

OLD TOWN BURLESON
CNU 23
LEGACY CHARRETTE
2015

HOME LOCATION
CONVENIENCE GROWTH
QUALITY FAMILY
BIG IDEAS ACCESS
IMPROVING FRIENDLY
PROGRESSIVE QUALITY

Burleson
TEXAS
"Hometown, Done Right"

FAMILY EFFICIENT
BIG IDEAS
QUALITY IMPROVING
LOCATION HOME
PROGRESSIVE QUALITY
ACCESS COMMUNITY
GROWTH FRIENDLY

BURLESON TEXAS

CNU Legacy Charrette

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The Congress for the New Urbanism would like to thank everyone involved in the Old Town Burleson Legacy Charrette for donating their time, resources, space, and expertise. Specifically:

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Beginning with CNU 23 in Dallas/Fort Worth, the Congress for the New Urbanism is launching the CNU Legacy Project. CNU is the leading national organization promoting walkable, mixed-use neighborhood development, sustainable communities and promoting active living. Members of CNU include planners, developers, architects, engineers, public officials, investors and community activists who create and influence our built environment. The Congress Legacy Project (CLP) is a new program designed to apply CNU's renowned placemaking expertise to "move the needle" on an urban topic of regional concern in the host region. Municipalities, non-profits, and others may submit proposals for low-bono advising from some of the best minds in placemaking and walkable places. The inaugural CLP involved conducting abbreviated two-day charrettes in three D/FW area communities: Fort Worth, Garland and Burleson. Collectively, the three projects represent some of the most pressing challenges communities across the country are facing as they strive to become more walkable, vibrant places. A summary of the experience and lessons learned will be presented at the Congress by representatives from each city and charrette team.

March 27-29, 2015

Executive Summary

The Congress for the New Urbanism has always prided itself on making communities better, more walkable places. Our membership has been building places people love for decades. This year, CNU23 will take place in Dallas in order to highlight how to meet the demand for walkable places. In addition to hosting sessions, tours, and networking events, CNU has piloted the Legacy Charrettes Program for the first time in 2015. Through volunteer work from visiting and local professionals, city staff, and countless hours from neighborhood stakeholders, Mithun | Solomon has teamed with the City of Burleson to advise the update of the Old Town Redevelopment Plan to help meet and expand the popularity of Old Town's inherently walkable nature.

The City of Burleson's historic downtown is currently undergoing a renaissance. Thanks in part to the Old Town Burleson Development Plan in 1995. Now, with music, events, bars and restaurants, and educational opportunities, Old Town is a destination for the entire city. However, Renfro Street and the Union Pacific Railroad tracks essentially divide the Old Town area into four quadrants.

Vision and Priorities

By listening to residents, business owners, and civic leaders, the design team set out to build on the momentum and success of Old Town. Some of the priorities that the public identified were:

- A Plaza on the west side of the tracks
- Reinforcing or establishing an Old Town identity
- Safe crossings and improved walkability on Renfro
- Student/multi-family housing
- Expanded higher education facilities
- Parking
- Sidewalks and walkability

Recommendations

To address these priorities and other issues, the design team developed the following recommendations:

- Redesigning Renfro Street for traffic calming and walkability, including adding sidewalks, street trees, signalized crossings, medians and possibly on-street parking
- Developing City-owned properties, such as a Plaza and neighboring development, mixed-use housing/retail surrounding a parking garage, relocating Hill College to the soon-to-be vacant Police Station, and

townhouses on the current Hill College site

- Gateway features, which could be arches, trestles, or pylons, announcing the entrance into Old Town

Implementation

The design team also laid out an implementation plan to be used in the update to the Old Town Development Plan in Short-, Mid-, and Long-term strategies.

Short-term

- Begin "taming" Renfro Street, using pedestrian safety features for crossing and testing the viability of on-street parking.
- Begin zoning and policy changes to ensure future development is pedestrian-oriented.
- Determine future use of City-owned properties.
- Begin development of Old Town Streetscape guidelines.

Mid-term

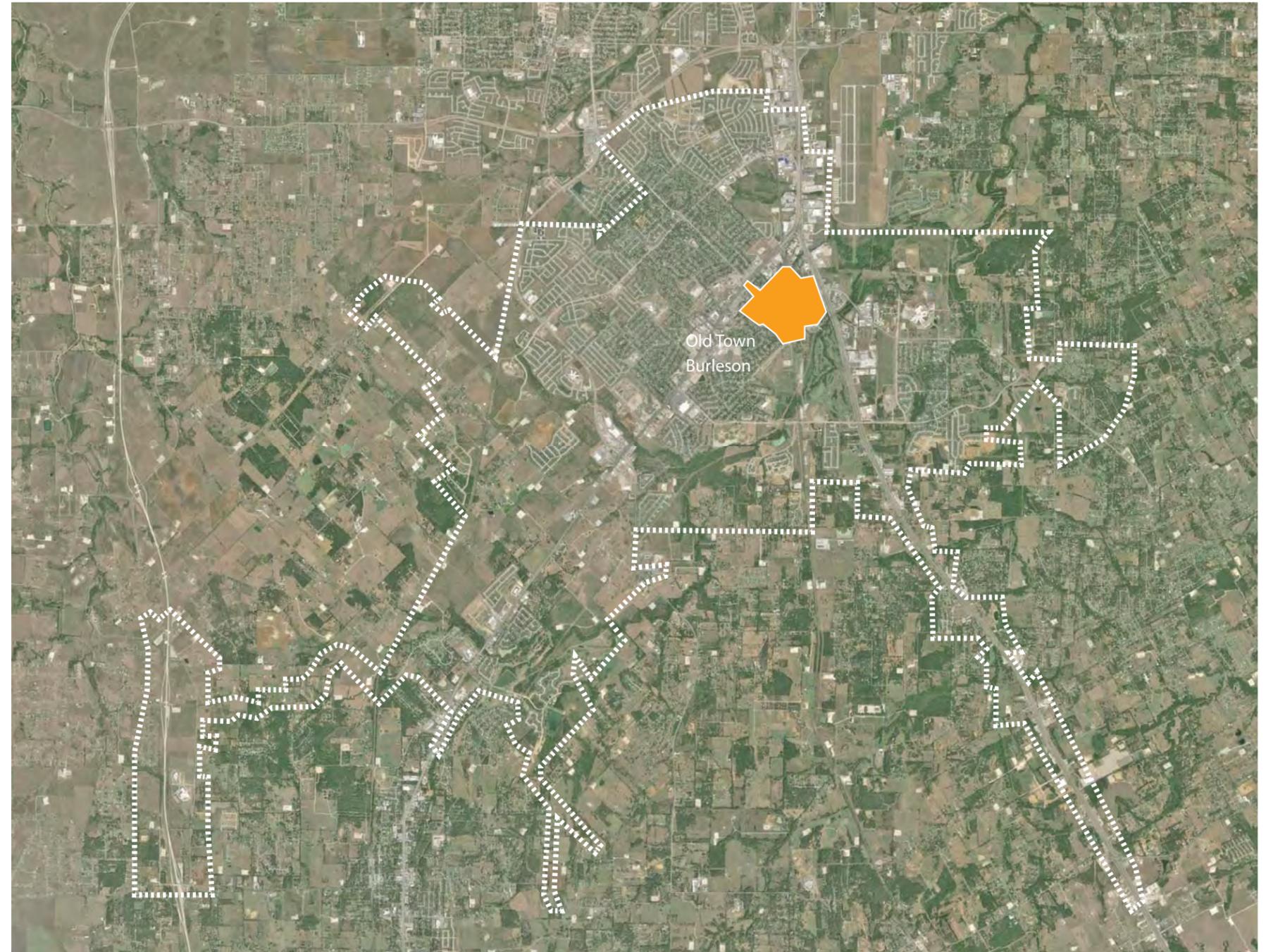
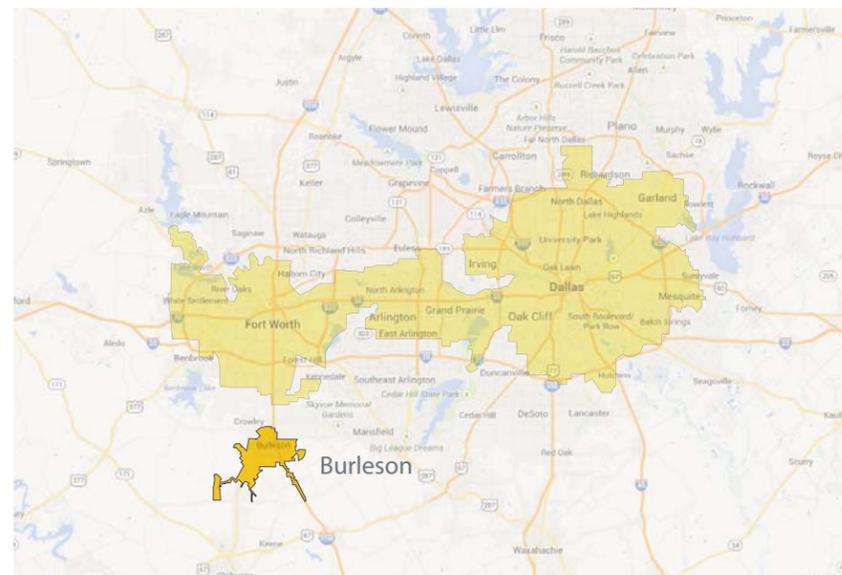
- Begin construction of plaza
- Hill College moves to Old Police Station site
- City begins redevelopment of City-owned properties

Long-term

- Complete Old Town Streetscape
- Complete redevelopment of City-owned properties
- Facilitate planning / redevelopment of underutilized properties in Old Town.
- Assess and update the Old Town Development Plan in 2020

Burleson

Burleson, a south suburb of Fort Worth, is situated in North Texas, just southwest of the D/FW region. It sits on the border of Johnson and Tarrant counties.



