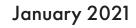


Lufkin Economic Development Corporation

Downtown Lufkin Economic Development and Public Realm Vision

# Needs Assessment Report



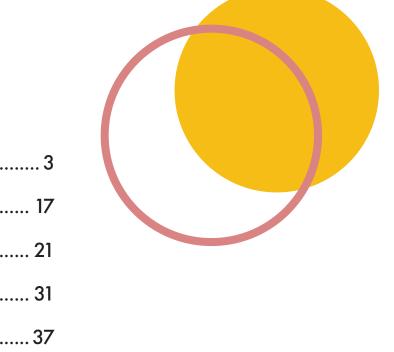


ASAKURA ROBINSON

# Contents

Introduction
Demographics
Market Analysis
Development
Public Realm
Key Opportunities





.....53





# Introduction

# **About the Project**

The Lufkin Economic Development Corporation and other stakeholders are working to develop a vision plan for Downtown Lufkin. This project will engage stakeholders and the public to improve the public experience for those living in and around Downtown and those visiting Downtown Lufkin

## **Project Goals**

This initiative will influence future development projects and public investments in Downtown Lufkin for years to come. The Vision Plan will identify a variety of projects, programs, and policies for the LEDC and partner stakeholders to improve downtown infrastructure, beautification, and events. Goals include:

- Development of a framework for what types of businesses and other development Downtown Lufkin should be seeking to develop locally and attract with a focus on small business, and including office, residential, hotel and regional opportunities for eco-tourism.
- Evaluation of streetscape, public realm and open space opportunities for the Downtown that improve the business climate and attractiveness of Downtown streets through improved urban design, amenities, branding and wayfinding.
- Development of marketing and programmatic recommendations, such as events, to support the Downtown small business community.

#### Why does the LEDC want Downtown to succeed?

The Lufkin Economic Development Corporation (LEDC) has the mission to stimulate economic growth, and much of their previous efforts have been dedicated to attracting new businesses through incentives, site selection, and property development. However, new businesses and employers also base their location choices off the availability of a talented labor pool and the community's quality of life.

What will make Lufkin's quality of life stand out compared to other small cities offering incentives and development assistance? An authentic, unique sense of place, with good schools, cultural and recreation amenities, and established neighborhoods. Healthy downtowns reflect the values and culture of its community, thus a community is only as successful as its downtown. Small businesses and the "creative class1" thrive in strong downtowns—downtowns become the center of business creativity, cultural exchange, non-profits, entrepreneurs, economic diversity, and an attraction for visitors, long-time residents, and young talent. This revitalization effort allows the LEDC to tap into a new source of economic growth for Lufkin and Angelina County- small businesses, creative class attraction, and increased sales tax revenue from tourism.

<sup>1</sup>Creative professionals in knowledge-based sectors (finance, healthcare) or creative-based sectors (engineering, innovation) will be the leading force of economic growth in post-industrial US cities

#### LUFKIN @ TEXAS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Conveniently located near major cities like Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, Beaumont, & Shreveport, Lufkin benefits from connectivity, thriving industries, and small town comforts.

Our historic downtown is flourishing with shopping, local coffee, a wine bar, several restaurants & a brewery! Our workforce powers area businesses such as forest products, food products, manufacturing, aerospace, and medical.

Lufkin's extensive history in industrial manufacturing. combined with our bounteous natural resources, have allowed Lufkin to thrive since its founding in 1882.







1/2021

# WHY LUFKIN

#### WHY PEOPLE LOVE LIVING HERE:









Central location in East Texas

World-Class Golf

World-Class

State-of-the-Art Bass Fishing Performing Arts Theatr

#### THERE'S A LOT TO DO IN OUR CITY!



- POPULATION | 35,837 // 100K DAILY
- LABOR FORCE | 145.000
- DAILY WATER CAPACITY OF 74 MILLION GALLONS/DAY [65.5 MGD SURPLUS]
- LOCATED @ THE JUNCTION OF HWY 69 AND HWY 59 [WITH A DAILY TRAFFIC COUNT OF 30K PER DAY]
- MEDICAL & RETAIL HUB FOR 12 COUNTIES
- AN&R | SHORTLINE & BURLINGTON | CLASS A RAILROADS



A citywide movement that encourages local spending and increases sales tax revenue.

Source: LEDC

### **Project Study Area**

The study area encompasses the Downtown District, as defined in the 2018 Comprehensive Plan, but extended north to capture the Pitser Garrison Civic Center and the Museum of East Texas. Bounding streets include Angelina Street, Rhodes Avenue, Chestnut Street, and Pershing Avenue. The Downtown core is considered as South Angelina Street, West Burke Avenue, South Third Street, and West Lufkin Avenue.

Downtown Lufkin's location is well situated in Lufkin's center, with main arterial access connecting Lufkin's peripheral neighborhoods and to the East Texas community by US-59, US-69 (Denman Avenue), Highway 103 (Atkinson Drive), Raguet Street, and Highway 94 (Frank Avenue).

Downtown Lufkin has many cultural and historic assets, including the recently renovated historic Pines Theater, the ongoing renovations of the Angelina Hotel into apartments, and the Museum of East Texas. Annual and regularly occurring events attract Lufkin residents and visitors downtown, in addition to small businesses such as boutiques, local restaurants and coffee shops, and furniture stores. Downtown has a strong pedestrian environment and activated storefronts. However, there are numerous vacant buildings and lots that remain empty and in poor condition, even as adjacent properties regain new life. The Downtown lacks a programmed outdoor open space, and has little wayfinding and branding.

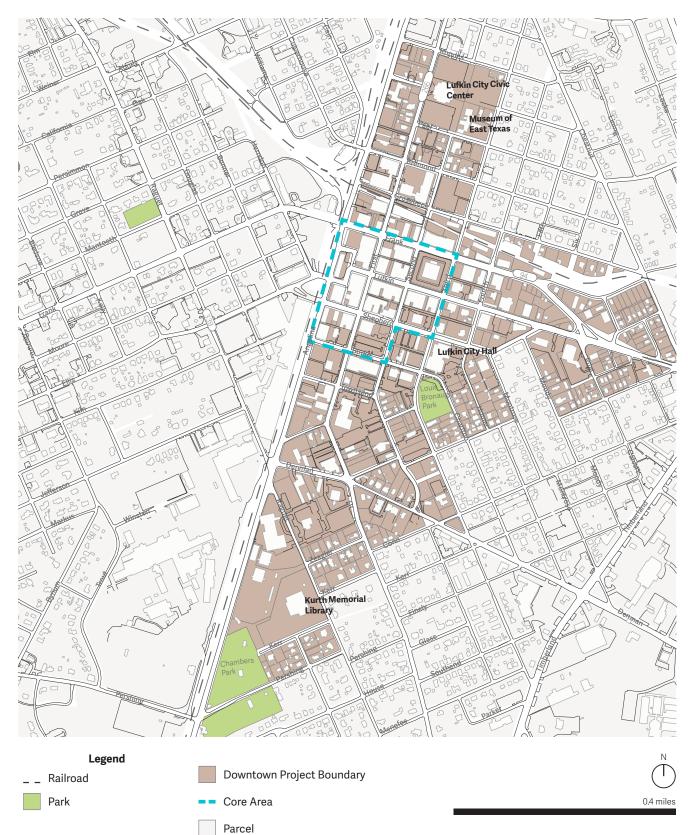






Source: Lufkin Daily News. Year: 1943.

