

# SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

### Purpose of a Comprehensive Plan

Cities are complex social, economic and political structures. The physical development of a city is a response to, and a product of, a variety of forces and pressures. Generally, in the absence of overall direction and guidance, cities cannot be expected to develop in an orderly fashion and in conformance with community interests. The municipal government through the adoption of appropriate policies, ordinances and standards for orderly development provides direction and guidance in community development.

Local governmental direction and guidance usually take the form of comprehensive physical planning and land use regulation. In Texas, municipal governments take the lead role in the planning process, because of the legal authority available to municipalities in ordinance making powers, while very limited legal authority is available in controlling local development by counties, regional entities, and even the state. By developing and implementing a comprehensive plan, capital improvement programs and land use control ordinances, the local policy-makers are able to give general direction in the physical development of their communities.

La Feria's Comprehensive Plan provides a guide for the physical development of the community by identifying characteristics and features, which influence the community growth patterns. Included in the plan is an analysis of La Feria's historical patterns of development in the areas of housing; population and land use and projections for the City's future. Particular attention is given to the adequacy of each of these major elements for future development needs and how these facilities will affect, and be affected by, future growth. The plan also suggests appropriate objectives, which would have the greatest likelihood of accomplishing planning element goals that would meet community needs, if followed. The Comprehensive Plan provides a foundation upon which sound decisions can be made regarding La Feria's future growth and development.

The likelihood of significant change in La Feria and adjacent areas over the next few years is substantial, especially given the community's location within the Rio Grande Valley, hereafter referred to as "the Valley," and its proximity to and relationship with Mexico. Because of unknown factors related to Mexico, the pace and extent of future growth and change of a valley community becomes difficult to forecast. Therefore, periodic evaluations of growth within the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) should be analyzed to show the City's commitment to all development opportunities. Maps of the City and ETJ are provided at the end of this chapter.

## LA FERIA'S LOCATION TO SURROUNDING CITIES

The hereafter exhibit shows the location of La Feria with surrounding communities and Mexico.

This is a detailed map of the Mercedes, Texas area, showing the Rio Grande, major highways, and surrounding communities like Weslaco and Edcouch. The map includes labels for various locations such as Edcouch, L.A. Villa, San Jose Ranch, Combes, Palmita, and Mercedes. It also shows the Rio Grande, various roads, and the surrounding landscape.

Source: Texas Department of Transportation and Design Services, Inc.



## **IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS**

Recommended goals and objectives as determined through the study of each planning element in this report are listed in the appropriate chapter. An overview of the subject matter in the report makes it easier for local citizens and officials to identify the most important activities that they want to implement or address. Many of the recommended activities can be achieved with city policies, while other activities will require some form of financial investment by private funds, local funds, grant funds or other government agency funds.

The hereafter-recommended goals and objectives need to be updated occasionally following an appropriate review of the material based on an established schedule determined by local officials. Following a review of the material by an appointed individual or group of individuals, needed additions and/or subtractions to the goals and objective statements should be made as local interest dictates.

The final phase of the Comprehensive Plan is the implementation step. Only through the actions of the council, staff, local planning bodies and in general, the citizens can the prepared plans be adopted or accepted for execution by the city and financial means allocated to implement recommended strategies and/or goals and objectives.

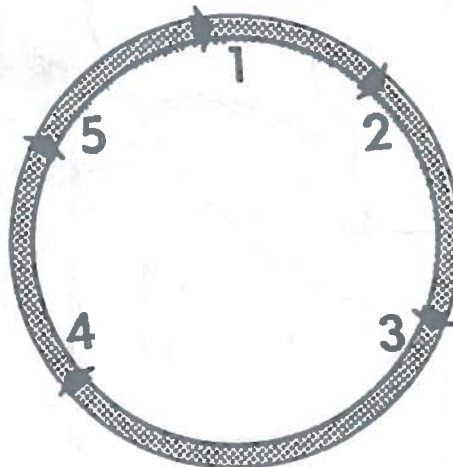
### **EXHIBIT 1-2**

#### **LA FERIA'S 2007 PLANNING PROGRAM**

Base Mapping; Economics; Population; Housing; Land Use; Parks and Open Space; Streets; Thoroughfares, Central Business District, Waterworks System; Wastewater System; Storm Drainage System; Subdivision Ordinance and Zoning Ordinance;