Burleson, 1900s

The City of Burleson was originally founded in the 19th Century around the railroad station, and was a small farming and cattle town, like many in the region, until relatively recently. Old Town Burleson, as the original area is now called, is similar to many pre-World War II neighborhoods with small block sizes, a dense street grid, and narrow lots with alleys behind them. The area was built to be walkable, with retail and residential uses within short distances from each other.

Interurban Rail

In 1881, the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad extended its service from Denison to Waco; and as the segment from Fort Worth to Alvarado was being laid out, Burleson was founded as a midway depot. In 1911 the Northern Texas Traction Company decided to install an interurban line between Fort Worth and Cleburne, with Burleson as one stop along the way and construction was completed in 1912. Due to the increasing popularity of automobiles, combined with the Great Depression, the interurban line between Fort Worth, through Burleson, to Cleburne closed in 1931.



Burleson Historic Grid



Interurban Rail



Renfro Clark Home

Old Town Burleson

Since the 1950s, Burleson has grown from 700 residents to over 40,000 today. 30% of residents have at least a bachelor's degree, and the average household income is \$76,000. Less than half of the land area within city limits is developed, and the average home value is approximately \$192,000. The city has a strong retail market, with only a 2.3% vacancy rate.

The Old Town District has undergone substantial redevelopment over the past 10 years, which has provided the area with new businesses and events. However, Old Town is essentially divided into four quadrants by Renfro Street, an east-west arterial and the Union Pacific rail line, which runs north-south.

The last Old Town Development plan was completed in 1995 and is responsible for much of today's success. This Charrette was a great opportunity for the City of Burleson to enhance the Old Town Development plan, scheduled for update this year. The update will acknowledge the 20 years of progress and build an aggressive vision for the further redevelopment of Old Town.



Renfro Street



Main Street



Ellison Street

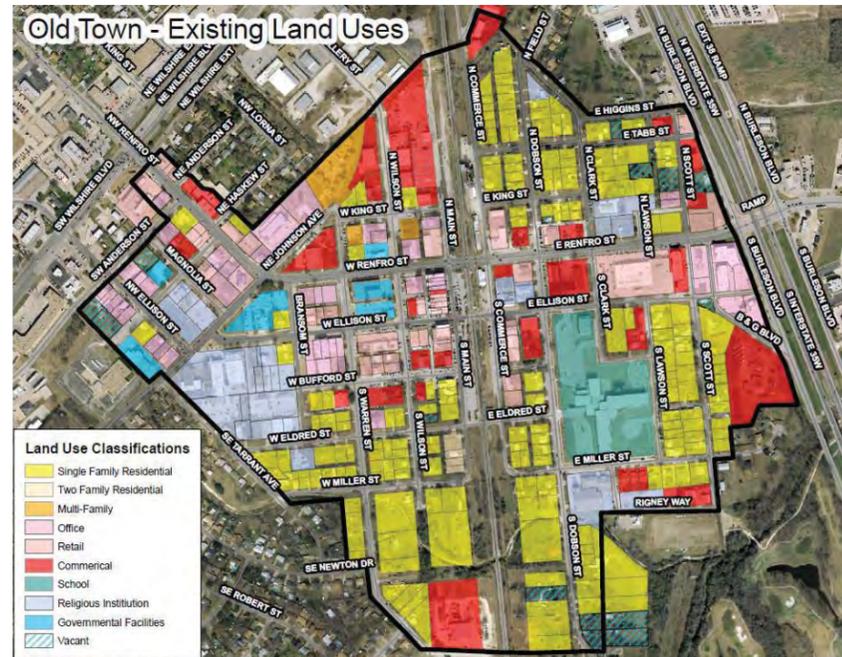


Wilson Street



Existing Conditions

Old Town Burleson enjoys a mix of many different uses, including retail, residential, institutional, office, and vacant properties.

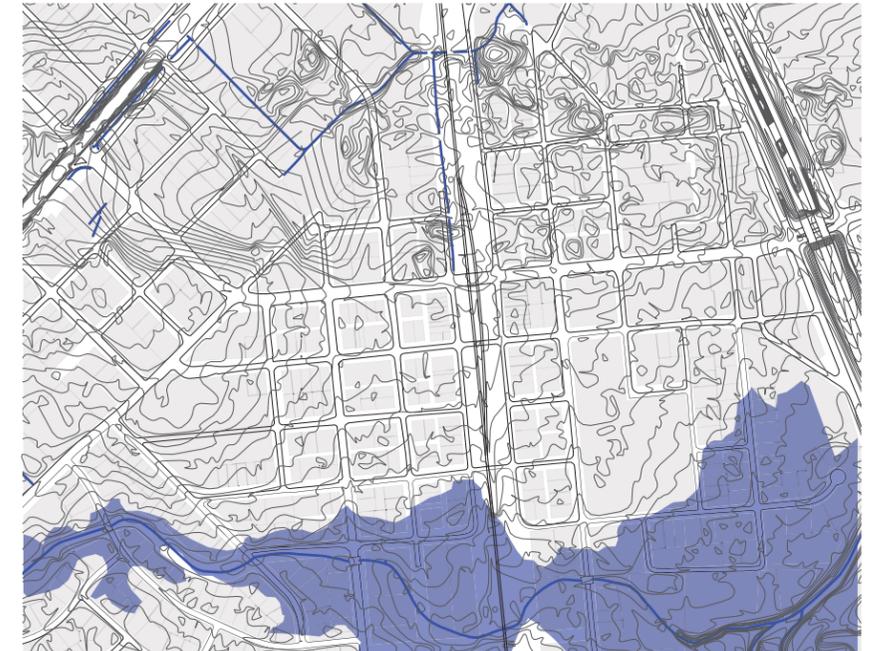


Existing Conditions

Old Town benefits from a tight street grid and narrow lots that provide the potential to promote walkability and a wide range of uses in the area. The southern portion along Booger Creek is in a flood plain. Despite several educational facilities and vacant lots, there are very few green spaces and parks for residents and visitors to enjoy north of Booger Creek. Several retail and institutional uses exist in the area, which have the potential of supporting each other if the connective infrastructure exists.