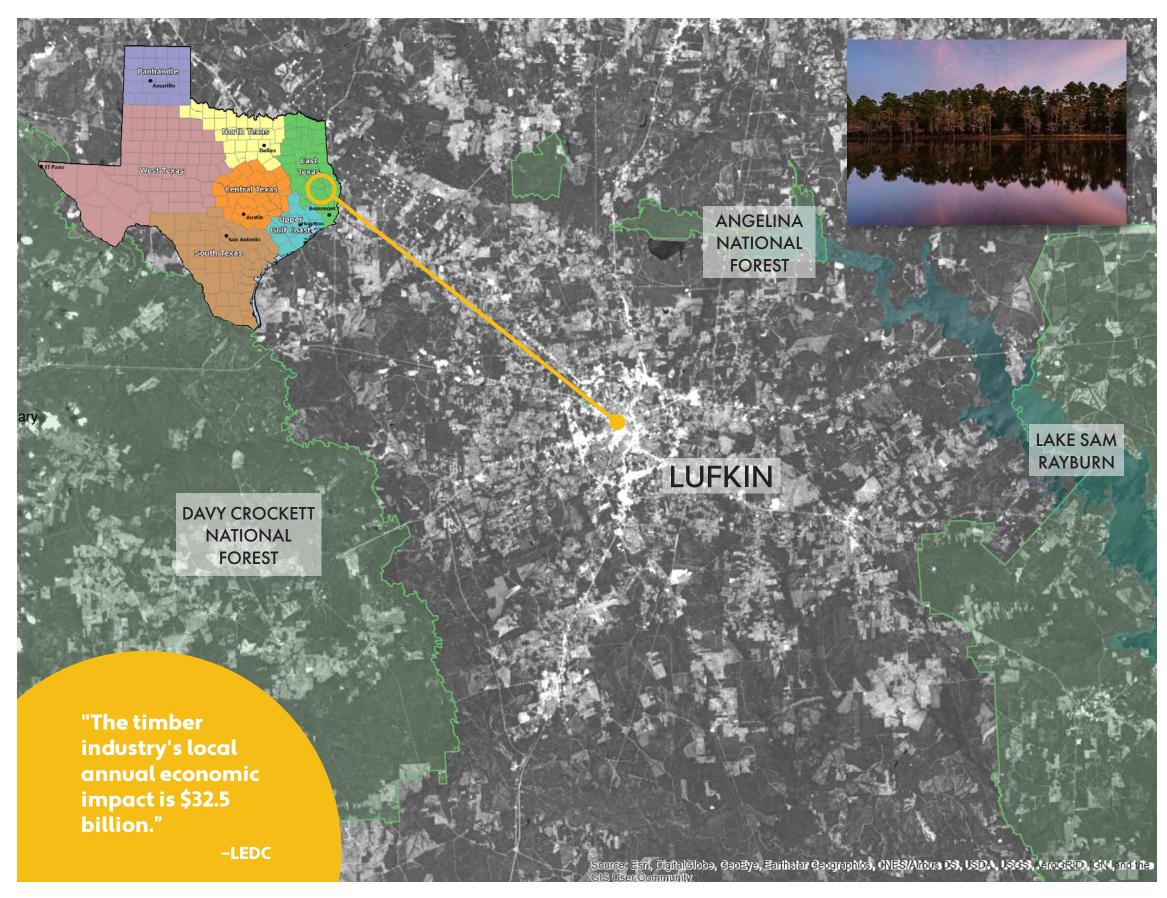
## **Project Study Area**



## **Regional Significance**

Located in the heart of East Texas and Angelina County, the City of Lufkin is 90 miles north of Houston, and is surrounded by the Angelina National Forest, the Davy Crockett National Forest, and Lake Sam Rayburn. It's location within the region is a defining feature of the town's economic successes, especially in part to its natural amenities, workforce, and infrastructure, as detailed below:

- Forest Products: As the industry that started it all, the timber industry continues to have a strong impact on local and state economies and jobs.
- Oil and Gas: Lufkin Industries produces rod lifts that extract oil and natural gas. The company was founded in Lufkin in 1902 and recently merged with Baker Hughes.
- Infrastructure: Lufkin has notable access to airports, freight carriers, and state highways that connect its residents and business community to the region, the state, and international opportunities. The city has sufficient water rights and infrastructure capacity for ongoing development and manufacturing needs.
- The Angelina County Airport: The small but successful airport has two runways and hosts upward of 150 private airplanes every month. Corporate and businesses are attracted to its convenience and service.
- Foreign Trade Zone: Formally designated zones in the United States attract foreign and domestic merchandise for operations and manufacturing, with the benefit of deferring or reducing overall U.S Customs and Border Protection duty and federal excise tax.
- Skilled Workforce: WorkForce Solutions Deep East Texas, located in Lufkin, provides continuing education and training to job seekers, as well as services for companies. Skilled job seekers from the surrounding counties are attracted to Lufkin for its diverse job opportunities.
- Angelina College and Stephen F. Austin State University provide a skilled and educated young workforce to the region's ongoing job growth.
- Medical Industry: Lufkin is the medical hub of a 12-county region and is home to two major hospitals. This industry not only attracts top talent and highpaying jobs, but also supports secondary industries, such technology and research, manufacturing, and supply and logistics.
- Retail: Lufkin's big box retail and leisure shopping serves its neighboring communities as well as Lufkin residents.





## Engagement

Engaging a diverse stakeholder audience is a key part of this project. It is especially important given Downtown's recent growth in businesses, residential units, and redevelopment. The engagement strategy for this project includes one Advisory Committee, two public meetings, and online engagement through the project website, www.LufkinForward.com. These meetings and events are fully digital given the limitation presented by COVID-19. The Community Priorities Survey was launched in early December 2020 as a way to attract diverse feedback from residents, businesses, and visitors. Survey results will be integrated into the Downtown Vision, goals, and priorities.



Source: www.LufkinForward.com 2020



Lufkin Forward Vision Plan Engagement Timeline 2020-2021			
derstand	NOVEMBER		
Community Priorities Survey	DECEMBER		
We are here! Advisory Committee #1 Public Meeting #1	JANUARY		
Advisory Committee #1 Public Meeting #1	FEBRUARY		
Public Meeting #2 Advisory Committee #2	MARCH		
Final Presentation	APRIL		

# **Previous Planning and Ongoing Efforts**

Lufkin has been the subject of recent planning efforts, and the Downtown planning effort will not start from scratch, but rather build on previous efforts. Most importantly, it will understand the barriers these plans have faced to implementation.

1. 2018 City of Lufkin Comprehensive Plan:

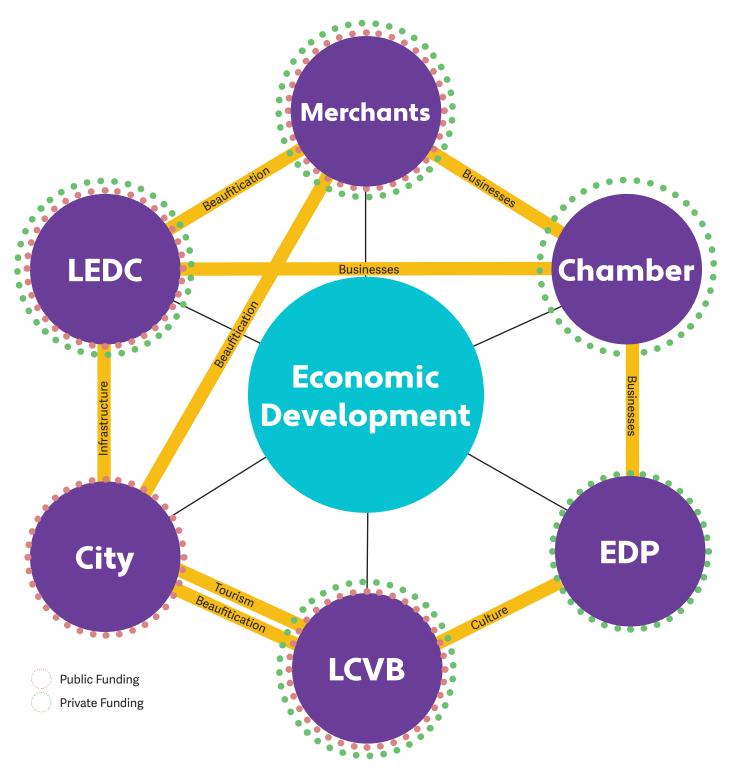
As the City's 20-year policy and strategic framework, the Comprehensive Plan is supported by many goals and objectives that can guide Downtown development. The Comprehensive Plan's vision for the future, "Create Ideal Livability in Lufkin", is supported by action items that address public space and public realm improvements, connections to surrounding neighborhoods and districts, and placemaking opportunities. This report will align and be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

- 2. City of Lufkin 2020 and 2021 Capital Improvement Projects: In May 2020, City Council approved \$5.2 millions for six separate capital improvement projects, including two that will impact downtown:
  - Creation of First Street Plaza with removable bollards and public restrooms
  - New bus stops added for the Brazos Transit Authority (locations not yet identified)

- 3. Lufkin Cultural District Feasibility Study (ongoing): The Angelina Arts Alliance has partnered with the City of Lufkin to conduct a one-year planning initiative to determine Lufkin's readiness and ability to achieve a state designated cultural district for Downtown Lufkin. The resulting go-forward strategy will identify key efforts that the City and other stakeholders must take, and will create an asset map for the potential Cultural District.
- 4. City of Lufkin Enterprise Zone: The City of Lufkin offers economic incentives and expedited permitting for companies looking to locate within the designated Enterprise Zone. Authorized new or existing facilities include manufacturing, research, distribution, service, or retail facilities.
- 5. Lufkin Parks and Recreation Facilities and Programs Master Plan (1998): The Lufkin Parks and Recreation Department is in the process of updating the 1998 Parks Plan.

#### **Organizational Overview**

There are numerous organizations that have historically been partners in revitalizing Downtown Lufkin, and will continue to collaborate in the future. They each have unique funding mechanisms (fundraising and fund distribution) and are considered stakeholders of this project.





1. Lufkin Economic **Development Corporation:** The EDC's mission is to stimulate economic growth within the City of Lufkin and Angelina County. The EDC is a Type B Corporation that receives an oneeighth of one percent of locally-collected sales tax from the City of Lufkin. Type B corporations may fund quality of life improvements, including economic development, and acquire or pay for land, buildings, equipment, targeted infrastructure, and improvements.

4. Lufkin Downtown

Merchants Association: An

informal group of downtown

business owners and

beautification efforts,

Currently, the Lufkin

Board, where larger

City staff.

Downtown Merchants

employees, a merchants

association unites behind

marketing and promotions,

Association meets monthly,

sits on the CVB's Downtown

and its elected President

actions and decisions are

coordinated with CVB and

and business retention.

efforts, such as event Bureau.

> the CHAMBER LUFKIN I ANGELINA COUNT

## 5. Lufkin /Angelina County

Chamber of Commerce: The Chamber is a local membershipbased association that promotes Angelina County's economic prosperity and business environment. The Chamber hosts monthly and annual events, as well as programs that provide educational opportunities for members. The Chamber oversees the Economic Development Partnership (1995), which is a non profit, 501(c)(3) organization, that can fundraise and provide grants and awards to promote economic vitality. Recent endeavors have included a small business financial incentives and programs.



