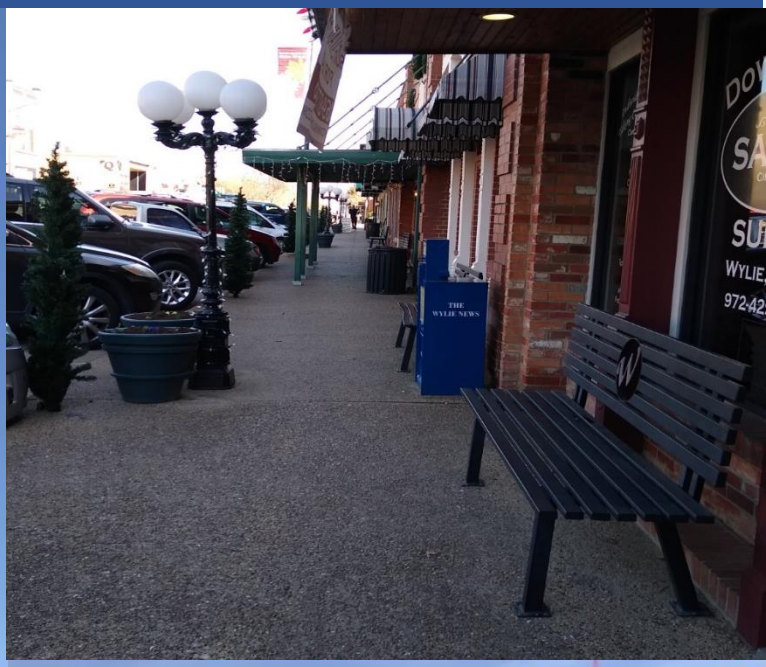
Downtown Wylie Strategic Plan



North Central Texas Council of Governments

CITY OF WYLIE

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I. INTRODUCTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to develop a strategic plan for enhancing Downtown Wylie by bringing together key stakeholders, elected officials, residents, and landowners. The City of Wylie Comprehensive Master Plan (2012) calls for a specific, detailed plan to protect Downtown residences and businesses, and to strengthen Downtown's critical role in the City. The City of Wylie requested NCTCOG technical assistance through the Unified Planning Work Program, which provides no-cost planning assistance to cities that request and are approved for assistance. The goal of this plan is to provide infrastructure, policy, and implementation recommendations and guidance to help Wylie achieve multimodal transportation and economic development goals for Downtown.

Major tasks included in this study consisted of data collection, stakeholder and public involvement, and strategic plan development. Regarding data collection, NCTCOG staff compiled future land use, existing zoning, demographic forecasts, traffic patterns, bicycle, and pedestrian plans, etc. City and NCTCOG staff also conducted a walk audit and pedestrian count in Downtown to gather more specific pedestrian information and a desktop audit with field verification to determine the current sidewalk and safety conditions.

Various public outreach efforts were conducted throughout the study process. NCTCOG and City staff hosted three stakeholder meetings. Meeting attendees consisted of Wylie City Council members, Wylie Economic Development Corporation members, Wylie Chamber of Commerce members, Wylie Parks and Recreation Board members, Wylie Downtown Merchants Association members, religious organizations within the project area, local businesses, and other relevant organizations. The kick-off and first stakeholder meetings focused on project details and strategies. The second and third meetings reviewed data collection and survey results and also included visioning activities for which stakeholders provided input.

The final major task consisted of the development of the strategic plan by NCTCOG with assistance from the City of Wylie. The plan addresses existing conditions, preliminary guiding principles and goals, detailed recommendations, and implementation strategies.

NCTCOG staff concluded the study with various recommendations that the City could implement to achieve its goals for Downtown, including:

1. A roadway reconfiguration that would decrease the travel lane width in order to increase right-of-way width. This would provide a more pedestrian-friendly and flexible sidewalk space that could be used for various pedestrian or bicycle elements.

2. Improved pedestrian facilities, such as bulb-outs or ADA curb ramps, which would increase pedestrian safety and improve the pedestrian experience overall.

3. Parking recommendations included a pros/cons analysis of back-in, parallel, and angled parking. Depending on what the City would like to gain from parking reconfigurations, Wylie staff will have to further discuss and analyze which type of parking works best.

4. Increasing and strategically placing more uniform wayfinding and general signage in Downtown. This will help visitors better navigate to Downtown and show the various parking options already available within one to two blocks of Ballard Avenue.

Each recommendation is further discussed in Section IV.

SCOPE OF THIS STUDY

This project incorporates Historic Downtown Wylie as well as areas immediately beyond to help visualize how Downtown will grow, and the impact the surrounding areas have on Historic Downtown Wylie. This study addresses traffic, pedestrian circulation and safety, multimodal transportation options, parking recommendations, and implementation strategies.

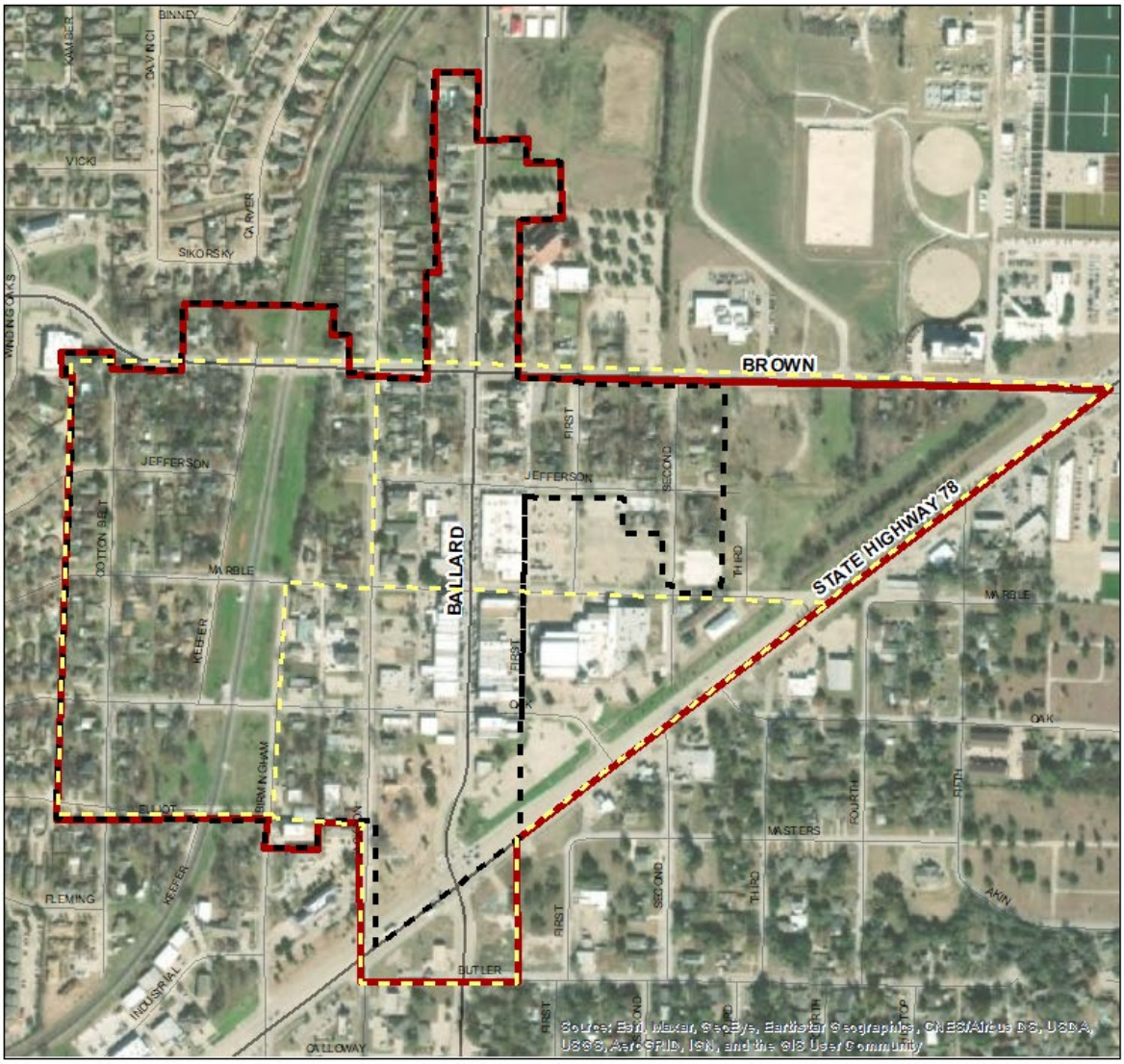
The Downtown Historic District (DTH) is generally bounded by State Highway 78 on the south, Cotton Belt Avenue on the west, N 2nd Street on the east and Brown Street to the north. The study area for this expands beyond the bounds of the DTH district to the east to include City-

owned properties, and to the south to allow for additional intersection study. Exhibit 1 shows the Downtown boundary versus the study area boundary.

Major tasks completed by NCTCOG staff included data collection, stakeholder and public involvement, and strategic plan development. These key tasks were used to assess the existing conditions of sidewalks, roadway, pedestrian experience, lighting, wayfinding, and other components in Downtown. Staff created recommendations for improvement options based on the existing conditions information gathered, stakeholder engagement, public survey responses, and goals outlined by the City.

Unless otherwise stated, all images in this report were provided by the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

Exhibit 1: Downtown Wylie Vision Plan Project Area



- Downtown
- Project Boundary
- Walk Audit Area Boundaries

N

0 0.125 0.25 Miles

North Central Texas Council of Governments

II. EXISTING CONDITIONS

LOCATION AND SURROUNDINGS

According to the Wylie Downtown Merchants Association website, Historic Downtown Wylie is home to vibrant shops, dining, and entertainment and is "the place to be seen" as voted yearly by family, friends, and neighbors. Historic Downtown has been Wylie's central market and gathering place since 1887. Located directly north of State Highway 78, Downtown Wylie extends north to Brown Street and is bound by North Jackson Avenue to the west and North 2nd Street to the east.

PROJECT STUDY AREA

To include major contributors to the area, the project study boundary is an expansion of the current Downtown Historic zoning district (Exhibit 2). The study areas include the Brown Street and SH 78 intersection to the east, the intersection of Ballard Avenue and SH 78 to the south, and the First Baptist Wylie (FBW) and nearby parking lots to the east. These areas were incorporated because of their current and potential future impact to the Downtown area. A map of the study area can be seen in Exhibit 2.

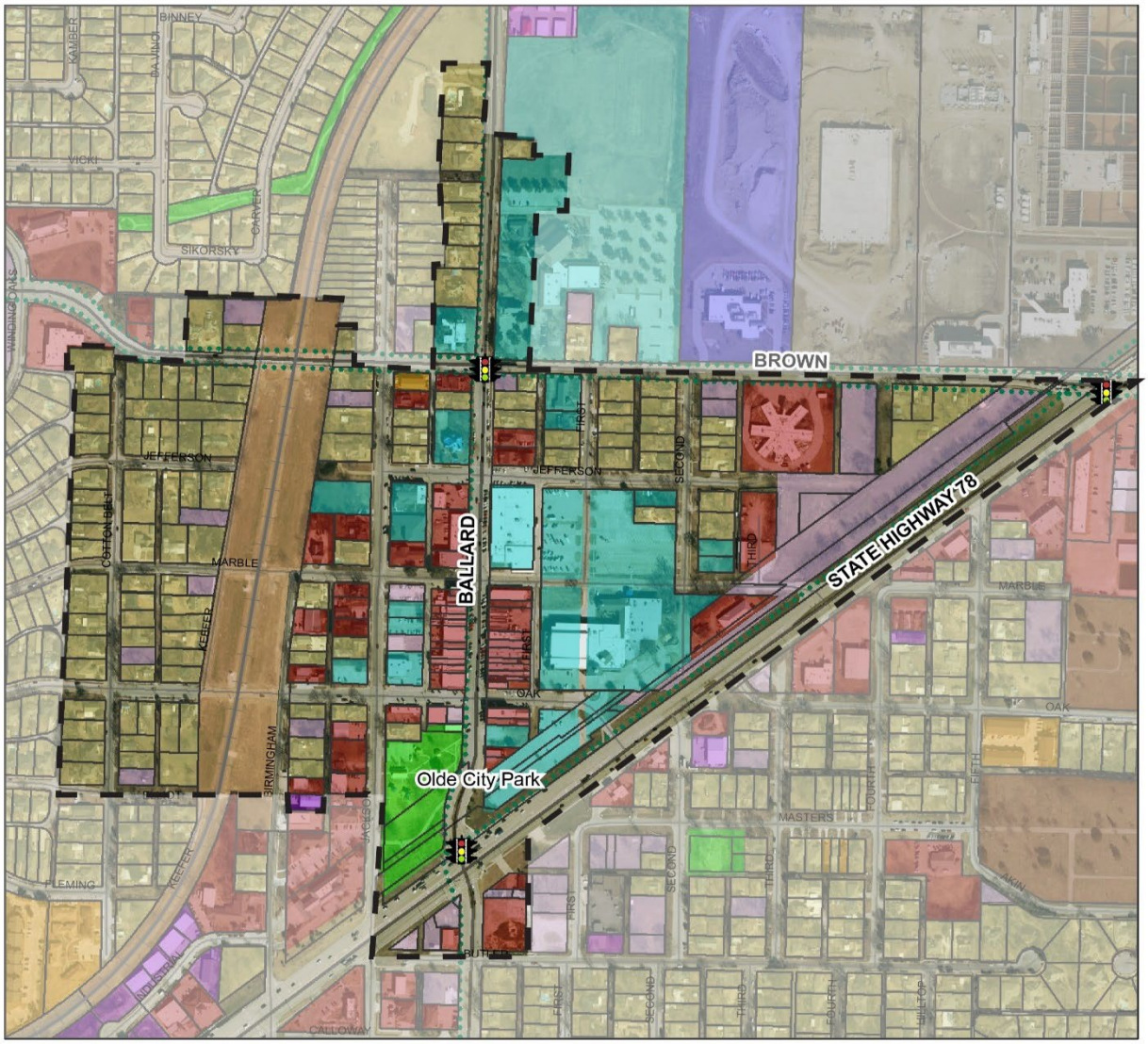
Currently, the FBW brings a large number of residents Downtown for service on Saturday and Sunday and is a major stakeholder for the study area due to the size of land ownership, trip attraction, and possible opportunities to be explored related to parking lots.