Streets and Parcels



Flood Plain



Parks



Retail and Institutional Uses

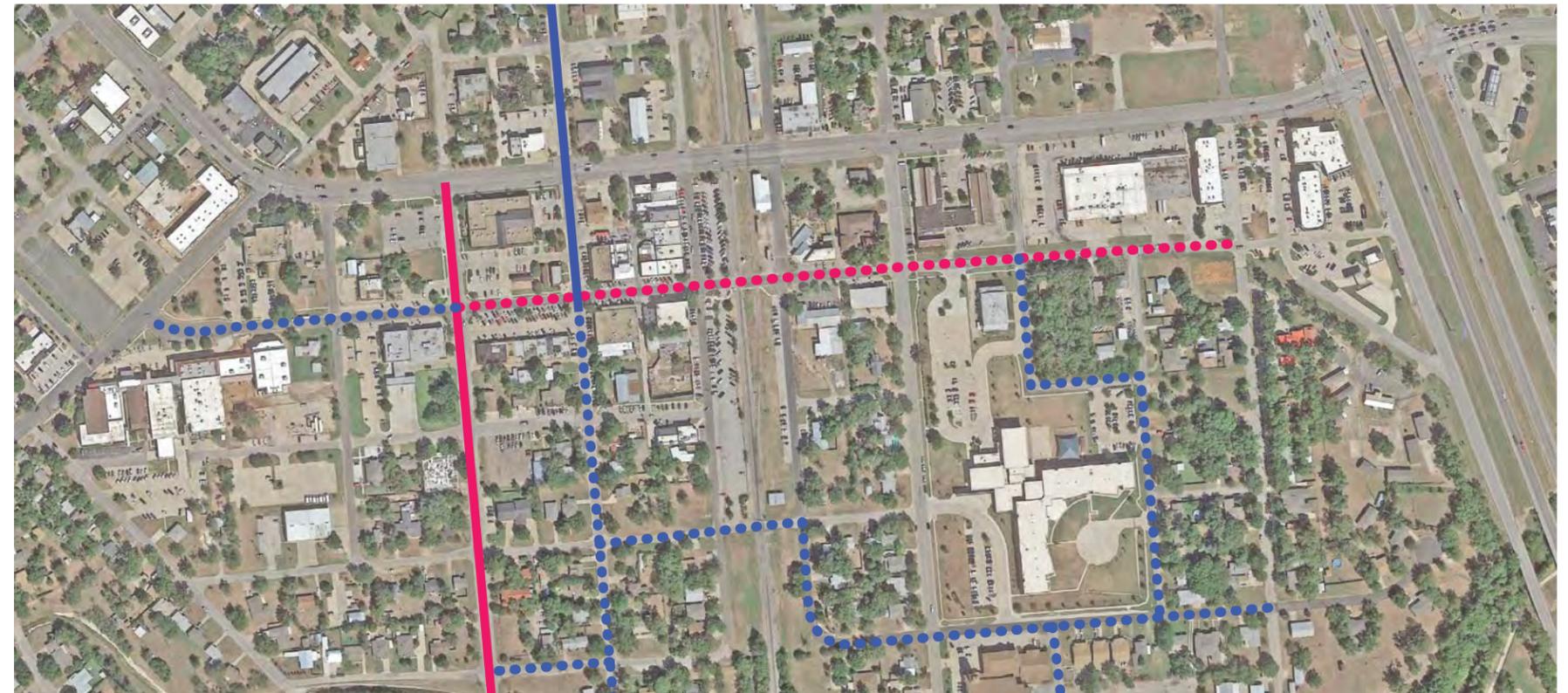
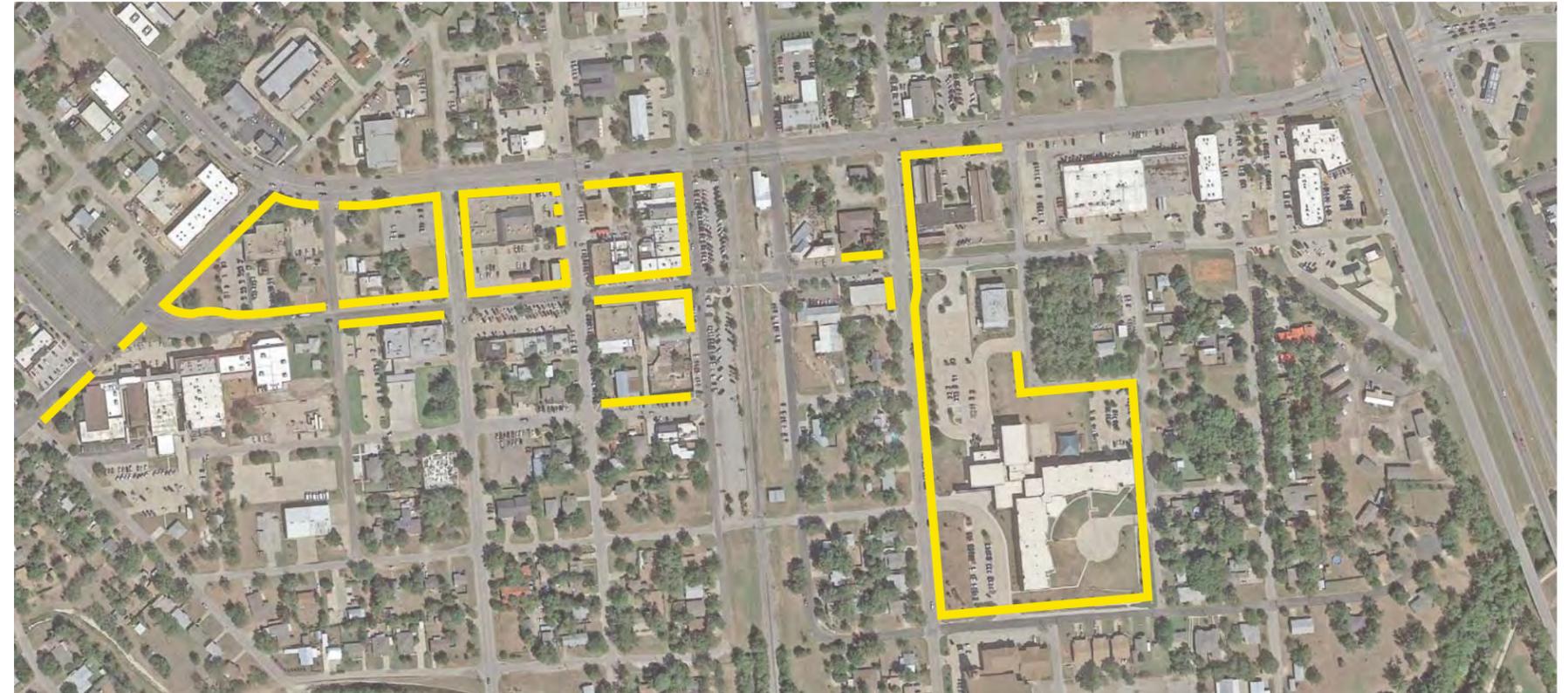
Existing Conditions

Walkability

As previously noted, the dense street grid is ideal for walkability. However, most streets are narrow and lack sidewalks. This is a barrier for residents to take advantage of Old Town's retail and restaurants (as proven by several residents' admitting to driving a handful of blocks to the Charrette location) and for visitors to take advantage of the 2,000 parking spaces within a quarter mile of the major retail area, leading to the perception of a parking shortage.

Bike Infrastructure

Several bike lanes and routes exist and more have been proposed. This provides an opportunity for creative improvements, including protected bicycle lanes and artistic bicycle racks.



-  Existing Sidewalks
-  Existing Bike Lane
-  Existing Bike Route
-  Proposed Bike Lane
-  Proposed Bike Route

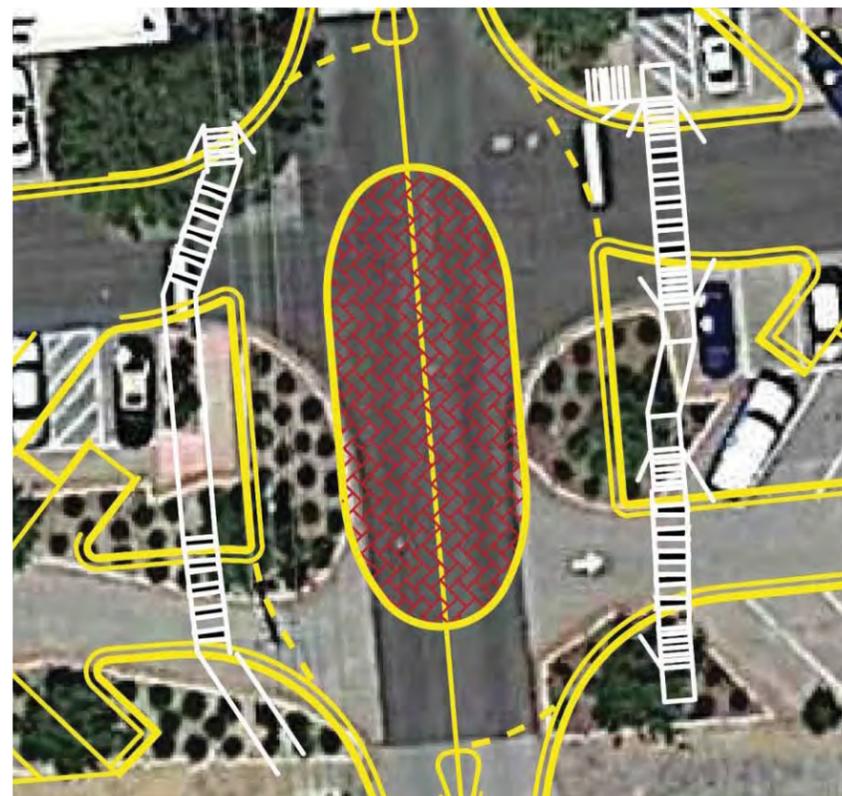
Bike Network

Current Intitiatives

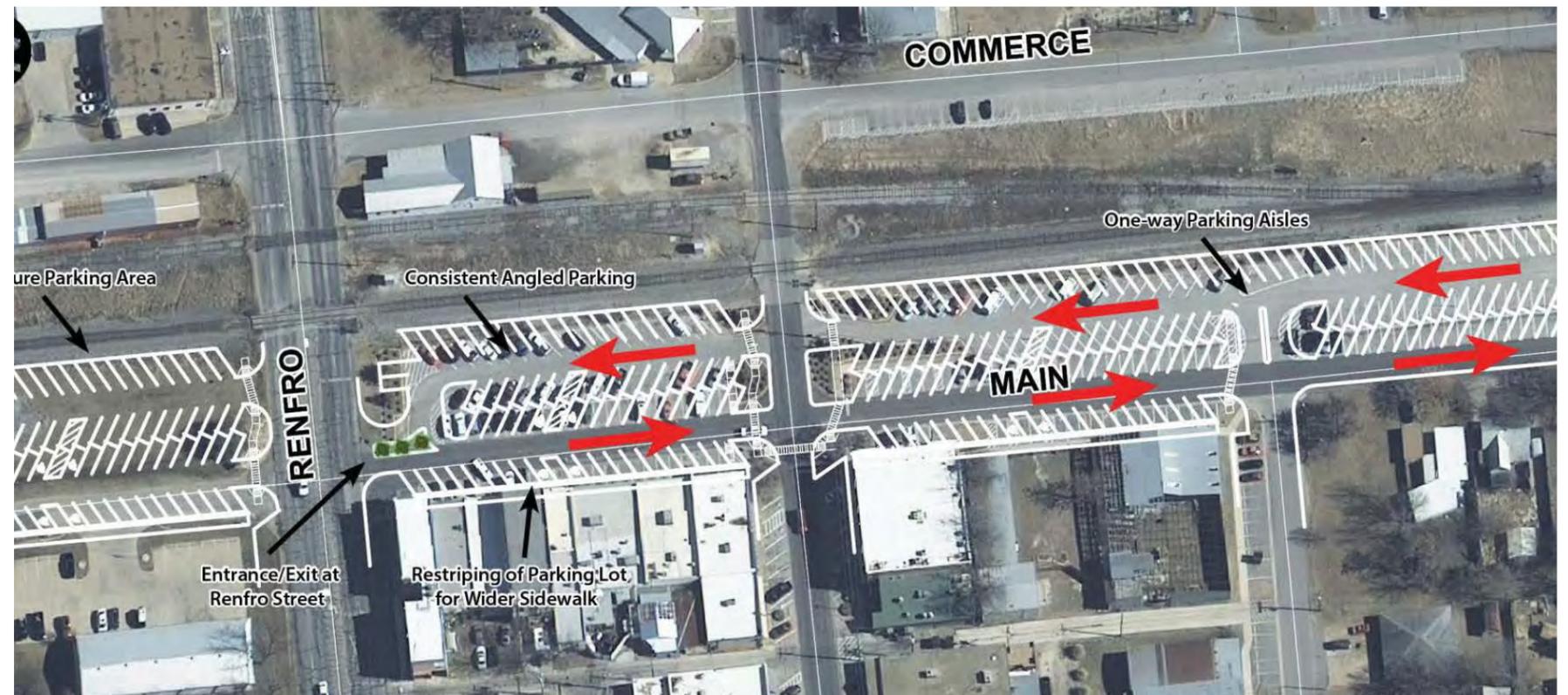
Circulation and Parking

The City has already taken steps to improve parking and circulation in Old Town by changing Main Street to one-way traffic with angled parking. Through this, additional space becomes available that will allow sidewalk widening along storefronts.

