

Opportunities and Constraints

Opportunities

During the interviews, community stakeholders identified over 40 assets (see Appendix E) in North Central Waco. The community is connected to downtown and identified by members of the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce as key to revitalization of the Greater Waco Downtown area. North Central Waco, a historic neighborhood, boasts diversity in architecture, socio economic status and ethnicity. It has active neighborhood associations that invest in the community. Nonprofits have invested in the area bringing hope to the community through new homes, job training, youth programming, housing for low-income seniors and educational initiatives. Small businesses have captured the vision of revitalization and are committed to both economic development in the area and to serving neighborhood members. The community has empty lots scattered throughout the community that provide opportunity for new home and business construction. The Family Health Center provides health care for low-income individuals and families, but also owns land that it is committing to multi-use development projects. The local schools have also invested in the lives of community families and have been rated at least Academically Acceptable for two years in a row. All of these assets create an environment that is ripe for revitalization.

In addition to the organizational assets of the community, neighborhood members as well as outsiders describe the neighborhood as family-oriented with a strong sense of neighborhood pride and community. Middle-income community members are moving into the neighborhood both to contribute to the process of revitalization and to benefit from the central location of the community. The city also supports the neighborhood's desire to change and community members have the political will to pursue the needed revitalization.

Community members identify several needed services that would help the community rebuild. The community has one credit union, Waco Federal Credit Union, but needs a bank that is willing to both place a branch in the community and invest financially, not just in nonprofit work in the community, but also in the infrastructure and in community businesses. The neighborhood needs a pharmacy and a grocery store with reasonable prices and healthy food options. With its proximity to downtown, the neighborhood could be home to architects, artists, lawyers and possibly a movie theatre. The business community in particular would like to see the community focus on developing the arts and ethnic culture.

The community has over 30 nonprofits that are working on revitalizing the community. Churches, community development corporations, organizations that develop human capacity, elderly support services, health services, adult education and

senior housing groups are cooperating to strengthen community. These organizations are poised to walk along side community residents and businesses in their efforts to revitalize the neighborhood.

Community stakeholders identified the following development projects that they would like to see funded. Family Health Center, Waco Community Development and Mission Waco are collaborating with community members to develop a mixed-use development on property owned by the health center. Housing nonprofits have the need to fund land acquisition, building and rehabilitating houses, economic development projects, as well as free tax services and housing counseling. Human capacity nonprofits need funding for teen and adult job training. The community needs a new recreation center to provide for the needs of neighborhood youth as well as provide an incentive for more stable families to move into the neighborhood. Businesses hope to renovate their properties and tear down old buildings in order to improve the capacity for the community to attract new businesses. Businesses also need sidewalks and bike paths in order to better connect the community with downtown. Two local churches are hoping to develop child development programs that will provide childcare for working families in the neighborhood. Adult education organizations need help with scholarships for GED exam fees.

Constraints

Community stakeholders identified approximately 30 challenges that the community faces—some of these challenges are also opportunities, such as vacant land. North Central Waco has been identified since the 70s with drug dealing, prostitution and other crime. Although the neighborhood continues to grow and revitalize, the perception of crime still remains with Waco community members who do not regularly enter North Central Waco. The perception of crime prevents businesses from locating in the neighborhood, challenges area businesses to retain customers and prevents stable families from moving to the area.

Along with the crime, run down housing stock and abandoned buildings create an impression of overall neglect. These buildings create challenges for economic development because they have to either be torn down to build new structures or remodeled. Additional, code enforcement would help to some degree. Banks invest in housing, but have not yet invested in the economic development piece. The neighborhood lacks internal financing capability for these projects because of the low income levels of many of its members.

Businesses in the community, impacted by the perception of crime and decay also struggle with lack of marketing and no existing relationship with downtown businesses and clients. Many of their buildings need renovation but most do not have enough money to reinvest into the infrastructure of the business. At the same time

CDBG funds are limited and shrinking for the City of Waco. Greater need is being identified with fewer resources to revitalize.

Despite these constraints, North Central Waco community stakeholders are committed to the revitalization process, and the change process is gaining momentum as houses are built and remodeled and businesses collaborate. Neighborhood associations also have more hope and are gaining membership. North Central Waco appears to be moving toward a tipping point of profound change.

Economic Empowerment with Performance Measures and Benchmarks

Housing Action Plan & Performance Measures

The housing coalition in Waco agreed on the following actions steps and measures at their meeting on March 2, 2009.

