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GRG 374 – Adams
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FINAL PROJECT
Property Revitalization Attractiveness and Mobility Improvements on the Town Square
Lockhart, TX

The Lockhart Town Square is an integral part of the city and its imperative that such an attractive and community hub are developed properly to ensure the attractiveness and long term viability for the city of Lockhart. The potential attractiveness of the available rental space on the town square zoned as mixed use (which consists of the blocks that are directly adjacent to the square) will be looked at in this report. In addition, I'd like to find out what the future for attracting more vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian traffic throughout the town square in order to increase the attractiveness for future renters on the town square.

The Lockhart Town Square is the central hub and center of the town and proper measures need to be taken in order to ensure that the character and uniqueness of the center of town is preserved for future generations. The only piece of virgin land that is still open directly on the town square is a piece which is at the corner of South Main and Market Street. The lot, which is currently occupied and owned by the owners of Henry's Restaurant, sits as a grass lot on this lucrative corner. According to employee's of Henry's however, the owner of the property owns it, but does not want to develop it at the current time. Henry's Restaurant sits interestingly in the center of the lot, so that on each side of the restaurant there is open space for future development. In this type of situation, there is no knowledge as to whether infrastructure exists below the land, but it is highly likely, since in Lockhart's past according to historical photographs, the town

square was covered on all sides with buildings. This land is actually highly valuable and holds a large potential, due to the fact that a developer would be starting from scratch. Many of the historical buildings in Lockhart have very large renovation expenses that are incurred if a developer is interested in utilizing space. Such changes like central air, plumbing, foundation/structure problems and technological wiring are all challenges that renovators face in historical Lockhart. This lot therefore, is deemed highly favorable for growth on the Lockhart square.

Right next to the empty lot owned by Henry's lies a small commercial space open for sale/lease. The property seems to be in fairly well condition for its age, has an excellent square-front location. Meanwhile, it's questionable what the demand for the store would be, especially since the majority of the retail/service seems to be on the other sides of the square. However, the space could be utilized by a law firm, architect, or other similar occupant. Due to the location right next to an open plot of land (where a developer is free to design anything he/she wants) and the constraints that would be put on anyone moving in due to the small size, the commercial space adjacent Henry's was viewed as moderately attractive.

Another interesting area of open retail space on the Town Square is the old J.C. Penney's and Hallmark Store. The property is also vacant, and according to local merchants, has been for quite some time. The store includes many display windows, along with double-door access into the store with a nostalgic "J.C Penney & Co" street mosaic. The property is situated in an older building and has a slightly awkward setup for a current storeowner. The window façade is slanted at parts, in a somewhat antique-style,

which is a bit out of date for today's retailers. For the J.C. Penney's Building, I would view such a structure as moderately favorable.

The old Stephens Electric appliance store at the corner of Main Street and San Antonio Street (SH 142) is also another attractive area on the corner with great street front visibility. Stephen's Electric has been closed for a certain time, and sits at an attractive street corner with ample awnings, street parking, and other amenities that are common on the town square in Lockhart. The Electric Store seems to be an ideal place for a restaurant or small coffee shop, but Javamotion, Lockhart's newest coffee shop, is directly down the block, and being in direct competition with them would seem to not be a viable business plan. However, often such eating establishments cluster together to benefit of the proximity off of one another similar to a "Motor Mile" dealership row which is seen in Austin. However, the Stephens Electric Appliance Store is viewed as highly favorable, due to it's prime location at the corner, along with a very successful coffee entrepreneurship which is down the street drawing in more people to this part of the square and possibly to try a new venture.

In addition, on the 3rd floor of a building on San Antonio Street also lies vacant and looks like it would be an ideal location for a setting for an apartment or office on the top floor overlooking the street. Although the exact details on the third floor are not known (the owner was busy fixing the roof at the time of observation), the shop owner below stated that it would be suitable for apartment use. With a newly built supermarket within 3 blocks of the town square from this structure and the relative lack of residential usage on the town square, the third floor apartments are highly favorable.

