

9 | HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic Preservation Policies

- POLICY 1:** Celebrate Lancaster’s history by retaining and explaining its historic assets.
- POLICY 2:** Use historic assets as the basis for special districts, gateways, and focal points.
- POLICY 3:** Make downtown historic ‘on the outside’ but cutting edge ‘on the inside.’

Introduction

The earliest settlement in the area that is today’s city of Lancaster was authorized by the Republic of Texas in 1841. The original survey of the town of Lancaster was completed in 1852. This history makes Lancaster one of the oldest communities in the North Texas region, and creates a rich heritage of business and residential building styles not found in other, younger communities.

Lancaster’s history is also one of resilience. Three early settlements – Hardscrabble, Pleasant Run and then Lancaster – were created during the early decades of Lancaster’s growth. Each settlement grew but was then surpassed by the next. Today’s Lancaster includes all three areas of early settlement. Major fires devastated the town square in 1877, 1889 and 1918. Each time, the square was rebuilt. The square suffered the fate of many American downtowns in the post-World War II era, when retail development along new highways diminished the role of traditional downtowns. Urban renewal investments in the 1970’s returned the community’s attention to its historic center. In 1994, a tornado destroyed homes in Lancaster neighborhoods and buildings on the town square. Once again, the community rebuilt and reinvested in its center. Lancaster’s response to these challenges shows the determination and resilience of its residents and business owners. It emphasizes the value of the Town Square and nearby neighborhoods to the character of this unique community.

Today’s residents and civic leaders desire the Town Square and surrounding areas to remain the heart of the Lancaster community. In workshops and individual comments during this Comprehensive Plan process, people expressed the desire for new activities and uses that benefit from and enhance the Town Square’s role as the center of Lancaster. The Historic Preservation Principles listed above, the plan’s preferred development pattern and the recommended implementation measures all support this idea – that Lancaster’s cherished historic core will be its 21st century focal point as well.

Historic Preservation Topics

Four topics provide this plan's direction related to historic preservation. The first topic, Historic Assets, summarizes the current status of Lancaster's historic buildings and areas and the processes intended to preserve their character. The second topic, Building on Historic Assets, explains the role these assets should play in Lancaster's continued growth and development. The third topic, New Investment, explores the opportunities for new investment that will strengthen the center of Lancaster while retaining or even enhancing its character. The final topic, Education and Celebration, recognizes that preservation of structures and development regulations alone cannot achieve a vibrant connection between past, current and future Lancaster residents.

Historic Assets

Several historic resource surveys have been conducted in recent years that have identified potential historic resources in Lancaster. In 1998, Dallas County conducted a Historic Resource Survey that identified a number of historic assets within Lancaster. That survey built upon a previous survey conducted by the University of Texas at Arlington that reviewed the architectural and historic significance of many structures within the community. Most recently, Quimby McCoy prepared an updated Inventory of Historic Structures in 2009 that expanded upon both the Dallas County and University of Texas at Arlington Surveys. All of these surveys and resources are available at the City of Lancaster.

Locations

There are seven locations within Lancaster with national, state or city historic designations. These locations are listed in Table 9.01 and shown on Exhibit 9.02. Four assets are recognized on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Three assets are Designated Texas Historic Landmarks (DTHL). Four assets are Historic Landmarks designated by the City of Lancaster (LHL). Each of these assets provide a connection to the early settlement of Lancaster.

	Historic Asset	Address	NRHP	DTHL	LHL
1	Crouch/Wood/Graham Home	616 E. Belt Line Rd.			X
2	Ellis/Hash Home	1000 W. Main St.			X
3	Randlett House	401 S. Centre St.	X		
4	Rawlins, Capt. R. A., House/Homestead	850 S. Dallas Ave.	X	X	X
5	Strain Farm--Strain, W.A.	400 Lancaster-Hutchins Rd.	X		
6	Strain, W. A., House	400 E. Pecan St.	X	X	X
7	Winniford House	1921 Nokomis Rd.		X	

Table 9.01 Historic Designations in Lancaster

The importance of these sites is recognized by their historic designation. In addition to these sites, state and federal databases identify additional locations in Lancaster with historic implications. The Texas Historical Commission's Texas Historic Sites Atlas locates the Durrett cemetery within Lancaster. Also, sixteen Texas Historical Markers identify places where important buildings stand or stood, and where notable events took place. Three of these markers are at the sites with Texas Historic Landmark designation

Districts

One area within the City of Lancaster is listed on the National Register of Historic Districts. This is the 163-acre Strain Farm, also shown on Exhibit 2. According to this determination, it “is significant due to the engineered qualities of its agricultural landscape, particularly the system of soil conservation terraces, as well as the pre-1950 buildings, structures and sites which embody agricultural uses, events and activities which occurred during the period of significance and continue today.”

