

INTRODUCTION

Johnson City is the county seat of Blanco County. It is located approximately 50 miles west of Austin, and 65 miles north of San Antonio near the intersection of US 281 and 290. (Illustration 1.1)

The first post office was established in Johnson City in 1878 and the community grew around a hotel and office run by James Polk Johnson, for whom the city was named. The county seat was moved from Blanco to Johnson City in 1890.

Lyndon Baines Johnson, the 36th President, was born in Johnson City and his influence is still strongly felt in the community. His property has become a State and National Historical Park and drives tourism to the city.

Over the years, the population of Johnson City has fluctuated but has risen steadily since 1990 to a current estimate of 1,191. Its economy is based on ranching and agriculture and tourism.

PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

Johnson City is located in the Edwards Plateau. This is a predominantly limestone landscape characterized by rugged hills and many springs and creeks, commonly referred to as the Texas Hill Country. The vegetation is predominantly short grasses with scattered timber of live oak and juniper. The city lies on the Pedernales River, a major tributary of the Colorado River.

Climate

- Annual Average Temp: 69F
- Jan. High 62F Jan. Low 40F
- July High 96F July Low 72F
- Average Precipitation 30"
- Elevation 1,193.4'
- Growing Season 230 Days
- Prevailing Winds Southeast

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan is intended to address all of the different facets of community development in a holistic fashion. Rather than addressing issues such as housing, economic development, transportation, and others individually, the comprehensive plan takes a big picture look at how all of these different issues interact. The goal is to identify projects that can generate the highest return on investment in multiple areas of the community. For example, a plan that only addresses economic development may call for focusing resources on business recruitment. However, if there is a housing shortage, businesses are unlikely to locate to the community. A comprehensive plan avoids this conflict by addressing these issues simultaneously to maximize the benefit to the community.

To be successful, a comprehensive plan must have a strong public input component. It is important to understand what the citizens identify as priorities for action because that will engender their support for using limited public resources on projects identified in the plan. Also involving residents in the planning process will empower them to participate in implementation of the plan. The plan is a community plan rather than simply designed for city government. Residents, civic organizations, and other groups should feel empowered to have an active role in implementing the plan.

The comprehensive plan has a series of goals identified during the public input process. Some of these require government action, while others are more geared toward local organizations. Each goal has a series of projects and actions to implement. This implementation process is the key to success for the plan. Implementation is a long term process; some projects can

be accomplished in the first year or two, while others will require more time and investment. The plan balances 'quick' victories that will build enthusiasm and support, while leading to larger successes down the road. The most important consideration is that the comprehensive plan cannot be put on the shelf. The plan reflects the needs and desires of the citizens of Johnson City and should be used regularly to guide decision making. Also, the plan must be continually reviewed to ensure it continues to reflect the community. Ideally, the plan is reviewed annually, potentially by the Steering Committee and City Council. Any major changes to the community will likely result in an update to the plan. For example, if a business with 200 employees locates in Johnson City it will dramatically affect priorities and issues for the city. It will be up to the citizens to stay involved and ensure that decisions are being made in accordance with the plan. They cannot sit back once the plan is adopted and not participate in the process. It is critical for city leaders to see the support of the citizens as they allocate resources to the plan.

PLANNING PROCESS

In the summer of 2008, city leaders of Johnson City decided to develop a Comprehensive Plan to help the city prepare for and manage expected growth. They contacted staff from Pedernales Electric Coop and Lower Colorado River Authority to help develop the plan.

A steering committee was appointed by City Council to work with PEC and LCRA staff. This group would ensure the plan reflected the concerns and priorities of Johnson City residents and may also take a leadership role in working to implement the plan.

Public input was considered a key factor in developing the comprehensive plan.

A mail survey was sent to all city utility customers and made available at City Hall and local businesses. This survey (Appendix A) was used to obtain the 'big picture' of what residents concerns and issues were. These findings were then used as the basis for two Town Hall meetings where residents could discuss in more detail the issues identified from the survey.

The Town Hall meetings then led to focus groups that discussed specific recommendations in each of the plan topic areas. Overall, the public participation was strong throughout the process and provided the steering committee with a clear direction on what should be addressed.

The plan is divided into chapters covering different topics. These include:

- Demographic Analysis – a detailed summary of current and projected population characteristics
- Land Use – a description of how the community has developed and a plan for future development
- Economic Development – includes recommendations for developing a sustainable local economy
- Historic Preservation / Downtown Revitalization – a plan to protect historic assets and improve downtown
- Housing – identifies how to ensure a mix of housing opportunities for all residents
- Community Development – discusses parks and other community facilities
- Thoroughfares – includes recommendations for transportation improvements

Each of these chapters has goals and objectives that address the key issues

identified by residents through the public input process. In addition, there is a detailed implementation guide that turns these goals into a specific series of actions with timelines, responsible parties, and cost estimates where available.

Taken together the plan elements represent a road map to the future for Johnson City leaders. However, it cannot be left solely to city government to implement the plan. There are projects identified for other civic groups and organizations as well as for private citizens. All residents of Johnson City should feel a sense of responsibility to implementing the plan. The benefits of the plan will extend to all residents, so all residents should participate in making it reality.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Comprehensive Plan eight chapters dedicated to specific topics with an implementation guide that has the specific action plan to implement the identified goals. Each chapter identifies the goals and recommendations with a discussion of why it is included and the expected impact of achieving each goal. The purpose is to provide enough information to city leaders to make good decisions and have necessary data and explanations to justify it. There are also case studies and examples of successful efforts from other communities as examples throughout the plan.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The demographic analysis provides a wealth of data on the characteristics of Johnson City residents. It includes population trends and projections. This is important because knowing what the population may be like in the future can help city leaders estimate needed infrastructure, facility, and staff additions needed to maintain services. This is especially useful for major capital investments, such as water and wastewater upgrades.

The analysis also includes data that would be helpful for economic development, such as educational attainment, existing employment characteristics, income levels, etc.

Taken together, this information paints a picture of Johnson City, providing necessary information for developing the comprehensive plan.

LAND USE

The land use chapter focuses on how Johnson City has developed over time and identifies how it should develop into the future. It contains an inventory of existing land uses identified by use including:

- Agricultural / Undeveloped
- Commercial
- Warehouse / Industrial
- Multi Family
- Mobile Home Park
- Recreation and Open Space
- Public
- Single Family
- Vacant / Semi Developed

This inventory of use allows a determination to be made of what is needed in Johnson City.

The future land use plan includes recommendations to manage expected growth and to encourage development that meets overall community goals. This includes the development of additional multi family and industrial lands. By having a future land use plan the city can encourage new development that meets its overall goals by growing the city in desired ways.

HOUSING

The housing plan includes an assessment of the current housing conditions. This assessment has identified that new homes are being built in Johnson City at a rate matching population growth. The challenge is that these homes are priced above what many residents can afford. A lack of multi family and rental options is another challenge facing residents. To address these issues, the plan recommends:

- Review and update zoning and subdivision ordinances to encourage a broad mix of housing
- Support homebuyer education programs
- Encourage the development of 'workforce' housing (\$100,000 - \$115,000)
- Encourage the development of multi-family housing

There is limited support for direct public involvement in housing (outside of the existing public housing authority) so the recommendations in this chapter focus on policies and actions that can impact housing without the city taking a direct role.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development was a priority of residents and is one of the longer chapters in the plan. Because of its complexity it has three sections focusing on general economic development, tourism, and workforce development / education. This breakdown allows different entities to take ownership of different areas.

General economic development focuses on building the foundation for a sustainable economy. It identifies strategies and policies that will build capacity and raise Johnson City's profile in economic development. The goals include:

- Redirect ½ cent sales tax to economic development
- Update web page to position Johnson City for economic development
- Develop a clear and reasonable incentive policy
- Support regional economic development activities
- 'Shop Local' Campaign
- Conduct a Business Retention and Expansion Program

The second section deals with tourism development. Tourism is already a significant part of the local economy; however, there is room to grow. Local issues include a lack of lodging and a need for greater promotion and marketing of local assets. To address this plan recommends:

- Develop a brand and marketing campaign
- Continue strengthening relationship with national and state parks
- Coordinate regional and local activities to build 'critical mass' of visitors to support lodging

The workforce development and education goals are structured to build on the strong program already offered to students at Johnson City ISD. It identifies opportunities to expand distance learning and make higher education more accessible to residents. It also has strategies for expanding access to the workforce for students who may not be headed to college and let them get experience and contacts in the local workforce. It includes:

- Support vocational education at Johnson City ISD
- Work with existing businesses to expand training and internship opportunities
- Develop a distance learning / higher education facility

The recommendations in this plan are intended to create a sustainable economy in Johnson City that offers a variety of jobs for residents and opportunities for young people to return to the city after college and find well paying jobs. A strong economy will increase tax revenues, encourage retail development, and make Johnson City a better place for all residents.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

This chapter relates to community facilities and overall quality of life. It addresses issues of beautification, environmental quality, parks and recreation, and river access. The goals for this section of the plan include:

- Strictly enforce all City ordinances
- Foster citizen action groups
- Beautify the city's thoroughfares and gateways
- Develop environmental ordinances and programs
- Develop Senior and Youth activities and programs
- Provide public access to the Pedernales River
- Revitalize existing parks
- Develop new facilities and park land to meet future demand and standards

The goals identified in this plan reflect the commitment of citizens to enhancing the quality of life. These improvements will also make Johnson City more attractive for economic development and new residents, so they should be considered investments rather than simply new expenses.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION / DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

Johnson City has not capitalized on its downtown area. There is a need to connect this area to the rest of the community, particularly businesses along the major thoroughfares. Protecting the unique historic assets of Johnson City is also key to protecting its heritage and quality of life. These assets are important for existing residents and for building tourism. The recommendations in this chapter include:

- Develop an inventory of historic structures
- Consider establishing an historic preservation ordinance
- Develop a façade improvement program
- Improve pedestrian infrastructure downtown
- Encourage mixed use development in downtown

- Support downtown businesses
- Update sign ordinance

Towns across the country are trying to recreate unique town centers. Johnson City is fortunate to have one that has unique history and charm. This chapter identifies a clear strategy to protect and enhance this asset to make it a true center of the community.

THOROUGHFARES & INFRASTRUCTURE

This chapter identifies the community goals regarding the street network and other vital infrastructure such as water and wastewater, but as important such amenities as high-speed broadband internet and household hazardous waste collection. Some of the goals include:

- Foster the development of high-speed broadband internet.
- Improve problem intersections.
- Resist any by-pass of the City.
- Implement water conservation programs.
- Implement household hazardous waste program in partnership with county and other cities.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

The implementation guide is the true heart of the comprehensive plan. This is where the goals are turned into actions. The guide provides detailed information that will allow city leaders and residents to make decisions and allocate resources to making the plan a reality.

Implementation will take the entire community. There is more in this plan than city government can accomplish itself. The plan is based on citizen input and citizens must stay involved to make sure it becomes reality. When it is time to allocate resources and spend money,

city leaders will need to have citizen support.

If citizens embrace this plan and work with elected officials, the Chamber of Commerce, JCISD, and others, they can create the future envisioned in this plan.

INTRODUCTION

Johnson City, prime hill country location, has neighbors from the east and south pushing a dynamic shift to how rural Texas will look over the next 10 to 20 years. With the City of Austin located on the eastern edge and the City San Antonio just to the south, the explosive growth of these MSAs and surrounding bedroom communities are heading straight for Johnson City. While the overall population of Johnson City and Blanco County in general remain fairly low, it is expected to grow fairly rapidly in the future.

Planning for the future is important, but it cannot succeed without a thorough understanding of current conditions and expected changes in the community. This Baseline Analysis provides data that can be used to drive decision making and ensure the community prepares for the future.

DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

POPULATION

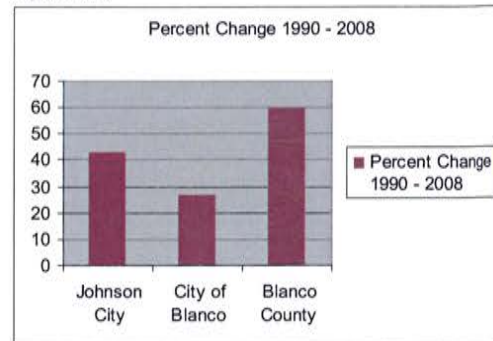
Johnson City's population has fluctuated throughout its history, but has seen steady growth since 1990. As the Blanco County seat, it remains a rural community, in a rural county; although, one that is experiencing significant growth on a percentage measure.

Table 2.1 Population

	1990	2000	2008 (Est.)	% Change
Johnson City	932	1,191	1,330	42.7%
City of Blanco	1,238	1,505	1,567	26.6%
Blanco County	5,972	8,418	9,527	59.5%

Source: US Census, ESRI Business Analyst

Figure 2.1



Source: ESRI Business Analyst

As the figures show, the county is growing much faster than either city. This is typical in counties throughout the Hill Country as ranches are subdivided into 'ranchettes' for retirees out of the metropolitan areas. Another factor is the lack of development regulations in the county. This allows developers to put in new subdivisions easier and faster than in the cities. Additionally, the City of Johnson City is currently limited on annexation powers as a general law city. This growth still impacts Johnson City because these residents come into the city for shopping and other services.

The population is projected to continue growing, which is shown later in the chapter.

Johnson City is unusual for communities in this region in that it's very young population (under 10) has grown since 2000, and is expected to continue growing. The elderly population has declined and is expected to continue to decline, which is an anomaly in this region. The over 65 population is lower for Johnson City than other Hill Country counties.

Table 2.2 Age Distribution

	2000	2008
0 - 4	7.1%	8.0%
5 - 9	7.1%	7.3%
10 - 14	8.6%	7.0%
15 - 19	7.9%	6.8%
20 - 24	3.7%	6.4%
25 - 34	12.6%	10.7%
35 - 44	14.7%	13.1%
45 - 54	11.6%	13.6%
55 - 64	9.6%	10.8%
65 - 74	7.3%	7.4%
75 - 84	6.0%	5.2%
85+	3.9%	3.5%
Median Age	37.2	37.8

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

The racial diversity of Johnson City is much lower than the State of Texas. The Hispanic population has increased since 2000 (from 21% to 25 %) but not at the dramatic rate seen elsewhere. Hispanic is considered an Ethnicity, not a race, so the totals will not add up to 100% because a Census respondent can claim White and Hispanic, etc.

Table 2.3 Race and Ethnicity

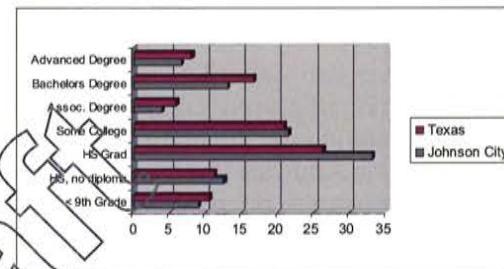
	2000 %	2008 %	% of Total Change
White	89.7%	88.0%	-1.7%
Black	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%
American Indian	0.8%	0.8%	0.0%
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.5%	0.3%
Other	8.2%	9.3%	1.1%
Two or More Races	1.1%	1.3%	0.2%
Hispanic	20.6%	25.0%	4.4%

Source: 2000 US Census, ESRI Business Analyst

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Education is a critical component for a healthy community. A strong school system will attract potential residents who want a good education for their children. A well educated population will also be an attractant for prospective businesses who are looking for a place to move their business. Finally, a strong education system will foster entrepreneurial development with residents starting their own businesses and growing the economy locally.

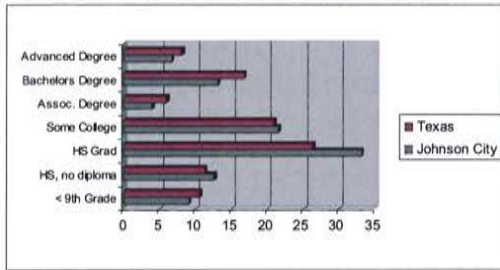
Figure 2.3 Educational Attainment Population 25+



Source: ESRI Business Analyst

As the chart shows, the population of Johnson City has become more educated since 2000. This is a good indicator that the City will become more competitive for business recruitment. It still lags the State in bachelors and advanced degrees. One solid indicator of educational accomplishment is that 64 percent of Johnson City ISD students attend college or graduate school. This statistic illustrates and demonstrates the school district's effectiveness in preparing the students well for higher education.

Figure 2.4 2008 Educational Attainment 25+



Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Johnson City ISD serves the City and most of the northern half of Blanco County with 1 elementary, 1 middle school, and 1 high school co-located in Johnson City. The elementary school is rated Exemplary and the Middle and High Schools are ranked Academically Acceptable. The District overall was rated Academically Acceptable by the Texas Education Agency in 2007. City residents strongly support the school district and recognize it as an asset for the community. It will be important to foster that support and continue to build on its success as the community grows.

INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT

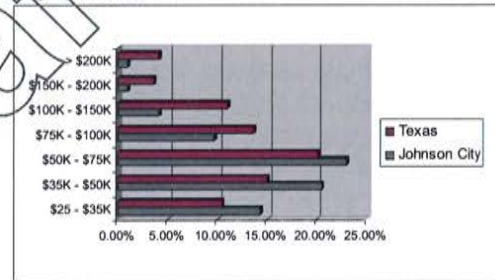
Johnson City lags the State in household median income by over 20 percent (\$40,359 vs. \$52,394), which is typical in rural communities. The creation of primary employment should be a focus to build the income of residents in Johnson City.

Table 2.4 Median Household Income 2008

	Johnson City	State of Texas
< \$15,000	14.10%	12.40%
\$15 - \$25K	12.20%	9.90%
\$25 - \$35K	14.30%	10.40%
\$35K - \$50K	20.50%	15.00%
\$50K - \$75K	23.00%	20.20%
\$75K - \$100K	9.70%	13.60%
\$100K - \$150K	4.10%	11.00%
\$150K - \$200K	1.00%	3.60%
> \$200K	1.00%	4.10%
Median Income	\$40,359	\$52,394

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Figure 2.5 Median Household Income Johnson City vs. State



Source: ESRI Business Analyst

The list of major employers reflects the lack of diversity in employment. The largest employer is Pedernales Electric Cooperative, a power utility company. The remaining top employers are classified as government (school district, County, etc.). This supports the need for economic development to expand and diversify local employment opportunities to the private sector.

Table 2.5 Major Employers

	Employees
Pedernales Electric Coop	319
Johnson City ISD	97
LBJ National Park	56
Blanco County	50

Source: Johnson City Chamber of Commerce

After the County, there is no single large employer in the City. Most other jobs are tied to restaurants and retail, excluding a few primary employers like Whittington's. These service and retail jobs are important to the tourist economy; however, there is a need to expand employment opportunities locally.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

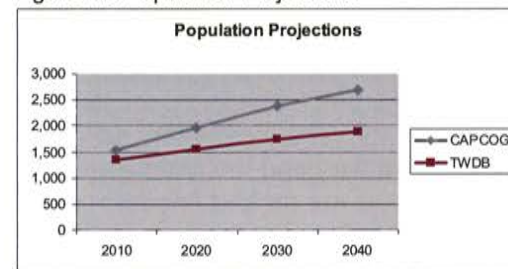
It is not enough to understand existing conditions, being able to project future conditions is also important. Population projections are a tool to allow a community to understand what is expected over time. The limitations of projections must be understood and not taken as what will happen; rather, they provide an expectation of what may happen given current conditions in the community. While there are a number of projections available, one of the most commonly used in Texas is from the Texas State Data Center (TSDC). The Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG, the regional planning entity covering Blanco County) uses the TSDC numbers in its projections. The table below is based on the CAPCOG numbers. It is determined that Johnson City will maintain its current percentage of the total population of Blanco County. The caveat to this is that the county population has grown faster than Johnson City, so it is likely that this projection overestimates the number of residents. Another common projection is the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). As the following table indicates, the different projections are significantly different over the next 30 years. The 2008 population estimate for

Johnson City is already above the projected 2010 number from the TWDB, so it can be expected that actual growth will likely be in between these two projections.

Table 2.6 Population Projections

	2010	2020	2030	2040
CAPCOG	1,536	1,968	2,373	2,680
TWDB	1,353	1,545	1,728	1,888

Figure 2.6 Population Projections



Source: CAPCOG, TWDB

CONCLUSION

Johnson City is reflective of many Texas Hill Country communities. Its income, education, and employment are lower than the State and nation as a whole. However, it is unique in that it is not aging rapidly like similar communities. Its proximity to two major MSAs to fuel a rapidly growing population lends itself to new opportunities for the community. The Comprehensive Plan is a guide for future challenges and provides the opportunity to focus efforts in protecting the quality of life and heritage of Johnson City.

Land Use

Introduction

Land use is a term used to describe how any given parcel within a community is developed, such as commercial, industrial, or single-family residential. At the turn of the 20th century communities began to recognize problems caused by incompatible, adjacent land uses such as heavy industrial manufacturing and residential. For the safety, health and welfare of the citizenry, cities were provided the authority to create districts or zones in which only certain types of land uses are allowed. Zoning ensures a strict, geographic separation of land uses stabilizing property values, reducing pollution in residential areas, and segregating the areas where people live from where they shop, work or play.

Johnson City adopted its current zoning ordinance in 2007. The zoning ordinance divides the community into nine districts: R-1 Residential District, R-1A Restricted Single Family District; R-2 Multifamily Residential District; R-3 Single Family Manufactured Home District; R-M Mixed Residential District; C- Commercial District; P-C – planned Commercial District; M-P Planned Industrial District; - M – Industrial District.

The City's zoning ordinance is a cumulative or pyramidal type of zoning ordinance. This type of zoning ordinance has a very exclusive zoning district (typically R-1 Residential) that allows a limited amount of uses. Each successive district permits all uses allowed in the previous category, plus some others. This strategy works well in rural communities because traditionally people moved close to the industries that provided jobs. Prohibiting this

pattern would establish a large number of nonconforming uses.

The land use plan is not a zoning ordinance; it is a policy guide for the city to manage growth and development. The land use study provides a city-wide inventory of current land uses, which when mapped, shows how the community is formed and the components fit together. With this information city officials can determine areas of incompatible land uses, important characteristics about the community, and trends in land use that will effect future development.

Land Use Inventory

The City of Johnson City's corporate limits encompasses 841 acres with an additional 2,824 acres in the extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ) for a total of 3,664 acres. An inventory of the land uses within the City and its ETJ took place in the summer of 2008. The results of this survey are tabulated in Table 3.X: Land Use Inventory. Parcels were placed into land use categories using the following definitions:

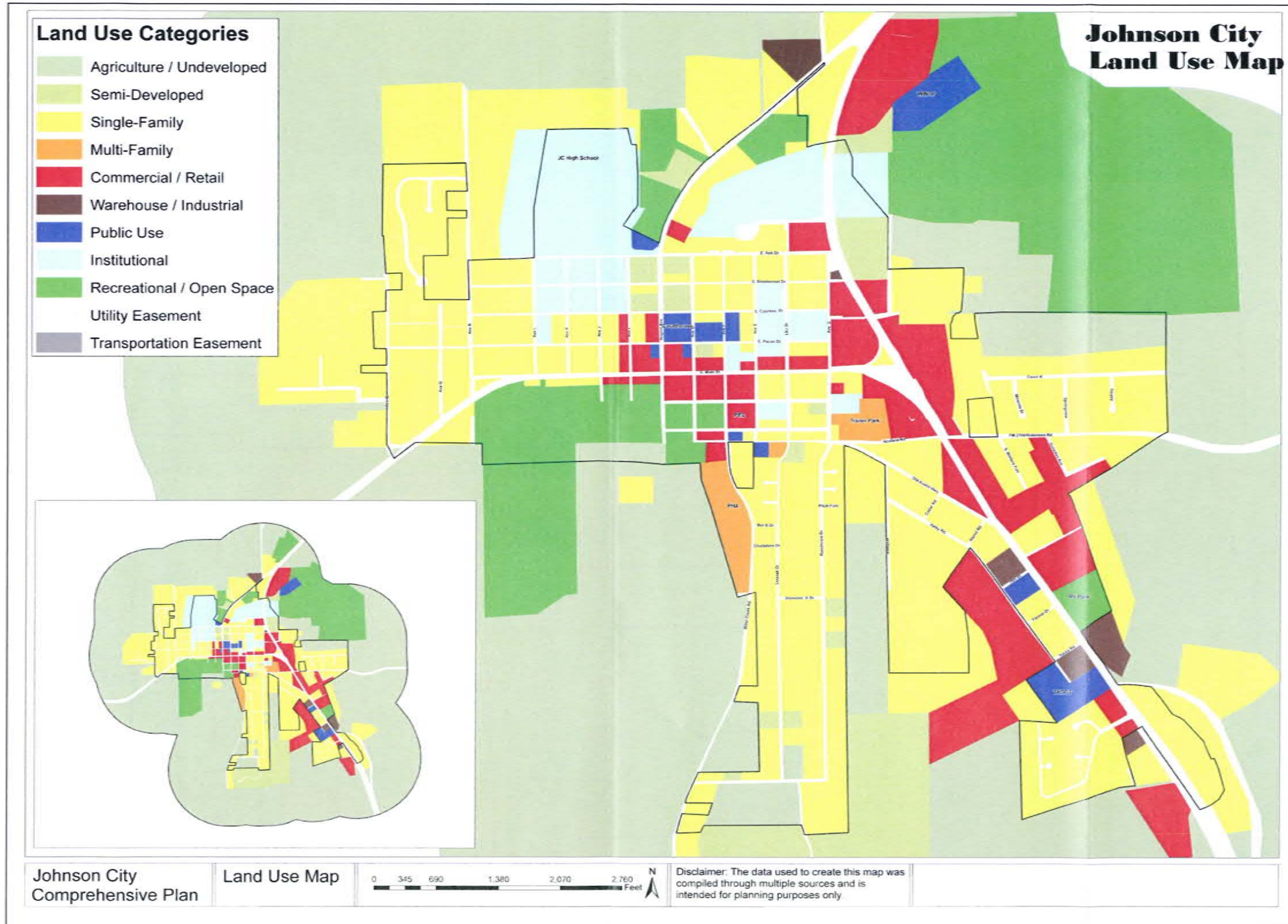
- Agricultural/Undeveloped: Describes land primarily used for farming or ranching activities; however, large tracts of land with no discernable use also fall into this category.
- Commercial: Typical commercial properties are automobile dealerships and garages, warehouses, etc. In addition, bed & breakfast establishments and hotels were identified as commercial.
- Warehouse/Industrial: Property identified as industrial is being used for manufacturing processes, quarries, and other intensive uses.

- **Multi Family:** Properties with more than one dwelling per housing unit (duplexes, apartments, etc.)
- **Mobile Home Park:** Property where only mobile homes are allowed to be sited.
- **Recreation and Open Space:** Land dedicated to open space or recreation
- **Public:** Public land is that which is owned by government agencies (parks, City Hall, etc) and that of churches, cemeteries, schools, etc. **Single-Family:** Property with a single family detached residence
- **Vacant/semi-developed:** Vacant land differs from Agricultural/Undeveloped land as it contains no structures and is not used for agriculture purposes. The land is suitable for development with infrastructure such as water, sewer, and streets either currently serving the lot or easily extended and the land has been subdivided into lot less than 10 acres in size.
- **Vacant/semi-developed land** identifies the most likely areas (i.e. easiest and least expensive) for development of new residential or other types of land use
- **Institutional:** Land that is used for institutional uses includes primarily hospitals and schools.

Table 3.1 Land Use Inventory, City Limits

Land Use Classification	Acres	% DEV	% TOTAL	Acres/100
Commercial	88.8	11%	11%	12.1
Institutional	93.2	12%	11%	12.7
Multifamily Residential	17.2	2%	2%	2.4
Public	17.8	2%	2%	2.4
Parks and Recreation	57.8	7%	7%	7.9
Semi-developed	23.7	3%	3%	3.2
Single-family Residential	395.2	49%	47%	53.9
Industrial/Warehouse	5.0	1%	1%	0.7
Major Transportation/ROWs	100.0	13%	12%	13.6
Total for Developed Areas	798.8	100%	95%	109.0
Agricultural, Forest, other Open Space	42		5%	5.7
Citywide Total	841		100%	114.7

The following map *City of Johnson City: Land Use, 2009* illustrates the development patterns of the community. The map illustrates how areas adjacent to major arterials and minor arterials have spawned commercial, industrial and multifamily development; the National Park Service's Johnson Settlement Park makes up a large section of the south west section of the community; and, single-family development is typically located adjacent to local streets, buffered from commercial and residential land uses.



Agriculture/Undeveloped Lands

Johnson City has approximately 42 acres of agricultural/undeveloped land within the city limits and 2,060 acres in the ETJ. In the ETJ, agricultural land accounts for seventy-three percent of the total as opposed to five percent in the city limits.

Vacant/Semi-Developed Land

Johnson City has approximately 23 acres of vacant land in the city limits, which accounts for three percent of the developed area, and an additional 108 acres in the ETJ. Analysis of the land use map shows a few vacant lots within established subdivisions and the flood plains. Future development opportunities include subdividing existing large parcels of two acres or more, building outside the city limits and to a lesser extent infill of existing small semi-developed lots.

Residential

Residential land uses are divided into two categories: single-family and multifamily. Single family is typically detached homes constructed on one or more lots. In the city limits there are 395 acres with an additional 236 acres in the ETJ and makes up the majority of land use in the city (49%). This is typical of most communities, especially rural towns.

Multifamily land use contains multiple housing units per lot. For example, duplexes, fourplex, apartments, townhomes, and condos are all considered multifamily. In Johnson City the public housing authority is the largest multifamily complex. There are 17.2 acres dedicated to multifamily in the city limits and no multifamily in the ETJ.

Commercial and Retail

Johnson City has 88 acres of commercial property. The largest concentration of commercial land use is in the central business district and along the 281 and 290 corridors. Most of the commercial land use is retail business tend to locate on the high traffic areas to tap into the largest potential market.

Industrial

Johnson City currently has approximately 5 acres of land dedicated to industrial uses in the city limits and an additional 11 acres in the ETJ. As with commercial, these are located on or near US Hwy 290. This is a fairly small amount of land dedicated to this use and speaks to the lack of manufacturing and other industrial enterprise in the city.

Public

Public land uses include government buildings and public services such as fire department, Post Office, City Hall, and city utilities. These are lands that are necessary for a city to conduct its business and provide services to its residents. There are 18 acres of public land in the city limits and 10.4 in the ETJ. The primary public land use in the ETJ is the wastewater treatment plant, city offices, and library.

Institutional

Institutional land uses include schools, colleges, hospitals, clinics, and prisons. Johnson City has twelve percent of its developed land – 93 acres – dedicated to institutional uses, primarily JCISD campuses.

Recreation and Open Space

Recreation and open space lands include parks, green belts, cemeteries, rodeo arenas, and gyms/family recreation centers. There are 57 acres of land dedicated to recreation and open space in the city limits and an additional 280 acres within the ETJ. Due to policies restricting the availability of use by the general public, the acreage of private recreational facilities, such as golf courses, cemeteries, and public school campuses, are typically not used. Johnson City has a very high percentage of land dedicated to parks and open space, primarily due to the NPS Johnson's Settlement and the Trout Farm Park.

Land Suitability

The City of Johnson City's primary natural barrier to land development is the Pedernales River flood plain and the two drainage channels that feed the river running through the city. The City lies at an elevation of roughly 1,360 feet to 1,100 feet above sea level. As illustrated below in Figure 3.X there is ample slope to facilitate run off to the two channels. Development in the flood plains should be prohibited due to the inherent risk to property and life. The City has developed parkland in the flood plain, which is a suitable and encouraged use.

Transportation

In many ways transportation drives land use, highways with high traffic become the conduit for commercial and retail development, local streets open up land for homes while limiting speed and access. There are no proposed extensions or thoroughfares proposed within the planning period. However, traffic on the 290 and 281 corridors is expected to increase bringing additional commercial and retail development.

Future Land Use

The future land use plan lays the foundation for managing growth in Johnson City. It identifies areas most suitable for different kinds of development and allows city leadership to make informed decisions when confronted with development proposals. The land use plan is not zoning, there is no regulatory authority inherent in the plan. As Johnson City moves forward with rezoning existing lands or new ones, this will form the basis for the zoning map and ordinance; however, it serves only as a guideline for decision making, not a regulatory document.

The following recommendations are similar to the current land use discussion above. It discusses each land use individually and identifies where it should be focused and the reasons for that location. The Future Land Use map at the end of this chapter shows in detail how growth should occur in Johnson City.

Residential Development

Foster in-fill development of single-family residential development

As noted earlier, there is only 65 acres of semi-developed and agricultural land within the city limits. While there is a modest share of the total land area, it still represents an opportunity for in-fill development. Obvious advantages include easy, inexpensive access to City infrastructure, amenities and services. In addition, many lots are large enough to subdivide into smaller parcels. One way to foster in-fill is to reduce the minimum lot size (in-fill is discussed further in the Housing Chapter).

Greenfield Single-Family Development around the LBJ High School

Over the next 12 years, Johnson City can expect its population to grow from a current estimate of 1,330 to 1,968 residents or an additional 638 people. Assuming 2.5 persons households the city will require 255 new homes to house the increase in population. The city's minimum lot size is 7,000 square feet, which would mean an additional 42 acres of development – just for lots, not including streets, parks, and right-of-way. The expansion of the population will present a challenge for the city and, in all likelihood, will mean new growth outside the city limits.

