

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. The foreground is filled with dense, dark green trees. Beyond the trees, there are several large, open fields, some of which appear to be agricultural. In the distance, there are rolling hills and a few small buildings or structures. The sky is filled with large, white clouds, and the overall tone of the image is somewhat muted, giving it a historical or archival feel.

Comfort Vision 2050

Acknowledgements

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The background image is a faded, grayscale photograph of a protest. A banner with the word 'WOMEN' in large, bold, white letters is visible across the top. Below the banner, there are several people, some holding signs, and a large truck or bus is parked on the right side. The overall scene suggests a demonstration or rally.

Introduction

Introduction

Comfort Vision 2050 as a response to local and regional growth. Comfort, Texas is a census-designated place (CDP) that covers 3.24 square miles at the western edge of Kendall County in the heart of the Texas Hill Country. Established by German immigrants in 1854, Comfort's population jumped from 2,358 to 3,441 between the years 2000 and 2016 (American Community Survey, 2019). This growth reflects the enduring desirability of Comfort as a home for long-time residents and the increasing allure for people who would like to relocate to the Texas Hill Country. These trends are fully consistent with Comfort's position within the San Antonio-New Braunfels Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which experienced an overall population increase of 17% between the years 2010-2018, making it the 22nd fastest growing region in the country (American Fact Finder, 2019; Stebbins, 2019). The rapid growth in Comfort and throughout the MSA is challenging residents to confront common impacts of urbanization, including increased traffic, shortages in affordable housing, escalating threats to local ecologies, and rapidly expanding infrastructure costs and requirements.

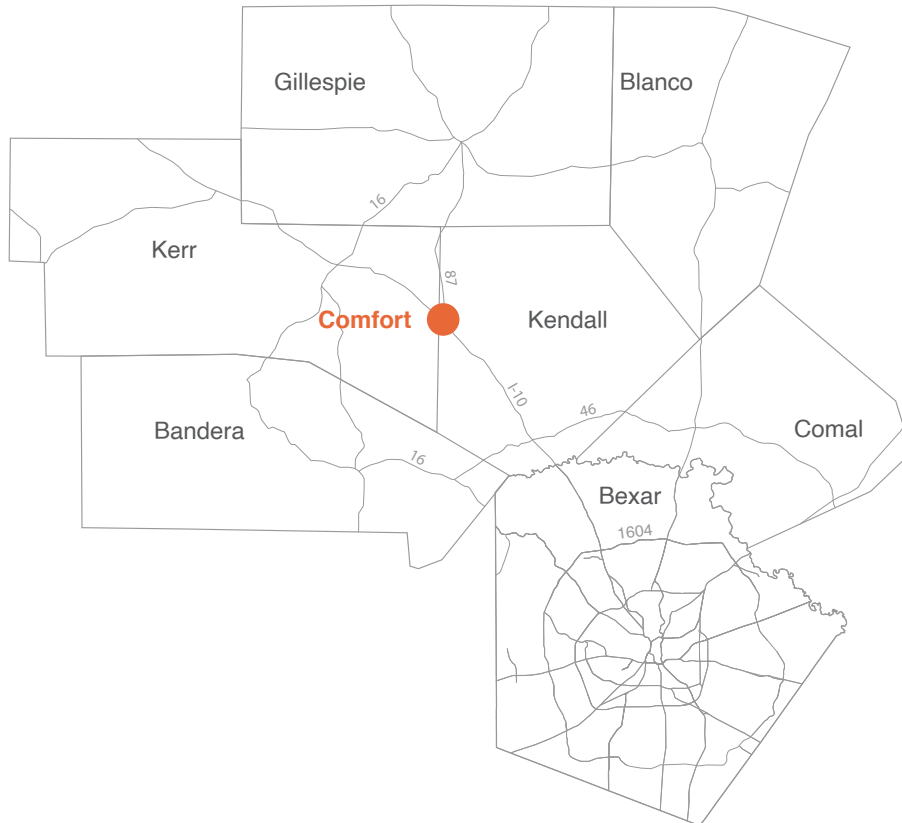
Rapid urbanization is also challenging communities throughout Kendall County, where the population grew 37% between the years 2010 and 2018, and across the entire Texas Hill Country, home to three of the ten fastest growing large counties in the United States (American Fact Finder, 2019) (Kotkin, 2016). For counties like Kendall, the stress of urbanization is partially financial, as property tax revenues often fail to keep pace with the increasing costs of new roads, schools, and emergency services. It is also environmental, as the rapid development and subsequent fragmentation of rural land threatens local ecologies. The State of Texas, for example, develops 1.5 million acres of land every 10 years, while it subdivides

another 3.5 million acres into smaller pieces (Hill Country Alliance, Issue: County tools Reasonable and Necessary Development Practices). Rapid urbanization threatens the quality of air, water, and land that makes the Hill Country a desirable place to live for so many people. Comfort Vision 2050 recognizes the regional nature of these challenges, yet makes a concerted effort to address them both at a local scale and within the political realities of life in an unincorporated community. To this end, Comfort Vision 2050 establishes four clear goals: first, to accurately describe and assess how urban growth impacts Comfort; second, to articulate the community's fundamental values in the face of these impacts; third, to leverage community values in order to create a list of 75 strategic initiatives that will benefit Comfort; and fourth, to develop a method to implement these initiatives. The underlying goal of Comfort Vision 2050 is to imagine a future for Comfort that will guide future decision-making and inspire residents towards action.

Urban planning in an unincorporated community.

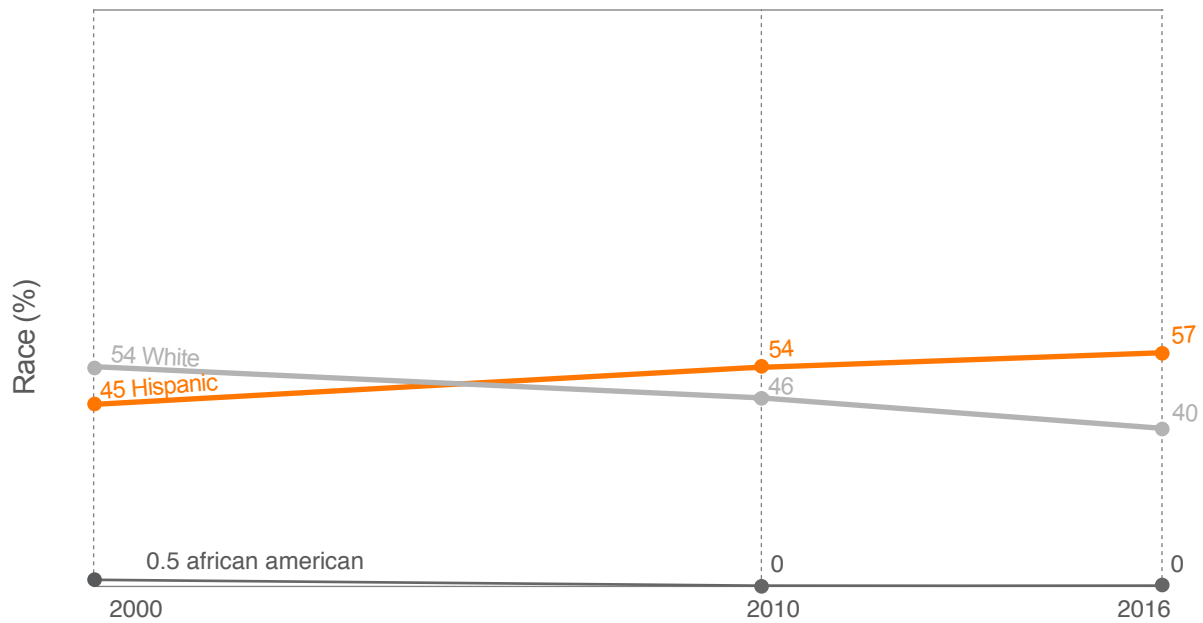
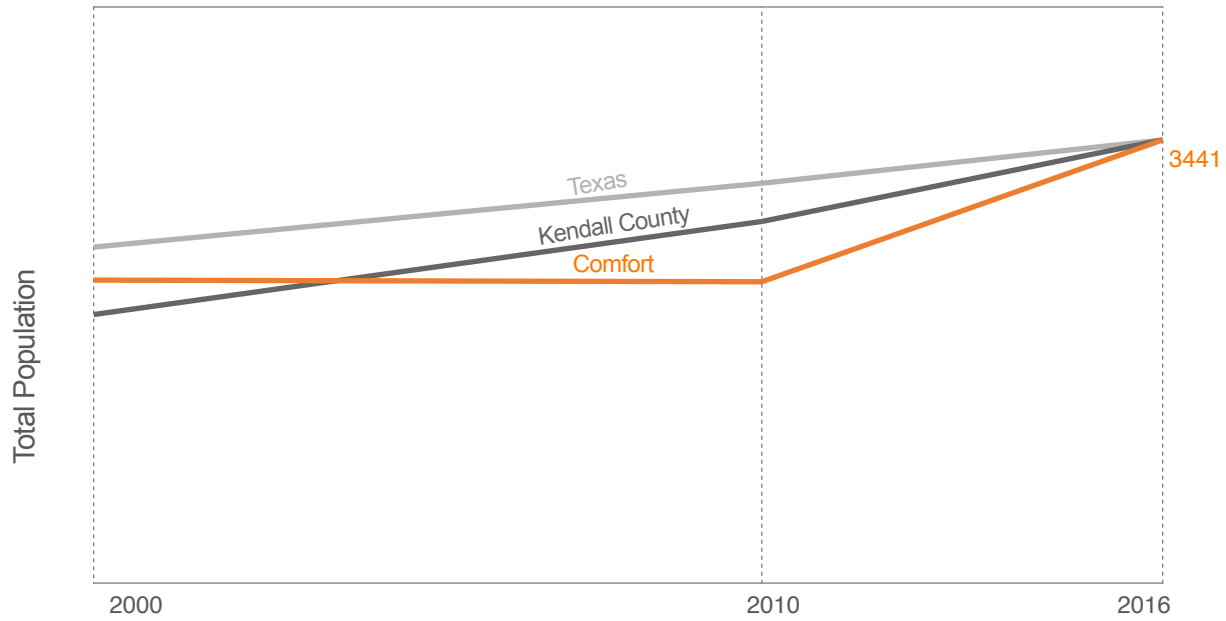
On November 3, 2015, 71% of Comfort residents voted in a Kendall County Special Election to reject a Proposition that would incorporate their community (Kendall County, 2015). The Proposition would have created a municipal authority, composed of a mayor and five alderman, with the power to control zoning and collect local sales and property taxes. Supporters of incorporation argued that doing so would facilitate local governance by allowing residents to decide what is best for the future of Comfort (San Antonio Express News, 2015).

By soundly rejecting incorporation, however, local voters affirmed deeply held community beliefs that now provide a foundation for Comfort Vision 2050: First, the vote expressed the community's clear



Regional Context





commitment to property rights, which is understandable in a region historically composed of large-scale ranch owners. Second, the vote reinforced a broad fiscal conservatism and aversion to new taxes, again not surprising in a community that voted 77% Republican in the 2016 Presidential Election (Decker, 2016). Third, the vote gave voice to a widespread, albeit passionately contested belief that in a community founded by German Freidenkers and abolitionists, the individualized and decentralized decision-making process that has guided the community's growth since 1854 is preferable to the creation of a centralized municipal authority. Finally, by rejecting incorporation, Comfort residents ensured that their community would remain aligned with the broader political status quo in the Texas Hill Country, where 90% of communities remain unincorporated (Hill Country Alliance, 2015). Within Kendall County, for example, Boerne and Fair Oaks Ranch are the only incorporated cities.