2. Main Street Lufkin: Main Street Lufkin was a community development organization with the goal of sustaining an economically vibrant historic downtown. Through the Texas Historical Commission's Texas Main Street Program, and operated under the City of Lufkin, the organization hosted several annual events. After the City dissolved the program in 2019, many of its operating production and marketing, were transferred to the Convention and Visitors



3. Lufkin Convention and Visitors Bureau: The CVB is a non-profit organization that supports the hospitality and tourism industry. The organization is primarily funded by the Lufkin Hotel/Motel Occupancy Tax (HOT), but also receives limited funding from the City of Lufkin for its Downtown focused events and improvements (roughly \$10,000 annually). These funds are used for the annual SpringFest and Heritage Festival, landscaping supplies, banners, and monthly food truck events. The CVB oversees the Downtown Board, the CVB Board, and the Merchants Association.







- 6. The City of Lufkin: The City oversees the implementation of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan and the recently approved Capital Improvement Program. It also manages the Downtown Revitalization Zone (within the Enterprise Zone) and the soon-to-be revamped Facade Improvement Program. The Lufkin City Council oversees the Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) Board, approved in January 2019. The board will make recommendations on the allocation of HOT funds, which are used to promote tourism, conventions, and the hotel industry.
- Source: Individuals organization's websites and project interviews





# Demographics

# **Residents and Neighbors**

The City of Lufkin is home to about 36 thousand people<sup>1</sup> and is projected to grow by about 1% over the next five years. The study area has a population size of 553 people and is projected to decline by 1% by 2025 to about 548 residents. The study area's median age is younger than the City's, 29 years old to 35 years old, respectively. Both the study area and the City of Lufkin share similar race and ethnicity, with over half of the population identifying as white (56.7% for the City of Lufkin and 51.8% for the study area) and 24.1% and 58.6% Hispanic, respectfully.

The median household income for residents in the study area is about \$37,000 and about 54% of households make at least this amount. The median household income for the City of Lufkin is higher about \$43,000 and

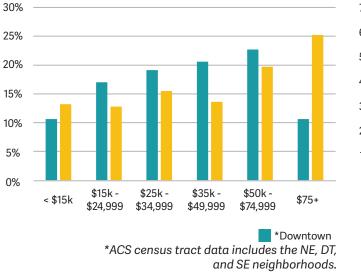
The following data comes from ESRI Business Analyst, 2020

58 % of households make this amount. The unemployment rate (for ages 16+) in the City of Lufkin is 6.6%, compared to the State of Texas rate of 5.1%. A majority of City residents have at least graduated from high school. About 26% have some college and about 22% have obtained a Bachelor's Degree or higher. About 29% of the study area population has some college but no degree and about 8% have a Bachelor's Degree or higher.

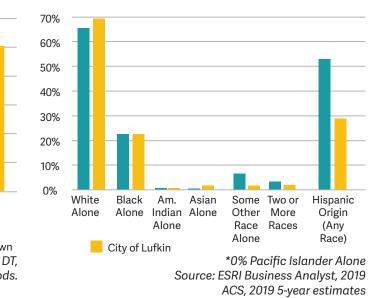
The neighborhoods surrounding the study area are very diverse, particularly those north and northeast of the study area. Downtown Lufkin has the opportunity to attract its diverse neighbors to work and play in its assets. This effort will work to create connections and attractions for all of Lufkin residents.

Stakeholders noted many young adults leave Lufkin for careers or to find a more dynamic social life. Many move back when they start their families.

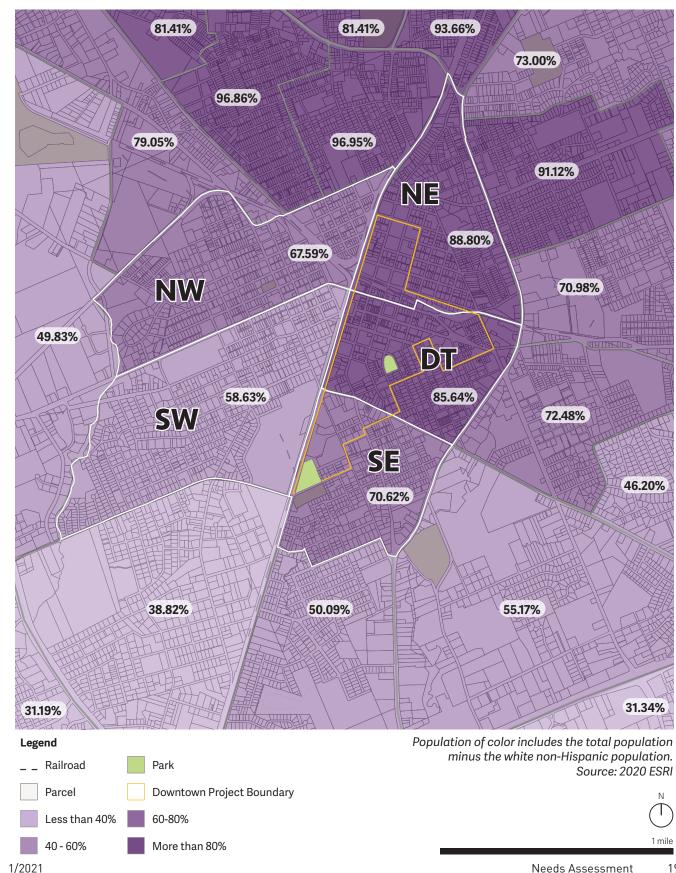
#### Household Income



### **Race & Ethnicity**



# Percent People of Color by Block Group





# **Market Analysis**



# Major Employers

The City of Lufkin has approximately 2,201 businesses with about 30,000 employees and \$5.5 million in total Sales. Majority of businesses in Lufkin are in the Services industry, which includes Health Services. Major employers in the City include:

- Lufkin ISD
- Pilgrim's •
- Brookshire Brothers •
- Lufkin State Supported Living Center •
- CHI St. Luke's Health Memorial Hospital

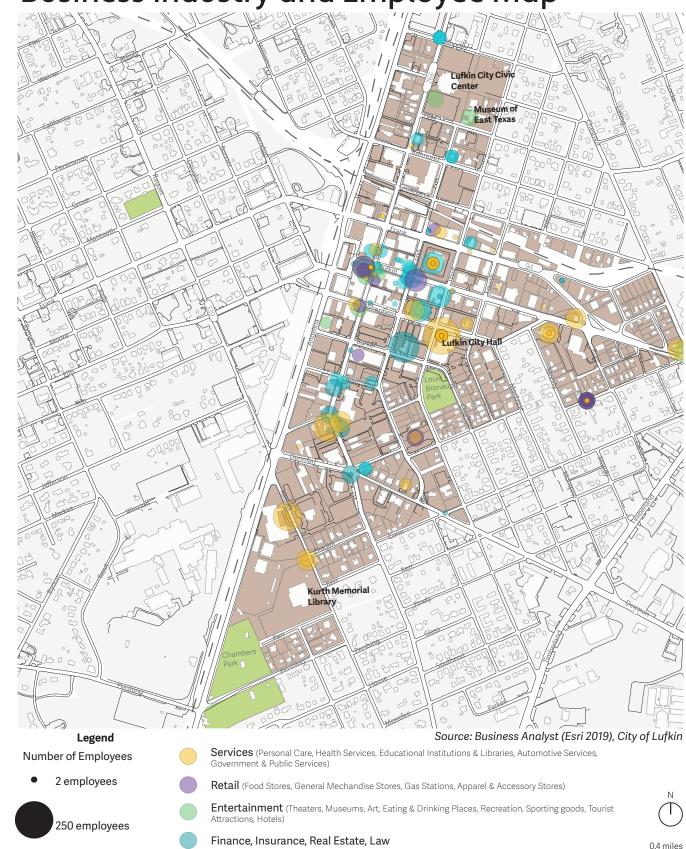
In the downtown study area, there are about 381 businesses with 2,931 employees that reach over approximately \$376,668 in sales. Major employers in Downtown include:

- City of Lufkin
- City of Lufkin Fire Department •
- **Regions Bank** •
- Lee Trans •
- Del- Tin Fiber LLC

Smaller employers ranging between 3-15 employees dominate downtown, including law offices, and professional services like insurance and real estate services. Downtown Lufkin has three courthouses- the Municipal Court, Angelina County Courthouse, and the Eastern District of Texas Federal Courthouse. Numerous local businesses serve citywide residents and tourists, such as cafes, restaurants, boutiques, and spas. These small employers are important to the dynamic and engaging downtown environment and also fit well into the historic buildings.



# **Business Industry and Employee Map**

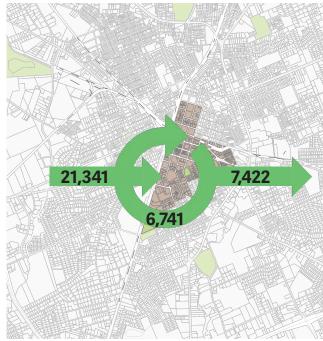


### Employees

Despite the number of jobs downtown, the majority of downtown residents find employment outside of downtown. Approximately 3 out of 250 employed residents live and work within the study area, resulting in 726 employees commuting into the study area from other parts of the region. The daily inflow and outflow has a large impact on traffic and parking, especially during peak travel hours.

