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planning report

US 180 Corridor Vision Plan

Adopted XXXXXXX





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Introduction



US 180 Corridor Vision Plan stakeholder meeting

Overview

In 2010, the City of Weatherford engaged the planning services of Freese and Nichols, Inc. to conduct and facilitate a Corridor Study along US Highway 180 (US 180). This Corridor Vision Plan focuses on the eastern portions of Weatherford and the relationship of land use, transportation and aesthetics along US 180, from downtown to the eastern city limits.

Purpose

The purpose of the US 180 Corridor Vision Plan is to provide a framework to make informed decisions, manage growth in an orderly fashion and guide development/redevelopment of the physical environment. The plan is intended to provide the City of Weatherford with a corridor vision plan map for US 180. In addition, this plan offers a vision for the study area's future development patterns and streetscape opportunities to enhance corridor aesthetics and create a gateway identity.

The US 180 Corridor Vision Plan is designed to complement the goals of Weatherford's planning and community efforts by providing a vision and direction for the future development. This is a working document and can assist the City of Weatherford in prioritizing implementation items and future City projects. The plan considers influences within the study area as well as surrounding factors. Implementation of this plan is targeted over the next five, ten or even twenty years and will help the City of Weatherford continue to provide services in a planned and organized fashion and help to make the community's visions a reality.

Process

The Corridor Vision Plan planning process was kicked off in 2010 and spanned a six-month period conducted in four phases: Data Collection, Stakeholder Involvement, Conceptual Analysis and Recommendation phases. The process included City officials, community leaders, stakeholders and local business owners. The planning team assessed the impacts of existing developments on land uses and circulation while considering the area's future needs and identity within the region.

Data Collection Phase

During the Data Collection Phase, team members were introduced, goals set, schedules were outlined, a working plan was produced, data collected and issue identification began. This phase established a further understanding of the study area. The Corridor Vision Plan was kicked-off with an introduction of the primary project team members to City leadership and staff and expectations were defined. The planning team compiled data through interviews, ordinances, plans, city maps, and conducted site visits to organize essential baseline information.

Stakeholder Involvement Phase

The planning process engaged the community to build consensus for the vision plan. A stakeholder meeting was held to identify issues and seek public information on desires for improvements. Public Planning and Zoning meetings were also held to present ideas and gather feedback.

Conceptual Analysis Phase

During the Conceptual Analysis Phase, the planning team gave thorough consideration to observations, existing conditions and data gathered from the previous phases. Issues were categorized and potential recommendations were explored. The preliminary recommendations were then presented to the City for review. The team received feedback regarding critical issues and further refined the preliminary recommendations based on comments.

Recommendation Phase

The information developed and refined during the Conceptual Analysis Phase was then blended into strategies. A clear vision with recommendations was developed and implementation tools were outlined. This final US 180 Corridor Vision Plan was presented for adoption by City Council.

The Planning Phases

Data Collection

- Kick-off
- Scope defined
- Stakeholders identified
- Map and regulation review
- Site visits and observations

Stakeholder Involvement

- Stakeholder meeting
- Issue identification
- Review

Conceptual Analysis

- Connectivity
- Uses
- Aesthetics
- Preliminary recommendations

Recommendation

- Vision Plan
- Implementation tools
- Review
- Adoption

Key Task

Background

The US 180 Corridor is a vital east-west thoroughfare for Weatherford and Parker County. Not only does it carry significant amounts of traffic through the City, the corridor plays an important role in the ultimate perception and identity for the community. The City intends for this plan to address US 180 as a gateway corridor and promote Weatherford's image along with providing a vision for future growth and redevelopment.

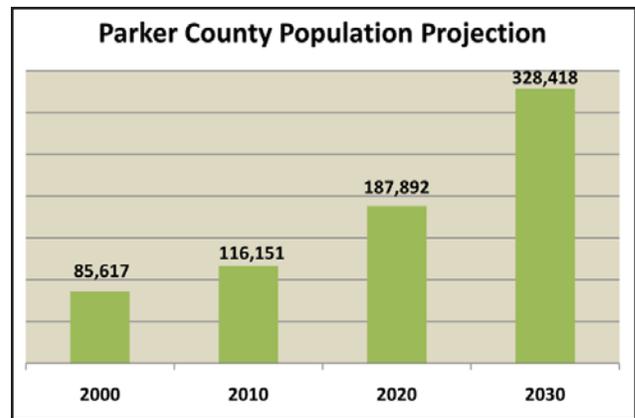
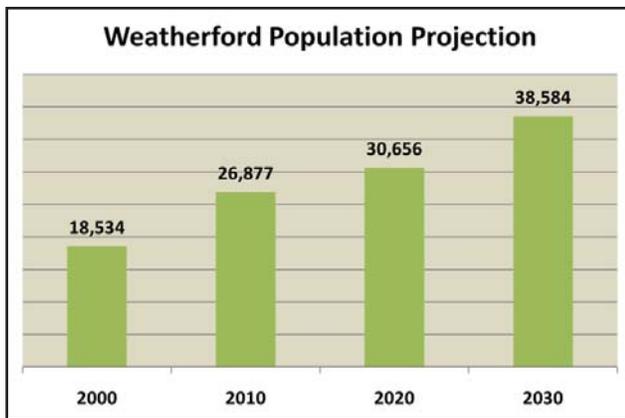
over the next 30 years, Parker County is expected to grow by nearly 212,000 people

The US 180 Corridor Vision Plan is in response to recent development, updated zoning, planned activities along the corridor and the study areas growth potential for the next 10, 20 or even 30 years. The corridor study was initiated to build upon existing planning efforts. The study is intended to take the existing land use and transportation plans a step further, studying and capturing a vision for US 180. The City of Weatherford recognizes recent activities through invested public and private improvements. New activities have included roadway resurfacing, bridge construction, continued commitment to Weatherford Trade Days site, new medical and professional offices and retail establishments. After looking at growth potential along with the recent activities, it was clear that a planning study could help organize efforts and create further excitement.

structures and unattractive areas limit the area from reaching its full potential as a commercial corridor. In addition, there is a blend of architectural styles and older businesses, resulting in lack of continuity. The community has expressed the importance and desire to blend new development but maintain Weatherford's western heritage, incorporate historic significance and an Americana quality.

As Weatherford expands, it's important to recognize US 180 will be competing with Interstate 20 for new business locations. Convenient access to US 180 will likely be a key issue for the corridor's future. Identifying and constructing an additional north-south thoroughfare on the eastern portions of US 180 will dictate future growth patterns. While most areas of the country have seen a significant decline in development over the last few years, Weatherford has seen some limited growth. Along with the described influences, growth projections for the Dallas-Fort Worth region, specifically Parker county, leaves the impression that Weatherford is a prime location for significant growth.

Although the new development activity is extremely positive for Weatherford, the corridor has many challenges. Vacant businesses, declining empty



