

Land Use Patterns

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plainspoken [ˌpleɪnˈspəʊkən] *adj* franco(ca).

plaintiff [ˈpleɪntɪf] *n* demandante *mf*.

plaintive [ˈpleɪntɪv] *adj* quejumbroso(sa), lastimero(ra).

plait [plæt] ◇ *n* trenza *f*. ◇ *vt* trenzar.

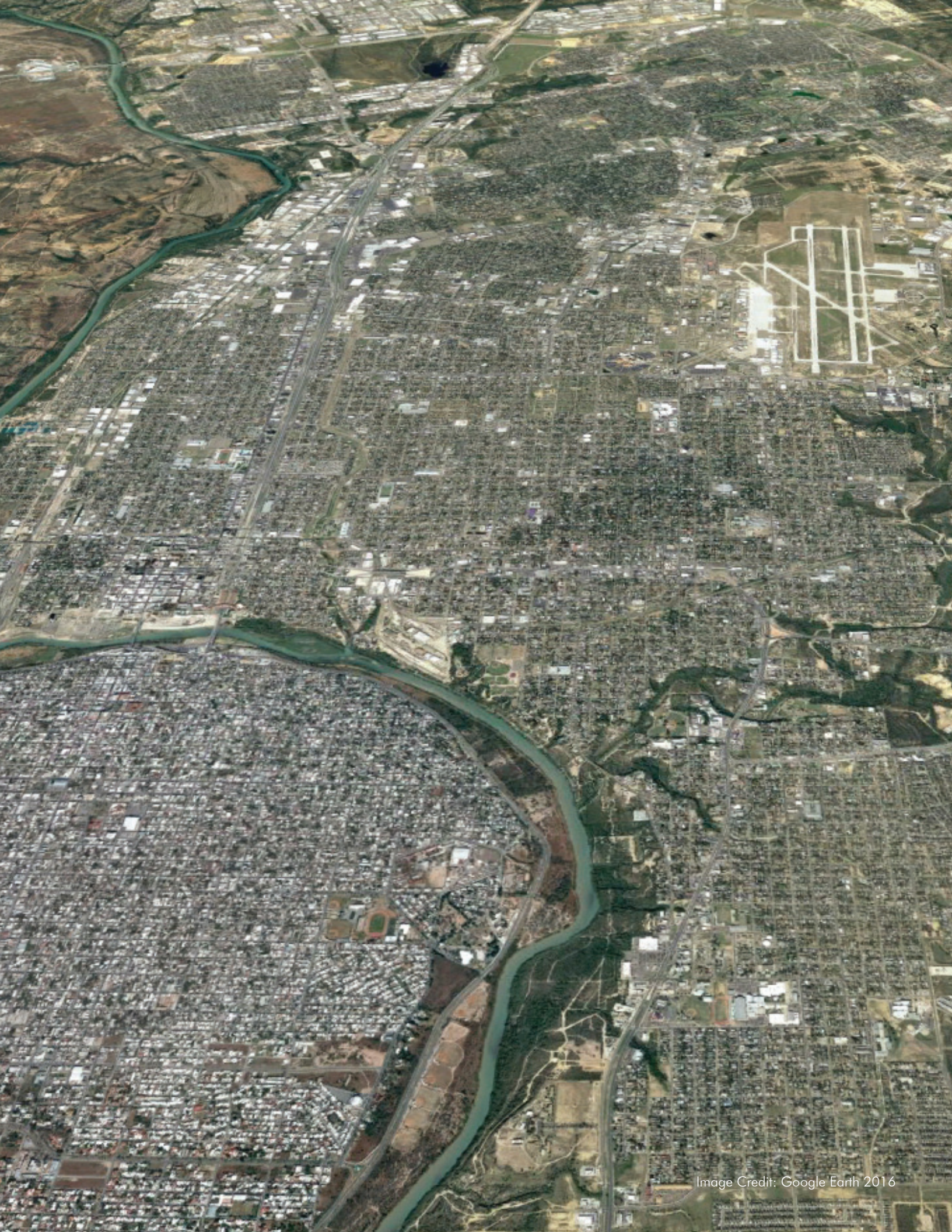
plan [plæn] ◇ *n* - **1.** [strategy] plan *m*; **to go according to plan** salir según lo previsto - **2.** [of story, essay] esquema *m* - **3.** [of building etc] plano *m*. ◇ *vt* (*pt* & *pp* -**ned**, *cont* -**ning**) - **1.** [organize] planear - **2.** [career, future, economy] planificar; **to plan to do sthg** tener la intención de hacer algo; **it wasn't planned** no estaba previsto - **3.** [design, devise] trazar un esquema *OR* boceto de. ◇ *vi* hacer planes; **we hadn't planned for that** no lo habíamos previsto.

◆ **plans** *npl* planes *mpl*; **to have plans for** tener planes para.

◆ **plan on** *vt insep*: **to plan on doing sthg** pensar hacer algo.

◆ **plan out** *vt sep* planear.

plane [pleɪn] ◇ *adj* plano(na). ◇ *n* - **1.** [aircraft] avión *m* - **2.** GEOM [flat surface] plano *m* - **3.** *fig* [level - intellectual] nivel *m*, plano *m* - **4.** [tool] cepillo *m* - **5.** [tree] plátano *m*. ◇ *vt*



EXISTING CONDITIONS

Historical Growth

Over the past 250 years, Laredo has developed from a small settlement with a crossing point on the northern bank of the Rio Grande into a major city with the nation's largest inland port of entry. Laredo remains a mostly gridded city planned using 18th century conventions, though recent development utilizes a suburban pattern. Rail-based development gave way to highway-based development as, like elsewhere in the United States, growth patterns were driven by national transportation policy.

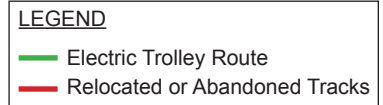
The original mode of transportation for the city was by foot, mule, or horse-drawn cart. Development began to push further from the downtown core with the introduction of the streetcar which opened between Laredo and Nuevo Laredo in 1890.

In 1916, automobile production began to sharply increase in the United States. The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1921 resulted in the funding of many major State and Federal roadway infrastructure projects. Among those projects was US Route 81 which was constructed in 1926 and passed through the city center along present day San Bernardo Avenue and terminated at the international border.

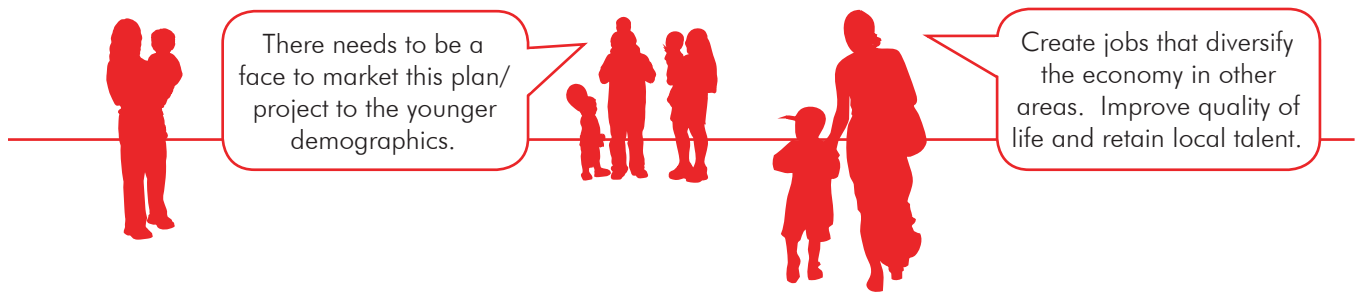
The proliferation of the automobile expanded the reach of development in the city and connected Laredo to cities further afield by means other than train. However, the primary pattern of development was still the small grid of blocks until after World War II.



Map of historic trolley routes, Southern Traction Annals



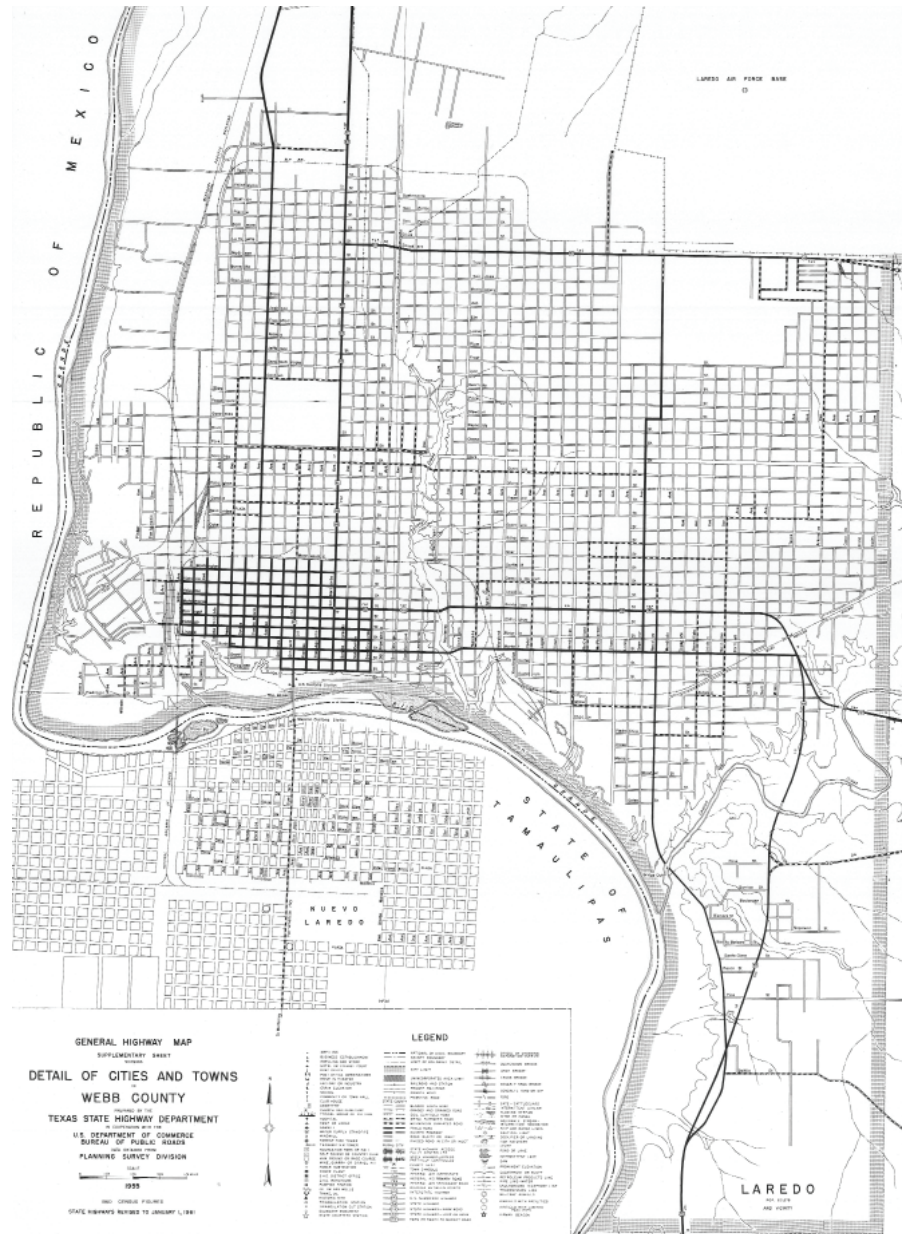
Streetcar in Laredo (circa 1905)