In addition, an elliptical mini-roundabout has been proposed at the intersection of Main and Ellison Streets to allow free-flowing traffic on Ellison Street and predictable circulation through the parking area. This design will allow removal of the 3-way stop, feature a mountable center island to accommodate fire trucks and other large vehicles, and the interior of the island will be landscaped and include two large oak trees and lighting.



Roundabout at Main Street and Ellison Street



Parking between railroad and Main Street

Current Intitiatives

Public Transit

Bus

There is currently a Park & Ride stop for the Fort Worth Area Transit with service to Fort Worth, but no bus service to Old Town.

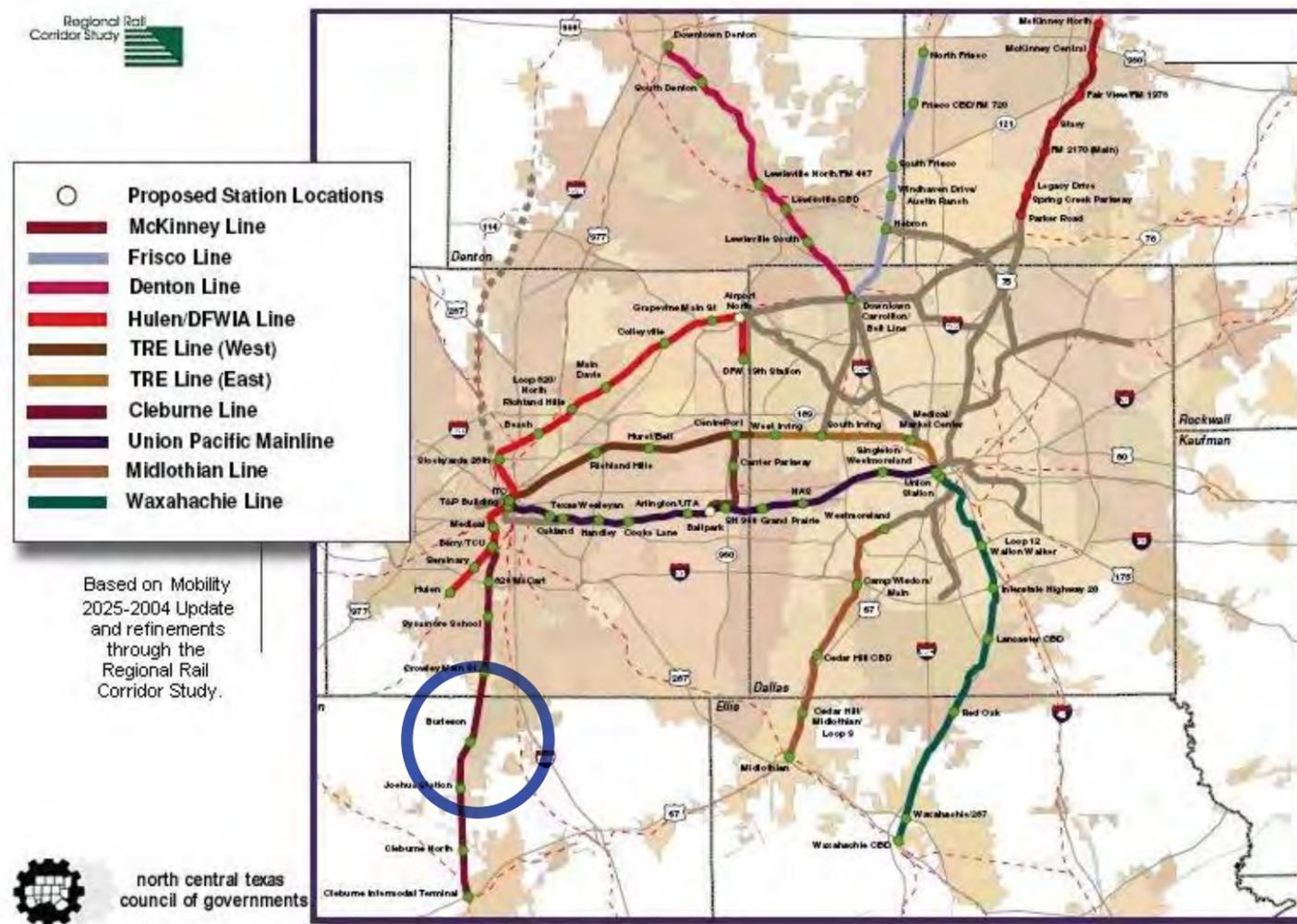
Rail

Burleson has been targeted as a potential station location for the proposed North Texas Corridor Commuter Rail, which will span from the City of Cleburne south of Burleson to downtown Fort Worth, Dallas and all points in between. This project is currently in the strategy stages for execution when funding, demand and demographic thresholds are met. However, the proposed station location would be west of Old Town.

PROJECT OVERVIEW | Burleson TOD Study Areas



PROJECT BACKGROUND | Regional Rail Plan



Source - NCTCOG

Strengths and Opportunities

Private development have brought several destination restaurants on the west side of the district, as well as 60,000 sq ft of Class A office space on the east side of the Old Town district. In the entire Old Town area, the existing land uses are a hodgepodge of single- and multifamily residential, office, retail, commercial, institutional, religious, and governmental, as well as a few vacant parcels. Major landmarks in the area include the Academy at Nola Dunn (a private elementary school), Hill College and Texas Wesleyan University, City Market grocery store, First Baptist Church, City Hall, and a Police Station (set to move soon) and Veterans' Memorial Plaza. There are also several events held in Old Town, such as parades and music events.



Founders Day



Hot Sounds of Summer



Retail and Institutional activities



Interurban Rail Museum



Main Street Retail

Strengths and Opportunities

The City owns seven major parcels of land. These lots provide the City a good potential to quickly develop desired forms and uses according to the pedestrian-focused vision, guiding development. These features can be required of developers, for example, through deed covenants or through long-term lease requirements. Additionally, City-owned properties can be converted to civic uses like parks and plazas, keeping the land as a public resource.

The interior street grid of Old Town is very amenable to walkable land uses because of the short block lengths (250 feet) and regularity. Indeed, this encourages the eclectic mix of land uses that exists today.



City Owned Properties



City Owned Properties

Challenges

Two Barriers and Four Quadrants

Renfro Street Barrier

Renfro Street (shown in red) has five lanes, and the speed limit is 35 miles per hour. It sees approximately 15,000 vehicles per day, and only two of the nine intersections have traffic signals with crosswalks. This has been a deterrent to development north of Renfro and leads pedestrians fretfully to navigate the wide, high-speed street from the available parking to the north. The City recently acquired jurisdiction over Renfro Street from TXDOT, which offers the potential to re-imagine Renfro as a more pedestrian-friendly downtown street. Funding for improvements to the Renfro Street section was included in a recent bond package and over \$1,000,000 has been set aside for design and construction. The proposed schedule includes design in 2015 with construction in 2016..

Union Pacific Railroad Barrier

The other main barrier challenge in Old Town is the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) line (shown in dotted black). Burleson is still very tied to its railroad roots. It would be impossible not to be. The UPRR rails carry an average of 26 trains per day through the heart of Old Town, running north/south, providing both challenges and opportunities. There are four street level crossings in Old Town, at Commerce, Renfro, Ellison and Eldred. The railroad has 300 feet of right-of-way in Old Town but only uses approximately 100 feet for tracks and clearance, leaving substantial excess property. Fortunately, UPRR has allowed the City to lease this property in some areas for paving uses. Main Street and Commerce Street are both fully contained within the railroad right-of-way, as is the Main/Ellison Street parking area. Discussions are underway and indications from UPRR are that similar arrangements can be made for other vacant rail property, opening up additional surface parking or other flatwork opportunities, including trails. The impact of the trains coming through Old Town is apparent on vehicular traffic at those times, but does not cause significant issues currently. Pedestrian mobility is more affected than vehicular by the rails. Crossing by foot is rough, particularly for people dressed up for a night on the town, so people often walk in the narrow street rather than navigate the rails and gravel. In 2010, the City created a protected pedestrian crossing at Ellison Street that provides good access to parking on the east side of the tracks and has been well used. However, all other crossings remain unimproved and a challenge for pedestrian mobility.