The areas near the intersection of Brown Street and SH 78 were included because of their future development potential. Brown Street is a major traffic route with minimal retail options, setting the stage for potential future commercial development to capture some of the pre-existing traffic. Additionally, the City of Wylie has expressed plans for redevelopment in the area, which could kickstart investment.

The final area, which lies along Ballard Avenue south of SH 78, was included for several reasons. First, it is a logical growth area that has drawn attention for redevelopment and now has available land on the northeast corner of Ballard Avenue and Butler Street. Second, this

area receives a lot of foot traffic during major events and traffic-generating times as users of the public park south of SH 78 walk north to Downtown.

Exhibit 2: Downtown Wylie Vision Plan Project Area



DEMOGRAPHICS: POPULATION AND HOUSING

As of 2019, the City of Wylie had a population of approximately 53,653, a 23% increase from 2010. Adding 12,226 new residents to the area almost doubled the issuance of single-family home permits. A total of 511 permits were designated in 2018, while only 268 were issued in 2010. 78.5% of Wylie residents own homes versus renting. A high owner-occupied housing rate combined with an above average proportion of persons under 18 years old (31.9% in Wylie compared to 22.4% U.S. average) indicates a large presence of young families residing within City limits. High owner-occupancy rates may indicate a lack of different housing options within the City if there is a large percentage of residents who would prefer to rent but cannot find rental housing. Further study would be needed to make this determination. Overall, increasing housing variety would supplement further, and possibly more diverse, population growth if desired by the City.

BALLARD AVENUE CROSS-SECTION OVERVIEW

Initial efforts to assess transportation needs and the degree to which Downtown is safe and comfortable for pedestrians began with understanding how Ballard, the “main street”, of the Downtown is currently laid out. Staff closely reviewed current sidewalks and the surrounding built environment in the study area to determine the existing cross-section conditions.

The existing Ballard Avenue cross section consists of 74 feet of right-of-way, divided into 10 foot sidewalks on either side, 10 foot pull-in angled parking on both sides with parking stalls approximately 18 feet long, and a 14 foot travel lane in each direction. Though the sidewalk width along most of Ballard Avenue is 10 foot, large planters, light poles, and benches are currently obstructing the walkway leaving approximately 4 foot of clear sidewalk area. Issues related to the existing Ballard Avenue cross section were identified during infrastructure inventories and a walk audit, discussed

Existing sidewalk in Downtown Wylie

below. Recommendations for improvements to enhance pedestrian and driver safety and comfort as well as improve parking access and availability are discussed in Section IV.

SIDEWALK/ADA CONDITIONS

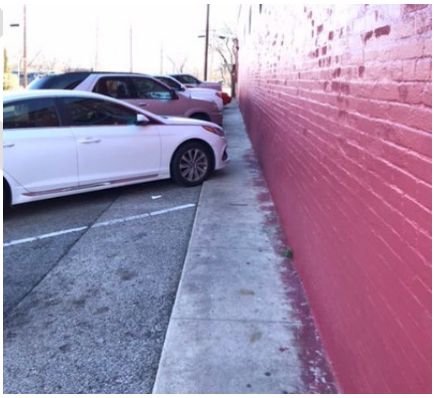
Staff conducted a sidewalk condition assessment for the study area using a variation on condition levels established by bcWorkshop for use in their Community Audit Public Spaces (CAPS) projects throughout the DFW region. Example imagery for the different condition levels used in CAPS projects can be seen in Exhibit 3. For the purposes of this assessment, staff categorized sidewalks into one of four different condition categories: Good, Fair, Poor, or None. The sidewalk condition assessment was conducted digitally using Google Street View imagery and verified during the walk audits later conducted on July 18, 2019. Along with condition, staff measured and verified sidewalk width within the study area. A map of the condition of all sidewalks within the study area can be seen in Exhibit 3.

Staff also assessed the condition of accessibility regarding curb ramps throughout the study area. This assessment was also conducted digitally through Google Street View imagery and verified on site during the walk audits. Staff categorized ADA ramps into one of three different condition categories: Good, Fair, or None. For a ramp to be designated as “Good”, ramp design needed to include best practices including being perpendicular to the road with a flare, truncated domes used as an underfoot detectable warning, and a detectable warning area in a contrasting color to the adjacent sidewalk. Any ramps that did not have these best practices were designated as “Fair,” and any intersections or alley crossings without a ramp present were designated as “None”. A map of the ADA ramp conditions within the study area can be seen in Exhibit 3.

Overall, the study area has a wide variety of sidewalk and ADA ramp conditions. Sidewalk widths range from 3 feet in some areas to 12 feet in others and are not uniform across the study area. The sidewalks along Ballard Avenue tend to be wider and in better condition than the sidewalks towards the perimeter of the study area with many areas having no sidewalks at all, as shown in red on Exhibit 3. There is a total of 12,743 feet of gaps in the existing sidewalk network within the study area.

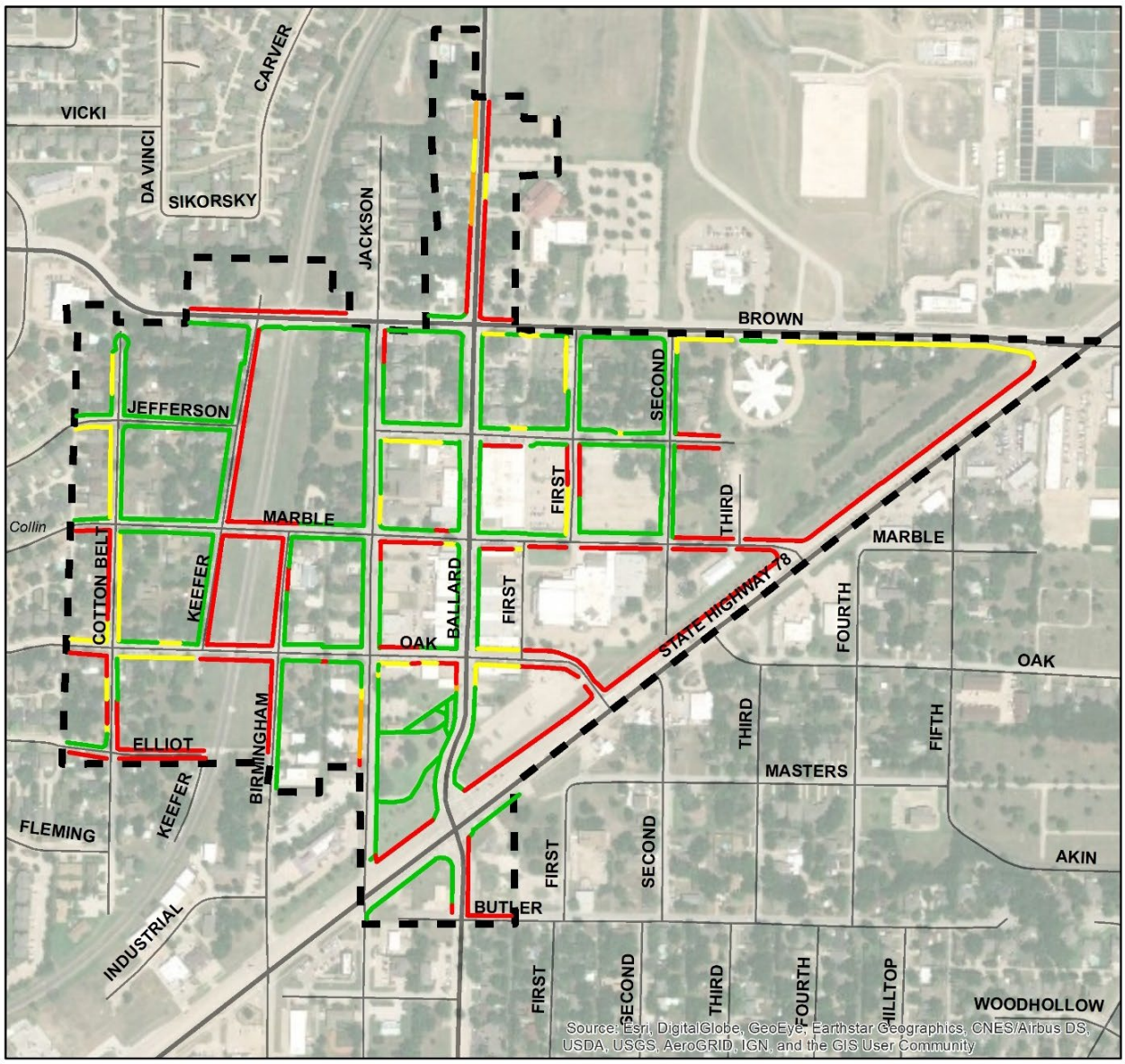
Vehicle encroaching on sidewalk

Curb ramp on Ballard Avenue not meeting best practice standards



Narrow sidewalk area

Exhibit 3: Downtown Wylie Vision Plan Condition Assessment



Legend

Sidewalk Conditions

- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- None
- Project Boundary

N

0 0.1 0.2 Miles

North Central Texas Council of Governments

June 2019

WALK AUDIT

Staff members from the City of Wylie and NCTCOG conducted walk audits during the study to gather qualitative feedback from pedestrians throughout the study area. The walk audits were performed at two different times on Thursday, July 18, 2019: during the lunch hour from 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM and the during the rush hour from 4:30 PM to 6:00 PM. The timeframes were chosen for two main reasons. First, these were expected to be high activity times and participants pedestrians would be using the facilities when there would be the highest number of vehicles and pedestrians on the road, leading to potentially more descriptive data about comfort levels and conflicts. Second, based on potential availability for participation from Downtown stakeholders and business owners, that those who could not be able to make the morning audit because of lunch crowds could attend during the evening audit, and vise-versa.

Audit participants were split into three groups, each led by a member of NCTCOG to better cover the entire study area within the time constraints. Each group consisting of about four to seven participants. A map showing the three different audit areas can be seen in Exhibit 4. After splitting into walking groups, each participant was given a comment sheet with instructions containing a map of the group's area, examples of what to look for, and numbered comment lines. Participants were encouraged to indicate the specific location of their comments using the map and the number of the line of the comment. The comments gathered from the audit can be found categorized in Appendix X. In addition to the comment sheet, participants were asked to verify the desktop audit values for sidewalk condition and ADA ramp condition. Comment sheets and maps used in the walk audit are shown in Appendix X.

The goal of the walk audit was to gather supplemental and qualitative data of the current sidewalk conditions and overall connectivity, and to obtain feedback from participants after experiencing the study area as a pedestrian. The walk audit supported many of the concerns that were voiced during general discussions with City staff and the Downtown stakeholders.

Walk audit participant walking along sidewalk in Downtown

Visitors walking along narrow sidewalk obstructed by mailbox

Overall, there is a major pedestrian disconnect on the western portion of the study area because of few easily accessible pedestrian crossings of the train tracks that run north/south between Birmingham and Keefer Streets. Creating more pedestrian connections across the tracks could encourage residents of the neighborhood to the west of the tracks to walk Downtown rather than having to drive. Additionally, participants were able to observe several areas where sidewalks needed maintenance or resizing and could be prioritized for any future sidewalk projects, or simply constructed to better enable safe and comfortable pedestrian activity as the area develops.

The major challenges in the pedestrian environment identified by the walk audit include:

- Sidewalk Connectivity Gaps: Once off Ballard Avenue, the pedestrian environment becomes more difficult to navigate in some cases; sidewalks are missing in some areas and narrow in others. This challenging pedestrian environment makes parking in underused areas a less attractive option for patrons. Engaging these areas, possibly as

a later project, could benefit the overall pedestrian and parking experience in Downtown Wylie by making it easier for visitors or residents to navigate the area on foot.