While the incorporation vote was clear in its rejection of municipal government, it did little to suggest how a loose assortment of property owners, developers, non-profits, utility districts, and county officials might address the multiple and pressing challenges associated with rapid urban growth. After all, unincorporated communities like Comfort need urban planning for all the same reasons that cities do: to protect the natural environment, maintain critical infrastructures, ensure access to housing, preserve physical and cultural history, attract and keep good jobs, expand available services, extend community traditions, foster constructive civic discourse, and ensure timely decision-making. Texas Local Government Code Chapters 211-229 provides local municipalities with the land use authority required to accomplish many of these goals. Still, unincorporated communities like

Comfort lack the tools, beginning with taxing and zoning authority, to engage in traditional planning practices.

These political realities help clarify the appropriate scope and aims for Comfort Vision 2050. A traditional vision plan that focuses on grand aspirations won't work in Comfort because there is no organization with the authority or resources to implement it. Instead, Comfort's unincorporated status means that Comfort Vision 2050 must identify and leverage the existing tools that the community has available to it. In order for Comfort Vision 2050 to succeed it must exceed the scope of traditional vision plans, which typically focus on outcomes while leaving implementation to a subsequent comprehensive plan. That's why Comfort Vision 2050 offers a combined vision plan and action plan, with the latter coming in the form of 75 Strategic Initiatives that county government, local non-profits, business leaders, and Comfort residents can pursue right away without the benefit of city government.

So what planning tools does Comfort have at its disposal? One way to answer that question is to assess the ability of various actors to assist or advocate for the community's needs. Obvious candidates include federal authorities, state authorities, county authorities, local volunteer organizations, non-profits, businesses, and of course Comfort residents. For example, the impact of federal authorities on local growth in Comfort may appear remote, but it is extensive and very real. Much of it comes in the form of regulations, such as limits that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency places on point source water pollution. But the federal government also offers numerous financial resources, like the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development grant that NALCAB used to

fund the Comfort Vision 2050 process. Unfortunately, Comfort's unincorporated status makes advocacy at the federal level impracticable and prevents the community from applying for most federal grants. For these reasons, Comfort Vision 2050 does not recommend planning initiatives that require direct federal involvement.

The impact of state authorities on life in Comfort is more immediate and easier to assess. The work of the Texas State Legislature, for example, affects everything from the scope of county authority to tax policy. Similarly, regulatory bodies like the Texas Department of Transportation and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality regulate infrastructural and environmental networks. To the extent that Comfort requires advocacy at the state level, these efforts are best handled by county officials, who possess the legal standing and political networks required to advocate for Comfort's interests.

The fundamental importance of county government is a central theme in Comfort Vision 2050. In Comfort today the most significant policy tools almost certainly reside at the county level, where Section 232 of the Texas Local Government Code allows host Kendall County to control urban development by regulating the subdivision of land. The county can additionally impact development by employing mechanisms like parkland requirements, transportation requirements, water supply, wastewater treatment, storm water runoff, flood control, and habitat conservation (Capital Area Council of Governments, pp.3-12, 2009).

However Kendall County, like most counties in Texas, lacks the authority to implement construction codes and zoning ordinances, tools that are commonplace in virtually every other state in the U.S. The limits on county authority to regulate land use means that ur-

ban development in unincorporated communities like Comfort proceeds with limited governmental coordination or oversight. The rapid and relatively unregulated urbanization of rural lands can deplete local water supplies, make air pollution worse, increase infrastructure costs, raise taxes, and spread the risk of wildfire (Hill Country Alliance, 2015).

Without zoning authority, Kendall County restricts the subdivision of land by regulating water supply, drainage, transportation infrastructure, and environmental controls (Capital Area Council of Governments, p.3, 2009). For example, the Texas Development Water Board has designated Comfort as a Priority Groundwater Management Area, meaning that the Kendall County Commissioner's Court has the authority to regulate groundwater production based on acreage or tract size (Kendall County, p.6, 2010). This means that individual lots that rely on a well and on-site sewage facility must have a minimum lot size of three acres, while subdivisions served by a public water systems and an on-site sewage facility (OSSF) must maintain a minimum lot of one acre (Kendall County, p. 37, 2010). In Kendall County, the regulation of water supply is the de facto policy mechanism to keep residential densities low and preserve the rural character and quality of life.

Another, more localized way that Comfort residents can impact development is through local organizations like the Comfort Area Foundation and the Comfort Chamber of Commerce. Each of these organizations enjoy significant local knowledge, yet they rely on volunteers, enjoy no official regulatory authority, and are limited by a lack of financial resources. Local non-profits and the business community also make significant contributions and will be fundamental to the success of Comfort Vision 2050.

General Principles for Comfort Vision 2050.

The General Principles for Comfort Vision 2050 are carefully tailored to the political circumstances and cultural values in Comfort today:

Decentralized. Comfort Vision 2050 emphasizes a dispersed, distributed decision-making process that does not rely on a single organization or individual to advance the plan.

Non-governmental. Comfort Vision 2050 tailors itself to the political realities of an unincorporated community.

Incremental. Comfort Vision 2050 emphasizes small-scale, diverse initiatives that are possible to achieve independently of one another.

Actionable. Comfort Vision 2050 create a reservoir of strategic initiatives that existing residents can advance via working groups.

Coordinated. Comfort Vision 2050 develops a process for decision-making that is decentralized, yet coordinated enough to optimize limited resources and avoid redundancies.

Measurable. Comfort Vision 2050 allows residents to evaluate the progress of this plan using agreed upon metrics.

Transparent. Comfort Vision 2050 makes the plan's objectives, successes, and shortcomings known to everyone.

Organization for Comfort Vision 2050.

Comfort Vision 2050 is organized according to the following topics:

Environment. This section addresses the ecological systems in the Texas Hill Country, including how they are impacted by human activity.

Infrastructure. This section addresses the community's fundamental physical and organizational structures and facilities.

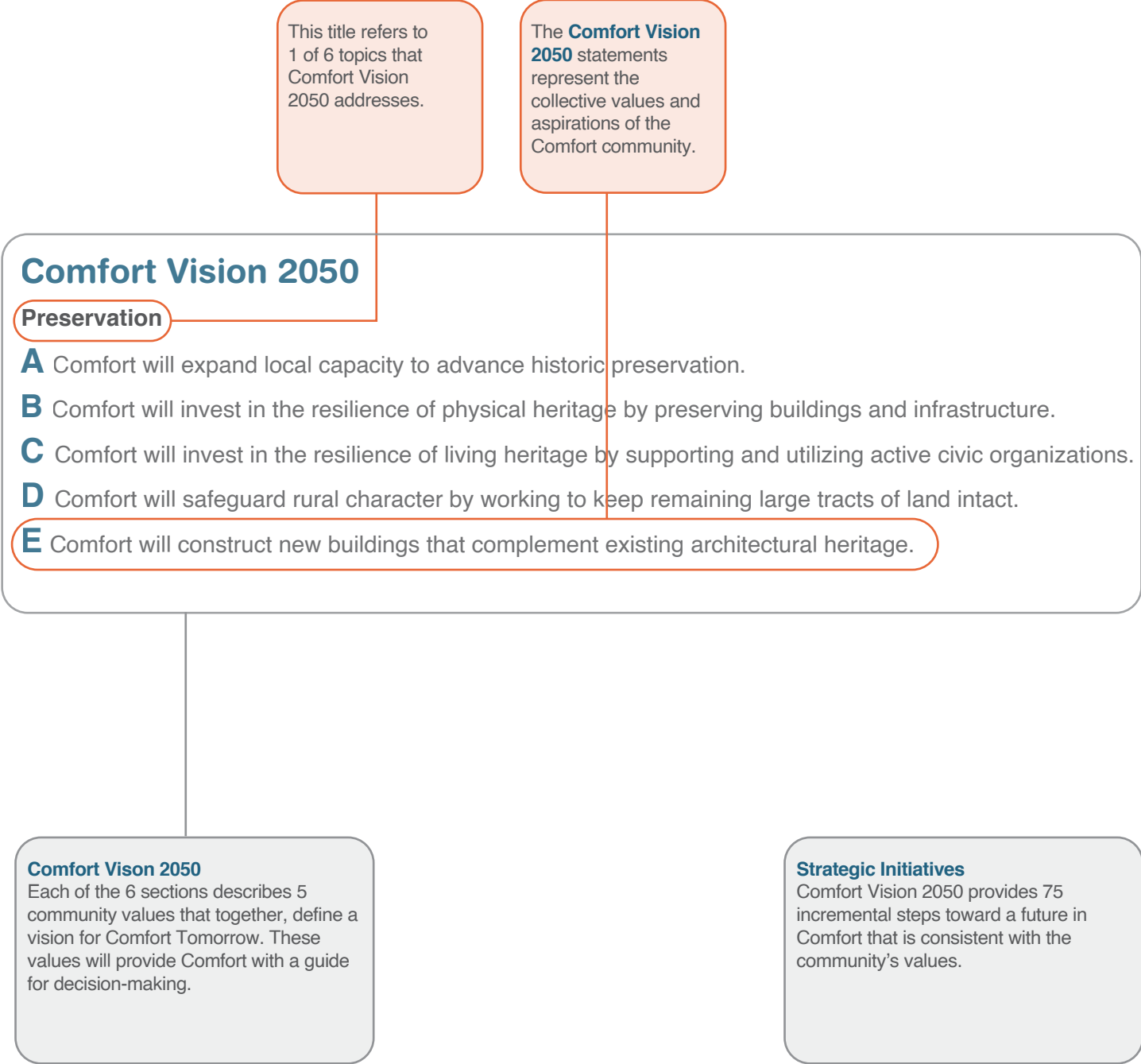
Housing. This section addresses this fundamental physical, social, and economic need.

Preservation. This section addresses attempts to preserve, conserve, and protect both physical and living history while advancing cultural continuity.

Economics. This section addresses effort to advance material prosperity and provide services to the community and region.

Community. This section addresses collective social values, responsibilities, and actions.

How to use this plan



52 Encourage conservation easements on agricultural property.

The number identifies 1 of 75 **Initiatives** recommended by Comfort Vision 2050.

Each of the Initiatives indicate **What** it is, **Who** will lead it, and **How** they can get started.

This letter refers to the **Vision Statement** that the Initiative supports.

This tab indicates 1 of 6 **Topics** that the Initiative supports.

What: Conservation easements allow landowners to resist the financial pressures of development while protecting natural habitats and scenic open spaces for future generations to enjoy. Conservation easements, which are monitored by the Texas Agricultural Land Trust, are legally binding, written into property deeds, and exist in perpetuity. Land owners retain the title to their property, are eligible for tax benefits to offset their land's development potential, and often continue their day-to-day agricultural operations.

Who: The Comfort Chamber of Commerce can petition the Kendall Soil and Water Conservation District to pursue policies with local landowners.

How: The Kendall Soil and Water Conservation District can present landowners with introductory information about the benefits, costs, and details of conservation easements. This presentation can include a representative from the Texas Agricultural Land Trust. More information about land easements and the conservation easement application process is available online at the Texas Agricultural Land Trust.

