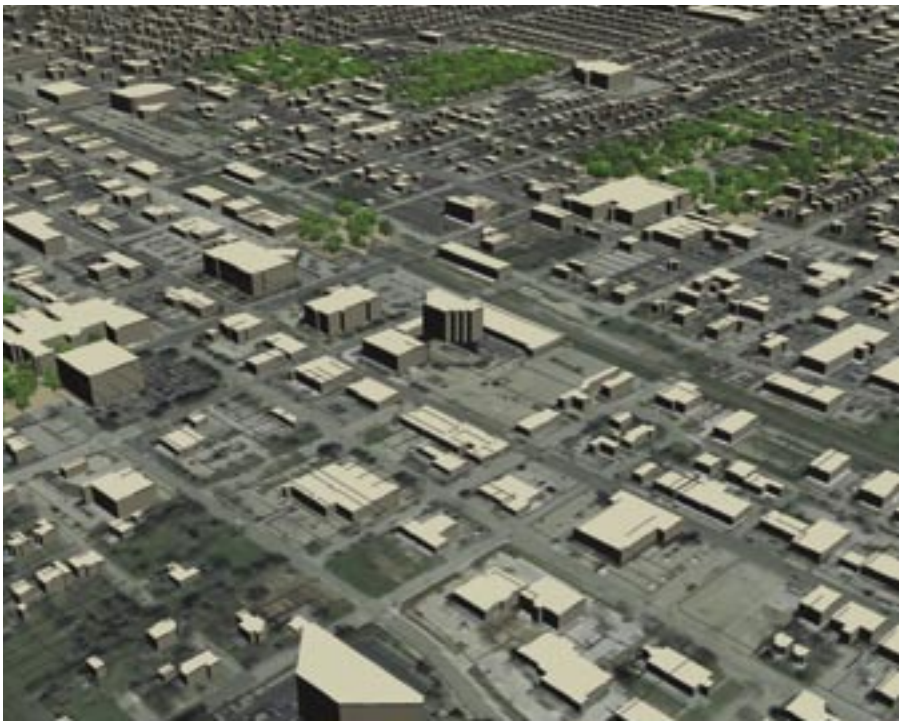
ARLINGTON℠

THE AMERICAN DREAM CITY

CITY OF ARLINGTON

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

Arlington has significant potential to revitalize its downtown area – something other communities have accomplished with great success during the past decade. In many of these communities, the downtowns have become centers of vital growth, providing jobs and raising property values. As part of their newly reinvigorated downtowns, communities are bringing in a strong core of small businesses, business and civic centers, entertainment districts, unique housing opportunities, and cultural and artistic quarters. With a strong physical core, downtown Arlington is well positioned to design a downtown that functions as a vital business and civic center, bustling with activity and investment.



Why this Plan is Needed

The Downtown Arlington Master Plan, like any successful planning effort, will convert a newly shaped vision of a vital downtown into reality. The past has shown that simply planning for a better downtown will not lead to its success – it will require a concerted effort by City leaders, local businesses and residents, and new investors. Fortunately, Arlington has many of the tools already in place that can help create a renewed downtown – appropriate regulations, key strategic public investments and partnerships with the public sector. One important aspect of this master plan is to study and organize existing plans into one comprehensive document. This inclusive document will describe in detail the strategic steps needed to revitalize downtown Arlington.

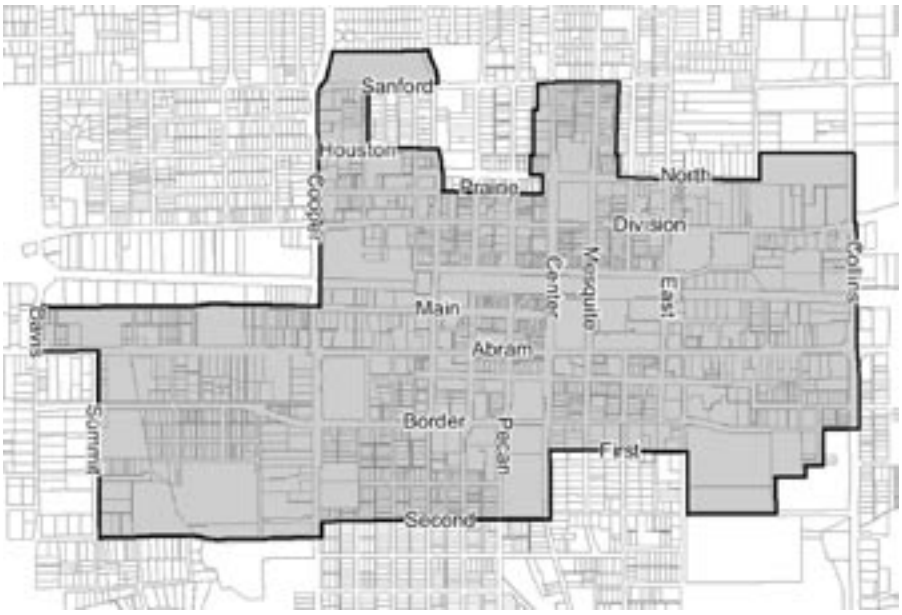
The final master plan will be the result of past plans and public workshops that envision a downtown functioning as a center of community business and culture. The past plans, current knowledge and information, as well as strong public input, will make this vision a reality. A key component is the set of strategies that will lead to change – a process that builds on success and encourages private investments that are crucial to the downtown's vitality.

Moving in the Right Direction

The City already has taken many positive steps toward achieving a thriving and vibrant downtown – including the forming of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District, establishing design standards, and the existence of robust prior plans – that will position downtown Arlington toward becoming a vital business and civic center bustling with activity and investment.

Forming the TIF

Currently, the City has established the Arlington TIF District to provide a financing mechanism that will help redevelop the downtown area. The TIF District, also known as the Arlington Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone Number One, was created by Ordinance 98-142 on November 3, 1998. The formation of a TIF District is one of the keys to providing the financing necessary for critical investments in the downtown area.



A map of the TIF boundary.

Using Existing Plans

Using prior plans and studies is an integral component of this master plan. Fortunately, Arlington has a history of sound planning practice that will shape and guide the master plan. Below is a list of the current Arlington plans and studies that will serve as a useful guide for developing this new master plan:

- Arlington 2025 "Your Future, Your Voice...Reach the Vision," January 2004
- Downtown Arlington Urban Design Study – July 1995
- Downtown Arlington Redevelopment Strategies – July 1995
- Central Planning Sector Comprehensive Plan "The Heart of Arlington" – 1999
- University of Texas at Arlington Campus Master Plan – 1999
- Commercial Planning Study – Gibbs Planning Group, December 1998
- Downtown Arlington Redevelopment Guidelines & Ordinance Provisions, January 2002
- I-30 Three Bridges Corridor Plan, February 2004

Downtown Arlington Today

The City of Arlington was established in 1876. A plat for the original town site showed five east-west streets and seven north-south streets within the half-mile square township, with North, East, South and West streets marking the boundaries. Center Street, the old military road for Bird's Fort, formed the north-south center axis.

Location, access to transportation and the support structure for a local economy made Arlington better suited for growth and prosperity than other communities in the area. As the City grew and prospered, downtown became the City's commercial center and began to represent the heart and soul of the community.

In the last 30 years, however, development has occurred closer to the freeway interchanges in Arlington, rather than the downtown. This is a common growth pattern that many other communities throughout the U.S. are working to re-direct as well. As these outer areas of Arlington have become built out, and with a renewed interest in downtowns in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, Arlington's downtown has the potential to again attract substantial investment for both jobs and housing.

Arlington is in the middle of the metropolitan area, halfway between Dallas and Fort Worth and just eight miles from the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport. Arlington has experienced rapid growth since 1970, with more than 356,000 people now calling Arlington home. The City also welcomes more than 6.5 million visitors annually.

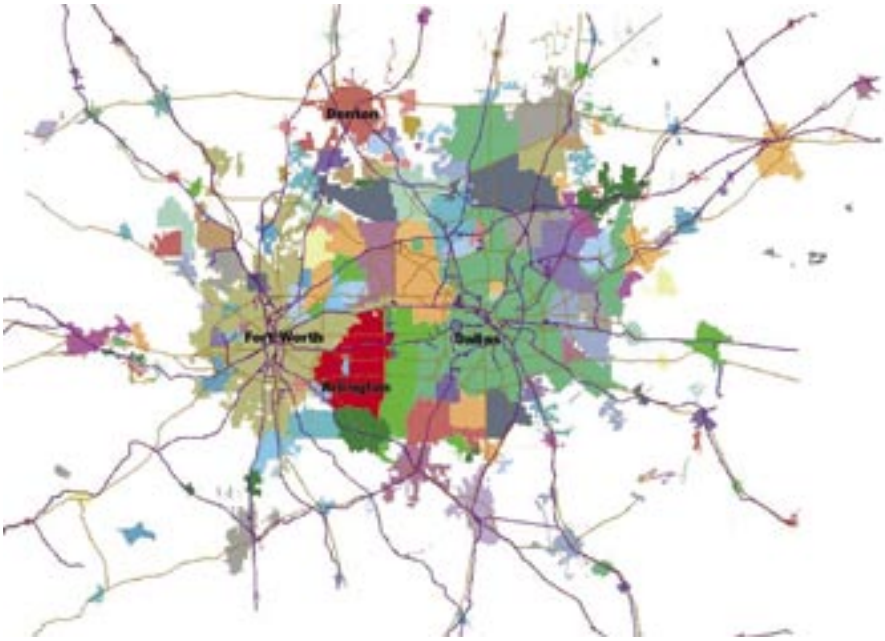
Arlington is home to the University of Texas at Arlington, Six Flags Over Texas, and the Texas Rangers baseball team, as well as major operations of General Motors and National Semiconductor. In addition, the City of Arlington is working aggressively to attract additional high-quality businesses.

Arlington also boasts a strong public school system and was recently cited as the best-educated big city in Texas, based on data from the 2000 U.S. Census. More than half of the population is between the ages of 18 and 44.

Downtown in Context

Strategically located between downtown Dallas and downtown Fort Worth, downtown Arlington's location makes it a focal point for a large portion of the metropolitan region, encompassing more than 356,861 people and close to half a million employees.

The downtown Arlington study area, with its 620 acres, includes a diverse mix of land uses. It is home to Arlington's civic area, established neighborhoods and industrial and commercial centers. Some of the cultural amenities located in the area include the Arlington Central Library, Theatre Arlington and the Museum of Art. It is also close to the rapidly expanding University of Texas at Arlington and is a logical stop for many fans and families destined to Six Flags Over Texas, Six Flags Hurricane Harbor and Ameriquest Field in Arlington. In the future, a commuter line may stop in the downtown, connecting the heart of Arlington with the larger metropolitan area.



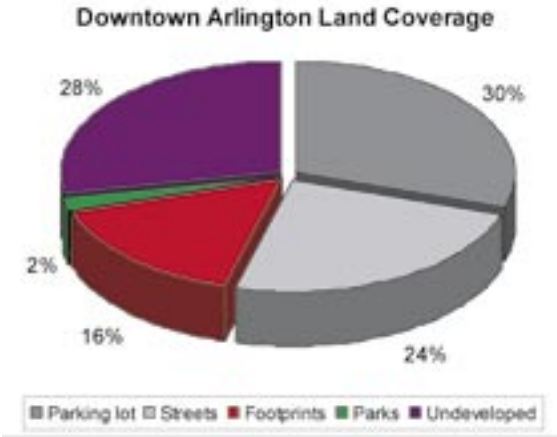
Despite this City's many promising, successful features, it's important to take steps today that will create an even more thriving downtown area. This plan aims to do just that. A mix of housing, jobs, services and attractions is necessary to shape a vibrant and pedestrian-friendly downtown. The downtown also must function well for the thousands of students and staff who live or work at the University and in the surrounding areas.

Downtown Arlington is in close proximity to the entertainment centers along Interstate 30 and State Highway 360 and the University of Texas at Arlington.

Current Conditions

Nearly half of the downtown area is occupied by industrial, commercial, institutional and retail uses. About 24 percent corresponds to streets and public rights-of-way. With just 13 percent of downtown used for housing and one-third of all the physical land in the study area used as parking lots, the area has fallen out of balance, requiring that people travel within the downtown primarily by car. This has created a pattern of economic concentration heavily dictated by daytime business activities and a retail environment stunted due to lack of customer diversity and evening hour destinations and activities. Developing a variety of housing options within the downtown and adjacent areas means more diverse groups will be able to use and appreciate the area on a daily basis, setting the stage for additional services and attractions.

A map of current downtown uses today.



ABOVE: A profile of downtown uses today. LEFT: Of the total downtown area, 24% is streets, 30% parking lots, 30% green or undeveloped and 16% is covered by buildings.

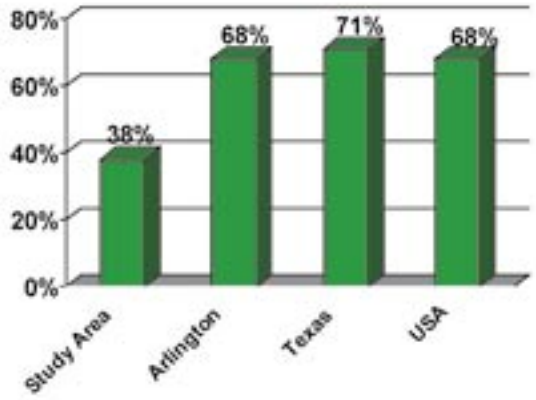
Demographics

Downtown Arlington is home to 3,568 residents, or about 1 percent of the city's 356,861 total population, according to the 2000 Census. Household size is 2.2 people per household, which is below average compared to the rest of the City. Fewer than 40 percent of households consist of families, compared to 68 percent in the rest of the City. Downtown area residents tend to be of ethnic and racial minorities, with just 42 percent of residents describing themselves as Caucasian. Hispanics make up nearly 30 percent of residents, followed by Asians who make up 25 percent, and African Americans who make up 13 percent.