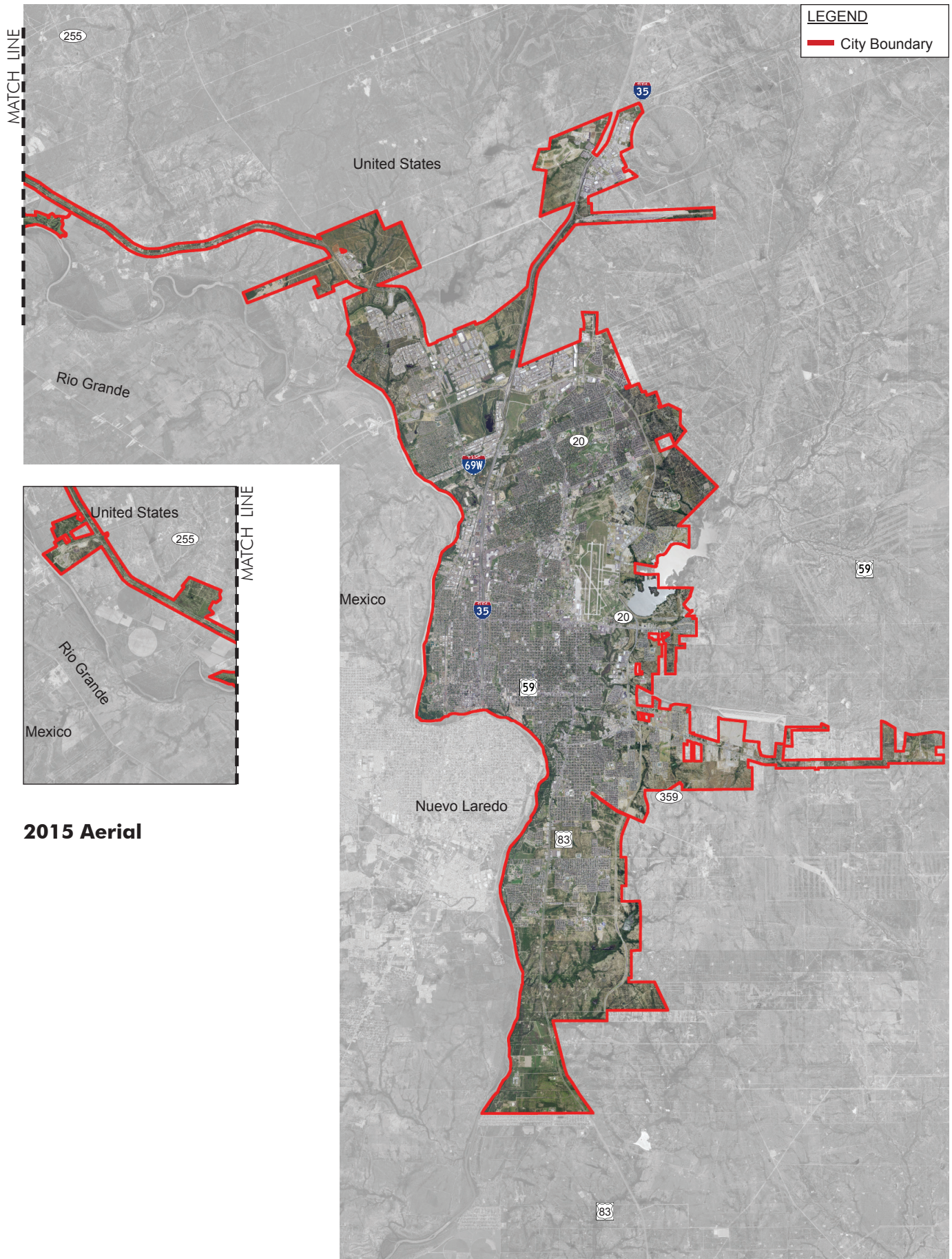
Following World War II further highway expansion projects were approved throughout the country, including the expansion of US Route 81, which would become Interstate Highway 35 as a result of the adoption of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956. In the 1950s, additional economic expansion projects included the construction and completion of Bridge #1, also known as the Gateway to the Americas Bridge.

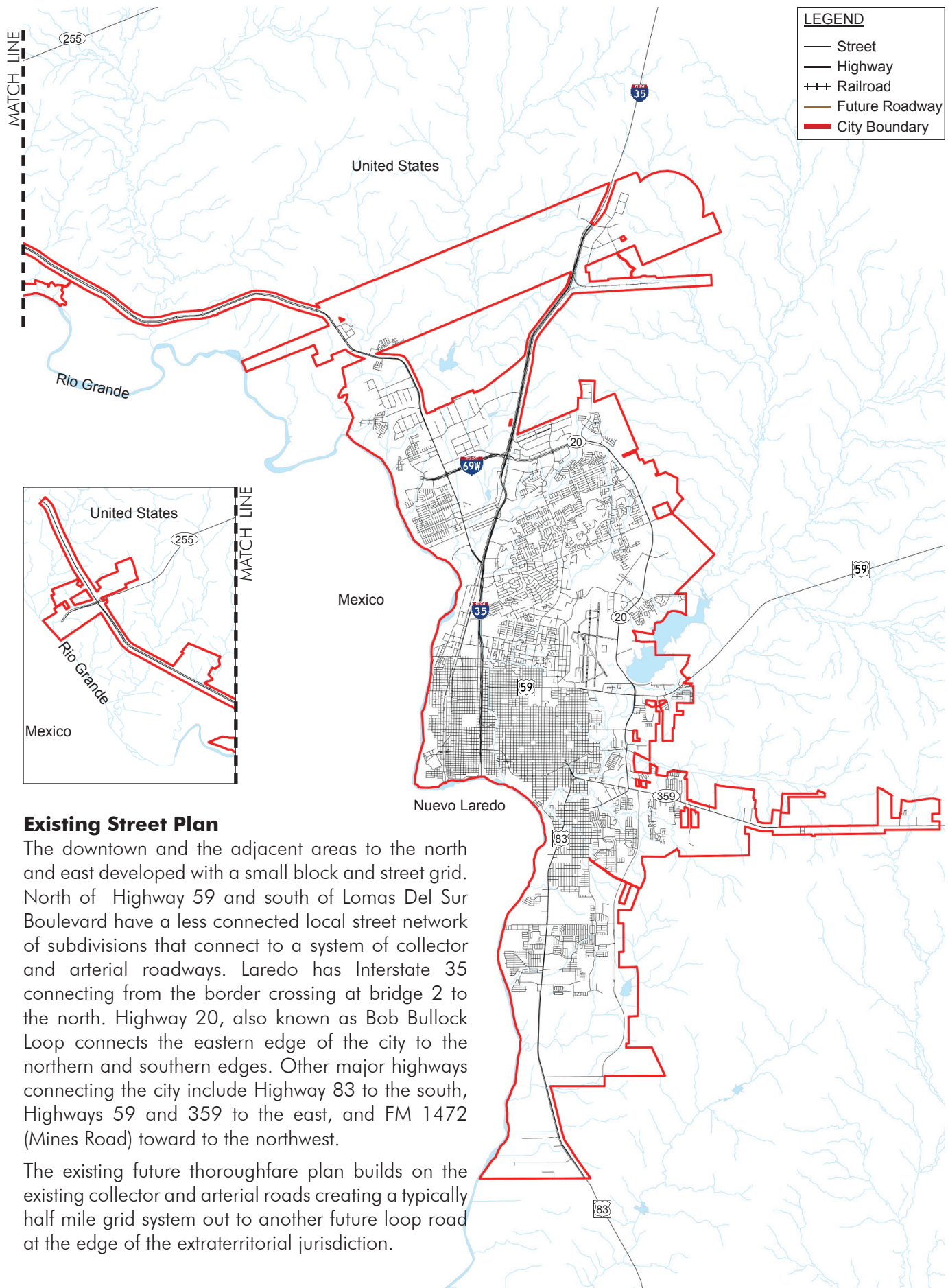
The growth of the port and the expansion of freight traffic continues to impact the landscape of the city. However, at its heart Laredo remains a mostly gridded city. Laredo shares this feature with Nuevo Laredo across the river.