**IMPLEMENTATION**  
(City Actions Through Policies)  
ORDINANCES  
PROJECT SELECTION  
PROJECT FINANCING

**INVENTORIES AND  
BASIC RESEARCH**



**PLANS &  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
TO IMPROVE  
THE COMMUNITY**

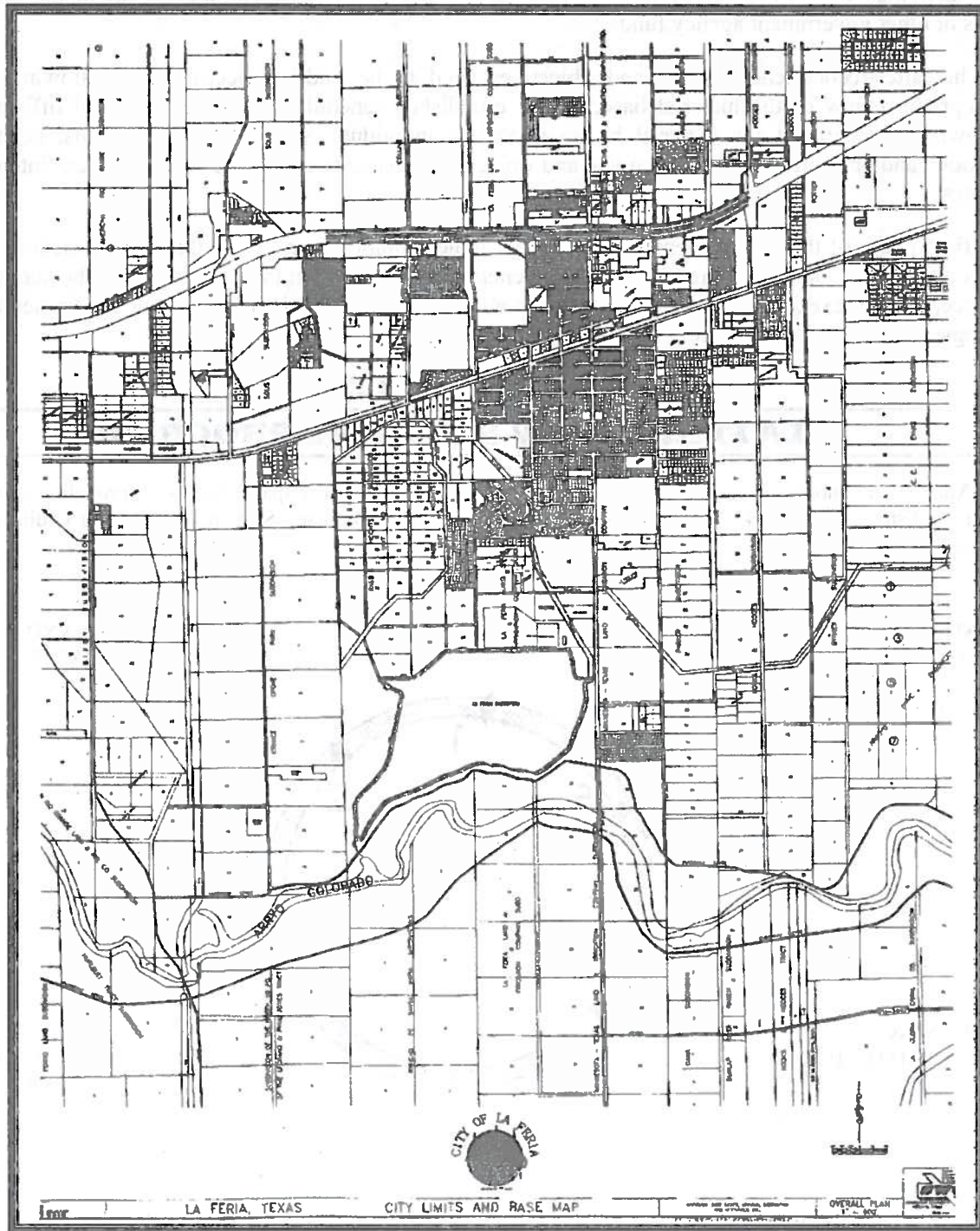
**ANALYSIS OF ACTIVITIES  
OR SYSTEMS TO DETERMINE  
NEEDS**

**PROGRESS IS MADE THROUGH PLANNING**

## LOCATION AND HISTORY

Exhibits 1-3 and 1-4 provide an Extraterritorial Jurisdiction map of the City and an aerial map that covers most of the City's Extraterritorial Jurisdiction.

### EXHIBIT 1-3 2007 CITY AND EXTRATERRITORIAL JURISDICTION MAP



Source: Sigler, Winston, Greenwood & Associates, Inc.



**EXHIBIT 1-4  
2007 TOPOGRAPHIC MAP**



Source: City of La Feria & Stewart Geo Technologies

## La Feria's History

The City of La Feria (the Trade Center in Spanish) is located at the intersection of U.S. Highway 83 and Farm Road 506, twenty-four miles northwest of Brownsville in Western Cameron County. The area was first settled when the land was assigned by Spain in 1777 to Rosa Maria Hinojosa de Balli as part of the La Feria land grant. The Balli family established several farms with headquarters on the La Feria Grant. The family maintained control of the land well into the mid-1800's, and the community that grew up on the grant remained a ranching center into the twentieth century. In 1909 G.J. Schoenberg, a local land developer developed the town of La Feria. That year the La Feria post office was opened. A railroad stop named Bixby was established a mile from the town when the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway was built through the area in 1911. In July 1912, the founding fathers of La Feria stole the Bixby depot and hauled it to the new town site. La Feria incorporated in about 1915 with a population of 200, a bank, two churches, and a weekly newspaper, the La Feria Leader. In 1925, estimates of the population ranged from 236 to 825.

In 1936, the community had various dwellings, one business, one farm, three schools, two churches and an expanding population that was estimated at 2,630 by 1949. In 1960, the town supported the La Feria News, three elementary schools, a junior high, a high school, and a population of 3,000. The town reported ninety industries in 1967, including fruit and vegetable canneries, manufacturers of carnival equipment, cotton trailers, and liquid fertilizer, and three cotton gins. The tourist trade had expanded considerably, and tourist facilities were available at the community center park. In 1990, La Feria had 4,360 inhabitants and thirty-five businesses.