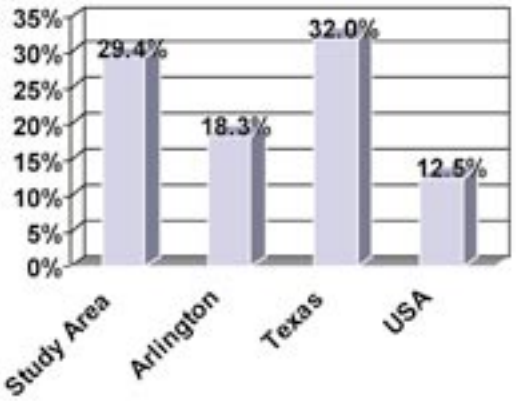
Housing

Downtown residents are overwhelmingly renters. Of the 1,434 households in the area, more than 95 percent rent, compared with 45 percent for the City as a whole. The population density in the area is 4.8 people per acre, lower than the density of 5.28 people per acre for the rest of the City. Population density is highest in the University District and at the edges of the study area, where it meets established neighborhoods. Population density is lowest in the downtown core.

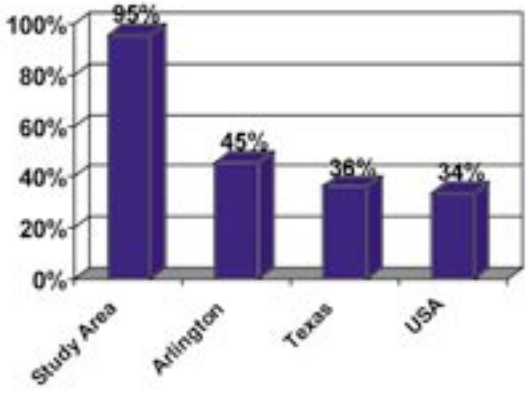
Percent Families, 2000 (Census Bureau)



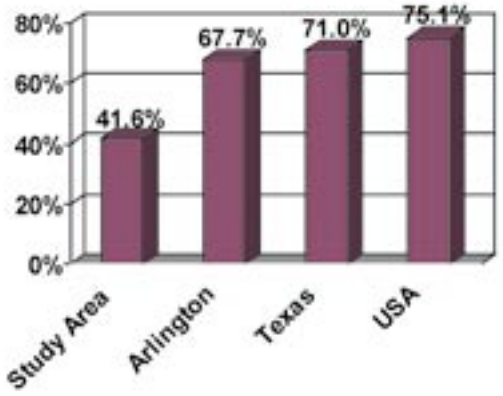
Percent Hispanic, 2000 (Census Bureau)



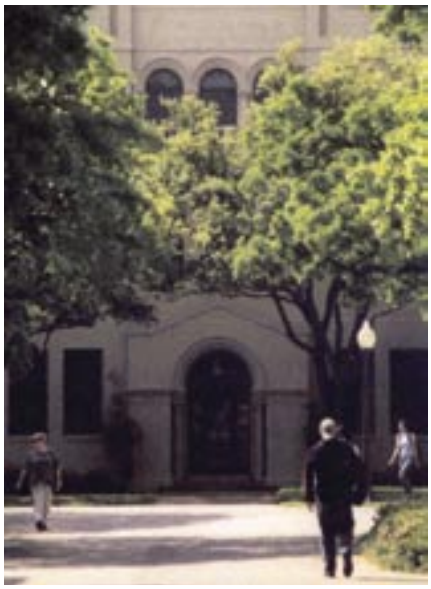
Percent of Households living in Rental Units, 2000 (Census Bureau)



Percent Caucasian, 2000 (Census Bureau)



University of Texas at Arlington



The University of Texas at Arlington's close proximity makes it a natural ally in the efforts to improve downtown Arlington. In 1999, UTA had 18,000 students and forecast that it would reach 28,000 students in 2020. The University is growing even faster than it anticipated and in Fall 2003 had 24,979 students. The University of Texas at Arlington is a critical piece in the future of downtown. The University's 1999-2020 Campus Master Plan and Planning Guide calls for closer ties to Arlington's downtown by creating welcoming entry points, establishing strong edges where the campus meets the surrounding community and providing new parking structures as well as additional apartments and residence halls.

Illustration from University of Texas at Arlington "1999-2020 Campus Master Plan and Planning Guide"

Transportation

In the City of Arlington, the great majority of commuters use their cars to get to work. About 86 percent of workers drive alone to work and 12 percent carpool. Fewer than 2 percent walk to work and less than 1 percent commute by bicycle.

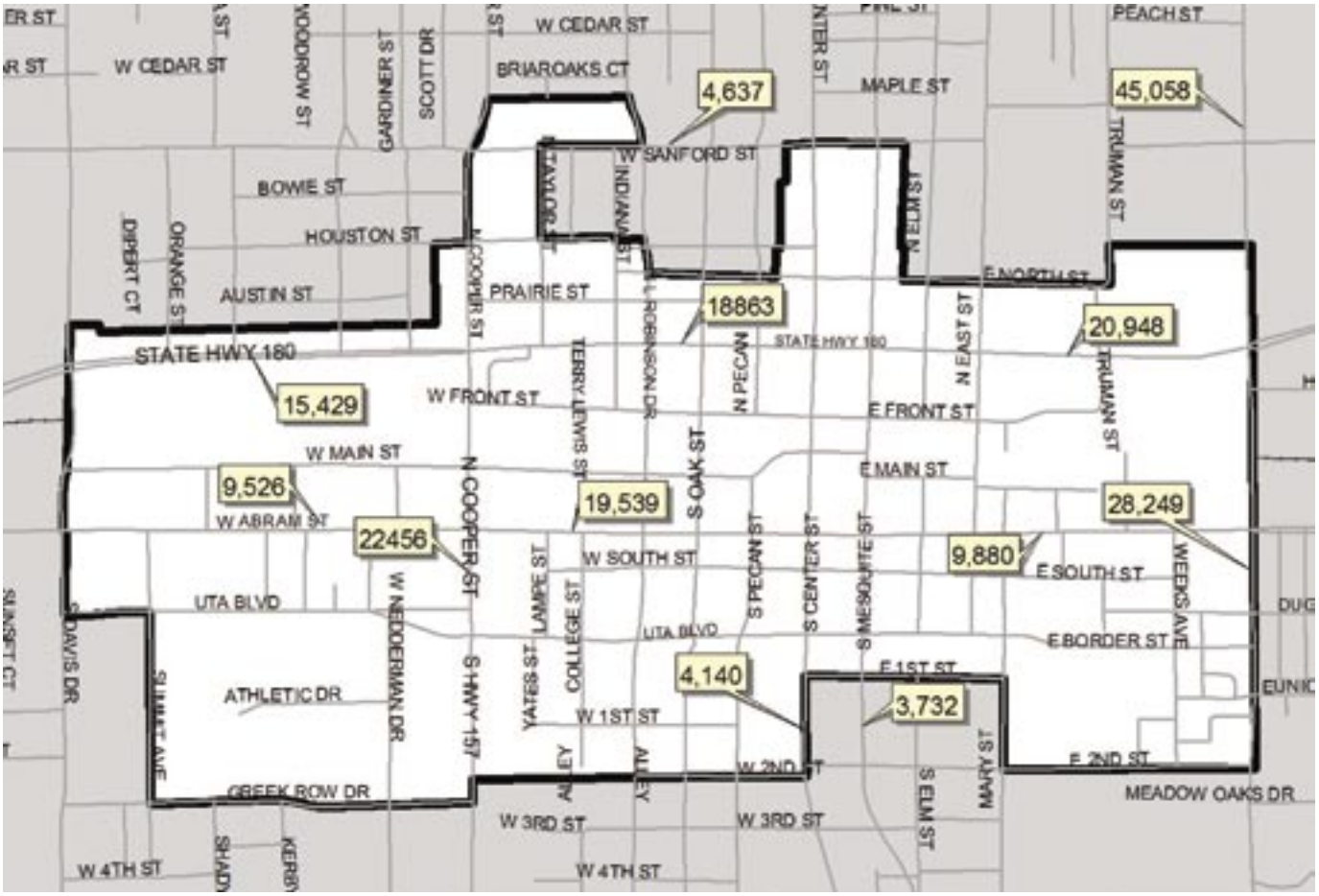
Downtown has good vehicular access from Interstate 30, State Highway 360 and Division Street (State Highway 180), which goes through the downtown area. The grid street pattern provides good interconnectivity and connects the area to the adjacent neighborhoods. However, many of the downtown blocks are quite large, and the railway acts as a barrier that allows only eight crossings within the study area. In addition, the area lacks bicycle facilities and many pedestrian amenities. The University's close proximity to downtown creates the opportunity to emphasize walking and bicycling as effective ways to bring people into downtown. There is no transit service in the area other than the UTA shuttle, but a future commuter rail line, serving the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, is expected to use the existing freight line and serve downtown.

Traffic Counts

Below is a list of the daily traffic counts for the major streets in downtown Arlington. Border and Abram streets carry the most volume of traffic going east and west, while Cooper and Collins streets carry the most volume of traffic going north and south. The couplet of Mesquite and Center carry around 16,000 vehicles. Division carries between 15,500 and 19,000 vehicles.

None of the major arteries report a level of service (LOS) of F (heavy congestion and unstable traffic flow). Collins, between Randol Mill and Abram, and Cooper, south of Abram, show present LOS of E (heavy traffic flow and delays of two or more cycles). The City's comprehensive plan lists transportation improvements in the area, ranging from widening segments on Abram to replacing deteriorated infrastructure on Main and Division streets, among others.

Center: 7,600
Mesquite: 8,500
Division: 15,500-19,000
Abram: 9,500-20,000
Cooper: 22,500
Collins: 28,000-48,000



Redeveloping the Downtown Core

To assess the current development potential in downtown, it's helpful to use GIS modeling software that can determine the return on investment of development projects based on current financial trends and the present zoning regulations in the area. Assuming a return of investment between 8 to 12 percent as the minimum for developers to invest in a project – as well as realistic estimates for construction and operating costs, rents and vacancy rates in the area – the model showed that few properties in the study area provided the minimum return on investment needed once all regulations (such as maximum building height, setbacks and parking requirements) were incorporated into the model. Very few vacant properties met the profit margin threshold.

However, once some of the zoning regulations were adjusted (such as lowering the number of parking spaces required and increasing the number of stories allowed), many properties showed healthy rates of return on investment. Four new zones were created (downtown business zone, main street zone, multi-family zone and university district zone) and all of them showed rates of return above 12 percent.

A second test was to increase rents by 25 cents a square foot, which may be accomplished through infrastructure improvements in the area or an increased market demand that frequently accompanies successful downtown developments. The results show that most of core area shows profit margins between 8 and 12 percent.

Downtown Arlington Zoning Map

Only areas in pink show redevelopment potential

With new land use requirements, many more lots show high redevelopment potential

With higher rents and existing zoning, many more lots show redevelopment potential

Commercial Planning Study Recommendations

The report prepared by the Gibbs Planning Group, "Commercial Planning Study, Arlington, Texas," states that the downtown has the opportunity to develop, in the short term, a viable and urban retail/ restaurant destination that could generate more than $13 million of additional sales every year. The report recommends concentrating retail (restaurants, galleries, antique stores, coffee shops) along Main, Center, Abram, Pecan, Oak and Front streets to take full advantage of a concentrated critical mass and to actively promote the downtown as a gathering place for students and university staff.

The simple fact about downtown reinvestment is that projects have to be profitable. The Downtown area was analyzed for profitability, using a technique called "Return on Investment (ROI) Analysis". This method looks at the costs of property acquisition, demolition, and construction, and compares it with the anticipated rents from the property. This method allows public sector tools, such as zoning code changes, and incentives, such as project support with infrastructure to be tested. The recommendations of this plan have been tested for financial feasibility using this method.

The Workshop: Gathering People's Opinions and Ideas

As part of developing this plan, a workshop was held with more than 100 stakeholders from the downtown area. They were asked how they would like the downtown to change during the next 20 years.

The groups were divided into tables of about eight people, and each group was given a large-scale map of the downtown. They were asked to place "chips" (small pieces of paper that represented various kinds of buildings or uses) on the map and illustrate the kinds of improvements they would like to see. In addition, the groups were asked to design a cross-section for the two common street widths that dominate the downtown – 70 feet and 100 feet of right-of-way. The workshop results helped focus and organize the approach that will be used for developing a master plan. Participants helped identify a set of key values and visions that will help guide the downtown into a more vital, active, and pedestrian friendly area that becomes a cultural center for the community.

Downtown Vision Statement

"Arlington's downtown will be a vibrant destination for residents, visitors and students providing entertainment, employment, culture and local goods and services for the immediate and surrounding community."

Downtown Goals and Guidelines

A number of goals for downtown Arlington already have been developed, based in part on previous plans and work accomplished, along with considerable public input from the workshops and stakeholder interviews. As part of the Downtown Master Plan, these goals were consolidated and revised. The revised downtown goals are as fiollows:

- **Transportation**
  - Provide a key role in a regional transportation network.
  - Minimize railroad conflicts with street traffic.
  - Provide creative parking solutions to manage long- and short-term parking.
  - Improve accessibility within the sector while planning for traffic growth and making traffic flow smoother.
  - Create a community with multi-modal mobility that encourages pedestrians, bicycles, automobiles, and some form of public and/or private transportation.

- **Environment**
  - Create and promote an image of being the civic heart with safe places to shop, live, work and visit.
  - Improve the appearance and design of the streets.
  - Improve infrastructure within the core.
  - Promote existing cultural and entertainment facilities such as the Arlington Museum of Art, Theatre Arlington, and Johnnie High's Country Music Revue
  - Encourage a mixture of land uses throughout the core.
  - Provide incentives for businesses to expand, start, improve or move into the downtown area.
  - Encourage research and high-tech development within the area.
  - Protect and improve the natural quality of the area through attractive, environmentally friendly development and maintenance.
  - Improve drainage and alleviate flooding problems.
  - Enhance the quality of residential and business areas by increasing knowledge of maintenance requirements, encouraging quality construction, preserving existing housing stock, and increasing code enforcement efforts.
  - Create a safe environment within the community and develop a strong relationship with police officers.
  - Create centers for youth activities, such as sports, mentoring and tutoring.
  - Include a variety of uses in downtown including housing, offices, shops and entertainment.