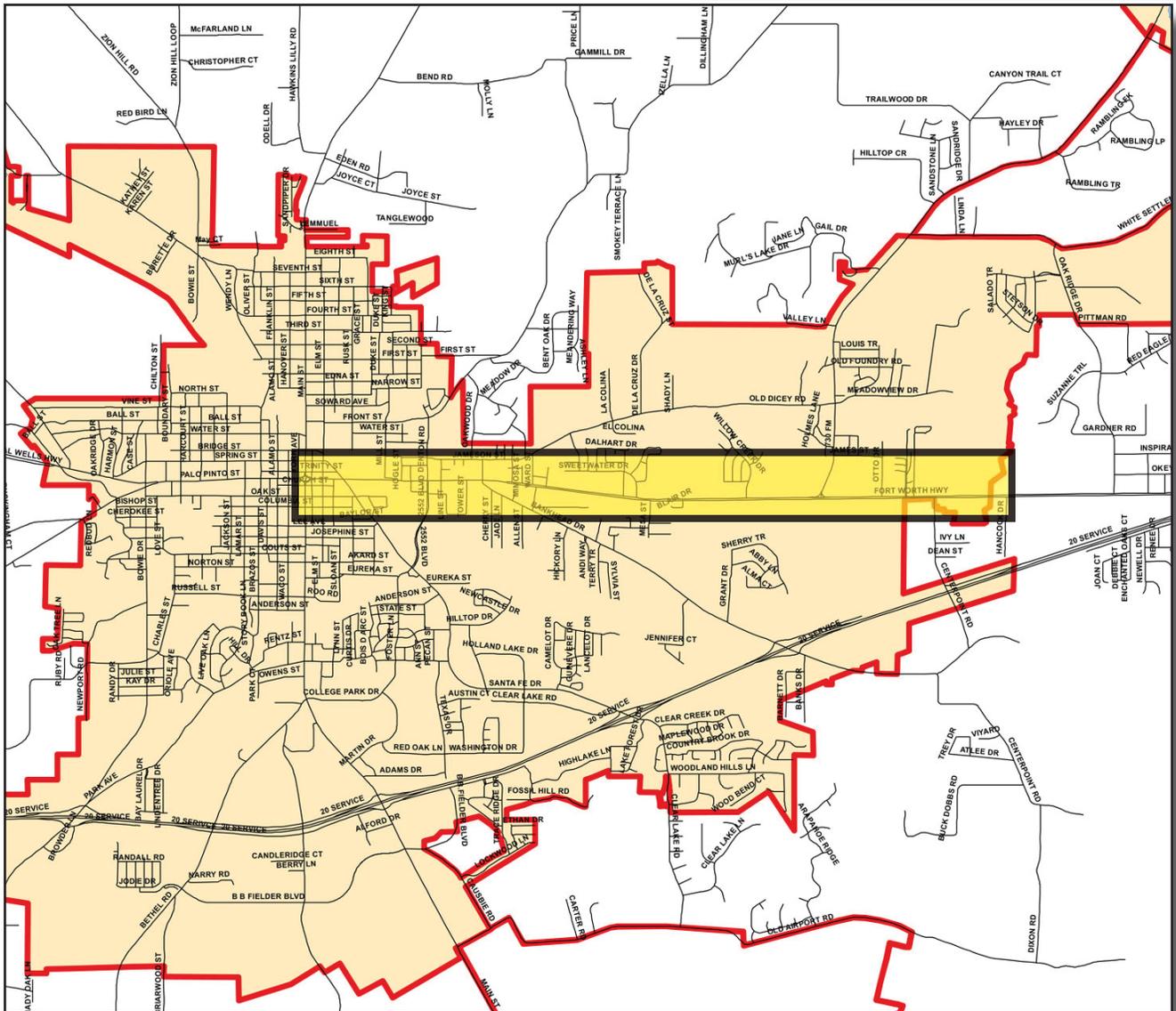
Source: NCTCOG

Study Area

The US 180 Corridor Vision Plan study area is located along US 180 from downtown Weatherford to the eastern city limits. The area is 4.2 miles in length and consists of approximately 180 property owners. The study area should not be viewed as a hard boundary but rather consisting primarily of the US 180 right of way and the adjacent parcels. However, this study boundary should not set limitation on vision, investment, financial resources, planning efforts or future development which may consider parcel consolidation to incorporate larger developments.

Fast Facts

Study Area: *Approximate 4.2 Miles along US 180 from downtown to eastern city limits*



City of Weatherford, US 180 study area

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Existing Conditions

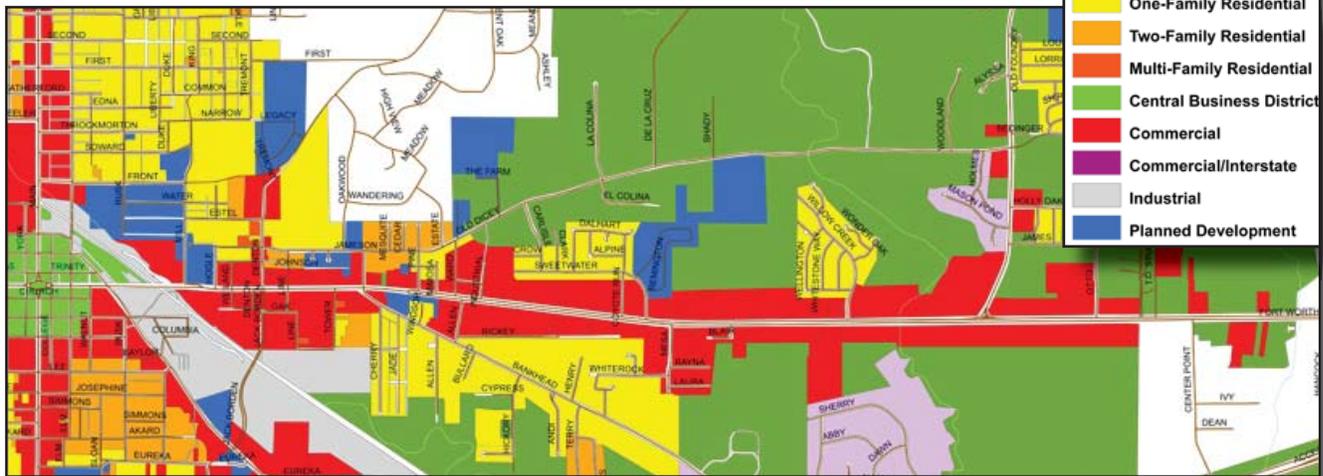
Zoning

The City of Weatherford has recently updated and adopted revisions to the zoning ordinance and zoning map to bring it up to date with current policies and activities. In many cases, the recent zoning updates and approaches are more appropriate and easy to administer at a planning level. It possesses district order and hierarchy. The City has worked to simplify the districts moving from 18 previous zoning districts to newly combined total of 11 districts. Also, the zoning ordinance has been simplified, in many instances becoming less restrictive, revising setbacks, signage and facade appearances. This effort is intended to make the ordinance easier to understand and enforce.

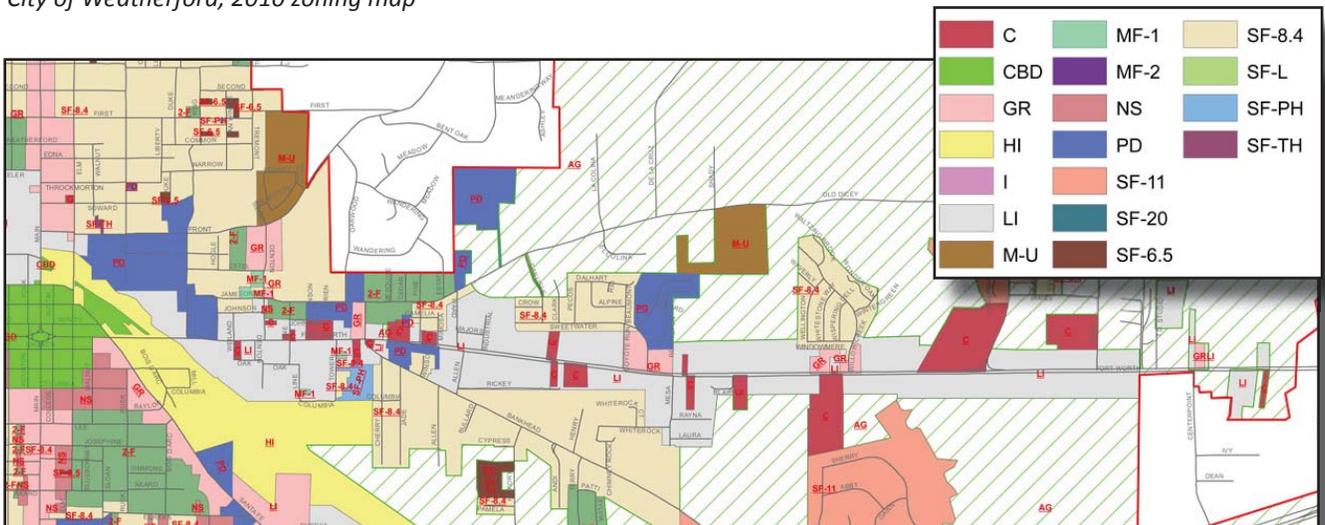
Zoning districts along the US 180 study area were previously Light Industrial until the 2010 revisions. Many of the current and past developments reflect Light Industrial zoning, however, Weatherford more or less

allowed all zoning district categories within the corridor from Residential to Industrial. Previous zoning included Commercial, Central Business District, Industrial and Planned Development sites.

The new zoning map reflects the communities desire for a commercial corridor. The Commercial District is targeted for commercial and service-related establishments but also permits office and retail uses. The current zoning districts are appropriate for the intended uses and should provide a base for future businesses that support the corridor vision plan. The existing commercial district provides all the necessary regulation to further the intent of the study area and could effectively serve as a base for a future overlay zoning district should additional regulations be desired as a zoning mechanism.



City of Weatherford, 2010 zoning map



City of Weatherford, zoning districts prior to 2010 update

Land Use Observations

Currently the corridor contains a mixture of land uses including commercial, retail, industrial, public and residential. In addition, vacant land and greenbelt areas are located along the corridor and provide limited natural features, tree coverage and topography. Commercial businesses make up the majority of the corridor but more recently, specialty retail shops and professional offices have been established. When traveling east to west, intensity of uses increase with a district node or terminus at Weatherford’s downtown area. Businesses on the eastern portions of the study area have a much different appearance in facades and use then those along the western portions of the study area.

Residential Uses

Residential uses are located throughout the entire study area with the greatest concentration located west of FM 730, behind non-residential uses which front US 180. Residential housing types include mobile home parks, single family units and townhomes. Apartments are not located directly adjacent to US 180 but are within 1/4 mile from the actual roadway. New residential uses offer quality housing and appearances. Some abandoned home sites were observed along the corridor with obvious code violation issues.

Commercial/ Retail/ Office Uses

Commercial uses are located along the entire study area from east to west. Commercial sites are generally smaller parcels and include uses such as agriculture

sales, greenhouses, service shops and auto related businesses. Commercial uses range in appearance from new construction to vacant businesses.