Information:

www.txaglandtrust.org

www.landtrustalliance.org

Brief history of Comfort, TX

In 1852, Ernst Hermann Altgelt (1832-1878) immigrated from Düsseldorf to the United States, landed in New Orleans, and quickly took a job working for local cotton trader John Vles. Two years later, while surveying property for Vles in the Hill Country of Texas, Altgelt arrived at the confluence of Cypress Creek and the Guadalupe River. Impressed by the water-rich and fertile land, Altgelt leveraged funds from his father to purchase 1000 acres of land from F.H. Schladoer. Altgelt proceeded to survey, plat, and develop the town of Comfort, which included 100 town lots, a public park, a market plaza, a school, cemetery, and 100 out-lots for farming (Stewart, p.2, 2010). Altgelt founded the town of Comfort on September 3, 1854 and immediately sold thirty lots at the corner of Main St. and Seventh St. to settlers (Zelade, 2011, p. 273).

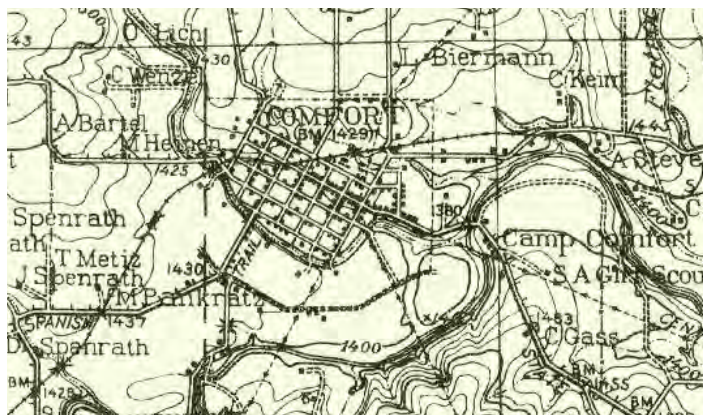
The founding of Comfort was part of a larger pattern of German immigration to the Texas Hill Country, an influx that accelerated after the failed liberal revolutions of 1848. At the time “Adelsverein,” an investment association financed by Prussian nobles, was actively resettling German immigrants to an area between the Comal and Guadalupe Rivers. Many of these settlers were Catholic and Lutheran farmers, tradesmans, and shopkeepers who left Germany during the 1840s to escape famine (Zelade, 2011, p. 273). These efforts led to the founding of New Braunfels in 1845 and Fredericksburg in 1846 (McComb, p.74, 2015). Such communities maintained a strong dedication to their native German tongue, and many public schools did not hire English-speaking teachers until after 1900 (McComb, p.74, 2015).

While Comfort shares this broad cultural lineage, the community also distinguished itself as home to an unusually large number of Freidenkers. This term, which translates as “freethinkers,” describes nine-

teenth-century German intellectuals who embraced empiricism and shunned organized religion. In this regard, early residents of Comfort shared a close cultural connection with the neighboring community of Sisterdale (Lich, Freethinkers, 2010). From the beginning, Comfort exhibited a strongly cooperative spirit, yet remained united in its opposition to formal government (Lich, Comfort TX, 2010). Most Comfort residents were also strongly pro-Union and fiercely opposed Texas’ decision to secede and join the Confederacy in 1861.

In 1862, these political tensions came to a head when a group of Confederate soldiers captured and killed 36 Union local men who were fleeing from Texas to Mexico. Most the men came from Comfort, Sisterdale, and Fredericksburg. Their bodies remained on the battleground until the end of the Civil War in 1865. At the conclusion of the war, locals from Comfort and surrounding communities retrieved and buried the remains, then purchased a small plot of land from Altgelt and erected a monument in their honor, the Treue der Union. Shortly thereafter Altgelt moved his family from Comfort to San Antonio, largely to escape widespread local resentment over his well-known Confederate loyalties (Stewart, pp.7-8, 2010).

Comfort existed as a relatively isolated community until the arrival of the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad in 1887, an event that transformed Comfort into a major shipping center for cotton. The arrival of the railroad also coincided with the opening of the community’s first church in 1892, the Deutsche Evangelische Kirche. The opening of Comfort’s first church marked an important cultural shift in a community founded by Freidenkers, who were typically agnostic or atheist (Zelade, p. 274, p.283, 2011).



1956



1964



2019

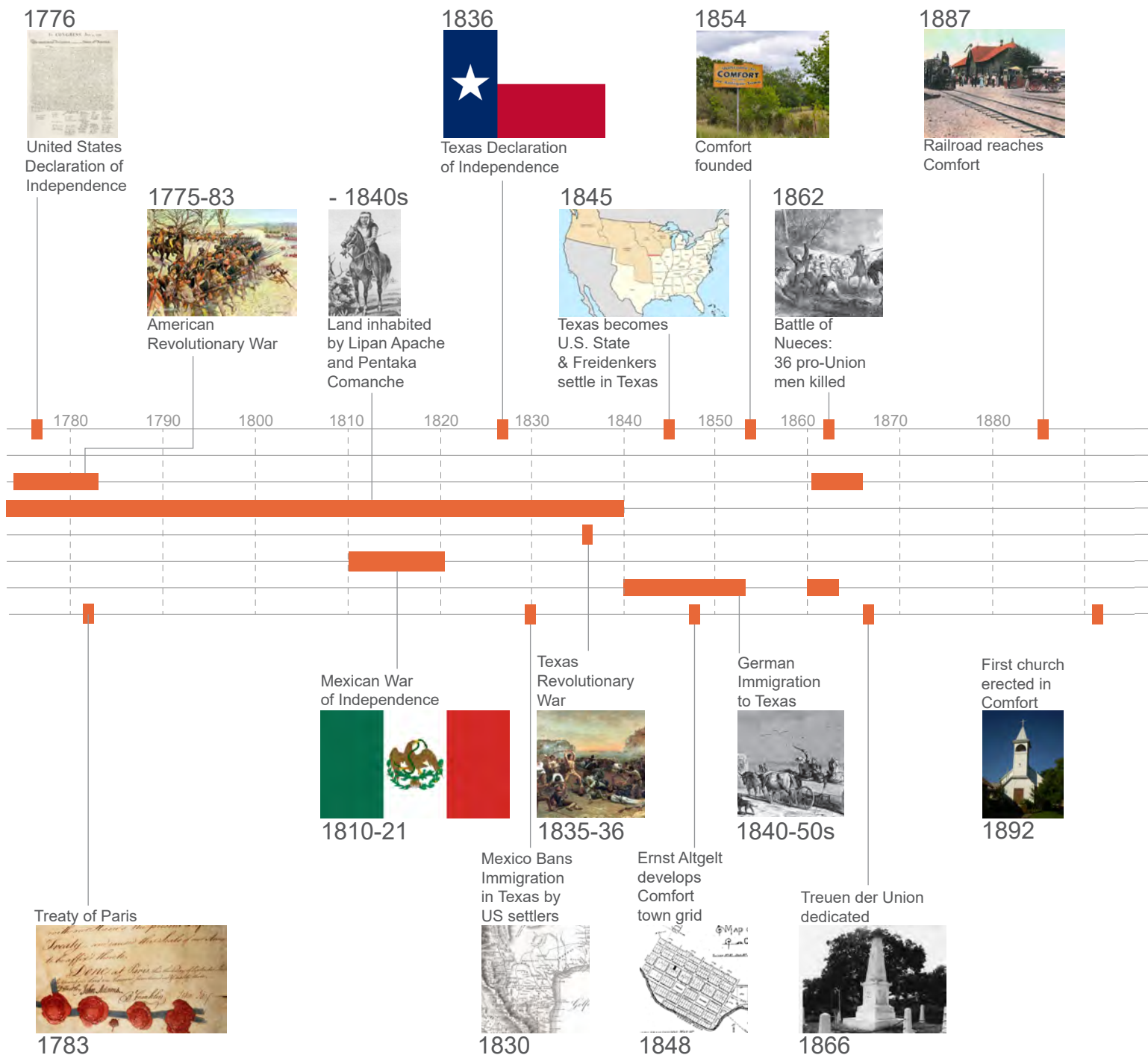
Even with the arrival of the railroad and religion, Comfort remained a small community surrounded by large ranches throughout the twentieth century. In the 1940s and 1950s Comfort like much of the Texas Hill Country, became an important center for wool and mohair. During the 1980s, corporate agribusiness, outdoor tourism, and youth camps emerged as critical economic staples (Lich, Comfort, TX, 2010).

The community undertook significant infrastructure upgrades in 1927 with the paving of the roads and 1950 with the introduction of a natural gas system. The ongoing development of the highways ended rail service throughout the Texas Hill Country in 1971 (Hemphill).

The community endured disastrous floods in 1870, 1900, 1932, 1978, and 1987. During the 1978 event, Cypress Creek and Guadalupe River crested simultaneously, destroying low-lying homes, sending water all the way to Main Street, and killing three people. In 1987, more floods along the Guadalupe River stranded two summer camp buses and tragically drowned ten young people (Zelade, p. 275, 2010).

In 1979, local volunteers made a concerted effort to document and preserve the architectural heritage of downtown by registering it as a National Register Historic District. This effort included most of the original town of Comfort, comprising more than 100 buildings built between 1854 through 1954.

Today Comfort remains a small, unincorporated community located at the western edge of Kendall County adjacent to I-10. The unusually well-preserved downtown district and rich mix of wineries, antique shops, and bed and breakfasts makes Comfort a popular destination for Hill Country visitors.



1918



Albert Steves erects the Hygieostatic Bat Roost

1939-45



World War II

1971



Rail service discontinued in Comfort

2019

Comfort Vision 2050

Vision 2050 developed

1927



Comfort's streets are paved

2014



Comfort Strategic Plan developed



"Big Flood"

1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000 2010 2020

World War 1



1914-18

The Great Depression



1929-39

Natural Gas system installed in Comfort



1951

Civil Rights Movement



1954-68

"1987 Flood"
43 children swept into Guadalupe River, 10 die



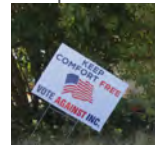
1987

The Great Recession



2007-09

Comfort votes not to incorporate



2015

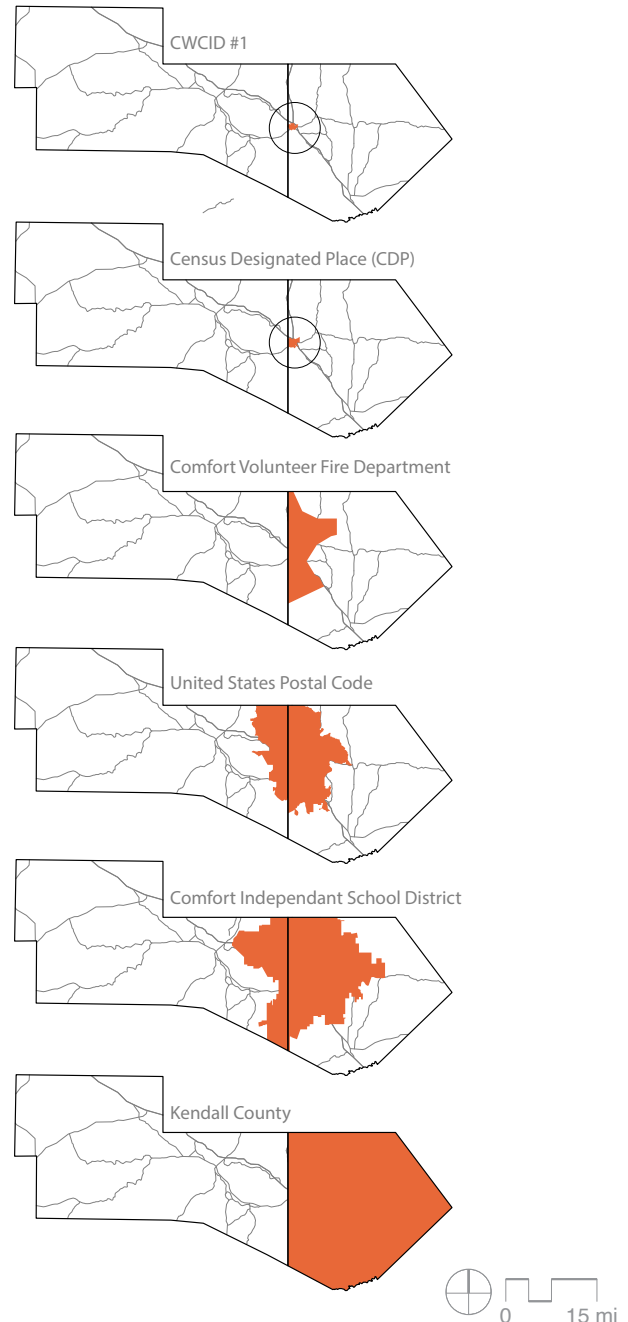
Where is Comfort?

