

Assessment

The housing assessment section below has been excerpted from the Waco Housing Study commissioned by the City of Waco in June 2007. (Note: Please see the Housing section of the Five Year Consolidated Plan on page 30 for city-wide assessment and goals).

Housing Assessment

Background and Purpose

The City of Waco commissioned the housing study and revitalization plan in June of 2007. The goal of the study was to establish a baseline for understanding the market conditions, housing and neighborhood stability issues and concerns facing its citizens. Four target areas were identified for detail data collection and analysis efforts including East Waco, North Waco, South Waco, and the area currently being revitalized through efforts of the Waco CDC i.e. North Central Waco. The study team sought to focus its demographic data gathering and analysis citywide, while providing a comparison of the data to that of the State of Texas and the United States. We also included comparisons among various target areas as a means of quantifying and creating a perspective on the impacts found.

While the study examined trends and neighborhood characteristics citywide, specific data for each target area was captured including field data on housing and neighborhood conditions. When developing recommendations, the more detailed data for the target neighborhoods helped to form a basis for conceptualizing recommendations on select sites as a means of illustrating how our concepts and strategies for revitalization might be carried out. It should be emphasized that these illustrations involving the specific sites are conceptual and for the most part absence of detail plans and specifications or feasibility analyses. It is our goal that the illustrations be used as a means of assisting those implementing the recommended strategies and to provide guidance to those replicating these concepts in other parts of the city wherever appropriate.

Particular emphasis has been placed on revitalizing commercial corridors as a critical component of revitalizing neighborhoods. A viable and attractive commercial corridor is crucial to the recovery of a neighborhood through which it passes. Reinvestment is not easily obtained when the first impressions of visitors and internal perceptions of residents are influenced largely by corridors characterized by deteriorated housing stock, obsolete commercial buildings, marginal businesses, and community safety issues. The following further summarizes the data collection and analysis sections of the report and the resulting recommendations for strategies and implementation.

Focus Group Sessions

A series of focus group sessions were held in Waco May 22nd through 24th, 2007 to discuss fair housing issues and to identify the community priority needs relative to housing and neighborhoods. Participants in the focus group included representatives from the City staff, local non-profit organizations, housing professionals, industry leaders, and other community representatives. Attendees were gathered by invitations sent to select residents and industry professionals. At each focus group session, issues related to the housing market and specific concerns pertaining to fair housing and neighborhood decline were discussed. These issues included inadequate dissemination of fair housing educational materials, the perception that certain areas of the city are home to a disproportionate number of the city's low-income population, the need to develop housing suitable to changing demographics in the city, lack of credit education, safety and security, economic development, living wages and lack of jobs, and predatory lending practices.

Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) Analysis

An analysis of HMDA data indicates some issues of concern in mortgage lending. The loan applications from minorities were significantly lower compared to their percentage in population in the city. The possible reasons for lower number of applications from Hispanics could be language and cultural barriers that impede them in understanding the loan applications and mortgage process. The loan origination rates of minority applicants were equivalent to those of Whites. Lack of credit or poor credit showed up to be the reason for the highest number of denials. The least success in lending was found in the refinance loan sector and the highest success was in the home purchase loan sector.

Socio-Economic Index

The Socio-Economic index highlights geographic areas indicating a concentration of attributes prevalent in fair housing issues. These attributes include high minority concentrations, older housing stock, reliance on public transportation, low income, low housing values and contract rents, a high percentage of female headed households with children, a high ratio of loans denied to loans originated, high unemployment rates, and high rates of high school dropouts. The collective concentration of these issues leads to neighborhood deterioration and market conditions that tend to impede fair housing choice. The fair housing index indicates that having high risk of fair housing related issues are concentrated in the North Waco area and the eastern census tracts of Waco.

Neighborhood Evaluation

A neighborhood evaluation was used to evaluate housing stock and neighborhood conditions in Waco citywide. The evaluation was based on an examination of the