The City of Lancaster has an Historic Preservation Overlay District (HPO), with four defined sub-areas. An Historic District is “an area of the city designated by ordinance of the City Council which possesses within definable geographic boundaries a significant concentration, linkage or continuity of sites, buildings or structures united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development”.¹ These areas are shown in Exhibit 3. Subarea A includes the Town Square; subareas B, C, D and E include areas of historic residential neighborhoods.

The City of Lancaster also designated a Downtown District for the purposes of establishing design guidelines so new development is compatible with the existing character of this central part of the community. This district also is divided into four smaller areas. The Downtown District and its sub-districts are shown on Exhibit 4. One of these, the Town Square District, includes the Town Square and property to its west. The Hall’s Branch, Downtown and most of the East Strand Sub-Districts are included in the HPO’s subarea B and part of subarea E. A part of the East Strand Sub-District is north of the HPO and the Keller Branch Sub-District is entirely to the east of the HPO area.

Current Processes and Procedures

The Lancaster Historic Landmark Preservation Committee (HLPC) is the key organization responsible for historic preservation in Lancaster. This committee advises the Planning and Zoning Commission on issues related to designated historic landmarks and districts, and is also responsible for activities such as conducting an inventory of significant properties, increasing public awareness, and preparing design guidelines.

The City of Lancaster has established a process for designation of historic landmarks and historic districts. These processes are detailed in the Lancaster Development Code. Designation requires consideration by the HLPC and approval by City Council. Once a landmark is designated, “alteration, construction, reconstruction, restoration, rehabilitation, removal or demolition”² is not allowed unless a Certificate of Appropriateness (CA) has been approved. A Certificate of Appropriateness is generally required for changes that alter the exterior architectural appearance of structures in a designated historic district. Certificates of Appropriateness are governed by the Lancaster Development Code and are recommended by the Lancaster Historic Landmark Preservation Committee and approved by the Lancaster Planning and Zoning Commission.

Design guidelines are intended to provide direction to property owners who are considering changes to their structures. The Lancaster Development Code provides a set of Core Principles that apply to the HPO area, as well as General Design Guidelines for use in considering CA applications and a set of Historic Town Square Design Standards that are to be used as guidelines for CA’s within the Historic Town Square District. A more detailed set of design guidelines for “Historic Residential Landmarks and Properties within the Historic District of Lancaster, Texas” was developed in 2009. A final draft was completed in February 2010 but was never adopted by the City. Similarly, a draft of “Design Guidelines for the City of Lancaster Downtown District” was prepared but was apparently not completed or adopted by the City.

