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Bangs: Small Town Revival

Recommendations by the CRE® Consulting Corps
City of Bangs and Heartland Realtors®



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Executive Summary

The City of Bangs, like many small and rural communities across the country, is at a critical point in its evolution. While possessing many of the attributes desired by individuals and families seeking a slower pace of life, greater access to natural resources, and neighbors who generally hold similar values; so, too, does it struggle with certain drawbacks, such as a limited inventory of home types and business base and fewer well-paying jobs.

The Heartland Association of REALTORS® and the City of Bangs requested the expertise of The Counselors of Real Estate (CRE) Consulting Corps to advise on the best use of the newly annexed property and offer action steps toward increased commercial activity. The study was made possible through the Transforming Neighborhood Program of the National Association of REALTORS®.

Three inquiries framed the assignment:

1. What kinds of infrastructure investments should Bangs prioritize and what are possible funding sources?
2. What is the best use of the newly annexed property? What strategies should be implemented to develop that property? How should those investments be prioritized relative to city needs?
3. What tools could encourage increased commercial activity and downtown revitalization?

The CRE Consulting Corps team reviewed existing data, plans, and background, both before and during their visit. The team toured the City of Bangs and interviewed more than 25 stakeholders. After assimilating the information, the team analyzed, discussed, and developed recommendations. To address the priority questions identified, the Consulting Corps team presented recommendations in four areas:

1. Infrastructure.
2. Recently Annexed Property.
3. Business and Commercial and Downtown Investment.
4. Housing and Community-Building.

The Consulting Corps team took a pragmatic and specific approach to its recommendations. There is much to be done. While this report offers many suggestions based on its observations in Bangs and known successes in similar communities, implementation should not be overwhelming. Hopefully, this report can be used as an action reference guide. Following are the priority first steps:

1. The City has already accomplished the team's first recommendation to fill the City Administrator position as soon as possible.
2. Reassert code enforcement, incorporating communication, education and consistent application of rules and regulations.

3. Continue with current infrastructure efforts - complete the water infrastructure project.
4. Move forward toward development of the newly annexed property. Clarify unanswered questions from the development proposal presented to the EDC and continue the review process and due diligence. If this proposal does not work out, seek others that will bring affordable, livable housing to Bangs. One possible approach is to issue a Request for Qualifications stating the community's priorities and vision for the property, as well as indicating a willingness to provide incentives and invest in infrastructure.
5. Refocus on downtown. Articulate a vision for downtown and take steps that demonstrate follow-through to existing businesses and residents. Cosmetic improvements, installing furniture or lights to create a downtown outdoor place, and staging community events downtown can be implemented immediately. Additional steps to improve downtown include developing a business incubator and encouraging second-story residential. Communicating with existing businesses is also a key component of economic development.
6. Improve community communications. Improved communication will help raise awareness of priorities, investments, incentives, and events, and will serve as an opportunity for information-gathering, solicitation of community input, etc. Enhanced communication can strengthen relationships and enhance community-building.
7. Install gateway monumentation and wayfinding signage. Many cities choose to have a common theme and design to the gateway and wayfinding signage. A common theme or design will create a cohesive feel when navigating through the community.
8. Encourage residential variety. Apartments above businesses, duplexes, townhouses, tiny homes, grandma units, and anchored factory-built homes are all options that could be considered.

Bangs has “good bones” with a lot to build on in terms of physical and social infrastructure. Renewed focus and bold leadership will make a big difference. Keep at it. Bangs can indeed be as good as, and probably better, than ever.



Introduction

Project Overview

BACKGROUND The City of Bangs, Texas, has a population of approximately 1,600 people. Located 12 minutes/10 miles from Brownwood, the county seat of Brown County, Bangs is in west central Texas. Major employers in Brownwood (population 18,800) include 3M, Barr Fabrication, Hendrick Medical Center, Howard Payne University, Kohler, and county government. Texas State Technical College and Ranger College have Brownwood locations. Brownwood's Walmart is a significant area draw, attracting shoppers from Bangs and throughout the region. In addition, many Bangs residents work in Brownwood.

New businesses in Bangs include Dollar Tree/Family Dollar, Tiny Homes Direct, LLC, and JRSF Services. Bangs has an overall tourism score above average from mid-April to early July and late August to mid-October based on weatherspark.com. Bangs has an At-Risk Score of 78.4% according to the Distressed Communities Index Interactive Map. Much of the housing within Bangs is older and needs repair; and many commercial properties downtown are underutilized. Bangs has recently annexed 20.14 acres which front the main highway and back up near the elementary school.

The Heartland Association of REALTORS® and the City of Bangs requested the expertise of The Counselors of Real Estate (CRE) Consulting Corps to advise on the best use of the newly annexed 20.14 acres and offer action steps toward increased commercial activity in Bangs.

Through the Transforming Neighborhoods Program, the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) is collaborating with the CRE Consulting Corps to deliver strategic real estate problem solving to select projects. After a call for applications and following a competitive process, the Bangs assignment was selected to receive strategic real estate problem solving.

THE ASSIGNMENT Three inquiries framed the engagement. They were:

1. What kinds of infrastructure investments should Bangs prioritize, and what are possible funding sources?
2. What is the best use of the newly annexed property? What strategies should be implemented to develop that property? How should those investments be prioritized relative to other city needs?
3. What tools could encourage increased commercial activity and downtown revitalization?

PROCESS The assignment objective was to work with the city, its leaders, constituents, and other interested parties to understand the challenges to and opportunities for investment and reinvestment. With this knowledge, the team could recommend targeted initiatives that serve to guide growth and development over the near- and long-term. The Consulting Corps team's approach was to conduct primary and secondary research about the community's infrastructure, real and perceived, and potential

to competitively position itself to capture a fair share of market activity in greater Brown County.

Components of the analysis included:

<i>Quantitative Research:</i>	Existing physical conditions, market demand by land use and product type, consumer profiles, industry trends, fiscal analyses, available resources.
<i>Qualitative Investigations:</i>	One-on-one interviews, small group discussions, case study findings.
<i>Strategic Prioritization:</i>	Solutions to mitigate barriers to investment—market, physical, financial, regulatory, social, organizational; actions to enhance business and investment climate; timeline of efforts; roles and responsibilities.

Findings presented in this report are based on a work program which included individual interviews with local and regional stakeholders, as well as small groups of property and business interests; analysis of prevailing market conditions and anticipated demand among various land uses and product types; and reconnaissance of targeted investment sites and areas.

From this work, conclusions were drawn regarding market prospects in the near- and mid-term, along with public sector roles and resources necessary to realize desired outcomes. Final recommendations were shared with officials, participants in the process, business owners, and residents to gauge the community's receptivity. A second presentation of this information was provided remotely for individuals unable to attend the first meeting.

Discovery

WHAT THE TEAM SAW The Consulting Corps team was impressed with the incredibly friendly people of Bangs and the warm welcome they extended. That this community is very close where "everyone knows everyone" is readily apparent. Exceptional in this small town is the deeply shared history of the residents. An unusual number of people reported coming to Bangs to care for a parent and then stayed. Accordingly, people not only know each other, they also know each other's families and generational stories about those families.

Bangs calls itself "*America's Small Town*," and immediately evident is residents' affection for the small farm town experience despite some inconveniences. Exceptional volunteerism from many was noted, as were many instances of neighbors helping each other and coming together to both solve problems and celebrate holidays. Given this history, the older age of the population is not surprising. Statistically, it shows up as a median age of 41.3 years versus 35.4 years in Brownwood and 34.8 years in Texas overall. While this longevity has strengthened social ties, it also presents opportunities to address the capacity of the community to generate revenue, provide resources, attract newcomers and inspire innovation.

Driving into Bangs the team immediately noticed the dilapidated condition of the roads, landscaping and buildings. Post-pandemic, many communities suffered from closed shops and empty buildings, but in Bangs the downtown was almost entirely vacant with buildings worn down, holding trash and storage, and seemingly abandoned. This disinvestment was also evident on the tour throughout town where the norm was moderately priced homes and neighborhoods, but too many in deteriorated condition. The team observed trash and equipment in yards, buildings clearly needing repair, unkempt yards, few sidewalks, and streets in poor condition. The investment areas such as the ball fields and the school complex were highlights and showed what could be achieved when attention had been directed to an area.



The panelists concluded with the observation of the “good bones” of the town and optimism that much could be done to reenergize the community. Specifically, the highway access, close proximity to amenities in Brownwood, coherent street grids, historic structures and scale of downtown, the good schools, the attractive recreational facility, the history of community engagement and events, and the stable community are all attributes that support revitalization.



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WHAT THE TEAM HEARD The stakeholder interviews were illuminating, particularly regarding consistently raised concerns. The first issue on the list is the cost of housing. Home prices in Bangs generally range from \$65,000-\$125,000, but the current high cost of building makes even standard home construction and repairs unaffordable for many residents. The term often heard was “livable housing,” the demand and challenge of safe, comfortable, functional shelter. Also discussed was the limited range of housing, with few choices other than single family residences which need maintenance and attention. The recently built apartments at Cannon Courts are reportedly fully leased with a waiting list.

Also of concern was the state of the downtown. Long-time residents noted that it wasn’t always like this; saying not so long ago, there were offices and shops such as a barber shop, hardware store, restaurants, bakery, and clothing store. Over time, evidently, the declining activity came with an aging and declining

population, lack of investment, competition from a new Walmart nearby in Brownwood, and continuing growth and amenities in surrounding small towns as well as in Early and Brownwood.

The interviewees were concerned about a loss and lack of image and identity for the town, as well. With a faded downtown and fewer and dispersed community events, the unique draws and resident pride in the area have been damaged. “What we need is something you can’t get in Brownwood” was one thoughtful suggestion. Marketing built on the idea of affordability was another suggestion.

Communication with local government and among residents and businesses often came up in conversations. Especially vital in small towns without a local newspaper, lack of communication was a big complaint. Interviewees didn’t feel as involved in the community, or knowledgeable about the issues, rationale for actions, new initiatives, needs and opportunities as they would have liked.

Another general frustration expressed was the lack of, or quality of, “follow-through” on town plans and policies. Examples cited included the delay of long-needed street repairs and the inconsistent application of recent code enforcement regulations.

Closely tied to the “follow-through” concern was the need for leadership. This issue first focused on the small size of town staff and some ineffective or unenforced policies, but also extended to civic leadership which seemed to be dwindling with the age of the population. “Somebody needs to” was a common refrain. Despite generations of citizens compensating for low municipal budgets through volunteerism, the attitude in the interviews often seemed removed and tired.

And of course, the need for strategies to secure more resources of every kind was a frequent refrain. Stakeholders expressed the need for more resources to fix up houses, for utilities and streets, to restore downtown, and for more city staff and programs.

Bangs Trade Area Demographic Trends

A trade area is the geography within which projects draw from and compete for most of their residents, customers, or tenants. Several determinants are used to define the boundaries of a trade area, some unique to the specific use or product type and others more universally applicable.

Because Bangs is a small market in a relatively remote location, drive times are an effective way to determine the potential trade area “draw” of local businesses. **Figure 1** illustrates the extents of 5-, 10- and 30-minute drive times from Bangs. For the purposes of market demand estimates, a trade area between 10- and 30-minute drive times was analyzed as it includes areas between Bangs’ closest competitors— Brownwood and Santa Anna. This trade area encompasses most of Brown County.

Figure 1 Bangs Trade Area

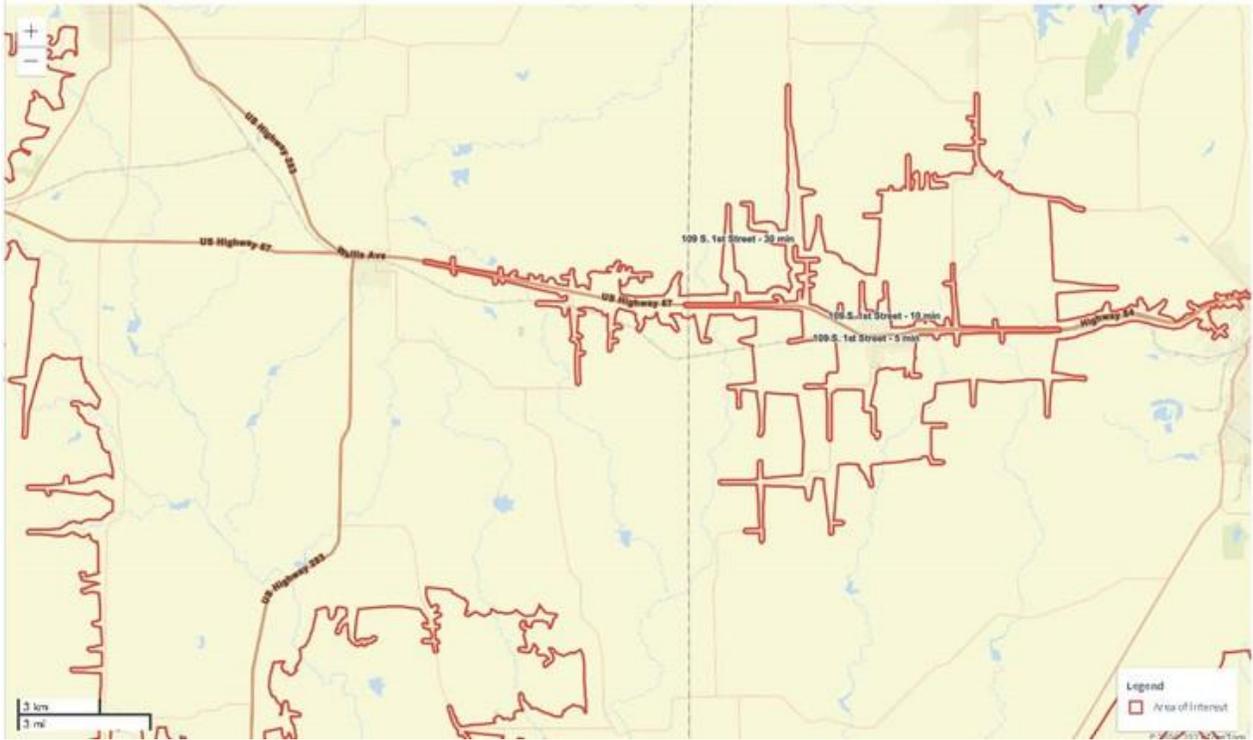


Table 1 summarizes demographic characteristics for the City of Bangs, as compared to Brown County. Following are observations from these characteristics:

- The City of Bangs (the City) is expected to grow at a comparable average annual rate as Brown County (the County) over the next 10 years (0.5%).
- The City has a lower share of one- and two-person households, but a higher share of non-family households as compared to the County. One- and two-person and nonfamily households usually comprise the majority of rental households in a market. The City does have a much higher average household size than the County (2.73 and 2.49, respectively), perhaps an indication that the City’s higher share of non-family households is resulting in more persons per living unit. Overall, the City and County have similarly sized renter populations (34% and 35%, respectively).
- The City has a much lower share of residents 65 years and over than the County (15% and 21%, respectively), but a similar share of residents 25-44 years (22% and 22%, respectively). Not surprisingly, the City has a significantly lower median age (41.3) than the County (42.9), indicating a higher share of established residents in the County, primarily in pre-retirement and retirement age groups.
- The City skews toward significantly lower average household incomes (\$57,700 and \$70,200, respectively) and education levels (percent holding a bachelor’s degree at 12% and 19%, respectively), as compared to the County.