Another area for small retail ventures could be the area that exists between the barber shop immediately to the other side of the third store lofts. This space is somewhat unique in the fact that the barber shop exists wedged in between the space, therefore segmenting the space for a very effective use. This piece of property is most likely, the least desirable on the Lockhart town square. The building is decrepit and in much need of repair. No central air exists and the property is split, making it very unattractive for anyone wanting to buy both separate pieces. This piece of property is viewed as least attractive.

The City Auto Parts store is another viable retail option on a corner in Lockhart. Recently closed, it has a relatively new building structure, along with wall-to-wall shelving for multiple use needs. It is a little bit off the main square and not immediately near anything that would draw large numbers to the location (except for ample parking), therefore the City Auto Parts store is ranked as moderately attractive.

The Church Building that is directly between the Church on Church St and City Hall on San Antonio Street lies a small building that, according to the Church, is rented out to certain groups, in order to bring in extra revenue for the church. The building, according to church members will most likely be bulldozed, but no plan to develop the site currently is underway. Therefore, for development purposes, due to its distance from the square and relative control by the church, the property was rated as less attractive.

The Voit Automotive Building is an example of a building structure that is not being used for its purpose. The Voit Building is a much older structure that was not originally designed to be a garage/woodworks shop, but that is what the owners have turned it into. It is not an attractive building both aesthetically and functionally, and

doesn't fit well with the mixed use in the area, however if the owners want to stay, they may; there is no right to force them to change the way in which they utilize their building. Due to the control that the current owners have on the property, the Voit Automotive Building was viewed as less attractive.

In addition, it appears as if certain retailers were not maximizing their potential with their location on the town square. There are a couple of buildings on the town square that were only open by appointment or on Saturdays, and the property could most likely be used for some other use during the week. However, it is a challenge if these people who are renting the space (and, essentially using it as a storage facility only to open on weekends) have the money to pay the rents required here, than it's a hard battle to tell them how to utilize the best use of their rented space. However, a better measure would be to possibly educate these renters and try to come up with a solution where they are able to rent their "storage", but also use it for another use while it sits idle.

Bringing people to the town square in a comfortable, convenient and attractive manner is paramount in making Lockhart Town Square businesses succeed. With these goals in mind, it is a must to make car, bike, and pedestrian access existent to ensure harmony and success on the Town Square. Being the focal point of the City of Lockhart, one cannot have a hierarchy system of access; this area must represent an area which is readily accessible to all Lockhartians.

The first part of the plan is motor vehicle access to the square. There is currently ample parking on the town square and on the surrounding blocks for the town square, therefore increasing parking is not really a key topic to focus on. However, traffic that currently travels eastbound and westbound on SH 142 (San Antonio Street) often moves

through at a rapid pace (due to the nature of it being a thru street connecting Lockhart, U.S. 183, and San Marcos), and such measures need to be taken to reduce the traffic speed. In order to accomplish this, speed bumps seem to be the most cost-effective and simple way to slow traffic in this area. Installing lighted signage to show pedestrian activity (or other warning) is about as effective, but is more costly. A recommendation for two speed bumps on this thoroughfare, one at the corner of Main Street and Market Street is what is recommended.

In order to increase and advocate for more bike activity on the Town Square, planning well-marked and maintained bike lanes are a must. There are some crucial areas that need bike lanes, such as schools along with arteries that can lead to the parks in Lockhart as well. The parks and schools, which are our two “markets” for bike traffic need to be interconnected to ensure usage of its residents, along with access into the Lockhart town square are extremely important to ensure success of the bike lane project. If you notice of the map for Lockhart’s bicycle lane plan, there are bike lanes that are planned to be adjacent near some of the schools in Lockhart. For instance, Plum Creek Elementary and Lockhart Junior High School were both given access to bike lanes, since these are areas that would see heavy bicycle traffic and ensuring the safety and well-being of students of bicycles is a must. The fact that Lockhart is imbedded in a car culture is no lie, and no realistic measures of turning major thoroughfares like U.S. 183 into partial bike lanes should be undertaken without hearing significant opposition to such a plan. In addition, running bike lanes along the major arteries is more dangerous, since drivers are accustomed to highway scenarios, are inclined to drive faster and are pressed for time. It is a much wiser move, however to run bike lanes parallel to the major arteries,

where they can still serve the main businesses along the main arteries, but not have the direct risk of collision that they might have directly on the major artery.

