retail, office or residential are strongly encouraged. The building type required in this district is the commercial/residential block. Parking for the district is expected to be in structures and located behind the retail uses on First Street.

Top Shopping Street

Bottom Pedestrian Street



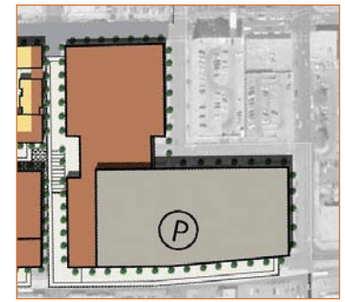
Full block study of residential over ground floor commercial and podium structure



Full block study of mid major retail lined with liner stores

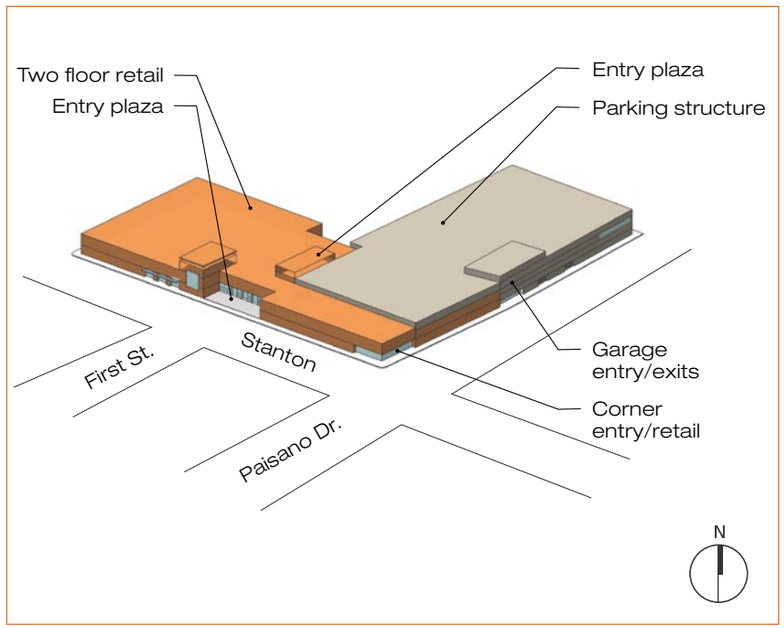
Lifestyle Retail 2 (LR 2)

This land use category is for a single, large format retail stores at the eastern terminus of First Street. The retail use should be a minimum of 150,000 square feet and the building should be two to three stories in height. The building type should follow the guidelines and standards for the commercial/residential block building. Parking should be located behind the building with its access from Paisano.



Top Chicago

Bottom West Palm Beach



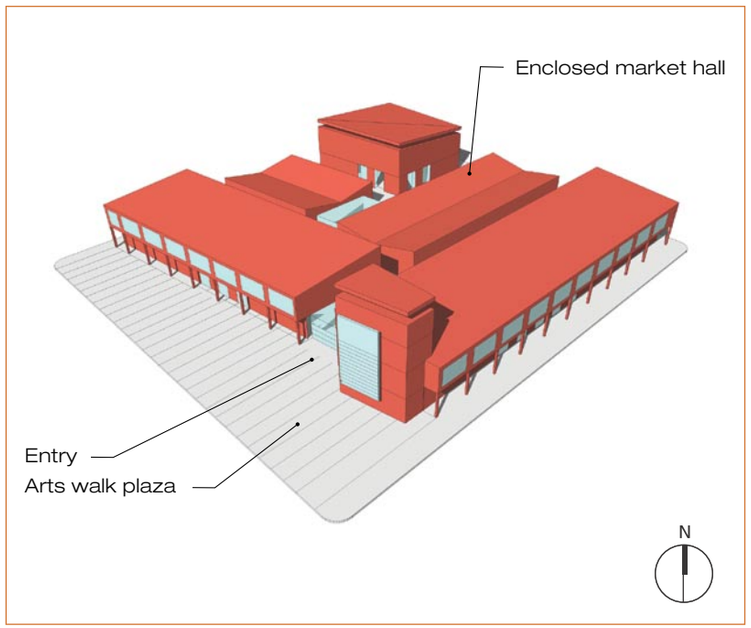
Major retail study with parking structure

Mercado (M)

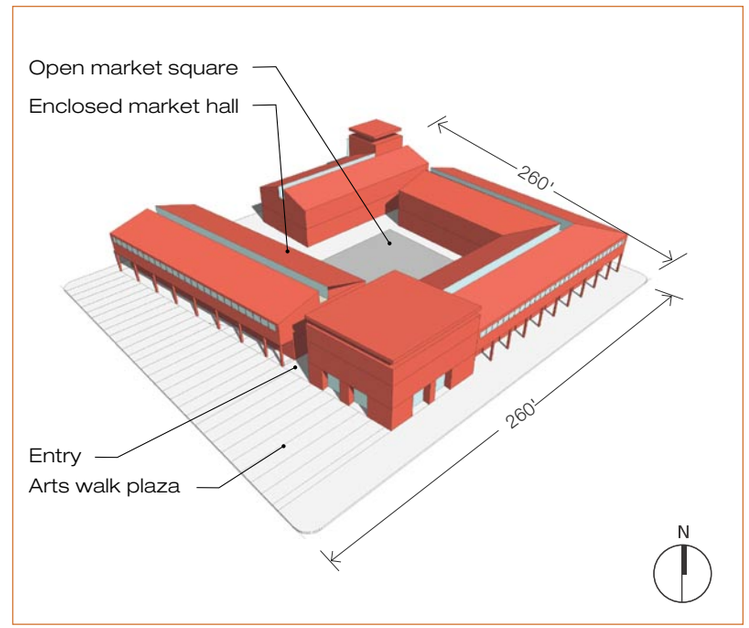
This land use category is for a new retail market that will be located south of Paisano and adjacent to, or integrated with, the Bi-National Arts Walk. The vision of the Mercado is a collection of small retail spaces in a public market setting. The spaces will accommodate a range of retail uses including art galleries, retail stores selling specialty goods, farmers market, and small-scale restaurants. The structure is expected to be a transparent and flexible space of one to four stories that can accommodate a diversity of retailers in an open and inviting environment. Parking for the use will be located off-site.

Top Santee Alley

Bottom Market Hall



Mercado study with narrow pedestrian alleys



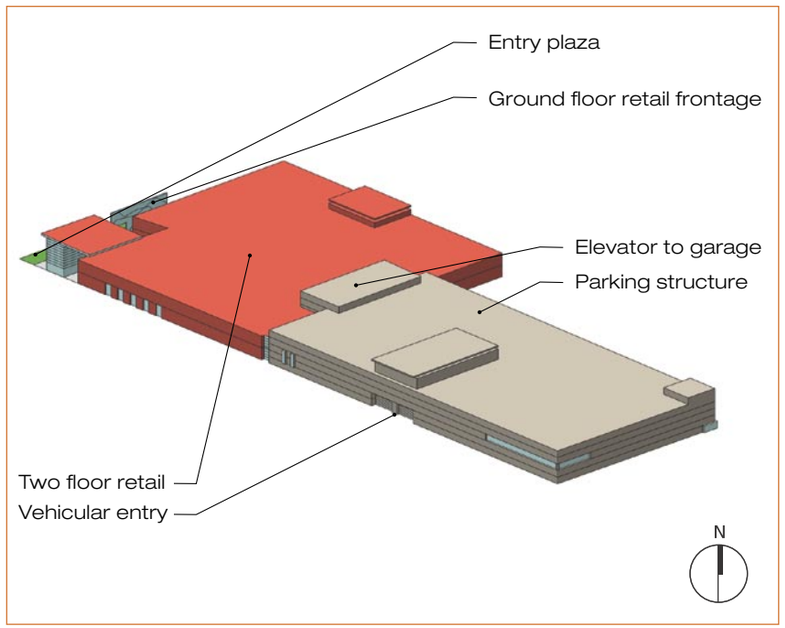
Mercado study with open market court

Border Retail (B)

Located on the southern edge of the downtown area and close to Juarez, Mexico, the border retail land use category is envisioned as a single, large-format retail store. The building is expected to be one to two stories in height with approximately 150,000 square feet of retail space. The building type should follow the guidelines and standards for the commercial/residential block building. Parking can be located either as surface parking or in a structure but most not be located adjacent to Mixed Use 2 residential area. The border retail use should have a major entry plaza that serves visitors from both Juarez and El Paso.

Top Chicago

Bottom Los Angeles



Border retail study with major retail and parking structure

Allowable Uses

Each land use category has designated appropriate land uses and activities that support the vision of the District while being compatible with current and future uses. The designation of uses is not intended to restrict activity but to encourage a mix of appropriate uses throughout the downtown. Residential development along with commercial development is encouraged throughout the downtown in mixed use scenarios in appropriate building forms. Following is a table of the uses that are permitted by right, the conditional uses and the uses that are not permitted in each land use category.

Public open space and pubic uses are allowed in any use district.

Allowed Use
Conditional Use
Use is Not Allowed

Notes:

1) "Personal Service" shops (not include those specifically mentioned above) for the conduct of businesses including travel agency, barber shop, tailor, shoe repair, clothing repair, jewelry repair or manufacturing, photo studio, pet grooming, loan/mortgage, realty, copy centers

2) "Retail Shops" for the conduct of retail businesses (excluding those specifically listed above) including sales of accessories, antiques, appliances, art or art supplies, beverages (excluding alcohol), carpets, clothing, drugs, fabrics, food, furniture, garden supplies, groceries, hardware, hobby supply, jewelry, office supplies, stationary, paint, pet store and supplies, sporting goods, toy shop, tobacco shop, video sales, wallpaper, and similar stores and shops.

Allowable uses by Land Use District

Type of Use

Public/Civic	R	MUR 1	MUR2	E1	E2	LR1	LR2	M	BR
Arena									
Churches									
Community Recreation Facility, open or enclosed									
Convention Center									
Day Care Facility									
Library									
Parking Garages									
Post Office									
Public Safety (police and fire)									
Recreation Center									
School, public or private									

Office/Professional Uses	R	MUR 1	MUR2	E1	E2	LR1	LR2	M	BR
Data Processing Center									
Research Laboratory									
Offices									

Commercial/Service/Retail	R	MUR 1	MUR2	E1	E2	LR1	LR2	M	BR
Alcohol Beverage Sales									
Adult Congregate Care Facility									
Adult Novelty/Entertainment									
Appliance Sales and Service									
Art Galleries									
Artist Studio									
Automotive accessories sales									
Automotive repair									
Automotive sales									
Bed and Breakfast									
Billiard hall									
Boarding House/Lodging House									
Cellular transmission									
Dance Studios/Dance halls									
Fast food restaurant (with drive thru)									
Gasoline stations									
Hotel									
Manufacturing and assembly									
Motel									
Mortuary									
Newspaper and similar printing establishments									
Night club									
Pawn shop									
Personal service shops (see #1 below for detail)									
Physical fitness and health clubs									
Private clubs and lodges									
Radio or TV broadcasting studios									
Retail Shops (see #2 below for detail)									
Storage facility									
Theater/Entertainment (movie, playhouse)									
Transportation terminal									

Residential	R	MUR 1	MUR2	E1	E2	LR1	LR2	M	BR
Residential, Single-family and multi-family dwellings									
Carriage Units									
Live/Work									

Allowable building types by Land Use District

Building Type	R	MUR1	MUR2	E1	E2	LR1	LR2	M	BR
Single-Family	■								
Townhouse/Rowhouse	■	■	■						
Duplex, Triplex, Quadplex	■		■						
Apartment	■	■	■						
Commercial/Residential Block		■	■		■	■	■	■	■
Tower				■	■				
Parking Garage				■			■		■
Special Use Buildings									
- Mercado								■	
- Arena				■					
- Civic				■	■		■		

Building Types

Each land use category has designated appropriate building types. These building types accomodate a variety of housing types, mixed use scenarios, and commercial development. The following is a table showing the allowable building types by land use category. Detailed information on each of the building types, such as design guidelines and development standards, can be found in the Design Guidelines section of the plan in Chapter 4. There are two special building types - the Mercado and the Arena - for which specific guidance is not provided since the buildings have unique uses and functions in the redevelopment of Downtown El Paso and they will be subject to project specific review.

Transportation Overview

Overall Transportation Impacts of Downtown Plan

The general transportation impacts caused by implementation of the Downtown Plan 2015 are addressed below by redevelopment district. Overall, the current transportation and circulation system should be able to address initial development of downtown plan elements. Development of the Arena and Border Retail areas will cause congestion at some intersections which will need to be addressed as specific plans are developed for these areas. Further study and traffic projections are needed for the one way streets of Kansas and Campbell, Frankin and Missouri Streets before recommendations are made to ensure good traffic flow to and from Interstate Highway 10 to downtown areas.

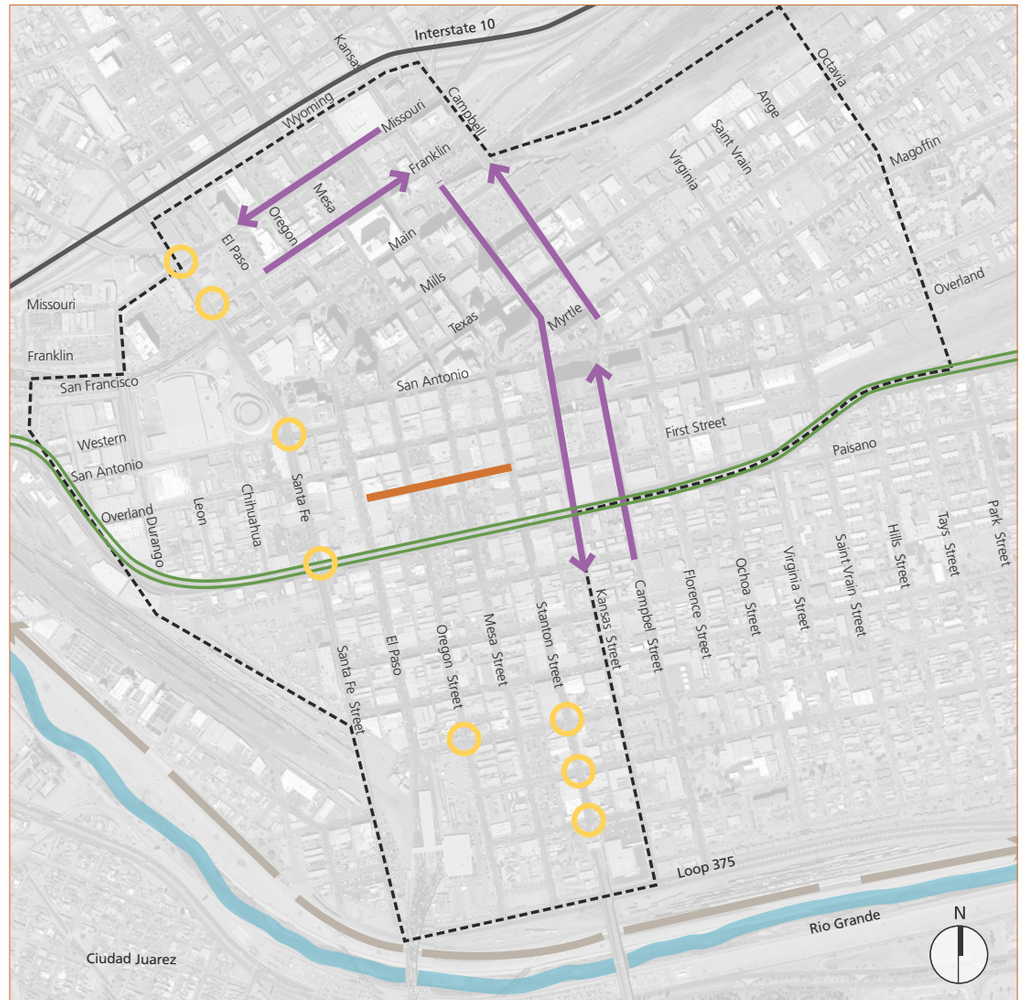
The overall transportation strategy is concerned with movement both to and from downtown and within the downtown area itself. The strategy for future development should facilitate local and regional access on existing and proposed streets and highways so that the downtown core can be easily reached by all residents and visitors of El Paso.

First Street: Lifestyle Retail District

The transportation impacts on this District at the beginning of any development will be minimal. There is adequate access from the north to this district from Interstate Highway 10 and also from the south from Paisano Drive. With the extension of First Street this area will have additional street connection to the existing street network.

Santa Fe Street: Convention/Entertainment/Arena

The existing traffic access to this area from Interstate Highway 10 is from the east along Missouri Street which is one-way street west from Interstate Highway 10. The access from the west Interstate Highway 10 is along Wyoming Street. These two streets have sufficient stacking length from Interstate Highway 10 although there might be congestion due to the traffic signals on the intersecting streets. The access from the



Downtown Plan Transportation Issues

Transportation Issues Legend

- One-Way Traffic
  Flows to and from Downtown to Freeway
- Street Intersections
  With Potential Traffic Congestion
- Proposed Alignment
  of Southern Relief Route
- First Street Extension
- Major Arterial
- Downtown Study Area Boundary

Top Paisano Drive

Bottom Border Traffic

south is from Paisano Drive with the Border Highway also serving as an access artery. If an arena is built in this district the transportation impacts will increase. The proposed Southern Relief Route that is being studied by the Texas Department of Transportation might serve as an access into this area of downtown.

Some of the street intersections in this area might see an increase in traffic from the development in this District. Two of those intersections will be Santa Fe and San Antonio Streets and Santa Fe Street and Paisano Drive.

Oregon/Mesa: Mercado District and Residential Infill

There will be increases in traffic surrounding the proposed Mercado. The area has access from all directions; Paisano Drive on the north; Mesa Street, Stanton Street and El Paso Street on the east and west; and from the Border Highway on the south. The increase in traffic from the residential infill can be handled by the existing streets in this area, traffic will need to utilize off-street parking resources.

Rio Grande: Border Retail

This district will see significant increases in transportation activity. The increased traffic that this development will generate will impact the street intersections in the area. Significant impacts will be felt from traffic coming from Juarez through the Paso del Norte international bridge. The intersections that will have the most impact will be Oregon and 6th Streets, Stanton Street at its intersections with 6th, 7th, and 8th Streets. The street that will see the most increase in traffic will probably be 6th Street because of the traffic generated by the international traffic from the Paso del Norte International Bridge.

Magoffin/San Antonio Neighborhood Residential Mixed Use

The transportation impacts of new development in this area can be handled by the existing street network. The area has adequate access from all points of the city. The City of El Paso has made considerable improvements to the streets in the area such as portions of San Antonio and Magoffin Avenues. These streets have had improvements to the pavement, drainage, sidewalks, lighting and landscaping.

Impacts of Planned Local and State Transportation Improvements on Downtown Plan

The Central Business District street improvements are ongoing City projects addressing improvements to the pavement, drainage, and utilities for many downtown streets in the redevelopment area and in the Incentive District in the historic downtown.

The Texas Department of Transportation is in the planning phase for the Southern Relief Route (SRR) which will take traffic from Interstate Highway10 to the Border Highway and will go on the southern edge of the proposed downtown development area. There are different options for this route, but alternatives to allow additional access to the downtown area via the SRR should be encouraged. The Chihuahuita Neighborhood Plan has specific recommendations regarding the proposed SRR and its potential impact on the neighborhood.

Options to Reduce Existing and Future Traffic Impacts on Downtown Area

Some of the options that can alleviate the traffic impacts on the downtown area may be the improvement of the Sun Metro System with more reliable bus service to the University of Texas at El Paso campus and other outlying areas of the city; the construction of the Camino Real Transit Terminal by Sun Metro; and the possibility of a light rail system from the international border to the downtown area.

Mass Transit Improvements

Downtown 2015 needs to be a balanced system that includes transportation systems that facilitate movement by individual cars, by pedestrians, and by mass transit. Increasing levels of visitation will require improvements to the existing transit system. A strategy for these enhancements will require further study of the downtown area as development increases and will be pursued on a case by case basis through discussions with Sun Metro. Service should be expanded along existing lines of transit and build on investments in the Oregon Street Transit Mall and the proposed International Bus Terminal.

Areas Requiring Additional Study

Additional study is necessary to determine project specific traffic impacts and required mitigations and improvements. These studies should also develop preliminary cost estimates for both public and private transportation improvements.