- The City has a similar level of ethnic diversity as the County, with both showing 24% of the population identifying as Hispanic.

Table 1 Bangs Trade Area Demographic Profile

2022 Indicator (unless otherwise noted)	City of Bangs	Brown County
2023 Population	1,653	38,400
2023 Households	592	15,900
Annual Household Growth Rate (2023 to 2033)	0.5%	0.5%
Average Household Size	2.73	2.49
Percent Non-Family Households	35%	31%
Percent One- and Two-Person Households	62%	65%
Percent Renter-Occupied	34%	35%
Percent Age 65+	15%	21%
Percent Age 25-44	22%	22%
Median Age	41.3	42.9
Percent With Bachelors Degree	12%	19%
Average Household Income	\$57,700	\$70,200
Percent With Income Below \$25,000	27%	22%
Percent With Income Over \$100,000	14%	20%
Percent Hispanic	24%	24%
Percent Black/African-American	5%	8%
Percent Native American	1%	1%

Source: U.S. Census; American Community Survey; Texas State Demographer; and Ricker | Cunningham.

An analysis of the current performance of real estate products within an overall market, as well as competitive projects within a trade area, provides an indication of whether a property or area may be ready for new development and/or redevelopment. It also helps to identify potential gaps in the market—niches that new development and/or redevelopment could fill. To identify potential future market opportunities, given the City’s competitive position and prevailing market conditions, market demand estimates were prepared for residential, retail, and employment (office and industrial) land uses over the next 10 years.

Residential Demand Estimates. Demand for residential units in the City is a function of projected household growth across a wider geography – in this case, the Trade Area. In other words, the City will compete with other locations in the Trade Area as a potential home for newly formed households, whether they arise through natural increase or net in-migration.

Based on current and anticipated home ownership and rental rates, there should be demand in the Trade Area for approximately 700 additional ownership housing units and 300 additional rental units over the

next 10 years (see Table 2). Ownership units include both single family detached and attached units (townhouse, condominium, rowhome, loft, patio home, etc.).

Table 2 Residential Demand Estimates (2023-2033)

Residential Demand Analysis					Households	2023	19,200		
Bangs Trade Area (Brown County)						2033	20,182	Annual Growth Rate	0.5%
10-yr Demand Estimates					Household Growth (2023-33)		982	Adjust for 2nd homes, demolition, vacancy	1%
					Adjusted Unit Requirement		992	% Rental	30%
					Trade Area Demand from New Households (10-yr)				
Annual Household Income Range (2022 dollars)	Approximate Rent Range	Supportable Home Price Range	Current Households in Income Bracket	New Households by Income Bracket	Total Units	Estimated % Rental	Total Rental Units	Total Ownership Units	
up to \$15K	up to \$375	up to \$75K	11%	10%	99	80%	79	20	
\$15-25K	\$375 - \$625	\$75 to \$100K	13%	12%	119	65%	77	42	
\$25-35K	\$625 - \$875	\$100 to \$150K	11%	10%	99	50%	50	50	
\$35-50K	\$875 - \$1,250	\$150 to \$200K	16%	16%	159	30%	48	111	
\$50-75K	\$1,250 - \$1,750	\$200 to \$250K	17%	18%	179	20%	36	143	
\$75-100K	\$1,750 - \$2,250	\$250 to \$350K	12%	13%	129	5%	6	122	
\$100-150K	\$2,250 - \$3,250	\$350 to \$500K	13%	13%	129	2%	3	126	
\$150K and up	\$3,250+	\$500K and up	7%	8%	79	2%	2	78	
Totals			100%	100%	992	30%	300	692	

Source: U.S. Census; Texas State Demographer; and Ricker|Cunningham.

Retail/Restaurant/Service Demand. Support for retail space is derived from two sources – the “recapture” of expenditures by residents of the Trade Area that occur outside the Trade Area, referred to as “leakage,” and expenditures by new residents of the Trade Area resulting from household growth. As shown here, there is “leakage” within several retail categories, potentially supporting an additional 16,000 square feet of space. Expenditure by new residents of the Trade Area resulting from household growth could potentially support an additional 7,000 square feet of space over the next 10 years (see Table 3).

Table 3 Retail / Restaurant / Service Demand Estimates (2023-2033)

Retail Category	Estimated 2023 Household Retail Demand	Estimated 2023 Retail Sales (Supply)	Estimated 2023 Retail Void (Leakage)	Estimated Retail Sales/s.f.	New Retail Space Needed to Recapture Void / Leakage	Annual Household Growth Rate (2023-2033)	Net New Household Retail Demand	New Retail Space Needed for Household Growth	Total 10-Year New Trade Area Retail Demand (s.f.)
Furniture & Home Furnishings	\$1,563,909	\$247,827	\$1,316,082	\$250	5,264	0.5%	\$79,979	320	5,584
Electronics & Appliance	\$1,148,356	\$252,853	\$895,503	\$250	3,582	0.5%	\$58,727	235	3,817
Bldg Materials, Garden Equipment	\$5,475,236	\$8,727,428	\$0	\$300	0	0.5%	\$280,004	933	933
Food & Beverage (Grocery)	\$10,180,892	\$16,144,658	\$0	\$400	0	0.5%	\$520,652	1,302	1,302
Health & Personal Care	\$4,384,396	\$7,876,283	\$0	\$400	0	0.5%	\$224,219	561	561
Clothing and Accessories	\$3,036,951	\$2,495,222	\$541,729	\$300	1,806	0.5%	\$155,310	518	2,323
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, Music	\$1,009,912	\$214,947	\$794,965	\$250	3,180	0.5%	\$51,647	207	3,386
General Merchandise	\$8,839,609	\$19,132,356	\$0	\$350	0	0.5%	\$452,059	1,292	1,292
Miscellaneous Stores	\$1,465,408	\$885,247	\$580,161	\$250	2,321	0.5%	\$74,941	300	2,620
Foodservice & Drinking Places	\$8,978,156	\$9,111,589	\$0	\$350	0	0.5%	\$459,144	1,312	1,312
Total	\$46,082,824	\$65,088,410	\$4,128,440		16,153		\$2,356,682	6,978	23,130

Source: Colorado State Demographer; Urban Land Institute; Environics Analytics; and Ricker | Cunningham.

Employment Demand. Support for employment space is derived from two sources – growth / expansion among existing users in the Trade Area and the relocation of new companies into the market. Based on overall annual employment growth of 1.0%, the Trade Area could support an additional 312,000 square feet of new employment (office and industrial) space over the next 10 years (see Table 4).

Table 4 Employment Demand Estimates (2023-2033)

Industry Category	Estimated 2023 Employees	Estimated Growth Rate 2023-2033	Estimated 2033 Employees	Estimated New Employees	Estimated % in Employment Space	Estimated Net New Employees	Sq Ft per Employee	Estimated 10-yr Employment Demand
Natural Resources, Mining and Construction	810	2.3%	1,016	206	80%	165	300	49,386
Manufacturing	2,774	1.2%	3,114	340	80%	272	300	81,634
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	2,874	0.8%	3,125	251	80%	200	500	100,246
Information	108	0.2%	111	3	90%	2	300	692
Financial Activities	633	1.2%	714	81	90%	73	150	10,941
Professional and Business Services	623	1.8%	742	119	80%	95	150	14,251
Educational and Health Services	4,515	0.4%	4,710	195	50%	98	300	29,294
Leisure and Hospitality	1,556	1.8%	1,866	310	25%	78	300	23,254
Other Services	322	0.7%	344	22	80%	17	150	2,610
Government	1,055	0.0%	1,053	-2	70%	-2	300	-471
Totals	15,270	1.0%	16,794	1,524	66%	998	300	311,836

Source: Texas State Demographer; Texas Workforce Commission; and Ricker | Cunningham.

MARKET SHARE CONSIDERATIONS

Several factors influence an area’s ability to capture market share. These can be categorized as top-down considerations, bottom-up considerations, external considerations, and others. Some of the public sector (or stakeholder entities) can be controlled, and others cannot.

Top-Down Considerations

- Demand for certain land uses
- Demographic and psychographic conditions which support certain product types
- Untapped market niches (product voids)
- Competitive projects (proposed, planned and under construction)

Bottom-Up Considerations

- Physical capacity of the community / individual parcels to accommodate market-supported product types – fewer physical constraints
- Vision of the community for certain land uses
- Size of parcels, parcel ownership (public and private), owner investment objectives
- Zoning (and other regulations) and presence of easements

External Considerations

- Delivery system – who are the area’s builders / developers? What are they willing and able to offer?
- Financing markets – availability of capital with reasonable funding terms for certain product types
- Market forces beyond those currently in the market (e.g., migration of people to the Trade Area who do not represent the existing profile of residents and consumers)

Take-Aways

Within the Bangs Trade Area, which encompasses most of Brown County, demand estimates suggest a potential for new employment (office and industrial) space, retail/restaurant space, and a variety of housing product types. The opportunity exists for Bangs to capture some of this growth within the city limits.

Topics

To address the priority questions identified, the Consulting Corps team presented recommendations in four areas:

1. Infrastructure.
2. Recently Annexed Property.
3. Business and Commercial and Downtown Investment.
4. Housing and Community-Building.

Infrastructure

What kinds of infrastructure investments should Bangs prioritize, and what are possible funding sources?

Definition of Infrastructure

The Consulting Corps team first considered “what is infrastructure?” While infrastructure can be defined in many ways, for purposes of this assignment, the team classified infrastructure in three categories:

1. Physical Infrastructure.
2. Social Infrastructure.
3. Infrastructure Systems.

Physical Infrastructure is what comes to mind for most people when they think of the term infrastructure. Examples include streets, sidewalks and trails, water, wastewater, electric, gas, cable, telephone, and internet. Simply put, physical infrastructure is the availability and quality of public facilities.

Social Infrastructure includes the policies, resources and services that ensure people can participate in productive social and economic activities in their community. Examples include public and institutional facilities, public spaces, and community organizations. The people, places, and things that bring a community together constitute social infrastructure.

Social Infrastructure	
Type of Infrastructure	Example
Public and Institutional Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libraries • Schools • Playgrounds • Community Centers • Churches • Recreational Fields • Sports Courts
Public Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks • Open Space • Community Gardens • Trails
Community Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unions • Social Service Groups • Fraternal Organizations • Clubs • Chamber of Commerce

Infrastructure Systems are the basic organizational structure and relationships, policies, processes and procedures, regulations and standards, and tools and tactics that serve as the backbone of the community. Examples include type of community (home rule vs. general law), leadership structure of elected and appointed bodies, staffing needs and organization, and adopted codes and ordinances. These infrastructure systems serve as the foundation and framework that support the community and are vital to its long-term livelihood.

Infrastructure Priorities

After defining infrastructure and reviewing the existing infrastructure in Bangs, the team identified a list of priority infrastructure in which the City should invest. This infrastructure has been further categorized into short-term and long-term infrastructure investments. Short-term infrastructure investments are the items on which the city should focus within the next two years. Long-term infrastructure investments are those that can begin in two or more years. Keep in mind that infrastructure investments generate long-term benefits and thus should be viewed as *investments*, rather than merely as *expenses*. Another thing to keep in mind is that investments in community infrastructure require regular evaluation and updating as the community grows and its needs change.

