

Comprehensive Master Plan Update 2020

The Comprehensive Master Plan Update is a compilation of the work done by two committees appointed by Blanco's City Council. The first committee (Martha Herden, Wayne Gosnell, Ginger Faught, David Smith, Barbra Hodges, Keith Domke) convened in 2016 and reviewed and assessed the 2005 Comprehensive master Plan goals. In 2020 a second committee was formed (Martha Gosnell, Pamela Capps, Susan Moore) to reassess the accomplishments and goals of the 2005 document and the work done by the first committee.

The following is an updated assessment of where the City of Blanco stands in regards to the 2005 Comprehensive Master Plan. Demographic statistics have been updated in red.

The questionnaire distributed in 2005 was, once again, distributed to citizens for their input. Due to the Covid Pandemic, no "townhalls" were conducted. A summary of the survey results is included.

Updates to the Narrative section and Implementation Section of the 2005 plan are in red to make it easy to see what the City has (and has not) accomplished in the past 15 years. The 2005 Plan was reviewed by the 2016 committee to identify specific recommendations made in the Plan. Both sections of the Plan were analyzed. The implementation section of the Plan contained 150 specific recommendations. 134 specific recommendations were identified in the Narrative section most, but by no means all, of which were duplicated in the Implementation sections of the Plan. The 2020 committee repeated the process.

Updated Sections:

- **Demographic Analysis**
- **Public Input**
- **Land Use**
- **Community Development**
- **Downtown Revitalization**
- **Historic Preservation**

Appendix:

- Survey results

Submitted by

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Sept. 4, 2020

Demographic Analysis

« Introduction
(/masterplan/introduction)

Table of Contents (/masterplan)

Public Input (/masterplan/public-input)
»

Introduction

The following report is a comprehensive profile of Blanco that includes information on key social and economic statistics such as population growth, industries, housing and workforce trends that are key to understanding Blanco. The purpose of this report is to provide community leaders with unbiased information about strengths and challenges of the community for strategic discussions about the future of Blanco. The analysis is divided into four parts: demographic and socioeconomic factors, employment and industry, infrastructure and transportation linkages, and quality of life.

All of the data collected for this analysis was compiled from published information including federal, state, and local government agencies and private sources.

Updated statistical information is in red

Demographic and Socioeconomic Factors

The most important resource available to a community is its people. As a result, gathering and analyzing data on the population to which the city is responsible is a critical function for knowing and understanding the community. This includes an understanding of the current and projected growth of the community, a socio and demographic profile of the people, and a brief review of data to demonstrate how the community lives.

Population Estimates and Projections

According to the 2000 Census, the City of Blanco grew from 1,238 in 1990 to 1,505 in 2000 reflecting an increase of 21.6 percent. In comparison, Blanco County grew 41 percent during the 90's, as evident by the new residential communities built primarily to the south of Blanco.

Table 2-1: 2000 Census Population Estimates

	1980 Census	1990 Census	2000 Census	Numerical Change 1990- 2000	Percent Change 1990- 2000
City of Blanco		1,238	1,505	267	21.6
Blanco County	4,681	5,972	8,418	2,446	41.0

	2010 Census	2018 Est Census	Numerical Change 2000- 2018 (2000-2010)	Percent Change 2000- 2018 (2000-2010)
City of Blanco	1739	Not available	(234)	(15.5)
Blanco County	10495	11702	3284	39

Source: US Census Bureau, DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics

The development of basic population estimates and projections between Census years is a challenging task. This important factor in population analysis has been complicated in that regional, state and federal population figures do not seem to completely capture or may overstate the impact of new and planned growth in the area. This analysis is further complicated by the fact that population researchers employ different methods for preparing population estimates as evident in Tables 2-2 and 2-3.

According to the Texas State Data Center, since 2000, the population in the City has continued to grow at an average 2.4 percent annually, nearly pacing the growth in the County. The current population estimate, January 2003 is 1,613 for the City and 9,040 in the County.

Table 2-2: City and County Population Estimates

	2001	2002	2003	Numerical Change 2000-2003	Percent Change 2000-2003
City of Blanco	1,564	1,585	1,613	108	7.2
Blanco County	8,690	8,910	9,040	622	7.4

Source: Texas State Data Center, October 2003, Total Population Estimates for Texas Counties and Places

	2001	2010	2017	2018	Numerical Change 2001-2018	Percent Change 2001-2018
City of Blanco	1564	1739	2027	2079	515	33%
Blanco County	8,690	10497	11610	11725	3035	35%

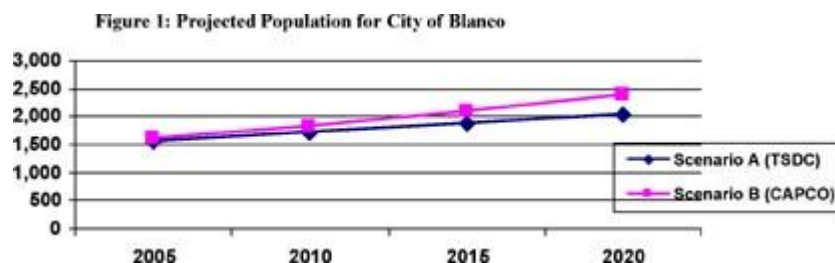
Below are presented two very different population projections for the County, the first from the Texas State Data Center (TSDC) and the second from the Capital Area Planning Council (CAPCO). The TSDC estimate is updated annually for the County only, while the CAPCO model was completed in July 2002 using a regional econometric model.

Table 2-3: Blanco County Population Projections

	2005	2010	2015	2020	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Texas State Data Center	9,164	10,044	11,011	11,916	10497	10988	11504	12021	12407
Capital Area Planning Council	9,466	10,751	12,277	14,020					

Sources: Texas State Data Center, June 2004 Population Projections (0.5 Scenario) and CAPCO, July 2002, <http://www.capco.state.tx.us/Regional%20Data/CAPCO%202000-2030%20Forecast.htm>

Using historical information and assuming that the City of Blanco's population is approximately 15-17 percent of the county population, the population of Blanco may grow to the levels depicted in Figure 1. Scenario A and B refer to the use of the TSDC and CAPCO population estimates for the county.



Population: Age

From the 200 Census and shown in Table 2-4, the most notable comparison of age cohorts for the City of Blanco, the Blanco ISD region and Blanco County is that the City of Blanco is home to a higher percentage of persons in both the youngest and oldest age cohorts -- persons under 19 and older than 65 years than the ISD and county. The city also holds the lowest population of the age group considered to be the workforce, aged 25-44, indicating that the community is not a strong labor market.

Table 2-4: Blanco Population Estimates by Percent Age (2000)

	Under 19	20-24 years	25 -44 years	45-64 years	65 and older	Median Age (years)
City of Blanco	29.1	5.0	23.5	21.3	21.1	39.3
Blanco ISD Region	26.2	4.2	26.7	27.0	15.9	
Blanco County	26.9	3.8	25.6	26.1	16.6	41.2

Source: US Census Bureau, DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics and National Center for Education Statistics

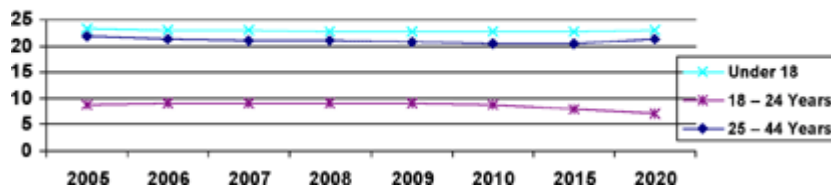
Blanco Population Estimates by Percent Age 2018

	Under 19	20-29 years	30-39 years	40-49 years	50-59 years	Over 60 years
City	30.2	11.5	8.4	14.9	16.6	18.5
BISD	19	9	5	15	17	34
County	24.6					

The statistics were not broken down the same way

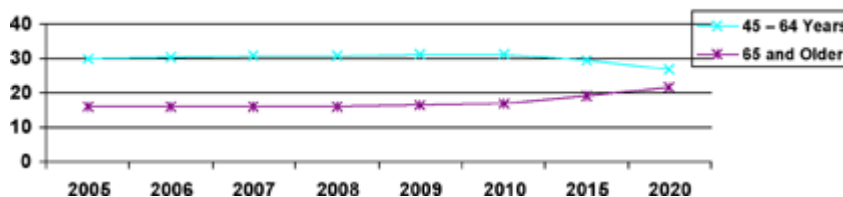
Over time, the changes to the younger age cohorts for Blanco County are expected to remain relatively stable and steadily decline, while the older age cohorts are increasing, as shown in Figures 2 and 3. The increases in the older age groups is most likely a reflection of the impact of the baby boomers, of which the first of that generation will reach 65 years in 2010, and the continued attraction of seniors/retirees to the Hill Country region.

Figure 2: Blanco County Projections of Selected Age Groups



Source: Texas State Data Center

Figure 3: Blanco County Projections of Selected Age Groups



Source: Texas State Data Center

Population: Race and Ethnicity

The racial makeup of the City of Blanco is predominately white, with less than 3 percent of the population identifying as Black, Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander or any other race. It is important to note, the Hispanic or Latino population is captured as an ethnicity, rather than race. Therefore, a person may identify as White and Hispanic or White only. The percent of the population, in 2000, that identified as Hispanic of any race was 22.7 percent, while 74.4 percent of the population identified as white not Hispanic.

Table 2-5 depicts the racial and ethnic distribution of the City in 2000.

Table 2-5: City of Blanco Population by Race and Ethnicity (Census 2000)

Race				Ethnicity	
White	Black	Native American	Asian	Hispanic Of Any Race	Not Hispanic (White alone)
88.8	1.2	1.3	.4	22.7	74.4

Source: US Census Bureau, DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics

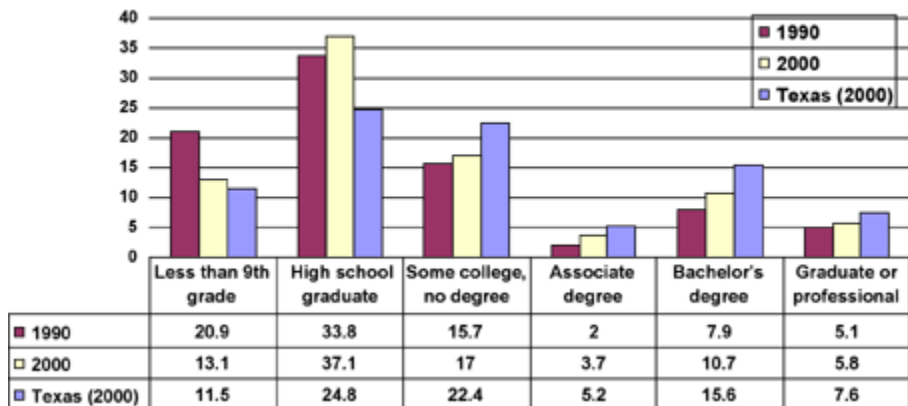
Table 2-5: City of Blanco Population by Race and Ethnicity (2010 Census)

Race (%)				Ethnicity (%)	
White	Black	Native American	Asian	Hispanic Of Any Race	Not Hispanic (White alone)
1528	4	8	25	422	1106
97.6%	.2%	.5%	1.6%	27.6%	72.3%

The decennial census provides the most comprehensive information about educational attainment for a community. According to 2000 statistics, educational attainment in the City of Blanco for persons over 25 years of age has improved since the 1990 Census in all areas. In 1990, 64.5 percent of the population over 25 years old held a High School diploma or better and 13 percent had earned a bachelors degree or higher. By the 2000 Census these figures have increased to 74.3 percent having earned High School diplomas or better and 16.5 percent holding at least a bachelors degree. Also significant is the percent of persons with less than a 9th grade education dropped nearly 8 percent during the decade, from 20.9 percent to 13.1 percent.

Comparing the City of Blanco to the State of Texas, statistically the City out performs the state through high school. Thereafter, the lack of Blanco residents continuing education and completing degrees drops below the state average.

Figure 4: City of Blanco Educational Attainment 1990 and 2000



Education levels as of 2017 (from City data.com); From population 25 yrs or older; High school or higher 85.4%; Bachelor Degree or Higher 24.7%; Graduate or professional 5%

Household and Housing

Data on households and housing characteristics provides additional information about the local population. In 2000, there were 633 housing units in the City of Blanco of which 91 percent were occupied. The other 9 percent vacant for a variety of reasons: for sale or rent, not occupied rental property, and seasonal/recreation property. As shown in Table 2-6, 65.3 percent of the housing units in the City were owner occupied and the average household size in 2000 was 2.46 persons.

Table 2-6: City of Blanco Selected Household and Housing Characteristics (Census 2000)

Total housing units	633	Percent single family home	75.1
Percent Occupied housing	91.0	Percent multifamily (2 or more units)	12.2
Percent of housing units occupied by owner	65.3	Percent housing built since 1980	37.9
Average household size	2.46	Percent of housing built before 1960	34.8

Source: US Census Bureau, QT-H1. General Housing Characteristics

Census 2010

Total housing units	892	Percent single family home	65.8
Percent Occupied housing	86.9	Percent multifamily (2 or more units)	18.7
Percent of housing units occupied by owner	67.7	Percent housing built since 2000	4.2
Average household size	2.49	Percent of housing built before 2000	83.5
		Percent Mobile homes	15.5

Estimate 2017

Total housing units	1022	Percent single family home	69.5
Percent Occupied housing	83.6	Percent multifamily (2 or more units)	21.1
Percent of housing units occupied by owner		Percent housing built since 2010	5.7
Average household size		Percent of housing built before 2010	94.4
		Percent Mobile homes	14.8

Three quarters, 75.1 percent, of the community lives in single family homes, while only 12.2 percent live in multifamily housing. The explosive new development, as seen in neighboring Hays County, has not occurred in Blanco or Blanco County; however the percentage of homes built in the past decade, 17.1 percent, is significant for this community, where new development has been limited for many years.

