

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

INTRODUCTION

Generally, the Central Business District (CBD) is the physical and the visual focal point of a community. It can also be said that the image and appearance of a Central Business District is a direct reflection of the entire community. If the Central Business District is not vital, most likely the community isn't either. Changes to a Central Business District occur through suburbanization or the scattering of land uses across a broader landscape. A city can find that roads, which once led to the Central Business District become streets that carry traffic away from the downtown area to newer commercial developments. No longer does the Central Business District have an exclusive claim on attractions that created downtowns of the past.

Although, a community's Central Business District generally occupies only a small part of the city's total developed area it may contribute a relatively large share of the city's tax revenue. Therefore, permitting such a valuable area of the city to decline in size and value could have a serious eroding effect in the community. Cities that were started in the 1800's and early 1900's usually developed their Central Business District at a railroad terminal or at a major highway crossing. La Feria's Central Business District is located on the south side of US Business Highway 83 where FM Road 506 crosses it.

Important attributes in creating a desirable Central Business District to serve the community as an important shopping and cultural area are listed hereafter.

1. Adequate access from all parts of the city and a sufficient internal vehicular circulation.
2. Adequate numbers of on and off-street parking spaces conveniently located to serve all Central Business District activities.
3. An area for retail establishments, office buildings, financial facilities and governmental offices for city, county, state and federal functions.
4. Separate pedestrian circulation with paved walks to facilitate pedestrian accessibility to all activities.
5. An overall aesthetic arrangement and development of commercial structures created through quality design, type and color of exterior materials and landscape design.
6. An area of high property values and an excellent employment and revenue resource.

As personal transportation improved, communities quickly lost their original compact pattern of residential and commercial development and became scattered and dispersed. With faster, more convenient and affordable automobiles, commercial centers were developed away from the Central

Business District where acres of commercial stores could be appropriately planned and developed with customer amenities such as sufficient parking spaces.

Larger cities benefited by commercial development changes by virtue of their location, transportation facilities, natural resources or government institutions, etc.. Because of these factors the commercial areas, or shopping centers of large cities continued to grow and expand. The automobile enabled people from the surrounding smaller communities to drive and shop in larger cities where a greater variety of merchandise is offered. Shopping trips to larger cities are at the expense of smaller city Central Business Districts, which are not developed with adequate street pavement widths and sufficient off-street parking.

The Role of the Small City Central Business District

The Central Business District has traditionally functioned as the center for trade and service and as a focal point for community activities ranging from parades and band concerts to the area of the city where finance and government facilities are located. With substantial public and private investments in buildings and infrastructure projects made in the area, it is of critical importance that this section of the community be preserved. In some cases it may mean that the area be revitalized to foster community identity and pride. A concerted effort by local authorities, local businessmen and interested citizens can accomplish this goal.

Business owners in small communities are keenly aware of the loss of business to newer area shopping centers and malls as they are developed. Certainly, these developments have significant advantages over old, unplanned collections of small stores in the older area of town where pleasant and convenient amenities are not available. Shopping centers and malls appeal to consumers because they are easily accessible from "major" highways, have ample, lighted parking areas and offer a large selection of standard merchandise.

When a Central Business District is centrally located in a community, it is accessible for quick errands by walking or by car. It historically has been the preferred location for concentrations of community and professional services not available elsewhere. Here, personal relationships between businessmen and clients have flourished. It also has harbored smaller outlets for specialty lines of goods appealing to a market limited either in area or in taste. In general, the average trip to the small Central Business District is made for a combination of reasons, of which shopping is one. The small Central Business District needs to build on its historical and potential strengths.

Potential Strengths of a Small Town Central Business District

A small group of businesses which are part of a Central Business District has advantages all its own. Some of these advantages are:

- Quick access to frequently needed items not necessitating a major trip, such as everyday foods, medications, meals, etc.
- Selected goods and services not supplied by the typical outlet, for instance a specialty line of clothing, a quality gift shop, a fresh fish market, etc.
- Personal relationships with customers, clients and patients and an intimate knowledge of their preferences, needs and credit standing, and conversely, the customer's knowledge of where to find a trustworthy product or professional.
- Accessibility to bicyclists and walkers, such as the elderly and the young.

- Unhurried low-pressure atmosphere, which turns errands into excuses for social outings instead of hurried hunts.
- Relative safety in a familiar and uncrowded area where mothers can keep track of children and the elderly are not intimidated.
- Entertainment value in any special features the place may have, such as bandstand concerts, an outdoor café, or a sidewalk fair.
- Unique character, the flavor and surprises offered by a center which has evolved over the years as contrasted to the cookie-cutter package design of even the best malls.
- Locally oriented services such as the community post office, banks, utility companies, library, etc.
- Community activities, whether political, ceremonial or institutional and the place for informal daily contacts.
- Civic symbol, a sense of place, character or history.
- A source of human resources for volunteer services, such as volunteer firemen, or service clubs.