La Feria as well as Cameron County has been greatly blessed with the tourist trade with the Snowbirds spending their winters in the Valley. At times, the surge of winter snowbirds increases the local population to twice the size of the summer population.

## Cameron County History

Cameron County created and organized in 1848 with an original area of 3,300 square miles taken from Nueces County, was named for Ewen Cameron. The county was later reduced to 863 square miles when Willacy and Kennedy counties were created. As part of the Rio Grande delta, Cameron County has sandy soils which, under irrigation, produce citrus fruits, vegetables, and cotton. Livestock raising was the first major industry; beef and dairy cattle, poultry, and bees are produced commercially.

In 1850 and in 1853 the Rio Grande Railway and Turn Pike Company and the Brownsville and Rio Grande Railway were projected for the county, but neither was built; the first railroad actually built in Cameron County was a military road constructed by Philip H. Sheridan from Brazos Santiago to White Ranch. A line chartered in 1866 to build from Point Isabel to Brownsville did not materialize, but in 1871, the Rio Grande Railway between those points did begin operation. The St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railroad built across the county in 1904 and the San Benito and Rio Grande Valley Railroad was built in 1912. In 1927 the San Antonio and Aransas Pass was completed from Harlingen to Brownsville.

Sugar cane and sugar mills as well as irrigation increased industry and population, as did the tourist business. World Wars I and II brought increased military activity and international trade, which was promoted by completion of the ship channel, which made Brownsville a deep-water port. Population in 1940 was 83,202 and 139,722 in 2000.



## KEY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Obtain adequate right-of-way to develop Beddoes Road into a “major” street from FM Road 506 to US Expressway 83. *partially accomplished*

Adopt the Industrial Area on the northwest side of the City, as shown on the “2025 Land Use Plan Map”, as the City’s official industrial area.