Income

Table 2-7: City of Blanco Household Income

	Less than \$10,000	\$10,000 to \$34,999	\$35,000 to \$49,999	\$50,000 to \$99,999	Greater than \$100,000	Median Income (\$)
Income in 1989	23.4	56.7	11.1	7.4	1.4	\$18,657
Income in 1999	14.5	40.2	20.1	21.1	4.2	\$31,071
Income in 2017	14%	32%	15 %	27 %	12%	

When other socioeconomic measures are examined, the residents of the City of Blanco are more prosperous than 10 years ago. Table 2-7 shows that the percentages of persons earning less money have moved into higher income brackets. For example, in 1989, three of four households' earnings fell within the lowest two income brackets; ten years later, this percentage has dropped to just over 54 percent, while the upper income levels increased. The median income for the city grew 66.5 percent from \$18,657 to \$31,071.

Employment and Industry

Analysis of Key Industries

The only data available on business patterns at the local level is the Census Bureau's Zip Code Business Patterns. County Business Pattern presents the number of establishments by North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) code and employment-size class but does not reveal the number of people employed in each industry.

Table 2-8: Establishments by Industry Sector (Zip: 78606)

Industry Code	Description	Total Establishments
11	Forestry, fishing, hunting, and agriculture	1 4.2%
22	Utilities	1
23	Construction	22 13.2%
31	Manufacturing	6
42	Wholesale Trade	2
44	Retail Trade	24
48	Transportation and Warehousing	4
51	Information	2
52	Finance and Insurance	6 5%
53	Real Estate and Rental Leasing	6
54	Professional, Scientific & Technical services	12
61	Educational Services	1 9.4%
62	Health care and social assistance	10 7.5%
72	Accommodation & food services	8 6.4%
81	Other services (except public administration)	13
99	Unclassified establishments	2

An analysis of the data for the 78606 zip code, which encompasses the City of Blanco, shows that the highest number of establishments in the community were involved in retail trade (NAICS 44) and construction (NAICS 23) industries in 2001, the most recent year for which figures are available. (2002 data will be released in October 2004) The business patterns identified six manufacturing establishments in Blanco, these include: a retail bakery, brewery, truss manufacturing, plastic bag, flat glass and machine shops.

Note: Information regarding employment trends is omitted from this report due to regional skews in data. Employment trends, growing and declining industries in Texas are gathered and aggregated by Workforce Development Area. Blanco County is a part of the Rural Capital Area Workforce Development Board Area, which also includes Williamson and Hays County, two of the fastest growing counties in the State.

Table 2-9 represents the leading manufacturers and employers in Blanco County, as defined by the Rural Capital Area Workforce Development Board and the Texas Workforce Commission. The companies on the left represent area manufacturers, whereas the right column list the County's largest employers by employment level (alphabetically listed.)

Table 2-9: Blanco County Leading Employers

Manufacturers	By Employment
Granite Printing	Blanco Bowling Club
Happy Trails Metal Craft	Cox Paving Company LP
Harvest House Farms	Independent Environmental Services, Inc
Blanco Products Co	Klepac Greenhouses, Inc
Texas Hills Vineyard	LD Tebben Roofing Company
Valley Graphics Printing	Pedernales Electric
Rar Enterprises	RL Toms, Inc
Golden Seal Printing	Sta-Built Products, Inc.
J M Wood Products	Super S Foods
Ejs Surveillance Co	The Blanco National Bank

Source: Texas Workforce Commission

Many of these employers are no longer operating in the Blanco Area. New employers include
 Stripes
 Tractor Supply
 Texas Regional Bank
 Real Ale Brewing

Analysis of Local Labor Force

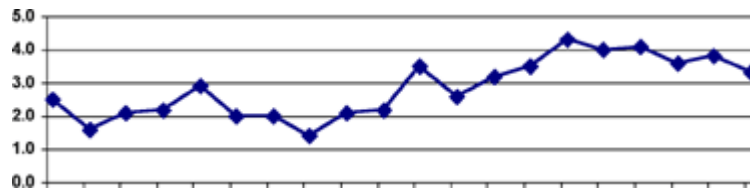
The most recent civilian labor force estimates from TWC, June 2004, Blanco County had a civilian labor force of 4,165 which was an increase of 124 people since June 2003. This change represented an increase of 3.1 percent. Over the past 5 years, the employment numbers for the county have remained relatively stable and followed state and national trends, as the economy has gained and lost.

Table 2-10: Averaged County Employment Characteristics

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2019	2017
Civilian Labor Force	3,918	3,944	3,783	3,961	4,057		
Employed	3,835	3,865	3,683	3,808	3,906		1137
Unemployed	83	79	100	154	151	2.6%	3.3%
Unemployment Rate	2.1	2.0	2.6	3.9	3.7	2.6	

Source: Texas Workforce Commission, Labor Market Information Department. Covered Employment and Wages
 The unemployment rate, in Blanco County, for the past 5 years is provided in Figure 2-5. The lowest monthly rate for the county, over these years, was 1.4 percent in October 2000, while the highest rate 4.3 percent was recorded in July 2002.

Figure 5: Blanco County Unemployment Rates: 1999-2003



Source: Texas Workforce Commission

Commuters represent another pool of available labor in the area: skilled workers leaving the community for work. According to the 2000 Census, City of Blanco residents mean travel time to work was 24.9 minutes, one-way to work. Table 2-11 shows both the number of workers reported to work inside and outside the county. 75 percent of workers leave Blanco County for work. The largest two groups of workers coming into Blanco County reside in Gillespie or Burnet County. Workers that commute from Blanco to another county primarily travel to Travis or Bexar County for employment.

Table 2-11: Blanco County Commuting Patterns

Inflow -- Working in the County	Outflow -- Leaving the County
---------------------------------	-------------------------------

County of Residence	Number of Workers	County of Residence	Number of Workers
Gillespie County	157	Blanco County	2,183
Burnet County	154	Travis County	614
Hays County	118	Bexar County	334
Bexar County	70	Gillespie County	184
Comal County	66	Burnet County	175
Llano County	57	Hays County	126
Travis County	45	Comal County	115
Kendall County	42	Kendall County	32
Tarrant County	17	Harris County	26
Washington County	17	Jackson County	17
Harris County	15	Grayson County	16
Jim Wells County	14	Zapata County	15
Johnson County	14		
Midland County	11		

Source: US Census and Rural Capital Area

Workforce Development Board

Mean travel time to work (2017) 26.8 minutes. 78.6% car, 16% carpool, 4.2% walk;
 NOTE: the chart above does not make sense

Quality of Life

Quality of life elements are these subjective factors may become the thing which sets a community apart from its neighbors and competitors. This section will provide an overview of several of the factors which impact quality of life, including education, cost of living, housing costs, crime and access to healthcare.

Education

Blanco ISD is the regional school district that serves students living in the southern half of Blanco County and portions of neighboring Hays and Kendall counties. The district has three campuses: Blanco Elementary, Middle and High School. During the 2001-2002 school year, 880 students were enrolled in the district, a decline of 5.0 percent from the previous two years. However, since 2002, there has been a significant growth in student population, with a current enrollment of 969 students. This growth has been accommodated with the construction of a new high school, but additional capacity at the elementary school is likely to be needed soon.

School districts in Texas are classified by Texas Education Agency (TEA) as either Exemplary (EX); Recognized (RE); Academically Acceptable (AA); Academically Unacceptable (AU); Unacceptable due to Special Accreditation Investigation (US); Unacceptable due to Data Quality (UD); or, Charter (CS). Approximately 50 percent of the districts in the state are rated Academically Acceptable.

The Blanco school district earned an accountability rating of "recognized" from the TEA 2001 and 2002, an improvement from the 1999-2000 rating of academically acceptable. These ratings are determined by a number of factors including student performance on the state mandated skills test and attendance. Table 2-12 shows the accountability ratings, student performance and demographics of the district for the past 3 years as compared to the Texas state totals.

Table 2-12: Selected School District Performance Ratings 1999-2002

School Year	1999-2000		2000-2001		2001-2002	
	Blanco	Texas	Blanco	Texas	Blanco	Texas
Enrollment	926	3,991,783	906	4,059,619	880	4,146,653

The figures above don't make sense – Table 2-12 should be labeled Enrollment not performance

2020	Enrollment	Free and reduced lunch
Elementary	437	249
Middle School	245	116
Highschool	349	130
Totals	1031	495

Accountability Rating	Academically Acceptable	N/A	Recognized	N/A	Recognized	N/A
4-year dropout rate	7.3	8.5	1.8	7.2	4.8	6.2
Percent Graduated	87.3	79.5	94.7	80.7	85.5	81.1
Percent Students Passing all tests taken (TAAS)	81.6	79.9	85.4	82.1	87.9	85.3
SAT: Mean Total Score	961	989	1015	990	1067	987
ACT: Mean Composite Score	21.1	20.2	19.7	20.3	20.5	20.2
Teacher Turnover Rate	13.6	15.0	13.4	16.0	18.6	15.7
Students to Teacher ratio	10.7	14.9	10.5	14.8	10.7	14.7
Total Instruction cost per student	\$4,092	\$3,298	\$4,435	\$3,419	\$4,661	\$3,528

Source: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/snapshot/index.html>

Crime

In the City of Blanco, there were .68 crimes reported for every 100 persons in 2003, an improvement from the previous 5 years of crime data from the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Table 2-13: City of Blanco Crime Statistics

	Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Rape	Robbery	Theft	Total Reported	Crime reports per 100
2003	2	3	6	0	0	0	11	.68
2002	2	8	8	0	0	0	18	1.15
2001	4	5	14			3	26	1.69
2000	3	9	24	1	1	3	41	2.23
1999	0	7	11	1	0	0	19	1.01

Cost of Living.

The overall cost of living is measured for an area where 100 equals the national average; therefore, a cost of living measure above 100 demonstrates a cost of living more expensive than the national average. It takes in account housing, food and groceries, transportation, utilities, health care, and miscellaneous expenses such as clothing, services, and entertainment. State and local taxes are not included. Table 2-14 compares these cost of living factors for communities within Blanco County, with the national average.

Table 2-14: Cost of Living Comparison

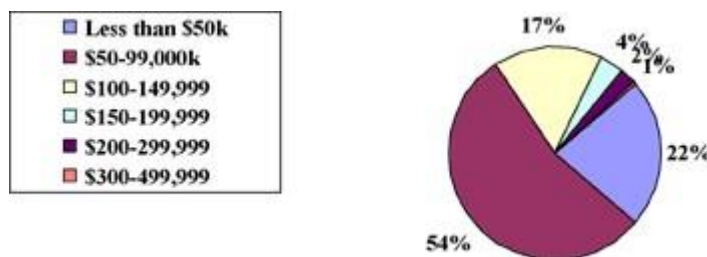
	Blanco	Johnson City	Round Mountain	National Average
Cost of Living Index	93.7	89.1	95.8	102.76
Average Yearly Utility Cost	\$3,240	\$2,811	\$3,558	\$3,251
Average Household Total Consumer Expenditures	\$40,748	\$35,205	\$46,470	\$41,554
Average Household Education Expenditures	\$706	\$614	\$792	\$729
Average Household Entertainment Expenditures	\$2,195	\$1,906	\$2,524	\$2,183
Average Household Transportation Expenditures	\$8,643	\$7,464	\$9,814	\$8,682
Average Household Retail Expenditures	\$23,912	\$20,830	\$27,814	\$24,198
Average Household Non-Retail Expenditures	\$16,920	\$15,342	\$19,356	\$17,353

Source: <http://realestate.yahoo.com/re/neighborhood/texas/>

Housing Costs

The rising cost of housing in the Central Texas is an issue of importance for all communities in the area. However, given Blanco's history of land ownership and water concerns the issue of affordable housing is not as pressing for this community. More than half of the houses in the City of Blanco are valued between \$50,000 and \$99,000. The next largest percent, 22 percent, of homes are valued at less than \$50,000. This may be due to age of the housing stock, or the influence of manufactured housing without ownership of the land on which the home is placed.

Figure 6: City of Blanco Housing Value



Property Tax

One factor that can have a significant impact on cost of living is property taxes. Comparing property taxes between Blanco and neighboring communities is complicated by the fact that the rate assessed varies widely depending on the taxing jurisdictions involved. Table 2-15 provides estimates of the 2003 property tax rates for cities near Blanco. Note: the cities of Dripping Springs and Wimberley do not charge city property taxes.