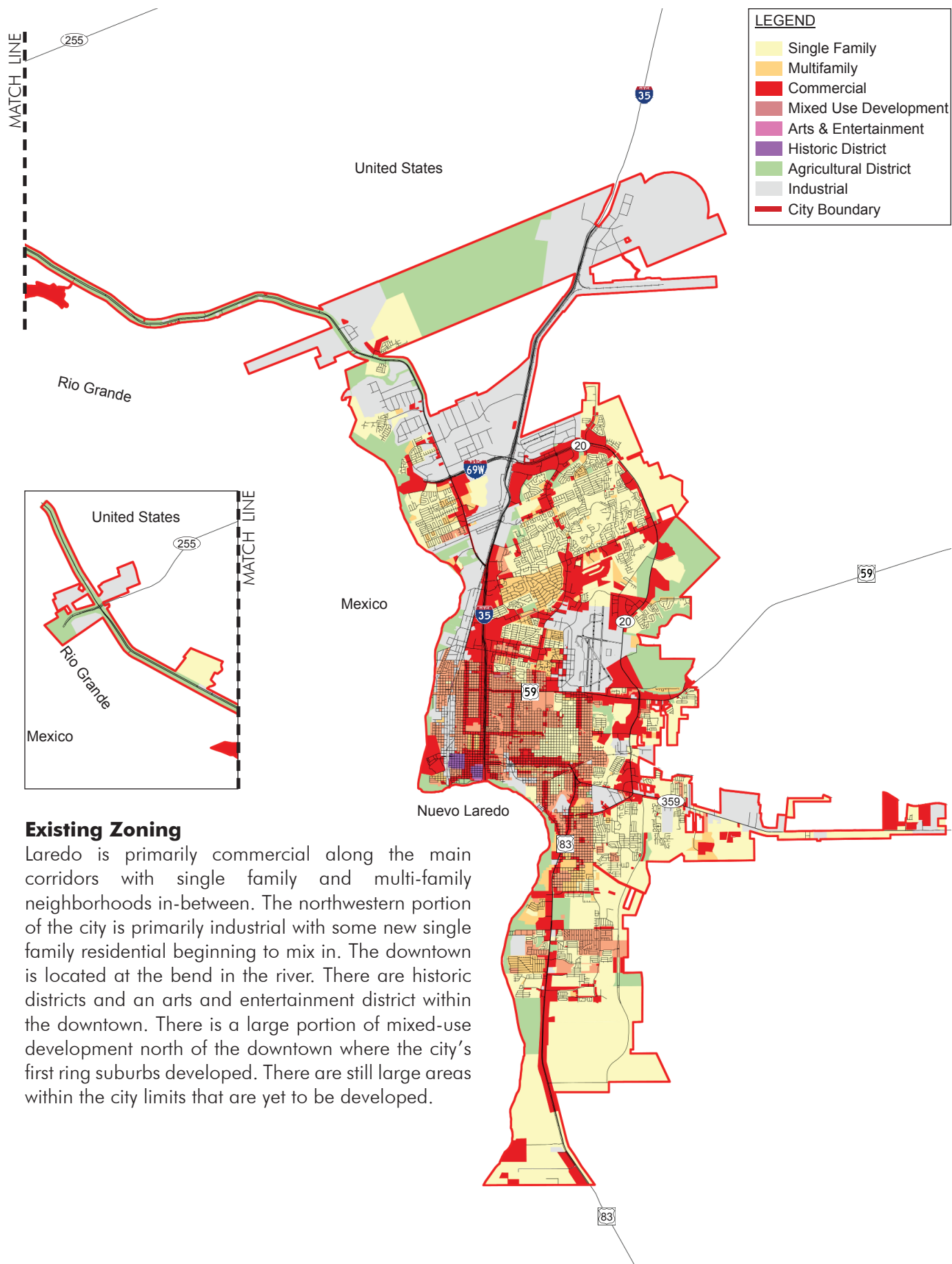
Pushing north, west, east, and south the future of Laredo will continue to be defined by local, state, and federal transportation policy including plans to create a loop highway at the furthest extent of the city and the construction of additional entries into Nuevo Laredo. The city that began "at the bend in the river" reaches today in every direction with few physical constraints other than the international border.



1961 Map of the City of Laredo

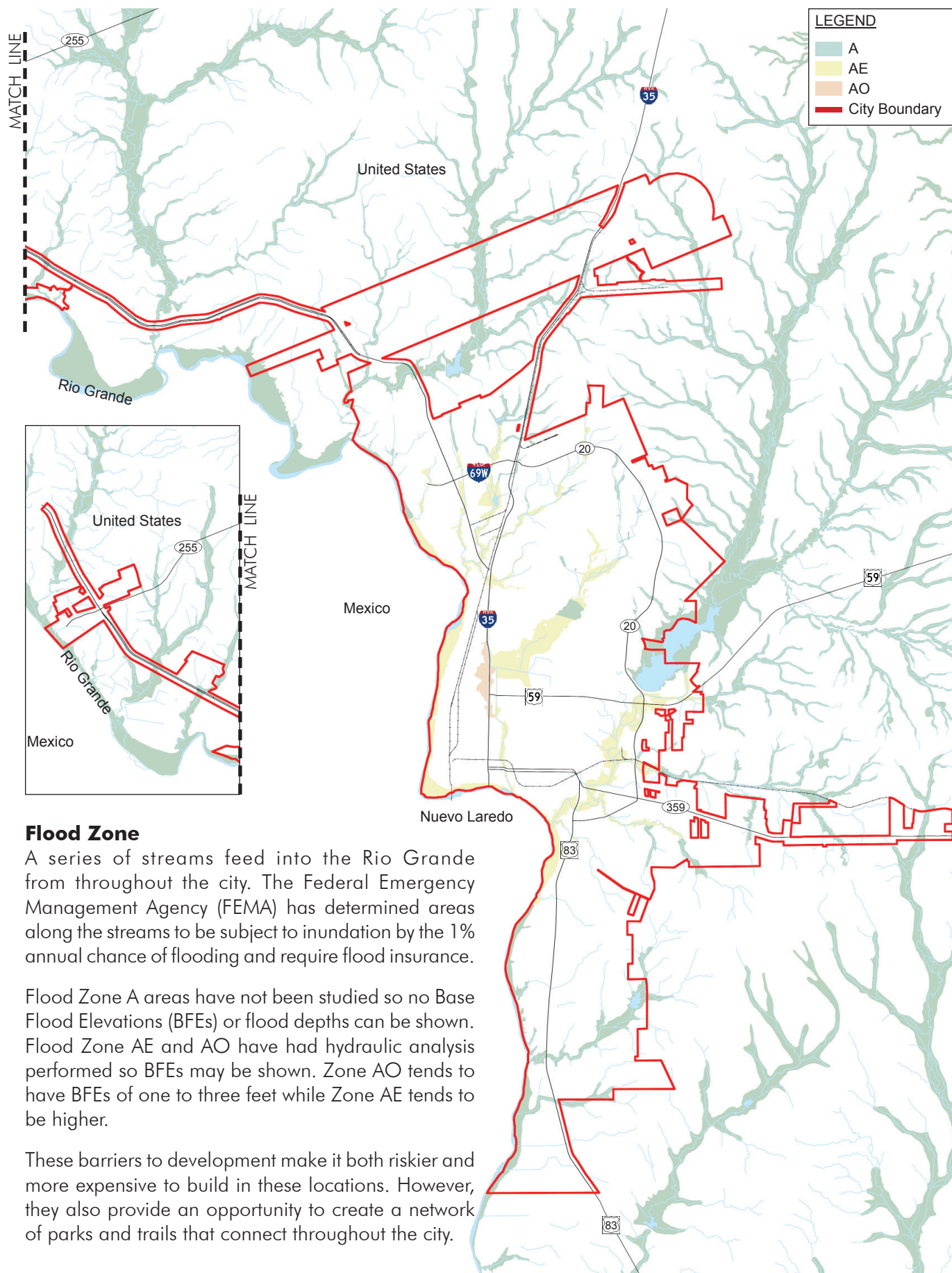


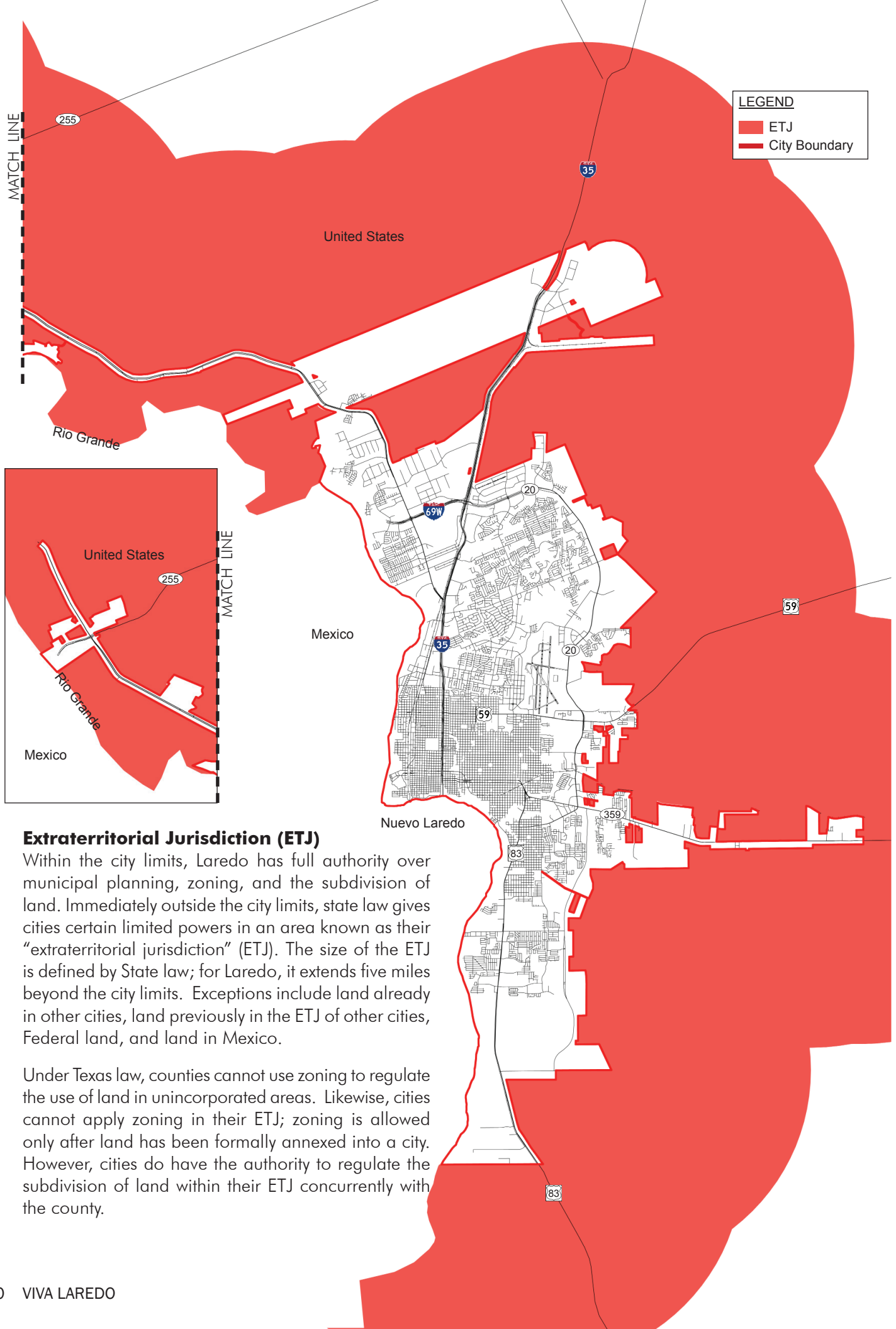




Existing Zoning

Laredo is primarily commercial along the main corridors with single family and multi-family neighborhoods in-between. The northwestern portion of the city is primarily industrial with some new single family residential beginning to mix in. The downtown is located at the bend in the river. There are historic districts and an arts and entertainment district within the downtown. There is a large portion of mixed-use development north of the downtown where the city's first ring suburbs developed. There are still large areas within the city limits that are yet to be developed.





Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ)

Within the city limits, Laredo has full authority over municipal planning, zoning, and the subdivision of land. Immediately outside the city limits, state law gives cities certain limited powers in an area known as their "extraterritorial jurisdiction" (ETJ). The size of the ETJ is defined by State law; for Laredo, it extends five miles beyond the city limits. Exceptions include land already in other cities, land previously in the ETJ of other cities, Federal land, and land in Mexico.

Under Texas law, counties cannot use zoning to regulate the use of land in unincorporated areas. Likewise, cities cannot apply zoning in their ETJ; zoning is allowed only after land has been formally annexed into a city. However, cities do have the authority to regulate the subdivision of land within their ETJ concurrently with the county.

Stop growing only north; south Laredo is practically abandoned and there isn't much opportunity.



COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Revitalize Downtown

Downtown Laredo's rich architectural and cultural heritage is apparent. Unfortunately, so is the extensive disinvestment of recent decades. Laredoans want downtown to once again become the city's vibrant heart – a place of common ground, constant reinvention, living commerce, and varied entertainment.

In its heyday, downtown Laredo was a distinctive cultural scene and the most choiceworthy place in the region to work, live, and meet. Department stores, theaters, festivals, family celebrations, and visitors from across the U.S. and Mexico all brought life to downtown. Today, that life is only a fraction of what it once was.

Redevelopment is important throughout Laredo. Downtown streets provide the highest-quality pedestrian environment in the city. Well-built and beautifully crafted buildings face tree-lined streets. Local government agencies are still mostly located in the downtown, giving the downtown a functional primacy. Hundreds of thousands of people every year have their first experience of the United States in the downtown and the downtown remains the place that all the people of Laredo have in common as it continues to host Laredo's most important events.

The work of institutions like the Webb County Heritage Foundation, enduring businesses like La Posada Hotel, and new ventures like the outlet mall (to name just a few examples) give downtown advocates hope.

Protect Historic Neighborhoods

Laredo's older neighborhoods, like Barrio Azteca and St. Peter's Historic Neighborhood should be a source of local pride. And while they have suffered from disinvestment, they remain capable of serving generations of new residents thanks to their central locations, walkable neighborhood designs, and housing stock of distinctive, yet affordable buildings. Protection is key as the downtown and its surroundings evolve in the future.

Grow, But Grow In a Way That Prevents Traffic Delays

Laredo is still a relatively easy place to drive; however, automobile trips are increasingly taking more time and only a fraction of the buildable land in Laredo has been developed. Bob Bullock Loop is an attempt to create an alternate route to bypass this inner city traffic. As development occurs, however, congestion along that facility is likely to worsen.

Add New Land Uses Into Neighborhoods

New subdivisions offer only a single type of home. Families can rarely stay within the same neighborhood when they need to change the kind of home they live in. Residents also report that there are few destinations within distance of their homes to walk. Small shops that would be valuable to residents aren't permitted because the same zoning that would permit them would also permit much larger stores that would be perceived as disruptive to nearby housing. Residents say that most neighborhoods, old or new, could benefit from a greater variety of activities within walking and bicycling distance.

Restore Close Connections with Nuevo Laredo

The recent violence that has occurred in Nuevo Laredo and other northern states of Mexico has badly damaged the historic connectedness between Laredo and Nuevo Laredo. The port industry still thrives, but other ties are severing. Nuevo Laredo and Laredo have grown together nearly as a single city, even though divided by a national border. The restoration of that closeness is an aspiration of citizens on both sides of the border.

STRATEGIES

Focus on the Downtown

City policies can inadvertently encourage growth and expansion at the edges of the city, and this can disincentive infill and redevelopment in the city's historic core and inner city. Laredo's downtown is remarkably intact, with many historic buildings still standing and the traditional street grid largely in place. Laredo needs to reimagine this valuable asset as a national destination. Revitalization of the historic center will anchor and enhance the overall character of the city and contribute to Laredo's long-term sustainability.

Revitalize Older Neighborhoods

Revitalizing Laredo's older neighborhoods, which feature walkable streets, parks, a mix of uses, a variety of housing types, and many historic buildings was a priority for community members. Revitalization includes improving public infrastructure, infilling empty lots as well as parking lots, and restoring valuable older buildings. Laredo should expand its programs, such as the neighborhood empowerment zones (NEZ) with design guidelines, to assist infill development.

At present the downtown has two National Historic Districts: Barrio Azteca Historic District (designated in 2003) and the San Agustin de Laredo Historic District designated in 1973. Additional neighborhoods and districts, like the Heights, and other inner city areas within the street grid defined in page 2.8, should be considered for designation as historic districts. Reusing existing buildings, even where they are not historic, is one of the most basic ways to foster a sustainable city. This can be facilitated through the creation of and adoption of a rehabilitation code.

Historic preservation should be seen as an economic development tool. All across America, blocks of older, smaller buildings are contributing to robust local economies and distinctive livable communities. Buildings of diverse vintage and small scale provide flexible, affordable space for entrepreneurs launching new businesses and serve as attractive settings for

new restaurants and locally owned shops.

They offer diverse housing choices that attract younger residents and create human-scaled places for walking, shopping, and social interaction. These modest, often-overlooked buildings are irreplaceable assets.

Retrofit Suburban Neighborhoods at Strategic Locations

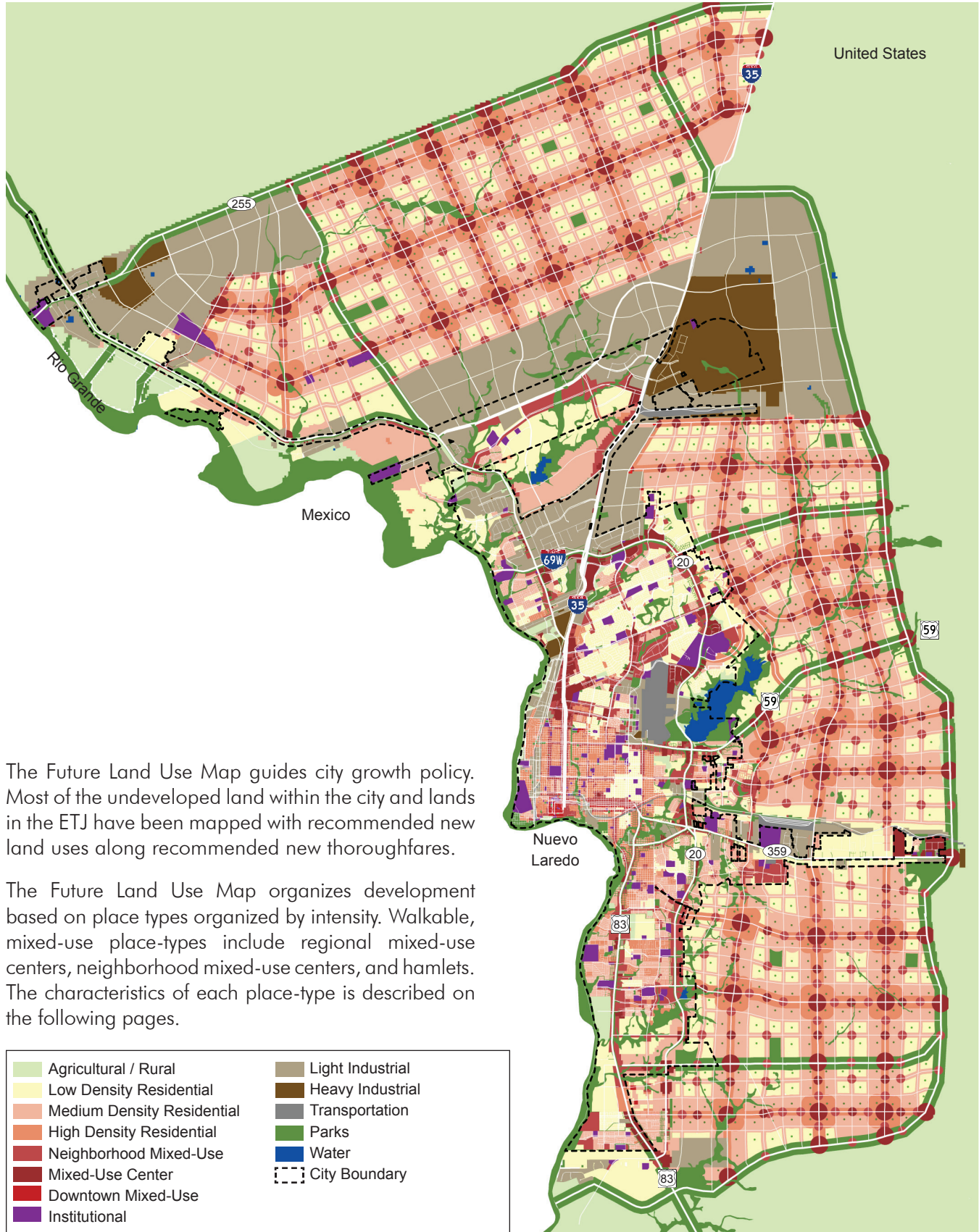
Strategically retrofit newer suburban and commercial areas. Suburban areas divide housing, shopping, and offices into separate districts that can only be reached by private car. This modern ideal of single-use districts is increasingly less attractive to Americans who are disenchanted with lengthening commutes and the lack of exercise allowed for by living in drive-only neighborhoods.

The Urban Design Chapter of this plan describes a wide variety of techniques for retrofitting suburban areas to increase the variety of buildings and provide opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and cultures to live and work. Single-family detached homes can be carefully supplemented by a wider range of housing options, including rowhouses, condominiums, and even lofts that can be built above stores and offices.













Ensure that New Subdivisions Complete the Community

New development should match the quality of Laredo's best older neighborhoods. Understanding the characteristics of a complete neighborhoods can help create diverse communities instead of a monoculture of single family housing.