Coincidently, Lufkin triples in size during the 9-5 work day as well. Approximately 70% of Lufkin's employees commute into Lufkin from other communities. 47% of employed Lufkin residents live and work within Lufkin, while 52% commute to other communities' employment opportunities.

#### Inflow/Outflow of Jobs (City of Lufkin)

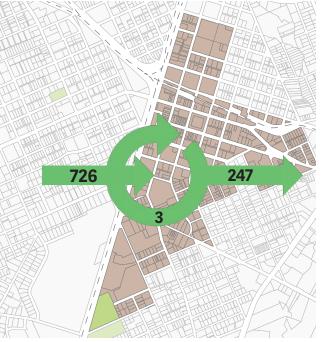


Source: On The Map 2018



This building remains one of the largest office spaces downtown.

#### Inflow/Outflow of Jobs (Project Study Area)



Source: On The Map 2018

# Retail Market Analysis

Approximately 78,597 people live within a 20-minute driving distance of the center of the downtown study area, which encompasses the towns of Huntington, Alco, Diboll, and Granville. Households within this "primary trade area" had an estimated median disposable income of \$40,079 in 2017. Residents within 20-minutes of Downtown and passengers using Highway 59 are the ideal audience to attract to Downtown for shopping, restaurants, events, social activities, and entertainment.

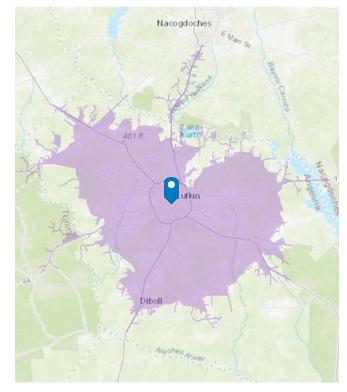
#### Unmet Residential Demand

While the Primary Trade Area and the Downtown study area offers many shopping opportunities, analysis of sales by retail category within the Primary Trade Area suggests that residents within 20-minutes of downtown are leaving the area to make purchases. These categories and their unmet residential demand leakage amounts are:

#### Food & Beverage Stores: \$84.1 Million

This category includes grocery stores of all sizes, specialty food stores, and beer, wine, and liquor stores. This number represents slightly more than half of the total resident demand for grocery purchases within the primary trade area, meaning that the current supply of grocery stores could double in number or size to meet just resident demand within the trade area. Specialty food stores have a retail gap of \$1 Million.

# **Primary Trade Area**



Source: Business Analyst 2017 20-minute Primary Trade Area

**Downtown insight:** An HEB is located on the eastern side of Downtown, however, Downtown can meet the growing demand for a specialty food store or a smaller urban grocer as downtown residents increase in size.

#### Nonstore Retailers: \$6.2 Million

These retailers typically do not have storefronts but sell their products online or through mail-orders. These can include prescription drugs, health and beauty aids, cosmetics, computer hardware and software, clothing, and books. The Primary Trade Area can support double the sales as it currently meets.

**Downtown insight:** Downtown has many older, underutilized warehouse style buildings along Frank Street that could capture some of this demand.

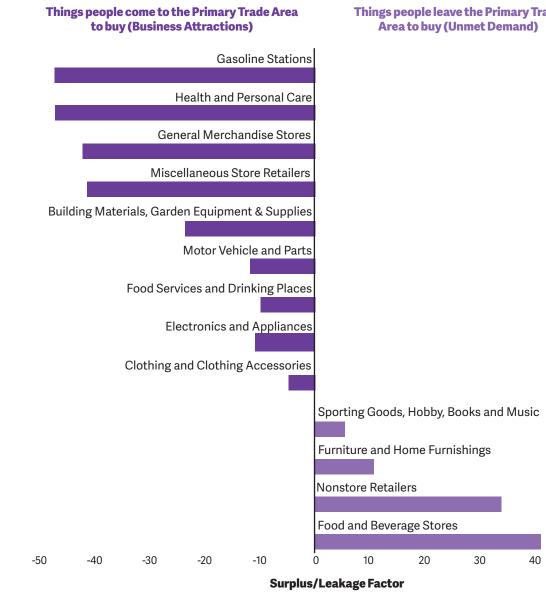
#### Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, and Music Stores: \$2.5 Million

This category is currently meeting about 80% of its demand, but could support a few more sales. The Primary Trade Area has about 29 businesses in the category.

Downtown insight: A new hobby, book, or music store would be a great addition to the Downtown small business community. A sporting goods store is an opportunity to build upon Lufkin's connection to its surrounding outdoor recreation community and tourism economy. See page 54-55 for case studies on other downtown outdoor recreation communities.

Downtown has many older, underutilized warehouse style buildings along Frank Street that could capture the Nonstore Retailers demand.

## Market Surpluses and Leakages



Source: 2017 ESRI Retail Marketplace Profile From Esri: The Leakage/Surplus Factor presents a snapshot of retail opportunity. This is a measure of the relationship between supply and demand that ranges from +100 (total leakage) to -100 (total surplus). A positive value represents 'leakage' of retail opportunity outside the trade area. A negative value represents a surplus of retail sales, a market where customers are drawn in from outside the trade area.



Things people leave the Primary Trade

#### **Business Attractions**

Some retail categories within the trade area sell more goods and services than its residents consume. This means people are traveling from outside the trade area to make these purchases, indicating these sectors are already strong attractors, and do not require recruitment to locate within the trade area meet residents' needs. These categories and their surplus amounts are:

#### General Merchandise Stores: \$200.1 Million

This category includes "big box" discount stores such as Walmart, smaller "dollar" stores such as Dollar General, and chain pharmacies. Each of these are found just east of Downtown Lufkin on Timberland Avenue and US-59. One-third of the Primary Trade Area's supply of General Merchandise Stores meets the resident's demand, meaning twothirds supply residents from outside the Trade Area.

**Downtown insight:** We do not recommend attracting a general big box store to downtown.



Downtown has three drinking establishments- the Angelina Brewing Company, the Restoration Bistro, and the Manhattan Fine Dining.

#### Health and Personal Care Stores: \$84.2 Million

This category includes retailers that sell and specialize in cosmetics, Optical Goods, Pharmacies, and other health related stores. About one-third of the Primary Trade Area's supply of General Merchandise Stores meets the resident's demand, meaning two-thirds supply residents from outside the Trade Area. The Primary Trade Area has about 38 businesses in this category.

**Downtown insight:** Lufkin residents did express interest in a healthy food store; see Food and Beverage stores in the Unmet Demand section, and the Special Food Services mentioned below.

#### Food Services & Drinking Places: \$18.9 Million

It is common among trade areas that experience high levels of commuters to experience higher restaurant sales than area residents demand. During the workday, Lufkin's population can grow to over 100,000 daily because of its workforce<sup>1</sup>. This surplus is mostly food establishments; drink places have an unmet residential demand of \$1.6 Million, and Special Food Services have a leakage of \$400,000.

**Downtown insight:** Downtown should attract drinking places to bolster the after hours, entertainment environment that residents desire.