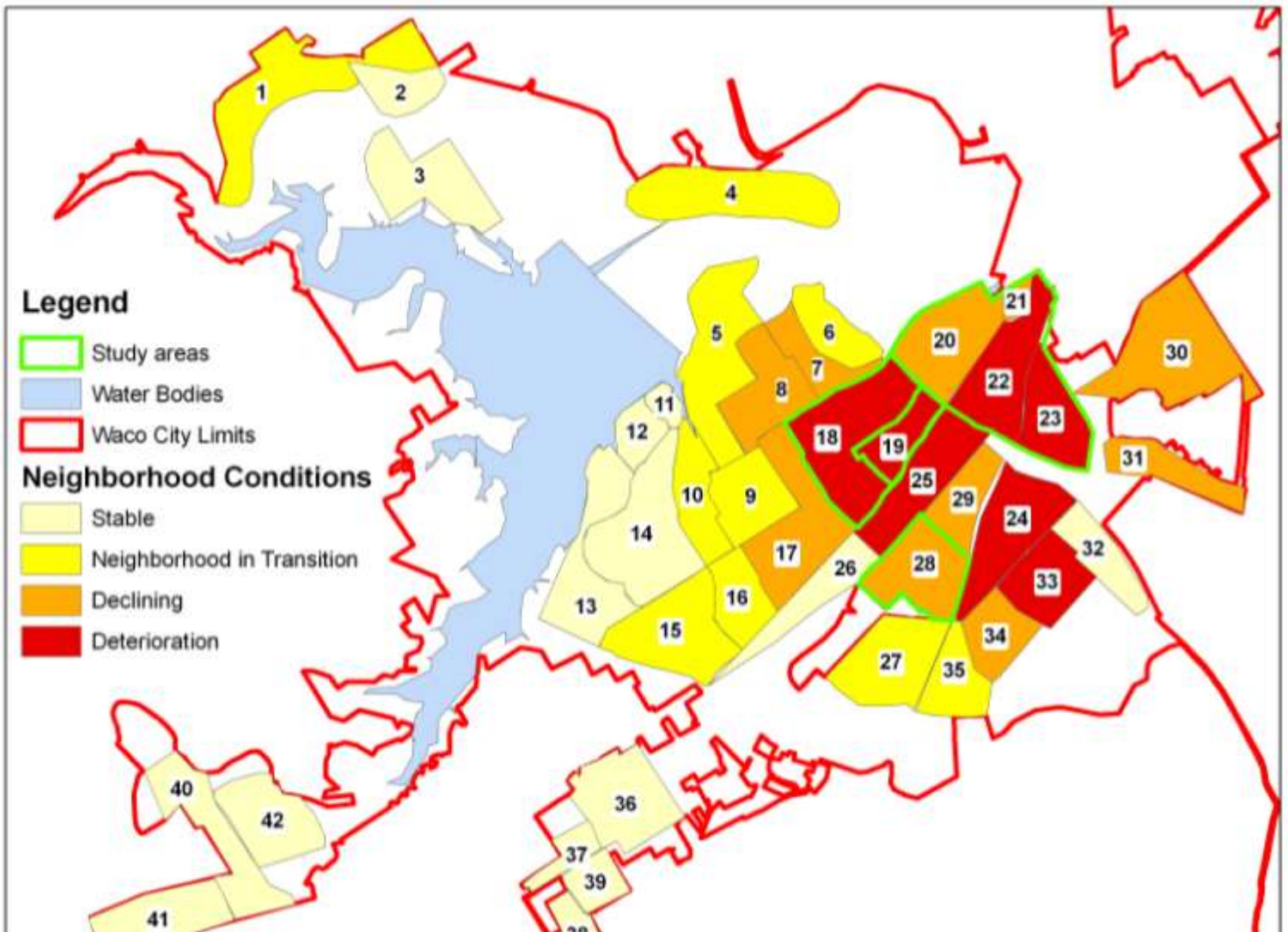
physical conditions of residential areas and qualitative and quantitative data collected from these areas. The evaluation was divided into three phases: the initial neighborhood area selection, an on-site evaluation of these neighborhood areas, and an analysis of the data collected. This allowed us to establish a baseline for existing conditions in all neighborhood areas and an opportunity to apply the strategies developed based on the target areas to other areas of the city.

Neighborhood Area: 19 (Waco CDC—North Central Waco)

The area bounded by:
 Colcord Ave.,
 W. Waco Dr.,
 Brazos River, and
 N. 17th St.

This area contains single-family and multifamily housing including some public housing. Small, dilapidated rental units are noted in this area. There is a dilapidated New Hope Baptist Church structure present in this area. There is a large vacant land at Bosque Blvd. and 4th St. Roads are in moderate condition. Sidewalks are present in some parts of the neighborhood and are in need of repairs. Overall, this neighborhood is categorized as “Deterioration”. A detailed housing condition survey for this area is provided in the Housing Conditions section.

Map 5.2: Neighborhood Condition Evaluation



Recommendations and Strategies

The recommendations generated during the planning effort are based on an overall Revitalization Program that includes **four fundamental principles**. These principals serve as a starting point for launching the revitalization program and form the basis for specific strategies to be designed and implemented in order to create change. These fundamental principals are:

First, the program for revitalization must be based on **broad strategies** that collectively address a wide range of physical, financial, social, economic, human, and policy issues that have a negative effect on the well being of the community. East Waco and other areas experiencing advanced levels of decline will require more aggressive strategies and a greater infusion of resources than other more stable areas within Waco.

