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Bangs, Texas: Small Town Revival

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Volume 48, Number 7 - February 23, 2024 • Written by: [Ms. Marilee Utter, CRE](#), [Mr. Thomas Rhodes, CRE](#), [Ms. Anne Ricker, CRE](#), [Mr. A. Thomas, CRE](#)



The following is excerpted from the final CRE Consulting Corps report presented to the The Heartland Association of REALTORS® and the City of Bangs.

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.

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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®.

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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?



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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.



Recently annexed parcel outlined in red.

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.



Alley in downtown Bangs. Add lights to enhance placemaking in the downtown.

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.



[Read the full project summary and report.](#)

Updates

The Bangs community welcomed the Consulting Corps input and began immediately to implement team recommendations.

1. A local business owner is moving forward to open a new restaurant.

2. The EDC has created a billboard inviting people to “Invest in Small Town Living.”



3. The community has seized on Consulting Corps recommendations related to improved communications:

- The EDC is planning to host a Meet & Greet and information session with all local business owners in the first half of 2024 to share resources and gather input on how best to support and communicate with them.
- The City has begun sharing a monthly “Upcoming Events” on Facebook.
- There was also a poll on a local FB group about the best ways to communicate with citizens.


4. The Brownwood News organization has agreed to include a Bangs Beat.

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