Actions	Benchmark - 1 Year	Benchmark - 5 year
Create more owner occupied housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build 7-10 homes for low to middle income families • Build 1-3 homes for market rate families • Remodel 2-4 homes for low to middle income families • Remodel 1-3 rental homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of vacant lots will decrease by 25. • Build mixed income developments on 4th and 5th Streets between Waco Drive and Bosque Avenue • Homes that have been built or remodeled will have held or increased their value when resold.
Educate families about home ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counsel 50 families in the neighborhood • Counsel 100 families outside of the neighborhood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a post ownership class that incorporates training about being a neighbor
Build Collaborations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with the City of Waco to build incentives for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Affordable homes ○ Middle income homes • Implement watch programs and volunteer patrols 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build two 4-story buildings on land behind the Brook Oaks Senior Center with first floor retail and niche restaurants, with second and third floors mixed-income

		<p>condos and apartments in collaboration with Family Health Center, Mission Waco, and local businesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop more mixed income blocks with multiple builders.
<p>Improve existing housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and complete 6 projects/year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community Service Projects ○ COW - Rehab/Reconstruct ○ Habitat for Humanity • Improve the quality of 3 rental homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a home repair program with financial aid for low income families.

Business Action Steps & Performance Measures

After reviewing the business assessment above at their March 26, 2009 meeting, the five Colcord and 15th businesses took time to develop a plan for the direction they would like to see the neighborhood businesses take. These businesses want to create a business district that capitalizes on the existing diversity in the community, the historic nature of the neighborhood and the unique flavor that already exists in the shops and restaurants. The group suggested developing an area similar to Deep Ellum in Dallas, Texas, which is an arts, music and ethnic food district. With this in mind the group discussed actions steps to take to improve the business identity of the community.

July 7, 2009

The following action steps and benchmarks combine the collective insight of the area businesses as well as local leaders in transportation, education, housing, social service nonprofits and community organizations (see Appendix E for notes of the meeting of Colcord and 15th area businesses). These action steps and benchmarks were approved by the local businesses at their July 7, 2009 meeting.

Actions	Benchmark - 1 Year	Benchmark - 5 year
Establish a distinct identity in the neighborhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a name for the business district • Develop a slogan that communicates the identity the businesses want to establish • Add signs that show what businesses are present and connect the identity of the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build identifiable entrances to the business district • Install unique lighting that unites the area, provides safety and provides a unique identity for the area • Establish annual events that attract customers to the area's businesses • Create a focal point in the neighborhood that draws people to the businesses
Improve the appearance of the neighborhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pull weeds • Cut grass especially for vacant businesses • Plant flowers • Work together to pick up trash 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant trees • Do façade upgrades that would unite the community with façade appearances and improve the

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demolish dilapidated buildings 	<p>look of the neighborhood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade occupied buildings to improve business capacity and appearance • Install unique lighting that unites the area, provides safety and provides a unique identity for the area • Demolish and/or renovate old buildings which are eyesores
<p>Improve the perception and reality of safety in the neighborhood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with building owners and managers to keep the area clean and manicured • Initiate an annual Taste of North Central Waco that attracts visitors outside of North Central Waco 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install unique lighting that unites the area, provides safety and provides a unique identity for the area • Improve presence of police in the area in order to open at night • Build relationships with area banks, investors and potential customers taking leaders on driving/walking tours of the neighborhood in order to educate them
<p>Improve the business capacity of current businesses in the neighborhood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with businesses to budget for word of mouth advertising • Develop ways for businesses to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade occupied buildings to current code standards • Improve the traffic flow for clients to provide more

	<p>advertise each other including an exchange of business cards and a cartoon map that highlights area businesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add signs that show what businesses are present and connect the identity of the community • Determine means to better utilize existing parking spaces • Work with the Chamber of Commerce to develop marketing programs that target workers in adjacent neighborhoods, special events, and promotions that draw patrons from outside the neighborhood • Develop relationships between North Central Waco businesses and the Small Business Development Center at McLennan Community College 	<p>parking and more space on street to attract more clients</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the number of off-street parking spaces needed and develop a plan to address the need • Make it possible to open at night with lights • Improve presence of police in the area in order to open at night
<p>Attract new businesses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add signs that show what businesses are present and connect the identity of the community • Collaborate to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade vacant buildings to make them business ready • Build two 4-story buildings on land behind the Brook