- **Economy**
  - Create a community with a strong, diverse and sustainable economy.
  - Foster a community with a business-friendly environment.
  - Create a community with workforce development and educational systems aligned to support economic development strategies.
  - Ensure that high-quality core services and infrastructure will be provided to all people.
  - Increase the number of jobs and retail sales every year, with rising property values as well.
  - Create a significant downtown employment center that will attract capital investment for long-term economic vitality.
  - Provide jobs downtown for residents who currently commute to all corners of the Metroplex for work.
  - Promote arts patronage through corporate donor programs to enhance civic identity.

- **Livability**
  - Create a community that wisely uses natural resources to create a healthful place to play, work and live.
  - Create a community of neighborhoods with easy pedestrian access to a system of parks, open spaces, trails and gathering places promoting interactions within and among neighborhoods
  - Value the community's history.
  - Ensure that downtown Arlington is a community with a clearly established identity.
  - Foster pride through an aesthetically pleasing environment.
  - Create strong and sustainable neighborhoods.
  - Encourage and promote areas that advocate for pedestrian design and amenities.
  - Ensure that the community is affordable, with coordinated and accessible programs and services for children and youth.
  - Maintain and enhance the role of downtown as a premiere banking, educational, and governmental center. Use this strength to create other service jobs, to draw other corporate businesses, and to market office space
  - Encourage development of an association of small retail and service businesses that are complementary to one another.
  - Encourage businesses that offer goods and services targeted for existing and future downtown residents.
  - Encourage the redevelopment and maintenance of historic structures and areas.
  - Ensure that there is good pedestrian infrastructure, including sidewalks, shade and calm traffic.
  - Encourage an assortment of specialized retail uses, restaurants, and services that will take advantage of the existing downtown worker, church member and student market.
  - Reinforce the sense of downtown as having connected activities within a single neighborhood.

- **Social Equity**
  - Create a community that celebrates and cultivates arts and culture.
  - Support a community where all people are free to pursue their religion, follow their beliefs and participate in community service.
  - Increase human services to those in need, including providing a compassionate continuum of services for the homeless and establishing substance abuse facilities in the city.
  - Develop a community where health and human services, including transportation and other supported services, are accessible to all persons.
  - Provide an atmosphere that accepts people of all walks of life and fosters a sense of inclusion in our neighborhoods.
  - Ensure that Arlington is a community where the government is committed to excellence, integrity and efficiency and encourages representation of all segments of the population at all levels.

- **University of Texas at Arlington (UTA)**
  - Strengthen ties with UTA by extending its educational presence and providing services and products that the university faculty, staff and students need and use.
  - Provide a link between UTA and the entertainment district through the downtown area.
  - Encourage joint development strategies for downtown uses serving both the public and UTA students.
  - Enhance the cooperation and links among government, educational facilities, businesses and residents. Build on the presence and resources of city government offices and the university.
  - Provide attractive living choices for university students, faculty, staff and others through encouragement of new market rate apartments and through restoration/renovation of buildings for residential purposes.

The Market for Downtown Arlington

All successful downtowns have a target market, since downtowns are like any other business district in that it competes for part of the regional market. However, downtowns are often a specialized place – they appeal strongly to a subset of the population. To be successful, downtown Arlington should have a clear view of its market, develop to meet their needs and likes, and communicate its services and facilities available.

Arlington Residents

Some residents of the City of Arlington will work in the downtown in offices and industries that support the local and regional economy. Some will start their own businesses to take advantage of a growing population at the University and in the surrounding area. Other residents might invest in developing (whether residential or commercial) one of the few under-developed downtowns in the region.

Downtown will be a shopping destination for a range of retail goods as well as the cultural center of the City. The library, art museum and theater will provide culture for the local residents as well as visitors. By day, the downtown area will provide a work location for employees; by evening, it will meet the cultural and shopping needs of the nearby community.

UTA Students, Faculty and Staff

The University campus adjacent to the downtown is a major asset in fueling the next phase of development. With a growing student population requiring a wide range of goods and services, the downtown should be able to anticipate and meet those needs. A cooperative approach to the student population will benefit both the development of the downtown and the success of the Arlington campus as it continues to grow and develop. At present, the UTA campus is predominantly commuter based. With student body anticipated to increase over the next few decades, the surface parking that now dominates the campus may need to be converted into new education buildings. Currently there is some interest in building student housing on campus and this could be supplemented by providing opportunities for housing in or near the downtown. Certainly having students living and meeting their local needs in Arlington would represent a major new market for downtown businesses. This might be reflected in grocery stores, restaurants, music establishments and hotels for visiting parents. Unlike the student population, faculty and staff are more likely to choose to live near campus. Their housing preferences will vary, depending on age and income, from apartments to townhouses or detached housing. Since they are full-time, permanent employees, the preference will likely be to own their homes in time.

Six Flags over Texas.

Ameriquest Field at Arlington draws a significant population of potential customers for Downtown Arlington.

Six Flags Families

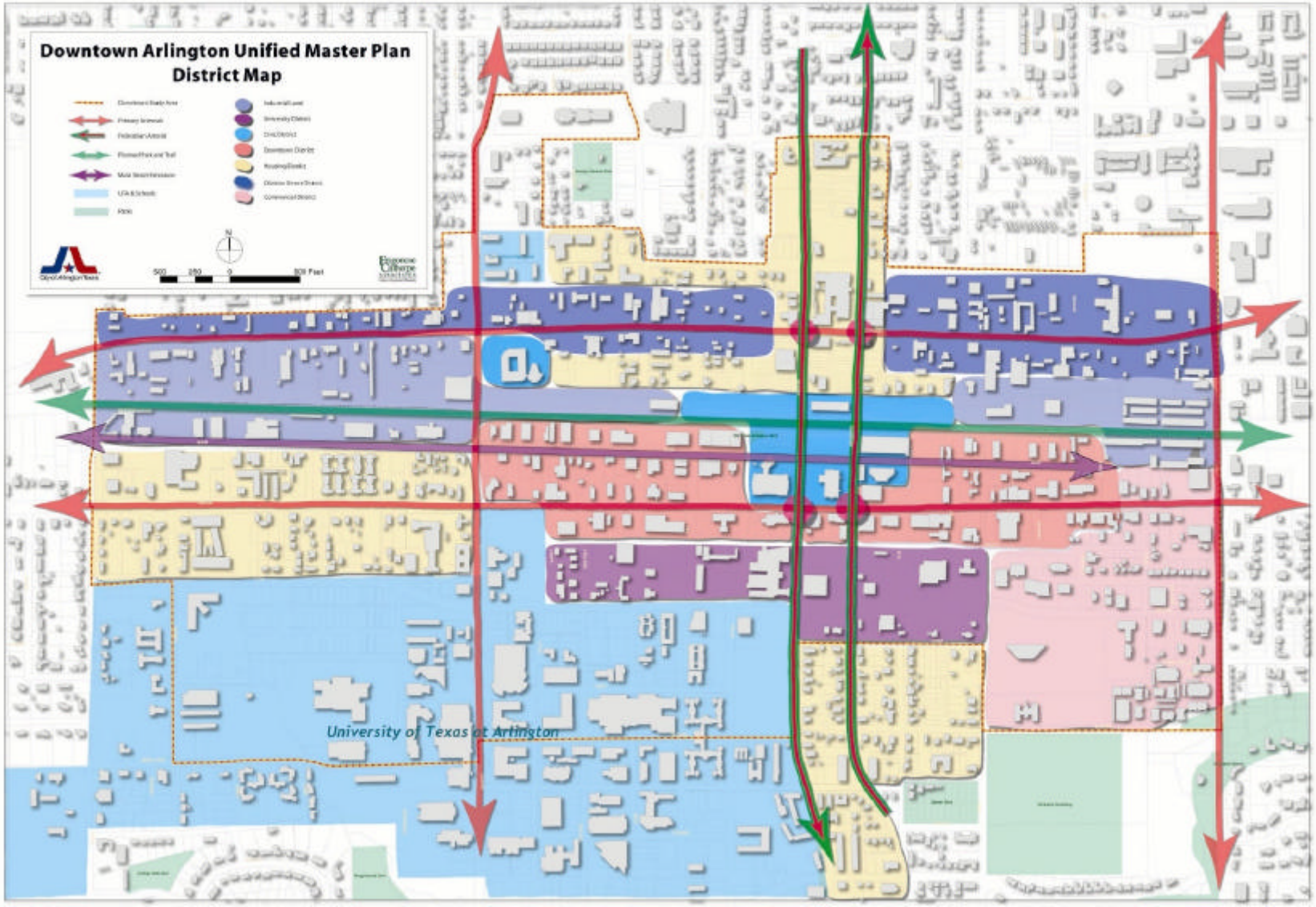
People from all around Texas and the country visit Six Flags Over Texas. The proximity to Downtown Arlington would make it a convenient place for meals, entertainment and lodging. This would offer an alternative to accommodations near the freeway, where most motels are currently located. It would open the downtown to tourism in its own right and offer a broader range of opportunities for family activities beyond the theme park.

Rangers Patrons

Texas Rangers' games attract huge audiences from all over the state and beyond. The attendees would support hotels, restaurants and entertainment if they were appealing and available. While sporting events are cyclical, the economic input would be welcomed by businesses in the area. Providing overnight accommodations for baseball fans in Downtown Arlington would locate Rangers patrons close to other businesses in the core, and would provide alternatives to motels along the freeway.

Metroplex Residents Looking for a Downtown Environment

As the land between Dallas and Fort Worth has been developed, population in the smaller towns between the twin metropolises has increased substantially. There are occasions when travel to either of the major cities might be more time consuming and complex than desired by families in this part of the region. A small downtown with a variety of dining and entertainment options could be attractive to many nearby residents. The opportunity to park once and dine out, attend a cultural event and enjoy an urban park could appeal to a large segment of local residents. It could also attract businesses looking for a branch office or establishing headquarters in a city closer to the airport than either of the two major cities.



The Downtown Master Plan Map

The master plan map is a graphic representation of the downtown plan vision and of how the different areas should develop. The map is not intended to be a zoning map, but rather a thematic map of the concepts and roles these areas will play. It also shows the transportation concepts and key landmarks that will create the environment that Arlington residents want.

Downtown Districts

University District

The area immediately adjacent to the University should act as a liaison between downtown and the campus. Many services specifically furnish the needs of educational facilities including cafes, photocopying shops, restaurants and art supply stores. Most of these can be accommodated under traditional commercial zoning, but some changes could benefit both the pedestrian access and commercial viability of the district.

Great University districts have a higher density of uses than traditional commercial areas. Businesses that serve the campus must be scaled to the size of the university in order not to exceed demand for their services. In addition, since the University provides such extensive parking there seems to be little need to require off-street parking for business in this district. This could be an area to consider structured parking, which could be provided as part of the campus plan or as a shared parking facility for local businesses.

UTA Boulevard Before.

UTA Boulevard After.

Athens, Georgia is a good example of a downtown integrated with a university.

Civic Center District

City Hall, the library and other public offices form a center in Arlington's downtown. This civic center area is the physical and conceptual center of downtown Arlington. Since the parking is publicly owned, this provides an ideal opportunity for shared parking that would serve non-profit organizations as well as privately owned businesses. Because hours of use differ from main street activities, the parking for public offices and their visitors can be shared in the evening with local commercial operations. This can anchor the arts district, which is the least financially able to provide ancillary facilities such as parking.

Before

After

Downtown Business District

Arlington's downtown business district will be a mix of offices, city offices, services and retail operations. Its location between the two major metropolises of Dallas and Fort Worth enhance its potential as a regional downtown district that serves local communities. It is served by two north-south arterials that link it to the interstate highway and an east-west arterial. This area is viewed as secondary to the downtown core, with building heights permitted up to 12 stories.

Residential Zones

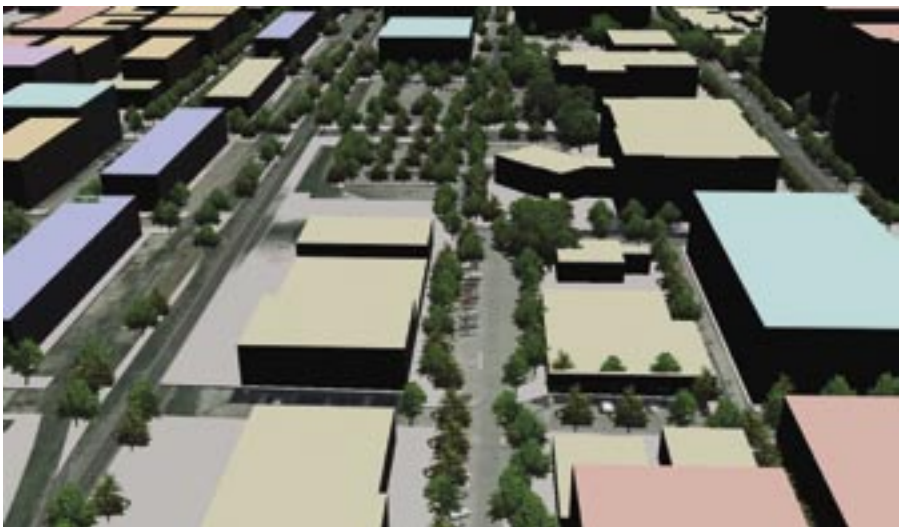
Central Arlington will become a moderately dense residential area with housing opportunities for students, the elderly and young people who want to live in an urban setting. Availability of local services will support these varying age groups. Large areas of the downtown that are currently designated for commercial development might better be converted to residential uses to provide the population needed to support other more viable commercial areas.

Downtown Core District

Main Street

Main Street, which currently ends at City Hall, will be extended east to a practical connection with existing streets. The art museum and theater are on the west end of the existing Main Street. These are both very successful operations and have set a cultural tone for the area. However, Main Street suffers from a lack of commercial activity and is somewhat a dead end street. The Plan envisions an extension of Main Street through to East street, opening up addition land to commercial development and turning Main Street into a potential retailing street.

Main Street Before.



Main Street After.