Table 2-15: Area Property Tax Rates

City	City	County	School
Blanco	.2057	.4910	1.500
Johnson City	.3090	.4910	1.3420
Dripping Springs		.3751	1.7554
Wimberley		.3751	1.69

2019

Blanco	.3615	.428	1.152
Johnson City	.4324	.428	1.1674
Dripping Springs	.19	.3899	1.4183
Wimberley		.3899	1.2892

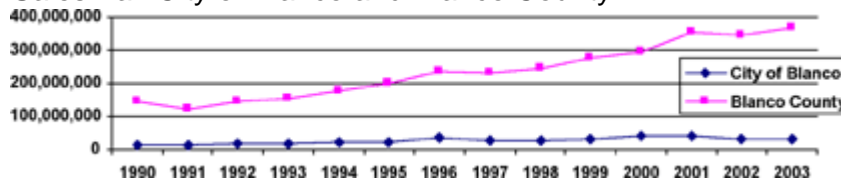
Sales Tax

The figures presented below are not accurate. The City takes in approximately \$820,000 (2020) a year in sales and use tax. The millions of dollar figures below must be the gross sales (and use) amounts the tax is based on.

The sales tax is a major source of revenue for taxing jurisdictions in Texas. The state sales and use tax rate is 6.25 percent. Under state law, local taxing jurisdictions are allowed to add up to an additional 2 percent to the state rate, for a maximum combined total of 8.25 percent. This 2 percent local tax can be comprised of a combination of taxes levied by cities, counties, special districts, and transit authorities. Blanco, like the other incorporated communities in the county, charges the maximum rate of 8.25 percent.

Over the past 13 years, the city's sales tax has nearly doubled, from 15.8 million in 1990 to 30.2 million in 2003. The county has also seen even greater results, increasing sales tax revenues 154 percent since 1990. It is important to note that the city's annual percent to the county's sales tax revenue has flattened and is currently decreasing; meaning the City of Blanco's revenues are not increasing at the rate of the county and contributing less to the overall revenues as in the past.

Figure 7: Gross Sales Tax City of Blanco and Blanco County



Access to Healthcare

Access to healthcare is often an important factor in community and economic development decisions. Blanco's proximity to Austin and San Antonio provides the community with access to a wide range of medical facilities, though these services are not available locally.

Hill Country Memorial and Scott and White have opened clinic in Johnson City. Scot and White has also built a hospital south of Marble Falls. Emergency care facilities have been built in Dripping Springs and Bulverde

Physicians and Medical Personnel

According to the Texas State Board of Medical Examiners, there were 4 licensed physicians in Blanco County in May 2004. Due to the increasing nursing shortage in the state, the Texas Board of Nurse Examiners reports statistical information on more than the employment status of nurses, but also includes the home residence of nurses and the county of work. The Board of Nurse Examiners reported a total of 4 registered nurses (RNs) working in Blanco County in September 2003, and a total of 56 registered nurses living in the County. Of the 56 nurses in the county, 35 were employed full time, 13 employed part time, 3 were working outside of nursing and 5 were unemployed.

2020 Survey Results

One hundred residents of Blanco and the immediate surrounding area voluntarily filled in the questionnaire modeled after the questionnaire done in 2002. Below are the basic findings. Please note that more data can be extrapolated from the spread sheet such as breaking down the responses by age group or area of residence. Please note that some respondents did not answer all the questions

Respondents.	Age	Percent
	High School Seniors.	50%
	19-34	9%
	35-49	6%
	50-64	22%

Number of Years Lived in the Blanco Community

Years	Percent
Less than 2	10%
2 to 5	17%
6 to 10	16%
11 to 20	34%
20 plus years	15%

Why do you live in Blanco (More than one answer could be chosen)

Reason	Percent
Family	46%
Location	66%
Job	17%
Good family atmosphere	64%

Other comments included ambiance of town and Park, and lifestyle

Where do you work

Location	Percent
Austin	4%
Blanco	42%
Canyon Lake	1%
Fredericksburg	2%
Johnson City	3%
San Antonio	4%
Retired or did not respond	44%

Should the City encourage Economic Development

No	29%
Yes	43%

The City of Blanco should focus its resources on

Focus	Agree	Disagree
Helping local businesses	68%	18%
Expand recreation Facilities	67%	5%
Revitalizing downtown	63%	3%
Attracting new Businesses	62%	9%
Improving roads	82%	2%
Expanding housing options	47%	14%
Protecting/enhancing town appearance	79%	3%
Improving the water system	70%	2%

Walkability was a concern for many – speed of traffic and condition of/lack of sidewalks. Animal control was also a concern

What new or improved facilities/activities would enhance your living experience

Dining was the number one choice with 36%

Historic architecture was the least chosen with 25% ranking it number 5 on a 1 to 5 scale

Facility/ Activity	Ranking Percentage				
	1	2	3	4	5
Recreation	15%	13%	20%	28%	3%
Shopping	16%	12%	20%	16%	15%
Entertainment	17%	16%	13%	14%	16%
Dining	30%	22%	10%	7%	3%
Historic Architecture	11%	10%	13%	6%	25%

A City swimming pool and recreation facilities for seniors were often mentioned. Increased daycare capacity was a concern. “Great infrastructure and a well-maintained city will attract business that will generate tax revenue” (Quote from respondent on questionnaire)

The City of Blanco should

Task	Agree	Disagree	Most important
Annex Land for development	26%	27%	7%
Assist in promoting local businesses	72%	1%	19%
Encourage businesses through incentives	53%	12%	9%
Promote new housing	44%	27%	12%
Provide park facilities and activities	73%	2%	12%
Improve zoning code	46%	8%	7%
Require annexation when providing utilities	27%	8%	2%
Limit residential growth	39%	26%	6%
Limit commercial growth	35%	28%	9%
Limit industrial growth	46%	10%	3%
Update the official city map	48%	1%	2%

Of the above list, 19% of the respondents considered promoting local businesses as the most important with new housing and park facilities and activities coming in seconds with 12% each. Only 2% felt that updating the city map was of prime importance and only 2% thought annexation should be required when utilities are provided. Encouraging a wide variety of integrated housing was emphasized in comments.

Businesses in Blanco would benefit from

Activity	Agree	Disagree
Broadening the mix of retail businesses	60%	2%
Expanding business hours	39%	11%
Attracting more dining establishments	84%	1%
New tourist friendly businesses	54%	5%
Improving sidewalks and lighting	75%	2%
Attracting new Tourists	36%	12%
Marketing Blanco's heritage	45%	8%

The City should protect the historic heritage of Blanco by

Activity	Agree	Disagree
Planning development with an emphasis on historic assets	53%	7%
Developing design guidelines based on Blanco's historic architecture	56%	7%
Using its Historic assets as key factors in a Comprehensive Development Plan	50%	7%

New Businesses needed in Blanco ordered by percent ranking

Business	Percent
Restaurants	78%
Retail	64%
Medical/Dental facilities	50%
Fast food establishments	37%
Primary employment (Manufacturing or Industrial like Klepec, Cox Paving, PEC)	32%
Professional (insurance, Banking, Beauty/barber Shops/Car Repair)	20%

39% of respondents were not happy with the internet services available to them. 47% were satisfied with their service.

In other comments, it was apparent that the citizens of Blanco love their small, friendly town where people care about one another and do not want to see that change.

CMP Land Use Update 2020

Introduction

The land use plan defines the existing development in a community and provides the guidelines for making decisions about new development. It will coordinate with the growth management section to ensure that Blanco will remain the desirable community that it is currently. It is important to understand that the land use plan does not constitute zoning; it is a policy guide for the city in managing growth within the existing city limits as well as future expansion through annexation. It lays out the desired development areas so developers and city leaders can make informed decisions about where growth should occur. The desired development areas should be well served by infrastructure or located in areas where utility extensions are most cost effective. Another important consideration is existing land use, so any new development has minimal impact on current residents and businesses.

Current Land Use

Download Current Land Use Map: Map no longer available

WARNING — This PDF reflects an analysis of the land use when the master plan was written. It does not show the city's current zoning or ordinances.

Land Use

As mentioned, the land use survey identified the existing conditions in Blanco. Defining current land use allows a more educated approach to decision making regarding future development. Properties were defined using the following categories.

Agricultural

This is used to describe land primarily used for farming or ranching activities.

Cemetery

Public Cemetery

Commercial

Typical commercial properties are automobile dealerships and garages, warehouses, etc. In addition, bed & breakfast establishments and hotels were identified as commercial.

Industrial

Property identified as industrial is being used for manufacturing processes, quarries, and other intensive uses.

Manufactured Home

Properties with Manufactured or Mobile Homes

Mixed Use

Mixed Use properties are those where there are more than one land use type. These may be residences that also contain a commercial establishment, agricultural land that also has a residence, or other variation.

Multi-Family

Properties with more than one dwelling unit (duplexes, apartments, etc.)

Park

Land dedicated to open space or recreation

Public

Public land is that which is owned by government agencies (parks, City Hall, etc.) and that of churches, cemeteries, schools, etc.

Retail

Retail is grocery stores, service shops (hair salons, dry cleaners, etc.), restaurants, etc. It also includes professional offices and banks. Small retail typically does not generate more than 50 trips per day. Large retail typically generates more than 50 trips per day, with longer hours, and is often mixed with commercial uses. As can be expected most of the retail in Blanco is small, catering to the local population.

Single Family

Property with a single-family detached residence

Vacant

Land that is vacant contains no structures and is not used for agriculture. Not all vacant land may be suitable for development, as it may fall in the floodplain or have other restrictions. However, it identifies potential areas for development of new residential or other types of land use.

Summary

Blanco's land use has evolved organically due to the lack of land use regulations (Illustration 4-1). The city did adopt a zoning ordinance; however, it was only in place for a limited time. Because of the lack of regulation, development occurred almost entirely due to market demand. This focused the commercial and industrial growth on the areas with the best transportation access on Hwy 281 and FM 165. Retail growth also centered on Hwy 281 and in the downtown. Homes were developed around these areas and on feeder roads off of Hwy 281, particularly the large developments being built outside of town. One important consideration is that the acreage defined for each use in this plan is approximate. Because parcel boundaries were not available to map land use, each one was defined by estimating the boundaries from an aerial photograph. Blanco County is currently developing a digital parcel map, once the parcels within Blanco are put into the system, the city should acquire an accurate parcel map. This will be especially important if Blanco moves forward with zoning. **Has the city obtained the referenced digital parcel map from the county?**

Undeveloped Lands

Blanco currently has approximately 291 acres of agricultural land within the city limits. These contribute to the rural character that is so important to many residents; however, they may cause conflict with nearby residences due to noise, dust, and other issues. Vacant land constitutes approximately 300 acres within the city limits. This undeveloped land offers a tremendous opportunity to the city because much of the expected growth in Blanco can be accommodated without annexation. There are also properties suitable for some larger developments, which can be more profitable for developers. The main benefit to this is that these properties are in proximity to existing infrastructure, which minimizes the cost of providing utilities. Also, Blanco has limited annexation authority, so focusing development within city limits would maximize the tax base without having to negotiate annexation agreements. **State law has changed, and the City can no longer annex unless annexation is requested by the landowner(s)**

Much of the agricultural land is on the west side of Hwy 281, near the schools and residential areas. A focus of the vacant land is east of Hwy 281, near Hwy 165. The future land use plan will define the potential uses for these properties. One important consideration is the contribution undeveloped lands make to the rural character that is so important to Blanco residents. It will be important to identify those priority properties that should be saved from development. These may be lands in the floodplain, with drainage issues, or with particularly attractive features or agricultural production. By maintaining undeveloped land within the city, Blanco can maintain its small-town charm, even in the face of expected growth.

Residential

Homes make up the next largest land use in Blanco with approximately 292 acres. This is typical of most communities, especially rural towns. As expected, the largest residential use is single family homes. These are located throughout Blanco, with the majority to the west of Hwy 281. There are some homes directly on Hwy 281; however, this number is rather limited. Manufactured homes are currently unregulated and are found throughout the city. There are a few areas that could be considered manufactured home parks because there are a cluster of homes. Blanco has limited multifamily properties, which limits options for many residents seeking a home. There is a "traditional" apartment complex on the east side of town with smaller units throughout the city. This may be an area where the city takes an active role in encouraging new multifamily development to provide adequate housing options for all residents. **New manufactured housing (trailer houses) are no longer allowed in the City Limits. This will change when an area is zoned for manufactured housing as required by**

law. The manufactured housing will be required to be put on a permanent foundation. Existing manufactured housing may be replaced once. A new 50-unit apartment complex has been built

Commercial and Retail

Blanco has more commercial and retail property (144 acres) than many communities of its size. Some of this is retail buildings that are vacant; however, this shows that there is a significant land devoted to businesses serving the local population. This does not mean there is not a need for additional businesses; however, it does show Blanco is on the right course in ensuring adequate property for business. Commercial uses tend to be more intensive, with more lighting, truck traffic, etc. that may create conflicts with neighboring properties. These are focused along Hwy 281 and on FM 165, which offer the most visibility and access to traffic. This is typical and appropriate because of the high traffic generated by commercial uses. These businesses need access to truck traffic and customers, and routing this through residential uses would be inappropriate. Retail uses do not have the same traffic and visibility issues; however, they also tend to locate on the high traffic areas to tap into the largest potential market. Most of Blanco's retail uses are along Hwy 281, including the downtown. There are smaller retail centers off of the highway as well. Redevelopment of the downtown will create additional retail businesses serving Blanco. **Several new commercial and retail establishments have located along HWY 281. The City has passed a lighting ordinance that addresses the concerns of commercial/retail and residential existing companionably.**

Industrial

Blanco currently has nearly 65 acres of land dedicated to industrial uses. As with commercial, these are located on or near Hwy 281 and are on the outskirts of town. This is appropriate because of the high impact these uses have on adjoining properties. It is likely that further industrial growth will occur on Hwy 281, and with the extension of a water line to serve the Real Ale Brewery north of town, this can serve as the focus for new industrial development.