Specific areas of additional study include determining the impacts of construction of an arena in the Santa Fe Convention/Entertainment/Arena District in terms of the streets system around the area as well as the impact on the access from Intestate Highway 10 and the Border highway for traffic coming from the east and west of the City. Another area that will need additional study is the traffic coming from Juarez through the Paso del Norte international bridge and having as destination the Rio Grande Border Retail district. Other studies that need to be done are the improvements to the streets such as pavement and sidewalks replacement. No cost can be defined at this time until such studies are completed.

A larger regional study of multi-model transit options connecting downtown with outlying areas is recommended.

Infrastructure Overview

Impacts of Downtown Plan on Infrastructure Capacity

In general the existing water, sewer, power, gas and telecommunications infrastructure has adequate capacity to serve the needs of the proposed downtown development. There might be need to investigate the storm water system in localized areas that might have drainage problems.

Summary of Needed Infrastructure Improvements for Specific Projects

As the city develops its comprehensive flood control and storm water management plan, an opportunity exists to further analyze the potential for new infrastructure along the Rio Grande. The city should investigate similar storm water control and placemaking strategies as San Antonio used in developing their Riverwalk as a connection between the riverfront and the downtown area.

As development of the proposed improvements takes place, investigation will be needed of any potential infrastructure improvements for a particular project. For example if the arena, a hotel and the Rio Grande Border Retail are built, there will be the need to investigate what type of improvements are required for the water, wastewater, and storm water infrastructure adjacent to these projects.

Infrastructure improvements will then most likely become the responsibility of the individual developer of each project. At this time there is not insufficient information on any of the proposed projects to identify infrastructure improvements required.

Downtown Surface and Structure Parking

Parking: Demand And Capacity

Inventory of Existing Parking Supply

First Street: Lifestyle Retail District

This District has some off street parking lots that at present serve as long term parking for people going downtown for shopping or to conduct business. On some of these surface parking lots are daily flea markets. There is on street parking that is metered and most of the day this parking is occupied. There are no current structured garages in this area.

Santa Fe Street: Convention/Entertainment/Arena

In this District there are also off street parking areas that serve as long term parking. There is also on street parking that is metered on most of the existing streets. The El Paso Convention and Performing Arts Center has a two story parking garage and Sun Metro has recently completed a multi story parking garage south of the City Hall building.

Oregon/Mesa: Mercado District and Residential Infill

There are some small off street parking areas in this district and as with the previous districts there is on street parking that is occupied most of the day.

Rio Grande: Border Retail

In this district the existing parking is mostly on street parking and not much off street parking. The on street parking is not metered so it is used not only for short term but also for long term parking.

Magoffin/San Antonio Neighborhood Residential Mixed Use

In this district most of the existing parking is on street parking that is used by the residents of the area. There are some off-street parking lots at the west portion of the district.

The County of El Paso has one parking structure that serves as parking for people conducting County business and for people reporting for jury duty. This parking structure is open for use for general public parking. However this parking structure is not used during evening and night hours for County business; it might be able to be used in the future for evening and night events.

Impacts of New Parking Demands on Existing Supply

First Street: Lifestyle Retail District.

There will be considerable demand on the existing parking supply in this district, especially with the development of retail development along the proposed extension of First Street. The existing on street parking will not be able to handle additional demand.

Santa Fe Street: Convention/Entertainment/Arena

This district will be the district with the most parking demand especially if a hotel, arena and other entertainment venues are built. The hotel and arena will be the developments that will require significant parking available when the developments are open.

Oregon/Mesa: Mercado District and Residential Infill

In this district the parking impacts of the development of the Mercado will be more significant than the demands for the residential infill development.

Rio Grande: Border Retail

The development of the Border Retail will have a major impact on the existing parking in this area. There is not sufficient on street parking for the demand that this type of development will require.

Magoffin/San Antonio Neighborhood Residential Mixed Use

The parking impacts on this district will not be as significant as in the other districts. This area is already residential with other uses and the on street parking in some of the streets can handle the residential use. Any future commercial development can be developed with its own parking.

Estimated Additional Downtown Parking Demand

	RETAIL	PARKING	
Redevelopment Districts	**(approx sf.)**	**ratio**	**count**
1. First Street: Lifestyle Retail District	600,000	3.0	1,800
2. Santa Fe Street: Convention/Entertainment/Arena		1 sp/ 4 seats	4,500
3. Oregon/Mesa: Mercado District and Residential Infill	200,000	2.0	400
4. Rio Grande: Border Retail	300,000	4.0	1,200
5. Magoffin/San Antonio Neighborhood: Residential Mixed Use	195,000	0.0	0
TOTAL	**1,295,000**		**7,900**

Top County Parking Structure
Bottom Downtown Surface Lot

Parking Strategy to Accommodate Parking Demand

Overall, an anticipated 7,900 new parking spaces will be required if the proposed development program is realized. This parking demand will be gradual as projects are built out over time. Overall, existing parking resources should accommodate the First Street and Mercado retail expansion. The arena project however, would create a new demand of 4,500 parking spaces. The arena creates the most acute need, which requires a dedicated structure as part of the arena project.

Parking demand created by the new First Street Retail and Mercado could be accommodated in existing structures and new structures as demand increases. In this case, patrons would be required to walk a few blocks for shopping or other destinations which supports the downtown concept of a walkable, activated streetscape well used by pedestrians. The Border Retail, with a projected demand of 1,200 spaces, would require a dedicated parking structure adjacent to the retail facility.

Shared Parking Arrangement

One potential strategy to address parking future parking demand in the continuous areas of significant future demand (Lifestyle Retail, Convention/Entertainment/Arena, and Mercado District) is to design a shared parking arrangement. In this arrangement initial new demand will be addressed in the existing parking structures such as the County parking structure, the existing Sun Metro structure, and the El Paso Convention and Performing Arts Center. Structures that have significant daytime use would then be able to accommodate night-time demand. Additional demand on the western edge of these districts could be addressed also by the planned Sun Metro parking structure at the corner of Santa Fe and Third (the Camino Real Transit Terminal). In this scenario the development of an arena, hotels, and the First Street anchor retail will require their own parking structures to be provided most likely by the private developer.

Downtown Parking District

Another strategy will be the formation of a parking district for the entire downtown development area in which all downtown developments fund in the construction of parking facilities that can be shared by all the proposed developments. In addition to existing parking structures, areas are already identified for major parking structures that could be constructed with funds from the parking district assessment. These include parking structures adjacent to the planned arena site and the First Street anchor retail. These facilities can be further defined as the development progresses.

Options to Reduce Future Parking Demand

Parking demand will increase as the development program is realized. Some of the options to reduce future traffic demand might be the use of more Sun Metro routes that can bring people from the outlying areas of the city into the downtown area. There has been discussion of a light rail line to move people from the border area into the historic downtown and civic areas. These options should receive additional study, but by themselves will not significantly reduce downtown parking demand.

A downtown which supports substantial residential development will help with reducing the parking demand for shopping and entertainment. Ultimately however, the El Paso region needs to address a comprehensive mass transit solution that is a combination of identifying mass transit corridors, increasing residential and mixed use density along these corridors, and providing for the development of a multi-model transit system that can bring people to downtown in a fast and convenient way. The downtown could then be the hub of such a system both further increasing the number of people that arrive downtown and those that arrive without a car.

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Parking and Transportation Strategy **97**
District and Catalyst Projects **101**
Building Types and Forms **110**

4

Urban Design Guidelines & Development Standards

The following Design Guidelines set minimum standards for all new development and building renovation in downtown El Paso. These guidelines complement the existing Downtown Historic District Guidelines and current zoning regulations. When these guidelines are in conflict with any existing City Ordinance or Historic Guidelines, the more restrictive regulation shall apply.

General Urban Design Guidelines

The following general guidelines set overall directions for downtown El Paso and are applicable to all development.

1. Emphasize El Paso

To promote the long-term viability of downtown El Paso, it is critical to recognize the value of downtown as a vital urban core with a rich architectural and cultural heritage, both of which should be carefully considered to ensure that new development is authentic to El Paso.

- The form, rhythm, materials, and character established by the historic and significant buildings are defining components in downtown El Paso and should be reinforced and enhanced by renovation and new construction. Historic buildings should not be mimicked or trivialized, but the character of street frontage and building quality should serve as a guide for renovation and new development.
- The rich history and culture of El Paso and the downtown area offer many stories, traditions, and inspirations that can influence new development. New development should incorporate these resources in architectural design and public art.

Top Left Emphasize El Paso: form, materials, and character

Top Right Emphasize El Paso: form, materials, and character

Bottom Emphasize El Paso: dynamic street level retail

Emphasize El Paso: form, materials, and character

Emphasize El Paso: form, materials, and character

2. Create a Pedestrian-oriented Downtown

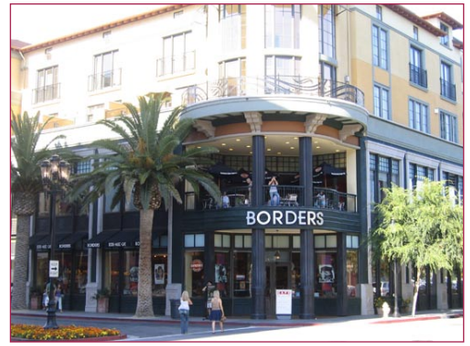
Streets in the historic downtown core of El Paso have transparent storefronts, frequent entries, active uses, and continuous building walls. Careful consideration of these traditions is critical for new development, especially large scale development, as they are the essential components of an inviting pedestrian street.

Entries

- All buildings shall have a principal façade and entry facing (with operable doors) a public street or open space.
- Building entrances should be prominent and easy to identify.
- Retail entries should be accessed from the sidewalk.

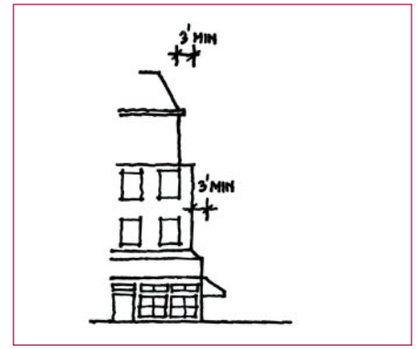
Building Wall

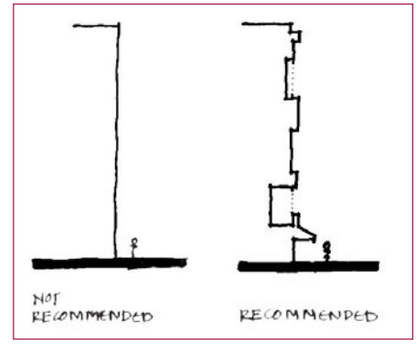
- Building walls should have perceivable thickness, visual interest, and character. A selection of architectural details such as vertical and horizontal recesses and projections, changes in height, floor levels, roof forms, parapets, cornice treatments, belt courses, pilasters, window reveals, and forms, and color as appropriate to each site can create shadows and texture and add to the character of a building.
- Street level frontage adjacent to public streets or open spaces should be primarily devoted to entrances, shop windows, or other displays.
- A window to wall proportion of 30-50% is recommended for upper stories.
- Windows should be inset a minimum of three inches from the exterior wall surface to add visual relief to the wall. This window reveal is especially important on stucco buildings.
- Walls should be articulated at a minimum every 50 feet. Articulation may include storefront bays with modulating building elements such as recesses, projections, expressed entries, building form, columns, pilasters, and/or other clearly expressed architectural details.
- In order to reinforce the pedestrian scale of the sidewalk, an expression line should be used to architecturally distinguish the ground floor from the upper façade. Expression lines and cornices should consist of either a molding extending a minimum of 4 inches, or a change in the surface plane of the building wall greater than 8 inches.



Top Prominent Building Entries

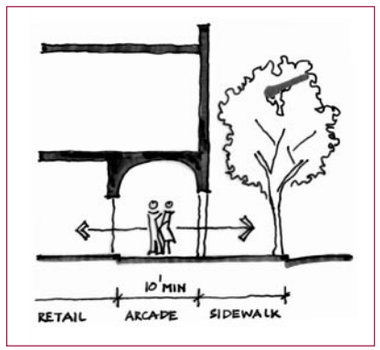
Bottom Building walls should have perceivable thickness, visual interest, and character



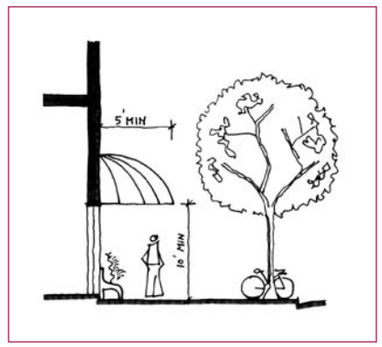


Top Step-backs should be a minimum of 2' or 3' in depth

Bottom Building walls should have visual interest and character



Arcades are encouraged on retail streets



Top Articulate the base, middle and top of buildings

Bottom Integrate awnings and canopies

- Step-backs, setbacks, and height changes should be a minimum of 2-3 feet in depth.
- In order to modulate their scale, multi-story buildings should articulate the base, middle, and top, separated by cornices, string cornices, step-backs or other articulating features.

Arcades are encouraged to provide shade for pedestrians.

- Arcades should be built to the property line and should not extend over the sidewalk.
- Arcades should be no less than 10 feet wide clear in all directions to facilitate easy pedestrian access to storefronts.
- Along primary retail frontages, the arcade should correspond to storefront openings.

Awnings, canopies, recessed entries, and other features that provide shade for pedestrians are strongly encouraged and should be integrally designed with the building.

- Awnings should fit within enframed storefronts.
- Awning shape, size, color, and material should be consistent with the architectural style and character of the building.
- Awnings should be compatible with adjacent awnings.
- Awning shape, size, and height should be proportional to the façade.
- Awnings and marquees shall occur forward of the setback and may encroach within the right-of-way, but shall not extend past the curb line.
- Minimum dimensions apply to first floor awnings only. There are no minimum requirements for awnings above the first floor.

  Depth: 5' minimum

  Height: 10' minimum clear

  Length: 25% to 100% of Building Front

  Awnings shall be made of fabric or metal.

  High-gloss or plasticized fabrics are prohibited.

Storefronts

Inviting and transparent storefronts are a critical component in creating an attractive and inviting downtown. Frequent entries, continuous display windows, obvious locations for signs, and sensitively scaled proportions, should be incorporated into new as well remodeled storefronts.

- Reflect the historic storefront rhythms and proportions found throughout downtown.
- Include standard storefront elements such as large display windows with clear glass, bulkheads, recessed entries, transom windows, and appropriate locations for signs.
- Clear, un-tinted and non-reflective glass shall be used at street level to allow maximum visual interaction between pedestrians and the interior of the building.
- Bottoms of the storefront windows shall be between 1 and 3 feet above sidewalk grade, separated from the ground by a bulkhead. Bulkheads might be a panel of tile or other material that is heavier that the wall materials.
- Storefronts shall remain unshuttered at night and shall provide clear views of interior spaces lit from within.
- Multiple storefronts within the same building should be visually compatible in terms of scale, alignment, color, and materials.
- Maintain a regular rhythm of storefronts along a block with entrances every 50', on average. Continuous length of flat retail walls is not permitted.
- Except for recessed entries, arcades, and similar features that provide benefit for pedestrians, storefronts should be built to the property line. Recessed portions should not diminish the streetwall.
- Retail frontage should consider recessed entries, recessed or projecting bays, expression of architectural or structural modules and detail, and/or variations such as surface relief, expressed joints and details, color and texture. Recessed bays should be a minimum of 2 feet deep.
- Recommended treatments for recessed entries include special paving materials such as ceramic tile, ornamental ceilings such as coffering, and/or decorative light fixtures.
- Entries and doors should be substantial and well-detailed. Doors should match the materials, design and character of the display window framing. Narrowline aluminum frame doors are not recommended.
- A minimum of 75% of the storefront area should be transparent. Where privacy is desired for restaurants, professional services, and similar uses, windows should be divided into smaller panes.
- Clerestory windows are horizontal panels of glass between the storefront and the second floor. They are a traditional element of retail buildings and are recommended for storefronts. Clerestory windows can be good locations for neon, painted window, and other non-obtrusive types of signs.
- New storefronts in existing buildings should be compatible with the character of the building in terms of materials, colors, and architectural details.

Create inviting and transparent storefronts

Maximize the percentage of transparency

Consider clerestory windows for more light

Linear buildings provide activity on the street

Large-Footprint Buildings

To promote a pedestrian-friendly streetscape, Large Footprint Buildings must reinforce the pattern, scale and character of downtown El Paso.

- Large Footprint buildings should front the sidewalk, providing windows and doors at frequent intervals.
- On primary streets, operable doorways should occur, on average, every 50 feet for the length of the street frontage. Primary streets include First Street, El Paso Street, Stanton Street, Oregon Street, and Sixth Street.
- Liner buildings or laminate uses should be attached or adjacent to the outside of large footprint buildings to relieve large blank façades and provide activity fronting public streets. Liner buildings and laminate uses include retail, office, and residential uses.
- Loading docks, service areas and trash disposal facilities shall not face directly an open space or public street.

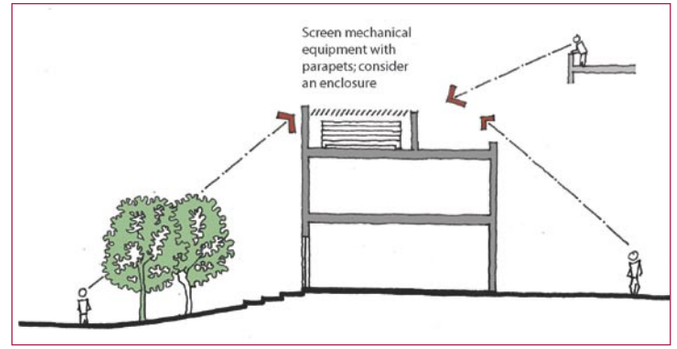
3. Promote High Quality Architecture

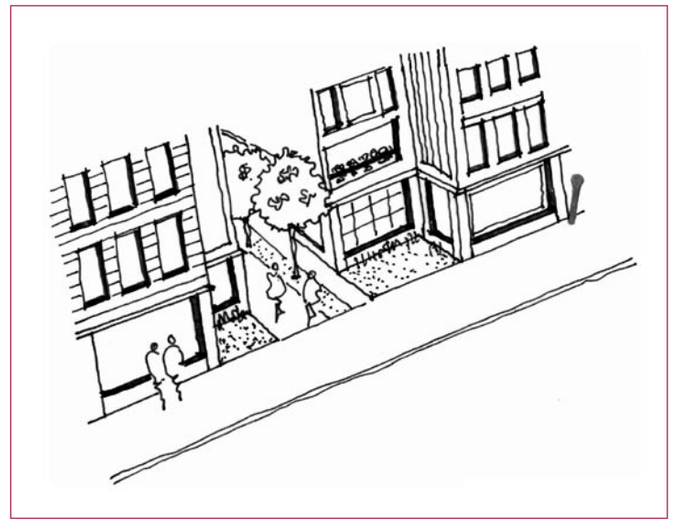
Building Massing and Organization

- Building forms and design should be appropriate to the intended use.
- Reflect and reinforce the scale, massing, proportions, rhythm, and attention to detailing established by the historic and significant buildings in downtown El Paso.
- Building mass should be articulated through variation in planes and wall surfaces, fenestration, height variation, and differences in materials or colors and surface articulations.
- Windows, wall panels, pilasters, building bays and storefronts should be based on a module derived from the building's structural bay spacing. Features based on this module should be carried across windowless walls to relieve blank, uninteresting surfaces
- Incorporate elements which break up the façade plane and create light and shadow.
- Vertical divisions of ground and upper floors should be consistent. Major horizontal elements of adjacent buildings and storefronts should align.
- Areas in which street corridors terminate on buildings are important architectural opportunities and should be designed in a manner that reflects their importance.
- Articulate side and rear facades in a manner compatible with the design of the front façade. Avoid blank wall surfaces on walls that are visible from streets or other public areas.

Roof Forms

- Roof forms should match the principal building in terms of style, detailing, and materials.
- Consider local precedents in the selection of roof forms.
- Flat roofs should be screened by parapets or fall-front sections of sloping roofs.
- Mechanical equipment shall be screened, organized and designed as a component of the roofscape, and not appear to be a leftover or add-on element.