- Narrow/Obstructed Sidewalks: The narrow sidewalks in Downtown could be addressed by removing or relocating some of the sidewalk obstructions as seen in Exhibits 5 and 6. Planters, streetlights, mailboxes, and other items impede the already narrow sidewalk in many areas within the project study area. Removing or rearranging some of these items will free up space for pedestrians, who currently must walk single file in some places.

- Driver Behavior: Staff found that the existing cross-section on Ballard Avenue is very wide, with little to no traffic calming elements. This encourages drivers to speed through Downtown. Difficulty backing out of the angled parking stalls onto Ballard Avenue creates a visibility issue for drivers as well.

- Crossing Safety: Wide street crossings and angled parking stalls make it more difficult for pedestrians to be visible to drivers, which in combination with the speeding issue staff observed, creates a dangerous crossing experience for pedestrians.

Lastly, another solution involves a roadway reconfiguration to use the existing right of way available on Ballard Avenue in a way that better balances motorized and non-motorized users. This will be discussed more in depth in Section IV.

Exhibit 4: Walk Audit Study Area

PEDESTRIAN COUNT

Photo of automatic counter used in pedestrian count

Pedestrian counts were conducted both manually by NCTCOG staff and City participants, and automatically through digital pedestrian counters affixed to light poles (see photo). The purpose of the counts was to inventory the number of visitors to the area to justify proposed sidewalk improvements and assist with future planning. The automatic counters were installed for a period of 34 days which included both the 4th of July holiday and the "Bluegrass on Ballard" event. Counters were installed on June 14th and removed July 18th. Staff installed one counter on the west side of Ballard Avenue and one on the east side, roughly across the street from each other. The automatic counters were installed to get a general idea of the number of pedestrians that the Downtown core sees on general weekdays and weekends at all times of the day.

To verify and expand the data received by the automatic counters, a manual pedestrian count was conducted throughout the main Downtown core along Ballard Avenue between Jefferson Street and State Highway 78 at nine different count locations (Exhibit 5). Staff reviewed the methodology used for the National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project to determine the optimal times to conduct the manual counts. According to the documentation project, "weekday PM peak periods were chosen since the afternoon peak typically has the largest volume of travelers, with commuters, school children and people running errands. Counts conducted during these periods will provide an excellent snapshot of walking and bicycling during the peak periods of the year. Mid-day weekend periods are another peak period. Actual local peak periods may vary with considerably." Applying this methodology resulted in three different counts across two different days: Saturday, June 22nd from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM, and Thursday, June 27th from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM and 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM. These timeframes

allowed pedestrians to be counted on a weekend just before a typical lunchtime of 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM, as well as a standard weekday before lunch and during dinner times, giving counting totals that should be close to peak totals. Staff made the decision to include pre and early lunch times in order to capture pedestrians entering Downtown for lunch. The results of the manual counts can be found in Exhibit 6. From June 14th-July 18th, the automatic counters processed 40,065 instances of both "in" and "out" trips for pedestrians. Overall, there were more pedestrians entering the Downtown area than leaving during the morning and evening time frame in which the observations were made.

Exhibit 6: Pedestrian Count Totals

	Total Number of Pedestrian Counts
June 22nd 10 AM - 12 PM	811
June 27th 10 AM - 12 PM	552
June 27th 5 PM - 7 PM	403

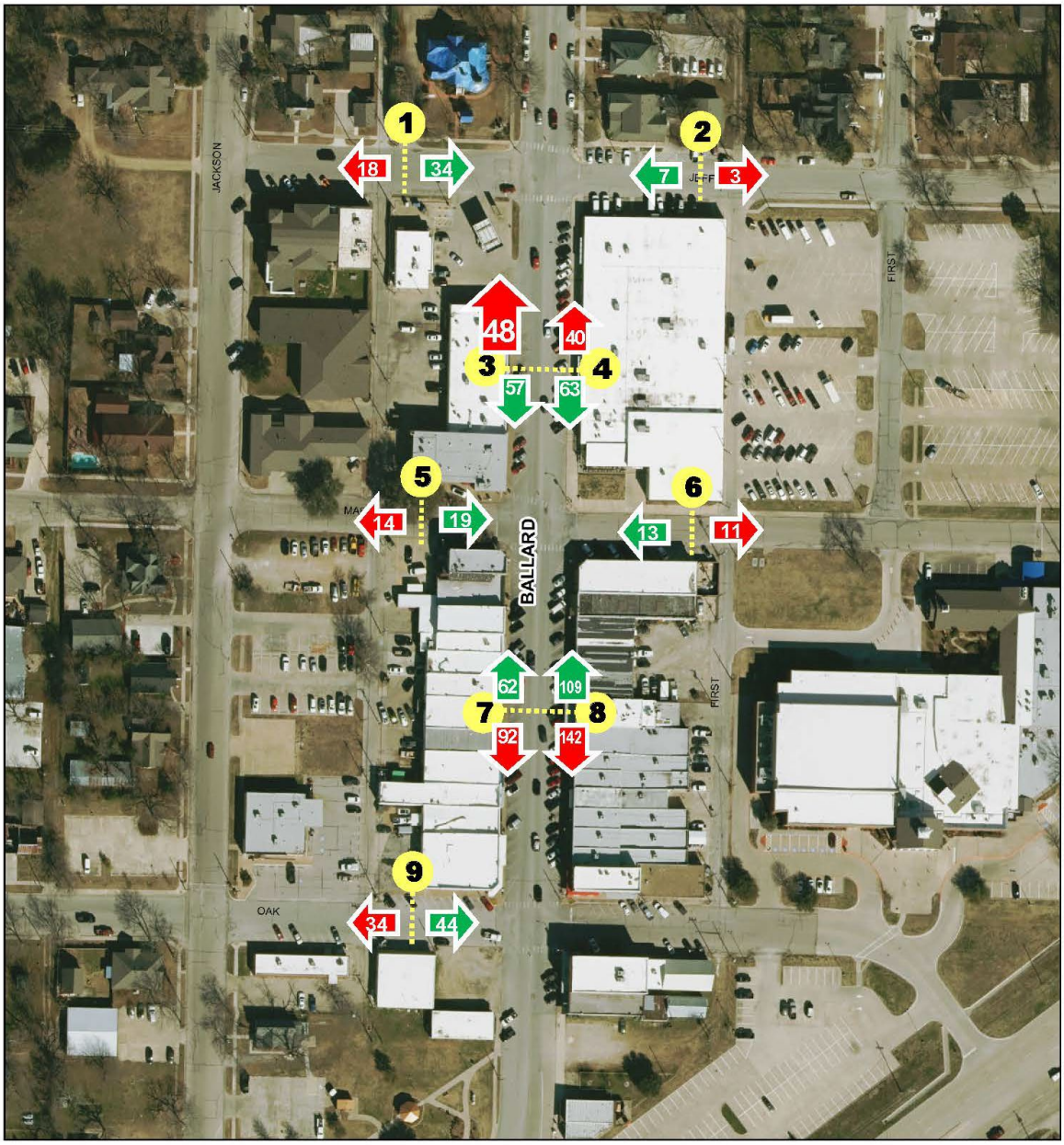
Manual counting of pedestrians always comes with the interpretation of the counter if they are not stationed at an intersection and the limitation of human error. The manual counts were conducted predominantly mid-block, leaving a lot of room for pedestrians to weave between parked cars and take atypical paths that could lead to incorrect count data. Staff or volunteer counters can also easily miss pedestrians because of distractions or blocked vision, or over/under count because of clarity of instruction and other faults in the preparation phase.

The pedestrian count data supports that there is enough foot traffic in Downtown to warrant pedestrian updates. The data could also be used in the development of an event management strategies guide if the City chooses to develop one. Most importantly, the pedestrian count data will provide the City with quantitative information to help future decision making with roadway projects.

In addition to assessing existing pedestrian conditions, the current zoning districts in the study area were reviewed as part of the existing conditions analysis. The goal of this review was to

assess how land use in the study area is regulated by zoning currently in place and the implications of existing zoning for enhancing the pedestrian environment in the study area.

Exhibit 5: Downtown Wylie Manual Pedestrian Count – 6/22/19, A.M.



ZONING

The zoning map for the study area can be seen in Exhibit 7. The project area is composed predominantly of the following zones:

- Downtown Historic (DTH): a zoning district intended to preserve the historic and architectural character of the area while encouraging reuse and new structures that are compatible with the area's historic nature *(City of Wylie Zoning Ordinance, 2017)*. Within project boundaries, there are three major areas that vary from the DTH zoning.

- Commercial Corridor (CC): located at the northeastern corner of the project area near the intersection of Brown Street and State Highway 78, is zoned a zoning district intended to provide retail and commercial opportunities at an intensity and scale that is higher than the Community Retail (CR) district that is applied in other areas of the city.

- Community Retail (CR): located Immediately to the west-southwest of the CC zoned portion of the project area. A zone used to provide an area for goods and services at a lower intensity than that of the Commercial Corridor zoning district.

- South Ballard Overlay (SBO) district: This area is partially shared with Shared Commercial Corridor (CC). Located on the far south side of the project site, along Ballard Avenue south of State Highway 78. Per Wylie's 2017 Zoning Ordinance, the SBO zoning district "has been identified by the City as a valuable area worthy of rejuvenation as a Mixed-Use district." Additionally, this zoning district aims to create a unique pedestrian environment that is compatible with the character of the Downtown Historic district.

Each zoning district within the City of Wylie contains specific development standards for building placement and appearance. This includes the Downtown Historic district, which has more specific standards for appearance, building placement, and building materials within the district, as well as a review process by a seven-member Historic Review Commission.

Overall, NCTCOG staff assessed that the current zoning ordinances do support the further development of a livelier Downtown area. However, improvements can always be made to help

the City reach their goals more efficiently. There are a few specific ordinances that the City could possibly reevaluate and update to promote a more pedestrian-friendly environment. These are further discussed in Section IV.

Exhibit 7: Downtown Wylie Current Zoning

PARKING

Parking is another aspect of Downtown Wylie that plays a major role in how the Downtown functions, as well as how effectively the pedestrian environment, events, and economic development efforts are supported. As part of the existing conditions assessment, parking conditions were inventoried to determine key challenges and opportunities related to parking.

As part of this study, a parking study was completed by Walker Consultants in November 2019 under the direction of NCTCOG. The completed report is included as Appendix X. The purpose of the study was to provide a preliminary assessment of existing parking conditions in the study area and provide recommendations for further data collection and analysis.

The focus area for the parking study (see Exhibit 8) included Ballard Avenue between Jefferson Street and Texas Highway 78; Jefferson Street, Marble Street, and Oak Street between Jackson Avenue and 1st Street; striped on-street parking on Jackson Avenue between Jefferson Street and Texas Highway 78; and select off-street parking facilities.

In addition to assessing existing conditions, Walker Consultants was tasked with providing recommendations for further data collection and analysis, preliminary ideas for managing event parking demand, and a list of potential issues (see Section IV).

One issue the parking study identified is the need for event parking management strategies. This has led to parking challenges, particularly when conflicting events occur on the same weekday or weekend. Another issue and opportunity addressed is the presence of a significant number of parking spaces both on public streets and on private parking available at the First Baptist Wylie church property, all within a two-block radius of Ballard Avenue, as seen in Exhibit 9. These parking opportunities could greatly enhance the availability of parking within a short walking distance of Downtown.

However, few issues were identified for consideration to fully realize the benefit of the existing available parking. First, there is a lack of signage and wayfinding to enable motorists to easily find the available parking. As seen in the first photo below, the current signage in Downtown is

very small and difficult to read, especially while driving. Wayfinding also becomes difficult because of the lack of uniformity between signs. The small light pole banners act as a “welcome to Downtown” sign, but larger ones could be utilized to clearly identify the Downtown boundaries for visitors. More details and various recommendations provided by Walker pertaining to current parking supply, wayfinding/signage, and event parking management are discussed in Section IV. Second, the availability of the church property for public parking is dependent on a formal agreement for shared parking with the First Baptist Wylie church. Section further explores these issues and provides recommendations.