*infrastructure investments generate long-term benefits and thus should be viewed as **investments**, rather than merely as expenses.*

Infrastructure Priorities

SHORT TERM	LONG TERM
I. Hire City Administrator	I. Update and/or adopt codes and ordinances (subdivision, zoning, etc.)
II. Hire Code Enforcement Officer & Implement Code Enforcement Program	II. Evaluate staffing needs and strategically budget to hire critical personnel
III. Continue Water and Street Infrastructure Improvements	III. Establish on-going educational opportunities and programs for staff, elected and appointed officials and the public
IV. Install Gateway Monumentation & Wayfinding Signage	
V. Improve Community Communications	IV. Foster relationships with neighboring communities to partner and share resources and expertise

Short-Term Infrastructure Investments

Hire City Administrator. As the Consulting Corps was preparing for its work in Bangs, the city administrator announced her departure, and the position had not yet been filled at the time of the team's visit. Therefore, the team offered recommendations regarding priority aspects of the replacement. The team was pleased to learn that the position had been filled between the team's visit and delivery of its report. Following are the team's thoughts and recommendations regarding this key role.

Bangs is not unlike most small communities throughout the country in which the city administrator is the key point of contact for the public, other city staff, and elected and appointed officials. This position serves as both the quarterback and the cheerleader for the city. It is important to hire someone who is qualified. However, as critically important but often overlooked, especially in cities of similar size, is hiring the right person.

For a community the size of Bangs, one of the most important characteristics to look for in hiring an administrator is the attitude of a "doer," not a "delegator." The ideal candidate should be customer service oriented toward everyone. The city does not have a large staff among which to delegate tasks. The City of Bangs needs someone who will step in and place the most critical issues front and center; someone with limited government operational knowledge may be more valuable than an experienced veteran. Time and experience can provide the necessary knowledge. Someone familiar with small communities, and Bangs in particular, will be an invaluable asset. Never underestimate the value of someone who is high energy and willing to get stuff done to build a better Bangs.

Address Code Enforcement. The issue of code enforcement, and its implementation, is often a controversial issue in most communities. But why? It doesn't have to be. Code enforcement, if done properly, will foster neighbors helping neighbors and holding each other accountable. The code enforcement officer can be the community hero, not the divisive enforcer.

Code enforcement, if done properly, will foster neighbors helping neighbors and holding each other accountable.

It is the Consulting Corps team's understanding that the city has adopted ordinances and regulations to help with many of the issues that have been identified throughout the city. This is a great first step. Implementation of newly adopted ordinances and regulations is a common challenge. In our experience, there are key elements to a successful code enforcement program.

- 1. COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION.** Alerting the community to the adoption and enforcement of new rules is critical. There must be notice informing the community new rules have been adopted, that the city is going to begin enforcing them, and outlining the enforcement

timeline and procedure. The team understands the city is in the process of hiring a new code enforcement officer. Once this position has been filled, the city should provide notice to the public of a community town hall meeting to introduce the new code enforcement officer. Such a meeting will also provide an opportunity to discuss the ordinances that have been adopted and will be enforced.

2. **REASONABLE TIMEFRAME FOR TRANSITION.** With the adoption of any new ordinances, rules, or regulations, there should be a “roll-out” period. The city needs to establish a reasonable timeframe for implementation and enforcement. Once the introductory period is over, the city must begin enforcing the rules in accordance with the processes and procedures outlined in the individual ordinances. This roll-out period can be an opportunity for the code enforcement officer to familiarize himself with the community, discuss issues with individual property owners to help them understand how the ordinances will be applied and establish expectations with the community.
3. **UNIFORM APPLICATION OF STANDARDS.** In the team’s experience, one of the biggest complaints or issues identified with code enforcement is the uniform application of the rules. The code enforcement officer must apply the rules and regulations equally to all properties, regardless of ownership or personal knowledge. Unequal application of rules will lose the trust of the community. It is difficult to avoid people feeling slighted or mistreated. With proper communication and education, perception does not have to become reality.
4. **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT.** One can never underestimate the value of community coming together. There is strength in unity and numbers. One of the best ways to promote code enforcement is through community clean-up days. There is plenty of publicly owned property that is currently underutilized. Coordinating with the trash companies to provide dumpsters at centralized locations will give people a choice. In a community the size of Bangs, there is no need to have restrictions for bulk items or household hazardous waste. There will always be a subset of people in the community who just don’t want to agree to enforcement. However, the code enforcement officer should be able to identify those individuals who truly need help to come into compliance with certain rules. Utilizing community volunteers from the churches and schools, the code enforcement officer could coordinate for specific assistance at specific properties as part of the community clean-up day. When schools are involved, students often receive community service hour credits. Code enforcement should be a positive aspect of the community. However, it involves a substantial amount of communication and coordination. Done successfully, code enforcement will bring the community together to make a better Bangs.

Continue Water, Sewer, and Street Improvements. In every community, the infrastructure associated with water, sewer, and streets is critical for daily living. During the Consulting Corps visit, the team heard and saw the materials associated with the planned water line replacement. It

is critical to maintain and replace aging infrastructure. The city has begun the work and needs to complete the water line infrastructure installation process.

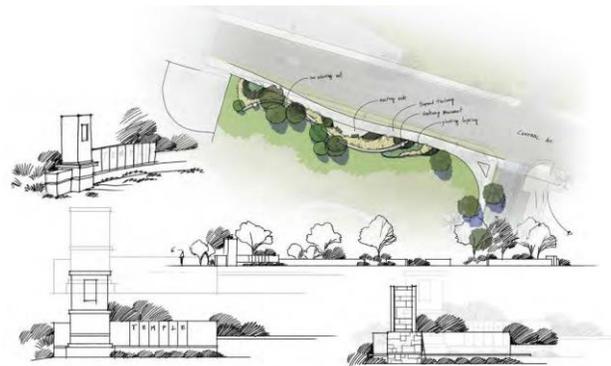
The city has begun the work and needs to complete the process of installing the water line infrastructure.

Once the city completes the water line replacement project, it should pursue additional improvements. The Counselors were also made aware of a planned bond election for street improvements to follow the water line improvements. This would be an excellent use of funds and the city should continue pursuing bond issuance. If the proposed bond measure intended to fund utility line extensions fails, consider other resources such as issuing Certificates of Obligation (COs), borrowing from traditional funding sources (at preferred municipal interest rate), or using available resources. Prioritize those located along the north side of US 67 / US 84 that would connect existing lines that currently terminate east of North Sixth Street with the newly annexed 20.14-acre site. It may take additional time, but there are resources available to assist cities in replacing aging infrastructure. The city must be willing to take the time to pursue all opportunities.

The city should also prioritize the creation of a water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure master plan. Utilities within the city should operate like a business and be self-sustaining enterprise funds. An infrastructure master plan will include an updated/current inventory of existing infrastructure as well as a plan and implementation program for long term maintenance, replacement, and construction of new infrastructure necessary as the city grows. This document should be used as the guiding document for infrastructure decisions moving forward. (See Appendix I for a list of possible infrastructure funding sources.)

Install Gateway Monumentation and Wayfinding Signage.

In recent years, we have witnessed significant growth in the installation of gateway monuments with landscaping and signage welcoming and inviting people to a community. Generally, these gateways are erected on major thoroughfares and significant streets at natural entrances into a city and contain a simple message with the city name. The City of Bangs has several areas that would make excellent locations to establish “Gateway to Bangs” signage.



Wayfinding signage identifying points of interest in a community is another component of community signage. These typically take the form of smaller signs positioned at significant intersections to direct

drivers to points of interest. In Bangs, wayfinding signage could be utilized to direct people off the highway to areas of interest such as the downtown, key locations, or focal points. As one of the stakeholders suggested to the team, “Capture people on their way to somewhere else.”

Bangs Stakeholder: "Capture people on their way to somewhere else."

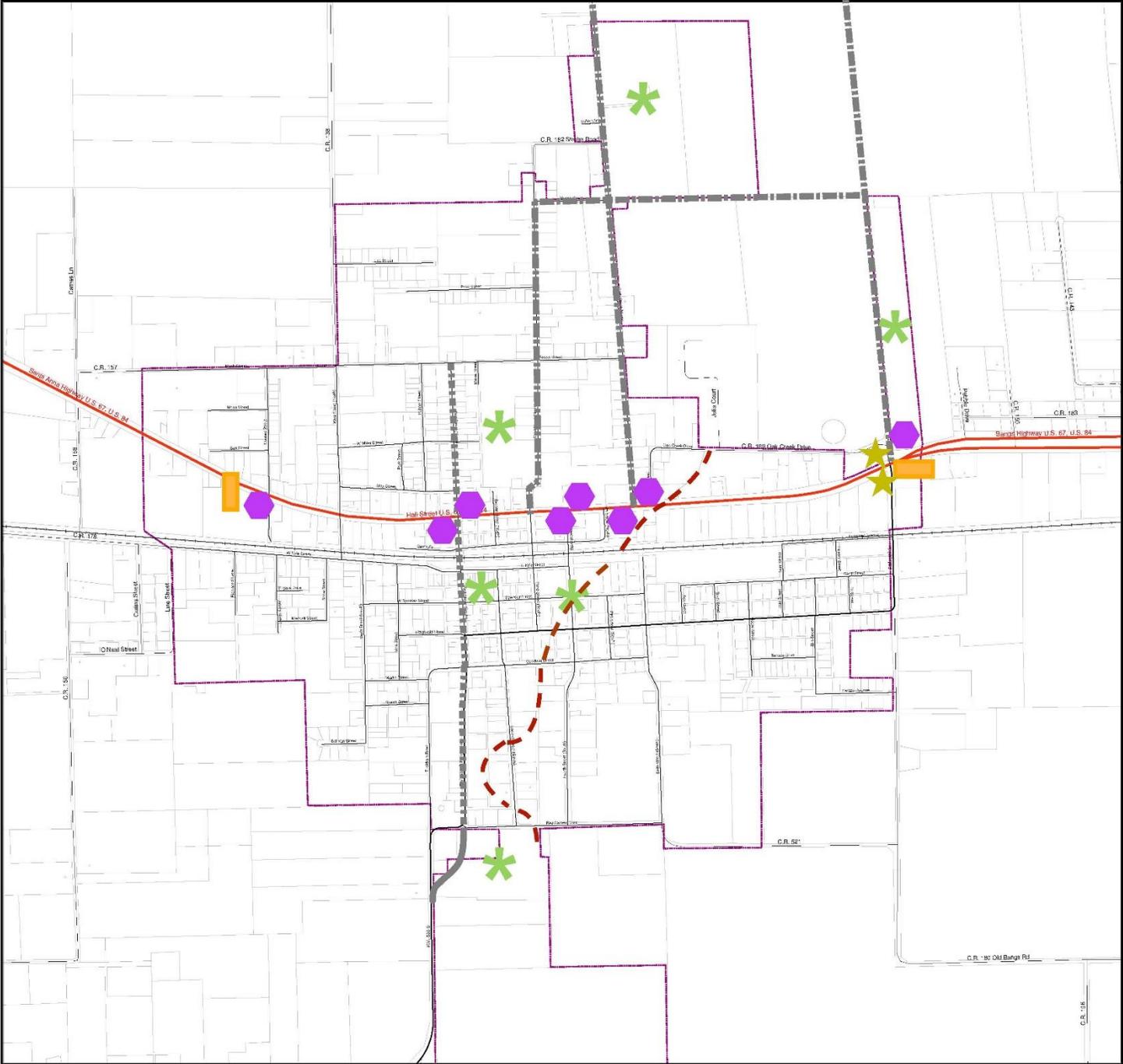
Many cities choose to have a common theme and design to the gateway and wayfinding signage. A common theme or design creates a cohesive feel when navigating through the community. Continue the theme reflected in these enhancements in all city and EDC communication and marketing materials, as well as physical improvements including non-vehicular pathways, parks, and public spaces. Should the city decide (in the future) to establish a system of branded districts and neighborhoods, ensure consistency with the theme. The team met with several residents and business owners who provided excellent suggestions and a willingness to come up with the artistic design and branding for the city’s signage. Engaging with someone local on this project will help build the overall sense of community and reflect the community’s desired identity. The following map indicates suggested signage and corridor improvements that the city could consider.

The team met with several residents and business owners who provided excellent suggestions and a willingness to come up with the artistic design and branding for the city’s signage. Engaging with someone local ... will help build the overall sense of community and reflect the community’s desired identity.

The map presented here illustrates the location of certain capital improvements and enhancements intended to support community revitalization initiatives discussed herein and contribute to the city’s existing system of infrastructure and utilities. Objectives driving these recommendations include:

1. Welcome and direct visitors and pass-through traffic.
2. Communicate a sense of character and history.
3. Establish expectations regarding building quality and design.
4. Highlight or promote centers of activity and points of interest (destinations).
5. Protect and preserve natural resources (e.g., waterways).
6. Connect public amenities and facilities.
7. Leverage private investment.

SUGGESTED LOCATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS CITY OF BANGS, TEXAS



- Points of Interest
- Gateway Monumentation
- Intersection Beautification
- Transportation Corridor Upgrades
- Wayfinding Signage
- Sidewalk & Trail Corridor / Drainage Improvements

Physical assets targeted for investment fall within five categories – points of interest, gateway monumentation and intersection beautification, transportation corridor upgrades, wayfinding and signage, sidewalk and trail improvements, utilities and infrastructure, and decorative enhancements. A description of each is provided below, along with an explanation of its purpose or intent.