Top Screen mechanical equipment

Bottom Articulate buiding mass through variation in planes and wall surfaces

Materials

- Approved Materials:

  Glass, Ceramic tile, Stucco / Painted stucco, Wood siding (residential), Hardie plank (residential), Textured or colored concrete block, Poured-in-place concrete, Pre-cast concrete, Stone and stone veneers, Brick and brick veneer

- Consider El Paso and southwestern precedents in the selection of building materials. Buildings and streets should use materials that are appropriate to local climate and use.
- New materials should reflect the character of downtown El Paso and should be selected to convey a sense of quality, durability and permanence.
- The palette of wall materials should be kept to a minimum, preferably two or less. Using the same wall materials as adjacent or nearby buildings helps strengthen the district character.
- Where more than one material is used, traditionally heavier materials (stone, brick, concrete with stucco, etc.) shall be located below lighter materials (wood, fiber cement board, siding, etc). The change in material shall occur along a horizontal line, preferably at the floor level.
- Use materials with regard to their traditional structural capacity. Veneer finishes should be configured in a way that corresponds with the material's traditional load-bearing configuration.
- Buildings should use materials that are durable, economically maintained, and of a quality that will retain their appearance over time.
- Where side façades are built of a different material than the front façade, the front façade material shall extend around the corner and along the side façade for a minimum of 18".
- Use high-quality detailing for new buildings and replacement elements.
- Full size brick veneer is preferable to brick tile. Brick veneers should be mortared to give the appearance of structural brick. If used, brick tile applications should use wraparound corner and bullnose pieces to minimize a veneer appearance.
- Stone and stone veneers are appropriate as a basic building material or as a special material for wall panels or sills in combination with other materials such as brick and concrete.
- Poured-in-place concrete and pre-cast concrete are appropriate as a basic building material with special consideration to formwork, pigments, and aggregates that can create rich surfaces. Accents such as ceramic tile or stone are recommended for decorative effect.
- Curtain wall systems are appropriate for upper floor commercial uses.
- Sheet metal parapet and cornice cap flashings should be painted to match wall or trim color and should be a minimum of 4 gauge to avoid "oil canning" distortion.

Details and Ornament

- Building details and ornamentation should contribute to the architectural character of downtown El Paso and should be integral to the design of the façade. Avoid applying ornament just for the sake of decoration.
- Incorporate details and ornament that are of a level of quality similar to those found on historic buildings in downtown El Paso.
- Incorporate details and ornament which are in scale and harmony with the overall building façade and which respect the historic character of El Paso.

Lighting

- Building lighting should highlight significant architectural features, signs, entrances, walkways, or display windows.
- Building lighting that blinks is not allowed.
- Provide lighting at building entrances and for security at ground level.
- Lighting should be integral to the design of the building.

Security

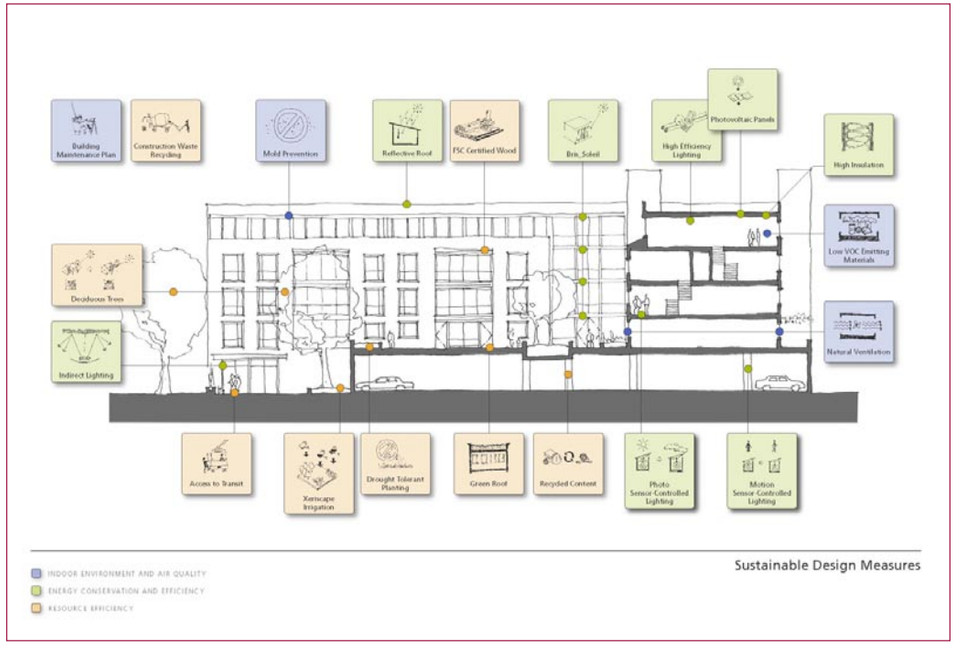
- Security grills and tracks should be carefully integrated into storefront design and concealed when not in use.
- Solid roll-down grilles are not permitted.

Signage

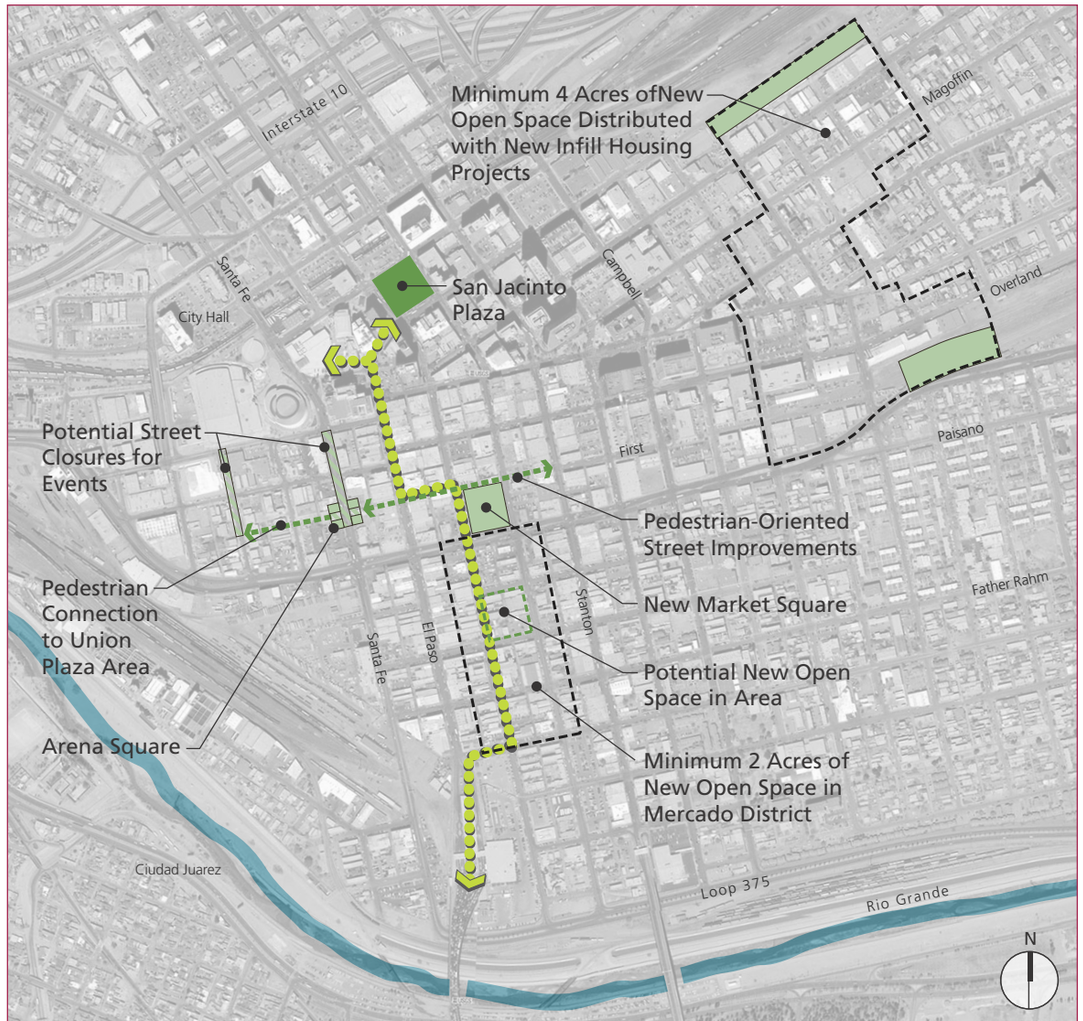
- Signs should be flat against the façade or mounted projecting from the façade.
- Signs that are externally lit from the front are recommended.
- Neon-lit signs are permitted only if size and location is controlled to prevent excessive light.
- Flashing signs and moving signs are not recommended.
- Retail signs along sidewalks shall be located a minimum of 8' above the pedestrian sidewalk.
- Signs shall not cover or obscure architectural elements.
- Individual tenant signs may be located on individual storefronts, over display windows and/or at entries.
- The maximum area of any single sign mounted perpendicular to a given façade shall not exceed 10 square feet.
- A sign may occupy up to 10% of the building façade area.

Sustainability

New development and renovation should consider the full range of measures and sustainable building products and landscaping that will minimize impact on the natural environment and conserve resources needed for construction and use. Special consideration will be given to developments that employ green design practices.



Consider a range of building sustainability measures



Downtown open space network

Public Realm Plan

The three components of the public realm plan for downtown El Paso, public open spaces, pedestrian-oriented streets, and a vibrant Bi-national Arts Walk, set the tone for a gracious and welcoming downtown. The plan identifies opportunities for new open spaces that complement existing neighborhoods and proposed projects, set a standard for pedestrian amenities, and provide a starting framework for arts and culture in downtown.

Together these components create opportunities for community engagement, stages for celebration, and places for everyday encounters all the while encouraging people to walk, explore, and linger throughout downtown. As important, a high quality public realm invites private investment and provides needed amenity to existing and future residents.

Open Space Elements

- Mixed Use Area with New Open Space Requirements
- Potential Open Space/Urban Plaza
- New Park
- Potential Street Closures for Events
- Major Pedestrian Street Improvements
- Bi-National Arts Walk

1. Public Open Spaces

The Public Open Spaces map identifies a network of existing and proposed open spaces in the redevelopment areas. The general program of each open space reflects its setting and its place in the overall network. These programs serve as a broad framework for design with an understanding that the final location and design of each open space will be developed with the community. The larger open space network should seek to provide new open spaces within each district of the plan area while complementing existing open spaces both within the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. As the city continues to develop the Rio Grande Trail Project, this open space network should be incorporated within the downtown's system of open spaces.

District 1—First Street: Lifestyle Retail District

A critical focal point of the First Street District is the proposed Market Square on First Street between Oregon and Mesa Streets. This space is envisioned as a dynamic and festive space, a window to First Street from Paisano that invites people to the activity of the retail district. Market Square should be a great place to rest and peoplewatch during a day of shopping, as well as a destination for programmed events. The design for this park should consider ample shade, both trees and structures, performance /event space, public restrooms, public markets, kiosks, cafes, and other formal/informal retail opportunities, and a strong cultural/arts component that incorporates the elements from the Bi-National Arts Walk.

Top Left First Street District: a dynamic and festive open space

Top Right First Street District: kiosks and retail opportunities

Bottom First Street District: kiosks and retail opportunities

District 2—Santa Fe Street: Convention/Entertainment/Arena

The open space in the Santa Fe Street District should complement the entertainment and events character of the area. It needs to be flexible for a variety of programming, as well as able to accommodate significant crowds of people in the area for events.

The proposed Arena Square is composed of building setback areas at the corners of First and Santa Fe Streets. As forecourts to the Arena, they should be large enough to allow for congregating both before and after events and to accommodate peak pedestrian flows. These spaces should be thought of as individual spaces, as well as part of the larger space of all four corners that are brought together during event nights with potential street closures of either First, Santa Fe, or both. The spaces should be primarily hardscape with space for outdoor seating, informal events, vendors, public art, and interesting lighting.

District 3—Oregon/Mesa: Mercado District and Residential Infill

A new open space along Oregon Street near the Mercado is recommended in the Mercado District, pending community input and the Segundo Barrio Plan that is currently being developed. This new open space will serve two important functions—it adds additional open space in a neighborhood that is currently underserved and provides a complement to both the Mercado and the Bi-national Arts Walk. The program might include activities for children and families, small-scale recreation, space for community events, and significant integration of cultural and arts elements.

The plan recommends a minimum of approximately 2 acres of new open space in the Mercado District which may be accommodated in one or more new open spaces. These open spaces should be very family-friendly and neighborhood-oriented.

Top Left Mercado District: complement the Mercado

Top Right Mercado District: farmer's market

Bottom Mercado District: community open space

District 4—Rio Grande: Border Retail District

Given the size and program of the Rio Grande District and its adjacency to the Mercado District, there are no new open spaces proposed in this area.

District 5—Magoffin/San Antonio Neighborhood: Residential Mixed-Use District

New open space in the Magoffin/San Antonio District is an essential component in creating a welcoming and family friendly neighborhood in an area that is currently mostly light-industrial uses. The plan recommends two buffer open spaces on the northern and southern edges of the neighborhood, each with significant landscaping and recreational uses. Complementing these buffer parks, the plan recommends a minimum of 4 acres of additional open space that may be accommodated in one or more new open spaces. These open spaces should be very family-friendly and neighborhood-oriented with activities for children, small-scale recreation, space for community events, and cultural and arts elements.

Magoffin/San Antonio Neighborhood: new recreation space

2. Pedestrian Network

Creating a downtown that is welcoming and safe for pedestrians is essential for the overall success of the Downtown Plan. At a minimum, all streets in the downtown should be designed with pedestrians in mind, with sidewalks of welcoming width, safe crosswalks, healthy tree canopies, on-street parking, and sufficient lighting.

The design of the pedestrian network should recognize the importance of a wider system that facilitates connections both within downtown and to surrounding neighborhoods such as the Segundo Barrio, Sunset Heights, and Union Plaza. These pedestrian links will maintain downtown as a vibrant and accessible core at the heart of El Paso.

Certain streets are more important for pedestrians due to their location in downtown, their connection between destinations and their land uses. On these streets, enhanced sidewalk treatments should be considered to highlight districts, provide pedestrian amenity, and to reinforce pedestrian connections.

The Downtown Pedestrian Network Plan identifies three types of streets in downtown El Paso:

1. Standard Pedestrian Streets

The baseline for all streets in the downtown, the focus on Standard Pedestrian Streets is to create safe and attractive pedestrian environments that reinforce downtown identity. The Standard Pedestrian Street should have a 10' wide sidewalk as an absolute minimum, although 12'-15' is preferable for pedestrian safety and street tree viability. Features on these streets should include standard downtown light fixtures, street trees (at approximately 30'-40' spacing depending on canopy size) with tree grates, standard sidewalk paving, trashcans, and on-street parking.

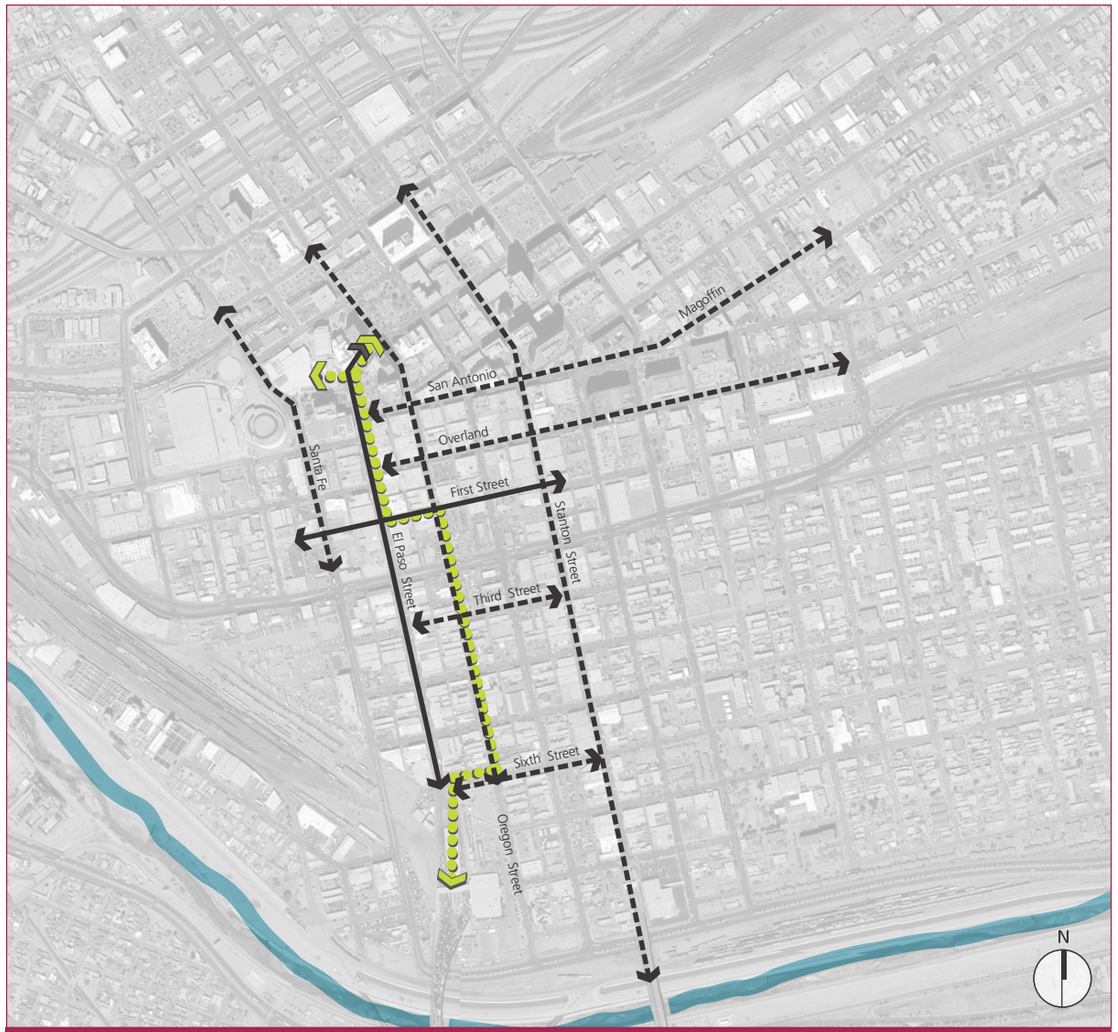
2. Secondary Pedestrian Streets

The Secondary Pedestrian Streets are Third, Sixth, Stanton, Overland, Magoffin, San Antonio, Oregon, and Santa Fe Streets. These streets are important connection streets between neighborhoods and districts, many of which already have a pedestrian focus. The Secondary Pedes-

Special Pedestrian Streets
First StreetEl Paso

Secondary Pedestrian Streets
Third Street
Sixth Street
Stanton
Overland
Magoffin
San Antonio
Oregon
Santa Fe

Bi-National Arts Walk



Downtown pedestrian network

trian Streets should have a minimum 15' wide sidewalk, as feasible, standard downtown lighting fixtures, street trees (at approximately 30'-40' spacing depending on canopy size) with tree grates, trashcans, and on-street parking. Design features that should be considered on Secondary Pedestrian Streets include paving variation, benches, bicycle racks, sidewalk cafes, banners, and sidewalk vendors.

3. Special Pedestrian Streets

There are two Special Pedestrian Streets in downtown, El Paso Street and First Street. El Paso is a critically important street in downtown due to its history, the vibrancy of its retail environment, the extensive public investments to date, and its role as the primary pedestrian connection between Juarez and the center of downtown El Paso. First Street will be a critically important street as the centerpiece of the key catalyst project for downtown, the First Street Lifestyle Retail District. Each of these streets deserves specific attention and design that highlights their importance in the overall framework of downtown. In addition to the elements of a high quality and safe sidewalk outlined for the other streets in downtown, design features on these special features might include widened sidewalks, corner bulb-outs, unique lighting, special paving, sitting areas, hanging flowers and other enhanced landscaping, kiosks, sidewalk café areas, banners, and sidewalk vendors.

3. Bi-National Arts Walk

The Bi-national Arts Walk is envisioned as a multi-faceted journey through downtown that tells the manifold historic and contemporary cultural stories of El Paso and Juarez. The walk might include elements in the sidewalk, specific sites of significance, galleries, working artists, and cultural institutions. It could be self-guided or along a tour. The Downtown Plan indicates a general route and how it is integrated into the catalyst projects and planning areas. Detailed planning for all the

Wider sidewalks and places to sit

Lively and inviting pedestrian environment

Arts Walk

Arts Walk

Downtown parking districts

Parking and Transportation Strategy

A successful downtown is a walking downtown, one in which people park once and engage in multiple activities. The overall parking strategy for downtown is based on the establishment of parking districts that serve multiple uses, as opposed to creating specific garages for each individual use. The advantage of this "Park Once" strategy is threefold. One, it promotes street activity which is essential for retail success. Two, it allows for shared use parking which is more efficient than single-use parking. And, three, it facilitates and encourages private development by decoupling commercial parking requirements from specific projects.