Public

Public land uses include government buildings, parks, and cemeteries. These are lands that are necessary for a city to conduct its business and provide services to its residents. Blanco has two local parks, Bindseil Park which links downtown with Blanco State Park, and Yett Park, which is maintained by local organizations. In addition, Blanco State Park runs through the middle of the city. As discussed in the community development plan there is a need for additional parks and open space throughout Blanco. Other public uses include the Post Office, City Hall, the historic courthouse, and city utilities. These are necessary, and by providing offices downtown, can help generate traffic and customers for downtown businesses. The Post Office in particular is a draw for downtown because so many residents get their mail on site. The courthouse also serves as a tourist attraction for Blanco.

Mixed Use

Mixed use is not a common land use in Blanco. There are a few properties with a residence and business co-located. These are scattered throughout town. In many communities, the downtown offers an opportunity for mixing retail with residential; however, most of the buildings in Blanco are single-story and not suitable for mixed use. An opportunity may be for undeveloped land near downtown to be built as mixed-use properties.

Future Land Use

Download Future Land Use Map: [PDF format](#) (477 KB)

The future land use plan lays the foundation for managing growth in Blanco. It identifies areas most suitable for different kinds of development and allows city leadership to make informed decisions when confronted with development proposals. The land use plan is not zoning, there is no regulatory authority inherent in the plan. If Blanco moves forward with zoning, this will form the basis for the zoning map and ordinance; however, it now serves only as a guideline for decision making, not a regulatory document.

Between 1990 and 2000, the population of Blanco grew from 1,238 to 1,505 nearly a 22% increase. Over the next 15 years, Blanco can expect its population to grow to between 2,000 and 2,500 residents (see the Demographic Analysis.) This will present a challenge for the future to absorb this level of growth and maintain the small-town character that is so cherished by residents. One opportunity for Blanco is the large amount of vacant land within the city limits. This land will allow for development in areas already served by infrastructure and within Blanco's taxing authority and regulation. As discussed in

the growth management plan, these areas should be the focus for new development, especially because development in the county is already occurring at a rapid pace. This growth is causing concern among many residents because the majority of it is large lot, expensive homes, that are unaffordable for many residents. This plan discusses the preferred growth scenario for Blanco, allowing residents and city leadership to understand how development can be managed for the benefit of all residents.

The following recommendations are similar to the current land use discussion above. It discusses each land use individually and identifies where it should be focused and the reasons for that location. The Future Land Use map (Illustration 4-2) shows in detail how growth should occur in Blanco.

Single Family Residential

Participants in the land use workshop identified the need for different types of single-family residences, which are not found currently in Blanco. One of these was the potential for "garden" homes, which are homes with small lots and minimal setbacks. These are often found in resort style developments. A development of this type is proposed for Blanco on the western edge of the city, just north of the river. This area offers an opportunity to develop a golf course style community which would provide a higher end home than is found currently inside Blanco city limits. This type of development may also serve to attract seniors who are looking to downsize their homes, minimize their maintenance, and have nearby recreation amenities. This development may also provide an opportunity to create workforce housing. The city could offer to allow the developer to build on smaller lots if a percentage of the homes are set aside for those making at or near the median income. As discussed in the growth management plan, mixed income neighborhoods are growing in popularity and are shown to be more successful than having housing that is strictly segregated by income.

More traditional single-family homes are being developed outside the city limits, in Cielo Springs, on the southwest side of the city, a subdivision which will likely be annexed soon. **Cielo Springs was never annexed and is not likely to be annexed.** Within the current city limits, single family homes will continue to be built in the predominantly residential areas of town west of Hwy 281 and around the high school. Additional single-family homes are likely to be built on all sides of Blanco, outside the current city limits and _ mile extra-territorial jurisdiction. It will be important for the city to work to ensure adequate affordable housing be built since most current projects are not affordable for many residents. As discussed in the growth management plan, there may be a need to allow smaller lot sizes to ensure homes are built that meet the needs of current residents.

Multi-Family Residential

Apartments and other multifamily units are scarce in Blanco. In order for Blanco to accommodate expected growth, there will have to be an increase in the availability of rental property. The future land use map identifies several areas throughout town for multifamily development. This may be traditional apartments, or may also be townhomes, and other types of multi-family properties. There are three areas identified for multifamily development on the future land use map. The first is located to the north of the state park, just west of Hwy 281. This area offers proximity to downtown and the schools, making it ideal for higher density development. This area may also be suitable for senior living development because of its location. The second area is north, in a strip located behind what should become retail and commercial development on Hwy 281. This area would provide access to the retail stores to be developed along Hwy 281, as well as good access via the highway. The final area is in the southeast section of town, between Hwy 281 and FM 165. This area offers excellent road access, proximity to Super S, and has the existing apartment complex. It is likely that not all of the land identified will be, or should be, developed as multi family; however, by identifying several areas, developers will have options for picking the property most suitable for that kind of development.

Another aspect of multifamily development is the desire to create a retirement facility in Blanco. This was a priority from the Town Hall meeting and public survey. Two areas were discussed at the Land Use workshop for this type of development. One was in the southeast section, where most of the multi family is found. This area offers proximity to the Super S shopping center but has limited pedestrian access to the rest of town. Another area was near the high school. This area offers proximity to downtown and much of the existing retail. One concern may be proximity to the stadium and school, with the associated lights and noise issues. There should be a designated area for this kind of development because it is such a priority for residents.

Manufactured Homes

As mentioned, manufactured homes are currently unregulated. This may change, especially if Blanco moves forward with a zoning ordinance. If they become regulated, it will be mandatory for Blanco to set aside enough land to allow for growth of this type. Currently, manufactured homes are found throughout the city; however, there are several concentrations that provide a suitable area for future manufactured home development. **New manufactured homes are not allowed in the city as of July 2020. Planning and Zoning is addressing the need for an area for these type of homes as it works on the new zoning map.**

The first of these is in the north west area of town. There are many manufactured homes as well as agricultural land that could be developed in the future as more homes are located in Blanco. This area is close to the elementary school and potential commercial and retail development. The second area is in the southeast section, near the proposed multifamily developments. This area has proximity to existing and proposed retail and is a "mixed use" area with commercial and retail uses. Multifamily and manufactured homes are often used as a "buffer" zone to more intense uses, so it is appropriate for them to locate in this area. One drawback may be the impression that the southeast section of town is the "low-income" area due to the concentration of multifamily and manufactured housing. However, if there is good design in the developments, and there are standards for home quality, etc. this concern can be minimized and the area be attractive, safe, and an asset to Blanco.

Commercial and Retail

As expected, commercial and retail growth will continue to be focused on Hwy 281. Because this area offers the best access and visibility, it will attract business. This is also beneficial because residential development is not appropriate along a highway because of noise and safety issues. Business activity on Hwy 281 will also help to create a sense of "entering" Blanco which can help to slow traffic. Additional retail development can be located in the downtown, where much is already found. This area is a logical location for businesses that serve both local residents and visitors, thereby creating a destination. The area just west of downtown is also suitable for retail development because there are a number of businesses in this area already. Also, it can serve to expand the retail options for residents and visitors and encourage people to stay longer in Blanco. To make this successful, there will have to be pedestrian access throughout the retail center.

More intense commercial uses, such as auto dealers, repair shops, etc. should be farther out along the highway where it will have less impact on neighboring properties. Also, the increased traffic generated by these uses will not be in the middle of Blanco. Because commercial uses tend to generate more noise, lighting, etc. they should be buffered from existing residences. By locating them on the outskirts, this will be accomplished. Commercial uses also serve to buffer less intense land uses from the designated industrial areas found in the north and south.

Industrial

Industry is the most intense land use, typically generating the most traffic, noise, and other potential nuisance. Blanco currently has two major industrial areas, one on the north side of town and one in the south. These offer a tremendous opportunity for additional industrial growth in areas already served by infrastructure. In the north, a new waterline is being built to serve Real Ale Brewery. This pipeline should open the area up for additional growth. To the south, access via Hwy 281 and FM 165 offers a good opportunity for additional industrial growth. Also, by locating south of town, industry can receive trucks to and from San Antonio without having to drive through downtown Blanco. Because industry is a foundation for economic development, it is important to provide adequate land for new primary businesses. This plan does that by identifying two areas for growth. **Both these areas have had some industrial growth.**

Public

The Future Land Use map does not specifically identify any additional public lands. Potential park sites are identified on the map, but these are intended only as a general reference for where parks could be located to best serve proposed and existing development. The existing schools are identified; however, land for additional schools is not on the map. The School District should be involved to ensure that adequate land is available for new schools as Blanco grows. The first area where a new elementary school may be needed is in the south of town, near Cielo Springs development. This school could also serve the Rockin' J Ranch development. The high school is new and will likely not need expansion in the near future. If the city moves forward with a requirement for new development to provide land or fee in lieu for new school facilities, this issue should not be a major obstacle to growth in Blanco. **The question of land for a new elementary school has been broached to developers. This should be a discussion that includes BISD as a lead**

Parks and Open Space

While the land use map does not specifically identify where new parks should be located, it does identify appropriate areas of town where new parks should locate. The first of these is in west Blanco, where the majority of current residences are found. There is quite a bit of vacant land in this area, so a suitable park site should be relatively easy to find. A neighborhood park here would serve existing and future residents. Another potential park is near the existing schools, which may also be an appropriate location for the planned recreation center. Another park was identified to the north of Blanco, in proximity to Gem of the Hills. This park would serve the proposed manufactured home development in this area, and potentially residents outside the current city limits. The final area for a park is the southeast section where the majority of multi-family housing and manufactured homes are proposed. Again, there is substantial vacant land that could become a large park to serve the concentrated population that may locate in this area.

By locating parks throughout Blanco, it will increase access for all residents, and provide benefits to the entire community. Proximity to parks increases property values substantially, so having several parks will benefit everyone. Also, if the city institutes a parkland dedication requirement for new development, each new subdivision will likely have at least some level of neighborhood park, or there will be money available for the city to develop additional parks.

In addition to parks, protecting agricultural land and undeveloped open space is an important consideration. One option may be to set aside land in a conservation easement which is an opportunity for ranchers and others who do not want to see their land developed to protect their land. Because the land cannot be developed, owners are protected from rising property appraisals and increased taxes. Protecting undeveloped land is a key aspect in maintaining the quality of life and rural character of Blanco. The growth management plan discusses in greater detail the opportunities to protect open space.

No land has been purchased by the city for parks. The city is proactive in asking developers to set aside areas for green space in the communities that they are building. The continuing need for parks and recreation facilities was confirmed by the survey of citizens completed in 2020 which listed recreation facilities as one of the major needs of the community.

Conclusion

The Future Land Use plan is intended as a guideline for where new development should locate. It should be used in conjunction with the recommendations from the growth management plan to ensure that development occurs on local terms and is not dictated by outside forces. The map identifies where different uses should be located based on community desires, current land uses, existing and planned infrastructure, and other factors. In order to be effective, city leaders must commit to utilizing this plan in making their development decisions. Finally, this is the foundation for a zoning ordinance if the city decides that is an appropriate next step. As Blanco grows and changes, this plan will need to be updated to reflect changing conditions. This is especially true if the city does not institute zoning because this plan has no regulatory authority. Growth will happen, this plan offers an opportunity to guide that growth and ensure maximum benefit to Blanco.

Community Development

Introduction

Many rural communities are struggling to provide recreational opportunities for residents of all ages. Parents, city leaders, and others are concerned that young people have to leave the community (drive to San Antonio, etc.) to find entertainment. While providing appropriate attractions in the community will not keep all young people from wanting to go out of town for fun, it can provide options for them. Also, elderly residents are in need of activities that will provide social interaction, exercise, and fun. It is challenging for any community to meet these diverse needs, particularly a small one with limited resources. Blanco is fortunate in that citizens are active and taking a leadership role in providing needed recreational opportunities.

Blanco is fortunate to have several recreational amenities, including Blanco State Park, Yett Park, Bindseil Park, and Gem of the Hills. These facilities offer a variety of service and amenities to the community. These facilities should receive on-going support from the community and not be overshadowed by projects proposed in this plan. Yett Park in particular serves a critical need by providing sports fields in Blanco. Every effort should be made to continue improving and expanding existing facilities in Blanco.

The Community Development focus group is not intended to take over the efforts of other groups, rather it should serve to coordinate efforts and bring additional resources to these projects. This group should hold regular meetings with representatives from the existing groups to identify progress and opportunities for assistance.

The goal of this focus group is to Develop recreational facilities for residents of all ages It also supports the Downtown Revitalization efforts to enhance safety on Hwy 281. Three specific projects will address this goal and provide for the needs of all residents in Blanco. These projects are:

- Develop pedestrian and bicycle access throughout Blanco, starting with Safe Routes to School
- Develop a Community Center serving the needs of the entire community
- Support the requirement for developers to set aside land or fee in lieu for schools and parks to ensure adequate facilities as Blanco grows
- Develop "pocket parks", community gardens, etc. as part of the trail network

The Community Development Focus Group was never implemented. A survey done in early 2020 indicates that lack of recreational facilities, speed of traffic and safe pedestrian and bicycle access are major concerns to the residents of Blanco.