Second, the process for revitalization must address needed **improvements to the community's basic attributes** of a clean and safe community, adequate delivery of city services, convenient access to quality retail and commercial services, recreation for all age groups, effective regulatory enforcement, public school systems that offer competitive programming to that of surrounding independent school districts, resource availability, and programmatic enhancements that ensure a reasonable quality of life for residents.

Third, revitalization requires that **increased resources** be identified and dedicated to revitalization through innovative programming and by identifying additional resources for implementation, including partnerships between government, business, and the community. In establishing new partnerships, emphasis must be placed on enhancing the community's social fabric, a necessary step so that the community can take more of a leadership role in the revitalization process. Community service organizations, religious institutions, residents, and other civic organizations who may have had limited involvement in revitalization efforts in the past, must be encouraged to participate in a community-wide effort aimed at improving the neighborhoods.

Fourth, revitalization requires that the implementers and policy makers directing the revitalization process make tough decisions relative to **resource targeting, leveraging of resources**, and the **priorities and timelines** associated with each activity outlined in the overall revitalization program. The disparity between resource availability and the existing level of need dictates that careful planning and consensus building must be at the forefront of the revitalization effort to ensure that priority is given to the most critical issues facing the community.

We further recommend that specific revitalization actions or strategies be designed and implemented as a basis for putting into place the four fundamental principles. The study identified levels of decline occurring citywide and in some instances that decline

was more prevalent in some neighborhoods than others. In fact, decline has become so severe in some areas that it threatens the basic fabric and character and the area's ability to sustain itself. Quality of life for the residents is disappearing and reinvestment in non-existent. In order to reverse this decline and build upon the fundamental principles, seven revitalization strategy areas have been identified.

These seven strategy areas detail a series of individual recommendations for revitalization and are presented in this section of the report. These individual recommendations should be implemented according to a time horizon most appropriate to effectuate change – that is, implementation should be broken into short, medium or long-term actions for purposes of implementation. The diagram on the following page illustrates a possible phasing of many of the recommendations. The seven strategy areas are as follows:

1. Restore the Community's Basic Attributes.
2. Enhance the Community's Image and Identity.
3. De-concentrate Poverty, Rebuild Housing and Restore Neighborhood Stability.
4. Improve Neighborhood Safety and Security.
5. Capitalize on the student housing market by redirecting new housing development to downtown.
6. Undertake Catalyst Economic Development Projects that will re-energize area reinvestment and help jumpstart revitalization efforts in declining areas.
7. Expand resources for housing and revitalization and increase the role and participation of the private sector, faith based community and educational institutions.