Example of current signage in Downtown

Example of light pole banner

Exhibit 8: Parking Study Focus Area

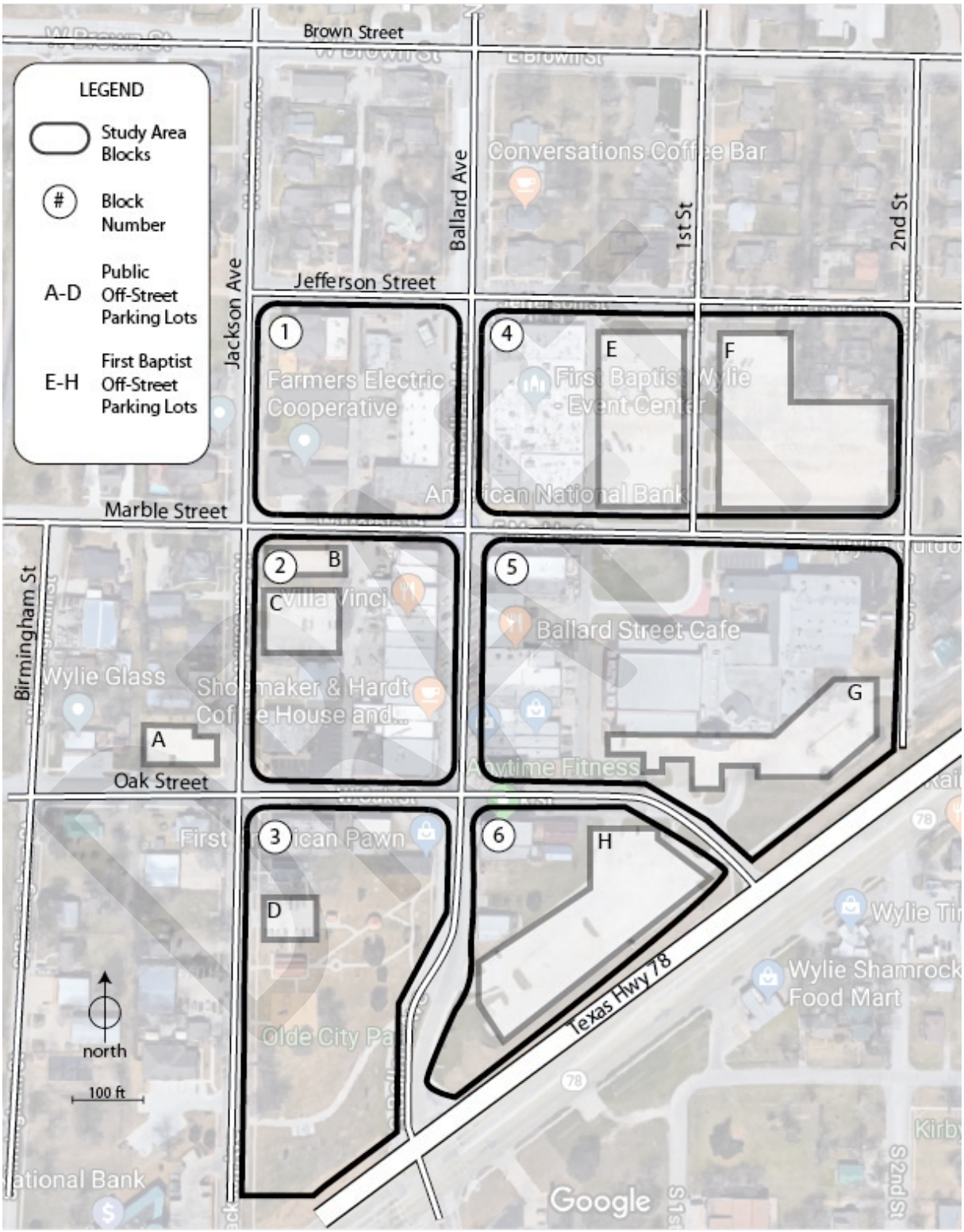
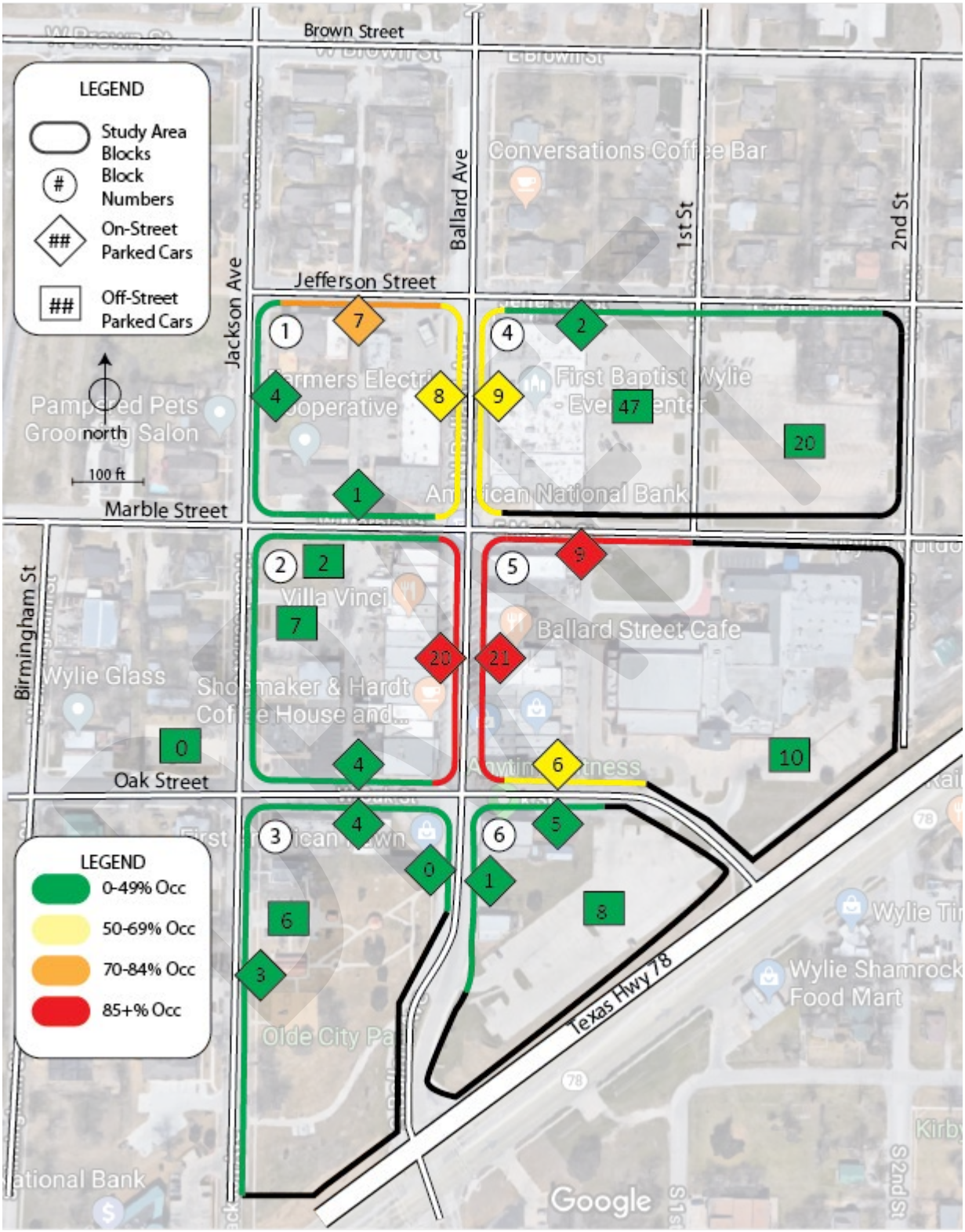


Exhibit 9: Parking Occupancy Map



Current Parking Supply and Potential Shared-Parking Opportunities

The study found that Downtown currently has adequate parking supply to accommodate existing peak weekday demand, but the most convenient spots that are the closest to commercial outlets on Ballard Avenue are usually occupied.

While on-street parking along the core of Ballard Avenue (between Oak and Marble Streets) and Marble Street east of Ballard Avenue are at or approaching full capacity, other on-street parking in the study area was less than 70% full on a block face by block face basis, with the majority of the block faces not on or adjacent to Ballard Avenue having occupancies in the 0-25% range.

Off-street parking in the study area was also only lightly used, with public parking lots under 20% used, and the First Baptist Wylie (lots also under 20%) used except for the lot adjacent to the First Baptist Wylie Event Center which was 46% used. Occupancy totals are depicted in Exhibit 10.

Exhibit 10: Parking Space Type and Inventory

Space Type	Inventory	Occupancy	%
On-Street Total	209	104	50%
Off-Street Total	593	100	17%
First Baptist Lots	502	85	17%
'Public' Lots	91	15	16%

Inventories were conducted of the available parking spaces throughout the study area as well as the percent of parking spaces occupied by cars during peak periods. A map of the study area and current available parking spaces can be seen in Exhibit 11. All parking spots summarized below are within two blocks of Ballard Avenue, which survey respondents indicated was the distance they would be willing to park and walk to Downtown (see Section IV for discussion of the community survey).

Exhibit 11: Parking Availability On and Off Ballard Avenue

	On-Street Parking	Off-Street Parking	Church Parking
Total	215	99	529
On Ballard Avenue	86	0	0
Off Ballard Avenue	129	99	529

In addition to the parking occupancy counts, Walker staff made the following observations related to parking:

- During the time Walker was in the study area, the parking spaces on Ballard Avenue appeared to turn over. This suggests that employees of the adjacent businesses are generally parking elsewhere, leaving the closest spaces available for customers.
- There is a lack of public parking signage denoting where public parking is allowed.
- Once off Ballard Avenue, the pedestrian environment becomes more difficult to navigate in some cases; sidewalks are missing in some areas and narrow in others. This challenging pedestrian environment makes parking in underused areas a less attractive option for patrons.

Wylie's parking standards may need to be reconsidered as the City looks to expand the Downtown. Wylie's current development standards allow for variances to grant up to 75% of required parking, while allowing up to 25% of the required parking to be on-street, also giving credit for public off-street parking within 1,000 feet. This allows for some flexibility in accommodating parked vehicles; however, there is still a lot of potential for a new business to need to provide parking on-site in the Downtown, which could discourage future development because of the complications of on-site parking in a Downtown environment.

LIGHTING

Existing lighting along Ballard Avenue consists of a mixture of pedestrian-scale lampposts and modern-overhang streetlights for auto traffic From Brown Street to E. Butler Street, there are a total of 30 streetlights along both sides of the street. Fifteen of these are the more pedestrian-scale lampposts which are spaced out along the corridor. The most consistent segment of pedestrian lighting is from E. Marble Street to Oak Street, where there are six lampposts on both sides of the street.

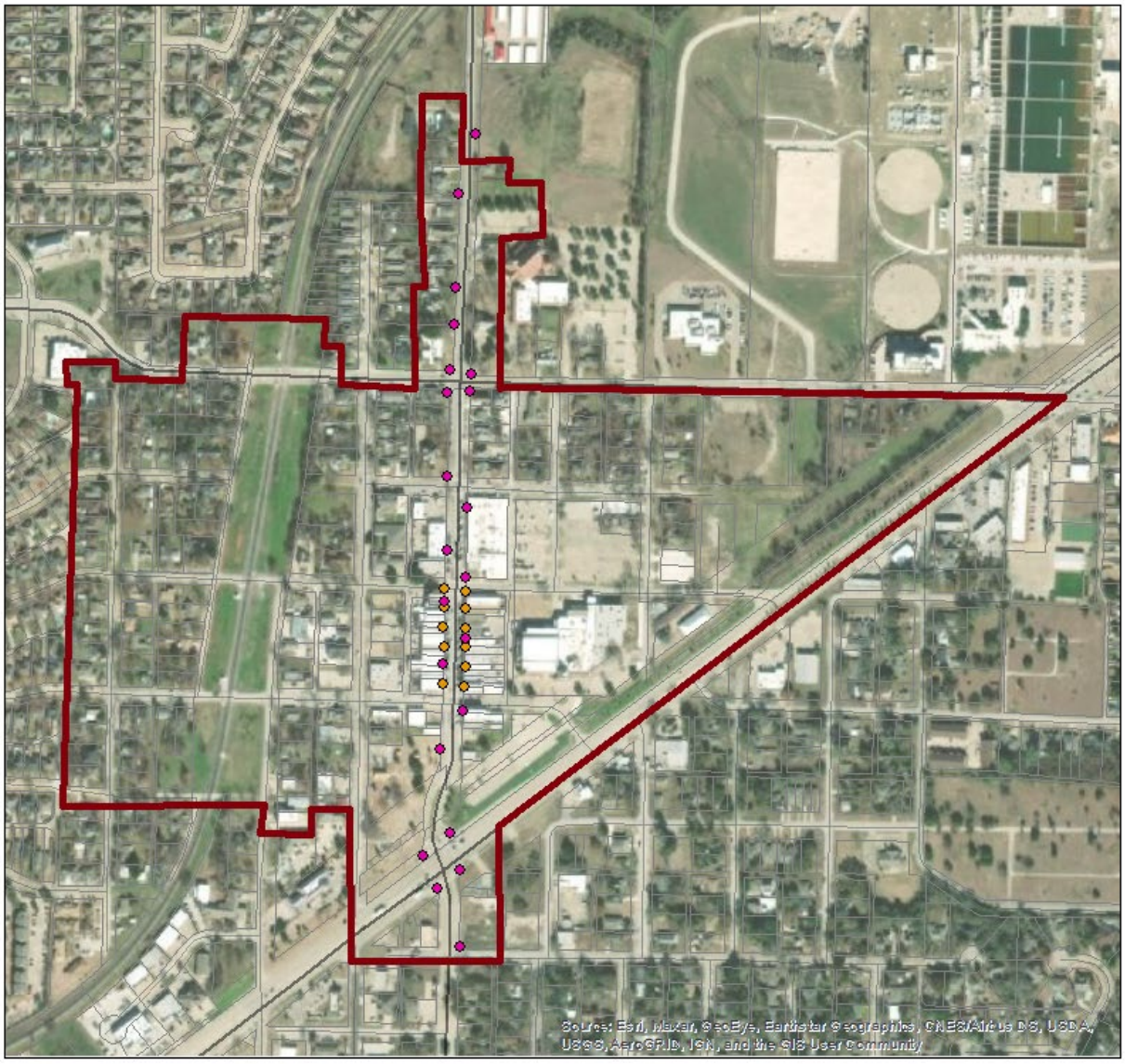
Pedestrian-scale lamppost in Downtown

This existing lighting is meant to serve pedestrians walking along Ballard Avenue, as many shops and businesses in Downtown are located in that area. Large planters are located around each lamppost. While the planters and lighting are pedestrian amenities that contribute to the comfort and safety of the pedestrian experience, they also have the effect of obstructing much of the existing sidewalk space. This can impede the movement of larger groups of pedestrians that may visit Downtown venues or events, as well as those pedestrians with mobility challenges. Existing lighting locations along Ballard Avenue can be seen in Exhibit 12.