Retail uses are found throughout the corridor with the greatest concentration on the western portions. These retail uses offer a wide variety of stores from high-end furnishings to local restaurants to grocery stores. Several shops promote a western heritage and offer unique retail experiences and others possess a small town character.

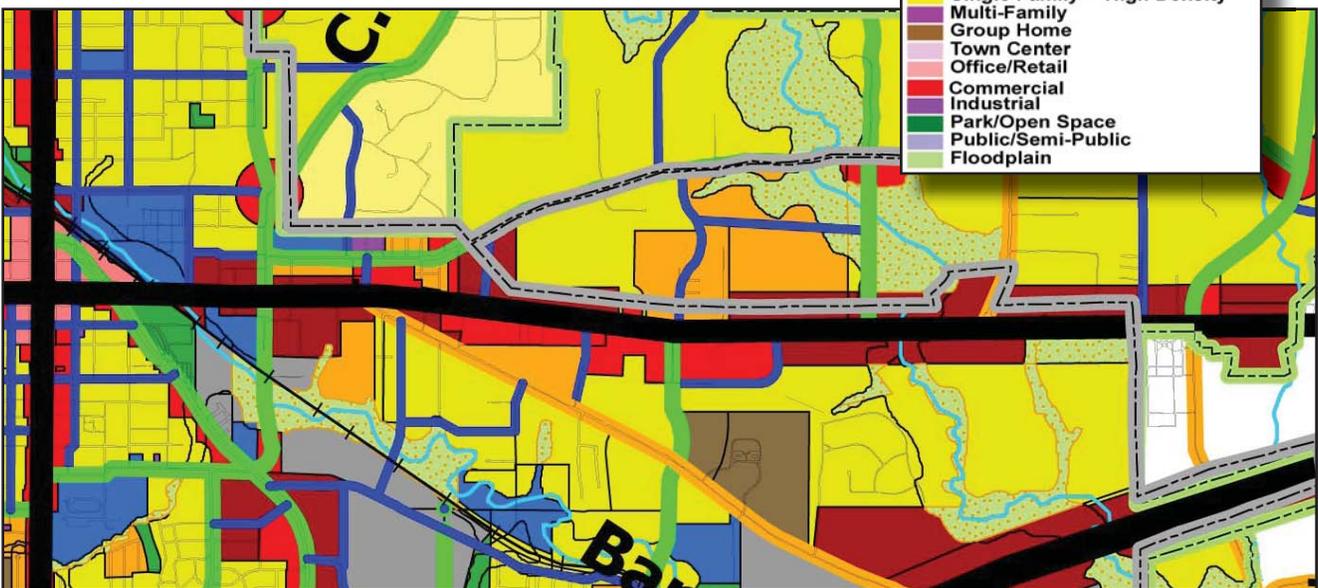
Office uses are again, found throughout the entire corridor with the greatest concentration along the western portions. Office uses, particularly medical office, make up the majority of new construction seen in the corridor. Most of the new office uses are located near FM 730.

Industrial Uses

As the corridor was originally zoned Light Industrial, several industrial uses are within the study corridor. Examples include light manufacturing, warehouse and storage facilities.

Public/ Semi-Public Uses

Public/ Semi-Public uses are located from downtown to the city limits. Uses include churches, the Parker County Court house, Weatherford Chamber of Commerce and a private school.



City of Weatherford, land use categories

Transportation

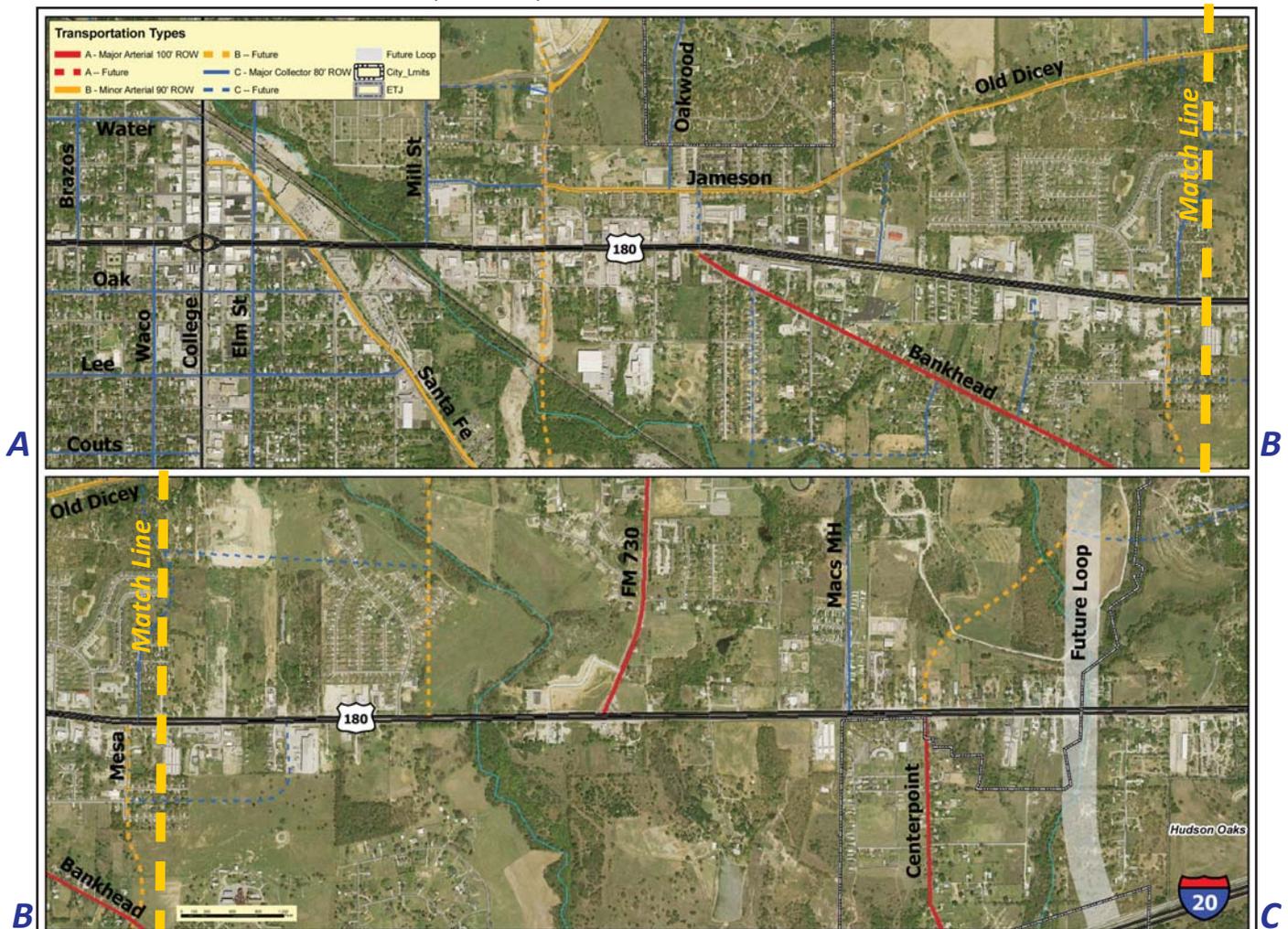
US 180 is a Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) roadway. Within the study area, it is a 4 lane divided section with raised medians and turn lanes. Research of TxDOT data reveals traffic volumes between 15,000-23,000 and 9,900 on FM 730 just north of US 180. The corridor serves as a major east-west connection between Weatherford and Hudson Oaks. Resurfacing of the roadway was completed in 2010 and currently the railroad bridge overpass between Santa Fe Drive and Jack Borden Way is being replaced. New signal lighting poles with black paint have been installed at the intersections of Bankhead Highway and Jack Borden Way.

The corridor study area contains lighted intersections at FM 730, Bankhead Highway, Jack Borden Way and Santa Fe Drive. Santa Fe Drive and Bankhead Highway provide access to Interstate 20 (I-20) to the south. FM 730 currently does not connect to I-20 but provides a major connection to northern Parker County. Numerous collector roads connect adjacent residential areas to US 180. A future outer loop road is planned

for Weatherford and the western portions are being constructed west of downtown. The eastern portions are not under construction but future roadway plans have the loop alignment at the eastern city limits as indicated on the map below.

Medians within the study area contain numerous breaks at existing roadways and driveways, limiting their effectiveness as access management devices. The medians add little to the aesthetic value for the corridor due to lacking vegetation and conditions. Each business along the corridor has individual driveways with little to no shared driveways, again effecting vehicular safety and access control.

Pedestrian access is limited. Most sidewalks are disconnected and do not provide access to adjacent uses. Uses along the corridor are auto dominant and very limited access is needed by pedestrians. Most pedestrian activity is concentrated from Bankhead Highway to downtown. The corridor's major intersections have limited marked crossings or aesthetic enhancements.