Future Land Use Map



Land Use Equivalents Chart

New Land Use Types	Current Zoning Groups
 Agricultural / Rural	AG
 Low Density Residential	R-1,R-1-MH, R-1A, R-1B, R-S, B-1R, and R-O with exceptions *
 Medium Density Residential	R-1, R-O, R-2, B-1R, R1-B, Small format market
 High Density Residential	R-3, R-2, B-1R, B-1, R-O
 Neighborhood Mixed-Use	ALL EXCEPT M-1, M-2, B-4, AH, AN, FH, OG, FiH
 Mixed-Use Center	ALL EXCEPT, M-1, M-2, AH, AN, FH, OG. B4 allowed with exceptions**
 Downtown Mixed-Use	CBD, R-1, R-2, R-3, R-1B, R-1A, R-O, AE
 Institutional	CF, MF
 Light Industrial	M-1, B-4, B-3
 Heavy Industrial	M-1, M-2, B-4, B-3, FiH
 Transportation	AH, AN
 Parks	

* RO within a Low Density Residential is allowed with the exception of restaurants.

** Land uses allowed under a B4 are allowed with the exception of the following uses***:

- Farms, General (Crops & Livestock)
- Farms, General (Livestock/Ranch)
- Bulk Grain And/Or Feed Storage
- Veterinarian (Outdoor Animal Confinement)
- Stables (Private, Principle Use)
- Stables (Private, Accessory Use)
- Stables (Commercial)
- Auto Wrecker Service
- Inoperable Vehicle Holding Yard
- Jail
- Halfway House
- Scrap/Waste Recycle Collection
- Zoo
- Horse Training Facility
- Amusement Redemption Machine Establishment
- Auto Impound Yards
- Auto Salvage Yards
- Transit and Maintenance Vehicle Equipment Facility
- Collection Container

The intent of this table is to provide a transitional language between the uses recommended within the vision of this plan and the current land development uses which are organized through the use of zones. When the city’s land development code is revised and adopted according to this plan, this table will no longer be necessary. This table should not be used to directly translate the current zoning to new land development code revisions. City staff should use discretion and best planning practices if using this table as guide in any approval process.

***Note: exceptions only apply to the extent that they do not contradict any other ordinances such as the Urban Agriculture Ordinance, as an example.



Land Uses

Place types and neighborhoods are made up by different land uses in the future land use map. Specified land uses however, are not meant to equate to single-use zoning areas. Rather a land use type in the future land use map describes the overall character of a neighborhood.

Neighborhoods are generally made up of residential and mixed-use designations:

- Low-Density Residential** describes a neighborhood whose character is primarily defined by single-family homes. A diverse range of lot sizes and unit types is encouraged, along with an interconnected network of blocks, streets and public spaces. Denser housing types such as duplexes, fourplexes and small apartment buildings should be designed to fit into the character of a single-family residential neighborhood. Thoughtfully designed small office, retail or mixed-use buildings can also be built at key intersections to provide neighborhood amenities. Civic buildings should also respect the character of a primarily residential neighborhood, but can also be used as landmarks.
- Medium-Density Residential** describes a neighborhood that is primarily residential in character, but includes a full range of range of residential building types. These include single-family homes in small and medium sized lots, attached rowhouses and apartment buildings. Thoughtfully designed small office, retail or mixed-use buildings can also be built at key intersections to provide neighborhood amenities. Civic buildings should also respect the character of a primarily residential neighborhood, but can also be used as landmarks.



Low Density Residential



Medium Density Residential



High Density Residential

- **High-Density Residential** describes a neighborhood whose character is primarily defined by multi-family residential building types, but can also include single family homes in small lots and neighborhood-serving businesses. A diverse range of housing types is encouraged, including attached rowhouses, small and large apartment buildings, courtyard buildings and small mixed-use buildings. Small office, retail or mixed-use buildings can also be built at key intersections to provide neighborhood amenities. Civic buildings should be sited to provide landmarks to the neighborhood.
- **Neighborhood Mixed-Use** describes a neighborhood-serving mixed-use district that includes multistory, mixed-use buildings with commercial, office and residential uses. Multi-family residential buildings are also appropriate as a transition between main street shopping areas and primarily residential neighborhoods.
- **Mixed-Use Center** describes a mixed-use center that includes multistory, mixed-use buildings with commercial, office and residential uses. Regional or neighborhood oriented shopping areas are encouraged as a primary feature. Multi-family residential buildings are also appropriate as a transition between main street shopping areas and primarily residential neighborhoods.
- **Downtown Mixed-Use** describes the most intense urban development in the City of Laredo. Reserved primarily for downtown Laredo, it includes multi-story mixed-use buildings with commercial, office and residential uses. Multi-family residential buildings are also appropriate as a transition between the downtown and primarily residential neighborhoods. The addition of residential uses on the upper floors of downtown buildings is encouraged as a priority for downtown revitalization.



Neighborhood Mixed-Use



Mixed-Use Center



Downtown Mixed-Use

Development Place-Types

Regional Mixed-Use Centers

The center of a Regional Mixed-Use Center area is a place of intense activity that serves an important role both for economic reasons and for social interactions. The center is where one shops for necessities and can also be a place to greet friends, spend leisure time, and enjoy community events.

Regional Mixed Use Centers have been placed on the Future Land Use Map at the intersection of principal arterials and multi-way boulevards.

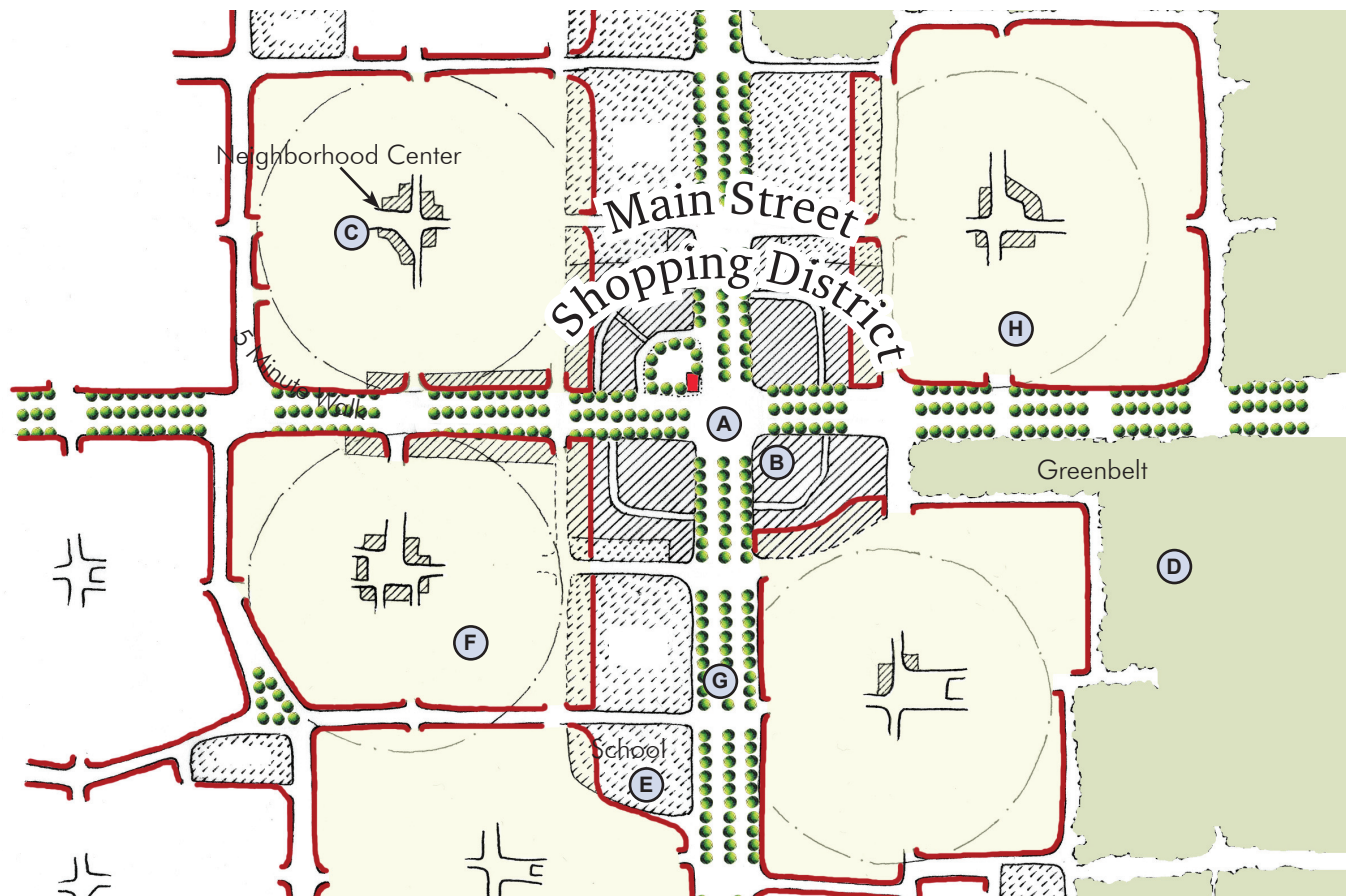
When Regional Mixed-Use Centers are planned, development typically starts with commercial investment at the main intersection. When unplanned and developed one project at a time, commercial investment typically comes only after there is enough residential “roof tops” to support the investment.