Downtown Parking Districts

Pending the completion of the detailed parking analysis, the Plan recommends two parking districts for the downtown. The first encompasses the First Street and Santa Fe Districts, the second includes the Downtown Incentive District north of Paisano. It is recommended that within each of these parking districts, the overall parking demand for the district be established by the existing uses and the redevelopment program. In lieu of building on-site parking, new projects within that program will pay a parking district fee sufficient to fund a prorated share of the shared parking. As needed additional parking should be consolidated into strategically located new garages as identified in the Plan.

Downtown Parking Districts

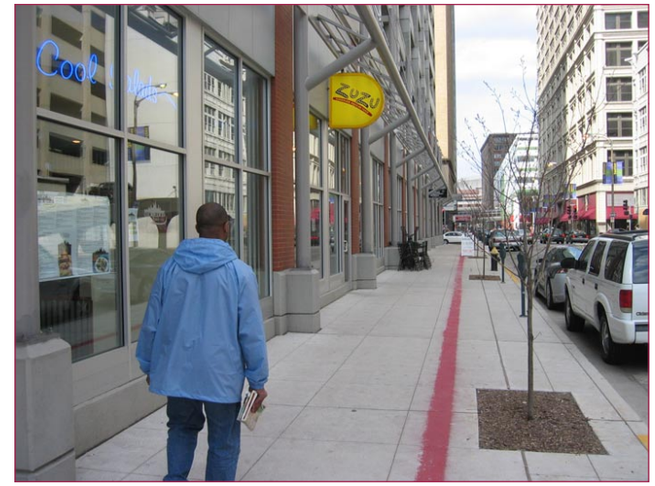
- Incentive District Parking District
- Downtown Parking District

Parking Garage and Parking Lot Design Guidelines

The intent of the parking regulations is to encourage a balance between a pedestrian-oriented downtown and necessary car storage as well as establish standards for parking lot design. Parking facilities should be designed in a manner that reduces their visual impact and serves to enhance the public realm rather than detract from it. By creating environments that contain a mixture of uses less parking is needed than in single use scenarios.

Parking Garages

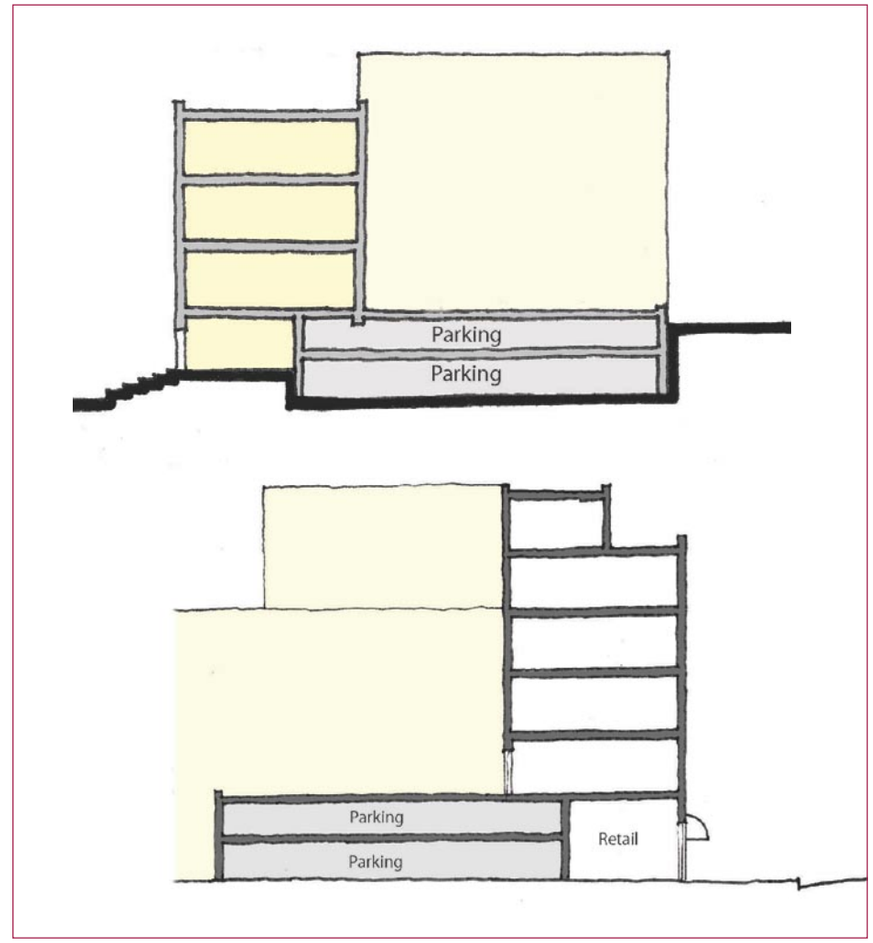
- Locate parking structures underground or behind buildings where feasible.
- Ground level parking should be screened from the sidewalk with habitable space, unless a suitable alternative is proposed. Blank walls are not permitted. Screening may include laminate uses such as retail, office, or residential and/or landscaping.
- Design parking garages that are architectural assets to downtown. Parking garage design should respect the historic character, proportions, and rhythm of downtown buildings.
- Design entries so that conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians are minimized. Vehicular entries should be clearly marked with architectural devices and/or landscaping and should be of minimum width.
- Parking structures shall conceal views of autos from public streets and public spaces.
- Parking structures should incorporate innovative design ideas, especially for façade treatment, signage, mitigating landscape, and covered walkways.
- Parking garages should be compatible in color, form, and quality of architectural details with adjacent buildings and development patterns in downtown El Paso.
- Openings to parking areas other than garage doors should be limited to those required by the Building Code for ventilation. Openings should be well above or below eye level and should be covered with visually attractive screening to minimize the parking and its lighting from being seen from the street.
- Signage and light sources internal to the parking structure should not be visible from outside the parking structure. Lighting, particularly on parking decks, should not illuminate or produce glare to adjacent properties.
- Setbacks from the property line are permitted to accommodate landscaping and other buffer features subject to design review. These features might include climbing vines, trellises, trees or similar landscape elements.



Top Active retail frontage on parking garages

Bottom Building walls should have visual interest and character

Parking garages should be architecturally interesting



Wrap parking with active use where possible

Surface Parking Lots

- Parking lots should be located behind or to the side of buildings, such that buildings or landscaping separate parking areas from the street. Off-street parking lots shall be set back a minimum of 10 feet from property lines along public rights-of-way, excluding alleys.
- Parking lots should be screened from the sidewalk with transparent, attractive and well-maintained cast-iron and brick fencing.
- Parking lots should be landscaped as follows:

  Landscape strips or landscape islands shall be provided.

  If landscape strips are used, they shall be at least 5 feet wide and shall be provided between parking isles of either head-in or diagonal parking.

  Each landscape strip shall have at least one tree for every 90 square feet of area, or portion thereof, and be covered with grass, shrubs, or living ground cover.

  If landscape islands are used, they shall be a minimum of 6 feet wide and extend the entire length of a parking stall. They shall occur no less than one island for every 6 consecutive spaces. A minimum of one tree shall be planted in each landscape island.

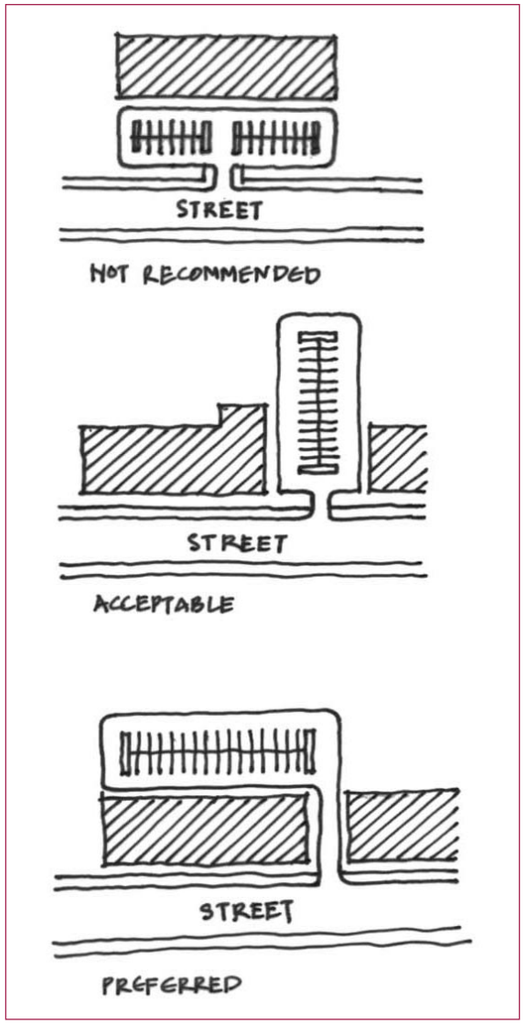
  Landscape islands can be consolidated into larger areas so long as there is the equivalent of one island for every six spaces.

  Parking lot landscaping shall not have a continuous curb in all places. This will allow for runoff to reach the landscaped areas.

  Parking lot landscaping shall be lower than or level with the parking lot to allow for runoff to reach the landscaped areas.

  The use of permeable pavement is strongly encouraged in parking lot construction. This will help allow the infiltration of water through the site.

  To minimize water consumption, the use of low water vegetative ground cover other than turf is encouraged.



Locate parking lots at the rear of buildings

Districts and Catalyst Projects

District 1—First Street: Lifestyle Retail District

The Lifestyle District is a critical economic driver that will spur development and renovation throughout downtown El Paso. Centered on a pedestrian-oriented First Street and a dynamic new public open space, this district will include large-footprint retail as well as smaller-scale local and national retailers. The Lifestyle Retail District is envisioned as a single redevelopment project with the variety and character of a great downtown retail street. This catalyst project is designed to have sufficient area to attract a significant private investment and a coordinated development plan.

A great retail street with articulated storefronts

Anchor retail should blend into the district

The following design guidelines outline specific issues that will ensure a walkable street of inviting scale.

First Street—
A pedestrian-oriented First Street is critical to the long-term success of this district.

- A continuous retail frontage should be maintained on both sides of the street from Stanton to Santa Fe Streets. Retail frontage may include large-footprint and smaller-scale retail, restaurants, transparent and active commercial uses, and lobbies for upper floor uses.
- Storefronts should be articulated along a block at a minimum every 50 feet.
- All retail uses along First Street should have their primary entrance on First Street.
- Anchor retail in the Lifestyle District should have a primary entrance from First Street.
- Vehicular access for parking garages is not permitted from First Street.

Paisano Street—
The frontage of retail, open space, and parking uses facing Paisano Street is an important front door for the Lifestyle District.

- Building walls facing Paisano Street should be well-articulated and visually interesting.
- Signage, architectural features, and lighting are encouraged to announce the Lifestyle District on Paisano.
- Vehicular access for parking garages is permitted from Paisano Street.

A coordinated design of streetscape components will include landscape, paving, lighting, signage and street furniture

Dynamic public spaces

Anchor Retail—
Large-footprint buildings are permitted in the Lifestyle District, as necessary, to accommodate anchor retail.

- Anchor retail may combine blocks, as necessary.
- Anchor retail should have a primary frontage on First Street or on a north-south street that is bisected by First Street.
- Primary frontage is not permitted on Paisano Street such as Paisano and Overland.
- Anchor retail should consider liner retail uses on secondary frontages.

Continuous frontage—
Continuous retail frontage in the Lifestyle District will create an active, inviting, and pedestrian-oriented area and create seamless connections to the Historic Incentive District.

- Buildings in the Lifestyle District should be built to the property line, with exception for arcades, recessed entrances, and storefront bays.
- Oregon and Mesa Streets should have continuous retail frontages on both sides of the street. Retail frontage may include large-footprint and smaller-scale retail, restaurants, transparent and active commercial uses, and lobbies for upper floor uses.
- Necessary back-of-house functions such as service and loading areas should be screened from the street. Access driveways should be minimized.

District 2—Santa Fe Street: Convention/ Entertainment/Arena

The Santa Fe Street District builds on the entertainment activities in the Union Plaza area and extends this activity to Santa Fe and El Paso Streets where it serves as a critical activity anchor that complements and facilitates the adjacent First Street District. The goal is a vibrant day and night center of entertainment and activity for downtown, alive with restaurants, nightclubs, and hotels.

Santa Fe Street—
The frontage of hotel, retail, and the arena uses on Santa Fe Street should be continuous and active.

- Hotels should locate restaurants and other retail uses directly accessible from Santa Fe Street.
- Outdoor dining on Santa Fe is strongly encouraged. Buildings may be setback from the property line to accommodate this activity.
- A new building at the intersection of Santa Fe and First Street should be setback a minimum of 50' in each direction to accommodate Arena Square.

First Street—
In the Santa Fe District, First Street is a continuation of the First Street District with the arena as a critical anchor for the street.

- A continuous retail frontage should be maintained on both sides of the street. Retail frontage may include large-footprint and smaller-scale retail, restaurants, transparent and active commercial uses, and lobbies for upper floor uses.
- Storefronts should be articulated along a block at a minimum every 50 feet.
- All retail uses along First Street should have their primary entrance on First Street.
- Vehicular access for parking garages is not permitted from First Street.

Top Dynamic mix of retail and entertainment uses

Bottom Articulate larger buildings

Integrate the arena into the district

Arena—
Incorporating the arena into the fabric of a vibrant district is not without challenges given the size of the arena and the necessary back of house functions. Drawing on the lessons of new arenas in downtowns across the country, there a few critical design principles that will both mitigate the scale of the facility and integrate it into the district:

- The arena should be setback from the property line to ensure sufficient gathering and queuing space for pedestrians, especially at entrances.
- The setback at the corners should be a minimum of 50' in each direction to accommodate Arena Square.
- Primary entrances to the arena should be located at First and San Antonio Streets.
- Public functions such as ticket windows should be oriented to the sidewalk.
- The ground floor of the arena facing Santa Fe Street should be laminated with active uses such as restaurants and retail establishments that are open even when there are no arena events.
- Building walls should be well articulated and visually interesting.
- The façade of the arena should transparent and animated. Large expanses of blank wall are not permitted.
- Arena signage and lighting should be incorporated into the overall design of the building façade.
- Back of house functions should be located on Leon Street.

District 3—Oregon/Mesa: Mercado District and Residential Infill

The Mercado District is a mixed-use residential neighborhood within the Segundo Barrio that is centered on a dynamic Mercado that will house a diverse collection of small, local retailers, artisans, and food sellers that cater to the neighborhood.

Mercado—
The Mercado is envisioned as a dynamic and inviting market hall that accommodates a host of small vendors selling a variety of goods, art and foods. The Mercado should draw inspiration from similar markets in Mexico, Central America, and throughout the U.S. From a design perspective, the following guidelines should be considered:

- The ground floor of the Mercado should be as transparent and porous as possible, especially on Oregon, Mesa, and Third Streets.
- Consider storefronts that completely open to the street.
- Arcades and/or substantial awnings should be considered for shade and comfort.
- Consider a sidewalk setback to create space for sidewalk displays and street vendors.
- An overall signage plan for the exterior should be developed, one that allows for distinctive signage for each individual vendor.
- The Mercado may include an outdoor vendor area that complements the indoor facility.

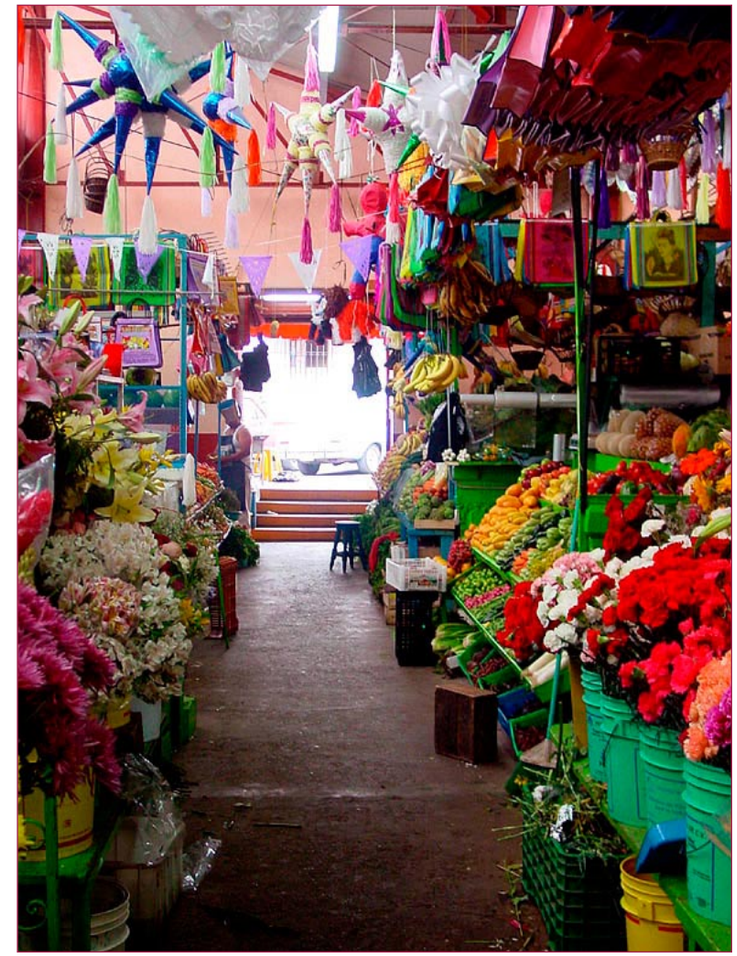
An inviting market hall

A range of small vendors

Neighborhood Character—
The Mercado District is within the Segundo Barrio, a neighborhood with a rich history and strong cultural traditions. All new development in this district should draw on these traditions in building program and design. Equally as important, all new and infill development projects in the Mercado District should be developed with community input to ensure that the project contributes to the overall needs of the community and the Segundo Barrio Plan that is currently being developed.

- New development should be built to the street with minimal setbacks, except for usable open space, stoops, and courtyards.
- Reflecting the general development pattern in the neighborhood, entrances and primary facades should be generally oriented to north-south streets.
- Reflecting the variety and scale of the neighborhood, development projects that occupy an entire block should consider housing with a range of densities and building types.
- Include active ground floor uses such as residential entries, retail, community services, and live-work.
- Incorporate a range of retail opportunities that include small-scale local retailers.
- Consider corners as important retail opportunities.
- Consider an extension of Mercado-type and arts-related retail in adjacent open spaces and storefronts/live-work spaces on Oregon Street.
- Parking should be accessed from alleys, not Oregon or Mesa Streets.

Outdoor vendor areas



A mix of arts and food

District 4—Rio Grande: Border Retail District

The Border Retail District is an economic driver that builds on the proximity to the El Paso and Stanton Street border crossings while providing economic opportunity and shopping options for the local neighborhood. This district will include large-footprint and smaller-scale local and national retailers.

Anchor Retail—
Large-footprint buildings are permitted in the Rio Grande District, as necessary, to accommodate anchor retail.

- Anchor retail may combine blocks, as necessary. Subject to review.
- Consider a range of retail opportunities that include local retailers.
- Necessary back-of-house functions such as service and loading areas should be screened from the street. Access driveways should be minimized.
- Primary vehicular access is permitted from the Border Highway.

Neighborhood Character—
The Rio Grande District is within the Segundo Barrio, a neighborhood with a rich history and strong cultural traditions. All new development in this district should draw on these traditions in building program and design. Equally as important, all new and infill development projects in the district should be developed with community input to ensure that the project contributes to the overall needs of the community and conforms to the guidelines outlined in the Segundo Barrio Plan that is currently being developed.

Top Prominent building entries

Bottom Integrate the retail into the scale of the district

Top Prominent building entries

Bottom Integrate the retail into the scale of the district

District 5—Magoffin/San Antonio Neighborhood: Residential Mixed-Use District

The Magoffin/San Antonio District represents a significant opportunity to create a new mixed-use residential neighborhood in an area that is currently underutilized yet adjacent to an existing historic residential district.

Neighborhood Character—
New development in the Magoffin/San Antonio District should draw inspiration from adjacent historic residential district, yet not mimic it.

- New development should be built to the street with minimal setbacks, except for usable open space, stoops, and courtyards.
- Reflecting the general development pattern in the neighborhood, entrances and primary facades should be generally oriented to east-west streets.
- Reflecting the variety and scale of the adjacent neighborhoods, development projects that occupy an entire block should consider housing with a range of densities and building types.
- Where feasible, parking should be accessed from alleys.