- **POINTS OF INTEREST** include institutional facilities, public resources, and commercial activity that are destinations for users, visitors, and consumers, and that provide certain goods and services. Collectively, they represent a community’s portfolio of offerings; and ideally, they reflect a similar character. Those identified on the map include the recently acquired property, educational campuses and supporting athletic amenities, downtown, and sports venues.
- **GATEWAY MONUMENTATION/INTERSECTION BEAUTIFICATION** include freestanding physical structures both with and without signs, usually constructed adjacent to principal transportation thoroughfares and featuring key information about the location (e.g., city or town name, date of incorporation, population, or other). Effective examples include attractive elements such as native plants or water features and reflect the character and quality of the area’s built environment. Those identified on the map include improvements along SH 84 near the municipality’s eastern and western borders, the latter in the vicinity of the recently acquired property. Note: Given the emergence of commercial operators with the potential to dilute commercial activity downtown, and absence of vertical improvements, the team recommends pursuing acquisition of property in all four corners of the intersection, and feature components of the monumentation in each one.
- **TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR UPGRADES** include capital improvements within and adjacent to the right-of-way that promote vehicular and non-vehicular movement, host commercial activities and community events, and house utilities necessary to support private development beyond the street. Recommended investment priorities include those that enhance the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles, followed by ones that most effectively leverage desired private investment (e.g., utility extensions serving the recently acquired property).
- **WAYFINDING/SIGNAGE** includes improvements and materials to direct individuals from one point to another or confirm progress along a route (in the case of wayfinding), advertise, and provide information such as the location of facilities, activities, events, and details about certain public services. As reflected in the map, these should be concentrated along SH 84, yet provide direction to points beyond the corridor. Note: Not denoted in the map yet recommended are various decorative enhancements along those blocks downtown that support commercial enterprises, including flags, plants, and signs featuring city announcements.
- **SIDEWALK/TRAIL/UTILITY IMPROVEMENTS** include those supporting non-vehicular mobility such as sidewalks and trails, along with associated features such as lighting, landscaping, fencing, and signage, as well as ones that improve the condition and capacity of

essential utilities; those reflected in the map are intended to connect and enhance physical and natural assets.

Please note that locations identified on the map are purely suggestive and based on sound planning principles. In moving forward with implementation, use these ideas as suggestions; the team recognizes that the issues such as property ownership and easements will need to be addressed in making final determination for specific scale and placement of particular improvements.

Improve Community Communication. While perhaps obvious, we cannot overstate that communication is key. Improved communication will help raise awareness of priorities, investments, incentives, and events, and serve as an opportunity for information-gathering, solicitation of community input, etc. Enhanced communication can strengthen relationships and enhance community-building. Some of the communications tools and tactics that the team heard proposed by local stakeholders or that the team has seen in other places include:

- Inserts in water bills.
- City website.
- Social media.
- “Bangs Beat” insert in Brownwood newspaper.
- Community survey.
- Resident forums such as:
 - Coffee with the Mayor.
 - Biannual town hall meeting.
- Community events (Mayfest, Halloween, rodeo, sports related, etc.).
- Community bulletin boards, banners, electric signs.
- Church and school circulars.
- Partnering with neighboring communities.

The Consulting Corps team especially likes the idea of the “Bangs Beat.” This could be a news column about what is going on in Bangs, drafted by local high school English or journalism students, and featured as an insert in the Brownwood newspaper. In addition to promoting local businesses, sponsorship and advertising revenue can be used to help offset the costs of publication.

Bangs may not have the full resources and capability to promote and market Bangs on its own but should seize the opportunity to partner with surrounding communities. The city should utilize relationships with neighboring communities to pool resources and promote the region collectively, ensuring that contributions made by Bangs are being utilized for Bangs.

Long-Term Infrastructure Investments

Address Codes and Ordinances. Bangs currently does not have adopted standard zoning, subdivision, or other development regulations. After 18 months, the City administrator should start prioritizing adoption of these regulations if they have not already done so. To aid in this undertaking, engage third party consultants who can assist in drafting and implementing these regulations. Professionals with experience working in communities similar to Bangs in terms of size, geography, and economic circumstances, can review existing regulations and policies and prepare recommended amendments that ensure consistency among documents as well as alignment with guidance provided in this report.

Specific resources that should be investigated include development ordinances regarding zoning for residential and commercial uses, and subdivision plats; and capital improvement plans for utility and infrastructure line extensions. Make sure allowances are in place for a range of product types in several categories (residential, commercial, mixed-use) including those that may not currently exist in the market, and that variances may be permitted should development proposals encounter unexpected regulatory challenges. Regarding new commercial uses, make effort to reposition downtown as the city's commercial core and destination by focusing restaurant and retail investment downtown and discouraging concentrated construction of retail and/or restaurant operators elsewhere.

Hire Appropriate Personnel. Setting up the systematic and structural infrastructure of the city will come with time and the appropriate leadership. As the city grows, it should strategically budget to hire the necessary personnel to meet the needs of the community.

Provide Education & Training. Education and training are essential, not just for elected and appointed officials, but also for staff and citizens at large. Many communities have established a citizens' academy or other similar program. *Citizens' or Leadership Academies* offer a forum where different topics having to do with city government, services, and other topics are presented and discussed.

Engage in Regional Partnerships. The Consulting Corps team recognizes that Bangs is not a large community. Some of the recommendations may not be difficult for Bangs; however, other communities may have experience and knowledge in an area unfamiliar to Bangs. Partnering with neighboring communities allows for the sharing of resources and expertise to serve a larger population.

Recently Annexed Property

What is the best use of the newly annexed property? What strategies should be implemented to develop that property? How should those investments be prioritized relative to other city needs?

Property Description

According to the Official Public Records of Real Property of Brown County, Texas, fee simple title to the subject property was conveyed to Bangs Economic Development Corporation by two separate warranty deeds, both showing Ramon Solis and wife Maribelle Solis as Grantors. The deeds are included in the Appendix. The first warranty deed is dated November 9, 2009, and was filed of record December 22, 2009, as Instrument 7538 in Volume 1766, Page 294, conveying 20.14 acres of land, SAVE AND EXCEPT 0.75-acre retained by the Grantors for the purpose of maintaining thereon a mobile home. The second warranty deed is dated November 30, 2010, and was filed of record March 7, 2011, as Instrument 1304 in Volume 6, Page 352, conveying the previously retained 0.75-acre. Since the mobile home is no longer visibly situated on the subject property, it can be assumed that the Grantors removed the mobile home prior to conveyance of the 0.75-acre parcel to Bangs Economic Development Corporation.

Together, the two properties conveyed by Ramon Solis and wife Maribelle Solis to Bangs Economic Development Corporation total 20.14 acres and are situated in the F. Lilienthal Survey 22, Abstract 1155, in Brown County, Texas. Copies of both warranty deeds are included for reference purposes.



The shape of the property is a long, narrow rectangle. The property's average width is only 330.5 feet, while its average length is 2,663.0 feet. The terrain of the property is near level, with little discernible change in elevation from north to south, and only a slight rise from west to east through the middle of the site.

The southerly 20% of the property's soil is Pedernales fine sandy loam, 1 to 3 percent slopes, and is susceptible to erosion. These soils are best suited for pasture, range, woodland, and wildlife, as well as urban development. The remaining approximately 80% of the property's soil consists of Sagerton clay loam, warm, 1 to 3 percent slopes, also susceptible to erosion. The best use of these soils is like those of the Pedernales soils.

Though the southern boundary of the property adjoins U.S. Highways 84 and 67 for approximately 134.7 feet, it is extremely unlikely that access would be granted. Access to the property is gained by way of County Road 169, approximately 200 feet north of the county road's intersection with U.S. Highways 84 and 67. It is our understanding that at some point in the future, the Texas Department of Transportation intends to install a traffic signal at that highway intersection. Once completed, access to and from the property should be greatly enhanced.

Property's Highest and Best Use

Real estate is valued in terms of its highest and best use, the fundamental point on which value is based. The value conclusion is based on the highest and best use, as if vacant and as improved.

DEFINITION—HIGHEST AND BEST USE OF PROPERTY. Highest and best use is defined by *The Appraisal of Real Estate, 15th ed., Appraisal Institute, Chicago, IL, 2020, p 307* as: "The reasonably probable and legal use of vacant land or an improved property that is physically possible, appropriately supported, financially feasible, and that results in the highest value. The four criteria the highest and best use must meet are legal permissibility, physical possibility, financial feasibility, and maximum productivity. Alternatively, the property use of land or improved property – specific for the user and timing of the use – is adequately supported and results in the highest and best use. "

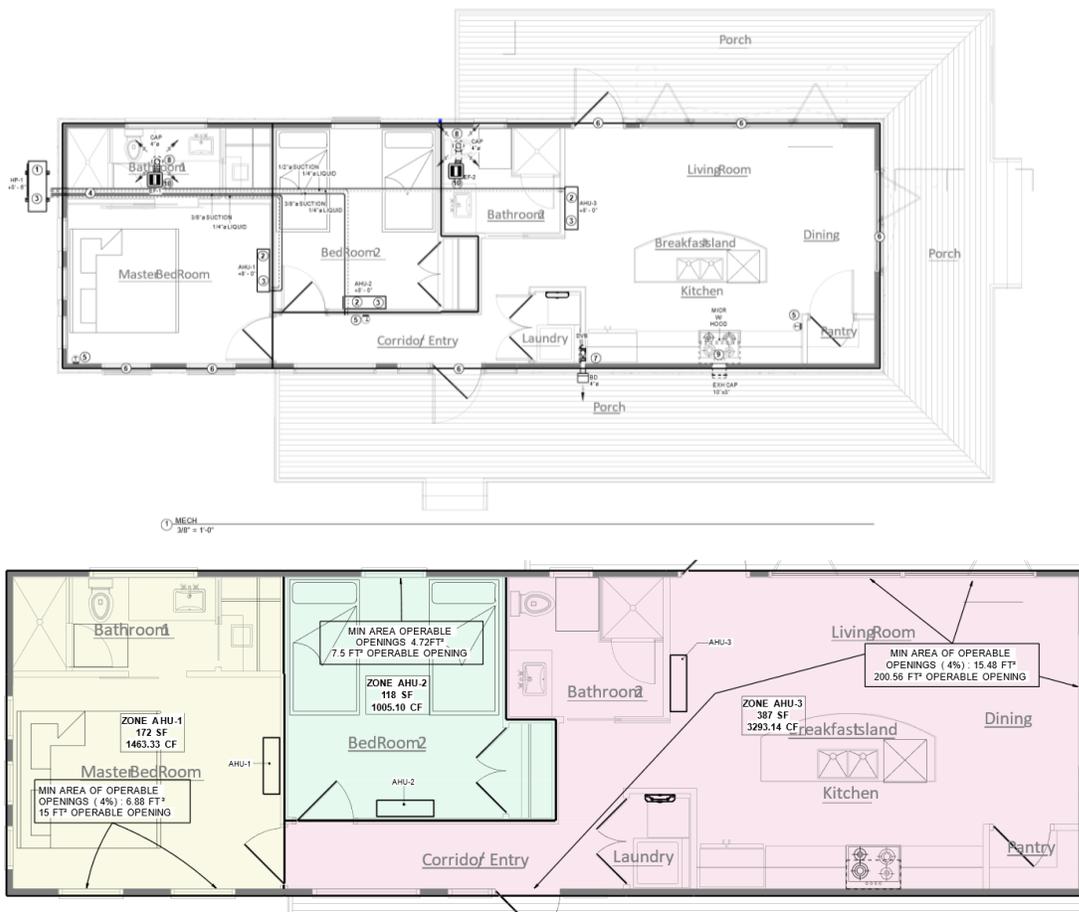
The definition implies that the highest and best use must meet four criteria: (1) legally permissible, (2) physically possible, (3) financially feasible, and (4) maximally productive. The definition suggests two separate analyses to be conducted – one assuming the land is vacant and the other as improved, if applicable. The subject property is analyzed as vacant as there are no improvements.

Though the property is within the corporate limits of Bangs, Texas, it is not subject to any land use controls, such as zoning restrictions. The City of Bangs has not adopted a zoning ordinance. Therefore, the current owner, Bangs Economic Development Corporation, can put the property to any use it desires. But, from a practical perspective the highest and best use of the property is for residential development.

Based on the team’s experience, this site is not an appropriate location for industrial development. Bangs is unlikely to attract substantial investment from industrial users or major employers. However, housing is needed. Residential development will yield households spending money, supporting local businesses, and paying taxes in Bangs. Furthermore, the team recommends the entire parcel be developed for housing (and not business/commercial). Keep the focus on concentrating businesses in downtown Bangs.

The community of Bangs needs new, livable, quality homes that are priced to be affordable for local residents and workers: single-family detached multi-family, duplex, single-family attached, and townhomes could be appropriate. Also, consideration could be given to a relatively new housing concept – tiny homes.

Tiny Homes Floorplan Concept



Funding offsite utility extensions is one incentive to attract developers. Other potential incentives include tax abatements and expedited permit processing. Additional tools and resources are described in the Appendix. When presenting the vision for the development, be open to alternative product types (such as tiny homes), design that offers shared public space, and untapped price points. Publish the RFQ and send it to professionals engaged in the real estate industry. After receiving the responses and potentially conducting a few interviews, use the input heard to dictate timing regarding construction of the infrastructure.

Establish a Development Incentive Program

An excellent way to attract developers is through an incentive program. For instance, establishing designated Empowerment Zones and Neighborhood Districts will encourage redevelopment, diversification, and improved housing stock. Through the implementation of this type of incentive program, developers may facilitate new housing construction for single family structures and/or rental investments.

Incentives can be made available for properties located within the corporate limits of Bangs. Some of the incentives that should be considered are:

- Waiver of platting, zoning, and permit fees (up to \$2,000).
- Waiver of water and wastewater tap fees.
- Roll-off container rental and service fees.