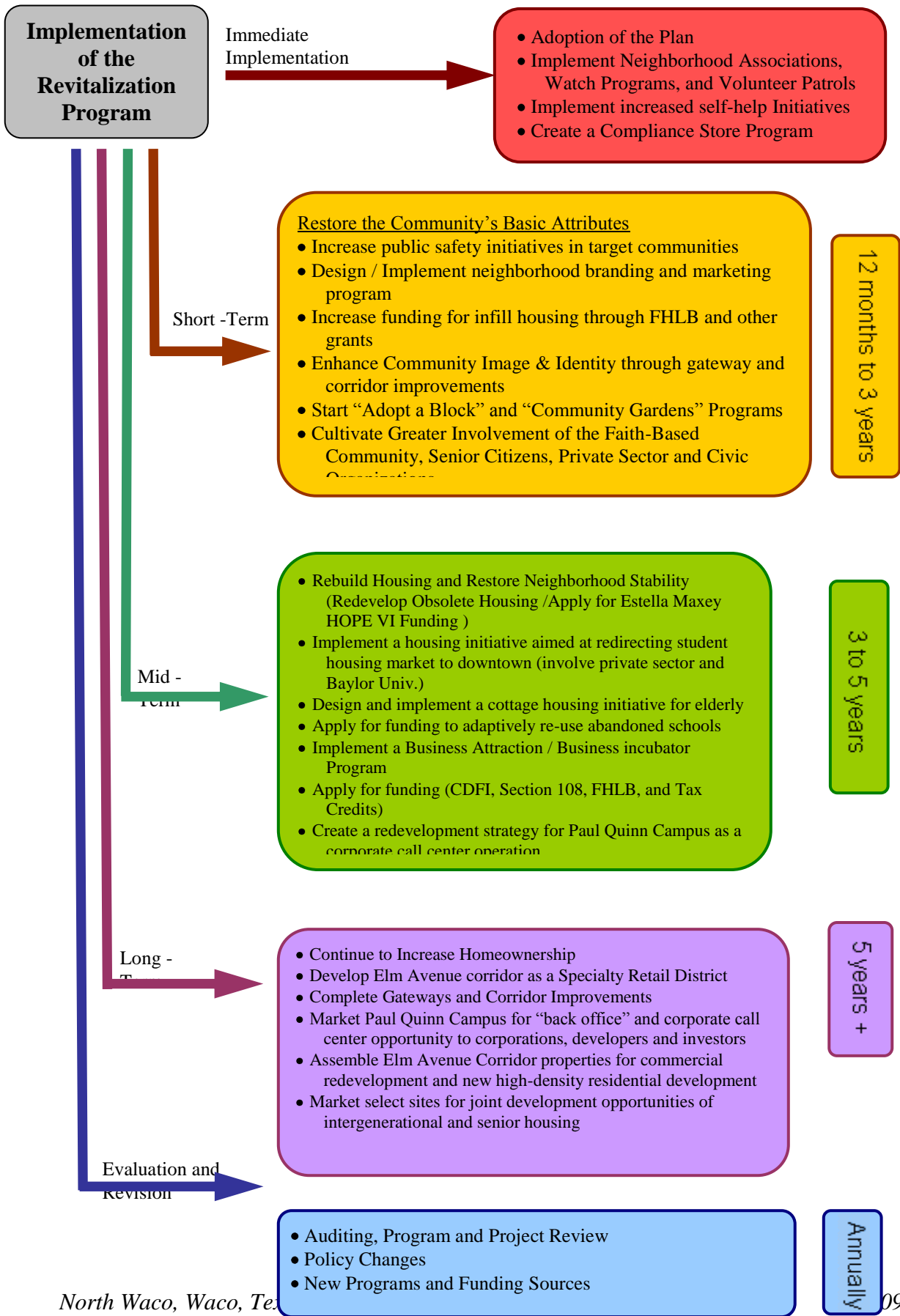
Implementation

The diagram on the following page is designed to guide implementation of the recommendations resulting from the Housing Study and Neighborhood Revitalization Plan for the City of Waco. The recommendations have been divided into categories of short term, mid term and long term for purposes of estimating the timeframes necessary to carry out the implementation program. These categories and timeframes are intended as a guide and actual timeframes may vary depending upon resources required for implementation or public policy and regulatory changes that have to be enacted before implementation can occur. We have also identified immediate actions designed to gain some initial recognition and mobilization for the revitalization program. We believe that some adoption or recognition of the plan by the City Council will underscore the importance of this effort to those who must carry out the recommendations.

The City of Waco Department of Housing and Community Development will be responsible for coordinating post-planning activities. This will include evaluation of

each recommendation to determine the feasibility of implementing recommendations based on public policies and fiscal impacts. We recognize that some recommendations are currently being implemented in this community and therefore should be evaluated in the context of expanding that service to serve a greater need. Other recommendations, while recommended to be implemented by the City, may be actions determined more appropriate for other entities to take the lead in implementation. The overall goal is to gain broader public involvement in the revitalization effort.

Finally, some recommendations will involve City participation in efforts to get the private sector and the nonprofit community energized in new initiatives such as Employer Assisted Housing, Cottage Housing for the Elderly, Modular Housing, and Intergenerational Housing. We recognize that the City may not necessarily undertake these development activities on their own, but will provide financial support with grant funding or by enacting public policy in support of these initiatives. The City will have to champion these new development concepts and leverage private sector participation in these efforts, if they are to be successful. The City's Housing and Community Development Department has been recognized with numerous awards for its outstanding service deliver to the community. Our recommendations are intended to compliment that performance.



Housing Occupancy

North Central Waco has approximately 600 homes with 190 vacant lots. The area has a higher rental rate and a lower home ownership rate than both the City of Waco as a whole and the state. However, due to the efforts of organizations like Habitat for Humanity, NeighborWorks and Waco Community Development, vacant lots are decreasing and home ownership is increasing.

	North Central Waco	Waco	McLennan County
2000 Housing Units	3663	45,863	84,560
Ownership 2000	1394	19,618	47,421
Vacant 2000	378	3522	5955
Renter %	51.3%	49.5%	37.19%
Ownership %	38.3%	42.8%	56.08%

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce; 2000 Bureau of the Census

Housing Services

Seven major housing services collaborate in the Waco Housing Coalition to focus on revitalizing several key areas of Waco, including North Central Waco. Each organization brings a unique mix of services to the coalition as stated below in the mission statements of the organizations taken from their websites.