Retail Corridors—
New development on San Antonio and Magoffin Streets should include active and transparent ground floors.

- Active ground floor uses include retail, community services, and live-work.
- Incorporate a range of retail opportunities that include small-scale local retailers.
- Consider corners as important retail opportunities.

Building Types and Forms

Single Family

Description
A detached residential building that is intended for one household. [Insert Images 49-51]

Districts
Residential Edge

Lot Area (by Unit)
2,500 sq. ft. minimum to 5,000 sq. ft maximum

Lot coverage
60% maximum

Building Placement
Front: 10' minimum to 15' maximum

Side: 5' minimum to 15' maximum

Rear: 3' minimum

Height
Primary building is 3 stories maximum with a maximum height 35 feet. Detached garages 2 stories maximum with a maximum height of 25 feet.

Frontage Type
Porch, Stoop

Access
The main entrance shall be located within the façade and accessed directly from the street through an allowed frontage type. Where an alley is present, parking and services shall be accessed through the alley. Where an alley is not present, parking and services shall be accessed by way of a driveway.

Parking
Minimum 1 per dwelling unit; maximum 2 per dwelling unit.

Off-street parking shall be placed in the rear 50% of the lot; side lot setback is 5' minimum; rear setback is 3' minimum.

Guidelines
- Single family buildings are allowed only in the Residential Edge District and are intended to serve as a transition between higher intensity development in the Magoffin District and existing lower density residential neighborhoods.
- Lot sizes should be small and building should have minimal setbacks in order to create a more urban environment. The primary access should be from the street and garages should be set back from the front plane of the structure.
- Residential entries should be identifiable and prominent. Architectural elements that create space or add scale, such as courtyards, porches, balconies, trellises and bay windows are recommended.
- New building design should follow traditional patterns, materials, colors, and typologies found in El Paso.
- Create variety along the street. Variety may be achieved by changing materials, roofline, windows, step-backs, modulation, setbacks, recesses, height, entries, color, building form, or architectural details.
- Architectural elements that create space or add scale, such as courtyards, porches, balconies, trellises and bay windows are recommended.
- Windows and doors should be inset in the building wall with a minimum 3 inch reveal
- Rectangular window openings facing streets should be oriented vertically.

Top and Bottom Single Family residence

Single Family residence with garage behind the main house

Townhouse

Description

Attached residential buildings of more than four attached, side-by-side units. Maximum of 8 units attached without break. Carriage house permissible depending on lot depth.

Districts

R -Residential Edge; MUR-2 Neighborhood Focus Mixed Use Residential

Frontage Type

Stoop; Porch; Storefront

Finished Floor Elevation

2' minimum above sidewalk grade for residential units; no minimum for non-residential units.

Access

The main entrance to each dwelling unit shall be accessed directly from and face the street. Secondary entrances are allowed from alleys or structured parking.

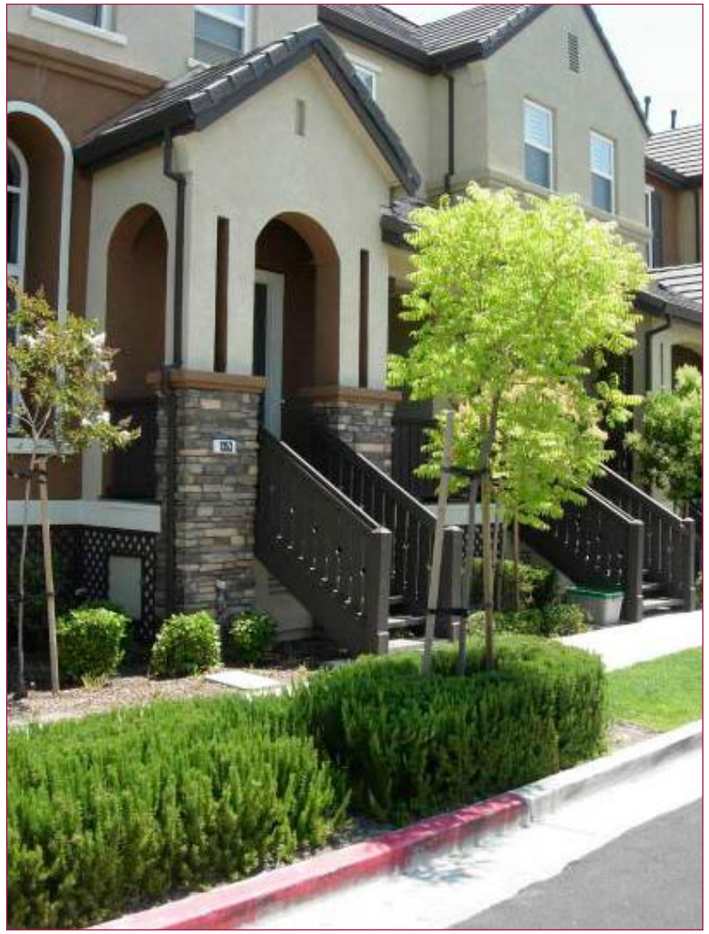
Parking

Minimum 1 per dwelling unit; maximum 2 per dwelling unit.

Parking shall be located at the rear of the lot, accessed from an alley or in a structure in a Blended Type Development.

Guidelines

- This building type should be located in primarily residential areas and can serve as a transition between higher density residential and commercial uses and existing lower density residential areas.
- Primary access to each dwelling unit shall be from the street. Units may be designed to allow for non-residential uses on the ground floor in some cases. This dwelling type may be blended with other dwelling types, such as Apartments or Commercial Block, on a single parcel or within a single development project.
- Townhouses should have minimal setbacks in order to create a more urban environment.
- New residential development should be informed by traditional patterns, materials, colors, and typologies found in El Paso.
- Create variety along the street. Townhouses should appear as separate, but attached buildings. Variety may be achieved by changing materials, roofline, windows, step-backs, modulation, setbacks, recesses, height, entries, color, building form, or architectural details.
- Step-backs, setbacks, and height changes should be a minimum of 3'.
- A continuous cornice line on a row of townhouses is not recommended.
- Architectural elements that create space or add scale, such as courtyards, porches, balconies, trellises and bay windows are recommended.
- Residential entries should be identifiable and prominent. Entries shall be marked by stoops, overhangs, and/or other architectural features.
- Windows and doors should be inset in the building wall with a minimum 3 inch reveal
- Rectangular window openings facing streets should be oriented vertically.



Townhomes with main level raised atop a partially sunken parking level

Townhomes

Duplex, Triplex, Quadplex

Description
Buildings that contain two, three or four dwelling units.

Districts
Residential Edge; Magoffin Residential; Neighborhood Focus Magoffin; Oregon/Mesa: Mercado District; Rio Grande: Border Retail District

Frontage Type
Porch; Stoop

Finished Floor Elevation
2' minimum

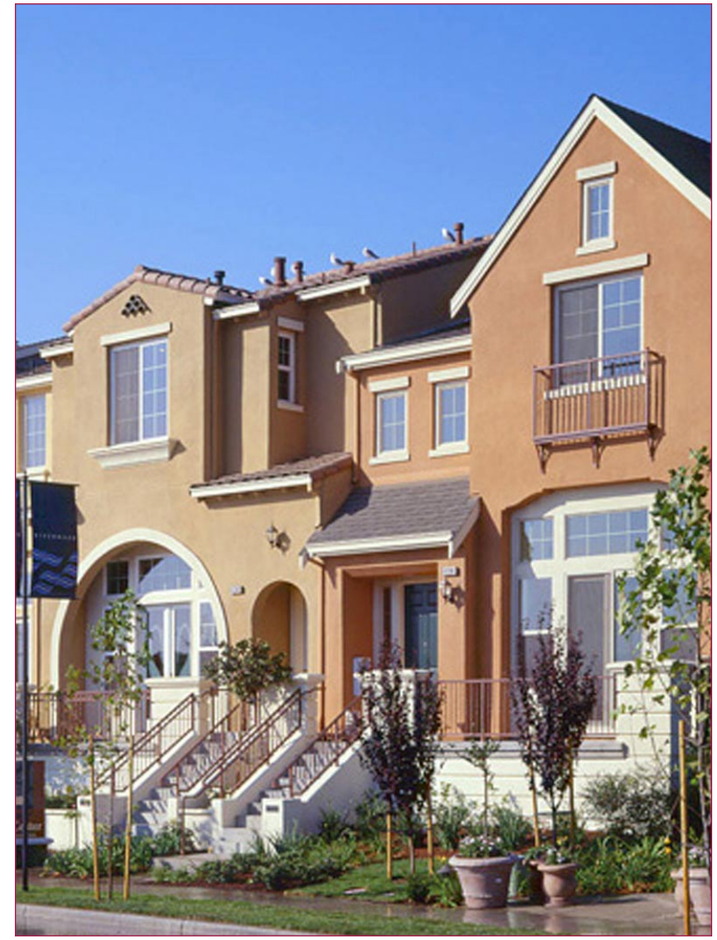
Access
The main entrance shall be located within the façade and accessed directly from the street through an allowed frontage type. Where an alley is present, parking and services shall be accessed through the alley. Where an alley is not present, parking and services shall be accessed by way of a driveway.

Parking
Minimum 1 per dwelling unit; maximum 2 per dwelling unit.

Off-street parking shall be placed in the rear 50% of the lot; side lot setback is 5' minimum; rear setback is 3' minimum.

Guidelines
- This building type should be located in primarily residential areas and can serve as a transition between higher density residential and commercial uses and existing lower density residential areas.
- Primary access to each dwelling unit shall be from the street. Units may be designed to allow for non-residential uses on the ground floor in some cases. This dwelling type may be blended with other dwelling types, such as Apartments or Commercial Block, on a single parcel or within a single development project.
- Include minimal setbacks in order to create a more urban environment.
- New residential development should be informed by traditional patterns, materials, colors, and typologies found in El Paso.
- Create variety along the street. Variety may be achieved by changing materials, roofline, windows, step-backs, modulation, setbacks, recesses, height, entries, color, building form, or architectural details.
- Step-backs, setbacks, and height changes should be a minimum of 3'.
- Architectural elements that create space or add scale, such as courtyards, porches, balconies, trellises and bay windows are recommended.
- Residential entries should be identifiable and prominent. Entries shall be marked by stoops, overhangs, and/or other architectural features.
- Windows and doors should be inset in the building wall with a minimum 3 inch reveal
- Rectangular window openings facing streets should be oriented vertically.
- Reflective glass is not permitted.

Duplex, Triplex and Quadplex



Duplex, Triplex and Quadplex

Apartment

Description

Residential apartment buildings that contain more than four dwelling units.

Districts

Magoffin/San Antonio Neighborhood: Residential Mixed-use; Oregon/Mesa: Mercado District; First Street: Lifestyle Retail District; Rio Grande: Border Retail;

Frontage Type

Stoop; forecourt; courtyard; storefront

Finished Floor Elevation

2' minimum if ground floor is residential.

Access

The main entrance shall be located within the façade and accessed directly from the street through an allowed frontage type. For buildings that front on two streets, entrances may be on the corner.

Parking

Residential: Minimum 1 per dwelling unit; maximum 2 per dwelling unit.

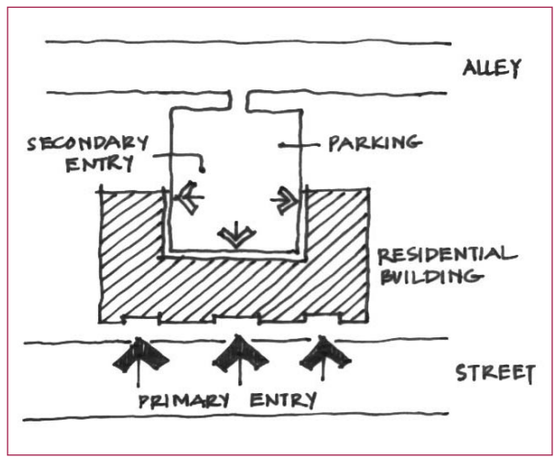
Parking may be at-grade or in structures.

Parking may be located interior to buildings, behind buildings or integrated with the building itself. Parking shall not be located fronting the street.

Dwellings may have indirect access to their parking stalls.

Guidelines

- New residential development should be informed by traditional patterns, materials, colors, and typologies found in El Paso.
- Create variety along the street. Adjacent buildings shall be visually distinct from each other.
- Variety may be achieved by changing materials, roofline, windows, step-backs, modulation, setbacks, recesses, height, entries, color, building form, or architectural details. At least two of these elements should vary for each building along the street.
- Step-backs, setbacks, and height changes should be a minimum of 3'.
- Variation in building form should relate to the scale of individual building units or rooms such as recessed or projecting bays, shifts in massing, or distinct roof shapes.
- The façades of multi- family apartment buildings should be articulated at minimum intervals of 25-50'. Articulation can be achieved through changes in building plane or features such as but not limited to: balconies, columns, bay windows and pilasters.
- Primary access for all residential buildings shall be from a public open space, public street, or courtyard. Secondary access is permitted from the parking area or alley.
- Residential entries should be identifiable and prominent. Entries shall be marked by stoops, overhangs, and/or other architectural features.
- Ground floor units directly accessible from the street are encouraged in multi-story apartment buildings.
- Windows and doors should be inset in the building wall with a minimum 3 inch reveal
- Balconies should be usable with a minimum 3 foot deep projection or recess.
- Rectangular window openings facing streets should be oriented vertically.
- Reflective glass shall is not permitted.



Apartments

Top Variety in elevation

Bottom Left Apartments

Bottom Right Primary entry from street

Commercial/Residential Block

Description

A building designed for occupancy by retail, service and/or office uses on the ground floor with the potential for residential or allowed non-residential uses on the upper floors. These buildings range in size from entire city blocks down to smaller infill projects built into the existing neighborhood fabric.

Districts

Magoffin/San Antonio Neighborhood: Residential Mixed-use; Oregon/Mesa: Mercado District; First Street: Lifestyle Retail District; Rio Grande: Border Retail; Santa Fe Street: Convention/Entertainment/Arena

Lot Area

no minimum or maximum

Lot Coverage

100% maximum

Building Placement

Front: No setback for at least 75% percent of frontage to 5' maximum for up to 25% of frontage. Exceptions for usable arcades and outdoor seating.

Side: no required setback

Rear: no required setback

Frontage Type

Storefront; Arcade; Forecourt

Finished Floor Elevation

0'

Access

The main entrance shall be located within the façade and accessed directly from the street through an allowed frontage type. For buildings that front on two streets, entrances may be on the corner.

Parking

Residential: Minimum 1 per dwelling unit; maximum 2 per dwelling unit.

Non-Residential: Maximum 4 spaces per 1,000 square feet gross floor area.

Parking may be at-grade or in structures and may not front the street.

Parking may be located interior to buildings, behind buildings or integrated with the building itself. Parking shall not be located to front the street.

Dwellings may have indirect access to their parking stalls.

Guidelines:

- The height of this building type can range from one story for a single retail-type use to multiple stories for mixed-use buildings. This is the recommended building type for many of the land use districts.
- New development should be informed by traditional patterns, materials, colors, and typologies found in El Paso.
- Create variety along the street. Adjacent buildings shall be visually distinct from each other.
- Variety may be achieved by changing materials, roofline, windows, step-backs, modulation, setbacks, recesses, height, entries, color, building form, or architectural details. At least two of these elements should vary for each building along the street.
- Step-backs, setbacks, and height changes should be a minimum of 3'.
- Variation in building form should relate to the scale of individual building units or rooms such as recessed or projecting bays, shifts in massing, or distinct roof shapes.
- The façades of multi- family apartment buildings should be articulated at minimum intervals of 25-50'. Articulation can be achieved through changes in building plane or features such as but not limited to: balconies, columns, bay windows and pilasters.
- Primary access for all residential buildings shall be from a public open space, public street, or courtyard. Secondary access is permitted from the parking area or alley.
- Residential entries should be identifiable and prominent. Entries shall be marked by stoops, overhangs, and/or other architectural features.
- Windows and doors should be inset in the building wall with a minimum 3 inch reveal
- Balconies should be usable with a minimum 3 foot deep projection or recess.
- Rectangular window openings facing streets should be oriented vertically.
- Reflective glass shall is not permitted.

Commercial/Residential building

Commercial/Residential building (all)

Tower

Description
A tall building designed for occupancy by retail, hotel, service and/or office uses on the ground floor with residential, office, hotel, or other non-residential uses on the upper floors.

Districts
Santa Fe Street: Convention/Entertainment/Arena District

Lot Area
1 acre minimum, 2 acres maximum

Lot Coverage
80% minimum

Building Placement
Front: No setback for at least 75% percent of frontage to 5' maximum for up to 25% of frontage. Exceptions for usable arcades and outdoor seating.

Side: no required setback

Rear: no required setback

Height
no height limit

Frontage Type
Storefront; Arcade; Forecourt

Finished Floor Elevation
0'

Access
The main entrance shall be located within the façade and accessed directly from the street through an allowed frontage type. For buildings that front on two streets, entrances may be on the corner or on both streets, depending on the size of the building.

Parking
Residential: Minimum 1 per dwelling unit; maximum 2 per dwelling unit.

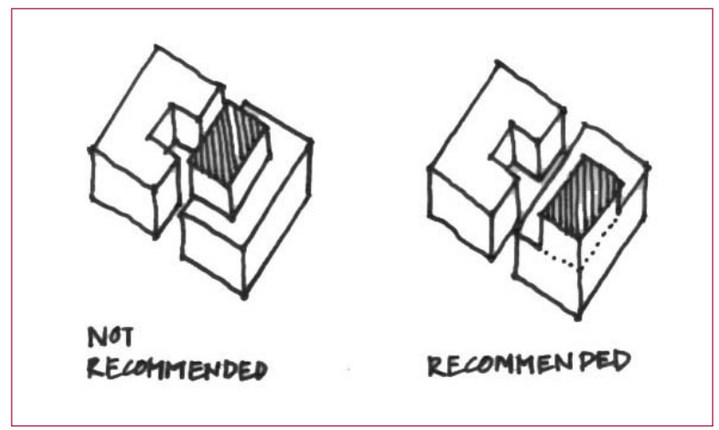
Non-Residential: Maximum 4 spaces per 1,000 square feet gross floor area.

Parking may be at-grade or in structures and may not front the street.

Parking may be located interior to buildings, behind buildings or integrated with the building itself. Parking shall not be located to front the street.

Dwellings may have indirect access to their parking stalls.

Guidelines
- Towers should be sited and massed so that they contribute the overall urban form and skyline of Downtown El Paso.
- The use of mirrored or highly reflective glass is discouraged in favor of tower buildings that combine transparent curtain wall glazing or more punctured wall treatments.
- Towers should be architecturally integrated with the perimeter block architecture at the base, differentiated by a change in plane, material and/or fenestration. While stepbacks are appropriate to create a building base, vertical expression of the tower is encouraged. [Insert Image 67]
- Special treatments should be introduced to enhance the skyline appeal and visual appearance of the structure (e.g., reduction of floorplate size and/or increase in floor-to-floor dimension on top floors, change in fenestration, spires, for example).
- Towers should be designed to provide an interesting silhouette, profile and volumetric form on the skyline through variation of building material, building shape, plane and stepbacks. [Insert Image 68]
- The topmost floors of the building should be architecturally differentiated through the use of stepbacks or changes in material and fenestration as appropriate to the overall architectural expression of the building.
- Placement and design of balconies should avoid repetitive egg-crate patterns, but rather be designed to reinforce the overall building form.
- Tower buildings that are combined with other building types at the street level (such as townhomes or residential-commercial blocks) are allowed.
- The maximum floorplate of the tower should not exceed 25,000 square feet.



Tower placement

Tower 1

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5

Action Plan

The City leadership for downtown revitalization recognizes that a critical component of success will be the creation and realization of an implementation strategy for the proposed plan. Recognizing that past planning efforts have, at times, fallen short of realization, the City, business and community leadership who support positive change in downtown have recognized that focused, market-driven, achievable change must be 1), the centerpiece of downtown action, and that 2), the implementation methodology is as critical as any physical, use or service changes that may be outlined in the plan.

Work on potential implementation strategies has paralleled all work on the physical strategy for downtown, and has had a number of valuable sources for guidance and inspiration. Business and community leaders who championed a new downtown strategy took responsibility to analyze a wide range of investment strategies for private and public participation. The also began to craft an approach that draws on the creative business acumen of experienced investors, creatively and sensitively utilizes the regulatory and policy structure available to El Paso, and sets the scene for essential change and follow-through. Key elements of that approach are outlined in this chapter and work continues on the full development of these coordinated actions so that the greatest potential for positive change can be achieved with firm and full protections for public investment and participation. All recommended actions will require further study by the City and action by the City Planning Commission and City Council if appropriate.