	<p>maintain the appearance of the area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a 3-story medical building on land adjacent to Family Health Center with first floor health-related retail, second floor medical clinic and third floor dental 	<p>Oaks Senior Center with first floor retail and niche restaurants, with second and third floors mixed-income condos and apartments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make it possible to open at night with use of lights and other improvements • Improve presence of police in the area in order to open at night • Invite in businesses that sell jewelry, arts, antiques, ethnic food more trendy clothing • Recruit more businesses with a higher number of employees • Recruit businesses from areas of the community where neighborhood transition will make it difficult for businesses to thrive e.g. Businesses from Waco Drive or antique shops from downtown
<p>Develop an association of businesses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a name for the business association and district • Set up regular meeting dates and times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add ten new area businesses to existing North Central Waco business association • Develop a working relationship with

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect business association with Small Business Resource Center at McLennan Community College 	the Downtown Merchants' Association
Improve the walkability of the business district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean up sidewalk areas to reduce hazards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build comfortable walking spaces by improving sidewalks • Plant trees for shaded sidewalks • Add new sidewalks where indicated on the sidewalk study map (see Appendix D)
Make an intentional connection between Colcord and 15 th businesses and downtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start developing relationships with downtown businesses through events like Taste of North Central Waco • Have the president of the North Central Waco Business Association attend the meeting of the Downtown Merchant's Association quarterly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build/improve sidewalks on routes indicated in the transportation section (see Appendix D map) • Add bike routes along the routes listed above • Expand the projected downtown trolley system to include North Central Waco • Include a stop for projected Brazos water taxi at Colcord

Infrastructure Action Steps & Performance Measures

The NRS Development Team created the following actions steps and benchmarks in cooperation with Chris Evilia of the Metropolitan Planning Organization based on interviews with Mr. Evilia and Mr. Henderson at Waco Transit System and with Earl Stinnett and Jeff Henderson from Waco Parks and Recreation.

Transportation & Parks Action Steps and Benchmarks

Actions	Benchmark – 1 Year	Benchmark – 5 year
Utilize the existing bus system to the fullest capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep bus maps and schedules on buses • Place bus maps and schedules at prominent destinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add bus pullouts to bus stop areas for additional safety • Build shelters every mile with lights, solar powered cell phones and electronic reporting systems with GPS technology • Build kiosks at high traffic areas with the above technology as well as additional information and resources
Increase the capacity of the bus system to serve a larger population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend existing bus times until midnight with buses running every hour for workers who work afternoon and night shifts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase bus routes to serve more outlying areas where jobs exist for individuals in North Central Waco • Add a satellite station at Richland Mall for routes that do not return to the main station • Increase the frequency of buses stopping at bus stops to every 15 minutes during peak hours and every half hour

		during non-peak hours
Connect the neighborhood with downtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build/rebuild sidewalks along Colcord Drive from 18th to 15th Street, on 15th Street from Colcord to Bosque, on Bosque from 15th to 11th, on 11th from Bosque to Washington and on Washington from 11th to the River Walk (see map in Appendix D). • Outline bike paths on city streets along the route listed above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build/rebuild sidewalks on 12th from Bosque to Washington Avenue and on 11th from Washington Avenue to Austin Avenue (See map in Appendix D). • Build/rebuild sidewalks on Austin Avenue from 11th to the River Walk. • Outline bike paths on city streets along the routes listed above.
Improve the walkability of the neighborhood, especially to local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build/rebuild sidewalks along Colcord and 15th Street • Build/rebuild sidewalks along path to downtown as indicated above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build/rebuild sidewalks along 18th Street • Build/rebuild sidewalks along Waco Drive • Build/rebuild sidewalks connecting Waco Drive and 18th Street with Downtown • Build rebuild sidewalks outlined on map in Appendix D
Build a new recreation center at the Dewey Park site similar to the proposal in the above assessment (Please see the 2004 Revision of the 2000 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demolish the administrative building to make room for a new adjacent parking lot • Strip the current gymnasium structure down to 	

	<p>the structural elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a new footprint around the gymnasium incorporating the structural elements of the gymnasium allowing for an increase in the square footage of the building and housing of all of the recreation center amenities in one facility. • Create uniform and identifiable entrance, defined circulation routes and additional programmable spaces • Include classroom facilities, locker rooms, wellness and fitness area, adequate spectator seating in the gymnasium and dance rooms • The center will be built to be more energy efficient with new technologies in lighting, windows and doors 	
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Appendix

Appendix A. Focused Conversation Protocol for Area Stakeholders

Focused Conversation Protocol

Topic: The current work the organization is doing to revitalize North Waco and what the organization envisions in the future.