Develop Beddoes Road as a “major” street from FM Road 506 to US Expressway 83.

Develop the northwest corner at the intersection of White Ranch Road and US Expressway 83 into a major retail shopping area.

Develop the southwest corner at the intersection of White Ranch Road and US Expressway 83 into a major retail shopping area.

Adopt provisions to designate areas as allowed by the State of Texas for Tax Increment Finance and select appropriate areas for Tax Increment Finance development. ✓

Investigate the possibility of an existing University or College to establish a campus in La Feria or the development of a community college. ✓

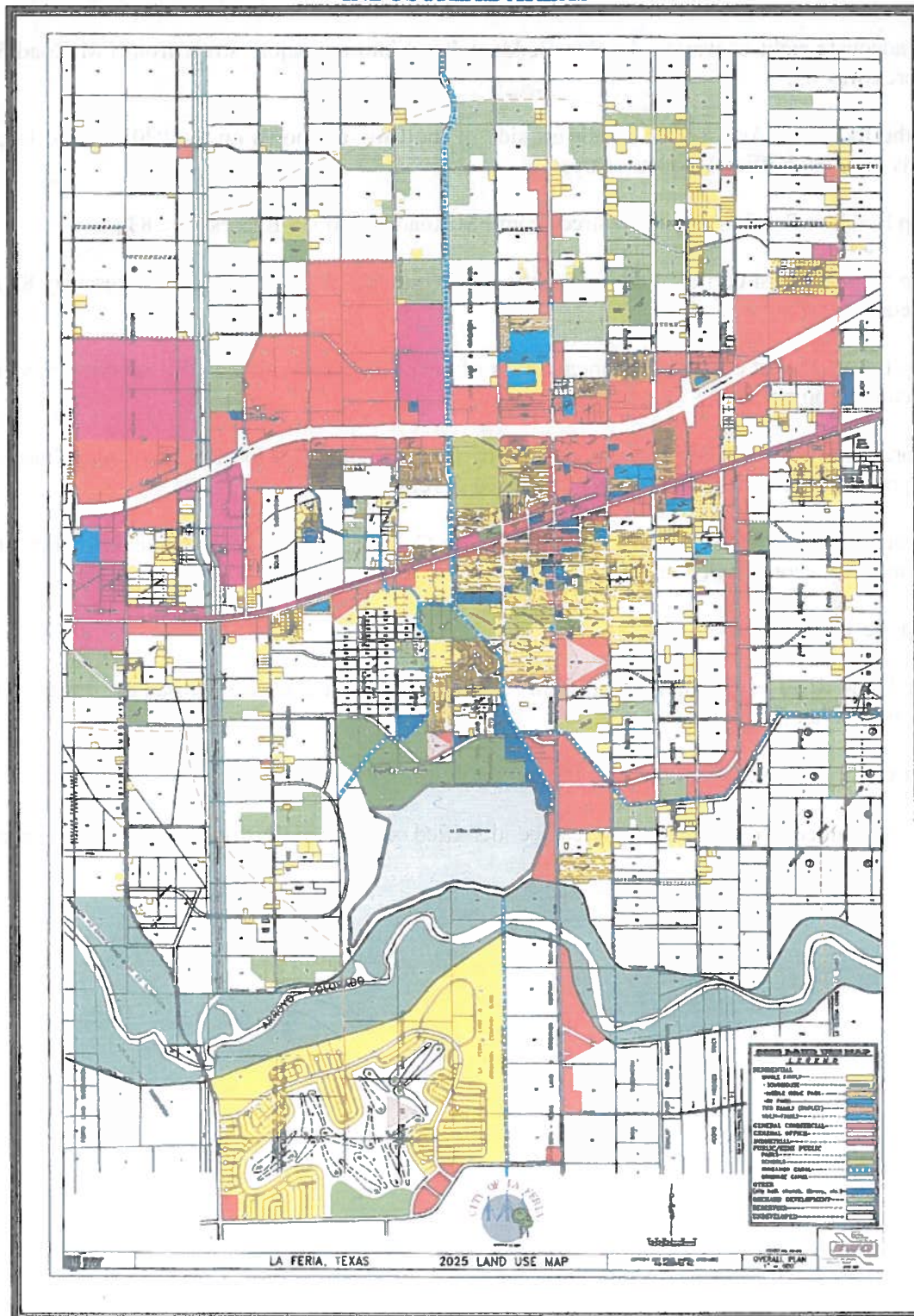
Develop the Wildlife and Nature Park. ✓

Develop Dodd Road as a “major” street from FM Road 506 to Orange Grove Road as suggested in the Thoroughfare Plan Chapter.

Create a senior retirement community with golf facilities.

The key recommendations stated above can be identified on the map illustrated on the following page.

**EXHIBIT 1-5  
PATTERN OF 2007 LAND USES WITH FUTURE COMMERCIAL AND  
INDUSTRIAL AREAS**



Source: Design Services, Inc.



## **CHAPTER 2 "ECONOMY" GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **Goal**      *Increase local industrial development.*

#### **Objectives**

- 2008    Review available sites for an industrial park to include the support of local organizations to work toward the promotion and development of a site. Then select a site of adequate size that can be served with utilities. Areas for industrial development are located on the "Future Land Use Map."
- 2009    Purchase the selected industrial park site and request City annexation of the land.
- 2009    Prepare a plan to develop the site and market the land.
- 2010    Acquire information on resource funding.

### **Goal**      *Increase the development of local businesses.*

#### **Objectives**

- 2008    The Industrial Development Corporation and Chamber of Commerce should make plans and promote the development of more medical offices activity in the Central Business District.

Following the adoption of the 2025 Land Use Plan in Chapter 5 by elected officials, a survey should be made of local historic buildings to provide protection for the buildings in the Central Business District and along FM Road 506.

- 2009    Promote the development of appropriate businesses along US Expressway 83 with special attention of White Ranch Road at the Expressway. Contract large retail firms to locate in this area.
- 2010    Research the possibility of starting a University branch campus or a community or junior college.