Visioning

The Old Town Burleson conceptual urban design plan involves a multi-step visioning process. The process begins with the project team gaining an understanding of the Burleson. The team familiarized itself with the history of the town, recent developments and growth trends, the local climate, and the architectural form and character of the place. A walk through much the Old Town district also helped the team understand the “lay off the land”, and see firsthand how Old Town is blessed with recent success and confronted with other challenges, as discussed on the previous pages.

The next step is for the team to organize and summarize these impressions into an illustrated presentation that could be presented and shared with the town. In a workshop style format, the team presented these initial findings to a group of interested and concerned citizens. The group included local residents, local business owners and land owners, people who work locally, developers, and city staff. After initial presentation, the attendees worked in groups to brainstorm and envision ideas about how to make Burleson better – how to enhance its best features, and how new contributions to Old Town can make the city even better. The results of the brainstorming and visioning are summarized on the next page.

The design team then began a process of translating the ideas voiced in the public meeting into physical form, using drawings, sketch, photo-collages. The next pages of the report illustrate these proposed concepts.

The plan proposes that the structure of this visioning process - meeting with community, city staff, business owners, and other stakeholders – be reconvened during the update of the Downtown Plan, which will begin soon.



Proposed Site Plan

The proposed site plan focuses on a 30-block area in Old Town extending north to Tabb Street, south to Eldred Street, east to I-35W, and west to Anderson Street. The plan here only shows a portion of Old Town, as it is focused to highlight the most important aspects of the urban design concept that was developed to illustrate the community-generated vision for the district.

Enhancements to both Renfro and Ellison streets are meant to enhance walkability and foster business development. Proposals for low-medium density housing, in the form of attached townhouses or 2-4 story stacked flats, will bring more local residents to the district, supporting the businesses without impacting parking resources. And at the heart is a new plaza, fronted by civic buildings, that becomes both a front yard and living room for the city's residents.



Overview

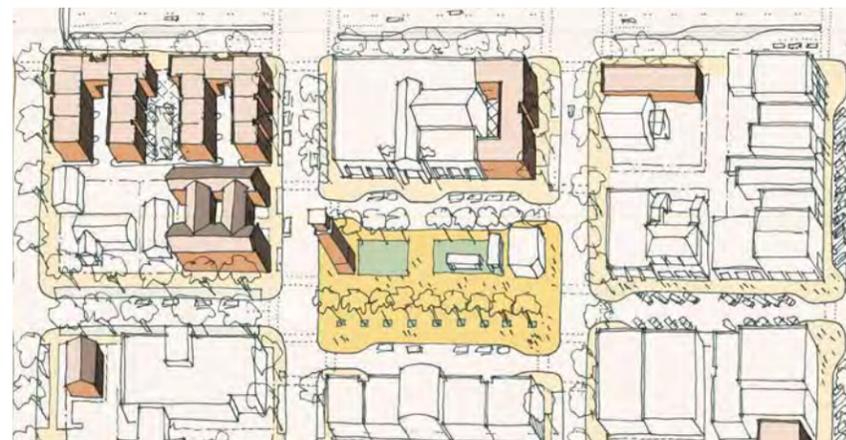


Old Town Plaza

At the heart of the urban design concept is a new plaza, one block west of Main Street. The plaza extends from Wilson Street west to Warren Street, and extends south from City Hall to the existing one-story retail building. The plaza is circles by a narrow, one way street. The north and south edges are lined with double-sided diagonal parking, so that the plaza does not displace any valuable public parking spaces.

Like the Mission towns from Texas to California, the plaza is fronted by the city's important buildings, civic buildings like City Hall and other cultural institutions like the Burleson Heritage Visitors Center. The Burleson Heritage Visitors Center and the historic railroad cars are incorporated into the plaza, anchoring the northwest corner.

The plaza becomes both a front yard and living room for the city's residents and visitors alike. It is a much needed gathering place for civic and cultural events and festivals, like Founder's Day and the annual Hot Sounds of Summer Concert Series. It is furnished in a useful and flexible fashion, with trees and trellises to provide shade, and limited amount of green landscaping for passive recreation. The new plaza is punctuated with a clock tower, visible along Ellison Street, which is sized appropriately for the city. At 50', the clock tower could be the tallest structure in Old Town.



Renfro Street: Traffic Calming

Renfro Street currently divides Old Town between north and south, inhibits development to the north, and poses serious pedestrian risks. The Team proposed two options for improving pedestrian safety to Renfro, one maintaining four traffic lanes with a green median/left-turn lane and improved sidewalks; and another that provides increased parking on-street, improved sidewalks, and calms traffic with two traffic lanes with a green median/left-turn lane.

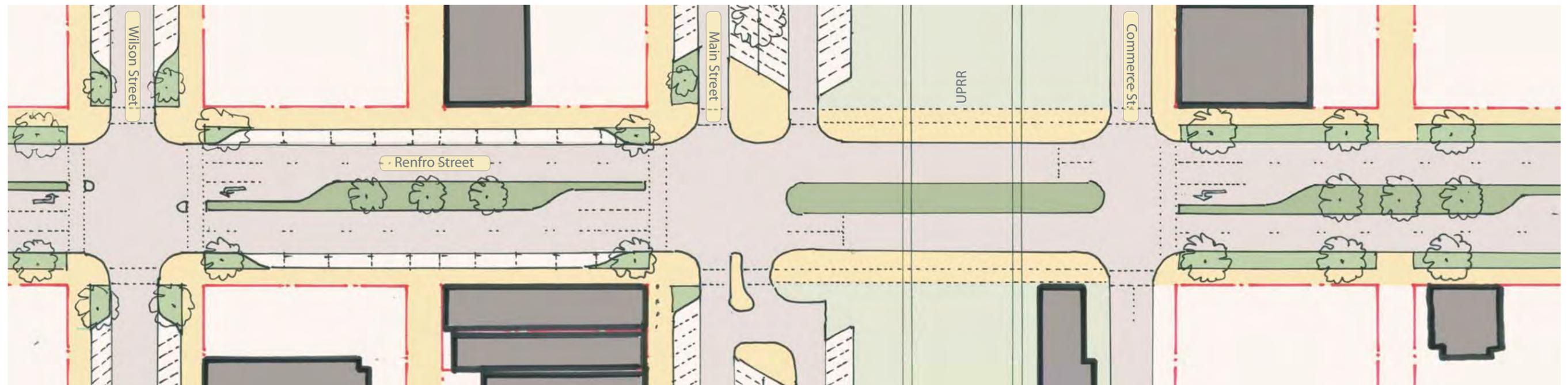


Renfro Street at Interstate - 35



Renfro Street at Hill College

0 60'