In considering when to offer incentives, a list of potential guiding principles is included in the Appendix. A similar program can be used for infill redevelopment throughout the City of Bangs.

Another financial tool would be to collateralize existing assets to facilitate financing. The EDC could put up the land as collateral to assist with construction financing. Then, once the home is sold or financed, the payment would be due to the City of Bangs for the cost of the platted lot.

In addition, the City of Bangs should address development approvals processes and costs. Consider implementing a streamlined permitting process; assisting with the coordination between property owners and inspectors, as well as managing expectations regarding response time can be helpful. Expedited permit processing can be a meaningful benefit to encourage development. In addition, it may be helpful to offer discounted permit and inspection fees. Consider these incentives as investments in the growth of the community. Incentives are NOT unrecoverable costs.

Address Processes

1. **ENSURE THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE.** Individual decisions to invest in development are broadly influenced by market demand, the cost and availability of

financing, physical capacity of a property to support a specific type of product, local attitudes and public support, and the likelihood of receiving entitlement approvals in a timely manner. It is the City's responsibility to ensure private interests have a positive experience working with staff and community leaders, keeping in mind their experience begins with the person at the front desk and continues through their interactions with the mayor and members of the council. To this end, always have a point person identified to assist with applications, respond to questions, and ensure requests are processed efficiently and in a timely manner.

2. **STREAMLINE PROCESSING OF DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS.** An efficient land use entitlement application and review program provides benefits to both the public and private sectors. From a public sector perspective, it saves staff time, expedites construction that translates into new revenue, and elevates their credibility as a sound partner. From a private perspective, it saves money by shortening the holding period, limits the number of opportunities for project comments and costly revisions, and increases the potential their project will be favorably received. An effective streamlined program has leadership and staff support, relies heavily on documentation and defined systems, and publishes expectations and timelines. Those engaged in the process should be committed to its success and held accountable when it does not work. An example is available in the Appendix.
3. **TAKE A PRIVATE SECTOR PERSPECTIVE.** Comprehensive and area-specific planning initiatives such as this one often come at a time when demands on local government are high and resources limited. However, they are essential for a certain level of order and sound decision-making. As stated above, multiple forces, internal and external, public and private, are continually impacting decisions that affect growth and development. To achieve some degree of predictability, public sector officials must understand the private sector's perspective regarding these matters to anticipate and eliminate potential obstacles. Promoting and securing new investment in a community cannot be the beginning and end of the public sector's responsibilities. It must include a shared understanding of conditions that drive up project costs, and willingness to offset extraordinary expenses in the furtherance of specific outcomes. Work conducted in the context of this assignment should provide early insights, but these insights need to be supplemented with input from a variety of voices involved in the development process from planning and finance to construction and operations.

Take Action. The team's best advice is to take action; establish a comprehensive portfolio of incentives, and actively pursue development opportunities. Engage with the local developer proposing tiny homes to address unanswered questions. As appropriate, reach out to other residential developers active in Brown County.

Business and Commercial and Downtown Investment

What tools could encourage increased commercial activity and downtown revitalization?

Essential Components of a Successful Small Downtown

As explained earlier in this report, recommendations proposed in response to the community's questions were based on input received from local representatives (residents and business concerns), primary research conducted by members of the Consulting Corps team, and knowledge gained from working with communities like Bangs facing similar challenges. To this end, presented below is information published by the Urban Land Institute, a leader in forecasting trends and identifying solutions for problem real estate assets. It provides a list of "essential components" found in "successful small downtowns."

1. Gateway signage.
2. Wayfinding plan.
3. Gathering places.
4. Regular calendar of events.
5. Curb appeal (accentuate the positive).
6. Brand or identity.
7. Uniform hours.
8. Technical support.
9. Fuel (constant activity).
10. Customer service training.



This list of key elements – which are addressed in this report – provides meaningful guidance to the Bangs community with comprehensive recommendations for community-wide initiatives associated with revitalization of downtowns.

Recommended Actions

Improve Communications with Business Owners. A common refrain heard during the planning for community revitalization initiatives is, "What about us ... the businesses that have already invested in the community. Why are there no incentives for us?" All too often community redevelopment and economic development efforts focus disproportionately on attracting new businesses, rather than ensuring they assist and retain existing ones. The community may have resources available to existing businesses, and the businesses may not know about those programs. To avoid these pitfalls, an early priority should be the establishment of a communications program with a variety of messages and platforms targeted to a host of audiences. Identify those audiences, and then determine characteristics that set them apart from each other or make them similar. Examples include existing or new businesses,

commercial or industrial, locally owned or franchise, temporary (pop-up) or established. With an understanding of these nuances, the City and EDC will be better prepared to understand potential challenges and opportunities and identify how it can help.

Remain Flexible in Defining Commercial Real Estate. Make sure existing regulations and ordinances allow for a range of commercial product types, both temporary and permanent. Since this type of review can take some time, in the interim, the city should establish a “pro-business” policy that ensures allowances will be made for development and/or construction proposals that are sound, but nonconforming. Examples might include home-based businesses, pop-up stores, food trucks, mobile carts, and others. The city and representatives of EDC should not only educate property owners about these concept types and affirm their support regardless of regulations, but also reach out to existing retail operators to inquire about the feasibility of their hosting certain goods (e.g., cottage industry businesses that need space to display their wares).



Pursue Business Incubator or Maker Space. Downtowns can be particularly good environments to host alternative commercial and residential products, since owners in these locations tend to be more innovative than those in conventional commercial settings that tend to attract corporate and credit tenant types. For this reason, and based on experience in other markets, the Consulting Corps team further recommends that the city and EDC begin pursuing a location downtown that could accommodate a business incubator or “maker space.” While early input regarding this concept tended to lean toward supporting food service operators, additional research should be conducted to gauge interest in other commercial constructs.



A host of monetary resources are available for these types of initiatives, including some available from the state. Details regarding who would operate the incubator, screen potential tenants, support marketing and promotion efforts, and relocate successful operators to permanent space are yet to be determined. However, an obvious role for city officials should be assisting with permitting, licensing, and compliance.

Maintain an Ongoing Schedule of Community Events. City staff, EDC members, or community volunteers can spearhead initiatives to revitalize downtown. Enlist a cheerleader to assemble a core group of individuals or organizations to prepare an annual calendar of events, identify necessary logistics involved in hosting each one, and determine the resources needed for promotion and operation. Participants interviewed by the Consulting Corps team repeatedly



referenced past events that they recognized and appreciated for the invaluable opportunities they provided to engage with residents, business owners, and visitors.

Invest in Placemaking and Prioritize Community Beautification. Continue efforts referenced earlier to establish a community brand reflected in wayfinding and gateway improvements that communicate a specific brand or heritage. In addition to concerted efforts to maintain residential and commercial properties, commit to growing a portfolio of public amenities using different locations to continue a common theme or story. The downtown environment with its gridded street system, historic structures, established businesses, and government offices will provide a perfect palette for enhancements such as benches, tables and chairs, flags, public art, decorative lighting, and other expenditures that activate the street and other public spaces; close alleys or streets for events or activities as appropriate. Many cities endeavoring to revitalize their community wonder whether early dollars are better spent promoting and supporting businesses or improving the physical environment. Unfortunately, both are necessary and inextricably connected. New, as well as unique, businesses are often drawn to locations designed for people, not vehicles, that emphasize experience over commerce.



Equally important to public amenities in these settings is the character and condition of existing structures. Members of the Consulting Corps team, as seasoned real estate professionals, are keenly aware of the monetary challenges many owners face, particularly those with properties having strong ties to the community. While an attractive appearance and consistent maintenance are imperative, their upkeep can be costly and potentially cause a hardship for their owners, especially without a consistent revenue stream to offset expenses. Mid-term strategies should include making street level spaces inviting, appealing and ideally interesting. One approach used in other communities involves **inviting artists** to occupy main street level spaces, allowing pedestrians to watch them as they work. Since buildings in the core of downtown have multiple stories, longer-term efforts should include finishes that lend themselves to alternative types of housing.

*Mid-term strategies should include making street level spaces inviting, appealing and ideally interesting. One approach used in other communities involves **inviting artists** to occupy main street level spaces, allowing pedestrians to watch them as they work.*

Revitalization of downtown Bangs will inevitably require many partnerships, patience, and time. Based on our limited understanding of circumstances that preceded our involvement, it is likely the city will need to employ different strategies to engage and encourage participation by its property owners, particularly those that reside outside of Bangs. Tools are available to help ensure certain outcomes, but the community will need to decide which ones to use to effect desired outcomes. What will be important in the near-term is demonstrating impact and commitment to long-term outcomes.

Establish a Comprehensive Portfolio of Incentive Offerings. Development costs in infill and established settings (e.g., downtowns, commercial corridors, older neighborhoods) are frequently higher, crippling projects that can also expect slower absorption and lower early project revenues. As such, and without public participation, new investment tends to occur in less restrictive and costly environments such as on “greenfield” sites or those located on the fringe of a community. To ensure an efficient pattern of growth and reinvestment in existing properties, the city and its partners should establish policies that favor infill and redevelopment, as well as assist in leveling the investment playing field.

The types of assistance suggested for Bangs include more than monetary resources. They involve a range of tools and tactics that directly and indirectly minimize project risk and maximize outcomes. Their benefits will be realized beyond the limits of individual projects, and they demonstrate a long-term commitment to the vitality and viability of the community. Experience has shown that no one project, or incentive program, will be sufficient to transform or sustain a community revitalization initiative such as this. Therefore, the city and its partner organizations should attempt to provide the broadest possible range of resources possible, both monetary and non-monetary, with the greatest potential to overcome obstacles and capitalize on opportunities. More information about resources is in the Appendix.

An added source of revenue for the community could include tax collections from online purchases. Many states, including Texas, have moved toward taxing online purchases, significantly growing the municipal budgets of some small and rural communities. In this instance, however, we believe other initiatives to be a higher priority in the near term. For future reference, and after the city’s early efforts have gained some momentum, the EDC might consider quantifying the potential contribution from local home-grown and cottage industries, and if deemed significant, seek assistance from professionals experienced in municipal finance. Materials pertaining to this topic are presented in an Appendix to this report.

Housing and Community-Building

Not directly reflected in the questions sent to the panel, but nonetheless important concerns of the interviewees were two other topics: Housing and Community-Building.

Housing

The need for livable housing in Bangs is real. It must be safe, functional, offer needed amenities, and be affordable for the residents both in terms of price and operating costs. The shortage of this housing was evident from multiple interviews and the very limited construction in recent years. It is a basic expectation that every community offer safe, attractive housing of various types both for current residents with changing lifestyle needs over the course of their lives, and to accommodate new employers, employees, and neighbors in the area.

Expand Infill Housing. Ideally, most of the increased housing would be built near downtown to support more services, places to eat, arts and entertainment, and shops. Infill housing also uses existing infrastructure and is more affordable because the cost of utilities is reduced. Once people are in a car, it's nearly as easy to drive to Early or Brownwood as to drive to downtown Bangs or other Bangs locations. Intentionally focusing on getting housing within walking distance of Main Street builds a market for shops to reopen and entrepreneurs to come. Additionally, walking paths and sidewalks suitable for children and seniors, more green space and parks, and safe lighting for walking will help build the market for downtown business.



Encourage Residential Variety. Bangs is fortunate to have several suitable parcels available near downtown, particularly if housing types other than family-oriented Single-Family Residences on large lots are considered. Not everyone has the desire or capacity to acquire and maintain such a home, especially if they do not have children. Apartments above businesses, townhouses, tiny homes (less than 700 sf), grandma units, and anchored factory-built homes are all options that Bangs could consider. Both rental and purchase options are important to offer.



Grandma units (or ADUs—Accessory Dwelling Units) seem like a particularly relevant building opportunity for Bangs. These are usually small studios with bathroom, kitchenette, and their own entrance built either attached to a home (i.e. as a second level to a garage) or technically not attached to the main house. They are frequently used to house parents, or children, or even for renting out as an additional income source, particularly in retirement.

The principal obstacle to more housing development has been the cost of building. To build a typical home of 1,500 SF with three bedrooms and two baths today costs over \$200/sf including land. 1,500 SF X \$200/sf = \$300,000. With a typical 20% down payment of \$40,000, this cost is prohibitive for most Bangs residents. Fortunately, there are still strategies to get livable housing at a lower cost.

Maintain and Clean Up. First, take care of what you have. The City needs to set reasonable codes for public health and safety, communicate the requirements and timelines, and then enforce them consistently. Removing trash, debris, unused vehicles, and other forbidden items will go a long way toward enhancing property safety and value. Failed utilities, crumbling foundations, and leaking roofs are also subject to code requirements.

Community trash days and block clean up parties with outside volunteers (i.e. teens or church groups) helping seniors are a great start.

Financial assistance and incentives can help:

- Matching health and safety, home repair, and energy upgrade grants can often be funded by HUD or EPA programs. These needn't be large dollar amounts to make a big difference.
- Property tax freezes or caps (i.e., 5-year freeze for \$5,000+ homeowner investment) are a meaningful gesture toward helping residents.
- Waiving fees for permits and/or inspections in priority areas or for priority projects that meet a certain criterion.

Having churches and neighbors suggest people who might welcome assistance but don't know about the services and funds available can also help address problem properties.

Don't Overly Restrict locations, fabrications, and types of allowed housing.