Shopping Areas

Shopping areas outside of the Central Business District offer merchants an opportunity to expand their business facility with adequate parking for customer convenience. In recent years, the continuing decline in rural population, the reduction of travel time to nearby metropolitan areas and the development of attractive and larger shopping centers have affected the expansion of small town Central Business District's. Citizens that shun shopping in their small city Central Business District end up paying higher property tax to subsidize the loss of local sales tax, which is paid to larger communities by consumer purchasing.

Central Business Districts suffered business loss as a result of:

- Highway oriented commercial centers.
- Downtown vacant buildings.
- Neglect of aging buildings.
- Absentee building ownerships.
- Inconvenient parking to shopping destination.
- Traffic congestion.
- Lack of customer appeal.
- Lack of a variety of merchandise.

The Central Business District Trend

The general trend in rural Texas Central Business District's during the past 40 to 50 years has been one of decline, demonstrated by the numbers of vacant and under-utilized buildings and vacant lots. High vacancy rates and under-utilization of commercial buildings in the Central Business District indicates the inability to compete with shopping centers and/or regional malls. Additionally, because vacant buildings and lots are rarely maintained, the parcels and buildings are left in a shabby

unattractive appearance. The vacant status does not generate income and thus provides no incentive to improve to the area.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

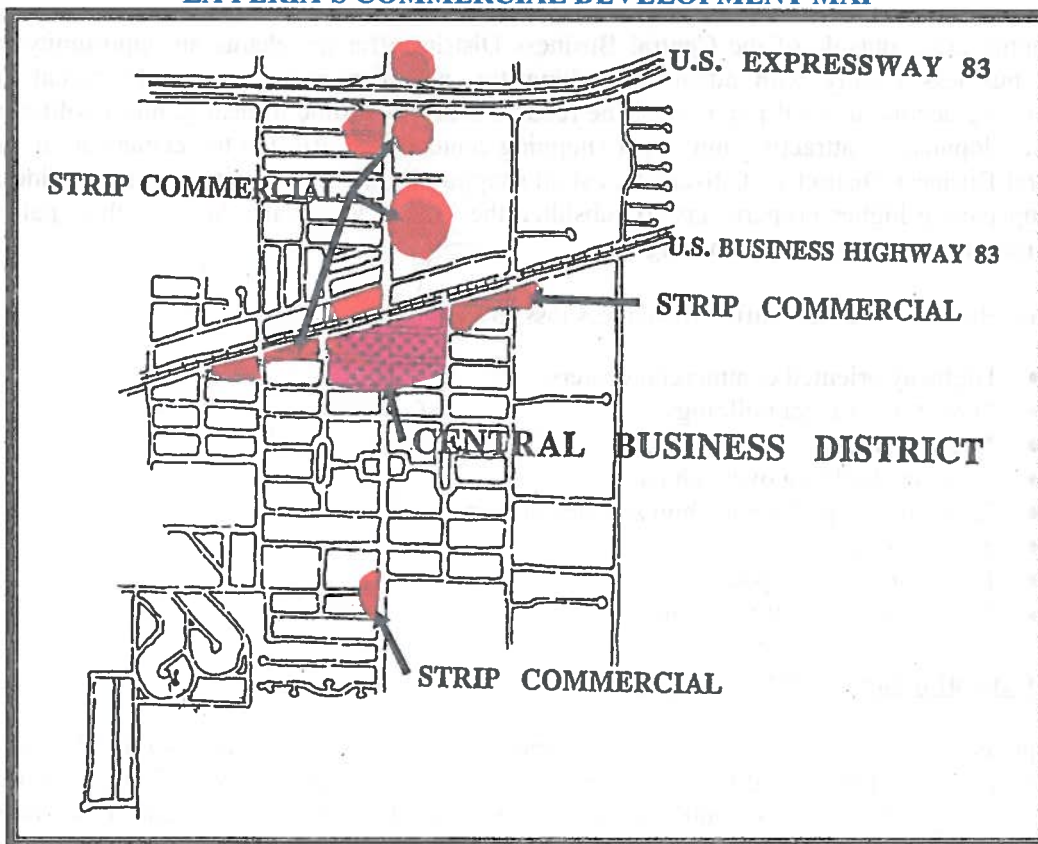
1991 Study of La Feria's Central Business District

In 1991, Governmental Service Agency, Inc. prepared a study of the Central Business District, which is used to the maximum extent in this document.

