

City of Rockdale, Texas 2050 MID-CENTURY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

July, 2024

Letter from City Leadership

To be completed after adoption.

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ROCKDALE



COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Past

Pre-Rockdale

The land that Rockdale, Texas now stands on was once the homeland of the Tonkawan Indians, who inhabited Central Texas in the sixteenth century. They were known as the Tonkawa, which derived from the Waco Indian word "tonkaweya," meaning "they all stay together," while they referred to themselves as "tickenwatic." The Tonkawa comprised independent bands such as Mayeye, Yojane, Ervipiame, and others. However, they faced challenges from the Lipan Apaches and Spaniards before contending with Anglo-American encroachment in the nineteenth century.

In the early eighteenth century, Spanish missions were established near Rockdale. These included Mission San Francisco Xavier de Horcasitas, Mission San Ildefonso and Nuestra Senora de la Candelaria, situated at the junction of Brushy Creek and the San Xavier River. The missions encountered difficulties, enduring Apache attacks and internal disputes. In 1755, they were ultimately abandoned due to unfavorable conditions and conflicts, bringing an end to Spanish occupation in the area.

Following the mission era, there was a historical gap until the early 1820s when American settlers arrived, seeking land grants from Mexico. Figures like Robert Leftwich and Sterling C. Robertson explored the region and established settlements in Milam County, where Rockdale is located. By 1836, over 120 families had settled in the county, with the first town, Nashville, emerging on the west bank of the Brazos River, near Little River's mouth.



Acequia de Mission San Francisco Xavier de Horcasitas, Milam County, Texas.
Source: Christopher Talbot. Courtesy of NPS.

In the ensuing years, pioneers like Captain B. M. Hutchinson and Dr. T. E. Riddle settled near Rockdale, laying the foundation for the town's growth. The area faced occasional Indian raids but experienced relative peace after Texas attained statehood in 1845. With steady development, Rockdale became a thriving settlement, adding to the rich historical heritage of Central Texas. Over time, the town's story unfolded, shaped by the interactions of diverse cultures and communities. The early presence of Tonkawa Indians, Spanish missionaries, and American pioneers, each contributing to Rockdale's unique history.¹

¹ Hodgeo, S. (n.d.). "INDIANS, "JARS AND ANGLO-AMERICANS".
[Http://www.Usgarchives.net/](http://www.Usgarchives.net/). <http://www.usgarchives.net/tx/milam/history/pg007.htm>

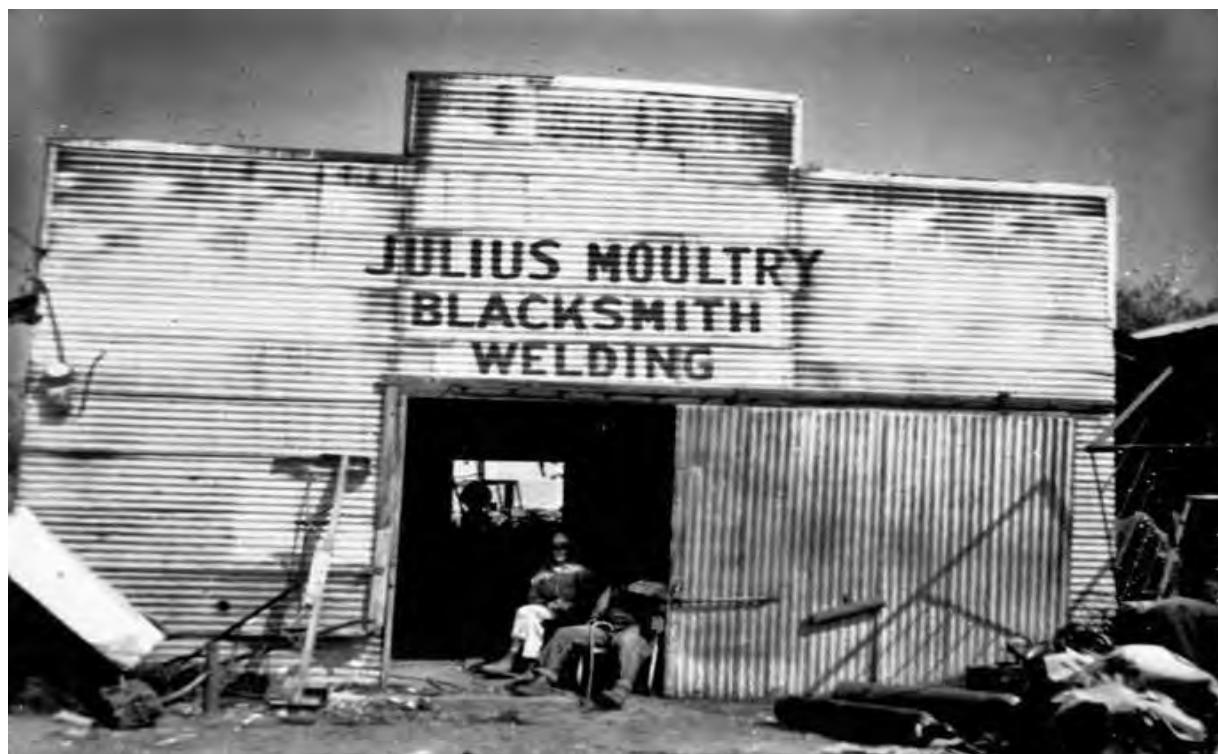
Early Rockdale

Rockdale was founded during the construction of the International and Great Northern Railroad. Settlers arrived in 1873 upon learning about a potential town along the rail line. It quickly developed into "Tent City" and was reported as a bustling frontier settlement in 1874. Following an election on May 18, 1874, Rockdale was incorporated, with the official declaration made shortly thereafter. On June 14, 1875, the city council, led by Mayor Alfred Bruck, passed an ordinance changing the name to the "City of Rockdale."

In 1882, a formerly enslaved person named Paul Moultry embarked on a journey to the fledgling City of Rockdale and became a blacksmith for the Valentine and Hooks general store, which happened to be the only store in the Rockdale area at that time. By 1885, Paul had managed to save enough money to purchase the shop, thus establishing the first Black-owned business in the City's history. Throughout his life, Paul had a total of 13 children, four of whom he imparted his blacksmithing skills to from a young age.

Out of these four children, one went on to establish a blacksmithing shop in Calvert, Texas, and two pursued different professions in Rockdale. Julius, the fourth of Paul's children, initially operated a shop in Thorndale but eventually returned to Rockdale, opening up a shop at the location of the Gaither Motor Company, but later moved about one block west of South Main Street.

Julius was nationally recognized for his horseshoeing ability. He was often recruited to shoe famous race horses across Texas and New Mexico. He was also highly renowned for his skill in making branding irons, trailers and barbecue pits. In 1968, Julius received a request from the Institute of Texas Cultures in San Antonio, asking for information on the history of blacksmithing within his family. Currently, the Institute of Texas Cultures houses an anvil, picture and resume of Paul Moultry's blacksmithing career. Julius blacksmithed until the age of 72 and passed away in 1978 at the age of 84.¹



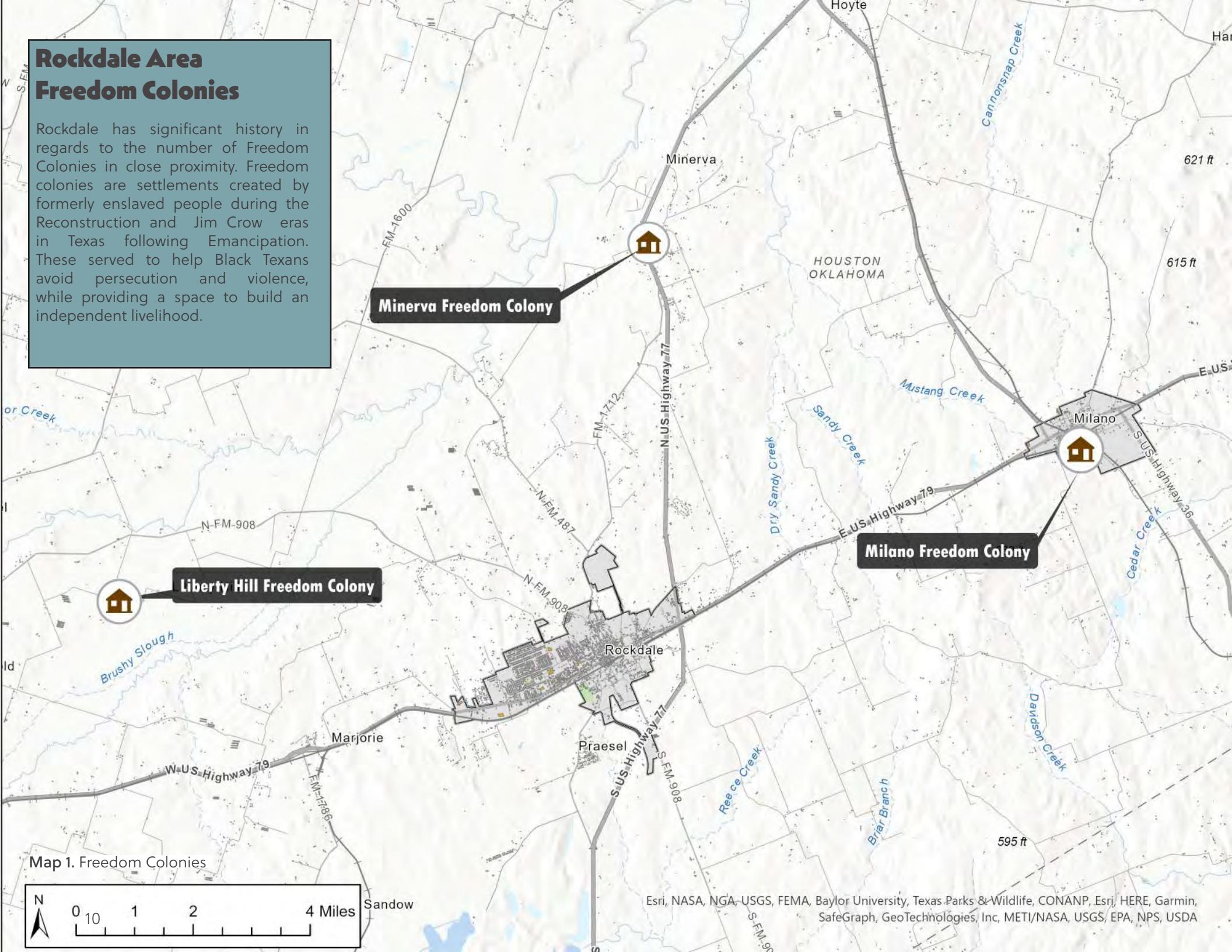
Julius Moultry Welding Shop (circa 1960)

Source: University of Texas San Antonio

¹ Piper, S. (n.d.). The Story of Paul Moultry First Rockdale Blacksmith. Milam County Historical Commission. http://www.milamcountyhistoricalcommission.org/newspaper_128.php

Rockdale Area Freedom Colonies

Rockdale has significant history in regards to the number of Freedom Colonies in close proximity. Freedom colonies are settlements created by formerly enslaved people during the Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras in Texas following Emancipation. These served to help Black Texans avoid persecution and violence, while providing a space to build an independent livelihood.



Industrial Revolution

In 1867, state geologists made a significant discovery in Rockdale: lignite coal. This find sparked a wave of interest and development in the area, leading to the establishment of the Vogel Mine just three years later. Herman Vogel, a prominent figure at the time, founded the slope mine on the eastern outskirts of Rockdale, near the International Great Northern railway.

As the years passed, the coal industry in Rockdale continued to flourish. By 1895, a total of six coal mines were in operation, each with its own mining area accompanied by a camp, store and saloon. The demand for coal was high, and Rockdale became a hub for employment opportunities. Notably, many Mexicans who were fleeing the Mexican Revolution sought refuge in the Rockdale area and found work in these mines.

Mining rapidly transformed into a prominent industry in the region, leading to increased recognition and representation within the state political system. Two Rockdale residents, E. A. Camp and N. M. Bullock, even served on the Texas State Mining Board, further solidifying the town's significance in the coal mining sector.

By 1914, Rockdale's coal production had reached astonishing levels, with an impressive 7,000 railroad cars of lignite coal being shipped out every week. This remarkable output demonstrated Rockdale's pivotal role in supplying this vital energy resource to meet the growing needs of the nation.

However, the rise of another energy source would eventually impact the coal industry in Rockdale. In 1920, a shallow oil field was discovered near the town, prompting the establishment of an oil refinery on its outskirts.

The subsequent growth of oil and natural gas between 1920 and 1940 gradually undermined the demand for lignite coal in the energy market. As a result, Rockdale lost many of its coal mining leases, and the industry came to a halt.

In the early 1950s, the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA) discovered a method to use lignite to generate power to refine aluminum. This would change the economic trajectory of Rockdale for decades to come.¹

¹ (n.d.). History of Rockdale, Texas. Rockdale Chamber. <http://www.rockdalechamber.com/history-of-rockdale>



Downtown Rockdale, 1948
Source: University of North Texas Libraries

ALCOA

ALCOA's presence in Rockdale had a profound impact on the City's economy and the aluminum industry. In the 1950s, ALCOA constructed a state-of-the-art aluminum plant and a 1.1-gigawatt coal power plant southwest of Rockdale, capitalizing on the high demand for aluminum during the Korean War and the Cold War.

By implementing continuous smelting and electrolysis processes, ALCOA significantly reduced the cost of producing pure aluminum, making Rockdale's plant the largest aluminum smelter in the Western Hemisphere. This achievement brought immense economic benefits to the City, creating job opportunities and increasing the tax base. It also provided incredible social benefits as ALCOA was a common link and identity that everyone in the town could share and celebrate.

However, the use of lignite as a fuel source in the plant's power generation had its drawbacks. The burning of lignite produced substantial pollution, particularly fly ash, which affected the surrounding environment. The closure of Lake ALCOA for public use due to contamination highlighted the environmental concerns associated with the plant's operations. Despite these challenges, ALCOA's substantial investments in the community and the plant's continuous operation provided sustained prosperity for Rockdale over several decades.

Nevertheless, in 2008, ALCOA made the unexpected decision to shut down the Rockdale smelter. Pollution concerns, coupled with an unstable power supply, were cited as reasons for the closure.



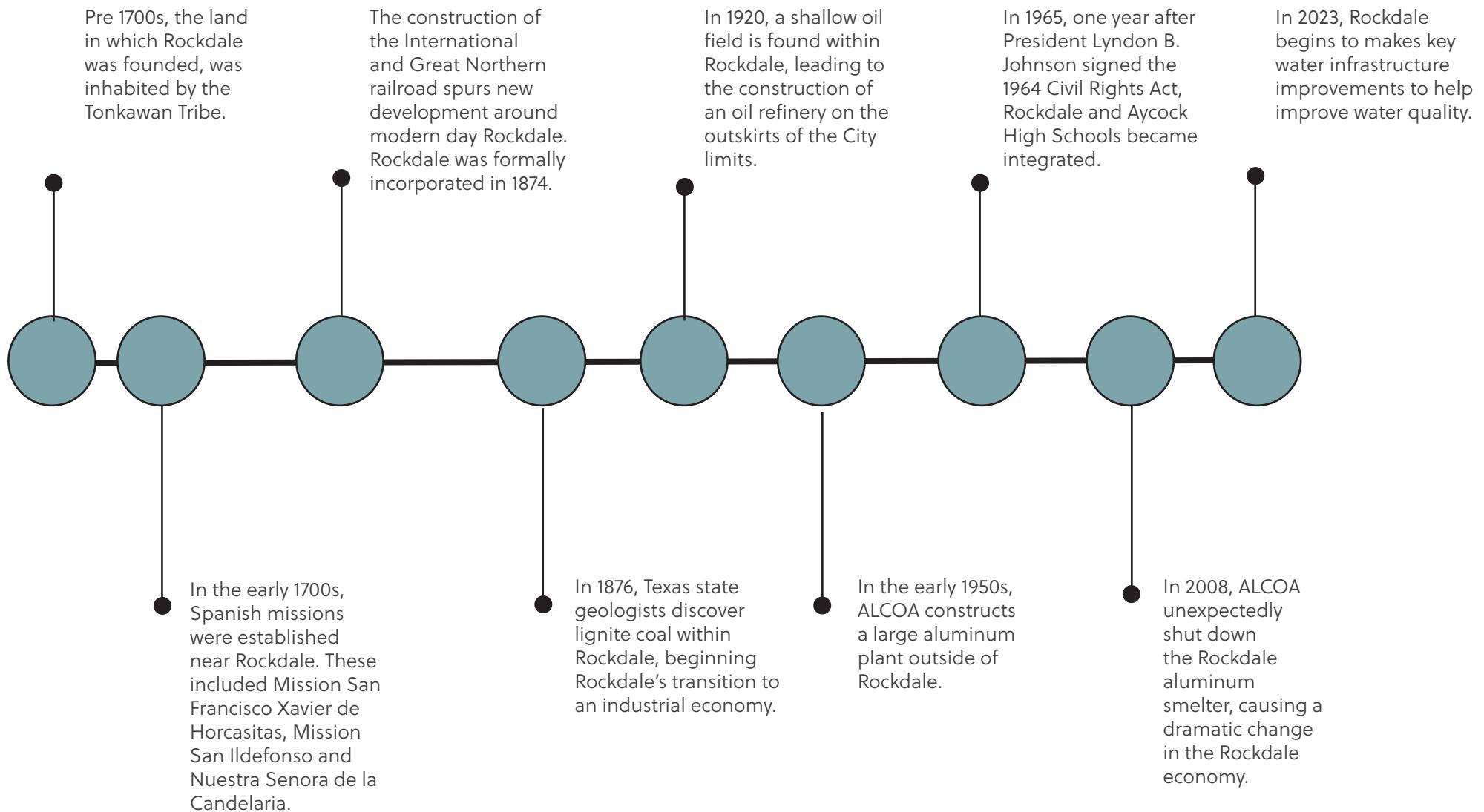
ALCOA Rockdale Aluminum Plant, 1952
Source: Dallas Morning News

Six years later, in 2014, the plant was fully shut down, eliminating another 450 jobs between the onsite power plant and the coal mine that supported it. This marked the end of an era for Rockdale, as the City's significant ties to the aluminum industry were severed. However, ALCOA's impact on the City's economy, its role in establishing Rockdale as a major aluminum producer and its pioneering work in refining aluminum remain lasting legacies in the history of both Rockdale and the aluminum industry as a whole. In 2018, Bitmain, a Chinese cryptocurrency mining company, revealed intentions to convert

ALCOA's former smelter into one of the most extensive Bitcoin-producing facilities globally. However, due to a significant drop in the cryptocurrency's value, Bitmain postponed its planned \$500 million investment and initiated a scaled-down operation, which is estimated to create 200 jobs.¹

¹ Dallas Morning News (n.d.). Their coal plant is gone, the golden age is over. What's next for the people of Milam County, Texas? <https://www.dallasnews.com/business/energy/2018/07/08/their-coal-plant-is-gone-the-golden-age-is-over-what-s-next-for-the-people-of-milam-county-texas/>

Rockdale Timeline



Place

Regional Context

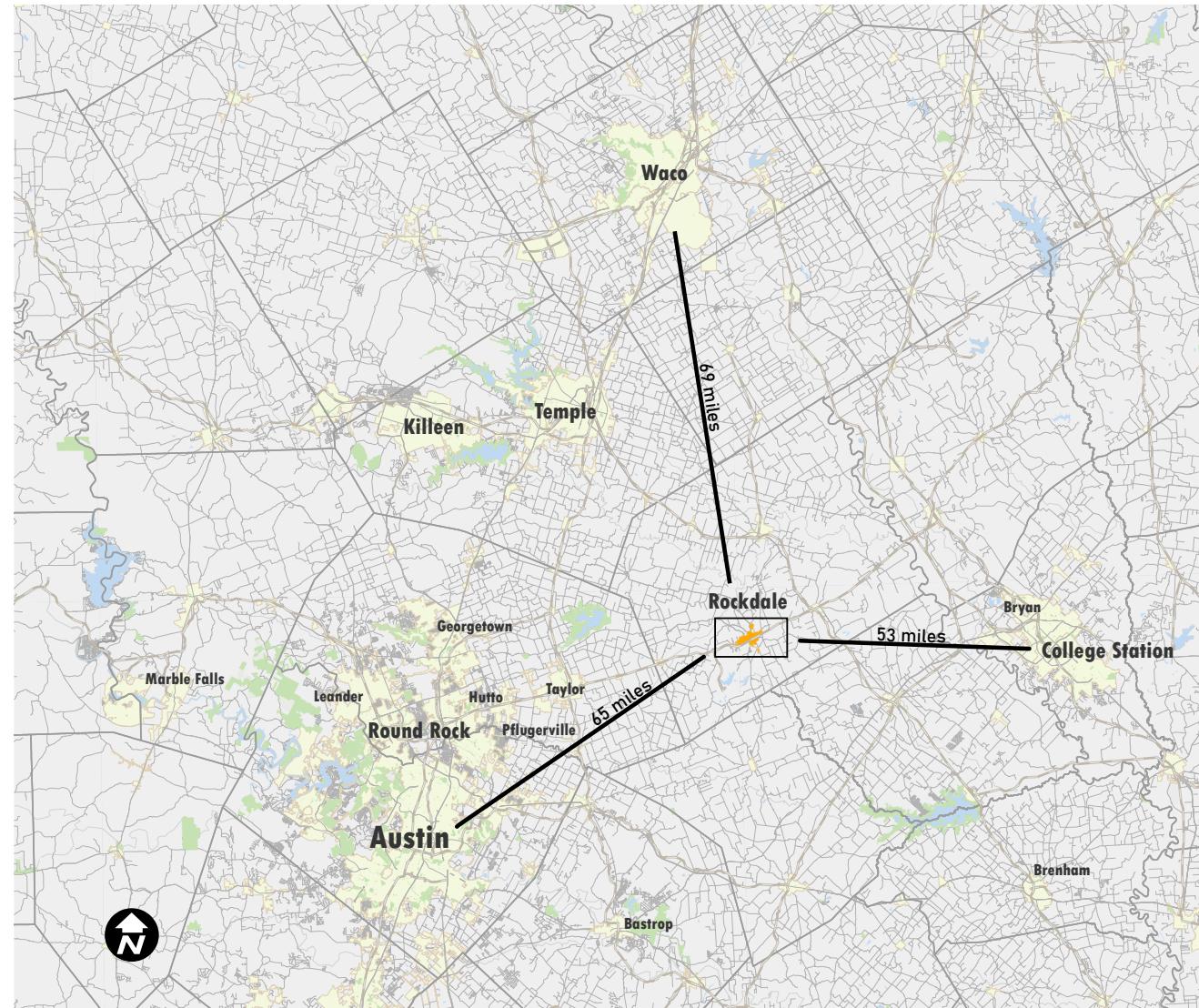
Rockdale is strategically located within the educational triangle that is formed by Texas A&M in College Station, Baylor University in Waco, and University of Texas at Austin.

This advantageous positioning brings a considerable amount of university-related traffic to Rockdale via U.S. 79. However, the town has yet to establish itself as a compelling destination that would entice people passing through the City to stop and visit.

Between 2010 and 2020, the populations of Austin, Waco and College Station experienced growth ranging from 11 percent to 28.4 percent. As a result, these metropolitan areas witnessed substantial suburban expansion, furthering Rockdale's central position in the region.

Furthermore, the Central Texas Region has become increasingly attractive to prominent employers in the semi-conductor industry, with significant developments taking place near the City of Taylor. These advancements raise the potential for significant growth in Rockdale within the next five to 10 years.

Map 2. Regional Context Map



Physical Features

Physical features are broadly defined as the natural and built environmental factors that impact how the City of Rockdale grows and develops. Overall, the City of Rockdale does not have any significant constraints on its growth or development; the terrain is relatively flat, there are no significant flood zones, and there is significant space in the Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) for future expansion.

Elevation

The City of Rockdale has very little topographic variation, with only a 170 ft difference between the highest and lowest points within the City and ETJ. Most of Rockdale's land is relatively flat or just slightly sloped, which does not pose any significant limitations on the ability and cost to develop the land.

Floodplains

The 100-year or one percent chance floodplain runs through Downtown Rockdale and extends south toward the Rockdale Waste Water Treatment Plant. The 2018 Milam County Hazard Mitigation Plan analyzed the risk posed by flooding within the City of Rockdale, and it was concluded that the potential impacts would be relatively limited because critical facilities would be shut down for 24 hours or less and less than 10 percent of property would be destroyed or damaged.

Historically, Rockdale has had at least 12 recorded flood events causing approximately \$222,494 in damage. Of these 12 recorded flood events within the City of Rockdale, there were zero recorded deaths or injuries.

Existing Road Network

The City is located along two significant highways. The first being U.S. 79 which runs west-east through Downtown Rockdale along Cameron Avenue. This thoroughfare is a convenient route between the Austin Metropolitan Area and the College Station-Bryan Metropolitan Area. Due to its location, Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) counts reach 16,707 along some sections of Cameron Avenue. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) projects the AADT to grow to 23,390 by the year 2041.

U.S. 77 is located southeast of most of Rockdale and runs north-south connecting a large number of rural towns in Central Texas to Waco and Dallas-Fort Worth. This highway serves as a key connector to Corpus Christi and the Brownsville metro. This highway receives significantly less traffic than U.S. 79, with AADTs that are around 4,199. The 2041 AADT projections show only a modest increase in daily traffic counts to 5,879.

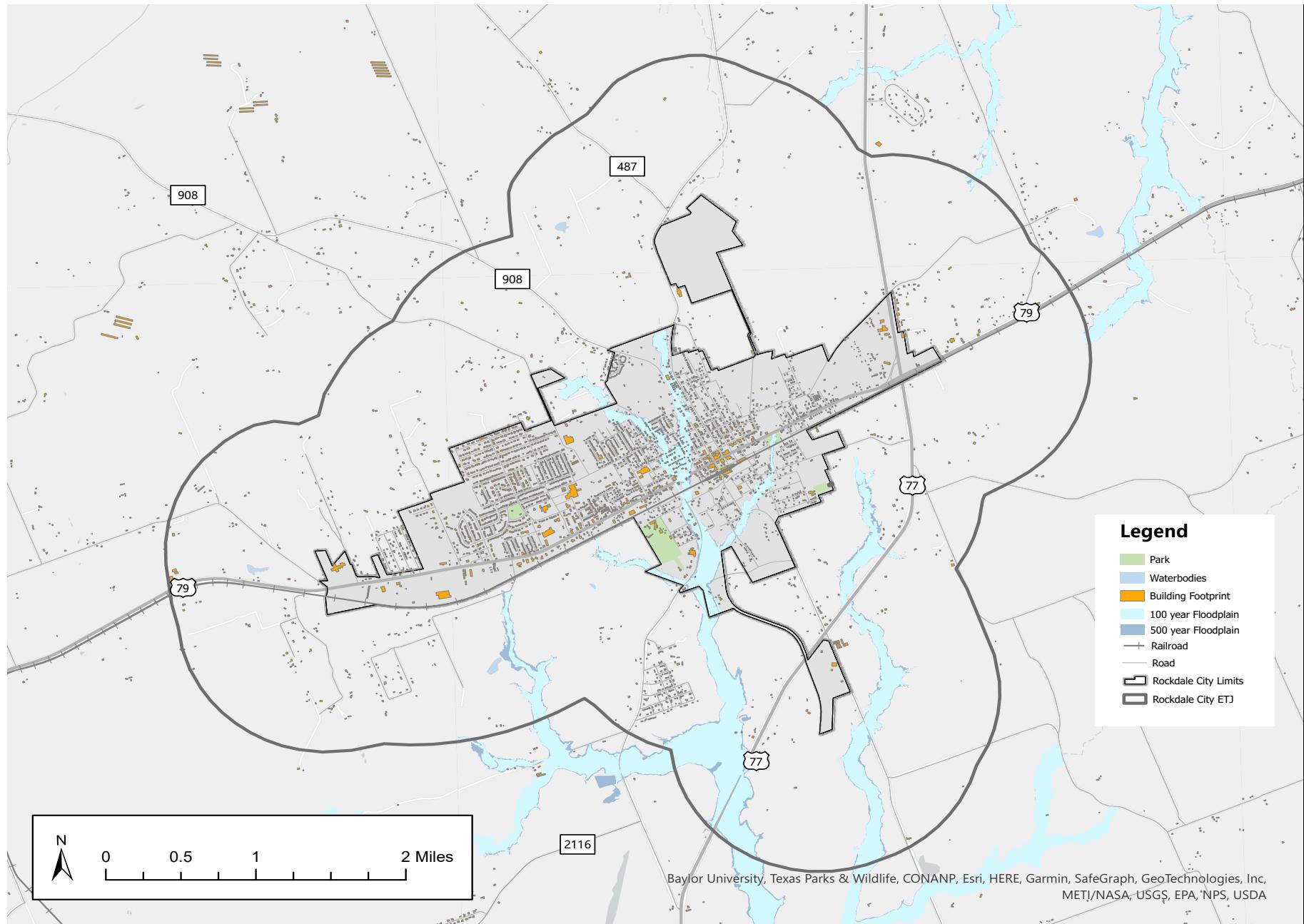
Railroad

Union Pacific Railroad is actively operating the railroad line that runs parallel to Cameron Avenue. This line is largely used for freight transport, though historically at this line's founding passenger rail was available.

What is an ETJ?

The ETJ is an area adjacent to a community's city limits where the community may enforce its subdivision regulations but not zoning regulations. This is also the area in which a community has the opportunity to annex, in accordance with state law. The size of the ETJ depends of the population of the community and proximity to other ETJs.

Map 3. Physical Features



Planning Framework

When developing a comprehensive plan for the study area, it is crucial to consider previous local and regional planning efforts. This ensures that the recommendations provided are coordinated and aligned. This section offers an overview of relevant plans.

Rockdale Comprehensive Plan (2018)

As a vision of the City's future physical form, the Comprehensive Plan sets forth a generalized pattern of land use areas and transportation corridors. It represents a long-range statement of public policy with respect to how the community should grow, develop and mature over time.

This plan had a significant focus on quality of life, with recommendations to help preserve Rockdale's historic character as well as its ecological features and habitats. The plan also outlined a more proactive economic development strategy, placing increased focus on retaining and recruiting businesses, while also maintaining the community's unique character.

In regards to land use, the plan recommended a significant amount of land along F.M. 908 and U.S. 77 be utilized as high intensity commercial corridors. The majority of residential land that was allocated in the future land use map was low intensity R-1 in the northwestern portion of the Rockdale ETJ.

Some higher intensity residential land uses were distributed along the north-central areas of the ETJ. This vision for the future of Rockdale's development had the goals of supporting a diverse local economic base and developing high quality residential neighborhoods that would enhance the overall quality of life of the City.

Master Plan for Downtown Rockdale (2012)

The Downtown Master Plan outlines a vision for the future of Downtown Rockdale and proposes a framework of actions to realize that vision for a 10-year period. While that 10-year period passed in 2022, much of the plan remains relevant. The recommendations were in four primary categories: improving appearance, building restoration and occupancy, creating a "Destination Downtown," and staffing and funding. All four remain highly relevant to this day.

Rockdale Reborn (2022)

This document initiates a dialogue on utilizing tourism to bolster Rockdale's local economy. It presents strategies to enhance Rockdale's competitiveness in the regional market through downtown improvements, arts and culture initiatives, and sports tourism.

The document also discusses funding projections and serves as a starting point for discussion between the City Council and Municipal Development District Board regarding Rockdale's economic strategy. Specific recommendations in this plan focus on making downtown Rockdale a destination that is aesthetically pleasing, authentic and economically generative.

City of Rockdale CASU Report (2022)

The Communities as Start Ups (CASU) model incorporates principles used in the start up business community to help facilitate growth within municipalities. The City of Rockdale's CASU report documented the current economic state of the community and facilitated its future state by defining the community's identity and developing implementation strategies. The community's identity, aspirations and strategic actions are essential to enhancing quality of place and the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

This effort aligns community priorities with emerging entrepreneurial opportunities, enhances resources and infrastructure, and prepares for future business and economic development. The CASU report aims to drive diverse economic development within the City. In the near term, this project supported economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and it provided recommendations for building resilience against natural disasters or changes in the community's economy.

Critical Water System Improvements (2023)

Rockdale is in the process of addressing key water quality issues, totaling more than \$27 million, by replacing cast iron lines throughout the City. The grand total includes a \$15,715,000 loan and \$500,000 grant from the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, and a \$10,825,000 loan and \$400,000 grant from the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, with loans being repaid via utility rates and revenue bonds.

Water Conservation Plan (2019)

This plan outlines a variety of short-term and long-term water conservation goals so that the City of Rockdale is able to meet future water demands. It also establishes a multi-faceted water conservation program to help pursue and accomplish the goals that are outlined in the conservation plan. Additionally, the Water Conservation Plan includes a regulatory component for amending/adopting the plan.



Vision 22 East Cameron Streetscape Enhancement Recommendations

Vision 22 East Cameron (2022)

The Vision 22 plan was designed to assess existing conditions and their impacts on development and quality of life along the East Cameron Avenue corridor. It provided recommendations implementing pedestrian-oriented measures such as medians, large sidewalks and significant landscaping between the police department and Bridge Park.

City of Rockdale Goals, Objectives, and Actions

The Rockdale City Council created a comprehensive set of Goals, Objectives, and Actions (also known as the GOAs) for the City. The GOAs are intended to be "the basis for growth and development decisions and serve as the foundation to protect, maintain, and enhance the quality of life in the City."

The City Council's GOAs address goals, objectives and actions related to the following:

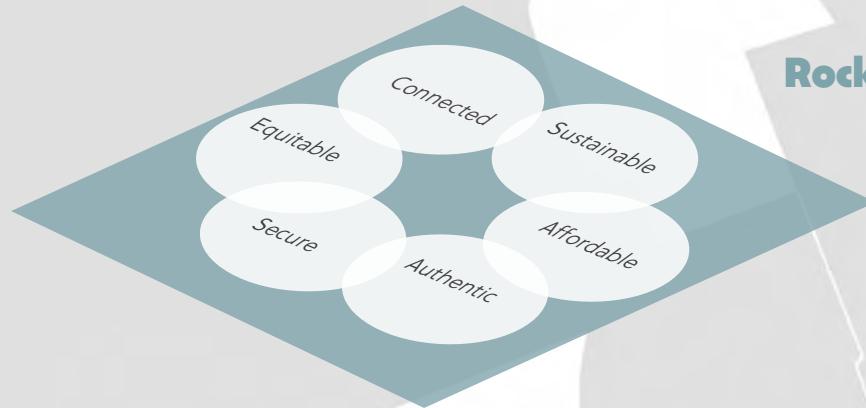
- Quality of Life
- Economic Development
- Future Land Use
- Residential Development
- Nonresidential Development
- Infrastructure and Utilities
- Transportation
- City Services
- Historic Preservation
- Capital Improvement Programming

While these provide a strong starting point for the planning team in creation of this Comprehensive Plan, there are two main ways that this Plan supplements and enhances the Council's GOAs. First, is the broader community outreach process that this Plan undertook and second, is the process of linking these GOAs back to a larger, more holistic vision and mission based on community input.

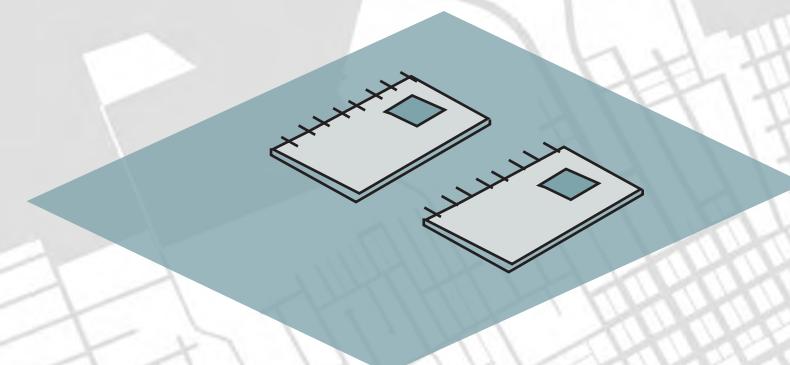
Relationship of City Plans

It is helpful to understand planning as a layered hierarchical process, with each plan being contained within or relating to future and past planning projects. This Comprehensive Plan will chart a vision that will guide more specific plans, such as neighborhood plans or studies. This vision and subsequent recommendations from City and area level plans will influence the City's codes and regulations. Codes and regulations directly impact city investments and private development within the municipality.

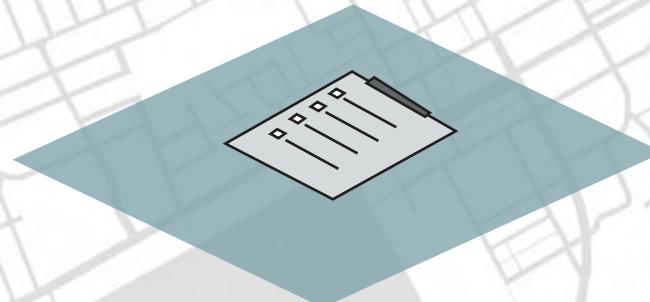
Rockdale's Comprehensive Plan and Vision



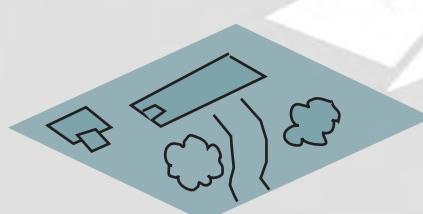
Neighborhood Plans, Special Area Plans and Hybrid Plans



Capital Improvement Plan, City Code and Regulations



Public Investments, Development Review and Annual Budgeting



People and Patterns

This community demographic profile is an essential part of the comprehensive plan process, helping decision makers gain a deeper understanding of the City's residents and how their lifestyles may impact the urban form.

By analyzing demographic data and trends, we can uncover key insights into the composition, characteristics and needs of the community. This knowledge empowers the community to develop targeted strategies and initiatives that address the specific challenges and opportunities presented by Rockdale's diverse population.

The demographics of Rockdale play a significant role in shaping the urban landscape. Factors such as age distribution, ethnicity, income levels and household types all influence the demand for various services, infrastructure and amenities.

For example, an aging population might require age-friendly design elements and accessible transportation options, while a young and diverse population may necessitate vibrant cultural spaces and recreational facilities.

Understanding these demographic nuances allows us to create a more responsive and inclusive urban environment that caters to the needs and preferences of residents. By examining indicators such as education levels, employment rates and income disparities, we can identify areas of opportunity and areas that require targeted interventions.

This information will also guide the decision-making process in terms of resource allocation, economic development strategies and social equity initiatives. By addressing these socio-

economic factors through the Plan, we can strive to create a more equitable and thriving community for all residents.

Population

The City of Rockdale's population has stayed relatively steady aside from two notable events which have caused significant fluctuations. In 1952, the ALCOA aluminum smelting facility was constructed in Rockdale. This factory changed the City's character from a primarily agricultural town to a key component in the nation's post-World War II Industrial economy. The ALCOA plant nearly doubled the City's population between 1950 and 1960, and provided significant economic benefits that fueled Rockdale's growth until the early 2000s.

However, the growth trajectory took an unexpected turn when the ALCOA plant abruptly closed its doors in 2008. This sudden closure dealt a severe blow to Rockdale, resulting in the elimination of a substantial portion of its workforce and triggering an economic downturn. Consequently, the City experienced a decline in population over the last decade, with an estimated loss of approximately 5 percent.

Figure 1. Rockdale Historic Population

Year	Population	Change
1900	2,515	+67.1%
1910	2,073	-17.6%
1920	2,323	+12.1%
1930	2,204	-5.1%
1940	2,136	-3.1%
1950	2,321	+8.7%
1960	4,481	+93.1%
1970	4,655	+3.9%
1980	5,611	+0.5%
1990	5,235	-6.7%
2000	5,439	+3.9%
2010	5,595	+2.9%
2020	5,323	-4.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

Population Projections

Town and city planning relies on population projections to anticipate future population trends, enabling effective allocation of resources, development of sustainable strategies for housing, transportation, and infrastructure, and creation of livable and resilient communities. The projections developed by the Texas Water Development Board anticipate that both Milam County and the City of Rockdale's population will stay constant going toward the year 2050.

However, it should be noted that comparable Central Texas towns, such as Taylor and Elgin, are experiencing high growth, attributed to recent industrial development and the outward expansion of the Austin metropolitan area. These local trends indicate the potential for the City of Rockdale to see much greater growth than is anticipated by these TWDB projections. Exploration of additional growth projections have been done as part of the Land Use and Development chapter.

Figure 2. 2010-2050 Population Projections, Regional Comparison

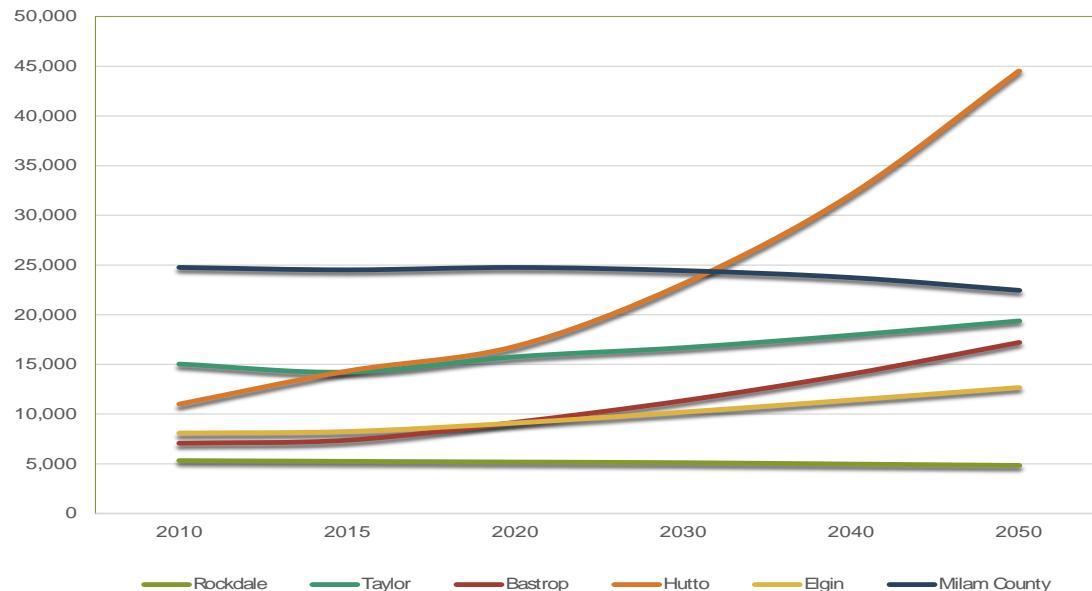


Figure 3. Population Projection 2010-2050

Year	Rockdale	Taylor	Bastrop	Hutto	Elgin	Milam County
2010	5,326	15,036	7,062	10,998	8,097	24,757
2015	5,251	14,231	7,368	14,323	8,252	24,513
2020	5,180	15,767	9,164	16,813	9,103	24,754
2030	5,113	16,686	11,346	23,100	10,204	24,434
2040	4,972	17,940	14,029	32,069	11,410	23,734
2050	4,835	19,378	17,208	44,520	12,667	22,450

Source: Texas Water Development Board, 2026 RWP Municipal Data

Race and Ethnicity Trends

The Texas Demographic Center projects that by the year 2030, Milam County will see a slight decrease in total population, but it will see new growth in some racial and ethnic categories. Between 2010 and 2030, the non-Hispanic white and non-Hispanic Black populations in Milam County are projected to decrease by 18 percent and 25 percent, respectively. In this same time period, the Hispanic population is slated to see a nearly 50 percent increase from 5,780 to 8,622 individuals within the county.

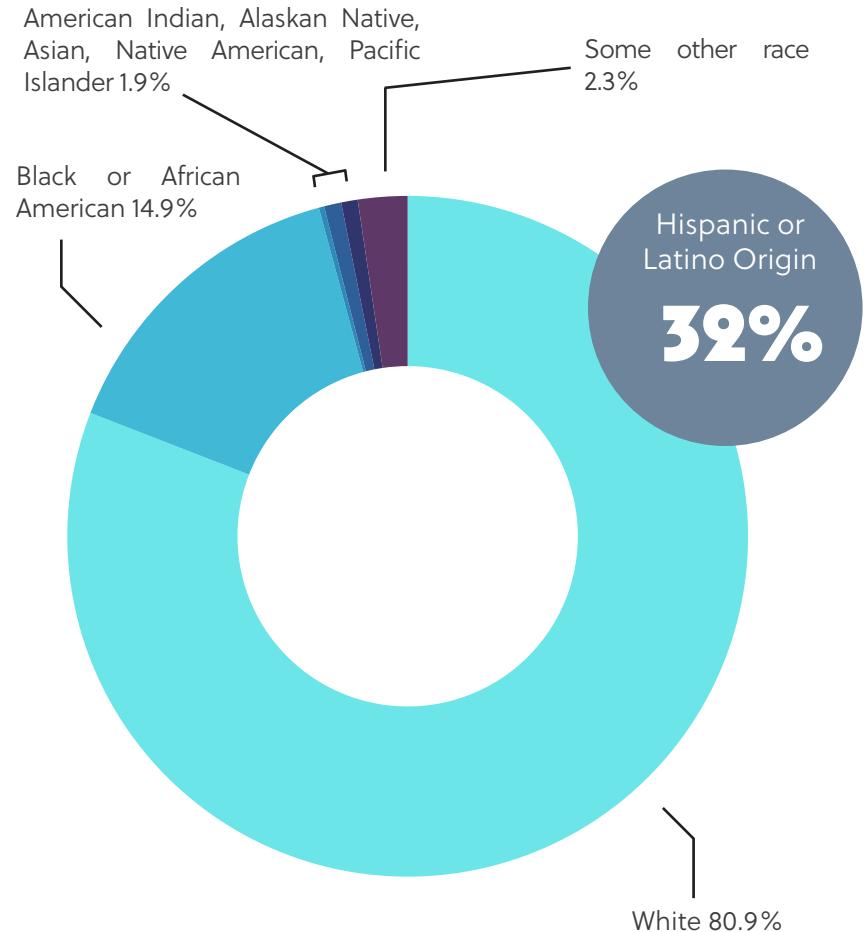
The City of Rockdale has witnessed significant fluctuations in race and ethnicity trends, with recent growth observed, particularly among the Hispanic and Latino population, which accounted for 30 percent of the total City population in 2010 and increased to 32 percent in 2020.

Figure 4. Total Population by Race, 2010-2020

Race	2010	2015	2020
White	4,005	4,378	4,444
Black or African American	899	514	818
American Indian and Alaskan Native	108	13	14
Asian	16	82	45
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	0	0	43
Some Other Race	129	400	129
Total	5,766	5,507	5,505

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010, 2015, 2020

Figure 5. 2020 Rockdale Demographic Breakdown



Age

Understanding age demographics is important for a comprehensive plan as it helps local decision makers anticipate the needs of different age groups, develop targeted strategies for healthcare, education, housing, and transportation, and ensure inclusive environments that promote the well-being of all residents throughout every stage of their lives.

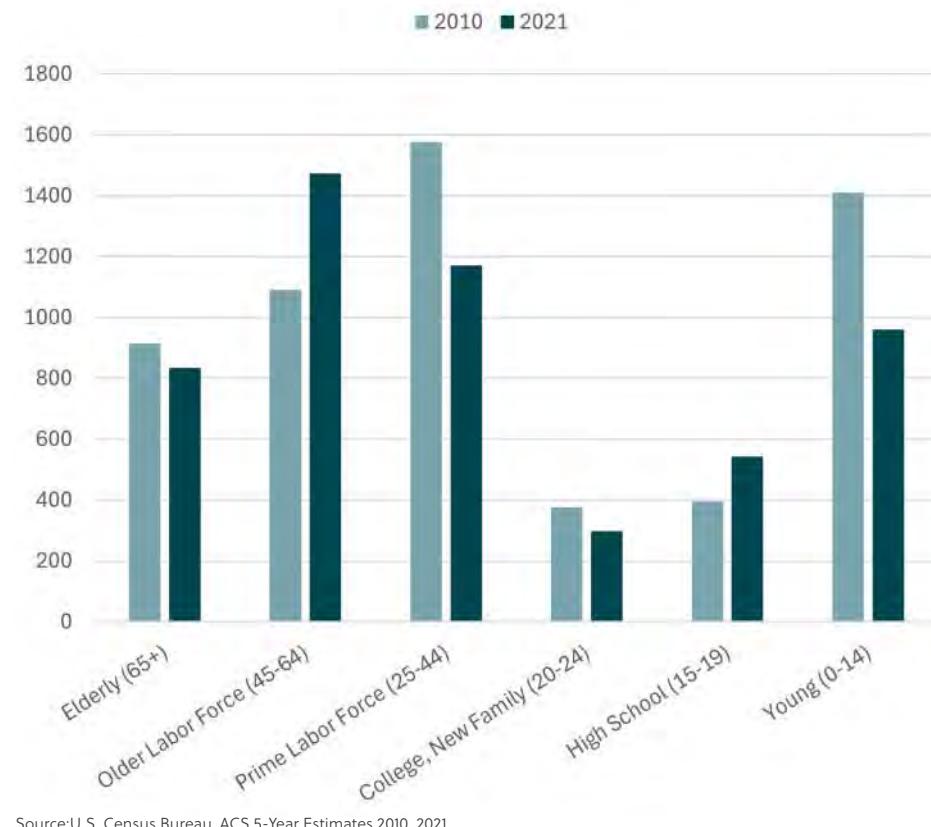
Rockdale's population has trended older in the last decade, with the median age increasing by almost five years in that time. Compared to Milam County, Rockdale's population is slightly younger, but it is still older than the state median. Comparing Rockdale's age distribution between 2010 and 2021, the population distribution within the City has started to skew older. Specific age categories include the college, new family (20-24) and prime labor force (25-44). These trends can occur for a variety of reasons, but the simplest is that often younger residents leave for jobs and opportunities in larger labor markets.

Figure 6. Median Age by City, 2010-2020

City	2010	2015	2020
Rockdale	33.5	41.3	38
Taylor	38	35.9	38.7
Bastrop	35.5	41.8	36
Hutto	29	31.2	35.5
Cameron	36.7	39.4	35.4
Milam County	39.8	41.4	41.8
State of Texas	33.4	34.1	34.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010, 2015, 2020

Figure 7. Rockdale Age Distribution



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010, 2021

Income and Opportunity

Income is essential for a comprehensive plan as it provides insights into the economic well-being and disparities within Rockdale. This data helps make informed decisions relating to housing initiatives, social service allocation, economic development strategies and infrastructure investments, ensuring that the needs of all income groups are considered and addressed in the comprehensive planning process.

Rockdale's median household income of \$38,636 is significantly less than the statewide median of \$67,321 in 2021. When household income is broken down by census block group, the disparities of incomes is more apparent within the City. Northwest Rockdale has significantly higher incomes, much closer to the statewide average, when compared to the southern portion of the City limits which has incomes that are nearly three times less than the statewide average.

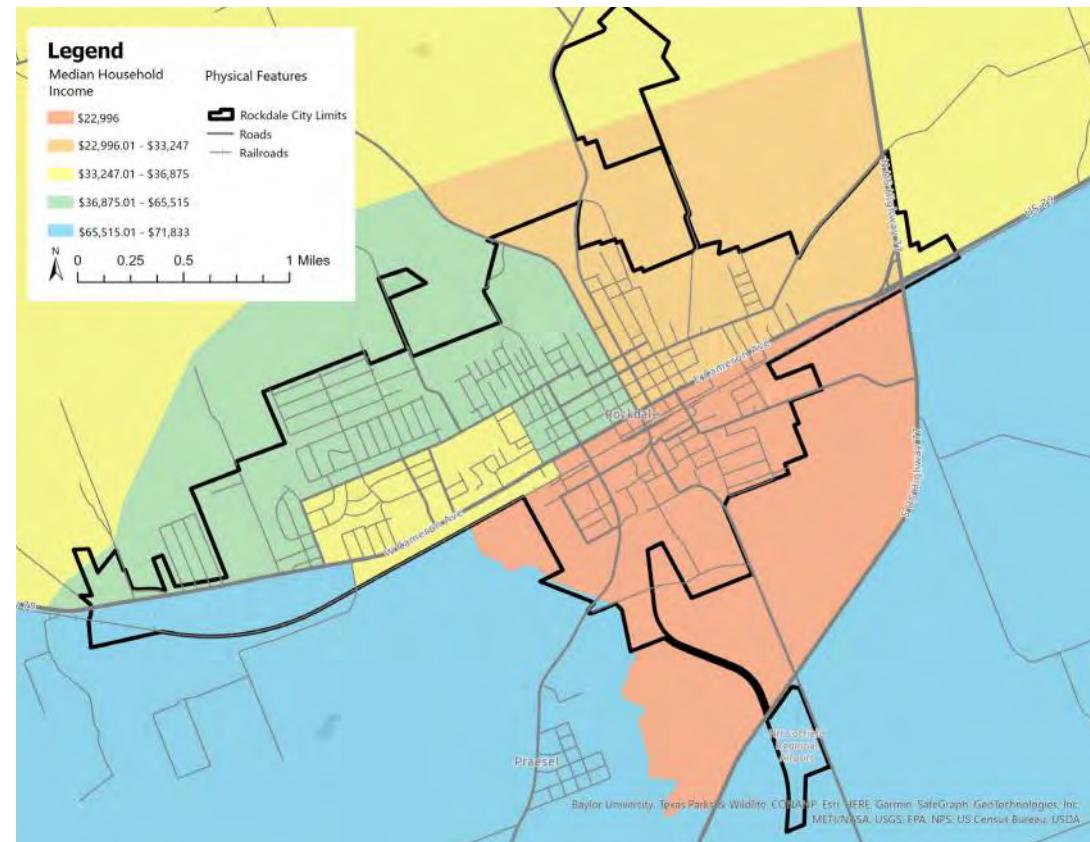
Figure 8. Median Household Income

\$38,636 **\$67,321**
Rockdale **Texas**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates 2021

In addition to income data, understanding educational attainment is another crucial aspect for a comprehensive plan. In the City of Rockdale, educational attainment levels fall significantly below the state-wide average. Only 13 percent of the population aged 25 and older possess a bachelor's degree or higher, indicating a lower level of educational achievement. This figure contrasts with the state of Texas, where the educational attainment for the population aged 25 and older, stands at 32 percent in 2021.

Figure 9. Rockdale Median Household Income Map



Community Vision & Goals

The planning team balances the quantitative data and research presented in this chapter with qualitative information and the lived experiences of residents. This information forms the community vision that becomes the basis for the plan recommendations.

Community Engagement Efforts

Qualitative information is gathered from community members via community engagement efforts. A summary of these efforts is provided here, additional detail on engagement events and outcomes can be found in Appendix A.

Summary of Community Input

Overall, the community wants to see Rockdale encompass multiple aspects aimed at creating a thriving, interconnected community that offers a range of opportunities and amenities. Central to this is the desire to establish strong connections, both physically and on a deeper level, between the east and west sides of the community. The community places great importance on fostering a sense of togetherness and support, with a strong focus on future generations and nurturing future leaders. The aim is to ensure that Rockdale continues to be a caring and close-knit community that takes care of its own.

Rockdale is currently facing a divide between what it aspires to be and the reality it currently faces. Challenges include:

- Access to groceries and dining
- Economic disparities
- Homelessness and substance abuse
- Shortage of healthcare facilities and services
- "Curb appeal" and overall appearance

5

Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) Meetings

The CPAC is a group of active community members who volunteered their time to work with the planning team throughout the process to ensure a variety of viewpoints was being considered and incorporated into the Plan recommendations. This group met five times over the course of the project and in addition to reviewing the plan recommendations, they discussed priorities and tradeoffs, community resilience and implementation.

10

Stakeholder Conversations

The planning team hosted targeted conversations with a variety of community stakeholders representing specific needs or viewpoints of residents. This included meetings with City staff, community leaders, City boards and commission members, high school students, local professionals, and small businesses.

9

Public Outreach Events

The planning team had three major community outreach events. At the beginning of the project, the team had a booth at the Chamber on Tap community event on June 22, 2023 where they spoke to community members about the project and encouraged participation in the survey. The team also hosted a project-specific Community Open House event on August 29, 2023, where they solicited initial input on the Comprehensive Plan topics.

9

Community Surveys

Two community surveys were done during the project. The first survey was at the outset of the project, open from June 16 to August 1, 2023, and asked community members to share what they saw as priorities, assets and needs in Rockdale. The second survey was specific to parks, open from October 5 to November 9, 2023, and asked the community about what they would like to see related to parks and recreation offerings in Rockdale.

The community input revolved around the central theme of "reinvention," representing a collective willingness to embrace change and transformation.

Key Takeaways:

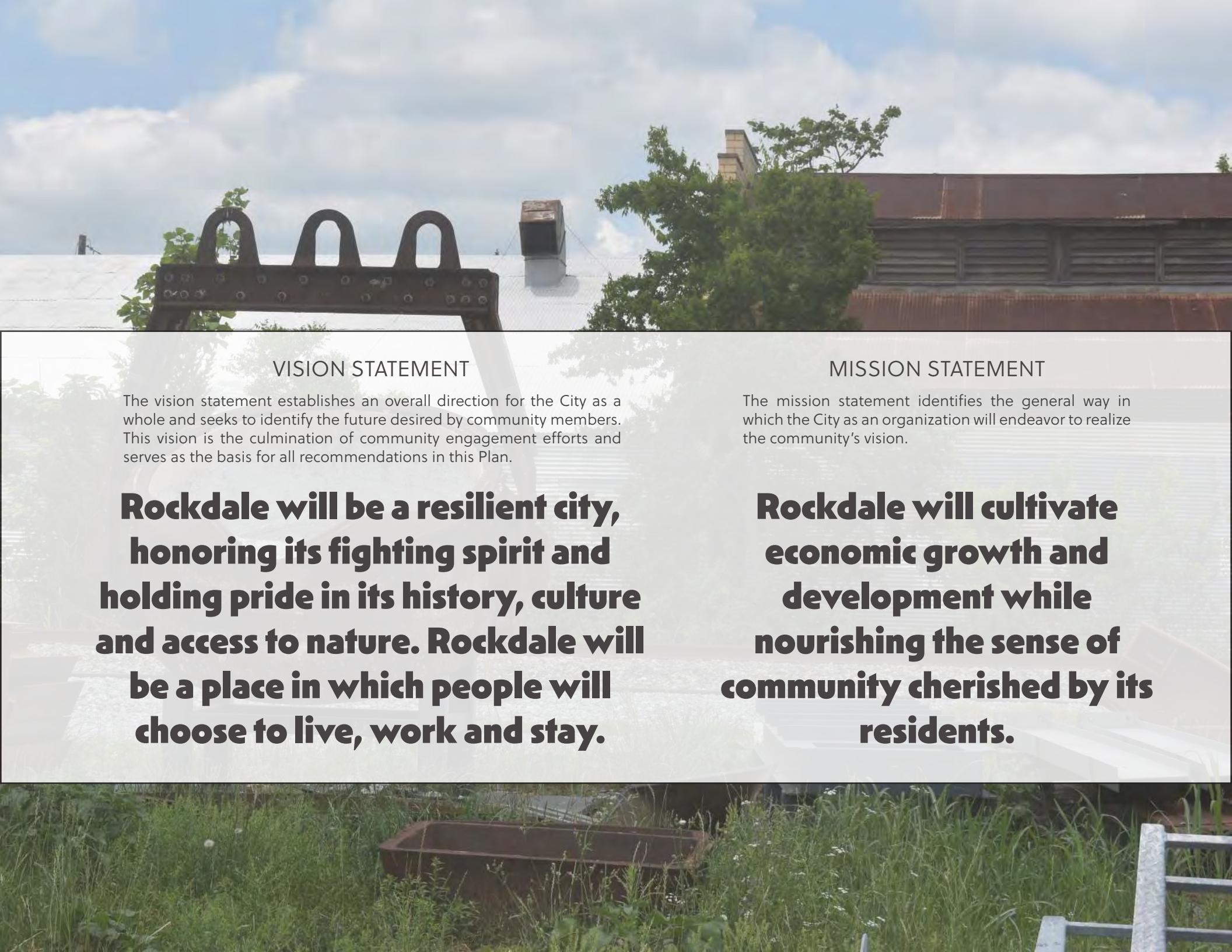
- Supporting small businesses to foster robust growth and ensure sustainable economic development
- Striking a balance between attracting new residents and supporting existing communities
- Overcoming obstacles including risk-averse mindset and perceived divides
- Actively seeking ways to enhance the community and its offerings while strengthening connections among its members

When asked what the City of Rockdale should prioritize, community members identified the following as the top five priorities:

1. Access to Healthcare
2. Infrastructure Condition
3. Appearance and Beautification
4. Roadways and Traffic
5. Entertainment, Activities, and Things To Do



Images from community engagement events, stakeholder conversations, and CPAC meetings.



VISION STATEMENT

The vision statement establishes an overall direction for the City as a whole and seeks to identify the future desired by community members. This vision is the culmination of community engagement efforts and serves as the basis for all recommendations in this Plan.

Rockdale will be a resilient city, honoring its fighting spirit and holding pride in its history, culture and access to nature. Rockdale will be a place in which people will choose to live, work and stay.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission statement identifies the general way in which the City as an organization will endeavor to realize the community's vision.

Rockdale will cultivate economic growth and development while nourishing the sense of community cherished by its residents.

COMMUNITY GOALS

These goals have been established as the ways in which this Plan will seek to realize the community's vision. After confirming alignment with what was heard from the community, these goals were taken directly or adapted from the Rockdale City Council's GOAs, discussed previously in this chapter. These goals can serve as a mechanism in decision making for City staff and leadership. City objectives related to these goals can be found in Appendix E. These objectives served as a reference for the creation of recommendations and implementation action items throughout this Plan.

A major theme during community conversations was the idea of Rockdale retaining its small-town charm/feel in the face of growth and change. However, this means different things to different people. When asked directly what they meant by "small-town feel," it became clear that stakeholders were most often thinking about the intangibles of their community, such as pride, stewardship and neighborly interactions between people. If these things exist strongly within the community members and leaders, then it is expected that it will also be reflected in the built environment via investment and high maintenance standards.

The vision statement on the prior page begins to reflect this idea of small-town values. The goals outlined here continue to delve into how those are reflected in policies and actions within the City organization.



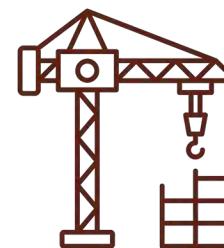
Goal 1: Enhance Quality of Life

Enhance and preserve recreational, cultural, educational, economic, natural and aesthetic resources to improve overall quality of life. Actions include neighborhood preservation, cultural promotion, infrastructure enhancement and community engagement.



Goal 2: Stimulate Economic Growth and Business Development

Preserve, protect and expand a diversified local economy through strategic initiatives and business development programs. Stimulating economic growth and fostering job opportunities while focusing on small and local businesses. Attracting investment and investors that are committed to enhancing opportunities for new and existing residents.



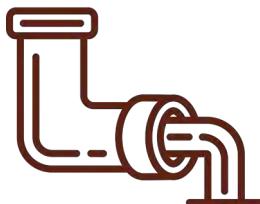
Goal 3: Promote High-Quality Development (Residential & Non-Residential)

Support orderly, well-planned development that enhances community livability and sustainability. Objectives include effective land development ordinances, property maintenance standards, future land use mapping and promoting infill development for the most efficient use of existing infrastructure.



Goal 4: Cultivate a Vibrant, Economically-Productive and Diversified Downtown

Foster a vibrant, well-maintained historic downtown district offering diverse businesses, activities and services. Prioritize arts and cultural initiatives, market studies for targeted development and community connectivity enhancements to revitalize downtown areas.



Goal 5: Establish Infrastructure for Future Development

Manage infrastructure development to efficiently meet future growth needs. Goals include providing consistent utility services, fair fee structures and equitable access to water and wastewater services. Promote sustainable, resilient and energy-efficient infrastructure policies and municipal construction practices.



Goal 6: Develop and Maintain a Safe & Efficient Transportation System

Develop and maintain a transportation system that can safely and efficiently accommodate future growth while providing additional mode choices for residents. Objectives include promoting walkable environments, upgrading street infrastructure, expanding public transportation options and developing aviation facilities in an orderly manner.



Goal 7: Support Public Service Excellence and Fiscal Responsibility

Provide high-quality City services to meet current and future needs of residents and businesses. Focus areas include fiscal stability, utility service expansion, development information accessibility and sufficient staffing for public safety to ensure high-quality, efficient and effective service delivery.



Goal 8: Attract and Retain a Competitive Workforce

Support the attraction and retention of a competitive, well-educated workforce to drive economic opportunity and growth. Prioritize collaboration with workforce development partners, job skills training and workforce recruitment efforts to upskill local residents and connect people to jobs.



Goal 9: Support a Variety of Housing

Promote a variety of housing options to serve diverse demographics and income levels. Goals include accommodating diverse housing through zoning designations, encouraging residential development in areas with adequate facilities, promoting mixed-use development and supporting housing affordability initiatives.





LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Rockdale is beginning to feel the impacts of Central Texas's rapid growth. U.S. 79 is Rockdale's primary corridor, and is seeing interest from residential, commercial and industrial developers. Developments in the region, even those outside the Rockdale city limits, will have a major impact on the City in the near future, as people come to the region seeking jobs, housing, services and opportunity.

Residents are generally quite accepting of this potential change and even looking forward to the opportunities this growth might bring for their City. However, they are keen to ensure growth is harnessed appropriately, bringing positive changes and quality of life enhancements for both existing and new residents.

This chapter aims to set the stage for Rockdale's future land use patterns. This process begins with an assessment of the existing land uses, with the understanding that some uses will remain unchanged over the next two decades. Subsequently, future land use categories are formulated to accommodate new developments and anticipated redevelopment initiatives, aligning the future land use plan with the community's vision and goals, and informed by fiscal and market data.

The subsequent sections of this chapter are as follows:

- Analysis of Existing Land Use
- Population and Growth Projections
- Future Land Use Map (FLUM)
- Future Land Use Category Dashboards



WHAT WE'VE HEARD:

Land Use and Development

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Many residents noted the importance of Rockdale's small town feel and character. Keeping this alive in the face of growth is high in important in Rockdale. Ideas for keeping Rockdale's charm include promoting small and local businesses, encouraging community activities and promoting social interaction between neighbors.
- In the future, residents are looking forward to more job opportunities and the provision of goods and services, especially dining and entertainment, in their community.
- The U.S. 79 corridor is the primary location for most City commercial development today, providing additional pockets of community serving commercial throughout the community could help increase access.

"A town that is strong in its roots and history and also working to incorporate positive change and growth is what prospers and survives."

- Community Member

"Safety, growth, more amenities for the citizens from shopping to fun activities."

- Community Member

"A little bit of growth but not too crazy."

- Community Member

"People have more options in where they shop, where they eat, where they spend their time, etc."

- Community Member

Existing Land Use

Considering existing land use is pivotal in a comprehensive plan. It provides essential insights into a city's current distribution of residential, commercial, industrial and green spaces. This understanding informs zoning regulations, resource allocation for infrastructure and efficient land utilization, all essential for creating a more professional and effective plan.

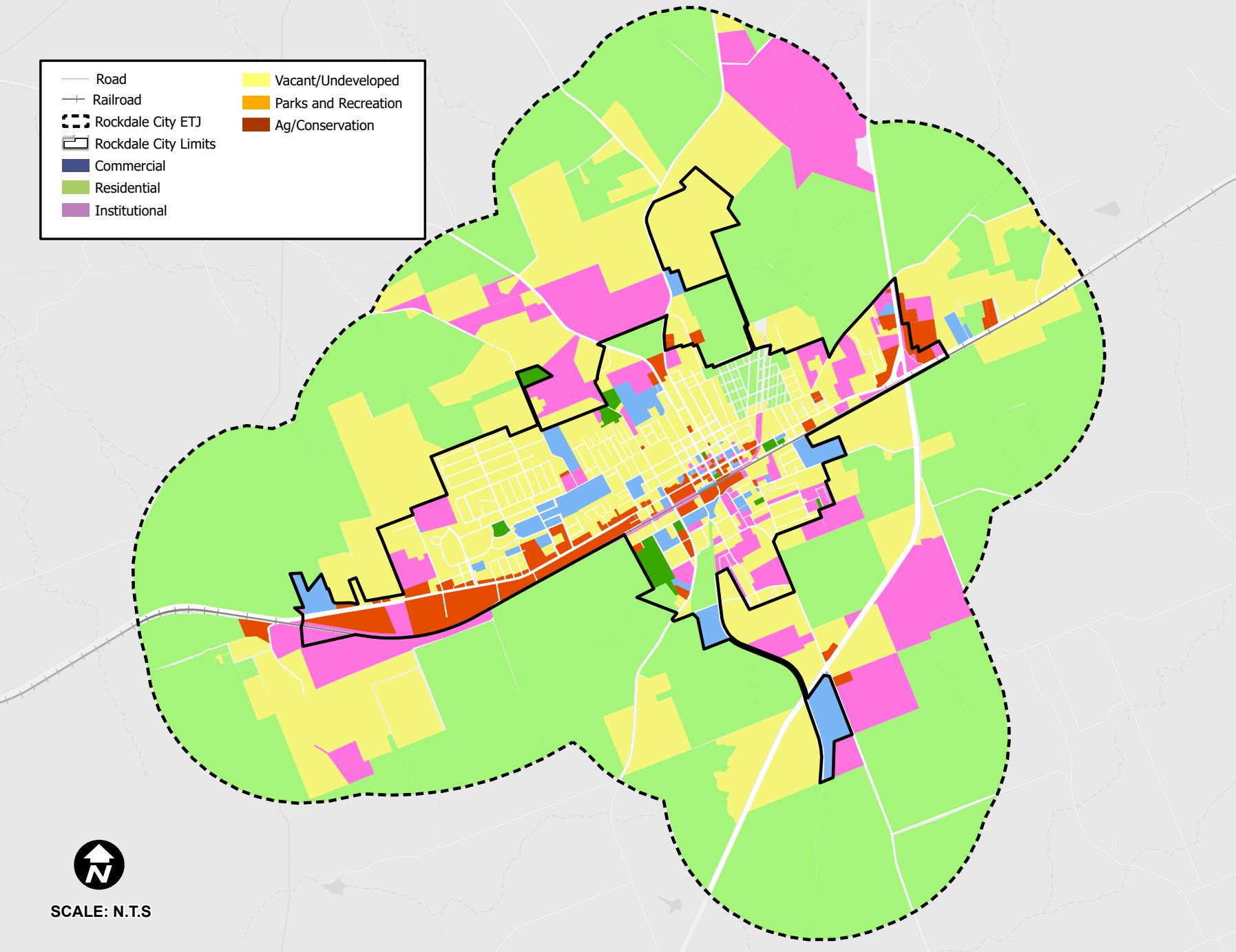
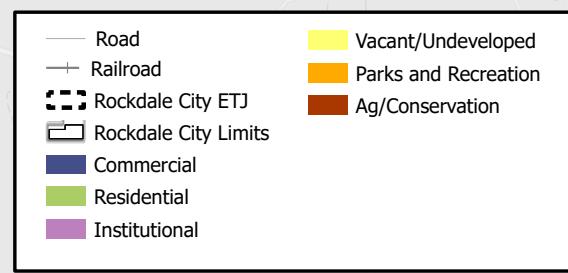
Within the City of Rockdale, the large majority (1,175 acres) of land is utilized for residential purposes. Much of this residential land is low density, single-family residential uses. Vacant land constitutes the next highest land use at 14.9%. With a larger portion of the City being vacant land, this gives opportunity to provide desired land uses and growth.

Rockdale's evolution has been shaped by various factors, foremost among them being the presence of the ALCOA plant, which drew many residents to the City. Consequently, this surge in population led to a large area of single-family residential housing. When looking at the existing land use map, much of the City's development is along U.S. 79.

The Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) is the area outside the City limits that includes the City's potential future growth and service areas. When looking at the combined City and ETJ area, Agricultural/Conservation is the largest land use at 55.3%.

Figure 10. Existing Land use

Existing Land Use	City Limits (acres)	City Limits (%)	City Limits + ETJ (acres)	City Limits + ETJ (%)
Commercial	288	12.5%	351	2.6%
Residential	1,175	51.1%	3,901	28.5%
Institutional	283	12.3%	303	2.2%
Vacant/Undeveloped	342	14.9%	1,495	10.9%
Parks and Recreation	68	3.0%	68	0.5%
Agricultural/Conservation	143	6.2%	7,578	55.3%



Map 4. Existing Land Use Map

Growth Projections

With an estimated population in 2020 of 5,180 residents, the City of Rockdale has experienced a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of -0.27% between 2015 and 2020. This negative growth rate seems highly unlikely given recent major economic activity within Rockdale's market area and recent development interest in the City of Rockdale. For this reason the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) projections were not used as a baseline for land use planning. Alternative growth scenarios were derived by examining historical growth patterns from comparable cities within the Central Texas Region, such as Hutto and Taylor, as precedent for what may reasonably occur in Rockdale. These cities are facing similar growth pressures and provide a more accurate projection of possible growth compared to both the U.S. Census and TWDB estimates.

Evaluating the projected growth, using these rates above will ensure the future land use categories can accommodate this growth.

Figure 11. Future Growth Scenarios 30-yr CAGR

Year	Growth Rate - 30 year CAGR			
	1.5%	2.5%	4.0%	6.2%
2020	5,323	5,323	5,323	5,323
2025	5,734	6,022	6,476	7,191
2030	6,177	6,814	7,879	9,714
2035	6,654	7,709	9,586	13,123
2040	7,169	8,722	11,663	17,727
2045	7,723	9,869	14,190	23,948
2050	8,320	11,165	17,265	32,351
Difference	+2,997	+5,842	+11,942	+27,028

Future Land Use Plan

What is a Future Land Use Plan?

The Future Land Use Plan (FLUP) is an important tool for planning Rockdale's future development. The arrangement and intensity of land use significantly influence various aspects of city management, including infrastructure requirements, traffic flow, quality of life and economic development. The efficient organization of land use enables cities to grow in an orderly and sustainable manner. Planning for future land uses provides the city with a degree of certainty about impending developments and facilitates effective planning. The FLUP is made up of two elements, the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and future land use categories.

Future Land Use Map

The FLUM included in this Plan illustrates the desired growth pattern expressed by Rockdale's residents, business owners, civic organizations and stakeholders. The FLUM, land use descriptions and strategies included in this chapter will guide the decision-making process regarding development, land use and growth.

It is important to note that the FLUM is not a regulatory document but rather an additional guide when facing site-specific development inquiries. The official Zoning Map of the City governs the land uses on a parcel-by-parcel basis, not the FLUM. The map is a long-range vision and may not reflect today's land uses.

Future Land Use Categories

The Future Land Use Plan identifies 10 land use categories ranging from low-intensity single-family to high-intensity industrial uses. The following chapter describes each land use, the corresponding FLUM color and the intent for each type listed below in a dashboard format.

Figure 12. Future Land Use Categories

Future Land Use	
	Mixed Use Corridor
	Agricultural/Rural
	New Neighborhood
	Core Neighborhood
	Downtown
	Local Mixed Use Node
	Commercial Corridor
	Regional Node
	Employment
	Industrial

Future Land Use Map

The FLUM is created through an iterative process of analysis, idea generation and revision to come up with a preferred land use scenario that most closely aligns with the community vision and goals presented previously in this Plan.

Step 1: Summarization of Community Input & Analysis

The process begins with analyzing both the community input and physical analyses done during the prior phases of work. Specifically, the stakeholder and community conversations as well as the land use exercise done at the community open house provides the team with valuable information on what uses the community wants to see more of and where. Based on what they have heard and uncovered so far in the process, the team answers questions such as:

- How much and what types of housing will Rockdale need in the future?
- How do we balance new housing with commercial uses to provide jobs, services and amenities to the community?
- What types of land use categories do we need to accommodate in order to realize the community vision and reach the goals of this Plan?

Step 2: Idea Generation, Assessment & Iteration

With the answers to those questions in mind, the consultant team hosted a "charrette" with City staff. A charrette is a workshop where the team rapidly generates, evaluates and revises ideas to come up with a series of potential and probable land use concepts. In this case, the team's concepts explored:

- Different geographical concentrations of development. For Rockdale this included concentric development radiating out from Downtown and linear development happening along the U.S. 79 corridor.
- Smaller nodes of development were also identified to promote better access to goods and services for existing and future residential areas of Rockdale.
- Additional concepts looked at potential major developments and roadways planned for the region, the impacts those may or may not have on Rockdale and how the land use plan needs to adjust to address and take advantage of those opportunities. This included the impacts of the Sandow Lakes Ranch project and a potential future U.S. 79 bypass.

These concepts are then discussed as to their merits and how far they move the needle on reaching the community vision and goals.

Step 3: Creation of a Preferred Land Use Scenario

After deliberation and discussion of the concepts, a preferred land use scenario is produced, including a combination of the best elements from all the various concepts. This preferred scenario is then reviewed and refined through a series of meetings with staff, stakeholders and the CPAC.

For Rockdale, the preferred land use scenario resulted in a concept that includes the following key aspects:

- Downtown remains the central focal point of the City, at the nexus of two mixed-use corridors that lead to supporting mixed-use nodes. These nodes serve neighborhoods to the north and south as well as capture traffic traveling on F.M. 908 and U.S. 77.
- An additional mixed-use corridor follows F.M. 487, connecting central Rockdale to the Praesel community and beyond.
- As you move away from Downtown on U.S. 79, the corridor shifts from mixed-use to more traditional commercial corridor development.
- Regional nodes bookend the U.S. 79 corridor, creating gateways into Rockdale. An additional regional node is located along F.M. 908 in the north, adjacent to the mixed-use node.

- Large areas of employment and industrial surround the regional node at the intersection of U.S. 79 and U.S. 77, allowing for the best access and least impact on residential neighborhoods. Most of this area is within the ETJ.
- Additional small areas of employment are located in strategic locations to the west and south near regional and mixed-use nodes. This also allows some employment to be captured within the City limits.
- Existing neighborhoods are classified as "core" neighborhoods due to their proximity to Downtown and their gridded street structure. These areas are prime for small-scale, organic additions of housing and services that are in line with the scale and character of those neighborhoods.
- Beyond the core neighborhoods are opportunities for the development of "new" neighborhoods. These areas are mostly in the City's ETJ and will likely be the type of suburban residential development that is typical in Central Texas. However, the land use dashboards allow for some small neighborhood-serving retail and services to encourage improved access.

The final FLUM is provided on the following spread.

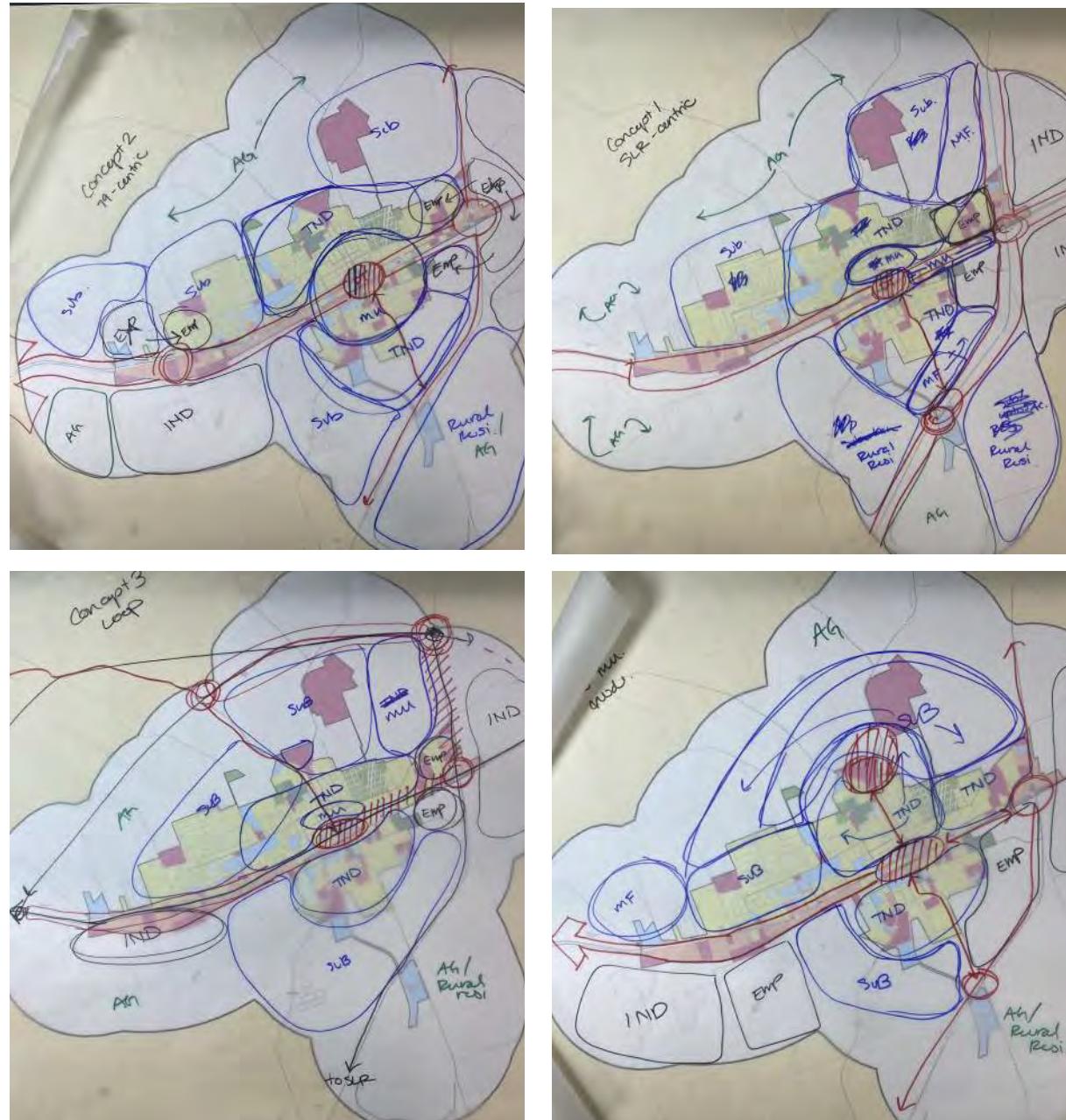


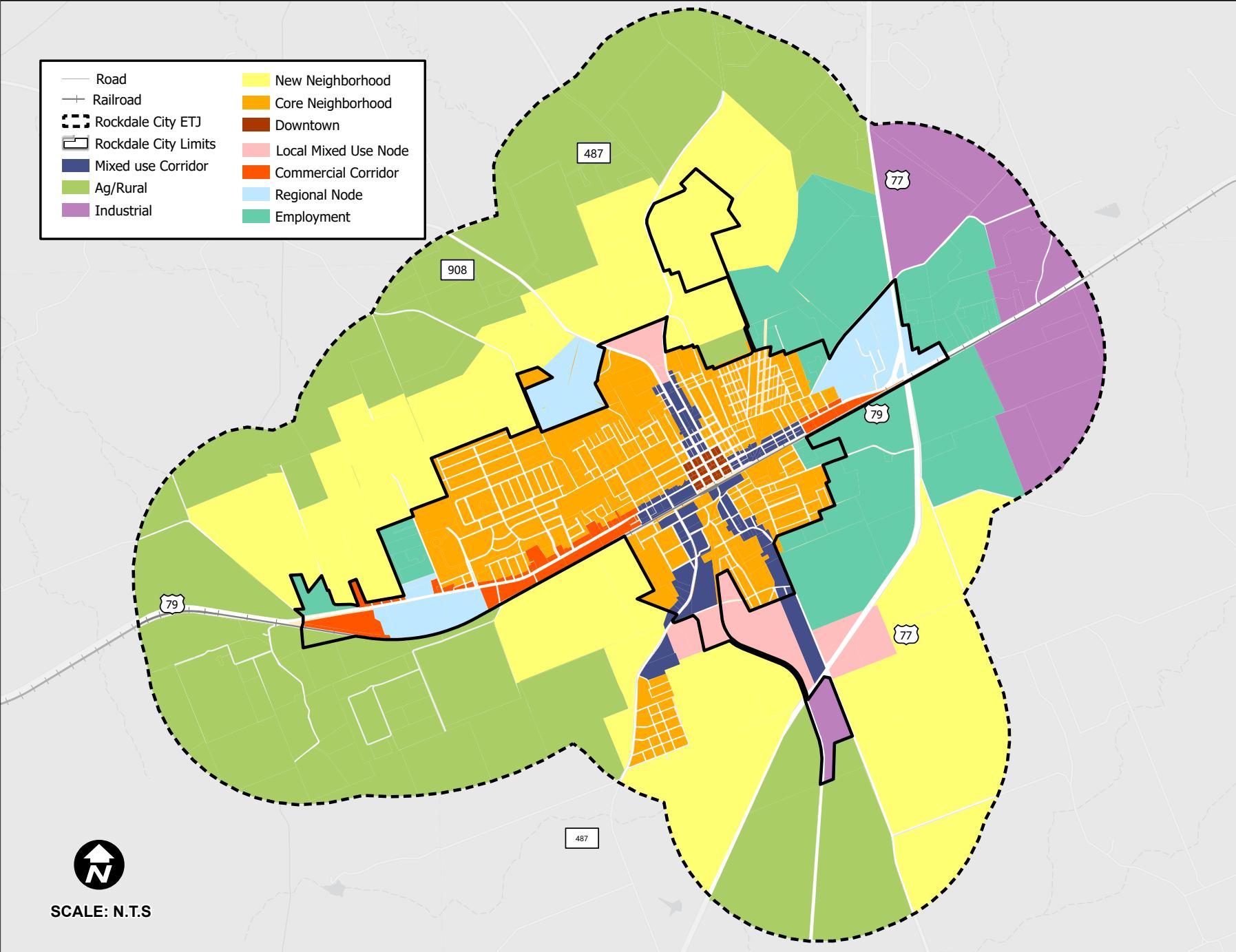
Figure 13. Series of hand-drawn concepts resulting from the charrette.

Land Use Distribution & Compatibility

The Future Land Use Map visually articulates the envisioned growth pattern, reflecting the collective input of Rockdale's residents, business owners, civic groups and stakeholders. The FLUM, along with the detailed land use descriptions and strategies outlined in this section, will steer decision-making processes related to development, land use and growth. It is important to clarify that the FLUM does not hold regulatory authority; rather it functions as an additional reference for addressing site-specific development inquiries. The official zoning map and ordinance of the City governs land uses on a parcel-by-parcel basis, with the FLUM serving as a long-term vision that may not necessarily mirror today's land uses. The FLUM, however, is an important reference when considering the appropriateness of zoning map amendments and can be used to inform future updates to the zoning map and ordinances.

Figure 14. Future Land Use Acreages City Limits & ETJ

Future Land Use		City Limits + ETJ (Acres)	City Limits + ETJ (Percentage)	City Limits (Acres)	City Limits (Percentage)
	Mixed - Use Corridor	265	1.9%	265	1.9%
	Ag/Rural	4,785	34.6%	4,785	34.6%
	Neighborhood	3,975	28.8%	3,975	28.8%
	Core Neighborhood	1,313	9.5%	1,313	9.5%
	Downtown	20	0.1%	20	0.1%
	Local Mixed-Use Node	295	2.1%	295	2.1%
	Commercial Corridor	146	1.1%	146	1.1%
	Regional Node	378	2.7%	378	2.7%
	Employment	1,620	11.7%	1,620	11.7%
	Industrial	1,019	7.4%	1,019	7.4%
Total		13,816	100%	2,418	100%

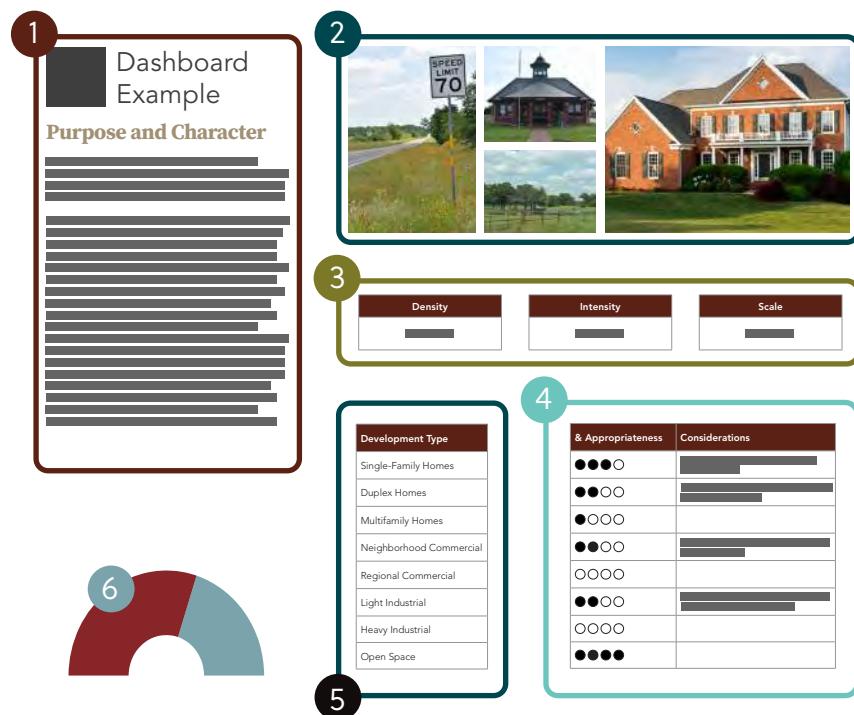


Map 5. Future Land Use Map

Future Land Use Dashboards

What are Land Use Dashboards?

Land Use Dashboards provide staff, appointed officials and elected representatives with a one-stop location for information related to the future land use categories established in the Future Land Use Map (FLUM). The components of each dashboard are described in the following section. Colors assigned to each component may be referenced with the corresponding dashboard example.



1 Land Use Description

Each dashboard includes the land use title, corresponding FLUM color and description that addresses the category's primary purpose and character. Purpose statements should be used when considering land use decisions, such as the appropriateness of a rezoning case. Character statements should be used when evaluating the building form of a proposal or updates to development code requirements.

2 Visual Representation

Each dashboard includes images depicting examples of the primary development type within the land use. Local examples have been used where available. These photos are not comprehensive and may not illustrate all appropriate uses. The representations, however, should be referenced when considering the built form of development inquiries.

3 Density, Intensity and Scale

The recommended density, intensity (i.e., lot coverage) and scale for development in each land use category are located beneath the visual representations. Density is represented as dwelling units per acre (DUA) and should be referenced when considering land use decisions with new or redeveloped housing components. Intensity and scale should be considered based on a proposal's relationship to nearby residences and structures. For example, if immediately adjacent to a neighborhood, consideration may be given to limiting the scale of nonresidential structures. Scale is referenced in stories, with one story being approximately 12 to 14 feet in height. Additional discussion on density, intensity and scale is provided on the following pages.

4 Appropriateness Table

Appropriateness ranges on a scale of one to four markers, where there is no marker it means a use should be prohibited, and four markers mean a use should likely be allowed by right. Where appropriateness is contingent on specific considerations, these ranges are provided to clarify when the use is more or less favorable.

5 Development Types

Within each appropriateness table, eight common development types are used to describe the compatible uses within each future land use category. A description of each development type is provided below:

Single-Family Homes

Generally, this includes detached dwelling units on separate lots. These homes are typically individually owned and may be built singularly or within larger neighborhood developments.

Duplex and Townhomes

No more than two attached dwelling units connected by at least one shared wall or in a stacked format. Units may be on an individual or shared lot and are typically higher in density than detached single-family homes.

Multifamily Homes

Buildings that exceed two individual dwelling units, such as condominiums or multifamily complexes. Multifamily development is the densest type of residential development and may include ancillary uses like parking structures and leasing offices.

Neighborhood Commercial

Commercial development intended to serve nearby residents. Neighborhood Commercial uses are located close to existing and anticipated residential subdivisions and offer residents the opportunity to buy goods and services conveniently.

Regional Commercial

Commercial development intended to serve a regional market. Uses are not appropriate in scale to local neighborhoods and are usually located on major thoroughfares, including large employers such as big-box retailers.

Light Industrial

Development offering commercial services, offices and business parks, light industrial uses, indoor manufacturing, tech, R&D, warehousing, and ancillary uses. Commercial services range in form and scale and may be compatible with retail and industrial uses depending on the context.

Heavy Industrial

Industrial development intended to serve local or regional markets. This development type ranges from services on an individual-consumer basis to larger shipping operations and may produce more-than-average noise, waste, large truck traffic and other nuisances. This development type is incompatible with residential uses and should be screened from adjacencies.

Open Space & Civic Uses

Open spaces range from parks to riparian buffers and serve both conservation and recreational purposes. Parks and open spaces promote social and physical well being and are an important part of the City's infrastructure. Civic uses are public or semi-public facilities that serve the people of Rockdale, such as libraries, recreation centers, schools, other government functions, churches, utility infrastructure, etc. Open space and civic uses are allowed in all land use categories (and so are not called out specifically in the dashboard use matrices), but should be contextually sensitive based on the surrounding uses.

6 Development Ratio

The development ratio dial serves as guidance on the overall mix of commercial to non-commercial types of development envisioned for the areas covered by the land use category. This is not intended to be a hard number, but more a target or rule of thumb.

Topic of Note: Density, Intensity and Scale

Density, intensity and scale are planning concepts used to talk about and measure the amount of development on a site. These are primarily governed by zoning regulations and land use policies and significantly impact transportation, infrastructure maintenance, housing affordability and the city's broader economy. This Plan sets out a target range or typical amount of density, intensity and scale envisioned for each land use category presented.

- Density refers to the number of dwelling units or homes in a given area, typically measured in dwelling units per acre (DUA).
- Intensity, for the purposes of this Plan, refers to the portion of a lot or parcel of land that is covered by buildings, structures or impervious surfaces like pavement or concrete, typically measured in a percentage of the lot area covered by these elements. Also often referred to as "lot coverage."
- Scale, for the purposes of this Plan, refers to the height of buildings, measured in number of stories.

These elements are all closely related and can also impact each other. You can increase one or two without increasing the others, depending on your goals for an area. See Figure 16 on the opposite page.

For example, a typical suburban block of detached, single-family homes, such as the one illustrated in Figure 15, often has densities between 5 and 10 DUA and intensities or lot coverages of 50 - 90 percent. Allowing accessory dwelling units or duplexes in a neighborhood can double the overall density without impacting the intensity or scale, allowing for an increase in density without changing the single-family character of the area or negatively impacting the residents' quality of life.

Figure 15. Visualizing Density - 6 DUA

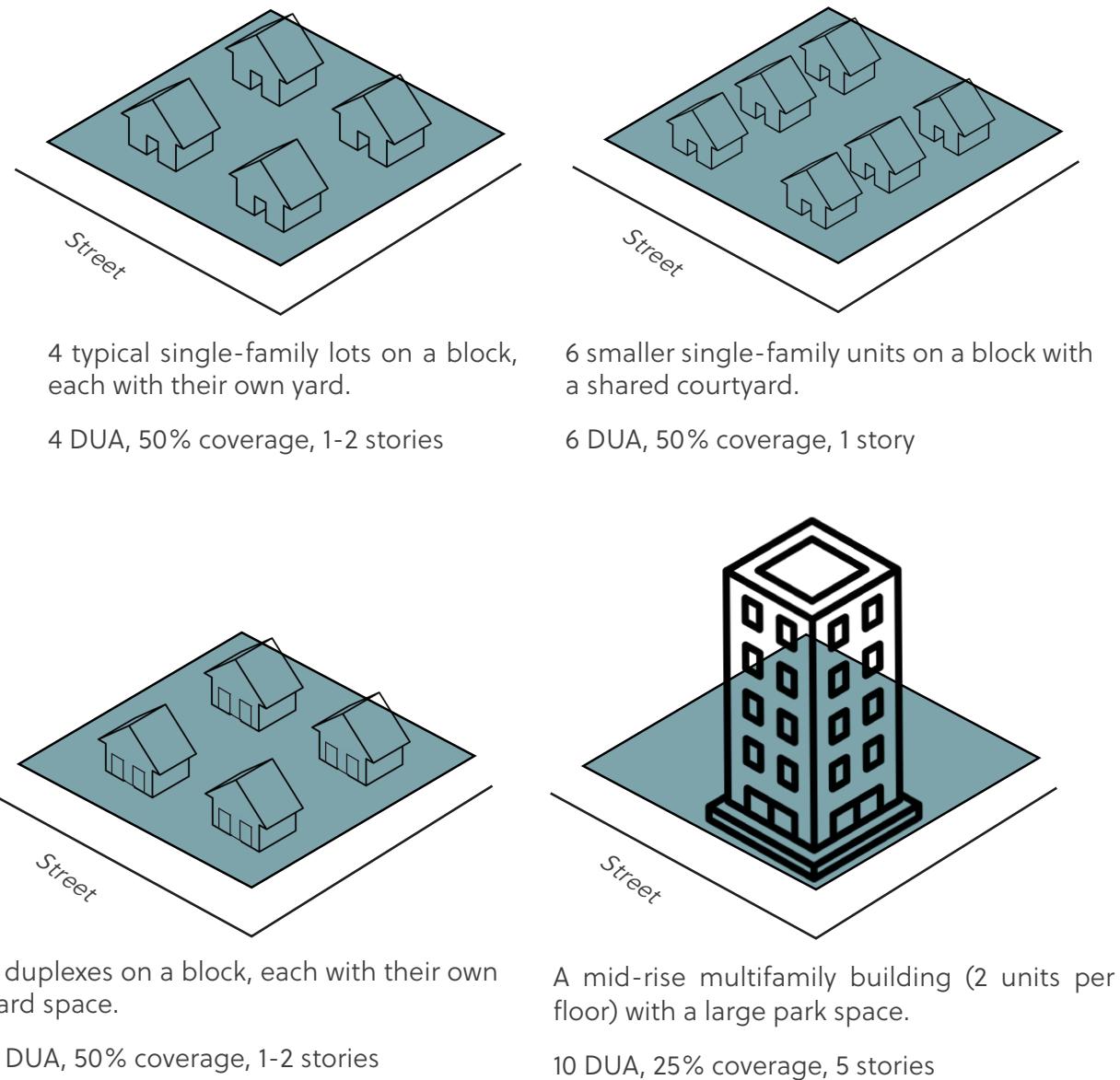


Figure 16. Lot Coverage Illustration

This graphic is intended to demonstrate the relationship between density, intensity and scale, noting the importance of discussing these elements together, rather than individually.

Note how the density, intensity and scale do or do not change among the examples. Notice how increasing scale allows more housing units with less intensity. Think about how these might address or not address some of the community's goals in different parts of the City.

Each example may be appropriate in different areas of Rockdale, therefore density, intensity and scale should be calibrated accordingly for each land use category.



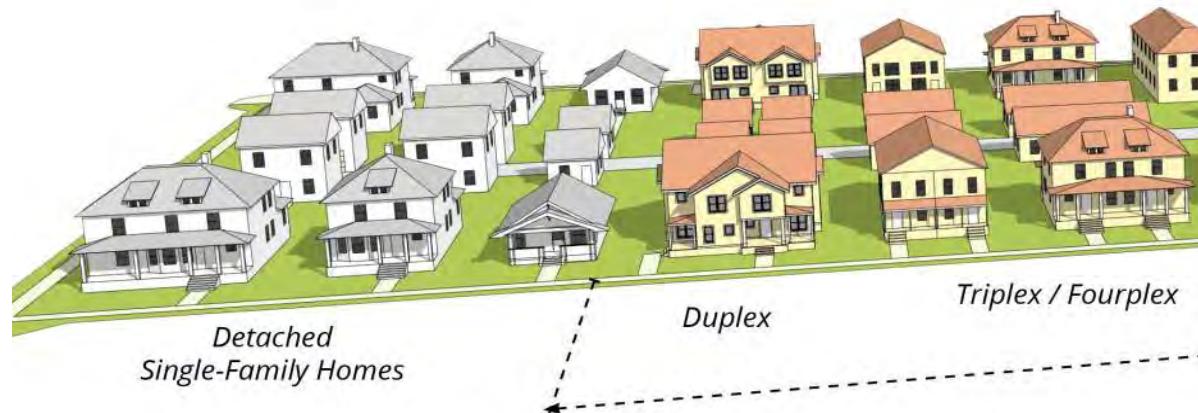
Topic of Note: Missing Middle Housing

As noted in the prior discussion, it is possible to increase housing density in a city without drastically changing the look or feel of the community. Missing middle housing is a popular strategy for achieving housing density, variety and opportunity through alternative types of housing that are compatible with the look and feel of small towns.

These housing types provide a variety of opportunities that may be important in Rockdale:

- Embraces small-town character while simultaneously meeting increasing housing needs, sometimes called “modest density.”
- Can help minimize displacement by facilitating multi-generational housing or allowing owners to rent a second unit for additional income (in the case of a duplex or ADU).
- Can be used as buffers between low-density and higher-density developments.
- Promotes incremental change rather than disruptive transformations that can alter the character of a neighborhood.
- Helps provide affordable housing options for people in different phases of the housing cycle, including young families, young professionals, and empty-nesters.
- Allows more housing to be built in areas that are already serviced by road and utility infrastructure, minimizing impacts on City funds and natural areas.

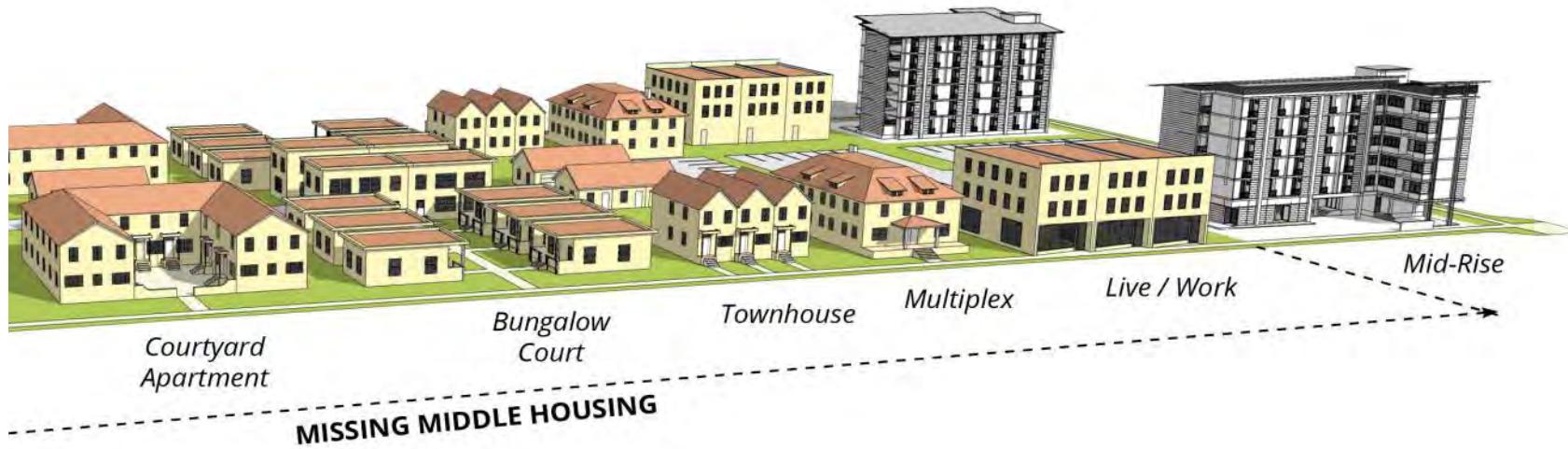
Figure 17. Spectrum of missing middle housing products.



Triplex or Quadplex
15-35 units/acre



Bungalow or Cottage Court
19-35 units/acre



Duplex
6-18 units/acre



Townhouse/Rowhouse
11-16 units/acre



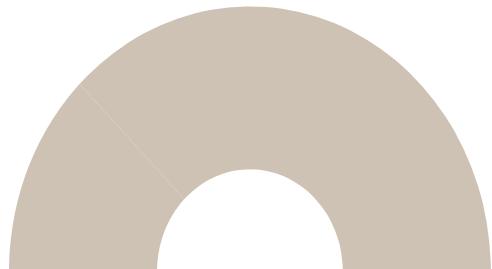
Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)
8-12 units/acre (including primary unit)

Agriculture/ Rural

Purpose and Character

Much of Rockdale's existing land use is dominated by agricultural land and practices, a trend favored by residents seeking a quiet, rural way of life. The purpose of the Agriculture designation is to preserve Rockdale's historic rural environment and promote complementary uses such as ranching, active crop cultivation and harvesting. Supporting more compact forms of development elsewhere in the City allows these areas to remain rural in character and use.

Natural topography, tree stands and hydrology significantly impact Agriculture development more than suburban development types. Visually, this designation should be dominated by grazing, cultivation, large parcels and agricultural structures. Large-lot residential homes and small-scale commercial development that support agricultural activities can be appropriate within this designation.



*Not Applicable - the non-residential/residential mix in rural areas is highly variable and may be agribusiness or rural residential in nature.



Density	Intensity	Scale
< 2 DUA	25% Lot Coverage Low Intensity	1 to 2 Stories Low-rise*

Development Type & Appropriateness	Considerations
Single-Family Homes	●●●
Duplex and Townhomes	○○○○
Multifamily Homes	○○○○
Neighborhood Commercial	●●○○
Regional Commercial	○○○○
Light Industrial	●●○○
Heavy Industrial	●○○○

*Note that scale may increase adjacent to agriculture production due to structures such as barns, grain elevators and silos.

New Neighborhood

Purpose and Character

New Neighborhoods primarily focus on single-family residential development while incorporating some additional housing choices and types in appropriate circumstances. These areas prioritize the new construction of single-family homes and should also include elements such as green spaces, parks and improved infrastructure for enhanced connectivity and livability. The emphasis remains on creating suburban living spaces that support various household needs, ensuring a balance between single-family housing, middle-density housing varieties and neighborhood-scale amenities. For the most part, New Neighborhoods are distributed along the periphery of the City, outside core neighborhoods.



Non-Residential █ 10%
Residential █ 90%



Density	Intensity	Scale
4 to 12 DUA	60% Lot Coverage Low Intensity	1 to 2 Stories Low-rise

Development Type & Appropriateness	Considerations
Single-Family Homes	●●●●
Duplex and Townhomes	●●●○
Multifamily Homes	●○○○
Neighborhood Commercial	●●○○
Regional Commercial	○○○○
Light Industrial	○○○○
Heavy Industrial	○○○○

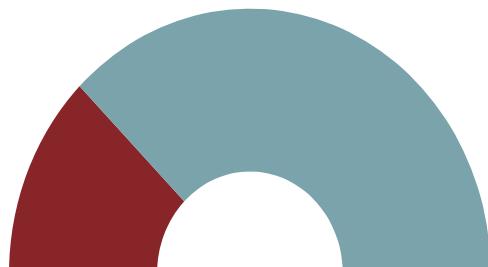
Core Neighborhood

Purpose and Character

A core neighborhood is a community characterized by complete neighborhoods that provide residents with a wide array of housing options, amenities, and services within its boundaries. These centrally located neighborhoods typically encompass a diverse mix of residential types, ensuring a variety of household types that individuals can find suitable to their needs at every stage of their life.

Beyond housing diversity, these neighborhoods prioritize the principles of walkability and accessibility by incorporating features like pedestrian-friendly streets, parks, green spaces, schools, local shops, restaurants and well-connected public transit options. This fosters a strong sense of community, promoting social interaction and enhancing the overall quality of life within the neighborhood.

This land use includes mostly existing neighborhoods in Rockdale, with some opportunities for small-scale infill to organically generate more diversity of housing and amenities.



Non-Residential  25%

Residential  75%



Density	Intensity	Scale
8 to 15 DUA	60-80% Lot Coverage Medium Intensity	1 to 2 Stories Low-rise

Development Type & Appropriateness	Considerations
Single-Family Homes	 Accessory dwelling units are appropriate as a secondary use to single family homes.
Duplex and Townhomes	 Generally appropriate for use as infill development.
Multifamily Homes	 Small-scale multi-unit buildings can be appropriate if in line with the scale and character of single-family homes.
Neighborhood Commercial	 Should be placed to support walkability, convenience, and designed to cohesively integrate with the surrounding neighborhood. Especially appropriate if it's an adaptive reuse of an older home. Most appropriate at roadway intersections within neighborhoods.
Regional Commercial	
Light Industrial	
Heavy Industrial	

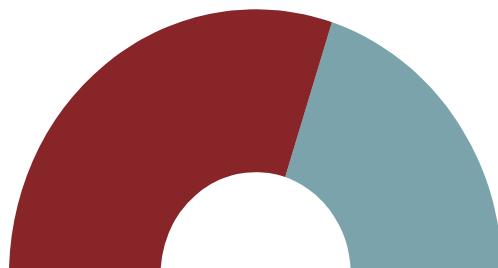
Downtown

Purpose and Character

Rockdale's Downtown represents the historic City center where residential and commercial spaces seamlessly coexist in the physical and cultural heart of the City. Downtown should maximize density and walkability, which often leads to some of the highest fiscally performing land in the City. The focus here is on mid-density development and a great public realm that promotes walkability, activity, and pedestrian engagement with downtown businesses.

Buildings in Downtown have minimal front setbacks and prioritize pedestrian-scaled elements like lighting, interesting storefronts, traditional architectural forms, street trees, and benches, fostering a welcoming atmosphere. Centralized parking supports a "pedestrian first" environment and enhances the street experience to encourage visiting multiple establishments.

Rockdale's Downtown is a primary component of community identity, and its preservation and renewed vitality is critical.



Non-Residential █ 60%

Residential █ 40%



Density	Intensity	Scale
12 to 36 DUA	90-100% Lot Coverage High Intensity	1 to 4 Stories Low-to Mid-rise

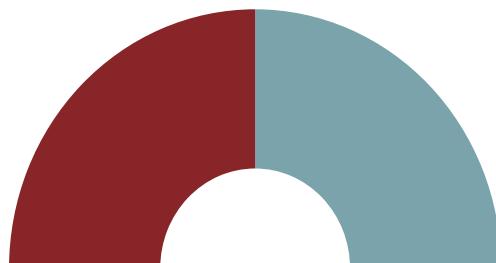
Development Type & Appropriateness	Considerations
Single-Family Homes	●●○○ May be appropriate if higher-density, small lot product integrated into the overall fabric of Downtown. Accessory dwelling units should be encouraged in this area.
Duplex and Townhomes	●●●○ Most appropriate toward the fringe of the Downtown District as it transitions to core neighborhoods.
Multifamily Homes	●●●● Multifamily units are appropriate located above ground floor retail along primary frontage, and minimally on the bottom floor to accommodate accessibility requirements. Small scale multifamily buildings may be appropriate along secondary streets.
Neighborhood Commercial	●●●● Focus on uses that activate the public realm, such as small shops and restaurants, as well as cultural institutions.
Regional Commercial	○○○○
Light Industrial	○○○○
Heavy Industrial	○○○○

Local Mixed-Use Node

Purpose and Character

The Local Mixed-Use Node land use category defines key focal points within the community, strategically designed to accommodate a variety of land uses, including residential, commercial and recreational activities within a compact and accessible area. These places typically feature dynamic streetscapes connecting a mix of local businesses, cafes, shops and essential services, fostering economic vitality and access to goods, services and opportunities for residents.

Residential components include apartments and townhomes integrated into a mixed-use development, offering a variety of housing options that cater to different lifestyles. Public spaces and parks are thoughtfully planned, encouraging social interaction and creating a distinct sense of place within these nodes. As community anchors, these nodes contribute to the overall diversity and resilience of offerings in Rockdale.



Non-Residential █ 50%

Residential █ 50%



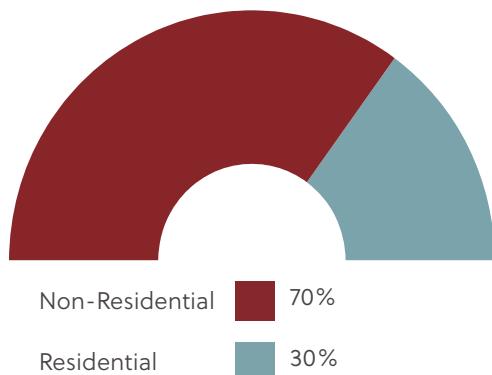
Density	Intensity	Scale
12 to 45 DUA	70% Lot Coverage Medium Intensity	1 to 3 Stories Low-rise

Development Type & Appropriateness	Considerations
Single-Family Homes	●○○○ May be appropriate if higher-density, small lot products incorporated into a larger, walkable neighborhood. Should be accessed from alleys.
Duplex and Townhomes	●●○○ Most appropriate at the fringe of the local mixed-use node as it transitions into other uses.
Multifamily Homes	●●●● Most appropriate if in a vertical mixed-use building with commercial space on the ground floor.
Neighborhood Commercial	●●●●
Regional Commercial	●●●○ May be appropriate if it is at the same scale as surrounding neighborhood commercial uses and supports a walkable environment.
Light Industrial	●●○○ Flex-office type uses with minimal nuisance creation, that also contribute to the public realm and urban design character of the area.
Heavy Industrial	○○○○

Regional Node

Purpose and Character

The Regional Node land use category designates essential regional centers that primarily focus on serving the broader geographic area. These nodes are characterized by large-scale commercial enterprises, corporate offices, apartment buildings, healthcare institutions and significant entertainment venues. These nodes act as hubs for commerce, drawing visitors and workers from surrounding areas and help to foster economic growth. Public spaces and green areas, where possible, enhance the overall experience within these nodes, providing opportunities for relaxation and community gatherings. Regional Nodes play a central role in regional planning, contributing to economic development, efficient transportation networks and the delivery of essential services to a wider geographic area, ultimately enhancing regional vitality and resilience. Can include mixed-uses, including vertical mixed-use with residential above retail.



Density	Intensity	Scale
20 to 60 DUA	75% Lot Coverage Medium Intensity	2 to 5 Stories Low- to Mid-rise

Development Type & Appropriateness	Considerations
Single-Family Homes	○○○○
Duplex and Townhomes	○○○○
Multifamily Homes	●●●●
Neighborhood Commercial	●●○○
Regional Commercial	●●●●
Light Industrial	●●○○
Heavy Industrial	○○○○

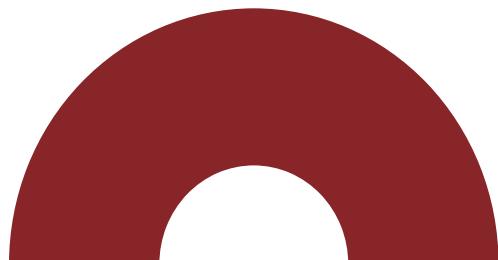
Commercial Corridor

Purpose and Character

The Commercial Corridor land use typology defines significant urban or suburban thoroughfares within the City primarily dedicated to commercial activities, creating bustling economic activity that enhances local business, trade and community vibrancy.

Commercial Corridors are characterized by a concentration of businesses, retail establishments, restaurants and service providers that cater to both local residents and visitors. These corridors often serve as prominent retail areas or business hubs, offering a wide array of goods and services. These are also often the gateways into the City for people driving into the community from across the region, and for that reason their aesthetic quality, along with appropriate land uses, is important to consider.

The Commercial Corridor typology is integral to local economic growth, providing opportunities for entrepreneurship, employment and commerce while contributing to the overall character and identity of the City.



Non-Residential 100%

Residential 0%



Density	Intensity	Scale
0 DUA	75% Lot Coverage Medium Intensity	1 to 3 Stories Low-rise

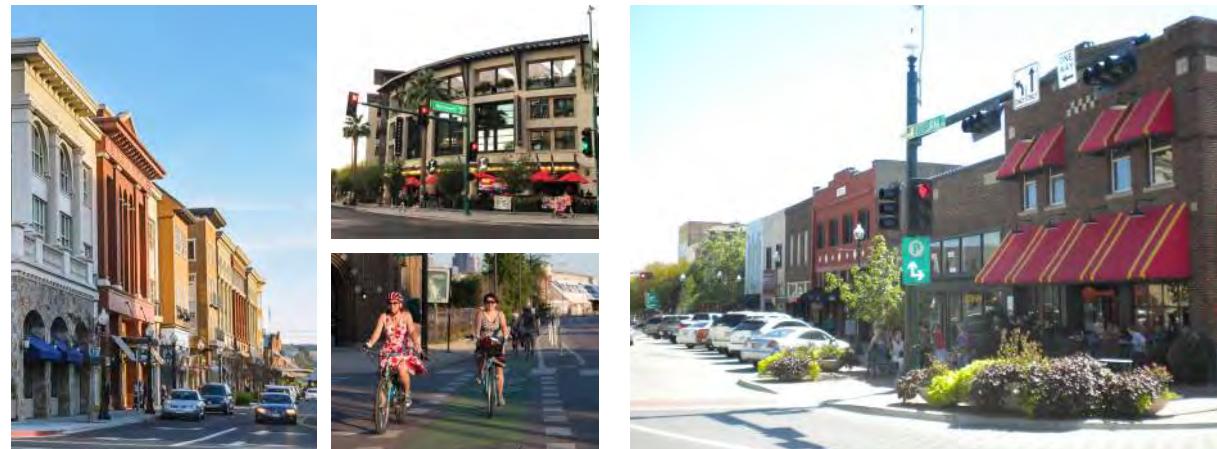
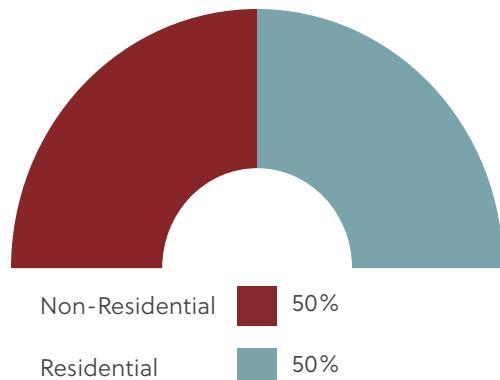
Development Type & Appropriateness	Considerations	
Single-Family Homes	OOOO	
Duplex and Townhomes	OOOO	
Multifamily Homes	OOOO	
Neighborhood Commercial	●●●●	
Regional Commercial	●●●●	
Light Industrial	●●○○	Light industrial should not generate nuisance to commercial or nearby residential uses. Placement along thoroughfares should consider design and aesthetics to support attractive gateways into the City.
Heavy Industrial	OOOO	

Mixed-Use Corridor

Purpose and Character

A Mixed-Use Corridor is a land use category within urban and suburban areas that combines a diverse range of land uses, fostering vibrant and walkable environments connecting important nodes throughout the community. Characterized by its prime location along collector streets, minor arterials and occasionally principal arterials, a Mixed-Use Corridor seamlessly integrates residential, commercial and often institutional or recreational components into a cohesive urban fabric.

In a Mixed-Use Corridor, you can find a blend of mid-rise residential buildings, commercial spaces, offices, entertainment venues and public amenities. The design encourages pedestrian activity by providing wide sidewalks, bike lanes and green spaces, reducing dependency on automobiles. By promoting accessibility to everyday services, neighborhoods, employment opportunities and recreational activities, Mixed-Use Corridors aim to enhance the quality of life for residents, support local economies and contribute to the vitality of urban communities.



Density	Intensity	Scale
15 to 25 DUA	70% Lot Coverage Medium Intensity	1 to 3 Stories Low-rise

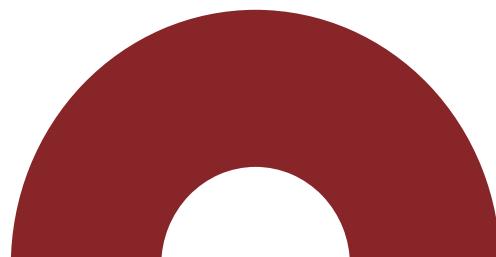
Development Type & Appropriateness	Considerations
Single-Family Homes	●○○○ Only appropriate in small quantities and if higher-density, small lot product incorporated into a larger, walkable corridor. Should be accessed from alleys.
Duplex and Townhomes	●●○○ Most appropriate at the edges where the corridor transitions into other uses.
Multifamily Homes	●●●● Most appropriate if in a vertical mixed-use building with commercial space on the ground floor.
Neighborhood Commercial	●●●●
Regional Commercial	●●○○ May be appropriate if it is at the same scale as surrounding neighborhood commercial uses and supports a walkable environment.
Light Industrial	○○○○
Heavy Industrial	○○○○

Employment

Purpose and Character

Employment centers include professional and service uses that are higher density, but have lower impacts to surrounding land uses compared to industrial uses. Typically, employment centers support a variety of occupations including general office, research and development facilities, medical clinics, light industrial, and business incubators. These are typically located within nearby access to arterial thoroughfares. Future employment centers should include a greater variety of commercial uses and multi-modal transportation options. This district is especially appropriate for several needs that residents of Rockdale currently look elsewhere to provide, including:

- Healthcare services, including hospitals
- Specialized facilities that support workforce and skills development, such as information technology and advanced manufacturing.



Non-Residential 100%

Residential 0%



Density	Intensity	Scale
0 DUA	80% Lot Coverage High Intensity	1 to 5 Stories Low- to Mid-rise

Development Type & Appropriateness	Considerations	
Single-Family Homes	OOOO	
Duplex and Townhomes	OOOO	
Multifamily Homes	OOOO	
Neighborhood Commercial	●●○○	Appropriate if serving surrounding employment uses, such as a cafe.
Regional Commercial	●●●●	Focus on office and large employment users with less retail commercial than regional nodes.
Light Industrial	●●○○	Appropriate if at a similar scale and intensity as surrounding commercial uses and does not create nuisances for other office users in the area.
Heavy Industrial	OOOO	

Industrial

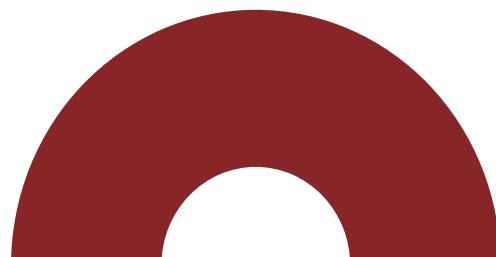
Purpose and Character

The Industrial land use category designates areas specifically allocated for a broad spectrum of industrial activities and operations. Characterized by their focus on R&D, manufacturing, processing, warehousing and distribution, industrial zones play a fundamental role in supporting a city's and region's economy. Within industrial areas, you can expect to find manufacturing plants, factories, warehouses, logistics centers and research facilities. These zones are strategically located to optimize transportation and supply chain logistics, often situated near major transportation hubs, including highways and railways. Industrial land uses also play a critical role in innovation, research and development, contributing to technological advancements and improving the competitiveness of businesses in the global marketplace. Industrial areas are carefully planned to balance economic development with environmental sustainability, ensuring that operations are conducted responsibly and with consideration for the surrounding community.



Density	Intensity	Scale
0 DUA	80% Lot Coverage High Intensity	1 to 4 Stories Low-to Mid-rise

Development Type & Appropriateness	Considerations	
Single-Family Homes	○○○○	
Duplex and Townhomes	○○○○	
Multifamily Homes	○○○○	
Neighborhood Commercial	●○○○	Appropriate if serving surrounding industrial uses.
Regional Commercial	●●●●	
Light Industrial	●●●●	
Heavy Industrial	●●●●	Heavy industrial uses should be evaluated for nuisance generation and located so as to minimize impacts to surrounding users and communities.