Already mentioned are Tiny Homes—fully functional stand-alone homes ranging from 300-700sf. Even at 700 sf, a tiny house would cost \$140,000—which falls within in a more realistic price range for many Bangs residents. In addition, a duplex home offers significantly increased affordability and can be positioned on an infill lot among single family homes, blending right into the neighborhood.

Housing on the second floor of commercial buildings—especially downtown—should be encouraged. The hardest thing for a building is to sit vacant. These buildings hold so much historic identity for the Bangs community, and the need for more downtown customers (vs. highway customers) is so great, that this is a natural fit. Building owners can earn additional rent to offset renovation expenses. Historic preservation loans and grants at the state and national level are commonly used to also offset the development costs.

Also, prefabricated, and modular housing construction is a widely used industry innovation that reduces building costs and offers many advantages to on-site “stick-built” homes. Quality control is often better, utilities and energy saving systems can be incorporated in the structure, and both construction and installation time are dramatically shorter than conventional construction. These homes, built on a foundation, are as durable as stick-built and offer very attractive design options for homes of any size.



Community-Building

There is much to do to bring back the vibrancy of Bang’s earlier years. The nature of small towns is that money and town staff will always be limited. But capacity can be greatly expanded when there is a shared commitment in the community to do so. As the memory of a thriving Bangs fades, the task of energizing the citizens and businesses to work together to that end can become harder.

Bangs Must Support Bangs. It has always been the individuals in the community that have made this town work, either through their willingness to volunteer to lead new initiatives, to help others in need, to make investments in the future, to offer what they can to activate church leadership, run a community fair, repair parks, and support schools. The list goes on. That enthusiasm and action, however, seem to be waning. To rebuild that sense of working together for a better town, it is essential to understand what residents want in the first place.

Many communities, including Bangs, neglect to communicate with residents about programs, planning initiatives, priorities, accomplishments, and resources. An early step to address this problem should involve understanding how different people get their news or local information, how they are connected, how accessible are different outlets, and how all of this can be improved to meet the greatest number of needs. One way to accomplish this objective is to conduct a **Community Survey**. Such a survey can provide detailed, invaluable information to help local government and organizations shape policies, priorities, investments, and programs. Texas A&M University has a highly reputable urban planning department that is often engaged to assist with drafting and administering surveys of this type. Bangs would do well to start there.

Expand Communications. In the meantime, local government and community communications need to be improved, as discussed previously. Keeping the town website up to date with meeting schedules, events, and initiatives is harder than it sounds, but an essential first step.

Digital newsletters on a regular schedule sent to all residents, or printed and included in monthly water bills would also broaden understanding and help keep citizens informed. One approach is to use Zoom to record and post online City Council, EDC and MDD meeting to facilitate public access. A local

newsletter, or even a “Bangs Beat” periodic insert in the Brownwood paper, would also improve community communications and Bangs’ visibility in the market. These written newsletters don’t necessarily have to all fall to town staff. It is an excellent opportunity for volunteer reporters, writers, and editors, perhaps working with students, to share their skills and make a visible contribution to the town.

Host Community Events. And finally, there is no better way to build community than to bring people together in person. Panelists found that annual celebrations like Mayfest were frequently described, and their loss mourned. While a big undertaking for the dedicated citizens who ran it, the in-person nature of this event in the historic downtown was perhaps its biggest appeal and kept it going for decades. Smaller gatherings for special purposes are also a draw: dog races, frisbee throwing contests, musician’s night, artist shows, chess games, flea markets, Halloween costume dances—it all depends on what the Community Survey shows people want. And the more that is done downtown—closing streets when necessary and reinforcing the small-town experience—the better.

Conclusion

Bangs is a small town with a long history, connected and committed citizens, and a need for reinvigoration. An affordable bedroom community, it has numerous assets including highway access, close proximity to amenities in Brownwood, coherent street grids, historic structures and scale of downtown, good schools, an attractive recreational facility, history of community engagement and events, and a stable community. However, it lacks a clear identity, even among some of its citizens. It also has an aging population, fewer young people and young families, and less volunteerism than in the past. Professional government leadership, chiefly a City Administrator, has been intermittent in recent years, and the resulting gaps are evident. Yet, there are growth and revitalization opportunities.

The recent annexation of an attached 20.14-acre parcel raised the question of whether this could be a valuable opportunity to restore Bangs to its past vibrancy, or whether downtown and infrastructure projects should be the priority. The team sees this property as an opportunity – an opportunity to foster development, increase housing options, attract new residents, and inspire energy.

And, at the same time, the team recommends several actions to encourage increased commercial activity and downtown reinvestment. Some of these recommendations include improving communications with business owners, creating a business incubator, installing gateway and wayfinding signage, maintaining an ongoing schedule of community events, and investing in placemaking and community beautification. Furthermore, housing on the second floor of downtown buildings can provide building owners with additional income and encourage more people and activity downtown.

The team recommends that Bangs encourage a diversity of housing and business development options. Don't set rules (ie. zoning, regulations) that are too restrictive. Rather, permit both for-sale and for-rent, and allow for a range of product types such as single-family, multi-family, duplex, townhomes and other forms of attached housing. Smaller homes, including tiny homes, can offer quality housing at lower prices. Don't overly restrict locations, fabrications, and types of allowed housing. In addition, avoid overly restricting entrepreneurial enterprises, such as home-based businesses and pop-ups.

The team cannot stress enough the importance of communication throughout the process. Effective communication will strengthen relationships and enhance community-building. Several tools and tactics were mentioned. The team especially liked the idea of "Bangs Beat," a news column featured as an insert in the Brownwood newspaper. It will also be important for Bangs to utilize relationships with neighboring communities to leverage resources for regional promotion.

There is much to do to bring back the vibrancy of Bang's earlier years. Start with a community survey to gather the necessary information needed to shape policies, priorities, investments, and programs. Expand communications, including an up-to-date website and digital newsletters, to keep citizens informed. And last, but not least, recognize the importance of bringing people together through community events.

The CRE Consulting Corps team took a pragmatic and specific approach to its recommendations. There is much to be done, and even more that CAN be done. While the report offers many suggestions based on its observations in Bangs and known successes in similar communities, the recommendations outlined in this report provide actionable steps that Bangs leaders can implement to attract investment and strengthen the community.

Bangs has “good bones” with a lot to build on in terms of physical and social infrastructure. Renewed focus and bold leadership will make a big difference. Keep at it. Bangs can indeed be as good as, and probably better, than ever.

Appendix I—Potential Funding Sources and Programs

Product Development and Small Business Incubator Fund (State)—a revolving loan program financed through original bond issuances. The primary objective of the program is to aid in the development, production, and commercialization of new or improved products and to foster and stimulate small business.

EDC | MDD (Low Interest Loans, Grants, Subordination) (State/Federal)—loans for construction, acquisition, operation, etc. are offered to qualifying individuals or organizations at a preferred interest rate; subordination – securitization by a public (city/county), private (lender), or semi-private organization of a loan, thereby providing a guarantee to the principal lending organization that in the event of default debt service will be paid.

Micro Loan Program (State)—small amounts of capital usually less than \$2,500 provided to very small businesses for a wide range of capital needs including façade improvements, working capital, and personal needs; also provides loan guarantees.

National Main Street Program (Federal)—financial and advisory assistance for downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts desiring preservation and advancing economic development strategies; affiliated with the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) (Federal)—incentive program for federally insured lending institutions to use with development financing for local projects (particularly those in economically distressed areas); assistance usually offered at a favorable rate; institutions earmark a percent of their lending dollars for the program.

Loan Pool (Lending Pools) (Local)—capital pledged by several entities for use by targeted business or industry groups; possessing shared goals and eligibility criteria; and offered at low or no interest, with risk spread among participating entities; and organized formally or on a case-by-case basis.

Chapter 380/381 Loan or Grant (State-Authorized)—program that authorizes municipalities to offer incentives including loans and grants of city funds or services at little or no cost, to stimulate business and commercial activity.

Neighborhood Empowerment Zone (NEZ) (State-Authorized)—program that provides incentives like building permit fee waivers and municipal property tax abatement to homeowners, investor-owners, and developers proposing new construction projects or rehabilitation projects that are located within a designated NEZ area. A municipality may create a neighborhood empowerment zone covering a part of the municipality if the municipality determines the creation of the zone would promote the creation of affordable housing and an increase in economic development in the zone.

Public Improvement District (PID) (State-Authorized)—both an organizing and financing technique to assist with revitalization of a designated area or district through provision of a stable stream of income for activities and projects considered special or additive to general municipal services and financed by fees.

Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program (Federal/State)—established in 1976 and administered by the National Park Service (NPS) in partnership with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and Texas Historical Commission (THC); a federal tax credit worth 20 percent of the eligible rehabilitation costs available for buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program (State)—established through Texas House Bill 500 during the 83rd Texas Legislative Session and made effective on January 1, 2015; a new state historic tax credit worth 25 percent of eligible rehabilitation costs and available for buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places, as well as Recorded as a Texas Historic Landmark or Texas State Antiquities Landmark; administered jointly by the Texas Historical Commission (THC) in cooperation with the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts.

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) (State-Authorized)—a district that obtains funds from increases in regular tax revenues that arise from new development in a designated area; incremental tax revenues collected over a designated base year are diverted into a special fund to generate revenue for investments; may be used in conjunction with resources from a municipal bond issuance and pledged to repay debt service, or allocated to an administering agency to finance redevelopment activities.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) (Federal)—federal grant administered through local or regional offices and designed to lower the overall cost of projects that must demonstrate an ability to improve economic conditions.

Concentrated Public Facilities (Local)—activity whereby municipal investments in facilities, publicly sponsored developments, and amenities located places where infill development is desired; considered a fiscally prudent practice whereby public dollars are used to leverage strategic investment and assist developers with underwriting requirements.

United States Department of Agriculture (Small Business Loans and Grants) (Federal)—program of the USDA for small and rural communities whereby partnerships are forged to funding projects that bring housing, community facilities, business guarantees, utilities, and other services; includes technical assistance and financial backing for rural businesses and cooperatives to create quality jobs, and promote the President’s National Energy Policy and nation’s energy security by “engaging the entrepreneurial spirit of rural America in the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency improvements.”

Community Trust—a fund acquired from bequests, the resources of which are used for the general betterment of the inhabitants of a community.

Land Swap, Donation, Write-Down (Local Practice)—tactics used to direct growth and development whereby cities can offer an exchange of city-owned land of similar value in alternate location; and public (city/county), private developer, or semi-private organization contributes land to a project either as a donation without an expected return, or at a reduced price; city-acquired property through fee simple transactions and foreclosures are an obvious source for land contributions.

Development Fee Waivers (Local)—municipal fees charged and intended to recoup a portion of the capital and operating costs required to review, approve, process, and support a project; often captured when approval is granted for sewer/water hook-ups, construction and building permits are issued, or other authorization provided by the municipality; decision to waive or delay payment provides a monetary incentive to the developer by improving their predevelopment cash flow.

Infrastructure Cost Participation (Local)—cost of infrastructure constructed either on- or off-site and necessary to support a project is shared by the developer and/or property owner with the public organization requiring the improvement; investment deemed to benefit interests beyond the project itself; may be offered through a formal program or on a case-by-case basis.

Ad Valorem/Property Tax Exemption (State) – authorized in Title 1 Chapter 11, Subchapter A, of the Texas Property Tax Code and including a variety of partial or total (absolute) exemptions from appraised property values used to determine local property taxes; a partial exemption removes a percentage or a fixed dollar amount of a property’s value from taxation while a total (absolute) exemption excludes the entire property from taxation.

Streamlined Development Approvals (Local)—initiative by government entity to facilitate a timely approval of certain project types or development desired in a certain location; also referred to as a “green-tape” permitting program; critical elements often include: streamlined permit and entitlement process, greater predictability, fairness in fees and exactions, appointed case manager, participation by multiple department representatives, waived or reduced fees, reduced number of changes, fewer conflicting comments, and a single hearing.

Taxation of Online Purchases. Background information and relevant articles:

- [Texas Tax Law Excerpt pertaining to taxation of online purchases - Sales and Use Tax Collection on Internet Sales: An Issue Brief from Legislative Budget Board Staff](#)
- [Online shopping can redistribute local tax revenue from urban to rural America - ScienceDirect](#)
- <https://www.salestaxinstitute.com/resources/wayfair-sues-colorado-city-and-department-of-revenue-over-undue-burdens-on-out-of-state->

[taxpayers#:~:text=Wayfair%20LLC%2C%20the%20defendant%20in%20the%20landmark%202018,the%20standards%20laid%20out%20in%20the%202018%20case](#)

- <https://www.thetelegraph.com/opinion/article/online-sales-tax-save-local-businesses-communities-18206093.php#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20primary%20reasons%20online%20sales%20taxes,required%20to%20collect%20sales%20tax%20in%20certain%20jurisdictions>
- [Data on Silverthorne tax revenue](#)

Appendix II—National Association of REALTORS® Resources

The National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) has a number of resources available to state and local REALTOR® associations through the REALTOR® Party that might be useful in keeping the momentum going once The Counselors of Real Estate’s Consulting Corps final report is received. The goal of these resources is to enable REALTORS® to strengthen ties with their community, to develop relationships with public officials, and to spur economic growth and development. REALTOR® associations can apply for these programs to bring these resources to their community.

[Smart Growth Grants](#)

Smart Growth Grants support state and local REALTOR® Associations’ efforts to advance programs, policies and initiatives aligned with one or more of the [10 Smart Growth Principles](#). Applications open January 2 through October 15, 2024, or until commitment levels reach 100%.