#### 1 Site Selection Magazine, Ron Starner, 2019

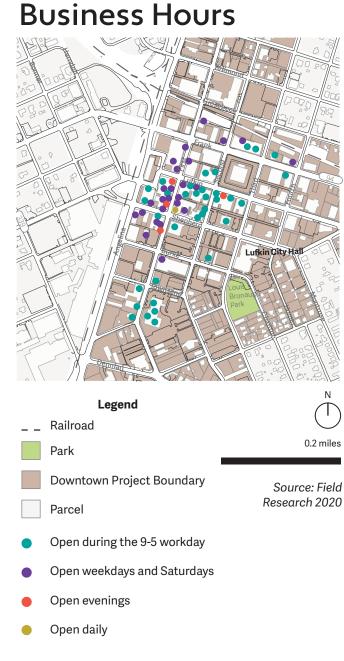


## Businesses That Contribute to Street Life

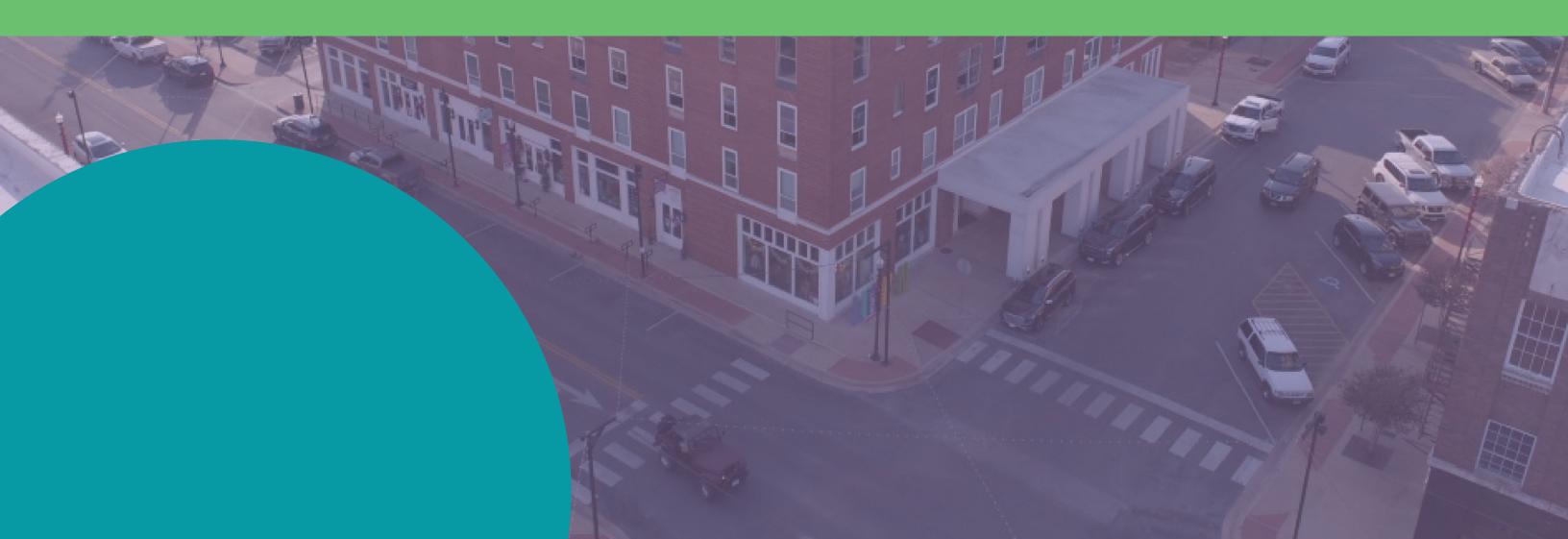
The map on this page shows that most businesses are open during the 9-5 workday, but very few are open in the evenings and weekends. The project team will use this data to develop strategic partnerships related to parking and street life. Businesses that cluster together and create hot spots of activity, thus contributing to Downtown's street life, will need car, bike, and pedestrian access to and within these hotspots. Pedestrian amenities that contribute to the businesses' success will be discussed in the Public Realm section of this report.











# Development

# Zoning and Land Use

Over 65% of the study area is zoned "Central Business" and in general, its development standards are simple and easy to understand. Buildings are limited to 70 feet in height, have standards that allow small side and rear yards, and have minimum lot sizes. A majority of the study area is designated as "Mixed Use" in the City's land use map, with some land designated "Neighborhood Commercial". In general, these categories are appropriate for the study area.

The following items can be explored in Lufkin Forward's recommendation phase depending on what the community identifies as their priorities:

- Ground Floor Transparency: Setting a minimum ground . floor transparency can ensure that new buildings support pedestrians and an active street life, and ensure that ground floors are flexible for potential future uses.
- **Entrances**: Similar to ground floor transparency, ensuring entrances face the street and are placed at pedestrian-supportive distances support active street life and ensure pedestrian safety.
- Maximum Building Width: Further supporting street life, maximum building widths prevent long, pedestriandeterring walls and ensure that entrance placement and higher ground floor transparency can be effective.
- Minimum Ground Floor Heights: Minimum ground floor • heights ensure that spaces are flexible for a variety of uses and supportive of commercial use. For example, office uses are sometimes more viable in ground floor spaces when initially developed, which typically have lower ceiling heights: but that same space may be better suited for retail use in the future, if it had higher ceiling heights that retail desires.
- **Parking Location**: Locating a building's parking in the rear of the property, rather than in front, can ensure that entrances are safe and easy to find for pedestrians, that businesses remain visible from the street, and the unsightly parking and noxious fumes do not deter visitors.

Light Industrial: Light industrial and maker uses, often with small retail components, are increasingly popular and can drive major foot traffic in downtown areas. Examples include glassblowing, leather working, or coffee roasting, which all require Light Industrial Zoning allowances. These operations are often great for drawing pedestrians in with demonstrations, and although products can be sold on site, these businesses do a bulk of sales online.

#### Residential

All dwelling types (multifamily, single family, and two family) are allowed by right within the Central Business Zone, except for Manufactured Homes. The majority of existing housing resides along the southern, northern, and eastern periphery of the study area, and are older single family homes. There are examples of downtown apartments, including second story apartments detailed in the section, "Second Story Utilization", as well as the newly renovated Angelina Hotel, which is converting a historic hotel into modernized apartments and condos. This effort will identify barriers and opportunities to create more housing in and around downtown.

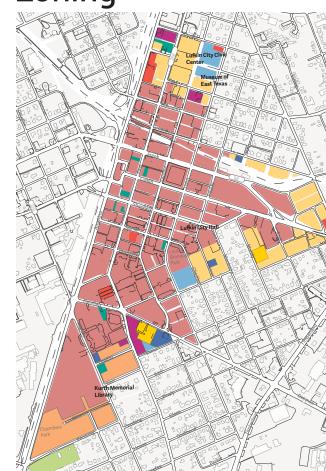
#### Hotels

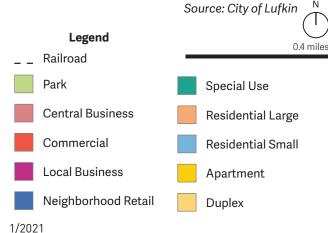
Hotels are allowed by right within the Central Business and Commercial Zones. There is no existing hotel in Downtown Lufkin, and this effort will identify the market demand for a new hotel. Lufkin hotels are all located along US-59 and Timberland Avenue, and are typically three- to four-stars and of a hotel chain. The two closest to Downtown are the Lufkin Inn and the Motel 6. Lufkin is lacking a five star hotel, a boutique hotel, and a resort style hotel.

# Land Ownership

The City of Lufkin is the largest landowner in the study area, owning over double the amount of land as any other owner. This is an opportunity for this planning process to have direct control of the vision for these parcels. In addition to the City of Lufkin, the

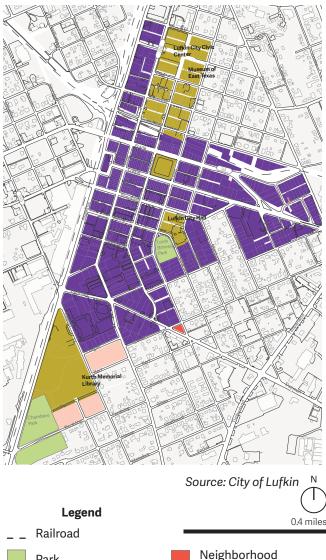
# Zoning





largest major landowner is Lufkin Industries, which is a manufacturing company. Angelina County also owns a substantial amount of land in the study area. These groups should be considered stakeholders in this process, and it is important to understand current real or perceived limitations on development.

#### Land Use



Park

Mixed Use

Office Institutional

Commercial

Residential

Medium Density

# Vacancies, Parking, and Buildings

In the downtown area, there are a variety of gaps in the urban fabric, including vacant land, parking lots, and vacant buildings, presenting opportunities for redevelopment and adaptive reuse. Gaps in the urban fabric exist, usually in the form of parking lots, which detract from the pedestrian experience and desirability of the downtown area, and should be avoided.

#### **Recent Development**

There have been a number of development activities in the downtown area since 2015. There have been a few demolitions, resulting in vacant lots or new parking lots, which do not support this project's goals, but others have been remodeled or otherwise converted to active commercial uses. There have also been 47 commercial and residential remodeling projects, and three new construction commercial projects. These activities provide important comparisons for developers and financiers looking to continue work in the downtown area.

#### **Private Property** Restoration

The high cost of renovation to meet building codes is oftentimes the sole reason buildings remain undeveloped. Building and fire codes are potential hurdles in the redevelopment of some underutilized spaces, especially when trying to convert an older building into a new use. Gap financing, such as low-interest loans or grants, can assist a property owner reach the needed capital to start or finish a downtown project.

#### Facade Improvement Program

The City of Lufkin's Facade Improvement Program is currently on hold. The City is undergoing an internal review of how to revitalize and fund the program, because it was previously tied to the now dissolved Lufkin Main Street Organization. The previous program provided the following guidelines and incentives:

- A \$1 for \$1 reimbursement grant, up to \$10,000, for qualifying projects.
- The goal was to preserve and improve the architectural and cultural (1920's+) integrity of the Central Business District (South Angelina Street to Frank Avenue, to South Fourth street, to Burke Avenue).
- Qualifying projects are limited to exterior building facades that are in view of the public.
- Improvements are subject to the approval by the Review Committee including cleaning or painting, rehabilitation (aesthetics or structural), canopies or awning, signage, windows, or doors.

#### Second Story Utilization

Many downtown buildings have vacant second floor spaces that are ripe for adaptive reuse, such as apartments, lofts, offices, coworking spaces, or art studios. Maximizing the use of these spaces can increase property values, increase patrons of downtown businesses, and attract new employers to Downtown.

# Vacancies, Parking, and Building Permits\*





# **Public Realm**



# **Public Realm**

A key focus for this project is to utilize the public realm and right-of-way to make more pleasing and desirable public spaces and attract users to its amenities. Many recent public improvements, such as mural design, banners, and sidewalk furniture have improved the public realm. Similarly, new development has supported public realm enhancement through facade improvements and outdoor seating arrangements. Connections between downtown assets will be a key focus of this project, as well as evaluating the existing private realm regulations that support the public realm.