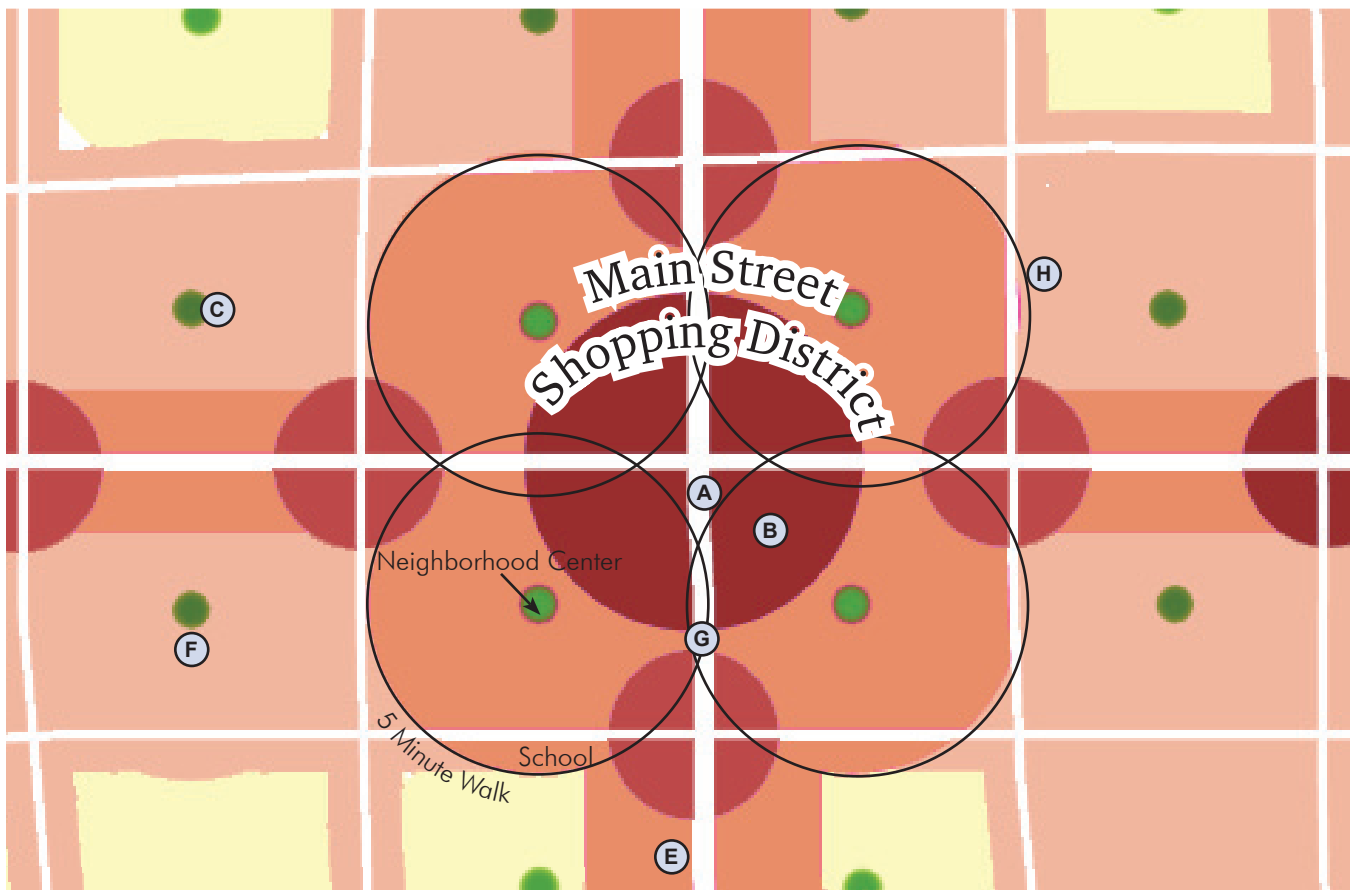
Regional Mixed-Use Centers are characterized by Main Street Shopping Districts which draw from both visitors from across the region as well as a built-in population of residents who live in nearby neighborhoods and walk to satisfy their daily or weekly needs.

Regional Mixed-Use Center Features

- (A) The intersection of multiple adjoining neighborhoods may serve as a shopping district. This area consists of a higher volume of commercial and office area, as well as denser housing types. The commercial space in the shopping district is positioned for its larger number of users.
- (B) Block sizes allow for larger format commercial tenants than what would be found in neighborhood centers.
- (C) Each neighborhood has an identifiable center and edge. Within the neighborhood is a mix of uses, which could include such daily destinations as schools, a pharmacy, or banks. Each is sized so that there is approximately a 5-minute walk from center to edge.
- (D) Large green spaces on the outside of the neighborhoods help define the communities' edge. They also provide large scale recreational opportunities.
- (E) In addition to smaller schools which might be located within the neighborhoods, this area may provide an opportunity for a larger scale school.
- (F) Within each neighborhood is an assortment of public open spaces. These could include plazas, squares, greens, playgrounds, community gardens, or parks.
- (G) Thoroughfares in the regional center may consist of separate vehicular and pedestrian realms. Multi-way boulevards accomplish this by providing a higher speed environment in the central lanes, with narrow, slow-moving, pedestrian-oriented access lanes.
- (H) Neighborhoods are designed with several points of access. This disperses car trips throughout the area rather than concentrating vehicles on a few streets.



Regional Mixed Use Center Diagram



Regional Mixed Use Center as it appears on the Future Land Use Map

Neighborhood Mixed Use Centers

The Neighborhood Mixed-Use Center settlement is composed of multiple neighborhoods ranging from 40 to 80 acres clustered around a town center shopping area. The neighborhoods utilize a general-purpose block network which can support a diversity of uses and housing types. The residential portions of the neighborhood would have multifamily homes and rowhouses at the center and larger lots at the neighborhood edge. The core of the community would contain multistory, mixed-use buildings with commercial, office and residential uses.

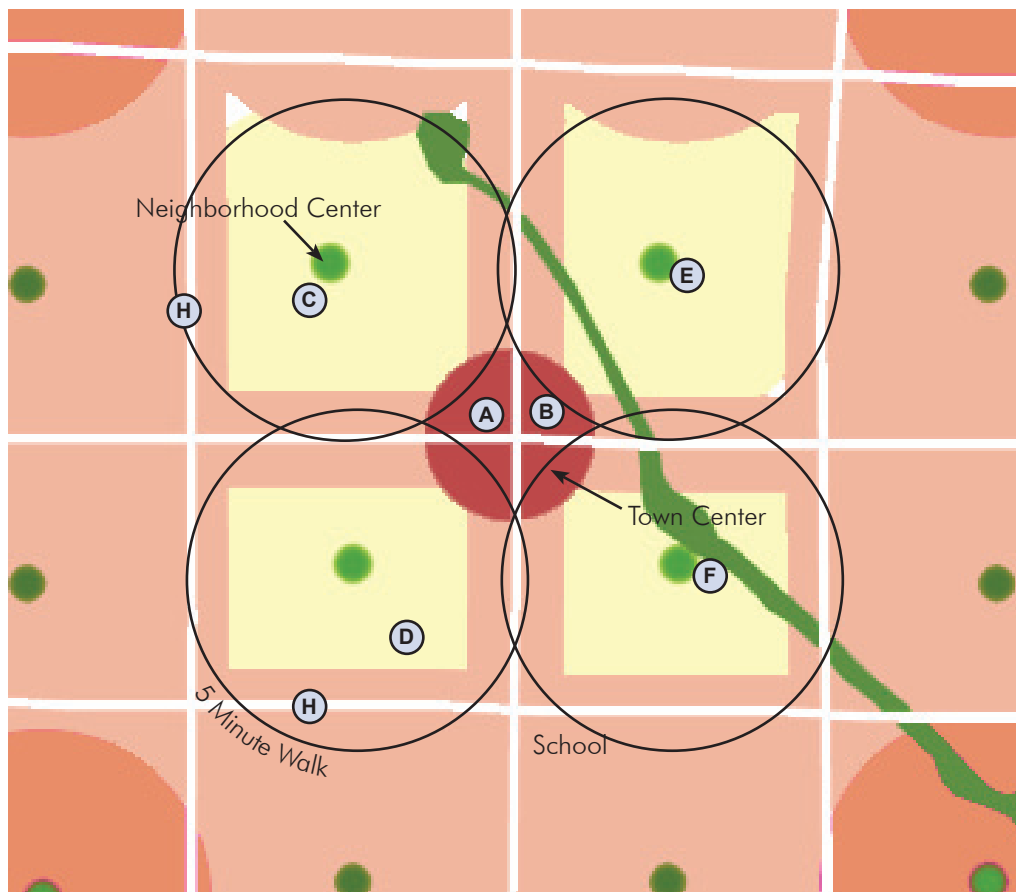
A wide variety of parks and open spaces is provided to address a variety of needs including small tot lots for children close to homes, centrally located greens for unstructured recreation and public gatherings, and expansive recreational fields for soccer and football at the edge of the development. Neighborhood Mixed use centers typically have been placed at the intersection of minor arterial roads on the Future Land Use Map.



Neighborhood Mixed-Use Centers are often characterized by “four-corner” intersections with mixed-use buildings facing each other across a crossable four-point intersection.

Neighborhood Mixed Use Center Features

- (A) The town center serves as the commercial core for a group of neighborhoods. It contains commercial and office uses based on the adjacent neighborhoods and is smaller than the shopping district at the regional mixed-use center.
- (B) The town center should be anchored by a signature open space. This space could serve as an identifiable landmark for all the surrounding neighborhoods.
- (C) The center of each neighborhood should be approximately a 5 minute walking distance from the neighborhood edge.
- (D) Neighborhoods in the Neighborhood Mixed-Use Center Typology will contain a variety of residential housing types. Denser and more urban types will be located near the neighborhood centers or the town center.
- (E) Neighborhood centers will feature more attached building types, including small commercial uses and denser housing types such as apartments, multi-family or rowhouses.
- (F) Within each neighborhood is an assortment of public open spaces. These could include plazas, squares, greens, playgrounds, or parks.
- (G) Large green spaces on the outside of the neighborhoods help define the communities’ edge. They also provide large scale recreational opportunities.
- (H) Neighborhoods are designed with several points of access. This helps disperse car trips throughout the area rather than concentrating vehicles on a few streets.



Attract others to come to Laredo- sell Laredo! Would like to see communities/ subdivisions have nearby outdoor recreation and walkable areas.



Laredo needs alternative funding for infrastructure improvements.



Rural Main Streets (or Crossroads)

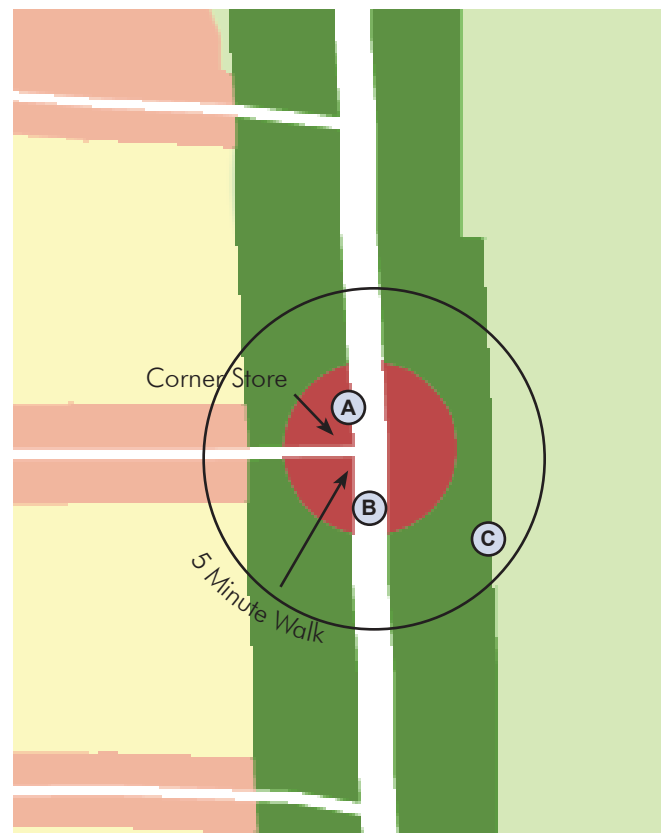
Hamlets are smaller than a single neighborhood and are typically found in less developed areas, often at a rural crossroads. A corner store within walking distance to homes is enough to create a local destination.