Mixed-use Districts

Similar to main streets, mixed-use districts allow multiple uses within a single development. Prime retail space on the ground floor can be mixed with residential or office uses on upper levels. Mixed use is very adaptive to university locales where upper floors can house starter businesses, studios or apartments. In many cases renting out the upper floors provides stable income for the development.

Abram Street

The districts along Abram are primarily commercial in use, but the streetscape is designed to be more attractive to pedestrian use. Residential uses in urban forms are encouraged. Buildings are adjacent to the street with parking to the side or rear, providing a stronger definition of the pedestrian environment. On-street parking is provided, if possible, to reduce the need for individual businesses to provide parking and to enhance the pedestrian character of the street. These areas form the heart of a pedestrian environment in downtown, with the highest density buildings built close to the sidewalk and with amenities such as cafes and plazas that provide activity and interest to pedestrians. Buildings heights can be to 8 stories, with higher heights allowed for exceptional buildings. Heights higher than 8 stories should step back to permit additional light to not overwhelm the streetscape. As its right-of-way is only 70 feet, and four travel lanes will be needed, it is not possible to develop both on street parking and a wide sidewalk. Additional dedications or creative design solutions will be needed to ensure that this is a comfortable walking environment. There are many opportunities to accomplish this on Abram.

Abram Street Before.

Abram Street After.

Division Street District

Although it fits within the general guidelines of a commercial main street, the land adjacent to Division Street is designated as a separate district. Since Division is a state highway, there are restrictions on modifications that can be made to traffic lanes.

This street should be developed into an attractive but more auto-oriented district. Its health in combination with the more pedestrian-oriented Abram will provide a large diversity of uses and many opportunities for successful business development. This area can continue to improve while accommodating the more auto-oriented and extensive land uses. This is an important east-west access to Arlington's downtown and should continue to be included in the downtown study area while some of its specific issues are resolved. Generally, coordination among property owners will be needed when redeveloping to provide an improved streetscape. In addition, a scheme is proposed that will improve the streetscape, provide private shared parking, reduce driveway access to Division, and provide an environment for a more vital and improved business district.

Front Street #1

Front Street #2

Front Street #3

Industrial Districts: Front Street

Land to the east and west of the downtown is currently zoned for industrial uses. With ready access to the railroad and freeways, much of the development is still viable. Even if the railroad moves its through traffic outside the Metroplex, the existing line could still serve local businesses, and rail-served land should be retained for industries that could make use of the line.

However, being close to a successful downtown has the potential to evolve into a mixed employment district, including small-scale manufacturing, services, live/work developments, artist lofts, restaurants and entertainment. Many similar areas develop into a more casual and diverse area that thrive near more formal downtowns. These types of uses would minimize traffic impacts to the industrial area while maintaining a similar character. This area would be characterized by FAR densities of .5 to 1.5, and a variety of building materials, including those commonly used for industrial buildings in order to acknowledge the semi-manufacturing nature of the area.

Front Street has a specific potential to develop a combination of uses along the railroad tracks. By providing shared private parking in a coordinated fashion along the back of new buildings that face Front Street, over 220 shared spaces can be provided, as well as consolidating service and trash service out of view of the public.

Downtown Parking and Transportation

Gateways into Downtown: Center, Collins and Cooper Streets

Several important entrances into downtown could help create a sense of arrival to Arlington. Some type of gateway feature should designate the boundary of the downtown at Center, Collins and Cooper streets.

Street Trees

The addition of a regular pattern of street trees in conjunction with on-street parking and sidewalks would signify entering a different area. A landscape modification such as this would be relatively easy to implement and would create a pleasant atmosphere for pedestrians who enjoy walking through downtown.

Sculpture/Urban Art

Gateways are often defined by urban scale art placed at the entrance. Some of the sculptures currently owned by Arlington would fit this designation and could make a unique statement on the border of downtown.

Parking Plan

A successful downtown relies on an adequate supply of parking at different times of the day and in the appropriate locations. This plan assesses the present supply and future need of parking in downtown Arlington and recommends parking strategies that act as tools to create an environment conducive to shopping, living or just enjoying an afternoon in downtown Arlington.

Parking Inventory

The number of parking spaces in the downtown area was estimated using aerial photography. Three types of spaces were identified: parking lots, parallel parking and diagonal parking. The map on page 31 shows the location of each type. The inventory shows that there are more than 25,500 parking spaces. Downtown Arlington has an exceedingly large number of off-street parking lots – with an estimated 23,000 parking spaces. Total parallel parking is around 2,300 spaces and diagonal parking about 300 spaces. Several arterials have been widened to include additional lanes and do not have on-street parking.

It is noteworthy that the downtown areas dedicated to off-street parking contain 185 acres of parking lots. This is 85 percent larger than the footprint of all buildings in the area.

Parking Demand

Many customers refuse to walk more than a block or two to a particular destination, yet the distances needed to walk in many downtowns are similar to those encountered in many suburban shopping malls. The difference between the two experiences is often in the perceived distance to the destination. Walking in a mall offers the customer a variety of amenities, providing additional reasons to visit the mall. In the same fashion, downtown Arlington must, in addition to maximizing parking, create an attractive environment to walk. This means creating shady, cool streets with amenities and plenty of shops. Where there are no shops along the street, clear visual clues should lead the pedestrian to those areas that have the best pedestrian and shopping areas.

Type Of Use

Exactly how nearby parking should be depends on the nature of the trip, the type of destination and the type of user. Minimum acceptable walking distances can be categorized as:

1.) Adjacent (less than 100 ft.), for people with disabilities, deliveries and loading, emergency services and convenience stores.

2.) Short (less than 800 ft.), for grocery stores, professional services, clinics and residents.

3.) Medium (less than 1,200 ft.), for general retail, restaurants, employees, entertainment centers and religious institutions.

Downtown Residents

As the area adds housing opportunities, more customers will patronize businesses and cultural facilities without having to rely on a car to get there, given the short distances in downtown Arlington. Studies show that downtown residents depend less on car trips for their daily needs and are excellent local customers. As the number of residents living in the downtown area increases, the number of parking spaces per customer can be reduced without adverse effects.

Study Area

	feet (sq. linear)	space dimensions (sq. linear feet)	spaces
lot	8,069,915	350	23,057
parallel	56,616	24	2,359
diagonal	5,586	18	310
Total			25,726

UTA

	feet (sq. linear)	space dimensions (sq. linear feet)	spaces
lot	1,649,668	350	4,713
parallel	7,476	24	311
diagonal	804	18	45
Total			5,069

Off-street Parking Policies

Parking plays an important role in any downtown. However, excessive off-street parking eats away land that can be used to provide destinations and leads to a loss of activity and concentration in an area. It can ultimately discourage the appeal of the area, despite ample parking.

Taking into consideration that 30 percent of the physical land in downtown Arlington is used as parking lots, providing more than 23,000 spaces (using a standard figure of 350 square feet per space, including landscaping and interior streets), it is clear that there is excess off-street parking in the area. With proper parking demand management and sensible use of space, as the area redevelops it can turn parking spaces into more active uses without creating parking shortages.

However, this is not to say that there won't be a need for off-street parking in the future in some areas of downtown. Many of the lots used for parking are currently supporting vacant or underutilized buildings or are located away from the retail core. The possibility of a new commuter rail station would create demand for park-and-ride lots. And since many people refuse to walk long distances from their car to a particular destination, it may be necessary to provide off-street parking in a particular district even though there may be excessive parking for the area as a whole. A closer examination is needed to determine the kinds of uses expected for the different areas in the downtown and to assess the future parking demand for each. It is likely that as areas develop and the demand for land increases, there may be a need for off-street parking facilities. Here are some strategies to consider regarding off-street parking.

Strategies:

- Off-street parking should be provided in the back of buildings to maintain continuity of building facades and shops.
- Limit the number of driveways. Driveways take away space for on-street parking and pedestrian amenities and break the continuity of building facades and shops.
- Use time limits to ensure that parking spaces have a proper customer turnover and that employees do not use the spaces.
- Be strategic about location. Determine the area with the greatest need and find a central location for off-street parking. Ideally, off-street parking should not be in the "100 percent corner" (in its place there should be some sort of destination), but not too far removed from it.
- The parking facilities can be funded through the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district or a Public Improvement District (PID). Public off-street parking facilities can be financed in part by allowing longer stops, some employee parking and long-term visitors and residents.
- In the longer term, encourage pay-to-park underground parking or structure parking when financially feasible. The costs vary but underground parking costs around $15,000 a space and structure parking about $10,000 a space.

On-street Parking

On-street parking is one of the most valuable assets in any community. It acts as a buffer between pedestrians and vehicles, brings customers to a commercial area, and helps ease parking requirements for housing and commercial development. On-street parking should play a greater role in downtown Arlington as the area redevelops and parking lots are turned into more intensive uses.

There are about 2,700 parking spaces in the downtown area. More could be provided over time with adequate policies that would protect and add more spaces and with proper demand management that would maximize their use.

Strategies:

- Use time limits to ensure that parking spaces have a proper customer turnover and that employees do not use the spaces.
- Reduce the number of driveways. There are blocks that have almost no on-street parking due to large number of driveways or driveways that are too wide. As the area develops, do not encourage driveways or instead require fewer and narrower ones.
- Consider allowing on-street parking on the outer lanes in some arterials going through retail areas during off-peak hours. Abram Street, most of Center Street, Mesquite Street, UTA Boulevard, Division Street (State Highway 180), Cooper Street, and Pecan Street have no on-street parking. These arterials, notably UTA Boulevard, Abram and Division and the Center/Mesquite couplet, travel through districts expected to provide a variety of commercial, civic and housing uses. UTA Boulevard, running adjacent to the University of Texas at Arlington, has the potential to become a lively extension of the University, accommodating a variety of coffee shops, restaurants, bookstores, music and clothing shops as well as student housing. On-street parking will be the best way to accommodate people driving to these areas.
- If streets are wide enough, encourage diagonal parking. It holds more parking spaces per block and for many people it is easier to use. A drawback of diagonal parking is that cars have difficulty seeing oncoming traffic when backing up. This can be very dangerous to bicyclists. Therefore, do not allow bicycle lanes and diagonal parking on the same side of the street.
- Designate sufficient and conveniently located parking spaces for people with disabilities
- Ensure that future transit stops and loading zones do not take excessive parking space, especially in the most active areas.
- As demand for parking increases, install parking meters to control use and bring in revenue that can be used to further improve the area. Evaluate whether the parking fee will keep the downtown competitive relative to other commercial districts in the region. Additionally, adjust the rates accordingly to encourage optimal turnover and revenue.
- Create a permit program exempting residents and a certain number of employees from paid time limits spaces.

Shared Parking

Under shared parking, one parking space easily can serve two or three businesses. While parking should be maximized, it is impractical to provide sufficient parking for each store within a few feet of its front door. This leads to the unfortunate situation in which the parking area sits unoccupied for much of the day. An office building may find its parking spaces nearly unused at the same time (i.e. evenings, weekends) that an adjacent restaurant may be reaching its own peak time for parking spaces. Shared parking also makes good business sense as well, since people can park in one location and visit a range of nearby businesses.

Summing the total demand of uses on the block and measuring this at various times of day can help calculate shared parking by block. The time of day with the highest total parking demand is the block's peak demand.

Downtown Core And University District

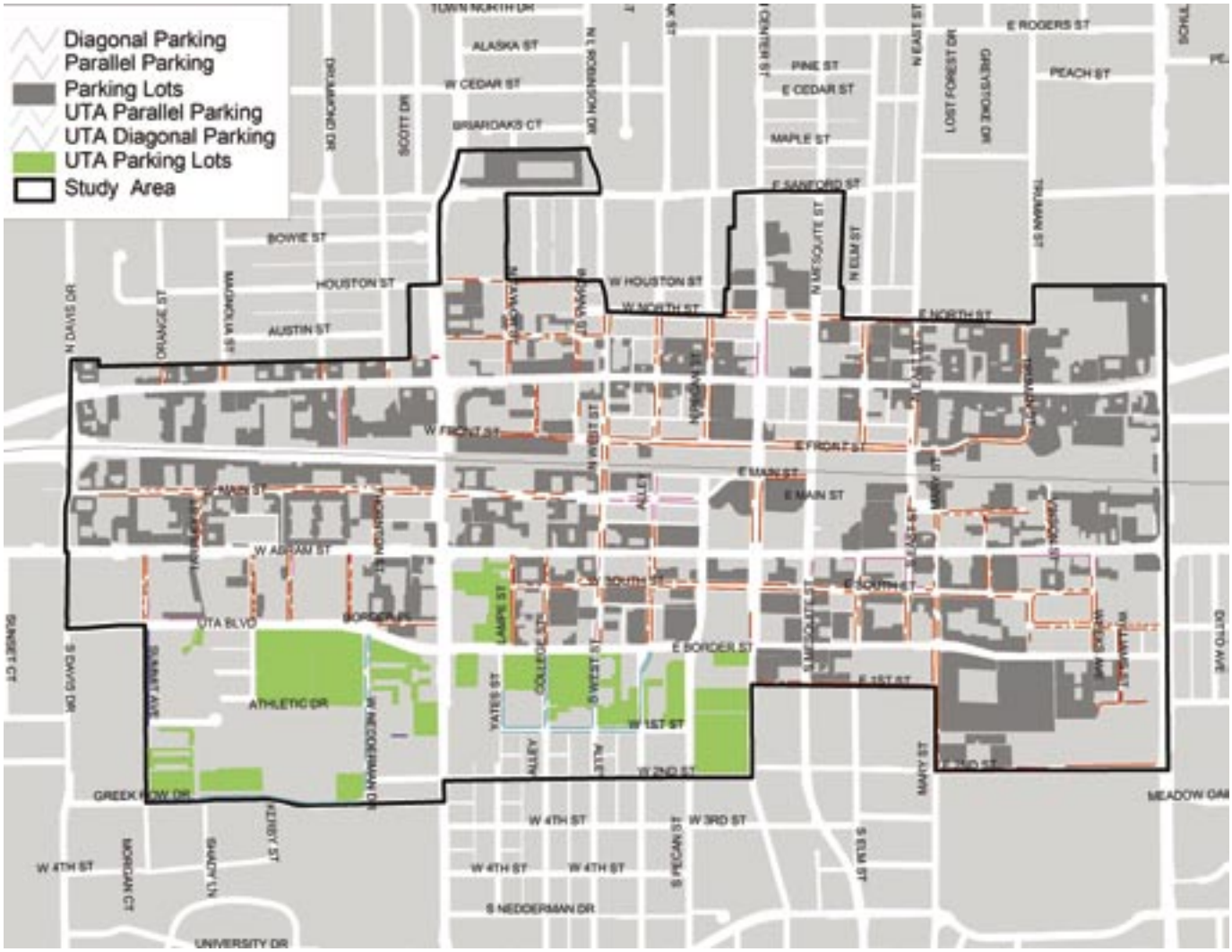
The downtown core and the area near the University of Texas at Arlington are the two areas that, due to their more active use, may be most in need of shared parking. Shared parking strategies usually depend on at least 15 percent to 25 percent of an area's parking being available to the general public. This can be achieved in several ways, but the following are some recommended strategies. These strategies should be used in conjunction with the strategies for on- and off-street parking that are previously described.