Included in this chapter is a Draft Timeline for Implementation which distributes the major tasks and options for implementation in an estimated 40-month period. Text which accompanies the timeline describes the implementation work program ahead and the opportunities that have been identified for coordinated action.

Implementation Strategy

The implementation strategy envisioned to support the objectives of the downtown plan has three primary components:

- First, a focus on attracting early and significant private sector investment to targeted areas of downtown
- Second, a clear public framework of improvements that must accompany the new private investment
- Third, a package of incentives and policies that will encourage and energize continued and more expansive investment and improvement in the whole of downtown

The conclusion of this planning effort is that the downtown can attract significant investment if a series of bold steps are taken. The resulting major public/private projects will infuse substantial investment in the form of expanded retail opportunities, a major entertainment venue, and a series of housing/mixed use development along with parallel improvements in the public realm and downtown services. It is the ultimate intent that these initial catalyst projects will inject the necessary investment, new ideas, visitors, and spending into downtown to propel current land and business owners to become part of the new downtown. This will mean increased investment on their part to upgrade and renovate properties, propose new projects on vacant parcels, or participate in the major development projects as partners or business tenants.

It has been the conclusion of City, business and community leaders sponsoring the downtown planning initiative that to create the opportunity for these catalyst projects, carefully organized and properly sized sites need to be available. There needs to be a clear process whereby interested developers or development groups are put in competition to develop these sites based on a program and development objectives and within adopted design guidance. Consequently, the implementation program must create a structure for necessary public/private funding of infrastructure, street and service improvements, aggregation and acquisition of land, issuance of requests for proposals, and potential contracting with a selected developer(s). The financial implications of the intended public/private investment must be analyzed and actions structured so that the amount of public improvements and type of private investments anticipated are feasible, flexible, and successful.

As discussed in this implementation summary, the key components of such success are expected to include:

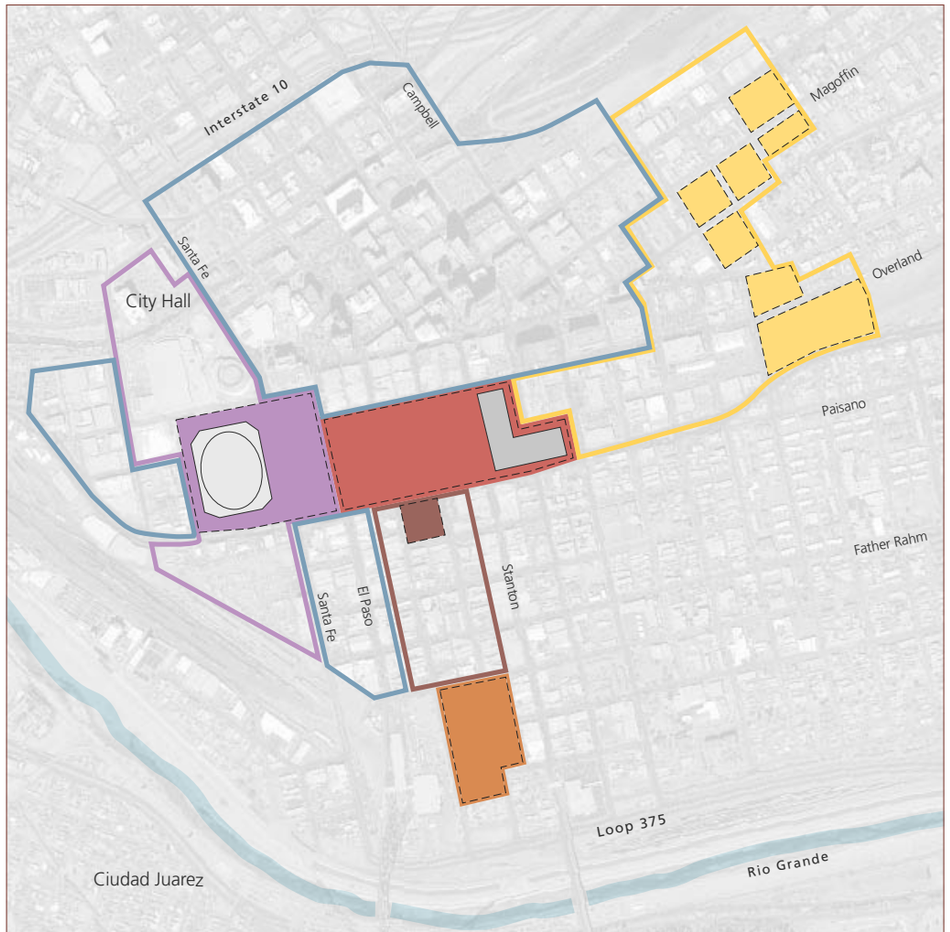
- Effective outreach and marketing to investment and development sources with proven expertise in urban, downtown development and not now engaged in El Paso downtown.
- Clear mechanisms to enable local business and land owners to participate in the growth and economic vitality of the new downtown
- Clarity and commitment to first steps in implementation, with a structure in place to reap the benefits of early target projects in the rest of downtown.
- Careful phasing of investment and physical change to assure creative management that minimizes negative impacts, balances costs and revenues for public and private participants, and protects the City from excessive early investment while assuring the shared benefits of success.

Catalyst Projects

- First Street Retail Core
- Arena/Entertainment
- Mercado
- Border Retail
- Residential Development
- Arena Anchor
- Major Retail Anchor

Redevelopment Districts

- First Street: Lifestyle Retail District
- Santa Fe Street: Entertainment/Convention/A
- Oregon/Mesa: Mercado District and
- Rio Grande: Border Retail
- Magoffin/San Antonio Neighborhood: Residential Mixed Use Downtown Incentive
- Historic Incentive District



Proposed Catalyst Project Locations

Recommended Catalyst Projects

As discussed in detail in earlier chapters of the Plan, a number of key projects are targeted for major change and early action in the transformation of the economic and physical environment of downtown. In the map provided, these projects are shown as project areas which will be further studied and refined in terms of creating a project description and anticipated program, establishing the project site area, determining the amount of public and private improvements, and other components.

The key projects listed below are not listed in order of implementation. It is probable that the housing projects will come on line first due to land availability and need for relocation housing.

1. **First Street Lifestyle Retail**—Facilitating a significant, new retail and mixed-use destination on an attractive new east-west shopping street
2. **Downtown Arena**—Providing an expansion of sports, performance, exhibition and meeting venues downtown along with entertainment and new hotel anchors for the downtown
3. **Mercado**—Showcasing the best of local El Paso ingenuity, products and arts in a must-see, experiential destination for locals and visitors alike
4. **Border Retail**—Capturing an unserved regional market right in downtown
5. **Housing**—Realizing a full fledged downtown character with affordable and market rate housing opportunities for singles, families, students and seniors

Implementation Timeline and Responsibilities

A range of implementation options have been considered by City, business and community leaders and will be further considered for full-fledged development into a coordinated, financially feasible implementation plan. The options, as organized here, are divided into major phases for further study and actions. The first phase takes the Plan through approvals and creation of entities and policies that will become the tools for revitalization. Phase Two takes those tools and applies them to the first target projects while beginning to realize incentives for the greater downtown area. By the third phase, the City begins to see the fruits of its labors with developers selected and incentive district applications being taken. Finally the City can move into an on-going downtown management structure that successfully repeats strategic actions and incentives until all target projects are complete.

Phase One Implementation Actions
(0-9 months)

1. Approve Downtown Plan (CPC and CC)

Approval of this Downtown Plan by the City Planning Commission and City Council of the City of El Paso is a first step to implementing downtown redevelopment. The Downtown Plan sets the vision, development and land use framework, design guidelines for new development downtown, and suggests initial public and private catalyst projects. It does not specifically identify which properties will be impacted, which projects will be undertaken, and what public improvements will be funded and when. These actions will require further detailed study and CPC and CC direction.

Adoption of the Downtown Plan will amend current City zoning in the redevelopment areas. The land use categories recommended in the Plan are flexible and can be amended for specific project needs.

2. Establish Public Funding Mechanism

Public improvements such as transportation improvements, streetscapes, new parks, infrastructure, parking, etc. are part of the Downtown Plan. Public expenditures might also include land acquisition, planning, design, and engineering fees, consultant studies, and project administration. These improvements will be partnered with private investment which will focus mostly on new and rehabilitated buildings for retail, housing, and other commercial needs. Private investment is anticipated to also contribute to improvements in the public realm, either immediately and directly or through longer term assessment mechanisms, depending on the type of project and structure of the development deal.

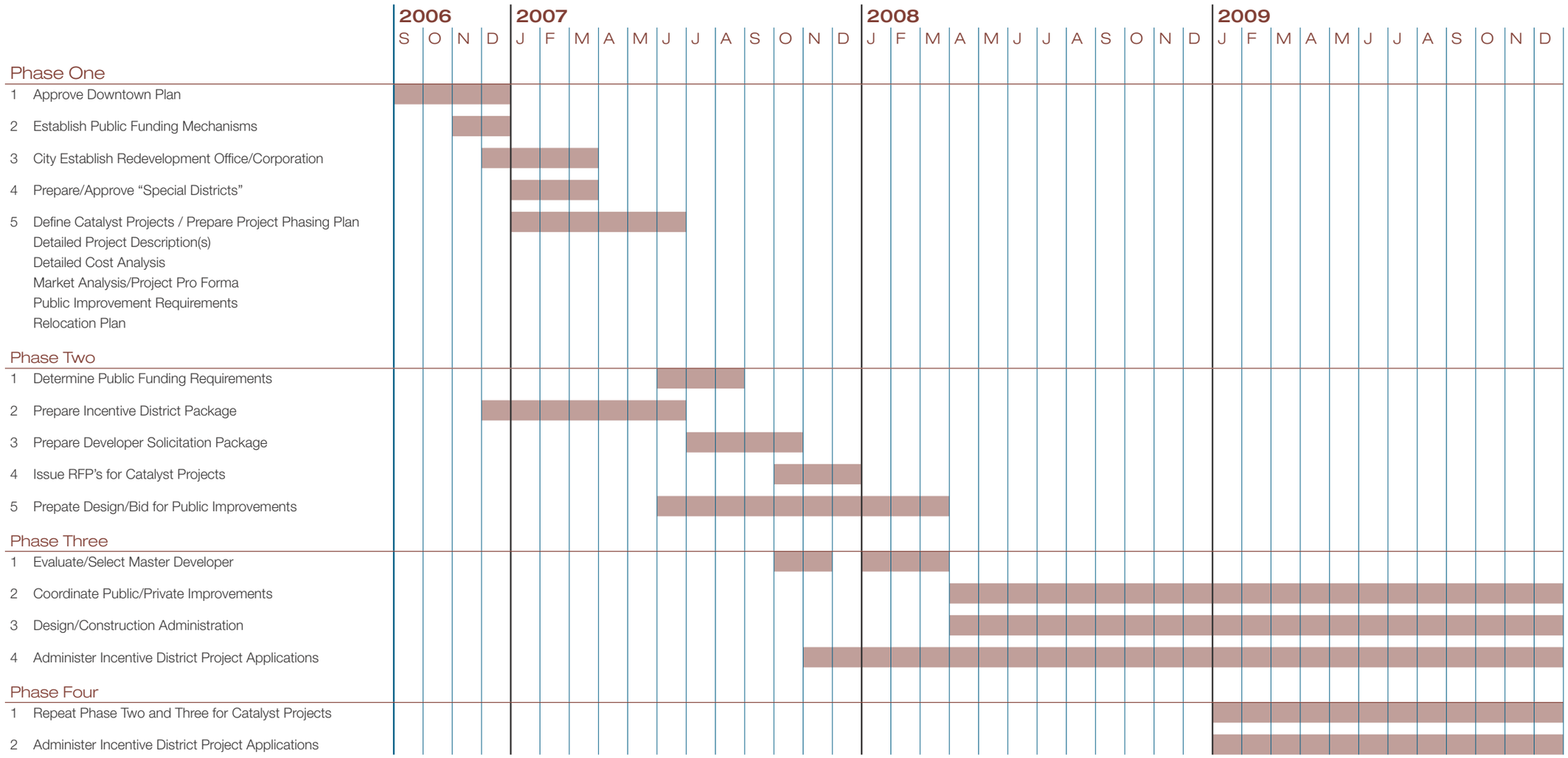
The funding of public improvements is anticipated through tax increment funding which allows a redevelopment entity to borrow against the future increase in tax revenues caused by increased valuation of properties and buildings in a redevelopment zone. When tax revenues from the redevelopment area do increase as the area is redeveloped, this money is used to pay off the funds borrowed. This can be done by the establishment of a Tax Increment Redevelopment Zone, or TIRZ. This will give the redevelopment entity the authority to borrow money such that public improvements can be done now to encourage the private investment that will cause the value of private land and buildings to increase substantially.

If later studies suggest the need for major infrastructure improvements in the downtown, the City may seek to exercise other funding mechanisms. Other U.S. cities have been particularly creative in parking funding and management and as the density of development in downtown is realized, such approaches to parking garage provision may be important to consider.

3. Establish Redevelopment Office/ Redevelopment Corporation

Study of successful downtown turnarounds across the U.S. suggests that a centralized redevelopment office focusing solely on activities within the redevelopment and incentive districts is critical to successful implementation. This will be a coordinated one-stop shop for both public and private entities including planning, development, funding, organizing land holdings, application of incentive programs, soliciting developers, administering funds for public improvements, expediting permits. While permits will continue to be handled by the appropriate City agencies, experienced cities such as San Diego suggest that their expedited permit process may well have been the single most important incentive for downtown development.

El Paso Downtown Plan Implementation Draft Timeline—3 Year Action Plan and Beyond



It may also be this office that, working with the City agencies, has the responsibility to apply the design guidelines established for the downtown and assure that the desired physical qualities and overall character of the revitalized downtown are achieved. Consequently, staffing of this office with experienced public/private development professionals and professionals with planning/urban design experience will be critical.

The redevelopment office can be a public agency or a semi-autonomous authority, a Redevelopment Corporation which is a non-profit entity with specific chartered authorities, functions, and oversight. Downtown plan leadership will review all existing structures and consider the value of a new entity in completing this task.

4. Prepare Mixed-Use Overlay for Downtown Plan Area

A mixed-use overlay may be imposed throughout the Plan area. The City will formulate the the mixed-use plan separately for approval. "Special Districts" may be required which provide for special guidelines or restrictions within the Plan area.

5. Define Catalyst Projects and Prepare Project Phasing Plan

The initial major investments downtown are envisioned as a combination of public and private investments. The specific projects need to be detailed enough in vision and specifics such that private investors can identify and evaluate the opportunity and make a specific proposal to the City to be evaluated. At the same time, flexibility needs to be built into the development opportunity to allow developers to propose solutions that are creative and make best use of their resources while meeting the City's need for downtown investments. Specific study needs to be undertaken by the redevelopment entity to establish and implement these development opportunities as follows:

Detailed Project Descriptions

These will describe the specific project opportunity including the project site, anticipated uses and program options, development program, project issues and constraints, schedule of development, etc. Usually this and the following information is packaged into a Developers Kit that can be utilized in marketing the opportunity to the best of experienced downtown developers.

Detailed Cost Analysis

Cost estimators will be engaged to work with downtown leadership in the development of conceptual cost estimates for anticipated public realm improvements. The team will then complete an iterative process that establishes a reasonable, feasible balance between private investment, likely increment funding and expectations for content and phasing of the public improvements package.

Public Improvement Requirements

All projects will have a public improvement component potentially to include transportation and streetscapes, infrastructure, open space, and other improvements. These will be defined for the specific project and fed to the cost analysis process discussed above. The public expenditure commitment for the project must be understood to include both soft (design, consultants, and administration) and hard costs (specific public improvement construction costs). Also operating and maintenance costs should be established. By this measure those public improvements that will be the responsibility of the City, and those improvements that will be the responsibility of the private investor, will be clearly defined for the pr posal phase.

Market Analysis/Project Pro Forma(s)

A market analysis can be further utilized to determine the market potential for specific project uses. Findings of an updated market review could be utilized in two important ways: first to share with targeted high quality downtown developers and investors in attracting them to El Paso, and secondly as a resource for public entities engaging in a review and eventual negotiation which such investors and developers.

Relocation Plan

As has been clearly stated by City, business and community leaders involved in the downtown plan development, some relocation of businesses and residents is anticipated with this plan, and commitments have been made to an effective, timely and community-serving relocation plan. The relocation plan will establish the protocol for any relocations. The broad objective is to facilitate and enhance the continued enjoyment of the downtown as a place to do business, work or live for all current participants in the life of the downtown.

Phase Two Implementation Actions

(4-18 months)

Phase Two will see important action in the steps to realizing catalyst and target projects as well as the initial drafting of incentive programs for improvements in the greater downtown area. Key elements will include:

1. Determine Public Funding Requirements
2. Prepare Incentive District Package
3. Prepare Developer Solicitation Package for Initial Catalyst Projects
4. Issue RFP's for Catalyst Project(s)
5. Prepare Design/Bid Packages for Initial Public Improvements

Phase Three Implementation Actions

(14-36 months)

Phase Three will see selection of developers for target projects along with the first years of implementation of incentive programs for all of downtown. Key elements will include:

1. Evaluate/Select Master Developer or Developers
2. Coordinate Public/Private Improvements
3. Design/Construction Process Administration
4. Administer Incentive District Project Applications

Phase Four

(Year 3 and Ongoing)

As new projects are defined and determined, and as current property owners take advantage of the Incentive District opportunities, there will an ongoing need to define and administer the ongoing rebuilding and renovation of downtown El Paso.

1. Repeat Phase Two and Three for Catalyst Projects
2. Administer Incentive District Project Applications

Conclusion

This outline of implementation actions gives a sense of the breadth and timeline for achievement of both major change and subtle sensitive improvements in the downtown. Much work is necessary and some of it is already underway to further detail each of these steps so that the objectives of the adopted plan can be realized.

Background Documents and Summary of Past Downtown Plans

A

Background Documents and Summary of Past Downtown Plans

El Paso Municipal Planning and Promotional Documents

A Collaborative Approach for Downtown Housing, El Paso Downtown Partnership, September, 2001

A Municipal Strategic Plan for El Paso, Texas: Confronting Challenges and

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Chihuahuita Historic District Report, El Paso Department of Planning, Research & Development,

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El Paso Arena, El Paso Arena Team Presentation, August, 2004

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"Juarez Begins Developing 21-mile River Park" Fabiola de Goribar, El Paso Inc. February 2005

"Just For Fun", El Paso Scene, July 2004

"Mexican Border Factories Rebound", Ricardo Sandoval, San Jose Mercury News October 3, 2004

MexicoNow, January, 2005

MexicoNow: Mexico and China Conference Offshore Manufacturing and Country Analysis, March, 2005

Power Centers/Big Box Retailing, Urban Land Institute, September 2004

The Economic Impacts of Mexican Visitors to Arizona: 2001, Alberta H.

Charney and Vera K. Pavlakovich-Kochi, University of Arizona, July 2002

The El Paso Downtown Management District, Vol.1.4, 4th Quarter.

Public Data, Analyses, And Databases

"Budge Crossings" Border Crossings Report

City of El Paso Population Projections

El Paso Current Projects Database

El Paso and Regional Traffic Analysis

Metropolitan Planning Organization Map of 2030 Roadway Projects

Sun Metro Bus Service Ridership Data

US Census 2000

Maps And Graphic Resources

City of El Paso Aerial

El Paso Downtown Aerial and development sites

Downtown Area Census Tracts and Data Sets, Department of Planning Research and Development, February, 2005

Downtown Development Project Parcel Map

Maps of Historic Districts

Downtown Revitalization Planning Documents Literature Review

Reviewed by Bernadette Montoya
Planning, Research, & Development
City of El Paso, Texas
March 9, 2005

1. Introduction

Numerous plans have been conducted addressing the revitalization of Downtown El Paso for the last half-century. Each of the 53 plans summarized in this report has identified specific objectives that were the focus issues during that time period in El Paso history. For example, early plans concentrated on parking and transportation issues, while recent plans have addressed more comprehensive approaches to downtown redevelopment. The table below demonstrates the evolution of issues in the area.

This literature review concentrated on placing aforementioned plans into five distinct categories. These categories include Transit, Housing, International Trade Center, Entertainment, and Downtown Redevelopment.