2007 Central Business District and Adjacent Commercial Area

Commercial development in La Feria is shown by the hereafter two graphics, a schematic presentation showing the Central Business District and fringe commercial area. Strip commercial is located on the east and west side of the Central Business District along US Business Highway 83 and north along FM Road 506 or Main Street between US Expressway 83 and US Business Highway 83. The north fringe area along FM Road 506 is where most of the City's commercial activity has been taking place over the past decade. Basically, a five block business area, one block deep on each side of FM Road 506 between US Business Highway 83 and Primrose Avenue is referred to as the Central Business District.

**EXHIBIT 8-1
LA FERIA'S COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT MAP**



Source: Design Services, Inc.

EXHIBIT 8-2
AERIAL MAP OF LA FERIA'S COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Source: Design Services, Inc.

Sales Tax Competition

Communities are located very close together in the Rio Grande Valley Metroplex. Competition for commercial development, whether it is in a shopping mall, commercial strip or a Central Business District is very strong in the Valley. A Central Business District, mall or strip commercial facility is located every four to seven miles along US Expressway 83 between Harlingen and Mission. A list of competitive communities to La Feria with 2000 population numbers and sales tax allocations are shown below.

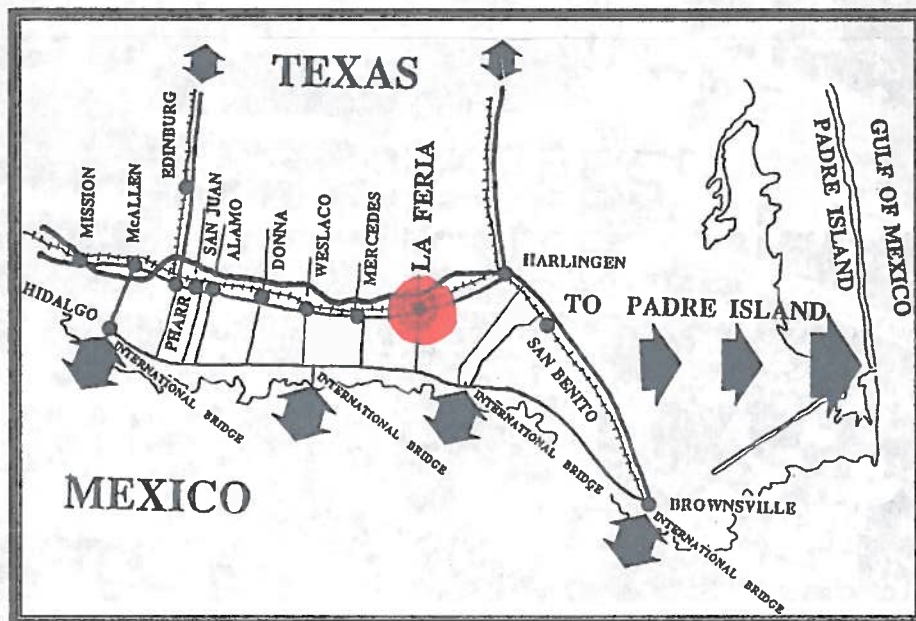
EXHIBIT 8-3 COMPETITIVE COMMUNITIES ON SALES TAX

CITY	2000 POPULATION	TAX RATE 2000	TAX RATE 2006	2000 SALES TAX TAX ALLOCATION	2000 SALES TAX ALLOCATION AT \$0.02	PER CAPITA SALES TAX ALLOCATION AT A \$0.02 TAX RATE
La Feria	6,115	\$0.02	\$0.02	\$606,847	\$606,847	\$99.24
Alamo	14,760	.02	.02	979,102	979,102	66.33
Combes	2,553	.01	.01	30,545	61,090 *	23.93
Donna	14,768	.02	.02	885,983	885,983	59.99
Edcouch	3,342	.02	.02	86,563	86,563	25.90
Elsa	5,549	.02	.02	413,489	413,489	74.52
Harlingen	57,564	.02	.02	14,780,090	14,780,090	256.76
Mercedes	13,049	.02	.02	865,539	865,539	63.41
Primera	2,723	.01	.02	38,426	76,852	28.22
San Benito	23,444	.02	.02	2,510,488	2,510,488	107.08
Santa Rosa	2,833	.01	.01	24,677	49,354 *	17.42
Weslaco	26,935	.02	.02	5,555,131	5,555,131	206.24

Source: U.S. Census and Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

* Sales tax for cities collecting a one (1) cent tax was increased to \$0.02 to show the per capita sales tax for all cities by the same tax rate of two (2) cents.

EXHIBIT 8-4 REGIONAL COMPETITIVE COMMUNITIES



Source: Design Services, Inc.