Cafes, corner stores, and parks provide a social setting separate from the two usual social environments of home and work and are often referred to as “third places.” They provide a “home away from home” that is conducive to conversation. Like traditional Mexican villages across the border, Laredo was once hosted by many small corner stores and several still exist in the historic neighborhoods.



Rural Main Streets Features

- (A) Corner stores may serve as a center in more rural areas. Incorporating limited commercial opportunities can help satisfy the daily needs of nearby residences. Corner stores are intended to serve only adjacent areas.
- (B) Rural residential units should be clustered with one another. This allows for true preservation of open space and natural areas.
- (C) Large open space areas surround the hamlet neighborhood and help define its edges. They provide opportunities for recreation or agricultural uses.





Rural Residential Agriculture and Livestock Estates Features:

Smart growth development is one of many approaches to subdivision developments. However, local food sustainability must be addressed in rural areas as well. Rural Main Streets or crossroads can be near by. A subdivision for 1/2 acre plus lots and an allowable use of land for agriculture and livestock can address the city's needs for community supported agriculture.

Industrial Lands

Industrial lands are treated differently than the mixed-use or residential areas in Laredo; however, some placemaking and multimodal transportation approaches still apply. Major thoroughfares should

connect though industrial areas to keep the overall connectivity of the city consistent. Creating isolated areas within, or around industrial lands is undesirable.

As the country's largest inland port, the storage of goods coming across the border is essential to Laredo's economy.

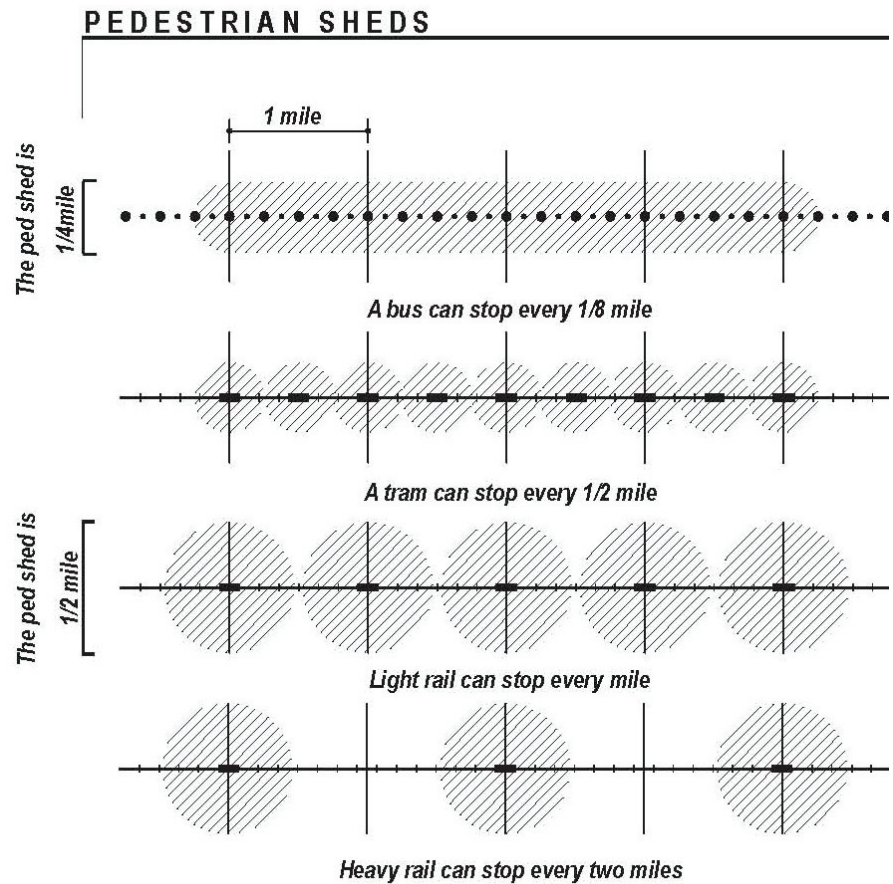
Residential uses can be a short commute to industrial areas as workers should have the choice of living within proximity of where they work, reducing household transportation costs. However, residential areas should not be placed within industrial only areas because conflicts typically result.



Placement of Place-Types

The distance between the various place-types is based on the distances that transit and buses are likely to stop. This spacing also corresponds with the need to space out commercial uses so that they are convenient to all without having to travel too far, while also having a large enough population base to support the type of commercial envisioned.

Why plan based on transit? Because the Future Land Use Map guides the next 150 years of development in the city and it is foreseeable that one day a balance of transportation approaches will be necessary to alleviate traffic and congestion.



From *The Lexicon of the New Urbanism*

The Neighborhood Unit

The building blocks of the Future Land Use Map is the neighborhood. A genuine neighborhood is not the disconnected, single-use development that characterizes sprawl. Complete neighborhoods, unlike the stand-alone apartment complex or the subdivision tract, provide housing, workplaces, shopping, civic functions, and more. Pedestrian-friendly and mixed-use, these communities are designed to be compact, complete, connected, and ultimately more sustainable. Although the parameters of an ideal neighborhood vary in terms of size, density, and mix of dwelling types. There are five basic design conventions that provide a common thread linking great neighborhoods. The diagram of a complete neighborhood, at right, will be used to illustrate the five basic principles of a neighborhood.

1. Identifiable Center and Edge to the Neighborhood

One should be able to tell when one has arrived in the neighborhood and when one has reached its center. A proper center has places where the public feels welcome and encouraged to congregate. Typically, at least one outdoor public environment exists at the center that spatially acts as the most well-defined outdoor room in the neighborhood. While it most often takes the form of a square or plaza, it is also possible to give shape to the neighborhood center with just a special “four corners” intersection of important streets that include shade and other protection from the elements.

The best centers are within walking distance of surrounding residential areas, possess a mix of uses, and include higher-density buildings at a pedestrian scale. Discernible centers are important because they provide some of people’s daily needs and foster social connections.



Diagram of a complete neighborhood



Identifiable center and edge

2. Walkable Size

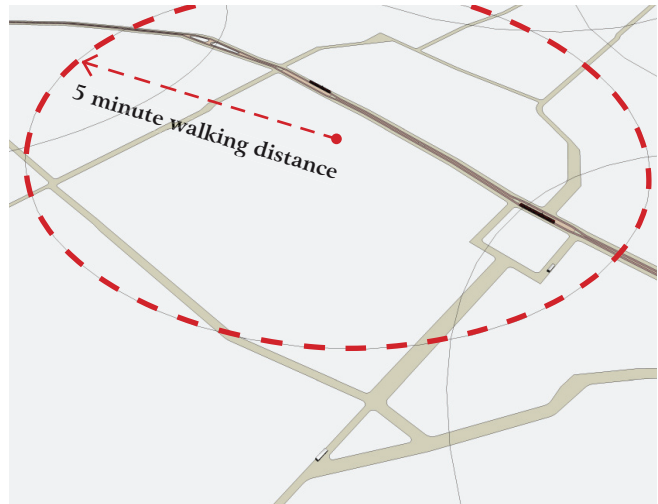
The overall size of the neighborhood, which typically ranges from 40 to 200 acres, should be suitable for walking. Most people will walk approximately one-quarter mile before turning back or opting to drive or ride a bike. Most neighborhoods built before World War II were approximately one quarter mile from center to edge.

Neighborhoods of many shapes and sizes can satisfy the quarter mile radius test. Civic spaces requiring a great deal of acreage such as schools with play fields can be situated where they are shared by more than one neighborhood. Larger planned communities can satisfy the quarter mile radius test by establishing several distinct neighborhoods within the community, being sure to place different neighborhood centers one-half mile apart or less.

3. Mix of Land Uses and Housing Types with Opportunities for Shopping and Workplaces Close to Home

Great neighborhoods have a fine-grained mix of land uses and housing types. This condition enables residents to dwell, work, socialize, exercise, shop, and find some daily needs and services within walking distance. Variety-rich neighborhoods, in comparison with the single-use, single “pod” developments, have multiple benefits.

Mixing uses is a powerful way to alleviate traffic congestion as it reduces the number of car trips needed throughout the day. A mix of housing is better socially, allowing people with diverse lifestyles and incomes to live in the same neighborhood. Residents have the choice to move elsewhere within their community as their housing needs change over time, while families of modest means are no longer forced into segregated concentrations. In addition, households with varied schedules and interests will activate the neighborhood at different times of day, adding both to the vibrancy and security of a place.



Walkable Neighborhood Size



Transect provides opportunity for mix of land uses and housing types

Walking Distance: The ideal travel distance for a person on foot is 1/4 Mile distance, also referred to as “five minute walk”.

Walkable Block Size: A walkable block has a perimeter no greater than 1,320’ (1/4 mile distance, also referred to as “five minute walk”).

Have the City of Laredo incentivize large companies to bring well paying jobs. Create technology programs at the high school level to educate youth for jobs of future.



Must restructure the land development and building process in order to stimulate growth.



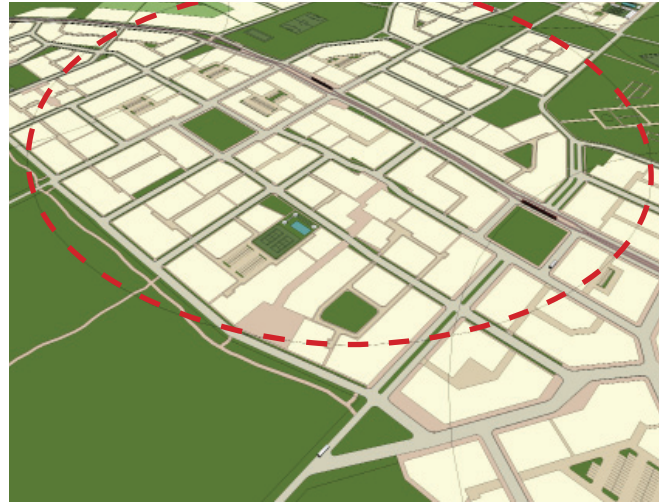
4. Integrated Network of Walkable Streets

A network of streets allows pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists to move safely and comfortably through a neighborhood. The maximum average block perimeter to achieve an integrated network is 1,500 feet with a maximum uninterrupted block face of, ideally, 450 feet, with streets at intervals no greater than 600 feet apart along any one single stretch.