Site Observations

Stakeholder Comments and Input

- US 180 and FM 730 is an important node. Consider expansion of medical uses in this area.
- Weatherford needs a prominent “Welcome to Weatherford” sign on the eastern portion of the corridor.
- There are heavy traffic volumes at US 180 and FM 730.
- The medical center is currently at Santa Fe Drive. Weatherford could develop a new medical district at FM 730. Baylor Medical has expanded into Weatherford and purchased new land at Bankhead and I-20 to potentially develop new medical facilities. Medical community is investing in Weatherford.
- There is poor maintenance and appearance of buildings and properties on eastern portions of the corridor and into Hudson Oaks.
- Do not develop new business to look like Southlake or other large shopping areas but rather maintain western heritage and cultural identity.
- Maintain western heritage theme and potentially promote this character at intersection nodes.
- Consider using additional special use permits to implement zoning changes.
- Develop intersections as nodes or activity centers at strategic locations.
- Need clean up of junk on the eastern portions of the corridor.
- Vacant buildings should be redeveloped.
- Many owners of vacant buildings and lands have been trying to sell property for a long time with limited success.
- Concern that no one will maintain the area if new plantings are placed in the right of way. This has been a past issue. If new plantings are considered, then use sparingly and at strategic locations.
- Unattractive properties outside the city limits still influence perspective of Weatherford. Consider working to remove or clean these properties by working with the county and Hudson Oaks.

Stakeholder Comments and Input

- A future Conference Center remains desirable to the stakeholders and could serve as a major catalyst project.
- Median and right of way mowing and maintenance is a major concern.
- Considered limited pedestrian activity concentrated near the Trade Days area and downtown. Curbing and better defined driveways are desired.
- Key consideration should be extending FM 730 to I-20. This could serve to better connect the area and help increase traffic counts, thus attracting new businesses. One challenge for this extension is significant drainage issues and the need for costly bridge crossings.
- US 180 serves as alternative route when I-20 is shut down.
- Work with incentive programs to encourage new businesses. Consider discontinued use of impact fees because they are burdensome on developers.
- Desire for the corridor to be easy to travel and attract new businesses that would otherwise develop along I-20.
- I-20 will attract all the new businesses if nothing is done to clean up the corridor.



US 180 Corridor Vision Plan stakeholder meeting

The following are general planning consultant observations.

Opportunities and Challenges

- The corridor contains several examples of quality developments and others that reflect negatively on Weatherford.
- The corridor has a wide variety of land uses mixed together with a wide variety of positive and negative appearances.
- Many properties have excellent quality in fencing materials and appearance while others use chain link fencing or no fences at all.
- There are several vacant buildings and abandoned structures.
- Many properties have code compliance issues.
- Some unsightly issues are outside of the city limits but still influence perceptions.



The corridor contains examples of quality developments which incorporate quality site design.

Limited Continuity and Identity

- The 'Welcome to Weatherford' sign is in downtown.
- No gateway appearance or signage exist in the corridor along the eastern portions.
- There is limited continuity in developments, materials and image.
- The city logo is on street signs.
- There is limited sense of place and the corridor does not serve as a destination or unique experience.



US 180 corridor has limited identity and branding.

Uniqueness

- The corridor does possess examples of uniqueness and eclectic character.
- Historic sites and businesses exist in the study area.
- Existing public art and interesting signage create uniqueness.
- Many businesses offer a small town feel and speciality items.



Example of uniqueness or small town character.

Private vs. Public Area

- Site visits observed two distinct issues, those that are within public areas and those on private property.
- Each area should include different strategies and approaches to encompass the community's vision.
- Well defined right of way at utility poles.



Opportunity and challenges are different for public and private areas.

Right Of Way Challenges

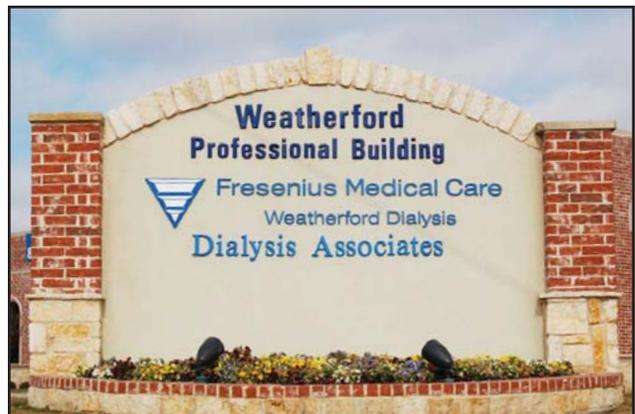
- Many sites have defined driveways.
- Opportunities exist to incorporate shared driveways and cross access easements.
- Many businesses have encroached the right of way with merchandise or storage.
- Medians are in poor condition with limited aesthetics.
- Many businesses are using the right of way for parking, or parking lots are accessed directly from right of way with no drives.
- In many areas, the right of way is completely paved with no defined entrances or exits.
- The roadway was recently resurfaced.
- Temporary signage is within the right of way.
- New intersection signal lights and poles have been painted black and look nice.
- Sidewalks are disconnected and in poor condition. Most areas do not have sidewalks.
- Intersections do not have clearly marked crosswalk or intersection enhancements.



The right of way has limited controlled access and numerous examples of encroachments.

Signage

- Signage associated with new development are well designed and appropriate for the corridor. The new signage examples use masonry materials, lighting and/or mostly low monument signs.
- Most signage is very difficult to distinguish and existing pole signs compete with each other.
- Numerous examples of temporary signs can be found throughout the corridor. These temporary signs are code violations and offer poor visual quality to the corridor as a whole.
- The western part of the corridor has too much signage and is very distracting.



Example of quality signage.

Visual Clutter

- Signage, utility poles and other vertical elements are increasing visual clutter in the corridor.
- These elements are distracting and create poor visual quality.
- Visual clutter takes away from Weatherford's desired western character and limits quality views towards the Parker County Courthouse.
- In many cases, businesses are trying so hard to be seen that no one stands out.
- Screening at many existing businesses would go a long way to enhance aesthetic quality of the corridor.



Over use of signs and vertical elements create visual clutter.

Redevelopment

- Many vacant properties offer redevelopment opportunities.
- Redeveloping vacant or abandoned sites would help the perception for the entire corridor.
- Most vacant sites are very unsightly.
- Vacant sites and areas appropriate for redevelopment create low expectations for development criteria within the corridor.



Example of potential redevelopment site.

New Development

- Newer developments provide examples for high quality expectations.
- These developments incorporate quality site design, landscaping, signage and facade appearances.
- New developments have been concentrated on the eastern portions of the study area.
- The City should encourage new development or a catalyst type project in the western portions of the study area.



New businesses in the US 180 Corridor.

Distinctive Areas

- The corridor has very distinctive areas. Eastern portions have different uses and characteristics than western portions and are somewhat visually disconnected.
- East of Bankhead Highway, the corridor is less dense with more commercial use and less retail. This area is not pedestrian oriented and should have less emphasis on pedestrian movement.
- Between Santa Fe Drive and Bankhead Highway, this area serves as a transition area between eastern and western portions. This area is somewhat urban in terms of pedestrian needs but mostly auto oriented, more dense than eastern portions with heavy concentrations of retail and commercial uses and has limited residential directly adjacent to US 180.
- Between downtown and Santa Fe Drive, this area is urban and should be pedestrian oriented. It is very important to improve the streetscape in this area and better connect downtown with the Trade Days area. This area should better respect and preserve views to the Parker County Courthouse. Overhead utilities in this area are very distracting.
- Major intersection at FM 730, Bankhead Highway, Jack Borden Way and Santa Fe Drive could serve as major development or identity nodes with increases to thematics and aesthetics.



Consider visual impact to downtown and pedestrian connections in western portion of the study area.



Eastern portions of the corridor offer different uses, densities and gateway opportunities.

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Recommendations

The vision for the US 180 corridor is to enhance the experience and create a unique gateway corridor destination that will benefit residents, developers, business owners, visitors and the City. It is envisioned that new businesses will be attracted to the corridor through increased aesthetics, development expectations and incentive opportunities. These new establishments will blend with existing development in an orderly fashion and increase economic activity in the City. Redevelopment opportunities will be explored, benefitting community perceptions and businesses adjacent to vacant structures.

New developments within the corridor is expected to build upon recent activities and envisioned to be the highest and best uses. Appropriate commercial, professional services, medical, retail and restaurants will be located to serve the City of Weatherford and promote long term economic viability. An activity node at FM 730 will further establish quality medical and professional services on the eastern portion of the vision area. Sense of place will be created throughout the corridor with continued use of unique architecture facade designs, increased landscaping and effective signage.

Existing businesses will have well-maintained screening and/or landscaping to block storage areas or other unsightly uses from view. Incentive will be created as funding allows to assist property owners with facade enhancement or screening improvements. Driveways will be better defined and shared access to adjacent properties will maintain safety and eliminate excessive additions of future curb-cuts.

Future transportation improvements will provide additional connectivity south of US 180 with the extension of FM 730. This new four way intersection will be the center for an activity node for new development. Pedestrian access will be enhanced in appropriate areas in the western portions of the corridor. These streetscape improvements will decrease visual clutter and increase connection opportunities between downtown and the Trade Days area. Intersection at Santa Fe Drive, Jack Borden Way and Bankhead Highway will provide clearly marked crosswalks and paving patterns. Future efforts will build upon access management with partnerships for shared access and driveways and better median controls.