Decade	No. of Plans	Main Issues/Themes/Elements
1950s	1	Parking
1960s	2	Monorail System, South El Paso
1970s	13	Transit, South El Paso, International Trade Center
1980s	7	Transit, South El Paso, Downtown Revitalization, Housing, Historic Structures
1990s	15	Transit, Housing, Arena, Riverwalk, Downtown Revitalization
2000s	3	Housing, Downtown Partnership
2001s	2	Arena, Downtown Partnership
2002s	5	Transit, Housing, Downtown Revitalization
2003s	5	Downtown Redevelopment, Railroads
Total	**53**	

2. Transit

In October of 1958 Wilbur Smith and Associates submitted a plan, commissioned by the City of El Paso and the Downtown Development Association, assessing parking needs and demands for downtown El Paso. This report, **A Parking Program for El Paso, Texas**, conducted a cordon count. This is a count of all the traffic in the downtown area including the number of parked vehicles. The report recommended several sites to develop off-street parking in order to alleviate parking problems and to plan for the future. In addition, the costs and income from this new parking was included.

The El Paso-Juarez Monorail System: A Substation ranked tourism as number one in Juarez in July of 1965 due to visitors being greeted with the culture of Mexico through its shops, missions, and parks. This plan was prepared for the City of El Paso and proposed that a transit system be provided between the El Paso and Juarez Central Business Districts. This report refers to the cities as twin cities with each city having a population over 350,000. It was proposed that a SAFEGE Monorail Traction and Suspension System be implemented between the two cities. This system is a monorail system designed for commercial rapid transit, which would operate on pneumatic tires with an electric power unit. This monorail system would provide service for tourists and visitors, as well as citizens of both cities. Ciudad Juarez was noted as wanting to establish a transit system in the form of streetcar service between Juarez and El Paso.

In 1973, **El Sistema Tranviario Internacional Ciudad Juarez-El Paso** was commissioned by Ciudad Juarez, which proposed streetcar service between the City of El Paso and Juarez. In this report, routes were proposed along with costs and benefits of a transit system connecting El Paso and Juarez. Juarez sought to obtain authorization for the establishment of a mass transportation system through streetcar service.

The **Proposed Downtown People Mover El Paso-Juarez** discussed the demand for international travel between El Paso and Juarez linking the two cities together. This report was a technical study commissioned by the City of El Paso with support from the U.S. Department of Transportation, and the Urban Mass Transportation Administration and conducted in June of 1976 by Wilbur Smith and Associates. This report highlights travel demands for the cities in addition to the history of travel, buses, trolleys, and railways. The number of bridge crossings was also studied and the trends were reported annually from 1966 through 1975. In addition, capital costs were determined for the implementation of the Downtown People Mover.

A Traffic and Safety Improvement Plan was commissioned by the City of El Paso in January of 1978 titled **El Paso Central Business District One-Way Streets**. This plan proposed extensions of several one-way streets in order to accommodate a smoother traffic flow. Additionally, a digital computer traffic signal was proposed, as well as the decreasing of curb parking and designating certain lanes as left turn only. The report provides a recommended plan for the El Paso Central Business District and implementation sequence that would best serve Downtown El Paso.

In 1978, the **El Paso Central Business District Land Use Report**, a Department of Planning, Research, and Development internal report, lists the downtown area building uses and vacancies. There are seven main categories for building uses including: services; trade; transportation, utilities, and communication; manufacturing; cultural, entertainment, and recreation; residential; and undeveloped. The report also focuses on the condition of the buildings. The study area included 101 blocks bounded by Montana, Paisano, Virginia, and Coldwell Streets. An interview of renters/residents was conducted in order to determine the number of years the tenant has lived in the Central Business District, reasons for living in the Central Business District, and rent per square foot.

The **Transit Corridor Analysis** (October 1979), an internal report by the Metropolitan Planning Organization, identified the importance of international travel between El Paso and Juarez. It recommended the Del Norte International Corridor, which would connect El Paso and Juarez, to be a priority for planning based on its high demand and potential for mass transit in the present and in the future. The study hypothesized that improving transportation conditions between the two cities would enhance the relationship of the two cities. Travel demands would be met with the establishment of the Del Norte Corridor through the joining of major mass transit alternatives.
A review of documents for ten international transit alternatives was discussed in the **International Transportation Alternatives Analysis** in December 1979, commissioned by the City of El Paso. This report also talked about the number of crossings over three bridges, while discussing trip purposes. For example, it included frequencies of Juarez students crossing over to El Paso

to attend school. There are fourteen tasks listed, which identified and evaluated transit opportunities. For instance, Task 3 assessed each of the eight corridors in El Paso and found that the Del Norte corridor, the area between Downtown El Paso and Downtown Juarez, had the highest travel density. The report concluded that the Del Norte corridor has the highest demand for mass transit. In addition, capital costs are determined for the implementation of the project alternatives.

A **Feasibility Study for the Reactivation of a Streetcar System** analyzed economics along with the advantages and disadvantages of reactivating the downtown streetcars. This report was submitted in May of 1980 in order to highlight the costs of the study and to inform about the firm, Bernard Johnson Incorporated. In April 1981, the Metropolitan Planning Organization Office and the Public Transit Administration commissioned the **Feasibility Study for Reactivation of a Streetcar System.** It was proposed that the streetcar follow along the Del Norte Corridor. In addition, this project proposed that streetcars from the earlier times of El Paso be repaired and reused. However, not all the streetcars would be repairable. The firm recommended three cars to follow a route along the Del Norte Corridor, which is the El Paso Central Business District, and they would stop every two blocks. This report also discussed the costs of the project, including right-of-way costs, construction costs, operating costs, and maintenance costs.

Turner Collie and Braden Inc. proposed a **Multimodal Ground Transportation Center for Downtown El Paso** in January of 1981, commissioned by the Metropolitan Planning Organization, the report developed alternatives for a ground transportation center in El Paso. The report discussed twelve alternatives and refined five that would benefit El Paso. These five alternatives are referred to as the Finalists. In addition, El Paso's Central Business District travel patterns were reported. Finally, capital, construction, and operating costs were discussed in the report for the proposed multimodal center.

The **El Paso-Juarez Mobility Improvement Program**, commissioned by the City of El Paso, also discussed a transit program. In October of 1992, the report proposed the reactivation of the downtown rail streetcars, which was prepared for the City of El Paso. It was proposed that an international transit route follow along Oregon Street including a pedestrian mall. In addition, pedestrian plazas are proposed at City Hall and on San Antonio Street. The report also proposed a five-year mobility enhancement program to improve travel for goods and people across the border.

The **El Paso-Juarez International Transit System: "Mobility for the 21st Century"** discussed mass transit improvements for the City of El Paso and Juarez. This was a presentation, which identified potential corridors for mass transit improvements. It also lists three gateway concepts for a transportation center. Moreover, benefits of the international multimodal facility for El Paso-Juarez were determined.

In February of 1995, a Final Report commissioned by the City of El Paso and Sun Metro for the **El Paso Streetcar Reactivation Project Phase II: Advanced Planning**. This report highlights the improvement of mobility in Downtown El Paso, in addition to the improvement of retail and employment. The report gives specifics for vintage cars, light rail transit, monorail, automated guideway transit, and the electric trolley bus. It discusses the design of the cars, tracks, and facilities, as well as the development of a transit mall.

The **Aerobus de Mexico** was proposed in February of 2002 for an El Paso-Juarez-El Paso route. This was a citizen provided report to the City of El Paso. This report contains pictures of a proposed monorail system between El Paso and Juarez.

The **El Paso SMART Starter Line Environmental Assessment Report** (September 2002) commissioned by the City of El Paso proposed the improvement of transit at the border, to decrease traffic, air pollution, and delay. This plan proposed to enhance traffic, stimulate downtown economic development by providing a new transportation opportunity. Additionally, the report proposes realignment of several streets. Finally, the report discussed how air quality, water quality, and noise pollution would affect downtown El Paso with the construction of the SMART Starter Line. The **El Paso SMART Starter Line Advanced Planning Report** of September 2002 also highlights several street alignments in El Paso. This plan proposed linking the SMART Starter Line (the Oregon Street Transit/Pedestrian Mall) to the Port of Entry. The report identifies different transit systems, such as the light rail, commuter rail, monorail, etc. Finally, ridership estimates were determined, as well as costs for the implementation of this project.

A Mobility Study Traffic Conversion Report of Oregon and Stanton Streets Two-Way (2002) conducted as an internal study by the Engineering Department-Traffic Division to the Department of Planning, Research, and Development. This report discusses traffic flows for Oregon and Stanton Streets and the plan that would change them to two-way streets.

Two-way streets would improve traffic circulation patterns and shorten travel distances. In addition, implementation costs were determined for the project.

The El Paso Regional Intermodal Rail Project (February 2003) was a study commissioned for the City of El Paso and conducted by Moffatt and Nichol Engineers. This project was developed for highway and rail improvements throughout El Paso, which would include relocating existing rail facilities out of downtown. Thus, rail facilities would be located where rail traffic would be able to bypass the El Paso Central Business District. This project would benefit El Paso by enhancing the quality of life and promoting economic expansion. **The El Paso Intermodal Rail Project El Paso, Texas Project Interim Draft Feasibility and Development Report** (July 2003) proposed the development of a Regional Intermodal Rail Plan to stimulate economic activities, improve mobility of goods, enhance the quality of life, improve safety, and address environmental concerns. The projects listed would form a complete outer loop for rail and truck traffic to bypass Downtown El Paso.

3. Housing

A Short History of South El Paso (October 1967) provides the history of how El Paso began in an internal report by the Department of Planning, Research, and Development. The report stated that the main concern for El Paso was water. This concern dealt with either flood or drought. This concern led El Paso to become the second city in the U.S. to have a fully metered water supply. The Kessler Report of 1925 recommended immediate action for the cleanup of the Chihuahuita neighborhood and creating a large market place and permanent outdoor fair for the redevelopment of the neighborhood. This was a report by the City Plan Commission addressing the existing city, its problems, and its future growth and needs. A July 1934 survey findings led to an application for federal aid in building El Paso's first public housing project. This project included the demolition of thirty tenements on the South Side of El Paso. This then led to the Alamito Project in 1940, which comprised of 349 units, and the Tays Housing Project in 1942, which comprised of 311 units. Proposals were also made to pave several streets in South El Paso, which did begin in 1906. In addition, the report maintains that while a lot of work has been accomplished in El Paso, there was still much more to do.

The Redevelopment and Improvement of South El Paso plan depicts the character of South El Paso in January of 1970 in an internal report by the Department of Planning, Research, and Development. This report shows several pictures of South El Paso giving a visual effect of the slum tenements including the outside bathrooms that were shared by residents. The report discusses the number of housing units, as well as the units to be replaced while preserving the residential character. The report concluded that tenements should be demolished in order for the redevelopment of South El Paso to occur.

The Revitalization Plan for the South El Paso Project Area of August 1976 commissioned by the City of El Paso describes the history of El Paso. This led to the goals and objectives of the revitalization of South El Paso. The goals include the restoration of the economic and social health in the area, to stimulate and attract private investment, to improve traffic flows, and to maintain urban design principles. The objectives include removing hazardous conditions, rehabilitate properties, provide low and moderate income housing, and to enhance commercial industries. This report also highlights the interaction between private, public, and community sectors in order for revitalization to occur.

The history of the Segundo Barrio is described in the report **An Analysis of the Tenement Situation in South El Paso** (May 1983). This report provided background information about El Paso. The Chamizal Treaty Settlement helped citizens move into other homes because the land area of the Chamizal was surrendered to Mexico, therefore forcing the citizens to move out of the area. Additionally, the slum conditions of the housing of South El Paso are portrayed in this report.

The South El Paso Zoning Rollback-1986 plan, commissioned by the City of El Paso, also studied the Segundo Barrio due to concern and complaints about the housing conditions in South El Paso. Therefore, City Council requested a downzoning plan for South El Paso. The revitalization of this district would depend on rezoning of the neighborhood in order to rehabilitate it. Several recommendations were proposed in order to aid revitalization of the neighborhood through rezoning. Furthermore, this report also proposes the extension of the Border Highway. This plan was adopted by City Council on July 22, 1986.

In September 1995, **A Strategy for the Development of Affordable Housing** was developed in order to provide home ownership for families with annual incomes of $24,000 or less. This was an internal report conducted by the Department of Planning Research, and Development. This report listed financing options for families and their affordability. **The Demand for Downtown Housing: Survey Results from Spring of 1997**, which was provided by the University of Texas at El Paso, finds who would like to live downtown and what type of housing demand exists. This report listed the questions and the frequencies of answers. **Duende y Alma** (1998) discussed how the rebirth of Downtown El Paso would have positive effects for the area. Some of these effects would include financial rewards. **The Building Blocks Concept Plan An Inner City Housing Proposal for El Paso, Texas** (June 1999), which was also an internal report by the Department of Planning, Research, and Development, listed four project areas that would attract people and housing downtown for redevelopment. The report identifies several specific buildings that would be targeted for redevelopment. The City of El Paso would seek funding for these improvements. In June of 2002, **Design Guidelines-Downtown Sectors (Housing) Concept Plan**, an internal report conducted by the Department of Planning, Research, and Development, indicates how buildings should follow the established urban character and complement downtown. These Design Guidelines were developed as drafts to be included in the Downtown Redevelopment Plan (August 2003) that was not completed.

4. International Trade Center

In July of 1978, the City of El Paso commissioned an **Application to the Southwest Regional Commission for an International Trade Center Study**. This application highlights what is to be studied and proposed a study for the implementation of an International Trade Center. **A Proposal for a Feasibility Study for Establishment of International Trade Center in El Paso, Texas** was submitted in January of 1979 by a consulting firm who proposed to conduct a feasibility study for an International Trade Center. This report highlights professional services and previous projects that the Real Estate Research Corporation would provide. In addition, it lists the qualifications of the individuals involved with the project. In May and July of 1979, the **Market and Feasibility Study for the Proposed International Trade Center in El Paso, Texas** was commissioned by the City of El Paso and conducted in order to determine whether El Paso would be a sufficient area for the development of an International Trade Center. With this study, it was recommended that the International Trade Center should be about seven stories containing offices to attract Juarez tenants from the twin plant programs. The report found that an International Trade Center would be more successful as offices.

5. Entertainment

The Arena Project (1997) listed several options where an arena would benefit El Paso in an internal report by the Department of Planning, Research, and Development. Two sites were analyzed at the Airport and Union Plaza District. Cost estimates were listed for each project including a map of the location. The El Paso Sports Commission would have the purpose of attracting sports and other events to the area and work with existing franchises. **The Central El Paso Multipurpose Entertainment Complex Proposal** (September 1999), which was proposed by the private sector, recommended a 25,000-seat open-air natural grass multipurpose stadium with eight sports fields adjacent to the El Paso County Coliseum. Additionally, the report proposed a light rail transportation system to connect existing parking facilities. **The Arena and Sports Complex Feasibility** study (February 2001), commissioned by the El Paso Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the City and County of El Paso,states that El Paso has experienced tremendous growth. Therefore, El Paso and Juarez would be able to support a soccer complex and an arena. With an arena, El Paso could `lure the Dallas Cowboys' Preseason training camp. In addition, locating the arena downtown would benefit its operating performance. Finally, funding for this project would be through the private and public sector.

6. Downtown Redevelopment

Downtown El Paso Agenda for Action was commissioned by the City of El Paso and submitted on September 29, 1976 by Staten/Pierce, Lacy Inc. and The Crane Design Group. The main focus of this plan was for El Paso to implement a Downtown Task Force, which would be a permanent body meeting in regular sessions. The report also focuses on pedestrian improvement plans that are key components of the Downtown El Paso Agenda. These improvements include intersection restriping, landscaping, urban walls, bus shelters, and sign ordinances. Furthermore, the report discusses a transportation program for Downtown proposing a streetcar route, a People Mover, and the completion of the Border Highway.

It was found that the Central Business District is losing its residential population. Therefore, a plan titled **Renovation...Revitalization A Plan for Downtown El Paso** was an internal report by the Department of Planning, Research, and Development in August of 1982. This report highlights the issue of revitalization for Downtown, which needs a public-private partnership and the support of the community in order to succeed. This report also conducted land and building use surveys, as well as a parking analysis.

The Plan for El Paso (1988), the city's comprehensive plan adopted by the City Council and prepared by the Department of Planning, Research, and Development staff, was also referred to as a guide to the year 2010 for the City of El Paso. This was the comprehensive plan for El Paso that is updated every ten years and superceded by the 1999 update. This plan described El Paso as a radial city, a sprawling, automobile oriented, and diverse city. Downtown was referred to as a part of the city that belongs to everyone. Therefore, the development of downtown should support business activities and provide access to public and private sectors. In addition, the plan proposed improvements for pedestrian traffic, vehicular traffic, as well as the development of adequate parking facilities and an efficient transit system. Furthermore, the plan calls for the preservation and restoration of the historic architectural legacy of the area. As a result, the reuse of historic structures for preservation would be encouraged. Next, the plan addresses the creation of new housing opportunities in downtown in order to stimulate a 24-hour environment, which would result in a feel safe environment. This plan was adopted by City Council on June 28, 1988.

The **Design Guidelines for the Downtown Historic District** (September 1991) discussed the different landmarks throughout downtown. It discussed details about buildings, materials and finishes, and the renovation and upkeep of the district. The purpose of these guidelines is to protect historic landmarks in the City of El Paso. These guidelines were adopted by City Council on January 21, 1992. The **Union Plaza Architectural and Design Guidelines** (July 1996) talked about preserving unity, order, and balance with the buildings in the Union Plaza District of El Paso. Certain types of guidelines would need to be followed, such as landscaping, height limits, and signs. These guidelines were adopted by City Council on August 6, 1996. **The Union Plaza Rehabilitation Program 23rd Year Proposal** (March 1997), an internal report, discusses what buildings need to be rehabilitated and cost estimates within the Union Plaza District in El Paso. Additionally, current housing conditions were stated, as well as recommended housing for rehabilitation.

The Downtown Redevelopment Plan (November 1996) focuses on the public and private sector joining together for the revitalization of Downtown El Paso along with a cooperating community. This was a city commissioned plan prepared by the staff of several departments. This plan recommended downtown to be the focal point of El Paso creating a 24-hour environment for downtown. In addition, new housing and rehabilitated housing would serve a wide range of incomes. Furthermore, this plan highlights the need for street improvements, the improvement of traffic flow for downtown, and rubber-tire trolley system that serves all of downtown. This plan was adopted by City Council on September 24, 1996.

The Downtown Redevelopment Incentives (January 1999), commissioned by the City of El Paso, looked for capital investments in Downtown El Paso through tax abatement. These incentives would help to promote the revitalization of downtown. The goals of this project were to provide corporate infrastructure, link tax abatement and financial services on infrastructure projects, and to revitalize and promote Downtown El Paso.

The Plan for El Paso (1999), the city's comprehensive plan prepared by Department of Planning, Research, and Development staff, addresses issues throughout the city from demographics to urban design for the next 25 years. For downtown, the plan states revitalization is important for overall economic health and continued growth. This plan promotes housing and the improvement of pedestrian, open space, and transit links between Downtown El Paso and Juarez, Mexico. In addition, the plan addresses the issue of the development of a riverwalk linear park and an arena. The goal of the plan is also to create housing in downtown for a wide range of incomes and fill vacant buildings and storefronts. This plan was adopted by City Council on April 27, 1999.

The Union Plaza Housing and Redevelopment Strategy (May 2000), an internal report by the Department of Planning, Research, and Development, proposed two options such as a housing/mercado concept and an arena/hotel and neighborhood concept within the Union Plaza District. In addition, Fannie Mae was identified as a potential funder to help offer Employer-Assisted Housing financing. Several other redevelopment projects were looked at including Albuquerque, New Mexico and San Diego, California as models.

Department files tracked progress of the **El Paso Downtown Partnership** (2000) strategy sessions. The partnership included members from financial institutions, business organizations, developers, non-profit-housing organizations, downtown property owners, and elected officials who started working on a downtown action plan with consultants but was not completed. Robert Charles Lesser and Co., a consulting firm, reported that nearly half of downtowns are feasible or in the process of becoming feasible. The company conducted an economic and market analyses of Downtown El Paso. The proposed revitalization would attract tourism with restaurants and shopping, create a sports venue, and a workforce neighborhood. **The Leinberger-Lesser Study and Data** (September 2000) conducted a survey in order to determine interest in housing, retail, and entertainment activities in downtown. **The Collaborative Approach of the El Paso Downtown Partnership** (September 2001) contains different sectors for downtown redevelopment. These sectors include private, non-profit, financial, and the government sector. These sectors would form the El Paso Downtown Partnership; each would take on a different role. With this partnership, the image of downtown would be transformed. The four sectors would work together to develop a strategy for downtown. The El Paso Downtown Partnership would hold strategy sessions to determine what is needed downtown. The Partnership discussed the bi-national character of our region, in addition to the bi-national utility corridor. Furthermore, the Partnership would develop an Action Plan for downtown. In addition, consulting firms were looked at to help determine what is needed to revitalize Downtown El Paso.