City of Waco Housing & Community Development—The mission of the City of Waco's Housing & Community Development Services Department is to ensure that equal opportunities are available for all to live in quality housing and encourage homeownership.

Heart of Central Texas Independent Living—Heart of Central Texas Independent Living Center (HOCTIL) is dedicated to the promotion of independence for persons with disabilities for equal access and active participation in their community.

Heart of Texas Homeless Coalition—The HOT Homeless Coalition was formed for charitable and educational purposes relating to the promotion, support, development, and furtherance of rehabilitation services, resources and treatment programs for persons who are homeless in the Heart of Texas Region of the State of Texas. The services and programs include, but are not limited to, housing, crisis intervention, psychosocial rehabilitation, case management, client advocacy, and family education and support.

NeighborWorks Waco—NeighborWorks® America creates opportunities for people to live in affordable homes, improve their lives and strengthen their communities.

Waco Habitat for Humanity—Habitat for Humanity International is a nonprofit, ecumenical Christian housing ministry that seeks to provide a decent house in a decent community for all of God's people in need. Habitat invites people from all backgrounds, races and religions to build homes with partner families. Habitat for Humanity International has built more than 300,000 houses around the world, providing more than 1.5 million people in more than 3,000 communities with safe, decent, affordable shelter.

Waco Housing Authority—Today our mission is not only to provide quality, renovated housing by today's standard. We also coordinate, develop and offer cultural enrichment, child development, adult education, drug rehabilitation, and homeownership programs to enable our clients to become self-sufficient.

Waco Community Development Corporation—Waco Community Development is committed to promoting housing, community and economic development throughout Waco.

Services for the Homeless, Transitional Services and Low-income Rental

(Note: Please see the Homeless section of the Five Year Consolidated Plan on page 61 for additional city-wide assessment and goals).

In addition to the above services, Mission Waco offers services to individuals and families who are currently living without a permanent home. Mission Waco's My Brother's Keeper is a chronic homeless shelter operated at 1217 Mary Street, approximately five blocks out of the North Central Waco NRS Area. Mission Waco's Meyer's Center, two blocks outside of the NRS Area, also offers case management, emergency shelter voucher distribution, showers, laundry, hair cuts, and meals as well as job training and placement assistance, G.E.D. classes, alcohol/drug rehabilitation, and additional case management for transitional homeless.

Compassion Ministries, located three blocks outside of the NRS Area, “reintegrates homeless individuals and families and those on the verge of homelessness into permanent housing and employment” according to its website.

The Waco Housing Authority manages 11 section-8 rental units in North Central Waco. Parkside Village Apartments has 200 section-8 rental units and The Villages Apartments manages 250 section-8 rental units.

Business Assessment

North Central Waco has the potential to be a destination for diverse restaurants, music venues and boutique shopping. This potential is only partially being met and has not yet been harnessed in an organized effort to plan and implement change. In order to gain a better understanding of what currently exists in North Central Waco as well as the challenges businesses face, the NRS Development Team surveyed sixteen local businesses, asking questions to understand an overview of the businesses, customer information, plans the businesses have for the future, the perception of the neighborhood by the businesses and the community as well as the needs of the businesses (see Appendix B for survey questions). After having these conversations, the NRS Team took a driving tour of North Central Waco and recorded all existing businesses, empty buildings, churches, parks as well as nonprofit and fraternal organizations.

On March 26, 2009, five businesses from the Colcord Avenue and North 15th Street area met together to discuss the following report based on the above business owner surveys and driving survey in order to develop a strategy for future economic development in the area. The vision statement as well as the action steps and benchmarks that follow come out of the discussion with these businesses as well as community stakeholders in transportation, housing, education and social service nonprofits.

Business Survey Report

Overview of the businesses

Five North Central Waco businesses surveyed have been in business over 20 years, four have been in business between six and ten years and four have been in business less than five years. Zero North Central Waco businesses reported being in business between ten and twenty years. The Colcord and 15th area, a seven block area, has retail, car repair shops, restaurants, convenience stores and housing for senior adults. The greatest challenges the businesses face include money issues, the location in North Central Waco, marketing/keeping customers coming, and maintaining quality staff. The businesses state that their greatest opportunities include their loyal customer base, good products and service, and the growth of the community. Six of the businesses

own their buildings and 5 lease them with 1 leasing to own. (Please note: Numbers reflect repeated responses or no responses to some questions so not all numbers will add up to 16.)

Customer information

Business owners report the following number of customers through their business in a week:

- 100 or less in a week—5
- More than 100 in a week—6

Businesses report that their customer base comes from the following locations:

- The Neighborhood—5
- Greater Waco—8
- Both the Neighborhood and Greater Waco—4
- Out of Town—7
- Across North Texas—1

Plans for the future

Business owners in North Central Waco hope to maintain healthy businesses with twelve of the businesses having plans to renovate and 7 having dreams to do so. One business plans to expand to other parts of Waco and 5 hope to do so in the next five years.