Non-Residential █ 100%

Residential █ 0%



A photograph of a rural road with trees and a speed limit sign.

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

Introduction

The City's mobility network is vitally important to the economic, environmental, physical and social health of a community. The roadways that connect a community impact whether people can easily bike, walk or drive to their destinations. Roads and streets not only connect us to our jobs, shopping and places of worship, but more importantly, they connect us to one another. Design decisions have the ability to isolate or further connect the community by influencing the way in which residents interact with one another.

Complete streets, designed to accommodate various modes of transportation, inherently offer more room for residents to participate in physical activities such as walking and cycling. This not only enhances public health by encouraging exercise but also fosters a sense of community as people interact more frequently in these spaces. The transportation network also impacts the labor markets within reasonable commuting distance for residents, improving economic mobility. How roads are designed also affects how adjacent land is utilized. The size, capacity, and flow of traffic can heavily influence the "highest and best use" of land within the City, as certain development patterns may lend themselves to increased pedestrian or vehicular traffic.

Throughout the Plan engagement process, various community stakeholders were asked to help identify a vision for the future of Rockdale's transportation system. The overarching vision provided by the community was to: *"Develop and maintain a transportation system that will safely, economically and efficiently accommodate future growth."* This vision statement will guide the discussion and recommendations relating to the transportation network in Rockdale.

The Transportation Plan is divided into the following sections:

- Community Input
- Transportation Profile
- Thoroughfare Plan Classification
- Design Standards
- Action Plan



WHAT WE'VE HEARD: TRANSPORTATION

When residents were asked
“What area(s) should the City of Rockdale work to prioritize and improve the most?”:

- **12%** said Infrastructure Condition
- **11%** said Roadways, traffic

“Safety concerns about getting into and out of the intermediate school. Traffic is often backed up on 79 because people are waiting to turn into the school. Traffic trying to exit has poor visibility.”

- Community Member

“The intersection of Wilcox and Murray does not provide good visibility.”

- Community Member

“Road (East Belton Ave) is not maintained. People drive on the wrong side to avoid potholes big enough to damage vehicles.”

- Community Member

“Clean up Milam Ave so that it connects back to downtown.”

- Community Member

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Maintenance of existing local street network should be prioritized.
- Rockdale’s transportation network should provide options for multiple modes of transportation, including biking, walking, and private vehicles.
- Streets within the City of Rockdale should be designed with safety as a primary concern.
- Increasing walkability and space for businesses in Downtown Rockdale was valued more than convenient parking.

Transportation Profile

The existing condition section of the thoroughfare plan is an overview of the transportation network within the City of Rockdale. This section provides a description of the City's major thoroughfares as they currently exist regarding capacity, functional classification and multi-modal accessibility. The purpose of the street classification system is to provide insight into the balance between accessibility and mobility across different road typologies. This provides valuable information that helps inform the long-range transportation plan and the broader land use planning process within the City of Rockdale.

Major Roadway Network

U.S. 79

U.S. 79 is an 855-mile, north-south interstate highway that begins off I.H.35 near Round Rock, Texas and terminates in Russellville, Kentucky. U.S. 79 is the primary east-west thoroughfare within the City and serves as a route for through traffic as well as providing local access to the vast majority of commercial/retail businesses with the City. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) maintains this roadway.

U.S. 77

U.S. 77 is a 1,305-mile, north-south interstate highway that begins at the junction of I.H. 29 in Sioux City, Iowa and ends at the Mexican border in Brownsville, Texas. This route is located along the eastern city limits of Rockdale and primarily serves through traffic rather than providing local access to goods, services and jobs. TxDOT is responsible for the maintenance of U.S. 77.

F.M. 487

Farm to Market Road (F.M.) 487 is a paved rural road that is part of the Texas state Farm to Market Road System. The Farm to Market System's purpose is to connect agricultural areas to towns throughout the state. This route ends in Downtown Rockdale but extends north of Rockdale for about 60 miles, connecting the City to several rural communities in Williamson, Bell and Milam Counties.

F.M. 908

This route currently serves as an important rural connector, running 34 miles north-south through Rockdale toward its southern terminus at the intersection of State Highway 21 near Caldwell, Texas. North of Rockdale, the roadway ends near San Gabriel, Texas. F.M. 908 largely provides local accessibility to several institutional and commercial facilities in Downtown and northern portions of Rockdale.

Local Roadways

Most of Rockdale's local roadways are within a linear grid system, with block sizes varying from 300 feet by 320 feet to 270 feet by 850 feet. Most of these roads are high-access but offer limited mobility in terms of speed. Murray Avenue, Belton Avenue, and Mill Avenue are collector roads connecting local roads with significant arterials, such as U.S. 79.



U.S.79, Downtown Rockdale

Street Layout

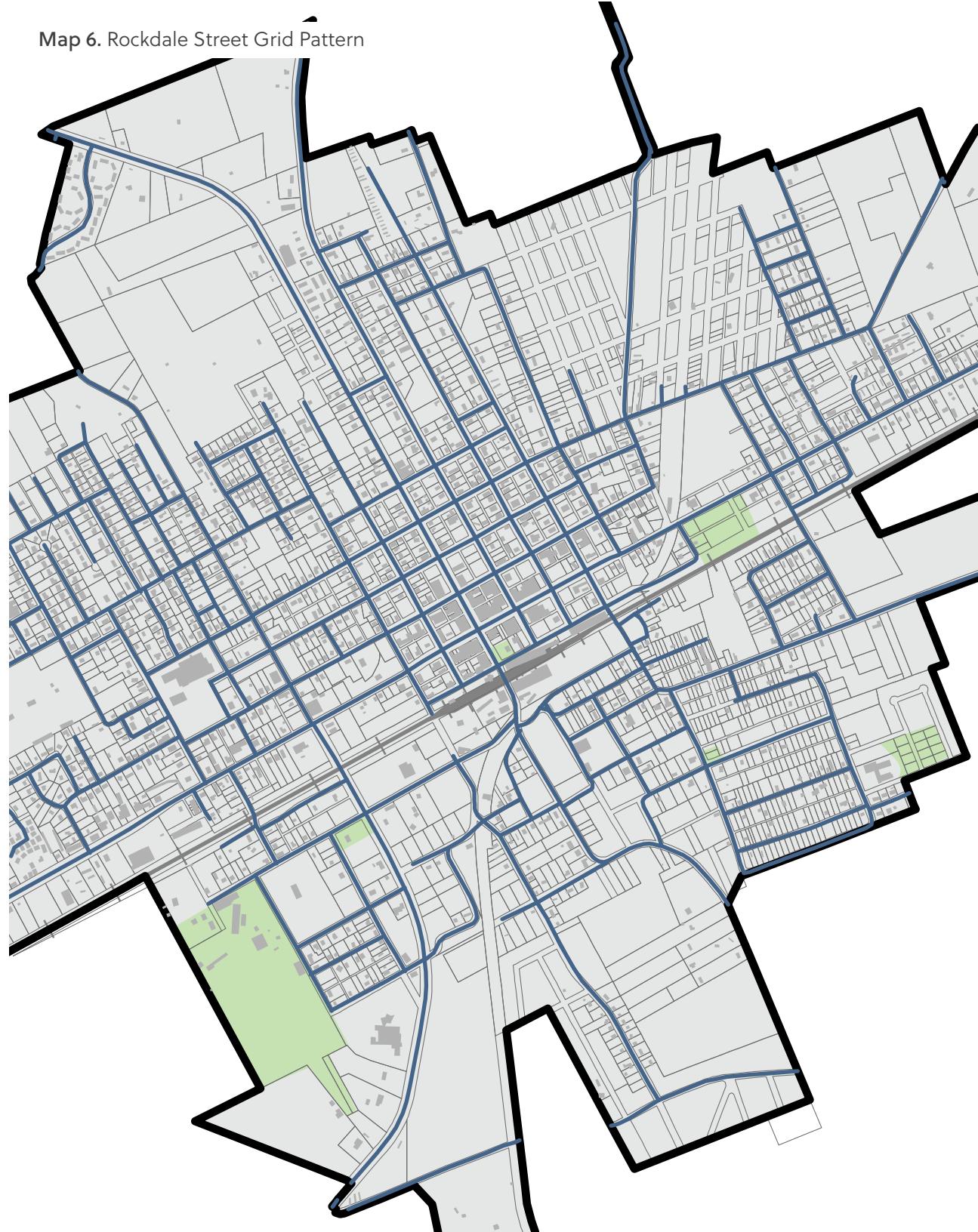
The City of Rockdale has approximately 51 miles of road within its City limits. With only a few exceptions, the majority of Rockdale's roads lay on a grid with a wide variety of block sizes. Grids offer distinct advantages compared to hierarchical street designs such as those that are more curvilinear in nature.

One of the key advantages that grid systems offer is that it can help distribute trip destinations and origins along a wider variety of similarly sized streets, rather than collecting vehicles onto a few large arterial roads. In this way, the grid system can help mitigate congestion as the City grows, especially when working in tandem with land use policies that encourage a greater variety of land uses along many of the City's streets.

Grid systems also have the advantage of being easy to navigate for both pedestrians and automobile users, which helps with safety and access. Grids can also help create well defined, central gathering spaces such as parks or plazas.

Currently, most residents need to utilize the U.S. 79 thoroughfare to gain access to most goods and services. Focusing on creating complete streets and distributing trip generating commercial areas may help improve traffic flow within the City as well as improves the quality of life for residents.

Map 6. Rockdale Street Grid Pattern



Commute Patterns

As of 2020, only about 13% of all workers in Rockdale live and work in the City. A slight majority (49%) of workers live in Rockdale and commute outside the City for jobs. Jobs are not highly concentrated in any particular area. Still, some commuting hotspots are located in the rural portions of Milam County and the nearby ALCOA site to the south of the City. The large number of inward and outward transportation flows illustrates a clear need for a transportation system that efficiently connects workers to regional and local labor markets.

Figure 18. Job Counts by Distance/Direction in 2020, All Workers

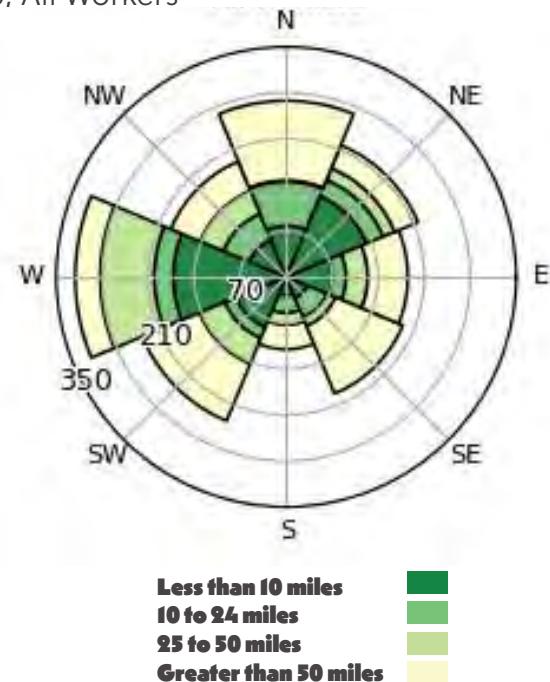
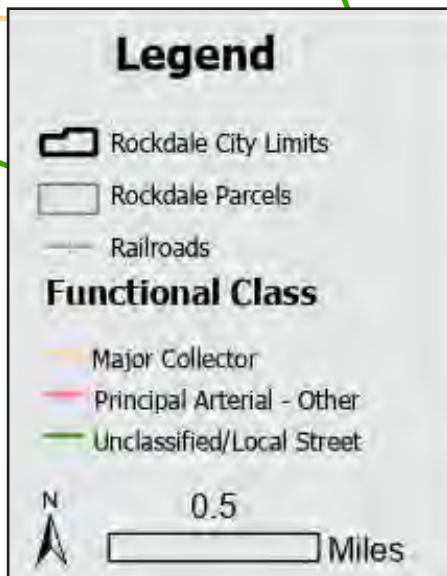


Figure 19. Rockdale Commuting Patterns 2002-2020





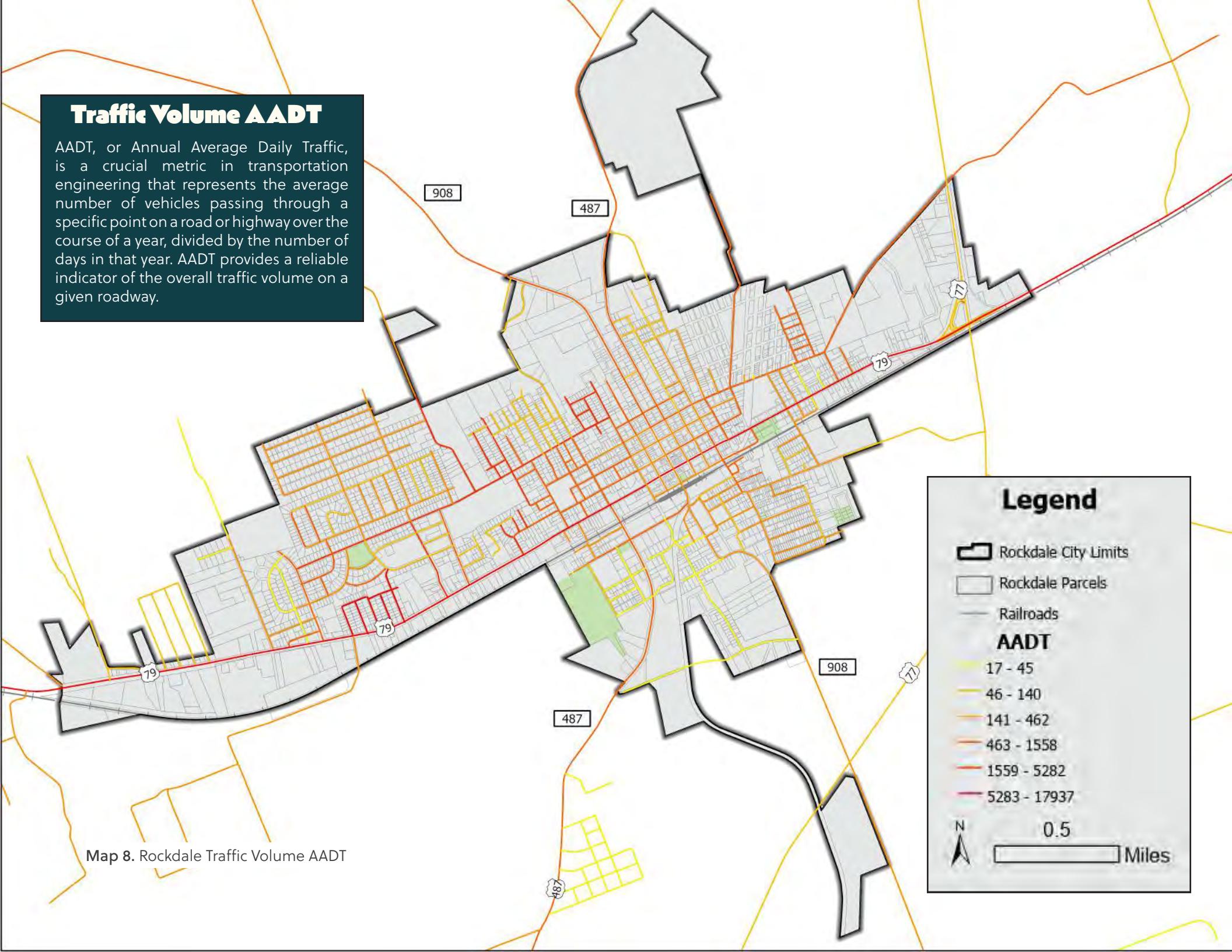
Map 7. Rockdale Street Functional Classifications

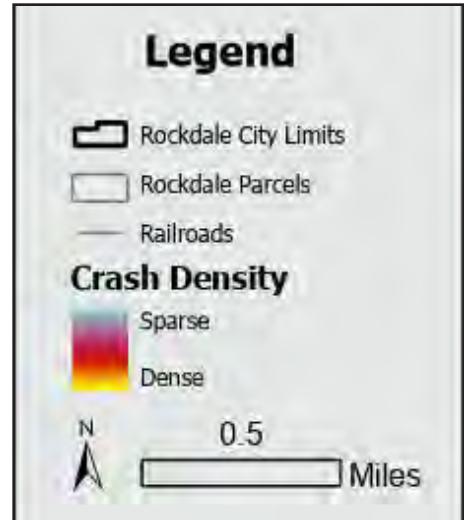
Functional Classification

Functional classification in transportation planning involves organizing roads into a hierarchical system based on their intended roles and importance within a network. This hierarchy typically includes three main categories: arterial roads, collectors and local roads.

Traffic Volume AADT

AADT, or Annual Average Daily Traffic, is a crucial metric in transportation engineering that represents the average number of vehicles passing through a specific point on a road or highway over the course of a year, divided by the number of days in that year. AADT provides a reliable indicator of the overall traffic volume on a given roadway.





Crash Density

Crash density is a metric used in transportation safety analysis to quantify the concentration of traffic-related crashes within a specific geographic area. The associated map of Rockdale represents a heat map of the total crashes in Rockdale between 2018-2023.

Map 9. Rockdale Crash Density

Expressways/Freeways

This includes controlled access facilities such as interstates, expressways and freeways. While these technically fall under the category of principal arterials within the City of Rockdale, they are not owned or operated by the municipality and are subject to Texas Department of Transportation design guidelines. It is critical that the City works closely with the Texas Department of Transportation to make sure that local businesses and residential areas located along the frontage are easily accessible.

Principal Arterials

Principal arterials are engineered to facilitate the movement of large traffic volumes with a focus on maintaining efficient mobility. They are designed to support longer-distance travel and provide critical access to major activity centers and neighboring cities. Principal arterials should have limited direct driveways connecting to them, and their primary intersections should typically involve other major arterials or larger transportation facilities. On-street parking is usually discouraged along major arterials to ensure smooth traffic flow.

Minor Arterials

Minor arterials play a vital role in connecting traffic from collector roads to major arterials. They are designed to accommodate moderate traffic volumes at relatively lower speeds and often extend to cover a broader geographical area. Depending on factors like right-of-way (ROW) availability and level of service, minor arterials may allow on-street parking to serve local needs while maintaining traffic functionality.

Collectors

Collector roadways are tailored for shorter journeys and slower travel. Their main purpose is to link trips to transportation routes with higher functional classifications and facilitate the movement of traffic between various Rockdale neighborhoods. Collector streets are characterized by their capacity to handle moderate traffic volumes and their reduced speeds, which cater to the need for easy access to nearby properties.

These thoroughfares typically consist of two to four lanes, a configuration that varies based on present traffic requirements, anticipated future demands, and potential development in the area. Collector streets are often good candidates for multi-modal lane improvements (i.e., bike lanes, pedestrian accommodations) due to their moderate speeds and volumes. While center turn lanes might be integrated into Major Collectors, raised medians are infrequently found on this category of roadways.

The design of collector streets aims to strike a balance between local access and regional connectivity, ensuring that they serve as vital components of the overall transportation network in the Rockdale area.

Local Roads and Streets

Local roads are integral in providing access to residential areas and land parcels, with a primary focus on accommodating local travel needs, including pedestrian and bicycle mobility. These roads typically connect to other local roads and collector streets and, in some instances, may link to minor arterials. Local roads are tailored for short trips at lower speeds, with spacing that varies based on the urban or rural context.



Evaluation of Future Roadway Needs

Functional Classification

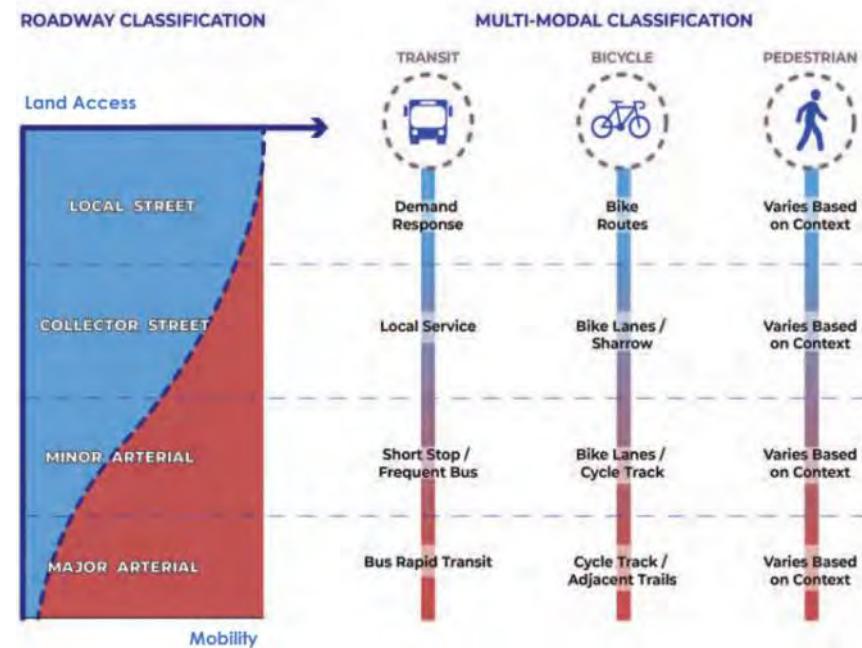
The functional classification system underpins local, state and national roadway design guidelines and manuals. The functional classification model categorizes streets in terms of access and mobility; as the functional classification tier increases, mobility increases, but land access decreases. As the classification tier decreases toward local streets, land access becomes easier, but mobility decreases. The functional classification of a street is not set in stone and may increase or decrease tiers for various reasons, but most often, it is because adjacent land uses change. Often, functional classification systems do not adequately account for the diversity of street typologies and various contexts in which they are located within a city. State and federal standards and guidelines may be the starting point for transportation planning, but cities should create street classification systems that better align with the community's goals for safety, growth, development and character.

General Guidance Regarding Functional Classification

The functional classification of roadways involves defined engineering design standards but also offers some flexibility due to overlapping characteristics between classes. Here are key guidelines to follow:

1. Consider the primary purpose of the roadway: Is it for local access or through traffic? Always consider adjacent land uses and the impacts that road design may have on local businesses and the quality of life for residential areas.
2. Evaluate existing roadway features like right-of-way, lanes, traffic volumes, medians, on-street parking and road segment length. Examine speed characteristics based on observed and desired speeds.
3. Verify that the facility's operation aligns with its assigned classification. Significant deviations may require reevaluation or the creation of a new class, although this is usually not recommended.
4. Consulting a registered professional engineer is strongly recommended for future updates to roadway classification.

Figure 20. Functional Classification



Rockdale 2024 Master Thoroughfare Plan

Purpose

A Master Thoroughfare Plan (MTP) is a comprehensive long-term transportation plan that serves as a blueprint for the development and management of a city's transportation network. It provides the overall framework for the transportation network, including the hierarchy of roads (such as arterials, collectors and local streets) and the location of major transportation corridors.

One of the key functions of an MTP is to guide the future growth and development of the transportation network. It identifies existing and future transportation needs based on factors such as population growth, land use patterns, economic development and traffic congestion. By anticipating future demands, the plan can help prioritize transportation projects and investments to ensure that the network can support the community's long-term growth and vitality.

The MTP serves as a tool for decision-makers to allocate resources and prioritize projects that will enhance the overall efficiency, safety, and accessibility of the transportation network. It also helps coordinate transportation planning efforts with other sectors, such as land use planning, economic development and environmental protection, to ensure that transportation investments align with broader community goals.

The streets plan, which is derived from the MTP, translates these guidelines into detailed designs for specific streets. It considers factors such as street width, lane configurations, intersection design and streetscape elements to create a cohesive and functional street network. By aligning the streets plan with the broader goals and objectives of the MTP, cities can create a transportation network that meets the needs of all users, from motorists to pedestrians to cyclists, while promoting sustainability and enhancing the overall quality of life for residents.

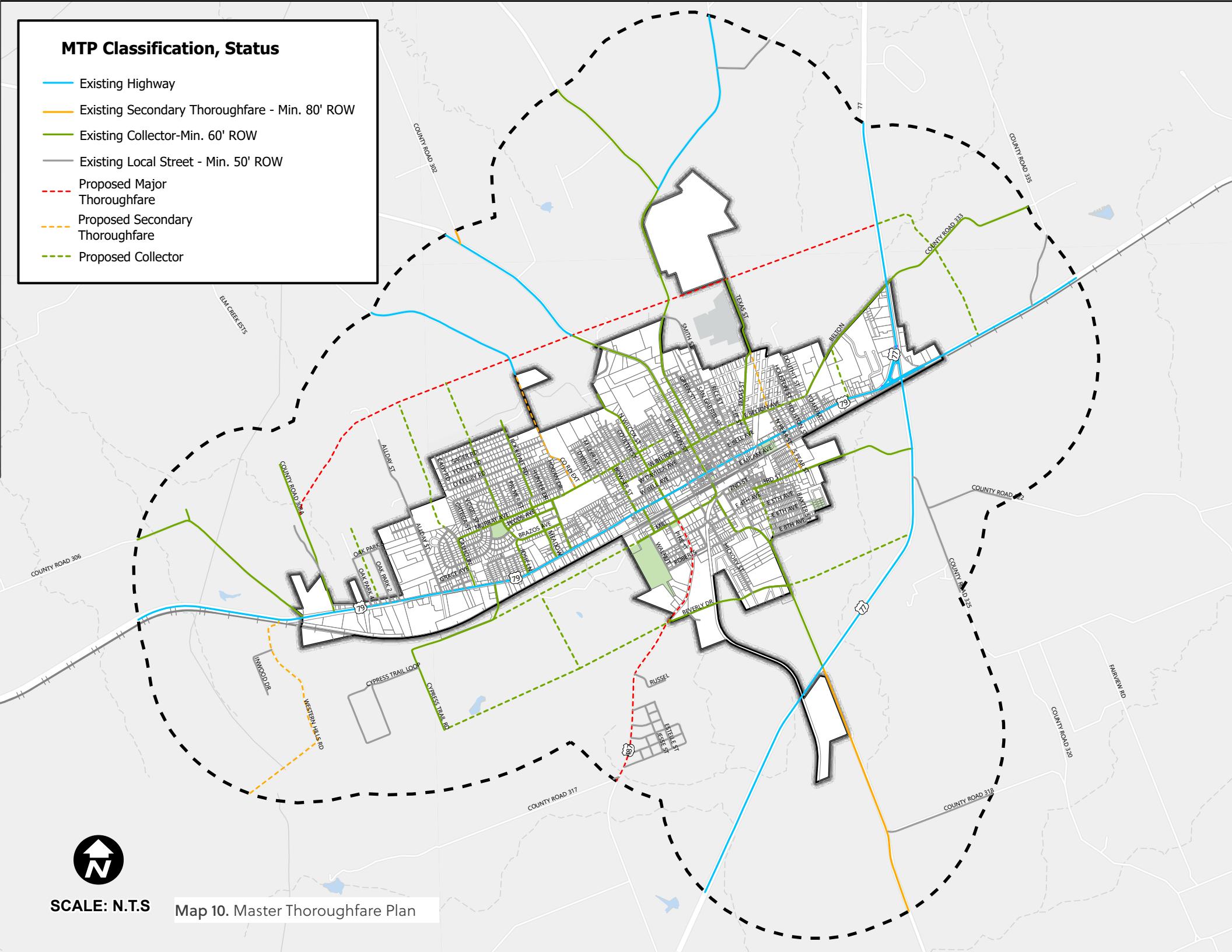
Key Features of the 2024 Master Thoroughfare Plan

The most recent Master Thoroughfare Plan for the City of Rockdale was completed in 2010. Key features of this MTP update include:

- Removal of the proposed U.S. 79 relief route that ran east-west north of the City Limits.
- Two additional proposed Major Thoroughfares along S. Wilcox St., extending to County Road 317. Additionally, a thoroughfare running east-west between County Road 308A and terminating at U.S. 77.
- Several proposed extensions of existing collector streets, in support of future connectivity, congestion relief and route redundancy.
- Removal of several proposed collector routes that would disrupt developed residential areas. Some existing streets such as Highland Ave. were removed from the functional system to better support residential accessibility, rather than throughput.
- Additional routes that provide increased south-north street connectivity crossing the railroad tracks.
- Proposed secondary thoroughfare route along Western Hills Rd. to support increased industrial demand southwest of Rockdale's city limits.

MTP Classification, Status

- Existing Highway
- Existing Secondary Thoroughfare - Min. 80' ROW
- Existing Collector-Min. 60' ROW
- Existing Local Street - Min. 50' ROW
- Proposed Major Thoroughfare
- Proposed Secondary Thoroughfare
- Proposed Collector



SCALE: N.T.S

Map 10. Master Thoroughfare Plan

Rockdale Future Roadway Plan

Roadway Planning Overview

The Future Streets Plan (Map 10) for the City is partially based on the functional classification system described in the previous section: expressways/freeways, principal arterials, minor arterials, collectors and local roads and streets. However, the Future Streets Plan recognizes that the functional classification system predominantly classifies roads in terms of their operational characteristics as it is relevant mostly to motor vehicles. It is important that streets are classified in a manner that acknowledges the full spectrum of users, including pedestrians, bicyclists or those utilizing other forms of transportation, a concept known as Complete Streets. The Rockdale Future Streets Plan includes a classification of streets that takes into account surrounding land uses and the neighborhood character in conjunction with the traditional considerations of access and mobility for cars found within the functional classification framework. Each context typology found within the Future Streets Plan includes compatible street typologies and sample design cross sections.

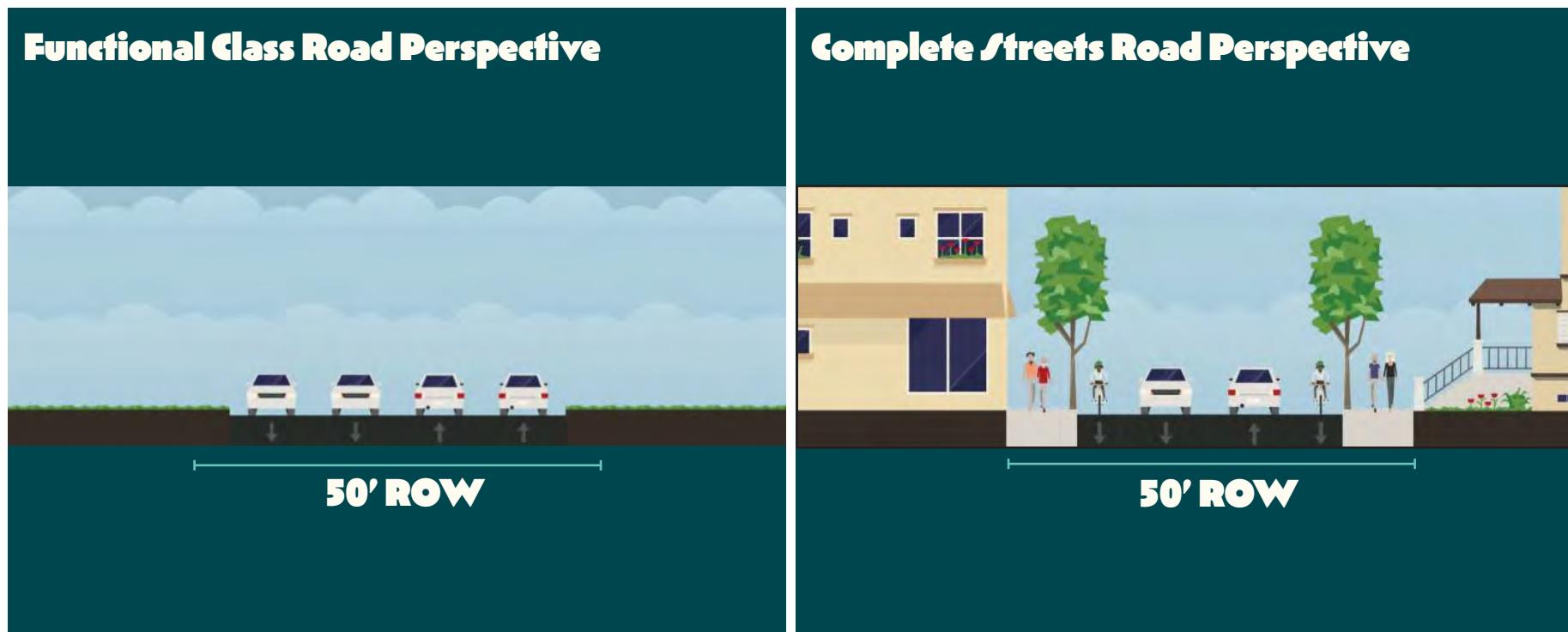


Figure 21. Complete Streets Comparison

Graphic generated using StreetMix.

Street Classification Considerations

During the transportation planning process, streets are classified based on function and context. The classification of a street guides its design and helps prioritize different users based on each unique context. This process helps clearly identify the tradeoffs that are made with each design decision so that the community can select approaches that most align with the vision outlined within the Comprehensive Plan. The methodology for identifying street classifications is broken down into the following steps:



1. Existing Land Use Context - Understand broader land use context in which a street is placed. When classifying streets, it is important that adjacent land uses are taken into account so that the street supplements the developments that are currently there and those that may be present in the future.



2. Multi-Modal Integration - Equally as important as the land use context is identifying the primary mode of travel for a street. Community members and policy makers should identify whether the street is used for moving vehicles quickly or if it is a street that focuses on multi-modal access, often times it is a balance between these priorities.



3. Economic Context - Each street typology will inherently support some economic development patterns over others. It is important to understand current and future commercial demands within an area and understand what street typology would best align with the community's vision for the area.

Context Typologies

Context typologies are simplified categories that encompass the context of the surrounding area, taking into account factors like land use, development patterns and density. The initial step in selecting an appropriate street type involves identifying the most fitting site typology, considering both the present and future context of the area. Along a corridor, it's common to traverse multiple context typologies. Within Rockdale there are six distinct context typologies which are outlined below.

Figure 22. Context Typology Details

Context Typology	Land Use(s)	Development Density	Street Setback*	Multi-Modal Trip Generation**	Example Areas
Residential	New Neighborhood, Core Neighborhood	Low	Close to Moderate	Moderate to High	Residential areas along Highland Ave., Belton Ave.
Rural Living	Ag/Rural, New Neighborhood	Low	Far	Low	Ranch and agricultural developments along Allday St.
Regional Commercial	Regional Node, Employment	Low-Medium	Moderate to Far	Low	Big Box Commercial along U.S. 79
Local Commercial	Commercial Corridor	Medium-High	Close to Moderate	Moderate	E. Bell Ave, Ackerman St., Milam Ave., Transition Zone along U.S. 79 between Downtown and Walmart
Industrial	Industrial	Low	Moderate to Far	Low	Airport, Industrial zones east of U.S. 77
Activity Center	Downtown, Local Mixed-Use Node, Mixed-Use Corridor	High	Close to Moderate	High	E. Bell Ave, Ackerman St, Milam Ave., Downtown

*Street Setback is the average distance between a building or structure and the edge of the street or road.

**Multi-Modal Trip Generation is the sum of both automobile and non automobile trips.

Residential

Examples in Rockdale	Land Use	Development Density
Residential areas along Highland Ave., Belton Ave.	Residential	Low



Rural Living

Examples in Rockdale	Land Use	Development Density
Ranch and agricultural developments along Allday St.	Residential, Agricultural	Low



Regional Commercial

Examples in Rockdale	Land Use	Development Density
Big Box Commercial along U.S. 79	Commercial, office, parking and entertainment	Low-medium



Local Commercial

Examples in Rockdale	Land Use	Development Density
E. Bell Ave., Ackerman St., Milam Ave., Transition Zone along U.S. 79 between Downtown and Walmart	Retail, office and parking	Medium-high



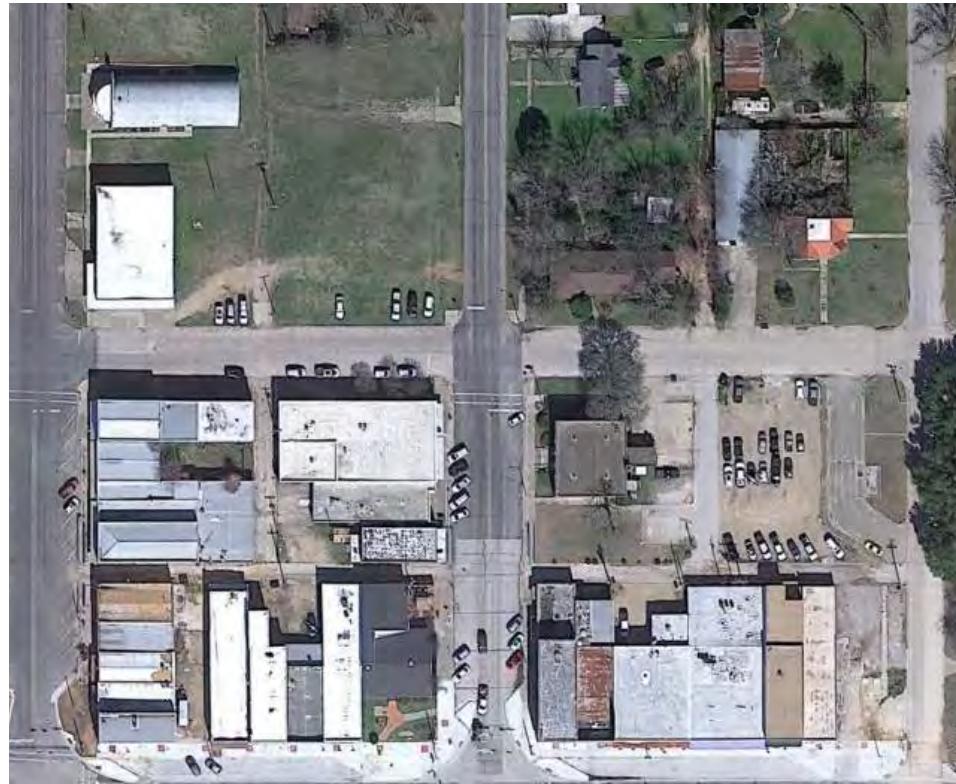
Industrial

Examples in Rockdale	Land Use	Development Density
Airport, Industrial zones east of U.S. 77	Industrial, retail, office and parking	Low



Activity Center

Examples in Rockdale	Land Use	Development Density
E. Bell Ave., Ackerman St., Milam Ave., Downtown	Residential, retail, office and parking	High



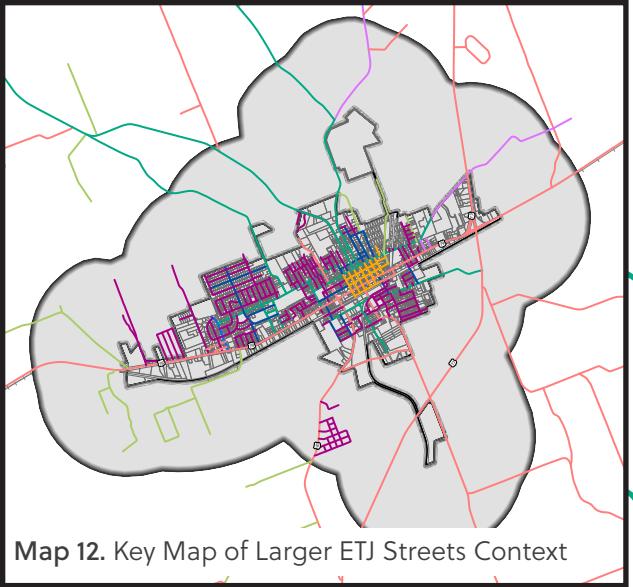


Street Typologies

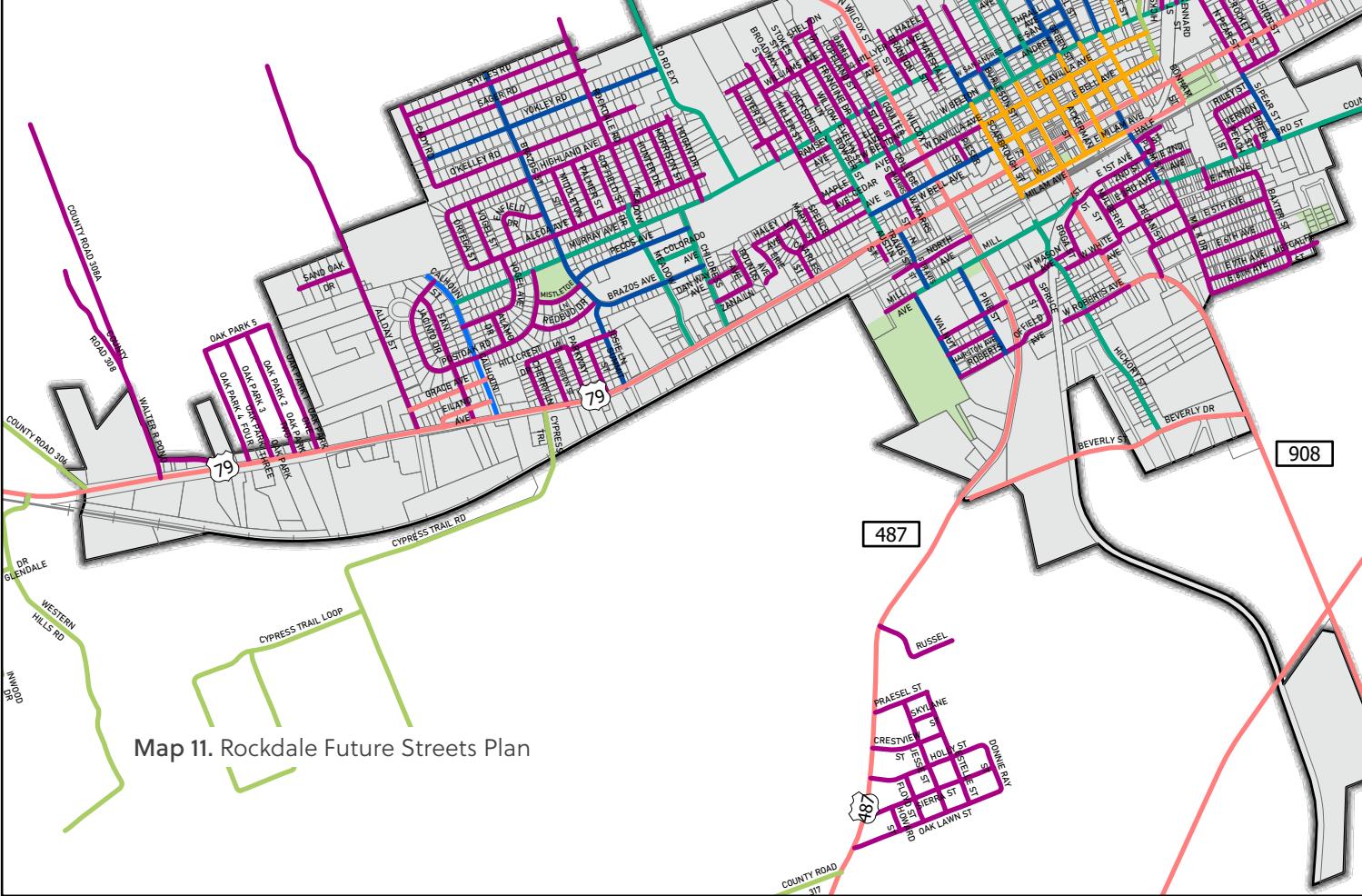
Once the context typologies and transportation function of a street corridor are determined, a street typology can be selected. Street typologies are unique to the conditions and contexts of Rockdale and provide a starting point for street designs that will be following the vision outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

Figure 23. Street Typology Details

Street Typology	Description	Relevant Character Typologies	Accessibility
Boulevard	A boulevard street refers to a multi-functional roadway with a central landscaped median, designed to accommodate a mix of vehicular traffic, pedestrians and cyclists.	Residential, Local Commercial	Balance of Access and Throughput
Avenue	A street that accommodates higher volumes of traffic and is more automobile oriented relative to neighborhood streets typologies.	Residential, Local Commercial, Activity Center	Balance of Access and Throughput
Neighborhood Residential	A low volume street within residential areas that emphasizes access to properties and provides multi-modal accommodations.	Residential, Rural Living	Access
Neighborhood Connector	A street within a residential area designed to facilitate safe and efficient transportation between neighborhoods. It emphasizes pedestrian and cyclist-friendly features while minimizing through traffic impact.	Residential, Activity Center, Local Commercial	Access
Neighborhood Mixed-Use	A low traffic street that serves a wider variety of land uses including neighborhood oriented businesses. May include traffic calming and pedestrian-oriented design elements.	Residential, Local Commercial, Activity Center	Access
Industrial	A street type characterized by its focus on supporting industrial activities, featuring wide thoroughfares for the movement of heavy vehicles, loading zones and industrial facilities. Design considerations prioritize efficient transportation of goods and may include infrastructure suitable for large trucks and machinery.	Industrial	Balance of Access and Throughput
Agricultural Access	A specialized street type crafted to serve dual purposes, providing essential access to both agricultural areas and residential ranch properties.	Rural Living	Access
Thoroughfare	A street with moderate to high volumes of traffic, used primarily to connect the City to other communities and provide access to automobile oriented developments.	Regional Commercial, Rural Living, Industrial	Throughput



Map 12. Key Map of Larger ETJ Streets Context



Rockdale's Future Streets Plan includes a typology for each street that will help guide improvements and design so that each street meets the goals outlined within the community's vision.



How to Use a Future Streets Plan

The Future Streets Plan serves as a comprehensive guide for both the public and decision makers in envisioning and implementing the development of new streets for the future of Rockdale. The Future Streets Plan serves as a transparent and accessible resource, providing a clear understanding of the City's vision for its evolving street network. Citizens can access the plan to learn about proposed road expansions, new thoroughfares, and connectivity improvements. It serves as a tool for community engagement, allowing residents to offer input, voice concerns or express support for specific projects, helping to improve collaboration between the City and its inhabitants.

City officials can utilize the Plan as a guiding document to make informed decisions about infrastructure investments, zoning regulations and urban development initiatives. By categorizing new streets based on their purpose, such as residential, commercial or recreational, the plan assists officials in aligning infrastructure projects with the City's broader goals. It aids in optimizing traffic flow, enhancing accessibility and promoting sustainable and smart city development.

Moreover, the plan contributes to long-term urban planning, helping officials anticipate the needs of a growing population and evolving cityscape. It serves as a reference point for budgeting, resource allocation, and prioritizing projects, ensuring that the City's expansion is well-coordinated and follows a trajectory that will achieve the goals outlined in the City's Comprehensive Plan.

In essence, the Future Streets Plan is a dynamic tool that fosters collaboration, transparency and informed decision-making between the City and its residents. It plays a pivotal role in shaping the urban landscape, promoting sustainable development and creating a well-connected community.



Boulevard

Boulevards are urban roads distinguished by their wide central medians that are often adorned with greenery and landscaping. Combining functionality with aesthetic charm, boulevards create visually appealing corridors for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Boulevards are generally four lanes, with some two lane examples within the City. Boulevards are medium to high volume streets that often include substantial pedestrian zones in addition to large landscaped buffers. Boulevards are primarily focused on throughput rather than access to adjacent land uses. Particularly within Boulevard street typologies, traffic calming measures may be ineffective and in some cases more dangerous for pedestrians due to obscured views from a large, landscaped median. Large side paths are recommended to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists and other forms of micro-mobility.

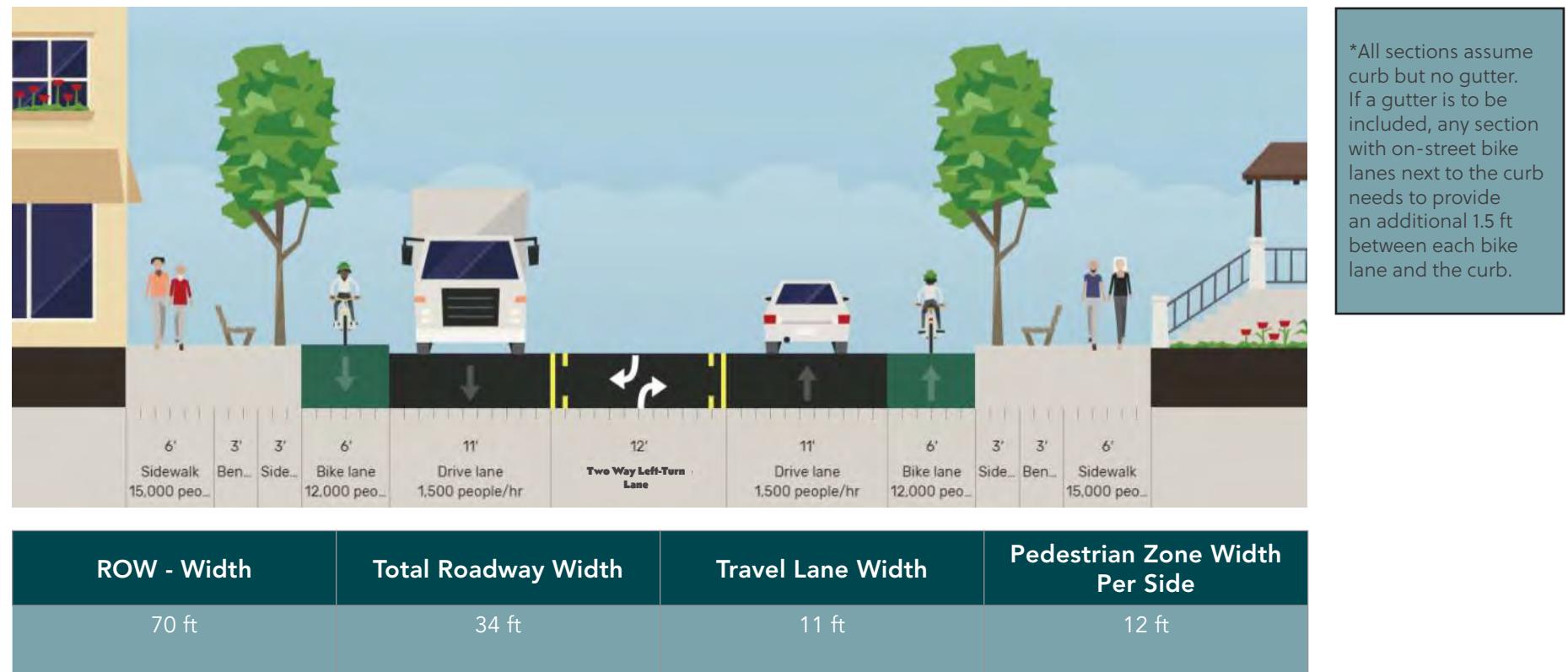


ROW - Width	Total Roadway Width	Travel Lane Width	Pedestrian Zone Width Per Side
72 ft	22 ft	11 ft	10 ft

Graphic generated using StreetMix.

Avenue

Avenues, prominent in urban and suburban settings, are generally characterized by right-of-ways that are slightly larger than those contained within access-oriented roadways such as neighborhood residential. In most contexts, Avenues aim to provide accessibility to commercial and higher density residential areas as well as balancing throughput for vehicular traffic. Avenues are often highly visible and accommodate moderate-high traffic volumes; therefore, pedestrian zone improvements such as landscaping, street furniture and lights can go a long way toward improving the quality of life and general perception of the street and neighboring areas.



Graphic generated using StreetMix.

Neighborhood Residential

Neighborhood Residential streets are characterized by lower traffic volumes and are designed with a focus on safety and quality of life for residents. Lower speeds, narrower lane widths, and decreased curb radii naturally calm traffic and provide easy, safe access to residential properties. Pedestrian enhancements such as street trees and large sidewalk space are strongly encouraged. On-street parking is generally allowable, and often encouraged where there is sufficient right-of-way due to its ability to force drivers to slow down and pay closer attention to the road. Within Neighborhood Residential streets, bikes will typically share the street with vehicles due to the low speeds.

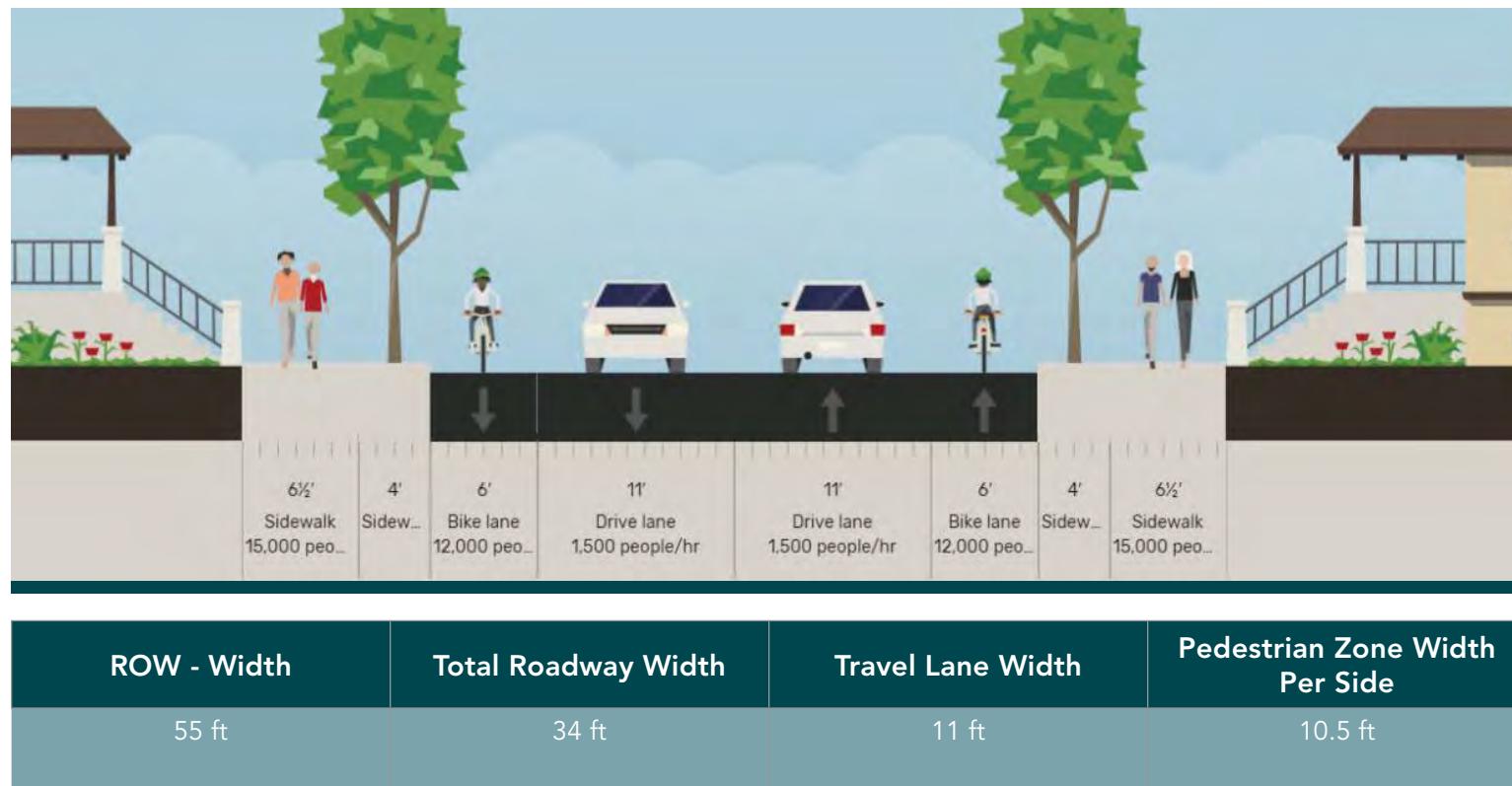


ROW - Width	Total Roadway Width	Travel Lane Width	Pedestrian Zone Width Per Side
50 ft	32 ft	16 ft	9 ft

Graphic generated using StreetMix.

Neighborhood Connector

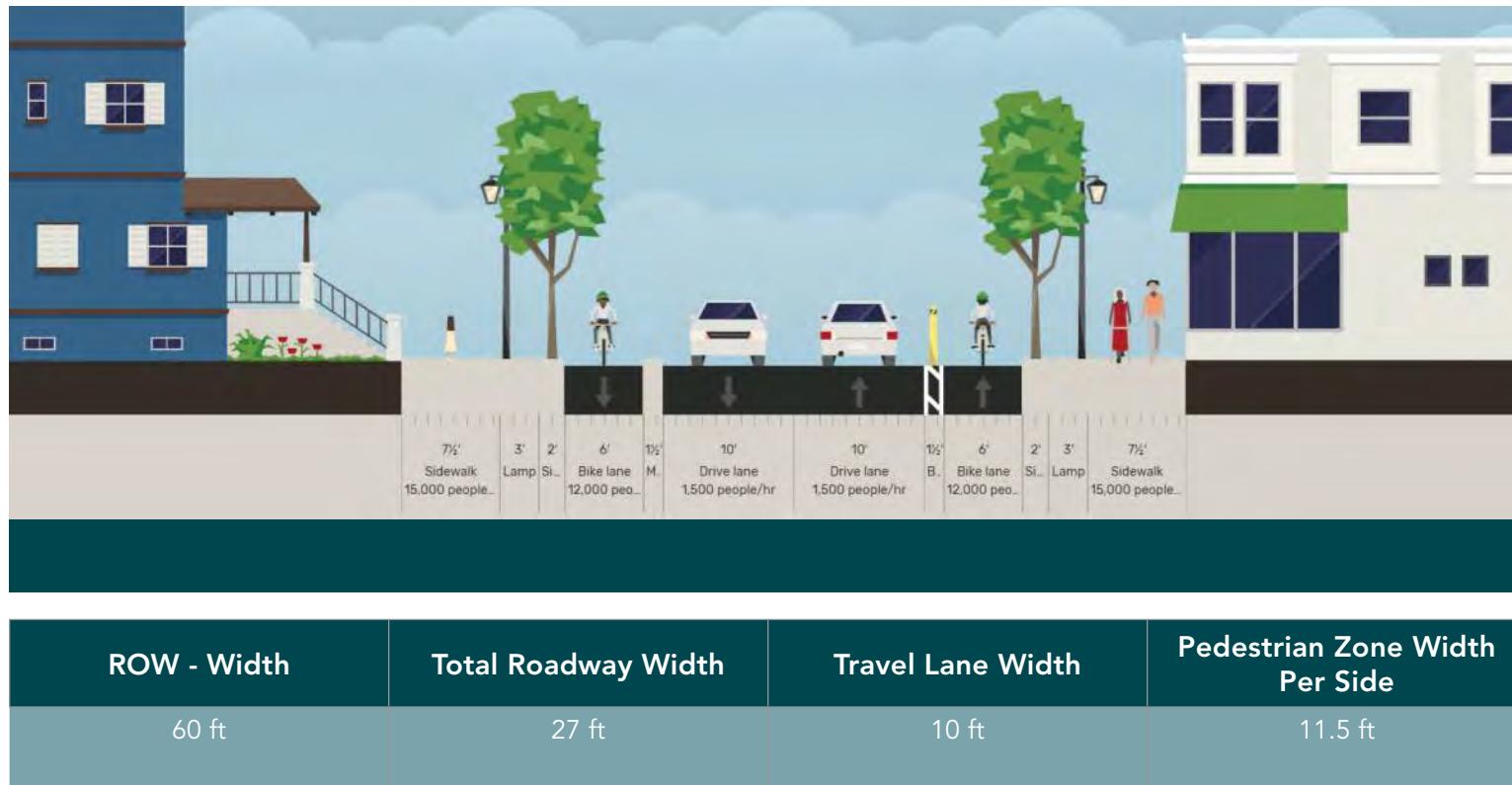
Neighborhood Connector streets link residential areas, providing conduits for local mobility within residential neighborhoods. These roads can afford slightly larger volumes of traffic compared to Neighborhood Residential, but are still primarily focused on accessibility and providing connections between neighborhoods in the community. Multi-modal improvements such as bike lanes are highly encouraged on Neighborhood Connectors. Pedestrian-focused improvements such as sidewalks and crossings are also highly encouraged.



Graphic generated using StreetMix.

Neighborhood Mixed-Use

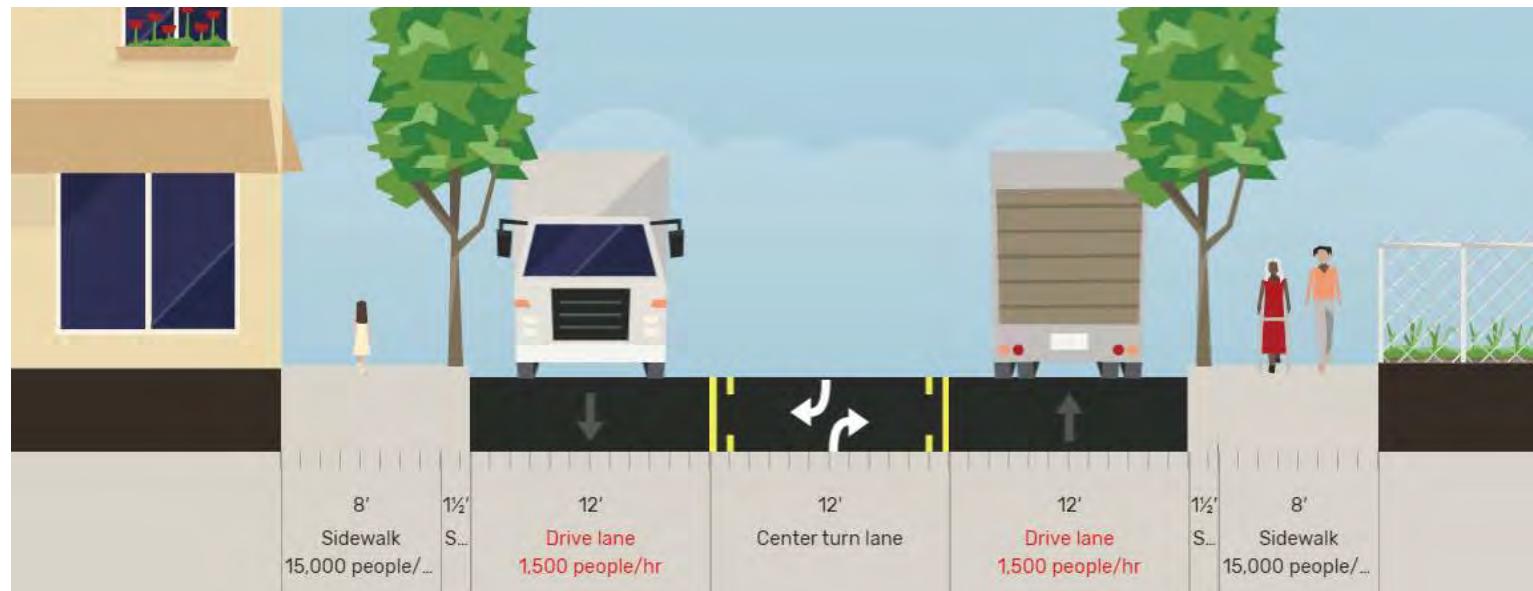
Neighborhood Mixed-Use streets are located along commercial and mixed-use districts such as those in Downtown Rockdale. They are highly focused on providing multi-modal accessibility and connecting people to businesses and multifamily residential units. Street enhancements may include more significant bike and pedestrian infrastructure such as protected bike lanes and raised pedestrian crosswalks. Lane widths are often smaller than higher volume roadway typologies so that speeding is discouraged. Street furniture and landscaping is highly recommended in mixed-use and downtown areas as these are among the most visible and highly trafficked areas within a city.



Graphic generated using StreetMix.

Industrial

Industrial roadways are specifically tailored to meet the current and future transportation demands of Rockdale's industrial base. Industrial roadways place an emphasis on accessibility, particularly for larger industrial truck traffic. Though Industrial roads area focused on providing accessibility for automobiles, they should still include good principles of design including sidewalks and moderate-high curb radii. Design features may include recessed stop bars at intersections, center turn lanes or increased lane widths between 11 and 12 feet to help improve access and safety within industrial areas.

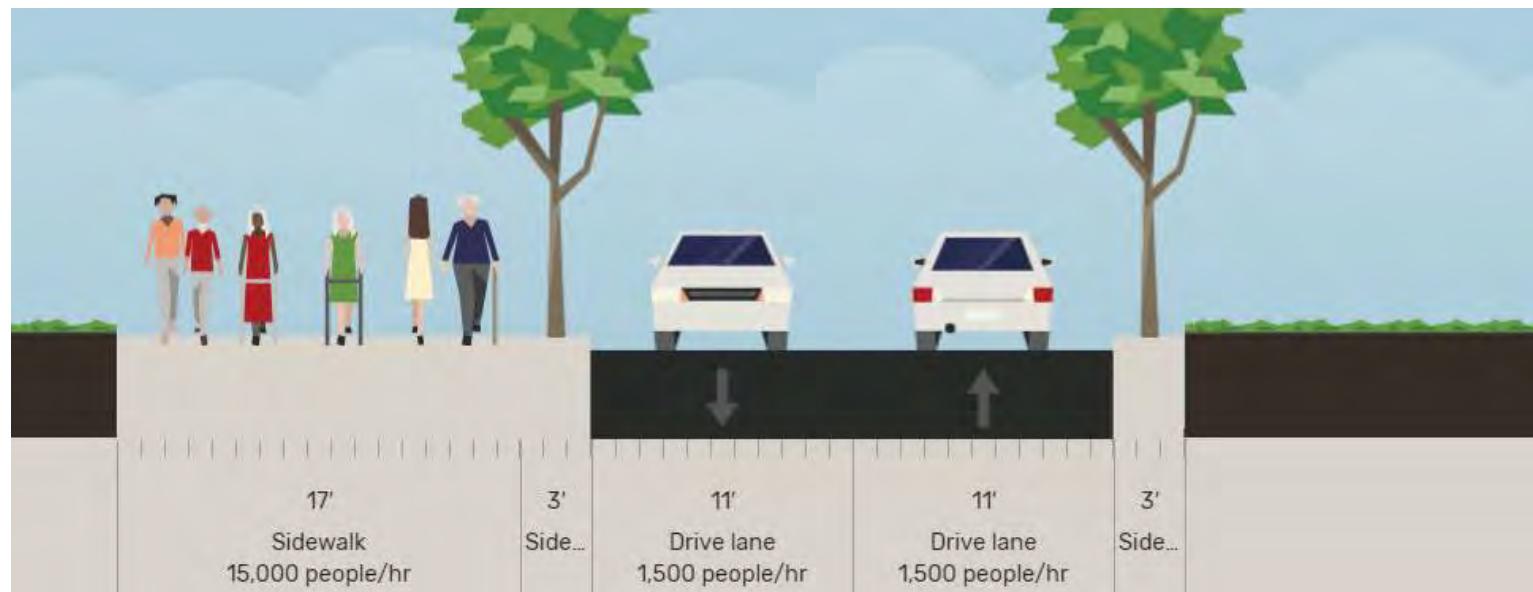


ROW - Width	Total Roadway With	Travel Lane Width	Pedestrian Zone Width Per Side
54 ft	36 ft	12 ft	9 ft

Graphic generated using StreetMix.

Agricultural Access

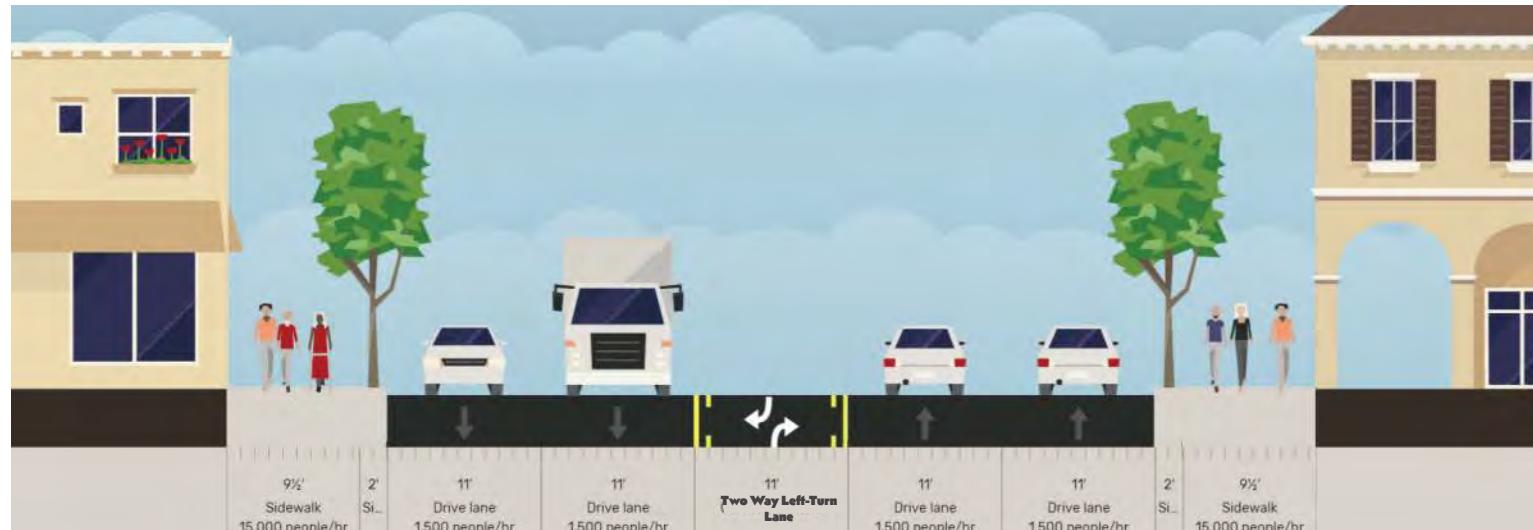
These roads, sometimes unpaved, cater to the needs of agricultural vehicles and provide crucial access to farms and rural properties located within and outside of Rockdale. Agricultural Access roads are low-moderate volume roads that generally extend toward the periphery of Rockdale's municipal limits and are focused on providing access to agricultural and ranch properties. These roads typically have less pedestrian accommodations, but may be outfitted with shared-use paths that can be utilized by walkers and cyclists and include a significant lined buffer to improve safety for those users.



Graphic generated using StreetMix.

Thoroughfare

Thoroughfares are generally the highest volume streets within a jurisdiction and are in many cases state highways, such as U.S. 79 that runs through Downtown Rockdale. Thoroughfares are designed to focus on automobile throughput rather than accessibility, and primarily connect the community to other cities, rather than accommodating trips within the city. Due to high speeds, thoroughfares should be outfitted with pedestrian safety features such as crosswalks and controlled intersections to help facilitate safe movement across the larger streets. Sufficient pedestrian spaces either directly along the thoroughfare or along lower volume streets parallel to the thoroughfare should be provided as safer and more pleasant alternative routes for pedestrians and cyclists.



ROW - Width	Total Roadway Width	Travel Lane Width	Pedestrian Zone Width Per Side
78 ft	58 ft	11/12 ft	10 ft

Graphic generated using StreetMix.

Transportation Design Parameters and Guidance

In the initial phases of a street design project, decisions regarding travel lanes, on-street parking and pedestrian infrastructure are made during the project scoping phase, and may be refined throughout the conceptual design process. These decisions are grounded in what are known as design criteria, with each street type having its unique set of parameters for roadway and pedestrian zone design that align with and support the relevant character typologies. Design criteria are often sourced from transportation engineering standard guides such as the AASHTO, NACTO, or the Texas Department of Transportation Standards. These criteria, encompass factors like the number of travel lanes, bikeway and parking configurations, sidewalk dimensions, and setback from the curb. Together, these standards help define the right-of-way that is generally required for each road type. Standards also help planning and engineering professionals select designs that will best meet the needs of the community while maintaining a reasonable amount of consistency across jurisdictions.

Figure 24. Space Standards by Street Typology

Street Typology	Total Pedestrian Zone Width		Total Roadway Width			Total Right-of-Way Width		Typical AADT
	Pref.	Min.	Max.	Typ.	Min.	Typ.	Min.	
Avenue	11 ft	8 ft	72 ft	34 ft	20 ft	70 ft	44 ft	1,000 to 15,000
Boulevard	18 ft	9 ft	84 ft	60 ft	33 ft	72 ft	60 ft	> 3,000
Thoroughfare	14 ft	7 ft	78 ft	58 ft	32 ft	78 ft	60 ft	> 15,000
Neighborhood Residential	10 ft	7 ft	35 ft	32 ft	20 ft	50 ft	50 ft	<3,000
Neighborhood Connector	10 ft	7 ft	50 ft	34 ft	20 ft	55 ft	48 ft	<3,000
Neighborhood Mixed Use	12 ft	8 ft	35 ft	27 ft	20 ft	60 ft	48 ft	3,000 to 25,000
Industrial	10 ft	6 ft	60 ft	36 ft	25 ft	54 ft	42 ft	<3,000
Agricultural Access	9 ft	6 ft	44 ft	36 ft	24 ft	52 ft	40 ft	<1,000

Roadway Design Criteria

The roadway design criteria in Figure 25 provides standard design values that can be reasonably accommodated within each street typology contained within the Rockdale Master Thoroughfare Plan. The values for each parameter conform to state and federal standards (AASHTO, MUTCD, NACTO and the TxDOT RDM). Significant deviations from any parameter should be examined carefully by a licensed professional transportation engineer.

Figure 25. Space Allocation Parameters

Street Type	# of Travel Lanes	Lane Width			Center Turn Lane	On-Street Parking
		Max.	Typ.	Min.		
Avenue	2-4	11 ft	11 ft	10 ft	Optional	Optional
Boulevard	2-6	12 ft	12 ft	11 ft	Median or Crossbay Standard	None
Thoroughfare	2-4	12 ft	11 ft	10 ft	TxDOT Standard	None
Neighborhood Residential	No Center Lines	35 ft*	20 ft*	20 ft*	Not Compatible	Non-delineated
Neighborhood Connector	No Center Lines	50 ft*	36 ft*	20 ft*	Not Compatible	Non-delineated
Neighborhood Mixed Use	2	11 ft	10 ft	10 ft	Optional	Parallel or angled acceptable
Industrial	2-6	12 ft	12 ft	11 ft	Optional	None
Agricultural Access	2	12 ft	11 ft	10 ft	Not Compatible	None

*Total travelway width, since there are no center lines

Operational Standards

The roadway design criteria in Figure 26 provides standard operational values that can be reasonably accommodated within each street typology contained within the Rockdale Master Thoroughfare Plan. The values for each parameter conform to state and federal standards (AASHTO, MUTCD, NACTO and the TxDOT RDM). Significant deviations from any parameter should be examined carefully by a licensed professional transportation engineer.

Figure 26. Roadway Operational Standards

Street Type	# of Travel Lanes	Center Turn Lane	Corner Radii		Target Speed
			Pref.	Max.	
Avenue	2-4	Optional	15 ft	25 ft	25 mph
Boulevard	2-6	Median or Crossbay Standard	15 ft	30 ft	35 mph
Thoroughfare	2-4	TxDOT Standard	15 ft	30 ft	35 mph
Neighborhood Residential	No Center Lines	Not Compatible	5 ft	15 ft	20 mph
Neighborhood Connector	No Center Lines	Not Compatible	5 ft	15 ft	25 mph
Neighborhood Mixed Use	2	Optional	5 ft	15 ft	20 mph
Industrial	2-6	Optional	40 ft	45 ft	25 mph
Agricultural Access	2	Not Compatible	5 ft	15 ft	25 mph

Transportation Planning Toolbox

In addition to the Future Streets Plan Map and cross-section designs, the crafting of transportation policies can aid in providing and maintaining a well-functioning transportation system that meets the needs of its users. The following sections discuss several policies that, if implemented, are anticipated to build on and enhance the existing transportation network in Rockdale.

Passive Design:

The passive design philosophy in transportation planning has traditionally erred on the side of caution, assuming and preparing for worst-case scenarios regarding both user behavior and traffic congestion. While this approach is sensible in engineering fields where mitigating known risks is essential, its application to city streets has led to unintended consequences. Over-engineered design elements, such as excessively wide buffers and setbacks meant to account for rare accidents, have inadvertently created an environment that is no longer people-centric and in many cases actually encourages dangerous and reckless driving.



Proactive Design:

A proactive design approach recognizes that human behavior is inherently responsive toward the surrounding environment and seeks to shape desired outcomes based on this insight. Rather than designing streets based on the assumption of the fastest, largest or most reckless driver, proactive design employs intentional strategies to guide user behavior. By creating environments that naturally encourage safe speeds and responsible driving habits, proactive design aims to achieve positive outcomes through thoughtful and purposeful planning.



Design Speed

In transportation planning, the distinction between design speed and target speed is crucial for creating roadways that prioritize safety and functionality. Operating speed refers to the maximum safe speed at which a road can be negotiated under ideal conditions, considering factors like geometry and alignment.

On the other hand, target speed is the desired speed at which authorities aim to encourage drivers to travel on a given road. Within the conventional transportation paradigm, roadways were designed where the operating speed equaled the design speed and was therefore the posted speed. Within a proactive framework, the design speed would be equal to the target speed that policy makers and community members have identified instead of being based on the maximum operating speed.

Reducing speeds, often achieved through measures like traffic calming or design adjustments, is paramount for enhancing road safety, mitigating the severity of accidents and creating more pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly environments. By aligning target speeds with the intended use of the roadway and the safety of all users, transportation planners can foster a harmonious and efficient transportation network that prioritizes well-being and accessibility over speed.

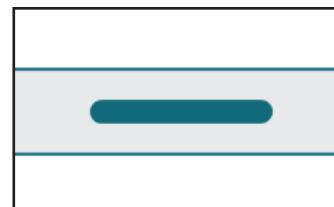
Figure 27. Driving Speed and Fatality Risk

SPEED (MPH)	STOPPING DISTANCE (FT)*	CRASH RISK (%)†	FATALITY RISK (%)†
10–15	25	5	2
20–25	40	15	5
30–35	75	55	45
40+	118	90	85

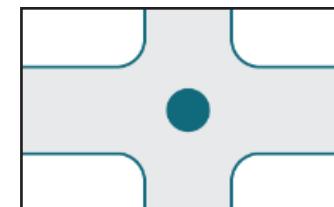
*Stopping distance includes perception, reaction, and braking times

Source: Traditional Neighborhood Development: Street Design Guidelines (1999), ITE Transportation Planning Committee SP-8

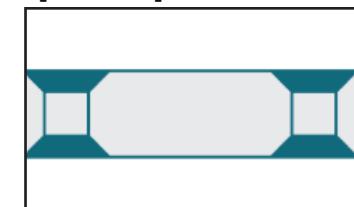
Median



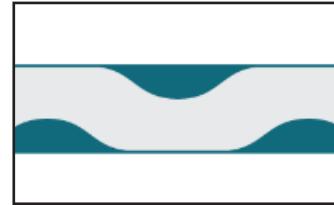
Roundabout



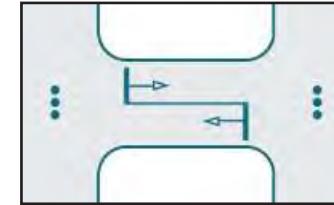
Speed Lumps



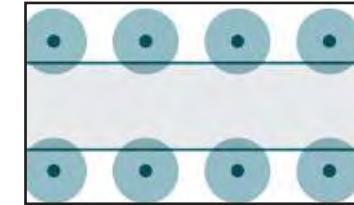
Chicane



Signal Progression



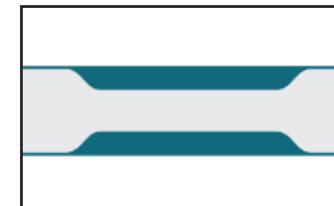
Street Trees



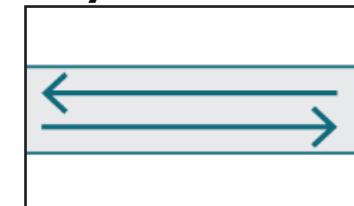
Building Lines



Pinch Point



2-Way Street



Source: NACTO, Urban Street Design Guide

Design Vehicle

The design vehicle plays a crucial role in transportation planning as it serves as a fundamental benchmark for designing and dimensioning roads, intersections and other transportation infrastructure. The design vehicle represents the largest or most challenging types of vehicles expected to use a particular roadway and ensures that the infrastructure can accommodate the diverse range of vehicles operating within a given area. Often design decisions are made with the largest and heaviest vehicle being prioritized at the expense of more vulnerable users.

Design Hour

The term “design hour” in transportation planning typically refers to the specific hour during the day when traffic demand is at its peak, and the transportation infrastructure needs to accommodate the maximum volume of vehicles and users. It is a crucial aspect of designing roads, intersections and other transportation facilities to ensure they can handle the highest levels of traffic efficiently.

Taking into account all users during this design hour is essential, encompassing pedestrians, cyclists and various types of vehicles. This inclusive approach results in transportation infrastructure that not only addresses peak-hour automobile demands but also caters to the diverse needs of the entire user population, promoting safety, accessibility and efficiency.

Design Year

“Design year” is another important parameter that transportation planners consider when making investments into new infrastructure. The design year is based on a transportation model that estimates the future demand along that particular roadway. Often, these models may overestimate demand which results in an overbuilt roadway and a lost opportunity to develop high value land within the municipality. In many cases savvy land use planning and natural growth can help distribute trips more efficiently, rather than over-designing a single roadway.

Performance Measures

Performance measures in transportation planning refer to quantifiable metrics used to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and overall success of transportation systems and projects. These measures help evaluate how well transportation goals and objectives are being met, providing valuable insights for decision-makers and planners. It is important to select measures that align with City priorities and that take a holistic approach towards the road. Simple measures such as level of service only take into consideration a road's ability to move automobiles, but do not take into account the economic vitality of the street, or impacts toward pedestrians. Looking at measures of pedestrian delay, multi-modal safety and in some instances retail revenues, can all be effective methods of evaluating a street's performance.

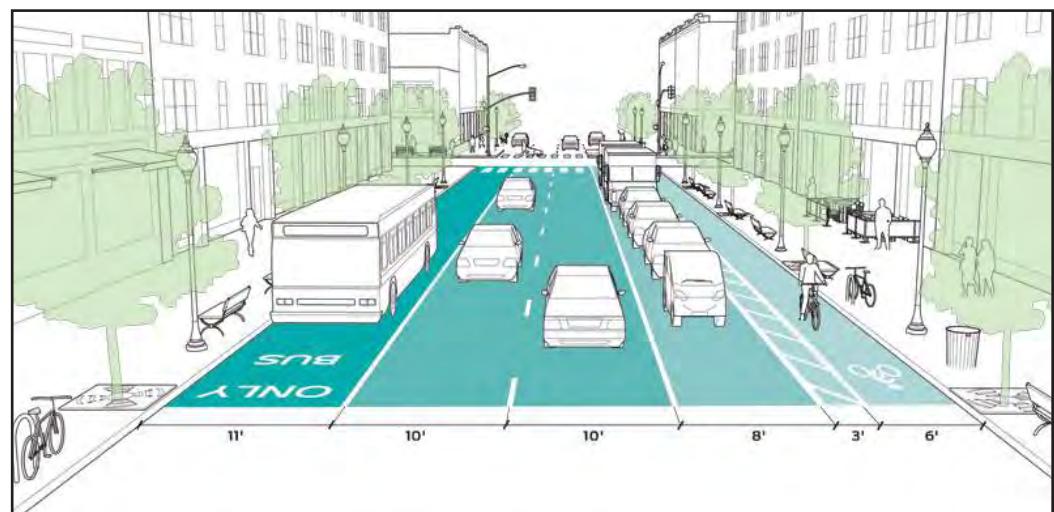
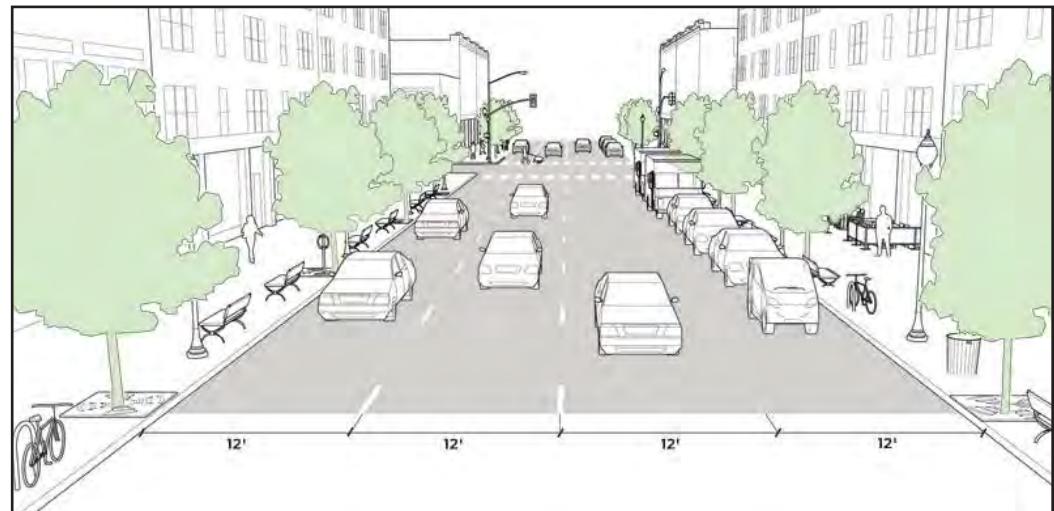
Lane Width

Lane widths play a pivotal role in transportation planning, serving as a critical design element that directly influences the safety, efficiency and overall functionality of roadways. The dimensions of traffic lanes impact vehicular speed, maneuverability and the capacity of a road to accommodate various types of vehicles. Optimal lane widths are essential to maintain safe driving conditions, as they influence driver perception and behavior.

Narrower lanes can naturally encourage reduced speeds, enhancing road safety. Conversely, wider lanes can accommodate larger vehicles and higher speeds but may contribute to increased traffic velocity and reduced safety. Striking the right balance in lane width is crucial for accommodating the diverse needs of road users, including pedestrians, cyclists and drivers. Thoughtful consideration of lane widths in transportation planning ensures a harmonious flow of traffic, reduces congestion and contributes to the creation of a safe and efficient transportation network.

NACTO design standards provide that lane widths within urban and residential contexts should be 10 feet, while industrial areas or designated truck routes can be 11 feet. Parking lane widths should be between 7 and 9 ft, and bike lanes should be no smaller than 5-6 feet in width.

Figure 28. Conventional Street Revitalization Example



Source: NACTO, Urban Street Design Guide

Intersections

Intersection controls play a pivotal role in ensuring the safe and efficient movement of traffic within road networks. These controls, including traffic signals, stop signs and roundabouts, are critical elements of transportation planning and traffic management. Properly designed intersection controls enhance safety by regulating the orderly flow of vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists, minimizing the risk of collisions.

Additionally, they contribute to the efficient use of road space and the optimization of traffic flow, especially during peak hours. Intersection controls help prevent congestion, reduce travel times and improve overall transportation system performance. Many streets in Rockdale such as U.S. 79 or Ackerman St. have a number of transition points in terms of adjacent land uses and requirements for accessibility. Unsignalized intersection improvements such as curb radii reductions or safety islands, along with improved signage help identify a low-speed, pedestrian-oriented zone. Creating an informal gateway and implementing design controls that force drivers to pay attention can help reduce conflicts between automobiles and pedestrians. When considering intersection improvements, it is also important to note intersections where public space can be reclaimed, this is particularly relevant for intersections along Bell Avenue, Davilla Avenue and Milam Avenue near Downtown Rockdale.

Figure 29. Downtown Intersection Revitalization



Source: NACTO, Urban Street Design Guide

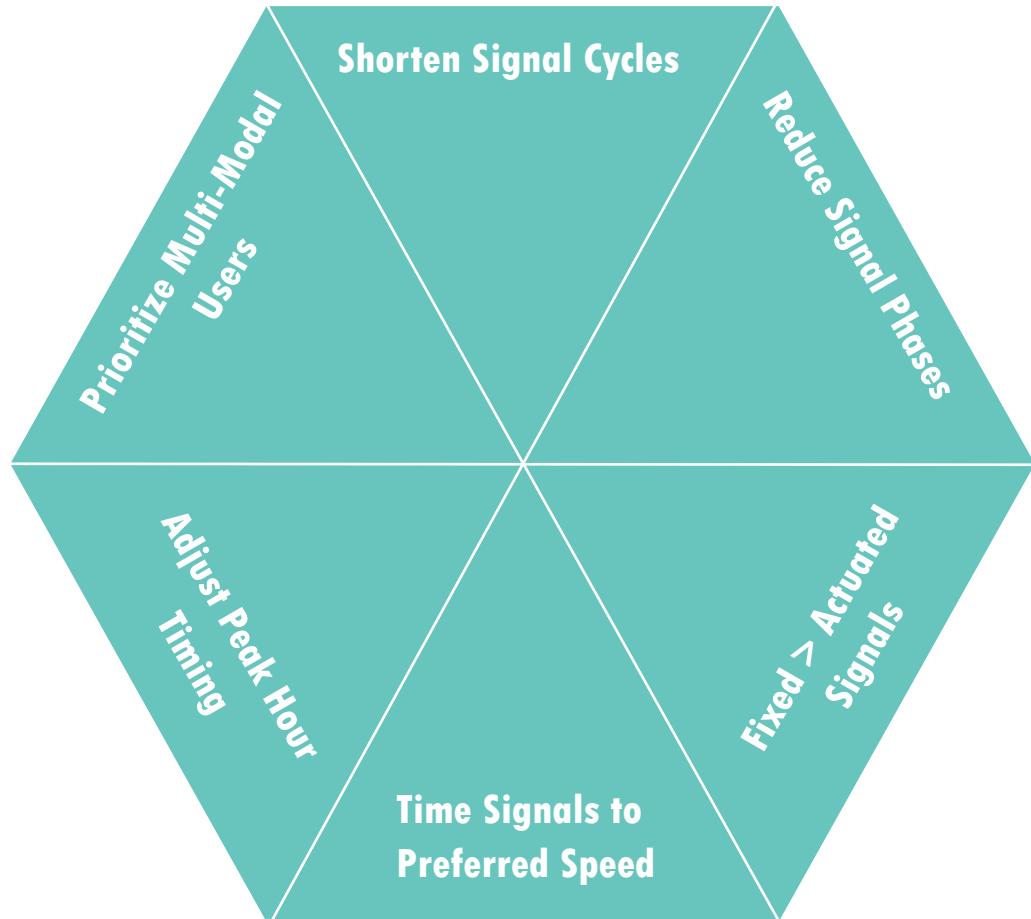
Signalization

Signalization is a critical aspect of transportation planning as it serves as an important tool for managing traffic flow, enhancing safety and optimizing overall mobility within a transportation network. Traffic signals, as a form of signalization, regulate the orderly movement of vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists at intersections. By controlling the right-of-way, signals help prevent conflicts, reduce the risk of accidents, and ensure a smoother and more predictable traffic flow.

Signalization is instrumental in coordinating the movement of vehicles along arterial roads, mitigating congestion and improving overall travel efficiency. Moreover, well-designed signal systems contribute to the effective prioritization of different modes of transportation, promoting inclusivity and accommodating the diverse needs of road users. In the context of transportation planning, the strategic placement and timing of signals are crucial factors that influence the performance and safety of the entire transportation network.

NACTO provides six general signalization principles as shown in Figure 30. When designing and timing signalization controls it is important to consider creating separate timing schedules based around the typical user during that peak hour. It is also important to time signals at the speed that is preferred, to avoid congestion. Maintenance is another crucial factor as actuated signals (signals that operate on real-time sensor information) have high associated maintenance costs compared to fixed (pre-programmed) signal systems.

Figure 30. NACTO Signalization Principles



Source: NACTO, Urban Street Design Guide

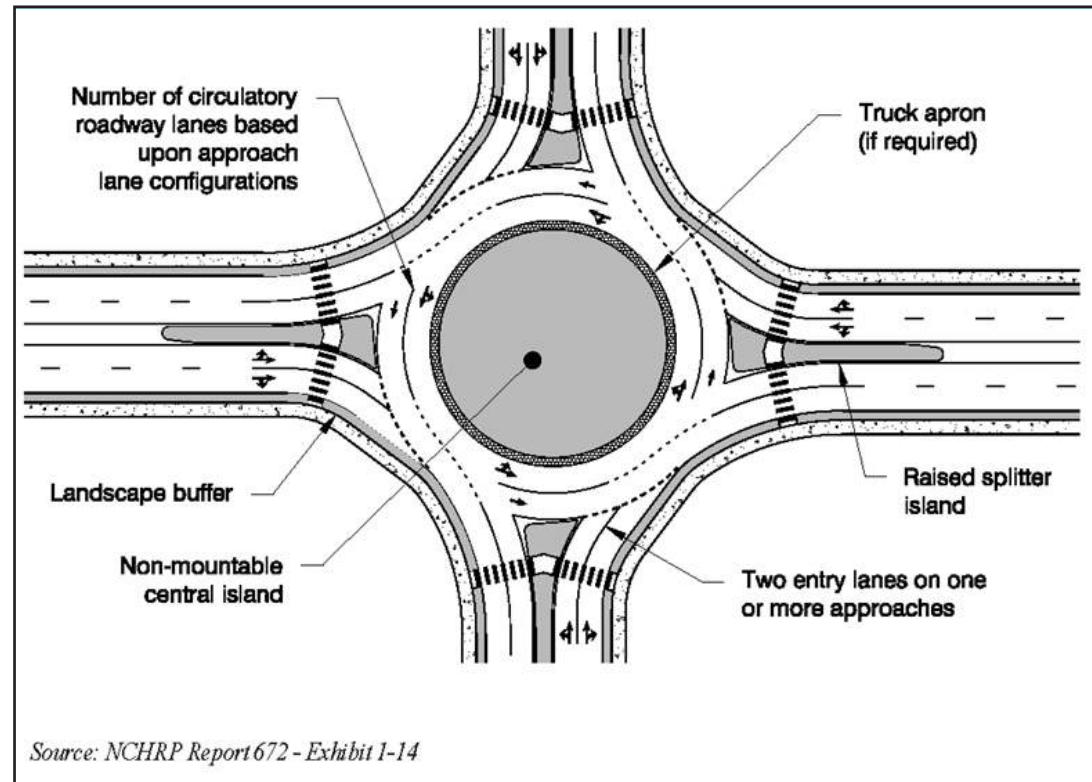
Roundabouts

Roundabouts represent a distinct form of intersection characterized by a circular layout, yield control on entry and geometric features that guide vehicles into a low-speed environment. Modern roundabouts, depicted in Figure 31, have proven to offer various advantages in terms of safety, operational efficiency and overall effectiveness compared to alternative intersection types. In projects involving new or improved intersections on collector or minor arterial roadways, the feasibility of implementing a modern roundabout should be explored as a cost-effective alternative to all-way stops or traffic signal control.

When planning for a roundabout, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recommends a structured approach encompassing six essential steps. These steps involve considering the context and any site-specific constraints, determining a preliminary lane configuration and roundabout category based on capacity requirements, developing a selection process justifying roundabout construction, conducting a thorough analysis using identified data, determining required right-of-way based on the preferred design, and performing an economic evaluation if additional right-of-way or alternative intersection control measures are considered. Additional steps may include comprehensive public involvement processes and the documentation of the decision-making process, emphasizing the chosen alternative.

Factors triggering further examination of roundabout applicability encompass physical or geometric constraints, challenges in traffic composition (e.g., high volumes of oversized trucks), proximity to structures or devices creating design complexities, and the risk of bottlenecks consistently affecting the roundabout due to nearby structures like drawbridges, railroad crossings or interchanges.

Figure 31. Two Lane Roundabout Diagram



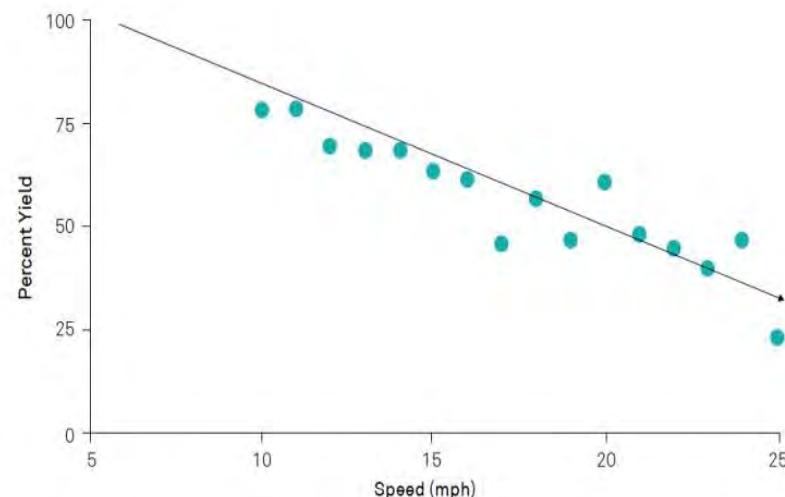
Source: NACTO, Urban Street Design Guide

Curb Radii

Curb radii, the rounded corners at intersections where curbs meet, are crucial elements in transportation planning with significant implications for both vehicular flow and pedestrian walkability. In terms of vehicular traffic, the size of curb radii directly influences turning speeds and the ease with which vehicles navigate intersections. Larger curb radii accommodate sharper turns at higher speeds, potentially compromising pedestrian safety. On the other hand, smaller curb radii force vehicles to make wider turns at slower speeds, enhancing safety for pedestrians crossing at intersections.

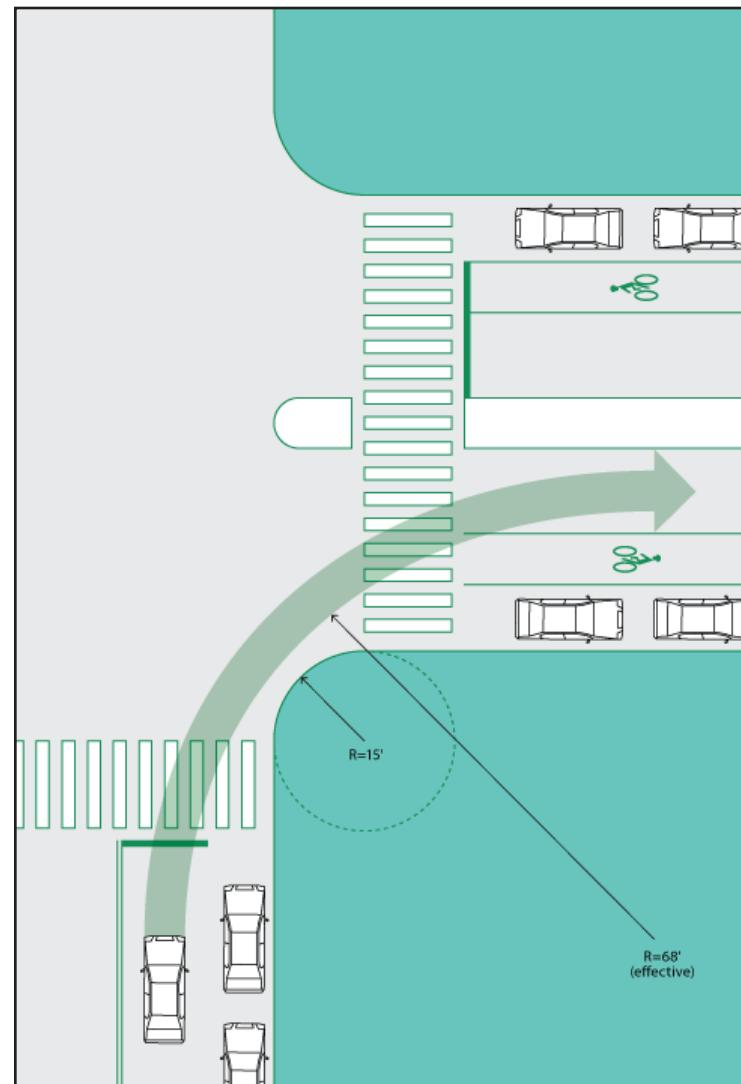
Generally, turning speeds should be limited to 15 mph or less to mitigate conflicts with pedestrians. Within most urban contexts corner radii should be no more than 15 feet and can often be less than 5 feet. Often lower corner radii can accommodate industrial vehicles as well due to the fact the effective corner radius is substantially larger than the actual corner radius as is shown in Figure 33. Recessed stop lines are another effective method for accommodating larger vehicles without compromising pedestrian space.

Figure 32. Driving Yielding Rates & Travel Speeds at Crossings



Source: Geruschat, D.R., Driver Behavior in Yielding to Sighted and Blind Pedestrians at Roundabouts. 2005.

Figure 33. Effective Curb Radii



Source: NACTO, Urban Street Design Guide

Sidewalks

Sidewalks are fundamental components of urban planning, playing a pivotal role in shaping the character and functionality of a city. Beyond serving as pedestrian pathways, sidewalks contribute significantly to the overall livability and accessibility of urban spaces. They provide safe and designated routes for walking, fostering a sense of community, encouraging physical activity and enhancing public health.

Sidewalks are also economic catalysts that contribute significantly to the prosperity of urban areas. By providing a conducive environment for pedestrians, sidewalks encourage people to explore their surroundings at a leisurely pace, promoting casual encounters and increasing the visibility of local businesses.¹ The accessibility offered by well-designed sidewalks attracts foot traffic, making commercial districts more vibrant and attractive. Moreover, the presence of sidewalks enhances property values, making adjacent real estate more desirable for both residential and commercial purposes.

Best practices for sidewalk design should include pedestrian zone widths at least 6 feet and up to 8 feet with a 2-foot street furniture zone buffer when directly adjacent to moving traffic in residential areas. Pedestrian Zone widths may increase to 8-12 feet in main street commercial areas.² Lighting, trees, street furniture and green infrastructure are all recommended inclusions to buffer the pedestrian zone from traffic flows. Within all urban areas, ADA accessibility requirements should be strongly adhered to.

¹ Bill Ryan, "Let's Talk Business: Ideas for Expanding Retail and Services in Your Community," UW Extension, July 2003.

² NACTO, Urban Street Design Guide

Figure 34. Pedestrian Zones



Source: NACTO, Urban Street Design Guide

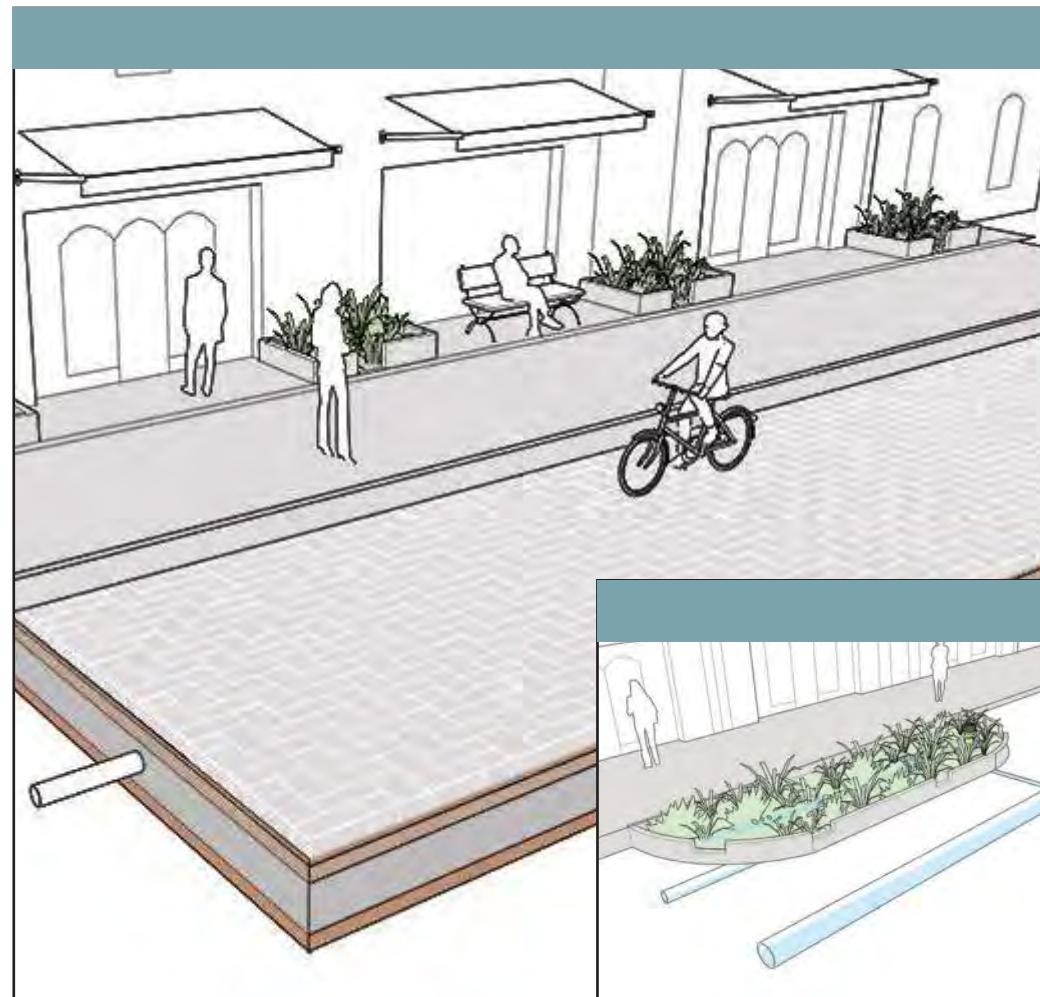
Stormwater Management

Stormwater management holds a pivotal role in transportation planning, influencing the resilience and sustainability of the entire transportation infrastructure. Effective stormwater management is crucial for mitigating the impacts of heavy rainfall and preventing issues such as flooding and erosion along roadways. Well-designed drainage systems and permeable surfaces help control the flow of stormwater, reducing the risk of infrastructure damage and enhancing the longevity of roads and bridges.

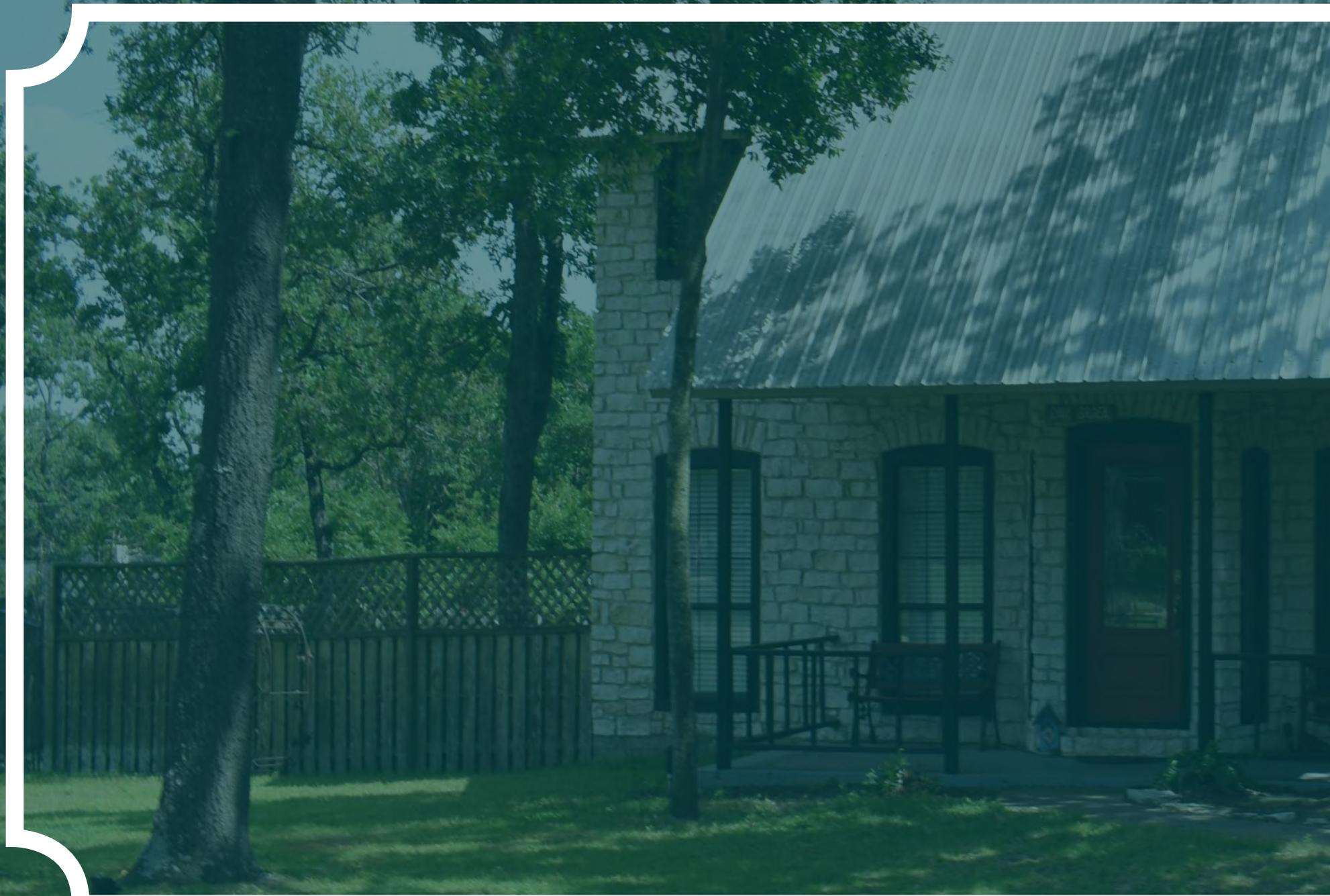
Furthermore, environmentally conscious stormwater management practices contribute to water quality preservation by preventing pollutants from entering water bodies. By integrating stormwater management into transportation planning, cities can create resilient and ecologically sound transportation networks, fostering both the durability of infrastructure and the overall health of the surrounding environment.

The design of stormwater management mechanisms is highly dependent on local context and engineering requirements, particularly as they relate to soil and materials. Pervious pavement can often be used within pedestrian walkways, street furniture zones and to a limited extent along roadways. Each stormwater capture method has different levels of maintenance that are required, in the case of bioswales it is vegetation upkeep and with pervious pavements regular cleaning of void spaces is required to maintain infiltration.

Figure 35. Pervious Pavement & Bioswale Cross Section



Source: NACTO, Urban Street Design Guide





NEIGHBORHOODS, HOUSING & CHARACTER

Introduction

In Rockdale, the goal is to create neighborhoods where people, places and unity come together for the City's quality of life. The focus is on practical, safe and vibrant areas where families thrive alongside the workplace. As Rockdale grows, there is an effort to adapt to the changing needs for housing.

Neighborhoods play a big role in how the city feels, leaving a lasting impact on residents and visitors. The aim is to give Rockdale its own unique identity, fostering community pride through various design ideas and guidelines that make a positive and lasting impression.

This chapter will address challenges and set goals for policies that can enhance the vitality of Rockdale's neighborhoods. The primary focus is on leveraging existing resources and assets to elevate safety, quality of life and opportunities for all residents. An emphasis will also be on creating mixed-use, infill and new neighborhood areas to sustain and enrich Rockdale's unique character.

The subsequent sections offer comprehensive guidelines for establishing, preserving, and enhancing the character of the community:

- Neighborhood Assessment
- Housing Framework Guidelines
- Historic Preservation
- Community Branding & Urban Design



WHAT WE'VE HEARD: Neighborhoods, Housing & Character

"More cultural activities, preservation and upkeep of historic buildings, a vibrant downtown with more retail. Beautiful entrances to the city."
- Community Member

"More public spaces for walking and biking."
- Community Member

"Cleaner, safer, growth."
- Community Member

"Housing better suited for young professionals and families and more parks with inclusive play sets."
- Community Member

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Encourage a variety of housing options and enhance the availability of more affordable housing.
- The top 3 types of housing the residents of Rockdale want are single-family neighborhoods, rural residential and multifamily units in mixed-use developments.
- Increase support for the maintenance and care of housing.
- Balance revitalization with stabilization.

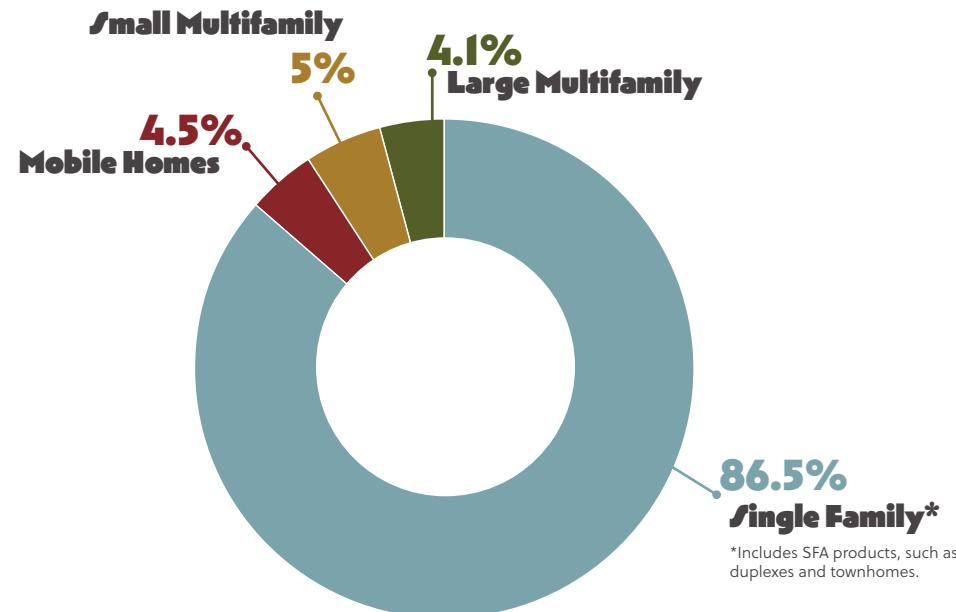
Neighborhood Stability

Rockdale's current population is mostly comprised of Older Labor Force, as illustrated in the Community Snapshot chapter. Given the generally older population, there are likely going to be changing housing needs and preferences in the near future. When survey participants were asked about the most needed housing option in Rockdale, 42% expressed positive inclination toward diverse residential choices. Given the potential for new growth due to surrounding development and job creation, a variety of alternative single-family products should be considered in addition to traditional single-family neighborhoods.

Rockdale has below average housing prices for the state of Texas and Milam County. As the City anticipates growth and the demand for more housing rises, there is an opportunity to strategically guide new housing developments to support the ongoing attainability of housing in Rockdale. This approach aims to align with the long-term goals of the community and foster neighborhood stability. The Economic Resiliency chapter discusses housing data in greater detail.

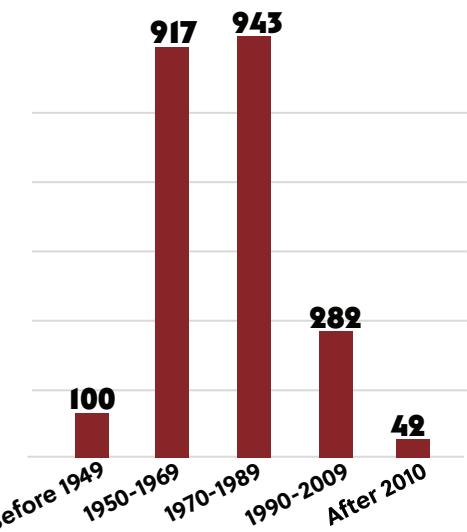


Examples of existing housing stock in Rockdale.



Source: U.S. Census 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates

\$798
Median gross rent
\$107,100
Median home value



Source: U.S. Census 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates

Vicious vs. Virtuous Cycles

As neighborhoods undergo constant change, it is easy for housing to become fixed in a vicious or virtuous cycle. The vicious cycle involves declining neighborhoods; resulting in a diminished quality of life, residents and businesses deserting, a shrinking tax base, disinvestment, and a stagnant community that further exacerbates the decline in quality of life - a downward spiral that may commence at any point and persist unless interrupted. Conversely, thriving neighborhoods are associated with a virtuous cycle which has more favorable results of improved quality of life, investment and reinvestment from residents and businesses, increased tax base, and increased public investment, which then enhances quality of life even more, and the cycle spirals upward.

It is important to note that unchecked growth is not the ultimate objective, as it introduces its own set of challenges such as sprawl, displacement, congestion and increased strain on city resources. These are complex issues that take coordination from multiple city departments to address and plan for as they begin to promote and see the benefits of the urban growth cycle. The optimal outcome is a balanced, sustainable growth cycle that benefits both existing and new residents and businesses.

In addition to the Neighborhood Assessment presented previously, the City should identify neighborhoods that are at risk of becoming stuck in a vicious cycle and direct resources to prevent that cycle from taking hold, and doing so in partnership with the residents.

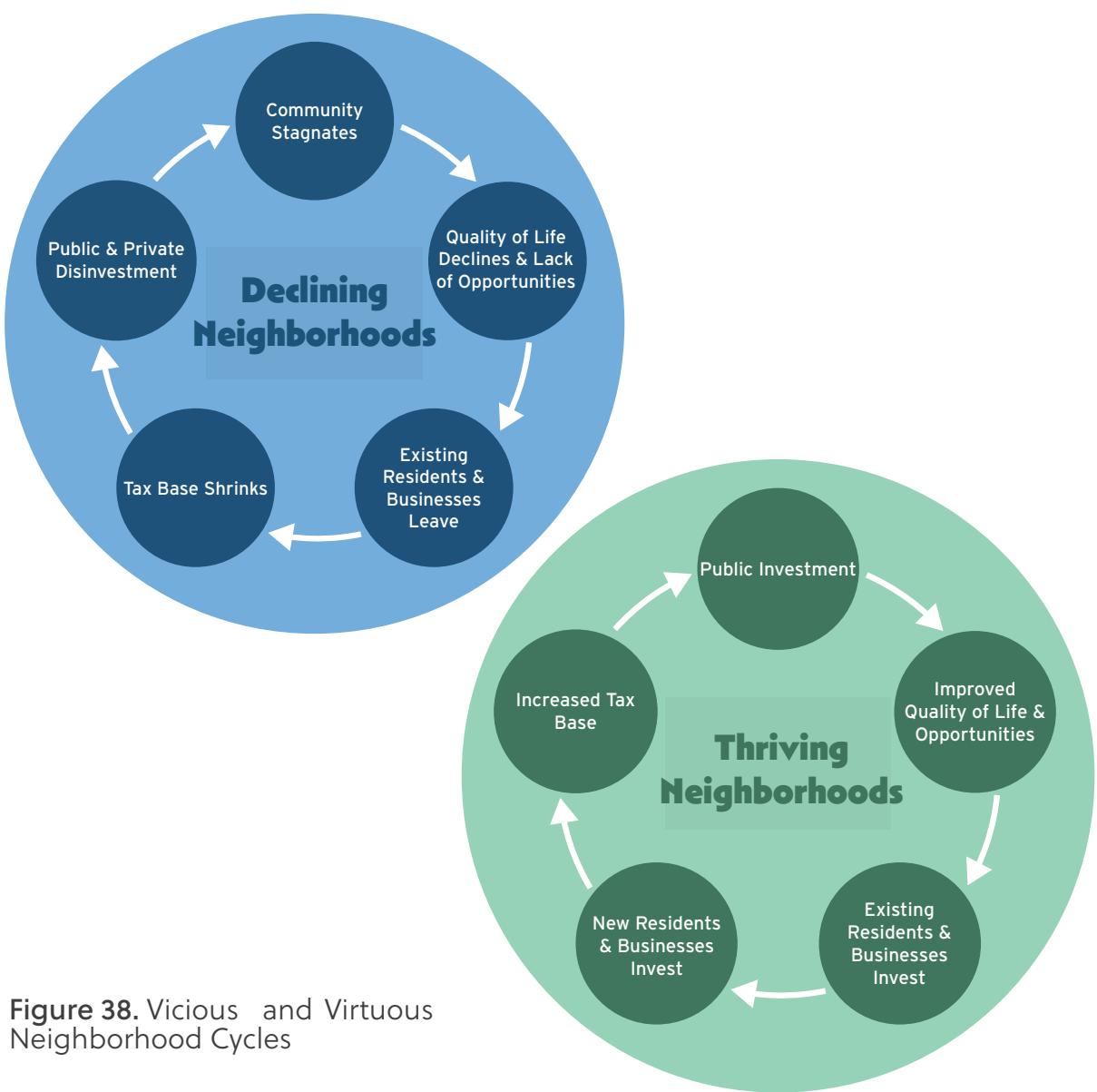


Figure 38. Vicious and Virtuous Neighborhood Cycles

Housing + Transportation Affordability Index (H+T Index)

The H+T Index is a tool that demonstrates affordability as a combination of both housing and transportation costs. This creates a more holistic picture of affordability within a community.

Nationally, 55% of neighborhoods meet the traditional definition of "affordability" that housing costs should be no more than 30% of a household's income. However, using the H+T index and factoring in transportation costs as well, the number of affordable neighborhoods nationally drops to only 26%.

This is because attainable housing options are often in locations that require higher automobile ownership and farther driving distances to access jobs, goods and services, which incurs many costs including auto payments, maintenance, insurance and fuel purchases. Transportation costs are usually the second largest expenditure for a household (after housing) and are impacted heavily by the household's physical location and neighborhood characteristics, when controlling for household characteristics.

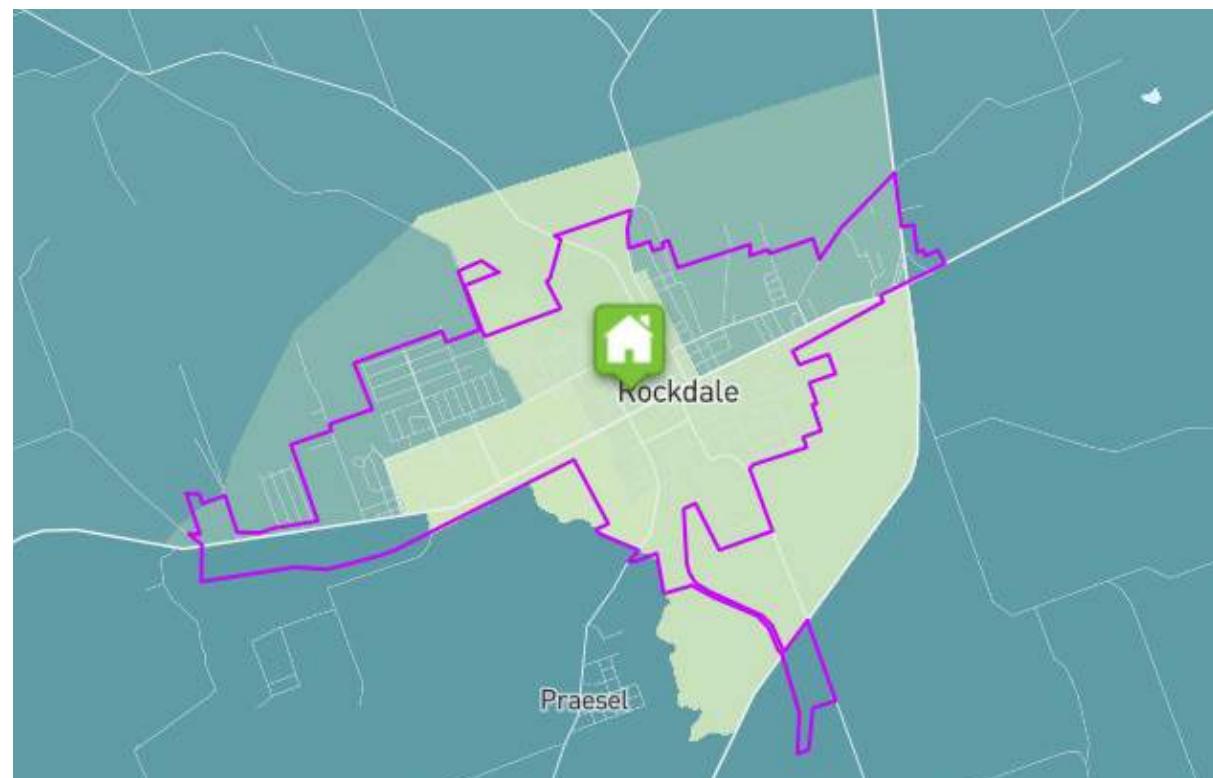
The H+T Index recommends that housing and transportation costs together should make up no more than 45% of a household's income.