Typically, school campuses attract residential growth. Johnson City has suitable land for "Greenfield" development near high school to the northwest. In addition, new single family growth should occur to the south of the green space created by the Johnson Settlement. This potential growth is illustrated in the Future Land Use Map at the end of this chapter.

Multi-Family Residential Development

In order for Johnson City to accommodate expected growth, there will have to be an increase in the availability of rental property. The future land use map identifies an expansion of the current Public Housing Authority site and additional areas throughout town for multi family development. This may be traditional apartments, townhomes, or other types of multi family properties.

Commercial and Retail

As expected, commercial and retail growth will continue to be promoted in the US Hwy 290 and US 281 corridors. Currently, these corridors are a mix of vacant, single-family and park land. As pressure for commercial development grows in these corridors, land uses will

convert to commercial and retail. This is beneficial because residential development is not appropriate along major highway due to noise and safety issues.

Industrial

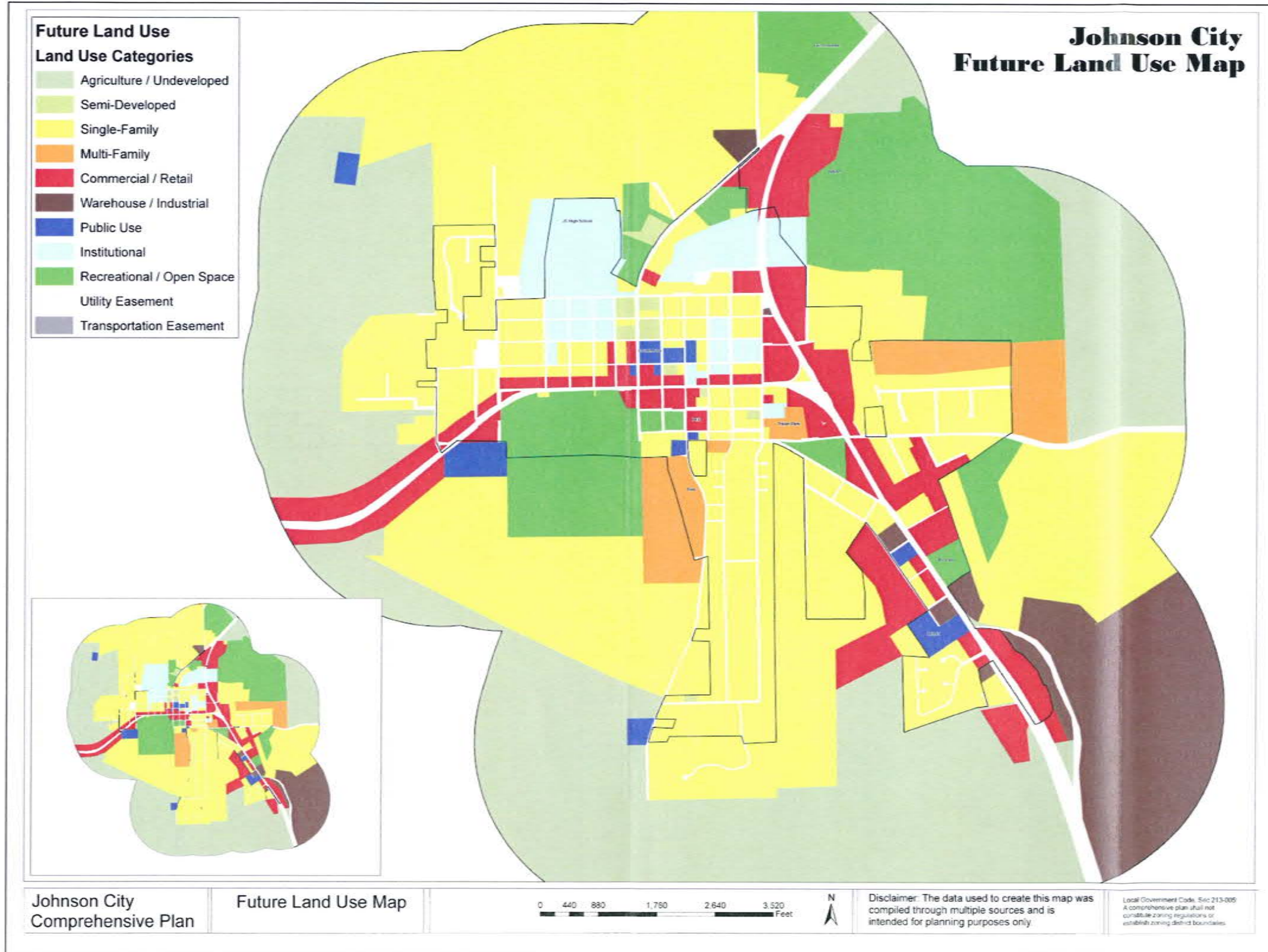
Industry is the most intense land use, typically generating the most traffic, noise, and other potential nuisance. Johnson City currently has very little industrial land use. The public planning process identified land to the east of US 281 south of town as the best place for future industrial growth. This area is illustrated on the future land use map.

Public/Parks and Open Space

The development of the Trout Farm Park will expand the parkland in Johnson City significantly. In addition, citizens identified the land to the south of the Johnson Settlement to be set aside a green or open space. Currently, much of this land is used for agriculture. Much of the flood plain to the west of Nugent Ave has been developed; however, the flood plain still provides and opportunity for linear parks and trails connecting the existing recreational facilities throughout the community.

Conclusion

The Future Land Use plan is intended as a guideline for where new development desired. The map identifies where different uses should be located based on community desires, current land uses, existing and planned infrastructure, and other factors. In order to be effective, city leaders must commit to utilizing this plan in making their development decisions.



INTRODUCTION

There is an imbalance in the Johnson City housing market. The cost of housing has increased much faster than wages (Table 4.2 shows an 18% increase in wages, compared to a 44% increase in home values) and there is a significant lack of multi family housing options. This does not present a huge challenge for those who work in Austin or San Antonio because of their higher wages; however, for those working in Johnson City it means they may struggle to find appropriate housing.

Participants in the Town Hall meetings and focus groups identified housing as a key issue for Johnson City. They saw that inadequate housing is a barrier to economic development and enhanced quality of life.

Because there is limited opportunity (and community support) for the city to become directly involved in developing new housing, the plan focuses on ways the city can make it more cost effective and easier for developers to build lower cost homes. The city has many tools at its disposal to do this, but it will require time and initiative to make it happen.

Growth in Johnson City is fueled by retirees and those seeking a 'country lifestyle' while still working in Austin or San Antonio. These new residents are typically higher income than Johnson City locals and see Johnson City as a more affordable option. These residents are usually able to build custom homes (typically outside city limits) so there is not a demand for tract homes that may be more affordable to local residents. Implementing this plan will help to spark new housing opportunities in Johnson City and potentially ensure adequate housing for all residents.

GOAL # 1: REVIEW AND UPDATE ZONING AND SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE TO ENCOURAGE A BROAD MIX OF HOUSING

GOAL # 2: SUPPORT HOMEBUYER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

GOAL # 3: ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF 'WORKFORCE' HOUSING (\$100,000 - \$115,000)

GOAL # 4: ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF MULTI FAMILY HOUSING

HOUSING ASSESSMENT

New homes are being built in Johnson City at a rate comparable to that of the population increase. This indicates that builders are responding to the increased demand. The challenge is that new homes are not in a price range that is affordable to current residents who may be renting and want to own, or to those wanting to move up to a better home.

Table 4.1 Housing Units by Occupancy 2008

	# Units	% Units
Total Units	543	100%
Occupied	484	89.1%
Owner	368	67.8%
Renter	116	21.4%
Vacant	59	10.9%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

As mentioned, the value of homes has increased much faster than the income in Johnson City. The current economic crisis may impact this issue by pushing the price of homes lower; although the Central Texas region has so far not seen as dramatic an impact as other parts of the country.

The median home value is the value where half the homes are worth more and half are worth less. This is a more effective number than the average because it takes out the skew a few very expensive homes can have on the number.

Table 4.2 Median Home Value and Income

	2000	2008	% Change
Median Value	\$69,861	\$100,833	44.3%
Median Income	\$34,076	\$40,359	18.4%

Source: 2000 US Census, ESRI Business Analyst

A family making the median income can afford a home at the median price. The challenge facing Johnson City is that there are few available homes at that price, and new homes being built are well above this price.

Table 4.3 Owner Occupied Housing Value 2000 - 2008

	2000 #	2000 %	2008 #	2008 %	% Chng
Total	325	100%	369	100%	
< \$30K	32	9.7%	12	3.1%	-6.6%
\$30-\$40K	28	8.6%	20	5.4%	-3.2%
\$40-\$50K	30	9.2%	19	5.1%	-4.1%
\$50-\$60K	37	11.4%	28	7.6%	-3.8%
\$60-\$70K	36	11.1%	34	9.2%	-1.9%
\$70-\$80K	30	9.2%	28	7.6%	-1.6%
\$80-\$90K	14	4.3%	20	5.4%	1.1%
\$90-\$100K	31	9.5%	22	6.0%	-3.5%
\$100-\$125K	40	12.3%	45	12.2%	-0.1%
\$125-\$150K	18	5.5%	48	13.0%	7.5%
\$150-\$175K	8	2.5%	38	10.3%	7.8%
\$175-\$200K	8	2.5%	13	3.5%	1.0%
\$200-\$250K	4	1.2%	21	5.7%	4.5%
\$250-\$300K	0	0.0%	7	1.9%	1.9%
\$300K-\$400K	4	1.2%	3	0.8%	-0.4%
\$400-\$500K	3	0.9%	3	0.8%	-0.1%
\$500-\$750K	0	0.0%	6	1.6%	1.6%
\$750K-\$1M	0	0.0%	2	0.5%	0.5%
\$1M +	2	0.6%	2	0.5%	-0.1%

Source: 2000 US Census, ESRI Business Analyst

It is not just the value of homes that is an issue; the percentage of income residents must spend on housing is a good indicator of the housing challenge facing a community. The standard measurement is no more than 30% of income should be spent on housing. The following table shows the amount of income Johnson City residents are spending on housing.

Table 4.4 Housing Costs as % of Income 2000

	Owner #	Owner %	Renter #	Renter %
< 15%	116	47.9%	22	18.5%
15 – 19%	39	16.1%	16	13.4%
20 – 24%	35	14.5%	15	12.6%
25 – 29%	18	7.4%	10	8.4%
Cost Burdened				
30 – 34%	14	5.8%	9	7.6%
>35%	20	8.3%	21	17.6%
Not Computed	0	0.0%	26	21.8%

Source: 2000 US Census

This table shows that approximately 14 percent of homeowners are paying more than 30 percent of their income. This is lower than many comparable communities. However, one quarter of renters are paying more than 30 percent. This is likely due to the scarcity of rental property in the community. The development of additional multi family housing may alleviate this issue.

Another indicator of the rental shortage is the type of structures found in Johnson City. There are very few multi family units available in the city.

Table 4.5 Units per Structure

	Total #	Total %	Occ. #	Occ. %
Total	490	100%	444	100%
1, Detached	338	69.0%	308	69.4%
1, Attached	2	0.4%	2	0.5%
Duplex	4	0.8%	4	0.9%
3 – 4	12	2.4%	12	2.7%
5 – 9	9	1.8%	6	1.4%
10 – 19	2	0.4%	2	0.5%
20 – 49	4	0.8%	4	0.9%
50+	2	0.4%	2	0.4%
Mobile Home	115	23.5%	102	23.0%
Other	2	0.4%	2	0.5%

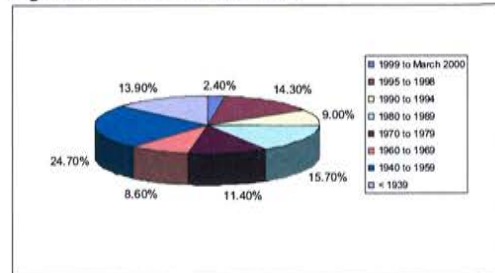
Source: 2000 US Census

The multi family options in Johnson City are essentially full, indicating there is a demand for more multi family options.

The age of the structure can indicate the quality of shelter it provides. This is not to say that all older homes are deteriorating; however, older homes do

tend to require more maintenance and higher expenses for utilities and upkeep.

Figure 4.1 Year Homes Built



Source: 2000 US Census

Approximately 66 percent of the homes in Johnson City were built before 1980 and over 35 percent before 1970. This high percentage of older homes may present a challenge for code enforcement and for owners to maintain.

There were 124 residential building permits issued between 2000 and 2007. All of these were for single family homes. There was not any new multi family construction (even duplexes) in that time period. This again supports the issue of a lack of multi family options available in the city. The average construction price in 2007 was \$151,214, which is a decline from 2006, but still a significant increase from 2005. A family making the median income would not be able to afford a newly built home, even only paying the construction cost.

Table 4.6 Building Permits and Value 2000 - 2007

	Single Family Homes	Construction Cost	Avg Cost / Unit
2000	7	\$604,763	\$86,395
2001	15	\$1,492,191	\$99,479
2002	16	\$1,591,670	\$99,479
2003	17	\$1,691,149	\$99,479
2004	19	\$1,890,108	\$99,479
2005	22	\$2,188,546	\$99,479
2006	14	\$2,400,520	\$171,465
2007	14	\$2,117,000	\$151,214
Total	124	\$14,035,947	

Source: US Census

Based on the data outlined here and the public input there is a need for more affordable housing and multi family options. The recommendations reflect this reality and provide community leaders with the tools they need to balance the housing situation in Johnson City and ensure adequate, affordable housing for all residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations reflect the reality that Johnson City is not positioned to get directly involved in providing housing. Rather, the city should use the tools at its disposal to spur housing development to ease potential builders and help residents find the resources they need to become homeowners.

GOAL # 1: REVIEW AND UPDATE ZONING AND SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE TO ENCOURAGE A BROAD MIX OF HOUSING

The current zoning and subdivision ordinances have been in place for many years and need to be reviewed and updated. The process of updating the ordinance includes:

- Review Ordinances from Neighboring Communities to Identify Best Practices
- Reduce the Minimum Lot Size
- Work with Builders and Citizens to Update Ordinances
- Adopt and Enforce New Ordinances

Review Ordinances from Neighboring Communities

Rather than “reinventing the wheel”, the city should take time to review ordinances from similar cities. The City of Blanco recently adopted a Unified Development Code that combines their zoning and subdivision ordinances. Best practices from other communities

can be incorporated into the new Johnson City code as appropriate.

Reduce the Minimum Lot Size

The current minimum lot size is 7,000 square feet. Often, communities adopt a large minimum lot size to try and maintain the ‘rural feel’ of the community. Residents are often concerned that small lots will make the community seem crowded and not rural any longer. This can be the case; however, good neighborhood design can minimize this issue.

Small lot development can be embraced by the community if it is done correctly. If a developer tries to cram a conventional subdivision onto smaller lots it will not fit. Good density means homes that are built to the sidewalk rather than set back. Designs should encourage common open space rather than individual yards.

Illustration 4.1



This image shows fairly high density single family homes in a new development south of Austin. The homes have garages in the back, small yards, but all homes have access to the common open space.

The city may also consider using density bonuses as an incentive for the development of lower cost housing. The City of Livermore, CA (among many other communities) offers a density bonus to developers who set aside 20 percent of their homes to those making 80 percent of the median income. This

benefits the builder by allowing him to build more homes, while it also benefits the community by providing homes at a lower cost. This also fits with the new trend in housing, which is to provide for mixed income housing. This has been shown to reduce the stigma of 'affordable' housing and enhance quality of life of those in lower cost homes.

The barrier to this is that Johnson City has not seen any large scale development that would make this feasible, what is being built reflects predominantly custom homes or very small subdivisions. Until Johnson City sees larger development this policy will have to wait.

A reduced lot size will make houses more affordable because the land cost is reduced. Also, infrastructure costs are lower because the proximity of homes reduces the amount of water and sewer lines, as well as roads that must be installed.

Work with Builders and Citizens to Update Ordinances

A task force should be established to work through the ordinance updates. This will ensure citizen and business support for the new policies and reduce resistance. If people are involved, the final product will reflect their concerns and values and be supported by residents and those trying to build in the community.

GOAL # 2: SUPPORT HOMEBUYER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The housing crisis has caused banks to review their processes and tighten the controls on mortgage lending. Currently, mortgage brokers, banks, and other entities provide programs for first time homebuyers, and some require it. The city should support these efforts and help local residents take advantage of them. This would include:

- Identifying Providers of Homebuyer Education Programs
- Providing a site for classes
- Advertising courses to residents

These objectives do not require much discussion, they are fairly simple. The city should partner with local banks, mortgage brokers, and others to offer homebuyer education. Advertising could include notice in city utility bills that are sent to residents, posting at City Hall, etc.

The benefit to the city will come from providing opportunities for residents to become homeowners. This increases community stability and encourages citizen participation. If residents see their local government working for them, they are more likely to participate and support city activities.