The future US 180 corridor will have an identifiable image that promotes Weatherford and its western heritage. Intersection enhancements will include new paving materials, colors and textures along with landscaping and western heritage art. Banner and wayfinding signage will be strategically located to create visual recall in thematics and direct visitors to the businesses, the Trade Days area and civic facilities. Community identity will be enforced with new gateway signage and enhancements to the future outer loop's bridges and roadway. These additions to visual perspective will help to create memorable experiences of Weatherford and set the stage for US 180 to serve as a gateway corridor.

Corridor Zones

Because the US 180 corridor offers different opportunities and challenges from one end to the opposite, it is recommended that portions of the corridor be addressed individually. This is not to say that the corridor should take on a completely different look east to west, but rather a “one size fits all” is not appropriate to apply to the entire 4.2 miles. Three distinct areas have been identified and the efforts applied to issues within those areas may be different than within another zone. These zones are general locations and should not be viewed as hard boundaries and should not limit considerations for improvements.

Zone 1

Zone 1 represents the area from Downtown to approximately the US 180 railroad bridge overpass. Efforts in this area should focus on increasing visual quality surrounding the Parker County Courthouse. In addition, considerations should be made to improve urban design, promote pedestrian scales and provide pedestrian circulation, particularly connecting downtown with the Trade Days area.

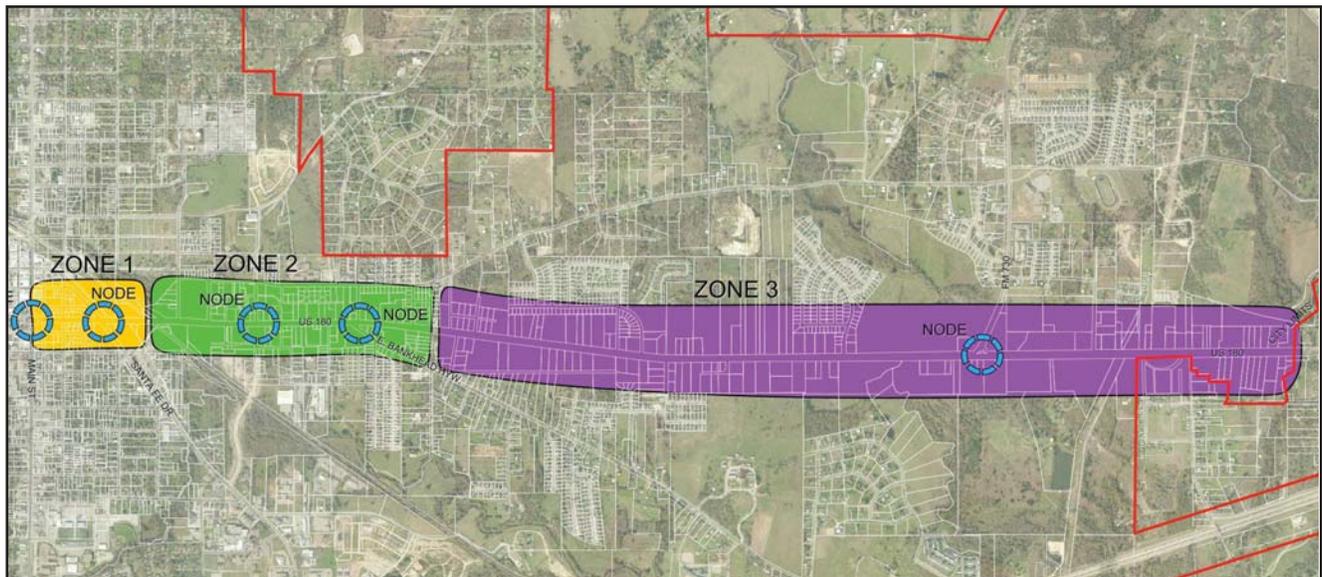
Zone 2

Zone 2 represents the area from approximately the US 180 railroad bridge overpass to approximately the Mimosa Street area. Efforts in this zone should include enhancing existing businesses and redevelopment of vacant sites. This zone should also provide community branding through intersection enhancements. Access

management should include evaluation of existing median openings and coordination for cross access easements and shared drives. Zone 2 should consider sidewalk improvements along US 180.

Zone 3

Zone 3 represents the area from approximately the Mimosa Street area to the eastern city limits. Key recommendations for this area include increased code enforcements and increasing visual quality and visitor perspectives. A gateway feature should be located in this zone. Access management should include evaluation of existing median openings and coordination for cross access easements and shared drives. Additionally, Zone 3 should continue as a commercial corridor and build upon recent establishments and further develop the area surrounding FM 730. FM 730 should be extended to the south for better connectivity and to promote new development.



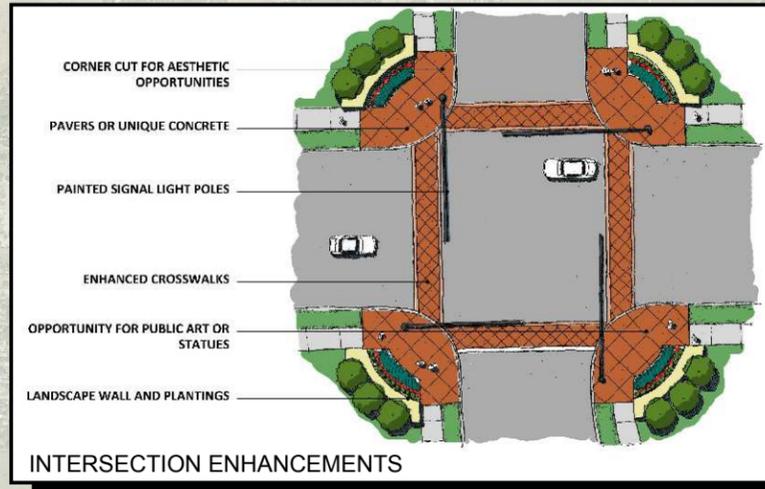
Distinctive areas and nodes within the US 180 study area

US 180 CORRIDOR VISION PLAN DRAFT

ZONE 1

HISTORIC DISTRICT CONNECTIONS

- Promote existing urban setting
- Reduce visual clutter and increase visual perspective for Parker County Courthouse
- Connect downtown, any future entertainment district, any future pedestrian rail station and the Trade Days area
- Create intersection enhancement at Santa Fe Drive and US 180
- Increase western heritage identity through use of facade treatments, banners, public art and district elements
- Increase pedestrian opportunities through streetscape improvements from downtown to Santa Fe Drive



ZONE 3

COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR EXPANSION

- Enhance existing businesses with site designs and facade enhancements
- Increase facade appearances and landscaping
- Reduce visual clutter and encourage appropriate signage
- Promote access management
- Create development/ activity node at FM 730 and US 180
- Extend FM 730 to the south
- Redevelop vacant and abandoned sites
- Create intersection enhancement at FM 730
- Increase western heritage identity through use of facade treatments, banners, public art and district elements
- Provide gateway features
- Provide community identity element at the future outer loop
- Screen unsightly storage areas
- Increase code enforcement



ZONE 1

ZONE 2

ZONE 3



ZONE 2

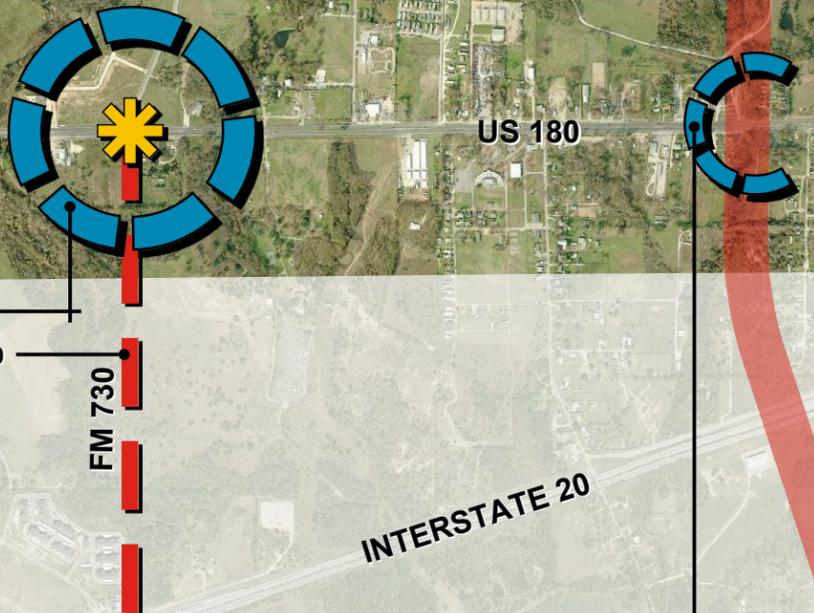
BUSINESS AND HERITAGE ENHANCEMENTS

- Enhance existing businesses with site designs and facade enhancements
- Increase facade appearances and landscaping
- Reduce visual clutter and encourage low monument signs
- Promote access management
- Increase visual perspective for Parker County Courthouse
- Redevelop vacant and abandoned sites
- Create intersection enhancement at Jack Borden Way and Bankhead Highway
- Increase western heritage identity through use of facade treatments, banners, public art and district elements
- Provide limited pedestrian opportunities through sidewalk improvements



DEVELOPMENT OR ACTIVITY NODE

EXTEND FM 730 SOUTH OF US 180



GATEWAY FEATURES



Land Use and Zoning

Current land uses and zoning are appropriate for US 180 to serve as a commercial corridor. Future rezoning or special use permits should be limited and apply careful consideration because the current designations meet the community’s vision regarding land uses and zoning districts. Current zoning requirements have been revisited and the city has made many of the requirements less restrictive. This effort should make the district easier to enforce, and future developments should be strictly held to the existing standards.