1 Lancaster Development Code, section 14.212.

2 Lancaster Development Code, Section 14.506.

Exhibit 9.02 Historic Markers, Assets, and Cemeteries

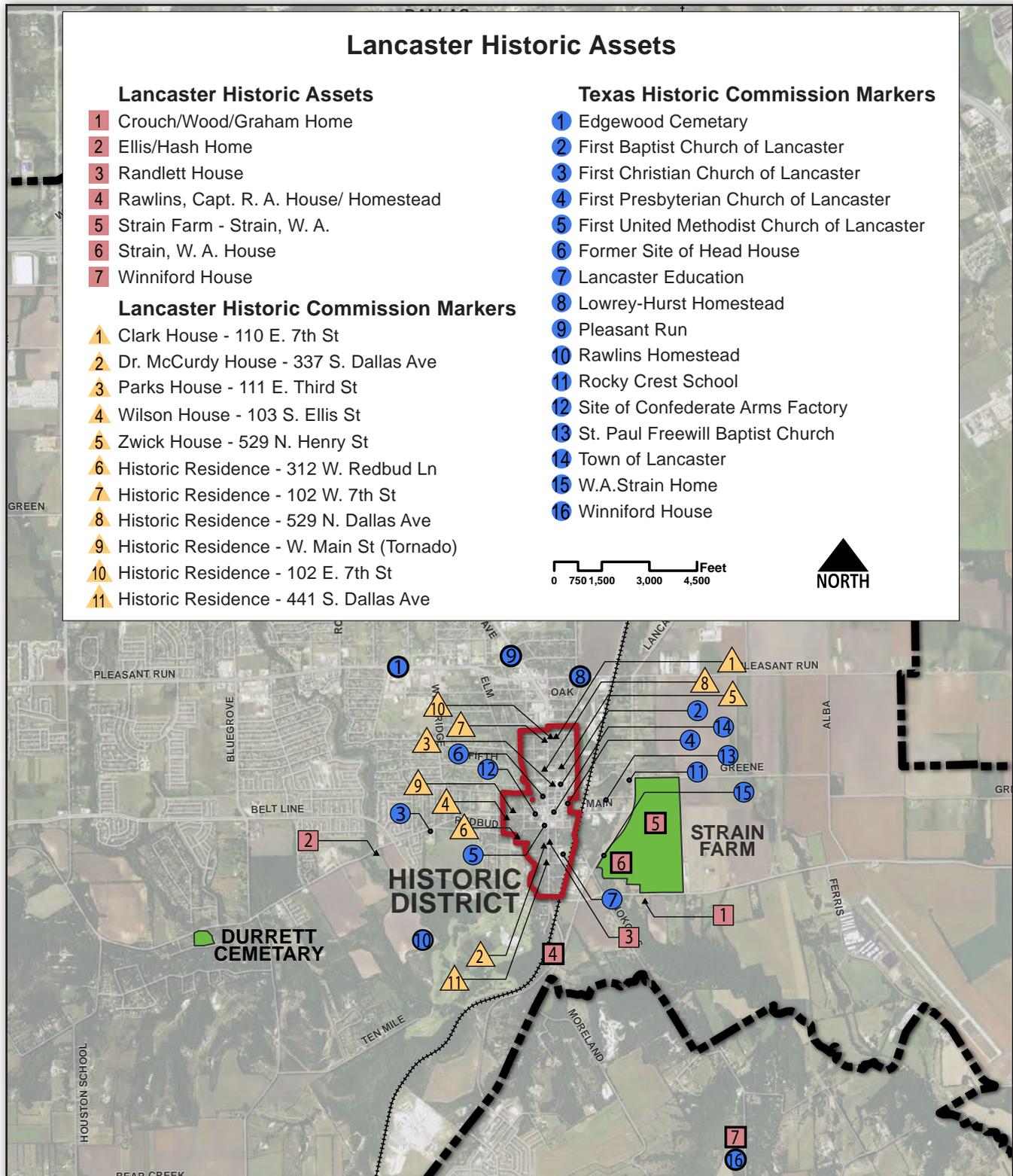




Exhibit 9.03 Existing Historic Preservation Overlay District

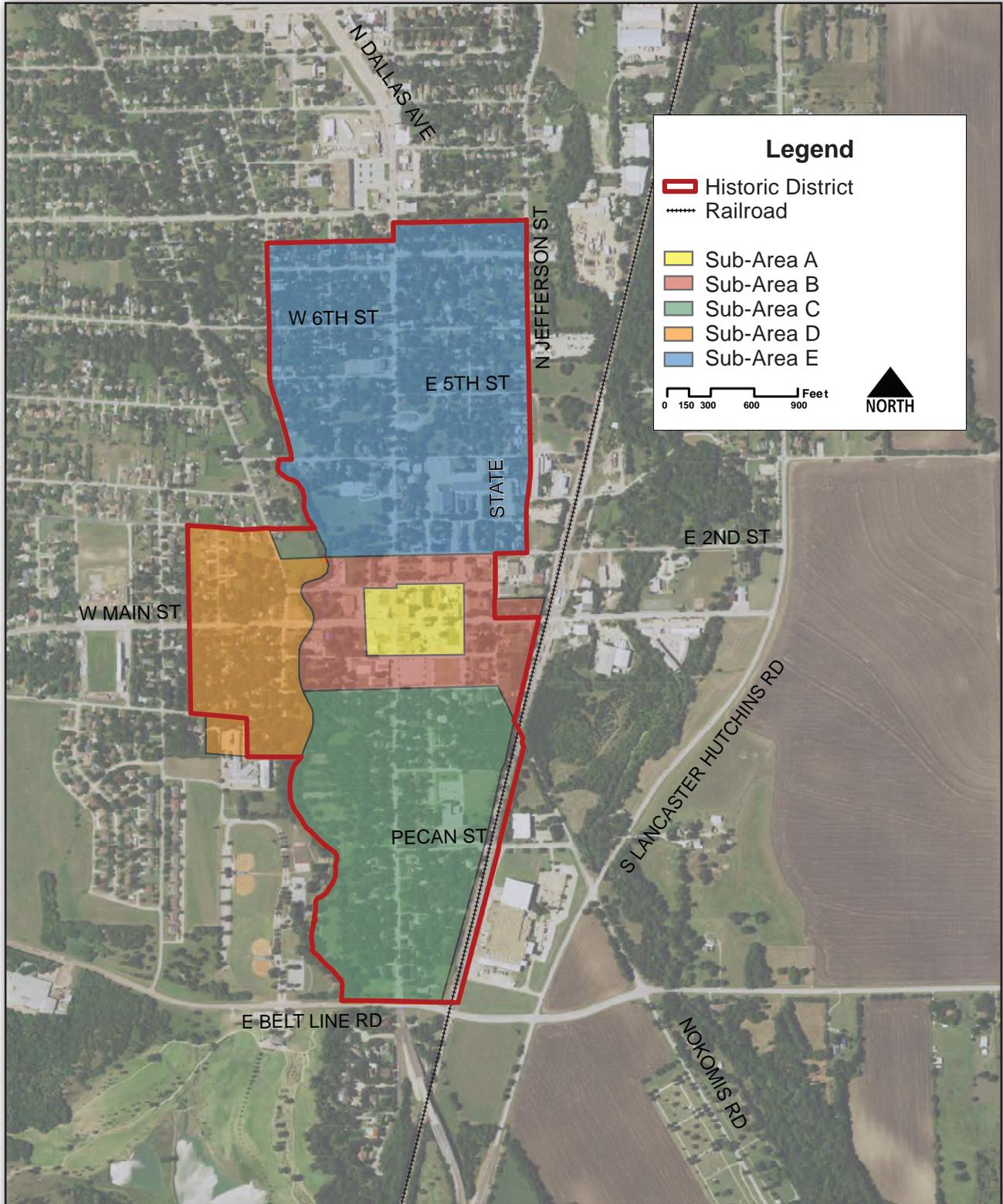
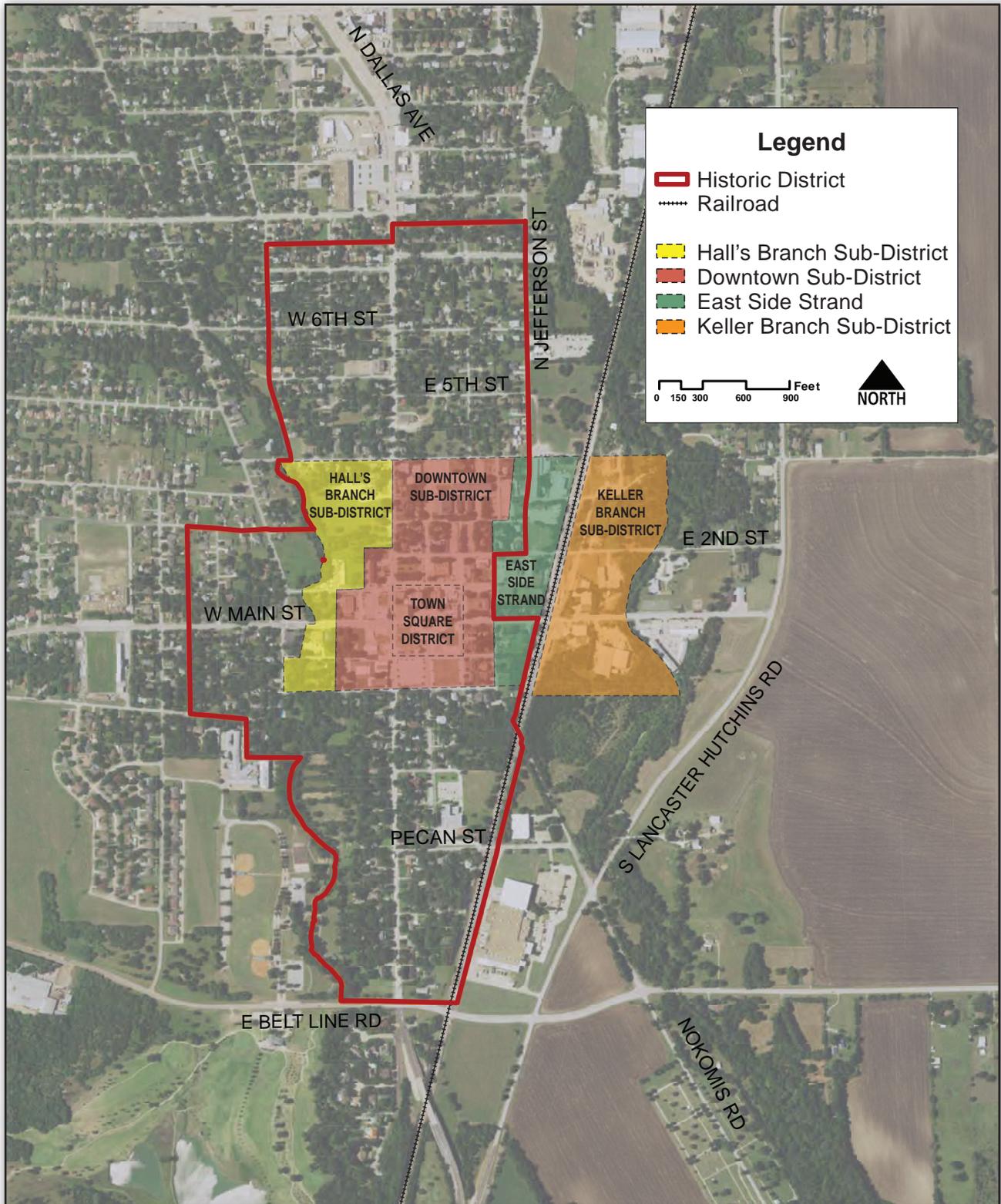