Existing streetlight in Downtown

The overhang streetlights are meant to serve vehicle traffic or those parking along the corridor. There are fifteen streetlights located along Ballard Avenue between the north and south project limits.

Exhibit 12: Downtown Wylie Existing Lighting On Ballard Avenue



Legend

type

- Lamppost
- Overhead

Updated Project Boundary

0 0.125 0.25 Miles

N

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WAYFINDING

Existing parking and wayfinding signage in Downtown are limited, difficult to see, and have no consistent central theme or branding style. Locating and navigating to public parking areas in Downtown is currently a challenge for residents and visitors alike due to either a lack of signage, or existing signage being difficult to see or read. Minimal parking signage creates the illusion that there is not a lot of parking in or near Downtown, which is not the case as established by the parking study. Current signage also does not feature a consistent design which makes it more difficult for visitors to recognize them as directional signage. Lastly, there is no signage on surrounding streets that informs visitors and/or residents that they are in Downtown.

Example of existing signage and wayfinding

Example of existing wayfinding

BIKE/PED CONSIDERATIONS

With pedestrian safety being a large consideration for Downtown, it is important to highlight current issues and opportunities for improvement. Providing alternative options to access Downtown can be beneficial in many ways, including alleviating any strain on available public parking spaces. As a result of the walk audit, stakeholder meetings, and the community survey (Section III), some common concerns with related to bicycle and pedestrian safety and access have emerged which are discussed below.

As shown in Exhibit 3, sidewalks become very scarce near the railroad tracks between Birmingham Street and Keefer Street. This leaves a large residential neighborhood with minimal routes to Downtown that may discourage residents from walking or bicycling to Downtown. Not only does this cause Downtown to potentially lose customers, but it also forces the residents to drive Downtown while living only one-quarter mile away. Creating these vehicle trips means more traffic and more occupied parking spaces simply because there is not a good, direct route across the train tracks to Downtown.

In addition, Downtown stakeholders (see Section III) expressed concern about the lack of lighting and an overall uncomfortable feel off Ballard Avenue. Increased pedestrian presence and pedestrian lighting would help alleviate these concerns and potentially draw additional attention to current and future businesses that locate off Ballard Avenue.

An additional safety issue is the visibility and safety of pedestrians crossing the roadway. This is exacerbated by diagonal parking of large vehicles, which can prevent pedestrians from being able to see oncoming traffic until they are in the middle of the intersection. Traffic speeds Downtown also affect the visibility and safety of pedestrians crossing the street. There are currently various factors contributing to traffic speeds in Downtown, including vehicles coming off SH 78 and drivers not following the 25-mph speed limit. However, traffic congestion occurring during rush hour can create slower traffic speeds during those times which can result in safer crossing points. As a result, the negative impact of congestion on drivers can be a positive one for pedestrians. Ultimately balancing the tradeoffs is dependent on the priorities and goals of the community for Downtown.

Finally, there are currently no dedicated bicycle facilities in Downtown. Bicyclists currently are forced to use the sidewalk, which as discussed previously is often obstructed; or to ride in the roadway behind diagonally parked cars, which provides poor visibility for drivers to see oncoming bicyclists.

The City's Comprehensive Plan includes increasing the amount of hike/bike facilities and establishing more multi-modal connections as development goals for the future.

SURROUNDING TRANSPORTATION EFFORTS

It is important to note surrounding transportation efforts and the influence they could have on infrastructure improvements implemented in Downtown Wylie. There are two proposed roadway projects adjacent to Downtown Wylie that could impact traffic patterns, Downtown expansion plans, and various other components.

The Farm-to-Market Road (FM) 2514 or Parker Road project is a TxDOT-sponsored roadway expansion project that is planned to be constructed by 2025. The project limits are north of Brown Street to east of Lavon Parkway, and it will consist of reconstruction from a two-lane undivided roadway to a four-lane urban divided roadway. However, north of Park Boulevard, the roadway will be reconstructed with a wide median to enable future capacity expansion to six lanes. of the project will require right of way acquisition to accommodate the additional capacity; however, displacement of businesses and residences is not anticipated. The purpose of this project is to redirect heavy traffic on FM 2514 away from Ballard Avenue, specifically the section north of Brown Street.

In addition to the FM 2514 project, the Parker Road “Bypass” project would further supplement regional traffic diversion away from Downtown Wylie. Currently, commuters trying to get the State Highway (SH) 78 corridor from Parker Road must turn onto Brown Street or continue through Downtown Wylie. The bypass would provide a more desirable east-west route, redirecting more commuter traffic out of Downtown to/from the east, and connecting to SH 78 at the existing Spring Creek Parkway/Kreymer Lane intersection.

CONCLUSION

The existing conditions analysis found that there are both opportunities and challenges for improving Downtown Wylie as a pedestrian-oriented destination and expanding the Downtown footprint. Existing signage and wayfinding, parking, pedestrian and bicycle safety, and roadway reconfigurations are all elements that City leaders and the community will need to further assess to identify the various tradeoffs and priorities as they move forward with establishing goals and an overall vision for Downtown.

III. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

The stakeholder meeting process began with a kickoff meeting on February 19, 2019 at Wylie City Hall. Attendees includes staff members from NCTCOG, the City of Wylie, and the Wylie Economic Development Corporation. Meeting content included a project background and scope of work presentation, the planned Walker Consultants parking study, current conditions, and issues in the Downtown Wylie area. More technical aspects, such as data needs and project timelines, were discussed by the group as well.

The second stakeholder meeting occurred on April 3, 2019 at the Brown House in Wylie. Attendees included various City staff members, as well as owners of businesses in Downtown Wylie and other members of the community. Stakeholders were encouraged to provide input on the current conditions and known issues and concerns in Downtown Wylie. The discussion primarily focused on traffic, pedestrian safety, parking, events, and next steps in the development of the Strategic Plan.

The third stakeholder meeting took place on December 3, 2019 with the same group in attendance as well as additional Downtown merchants representing the Wylie Downtown Merchants Association. NCTCOG staff led a visioning exercise to help stakeholders identify their preferred goals for Downtown Wylie. Stakeholders were asked to describe the Downtown area today and their vision for it in the future (Exhibit 23), as well as indicating desired goals for the area. Both positive aspects and challenges of the present Downtown Wylie were listed by meeting attendees. Themes included the historic, friendly, changing/growing, and small town feel of Downtown, while current challenges included the restriction of Downtown to Ballard Avenue, traffic, lack of business

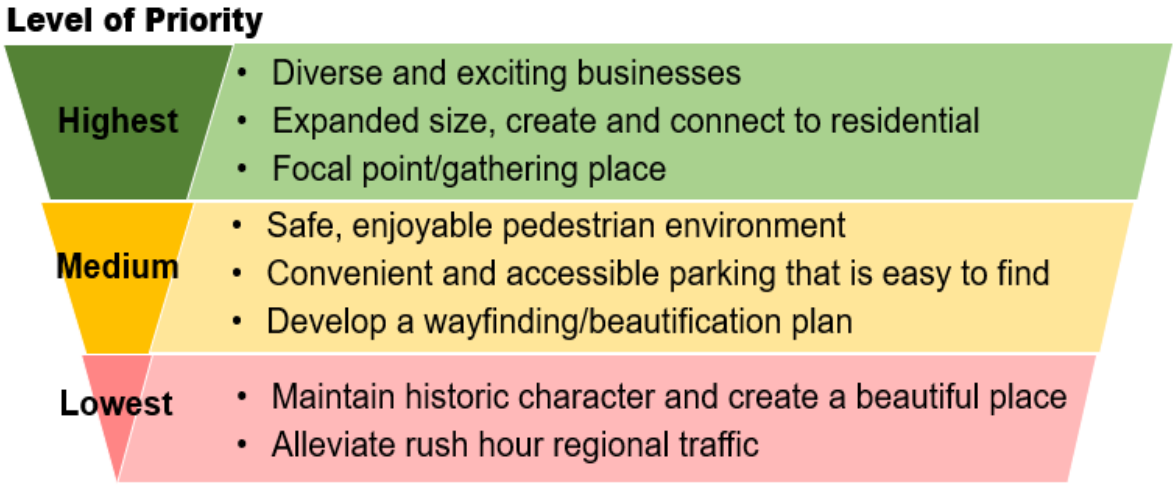
diversity, run-down feel in some areas, and the lack of being a destination due to being unknown throughout the region. The discussion of what is desired for the future of Downtown resulted in the following key concepts:

- Draw in businesses that have extended hours
- Be a destination
- Draw in people from Wylie and surrounding cities
- Maintain small town/historic feel
- Increase landscaping, uniformity, and activity
- Create or extend sidewalks and gathering places

Regarding the desired goals for Downtown Wylie, meeting attendees were asked to place dots next to draft goal statements. The goals were then prioritized from highest to lowest, as seen in Exhibit 1. The most favored statements included:

- Make the area safer and more enjoyable to walk around in with wider and connected sidewalks and safer street crossings
- Address concerns about the availability of parking and increase ease of parking through signage
- Expand the diversity of businesses (e.g. more restaurants, bars, etc.)
- Encourage business growth on side and parallel streets

Exhibit 13: Priority Goals



The final stakeholder meeting was held virtually on July 27, 2020. During this meeting, NCTCOG staff presented data collected on traffic and pedestrian counts, current pedestrian and parking conditions, and the project timeline. In addition, NCTCOG staff discussed the results of the public survey that was distributed for citizens and stakeholders in 2019. Lastly, staff discussed possible concepts for consideration related to pedestrian infrastructure improvements, wayfinding, parking, and Ballard Avenue roadway reconfiguration.

ONLINE SURVEY

An online survey was published and distributed for citizens and stakeholders from September 11, 2019 to October 31, 2019. The survey questions and complete survey results are shown in Appendix X. The 19-question online survey experienced a lot of public engagement, receiving a total of 586 responses. Key topics included frequency/timing/visits to Downtown, event attendance, opinion of outdoor seating, distance Downtown visitors are willing to walk from parking, desired improvements, and the experience of pedestrian safety. Other major findings regrading pedestrian experience and parking are discussed below.

General questions regarding the Downtown environment and reasons for visiting are shown in Exhibits 14 and 15. Most survey respondents answered the charm/character and historic buildings are the most-liked characteristics of Downtown, followed by the local businesses and events. As observed in Exhibit 15, many respondents stated that more restaurant options and more diverse business options would likely increase their visits to Downtown.