Overlay Zoning

Although the zoning districts have been reviewed and are observed to be appropriate, additional design, landscaping, site requirements and continuity in thematics could be achieved through the application of an overlay zone. Again, the base zoning districts of Central Business and Commercial are in place and would be excellent base zoning districts for an additional overlay zone. An overlay zoning district is an additional device in the zoning regulatory model, and it has two key components. First is an identifiable boundary that may share common boundaries with an underlying base district. Second, the overlay district will provide regulations, procedures and/or incentives to protect or enhance the resources within the area. It will require amendment to the zoning text regulation. The new overlay zone would require minimal additional requirements that would positively influence the corridor’s aesthetics.

The city should concentrate efforts to redevelop and further promote the Central Business District area from downtown to Santa Fe Drive. These two to three blocks should extend the streetscape improvements, architectural designs and historic influences.

Residential Uses

Future residential uses should be limited in the corridor. It is recommended to concentrate residential uses behind those parcels and businesses adjacent to US 180. The current zoning map has this recommendation reflected but current and past land uses have allowed residential uses along US 180. Additional small lot home sites that directly front US 180 should be avoided due to compatibility issues and traffic safety. Only residential units that are in conjunction with a mixed-use, planned development should be allowed long the corridor.

Recommended Uses

- Commercial*
- Retail*
- Restaurant*
- Office*
- Medical Office*
- Public-Semi Public*
- Mixed-Use Center with retail and residential*

Development/ Activity Node

FM 730 should continue existing development activities and patterns to further emphasize and encourage development at FM 730. It is recommended this intersection be viewed as a development or activity node for the eastern portions of the US 180 corridor. Quality development at this intersection will serve as a catalyst and set expectations for the corridor as well as provide a positive image for visitors. Future uses should build upon recent establishments and expand with additional medical and professional offices and related businesses. The area should be viewed as a master planned development and use similar architectural styles and materials. This described node should encompass all corners of FM 730 and US 180. The development node should include walkable sites, intersection improvements, art and district signage.

Code Enforcement

Code enforcement issues were observed throughout the corridor. City ordinances are adopted by the Council and reflect the community’s desires. These ordinances are in place to protect the citizens and the community’s best interest. Future efforts should increase code enforcement efforts along the US 180 corridor. Many of the observations dealt directly with code violations from temporary signage to right of way encroachments. Correcting these violations and enforcement of current ordinances should be a focused effort. The city should work with businesses and land owners as partners to make the corridor’s image the best it can be.

Gateway Element/Monumentation

Due to the prominence and visibility of US 180 corridor, a gateway element or monumentation sign is recommended. The sign should be located along the eastern portions of the corridor study area, preferable east of FM 730. The sign would ideally be located at the eastern city limits, however current land uses and appearances conflict with branding considerations. Site selection should consider visual backdrop and adjacent uses as viewed from the roadway.

Design of the gateway elements and/or monumentation sign should build upon Weatherford's western heritage. Materials for consideration should include stone, brick, wood and potential accents of metal and metal lettering. The sign or elements should be significant in size and able to be seen and read from US 180. Design may take advantage of existing vegetation and topography with the use of retaining walls as part of the feature. Appropriate landscaping and/or statuary could accompany any signage.

In addition to gateway features, special consideration should be given to incorporate Weatherford's character in the future outer loop's design and appearance. Future overpasses and roadway structure should compliment and serve as a gateway feature. This will further brand and promote Weatherford and the US 180 corridor. Enhancements to the outer loop at US 180 may include similar colors, textures and materials that represent western characteristics. Also, consider using the city's logo or slogan as part of the future roadway elements.

Transportation/Pedestrian Connections

Transportation recommendations are targeted at providing efficient circulation and connectivity to I-20 while recognizing US 180 as a major east-west connection to Hudson Oaks. While US 180 is a TxDOT roadway, limited pedestrian improvements are recommended at strategic locations. Future transportation improvements should focus on safety and providing increased connectivity to promote economic development for Weatherford.

FM 730

Based on stakeholder input and existing conditions, it is recommended that FM 730 be extended to I-20. This will create additional north-south connections to I-20. Currently, Bankhead Highway, Santa Fe Drive and Main Street provide access to I-20 but are concentrated access points close to downtown. Current travelers between Bankhead Highway and Hudson Oaks are provided southern access at Center Point Road, primarily a residential collector. Although Center Point Road crosses I-20, it doesn't provide access to the interstate from Center Point Road. Only west bound travelers along the I-20 access road can access Center Point Road. Extending FM 730 will provide further develop opportunities along US 180 due to southern accessibility.

Pedestrian Circulation

Additional but limited pedestrian circulation improvements are recommended. The corridor is auto dominant and it is not feasible to require sidewalks east



Example of gateway monument sign with statue

of Bankhead Highway. However, as new development occurs and density increases, opportunities for better pedestrian circulation could be considered. Limited pedestrian access should begin around Bankhead Highway and increase as you get closer to downtown.

Recommendations:

- Provide new crosswalk at Santa Fe Drive, Jack Borden Way and Bankhead Highway consistent with the Streetscape sections of this report.
- Provide continuous sidewalks in Zone 2.
- Provide pedestrian connections between downtown, any future entertainment district, any future passenger rail stations and the Trade Days area with one another. Provide wide sidewalks and pedestrian spaces in Zone 1.

Access Management

Due to safety issues, driveways, existing road alignments and median opening locations, an additional corridor management traffic plan or study should be conducted for US 180. It is recommended that on-site circulation solutions be used in conjunction with future strategies made as part of a median traffic study. When site locations and sizes are appropriate, it is recommended that shared access into adjoining tracts of land and align entrances with those on opposite sides of roadways. Site plans and developments should provide connections and cross access easements to adjacent properties with drives. A few median openings should be relocated based on observed conflicts with existing driveways. Where possible, existing drives should be realigned or designed to share access with adjacent properties to maintain safety and eliminate illegal crossing patterns across medians.

The primary goal of access management is to balance the access intensity with the desired mobility function of the roadway. Generally, as the mobility and capacity of a roadway are increased, the access to a specific facility is decreased in order to maintain the roadway efficiency and enhance traffic safety. Access management provides a significant benefit to the mobility and function of the roadway, and more importantly, reduces the potential for accidents by minimizing speed differentials between vehicles and turning movements.

Primary site entrances for vehicles should be part of an arrival sequence and should provide a clear line of site and avoid conflicts. Drive entrances should be spaced according to City of Weatherford standards. Entrances should be enhanced with medians, lighting, plant material, paving variations, colors and signs.

Streetscape

Streetscape features play a vital role in enhancing a corridor. Decorative elements such as lighting, banners and signage are important in creating a unique image and memorable experience. The following is recommended to provide increased continuity in design and aesthetics.

Visual Clutter

Vertical elements such as signage, street lighting and utility poles are creating visual clutter and limiting US 180's potential. It is recommended to remove and limit future vertical elements, particularly in the area of Downtown.

Recommendations:

- Bury utility lines along the corridor particularly in Zone 1. While this is an expensive recommendation, overhead lines are very unsightly and distract from the view of Downtown. Future developments



Example of access management, shared drives and cross access between businesses.

should incorporate buried utilities. Utility poles also limit the ability to enhance streetscape or provide wide unobstructed sidewalks for pedestrians.

- Limit and remove pole signs and replace with monument signs. Future developments should only use low monument signs, especially in Zone 1.
- Reduce temporary signage and remove all unnecessary signage or poles.
- Remove private signage within US 180 right of way.

Special Signs and Way-finding

The use of special signage should be used along US 180. Examples include banner signs on light poles, directory or way-finding signs. As mentioned above, visual clutter is a major issue. Additional recommended signage should not add to the issue. Wayfinding signs should be used strategically to increase character so long as distracting elements or unnecessary signs are removed. Recommendations:

- Replace old light poles in Zone 1 with historic theme poles and banners similar to those found in downtown.
- Place limited directional signs at major intersections in Zones 1 and 2.
- Continue to use Weatherford logo on street signs throughout the corridor.
- Replace stop sign poles in Zone 1 with matching historic theme light poles similar to those found in downtown.