Projects

Develop safe pedestrian access throughout Blanco

Pedestrian safety and traffic together were the most important issue identified at the Town Hall meeting. A significant concern was pedestrian access to the schools, allowing children safe routes to ride or walk to school. Another was the barrier formed by Hwy 281 bisecting Blanco and the need for safe crossing points through town.

There has been significant work done to address these concerns. The Wheels and Feet program is an effort to develop a linked system of trails throughout Blanco County. They have developed a plan in coordination with the National Park Service that identifies routes for trails, as well as resources to make it happen. Rather than reinvent the wheel, the Community Development focus group will help the Wheels and Feet trail projects be implemented within the City of Blanco, beginning with the Safe Routes to School portion of their plan.

Wheels and Feet was disbanded, and no further progress was made regarding a system of trails

In order to address the need for pedestrian access, the following steps should be followed:

- Evaluate the trail routes identified in the Wheels and Feet plan
- Initiate a study to identify final "Safe Routes to School" based on safety and appropriateness
- Identify safety improvements on Hwy 281 to make an interconnected system
- Bring these to TxDOT as part of the overall plan
- Develop cost estimates to develop trails that are separated from the street
- Work with property owners to obtain easements for the trail
- Identify funding sources to develop the trails and maintain them
- Develop and maintain trails
- Review feasibility of additional trails to connect other parts of the city, including Yett Park, Super S shopping center, etc.

The first priority is to develop the "Safe Route to Schools" trails identified in the Wheels and Feet plan. This would entail creating off-street trails that connect the schools to the rest of the community. This would allow students to safely walk or ride their bikes to school. The city submitted an unsuccessful bid for Safe Routes to School funding to develop sidewalks in 2002. This application is included in Appendix B for reference as the city moves forward with the new development. The focus group felt that these should be more than just designated bike lanes on existing roads for safety. The Wheels and Feet plan is included in Appendix C of this plan for detailed information. The first step is to take the routes identified in the Wheels and Feet plan and determine if they are feasible for development. Because these would be more than just bike lanes on existing streets, it will be necessary to have an in-depth survey to determine those routes where off-street trails can be developed at a reasonable expense and timeframe. This would require an outside expert to conduct the study and determine feasibility. The focus group should work to identify an appropriate agency for this work and funding to make it happen. There would also be a need to meet with property owners along the route to determine if they would be willing to allow a trail across their property. Participation from property owners will make the process much easier and potentially less costly if they are willing to donate the easement for the trail.

The City obtained a feasibility/engineering grant to address Safe Routes to School in 2008. A plan was designed at that time. A grant was obtained in 2018 to implement a sidewalk joining the Middle and Elementary Schools. The sidewalk was completed in 2019.

Another aspect of the plan is safety enhancements on Hwy 281. This is of critical importance to the entire community and will also be addressed in the Downtown Revitalization section. The community development focus group identified several intersections that were most important for safety enhancements. These intersections are those used most by pedestrians or would link important features in Blanco.

They are:

- 7th Street
- 11th Street near the Public Library
- State Park Intersection

In addition to additional streetlights, pedestrian lights are an option to increase driver awareness on Hwy 281 and slow them down. These could be flashing lights installed in the roadway that could be activated by a button or motion detectors. These would alert drivers when pedestrians are present. Pedestrian signage would also be beneficial, especially as part of an overall signage program that highlighted downtown amenities and attractions. Clearing the brush from Town Creek is also an opportunity to increase the visibility of downtown to remind drivers to slow down. If this area was cleared, building owners could take advantage of the visibility to place signage, porches, and other amenities that would enhance their business and improve downtown overall. These projects serve to inform drivers that they are entering town and should be more cautious.

Other options include increasing parking on Hwy 281, building curb extensions, improving the landscaping, and other projects that would make downtown an obvious location and slow traffic. An evaluation should be conducted to identify what improvements would be most appropriate and these should be taken to TxDOT for their participation. These improvements will also require the input and participation from property and business owners on the Square. Their input is critical for any project to be successful and minimize any potential negatives to existing businesses. If the improvements are made as part of an overall trail plan, especially Safe Routes to School, TxDOT may be willing to assist with funding the improvements.

No progress has been made in developing safe pedestrians crossing along 281

An additional concern on Hwy 281 is the overall speed of traffic through town. There is a desire for traffic calming from Yett Park in the south to Gem of the Hills in the north. Slowing traffic in this area would be a huge benefit to Blanco and improve the safety of residents and visitors, especially in the downtown. Some options for this include the recommendations above for pedestrian signage and lights, additional traffic lights, etc. Increased traffic enforcement will also have benefits, and the police department has responded to concerns from citizens and Council. Other opportunities include creating "gateways" into Blanco that will serve as a visual reminder that drivers are entering a community. These can be well-placed and designed signs, landscaping, curb extensions, etc. All of these options will remind drivers that they are no longer on an open highway. There are two signs being installed at the edge of town that were designed and built by volunteers. They are very attractive and unique to Blanco and include a statement reminding drivers to slow down. Additional signage can also serve to entice drivers to stop and visit local businesses.

The signs referenced in the above paragraph need replacing. In 2020 TxDOT agreed to reduce the speed of traffic approaching Blanco from the South (Ordinance 2020-O-007) to 50 mph at the 163 intersection and further reduction at Sonic to 45 mph. TxDOT also reduced the speed approaching the intersection with HWY 32 to 60 mph.

Once the final trail routes and pedestrian improvements are identified, it will be important to determine the costs associated with the plan. Funding for trail development can come from a variety of sources, but it will be important to have some local funding available as seed money. Some of this may come from property owners who donate easements for the trail, as well as in-kind donations from the city for labor and materials. There are a variety of state, federal, and private grants available for trail development; one option may be to hire a professional grant writer to pursue this funding.

Finally, the project will need to be built. One option may be to use on-street bike lanes on those low traffic side streets until separate trails can be built. This will reduce initial cost, create a safer pedestrian environment, and show progress until the final project is complete. If the Safe Route to School trails can be built on a reasonable time frame and cost, it will build support for additional trails throughout the community. A critical consideration will be maintenance of the trails once built. Because they are intended to be off-street trails, they will not be part of the regular street maintenance and will require additional resources to maintain. This should be a community effort, involving volunteer groups, Boy Scouts, and others to help with trail maintenance.

Once the Safe Routes to School trails are developed, the additional recommendations of the Wheels and Feet plan should be reviewed. One aspect of the plan that is already underway is the improvements to Bindseil Park connecting downtown to the State Park. LCRA is serving as the construction manager for this project, and work should be underway in 2005. This park creates a tremendous opportunity for Blanco because it connects downtown with the major attraction of the State Park. This connection should be a priority for marketing to park visitors. The Chamber of Commerce can create a walking map of Blanco that highlights the connection and amenities that would encourage park visitors to walk downtown for a meal or shopping. Because of the proximity of downtown and the State Park, it is relatively easy to loop from the State Park through downtown. Also, festivals and events downtown should be coordinated with the State Park so visitors are informed and can participate.

The trail through Bindseil Park has been reworked with the help of LCRA. It is handicapped accessible. The banks of Town Creek have been restored to native vegetation.

One feature not addressed in the current plan for Bindseil Park is installing electrical wiring to support a "Trail of Lights" holiday display. Many Hill Country communities are involved in this type of event and it serves to attract many visitors around the holidays. The city, Chamber of Commerce, and local businesses should coordinate their efforts and raise money to install the needed wiring to support a "Trail of Lights" in Bindseil Park and the Square. An important consideration in the "Trail of Lights" is the nature of the improvements being made to Bindseil Park. The improvements are intended to return the stream to a more natural state than it has been. A "Trail of Lights" would not be incompatible with the intent of the restoration; however, the most intense uses, such as gathering places, vendors, etc. should be focused on or near the Square and around the large oak tree rather than closer to the stream. The trail could be lighted and allow businesses to set up their own stations along the trail encouraging visitors to walk the length of it.

With the advent of LED lights, the electricity in the park is adequate for the Christmas displays. Additional electricity has been run to the stage area for the use of performances.

Developing an inter-connected trail system will make Blanco a much more attractive and safe community by providing access to community amenities for all residents. It will also make Blanco more attractive for retirees who may be looking for a community where they can be less auto dependent. Finally, businesses consider quality of life as a major factor in business relocations. A trail network, especially if connected county-wide will serve to make Blanco very attractive for new businesses and residents looking for a quality community.

Recreation Center

A new non-profit is being created that will work to develop a recreation center in Blanco. This center will provide a range of recreational activities for residents. This may include a skate park, sports, pool tables, etc. This effort was identified as a major priority in the town hall meeting and should be supported.

The initial plan was to locate the facility in the Mohair Warehouse in downtown; however, that location will not work out as expected. This provides an opportunity to locate in an area that may provide additional benefits for the center. One option may be near the schools, where young people will have easy access to the facility after school. Also, the location should be along the proposed trail system to ensure adequate pedestrian access to the site.

Locating near the school may provide an opportunity for a partnership to develop a swimming pool that could serve the ISD and the community at large. All options should be explored to ensure the facility meets the needs of Blanco residents. The school may also have property available for the facility that could be used as part of matching funds for grant applications, etc. In addition to location, starting with a new building offers greater flexibility in design, allowing for a variety of uses and future expansion.

Developing the community center will entail the following steps:

- Identify successful projects (i.e. Burnet Community Center) and determine if their programs can serve as a model for Blanco
- Develop partnerships with Blanco ISD, Gem of the Hills, and city, if feasible, to provide maximum benefit to all parties
- Identify what amenities and activities should be developed and appropriate staffing needs
- Identify funding sources for building the facility
- Identify funding sources for maintenance, supervision and management, and expansion as needed
- Build and maintain the property

Many communities, notably Burnet, have developed successful community centers. The center in Burnet has a membership of approximately 1,600 and is located in a community of less than 5,000. This shows that it is drawing from a larger region than just the City of Burnet. The new non-profit members should establish a strong relationship with the leadership of the Burnet project to identify their successes and translate that to Blanco. Other communities with similar projects should be contacted as well.

The Nonprofit referenced above did not materialize. A private citizen rebuilt the Old Mohair Warehouse, turning it into a youth center with basketball courts. Gem of the Hills continues to be the center of community activities. Yett Park (owned by the Chamber of Commerce) and managed by the Yett Park Committee consisting of representatives of Blanco Youth Soccer, Little League and the Rodeo Association. The Survey conducted in 2019/20 indicated a desire among the senior citizens for an indoor pool to be used for exercise and therapy.

Next, outreach is needed to identify other partners for the effort. Gem of the Hills may be able to use the facility for new or expanded programs. Senior activities can be held during the day, while students are at school, thereby maximizing use of the facility. Also, local sports organizations should be contacted to determine what their needs are and if the center can address them, such as providing a batting cage. Blanco ISD may provide a long-term opportunity for partnership. Blanco ISD may be able to provide land or funding for amenities such as a swimming pool that would benefit the school as well. These organizations already have their contacts and support in the community which can be brought to enhance the community center effort. While these partnerships would be beneficial, the need for the center should be addressed even if partnerships are not available.

Once partnerships are explored, a process to determine what amenities will be included should begin. If the center is intended to serve youth in the community, its amenities will likely be much different than if it is intended to serve the community as a whole. The Burnet center offers a state-of-the-art weight room, basketball courts, indoor track, and other fitness-oriented amenities. Blanco may decide to go with a different model, including pool tables, reading area, a skate park, etc. to provide for the youth. To be successful, the center should provide facilities attractive to the community as a whole. The center can be used by elderly residents and adults in the morning, then provide for the youth after school. Determining what will be offered is critical before any design because it will directly impact the needs of the center. In addition, the amenities and activities will be directly impacted by available funding. Identifying what the needs in the community are, and how they will be met by the center will enhance fundraising efforts because specific grants, etc. can be targeted based on the needs of the center.

An important consideration is staffing of the facility. In order to provide a safe, well maintained environment, staff will have to be available whenever the facility is open. Also, by having staff organize and implement activities, there will be better options for the users. This may include regular workouts (yoga, spin classes, etc.), arts and crafts for younger children, organized sporting leagues, and fitness training. Most communities utilize the city for personnel management, providing the necessary insurance and other needs. This would be a major expense for the city, so on-going funding would be needed to ensure adequate staff.

Funding is the biggest hurdle with any community project. City government, the ISD, local organizations all have limited funding, and often are competing for the same grants and other funds. A well-developed plan with broad community support will ensure that the community center is more competitive for grant funding and is not competing with other entities within the City of Blanco. Most grants require local matching funds, which can come from a number of sources. This includes donated land for the facility, in-kind donations of labor or materials from the city, as well as local donations. It will be important to pursue this initial funding at the local level. Some successful programs include "Buy-a-Brick", in which businesses or individuals buy a decorative brick. Also, businesses may sponsor an amenity, such as the local bank providing the pool tables. Other options may include festivals or other events, such as "Night in Old Blanco" similar to the "Night on Old San Antonio", to bring in visitors to the area and raise money for the community center.

Any fundraising should provide recognition for the sponsors such as signage, facility naming, etc. The resource guide contains a list of funding opportunities for this project. These should be contacted to determine application cycles and dates as well as requirements. One important option may be to hire a professional grant writer. An excellent resource for Blanco is Pedernales Electric Co-op which provides grant writing assistance to its members. The non-profit should use this assistance as a starting point for identifying and applying for grants to support their efforts. Private grant writers are another option if necessary. Most grant writers do not charge up front, rather they take an administration fee from the grant, which can be helpful because it minimizes upfront costs.