Strategies:

- Encourage private parking lots to be available to the public after hours or during off-peak times. Private parking lot owners can be encouraged to participate by having neighboring businesses provide liability insurance and cleanup services during off hours.
- Provide adequate parking to handle the shared parking demand. While there presently is adequate parking, as a particular district or area redevelops the supply for parking may be exhausted.
- Encourage sharing among businesses and devise mechanisms for addressing logistical issues. Some businesses should share parking at all times of day, while other businesses should share parking after their individual peak time of day. Also, equity issues may need to be resolved between existing businesses that have either an oversupply or undersupply of parking.
- Encourage customers to use shared parking. A signage strategy may be needed to tell drivers that parking is shared among merchants and to point the way to large, common parking areas away from the town square.
- Establish municipal or cooperative parking facilities. Land currently owned by the City could be improved to provide parking, or new land could be acquired.
- Identify critical parking areas and encourage short-term parking there. The conflict between employee and customer parking downtown may need to be addressed in such areas, since employees tend to use spaces for longer periods that may discourage customer and tourist use.

Long-term Policies May Need To:

- Plan for the appropriate amount and location of necessary parking supply. These decisions will be based on the estimated evaluation of need but also will be based on site-by-site considerations. These include locating sites nearest to intense parking demand and the type and configuration of adjacent land uses.
- Determine the timing of parking need. When should land be purchased and parking structures developed?
- Encourage walking. An excellent way to encourage customers to use one parking space while visiting several businesses is to encourage walking. One way to do this is by improving site design and architecture to make walking a pleasant, safe experience.


Diagonal Parking
Parallel Parking
Parking Lots
UTA Parallel Parking
UTA Diagonal Parking
UTA Parking Lots
Study Area
ALASKA ST
W CEDAR ST
BRIARDAKS CT
PINE ST
E CEDAR ST
MAPLE ST
E ROGERS ST
PEACH ST
E SANFORD ST
BOWIE ST
HOUSTON ST
AUSTIN ST
W HOUSTON ST
W NORTH ST
E NORTH ST
W FRONT ST
E FRONT ST
E MAIN ST
W ABRAM ST
W SOUTH ST
E SOUTH ST
UTA BLVD
E BORDER ST
E 1ST ST
ATHLETIC DR
W 1ST ST
W 2ND ST
GREEK ROW DR
W 4TH ST
W 3RD ST
S NEDDERMAN DR
UNIVERSITY DR
MEADOW GA

Downtown Arlington Master Street Plan

At the core of this plan is developing a way to use downtown streets more effectively. Streets take up about 24 percent of downtown Arlington's entire acreage. This is the second largest publicly owned space in the downtown, with parking lots covering the majority at 30 percent. The streets are well designed for through traffic but can be used much more effectively for other uses. Downtown streets should be viewed as multiple-use facilities, providing the following needs:

- Routes for through traffic
- Access to local businesses and residents
- Transit routes and stops
- On-street parking
- Pedestrian travel
- Sidewalk activities, including sidewalk seating for restaurants and limited advertising and merchandising.

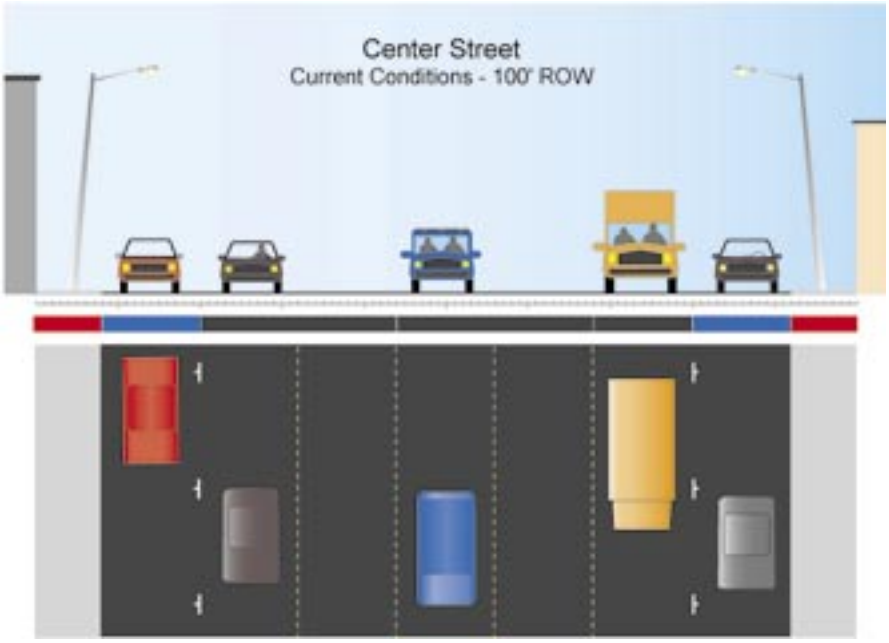
The streets downtown vary in width from a 60-foot right-of-way to a 100-foot right-of-way. The current typical cross section has wide travel lanes with relatively narrow sidewalks. There are few areas with trees or shade and no comprehensive design for shade or weather protection. Also, there are few streets that are wide enough for sidewalk activities such as outdoor eating and limited signage – the kind of amenities that encourage walking, shopping and an overall lively atmosphere.

Current Street Widths:

- Center = 100-foot right-of-way
- Division = 60-foot right-of-way
- Abram = 70-foot right-of-way
- Main = 100-foot right-of-way
- UTA Blvd = 60-foot right-of-way

As part of the plan, there are several alternative designs for improving these important rights-of-way. Each of these designs makes more efficient use of the available right-of-way, reallocating wasted space into additional parking or sidewalk width. In addition, comprehensive shade and weather protection strategies are envisioned, with a formal street tree program and ways to encourage shade-producing awnings, porticoes and balconies.

While it will take many years for all the streets to be completed, this master plan is intended to represent the policy decision of what the street ultimately should become. In this way, annual street improvements will provide constant upgrades to the downtown environment, as well as less disruption and expense than if the improvements occurred piecemeal.

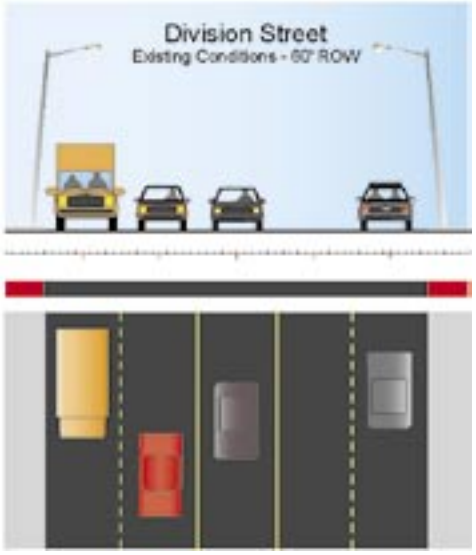


Center Street

The Center and Mesquite streets couplet is the downtown's main connection from the interstate. Currently Center is a five lane, one-way thoroughfare that bisects the downtown core. Many well-known public facilities front Center Street including City Hall, the City Library, Johnnie High's Country Music Revue and First Baptist Church.

Division Street

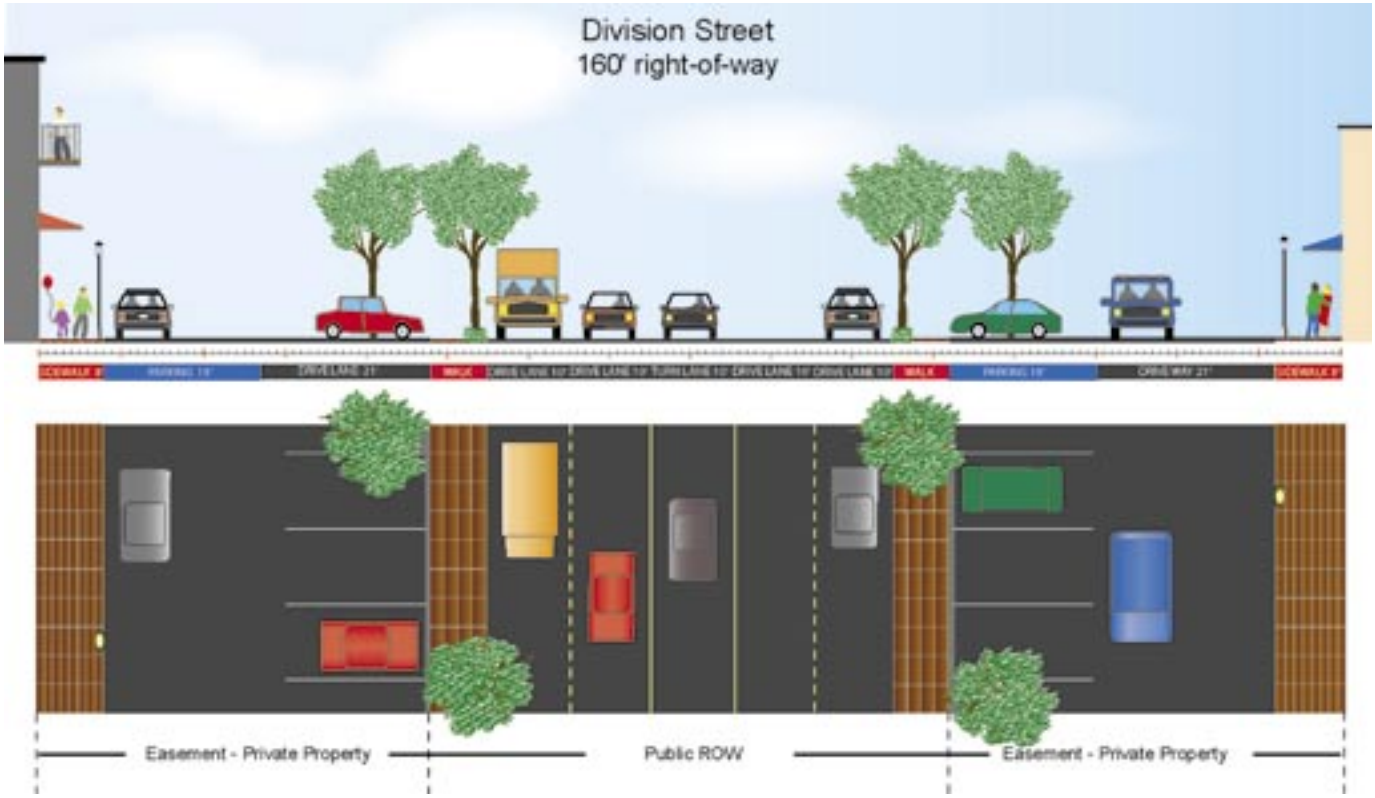
Division is a unique street in that it not only is a local street but also is State Highway 180. It carries a large amount of traffic and was traditionally the "auto row" in Arlington. However, the street right-of-way is only 60 feet, leaving little to no room for on-street parking or sidewalks.



It is probably not feasible to develop on-street parking on Division. The solution proposed is to develop an additional 10-foot landscaped buffer on the private property adjacent to the street and a sidewalk inside this. If an easement is given, then the City can assist with the improvement, as well as the under-grounding of utilities.

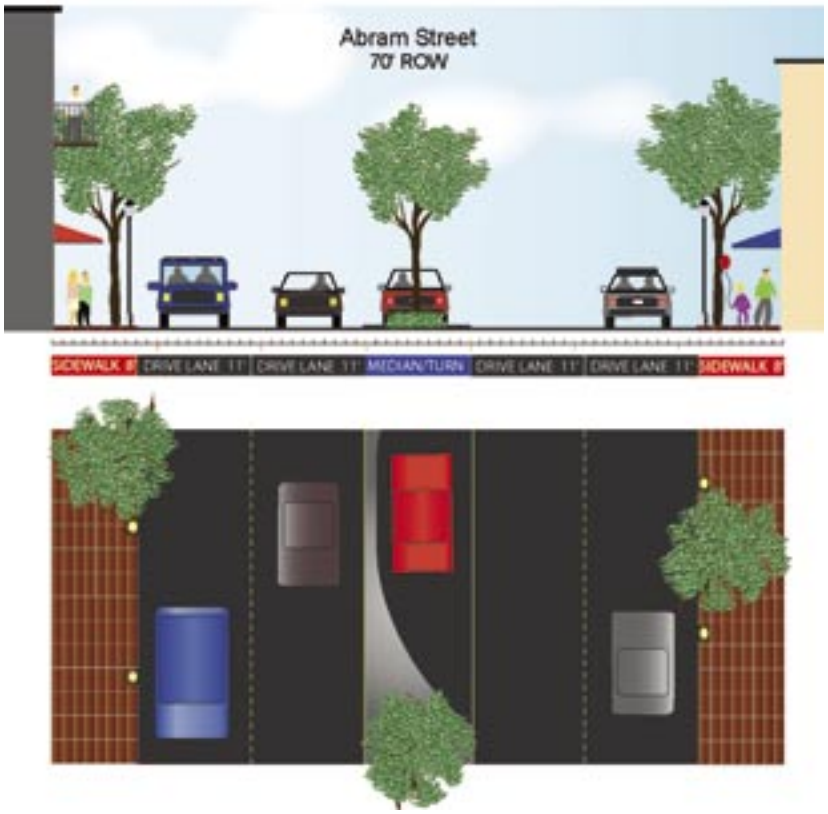
The private property shows a coordinated access and parking scheme in front of adjacent buildings that provides a row of parking and a common sidewalk, as well as coordinated landscaping. While this is a schematic design, in an actual application considerable flexibility will be needed in order to accommodate property owners and businesses.