Exhibit 14: Survey Response

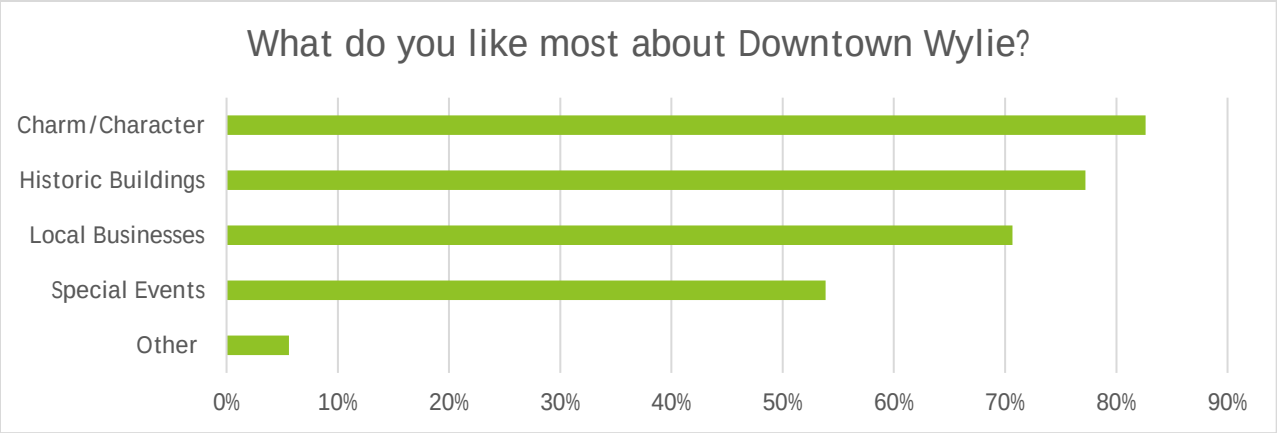
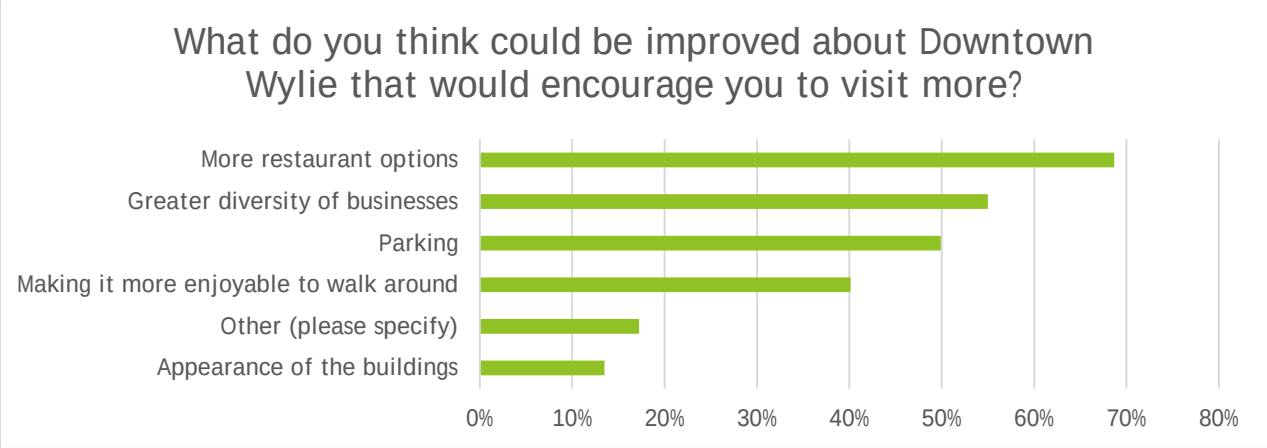


Exhibit 15: Survey Response



Pedestrian Experience

The general consensus regarding the pedestrian experience was that the area currently has good pedestrian amenities such as planters and benches, but there are missing or narrow sidewalks, a feeling of crowding and encroachment from parked vehicles and amenities blocking the sidewalk space, little space for outdoor dining, wide street crossings with poor visibility, and pedestrian safety concerns.

50% of survey respondents answered that they usually feel safe when crossing streets in Downtown. Primary reasons cited for unsafe experiences related to motor vehicles included motor vehicle speed, drivers not yielding to pedestrians in crosswalks, driver/pedestrian visibility, and driver inattention.

Parking Availability

As depicted in Exhibit 16, half of the survey respondents are willing to park up to two blocks from their destination, which coincides well with the abundance of existing parking on side streets off Ballard Avenue. However, approximately 41% of respondents answered that they only "sometimes" attend events Downtown due to difficulty finding parking and/or events not being of interest to them (see Exhibit 17). The difficulty of parking is also reflected in Exhibit 17, where respondents were asked why they rarely or never attend events Downtown. As previously mentioned, there is adequate parking supply on and off Ballard Avenue. However, there is lack of uniform/noticeable wayfinding and signage directing drivers to existing parking. This is further address in Section IV.

Exhibit 16: Survey Response

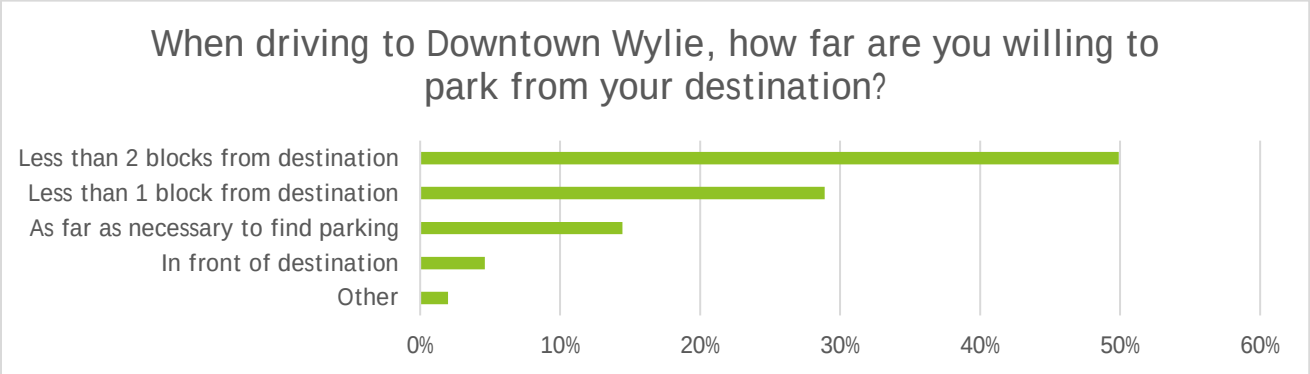
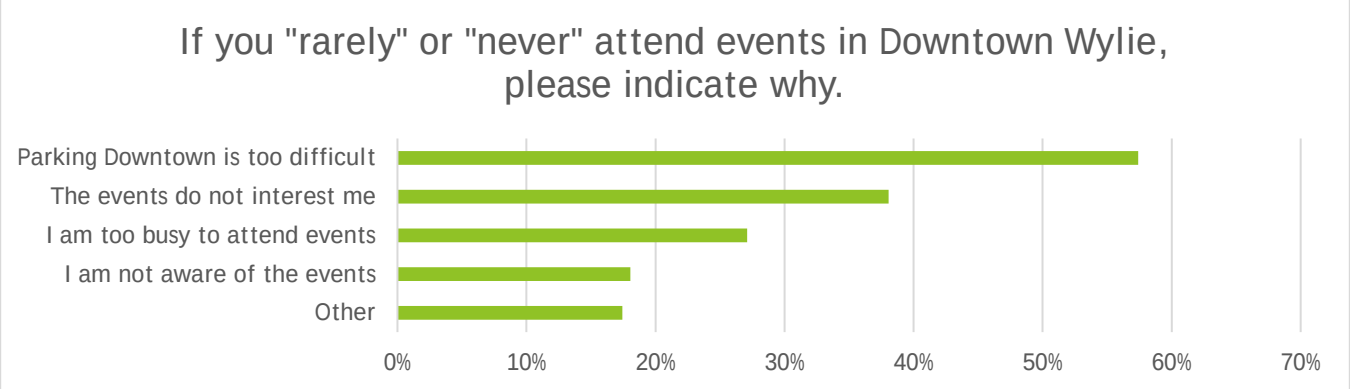


Exhibit 17: Survey Response



IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Various recommendations and possible treatments that, if applied, could be beneficial to Downtown Wylie are outlined below. Key data, stakeholder feedback, existing conditions analysis results, and other information were compiled to develop the recommendations. Topics can be categorized into land use/zoning, parking, pedestrian experience and safety, lighting, roadway reconfiguration, and a brief discussion on one-way versus two-way street tradeoffs.

LAND USE AND ZONING

Staff reviewed Wylie's Zoning with the City's Future Land Use designations (Exhibit 18) and found that overall, the plans were consistent with one another so that zoning ordinances are in place to bring about the established future land use vision. The below sections focus on potential zoning ordinance updates and concepts to the City may want to consider, as well as using or considering the addition of more green, open spaces.

Zoning

Review of the City's zoning codes determined that the current setback requirements for the CR District could impede the future increase of pedestrian use if the district remains. Currently a 25-foot setback in the front, with 10 feet on either side of a building, is required. These standards may make this area less inviting to pedestrians and Downtown patrons than the Downtown Historic District, which instead calls for commercial buildings to be placed on the front property line but may be moved back from the property line a total of four feet to provider for wider sidewalks and entries. Such zoning standards would also result in less continuity of the current Downtown character, instead resulting in a more suburban look and feel. First Baptist Wylie is located within the CR District, which was discussed as possibly being an opportunity for shared parking. If that were the case, a lot of pedestrian traffic would be moving between the church and the Downtown core, so a more pedestrian-oriented code for setbacks may be worth considering.

Form-Based Codes

NCTCOG has available a *Sustainable Zoning Guidebook,* which focuses on zoning approaches that encourage walkable, mixed-use, and transit-oriented development. A large portion of the guidebook covers Form-Based Codes, which are flexible zoning regulations that aim to achieve predictable development results by focusing on the physical form of structures rather than the permitted land uses and the separation of uses. NCTCOG staff studied the application of form-based codes in the DFW area and resources for the City of Wylie staff to potentially implement such codes in the Downtown Historic district.

Examples of key form-based code components that have been used around the region include:

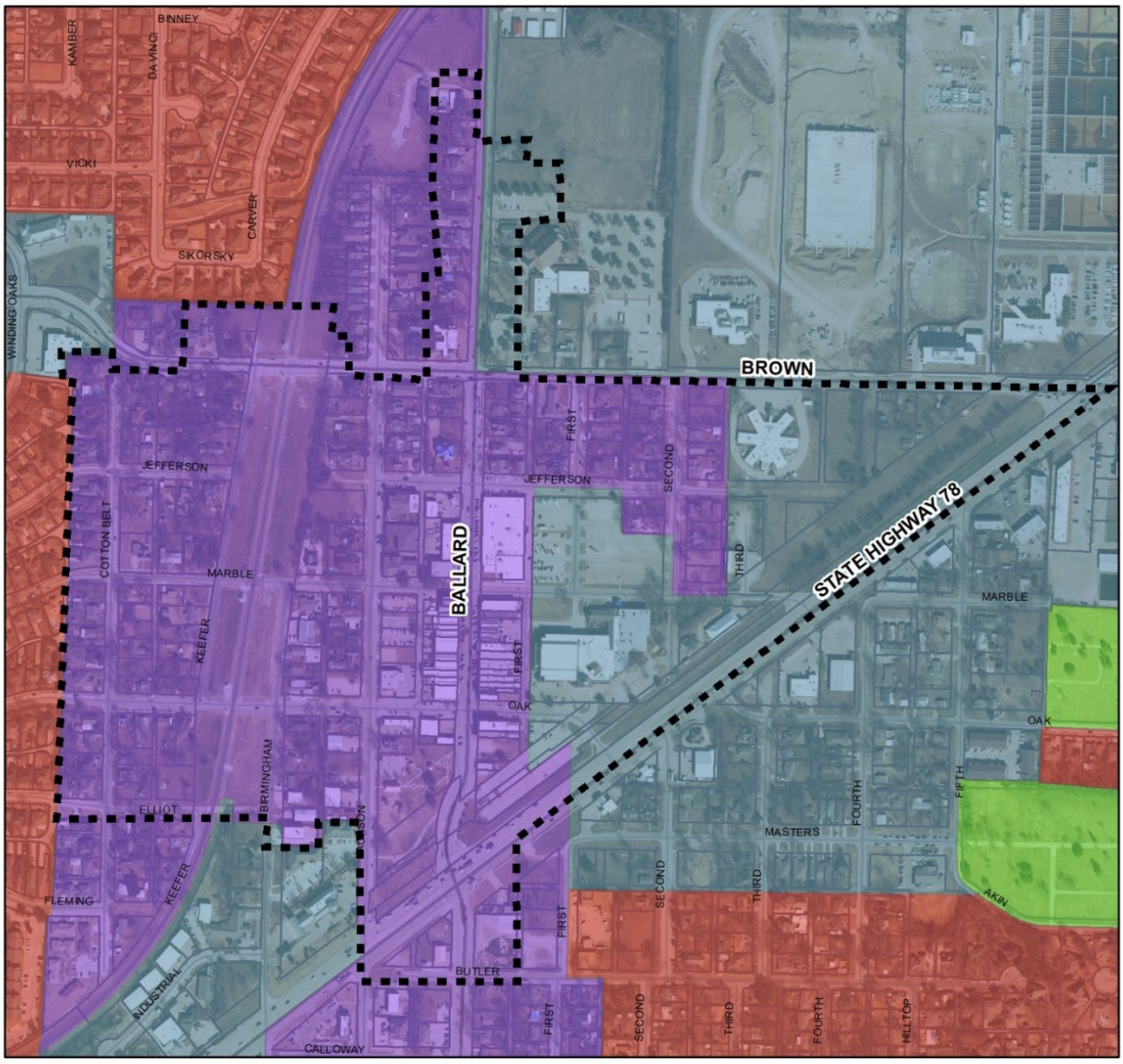
- Façade requirement of 60-80% windows or doors
- Canopies or awnings to provide shelter and shade to pedestrians
- Building entries inset at least 4-feet from the front façade to create an entryway
- Using only durable materials such as stone or brick on the first level of a building

Staff recommends that Wylie staff explore the use of form-based codes to further assist in achieving Downtown goals. Challenges to implementing form-based codes could include public opinion or historic building limitations. However, implementing form-based codes in and around Downtown may help the City expand the existing Downtown footprint and achieve walkability goals as new development and redevelopment occurs in the area.