As an unincorporated community, Comfort does not enjoy an easily identifiable geographic boundary. The importance of this became clear during the vision sessions, when residents voiced widely diverging opinions about the physical extent of their community.

Some defined Comfort in strongly historical terms, focusing on the historic grid as defined by Altgelt's original plan. Still others took a more expansive view, defining the community in a way consistent with the Census Designated Place (CDP). This boundary comes from the U.S. Census Bureau and describes a statistical concentration of population. Much of the demographic and economic data that appears in this document corresponds to the CDP boundary.

The lack of an agreed-upon geographic boundary in Comfort is fully consistent with the decentralized administrative structure of the community. The diffuse nature of the physical and political boundaries in Comfort emphasize the need for an incremental, action-based approach for this planning document.

The following diagram delineates some of the most important community boundaries including the Kendall County Water Control & Improvement District #1, Census Designated Place (CDP), Comfort Volunteer Fire Department, United States Postal Code, Comfort Independent School District, and Kendall County.



What is Comfort's likely future?

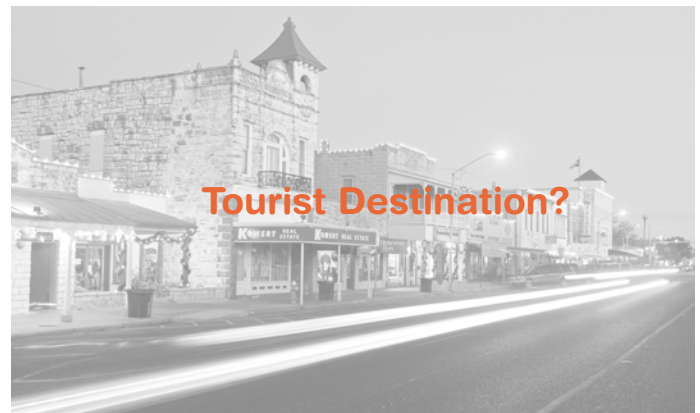
Another discussion that came up during the 2019 vision sessions involved the most likely future for Comfort.

Some participants speculated that Comfort would develop into a bedroom community for Boerne or San Antonio, much like Helotes is for San Antonio or Mesquite is for Dallas. The fact that Comfort currently experiences a daily outflow of 751 residents suggests that this dynamic may have already begun (eSite Analytics, Experian). This pattern will likely continue unless the business community develops or attracts more high-paying jobs to the area.

Comfort could also become a tourist destination like Fredericksburg or Gonzales. After all, Christmas in Comfort and Independence Day Celebration already attract a significant number of visitors to the area. Still, some residents expressed concern that Comfort, by overinvesting in tourism, might diminish the authenticity of its heritage. Others worried that an influx of visitors could exacerbate local noise, traffic, and crowds.

Comfort could become a dedicated retirement community. One precedent for this is Sun City, a residential development located within the city limits of Georgetown. A similar development might fit well in Comfort, which already enjoys a significant retirement community.

One outcome that seems increasingly unlikely is that Comfort will remain a small town. Demographic trends throughout the Hill Country will make this impossible. They further suggest that any community that does not plan for growth runs the risk of being overrun by it. For an extreme example of the failure of this approach look no further than Austin, a community that resisted planning, yet doubled its population over the course of several decades.



Recent planning efforts

2014 Strategic Plan Recommendations. In 2014, the Comfort Area Foundation engaged Opportunity Strategies LLC to begin planning Comfort's future, specifically by producing a Community Strategic Plan. This planning process, which ran from May to September 2014, consisted of a community survey, demographic overview, two stakeholder meetings, two public forums, and a strategic planning session. The outcome included a 19-page plan which identified issues and opportunities for Comfort's future across multiple areas including Water, Housing, Quality of Life, Healthcare/Human Services/Hunger, Economic Development, Youth Engagement, Education, and Communications. The impact of this effort on Comfort Vision 2050 is significant, as a number of the 2014 recommendations appear in the current document relatively unchanged. In such instances, Comfort Vision 2050 notes the origin of the Initiative. The synchronicity between the two plans reflects a fundamental commitment on the part of plan sponsors to the continuity of urban planning and civic culture.

2018 Leadership Sessions Outcomes. More recently, the CAF and NALCAB engaged the Rural Empowerment Advancement Program to produce a series of seven Leadership Sessions covering a wide range of topics including economic development, preservation, youth engagement, entrepreneurship, housing, and planning scenarios. The public series, which ran from March to July 2018 at the Comfort Public Library, was funded by a Rural Capacity Building Grant sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The series concluded with a presentation on the vision planning process, led by Ian Caine of CURPR, an event that provided an introduction to the Comfort Vision 2050 process.



Comfort Vision 2050

Comfort Vision 2050. The Comfort Vision 2050 process began in March 2019 with a series of community interviews conducted by Ian Caine. The names of each interviewee are listed in the Preface of this document.

The CURPR team next facilitated a series of four public visioning sessions, titled Comfort Vision 2050: Your Vision Your Say. Each session elicited feedback from residents while providing data and expertise from UTSA faculty. The sessions were as follows:

Date: April 18, 2019

Topic: Demographics and Economics

Location: Comfort Public Library

Date: April 25, 2019

Topic: Housing and Preservation

Location: VFW Hall

Date: May 2, 2019

Topic: Environment and Infrastructure

Location: Comfort Public Library

Date: May 9, 2019

Topic: Community and Decision-Making

Location: Comfort Public Library

Upon completion of the public visioning sessions, the CURPR team produced a draft that was reviewed in whole or in part by the following parties: Colton Powell, NALCAB; Beth Bourland, CAF; Don Durden, Kendall County; Shirley Solis, Comfort Chamber of Commerce; Cliff Kaplan, Hill Country Alliance; Keith Marquart, Kendall County Water Control & Improvement District #1; Sue Schwethelm, Comfort Heritage Foundation. CURPR presented a public draft to community stakeholders on October 22, 2019 and submitted a final draft for review to NALCAB and CAF on November 27, 2019.







Environment

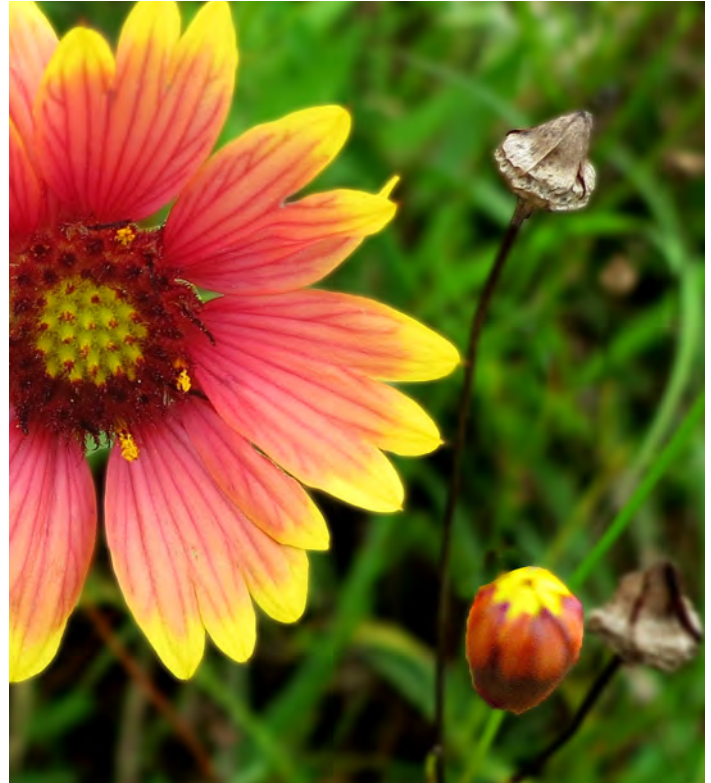
Comfort Today

The physical beauty of the Texas Hill Country attracts many residents and visitors to Comfort.

The Hill Country's rugged terrain is characterized by rolling limestone hills, rocky soil, and grassy prairies dotted with Live Oak and Ashe Juniper trees. The community of Comfort rests within the Upper Guadalupe River basin, one of the most picturesque regions in Texas. The western half of the basin begins at the Real-Kerr County line and ends downstream at Comfort, while the eastern half stretches from Comfort to Canyon Dam. In its entirety, the river basin covers the majority of Kerr County, Kendall County, and much of northwestern Comal County.

Flooding remains a big challenge for residents in Comfort. This is especially true for those who live south near Cypress Creek. When Cypress Creek floods, it is often because the Guadalupe River is backed up. Similarly, when the Guadalupe River floods, it is often because of conditions in the Upper Guadalupe River Basin. So flooding in Comfort is best understood as part of a larger regional challenge. This reminds us that Comfort and Kendall County residents can best address flooding issues by working with their upstream neighbors in Kerr County.

Patterns of land use in and around Comfort parallel larger trends throughout the Hill Country. The most prominent uses remain ranching, tourism, retirement homes, wildlife and hunting leases, and farming (Forest Encyclopedia Network). The influx of people to the area over the last few decades is putting significant pressure on large ranch owners to subdivide and sell their land to developers. A recent niche in the residential development market caters to retirees who are interested in purchasing smaller, recreation-



Vision Statements

Environment

- A** Comfort will maximize biodiversity and support native ecosystems that allow the Hill Country's plant and wildlife networks to flourish.
- B** Comfort will favor sustainable development strategies that lessen energy consumption, water consumption, carbon emissions, herbicide/pesticide use, and solid waste.
- C** Comfort will leverage Low Impact Development strategies.
- D** Comfort will favor residential and commercial developments that protect dark sky environments.
- E** Comfort will expand energy-efficiency resources to homeowners.

Strategic Initiatives

Environment

- 01** Recruit “citizen scientists” to control invasive species.
- 02** Apply to Texas Master Naturalists.
- 03** Develop a voluntary Habitat Conservation Plan.
- 04** Support the use of native plant species.
- 05** Hold an annual competition for the best native plant garden.
- 06** Establish a Keep Texas Beautiful Local Affiliate in Comfort.
- 07** Develop an Urban Tree Canopy assessment.
- 08** Develop a Watershed Protection Plan.
- 09** Initiate an online recycling program.
- 10** Ask Kendall and Kerr Counties to adopt LID regulations.
- 11** Plan a Low Impact Development workshop.
- 12** Support IDA International Dark Sky program.
- 13** Implement a Night Sky Friendly Business Program.
- 14** Implement the Texas PACE Program.