GOAL # 3: ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF WORKFORCE HOUSING

If the city allows for smaller lot sizes, this will help provide lower cost housing. The city also has other opportunities including:

- Market Johnson City to Developers
- Partner with Non-Profit Housing Developers

Market Johnson City to Developers

The population and income of Johnson City are growing. While the overall numbers are low, it is reaching a point where a 'spec' home builder might see an opportunity. The economic downturn may present an opportunity for Johnson City as developers who cannot get financing for mega projects start looking for smaller opportunities. Johnson City is well placed for a 20 – 30 home subdivision.

The city can take the demographic analysis from this plan and work with local realtors to spread the word. The Building Industry Alliance of the Highland Lakes is an industry group composed of area builders and developers. This group is primarily custom home builders; however, if the city approached them with a concept and the data to back it up, they might consider developing a subdivision locally.

Marketing should include education about opportunities for assistance in developing low cost housing. The Low Income Housing Tax Credit is a tax credit for developers who set aside 20 percent of their development for low income buyers. This may encourage a developer to build a few lower cost units (it would be 4 units in a 20 home subdivision). With the updated zoning ordinance, a builder could put 2 duplex units on corner lots to meet the low income criteria while still building 16 market rate homes. The city benefits from a broader mix of housing and the developer is still able to make a healthy profit.

Partner with Non-Profit Housing Developers

Blanco County is fortunate to be served by the Capital Area Housing Finance Corporation (CAHFC), whose mission is to provide low cost housing. This group operates by accepting donated land and building homes. They also market the homes and work with potential buyers to qualify them for mortgages.

To work with CAHFC, the city should identify public property that can be donated. This may include foreclosed properties, abandoned ROW, or other surplus properties. The city may need to invest some money into clearing these properties and ensuring they are development ready; however, the

benefit of turning unused land into new homes is worth the cost.

There are many organizations involved in housing; the key is to have property available for building. The city should create an inventory of public lands and those that may be acquired through tax foreclosure or other process. This inventory can be used to work with the school district and county to acquire clean title and then make available to CAHFC, Habitat for Humanity, or other group to build homes.

GOAL # 4: ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF MULTI FAMILY HOUSING

Johnson City has a public housing authority that manages most of the multi family units in the city. As mentioned there is a shortage of multi family units, particularly market rent, for potential residents. The challenge this presents is that newcomers and those with lower incomes may struggle to find suitable housing. The recommendations for multi family housing include:

- Continue Support of the Public Housing Authority
- Market Johnson City to Multi Family Developers
- Include Mixed Use Zoning in Zoning Ordinance Update

Continue Support of the Public Housing Authority

The Housing Authority fills a need in the community by providing adequate housing and assistance for the lowest income residents. The majority of funding for the authority comes from the State and Federal governments. The city should continue its support of this organization and ensure its success in serving the citizens most at need in Johnson City.

Market Johnson City to Multi Family Developers

This is essentially the same effort as discussed in developing workforce housing. The city or chamber should utilize the demographics and market data included in this plan to 'sell' Johnson City to potential developers. The economic slowdown will make developers more likely to be interested in new opportunities and smaller markets that were easy to overlook in the boom times. Johnson City has the expected growth to justify new housing development.

Include Mixed Use Zoning in the Zoning Ordinance Update

When the city updates it's zoning ordinance it should include a mixed use provision. This would allow a developer to build a complex that includes retail, office, and residential in the same project. By including these uses, it can reduce the risk for the developer and enhance profitability. The builders are not relying solely on one type of use in their development. There is ample opportunity for this type of development throughout Johnson City, particularly on the major thoroughfares.

Mixed use developments are growing in popularity in large and small cities. It is really a return to how communities were built when shopkeepers would live in apartments above their stores. By encouraging this type of development, Johnson City will benefit from an increase in multi family housing options while also creating new destinations and attractions.

Illustration 4.2 Mixed Use Development



Illustration 4.3 Small Lot Single Family Lunch



Illustration 4.4 Multi Family



CONCLUSION

Many communities face the challenge of ensuring adequate housing for all residents. It is a difficult issue to address because of limited opportunities for public involvement. There is a lack of support in Johnson City for direct city participation in housing development, or for incentives to builders. The city will have to work indirectly to address the issues.

Despite the difficulty, it is one of the single biggest opportunities for the city. Providing affordable, suitable housing will ensure quality of life for the citizens, protect property values, and make Johnson City more attractive for prospective businesses. It will take a community-wide effort and sustained work to address the housing issue; however, if successful, Johnson City will position itself well for its future.

INTRODUCTION

Economic development is a priority for Johnson City. Survey and Town Hall results all point to overwhelming support for building the local economy. Because this is such a significant element of the plan, it has three distinct sections. These are general economic development, tourism, and education and workforce development. These are three elements required to develop a sustainable local economy.

General economic development focuses on building the foundation for success. Johnson City does not have focused economic development staff and has not had an active economic development program. The recommendations in this section will provide guidelines for the community to establish an economic development program that fits in the limited resources and staff of the city and will create an environment for success.

Tourism is already a critical component of the local economy and should serve as the foundation for future growth. The National and State Parks, wineries, galleries, and other attractions bring people to Johnson City. What is needed is the supporting infrastructure to keep visitors in town longer and entice them to spend more money locally. The recommendations in this section focus on achieving this initiative.

Finally, education and workforce development is paramount to economic development. The foundation of today's economy is technology and skill rather than simply labor. Businesses want to have an available pool of labor for their business. It is critical for the community to work together, including existing businesses, the school district, higher education providers, and citizens to ensure the workforce is prepared and skilled.

GENERAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

GOAL # 1: REDIRECT ½ CENT SALES TAX TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL # 2: UPDATE WEB PAGE TO POSITION JOHNSON CITY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL # 3: DEVELOP A CLEAR AND REASONABLE INCENTIVE POLICY

GOAL # 4: SUPPORT REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

GOAL # 5: 'SHOP LOCAL' CAMPAIGN

GOAL # 6: CONDUCT A BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION PROGRAM

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Survey respondents and Town Hall participants saw the need for economic development. Survey responses were obtained when gas prices were a challenge for residents who commuted to Austin, San Antonio, or elsewhere for work. While gas prices have come down significantly, it is likely they will go back up at some point. It is important to build the local economy to provide employment in Johnson City so residents have the opportunity to work in town.

This will benefit employees but also the community as a whole. Employees who work out of town likely spend their money out of town as well, doing their shopping before they come home. Keeping people in town will help support local businesses and lead to more retail businesses opening. The recommendations outlined here will provide the foundation for economic growth and sustainability in Johnson City.

GOAL # 1: REDIRECT ½ CENT SALES TAX TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

One of the challenges facing Johnson City is the lack of resources to use for economic development. Over 550 cities in Texas have passed a sales tax for economic development. This is usually called the 4A tax, which is primarily focused on manufacturing and primary employment development, and 4B which provides greater flexibility and can be used for projects such as parks, downtown improvements, etc. that enhance community quality of life.

Cities are capped at 2 cents on their sales tax and Johnson City is already maxed out, with ½ cent going to property tax relief. Redirecting this ½ cent to economic development may ultimately generate a bigger benefit to

residents as new business is created locally.

To accomplish this goal, the city should:

- Conduct a Public Input and Education Campaign
- Develop a Plan to Utilize Economic Development Sales Tax Funding
- Conduct a Vote to Change the Sale Tax

Conduct a Public Input and Education Campaign

As with many other projects, it will be necessary to build public support and enthusiasm for the change to an economic development sales tax. The initial response from many residents may be to question the benefits of the change and concern about an increase in property taxes.

The first step is to target business owners and community leaders to get their support. These people will have the ability to influence opinions and build grassroots support for the effort. This is more important than a perceived 'top down' effort led by city leadership to push the issue.

Once leaders are identified and in support, a series of meetings should be held to build public support. These should be heavy on education, showing people how little the sales tax actually influences their property tax bills, while highlighting how the economic development tax will benefit them. Residents need to see that the tax will lead to higher quality of life and economic opportunity for Johnson City, which will ultimately have more impact on their property taxes. More business in town means more property and sales tax revenues as more people are working and spending locally.

Develop a Plan to Utilize Economic Development Sales Tax Funding

This should occur hand in hand with the public outreach. People will be more likely to support the change if they understand how the money will be used. In addition, sales tax law requires that an outline of how the funding will be used is included in the ballot language for the tax. It will be important to have an idea of what the money will be used for before putting the issue on the ballot.

It is recommended that Johnson City pursue the 4B sales tax. This option is more flexible and would allow the city to use the money for different types of projects. The purpose of the bill is to enhance community quality of life to support economic development. This means money can be used for parks and recreation improvements (another key issue in this plan), downtown revitalization, support for retail businesses, and similar projects.

Because this plan identifies so many projects that would benefit from a dedicated revenue source, 4B is the recommended policy.

Despite the flexibility of the funding, it will be important that the goal of any project actually be economic development rather than simply community improvement. While park improvements can improve quality of life, it may have less impact on economic development than new sidewalks, etc in downtown that will help businesses in that area. The sales tax use plan should support the recommendations identified in this plan (new website, incentives, business retention and expansion) and not be seen simply as a 'slush fund' for the city.

Conduct a Vote to Change Sales Tax

The final step will be to hold the vote. This should not be a special vote, but rather one held during a regular voting

time. This should only be scheduled once community support has been secured and an adequate plan is in place. The ballot language should clearly identify how the funding will be used to ensure it is not misallocated. If the vote is successful, the city should immediately begin prep work for plans to be developed as it waits for the money to start coming in. Given the limited sales tax to be collected, it will take some time to see hard results; however, a good plan will provide direction for use of the money.

GOAL # 2: UPDATE WEB PAGE TO POSITION JOHNSON CITY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

It is no surprise that economic development occurs on the internet. Businesses and relocation consultants are doing more and more research on the web and a community without a good website will not make a short list of places a business may visit. If Johnson City wants to position itself for economic development, it must reinvent its website to provide the information and resources needed for businesses. The cost should not be too high on this and should be undertaken even if the economic development sales tax is unsuccessful. The process should include the following:

- Identify best practices from other websites and communities
- Budget for upgrades and maintenance
- Update the website and publicize

Identify Best Practices from Other Websites and Communities

Many communities have excellent websites that should serve as an example for Johnson City. The best will provide substantial information and be extremely well organized. Some examples include:

- <http://www.destinationflatonia.com/business-economic-overview.html>
- <http://www.wallercounty.org/>
- <http://www.mcedc.net/index.php>

At a minimum, a good website will provide demographic data, incentive policies, tax rates, utility providers, and existing businesses. Better websites will include available properties, workforce data, and more. The more data the better because the goal is to provide businesses with the necessary data they require to make a decision to visit and conduct business in Johnson City.

Local businesses are another resource for what is appropriate on the website. Their knowledge may be helpful in guiding the website development and should be utilized. Tourism information and resources should definitely be included because of its importance to the local economy.

Budget for Upgrades and Maintenance

The cost to upgrade the website is likely an expense that can be borne in the general fund budget rather than waiting until (or if) the economic development sales tax passes. More importantly is the budget to maintain the website. Demographic and other information change and if the website is not regularly maintained it may create the impression that the city is not focused on presenting its best image. If the city includes available properties it will be even more important to regularly update and maintain the site.

Local realtors will likely be willing to provide information to the city for inclusion on the website because it means more publicity for them to sell their properties. This information should be captured and maintained at least monthly to ensure it is current and accurate.

Update the Website and Publicize

Updating the website should be straightforward. This plan provides much of the demographic needed and the rest should be easily accessible. The city may consider using a website optimizing firm to help draw hits to the site once developed. These firms work by pushing the website up the list of common search engines, so if a firm searched for 'economic development Texas hill country' or something along those lines, Johnson City would be at or near the top of the list.

Having a good, updated website will help the city attract new businesses, but it will also help attract visitors if it includes tourism information. The goal is to have a website that users can find whatever information they need about Johnson City quickly and easily.

GOAL # 3: DEVELOP A CLEAR AND REASONABLE INCENTIVE POLICY

Incentives provide a tool for communities to increase their attractiveness to potential businesses. Incentives can range from infrastructure assistance to tax breaks to direct financial contributions. Johnson City should develop a policy that reflects the goals and values of the community so that when a prospective business calls the policy is there to guide decision making.

Any policy should provide benefits for the business as well as the city. Any policy should clearly lay out how many jobs must be created, how much investment must be made, etc. to ensure the city is not giving money away for no return. Incentives can also be tied to less direct measurements, such as landscaping and other improvements that benefit the city. Incentives should be seen as a tool that helps attract business while also protecting the city's

interests. To be successful, the city should:

- Identify Best Practices from Other Communities
- Determine What is Appropriate for Johnson City
- Adopt and Utilize the Policy

Identify Best Practices from Other Communities

As with other elements of this plan, it makes sense to see what other communities are doing and determine what is best. This saves time and effort because there is no need to reinvent the wheel. This is not to say another city's policy should be adopted as is, but it can be used as an example.

Determine what is Appropriate for Johnson City

To be successful, Johnson City has to adopt a policy that is appropriate to its values and priorities. Incentives can range from tax abatements, infrastructure assistance, or direct financial assistance. The recommendation would be for Johnson City to adopt a policy that is not overly aggressive, focusing on minimal tax abatements, fee waivers, and expedited permit approvals.

Johnson City is already seen as a lower cost alternative to neighboring metropolitan areas, so reducing the overall cost of doing business (through tax abatements for example) may not be the most appropriate approach. The biggest expense will likely be the cost of land and utilities. This is an area where the city may be willing to focus its incentives. There was discussion about the development of an industrial park; however, there are very limited public resources for this. A better option may be for the city to collaborate with a private developer to reduce land costs by helping with infrastructure to a privately developed park. This cost

savings could then pass on to potential businesses.

The following are examples from other communities:

City of San Marcos, TX

http://www.ecodevsanmarcos.org/pdf/S_M_Incentive_Policy_2008.pdf

City of Sealy, TX

http://www.ci.sealy.tx.us/forms_docs/se_dc/tax_incentives_policy.pdf

City of La Grange, TX

http://edc.ci.la-grange.tx.us/services_programs/business_incentives/Business_incentives_guide_lines.htm

Another consideration is assistance for existing businesses. Many communities offer two tier programs that have lower thresholds for assistance. For example, the city policy may have a 10-year tax abatement for a new business that invests \$1,000,000. Property taxes are abated 100% for the first 5 years, 90% the 6th year, 80% the 7th, 70% the 8th, 60% the 9th and 50% the last year. After 10 years, the taxes are 100%. This same structure could be used for an existing business but at an investment level of \$500,000. This would allow them to benefit from incentives at a lower investment. This would reward existing businesses and support them.

Any incentive policy must have 'clawback' provisions, which enable the city to get its investment back if the business does not meet the investment levels of the agreement. This protects the city's interest in the case where a business fails or grows slower than anticipated.

Adopt and Utilize the Policy

Once the policy is developed, the city should adopt it and publicize it. The city should also work with the county and school district to include them in the

policy because those taxing entities are a much higher part of any tax assessment.

The policy must be in place and used consistently. If the plan is seen as arbitrary and unfair, Johnson City will begin to get a reputation as a poor place for business. In addition, having an established policy will minimize the possibility of the city making a bad deal with a prospective business.

GOAL # 4: SUPPORT REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

If a new business locates anywhere in Blanco County, Johnson City will benefit. If it is in the south end of the county, the benefits will be less, but there will be some. By collaborating with the City of Blanco and Blanco County, Johnson City can foster an 'open for business' attitude for the county as a whole which will be much more attractive to potential businesses. In addition, the partnership will increase the reach of the city by expanding available resources for economic development.

The city should also stay in contact with the Capitol Area Council of Governments, PEC, LCRA, and the Governor's Office of Economic Development. These agencies often hear of potential business relocations and can steer them towards Johnson City.

If the county moves forward with a countywide economic development task force the city should be an active partner. If not, the city should still maintain contact with the City of Blanco and Blanco County to work towards economic development for the region.

GOAL # 5: 'SHOP LOCAL' CAMPAIGN
Retail businesses in Johnson City will not be successful if they are only geared

to serving tourists. Shops will need to find a mix of goods and services that attract residents as well. A common concern from residents of many 'tourist' towns is that there is nowhere for local people to shop. The Chamber of Commerce should take an active role working with existing businesses in Johnson City to ensure they carry goods that will appeal to both visitors and tourists. There are many examples of these stores, including a pharmacy in Uvalde that carries regular goods, but also has a mix of decorative and craft goods as well as an old time soda fountain and lunch counter. This kind of business attracts locals who come to purchase their medicine, while also bringing in visitors to experience the lunch counter.