Perception of the neighborhood and its impact on business

When asked their perception of the neighborhood, the businesses responded that the neighborhood—

- Is good—6
- Has improved—5
- Is so-so—1
- Is not safe—6

When asked to describe the Waco community perception of North Central Waco, they unanimously said:

- Perception of the neighborhood is bad because of crime
- People are afraid to come to North Waco

When asked the impact of the community’s perception on their business, the businesses said:

- They have a loyal customer base and so it does not impact them much—5
- The perception of crime impacts them because customers will not come—9

Needs of the business

The following list shows new businesses that both business owners and community leaders have identified as desired additions to the neighborhood:

- Grocery/Place with fresh produce
- Pharmacy
- Bank

The businesses mentioned the following items as needs that, if met, would help the business run more effectively:

- Money
- Association of businesses with educational meetings
- Better staff
- Better traffic flow/parking

Business Inventory Based on Driving Survey

The NRS Development Team created an inventory of local businesses in March 2009 through field observations, local phone listings and business surveys in order to accurately record the “retail mix” in the neighborhood. The current businesses found in North Central Waco are summarized below:

Table 1: Summary of North Central Waco Businesses, March 2009

Type	Number of Establishments	% Total Businesses
Auto Related	10	8.3
Auto Repair	4	3.3
Detail	2	1.7
Gas/Oil	4	3.3
Bank/Credit Union	1	0.8
Credit Unions	1	0.8
City/County Services	10	8.3
City Services	5	4.2
City Parks	3	2.5
County Health Services	1	0.8
Zoo	1	0.8
Clubs/Fraternal Organizations	3	2.5
Athletic Clubs	1	0.8

VFW's	2	1.7
Food Retail	8	6.7
Convenience Stores	7	5.8
Ice Cream	1	0.8
Restaurants	6	5.0
Restaurants—Barbecue	2	1.7
Restaurants—Burgers	1	0.8
Restaurants—Cafes	1	0.8
Restaurants—Ethnic	2	1.7
Home Services	4	3.3
Franchise Services	1	0.8
Home Repair	1	0.8
Storage	2	1.7
Manufacturing	1	0.8
Nonprofits	32	26.7
Churches	17	14.2
Community Development Corporations	1	0.8
Community Development—Human Capacity	3	2.5
Elderly Support & Services	2	1.7
Health Services	4	3.3
Housing	2	1.7
Museums	1	0.8
Senior Housing	2	1.7
Pawn Shops/Bail Bonds/Loan Shops	8	6.7
Bail Bonds	1	0.8
Loan Shops	2	1.7
Pawn Shops	2	1.7
Tax Services	3	2.5
Personal Services	3	2.5
Barber Shops	1	0.8
Hair Salons	2	1.7
Professional Services	2	1.7
Dental	1	0.8
Insurance	1	0.8
Retail	11	9.2
Antiques	2	1.7
Beauty Supply	1	0.8
Clothing Boutiques	4	3.3
Electronics	2	1.7
Liquor	1	0.8
Pets	1	0.8
Vacant Retail/Business Space	22	18.3
Total Establishments	120	100.0

An evaluation of the percentage of businesses categories offers some insight into the current business landscape in North Central Waco. Retail makes up 15.9% of the businesses in the neighborhood. Place this in contrast to nonprofits, which make up 26.7% of all businesses. Most of these nonprofits focus on improving the economic and human capacity of the neighborhood. Vacant retail also tells a story—18.3% of the potential retail property lies vacant.

These statistics give a surface view of deeper issues that will be addressed in later sections. Waco stakeholders believe that a priority needs to be placed on establishing new retail in the community and upgrading the existing establishments. The businesses are committed to a concerted effort in this direction, as are community development organizations, the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce and the City of Waco.

Retail and Services—Present and Potentially Needed

North Central Waco’s business community is committed and hardworking, however, they along with other community stakeholders identify the need to build up new retail. The charts below give a view of businesses that exist in the neighborhood as well as those that are missing from the business landscape.