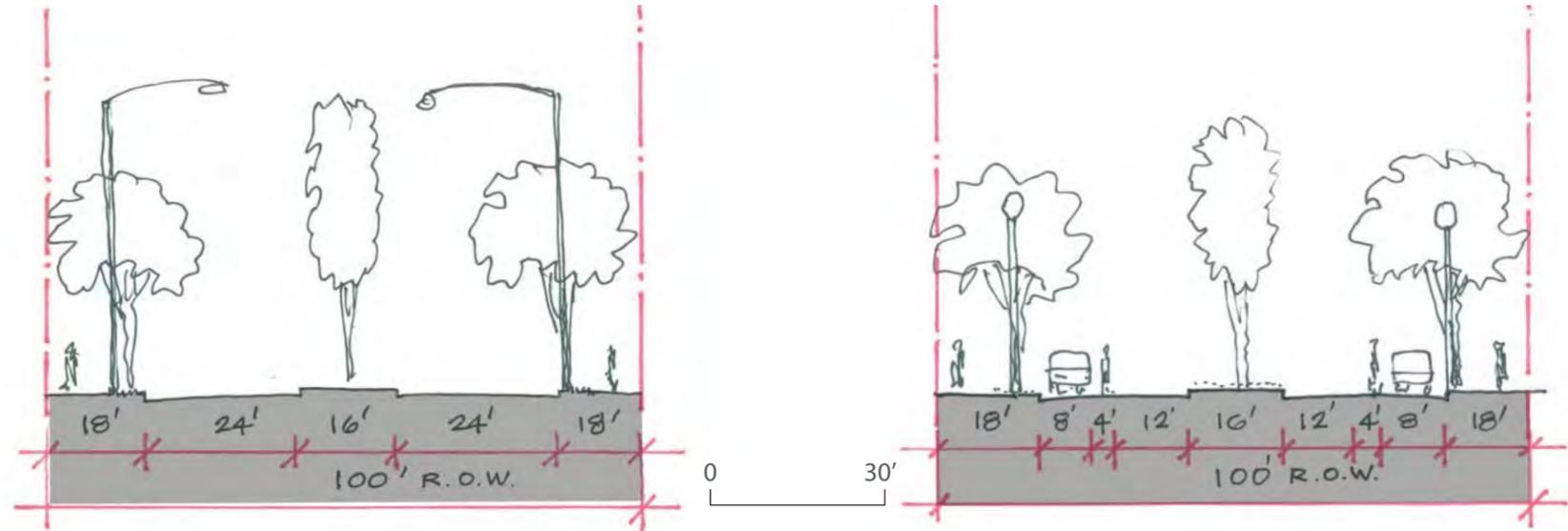


Renfro Street Traffic Calming

Renfro Street: Street Section Options

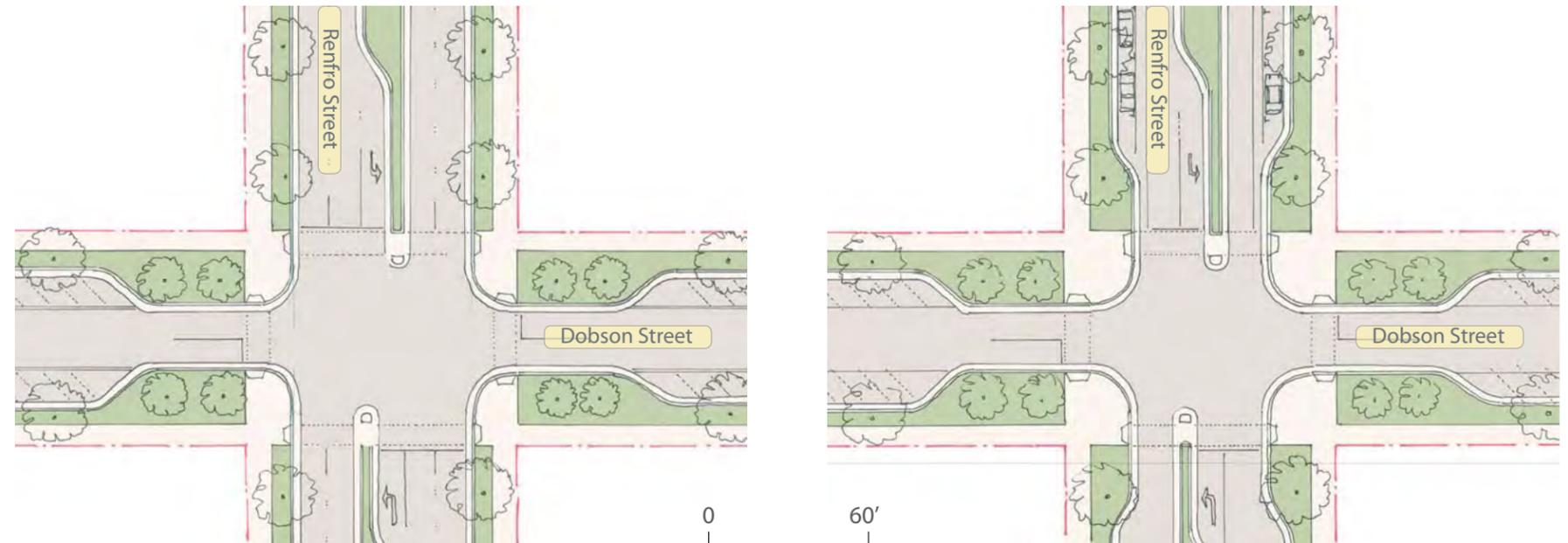
Option 1: Median with Turning Lane

In addition to sidewalks and streetscaping, the first option for improving Renfro Street is to convert the middle painted median/left turn lane into a landscaped median and preserve the left turn lanes. With trees, grass, and the potential for neighboring residents or businesses to add plantings to the median, this softens the street and sends the message to drivers that this street is different from a highway, and that speeds are reduced. It provides a refuge for pedestrians crossing Renfro to stop half-way across. It also improves safety by pushing all left turns to intersections instead of occurring mid-block. By maintaining the current two lanes in each direction, the vehicle throughput capacity remains the same. While this speeds people driving through Old Town, its impact on traffic calming is limited.



Option 2: On-street Parking, Turning Lane and Bike Lanes

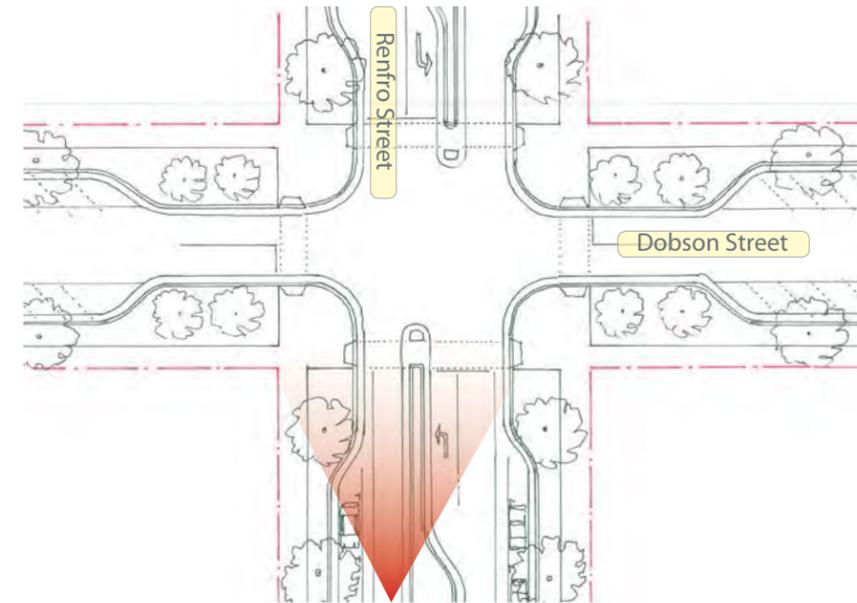
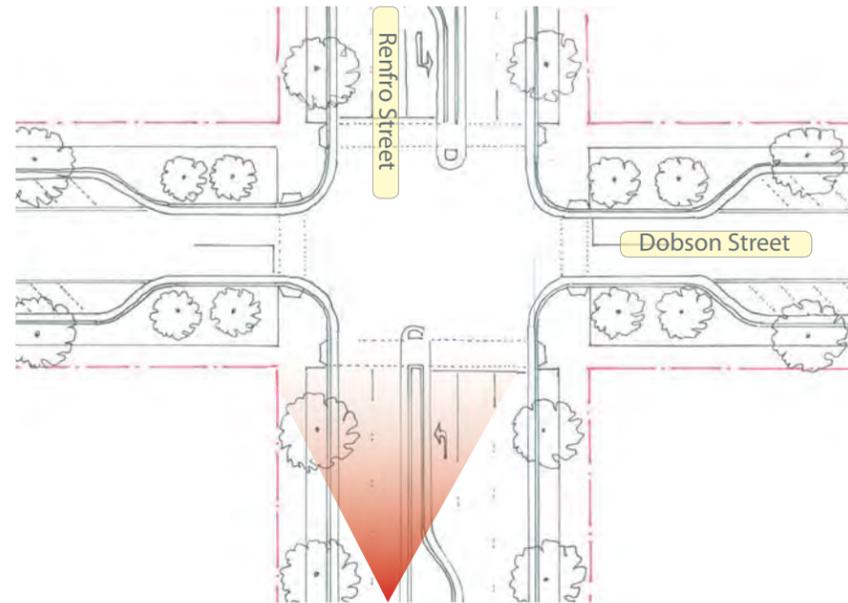
During the public input process, parking was a major concern for residents and visitors. The second option for improving Renfro Street, therefore, involves converting one travel lane in each direction to on-street parking and a bicycle lane (in addition to a landscaped median with left turn lane). This option has several benefits: it more effectively calms traffic, it makes safer for pedestrian crossing at intersections by being able to install curb extensions, it provides a safe route for bicycling, and it provides 100 additional parking spaces for Old Town. These parking spaces also buffer the sidewalk from traffic, creating a more pleasant pedestrian environment. Before implementing this recommendation, the City of Burleson should conduct some level of traffic analysis, or could test the concept by allowing parking on a temporary basis.



Option 1: Median with Turning Lane

Option 2: On-street Parking, Turning Lane and Bike Lanes

Renfro Street: Street View Options



Option 1: Median with Turning Lane

Option 2: On-street Parking, Turning Lane and Bike Lanes

Gateway Feature

The workshop identified the desire for a landmark or gateway monument. We were directed to an historic image of Burleson's Arch. This archway was part of a familiar language of arches, banners, and monuments that mark the entry to town centers, neighborhoods, and special districts across the country.

The design team proposed 3 options for a gateway element, based on three typical configurations. Each option is proposed to occur along a narrowed location of Renfro Street, but they could be located along Ellison Street or Main Street as well.

Option 1 – Gateway Arch

Option 1 is a gateway arch that spans across the street. The trussed arch rises from thick masonry bases, and carries the city name along its upper chord.

Option 2 – Burleson Trestle

Option 2 is a flat truss that spans across the street from columnar supports. The supports are each a group of 4 square columns, set on a shallow base. The columns support a square entablature which in turn supports the truss.

Option 3 – Great Pylon

Option 3 is a great Pylon, rising 50' from the ground. The pylon is a marker meant to be visible from blocks away in either direction. The pylon has a 20' tall masonry base supporting a 30' tall, tapering steel truss.

Each of the 3 Options incorporates 4 key iconographic features: the city name; two dates - the city's founding date, 1881, and the year of the project, 2016; the star of Texas; and the shape of Texas.