Example of low monument sign



Example of banner, way-finding and street poles

Intersection Enhancements

Enhancements at major intersections are recommended as a streetscape strategy to enhance the experience of arrival and begin to define nodes along the linear corridor. Along with gateway elements, these intersections will provide aesthetic recognitions for the corridor. Because of the number of properties and businesses along US 180, four key intersection improvements are recommended to unify the area and create a repeating element that will visually translate as continuity. The recommended intersections should be consistent in design, color, materials, and fixtures/furniture, yet unique in landscape planting or public art.

Recommendations:

- Enhance the intersection of US 180 at Santa Fe Drive, Jack Borden Way, Bankhead Highway and FM 730.
- Intersection enhancements should include common thematics in materials, public art, paving colors, paving texture, signage and plant materials.
- The enhanced intersections should include clearly marked crosswalks that compliment the corridor's design aesthetics and promote pedestrian safety.

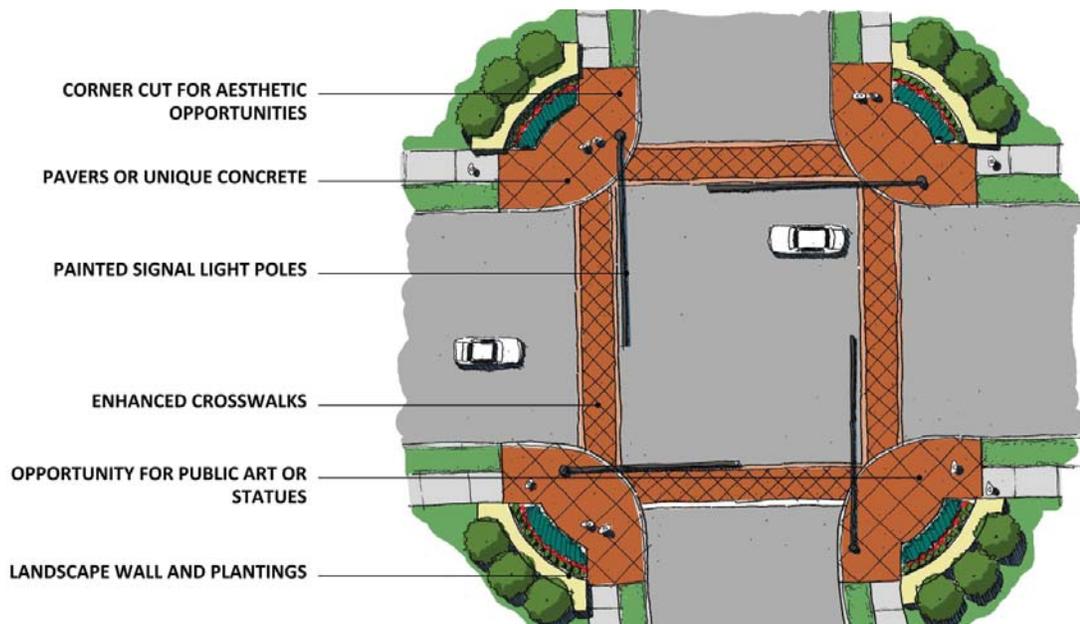
Landscape

Landscaping is important in creating human scale and comfort, especially in a commercial corridor such as US 180 that is auto-dominant. Based on site observations, it is recommended that well maintained and irrigated landscapes be increased throughout the corridor. This will support visual quality and should become part of the review process for future developments

and redevelopments. These increases in landscape standards should not be viewed as aesthetics alone, but also as a means for screening undesirable areas.

Landscaping should be utilized along US 180 at key intersections and site entrances. Plantings will help to define major portions of the site and will create a gateway for the development. The plant materials for these areas should include not only large trees and shrubs, but also seasonal color, small trees and planters. Landscape beds and planters should be provided at building entrances and outdoor seating areas. The planting design for developments should include a variety of plant material in addition to the required trees. The use of seasonal plants is encouraged to add color and variety to the landscape. With each site, developers and designers are encouraged to utilize their creativity to meet or exceed landscape guidelines.

Increases to landscape standards should include a percent of the site in permanently landscaped areas. These areas should establish minimums for the required large tree, small tree and shrubs per square feet. In addition, remaining permanently landscaped areas should be covered with turf, groundcover, small shrubs or mulch. These areas may include the required open space, setbacks, yards, buffer yards, medians and parking islands. All service areas, salvage yards, refuse facilities and dumpster sites should be screened from public view. Masonry walls, fences and screening should be architecturally consistent with similar form, color and materials. The use of chain link fence should be restricted and replaced with wrought iron, metal or



Intersection with aesthetic enhancements to create visual continuity

Architecture

The US 180 corridor has a wide range of architectural styles and facade appearances. Many of the establishments offer an eclectic and historic character while others reflect a more utilitarian commercial facade. In any case, the US 180 corridor should expand and create a unique character with application to forms and materials.

The city should continue masonry requirements along the corridor. The more the corridor can incorporate unifying high-quality materials, the better sense of place will be reflected. Themes in architectural styles may vary within the study area but overall it is recommended to express a western heritage, prairie or hill country vernacular.

Often times architectural guidelines are seen as a negative to business owners because of the additional cost perceived to be associated with increased design. In reality, many developers concur that high-quality or compatible architectural standards are a very positive investment because it gives continuity and assurance that everyone is adhering to the same goals. Even with existing building that are more utilitarian in use can be improved and make a big difference in the corridor.

Facade Enhancements

Simple facade enhancements of existing buildings can go a long way to improving the character of the area. Facades should use treatments with a mix of stone, brick, stucco, cast stone and metal accents. It is recommended that no single material make up the entire facade. Standards should be developed that require a change in materials and the use of decorative accents. The use of large planes with a single bright color and fluorescent paints should be avoided.

Facades should incorporate horizontal and vertical articulations. The use of human scale elements is recommended to again, provide unifying and inviting elements. Examples of human scale features include lighting fixtures, canopies, porches, balconies and awnings.

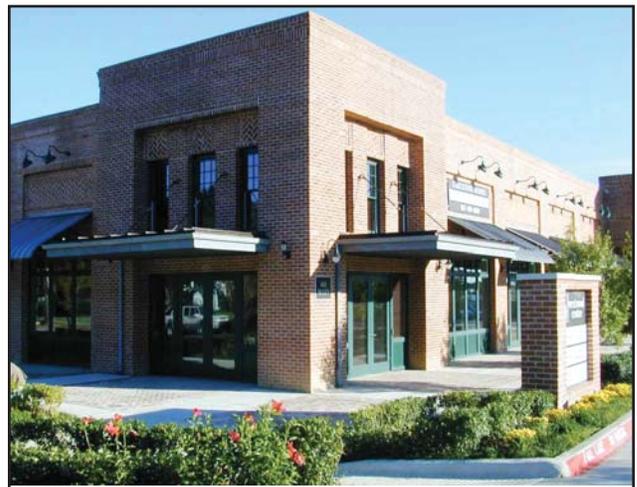
In the blocks near downtown, it is recommended to extend the historic district requirements along US 180 from downtown to Santa Fe Drive. Most of the buildings in this area contain historic characteristics and the area should be an extension of downtown, thus visually and physically connecting the Trade Days area



Example of mixed masonry facade with vertical and horizontal articulations. In addition, the building uses awnings, canopies and light fixtures for human scale.



Example of downtown first floor with storefront and designed at human scale.



Example of monument sign, masonry materials and human scale elements.

to downtown. First floor requirements in these few blocks become critical. Storefront facades and the use of pedestrian scale elements should be promoted on the first floor to allow indoor and outdoor views and retail display spaces. The city may wish to partner with land owners or the EDA to establish new businesses at these locations. Loans, grants or other assistance mechanisms would be appropriate to attract new owners. In order to encourage enhancements to existing businesses, it is recommended that the City along with the EDA allocate monies toward matching owner's improvements. This can be through capital budgets or grants through various federal entities.

Redevelopment

Several existing areas that are abandoned or vacant offer opportunities for redevelopment or demolition and land assembly for new retail and commercial uses. This will serve well not only to the redeveloped sites but the image of the adjacent existing businesses.



Before



After



Before



After

Implementation Strategies

A “multi-tool” approach is recommended in which multiple strategies are employed in order to collectively work to achieve the desired results for the corridor vision plan. Different strategies may be appropriate within a given location and, therefore, each possible strategy should be understood and examined in order to determine where it may be most appropriately used. Legislative actions, such as creating an overlay district are only some components to the overall picture of what the City could do. Financial incentives, specifically those appropriated by Chapter 380 of the Texas Local Government Code, should be utilized by the City in order to create incentives to attract desired development.

Weatherford Economic Development Authority, Inc

Weatherford has already established the Weatherford Economic Development Authority, Inc. The organization is an independent business organization for the marketing and promotion of the economy and the community to business and industry. It exists as an independent, non-profit 501(c) (6) economic development business corporation.

It is recommended that members of the Weatherford Economic Development Authority, Inc use this document as a guide in promoting and attracting development within the study area. Economic Development Corporations, or EDC, are often utilized in communities as a means of concentrating resources towards economic development and creating new jobs. Advocacy and proactive outreach are important functions of the WEDA in their attempt to reach out to potential development and provide reasons and offer incentives for choosing to locate within the identified area.