Currently, Rockdale's overall H+T Index comes out to 44% (15% housing and 29% transportation), just below the 45% recommended benchmark. So while housing costs are well below the 30%

benchmark, the costs of transportation required to live life in Rockdale are quite high, putting it right on the verge of affordability.

In order to maintain affordability in Rockdale, the City needs to maintain its housing affordability and implement strategies to help bring down residents' transportation costs. Some strategies to achieve this are to provide development

patterns that allow residents to choose alternative modes of transportation, bringing more goods and services closer to residents so they don't have to travel as far, and providing more jobs in the community so residents can have shorter commutes.



Map 13. H+T Index Map

Source: Center for Neighborhood Technology, <https://htaindex.cnt.org/>

Community Resilience

Resilience is the ability to withstand or recover from an impact and bounce back stronger than before. Impacts may be acute shocks, (quick, unexpected and extreme events such as natural disasters or cyber attacks) or chronic stressors (long-term, lingering issues that slowly grow until they finally push a community over the edge, such as poverty or environmental degradation). Resilience is complex and highly contextual, so it means something different to every community, organization and individual. Holistic resilience planning includes the traditional tasks of infrastructure hardening and emergency response preparations, plus the addition of strengthening community resilience. Community resilience focuses on addressing the underlying social and economic issues such as health, housing, education, affordability, equity, trust, etc. so that residents may be as strong as possible in the face of a shock or stress. Expected outcomes of working toward greater community resilience are:

- Communities with the means and ability to properly prepare themselves for emergency events.
- Self-sufficient communities where neighbors can care for each other while waiting for help to arrive and can assist in formal emergency response efforts.
- Residents who are engaged in the community and connected to each other, know their neighbors and who might need additional assistance during an emergency event.
- Impacts of shocks and stressors don't compound on top of other health, social or economic hardships.

It is well documented that shocks and stressors impact low income and marginalized communities "first and worst." This should be a primary consideration when formulating and implementing plans and programs focused on increasing community resilience. Community resilience is not a one-time plan or event, it is a daily, year-round effort.

Some of the concerns related to community resilience identified for Rockdale include:

- Increasing homelessness and rising housing costs
- Diminishing social connections
- Limited opportunities for economic mobility

- Lack of healthcare access
- Infrastructure condition
- Housing in disrepair

Addressing these items will help set Rockdale residents up to more easily withstand and recover from impacts they might face.

Leveraging Local Organizations

The closing of the ALCOA plant in the late 2000s was not only a loss of jobs for the community, but also a loss of funding for many community activities and services that help support community resilience. There is a solid group of local organizations and individuals in the community who are doing their best to fill those gaps left by ALCOA, but they lack formal organization and funding. Additionally, those residents that step up on behalf of their community are tired and often run into barriers in their efforts. To realize greater impact, the City should support the work of these community efforts and could assist them with coordination, funding, succession planning and overcoming obstacles.

Schools are a major aspect of Rockdale's community pride, both historically and today. Although the school district operates separately from the City, both benefit from positive community perception and a strong working relationship. Rockdale should support their local school district by:

- Promoting Rockdale-area schools through newsletters, local media channels and social media. Pursue collaborative marketing between City, school district and other entities such as the economic development community and local real estate agencies.
- Supporting teachers by offering workforce housing options for teachers and paraprofessionals, including missing middle housing like townhomes, condominiums, duplexes, live-work units and patio homes. The City can collaborate with and encourage local landlords and property owners to offer discounted rates or promotions to school faculty and staff members so that a greater variety of housing options are attractive and accessible. In turn, teachers and other paraprofessionals can afford to live in the City they work in.
- Working with local schools and regional partners to facilitate additional offerings to both students and other residents related to trades jobs, technical training, upskilling, etc.

Neighborhood Assessment

A neighborhood assessment looks at the physical characteristics of an area, including infrastructure, access and housing to identify parts of the City that could benefit from additional investment.

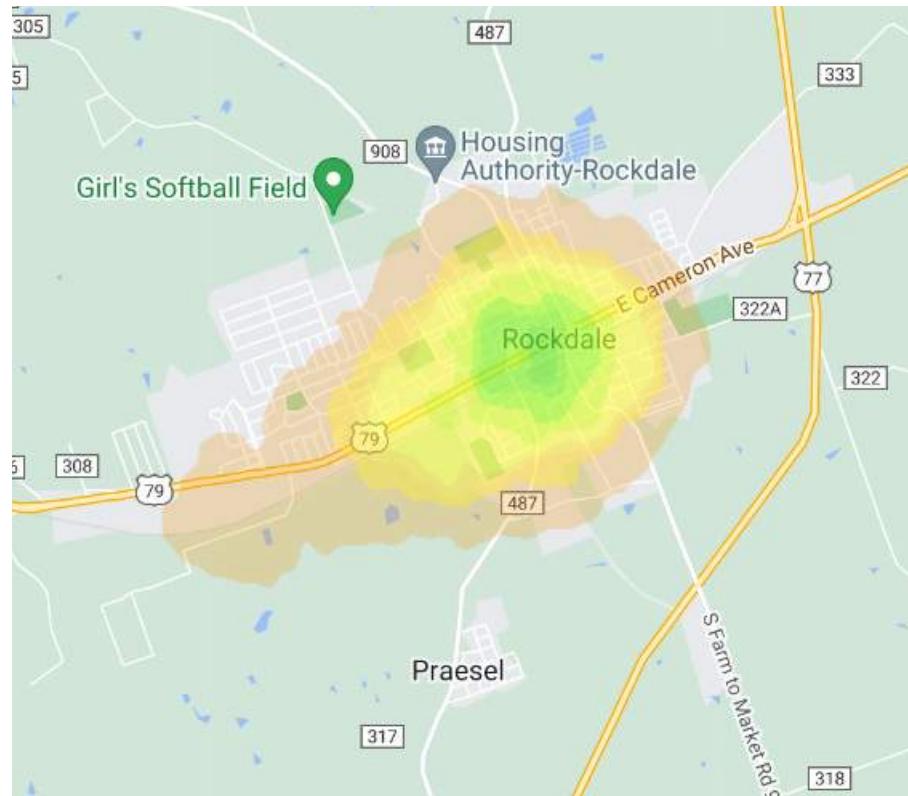
Infrastructure Condition

Notably, the City's road infrastructure emerges as a focus area with attention required to ensure well-maintained and efficient roadways. Parts of the City south of U.S. 79 have many roadways with issues such as eroding pavement and localized flooding. Addressing these infrastructure needs contributes to improved mobility, connectivity and overall safety for the community.

The City is in the process of doing major city-wide upgrades to utility infrastructure. Additional utility information can be found in the Utilities and Public Facilities chapter.



Roadway conditions in eastern Rockdale.



Map 14. Walk Score Heat Map
Walk Score®, <https://www.walkscore.com/>

Access to Goods and Services

Accessibility to goods and services is an important aspect of any neighborhood, impacting the residents' ability to go about their daily lives with the most convenience. Access to jobs, healthcare and food specifically are basic needs that make the difference in the quality of life for residents. Not surprisingly, the neighborhoods with the most current accessibility to goods and services are those near the Downtown and along U.S.79. Attracting more businesses as well as distributing them more equitably around town will help increase access for a greater number of Rockdale residents.

Housing Quality

As homes age they often require more care to ensure they stay well maintained and safe. By analyzing housing conditions, the City can better understand the current state of housing in the City and where to direct investment efforts. Map 15 - Housing Conditions Map identifies the general conditions of housing observed in Rockdale. This assessment does not apply to every home, but rather the overall state of properties within the neighborhood. This assessment considers housing condition, yard maintenance and overall upkeep.

One factor contributing to the age of Rockdale's housing stock is its historic relationship with the ALCOA plant. Much of the housing in the City was built when the ALCOA plant was rapidly expanding and new construction slowed once it reached full employment in the mid-1980s, and nearly stopped when the plant closed in the late 2000s. New growth on the horizon provides opportunities for new construction and housing stock, but updating existing housing, and enhancing quality of life for existing residents in that process, should not be forgotten.

The visual assessment revealed widespread opportunities for improvement in Rockdale's existing housing stock, indicating a comprehensive approach is needed. For instance, this approach might involve not only housing repair but also addressing city infrastructure challenges, implementing green spaces and promoting active community participation. Initial processes could serve as a model for broader revitalization strategies, steering Rockdale toward a more resilient and aesthetically pleasing future.

Sound

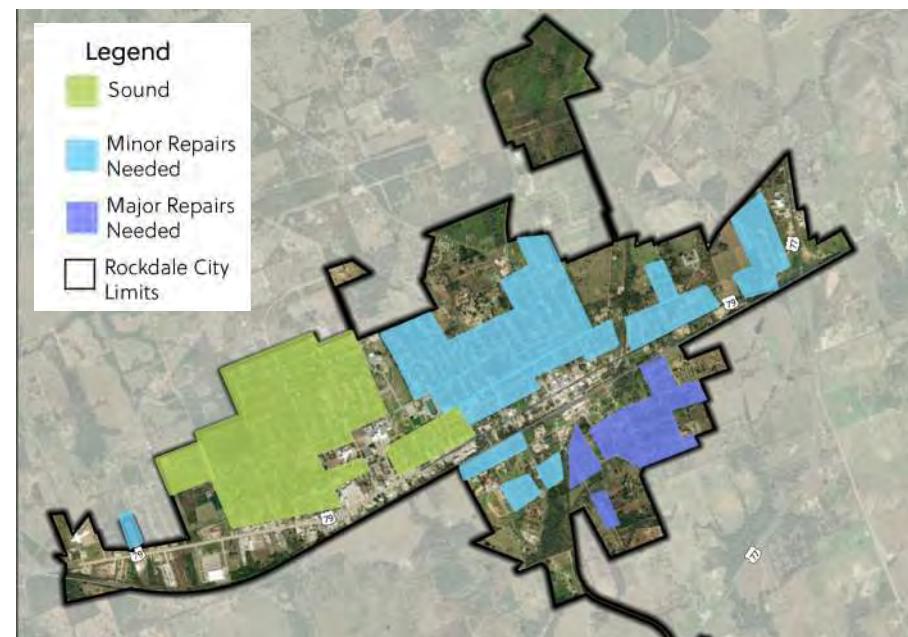
Neighborhoods within this category include predominately sound, quality housing. It also includes older areas in stable condition. However, there may be some factors or properties that need updating or repairs within these areas. Overall, this housing only needs to be sustained at its current condition to prevent or slow the aging process. However, the City should proactively work to maintain stability instead of assuming that these neighborhoods will sustain themselves.

Minor Repairs Needed

This category includes neighborhoods that are just beginning to show signs of wear. Most housing is in sound condition, with some properties simply in need of maintenance or minor repairs. Overall, this housing could need some correcting of code violations and assistance for homeowners to make repairs to prevent further decline.

Major Repairs Needed

This category includes neighborhoods that are showing signs of decline with many properties in need of major repair. These areas are prime for the first and most investment to enhance quality of life for these residents.



Repair and Weatherization Programs

Repair and weatherization programs assist residents with the maintenance and upkeep of their properties and homes. Weatherization is especially important in that it can impact inhabitants' health and lower utility bills, helping with overall affordability.

Repair efforts are important for Rockdale as they not only enhance the quality of life for existing residents but also contribute to the overall improvement and rejuvenation of the City. Revitalization initiatives, focused on housing repair and weatherization programs with priority on the neighborhoods most in need of investment, bring about positive transformations that create a more appealing, healthful, and aesthetically pleasing living environment. By investing in the restoration of homes and infrastructure, Rockdale can foster a sense of community pride and well-being.

Community Stewardship

City investments in infrastructure, parks and home repair programs can spur community pride and stewardship among residents. One element of community pride is in how residents and local businesses maintain their properties. This does not have to mean expensive updates, but can be small, simple acts that demonstrate care and stability.

The City could create and distribute "Idea Books" to showcase ideas about how to improve curb appeal on a budget. Additionally, city-wide cleanup days, whether sponsored by the City or a private entity, that focus on improving properties (fix fences, paint walls, fix roofs, update landscaping, etc.) are an easy and relatively inexpensive way to beautify the community. Since volunteers donate their time as in-kind, nonprofits and other organizations can maximize their efforts through partnerships that leverage each other's resources.

Cleanup programs might already exist as grassroots initiatives and the City should seek to create or enhance such programs by coordinating with volunteers, school districts, local businesses and faith-based organizations. If not, the City or MDD may look to start a "Keep Rockdale Beautiful" or similar initiative for this purpose.



Unfinished housing construction in Rockdale.



Older homes in Rockdale would likely benefit from assistance with weatherization updates.

Planning Framework for Housing Diversity

Areas within the City provide an opportunity to focus on strategic efforts to create a meaningful impact or transformation based on the identified vision and goals within this Plan. Some areas are currently vacant and are a blank slate for new development. Other areas could benefit from focused planning to revitalize existing neighborhoods. Key strategies identified for addressing City issues and aspirations include mixed-use developments, infill projects and the creation of new neighborhoods.

Mixed-Use

Mixed-use developments offer more than just aesthetic improvements; they also mitigate market risk by not relying solely on the demand for a single use. In well-designed mixed-use developments, the loss of one component does not jeopardize the entire project. These centers generate long-term value, appreciating over time as different activities reinforce each other, leading to increased pedestrian traffic and improved amenities. With a focus on mixed-use corridors in the future land use map, careful consideration is paramount.

A mixed-use development enhances a small town by integrating urban design elements, combining residential and commercial spaces to create a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly environment. This approach fosters economic diversity, supports local businesses and reduces dependence on vehicles to get around. Walkability and efficient land use contribute to a sense of community.

Additionally, mixed-use developments align with City design aspirations, reducing the need for long commutes and promoting sustainable development. By efficiently utilizing available land, it minimizes urban sprawl, preserving the City's character. This well-integrated approach not only addresses economic and social aspects but also creates a resilient, walkable and culturally rich small town, benefiting both residents and local businesses.

Infill

Infill development involves constructing on vacant or underutilized land between existing developments, resulting in smaller, incremental projects that gradually increase area density. Infill development presents opportunities for small businesses and unique housing options. Leveraging vacant land and underused parking lots in central locations provides a chance to create desirable spaces while preserving the character of existing districts.

Throughout the core of Rockdale, numerous vacant lots stand as opportunities for prime development. These opportunities could either bring in residential spaces within convenient walking distances to the City's main retail areas or introduce local business establishments, addressing essential needs that currently lie beyond the reach of pedestrians in the area.

Topic of Note: Range of Housing Choices

Diversity within housing is defined as variety in the housing type (e.g., single-family home, townhome, duplex), size and price point. While related to affordability, diversity also considers the specific preferences or needs of the household, which often varies by life stage. Housing unit type is an important characteristic to consider for cities to adequately understand housing challenges and issues facing their residents and workforce. A range in housing options is important to ensure the full life cycle of housing is available. Enabling residents to stay within the community throughout their lives, even as housing desires change, is an invaluable component of a city. Smaller starter homes, apartments, townhomes and retirement housing are important to ensure adequate housing for young adults, families with children, empty-nesters and retirees. Additionally, a range of housing options combats inequality and provides housing for all income levels.

New Neighborhoods

New neighborhoods primarily center on single-family residential development, also incorporating additional housing options in appropriate circumstances. Planning the development of new subdivisions, such as the new Cornerstone subdivision, with 660 residential lots, ensures the inclusion of desired elements like green spaces, parks and improved infrastructure. Despite limited new neighborhoods in the past, the City anticipates growth and should plan to connect new growth with City needs.

Rockdale's aging neighborhoods have an impact on community growth and the overall quality of life, influencing individuals and families as they search for an ideal place to establish roots. The shortage of diverse housing options and neighborhoods that are easily accessible contributes to urban sprawl. While efforts to revitalize aging neighborhoods through initiatives like "fixer-upper" projects and City improvements, such as enhancing walkability, are attractive and incentivize residents to move into existing areas, there's a parallel need to accommodate the City's growth.

As Rockdale expands, creating new neighborhoods becomes essential to provide housing solutions that align with the evolving needs of residents. Balancing efforts to rejuvenate existing neighborhoods with the development of new ones ensures a comprehensive approach to community planning, accommodating both those who seek the charm of established areas and those eager to be part of the City's growth.



Duplex units currently existing in Rockdale.



Examples of ADU and Townhome units, housing choices that likely make sense for Rockdale.

Topic of Note: Aging in Place

Aging in place refers to staying in one's familiar home and community as one ages, with changing needs. Here we are focused less on the individual house or unit but more on the community wide efforts that support aging in place. Incorporating housing like accessory dwelling units into neighborhoods allows for downsizing while maintaining proximity to family and familiar surroundings. These housing options, referred to as 'granny flats', offer independent living. Condoized single-family homes and setups like bungalow courts also provide independence with less upkeep, fostering social connections among residents. Yet, holistic quality of life for seniors necessitates mixed-use neighborhoods with daily amenities and services easily accessible without relying on cars. Keeping seniors in communities benefits everyone, as they contribute through volunteering, support the local economy and help with childcare. Prioritizing features like ADA accessibility, high-speed internet and public transit access is essential in senior-friendly housing.

Historic Preservation

A community's enduring character leaves a lasting imprint on both residents and visitors, shaping its distinct and appealing image through thoughtful development and maintenance. The identity of Rockdale is a collaborative creation, molded by the values and needs of its residents and workers, who, in turn, influence the physical and built environment. The public realm serves as a tangible reflection of community values, instilling pride among residents and leaving a positive impression on visitors - ultimately fostering a sense of community stewardship.

The impact of historic assets within the City is paramount in shaping Rockdale's character. By employing various methods to preserve and enhance this character, Rockdale can distinguish itself from other communities. While the term "character" is broad, particularly in the context of the built environment, it encompasses a range of design recommendations and guidelines aimed at creating a favorable impression on both residents and visitors.

These recommendations include, but are not limited to:

- Urban design guidelines and streetscape enhancement programs
- Gateway installations
- Landscape enhancements
- Development standards
- Corridor aesthetic standards

Rockdale's Existing Assets

Rockdale has a rich history, detailed in the Community Snapshot chapter, leaving behind historic buildings and areas deserving recognition and preservation. Despite the absence of strong preservation efforts, various studies, such as the Old Rockdale City Hall Historic Structures Report and Feasibility Study, provide insights into the City's historical assets. Ongoing efforts to understand and preserve these assets are crucial for maintaining the City's historic identity.

The 1895 Project (redevelopment of the historic City Hall building now owned by the Vision Historic Preservation Foundation), has returned the bell tower to the building and it now serves as both a physical and programmatic anchor for Downtown.

Tools of Preservation

To facilitate preservation, the City may consider employing various tools, such as:

- Zoning Overlays
- Conservation Districts
- Historic Rehabilitation Incentives
- Direct Subsidies or Grants
- Preservation Easements

By leveraging these tools and fostering a collective commitment to preservation, Rockdale can uphold its unique character and historic legacy, ensuring a vibrant and distinctive identity for generations to come.



Funding Sources & Incentives

Incentives play a pivotal role in shaping the urban design of a city, acting as catalysts for positive change and sustainable development. By offering incentives, municipalities can encourage private developers, businesses and communities to actively participate in the enhancement of urban spaces. These incentives may range from tax breaks and financial subsidies to streamlined permitting processes and zoning flexibility.

The prospect of economic and regulatory benefits motivates stakeholders to invest in projects that align with the city's vision for a well-designed and functional urban environment. In turn, this fosters innovation, promotes the construction of environmentally friendly structures, and attracts businesses that contribute to the overall economic vibrancy of the city.

Moreover, incentives can be tailored to address specific urban challenges, such as affordable housing shortages or the revitalization of neglected neighborhoods, providing a targeted approach to address pressing issues. Ultimately, the strategic use of incentives in urban design empowers cities to steer growth in a desirable direction, creating vibrant, sustainable and inclusive urban landscapes.

Commercial Grants & Incentive Programs

A large number of funding sources and economic development mechanisms are available for commercial property owners.

- **USDA Rural Business Development Grants** - This program is designed to provide technical assistance and training for small rural businesses. Small means that the business has fewer than 50 new workers and less than \$1 million in gross revenue.
- **Texas Enterprise Zone Program (EZP)** - The EZP is a state sales and use tax refund program designed to encourage private investment and job creation in economically distressed areas of the state.
- **Public Improvement District (PID)** - A district in which owners pay an additional assessment on their taxes which is then used exclusively on public improvements within the district.
- **Brownfield Site Assessment and Technical Assistance** - Helps provide initial planning and environmental assessment for underutilized sites that may be contaminated or just perceived as such.
- **Texas PACE Authority -Property Assessed Clean Energy (TX-PACE)** - A proven financial tool that incentivizes Texas' property owners to upgrade facility infrastructure with little or no capital outlay. Approved by State legislation and established by local governments, TX-PACE programs enable owners to lower their operating costs and use the savings to pay for eligible water conservation,

energy efficiency, resiliency and distributed generation projects. Owners gain access to private, affordable, long-term (typically 10-20 years) financing that is not available through traditional funding avenues.

Residential Incentive Programs

A variety of City-led programs can help facilitate the revitalization of aging residential neighborhoods, programs that have had regional success include:

- **Rural Housing Inspection Program** - Helps ensure that the rental housing stock meets minimum standards to ensure that high quality housing is available for renters.
- **Rehabilitation and Replacement Program** - Provides funds to rehabilitate single-family occupied structures, enhancing housing quality and neighborhood perception.
- **Demo-Rebuild** - Is an incentive program that offers tax abatements, streamlined permits, or financial incentives to encourage property owners and developers to revitalize specific areas with higher value structures.
- **Exterior** - The City may provide a rebate or other incentive to residential property owners that make improvements to the exterior of their homes, similar to Rockdale's existing facade program for structures in Downtown Rockdale.

Community Character

A strong community image expressed through elements in the public realm lets people know when they have entered the city and reflects the values of the community. Branding and identity can create enjoyable experiences for people, leaving a positive impression on visitors and promoting community pride and stewardship through the city's investment in its public places. Branding should be unique and identifiable to the City of Rockdale and can include elements such as consistent use of materials or colors, a cohesive signage program and a series of special distinctive places throughout the City.

Signage & Wayfinding

Signage is an important element of the public realm, both functionally and aesthetically. Sign families should be created that use an organized and consistent set of design elements and materials, creating a cohesive and memorable experience. Sign families consist of coordinated sets of signage, including:

- Gateways
- Wayfinding
- Branding Elements
- Building Signage
- Regulatory Signage

Gateways

Gateways are features, landmarks or other streetscape elements that help to initiate an identity, orient visitors to an area and signify entrance to the city. Two distinct classes of gateway entries include regional gateways and local entry gateways.

Regional gateways are large in scale and typically situated near regional highway systems. Most likely to be experienced from a vehicle, regional gateways are designed to be effective for drivers and passengers. Regional gateways could be considered along U.S. 79, at the regional nodes identified on the FLUM.

Local gateways are located at secondary points into the city, they are intended to create identity at the street level and are experienced by both vehicles and pedestrians. These could be established along the smaller F.M. roadways coming into Rockdale, especially as part of the identity created by the local mixed-use nodes.

Both regional and local gateway features should be designed with a unified theme to enhance continuity and link elements together, creating a recognizable community identity. Additionally, gateways are an opportunity to incorporate beautification elements, such as enhanced landscaping and public art.

Wayfinding

Wayfinding signage helps motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians better navigate the city. There should be various versions of wayfinding signage that adjust in scale and content as applicable to the different users, whether they be in a car, on a bicycle or on foot. For example, drivers may need simple signage to quickly point them to special areas of town or parking locations, while pedestrians may want more detailed signage pointing them toward local attractions and specific destinations.

Gateways and wayfinding signage should be a part of a cohesive package of signage that is coordinated with the city's logo and other branding and identity elements.





Topic of Note: Commercial Redevelopment

Like many cities across the U.S., Rockdale features numerous strip shopping centers that serve most commercial needs for itself and its surrounding area. These are primarily located west of Downtown on Cameron Ave. Currently, most of these centers host a variety of productive economic activities, serving as sources of jobs, tax revenue and amenities for Rockdale's citizens.

However, retail consolidation and the shift toward online commerce pose potential challenges to these centers. There's a risk that some could become vacant, fall into disuse or appear neglected - turning assets into eyesores and maintenance challenges, and resulting in a loss of tax revenue.

We recommend that the City proactively monitor these centers to identify potential issues. The City should adopt a creative, flexible approach, which may include encouraging housing and mixed uses; permitting light industrial activities; partnering with developers for business incubation; holding special events; or reimagining sections of parking lots as active gathering spaces. Concurrently, the City should review its building, parking and use regulations to ensure they are compatible with innovative approaches. The guiding principle should be to support the flexibility needed to ensure that these properties continue to be assets for the community.

Urban Design

Urban design is intricately connected to the health and vitality of a community, a quality-built environment plays a vital role in improving physical health and well-being. For example, a city with quality sidewalks connecting major destinations can encourage residents to be more physically active, both as a part of their daily lives and recreationally.

The following are basic urban design elements that can be incorporated into the City's development code to govern the physical shape and development pattern that is desired. This is especially applicable to the mixed-use nodes and corridors as denoted in the FLUM.

Additional concepts for urban design on specific roadways throughout Rockdale can be found in the Transportation chapter.

Street Design

For decades, the design of city streets has centered around the automobile. Streets are an integral part of the public realm and often make up a large portion of public lands. As such, they should be designed to accommodate a range of users, including pedestrians, cyclists and cars.

Sidewalks

Sidewalks play a vital role in communities. They facilitate pedestrian safety, movement and access, promoting overall community connectivity and welfare. Safe, accessible and well-maintained sidewalks are a fundamental and necessary investment for cities, which have been found to enhance public health and maximize social capital. In residential settings sidewalks should

ideally be 5-7 feet wide, and 8-12 feet wide in commercial settings. New developments should be required to install sidewalks along their frontages and a plan to fill in sidewalk gaps throughout the city should be developed.

The context of the area and the adjoining street type should determine the appropriate sidewalk width. It is critical that sidewalks provide enough width to accommodate the expected amount of pedestrian traffic, or else people might be pushed off the sidewalk into potentially dangerous situations.

Additionally, shared-use paths may be a great option for smaller communities that do not need separate infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists. These should be 8-16 feet wide to promote safety when mixing modes.

Lane Width

The width allocated to lanes for motorists, bikes and parked cars is a crucial aspect of street design. Lane widths should be considered within the overall assemblage of the street. Narrower streets are typically recommended in a downtown or mixed-use area to reduce vehicle speed and create a more comfortable experience for pedestrians and cyclists.

Curb Extensions

Curb extensions are a traffic calming measure primarily used to narrow roadways at crosswalks and extend the sidewalk for pedestrians crossing the street. Shortening the crossing distance improves pedestrian safety and visibility. Curb extensions may also be implemented to help allocate more space for street furniture, landscaping or street trees in areas with narrow rights-of-way.

Streetscapes

Streetscapes are the combination of paving materials, trees, landscaping, lighting and street furniture placed within the sidewalk or pedestrian zone, the area between the back of curb to the property line. Streetscapes help define a community's aesthetic quality and identity as well as provide amenities that can make the experience of walking through an area more enjoyable. The more enjoyable a place is for pedestrians, the longer they tend to stay, the more connections they make and more businesses they frequent.

Streetscape amenities should be determined by the context of the area and the adjoining street type. For example, on a high-traffic vehicular corridor, streetscapes may be mostly aesthetic and maintenance would be a primary concern, whereas in Downtown or a mixed-use node, pedestrian experience, comfort and safety may be the primary goals of the streetscape.

High quality streetscapes do not need to be expensive; cost and scale can be adjusted to available resources and context without sacrificing impact.

Street Trees

In Texas, providing shade is one of the most important streetscape elements. A non-shaded sidewalk can be rendered nearly unusable certain times of the year. Even along primarily vehicular corridors, shade can help reduce the ambient heat caused by paved surfaces. Ideally, shade is provided by street trees of shade-tree species that are adapted to the climate and context or setting.

Providing adequate soil volume is an important factor in determining the fate of street trees and ensuring they grow large enough to provide shade. Today's best practices suggest 1,000 cubic feet of soil volume is necessary to support a thriving street tree in an urban environment. Soil volume can be provided for in planting areas, tree well/pits or underneath walking surfaces with the use of suspended pavers.

Root barriers should be utilized as needed to ensure tree roots are contained and do not damage adjacent infrastructure. Street trees are a common point of contention among city departments, but they bring so many benefits to a community that it is worth the time for staff to come together to find solutions to the implementation of street trees for their city. It may be worthwhile to convene a Right-of-Way Task Force, even temporarily, to work through issues like this.

Lighting

Lighting can serve a variety of purposes. Roadway lighting is intended to serve drivers and standards or requirements are generally mandated by applicable transportation jurisdictions. In some instances, roadway lighting casts enough light onto adjacent sidewalks to also serve as pedestrian lighting, or a "dual arm" fixture can be used that has a smaller fixture on the side of a pole facing a sidewalk. Pedestrian- scaled lighting, such as lampposts or bollards, provides safety for pedestrians and should be installed along sidewalks, trails or at crossings as necessary for safety and comfort. Decorative lighting, such as landscape, building or festoon lighting, can add character and interest to an area without much cost. For both aesthetic and environmental purposes, overlighting an area should be



prevented through thoughtfully, appropriately and safely applied lighting. Rockdale may consider a lighting ordinance that is Dark Sky compliant and utilizes the Model Lighting Ordinance (MLO) provided by the International Dark-sky Association.

Furnishings

Appropriate furnishings along a streetscape, such as seating and waste receptacles, are highly dependent on the context. The types of amenities provided for a pathway that may be primarily used for recreation will vary from those provided near a transit stop. Like lighting, the application of furnishings to a public space should be done thoughtfully. Considerations include the types of users, what they will be doing in the space and their needs, comfort and safety. The types and location of furnishings should be dependent on these considerations. For example, along a recreational path a water bottle refill station might make sense, whereas near a transit stop shaded seating might be most appropriate.

Screening

There are certain elements of the public realm that are necessary for the place to function but do not necessarily make for a pleasant experience. This includes utility boxes, dumpsters, outdoor storage, etc. To the extent possible these elements should not be placed along a primary street frontage and should be screened using a decorative fence or landscape.

Activation

Even the most well designed spaces will not be successful if they are not utilized and well loved by people. Planning for physical elements,

contexts and programming that encourage people to come to and stay in a public space is known as activation. Along activated streets, an emphasis should be placed on people-focused or pedestrian-scale design. Allowing businesses to spill out into the right-of-way via sidewalk sales or outdoor dining areas, public art, tactical urbanism installations and treatment of the building facades are all elements of activation. This is most applicable in Downtown and Mixed-use Nodes. The next section on building form discusses this in more detail.



Topic of Note: East Cameron Avenue Vision

In late 2021, the Rockdale Municipal Development District, in cooperation with the City of Rockdale commissioned designers to prepare a long-term vision for the area of Rockdale along East Cameron Avenue (U.S. 79), between U.S. 77 and Main Street. The "Vision 22" plan provides many additional considerations and strategies to enhance urban design and promote quality development. The recommendations provided in this Comprehensive Plan are in alignment with and supportive of the proposals in the East Cameron Avenue vision, and looks at how those general ideas can be applied city-wide. The Vision 22 document also provides detailed implementation recommendations that may also apply to the broader community beyond just the East Cameron Avenue corridor.

Building Form & Site Design

The creation of good public spaces does not end at the boundary of the public right-of-way. The form of the surrounding buildings and the context they create for the public realm have an immense impact on the character of the space and its success in a community. Building form should also respond to the type of street environment and configuration that exists or is to be created over time. Street design and building form go hand-in-hand and must be aligned to create a harmonious and vibrant public realm.

Height, Massing, & Scale

The height, massing and scale of a building should be reasonably proportional to surrounding buildings and the streetscape so that they do not overpower the public realm. Buildings must be designed and sculpted to create a comfortable experience, especially in highly pedestrianized environments. The height, massing and scale of buildings need to be balanced with the size of surrounding or adjacent right-of-ways and open spaces. Buildings and the elements that contribute to their facades should have a proportion and scale that are welcoming for pedestrians. Considerations in massing include, but are not limited to, creating a sense of enclosure or openness, sunlight and shadows, reinforcing views and wind patterns.

Building Placement

For mixed-use, retail, and commercial buildings in pedestrianized areas, the building should be located at or near the primary frontage property

line, in order to reinforce the streetscape and create a quality pedestrian experience.

For residential uses, the building placement will depend on the type of residential building being proposed and the desired character of the neighborhood. Townhomes and multifamily buildings should be located at or near the property line to ensure the proper proportions are created for the public realm. Single-family dwellings should be set back 8-15 feet from the property line, close enough to engage the sidewalk but providing some buffer for the home. In existing neighborhoods, the current form may be preserved. The setback ensures there is growing space for trees and front entrance features, such as a porches. Encouraging structures to be located closer to the street reinforces the streetscape, creates a quality pedestrian environment, and opportunities for socialization. Additionally, front setbacks are generally the least utilized portion of a home's yard, so it is a more efficient use of the lot to put that additional space in the back yard.

Building Facade

In conjunction with building massing, scale and placement, the building facade can be adorned with features that are inviting and contribute to the experience and scale of the buildings. Long monotonous walls without windows or entrance features should be avoided. To ensure a quality public realm, entrances to the ground floor units, whether commercial or residential, should front the street. Building facades should feature architectural elements along the street such as main entrance features, balconies, porches, patios, awnings and light fixtures. Multifamily, townhomes and single-family dwellings should connect entry features to public sidewalks.

Parking

Parking is an inherent functional piece of most places. With downtowns and mixed-use nodes in particular, there is often a perception that there is never enough parking. A more accurate statement might be "there is never enough parking right in front of where I want to go". Often there is plenty of parking within a reasonable walking distance but this is more of an issue of people feeling like the walk isn't safe, comfortable or interesting. Likewise, restricted use of private parking reduces overall parking efficiency and reduces the financial performance of downtowns and mixed-use areas. In a downtown or mixed-use setting, good urban form tends to locate parking on-street or toward the fringe of the core in communal lots or structures, allowing focus to remain on pedestrian space and activity.

Throughout the City, parking should generally be encouraged to be placed in the rear of buildings. It is common in Central Texas to see areas dominated by oversized parking lots in front of buildings, this is an excellent opportunity for redevelopment using engaging liner buildings that can create the more desired character of buildings fronting the streets.

Many cities have eliminated minimum parking ratios in downtown and mixed-use areas. An increasing number of cities have eliminated minimum parking city-wide, in these cases the market tends to provide adequate parking due to pro forma and financing requirements but it is not mandated by the municipality.



Figure 39. Strategies to address urban design using building form.

THE EAST BELL TAHPHOUSE

NORTH
FARM
908
ROAD





ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

Introduction

Nestled at the crossroads of progress, Rockdale must balance the need to provide infrastructure, public services, and quality of life amenities while attracting new businesses. Rockdale is strategically located to the Samsung semiconductor plant in Taylor, the Sandow Lakes Ranch (SLR) development on the former ALCOA plant site, and the educational triangle outlined in the Regional Context section of the Community Snapshot chapter. The challenge many growing suburban cities face is balancing rapid residential development and population growth with the need to diversify the tax base and attract businesses whose employees' needs align with the skills of existing residents. While Rockdale has not experienced this type of rapid suburbanization in recent years, that growth is on the horizon and presents a significant opportunity to prepare, leverage, and benefit rather than react as many suburban communities have.

Because this is a Comprehensive Plan, the focus is on assisting Rockdale in making better-informed decisions related to economic development in a citywide context versus individual target industries or project-specific site decisions. The Rockdale Municipal Development District (Rockdale MDD) is the City entity charged with leading business retention and recruitment efforts. Over recent years, the Rockdale MDD and the City have invested in and been a part of numerous documents to support city growth, notably amidst the current surge in business expansion just beyond the city limits. Examples, briefly outlined in the Community Snapshot chapter and further in this chapter, include the Master Plan for Downtown Rockdale (2012), Rockdale Reborn (2022), City of Rockdale Communities as Startups (CASU) Report (2022), and Vision 22 East Cameron (2022). These reports, initiated the process of identifying key areas within the City and formulating strategies for their revitalization, ultimately attracting new businesses.



WHAT WE'VE HEARD:

Economic Resilience

SURVEY RESULTS

- The vast majority of participants rated the business climate in Rockdale currently Okay to Very Poor.
- Insufficient infrastructure, limited networking and support services, and lack of skilled workforce were rated the top three barriers or challenges to business growth in Rockdale.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Addressing the economic stressors in Rockdale could go a long way in allowing residents to focus on other things that can enhance their quality of life.
- Support and grow local businesses, especially in Downtown, marrying economic development with historic preservation. Rising commercial rents are a burden on existing small businesses
- Offer more entertainment and retail options, especially for high school aged kids.
- Broaden the range of available services for residents; focus on creating an environment that might attract healthcare providers.
- Grow and diversify Rockdale's economic base to fill some of the gaps left by the ALCOA departure.

"Beautification, create a better first impression."
- Community Member

"Too many businesses come and go because workers are hard to come by."
- Community Member

"Limited citizens' capital."
- Community Member

"There aren't enough people in Rockdale to support new businesses."
- Community Member

"Lack of a hospital."
- Community Member

"The surface appearance of the town as looking so industrial and in some places just neglected."
- Community Member

Existing Rockdale MDD Framework

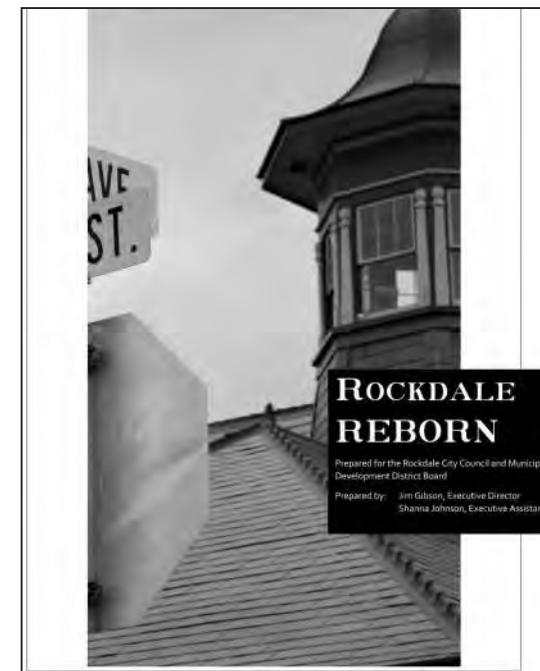
Vision 22 East Cameron

In late 2021, The Rockdale MDD and the City of Rockdale collaborated to envision the future of the East Cameron Avenue area. Named Vision 22, the study assessed current conditions impacting development and quality of life, proposing recommendations for both public and private actions to boost economic development and urban character. Positioned in the heart of the Texas Triangle, Rockdale is influenced by regional dynamics, notably the Austin area's rapid growth. Despite its location along U.S. 79, providing commercial exposure, the City faces setbacks due to the closure of major employers in the late 2000s. Challenges in the East Cameron neighborhood include a shortage of homes limiting population and employment growth, contributing to a negative perception.

The Vision comprises three building blocks: Transform the Avenue, Create Connected Parks, and Nurture Healthy Neighborhoods. Transforming the avenue by planning for a mix of quality residential and commercial development, creating connected parks with Bridge Park as a community focus, and nurturing healthy neighborhoods through improved appearances, better streets, and safe routes. Implementation strategies involved funding public improvements, enforcing stronger regulations for quality development, and using economic tools to entice private sector involvement.

Rockdale Reborn

The Rockdale City Council and Rockdale MDD expressed a shared interest in leveraging tourism to stimulate the local economy. Recognizing tourism as an important element, although insufficient on its own, Rockdale Reborn outlines features for Rockdale to compete in the regional market. Proposed initiatives include increased City Council involvement and resource allocation for downtown development, the establishment of an arts/downtown tourism program managed by existing City and Rockdale MDD staff, and the initiation of a sports tourism program. Projections for funding and potential contributors are provided, serving as an informed starting point for discussions by City Council and the Rockdale MDD Board.



2023 Retail Market Snapshot

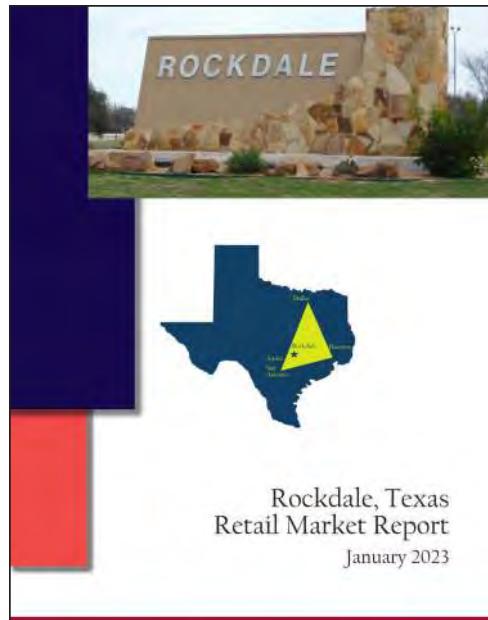
The Rockdale Retail Market Report outlines essential information for potential retail projects in Rockdale. With an increase in regional housing development activity driven by business growth from the Austin market and major employer announcements, such as the new Samsung plant in Taylor, Rockdale anticipates significant industrial growth. Identified retail gaps outlined in this snapshot include grocery stores, building materials, automobile dealers, and department stores. Opportunities exist for national and regional restaurant establishments not currently present in Rockdale but prospering in comparable markets. Situated on U.S. 79, connecting to Round Rock and the larger Austin market, Rockdale benefits from diverse traffic and exposure, with counts exceeding 15,000.

Housing Development Fact Sheet

The Rockdale Housing Development Fact Sheet introduces the community's favorable conditions for housing projects. With a strong demand for various housing units and recent job-creating business announcements, Rockdale presents an opportune environment for developers. The Austin region's combination of business growth and affordability challenges enhances the appeal of quality, affordable communities within a commutable distance.

Target Industry Analysis Report

Economic development organizations frequently conduct target industry analyses to streamline, focus, and enhance success probabilities. By narrowing down to a select number of compatible industries, resources can be effectively deployed. The selection is often based on local assets, workforce specialization, and larger industry trends. In March 2023, the Rockdale MDD conducted such an analysis, identifying different industry options across seven broad industries. The goal is to refine marketing efforts, respond more effectively to prospect leads, and pinpoint industries with significant growth potential. The selection process involved a mix of qualitative and quantitative data. The resulting report details the identified target industries, their broad definitions, key location factors, how Rockdale's assets align with these factors, and a brief discussion on optimizing these assets.



Economic Analysis

Rockdale's strategic economic development efforts in recent years have created resources for future developers. In anticipation of significant population growth, there is a pressing need for additional resources to continue fostering the City's expansion and success. While the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) identifies optimal sites for prospective growth, it is imperative for Rockdale to explore supplementary public policy initiatives. These initiatives will play an important role in strategically positioning key areas and corridors for economic development projects, complementing and extending beyond the scope of the Rockdale MDD initiatives. This forward-thinking approach allows the City to remain at the forefront of sustainable and diversified growth, creating an environment conducive to both prosperity and innovation benefiting existing residents as well as future residents. Some main obstacles facilitating growth include:

- Departure of ALCOA
- Shortage of restaurant, retail, and entertainment options for residents
- Lack of a strong identity or brand
- Poor infrastructure conditions and quality
- Limited attainable housing options

While these challenges are not unique to Rockdale, continued proactive efforts are necessary to achieve the desired growth results in the City.

Topic of Note: Departure of ALCOA

Rockdale has encountered significant economic challenges in recent years, notably following the departure of the ALCOA plant in 2008. The community's heavy reliance on this single industry created a vulnerability, exposing it to the cascading effects of job losses, unemployment, and a decline in local revenue. The departure of ALCOA not only resulted in a substantial reduction in direct and indirect employment but also posed the risk of a skill mismatch among the workforce. In fact, the last four obstacles to facilitating growth, above, are the result of Rockdale's dependence on a single industry (and employer). This economic shock underscores the need for a diversified approach to mitigate such vulnerabilities and build resilience in the face of industry fluctuations. The community must now navigate the complexities of economic recovery by implementing strategies that encourage diversification, workforce training, and the creation of an environment conducive to entrepreneurship, thereby fostering long-term adaptability and sustainability.



Local Economic Context

Leveraging insights from the 2023 Retail Market Report enhances our understanding of the local economic landscape by analyzing aspects such as local retailers and employment figures. The 2023 Retail Market Report considered a 15-minute drive radius of the City rather than relying solely on city data. This comprehensive analysis offers a more nuanced understanding of the entire local market.

Community Retail Gap/Surplus

Retail gaps highlight areas where consumer demand surpasses the current supply, providing potential opportunities for businesses to address unmet needs. In Figure 40, identified retail gaps in the community include building material stores, limited service eating, and automotive dealers, suggesting potential avenues for strategic business expansion. This gap may be exacerbated by the leakage of demand to nearby markets or commuting patterns, indicating that Rockdale's market alone may not be sufficient for a particular type of business to thrive.

Conversely, retail surpluses indicate an excess of businesses relative to demand, fostering heightened competition and challenges. This is evident in sporting goods stores, automotive parts stores, health and personal care stores, as well as hobby, book, and music stores, as detailed in the 2023 Retail Market Snapshot. It is worth noting that Rockdale may be drawing customers beyond the typical 15-minute drive market for certain services, creating a surplus that might not be sustainable in smaller nearby communities.

A key observation lies not in the over-saturation of grocery stores, as seen in Figure 40, but rather in the community's specific preference for a particular grocer and the desire to introduce healthy competition to existing retailers. This recurrent theme in community input underscores the importance of aligning retail strategies with the specific needs and preferences of the local residents.

Employment

In the 2023 Retail Market Snapshot, a significant disparity became evident when comparing employment figures to the daytime population of 9,932 in 2022 (Figure 41). With fewer job opportunities in Rockdale compared to its resident population, a large number of individuals commute elsewhere daily for work. The daytime population (Figure 42), representing individuals present during business hours, is notably lower than the resident population, indicating a need for improvement in the local job market. Addressing this gap is important to retaining residents and preventing migration for employment opportunities, and enhancing the potential benefits local job prospects for economic vitality and community sustainability. In addition, achieving increased daytime population is critical to addressing some of the gaps identified.

Figure 40. Major Retail Gap/Surplus Areas
(largest gap/surplus listed first)

Major Retail Gap Areas	Major Retail Surplus Areas
Building Materials Stores	General Merchandise Stores
Limited Service Eating (such as fast casual dining)	Sporting Goods Stores
Automotive Dealers	Grocery Stores
Full Service Restaurants	Automotive Parts Stores
Department Stores	Health & Personal Care Stores
Other Motor Vehicles	
Electronic & Appliance	
Clothing Stores	

Source: 2023 Retail Market Snapshot, via Placer.ai STI: Market Outlook Trade Area Demographics

Figure 41. Daytime Population

Daytime Population	Population	Percentage
2020 Rockdale Population	5,323	-
Students	2,989	30.1%
Workplace Employees	2,587	26.0%
Retired/Disabled	1,801	18.1%
Pre-K to 8th Grade	1,745	17.6%
Homemakers	1,600	16.1%
9th to 12th Grade	839	8.4%
Children at Home	533	5.4%
Post Secondary	405	4.1%
Unemployed	272	2.7%
Work at Home	150	1.5%
Total	9,932	

Source: 2023 Retail Market Snapshot

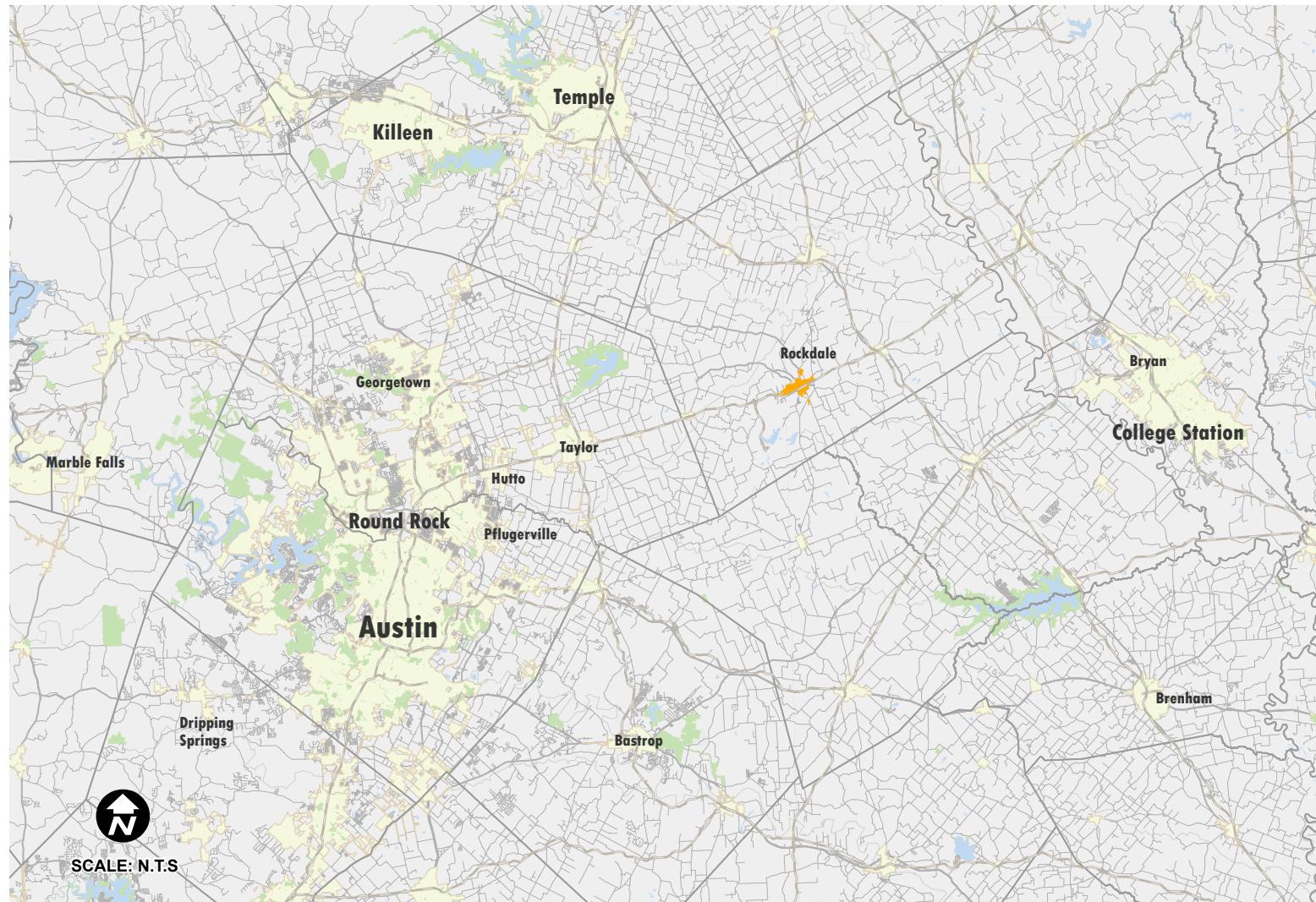
Figure 42. Employment by Occupation

Employment by Occupation (16+ Years Old)	Population	Percentage
Construction	1,085	24.6%
Professional Specialty	686	15.5%
Production & Transportation	610	13.8%
Office Administration	570	12.9%
Sales	378	8.6%
Managerial/Executive	322	7.3%
Building Maintenance	297	6.7%
Food Prep/Serving	182	4.1%
Healthcare Support	92	2.1%
Personal Care	91	2.1%
Protective	61	1.4%
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	44	1.0%
Total Employees	4,418	

Source: 2023 Retail Market Snapshot

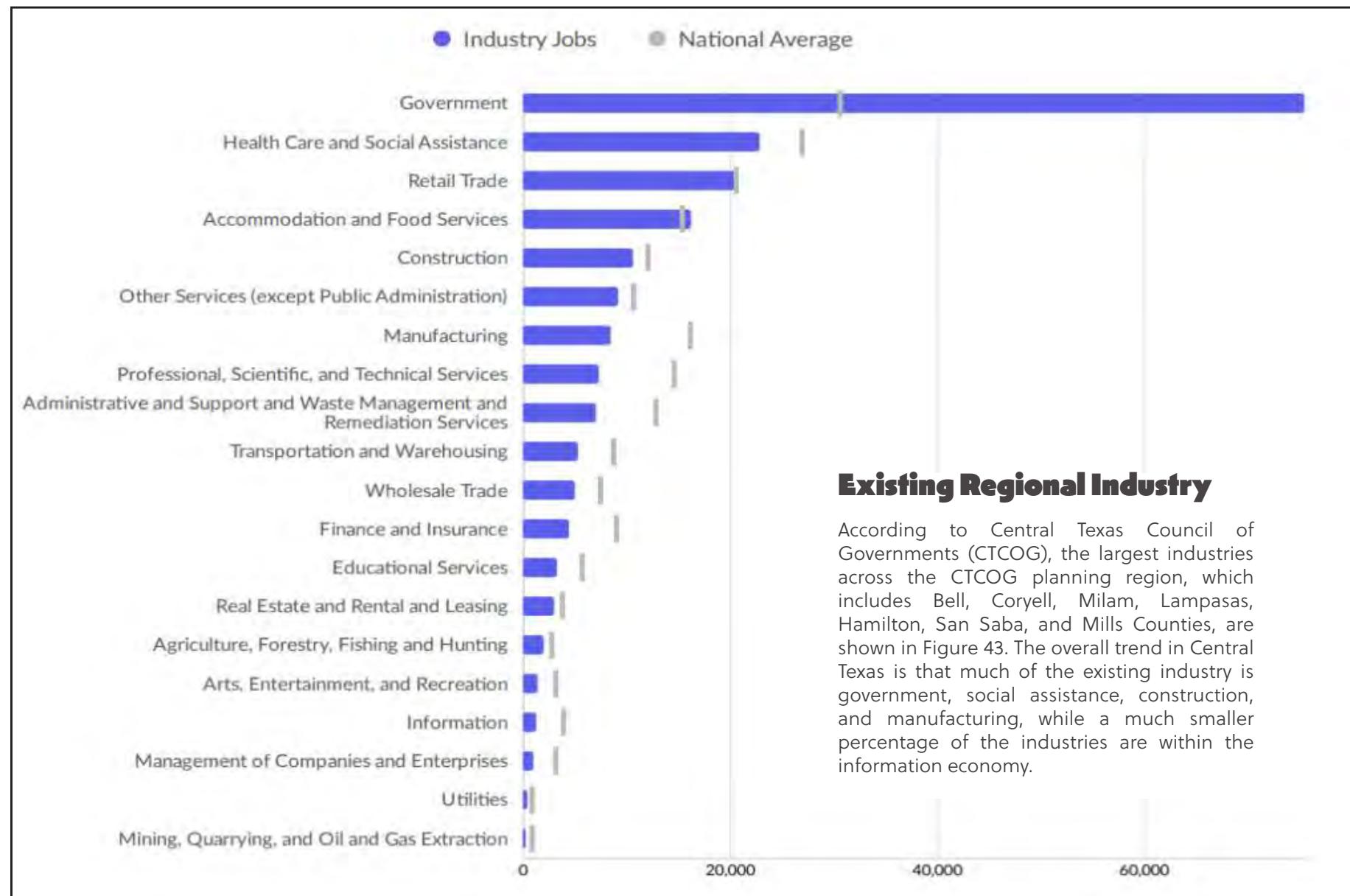
Regional Growth Context

Discussing regional growth is vital as it provides a comprehensive understanding of the interconnected dynamics that shape the economic and social fabric of an area. Regional growth discussions are essential for urban and economic planning, as they shed light on the strengths and challenges of specific industries, employment trends, and infrastructure needs. By engaging in conversations about regional growth, stakeholders can collaboratively identify opportunities for economic development, address potential disparities, and align policies to support sustainable and inclusive growth.



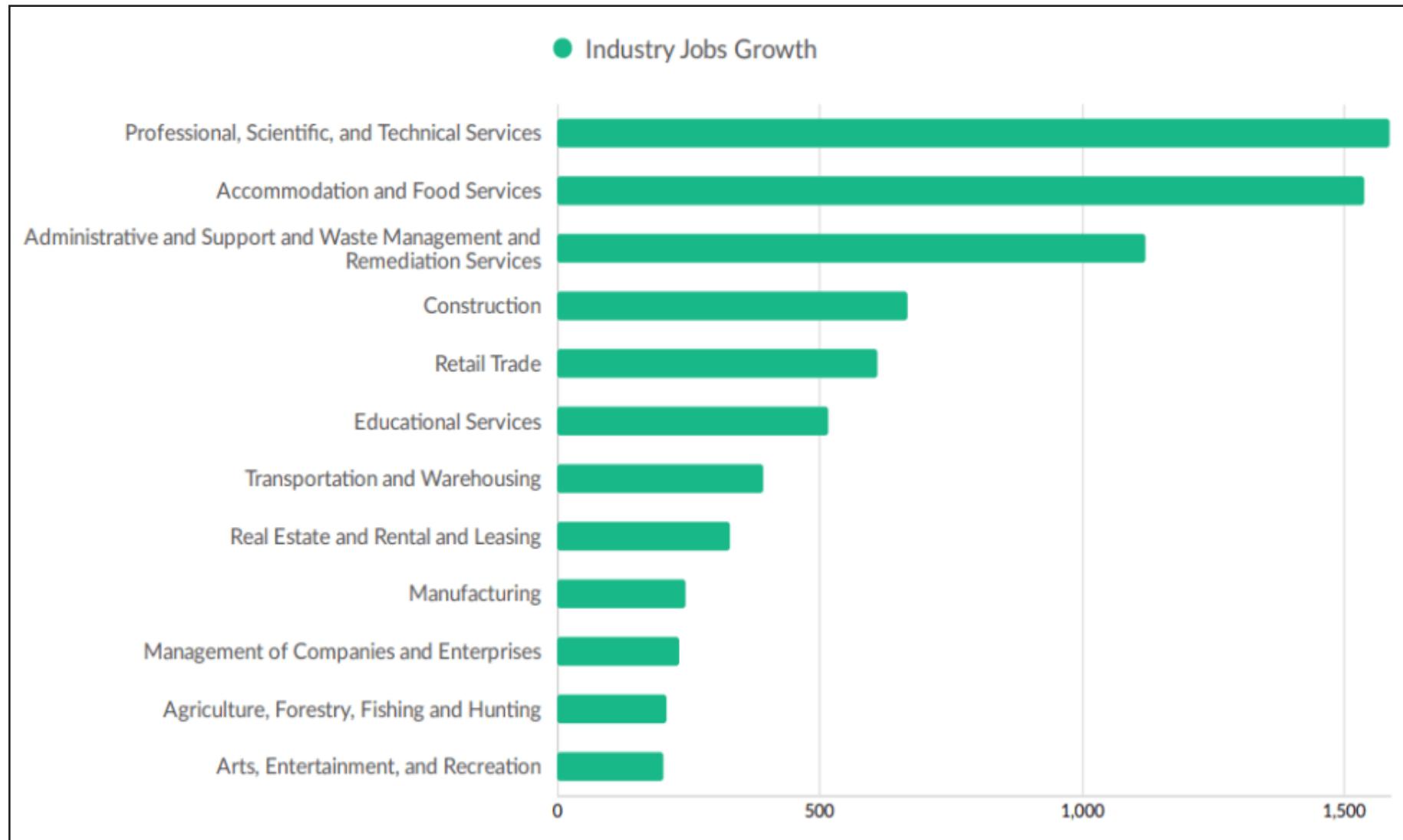
Map 16. Regional Market Context

Figure 43. Existing Regional Industrial Base



Source: CTCOG

Figure 44. Regional Industry Jobs Growth



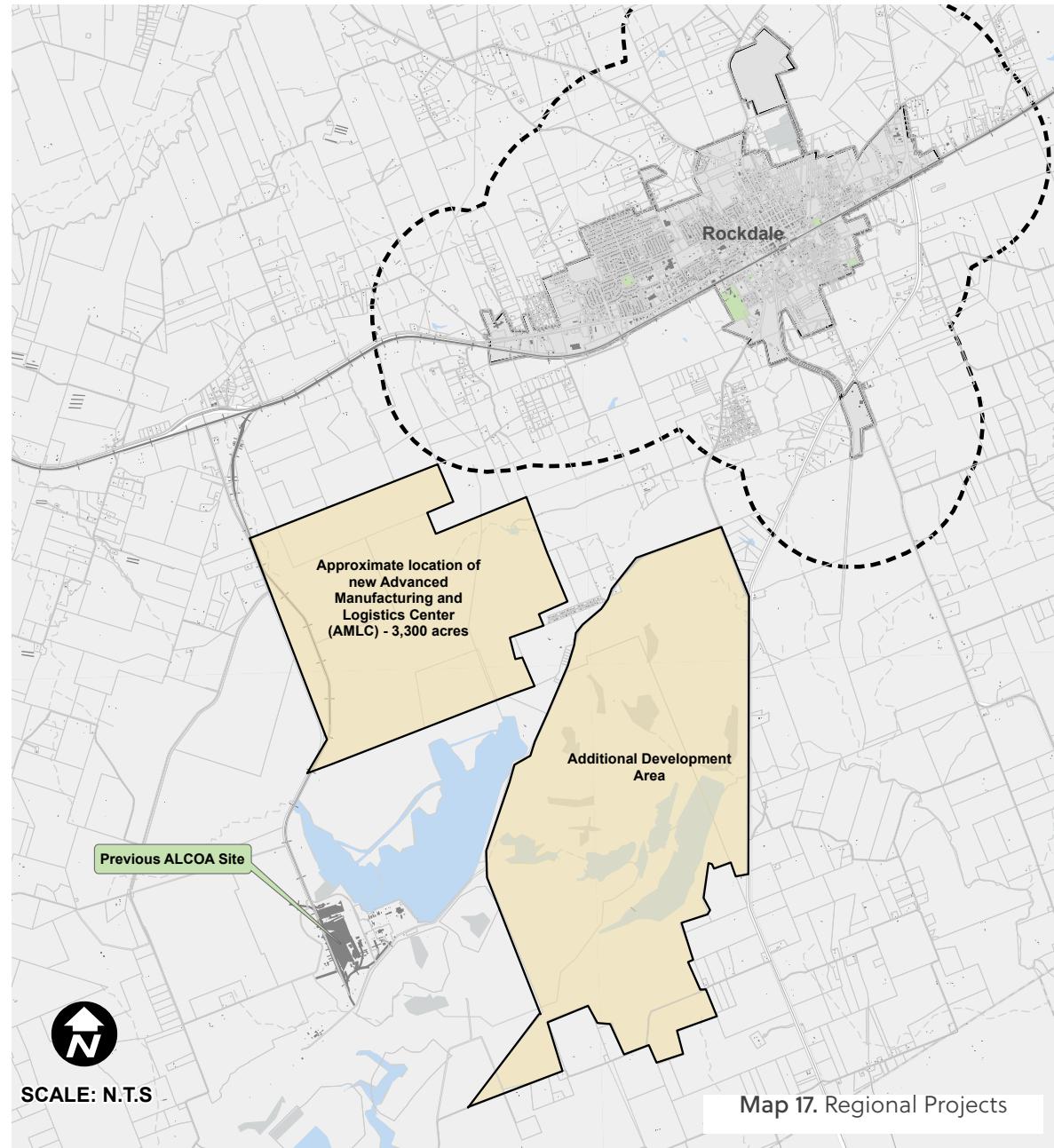
Source: CTCOG

Future Regional Industry

The industries that are driving new growth within the Central Texas Region are primarily those that represent the information economy, such as science and technology. This trend has manifested locally with significant growth in the semiconductor industry, which plays a significant supporting role in many emerging markets such as large-scale data centers, automotive, sensing technologies, and consumer electronics. Manufacturing will still play a large role in the region's economy as many of the inputs required for these industries will likely be sourced in areas with lower land values neighboring Travis and Williamson County.

The Sandow Lakes Ranch (SLR) development located southwest of Rockdale is one of the first indications that this trend is quickly coming to fruition. This major project will bring commercial, residential and industrial uses to the region. However, the initial phases currently under development will be primarily industrial, which means those people will be seeking housing, shopping and services elsewhere until the long-term build out of the project is complete. Rockdale should see this as an opportunity to capitalize on that need and solidify themselves as a cultural and activity center for the region.

The need for a hospital in Rockdale is evident, especially considering the rapid growth occurring in the Central Texas region. With new industries driving growth, the influx of workers and aging existing residents necessitates essential amenities like healthcare facilities. To attract a hospital, Rockdale can strategically leverage its positioning as a cultural and activity center for the region. Urban planning initiatives could focus on zoning regulations conducive to healthcare infrastructure, incentivizing developers to invest in medical facilities. Economic development strategies may involve collaboration with healthcare providers and investors to explore public-private partnerships or tax incentives for hospital construction. By proactively addressing the growing demand for healthcare services, Rockdale can enhance its appeal as a vibrant community within the Central Texas economy.



The Knowledge Economy

As shown in Figure 44, above, the professional, scientific and technical services industry is the fastest growing job category within the region. This allows for opportunities in both upskilling the workforce in Rockdale as well as attracting creative class workers to support the local economy.

Knowledge Workers

Knowledge workers are a subsector of people whose primary skills are their critical thinking, problem solving, and innovation. Jobs may include medical professionals, designers, engineers, accountants, lawyers, scientists and researchers.

With recent lenience in many companies' work from home policies, Rockdale could be a major competitor for pulling these workers away from the surrounding cities. Rockdale offers a lifestyle and price point sought by many, while still being close to major metros and college towns to offer variety. These workers can choose to live almost anywhere and are seeking authenticity, unique culture and character. Revitalization of Rockdale's historic downtown and established neighborhoods provides these elements in a way that cannot be replicated by new developments.

Upskilling

Not everyone can be a knowledge worker; however, a broader knowledge economy can provide opportunities for all workers. A knowledge economy is based on the production of goods and services that stems from the

outputs of the knowledge workers. However, even manufacturing jobs in a knowledge economy are becoming more technical.

Helping existing residents transition with these industry changes will be important. Creating programs and incentives for local residents to upskill their technical abilities and be better prepared for finding a place in the knowledge economy could be highly valuable. With Rockdale's location nearby so many major educational institutions, these types of programs could be relatively achievable.

Additional Considerations

The knowledge economy not only needs workers but also physical locations to do business. The Future Land Use Plan provides locations for office, R&D and light or flex industrial spaces in Rockdale that could house knowledge economy type uses.

Reliable high-speed internet access for all residents will also be necessary to successfully facilitate a knowledge economy.

Seeking to build a knowledge economy in Rockdale could be a way to bring the investment and amenities the community is asking for. However, in the process, the focus must remain on promoting Rockdale's unique values, as expressed in the vision statement and goals from the first chapter of this Plan.



High Tech Manufacturing



Upskilling Institution



Flex Industrial / R&D Building

Economic “Gardening” and Resiliency

Economic gardening is an entrepreneurial and economic development strategy that focuses on nurturing and supporting the growth of local businesses, particularly small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to stimulate economic vitality within a community or region. This concept emerged as a response to the limitations of traditional economic development approaches that often rely heavily on recruiting large corporations or industries from outside the area. Economic gardening seeks to cultivate a robust and sustainable local economy by fostering the development of existing businesses through three main pillars: providing access to information, facilitating networking opportunities, and offering customized support services. Central to economic gardening is the idea of leveraging local resources and expertise to create an environment where homegrown enterprises can flourish. By emphasizing the expansion of local businesses, economic gardening aims to generate job growth, enhance innovation, and contribute to long-term economic resilience. This approach recognizes the value of cultivating a diverse and dynamic business ecosystem that can adapt to changing economic landscapes, ultimately leading to more resilient and prosperous communities. Beyond the economic benefits, economic gardening also carries a soft advantage of encouraging community pride in the success of neighbors. Those resulting businesses often become ambassadors for Rockdale, actively supporting local organizations. Moreover, businesses developed through economic gardening are less likely to relocate to another community due to deep-rooted ties, contributing to the community's stability and resilience.



Implementing an Economic Gardening Strategy

Implementing an economic gardening strategy is crucial for fostering local economic development, but it comes with some challenges that can be overcome. Convincing governing bodies to endorse and invest in this strategy requires time and effort, as it involves a shift from conventional approaches. Identifying and leveraging community assets, a crucial step in economic gardening, demands a comprehensive understanding of local resources, skills, and partnerships. Establishing a collaborative effort among resource partners and creating a system-wide operating agreement necessitate effective coordination and commitment from various entities. Moreover, determining the target audience for services involves careful consideration to ensure that the economic gardening program addresses the specific needs of local businesses poised for growth. Developing a delivery system for services requires finding or cultivating qualified business coaches and technical assistance resources, often challenging in smaller or rural areas. Finally, building a communication system to gain community support is an ongoing process that requires effective public outreach and engagement. Despite these challenges, the importance of economic gardening lies in its potential to generate sustainable economic growth, create local jobs, and build a resilient community. Successfully navigating these challenges involves strategic planning, stakeholder collaboration, and a commitment to nurturing the organic growth of businesses within the region.

Figure 45. Rockdale Community Assets

- Rockdale MDD
- Rockdale Chamber of Commerce
- Rockdale Independent School District
- Temple College
- Rockdale Rotary Club
- Existing Small Business Community



Economic Gardening Strategy Components

1. Secure Support from Local Officials and Stakeholders:

- Engage in proactive dialogue with elected officials and key stakeholders to address concerns and garner support for the economic gardening approach.
- Ensure inclusive decision-making processes by actively involving all relevant parties, avoiding inadvertent exclusion that may lead to future opposition.

2. Identify and Leverage Community Assets:

- Conduct a comprehensive inventory of community and business assets, encompassing human capital, skills, organizational partnerships, and existing support systems.
- Explore cultural and recreational amenities, as well as potential collaborations with external entities, to build a robust foundation for economic gardening.

3. Establish a Collaborative Effort Among Resource Partners:

- Form a steering committee comprising key resource partners to guide and implement the economic gardening project collectively.
- Foster common agreement on project goals and directions, ensuring each partner's commitment and responsibility in the implementation process.

4. Develop a System-Wide Operating Agreement:

- Create a formal or informal operating agreement that addresses critical operational and long-term planning issues, including decision-making, funding mechanisms, service delivery coordination, and program evaluation.
- Define the roles and contributions of each partner, establish accountability measures, and set the groundwork for sustained program success.

5. Determine the Target Audience for Services:

- Assess the entrepreneurial talent in the community, categorizing business into start-ups, lifestyle businesses, and growth-oriented companies.
- Prioritize growth-oriented ventures for maximum economic impact, focusing on companies with one to five years of establishment that demonstrate potential for scalability and market expansion.

6. Create a Delivery System for Targeted Services:

- Develop a comprehensive delivery system by identifying or cultivating qualified business coaches, linking to technical assistance resources, and offering market research services.
- Establish partnerships with other service providers, leveraging local and external resources to support growth-oriented businesses and ensure the success of the economic gardening program.

7. Develop a Communication System for Community Support:

- Conduct public presentations to explain the economic gardening program and its benefits, securing support from local media outlets to amplify outreach.
- Utilize entrepreneurs and the referral network as advocates, delivering the program's message to funders, prospective clients, and the wider community.
- Build a regular reporting function into ongoing activities to maintain transparency and foster sustained community support.

Sustainable Businesses Retention and Attraction

According to the Center for American Progress's 2018 report entitled *The Realities of Economic Development Subsidies*, "incentives are often not crucial to where firms decide to locate, as state and local taxes represent less than 2% of business costs". A more significant portion of a company's costs are related to human resources as "Labor costs can account for as much as 70% of total business costs; this includes employee wages, benefits, payroll, and other related taxes", according to Paycor, a human resource software firm.

These findings suggest that an economic development attraction strategy crafted around improving quality of life factors, workforce education, and local business improvement may be more effective at attracting firms that align with the community's vision and goals that were identified throughout this planning process. Often, local business incentives are "front-loaded," which means that the City must provide its financial backing far ahead of when it will receive any potential benefits from a new company. This can cause significant financial strain on many factors that contribute to the quality of life within a City, such as education, infrastructure maintenance, or other improvement projects.

Ultimately, aggressive, front-loaded incentive strategies may jeopardize the long-term benefits that a City seeks to gain from incentive programs as new workers may choose to live in nearby towns that can offer a higher quality of life. "Back-loaded" economic incentives represent a less significant upfront cost to cities, such as performance-based grants, conditional development fee reductions, workforce training partnerships, shared-use agreements, and, in some cases, support for infrastructure. However, infrastructure improvements and enhancements should be considered carefully within the framework of a utility extension policy that reflects the goals and vision of the community. Back-loaded incentives such as workforce training, infrastructure improvement, and shared-use agreements all have the distinct advantage that they still can provide lasting benefits to the community regardless if the business succeeds or fails.



Incentive & Financial Programs

New Market Tax Credits

The New Market Tax Credit (NMTC) program is a U.S. federal initiative aimed at encouraging private investment in economically distressed communities. Established by the Community Renewal Tax Relief Act of 2000, the program is designed to stimulate economic and community development by providing tax incentives to investors who support projects in low-income areas.

EB-5

The EB-5 program, officially known as the Employment-Based Fifth Preference Immigrant Investor Program, is a United States immigration program that provides a path for foreign nationals to obtain U.S. green cards by making a qualifying investment in a new commercial enterprise that creates jobs. The program is administered by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

EDA Grants

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants in Texas aim to support economic development initiatives and projects that enhance regional economic competitiveness, foster job creation, and promote innovation. EDA grants are typically provided to local and regional organizations, including governments, nonprofits, and educational institutions, to help stimulate economic growth and resilience.

SBA Loan Guarantee

The Small Business Administration (SBA) loan guarantee programs aim to facilitate access to financing for small businesses that may face challenges in obtaining traditional loans. The SBA doesn't directly lend money to businesses but provides a guarantee to approved lenders, reducing the risk for these lenders and making it easier for small businesses to secure loans.

Rockdale Joint Incentive Policy

This municipal program creates a framework in which the City of Rockdale can promote economic development and stimulate business and commercial activity within the City. Incentives include, but are not limited to, ad valorem taxes, sales tax grants, and fee reductions.

Community Development Corporations

Community Development Corporations (CDCs) play a significant role in financing and supporting community development initiatives in Texas, as well as throughout the United States. CDC financing in Texas involves various programs and initiatives aimed at revitalizing neighborhoods, creating affordable housing, promoting economic development, and addressing community needs.

Texas Small Business Credit Initiative (TSBCI)

TSBCI aims to support state programs that provide resources for small business growth and job creation. In a municipal context, this initiative can be utilized to assist local small businesses, especially those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, contributing to the economic resilience of the community.

Skill Development Fund

Municipalities can collaborate with public community and technical colleges through this program to provide customized job training for local businesses. This ensures that the local workforce is equipped with the skills needed by businesses operating within the City, promoting employment and economic growth.

Opportunity Zones

The Opportunity Zone Program, is a federal effort to boost economic development and jobs in struggling U.S. communities. It gives investors a tax break when they invest in certain areas, known as Opportunity Zones. In Texas, 628 areas in 145 counties are Opportunity Zones out of a total of 5,265 areas. To pick these zones, the U.S. Dept. of Treasury looked at factors like high unemployment, low population, and economic challenges, such as natural disasters. Rockdale is included within the opportunity zone geographies.

US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Grants

The USDA Rural Development (USDA-RD) programs, USDA-RD Business Programs and USDA-RD Community Facilities Programs, provide loans and grants to upgrade the infrastructure in rural communities, aiming to bring new jobs, clean water and fuel, and reliable electricity to people.

Financing and Development Strategies

Incorporate Zoning Flexibility for Small Business

Incorporate provisions for modest commercial areas, like incubators, into the City's land use plan to cater to the needs of small local businesses. A small business incubator is a facility designed to offer affordable space and shared business support services to nascent businesses, aiming to boost the entrepreneurial environment and job creation in the community.

Make Space for Small Business

Cities can require development projects to reserve a portion of their first floorspace for small storefronts and for locally owned businesses. This would be an ideal scenario for future buildings developed or redeveloped in the City's mixed-use place types. It is also a worthwhile exercise to regularly review the unified development code and other applicable City ordinances to make sure that there are not unnecessary or complex rules that are hindering small business or preventing small spaces or vendors from operating.

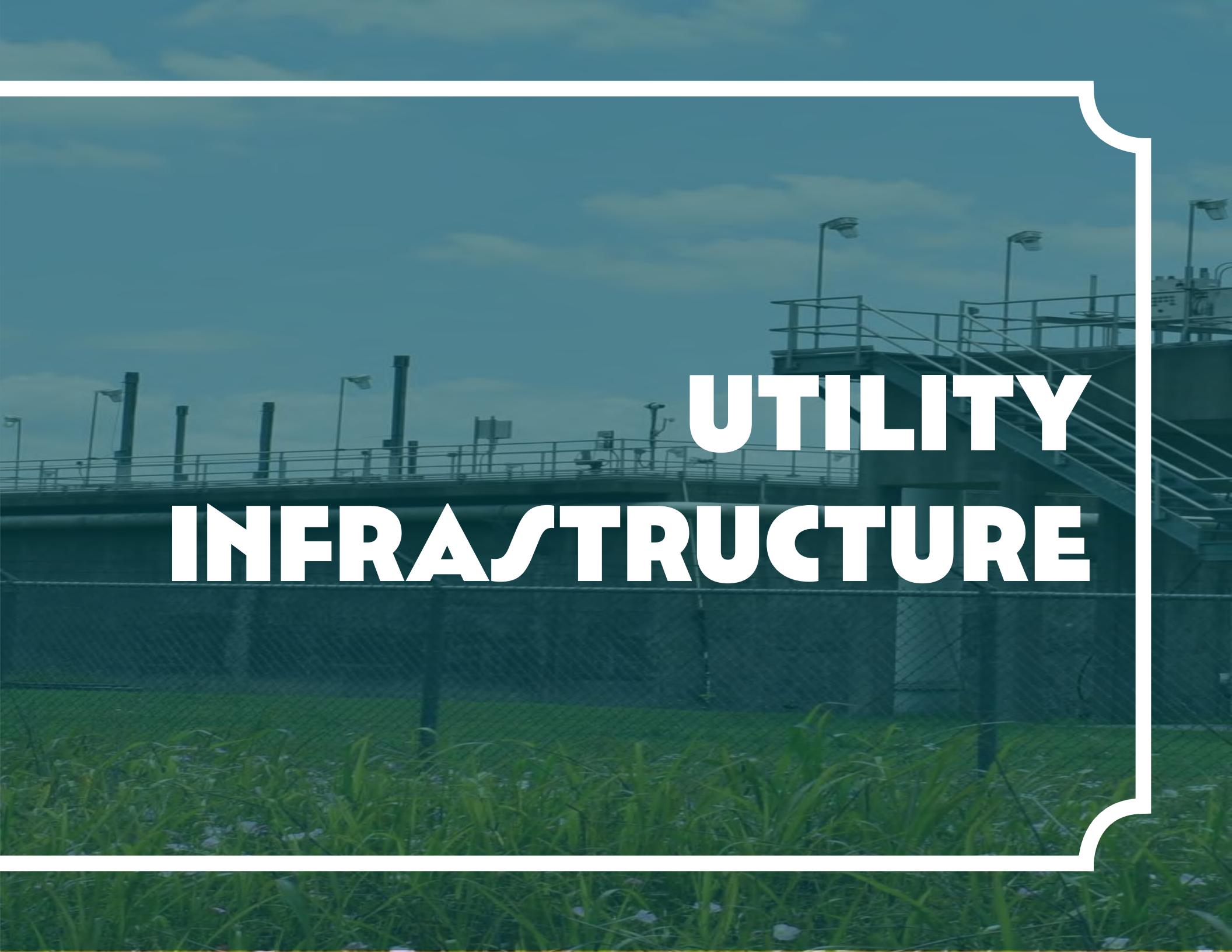
Restructure Rockdale's Economic Incentives

Economic development incentive programs disproportionately favor big companies. Revisit the MDD's strategic plan to incorporate initiatives to help grow local businesses in Rockdale.

Expand Access to Capital

To expand local financing for small businesses, the City can implement initiatives such as establishing city-sponsored loan programs with favorable terms, collaborating with local financial institutions to create specialized small business financing products, and allocating funds for seed financing programs targeted at startups. The City can also support microfinance initiatives, provide financial education and counseling services, and incentivize private investment through tax credits. Creating a municipal investment fund, streamlining permitting processes for financial institutions, and fostering public-private partnerships are additional strategies that can contribute to the expansion of local financing for small businesses.



A large industrial facility, likely a chemical plant or refinery, is visible through a chain-link fence. The facility features several tall, dark smokestacks and a complex network of pipes and walkways. The sky is overcast with white clouds. In the foreground, there is a field of tall, green grass.

UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Introduction

The Infrastructure and Utilities chapter of the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Rockdale serves as a document guiding the development, maintenance, and enhancement of essential systems that underpin Rockdale's functionality and vitality. This chapter delineates strategies, policies, and initiatives aimed at ensuring the efficient provision of infrastructure services and utilities to meet the present and future demands of residents, businesses, and visitors. Infrastructure encompasses a broad spectrum of physical assets and facilities that facilitate economic activity, public health, safety, and overall quality of life. These encompass water supply and wastewater systems, and public facilities like community centers and emergency services.

As the City of Rockdale undergoes continued growth and transformation, strategic planning and investment in resilient, sustainable, and equitable infrastructure and utilities are imperative. This chapter addresses critical issues including infrastructure maintenance and modernization, expansion to accommodate growth, environmental sustainability, and ensuring equitable access to services across all neighborhoods and demographic groups.

Through collaborative efforts with stakeholders, thorough analysis of data and trends, and incorporation of best practices, this chapter outlines a visionary approach to the future of Rockdale's infrastructure and utilities. By implementing the strategies laid out herein, Rockdale can ensure that our community remains dynamic, competitive, and inclusive, with infrastructure and utilities that adequately serve the needs of all residents both now and in the years ahead.



WHAT WE'VE HEARD: Utilities and Infrastructure

“Plan conservatively and protect infrastructure with managed growth.”
- Community Member

“Water Quality and reliability.”
- Community Member

“Execute on water infrastructure improvements.”
- Community Member

“The water system and internet systems need major upgrades.”
- Community Member

“Availability of safe drinking water at a reasonable price.”
- Community Member

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Infrastructure condition was the #2 response when asked what the City of Rockdale should prioritize improving.
- Water quality is a major topic and top of mind for Rockdale residents and they are anxious to see the water line projects completed.
- Utility infrastructure will need to keep ahead of future growth, both in terms of proactive maintenance and upgrades of existing facilities as well as new service extensions.
- Internet service will be an important aspect of Rockdale's ability to keep up with future opportunities.

Approach to Infrastructure & Facilities Planning

There are some unifying themes across all infrastructure systems that create an overall approach to tackling the provision of infrastructure in Rockdale.

Multipurpose Facilities

Infrastructure and facilities can serve to support or meet multiple needs through careful coordination. Infrastructure alignments and easements can serve multiple forms of infrastructure as well as provide amenities that enhance quality of life for residents. If such plans are coordinated well, multipurpose facilities can help Rockdale efficiently make progress on a variety of goals as well as demonstrate fiscal prudence to residents. Some examples are:

- Sewer interceptors generally follow the lowest points in a watershed. These areas tend to be floodplain areas that benefit from greenspace preservation and drainage easements, and also align with key trail corridors or routes. When acquiring easements or fee-simple ownership, Rockdale can seek to address all needs simultaneously.
- Some infrastructure types may change character substantially based on long-range needs. For example, a 20-foot easement may be sufficient for an initial sewer line, but that alignment may eventually call for a much larger sewer interceptor that requires a larger easement. Rockdale should acquire easements for the ultimate infrastructure need, not just the present need, as well as

size easements to serve multiple purposes.

- Parkland dedications should include underlying permissions to accommodate utility infrastructure, especially along alignments consistent with water and sewer infrastructure.
- Facilities, like school sites, can play important roles as trail heads and their placement adjacent to parks can allow for shared benefits, such as parks that can serve both the school and the community.

Utility Planning Best Practices

Future updates to utility plans should include a risk-based assessment of all water pipelines, sewer mains, lift stations, pump stations, wells, and storage tanks to assist in the prioritization of recommended operations and maintenance improvements. The assessment should consider the condition and criticality of existing water and sewer system infrastructure, using a scoring system to provide an analytical and quantitative method to evaluate the condition and criticality of each facility, leading to a rehabilitation capital improvements plan for each system.

Because development demands are ever evolving and changing, Rockdale should develop and continually update the water and sewer system models, evaluate the CIP annually to see if critical infrastructure needs require a shift in the schedule, and engage modeling as early



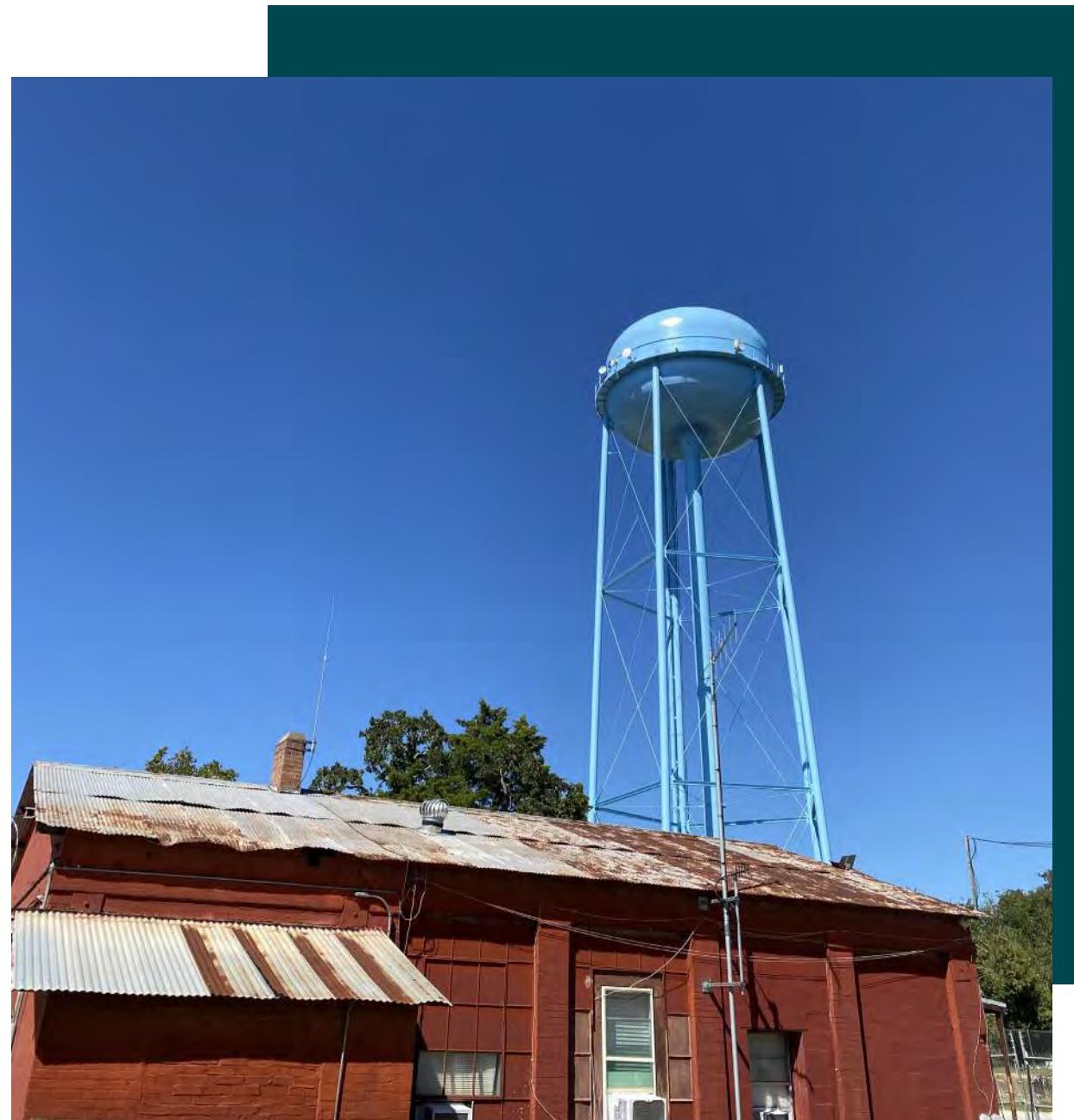
Dual-purpose facilities can be utilized by combining utility easements or drainage channels with trails and open space. This can enhance the quality of life for residents by creating more green spaces and trail connections within the City.

as possible in the development review and feasibility process. For example, timing and commitments to capacity can be addressed in early Development Agreements to support appropriate infrastructure investments.

With growth accelerating, timing for planning and design of facilities should exceed the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) minimums to avoid compliance issues, improve overall system performance and lower risk. For example, the "75/90 rule" for planning and construction of wastewater treatment plant capacity may not be sufficient, given timelines to achieve necessary permits and the potential future rates of growth in Central Texas.

This same philosophy applies to drainage, as Rockdale has the opportunity to be proactive, where so many other cities have been reactive and ultimately been forced to undertake expensive stormwater retrofits. Rockdale has the opportunity now to avoid that future for itself.

In a related manner, the design, timing and placement of developments can drastically affect short- and long-term operations and maintenance, as well as capital investment. Rockdale has an opportunity to advocate for compact, interconnected development patterns that foster efficiency and high fiscal performance in terms of both tax revenue per acre and number of connections per linear foot of infrastructure. More connections per linear foot results in more utility fees collected without having to add more infrastructure, and ultimately can help lower overall utility rates.



The “One Water” Approach

The idea of an integrated systems approach to water is not new. Its full-scale implementation, however, has yet to be realized. All around the country, and particularly within areas that frequently encounter drought and flood risks, there are increasing examples of integrated and inclusive approaches to water resource management that touch multiple infrastructure systems. These approaches exemplify the view that all water has value and should be managed in a sustainable, inclusive, integrated way. From nature to tap, from farms to food, from toilet back to river, there is just one water cycle. While nature provides water, it takes pipes, pumps, reservoirs, treatment plants, and people working around the clock to deliver clean water to homes and businesses, and to remove and treat wastewater so it can safely be reused or returned to the environment. Public facilities and utilities serve as opportunities to demonstrate design that recognizes One Water in a similar way that a private development project might, as well as providing the opportunity for community education.

Central Texas is an area that experiences significant extremes when it comes to water. Recurringly, cities and service providers must grapple with both how communities will be provided water in the peak of drought season and what to do with too much water in the peak of rainy season. The One Water way of thinking can help communities address and mitigate these concerns.

A One Water approach can take many different forms, but has some unifying characteristics as shown in Figure 46.

Figure 46. Elements of a One Water Approach



All Water has Value

All water can and must be managed carefully to maximize its benefits.

Achieving Multiple Benefits

Often, resources available do not match the level of investment needed to achieve a sustainable water future. Projects should seek to optimize costs, benefits and priorities across economic, social and ecosystem needs, bringing the maximum benefits to a community for the lowest investment.

Systems Approach

Water is complex and interdependent. Tackling problems based on the complete life cycle of water, rather than limited to one piece of the equation, allows identification and advancement of more effective and lasting solutions.



Watershed-scale Thinking and Action

Water does not respect geo-political boundaries. It is within the context of a natural watershed that communities have either too much water, too little water or poor quality water. Watershed-level management brings together regional partners for collaborative action and greater impacts.



Right-sized solutions

The scale of interventions should be proportional to achieving the desired outcome. For example, water quality can be addressed at a hyperlocal scale based on particular issues, but the root of the problem may require watershed-wide action.



Partnerships are Essential for Progress

All sectors are part of the solution, not just public entities and utility providers. No single stakeholder has the control, responsibility, expertise, political support or legal authority to manage issues like pollution, climate impacts or water consumption rates.



Inclusion and Engagement of All

When all people have a voice in ensuring a water-secure future, best results are achieved. Low-income people and communities of color are often disproportionately impacted by environmental justice and equity issues, including clean, safe, and reliable water.

Water and Wastewater Systems

Existing Systems - Water

The City of Rockdale owns and operates both water distribution and wastewater collection systems providing service to approximately 2,200 customers. The systems consist of a network of underground pipelines and above grade facilities including groundwater wells, elevated storage tanks, pump and lift stations, and treatment plants. The extensive infrastructure detailed below is required to provide water and wastewater service to City of Rockdale customers.

The existing water distribution system is shown in Map 18. The distribution system consists of two pressure planes, the High-Pressure Plane and the Low-Pressure Plane. The Low-Pressure Plane is shown in Figure 47 and includes three groundwater wells and the Mills Street Water Treatment Plant, which includes treatment facilities, a pump station, a ground storage tank, and an elevated storage tank. The High-Pressure Plane is shown on Figure 48 and includes two groundwater wells, the Texas Street treatment facilities, pump station, and ground storage tank, and the Allday Elevated Storage Tank. An accounting of the water distribution system pipelines and facilities are shown in the tables of Figures 49 and 50, respectively. In all, the City maintains approximately 320,000 linear feet (60 miles) of distribution pipeline, with 1.54 million gallons (MG) of storage and nearly 8,000 gallons per minute (gpm) of total pumping capacity. The total groundwater well production capacity is approximately 2,500 gpm. The total water treatment plant capacity is just over 5 million gallons per day (MGD).



Rockdale Water Treatment Facility

DRAFT FIGURE 1
CITY OF ROCKDALE
EXISTING WATER SYSTEM

LEGEND

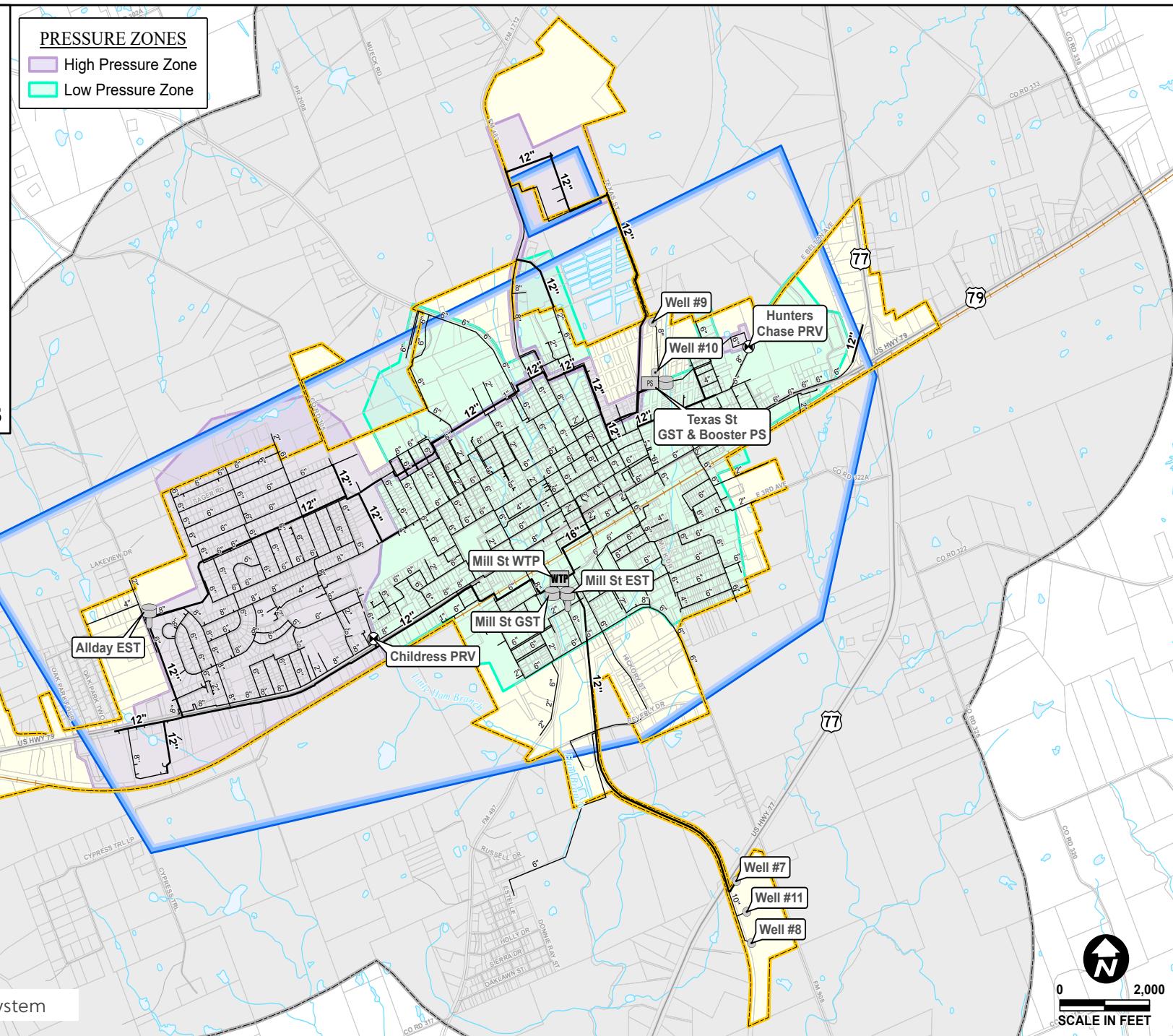
- Road
- Railroad
- Stream
- Water Body
- Parcel
- City Limits
- ETJ
- Water CCN
- Water Treatment Plant
- Pump Station
- Elevated Storage Tank
- Ground Storage Tank
- Pressure Reducing Valve
- Well
- 10" and Smaller Water Line
- 12" and Larger Water Line



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NICHOLS

PRESSURE ZONES

- High Pressure Zone
- Low Pressure Zone



Map 18. Rockdale Water System

Figure 47. Low-Pressure Plan Schematic

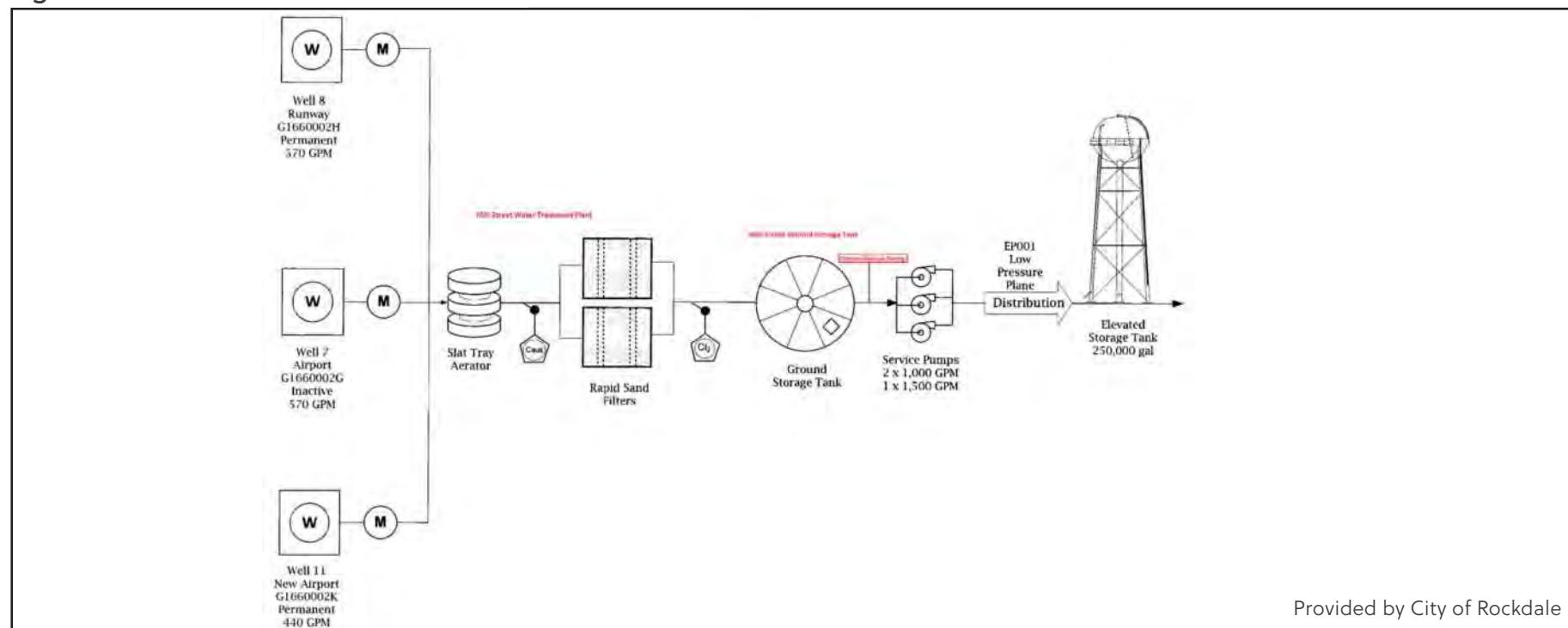


Figure 48. High-Pressure Plan Schematic

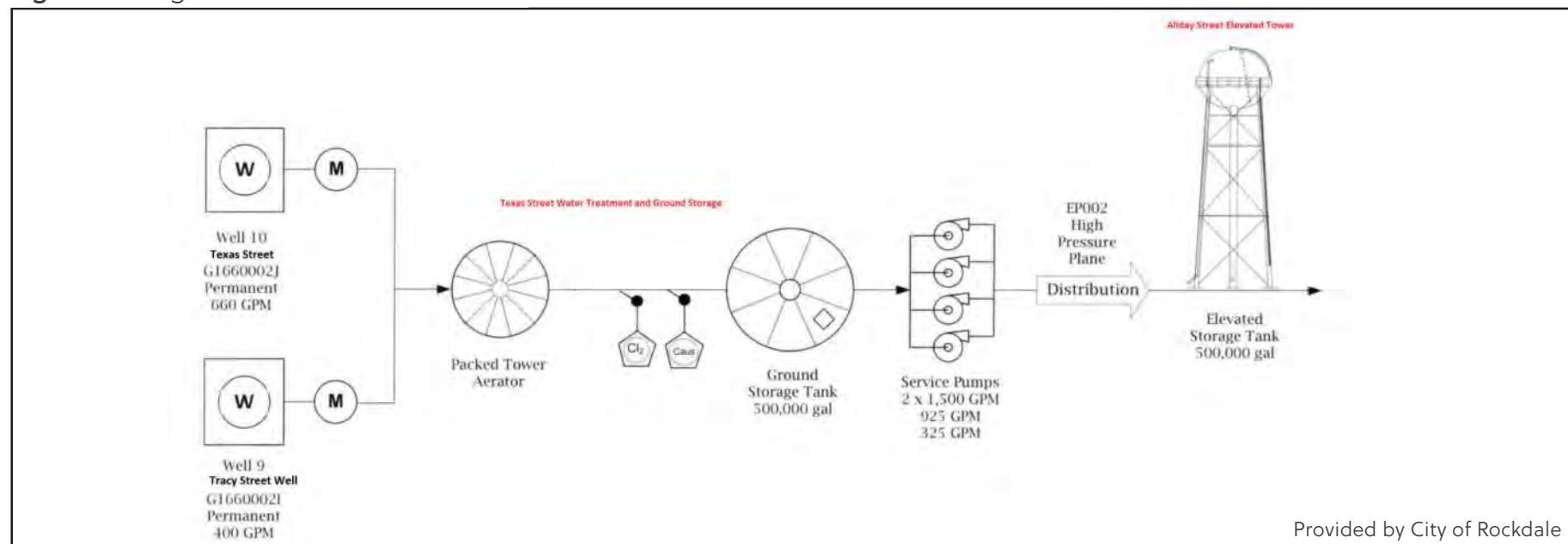


Figure 49. Water Pipelines Table

Diameter (inch)	Length (linear feet)	Percent of System
1	2,317.4	0.7%
1.25	267.2	0.1%
2	33,278.9	10.5%
2.5	481.0	0.2%
4	5,968.6	1.9%
6	180,322.3	56.7%
8	44,287.0	13.9%
10	1,361.7	0.4%
12	47,164.4	14.8%
16	2,480.2	0.8%
Unknown	31.6	0.0%
Total	317,960.3	100.0%

Figure 50. Water Facilities Table

Facility Name	Type	Address	Capacity	Unit
Mill Street	WTP	301 Mill Street	3.66	MGD
	EST	301 Mill Street	0.25	MG
	GST	301 Mill Street	0.29	MG
	PS	301 Mill Street	1,000	gpm
		301 Mill Street	1,000	gpm
		301 Mill Street	1,500	gpm
Texas Street	WTP	710 Texas Street	1.58	MGD
	PS	GST	0.50	MG
		710 Texas Street	325	gpm
		710 Texas Street	925	gpm
		710 Texas Street	1,500	gpm
	EST	710 Texas Street	1,500	gpm
		534 Allday Street	0.50	MG
Well 7	Well	2443 US 77	420	gpm
Well 8	Well	2443 US 77	570	gpm
Well 9	Well	710 Texas Street	400	gpm
Well 10	Well	710 Texas Street	660	gpm
Well 11	Well	2443 US 77	440	gpm

Existing Systems - Wastewater

The existing wastewater collection system is shown in Map 19. The collection system consists of one wastewater basin served by one wastewater treatment plant and three lift stations. The City's wastewater treatment plant, located on Beverly Street, is permitted to treat up to 1.25 MGD. In addition, the City has about 220,000 linear feet (about 42 miles) of wastewater lines ranging in size from 4 to 21 inches. An accounting of the wastewater collection system pipelines and facilities are shown in the tables of Figures 51 and 52, respectively.

Figure 51. Wastewater Pipelines Table

Diameter (inch)	Length (linear feet)	Percent of System
4	2,700.1	1.2%
6	161,657.9	73.4%
8	36,973.7	16.8%
10	5,749.8	2.6%
12	8,159.7	3.7%
15	1,058.7	0.5%
18	2,023.0	0.9%
21	1,863.1	0.8%
Total	220,185.9	100.0%

Figure 52. Wastewater Facilities Table

Facility Name	Type	Address	Capacity	Unit
WWTP	WWTP	290 Beverly Drive	1.25	MGD
East Cameron	LS	100 CR 306	-	-
West Cameron	LS	1601 E Cameron Avenue	-	-
Private	LS	FM 908 and Cordova Drive	-	-

DRAFT FIGURE 2

CITY OF ROCKDALE

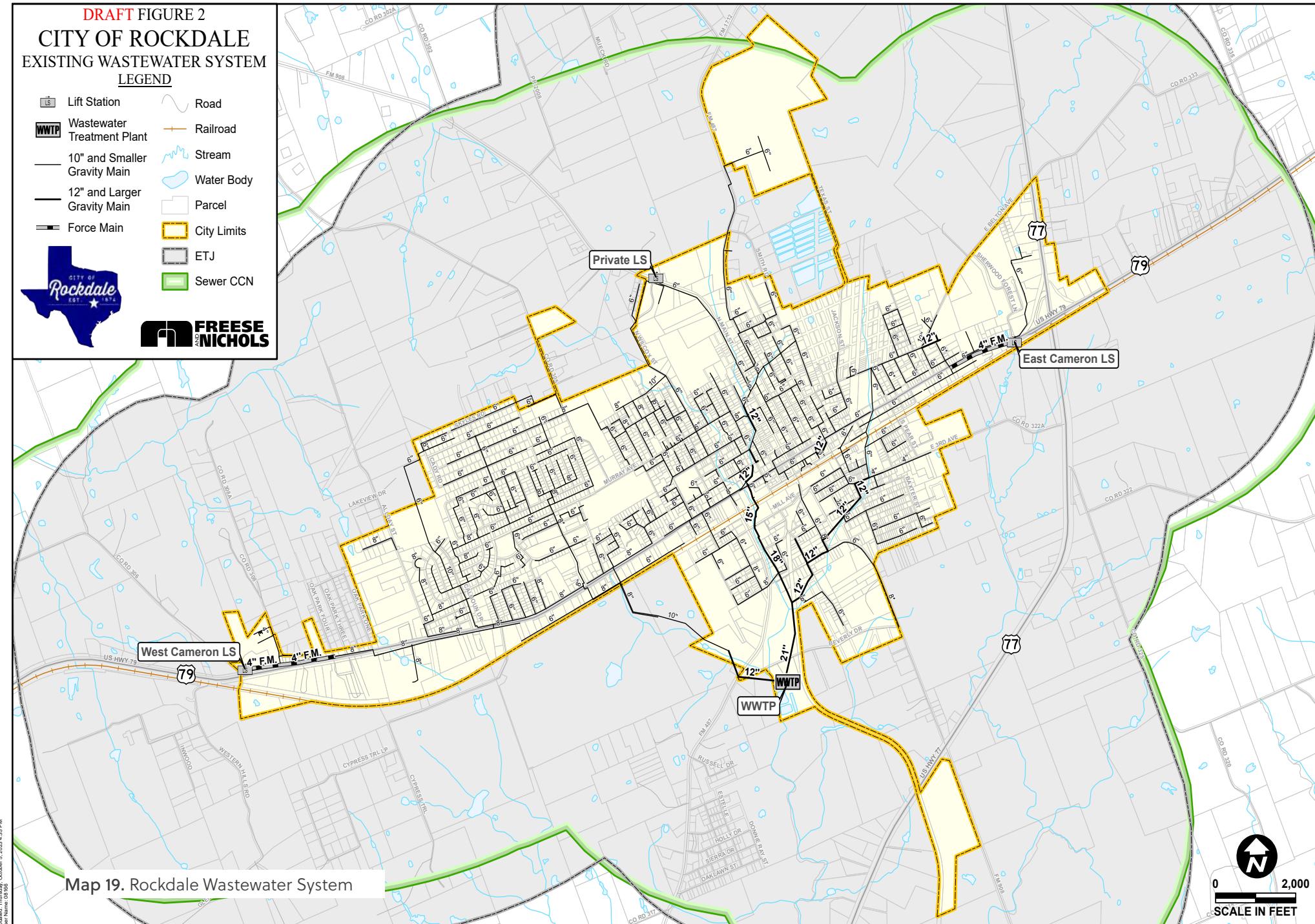
EXISTING WASTEWATER SYSTEM

LEGEND

- LS Lift Station
- Road
- WWTW Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Railroad
- 10" and Smaller Gravity Main Stream
- 12" and Larger Gravity Main Water Body
- Force Main Parcel
- City Limits ETJ
- Sewer CCN



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NICHOLS

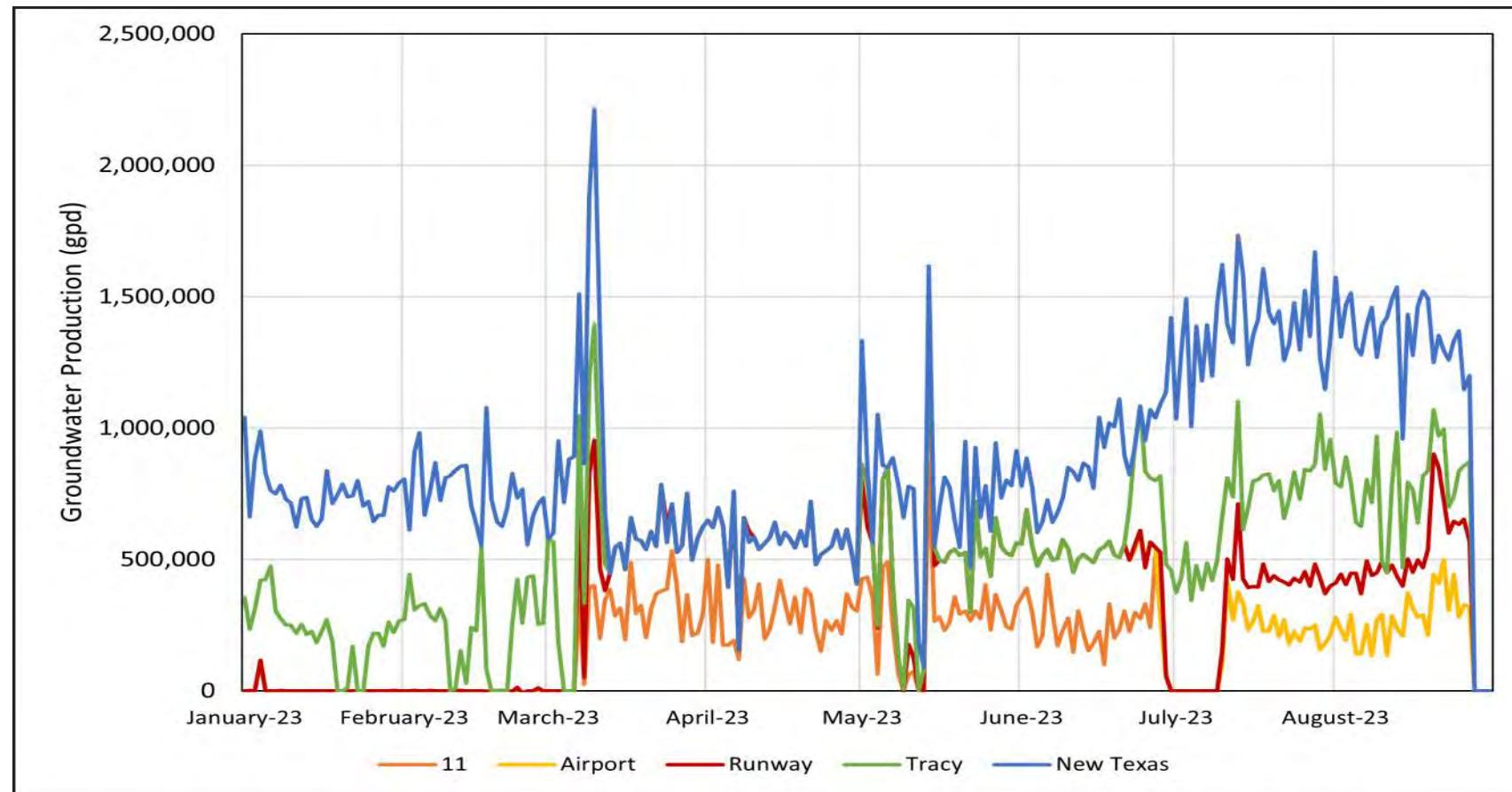


Historical Water Demands and Wastewater Flow

Reviewing historical demands and flows helps provides insight into system operations and to select planning criteria for use in projecting future water demands and wastewater flows. The City provided historical data for groundwater well production, water billing meter consumption, and wastewater treatment plant effluent flow.

Groundwater well production data was provided from January 2023 through August 2023 as shown in Figure 53. The total average production over the period is 0.9 MGD with a maximum day of 2.2 MGD compared to the total rated capacity of approximately 3.6 MGD for the five groundwater wells.

Figure 53. Groundwater Production – 2023



Monthly Use

The City of Rockdale provided a summary of billed water consumption for May through July of 2023, as summarized in Figure 54. The total number of active water customers is 2,186 as of July 2023. The average consumption per connection is approximately 270 gallons per day (gpd).

Monthly effluent flow from the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant was provided from July 2022 through July 2023 as shown in Figure 55. The average wastewater flow over the period is approximately 0.4 MGD with a maximum daily flow of 1.4 MGD compared to the annual average rated capacity of 1.25 MGD.

The received water billing data also noted wastewater customers, though wastewater flow is not directly recorded by customer. Additionally, the count of wastewater customers differs slightly from water customers, primarily due to water customers with private septic systems that are not provided City sewer service. The observed wastewater treatment plant flow is compared to the billed wastewater customers in Figure 56. The total number of active wastewater customers is 2,067 as of July 2023. The resulting average flow per connection is approximately 200 gallons per day.

Figure 54. Billed Water Consumption – May to July 2023

Month	Active Water Connections	Monthly Consumption (hundred gallons)	Consumption per Connection (gallons per day)
May	2,170	134,990	207.4
June	2,183	182,249	269.3
July	2,186	230,918	340.8
Average	2,180	182,719	270.4

Figure 55. Wastewater Treatment Plant Flow – July 2022 to July 2023

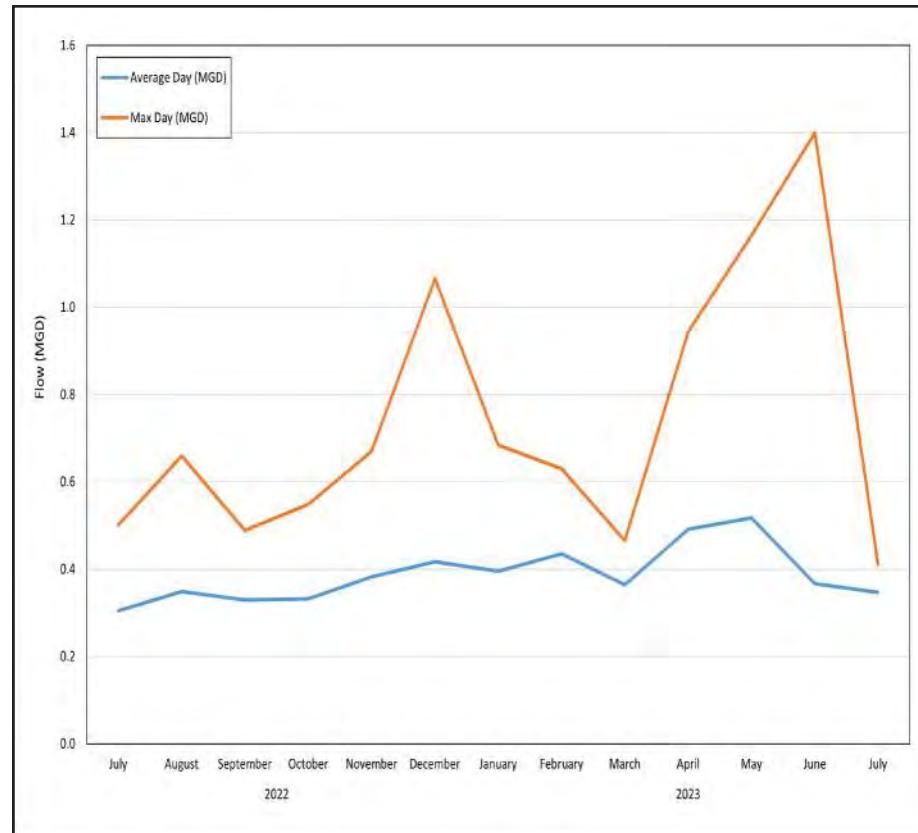


Figure 56. Flow per Wastewater Account

Month	Active Wastewater Connections	Average Day Flow (MGD)	Flow per Connection (gpd)
May	2,064	0.52	251.0
June	2,066	0.37	177.6
July	2,067	0.35	167.9
Average	2,066	0.41	198.8

Water Demand and Wastewater Flow Projections

As discussed previously, the City of Rockdale has experienced a slightly negative growth rate over the last decade but has significant growth potential over the next several decades. To account for the wide range of potential future growth, the growth scenarios identified in the Land Use and Development chapter were utilized to evaluate potential future water and wastewater conditions. Projected growth rates are presented as compound annual growth rates (CAGR) for each growth scenario. However, to project future water demand and wastewater flow, the identified growth rates are applied to the total 2023 water and wastewater customers and projected through all planning periods as shown in Figure 57. To account for the difference between water and wastewater customers, it is assumed that all existing non-wastewater customers do not connect to the wastewater system in the future, but all future customers are provided both water and wastewater service. The count of existing water and wastewater customers are 2,186 and 2,067, respectively. The low (1.5%) growth scenario would increase the total connections by approximately 50% through 2050 while the high (6.2%) growth scenario would result in an approximately 600% increase by the 2050 planning horizon.

Figure 57. Projected Future Water and Wastewater Connections

Planning Period	Growth Scenario (CAGR)			
	1.5%	2.5%	4.0%	6.2%
Water Connections				
2023	2,186	2,186	2,186	2,186
2025	2,252	2,297	2,364	2,465
2030	2,426	2,598	2,877	3,331
2035	2,614	2,940	3,500	4,499
2040	2,816	3,326	4,258	6,078
2045	3,033	3,763	5,181	8,211
2050	3,268	4,258	6,303	11,092
Wastewater Connections				
2023	2,067	2,067	2,067	2,067
2025	2,133	2,178	2,245	2,346
2030	2,307	2,479	2,758	3,212
2035	2,495	2,821	3,381	4,380
2040	2,697	3,207	4,139	5,959
2045	2,914	3,644	5,062	8,092
2050	3,149	4,139	6,184	10,973

Water Auditing

Soils with high plasticity indexes in Central Texas make Rockdale's system more susceptible to pipe breaks and leaks, which can decrease efficiency throughout the entire system, generating unnecessary costs for both the utility provider and end user.

The Texas Water Development Board released a report titled *Water Loss Audit Manual for Texas Utilities*¹ in 2008, which states the following:

- For utilities to operate efficiently, they should use recommended practices to monitor and control water and revenue losses. These include active leakage control, as well as metering production flows and customer consumption.
- Real losses cause a portion of the treated, pressurized water to be lost from the distribution system before customer use. In effect, the utility treats a greater volume than its customer base requires, hence incurring excess production costs.
- All water utilities incur leakage losses; only the amount varies. Leaks and visible main breaks occur for a variety of reasons, including poor installation workmanship or materials, corrosion, external forces, environmental extremes, and other causes. Leakage is always occurring, and only grows worse if left unchecked. Therefore, all water utilities

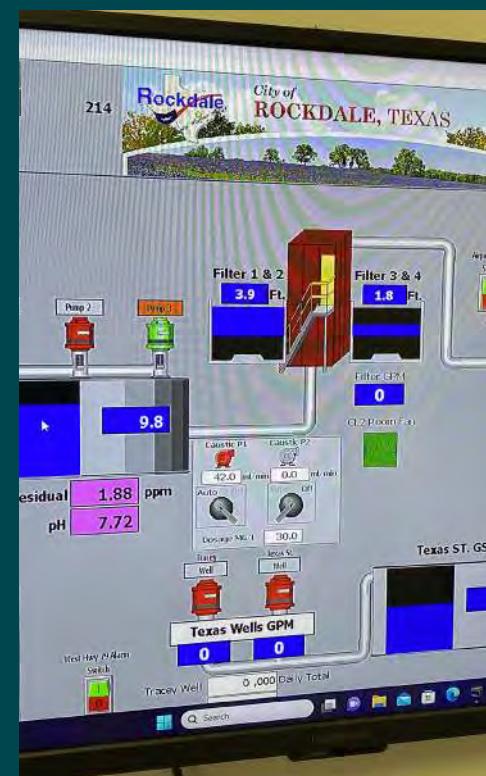
¹ Water Loss Audit Manual for Texas Utilities, by Mark Mathis, George Kunkel, P.E., and Andrew Chastain Howley for the Texas Water Development Board, Report 367, March 2008. https://www.twdtexas.gov/publications/brochures/conservation/doc/WaterLossManual_2008.pdf

should provide system maintenance and upkeep functions that include appropriate components of leakage management via active leakage control, timely quality repair, water main rehabilitation, and pressure management.