In addition, Lockhart has an enormous benefit by having a state park immediately adjacent to the town. A bicycle path that could lead from the city center to the downtown area are vital for Lockhart's transportation modes and recreation. Although this would be a costly endeavor, I think that for long-range bicycle planning, this plan must exist as a recommendation for future development.

Lastly, pedestrian attractiveness is vital to maintaining both the economic well-being and the attractiveness for pedestrians on the town square. The current plan which is being proposed by the Lockhart 2020 plan, with wide-pedestrian ADA-accessible sidewalks should be strictly enforced to ensure that the area remains pedestrian-friendly for future generations.

Overall, it is crucially important that City Council and city officials make the best choices for the future to ensure that Lockhart grows in a way where it will remain attractive, livable, and safe for future generations to come. By taking these measures, the City of Lockhart will put itself in track for future economic and personal growth within the community.

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Appendix

Photos

1. Stephen's Electric Store, April 2004



2. Former Napa Auto Parts Store



3. Third Story San Jacinto St. "Apts"



4. Henry's Restaurant Town Square Lot



5. Henry's/Town Square Lot Neighbor (above)



6. Barber Shop Storefront



7. Church Building on San Antonio St.



8. J.C. Penney's/Hallmark Building



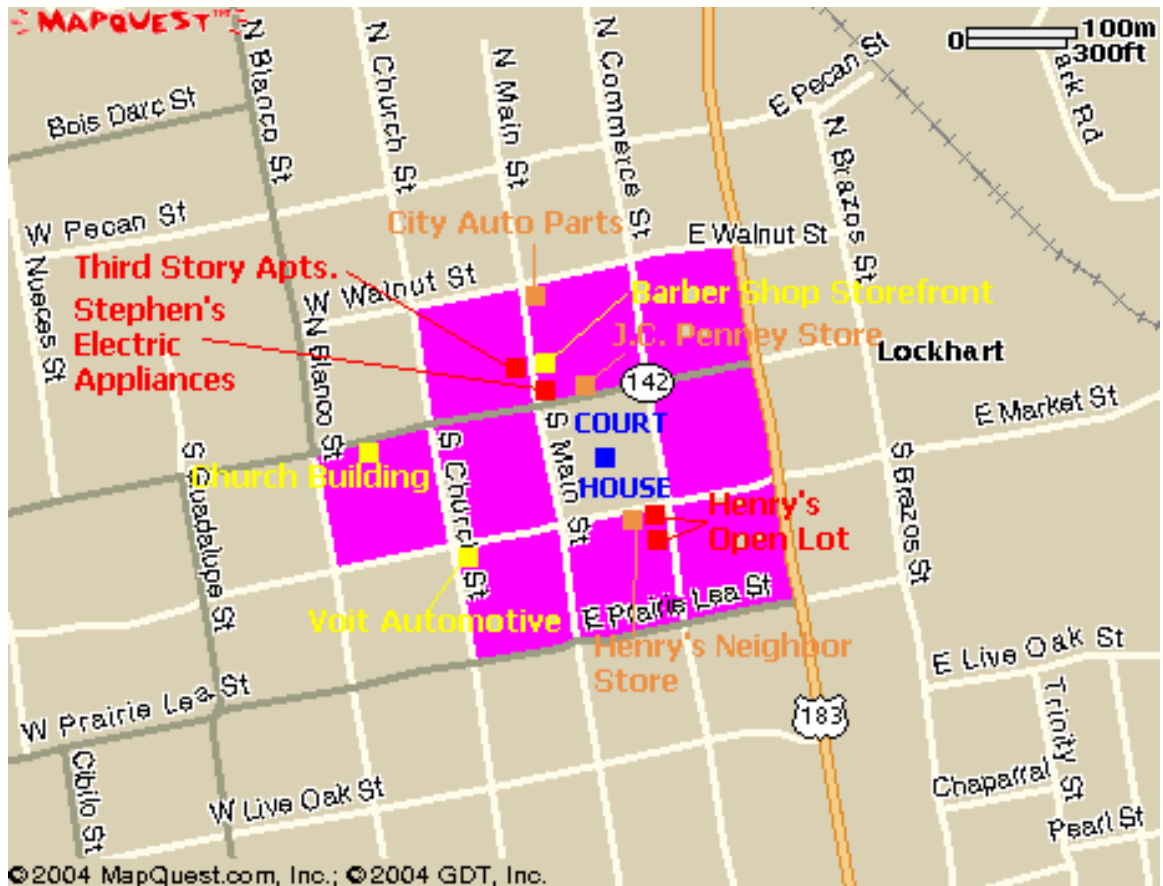
9. Voit Automotive



10. Downtown Log Piles – use of space??



11. Development Attractiveness Map



Legend

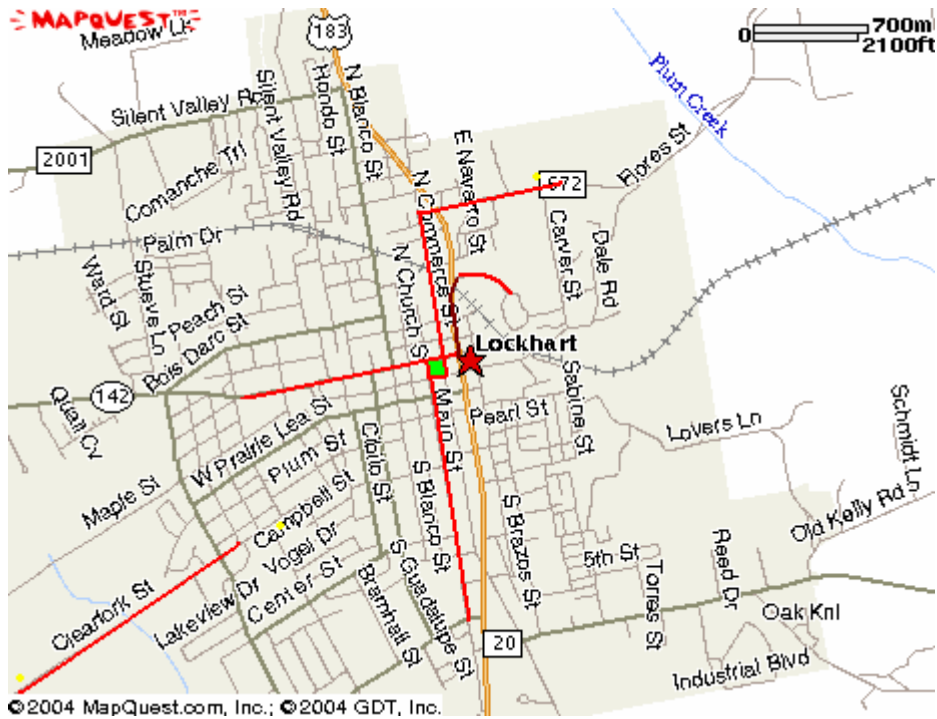
Blue : Courthouse

Red : Highly Attractive for purchase/redevelopment

Orange : Moderately attractive

Yellow : less attractive

12. Proposed Bicycle Lane Map



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Highest Priorities: “hot lines” – lines that connect crucial points like the town square, schools (noted as a yellow dot), etc

Moderate Priority : connecting “hot lines” together, especially along Clearfork St. towards town square.

Low Priority : hike-and-bike linkage from LJHS on Clearfork to Lockhart State Park.