Scenic Corridor Appearance

In 1990, "The Magic Valley Scenic Corridor Handbook" was published for the Valley Area communities. The publication provided methods to improve the appearance and image of development along US Highway 83 and other "major" highways and thoroughfares. The image of a community can be negative if the development appearance along the highways and thoroughfares are left to chance. The soft lace effect of plant material mixed in with hard surface building material can

Land Use

Land use in the downtown area is shown on Exhibit 8-5. Each lot in the exhibit is marked with the specific use of property when the Central Business District was inventoried. Acreage of each land use category in the City and Central Business District is provided on Exhibit 8-6. Most of the retail enterprises in the Central Business District are located along Main Street and West Commercial Avenue, but medical offices and other non-retail operations interrupt the flow of retail establishments. Desirable retail areas are developed when shoppers can walk from one retail shop to another without interruptions from non-retail establishments. To correct and enhance the City's downtown shopping area will take many years of work and organization.

The existing City Hall appears to be reaching a state of full utilization. With the anticipated growth of the City, a new City Hall with more space will be needed within the planning period. Such facility should be constructed in the downtown area at the corner of Commercial Avenue and East Street as shown on Exhibit 8-7.

Streets in the Downtown Area

The preceding page (Exhibit 8-5) provides information on: street right-of-way widths, paving widths, direction of traffic flow, on-street parking, off-street parking, signal light locations, stop sign locations, streets with curb and gutter, street names, sidewalks and condition of sidewalks ("good" or "fair"). It also portrays building conditions and if the buildings are either "good" or "fair". Traffic count information as collected by the Texas Department of Transportation on highways throughout the State, has not been collected within La Feria's Central Business District and is therefore not available on the "Central Business District Map".

The existing right-of-way and pavement widths of streets in the Central Business District as shown on Exhibit 8-5 appear to be conditions that will not change with the exception of repaving the streets. Oleander Avenue, Primrose Avenue and West Commercial Avenue are being repaved in 2007.

Sidewalks

Commercial establishments having sidewalks in front of their stores to accommodate pedestrian circulation on shopping trips are located on Main Street between Commercial Avenue and Primrose Avenue and to some degree on side streets. Sidewalks widths are shown on Exhibit 8-5. A redevelopment program of undesirable sidewalk sections was under construction in August 2007.

On and Off-Street Parking

On-street parking in the Central Business District is illustrated on Exhibit 8-5. Angle parking stalls are assigned for both sides of Commercial Avenue, which is a one-way street eastward. Because the street has one moving lane, there is sufficient pavement on East Commercial Avenue to permit angle parking on both sides of the street. This is a workable parking arrangement in 2007, but if the traffic increases on East Commercial Avenue to a point where two traffic moving lanes are necessary, the on-street parking on this street would need to be changed to parallel parking and off-street parking constructed.

East Oleander Avenue has parallel parking on the north side and angle parking on the south side. All other on-street parking in the Central Business District are restricted to parallel parking to allow a sufficient number of lanes for traffic movement.

Four off-street parking areas are located in the downtown area as shown on Exhibit 8-5. One of the off-street parking areas is located on East Oleander Avenue on the east side of the Bank at the corner

of Main Street and Oleander Avenue. This is a constructed off-street parking area with designed parking spaces. Other off-street parking areas are located on West Oleander Avenue, Main Street between Commercial Avenue and Oleander Avenue and on East Commercial Avenue at the American Legion Hall. Other off-street parking areas will need to be developed in the future to have sufficient parking for a fully developed Central Business District. Exhibit 8-7 illustrates two additional off-street parking sites.

Condition of Buildings

Buildings in the Central Business District are old with the exception of City facilities on Commercial Avenue. Therefore, it is expected that most commercial structures are in need of some repair, but from a visual look of the structures, all buildings are of good to fair condition.

Traffic Controls

Traffic control facilities are illustrated on Exhibit 8-5. Signal light and stop sign facilities are adequate for controlling traffic in the area with no changes necessary in the near future.

The Ratio of the City's Commercial Development with the CBD

- Commercial establishments in La FERIA utilize 64.85 acres of land, most of which are strip development. Commercial land in the Central Business District totals 7.26 acres. A ratio of City commercial acreage to the Central Business District commercial acreage is 11.5 to 1.
- There are 54,450 square feet of vacant land in the Central Business District and approximately 10,850 square feet of vacant buildings, which is a ratio of 5 to 1 of vacant land to vacant buildings.
- The commercial acreage of the Central Business District core area is not expected to increase, but the quality in appearance should continue to improve with continued assistance from the City. Also commercial development to the north of the Central Business District along FM Road 506 is expected to increase.

EXHIBIT 8-6 2007 LAND USE IN CITY AND CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

LAND USE CATEGORIES	CITY ACRES	CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT ACRES	BUILDING SQUARE FEET IN CBD
Residential	505.90	3.02	
Commercial	83.33	7.26	143,625 SQ. FT.
Business		5.34	
Vacant Businesses		0.25	10,850 Sq. Ft.
Off-Street Parking		1.67	
Industrial	113.81	0.13	
Railroad	13.77	0.00	
Public/Semi-public	229.03	2.81	28,825 SQ. FT.
Street R-O-W	352.81	7.69	
Alley R-O-W	7.26	1.18	
Used Developed	1,305.91	22.09	
Vacant Developed	194.09	1.25	
Total Developed	1,500.00	23.34	

Source: Design Services, Inc.