01 Recruit “citizen scientists” to control invasive species.



What: Plant, insect, and animal species are classified as “invasive” if they are non-native to an ecosystem and cause economic, environmental, or human harm. The economic damage to crops, fisheries, forests, and other resources reaches \$137 billion each year across the United States (Texasinvasives.org). Comfort can fight invasives by recruiting “citizen scientists” who are trained to detect, map, and help eliminate invasive species.

Who: The Comfort Garden Club can collaborate with the Invaders of Texas Program to recruit volunteers for the “citizen scientist” program. Currently there are no volunteers in Comfort.

How: The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in

Austin, TX manages the program with support from the the U.S. Forest Service Forest Health Protection, U.S. Forest Service National Forests and Grasslands in Texas, Texas Forest Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and Texas Master Naturalists. The goals of the program are to train a network of “citizen scientists,” map invasive species, partner with regional experts to eradicate invasives, and provide education. The program hosts workshops, trains volunteers, and collects specimens.

Information:

www.texasinvasives.org

www.earthzine.org

www.lshs.tamu.edu

02 Apply to Texas Master Naturalists.



What: Texas Master Naturalists (TXMN) is a group of highly trained volunteers who offer education, outreach, and community service to help preserve the natural systems and resources in Texas. The Hill Country Chapter is very active, having approved over 80 volunteer service projects in ten counties.

Who: The Comfort Garden Club can recruit a volunteer to join this program, which is sponsored by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension service.

How: In order to become certified, a TXMN Mem-

ber-in-Training must complete a 12-week training program in Kerrville, 40 hours of service, and 8 hours of advanced training. The cost for this program is \$200 dollars. In order to retain the title of TXMN, members are required to complete 40 service hours on pre-approved projects and 8 hours of advanced training each year.

Information:
www.txmn.org

03 Develop a Voluntary Habitat Plan.



What: The State of Texas has more than 200 plant and animal species that are threatened or endangered (Boyd, 2014). In order to protect the native ecosystems that support Hill Country plant and wildlife networks, Comfort can request that Kendall County implement a voluntary and limited Habitat Conservation Plan.

Who: The Comfort Area Foundation or the Comfort Garden Club can lead this initiative.

How: This effort might begin with a request that Kendall County study how many plant and animal species qualify for protection. Once this study is complete, Chapter 83 of the Texas Parks and

Wildlife Code permits the County to implement a conservation plan to protect areas that support endangered species. These development guidelines can be voluntary and therefore less onerous than typical federal guidelines (Capital Area Council of Governments, p.8, 2009). For an example of successful voluntary guidelines, see Bastrop County's Lost Pines Habitat Conservation Plan to support the Houston toad habitat.

Information:

www.tpwd.texas.gov

www.co.bastrop.tx.us

04 Support the use of native plant species.



What: Native plant species help protect soil and water in the Texas Hill Country by minimizing the use of fertilizer, pesticide, and water while supporting local wildlife, pollinators, and biodiversity. Comfort can advance the use of native plants by introducing educational programs and demonstration projects.

Who: The Comfort Garden Club can lead the effort to introduce homeowners and business owners to native planting strategies.

How: The educational programs can cover useful topics like soils, seeds, invasives, rain gardens, and landscaping materials. The demonstration projects can illustrate how pocket prairies, home

meadows, and rain gardens improve wildlife habitats, conserve water, and add to Hill Country Character. The demonstration projects would plant native gardens in a local park or street to showcase local flora, drought tolerant landscapes, permeable paving surfaces, and water conservation strategies, leveraging educational signage to further explain and celebrate the strategies. Two excellent native planting demonstration projects exist at the San Antonio Botanical Garden and San Antonio's Confluence Park.

Information:

www.npsot.org

www.sabot.org

05 Hold an annual competition for the best native plant garden.



What: An annual competition for best native plant garden in Comfort would celebrate the beauty of these landscapes while demonstrating their contribution to biodiversity in the Texas Hill Country.

Who: The Comfort Garden Club can lead this effort.

How: The annual competition could grow into an annual Comfort Native Plant Garden Tour. This

event would be fun and educational for residents, while providing one more reason for people to visit Comfort. The event might coincide with peak wildflower blooms, which occur between March and June.

Information:
www.nativeplantgardentour.org

06 Establish a Keep Texas Beautiful Local Affiliate in Comfort.



Keep Texas Beautiful

What: Keep Texas Beautiful (KTB) is the largest environmental and community improvement network in the state. A local affiliate could help Comfort residents beautify their hometowns with the help of KTB's extensive state and national resource network."

Who: A group of volunteers can apply to KTB for provisional status. KTB will then help the new affiliate form a board, generate a mission statement, prepare bylaws, network, establish a strategic plan and budget, and develop priorities.

How: No two KTB local affiliates are exactly alike. Some are very small, like the one in the unincor-

porated Hill Country community of Utopia; others are large, like the one in Houston. Some of the affiliates are run by volunteers; others have full time paid staff. No matter the size of the affiliate or makeup of the staff, affiliates contribute to their community by organizing local cleanups, starting recycling programs, putting together educational programs, and participating in KTB-sponsored programs like the Great American Cleanup and Don't Mess with Texas Trash-Off (Keep Texas Beautiful, 2019).

Information:
www.ktb.org

07 Develop an Urban Tree Canopy assessment.



What: An Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) consists of the leaves, branches, and stems that cover the ground when seen from overhead. The UTC defines much of the visual character in a semi-rural community like Comfort. It also offers numerous ecological benefits like reducing air pollution, supporting local wildlife, improving storm drainage, reducing erosion, and lowering air temperature by shading the ground. Comfort can make its future greener by completing an Urban Tree Canopy assessment (UTC) to assess, protect, and improve local tree resources.

Who: A UTC assessment would benefit all of Kendall County. So a group of Comfort residents might pursue this initiative in collaboration with the Kendall County Parks Department.

How: The U.S. Forest Service supports UTC assessments, which typically involve five steps: setting goals and strategies, completing data collection, integrating data analysis with stakeholder input to establish priorities, implementing new policies and planning, and finally monitoring and assessing changes in the local tree-canopy (U.S. Department of Agriculture). Once Kendall County has completed an assessment and established priorities, it might pursue funding for new planting from the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA), Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA), or a utility like Bandera Electric.

Information:
www.fs.fed.us
www.jeffersoncountywv.org

08 Develop a Watershed Protection Plan.



What: Nonpoint source pollution occurs when rain washes surface pollutants into lakes, rivers, wetlands, coastal waters, and ground waters. It is a significant threat to water quality in the Texas Hill Country. Comfort can help protect local water quality within the Upper Guadalupe Watershed by asking Kendall County to help develop a Watershed Protection Plan (WPP).

Who: The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), the Texas Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provide funding and technical assistance to help local stakeholders develop WPPs (Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, 2019). For Comfort, this process would

require multiple stakeholders from Kendall and Kerr Counties.

How: Kendall and Kerr Counties could initiate this process by gathering preliminary data on pollution sources, then determining whether problems can be addressed without a comprehensive WPP. If county leaders decide that a WPP is necessary, they can convene stakeholders groups to lead the process, which typically takes a minimum of two years to complete (Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, 2019).

Information:
www.tceq.texas.gov

09 Initiate an online recycling program.



What: The markets for recycled materials have shifted, making programs in small communities uneconomical. Today, however, online vendors exist who can help residents recycle via UPS, making centralized collection or curbside pickup unnecessary.

Who: This effort would require an information campaign, initiated by either the Comfort Area Foundation or the Comfort Chamber of Commerce. Either could distribute marketing literature from competing online vendors to residents, businesses, and/or civic groups in Comfort.

How: These programs, run by companies like Terracycle, work by targeting specific materials and product manufacturers. Some of the recycling programs are designed for individuals; others for businesses; some are free, made possible through corporate support; and others are fee-based, paid for by users. In a typical scenario, an individual or business joins the service online, collects the recyclables, prints a mailing label, and ships the recyclables via UPS envelopes or boxes. The recycling vendor in turn handles the sorting and recycling offsite.

10 Ask Kendall and Kerr Counties to adopt L.I.D. regulations.



What: Low Impact Development (LID) minimizes many of the negative impacts of urban development by removing pollutants from storm runoff, detaining stormwater, improving overall water quality, saving potable water by reusing greywater for irrigation, supporting native wildlife habitats, and minimizing overall infrastructure costs. One way to expand the use of LID in and around Comfort would be for Kendall and Kerr Counties to write the practices into their development rules and regulations for unincorporated areas.

Who: A group of citizens, led by the Chamber of Commerce or Comfort Area Foundation, can lobby for this change to county development rules and regulations.

How: Travis County has already implemented LID

requirements for areas that fall outside the limits or extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ) of a municipality. These LID requirements apply to residential and non-residential subdivisions, commercial site plans, private streets, and in some cases the public right-of-way. Comfort residents can lobby both Kendall and Kerr Counties to adopt LID by attending the Commissioner's Court and writing editorials in local newspapers. A change in regulations in Kerr County, Comfort's upstream neighbor, would be especially beneficial for Comfort. For similar reasons, Comfort might further encourage Kerrville to adopt Boerne's LID Guidelines

Information:
www.traviscountytx.gov

11 Plan a Low Impact Development workshop.



What: Low Impact Development (LID) describes a system of stormwater management that leverages natural processes to infiltrate, filter, evapotranspire, store, and reuse stormwater as close to the source as possible. LID offers a less expensive alternative to traditional engineering strategies that focus on relocating storm water via pumps, pipes, culverts, detention basins, and storm sewers. LID strategies may be especially helpful given Comfort's extensive flooding and lack of storm sewer infrastructure.

Who: The Comfort Area Foundation can work with the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) and/or the Upper Guadalupe River Authority (UGRA) to organize an educational program covering LID strategies and nonpoint source water

pollution.

How: These workshops would benefit home and business owners who are interested in learning more about LID strategies. LID can operate at the scale of the building, by introducing rainwater harvesting systems; at the scale of the driveway and parking lot, by increasing infiltration and introducing bioretention; and at the scale of the site, by introducing native plant species and greywater recycling.

Information:
www.epa.gov
www.sara-tx.org
www.gbra.org

12 Support IDA International Dark Sky program.



What: Dark night skies save energy, protect healthy ecosystems, support human health, improve public safety, and maintain the visual character of the Texas Hill Country. The International Dark Sky Association helps maintain night skies, having certified over 120 International Dark Sky Places worldwide, covering 34,700 square miles. Neighborhoods or developments in Comfort can pursue a certificate from the IDA Dark Sky Friendly Development of Distinction certification program, which recognizes unincorporated communities that promotes dark night skies. Currently, three of the four Developments of Distinction world-wide are

located in Texas.

Who: The Comfort Chamber of Commerce can contact IDA to initiate the certification process.

How: In order to qualify, a neighborhood or development must receive a nomination from an existing IDA member (currently there is one near La Grange), develop a plan to control lighting pollution, and demonstrate the community's commitment to control light pollution.

Information:
www.darksky.org

13 Implement a Night Sky Friendly Business Program.



What: Light pollution is threatening the quality of life in the Texas Hill Country. This trend diminishes the visual character of the Hill Country, discourages star-gazing, negatively impacts people's sleep, and disrupts the natural ecosystems of nocturnal wildlife. The Night Sky Friendly Business Recognition Program helps reverse these trends by encouraging local businesses to protect dark night skies in the Texas Hill Country.

Who: The Comfort Chamber of Commerce can work with the Hill County Alliance to implement this voluntary program.