On-going funding is even more important than finding money to build the facility. There are many grants and programs available for building new facilities, but it is challenging to find funding for on-going costs. In order to fund the maintenance and activities, the non-profit should work with the city, ISD, and others to identify support they can provide. Also, most community centers charge fees for usage. This could take the form of a monthly membership fee, much like a private gym, or simply usage fees. Most likely a combination will offer the best results. Residents of Blanco and the area can get discounted long-term memberships, while occasional users can pay a flat fee. There may also be an additional fee for classes, etc. Generally, these fees do not cover the actual costs of the facility; however, they can offset some of the expenses. If the school is a partner, particularly with a swimming pool, they may provide money for maintaining that. Also, partnering with the city may allow city staff to provide basic maintenance, as well as reduce personnel costs by managing the human resources through the city. Again, long-term funding will be an on-going challenge for the community center. This should be considered early in the process to ensure that once built, the center has the support to be successful and a true asset to Blanco.

Also, as demand grows, there will be a need for expansion. This can be addressed by creating an endowment fund that will grow over time to support expansion. There can also be additional fundraising to support new facilities as required. Also, by "over-building" the facility to some degree, future expansion can be put off because extra capacity will already have been built into the project. It is cheaper and more efficient to design with growth in mind rather than attempt to retrofit an expansion soon after completion. A long-term goal may be for the city to take over ownership and management of the recreation center. This would be beneficial because it would ensure a consistent source of financial support, staffing, etc. It would benefit the city as an improvement to the quality of life, increasing the attractiveness of Blanco to prospective businesses and residents.

Finally, the community center needs to be built. This should be a big event, involving the entire community so they feel a part of the project. The facility should be designed and built to meet current needs but allow for expansion. The design should also be flexible to allow for a variety of uses and activities to occur. This may include allowing areas to be used as conference space, arts and crafts, homework and reading, as well as food service. If the facility is well-designed and maintained it will serve as a tremendous asset to Blanco for years to come.

Developer Set Asides for Parks and Schools

Development leads to increased demand on parks and schools. To provide these services, government has to compete with developers to find property for needed new facilities, leading to higher costs. Many communities have begun requiring developers to provide land for parks and schools as they build projects. There are also provisions for fee in lieu of land in cases where providing property may not be suitable. One of the benefits of this type of program is that it is regulated by the city's subdivision ordinance, which makes it applicable within the extra-territorial jurisdiction. In Blanco, most of the large development will likely occur outside the city limits, making this a good tool for the community to provide for the future. Blanco currently has a provision in its subdivision ordinance encouraging developers to dedicate 8% of the total acreage to be used as public parks. This voluntary program is an excellent starting point and can be updated to a requirement if there is public and Council support. To implement this change, the following steps should be followed:

- Begin educating the public about the current voluntary standards Research
- similar programs to identify what is most appropriate for Blanco
- Begin dialogue with citizens and builders to gauge support and determine set aside ratios
- Update Subdivision Ordinance to require set asides or fee in lieu

It is likely that most builders and residents of Blanco have no knowledge of the current voluntary program for parkland dedication. This should change, and the city should be educating the public about this. This policy shows that the City Council understands the importance of community parks and the benefits they provide to the city.

Every effort should be made to inform residents about this policy and encourage builders to implement it. It is voluntary, but developers may be willing to implement it, if for no other reason than positive public relations and showing they too are concerned with improving Blanco.

Identifying communities that have similar programs is recommended to ensure that Blanco develops standards that are in-line with other communities. The City of Bertram has a program in place that requires developers to provide land or fees for parkland as development occurs. Bertram requires one acre of parkland for each 100 homes developed, or 5% of land area, whichever is greater. The city also allows a fee of \$250 per dwelling unit if the providing land is not feasible due to the size or layout of the property. This fee is collected before approval of the final plat to ensure the requirement is met. The ordinance also sets minimum standards for the size, location, and other aspects of the parkland to ensure that it meets the needs of the community. One option included is that the park can be dedicated for the private use of the subdivision residents if it meets minimum standards for public parks. This allows a developer to offer the park as an amenity to residents and still fulfill the requirements of the ordinance. The justification for this, is that those residents would require a public park near their neighborhood if one was not available in the subdivision. Also, if the facility is a neighborhood type park, it would likely only meet the needs of property in proximity of the park.

There are fewer examples of communities in Texas that require set asides for public schools. The City of Flower Mound requires developers to get approval from the school district if their development results in schools being 110% over-capacity. Given this requirement, developers have to work with the school district to ensure adequate capacity to handle the increased number of students. This requirement is only applicable for residential development. Dripping Springs utilizes development agreements to ensure there is land set aside for parks and schools. They allow developers to build with higher densities if they agree to set aside land for new schools to serve their subdivisions. The City of Montrose, Colorado has a policy requiring developers to set aside 1.37 acres per student based on an assumption of .294 new students per lot. The following table shows the calculations used in Montrose for school dedications.

Table 6-1: Montrose, CO School Land Dedication Requirements

School	Student per Lot	Acres per Student	Dollars per Acre	In-Lieu Fees
Elementary	.294	.033	\$18,000	\$175
Middle	.154	.067	\$18,000	\$185
High	.192	.037	\$18,000	\$128
			TOTAL	\$488

Any program should be based on the needs and desires of the citizens, following the process from this plan will ensure there is public support for the measure. As with any major policy change, there should be an opportunity for residents to learn about and discuss the options. Education will be an important aspect of this outreach to ensure that citizens understand the costs and benefits of the program. Obviously, adding requirements to developers will result in higher home costs; however, the benefits will likely outweigh the costs by providing needed services based on growth, rather than having to retrofit services into a built-out area. Also, rather than requiring all residents to pay the costs associated with expansion, it will be borne by the development that spurs the need. Builders will need to be educated on the benefits for them to minimize their resistance.

Once the public has been involved, the city should set up a steering committee of community members, ISD representatives, and developers to create the standards for the set aside program. They should discuss appropriate amounts of land required to be set aside, and an appropriate fee in lieu for those occasions when setting land aside is not a good option. These options can be based on other communities but should be tailored to the local needs. Because the city already has a policy of an 8% dedication, one possibility may be to keep this percentage and split it between schools and parks. Or allow developers to set aside enough land for a neighborhood park and money for schools. Again, the requirements must be worked out with the steering committee to ensure adequate support from the community for the changes.

The UDC adopted in July 2019 (2019-O-005) requires developers to provide green space in their developments.

Develop "pocket" parks throughout Blanco

Blanco has a significant amount of vacant land throughout the city limits. Much of this vacant land is small lots, suitable for use as a neighborhood park, community garden, or similar feature. The city should identify those properties most suitable for these uses, particularly those along the proposed pedestrian trails, and on lots that may be unsuitable for more intense development. In order to facilitate this effort, Blanco should:

- Identify appropriate property for "pocket" parks
- Prioritize property to acquire that provides maximum benefit
- Develop amenities at acquired parks
- Provide on-going maintenance and upkeep

Because Blanco has a significant amount of vacant land, identifying appropriate property should not be too difficult. The challenge will be in acquiring the needed parcels. The parcels that should be targeted should be sites along the proposed trail network, providing areas for pedestrians and cyclists to rest as they use the trails. They should also be located where they can have the highest benefit to the surrounding neighborhood, providing access to all potential users. The parks will provide connectivity from the trail to the neighborhood, as well as create more use along the route enhancing safety of the entire park system. The sites do not have to be large, even ½ acre lots would provide space for a swing set, a few picnic benches, or small public gardens. The point would be to provide greenspace throughout the community where residents can take a break, or families can gather.

The second step is to prioritize properties to acquire. One opportunity may be for owners to donate land that may be unsuitable for development. This may include small lots, areas with drainage issues, etc. that may allow for a park to be built, but not more intense uses. Secondly, those properties that can connect different trail segments, or provide an asset to the neighborhood should be targeted. The goal is to create an inter-connected system of parks rather than isolated properties scattered across Blanco. Those properties that can provide the most benefit to the overall system should be priorities. Funding will be the driving issue for acquiring property. Because the lots are relatively small, an individual purchase should not be overly expensive. However, any acquisition should be made only when funds are budgeted, or other arrangements are made, for development and on-going maintenance. The properties do not all have to be acquired at once, rather it can be an incremental effort, slowly developing the parks as funding allows. The main drawback would be the potential for prospective park properties to be developed or sold before they can be acquired. However, due to funding limitations, it will be necessary to prioritize and have secondary properties in the event a first choice becomes unavailable. Implementing the recommendation to require park dedications with development will not only provide land within areas being developed, it may provide funding to acquire those high priority properties.

Once suitable properties are identified, planning should be undertaken to identify appropriate amenities. These should include picnic benches, swing sets and other play equipment, open play areas, basketball courts, and potentially community gardens. Each site can provide different amenities based on surrounding neighborhood interests and needs. Because many of the parks would be accessible via pedestrian trails, it would allow users to walk to different parks offering different activities. Community gardens are becoming more and more popular and would provide a low-maintenance opportunity for the city. Because each garden plot is maintained by the user, the city would only have to provide access to water faucets and basic upkeep on the non-garden area. This also would provide an opportunity for community interaction and cooperation as individuals and families developed their gardens. It could also spur tourism, as the gardens produced goods that could be sold at the Farmers' Market.

As mentioned, no parks should be developed unless there is a plan to provide maintenance and upkeep. Because these would be small parks with minimal amenities it may be possible to have a volunteer park maintenance program. The neighborhoods could provide needed mowing, etc. to keep the parks in order, while the city provides any significant work. The community development focus group can take the lead in developing a volunteer database that can be used for this purpose. Again, it must be stressed that these parks should only be developed as funding and / or volunteers are available to maintain them. If the parks are not maintained, they will be a detriment to the park system and the community as a whole.

No sites for "pocket" parks have been identified.

Conclusion

The four projects identified in this plan will create tremendous benefits for the City of Blanco. Providing safe routes to school is a basic function of city government and should be a priority. A thriving community center will benefit residents of all ages and attract visitors from the region to use the facility. Requiring builders to provide for schools and parks as they build new subdivisions will benefit the entire community and help to minimize tax increases to pay for needed facilities. Developing interconnected parks throughout Blanco will enhance property values and community appearance.

Quality of life is one of the key features of Blanco. Residents feel comfortable and safe in the community. There are already excellent facilities in town, including Yett Park, Gem of the Hills, and Blanco State Park. By implementing this plan, these facilities will be enhanced with additional recreational opportunities. This will increase quality of life for current residents and make Blanco more attractive to prospective businesses which are looking for a quality community to locate.

Much remains to be done on the quality of life issue. Most of the movement forward has been on a casual basis, dependent on enthusiastic individuals rather than institutionalized improvements

Downtown Revitalization

Introduction

Small town atmosphere evokes images of quiet residential neighborhoods with children playing in the street and residents gathering to chat as they conduct their business on the Square. Blanco is fortunate to have this image as a reality.

Downtown Blanco serves as the heart of the community with several restaurants, shops, the Post Office, Bindseil Park and city government all located on the Square. This collection brings people to the area for a variety of reasons and creates a consistent flow of traffic in the area. Blanco also has antique stores, art galleries, and boutiques that, along with the historic architecture of the buildings and courthouse, serve to attract out of town visitors to the area. This does not mean that there are not significant challenges facing Blanco in revitalizing this area. There are many improvements that can be undertaken that will help existing businesses be more successful as well as attract new businesses to the area. Property and business owners, concerned citizens, the Chamber of Commerce, and the city need to coordinate their efforts and activities to ensure that improvements are planned to minimize negative impacts on businesses and improve the overall character of the area.

Public input has shown that residents are concerned with downtown and want to make improvements to the area. There is a strong desire to Create a thriving downtown that attracts residents and visitors with a variety of activities. By following the recommendations in this plan, this goal can be achieved, and Blanco's downtown can be a source of pride for all residents. These recommendations include:

- Develop a Downtown Committee of the Chamber of Commerce **Chamber has not deemed this as necessary as the businesses around the Square are very active in the Chamber and frequently discuss issues**
- Create a unified parking and sidewalk plan for downtown **A Sidewalk plan (Street Scape) has been developed but not completely implemented due to the lack of funding. A handicapped accessible sidewalk has been installed on the north side of the square and handicapped curbs exist at each corner**
- Increase the mix of downtown businesses **The Chamber is available to offer advice to potential business owners**
- Improve the appearance of downtown **Work has been done on the landscaping around the Old Courthouse. Businesses have improved their signage. Eating establishments have added outdoor (sidewalk) space for gathering. Uptown Blanco side of the square needs to be completed**
- Provide assistance for building owners to maintain and improve their buildings
- Hold regular events downtown **Markets Days and the Lavender festival continue. Music concerts were held in Bindseil Park for two years but were discontinued due to lack of funding**
- Provide public restrooms **Built in 2016**

HOT funds are now administered by the Chamber of Commerce and can be used, upon application, for accomplishing many of the recommendations.

One area identified as a significant concern is safety and traffic along Hwy 281. This issue is addressed as part of the community development plan, so will not be repeated here. As mentioned, implementation of this plan will require coordination between many groups, including merchants, property owners, the city, Keep Blanco Beautiful, and others. It will be critical for there to be constant communication and coordination between all of these entities in order for this plan to be successful. This can be done through the downtown revitalization focus group, or the Downtown Committee of the Chamber of Commerce, if one is created.