Objectives:

- To understand the current work the organization is doing to revitalize North Waco and what the organization envisions in the future.
- To build a beginning relationship and leave feeling that we are working on a project bigger than any one group.

Opening: I am working at Waco Community Development on a neighborhood revitalization strategy that will pull together the work of many of the groups in the area. I understand that you have a lot of experience/interest in the revitalization of this neighborhood. I would like to have a conversation with you about what you see already happening in the community and what you envision for the future that could be a part of a larger revitalization strategy.

Questions:

1. What key things do you observe when you walk or drive around North Waco?
2. What kinds of changes have happened in the past few years?
3. How do you feel about the direction the neighborhood is taking?
4. What strengths do you see?
5. What challenges do you see the neighborhood facing?
6. What is your organization doing?
7. What do you see other organizations doing?
8. Where are you collaborating?
9. What gaps do you see in services to the neighborhood that you feel need to be addressed?
10. Ten years from now in this neighborhood, what headlines would you like to see in the newspaper about North Waco? What role do you anticipate your organization playing in these changes?
11. What current projects need additional funding?
12. What do you hope to accomplish in the next five years that could contribute to a community-wide effort to revitalize North Waco?

Closing: Thank you for your time. I am grateful to see what your organization is accomplishing in North Waco and look forward to working with you further.

Survey Questions for Local Business

December 2008

Compiled by Beth Kilpatrick, Alexis Cooper, Mike Stone, and Carrie Schoenert

Introductory Questions

1. How long have you been in business?
2. What is your primary service/what do you primarily sell?
3. What are your goals/visions for your business?
4. Greatest challenges to the success of your business?
5. What are the greatest opportunities for your business?

Convening Questions

6. How do you currently interact with other businesses/business owners in the neighborhood?
7. Do you ever work with the Greater Waco, Hispanic, or African-American Chamber of Commerce?
8. Are you interested in coming together with other businesses to start a local business association (e.g., to unite forces for better advertising)? If no, why? If yes, what would you hope to accomplish together?

Customer Related Questions

9. How many customers come through your business in a week?
10. Are your primary customers from the neighborhood and/or Greater Waco?

Future Plans

11. Do you have plans to update/renovate the building? If no, what would make you decide to update/renovate your building? If yes, what are you hoping to do? Do you feel that you have access to adequate funding to do this?
12. Do you have plans to expand to a different location?

Perception Questions

13. What is your perception of this neighborhood?
14. What would others say of this neighborhood?
15. How does this perception affect your business?
16. What is the crime level?
17. What kind of family heritage do you have in Waco?

General Questions

18. Do you own or lease your building?
19. What kind of other businesses located in the general area would help your business?

20. What could help you run your business more effectively?
21. Have your business sales increased or decreased in the last 12 months? Why do you think this is happening?

Colcord and 15th Meeting of Businesses
Thursday, March 26th
Meeting Notes

Present:

Britt's Burger Barn

- Britt Edwards, 1700 Colcord, 235-9003, brittsburgerbarn@yahoo.com

Brook Oaks Senior Residence

- Lisa Morquecho, 1725 Colcord, 754-6000, 0942@ncr.org

D's Mediterranean

- Nizam and Diane Issa, , 1503 Colcord, 754-6709, dianerissa@yahoo.com

The Hook Up

- Antonio Plump, 1726 Colcord, 753-0570
- Felicia Silva, 1726 Colcord, 753-0570, felicia876@hotmail.com

Show and Tell Antiques

- Milton Talbert, 1525 Morrow, 752-5372, antiques@showandtellwaco.com

Greater Waco Chamber

- Alexis Cooper
- Chris McGowan

Waco Community Development

- Beth Kilpatrick, 1624 Colcord, 235-7358, beth_kilpatrick@baylor.edu
- Walker Moore
- Mike Stone, Waco Community Development

Background:

After introductions, the group discussed the results from the survey of businesses as well as a survey of all North Central Waco businesses completed by Beth Kilpatrick taken while driving through the neighborhood. The group discussed the following questions (Answers to the questions are in *italics*):

Questions:

Now that we have taken a look at these reports, let's go around the room and each identify one thing that stands out to us on this report.