- With decreasing water availability and rising costs for water treatment or purchase, auditing water supplies is essential for water utilities to ensure efficiency in their operations and preserve water resources.

Water auditing and loss control are emerging as significant conservation measures because as utilities minimize water loss, they increase their efficiency and reduce the need to search for additional water sources. For utilities to effectively identify losses in their systems, they must first employ water auditing as a routine business practice, using a method that has clearly defined terms and meaningful performance indicators. In recognizing the need for such a reliable method, the Water Loss Control Committee of the American Water Works Association adopted (AWWA, 2003) the method published by the International Water Association's Water Loss Task Force (Alegre and others, 2000). This methodology not only assists utilities in identifying where their losses are occurring, but also expresses by volume how much is lost and associates a cost to those losses. It also standardizes the water audit reporting process for water utilities.

- *Water Loss Audit Manual for Texas Utilities, 2008*



Design Criteria and Considerations

A water utility must be able to supply water at rates that fluctuate over a wide range. Yearly, monthly, and hourly variations in water use occur, with higher use typically during dry years and in hot months. Also, water use typically follows a diurnal pattern, being low at night and peaking early in the morning and in the early evening. Usage rates most important to the hydraulic design and operation of a water treatment plant and distribution system are average day, maximum day, and peak hour demand conditions.

- **Average day demand** is the total annual water use divided by the number of days in the year. The average day rate is used primarily as a basis for estimating maximum day and peak hour demands. The average day rate is also used to estimate future revenues and operating costs.
- **Maximum day demand** is the maximum quantity of water used on any one day of the year. The maximum day demand is used to size water supply facilities, treatment facilities, and pump stations.
- **Peak hour demand** is the peak rate at which water is required during any one hour of the year. Since minimum distribution system pressures are usually experienced during peak hour, the sizes and locations of distribution facilities are generally determined on the basis of this condition. Peak hour water requirements are partially met through the use of strategically located system storage. The use of system storage minimizes the required capacity of transmission mains and permits a more uniform and economical operation of the water supply, treatment, and pumping facilities.

The average water consumption and wastewater flow per connection from the water billing data were used to project future average water demand and wastewater flow. Typically, maximum and peak conditions are also determined from observed system conditions such as flow monitoring data or pump station records. However, this detailed information was not readily available for this study. In the absence of detailed historical data, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) recommends a maximum day to average day demand peaking factor of 2.40 and a maximum day to peak hour demand peaking factor of 1.25 for the water system, and a peak 2-hour to average day flow peaking factor of 4.00 for the wastewater system. The design criteria are specified in Figure 58. These design criteria were used to project maximum day and peak hour water demand and peak 2-hour wastewater flow as shown in Figures 59 and 60, respectively. Existing average water demand is approximately 0.59 MGD, with projected maximum day and peak hour demands of 1.42 MGD and 1.77 MGD, respectively. The existing average wastewater flow is 0.41 MGD with a projected peak 2-hour flow of 1.65 MGD.

Figure 58. Design Criteria

Criteria	Value
Water System	
Average Day Demand per Connection	270
Maximum Day to Average Day Peaking Factor	2.40
Peak Hour to Maximum Day Peaking Factor	1.25
Wastewater System	
Average Day Flow per Connection	200
Peak 2-hour to Average Day Peaking Factor	4.00

Figure 59. Water Demand Projections

Planning Period	Growth Scenario (CAGR)			
	1.5%	2.5%	4.0%	6.2%
Average Water Demand (MGD)				
2023	0.59	0.59	0.59	0.59
2025	0.61	0.62	0.64	0.67
2030	0.66	0.70	0.78	0.90
2035	0.71	0.79	0.94	1.21
2040	0.76	0.90	1.15	1.64
2045	0.82	1.02	1.40	2.22
2050	0.88	1.15	1.70	2.99
Maximum Day Water Demand (MGD)				
2023	1.42	1.42	1.42	1.42
2025	1.46	1.49	1.53	1.60
2030	1.57	1.68	1.86	2.16
2035	1.69	1.91	2.27	2.92
2040	1.82	2.16	2.76	3.94
2045	1.97	2.44	3.36	5.32
2050	2.12	2.76	4.08	7.19
Peak Hour Water Demand (MGD)				
2023	1.77	1.77	1.77	1.77
2025	1.82	1.86	1.92	2.00
2030	1.97	2.10	2.33	2.70
2035	2.12	2.38	2.83	3.64
2040	2.28	2.69	3.45	4.92
2045	2.46	3.05	4.20	6.65
2050	2.65	3.45	5.11	8.98

Figure 60. Wastewater Flow Projections

Planning Period	Growth Scenario (CAGR)			
	1.5%	2.5%	4.0%	6.2%
Average Wastewater Flow (MGD)				
2023	0.41	0.41	0.41	0.41
2025	0.43	0.44	0.45	0.47
2030	0.46	0.50	0.55	0.64
2035	0.50	0.56	0.68	0.88
2040	0.54	0.64	0.83	1.19
2045	0.58	0.73	1.01	1.62
2050	0.63	0.83	1.24	2.19
Peak 2-hour Flow (MGD)				
2023	1.65	1.65	1.65	1.65
2025	1.71	1.74	1.80	1.88
2030	1.85	1.98	2.21	2.57
2035	2.00	2.26	2.70	3.50
2040	2.16	2.57	3.31	4.77
2045	2.33	2.92	4.05	6.47
2050	2.52	3.31	4.95	8.78



Regulatory Compliance

For water distribution systems, TCEQ sets minimum requirements for production capacity, storage capacity, and pumping capacity according to Chapter §290 of the Texas Administrative Code. Distribution systems are primarily evaluated by pressure plane, except for water production and total storage, which are evaluated on a system-wide basis.

The minimum TCEQ production requirement is 0.6 gpm/connection. For distribution pumping, if a pressure plane has at least 200 gallons per connection of elevated storage, the resulting TCEQ pumping requirement is 0.6 gpm/connection. If the pressure plane has less than 200 gallons per connection of elevated storage, the TCEQ distribution pumping requirement increases to 2.0 gpm/connection or at least 1,000 gpm total capacity with the ability to meet peak hour demands in the pressure plane if the largest pump was to be out of service (i.e., firm capacity).

Generally, 2.0 gpm/connection is a more stringent requirement than peak hour demand for required pumping capacity. However, due to the lack of historical peak hour demand conditions, the 2.0 gpm/connection is utilized for this analysis to be conservative. The minimum TCEQ elevated storage capacity requirement is 100 gallons per connection and the total storage capacity requirement is 200 gallons per connection. Minimum production, pumping, and storage requirements for water distribution systems per TCEQ are summarized in Figure 61.

The results of the TCEQ minimum requirements analysis for the existing planning period are shown in Figures 62, 63, and 64 for production, storage, and pumping, respectively. The City of Rockdale meets all TCEQ requirements for the existing water distribution system. However, the Low-Pressure Plane has slightly less than 200 gallons of elevated storage per connection, so the required minimum pumping capacity is 2.0 gpm per connection. The existing connection count for each pressure plane was provided by City staff.

For the purposes of this study, it was assumed that all future growth would occur across the pressure planes following the existing distribution, approximately 60% to the Low-Pressure Plane and 40% in the High-Pressure Plane.

The results of the TCEQ minimum requirements analysis for all future scenarios are included in Appendix C. The City of Rockdale has adequate production capacity under the low (1.5%) growth scenario through the 2050 planning period. Under the high (6.2%) growth scenario, additional production capacity is needed by the 2035 planning period.

The High-Pressure Plane has adequate elevated and total storage through the 2050 planning period across all growth scenarios. The Low-Pressure Plane does not currently have 200 gallons of elevated storage per connection but is still meeting the TCEQ minimum requirement of 100 gallons of elevated storage per connection. This state is projected to continue under the low growth scenario through the 2050 planning period. However, the Low-Pressure Plane is projected to need additional elevated and total storage for all other growth scenarios, starting by the 2035 planning period under the high growth scenario.

Lastly, the High-Pressure Plane has adequate pumping capacity through the 2050 planning period across all growth scenarios. The Low-Pressure Plane is projected to need additional pumping capacity by the 2030 planning period under the high growth scenario and the 2045 planning period by the low growth scenario. It is also worth noting that the elevated storage and pumping requirements are dependent of one another and expansion of either may satisfy the minimum requirements of the other.

Figure 61. Minimum TCEQ Requirements

System Component	TCEQ Minimum Requirement	Evaluation Area
Production	0.6 gpm/connection	Systemwide
Distribution Pumping	0.6 gpm/connection (\geq 200 gal/connection elevated storage) 2.0 gpm/connection ($<$ 200 gal/connection elevated storage)	Pressure Plane
Elevated Storage	100 gallons/connection	Pressure Plane
Ground Storage	100 gallons/connection	Pressure Plane
Total Storage	200 gallons/connection	Systemwide

Figure 62. Existing TCEQ Minimum Production Requirements

Planning Period	Connections	Required Production (gpm)	Total Available Production (gpm)	Meets TCEQ Requirements(Y/N)
2023	2,186	1,311.6	2,490	Y

Figure 63. Existing TCEQ Minimum Storage Requirements

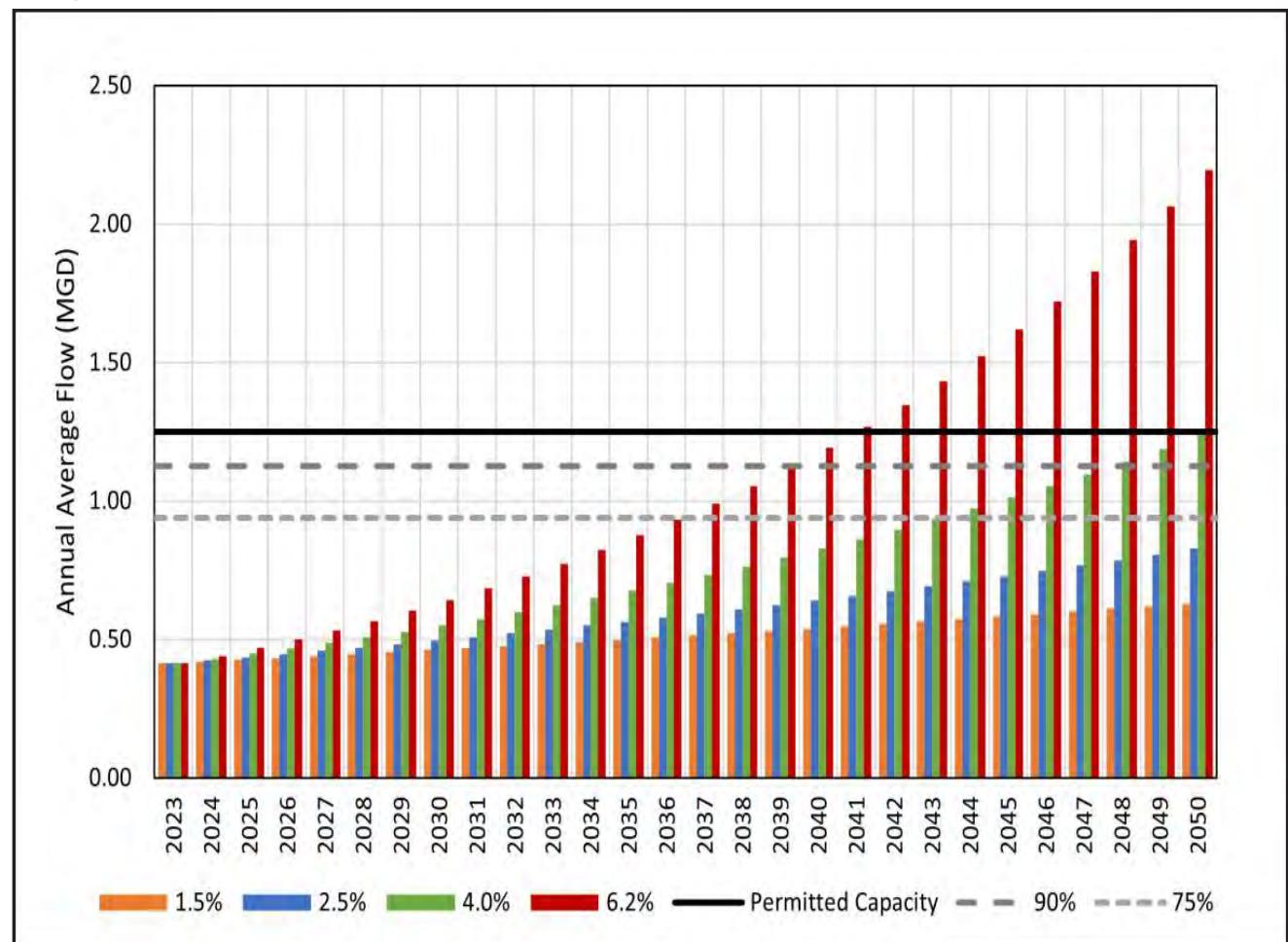
Planning Period	Pressure Plane	Connections	Required Elevated Storage (MG)	Required Total Storage (MG)	Available Elevated Storage (MG)	Available Total Storage (MG)	Meets TCEQ Requirement (Y/N)
2023	Low	1,291	0.13	0.26	0.25	0.54	Y
	High	895	0.09	0.18	0.50	1.00	Y

Figure 64. Existing TCEQ Minimum Pumping Requirements

Planning Period	Pressure Plane	Connections	Minimum Requirement (gpm/connection)	Required Pumping Capacity	Available Pumping Capacity (gpm)	Meets TCEQ Requirement (Y/N)
2023	Low	1,291	2.0	2,582	3,500	Y
	High	895	0.6	537	3,000	Y

TCEQ requirements for wastewater capacity are not as detailed as the water distribution system requirements. TCEQ regulates permitted wastewater treatment plant capacity with the "75/90 rule". The 75/90 rules states that when a plant exceeds 75% of its permitted annual average flow for three consecutive months, the facility must begin planning for its next expansion. In addition, the rule states that when a facility exceeds 90% of its permitted annual average flow, the facility must be in construction of its next expansion. The projected annual average wastewater flows are compared to the rated capacity of the wastewater treatment plant in Figure 65. Expansion of the WWTP is projected to be under design by the 2036 planning period and complete by the 2040 planning period under the high growth scenario. The low growth scenario is not projected to exceed 75% of the existing permitted capacity through the 2050 planning period.

Figure 65. WWTP Flow Projections



Wastewater Beneficial Reuse

Public water supplies are generally treated to drinking water standards, even though household potable use is only a portion of the overall water usage in communities. Many uses like irrigation and industrial processes do not require water treated to drinking standards, but they are still using this finite and precious resource because it is available. Reclaimed water has become an increasingly common and accepted method to both conserve potable water supplies as well as manage wastewater or treated effluent. In some cases, this can become its own utility funding stream. The ability to access it can also help realize opportunities such as enhanced landscaping associated with state-maintained roadways.

Beneficial reuse is governed by TCEQ's Chapter 210 Use of Reclaimed Water regulations. Authorization for the use of reclaimed water applied to an area of land for irrigation requires determination and documentation of typical irrigation demands for the proposed use based on the type of vegetation and land area to be irrigated. There are two types of reclaimed water; Type I is reclaimed water that the public may come into contact with and Type II is in more remote or restricted locations where human contact is unlikely. Type I use is allowed for unrestricted areas and may also be used for any Type II use. Designing WWTPs to meet Type I standards provides the City the greatest flexibility in effluent management.

One of the obstacles in developing a reclaimed water system is balancing the demand for water with the limited and variable supply produced by a wastewater treatment facility. The flows

demanded from the reclaimed water system are rarely constant and will vary significantly over a 24-hour period. Furthermore, the reclaimed water demands will fluctuate and vary greatly depending on the type of use and time of year. For example, typical irrigation demands are highest at night during the summer months, but this is also the time of day when less wastewater is being put into the system from the community.

Since the reclaimed water supply is from a WWTP, the supply is variable based on water use throughout the day. The water that flows through a treatment facility will fluctuate and generally follows the non-irrigation domestic demand and use of potable water. Wastewater flows will often have two peaks with a crest in the morning and lower flows through the day and then another peak in the evening before tailing off during the nighttime hours. This means methods of storage and pressurization are needed.



Recommendations

As discussed in the previous sections, the City of Rockdale has a wide range of potential future growth. The various growth scenarios make it difficult to manage utility systems and proactively make decisions based on future needs. This wide future variability highlights the importance of planning as a foundation for future decision making. The first part of the planning process includes developing a Comprehensive Plan, as achieved with this document. The Comprehensive Plan helps to define the potential future scenarios and document the desired direction of the City and community at large.

The next part of the planning journey includes developing Water and Wastewater Master Plans. The master plans will further refine the results of the Comprehensive Plan and determine the infrastructure needs to support the vision for future growth. In addition to a detailed hydraulic analysis, it is recommended that the master plans include a risk-based condition assessment to identify potential infrastructure in need of renewal. Master planning is a tool for budgeting and capital planning that will help define the desired level of service and monetary needs through the future planning horizon. Upon completion of the Comprehensive Plan, it is recommended that the City engage a professional engineering services firm to develop Water and Wastewater Master Plans.

The results of the master plans will identify the City's budget for water and wastewater capital expenditure. These capital costs can be funded via utility rates, impact fees, or various bond, loan, and grant programs. It is also recommended that the City conduct financial studies to identify potential revenue sources to help fund the capital budget for the water and wastewater systems.



Stormwater Infrastructure

Stormwater

In natural areas, stormwater is either slowly absorbed into the soil or gradually moves toward the lowest points and channels before reaching ponds, low-lying wetlands or waterways. In urban and suburban areas, a significant portion of the land is covered by buildings, pavement, and other surfaces that do not allow the water to seep into the ground, known as impervious surfaces. This causes a greater quantity and velocity of water to run off into adjacent areas and waterways.

Stormwater management is often front-of-mind in Central Texas given the frequency and size of large storm events, resulting in flash flooding. Water quality and wildlife habitat are also a concern along natural waterways. These stormwater features, sometimes considered liabilities, can serve as assets if designed and managed as such.

Drainage & Floodplains

Like most cities west of the Mississippi, Rockdale deploys a system of underground pipes and drainage channels to convey stormwater runoff from developed areas to natural creeks. On-site detention ponds collect rainfall and gradually release it into the storm system to ensure that the location does not shed water at a rate or volume that could overwhelm the system and prove detrimental to surrounding areas. Nevertheless, heavy rainfall events can result in flooding in parts of the City due, at least in part, to location

of development, the pattern of development, drainage system maintenance and the approach to dealing with stormwater. Rockdale may consider regional stormwater management rather than relying upon disconnected and uncoordinated facility implementation happening on a development-by-development basis. When done correctly, this can introduce placemaking opportunities and recreational amenities via dual-purpose stormwater management facilities. A stormwater impact fee can be an effective vehicle to support this.

Soil, topography, and land use cover shape the role and performance of stormwater in any city. As mentioned previously, Rockdale's soils feature a variety of clays with high plasticity, meaning they shrink and swell based on moisture content.

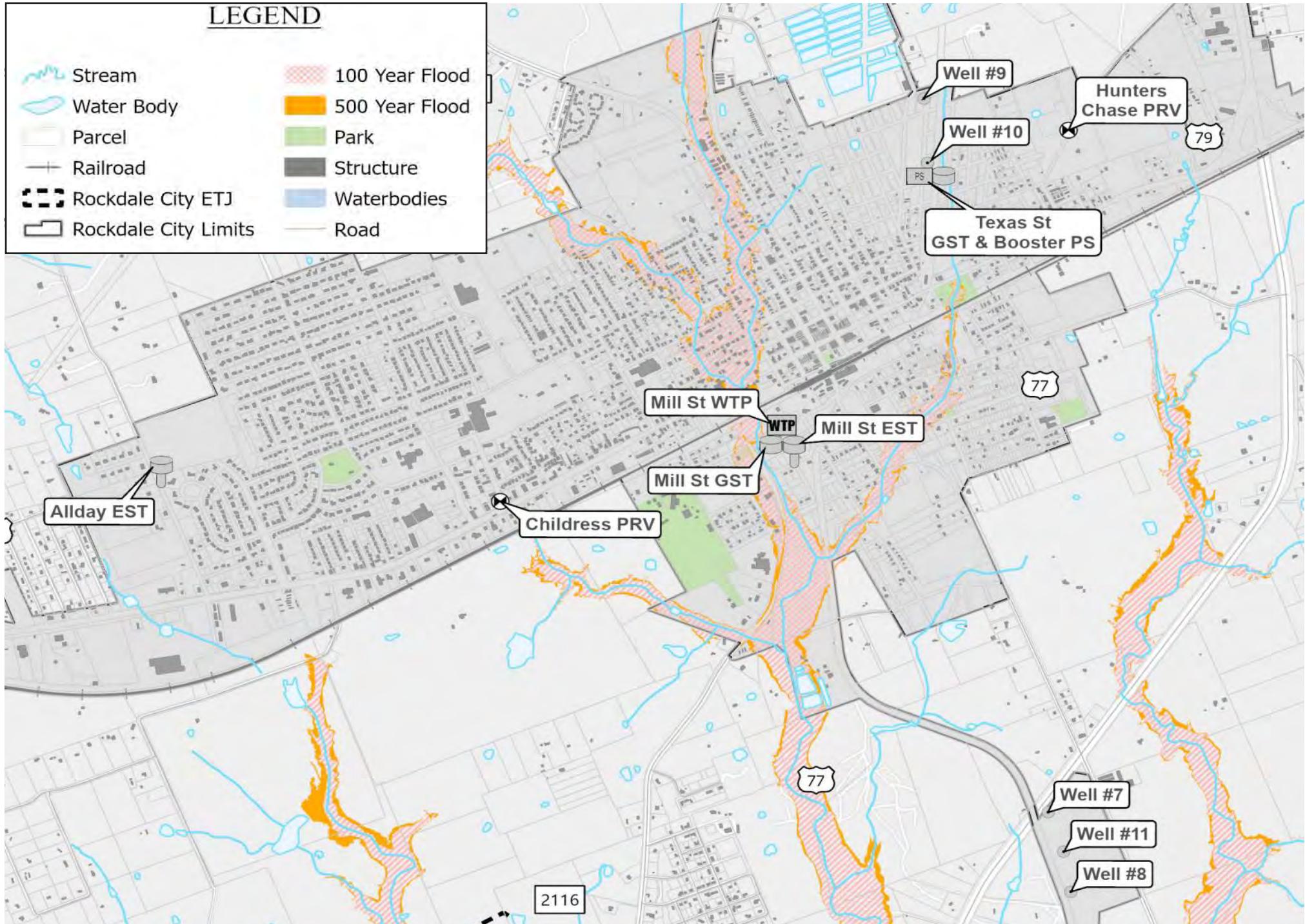
This is most commonly understood to the general public as a cause for home foundation issues, but this soil trait also means the soil does not allow infiltration at high rates compared to other soils.

In Central Texas, a number of creeks and waterways are unstudied or minimally studied for floodplain presence. In addition, several waterways originate beyond the City's jurisdiction, meaning the stormwater affecting Rockdale residents is beyond the control of Rockdale. As a result, it is a prudent practice to establish buffers from stream centerlines where the floodplain is not established on NFIP maps, and buffers from the 100-year floodplain where the floodplain is established on NFIP maps.



LEGEND

Stream	100 Year Flood
Water Body	500 Year Flood
Parcel	Park
Railroad	Structure
Rockdale City ETJ	Waterbodies
Rockdale City Limits	Road



Map 20. Floodplain & Facilities Map

Water Quality & Innovative Stormwater Management

Water quality is impacted by point and nonpoint source pollution. Point source pollution can be traced to specific points of discharge from wastewater treatment plants or industrial sites. Nonpoint source pollution typically originates from rainfall that moves over the ground and picks up natural and human pollutants and then deposits them into lakes, rivers, wetlands and coastal waters. Common examples of nonpoint source pollution include septic systems, oil and other contaminates on parking lots and roadways, fertilizers, and animal waste. Point source pollution is regulated through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program.

Nonpoint source pollution has emerged as a major contributor to water quality problems. Unmanaged stormwater runoff is harmful to the environment as it often carries pollutants such as oil, dirt, chemicals, and lawn fertilizers directly to streams and rivers. Nonpoint pollutants are especially concentrated in the initial wash or "first inch" of runoff during a storm. Additionally, heavy storms can generate excessive volumes and velocities of runoff that can damage streamside vegetation and aquatic habitat, especially at the point of outlet from storm drains.

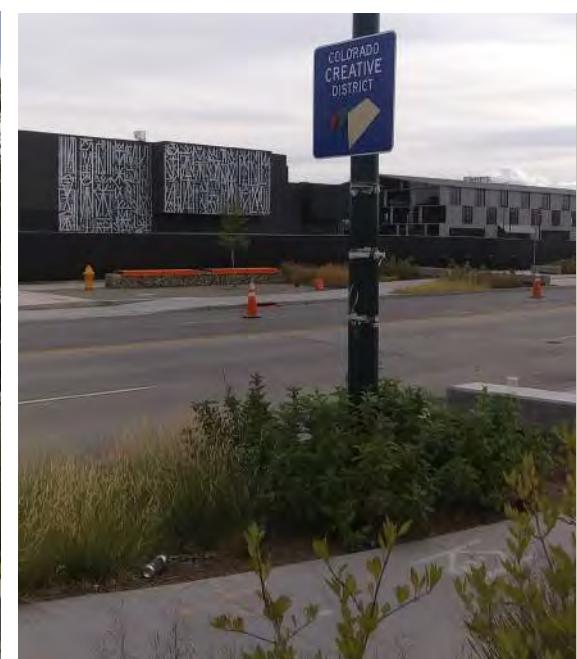
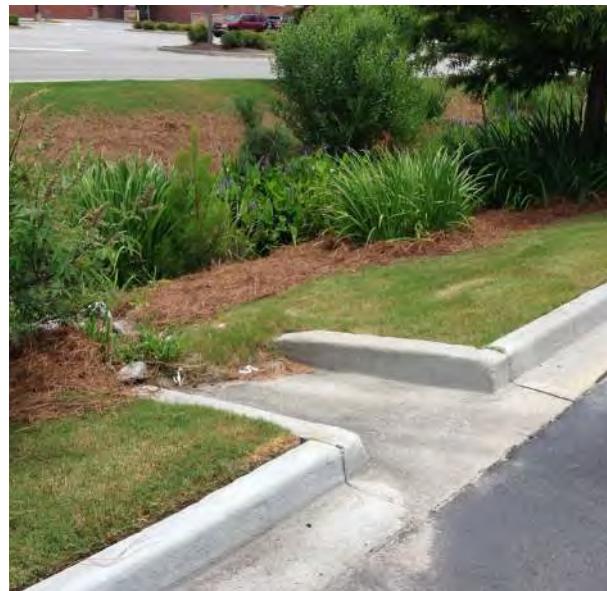
Beyond environmental implications, poor water quality can make these spaces, which are naturally suited to act as amenities in the forms of linear open spaces and trails, less safe for human contact and reduces the potential for people to develop positive interactions with nature.

To protect water quality, infrastructure and development should be designed and built to minimize runoff and treat that first inch of water through conservation of natural areas, green infrastructure, cluster development, use of pervious surfaces, and other best management practices (BMPs). These low-impact approaches are generally recognized as preferred instead of or in partnership with engineered, or "gray" solutions, and tend to result in the creation of amenities that also support quality of life and high-quality, valuable developments. Utilizing natural systems/processes and taking a comprehensive approach to managing water can help meet several of the community's goals, including improved water quality, water conservation, interconnection between parks and neighborhoods, placemaking, and flooding reduction.

The use of natural systems and processes, including wetlands, native planting areas, and bioswales, to treat and retain stormwater is referred to as green infrastructure. These are important parts of holistically managing stormwater and water quality and can be accomplished at the regional, community, and site scale. It is also critical to understand that green infrastructure extends to other aspects of the built environment and can be utilized as amenities and dual-purpose facilities that bring multiple benefits to the City and community.

Maintenance of facilities is of the utmost importance; this is especially true for innovative stormwater practices where plants are serving

functional purposes. Vegetated stormwater facilities do not need more maintenance, in fact they should overall require less, but they do need to be properly maintained. There is a specific set of knowledge required to maintain green infrastructure. Certification classes are available for just this purpose.



Images of Green Infrastructure and Innovative Stormwater Management Elements.

Best Practices for Public & Community Facilities

Facilities take on a variety of forms — from public safety facilities like police stations to places of community gathering, like libraries, city halls and recreation centers. As growth occurs, it is the City's responsibility to determine what influences are at work and what data is necessary to make decisions that meet the needs of the community. Adequate land allocation for anticipated community facilities is necessary to meet evolving community expectations for community services, both essential services and those that enhance quality of life. As Rockdale continues to experience development, it becomes vital that the land allocation needs for public facilities are identified before the options available become limited and less optimal.

In addition, schools are an important partner for the City of Rockdale, even though the Rockdale Independent School District leads school operations and facilities and not the City itself. School districts typically conduct their own long-range planning, but there are significant opportunities to work together with the City to address mutual challenges and opportunities.

Facility master plans are the best means of addressing Rockdale's needs, taking into consideration what the City's long-term goals are for programming and services. Given ongoing growth, a more holistic approach is likely warranted to address all municipal functions across all departments. This can help to identify complementary uses and needs that result in improved efficiency overall, as well as prioritization. Perhaps more important, sites can

then be selected with the goal of accommodating a complete buildout with consideration of these complementary uses.

Generally, any new facility should be designed to at least the 20-year population projection for efficiency. Rather than relying on ratios of square footage to population exclusively, a Facility Master Plan should focus on the real space needed for effective desired programming and operations as this links more directly to the user experience and residents' desired service quality.

APPROACH TO FACILITIES PLANNING

DESIGN TREND: Flexible spaces & sites

A growing city like Rockdale should consistently "begin with the end in mind" by planning for future expansions and natural service breaks for facilities (when a service should either separate into a new facility or into an expansion, allowing other services within the facility to expand to accommodate the needs of all services). The flexibility of use within spaces inside buildings is important to accomplishing this, as well as meeting a variety of community needs—those already known and those unknown as technology and community needs change. Likewise, selecting

sites to accommodate ultimate buildout needs is critical to success, as discussed earlier.

This also extends to the design of the architecture itself, seeking to create wide structural spans and volumes that allow for future reconfiguration without altering critical building structures or systems.

DESIGN TREND: Technology & digital connectivity

Technology continues its rapid pace of growth and change. The public as well as employees expect facilities to keep pace with and prepare for this dynamic landscape. Inclusion of additional conduits, accessible tracks and drops, and other low-cost design methods to ensure connectivity will be necessary to support technology of the future.

DESIGN TREND: Shared spaces

Co-locating uses, especially those with alternating hours, allows for the shared use of common spaces and parking. This means less redundancy in facilities and increased space and fiscal efficiency.

Sharing sites and buildings extends outside of the city itself. Increasingly, city halls and other facilities co-house other state agencies, county offices and even school district offices. These sometimes take the form of condominium-

like arrangements within a building, cost participation in construction with a low/no-cost lease, or constructing a larger space than needed at the time and subleasing. Each approach carries different risks depending on the entities involved. This applies not just to office spaces, but other types of buildings and sites. For example, county maintenance may have an interest in shared facilities with City Public Works.

DESIGN TREND: Public buildings as catalysts

Some public facilities have been shown to function particularly well as part of an overall economic development and placemaking effort. City halls, libraries and recreation centers have customer visits similar to retail use as well as significant employment, and are often planned as one stop of many rather than as single-trip destinations. This means their thoughtful design and placement can serve as a catalyst to development in key desired locations, such as a Downtown. Knowing a large public employer or large customer base will be present often prompts interest in surrounding development.





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DOWNTOWN



Introduction

Downtown Rockdale is widely recognized as the historic heart of the community. Long-term residents recall a time when Downtown was bustling with a wide variety of activities and serving people of all ages.

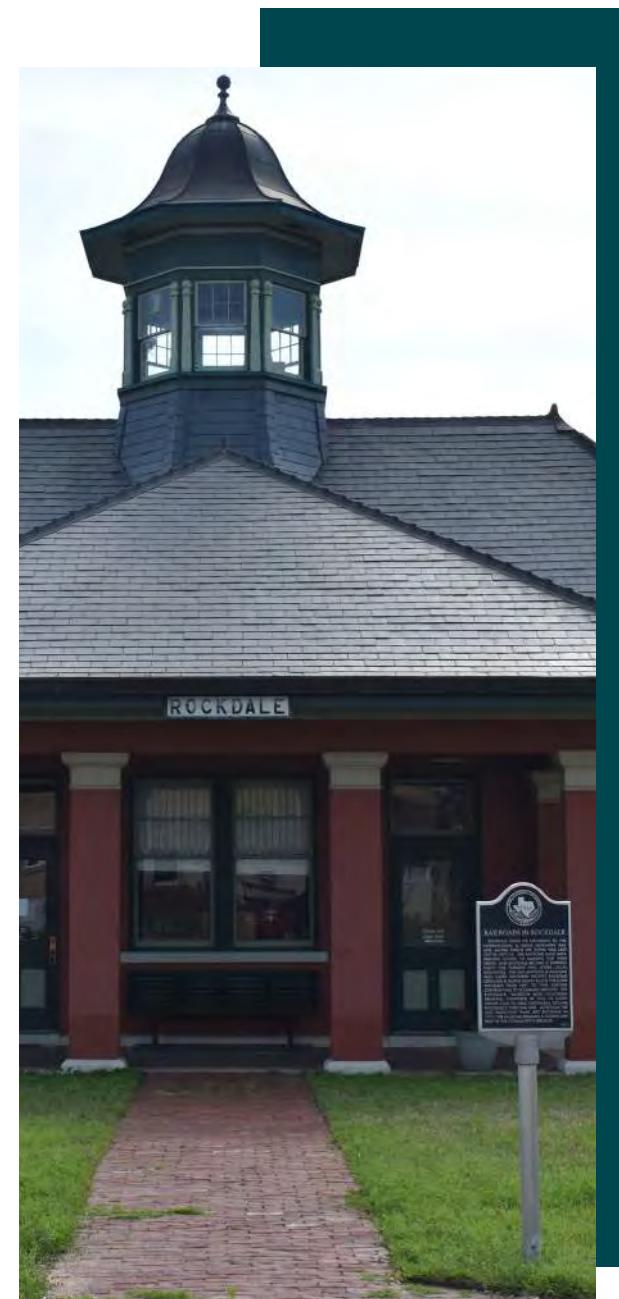
The condition of Downtown has a major impact on how a city is perceived by others, and even by its own residents. Rockdale's residents strongly backed the vision statement of this Plan, which is centered on being a resilient city which holds pride in its history and culture. To accomplish this, it will be crucial to bring new life to Downtown. New development is expected to be happening in the City and region in the coming years, and for Rockdale to thrive it must celebrate what makes it unique. Revitalization of the historic Downtown is central to this, as the character and history of Rockdale's Downtown cannot be replicated by even the most thoughtful new developments.

Over the last several decades, Downtown Rockdale has seen patterns of disinvestment typical of towns and cities throughout Texas (and the nation as a whole), as businesses have either closed due to competition from large national chains or relocated to newer parts of the City, such as the Cameron Avenue Corridor. This has been exacerbated by the local economic struggles resulting from the closure of ALCOA's operations in Rockdale. The ultimate result has been that many properties in Downtown Rockdale remain vacant, underutilized or undeveloped.

Rockdale's 2012 Downtown Master Plan offers a wide array of recommendations for the district, many of which remain relevant. This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan is not meant to replace the 2012 Plan, as that would require a separate downtown plan to fully explore strategies and recommendations. Rather, this chapter identifies the role Downtown plays in supporting the City's larger vision and goals, as outlined in this Comprehensive Plan paired with a more specific implementation strategy to build momentum and progress. It identifies opportunities and challenges specific to Downtown, Downtown character areas and a number of issues which will require strategic focus, including:

- Vacancy Strategies
- Public Space Activation and Events
- Micro-investments
- Parking

Each of these recommended priorities are discussed in more detail in this chapter. None can be understood in isolation, as all connect to each other to result in a successful and cohesive Downtown.



WHAT WE'VE HEARD: Downtown

"I suggest that the City leaders focus on a major Downtown renovation."
- Community Member

"East Bell Tap House has brought life back to the Downtown area!"
- Community Member

"Most all of the Downtown surrounding area has fallen to urban blight."
- Community Member

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The community seeks to find a harmonious approach that maintains Downtown's historic character while allowing for necessary modernization and revitalization.
- Downtown is identified as the best place to celebrate the history and culture of the City.
- Vacant buildings, or general maintenance issues in Downtown, create a negative impression of the City as a whole.
- Top priorities in Downtown: addressing parking and providing a wider variety of public spaces and particularly family-friendly entertainment options.

The top 4 development types residents want to see more of in Rockdale are Local Businesses, Food and Beverage Service, Entertainment, and Retail - all are ideal uses for Downtown.

59% of survey respondents said they visit Downtown at least once a week.



Downtown Opportunities & Challenges

Based on public input and stakeholder conversations, below are the top opportunities to leverage and challenges to address as identified by the Rockdale community.

Key Assets

- Kay Theatre
- East Bell Taphouse
- Patterson Library
- The 1895 Project (historic City Hall redevelopment)
- Wolf Park
- Historic Train Depot

Businesses/Retail Frontages

Key Challenges

- Lack of “critical mass” of establishments
- Vacant storefronts and vacant parcels
- Perceived lack of parking
- Limited variety of offerings
- Public realm maintenance and appearance
- Traffic on U.S. 79

Key Opportunities

- More Local Businesses
- Library Expansion
- Family-friendly Activities
- Community Events



Map 21. Downtown Assets



Map 22. Downtown Character Corridors

Downtown Character Corridors

Downtown Rockdale is in a compact area, which allows the City to focus on a relatively small geographical area. For this reason, the identification of character areas in Downtown looks at the aesthetics and experience of different corridors throughout the area. Three types of corridors have been identified for Downtown Rockdale:

- ● ● Mixed Pedestrian/Vehicular Corridor (E Cameron Ave/US79)
- ● ● Primary Pedestrian Corridor (Main St)
- ● ● Supporting Corridors (E Bell Ave and Ackerman St)
- ▶▶▶ Festival Street (Milam Ave)

Downtown Character Corridors

Mixed Pedestrian/Vehicular Corridor (E Cameron Ave/US79)

The primary vehicular corridor follows E. Cameron Avenue/U.S. 79, a roadway controlled by TxDOT, meaning that the City has limited control over design within its right-of-way. It had some recent improvements to improve pedestrian conditions including enhanced intersection details, new parking and sidewalks. This is a busy regional roadway with a large quantity of traffic, including large trucks. A variety of businesses front onto this corridor, including the Lucy Hill Patterson Library. The future condition of this roadway should balance the current vehicular needs with downtown-appropriate pedestrian amenities, with a focus on beautification, aesthetics and pedestrian safety. To note, the East Cameron Corridor plan overlaps with a portion of the blocks identified here. While this plan is generally consistent with the proposed conditions, we recommend looking into a redesign which would reallocate the trees in the median to line the sidewalks.

Primary Pedestrian Corridor (Main St)

Bookended by the Kay Theatre and East Bell Taphouse on one end and Wolf Park and the historic Rockdale Train Depot on the other, the three blocks of Main Street through Downtown pose the opportunity to create a great pedestrian street for Rockdale. This corridor is still a major roadway through town, but caters more to local trips and has less traffic overall than E Cameron Ave; however, Main St is controlled by TxDOT and the City has less control over design within its right-of-way. The future condition of this corridor should focus on pedestrian comfort and amenities (wide sidewalks, streetscaping, lighting and furnishings) and encouraging the businesses to activate the public realm through sidewalk cafes, etc.



Conceptual rendering of Main Street as a Pedestrian Corridor.



DOWNTOWN

Supporting Corridors (E Bell Ave and Ackerman St)

A single block of these two roads round out Downtown and create a "core block" bounded by Cameron Avenue, Main St., Bell Avenue and Ackerman St. There should still be adequate pedestrian infrastructure and minimum levels of maintenance and aesthetics adhered to along these blocks, as well as support for storefront activation where feasible, but they do not require the same level of investment as Cameron Avenue or Main St. Ackerman St., on the north side of Cameron Avenue, is under the jurisdiction of TxDOT, adding to the list of roads constrained on design within the right-of-way.

Festival Street (Milam Ave)

Bonham Street and Milam Avenue serve as an important connector between multiple Downtown assets including Bridge Park, Wolf Park and the Historic Train Depot. This poses an opportunity to create a festival street that could be closed during events and used to expand Downtown's civic space. Bonham St/Milam Ave between Bridge Park and Scarbrough St. could be enhanced to create a festival street via the following:

- Enhance Bridge Park, Wolf Park, and the open spaces around the Historic Train Depot per recommendations in the Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails chapter, creating a series of Downtown destinations along the corridor.
- Street enhancements from Bridge Park to Plum/San Gabriel St, including a shared-use path, lighting, benches, and landscaping.
- Street enhancements from Plum/San Gabriel St to Ackerman St and Burleson St to Scarbrough St focused on generally enhanced pedestrian walkability including sidewalks, lighting, landscape, benches, etc.
- Street enhancements for the two blocks of Milam Ave between Ackerman St and Burleson St creating a festival street, including curbless transitions between the roadway and sidewalks, enhanced pavers, festoon lighting, landscaping and street furnishings.
- Acquire the commercial buildings between Milam Ave and the railroad tracks to turn into permanent vendor market stalls or similar, that can be open regularly or just during activations and events.



Conceptual rendering of Milam Ave Festival Street and Wolf Park.



DOWNTOWN

Rockdale Arts & Entertainment District

Downtown Rockdale has many arts, culture and entertainment assets that make it primed for the creation of a formal Arts & Entertainment District. Considerations for an appropriate boundary include a compact area with a concentration of assets that are within a 5-minute walk of each other. Map 23 displays a recommended district boundary that is likely to meet the criteria of the Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA). The district is bookended by the proposed Milam Ave Festival Street on the south and the Kay Theatre on the north. These are connected by the proposed pedestrian corridor enhancements along Main Street, which is also intersected by Cameron Ave, providing connections to The 1895 Project and the Public Library. These routes also connect to local businesses such as East Bell Taphouse and Main Street Bookshop, which are popular third places for the community and also host their own public events. A series of activated alleyways provide an additional layer of connectivity and interest throughout the District.

The recognition of this District by the City via a formal Arts & Entertainment District Overlay would be a precursor to eventual TCA Cultural District designation, which opens up additional resources and funding. The City could also consider applying a historic preservation program within the District boundaries and eventual designation as a Certified Local Government by the Texas Historical Commission, again creating access to grant streams.

Additional recommendations related to the implementation of an Arts & Entertainment District include:

- Updating the City's noise ordinance to accommodate regular functions of the District, such as reasonable accommodation for evening outdoor music.
- All of the arts/cultural interest groups and stakeholders in the area should formalize their coordination and support for one another, and consider asset-sharing to support their similar missions.
- Creation of a public art program, focused on leveraging local artists.

- Creation of an art league or artist's cooperative; The 1895 Project has plans for a community gallery or the MDD could acquire a space for such a use.
- Encourage and support youth engagement programs related to arts and culture in the district.
- A percentage of infrastructure/capital projects in the District should be slated to go towards public art integration in the area.
- Develop programming plans for public spaces within the District, in partnership with the many organizations and businesses already active in the area.
- Prioritize the proposed streetscape and alley enhancement projects to link existing arts, cultural, and business assets in a comfortable and interesting public environment.
- Make allowances for artisan-scale manufacturing uses in Rockdale's Downtown, these uses are especially appropriate for adaptive reuse of former industrial buildings.

TCA Review Criteria for Cultural District Designation

Artistic Quality: Artistic significance, quality of works of art, quality of artists, impact on artists, quality of services.

Capability: Administrative capability, personnel, demonstrated history, budget, planning/implementation/evaluation.

Impact: Public service, audience or participants, education, outreach, economic impact.



Map 23. Arts & Entertainment District Map

Vacancy Strategies

Downtown Rockdale benefits from multiple blocks of quality commercial buildings, both along Cameron Avenue and on Main Street. Collectively, these buildings offer the potential to create a thriving and attractive Downtown. However, vacant and inactive buildings, particularly at the ground level, pose a serious challenge to creating vibrancy. Vacant storefronts create "visual dullness," signaling a lack of investment and making the destinations that do exist in Downtown feel few and far between, especially for a pedestrian.

Data provided by the City of Rockdale identified 49 buildings within the Downtown area, as of December 2023:

- 11 are listed as "vacant" and "deteriorated"
- 6 are listed as "vacant," but not "deteriorated"
- 3 are listed as "occupied" and "deteriorated"
- 2 are listed as "half occupied"
- The remaining 27 are occupied and appear to be in decent shape

That means approximately half of the buildings are not currently contributing to the aesthetics or activity of Downtown, and may even be hindering it. In addition to the 49 buildings, there are 18 other lots in the Downtown database. One is listed as a park (Wolf Park), six are listed as parking, and 11 are listed as "undeveloped."

Further classification could be helpful in identifying "active" uses (such as retail, restaurants, salons/barber shops, the library, etc.) and "passive" uses such as private offices. Ideally, most of the uses on the two primary streets (Cameron and Main) are "active" uses. However, this aspiration may not be feasible in the short term, given the surrounding population and the size of the Downtown. At this point, getting the storefronts well maintained and filled with any economically productive use would be a significant step in the right direction.

The City and MDD should work proactively to keep the Downtown database up-to-date. As part of this planning process, revisions have been made to the database and a checklist was created that the City and MDD can use to update the data building-to-building (See Appendix B).

This includes such information as:

- Would it be possible to get a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) based on the current condition?
- What specific investments are needed to address deterioration?
- Does the ground floor have a public-oriented use (such as a restaurant, store, or salon)?
- Are there any Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance issues?
- Are the windows tinted or shaded?

As the City and MDD continue to update this information, they can gain a better understanding of what is needed to bring the buildings in Downtown up to code.



Enforcement Efforts

City Ordinance 2023-03-13(6A) sets increasing fees for vacant commercial buildings:

- Ownership for 1 year: \$100
- Ownership for 2 years: \$500
- Ownership for 3 years: \$1,000
- Ownership for 4+ years: \$2,000

This provides a foundation for accountability and ensures that the City and MDD can take some action against absentee landlords. However, this could be significantly strengthened by requiring property owners work with the City and MDD to list out any outstanding building code violations and create a plan to achieve compliance. Alternatively, the City could require an annual inspection from the Fire Marshal, Building Inspector, and Code Enforcement to verify the building has no code violations.

Rockdale's code enforcement officer has several important duties within the City and therefore is not able to put their full focus on code enforcement. The current official is actively working with building owners and maintaining an active database in Downtown and elsewhere throughout the City.

Through the process, it may be established that some buildings have fundamental structural issues which would be financially infeasible to correct. This is a particularly difficult issue in Rockdale since there is a significant number of buildings in Downtown but not a large population center that provides the customer base to justify major structural projects. The City should take steps to avoid demolition of buildings, but in some extreme situations it may be necessary. The urgency of addressing these issues is underscored by the collapse of a downtown building during heavy rains in May of 2024.

Storefront and Small Business Support

To bring deteriorated buildings into productive use, a "carrot/stick" strategy is needed. The City and MDD must not only penalize property owners who leave their buildings in disrepair, but also support and incentivize new active uses and fit the future vision for Downtown.

Strategies to achieve this are:

- Support a "business cluster" to help promote filling vacant storefronts. The 2012 Plan suggests an antiques and arts cluster, however these should not pose limitations on other active uses that may help to fill the vacant spaces. It should be noted that the "antiques mall" model has often proved successful in attracting people and filling large spaces in small town downtowns, even in the absence of
- Lead a "popup" or temporary retail initiative in vacant and underutilized storefronts (as recommended in the 2012 Plan). Participation in such a program could be optional or required as part of a developers agreement in cases where the City makes a contribution/investment in a property or project. Such popups can range from very short term (such as a day-long popup in conjunction with a special event), to medium term (holiday season, Sesquicentennial Celebration, etc.), to several months. Success will require active outreach to potential local entrepreneurs. Such a program can help significantly lower the barriers to entry for new business concepts.
- Small business support - various entities, including the MDD and Chamber of

A Note on Second Story Vacancies

Second story vacancies can be a particularly difficult issue, even in downtowns which are very economically productive. Meeting the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other modern code requirements can often make development of upper stories in historic buildings infeasible. For that reason, the City may consider lessening enforcement actions for second stories or come up with creative ways to help support building owners with multi-story buildings. For example, creating a zoning overlay for historic structures in Downtown that waives certain code requirements without sacrificing health, safety and welfare. Alternatively, the City and MDD could create a program to fund design services for accessibility alternatives under the existing building code for a building owner.

It should be noted that the City of Rockdale has adopted the 2018 International Existing Building Code (IEBC), which allows greater flexibility for historic buildings. It will be important to ensure that both local developers and City's Code Enforcement staff are aware of the applications of these standards to such structures.

a strong overall market for tourism. This can also be a way to incubate and test innovative retail concepts at low cost and risk.

Commerce, should work together to both support existing Downtown businesses and help incubate new ones. Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) excel at providing tailored support to small businesses. These generally require partners "on the ground" in a community to help guide businesses to their services. It is recommended to reach out to local SBDCs (Brazos Valley Small Business Development Center in Bryan, Blinn College SBDC in Brenham, Texas State University SBDC in Round Rock) to explore potential partnerships. In addition, there has been a proposed partnership between the City and Temple College, which also has a partnership with Taylor.

- The City and MDD should continue to work with property owners on a variety of programs including facade grants, low interest loans, property tax abatements, etc. to help bring their properties up to code. Crucially, this funding must come with agreements that require active participation in the Downtown as a whole. This may include being part of monthly events, having an active window display, keeping the property clean and well-maintained, being open certain hours, or inclusion in a popup retail program. This can be tied to programs that recruit and mentor small developers, as discussed below in the Vacant Lots section.

Window Display Programs

Window displays are the "seams" between the public realm (what people experience as they walk through Downtown) and the private realm (what people experience when they walk into businesses). For that reason, they play an outsized, and usually underappreciated, role in both the ability of businesses to attract customers and the Downtown experience as a whole. We strongly recommend that the City or MDD maintain a constant budget for matching funds to support window display programs, including those with lighting at night. Entities such as the Chamber of Commerce and Rockdale Downtown Association could hold themed competitions during special occasions. Storefront Mastery is an organization that can offer low-cost advice on dynamic window displays.



Window Displays in Downtown Rockdale.

Zoning

Downtown Rockdale is subject to Central Area (CA) zoning. This district permits a mix of uses, including retail, office, light commercial, and residential uses. No minimum lot area or setbacks (see Glossary) are required. A minimum lot width of 25 feet is required. The top permissible height is 35 feet, while 100% lot coverage is permitted. Additionally, there are no required minimum number of parking spaces. These standards are appropriate for a traditional small-town downtown context and are consistent with Downtown Rockdale's historic development patterns and future vision.

However, there is a lack of downtown-appropriate urban design standards, which may include elements such as entrances on main streets, maximum setbacks, and window/permeability requirements. Since Downtown is a unique part of Rockdale, it is strongly recommended that the City consider creating specific urban design standards for the CA district.

It should also be noted that there is a specific limitation that all business be "conducted wholly within an enclosed building, except for delivery, gasoline sales, nurseries and garden centers." Since outdoor dining (and other similar activities) are beneficial, appropriate, and even encouraged for a downtown area, it is recommended that the City reconsider this regulation.

Vacant Lots

A number of vacant lots in Downtown offer strong opportunities for infill development or redevelopment. Given the large number of vacant commercial storefronts in the area, it is unlikely that these empty lots will be appropriate for retail, restaurant, or similar active commercial uses. These lots are best suited for modest-scaled residential developments, particularly if the current height limits of 35 feet are maintained. Downtown is a prime location for "missing middle" housing products such as duplexes, townhomes and small multifamily buildings.

The City and MDD should proactively work to identify local developers with capacity to build residential development on this scale. Based on conversations with these developers, the City and MDD should assess what the market needs are, whether zoning will need to be adjusted, and how they can best mentor or support these developers. National organizations such as Neighborhood Evolution or the Incremental Development Alliance may be sought to advise on these projects, depending on local capacity. There may also be a need for the City to work with financial institutions to create low-interest loan packages, particularly given the current high interest rates.



Public Space Activation & Events

One of the most important strategies to creating a vibrant downtown lies in the activation of public spaces and semi-public spaces (see Glossary in Appendix B).

Wolf Park

At this time, Wolf Park, which is owned by the Chamber of Commerce, is by far the most significant gathering space in Downtown Rockdale. This is a partially programmed space with a 1,200 square foot pavilion and some other amenities. The park can be rented for a fee of \$50 (waived for Chamber members), plus a \$25 utility fee if concessions, sales, or amplified music are used.

For two years, the Chamber hosted an increasingly popular Farmers Market in Wolf Park. However, the market was briefly moved out of Downtown, particularly due to shade issues, before being discontinued in March of 2024. There may be opportunities for the City to bring it back. The Chamber also uses the pavilion to host occasional evening craft markets and other events.

Consistent programming of “anchor” public spaces, even if only for small events, is key to bringing a constant flow of people into downtowns. Equally important is redesigning the space for daily use, where people are encouraged

to eat, linger, play lawn games, or be involved in other activities. The 2012 Downtown Master Plan includes some design recommendations for Wolf Park, but the City should consider a fresh redesign process to maximize the use of this asset.

Events

A key to successful, consistent events is providing shade in strategic locations and throughout Downtown. Downtown currently has a general lack of mature street trees or other sources of shade. Consideration should be given to implementing a program to restore awnings on buildings Downtown, potentially accompanied by lighting to enhance visibility at night. Furthermore, the addition of street trees and well-placed shade structures, particularly at parks, gathering places and intersections, will help to mitigate the Texas heat while strengthening the visual cues that establish the Downtown.

There are currently events held along Bell Street, including the Thursday on Tap events that debuted the summer of 2023. Milam Avenue between Main and Ackerman adjacent to Wolf Park offers another potential opportunity for holding events. The City and MDD could pilot shutting down this block to hold special events and work toward pedestrianizing the street.

The Vision Historic Preservation Foundation is planning to include a pocket park with their 1895 Project along W. Cameron Ave. and plan to produce events in their space.

Bridge Park is only a short distance from Downtown core, 5 blocks east via Milam Ave/ Bonham Street. The street becomes a shaded rural road for about 875 feet before terminating

into Bridge Park. With signage and visual cues, a better connection between Downtown, Bridge Park, and a wider network of parks and trails could be made.

Staffing

It should be appreciated that various entities - including the Chamber of Commerce, the Kay Theater, the Rockdale Downtown Association, the Rockdale Historical Society, and the Lucy Hill Patterson Memorial Library - are doing an excellent job creating events in the Downtown. This ranges from Thursday Sip and Shops, to Saturday Farmers Markets, to numerous shows at the theater. However, there are limitations to what can be coordinated by volunteers or organizations that have other primary missions. Both the curation of events and the expansion of the number of events will likely require paid staff.

One cost effective way to do this is to bring on an events coordinator who gets paid from vendor fees, sponsorships, etc. as well as a modest payment from the City or MDD. In the long run, the City may consider hiring a Downtown Coordinator, perhaps as a part-time position,



A bench in Wolf Park.

who can coordinate events as well as support the “bigger picture” of Downtown. Likewise, the City could consider participating in the Main Street Program, administered by the Texas Historical Commission.

Micro- Investments

Cities often focus on large, transformative investments, whether private or public, to improve their downtowns. Such expenditures are sometimes needed, for example, major enhancements to public streets that require large capital investments and extensive coordination with other jurisdictions. Similarly, the proposed 1895 Project, led by non-profit Vision Historic Preservation Foundation, offers the opportunity for a catalytic project in the form of high-quality historic restoration with a strong cultural element.

However, such large investments are only a piece of the larger puzzle. They come rarely and often involve factors which are beyond the immediate control of City and MDD staff and other stakeholders. Furthermore, they are unlikely to be successful in isolation as they must be part of a larger strategy. Making many small, intelligent investments of both money and time is crucial to a successful downtown. Given that, micro-investments should be the foundation of Downtown's revitalization strategy.

Tax Increment Funding

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ) capture the increased tax revenue from properties within a growing district and invest that money back into the area (see the Implementation chapter for additional information on how a TIRZ works). Tax Increment Funding (TIF) is the funding that comes from the TIRZ district.

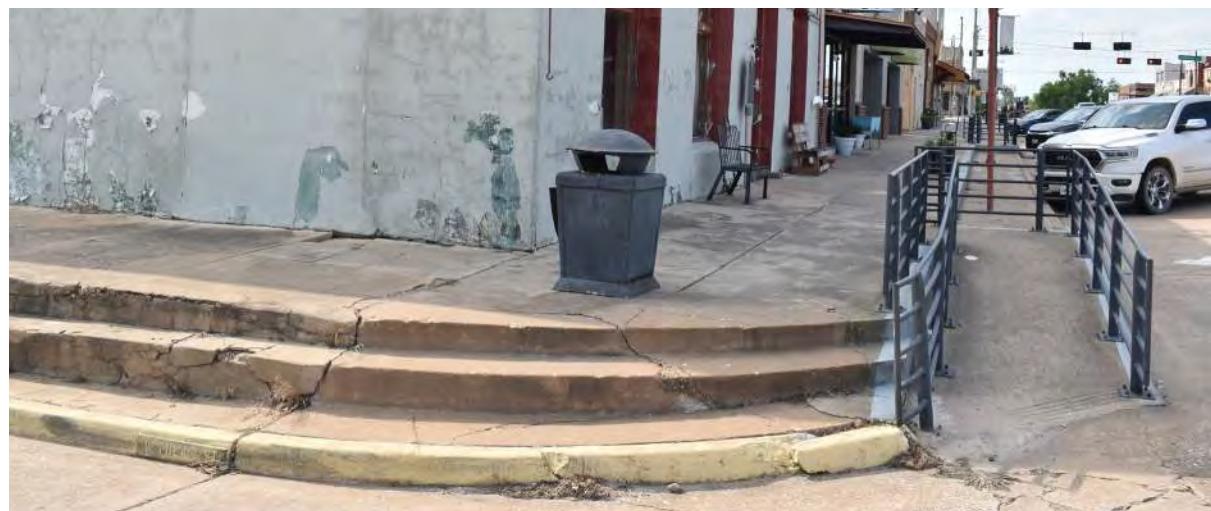
The City of Rockdale has recently created TIRZ #2 (the Downtown/East Cameron Area TIRZ), which begins in the western section of Downtown Rockdale and terminates at U.S. 77 (near Rockdale's eastern boundary). The TIRZ has a 20-year term and will expire in 2043.

This Plan recommends that the TIF funding collected within the district should be prioritized as follows:

- 1. Addressing basic safety concerns** - some Downtown structures pose possible safety hazards; to the extent that buildings are

confirmed as potentially dangerous, taking steps to mitigate those risks via building updates, demolition or other strategies must be the highest priority.

- 2. Keeping streets, sidewalks and common areas well maintained and attractive** - basic maintenance such as weed control and repainting parking lines. Beyond basic maintenance, additional elements such as enhanced paving, landscaping, decorative lighting and crosswalks.
- 3. Supporting active spaces for people** - upgrades to Wolf Park are the most obvious opportunity for this strategy. Since the Wolf Park parcel is owned by the Chamber of Commerce, it will require a partnership and cooperation between the City, MDD, and Chamber. As a precondition for success, it will be necessary to have a maintenance and cleaning plan in place for the park, either independently or in collaboration with the Chamber.



A portion of Downtown Rockdale that could benefit from TIRZ funds for sidewalk maintenance.

4. **Creating “visual cues” to support a distinctive Downtown** - branding elements such as signage, consistent streetscaping, enhanced paving, public art, holiday lighting, etc.
5. **Updating the appearance of storefronts and window displays** - as outlined in the prior sections of this chapter.

To note, the existing five-year plan for TIRZ #2 is consistent with this recommended prioritization. The rough budget over five years, which will likely be adjusted as more information is available, includes a number of Downtown improvements, such as murals, banners, planters, decorative street signs and lights on Downtown buildings. It also includes demolition of dilapidated structures along the Cameron Ave Corridor. Ongoing maintenance of landscaping, trash removal, holiday lights, banners and Downtown lights are also included.

Other items to consider may include repainting parking lines, creating shade structure in Wolf Park, creation of parklets, painted/artistic crosswalks, movable furniture, strategically-placed bollards (to create buffers for pedestrians), and a window display program. These may be funded by the TIRZ, or the City may identify other grants and sources of general funding to support this.

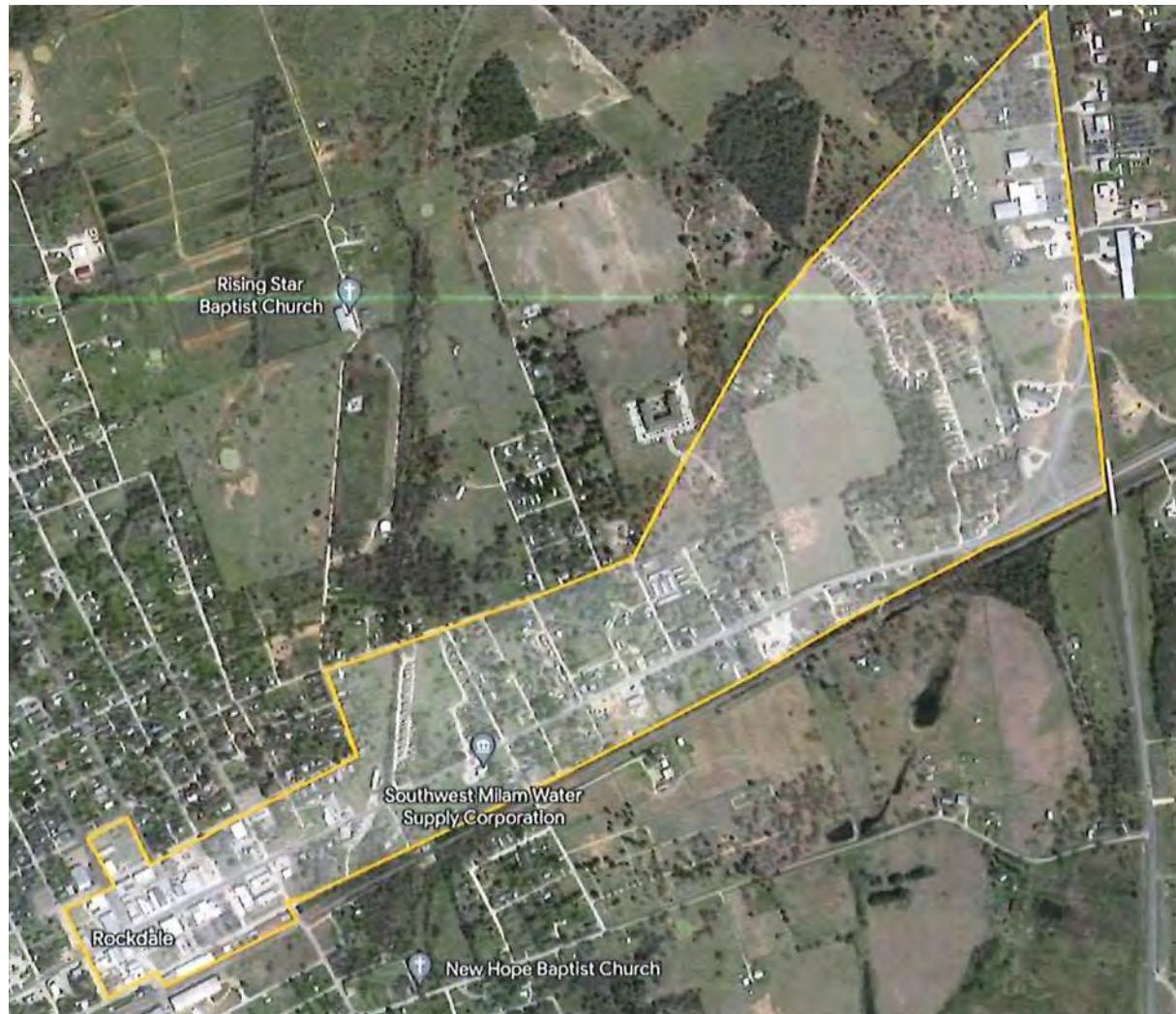


Figure 66. Boundaries of Rockdale TIRZ #2

Source: City of Rockdale Document Center, <https://www.rockdaletx.gov/41/Codes-Ordinances>

Parking

The more successful a downtown becomes, the more parking becomes a challenge. So, while parking issues are frustrating, they also signal that Downtown is a popular and thriving district.

Visitors are often accustomed to having convenient, clearly marked parking right in front of their destinations, particularly if they live and shop in small towns and rural areas. Many examples can be seen along Cameron Avenue west of Downtown, where businesses have ample parking. This traditional retail parking is clearly assigned to one store or a group of stores in a shopping center. In such places, businesses can create large, convenient parking lots with few tradeoffs. However, a significant portion of these lots are often empty, and an empty parking lot is not the highest or best use for any piece of land.

A downtown, on the other hand, thrives when a variety of uses are within walking distance of each other, with minimal gaps or dead zones between buildings and businesses. More broadly, there are tradeoffs between parking and other priorities. Usually the tradeoff is between convenience and economic productivity. A recent example in Downtown Rockdale is the TxDOT project that helped to improve pedestrian experience but required the elimination of some parking spaces. In the future, the City may consider replacing some spaces with parklets (see Glossary in Appendix B), as a way to bring outdoor dining and active public spaces into Downtown, but would be at the expense of one or more parking spaces.

Currently, there is not a broad perception of a parking shortage in Downtown Rockdale. As storefronts fill and Downtown attracts more activity, this will likely change and there will likely be a perceived parking problem. To note, "parking problems" often have little to do with the actual number of parking spots available, but often more so with the fact that the walk between plentiful parking and destinations is not enjoyable.

A parking garage is unlikely to be a good solution for Downtown Rockdale, as parking garages are expensive and can be perceived as unsafe and unpleasant. Rather, the City and MDD should first strategize to use what spaces are available and, if necessary, identify empty lots which can be converted to parking. Secondly, the City and MDD should ensure walking routes between parking areas and Downtown businesses and destinations are safe, interesting, and comfortable.



A "parklet" that utilizes an on-street parking lot to provide outdoor cafe seating for a business.

It should be noted that there is a large amount of unused parking currently within Rockdale's Downtown area.

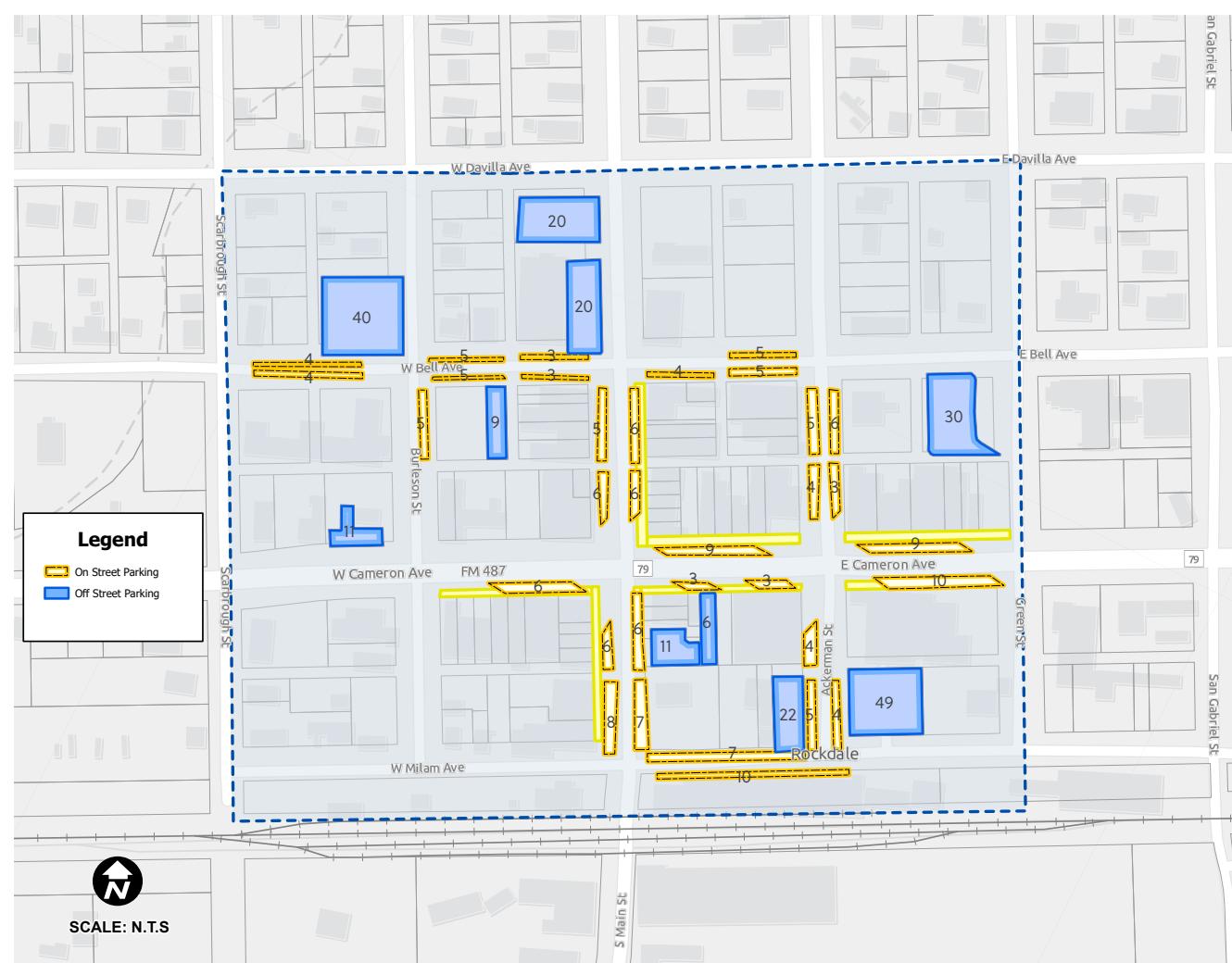
MDD staff conducted parking counts across Downtown Rockdale on 10 weekdays (five in the morning, four in the afternoon and one in the evening), excluding the five days leading up to Christmas. In addition, there were three counts taken on Saturdays, at 8:00 AM, noon and 4:00 PM. These counts revealed a significant underutilization of available parking.

While there are many on-street parking spaces, there are no lots with parking that is available for general public use. Downtown parking lots are owned by governmental entities (USPS, Milam County, Rockdale MDD), banks (Citizens National Bank), or churches (First Baptist Church, First Christian Church). All of these owners have peak times of heavy use when their lots are likely at or near capacity and other times when their lots are nearly empty. This poses a great opportunity for shared parking agreements.

Existing Parking Use Study

Parking Lots (weekday)

Downtown has 10 surface parking lots, totaling 218 spaces. Although currently owned by specific entities, these lots offer considerable potential to accommodate increased parking demand as Downtown continues to develop. The highest usage observed was 26.1%, with an average of 17.9%. The MDD lot, with 11 spaces, displayed the highest weekday occupancy rate, with a maximum of eight to nine spaces in use.



Map 24. Downtown Parking Availability Map

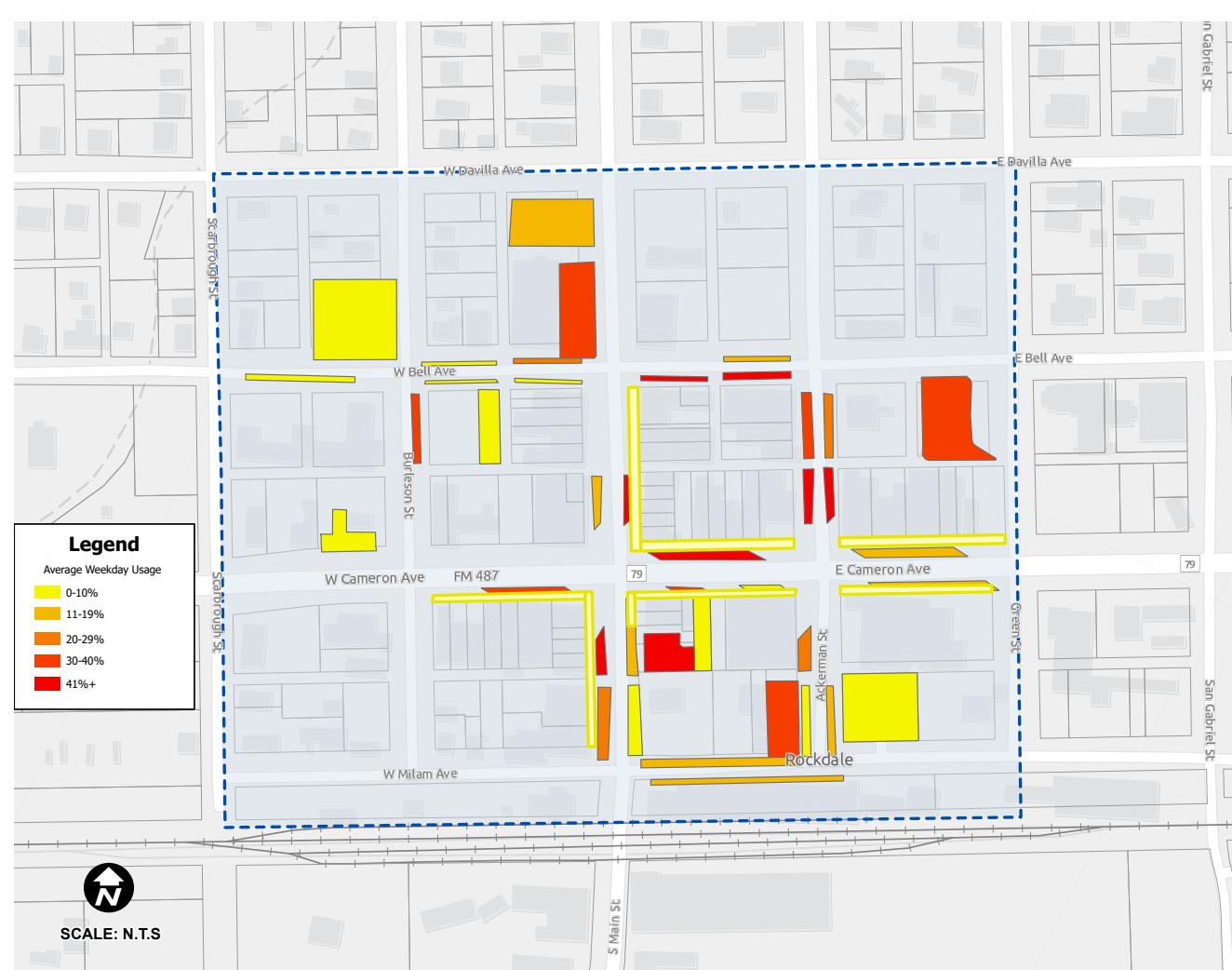
On-street Parking (weekday)

Downtown has 182 on-street parking spaces, which are available to everyone. As with the parking lots, only a small percent are used during the weekdays. These have a total use of approximately 22.8%. Even in high demand areas, there were significant vacancies. For example, the block of Main Street between Bell and Cameron (24 spaces) had a peak observed weekday occupancy rate of 66.7% and an average of 30.7%. For the two blocks of Cameron between Bell and Ackerman (21 spaces), the peak was 62% and the average was 45%.

It should be noted that many of these spaces are currently unmarked, leading to potential user confusion.

For the Saturday counts, it was observed that the vast majority of spaces were empty. Of the 218 parking lot spaces, three to 17 cars were parked on Saturday. For the off-street spaces, usage ranged from 17 to 25 cars parked. This indicates significant opportunity for Saturday daytime activities with minimal impacts on parking.

These findings highlight a considerable surplus of parking availability throughout Downtown Rockdale, suggesting opportunities for better utilization and management to support the area's growth and development.



Map 25. Downtown Parking Weekday Usage Map

Parking Strategy

Downtowns are, by their nature, mixed-use districts. As such, they naturally lend themselves to shared parking arrangements. For example, church parking lots tend to be filled on Sunday mornings, and to a lesser extent during other times (such as Wednesday evenings). Bank parking tends to be filled on weekdays during the day and restaurant parking is filled during the evenings and weekends. These uses can all share parking with generally little overlap.

Public lots which are open to all uses are often most appropriate for a downtown, in contrast to the "each user parks themselves" model which can work in other parts of a city. This is because in downtown it should be encouraged that visitors frequent more than one business while in the area.

A parking strategy for Downtown Rockdale will include:

- Clearly mark on-street parking spaces to encourage use, including signage to direct visitors to side street parking.
- Work with parking lot owners to make parking available publicly, during appropriate hours. As a model, the MDD may consider making its lots available for public parking during evening/ weekend hours as deemed appropriate (for example, after 6:00 PM on weekday evenings and all day on the weekends). Other examples may include:
 - First Christian Church Parking Lot, Bell Ave/Burleson Ave
 - Citizens National Bank Parking Lot, NW corner of Milam/Ackerman

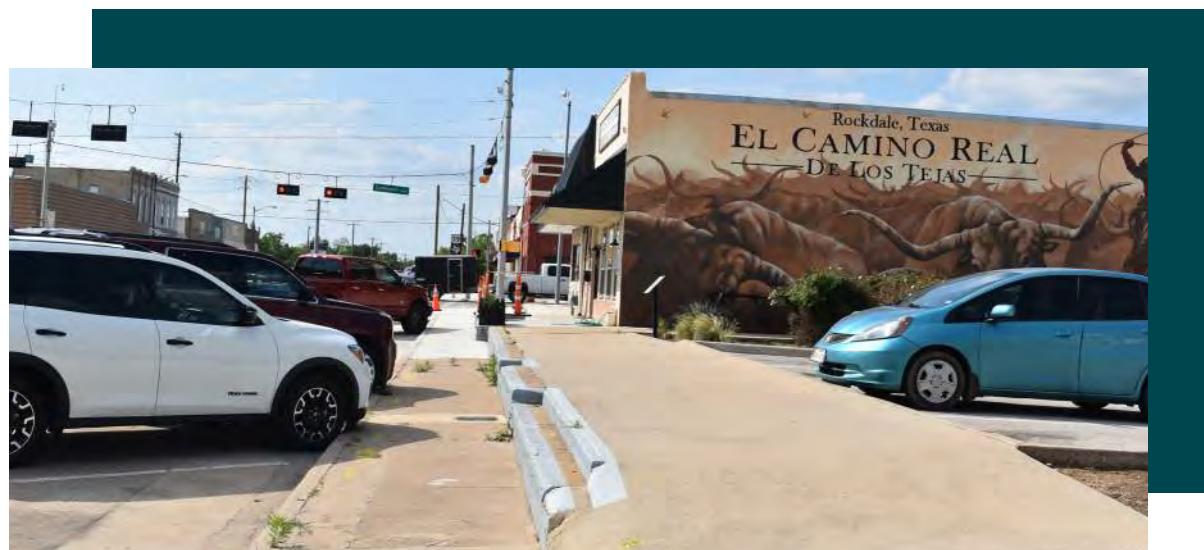
- Citizens National Bank Parking Lot, NE corner of Milam/Ackerman
- First Baptist Church of Rockdale lot, Bell Ave/Green Ave.

- Increase visibility of parking lots with uniform signage and other indicators, listing rules and hours as appropriate.
- Create maps to indicate available parking. As a first step, these can be printed for distribution by businesses and circulated in conjunction with special events.
- Work with property owners and Downtown employees to use more remote parking spaces, where appropriate. This could be led by Rockdale Downtown Association.

There may be enough opportunities to work with existing parking lot owners to address future parking concerns. If not, an additional strategy is to consider the conversion of undeveloped Downtown lots into parking, either permanently or temporarily. While parking lots on Cameron

Avenue or Main Street would have greater visibility, they would also disrupt the continuity of the primary Downtown corridors. Therefore, where possible, parking lots should be located on side streets and have highly visible signage and indicators to direct visitors to these lots with convenient and comfortable walking routes to get pedestrians to their destinations from these lots.

In the bigger picture, Downtown parking cannot be approached in an isolated silo. For people to park Downtown and walk to a different location, the walkability itself must be safe, comfortable, and visually appealing. Efforts to calm vehicular traffic in the Downtown area and to improve crossing conditions for pedestrians will be crucial to maximizing use of existing and future side street parking spaces. While the City maintains jurisdiction regarding side streets, any changes to parking along both Cameron Avenue or Main Street will require coordination with TxDOT.



Activation and Connection Strategy

The presence of two major Downtown corridors, and some minor ones, creates an opportunity to offer visitors a variety of experiences and uses in Downtown. However, it also makes the district somewhat difficult to explore and navigate for people with limited familiarity with the area.

There should be an active effort to create visual cues and uses which entice visitors from one part of the Downtown to another. The use of string lights, distinctive public art, pavement treatments and similar methods can be part of this strategy.

People are drawn to human activity. A series of well-lit, activated alleyways can play a key role in creating additional pedestrian connections between retail corridors. A future plan will be needed to assess how to balance the functional needs of alleys for such things as waste management and access with the benefits of creating an enhanced human experience. It should be noted that redesign of such spaces may prove to be logically infeasible; in such a case, it can make sense to make modest changes (such as murals) where possible, while focusing the bulk of resources on the primary streets.

Some alleyways that may be candidates for activation and pedestrian walkways are identified in Map 26 by the red arrows.



Map 26. Downtown Alley Activation

Alley Activation

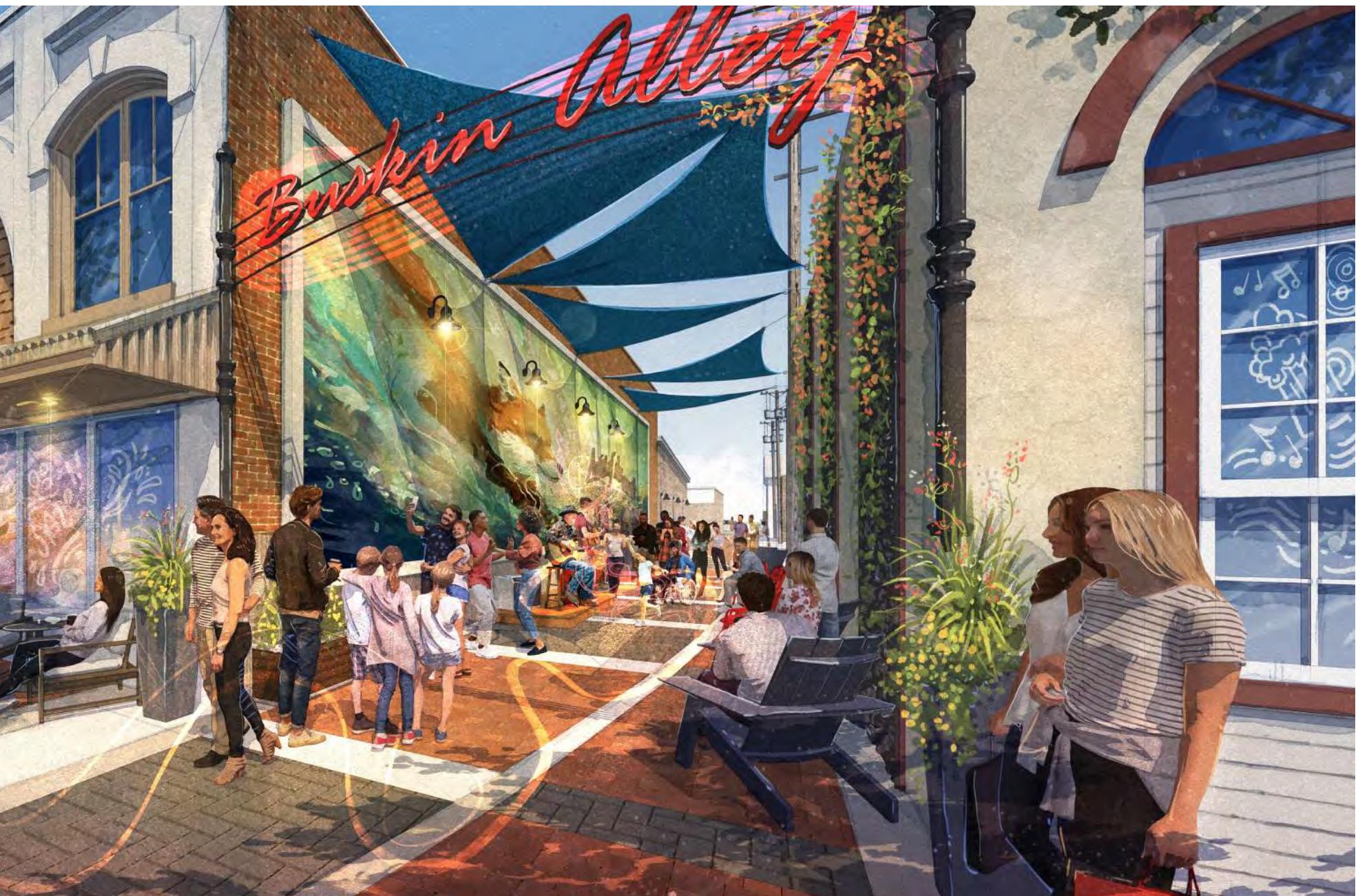
Alley activation could be a great strategy to enhance aesthetics and connectivity in Downtown Rockdale. The concept allows these alleys to remain functional while being able to support comfortable pedestrian movement and larger activations during peak times. Permanent installations could include enhanced paving, lighting, shade elements, and wall art or plantings. All furniture, planters, stage elements, etc. are intended to be movable and could be put out only during special events or put out during the day by businesses and taken back up at night to allow functional access. These enhanced alleys also provide additional branding opportunities and could be named after prominent historical figures in Rockdale.



Typical Downtown Rockdale alleyway.



Conceptual rendering of an activated alleyway.



Miscellaneous Downtown Maintenance

Currently, there is a lack of basic maintenance in Downtown. There is no clear responsibility for keeping up cleanliness in the district as a whole. There are a number of visible issues related to this lack of maintenance, including faded banners, weeds, trash, etc.

While many people may not consciously notice this lack of maintenance, it serves as a negative advertisement for the Downtown area and appears not cared for. This is even more true for public spaces, such as Wolf Park, which cannot be consistently programmed or activated until there is staffing in place to keep it clean. This will require some allocation of funding and resources, either directly or indirectly, in the form of assigning staff time to perform general Downtown upkeep. The landscaping budget identified with the TIRZ #2 funding may be sufficient to address this.



An area of Downtown that requires maintenance.

Leveraging the Historic Depot

The Historic Train Depot, run by Rockdale Historic Society, is currently a museum and weekend visitors center. The model trains, blacksmith shop, and other offerings of the museum pose a strong potential attractor for casual visitors. In addition, recent events such as the living historian on Veterans Day of 2023 showcase the opportunity to further leverage the site.

The dining car is available for rent and seats 32. This space hosts occasional special events, such as a dessert event and a Roaring 20s themed dinner in 2023. Moving forward, it should be encouraged to feature consistent similar events. There could also be an excellent opportunity for

a small diner, bar, or coffeehouse to operate out of this space not unlike similar services found in museums throughout the country. This is one of the low-hanging fruits to create a unique attractor that can bring visitors to the Downtown area.

Rockdale Downtown Association

While strong City and MDD leadership is necessary for a successful downtown, it is not sufficient by itself. Downtown cannot be consistently successful without the cooperation of business owners and other individuals who invest their money, time, and energy into the area. For that reason, having strong participation in the Rockdale Downtown Association (RDA) is



The dining car adjacent to the Historic Train Depot.

crucial for long-term prosperity.

The RDA has an active social media presence and participates in several projects; recent examples include the City of Angels public art project, the Christmas Tree lighting, and the Downtown Sip and Shop events.

For the RDA to continue its success, it is recommended that they set a clear understanding of their goals, mission, and next steps, as well as an action plan. This will also involve specifying what their specific role is and how it differs from other organizations which are active in Downtown, such as the Chamber of Commerce, MDD, Rockdale Historical Society, and The Vision Historic Preservation Foundation. This is especially important because the Chamber is strongly involved with running events and promoting businesses. The RDA may decide to host separate events or offer to take a role in leading or supporting Chamber events.

The RDA may choose several areas of focus, which may include event planning, public art, fundraising for Downtown improvements, promotion/marketing, Downtown business support, etc. However, it will be impossible for them to address all elements of Downtown and the RDA time will be more effective if targeted toward specific mission-aligned efforts.

Public Art

Public art can be key to creating visual cues that establish one has arrived in the Downtown area, as well as useful for bringing beautification, culture and interest. Downtown Rockdale has a base of quality private and public art, including the 1939 "Industry in Rockdale" mural at the Post Office, the "History of Milam County" mural at

Citizens Bank, various art and antique displays at the Patterson Library (both permanent and rotating), and three outdoor murals throughout Downtown. Continuing this trend, the City should place a focus on bringing well-curated, high-quality public art to the area. Creating more murals is one easy opportunity and there are a number of potential locations for these. As with many elements of Downtown, there needs to be a clear "champion" of this effort who can set guidelines, obtain funding, and ensure quality.

Broadly speaking, art serves as an attractor in its own right, as well as a gateway and branding opportunity for the district as a whole. State law permits up to 15% of all Hotel Occupancy Taxes (HOT Funds) to be used on public art, this could be an opportunity to leverage Downtown Rockdale.

Crosswalk Safety

As of June 2024, there have been two recent pedestrian fatalities in Rockdale, neither of which were in Downtown. These deaths underscore what has been confirmed in many discussions with stakeholders, that pedestrian conditions, particularly on Cameron Avenue, are unsafe and uncomfortable.

While this is a problem along the entire corridor, it is particularly concerning in the Downtown area, where pedestrians should be prioritized. One way to help address this is to ensure that there are highly-visible crosswalks, with specialty or colorful materials to attract attention coupled with upgraded traffic control devices such as fully-signalized intersections and pedestrian-actuated signals. Examples in Texas are some crosswalks which use thermal plastic for durability and visibility. In some cases, public art funds have

been leveraged to support "artistic" crosswalks.

Crossings can also be reinforced by pavement treatments, signage, and other cues to alert drivers that they are entering a special zone and to pay more attention. The current pedestrian "beg buttons" on the intersection of Main Street and Cameron Avenue are not operational, further deprioritizing pedestrians. Ideally, such buttons should not be needed in a Downtown context, as pedestrians should have ample crossing time without having to push a special button.



Examples of crosswalks with an artistic flare.

Downtown Action Plan

This action plan summarizes the recommendations from this chapter into clearly outlined action items that should be undertaken to implement the vision. Implementation timeframes shown here are target, but actions can be done sooner or later than noted here based on viability of funding, political support, or other opportunities.

Short-term = 1-5 years, Mid-term = 5-10 years, and Long-term = 10+ years.

Rec.	Supported Goal	Action Items	Implementation Timeframe			Action Type	Key Entity and Partnerships
			Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term or Ongoing		
DT-1	Pedestrian and Vehicular Corridor Enhancement	Enhance pedestrian conditions, including sidewalks and intersection details, along E Cameron Ave/US79, per the existing corridor plan.		◆		Program	Engineering TxDOT
DT-2	Pedestrian and Vehicular Corridor Enhancement (Related to action TR-3)	Balance vehicular needs with downtown-appropriate pedestrian amenities, focusing on beautification, aesthetics, and safety.	◆			Policy	Engineering
DT-3	Pedestrian and Vehicular Corridor Enhancement	Explore redesign options to relocate trees in the median to line sidewalks.		◆		Project	Engineering
DT-4	Main Street Pedestrian Corridor	Improve pedestrian comfort and amenities on Main St, focusing on wide sidewalks, streetscaping, lighting, and encouraging businesses to activate the public realm.		◆		Program	Planning Engineering
DT-5	Supporting Corridors Enhancement	Ensure adequate pedestrian infrastructure and aesthetic maintenance along E Bell Ave and Ackerman St.		◆		Project	Planning Engineering
DT-6	Small Business Support (Related to action ED-10)	Collaborate with Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) to support existing businesses and incubate new ones.	◆			Program	MDD
DT-7	Small Business Support	Continue programs such as facade grants, low-interest loans, and property tax abatements to improve property conditions and encourage participation in Downtown activities.	◆			Policy	MDD
DT-8	Small Business Support	Support a cluster of art- and antique-related businesses in Downtown, leveraging the business incubation potential of these types of entities. This should not preclude encouraging other types of businesses.		◆		Program	MDD
DT-9	Vacant Storefront Activation	Lead a popup or temporary retail activation initiative in vacant and underutilized storefronts.	◆			Program	Planning MDD
DT-10	Window Display Programs	Maintain a budget for matching funds to support window display programs, including themed competitions and lighting enhancements.	◆			Program	MDD
DT-11	Zoning and Urban Design Standards	Consider creating specific urban design standards for the Downtown district to preserve Downtown's historic character and encourage appropriate development.		◆		Study	Planning
DT-12	Vacant Lots Redevelopment (Related to action LU-4)	Identify opportunities for infill development or redevelopment of vacant lots, focusing on missing middle housing products and working with local developers and financial institutions.			◆	Study	Planning MDD

Rec.	Supported Goal	Action Items	Implementation Timeframe			Action Type	Key Entity and Partnerships
			Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term or Ongoing		
DT-13	Public Space Activation & Events (Related to action PR-30)	Redesign Wolf Park to maximize its use for public events and daily activities.		◆		Study	Planning Chamber of Commerce
DT-14	Public Space Activation & Events (Related to action TR-11)	Provide shade in strategic locations and enhance streetscapes to support consistent events in downtown.	◆			Project	Engineering
DT-15	Public Space Activation & Events	Consider piloting street closures for special events and pedestrianizing certain areas.	◆			Study	MDD Engineering
DT-16	Public Space Activation & Events	Implement a festival street along Milam Ave per the recommendations in this chapter.			◆	Program	Planning Milam County
DT-17	Staffing and Coordination	Consider hiring an events coordinator or a part-time Downtown Coordinator to support event planning and overall downtown management.		◆		Policy	MDD
DT-18	Staffing and Coordination	Explore participation in the Main Street Program for additional support and resources.		◆		Policy	MDD
DT-19	Micro Investments	Focus on small investments in Downtown infrastructure, amenities, and programming to complement larger transformative projects.		◆		Study	Engineering MDD
DT-20	Parking Strategy	Strategize to use available parking spaces efficiently, considering shared parking agreements and remote parking options.	◆			Study	Planning
DT-21	Parking Strategy	Enhance visibility and signage for parking lots, create parking maps, and encourage walking routes between parking areas and downtown destinations.	◆			Project	Planning MDD
DT-22	Parking Strategy	Coordinate with TxDOT for any changes to parking along primary downtown corridors.		◆		Project	Planning Engineering TxDOT
DT-23	Parking Strategy	Ensure that all on-street parking spaces are clearly striped.		◆		Program	Engineering
DT-24	Activation and Connection Strategy	Create visual cues and activate alleyways to enhance pedestrian connections between retail corridors.			◆	Program	Planning Engineering
DT-25	Activation and Connection Strategy	Address basic maintenance issues in Downtown to improve overall cleanliness and attractiveness.	◆			Policy	Engineering
DT-26	Leveraging Historic Depot (Related to action PR-31)	Encourage consistent events at the historic depot and explore opportunities for additional services like a small diner or coffeehouse.		◆		Program	MDD Rockdale Historical Society
DT-27	Rockdale Downtown Association (RDA)	Define clear goals, mission, and action plan for the RDA to ensure effective Downtown revitalization efforts.	◆			Study	MDD
DT-28	Rockdale Downtown Association (RDA)	Specify the role of the RDA and differentiate it from other organizations which are active in downtown.	◆			Policy	MDD
DT-29	Public Art and Crosswalk Safety	Focus on bringing well-curated public art to Downtown and improve crosswalk safety with highly-visible markings and upgraded traffic control devices.		◆		Program	MDD Engineering





**PARKS,
RECREATION, OPEN
SPACE & TRAILS**

Introduction

PROST Plan Purpose

Parks and recreation opportunities are crucial quality-of-life amenities for Rockdale residents. Development of a high-quality parks and recreation system doesn't happen overnight. Likewise, decisions about park amenities and recreational offerings should not happen in a vacuum. Rather, a cohesive vision for the community's parks and recreation system must be determined and then guidance provided toward incremental implementation over time. This plan, in concert with the overall Comprehensive Plan, provides that guidance.

This Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails (PROST) Master Plan:

- Identifies the implications of current community demographics and projected population growth as it relates to parks and recreation.
- Analyzes the current state of the City's parks, recreation and open spaces.
- Identifies parks and recreation deficiencies and needs.
- Establishes goals, objectives and recommendations for the next five to 10 years.
- Prioritizes improvements to the parks and recreation system.
- Aids the City in seeking funding opportunities.

This document should be used as a planning tool by City staff, elected and appointed officials, citizens, and the private development community to understand community desires and move toward long-term community success. The plan is intended to help coordinate local efforts for Rockdale and to work in conjunction with Milam County, area school districts, local organizations and sports leagues.

Benefits of Parks

Access to quality parks and recreation is an important component of a high-quality community. Planning for a successful, equitable parks system ensures that all residents can experience these key benefits:

Overall Well-Being Benefits

- Contact with nature helps to improve overall well-being and quality of life.
- Recreation provides multi-generational opportunities for mental, physical, social and emotional stimulation.

Health Benefits

- Access to nature and recreation increases frequency of fitness and improves psychological health.
- Play provides crucial developmental opportunities for children.
- Physical activity helps to reduce obesity, depression and many other health problems.

Environmental Benefits

- Parkland helps to mitigate climate, air and water pollution impacts.
- Preserved open space protects vital habitat for plants and wildlife.
- Parks foster environmental stewardship in citizens.

Economic Benefits

- Parkland increases property values within close proximity.
- Quality parks and recreation can attract new residents and businesses.
- Unique park and recreation amenities can encourage tourism and associated economic benefits.

WHAT WE'VE HEARD: Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails

"Have a strong, up-to-date parks and rec program will not only add to Rockdale's master plan, but will attract potential new residents & increase usage by existing residents."

- Community Member

"More young child programs would be my families top priority."

- Community Member

"Create a position for someone to oversee [the parks]."

- Community Member

"As growth comes to Rockdale, recreation space will be needed. We as a community have to do better to provide sufficient space and recreation activities for our community."

- Community Member

"I think it's important that our kids, teenagers and senior adults have something to do."

- Community Member

"Upkeep and safety is a necessity!"

- Community Member

"Bridge Park becomes a 'node' or stopping point along a sidewalk/trail system. A couple of benches and tables. Plant some trees. Fix up the bridges so they can be walked on."

- Community Member

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Promote diverse programs at parks suitable for all ages, fostering community engagement.
- Increase support for the upkeep of existing parks, ensuring they remain inviting and well-maintained.
- Create parks that are safe and welcoming for everyone, prioritizing security and comfort for all.

Planning Process & Time Frame

In 2023, the City commissioned Freese and Nichols, Inc. to prepare a new Comprehensive Plan and PROST. The Plan's analysis, vision and goals, recommendations, and prioritization were developed to create this overall guiding document for parks and recreation development.

The planning process included a variety of public engagement opportunities to allow community input to help shape the Plan. Engagement opportunities included individual interviews, multiple stakeholder listening sessions and two online public surveys. Detailed documentation of the public input process and responses can be found in Appendix A, Community Engagement Summaries. Full responses to the parks-specific survey can be found in Appendix D, Supplemental Parks & Recreation Information.

This Plan is intended to address parks and recreation needs over the next five to 10 years. Recommendations should be re-evaluated periodically to ensure they are still valid. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department master plan guidelines recommend updating the Plan every five years or before any new major developments occur that significantly change the parks and recreation needs of residents.

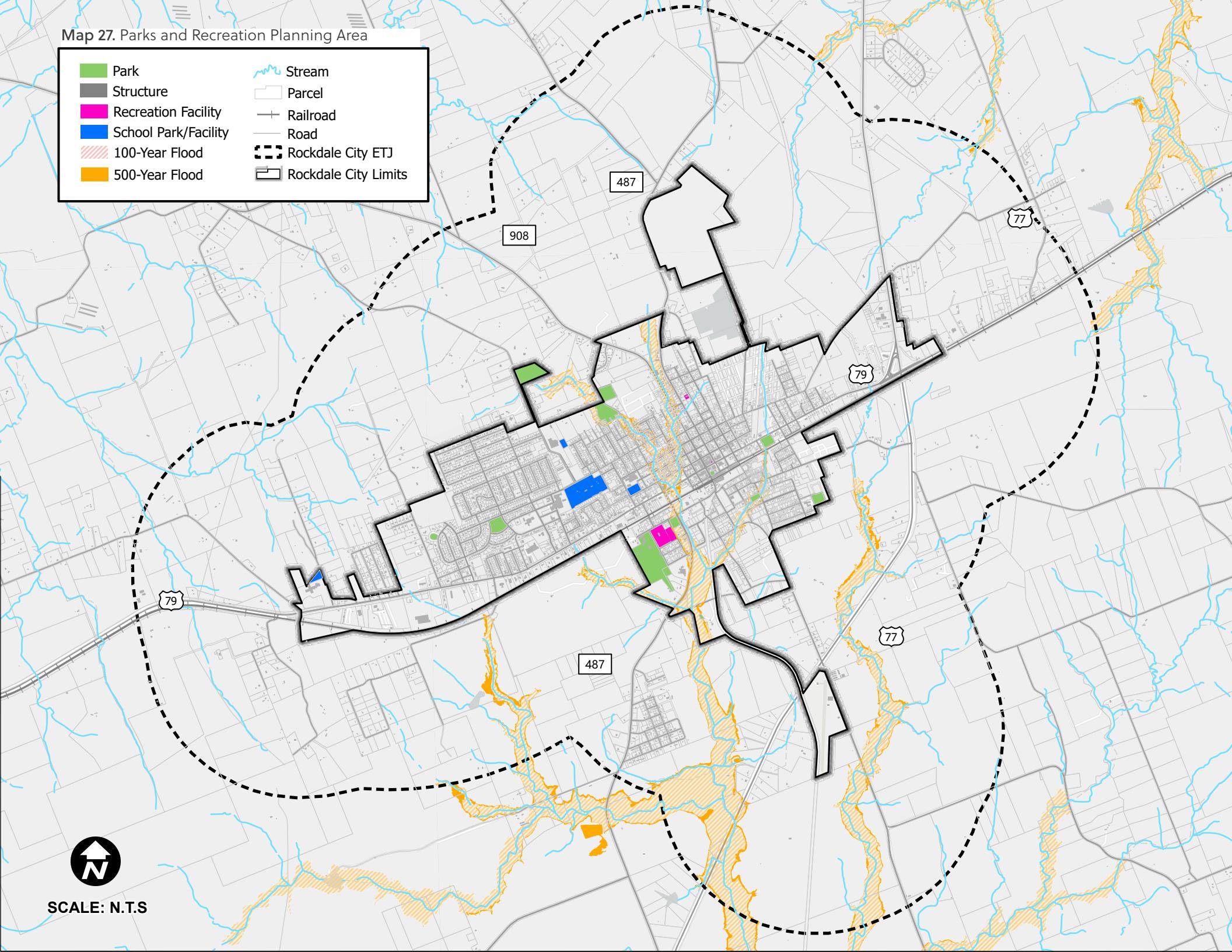
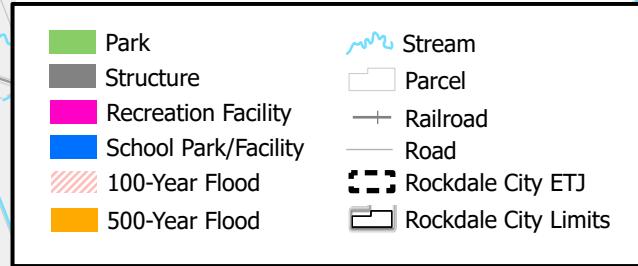
Planning Area

The study area outlined in this Plan encompasses Rockdale's entire city limits and extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), as indicated on the map on the following page. Situated in Milam County, Rockdale holds a strategic location, being nearly equidistant from Austin, Waco and College Station. Noteworthy is the City's recent shift in population growth trends, now on a steady upward trajectory.

The City of Rockdale is the primary governmental entity responsible for providing parks and recreation facilities for its citizens. While implementation will be largely led by the City, everyone in the community has a vested interest in seeing parks and recreation improve and succeed. Potential partners on implementation may include other governmental entities, local industry and businesses, and the residents of Rockdale.

Additional planning area information can be found in Chapter 1, Community Snapshot.

Map 27. Parks and Recreation Planning Area



SCALE: N.T.S

Rockdale Public Works Department

The Rockdale Public Works Department, comprised of three employees, handles the upkeep of the City's parks due to the absence of a dedicated Parks Department. This small department is also responsible for all City mowing and upkeep of City cemeteries and facilities. Based on this widespread area of responsibility, there is a pressing need for additional staff to support parks and recreation. This is essential to not only facilitate the development and maintenance to expand park facilities and addition of events, but also align with the community's strong desire to elevate the overall parks and recreation system to better serve its residents.

Previous Planning Efforts

The last parks planning effort was the 2015 Revised Rockdale Master Park Plan Project Priorities. This Plan offered a road map for enhancing specific parks in the City, presenting targeted updates. Moreover, the document set forth two supplementary priorities, charting a course for the City to realize its vision for additional desired facilities.

The Plan included recommendations for the following parks:

- Fair Park (prior to its sale to the Rodeo Association)
- Patterson Community Center
- Post Oak Place Park
- Moultry Park
- Softball Fields
- Skate Plaza
- Sumuel Park
- Veterans Park

That 2015 document also identified two additional priorities:

- An indoor recreation facility.
- Acquiring land adjacent to Fair Park and the Patterson Center for a Central Park and Recreation Complex.

Furthermore, individual park design concepts have already been created for Bridge Park, Veterans Park and the Patterson Center and remain applicable. These existing park concepts are provided for reference in Appendix D, Supplemental Parks & Recreation Information.



Community Demographics

Rockdale's population has experienced a slight decrease in recent years; nevertheless, the area is currently witnessing an upward trend in regional growth. The largest cohorts of the population today include teens between the ages of 15 and 19, and adults between the ages of 50 and 64. With new opportunities emerging in the area, it is important to offer diverse recreational options suitable for residents of all age groups.

Additionally, the City's population is projected to continue growing over the next 10 to 20 years. Parks and recreation opportunities should increase accordingly to provide quality facilities and programming for the growing population.

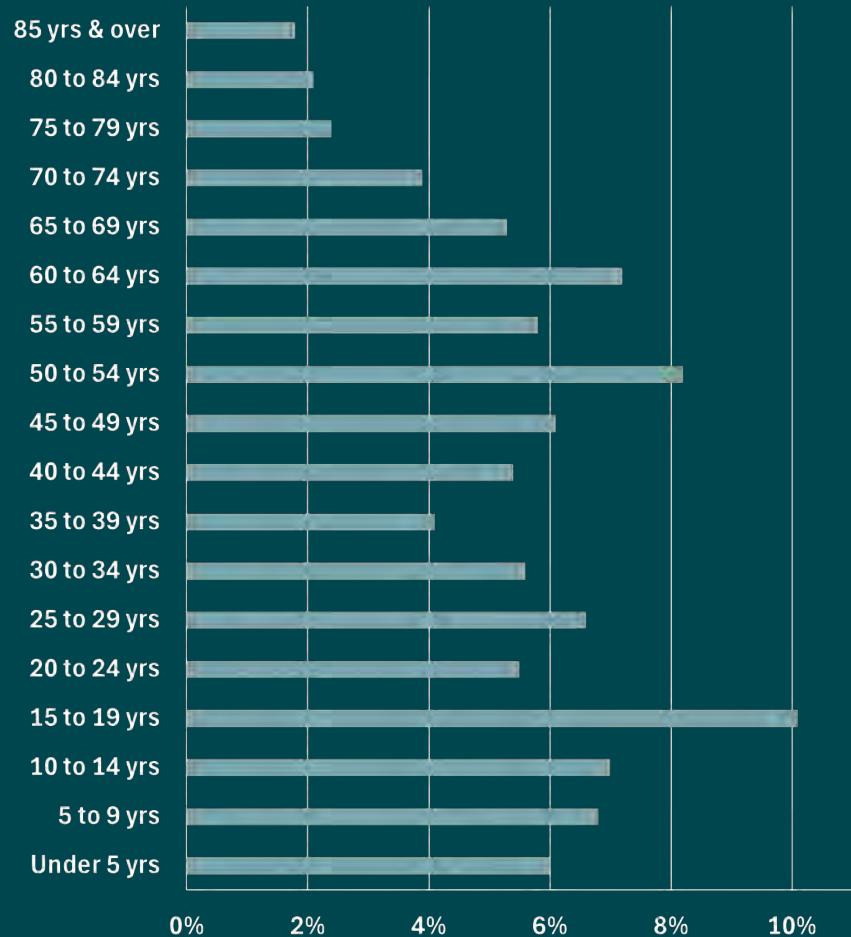
Reference Chapter 1 for additional information about community demographics and previous planning efforts.

Figure 67. Rockdale Population Projections

Year	Growth Rate
	2.5%
2030	6,814
2035	7,709
2040	8,722

Source: Freese and Nichols, Inc. Population Projections

Figure 68. Rockdale Age Distribution



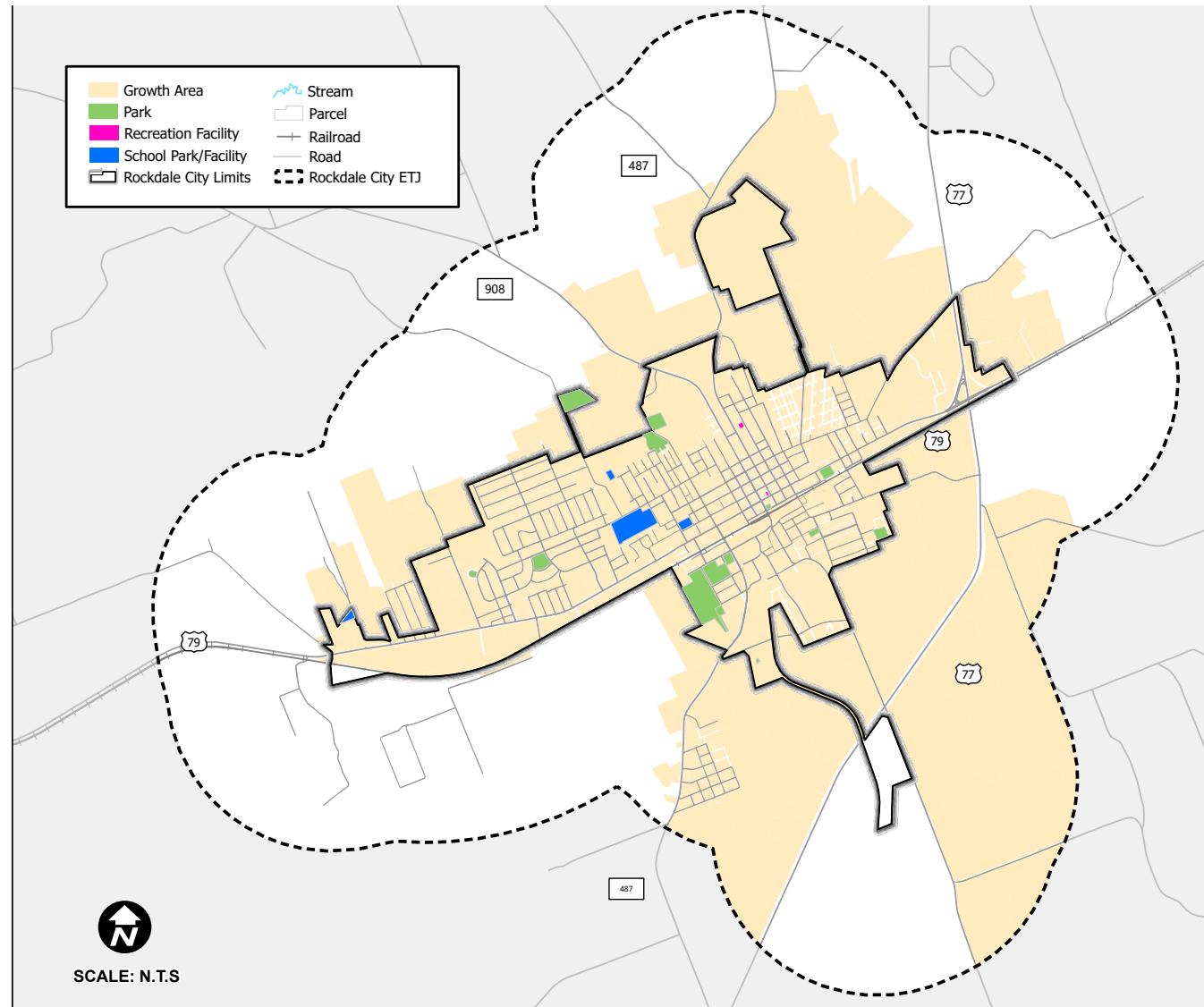
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates 2021

Growth Area

As seen in the population projections, the City's population is projected to continue steadily growing.

While much of the City and ETJ remain undeveloped (see Residential Growth Areas Map), there is potential for future residential development throughout the majority of the City and portions of the ETJ. The yellow areas on the Residential Growth Areas Map include areas where current or future development would likely include a residential component (based on the Future Land Use Map found in Chapter 2).

As the City considers the future of its parks system, it's important to locate parks in close proximity to residential areas. Future parkland acquisitions and/or development should aim to provide adequate parkland resources to serve any under-served neighborhoods in these areas (see the Needs Assessment later in this chapter for Parkland Service Area Maps).



PARK & FACILITIES INVENTORY

Park Classifications

Parks and open space systems include a variety of different types of parkland that meet the varying recreational needs in a community. Types vary by size, function, typical amenities and service area. As the City grows and new park spaces are acquired, an adopted classification system should be used to guide the development for each type of park.

Pocket Parks

Pocket parks provide passive recreational opportunities to a concentrated population within an immediate proximity (e.g., a playground and/or picnic area in a residential area). Wolf Park is a local example of a pocket park.

Typical Size: 1/4 to 1 acre

Service Area: 1/4-mile radius in immediate neighborhoods

Characteristics and Considerations: Pocket parks generally range in size from 2,500 square feet to one acre and usually contain a playground and picnic area. They should be located within close proximity to medium/high density residential areas. They are often located at the street edge and should be safely accessible by pedestrians. These parks are often built by developers and can be operated and maintained by a homeowners association or the City.

Pocket parks can also be found in urban contexts. In these situations, they often include amenities such as shaded seating and gathering areas, enhanced plantings, and water features.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are the foundation of a well-balanced park system and provide the daily park experiences for residents. They serve as the social centers for residential districts in an active and passive capacity for a wide variety of age groups. Sumuel Park is a local example of a neighborhood park.

Typical Size: 3 to 10 acres

Service Area: 1/4- to 1/2-mile radius

Characteristics and Considerations: These parks should be located in the center of neighborhoods with good public access. At least one side of the park should front a residential street. Sites should drain properly and be suitable for a variety of uses such as playgrounds, sports courts, trail access and areas for family functions. Safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle access is important. Locations in flood areas should be avoided.



Wolf Park is an example of a pocket park.



Sumuel Park is an example of a neighborhood park.

Community Parks

Community parks are larger in size and serve a broader population than neighborhood parks. They are intended to meet the recreational needs of several neighborhoods. Park development should protect desirable natural amenities and include active and passive activities for all ages. Veterans Park and Pool is a local example of a community park, as the pool is accessible to the entire community.

Typical Size: 10 to 100 acres

Service Area: 1- to 3-mile radius

Characteristics and Considerations: Whenever possible, these parks should be adjacent to desirable natural resources and have amenities such as athletic fields, pools, playgrounds, sports courts, picnic areas and restrooms. Community parks should be connected to citywide trail networks and be conveniently accessed by cars. Park programming should include adequate space for off-street parking.

Regional Parks

Regional parks are the largest type of park for a typical community's park system. The size varies depending on the purpose and character of the site. Regional parks provide recreational amenities for the entire community and even serve as a hub for surrounding communities. Fair Park and Rodeo Arena could be considered a regional park based on its larger draw; however, it is not publicly owned or available for public use on a regular basis, and thus does not truly function as a regional park.

Typical Size: Varies from less than 10 acres to several thousand acres

Service Area: Up to 50-mile radius, depending on site features

Characteristics and Considerations: Regional parks often help to protect and showcase valuable natural resources such as habitat preserves or bodies of water. These parks include a very wide range of active and passive recreation opportunities and can be an economic generator by attracting sports tournaments or ecotourism or hosting large events. Typical amenities include destination playgrounds, athletic courts and fields, trail systems, water activities, unprogrammed open space, and preserved natural areas. These parks can be located almost anywhere in the community. They should be accessible by car and connected to citywide trail networks.



Veterans Park and Pool is an example of a community park.



Rockdale does not have any regional parks. However, the privately owned Fair Park and Rodeo Arena does draw a regional crowd.

Greenbelts and Linear Parks

Greenbelts and linear parks are often located along linear natural (e.g., creeks) or man-made (e.g., utilities) features. These parks often connect two or more parks or points of interest in a city. They are also used to protect wildlife and natural processes or provide for floodways or stormwater drainage. There are no local examples of greenbelts or linear parks in Rockdale.

Typical Size: Varies based on surrounding environment

Service Area: Varies based on amenities

Characteristics and Considerations: Greenbelts and linear parks include amenities for walking, jogging, bicycling and/or hiking. When property adjacent to creeks and floodplains is developed, floodplain property should be dedicated to the City. The City should not purchase floodplain property unless it provides an opportunity to preserve key natural resources and/or provide a link to another park. The City should also be careful in accepting dedication of linear parks unless they provide trail links or useful recreation. Acquisition of linear parks, if small in size, can burden maintenance budgets.

Special Use Parks

Special use parks can have a wide range of uses, but parks are designated as special use when the park facilities are oriented toward a single purpose. Skate parks and dog parks are examples of special use parks.

Typical Size: Varies

Service Area: Varies

Characteristics and Considerations: Special use parks serve varying user groups based on the programming. The location of the park within the community will vary based on available land and appropriate adjacent uses. Typical examples of special use parks include golf courses, skate parks, aquatic facilities, tennis complexes, ballfield complexes, nature centers or historic sites. These parks can be operated and maintained by the City or a private enterprise.



Rockdale does not currently have any greenbelts or linear parks, but there are some natural drainageways that could serve as prime greenbelt corridors. This image is a regional example of a linear park.



Skate Park is an example of a special use park.

Rockdale's Existing Parks and Facilities

Rockdale's park system includes 18 private and public parks and recreation facilities (see inventory on next page). The parks range in size from less than one acre to nearly 30 acres. The system includes one pocket park, three neighborhood parks, one community park, three special use parks, three recreation centers and three privately owned recreational facilities. The parks are distributed throughout the City, with most located north of U.S. 79.

To further enhance recreational opportunities, the City could consider coordinating with the Rockdale Independent School District (ISD) to leverage park facilities on their four school properties. Collaborating with the ISD can provide additional space for active and passive recreation outside of regular school hours.

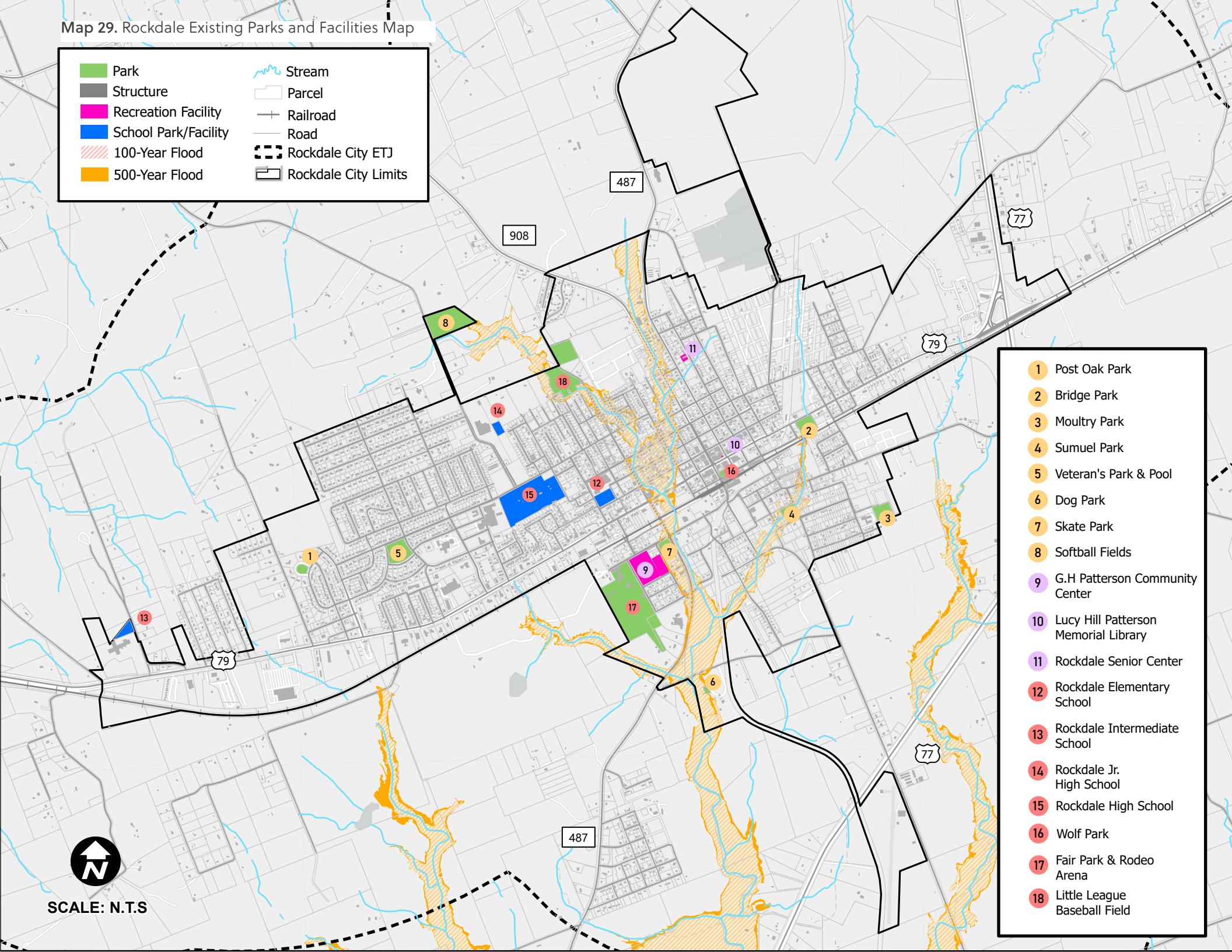
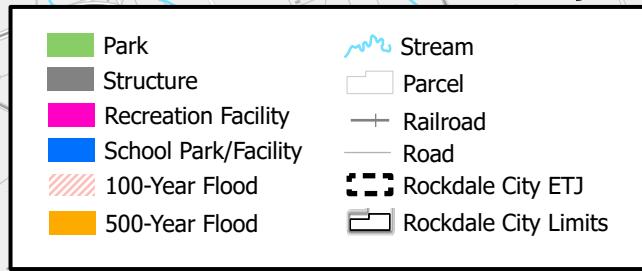
The park system includes opportunities for active and passive recreation. Active recreation refers to structured activities for individuals and teams that often require specialized facilities such as baseball, soccer and football. Passive recreation refers to unstructured activities that typically do not require specialized equipment or facilities such as jogging, picnicking and fishing.