Work with Cameron County and the Texas Transportation Department to develop Beddoes Road into a major street from F.M. Road 506 to US Expressway 83.

- 2012    Promote transition of some residential structures facing FM Road 506 to light commercial. Areas acceptable to light commercial must be redeveloped in accordance with Zoning Ordinance requirements.

### **Goal**      *Increase festival events and other activities to attract people to La Feria.*

#### **Objectives**

- 2008    Work with local organizations to improve festival events in the City's commercial area.  
  
Develop the Wildlife and Nature Park and the development and realignment of Dodd Road as a "major" street from FM Road 506 to Orange Grove Road.
- 2009    Encourage the development of a Certified Retirement Community in La Feria.

- 2011 Develop a golf course on the south side of the Arroyo Colorado between FM Road 506 and FM Road 2556.

## CHAPTER 3 "POPULATION STUDY" GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In Chapter 3, population forecast was made by five-year increments to the year 2025. The forecast of 10,770 for the year 2025 was used in the planning and decision-making processes and constitute important input in developing recommendations for extensions and improvements to the utility systems, community facilities, park and recreational facilities and street development.

The desire for a small town lifestyle is still very strong for many people, especially in the South and Southwest. A slower pace in the lifestyle of individuals, a perceived higher level of safety and security, and a general feeling of having greater control over one's circumstances are among the considerations that provide individual attractions to small towns. As long as employment opportunities continue for local commuters to work outside of the city and county or employment opportunities increase in La Feria, the city's population should continue to increase each decade.

### EXHIBIT 1-6

#### POPULATION FORECAST FOR LA FERIA

2007 TO 2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN				
YEAR	1998 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN & CENSUS	WATER DEVELOPMENT BOARD	1** DSI SUMMER FORECAST	2** DSI WINTER FORECAST RECOMMENDED
1990	4,360*	4,360*	4,360*	4,360*
2000	6,115*	6,115*		6,115*
2007		—	7,610	8,500
2010	7,530	7,954	7,960	8,850
2015			8,510	9,400
2020	9,620	9,898	9,140	10,030
2025			9,880	10,770

Source: \* 1990 & 2000 U. S. Census. (1\*\* & 2\*\*) Estimates and projection by Design Services, Inc. (DSI).