Table 2: Retail—Present and Absent

Current Retail in North Central Waco	Absent Retail in North Central Waco
Antiques	Appliances
Beauty Supply	Art Supply
Carpet/Floors	Auto dealers
Clothing	Auto Supply
Electronics	Balloons
Gas Stations	Bike Shop
Liquor Store	Book Publishing
Nonprofits	Book Store
Pawn Shops/Loan Shops	Camera/Photo
Pet Stores	Candies and Nuts
Restaurants	Cards
Used Merchandise	Coin Shop
	Computers/Software
	Cookies
	Crafts
	Department Stores
	Drapery/Blinds
	Drug Store
	Espresso Bar/Coffee Shop
	Fabrics/Sewing
	Florists
	Formal Wear

	Framing
	Galleries
	Garden Supplies
	Gifts
	Glass
	Grocery
	Hardware
	Health Foods
	Hearing Aides
	Hobbies/Games
	Jewelry
	Kitchen Equipment
	Lamps/Lighting
	Luggage/Leather
	Linens
	Lingerie
	Medical Supply
	Musical Instruments
	Newsstand
	Office Furnishings
	Office Supply
	Optical
	Paint
	Records/Tapes/CD's
	Shoe Stores
	Sporting Goods
	Stationary
	Tobacco
	Toys
	Trophies
	Upholstery
	Variety Store
	Wallpaper

The table below identifies services that are present in the neighborhood compared to those that are still needed.

Table 3: Services—Present and Absent

Current Services in North Central Waco	Absent Services in North Central Waco
Auto Repair	Advertising

Beauty Salons/Barber Shops	Airline offices
Dentist	Answering Service
Doctor's Office	Appraisers
Educational Services	Architects/Planners
Health Clinics	Appraisers
Income Tax	Banks
Insurance Agents	Beauty Schools
Social Services	Brokers/Investment
Utility Customer Service	Car Rental
	Child Day Care
	Chiropractor
	Clock Repair
	Coin Arcades
	Collection Services
	Computer Services
	Costume Shops
	Couriers
	Credit Unions
	Dance Studio
	Delivery Services
	Dry Cleaning
	Electrical Repair
	Employment Agencies
	Funeral Services
	Graphic Design
	Health Clubs
	Hotels and Motels
	Interior Design
	Janitorial Services
	Law Offices
	Limousine Services
	Locksmiths
	Mailing Services
	Market Research
	Messenger Services
	Movie Theatre
	Package/Shipping
	Photocopy
	Photo Finishing
	Photography Studio
	Post Office
	Real Estate
	Secretarial Services
	Security/Detective Services
	Shoe Repair

	Sign Shop
	Tailoring
	Tanning Salon
	Tattoos
	Temporary Agency
	Ticket Outlets
	Title Company
	Travel Agents
	Uniform Supply
	Video Rental

Infrastructure Assessment

(Note: Please see the Infrastructure section on page 72 and the Public Spaces section on page 73 of the Five Year Consolidated Plan for city-wide assessment and goals).

Transportation Assessment

The Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Waco Transit System set policy and direct policy implementation around transportation in the City of Waco. The Metropolitan Planning Organization oversees all areas of transportation including sidewalks, bike routes, public transportation, as well as road and highway systems. The Waco Transit System oversees the functioning of the bus system in Waco.

In order to assess transportation needs in North Central Waco, the NRS Development Team interviewed Chris Evilia from the Metropolitan Planning Organization and John Henderson from Waco Transit System. In addition to this, the team road seven of the nine bus routes, surveyed bus patrons, analyzed a map outlining potential bike routes, and drove the neighborhood identifying sidewalks in need of repair or replacement. These interviews and surveys have been compiled into the following report. (The team was not able to assess the use of the informal taxi system in the community, where community residents pay each other for rides to work, shop and visit doctors.)

The NRS Development Team made the following observations while riding the bus. Waco Transit provides beautiful maps for patrons. However, they locate them solely at the downtown terminal—none of the buses ridden had route information for passengers to obtain.. Most patrons boarded the bus and asked questions of the bus driver before continuing to their seat. When asked questions, the bus drivers answered willingly and let the riders know what they needed to do to get to their destinations.

Though five of the nine routes travel through North Central Waco, riders experience some difficulty getting to other parts of town; fewer routes cover the areas farther from the center of town. One of the systems biggest limitations is that in order to use public transportation to get to and from jobs, a person from the target neighborhood

would have to work a shift that would allow them to get off no later than five or six o'clock.

The Metropolitan Planning Organization is developing plans to upgrade the current bus system in order to make it more accessible, especially to those who need it to access jobs in the community. Waco Transit hopes to double the number of buses and staff serving Waco so that the buses can run every thirty minutes instead of every hour at a cost of approximately \$800,000. The transit system also hopes to have buses run later in the evening. Waco Transit may set up a park and ride system where someone can park on one side of town and ride the bus to another if route expansion is not feasible beyond Loop 340.