The City's parks contains an even mixture of traditional parks and specialized recreation facilities (e.g., Skate Park).

Based on the proximity between most of the parks, there are opportunities to connect much of the parks system with an on- and off-street trail network. There are also multiple opportunities to expand Rockdale's park programming using the City's undeveloped parks.



Map 29. Rockdale Existing Parks and Facilities Map



SCALE: N.T.S

- 1 Post Oak Park
- 2 Bridge Park
- 3 Moultry Park
- 4 Sumuel Park
- 5 Veteran's Park & Pool
- 6 Dog Park
- 7 Skate Park
- 8 Softball Fields
- 9 G.H Patterson Community Center
- 10 Lucy Hill Patterson Memorial Library
- 11 Rockdale Senior Center
- 12 Rockdale Elementary School
- 13 Rockdale Intermediate School
- 14 Rockdale Jr. High School
- 15 Rockdale High School
- 16 Wolf Park
- 17 Fair Park & Rodeo Arena
- 18 Little League Baseball Field

Figure 69. Rockdale Existing Parks and Facilities Inventory Table - City-Owned

Map Label	Park or Facility Name	Address	Ac.	Park Classification*	Active Recreation												Water Recreation			Passive Recreation			Misc.										
					Baseball Field	Softball Field	Standalone Backstop	Soccer Field	Football Field	Multipurpose Practice Field	Basketball Court	Tennis Court	Volleyball Court	Pickleball Court	Concession Stand	Skate Park	Disc Golf Course	Walking/Biking Trail (miles)	Fitness Equipment	Fishing Pier	Canoe/Kayak Launch	Swimming Pool	Splash Pad	Dog Park	Playground	Horseshoe Pits	Picnic Tables	BBQ Grills	Picnic Shelter/Pavilion	Outdoor Event Space	Restrooms	Parking Area	
City-Owned Parks																																	
1	Post Oak Park	Post Oak Pl	1.0	P																													
2	Bridge Park	640 E Cameron Ave	1.3	N																													
3	Moultry Park	Baxter St	2.7	N			1					1			1													X	X				
4	Sumuel Park	417 MLK Dr at 4th	1.0	N								.5										0.1						X	X				
5	Veterans Park & Pool	Brazos St and Mistletoe Ln	5.0	C									3	1								1		1	X	X	3		X	X			
6	Dog Park	290 Beverly Dr	0.3	SU																										X			
7	Skate Park	Mill St and Wilcox St	2.7	SU																	1									X			
8	Softball Fields	622 Co Rd 305	10.5	SU		4																							X	X			
City-Owned Recreation & Civic Facilities																																	
9	George Hill Patterson Community Center	609 Mill St	9.6	NA																									1	X	X		
10	Lucy Hill Patterson Memorial Library	201 Ackerman St	0.2	NA																										X	X		
11	Rockdale Senior Citizen Center	765 Green St	0.7	NA																										X	X		
Subtotal City Owned Parks and Facilities					35	0	4	1	0	0	0	1.5	3	1	1	1	1	0	0.4	0	0	0	1	1	1	5	0	4	2	4	1	7	9

* P = Pocket N = Neighborhood C = Community SU = Special Use

Figure 70. Rockdale Existing Parks and Facilities Inventory Table - Non-City-Owned

Map Label	Park or Facility Name	Address	Ac.	Park Classification*	Active Recreation												Water Recreation			Passive Recreation			Misc.											
					Baseball Field	Softball Field	Standalone Backstop	Soccer Field	Football Field	Multipurpose Practice Field	Basketball Court	Tennis Court	Volleyball Court	Pickleball court	Concession Stand	Skate Park	Disc Golf Course	Walking/Biking Trail (miles)	Fitness Equipment	Fishing Pier	Canoe/Kayak Launch	Swimming Pool	Splash Pad	Dog Park	Playground	Horseshoe Pits	Picnic Tables	BBQ Grills	Picnic Shelter/Pavilion	Outdoor Event Space	Restrooms	Parking Area		
Rockdale ISD Facilities																																		
12	Rockdale Elementary School	625 W Belton Ave	1.6	NA																									X	X				
13	Rockdale Intermediate School	1338 US-79	3.5	NA													1												X	X				
14	Rockdale Jr. High School	817 Bushdale Rd	0.7	NA								1				4														X	X			
15	Rockdale High School	500 Childress Dr	16.0	NA	1	1			1																					X	X			
Non-City-Owned Parks & Recreation Facilities																																		
16	Wolf Park (owned by the Chamber of Commerces)	106 N Main	0.4	P																									X	X				
17	Fair Park & Rodeo Arena (Owned by the Rodeo Association)	200 Walnut St	30.1	SU														X										2	X	X	X	X	X	X
18	Little League Baseball Field (owned by Rockdale Little League)	908 N. Wilcox	12.0	SU	5													X													X	X		
Subtotal Non-City-Owned Parks and Facilities				64.2		6	5	1	0	0	1	1	1	2.5	7	1	1	3	1	0	0.4	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	7
TOTAL ALL PARKS AND FACILITIES				99.3		6	5	1	0	0	1	1	1	2.5	7	1	1	3	1	0	0.4	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	5	3	6	2	9	16

* P = Pocket N = Neighborhood C = Community SU = Special Use

Post Oak Park

Location and Access

Located on the west side of the City, Post Oak Park is in the middle of Post Oak Place and Post Oak Road. While the park lacks parking options, convenient vehicle and pedestrian access is facilitated through the surrounding roads.

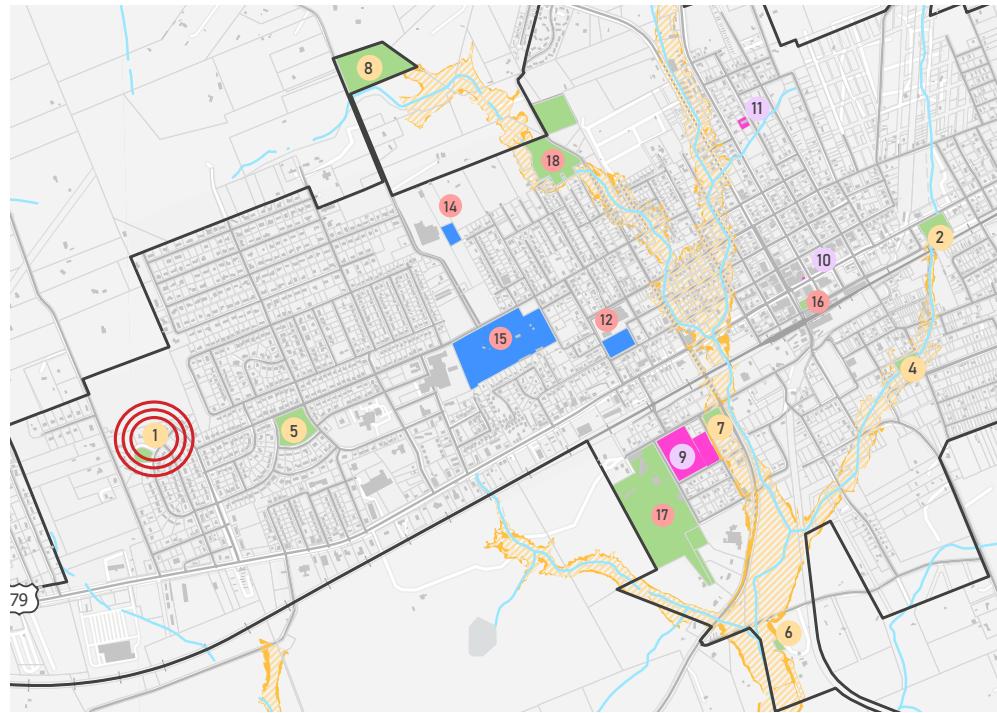
Existing Conditions

Post Oak Park, situated amidst residential housing, is undeveloped with scattered trees throughout. The park is kept neatly maintained, despite its smaller size, presenting an opportunity to enhance the space with passive amenities catering to the local residents.

Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for future improvements and new amenities could include:

- Add landscaping for park beautification.
- Install water fountains for park visitors.
- Leverage passive amenities to increase the park's versatility for various activities.
- Continue ongoing maintenance to keep the park clean and well-kept.



Map 30. Post Oak Park Location Map

Park Location

- Post Oak Pl

Park Size

- 1.0 acre

Park Type

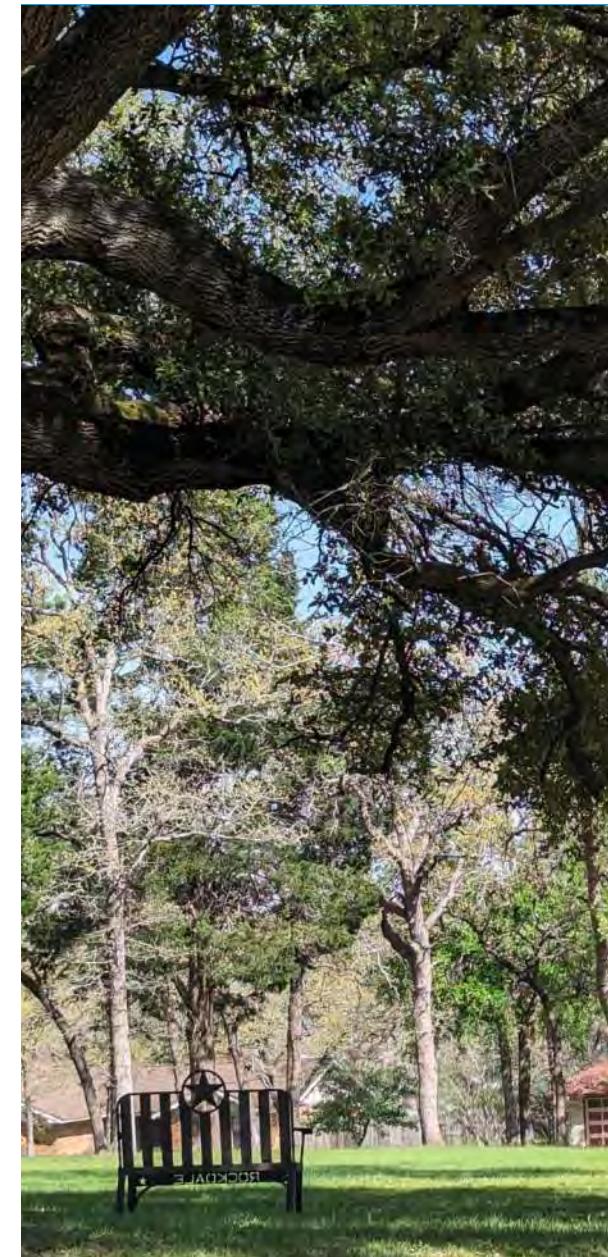
- Pocket

Park Features

- Undeveloped



Map 31. Post Oak Park Aerial Map



Post Oak Park Images

Bridge Park

Location and Access

Situated just a few blocks east of Downtown along Cameron Ave, Bridge Park is in an ideal location but lacks available parking options and pedestrian access. However, as detailed earlier in this chapter, an individual concept plan is in place to introduce walking trails and additional parking facilities to enhance accessibility.

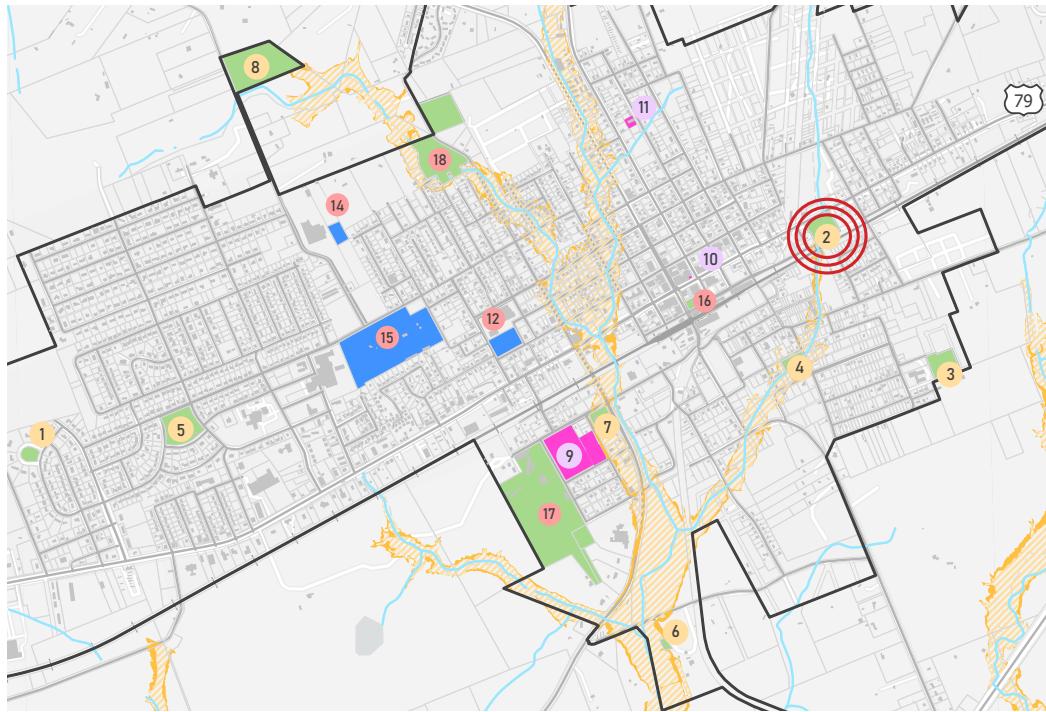
Existing Conditions

Bridge Park presents a vast open space adorned with shade trees and historic bridges that have been moved to the site and placed over natural drainageways, adding an artistic touch to its landscape. There is also a historic calaboose structure with interpretive signage in the space. ADA accessibility is lacking at this park.

Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for future improvements and new amenities could include:

- Implement the existing concept plan, seen on the next page and in Appendix D, to improve access and introduce amenities such as walking trails, a pavilion, play space, landscaping and parking.
- Leverage the site's large layout and explore the potential of Bridge Park to host small-scale community events.
- Capitalize on the opportunity to create connectivity to Downtown by creating a trail west along Bonham St/ Milam Ave that links Bridge Park to Wolf Park.
- Improve accessibility of the bridges and any new amenities via ADA accessible walking paths.



Map 32. Bridge Park Location Map

Park Location

- 640 E Cameron Ave

Park Size

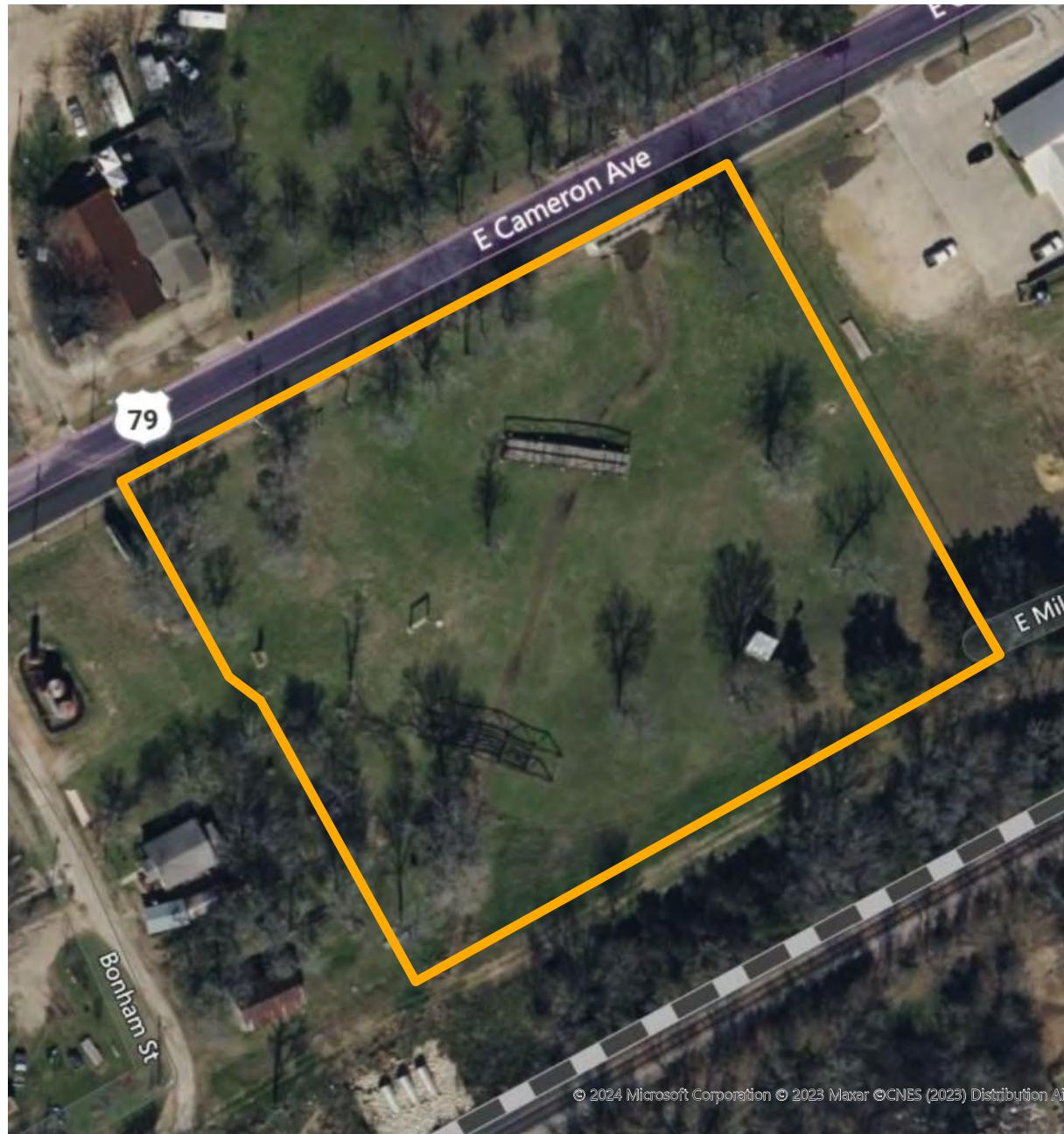
- 1.3 acres

Park Type

- Neighborhood

Park Features

- Historic Bridges and Structures
- Shade Trees
- Natural Features



Map 33. Bridge Park Aerial Map



Bridge Park Concept
Retrieved from the City of Rockdale

Moultry Park

Location and Access

Located on the southeast border of the City, Moultry Park is tucked behind the abandoned Aycock High School. Despite its recreational offerings, the park faces visibility challenges, making access less apparent. Additionally, the road and parking areas are unpaved and only approximately one-third of the site is developed.

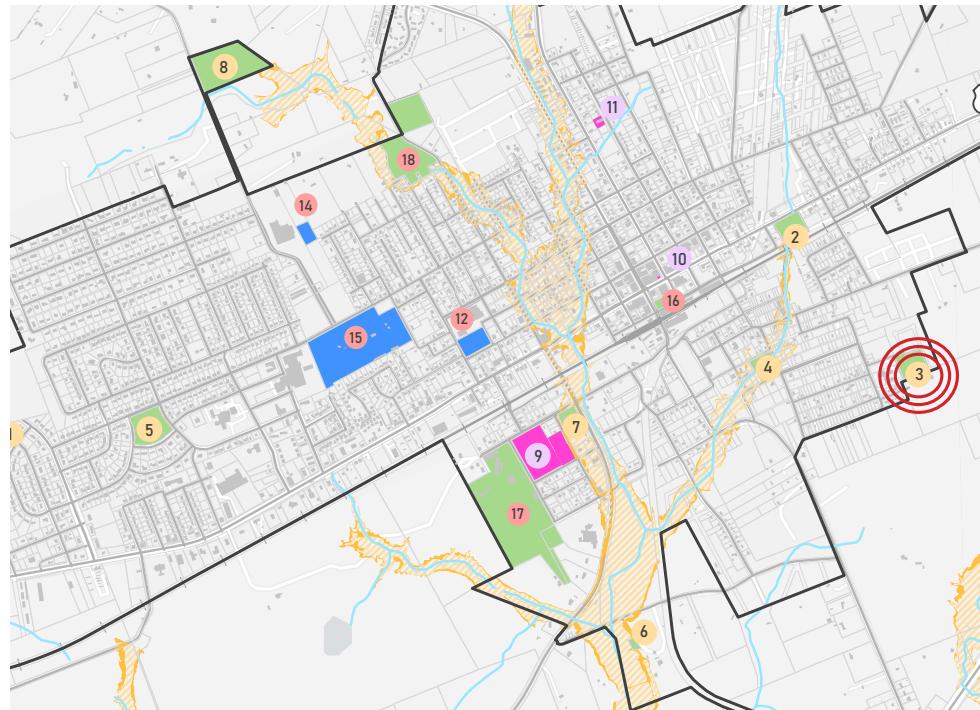
Existing Conditions

Moultry Park offers a variety of recreational activities, featuring amenities such as a basketball court, picnic tables and a playground. However, the atmosphere may seem unwelcoming due to the absence of paved parking and aesthetically pleasing landscaping. Due to its location behind the Aycock High School, visibility is limited and safety can feel like a concern. ADA accessibility is lacking at this park.

Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for future improvements and new amenities could include:

- Cover the basketball court to provide shade.
- Add a picnic pavilion to provide shaded seating.
- Add a multipurpose field and replace the standalone backstop.
- Update and modernize the playground and add a shade structure - consider relocation farther from the basketball court.
- Increase lighting to improve safety through evening hours.
- Add more robust park and wayfinding signage to increase visibility of the park.
- Channel resources into the upkeep and maintenance of park facilities, such as restroom renovations, paving the parking area and installing water fountains.
- Explore opportunities with adjacent landowners to expand the park.
- Connect the park to whatever future use happens at Aycock High School.



Map 34. Moultry Park Location Map

Park Location

- Baxter St

Park Size

- 2.7 acres

Park Type

- Neighborhood

Park Features

- Standalone Backstop
- Basketball Court
- Playscape
- Picnic Tables
- Restrooms
- Parking (dirt)
- Pickleball Court



Map 35. Moultry Park Aerial Map



Moultry Park Images

Sumuel Park

Location and Access

Sumuel Park is located in the residential neighborhood south of Downtown. It provides paved parking and accessible walking trails.

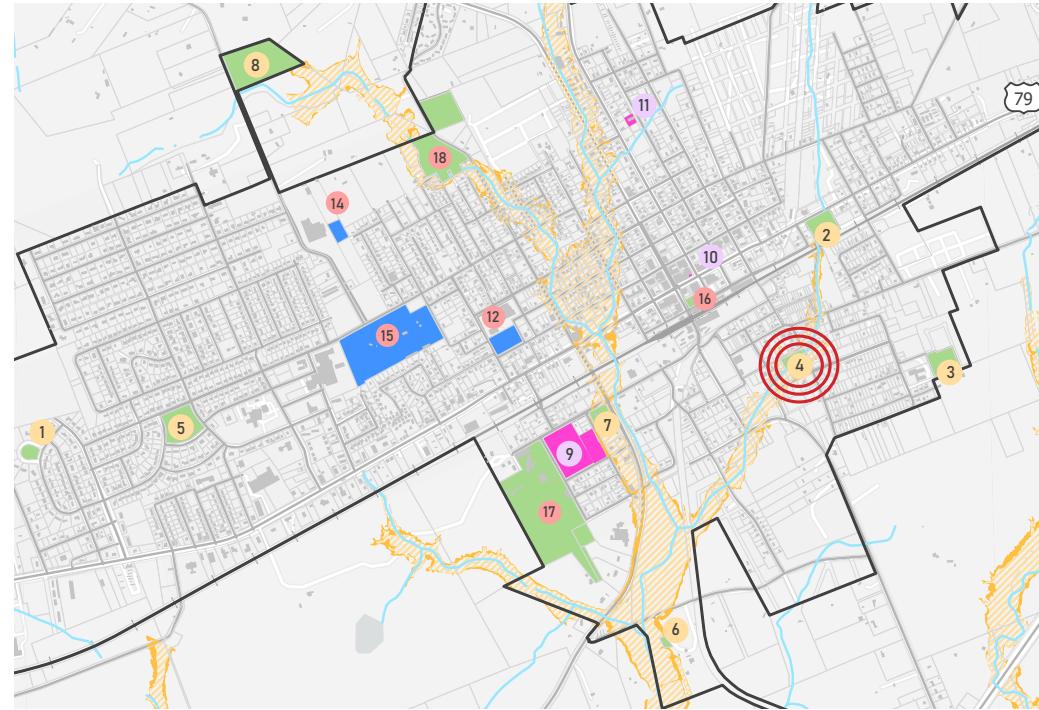
Existing Conditions

A recent improvement project was funded in part by a grant from the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and in-kind donations from Mine Services. Following the recent enhancement initiative, Sumuel Park is a good example of a neighborhood park with an array of amenities. From a half basketball court to a splash pad, the park offers a range of facilities for nearby residents. Also unique to the park is free WiFi and ADA accessibility catering to a broad spectrum of park users. While the park has numerous excellent features, there is room for improvement in terms of overall maintenance of park facilities and addressing safety concerns.

Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for future improvements and new amenities could include:

- Build on the momentum of improvement by continuously upgrading park amenities, such as installation of lighting and additional parking.
- Prioritize the ongoing maintenance of park facilities to sustain the quality achieved by recent improvements.
- Improve the visibility of the park trail by delineating it more clearly. Clear pathways contribute to a user-friendly environment, encouraging more residents to explore the park's offerings.



Map 36. Sumuel Park Location Map

Park Location

- 417 Martin Luther King Dr at 4th Ave

Park Size

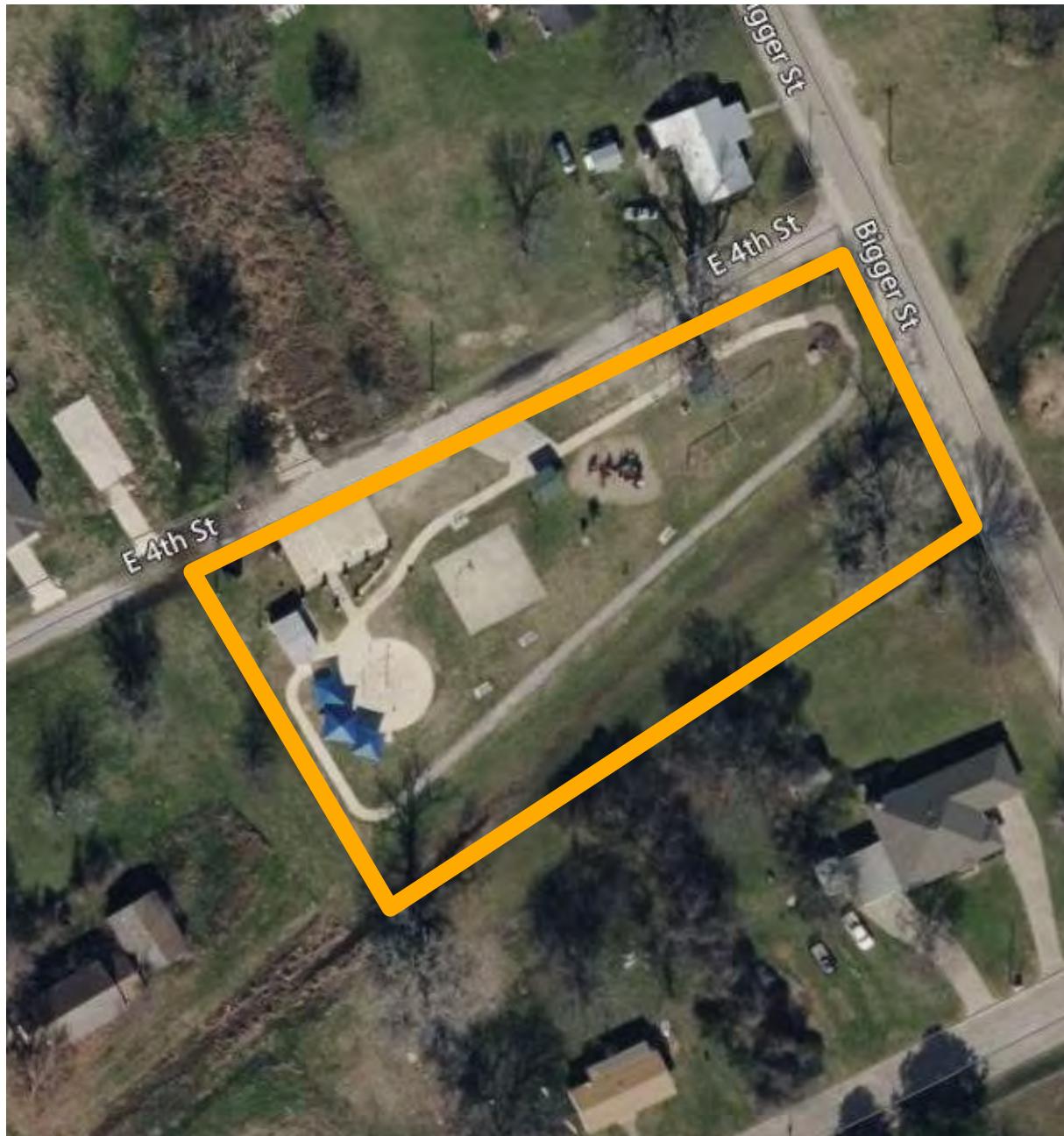
- 1.0 acres

Park Type

- Neighborhood

Park Features

- Half Basketball Court
- Splash Pad
- Playground
- Shaded Seating
- BBQ Grill
- Picnic Pavilions
- Restrooms
- Parking
- Walking Trail



Map 37. Sumuel Park Aerial Map



Sumuel Park Images

Veterans Park and Pool

Location and Access

Veterans Park and Pool is the primary developed green space on the west side of the City, nestled within a residential neighborhood and near Rockdale High School. Offering parking opportunities along its perimeter, this park is easily accessible for the community.

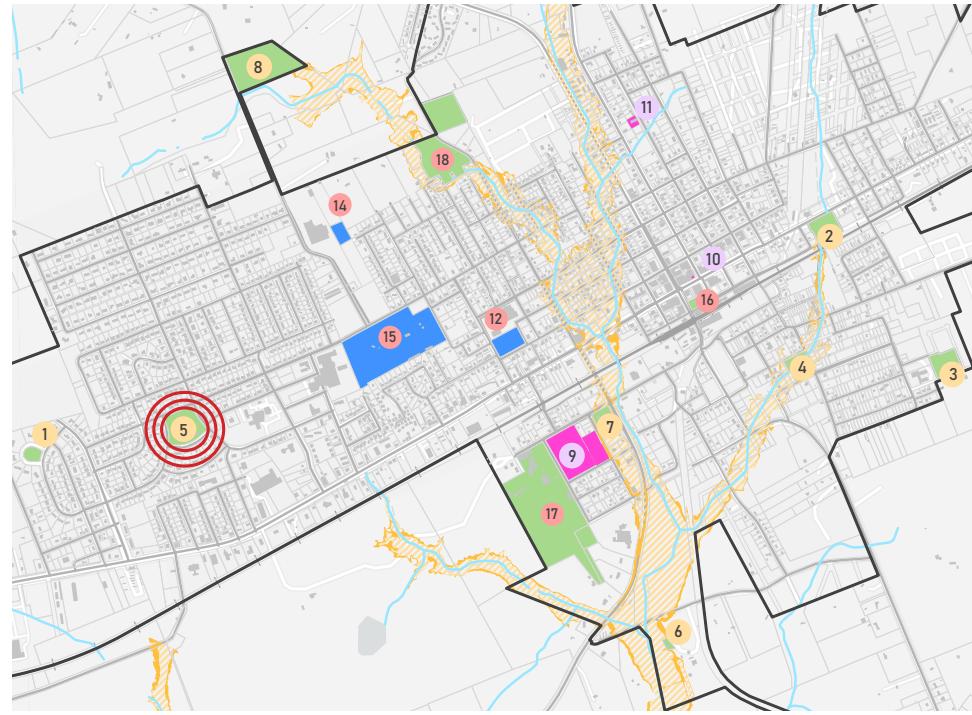
Existing Conditions

Its name is derived from the Veterans Memorial at the northwest corner, with a concept plan in place to amplify its significance and enhance the surrounding area. While Veterans Park currently boasts large shade trees and an array of amenities, including tennis courts, a rentable pavilion and playgrounds for different ages, there are opportunities for beautification and maintenance of existing facilities. Some of the play structures have safety concerns. Notably unique to the park is its swimming pool, managed by the Hutto, Texas YMCA of Greater Williamson County. ADA accessibility is lacking at this park.

Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for future improvements and new amenities could include:

- Prioritize the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of park facilities to ensure an inviting and safe environment for park users.
- Take action on the concept plan designed to enhance the Veterans Memorial, as seen on the next page and in Appendix D.
- Consider additional amenities to enhance the park experience, such as installation of exercise stations, lighting and a splash pad.
- Enhance the park's user-friendly features by clearly delineating the walking trail.
- Strengthen coordination efforts with the Hutto, Texas YMCA of Greater Williamson County to manage the swimming pool, exploring opportunities for expansion, upgrades and community engagement.
- Create a safe park environment by promptly addressing and fixing any equipment issues as they arise.



Map 38. Veterans Park Location Map

Park Location

- Brazos St and Mistletoe Ln

Park Size

- 5.0 acres

Park Type

- Community

Park Features

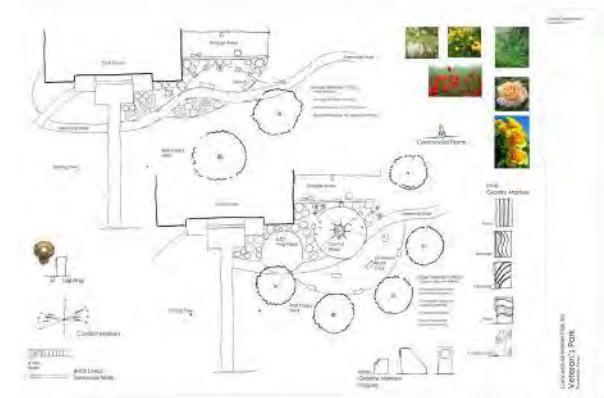
- Tennis Courts
- Volleyball Court
- Walking Trail
- Swimming Pool
- Multiple Playgrounds
- Picnic Tables
- Pavilion
- Restrooms
- Parking
- BBQ Grill



Map 39. Veterans Park Aerial Map



Veterans Park Images



Veterans Park Concept
Retrieved from the City of Rockdale

Dog Park

Location and Access

Situated adjacent to the Rockdale Dog Shelter, the Dog Park offers easy access with available parking at the shelter premises. However, the location far south of town feels out of the way for many residents and the entryway (shared by the City's water treatment plant) does not feel welcoming to public users.

Existing Conditions

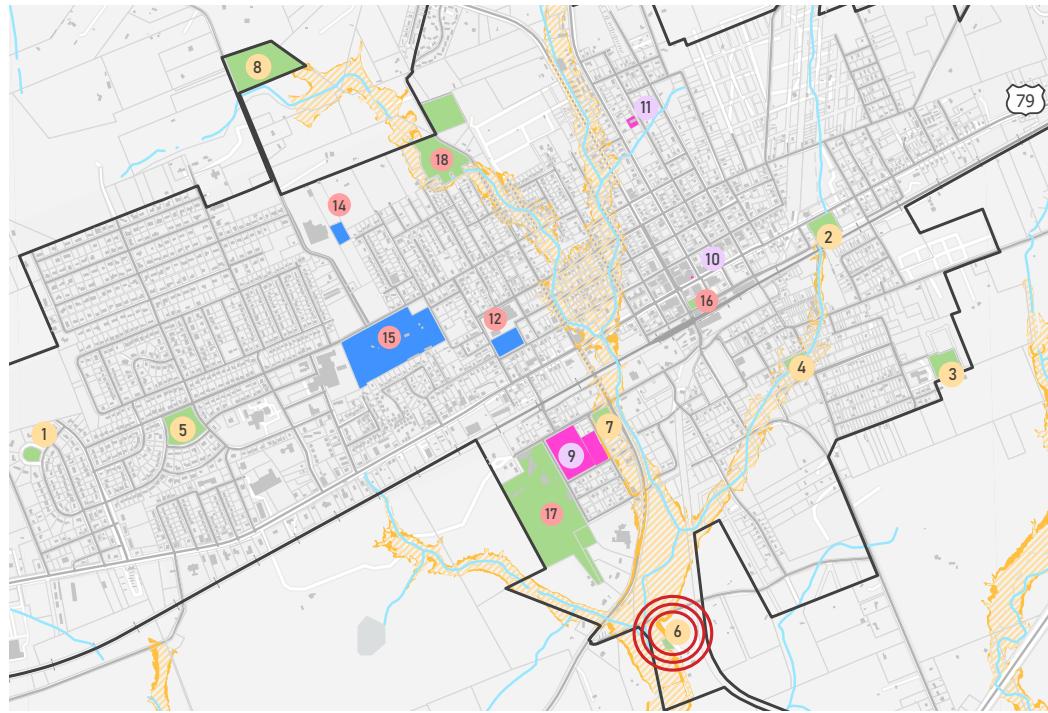
The Dog Park provides the basic amenities including a fully-fenced canine play area with double entry gates, a drinking water source for pets and dog agility obstacles. Presently, the Dog Park occupies a compact space, raising concerns about potential cross-contamination due to its proximity to the dog shelter. The City has future plans to install park benches and a shade structure along with additional obstacle course activities for dogs. Also in the works is an expansion to include a separate large dog area.

The City has also considered relocating the dog park to Fatheree Field, a former ball field adjacent to the existing Dog Park site.

Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for future improvements and new amenities could include:

- Consider relocating the Dog Park to Fatheree Field if improvements are made to the road quality on Beverly Dr, or alternatively, explore relocating it to the vacant land surrounding the George Hill Patterson Community Center. Relocation would offer the prospect of significantly expanding its size, providing ample space for dogs to roam and play.
- Upon relocation, explore the opportunity to enhance amenities that cater to both dogs and their owners. This could include agility courses, shaded areas and seating.
- Provide clearer signage and more formalized parking areas to help promote this as a public space.



Map 40. Dog Park Location Map

Park Location

- 290 Beverly Dr

Park Size

- 0.25 acres

Park Type

- Special Use

Park Features

- Parking (gravel)
- Fenced Area
- Agility Obstacles



Map 41. Dog Park Aerial Map



Dog Park Images

Skate Park

Location and Access

Skate Park is located just east of the George Hill Patterson Community Center. Access to this park is available via local neighborhood streets off Mill Ave, with parking located along Pine St.

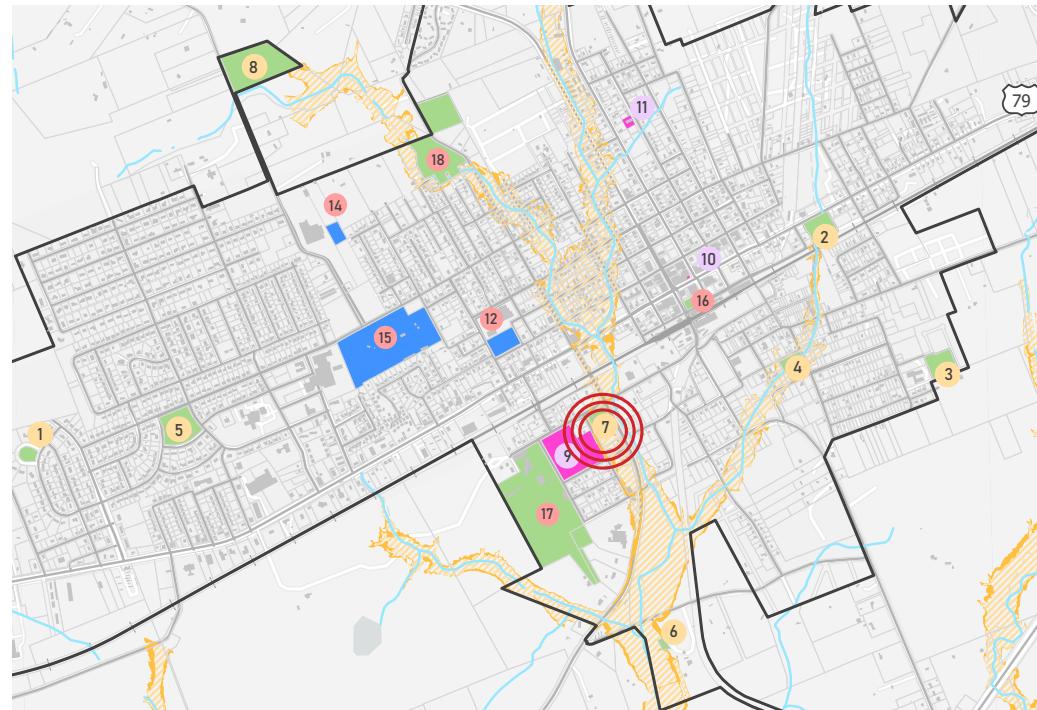
Existing Conditions

Primarily designed for skateboarding and rollerblading, the site also exhibits the Historic Henderson Crossing Bridge. A large portion of the park property remains undeveloped; however, it is important to note this area is located within the floodplain. Additionally, a notable concern is offensive graffiti on the park amenities.

Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for future improvements and new amenities could include:

- Maintain the safety of the current skate park structures. Regular inspections and upkeep can contribute to a safe environment for users.
- Expand the range of park activities, taking into consideration the functionality of the floodplain, as a considerable amount of the park has unused space.
- Maintain an ongoing commitment to the overall appearance of the park beyond the skate facilities.
- Enhance visitor experience by providing additional amenities, such as picnic tables, shade structures and restrooms.
- Connect the park to the George Hill Patterson Community Center and Fair Park & Rodeo Arena with walking trails.



Map 42. Skate Park Location Map

Park Location

- Mill St and Wilcox St

Park Size

- 2.7 acres

Park Type

- Special Use

Park Features

- Parking
- Skateboard Ramps
- Benches



Map 43. Skate Park Aerial Map



Skate Park Images

Softball Fields

Location and Access

Situated at the most northern park in the City, the Softball Fields are conveniently accessible via County Road 305, and include unpaved parking facilities.

Existing Conditions

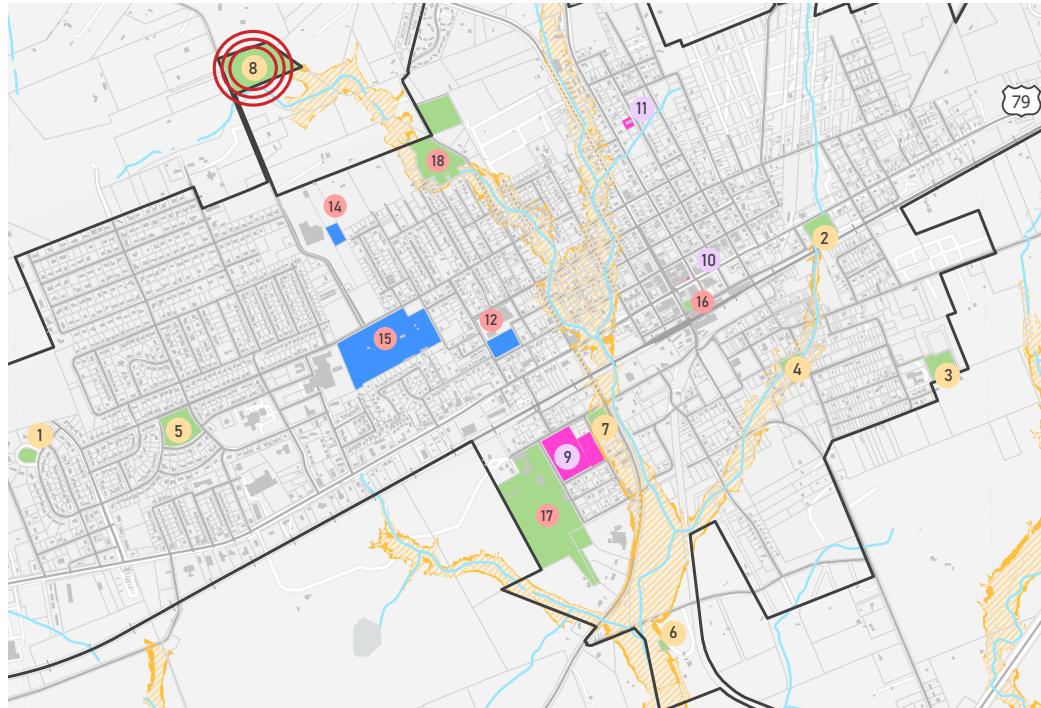
Comprising four softball fields, the site offers an array of visitor amenities, including a concession stand, restrooms, playground and picnic tables. While providing essential facilities, there is a need for general upgrades and maintenance to enhance the overall user experience. The fields host youth softball leagues for ages four to 15 years.

This site used to be the City landfill, so options for redevelopment are limited due to environmental and regulatory concerns.

Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for future improvements and new amenities could include:

- Prioritize maintenance of the softball fields to establish a safe and enjoyable playing environment, such as improving the fence and sod on the fields.
- Create avenues for increased use of the softball fields to contribute to a more vibrant community space.
- Consider developing the Softball Fields into a new animal shelter and dog park if a regional softball and baseball field is developed within the City, as there is a desire to enhance these facilities and parks.



Map 44. Softball Fields Location Map

Park Location

- 622 County Road 305

Park Size

- 10.5 acres

Park Type

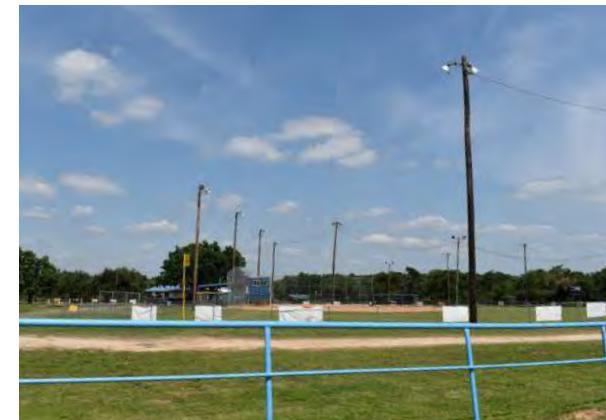
- Special Use

Park Features

- Softball Fields
- Concession Stand
- Playground
- Picnic Tables
- Restrooms
- Parking
- Covered Seating



Map 45. Softball Fields Aerial Map



Softball Fields Images

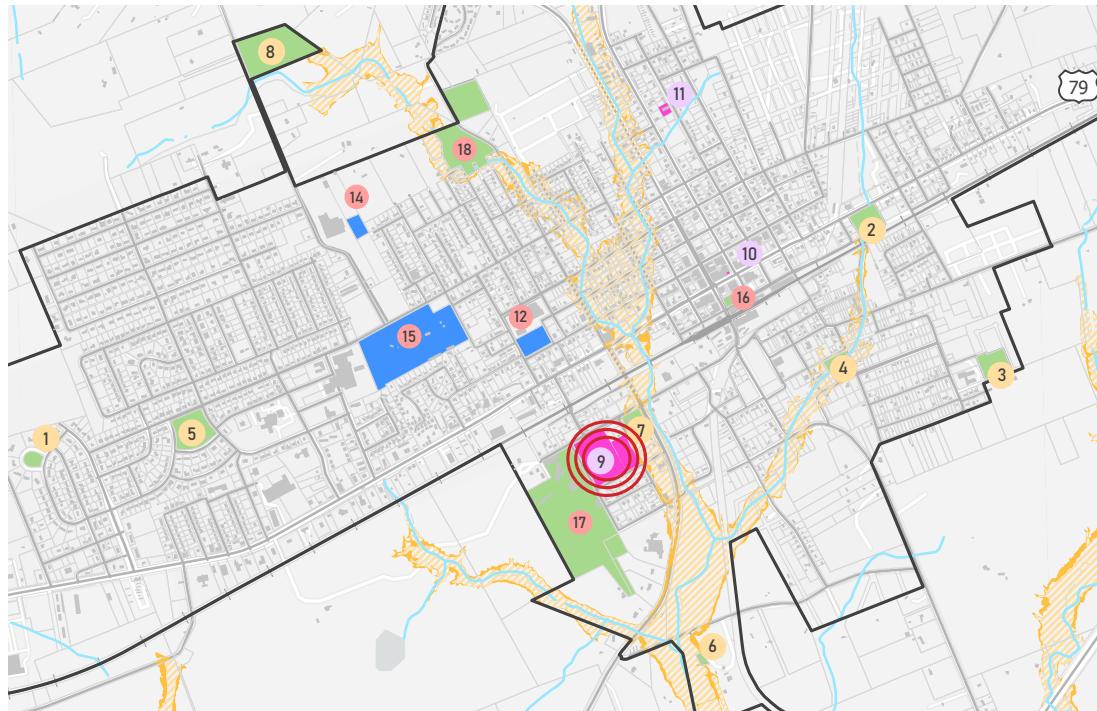
George Hill Patterson Community Center

Location and Access

Located at 609 Mill St, the George Hill Patterson Community Center is positioned just south of Cameron Ave and adjacent the Fair Park & Rodeo Arena. A good sized parking lot sits at the front of the property.

Existing Conditions

The Center, encompassing a main building along with a spacious lawn and landscaped area, offers a versatile space for various events. Inside, amenities include a fully equipped kitchen, restrooms, free WiFi and a flexible configuration layout to cater to diverse community needs. The Center is available for rent, providing an accessible venue for anyone in the community. The 9.6-acre site provides nice outdoor lawn space with large shade trees, but is under-amenitized. The west side of the building provides a small outdoor stage with lawn seating area for indoor/outdoor events.

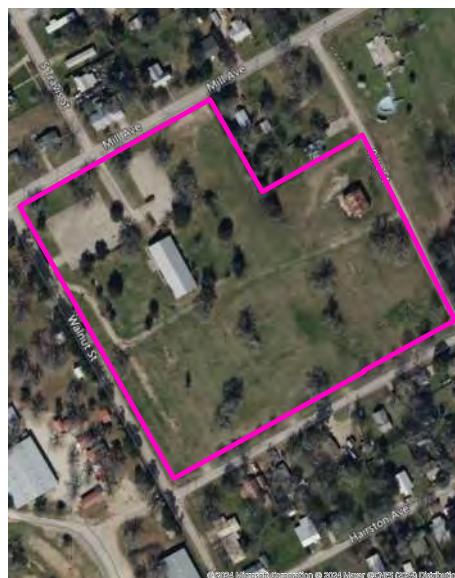


Map 46. Patterson Center Location Map

Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for future improvements and new amenities could include:

- Provide additional park amenities and programming to maximize the utilization of the site's outdoor spaces. Consider enhancing the open space with park amenities such as picnic facilities, covered playground and loop trail. The site is also large enough for active amenities such as a multipurpose practice field or soccer field, if desired.
- Prioritize ongoing funding for the maintenance and upkeep of the Center to uphold its usability and attractiveness.
- Connect the new outdoor park spaces to adjacent amenities, including Fair Park and Skate Park.
- Explore implementing the Patterson Center Park Concept as seen to the right and in Appendix D.



Patterson Center Aerial & Context



Patterson Center Park Concept
Provided by the Rockdale MDD

Lucy Hill Patterson Memorial Library

Location and Access

Lucy Hill Patterson Memorial Library, located at 201 Ackerman St, is at the corner of Ackerman and Cameron Ave. On-street parking lines both sides of the road-front building. Pedestrians can access the library using sidewalks along both streets, though the adjacent neighborhoods lack sidewalks.

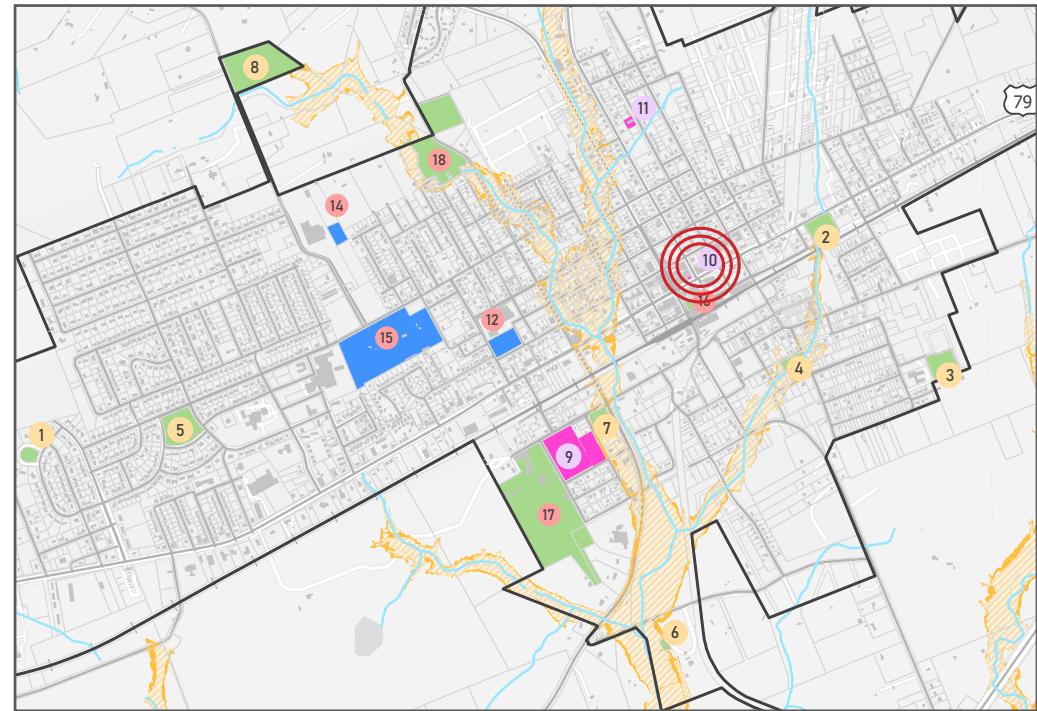
Existing Conditions

The library, home to a small green space adjacent to Cameron Avenue, pays tribute to E.M. Scarbrough with a memorial. This area also commemorates the Scarbrough & Hicks Co. Building Fire and houses the Rockdale Centennial time capsule. Offering an array of resources, the library features programming for children and adults, WiFi, computers, eBooks and more.

Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for future improvements and new amenities could include:

- Ensure continued funding for the maintenance and upkeep of the library to preserve its functionality and appeal.
- Establish a collaborative approach with the community to identify programming needs.



Map 47. Patterson Library Location Key Map



Patterson Library Aerial & Context

Rockdale Senior Citizens Center

Location and Access

Situated at 765 Green St, the Rockdale Senior Citizens Center stands at the heart of the City, offering a central location for citizens. A parking lot is located at the front of the building.

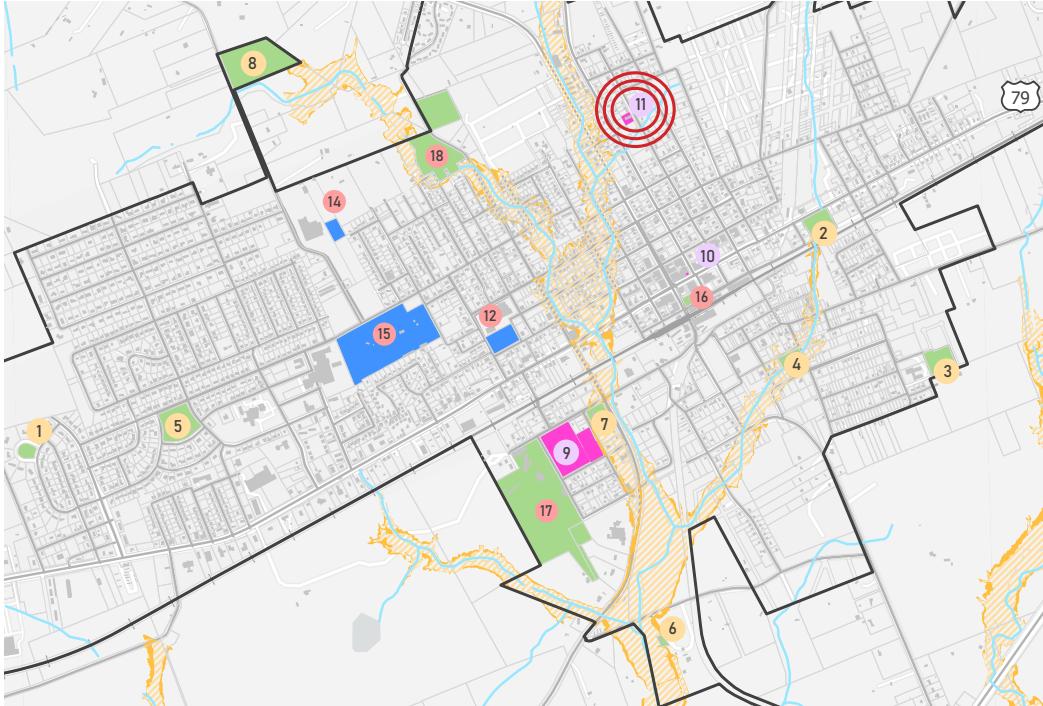
Existing Conditions

The center hosts a range of activities, including arts and crafts, bingo, cards, exercise equipment and monthly events. For those who register, a daily lunch service is also provided. Ensuring inclusivity, the center is equipped with ADA accessibility, a multipurpose room and restroom facilities.

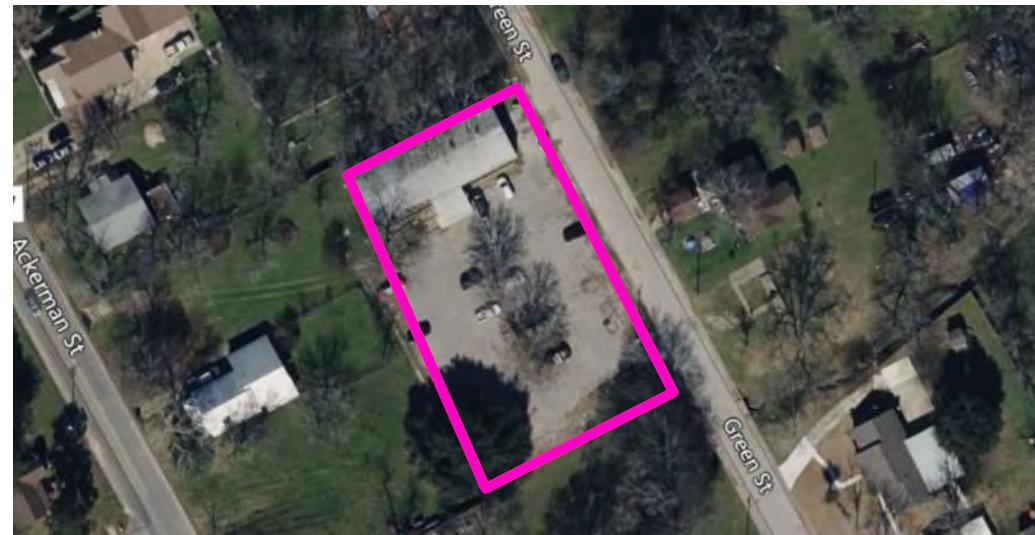
Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for future improvements and new amenities could include:

- Coordinate with seniors to tailor additional programming that meets their interests and addresses any specific concerns they may have.
- Prioritize the ongoing upkeep and maintenance of the building to provide visitors with the best possible experience.



Map 48. Senior Citizens Center Location Map



Senior Center Aerial & Context

Fair Park & Rodeo Arena

Location and Access

Fair Park & Rodeo Arena is located at 200 Walnut St, just west of the George Hill Patterson Community Center. Visitors have plenty of on-site parking during events.

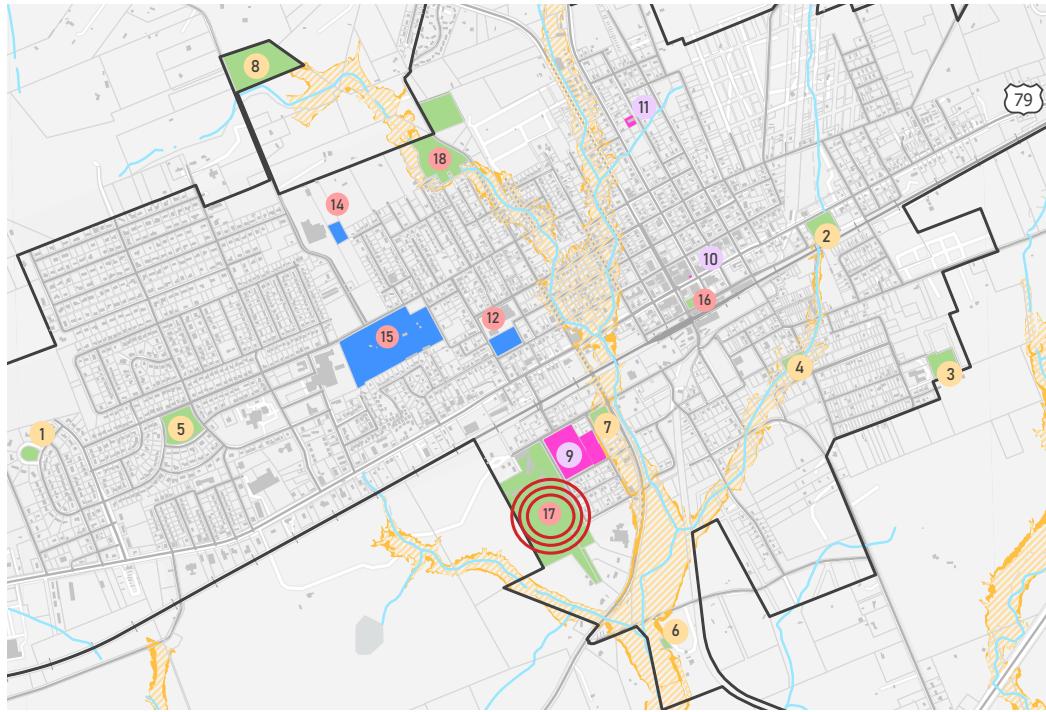
Existing Conditions

Privately owned by the Rockdale Fair Association, purchased from the City in 2021, the venue serves as the home of the annual Rockdale Fair and Rodeo. Fair Park encompasses a variety of amenities, including equestrian facilities, a rodeo arena and livestock pens, RV hookups, large BBQ pits, concession stands, restrooms, a music stage, multiple pavilions, and more. Fully secure, use of the site is for private or ticketed events only at this time.

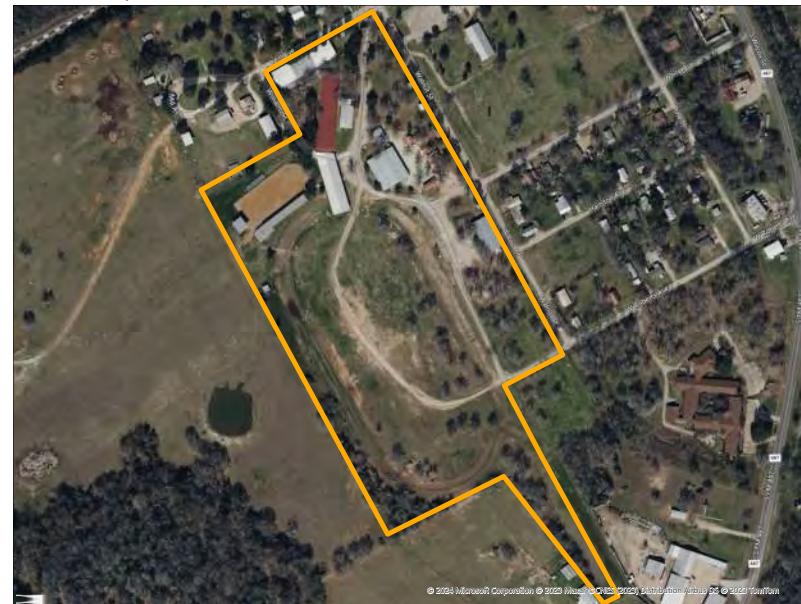
Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for future improvements and new amenities could include:

- Coordinate with the Rockdale Fair Association to open up opportunities to host additional community events and communicate potential community needs.
- Reopen potentially unused portions of the site for public use, via nature trails and a disc golf course.



Map 49. Fair Park Location Map



Fair Park Aerial & Context

Wolf Park

Location and Access

Nestled in Downtown Rockdale, the park occupies a quarter of a city block and is accessible from Main Street, one of the primary corridors through the heart of the City. The park is fully bounded by either city streets, driveways or alleys. Adjacent on-street parking is available along Main St and Milam Ave. Wolf Park is easily walkable to the offerings in Downtown Rockdale.

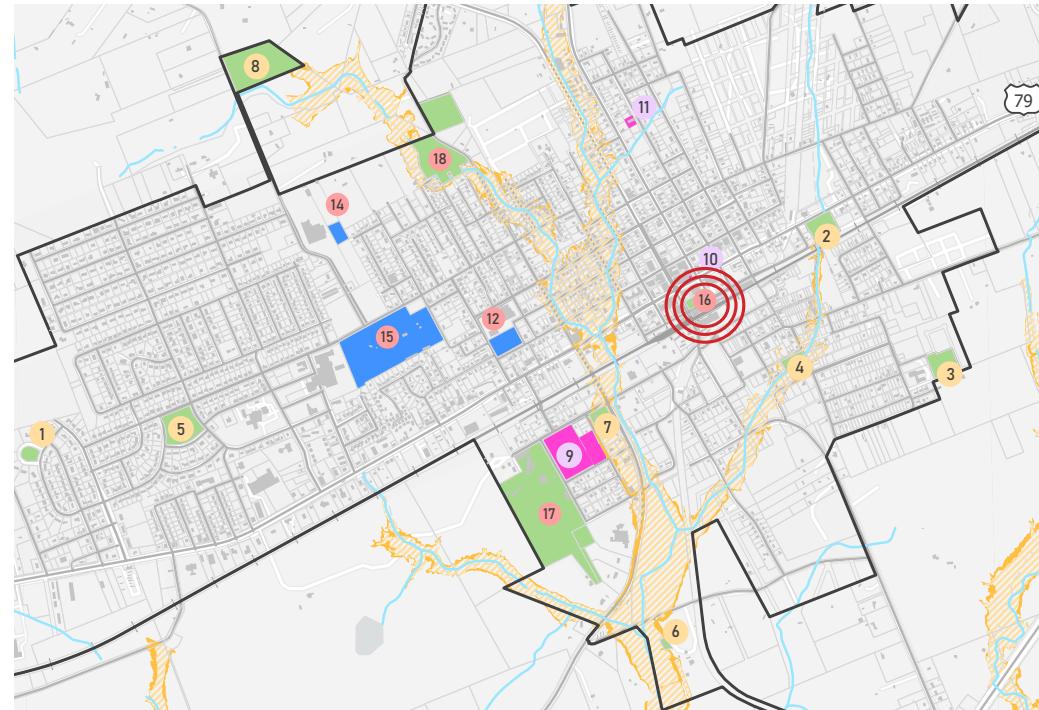
Existing Conditions

Wolf Park features open grassy areas and a pavilion. Owned by the Chamber of Commerce, this asset serves as the primary Downtown open space for Rockdale, hosting events such as farmers markets that draw people into Downtown. Offering limited recreational options, the park predominantly features open space and benches on the perimeter. The pavilion, available for public rental, provides opportunity for shade for events held here but does not include benches. ADA accessibility is lacking at this park.

Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for future improvements and new amenities could include:

- Improve accessibility to the park amenities such as adding accessible paths to the benches.
- Add movable tables in the picnic pavilion that can be relocated temporarily as needed during events.
- Add additional shade trees and enhanced landscaping.
- Add food truck hook-ups for use during events.
- Consider developing the park into a more urban-style paved plaza that can withstand increased pedestrian traffic.
- Evaluate how the park connects to the rest of Downtown and nearby amenities, such as the Depot and Bridge Park.



Map 50. Wolf Park Location Map

Park Location

- 106 N Main

Park Size

- 0.4 acres

Park Type

- Pocket

Park Features

- Pavilion
- Benches
- Downtown Location



Map 51. Wolf Park Aerial Map



Wolf Park Images

Little League Baseball Fields

Location and Access

The Little League Baseball Fields are owned by Rockdale Little League and situated on the north side of the City. While there is plenty of parking spaces, it is worth noting that the area is not paved.

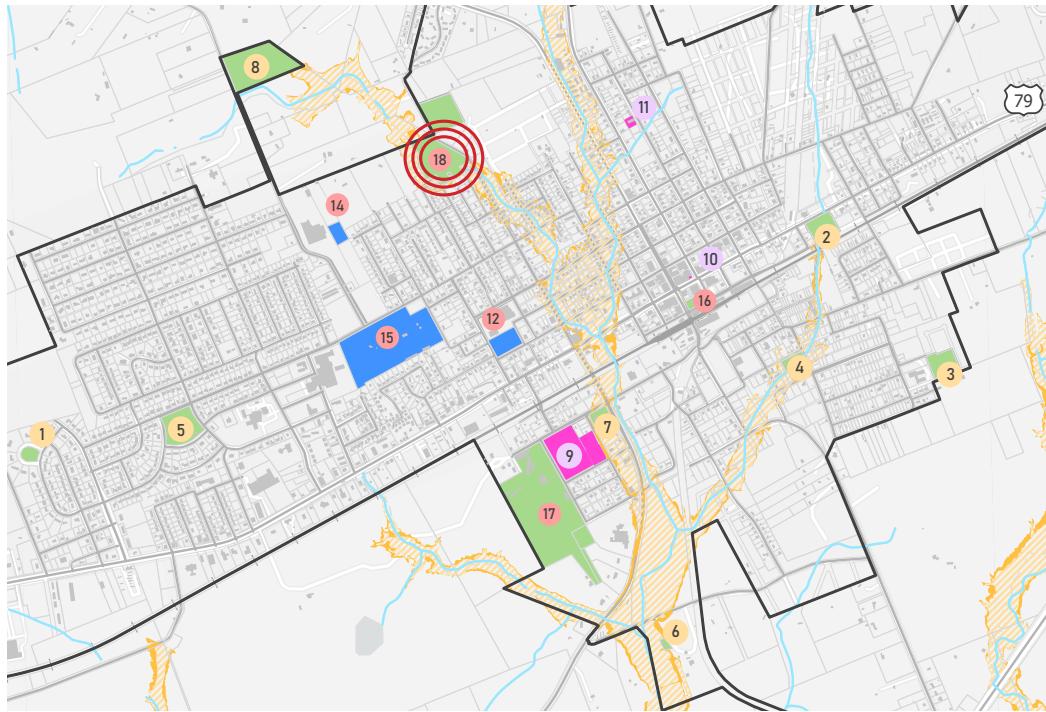
Existing Conditions

Current conditions include five baseball fields equipped with a concession stand and restrooms for game attendees. Public feedback at present highlights concerns about the inadequate maintenance of the fields. The fields host youth baseball leagues for ages four to 14 years.

Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for future improvements and new amenities could include:

- Partner with the Rockdale Youth Baseball Association to figure out how the City can help update facilities for safety, function and appearance.



Map 52. Little League Baseball Fields Location Map

Park Location

- 908 N. Wilcox

Park Size

- 12.0 acres

Park Type

- Special Use

Park Features

- Baseball Fields
- Concession Stand
- Restrooms
- Parking
- Covered Seating



Map 53. Little League Baseball Fields Aerial Map



Little League Baseball Fields Images

Rockdale Recreational Programming

Rockdale's recreational programming consists of a variety of seasonal events and festivals for residents. The Easter Egg Hunt is the only event geared specifically to children. Attendance has not been tracked for most events/festivals, but those that have been tracked have seen slow and steady growth in recent years. Most events are typically held in Fair Park or Wolf Park. Most sports leagues are run by outside organizations. There may be opportunities to provide additional recreational options for various age groups either by the City, other organizations or through partnerships.

Program Name (City run or operated by other vendor on City property)	Age Group				Location	Season	Fee	Estimated Annual Attendance/Participation					
	Age 12 and under	Age 13-18	Adults	Seniors				2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Festivals/Events													
Alpha Phau Delta 5K Run	X	X	X	X	Veterans Park	Summer							
Rockdale Fair and Rodeo	X	X	X	X	Fair Park	Fall							
Community Easter Egg Hunt	X				Fair Park	Spring	FREE	200	250	300	300	350	
Farmers Market	X	X	X	X	Wolf Park	Spring/Fall/Winter	FREE	40	55	60	75	150	
Milam County 4th of July	X	X	X	X	Fair Park	Every other Summer	FREE						
Youth Athletics													
Boys Little League Baseball	X	X			Little League Baseball Field	Spring							
Girls Softball	X	X			Softball Fields	Spring							
Swim Teams	X	X			Veterans Park	Summer							
Rockdale Tigers Youth Football and Cheer	X				Rockdale High School Football Fields	Summer							

Figure 71. Recreation Programs Table

Needs Assessment

Assessment Methodology

This Plan uses a multifaceted analysis to help determine the parks and recreational needs of the Rockdale community. The needs assessment analyzes whether those needs are being met and what types of improvements or changes would be beneficial for Rockdale. Existing parks and recreation opportunities are analyzed in terms of public opinion, the location and quantity of parkland, the quantity of facilities within parks, and natural resources in the City.

The needs assessment includes three parts. The use of multiple assessment methods helps to establish an understanding of key parks and recreation needs and inform Plan recommendations to address those needs.

Demand-Based Assessment

The needs assessment starts with a demand-based assessment. This includes an analysis and summary of public feedback to identify what the community wants and expects from the parks and recreation system, and how this compares to its current state.

Standards-Based Assessment

The standards-based assessment then analyzes parkland acreage, location and amenities in comparison with the needs and location of the current population and future growth areas. This is used to determine an appropriate target level of service for the Rockdale community and identify surpluses or deficits.

Resource-Based Assessment

Lastly, the resource-based assessment evaluates Rockdale's existing physical, man-made and natural resources to identify opportunities to leverage for public recreation benefit.



Figure 72. Three Elements of the Needs Assessment

Demand-Based Assessment

The demand-based assessment is a reflection of the community's needs, as expressed directly by residents through various public engagement opportunities. Community engagement included:

- Stakeholder conversations with the CPAC and focus group participants
- Comprehensive Plan Vision Survey
- Online Mapping Exercise
- Public Open House Event
- Parks-Specific Survey

The following pages present highlights from the community input received. These highlights are presenting varying opinions from Rockdale residents and/or park users and may differ between the various engagement opportunities and questions. Additional public engagement information and details can be found in Appendices A and D.

Stakeholder Listening Sessions

Over 20 participants provided feedback during a series of stakeholder listening sessions. Participants were asked to consider the existing parks and recreation system and explain their likes, dislikes and desires for change and/or improvements to the system as a whole. The following are key themes that were identified during these meetings, many of which were reiterated by participants in other engagement opportunities.

Desires:

- Expanded trails network.
- Youth activities, specifically a recreation/activity center and clubs and activities outside of academics and sports.
- Inclusive parks.
- More community events and festivals - especially family-friendly.
- Health is a major topic in Rockdale - parks could play a role in supporting increased wellness.
- A City that looks loved and cared for.
- Ability to host sporting events and the economic drivers those create.

Issues/Concerns:

- General aesthetics and maintenance.
- For a long time ALCOA was a major supporter of community recreational activities, such as youth sports leagues and summer camps. Their departure left a hole in that aspect.
- The City has limited staff and financial resources to address parks maintenance and development.
- The City sold the Fair Park and Rodeo Arena facility to the Rockdale Fair Association and the site is no longer available for public use.
- Abandoned Aycock Center.
- Accountability for implementation of City plans.
- Usability of parks in the summer heat. There is a lack of shade or shade structures that actually trap heat.

Vision Survey

At the outset of the Comprehensive Planning process, a community visioning survey was conducted, which included elements of feedback on parks and recreation. There were 151 survey responses. The parks and recreation related takeaways include:

- Parks and recreation was second to last on the list of reasons why residents moved to or live in Rockdale.
- Quality parks and public spaces was No. 7 out of 15 choices for prioritizing areas of improvement - the provision of a recreation center was also noted as a need.
- Many residents noted parks as a top asset or amenity the City provides them - specifically the municipal swimming pool.
- Georgetown, Taylor and Round Rock were noted by residents as examples of city parks they enjoy.
- Parks were noted as something many residents would like to see changed about Rockdale - specifically more parks, additional playgrounds and inclusive playsets, and enhanced maintenance. Walking/biking trails were also noted as a desire.
- Beautiful and plentiful parks were often cited when residents were asked what their vision for the future of Rockdale was.
- Parks and open space was No. 5 out of 12 choices for prioritizing the new types of development residents want to see in Rockdale.

9. Which of the following do feel most accurately describes your opinion of Rockdale's parks?

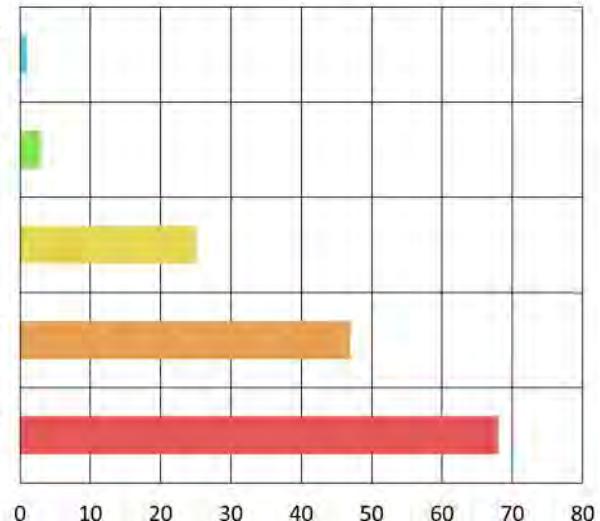
I am satisfied with the current amount and quality of existing parks.

I am satisfied with the existing parks, but we could use more park spaces.

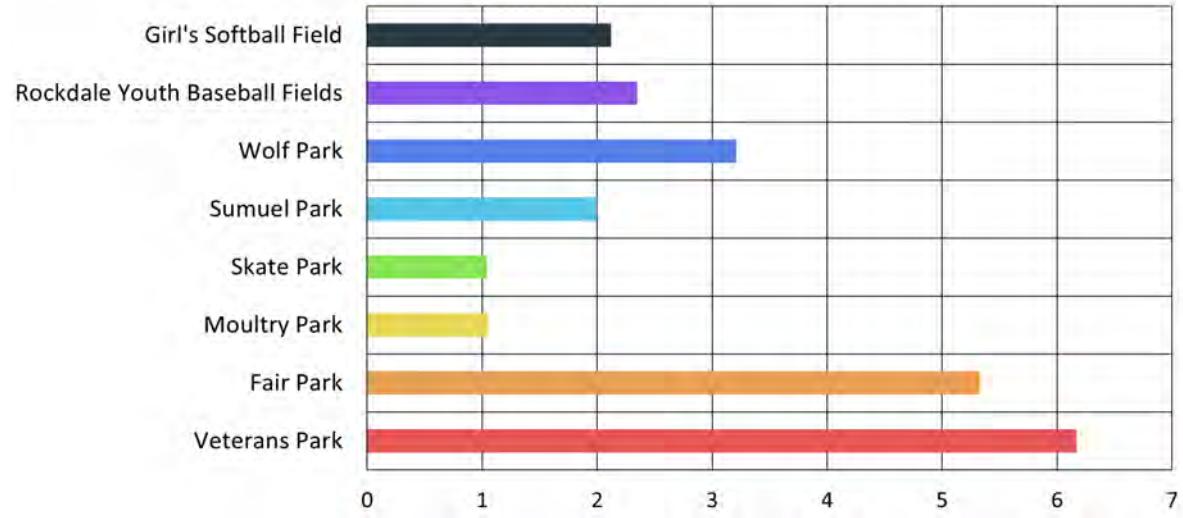
We don't need new parks, just better maintenance of existing parks.

We need new park spaces and we need to invest more in our existing parks.

We don't need new parks, but existing parks could use better maintenance and offer more amenities.



10. Please rank the parks and recreation facilities in order of which ones you use the most.

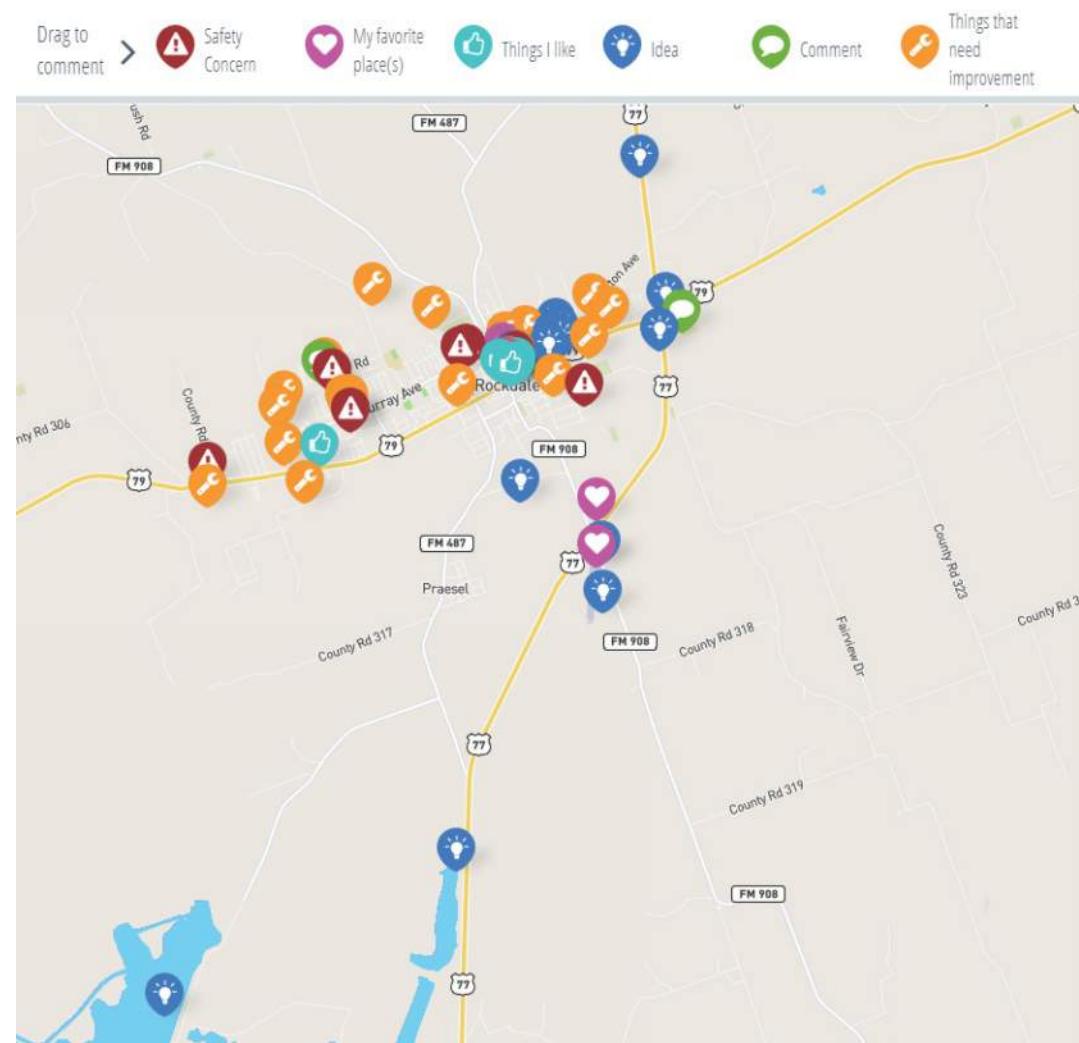


Online Mapping Comments

Throughout the course of the project, there was an online mapping exercise available for residents to provide comments and ideas related to specific points around Rockdale. The following represents real responses from participants regarding parks and recreation feedback:

- "Sumuel Park is an asset to the community, but the City must maintain these assets properly to truly have the benefit last. It is unfortunate that vandalism takes some of the benefit away and keeps City funds from being used to the benefit of all taxpayers."
- "All current Rockdale City Parks need an extreme makeover. For example the city pool has been repaired but shade structures are an eyesore and falling down. Huge visual improvement needs to be made to fencing and change room facilities. Walk thru the men's room sometime and see what I mean. I have never been an advocate of spending money on Bridge Park at the expense of other park improvements."
- "Veterans Park needs attention. There is a slide with a hole, others that are cracking. A sun shade over at least one play scape would make the park easier to utilize. Benches closer to the playscapes are needed, and the current walking path needs major attention."
- "Wolf Park pavilion is a wonderful resource."
- "We need a real nice park with shade and walking paths. Maybe a small water area to make it nice! Some benches! For the community in all seasons. [Referring to a location in the eastern portion of the City near the intersection of US77 and US79.]"

- "Have Bridge Park become a 'node' or stopping point along a sidewalk/trail system. Add a couple of benches and tables. Plant some trees. Fix up the bridges so they can be walked on."
- "Develop ALCOA lake into a city park much like Pflugerville has developed their little lake with trails, public fishing and beach areas."



Public Open House

During the public open house held for the Comprehensive Plan, a set of interactive boards gathered community input related to parks. Feedback related to parks and recreation included:

- Desire for better signage for all parks.
- The Skate Park needs more trees and additional activities.
- The Youth Baseball Fields need better maintenance, general aesthetic upgrades and more adequate seating areas.
- Fair Park needs better parking and restroom modernization and upgrades. Participants also noted the desire for Fair Park to have more open/public access hiking trails, ballfields and a playground.
- Veterans Park needs restroom improvements and provision of restrooms outside the pool, better workout equipment, pickleball courts, and adults-only swim times.
- Sumuel Park needs better workout equipment, more equipment generally and restroom improvements.
- Bridge Park needs a clear purpose and better overall access. Additionally, desired amenities include restrooms, walking trails, picnic areas, benches, lighting, water features and landscaping. Many residents noted the ideal location of Bridge Park to serve as a "node" in a larger city-wide trail network.
- The Skate Park has a lot of opportunity but is underutilized, it needs updates to some of the skating elements (bowls and ramps), more gathering spaces, restrooms, lighting and picnic tables.
- General amenities that were noted as desired in Rockdale parks include community BBQ pits, community garden, outdoor exercise,

adult water activities (swimming), more walking paths and loop trails, bike paths, and dog parks.

- To note, adding more water elements to parks (e.g., splash pads, pools, water features) received negative feedback among some community members due to recent concerns over the water supply system and the use of potable water for parks being seen as wasteful.



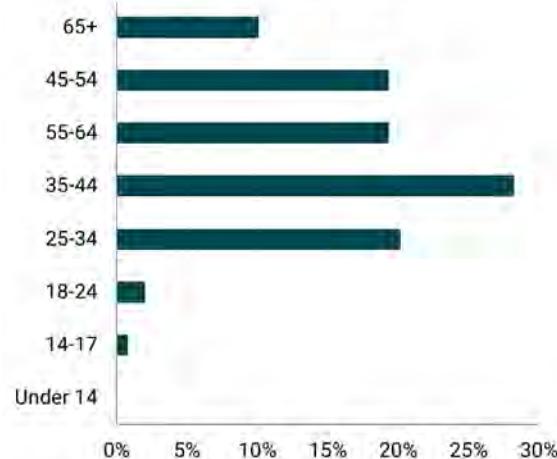
Parks Survey

As an integral part of the planning process, a comprehensive 25-question public survey focusing on parks was conducted to gather insights from a wide range of Rockdale citizens and stakeholders. The survey, open for approximately one month, garnered just under 300 responses.

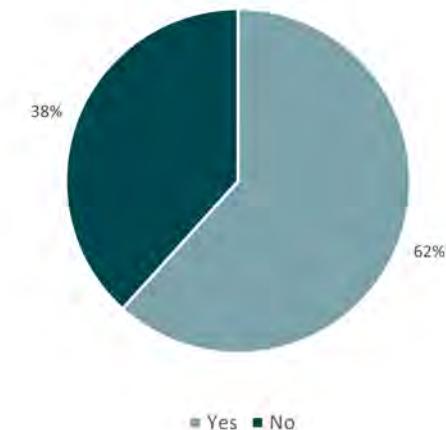
Notably, the respondents span a range of ages, with the majority falling between 25 and 44 years old. A considerable portion of participants showed the presence of children in their households, adding a familial dimension to the gathered data. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the majority of respondents are residents within the City, underscoring the local engagement and relevance of the survey findings to the community.

Survey Respondent Demographics

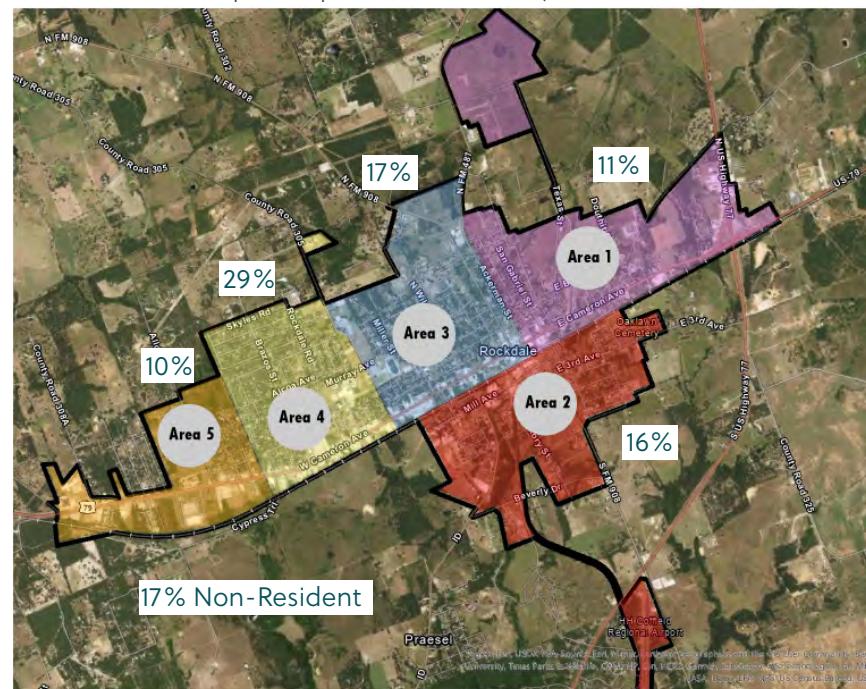
20. What is your age?



24. Are there children under the age of 18 in your home?



19. Based on the map, what part of Rockdale do you live in?



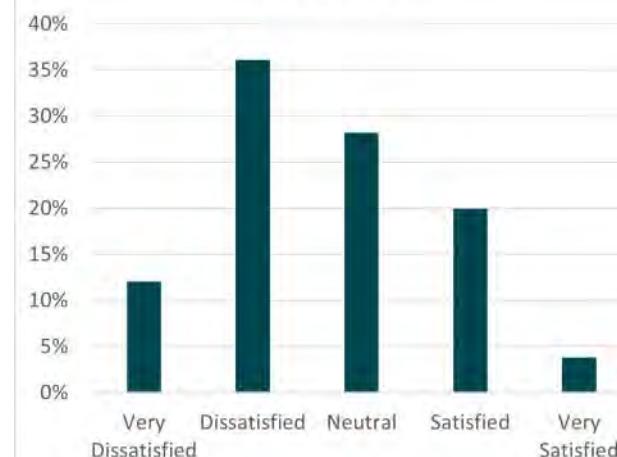
Rating of the City's Parks and Recreation System

Several factors influence how a community perceives, utilizes and approves of its parks and recreation system. When asked about their overall satisfaction with parks and recreational opportunities, respondents expressed a predominantly dissatisfied sentiment, with a notable number providing neutral responses.

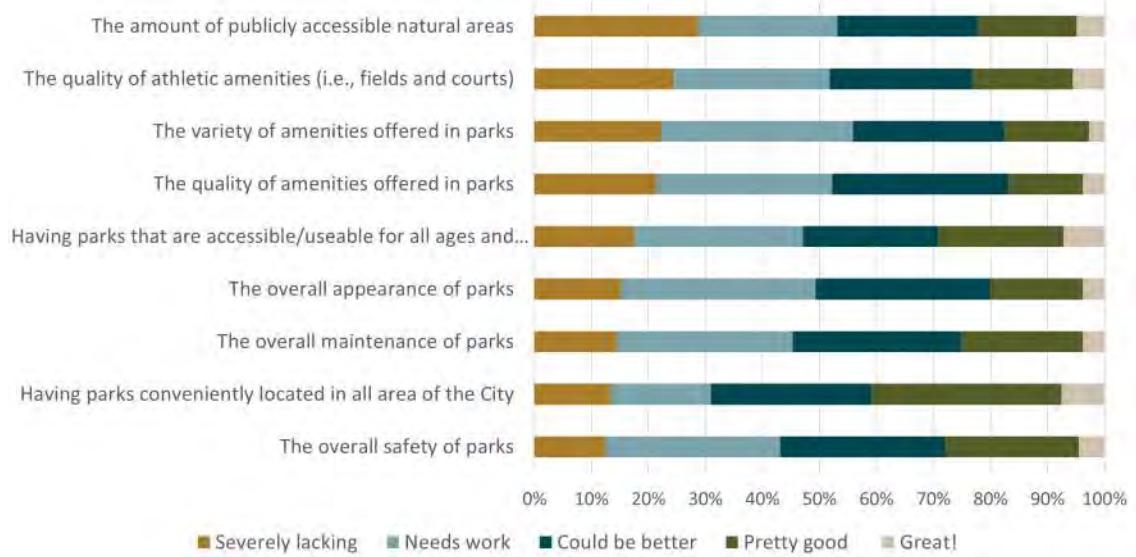
When evaluating the quality of various parks and recreation categories, the majority of respondents indicated that the elements were severely lacking, needing work or could be better. The most positively rated category was having parks conveniently located in all areas of the City.

When assessing the satisfaction levels regarding recreational programming opportunities for various age groups, responses again tended to gravitate toward categories indicating improvements - namely, severely lacking, needs work, or could be better.

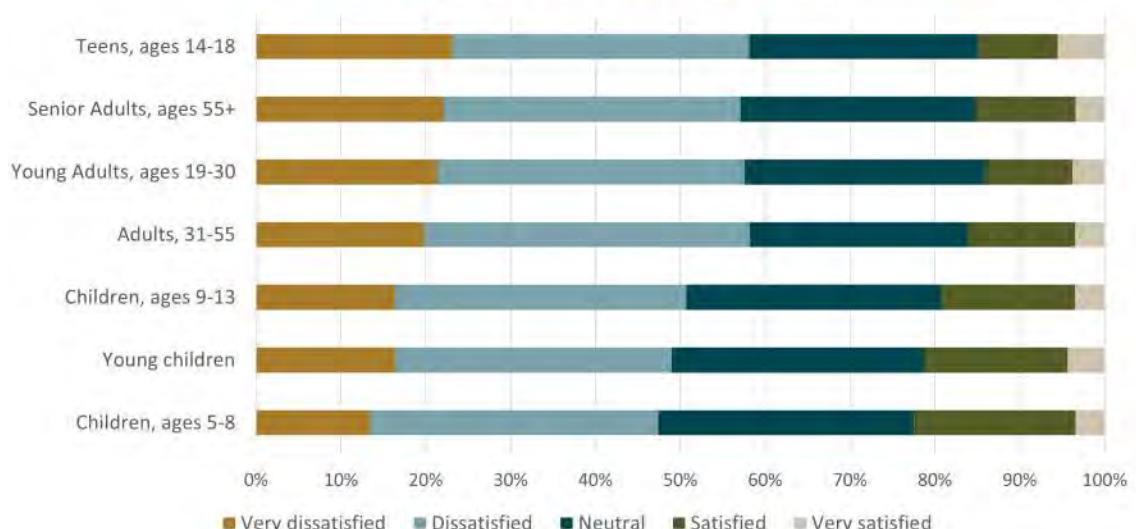
1. How satisfied overall are you with the parks and recreational opportunities in Rockdale?



2. How would you rate the City of Rockdale in the following categories?



3. How satisfied are you with recreational programming opportunities in Rockdale for people in the following age groups?

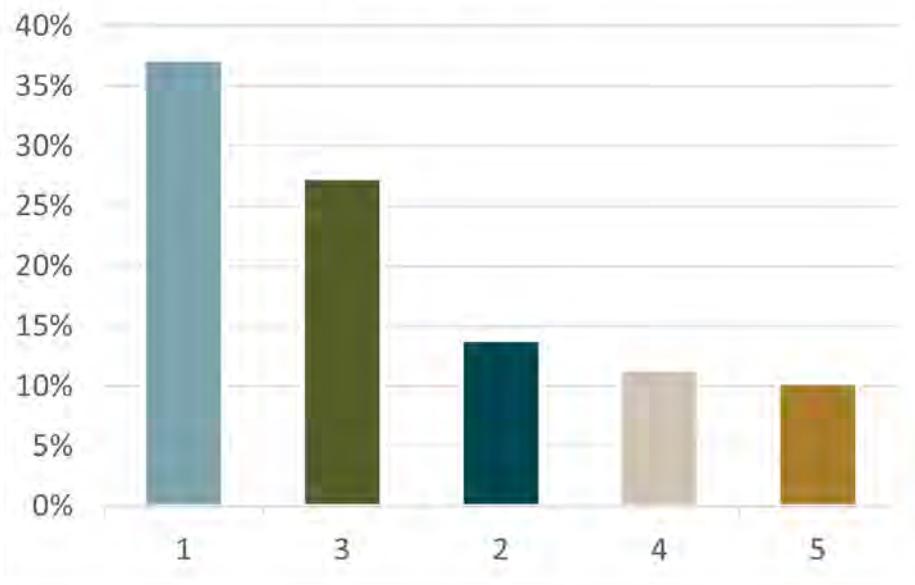


Access to the City's Parks and Recreation System

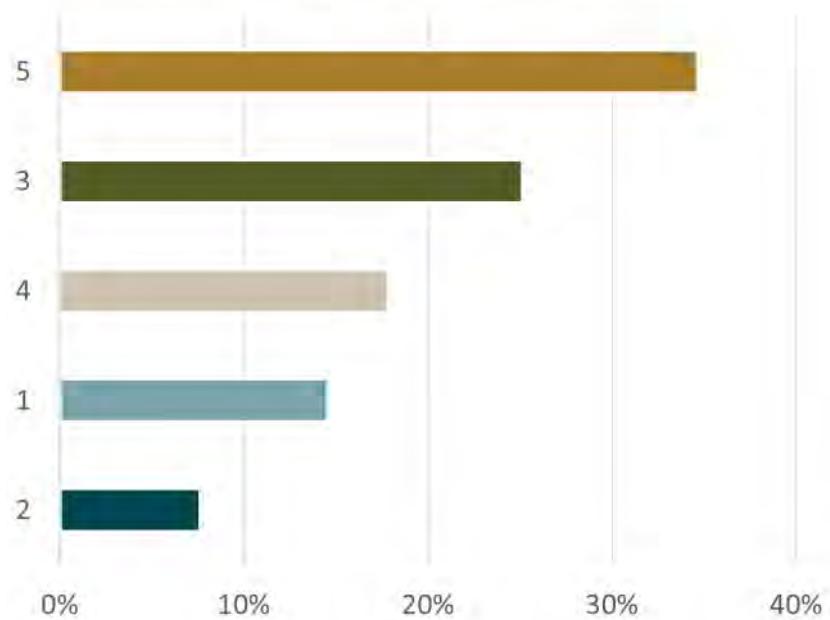
When questioned about the accessibility of walking to a park within a 10-minute radius of their homes on a scale of 1 to 5, respondents indicated a perception of poor access, with a notable number expressing a relatively neutral stance, signaling a range of perspectives.

When asked about their likelihood to walk or bike to a park, a majority of respondents were likely to do so if comfortable facilities were available.

4. On a scale of 1 to 5, do you feel that you have access to enough high-quality park space within a 10 minute walk of your home?



10. On a scale of 1 to 5, how likely would you be to get to a park or recreation facility by walking or bicycling, assuming it was close enough and had comfortable bike/pedestrian routes?

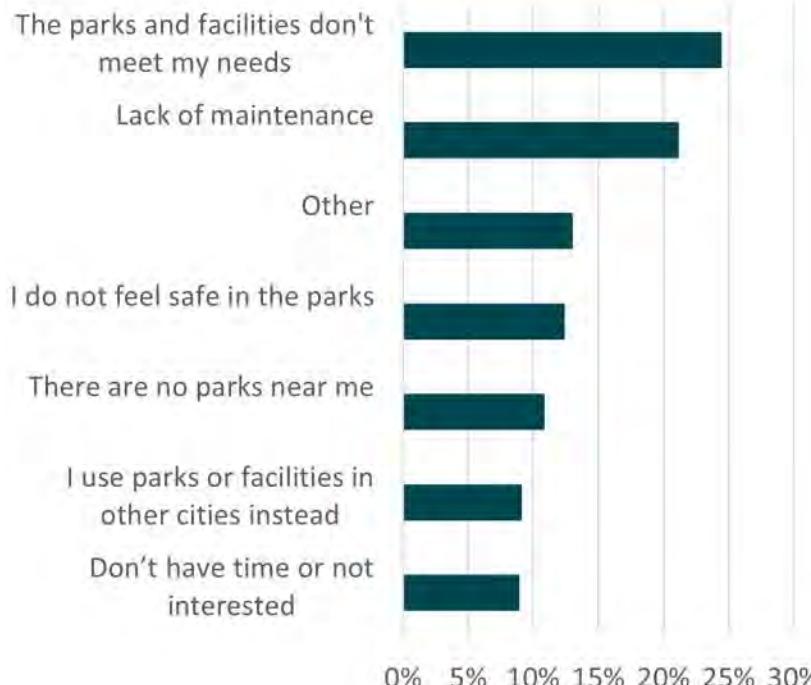


Parks and Recreation Importance

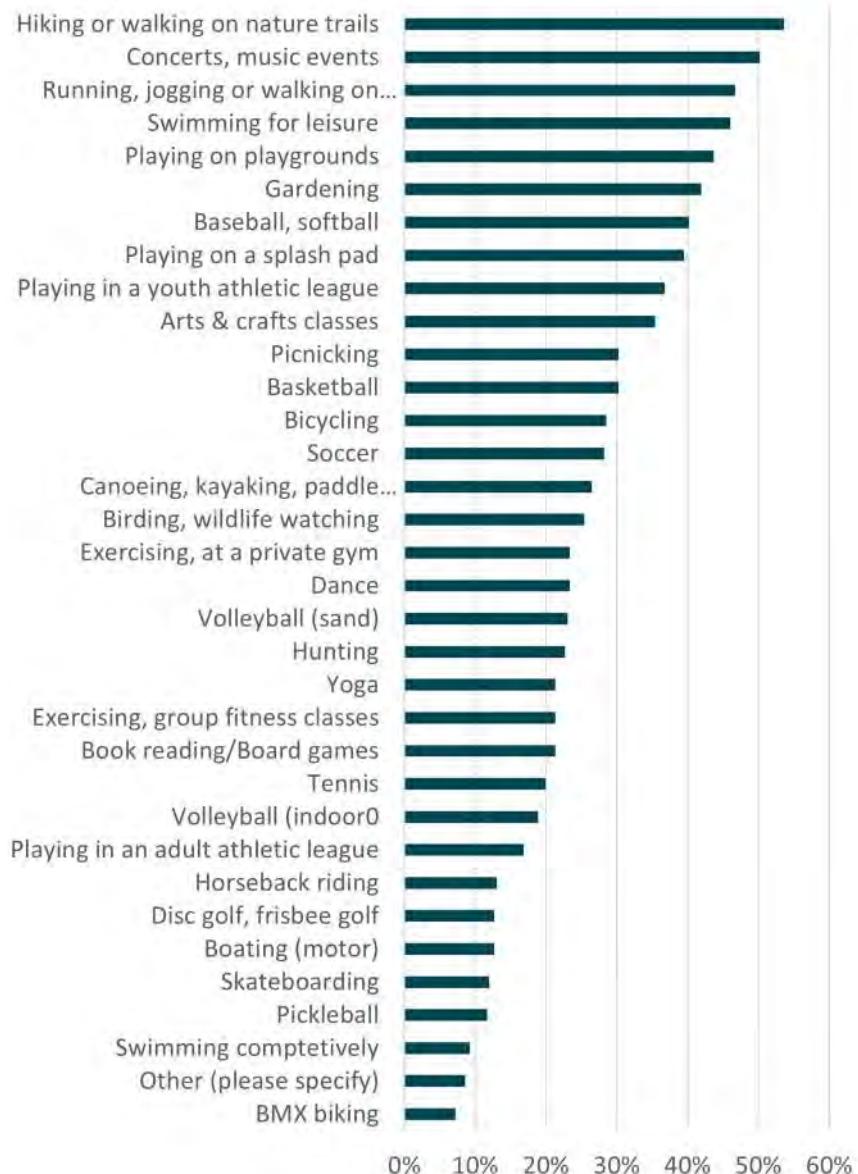
As the City considers expanding its park offerings, it is helpful to know which amenities will cater to the widest range of residents. Top ranking activities included passive recreation such as using trails, concerts and music events, swimming, and playing on playgrounds. Two of the top 10 ranked activities included athletics.

In contrast, exploring the factors that deter residents from utilizing City facilities reveals that the foremost reasons include facilities not meeting their needs and a perceived lack of maintenance. Additional responses address concerns regarding safety, specific usage limitations, and insufficient desired amenities.

6. What keeps you from using the parks and recreation facilities in Rockdale more often? (Check all that apply)



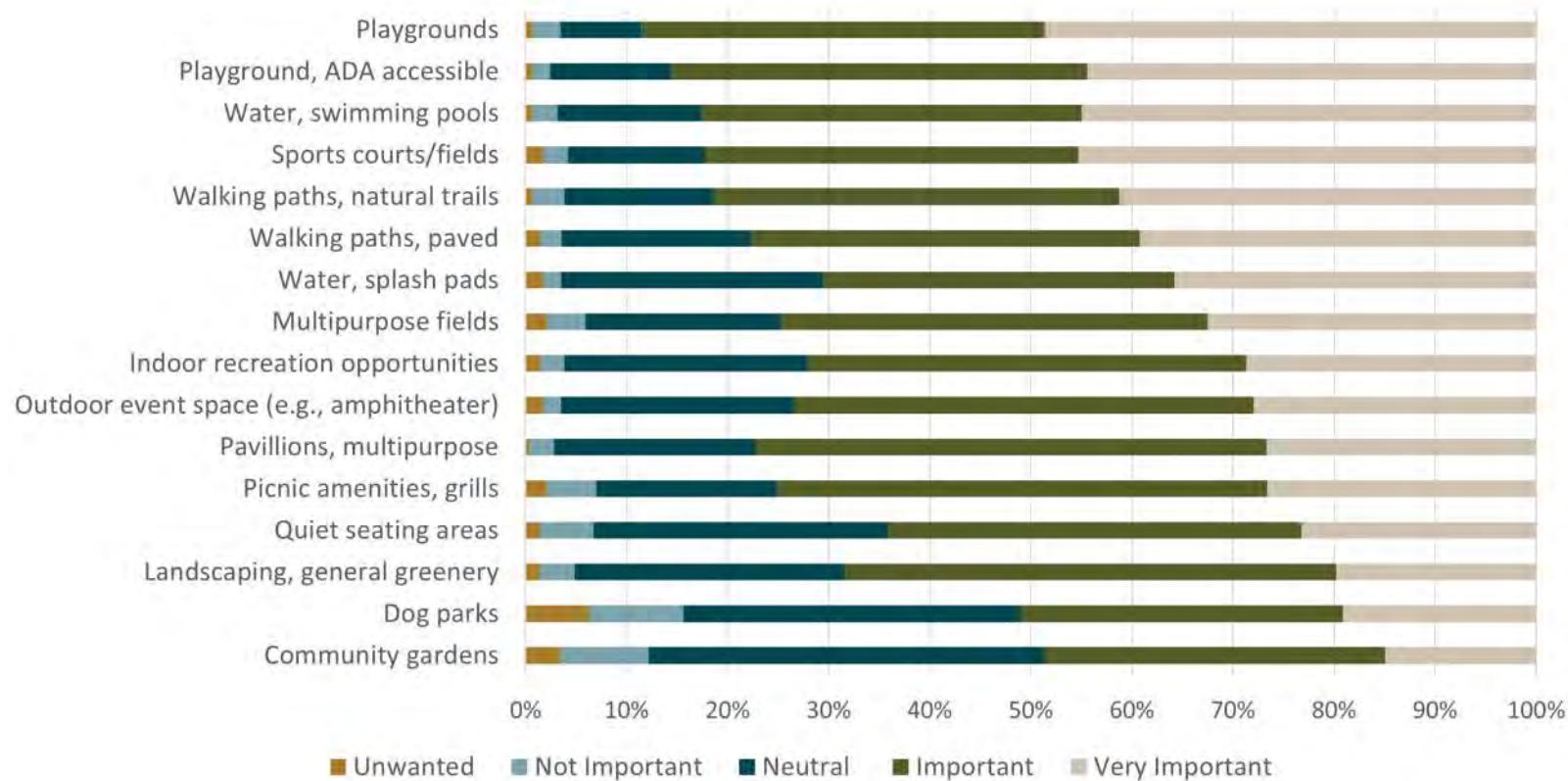
7. What are you or your family's favorite recreational activities? (Check all that apply)



Amenity Importance

The City has many opportunities to improve its parks and recreation system, with a clear focus from respondents on almost all amenity options in this question. The top three ranked amenities - ADA accessible playgrounds, swimming pools, and sports courts/fields - were highlighted as especially important. Most respondents rated all provided improvements as either very important or important, indicating a strong community desire for enhancements. Exploring these specific amenities and their priority could offer valuable guidance for aligning future initiatives with community preferences.

11. How important is it for the following amenities to be provided in Rockdale parks and recreational facilities?



Asset and Challenges

No matter the size or quality of a parks and recreation system, there are always improvements that can be made. In order to help determine the community's highest priorities, respondents were asked what is the greatest asset and challenge of the City parks and recreation system.

Key asset themes included:

- City pool
- None
- Splash pad
- Sumuel Park
- Veterans Park
- Tennis courts
- Youth fields

Key challenge themes included:

- Lack of maintenance
- Cleanliness
- Funding
- Accessibility
- Lack of sidewalks
- No indoor sporting area
- Parking

12. What is the City's greatest parks and recreation asset?

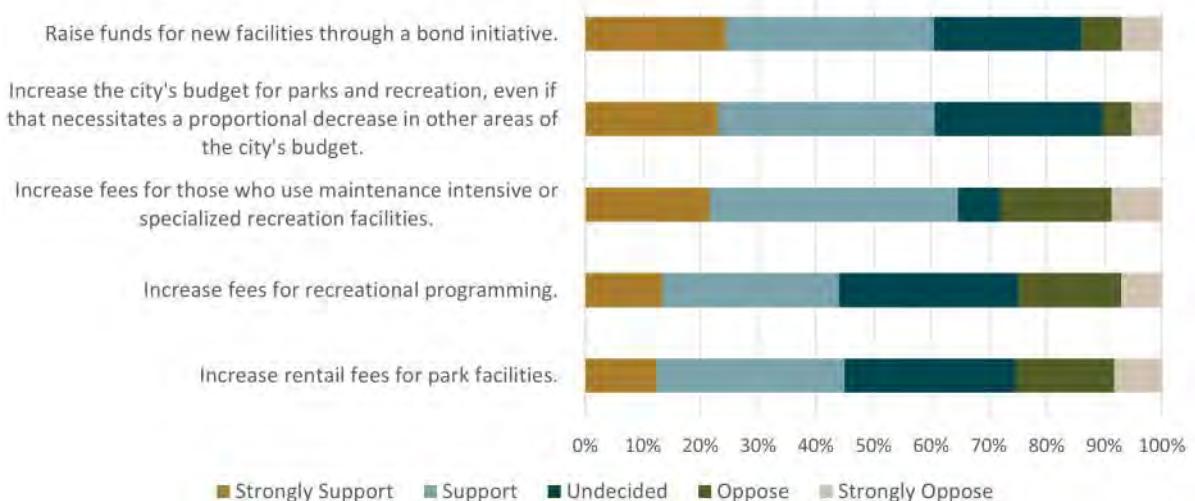
13. What is the City's greatest parks and recreation challenge?



Potential Funding to Support Parks and Recreation

In meeting the demands of Rockdale residents, securing additional funding for parks and recreation may become imperative. Respondents were asked how strongly they would or would not support various funding strategies. The most supported strategy was raising funds for a new facility through a bond initiative, with increasing the City's budget closely behind. Based on the potential willingness among residents to explore and discuss funding options, it is important for the City to have transparent communication and collaboration in addressing the community's needs.

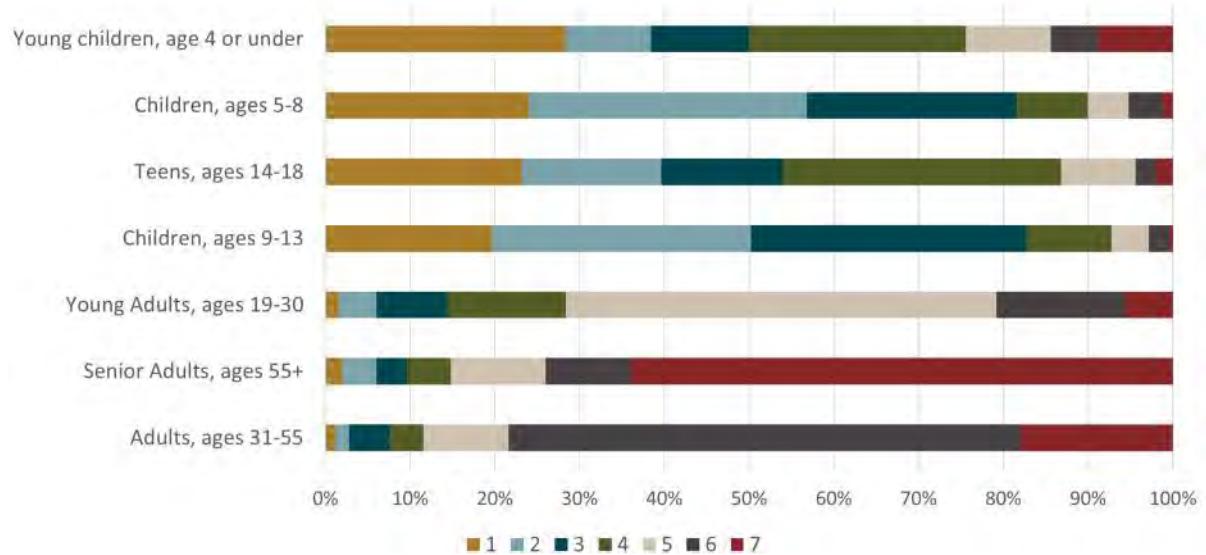
14. To meet the needs of Rockdale residents, the City may require additional funding for parks and recreation. How strongly would you support or oppose the following finance strategies?



Recreational Programming

In the strategic allocation of funding and resources for recreational programming, an important consideration is determining the age groups with the most significant needs. According to respondent feedback, the top priority age groups identified for enhanced recreational programming include young children aged 4 or under, children aged 5-8, children aged 9-13, and teens aged 14-18.

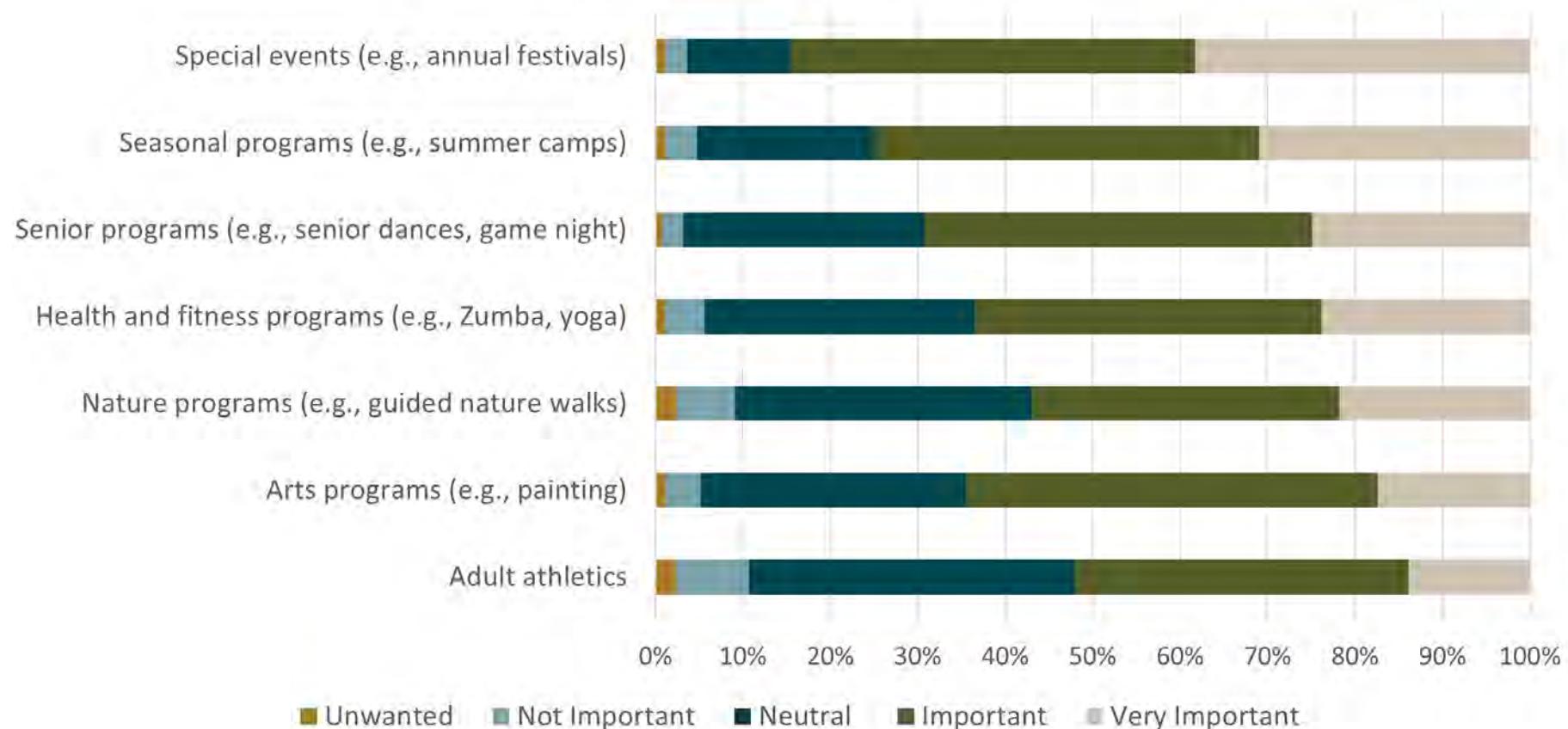
16. Rank in order the age groups you feel have the greatest needs for recreational programming.



Recreational Opportunities

When considering recreational programs, it is important to consider community preferences as they are the target user of the programs. Respondents indicated that all programs and opportunities presented in the survey are deemed important or very important. Interestingly, adult athletics emerged as the least prioritized among the preferences expressed.

17. How important is it for the City to provide or support the following types of recreational opportunities?



Standards-Based Assessment

The standards-based assessment analyzes parkland in terms of acreage, location and number of park facilities. It identifies the current level of service and whether it is meeting the community's needs. Levels of service represent a specific acreage of parkland or number of facilities needed per given population.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) publishes their Agency Performance Review annually. It presents data and insights from 1,000 parks and recreation agencies around the country. This information was referenced throughout the standards-based assessment as a baseline comparison.

Three types of standards were examined in this assessment: acreage, location and facilities.

Acreage Level of Service

The acreage level of service defines the quantity of parkland acreage as a ratio to population. The results are expressed as park acreage per 1,000 residents. The analysis examines whether there is sufficient parkland for residents today and in the future.

Spatial Level of Service

The spatial level of service looks at the location and distribution of different park types to identify underserved areas and where new parks may be needed.

Facility Level of Service

The facility level of service defines the number of park facilities needed to meet the community's recreational needs. Standards are expressed as a ratio of facility per population size (e.g., one baseball field per 3,500 residents).



Acreage Level of Service

Different types of parks are intended to serve different needs. Pocket, neighborhood and community parks, cumulatively thought of as close-to-home parks, are focused on recreational benefits for nearby residents. In addition to local residents, regional parks serve a population beyond the immediate community. Greenbelts/linear parks provide passive recreation opportunities for the whole community, while special use parks serve a focused user group (e.g., sports complex providing only athletic recreation options).

While Rockdale's parks system includes 37.1 acres of publicly accessible parkland, over 25 acres are currently geared toward dedicated user groups or a single use in special use parks.

According to the 2023 NRPA Agency Performance Review, the median community with less than 20,000 people had 13.0 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents.¹ However, community feedback during this process has highlighted that improving and enhancing the existing City parks is a higher community priority than developing new parks. Thus, a target level of service has been defined for Rockdale through comparison with the NRPA Agency Performance Review, and an understanding of the community's goals, opportunities and challenges.

Existing and target levels of service per park type are listed in the table on the next page. The City's total combined level of service today is 6.7 acres per 1,000 residents. Considering the total of all park types (including those without target levels

of service), there is a current parkland deficit of 3.0 acres, with a future deficit that grows as the population increases toward its projected 2035 population.

The City does not have any existing regional parks. In consideration of the community's feedback on where to prioritize parks and recreation spending (i.e., improving existing assets) and an understanding that regional parks often require substantial acreage and are not appropriate for all communities, no acquisition of regional parkland is recommended in this Plan. This should not, however, preclude the City from capitalizing on an opportunity for regional parkland if one should arise in the future.

Based on the target levels of service, the City is primarily lacking close-to-home parkland (i.e., pocket, neighborhood and community parks) today and in the future, as listed in the "surplus/deficit acreages" columns in the table.

The City should consider opportunities for additional close-to-home parks in areas with new development in the future. Based on the City's extensive amount of special use parkland, it will be important to enhance pocket, neighborhood and community park amenities (e.g., playground, basketball court, picnicking) within these parks to ensure that they can help meet the daily recreational needs for residents in the vicinity. Adding diverse recreation offerings to the parks will allow them to meet the need of a wider user group (e.g., adding a playground to a sports complex to provide recreation for players' families).

If properly located and developed with bicycle and pedestrian trails, greenbelts/linear parks can greatly contribute to citywide connectivity to parks and other points of interest. There is no specific target level of service for linear parks.

However, the City should evaluate opportunities to provide linear parks as an option for residents of all ages and abilities to exercise, recreate, enjoy their natural surroundings and connect with the greater community.