## CHAPTER 4 "HOUSING STUDY" GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Housing policies should be articulated in a community's zoning, subdivision and building codes. Local government policies, programs, and regulations can affect the development, location, quality, and cost of housing, as well as the demographic characteristics of the households that are willing or able to occupy housing in the community.

**Housing, Goal #1:** Encourage appropriate neighborhoods with appropriate amenities for existing and future residents.

**Objectives:** 2008. Improve neighborhood appearances through subdivision design and street tree planting along local streets.



- 2008. Develop a policy on the types of residential development that the city would like to have constructed.
- 2009. Prepare plans to develop a residential retirement community area.
- 2010. Submit an application to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for grant funds to improve recreation facilities.
- 2012. Request the Texas Department of Transportation to provide assistance to landscape local highways.
- 2014. Request the County Agency to provide technical assistance to local citizens in developing street landscaping.
- 2015. Request the local garden club to assist in developing a plan for street landscaping.

**Housing Goal #2**      **Encourage appropriate development of land for residential areas with desirable lot sizes, paved curb and gutter streets and appropriate utility lines.**

- Objectives:**
- 2008. To alleviate maintenance and service problems in the city, especially in older areas, upgrade existing infrastructure (water, sewer, streets and drainage) to minimum acceptable standards.
  - 2008. Request Community Development Block Grant Funds for the improvement of utility lines.
  - 2009. Assist property owners who want to subdivide their land to create a desirable arrangement of platted property that will blend with existing development and plans of the city.
  - 2010. Develop a five-year housing improvement program.
  - 2011. Develop a golf course with a retirement community project.

**Housing Goal #3:**      **Seek state and federal funds for housing improvements and the development of administrative codes and ordinances for quiet, safe, healthy, convenient and attractive housing in La Feria.**

- Objectives:**
- 2007. Prepare a new Zoning Ordinance Map.
  - 2007. Promote and encourage "fair housing".
  - 2008. Review the 2008 HOME Program for the preparation of a new application to assist in improving local housing conditions
  - 2010. Promote and encourage "fair housing".

2012. Encourage the review and adoption of all codes and ordinances that would improve local housing.

**Housing Goal #4: Demolish all dilapidated housing units.**

**Objectives:** 2008 Demolish one dilapidated housing structure.

2009. Review all structures classified as substandard in the 2007 survey data to determine if any have reached a stage of deterioration or demolition.

2010. Demolish one dilapidated housing structure.

2015. Demolish one dilapidated housing structure.

## **CHAPTER 5 "LAND USE STUDY" GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

Land use management recommendations are illustrated by the "Future Land Use Plan Map", which includes the anticipated growth area by the year 2025. A list of stated goals and objectives provides specific steps or procedures to undertake in the accomplishment of the land use arrangements shown by the "Future Land Use Plan".

### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**Goal #1** Encourage the designation of land for public and private development as illustrated on the "Future Land Use Plan Map".

**Objectives:**

- 2008 Implement the "Future Land Use Plan" as a design for the future development of the city by adopting the plan.

Implement annexation policies.

Encourage improvements to the downtown area.

Obtain all right-of-way needed to develop Beddoes Road proposal as a "major" street from FM Road 506 to US Expressway 83.

Encourage the development of single-family, condominiums, duplexes and apartments in the appropriate designated places on the "Future Land Use Map".

Encourage the development of future commercial establishments to locate in the appropriate designated places as shown on the "Future Land Use Plan".

Encourage the development of future industrial establishments to locate in the appropriate designated places as shown on the "Future Land Use Plan".

- 2009 Implement landscape and/or other design plans to improve the appearance of the city.



Implement annexation policies.

Develop a plan to obtain land for the development of an Industrial Park.

Adopt the recommended revisions to the City's Zoning Ordinance and improve the appearance along US Expressway 83, US Business Highway 83 and major streets by landscaping with ground covers, shrubs and trees.

2010 Review the Scenic Corridor Ordinance.

Encourage property owners to use good design techniques when subdividing or re-subdividing property.