The identified aesthetic elements may help to indicate the types of development that may be appropriate. This document may also be used to market the corridor by showing the commitment the City has made towards the construction and attraction of quality development.

The Weatherford Economic Development Authority, Inc may wish to explore developing incentive and redevelopment programs to help improve the appearance of existing facades and site designs.

City Funds

The City itself may take an active role in attracting quality development and implementing the recommendations

contained in this plan through direct funding. Examples may include the issuance of bonds for infrastructure improvements and landscape enhancements. City funds may also be used towards the purchase of property, especially in redevelopment locations. The City may then use purchased property as an incentive to developers by offering the property at a discounted rate in exchange for meeting certain development criteria. The City may also ultimately decide to provide financing options for development by providing direct financing, waiving development fees or work to obtain low interest rate loans for developers. Many of these techniques are explained in the financing tools to follow, specifically Chapter 380 Incentives.

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZs), also known as Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIFs), are specifically designated districts that exist for a designated period of time. It is a way to fund public improvements and to stimulate new private investments without affecting the taxpayers. Any increase in ad valorem tax revenue (land and buildings) caused by new private investment and higher land values in the district is paid into a special TIF Fund used to finance public projects in the TIRZ. They originated in California during the early 1950s but the majority of TIFs have been established since the 1980s. They were established in Texas in 1981 and are governed by Chapter 311 of the Texas Tax Code.

Weatherford’s US 180 corridor is an excellent location to explore a TIF district. Available land, interested owners and planned development provide the necessary elements to make a TIF district successful in Weatherford. Currently, no TIF districts have been created in Weatherford or Parker County and the US 180 corridor should be the first location to establish such funding mechanisms.

A TIRZ is:

- Created and the boundary established by the City
- Governed by the City Council
- Managed by the City Council with the advice of a Board of Directors
- Each Board member is a representative from a participating taxing jurisdiction
- The Board is only a recommending body
- All Board actions must be approved by the City Council
- Supported by existing City Staff

What is the TIF creation process?

- Boundary is determined
- A Project Plan is developed of all the private and public investment needed
- A Financing Plan is developed projecting TIRZ revenues and bonding capacity
- There needs to be an independent feasibility analysis and market study
- It requires a public hearing and ordinance creating the TIF District
- Once the district is created, contracts or interlocal agreements must be negotiated with the other taxing jurisdictions
- The Council appoints the TIF board

Public Improvement (Assessment) District

Public Improvement Districts (PIDs) are a mechanism to finance new public improvements and enhance public services in a designated area in order to stimulate new private investment and enhance the viability of existing businesses. It is a defined assessment area providing specific types of public improvements or maintenance. PIDs may fund project expenses by collecting special assessments on property within the district. The assessments are over and above normal tax assessments of a jurisdiction and property owners in the area must sign petitions to create a district. An advisory board is appointed by the City to oversee the PID and make recommendations to City Council.

PIDs can fund:

- Water, waste water, health and sanitation, or drainage improvements
- Street and sidewalk improvements
- Mass transit improvements
- Library improvements
- Parking improvements
- Park, recreation and cultural improvements
- Landscaping and other aesthetic improvements
- Art installation
- Creation of pedestrian malls
- Supplemental safety, sanitation and security services
- Supplemental advertising and business recruitment and development
- Maintenance of the public improvements within a district
- Payment of expenses incurred in the establishment, administration and operation of the district

What is the PID creation process?

- Boundary is determined
- A Project Plan is developed of all the private and public investment needed
- A Financing Plan is developed projecting PID assessments, revenues and bonding capacity
- There needs to be an independent feasibility analysis and market study
- A petition needs to be signed by the owners
- More than 50 percent of the assessed value and more than 50 percent of the property owners, or
- More than 50 percent of the surface area
- It requires a public hearing and ordinance creating the PID District
- The Council appoints the board

While a TIF may be more appropriate for new and redevelopment parcels along 180, a PID may be appropriate for areas closer to Downtown if property owners desire the district.

Chapter 380 Grants/Loans

Chapter 380 of the Local Government Code gives legislative authority to Texas cities to provide grants or loan of city funds or services to promote economic development. Whether a city provides these incentives is completely discretionary. To establish a loan or grant, or to offer discounted or free city services, the city must meet the requirements contained in the Constitution and applicable statutes, and must comply with the city charter and make sure that any other local provisions do not limit the city's ability to provide the grant or loan.

380 Agreements can be used to fund initial infrastructure requirements for a development or to provide incentives such as:

- Fee reductions to help build the project
- Infrastructure assistance specific to a particular project
- Tax rebates to encourage leases
- The 380 Agreement should include a recapture provision so if business does not fulfill its promises, the city will have right to seek reimbursement of incentives along with tangible means for measurement

State and Federal Grants and Funding

The State of Texas, as well as the Federal government offer a variety of grants and funding options that may be explored by the City in their efforts to implement this plan and enhance the visual integrity of the corridor plan. One program, the State Transportation Enhancement

Program, or STEP, offers funding to projects that go above and beyond typical transportation planning. Funding may be offered to transportation related projects that enhance the local character and that integrate roadways into the surrounding community and environment. The STEP program encourages the incorporation of pedestrian and bicycle trails, environmental impact mitigation, historic preservation and control and removal of outdoor advertising, among others, as components of its program.

Examples of other State-funding options that may be pursued include the Safe Routes to School program offered by TxDOT, which provides funding for pedestrian pathways, especially near or around school areas, as well as various grants offered by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The City may be particularly interested in exploring grant funding from Texas Parks and Wildlife as a means of enhancing the City's trail system near downtown. Funding opportunities are typically granted when a parks and trails master plan has been adopted and when projects have the opportunity to both enhance quality of life and protect green and open space.

Sponsor-Based Funding

Several cities have begun to use sponsor-based funding for public improvements; these allow for increased community ownership, support and buy-in for many projects. Fund-raising or donations by community organizations or citizen-sponsored improvements could include public art programs, park amenities, landscape enhancements, trails or gateway signage. Such sponsor-based funding could be marketed towards a promotion campaign for the new district. Additionally, sponsor-based funding projects create opportunities for community participation by engaging and encouraging businesses and citizens to take an active role in the beautification of the City. Engaging the public through participation and involvement can make lasting impressions and may ultimately create more interest in community involvement.

Catalyst Project

A catalyst project is recommended as an opportunity to begin attracting and re-defining the study area. Often a single business will spawn new development. Catalyst projects could include the active pursuit to redevelop near downtown in vacant buildings or continue to pursue a convention center. It is believed that a large or initial project would help to attract additional development within the corridor.

Owner Volunteer or Developer Agreements

The City could take the approach of asking current owners to voluntarily meet any new requirements within the study area. If presented with the vision and potential for increased property values, many owners may autonomously consider actions proposed by this plan.

Action Items

The table below organizes significant action items to be implemented and provides specific direction. However, not all US 180 Corridor Vision Plan strategies and recommendations are contained within. The recommendation section of this report should be consulted and considered as a whole when making decisions regarding the future of the corridor. The action items should be reviewed annually to make certain policies and funding are in place to support the community's vision.

SIGNIFICANT SAP ACTION ITEMS		
ACTION ITEM	WHO	PRIORITY/ TARGET TIMELINE
Revise the Future Land Use Plan to incorporate US 180 Corridor Vision Plan recommendations.	City	High priority, 2012-2013
Revise the Master Thoroughfare Plan to incorporate US 180 Corridor Vision Plan recommendations.	City, TAB	High priority, 2012-2013
Develop and adopt a US 180 Overlay Zoning District or US 180 Design Guidelines .	City	Medium priority, 2013
Create incentive strategies and marketing materials to support US 180 Corridor Vision Plan recommendations.	City, EDA	High priority, 2011-2012
Conduct a corridor management traffic plan or study to address safety and access management.	City	Medium priority, 2012-2013
Coordinate with MPO to incorporate recommendations and to identify TOD connectivity .	City	Medium priority, On going
Apply for Green Ribbon Funding Grant for landscaping/aesthetic intersection improvements.	City, EDA	Medium priority, On going
Apply for STEP Grant when next call is advertised.	City, EDA	Medium priority, On going
Create a TIF district within the US 180 corridor.	City, EDA	High priority, 2012-2013
Update CIP database with gateway/monumentation areas and wayfinding signage .	City	Medium priority, 2013
Update CIP database with intersection enhancement areas.	City	Medium priority, 2013
Update CIP database with pedestrian circulation improvements.	City	Medium priority, 2013
Update CIP database with transportation improvements.	City	Medium priority, 2013
Prepare streetscape plan from downtown to Sante Fe Drive to reduce visual clutter and enhance pedestrian spaces.	City, HPC	Medium priority, 2013-2014
Work with Power and Utility company to relocate overhead lines.	City	Medium priority, Ongoing
Work with property owners to correct code violations .	City, Property Owners	High priority, ongoing

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