Green and Open Space

Another recommendation is to increase the usage of or create more green space or open areas in Downtown. These spaces could be used as gathering places for events, which could increase the number of visitors. The closest green space to Downtown currently is Olde City Park, which is located in the southern portion of the project study area. The City should assess and consider development of other green areas or open spaces in Downtown to potentially increase visitor attendance.

Exhibit 18: Downtown Wylie Future Land Use Designation



PARKING

As discussed in Existing Conditions, Downtown Wylie has approximately 300 public spots within two blocks of Ballard Avenue that is usually available to visitors, but wayfinding and event parking create challenges.

There may be additional parking opportunities in Downtown if the City seeks a partnership with surrounding churches, specifically the First Baptist Wylie (FBW) located one block from Ballard Avenue. The FBW has 502 spaces that could be used for particular events or during the week. The FBW parking needs predominately occur on weekends, and they may be amenable to formalizing the allowance of public parking or employee parking in their parking lot during weekdays. Based on discussions during the stakeholder kick-off meeting, this already occurs on an ad-hoc basis in FBW's parking lots. A formal agreement would also help alleviate concerns Church representatives expressed about allowing regular public parking on their property, including liability concerns and insurance, lot maintenance, and hours of public availability. FBW representatives present at the stakeholder meetings indicated that the FBW is open to discussions regarding a shared parking agreement.

Event Parking Recommendations

The parking study also recommended to work with the FBW, St. Anthony's Catholic Church, and other interested participants to develop an event parking plan and event tracking system for Downtown, to be coordinated and maintained by a designated City staff person. Among the goals would be reduced occurrences of conflicting events, and a clear set of procedures, policies and terms for parking use and management during events. Overall, staff recommends seeking a shared parking agreement with the nearby churches to begin the process of creating more parking opportunities.

Increasing coordination between surrounding businesses and organizations is a key recommendation made by Walker regarding event parking management. An option for event organization could be developing an event tracking system that groups events into different categories by size, which could allow Downtown stakeholders to better plan parking to prevent

conflicting occurrences that would induce crowding in the area. To take this a step further, the City could work with stakeholders to develop different parking options or plans based on event size.

The City could also explore the option of having valet parking during large events or on weekends. The City of McKinney has implemented a similar program as a part of the curb management practices outlined in their Downtown Parking Management Study. The public service operates on Fridays and Saturdays and is managed by a partnership between two Downtown businesses. This program utilized an already existing valet service and extended it to other Downtown visitors with a fee. Customers can have their parking validated by the participating businesses if they visit either business or pay $7 per vehicle otherwise. The City ran a trial period of this service and found it to be successful with 3,800 customers who participated.

Wayfinding and Signage Recommendations

Improving signage and wayfinding to public parking facilities will alleviate the perception that there is no parking available. As unfamiliar users, it was unclear to the review team which off-street parking lots are considered public parking. Signage should be provided at each location where public parking is allowed and could be as simple as a blue “P” parking symbol on the approaches to public facilities. Additionally, wayfinding signs should be placed in strategic locations approaching the Downtown to direct patrons to these facilities. The below photos show two examples of simple, clear parking signage. Signage and wayfinding could also serve as an opportunity to further Downtown branding efforts by integrating parking signage packages with a general wayfinding package sharing information about Downtown with visitors.

Example parking signage

Example parking wayfinding

Imagery Provided by Walker Consultants

The current matter of lacking signage in Downtown could be addressed with the addition of more strategically placed, uniformly styled signage. Placing more signs in and around Downtown could alleviate the perception of a lack of parking serving Ballard Avenue that currently exists, as well as aid visitors in getting to the Downtown core. Current signs are small and/or obstructed by other signs or items in the right-of-way. As addressed in the existing conditions section, there is also a lack of “announcement” that one has made it to Downtown. The City could implement an archway sign or large “Welcome to Downtown Wylie” sign on the outer boundaries of the area to notify visitors of their arrival. An example can be seen in in the above photos.

Example of gateway signage

Imagery Provided by City of Pantego

PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE AND SAFETY

Sidewalk and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant curb ramp conditions in Downtown were assessed by NCTCOG and Wylie staff through a walk audit, as previously discussed in the Existing Conditions section. Key conclusions from the audit were 1) there are areas of major disconnect in the sidewalk network throughout the study area, 2) there are sidewalks in need of additional maintenance or resizing, and 3) existing crossings and ADA treatments on Ballard Avenue are not ideal for a safe and comfortable pedestrian experience. There are various areas within the study site to upgrade sidewalks and ADA ramps to be added. If the City chooses to pursue upgrades, identifying available funding and developing specific priority areas to prioritize key locations will be a crucial first step. When selecting sidewalk improvement projects in the future, two major factors that should be considered include pedestrian safety and providing alternative access to Downtown.

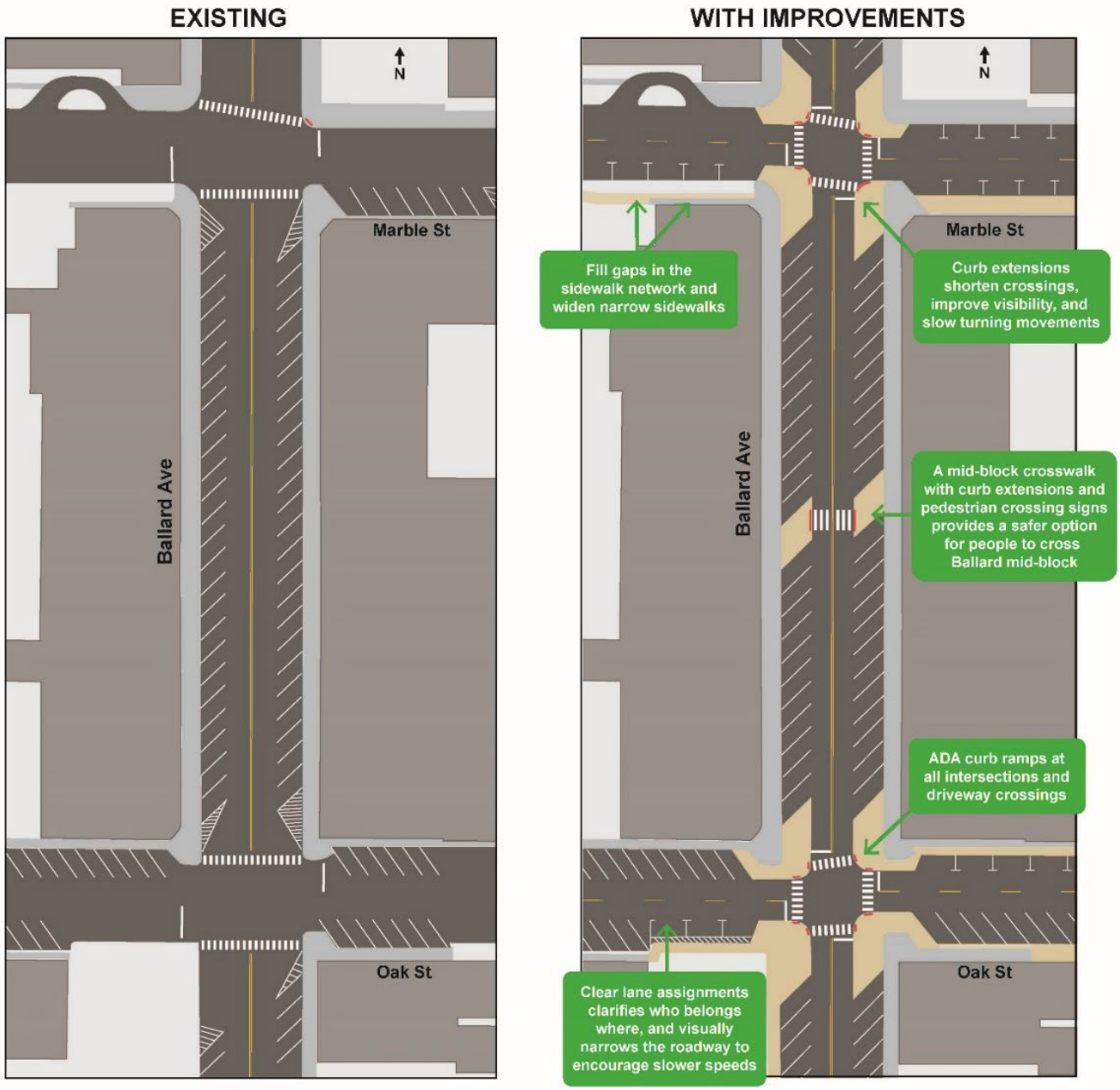
In addition to sidewalk improvements, a number of treatment options exist to improve the pedestrian experience in and around Downtown. One potential option that can allow pedestrians to cross the street more safely is bulb-outs, also known as curb extensions, at intersections throughout the Downtown core (see Exhibit 19). Bulb-outs are enlarged pedestrian refuge areas

that extend further into the roadway at the intersection, allowing pedestrians to see further down the street and around vehicles parked diagonally without needing to walk into the roadway. Bulb-outs additionally reduce the street crossing distance for pedestrians, reducing the chance of a conflict with a motor vehicle. A bulb-out would be especially effective for pedestrians on the southeast corner of Ballard Avenue and Marble Street because of the large intersection. Inserting a bulb-out here would shorten the pedestrian crossing.

Other treatment options to increase pedestrian safety could include installing ADA curb ramps at all intersections and driveway cross-sections, as well as upgrading existing curb ramps to current design standards. Curb ramps are critical to providing safe access for mobility- or vision-impaired pedestrians when entering the street from the sidewalk. To maximize accessibility and safety for all pedestrians, curb ramp designs should attempt to meet all of the best practices for curb ramp design as determined by the Federal Highway Administration Bicycle and Pedestrian Program (Appendix X).

Clear lane assignments through paint and striping would also help alleviate current pedestrian and motor vehicle conflict points along Ballard Avenue. Identifying and improving specific parking and driving lane boundaries could make the roadway interactions feel safer among drivers, pedestrians, and those parking. Lastly, traffic calming measures and reduced travel lane widths can help create more narrow travel lanes, which can encourage slower motorist speed. Traffic calming measures could include diagonal parking, bulb-outs, street trees, narrower driving lanes, and other treatments.

Exhibit 19: Pedestrian and Safety Improvements Options



IMPROVEMENT EXAMPLES

Lane Striping/Defining the Roadway

ADA Curb Ramp

Bulb-out/Curb Extension

Mid-Block Crosswalk

LIGHTING

Existing lighting consists of a mixture of streetlamps and pedestrian-scale lampposts. Installing more lampposts or other pedestrian-friendly lighting could make pedestrians feel more comfortable walking at night and as a result, could improve nightlife activity in the Downtown core. Also, some of the current sidewalk lighting obstructs the sidewalk area, as well as planters, so if no sidewalk changes are made installing less bulky lighting could free up space for pedestrians or other activities. The City should assess possible conflicts that could arise with installing new lighting and ROW construction, such as underground utilities, electrical components, etc.

More specifically, pedestrian lighting creates better safety for navigating sidewalks and pathways, provides visibility and security at all hours, extends hours a business district is active, encourages walking as part of an active lifestyle, and improves access to transit and other services at night/early morning.

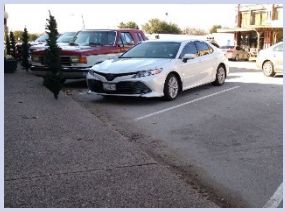
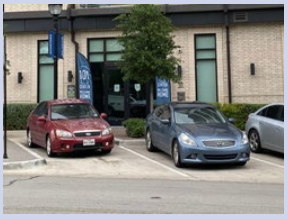
PARKING RECONFIGURATIONS

Another major consideration which also affects how the roadway can be configured is the type of parking desired. This table compares the three basic types of parking. Parallel parking requires the least right of way which frees up space on the roadway for other uses but allows the least amount of parking to be placed on the roadway. Parallel parking creates better pedestrian and driver visibility but also requires through-traffic to wait while another vehicle is parking. Traditional angled parking increases the amount of parking stalls that can be provided; however, it also requires through-traffic to wait and provides poor visibility when exiting the stall. Back-in parking

Parallel Parking	Traditional Angled Parking	Back In Parking
Uses minimal ROW width	Approximately 6-7 stalls per 100 feet	Better cargo loading
Easier to enter traffic due to increased visibility over angled parking	Provides space to exit vehicle outside of regular traffic	Safer for traffic, bicyclists, and children
Approximately 5 stalls per 100 feet	Lower visibility exiting stall	Better sight distance exiting stall
Driver side door opens into traffic		Increased capacity over parallel parking
		Approximately 6-7 stalls per 100 feet

is a newer concept that allows safer and easier cargo loading and good visibility when exiting the parking space into traffic. Back-in angled parking allows for vehicle loading at the curb and businesses instead of the street, which provides added safety. It is being used by cities like Denton, Arlington, and others in the region. See Exhibit 20 for photo examples of each parking type and additional specifications.