#### Circulation

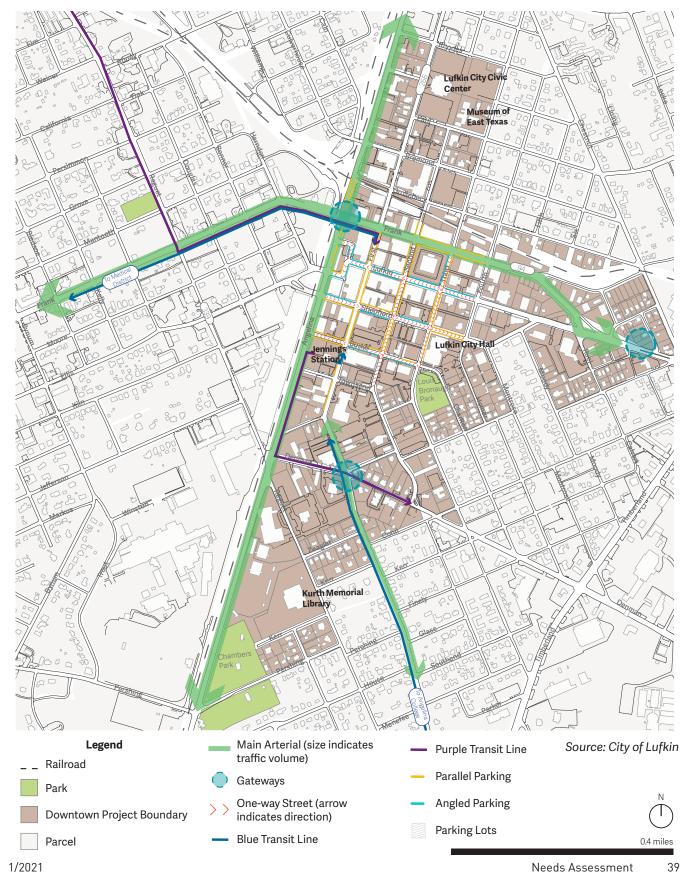
Downtown Lufkin is supported by the main arterials of Frank Avenue and South Angelina Street. These roads not only bring downtown guests in and out of the neighborhood, but they also carry through-traffic across the center of Lufkin. They both are characterized by a high volume of traffic, have sub-par pedestrian amenities, no bicycle facilities, and lack character, yet they are the gateways of downtown. The railroad tracks along South Angelina Street and the large parcels to the west of downtown also create a large barrier to connectivity and walkability in the area.

South 1st Street, Lufkin Avenue, and Shepherd Avenue serve the primary center of business activity, and therefore have the highest density of pedestrian amenities and highly desired street-parking. These streets are extremely walkable around the commercial activity, but also serve important vehicle traffic functions. South 1st Street and Lufkin Avenue connect to adjacent neighborhoods and connect to other main arterials, so carry higher traffic volumes than other small, local streets downtown. The remaining streets downtown have very little commercial activities, and have relatively low vehicle traffic. They are all one-way streets within the Downtown Core, but expand to two-way, which creates confusion for newcomers. Curb extensions and "Do Not Enter" signage designates the two-way to one-way conversion locations.



South 3rd street is an example of a two-way street conversion to a one-way street. The red brick bulb out and the Do Not Enter sign indicates to the driver about the conversion. Source: Google Street View

# **Circulation Map**



#### Transit

Downtown Lufkin is served by local transit transportation, provided by the Brazos Transit District. The newly developed Jennings Station serves inter and intra-state bus lines. Two bus lines, the Purple Line and the Blue Line, have fixed routes through downtown, but a rider can board the bus anywhere along the route as long as the rider is on the same side of the street as the entrance to the bus. The Blue Line connects downtown to the Medical District and to Angelina College. The Purple Line connects to north and northwest Lufkin. Because there are no set stops along the fixed routes, there are no bus stop amenities downtown. However, the recently approved City of Lufkin 2020 and 2021 Capital Improvement Projects identified funding for new bus stops, but locations have not been identified.

#### Parking

Downtown Lufkin has a variety of two-way or one-way streets with parking on one or both sides of the road. The on-street parking is either parallel or angled parking on one or both sides of the street, depending on space availability and curb cuts. Angled parking provides parking for more cars as compared to conventional parallel parking. There also are a variety of privately owned parking lots that offer free parking, but there is limited signage advertising the availability and location of the free parking. As is typical in other downtowns, the general perception is a shortage of parking, or that available parking is not close to a destination. Many First Street merchants expressed concern about cars parked in one spot for too long. However, as evident in Lufkin, there is ample on-street and off-street parking, and on-street parking meters were removed in the past five years.



An example of a privately owned parking lot offering Free Unlimited Parking at 203 S 1st St.

#### Streetscape

The streetscape in downtown Lufkin is inconsistent with the project goals of supporting pedestrian life and ensuring Lufkin's status as a unique place. Solutions to this issue vary but can include development code updates, design guidelines, streetscape upgrades, and sign standards.



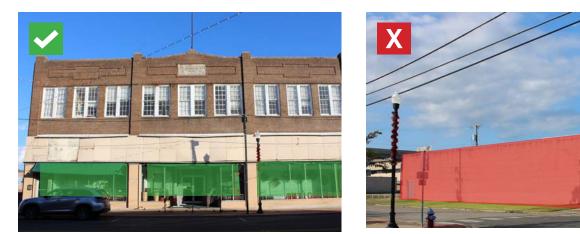
also auto-oriented signs that create a more suburban atmosphere.



**Entrances**: Entrances on buildings that face the street support commercial activity and issues dangerous to pedestrian-design.

**Signs**: Signs can support and detract from the urban environment. In downtown Lufkin, there are historic and appropriate commercial signs that are readable from a pedestrian view, and

walkability. In downtown Lufkin, some buildings have entrances facing the street, and some do not. The entrances that do not support commercial activity present blank walls and other



**Transparency**: Windows and other openings on ground floors support pedestrians, encourage commercial activity, and provide sunlight indoors. In downtown Lufkin, many of the historic buildings have adequate transparency, but newer buildings often do not.



**Setbacks and Parking:** Buildings that are close to the street and have parking in the rear support pedestrian and commercial activity. In downtown Lufkin, historic buildings often take this form, and newer building prioritize car use, risking pedestrian safety and aesthetics by placing buildings away from the street and parking in the front.



**Sidewalks**: Sidewalks can provide space for pedestrians, cafe seating, popup retail, and other activities. Sidewalks in downtown Lufkin are historic, but often too narrow. Many also have accessibility issues, such as missing ramps and unsafe crossings.

# **Public Realm Constraints and Opportunities**



	Pedestrian Realm	
1	Insufficient sidewalk width	The sidewalk is not wide enou
2	Sidewalk obstacles	Obstacles in sidewalks are co street furniture, railings, and st
3	Unclear space definition	The sidewalk paving provides frontage zone. The unclear de
4	Frontage activation opportunity	This vacant storefront can inc window appeal.
5	Exceptionally wide setback	The front load parking elimina experience much less enjoyab
	Street Furniture	
6	Missing street benches	Benches will encourage peopl
7	Automobile-oriented lighting	These 25' street lights do not
8	Wayfinding opportunity	Signage that indicates nearby
	Landscape	
9	Insufficient shade	In the study area, the tree cov especially in the Texas summe
	Building	
10	Fenestration/facade opportunity	The majority of the study area pedestrian realm and have the
1	Building signs	The building signs are general
	Crossing	
12	Tactile ramp	Tactile ramps are missing in so
13	Crosswalks	The Downtown has many well comfort and safety.

1/2021

ugh to provide comfortable walking experience.

ommonly seen throughout the study area, such as utility and sign poles, steps.

a better walking experience, while in some areas it is used to delineate a sfinition may cause confusion and reduce an overall cohesive experience.

crease street vibrancy by introducing outdoor dining or enhancing the

ates the interaction between people and buildings and makes the walking ble.

ole to experience more social interactions and enhance street vibrancy.

t provide security and lighting for pedestrians.

assets will encourage people to explore the area.

verage is fairly poor. Tree coverage reduces urban heat island effect, ner heat.

a's buildings have good fenestration, yet blank walls detract from the he opportunity to support downtown.

Illy good in the area but some need to be upgraded.

some crossing areas.

II-marked crosswalks. Maintaining these crosswalks enhances pedestrian

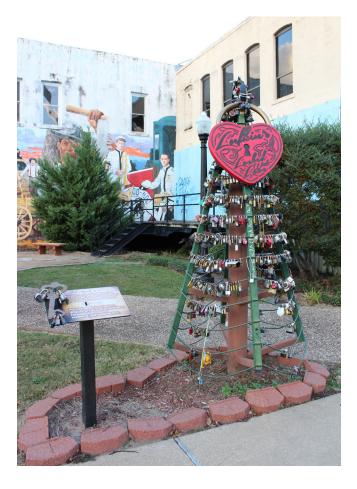
#### Asset Analysis

Recent private development enhancements have revived "third spaces" in downtown, which refer to places where people can spend time between home and work, and can include restaurants, recreation activities, or religious institutions. Third places build community; they help community members find common ground, and break down existing silos. Enhanced private and public spaces are pivotal to building community, and can increase Downtown's welcoming nature for all of Lufkin.