Exhibit 9.04 Existing Downtown District



Building on Historic Assets

The Future Land Use Plan found in Chapter 3 of this document was developed through extensive public involvement and discussion with key Lancaster stakeholders. One of its most important concepts is that it continues the Town Square and Historic District as the heart of the Lancaster community. The Place Types in the Land Use Plan continue the important role for Lancaster's historic assets as this community continues to grow and change.

Special Districts and Areas

The Future Land Use Plan addresses the HPO and Downtown District areas in the following ways:

Town Square

Sub-Area A of the HPO includes the Town Square Sub-District of the Downtown District as well as the properties west to approximately Texas Street. The Town Center Place Type describes the future development pattern and character that is appropriate here. The intent of this place type is to encourage:

- Locally serving areas of economic, entertainment and community activity
- Employment center and shopping destination
- Civic component for gathering
- Active living and walkable

The primary land uses appropriate in this area include a range of residential uses: single family detached, duets, townhouses, urban residential, and senior housing. Non-residential uses are also appropriate here including restaurants, retail, professional office, live/work/shop units. Civic and institutional uses, parks and community buildings are secondary land uses in the sense that they occupy less land area. They are critical, however, to the character of the area and its important role as the center of the Lancaster community.

Other Parts of the Downtown District

The Downtown Sub-District (parts of Subareas B and E of the HPO) is also designated with the Town Center Place Type. In this area, civic uses are less likely to occur. But the other uses described above are appropriate.

The Future Land Use Plan applies the Mixed Use Place Type to the Halls' Branch and East Side Strand Sub-Districts (parts of Subareas B and E of the HPO, as well as the area to the north of Subarea B). This Place Type includes a mix of housing types and residential densities. It also includes non-residential uses so residents can walk to work, shopping and other destinations.