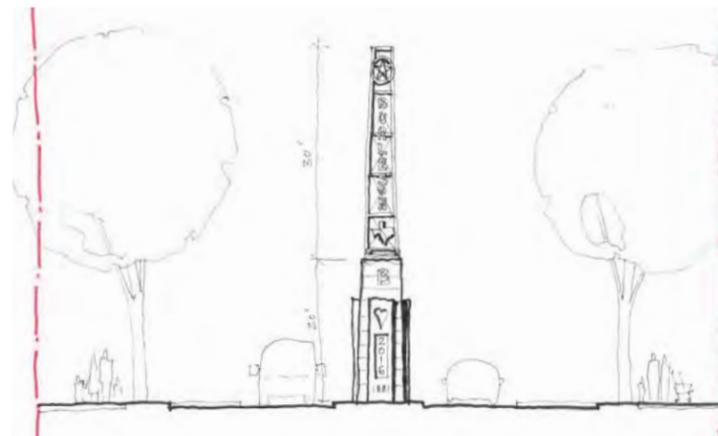
Gateway Locations



Option 1: Gateway Arch



Option 2: Burleson Trestle



Option 3: Great Pylon



Historic Burleson Arch

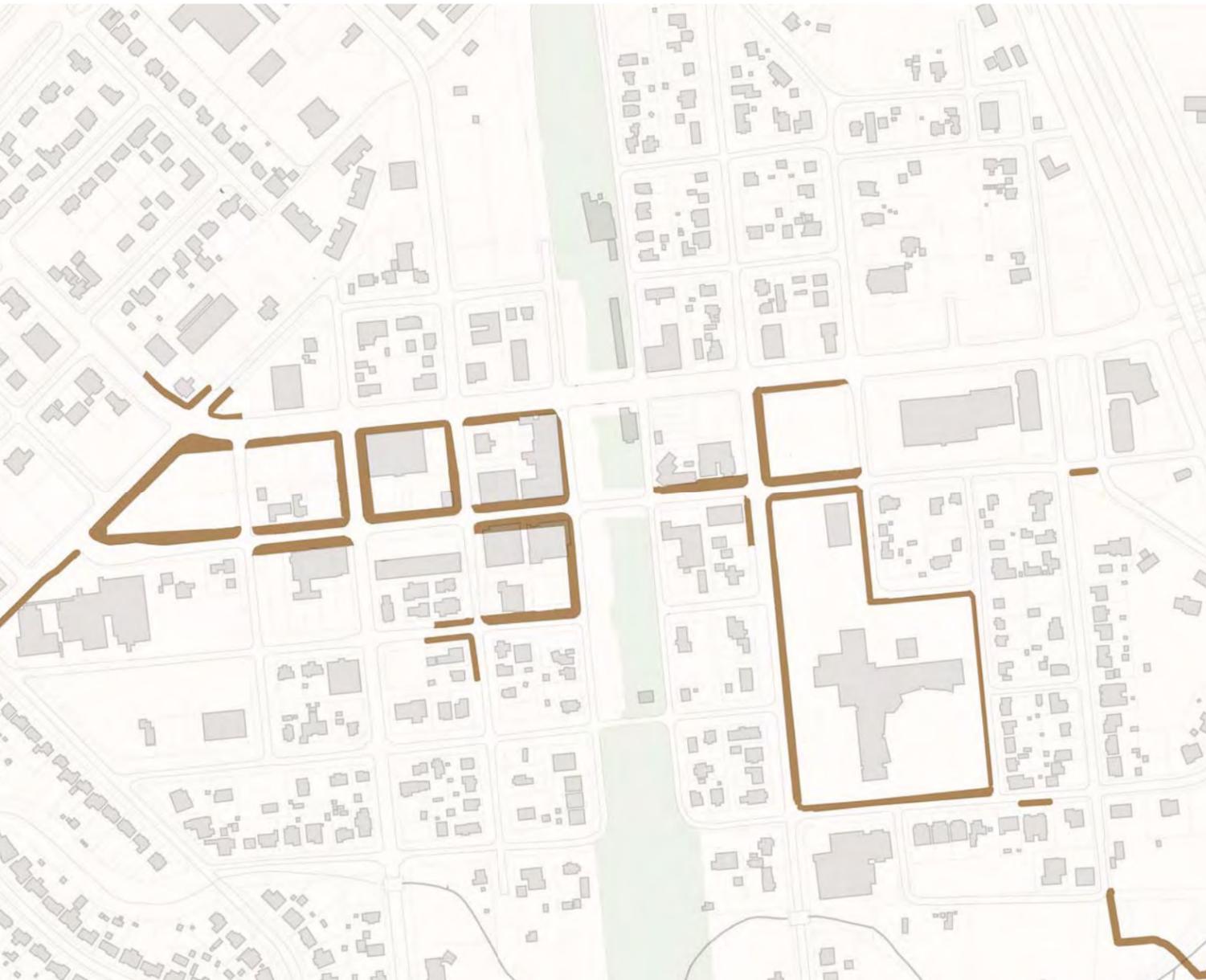


Other Precedents

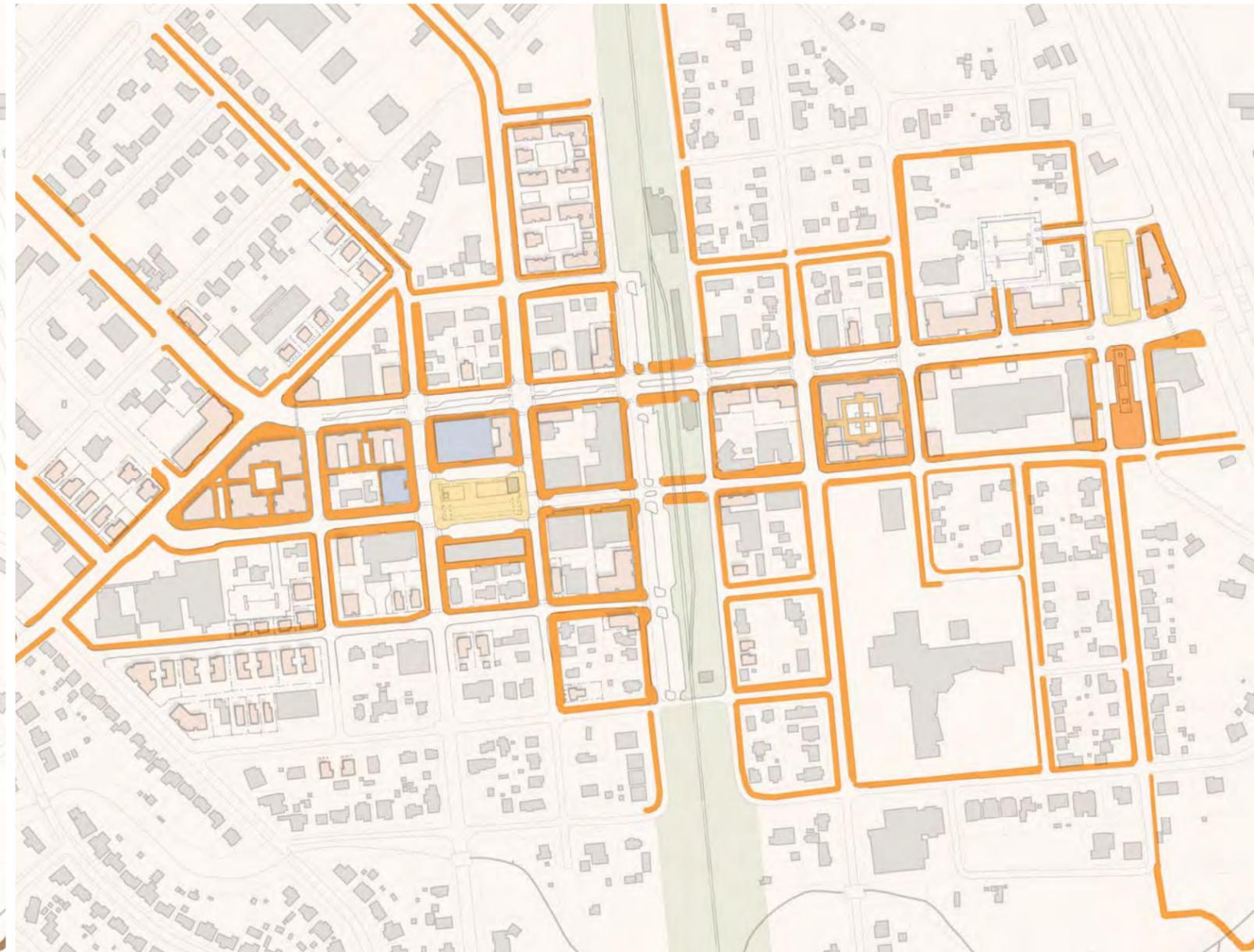
Sidewalks

As previously noted, very little of Old Town has sidewalks. Without sidewalks, people must walk in the street, which can be unsafe, especially for children. This often leads to people driving very short distances. In fact, several residents drove a handful of blocks to participate in this charrette!

This study recommends sidewalks for every block inside and outside of Old Town to encourage walking in and into the area. These should be accompanied with high quality crosswalks at every intersection. This is especially important on the north side of Renfro Street, where many parking spaces are located.