#### Historic Markers and Museums

Downtown Lufkin is home to a variety of historical markers and the Museum of East Texas. Landmarks throughout the project area included in the National Register of Historical Places include:

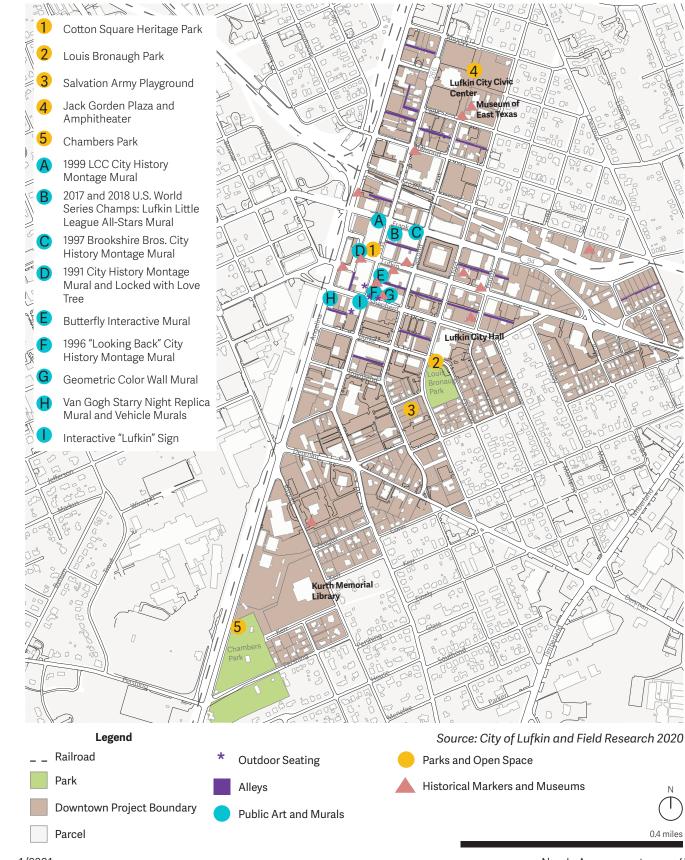
- Banks-Ogg House •
- Behannon-Kenley House •
- Corstone Sales Company
- Fenley Commercial Building •
- McClendon-Abney Hardware Company •
- Old Federal Building-Federal Courthouse ٠
- Pines Theatre •





This is an example of a historic marker designating a place of significance.

# Downtown Lufkin Asset Analysis



#### **Outdoor Seating and Alleys**

Currently, the downtown has numerous alleys which only serve as loading and service zones. These corridors can be transformed into vibrant public spaces for different activities, while maintaining their existing purpose. Activation has already begun, including the new Butterfly Mural next to the Pines Theater, and the cafe seating and mural design between Standpipe Coffee and Spruce. In addition to limited use of alleys, there are limited options for outdoor seating in Downtown Lufkin. At the time of this report, Restoration Bistro, Standpipe Coffee House, and Angelina Brewing Company provide the only outdoor seating options. The existing zoning allows for flexible use of small side and rear yards, but there is not adequate sidewalk width for sidewalk cafes.

#### Public Art and Murals

Efforts in the 1990s commissioned and installed five murals in Downtown Lufkin; successfully enhancing Downtown's aesthetics and honoring Lufkin's economic history. Since the original 1990s "mural project", five more art pieces have been completed in Downtown, and there is interest in adding more.



Map Label	Art Location	Adjacent Business Name	Quality	Art Description
A	W Frank Ave & N 1st St	Old City of Lufkin Parks and Recreation Dpt	Good	1999 LCC City History Montage Mural
В	W Frank Ave & N 1st St	Lufkin Antique Mall	Great	2017 and 2018 U.S. World Series Champs: Lufkin Little League All- Stars Mural
С	E Frank St & N 2nd St	Lufkin Detension Center	Good	1997 Brookshire Bros. City History Montage Mural
D	N Cotton Square & W Lufkin Ave	Cotton Square Park	Needs Improvement	1991 City History Montage Mural and Locked with Love Tree
E	S 1st St & Alleyway	Pines Theater	Great	Butterfly Interactive Mural
F	S 1st St & E Shephard Ave	The Standpipe Coffee House	Good	1996 "Looking Back" City History Montage Mural
G	S 1st St & E Shephard Ave	Spruce	Great	Geometric Color Wall Mural
H	S Angelina St & W Shephard St	A Furniture Fetish	Needs Improvement	Van Gogh Starry Night Replica Mural and Vehicle Murals
	S 1st St & W Shephard St	Hotel Angelina	Great	Interactive "Lufkin" Sign







This is an example of an existing alleyway activation. The Pines Theater installed the Butterfly Interactive Mural.

Source: Field Research 2020.





#### Parks and Open Space

Downtown Lufkin has four public parks and open spaces with a variety of amenities for residents and visitors. Although small, Louis Bronaugh Park, Jack Gordon Plaza and Amphitheater, Cotton Square Heritage Park, and Chamber Park each serve a unique purpose, by providing gathering spaces, recreation opportunities, or small outdoor venues. Downtown Lufkin is situated within two miles of eight other neighborhood parks offering a higher diversity of amenities, including larger recreation amenities, pools, fishing piers, and trails. See page 43 for a list of Lufkin's Park and Open Spaces Assets and their respective distances from Downtown.

Chamber Park is in great condition and is on the southern periphery of Downtown's boundary, away from the central activity of the tourist and business attractions, so will not be considered a downtown park for the remainder of the project. Downtown's remaining open spaces (Louis Bronaugh Park, Jack Gordon Plaza and Amphitheater, and Cotton Square Heritage Park) are underutilized and are in need of enhancements. Their current conditions do not attract residents, workers, or downtown visitors to congregate and enjoy their spaces. Each of these three spaces also provides various sizes of bandstands or amphitheaters, but none are used during major downtown events.

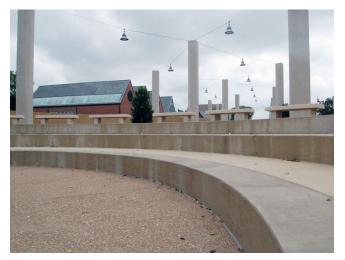
There are no multi-purpose trails connecting Downtown Lufkin to surrounding areas, and the 2018 Comprehensive Plan did not recommend a new Downtown trail. However, the Comprehensive Plan specifically called out to "expand sidewalk, bike, and trails networks to the [downtown's] surrounding neighborhoods".



Cotton Square Heritage Park offers an underutilized bandstand on a refurbished train car.



Louis Bronaugh Park is home to a memorial, a mural, and an amphitheater.



Jack Gordon Plaza and Amphitheater offers hardscape and congregating space. Source: Lufkin Daily News.

# Lufkin's Park & Open Space Asset Analysis

Name of Park (and Map Label No.)	Management	Amenities	Quality
Cotton Square Heritage Park	City of Lufkin	Picnic, Bandstand	Needs Improvement
Louis Bronaugh Park	City of Lufkin	Amphitheater, Memorial	Needs Improvement
Salvation Army Playground	Salvation Army	Playground, Baseball	Great
Jack Gordon Plaza and Amphitheater 4	Lufkin Convention and Visitors Bureau	Benches, Lighting, Amphitheater	Great
Mantooth Park	City of Lufkin	Pavilion, Picnic, Playground	Great
Ward Street Park	City of Lufkin	Baseball, Playground	Good
Chambers Park 5	City of Lufkin	Pavilion, Bandstand, Picnic, Playground, Restroom, Spray Play Pad, Tennis, Community Center	Great
Lufkin Land Park	City of Lufkin	Picnic, Volleyball, Playground	Good
Gamble Park	City of Lufkin	Pavilion, Picnic, Playground	Great
Brandon Park	City of Lufkin	Pavilion, Picnic, Playground, Basketball, Community Center	Great
Winston Park	City of Lufkin	Pavilion, Picnic, Playground, Restroom, Tennis, Basketball, Volleyball, Softball/Baseball, Trail	Needs Improvement
Kiwanis Park	City of Lufkin	Pavilion, Picnic, Playground, Restroom, Slash Pad, Tennis, Basketball, Volleyball, Disc Golf, Skate Park, Trail	Great
Jones Park	City of Lufkin	Pavilion, Picnic, Playground, Restroom, Splash Pads, Pool, Pier, Tennis, Basketball, Volleyball, Trail	Great
Morris Frank Park	City of Lufkin	Pavilion, Playground, Restroom, Softball/Baseball, Soccer, Disc Golf, Wetland Garden, Wetland Trail	Great
Azalea Trail	City of Lufkin	Trail, Lighting, Call Boxes	Good
Grace Dunne Richardson Park	City of Lufkin	Pavilion, Gazebo, Picnic, Playground, Restroom, Basketball, Volleyball, Soccer, Dog Park, Trail	Good
Four Season Park	City of Lufkin	None	Needs Improvement
Herty Park	City of Lufkin	Pavilion, Picnic, Playground, Restroom, Basketball, Volleyball, Softball, Soccer, Trail	Great
Ellen Trout Zoo and Park	City of Lufkin	Pavilion, Picnic, Playground, Restroom, Train & Depot, Lake/Fishing, Zoo, Trail	Good
Angelina Fitness Trail	Angelina College	Trail	Good
Kit McConnico Park	City of Lufkin	Playground, Restroom, Softball, Soccer	Great
Lost Arrow Biking and Hiking Trail	City of Lufkin	Trail	Good
Angelina National Forest	USFS	Camping, hiking, equestrian trails, wildlife viewing	Great
Lake Sam Rayburn	USACE	Camping, hiking, trails, wildlife, boating, fishing	Great
Davy Crockett National Forest	USFS	Camping, hiking, equestrian trails, wildlife viewing	Great

#### **Downtown Events**

Annual and regularly occurring events attract Lufkin residents and visitors downtown, in addition to visitors who normally may not visit downtown. The events vary in audience and cost, and categorize as entertainment events, arts and cultural events, or civic pride events. All contribute to Lufkin's sense of pride, quality of life, and local economic development.