The Downtown Redevelopment Plan (August 2003), an internal report by the Department of Planning, Research, and Development, proposed maintaining and enhancing the character of Downtown El Paso. The goal would be to attract middle and upper class income households to downtown. Additionally, the plan would attract banks and professional services back to downtown. Furthermore, El Paso could be defined through its Mexican music. This would identify El Paso uniquely. Finally, it is recommended that an arena and certain historic venues be located downtown. However, this plan was not completed. **The Downtown Redevelopment Action Plan** (2002-2003), an internal departmental report draft that was not completed, was intended to guide development and bring residents back to Downtown El Paso. It divides downtown into sectors, which include: residential, entertainment, cultural, retail mix, and government. Furthermore, the Downtown Action Plan encourages financial institutions, high-density offices, high-density residential, and mixed-use buildings. This plan encourages transit and pedestrian travel. It was found that successful redevelopment has been driven by the public entity in other cities. Projects such as "Housing in the Heart": City of El Paso's Downtown Housing Initiative and "Project Alpha: Launching downtown redevelopment" were proposed. In order to rehabilitate downtown, incentives were proposed. These include the historic tax exemption and the acquisition of buildings/properties. This plan was a part of the Downtown Redevelopment Plan (August 2003) that was not finished.

7. Conclusion

All the plans contain one basic concept, which is improving Downtown El Paso while maintaining its unique character. Many of the plans reflect on common themes throughout the decades that continue to be an issue of concern – rehabilitation of downtown structures, attracting residents to downtown, addressing parking issues, the circulation system in the downtown area – while some plans specifically focus on one issue within the downtown area such as parking structure sites or mass transit routes for international transit service. Over the years, some of the projects and programs proposed in these plans have been implemented. In fact, design guidelines were developed and implemented by the Department of Planning, Research, and Development, many transit improvements and sidewalk improvements have been implemented over the years, and several large projects have been built in the downtown area. However, there is still a continued need for planning in this area and for a comprehensive vision to be implemented for the downtown area to truly revitalize it as other cities have been able to do in their downtowns.

This review of the plans demonstrates the diversity and complexity of issues involved in downtown planning and revitalization. Furthermore, it reveals the revolving vision of downtown over the last five decades – some which appear contradictory in retrospect. For example, plans have suggested creating more one-way streets, while others have propositioned reverting back to two-way streets for the improvement of local traffic conditions. An emphasis was placed on an international transit system to benefit travelers, which would alleviate some of the congestion and pollution problems that link El Paso and Juarez together. Moreover, housing plans were developed to improve living conditions for downtown residents that would attract a range of incomes, yet offer affordable housing for low-income households. Finally, a theme that resurfaced in the eighties through the present is that of an entertainment district proposed to benefit Downtown El Paso by creating a 24-hour arena venue that would draw people during the evening and weekend hours. The El Paso Downtown Partnership – comprised of several members of the public and private sector – was established work together to bring forth the vision for revitalization as proposed in the city plans and successfully involved a group of key stakeholders. However, there was no consistent effort to ensure this group continued its work so that effort was half completed. Other plans similarly reveal that partnerships with private and public entities have yielded positive projects, programs, and plans. For plans to be successful, the private and public sector are critical partners for not only plan development but also for the implementation of a consistent vision.

Table 1.
Organizations Responsible for Plan Creation

	Staff	Consultants	Other	Total Plans
Number	24	24	5	53
Percent	45.28%	45.28%	9.43%	100.00%

Table 2.
Rate of Adoption by City Council

	Adopted	Not Adopted	Total
Number	6	47	53
Percent	11.32%	88.68%	100.00%

Table 3.
Proposed Projects and Estimated Capital Costs in Plans by Year

Year	Option A*	Option B*	Option C*	Plan
1976	25,456,000	19,367,000	18,844,000	Proposed Downtown People Mover (p. 67-69)
1979	4,918,000	23,354,000	58,290,000	International Transportation Alternatives Analysis (p. 97)
1979	6,700,000			Market and Economic feasibility Study Proposed ITC (p. 91)
1981	7,750,000			Feasibility Study for Reactivation of a Streetcar System (p. 21)
1981	5,232,000	2,350,000	3,967,000	Multimodal Ground Transportation Center (p. 13)
1995	18,019,484	15,224,631	14,562,623	El Paso Streetcar Reactivation Project Advanced Planning (p. 7-7)
1997	80,550,000	82,820,000	87,664,000	Arena Project
1999	37,500,000			Central El Paso Multipurpose Entertainment Complex Proposal
2002	10,000,000			SMART Starter Line Advanced Planning (p. 5-1)

Table 4.
Plans Proposing a Regulation Change

Year	Plan	Proposed Regulation Changes
1978	El Paso Central Business One-Way Streets	One-way streets
1982	Renovation…Revitalization A Plan for Downtown El Paso	Realign streets and one-way streets
1986	The South El Paso Zoning Rollback	Zoning
1999	Downtown Redevelopment Incentives	New tax abatement guidelines
1999	The Plan for El Paso	Zoning
2002	Mobility Study Traffic Conversion Report	Two-way streets
2003	Downtown Redevelopment Plan	Tax freeze concept

Note: Tables 1-4 prepared by Bernadette Montoya

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Community Meetings Overview

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Community Meetings Overview

Schedule of Meetings

A series of community meetings and workshops were held as part of the City's development plan review process for Downtown El Paso 2015. A series of community meetings and workshops were held in May and June of 2006 as part of the City's development plan review process and to review with residents of El Paso preliminary plan concepts and recommend strategies.

These meetings took two formats;

1) A presentation of plan concepts followed by open public comment - City staff and representatives from PDNG and SMWM then responded to questions.
2) Workshops with planning exercises to solicit ideas from the public to help shape a more responsive downtown plan.

The public meetings and workshops were held on the following dates:

May 23-24th, 2006
JFW Convention Center, Downtown
2 meetings

June 7-8th, 2006
JFW Convention Center, Downtown
4 meetings

June 28-29th
Polly Harris Senior Center, Northeast
Recreation Center, Eastwood Recreation Center
4 meetings

An additional special public meeting was held to address the proposed arena. At this meeting representatives of a group which provided input on an arena proposal were present to answer questions.

Numerous additional meetings were held and contacts made throughout the area, including residents of the Segundo Barrio, the Central Business Association, the Downtown Management District, and the Korean Merchants Association; other meetings as were requested.

After receiving public comment, the City and project team refined the Downtown El Paso 2015 Plan and prepared responses to public comments. A special City Council Hearing was conducted on July 10, 2006 to formally present the refined plan and address further public comment.

Workshop Overview

Downtown El Paso Plan Workshops were held to engage community members and interested stakeholders in a discussion about the future of the Downtown area and surrounding residential neighborhoods in order to create a more responsive area plan. SMWM organized and facilitated the workshops with the assistance of additional facilitators from the city's offices who were trained by the consultant staff.

The team publicized each meeting and sought to provide Spanish-English translators. Workshops were scheduled in different locations throughout the study area and in adjacent neighborhoods. Additionally, meetings were scheduled at a range of times in the morning and evening to provide the opportunity for people with varying schedules to attend. At each workshop the public was given the option of playing one of two planning games focused either on the Mercado neighborhood or the proposed First Street in the Downtown area based on their interests. Throughout the course of the workshops facilitators actively listened to participants and recorded their comments.

Meeting Structure

Workshops consisted of a one hour slide presentation of the proposed El Paso Downtown Plan, a discussion of the objectives and rules for the planning game to be played, followed by one and a half hour small group work sessions where participants outlined a vision statement then built their selected area based on the game pieces provided. Workshops concluded with each group reporting back to the larger group a summary of their vision and the major character and elements of their plan including the major theme of their downtown; the types of land uses and activities they favored in what locations and why; and why the group's downtown or neighborhood made sense for El Paso.

Each hands-on planning exercise provided participants with an opportunity to provide their vision for a new El Paso Downtown or Neighborhood and to understand the planning for its future. Discussions surrounding the playing of the Planning Game focused on the great opportunities presented and compromises required when developing downtown.

Through their vision statement, game board and comments, each group expressed their feelings about what land uses and activities they thought were appropriate for El Paso's downtown and related neighborhoods while discussing how different land uses work together and the advantages and drawbacks of various adjacency issues.

Materials

Upon arriving, each participant was assigned to play either the Downtown game or the Neighborhood game. Tables were arranged throughout the meeting area for the breakout session and each small group was given the following items:

- Gameboard (40" x 70")
- Vision Statement Cards
- Game pieces for Character and Use defining land uses and public realm uses and activities
- Scissors, tape, and pens to cut game pieces, tape game pieces together, write in new uses or activities, and record comments

Throughout the exercise facilitators took notes and answered questions, helping participants create and refine their vision statements through the illustration of land uses and activities. They instructed participants to look for synergies in land uses and public realm activities such as pairing residential uses with ground floor uses that support people living in the neighborhood while providing local employment. Likewise entertainment and cultural uses were mixed with other regional attractions such as restaurants and shopping. Participants were also encouraged to write their comments on the base maps and game pieces in order to use them to further expand upon their views and perspectives.

Downtown Planning Game

The Downtown Planning Game focused on how to make downtown El Paso a vibrant neighborhood. Each group created a vision statement for the future downtown using the statement cards provided to express their preferences. Using the game pieces, participants elaborated their vision statement by illustrating or "building" their vision. Cards were placed on the board to define land uses and activities and spatially locate them.

Members of the public illustrated ground floor and upper floor land uses and desired activities within the public realm (open space, street, and sidewalks). Facilitators helped participants focus on whether or not ground floor and upper floor uses were compatible within a building and with adjacent blocks. Likewise, they helped pose the question of whether parks made sense in this neighborhood and which street activities were compatible with traffic flow.

Each group then reported back to the larger group and presented a summary of their downtown vision and the major character and elements of their downtown plan.

Neighborhood Planning Game

The Neighborhood Planning Game focused on creating a vision of the future of one of two of the residential neighborhoods located adjacent to downtown.

Participants could chose between playing on the Mercado Retail District game board or on the Mixed-Use/Retail District game board. Each group created a vision statement of the future neighborhood using statement cards to express their preferences. Game pieces were placed on the board defining land uses and activities. Participants illustrated their desired mix of uses and desired activities within the public realm (open space, street, and sidewalks). Each group then reported back to the larger group in the same format as the Downtown Planning Game, sharing the vision and character of their neighborhood plan.

Game Rules

The following were the rules shared with the participants of the workshop:

- Group must provide a vision statement by selecting from three groups of cards; land use, cultural/entertainment, and public realm/community. A maximum of eight cards may be selected with a minimum of one card from each group
- Place pieces in the appropriate ground floor, upper floor, street, or open space areas. Pieces do not have to match exactly, overlapping is fine. Game pieces can be cut to change the intensity or location of a use. "Wildcards" are used to express a land use or activity that is not one of the cards

Game Boards & Pieces

Each planning game had a different board showing the streets and blocks of the focus area. While both games had Vision Statement Cards, there was some variation between the two games in terms of the land uses and activities for each Vision Statement card.

Downtown Planning Game

The Downtown Planning Game Board consisted of an eight block area in the center of the site currently being studied by SMWM. The board focused on the section of First Street proposed between Stanton and Santa Fe with the goal of creating land uses and activities that made this new street a vibrant catalyst for the downtown.

Downtown Planning Game Pieces

The following twenty-two Vision Statement cards were available within three categories:

Cultural/Entertainment

Bar/Nightclub
Public Art
Cultural Significance
Museum
Theater
Arts Walk
Art Gallery/Studios

Land Use

Office
Commercial
Civic/Government
Education/Institution
Retail: Specialty
Retail: Major
Housing
Mixed Use

Public Realm

Community Garden
Public Transit
Open Space for Families
Pedestrian Street
Bike Route
Open Space: Passive Park
Open Space for Event Gathering

The following five game pieces, showing a mixture of commercial uses, were available for the ground floor:

Retail—National

Major; Mid-Size; Restaurant; Café; Convenience

Retail—Local

Café; Retail; Restaurant; Arts & Crafts/Gallery; Specialty; Gourmet Foods; Convenience

Entertainment

Nightclub; Entertainment; Bar

The following thirteen game pieces with ground and upper floor land uses were provided:

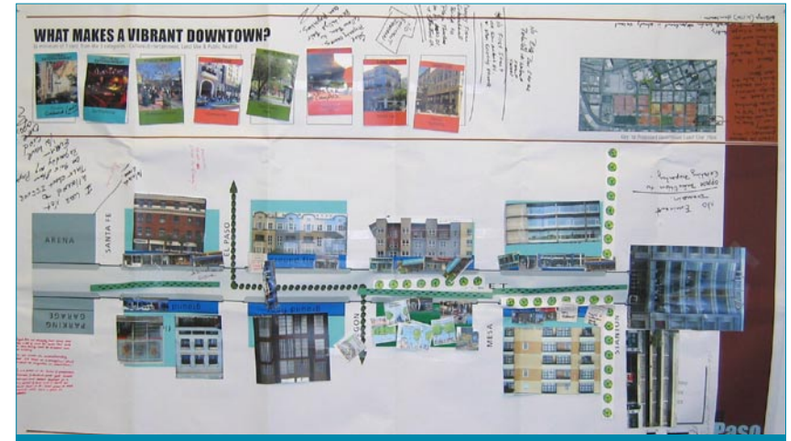
Apartments
Low-rise Housing
Affordable Housing
Mid-rise Housing
Lofts
Adaptive Reuse: Housing or Retail
Office: Low-rise
Mid-rise Commercial
Theater
Museum
Hotel
Retail - National: Major
Parking Garage

Downtown Planning Game Examples

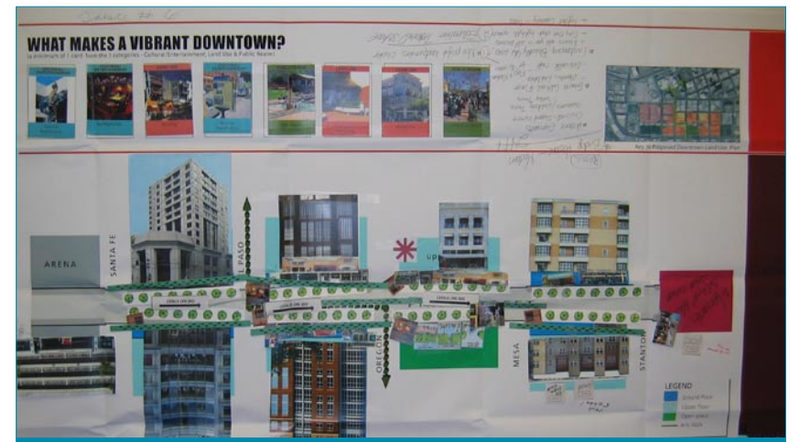
Included are two examples of Downtown Planning Game Boards from the workshops held on June 7th and 8th in El Paso.

Example 1: The group placed a high importance on housing, playing game pieces for low-rise apartments, mid-rise apartments, lofts, adaptive reuse housing, and affordable housing. They chose primarily locally serving retail uses to fill the ground floors below the housing while entertainment uses filled the ground floors on the blocks nearest to the proposed arena site. They did not want an arena and suggested major national retail with an accompanying parking garage as the other anchor at the end of First Street. A cluster of public amenities were centered around the proposed park along First Street including a farmer's market, community garden, and a range of different types of open space. The group emphasized the adaptive reuse of existing structures and expressed concern over the presence of large national chains.

Example 2: The group chose higher levels of density along First Street with a mixture of housing and commercial uses on upper floors above with mostly national retail along the ground floors. The group was in favor of the arena and chose to place parking to serve the facility across the street. They suggested a Mercado cultural mall with interior and exterior spaces as the other retail anchor. First Street emerged as a vibrant public environment with art, street vendors, interpretive signage, open spaces and transit connections. In addition, the group used their wildcards to include a tech school and a clinical support center offering more services to the neighborhood. Their comments indicated the need to bridge the historic elements of the neighborhood with newer development and the enhancement of existing culture.



Example 1: Downtown El Paso Game Board



Example 2: Downtown El Paso Game Board

Neighborhood Planning Game

The Neighborhood Planning Game focused on two mixed-used residential areas adjacent to the Downtown Game site. Each game board showed both the Mercado Retail District and the Mixed-Use/Retail District, offering participants the choice of playing either one or both game boards.

Neighborhood Planning Game Pieces

The following twenty-seven Vision Statement cards were available within four categories:

Cultural

Arts Walk
Art Gallery
Artist Studio
Historic Significance
Cultural Significance
Community Art Center
Public Art

Land Use

Housing
Retail: Neighborhood
Retail: Supermarket
Retail: Lifestyle
Office
Commercial
Mixed Use

Public Realm

Pedestrian Street
Bike Route
Public Transit
Open Space for Children
Open Space for Event Gathering
Community Garden
Sports Fields

Community

Community Center
Farmer's Market
Day Care Facility
School
Recreational Center
Café/Restaurant

The following sixteen game pieces in the following categories were provided:

Retail

Neighborhood Retail
Local Grocery Store
Antique Store
Boutique Store

Housing

Lofts
Apartments – Low-Rise
Apartments - Mid-Rise
Townhouses (2 varieties)
Affordable Housing
Senior Housing
Adaptive Reuse Housing

Community Uses

Community Recreation Center
Day Care Facility
School
Commercial
Office

The following nineteen cards were provided for meeting attendants to use to describe their Vision for the neighborhood's public realm:

Local Arts/Crafts

Art Gallery/Studio
Local Sidewalk Café
Street Vendors
Public Art
Community Garden
Farmer's Market
Open Space: Children; Family; Passive Park; Events; Water Feature
Night Time Street Closure
Streets: One Way; Two Way; Pedestrian; Bike Route; Transit
Interpretive Signage

Historic/Cultural Significance cards were provided for participants to indicate sites throughout the neighborhood that existed as historic or culturally significant buildings and places.

Neighborhood Planning Game Examples

Included are two examples of Neighborhood Planning Game Boards from the workshops held on June 7th and 8th in El Paso.

Example 1: The group played a large number of housing cards providing for a range of housing types including townhouses, low-rise apartments, adaptive reuse housing, and lofts within the Mercado Retail District. The group was also concerned with maintaining and improving a diversity of housing options; they played a senior housing card and three affordable housing cards. Retail was focused primarily around a new central green space and in the block across from the Sacred Heart Church. The group proposed a community garden and open space designed for families including a water feature and areas designated as a passive parkl. The group was concerned that any buildings be maintained in good conditions and that sports fields not dominate open spaces.

Example 2: The group placed housing throughout the Mercado Retail District focusing on low-rise apartments and affordable housing. A large number of public amenities were provided to serve the community. A community recreation center, day care facility, community garden, farmer's market, public art, street vendors, interpretive signage, and open spaces were selected. In addition, the group added a pharmacy. Concern was raised that the planning process respect the historical and cultural significance of the Segundo Barrio.

The pieces played on the Mixed Use/Residential District board differed from those played on the Mercado board; different types of housing were proposed including lofts, townhouses, and mid-rise apartments with higher levels of density. Affordable housing was still included but to a lesser extent. A day care facility was included and open spaces and public art were distributed throughout the neighborhood. Overall, however, there was less of an emphasis on community services.

Example 1: Neighborhood El Paso Game Board

Example 2: Neighborhood El Paso Game Board

Downtown Site Survey

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Downtown Site Survey

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Site Survey of Downtown El Paso

The SMWM team conducted a thorough site survey of the downtown study area during April of 2005. The survey allowed the team to become fully familiar with the downtown urban fabric including streets, public ways, buildings, and vacant private properties. This information was utilized to determine potential areas for preservation, reuse, and redevelopment.

The team walked every block in the study area, photographed every building façade, and made detailed notes of property uses and condition. Ground floor and upper floor uses were recorded. Buildings were assessed for their architectural and historic character. This assessment of historic and noteworthy buildings assisted in the formulation of the land use framework.

A separate independent survey of historic structures was also conducted. This more detailed assessment will be utilized in further project planning.