National Recreation & Parks Association (NRPA) 2023 Agency Review

Average Total Parkland per 1,000 Residents (for communities under 20,000 people):

- Lower Quartile = 6.0 acres/1,000 people
- Median = 13.0 acres/1,000 people
- Upper Quartile = 21.1 acres/1,000 people

<https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/research-papers/agency-performance-review/>

¹ <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/research-papers/agency-performance-review/>

Park Classification	Existing Level of Service (LOS)		Recommended Level of Service (2024)			Recommended Level of Service (2035)	
	Existing Acreage (2024) ¹	Current LOS (based on 5,529 population ²)	Recommended Target LOS (2024-2035)	2024 Recommended Acreage (based on 5,529 population ²)	Surplus/Deficit Acreages (2024)	2035 Recommended Acreage (based on 7,709 population ²)	Surplus/Deficit Acreages (2035)
Close-to-Home Parks							
Pocket Parks	1.4	0.25 Ac/1,000 Residents	0.25 Ac/1,000 Residents	1.4	0.0	1.9	-0.5
Neighborhood Parks	5.1	0.9 Ac/1,000 Residents	2.5 Ac/1,000 Residents	13.8	-8.7	19.3	-14.2
Community Parks	5.0	0.9 Ac/1,000 Residents	4.5 Ac/1,000 Residents	24.9	-19.9	34.7	-29.7
Close-to-Home Parks Subtotal	11.5	2.1 Ac/1,000 Residents	7.25 Ac/1,000 Residents	40.1	-28.6	55.9	-44.4
Other Parks							
Regional Parks	0	0.0 Ac/1,000 Residents	0.0 Ac/1,000 Residents	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Greenbelt/Linear Parks	0	0.0 Ac/1,000 Residents	Varies	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Special Use Parks	25.6	4.6 Ac/1,000 Residents	Varies	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other Parks Subtotal	25.6	4.6 Ac/1,000 Residents	Varies	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
All Park Types	37.1	6.7 Ac/1,000 Residents	7.25 Ac/1,000 Residents	40.1	-3.0	55.9	-18.8

¹ Includes City-owned and publicly accessible parks. Excludes City-owned recreation facilities as the surrounding open space areas are not currently programmed as parks

² Source: Current Population: United States Census Bureau, July 1, 2022 Population Estimates; 2035 Population: 2.5% Growth Rate Projections in the Land Use and Development Chapter

The bottom row includes all park types (including those without target levels of service) and an overall recommended level of service of 7.25 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. The total 2024 and 2035 surplus and deficit calculations are based on all park types combined (i.e., 37.1 existing acres - 40.1 recommended acres in 2024 = 3.0 acre deficit)

Negative numbers = acreage deficits

Figure 73. Parkland Acreage Level of Service Table

Spatial Level of Service

Access to Pocket & Neighborhood Parks

Pocket parks typically serve residents within a 1/4-mile area, while neighborhood parks are meant to serve residents within a 1/4-mile to 1/2-mile radius. These parks are intended to serve daily recreational needs for nearby residents and are often accessed by foot or bike. These service areas equate to approximately a 5-minute (1/4-mile) to 10-minute (1/2-mile) walk. Pocket and neighborhood parks should be generally located away from major arterial streets and should be accessible without requiring residents to cross major roadways.

The pocket and neighborhood park service areas are illustrated on the maps on the next two pages. Service areas are clipped where they would require residents to cross a major roadway or railroad tracks to access them.

Neighborhood and community parks may also serve pocket park needs for nearby neighbors, and likewise community parks may also serve neighborhood park needs. For this reason, pocket park service areas include pocket, neighborhood and community parks and neighborhood park service areas include both neighborhood and community parks.

When service areas are overlaid with the residential growth areas, it is evident where existing and future residential areas are not being served adequately by parks.

There are minimal pocket parks within the City; however, the presence of neighborhood and community parks provides relatively good access to recreational spaces for residents in neighborhoods near Downtown and somewhat for residents in the established neighborhoods west of Downtown. Notably, there are large areas of both existing and future residential areas lacking such amenities. Neighborhood parks have similar service areas to pocket parks, with slightly wider coverage. The same areas lacking access to pocket parks are also generally lacking access to neighborhood parks. To note, the areas lacking coverage do contain some non-City owned recreational spaces, that could serve these park needs if there were formal agreements in place and with some enhancements which would allow them to serve general public park uses.

Regardless of how existing parks are further enhanced, there are still substantial areas lacking access to parkland of any kind. As the City considers locations for new close-to-home parks, priority should be given to residential areas located within the need areas. Need areas are those areas within the growth area that are not currently serviced with appropriate parks, as illustrated and discussed on the following pages.

As the City considers improvements to its sidewalk and trail network, priority should be given to streets within a 1/2-mile distance of existing parks to allow nearby residents to safely walk and bike to the parks.

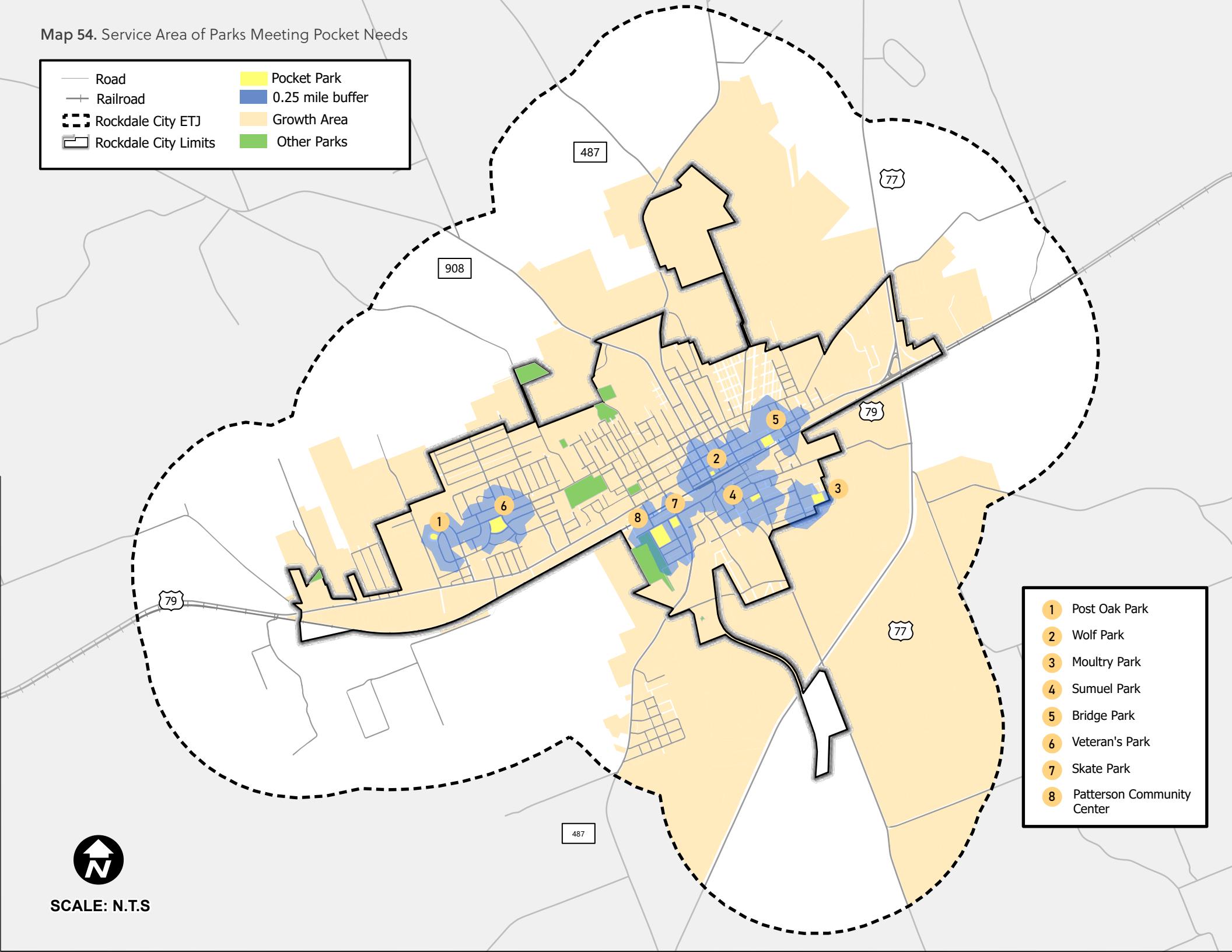


Moultry Park



Sumuel Park

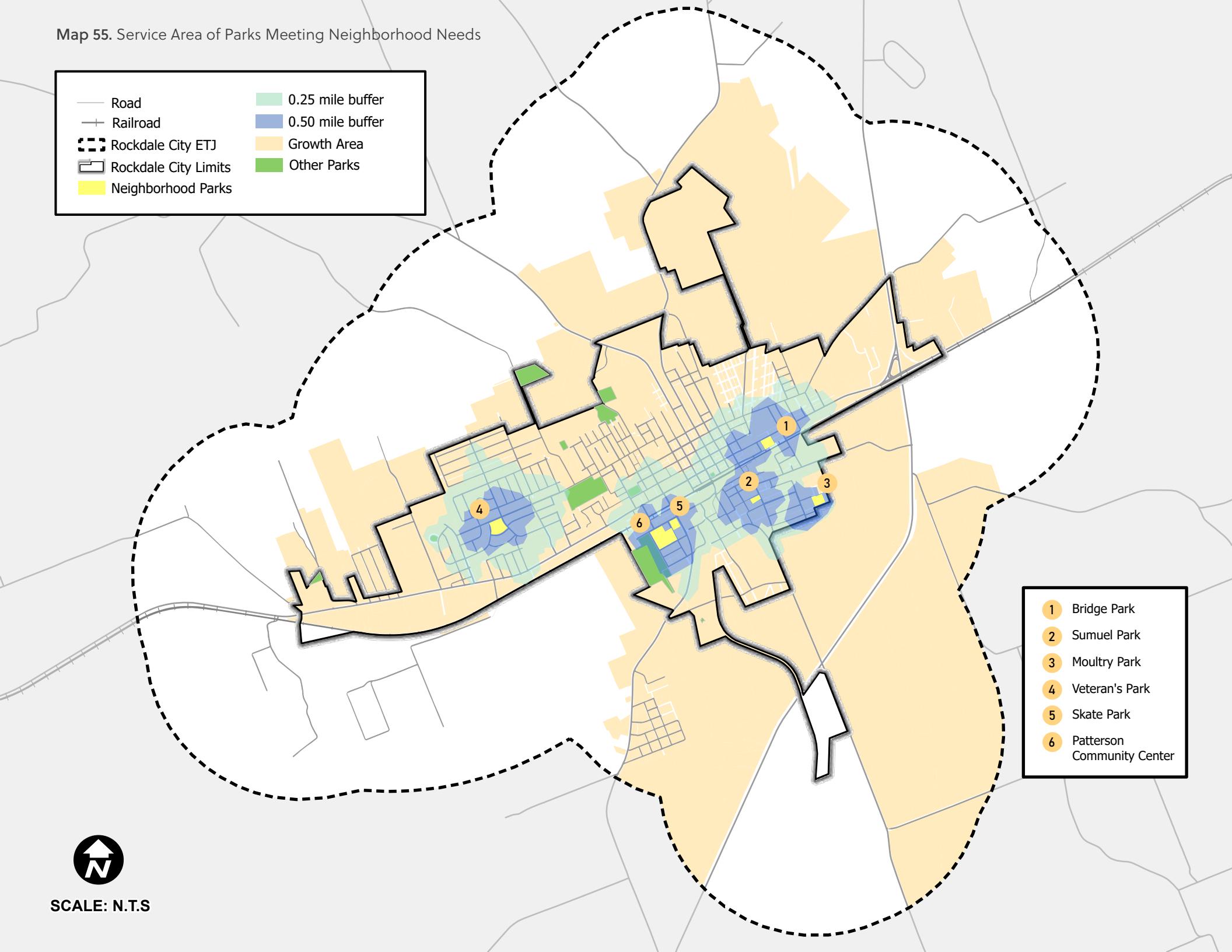
Map 54. Service Area of Parks Meeting Pocket Needs



SCALE: N.T.S

- 1 Post Oak Park
- 2 Wolf Park
- 3 Moultry Park
- 4 Sumuel Park
- 5 Bridge Park
- 6 Veteran's Park
- 7 Skate Park
- 8 Patterson Community Center

Map 55. Service Area of Parks Meeting Neighborhood Needs



- 1 Bridge Park
- 2 Sumuel Park
- 3 Moultry Park
- 4 Veteran's Park
- 5 Skate Park
- 6 Patterson Community Center



SCALE: N.T.S

Access to Community Parks

Community parks are large parks that are meant to serve multiple neighborhoods. They typically include a range of facilities such as playgrounds, picnic pavilions, athletic fields and courts, trails, swimming pools, and splash pads. Residents are often willing to drive to these parks for access to a greater diversity of options than at their neighborhood park.

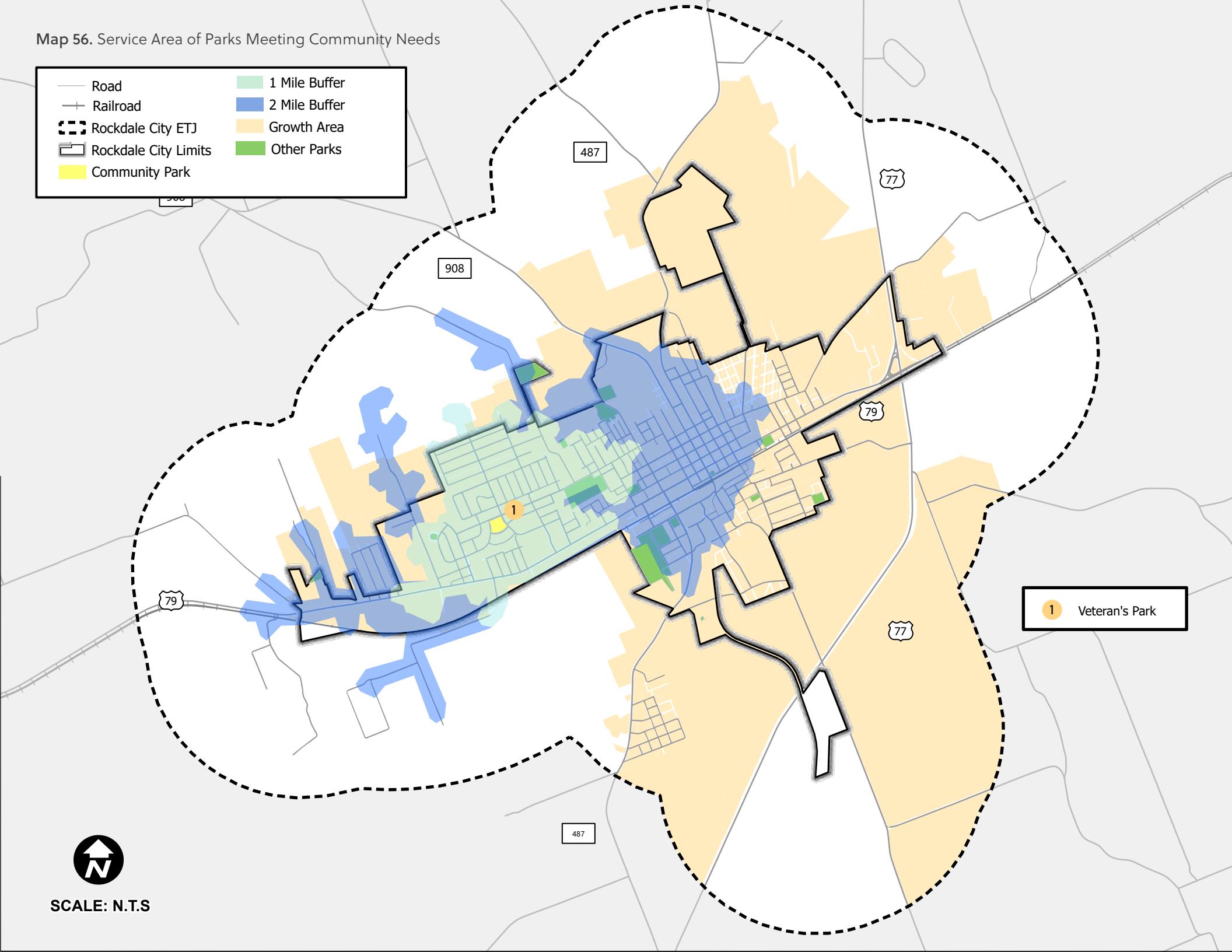
A 1- to 2-mile service area is shown around the parks that have the potential to provide community park benefits based on their size, amenities or current use (see map on the next page). There is currently only one community park in Rockdale, Veterans Park. When the community parks service area is overlaid with the residential growth areas, parkland need areas are most evident in the eastern portion of the City. As this area further develops, there may be an opportunity to create community parks or upgrade existing parks to meet both community and neighborhood parkland needs for this part of the City.

The open space around the George Hill Patterson Center is not currently used as a community park. However, based on its size, if properly amenitized it could become a new community park for the City. Additionally, Moultry Park has land around it that could be considered for acquisition, which would allow it to also serve as a community park. Enhancing the Patterson Center and Moultry Park into community level parks would go a long way toward expanding parks coverage without building new parks.



Veterans Park (all images)

Map 56. Service Area of Parks Meeting Community Needs



SCALE: N.T.S

Access to Trails

Similar to pocket and neighborhood parks, trails are often accessed by foot or bike. They thus have the same service area as pocket and neighborhood parks — 1/4- to 1/2-mile.

Existing trails in Rockdale are provided as small loop trails within Veterans Park and Sumuel Park. Based on nearby natural conditions, there may be opportunities to connect these trails to greater areas of Rockdale using new trails along floodplains and creeks.

The trail and pocket/neighborhood parkland need areas are relatively similar. If trails and new parks are located in close vicinity to each other, the trail network could serve as a community-wide connection between park amenities.

Based on strong community support, further development and expansion of the City's trail network should be considered a priority for implementation.

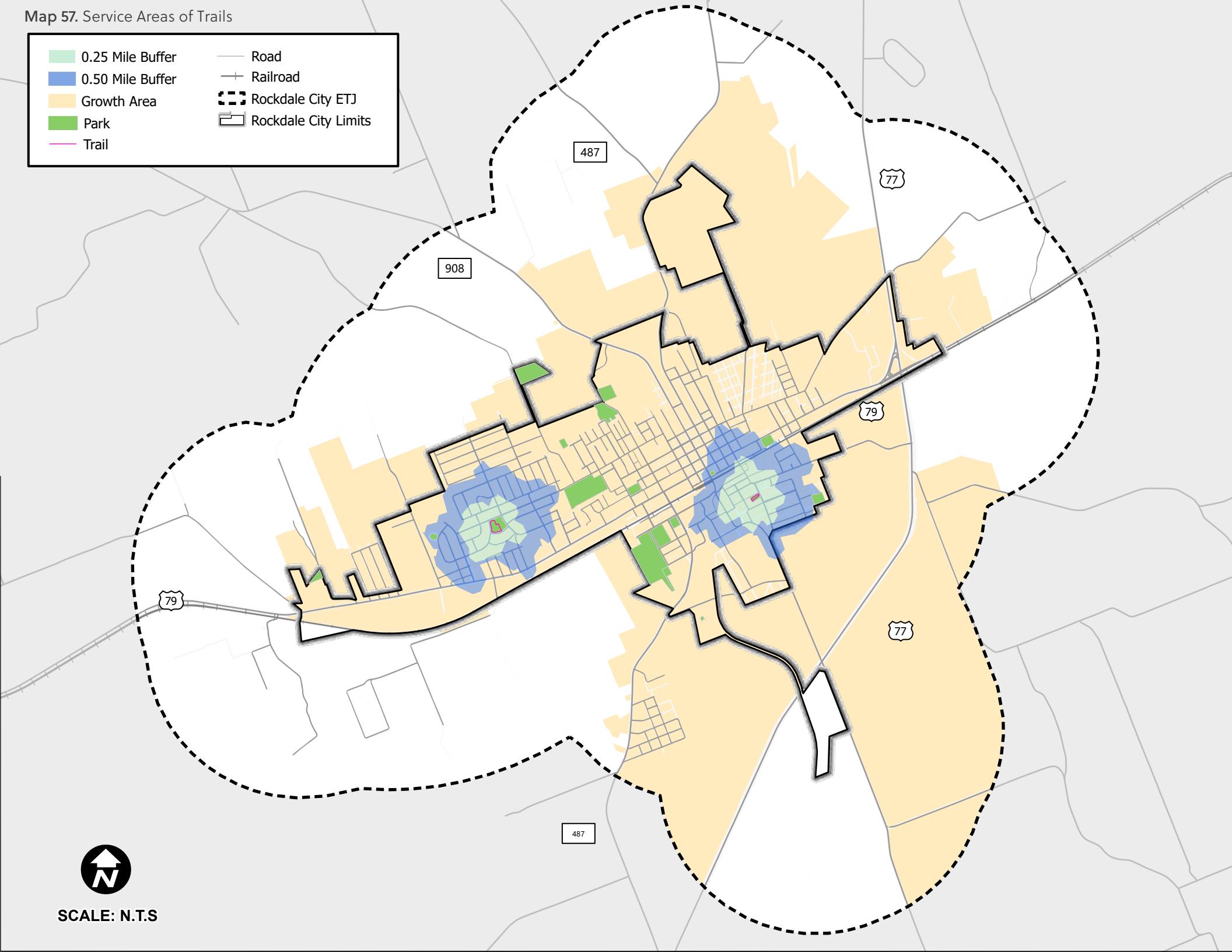
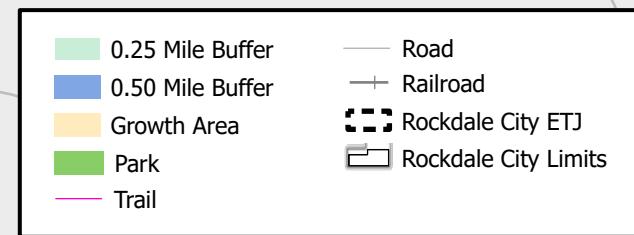


Veterans Park



Sumuel Park

Map 57. Service Areas of Trails



SCALE: N.T.S

Facility Level of Service

In addition to considering the different types of parkland, it is important to consider what types of facilities are available for resident use. The 2023 NRPA Agency Performance Review also provides comparison data for the prevalence for outdoor park and recreation facilities per population. The facility target levels of service were determined through a baseline comparison of the 2023 NRPA Agency Performance Review results for communities with less than 20,000 people. Targets were then tailored to Rockdale based on community input, goals, and an understanding of parkland and staffing opportunities and challenges.

The Facility Level of Service table on the next page illustrates the current level of service for each type of facility based on the current estimated population. Targets are applied to the facility categories to determine current and future deficits. The far right column displays the findings from the 2023 NRPA Agency Performance Review for communities with less than 20,000 people, when available.

There are currently deficiencies in the following facilities:

- Basketball courts
- Disc golf
- Fitness equipment circuit
- Multipurpose fields
- Soccer fields
- Trails
- Picnic facilities
- Recreation center

Looking out toward 2035, without the addition of new facilities, there will also be deficiencies in:

- Standalone backstops
- Volleyball courts
- Splash pads

Most other current deficits remain the same in 2035 or increase incrementally.



Skate Park



Veterans Park

		Current Available ¹	Current LOS (1 Facility per # Residents)	Target LOS (Per Residents)	2024 Need (based on 5,529 pop. ²)	2024 Deficit or Surplus	2035 Need (based on 7,709 pop. ²)	2035 Deficit or Surplus	Cities less than 20,000
Active	Baseball Fields	5	1,106	1 per 3,500	2	3	3	2	1 per 3,114
	Softball Fields	4	1,382	1 per 5,000	2	2	2	2	1 per 5,079
	Standalone Backstop	1	5,529	1 per 6,000	1	0	2	-1	
	Basketball Courts	1.5	3,686	1 per 4,000	2	-0.5	2	-0.5	1 per 3,729
	Disc Golf	0	0	1 per city	1	-1	1	-1	
	Fitness Equipment Circuit	0	0	1 per city	1	-1	1	-1	
	Multipurpose Field ³	0	0	1 per 4,000	2	-2	2	-2	1 per 3,859
	Pickleball Court	1	5,529	1 per 4,000	2	-1	2	-1	1 per 3,252
	Skate Park	1	5,529	1 per city	1	0	1	0	1 per 10,726
	Soccer Fields	0	0	1 per 3,500	2	-2	3	-3	1 per 3,600
	Tennis Courts	3	1,843	1 per 3,000	2	1	3	0	1 per 2,805
	Trails (miles)	0.4	13,823	1 per 2,000	2.8	-2.4	4	-3.6	Median 4 total miles
	Volleyball Courts (Outdoor)	1	5,529	1 per 7,000	1	0	2	-1	
Passive	Amphitheater/Outdoor Event Space	1	5,529	1 per city	1	0	1	0	1 per 11,000
	Dog Park	1	5,529	1 per city	1	0	1	0	1 per 11,100
	Horseshoe Pits	0	0	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies	
	Picnic Pavilions	5	1,106	1 per 3,000	2	3	3	2	
	Picnic Facilities (e.g., tables)	4	1,382	In all publicly accessed parks	In all publicly accessed parks	-5	In all publicly accessed parks	-5	
	Playgrounds	5	1,106	1 per 2,000	3	2	4	1	1 per 2,014
Water	Fishing Piers	0	0	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies	
	Swimming Pool/Aquatic Facility	1	5,529	1 per city	1	0	1	0	1 per 9,745
	Splash Pad	1	5,529	1 per 6,000	1	0	2	-1	
Misc.	Recreation Center	0	0	1 per 10,000	1	-1	1	-1	1 per 9,745
	Restrooms/Portable	7	790	Where feasible	Where feasible	Varies	Where feasible	Varies	

¹ Excludes ISD and non-publicly accessible facilities

² Source: Current Population: United States Census Bureau, July 1, 2022 Population Estimates; 2035 Population: 2.5% Growth Rate Projections in Land Use and Development Chapter

³ Multipurpose field should be appropriate for soccer, football and other rectangular field uses

Figure 74. Facility Level of Service Table

Summary of Needs

Through the needs assessment and public engagement process, the need for additional distribution of parkland, increased connectivity, new and improved facilities, and expanded recreational programs were identified. These needs include services that are currently lacking for existing residents as well as needs expected as Rockdale's population grows through 2035.

The future Cornerstone Development in Target Area 1 is proposing to dedicate approximately 3.8 acres of parkland. Due to this dedication, the needs in this area will change from needing parkland and amenities to potentially more specific needs to be determined once the parks are developed.

The map on the opposite page illustrates all existing close-to-home park service areas, residential growth areas and areas lacking adequate access to any parkland. The areas lacking any parkland access are mostly future growth areas and should be Rockdale's target areas for new parkland acquisition or expansion of park services to provide the needed access. Key parks and recreation needs are summarized below.



Parkland Acreage and Development

- Enhanced maintenance for all park spaces and equipment
- Upgrades to existing parks
- Account for additional close-to-home parks, especially in future residential areas



Park Facilities

- Basketball courts
- Disc golf
- Fitness equipment
- Multipurpose fields
- Soccer fields
- Trails
- Picnic facilities
- Recreation center



Parkland Access and Connectivity

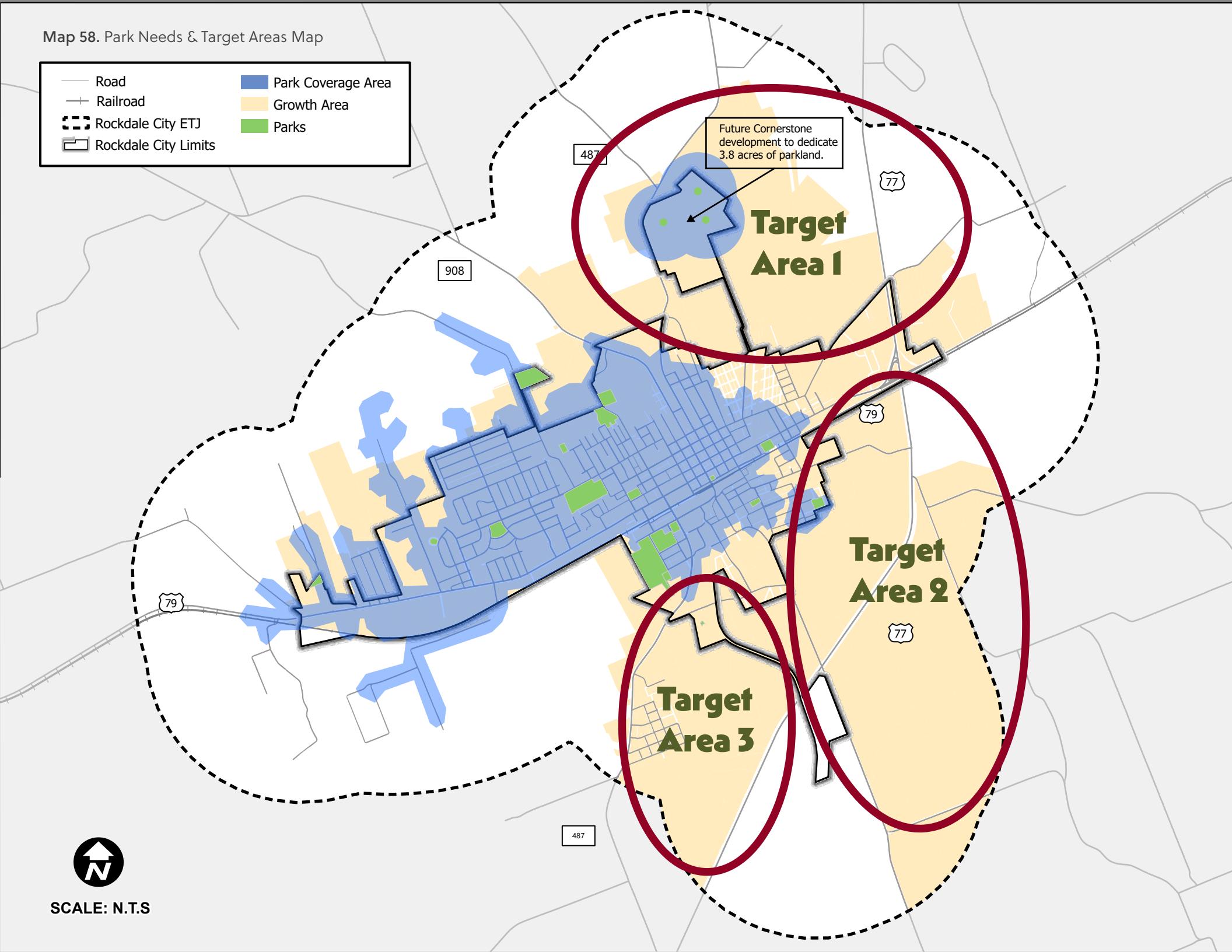
- A trail network that connects major park spaces
- Safer and more complete sidewalk network throughout the City



Recreational Programs

- Children and youth programming
- Indoor recreation
- Additional family-oriented community events

Map 58. Park Needs & Target Areas Map



SCALE: N.T.S

Resource-Based Assessment

The resource-based assessment is the third analysis for the needs assessment. This exercise recognizes key physical, man-made or natural resources within the community that may provide potential recreational opportunities. These areas can either support active recreational pursuits or provide opportunities for passive enjoyment. The following areas have potential to be further leveraged for recreation or open space preservation.

Natural Drainage Channels

Water bodies and floodplains are areas that are inherently unsuitable for most types of development. They are also often beautiful natural areas that wind through cities. Rockdale's streams, such as the Rockdale Branch and Little Ham Branch, and associated floodplains extend south and north across the City. With strategic development of trail infrastructure, these natural areas could be used as a key element in a citywide trail network.



Natural drainage channel in Bridge Park.

Recommendations

The overall consensus of the community feedback related to parks was that residents would prefer to see enhancements and upgrades to existing parks over the addition of new parks spaces. This is also in line with the City's position, as they do not currently have the staff to maintain additional park spaces. Therefore, recommendations focus on making the most of the City's existing parks and recreation assets, with a few aspirational recommendations for new parks and facilities.



Veterans Park

Goals for the Parks & Recreation System

The following goals provide overall direction for Rockdale's parks and recreation system to achieve the community's vision and aspirations. These goals should be used to help guide the City's decision-making processes and form the basis of the PROST plan's recommendations.

1. Proactively obtain and preserve parkland for permanent open space.
2. Ensure the park system responds to the needs and desires of Rockdale's citizens.
3. Provide a variety of recreational opportunities suitable for all ages, abilities and interests.
4. Prioritize safety, maintenance and accessibility in Rockdale parks.
5. Pursue partnerships and diverse funding strategies to support the enhancement and expansion of parks and recreational options for Rockdale residents.

Parkland Acquisition & Preservation

Goal 1: The City will proactively acquire and preserve parkland for permanent open space.

Action 1.1 - Preservation of existing parkland.

As the City grows, especially into the ETJ area, the City should proactively pursue preservation of land for parks. The first step is to preserve existing City-owned land. Land is a finite resource and divesting of parkland assets is not in the long-term interest of the City or its residents. Additionally, the City of Rockdale leadership and community members have identified the priority of improving existing parks before acquiring more acreage.

The undeveloped City-owned land adjacent to the George Hill Patterson Community Center provides an option for new parkland without acquisition.

Action 1.2 - Acquisition of land outlined in the Plan.

Undeveloped, privately owned land adjacent to Moultry Park may provide an option for acquisition and expansion of that park. Expanding and/or further developing these areas has potential to address some of the parkland needs in target areas three and four, shown on Map 57.

As the land within target area one develops in future years, the City should look for opportunities to acquire and preserve parkland. This could be through parkland dedication requirements for

residential development projects going into the area or the purchase of additional land parcels by the City.

Action 1.3 - Review parkland dedication policy and modify as needed.

In order to meet parkland needs as additional areas of Rockdale are developed, the City should review the current parkland dedication policy, located in the Rockdale Code of Ordinances - Subdivision Ordinance, and update as needed. This could allow additional dedication of land and/or collection of funds from the private development community for acquisition, development and improvements of parks within defined park need areas. It is important that any accepted land has true recreation potential.

The City may consider privately owned parks, such as those owned and managed by an HOA, to account for some level of pocket or neighborhood parks accessible for future residents in communities that provide them with those amenities.



Moultry Park

Park Improvements & New Amenities

Goal 2: Ensure the park system responds to the needs and desires of Rockdale's citizens.

Action 2.1 - Improve Veterans Park.

This is the most highly amenitized park currently in Rockdale. Recommended improvements include:

- Ensure the amenities stay safe and in good condition via proactive maintenance.
- Implement the concept plan already created for the Veterans Memorial.
- Install lighting.
- Consider additional amenities including exercise stations.
- Upgrade the walking trails to be ADA accessible.
- Upgrade the pool area (see Action 5.6 for more details).
- Enhance the park through general beautification and landscaping.
- Add community gardens.
- Add public WiFi.

Action 2.2 - Improve Sumuel Park.

This is the most recently updated park space in Rockdale. Recommended improvements include:

- Ensure the amenities stay safe and in good condition via proactive maintenance.
- Consider shading the basketball court.
- Install additional lighting and parking.
- Enhance the natural function of the

drainageway via native plantings and habitat restoration.

Action 2.3 - Enhance beautification efforts throughout the parks.

The community voiced a desire for more attractive parks. Beautifying parks helps to increase community pride, attract greater usage and improve the City's overall image. The City should consider beautifying existing parks through enhanced landscaping in high-visibility areas, choosing amenities with upgraded materials for durability and aesthetics (e.g., furnishings and pavilions), and proactively repairing and replacing amenities as needed.

Action 2.4 - Develop a community-wide trail network connecting key points of interest.

Establishing routes connecting schools to parks and points of interest throughout the City is important for promoting outdoor activities and enhancing community connectivity. A first phase of trails has been identified, to connect Bridge Park, Moultry Park, Sumuel Park, the Skate Park, and the George Hill Patterson Community Center. A larger, second phase of the trail network would connect additional destinations including Downtown, Veterans Park, the Baseball and Softball Fields, and schools. A connection to the Dog Park could also be considered. See Map 58.

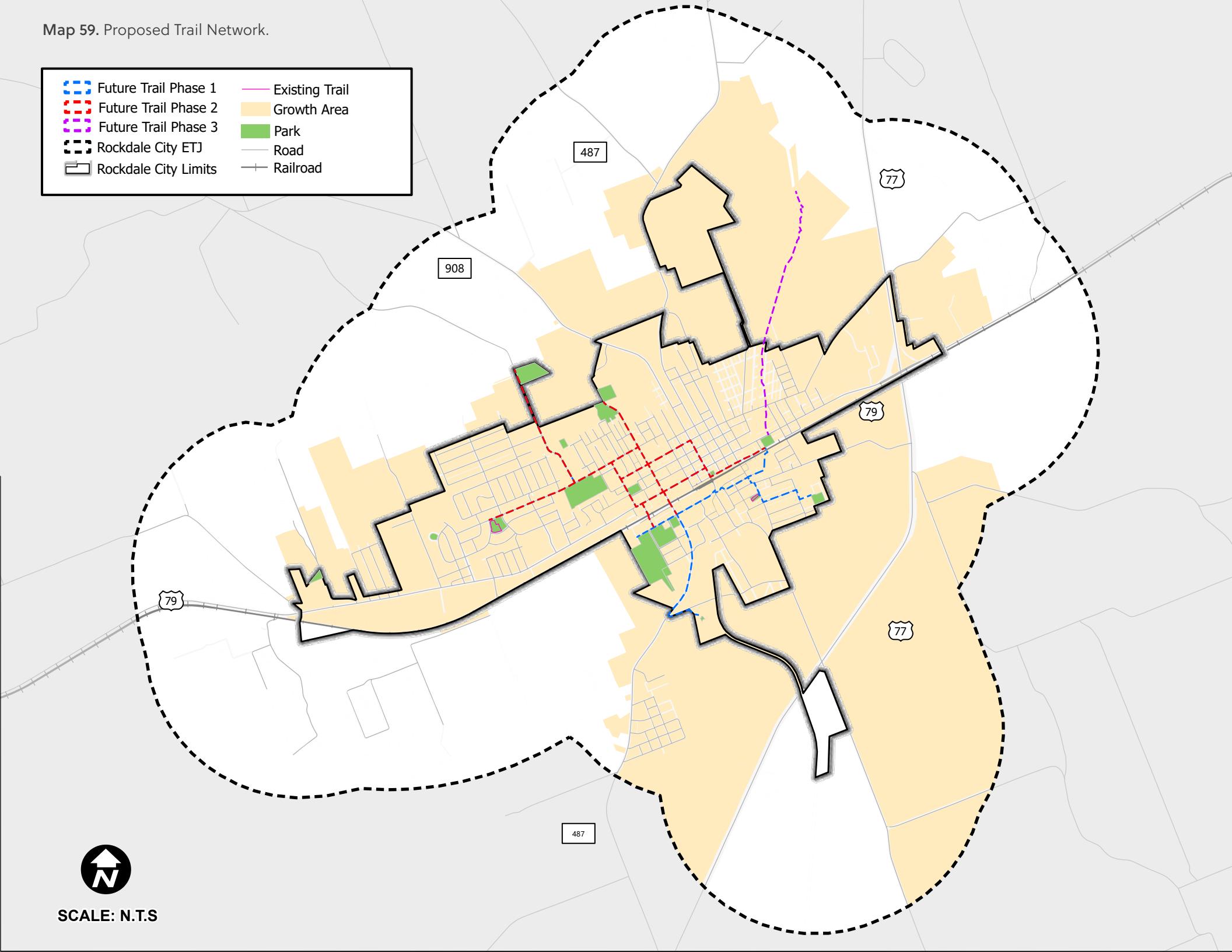
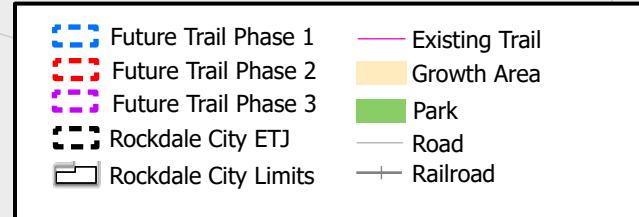
If the City pursues the idea of a consolidated regional complex, the trail links to the softball and baseball fields would not be constructed. However, if these sites redevelop as major projects, trail connections may still be warranted.

Action 2.5 - Improve Bridge Park.

Recommended improvements include:

- Implement the concept plan already created, including amenities such as walking trails, a pavilion and events lawn, landscaping, and parking.
- Consider nature play for the playscape in Bridge Park, as it offers a different play experience and keeps with the natural character of the park.
- Ensure new amenities are ADA accessible.
- Prioritize protecting the space's natural character, including trees and drainageways, while making upgrades to the park.
- Enhance the natural function of the drainageway via native plantings and habitat restoration.

Map 59. Proposed Trail Network.



SCALE: N.T.S

Action 2.6 - Relocate the Dog Park.

The City should consider relocating the Dog Park to Fatheree Field if improvements are made to the road quality on Beverly Dr, or alternatively, explore relocating it to the vacant land surrounding the George Hill Patterson Community Center. Relocation would offer the prospect of significantly expanding its size, providing ample space for dogs to roam and play. Relocation also allows the existing site to be used solely by the animal shelter, minimizing biosecurity concerns.

Recommended improvements to the relocated dog park include:

- Offer basic amenities such as signage and lighting, parking area, fully fenced play areas with dual gates, separate play areas for large and small dogs, shaded seating in both play areas, drinking water availability for both humans and pets, and waste stations with baggies and receptacles.
- Consider ground cover within play areas that minimizes mud, such as bark or pea gravel, especially in the most highly trafficked areas.
- Provide additional amenities such as canine agility obstacles as budget allows.

Action 2.7 - Improve the Skate Park.

Recommended improvements include:

- Implement paved parking to accommodate visitors to the park.
- Upgrade existing skate ramps and amenities to promote safety, usability

and accessibility. Work with park users to ensure new facilities are in line with user needs.

- Add shaded seating and tables, restrooms, loop trail, and public WiFi.
- Utilize the undeveloped area of the park, which is currently in the floodplain, to create a multipurpose or 3v3 soccer field, ensuring compatibility with its functional floodplain status.
- Enhance the natural function of the drainageway via native plantings and habitat restoration.

Action 2.8 - Improve George Hill Patterson Community Center Outdoor Spaces.

Amenitize the underutilized outdoor spaces of the site to turn the space into a full community park.

- Implement the concept plan already created, including amenities such as walking trails, multiple pavilions and outdoor event spaces, a playscape, benches and lighting, art, outdoor games and activities, and landscaping.
- Add park signage consistent with all Rockdale parks and ensure the community knows this is now a public park.
- Consider additional amenities such as picnic areas with grilling stations, drinking water sources and public WiFi.
- Add community gardens.
- Ensure new amenities are ADA accessible.
- Protect the space's natural character, especially large shade trees, while making upgrades to the park.

- Consider relocating the dog park to additional vacant space around the center.
- Explore adding a full-size soccer/multipurpose field to the site if there is room beyond the already conceptualized amenities.

Action 2.9 - Improve Moultry Park.

The City may explore the opportunity to acquire some additional acreage for Moultry Park and enhance this spaces into a full community park.

Recommended improvements include:

- Improve signage and park visibility from Baxter St.
- Pave the access road and parking area.
- Increase lighting.
- Enhance the park through beautification and landscaping.
- Update restrooms and add water fountains.
- Provide a shade cover over the basketball court.
- Consider relocating the playscape farther from the basketball court to minimize conflict between age groups. Consider updating and modernizing with a new playscape, if budget allows. Provide a shade cover over the playscape and benches for to improve user comfort.
- Install a picnic pavilion with WiFi connectivity.
- Upgrade the large portion of undeveloped park area to be a multipurpose practice field.
- Remove the existing standalone backstop and install a new backstop at one corner of the new multipurpose field.

Action 2.10 - Evaluate opportunities to provide a Regional Sports Complex.

One of the few recreational amenities the City is currently adequately providing are baseball and softball fields. If the City wishes to create a new regional tournament-level sports complex, this Plan recommends consolidating the existing baseball/softball fields to this new complex and redeveloping those existing sites. Rockdale does not need both the existing and new baseball/softball facilities. Additionally, a new sports complex should accommodate those amenities that Rockdale currently lacks, such as soccer fields. A regional sports complex should be located in the vicinity of other amenities, such as dining, shopping, and lodging, in order to realize the most economic impact for the City.

Action 2.11 - Improve Post Oak Place Park.

Amenitize the space to serve as a pocket park.

- Select minimal passive amenities, such as benches, picnic tables and soft surface walking paths, to minimize creating nuisances for immediate neighbors. Avoid adding lighting or off-street parking, out of respect to the neighbors.
- Work with the adjacent neighbors to identify appropriate enhancements to this space.
- Preserve the space's natural character while making park upgrades (e.g., large shade trees).

Action 2.12 - Develop park design guidelines.

In addition to signage, incorporating similar materials, furnishings and level of maintenance throughout all City parks will help to build greater continuity within the parks system and provide efficiency for design decisions. The City should consider adopting park design guidelines to steer the design and construction of new and improved parks and recreation facilities. Consideration should be given to:

- Choosing furnishings and facilities that use attractive, durable, vandal-resistant materials.
- Implementing standards for native and water-efficient landscaping.
- Minimizing maintenance requirements to the extent possible.
- Increasing security and safety through design decisions (e.g., Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design).
- Designing for all ages and abilities.
- Considering adjacencies between amenities and the target audiences.
- Allowing for flexibility of use.
- Maximizing shade.
- Beautifying the parks.
- Incorporating a consistent parks brand through styles and materials used in the parks.

Action 2.13 - Systematically address recreation amenity deficiencies.

As the City further amenitizes existing parks or develops new parks, it should prioritize providing amenities with identified deficits as defined in the facility level of service assessment. These do not need to be the only amenities included, but should be a starting point for all discussions about adding recreation options to parks.

Action 2.14 - Update the PROST Plan.

The community's parks and recreation needs and desires will change as the population grows and demographics shift. The City should plan to update the Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Master Plan periodically to ensure that it reflects current needs and priorities. The TPWD recommends updating the Plan every five years or before any new major developments occur that significantly change the parks and recreation needs of residents. This can also help the City during a TPWD grant funding evaluation, as TPWD places a higher point value on submittals that demonstrate that a plan has been updated within the previous five years. All Plan updates should include a public involvement process.

In the coming years, the City should review and update the Plan using the following steps:

- Annually: Staff review implementation to identify progress and provide an annual report to the City Council.
- Every five years (or sooner if needed): Conduct a full review and make needed updates to the inventory, needs assessment, recommendations, and prioritization, if needed.

Recreational Facilities & Programming

Goal 3: Provide a variety of recreational opportunities suitable for all ages, abilities and interests.

Action 3.1 - Evaluate opportunities to provide a Community and/or Recreation Center in Rockdale.

Based on community input, there is a strong desire for a community or recreation center in Rockdale that can accommodate indoor recreational classes and additional programming, especially for teens and youth. It is recommended that the City undertake a Community and/or Recreation Center feasibility study to determine the viability, location, programming, cost and potential funding sources for such a facility. The study should consider space needs for:

- Indoor recreational programs and classes for all ages.
- Rentable spaces for meetings and events of different sizes.
- A lounge for teens with a student-staffed coffee shop/caf  , an e-sports room and lounge furniture.
- Adequate parking to serve the desired programming.
- After school programs.
- Potential partnership programs.

Potential locations to consider could include:

- Redevelopment of the Aycock Center.
- Redevelopment of the baseball or softball fields, if those sites get consolidated into a regional complex.

- A new site within Downtown or near the high school.

The site of the new Community and/or Recreation Center should connect to the city-wide trails network and specifically to the middle and high schools via safe multi-modal routes.

Action 3.2 - Develop or support the development of a Community & Recreation Center in Rockdale.

Following identification of the preferred location, programming, and funding or partnership strategy, the City should proceed with the design, construction and management of a Community & Recreation Center.

Action 3.3 - Support more community clubs and activities.

There is a need for clubs and activities for all residents. The City should support programs such as the arts and STEM. This could include initiatives/programs such as:

- Based on community feedback, a high priority should be placed on youth programs.
- Athletic leagues and clinics.
- Arts and crafts classes and camps.

- Technology classes and camps.
- Inclusive programs for children with all abilities.
- Non-traditional sports programs (e.g., skateboarding).

Action 3.4 - Create a community garden program.

Community gardens were an identified need by the community and can provide a variety of health and wellness benefits for community members. The City should seek to provide community garden plots in their community level parks, including Veterans Park, Moultry Park, or the George Hill Patterson Community Center.

Along with provision of the garden plots, there must be a program in place to ensure proper use and maintenance of plots. This can be a community or City-led program that focuses on the member and plot management as well as the communal elements of the garden, such as:

- General area upkeep and work days.
- Communal tools.
- Rules and security.
- Educational programs, either for members or external groups.
- Care trades (for when members are out of town and need extra help caring for their plot).

Action 3.5 - Enhance events programming.

Many park spaces are going to be most effective and valuable when they are properly programmed with events and activities. This could be the responsibility of a new recreational programming coordinator or manager role on City staff (as noted in Action 4.2), the Rockdale MDD or other organization as deemed appropriate. The park spaces noted as most appropriate to host community events (given the recommended updates and enhancements) are:

- Bridge Park.
- Patterson Center
- Wolf Park and the Milam Avenue Festival Street.



Abandoned Aycock School

Safety & Maintenance

Goal 4: Prioritize safety, maintenance and accessibility in Rockdale parks.

Action 4.1 - Conduct a staffing assessment.

The Rockdale Public Works Department currently includes three staff members to maintain the City's parks and support City events. The parks related staff currently focus mostly on day-to-day maintenance and not on long-range parks planning.

It is recommended that the City conduct a staffing assessment to determine needs for additional staff and consider the establishment of an official Parks and Recreation Department. The assessment should consider increased maintenance regularity, capacity to quickly address safety and security concerns, and handle recreational programming. The assessment should also consider the staffing needs beyond the day-to-day operations and maintenance, such as long-range planning, prioritization, securing funding and parks development.

Action 4.2 - Ensure adequate funding and staffing accompany park system expansions.

A poorly maintained park is oftentimes viewed as worse than no park at all. As the City develops additional park facilities, it is also crucial to budget adequate funding and staffing to allow for increased park system maintenance and repairs. If the City wants to grow recreational

programming, it is likely that there will be the need for a specific recreational programming coordinator or manager staff position.

Action 4.3 - Develop a proactive maintenance plan.

The overall maintenance of park facilities is a major concern for Rockdale residents. City maintenance staff is overburdened and responsible for all maintenance throughout the City. With the addition of new staff dedicated to parks planning, maintenance and development, a maintenance plan that focuses on proactive updates and quickly addresses any equipment safety concerns should be created. A proactive maintenance can help prevent unexpected costs and undue risk for the City as well as allow staff to identify the most efficient and effective way to maintain parks. At a minimum, this plan should include:

- An inventory of park assets.
- Proactive park maintenance plans and schedules for each park.
- Replacement plans for amenities.
- Required training necessary to develop the specialized skill sets needed to maintain the parks.

Action 4.4 - Conduct an ADA assessment and develop a prioritized plan to address any issues.

Some of the amenities in the parks system are currently inaccessible to individuals who are mobility challenged. In order to provide equal access to park amenities, the City should conduct an ADA assessment of each of the parks including trails, playgrounds, splash pads, parking areas, picnic facilities, etc. Identified deficiencies should be addressed in a prioritized order.

Action 4.5 - Increase shade within all parks.

In Texas's climate, shade is an important element in making the parks usable and comfortable and also in promoting community health and wellness in public spaces. It is recommended that the City provide additional shaded areas in all parks. This can be through the use of shade structures, shade fabric or the planting of more shade trees. These efforts should be focused in gathering areas and along walking trails.

Action 4.6 - Develop a Lighting Plan.

Many of the parks in Rockdale lack adequate lighting, which can make the parks feel less available and comfortable for users. The City should conduct an assessment of each of the parks including trails, playgrounds, parking areas, picnic facilities, etc. and identify deficiencies in lighting. The City should then come up with a plan to increase and update lighting in a prioritized order. This can include upgrades to lighting that can not only enhance safety but also reduce maintenance and increase aesthetics and efficiency of fixtures.

Action 4.7 - Provide system-wide consistent parks signage.

Consistent parks signage, including materials and graphic content, helps residents and visitors navigate to/within parks, visually recognize City-owned parkland, and build an understanding of allowable behaviors. The City should develop a consistent parks branding strategy and update entry and wayfinding signs at all parks accordingly. Each park should have signs with the park name, rules and contact information for maintenance and other requests. Entry signs should be located in prominently visible locations and have park names at an easily legible size. Park rules signage should be provided, where needed.

Action 4.8 - Evaluate opportunities to increase the use of technology at all City parks.

Creating opportunities for people to interact with nature while staying connected with technology can be a great way to encourage increased park usage. It is recommended that the City seek to provide public WiFi access at all City parks. The City can also utilize QR code quick links on signs throughout the parks to allow people to report an issue, learn about a recreation opportunity, educate themselves about natural features or participate in organized activities (e.g., digital scavenger hunt).



Needed maintenance at Veterans Park

Partnerships & Funding

Goal 5: Pursue partnerships and diverse funding strategies to support the expansion of parks and recreational options for Rockdale residents.

Action 5.1 - Work with the Chamber of Commerce to enhance Wolf Park.

Recommended enhancements include:

- Transform the park into a paved plaza and Downtown signature space.
- Amenitize the space for everyday use that is also flexible for events, such as movable picnic tables in the pavilion.
- Implement general beautification and landscaping with a focus on enhanced planting beds rather than a large grass area.
- Add food truck hook-ups for events – this could also be added to the MDD parking lot, creating a food truck area off to the side of the park space.
- Install public WiFi.

Action 5.2 - Work with the Rockdale Historical Society to amenitize their Downtown green spaces.

There are two blocks of green space behind the Historic Depot Building along Milam Ave. This site sits in a prime location in Downtown Rockdale adjacent to Wolf Park. Work with the Society to

make those spaces contribute more fully to the fabric of Downtown.

Recommended enhancements include:

- Create a small plaza area outside the dining car event space (bounded by the restrooms, train cars, and blacksmith's building) to serve as a prefunction or event space, as well as an outdoor classroom for educational visits.
- Turn the rest of the space into a linear park with landscaping, trees, walking paths, seating and picnic tables.
- Enhance beautification and landscaping throughout the area.

Action 5.3 - Work with the Fair Association to explore opportunities at Fair Park.

With the sale of Fair Park and Rodeo Arena from the City to the Fair Association, many residents feel the loss of a public asset. The City should coordinate with the Rockdale Fair Association to open up opportunities to host additional community events and communicate potential community needs. Additionally, the City may consider participating in assisting the Fair Association to reopen portions of the site back up for public use. There are large portions of land on the site where nature trails and a disc golf course

may be a good use of space. Security could be maintained by moving the fence to keep the rest of the facilities secure.

Action 5.4 - Work with the Youth Baseball and Softball Associations to coordinate the future of those activities in Rockdale.

The Youth Baseball and Softball Associations are important to the City and residents of Rockdale. The City should partner with these groups either on a new regional sports complex and redevelopment of the existing facilities or to update the existing baseball/softball facilities.

Action 5.5 - Partner with Farmers Market to expand events.

The Farmers Market is a popular event and with the recommendations of this Plan to enhance Wolf Park and create a new Milam Ave festival street with vendor spaces, there is great opportunity to expand the Farmers Market events.

Action 5.6 - Work with the Hutto, Texas YMCA of Greater Williamson County to upgrade the pool at Veterans Park.

Recommended enhancements include:

- Update locker rooms.
- Add additional shaded deck areas.
- Upgrade and screen the pump equipment.

Action 5.7 - Reevaluate and/or establish joint maintenance agreements with athletic leagues.

Some of the City's existing and future facilities may be used by third-party youth and adult athletic leagues. As the City considers increasing maintenance throughout the parks system, it should consider reevaluating and/or establishing joint maintenance agreements with the leagues. This can help to ensure that each party's responsibilities are clear, athletic facilities are adequately maintained, and that league fees are sufficiently offsetting the City's costs.

Action 5.8- Work with Kay Theatre and The 1895 project to host fine and performing arts programming.

Additional youth activities were a major need identified by the community. Rockdale has fine and performing arts assets in the Kay Theatre and the planned 1895 project. The City should utilize these assets to provide additional programming

for residents. To note, the 1895 redevelopment is planning a pocket park at their site in Downtown.

Action 5.9 Evaluate opportunities for inter-local agreements with Rockdale Independent School District.

Cities and school districts often provide similar types of recreational amenities for their target users. In order to maximize sharing of mutually beneficial resources, the City should evaluate development of inter-local agreements with the Rockdale Independent School District. This could include allowing school district use of facilities such as City-owned athletic fields, and public use of school facilities such as playgrounds and athletic fields outside of school hours.

Action 5.10 Pursue grant funding.

In order to maximize park system development potential, the City should consistently evaluate and pursue appropriate grant funding opportunities. This includes Texas Park and Wildlife Grants as well as a variety of other recreational grants available to cities.

Action 5.11 - Evaluate opportunities for public-private partnerships.

Partnerships between cities and private-sector companies can be powerful tools to finance, build, and/or operate parks and facility projects. It is recommended that the City evaluate and pursue opportunities for public-private partnerships to best leverage its existing resources and expand offerings for the community. This could include consideration of partnerships for a recreation

center and sponsorships from the local business community, among others.

Action 5.12 - Consider pursuing bond funding for parks and recreation improvements.

When asked about funding strategies, over 60% percent of respondents voiced support or strong support for a voter approved bond initiative via the public parks survey. As the City explores large-scale capital improvements, it should consider approaching the citizens with certificate of obligation bond options. This requires preparation of bond-ready projects with detailed design plans and vetting the projects with a citizen bond committee.

Implementation

High Priority Needs

This Plan includes a variety of recommendations to improve and expand the parks, facilities, trails and recreational programming in Rockdale. The Plan meets the TPWD's requirements for a parks, recreation and open space master plan, and can help increase the City's competitiveness when applying for TPWD grant funding.

Rockdale's top priority parks facility needs are summarized in the adjacent table. These are based on community input, needs assessments, consultant evaluation, and staff input. Future parks and recreation efforts should work toward fulfilling these community needs.

Figure 75. Top Priority Facility Needs Tables

New facilities needed based on community input	New facilities needed based on level of service	Upgraded facilities needed based on existing condition
1. Trails/Nature Trails 2. Inclusive playgrounds 3. Recreation center 4. Community garden 5. Fitness Equipment	1. Soccer Fields 2. Picnic Facilities 3. Trails 4. Multipurpose fields 5. Recreation center 6. Fitness Equipment	1. Lighting, generally 2. Shade, generally 3. Baseball, softball fields 4. Dog Park 5. Playground equipment
Top 10 cumulative outdoor facility needs		Top 10 cumulative indoor facility needs
1. Additional shade throughout all parks 2. Trails, especially nature trails 3. Soccer Fields 4. Multipurpose fields 5. Additional lighting throughout all parks 6. Improved Playground Equipment/Inclusive Playgrounds 7. Improved dog park 8. Community gardens 9. Improved Softball/Baseball Fields 10. Fitness Equipment Circuit		1. Recreation/Community center 2. Youth Programs

Prioritized Action Plan

Prioritization

The recommended actions of this Plan have been prioritized based on the following criteria:

- Level of need based on community input
- Level of need based on the level of service
- Existing conditions evaluations
- Less complex actions that can create early wins

Actions have been organized into near-term (1-2 years), mid-term (3-7 years) and long-term (8-10+ years) time frames, with an indication of actions that will be ongoing. Some actions will be initiated and completed within their designated time frame, while others may be initiated during their designated time frame and then completed over time. Near- and mid-term actions have been ranked. Long-term actions should be further prioritized in subsequent Plan updates.

The priorities set forth in the Prioritized Action Plan on the next page are intended to guide staff and the City Council as they improve and operate the parks and recreation system for the next five to 10 years. This does not, however, preclude the City from initiating an action sooner than recommended if opportune circumstances arise.

To note, not all of the recommendations above are translated into specific action items. Many of the recommendations, such as funding and partnerships, will be necessary to pursue as a part of implementing the actions noted here.

Potential Cost Ranges

Order of magnitude potential cost ranges are provided where possible in the action plan. These planning level cost ranges were created in 2024, based on a current understanding of the industry. Ultimate costs will be dependent on detailed design and construction plans, industry trends, and timing of implementation. Considering current high levels of inflation, costs should be re-evaluated closer to budgeting and implementation phases. Final costs will be dependent on further decisions by the City. Additional information regarding assumptions utilized to create these opinions of probable costs (OPCCs) can be found in Appendix D.



Veterans Park

Rank	Action Items	Implementation Timeframe				Potential Cost Range
		Short-term (1-2 yrs)	Mid-term (3-7 yrs)	Long-term (8-10+ yrs)	Ongoing	
PR-1	<p>Conduct a staffing assessment.</p> <p>It is recommended that the City conduct a staffing assessment to determine needs for additional staff and consider the establishment of an official Parks and Recreation Department.</p>	◆				City staff resources
PR-2	<p>Review parkland dedication policy and modify as needed</p> <p>In order to meet parkland needs as additional areas of Rockdale are developed, the City should review the current parkland dedication policy, located in the Rockdale Code of Ordinances - Subdivision Ordinance, and update as needed.</p>	◆				City staff resources
PR-3	<p>Develop park design guidelines.</p> <p>In addition to signage, incorporating similar materials, furnishings and level of maintenance throughout all City parks will help to build greater continuity within the parks system and provide efficiency for design decisions.</p>	◆				City staff resources or Consultant (\$50,000-100,000)
PR-4	<p>Enhance beautification efforts throughout the parks.</p> <p>The City should consider beautifying existing parks through enhanced landscaping in high-visibility areas, choosing amenities with upgraded materials for durability and aesthetics (e.g., furnishings and pavilions), and proactively repairing and replacing amenities as needed.</p>	◆				\$25,000-50,000 per park; includes benches, trashcans, trees and landscaping. Assumes labor by City staff.
PR-5	<p>Create a community garden program.</p> <p>The City should seek to provide community garden plots in their community level parks, including Veterans Park, Moultrie Park, and the George Hill Patterson Community Center.</p>	◆				\$500 per planting bed, plus fencing, pathway materials, and any equipment or buildings as applicable
PR-6	<p>Evaluate opportunities to provide a Community and/or Recreation Center in Rockdale.</p> <p>It is recommended that the City undertake a Community and/or Recreation Center feasibility study to determine the viability, location, programming, cost and potential funding sources for such a facility.</p>	◆				City staff resources and consultant (\$75,000-120,000)
PR-7	<p>Evaluate opportunities for inter-local agreements with Rockdale Independent School District.</p> <p>In order to maximize sharing of mutually beneficial resources, the City should evaluate development of inter-local agreements with the Rockdale Independent School District. This could include allowing school district use of facilities such as City-owned athletic fields, and public use of school facilities such as playgrounds and athletic fields outside of school hours.</p>	◆				City staff resources
PR-8	<p>Improve Bridge Park.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the concept plan already created, including amenities such as walking trails, a pavilion and events lawn, landscaping, and parking. Consider nature play for the playscape in Bridge Park, as it offers a different play experience and keeps with the natural character of the park. Ensure new amenities are ADA accessible. Prioritize protecting the space's natural character, including trees and drainageways, while making upgrades to the park. Enhance the natural function of the drainageway via native plantings and habitat restoration. 		◆			\$1,200,000-1,400,000; plus 18% soft costs and 30% contingency

Rank	Action Items	Implementation Timeframe				Potential Cost Range
		Short-term (1-2 yrs)	Mid-term (3-7 yrs)	Long-term (8-10+ yrs)	Ongoing	
PR-9	<p>Relocate the Dog Park.</p> <p>Explore relocating the Dog Park to Fatheree Field if Beverly Dr road quality improves, or alternatively, consider relocating it to the vacant land surrounding the George Hill Patterson Community Center.</p>		◆			\$110,000-125,000; for a one acre dog park
PR-10	<p>Ensure adequate funding and staffing accompany park system expansions.</p> <p>As the City develops additional park facilities, it is also crucial to budget adequate funding and staffing to allow for increased park system maintenance and repairs.</p>		◆			City staff resources
PR-11	<p>Develop a community-wide trail network connecting key points of interest.</p> <p>The City should consider establishing routes that connect schools to parks and points of interest throughout the City to help promote outdoor activities and enhancing community connectivity, per this Plan.</p>	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3		\$1,000,000 per mile, does not include land acquisition
PR-12	<p>Increase shade within all parks.</p> <p>It is recommended that the City provide additional shaded areas in all parks. This can be through the use of shade structures, shade fabric or the planting of more shade trees. These efforts should be focused in gathering areas and along walking trails.</p>		◆			Structures: \$75,000-150,000 each Trees: \$600-800 each, plus installation
PR-13	<p>Develop a proactive maintenance plan.</p> <p>With the addition of new staff dedicated to parks planning, maintenance and development, a maintenance plan that focuses on proactive updates and quickly addressing any equipment safety concerns should be created.</p>		◆			City staff resources
PR-14	<p>Conduct an ADA assessment and develop a prioritized plan to address any issues.</p> <p>Some of the amenities in the parks system are currently inaccessible to individuals who are mobility challenged. In order to provide equal access to park amenities, the City should conduct an ADA assessment of each of the parks including trails, playgrounds, splash pads, parking areas, picnic facilities, etc. Identified deficiencies should be addressed in a prioritized order.</p>		◆			City staff resources and consultant
PR-15	<p>Develop a Lighting Plan.</p> <p>The City should conduct an assessment of each of the parks including trails, playgrounds, parking areas, picnic facilities, etc. and identify deficiencies in lighting. The City should then come up with a plan to increase and update lighting in a prioritized order. This can include upgrades to lighting that can not only enhance safety but also reduce maintenance and increase aesthetics and efficiency of fixtures.</p>		◆			City staff resources
PR-16	<p>Support more community clubs and activities.</p> <p>This could include initiatives/programs such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on community feedback, a high priority should be placed on youth programs. • Athletic leagues and clinics. • Arts and crafts classes and camps. • Technology classes and camps. • Inclusive programs for children with all abilities. • Non-traditional sports programs (e.g., skateboarding). • Work with Kay Theatre and the 1895 project to host fine and performing arts programming. 		◆			TBD

Rank	Action Items	Implementation Timeframe				Potential Cost Range
		Short-term (1-2 yrs)	Mid-term (3-7 yrs)	Long-term (8-10+ yrs)	Ongoing	
PR-17	<p>Provide system-wide consistent parks signage.</p> <p>The City should develop a consistent parks branding strategy and update entry and wayfinding signs at all parks accordingly. Each park should have signs with the park name, rules and contact information for maintenance and other requests.</p>		◆			Park Monument Signage - \$5000-15,000 each Regulatory Signage - \$500-1000 each
PR-18	<p>Evaluate opportunities to provide a Regional Sports Complex.</p> <p>If the City wishes to create a new regional tournament-level sports complex, this Plan recommends consolidating the existing baseball/softball fields to this new complex and redeveloping those existing sites.</p>		◆			Planning & Design by Consultant - \$75,000-100,000 \$3,700,000-4,200,000; plus 18% soft costs and 30% contingency, does not include land acquisition
PR-19	<p>Acquisition of park land - Moultry Park</p> <p>Undeveloped, privately owned land adjacent to Moultry Park may provide an option for acquisition and expansion of that park.</p>		◆			TBD
PR-20	<p>Improve Moultry Park.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baxter St. • Pave the access road and parking area. • Increase lighting. • Enhance the park through beautification and landscaping. • Update restrooms and add water fountains. • Provide a shade cover over the basketball court. • Consider relocating the playscape further from the basketball court to minimize conflict between age groups. Consider updating and modernizing with a new playscape, if budget allows. Provide a shade cover over the playscape and benches for to improve user comfort. • Install a picnic pavilion with WiFi connectivity. • Upgrade the large portion of undeveloped park area to be a multipurpose practice field. • Remove the existing standalone backstop and install a new backstop at one corner of the new multipurpose field. 		◆			\$930,000-1,135,000
PR-21	<p>Improve the Skate Park.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement paved parking to accommodate visitors to the park. • Upgrade existing skate ramps and amenities to promote safety, usability and accessibility. Work with park users to ensure new facilities are in line with user needs. • Add shaded seating and tables, restrooms, loop trail, and public WiFi. • Utilize the undeveloped area of the park, which is currently in the floodplain, to create a multipurpose or 3v3 soccer field, ensuring compatibility with its functional floodplain status. • Enhance the natural function of the drainageway via native plantings and habitat restoration. 		◆			\$450,000-520,000; does not include upgrades to the skate ramps as those require further investigation

Rank	Action Items	Implementation Timeframe				Potential Cost Range
		Short-term (1-2 yrs)	Mid-term (3-7 yrs)	Long-term (8-10+ yrs)	Ongoing	
PR-22	<p>Improve Veteran's Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the amenities stay safe and in good condition via proactive maintenance. • Implement the concept plan already created for the Veterans Memorial. • Install lighting. • Consider additional amenities including exercise stations. • Upgrade the walking trails to be ADA accessible. • Upgrade the pool area (see action 5.6 for more details). • Enhance the park through general beautification and landscaping. • Add community gardens. • Add public WiFi. 		◆			\$200,000-260,000; does not include upgrades to the pool as that requires further investigation
PR-23	<p>Develop or support the development of a Community & Recreation Center in Rockdale.</p> <p>Following identification of the preferred location, programming, and funding or partnership strategy, the City should proceed with the design, construction and management of a Community & Recreation Center.</p>		◆			Planning & Design by Consultant - \$75,000-100,000
PR-24	<p>Evaluate opportunities to increase the use of technology at all City parks.</p> <p>It is recommended that the City seek to provide public WiFi access at all City parks. The City can also utilize QR code quick links on signs throughout the parks to allow people to report an issue, learn about a recreation opportunity, educate themselves about natural features or participate in organized activities (e.g., digital scavenger hunt).</p>		◆			Data & IT Planning Consultant - \$25,000-30,000
PR-25	<p>Improve Sumuel Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the amenities stay safe and in good condition via proactive maintenance. • Consider shading the basketball court. • Install additional lighting and parking. • Enhance the natural function of the drainage way via native plantings and habitat restoration. 			◆		\$185,000-250,000
PR-26	<p>Improve George Hill Patterson Community Center Outdoor Spaces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the concept plan already created, including amenities such as walking trails, multiple pavilions and outdoor event spaces, a playscape, benches and lighting, art, outdoor games and activities, and landscaping. • Add park signage consistent with all Rockdale parks and ensure the community knows this is now a public park. • Consider additional amenities such as picnic areas with grilling stations, drinking water sources and public WiFi. • Add community gardens. • Ensure new amenities are ADA accessible. • Protect the space's natural character, especially large shade trees, while making upgrades to the park. • Consider relocating the dog park to additional vacant space around the center. • Explore adding a full-size soccer/multipurpose field to the site if there is room beyond the already conceptualized amenities. 			◆		\$875,000 - 1,100,000; plus 18% soft costs and 30% contingency, does not include land acquisition

Rank	Action Items	Implementation Timeframe				Potential Cost Range
		Short-term (1-2 yrs)	Mid-term (3-7 yrs)	Long-term (8-10+ yrs)	Ongoing	
PR-27	<p>Improve Post Oak Place Park.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select minimal passive amenities, such as benches, picnic tables and soft surface walking paths, to minimize creating nuisances for immediate neighbors. Avoid adding lighting or off-street parking, out of respect to the neighbors. • Work with the adjacent neighbors to identify appropriate enhancements to this space. • Preserve the space's natural character while making park upgrades (e.g. large shade trees) 			◆		\$45,000-55,000
PR-28	<p>Update the Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Master Plan.</p> <p>The City should plan to update the Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Mater Plan periodically to ensure that it reflects current needs and priorities.</p>				◆	City staff resources and consultant; depending on scope

Funding Sources

General Funds

This source of funding is supported by ad valorem tax revenues and is generally the primary source of funds for maintenance and operation of the existing park system. The general fund is also the source for projects requiring smaller amounts of capital investment. It is important to include funding for ongoing maintenance and staff requirements for new trail and park improvements.

Economic Development Corporation

Economic Development Corporations (EDCs) are often utilized in communities as a means of concentrating resources toward economic development and creating new jobs. One advantage to EDCs is that they may exist as a public entity (directly associated with municipal government) or as a non-profit organization. EDCs may be created to promote and attract economic development for the City as a whole, or they may be created to specifically address issues within a particular neighborhood or area within the community. EDCs often receive funding from both public and private sources, such as funding by 4B sales tax revenues, and essentially act as an ambassador for the area that they serve. Advocacy and proactive outreach are important functions of EDCs in their attempt to reach out to potential development and provide reasons and incentives for choosing to locate within the identified area. It is recommended that members

of the Rockdale Municipal Development District use this document as a guide in promoting and attracting development within the study area.

Bonds

Bonds are generally the most common source used by cities for the purchase of land and for providing development monies. Debt financing through the issuance of municipal bonds is one of the most common ways to fund park, recreation and open space projects. This type of funding is a strategy wherein a city issues a bond, receives an immediate cash payment to finance projects, and must repay the bond with interest over a set period of time ranging from a few years to several decades.

A general obligation bond is amortized using ad valorem taxes and is used to fund capital projects that are not supported by a revenue source. These projects include water service, sanitary sewer service, and park acquisition and development. The availability of bonding for parks is often dependent upon the overall municipal needs financed by this source. Capital items such as purchase of land and physical improvements with a usable life expectancy of 15 to 20 years can be funded with general obligation bonds.

A revenue bond finances projects which produce enough revenue to retire their debt, such as golf courses, batting cages and enterprise-oriented park projects.

Developer Requirements

This involves requiring new development to provide a dedication of land for parks (or fee-in-lieu of land), park development fees, and trail rights-of-way or easements to offset the City's costs.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Local Park Grants

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Local Park Grant Program includes five individual programs that assist local governmental entities with the acquisition and/or development of public recreation areas and facilities. In general, these grants provide percentage matching grant funds to local units of government to acquire and develop parkland, renovate existing public recreation areas, or construct recreation centers, nature centers and other indoor recreation-related buildings. Current grant requirements can be found at <https://tpwd.texas.gov/business/grants/recreation-grants/about-local-parks-grants>.

Grant Program	Eligible Population
Small Community	<20,000
Non-Urban Outdoor Recreation	<500,000
Urban Outdoor Recreation	<500,000
Non-Urban Indoor Recreation	>500,000
Urban Indoor Recreation	>500,000

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Community Outdoor Outreach Program (CO-OP) Grants

The CO-OP grant helps to introduce underserved populations to the services, programs and sites of TPWD. This is not a land acquisition or construction grant; this is only for programs. Grants are awarded to non-profit organizations, schools, municipalities, counties, cities and other tax-exempt groups. Funds may be used for direct program costs for outdoor recreation or environmental education and conservation programs.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Recreational Trail Grants

TPWD administers the National Recreational Trail Grants in Texas under the approval of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). This federally funded program receives its funding from a portion of federal gas taxes paid on fuel used in non-highway recreational vehicles.

Private Donations

This source of financial assistance would usually come from a citizen, organization or business that has an interest in assisting with the development of the park system. Land dedication is a common occurrence when property is being developed.

The location of a neighborhood park within a residential development offers additional value to residential units within that neighborhood, especially if the residential development is occupied by younger families with children. Once property is acquired through this method, the City should be prepared to improve the facility for use within a reasonable length of time and to maintain the new facility.

Private donations may also be received in the form of funds, facilities, recreation equipment, art and in-kind services. Donations from local and regional businesses as sponsors for events or facilities should be pursued. A Parks Improvement Trust Fund may be set up to manage donations by service organizations, benevolent citizens, willed estates and other donated sources. The purpose of this trust is to establish a permanent source of principal value that will increase as donations occur. The principal cannot be decreased; however, the annual interest can be used for park development.

Public Improvement District (PID)

When authorized by City Council in compliance with state laws, new developments can establish a Public Improvement District (PID). As a taxing district, the PID provides funds specifically for the operation and maintenance of public facilities such as parks and major boulevards.

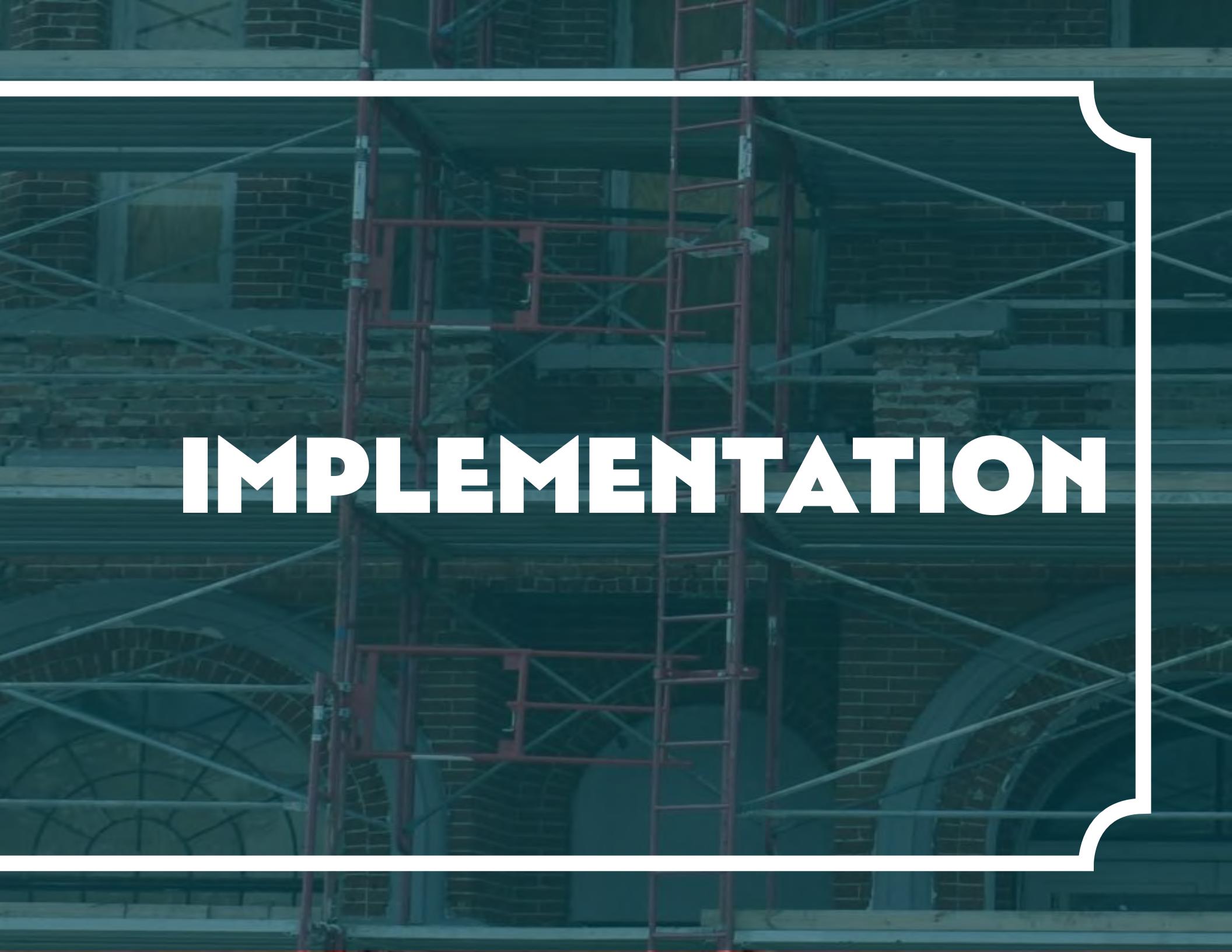
Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ)

A TIRZ is a tool used by local governments to finance public improvements in a defined area as approved by the City Council. When an area is designated as a TIRZ district, the tax base is frozen at the current level. As development occurs within the TIRZ, the increased value of property, or the tax increment, is captured. The tax increments are posted to a separate fund to finance public improvements within the district.

Partnership with the School District and County

The City can investigate opportunities to share park facilities and their associated cost with both the local school district and county as they have many common goals. Additionally, assets and costs can be shared between the entities to help meet each of their specific needs. For example, the City may purchase land next to a future school site and a school district may install the facilities, such as a playground, which can be enjoyed by the entire community. As a result, the entire community benefits.



A dark, semi-transparent background image of a brick building under construction. The building features a brick facade with large windows and a prominent brick chimney. A complex network of red and silver scaffolding is visible, covering the left side of the building. The image has a grainy, construction-themed aesthetic.

IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

The future direction of Rockdale's development and land use policy will be shaped by the recommendations and actions outlined in this Plan. The success of this Plan relies on the City's consistent and frequent implementation of its goals and objectives. The Implementation chapter summarizes the recommended actions from the Plan, prioritizes necessary measures to be taken, and identifies responsible parties for carrying each action through.

Information within this chapter include:

- Best Practices for Implementation
- Decision-Making Process
- Implementation Table
- Performance Metrics



Using this Plan

Comprehensive plans proactively address a community's future growth and development. They are the connection between the community's vision and land use regulations. Without the foresight provided by a comprehensive plan, the development process would be reactive, resulting in development that is uncoordinated, costly and may not be in the best interest of the broader community.

A comprehensive plan is not regulatory and is used in conjunction with a zoning ordinance and other land use and development regulations as the primary implementation mechanisms. The comprehensive plan provides vision, guidance and recommendations on how land should be utilized to meet the needs and desires of the community. Ideally, development regulations should be updated to regulate land uses in accordance with this Plan.

City staff will use this Plan in a variety of ways, including:

- Guiding everyday decisions across all departments, aligning all City staff toward a single vision.
- Assisting in major policy and budget decisions.
- Utilizing in reviews of zoning cases.
- Planning for future facility and infrastructure needs and proactive maintenance/updates.
- Providing justification and prioritization for City projects and programs that align with the Plan.

Providing the basis for updating city codes and ordinances.

The Planning and Zoning Commission will use this Plan in a variety of ways, including:

- Aiding in discussing and reviewing zoning cases and other development decisions.
- Providing justification for zoning case recommendations.
- Allowing for the balancing of the community needs and values with individual interests.

City Council will use this Plan in a variety of ways, including:

- Annual reporting allows Council to track whether the City is achieving or falling short of its goals.

- Allowing for alignment of public goals and a more efficient use of City resources.
- When discussing zoning cases, development decisions and other major topics related to land use policy.
- Aiding in aligning Rockdale's plans with surrounding jurisdictional entities.
- Acting as the basis for the City's Strategic Planning.

The business community will use this Plan in a variety of ways, including:

- Developers, potential property buyers, businesses and other interested parties can better understand the intended future development patterns in Rockdale when making decisions.
- Property owners and developers can propose developments that better align with the goals of the community.

Residents will use this Plan in a variety of ways, including:

- Engaging and educating community members and stakeholders in planning for their City's future.
- Aiding in shaping the desired outcomes and appearance of the community, enhancing quality of life for residents.
- Annual reporting allows community members to keep the City accountable in achieving its goals.

Best Practices for Implementation

Keeping it Updated

This Plan is intended to serve as a guide for policy decisions and to reflect the community's vision for the future of Rockdale. As such, the Plan is not a rigid document but a living tool that should be revisited and revised, if necessary, depending on the City's changing economic, physical and social composition. The Plan must be reviewed for accuracy as the City grows to ensure continued alignment with Rockdale's vision and guiding principles.

Annual Progress Reporting

Following adoption, the City should assign a responsible body, such as the Planning and Zoning Commission or another committee, to provide an annual progress report on the status of the Comprehensive Plan to City leadership. This annual review will ensure that the Plan is reviewed critically every year for the relevance of content and the appropriateness of the Plan's recommendations and actions. With assistance from staff, the responsible body may present a report card on the City's implementation from the year prior. This report should be used as an opportunity to celebrate the City's achievements and reflect on what can be improved in the coming year.

Five-Year Audit

The City should conduct a comprehensive audit of the Plan's outcomes and content every five years, involving all relevant departments and officials. This review should assess successes and shortcomings in implementing Rockdale's community vision, with a focus on identifying necessary document revisions. Factors such as demographic, economic and societal shifts impacting the City's trajectory should be considered. Falling short of a performance metric does not necessarily imply lack of progress, but suggests a need for closer examination. Updates to performance metrics may be needed if they prove inefficient in measuring actions.

Proactive and Reactive Strategies

Plan implementation is often achieved through one of two methods: proactive and reactive implementation strategies. While both are effective in putting the recommendations of this Plan into action, using a balance of both approaches will better set the City up for success in this goal. Examples of proactive and reactive strategies are provided below.

Proactive Strategies

Proactive strategies are those that the City leads in seeking implementation of the Plan's recommendations and actions. City-initiated efforts are effective because they may occur immediately but may prove costly regarding staff time and City resources. Examples include:

- Updating policies, such as Capital Improvement Plans (CIPs), thoroughfare plans, and development codes to achieve the recommendations identified in this Plan.
- Initiating zoning changes within target areas to encourage development that is compatible with the land use designations within this Plan.

Reactive Strategies

Reactive strategies involve opportunities brought to the City on a case-by-case basis rather than those the City seeks out independently. These strategies rely on elected and appointed officials to act with the recommendations of this Plan in mind, placing further emphasis on the continuing updates and communication of the Plan suggested in this chapter. Examples include:

- Assessing rezoning requests against the intent and purpose of the future land use categories established in this Plan.
- Reviewing development applications for compliance with the adopted development standards and the intent of this Plan.
- Updating the recommendations and actions of this Plan based on public feedback and initiatives.

Continuing Education and Training

While City staff and management may be familiar with the comprehensive planning process and how it impacts day-to-day decisions, others not involved in the planning field, including those appointed to assist in implementation, may not be readily familiar. For this reason, educational materials and work sessions with the Planning and Zoning Commission, City Council, Rockdale Municipal Development District Board, and other key groups involved in the Plan's implementation are recommended. The goals of such training may include:

- Establishing an understanding of the rules and responsibilities of each party related to the implementation and maintenance of the Comprehensive Plan.
- A review of the Plan's content and how it relates to the decisions and actions of each involved party.
- A review of the Plan's Implementation Table in order to establish a basic understanding of the Plan's priorities and timelines related to fulfilling recommendations.

As new individuals are elected and appointed into positions tasked with promoting and implementing the findings of this Plan, continuing education and training efforts must be provided as needed. Educational materials, such as summary brochures and handbooks, will assist when transitioning between decision-makers.



Decision-Making Process

There may come a time when this Plan does not provide clear direction regarding a decision. This Plan is a flexible tool intended to inform land use and development decision throughout Rockdale; as such, site-specific considerations may require tailored consideration and judgment. In these instances, decisions should be based on the proposal's overall compatibility with the Plan's vision and guiding principles and the intent of the Plan's recommendations and findings found throughout the chapters. Decision-making opportunities will yield various outcomes, including inconsistency with the Plan, partially furthering the Plan's goals, and alignment with the Plan completely. It is up to the City's decision-makers to weigh each request's benefits and drawbacks and ultimately determine what best promotes Rockdale's health, safety, and welfare.

Guiding Questions

When presented with unclear direction from this Plan, it may be helpful to keep the following questions in mind:

- Does the request align with our vision for Rockdale, and does it further the guiding principles outlined in this Plan?
- What are the impacts of the request on the quality of life of our residents?
- Will it impact an individual's enjoyment and capability of being part of our community?
- Will the request have a positive fiscal impact on the City?
- Will it result in a benefit not only for the applicant but for the public as a whole?
- Are there any adverse outcomes that may arise if the request is approved?
- Would approval of the request jeopardize this Plan's goals and recommendations in the future?

These questions are not intended to provide a definitive answer. They are, however, intended to help guide decision-makers through consistently and equitably enforcing this Plan when presented with challenging cases.

Bundling Projects

Completing recommendations in tandem can frequently be more effective, more efficient, and accomplish greater results. Implementing two or more projects at a time can seem daunting, but by sharing resources it can allow for better outcomes. Some examples of projects that typically bundle well together are underground utility updates with streetscape enhancements and updating housing regulations while working with developers to determine options and incentives to encourage more housing choices.

Economic Development and Revitalization Strategies

There are a variety of public policy tools that the City can use to fund the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. Depending on the specifics, state law might dictate the parameters under which each incentive can be utilized. To successfully execute the Implementation Plan, the City and other stakeholders will need to expand the funding strategies available, combine resources for larger projects, and formalize a predictable long-term funding stream for the City that allows for multi-year projects.

Funding Tools

There are a variety of financing options that can be used to help implement this Comprehensive Plan. Each possible tool should be examined to determine when it may be most appropriately used. In most cases, funding could include a combination of private sources, City funds, County funds, Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone funds, improvement districts, tax abatements, and state and federal grants.

There are three types of economic development and incentive mechanisms that the City can implement as the tools to spur private investment in the City. These include:

- Public-born actions to help prepare a larger development landscape for private investment.
- Public actions simultaneous with private investment to induce the desired development form, pattern and density in this Comprehensive Plan.
- Incentives to reduce the risk of project development.

The following are recommended financing tools, programs and potential funding sources.

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ)

In Texas, TIRZ are implemented under Chapter 311 of the Texas Local Government Code. These districts capture certain property tax revenue generated in the district, which is then reinvested through the development of infrastructure and improvements. TIRZs operate with the idea that the cyclical connection between property tax revenue generated by private investment within a district, when applied to public investment within the same district, creates a snowball effect in which redevelopment is encouraged and accelerated.

Upon creation, the assessed property value of a geographic area is locked-in as the base value. As investments occur and valuation increases, the property tax revenue generated from the value above the base value is captured and reinvested within the district. Preliminary evaluation suggests creation of a TIRZ should be considered. Even small amounts of revenue generated can prompt establishment of the cyclical investment pattern and help to finance needed improvements in the area.

See Figure 76 on the next page for additional information.

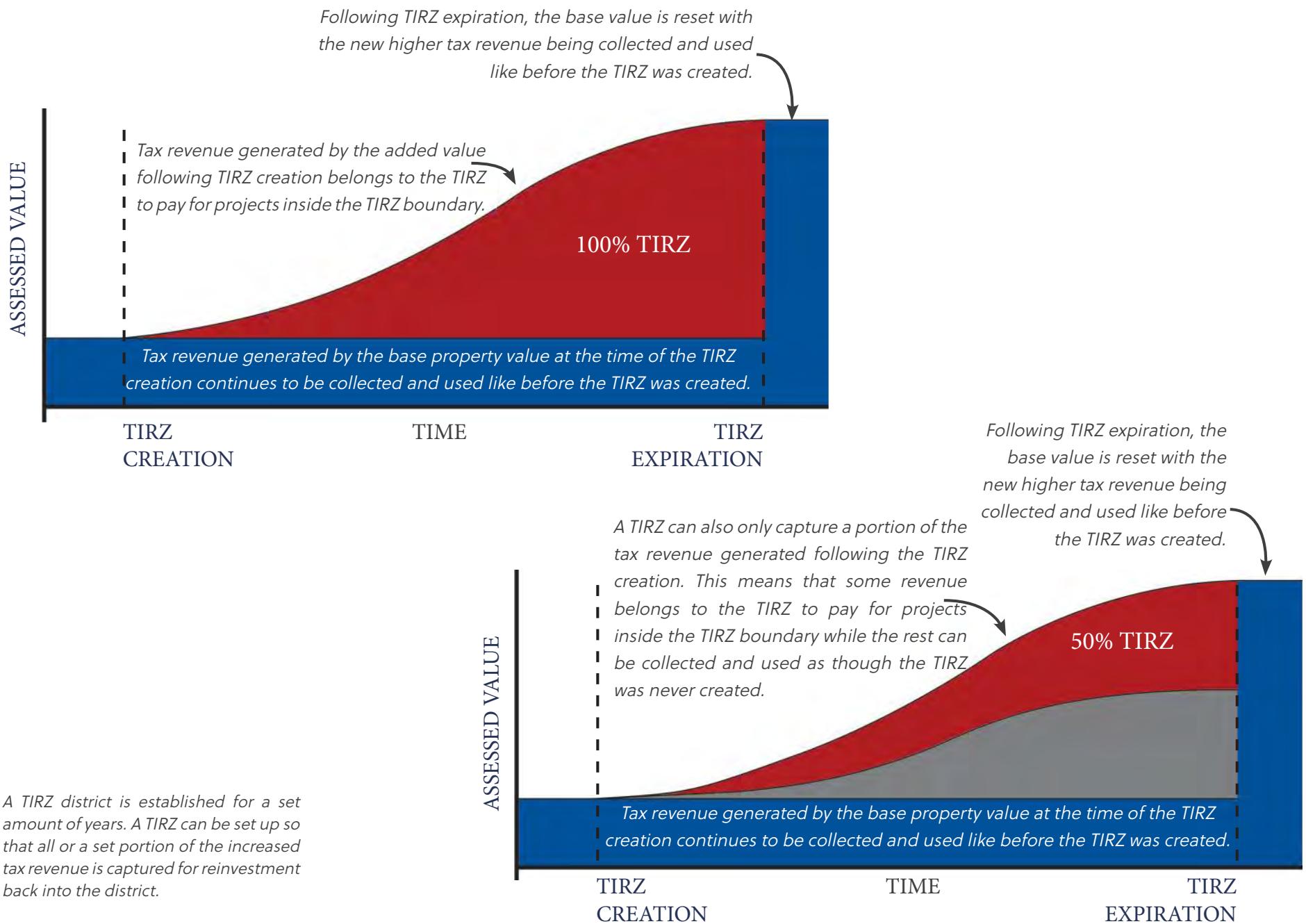


Figure 76. TIRZ Functionality

Public Improvement District (PID)

In contrast to a TIRZ, a PID is a special district where all properties receive an additional assessment based on a fixed rate. PIDs are permitted under Chapter 372 of the Texas Local Government Code as a type of special assessment enabled for cities and counties. The funds generated by the special assessment tax are reinvested in the district for the following eligible activities:

- Water, wastewater, health and sanitation, or drainage improvements
- Street and sidewalk improvements
- Mass transit improvements
- Parking improvements
- Library improvements
- Park, recreation and cultural improvements
- Landscaping and other aesthetic improvements
- Art installation
- Creation of pedestrian malls
- Supplemental safety services, including public safety and security services
- Supplemental business-related services for the improvement of the district

PIDs are often used in combination with TIRZs to "buy down" the PID rate, or to fund capital projects with a TIRZ and operations/services with a PID. PIDs are most effective when the geographic area is larger; Rockdale should work closely with financial advisors to determine the appropriateness and effectiveness of a PID.

Municipal Utility Districts (MUDs)

Areas not served by the City may establish a MUD with service providers that will extend and maintain water and sewer services. These districts are typical within ETJs that do not have access to municipal utilities. This tool was initially established by the state legislature to address access to a safe water supply. Over time, MUDs have evolved into powerful special districts that often mimic many of the powers of a general-purpose local government.

- The City can address growth by managing MUDs and their role in both development agreements and annexation actions.
- Set up a system that ensures ratepayers can support existing infrastructure as well as the end of life cycle replacement and maintenance necessary for the City to add new development through annexation.
- Negotiate terms that benefit the City if/when a MUD is considered for annexation. Conduct cost/benefit analyses to determine the real financial impact of annexation, not only immediately but for a longer-term that accounts for the age and complexity of the services covered under the MUD and maintenance and replacement costs.
- Expire MUDs as soon as possible after annexing the property they govern into the City.
- The City should participate in long-range planning performed by utility districts to guide system improvements.
- Ensure utility systems expand to address anticipated growth in areas the City has identified as appropriate for increased development.

Implementation Table

This Plan provides recommendations and actions aimed at helping the City further the goals and objectives discussed within. The Implementation Table is the central hub for these recommended actions for ease of reference. Content includes recommended actions with a detailed description, anticipated implementation timeframe, action type, and responsible entities.

Implementation Table Elements

1 Recommendation Reference and Description

The recommendation reference gives the reader a simplified reference number for the specific action. Actions are grouped by topic and are provided a two-letter abbreviation of the topic and associated reference number. Action descriptions outline the recommendation suggested within the Plan.

- **LU** - Land Use
- **IN** - Utilities/Infrastructure
- **TR** - Transportation
- **ED** - Economic Development
- **CH** - Character, Housing & Preservation
- **PR** - Parks & Recreation

2 Implementation Timeframe

It would be unreasonable for the City to implement all of the Plan's recommendations immediately following adoption. Specific actions are achievable in the near future, while others may require extensive studies and preparation. As such, the anticipated implementation timeframe for each action from the time of the Plan's adoption is indicated. Some actions are one-time events, while others require follow-up tasks once underway; the responsible entity should determine an achievable timeframe when ongoing work is needed. Actions can take place during an earlier or later timeframe depending on changing circumstances or when opportunities become available.

Short-Term (1-5 years)

Actions that are typically low-hanging fruit or easier to achieve because they do not require a large amount of capital.

Mid-Term (5-10 years)

Actions that generally need a larger amount of capital, and require significant planning and coordination for completion or other steps must take place before implementation. In some cases, there may be opportunities to make some initial progress in the short-term.

Long-Term (10+ years)

Recommendations that do not have a specific timeframe for implementation, are continuously implemented, or should be revisited regularly throughout the life of the recommendation or implementation of the Plan.

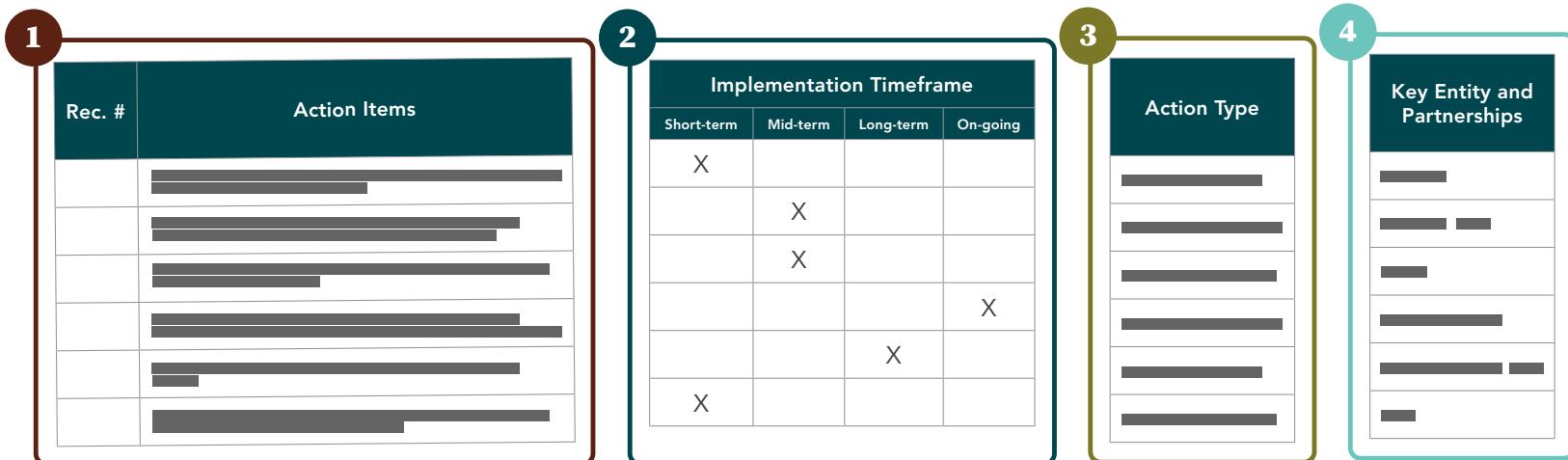
3 Action Type

The table identifies each action as Project, Program, Partnership, Policy, Relationship or Study. This distinction assists the City in identifying the individuals or groups responsible for carrying out the action and plan for proper resources and staffing.

- Project** - A physical project or capital improvement to be completed.
- Program** - Development of a new program or enhancement of an existing program.
- Policy** - Development of a new policy or an update to an existing regulation or City policy.
- Partnership** - Partner with outside organizations or agencies to coordinate on an initiative or complete an action.
- Study** - A plan or study to be completed.

4 Key Entity and Partnerships

Assigning the key implementing entity responsible for following through on an action is essential to implementing the suggested recommendation. This portion of the table sets the responsible department or group within the City and potential partnerships with other departments or other external entities that may assist with completing the action. Communication with these individuals and groups is essential to explain their roles and expectations when implementing this Plan.



Land Use

Rec.	Action Items	Implementation Timeframe			Action Type	Key Entity and Partnerships
		Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term or Ongoing		
LU-1	<p>Review and update the zoning ordinance to reflect land use categories Review and update the existing zoning ordinance to allow for the mix of appropriate development types, densities, intensities, and scales classified within each land use category. See the Code Diagnostic in Appendix F for detailed recommendations.</p>	◆			Policy	Planning
LU-2	<p>Continually reference this Plan Reference this Plan when evaluating future zoning and development applications. Develop a uniform format for communicating Plan relevance in development project cases before Commissions and City Council.</p>			◆	Policy	Planning
LU-3	<p>Establish a decision-making policy Establish an internal decision-making policy, communicated to an applicant, when presented with an application that is deemed inconsistent with the land use categories established by this Plan.</p>	◆			Policy	Planning
LU-4	<p>Review and update City ordinances to address administrative adjustments/alternative compliance Review and update existing City ordinances to allow for administrative adjustments when considering applications for infill development within the Core Neighborhood, Downtown, Local Mixed-use Node, and Mixed-use Corridor land use categories. Adjustments should be made based on the context of adjacent development and development along the same block.</p>	◆			Policy	Planning
LU-5	<p>Review and update City ordinances for market-supported low impact development patterns and preservation of natural areas Review and update the existing City ordinances to incentivize natural preservation and low-impact development standards, including density bonuses, parkland dedication reductions, and reductions to minimum landscaping requirements.</p>	◆			Policy	Planning Engineering
LU-6	<p>Review and update City ordinances to create design standards along floodplains Establish design standards for buildings and infrastructure improvements along identified floodplains to protect natural topography and tree stands, and to mitigate impacts on the floodplain and ecology of nearby water bodies. Update flood damage prevention regulations.</p>	◆			Policy	Planning Engineering
LU-7	<p>Create a comprehensive geospatial database/inventory of trails and sidewalks Create a GIS-based Citywide sidewalk and trail inventory that can be used for maintenance and to determine where dedication is necessary with new development.</p>		◆		Study	Planning Engineering
LU-8	<p>Established preferred architectural guidelines and incentivize their use through regulatory bonuses and similar tools Establish a series of architectural guidelines to encourage a diversity of housing styles and elevations depending on the local context when considering development applications, and incentivizing higher quality development.</p>		◆		Policy & Program	Planning
LU-9	<p>Review and update the Zoning Map to reflect future land use map direction Revise the existing Zoning Map for consistency with this Plan through either private rezoning applications or City-initiated zoning efforts.</p>			◆	Policy	Planning

Rec.	Action Items	Implementation Timeframe			Action Type	Key Entity and Partnerships
		Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term or Ongoing		
LU-10	<p>Review and update City ordinances to address public space within development and compact development form</p> <p>Seek integration of engaging public spaces within development, such as outdoor plazas, focused on placemaking potential and engagement with users to support long-term success of nonresidential and mixed-use development. Develop regulatory approaches that encourage compact, fiscally high-performing development with quality access to goods, services, open space and other quality of life assets.</p>	◆			Policy	Planning
LU-11	<p>Review and update City ordinances and necessary policies to support the ability to access goods, services, employment and other opportunities</p> <p>Promote the establishment of local mixed-use nodes and mixed-use corridors within the City to enhance access to goods, services, employment and other opportunities within accessible areas. Identify regions in Rockdale lacking such land uses, and take proactive steps to rezone and introduce economic incentives to encourage their development.</p>	◆			Policy	Planning
LU-12	<p>Understand developer motivation for providing housing variety</p> <p>Work with residential developers to determine options and possible incentives to encourage a wide range of residential choices. Develop educational programs in design and financing, and potentially financing tools, to support small/incremental developers in creating missing middle housing types.</p>	◆			Partnership & Program	Planning
LU-13	<p>Review and update City ordinances to address diverse housing options</p> <p>Work with residential developers to determine options and possible incentives to encourage a range of residential choices.</p>	◆			Policy	Planning
LU-14	<p>Support housing aligned to workforce</p> <p>Establish special, incentivized standards for workforce housing (60% to 120% of area median household incomes), such as lot size, setbacks, density, parking and lot coverage, as the housing is in high demand and lacks federal/state incentives.</p>		◆		Policy	Planning
LU-15	<p>Review and Update City ordinances to address network connectivity in new developments</p> <p>Establish/strengthen elements like connectivity ratios, the ratio of external connections to number of residential units, etc. to increase intersection density, supporting improved walkability and network resilience in roadways.</p>	◆			Policy	Planning
LU-16	<p>Review and update City ordinances to address transitions and meaningful integration of commercial/retail adjacent to residential</p> <p>Ensure appropriate levels of multifamily are enabled in commercial/retail areas to support mixed use benefits, and in a way that coordinates well rather than isolated pods. Provide compatibility transitions that buffer while also retaining the benefits of adjacent mixed uses, reducing automobile trips and improving access.</p>		◆		Policy	Planning
LU-17	<p>Create an interactive GIS web applications</p> <p>Create an interactive online GIS presence with useful, accurate data for residents, businesses and those interested in development within Rockdale.</p>	◆			Project	Planning
LU-18	<p>Update all development regulations and consolidate into a Unified Development Code (UDC)</p> <p>Update the development regulations with the action items defined in this table and consolidate the zoning ordinance and subdivision ordinance into a UDC.</p>	◆			Project	Planning

Utilities/Infrastructure

Rec.	Action Items	Implementation Timeframe			Action Type	Key Entity and Partnerships
		Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term or Ongoing		
IN-1	<p>Ensure responsible growth aligned to infrastructure capacity and performance Reinforce concurrency requirements to reconcile growth needs against infrastructure capacity to ensure development does not outpace the growth of infrastructure.</p>	◆			Policy	Planning Engineering Utilities
IN-2	<p>Initiate infrastructure improvements and multi-year capital improvement program Proactively develop strategic infrastructure improvements to spur growth in a desired, cost-efficient and responsible manner rather than relying on the development community to drive investment.</p>			◆	Project	Engineering
IN-3	<p>Review and update City ordinances to promote efficient service patterns Update development regulations to support development types and patterns that reduce the amount of infrastructure to be maintained per connection, improving fiscal efficiency.</p>	◆			Policy	Planning Engineering
IN-4	<p>Protect and optimize existing infrastructure Seek opportunities to reduce points of failure in utility systems, such as reduction in lift stations via wastewater interceptors to reduce the fail risk and lessen operating costs.</p>			◆	Project	Engineering Utilities
IN-5	<p>Reserve land for key improvements Seek to reserve optimal land for key infrastructure, like pump stations and elevated tanks, seeking ideal locations rather than settling for lesser locations.</p>			◆	Project	Engineering
IN-6	<p>Develop model-based water and wastewater master plans and assess infrastructure components early in the development process Incorporate utility model assessment into the initial stages of development review to proactively anticipate implications and make timely adjustments. Establish or strengthen concurrency requirements to align growth demands with infrastructure capacity, preventing development from outpacing infrastructure expansion.</p>	◆			Policy	Planning Engineering
IN-7	<p>Use the build it once approach Promote a build it once approach, using oversizing agreements to construct ultimate infrastructure whenever possible and ensuring capacity-related elements like elevated tanks and lift stations are built to ultimate need (or easily adapted to ultimate need).</p>		◆		Partnership	Engineering Utilities
IN-8	<p>Review and update all technical manuals Conduct an annual evaluation of engineering technical manuals to address the needs of a growing community and ensure long-term quality infrastructure performance.</p>			◆	Policy	Engineering
IN-9	<p>Invest in the long-term holistically Consider long-term goals, including those beyond infrastructure that may be accomplished by infrastructure projects, when undertaking major infrastructure investments.</p>			◆	Policy	Engineering

Rec.	Action Items	Implementation Timeframe			Action Type	Key Entity and Partnerships
		Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term or Ongoing		
IN-10	Implementation of impact fees Establish impact fees to ensure they accurately reflect the impact of growth on infrastructure needs. Consider updating impact fees more frequently than the state-required five-year intervals, as growth can cause shifts in the associated Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that may necessitate adjustments to the fee structure.	◆			Policy	Engineering Utilities
IN-11	Assess water availability Evaluate capacity of adjacent water providers to support desired development patterns and provision of health/life/safety levels of service, such as fire flows.		◆		Study	Engineering Utilities
IN-12	Address inflow and infiltration Proactively maintain and reduce inflow and infiltration (I&I) into the wastewater system as a critical tool to manage capacity and energy requirements, particularly during storm events.			◆	Project	Engineering Utilities
IN-13	Require Type I water reclamation Require Type I water reclamation infrastructure in any new development involving irrigation activities, retention pond management, industrial processes and any other activity in which it is appropriate.	◆			Policy	Engineering Utilities
IN-14	Plan for the bigger picture Acquisition of easements should consider all needs of the City, rather than just the needs of the specific infrastructure element.			◆	Policy	Planning Engineering
IN-15	Manage WCIDs and MUDs responsibly Water Control and Improvement Districts (WCID) and Municipal Utility Districts (MUD) should either be discouraged as tools that accelerate improvements to infrastructure beyond responsible growth through the City, or account for impacts via consent and strategic partnership agreements. The City should consider creating a policy regarding how the City plans to deal with in-City MUDs.			◆	Partnership	Engineering City Manager's Office
IN-16	Ensure context sensitivity All infrastructure projects, particularly projects that alter the physical or visual composition of an area, should apply context-sensitive design.			◆	Policy	Planning Engineering
IN-17	Diversify water supply and evaluate solutions Ensure a diversified water supply, based on water characterization, to avoid sole reliance on limited sources. Conduct a triple bottom line assessment of water resource enhancement strategies, prioritizing solutions such as Aquifer Storage and Recovery, desalination, different forms of reuse (direct/indirect, potable/non-potable, centralized/decentralized), rainwater harvesting and condensate recovery.			◆	Policy	Engineering Utilities
IN-18	Prepare a stormwater/drainage master plan Prepare a stormwater/drainage master plan for Rockdale, incorporating regional stormwater management approaches and water supply solutions.		◆		Study	Planning Engineering Utilities
IN-19	Evaluate and implement green infrastructure solutions Perform triple bottom line evaluation of green infrastructure (GI) actions that can bring multiple benefits to communities; such as rain gardens, bioswales, green roofs, community gardens and permeable pavers.	◆			Study	Planning Engineering

Rec.	Action Items	Implementation Timeframe			Action Type	Key Entity and Partnerships
		Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term or Ongoing		
IN-20	Implement low impact development solutions Perform triple bottom line evaluation of low impact development (LID) practices that could reduce flood risk and/or improve water quality; such as setting aside stream buffers, adopting higher standards for floodplain management, incentivizing trails, requiring stormwater detention basins, and nature-based solutions.	◆			Study & Policy	Planning Engineering
IN-21	Partner with residents to monitor improvements Utilize citizen science for planning, ecosystem monitoring and watershed restoration.			◆	Partnership	Planning Engineering
IN-22	Encourage regional networks Promote regional stormwater detention as preferable to numerous, disconnected and poorly maintained on-site detention ponds and water quality facilities.		◆		Policy	Engineering
IN-23	Incorporate amenities within improvements Require large scale stormwater improvements to incorporate amenities, particularly for aesthetic or recreational purposes.	◆			Policy	Planning Engineering
IN-24	Promote rain gardens Rain gardens in parking areas should be promoted as an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective alternative to raised landscape improvements while still meeting landscape requirements of development regulations.	◆			Policy	Planning Engineering
IN-25	Protect from poor storm drainage Enforce, and adopt as needed, policies, regulations and practices to assure individual sites and development projects avoid negatively impacting adjacent property owners through poor storm drainage.			◆	Policy	Engineering
IN-26	Review the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance Comprehensively review and revise the Flood Hazard Reduction Standards to align with best practices.	◆			Project	Engineering
IN-27	Participate in the Community Rating System Consider increased participation in the Community Rating System to reduce potential for flood damage and support reduced flood insurance costs for residents and businesses.		◆		Program	Engineering City Manager's Office Emergency Management

Rec.	Action Items	Implementation Timeframe			Action Type	Key Entity and Partnerships
		Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term or Ongoing		
IN-28	Integrate Stormwater infrastructure in open spaces Consider allowing stormwater detention to count for a certain percentage of open space requirements ONLY if certain standards and criteria are met, including successful and creative integration into the landscape, consideration of surrounding context, potential provision of recreational use, and ability to positively impact stormwater management.	◆			Policy	Planning Engineering
IN-29	Integrate green infrastructure in roadway standards Integrate green infrastructure practices into standard roadway construction and retrofit designs, including use of swales, vegetated islands, rain gardens, etc.		◆		Policy	Planning Engineering
IN-30	Minimize impervious cover Establish standards and practices to minimize impervious surface through efforts such as reduced street widths, incorporating sunken landscaped islands, clustering development, preservation of natural areas, reducing parking requirements, and requiring use of pervious surfaces for excess parking above minimum ratios.	◆			Policy	Planning Engineering
IN-31	Ensure pollution prevention regulations Ensure effective creation and enforcement of stormwater pollution prevention regulations/MS4, along with standards for illicit discharges, and evaluate regulations for possible update.	◆			Policy	Engineering
IN-32	Maintain Continuous Participation in County Hazard Mitigation Plan Representatives from all City departments should continue to actively participate in the Milam County Hazard Mitigation Plan and advocate for an action-oriented approach that goes beyond emphasis on post-disaster federal funding.		◆		Policy	Engineering
IN-33	Create a Fiscal Impact Analysis model for development practices Develop fiscal analysis tools to inform decisions on annexation and infrastructure/service provisions, considering both tax revenue performance and impact to user fees such as utility rates.	◆			Policy	Engineering
IN-34	Assess fire station needs with future growth areas As Rockdale grows spatially in addition to population, it will likely need additional fire stations to support community and professional expectations for response time. Rockdale should develop a strategy for future facilities and proactively acquire new land.	◆			Policy	Planning Fire
IN-35	Evaluate and update landscaping requirements Evaluate the landscaping requirements for new developments for opportunities to increase natural cooling and shade, as well as drought tolerance while also enhancing community aesthetics.	◆			Policy	Planning

Transportation

Rec.	Action Items	Implementation Timeframe			Action Type	Key Entity and Partnerships
		Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term or Ongoing		
TR-1	<p>Establish the Transportation and Mobility Master Plan Establish the Transportation and Mobility Master Plan for Rockdale as seen in Chapter 3, clearly addressing multi-modal aspects of the complete transportation network. This should address market disrupting technologies such as micro-mobility, transportation network companies, etc.</p>	◆			Study	Planning Engineering City Manager's Office
TR-2	<p>Update Roadway Cross-sections for capital projects and new development Update roadway cross-sections to implement a safe and balanced street policy, and that provides a variety of options in different roadway classifications to better adapt to the surrounding development and land use context.</p>		◆		Policy	Planning Engineering
TR-3	<p>Establish arterials responsibly Avoid establishing arterial thoroughfares through established neighborhoods, and when necessary ensure appropriate design to context and traffic calming in order to maintain a compatible bike and pedestrian environment.</p>			◆	Policy	Planning Engineering
TR-4	<p>Evaluate existing roadways for reductions Evaluate existing roadways, particularly 4-lane undivided roadways, to determine whether a 3-lane configuration would meet needs while improving safety for all users.</p>	◆			Study	Engineering
TR-5	<p>Create alternatives to U.S. 79 Encourage creation of a resilient interconnected roadway network that does not rely on U.S. 79 as critical components of network function through development practices, capital programs and per the thoroughfare plan updates recommended in Chapter 3.</p>			◆	Project	Planning Engineering
TR-6	<p>Create additional corridors Consider the creation of additional roadway corridors and innovative intersections, through development practices and capital programs, to disperse traffic rather than relying primarily on the widening of existing corridors.</p>			◆	Project	Planning Engineering
TR-7	<p>Implement a balanced street framework Implement a framework for safe and balanced streets that value the user experience for both people in motorized vehicles and people walking/biking as described in Chapter 3. Such designs should consider the characteristics of likely users. For example, a multi-use path separated from vehicle lanes is more appropriate than a bike lane when likely users are less experienced, young or traffic volumes are such that separation represents a necessary safety intervention.</p>		◆		Policy	Planning Engineering
TR-8	<p>Safe Routes to School Develop a Safe Routes to Schools Plan to support safe and connected routes to Rockdale's schools.</p>			◆	Study	Engineering
TR-9	<p>Increase access to multi-use paths Seek to create a greenway network of off-roadway multi-use paths, with a goal of all residents being within safe access of the network within 5 minutes. Consider adopting standards for new development to be oriented and provide access to existing and proposed greenways to improve pedestrian access and connectivity to the community.</p>		◆		Project	Engineering Parks and Recreation

Rec.	Action Items	Implementation Timeframe			Action Type	Key Entity and Partnerships
		Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term or Ongoing		
TR-10	<p>Expand safe pedestrian infrastructure Seek opportunities for grade separation for pedestrian facilities when crossing major roadways and intersections, to the extent practical.</p>			◆	Project	Engineering
TR-11	<p>Improve existing sidewalks Establish a sidewalk gap completion program, and a sidewalk retrofitting program. Strategically invest in extending sidewalks along major roadways and other commercial areas where there are gaps in the sidewalk system. These roadways serve as gateways, and should be designed accordingly with enhancements like landscaping, pedestrian amenities, shade and public art.</p>	◆			Program	Engineering
TR-12	<p>Establish a traffic mitigation and calming program Establish a local area traffic mitigation and calming program for street retrofitting.</p>		◆		Program	Engineering
TR-13	<p>Evaluate access management regulations Consider improvements to access management regulations to reduce points of conflict along thoroughfares, and consider programs to support retrofitting to improve access management.</p>	◆			Policy	Planning Engineering
TR-14	<p>Establish Prescriptive Traffic Calming Standards Establish standards for prescriptive traffic calming via development regulations.</p>	◆			Policy	Planning Engineering
TR-15	<p>Increase neighborhood connectivity Establish connectivity ratios within subdivisions and stubout/interconnection standards that increase connectivity between different subdivisions and commercial development.</p>	◆			Policy	Planning
TR-16	<p>Improve bicycle and pedestrian facility standards Bike and pedestrian facilities should exceed minimum standards (AASHTO and NACTO) and be designed for increased safety to fit the needs of more Rockdale residents. Minimum standards may not be sufficient to achieve the desired user experience. Bike and pedestrian facilities should be designed to serve as part of the transportation system in addition to recreational purposes.</p>		◆		Policy	Engineering
TR-17	<p>Exceed ADA requirements Improve access for mobility impaired patrons through the installation of ADA compliant sidewalks and other facilities. This should move beyond minimums to ensure such facilities are affirming and welcoming.</p>			◆	Policy	Engineering
TR-18	<p>Conduct a walkability assessment Conduct a walkability assessment to establish a baseline for walkability in the community.</p>		◆		Study	Planning Engineering
TR-19	<p>Create a Roadway Safety Action Plan Use USDOT guidelines to create a Roadway Safety Action Plan aimed at using data analysis to characterize safety problems and address the most significant transportation risks. Use the opportunity to apply for a Safe Streets for All (SS4A) grant to fund the development of the plan.</p>	◆			Study	Planning Engineering Police

Economic Development

Rec.	Action Items	Implementation Timeframe			Action Type	Key Entity and Partnerships
		Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term or Ongoing		
ED-1	Use infrastructure investments to guide growth Use CIP, bonds and grants as an economic development tool, taking into account the short- and long-term economic development impact of traditional infrastructure investments. Add "economic development" as a scoring criteria when ranking/prioritizing these investments.			◆	Policy	City Manager's Office Engineering MDD Planning
ED-2	Increase infrastructure capacity in a targeted manner to support economic opportunities Ensure infrastructure capacity is in place in a timely manner to allow Rockdale to support economic opportunities and target industries.			◆	Policy	City Manager's Office MDD
ED-3	Preserve and Protect Downtown The mix of entertainment and personal services businesses combined with the historic character of Downtown Rockdale make Downtown Rockdale a key asset that can attract both residents and visitors. Work to preserve and protect Downtown Rockdale and build upon the current progress happening.			◆	Policy	City Manager's Office MDD Planning
ED-4	Kickstart redevelopment Consider acquisition or optioning of under-performing properties to support redevelopment (or greenfield development in prime location), using a public-private partnership model.	◆			Partnership	MDD
ED-5	Reduce financial barriers to desired built environment Develop financial assistance programs for those barriers that are essential to life/safety or address gap funding due to development finance risk aversion.		◆		Program	MDD
ED-6	Create Neighborhood Empowerment Zones (NEZs) Evaluate the feasibility of establishing Neighborhood Empowerment Zones (NEZs) as a community-driven strategy to preserve neighborhoods, promote reinvestment, and prevent displacement.		◆		Program	MDD
ED-7	Identify and assess Brownfields/Greyfields Conduct a thorough inventory and assessment of potential brownfield sites within the City that face redevelopment challenges due to real or perceived environmental contamination.	◆			Study	MDD
ED-8	Maintain and enhance regional partnerships MDD should regularly (i.e. semi-annually) meet with key economic development partners, such as adjacent economic development corporations, the school district and post-secondary education/training partners.		◆		Partnership	MDD
ED-9	Increase supply of workforce housing Encourage diverse housing in terms of type and affordability to align with workforce needs.			◆	Policy	City Manager's Office MDD
ED-10	Improve access to capital for local business Partner with local banks, credit unions, and community development financial institutions (CDFIs) to create loan programs specifically for small businesses. Also, utilize the inventive and financial strategies outlined in Chapter 5 for more broad capital opportunities.		◆		Project	MDD
ED-11	Support local business incubators Support local incubators to foster entrepreneurship and growth in technology-related businesses.		◆		Policy	MDD

Rec.	Action Items	Implementation Timeframe			Action Type	Key Entity and Partnerships
		Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term or Ongoing		
ED-12	<p>Market Rockdale's business community through economic "gardening"</p> <p>Develop a marketing and branding campaign utilizing the economic "gardening" strategies outlined in Chapter 5 to promote Rockdale as a destination for small businesses and entrepreneurs, particularly within the agritourism, restaurant, and technology industries.</p>		◆		Project	MDD
ED-13	<p>Develop revitalization programs for aging commercial spaces</p> <p>Explore and implement commercial programs to support aging commercial areas. Example programs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail Landscaping Program • Retail Rehabilitation Program • Neighborhood Enterprise Zone • Neighborhood Empowerment Zone • Exterior Improvement Incentives • Sales Tax Sharing • Low Interest Loans/Subordination • Tax Increment Financing District (TIF) • Public Improvement District (PID) 		◆		Program	MDD City Manager's Office
ED-14	<p>Property Acquisition and Redevelopment</p> <p>Acquire vacant or underoccupied properties for renovation or redevelopment. Maintain ownership while offering lease-to-purchase agreements to businesses seeking occupancy to provide accessible pathways for new businesses.</p>		◆		Project	MDD
ED-15	<p>Develop a study for the Milam Ave. Corridor</p> <p>Create a study to explore the feasibility of an entertainment district along the Milam Ave. Corridor.</p>		◆		Study	MDD
ED-16	<p>Create an alley activation study</p> <p>Develop a study to help understand the potential for alley activation and enhancements in Downtown Rockdale.</p>		◆		Study	MDD
ED-17	<p>Develop and consistently update an economic development strategic plan</p> <p>Initiate the process of creating and maintaining an economic development strategic plan, ensuring it is continually updated to reflect evolving economic trends, community needs and emerging opportunities.</p>	◆			Study	MDD
ED-18	<p>Continue to implement and create economic growth studies</p> <p>Incorporate recent economic growth studies like Rockdale Reborn. Continue to create new studies to align with the evolving current market conditions.</p>			◆	Study	MDD
ED-19	<p>Diversify Economic Development Strategies</p> <p>Assess and enact supplementary public policies to strategically position key areas and corridors for economic development to mitigate industry fluctuations and reduce reliance on any one sector.</p>	◆			Project	MDD

Character, Housing and Preservation

Rec.	Action Items	Implementation Timeframe			Action Type	Key Entity and Partnerships
		Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term or Ongoing		
CH-1	<p>Develop a Neighborhood Enhancement Program Implement neighborhood enhancement initiatives to help facilitate and improve neighborhood quality, including development of idea books for curb appeal improvements. Develop other tools such as block party kits, neighborhood-based vitality matching grants, home improvement guidance and resources, and public safety programs.</p>	◆			Program	Planning Police Department
CH-2	<p>Link Code Enforcement with Compliance Resources Create programs that pair code enforcement and property maintenance enforcement with resources to support resolution of violations.</p>	◆			Program	Planning
CH-3	<p>Review and update City ordinances to incentivize high quality design Update standards and create regulatory incentives to reflect high quality aesthetics and community/district character, seeking to incentivize/reward developments that exceed minimum standards. Develop programs to support retrofitting with appropriate regulatory offsets to bring properties incrementally toward compliance from nonconformity.</p>	◆			Policy	Planning
CH-4	<p>Recognize business enhancements Develop a recognition/reward program, and financial assistance programs, to encourage business owners to enhance their properties through landscaping and other design aesthetics. Consider variable increases based on key locations, such as gateway corridors and area plan geographies.</p>		◆		Program	Planning
CH-5	<p>Establish an urban design program Create urban design guidelines and programs that address signage and wayfinding, public realm design and amenities, and building form, paired with appropriate incentives to support deployment in retrofitting/redevelopment and greenfield development contexts.</p>		◆		Program	Planning
CH-6	<p>Adjust City ordinances to reduce vacancy and remove barriers to revitalization Evaluate alternative compliance approaches to reduce common barriers to redevelopment that have resulted in vacancy, such as reduction of parking requirements to allow market-driven parking solutions that will provide opportunities for better use of property.</p>	◆			Policy	Planning
CH-7	<p>Roadway Rightsizing Initiate a roadway "rightsizing" program and traffic calming program to better allocate right-of-way and support multimodal transportation, rather than only/primarily automobiles. Integrate into development regulations for future development. This should target corridors that have had their roles shift due to other transportation investments (e.g. "business" state highways supplemented by primary/bypass routes).</p>	◆			Program	Planning Engineering
CH-8	<p>Update City ordinances to address signage design Update signage regulations to reduce sign clutter and enhance the quality of sign design while also adhering to recent case law.</p>	◆			Policy	Planning

Rec.	Action Items	Implementation Timeframe			Action Type	Key Entity and Partnerships
		Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term or Ongoing		
CH-9	<p>Coordinate with the MDD to support quality design in new and infill development Continue to work the Rockdale's MDD to target new and infill uses, and link incentives to adherence to or promotion of goals in this Comprehensive Plan.</p>			◆	Policy	Planning MDD
CH-10	<p>Develop funding pathway via CIP for design Create budget estimates for urban design public projects outlined in this chapter.</p>	◆			Project	Planning Engineering
CH-11	<p>Feature urban design in Rockdale's CIP Update Rockdale's CIP database to include infrastructure and improvements that create and enhance special design districts, the Downtown District, corridors and streetscapes, enhanced intersections, gateway features, and open space/greenbelt/floodplain features.</p>		◆		Project	Engineering Planning
CH-12	<p>Kickstart redevelopment Explore the acquisition or optioning of properties with tax delinquencies or violations of property maintenance codes, aiming to facilitate their redevelopment and restoration to enhance neighborhood stability and fiscal performance.</p>					

Performance Metrics

Utilizing benchmarks offers a quantifiable approach when tracking implementation progress during the annual and five-year review cycle discussed in this chapter. Specific action items and performance metrics have been developed to support implementation of the recommendations laid out in this Comprehensive Plan. Metrics demonstrate progress toward achieving the vision and guiding principles set forth at the beginning of the process, while the action items outline the steps and resources needed to see progress within the performance metrics.