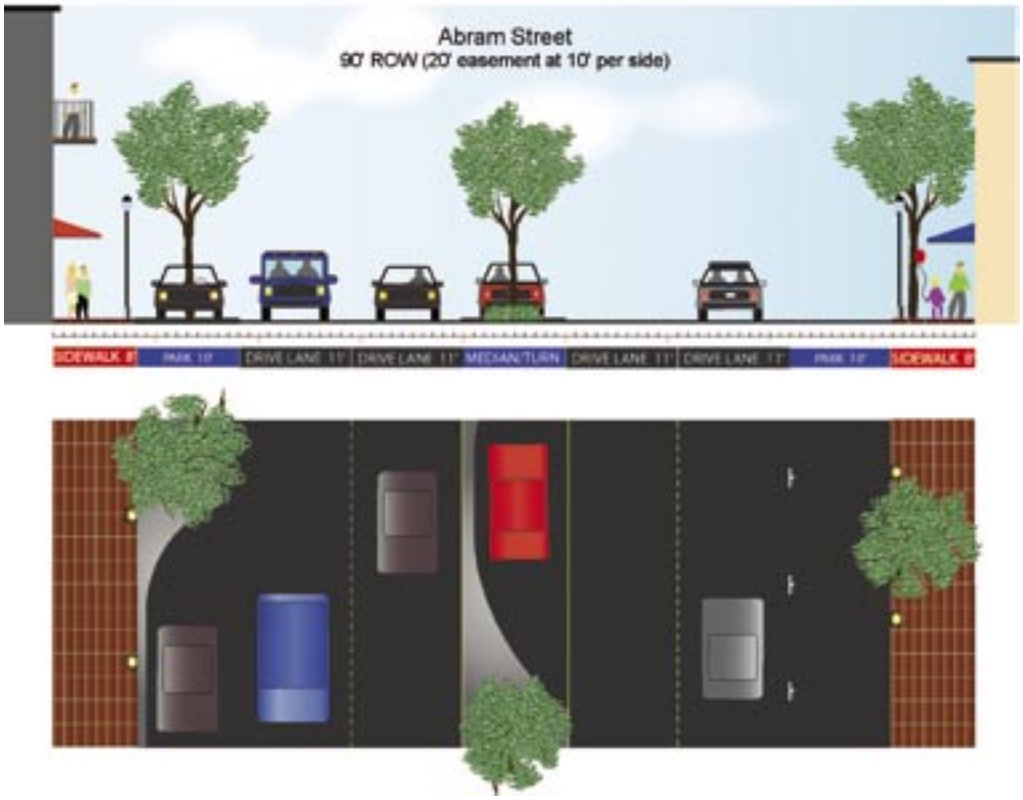
The following illustration shows the kind of solution that this schematic idea may look like when applied to a development along Division.


Division Street
160' right-of-way
Easement - Private Property
Public ROW
Easement - Private Property

Abram Street

Abram Street is one of two main east-west corridors in the downtown. It is currently a five-lane street with four driving lanes, one turn lane and small sidewalks. With a 70-foot right-of-way, it is too narrow to accommodate an essential ingredient in a main street, which is on-street parking and street trees. The solutions are to provide a sidewalk and street tree with a buffering hedge or planter, which will provide visual and psychological protection to the pedestrian. When possible, an additional 10 feet of right-of-way should be acquired and a parking land and wider sidewalk added. The recommended sidewalk and median improvements should be implemented as well as street trees and awnings.



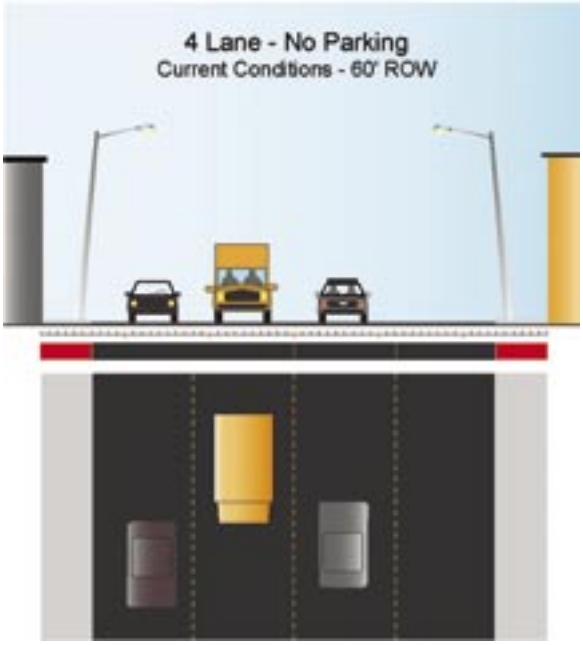

Abram Street
90' ROW (20' easement at 10' per side)
SIDEWALK 8'
PARK 10'
DRIVE LANE 11'
DRIVE LANE 11'
MEDIAN/TURN
DRIVE LANE 11'
DRIVE LANE 11'
PARK 10'
SIDEWALK 8'

Main Street

Of all the streets in downtown Arlington, Main Street is furthest along in terms of streetscape design and implementation. This is primarily due to past plans that have identified Main Street as the long-established and historic core of the city. The recommended sidewalk and parking improvements and the addition of street trees have already begun. The proposed extension of Main Street can either be designed with the current Main Street cross section, or with the two lane cross section, seen below. This area has the best physical design to evolve into an entertainment district and lends itself to experimenting with sidewalk uses such as outdoor seating and balconies.

Other Downtown Streets

Most other downtown streets have at least a 60-foot right-of-way and traffic counts of fewer than 8,000 vehicles per day. These areas are best constructed to accommodate two traffic lanes, two parking lanes, street trees and wide sidewalks. This generic streetscape can be used in many areas. There is a commercial version (full paving under trees and grates or bricks in street tree wells) and a residential version (parking rows under the street trees)



Estimating Street Improvement Costs

The provisional budget allocates approximately $3,400,000 for street and sidewalk improvements. As in any estimation at this stage, many factors can affect the final cost. If all the streets indicated in the Street Plan are completely rebuilt the preliminary estimates have resulted in a total cost of just over $7,000,000. This estimated cost of over $7,000,000 assumes that every linear foot of street would be entirely replaced and new curbs, sidewalks and landscaping installed. In most cases it will not be necessary to completely replace the whole street. In areas where the street is in good condition and does not require widening only new sidewalks, street trees and lighting will need to be put in, reducing the improvement cost significantly. The site specific design will have to be completed before deciding whether to entirely replace a street or simply perform the human scale improvements that enhance the downtown environment such as lighting and landscaping. The City must be strategic about when and where improvements are made to ensure that the allocated $3.4 million will adequately fund the necessary reconstruction.

On Division the expense will be the addition of sidewalk, street trees, and other improvements, as well as partnering with private land owners. As this is a State Highway, partnership with the State of Texas should be included for improvements to the travel lanes. Abram street is likely to be the most expensive to improve. On Abram, the main cost will be the addition of a landscaped median and additional on-street parking where feasible. Main Street is largely improved between West Street and Pecan Street, but will require full construction for the section between Pecan Street and East Street. Other streets such as UTA Boulevard and Front Street will require much less overhaul, resulting in a lower expense. UTA Boulevard for example will simply require new sidewalks, landscaping, street lights and striping to reduce traffic lanes to two and add on-street parking.

The provisional budget provides for an annual allocation, starting at $275,000, and increasing by 5% per year. However, other non TIF funding should also be relied on where possible to increase the extent of the improvements.

Downtown Master Street Plan Map

The Master Street Plan map shows the recommended street improvements in the downtown core. The color coded lines represent the location and length of the proposed streets recommended to be improved. The estimated length and cost of improvement is represented in the table at the bottom of the page. This plan should be used as a guide for strategic improvements over time, there is no sequence inferred, but rather, public investment should stimulate and support private investment as opportunities arise.

	DIVISION	CENTER	MESQUITE	FRONT	MAIN	UTA BLVD	ABRAM
# of Lanes	5 (including turn)	5 (plus parking)	3 (4 across tracks)	2 (could be 4)	2 (diagonal parking)	4 (recommending 2)	4 (boulevard)
Lineal Feet of Improvement	2,900	1,400	1,400	1,800	1,500	2,800	2,400
	Sidewalk & Parking	Sidewalk & Parking	Sidewalk & Parking	Sidewalk & Parking	New Section	Sidewalk & Parking	Full Reconstruction
Improvement Cost	$ 234,416.67	$ 113,166.67	$ 113,166.67	$ 145,500.00	$ 570,000.00	$ 226,333.33	$ 1,032,000.00
Street Lights	$ 81,837.12	$ 81,837.12	$ 81,837.12	$ 81,837.12	$ 81,837.12	$ 81,837.12	$ 81,837.12
Landscaping	$ 58,000.00	$ 58,000.00	$ 58,000.00	$ 58,000.00	$ 58,000.00	$ 58,000.00	$ 58,000.00
Total Cost	$ 374,253.79	$ 253,003.79	$ 253,003.79	$ 285,337.12	$ 709,837.12	$ 366,170.45	$ 1,171,837.12
Total Street Costs	**$ 3,413,443.18**						

Sidewalk Use Regulation

Other regulatory changes that should be implemented are those that govern the use of the public rights-of-way in the downtown. There are two types: those that regulate and allow architectural projections over the public right-of-way (namely arcades, porticos, and balconies), and those that regulate the temporary use of the sidewalk for commercial enterprise (such as sidewalk restaurants, signs, displays of merchandise and vending carts).

Architectural Projections Permits

This plan encourages the extension of shade-producing structures over the sidewalk, especially where those sidewalks are widened to more than 10 feet. While shallow awnings do not need supports, shade protection that covers the sidewalk often can involve supports on the sidewalk in the form of columns. These should be permitted with certain conditions, namely ensuring that the public use of the sidewalk continues, that there is sufficient clearance both vertically and horizontally, and that the conditions for their temporary or permanent removal is spelled out when it applies to a public right-of-way.

A balcony also may be formed to provide shade and a unique seating area on the second story. These often are useful for restaurants and hotels and can stimulate development within second stories of buildings. These structures should be covered by a sidewalk use permit ordinance that spells out the standards and conditions. Aesthetically, any use of balconies, arcades or porticos should be complimentary to the building's architectural design and style.

Sidewalk Use Permits

A second category is the use of sidewalks for commercial purposes. This is one of the easiest ways to enliven a downtown, since it draws people and activity to the sidewalk areas. Where sidewalk widths exceed 10 feet, narrow tables can be used and still allow the minimum travel width necessary (five or six feet in most jurisdictions). When the sidewalk is wider, an area can be enclosed for full table seating. In addition, some small "A-frame" signs can be accommodated.

On a cautionary note, however, this type of signage should be regulated. Competition for customers may lead to chaos and overly aggressive displays. This plan recommends that regulations be adopted for permits that allow sidewalk seating, specifying the location of tables, the width of unobstructed walking area, and the owner's responsibilities for cleaning and trash disposal. In addition, regulation of sidewalk signs should be included in a sidewalk use ordinance.

Open Spaces, Plazas & Amenities

Downtown Arlington can offer a variety of urban open spaces that will, in their own right, attract visitors. These should be distributed through the overall downtown but focused primarily on the cultural center along Main Street.

Library Fountain

In 1891, Rice Woods Collins, a downtown merchant, solicited subscriptions and campaigned for a public well. Responding to the need for a downtown watering place for animals and the public, the community drilled a well at the intersection of Main and Center streets in 1892. In the early 1900s the basin was covered with various gazebo-type structures. In 1951, in response to the city's growth and increasing traffic, the well was permanently capped under the intersection's pavement. An exact replica can't be revived, since it was located in the middle of the intersection. However, elements of the historic basin could be adapted for use in a new library fountain.

The library offers a convenient central site for an urban fountain. The fountain itself should be located on the southwest corner of the site, providing a unique, inviting library entrance. The North Central Texas climate suggests that an accessible fountain, where people can enjoy the water, would be a very popular attraction. It should be designed to encourage public use by children and their parents.

The plaza should provide extensive seating that takes advantage of shade from the mature trees between Center Street and the library building. It will be used as a lunch destination for downtown employees, evening pedestrians and weekend family outings.

Redeveloping the Library Block

There is some discussion of redeveloping the library area with a new library building in a different location, along with other uses on the site such as retail and commercial uses, and a central park. In this case, the central park would be an ideal location for the library fountain. While this and other related decisions should be the subject of a specific design for this block, the following downtown plan components should be included in the design:

- Extension of Main Street through the library site
- Development of a central park with an interactive fountain feature
- A major orientation of the buildings on Abram Street to the street and sidewalk (the final design should avoid the appearance of "turning its back" on Abram)
- Development of the Abram streetscape included in the plan (e.g., on street parking, street trees, and a wide sidewalk);
- Investment in public art.

Public Art

Public art enriches the urban environment by providing destinations, meeting points and a unique identity to the city. Civic art can take on a variety of forms from statuary to plazas and fountains. Each has a distinct character and place in the urban area. Various types of public art could be used at gateway locations, in urban plazas or as focal points in the central city.

Houston's downtown is a good recent example of improving public spaces with art.

Arena

City leaders in Arlington and UTA agree that an arena would be a major contribution to the community. At present the University has plans for an arena on the south part of campus. An arena would better serve the community if it were located closer to Arlington's downtown. Several potential locations were suggested through the workshop, all of which strongly supported a downtown orientation. One potential solution that would serve both the City and the University would be a joint venture to build structured parking that could be shared with downtown businesses and events at the arena. This would free up some land on the University campus for new facilities and allow downtown development to proceed without strict requirements for off-street parking that support individual developments. Sharing the cost of a parking structure would benefit the University and would promote downtown development.