Existing Sidewalks



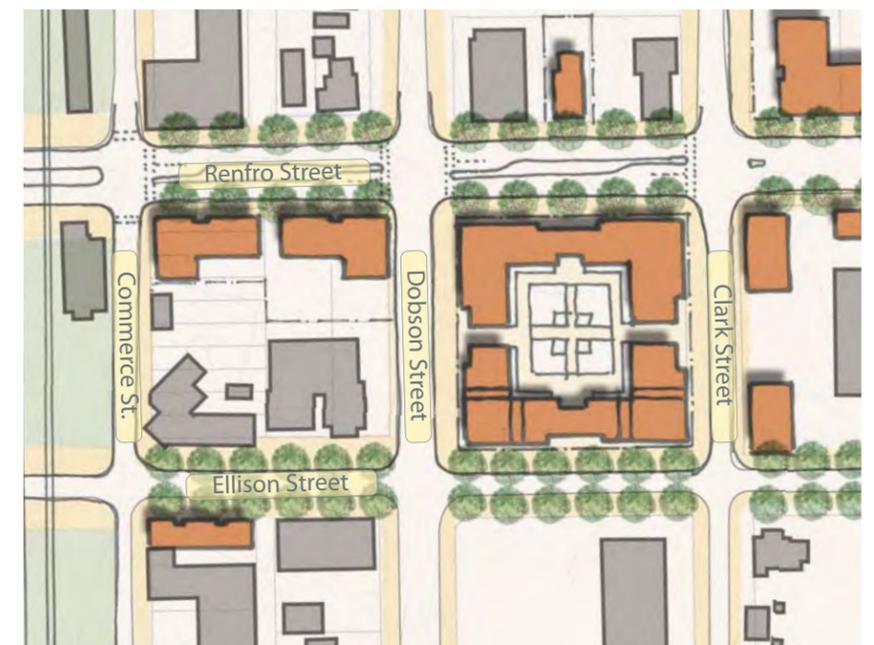
Proposed Sidewalks

Opportunity Sites Development

The City of Burleson is a major landowner in the area, which is a big advantage in achieving the community vision. The Team proposed the following improvements, which, when fully implemented, can include up to 250 new dwelling units. Through covenants, land leasing, zoning changes and other means, the City and stakeholders can determine the form of these developments.

Hill College and Wesleyan University Relocation

Hill College is a great higher-education asset to Old Town Burleson, and it is growing quickly. To accommodate its popularity, many have discussed relocating it to the western edge of Old Town, where the former Police Station is located. This could be built as a pedestrian oriented campus with a central quad, and potential for ground floor retail. There could also be student housing built very nearby to lessen the need for students to commute from other areas. After the relocation, the current Hill College site on the east side of Old Town could be redeveloped into multi-family residential units above ground floor retail, with an inner "car court."



Hill College relocated to the site of former Police Station.

Mixed-use development of existing Hill College site

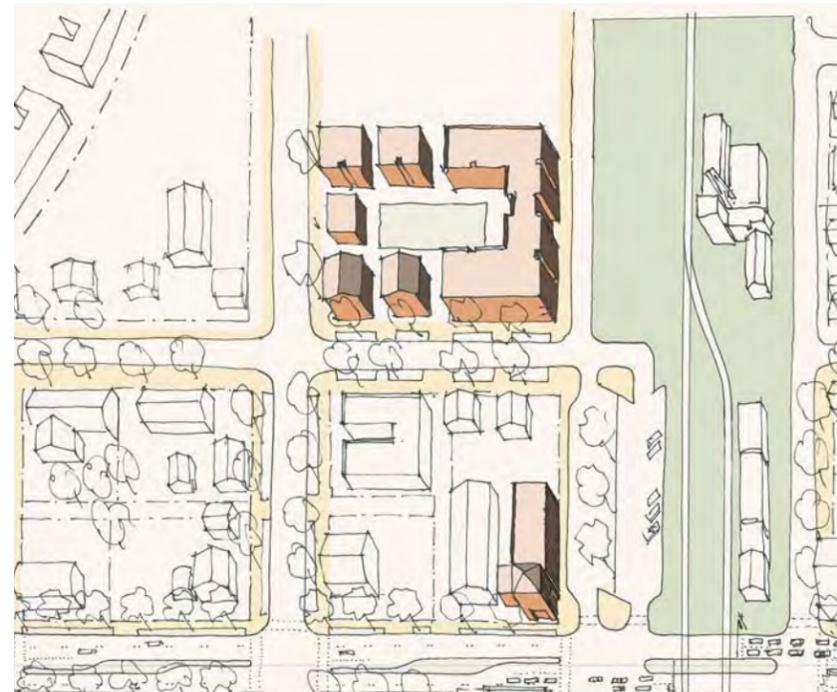
Opportunity Sites Development

Old Service Center

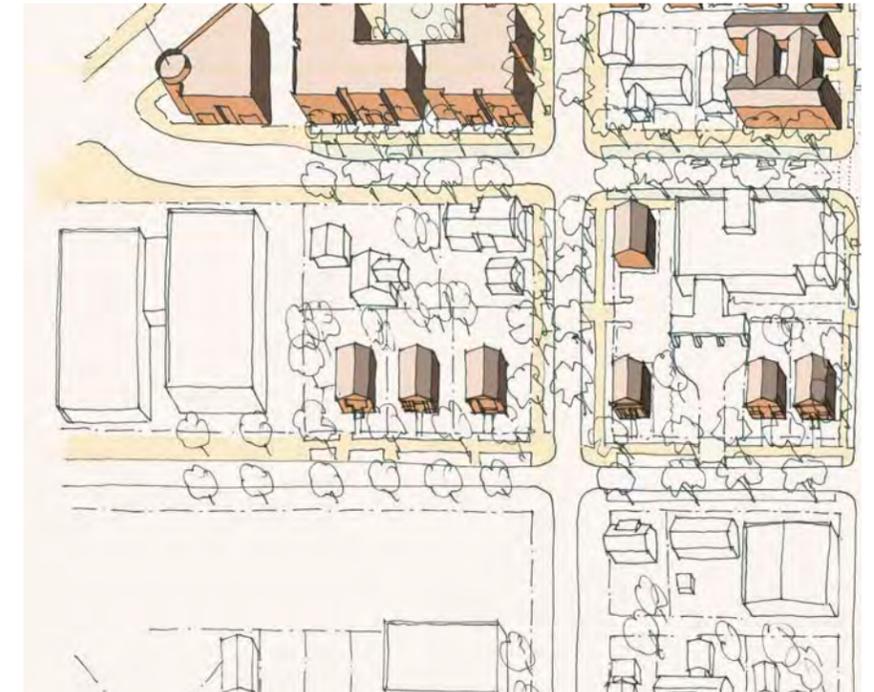
The Old Service Center is a 4.5 acre site that runs north along the west side of the railroad tracks. As improvements are made to pedestrian circulation and Renfro Street, this site will become more appealing for its close proximity to the center of Old Town and its relative ease of redevelopment. While any number of uses could be accommodated, this would be a very sensible location for moderate density residential development. First, the town's grid of streets could be extended north through the site, to divide it into 2-3 block-sized increments of development. Each block could accommodate groups of 3-4 story apartment buildings arranged around a common courtyard. Working as landowner or master developer, the City could guide this development to meet the housing needs of residents – like students, recent grads and seniors - in a way that might not be offered in the current marketplace.

Old Town West

First Baptist Church anchors the west end of Old Town, four blocks west of Main Street. The area surrounding the church has considerable potential, in the way of underdeveloped sites and parking lots. If shared parking or parking management strategies could be implemented to adequately serve the church, then some of the parcels could become available. Appropriate uses could include low density residential, like duplexes or single family homes, following the massing and architectural patterns established in Burleson's best prewar historic residential buildings.



Old Service Center Site



Old Town west



Implementation Strategy

Short Term Recommendations (0-2 years)

Renfro Street

- Paint crosswalks at more intersections.
- Install HAWK or similar traffic control devices.
- Hire Traffic Control Officers to assist pedestrian traffic during events and weekends, especially at Main Street and other parking areas.
- Test on-street parking and determine long-term viability - This could be in stages, such as off-peak hours only, for example, or only during special events.
- Begin procurement, design and public outreach for streetscape project.
- Develop Streetscape and landscape designs for Renfro, including sidewalk areas, medians, whether full-time on-street parking would be appropriate, bulb-outs, additional traffic signals, drainage, etc.
- Allow parking in painted median of Renfro where deemed safe.

Zoning and other policy changes

Examine current zoning requirements and make changes to allow denser, pedestrian-friendly development, such as height limits, parking requirements, setbacks, etc.

Opportunity Sites

Determine desired uses and forms for city-owned properties, and implement legal means to achieve these goals for uses such as:

- Parking garage
- Housing for Hill College students
- Redevelopment of Hill College site
- Plaza Block

Plaza

Design of plaza, incorporating public comments on size, shape, types of uses, landmark feature, etc..

Gateway Features

Decide on type and locations for Gateway Treatments -

- Arch/trestle/pylon
- Bransom and Main Streets or Bransom and Scott Streets

Streetscape design guidelines

develop streetscape design guidelines for the entire Old Town area that can be implemented incrementally during any major road project or development project in the area. This should include sidewalks, crosswalks, bulb-outs, lighting, street furniture, trees and landscaping, drainage, and any other treatments deemed appropriate, and should differentiate between primarily residential and retail/mixed-use areas.

Funding

Examine funding mechanisms, such as TIFs, to implement Plaza, Renfro Street modifications, Gateway feature, and other capital projects

Mid-term Recommendations – 2-5 years (or as funding allows)

- Plaza – construction of the plaza; maintenance and vending agreements
- Establish an Old Town Association (or something similar) to manage plaza activities, and more generally represent the area
- Hill College moves to Old Police Station
- Hill College site redevelopment plans finalized
- Begin redevelopment of other city-owned sites

Long Term – 5-10 years

- Fill in Old Town streetscape where development has not implemented it
- Complete redevelopment of city-owned sites



Temporary Urbanism Strategies