The performance metrics include a variety of metrics that allow the City to track the success of the Plan as it is implemented. The City will need to track and analyze certain data points in order to accurately track the progress of each defined metric. Appropriate metrics are described in the following Performance Metrics Table, which describes each metric as well as outlines what the metric indicates, and potential data sources.

Chapter	Goal	Metric	Indicating	Data Source	Baseline	Target
Land Use	Support and regulate orderly, well-planned development.	% of developed area (excluding Agriculture, Agriculture with SF, Vacant, Water-body) as mixed-use and/or nonresidential land uses (excluding industrial)	More accessibility to goods and services within the City; reducing the need for residents to visit other cities for goods and services, keeping sales tax dollar in the City; greater potential for 3rd places that connect residents to the City identity.	City GIS Analysis (state land use codes by parcel per Milam County CAD)	TBD	TBD
					TBD	TBD
Land Use	Expand and preserve the recreational, cultural, educational, economic, natural and aesthetic resources of the community.	% of city limits within 2 miles of a fresh food seller (with produce)	Reduction in food deserts; resulting in improved health outcomes, access to goods and services, and dependence on personal automobiles.	City GIS Analysis	TBD	TBD
Land Use	Support and regulate orderly, well-planned development.	% of zoning that is consistent with future land use map	Responsiveness of regulatory environment to the direction of the community vision, as operationalized by this Plan.	City GIS Analysis	N/A	>95%
Economic Resilience	Help the community attract and maintain a competitive and well-educated population that drives economic opportunity and growth.	Median household or family income	More disposable income and improved alignment between employer and resident needs.	U.S. Census & American Community Survey	\$39,911	>\$50,000 (evaluate each year and increase target based on Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAs) so target paces with cost of living)

Chapter	Goal	Metric	Indicating	Data Source	Baseline	Target
Economic Resilience	Help the community attract and maintain a competitive and well-educated population that drives economic opportunity and growth.	Ratio of jobs to civilian labor force	The City is attracting sufficient jobs, and also has sufficient housing, to support a sustainable economic environment in which commuting to jobs or housing outside of Rockdale is a choice, rather than requirement.	U.S. Census & American Community Survey, LEHD	0.64	>1.25 (being a net importer is good)
Economic Resilience	Preserve, protect, and expand a diversified local economy.	Sales tax per resident	The City is attracting retail and entertainment, providing more opportunities for consumer activities within Rockdale rather than going elsewhere, and that the tax burden is more balanced between sales and property tax. Indicates increased buying power and potentially disposable income of residents.	U.S. Census & State Comptroller of Public Accounts	\$8.85	>15% annually
Economic Resilience	Help the community attract and maintain a competitive and well-educated population that drives economic opportunity and growth.	Percentage of persons in poverty	The City is attracting businesses offering higher incomes. This is just one measure when considering poverty.	U.S. Census & American Community Survey	13.9%	<14% (Stretch Goal: 10%)
Economic Resilience	Preserve, protect, and expand a diversified local economy.	Travel spending per resident	The City is attracting more visitors and visitor spending.	Texas Travel Research Dashboard https://www.travelstats.com/dashboard/texas	Total Direct Spending: \$18.4M Local Tax Receipts: \$323,000K	Total Direct Spending: 15% annually Local Tax Receipts: 15% annually
Housing and Urban Design	Support a variety of housing to serve people of various ages, living arrangements, and income levels.	% of housing in the community other than single-family detached.	Increased diversity of housing choices to serve residents of differing needs and stages of life.	U.S. Census & American Community Survey	14.3%	>40%
Character, Housing & Preservation	Expand and preserve the recreational, cultural, educational, economic, natural and aesthetic resources of the community.	% of city limits with tree canopy coverage	Positive aesthetics and an environment supportive of improved public health outcomes, property values, equity, etc.	City GIS Analysis (USDA Tree Canopy Cover)	TBD	TBD
Character, Housing & Preservation	Support and regulate orderly, well-planned development.	Linear feet of frontage of property, or acreage redeveloped along corridors	Private investment to improve aesthetics and development performance in identity areas of the City outside of Downtown.	City GIS Analysis	0 (Setting target from plan adoption, forward)	TBD
Character, Housing & Preservation	Develop and maintain a transportation system that will safely, economically, and efficiently accommodate future growth.	Housing + Transportation (H+T) Index.	Includes both housing and transportation costs to show a more holistic picture of household cost burden, as compared to housing costs alone.	H+T Index https://htaindex.cnt.org/	45%	<45% (Maintain, which is difficult when growing)

Chapter	Goal	Metric	Indicating	Data Source	Baseline	Target
Public Investments: Transportation	Develop and maintain a transportation system that will safely, economically and efficiently accommodate future growth.	% of residents who drive alone to work	Improvements to the built environment that make possible and encourage alternative forms of transportation to access destinations, such as improved bike/pedestrian facilities, improved transit, employment located closer to where residents live, and similar characteristics.	U.S. Census & American Community Survey	70.4%	<70%
Public Investments: Transportation	Develop and maintain a transportation system that will safely, economically and efficiently accommodate future growth.	% of street ROW dedicated to the sidewalk zone (sidewalks and streetscapes) for new streets and reconstructed streets	Street designs are better balancing the needs of pedestrians and treating the ROW as public space and opportunities for placemaking; wider sidewalk zones allow for activation of the streetscape by local businesses.	City GIS Analysis	0 (setting target from plan adoption, forward)	>45%
Public Investments: Parks, Facilities, & Infrastructure	Manage development of infrastructure and utilities to meet the requirements for future development and growth.	Housing units and business establishments served per linear foot of infrastructure	A more efficient system in which individual ratepayers are supporting a smaller amount of infrastructure; less infrastructure to maintain per capita; ideally resulting in more stable utility rates.	City calculation using linear utility assets and U.S. Census & American Community Survey data regarding housing units (or number of units tracked by the City)	Water: 66 linear feet/connection Wastewater: 77 linear feet/connection Wastewater: 2.5 lift stations/1,000 connections Streets (non-highway): 43 centerline linear feet/resident	Maintain/Reduce Maintain/Reduce Maintain/Reduce <40 centerline linear feet/resident
Public Investments: Transportation	Develop and maintain a transportation system that will safely, economically and efficiently accommodate future growth.	Average walk score and bike score ratings	Conditions are improving to make people more likely to choose walking or biking for their travel mode; neighborhoods are becoming more complete with greater access to convenient goods, services and activities.	Walk Score https://www.walkscore.com/professional/research.php	Walk Score: 55 Bike Score: 45	Walk Score: >70 (Stretch Goal: >80) Bike Score: >60 (Stretch Goal: >70)
Public Investments: Transportation	Develop and maintain a transportation system that will safely, economically and efficiently accommodate future growth.	Average commute time or distance for residents	Increasing access to employment and opportunities in the City; decreasing household transportation costs.	U.S. Census & American Community Survey	33.3 minutes	<21 minutes (State average is 26.9 and national is 26.6)

Chapter	Goal	Metric	Indicating	Data Source	Baseline	Target
Public Investments: Parks, Facilities, & Infrastructure	Expand and preserve the recreational, cultural, educational, economic, natural and aesthetic resources of the community.	% of open space vs. developed land in city limits (Excluding Agriculture, Agriculture with SF, Vacant).	Increased growth is not coming at the detriment to environmental health and quality of life; reduced potential for flooding due to increased impervious cover.	City GIS Analysis	14.9%	>10%
Public Investments: Parks, Facilities, & Infrastructure	Expand and preserve the recreational, cultural, educational, economic, natural and aesthetic resources of the community.	Acres of parkland per 100 people	Improved access to open space; retained quality of life in the face of growth.	City GIS Analysis including U.S. Census and American Community Survey population data	1.8 acres per 100 people	>1.9 acre per 100 people
Public Investments: Parks, Facilities, & Infrastructure	Expand and preserve the recreational, cultural, educational, economic, natural and aesthetic resources of the community.	% of population in city limits and ETJ within 1/2 mile (10 min walk) proximity of park	Improved access to open space; retained quality of life in the face of growth.	City GIS Analysis (Note: apply household size to number of units)	TBD	TBD
Public Investments: Parks, Facilities, & Infrastructure	Manage development of infrastructure and utilities to meet the requirements for future development and growth.	Community Rating System (CRS) Classification (FEMA)	Reduced flood damage risk and reduced flood insurance cost burdens to residents and businesses.	FEMA	Class 10 (Not currently a participant)	Class 6 (2,000 - 2,499 CRS credit points, resulting in flood insurance premium reductions of 20%)
Public Investments: Parks, Facilities, & Infrastructure	Manage development of infrastructure and utilities to meet the requirements for future development and growth.	Value of improvements geographically on properties impacted by 100 yr. floodplain (even if elevated above base flood elevation)	Risk of flood damage and alterations to natural floodplains.	City GIS Analysis	TBD	TBD
Public Investments: Parks, Facilities, & Infrastructure	Manage development of infrastructure and utilities to meet the requirements for future development and growth.	Water: Gallons per Connection Per Day Water Loss	Demonstrates proactive efforts to maintain water lines, avoiding leaks, conserving water and preserving capacity for domestic use, and financial sustainability.	City TWDB Water Audit Summary	TBD	TBD
Public Investments: Parks, Facilities, & Infrastructure	Manage development of infrastructure and utilities to meet the requirements for future development and growth.	Wastewater: Inflow and Infiltration (I&I)	Demonstrates proactive efforts to maintain wastewater lines, avoiding leaks, preserving system capacity and reducing large-scale replacement (avoid treating clean water).	City Analysis	TBD	TBD
Public Investments: Parks, Facilities, & Infrastructure	Manage development of infrastructure and utilities to meet the requirements for future development and growth.	Wastewater: % of system inspected by CCTV in previous five years	Demonstrates proactive efforts to maintain wastewater lines, avoiding leaks, negative environmental impacts and damage to property resulting from malfunctions/backups.	City Analysis	TBD	TBD
Public Investments: Parks, Facilities, & Infrastructure	Manage development of infrastructure and utilities to meet the requirements for future development and growth.	% of roads with Pavement Condition Index (PCI) grade of 71 or greater	Demonstrates proactive efforts to maintain streets and avoid unnecessary full reconstruction that might be caused by deferred maintenance, and delivering a high quality roadway system.	City Pavement Condition Index Data	TBD	TBD



APPENDIX A

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SUMMARIES

Themes

The vision for Rockdale encompasses multiple aspects aimed at creating a thriving, interconnected community that offers a range of opportunities and amenities. Central to this vision is the desire to establish strong connections, both physically and on a deeper level, between the east and west sides of the community. The community places great importance on fostering a sense of togetherness and support, with a strong focus on future generations and nurturing future leaders. The aim is to ensure that Rockdale continues to be a caring and close-knit community that takes care of its own.

Economic Development

There is both excitement and apprehension about the changes taking place in Rockdale. Continued expansion of the Austin Region, in addition to new nearby employers (such as Samsung) create new opportunities for the City - even as they may upset the small-town environment that many citizens cherish.

Economic growth is certainly coming to the area near Rockdale. However, Rockdale must ensure that the City and its residents benefit from this growth. This will necessitate understanding and celebrating the history, character, and sense of community that can help distinguish it from newer developments - and to maintain and sustain the attributes that make Rockdale unique.

The discussion in Rockdale focuses on the community's openness to change, including accepting new ideas, business models, and industries. To support the establishment of newer companies and strengthen what exists, the City actively collaborates with local authorities, offering economic incentives and investing in essential infrastructure. Reinvention centers on fostering diverse and unique businesses rather than large retail stores. Marketing the town as a destination for events, weddings, and breweries/winery experiences could attract more visitors and drive economic activity. Similarly, the historic downtown can be leveraged to bring in more

people.

Despite experiencing growth, the City faces challenges in filling job vacancies, particularly in small businesses. Strategies are needed to align the education system with the skills needed to meet workforce demands.

Preparing for the future, Rockdale aims to be sustainable and forward-looking. Leveraging its position in the Golden Triangle created by the DFW, Houston, and Austin/San Antonio regions, the City can take steps towards connecting the community to nearby assets and ensuring that it stays ahead in terms of innovation and progress.

Participants raised concerns about job opportunities for workers, and efforts are being made to explore ongoing employment prospects in the area. While Rockdale's low unemployment rate is acknowledged, rising crime rates raise questions about the adequacy of the police force to handle future challenges.

One critical topic is the ongoing debate between redevelopment and preserving historic elements in Downtown. The community seeks to find a harmonious approach that maintains the City's historical character while allowing for necessary modernization and revitalization.

Additionally, opportunities beyond Downtown are being explored, particularly at Sandow Lakes. The Sandow Lakes Ranch industrial development,

currently under construction, will represent up to 3,300 acres of industrial development (and related projects).

An interesting aspect that emerged in the discussion is the mindset influenced by ALCOA's previous "caretaking" role for the City, which ensured that its basic needs were met. Due to ALCOA, Rockdale citizens had a variety of resources, ranging from health care facilities to youth recreation opportunities. This may have inadvertently contributed to a risk-averse orientation, since city stakeholders were not required to take a high level of initiative to fulfill local needs. There is a collective acknowledgment that individuals must adopt a forward-thinking mindset, understanding their crucial roles in shaping the future of the community.

A core focus is on preserving Rockdale's social, cultural, and community assets. Despite challenges in securing funding, the community values these assets and aims to maintain and expand community services. Partnerships with Milam County and regional collaborations are explored to find solutions.

Housing

Rockdale is grappling with a myriad of housing issues, ranging from increasing rent prices and taxes to higher rates of homelessness to the lack of affordable rental properties. Low-

to-moderate-income housing has dwindled, leading to concerns about young people leaving the town due to limited housing options. Efforts are underway by the Housing Authority to open another housing complex with 1-2 bedroom units, but there is a need for a better process to establish and address housing needs effectively.

A number of housing issues are prominent to Rockdale. One example is the unattractive, rundown properties all over the city, particularly along the main roads. The reasons behind this trend warrant further exploration. Some residents returned to Rockdale to escape the fast-paced environment of Austin and high home prices, but rising taxes and housing costs are a growing concern.

The surge in prices has led to an increase in people living in RVs throughout town. Originally established for temporary workers in the local industry, RV parks have now become home to more permanent residents after the industry moved out. While these RVs do represent a source of unsubsidized affordable housing, many citizens consider them to be eyesores. Some community members wish to explore alternative solutions, such as tiny homes (which are relatively affordable, but built to higher design standards) and accessory dwelling units (ADUs), otherwise known as granny flats — smaller housing units which built behind/on the same lot as a more traditional house. These housing alternatives have sparked a topic of conversation among community members.

Beautification and parking issues are among the concerns raised in the community, as some of the existing housing stock is outdated and aesthetically unappealing. Moreover, affordable housing is not distributed equally, mainly concentrated on the east side of town, calling for

fair distribution across the community.

Homelessness has grown in the community, prompting discussions on potential solutions and actions. There have been and are community organizations attempting to address homelessness issues in the community, but the community is divide on solutions.

Healthcare

Like many rural communities in Texas, Rockdale now lacks a hospital or emergency care center. This creates great risks and hardships for local residents, while deterring others from moving to the community. This challenge is worsened by the fact that many local residents lack good health insurance - making it even less likely that a hospital can support itself locally.

Some participants held little hope that Milam County had the number of insured residents needed to support a hospital. However, others believed that it could be possible, particularly given the scale of new development projected for the area. To address the hospital closure issue, the community seeks to improve its professional background to attract healthcare employers with private insurance. On a related note, increasing numbers of retired military personnel are moving to Rockdale. While they have access to the VA hospital in Temple (about 50 minutes away), they may help to support a medical facility in or near Rockdale.

The potential redevelopment of an old nursing home is seen as an opportunity Rockdale.

Community Building

Many people within Rockdale are eager to help the city make needed progress. Community members express a sense of frustration with the lack of action and implementation of previous plans. There is a desire for accountability, fiscal backing, and effective city services. To drive change and growth, there is a desire to revitalize the city's image and mindset and to communicate successes more effectively.



Participants raise concerns about the challenges faced by those who step up to address community issues and initiate positive changes.

A noteworthy observation is the perceived divide between the east and west sides of the community, where the east side feels disconnected and disengaged from the west. To bridge this gap and foster a sense of unity, there is a need to demonstrate tangible impact and positive changes that inspire greater involvement and belief in community initiatives, particularly from the east side.

In multiple meetings, participants emphasized a need for better communication and coordination among different community organizations and volunteers. There were multiple suggestions to establish a centralized database or clearing house that can disseminate information about ongoing projects and opportunities for community members to get involved, ensuring transparency and inclusivity. The initiation of campaigns like "I Heart Rockdale" aims to foster civic pride and unity, encouraging residents to embrace their

shared identity and common values.

Some of the conversations reflected on past experiences may have left the community somewhat divided and fractured. Acknowledging this, the need for new leadership and a cultural shift emerges, with an emphasis on focusing on a positive future for Rockdale.

Education

Rockdale is proactively aligning education with the needs of the local job market by collaborating with Temple College to develop Career and Technical (CT) programs. The primary goal is to equip graduates with practical skills that are immediately applicable in the workforce, placing greater emphasis on these skills over conventional degrees in the current job market. In support of students interested in pursuing careers in the armed forces, the Rockdale ISD actively encourages military opportunities by providing programs and support tailored to their aspirations.

Additionally, the partnership between Temple College and Rockdale ISD exemplifies a joint initiative to enhance educational opportunities in the community. More broadly, Rockdale is in the heart of an "educational triangle," at approximately the same distance (1 hour-1:20) to three of the top five universities in Texas (University of Texas, Texas A&M, and Baylor University). This has potential to support various types of alliances with multiple strong educational institutions.

Youth and Recreation

The community in Rockdale is engaged in discussions concerning adequacy of recreational opportunities for its youth. While some believe there are sufficient offerings (particularly considering Rockdale's size), others believe that the existing options, such as parks, recreation programs, and church activities, are not fully meeting the needs and interests of the young population. As a result, there is a growing interest in understanding the preferences and aspirations of the youth through feedback and engagement.



While celebrating sports is a source of community pride, respondents also expressed the need to expand that sense of pride into other areas that enrich community life.

The community acknowledges the importance of recognizing accomplishments and awards outside of academics to encourage greater participation and engagement among the youth. This recognition fosters a supportive and inclusive environment where young individuals feel valued and motivated to actively participate in various activities.

There is a discussion about implementing more youth-oriented activities. The community considers options such as a skating rink, bowling alley, and arcade to provide physical and interactive spaces where young people can socialize, have fun, and explore their interests. The community aims to integrate its rural history into programmed activities, honoring its heritage while embracing modern development. These suggestions aim to offer a compelling alternative to the quiet atmosphere of the library and cater to the diverse interests of the youth.

Rockdale's citizens aim to cultivate a strong sense of community, fostering the growth and well-being of its youth, who are the foundation for a vibrant and prosperous future.

Downtown

Downtown came up as an important recurring theme throughout the discussions. As the historic heart of the community, downtown is identified as the best place to celebrate the history, culture, and character of the city. Furthermore, there is a wide perception that the city has challenges with "curb appeal" and overall appearance; the condition of

Downtown serves as an advertisement of the City itself. Vacant buildings, or general maintenance issues, create a negative impression of the city as a whole.

Addressing parking needs will be key to supporting downtown's growth; there is a need to ensure businesses and visitors have enough spaces, while still supporting the "critical mass" of buildings needed for a successful and vibrant downtown.

Well-maintained public gathering spaces with consistent events is seen as another key to a successful downtown. More broadly, there needs to be a variety of places for people (and families) to visit. The East Bell Taphouse is widely noted as a successful gathering space - but a wider variety of places (and particularly child-friendly venues) would help to support a more successful downtown.

The high rate of vacancies downtown is an ongoing challenge. Addressing this will require both a commitment to maintenance and code enforcement and a focus on supporting small local businesses.

Miscellaneous

The community of Rockdale engages in a multifaceted discussion, recognizing the essential role churches play in unifying their efforts to achieve shared community goals. There is a local ministerial alliance that is active in spearheading various community initiatives, fostering collaboration, and promoting positive change.

Addressing internet connection is identified as a solvable issue, and the community is eager to explore solutions to enhance connectivity for its residents and businesses.

Grants emerge as a valuable resource for funding various projects and initiatives. The community recognizes the importance of aligning funding opportunities with specific community needs, ensuring resources are directed effectively to drive positive changes. The community acknowledges the availability of grants but also the need for effective grant-winning strategies to access resources for community development and growth.

Finally, participants emphasize the significance of code enforcement, which has been brought to the attention of the council. There is a consensus that better code enforcement is needed to address substandard or unattractive conditions in the City. At the same time, it is understood that strict code enforcement can place burdens on people with few resources to improve their properties. For these reasons, citizens call for a "carrot and stick" approach, which focuses both on enforcement and on providing resources to help homeowners make improvements.

It was also discussed that the City does not have a full-time code enforcement official; this would likely be needed for code enforcement to be consistent and successful.

Workshop #1 -

June 2023

Schedule and Setup

The day long community engagement workshop fostered collaboration and gathered input from diverse stakeholder groups. It provided a platform for stakeholders to share perspectives related to community development and provide feedback to the consultants, MDD and City. This session helped in aligning the views of key officials and community leaders and ensured their feedback was being considered from the outset of the project and was instrumental in shaping the plan recommendations.

1. Stakeholder Meetings (2) - Community Leaders
2. Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) Meeting
3. Stakeholder Meeting - Open Invite to Appointed City Board and Commission Members
4. Community Event: Tabling at 4th Thursdays Chamber on Tap

Participants were able to interact with various tables or booths set up by organizers, offering information and opportunities for engagement on different community-related topics. The focus is on fostering conversations, building connections, and collecting valuable input from the community members present.

Additionally, a virtual version of the engagement materials was made available online in the weeks following the in-person event, to ensure broader accessibility and participation.

Summary

Rockdale is facing a divide between what it aspires to be and the reality it currently faces, with many big city issues affecting the small town. Challenges include access to grocery shopping and dining, economic disparities, homelessness, and a shortage of healthcare facilities and services.

The community engagement in Rockdale revolves around the central theme of "Reinvention," representing a collective willingness to embrace change and transformation. It encompasses diverse aspects crucial to the community's growth and development.

Key takeaways included:

- Supporting small businesses to foster robust growth and ensure sustainable development.
- Striking a balance between attracting new residents and ensuring affordability for existing ones are being prioritized.
- Overcoming obstacles such as a risk-averse mindset and perceived physical divides.
- Actively seeking ways to enhance the community and its offerings while strengthening connections among its members.



Workshop #2 - August 2023

Schedule and Setup

The second day long workshop included more outreach that moved beyond high-level visioning and dug deeper into details and topical recommendations.

1. Stakeholder Follow-up Meeting with all stakeholders engaged during Workshop #1.
2. Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) Meeting
3. Community Open House Event

The team hosted a follow up meeting with the community stakeholders engaged during workshop #1, to present outcomes of the initial engagement efforts and solicit feedback on detailed recommendations.

The CPAC meeting included a session related to community resilience, identifying economic, social, and environmental shocks and stressors that Rockdale may be facing today or in the future. The potential impacts of these shocks and stressors was also discussed.

That evening, the team and MDD hosted a community open house that was open to anyone, began with a formal presentation and then broke out into interactive stations to collect feedback and foster discussion. Team members to present to facilitate participant's interaction with the stations a well as answer questions and engage in discussions.

Meeting stations included:

- Feedback on the draft vision and mission statements
- Transportation mode preferences and complete street discussion
- Land use tradeoffs and priorities
- Land use types and locations
- Parks needs and design elements
- An investing exercise where participants could identify their priorities for City spending

Summary

Overall, the stakeholders and CPAC confirmed that the outcomes of the initial engagement were accurate and the key takeaways identified by the planning team set the Plan on the right path.

Key takeaways included:

- Water scarcity, community health and wildfires were noted as the resilience concerns most likely to happen and to have the greatest impact in Rockdale.
- Participants prefer to travel 10-15 minutes for daily goods, 15-20 minutes for work, and are willing to travel up to 30 minutes for entertainment. They would be interested in walking for 10 minutes or bicycling for 15 minutes to reach these destinations.
- Participants preferred additional space for small businesses over more parking, increased housing stock over limited growth, more amenities over low density development, and multi-modal accessibility over high volume roadways.
- The U.S. 79 corridor emerged as the most preferred location for additional

development in the City.

- The top five priorities for investment identified by participants were utility infrastructure, roadway infrastructure, beautification, small businesses, and parks.



Workshop #3 - October 2023 Schedule and Setup

The final day long workshop sought more targeted feedback and support from additional stakeholder groups.

1. Stakeholder Meetings (2) - Rockdale Rotary and Youth Engagement
2. Park Tours
3. Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) Meeting

The youth engagement included the project team visiting three high-school classes; a government class, agriculture class and art class. The government and agriculture classes participated in an interactive activity using LEGOs to build a future for the City and the art class spent time drawing things they wanted to see in Rockdale.

Summary

The Rotary Club was generally supportive of the plan progress and overall work being done related to the Comprehensive Plan.

Generally, the high school students like the small town feel of Rockdale, but want to make it a better place to live with more amenities, such as:

- More jobs for when they graduate high school
- Places to hang out, whether that's a community center or a business where they

can spend time with their friends, like a coffee shop or wing restaurant.

- More variety of food, especially more options for international foods.
- Ways to get around town if they don't have a car, such as walking and bicycling.



Additional Meetings

Additional meetings were held throughout the process to update and engage stakeholders as needed. These meetings provided feedback for the team that were incorporated into the themes and takeaways noted previously, and specific comments and ideas from these groups were considered and incorporated into the document recommendations as appropriate. Additional meetings included:

1. City Council Briefing - April 2023
2. P&Z Briefings (2) - October 2023 and March 2024
3. Stakeholder Meetings (2) - MDD Board and City Staff - March 2024
4. Stakeholder Meeting - Parks Board Briefing - April 2024
5. Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) Meetings (2) - additional meetings not noted as part of the workshops above
6. Stakeholder Meeting - The 1895 Project and Vision Historic Preservation Foundation - June 2024
7. Adoption Meetings - P&Z Meeting and City Council Meetings (2) - June/July of 2024

Project Website & Virtual Engagement

The project website is a tool used to provide the community with up to date information on the project, upcoming engagements, and draft deliverables, as well as hosting the online surveys and virtual engagement platforms. The website offered language translation and included the following:

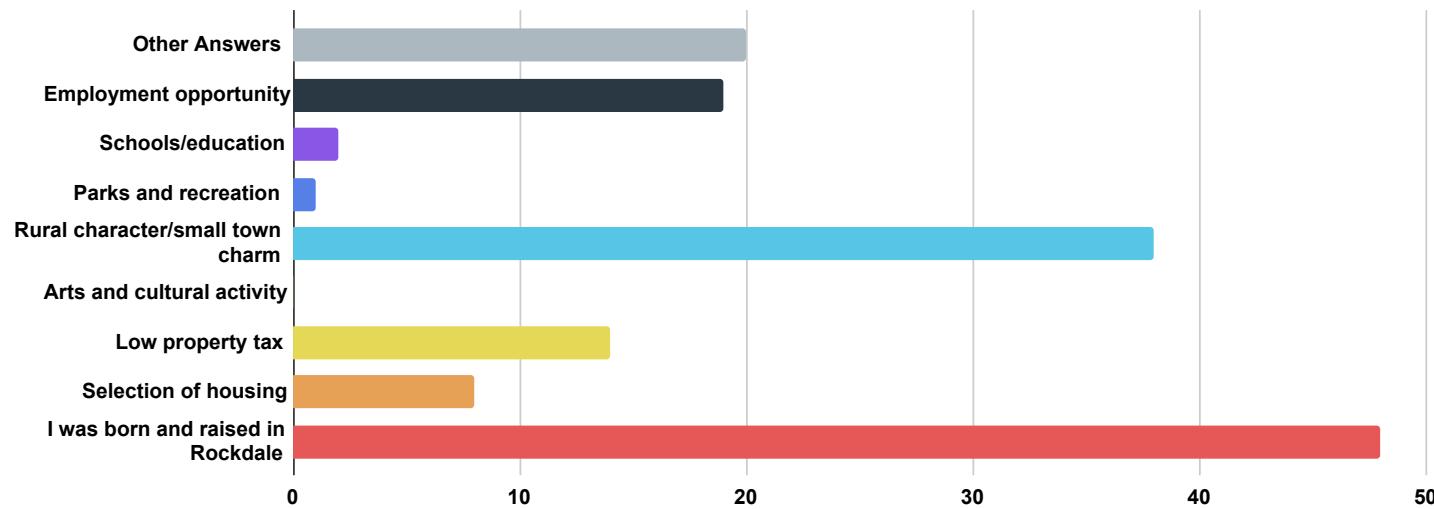
- A landing page with the project branding, an introduction to the project and its purpose, a project timeline denoting completed, past and future phases of work, and buttons to take visitors to the virtual engagements.
- A project team page so the community could know who was working on the project, including consultants, city staff, and CPAC members.
- A get involved page that listed upcoming and past in person engagements as well as hosting the virtual engagements.
- A documents page that provided links to the City's planning documents and download of all draft documents and public engagement materials.
- A page where visitors could leave general comments for the team or sign up for email updates on future engagements.

Virtual engagements are just one more way for residents to provide input in a way that may be more convenient or comfortable.

Online Public Survey Results

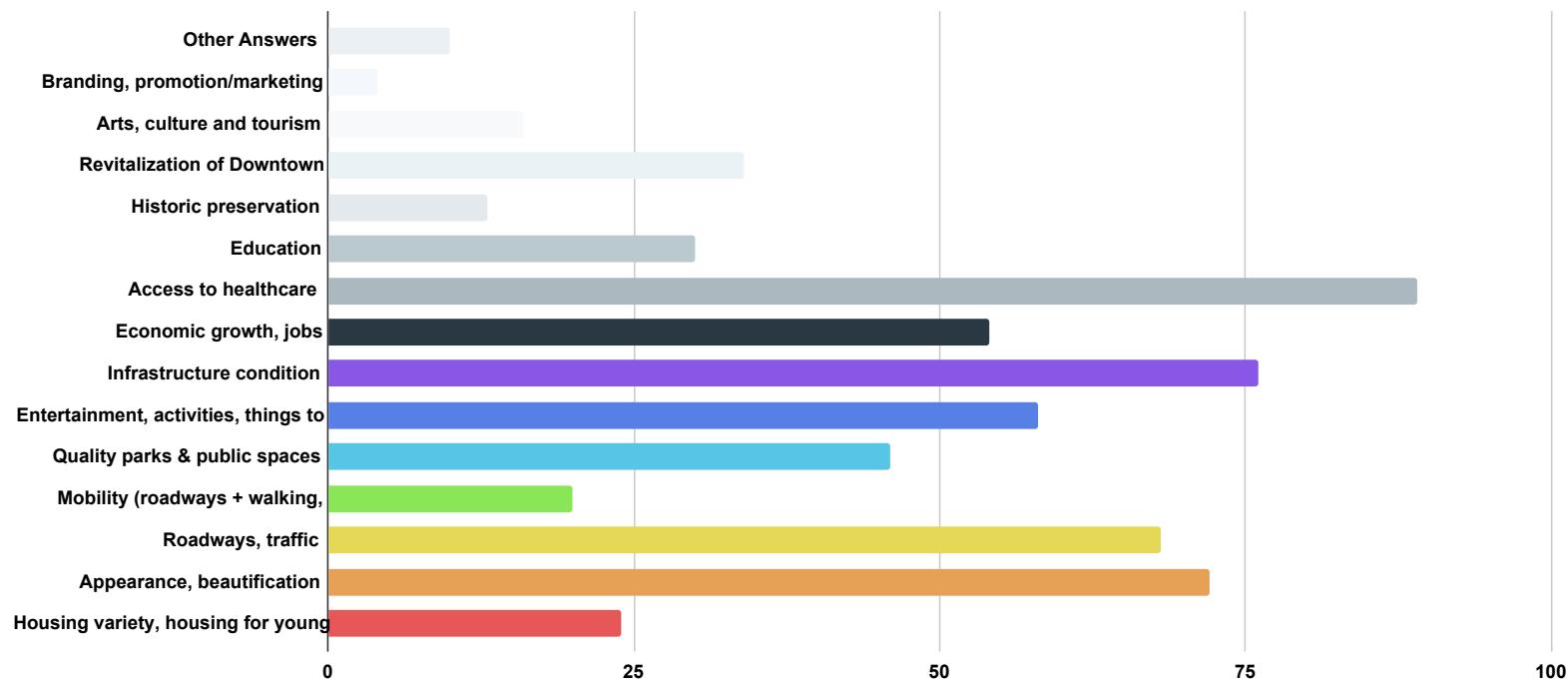
A community survey was available online via the project website from June 16, 2023 to August 1, 2023. The survey was open to anyone to participate and utilize online translation capabilities to allow it to be taken in a variety of languages. It was also usable both in desktop and mobile formats. Outreach regarding the availability of the survey was done via multiple channels, including flyers handed out at community events and on City social media channels. The survey received 151 responses. A summary of the responses received follows. The input from this survey, along with feedback gathered and conversations had at Workshops described previously, provided the design team with important baseline information and community priorities to utilize as the basis for progressing the project.

1. What was the most important factor for you or your family when you decided to move to Rockdale?



While a significant proportion (32%) were born and raised in the town, others were drawn by the appeal of its rural character and small-town charm (25%), low property tax rates (9%), and employment opportunities (13%). Family ties and practical considerations such as housing affordability, proximity to family, and historical connections also played a pivotal role in influencing respondents' decisions. The results underscore the multifaceted nature of motivations behind Rockdale's residents, combining factors of community, lifestyle, economics, and personal history.

2. What area(s) should the City of Rockdale work to prioritize and improve the most?



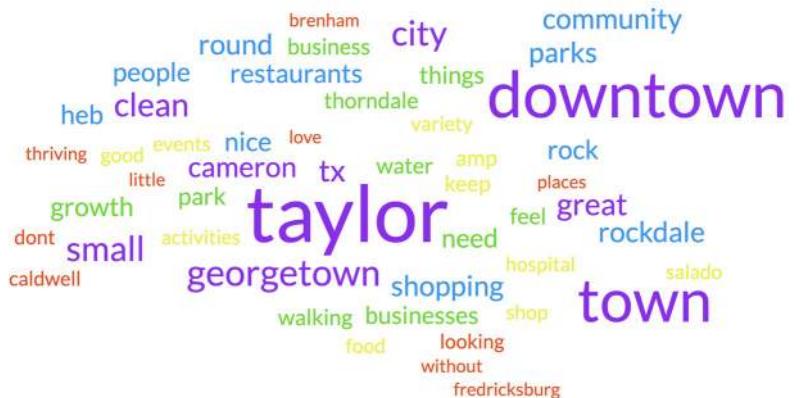
A significant emphasis is placed on beautification and appearance (48%), infrastructure condition (51%), and access to healthcare (60%), underscoring residents' desires for an aesthetically pleasing environment and vital services. Roadways and traffic management (46%) and economic growth with job opportunities (36%) also feature prominently. Additionally, there are calls for improvements in public spaces (31%), entertainment options (39%), and downtown revitalization (23%), indicating a desire for a vibrant community. Several respondents express concerns about water quality, public safety, and drug-related issues, reflecting local challenges.

3. What are the top three assets or amenities Rockdale has or provides for you?



The survey results provide a comprehensive view of the assets and amenities that Rockdale offers and are held dear by its residents. The most frequently mentioned assets include the Library, Walmart, and the Farmers Market, indicating the importance of accessible shopping and community resources. Additionally, residents value the small-town feel and atmosphere. Parks, pools, and recreational facilities, as well as schools, also received multiple mentions. Proximity to larger cities and the potential for growth are noted as strengths, and there is an appreciation for the friendly, supportive, and active community. Respondents also pointed out areas for improvement, such as the need for an HEB grocery store, urgent care facilities, and more youth activities.

4. Are there other cities or towns that could serve as a model or inspiration for Rockdale? What specifically do you like about those places that you would like to see in Rockdale?



Rockdale residents draw inspiration from several nearby towns and cities when considering models for their community's development. Cameron, Taylor, and Georgetown are frequently mentioned as examples. Respondents admire these places for their revitalized downtown areas, variety of businesses, parks, and clean environments. Many express a desire for more amenities, like grocery stores other than Walmart and a broader range of dining options. The emphasis on cleanliness, active downtowns, historical preservation, and community involvement stands out as recurring themes in these responses. However, it's also clear that Rockdale residents want to maintain their town's unique identity and small-town charm while seeking improvements and additional services.

5. What is sacred about Rockdale that should be preserved?



Rockdale residents have a deep appreciation for the town's historical assets and small-town atmosphere. Many respondents value the town's historic buildings, landmarks, and cultural heritage, emphasizing their importance in preserving the town's identity and attracting tourism and businesses. The sense of community and the friendly, small-town vibe are also cherished, as is the conservative, rural character of Rockdale. Residents express a desire to maintain the town's small-town charm and lower tax rates while acknowledging the need for improvements and investment in historical sites and downtown areas.

6. What about Rockdale would you like to see changed?



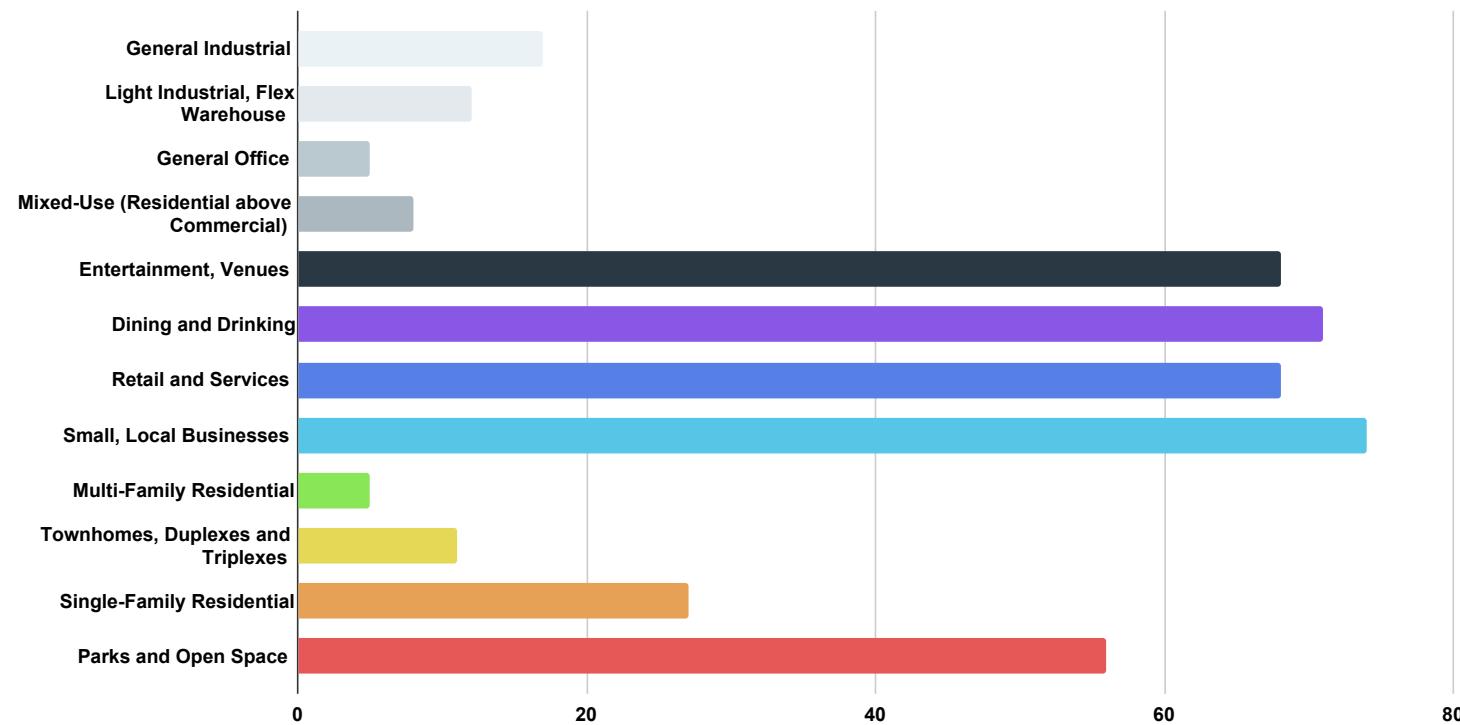
Residents express a strong desire for cleaner streets and neighborhoods, with a focus on addressing drug problems and homelessness. Many respondents emphasize the need for infrastructure upgrades, particularly regarding roads and the water system. There's also a call for the development of more public spaces for walking and biking. Some residents seek greater community unity, better access to healthcare, and more shopping and dining options. The survey captures a mix of concerns, from the physical appearance of the town to issues related to safety and quality of life.

7. Describe your vision for the future of Rockdale. In 20 years what does Rockdale look like? What kinds of things are happening here? What are people doing or experiencing in Rockdale?



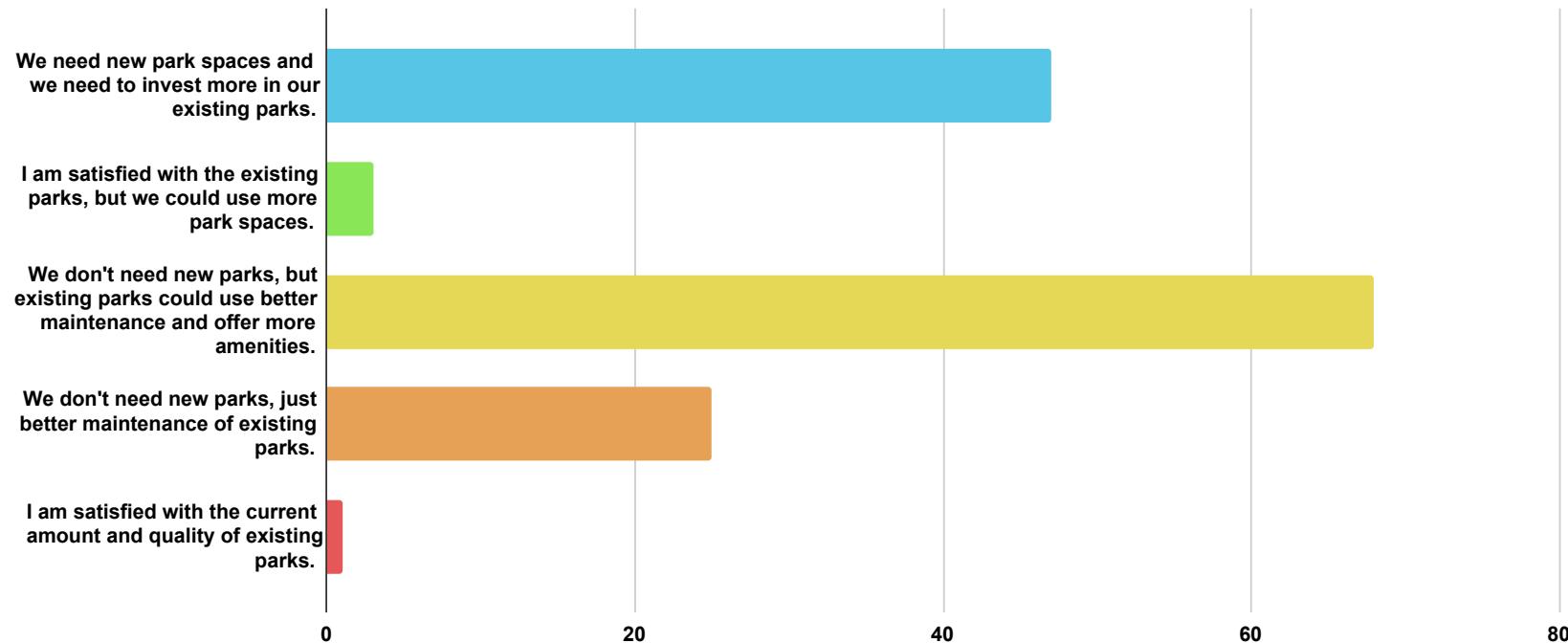
The vision for the future of Rockdale, as described by respondents, varies but generally emphasizes the desire for a revitalized downtown area with thriving businesses, improved infrastructure, and a focus on community safety. Many hope to see a town that preserves its small-town charm while offering modern amenities, including shopping options, entertainment, and healthcare facilities. The desire for more parks, recreational opportunities, and family-friendly activities is also prominent. There's an aspiration for cleaner streets, accessible clean water, and reduced crime. Some envision Rockdale becoming a destination with cultural events, festivals, and attractions. However, concerns about drug-related issues, city management, and the need for more job opportunities and diverse businesses are also expressed.

8. What are the top three development or business types you would like to see more of in Rockdale?



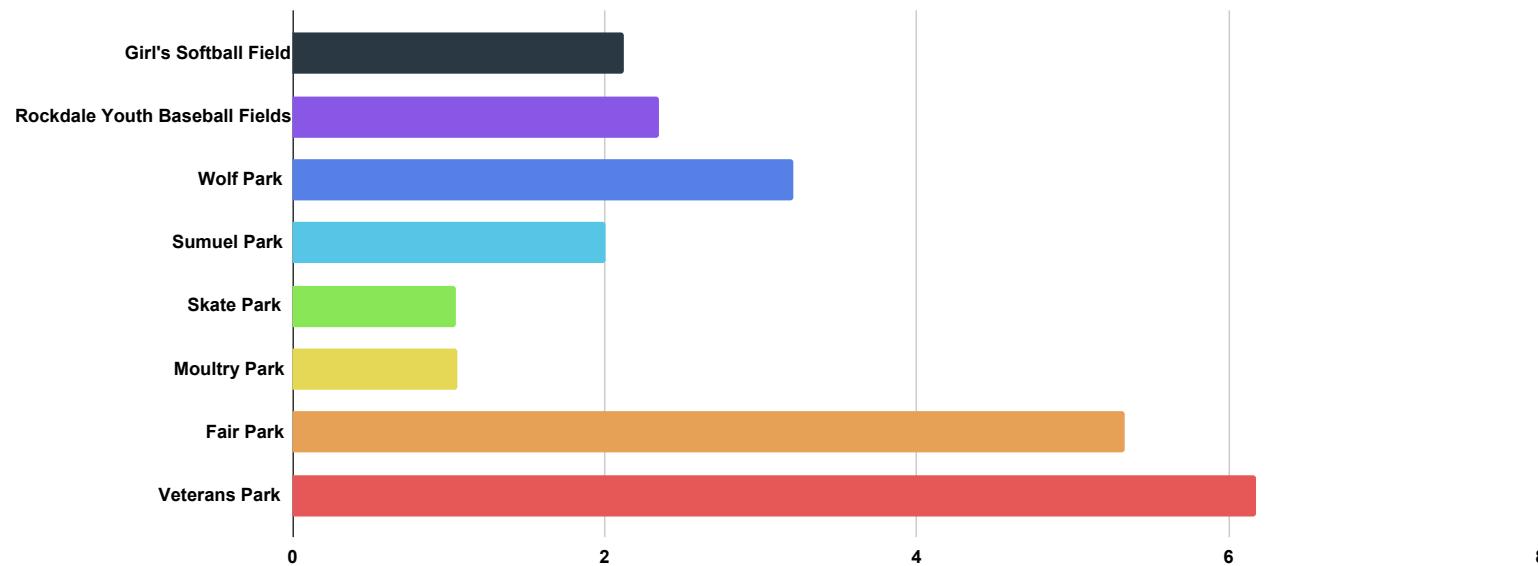
The survey results indicate a strong desire among respondents for specific types of development and businesses in Rockdale. Notably, there's a significant interest in the expansion of small, local businesses (50%), reflecting a community focus on supporting local entrepreneurship. Additionally, respondents expressed a keen interest in dining and drinking establishments (48%), followed closely by retail and services (46%) and entertainment venues (46%), suggesting a desire for a vibrant and diverse local economy. Parks and open spaces (38%) were also favored, emphasizing the importance of green areas in the community. Light industrial and flex warehouse spaces (8%) and general industrial areas (11%) were mentioned as well, indicating some interest in expanding the industrial sector. Overall, these results provide insights into the community's aspirations for both economic and recreational development in Rockdale.

9. Which of the following do feel most accurately describes your opinion of Rockdale's parks?



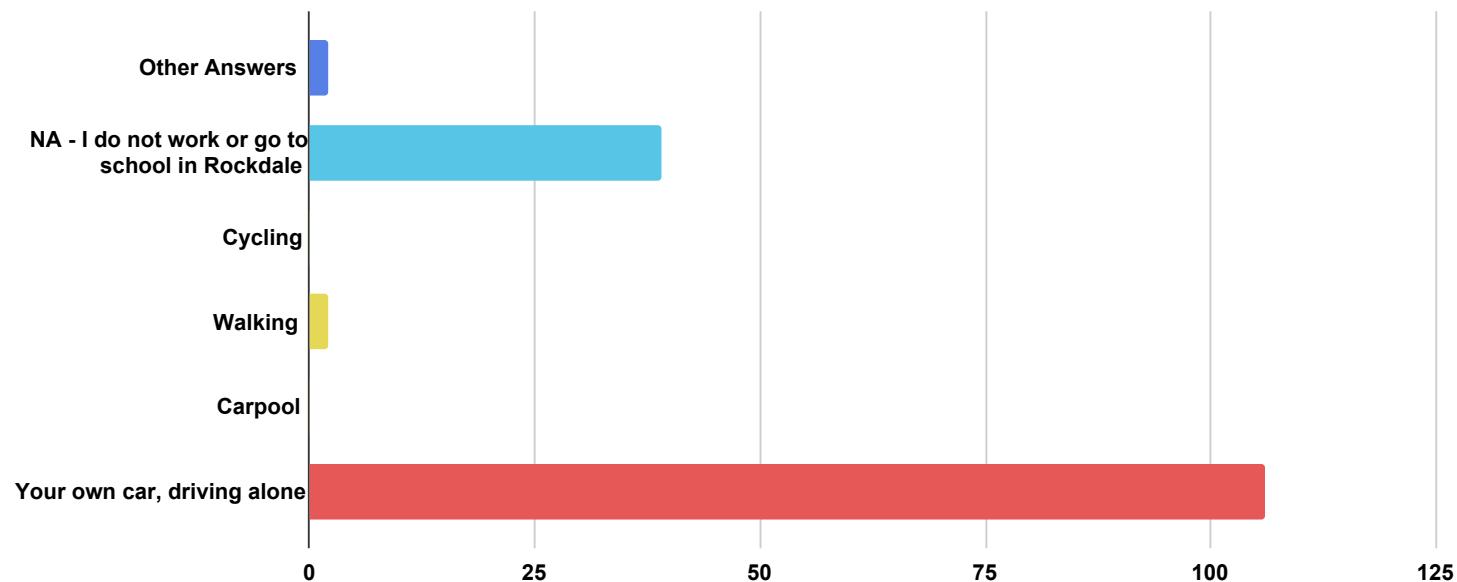
The survey results indicate that a significant portion of respondents, 47%, feel that while new parks may not be necessary, the existing parks in Rockdale could benefit from better maintenance and the addition of more amenities. Additionally, 33% of respondents believe that both new park spaces and increased investment in existing parks are needed, suggesting a desire for overall improvement and expansion of recreational areas. Meanwhile, a small percentage, less than 1%, expressed satisfaction with the current amount and quality of existing parks, while 17% emphasized the importance of better maintenance for the existing parks rather than the creation of new ones. Only 2% of respondents were content with the current parks but wished for more park spaces.

10. Please rank the parks and recreation facilities in order of which ones you use the most. (Top is the place you use the most and bottom is the place you use the least)



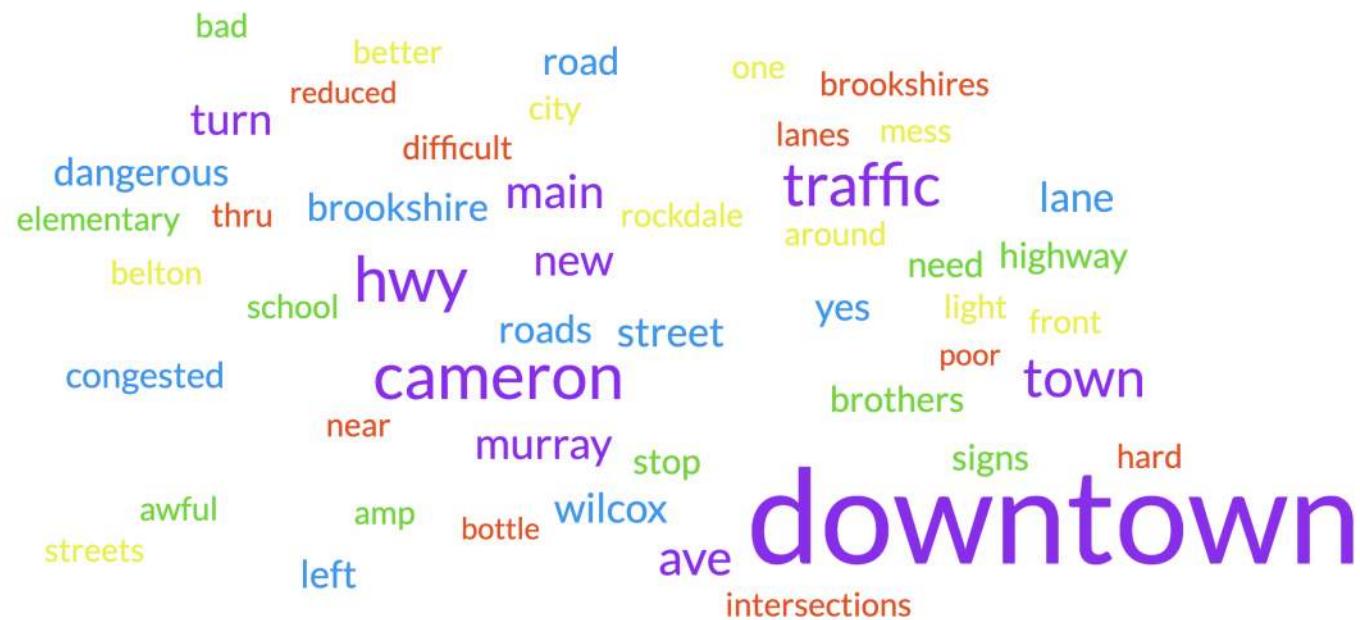
The survey results provide insight into the usage and popularity of Rockdale's parks and recreation facilities. Veterans Park emerged as the most frequently used facility, with 48% ranking it as their top choice. Fair Park also garnered significant usage, with 27% ranking it as their primary choice. Moultry Park, Skate Park, and Sumuel Park received comparatively less usage, with a mixed distribution of rankings. Wolf Park, Rockdale Youth Baseball Fields, and the Girl's Softball Field showed moderate usage across respondents. These rankings suggest that Veterans Park and Fair Park are the preferred destinations for most, highlighting their importance within the community, while other facilities have varying levels of use and popularity.

11. How do you primarily get to work or school within the City of Rockdale?



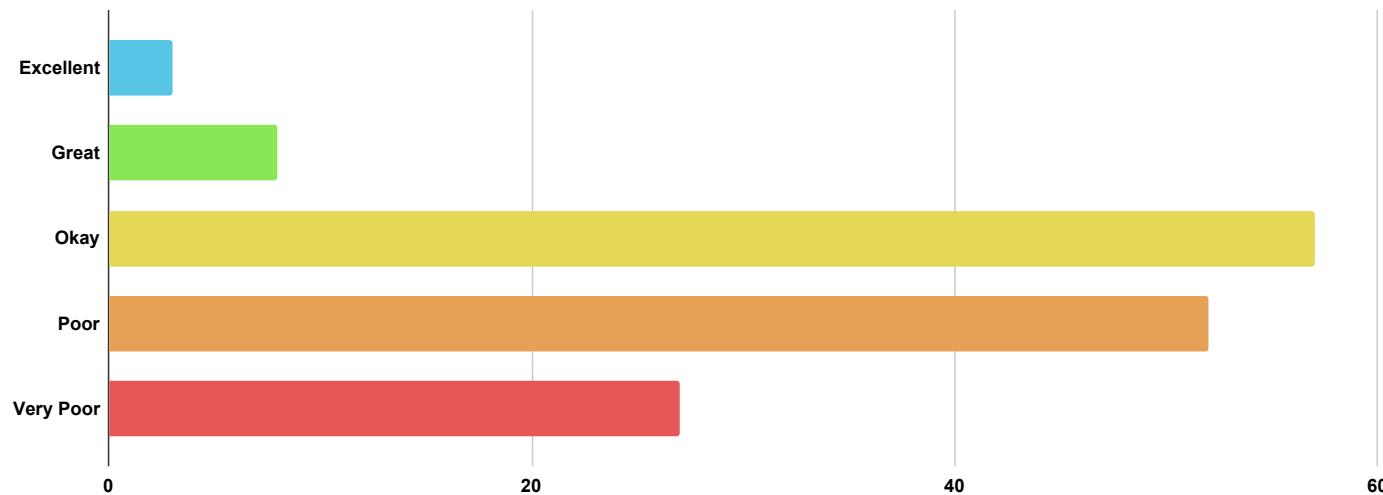
The survey results indicate that the majority of respondents (71%) primarily commute within the City of Rockdale by using their own cars, driving alone. A small percentage reported walking (1%) as their primary mode of transportation, while a similar percentage (1%) mentioned working from home. Notably, a significant portion (26%) noted that they do not work or go to school in Rockdale, indicating a proportion of the population who may commute outside the city for work or education. The results suggest that personal vehicles are the predominant mode of transportation for those commuting within Rockdale, with limited usage of other transportation options.

12. Are there specific areas or routes within the City that you find are particularly congested, dangerous, or difficult to navigate?



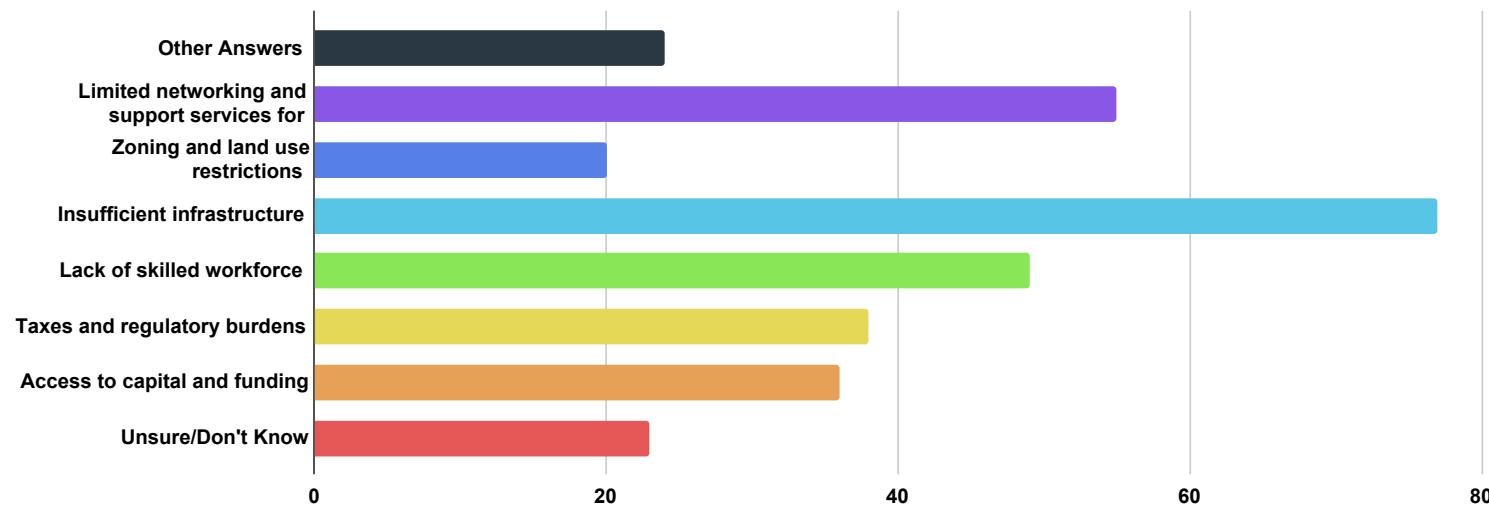
Respondents identified several areas within Rockdale that they find congested, dangerous, or difficult to navigate. The most commonly mentioned location is Highway 79, especially in the downtown area, where traffic congestion and reduced lanes are causing concerns. Many also express dissatisfaction with the new downtown configuration, citing issues with the road layout and pedestrian walkways. Some mentioned side roads with potholes and maintenance issues, as well as concerns about traffic safety around schools and intersections. There are calls for better visibility, tree trimming, and improved traffic light management.

13. Please rate the overall business climate and opportunities for economic growth in Rockdale?



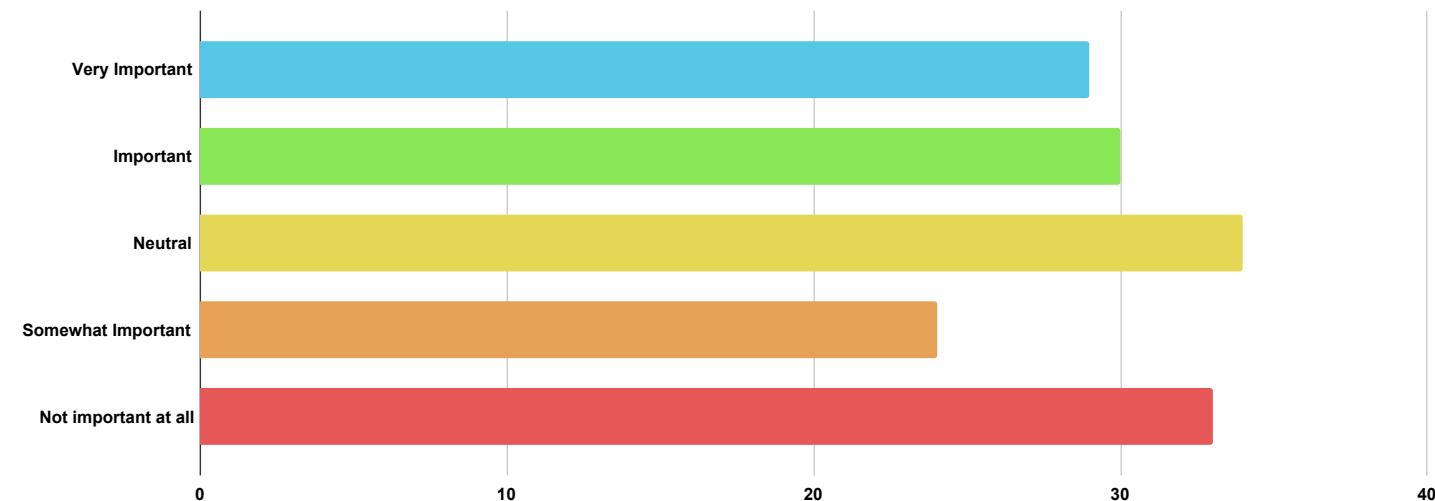
The survey responses reflect a somewhat mixed assessment of the overall business climate and opportunities for economic growth in Rockdale. A substantial portion of respondents (35%) rated it as "Poor," while another significant portion (39%) deemed it "Okay." A smaller but noteworthy segment viewed the business climate positively, with 5% considering it "Great" and 2% rating it as "Excellent." However, a significant portion (18%) expressed a rather negative perception, marking it as "Very Poor." These results suggest that while there is room for improvement, there are also pockets of optimism regarding the business climate and economic growth prospects in Rockdale.

14. In your opinion, what are the main barriers or challenges that hinder business growth and development in Rockdale?



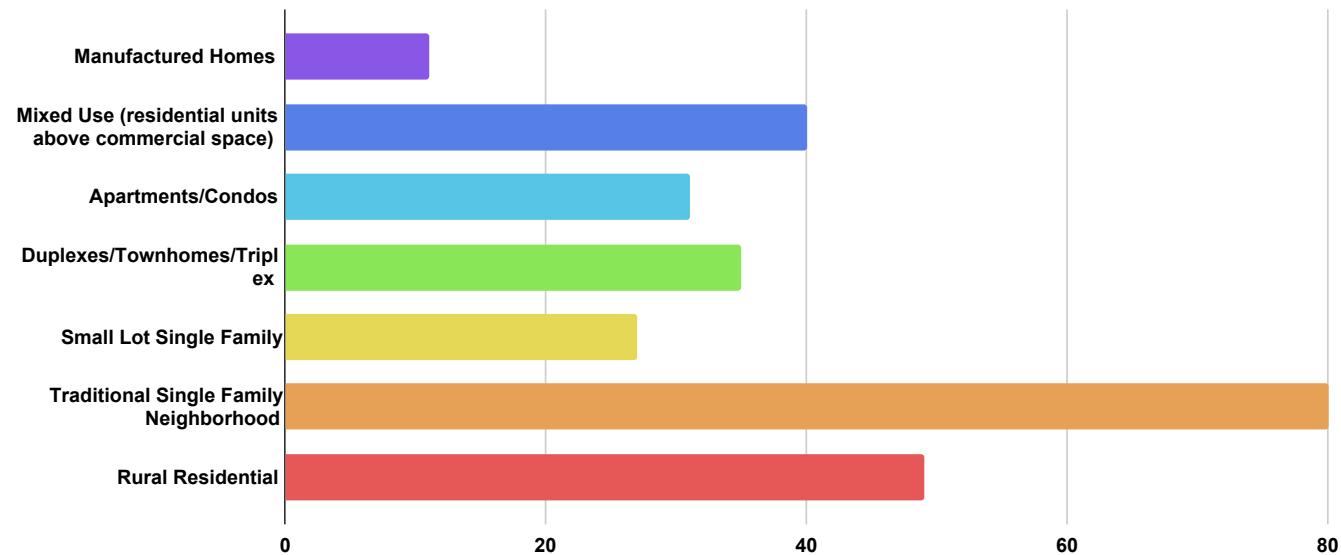
The survey responses highlight a range of barriers and challenges that hinder business growth and development in Rockdale. The most frequently cited challenge is insufficient infrastructure, with 52% of respondents identifying this as a hindrance. A significant portion also noted the lack of a skilled workforce (33%) and limited networking and support services for businesses (37%) as barriers. Taxes and regulatory burdens (26%) and access to capital and funding (24%) were also identified as impediments to business growth. Zoning and land use restrictions (14%) and the overall economic grade (16%) were mentioned as well. These responses suggest that there are multifaceted challenges facing businesses in Rockdale, including infrastructure, workforce, financial resources, and regulatory issues, which could benefit from targeted interventions and support to promote economic development.

15. How important is it to you that Rockdale provides a range of housing types to accommodate different household sizes and preferences?



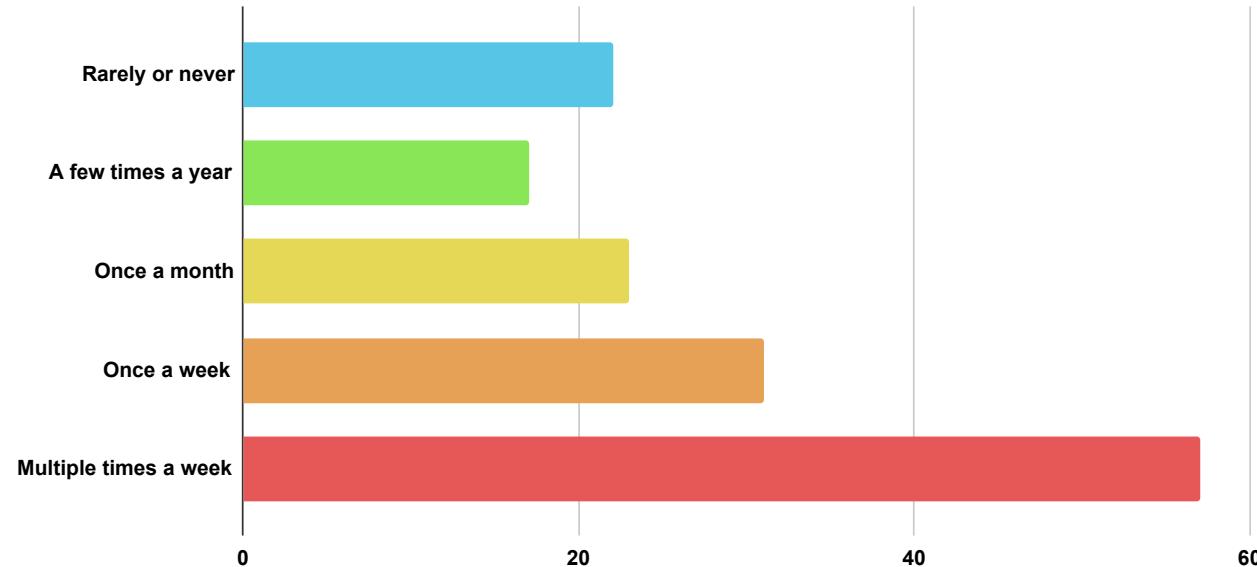
The survey results indicate a mixed but overall positive sentiment regarding the importance of Rockdale providing a range of housing types to accommodate different household sizes and preferences. A combined 39% of respondents considered it "Important" or "Very Important," highlighting the significance of housing diversity. Conversely, 23% held a neutral stance, while 22% expressed that it was "Not important at all." This suggests that while there's a notable portion who place high importance on housing variety, there are also those who may not prioritize it as a critical factor in the community's development.

16. Which of the following housing options do you find are most needed in Rockdale?



The survey results reveal a diverse set of housing preferences within the Rockdale community. A significant majority of respondents identified a need for traditional single-family neighborhoods (58%), indicating a desire for more conventional housing options. Rural residential areas (36%) were also considered important, reflecting the community's affinity for a mix of rural and suburban living. Other housing options such as mixed-use developments (29%) and duplexes/townhomes/triplexes (25%) were noted, highlighting a demand for more diverse housing styles. Smaller percentages expressed interest in small lot single-family homes, apartments/condos, and manufactured homes, suggesting a varied housing market would be well-received in Rockdale to cater to different preferences and needs.

17. Which best describes how often do you visit Downtown Rockdale?



The survey results demonstrate a relatively high level of engagement with Downtown Rockdale among respondents. A combined 59% visit downtown either multiple times a week (38%) or once a week (21%), indicating a consistent presence. Additionally, a significant portion, comprising 15%, visits downtown once a month. A smaller but notable percentage, 11%, frequents the area a few times a year. However, it's worth noting that 15% of respondents visit downtown rarely or never. These results suggest a substantial segment of the community has an active relationship with Downtown Rockdale, while others engage less frequently or not at all.

18. When you go to Downtown Rockdale, what kinds of things do you do or what places/establishments do you visit?



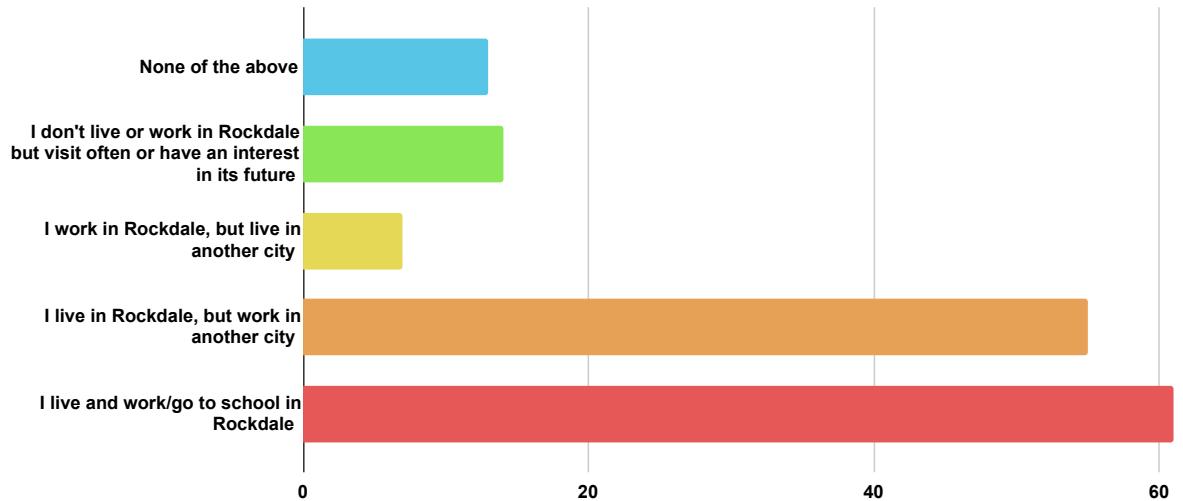
When respondents visit Downtown Rockdale, their activities vary but typically involve essential services like the post office, library, and various restaurants. They also frequent local businesses and shops, with some mentioning specific places like the East Bell Taphouse, hardware stores, and thrift shops. However, there's a common sentiment that the downtown area could benefit from more establishments and activities to attract residents and tourists. Suggestions include more shopping options, coffee shops, small businesses, and entertainment venues. Parking and traffic concerns are also raised as potential obstacles to downtown visits.

19. What kinds of activities or amenities would make you want to visit Downtown more often?

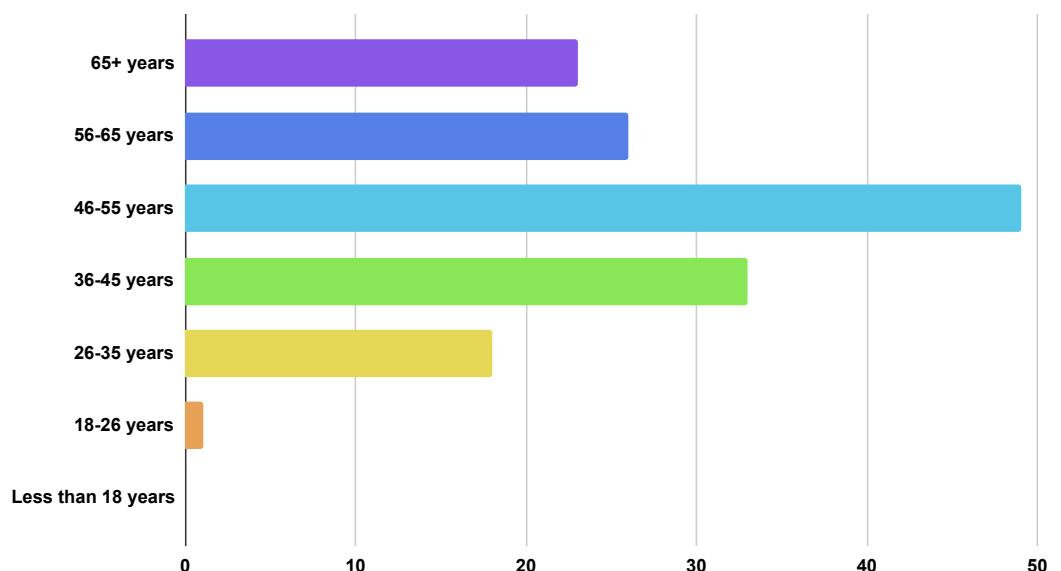


To encourage more frequent visits to Downtown Rockdale, respondents express a desire for several enhancements and additions. These include a larger, improved library with a focus on children's resources, better parking options, and a wider variety of shops. There's a call for a diverse range of dining options, with requests for healthier food choices, restaurants with different cuisines, and family-friendly venues. Respondents also highlight the need for cultural and entertainment amenities, such as theaters, museums, and live music venues. Additionally, efforts to beautify and revitalize the downtown area are mentioned, including fewer vacant buildings and improved safety and cleanliness. More community-oriented events, family-friendly activities, and attractions for children and teenagers are also seen as ways to make downtown a more appealing destination.

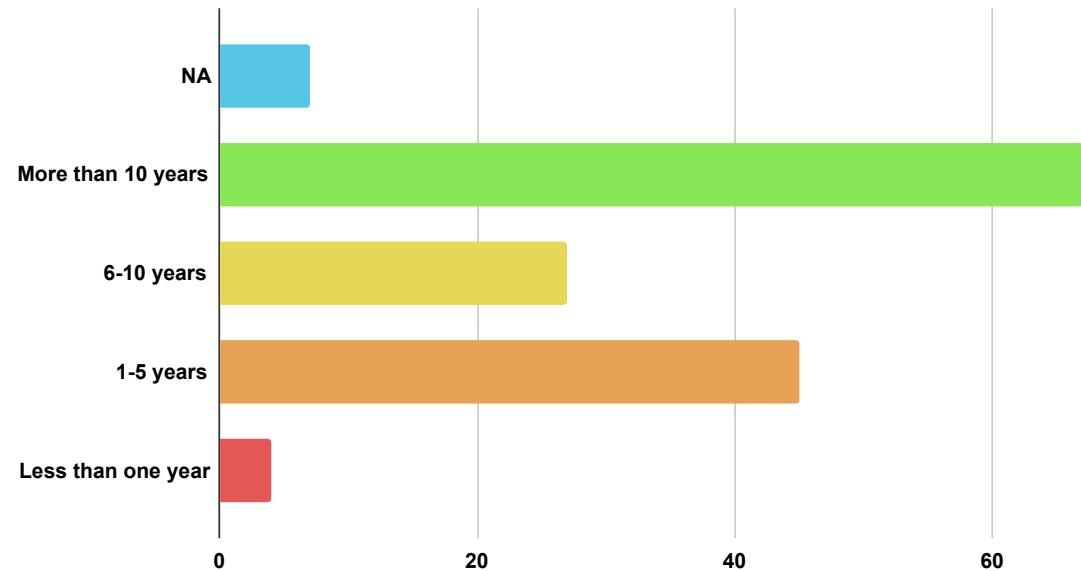
20. Which best describes you?



21. Which of the following age groups do you belong to?



22. How long have you lived or worked/gone to school in Rockdale?





Safety
Concern



My favorite
place(s)



Things I like



Idea



Comment

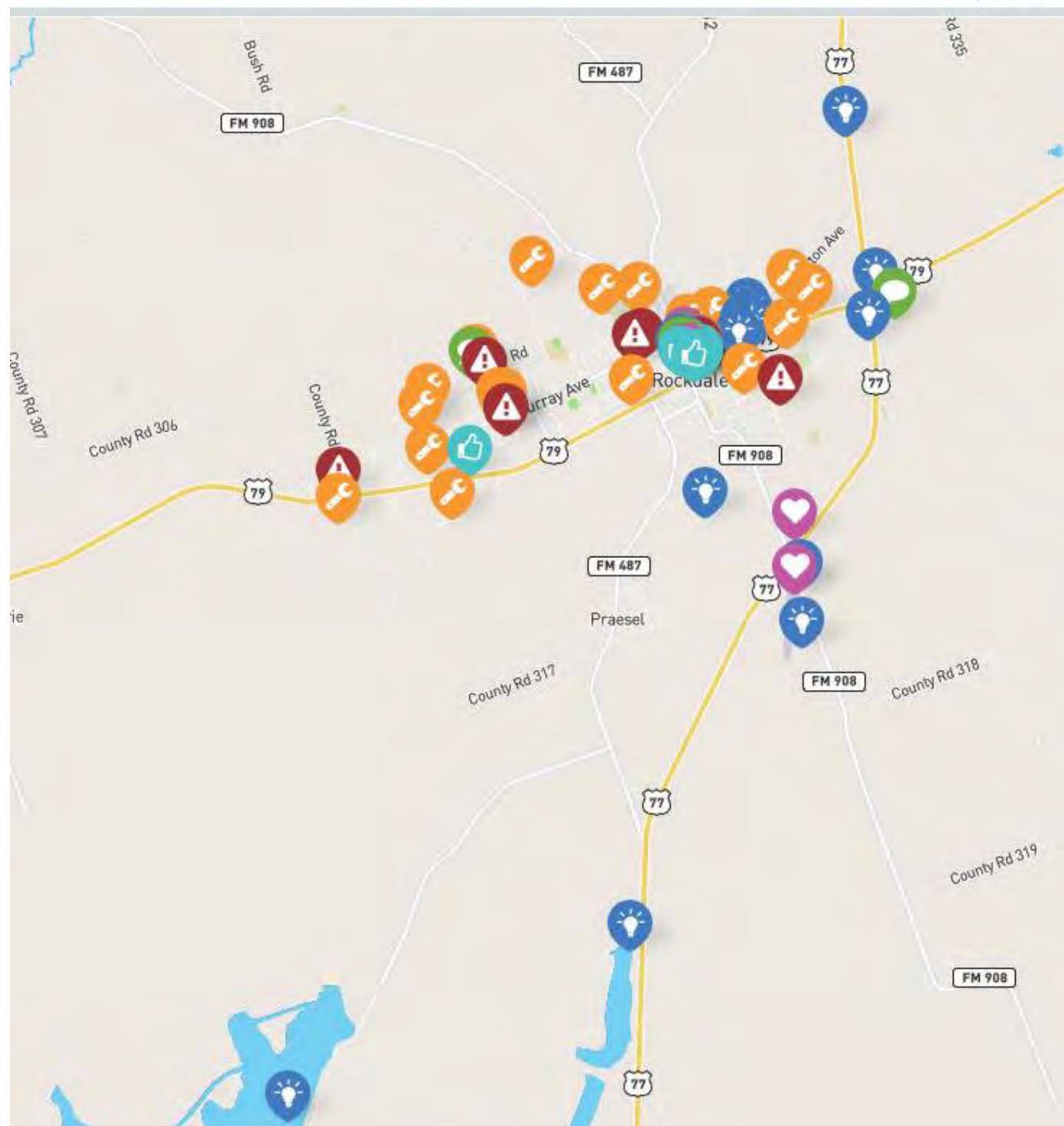


Things that
need
improvement

Online Mapping Comments

The primary virtual engagement offered for this plan was an online mapping exercise where visitors could leave geo-referenced comments on a map of Rockdale. Participants could read the comments left by others and up or down vote them to show agreement or disagreement. This is useful in helping the planning team understand which comments rise to the top in priority during the creation of recommendations.

All comments from the mapping exercise can be found on the following pages, although they are not geo-referenced, as they were when the planning team reviewed them via the online platform. The online mapping exercise opened with the launch of the project website in June 2023 and was available for continuous participation throughout the entire project process.



Type	Comment	Up Votes	Down Votes
Things that need improvement	Most all of the downtown surrounding area has fallen to urban blight and needs to be torn down and rebuilt!	10	1
Things I like	Farmer's market is great-could be expanded tho.	9	0
Comment	We don't like the idea of an industrial area here. More urban blight in a different way!	6	1
Things that need improvement	This is the approx. area only-the first thing you see when entering the city is industrial blight.	7	0
Idea	An expanded recycling center for everyone to be able to utilize.	18	0
Things that need improvement	Businesses and building need to be cleaned up when coming into town from this direction	22	0
Things that need improvement	Trailer Park needs to GO away! Trashy and not kept up/maintained	8	0
Safety Concern	House with several people living in it with possible criminal activity going on.	9	0
Things that need improvement	Girls Softball field	3	0
Things that need improvement	Boy Little League Baseball Facility needs to be revitalized and regularly maintained year round.	8	0
Things I like	East Bell Tap House has brought life back to the downtown area!	8	0
Things that need improvement	All current Rockdale City Parks need an extreme makeover. For example the city pool has been repaired but shade structures are an eyesore and falling down. I huge visual improvement needs to be made to fencing and change room facilities. Walk thru the men's room sometime and see what I mean. I have never been an advocate of spending money on Bridge Park at the expense of other park improvements.	9	1
Comment	O'Kelley Road is just one big example of the average condition of roads in Rockdale. It has a 1000 patches and hasn't been repaved or even seal-coated in 53 years! The condition of roads is a major drawback of Rockdale. It is so bad I have many visitors and relatives ask "what is wrong with our town?" Please develop a comprehensive roadway improvement plan ASAP.	4	0
Things that need improvement	I suggest that the City leaders focus on a major downtown renovation. I suggest starting in a small downtown district (like 2 blocks on either side of Main and one block on either side of Cameron-79. Some owners are beginning to improve their front facade but many are not at all. That leave a horrible 1st impression for new people. I recommend the city manager ask all owners to attend a meeting about "New expectations of downtown businesses regarding appearance ordinances being considered by Cit	11	2

My favorite place(s)	Beckys sandwich shop and the barn	9	1
My favorite place(s)	Bell tap house is becoming my new fav place	4	0
Idea	landscaping/nursery	5	2
Safety Concern	Elderly people coming and going visiting their spouses at Rockdale Estates while drivers are coming around that curve on US 79 like it is the Indy 500. There needs to be more regular law enforcement available like there used to be to maintain peoples speeding habits. People are now doing doughnuts there because they know there is no enforcement available. Not to mention the buses that almost get hammered trying to enter the highway.	1	0
Things that need improvement	Buildings that have received Facade grants in the recent past already look decrepit. Facade grants should require the grantees maintain the property for at least years or give the money back. This is tax money and needs to be administered to the benefit of the entire community.	4	0
Things I like	Wolf Park pavilion is a wonderful resource for the community in all seasons.	6	0
Things I like	Rockdale I&GN Depot Museum is a treasure to have and a great example of the difference community commitment can make to the area. Would love to see more buildings with such character be restored.	8	0
Things that need improvement	Sumuel Park is an asset to the community, but the City must maintain these assets properly to truly have the benefit last. It is unfortunate that vandalism takes some of the benefit away and keeps City funds from being used to the benefit of all taxpayers.	9	0
Idea	LHP Library is a wonderful community resource, but please optimize staffing and open hours to ensure more taxpayers can utilize the physical building as well as online resources. Most residents work or attend school during the only open hours available, and there has been no recovery of Saturday hours or evening hours since Covid.	7	0
Things that need improvement	Street has not been maintained to an acceptable level. Located within the city limits for over two decades. The city has yet to provide public wastewater.	2	0
Idea	need a real nice park with shade and walking paths. maybe a small water area to make it nice! some benches!	4	3
Idea	A nice apartment complex just for seniors! would be nice to have walking paths and some shade. Maybe a swimming pool!	5	1
Idea	Nice place for senior apartments too! Water near by!	1	2
Idea	small bowling alley and/or miniature golf course	3	2
Things I like	The Kay Theater is a wonderful little venue for our town.	3	0

Things that need improvement	Veterans Park needs attention. There is a slide with a hole, others that are cracking. A sun shade over at least one play scape would make the park easier to utilize. Benches closer to the play scapes are needed, and the current walking path needs major attention	9	0
Idea	Hwy 79 traffic will overwhelm the “new” intersection soon. West traffic on 79 should be routed north along E. Bell Ave (make one-way) from San Gabriel St. to N. Wilcox then back down to 79. East traffic should go south along W. Milam Ave (make one-way) and back up to 79 at San Gabriel St. The entire area of Main/Ackerman St./79 should be setup for walking and parking to make a “Town Square”. Then promote places that will attract people to visit (restaurants, shops, music venues and more).	52	2
Things that need improvement	I would like to see the city make a real investment in the city swimming pool. We have an opportunity for a legitimate swim team to operate in Rockdale that would be attractive to many families and would bring lots of folks to town in the summers for meets.	4	0
Safety Concern	This road is treacherous, impassable for some vehicles because of the giant cracks in the concrete.	6	0
Safety Concern	Aycock needs to be secured	5	1
Things that need improvement	Niels needs to be held accountable to clean up property	12	0
Idea	The library is a great asset not being utilized for a strong children’s program. You already own the building and maintain it. Use the staff and or friends of the library to build a children’s program. Story time feels like an after thought. Pack Pals feeds tons of kids every week. Where are they all the time? Could they be at the library? Think outside the same old same old box	3	0
Things that need improvement	Fix the road... not just this one... but this is the one I have to travel. Pieces of my vehicles have FALLEN off on these roads. They are ridiculous	2	0
Safety Concern	How about a stand alone ER... obviously not where the marker is because the property is sold... something to treat/stabilize people. Maybe keep AMR in the county more??	2	0
Safety Concern	Not only is the road on Red Bud in horrible condition but there are dead trees in the island that pose a safety hazard to the residents that live along this street (including my daughter and her family). The island is an eyesore and either needs to be maintained by the city or taken out and a decent road maintained.	6	0
Safety Concern	The intersection of Wilcox and Murray does not provide good visibility. It is difficult to see the stop sign when driving north on Wilcox because of the huge cedar tree in the yard on the southeast corner. If I did not already know there was a stop sign there, I would be in the intersection before realizing it and could result in an accident.	0	0
Things that need improvement	safety concerns of getting into and out of the intermediate school. Traffic is often backed up on 79, of people waiting to turn into the school. Traffic trying to exit have poor visibility. Perhaps an additional turn lane going into the school to take care of traffic issues. A traffic light with cameras that is activated during school hours.	2	0

Things I like	Family restaurant and Live Music, for 18 plus years. Plenty of space for large parties and get together's	2	0
Things that need improvement	This area will be a disaster after the housing addition is open, these roads can't handle the traffic we have now , much less the added traffic in the near future	5	0
Idea	Greenbelt trail either along the old railroad right of way or the Rockdale Branch Creek.	2	0
Idea	Sidewalks along East Cameron Ave	2	0
Idea	Bridge Park becomes a 'node' or stopping point along a sidewalk/trail system. A couple of benches and tables. Plant some trees. Fix up the bridges so they can be walked on.	1	0
Idea	Clean up Milam Ave so that it connects back to downtown.	1	0
My favorite place(s)	The Tap House is a great addition to downtown	3	0
My favorite place(s)	One word - Green Sauce	1	0
Things that need improvement	Road is not maintained. People drive on the wrong side to avoid potholes big enough to damage vehicles.	3	0
Idea	develop Alcoa lake into a city park much like Pflugerville has developed their little lake with trails and public fishing and beach areas	3	1
Things that need improvement	Speed bumps, people drive over 55 in this neighborhood.	0	0
Things that need improvement	Six Street needs to be cleaned up!!! All the abandoned cars need to be moved, leaks in roads, lots cleared.	0	0
Safety Concern	The sidewalk that juts out into the street by the Library is dangerous. I've seen several big trucks that have trouble turning onto Ackerman from HWY 79 and also people turning on to 79 from Ackerman.	4	0
My favorite place(s)	I love the Kay Theater. The community uses the facility often, it is a great piece of Rockdale history.	3	0
My favorite place(s)	The 1895 is a wonderful historic building that is being restored by the Vision Historic Preservation Foundation to benefit all of Rockdale. I can't wait to see it completed!	1	0
My favorite place(s)	The 1895 is a wonderful historic building that is being restored by the VHPF (I put it across the street on this map by mistake) with an explanation).	2	0
My favorite place(s)	The Kay Theater is a wonderful historic place in Rockdale.	3	0
Things that need improvement	The road on O'Kelly Road is HORRIBLE. Pot holes are fixed sometimes, but with something that does not fix the problems. Many other streets in Rockdale are the same way. Most people I speak to say they go out of their way so they don't have to travel on O'Kelly Road, but I live here and have to use these streets.	1	0

Idea	Further development of Bridge Park with trails and picnic tables would enable it to be used more.	1	0
My favorite place(s)	Rockdale is blessed to have a wonderful Library!	1	0
Things I like	I really like the new Book Store!	2	0
Idea	New Large Hangar Spaces. Fuel sales and designated A&P Mechanic. Grass Runway parallel to existing. T-Hangars in a secure area. Aircraft tie-downs on the ramp.	3	0
My favorite place(s)	Great place for people to store airplanes or have maintenance work performed by the A&P mechanic on site. New Fuel system a plus. Could have a flight school and larger maintenance facilities here.	3	0
Things that need improvement	A well maintained cemetery would be a great way to respect those, and their family, who have passed	0	0
Idea	The City could create 8-10 parking spaces along Bell if they would dig into their easement. The elevation would require a retaining wall, but it would support further growth and support the businesses in the Main St district which lack parking. Front-in parking would be far safer as paralleling along Bell causes the road to be extremely narrow.	0	0
Idea	An additional 8-10 parking spaces could be developed by the City of Rockdale if they dug into there easement along Burleson which extends to the top of this old Phillips Luckey staircase. The topography would require a retaining wall, but additional parking would foster additional development and pedestrian access to the downtown business district.	0	0
Comment	It is my understanding that the MDD has secured a grant to address sidewalks along Bell St from Burleson to Ackerman. I hope they take advantage of this opportunity to ALSO develop front-in streetside parking along the city easement and address ADA due to the elevation changes.	0	0
Things I like	I like the DT-24 recommendation of creating Alleyways that are decorated with murals. Addressing the surfacing of the Alleyways would also help remediate erosion. With the development of The 1895 and the very successful Main Street Bookshop on Burleson .. activating the Alleyway from Burleson to Main would foster more pedestrian activity. This is even more true since The 1895 is developing Parking and a Park Space which will be accessible and inviting. Activating the alley will tie it together.	0	0
Comment	Vision Historic Preservation Foundation is developing formal plans to construct 8-10 parking spaces along the eastern boundary of their back lot (former Phillips & Luckey lot). Having worked with ONCOR to define a 30ft easement along the eastern side of this lot (along the alley) the Foundation is able to construct surface parking, but not vertical construction within this easement.	0	0

Draft Plan Survey Feedback Results

A community survey was available online via the project website from May 6, 2024 to June 3, 2024 to review the Draft Comprehensive Plan. The survey was open to anyone and utilized online translation capabilities to allow it to be taken in a variety of languages. It was also usable both in desktop and mobile formats. The survey received 11 responses and a summary of the responses received follows.

Question 1: Overall, do you support this plan for Rockdale?



Question 2: Please use this space to provide any comments or feedback you have related to the Draft Plan.

1	Would like to see infrastructure move up on the "goals" list! I didn't see healthcare addressed in the plan. Healthcare services need to be available in Rockdale.
2	This is absolutely amazing that you all are 'planning' for the growth and looking into the future. The Rockdale community and myself are very grateful and lucky! Thank you! And, most of all thank you for preservation efforts. This is so important to include the past with the present and future! Love the new plans!
3	I believe Rockdale should focus more on modern Multi-Family housing focused in a natural setting that allows ease of access for young families as well as individuals whom are looking to downsize square footage and overall responsibilities as they enjoy their golden years of life. With the economic horizon looking grim for first time buyers, the only option to continue to attract families will be modern Multi Family housing.
4	The idea that growth is a decade away is unrealistic. We need to enhance our community's appeal by improving housing, parks, and businesses to attract teachers and employees. To see improvements in our schools, we must make changes within the community.
5	Need to implement TR-11 sidewalk construction on new housing developments. Also did not see any fire code requirements for future developments of downtown buildings such as sprinkler systems. Need a full time code enforcement with all the homes being flipped with the uptick of home prices.
6	I do not support any additional taxing on existing residents including bond issuance as debt service cost is very high. City commitment to consistent, fair code enforcement and dis-incentivizing negligent downtown building owners is critical to livability, useful development and access to capital for projects. Get Fair Park back at minimal cost - it was a big loss to the city for almost no benefit and upgrades/ utilization would be a huge win for the scope and diversity of activities which could be brought to Rockdale for increased sales and hotel tax.
7	I like what is planned for the future for Rockdale. I hope we can get all or most these plans implemented to help Rockdale to be one of the best places to live in.
8	Generally, I support the plan. There's definitely some missing points. I am compiling a more complete response, but I wanted to point out that Appendices A-E are not included in the viewable Comprehensive Plan. I was definitely interested in Appendix B: Downtown, D: Parks & Rec, and E: Goals & Objectives.

9	<p>I am submitting these comments from my perspective as the former Executive Director of Vision Historic Preservation Foundation, for which I now serve as a Volunteer Board Member and Officer. These comments are not the opinion of the full board, though I believe they also would agree. I also serve as a key volunteer for the Kay Theater Foundation for which my husband Brian Beard serves as Board President. While I do not speak for their organization, I know of the organization's future plans and general opinions and desires for an enhanced downtown.</p> <p>In general, I support the Comprehensive Plan, though there are several areas which are seemingly not inclusive of actual plans of affected organization which are cited in the Comprehensive Plan's design renderings and recommendations. I would have thought that the consultants could have done a better job of actively engaging the various stakeholder organizations and gain further insight into the organizations' missions, goals, and plans which they have been formalizing in an effort to achieve various previously established (2012) Downtown Master Plan goals and recommendations.</p> <p>Furthermore, the lack of any significant inclusion of Vision Historic Preservation Foundation's plans to restore The 1895 and transform it into an Arts & Entertainment District in the heart of downtown is rather disheartening. Especially since the lack of highlighting our well-publicized plans in the Comprehensive Plan is actually a hinderance to the Foundation in our pursuit of grant funding. We have been engaging with the City and MDD for nearly 4 years on this project, which has made significant progress, and it is rather off-putting to have only cursory annotations about The 1895 in the Comprehensive Plan.</p> <p>The following are notes on areas where I feel there could be better inclusion of The 1895 and Vision Historic Preservation Foundation, as well as recommendations of other things which could be important to include.</p> <p>First .. the referenced Glossary and Appendices are not included in the Comprehensive Plan Document. There is likely some pertinent information and data we would like to review.</p> <p>Pg 199 there is reference to Map 5 .. I think it should be Map 25</p> <p>On all MAPS, please change the label to read "The 1895" instead of "Historic City Hall": This is a re-branding and education issue for us – we have faced significant backlash from uninformed citizens who assume we are a MUNICIPAL project and with every progress point we work hard to achieve, we receive negative feedback that "the CITY should be spending money to fix waterlines / streets not an old building". Getting away from calling it the "Old City Hall" and instead calling it "The 1895" helps in re-positioning this project.</p> <p>UPDATED CODES & ORDINANCES RECOMMENDATIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I would agree with the need to update the CA maximum permissible height of buildings from 25ft to less than 60ft. This would allow for more flexibility for vertical construction to maximize property owners' highest and best use as well as provide for more opportunities for recommended Residential-over-Retail/Commercial development. Note that construction over 60ft in height starts getting into other, more stringent Federal codification regarding fire safety. ▪ I agree the CA Code needs to be revised removing the part about business "must be conducted wholly within enclosed building" as this does impact businesses which are trying to offer outdoor dining options, food truck courts, outdoor music, courtyard settings, etc. These are all recommended "urban design" elements which are engaging to the community.
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9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The NOISE ORDINANCE https://ecode360.com/39257611 specifically says "no unreasonable noise" (which is unenforceable due to no defined decibel level) and would prevent outdoor musical performances AFTER 7PM. In addition to revising this ordinance to something that was measurably enforceable and not left to ambiguous "reasonableness" .. there needs to be thought given to defining more reasonable times for BUSINESSES which may seek to host music and performances – especially if the City is promoting the development of an Entertainment District Downtown. Later than 7pm times must be established for businesses both for weeknights, and even later hours for weekends. This Noise Ordinance also needs to be updated before we have too much residential development occur in the downtown district. ▪ I would support the creation of an Arts/Entertainment District Overlay to extend to Burleson to at least Green (maybe to Bridge Park) and Milam to Davilla (Kay Theater) – we could also pursue a TCA Cultural District Designation which would make both the City and Nonprofits within the District eligible for TCA arts grants. ▪ I would support the creation of a Historic District overlay as it could help the City, nonprofits/churches and individual property owners secure funding to restore historic buildings. ▪ Due to the number of Churches in the Downtown district, the City may also want to adopt an Ordinance (like Columbus did) which dictates that businesses in the Downtown District CANNOT be prevented from getting a TABC permit even if a church (or school) is located within the State designated number of feet. The State law dictates that a City MAY enact a law which prohibits TABC permits within XXX ft of a church or school .. and while that is not currently in the city's ordinances, we need to protect business & property owners and their investment by preventing that from happening in the future. Luling passed the ordinance disallowing as such, and a church opened a school in a building in the downtown district of Luling and literally KILLED their downtown. PS: There's no such thing as "grandfathering" a business in regard to TABC permits .. because if a business sells, or if a business is transferred from one generation to the next (as was the case with Cliffs and Piano Bar) the new owner must obtain their own TABC permit and would be impacted.
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ADDRESSING SPECIFIC SECTIONS OF THE COMP PLAN:

Pg 194: Public Space Activation and Events: It would be nice to see The 1895 included in this section taking into account our public plans to develop a "pocket park" with The 1895's greenspace. Additionally, it would be appreciated if Vision Historic Preservation Foundation was included in the list of organizations which are producing events (Staffing). And if you want to talk about "Anchor" spaces .. The 1895 is the biggest, most visible anchor of the downtown district.

Pg 188: Festival Street/Milam Ave: I understand the desire to design a plan to better utilize Wolf and Bridge Parks and connect the two ... but ... the organizations (Chamber & Depot .. as well as private building owners) which own the properties highlighted in this section were not consulted with about their specific goals or long-term initiatives. Milam St would require considerable improvement, ie: sidewalks, and of course since this was written the McVoy's building has collapsed. On the other hand .. BELL STREET, which is listed as a Supporting Corridor, has enormous potential and has organizations and businesses which are actively collaborating on events and making improvements to their properties. Specifically, Vision Historic Preservation Foundation has actionable, formal plans to fulfill most of the recommendations made with the development of The 1895's Greenspace "Pocket Park" (which will have a performance stage, food truck spaces, outdoor seating, restrooms, etc.), Parking Areas, and future Arts & Entertainment Center. It is my understanding that the MDD has already secured a grant to have the sidewalks along Bell Street updated from Burleson to Ackerman. With active Arts & Entertainment-Focused organizations like Vision Historic Preservation Foundation and the Kay Theater Foundation currently working with businesses such as East Bell Taphouse, Main Street Bookshop, the Library, and other businesses in the downtown district -- wouldn't BELL STREET be a better Festival Street? (see also Alley Activation section)

9	<p>Let's be honest .. neither the Chamber nor the Depot specialize in Arts, Entertainment or Events – but the Arts-Focused organizations could lead this effort and include those organizations. To make a plan that depends on those organizations (Chamber/Depot) to lead the "Festival Street" concept would be a failure waiting to happen. Also, by the City's Comprehensive Plan highlighting / planning for Milam Ave to be the city's focus over the next few decades quite frankly diminishes the value of The 1895 and The Kay in the eyes of potential grant makers and pulls potential funding away from the very Arts-oriented organizations who are actually doing this now.</p> <p>Pg 197 Parking: Please add Vision Historic Preservation Foundation's plans to construct Parking areas at The 1895. We will have formal site plans & renderings for both the Parking areas and Greenspace "pocket park" by July 1. The East Lot will have 20 parking spaces and the eastern boundary of the North Lot will have 8-10 parking space. Please change your map to reflect that ONLY the eastern 75 feet of the East Lot and the eastern 30 ft along the alley of the North lot will be parking .. NOT the entirety of those lots. Consider that streetside parking along the Burleson and Bell frontage of The 1895's north lot could easily be doubled if the city would dig into their easement and develop front-in parking. Also, FYI, The Kay has expressed a willingness to develop their North Lot into shared parking (accessible during non-event times) contingent upon securing funding to develop parking (which they desire to utilize the previous parking grid system as well to help address drainage and run-off)</p> <p>Pg 201: Alley Activation Strategy: I very much support this concept .. in fact, this is exactly something that I sketched out in 2019/2020 .. including the Alley Murals concept. The Alleys from Burleson to Ackerman suffer from severe erosion issues which are dangerous (and in the case of the Alley at Main next to Cliff's the eroded dirt and rock actually impedes on access to the ADA ramp). The 1895's parking area project will help provide better lighting in the alleys behind The 1895 as well.</p> <p>Pg 205 RDA Section: Include Vision Historic Preservation Foundation among the active groups.</p> <p>Pg 205: Crosswalk Safety: Please address Bell Street stop signs at Main and at Ackerman. These really need flashing lights on the stop signs as in an hour sitting out front the East Bell Taphouse you will see at least 5-10 vehicles run the stop sign. There should probably be enhanced crosswalks at these locations as well. Also the Yield sign on Burleson at Bell should probably be made a Stop sign for consistency and safety. The "Walk" buttons on Hwy 79 at Main and at Ackerman are still not fully functional and need to be addressed.</p> <p>DOWNTOWN ACTION PLAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DT-3: The East Corridor vision which promoted having trees in the center median of Hwy 79 overall was good – except for the trees in the median. That is a horrible idea. First, it's TXDOT's road and I doubt they would agree. Plus, the trees will likely die due to the heat and there will be issues with watering/care and maintenance/trimming. Big trucks will likely hit limbs. Trees could create blindspots for drivers .. and it would be safer to plan a dedicated left turn lane. It seems this part of the plan was predicated on the fact that there is "no development along that section of the thoroughfare" – to that I would say YET. We need to plan for future development and plan for turn lanes. Clearly marked Pedestrian crossings would be helpful. ▪ DT-12: Vision Historic Preservation Foundation is open to discussion with developers regarding options for the North Lot. The eastern 30ft where we are planning surface parking will have an electrical easement but otherwise the developable land is 95x125 (11,875sqft) and could be two-story. ▪ DT-13: Public Spaces/Events – First this says related to PR-30 .. which doesn't exist in this report. Consider including The 1895 and the Alley Activation/Art concept in this section as well. Vision Rockdale already has plans to do exactly this with the Greenspace Pocket Park.
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9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DT-16: Public Spaces/Events (Festival street/Milam) – Bell Street should be considered as a more feasible and actionable alternative as a Festival Street due to the existing plans and organizations already coordinating and collaborating on activities and events which can be expanded upon. ▪ DT-17: Staffing & Coordination – Collaborate with Vision Rockdale/The 1895, Kay Theater and Rockdale Historical Society/Depot for PT staffing to help with downtown events coordination perhaps partially funded via City HOT funds. ▪ DT-18: Staffing & Coordination – I am very familiar with the Main Street Program (TMSP) and support pursuit of an application when the program re-opens for 2025 designations. Rockdale is just now getting in a position where we would have a strong application. It is VERY competitive to be awarded a designation and usually only 2 or 3 are selected each year. The TMSP was paused for 2024 appointments as they were re-vamping the program. Recommend we join the Texas Associate Network (begins July 2024) .. this is a new program they are creating to help communities prepare for becoming a TMSP candidate. Previously for TMSP, cities under 50K population a City Entity had to make the application (within which the applicant has to commit to funding the Main Street Director for at least 2 to 3 years). I have heard that the re-vamped program may allow a nonprofit to make the application in smaller communities. ▪ DT-19: Micro Investments – Consider creating funding programs for Asbestos Abatement and Demolition. A demolition program could help clean up blight without having to go thru the expensive, arduous, and controversial process of the City taking action against property owners. An abatement program will help projects move forward which often hinder restoration of historic buildings. This would be good support for downtown revitalization. Likewise a Fuel Tank removal funding program would also be helpful in getting undeveloped/underdeveloped properties cleaned up. Many properties (especially along 79) cannot move forward with construction plans as an old underground fuel tank must first be removed. ▪ DT-20/21: Parking – Include The 1895 in these considerations. ▪ DT-24: Activation & Connection – Focus on Alleys Burleson to Ackerman with murals and install pervious grid surface grid system which will eliminate the erosion and more easily allow public works to access underground utilities in the event of a necessary repair. ▪ DT-26: How about Leverage The 1895 and The Kay Theater which specialize in Arts & Events. The Depot is limited in what they are allowed to do as much of their property is actually still owned by the Railroad and they Lease it. Kay Theater and Vision Rockdale own their properties. Vision Rockdale has formal plans for Food Trucks in their Greenspace pocket park which will also have a performance stage, and eventually envisions having a restaurant space at The 1895. This bullet also references PR-31 which does not exist in this report. <p>PARKS/REC section: Thank you for more including The Kay and The 1895 in your programming partners .. this is something both organizations already been actively looking to incorporate. Please include The 1895's Greenspace Pocket Park in the list of parks. The East Lot Greenspace (not including the North Lot) will be approximately 5000sqft.</p> <p>Pg 320 CH-2: I strongly support Linking Code Enforcement with Compliance Resources. Resources also need to be linked to the Permitting Process. I had recommended over a year ago when I experienced the permit process that a resource checklist be developed that is given to property owners/contractors at the time of permitting. One simple example is giving them a list of emergency contacts, utility providers, and other required providers such as BVR for dumpsters. As we experience more growth, in order to meet demand, there will be more out-of-area contractors doing work in Rockdale. Property owners who are from out of town will also bring to their Rockdale project contractor with whom they have established relationships. These property owners and contractors will not be familiar with the requirement of BVR roll-off dumpsters. If that was communicated at the time of permitting, then we there would be less "non-compliant" roll off dumpster to pursue enforcement on. Things like this are very simple and avoid negative interactions between city staff and contractors/property owners.</p>
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APPENDIX B

DOWNTOWN

SUPPLEMENTAL

INFORMATION

Glossary

- **Parklets** - a small seating area or green space created alongside a public sidewalk, often erected permanently or temporarily in a former on-street parking space.
- **Public Space** - an outdoor space that is open and accessible for use by the general public, generally owed by a public entity.
- **Semi-Public Space** - an outdoor space that is open and accessible to the public but is owned by a private business, may be limited access, such as a restaurant patio that is accessible to restaurant patrons.
- **Setbacks** - the distance between the property line and a building or other element of the built environment.

Downtown Building Database (at the time of plan production)

Property ID	Property Use Description	Building Square Feet	Address	Ownership	Owner Location	Status
10231	Orsag Building	8,000	226 N Main	Private	Local	Vacant
10592	Office, Services	15,920	223 Ackerman	Private	Out of Town	Occupied
10771	Office	2,824	225 Ackerman	Private	Local	Occupied
10872	Office	1,820	221 & 223 Ackerman	Private	Local	Occupied
10877	Retail	6,975	106 W Cameron Ave	Private	Local	Vacant
11068	Vacant	-	-	Organization	Local	Undeveloped
11341	Future Parking	-	128 W Cameron Ave	Organization	Local	Undeveloped
11523	Old City Hall/1895 Project	6,580	140 W Cameron Ave	Organization	Local	Vacant
11607	Vacant Lot	-	240 Burleson	Organization	Local	Undeveloped
12195	Religious, Services	3,696	225 N Main St	Private	Out of Town	Occupied
13087	Vacant	2,400	215-219 N Main St	Private	Local	Vacant
14376	Medical	1,680	125 N Main	Private	Local	Occupied
14475	Food & Beverage	3,120	137 N Main	Private	Local	Occupied
14580	Services	1,680	121 N. Main	Private	Local	Occupied
14679	Food & Beverage	1,300	129 N Main	Private	Local	Occupied
15392	Vacant Lot, storage bldg	-	122 W. Milam St.	Private	Out of Town	Undeveloped
15488	Vacant Lot, storage bldg	884	126 W Milam	Private	Local	Undeveloped
15954	Services	2,100	129 W Cameron Ave	Private	Out of Town	Vacant
16058	Office	1,666	123 W Cameron Ave	Private	Local	Occupied
16168	Services	3,600	117 W Cameron Ave	Private	Local	Occupied
16266	Bank	2,158	-	-	Out of Town	Parking
16267	Services	3,000	115 W Cameron Ave	Private	Out of Town	Vacant
16549	Bank	1,200	-	-	Out of Town	Parking

16788	Wolf Park	-	102 N Main	Organization	Local	Park
17444	Bank	-	122 E Cameron Ave	Business	Out of Town	Occupied
17529	Vacant	1,000	114 E Cameron Ave	Private	Out of Town	Vacant
17557	Bank	-	124 E Cameron Ave	Business	Out of Town	Occupied
17564	McVoy Bldg	3,780	101 N Main	Private	Out of Town	Vacant
17657	Residential	3,287	235 Milam	-	Local	Vacant
17845	Bank	15,001	140 E Cameron Ave	Business	Out of Town	Occupied
18286	Food & Beverage	1,800	218 N Main	Private	Local	Vacant
18377	Kara's Building	2,760	200 N Main	Private	Out of Town	Vacant
18476	Medical	1,488	208 N Main	Private	Local	Occupied
18564	Retail	1,440	204 N Main	Business	Local	Vacant
18656	Old Ford House; Retail	20,100	212-214 E Cameron Ave.	Private	Out of Town	Occupied
20400	Residential	833	126 E Davilla	Private	-	Vacant
22401	Vacant	5,070	240 N Main	Private	Local	Vacant
22489	Office	1,325	120 E Bell Ave	Private	Local	Occupied
23147	Vacant	-	NW Corner of Bell and Ackerman	Private	Out of Town	Undeveloped
23382	Vacant	-	W side of Ackerman, between Bell and Divilla	Private	Out of Town	Undeveloped
23612	Food & Beverage	5,112	101 E. Bell Ave.	Private	Out of Town	Occupied
24014	Vacant Lot	-	104 Burleson	Private	Local	Undeveloped
24106	Bank	-	-	-	Out of Town	Parking
24204	Vacant	1,260	120 Burleson	Private	Local	Vacant
24498	Food & Beverage	780	239 N Main St	Private	Local	Vacant
25415	Retail	5,183	233 N Main St	Organization	Local	Occupied
25822	Vacant Lot	-	241 Cameron	Private	Local	Undeveloped
25888	Retail	669	128 Burleson	Private	Local	Occupied

25918	Planned Food & Beverage	3,472	235 Cameron	Private	Local	Vacant
25975	Retail	1,590	139 W Cameron Ave	Private	Local	Occupied
26005	Medical	4,620	231 Cameron	Organization	Local	Occupied
26096	Rockdale Reporter	7,440	221 E Cameron Ave	Business	Local	Occupied
26275	Mehaffey Building; Office	5,280	213 E Cameron	Private	Out of Town	Occupied
26331	Retail	1,200	229 N Main St	Private	Local	Occupied
26459	Religious	4,040	214 Ackerman	Organization	Out of Town	Vacant
27205	Public Library	5,653	201 Ackerman	City of Rockdale	Local	Occupied
27272	Parking Lot	-	118 N Main	RMDD	Local	Parking
27377	Parking Lot	-	130 N Main	RMDD	Local	Parking
27413	Library	2,910	131 E Cameron	City of Rockdale	Local	Occupied
27463	Reck Building; Retail, Services	1,750	100-104 E Cameron Ave	Private	Local	Occupied
27498	Retail	2,340	127 E Cameron	Private	Local	Occupied
27558	RMDD Offices	1,750	134 N Main	RMDD	Local	Occupied
27586	Food & Beverage	5,396	119 & 121 E Cameron	Private	Local	Occupied
27775	Vacant Lot	-	113 E Cameron (Alley)	Private	Local	Undeveloped
27887	Office	3,654	107-113 N Main	Private	Local	Occupied
28052	Bank	-	-	-	Out of Town	Parking
28308	Retail, Services	3,270	117 E Cameron	Private	Local	Occupied
76354	Kay Theater	4,000	350 N. Main St.	Organization	Local	Occupied
76750	Food & Beverage	1,500	N Main (alley)	Private	Local	Undeveloped
	Total Building Square Footage in Downtown	165,817				

Downtown Building Database Additional Information Collection

<p>5/6/24, 2:16 PM</p> <p>Downtown Rockdale Building Assessment</p> <h2>Downtown Rockdale Building Assessment</h2> <p>additional questions to original assessment</p> <p>Note: Existing database includes Address, Building Square Feet, Owner Name, Owner Location, Occupied Status, etc.</p> <p>1. Property address: _____</p> <p>2. Current Use: _____</p> <p>3. Is there a second story? <i>Mark only one oval.</i> <input type="radio"/> Yes, Occupied <input type="radio"/> Yes, vacant <input type="radio"/> No</p> <p>4. Is the property currently vacant? <i>Mark only one oval.</i> <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No</p> <p>5. If vacant, when was the property last occupied? _____</p>	<p>5/6/24, 2:16 PM</p> <p>Downtown Rockdale Building Assessment</p> <p>6. Does the ground floor have a public-oriented use (example: restaurant, store, salon) <i>Mark only one oval.</i></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Semi-public</p> <p>7. What improvements need to be made on the property? Are there approximate cost estimates? _____ _____ _____ _____</p> <p>8. Are there fines owed on the property? _____</p> <p>9. Would it currently be possible to get a certificate of occupancy (CO) based on the current condition? <i>Mark only one oval.</i></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> (There currently is a CO) <input type="radio"/> Other: _____</p>
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5/6/24, 2:16 PM

Downtown Rockdale Building Assessment

10. What specific investments are needed to address deterioration?

11. Are there any issues with compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

Mark only one oval.

 Option 1

12. Is the facade/storefront appearance in good condition? Is there potential for improvement?

13. Are there storefront windows facing the street?

Mark only one oval.

 Storefront windows
 No windows/blank wall
 Other

14. Are the owners in communication with the City?

Mark only one oval.

 Yes
 No

5/6/24, 2:16 PM

Downtown Rockdale Building Assessment

15. Are the owners actively working on the property?

16. How many people (if any) are currently employed at the property? Note full time and part time.

17. Are the windows tinted or shaded?

Mark only one oval.