The Keller Branch Sub-District is designated for Urban Residential uses in the Future Land Use Plan. While these areas are still intended to be walkable and offer a range of residential choices, they are not expected to have the non-residential mix contained in the Town Center and Mixed Use Place Types.

Other Parts of the Historic Preservation Overlay Area

Other areas within the HPO (Subareas C, D and the remainder of E) are largely developed today with residential neighborhoods. The Future Land Use Plan retains this character for these areas.

Gateways and Focal Points

Gateways

As these historic areas see new development and reinvestment, gateways could be designed to indicate that the visitor is entering an area with a unique history and character. Such gateways could be considered at locations such as:

- North Dallas Avenue and Fourth Street;
- North Jefferson Street and Fourth Street;
- South Dallas Avenue and East Redbud Lane;
- South State Street and East Redbud Lane;
- Main Street at its crossing of Hall's Branch; and
- Main Street at its crossing of Keller's Branch

Town Square Focal Point

The Town Square should remain the central focal point of this community. For this reason, its historic character must be preserved. At the same time, Town Square will not play such a central community role if its only appeal is its past. The destinations in the Town Square must attract people as part of their daily activities and for special events and occasions. To achieve this central role in Lancaster's future, the City and area property owners must invest in the area. New public facilities, particularly City buildings, should locate here so they bring residents and employees to Town Square on a daily basis. Private investment is also essential, both to maintain the existing historic buildings and to build new buildings for homes and businesses. New businesses, particularly small businesses, entrepreneurs and creative companies that value a lively, walkable locations should be a focus of economic development efforts for the Town Square. Incentives to support these investments are an important part of implementing this Comprehensive Plan.

Lastly, exciting events and activities will bring Lancaster residents and visitors back to the Town Square again and again. Programming of festivals and events must be a coordinated effort of the Town Square property owners and businesses, the City, the Chamber of Commerce and other interested stakeholders.

Other Historic Focal Points

Lancaster's designated historic landmarks are not within Town Square itself, but are in or near the areas of the HPO and Downtown District. The seven historic landmarks shown on Exhibit 2 are all historic homes or farmsteads, and are located south of Town Square. Many of them are still surrounded by agricultural uses or natural open space. This is an unusual feature in this rapidly-growing metropolitan region. These homes and farmsteads could create focal points in Lancaster that convey the experience of life in this region when it was still a predominantly agricultural area. Depending on property owner interests, these landmarks could become part of an historic homes tour, locations for special events or for destinations cultural, natural or agricultural tourism.

New Investment

Historic Sites and Structures

Like all structures, historic buildings require continuing investment by their owners. The additional challenge for historic buildings is that some necessary investment – such as replacing building siding or windows – must be done in a design and with materials that are appropriate to the building's historic character. The City of Lancaster uses its Certificate of Appropriateness process to ensure that these investments are indeed compatible with the historic building's character.

Compatible New Buildings

New construction is desirable in these historic areas of Lancaster because it will allow more people to live, work and spend time in these special areas. The design of these new projects is extremely important. They must create vibrant, walkable places that are compatible with the existing historic character.

Design Standards

The design standards applied during the CA review vary depending on the Subarea or Sub-District in which the property is located. Currently, there are standards in the Lancaster Development Code, the “Historic Residential Landmarks and Properties within the Historic District of Lancaster, Texas” and the “Design Guidelines for the City of Lancaster Downtown District”. Each of these sets of standards are at a different level of detail and use a different set of geographic designations; it is unclear whether the latter two documents were ever formally adopted by the City.

A coordinated set of standards, linked to this plan’s Place Types for future development, could both clarify and simplify the decisions related to new investment. If property owners have a clear idea of the requirements, it is easier for them to decide whether or not the improvements make economic sense. It makes the review process more predictable as well, since the owners, the HLPC, Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council will all have a more consistent understanding of what design is appropriate. This predictability should also streamline the review process, a benefit both to the property owner and to the community.