2011 Purchase acreage for the development of an Industrial Park.

Prepare a plan for the design and development of the Industrial Park.

2012 Start construction of an Industrial Park.

Implement annexation policies.

2013 Encourage the development of single-family, condominiums, duplexes and apartments in the appropriate designated places on the "Future Land Use Map".

Encourage the development of future commercial establishments to locate in the appropriate designated places as shown on the "Future Land Use Plan".

Encourage the development of future industrial establishments to locate in the appropriate designated places as shown on the "Future Land Use Plan".

2014 Encourage Cameron County to construct Beddoes Road into a "major" street.

2015 Encourage the development of commercial property on the east side of the City along Beddoes Road following the construction of the road as a "major" street.

2016 Plan for the development of a retirement community with a golf course.

2017 Update the "Future Land Use Map".

## **CHAPTER 6 "PARK & OPEN SPACE STUDY" GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The city has an opportunity to promote local businesses by developing and marketing certain recreation programs. Park and open space goals are general statements to guide local officials and leaders to implement a first class park and recreation system for local citizens and encourage facility development where practical as a tourist industry.

The hereafter goals and strategies are based on the previous analysis of the existing facilities and plans.

**Goal #1** Provide public park and recreational facilities and programs of adequate scope and variety to serve local population of all age groups.

**Objectives**

- 2008      Adopt the Park and Open Space Plan.
- Develop the Wildlife and Nature
- Resubmit the Skateboard Park application to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for a matching grant to assist in developing the facility.
- Resubmit the Indoor Park application to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for a matching grant to assist in developing the facility.
- 2009      Continue to work with La Feria Independent School District to expand and share recreation facilities, such as baseball fields, soccer fields, walking and jogging trails, swimming pool, tennis courts, etc.
- 2010      Continue to obtain information from local citizens on facilities they would like to have in local parks with the understanding that future parks should be developed as low maintenance projects.
- 2012      Update the City's park needs for the next five years.

**Goal #2      **Initiate and carry out a general beautification and environmental improvement program.******Objectives**

- 2008      Work with the property owners, especially businesses along local highways and major streets, and develop a design for a street tree planting program that will improve local appearance.
- 2009      Request the Texas Department of Transportation to develop a landscape program for the local highways.
- Request the Garden Club and County Agent to provide instructions to local citizens in selecting and pruning street trees.
- 2010      Update the City street tree planting program to include color and appropriate tree size where electrical lines are located. Encourage the electrical, telephone and cable companies to participate in the program.
- 2011      Develop a program to use City forces and volunteer organizations to maintain drainage area easements.
- 2012      Develop a five-year program to continue a general beautification and environmental improvements program in the City.



## **CHAPTER 7 "THOROUGHFARE STUDY" GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

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The large number of undeveloped dedicated streets is a burden to the city. As individuals build along undeveloped streets, pressure is applied on the council to pave these streets and construct utility lines. Vacating the premature subdivisions and replatting the land when needed under an adopted Subdivision Ordinance with desirable construction and design standards the developers or land owners are required to finance the construction of streets and utility lines and this will eliminate the burden from the city.

### **Goal # 1     Administer the City's minimum street standards in the Subdivision Ordinance and consider requiring more desirable standards for "major" streets where needed.**

#### **Objectives**

- Phase 1   Review the street standards in the Subdivision Ordinance and make changes as needed to carry out City policies.
- Phase 2   Adopt the "Land Use" and "Thoroughfare Plan" and use the two plans as a guide in administering the Subdivision Ordinance.
- Phase 3.   Obtain right-of-way designation from property owners along Beddoes Road from US Business Highway 83 to FM Road 506.
- Phase 4.   Obtain right-of-way designation from property owners along the proposed route for Dodd Lane from FM Road 506 to Orange Grove Road.
- Phase 5   Revise the City's Scenic Corridor Ordinance to provide a more conservative use in large set-backs where plants would accomplish the desired appearance.
- Phase 6   Encourage Cameron County Commissioners' Court to adopt strong Subdivision Development Standards.
- Phase 7   Seek assistance from County Commissioners' to improve county roads leading into the City.