How: Any Chamber of Commerce in the Hill Country can adopt The Night Sky Friendly Business Recognition Program. It works by recognizing businesses that install outdoor lighting that avoids shining up towards the sky, onto a neighbor's property, or into the eyes of passers by. The program recognizes participating businesses with a certificate, window decal, and the right to use the Night Sky Friendly Business Recognition Program logo in their advertising.

Information:
www.hillcountrynightskies.org

14 Implement the Texas PACE Program.



What: Property Assessed Clean Energy (TX-PACE) is a financial tool for Texas property owners who want to upgrade building infrastructure in a way that saves water, improves energy efficiency, or adds resiliency. TX-PACE works by providing access to private, affordable, long-term financing for infrastructure upgrades such as HVAC, lighting, energy management, roofing, windows, doors, insulation, solar panels, wind turbines, irrigation, rainwater collection, toilets, and greywater systems.

Who: Commercial, industrial, and multifamily residential property owners can apply for this program.

How: Property owners select a private capital provider, allow local government to place a lien on their property, and then pay the balance of the loan to TX-PACE. Typically the project savings exceed the cost of the assessment and result in positive cash flow for the property owner.

Information:
www.texaspaceauthority.org





Infrastructure

Comfort Today

Drivers in Comfort today enjoy access to a good road network. The infrastructure is in relatively good repair and most days there is plenty of parking for residents and visitors. The 2019 vision sessions did reveal several problem areas: The intersection at SH 27/RM 473, where eight smaller intersections converge, causes confusion for drivers and pedestrians alike. Similar issues exist at 8th St/Front St. and Front St./Business 87. The lack of a dedicated pedestrian sidewalk along Business 87 makes passage hazardous for bicyclists and pedestrians, especially as the road crosses under I-10. There is a low-water hazard where 7th St. crosses the Cypress Creek that makes this important access point impassable during high water events.

Comfort's transportation network does not effectively support pedestrians and bicyclists. Walkscore.com gives Comfort's pedestrian network a rating of 54, which indicates that it is "somewhat walkable." This means that there is sufficient infrastructure and mixed-use programming for pedestrians to accomplish some errands on foot (walkscore.com). Currently, Comfort offers virtually no dedicated bicycle infrastructure. One of the biggest obstacles to cohesive pedestrian and bicycle circulation is I-10, which separates the historic portion of Comfort from areas north of the interstate. This means that Comfort High School students who live south of I-10, for example, are unlikely to walk or bike to school. The spatial separation caused by I-10 will likely intensify in coming years as undeveloped land north of the interstate absorbs a large portion of Comfort's expected growth.

Five distinct street typologies exist in Comfort today. The first is the interstate, in this case I-10, which connects Comfort to Kerrville and Boerne, its northern and southern neighbors. TxDOT maintains this infrastructure.

The second type are the automotive arterial roads. U.S. 87 runs north from San Antonio concurrent with I-10, then splits into Business 87 and heads due north through Comfort towards Fredericksburg. Ranch to Market (RM) 473 splits from State Highway (SH) 27 on Comfort's west side, then runs northeast through the business district. Finally SH 27 connects with Center Point to the west and runs along the northern edge of Comfort's historical district, briefly merging with Business 87 before ending at the I-10 interchange. All of these roads are designed exclusively for the automobile, offering intermittent or non-existent pedestrian and bicycle access.

The third street type is the pedestrian-oriented commercial street, which in Comfort functions as a "main street." The best example here is High St., which is a center of civic life in Comfort and a primary destination for tourists. 7th St. also hosts significant commercial program and sidewalks. Front St. between 6th and 8th St. fulfills a similar role, though the current street design makes pedestrian travel and mixed-use programming difficult.

The fourth and perhaps most consequential street type for Comfort is the single-family residential street. Many of the best examples like 6th St. or Water St. reside within Algelt's original street grid. During the 2019 vision sessions, most residents mentioned Idlewilde Blvd. as a favorite street in Comfort. Each of these streets exemplify the low-density, rural characteristics that define the physical character of Comfort. Few of them offer dedicated sidewalks or bike lanes.

Finally, there are multiple newer single-family residential roads and streets, most built during the twentieth century. These typically constitute suburban collector, local roads, or culs-de-sac. Some examples include Meadow Lane and East St. These examples

support a range of suburban residential densities, which are often higher than those found in historic Comfort. They rarely offer dedicated sidewalks or bike lanes.

Population growth in Kendall County will cause water shortages by 2050. Currently Kendall County enjoys a significant water surplus. In 2017, the annual supply of 13,577 acre-feet/yr outstripped the demand of 7,536 acre-feet/yr by a sizeable margin. Still, Kendall County projects that continued population growth will cause demand to surpass supply by 2050. By 2070, Kendall County estimates a potential supply deficit of 2,613 acre-feet/yr. Virtually all of the projected demand increases are municipal in origin, i.e. they do not relate to irrigation, livestock, mining, or manufacturing (Texas Water Development Board). The status of the former AJW Architectural Products facility, now empty, could significantly impact these projections. If a water-intensive program reoccupies this 412,000 square foot facility, the increased demand might quickly consume much of Comfort's existing water surplus.

The Cow Creek Water District regulates the conservation, preservation, recharge, and protection of groundwater from aquifers within Kendall County, including the Trinity Aquifer. Kendall County Water Control and Improvement District #1 (KCWCID #1) exists to manage water and sewer issues in the Comfort area. The Cow Creek Water District in turn controls KCWCID #1's access to water, adjusting the maximum draw according to drought conditions while enacting fines for overages. In response to these restrictions, KCWCID #1 is working to expand future water supply by investigating alternative acquisition and storage strategies like scalping, gravel pits, and aquifer storage and recovery. KCWCID #1 is also considering securing additional water rights within

Kerr County by purchasing an unused permit to extract water from the Guadalupe River and by drilling wells on private property.

KCWCID #1 possesses excess sewer capacity.

As KCWCID #1 works to secure additional capacity for Comfort's water supply, it already enjoys it for the sewer system. Currently the sewer plant discharges 190,000 gallons/day of treated water to the golf course, though its design capacity is 750,000 gallons/day (Opportunity Strategies, 2014). KCWCID #1 is working to monetize this opportunity by serving other communities and developments such as Center Point in Kerr County.

KCWCID #1's decisions regarding infrastructure catalyze growth. KCWCID #1's ability to expand or limit new water and sewer infrastructure has the effect of supporting or deterring new development. Recently the district made significant investments north of I-10, adding a well to the St. Boniface Episcopal Church property, a subterranean water storage tank on the Sacred Heart Catholic Church property, an extension to Comfort High School and the Gaddis Memorial United Methodist Church properties, and a new water tower on the James Avery property. Current projects include new sewer lines that connect to Westwood and Center Point. KCWCID #1 works with developers to determine the potential impact of proposed projects on the current infrastructure. In some cases the developer may be required to install a well and storage tank, which become part of KCWCID #1's water supply system.

Vision Statements

Infrastructure

- A** Comfort will expand its integrated network of walkable streets.
- B** Comfort will work with KCWID #1 to define its mission and role in community development.
- C** Comfort will pursue flood remediation strategies at both local and regional scales.
- D** Comfort will achieve twenty-first century infrastructure technology networks.
- E** Comfort will create inspiring new community spaces.

Strategic Initiatives

Infrastructure

- 15** Encourage Kendall County to expand roadway standards.
- 16** Build more streets like High St. and Idlewilde St.
- 17** Add bicycle infrastructure to Comfort.
- 18** Add roundabout at Highway 27 and 5th St.
- 19** Reconfigure Front Street for pedestrian.
- 20** Repair and extend the street grid south of I-10.
- 21** Clarify KCWCID #1's role in community development process.
- 22** Work to secure additional water rights.
- 23** Support KCWCID #1's pursuit of alternative water resources.
- 24** Work with Kendall County to pursue infrastructure grants.
- 25** Use incremental strategies to control flooding.
- 26** Build a riparian walking park along Cypress Creek.
- 27** Extend frontage roads along Interstate 10.
- 28** Join the MPO.
- 29** Offer free wifi in public areas.
- 30** Utilize the existing Community solar system.
- 31** Develop new Community Park at 8th St. and Broadway.
- 32** Build an inspiring new pedestrian promenade.

15 Encourage Kendall County to expand roadway standards.



What: Road and street design defines much of the physical character in communities like Comfort. So residents must appeal to Kendall County to expand roadway standards, which will involve elevating design quality and introducing Complete Streets.

Who: Comfort residents, working through the auspices of the Comfort Area Foundation, can advocate to the Kendall County Transportation Planning Committee for these changes.

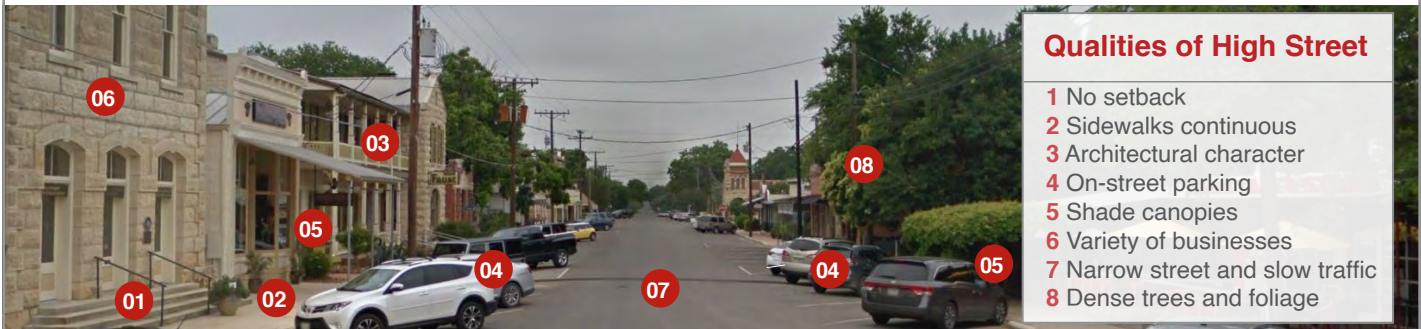
How: The Texas Local Government Code provides Kendall County with authority to implement standards for subdivision and county roads. The County is currently considering a proposal to form

a Kendall County Transportation Planning Committee to address congestion, long-range transportation improvements, and the strategic integration of transportation and land use policy. Comfort citizens can advocate that the Commission do all of the above and also reconsider road design standards. A revised approach to street design would protect the rural character of communities like Comfort while also accommodating automotive, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic.