Performing Arts Center

The Arlington Performing Arts Center attracts more than 30,000 patrons per year – a significant attendance for a relatively small theater. While the market seems strong for performing arts, the existing venue imposes space limitations on potential expansion. If a larger new arena were built, it would expand an already strong market and provide a new venue for additional performances sponsored by the theater company or the University.

Farmer's Market

One way to attract people to the downtown is providing a market for local farmers to sell their wares. Residents benefit from fresh produce, and farmers profit from higher returns than they can get from wholesale sales. Local markets also provide a place for people to meet and attract a different group of people than might ordinarily come downtown.

Strategic Plan

To convert this master plan into reality, specific steps should be taken to lay the groundwork. Plans do not by themselves accomplish anything; instead, they create the right conditions for action. That means it's important to have a strategic approach so that specific actions are effective in creative change.

A strategic plan will flesh out the specific steps needed to create positive change. These should be the first steps undertaken and should be feasible to accomplish in the short term. Each of these steps will have a positive effect on developing the kind of downtown envisioned by Arlington's citizens and civic leaders.

Regulatory Review

It's clear that the future of downtown Arlington depends on allowing buildings to develop that both meet the community vision and that are cost effective. While Arlington's downtown zoning is relatively effective in meeting this goal, several items have been identified as important to achieving these goals. Therefore, the strategic plan should include redrafted zoning regulations that meet these objectives. To do this, the following should be objectives of the plan: (*Key uses should be permitted under clear and objective standards.)*

One of the primary objectives should be that desired uses would be permitted under regulations that are clear and objective and that allow issuance of permits with a predictable outcome. This means that the zoning uses, development standards and design standards could be administered at a ministerial level (e.g., by appointed officials without the need for public hearings). Also the zoning should be sensitive to market realities, permitting sufficient density to allow developments that will meet financial standards of development profitability, while also conforming to community goals. Market realities shift over time, so these standards may need to be adjusted from time to time as well.

The DowntownTax Increment Financing (TIF) District

This plan recommends that the extent of the TIF district area also be used to allow more downtown type developments in the zones within this area and also to implement design standards in this area. These are intended to allow a greater mix of uses at greater intensity in the downtown area. A list of recommendations follows:

Parking

Reduce parking requirements to 75 percent of the standard requirement within the TIF district.

Design Standards

Simple zoning will not be effective in developing the kind of downtown envisioned in this plan. Most downtowns include design standards to ensure compatibility between the private uses and the public shared spaces that are the heart of a downtown. However, design processes can often be highly discretionary, and the lack of predictability can discourage investment. Downtown Arlington should have easy to use, effective and objective standards that can be processed quickly. The current draft of design standards being considered is an excellent vehicle to adopt effective standards.

Townhouse (TH):

• Lot size: Within the TIF district, reduce the minimum lot size to 2,500 square feet.
• Uses: Provide for limited home-work units, by allowing a more intense home occupation by permitting one full-time employee and providing more business to be conducted from the home.

Multi-family (MF):

• Uses: Allow bed-and-breakfasts up to 12 units.
• Allow office uses as a specific use permit (SUP)
• Allow development of 32 units per acre and three full stories (45 feet).

Office Service (O):

• Uses: Permit all uses in the MF Zone

Business (B):

• Uses: Permit all uses in the MF Zone

Light Industrial (LI)

• Uses: Prohibit adult entertainment
• Allow all uses in the MF Zone
• Reduce the alcohol sales limitation near churches from 300 feet to 100 feet; adjacency may be permitted by SUP.

Downtown Business (DB):

• Uses: Reduce entrance prohibition on all zones other than residential zones for nightclubs
• Establish a permitted density of 100 units per acre for residential uses without SUP
• Reduce the alcohol sales limitation near churches from 300 feet to 100 feet; adjacency may be permitted by SUP
• Allow annual sidewalk café permits under more moderate rules
• Allow buildings to reach 80 feet before setbacks begin
• Allow heights to 8 stories or 100 feet without SUP, to 12 stories or 140 feet with a SUP
• Allow awnings to project 10 feet over the public sidewalk
• Reduce the minimum lot area to 3,000 square feet and 30 feet wide

Development Standards

• Reduce setbacks in MF, O, B, and LI zone to 10 feet front and side yard adjacent to a street
• Reduce minimum lot area to 5,000 square feet in MF, O, B, and LI zones
• Measure the height setback standards from the DB area boundary.

Campus Plans

There are two key downtown users that have campuses – the University of Texas at Arlington and the First Baptist Church. In addition, civic uses have developed into a campus in the heart of downtown. These uses are key to a downtown's vibrancy. However, they all have an impact in that their development removes taxable property from the TIF district and also can reduce the amount of land available for private sector development. While the University has developed a campus plan, the other campus users should develop a campus plan that defines the boundaries of the uses and that resolves any conflicts between the use and the downtown. In this manner, a complementary development can take place that allows these uses to grow and prosper in a vibrant downtown.

Street Use (awnings, balconies, signs, carts)

While not an issue today, downtowns commonly have street use regulations that permit limited use of the public right-of-way for commercial activities. Uses such as outdoor seating, portable signs, food carts, and projections into the public right-of-way such as awnings and balconies are often seen, and if not regulated can become a problem later. A street use ordinance should be enacted to cover these uses in the downtown area.

Centerpiece Attractor (arena, performing arts center)

A great deal of discussion has occurred about either an arena and/or a performing arts center. While the TIF probably cannot fund these efforts independently, it is customary for downtown renewal districts to assist with land acquisition, parking, street improvements and other forms of support. This should be explored and the City's position clarified about its level of participation.

Strategic Actions

Investment Strategy

Much of a successful downtown's development is the timing of public investment to stimulate private investment. This can occur in a number of areas but typically involves developing public infrastructure that supports downtown activities and that improves the area (sometimes strategically timed to occur near an upcoming development). Arlington already has formed a TIF district, and part of this plan should be the strategic use of these funds in the downtown area. While the TIF is a powerful tool, downtown improvements can be expensive and funding sources limited. Therefore, TIF funds should be thought of as a scarce resource, to be used to leverage private investment either directly or indirectly.

Realistic Budget and Timeframe

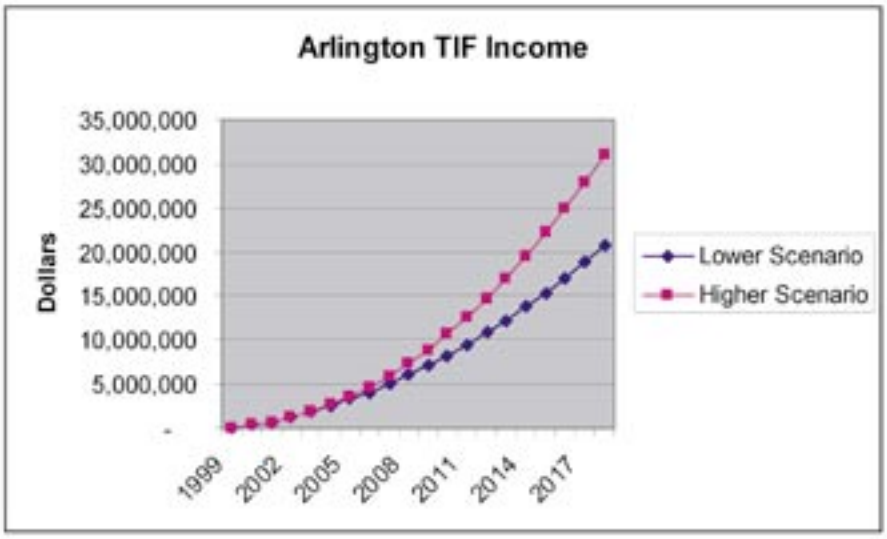
Since the TIF was established in 1998, the assessed value of downtown has increased from $74 million to nearly $97 million today – a taxable increment of $23 million. Currently, the district has annual revenues of about $600,000 and has amassed nearly $1.8 million in funds.

We have prepared two scenarios of future income during the life of the TIF, which expires in 2018. The first assumes that continued development will increase the assessed value by about $3.6 million a year. The second assumes an increased rate of development, about $7.6 million a year.

Scenario 1 provides the foundation for a long-range budget plan. The basic elements of the plan are based on a pay-as-you-go strategy

In addition, these funds can only be spent if the actual increment occurs and the taxes are collected. The City's conservative financial management philosophy dictates a low risk approach, with the issuance of bonds an unlikely option at this time.

Based on this strategy, this is the recommended expenditure plan for the TIF during the next 10 years. This budget would have to go through a public review process, be approved by the TIF Board and City Council, and be adjusted annually. The recommendation is not that this exact budget be adopted, but that an annual budget and program be instituted and that the TIF Board be proactive and strategic, rather than reactionary, in the use of the TIF funds.



The following table represents the development scenarios considered:

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Annual Growth Increment	$3,680,000	$7,360,000
Total Increase in Assessed Value	$55,350,000	$110,460,000
New Housing Units	455	1,014
New Population	900	1,825
New Building Square Footage	350,000	637,000
New Employment	900	1,644
Total TIF Revenue	$20,700,000	$31,162,000

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
TIF Annual Budget Forecast - Revenue					
Appraised Value Shared	$ 27,118,436	$ 30,808,436	$ 34,498,436	$ 38,188,436	$ 41,878,436
Annual Revenue	$ 642,731	$ 730,187	$ 817,643	$ 905,100	$ 992,556
Beginning Balance	$ 2,535,613	$ 2,390,800	$ 2,514,693	$ 2,706,105	$ 2,963,764
TIF Annual Budget Forecast - Expenditure					
TIF Management Expenses	$ 50,000	$ 55,000	$ 60,500	$ 66,550	$ 73,205
Annual Storefront Improvement Grants	$ 50,000	$ 50,000	$ 50,000	$ 50,000	$ 50,000
Annual Streetscape Improvement Program	$ 275,000	$ 288,750	$ 303,188	$ 318,347	$ 334,264
Plaza Improvements	$ 200,000				
Parking Structure 1 (200 spaces)					
Direct Development Assistance	$ 300,000	$ 300,000	$ 300,000	$ 300,000	$ 300,000
Total Expenditures	$ 875,000	$ 693,750	$ 713,688	$ 734,897	$ 757,469
Remaining Balance	$ 1,660,613	$ 1,697,050	$ 1,801,006	$ 1,971,208	$ 2,206,295

**This budget forecast is based on 2004 dollars and does not account for inflation.This budget is based on figures provided by the City of Arlington's TIF manager.*

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
TIF Annual Budget Forecast - Revenue					
Appraised Value Shared	$ 45,568,436	$ 49,258,436	$ 52,948,436	$ 56,638,436	$ 60,328,436
Annual Revenue	$ 1,080,012	$ 1,167,468	$ 1,254,925	$ 1,342,381	$ 1,429,837
Beginning Balance	$ 3,286,307	$ 1,272,272	$ 1,720,092	$ 2,228,085	$ 2,794,442
TIF Annual Budget Forecast - Expenditure					
TIF Management Expenses	$ 80,526	$ 88,578	$ 97,436	$ 107,179	$ 117,897
Annual Storefront Improvement Grants	$ 50,000	$ 50,000	$ 50,000	$ 50,000	$ 50,000
Annual Streetscape Improvement Program	$ 350,977	$ 368,526	$ 386,953	$ 406,300	$ 426,615
Plaza Improvements					
Parking Structure 1 (200 spaces)	$ 2,400,000				
Direct Development Assistance	$ 300,000	$ 300,000	$ 300,000	$ 300,000	
Total Expenditures	$ 3,181,503	$ 807,104	$ 834,388	$ 863,480	$ 594,513
Remaining Balance	$ 104,804	$ 465,168	$ 885,704	$ 1,364,605	$ 2,199,929

Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

This recommended expenditure plan contains the basic activities that are suggested to improve the downtown business environment, to allow for opportunistic investments, and to stimulate improved private investment in the downtown.

TIF Manager

This would be a new position that requires the skills of an experienced downtown development manage – someone who has experience in downtown real estate development and in using TIF funds to leverage private funds. This position should report as directly as possible to the City manager. The TIF manager would work with the TIF board, which would approve expenditures and develop an annual budget and program, subject to the oversight of the City manager and City Council.

In other successful downtowns, a talented redevelopment manager has been essential. This position does not promote merchant services but instead oversees overall real estate development for the area and develops public-private partnerships that are essential to the downtown. The salary would be split between the TIF and the City. If the TIF is more successful than this conservative projection, the entire costs could be solely funded by the TIF after five or six years. The City and Chamber of Commerce should provide staff support and office space. While this is a direct expense, a good TIF manager will more than pay his or her salary in a few years.

Street Improvement Program

This program provides $250,000 a year for street improvements, or about 500 to 1,000 linear feet of improvement per year. (The actual cost of improvements per lineal foot varies considerably based on the specific situation). This will provide funding for all the improvements foreseen in the master street plan. These street improvements are important, not only for improving downtown amenities but also in providing on-street parking. On average, each year's improvements will provide more than 50 on-street spaces – the best kind for business development downtown.

These expenditures should be directed to the areas that have the highest potential to increase the private investment downtown. This is a phased plan that is decided annually and is determined by the TIF manager and TIF board as conditions change.

Storefront Improvement Grants

This is a program to assist small businesses in making improvements to the exterior of buildings and properties so that existing businesses are compatible with the downtown vision. Painting, historic restorations, awnings and landscaping are typical expenditures. These can be grants or low interest loans and require at least a 50 percent match in improvements to be undertaken simultaneously. The provisional budget has allocated $50,000 for these grants annually, sufficient for two to five grants annually.

Plaza and Fountain Improvements

This program would implement development of a central plaza or park with the fountain as a central attractor. This plan recommends the library site as a key location. This area should be designed in a public process and current ideas about the library renovation and central park considered and reconciled. Given its prominent location, this is a key improvement and provides a central public open space that would be an attractive landmark for the downtown.