A street network forms blocks that set up logical sites for private development, provides routes for multiple modes of transportation, and provides non-motorized alternatives to those under the driving age as well as for senior citizens. Streets should be designed to be walkable first while also serving cars and emergency vehicles. Slow traffic speeds, coupled with features such as narrow curb-to-curb cross sections, street trees, on-street parking, architecture close to the street edge, and tight radii at the street corners, work together to create highly walkable environments. A connected web of streets then allows for numerous driving patterns and the orderly management of traffic.

5. Special Sites are Reserved for Civic Purposes

In complete neighborhoods, some of the best real estate is set aside for community purposes. These locations are made significant by the geometry of the town plan. Unique settings such as terminated vistas or locations with greater activity should be reserved for landmark buildings that will act as permanent anchors for community pride. Similarly, special sites should be set aside for parks, greens, squares, plazas, and playgrounds (each of which has its own distinct character). Each neighborhood should have one special gathering place at its center, such as a village green.



Network of walkable streets



Special sites are reserved for civic purposes

GOALS & POLICIES

Overall Goal

Encourage development that creates complete, compact neighborhoods to conserve environmental resources, spur economic investment, maintain social fabric, reduce the cost of providing infrastructure and services, and reclaim abandoned areas.

Downtown

Downtowns are the heart of a city and region and having a healthy heart is essential to having a strong city and region.

Goal 1.1: The City of Laredo places one of its highest priorities on the reinvigoration of downtown, whose strategic location, walkable blocks, and historic buildings will once again make downtown a vibrant destination and center of culture, shopping, government, and the arts.

Policy 1.1.1: City policies and programs should encourage the rehabilitation of upper stories of existing downtown buildings as office, retail, entertainment, and residential space. Financial incentives should be considered to encourage investment from the private sector.

Policy 1.1.2: The city encourages new multi-story mixed-use buildings with windows and doors facing all sidewalks to be constructed on vacant lots. The city should not require any on-site parking for buildings downtown.

Policy 1.1.3: Large new downtown complexes such as a downtown mall, convention center, museums, or recreational facilities should fit urbanistically within the downtown. As large new uses are added, updated, or replaced, they should be integrated into Laredo's original street network and other land uses rather than being isolated in large complexes of civic buildings.

Policy 1.1.4: Downtown redevelopment strategies will include new and improved civic buildings and civic spaces, plus shared parking for residents, employees, and visitors.

Policy 1.1.5: The city's historic design guidelines should be expanded and made mandatory to highlight downtown's architectural heritage, to avoid unnecessary damage to this valuable resource, and to ensure that new buildings maintain and improve this historic character.

Inner City Neighborhoods

The inner city neighborhoods could host greater business creativity, non-profit entrepreneurs, and economic diversity, while providing an attraction for visitors, seniors, and young talent.

Goal 1.2: The City of Laredo highly values the historic neighborhoods that were laid out in a grid around the downtown and will maintain and improve their highly walkable character, transit accessibility, diverse mix of land uses, and historic building stock.

Policy 1.2.1: The city should maintain and strengthen the historic landmark status of San Agustin, Old Mercado, and El Azteca neighborhoods.

Policy 1.2.2: The city will actively consider historic landmark status for additional qualifying neighborhoods such as El Cuatro, Fort McIntosh, the Heights, Jarvis, St. Peter's, El Tonto, and the Heights.

Policy 1.2.3: Vacant and underutilized parcels in and around the city's traditional historic neighborhoods can be excellent locations for redevelopment that adds housing, shopping, employment, entertainment, and recreational options for nearby residents. Redevelopment of such sites should mesh with the scale and character of these existing neighborhoods rather than imposing a suburban or high-rise model on traditional neighborhoods. The city's zoning and development regulations should be modified accordingly. Additional infill incentives should be considered by the city.

Policy 1.2.4: The city shall coordinate its land development regulations and zoning regulations to create a unified development ordinance to make development more predictable and easier to navigate the development process.

Policy 1.2.5: The city shall explore the use of tax increment financing (TIF) to improve targeted areas such as the downtown and inner city neighborhoods. A TIF district essentially reallocates funds from property taxes to encourage investment within the district. Any increased tax revenues collected as a result of an increase in property values then go into the TIF fund and can be used by the city for a wide range of purposes within the TIF to promote redevelopment.

Policy 1.2.6: The city shall look for opportunities to partner with private entities to enable and encourage development within the inner city neighborhoods.

New Neighborhoods

Goal 1.3: The city wishes to augment conventional development pattern with strategic suburban retrofits or urban infill where practical.

Policy 1.3.1: The city's zoning and land development regulations should be reviewed and amended to encourage new neighborhoods to have:

- a. Greater interconnection of internal streets;
- b. Provision of small parks, community gardens, and civic functions within neighborhoods;
- c. A greater variety of housing types within each neighborhood;
- d. Protection of natural features such as stream beds and flood zones;
- e. Mixed-use zoning; and
- f. Form-Based Code.
- g. Designated subdivision for agriculture and livestock estates.

Extraterritorial Jurisdiction & Annexation

Goal 1.4: The city will use the limited authority granted by Texas law to regulate the subdivision of land within its ETJ in order to shape future growth in accordance with *Viva Laredo*.

Policy 1.4.1: The city should strengthen its existing regulations that regulate the subdivision of land within the ETJ. Future subdivisions should be required to have a connected network streets and blocks and connect to surrounding development.

Policy 1.4.2: Future subdivisions also need to be interconnected with each other and with a suitable regional road network. This comprehensive plan's Major Thoroughfare Plan needs to be improved with a more tightly interconnected road network for the ETJ so that future subdivisions will not create isolated pods of development that are unlikely to become an integrated part of Laredo.



Policy 1.4.3: The City of Laredo should maintain a separate annexation policy that defines areas where voluntary annexations would be considered upon petition by affected landowners. The following criteria should be considered for potential future voluntary annexation:

- a. Must be contiguous with the existing city limits;
- b. The landowners must agree to build all local, collector, and arterial roads at their expense and must submit a general development plan for the area; and
- c. The landowners must pay water and sewer impact fees plus an additional per-unit annexation fee toward fire, police, libraries, and recreation centers.
- d. Permit a lower impact threshold when new development meets higher standards for complete, compact, connected neighborhoods.
- e. Require a Transit Impact Development Fee (TIDF) levied on new development to offset new development's impacts on the transit system. Revenue generated by the fee is directed to El Metro and is to be used to fund capital and operations.

This annexation policy should require creating a commitment to mixed use development on the larger tracts in the development agreements that accompany formal annexation. The city may use economic incentives for landowners where it deems appropriate to accomplish the vision of the plan.

Industrial Lands

Goal 1.5: The regional economy depends on manufacturing and the storage and transportation of goods crossing the border. The City of Laredo will designate ample land that is well-suited for industrial facilities and will ensure that industrial facilities do not adversely affect the health, safety, or welfare of the community.

Policy 1.5.1: Encourage the development of new industrial areas and the redevelopment of existing older or marginal industrial areas.

Policy 1.5.2: Discourage access to industrial development through residential areas.

Policy 1.5.3: Discourage the development of residential uses on industrial designated land.

Policy 1.5.4: Obsolete industrial sites and rail yards pose technical challenges to redevelopment but are often ideally located within the city to offer new choices and opportunities for Laredo residents. The city should take affirmative steps to maximize this potential.

Policy 1.5.5: The city should develop direct transit access from the downtown to the industrial zones to facilitate workers crossing the border to get to their jobs.

Policy 1.5.6: Encourage the development of overnight parking facilities within or close to the industrial lands that includes restrooms and showers for truck drivers waiting for their next shift.

Future Land Use Map

Goal 1.6: A new Future Land Use Map is an integral part of *Viva Laredo*. This map has been created to assist city officials and private developers in understanding the growth management goals and policies of this plan, particularly as to the form and direction. The designations on this map are subject to change as Laredo grows and *Viva Laredo* is modified accordingly.

Policy 1.6.1: Adopt the Future Land Use Map

Application of Viva Laredo

Goal 1.7: The City of Laredo will use the principles set forth in *Viva Laredo* as tools to shape future development, to protect natural resources, to direct capital improvements, and to guide public policy in a coordinated manner for the mutual benefit of Laredo's residents and landowners.

Policy 1.7.1: *Viva Laredo* provides the basis for amendments to the City of Laredo's zoning and subdivision regulations. The adoption of *Viva Laredo* does not change the zoning districts on any property, nor does it interfere with or extend vested rights. Staff recommendations to discretionary bodies such as planning and zoning commission or the council shall be determined based the action's concordance with plan *Viva Laredo*.

Policy 1.7.2: Decisions on rezoning requests will be made in accordance with *Viva Laredo* and in accordance with all requirements of city and State law. When evaluating whether a proposed rezoning is in accordance with *Viva Laredo*, the City Council may also consider the following factors:

- a. The proposed zoning district's effect on development or redevelopment of the property, particularly whether the rezoning will further

or at least not conflict with specific policies listed under other goals of *Viva Laredo*.

- b. Whether the property is in a Regional Mixed-Use Center or Neighborhood Mixed-Use Center, defined in *Viva Laredo*. For instance, these areas:
 - i. Are preferred locations for higher density development and redevelopment;
 - ii. Are ideal for a balance of housing, jobs, shopping, recreation, and civic uses;
 - iii. Will be served by walkable thoroughfares; and
 - iv. Are suitable for zoning districts that would orient most buildings toward streets.
- c. The proposed zoning district's effect on the property and surrounding property, after evaluating the following factors:
 - i. The physical context of the property and surrounding properties, including recent or anticipated changes to that context;
 - ii. Any historic district or other special designations that may be applicable;
 - iii. Potential adverse effects that might be caused by approval or denial of the requested rezoning;
 - iv. Anticipated effects on the natural environment;
 - v. Whether the area is stable (low vacancy rates and units that are not for sale) or in transition; and
 - vi. Any changed social, economic, or physical conditions that make the existing zoning no longer suitable for the property.