Projects

Develop a Downtown Committee of the Chamber of Commerce

For such a small town, Blanco has many different organizations working on different projects. It may seem inappropriate to recommend creating another group; however, a group focused on the concerns of the downtown property and business owners can serve to coordinate the efforts of the many other groups that are involved downtown. This committee can serve to address lack of communication and cooperation between the many groups, the city, and others. There can be representatives of each of the downtown groups on the Committee to ensure coordination between these groups. It is appropriate for this group to be a committee of the Chamber of Commerce because of the role the Chamber serves assisting local businesses. Also, many of the merchants are likely members of the Chamber already and it is logical to utilize the resources of the Chamber to support this committee.

An opportunity for this group is to survey its members and sponsor seminars to address business needs. There are a variety of organizations, including LCRA, Pedernales Electric Co-op (PEC), Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), Small Business Administration, and others that can provide training seminars for business owners. These can address concerns ranging from succession planning, merchandising, customer service, etc. These seminars can help existing business owners become more successful, leading to potential expansion and more hiring. Also, they can be advertised throughout the county and serve to showcase Blanco as a progressive community and build relationships with businesses in nearby communities. **Lunch and early morning coffee gatherings have been instituted to foster the businesses in Blanco**

This organization can also serve an advisory role as the city moves forward with infrastructure improvements in the downtown. Any major improvements, such as sidewalks, underground utilities, etc. will result in limiting the access to businesses for a period of time. The committee can work with the city to schedule work for those times with the least negative impact and avoid major interruptions.

The Chamber does not see the necessity for a formal committee at this time. There is only one unoccupied building around the Square. Outreach to businesses that are not on the Square should be a priority

Create a unified parking and sidewalk plan for downtown

To some degree, having a parking problem is a good thing because it shows that there are people using the downtown. However, parking problems can lead to a decline in business as visitors choose to go elsewhere. Currently, parking is a challenge downtown, particularly on Market Days. There is not a set pattern for parking in downtown. Most cars park straight into the curb. This allows for the most parking; however, it creates a safety issue when these vehicles back out. The state has plans to repave 4th Street, which will result in this area being striped for diagonal parking. The city should follow this pattern for the rest of the Square, so all perimeter parking is diagonal. The parking should be designed so that the number of spaces is maximized without compromising safety. There is currently a lot at the courthouse which provides some parking; however, it is not clearly marked for public parking. The landscape plan for the courthouse includes a 25-space parking lot that would help improve overall parking in the downtown. If the city acquires the courthouse, this lot may be used for employee parking; however, it would be available on weekends and evenings for business parking. **The referred to parking lot at the courthouse has been removed**

As mentioned, Market Days regularly creates parking issues downtown. One challenge is vendors taking extra spaces to park their vehicles on the Square. They are supposed to park off the Square and leave the extra spaces for customers. This should be enforced. All vendors should be reminded of the requirement and on Market Day, organizers should actively work with vendors to get them to move their vehicles. In addition, temporary signage can be used to identify parking off the Square for visitors, such as the Church of Christ, which has offered parking for the last three years. The mohair warehouse has also offered parking in the past. There is adequate parking off the Square that can be used on Market Days, but there needs to be directional signage to inform people where to go. The safety improvements discussed in the community development plan will help address this problem by making it easier and safer to cross Hwy 281 and walk to downtown. **The Mohair warehouse is now the 2nd Mile recreation center for youth.**

Finally, the Uptown Blanco group is developing a 75-space parking lot a block off the Square that should be open within the year. This will address much of the parking concerns; however it will require adequate signage to inform drivers of its location, and there needs to be an obvious and safe pedestrian connection to the Square from this location. **The Uptown Parking lot is complete and available for parking. Signage is still needed**

Sidewalks are another amenity that will benefit downtown. The development of sidewalks has been divisive in the past, especially those around the courthouse. Any improvements to the sidewalks should be planned with property and business owners to minimize any potential negative impacts. Sidewalks are necessary to encourage people to visit and stay on the Square. If people can safely and easily walk from business to business, they will do so. It has been shown that people walking in downtown will visit more businesses and spend more money than those who stay in their cars. **Sidewalk improvements are needed on the East side of the Square. Crosswalks are still an issue where there are no traffic lights**

In addition to sidewalk improvements, there should be additional pedestrian amenities installed. This includes lighting, benches, landscaping, and crosswalks to make walking an attractive activity. These improvements can be provided by businesses, or by the city. Keep Blanco Beautiful currently install and maintains landscaping downtown and this effort should be supported by businesses and the city. It is important that any landscaping be maintained so that it is attractive. Benches can be beneficial because it encourages people to stay longer. If benches are installed, they should be designed to fit the historic character of the area and be difficult to steal. This may include bolting them to the sidewalk or making them very heavy. Lighting is important to make downtown safe and appealing after dark. Currently, most businesses close early; however, as downtown becomes more successful, there may be a business interest in staying open later to benefit from evening visitors. Having adequate lighting will make the area attractive to visitors after dark.

Available electrical outlets and water faucets should be included to allow for maintenance of landscaping and lighting, sound, etc. at area events. Finally, there is a need for clearly designated crosswalks in downtown. Because there are not currently sidewalks throughout the Square, it is necessary to cross to the courthouse to get all the way around the Square. There should be crosswalks clearly laid out to allow pedestrians to safely get to the courthouse. Many communities utilize bricks, paint, or other material to clearly define crosswalks. These can be part of an overall design for downtown. Also, as discussed in the community development plan, crosswalks and pedestrian facilities on Hwy 281 should be part of the overall downtown improvements. **A streetscape Plan has been drawn up. To implement it will require grant funding.**

Increase the mix of downtown businesses

Blanco is fortunate in that there are many types of businesses on the Square including several restaurants, antiques, government offices, a bank, and more. These businesses serve both the local population and can attract visitors from out of town. There should be an effort to strengthen this mix to increase visitation to downtown. The economic development plan discusses retail recruitment in more detail. The Uptown Blanco project will bring in a new mix of attractions including a theater and performing arts facility. This will attract evening visitors locally and from out of town that will benefit all of downtown. Other businesses on the Square may be willing to be open later to serve this increased evening traffic.

One opportunity that should be pursued is to capitalize on the Real Ale Brewery. Currently, it is located in downtown but is building a larger facility north of town. The brewery could provide a tremendous asset to downtown if they opened a Tap Room on the Square. This could be located in the existing brewery once the new one is completed, or it could be located in another building. Fredericksburg has benefited greatly from allowing open containers on their shopping strip. Blanco could allow this as well, with visitors enjoying a locally brewed beer or glass of wine as they visit local shops. Also, beer aficionados are a potential tourist market to bring to Blanco to tour the brewery and visit the downtown Tap Room. **Real Ale has built a new Brewery on the north side of town and is a major draw to the city. Several events are held each year at the brewery. A new microbrewery and pub will soon be open. On the Square. The loss of the Bowling Alley Café and the Sunset Restaurant are felt. These two buildings need to come back into the economic fold.**

Most local residents would like to see more restaurants in the community

Improve the appearance of downtown

Many of the improvements discussed above will help improve the appearance of downtown, particularly the lighting, benches, and landscaping. However, there are additional projects that will help the appearance. In addition to improving how the area looks, there may also be a benefit in slowing traffic by creating an image for drivers that there is activity and they need to be more cautious. As discussed in the community development plan, clearing the brush from Town Creek would improve the appearance and help slow traffic by making downtown more visible from Hwy 281. This has been done by Keep Blanco Beautiful (KBB) in the past but requires more on-going work than a small volunteer group can provide. This may be something the Downtown Committee can spearhead in cooperation with KBB and the City of Blanco. In the past this work was done for community service by minor offenders. This may be an option to provide the necessary labor for the project. **An environmentally responsible approach has been taken with Town Creek. The City now employs a code officer to encourage/enforce abiding by the standards set in the UDC**

Another opportunity to improve the appearance of downtown is to complete the paving on the Square. Currently, between the curb extensions around the Courthouse, there is dirt. This is unattractive and inconvenient because people often have to step out of their car into puddles or mud. This should be addressed to improve parking and appearance downtown. **This has been done**

The courthouse lawn also provides an opportunity to create a visual destination in downtown. The lawn currently has large trees and grass but little else to attract attention. The Old Blanco County Courthouse Preservation Society has developed a landscape plan for the courthouse and has had some success with implementing aspects of this plan. Any improvements should be made in consideration of the Square as a community destination and create a space that can be multi-purpose. This means it can be used for concerts, such as were held at the courthouse Christmas lighting the Friday after Thanksgiving, as well as a place for downtown visitors to relax and enjoy time in the area. If the city moves forward with plans to purchase the courthouse, the existing landscape plan can be the basis for improvements to the property. **The City dropped plans to purchase the Courthouse. The OBCCPS has improved the landscaping with walkways and picnic tables**

Many communities protect and enhance their appearance through design guidelines which provide standards when buildings are renovated, or new ones are built. These guidelines can be mandatory or voluntary, depending on the desires of the community. Designs for buildings in the Historic District currently have to go before the Historic Commission for review, but this does not extend beyond the downtown area. Some communities, such as Fredericksburg, have very strict, mandatory design standards which go so far as to dictate colors that can be used for buildings. Other communities are much more flexible and simply provide general recommendations for how buildings should look. What these communities often use is a picture book of design elements that should be included rather than cumbersome text descriptions. These books can be provided to prospective developers when they approach the city for permits. The goal of design guidelines should not be to create cookie cutter buildings, rather they should create common elements that will unify the appearance of downtown. These guidelines are intended to protect the historic integrity and appearance of the downtown to ensure that the character of the area is not lost as buildings are built or renovated. Guidelines will help protect property values in the area by ensuring quality development and minimize the potential for inappropriate structures to be built.

Before developing any design standards, there must be an education and outreach effort to residents, downtown property and business owners, the Historic Commission, and others to ensure they support the guidelines and understand the benefits they provide. Their support will be necessary if the guidelines are to be successful. Rather than making the design guidelines mandatory, they can be voluntary. Developers who agree to follow the guidelines can be rewarded with assistance to renovate their buildings. This can include grants, easier permitting, fee reductions, etc. Discussed below is a program many communities utilize to help revitalize their downtowns. **The Historic Preservation Commission has completed an initial design guidelines guide. All alterations to existing buildings must be approved by the commission including signage and lighting. New construction must also follow the guidelines**

Provide assistance for building owners to maintain and improve their buildings

The cost of renovating historic buildings can be daunting for their owners, especially if there is a desire to maintain their historic integrity. Often, these buildings require major investment to return them to a safe and usable condition. Often, property owners are not able to realize adequate rents from the property to justify renovation costs and leave the buildings to deteriorate. This results in a spiral of declining values and appearance throughout downtown which can harm even successful businesses in the area. To combat this, many communities have begun offering assistance to building owners to help them maintain and improve their buildings.

Improving downtown appearance can be as simple as pressure washing buildings and cleaning up weeds, trash, etc. Downtown property owners can come together and hold regular clean up days to improve downtown. There could be cost sharing to hire a pressure washer for all the buildings, volunteers could plant flowers and provide general clean up. Also, building owners can help improve appearances when their buildings are vacant by painting murals on the windows rather than leaving them open (and dusty) on an empty building. Local high school art students or area artists can be used to paint historic scenes, or even artistic shopping scenes, on the windows so that there is still "life" in the building rather than simply being empty.

One program that has been successful is a facade improvement grant or low interest loan. Cities often set aside anywhere from \$10,000 and up that property owners can apply for to use on their buildings. The La Grange Economic Development Corporation offers a 20% matching up to \$1,000 for facade improvements. Another option may be to set up a low interest loan pool through local banks. These loans can be offered to property owners for building improvements. The way many

communities set this up is to request each bank to provide money that can be administered on a rotating basis by the banks so each will have access to servicing the loans. This may be a better option for Blanco due to the limited resources of city government. Blanco is fortunate to have several local banks that can be called upon to participate in this process.

A tax abatement or tax "freeze" program may also provide needed incentive for owners to improve their buildings. The city may decide to declare the historic district as a reinvestment zone that would allow abatements to be offered for owners who renovate their buildings. The drawback to this is that it can cause resentment among those owners who have done improvements and not benefited from the program. A tax "freeze" may be more palatable to owners and the community as a whole. If a building owner makes improvements and increases the value of the property, the taxes would not immediately rise based on the higher appraisal value. For example, if a building is worth \$50,000 and improvements raise the value to \$75,000, that increase in value would not be taxed for a set period. The increased taxes could be phased in over time, 100% abatement in year one, 80% in year two, etc. This would allow the owner to begin to recoup the investment in the building before having to pay higher property taxes. Local government would not lose any tax revenue (as they would through abatements) because the original value of the property is still taxed.

Funding options that the city may consider revitalizing downtown are to create a Public Improvement District or a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone. These are tools that will generate funds solely for downtown improvements and can be used to fund building improvements, pedestrian enhancements, burying utilities, rent assistance, public restrooms, and other projects. A Public Improvement District (PID) is an additional property tax that is imposed on properties in the district. This additional tax is used for downtown improvements. To establish a PID, over 50% of the property owners in the proposed district would have to support to effort. Austin has a PID for the 6th Street area that exempts properties valued under \$500,000. This allows those owners with smaller properties to avoid paying higher taxes. An exemption may be appropriate in Blanco and could be set based on local needs. A Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) is similar to a PID, except that it does not require an additional property tax. Rather, it uses any additional tax revenues generated by higher values on property in the TIRZ created by public improvements to the area. For example, if the city created a TIRZ, they could issue bonds to build new sidewalks and bury the utilities. Based on these improvements, properties in the TIRZ would increase in appraised value. The taxes generated on that increased value would be used to pay off the bonds. While these programs are a reliable source of funding for downtown improvements, they are often contested by property owners unwilling to increase their taxes, and others in the city who resent tax dollars spent solely to benefit downtown owners. As with many of the recommendations in the comprehensive plan, this would require outreach and education to the public, so they realize the benefits of implementing these programs.