[Housing Opportunity Grants](#)

Housing Opportunity Grants support state and local REALTOR® Associations’ activities that create or improve systems, programs, and policies that expand access to housing that is affordable. The goal of the program is to position REALTORS® as leaders in improving their communities by creating affordable housing opportunities. Applications open January 2 through October 15, 2024, or until commitment levels reach 100%.

[Placemaking Grants](#)

Placemaking Grants fund state and local REALTOR® association led projects that create new, outdoor public spaces and destinations in a community on unused or underused sites and create new public gathering places. Support for benches, playground equipment, and signs within existing public spaces is permitted. Applications open January 2 through October 15, 2024, or until commitment levels reach 100%.

[Growth Polling on land use and transportation issues](#)

The State and Local Growth Polling program offers REALTOR® Associations the opportunity to conduct polling on growth-related issues in their areas. The program connects state and local associations to NAR’s public opinion firm in order to perform a survey on the opinions of the local or state residents concerning land use and transportation issues. The surveys, generally of 400 registered voters living in the defined area, can be used as a powerful tool to focus the opinions of your community for local and state government officials. Other resources may be used to boost the number of respondents by 300 for a total of 700.

Appendix III—Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles are defined as representing a broad philosophy that guides an organization throughout its life in all circumstances, irrespective of changes in its goals, strategies, type of work, or top management; they serve as a filter for decisions at all levels of the organization.

Presented below are a series of statements that could serve as guiding principles and be used to communicate and affirm a commitment to efforts that advance the recommendations, and/or discern projects meritorious of funding assistance by the city or EDC.

1. Investment and reinvestment will have sustained value and reflect the authenticity and distinctive character of the Bangs community.
2. Design and development regulations or standards intended to elevate quality levels and reflect the long-term vision for the community yet increase project costs and widen the economic feasibility gap will be offset by corresponding economic incentives.
3. Efforts to keep street level spaces occupied by a healthy mix of commercial and service businesses will be encouraged, and between tenancies, well-maintained.
4. Public expenditures will prioritize reinvestment in existing and shared facilities and infrastructure so that limited resources are effectively leveraged, and properties have a net positive impact on municipal revenues.
5. Public and private improvements will connect established neighborhoods to downtown and promote multiple modes of mobility between residential and commercial centers of activity.
6. Commercial uses located along the city's principal vehicular corridors will complement, rather than compete with, businesses in the downtown core.
7. Uses, industries, and businesses that diversify existing offerings will be encouraged and supported.
8. Community facilities, events, and activities will be deliberately programmed in certain locations to grow resident and visitor awareness and potentially investment throughout the city.

Appendix IV—Acknowledgements

We thank the National Association of REALTORS® for their support of the CRE Consulting Corps through the Transforming Neighborhoods program. We express our sincere appreciation to Laura Tilley and leadership of the Heartland REALTORS® for the warm welcome. The CRE Consulting Corps team was privileged to talk to a wide variety of stakeholders while onsite in Bangs. Some of those people are listed below, and we thank them for their time.

- Heidi Andrade, Member, Bangs Municipal Development District, Bangs Resident
- Erica Berry, City Administrator, City of Bangs
- Eric Bishop, Bangs Resident
- Michael Bush, Owner, Bangs Thrift Mart
- Marisa Craddock, Secretary, Bangs Municipal Development District
- Cathryn Davis, Texas Goldstar Real Estate
- Felicia Davis, Realtor, Pecan Valley Real Estate, Bangs Resident
- Jeremy Essary, Code Enforcement Officer, City of Early
- Gail Fitzgerald, Bangs Resident, Downtown Property Owner
- Ken Fitzgerald, Bangs Resident, Downtown Property Owner
- Harvey Gibbs, Developer/Investor in Small Towns
- Sam Gregory, Bangs Resident
- LeeAnn Grisham, Bangs Resident
- Garrett Hager, Member, Bangs Economic Development Corporation, Bangs Resident
- Wyatt Hinton, Turnkey Development
- Bill Jordan, Director of Public Works, City of Bangs
- Rhonda Louviere, Bangs Resident
- William Loyd, Councilman, City of Bangs
- Dr. Josh Martin, Superintendent, Bangs ISD
- Larry McConn, Assistant City Administrator and Director of Economic Development, City of Early
- Holly McMillian, Realtor®, Texas Goldstar Real Estate, Bangs Resident
- Jackie Randle, Governmental Affairs Director, Heartland Realtors®
- Larry Traweek, Commissioner, Brown County
- Carrol Wells, President, Bangs Economic Development Corporation
- Steve Whittenberg, Mayor, City of Bangs
- Daniel Wright, Bangs New Business Owner
- Stephanie Wright, Bangs New Business Owner

Appendix V—The Counselors of Real Estate®

The Counselors of Real Estate® is an international organization of commercial property professionals from leading real estate, finance, law, valuation, and business advisory firms, as well as real property experts in academia and government.

Counselors have created and endowed the MIT Center for Real Estate; resolved the dispute between the developer of the World Trade Center and its insurers post-September 11, 2001; led the privatization of U.S. Army Housing; developed a multi-billion-dollar, 10-year master plan for Philadelphia Public Schools; and valued both the Grand Canyon and Yale University.

Counselors practice in 22 countries and U.S. territories, with only 1,000 professionals holding the CRE® credential worldwide. Thought Leadership is a core competency of the CRE organization as exemplified by the peer reviewed journal, Real Estate Issues, and presentation of major real estate symposia in partnership with Harvard and Stanford Universities.

CRE Members. Membership in The Counselors of Real Estate is selective and extended by invitation to commercial real estate practitioners with at least 10 years of proven experience. The stringent membership criteria ensure CRE members possess:

- Recognized records of accomplishment.
- A commitment to excellence.
- Uncompromising adherence to high standards of professional conduct.
- Visionary, yet practical approaches, to real estate issues.

CRE Consulting Corps. The CRE Consulting Corps, a public service program of The Counselors of Real Estate, provides real estate analysis and action plans for municipalities, not-for-profit organizations, educational institutions, and government agencies that address their clients' real estate dilemmas and often enhance the performance of a property or a portfolio. Each Consulting Corps project is conducted by a small group of volunteer members selected for their experience and skillsets to specifically address the needs of the client. The extensive talent base available within the CRE community ensures that teams can provide expertise on virtually any real estate issue, providing:

- Feasible, achievable solutions from experienced professionals.
- Non-partisan, objective advice.
- Extremely cost-effective service.
- Advice and recommendations provided quickly on site.

Finding the Right CRE. Members of The Counselors of Real Estate, awarded the CRE credential, are available to assist with your real estate challenge. Visit the CRE website to find the right CRE at <https://cre.org/find-a-cre-search/> or contact CRE staff for assistance in identifying Counselors with the right skill sets and experience to address your need.

Appendix VI—The CRE® Consulting Corps Team



Marilee Utter, CRE

President

Citiventure Associates, LLC

Denver, CO

Marilee A. Utter, CRE, is President and Founder of Citiventure Associates, LLC, a real estate advisory firm focused on development strategy and offering expertise in public-private partnerships, transit-oriented developments, and transformational real estate. Previously she was Executive Vice President of the Urban Land Institute, a Washington, DC based global non-profit association known for real estate best practices and cutting-edge thinking. With her unique background, Utter has become a nationally known speaker, writer, and advisor on innovative approaches to community redevelopment and urban issues.



Thomas Rhodes, CRE

Principal

Mango Rhodes Land Advisors

San Marcos, TX

Thomas K. Rhodes, CRE, is a Principal with Mango Rhodes Land Advisors, a locally owned and operated boutique real estate brokerage firm based in the Austin-San Antonio corridor. He has over 16 years of experience as a development and entitlement consultant and commercial Realtor®. His firm provides commercial real estate advisory and consulting services related to entitlements, utilities, and land development. The firm concentrates on projects and properties that present opportunities to strategically maximize value through knowledge of market trends and jurisdictional development processes.



Anne Ricker, CRE

Principal/President

Ricker | Cunningham

Littleton, CO

Anne Ricker, CRE, is Owner and Managing Principal for Ricker | Cunningham, a practice of real estate economists and community strategists that specialize in assisting communities and investors in those communities with preparation of strategies for development and redevelopment, along with identification of partner roles and resources. Her extensive experience in urban redevelopment and real estate market analysis, together with vision building for public and

private sector clients, has provided her with a keen understanding of the essential elements of successful projects and sound investment.



A. Lloyd Thomas, CRE
Owner/President
NAI Aldrich-Thomas Group
Temple, TX

A. Lloyd Thomas, CRE, is the Owner/President of NAI Aldrich-Thomas Group, one of the largest independently owned and respected commercial real estate organizations in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. The firm specializes in retail, office, commercial, industrial, and investment properties, as well as land sales and development. Clients include blue chip firms, small and medium-sized businesses, and not-for-profit organizations, as well as individuals and families with real estate holdings. The firm’s goal is to customize a delivery platform based on the client’s requirements.



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Appendix VII—Recently Annexed Property Deeds

STATE OF TEXAS

COUNTY OF BROWN

BQAC1EMC10909065

WARRANTY DEED

NOTICE OF CONFIDENTIALITY RIGHTS: IF YOU ARE A NATURAL PERSON, YOU MAY REMOVE OR STRIKE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION FROM ANY INSTRUMENT THAT TRANSFERS AN INTEREST IN REAL PROPERTY BEFORE IT IS FILED FOR RECORD IN THE PUBLIC RECORDS: YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER OR YOUR DRIVER'S LICENSE NUMBER

DATE: November 19, 2009

GRANTOR: Ramon Solis and wife, Maribelle Solis

GRANTOR'S MAILING ADDRESS:

P. O. Box 442
Bangs, Texas 76823

GRANTEE: Bangs Economic Development Corporation

GRANTEE'S MAILING ADDRESS:

109 South First Street
Bangs, Texas 76823

CONSIDERATION: TEN AND NO/100 (\$10.00) DOLLARS and other good and valuable considerations.

PROPERTY: (including any improvements):

All that certain lot, tract or parcel of land, and all improvements situated thereon, lying and being situated in Brown County, Texas, and being 20.14 acres out of the Lilienthal Survey, Abstract No. 115, Brown County, Texas and more particularly described in Exhibit "A" attached hereto and made a part hereof and being the same property described in a Warranty Deed to Ramon Solis and wife, Maribelle recorded in Volume 1653, Page 935, Real Property Records, Brown County, Texas and subject to ROW and Easements shown in said Deed.

SAVE AND EXCEPT the 0.750 acres of land as described by metes and bounds shown in Exhibit "B" attached hereto and made a part hereof for all purposes, and the mobilehome situated on said property retained by Grantors.

RESERVATIONS FROM AND EXCEPTIONS TO CONVEYANCE AND WARRANTY:

Subject to all prior reservations of minerals, restrictions, rights of way and easements of record in the office of the County Clerk of Brown County, Texas.

Grantor, for the consideration and subject to the reservations from and exceptions to conveyance and warranty, grants, sells and conveys to Grantee the property, together with all and singular the rights and appurtenances thereto in any wise belonging, to have and hold unto Grantee, Grantee's heirs, executors, administrators, successors and assigns forever. Grantor binds Grantor and Grantor's heirs, executors, administrators, and successors to warrant and forever defend all and singular the property to Grantee and Grantee's heirs, executors, administrators, successors, and assigns against every person whomsoever lawfully claiming or to claim the same or any part thereof, except as to the reservations from and exceptions to conveyance and warranty.

When the context requires, singular nouns and pronouns include the plural.

EXECUTED November 19, 2009

Ramon Solis
Ramon Solis
Maribelle Solis
Maribelle Solis

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTY OF BROWN

This instrument was acknowledged before me this the 19 day of November, 2009 by Ramon Solis and wife, Maribelle Solis.

Debbie Schulte
Notary Public, State of Texas
DEBBIE SCHULTE
Notary Public, State of Texas
My Commission Expires
1-17-2012

After recording return to:
Charles E. McDonald
P. O. Box 74
Bangs, Texas 76823

PCAC

All of that certain 20.14 acre tract, lot or parcel of land being out of the Lilienthal Survey, Abstract No. 1155, being part of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the H.T. & B.R.R. Co. Survey No. 22, being situated in Brown County, Texas, and being the same land as described in Warranty Deed from W. T. Smith to Coleman Production Credit Association, by deed being of record in Volume 867, Page 523, of the Deed Records of Brown County, Texas, said 20.14 acres being described as follows:

BEGINNING at an iron rod found in place at the occupied North West corner of the Lilienthal Survey, Abstract No. 1155, being the occupied NWC of said former 20 acre tract, for the North West Corner of this tract;

THENCE S 89-56 E, with the occupied northerly line of said Section 324.5 feet, to an iron rod set for the North East Corner of this;

THENCE S 05-13 E, with the East line of said former 20 acre tract, 2633.7 feet, to an iron rod found in place by a fence corner post being in the occupied northerly line of said U.S. Highway No. 84 & 67, being the SEC of said former 20 acre tract, for the South East Corner of this;

THENCE with the occupied northerly line of said Highway and the intersection of a Paved Road, S 73-53 W 134.7 feet, to an iron rod set by a fence post, S 82-33 W 133.0 feet, to an iron rod set by a fence post, and S 86-19 W 68.8 feet, to an iron rod found in place by a fence corner post being the South West Corner of said former 20 acre tract, for the South West Corner of this tract;

THENCE N 04-59 W with the occupied westerly line of said former 20 acre tract, 2692.3 feet to the place of beginning and calculated to contain 20.14 acres of land in area.