- *The perception of neighborhood crime does not reflect the reality of crime.*
- *Neighborhood businesses need to be representing each other to get the word out.*
- *The current businesses are repetitive—we need to bring in more types of businesses.*
- *We need to bring older/empty businesses up to code and that's expensive.*

- *Lighting, appearance, parking and perception of safety in the evening are challenges.*

Do you feel that these reports accurately reflect our North Central Waco Community?

The report accurately reflects the nature of the business community in the area.

What strengths do you identify in our community from this? *See the discussion below.*
What challenges do you see our business community facing? *See the discussion below.*

Visioning—Getting the End in Sight

After discussing the reports, the group described their dream of how the business community in the neighborhood will look in the next few years. The group’s list is detailed below.

- *Maintain the uniqueness of the neighborhood—perhaps develop an arts and dining district with music venues.*
- *Develop a name for the district.*
- *Develop an identity that is unique for Waco—like “Keep Austin Weird”—Sort of a “Deep Ellum” of Waco.*
- *Have identifiable entrances to the neighborhood.*
- *Market—Learn to budget for word of mouth advertising—Advertise for each other.*
- *Improve the appearance of the neighborhood—manicured—well maintained.*
- *Improve the connection to downtown.*
- *Develop similar design for business facades—something that ties the businesses together in a unified whole.*
- *Beautify the area.*
- *Restore old buildings and upgrade the décor.*
- *Install unique lighting.*
- *Improve the traffic flow for clients—more parking and street space so that there is space to attract more clients.*
- *Make comfortable walking spaces.*
- *Add signs that show what is around.*
- *Make it possible to be open at night.*
- *Bring in stores that focus on merchandise such as jewelry, arts, antiques, ethnic food, more trendy clothing.*
- *Fix up AJs for an Art Boutique with different art booths.*
- *Get rid of old buildings that are eyesores.*
- *Morrow and 16th offer potential for development as well as Colcord between 15th and 18th.*
- *Might be important to include El Charro Tapatio in the conversations (17th and Waco Drive).*

Current Reality—What are we working with?

As the group dreamed of what North Central Waco businesses could be, the group looked at its current reality by answering the following questions. (Answers are in *italics*.)

What strengths does this neighborhood offer the community?

- *Diversity*
- *Active neighborhood associations*
- *Uniqueness*
- *Artsy nature*
- *Good ethnic food*
- *Some space available*
- *Closeness to downtown*

What are our challenges?

- *Perception of crime*
- *Lack of marketing*
- *Parking*
- *Looks*
- *Building condition*
- *Safety of business*
- *No existing support from downtown*
- *Lack of financial resources*

What benefits do you see in trying to follow through on a plan to develop this dream?

- *Seeing daylight—increasing the positive perception of the area*
- *Growth*
- *More money coming into the neighborhood and the businesses*
- *Increased strength*
- *More people in the neighborhood*
- *Being able to leave an imprint on the character of the community—bringing positive change*

What will it cost us in this process?

- *Money*
- *Time*
- *Hard work*
- *The potential of losing our neighborhood identity as other businesses move in*

Commitment—To what are we committing?

To close, we discussed the action steps we need to take first. The following list details those steps:

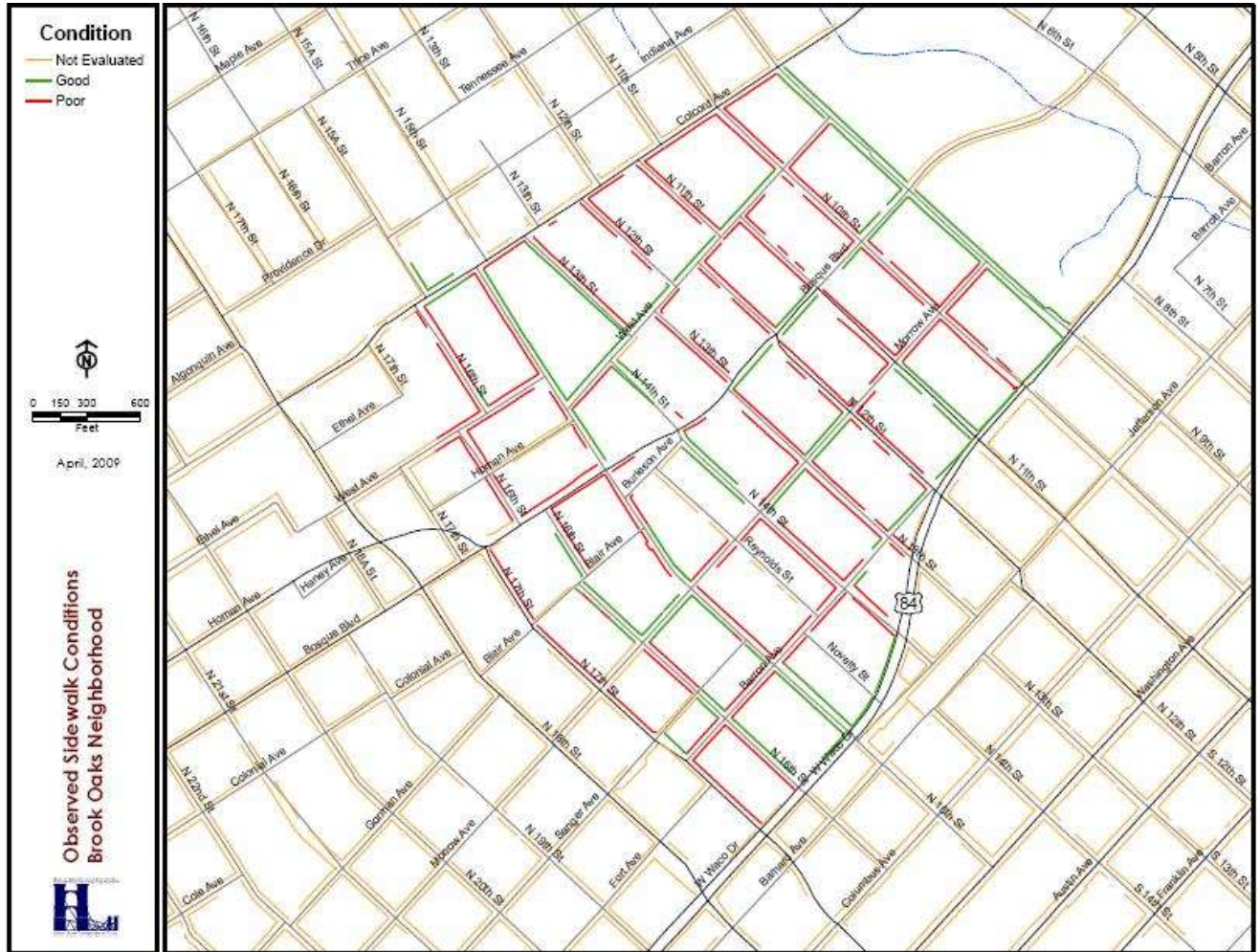
- Establish and identity—branding, e.g. Northside
- Marketing—Work on marketing each other’s businesses
- Face lifts
- Attract new businesses
- Establish a regular meeting time
- Develop an association of businesses

Thank you for attending.

We look forward to the next meeting.

Appendix D: Sidewalk Condition Assessment Map

Please note: Gaps in lines on the map indicate that sidewalks do not exist in that area.



Appendix E: Community Assets List

The following assets were gleaned from the community stakeholder interviews. Assets are listed in order of their appearance in the interviews.

1. North Waco is key for revitalization of the Great Downtown Area
2. Mission Waco Theatre
3. Green's Transmission
4. Diverse Income
5. Diverse House Styles
6. New Houses
7. Brook Oaks Senior Residence
8. Mission Waco
9. Waco CD
10. Sense of Community
11. Sense of family
12. Habitat for Humanity
13. Super Plaza Grocery
14. D's Mediterranean Restaurant
15. Family Health Center
16. Parent-Teacher Relationships
17. Mission Waco's Park
18. Diversity in Ethnicity
19. Dewey Park
20. Intentional Neighboring
21. Sue Sadosky at Parkside
22. 4th and 5th Street Developments
23. Willingness to Change/Political will to change
24. Less Prostitution
25. New Businesses
26. Hip Hop Shops
27. World Cup Café
28. Investment of Landlords in upgrades
29. Elementary Schools
30. Brook Oaks Neighborhood Association
31. Churches
32. Historical houses
33. History
34. Britt's Burger Barn
35. Zoo
36. Better perception of crime
37. Clearing out behind Villages
38. City is behind the neighborhood and willing to consider creative solutions
39. Vacant land

40. Parental involvement growing at schools
41. Family interactions in the community
42. Potential funding from people living in Parkside Village and the Villages
43. Friendly people
44. Investment in the neighborhood like the building at Calvary and Brook Oaks
45. People Care
46. People are committed to the neighborhood
47. Good layout of streets
48. Closeness to downtown
49. Downtown development creeping toward Waco Drive