Hold regular events downtown

As the heart of Blanco, downtown should serve as a gathering place for community celebrations. Market Days is a regular event that brings vendors and visitors into downtown. There should be more events serving both a larger regional audience, as well as local residents.

There are plans underway to hold a Lavender Festival in May 2005. There will be an estimated 7,000 visitors to Blanco as part of this event. This marks a tremendous opportunity for local businesses to capitalize on those visitors and create a lasting impression that will bring them back to Blanco in the future. The entire community should support the efforts of the Chamber of Commerce to organize this event and make it successful. An annual festival that is well organized and attended can be a tremendous boon to a small town, Luling's Watermelon Thump has become nationally recognized, as have other small-town festivals. **Accomplished and very successful**

Another event is the "Trail of Lights" during the holidays. Many Hill Country cities participate, and it has become a major tourist attraction for many. This is discussed in the community development plan as it relates to Bindseil Park. Downtown property and business owners should be involved in planning this and making it successful. There should be cost sharing for lights throughout downtown, and businesses can agree to stay open later and participate in downtown activities to serve "Trail of Light" visitors. Again, the Downtown Committee should take the lead in planning this event to ensure all are involved and benefit from the effort. **Continues to be a popular annual event**

Downtown events do not have to be large festivals, they can be simple concerts by local bands, including school bands, sidewalk sales, etc. The Downtown Committee can serve as the organizing group to put together regular events that will generate interest in downtown. Many towns have weekly concerts in the evening where residents can pick up dinner at restaurants on the Square or bring picnic lunches. The lawn in front of the courthouse offers a perfect location for an event like this. Sidewalk sales can be coordinated with business owners and possibly Market Days to bring in the maximum

audience. These can be fun events with businesses offering early morning coffee and donuts to bring in folks, or evening "Sip and Save" where visitors can enjoy a beverage while shopping. The benefit of these types of events is the minimal cost involved. Local bands may be willing to play for free, or simply pass a tip jar around the crowd. Most would likely have their own equipment and residents could bring blankets or chairs. The primary issue in holding events downtown is the lack of adequate public restrooms.

Provide public restrooms

Public restrooms are consistently a challenge for any downtown revitalization effort. In order for there to bring visitors into downtown and keep them there, restrooms are a necessity. Blanco currently has facilities in the courthouse that are used for many events in the downtown; however, this places a burden on the Courthouse Society due to the increased utility, cleaning, and related expenses for maintaining the restrooms when heavily used. Providing restrooms should be a mid-range goal for the Plan, because it is an expense that is not required until there are regularly large crowds in downtown. One option may be to provide facilities at the Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center with the City helping with utility costs. **Accomplished**

Conclusion

Blanco's downtown is a tremendous opportunity for the community. It offers a connection with the past as well as an asset for the future. Downtown can serve local needs as well as attract visitors to the community, driving the local economy. Implementing this plan will help protect what is already successful in downtown and create opportunities for new and existing businesses to prosper. The biggest challenge facing Blanco currently is a lack of coordination and cooperation in downtown improvement efforts. The first step in implementation should be for all the groups with interests in downtown to come together and agree on the process. This plan is based on the input of the entire community, it is not based on any one group's idea of what should happen downtown. It will be important for there to be consensus before work is undertaken to ensure success and minimize the potential for anyone to have negative impacts from the improvements. Creating a Downtown Committee should be a priority so it can serve as the clearinghouse for all other groups and actions. Improving downtown will help drive the local economy by bringing in tourism dollars and improving quality of life, thereby making Blanco more attractive to prospective businesses. This plan lays the groundwork for long term improvements that the entire community can both participate in and benefit from.

Historic Preservation

Introduction

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Of all the opportunities presented in the CMP, Historic Preservation has made the greatest progress. This can be attributed to the hard work of a few individuals on the Historic Preservation Commission and the cooperation of the residents and business owners in the district. The Old Blanco County Preservation Society plays a vital role in maintaining the historic relevance of the town.

There is a common misperception that Historic Preservation is another attempt by government to control private property. That is not the case at all, rather it is about economic development, building on local assets to improve the overall economy of a community. As with all aspects of the comprehensive plan, there must be popular support for protecting the cultural assets of Blanco. This section of the plan identifies strategies for identifying and protecting those historic resources in the community to serve as a basis for improving the quality of life and economy of Blanco. It is important to consider that there are more historic assets in Blanco than just the downtown buildings. There may be historic farmsteads, other agricultural lands, the State Park, the cemetery, private homes, and other sites that have historic value and contribute to the overall character of Blanco. These assets should not be overlooked when implementing an historic preservation program.

This plan is geared toward community efforts rather than city government. Local government can be involved in developing ordinances and potentially providing funding assistance, but the bulk of the work to inventory historic assets and research applicable information will be the work of volunteers. These volunteers include members of the Historical Commission, Keep Blanco Beautiful, and Old Blanco County Courthouse Preservation Society, as well as private citizens. The historic preservation focus group should have an on-going role in overseeing this effort and ensuring constant communication among the volunteers.

The projects identified for this plan are intended to *Protect the heritage of Blanco through preservation of historic buildings and sites throughout the community* and *Utilize Blanco's heritage to develop tourism and related businesses in the community*. The projects that will accomplish these goals are:

- Develop an inventory of all historic buildings and sites in and around Blanco
- Expand the preservation ordinance and become a Certified Local Government
- Develop design guidelines for new construction and renovation for the entire community of Blanco
- Prioritize properties in need of protection and develop a program to do so

These projects will ensure that historic assets in Blanco will not be lost; however, it is not intended as a top down regulatory program, rather it will work with property owners and provide them with resources to protect their buildings

Projects

Develop an inventory of all historic buildings and sites in and around Blanco

In 1990, an inventory was developed for the downtown area in order to establish a historic district. This survey should serve as the basis for a community-wide survey to identify additional structures and locations that are in need of preservation. Volunteers are already moving forward with this effort and are meeting with representatives from the Texas Historical Commission to create a survey form and determine how best to proceed. The survey will begin with a "windshield" tour of Blanco to identify historic assets. Part of this survey will involve photographing each structure, identifying when it was built, the architect, etc. A video should also be produced highlighting historic structures and their history. Local residents can be interviewed to create an oral history of the buildings where possible. This can serve as a resource for the entire community.

An inventory has been made of historic buildings. A walking tour is in the works

Another opportunity is to create a walking tour of Blanco that would serve as a tourist attraction. The Chamber of Commerce can create a brochure highlighting the most historic properties and identifying walking routes to connect them. This brochure can then be distributed at tourism trade shows, local businesses, and other venues to highlight the attractions of Blanco. Implementing the pedestrian projects identified elsewhere in the comprehensive plan will help this become reality by providing safe access throughout Blanco.

Blanco Cemetery is another under-utilized historic asset. There has been some effort made to survey and identify historic gravesites. It is known that over 30 Confederate soldiers are buried there, as well as other historic figures. A complete inventory should be conducted to identify historic graves and a brochure developed to allow visitors to find those sites. Again, the Texas Historical Commission can be a resource in this effort.

The cemetery has been designated an historic cemetery

By identifying and cataloging historic assets, Blanco can identify those in need of protection and work with property owners to do so. Also, because heritage tourism is so popular, visitors will come to see historic buildings and homes, and this will result in increased business in Blanco.

Expand the preservation ordinance and become a Certified Local Government

In order to establish the Historic District, the city had to adopt a preservation ordinance; however, the existing ordinance may no longer be appropriate. There should be an effort to research ordinances to identify "best practices" that could be applied in Blanco. THC has a model ordinance on their website that can serve as the first step in updating the current ordinance. In addition, volunteers should contact other communities that have established ordinances and identify what could be adopted from those cities that would benefit Blanco.

An historic preservation ordinance has been added to the UDC.

The Certified Local Government (CLG) program is administered by THC and provides a variety of benefits to participating communities. One of the primary benefits is access to funding for preservation programs. This funding can be used for establishing design guidelines and other

needed projects. In addition, it will provide access to other communities facing similar challenges and allow networking to identify appropriate programs to implement to better protect local resources. THC will work with Blanco to assist the city in becoming CLG compliant and entering the program.

Blanco is Certified Local Government compliant. Work needs to be done to take advantage of the funding and other programs available through THC

Develop design guidelines for new construction and renovation for the entire community of Blanco

Design guidelines often evoke concerns about overly strict regulation of private property. Some communities have taken guidelines to this level and have very stringent regulations on everything from building material to even paint color. It is not recommended that Blanco create guidelines that are this restrictive on property owners. Rather, the

guidelines should be created in such a way that new development and renovations will result in buildings that match the existing character of surrounding buildings. These guidelines do not have to be mandatory, they can be voluntary, allowing building owners to opt in to following the guidelines. There may be an opportunity to provide incentives for building owners who choose to follow the guidelines.

Guidelines for new construction outside the historic zone have not been developed

The first step in establishing guidelines is research to identify what other communities have done. There are a number of websites available with model guidelines and other resources. This information can be found in the Resource Guide. Once a basic understanding has been established, a consultant should be hired to develop the actual guidelines. Funding can come from the CLG program, local sponsorship, and other sources to pay for the consultant. The consultant should be experienced in developing guidelines and have a portfolio available for review. The goal should be to develop appropriate guidelines that can be administered locally through the Historical Commission. Many communities utilize a "picture book" format that has images of appropriate design rather than cumbersome text descriptions.

Finally, there will have to be education and outreach to inform citizens of the new program. Building and business owners should be included in the guideline development process to ensure they support the recommendations.

Also, before adoption, citizens should be informed about the guidelines and given an opportunity to comment on them. This will ensure adequate support for them and help with implementing the changes.

Prioritize properties in need of protection and develop a program to do so

All of the programs identified in this plan will result in enhanced protection of historic assets in Blanco. However, there will likely be a need for financial assistance to some building owners to allow them to improve their properties and protect their historic character.

The first step is to determine the current condition of historic structures as part of the survey. This will form the basis for prioritizing those properties most at risk for deterioration or even demolition. Once these properties have been identified, the owners should be contacted to

determine their plans for the property. If possible, they should be encouraged to protect the historic assets. One way to do this is through financial incentives. A program should be developed that will provide assistance for property owners in protecting their buildings.

As with other aspects of this plan, the first step is research. Many communities have successfully established local funding sources for historic preservation. There are also a wide variety of grants available for this. The Resource Guide offers a starting point for identifying funding sources. Local options may include a low-interest loan pool that local banks can contribute seed money to start. Loans would be offered at a reduced interest rate and each bank would administer the loan on a rotating basis. Another option may be a grant program administered by the city.

This could be funded through city government, or private funding sources. The grants could be relatively small, many communities provide up to \$1000 for paint or other facade improvements, so even a relatively small amount of money (\$10,000) could go a long way. Volunteers will begin the process of identifying potential funding sources and contacting communities to identify how they fund historic preservation. Any assistance should be tied to the design guidelines, providing an incentive for owners to follow the guidelines in their construction or renovation.

No funding has been allocated for building rehabilitation

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to ascertain the extent to which the recommendations made in Blanco's 2005 Comprehensive Master Plan have been accomplished.

Methodology: In 2016, the 2005 Blanco Comprehensive Master Plan was reviewed by 5 knowledgeable individuals to identify and assess specific recommendations made in the Plan. 134 recommendations in the Narrative portion of the Plan and 150 in the Implementation section were reviewed. Analysis showed that only 15% of the recommendations had been accomplished. In 2020, this methodology, with minor modifications, was repeated with 3 knowledgeable individuals participating.

Analysis: Each of the specific recommendations was subjectively evaluated and assigned to one of the following categories:

- a. Done (recommendation has been substantially completed)
- b. Partially Done (some things have been done but work remains)
- c. Not Done (virtually nothing, if anything, has been accomplished)

Results. The 2020 analysis combined with the 2016 analysis yielded the following:

	DONE	PARTIALLY DONE	NOT DONE	TOTAL
Land Use	2	5	8	15
Growth Management	13	6	14	33
Community Development	16	10	28	54
Economic Development	5	12	14	31
Downtown Revitalization	12	4	9	25
Historic Preservation	3	4	6	13
Water Resources Assessment	6	0	10	16
TOTAL.	57	41	89	187
% of Total	30%	22%	48%	100%

The historic assets of Blanco serve to enhance the quality of life for residents as well as forming a basis for economic development. People want to visit authentic rural communities and experience real small-town life. Blanco has that, it does not have to artificially create a downtown as many suburban communities are doing. Protecting these assets will benefit all residents through increased sales tax generation, as well as protecting the rural character. Historic buildings are a link to a shared past and are worthy of protection. Following the recommendations of this plan will allow these resources to be protected but also provide an economic benefit to the owners and the community as a whole.

APPENDIX

[PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS](#)

[STATUS OF GOALS](#)