	Total New Development		Shared Parking Requirement		Spaces Required
Retail	100,000	(sq. ft.)	2.00	(per 1000 sq. ft.)	200
Restaurant	56,000	(sq. ft.)	8.00	(per 1000 sq. ft.)	448
Office	130,000	(sq. ft.)	1.00	(per 1000 sq. ft.)	130
Residential	455	(# bedrooms)	0.50	(per bedroom)	228

Results:

Total Spaces following Minimum Requirements:	1005
Total Spaces if Shared Parking is Permitted:	843
Total Reduction in Spaces using Shared Parking:	163
Estimated Reduction in Impervious Cover:	22,127 Sq. Feet

Parking strategy

Based on Scenario 1 that has been discussed, and assuming that reducing the parking requirements in the zoning code is implemented, more peak parking will be required on a daily basis than can be provided by the combination of public and private lots. While parking is not in short supply today, parking in the future will become scarcer as developments provide less off-street parking. This is part of the plan for downtown, since a walking environment with shared parking is essential for its success.

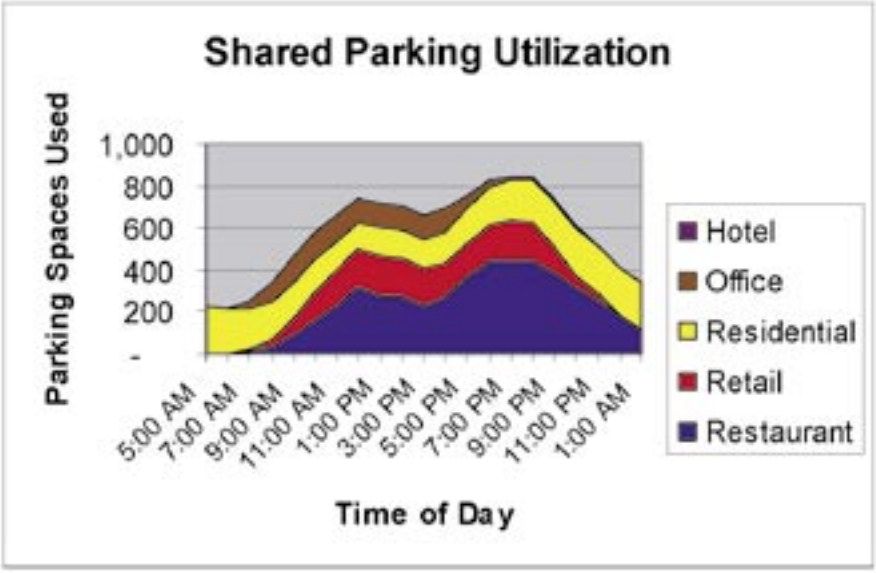
Based on the assumption that office and retail uses will provide one space per 1,000 sq. feet of Gross Leasable Area (GLA) of on-site parking, restaurants will provide two spaces, and residential uses will provide one space per unit, we can estimate the amount of overflow parking cannot be accommodated on an individual development site. This overflow can be taken care of via shared spaces, such as on-street and public parking spaces.

This was modeled for time-of-day demand (based on the Urban Land Institute's shared parking model) showing the potential shared parking demand if the development occurs. The following charts show the basis of the estimate.

Using this estimate, a plan to develop the required shared parking is based on adding 447 new on-street spaces by making the streetscape improvements on Center, Mesquite, Abram, and Border/UTA Boulevard. In addition, the proposed shared private parking proposed for Division adds 375 spaces, and Front Street adds 250. TIF would participate with these improvements on the condition that there is shared access and a certain percentage of the spaces shared among users and available after hours for parking for adjacent uses.

Central parking garages also would have to be added, including a 200-space garage in 2009 and another between 2014 and 2018. A 200-space garage is a 4-story structure if located on a half acre (20,000 sq. ft.) site, and would cost an estimated $2.4 million. The assumption is that it would be owned and operated by the City of Arlington, but alternative ownership and cost sharing should be investigated when the need for the structure develops. If the ground floor is used for retail or other uses, this would be a 5-story building.

Obviously, major investments in parking structures should be delayed until the need is evident. Actual parking utilization surveys should precede the investment of several million dollars in a structure. Also, this is based on the assumptions of Scenario 1 – the downtown's actual development history will determine the exact time the structures should be built. The results of the shared parking demand analysis are shown below:



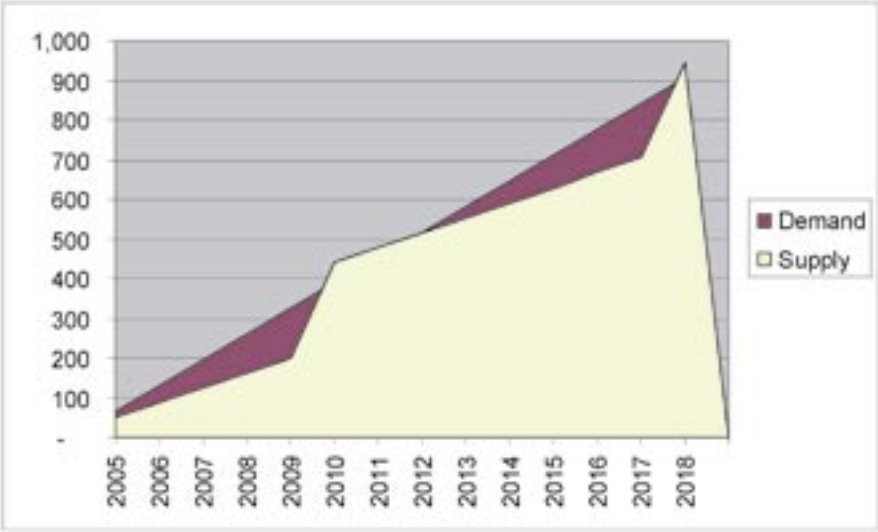
Development Assistance

Frequently TIFs are used to "close the gap" for private projects in downtowns, by providing land at reduced or no costs, providing public infrastructure, purchasing affordable housing, and many other strategies. The preference is to use an approach that provides financial and technical assistance only to pilot projects that – once they become successful – eventually can be replicated by the private sector without assistance. As the market success of the pilot projects is proven, lower risk will make downtown Arlington mixed-use projects more feasible, and assistance can be reduced and eventually eliminated. However, providing public infrastructure that is supportive of development is one of the key uses of TIF funds, and there will be a need for this throughout the life of the TIF district.

The recommended expenditure plan has placed $300,000 toward direct assistance. This can be used for many purposes, such as land assembly, interest rate reduction, infrastructure provision, and many more areas. If the annual increment is not expended, it should be rolled into future years so that a substantial fund for improvement can accumulate.

Land Assembly

Often, large projects require the City of Arlington to purchase land and consolidate it in order to develop large projects. While this is not in the near future, the ways that the TIF can assist in larger developments should be considered.



Year	Demand	Supply			
2005	65	50			
2006	130	88			
2007	194	126			
2008	259	164			
2009	324	202			
2010	389	440	Add 200 space parking structure		
2011	454	478			
2012	519	516			
2013	583	554			
2014	648	592			
2015	713	630			
2016	778	668			
2017	843	706			
2018	907	944	Add 200 space parking structure		
38	Annual average on street parking				

Initial Project

The initial year's activities are key steps toward achieving this plan. These activities should include the administrative changes suggested and should include initial improvements to develop a high amenity core to the downtown and implement small essential improvements designed to stimulate investment.

Create, Fund, and Hire the TIF Manager

There are many opportunities that can be developed in downtown Arlington, with a number of available tools to help. This is a complex and important task, and one that needs the attention of a professional with a record of achievement in implementing downtown redevelopment. The suggestion is that the TIF and the City split the costs of this office for the first six years.

Adopt a Five-year TIF Budget Based on the Provisional Budget Contained in this Plan

The provisional budget should be subjected to further scrutiny and debate and be adopted as soon as possible, so that the downtown plan's implementation has official sanction. This five-year budget should be revised annually.

Adopt the Plan

The first step should be the adoption of this document as a master plan to guide the future of the downtown. The vision and policies should be modified if necessary, but the downtown needs a public statement of the principles, policies and strategies that will guide downtown development. Adoption of the plan should include the first year of a downtown CIP plan and direction to proceed to implementation.

Develop and Implement Way-finding Plan

Ideally, the location of downtown should be clear to any visitor or resident from the major arterials and freeways. This means that exit signs should be added to I-30, I-20, and SH-360. In addition, Cooper and Collins should be signed, as well as accesses from the Entertainment District to downtown, which encompasses the area around Six Flags and Ameriquest Stadium. The sign for downtown should be distinctive and promote the "branding" of downtown.

Public Art and Amenities

This is one of the key investments that can draw people to a downtown. Arlington has some excellent resources and decisions to make about how to incorporate art and culture as an integral part of its downtown character and atmosphere.

Caelum Moor art

The Caelum Moor stones were part of a five-acre sculpture garden that was donated to the City. While its original setting may be impractical, these pieces could be used as set pieces for plazas, roundabouts, parks and fountains. It is recommended that the use of these stones be investigated as part of a first phase of downtown improvements. If this is not feasible, we recommend that the pieces be sold and the money be used to purchase more appropriate art for downtown.

Central Plaza & Fountain

A fountain near the historic location of the mineral well in Arlington would provide a centerpiece and recreational facility for Arlington residents and visitors. A fountain facility that would permit public entry would cost about $100,000, but there are many options that can change this cost. It also would provide a recreational facility for residents and visitors. It is recommended that this facility be designed and be part of the first phase addition to the downtown.

The mineral well at the intersection of Main and Center was the heart of town, as seen here in 1921.
(Photograph courtesy of J.W. Dunlop)

Street Improvements

The first round of street improvements should be designed and funded, concentrating around the Center Street/Abram Street intersection. The existing Center Street improvements should be modified to fit the streetscape in this plan (these are minor modifications) and included in the first year's improvements.

Storefront Improvements

The City should develop grant standards and award criteria and offer the first $50,000 of grants funds for storefront improvements in the downtown. The City would devise a selection process for helping to decide which businesses would be awarded the grant.

Develop Marketing Strategy

The vision and tools available to the downtown make it a much more viable development opportunity. This should be communicated to the development community as soon as the TIF manager is hired. The budget for this should be developed in future TIF program budgets and should be one of the responsibilities of the TIF manager.

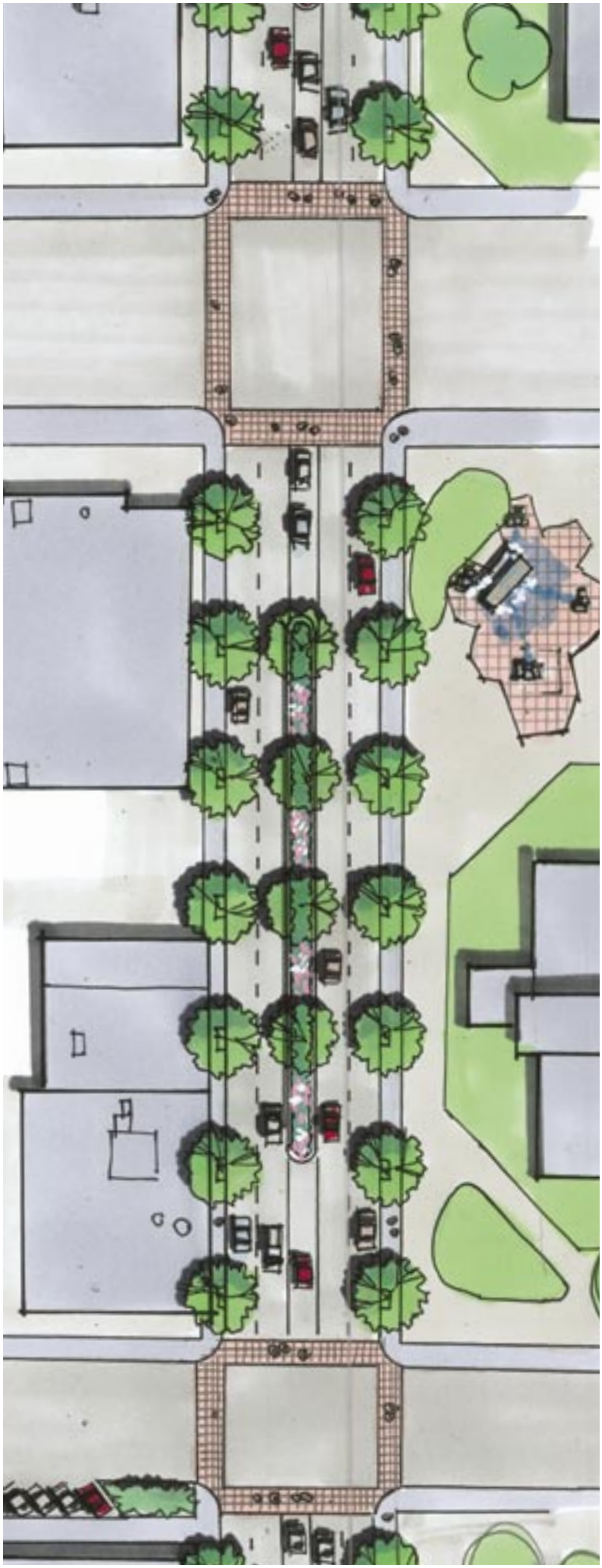
Secure Commitment for Development

One of the first goals is to secure a commitment for an initial development that will showcase downtown for its potential as a vibrant mixed-use area. While there are many expressions of interest in downtown development, changing these expressions of interest into bricks and mortar will require a great deal of skill and hard work – an achievable goal, however, for 2005.

- Notes -

City of Arlington Texas

Success is Downtown Arlington's Future

This plan constitutes ambitions, vision and a plan of action that will transform downtown Arlington into a center of economic growth and community pride. While this may seem daunting at first, it is important to both hold an ambitious vision and proceed cautiously. There is a cycle of success and reward that should be followed, with small, relatively inexpensive steps taken at first, evaluating their success, and then taking larger steps as momentum grows. Even small changes can build confidence in the downtown's investment potential, but nothing will be as effective as a long-term commitment to the downtown's success by City leadership. The best way to sustain this is through repeated successful projects and a very public celebration and recognition of these successes.

City of Arlington Texas