Exhibit "A"

STATE OF TEXAS:
COUNTY OF BROWN:
CITY OF BANGS:

SURVEY MADE FOR:
BANGS EDC
303 E. SPENCER ST
BANGS, TEXAS 76823

2009 BK
7538 FR
1766 VOL
297 PG

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION of a survey of:

0.750 ACRES of land in Brown County, Texas, being out of the F. Lilienthal Survey 22, Abstract 1155, said 0.750 acres being a part of that tract of land described in the deed from Marvin Dudley to Ramon Solis and wife, Maribelle Solis dated April 2, 2007, and recorded in Volume 1653, Page 935, Brown County Real Property Records.

BEGINNING at a 1/2" iron stake set 60.24' S89°59'09"E of a 1/2" iron stake found at the Northwest corner of said Solis tract, said Solis corner being reported to be the Northwest corner of said Lilienthal Survey.

THENCE S89°59'09"E 263.89' [Deed Bearing = S89°56'E] along the north line of said Solis and north of a fence intrusion to the Northeast corner of said Solis tract and the Northwest corner of a tract described in deed to Ruben Elliott White recorded in Volume 1038, Page 52, Brown County Real Property Records, at which a 1/2" iron stake was found, said corner being located 324.13' S89°59'09"E [Deed = 324.50' S89°56'E] of said Solis Northwest corner.

THENCE S5°15'33"E 124.26' [Deed Bearing = S5°07'E] along the west line of said White tract and west of a fence protrusion to a 1/2" iron stake set for the Southeast corner of this tract.

THENCE N89°59'09"W 264.15' to a 1/2" iron stake set for the Southwest corner of this tract.

THENCE N5°08'25"W 124.23' to the place of beginning, this tract containing 0.750 acres, more or less, as shown on the accompanying plat. Bearings given herein are relative to True North at the 99°07'00"W longitudinal meridian as determined from GPS observations. Distances and areas given herein reflect horizontal surface measurements. Set 1/2" iron stakes are 2 foot long 1/2" galvanized rebar stakes capped with a red plastic identifier cap having the text NEEDHAM SURVEYORS 1-877-625-2357 SURVEYING SINCE 1945.

I, Michael Jack Needham, Registered Professional Land Surveyor of Texas, do hereby certify that the above describes the boundaries of the property depicted on the accompanying plat this the 24th day of November, 2009.

Michael Jack Needham
NEEDHAM SURVEYORS · COLEMAN, TEXAS
PHONE: (325)625-2357



INSTRUMENT NO. 7538

FILED DECEMBER 22, 2009 03:56 PM

RETURN TO:

BROWN COUNTY ABSTRACT CO INC

RECORDED
COMPARED
INDEXED

28-

ANY PROVISION HEREIN WHICH RESTRICTS THE SALE,
RENTAL OR USE OF THE DESCRIBED REAL PROPERTY
BECAUSE OF COLOR OR RACE IS INVALID AND UN-
ENFORCEABLE UNDER FEDERAL LAW.
STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTY OF BROWN

I hereby certify that this instrument was FILED in File Number
Sequence on the date and at the time stamped hereon by me, and
was duly RECORDED in the Official Public Records of Real
property of Brown County, Texas.



DEPUTY: *Bernal*
SHARON FERGUSON, COUNTY CLERK
BROWN COUNTY, TEXAS

ps

STATE OF TEXAS

COUNTY OF BROWN

WARRANTY DEED

NOTICE OF CONFIDENTIALITY RIGHTS: IF YOU ARE A NATURAL PERSON, YOU MAY REMOVE OR STRIKE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION FROM ANY INSTRUMENT THAT TRANSFERS AN INTEREST IN REAL PROPERTY BEFORE IT IS FILED FOR RECORD IN THE PUBLIC RECORDS: YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER OR YOUR DRIVER'S LICENSE NUMBER

DATE: November 30, 2010

GRANTOR: Ramon Solis and wife, Maribelle Solis

GRANTOR'S MAILING ADDRESS:

P. O. Box 442
Bangs, Texas 76823

GRANTEE: Bangs Economic Development Corporation

GRANTEE'S MAILING ADDRESS:

109 South First Street
Bangs, Texas 76823

CONSIDERATION: TEN AND NO/100 (\$10.00) DOLLARS and other good and valuable considerations.

PROPERTY: (including any improvements):

All that certain lot, tract or parcel of land, and all improvements situated thereon, lying and being situated in Brown County, Texas, and being 0.750 acres of land out of the Lienthal Survey 22, Abstract No. 1155, Brown County, Texas and more particularly described in Exhibit "A" attached hereto and made a part hereof and being part of the same property described in a Warranty Deed to Ramon Solis and wife, Maribelle recorded in Volume 1653, Page 935, Real Property Records, Brown County, Texas and subject to ROW and Easements shown in said Deed.

RESERVATIONS FROM AND EXCEPTIONS TO CONVEYANCE AND WARRANTY:

Subject to all prior reservations of minerals, restrictions, rights of way and easements of record in the office of the County Clerk of Brown County, Texas.

Grantor, for the consideration and subject to the reservations from and exceptions to conveyance and warranty, grants, sells and conveys to Grantee the property, together with all and singular the rights and appurtenances thereto in any wise belonging, to have and hold unto Grantee, Grantee's heirs, executors, administrators, successors and assigns forever. Grantor binds Grantor and Grantor's heirs, executors, administrators, and successors to warrant and forever defend all and singular the property to Grantee and Grantee's heirs, executors, administrators, successors, and assigns against every person whomsoever lawfully claiming or to claim the same or any part thereof, except as to the reservations from and exceptions to conveyance and warranty.

When the context requires, singular nouns and pronouns include the plural.

EXECUTED November 30, 2010

Ramon Solis
Ramon Solis
Maribelle Solis
Maribelle Solis

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

STATE OF TEXAS

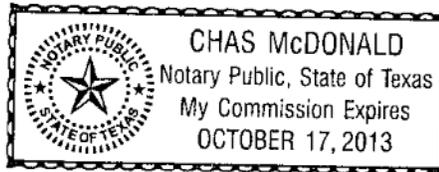
COUNTY OF BROWN

This instrument was acknowledged before me this the 6 day of November, 2010 by Ramon Solis and wife, Maribelle Solis.

Chas McDonald
Notary Public, State of Texas

After recording return to:

Charles E. McDonald
P. O. Box 74
Bangs, Texas 76823



STATE OF TEXAS:
COUNTY OF BROWN:
CITY OF BANGS:

SURVEY MADE FOR:
BANGS EDC
303 E. SPENCER ST
BANGS, TEXAS 76823

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION of a survey of:

0.750 ACRES of land in Brown County, Texas, being out of the F. Lilienthal Survey 22, Abstract 1155, said 0.750 acres being a part of that tract of land described in the deed from Marvin Dudley to Ramon Solis and wife, Maribelle Solis dated April 2, 2007, and recorded in Volume 1653, Page 935, Brown County Real Property Records.

BEGINNING at a 1/2" iron stake set 60.24' S89°59'09"E of a 1/2" iron stake found at the Northwest corner of said Solis tract, said Solis corner being reported to be the Northwest corner of said Lilienthal Survey.

THENCE S89°59'09"E 263.89' [Deed Bearing = S89°56'E] along the north line of said Solis and north of a fence intrusion to the Northeast corner of said Solis tract and the Northwest corner of a tract described in deed to Ruben Elliott White recorded in Volume 1038, Page 52, Brown County Real Property Records, at which a 1/2" iron stake was found, said corner being located 324.13' S89°59'09"E [Deed = 324.50' S89°56'E] of said Solis Northwest corner.

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I, Michael Jack Needham, Registered Professional Land Surveyor of Texas, do hereby certify that the above describes the boundaries of the property depicted on the accompanying plat this the 24th day of November, 2009.

Michael Jack Needham
NEEDHAM SURVEYORS - COLEMAN, TEXAS
PHONE: (325)625-2357



2011 BK VOL PG
1304 6 351

RECORDER'S MEMORANDUM
All or parts of the text on this page was not clearly legible for satisfactory recordation

Exhibit "2"

RECORDER'S MEMORANDUM
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INSTRUMENT NO. 1304

24

FILED MARCH 07, 2011 02:11 PM

RECORDED
COMPARED
INDEXED

RETURN TO:

MC DONALD CHARLES (ATTORNEY)
PO BOX 74
BANGS TX 76823

ANY PROVISION HEREIN WHICH RESTRICTS THE SALE,
RENTAL OR USE OF THE DESCRIBED REAL PROPERTY
BECAUSE OF COLOR OR RACE IS INVALID AND UN-
ENFORCEABLE UNDER FEDERAL LAW.
STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTY OF BROWN

I hereby certify that this instrument was FILED in File Number
Sequence on the date and at the time stamped hereon by me, and
was duly RECORDED in the Official Public Records of Real
property of Brown County, Texas.



DEPUTY:

Bernal

SHARON FERGUSON, COUNTY CLERK
BROWN COUNTY, TEXAS

RECORDED'S MEMORANDUM
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clearly legible for satisfactory recording

Appendix VIII—Sample Streamlined Approval Process



Pre-Application Meetings | City of Commerce City, CO

Pre-Application Meetings

Scheduling a pre-application meeting is an important first step if you are considering a potential business or development project in Commerce City. These meetings are informal, preliminary discussions about process timelines, necessary submittal items and relevant requirements for your specific property or business type.

[Learn more about Pre-Application Meetings](#)

For questions or issues submitting an application please reach out to the Planner of the Day.

Planner of the Day

Phone: 303-227-8777

[Email](#)

During the Pre-Application process, applicants can expect both a meeting and written comments from Planning and Engineering staff to provide general direction and answer questions regarding potential development projects. Please note that these pre-apps are site specific. Meaning that you must have an address selected, along with a conceptual site plan and general narrative about the project. There are a limited number of these slots available per week. Pre-apps are processed in the order received. For more information about the process please reach out to cdplanner@c3gov.com.

<https://www.c3gov.com/doing-business/developing-in-commerce-city/pre-application-meetings>

Pre-Application Meeting



Facts to Know

WHAT IS A PRE-APPLICATION MEETING?

In order to provide future applicants with the best customer service, ensure complete applications, and exchange key information, the city offers (to individuals who are considering potential projects within the City's growth boundary) complimentary pre-application meetings that are designed to be an informal, preliminary exchange of information. These meetings usually involve discussing process timelines, submittal requirements, and specific requirements for a particular property.

IS A PRE-APPLICATION MEETING CONSIDERED A PRELIMINARY APPROVAL?

NO. The information exchanged at a pre-application meeting does not imply approval or conditional approval. Staff's subsequent review of your formal application may require changes, alterations, or the submittal of additional information. It is the applicant's responsibility to review and adhere to all applicable codes and regulations.

HOW DO I SCHEDULE A PRE-APPLICATION MEETING?

Note: Pre-application meetings are being conducted in person on Thursday afternoons. You must submit your pre-app questionnaire and supplemental documents via eTRAKiT. To submit you must visit c3gov.com/etrakit

Once the pre-app questionnaire is received, it will be assigned a date to be reviewed. Applicants should expect a response from a planning staff member as well as an engineer from the public works department. A limited number of pre-app questionnaire reviews are assigned each week; therefore, please understand that a response may not be expected until a later date.

WHAT SHOULD I BRING TO A PRE-APPLICATION MEETING?

A completed questionnaire, general site plan and brief narrative are required to schedule and attend a pre-application meeting. Narrative should include:

- A discussion the use of the property and the scope of the project.
- Describes site layout and circulation.
- Identifies the anticipated number of employees.
- Identifies the hours of operation.
- Highlights the anticipated number of vehicles or deliveries.
- Discusses any buffering of neighboring land uses.
- Discusses any phasing of the project, construction timelines, and the anticipated time frame for opening the development.
- Any other relevant information.

HOW DO I OBTAIN ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR SCHEDULE A PRE-APPLICATION MEETING?

For answers to questions regarding the city's pre-application schedule, or for additional information or to schedule a pre-application meeting, contact the Planner of the Day at 303-227-8777 or cdplanner@c3gov.com. Also, to obtain some of the information required for a pre-application meeting, you may click the following link to access an interactive map on the city's website: <http://maps.c3gov.com/propertyLookup/>



Pre-App Questionnaire

*Note- Please be sure to attach required Site Plan and Narrative

CONTACT INFORMATION

APPLICANT/CONTACT _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

PHONE NUMBER _____

PROPERTY INFORMATION

ADDRESS (subject site) _____

PARCEL NUMBER(s) _____

SITE SIZE (acres / sq. ft.) _____

CURRENT ZONING _____

PROPOSED USE _____

(Brief description only – detailed description of proposed use to be provided in narrative)

Outdoor Storage Proposed? Yes No

If "Yes", what will be stored? _____

PROPOSED STRUCTURE(S) Height (ft.): _____ Size (sq. ft.): _____

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Are there any questions you would like to have answered as part of your pre-application?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Disclaimer

Please be advised that written pre-app responses are provided as a courtesy in order to help potential developments anticipate likely timelines, prepare the appropriate materials, and consider "big picture issues" as early as possible. Pre-app meetings and/or responses are in no way an approval of a project or a guarantee of staff's support of a project. In addition, comments may change or be updated based on submittals and additional information. The applicant is still responsible to follow all standard requirements of the Engineering Construction Standards and Specifications as well as the Land Development Code. Ultimately, it is the applicant's responsibility to review and adhere to all applicable City Codes, laws, and regulations.