Just having goods and services will not be enough if residents are in the habit of shopping elsewhere. There will have to be a concerted effort to get residents to patronize local shops first before going out of the community. The benefits to this are many, local businesses will thrive, sales tax revenue will increase, and residents will save time and money. To accomplish this, the Chamber of Commerce should:

- Survey Local Businesses to Determine what Goods and Services they Offer
- Develop a Coordinated Marketing Campaign
- Conduct Events to Bring in Shoppers
- Consider a Chamber Bucks Program

An added bonus of a successful Shop Local campaign is that it will provide a real service to Chamber members. They will benefit from the Chamber driving this campaign and will see a value in their membership. This may also lead others to join the Chamber

because they will see a positive impact on their business.

Survey Local Businesses to Determine what Goods and Services they Offer

The first step to a successful Shop Local campaign is to know what is available in local businesses. Chamber Board Members or other volunteers to visit local businesses and talk with business owners to determine what they offer. This will help the Chamber answer questions from those seeking particular goods and services. It will also allow the Chamber to make recommendations to business owners as to what is not available in Johnson City that might be worth carrying.

The Chamber should also talk to visitors and residents to determine what products they are looking for. This will help them to serve their members better by being able to offer suggestions on products that will sell.

Develop a Coordinated Marketing Campaign

Many small businesses do not have a budget for marketing; even putting inserts in the local paper may be prohibitive. One part of the Shop Local campaign should be a cooperative marketing effort where multiple businesses cooperatively run ads. The Chamber can commit to purchasing an insert in the paper every week and different local businesses can buy space from the Chamber on that insert. This will reduce the cost to individual businesses and let the Chamber serve its customers. The Chamber website is already a resource with a solid list of businesses with descriptions. This is helpful to visitors coming to Johnson City, but likely does not reach local residents. The insert in the paper would.

In addition to advertising businesses, the Chamber should take a lead role in

encourage 'Shop Local'. This can include regular articles in the newspaper highlighting a local business, as well as articles on the economic impact of shopping local. Signs and fliers can also be used. Many Chambers provide their members with window stickers with a 'Shop Local' message as well. The idea is for residents to be constantly reminded to think Johnson City first when it comes to their shopping needs.

Conduct Events to Bring in Shoppers

One way to help spur a Shop Local campaign is to have regular events where local businesses coordinate their activities to bring in people. This may be a community wide sidewalk sale, where local businesses pick a weekend and have an event. This could be coordinated with a local Farmers Market or other vendor event as well. A big event will help draw attention and introduce residents to what is available at local businesses. Again, the Chamber should take a lead role to cement its position as serving its members by helping them grow their business.

Consider a Chamber Bucks and/or Checks Program

Some communities have begun a Chamber Checks program. This kind of program would be administered through the Chamber of Commerce and can take many different forms. The purpose is twofold: to encourage Chamber members to shop with other members, and to encourage local residents to shop-at-home first before taking their dollars outside the community.

The simplest form is a program where the Chamber sells "Chamber Checks" that have no cash value but function as gift cards and can be redeemed at local businesses. Businesses can choose to participate in the program and accept the Chamber Checks in their regular business transactions with residents.

Members and residents are encouraged to purchase them as gifts for employees, holidays, birthdays and other special occasions, so that the money is reinvested in local businesses, positively increasing the economic impact.

Other programs can be more complex and involve a partnership with a bank. The Chamber Checks are considered as cash and the bank redeems them to storeowners as deposits. Another format is the Chamber Checks are plastic gift cards and are swiped on a credit card machine much like a gift card in a retail chain store or restaurant.

The challenge with this type of program is that the Johnson City Chamber has limited staff and ability to manage this type of program. This is something that may be considered on a long-term basis as the local economy grows and the Chamber resources expand.

GOAL # 6: CONDUCT A BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION PROGRAM

Most new jobs will be created by local business expansion, not from a new business relocating to Johnson City. A Business Retention and Expansion program (BREP) will provide the city and Chamber with information they can use to support local businesses and help them succeed.

This is a project that should be a partnership of the Chamber of Commerce and the city because there will be opportunities for both to provide assistance and get involved. To accomplish this task the following is required:

To be successful, the BREP should be conducted by an outside entity. The interview and questions asked of participants are very detailed and specific about the business. Owners

may not feel comfortable being completely honest and open with city or Chamber staff, especially if they have concerns or issues. LCRA has conducted many BREP's and can provide this service to Johnson City.

The program consists of interviews and surveys of business leaders, as well as demographic and business analysis of the community. This data is then used to identify specific needs and issues facing local businesses. A plan is developed to address those issues. The plan usually involves the city and Chamber of Commerce to implement actions to address the needs identified by business leaders.

The goal of the BREP is to help existing businesses succeed. By talking with them and hearing their concerns the community can be proactive in meeting those needs. This will not only help grow the business, but may reduce the chance of that business relocating to a more welcoming community.

Outside of a formal BREP process, city leaders should work to establish a strong relationship with business leaders. There should be regular meetings, events, and activities where people can meet and discuss issues and opportunities. These may be formal events, such as quarterly lunches, or just an informal visit for coffee at the start of the workday. Communication is critical to supporting local business and helping to ensure their success.

TOURISM RECOMMENDATIONS

As mentioned, tourism is critical to the economic sustainability of Johnson City. There are a number of assets in the community that can be capitalized on to increase tourism and support local tourism businesses. The recommendations in this section will help strengthen this sector of the economy.

GOAL # 1: DEVELOP A BRAND AND MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Johnson City has pursued different branding campaigns in the past, but none has really been successful. A strong brand will help create an identity for Johnson City in people's minds. Examples include Bastrop and the 'Lost Pines' brand or Washington County as 'the Birthplace of Texas'. To accomplish this goal, the Chamber of Commerce and City should:

- Work with local businesses and attractions to forge a common identity
- Utilize the brand in websites and publications
- Partner with local and regional entities to market Johnson City

Work with Local Businesses and Attractions to Forge a Common Identity

Johnson City tried to build a brand around 'Arts, Parks, and a President' but it did not catch on. This idea could be revived because it builds on three strengths of Johnson City. The key would be to build local support so that businesses and others use it in their marketing efforts.

If it is decided to create a new brand, it may be helpful to hold a contest to get ideas from local businesses and residents. This would also be helpful to build enthusiasm and community support for the brand. The contest should include a marketing slogan and a logo. A committee of the Chamber of

TOURISM GOALS

GOAL # 1: DEVELOP A BRAND AND MARKETING CAMPAIGN

GOAL # 2: CONTINUE STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIP WITH NATIONAL AND STATE PARKS

GOAL # 3: COORDINATE REGIONAL AND LOCAL ACTIVITIES TO BUILD 'CRITICAL MASS' OF VISITORS TO SUPPORT LODGING

Commerce could be created to judge the entries. This committee could also take a leadership role in pushing the brand into widespread use.

The brand must appeal to visitors who will be encourage to visit Johnson City. Local support is important so businesses use and publicize the brand to create an image of Johnson City to attract visitors.

Utilize the Brand in Websites and Publications

Once a brand is selected, it will be critical to use it everywhere. This includes the Chamber of Commerce, city, and other community websites, as well as in any print materials produced locally. It should be fairly quick and inexpensive to update local websites to reflect the new logo; however, print materials will be harder to change.

Local entities should budget appropriately to produce new materials with the new logo so that once it is adopted it can go into circulation quickly. If Johnson City does pursue a broader marketing strategy in state and regional publications, the new brand should feature prominently.

Partner with Local and Regional Entities to Market Johnson City

The National Park Service has offered to do joint advertising with Johnson City, and this offer should be enthusiastically accepted. Because of the limited resource of the city and Chamber of Commerce, this type of partnership is critical. Once the new identity is selected, a marketing campaign in regional and state publications should be pursued in partnership with the National Park Service and the State Heritage Trails (Forts and Hill Country Trails). The Centennial of LBJ's birth marks a tremendous opportunity to tap into a renewed interest in the former president. Improvements and

expansion at the National Park will also help to attract visitors. This partnership is a tremendous opportunity for Johnson City that should be a cornerstone of tourism development.

Also consider regional entities, such as LCRA, the Texas Hill Country Trail Region, and others. These organizations are geared towards developing tourism in the area and regularly participate in trade shows and other marketing efforts. Johnson City should actively partner with these organizations to help market the city. Trade shows can be expensive; however, if several communities or organizations coordinate participation, Johnson City can participate at a much lower price. This allows the city to present itself to a much wider audience than could be targeted alone.

In addition to trade shows and advertising, marketing should include attending events in other communities to showcase Johnson City. This is not to take people away from that event; rather it is to build the entire region as a destination. If Johnson City and Blanco coordinate and market at each other's events, a critical mass can be developed to enhance tourism in both communities. The more people know of activities and attractions, the more time and money they will spend locally.

GOAL # 3: COORDINATE REGIONAL AND LOCAL ACTIVITIES TO BUILD 'CRITICAL MASS' OF VISITORS TO SUPPORT LODGING

Currently, there is not sufficient visitation to justify additional lodging in Johnson City. While there are select weekends that available rooms are booked, this is infrequent. The community should look regionally to coordinate events and activities that will encourage people to spend the night in the area rather than just coming for the day. This can include holding 2-day festivals, having

an evening activity the same weekend as a daylong event, or holding events in Johnson City and Blanco (or other nearby community) that visitors can visit. To address this issue, the following should be implemented:

- Develop a Regional Calendar of Events
- Market Available Lodging
- Develop Itineraries of Activities to Encourage Overnight Stays

Develop a Regional Calendar of Events

Every community keeps a calendar of events; however, there is often little coordination between communities. This can lead to competition when events are held on the same weekends. Even if events are not on the same weekend, attendance at one may be reduced if it is scheduled too close to another community's. This can be addressed by coordinating calendars.

With its proximity to Austin and San Antonio, there is little incentive to spend the night in Johnson City. However, if there were a full weekend of activities, such as a Vendors Fair in Blanco on Saturday and an Art Gallery tour in Johnson City on Sunday, visitors would have a reason to spend the night.

The cooperation can also extend to regional marketing. There are a number of websites that market the Hill Country (www.texashillcountry.com, www.txhillcountry.com trail.com are examples); however, there is not an overarching coordinating body. Counties around the Highland Lakes have formed the Hill Country Economic Development Council, which has a website (www.lakesandhills.com) to coordinate activities and calendars. This might be something to pursue with neighboring communities and counties as a longer-term project.

Market Available Lodging

Because of its proximity to Fredericksburg, it is likely that visitors automatically look there for lodging first. Johnson City should work with bed and breakfast owners and local hotel owners to spread the word and encourage people to stay local. Local leaders should visit these establishments and meet owners to show their support. Chamber volunteers should also be included so they can offer first hand recommendations when visitors ask about lodging.

Develop Itineraries of Activities to Encourage Overnight Stays

In addition to coordinating activities, the Chamber of Commerce should take the lead in developing 2-day or 3-day itineraries for Johnson City to keep people in the area overnight. These could be posted on the website in a section called '48 Hours in Johnson City'.

The activities could be geared towards different interests and seasons. For example, a springtime trip may include tours of lavender farms one day and a driving tour of wildflowers the next. A fall weekend could be winery tours and art galleries. Tours could be based on themes as well, an obvious example being LBJ. The State and National Parks could take a full weekend to explore. Each itinerary should include approximate drive times, specific directions, and recommendations for meals and 'off the beaten path' attractions.

The key is to give people a reason to want to come, and more importantly, to stay in Johnson City. There are many unrealized opportunities that people may not be aware of in the area. This is an easy, low cost project that can be quickly implemented and immediately show dividends to the community.

WORKFORCE AND EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

A well-educated, trained workforce is a key element in economic development. Johnson City is fortunate to have a progressive school district that sees the value in preparing students for the workforce and has established programs to do so. The recommendations in this section will build on that foundation to expand training and education opportunities to grow the workforce. With the current economic situation, this will become more attractive as residents seek to retrain and learn new skills to deal with job losses and changing opportunities. A successful program will:

- Support Vocational Education Programs at JCISD
- Work with Existing Businesses to Expand Training and Internship Opportunities
- Develop a Distance Learning / Higher Education Facility

Support Vocational Education Programs at JCISD

School districts are charged with preparing students for life after high school. For many that means college, but for some it may be starting a career. Finding the balance can be a challenge as there is increasing pressure to focus on college preparation at the expense of vocational education.

The community should rally behind the school district to ensure continuing support for vocational education. The school district can build support by working with local businesses to provide training that fits with their needs. This will allow students coming out of school to be better prepared to fill local jobs.

Another aspect of vocational education is teaching the 'soft skills' students will require in the workforce. This includes interview skills, appropriate dress and

WORK FORCE AND EDUCATION GOALS

GOAL # 1: SUPPORT VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AT JCISD

GOAL # 2: WORK WITH EXISTING BUSINESSES TO EXPAND TRAINING AND INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

GOAL # 3: DEVELOP A DISTANCE LEARNING / HIGHER EDUCATION FACILITY

behavior, resume writing, etc. Even students who are going on to college will benefit from this type of training.

Work with Existing Businesses to Expand Training and Internship Opportunities

Local businesses require new employees and there is no better place to find them than locally. Business leaders should work closely with the school district to provide opportunities for students to participate in the workforce.

This participation may be by providing instructors and equipment for vocational education classes, or by allowing students to take classes at the business, using the equipment and facilities. This would let the students experience the workforce environment and learn skills they can use to get a job after school.

Another option is internships where students can actively participate in the workforce. Internships may be during school hours, or after school. These internships can be in technical or professional settings to provide different experience for different students.

To build a strong relationship between the school district and local employers, a task force should be created that includes business and school district leaders. This task force should meet regularly to develop a program that meets the needs of students, employers and the school district. Success will be a program that seamlessly blends the education and business worlds to allow students to transition into their career with skills and experience to succeed.

Develop a Distance Learning / Higher Education Facility

JCISD has a partnership with Austin Community College that allows students to earn college credit while at school. The current facility is a classroom at the

high school that has limited accessibility and room for additional students (particularly adults). Developing a facility that can provide access to higher education for residents of all ages should be a priority for the community.

The first step will be to determine who should be responsible for the facility. One option would be to include it as part of the community center that is discussed in another chapter of the plan. The community center will be a facility that serves the entire community and is open to all. This would be an ideal location because of its accessibility.

Once a physical location is identified, programming will need to be developed. The school district is a logical organizer because they have the established relationship with ACC and schedule classes, etc. already. The school district could also work with local residents to determine what other opportunities should be developed to meet the needs of the community at large. Some examples may include additional computer courses, accounting, and other classes that will build the skills of residents.

Finally, there may be an opportunity to expand the services offered locally. Texas Tech has facilities in Marble Falls and Fredericksburg. These can be a resource for Johnson City and should not be overlooked. A well-developed facility can tie into opportunities to provide education that will help prepare local students for college and provide older residents with new skills and opportunities.

CONCLUSION

Economic development is a priority for Johnson City. Residents want local opportunities for employment and understand the benefits of a thriving local economy. Fortunately, Johnson

City is well positioned to build a sustainable local economy. It will require a coordinated, long-term effort from the community; however, the fundamentals are there for success.

Success will require investment from the city, Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, the school district and others. It will take coordination and cooperation among these entities to be successful. Johnson City should consider establishing an Economic Development Committee (possibly under the Chamber of Commerce) that can take ownership of this effort and have the responsibility to build on the existing assets of the community. Given the current economic turmoil, it will become even more important to focus on local economic sustainability and build on existing assets to make Johnson City successful.

Community Development

Community development is a broad term applied to the practices and actions conducted by civic leaders, volunteer groups, and citizens to improve various aspects of local communities. In this chapter, we examine two branches of community development identified as priorities during the public planning process: beautification and recreation.

Beautification

Introduction

Beautification is the process of making visual improvements to a community. Through the planning process, citizens voiced a real concern for how Johnson City looks and how a lack of visual appeal affects community morale, business recruitment, environmental quality, and economic development. Tools communities use to tackle these problems include city ordinances or codes, volunteer action groups, local or regional government programs, grants, and education programs.

Municipal ordinances or codes prescribe adherence to laws that reflect community values. Ordinances prohibit behavior by one neighbor that will negatively affect the health, safety and welfare of another. Ordinances ensure environmental quality, enhance aesthetics, and preserve property values. In Johnson City the issue is not so much how the codes are written or their intent, but that there is a lack of city staff and funds to enforce the codes properly.

Johnson City is fortunate to have a volunteer organization in place called the Townscape Taskforce actively

working towards the beautification of the community. The Townscape Taskforce has created a city-wide campaign called, "Catch the Spirit". The "Catch the Spirit" campaign promotes rehabilitating buildings and infrastructure, installing planting, and increasing awareness about the importance of a clean, well-maintained built environment to the economic development of the community.

Environmental degradation is an issue that negatively affects health, public safety, and economic development and has a real affect on the cost of government. Trash on the side of the road, in the streets and parks gives a poor impression of the community to perspective investors and residents. Inappropriate disposal of household hazardous waste pollutes waterways and contaminates drinking water. The costs of clean-up is typically borne by the government and then transferred to the tax payer. Johnson City provides recycling for it residents; however, facilities for the disposing of such items as tires, oil, antifreeze, paint and household chemicals are lacking in the county.