Information:

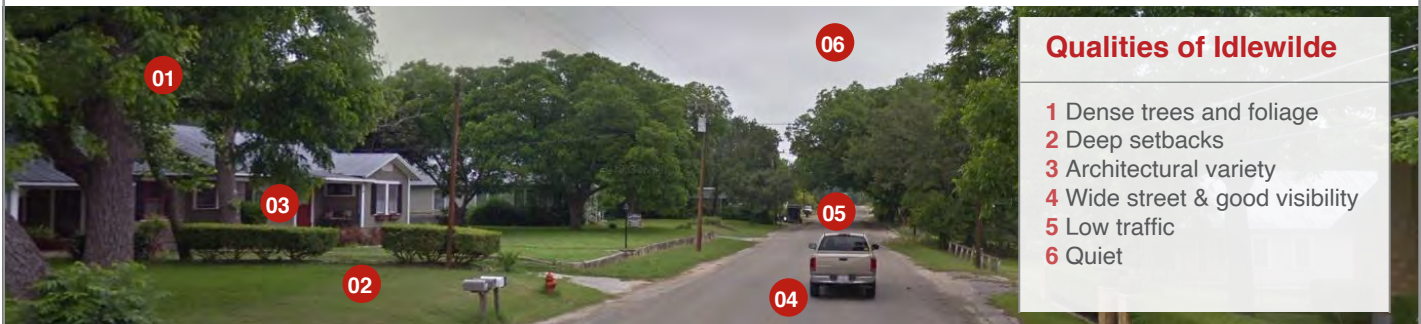
www.smartgrowthamerica.org
www.austintexas.gov

16 Build more streets like High St. and Idlewilde Blvd.



Qualities of High Street

- 1 No setback
- 2 Sidewalks continuous
- 3 Architectural character
- 4 On-street parking
- 5 Shade canopies
- 6 Variety of businesses
- 7 Narrow street and slow traffic
- 8 Dense trees and foliage



Qualities of Idlewilde

- 1 Dense trees and foliage
- 2 Deep setbacks
- 3 Architectural variety
- 4 Wide street & good visibility
- 5 Low traffic
- 6 Quiet

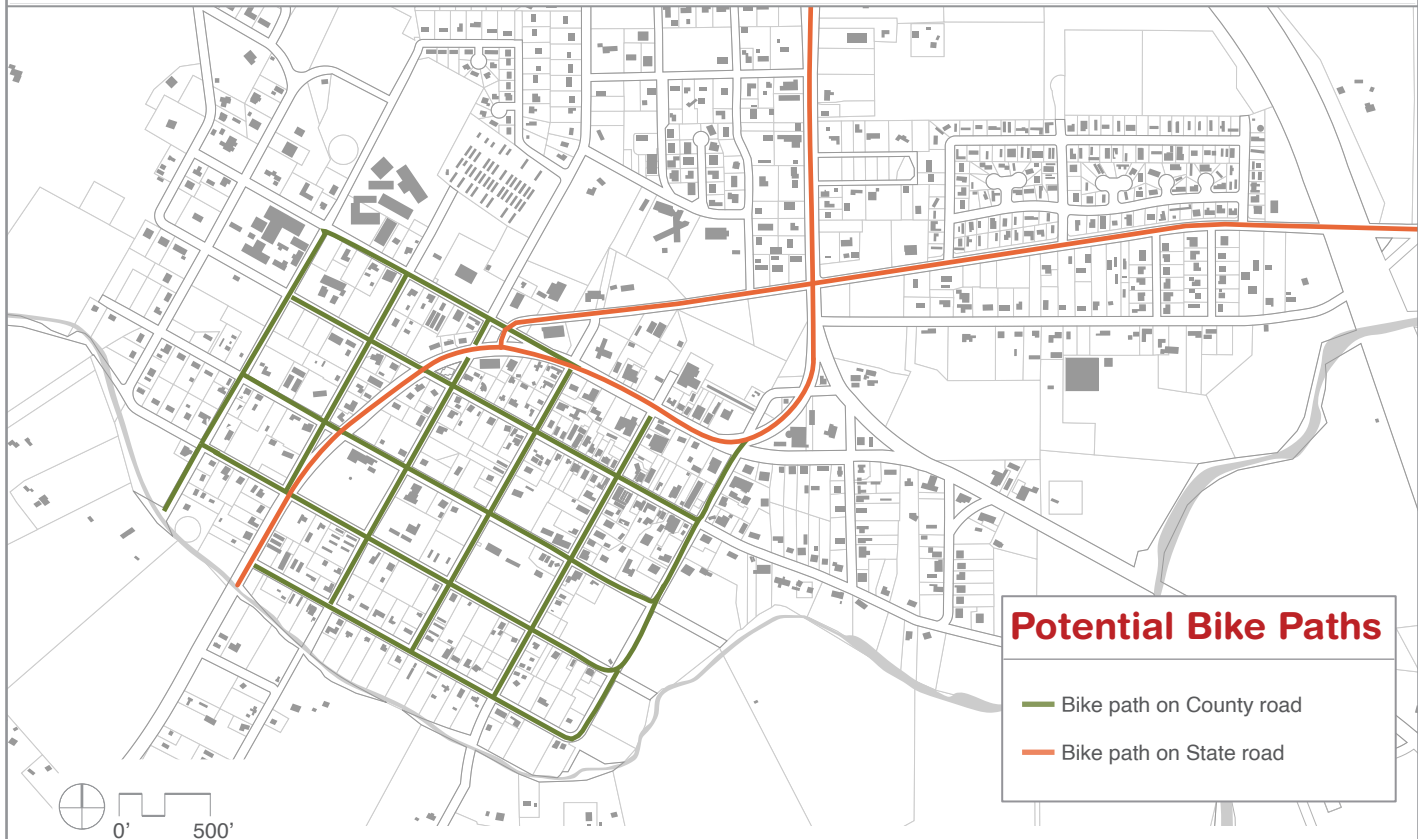
What: During the vision sessions, facilitators asked community members “What is your favorite street in Comfort?” The two most common answers were High St. and Idlewilde Blvd. Given the success and popularity of these streets, Comfort can encourage developers and Kendall County to pursue similar physical qualities in the construction of all new streets.

Who: Comfort residents, led either by the CAF or Chamber of Commerce, can express this sentiment to the Kendall County Commissioner’s Court, who are in a position to approve or deny plat requests from developers.

How: In order for this to be successful, Comfort residents must clearly articulate the characteristics that they believe make a great street. For example,

High St. demonstrates a specific set of physical qualities typical of Texas main streets: one- and two-story buildings facing the street, architectural variety, zero-lot-line setbacks, continuous sidewalks, mixed-use programming, and a narrow two-lane street with head-in parking. As Comfort sees the growth of additional commercial districts, for example on Front St., it ought to leverage the lessons of High St. in order to multiply this street’s success. Similarly, Idlewilde Blvd. displays the semi-rural qualities that Comfort residents value: architectural variety, 40-50 foot setbacks, a narrow two-lane street, mature trees and vegetation. Comfort ought to communicate these preferences to Kendall County, asking the County to encourage developers to make all future streets great streets.

17 Add bicycle infrastructure to Comfort.



What: Improve bicycle access in Comfort by providing continuous, dedicated lanes. The bicycle network could cover some or all of the historic portion of Comfort and make a north-south connection along U.S. Highway Business 87 with an underpass at I-10.

Who: The Comfort Area Foundation (CAF) and Kendall County would work together to coordinate this effort.

How: Kendall County can begin this process by asking TxDOT about existing plans to upgrade the

interchange at Business 87 and I-10. If TxDOT is planning an upgrade, the County can petition to add the infrastructure for bicyclists and pedestrians, using the drawings from COMFORT VISION 2050 as a conversation starter. The federal Surface Transportation Block Grant program (STBG) offers one potential funding source for upgrades to Business 87. Since Kendall County maintains the roads within Comfort's historic district, they would either invest in infrastructure upgrades or partner with CAF on a separate grant application to fund this work.



18 Add Roundabout at Highway 27 and 5th Street.



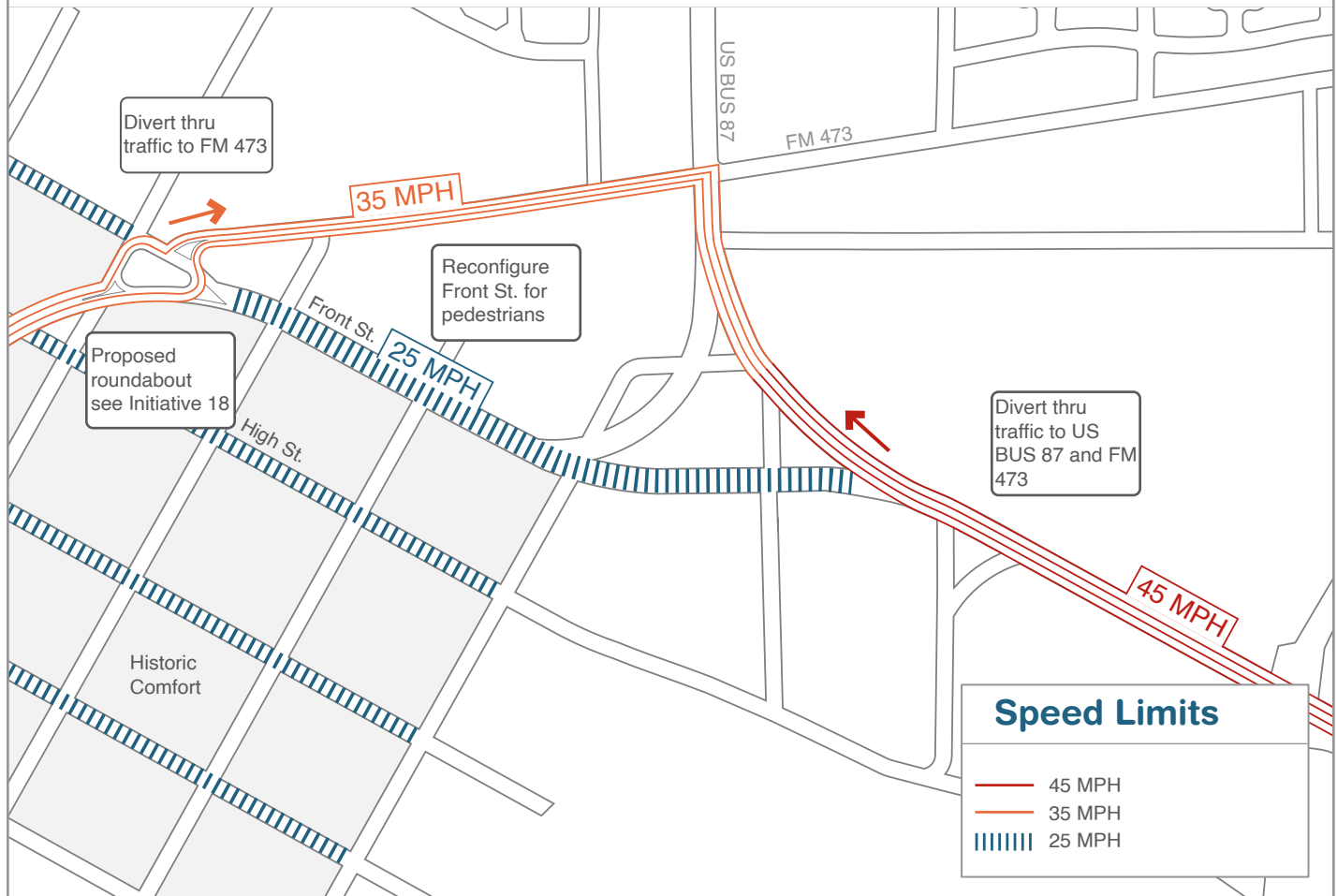
What: The design and construction of a roundabout at the intersection at SH 27 and RM 473 will reduce confusion for drivers and allow pedestrians to navigate the intersection safely.

Who: The CAF can petition Kendall County to pur-

sue state funding for these upgrades.

How: Kendall would request the State to insert a roundabout that maintains the existing park and ride.