### **Goal # 2     Develop all "major" and "collector" streets in the City with adequate right-of-way and paving widths.**

#### **Objectives**

- Phase 1   Continue to improve "major" and "collector" streets by allocating funds in the annual budget.
- Phase 2   Adopt the Street Improvement Program recommended in Exhibits 7-14.
- Phase 3   Encourage Cameron County to construct Beddoes Road from US Business Highway 83 to FM Road 506.
- Phase 4   Encourage Cameron County to prepare drawings for the realignment of Dodd Lane from FM Road 506 to Orange Grove Road.
- Phase 5   Implement Phase 1 of the "Street Improvement Program".

- Phase 6 Implement Phase 2 of the "Street Improvement Program".
- Phase 7 Implement Phase 3 of the "Street Improvement Program".
- Phase 8 Implement Phase 4 of the "Street Improvement Program".
- Phase 9 Implement Phase 5 of the "Street Improvement Program".
- Phase 10 Review "major" and "collector" street priorities and establish another five-year improvement program.

## **CHAPTER 8 "CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT" GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**The hereafter Central Business District goals and objectives were developed to effectively guide the City's commercial center for the next 10 to 20 years.** It is essential that the City periodically review and update proposed goals and objectives to develop a more desirable Central Business District.

**20 YEAR GOAL** – Encourage and assist property owners in seeking professional assistance to keep and/or improve the original historical structure appearance of commercial buildings.

### **2 YEAR OBJECTIVES**

1. Apply to state and federal agencies for grant funds that would assist in implementing the proposed Central Business District Development Plan
2. Create spaces to improve the appearance of the back and/or sides of buildings with desirable art.
3. Encourage the development of street tree planting in off-street parking areas and side streets.
4. Investigate the type of trees that are to be used in the downtown area. Characteristics for consideration is the shape of trees, tree maturity height, foliage type, evergreen tree, deciduous tree, flowering tree.

### **5 YEAR OBJECTIVES**

1. Assist and encourage those property owners needing store front or structure improvements to implement professional recommendations.
2. Make sidewalks accessible to wheel chair patients
3. Encourage private investment on the part of individual property owners in the Central Business District in order to provide for a more attractive shopping environment.
4. Emphasize pedestrian orientation in the Central Business District by providing marked pedestrian crosswalks at street intersections.
5. Improve the visual quality of the Central Business District by implementing a landscaping program for the area with the continuation of adding antique lights.

**10 and 15 YEAR OBJECTIVES**

1. Seek grant funds or other financial assistance to improve facilities in the Central Business District.
2. Investigate ways for the City to utilize local organizations, firms and individuals to assist in the implementation of improvements needed in the Central Business District.
3. Provide a safe, convenient and attractive place for residents to shop and conduct daily business activity by encouraging private and public investment in the Central Business District.
4. Maintain the Central Business District as a competitive center for business and trade in the community by means of a comprehensive downtown improvement program.

**20 YEAR GOAL** – Develop necessary infrastructure and facilities needed in the Central Business District.

**2 YEAR OBJECTIVES**

1. Prepare a plan to forecast land and office space that the City will need in the next twenty years to accommodate facilities and personnel to provide needed services to a growing population.
2. Assist the American Legion in finding land to relocate their facility from East Street and Commercial Avenue.

**5 YEAR OBJECTIVES**

1. Prepare a plan for full utilization of the property bordered by Commercial Avenue, US Business Highway 83 and East Street and Main Street with City facilities.
2. Prepare plans to construct a new City Hall building at the corner of East Street and US Business Highway 83 to provide needed space for municipal departments and personnel for a growing population.
3. Prepare a plan for full utilization of property on the south side of Commercial Avenue between Main Street and East Street for City facilities.
4. Develop a financial plan to obtain funds to construct a new City Hall.

**10 and 15 YEAR OBJECTIVES**

1. Prepare property for the construction of a new City Hall.
2. Start construction of a new City Hall on the west side of East Street between US Business Highway 83 and Commercial Avenue.
3. Start construction of needed municipal facilities on the south side of Commercial Avenue.



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

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### 2.2 EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

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