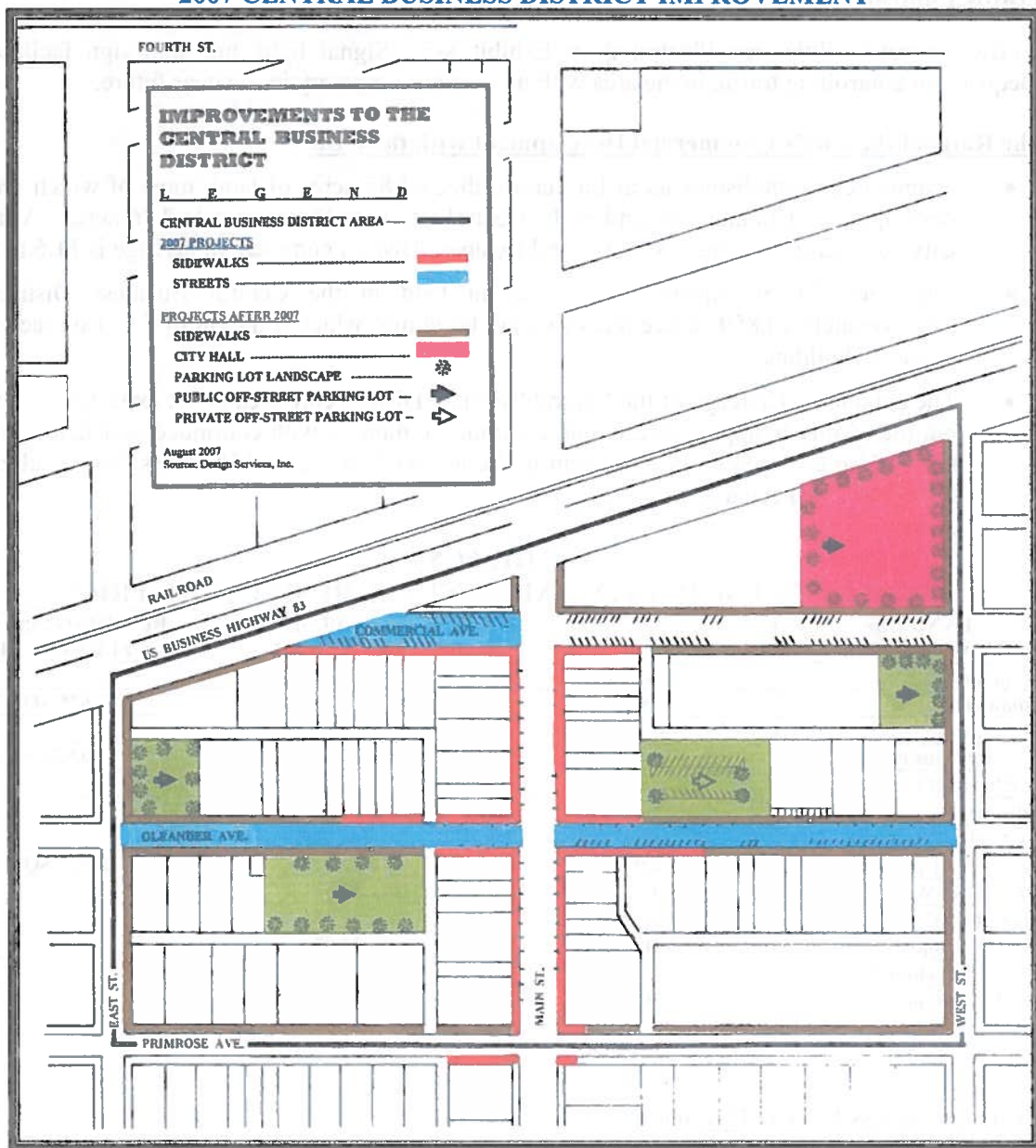
Central Business District Problems

- District is divided by a "major" highway.

- Curbs are high in some locations.
- Inconvenient parking to most storefronts.
- Sections of the area sidewalks are inadequate.
- Side streets need to be resurfaced.
- Some buildings lack awnings.

Improvements to sidewalks and streets the Central Business District were started in 2007 by reconstructing sections of the sidewalks along with reconstructing Commercial Avenue from FM Road 506 to US Business Highway 83 and reconstructing Oleander Street between East Street and West Street. These improvements are illustrated on the hereafter exhibit.

EXHIBIT 8-7 2007 CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT



Source: Design Services, Inc.