Recommendations:

GOAL #1 Strictly Enforce all City Ordinances: The focus group discussion regarding the City's codes focused on enforcement as opposed to the actual scope of the codes themselves. Consensus in the group was that the codes, if adequately enforced, would reduce trash and improper behavior and improve the appearance of the community.

1. Hire Code Enforcement Officer: Code enforcement is a difficult task – no one likes to be told what to do with their property. Hiring additional staff either full- or part-time or sharing a contractor

with a neighboring city would relieve this burden from current staff and put the responsibility of enforcement on an individual with the training and time to do the job adequately.

2. Review Enforcement Regulations:

There are a number of methods communities across the country have adopted to enforce codes. Some lean towards the carrot, others the stick, but creativity and understanding the political climate is a key to success. Johnson City leaders should review the current penalties for code violations and determine what changes may prove effective.

GOAL #2 Foster the Efforts of the Chamber of Commerce and Citizen Action Groups: Public, private, volunteer and non-profit organizations are essential to the promotion of community and economic development in small towns.

1. Support the Townscape Task Force:

The Townscape Task Force's 'Catch the Spirit' Campaign is an example of a citizen led program effectively improving the image of the community. Every effort to cross promote and market the campaign should be taken. In addition, joining the "Mainstreet" program through the Texas Historical Commission could provide the city access to a number of grants and other funds for the improvement of downtown.

GOAL #3 Beautify the City's Thoroughfares and Gateways:

Gateways are those areas where visitors enter the community. Typically a gateway will be a section of highway or an intersection. The first impression of a visitor driving into a community goes a long way to shaping the impression they leave with.

1. Develop a "Zoning Overlay District" that would control the form and design of development along the major thoroughfares and gateways.

2. Review Sign Ordinance: The sign ordinance is a major concern of the community. This recommendation is covered in detail in the Economic Development Chapter.

3. Promote Landscaping at Gateways: Installing gardens and other landscaping can improve the visual appeal of the gateways and thoroughfares entering a community. Quite often these projects are conducted by local master gardeners. Working to support these efforts by promotion, recruiting volunteers, and donating supplies will foster such efforts.

GOAL #4 Develop Environmental Ordinances and Programs:

1. Develop a Tree Ordinance and Landscaping Guidelines: The City should develop ordinances to regulate tree trimming and removal, tree replacement and develop an Oak Wilt prevention program.

2. Household Hazardous Waste County-wide Assessment: The City should participate in a county-wide Household Hazardous Waste assessment to help develop a strategy for the development of sustainable, cost efficient waste collection and disposal.

Recreation

Introduction

Johnson City's park system plays a key role in the quality-of-life of its residents. Parks provide open space and areas to play and gather enhancing the health and social fabric of the community. Also, parks function as marketing and recruiting tools for new residents and tourist attractions. In Johnson City, for example, the Lyndon B. Johnson National Historic Park, *Johnson Settlement*, is a regional tourist attraction and an important driver in the local economy.

The Johnson City park system consists of approximately 366 acres of parkland and, in conjunction with the Johnson City Independent School District, offers multiple recreational opportunities such as baseball, swimming, playgrounds, and hike and bike trails. The following analysis provides an inventory of recreational amenities, determines what amenities are lacking or desired, and establishes a prioritized list of parks and recreation goals for the planning period.

Local Recreational Assets

1. Johnson City Memorial Park: Johnson City Memorial Park is a 0.37 acre pocket park located on the north east corner of Ave G and Main Street. The park has bathrooms, benches, walking path, picnic tables, pavilion, and electricity. The park is spruced up for the winter season (see photo) reflecting the community's sense of fun and spirit.



2. Johnson City Community Park: Johnson City Community Park is a 6.7 acre park located across from LBJ High School on the east side of Nugent Ave. The park has many amenities including a swimming pool, lighted tennis courts, community building, gardens, playscape, soccer/baseball field, bathrooms, and picnic area. The tennis court lights need to be upgraded and nets repaired or replaced. The community building requires paint and landscaping.

Currently, the City is constructing a parking lot to the north of the swimming pool for additional parking and has just completed a cement walking trail from the park to E. Ash Dr.



3. Lyndon B. Johnson National Historic Park: The Lyndon B. Johnson National Historic Park "Johnson Settlement" operated by the National Park Service (NPS) is the boyhood and ancestral home of Lyndon Baines Johnson. At approximately 85 acres, the park makes up a large portion of the

southeast sector of the city and contains a visitor center, boyhood home, education building, and exhibit center, walking trail, barns and original homesteads of the Johnson family. The NPS also operates the Lyndon B. Johnson ranch as a Historical Park just outside of the city.



4. Blanco County Fair Grounds: Blanco County Fair Grounds are located on a 20 acre site to the north of town on SH 281 abutting the Pedernales River. The fairground has a rodeo arena, grandstand, and multi-use buildings.

5. Rainbow Trout Park: Across SH 281 from the Blanco County Fairgrounds is the Rainbow Trout Farm Park. Originally privately held and developed, the park offers river access, RV sites, trails, swimming pool, motel/lodge, and cabins. The park was not operating in 2008 when the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) purchased the land. LCRA will conduct a resource assessment - eliciting public input and determining local and regional recreation gaps - to guide the successful development of the site as a recreational asset.

6. Johnson City Independent School District: Johnson City Independent School District (JCISD) provides many recreational amenities for the community.

LBJ Elementary & Middle School Campus: Playscape, basketball courts, and gymnasium.

LBJ High School: ¼ mile track, four baseball fields, gymnasium, football stadium.

7. Private Parks: RV Parks leverage the natural beauty of the area into viable tourist and recreational attraction. In Johnson City, there are three separate RV Parks including Miller Creek, Road Runner, & Blanco Riverside B&B and RV Park.

Table 6.1 Local Recreation Facilities Inventory lists the parks and JCISD campuses within Johnson City and identifies what facilities are located at each one. Typically, recreation facilities located at schools are not included in recreational assessments due to constrictions on use. However, in small communities schools quite often own and maintain the majority, if not all, the assets within the community. In Johnson City, baseball and football fields, ¼ mile track, playscape, and indoor gyms are owned, maintained, and operated by the JCISD. The JCISD provides access to these facilities by the public for a nominal charge or for free, therefore the facilities are included in the inventory below.

Table 6.1 Local Recreation Facilities Inventory

	Johnson City Memorial Park	Johnson City Community Park	NPS Johnson Settlement	Blanco County Fairgrounds	Rainbow Trout	LBJ High School	LBJ Elem & Middle School	Existing Facilities
Baseball/Softball Field		1				3		4
Jungle Gym/Playscape		1					1	2
Trail	1		1					2
Tennis		2						2
Gymnasium						1	1	2
Little League Field						1		1
Football Stadium						1		1
1/4 Mile Track						1		1
Soccer Field		1						1
Swimming Pool		1						1
Rodeo Arena				1				1
Historic Sites			1					1
Volleyball								0
Basketball Courts								0
Golf Course								0
Pavilion								0
Community/Recreation Center								0

Source: LCRA Field Survey

Regional Recreational Asset

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historic Park: The Lyndon Baines Johnson National Historical Park consists of two sites one described above within the City of Johnson City and another along the Pedernales River on which LBJ was born and raised. The park contains a visitor center, history farm, Texas White House Complex and the homestead LBJ was born. The park conducts tours.

Lyndon B. Johnson State Park and Historic Site: Located across the Pedernales River from the LBJ ranch the LBJ State Park is a 717 acre site

where visitors can enjoy historical study, picnicking, nature study, fishing, and swimming.

Pedernales State Park: Pedernales Falls State Park is a 5211 acre park located east of Johnson City. Activities offered at the park include camping, picnicking, hiking, river swimming, mountain biking, fishing and bird-watching.

Blanco State Park: Blanco State Park is a 104 acre park located along the Blanco River. Visitors to the park can enjoy camping swimming, picnicking, hiking, nature study, boating, and fishing.

Marble Falls: The City of Marble Falls has many recreational amenities lacking in Johnson City including bowling, skate park, movie theater, and 'Rockhoppers'.

Gem of the Hills: Gem of the Hills is a facility for senior citizens and the community in which to gather to enrich their daily lives and enjoy programs and activities of recreation, health, fitness and general welfare.

Facility Standards Assessment:

National Recreation and Park Association has developed standards based upon a relationship between

population and the number recreational facilities found in a community. For example, for every 500 persons within a community there should be one basketball court; therefore, a town of 1,500 should have three basketball courts available to the public. This analysis is useful in determining future recreational needs as well. If by 2016 the same town's population is expected to grow to 2,000, they should add one basketball court. Table 6.XX Recreation Facilities Standards would suggest that the only gap in the park system is a lack of volleyball (sand) and basketball courts.

Table 6.2 Recreation Facilities Standards

	Baseball/Softball Field	Little League Field	Volleyball	Football Stadium	Basketball Courts	1/4 Mile Track	Soccer Field	Golf Course	Community/Recreation Center	Swimming Pool	Tennis
Standard: One facility per	1,000	1,000	1,000	20,000	500	20,000	10,000	25,000	10,000	20,000	2,000
Recommended*	1.33	1.33	1.33	0.07	2.66	0.07	0.13	0.05	0.13	0.07	0.67
Existing Facilities 2009	4	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	2
Suggested yr2009	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Suggested yr2014	-	-	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-

*National Recreation and Parks Association Standards

Another standard developed by the NRPA is called Level of Service (LOS) which compares the ratio of the population to the total acreage of developed park land. An LOS between 5 to 15 acres per one thousand residents

is considered adequate. The LOS for Johnson City is currently quite high (69 acres per 1,000) and will get higher when Rainbow Trout Farm Park is developed (230 acres per 1,000).

Table 6.3

	Type	Desirable Size	Total Acres	Dev. Acres*
Johnson City Memorial Park	Pocket Park	1 or <1	0.37	.37
Johnson City Community Park	Community Park	25+	7	7
Blanco County Fairgrounds	Community Park	25+	20	10
NPS Johnson Settlement	Special Use Park	Variable	85	40
Rainbow Trout Park	Community Park	25+	208	0
LBJ High School Facilities	Special Use Park	Variable	33	33
LBJ Middle School Facilities	Pocket Park	1 or <1	.25	.25
Total			353	90

* Approximate developed acreage derived from analysis of aerial photos.

Recreational Resources:

Johnson City has many resources available for the future development of parks and open space including:

1. Rainbow Trout Park (208 acres): The Lower Colorado River Authority has recently purchased this property in order to develop a park that will serve the citizens of Blanco County. The park currently has infrastructure and facilities such as water, sewer, RV sites, swimming pool, and a lodge, but more importantly the site has approximately 3,700 feet of river frontage. The development of this park should expand the recreational opportunities available to the residents of Johnson City, serve as regional attraction, and bolster economic development in the area.

2. Hamburger Property: The City has purchased 19 acres outside the city limits for the purposes of developing parkland.

3. National Park Service Land: The National Park Service owns 85 acres in the southeast section of the city. Much of this land is currently undeveloped land or pasture. This open space is valued by citizens who, during future

land use workshops, designated this and adjacent property remains agricultural and/or undeveloped.

4. Flood Plain Areas: Flood plains offer an excellent opportunity for the development of parks, trails, and greenbelts as more intensive development is discouraged due to the inherent risk. There are two drainage channels in Johnson City that could be utilized for the expansion of the City's trail system. Town Creek is a drainage channel that flows southwest to northeast through the city into the Pedernales River. Currently, the City has constructed a trail from the Community Park to downtown in the flood zone. This trail could be expanded to connect the Nation Historic Park to the Community Park. Deer Creek to the east of the town could connect Miller Creek RV to the Rainbow Trout Park.

Recommendations:

Discussions at public meetings, resident surveys, interviews of City and not-for-profit organization leaders, and the application of the previously mentioned standards, identified the following priorities for the development or enhancement of the City's parks:

GOAL #1 Develop Senior & Youth Activities & Programs:

Youth activities are currently lacking in Johnson City, most youth go to Marble Falls for entertainment such as bowling, movies, and skateboarding. Similarly, there are few places for seniors to gather for classes or recreation. Developing a place in which recreation and education programs can be offered to these two groups is priority for the City.

1. Multi-use Recreation or Community Center: The city does not have a community recreation center to house activities for youth and seniors. One location identified to construct a center is the triangular section of land between US 281, Old Austin Highway, and Scofield Street.

2. Pavilion: The City is currently looking to construct a large pavilion in which to hold dances and other events, which could provide youth and senior activities in the evening. The most likely spot to build it is in the community park.

GOAL #2 Provide Public Access to the Pedernales River: There is only one publicly owned access point to the Pedernales River. It is undeveloped and undesirable due to unsupervised activities that occur in the area. Providing safe, supervised, and developed access for fishing, swimming, and other water related activities is a priority for the City.

1. Rainbow Trout Park: Rainbow Trout Park has approximately 3,700 feet of river frontage. When opened the park should provide public access to river for water related activities.

2. River Walk: Rainbow Trout Park and the County Fair Grounds combined have approximately 4,700 linear feet of river frontage separated by one tract of land. Over the long term, developing a

river walk connecting these two properties could prove a successful attraction.

GOAL #3 Revitalize Existing Parks: Johnson City's existing parks are in need of improvements. These projects should be complete before allocating funds for *new* city parks.

1. Community Park Tennis Courts: The tennis nets at the community park are in poor condition and require maintenance (see photo). The lights are old and insufficient compared to today's standards and should be upgraded.



2. Improve Soccer/Softball field at the Community Park: At Community Park the soccer and baseball fields overlap (see photos). This conflict could be resolved by reconfiguring the site, eliminating one use, or developing facilities else where (Hamburger Property).





3. Community Park - Community Building: The community building at Community Park is the first thing people see when entering the park (the beautiful gardens and colorful playscape are in the back). The community building's paint is faded and flaking, there are no gardens or landscaping, no windows, and the sign is small and faded. Improvements to this building will put a new face on the park and could increase the usage of the building.



4. Creek Clean – up: During the town hall meetings it was noted that the new trail along Town Creek suffered from trash and debris in the creek. Upon field inspection of the trail only one small area of trash was discovered. Volunteer groups – particularly high school students – should be encourage to assist in clean ups.

GOAL #4: Develop new facilities and park land to meet future demand and standards.

1. City Owned Land: The City owns 19 acres outside of town earmarked for park development. Nineteen acres could provide adequate space for a special use park such as sports complex for soccer and baseball fields.

2. Revise Subdivision Ordinance: Develop and enforce a land use management standard for acquisition of parkland to ensure at least one acre of park and recreational land per one hundred residents will be available for use in the City or its extraterritorial jurisdiction.

3. Expansion of Trail System: National standards call for at least one mile of hike and bike trail for every fifty miles of road or for every five square miles of incorporated territory. Expand existing trail to connect the NPS Johnson Settlement to Community Park.

4. Identify and Pursue Many Revenue Options: Use grant programs, City general revenues, volunteer efforts, private and corporate donations, and inter-local agreements to construct recreational facilities.

5. Obtain Technical Assistance: Seek technical assistance in park design, construction techniques, and project

implementation from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, National Park Service, Blanco County, LCRA and other public, not-for-profit, or private entities.

6. Install Basketball and Volleyball Courts: As described previously, there is no outdoor basketball or sand volleyball courts in the city. This gap in recreational facilities should be addressed to ensure a minimum level-of-service.

DRAFT

INTRODUCTION

Johnson City has an important place in American history as the birthplace and childhood home of President Lyndon B. Johnson. It has significant historical assets, including State and Federal Parks related to LBJ as well as historical homes and buildings throughout the city. These assets offer a tremendous opportunity to build the tourism economy in Johnson City and should be a major focus of attention.

The downtown is another unrealized opportunity. Communities all over the country are attempting to replicate the historic downtown that has a mix of uses and serves as the heart of the city. The square in Johnson City has the potential to become the heart of the city and attract residents and visitors to spend time (and money) in a unique Hill Country atmosphere. Downtown Johnson City can become a focus for new development while protecting the historic architecture of existing buildings in the area.

This chapter contains recommendations to address the key issues of preserving Johnson City's unique heritage, turning it into an asset for the community, and recreating the vibrant downtown that once existed. The recommendations are not just a blueprint for city government action, although it will play a role. Rather the community, Chamber of Commerce, Preservation Society, and other groups can step up and take an active role in moving this project forward.

It should be understood that historic preservation is not an attempt to limit property owners in their use of private property, rather it is an effort to preserve the unique heritage of the community and utilize it in a way that benefits not just the property owner but the community as a whole.