In addition, Waco transit would like to upgrade bus stops by providing shelters with better lighting, solar powered cell phones for emergencies and GPS technology offering bus location information. They would also like to add bus kiosks at high traffic points with the same technology as well as other resources. In order to service the additional bus routes and buses the transit system would add a satellite station at Richland Mall.

When interviewed, Chris Evilia of the Metropolitan Planning Organization stated that the total cost for all of the above upgrades for the entire city would be approximately \$3 million dollars, providing upgrades and services for 10 years. Evilia compared these costs to the cost of laying one lane of China Spring Highway both directions between Waco and China Springs. The same \$3 million would pay for five miles of highway improvement on China Spring Highway.

Along with working with Waco Transit on developing plans for the bus system, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) develops plans for sidewalks and bike paths in the community. Safe Routes to School works with the MPO to develop plans for sidewalks and bike paths. The MPO has developed a map showing potential bike routes and their safety ratings through out the city of Waco. The NRS Development team also performed a driving assessment of North Central Waco sidewalks, noting existing sidewalks, sidewalk condition and areas that need sidewalk on a map (see Appendix D). The Team utilized these maps to outline sidewalks and bike routes that would provide access between businesses on Colcord, specifically, and downtown to develop the attached action steps and benchmarks.

Parks and Recreation

The City of Waco has recommended the development of a new recreation complex with expanded parking at the current Dewey Park site (current parking at the Dewey site does not meet the current demands of the recreation center and gym) or at another site agree upon by community stakeholders. Jeff Henderson at Waco Parks and Recreation wrote the following proposal in 2009 for the current Dewey Park site.

Dewey Community Recreation Center

915 North Ninth Street

\$6,000,000

Dewey Community Recreation Center is located within the Brook Oaks neighborhood. The facility is two separate buildings adjacent to each other. One building houses the administrative offices and 2 multi purpose rooms. The other building is a pre-engineered structure housing a gymnasium. The funding of \$6 million dollars would be enough to demolish the administrative building to make room for a new adjacent parking lot. The current gymnasium structure would be stripped down to the structural elements and a new footprint would be designed around the gymnasium incorporating the structural elements of the gymnasium. The project would allow for an increase in the square footage of the building and house all of the recreation center amenities in one facility. This will allow for a uniformed and identifiable entrance, defined circulation routes and additional programmable spaces. Additional activity areas provided with this renovation would include classroom facilities, locker rooms, wellness and fitness area, adequate spectator seating in the gymnasium and dance rooms. The renovation would also allow the center to be more energy efficient with new technologies in lighting, windows and doors.

This is a recreation center that has a strong service orientation to the specific neighborhood and this renovation would help facilitate promoting active lifestyles, with the large space and uniformity of the facility would allow the participation in the after school, summer camp, and recreation programs to service a larger number of users. The social benefit is the increased area for community gatherings, and educational opportunities. Being able to host larger athletic events, special events and many different gatherings will provide an economic impact not currently available. The project timeline would be similar to other recreation center renovation projects of 18 – 20 months.

Input from Community Interviews

The Greater Waco Downtown Development Initiative has been expanded to include North Central Waco. Chris McGowan at the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce describes North Central Waco as key to the revitalization of Greater Downtown Waco. He identifies the historic nature of the community as well its diversity and unique blend of businesses as an asset to build from in the development of more businesses in the area. Connecting those who will be choosing to live downtown to the businesses on Colcord and 15th will provide needed access to thriving businesses for those downtown as well as needed patrons for businesses in North Central Waco.

The business climate in the neighborhood, both the potential and challenges of area businesses, reflects the overall perceptions and experiences of the community at large. North Central Waco is a community in transition. Stakeholders who are involved in the community see the positive change of new houses and upgraded businesses. They describe the commitment of the North Central Waco community members to bringing positive change in the community. However, one community stakeholder stated that he believes the community is dying based on perceptions developed during the 1980s. These observations underline the challenge businesses face in overcoming community perception of crime and community decline. Those who would invest in the neighborhood are the ones least likely to be aware of the current renewal.

Finally, leaders in transportation and social service nonprofits describe the impact of transportation on the business climate of the community. The area has the advantage of five out of nine city bus routes traveling through the community bringing potential patrons from other parts of the community to the area. The bus routes need to be expanded to reach further into the community and the buses need to run more frequently in order to for the system to really benefit the area, however. The area's sidewalks need significant improvement in order to make the area pedestrian friendly as well. In addition, Waco Drive, the southern boundary of the neighborhood, needs to be widened to six lanes from four based on assessments done by the Metropolitan Transportation Organization. This change to Waco Drive would drive many businesses out of their retail space. This challenge also provides an opportunity for the Colcord business district, because these businesses could potentially move to a revived Colcord business area, bringing new life and more customers to the area.