First StrEAT Feast Source: City of Lufkin Facebook

#### Food Truck Regulations

In 2017, the City had to update its Vendor Ordinance in order to meet the increasing demand for food truck vendors. City regulations require that vendors must provide a \$1,000.00 Surety Bond from an insurance agency and may not conduct business in any street, intersection or right of way. The surety bond requirement is common across Texas towns, but there may be instances where a Food Truck in a street parallel parking spot may be desirable. Lufkin Forward will consider improvements to these rules in the recommendation phase.



Main Street Lufkin Days Source: CVB



Festival of Trees Source: Red River Radio



Lufkin Bistro Source: TX Forest Living

## Downtown's Events

Event Name	Location	Frequency	Cost	Organizer	Market Audience
First StrEAT Feast	Adjacent to Pines Theater	3rd Saturday of each month	Free*	Lufkin CVB	Young Adults
Main Street Market Days	1st Street	3rd Saturday of each month, quarterly	Free*	Lufkin CVB	Families
Heritage Festival	Pitser Garrision Convention Center	September, annually	Free*	Lufkin CVB	Families
Lufkin's Bistro	1st Street	October, annually	\$40/person	Lufkin CVB	21+ adults; tourists
Festival of Trees	Museum of East Texas	December, annually	Free, fundraiser	Museum Guild of the Museum of East Texas	Families
Christmas in the Pines	Downtown	December, annually	Free*	Lufkin CVB	Families
SpringFest	Downtown	April, annually	Free*	Lufkin CVB	Families
Pineywoods Veterans Celebration	Pitser Garrision Convention Center	November, annually	Free*	Lufkin CVB	Families



1/2021

\*Must pay for products at event Source: Lufkin CVB Website, accessed December 2020

Heritage Festival Source: Lufkin Daily News





## **Outdoor Recreation Economic Development** Opportunity

Several outdoor recreation opportunities are available in and around the Lufkin area, which attract outdoor enthusiasts from Lufkin's regional and local market area. The Angelina National Forest, the Davy Crockett National Forest, the Sam Rayburn Reservoir, and the Angelina and Neches Rivers provide rich natural landscapes and opportunities to camp, hike, ride equestrian trails, boat, fish, and partake in wildlife viewing. These natural assets boost ecotourism and provide jobs in the local economy. Park operators, concessions, rentals, restaurants, and hotels all contribute to this particular market; outdoor recreation in Texas directly supports 411,000 jobs- nearly double the oil and gas industry.<sup>1</sup>

Downtown Lufkin has an opportunity to seize upon this job creation opportunity by creating a vibrant, dynamic urban environment that can entice outdoor enthusiasts to visit downtown. The following three Downtown case studies highlight similar efforts to capture nearby outdoor recreation ecotourism. Lufkin can become the "Gateway to East Texas".

1 Outdoor Industry Association. (2017). Outdoor Industry Association--Texas. https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/ uploads/2017/07/0IA RecEcoState TX.pdf

1. Bozeman, Montana: Well known for its access to Yellowstone National Park, Custer Gallatin National Forest, hot springs, and other natural wonders, Bozeman has a historic downtown center that not only serves the local residents, but also attracts outdoor enthusiasts to its hostels. boutique hotels, restaurants, bars, sports equipment stores, and annual events. The recent 2019 Downtown Improvement Plan identified the need to diversify retail to serve its surrounding thriving residential neighborhoods with a grocery store, and offer more specialty merchandise, like outdoor supplies.



Source: Tim Evanson, Elickr 2013

/2021

"The 2018 Comprehensive Plan identified the opportunity for the City of Lufkin to partner with regional recreation providers and the Lufkin Convention and Visitors Bureau to market regional opportunities as well as plan for year round outdoor recreation"

2. Marfa, Texas: Marfa is surrounded by mountains; to the north are the Davis Mountains, to the southeast the Chisos Mountains, and to the southwest the Chinati Mountains. **Big Bend National Park is two** hours away. The Marfa Lights and minimalist art designs attract staggering numbers of national travelers for the tiny desert town. Downtown is ready to host west Texas travelers with hotels, restaurants, museums, and art galleries.



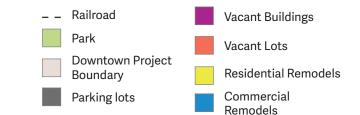
3. Brainerd, Minnesota: Situated on the Mississippi River and founded in 1870 as a Northern Pacific Railroad town, the city has a rich history to explore. Brainerd is known as the home of Paul Bunyan, and is the retail-center of central Minnesota, surrounded by 400 lakes and Crow Wing State Park. Downtown Brainerd attracts visitors and locals with arts, shopping, dining, and annual events.



Source: VisitBrainerd.com

# Vacant and Underutilized Land

Land and buildings in the Study Area, especially within the Downtown Core, are ripe for redevelopment. Downtown's recent successes indicate many of these buildings and lots will likely to redevelop on their own with the market. A key part of this study will be thinking about how this land can best support the community's goals for downtown. The following graphic details opportunities to reutilize vacant and publicly owned land in the study area.





1/2021

1/2021



Demolished + Constructed



AA Alleyway Activation Opportunity Angelina County Ownership

Source: City of Lufkin and Field Research 2020

CL City of Lufkin Ownership

CS Cotton Square

# The Public Realm

Analysis of previous planning and field research has identified strong assets that can be linked by a strong public realm strategy. The needs below are those that can be linked and supported with the existing right-of-way.

#### Gateways

2

3

5

6

There are ample opportunities for gateways that can include landscaping, pedestrian access, signage, public art, open space, and programming. This project will identify more attractive and compelling gateways into the downtown area.

#### Strong Commercial Corridors

South First Street, Lufkin Avenue, and Burke Street provide a basis for strong commercial areas, and there are other areas where block lengths and existing tenants and buildings make the corridors ideal for improvements. This effort will identify short term and long term improvements to introduce new activity.

#### **Outdoor Space Enhancements**

Space for outdoor exercise and socialization will be a significant consideration for this project. The existing outdoor spaces in downtown are underutilized and unprogrammed. Breathing new life into these spaces as well as identifying new outdoor spaces will be a part of this effort.

#### Programming, Activity, and Wayfinding

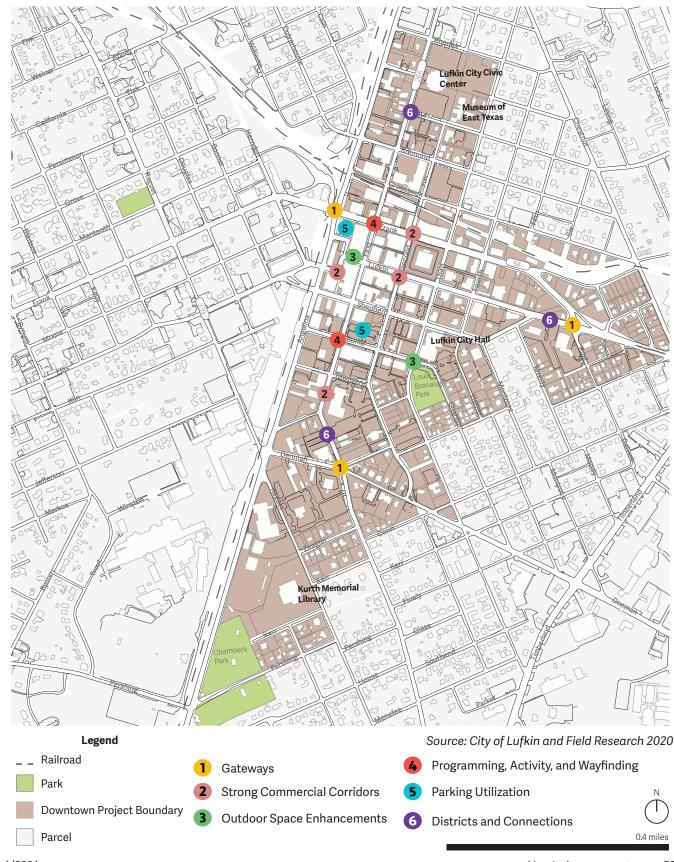
Downtown Lufkin has a variety of existing assets, but more needs to be done to promote, program, and connect these attractions. This project will identify opportunities to enhance programming and wayfinding as a way to increase street activity, visitors, and link popular attractions.

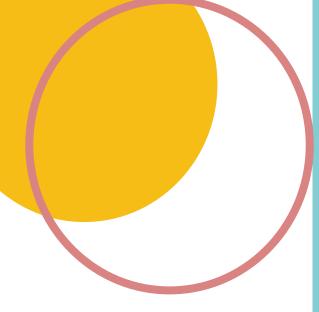
#### **Parking Utilization**

There are a variety of privately and publicly owned parking lots that offer free parking, but there is limited signage advertising the availability and location of the free parking. This effort will identify short term and long term solutions to utilize existing parking more efficiently for downtown workers, visitors, and residents.

#### **Districts and Connections**

Downtown Lufkin has two unique areas- the Downtown Core and the Convention Center. There is an opportunity to better define these areas, create new districts, and create synergy between them. Streetscape improvements, branding, and wayfinding will be a component of this effort.







DRAFT January 2021