Facades and alleys

Building facades are adequate and will not need immediate attention and alley ways are of adequate quality and will not need specific improvements.

Obsolete Building and Overhead Utilities

The only obsolete buildings in the downtown are single-family homes that will need to be removed when commercial development expands onto lots where single-family homes are located. Overhead utility lines are limited and do not need to be changed.

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.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT PLANS

A Plan for the Central Business District is illustrated by the hereafter exhibits:

EXHIBIT 8-8

MAIN STREET BETWEEN COMMERCIAL AVENUE AND OLEANDER AVENUE



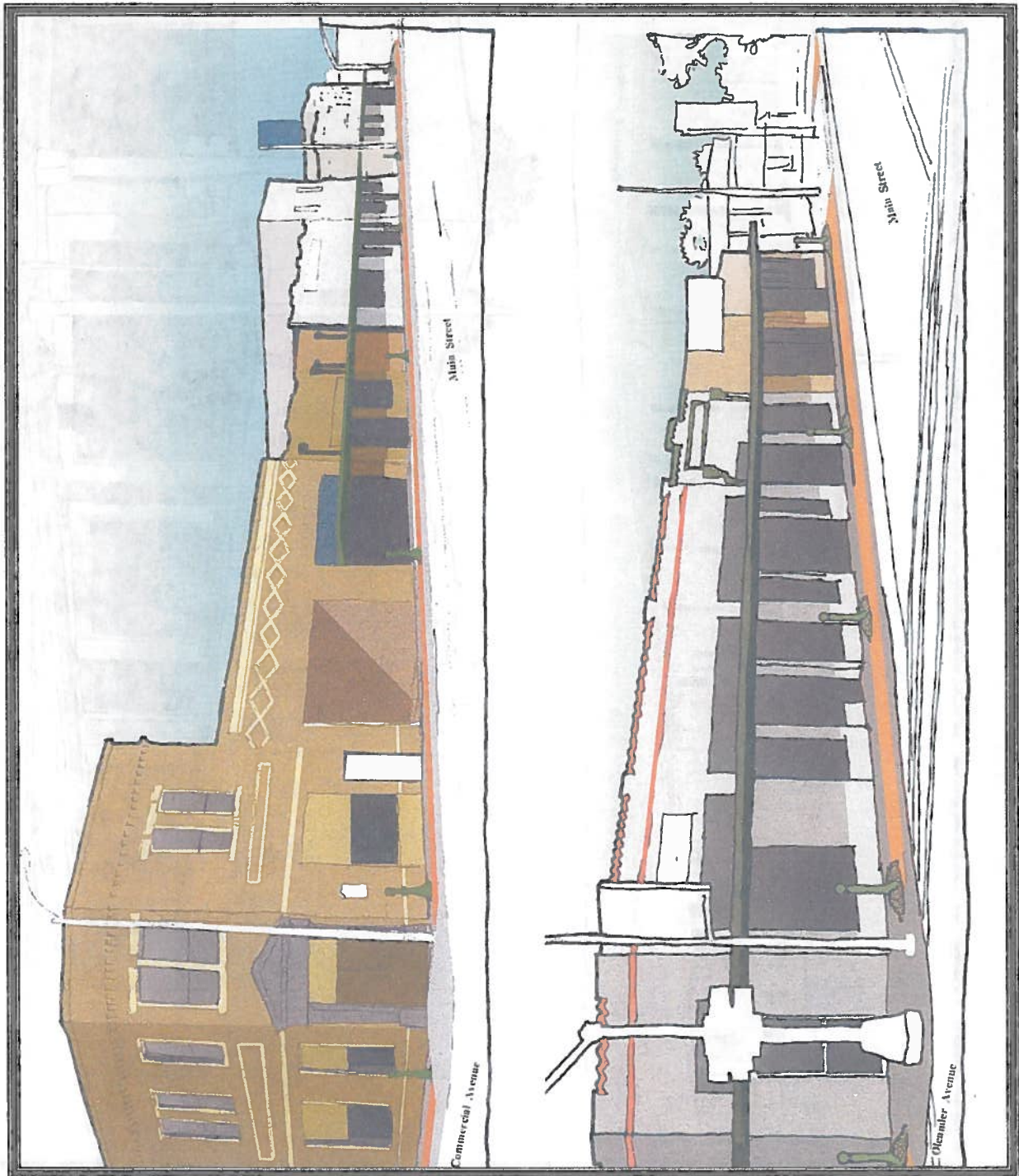
Source: Design Services, Inc.