 Yes
 No

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Google Forms



APPENDIX C

UTILITIES

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

TCEQ Minimum Production Requirements

Planning Period	Growth Scenario	Connections	Required Production (gpm)	Total Available Production (gpm)	Meets TCEQ Requirements (Y/N)
2023	-	2,186	1,311.6	2,490	Y
2025	1.5%	2,252	1,351.2	2,490	Y
	2.5%	2,297	1,378.0	2,490	Y
	4.0%	2,364	1,418.6	2,490	Y
	6.2%	2,465	1,479.3	2,490	Y
2030	1.5%	2,426	1,455.7	2,490	Y
	2.5%	2,598	1,559.1	2,490	Y
	4.0%	2,877	1,726.0	2,490	Y
	6.2%	3,331	1,998.4	2,490	Y
2035	1.5%	2,614	1,568.2	2,490	Y
	2.5%	2,940	1,764.0	2,490	Y
	4.0%	3,500	2,099.9	2,490	Y
	6.2%	4,499	2,699.6	2,490	N
2040	1.5%	2,816	1,689.4	2,490	Y
	2.5%	3,326	1,995.8	2,490	Y
	4.0%	4,258	2,554.9	2,490	N
	6.2%	6,078	3,646.9	2,490	N
2045	1.5%	3,033	1,819.9	2,490	Y
	2.5%	3,763	2,258.0	2,490	Y
	4.0%	5,181	3,108.4	2,490	N
	6.2%	8,211	4,926.5	2,490	N
2050	1.5%	3,268	1,960.6	2,490	Y
	2.5%	4,258	2,554.7	2,490	N
	4.0%	6,303	3,781.8	2,490	N
	6.2%	11,092	6,655.2	2,490	N

TCEQ Minimum Storage Requirements

Planning Period	Growth Scenario	Pressure Plane	Connections	Required Elevated Storage (MG)	Required Total Storage (MG)	Available Elevated Storage (MG)	Available Total Storage (MG)	Meets TCEQ Requirement (Y/N)
2023	-	Low	1,291	0.13	0.26	0.25	0.54	Y
		High	895	0.09	0.18	0.50	1.00	Y
2025	1.5%	Low	1,329	0.13	0.27	0.25	0.54	Y
		High	923	0.09	0.18	0.50	1.00	Y
	2.5%	Low	1,355	0.14	0.27	0.25	0.54	Y
		High	942	0.09	0.19	0.50	1.00	Y
	4.0%	Low	1,395	0.14	0.28	0.25	0.54	Y
		High	969	0.10	0.19	0.50	1.00	Y
	6.2%	Low	1,455	0.15	0.29	0.25	0.54	Y
		High	1,011	0.10	0.20	0.50	1.00	Y
2030	1.5%	Low	1,431	0.14	0.29	0.25	0.54	Y
		High	995	0.10	0.20	0.50	1.00	Y
	2.5%	Low	1,533	0.15	0.31	0.25	0.54	Y
		High	1,065	0.11	0.21	0.50	1.00	Y
	4.0%	Low	1,697	0.17	0.34	0.25	0.54	Y
		High	1,179	0.12	0.24	0.50	1.00	Y
	6.2%	Low	1,965	0.20	0.39	0.25	0.54	Y
		High	1,366	0.14	0.27	0.50	1.00	Y
2035	1.5%	Low	1,542	0.15	0.31	0.25	0.54	Y
		High	1,072	0.11	0.21	0.50	1.00	Y
	2.5%	Low	1,735	0.17	0.35	0.25	0.54	Y
		High	1,205	0.12	0.24	0.50	1.00	Y
	4.0%	Low	2,065	0.21	0.41	0.25	0.54	Y
		High	1,435	0.14	0.29	0.50	1.00	Y
	6.2%	Low	2,655	0.27	0.53	0.25	0.54	N
		High	1,845	0.18	0.37	0.50	1.00	Y

TCEQ Minimum Storage Requirements

Planning Period	Growth Scenario	Pressure Plane	Connections	Required Elevated Storage (MG)	Required Total Storage (MG)	Available Elevated Storage (MG)	Available Total Storage (MG)	Meets TCEQ Requirement (Y/N)
2040	1.5%	Low	1,661	0.17	0.33	0.25	0.54	Y
		High	1,154	0.12	0.23	0.50	1.00	Y
	2.5%	Low	1,962	0.20	0.39	0.25	0.54	Y
		High	1,364	0.14	0.27	0.50	1.00	Y
	4.0%	Low	2,512	0.25	0.50	0.25	0.54	N
		High	1,746	0.17	0.35	0.50	1.00	Y
	6.2%	Low	3,586	0.36	0.72	0.25	0.54	N
		High	2,492	0.25	0.50	0.50	1.00	Y
2045	1.5%	Low	1,790	0.18	0.36	0.25	0.54	Y
		High	1,244	0.12	0.25	0.50	1.00	Y
	2.5%	Low	2,220	0.22	0.44	0.25	0.54	Y
		High	1,543	0.15	0.31	0.50	1.00	Y
	4.0%	Low	3,057	0.31	0.61	0.25	0.54	N
		High	2,124	0.21	0.42	0.50	1.00	Y
	6.2%	Low	4,844	0.48	0.97	0.25	0.54	N
		High	3,366	0.34	0.67	0.50	1.00	Y
2050	1.5%	Low	1,928	0.19	0.39	0.25	0.54	Y
		High	1,340	0.13	0.27	0.50	1.00	Y
	2.5%	Low	2,512	0.25	0.50	0.25	0.54	N
		High	1,746	0.17	0.35	0.50	1.00	Y
	4.0%	Low	3,719	0.37	0.74	0.25	0.54	N
		High	2,584	0.26	0.52	0.50	1.00	Y
	6.2%	Low	6,544	0.65	1.31	0.25	0.54	N
		High	4,548	0.45	0.91	0.50	1.00	Y

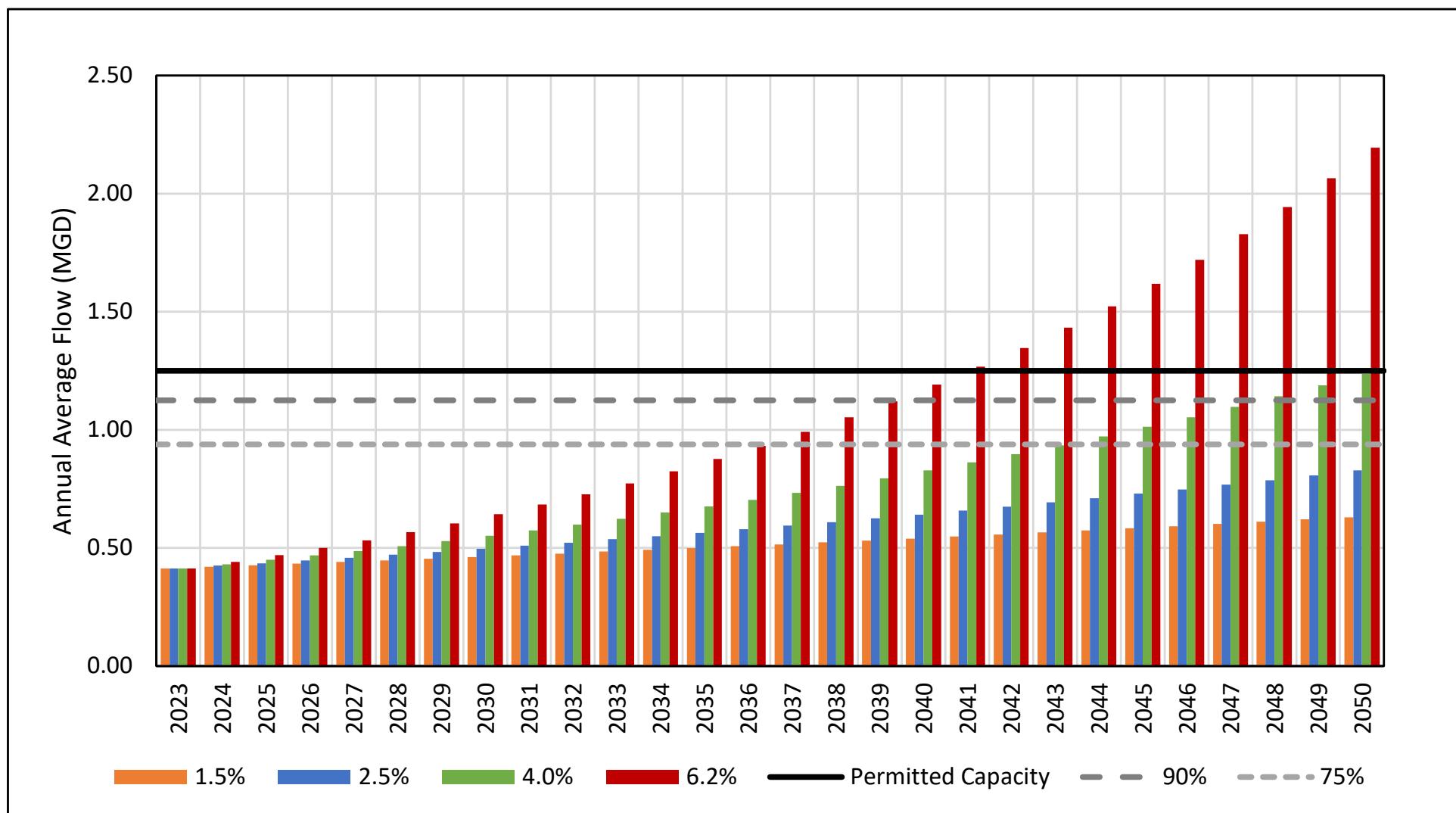
TCEQ Minimum Pumping Requirements

Planning Period	Growth Scenario	Pressure Plane	Connections	Minimum Requirement (gpm/connection)	Required Pumping Capacity (gpm)	Available Pumping Capacity (gpm)	Meets TCEQ Requirement (Y/N)
2023	-	Low	1,291	2.0	2,582	3,500	Y
		High	895	0.6	537	3,000	Y
2025	1.5%	Low	1,329	2.0	2,658	3,500	Y
		High	923	0.6	554	3,000	Y
	2.5%	Low	1,355	2.0	2,710	3,500	Y
		High	942	0.6	565	3,000	Y
	4.0%	Low	1,395	2.0	2,790	3,500	Y
		High	969	0.6	581	3,000	Y
	6.2%	Low	1,455	2.0	2,910	3,500	Y
		High	1,011	0.6	607	3,000	Y
2030	1.5%	Low	1,431	2.0	2,862	3,500	Y
		High	995	0.6	597	3,000	Y
	2.5%	Low	1,533	2.0	3,066	3,500	Y
		High	1,065	0.6	639	3,000	Y
	4.0%	Low	1,697	2.0	3,394	3,500	Y
		High	1,179	0.6	707	3,000	Y
	6.2%	Low	1,965	2.0	3,930	3,500	N
		High	1,366	0.6	820	3,000	Y
2035	1.5%	Low	1,542	2.0	3,084	3,500	Y
		High	1,072	0.6	643	3,000	Y
	2.5%	Low	1,735	2.0	3,470	3,500	Y
		High	1,205	0.6	723	3,000	Y
	4.0%	Low	2,065	2.0	4,130	3,500	N
		High	1,435	0.6	861	3,000	Y
	6.2%	Low	2,655	2.0	5,310	3,500	N
		High	1,845	0.6	1,107	3,000	Y

TCEQ Minimum Pumping Requirements

Planning Period	Growth Scenario	Pressure Plane	Connections	Minimum Requirement (gpm/connection)	Required Pumping Capacity (gpm)	Available Pumping Capacity (gpm)	Meets TCEQ Requirement (Y/N)
2040	1.5%	Low	1,661	2.0	3,322	3,500	Y
		High	1,154	0.6	692	3,000	Y
	2.5%	Low	1,962	2.0	3,924	3,500	N
		High	1,364	0.6	818	3,000	Y
	4.0%	Low	2,512	2.0	5,024	3,500	N
		High	1,746	0.6	1,048	3,000	Y
	6.2%	Low	3,586	2.0	7,172	3,500	N
		High	2,492	0.6	1,495	3,000	Y
2045	1.5%	Low	1,790	2.0	3,580	3,500	N
		High	1,244	0.6	746	3,000	Y
	2.5%	Low	2,220	2.0	4,440	3,500	N
		High	1,543	0.6	926	3,000	Y
	4.0%	Low	3,057	2.0	6,114	3,500	N
		High	2,124	0.6	1,274	3,000	Y
	6.2%	Low	4,844	2.0	9,688	3,500	N
		High	3,366	0.6	2,020	3,000	Y
2050	1.5%	Low	1,928	2.0	3,856	3,500	N
		High	1,340	0.6	804	3,000	Y
	2.5%	Low	2,512	2.0	5,024	3,500	N
		High	1,746	0.6	1,048	3,000	Y
	4.0%	Low	3,719	2.0	7,438	3,500	N
		High	2,584	0.6	1,550	3,000	Y
	6.2%	Low	6,544	2.0	13,088	3,500	N
		High	4,548	0.6	2,729	3,000	Y

TCEQ Wastewater Treatment Plant Permitted Capacity Requirements



APPENDIX D

PARKS &

RECREATION

SUPPLEMENTAL

INFORMATION

Existing Parks Concepts

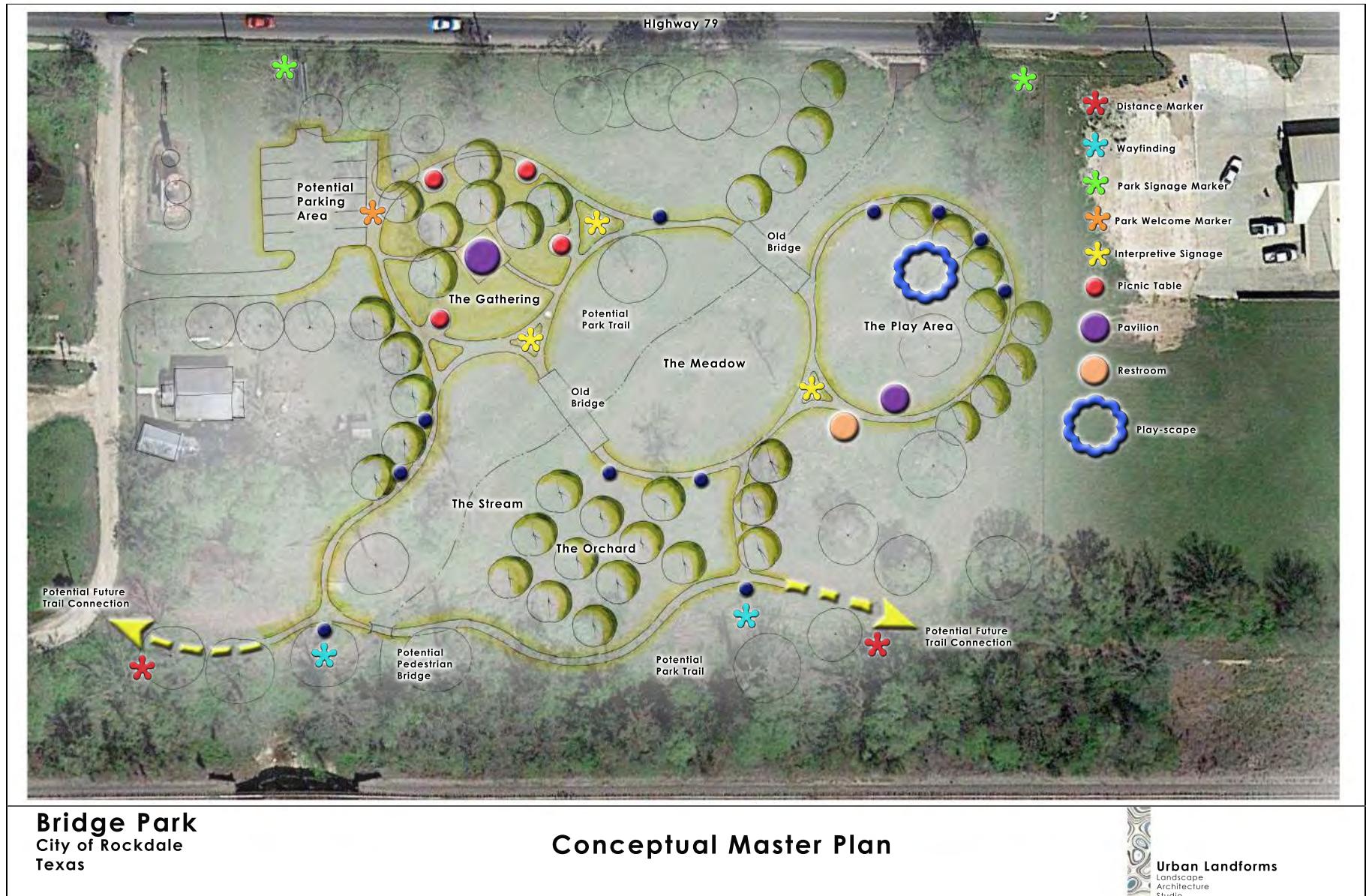


Figure 77. Bridge Park Conceptual Master Plan (acquired from the City of Rockdale)

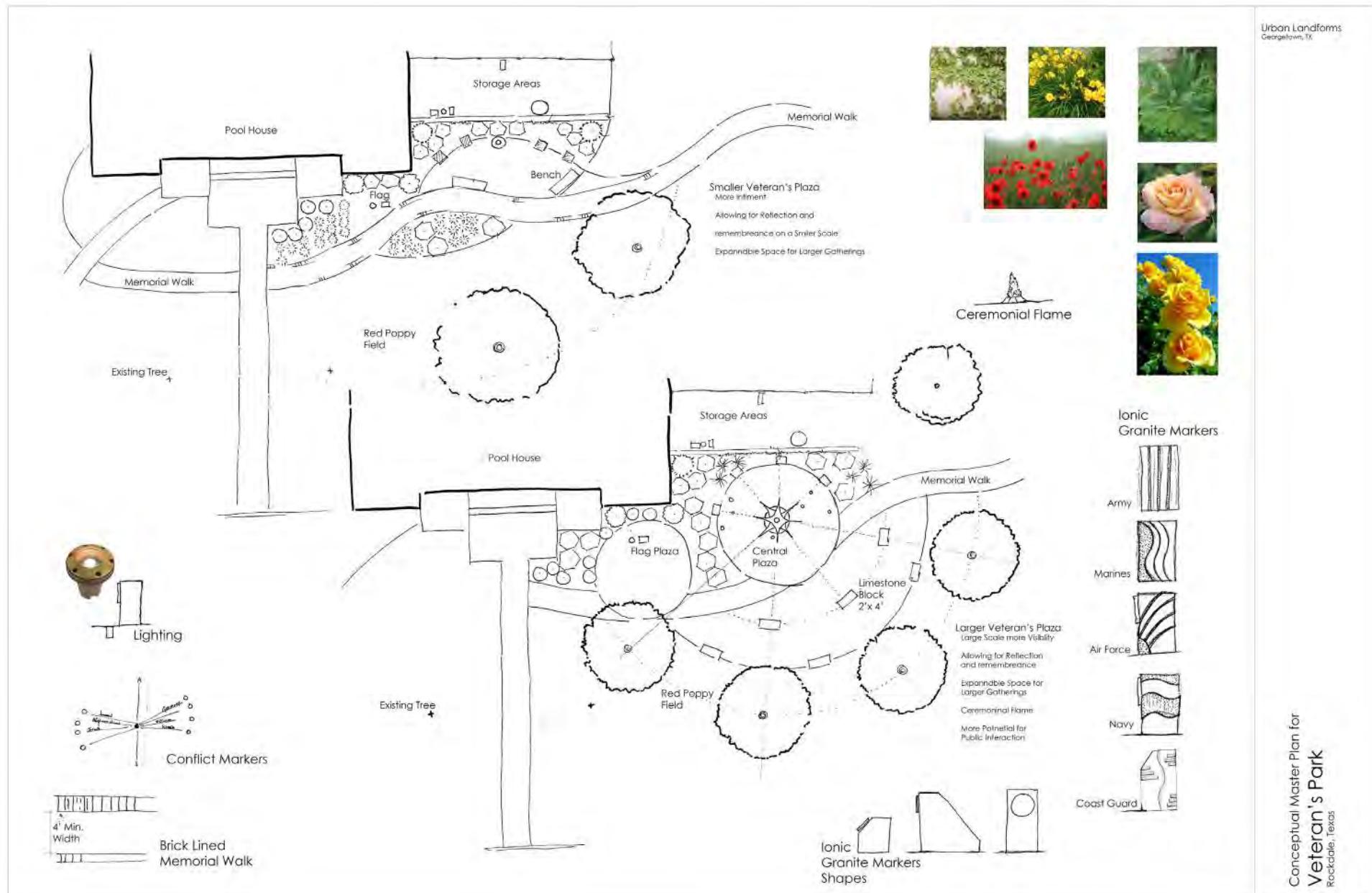


Figure 78. Veterans Park Conceptual Master Plan (acquired from the City of Rockdale)

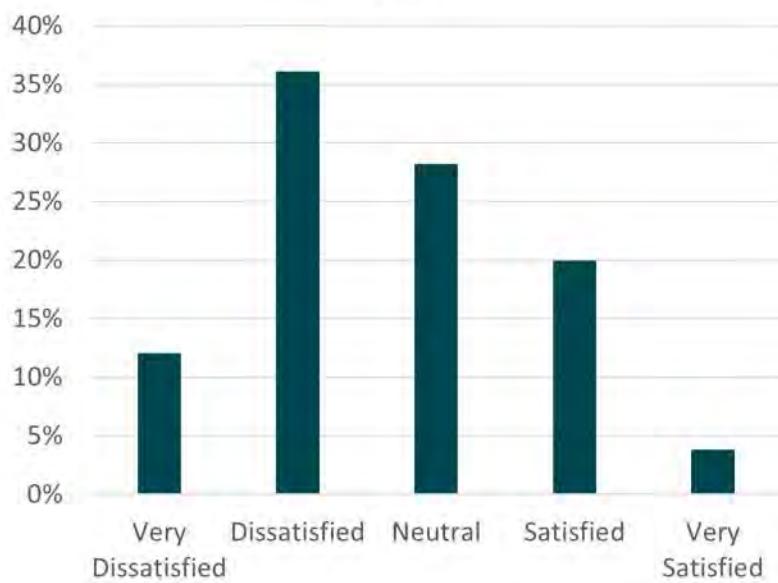


Figure 79. Patterson Center Conceptual Rendering (acquired from the Rockdale MDD)

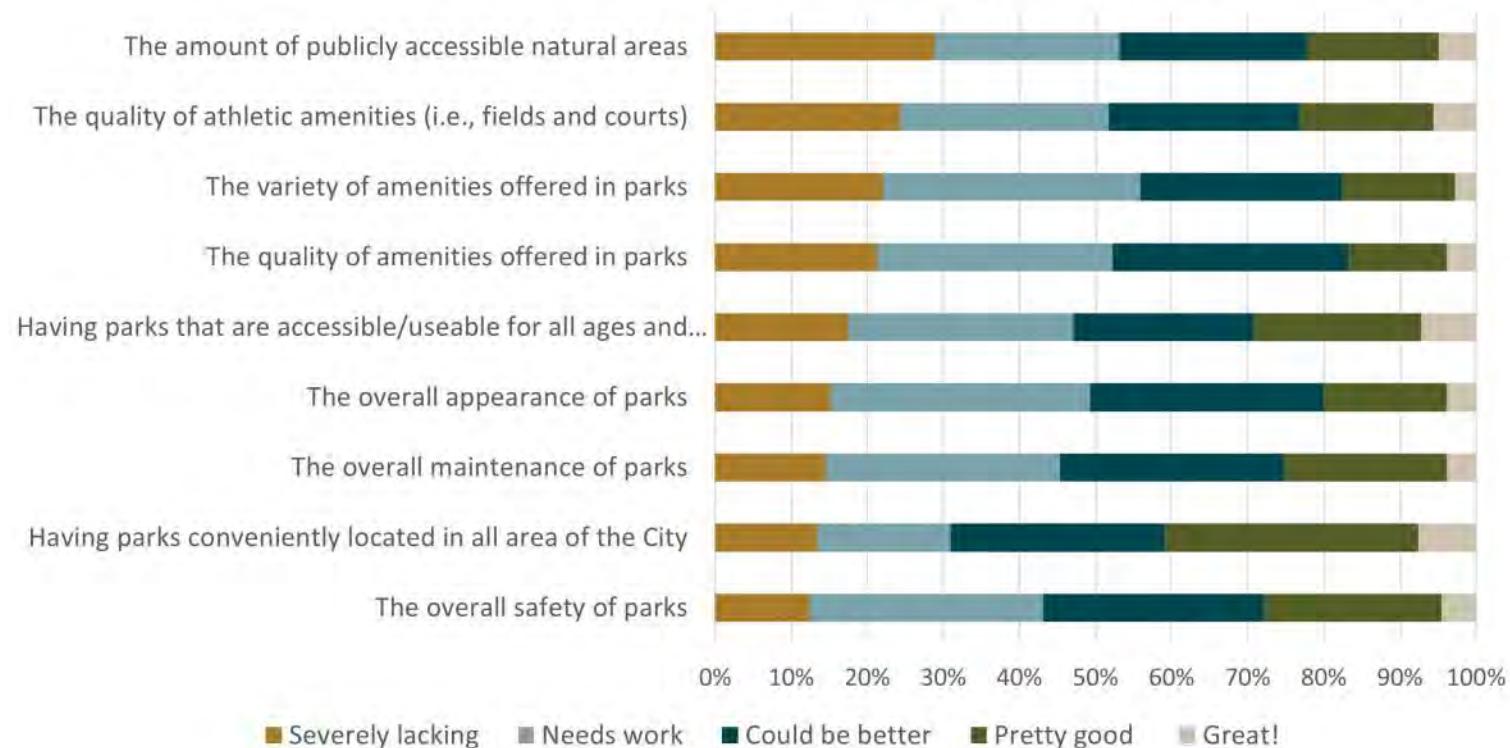
Online Public Parks Survey Results

Building upon insights from the initial online public survey, a focused parks-specific survey was done to gather detailed information on the community's wants and needs for parks and facilities. The survey was done in October of 2023. This targeted approach aims to enhance the preparation of the PROST chapter by providing specific, actionable data that directly addresses the needs of the community. By honing in on these details, a more effective and tailored strategy for park development and management was developed.

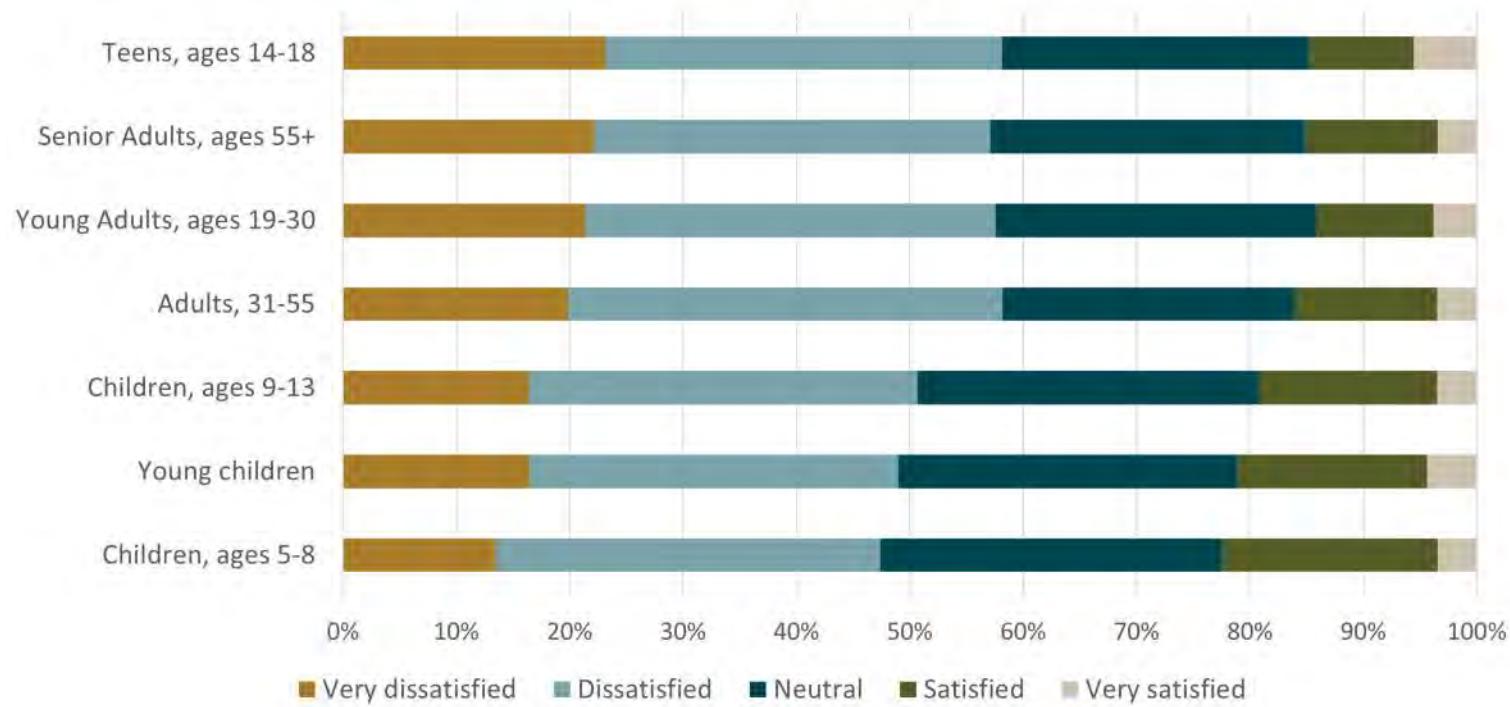
1. How satisfied overall are you with the parks and recreational opportunities in Rockdale?



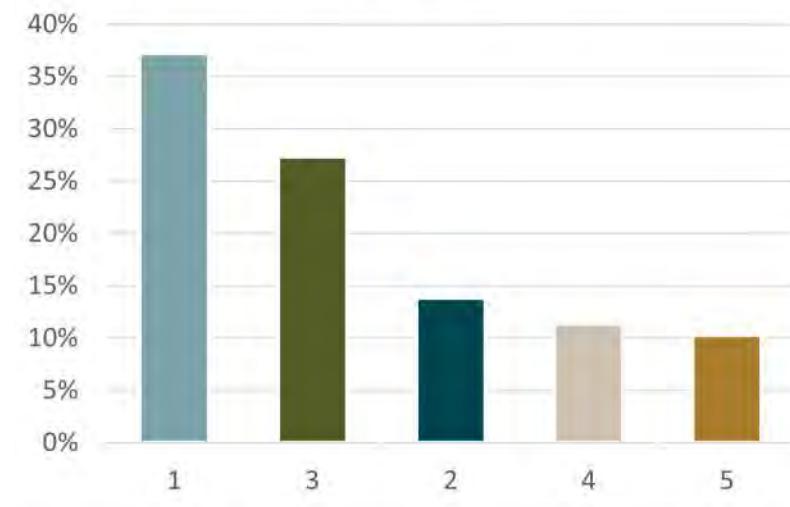
2. How would you rate the City of Rockdale in the following categories?



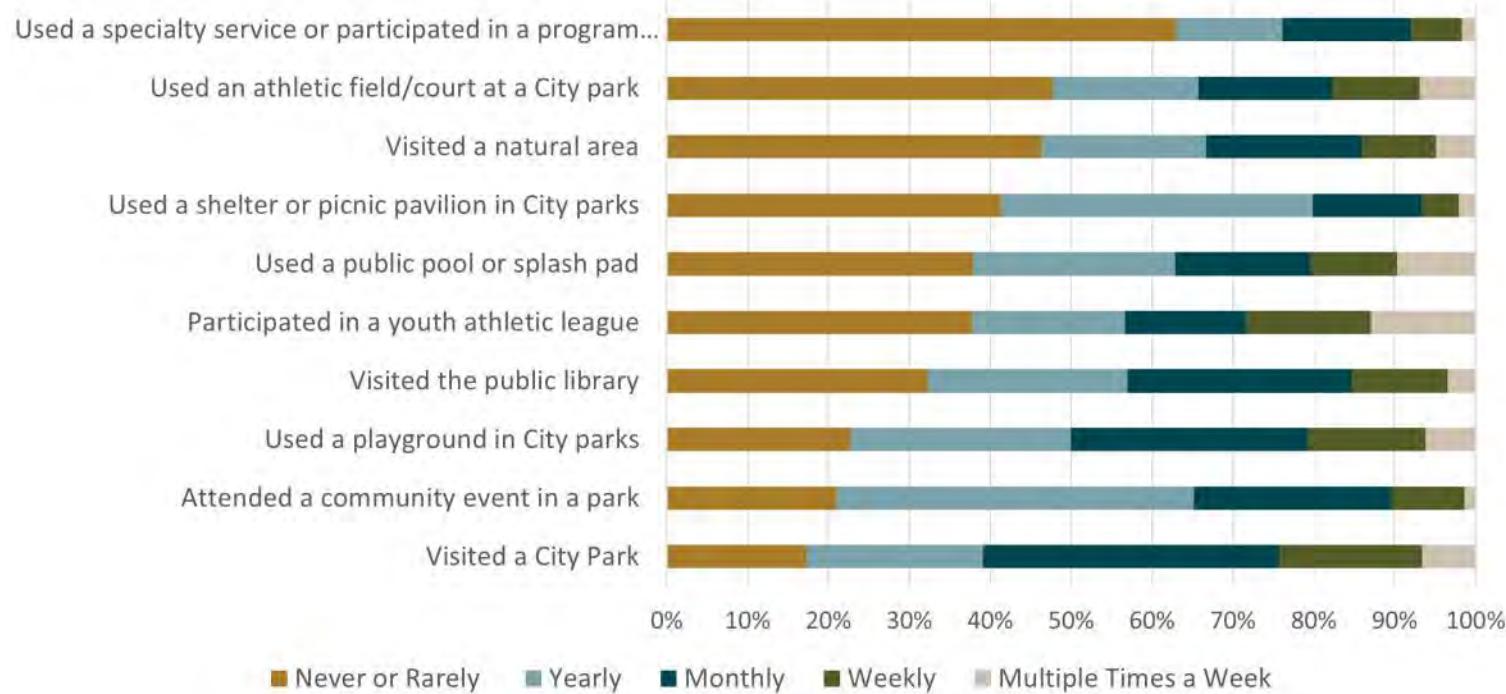
3. How satisfied are you with recreational programming opportunities in Rockdale for people in the following age groups?



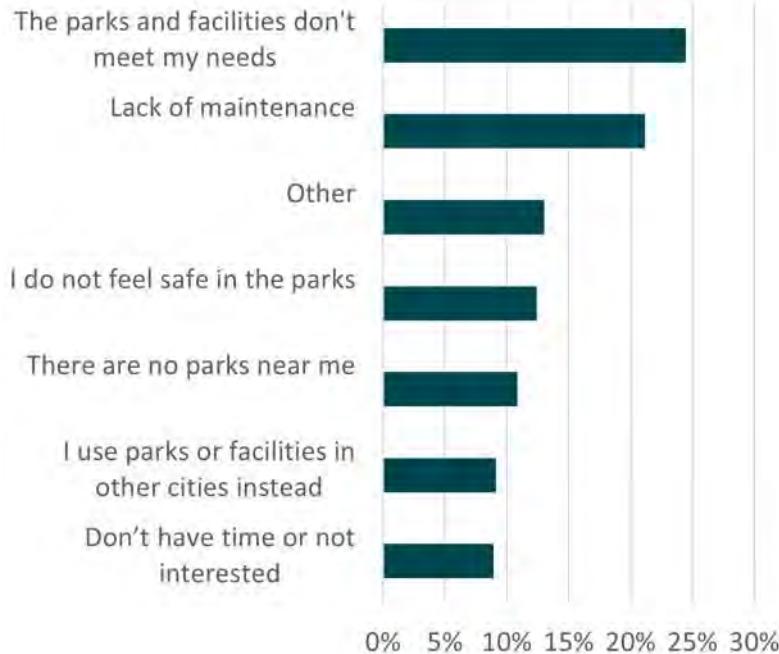
4. On a scale of 1 to 5, do you feel that you have access to enough high-quality park space within a 10 minute walk of your home?



5. In the past year, how often have you or your family participated in or utilized the following?



6. What keeps you from using the parks and recreation facilities in Rockdale more often? (Check all that apply)



Other Responses:

Age inappropriate

Although our park system is a shame, I feel it's a huge waste of tax payer dollars for parks that will either be rarely used or used by our local hoodlums. We have that beautiful park on the east side on the highway that I've personally never seen anybody use. The pool is popular but poorly run. It looks like a dump. The tennis courts and playground next to it have lots of birthday parties and such however. I live ten minutes from the pool but can't use the park because it's barely at best wheelchair accessible.

Cover and parking lighting

Crackheads!

Do not offer enough space or facilities to accommodate youth sports such as soccer, baseball, football.

Don't know when things are happening

Don't know of anyone other than veterans park area

Drug activity in city parks

Drug paraphernalia and needles found in park areas, or bathrooms. Insanitary restrooms, or grafidie

Drug paraphilia and needlesand condoms laying all in parks, restrooms to nasty to let kids and wife use

drug users, needles and other paraphanalia

Drugs are an issue at the parks. People have found multiple needles etc. People park their cars and you can tell what they are doing, dealing drugs or using. We need more police trolling these areas so it's safer for our children.

Finishing what needs to be fixed

Get rid od drug dealers i. Park on murray st

Heat has been an issue. Covered playscapes would be helpful. The splashpad is great just wish it were bigger or also at other park in town

Homeless individuals make me uncomfortable. When walking the trail I leave if I feel like I'm being followed.

I am a new resident

I go more when grandkids visit.

I mainly us the park when my grandkids visit

I use them parties

I use them.

I would use a pickleball court often. You can just paint lines on a tennis court.

Just haven't needed as much since kids are older and we go out of town more often but when we get grandkids we use what we have and enjoy it like we always have!

Kids are not interested anymore that they are tweens

Lack of signs for others to keep dogs on their leashes

Lack of time due to work

My kids are older

My kids are teens. They parks are geared towards younger kids.

My kids love to ride bikes and scooters and I love to walk. Would love to see a good biking/ walking trail in Rockdale. We do go to Veteran's park for the playground and to play tennis, though

Nasty

Need better access, better amenities. Bridge park has no access, never seen anyone at it. Need fenced area safe for kids, families and a section for dog park attached. So everyone can be together. Needs walking trail around/ throughout. Needs good walking trail thru city.

Need more lighting and more swings for older children and more games

Needs more to attract children

No available parking

No fence

No Hiking Trails, No Disc Golf, Skate Park is trash.

No pickle ball

No shade over the play equipment.

None

Not enough for all ages to participate in. When we do go things are not maintained or are broken. Multiple Public basketball courts would be HUGE for our city

Not enough for kids to do

Not enough shade at parks, play equipment too hot for kids to use.

Nothing to do at the parks if you don't walk or run for exercise

Only one park others just have name saying it's a park

Our parks need work our pavilion don't have chairs or tables. The bathrooms are always nasty I have Seen condoms and needles at our park before. Several things on playscapes are broken. Not gripping just telling you guys things I have Noticed.. so glad y'all are starting a change!! Thank you also it would be cool to have a nature walk for adults.. with maybe a pond/ fountain and table and chairs..

People use drugs at veterans park. Need night time lighting to keep the druggies and young kids away

Restroom are not cleaned special on the weekend. If you have a small child you have to take them home. It's never clean

Restrooms are nasty

Restrooms at park need to be better maintained

Seen drug needles on ground, no fence to protect children from stray dogs. Not safe. Stickers a a huge problem here.

Senior availability

Sometimes there are homeless people occupying the parks and restrooms.

Swim team needs to be able to update the pool

The bathrooms are dirty

the bathrooms are disgusting and need work

The bathrooms are really gross

The damn stickers, can't even walk the dogs out there. Have to walk them in the streets

The handle bars at the park are so wobbly and y'all took a whole slide away

The splash pad in particular has hypodermic needles and people on drugs loitering

There are no public fishing areas like there are in the surrounding cities.

There is nothing at the park interesting for kids just a slide and some swings

Too hot-not enough seating in shade

Trash at the parks is an issue

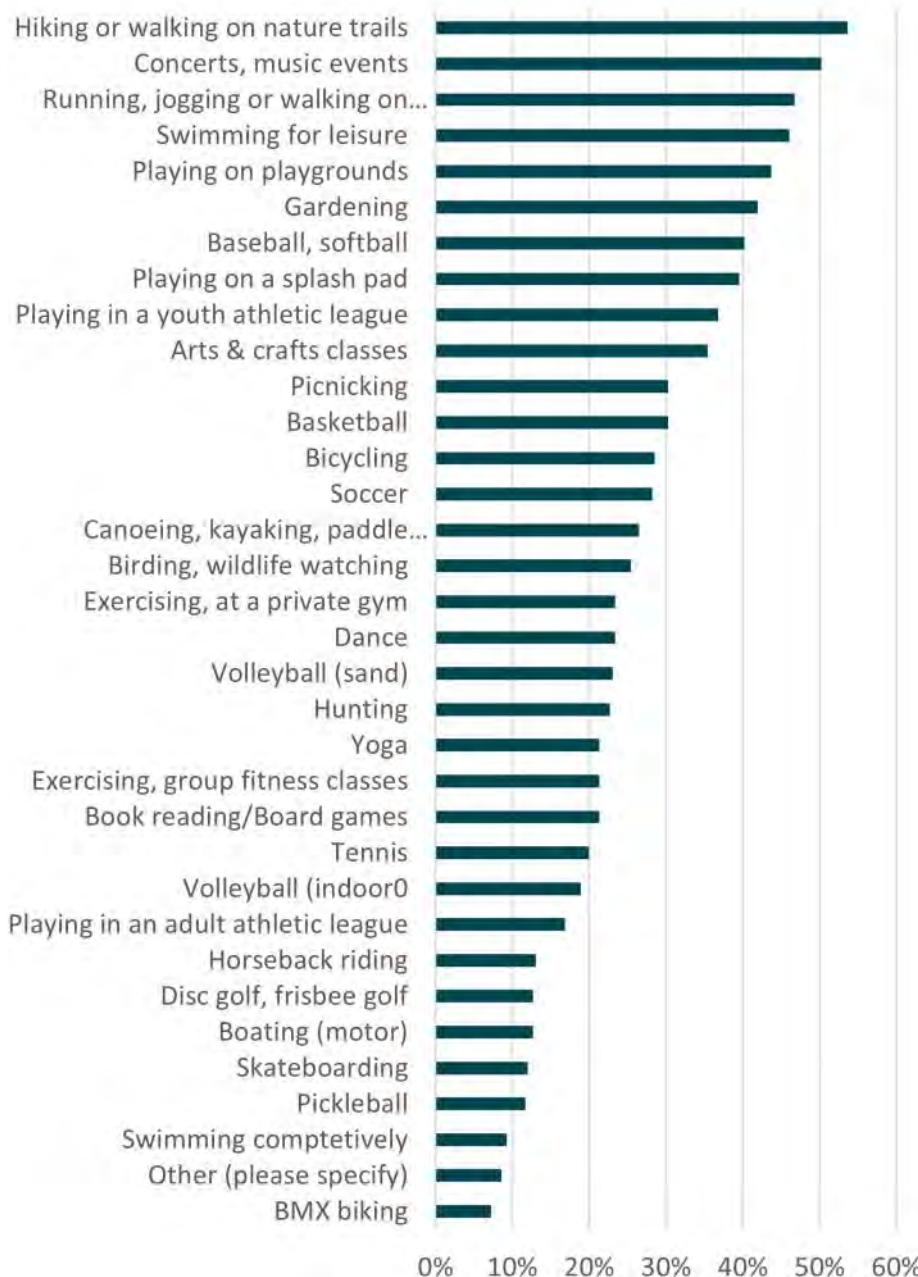
Used condoms and wrappers at the playground, glass pipes at park by pool.

We need a sports complex with baseball, softball, football and soccer fields. Many families take their children to other towns because Rockdale sports parks need much improvement & lighting or there are none.

We would love to use the playground more during the hotter months but being that they aren't covered, makes them too hot to use for our toddlers

Would like more organized activities

7. What are you or your family's favorite recreational activities? (Check all that apply)



Other Responses:

Basketball
Camping
Could really use more areas with water
daily walks but no place to walk besides fb field
Dog park, walking
Farmers market
Fishing
Fishing
Fishing!
Football
Golf
Golf
Hike and bike trails
Hockey
Hop scotch, checkers
Indoor pool for 55+
It changes yearly
Martial Art, Tai Chi, Camping,
Martial arts
Pitching Horseshoe
Racquetball
Start gazing
Water aerobics
Water aerobics would be nice for older people
We currently go to austin. Rock climbing, music lessons(guitar and violin)

8. If you or your family members participate in an athletic league, in which one(s) do you participate?

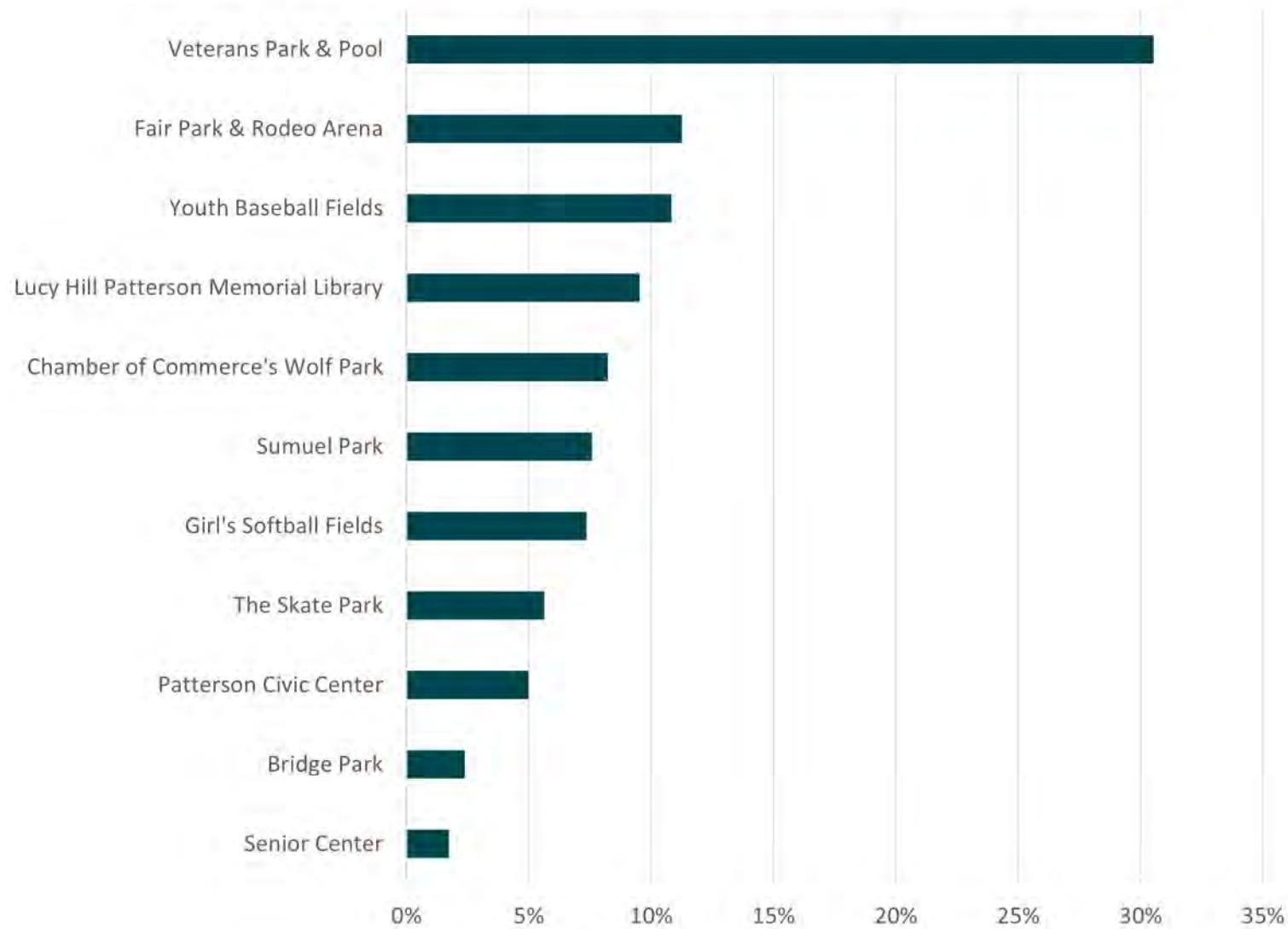
American National Football League	National wide
Baseball	Niece and nephew are in Band so sporting events that the band plays in
Baseball	Non yet but hopefully soccer, softball and volleyball soon.
baseball	None
Baseball	None. We are senior citizens
Baseball	Pickleball & Tennis
Baseball	Rockdale
Baseball	Rockdale Girls Softball League
Baseball	Rockdale has amazing youth leagues!!!
Baseball Football Basketball	Rockdale junior high volleyball
Baseball and Volleyball	Rockdale little league. Bathrooms are horrible park is bad. They do try to have nice fields. Needs major over haul
Baseball basketball football cheer	Rockdale soccer, Cameron basketball, milano baseball, rockdale football
Baseball football	Rockdale Tigers Youth Football Rockdale Little Dribblers
Baseball, Basketball, Football	Rockdale Youth Baseball and Rockdale Youth Soccer
Baseball, basketball, football, tennis	Rockdale youth football Rockdale youth baseball
Baseball, soccer	Rockdale Youth Football & Cheer Wake Aquatics
Baseball, soccer, volleyball, basketball	rockdale youth football/baseball/softball
Baseball, softball	Rockdale youth soccer
Baseball, softball, swimming team	Rockdale youth soccer association Little diggers (volleyball) Little dribbles (basketball) Wake swim team
Baseball.soccer, basketball, football	Rockdale Youth Soccer Association and Rockdale Youth Baseball Association. Lexington Little Dribblers.
Basketball	
Basketball /Baseball	
Basketball for 12 year old girls and my teenager plays bball on courts too	
Bowling	
Cheer football volleyball basketball softball baseball	
City of College Station	
Coed kickball in other cities	
Everything is ok	
Football	
Football , basketball , baseball	
Football and soccer	
Football basketball baseball	
Football youth men's woman leagues basketball youth men women leagues	
Football, baseball	
Football, baseball, school soccer	
Football, baseball, softball, basketball, soccer	
Football, softball, basketball, soccer	
Football/Baseball	
Girls Softball, Youth Football/Cheer, Little Dribblers, Youth Soccer	
Golf	
Horseshoe tournaments	
Karate	
Kids play in youth sports leagues	
Lonestar soccer, Pilates, yoga, volleyball	
Martial Art Competitions, Spartan, Mud Runs	
My children are too old.	
My children used to be in Youth baseball	
N/A	
N/A	
N/A	
Na	

Rockdale youth soccer league
Rockdale youth soccer, basketball, and baseball leagues
Rockdale Youth Soccer, Softball and Baseball
RYBA
Ryba, rysa, giddings summer soccer
RYBaseball, RY Basketball, RY Soccer
RYSA
s
School athletics
School District & Youth Soccer
Soccer
Soccer
Soccer
Soccer
soccer
Soccer
Soccer
Soccer and Baseball
Soccer and baseball
Soccer and basketball
Soccer and basketball little league
Soccer and softball
Soccer, baseball and football
Soccer, baseball, baseball, football (7on7), cheer
Soccer, baseball, football, tumbling, basketball
Soccer, baseball, softball, basketball, volleyball, cross country, swimming

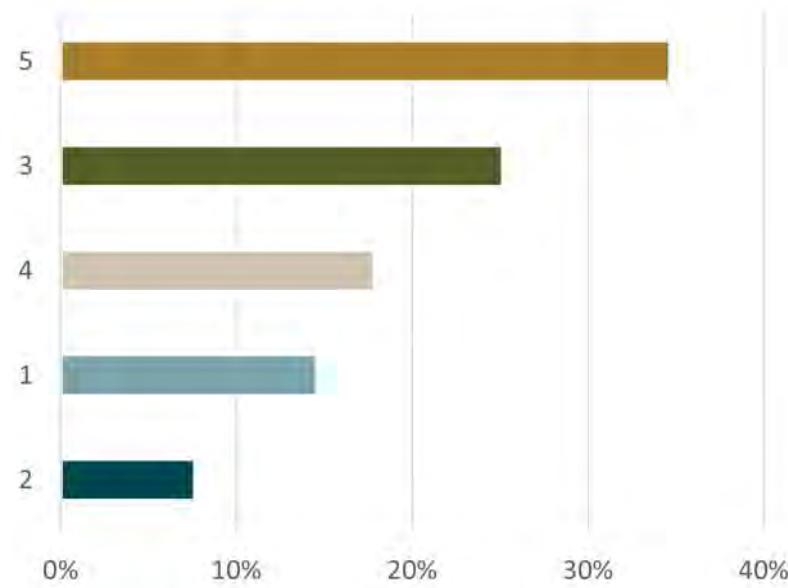
Soccer, softball, baseball, basketball
soccer, volleyball, baseball, flag football, swimming
Softball
Softball
softball
Softball and baseball
Softball basketball volleyball
Softball or dodgeball
Softball, baseball, tennis and volleyball
Softball, kick ball
Softball, soccer
Sports and the like
swim
Swim team
Swimming
Swimming Football
technical
Tennis
The city does not offer any athletic leagues. All sports opportunities for local children are either provided by the school or local volunteer groups. It's a shame that the city does not even help these groups with fees or field maintenance.
volleyball
Volleyball
Volleyball
Volleyball basketball football soccer tennis
Wake Aquatics

Wake Aquatics
Wake aquatics
Wake Aquatics, Rockdale baseball, youth football
Wake swimming
Would love pickle ball
Youth baseball
Youth baseball and this year little dribblers
Youth baseball, softball, soccer, football
Youth cheer
Youth football league Little dribblers Older kids- school sports (football, basketball, tennis, track)
Youth soccer
Youth soccer
Youth softball Youth basketball Youth volleyball
Youth softball, soccer
zoftball

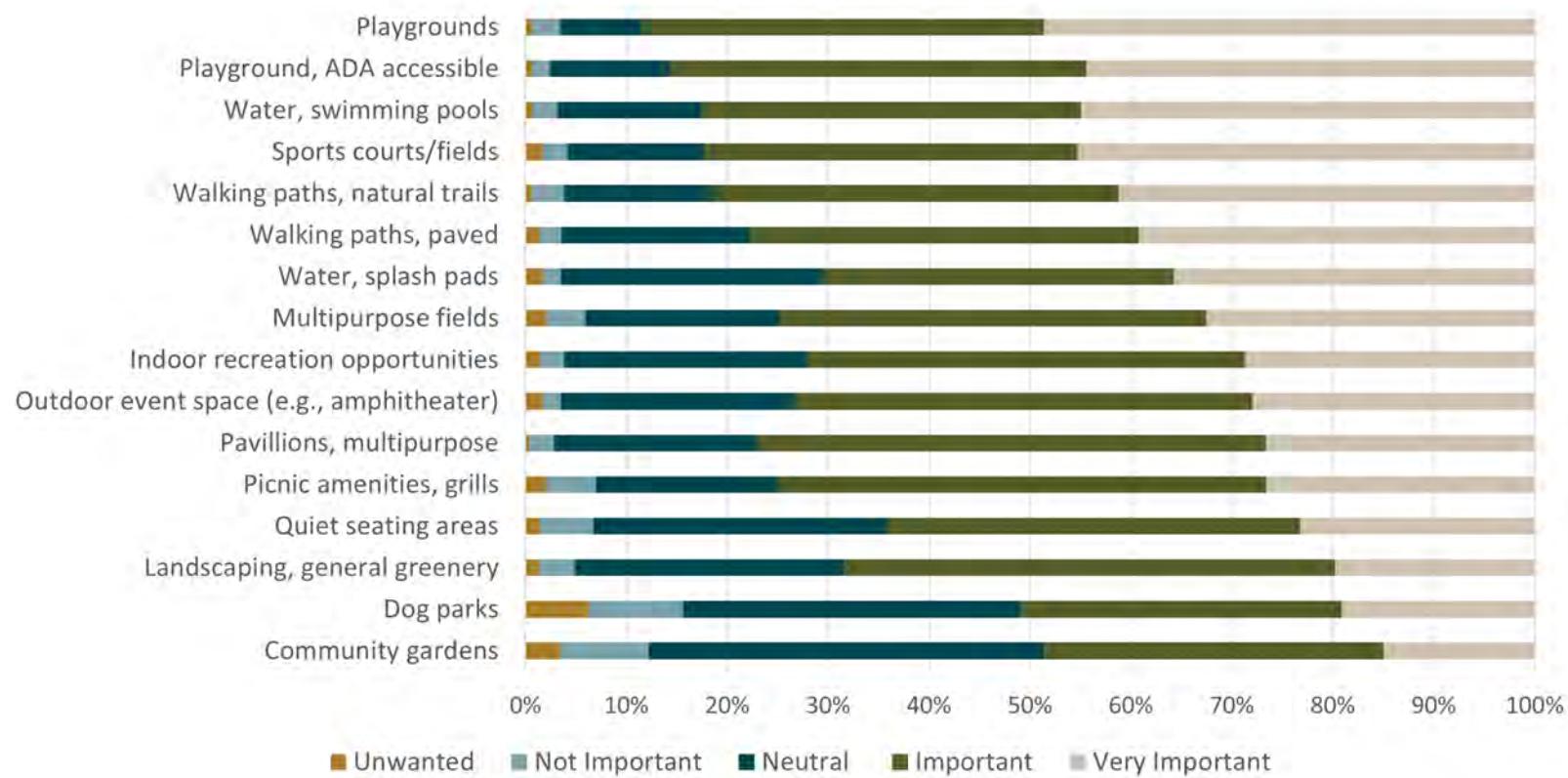
9. Which parks or facilities do you walk or bike to regularly (Check all that apply)



10. On a scale of 1 to 5, how likely would you be to get to a park or recreation facility by walking or bicycling, assuming it was close enough and had comfortable bike/pedestrian routes?



11. How important is it for the following amenities to be provided in Rockdale parks and recreational facilities?



12. What is the City's greatest parks and recreation asset?

Accessibility	Getting the kids out of the house and letting them do something	N/a back in the day they had swing call the smiley face
Baseball and softball fields	Good locations	NA
bastrop tx	Good maintenance	Na
Being able to freely move around	Great for 9 and under	None
City has a great pool but..	Honestly nothing it's just bad this town is decades behind the rest of the United States its just sad to be honest	None
City Park	Honestly, the splash pad. We spend most of our summer there because the splash pad is more convenient. Also, the splash pad has had less issues for us than Veterans park.	None
City Park & Pool	How much space they have	None
City pool	I don't see any.	None
City pool	I think that even though much of the areas are dated it is nice they are kept clean.	Not sure
City pool	Inviting	Not sure
City pool	Library	Nothing
City Pool	Location	Nothing
City Pool and Park	Location of parks on both sides of town	Nothing..
City pool, fair park, veterans park / playground	Locations	Numerous parks throughout the community
City pool.	Lot's of employees to hold shovels	Parks
City veterans, fair park and skate park	Many	Pavilion for events
Complete supporting facilities to meet everyone's needs.	Multiple playgrounds	Pavillion at Veterans park
Concerts	N/A	Play scapes for the children.
convience	N/A	Pool
cycle	N/A	Pool
d		Pool
Don't really think there is one at this time.		Pool
Fair Park is the biggest asset. Its the only one with a stage.		
Fair Park, Veterans park/pool		

Pool	Splash pad at Sumel, but they need to get rid of the homeless people there so it can be used by families with small children.	The location, size and overall accessibility of Veteran's Park is a huge perk to our city.
Pool	Splash pad just wish there was one at veterans park	The London Stock Exchange
Pool	Splash pad, covered pavilions, courts, pool	The one by the pool and the splash pad.
pool and splash pad	Splash pad, library, veteran's park	The pavilion
Pool, veterans park	Splash pad, pool, veterans park with the different play ground areas	The pavilion
Pools	Stadium	The playgrounds pool and splash pad
Pools and splash pads	Sumuel Park	The pool
proximity to various park locations--relatively short distance	Swimming pool	the pool
public access to the ISD track around the football field	Swimming pool	The pool although i feel it should be bigger since many use it.
public pool for hot summer days	Swimming pool	the pool and park with tennis courts ... need to add basketball courts
Restrooms, but only if in proper working order.	Swimming Pool and Skate Park	The pool at Veterans Park
Rockdale veterans	Tennis Courts	The pool! Texas is just too hot during the summer. Kids and families must have a way to cool off outdoors.
Rockdale youth baseball complex	Tennis courts	The pool. It gives the kids something to do during the summer when it's too hot to do anything else.
Safe Playground for kids	Tennis Courts, Pavillion, Splash Pad, City Pool, Playground Equipment	The splash pad, Veterans park, and the library.
Safety, cleanliness	Tennis courts, play ground, pool	The swimming pool
Samuel park is great!!! Always clean and well maintained. The city does a great job of keeping the parks clean, it's the drug use at veterans park during night time that's always a problem.	That's y'all are starting this!	The young children and the active adults
Slash pad	The best part for the same is by the swimming pool. But the upkeep is negligent. The best unused space is the bridge park. It's absurd. A bridge in a ton of grass space and a creepy shack. No parking. Nothing to play on. What even is it?	There are several areas available.
So much potential at veteran's park	The city pool	There are some parks but underutilized
Space	The city pool	There really isn't anything love about our city park. Which is why I go to the play for all in round rock.
Space and equipment.	The city pool/ library	There seems to be so much space that is not being utilized
Splash pad	The community pool.	They are all ehhh
Splash pad	The different play scape	They are great for 9 and under
Splash pad		

They exist	Veterans Park and the softball and baseball fields. Also Lucy Hill library.
They exist.	
Trash cans and keeping it clean	
trees	Veterans Park because it has pool, playground, pavilion and tennis courts. Also great shade trees
Trees	
Variety of locations	Veterans park has a centralized location to down town and it works as a multipurpose spot. However parking is a challenge and events are limited to weather.
Veteran park and pool.	
Veteran Park Pool	Veteran's Park has lots of potential.
Veteran's park	Veterans park pool
Veterans	Veterans park- used by multiple families year round
Veterans memorial park	Veterans park, splashpad, skate park
Veterans Park	Veterans Park and the swimming pool. Both need a lot of work in my opinion. The upgrades to the City Pool are nice but we really need a new pool especially with the growth we are expecting. I know it takes money. Maybe a fund raiser just for that?
Veterans Park	
Veterans' Park	
Veteran's Park	
Veterans park	
Veterans park	
Veterans Park City Pool	
Veterans park and city pool, fair park, Wolf park, Sumuel Park and splash pad.	We currently have more parks than we have the money to maintain. The ones we have are a bit excessive. We do not need more.
Veterans park and pool	We use Veteran's Park the most.
Veterans park and swimming pool	Youth fields
Veterans Park and swimming pool. It's the only thing for our youth to do	Youth sports facilities; keeping youth involved is essential and the financial benefits for the community is exponential.
Veterans Park and the City Pool	

13. What is the City's greatest parks and recreation challenge?

Lack of care and maintenance
accessibility can't vet a wheelchair into the pool and most pool staff don't have access to or know how to place battery for and/ or operate pool lift chair. parks are no wheelchair accessible at all
Activities for kids
All parks need better upkeep. Between playground equipment or overgrown weeds/grass make some unuseable. We have a pickle ball court but it's currently in useable. Why is the city thinking about make NEW courts, when the current one just needs updating!
Alot
Amenities
Apparently having city employees that care enough to keep them clean and maintained.
Appealing to more people with a variety of activities
Athletic complex for all sports
Bathroom availability and cleanliness and drugs laying on the grounds
Better restrooms and a splash pad up grade and maintenance of the pool and kiddie pool
Bridge park
Bridge park
Building creating new ones

Cars speed by the park and keeping kids from tearing up the playground equipment. A 3 and 4 way stop on Murray by the park would be beneficial for the safety of the kids.
Clean and working restrooms
Clean up
Cleanliness and cover
Cleanliness of the parks, safety, and accessible to those with special needs.
Cleanliness water fountains, clean bathrooms and safety
Cleanliness..Veterans Park restrooms are always filthy & the trash cans are always overflowing.
Courts and fields
Courts and good field facilities
Creating spaces for teens and young adults; upgrading and updating the City Pool to allow for growth of competitive swimming; building and maintaining youth sports facilities/complex
d
Do you have no fencing around the parks that would be a safety feature for children playing or for someone who wanted to bring their dog and let them go off leash. Huge safety concern for me! Main reason I don't go to any of the parks.

Don't feel like city manager is interested in improving Rockdale. Her "woke" values makes me consider moving. After her asking woke, non job related (illegal) questions in in my interview, I'm surprised she has a job. If you want to see rockdale prosper, get rid of her.

Drug dealers at a park on a regular basis.

Drug dealing ongoing at park on Murray Street

Drug usage, no fence or safety measures

Everything

Everything else

Finance

Fresh, up to date, clean & safe and more options

Funding

Funding

Funding to get what everyone wants. Finding the space to add basketball courts with lights. Again, funding.

Funding, space

Funding/maint personnel

Get some pickle ball courts. Fun for all family members

Getting something the teenagers will enjoy

Green space

Hard to maneuver a wheelchair at Veterans park

Having enough sports fields And kept maintained and parking.

having something for all ages including indoor pool would love to have indoor walking trail as well for all ages

Having something for teenagers/ young adults to do.

Hiking trails

I don't know

I don't know

I sure it is providing the funds needed to build new parks and swimming pools.

I'm not sure

jogging

Keep clear of creepy people

keep providing excellent maintenance

Keeping drugs off the premises

Keeping it clean and clear of drugs, and used paraphernalia

Keeping parks clean. Keeping illegal activity out of the parks

Keeping people from ruining it for others.

Keeping the park safe and including things for older kids/adults

keeping them clean and good in appearance

Keeping them clean.

Keeping things clean/useable/safe

Lack of

Lack of maintenance & limited equipment

Lack of maintenance and lack of parking. No soccer fields and lack of restrooms

lack of maintenance and upkeep

Lack of maintenance, safety, cleanliness

Lack of park and paved walking trails

Lack of quality youth athletic facilities and poor walking paths

Lack of shade. It's too hot most of the year to use the parks. Shade over the play area and seating would be amazing.

Lack of sidewalks to safely walk to a park.

Lack of upkeep. Bathrooms are disgusting.

Maintaining facilities at the parks. They are always in a bad state

maintaining restrooms

Maintaining the existing park infrastructure.

Maintaining the pools and facilities, like the playground and bathrooms.

Maintaining what already exists. Made them usable!

maintenance, cleanliness

Maintenance

Maintenance

Maintenance

Maintenance

Maintenance

Maintenance & safety concerns, lack of amenities such as skating, bowling, and dances.

Maintenance (fair park)

Maintenance and security. The playground at Veterans park has been falling apart since we moved here 9 years ago and we plus our neighbors have requested security lights to keep the park safe from law breakers at night.

Maintenance and trash

Maintenance and upkeep

Maintenance of the pool and parks. Rockdale and the surrounding areas are beautiful but the parks are severely lacking. The pool is so old and non-functioning that it is an embarrassment to take out of town guests to when visiting. The same goes for the parks.

Maintenance, keeping bathrooms clean, lighting

Maintenance, things to do at the parks

Making the skate park more like Taylor's... also incorporating more natural walking areas like davidson park in caldwell

Making them safe and inviting.

Money

Money to continuously update and maintain the parks

Money.

More to offer and better upkeep

N/A

Na

Need a basketball court at the Veteran's park

Need a sports complex for the kids. They are the future of Rockdale. Families are paying money to other teams in other towns to play. Youth football has to use school fields, there are no soccer fields and the boys baseball fields need lots of improvements; lighting, paved parking, better bleachers/seating, batting cages

Need better lighting at night

Need more soccer fields and volleyball.

Need more toys to play on on all the parks need a splash pad

Need pickleball courts and clean bathrooms.

Need to open the fair Park up for the citizens to use for free. It should not cost to use.

Needs more parks

No basketball courts

No indoor facilities for Fine Arts. A performing arts center is needed.

No indoor sporting area

No lakes or ponds

No multipurpose fields

No paved walking areas at the splash pad, the trail at Veterans not kept up.

No pavement on walking pad for pushing a stroller. Lexington park has the perfect setup as far as equipment and a concrete walking pad.

No safety gates to prevent kids from running to street or keep stay dogs out. Not clean, seen drug needles on ground. Parks are so run down it's embarrassing.

No walking/ biking trails

Not a lot for teens to do.

Not being able to keep up with the grounds

Not being safe from loose dogs or drug users

Not being up-to-date and not being centered around the Community.

Not enough equipment, bathrooms are usually dirty and lights do not work.

Not enough for preteen and teens. Only have football field to walk

not enough green space

Not enough natural water areas

Not enough to to date equipment

Not many options

Not sure

Not sure

Ongoing maintenance for what exists.

Outdated equipment

Parking

parking

Parks at many locations in city

Path to walk and bike on and a way to get to it.

People are assholes and ruin stuff they don't own.

Playground and little league baseball/ softball fields

Playgrounds are not safety rated for young children

Pool activities for older adults

Pool is too small, park maintenance, covered playscapes

Providing enough dedicated space for families to participate in outdoor activities.

Providing vending machines at parks. A building with them locked up in a gate that you can access buttons still would be perfect.

public pool not open enough

Put more things to do for the kids

Residents who don't want change or complain about every thing the city tries to do that would benefit everyone

Restroom facilities

Rm for improvement

round rock tx

Safety

Safety and maintenance

Safety and maintenance, fields

Safety, cleanliness, outdated/broken equipment.

Setting and forming walking paths

Signs for dogs to be on leashes

Soccer could really use a place for the children to actually have fields and practice areas.

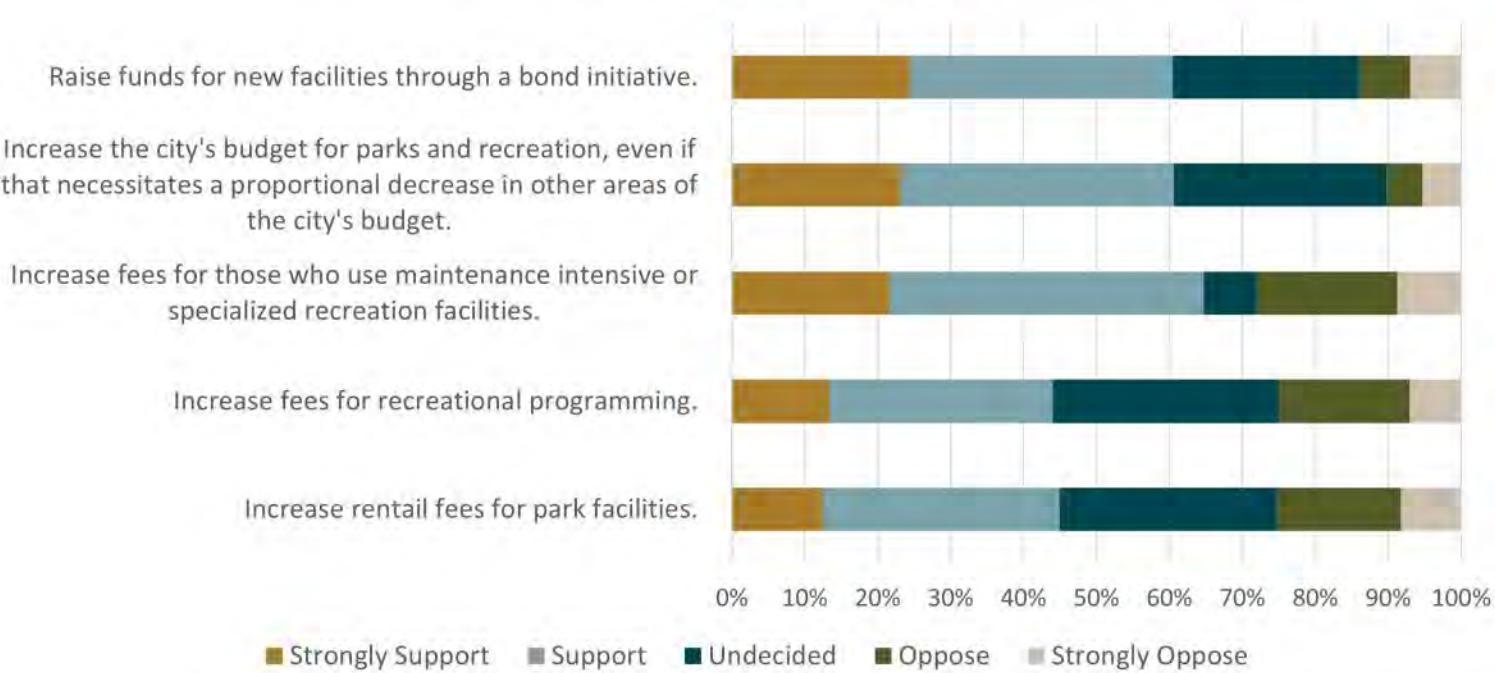
Soccer fields and better baseball/softball fields

Some of the equipment needs to be fixed at the park. Honestly overall it's just needs MORE. More attention, more equipment overall.

Southside parks

Space for all the activities	The homeless people and loiterers in the parks	Usable Space that is multipurpose and well maintained
Space for these much needed things within the city limits. Especially a paved walk path with a water element and green space.	The parks are bare minimum effort and vision. There is one broken ADA swing at one park we have been to and absolutely no access to get to the play equipment unless the person is carried. Gravel is not accessible. Similarly, with no vision, there is no reason to upkeep or create a safe community gathering space within any park area.	Vandalism
Space, location, leaders to operate the facility, maintaince standards		Vandalism, a few that don't care take away so much from us that do care.
Space, property and funding to put in place new recreational buildings/courts/fields.		We need a multi-purpose community sports complex. Right now, little league football has to pay the school district to use fields and concessions which id expensive and increases registration fees. Rockdale youth soccer association worked out an agreement with Youth Baseball to use the baseball fields in the off season but space will be limited for future years as registration rises. Sports should be at the foundation of this community to give kids a healthy recreational outlet. There is currently no city support for youth sports.
Splash pad		
Stadium		
Staffing		
Stickers in the parks, but since the citizens bordering the parks do nothing to get rid of theirs, this is hopeless.	The pool could be utilized more often not just the children. There needs to be a time for senior citizens. Water exercises and/or individual swimming.	
Swimming pool. Not affordable for children/families to go to.	The skate park looks beat down but I do not know it's functionality.	
The area is a little small.	The summer heat	
The city needs to clean the crackhead out an fix the dam streets!!	The unsafe areas. The splash pad has people on drugs bathing in the water.	
The dog park	They are dated.	
The entrance to the pool at Veterans Park.	To get something that Would bring more people out would be alot of work.. there isn't much our town has to offer with what we have now .. in my opinion..	
The fact the city/county tried to screw Alcoa and had a hand in them leaving. Our town is broke our infrastructure broke, water is disgusting. We are a small town with big town taxes and dreams. We need to get our drug problem under control and provide the teens eith meaninful opportunities to help cut back on teen pregnancy. The corruption in the city government and police dept will do nothing but blow money and pay lip service to problems. Look at skate park. It look ok but too far for half the towns kids to skate there and play. Both sides of the highway need equal resources.	To have hiking trails	
	To many drug addicts there	
	Too much rubbish	
	Trying to walk on the gravel path	
	Upkeep	
	Upkeep of all of the parks.	
	Upkeep, more modern ADA appropriate equipment	

14. To meet the needs of Rockdale residents, the City may require additional funding for parks and recreation. How strongly would you support or oppose the following finance strategies?



15. Please use this space to explain any additional thoughts or comments you have regarding the future of parks in Rockdale.

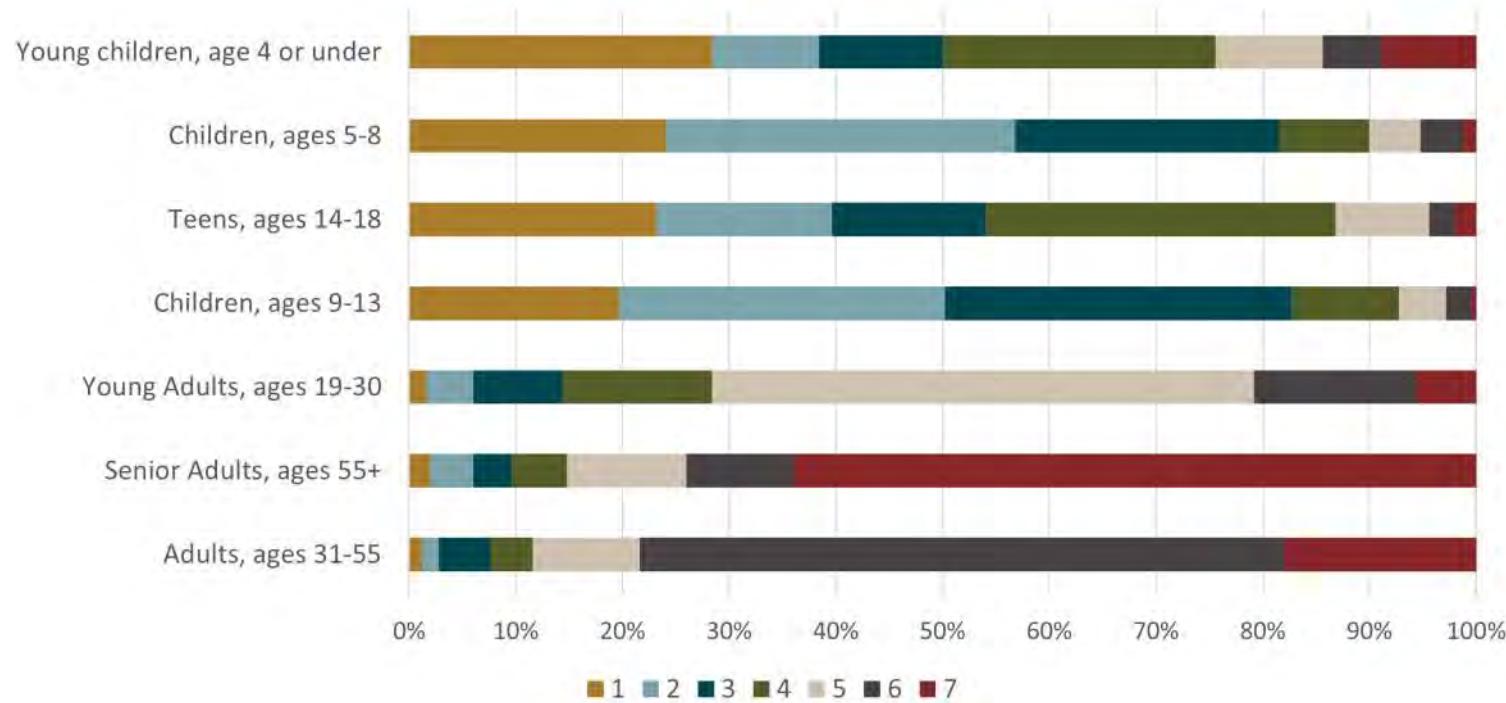
None	Great need
A complex where there is a soccer field for kids and adults to enjoy.	Have a place to go roller blading.
A place where people can enjoy activities, meet with other people and have some sort bond like games or activities to make life a little better in our community.	Having a strong, up-to-date parks & rec program will not only add to Rockdale's master plan, but will attract potential new residents and increase usage by existing residents.
A public fishing area in Rockdale would be amazing. My family & I would not have to travel to Cameron or Settlers Park in Round Rock to fish.	Having been a board member of many of the youth programs in town, you shouldn't charge them at all for use of the facilities. If anything you should help them way more than you do. That is if the mayor and city council really mean it when they say they support the youth of our city.
a recreational indoor park would be great to have in Rockdale.	Hope that Jim Gibson is not given too much power to impact this area...he does not collaborate with or respect other's opinions or views to be over anything like this.
A space for large community events within a park would be excellent. Fair park is big enough but is in dire need of upgrades. All of the bathrooms at the parks are awful, making them hard to visit for very long.	I am a transplant and not originally from Rockdale. The country side and most of the people are beautiful and amazing. We are completely for bringing industry and beauty through nature to the city. It would be wonderful to see it revived.
Add a park & rec donation to the water bill	I believe Rockdale has the bones of good parks.... We don't need more things, we need to take way better care of the parks that we have! We can add more play structures at Veterans park that are designed for younger children, add sunshades, maintain the play structures currently there, maintain the walking trail there. Remove homeless people from parks so people aren't scared to use them, etc.
Although our parks are outdated compared to parks in larger neighboring cities we can easily improve these facilities with prioritized maintenance (of bathrooms, trashcans, etc.) as well as additional patrol from law enforcement. I have felt unsafe at our city parks on more than one occasion. The splash pad is frequently used for showering/bathing	I feel like "rental" of a public space is just another fee. We pay taxes for these things. When the tax is payed, the space should be accessible by all, not exclusive of those who cannot afford to rent in a public space. Park and rec need a lot of public input from diverse representatives knowing that not everyone will be 100 percent satisfied. But all should have this opportunity to be heard. Fund raising is a perfect way to supplement a bond or gain community buy in in order to be successful with support.
As a senior would love pickle ball and hike and bike trails	I have no idea
As growth comes to Rockdale, recreation space for will be needed. We as a community have to do better to provide sufficient space and recreational activities for our community.	I have yet to see a park that I would willing go to. Until these parks are upgraded and maintained it is a waste of money to anything new.
Awesome	
Build it they will come!	
Change and growth is inevitable. The problem will be those that think their taxes should never go up but still want the city to do better.	
Consider doing something for the fixed income senior citizens that does not include increasing taxes or fees	
Excited for the possibilities of new things coming for our citizens and especially our youth!	

I hope the park will be built more humane and beautiful	It would be awesome if the parks and splash pads were in safer areas of town.
I strongly believe that Rockdale would benefit from a year-round, indoor/outdoor swimming facility that could host competitive swimming events. This might be in partnership with the school district to allow for competitive swimming in the high school.	It would be great to have safer spaces where drugs and safety weren't a concern and to have more activities/ amenities available.
I think events need to be held at other parks than Wolf Park. It's small and has no shade.	Just hopeful that it can become a more enjoyable and accommodating town for families
I would like to suggest the creation of a 'Rockdale Skyway' to connect Fair Park, Skate Park, Sumuel Park, and Moultry Park (possibly the inclusion of Bridge Park since it is located nearby but may be better to wait later date since it's on the other side of the railroad--or creating a 'Second Rockdale Skyway' that will link it to Veterans Park and an 'unknown park' to be constructed in the future near the new housing development currently underway). Eventually to connect two Skyways. The Skyway will be to walk/run/jog and possibly to add skate-board portions of it as appropriate, so that skateboarding won't be limited to one park, which may be an attractive feature for fans of young and 'matured' skaters. Utilizing 'out-of-service' country bridges will be an important part of this project by restoring them to be part of park connections -- all ages would enjoy being the part of Rockdale Skyway and honoring/preserving history. Creating a couple of 'observation' decks along the way will be another feature -- ie, one near the Main and Cameron, for those who want to hangout the downtown area can make a stop through the stairs/winding slope/etc and . . . enjoy Farmer's Market at the Wolf Park or whatever is going on in the area. Adding stairs will be a nice exercise that may help reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases per a recent research from the Medical News Today.	Just think of everyone all ages and indoor facilities for safety
I would love to take my family to the splash pad but am not comfortable with the safety of the location	Love the walking path at Veterans park, would love to see a better skatepark with covered areas and picnic or other shaded seating areas.
If the people of rockdale would come together there would be a lot more for kids adults young people to do	Make bridge park a dog park....NEEDS parking.
If the youth baseball fields are not owned by the city, why are we including them? I think an entire new sports facility to utilize for all youth sports should be built.	Maybe a sand area for kids, maybe new everything, a fence would be great for the safety of our little ones. I hate going out of town to go to the park because ours truly sucks.
it is good park to play	Moultry park is hard to find and not used much. Better signs for all parks would be helpful.
	N/A
	Na
	Need more activities but we already pay plenty of taxes
	Need more exposure to the public About general plan and desire future planning of recreational park and etc
	New pool
	No
	No comment
	No comment.
	No new facilities UNTIL existing ones are repaired and maintained CONSISTENTLY...
	No one can get in at the Fair Park. It stays locked up. So you can't enjoy a nice walk.
	Nothing will happen with current administration. The citizens and their wants and needs is not a priority of this administration.
	Our parks are in good shape and we have a wonderful youth league that works hard and does a magnificent job of running those areas. Our fair grounds could use some attention through out the entire year not just during events.

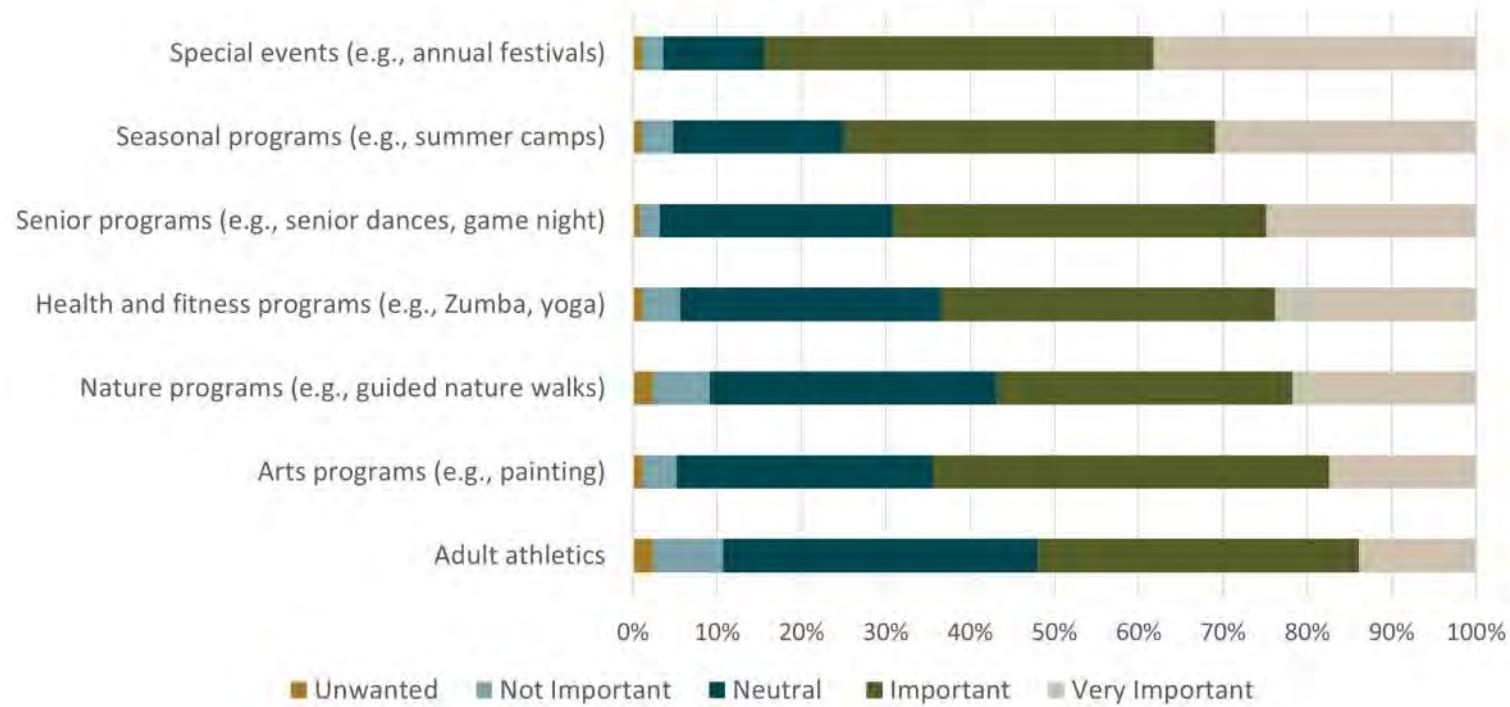
<p>Our property tax has gone up every year, we're paying Austin rates now! You guys wanted the school bond to pass, now the EMS bond, and soon another bond will be on the ballot. How do you expect to keep local community members if they keep getting priced out??</p>	<p>Support youth sports of Rockdale and include a multi-sports complex. The area is expanding, and the supporting facilities are improving.</p>
<p>Out of date could use more cover over play scapes and an area that is safe for parents and children with limited access points and gates for users</p>	<p>The city must show a stronger commitment to existing facilities management and initiate a walkability/safe routes to school focus. There are no pleasant natural areas.</p>
<p>Parks and recreation will bring people to Rockdale and will increase revenue to local businesses providing tax money to support the parks. Example. Hosting youth baseball, soccer tournaments.</p>	<p>The kids need more places for youth sports like soccer and football. The baseball parks needs a lot of work and redone. Need to be more handicap assessable</p>
<p>Parks should be wheelchair friendly. We don't use them very much because it's hard to push a wheelchair through grass and rocks.</p>	<p>The more kids have to do the less likely they are to get in trouble</p>
<p>Pickle ball is rising in interest all over the country. It is fun for all members of the family</p>	<p>The park need more equipment. A splash pad at veterans park would be nice. The bathrooms are always dirty and lights usually don't work. More rocks need to be put at the play scapes. The tarp is showing causing children to trip.</p>
<p>Please talk with the people that overlook the various youth sports in Rockdale</p>	<p>The parks are in terrible shape and need a lot of work</p>
<p>Really need a dog park for big dogs and little dogs.</p>	<p>The school does not take fine arts into account for its students, so I'm hoping the city will. The high school's auditorium needs a serious upgrade. The stage, the closets, no dressing room, the lighting and sound. The seats. The almost 60 year old curtains. The school leaves out half it's students focusing on sports. Fine Arts should be supported more! A performing arts center would benefit the city and the resident students. From the pageant to hosting the school's dance team shows, not to mention maybe dance recitals, to bringing in local theater, school plays, concerts. Maybe even enough room for the school band. The stage is not even big enough for the whole band. The city would benefit greatly.</p>
<p>Rockdale is lacking hike and bike trails and green spaces. Also it would be amazing to see pickle ball courts...</p>	
<p>Rockdale needs a sports complex, all the fields in one place with indoor batting cages and areas for private lessons. But who would operate it?</p>	
<p>s</p>	
<p>Sand area for kids to dig or play in, music area, play area with new everything. Better swings, better everything</p>	
<p>Seeing how the water/street projects have been handled, not confident money collected would be utilized well. But if there was a concrete timeline and accountability, would love to support growth of trails and upgrades on park</p>	
<p>Skate park must be updated and added to. It would be a great place to start. Look to Taylors version of what a skate park is, then add picnic tables like Sumuel Park, a couple of BBQ pits, shading, a paved walk path for the parents while the kids skate and Restrooms.</p>	<p>There shouldn't be an added cost. We already pay so much for youth sports, the pool is limited during the summer due to hours and expense. The city gets upset if they are called to turn the splash pad on during the weekend or if there is an issue with it. The park at the splash pad is less shady than Veterans and the play area is less desirable. The parks should be equal no matter what side of town you are on. We live outside of the city limits by two miles and always visit the splash pad and their park. We have been to veterans but we saw used condoms and glass pipes throughout the park.</p>
<p>Soccer fields and outdoor volleyball courts with a park or splash pad all together would be a great idea... definitely would be used</p>	<p>They need more basketball areas.</p>
<p>Somewhere to chat drink a coffee and watch children play</p>	<p>They need to be maintained monitor the useage to which parks are used and which are not.</p>

This town is so crooked!	We need to build a multi-use sports complex. The complex should have baseball, softball, soccer fields. There should be basketball courts and tennis courts as well. This could be done for our local and league use, but could also be used to host tournaments, thus bringing people into Rockdale and getting heads in beds.
Too bad the rail car and caboose restaurant idea hasn't come to fruition. Could make a nice tourist attraction along with the blacksmithing and field trip for students.	We need to get this done asap
Until the drug dealers are removed by our PD...you will never have a safe area for anyone!	We need to improve the maintenance and repair our broken parks plus extend the library hours for the working person. Thursday evenings are not enough.
Upgraded	We use the parks regardless but could use a makeover
Upkeep and safety is a necessity!	What about having our own YMCA created to have covered building and access all year long.
Walking and biking are such important forms of exercise, recreation, and relaxation, especially for those of us not interested in getting involved in competitive sports. The lack of public space to just get out and walk or bike is a huge drawback to living in Rockdale, especially for those of us with kids older than about 6, who are no longer content to just play on a playground. But also for adults; walking is an ideal exercise, and especially for our aging population, and most of the neighborhoods do not even have sidewalks.	While I am not opposed to raising fees, a bond would be a better option. Would it raise taxes for the community? When was the last time taxes were raised for such a purpose?
We have a projected amount of people coming we should at least shoot for Taylor amenities or beyond.	Wish there were more quiet sitting areas
We have many needs that are much more critical than parks. Streets, water, police funding, maintaining what we have.	Would like to see the city get more involved with the swimming program in Rockdale. This is a great sport that all of the children involved seem to really enjoy
We have to have facilities for the youth, especially the 9-18 yr old range. We can't complain about trouble they cause if we don't do our part in allowing them to occupy their time constructively. Parents have to do their part but parents are spread thin in our modern society trying to make ends meet. Kids are like pets in the sense that if they are bored they are gonna get into trouble.	Would love to have a safe space to walk on the east side and have a play space for children
We need a Fishing area	
We need more activities for kids ages 10 and up.	
We need places that are safe and well lit as well as properly maintained where children and adults can enjoy.	
We need something in Rockdale for the youth! Something to get them active and outside.	
We need to be able to properly maintain the existing parks before adding more parks!	

16. Rank in order the age groups you feel have the greatest needs for recreational programming.



17. How important is it for the City to provide or support the following types of recreational opportunities?



18. Please use this space to explain any additional thoughts or comments you have regarding the future of recreational programming in Rockdale.

All of these things will build community & attract a population of people happy to pay extra fees to have these things here so they don't have to travel for them.

Anything that raises taxes is unacceptable nor is selling bonds we have to repay with interest. Our neighbors are being bled dry by the city county and hospital that we don't even have taxes. I suggest leadership looks at our budget like most families do. Make a list of what you want and how much it costs then look at the price tags of projects and start cutting what we can't afford instead of raising our taxes barely below the Texas State max permissible every year. I would sell our house in a minute if the taxable value was the actual sellable price.

Art classes , cooking classes, intro to job skills, life skills classes

City can & should support programs, however they should not be city run. So support can be funding or training, however city run programs should not be the plan. This just leads to bigger bureaucracy and wasted spending.

Cool

Create a position for someone to oversee this area.

Fall Music Festival was great. We should try to do something like that again. Maybe not that big of a production but something like it for all ages.

First task is to have parks that are clean and safe. May be making 1 Park fit for human use each year is a goal that may be beyond reach.

Great need

Growth is coming and Rockdale is so behind. The Parks Board may need new members for some new ideas.

I cannot respond to #16 question above since all are important, so I left them without making changes.

I have no idea

I think it's important that our kids, teenagers and senior adults have something to do

I think young children & seniors need these programs because they have time on their hands that older children get a lot of this activities through school.

I'd love to attend wine tasting and art classes at Patterson Center.

Instead of focusing on recreational activities it seems to me the infrastructure must be addressed as the highest priority. Drive Murray Ave. from end to end. Road condition deplorable and passes a park, high school and athletic fields. Roads even worse in other areas. City can't adequately patch roads following utility repairs. Fix the water system, fix the roads, ensure HOP remains funded, then work on parks and recreation

it is a great place for pinnic

Just hoping it gets better

Make sure the programs fit the schedule of the working person who has kids. Saturday programs are needed for us.

More programs that are not just baseball and football. Should be supporting soccer and swimming as well as tennis.

More young child programs would be my families top priority

N/A

N/A

No

No comment

Painting or choir competition

Programming and city athletics should be done in conjunction with existing youth leagues.

Rockdale's financial demographic has not changed yet. We still have a lot of lower income families. Our community cannot support wine and cheese festivals as much as we can support hosting youth athletic tournaments. Festivals need to be more family friendly and not be high priced events. Utilize more corporate sponsors and less from the small businesses that are already struggling. Not to mention people do not want to come to an art festival with a jazz band and wine when the town itself is not very presentable.

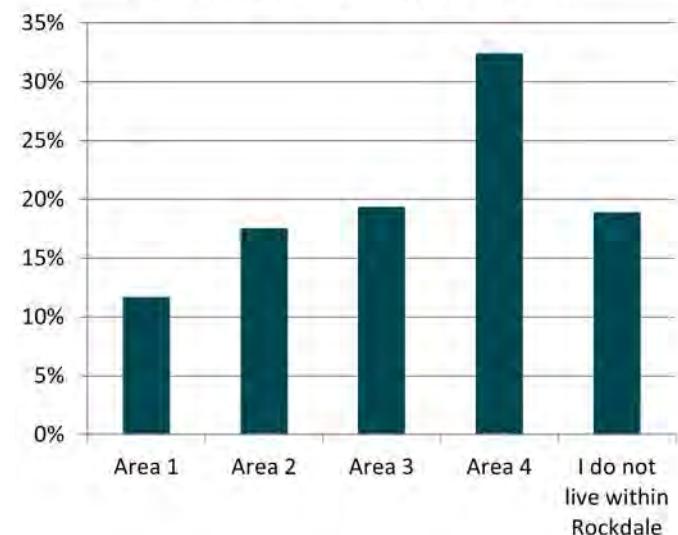
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Seasonal events should be pushed more to help generate more money for parks and programs.

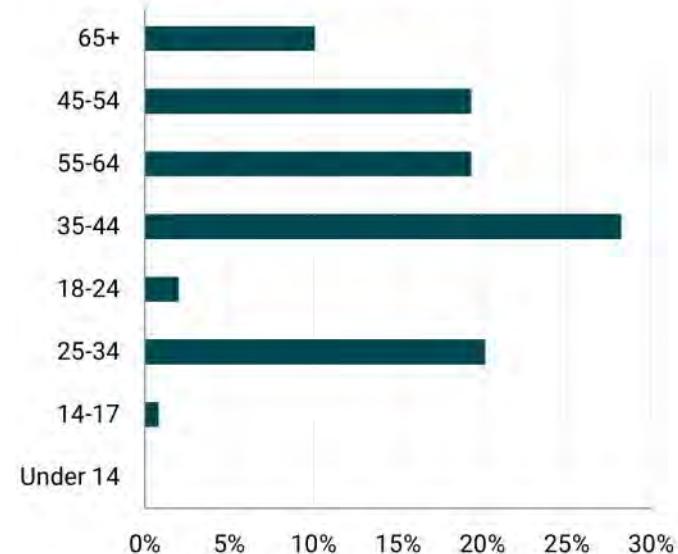
Someone going to get a nice kickback from their buddy the contractor.
Summer outdoor movie night
The city does not need to be involved in putting on an annual festival. If an organization i.e. Rockdale fair wants to put one on that is fine, but the city does not need to do that
The city needs to focus on making what we currently have better. Better parks, better streets etc
The high school aged kids need something to keep them off drugs. I wish we had a drive in theatre for them.
The more involved our youth stay the less trouble they get into. The closer knit a community is the better off our youth are. There's an old saying that says "it takes a village to raise a child", it's truer everyday!
The schools get plenty of taxes to provide for children. If adults want exercise, they could clean up their yards and get rid of their own weeds. If they have any extra time, they could pull weeds in public places instead of just complaining because someone else doesn't do it. We do not need to use taxpayer money because people are too lazy to find something constructive to do.
The teens need something to do! Seniors needs facilities for mobility issues, the preteens and younger need introduction to facilities to learn to be active.

There is nothing for adults! Soccer, indoor basketball, bike riding groups.... people who move here have nothing available to develop that sense of community with new neighbors who share their interests and very limited activity based opportunities. Kids need to see adults getting outdoors, and seniors need help to stay active since we have very limited local healthcare.
There really does need more for teens to do around here. It will help keep them out of trouble. If I had the funds, I would open up a skating rink and bowling alley with video games. And a real movie theater.
Ty
Upgrade
Wake aquatics needs more support from the city. It is, hands down, the most attended recreation program but the city treats them like dirt.
We need to a healthy community where we can feel safe using our local community resources such as parks, community gyms, dance classes. Options are limitless
Would be nice to connect the parks with trails for walking/bicycle. This way the smaller parks can be in essence expanded. Must have fences/gates to keep kids safe. Must have areas allowed for dogs
Would like to see some pickle ball activity. To help get us moving
Would love to see dances at the KC Hall again and a skating rink or bowling alley back in Rockdale.

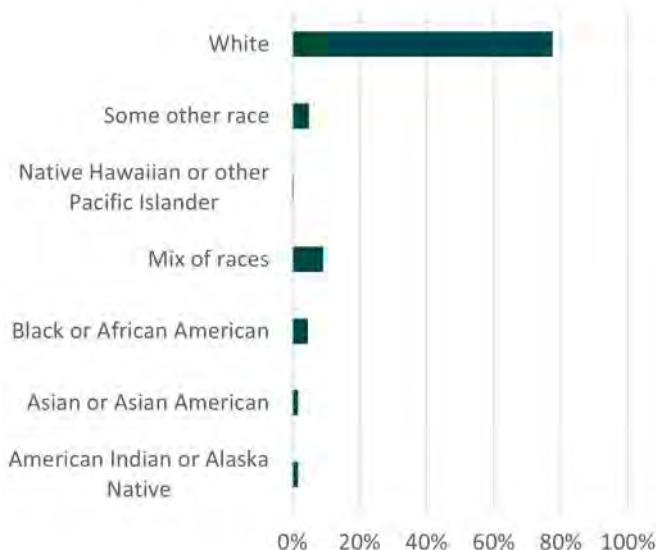
19. Based on the map above, what part of Rockdale do you live in?



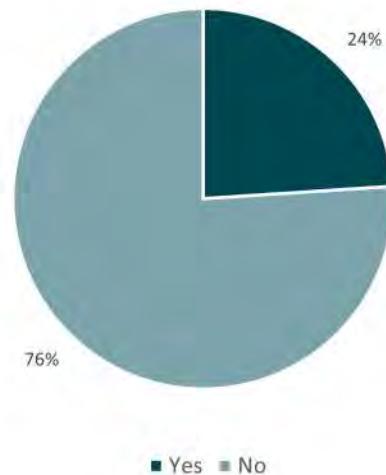
20. What is your age?



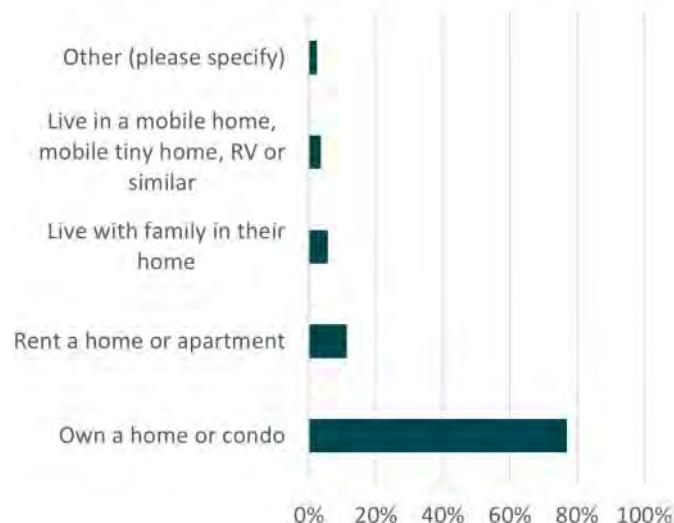
21. What is your race?



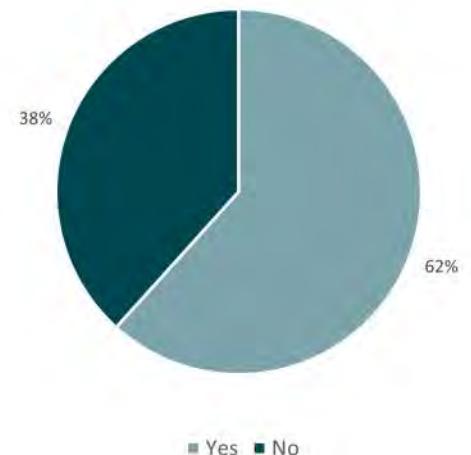
22. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?



23. What best describes your current living situation?



24. Are there children under the age of 18 in your home?



Other Responses:

I owned my home on San Gabriel St over 20 years. I recently sold it because I had a home built in the country. My grandchildren still live in the Rockdale city limits. It's because of them that I'm taking this survey

In

Live on 22 acres off Hwy 77 and currently building

Live on a 5 acre lot with a home and barn I purchased

Living in an RV On property until we build

Temporarily renting till our home is rebuilt

Opinions of Probable Costs (OPCCs)

OPCCs provide planning-level costing guidance and are helpful to the City as they plan implementation and prioritization of proposed parks projects. OPCCs are not applicable to all recommendations, as such, only the applicable recommendations are listed here. OPCCs make high-level assumptions related to market costs at the time of publication, and are subject to change based on market and economic conditions that are unpredictable and out of the control of the estimator.

Action ID	Action Item	OPCC Narrative/Assumptions
PR-3	Develop park design guidelines	Engaging a consultant to assist with this effort may range between \$50,000 and \$100,000 depending on scope of the study.
PR-4	Enhance beautification efforts	A typical neighborhood park pavilion is generally in the 24'x 24' size range and typically should cost between \$120,000 - \$150,000 including the slab. Bench and trash receptacle upgrades should be budgeted at approximately \$1500 - \$2000 each. Landscape material varies in cost, but a budgeting \$600-\$800 per tree (30gal-45gal size). Costs could be reduced by having city staff procure and plant these materials. Planting bed installation costs typically range between \$4.50 - \$7.00 per SF.
PR-5	Create community garden program	Community garden development can be a low cost improvement. Raised box gardens can be constructed using volunteer labor, a JOC, or city staff resources. A 4'x 8' raised box garden could be constructed and filled for less than \$500 dollars each. For larger gardens, specialized tillage equipment may be needed for creating in ground beds. Additional optional amenities could include seating and tool sheds.
PR-6	Evaluate opportunities to provide a Community and/or Recreation Center in Rockdale	Engaging a consultant to assist with this effort may range between \$75,000 and \$120,000 depending on scope of the study.
PR-8	Improving Bridge Park	Per plan by others: Concrete parking lot and driveway - \$72,000 (5550 sf) 6' concrete sidewalks - \$117,000 (1500 lf) Nature based playscape - \$475,000 (2700 sf @ \$175 sf) Restroom - \$175,000 - \$275,000 (depending on number of fixtures) Signage package - \$35,000-\$50,000 (depending on complexity) Pavilion - \$120,000 - \$150,000 (ea)(including slab) Landscaping and irrigation allowance - \$165,000 (2.5 acres @ \$65,000/acre) Site Furnishing Allowance (4 picnic tables/11 benches) - \$45,000 - \$50,000 Professional services/survey/geotech - 18% of construction cost Contingency - 30%

Action ID	Action Item	OPCC Narrative/Assumptions
PR-9	Relocate the dog park	Assumed costs for a 1 acre dog park on level ground: 6' chain link fencing/gates - \$18,000 - \$20,000 (1100 lf) Landscape and irrigation allowance - \$65,000/ac Site Amenity Allowance - \$25,000 - \$35,000 Parking lot allowance - \$4,500/space
PR-11	Develop a community-wide trail network connecting key points of interest	12' wide concrete trail is generally \$1-million dollars per mile, assumes no land acquisition costs
PR-12	Develop shade within all parks	Shade structures (sails or structures) \$75,000 - \$150,000 per each Shade trees - \$600 - \$800 per each
PR-17	Provide system-wide consistent parks signage	Standardized Park System Sign - \$5,000 - \$15,000 per each (depending on complexity) Standardized Rule Sign - \$500 - \$1,000 per each
PR-18	Evaluate opportunities to provide a Regional Sports Complex	Sports Complex Master Plan via a consultant \$75,000 - \$100,000. Land acquisition costs - TBD Lighted youth field (225'-250' outfield) - \$250,000 to \$300,000 per field Lighted adult field (300' outfield) - \$300,000 to \$350,000 per field Stadium bleacher seating - \$100,000 per field Parking requirements for tournament play - 40 spaces per field (\$4,500/space) Restroom/Concession Bldg - \$350,000 - \$500,000 Professional services/survey/geotech - 18% of construction cost Contingency - 30%
PR-20	Improve Moultry Park	Pave park access road and parking lot - \$115,000 (roadbase with chip seal) (\$42/sy) New pre-fabricated restroom \$125,000 - \$150,000 (assume existing restroom is at the end of its service life) Shade Covering over basketball court - \$210,000 - \$230,000 Pavilion - \$120,000 - \$150,000 (ea) (including slab) Wifi Capability (TBD) Add solar pedestrian lights - \$3,500 - \$6,000 each New playscape, shade and fall surfacing - \$200,000 - \$300,000 (depending on complexity) (not recommended to reuse existing equipment) Develop unused property for sports fields - \$110,000 per acre. Remove and replace backstop - \$5000 Site furnishing allowance - \$10,000 - \$15,000

Action ID	Action Item	OPCC Narrative/Assumptions
PR-21	Improve skate park	<p>Create paved parking area along Pine St - \$9,500 - \$12,000 (10 spaces, roadbase with chip seal)</p> <p>Upgrade existing skate ramps (requires further investigation)</p> <p>Shade pavilion - \$120,000 - \$150,000</p> <p>Develop unused property for sports fields - \$110,000 per acre.</p> <p>Prefabricated restroom - \$125,000 - \$150,000</p> <p>Loop trail - \$60,000 (6' conc. trail/1000 lf)</p> <p>Vegetative restoration - \$4.50 - \$7.00 per sf</p>
PR-22	Improve Veterans Park	<p>Memorial concept plan execution - \$75,000 - \$100,000</p> <p>Add solar pedestrian lights - \$3,500 - \$6,000 each</p> <p>Exercise stations - \$30,000 - \$40,000</p> <p>Renourish decomposed granite trail - \$40,000 - \$45,000</p> <p>Add concrete containment band to either side of decomposed granite trail - \$25,000 - \$30,000</p> <p>Upgrade pool area (requires further investigation)</p> <p>General beautification/landscaping - \$20,000 - \$25,000 (allowance)</p> <p>Community gardens - \$500/each (4' x 8' raised bed)</p> <p>Add public wifi (requires further investigation)</p>
PR-23	Develop or support the development of a Community & Recreation Center in Rockdale	Facility Master Plan via a consultant \$75,000 - \$100,000.
PR-24	Evaluate opportunities to increase the use of technology at all City Parks	<p>Data/IT consulting \$25,000 - \$30,000.</p> <p>Staff hours to establish and maintain QR code system/programming content</p>
PR-25	Improve Sumuel Park	<p>Shade Covering over basketball court - \$120,000 - \$150,000</p> <p>Add 3-4 additional parking spaces - \$13,500 - \$18,000</p> <p>Add solar pedestrian lights - \$4,500 - \$6,000 each</p> <p>Vegetative restoration - \$4.50 - \$7.00 per sf</p>

Action ID	Action Item	OPCC Narrative/Assumptions
PR -26	Improve George Hill Patterson Community Center Outdoor Space (please note that a plan was not available for the concept prepared, so these estimates are a based on the renderings provided, which adds some uncertainty)	<p>Per concept by others:</p> <p>6' concrete sidewalks - \$132,000 (~1650 lf)</p> <p>Signage package - \$35,000-\$50,000 (depending on complexity)</p> <p>Landscaping and irrigation allowance - \$165,000 (2.5 acres @ \$65,000/acre), does not cover the entire site</p> <p>Site Furnishing Allowance (4 picnic tables/11 benches) - \$45,000 - \$50,000</p> <p>Bocce court - \$10,000 - \$15,000 each (depending on size)</p> <p>Horseshoe pits - \$500 - \$800 each</p> <p>Sand volleyball \$25,000 - \$35,000 each</p> <p>New playscape, shade and fall surfacing - \$150,000 - \$200,000 (depending on complexity)</p> <p>Pergola covered patio \$50 - \$75 S.F under cover</p> <p>Performance stage with pergola cover \$85 - \$100 S.F under cover (including slab) - Extended slab - \$12 - \$15 per S.F.</p> <p>Grass concert lawn - \$45,000 - \$55,000 (~16,000sf)</p> <p>Pavilion - \$120,000 - \$150,000 (including slab)</p> <p>Memorial/statue area (artwork not included) - \$50,000 - \$80,000 (allowance)</p> <p>Professional services/survey/geotech - 18% of construction cost</p> <p>Contingency - 50%</p>
PR-27	Improve Post Oak Place Park	<p>Site Amenity Allowance - \$10,000 - \$15,000</p> <p>Loop trail - \$35,000 - \$40,000 (6' decomposed granite with containment bands)(800 lf)</p>

APPENDIX E

GOALS AND

OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1: Enhance Community Resources & Quality Of Life

OBJECTIVES:

I. Preservation and Cultural Promotion

- A. Compile best practices for neighborhood preservation and attend relevant training sessions.
- B. Encourage cultural activities through funding support and public art programs.

II. Aesthetics and Sustainability

- A. Establish a street tree planting program and explore dark sky initiatives.
- B. Investigate incentives for enhancing building facades.

III. Infrastructure and Recreation

- A. Develop a comprehensive plan for facilities and services, focusing on libraries and parks.
- B. Seek grant funding for technology upgrades in libraries and promote community engagement through initiatives like book swaps.

IV. Park and Recreation Development

- A. Enhance parks with innovative features and expand amenities such as dog parks and trails.
- B. Foster recreational programs through partnerships and assess the feasibility of a competitive aquatic center.
- C. Preserve drainage corridors for green spaces and consider water features in parks.
- D. Research sports tourism and potential sponsors for a major sports complex.

V. Library Services Expansion

- A. Extend library hours and ensure staffing for increased services and programs.

Sub-Goal: Historical Preservation

VI. Historic Resource Preservation

- A. Maintain an inventory of significant properties and explore preservation grants.
- B. Prioritize the preservation of historical landmarks and develop design guidelines.
- C. Identify additional properties for protection and seek Certified Local Government status.

VII. ALCOA History Museum Investigation

- A. Explore the feasibility of establishing a museum to celebrate ALCOA's historical contributions.

GOAL 2: Stimulate Economic Growth & Business Development

OBJECTIVES

I. Strategic Initiatives

- A. Launch a "buy local" campaign and collaborate with the MDD on business incentives.

II. Expansion of Tax Base and Job Opportunities

- A. Expand economic growth opportunities through tourism to increase the tax base and job opportunities.

III. Strategic Business Attraction and Development

- A. Market to boutique businesses and foster collaboration with the local school district for business incubation.
- B. Conduct studies to identify strategic business opportunities and invest in arts and entertainment assets.
- C. Collaborate with the MDD to support initiatives for expanding and diversifying the local business community.

GOAL 3: Promote Quality Development (Residential & Non-Residential)

OBJECTIVES

I. Effective Land Development Ordinances

- A. Identify and implement best practices from communities such as Georgetown and Hutto to craft suitable ordinances for Rockdale.

II. Property Maintenance Standards Review

- A. Enforce noise, high grass, weeds, and trash regulations rigorously.
- B. Evaluate and streamline procedures for handling substandard structures.
- C. Utilize state laws and coordinate with the county for enhanced enforcement.

III. Future Land Use Map Development

- A. Preserve single-family neighborhoods and designate land for industrial and distribution uses near transportation facilities.
- B. Reserve land for future transportation rights-of-way and ensure appropriate transitions between land uses.

IV. Promotion of Infill Development

- A. Offer incentives such as reduced planning and permit fees for residential and commercial projects in designated areas.
- B. Consider implementing impact assessment fees to ensure developers bear the costs of infrastructure required for their developments.

V. Neighborhood Development

- A. Promote the creation of safe and defined neighborhoods with updated building codes and zoning standards.
- B. Enforce standards and master planning criteria for new subdivisions to improve the quality of life.

VI. Enhanced Code Enforcement

- A. Utilize commissions and enforce current codes with emphasis on property maintenance.
- B. Maintain an active code log and employ proactive enforcement measures.
- C. Hire dedicated code enforcement professionals and incentivize the productive use of vacant commercial properties.

VII. Floodplain Management

- A. Adopt a "no adverse impact" approach and preserve drainage corridors for parks and trails.
- B. Investigate opportunities for parks and trails in floodplain areas and budget for updated floodplain maps.

GOAL 4: Cultivate a Vibrant, Economically-Productive, and Diversified Downtown

OBJECTIVES

I. Arts District Implementation

- A. Collaborate with the Vision Historic Preservation Foundation to establish an artists' haven downtown.
- B. Incorporate the library as a central asset in downtown arts and entertainment initiatives.
- C. Explore collaboration for murals and artwork in local parks.
- D. Implement storyboards and historic markers to showcase local history within parks.

II. Market Study and Business Development

- A. Investigate participation in the Texas Main Street Program and conduct a downtown market study.
- B. Engage craft brewers to gauge interest in establishing local brew pubs.
- C. Explore the concept of an open container district to enhance the downtown experience.
- D. Collaborate with the MDD to attract boutique and destination businesses.

III. Enhance Community Connectivity and Accessibility

- A. Support downtown redevelopment into a mixed-use business center.
- B. Explore options for integrating housing with retail spaces in downtown areas.
- C. Implement proactive code enforcement in downtown areas, focusing on issues like high grass and overgrown curbs.
- D. Research communities with districts allowing golf carts on roads and assess feasibility.
- E. Encourage restaurants to offer outdoor seating with live entertainment to enhance community engagement.

GOAL 5: Infrastructure For Future Development

OBJECTIVES

I. Ensure Nonresidential Development Consistency

- A. Create a comprehensive guide for nonresidential development processes.
- B. Adopt the most recent ICC building codes and NEC electrical code to ensure consistency and safety.
- C. Maintain consistent plan review times of seven days or less to streamline development processes.
- D. Map the size and location of city infrastructure to aid developers in project planning.

II. Expand Utility Services

- A. Support broadband initiatives to ensure high-speed internet accessibility throughout Rockdale.
- B. Extend the City's Certificate of Convenience and Necessity to expand the water customer base where feasible.
- C. Establish utility rates both inside and outside city limits to ensure equitable service provision.
- D. Adopt cost-sharing criteria for oversizing utilities to manage development costs effectively.

III. Establish Transparent Fee Structures

- A. Prepare annual adjustments to water and sewer rates to reflect necessary costs accurately.
- B. Conduct cost analyses for per-linear-foot extensions to establish fair fee structures.

IV. Expand Water and Wastewater Access

- A. Amend ordinances to allow for in and out of City utility service, expanding access to underserved areas.
- B. Identify areas with potential growth for water and sewer service expansion.

V. Facilitate Strategic Infrastructure Expansion

- A. Utilize existing engineering studies for service extensions, particularly in the northwest portion of town.

VI. Ensure Equitable Development Policies

- A. Ensure ordinances specify cost-sharing according to legal requirements and adopt appropriate templates.
- B. Identify gaps in park coverage for new locations to ensure equitable access to recreational spaces.

VII. Implement Sustainable Infrastructure Policies

- A. Establish a comprehensive Capital Improvement Program to guide sustainable infrastructure development.
- B. Conduct annual evaluations of the Capital Improvement Program to adapt to changing needs and funding.
- C. Adopt ICC energy codes to promote energy-efficient residential construction.
- D. Increase awareness of available incentives for energy-efficient construction, including financial incentives and adherence to efficiency standards.

VIII. Ensure Balanced Zoning

- A. Collect data on current land use and zoning to inform balanced zoning decisions.
- B. Create and update the future land use map to guide zoning decisions.
- C. Encourage the sale of vacant commercial structures by implementing an annual registration requirement.

IX. Preserve Residential Quality Amidst Commercial Growth

- A. Maintain a digitized GIS system to provide accurate data for development planning.
- B. Utilize planned unit development to foster commercial growth while preserving residential quality.
- C. Establish an allowed use table to regulate businesses in lighter-zoned areas effectively.
- D. Implement physical buffers between residential and nonresidential areas to mitigate potential conflicts.

A NOTE ON CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMMING

The City aims to implement a structured 5-Year Capital Improvements Program and Annual Capital Budget to effectively coordinate the timing and prioritize the construction and redevelopment of public facilities in alignment with the Comprehensive Plan. This initiative seeks to safeguard existing investments in facilities while facilitating orderly growth.

Under this plan, the City requires the construction and redevelopment of public facilities to address deficiencies, support future growth, and replace outdated infrastructure, as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. The inclusion of projects in the 5-Year Schedule necessitates evaluation by the Capital Improvements Program Review Committee to assess capital requests, ensure alignment with the strategic plan, and present a final list of recommended projects for approval from the Planning Commission and City. Efforts are also made to ensure that future development contributes fairly to the costs of public facility improvements, through impact assessments and fees. Furthermore, development permit decisions rely on the coordination of development requirements, land regulations, and the availability of necessary public facilities. This is supported by establishing Level of Service (LOS) standards for key public facilities.

GOAL 6: Develop And Maintain Safe & Efficient Transportation

OBJECTIVES

I. Promote Walkable Environments and Alternative Transportation

- A. Implement recommendations from the East Cameron Corridor Study to enhance linkages within and through eastern Rockdale.
- B. Enforce sidewalk and trail construction during platting to promote walkability.
- C. Review the suitability of Ham Branch creek corridors for trails to expand alternative transportation options.
- D. Implement bike paths where feasible to encourage alternative modes of transportation.
- E. Investigate more integrated transportation options such as ride-sharing and bike rentals to reduce reliance on passenger cars.

II. Develop and Maintain Arterial and Collector Streets

- A. Create a Master Street Plan properly noted for street category and traffic movement to guide development.
- B. Review subdivision design criteria to ensure appropriate construction standards for all streets.
- C. Investigate traditional neighborhood design for more pedestrian-friendly transportation systems.

III. Upgrade Street Infrastructure

- A. Evaluate existing street construction to determine necessary widening or narrowing to meet current design criteria.

IV. Ensure Effective Street Maintenance

- A. Establish a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) that includes street maintenance for long-term durability.
- B. Annually evaluate the CIP for changing needs and funding to ensure effective street maintenance.

V. Develop H. H. Coffield Airport

- A. Seek annual TxDOT Aviation RAMP grants for airport development and maintenance.
- B. Work with area pilots to assess changing aviation needs for the airport.
- C. Investigate the possibility of runway expansion beyond 3,000 LF to accommodate growing demands.
- D. Maintain the airport to FAA standards wherever feasible to ensure safety and compliance.
- E. Consider acquiring property and developing City-owned hangars, parking spaces, and transient facilities.
- F. Collaborate with Sandow Lakes Ranch on aviation needs in the area to enhance overall aviation infrastructure.

GOAL 7: Support Public Service Excellence and Fiscal Responsibility

OBJECTIVES

I. Make Local Taxes and Services Competitive

- A. Pay down current debt to improve financial stability and reduce reliance on borrowing.
- B. Move towards a "pay as you go" model for projects to minimize long-term debt obligations.
- C. Evaluate partnering with the private sector for services like a sports complex to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.
- D. Work with local civic organizations to enhance services at low or no cost through community partnerships.

II. Expand City Utility Services

- A. Create a utility extension map to identify areas for expansion and development.
- B. Identify utility extension funding through budget allocation and the Capital Improvements Program to support expansion efforts.

III. Enhance Information Accessibility

- A. Update the City website to provide citizens with easy access to essential information and resources.
- B. Map all park locations by local, community, or regional designation to improve accessibility and awareness.
- C. Maintain a list of parks and their maintenance needs to prioritize resources and ensure upkeep.

IV. Ensure Sufficient Public Safety Staffing

- A. Staff sworn patrol officers at a ratio of 2 officers per 1,000 population to ensure adequate coverage.
- B. Staff civilian support staff at a ratio of 1.4 persons per 1,000 population to support operational needs.
- C. Provide a community services officer responsible for outreach efforts to enhance community involvement in public safety.
- D. Investigate the feasibility of bike patrol officers for community policing and enhanced mobility.
- E. Grow the canine program to have a canine on each shift to enhance detection and deterrence capabilities.
- F. Grow criminal investigation capabilities to enhance crime-solving and prevention efforts. Investigate centralized dispatch for more efficient and streamlined public safety service delivery.

V. Explore Centralized Public Safety Facility Options

- A. Review potential sites for a new centralized public safety facility to ensure strategic location and accessibility.
- B. Determine adequate sizing for a facility through professional study to accommodate current and future needs effectively.

Goal 8: Attract & Maintain a Competitive Workforce

OBJECTIVES

I. Foster a Competitive and Educated Workforce for Economic Growth

- A. Support efforts by the MDD to increase the local workforce, fostering economic growth.
- B. Collaborate with the Texas Workforce Commission to develop locally needed job skills, aligning workforce development with industry demands.
- C. Collaborate with Rockdale Independent School District (RISD), Temple College, and local businesses to develop workforce training programs tailored to local industry needs.
- D. Aggressively pursue industry recruitment and expansion efforts to create job opportunities and enhance economic vitality.
- E. Participate with the MDD in growth incentives where appropriate to stimulate economic development and attract skilled workers.
- F. Collaborate with Rockdale Independent School District to develop adult education programs and certifications, providing opportunities for lifelong learning and skill development.

II. Develop Accurate Planning Basis through Population Modeling

- A. Provide annual demographics updates to the City Council to inform planning decisions and strategies.
- B. Provide updates on regional growth rates to the City Council to ensure accurate forecasting and planning for future workforce needs.

GOAL 9: Support a Variety of Housing

OBJECTIVES

I. Accommodate Diverse Housing Options for Residents of All Income Levels

- A. Measure the percentage of varying residential zoning designations to accommodate diverse housing options.
- B. Amend current zoning designations to allow for smaller lot developments, increasing housing diversity.
- C. Use Planned Unit Developments where needed for larger scale developments to promote diverse housing options.

II. Encourage Residential Development within Areas with Adequate Public Facilities

- A. Measure the number of permits within SE Rockdale to encourage residential development in areas with adequate public facilities.
- B. Map all vacant residential property and City infrastructure to identify areas suitable for residential development.

III. Promote Mixed-Use Development

- A. Measure the presence of mixed-use development neighborhoods to promote housing diversity.
- B. Support neighborhood retail to reduce car reliance for minor trips, enhancing mixed-use development.
- C. Use Planned Unit Developments for mixed-use neighborhoods to encourage diverse housing and commercial integration.
- D. Investigate additional zoning flexibility for neighborhood development to promote mixed-use development.