Design standards or guidelines should address the characteristics that make a renovation or new construction compatible with the area’s history. They should also support the creation of more people-oriented places. Topics for inclusion in these updated standards should include:

- Building scale and massing (height, lot coverage, etc.)
- Windows, doors, porches, canopies and similar features
- Architectural standards and materials
- Public realm
- Multi-modal street typology and streetscape
- Parking
- Signage
- Lighting
- Screening and buffering
- Parks and open spaces
- Review process
- Enforcement approach

Incentives

Economic incentives can play an important role in the new investment desired for these historic sites, buildings and areas. Property tax abatements, economic development incentives, grants or loans for historic projects and other similar tools can help to achieve the public and private objectives of a thriving historic area at the heart of Lancaster.

Partnership Investments

The principle that these areas and buildings should be “historic on the outside and cutting edge on the inside” creates a unique opportunity for partnership between the public and private sectors. Bringing high speed internet, WiFi, adequate electrical service and similar technologies into an older area is far more difficult than building them into a new development in an area that was previously open land. Water and sewer systems in these areas may need expansion or renovation to accommodate the demands of new, more intense mixed use areas or urban residential neighborhoods.

Cutting edge features could also involve on-site solar generation of energy for local use, or the collection and reuse of storm water to conserve water and reduce costs to residents and businesses. Such investments strengthen Lancaster's resilience in a future of limited natural resources and recall the community's resilience and ability to rebuild and restore itself after challenges earlier in its history.

All of these investments could benefit the City's facilities and parks in the Town Square and historic district areas. They also help attract residents and businesses to Lancaster. The City, the Chamber and the property owners within these districts should work together to investigate these ideas and should form an on-going partnership to implement the ones that show promise.

Education and Celebration

Information

Many Lancaster residents and visitors are not aware of Lancaster's history or its important historic sites. Information about these assets should be communicated so there is greater awareness and support for these central parts of the community. Along with the traditional approaches of using historic markers and written brochures, these Lancaster sites could be featured on mobile apps and included in interactive programs and activities for children in the local schools.

Celebrations and Events

Lancaster residents who participated in this comprehensive planning process had many creative ideas for events and activities in the historic center of the community. Certainly, the City's current holiday events should continue to be focused on Town Square. Additional ideas that could be pursued include:

- Theater and performance spaces
- Community green spaces or gardens
- Farmers' markets
- Festivals
- Historic homes tours
- Events that appeal to all generations
- Health fairs, runs and other events that support healthy lifestyles
- Small business incubator or co-office space
- Public transportation hub (shuttle, bus, or rail)
- Bike-share or Zip-car stations
- Places for life-long learning, possibly connected to the campuses of Cedar Valley College and UNT-Dallas

Many of these ideas also involve partnerships between

the City, property owners and other stakeholders. Investments to create these – and to operate them successfully over time – will mean that the Historic District of Lancaster is not just a place to visit once but is rather a place to enjoy all year long.

Historic Preservation Implementation Strategy

The implementation strategies described below are intended to help Lancaster accomplish the goals of the comprehensive plan. By implementing these strategies to celebrate the community's historic assets and use them as the basis for special districts and gateways, Lancaster can leverage its history to build an even stronger future. More details on these strategies can be found in the implementation chapter and Appendix 1 of this document

- Adopt the Historic Area Guidelines as regulations.
- Develop incentives for the restoration and rehabilitation of historic structures in Lancaster.
- Create a downtown business owners association, BID, or other similar organization to take responsibility for organizing events and activities on the Town Square, marketing, and other enhancements.
- In partnership with property owners and key stakeholders, enhance open spaces and activities in and near the Town Square.
- Create special outreach and incentives to encourage the development of vacant lots where previous structures were destroyed by tornadoes.
- Develop and implement education and marketing measures to increase awareness among residents of Lancaster's historic, cultural, and natural assets.
- Expand marketing of Lancaster's historic, cultural, and natural assets
- Evaluate the various policies and procedures governing the existing Historic Preservation Overlay (HPO) sub-areas and the Downtown District and sub-district design guidelines. Consider making changes to these policies, regulations, and guidelines to consolidate them and bring them in line with the Comprehensive Plan's place types, so the process for reinvestment in these areas is clearer and more streamlined.
- Establish a partnership between the city, the chamber, the downtown business owner's association, and other stakeholders to implement technology upgrades and investment in the Town Center area.
- Use a "Common Sense" approach to implementation by providing information and assistance to the property and business owners in the historic district.
- Update previous inventories conducted related to historic assets.

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