GOAL # 1: DEVELOP AN INVENTORY OF HISTORIC STRUCTURES

GOAL # 2: CONSIDER ESTABLISHING AN HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE

GOAL # 3: DEVELOP FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

GOAL # 4: IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE DOWNTOWN

GOAL # 5: ENCOURAGE MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT IN DOWNTOWN

GOAL # 6: SUPPORT DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES

GOAL # 7: UPDATE SIGN ORDINANCE

RECOMMENDATIONS

The community survey identified a need for additional retail, restaurant, and office uses. These are all appropriate businesses to find in downtown, particularly retail and restaurants. These businesses can fit into the existing historic structures, while new buildings can be built to complement the existing character and accommodate the business needs. Also, retail and restaurants can serve local residents as well as attract tourists. The goal for downtown revitalization is to create a destination that will serve locals and visitors, encouraging both to spend time and money in the community.

Historic Preservation plays a role in downtown, but also for the community as a whole. The character of Johnson City was not created overnight; however, it can be destroyed that quickly as historic buildings are demolished. Historic preservation is ultimately a local endeavor, only local ordinances have any authority to actually protect historic structures. State and Federal policies do not have an enforcement mechanism, outside of a loss of historic recognition. It is up to the locality to establish policies to protect its historic assets. The recommendations in this plan give the city the tools to protect its heritage and enhance the vitality of the downtown.

GOAL # 1: DEVELOP AN INVENTORY OF HISTORIC STRUCTURES

Before preservation can occur there has to be an understanding of what assets exist in town. This is an opportunity for local historians, and the Preservation Society to get involved and take a leadership role. Developing an inventory of historic structures was also identified in the Blanco Comprehensive Plan, so it may be helpful to contact that city to discuss their efforts. The steps to this include:

- Identify a Volunteer Group to Lead the Effort
- Contact the Texas Historical Commission to Obtain Information on Conducting a Survey
- Coordinate the Activities and Data Collection
- Develop a Handbook of Historic Structures
- Develop an Oral History to Accompany the Inventory

Identify a Volunteer Group to Lead the Effort

There are existing groups in Johnson City and Blanco County that are involved with historic preservation already. These groups should take the lead in this effort. The city can play a supporting role in the effort, but allow the volunteers to take leadership. These groups will already have an idea of existing assets and have a knowledge of building histories and other information that will be beneficial to the survey. The city should begin contacting local groups to find a suitable partner and help them start the effort.

Contact the Texas Historical Commission to Obtain Information on Conducting a Survey

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) is a tremendous asset to communities and should be a major resource to Johnson City. Their mission is to provide tools and assistance to cities to protect their historical assets. They have templates and other resources that can be utilized to make the survey more effective and more successful. It is important to use a consistent template in the survey to ensure the right (and adequate) information about each building is collected, including the architect, builder, past uses and occupants, etc. All of this information will be critical to capture to make the inventory truly useful.

The lead group in developing the inventory should contact THC to discuss the project and utilize their knowledge and tools. The website is the first place to start: www.thc.state.tx.us Staff from the State and Federal Parks might also be helpful in this process. They should be included on the team, at minimum in an advisory role.

THC has a staff of historians, architects, and others who do this kind of work every day and can provide invaluable insight and assistance to make the inventory not just easier but also more useful to the community. There are also a host of opportunities through THC including the Visionaries in Preservation program and Certified Local Government that can provide even more assistance and tools for historic preservation in Johnson City. These possibilities should be explored in the future.

Coordinate Activities and Data Collection

As mentioned, consistent and thorough data collection will be key to a successful inventory. If the project is done haphazardly it will not provide the full benefit of a well developed effort. The lead organization should take the time to prepare properly before undertaking the survey, including identifying what information is needed, how it will be collected, and who will be responsible for quality control. This base work will ensure success.

Once the preliminary work is done, property owners should be contacted so they are aware of the inventory. It might concern some owners if people show up taking pictures and asking questions about their property. The coordinating group should send out letters, put a story in the newspaper, and call owners to inform them of the inventory.

The data collection should not be rushed. It is better to take the time to do it right than to try and do it quickly and miss important data or even entire buildings that might have an historic value.

GOAL # 2: Consider Adopting an Historic Preservation Ordinance
Protecting historic structures is a local endeavor. State and Federal agencies have guidelines and policies about historic preservation; however, there is no real enforcement at that level. If an owner of a designated historic structure alters it, or even tears it down, the only repercussions would be the removal of the historic designation.

In order to have real protection for historic structures, a local ordinance must be in place. The benefit is that a local ordinance will reflect the values and priorities of Johnson City residents rather than being dictated by the State or Federal governments.

Establish a Task Force to Address the Issue

As with any major policy issue it makes sense to have citizen involvement. The Preservation Society is a starting point, but owners of historic structures should also be involved to ensure their concerns are addressed.

The task force should be charged with identifying best practices and advising the city as it moves forward. The task force can also take on the role of writing the draft ordinance to be presented to the City Council for its review.

Identify Best Practices for the Ordinance

THC is again the starting point for this effort. They have a model ordinance on their website that fulfills their requirements. The City of Blanco also has developed an ordinance that can serve as a model. The idea is not to take a boilerplate ordinance, but rather to identify what other communities are doing and use that as a starting point to develop an ordinance that reflects local values.

One issue to consider is that THC has a basic standard for Historic Preservation Ordinances that must be met to qualify for further assistance from THC. The standards are only intended to ensure adequate protection for local structures because the State does not have direct enforcement authority.

Educate Property Owners of the Benefits of Historic Preservation

When property owners hear the words 'Historic Preservation Ordinance' they may immediately react negatively out of concern that their property rights will be limited. It will be important to provide education on the benefits that will incur when buildings are protected.

One of the obvious benefits is the tourism potential that will be realized by protecting the heritage of Johnson City.

More visitors mean more support for local businesses and more money for business owners. This will ultimately result in owners being able to charge higher rents (once businesses are established and successful).

Also, owners of recognized buildings can qualify for tax credits for any renovations they do. To qualify any work will have to meet guidelines established by the National Park Service. This is the one area that Federal standards do apply to local historic preservation. Owners who qualify receive a tax credit for costs incurred in the renovation. This can mean substantial savings to building owners as they fix up their buildings.

Finally, community quality of life is enhanced by the preservation of buildings. If buildings are left to deteriorate they have a ripple effect on the entire neighborhood. One blighted building will affect property values and sales potential for properties all around it.

The next goal is another carrot the city can offer to property owners to encourage and assist them in renovating and improving their businesses.

GOAL # 3: DEVELOP A FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The cost of maintaining and improving buildings can be daunting for property owners. Many communities have created programs that provide assistance to owners to improve their buildings. These does not have to be an expensive program, rather it can be a total budget of \$5,000 - \$10,000 providing small grants to several owners.

Identify Best Practices

Rather than reinventing the wheel, Johnson City should look to other communities for examples. The City of La Grange has had a façade improvement program for many years. The City of Weimar has recently begun providing assistance and it has resulted in improvements to 19 downtown buildings (not all of which received façade grants). The money for the Weimar program comes from the city's 4B sales tax, a resource Johnson City does not have at this time.

Determine Appropriate Budget and Application Guidelines

As mentioned, the budget does not have to be huge to be effective. Most communities provide small grants (\$500 - \$1,500 are typical) to 5 to 10 applicants per year. The goal is to use the program as a catalyst for improvements throughout an area more than trying to help everyone directly. The funding in Johnson City would have to come from the general fund since there are not economic development funds available.

The next step would be to define the area that is eligible for assistance. Most communities focus their efforts on their designated downtown, but it is not a requirement. Johnson City would likely benefit from having an expansive program that would allow most or all building owners to participate. If a designated area were defined it should include the major thoroughfares (esp. US 281 and 290) to ensure the most visible parts of town received assistance.

The goal of the program should be to begin enhancing the community appearance while also improving historic buildings particularly. Targeted grants could be utilized to improve the most visible buildings to create attractive 'gateways' into the community.

GOAL # 4: IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES DOWNTOWN

Johnson City is fortunate to have the backbone of a pedestrian network connecting its downtown to the City Park. This first step represents an excellent start to connecting the community for bike and pedestrian access.

The Recreation section of the plan will have much more detail about community pedestrian development; this section will focus on the downtown core of Johnson City.

Identify Needed Improvements

Currently, the courthouse square is underdeveloped. Most businesses and attractions are along the highways. It will be important to connect the downtown to these areas. The purpose of the connection is to encourage visitors who stop at highway businesses to come into downtown and patronize those businesses as well. By making attractive and convenient pedestrian and bicycle connections they will be more likely to do this than to get in their car and drive a few blocks. These connections should be a priority for sidewalks and access improvements.

Illustration 5.1

Safety is another key issue. Sidewalks that are uneven, not well lit, or not accessible will not provide needed connectivity. The city should inventory existing sidewalks in the downtown and

determine needed safety improvements. Designated bike lanes should also be considered, especially in those areas near the schools and residential areas. Bike lanes not only enhance safety for cyclists, they also serve to slow traffic. Drivers slow down when there are designated bike lanes and narrower lanes for driving.

Other missing links should also be targeted beyond connecting downtown to the highways. This includes connecting City Hall, the Middle and Elementary School campus, and other area amenities. By connecting the various attractions and services residents and visitors will be more likely to spend more time in downtown and more money.

Provide Benches and Landscaping

In addition to safety and convenience, walking must be comfortable for people to actually do it. This means benches and landscaping, especially shade, in pedestrian areas. Benches should be placed so they are not an obstacle, but are connected to the area. If a bench is placed facing the street it is not likely to be used, rather it should be facing the pedestrian area.

Illustration 5.2



This image is of a poorly placed bench. It is too close to the street, without any protection (or perception of protection)

from oncoming traffic and no pedestrian access.

Illustration 5.3



The second illustration shows a much better placement idea for benches. They are facing the sidewalk so people on the bench can interact with passersby and the landscaping provides a buffer from car traffic.

Install Appropriate Lighting

The city has installed lighting along the existing hike and bike trail to make it accessible in the evening. Any areas that will be a focus for pedestrians should be well lit to ensure safety and a welcoming environment at night. This would encourage people to spend more time in the area and will give businesses a reason to stay open later.

To support this effort, evening activities should be planned to bring people back to downtown after hours. Evening concerts, sales, and other activities will give people a reason to stay in town longer. The longer people stay, the more money they will spend.

Provide Direction and Way Finding for Pedestrians

People will only walk if they know where they are going, or have some encouragement to do so. It will be critical to have appropriate signage and way finding to help pedestrians find their way.

Kiosks can be used to provide information about businesses in the area as well as historical information about Johnson City and specific buildings. Communities should think like indoor malls and have directories and signage for people to find their way.

Illustration 5.4



GOAL # 5: ENCOURAGE MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT IN DOWNTOWN

The details of updating the zoning ordinance to allow for this type of use are discussed in the housing chapter; this section will discuss possible incentives that can be provided to encourage this type of development.

Consider a 'Tax Freeze' for Owners who Renovate Buildings with Residential Uses

Two story buildings in historic downtowns were usually built with living space for the shop owner on the second floor. Now, many of these spaces are used for storage, or simply left empty. Johnson City does have many two story buildings in its downtown, but there are

some that could be renovated to provide housing. A 'tax freeze' would allow owners to renovate their buildings without having their property taxes increased based on the improvements they make. The increased property tax can be phased in over time (100% waived the first year, 80% second year, etc.) to allow the owner to begin to recoup his investment before the taxes are increased. This is beneficial to the owner who can renovate his building without being hit with a significant tax increase, and the city who still receives the same level of property tax revenue and sees an increase over time.

Consider Fee Waivers and Other Financial Assistance

Property owners may be wary of being the first to invest in the downtown. The city should consider providing some level of incentive for those who want to make the commitment. This can include fee waivers, expedited permitting (although permitting is probably not a drawn out process), or possibly infrastructure assistance. The city might offer to help pay need water and sewer upgrades necessary to have more development in the downtown. The goal would be to reduce the financial risk for property owners willing to invest in the community.

GOAL # 6: SUPPORT DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES

All local businesses should be supported, but there are some opportunities to provide additional assistance in downtown because this area lacks the visibility and accessibility of the commercial areas along the highways. The infrastructure improvements and other recommendations in this plan will help to spur downtown activity and interest which will help businesses. The Chamber of Commerce should take an active role in this effort and help to spur downtown success. The following

activities are opportunities to bring more people downtown and make the local businesses more successful.

Hold More Events Downtown

The square in Johnson City has ample room for events of all kinds. The vacant block that is planned to be developed as the new County Annex is a prime location for a Farmer's Market, evening concerts, or other activities. Ideally, this area would be redeveloped into retail and other uses rather than the County Annex; however, until the new facility is built it should be used as a community gathering site.

Many communities have success with regular concerts in their downtown. These do not have to be big name bands; rather it can be the high school band or choir, local musicians, etc. These can be during the lunch hour or in the evenings when residents. These kinds of events not only bring people to the downtown, they build community spirit and neighborliness. They are an aspect of the rural character and quality of life that residents appreciate about Johnson City.

Farmer's Markets are exploding in popularity and should be a regular event in Johnson City. These could be held weekly with possibly a monthly or quarterly Artist Market as part of it. This would be a draw for residents and out of town visitors to spend time and money in downtown.

Form a Downtown Business Alliance, or Committee of the Chamber of Commerce

It is important for downtown business owners to coordinate their activities and have a voice in the community. A Business Alliance or Committee of the Chamber of Commerce could be a forum for new ideas and collaboration. This group could take responsibility for event planning and advocacy for

downtown improvements. It would also serve as a forum for sharing ideas and successes among business owners.

Develop a Marketing Campaign

This is another issue that is not limited to downtown but should be a facet of a broader marketing campaign for Johnson City. The unique historical character and assets of downtown should be utilized as a marketing tool to bring in visitors. Local business owners should coordinate to develop a common theme and voice for downtown.

Another aspect of marketing is to coordinate activities. Downtown businesses should communicate when they are planning sales and other events so all businesses can participate. If all businesses coordinate and have a downtown-wide sale it will bring in more traffic for everyone than just an individual business having a sale.

GOAL # 7: UPDATE SIGN ORDINANCE

The sign ordinance has been an issue since it was adopted. Business owners feel it is prohibitive for businesses off the highway to advertise their businesses. The concern is to avoid sign clutter along the highways by developing standards that will allow for appropriate advertising that is clear, uncluttered, and attractive.

Determine Best Practices

The sign ordinance should serve seemingly conflicting purposes. One is to provide adequate advertising for businesses, especially those not on the highway, while being visually appealing and non-cluttering. There are many examples of communities that have been successful at this. The key is to provide clustered signs that identify businesses and attractions in a single location, rather than each business installing their own sign.

Illustration 5.5



This sign is an example of 'vehicle friendly' signage that can be installed before major intersections along the highways in Johnson City. The businesses in the upcoming block could be listed, and those off the highway could be identified with a directional arrow.

Signage should also indicate parking areas, Visitors Center, etc.. To get people to park and walk through downtown, they need to know central locations where they can access all the attractions in the area.

Illustration 5.6



Good signage will not only support businesses it will enhance the appearance of the community by removing unattractive signs and replacing them with signage that is attractive, well maintained, and tied to the community as a whole rather than being individualistic to each business.

Conduct Public Input

Given the strong feelings about the existing ordinance it will be important to get support from business owners and residents. This should be done using design books and images rather than words. There needs to be an education process that informs residents of the goals of the proposed ordinance and the impact it would have. Providing examples, like those in this plan, will help sell resistant citizens on the benefits. The selling point is that providing clear, consistent signage across the community will be more effective advertising than each business going alone. All businesses will benefit from the signage program, not just those on the highways or who can afford a large off-site sign.

The city can be responsible for installing and maintaining the signs and charge each business a fee to participate. This fee may cover the entire cost, or be minimal to encourage participation. If businesses see the benefit they will be more likely to support the effort and the proposed ordinance.

CONCLUSION

Johnson City is fortunate to have so many attractions in and around its downtown. It has many businesses, historical sites, City Hall, the County Courthouse, schools, PEC headquarters, and more all within walking distance. Better pedestrian amenities would help connect all these destinations and give people a reason to get out of their cars and spend time and money. Protecting the historical assets is also key to making Johnson City a true destination.

Implementing this plan will protect the unique character and heritage of Johnson City, enhance the quality of life, and foster the economic sustainability of the community by strengthening local businesses.

THOROUGHFARE AND INFRASTRUCTURE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

The Thoroughfare Plan guides the development of a safe and efficient street network that enables the expedient movement of people and goods throughout a community. The street network is the frame from which a town is built. It is important that the network provide safe access to all developed areas within the community and ensure that regional traffic does not negatively impact the community. Johnson City maintains the local street network while TxDOT controls the US highways and farm to market roads.

In addition to the street network, Johnson City is responsible for the construction, maintenance, and operation of infrastructure vital to the existence of the community; specifically, providing safe, clean, potable water and the collection and treatment of wastewater.