Exhibit 20: Example Photos of Parking Types

Parallel Parking	Traditional Angled Parking	Back In Parking
		

ROADWAY RECONFIGURATION

A roadway reconfiguration on Ballard Avenue may also add operational improvements to the area. Roadway reconfigurations redesign the existing roadway to meet the goals of the community. They can range from basic restriping up to total roadway reconstruction. Roadway reconfigurations can increase safety, mobility, and access. This option can also help increase pedestrian comfort and safety by reconfiguring the roadway in a way that reduces speeds and crashes and allows for improved pedestrian infrastructure.

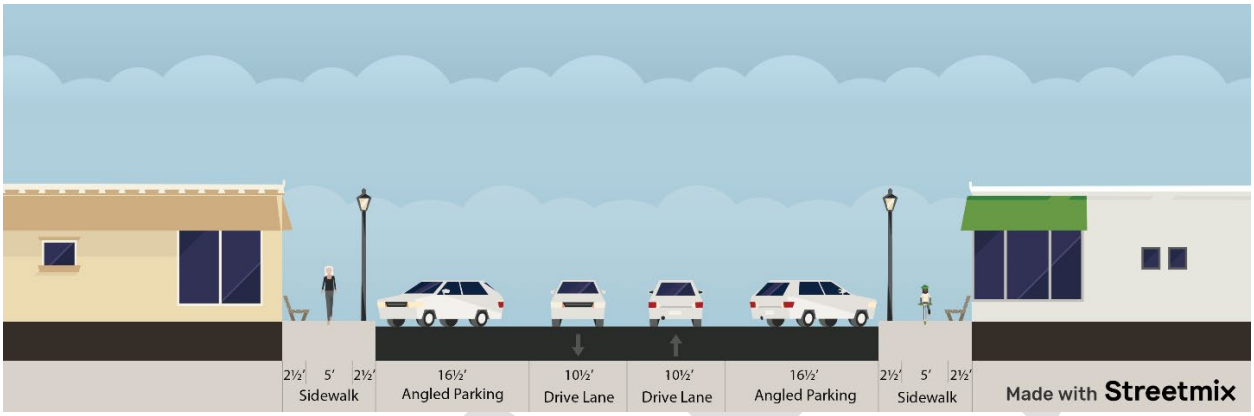
This section will discuss the existing cross-section on Ballard Avenue and two possible reconfiguration concepts and provide benefits and disadvantages of each.

Both reconfiguration concepts explored Ballard Avenue from Marble Street to Oak Street. As previously discussed, the existing cross-section along Ballard Avenue consists of 74 feet of right-of-way, divided into 10-foot sidewalks on either side, 15-foot pull-in angled parking on both sides, and a 12-foot travel lane in each direction.

CONCEPT 1:

The first roadway configuration concept, as seen in Exhibit 21, includes a 9-foot sidewalk and 18-foot angled parking on both sides of the street, with a 10-foot travel lane in each direction.

Exhibit 21: Cross-section Concept 1



Pros

Overall improvements for this concept include lengthening angled parking to properly fit vehicles, fixing the sidewalk/travel lane encroachment issue. The resulting reduced travel lane width would encourage lower traffic speeds, which would increase pedestrian safety along the corridor. Also, this option would aid with the current crowding issues related to parking because the parking stall size would increase.

Cons

Cons of this option include the sight challenges remaining for both pedestrians and drivers, and the roadway remaining relatively wide. This results in a long crossing distance and therefore longer crossing time for pedestrians, which decreases pedestrian safety. In addition, the narrow 10-foot lanes may result in an increased incidence of side-swipe accidents, particularly with larger trucks.

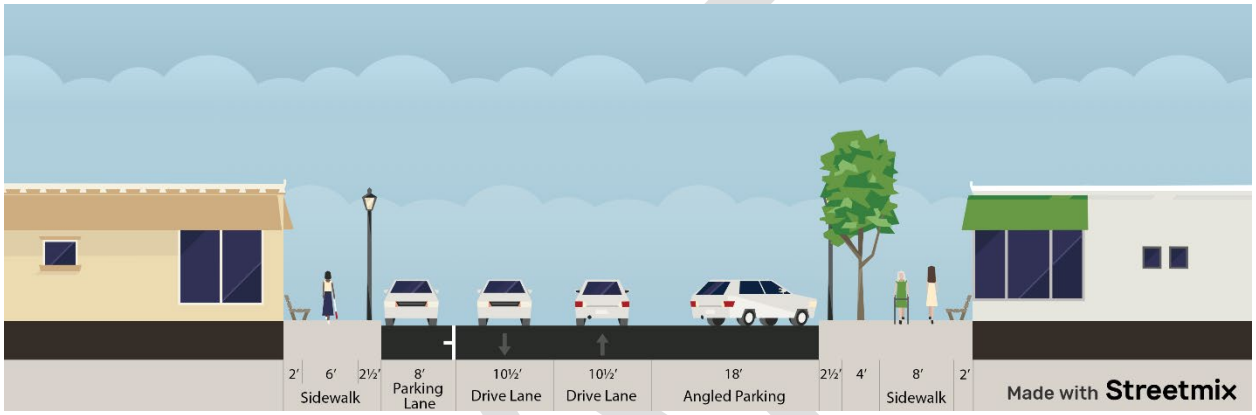
CONCEPT 2:

The second roadway reconfiguration concept features the following (see Exhibit 22):

- 10.5 foot sidewalk on one side

- 16.5 foot sidewalk on other side
- 8 foot parallel parking on same side as smaller sidewalk
- 18 foot angled parking on same side as larger sidewalk
- 10.5 foot driving lanes in each direction

Exhibit 22: Cross-section Concept 2



Pros

Improvements for this option include reduced width of travel lanes, which reduces pedestrian crossing distances and may encourage reduced motor vehicle travel speeds; parallel parking on one side, allowing for more space that can be designated to other uses; and widened sidewalks on both sides of the street to create more space for possible café-style seating, street trees, and larger groups of pedestrians. Visibility for drivers and pedestrians is increased by the use of parallel parking on one side, and a shorter travel distance across the street increases safety for pedestrians. Reduced motor vehicle speeds may result in slower traffic and more congestion. In addition to the pedestrian safety benefit, this increased congestion can be a benefit to businesses on Ballard Avenue because drivers moving more slowly through Downtown are more likely to see and frequent businesses, and to view Downtown as a destination versus a place to pass through on their way to somewhere else.

Cons

The “pro” of reduced travel speeds that could result from reduced driving lane width is good for pedestrians. However, it could create more traffic congestion on Ballard Avenue, especially during peak traffic times. The City will ultimately need to evaluate the tradeoffs associated with the reduced lane width. If the City wants traffic to move slower through Downtown to increase business visibility, then this option may be beneficial. However, if the City wants traffic to pass through quickly, further analysis of this option should be considered.

Also, option two would reduce the total amount of parking spaces on Ballard Avenue by 15 spaces, but six spots could be gained back through the use of curb extensions. While this option would reduce the number of spaces with immediate access to store fronts, there is adequate parking within a two-block distance from Ballard Avenue which needs improved signage and wayfinding, as discussed in the parking analysis.

ONE-WAY VS TWO-WAY

Another option for Downtown that stakeholders have expressed interest in exploring is converting Ballard Avenue to a one-lane one-way street. Staff conducted an analysis of the pros and cons of such a conversion versus maintaining the current two-way configuration, and reviewed this option considering stakeholders’ feedback regarding preferred goals for Downtown. Further exploration of this component was outside of the scope of work for the study and will need additional analysis if pursued by the City.

V. IMPLEMENTATION STEPS AND STRATEGIES

Given the above assessment of the existing conditions and provided recommendations, the City should consider the following next steps to further its redevelopment strategy for Downtown Wylie. The following section will outline the recommended next steps in order of the assumed length of time the recommendation would take to develop.

SHORT TERM PROJECT COMPONENTS

Parking Program

A short-term, relatively low-cost project component is to develop a parking plan for Downtown Wylie. This plan could consist of the various existing conditions, most significant issues, community input, and recommendations as outlined in this report. The plan could also take a deeper look into the development of a Downtown Parking Corporation, which would manage parking and events in the area. The City should proceed with seeking a shared parking agreement with FBW and investigate developing a detailed event parking management plan with the various Downtown stakeholders. Overall, certain pieces of the parking program could be developed or implemented within a few months, while a detailed plan may take longer.

Wayfinding/Signage

As outlined in previous sections, the addressing the perceived parking issue in Downtown will help the City further its Downtown economic development goals. A further look into signage options and placement to direct drivers to already existing public parking available within two blocks of Ballard Avenue could be a good way to start this process. Installing new wayfinding and signage could be a short-term component to implement; however, it could also be medium-high cost depending on if the City would like to engage in a larger and more comprehensive downtown marketing branding and marketing strategy that includes signage.

Community Engagement

Staff recommends conducting outreach with the general public regarding the cross-section concepts, one-way versus two-way streets option, and overall vision and goals for Downtown

development. This item could be short-term and relatively low cost to implement and could include a public survey regarding the roadway reconfigurations and meetings aimed at presenting proposed alternatives to the general public for feedback. Plans such as this one are more likely to be accepted by the community and implemented by the City if there is a thorough public outreach and vetting process.

Sidewalk Improvements

Another short-term item Staff recommends is identifying priority areas for sidewalk improvements and seeking or allocating funds to such areas. Managing some of the previously identified sidewalk obstructions could also be done in the interim.

MID-TERM PROJECT COMPONENTS

Budget and Funding Strategies

Preparing a budget will help further outline priority areas for specific project components. There are many places to apply funding in Downtown currently, so attaching a monetary component will enable the City to list its priority areas and outline future projects. Further community engagement will be beneficial to assess City priorities.

A combination of funding sources will be necessary to achieve community goals for Downtown Wylie. As is typical in any infrastructure improvement project, a myriad of options are available, including both public and public/private partnership sources. The following discussion outlines some key funding sources and strategies that can be used to secure the necessary funding for downtown Wylie improvements.

Capital Improvements Programs

Capital Improvement Programs (CIPs) consist of scheduling selected physical plans and facilities for a community over a certain period of time. Improvements are based on series of priorities, often set by the community, stakeholders, and the City. A CIP would allow the City of Wylie to budget for infrastructure improvements through prioritization.

Bonds

Municipal bonds are issued by municipalities to raise funds necessary to pay for desired infrastructure and other capital improvements. Bonds are attractive to investors because they offer tax free interest and are guaranteed investments. A bond could be a creative solution to fund the cost of infrastructure improvements in Downtown Wylie.

The City should consider coordinating with Collin County on possible partnerships in future County bond initiatives.

Public Improvement District

A Public Improvement District (PID) is a special assessment area created so that property owners finance specific types of maintenance or improvements. A PID can fund supplemental improvements (including infrastructure, landscaping, and design elements) that would not otherwise be constructed. In general, a PID should serve a very specific purpose, and needs to be self-sufficient so it does not impact the standard services that are provided by the City. PIDs should only be implemented in targeted areas of a community.

The creation of a PID around Downtown Wylie would help fund the infrastructure improvements and help the area achieve unique aesthetic, design, and character-making goals.

A PID would be most likely to succeed if the business owners, landowners, and other stakeholders agreed that its creation would spur positive change along the corridor and to their properties.

Tax Increment Financing District

A Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District is a special area where the increment in tax revenue is used within the district for capital improvement projects. As new development results in higher property values, the value of the resulting tax increase is paid into the TIF fund, which is used to finance improvements such as landscaping, lighting, renovations, demolitions, etc. The goal of a TIF is to leverage existing public and private investment to fund additional public

improvements in the designated area. TIFs are a creative a way for a community to invigorate a specific area without drawing funds from other municipality coffers.

Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program

The Federal Highway Administration funds the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TA Set-Aside) Program, a set-aside of the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program. General types of eligible projects include on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, shared-use paths, Safe Routes to School projects, and related pedestrian and bicycle safety countermeasures. Specific project eligibility is determined with each TA Set-Aside Call for Projects. Funding was awarded for the last TA Set-Aside Call for Projects in 2020. Calls are generally anticipated to take place approximately every two years, but their timing and scope is dependent on future federal funding levels.

The addition of shared-use bicycle paths, pedestrian amenities, and the completion of a connected sidewalk network could make the project a candidate for submission for a TA Set-Aside grant.

Zoning

Staff recommends the City complete further study of the feasibility of implementing form-based codes in Downtown Wylie. To be successful, this would require extensive public outreach and education regarding what is being proposed, the goals, and the benefits and impacts. Implementation of a form-based code could happen anywhere from short-long term, depending on the scale of what is implemented and the degree of public acceptance of the change.

LONG TERM PROJECT COMPONENTS

Roadway Reconfiguration

The two roadway reconfiguration concepts given in Section IV should be further studied by the City for community input on alternatives, funding, feasibility, and cost. Also, further study will be needed to assess the feasibility of a one-way versus two-way option, including public outreach, cost estimates, and preliminary engineering. If either is implemented, roadway construction

could take years which the City should also assess the impacts of on Downtown. This project component is long-term and high-cost due to the nature of construction project timelines and funding requirements.