EXHIBIT 8-9
MAIN STREET BETWEEN OLEANDER AVENUE AND PRIMROSE AVENUE



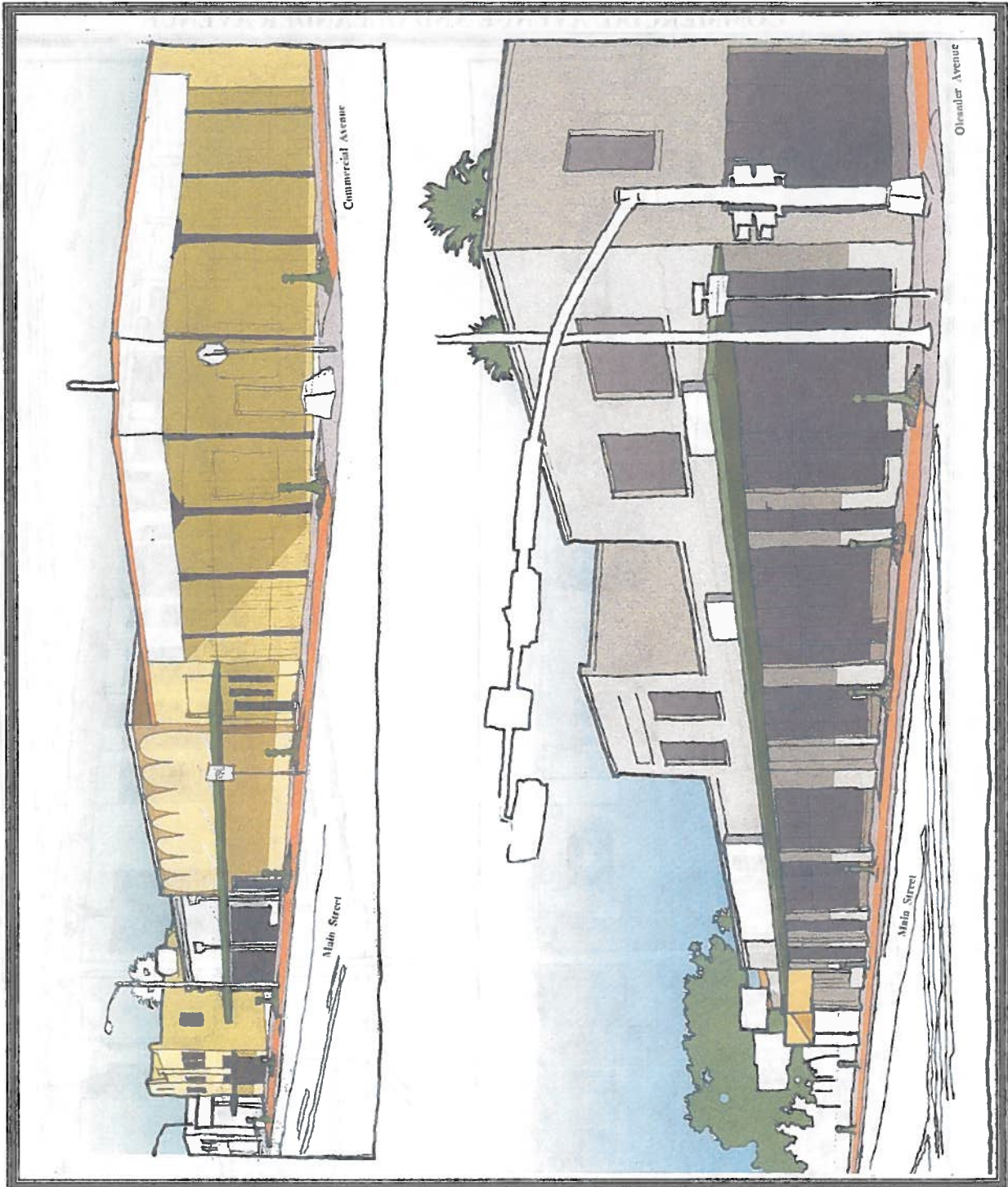
Source: Design Services, Inc.