Johnson City residents identified the development of high-speed, broadband internet service and hazardous household waste collection as two priorities in which the City - in partnership with private, non-profit, and other public agencies - could play a role. The lack of high-speed internet service surfaced as, perhaps, the number one concern of the citizens, as the lack of this amenity, affects economic development and quality-of-life significantly.

THOROUGHFARE GOALS:

GOAL #1: Reduce the affect of commercial trucking on the safety and quality of life within the community

GOAL #2: Ensure a safe local street network by installing adequate traffic management signage, traffic calming devices and maintaining the streets in proper operating condition.

GOAL #3: Promote alternative transportation opportunities to serve the needs of the residents.

GOAL #4: Avoid the development of new thoroughfares that would reduce traffic volume through the City's commercial areas.

GOAL #5: Plan and construct new roadways to ensure safe and adequate access to all areas within the community.

GOAL #6: Mitigate flooding of existing roadways and lands.

INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS:

Goal #1: Develop high speed, broadband internet service for the community.

GOAL #2: Maintain the current water and wastewater infrastructure capacity to foster and provide for economic growth.

GOAL #3: Promote and develop programs to ensure a clean, safe, and healthy environment.

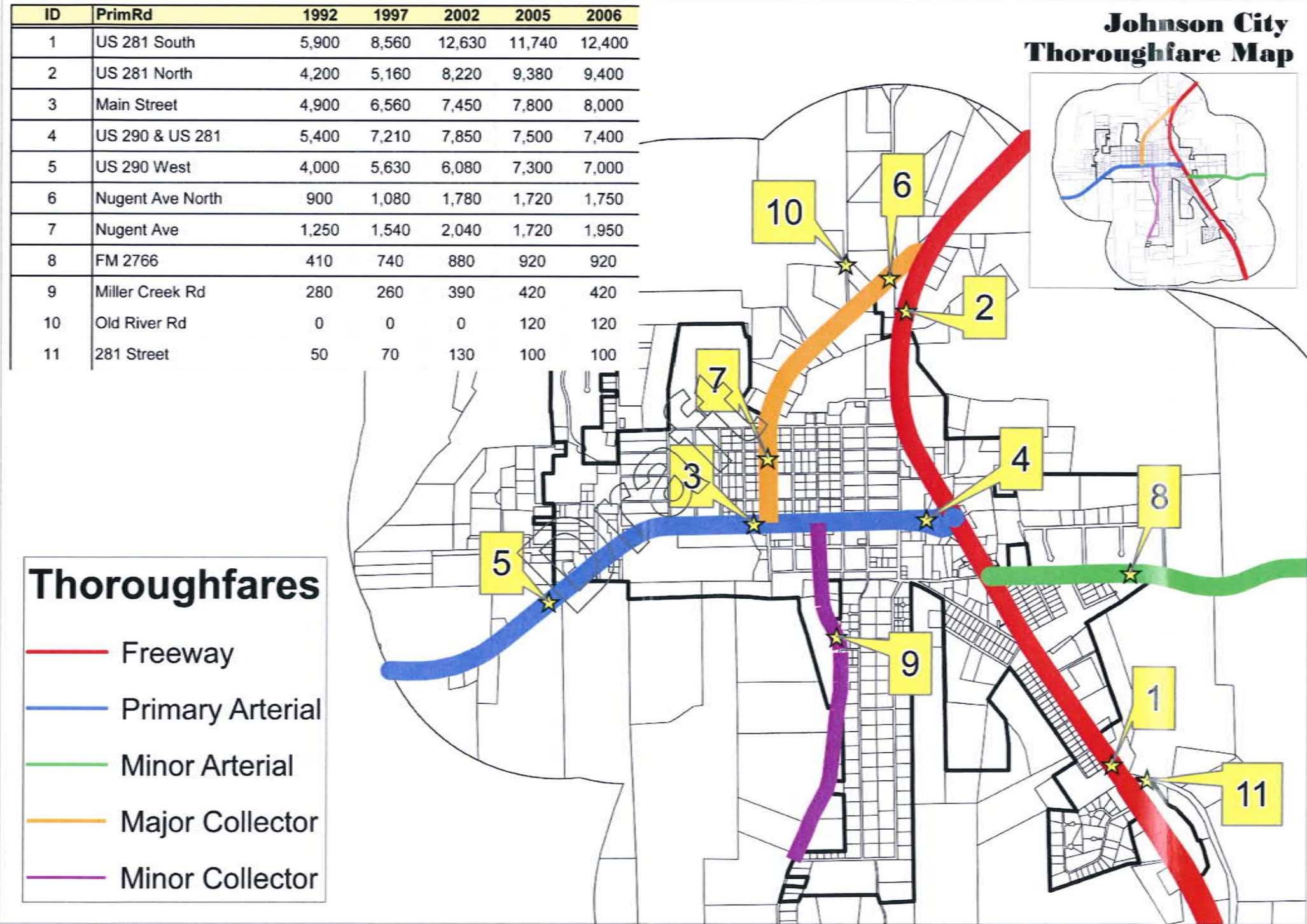
Goal #4: Plan and implement policies to ensure a long-term, sustainable water supply for the community.

**THOROUGHFARE
RECOMMENDATIONS**

On the following page, Johnson City: Thoroughfare Map illustrates the location hierarchy of the City's thoroughfare system. US 281 is a freeway carrying regional traffic from Austin and San Antonio through the community. The US 281 corridor has large-scale, car-oriented commercial development. US 290/Main Street a major arterial carries a large share of the regional traffic east to west through the City's other commercial area and runs adjacent to the schools campuses and historic downtown. Minor arterials and collectors include Nugent, FM 2766, and Miller Creek Road. As the table on the map indicates, traffic

volumes on the City's thoroughfares have increased significantly over the last 15 years.

In general, increased and high volumes of traffic on US 281 & 290 are viewed as an economic opportunity. The capacity of these roadways is adequate to handle the speed and volume currently experienced. However, as the community grows careful thought should be given to where and how the existing street network is tied to these highways, particularly US 281. TxDOT is reticent to allow to many points of entry onto the highway as this would either prove dangerous or require slowing traffic. A Future Thoroughfare Map is provided in this chapter illustrating how roadways can be developed to establish traffic patterns integrating the freeways and local street system.



Johnson City
Comprehensive Plan

Thoroughfare Map



Disclaimer: The data used to create this map was compiled through multiple sources and is intended for planning purposes only.

GOAL #1: REDUCE THE AFFECT OF COMMERCIAL TRUCKING ON THE SAFETY AND QUALITY OF LIFE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

One of the challenges facing the community due to increased levels of vehicle traffic is the negative affect of increased commercial truck traffic, particularly from the west on US 290. Some ways of addressing this are increased enforcement and traffic calming infrastructure. Citizens voiced support for additional officers if so required to enforce the speed limit. Traffic calming methods could include additional signage and reflectors, and changes to the roadway such as divots to remind truckers they are entering a community.

GOAL #2: ENSURE A SAFE LOCAL STREET NETWORK BY INSTALLING ADEQUATE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SIGNAGE, TRAFFIC CALMING DEVICES AND MAINTAINING THE STREETS IN PROPER OPERATING CONDITION.

Citizens noted that traffic calming devices should be installed at Old Austin Highway, Ave Q, and in front of City Hall. There a number of types of traffic calming devices such as speed bumps, narrowing streets by extending curbs into the street, and roundabouts.

The maintenance and improvement of the condition of the roadways and, specifically mentioned, the road shoulders is a priority for the citizens. Developing a 2 to 3 year street improvement plan can provide a method of prioritizing sections of roadway for upgrades and maintenance.

There were six intersections identified as requiring improvements for reasons ranging from poor sightlines, difficulty entering traffic, drainage, or confusing signage. These include:

- FM 2766 and US 281
- Lady Bird and Ranch View
- Elm & Ranch View

- Old Austin Highway and US 290
- FM 356 and US 290
- Scofield and US 281 (across from FM 2766)

GOAL #3: PROMOTE ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF THE RESIDENTS.

High gasoline prices have resulted in a new interest in alternative transportation. In Johnson City, citizens are interested in obtaining and promoting community to community mass transportation such as a "van pool" and within the community a taxi service.

Related, the citizens noted the need for infrastructure to foster pedestrian safety and access throughout the community. As a method of reducing parking problems out on the highway, developing a public parking lot in downtown tied to sidewalks and trails connecting the commercial areas

GOAL #4: AVOID THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW THOROUGHFARES THAT WOULD REDUCE TRAFFIC VOLUME THROUGH THE CITY'S COMMERCIAL AREAS.

There is no support for a US 290 by-pass to the south of Johnson City. The by-pass would have a detrimental affect on the community's retail and commercial sector.

GOAL #5: MITIGATE FLOODING OF EXISTING ROADWAYS AND LANDS.

There are a couple areas identified storm water problem areas these include the bridge at SH 356, Gonzales Ave., and US 281 and Old Austin Hwy. The City has cleared the land around the bridge which has helped mitigate the issue.

Installing a "high water" sign or warning signal for the US281 area is recommended.

Another approach to mitigate flooding is reducing the amount of

water that enters the roadways. The City should work with TxDOT on their 'Access Management Plan' to identify techniques to retain storm water on properties adjacent to the highways.



GOAL #6: PLAN AND CONSTRUCT NEW ROADWAYS TO ENSURE SAFE AND ADEQUATE ACCESS TO ALL AREAS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.

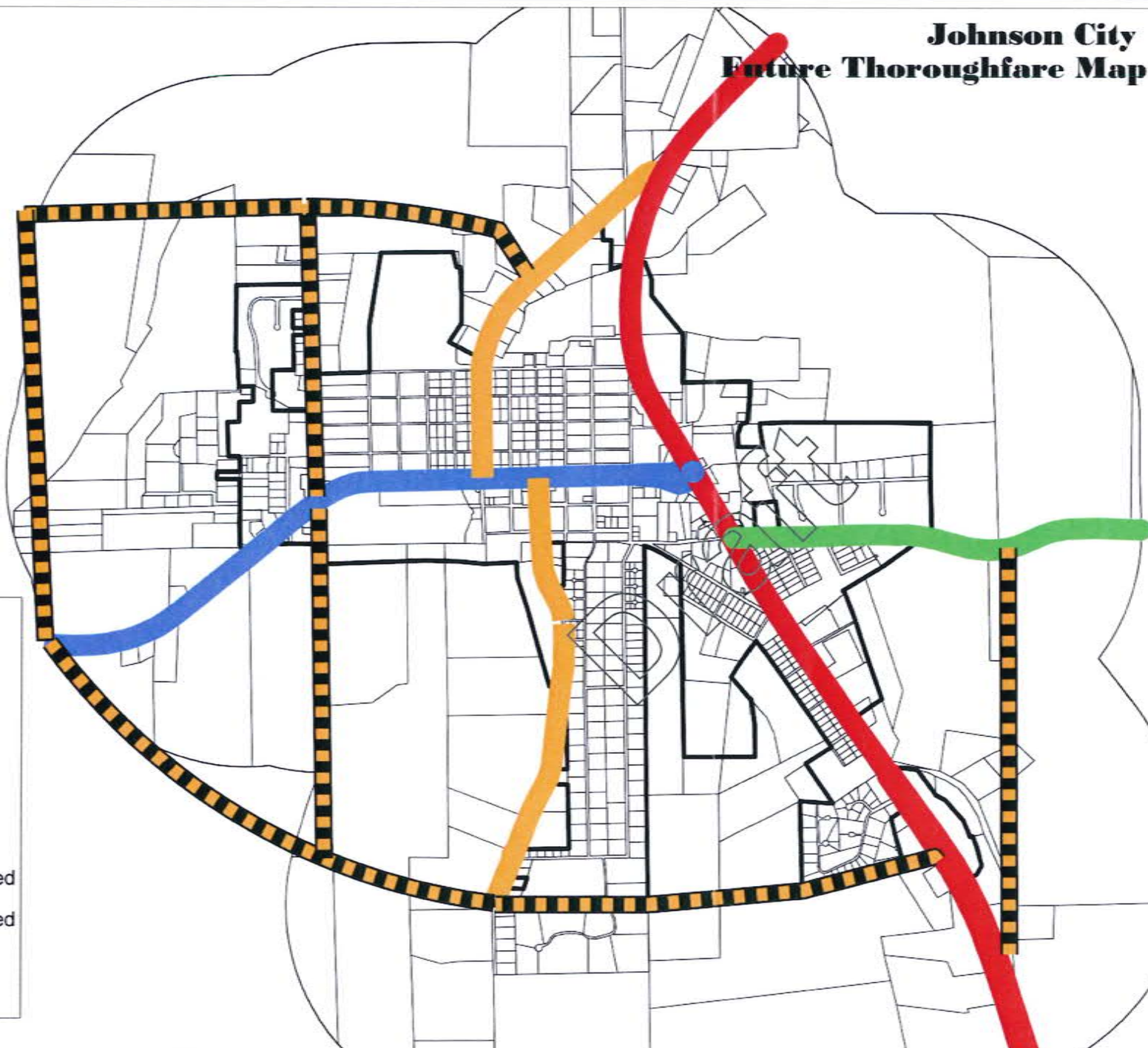
The photo above shows the post office box on the right hand side of the street. Residents wishing to drop off mail must either cross against traffic or park and get out of their car. Creating an island in the middle of the street or a drive off of the street are solutions to this issue

Currently, there is adequate access to all areas of the community by the street network. Most roads are paved and fair to good condition. However, a turn lane on Nugent Ave at the high school would eliminate traffic backing up during peak hours and increase safety. Also, the mailbox (see photo) at the post office should be moved to an island in the middle of street providing access to the driver side of an automobile or a separate drive built to allow drivers to access the box from the driver's side.

Johnson City Future Thoroughfare Map

Thoroughfares

- Freeway
- Primary Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Major Collector Proposed
- Minor Collector Proposed
- Minor Arterial Proposed
- Network Extension



The Future Thoroughfare Map identifies corridors where right-of-way should be reserved for roadway construction to ensure a high level of service, access, and safety for the street system. In Johnson City developing a southern cross-town route connecting US 281 and Miller Creek Rd will open up that area for further single family development and provide residents an additional egress to US 290. Providing a clear major collector in the north west sector of the city in conjunction with a northern cross-town route will again eliminate bottle necks at US 290. The river poses a major barrier to north-south radial and circumferential routes so there are no proposed collectors to the north of FM 2766.



INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

GOAL #1: DEVELOP HIGH SPEED, BROADBAND INTERNET SERVICE FOR THE COMMUNITY.

A high priority for the community is developing high-speed, broadband internet service for the community. Not having broadband was noted as a barrier to recruiting businesses and new residents from outside the community. Citizens can currently access the internet via the telephone line or satellite providers, both of which are not ideal (too slow, inconsistent, or expensive). There are three providers who may be able to serve the community: 1) Rapid Cable, which currently provides cable TV service, will expand internet service; 2) Verizon has lines adjacent to the City; and 3) Time Warner, which also has lines in the area. The Johnson City government should take an active role in recruiting one of these vendors to the city.

GOAL #2: MAINTAIN THE CURRENT WATER AND WASTEWATER

INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY TO FOSTER AND PROVIDE FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH.

Currently the wastewater treatment plant is operating within TCEQ standards and at 40% of peak capacity. Cities are required to begin planning plant expansion when they have reached 75% of capacity. Therefore the City has significant capacity for growth regarding the wastewater treatment plant. The City has recently been rated a "Superior Water Supplier" by TCEQ.

Population growth in combination with current drought conditions has reinforced the need for water resource planning. Pursuing surface and groundwater supplies is a priority for the City; however, citizens stressed the need for *conservation* as key to a long term, sustainable solution to population growth and a finite water supply.

GOAL #3: PROMOTE AND DEVELOP PROGRAMS TO ENSURE A CLEAN, SAFE, AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT.

Johnson City residents' recyclable materials are collected by the City and at the county transfer station. The Pedernales Electric Cooperative gives away compact fluorescent lights (CFL) to reduce electric use; however, the citizens have no way of disposing of them correctly. Blanco County, in partnership with the cities, is working on a strategic plan to develop collection events for hazardous waste material and recyclables such as oil, paint, batteries, and antifreeze.

GOAL #4: PLAN AND IMPLEMENT POLICIES TO ENSURE A LONG-TERM, SUSTAINABLE WATER SUPPLY FOR THE COMMUNITY.

Conservation methods identified during the planning sessions included rainwater harvesting, participating in local and regional planning efforts (Ground Water

District's 2060 Plan), water reuse from the wastewater treatment plant, and water reuse from residential and commercial sources. In addition, methods targeted at homeowners such as education programs, low flush toilets, promoting xeriscaping, water irrigation controls. Citizens were hesitant to recommend adjusted rate fee schedule to discourage water use as this may put to great a burden on some members of the community. The City has adopted Stage 1 water conservation restrictions without waiting for rainfall triggers.