EXHIBIT 8-10
RENDERING OF PLAN FOR THE EAST SIDE OF MAIN STREET BETWEEN
COMMERCIAL AVENUE AND OLEANDER AVENUE



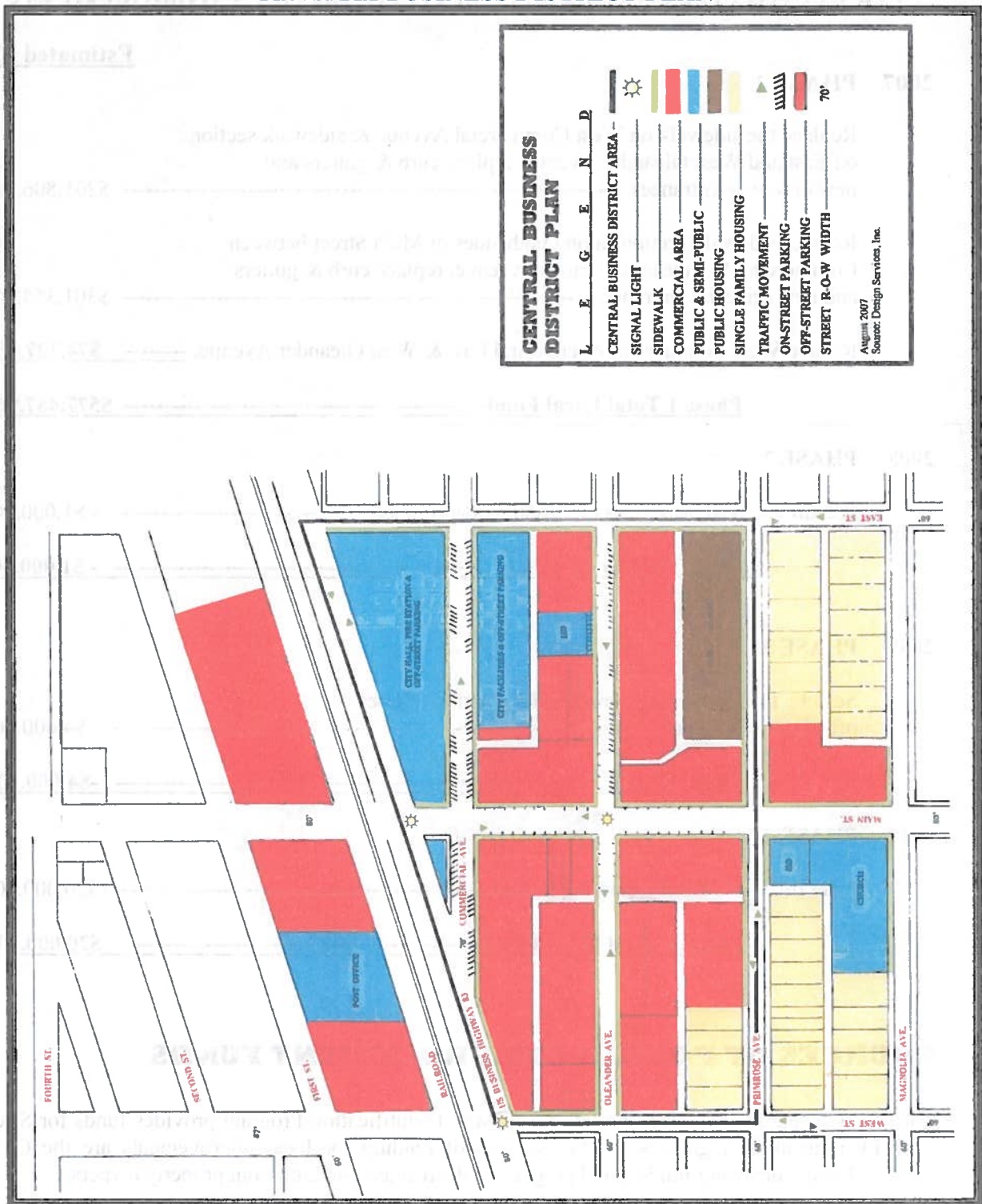
Source: Megamorphosis – Architecture & Interior design, LLC

EXHIBIT 8-11
RENDERING OF PLAN FOR THE WEST SIDE OF MAIN STREET BETWEEN
COMMERCIAL AVENUE AND OLEANDER AVENUE



Source: Megamorphosis – Architecture & Interior design, LLC

EXHIBIT 8-12 CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT PLAN



Source: Design Services, Inc.

EXHIBIT 8-13
COST ESTIMATES FOR CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT IMPROVEMENTS

	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
2007 PHASE 1	
Replace the sidewalk on West Commercial Avenue & sidewalk sections on East and West Oleander Avenue, replace curb & gutters and new driveway entrances. -----	\$201,806.00
Replace sidewalk sections along both sides of Main Street between Commercial Avenue and Primrose Avenue, replace curb & gutters and new driveway entrances. -----	\$301,354.20
Repave West Commercial Avenue and East & West Oleander Avenue. -----	\$74,327.76
Phase 1 Total Local Funds -----	\$577,487.96
2008 PHASE 2	
Prepare plans to plant trees on off-street parking lots. -----	- \$1,000.00
Phase 2 Total Local Funds -----	- \$1,000.00
2009 PHASE 3	
Select a firm to prepare plans for the planting of trees at off-street parking lots. -----	-\$4,000.00
Phase 3 Total Local Funds -----	-\$4,000.00
2011 PHASE 4	
Plant trees on off-street parking lots -----	-\$20,000.00
Phase 4 Total Local Funds -----	\$20,000.00

SOURCES OF POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENT FUNDS

The Texas Department of Transportation Highway Beautification Program provides funds for Street Tree Planting along highways. Other sources of funding for local improvements are the City's General Fund, borrowing funds, bond program and street assessments from property owners.