19 Reconfigure Front Street for pedestrians.



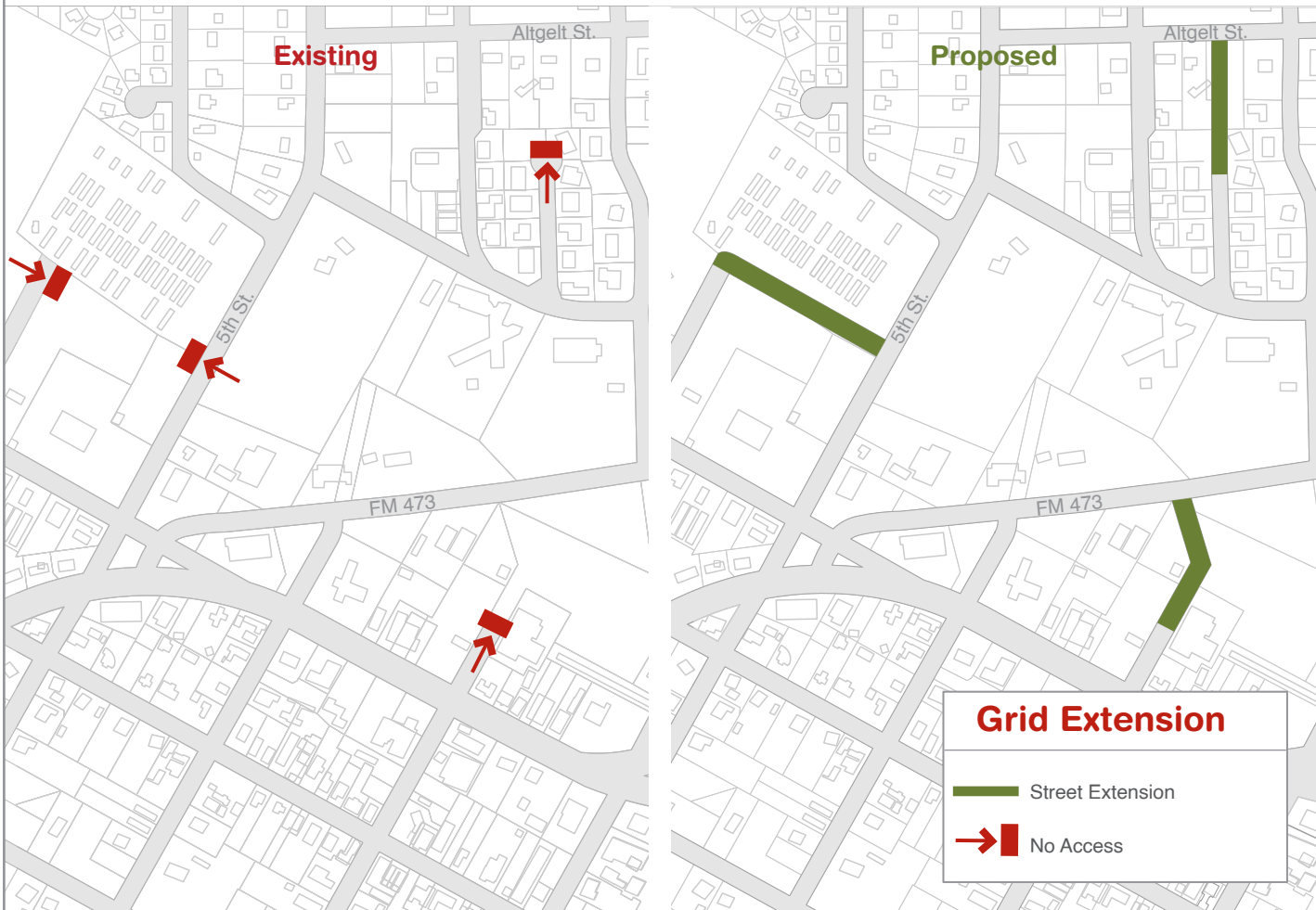
What: By diverting thru traffic at Front St./Business 87 and Front St./SH27, Comfort can reconfigure Front St. in between 5th St. and 8th St. for pedestrians.

Who: The CAF can petition Kendall County to pursue state funding for these road infrastructure upgrades.

How: The redesign of Front St. will remake the

street in the image of High St., reconstituting the street's historical character. This was interrupted with the introduction of high speed automobile traffic. The transformation will take place between 5th St. and 8th St. The project goals should be to narrow the street, introduce head-in parking, add a continuous sidewalk, dedicated bike lanes, and invest in low impact development strategies.

20 Repair and extend the street grid south of I-10.



What: One of Comfort's most valuable physical attributes is its 550 ft x 550 ft historic street grid, which provides much of the community's spatial character. Comfort has an opportunity to repair and extend the original grid in multiple locations, thereby protecting a critical piece of the community's physical heritage.

Who: The CAF or Chamber of Commerce can pe-

tion Kendall County to invest in these infrastructure upgrades.

How: Three likely locations to extend the street grid include 7th St. between Front St. and RM 473, 4th St. and 5th St. north of Front St., and Independence Parkway St. between Faltin St. and Altgelt St.

21 Clarify KCWCID #1's role in community development process.



What: KCWCID #1's authority to construct and manage infrastructure projects makes them a potentially powerful catalyst for development in Comfort. As de facto community planners, KCWCID #1 might benefit by clarifying their organizational mission and expanding channels for public dialogue.

Who: A trained facilitator can lead a conversation between KCWCID #1 staff, Comfort residents, and Kendall County officials.

How: One goal of this process might be for KCWCID #1 to create a public Mission, Vision, and Values statement. Since KCWCID #1 is already acting on the public's behalf, why not explicitly align their organizational mission with broader community values? The organization might also identify the most constructive ways for the public to provide feedback on strategic decisions like revenue streams, district boundaries, and infrastructure investments.

22 Work to secure additional water rights.



What: The Cow Creek Water District controls KCWCID #1's access to water, adjusting the allowable draw to accommodate local drought conditions. In response to these restrictions, KCWCID #1 must continue working to expand future water supply on behalf of the Comfort community. These efforts are already underway.

Who: KCWCID #1 must continue to build relationships with the Cow Creek Water District and Kerr County, while building community awareness about the importance of maintaining water supply.

How: KCWCID #1 has already begun to pursue additional water rights within Kerr County. This would allow them to purchase an unused permit to extract water from the Guadalupe River and to gain access to wells on nearby private property. KCWCID #1 can also make a request to the Cow Creek Water District for a 50% supply increase from 500 acre feet to 750 acre feet.

Note: 2014 Strategic Plan Initiative

23 Support KCWCID #1's pursuit of alternative water resources.



What: KCWCID #1 is already working to expand future water supply by examining alternative acquisition and storage strategies like scalping, gravel pits, and aquifer storage and recovery.

Who: KCWCID #1 is currently pursuing a regional feasibility study with other water districts.

How: Water scalping describes a technique that

pumps water out of a river when it is in flood condition. A gravel pit similarly stores excess water for use during drought. Aquifer storage and recovery deposits water in existing underground repositories, then recovers it later for drinking, irrigation, industrial, or ecological restoration.

Note: 2014 Strategic Plan Initiative

24 Work with Kendall County to pursue infrastructure grants.



What: As an unincorporated community, Comfort is not eligible to pursue funding opportunities like Texas Community Block Grants. As a way around this potential limitation, KCWCID #1 has collaborated successfully with Kendall County to pursue infrastructure grants.

Who: KCWCID #1 and Kendall County will continue to work together on these efforts.

How: The water tower project north of I-10 is the result of this type of collaboration. Kendall County acted as an intermediary between the State and KCWCID #1. Such collaborations can deliver lead low interest loans and grants, providing an excellent way to fund future infrastructure upgrades.

25 Use incremental strategies to control flooding.



What: Like any small community, Comfort does not have the capacity to pursue large-scale flood control projects. Comfort must therefore pursue incremental strategies, asking Kendall County and Kerr County to work on its behalf.

Who: Kendall County can pursue these strategies in collaboration with Kerr County, Comfort's upstream neighbor.

How: Kendall County and Kerr County, working together, can pursue flood warning systems, flood retention strategies, and improvements to local drainage culverts. Another worthwhile local project would remove blockages under the SH 27 bridge, which occur on a regular basis during storm events and are the source of flooding at Water St., Broadway, and Main St.

26 Build a riparian walking park along Cypress Creek.



What: A new riparian walking park would provide public access to the Creek and become a civic destination for residents and tourists alike.

Who: Kendall County would initiate and manage this effort with assistance from the Comfort Area Foundation.

How: Kendall County can initiate a conversation with landowners along Cypress Creek to see if

they are willing to support the creation of a riparian park. If the response is positive, Kendall County might offer a free engineering consultation in exchange for the donation or use of private land adjacent to Cypress Creek. Once the County has assembled a continuous swath of land, the Comfort Area Foundation can fundraise for the design and construction of the park.

27 Extend frontage roads along Interstate 10.



What: Extending frontage roads along I-10 from US Hwy 87 to RM 473 would facilitate access to adjacent property while enhancing its potential for development. New frontage roads would also provide a more convenient connection between RM 473 and I-10, thereby reducing traffic at the existing US Hwy 87 and RM 473 intersection and along RM 473 between I-10 and US 87.

Who: The Comfort Chamber of Commerce is well-positioned to advance this project.

How: The Comfort Chamber of Commerce, in

collaboration with the Kendall County Commissioner, can obtain a preliminary cost estimate for the work. TxDOT's San Antonio District Transportation Planning and Development Engineer can then refine the preliminary scope and cost estimate. The Chamber should encourage the Kendall County Commissioner's Court to budget matching funds, which will help get the project included in TxDOT's Transportation Improvement Plan. The Chamber should also encourage Comfort residents to participate in subsequent TxDOT transportation planning processes.

28 Join the MPO.

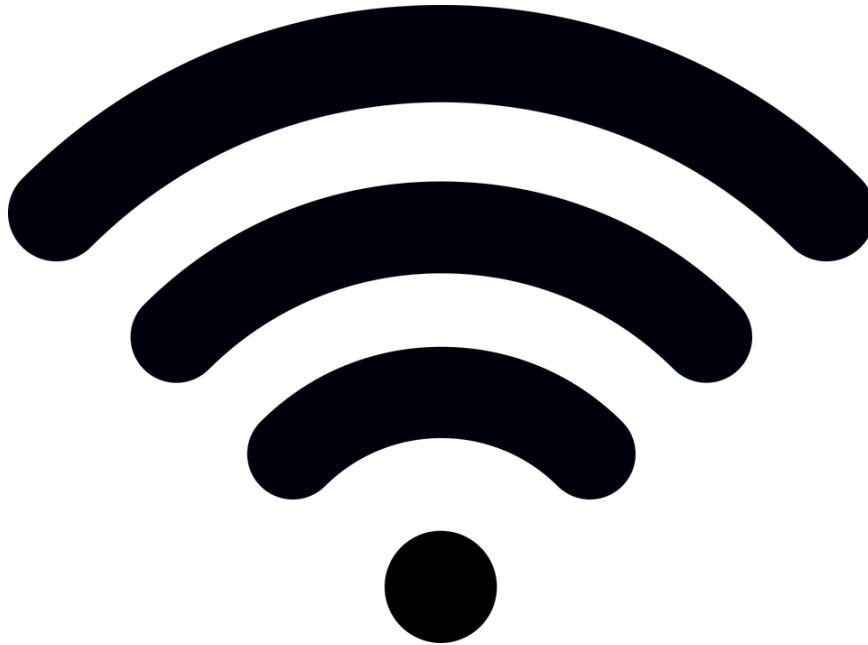


What: The Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (AAMPO) is an independent agency created by federal law to do transportation planning and allocate federal transportation funds. AAMPO's current study area includes the southern portion of Kendall County, but does not extend to Comfort. If the rest of the County joined, Comfort could benefit from federal and state transportation dollars in the amount of \$200 million per year (AAMPO).

Who: Comfort leaders would ask Kendall County to make this request on their behalf.

How: Kendall County would likely petition AAMPO to include the entire county in their study area. This means that the Comfort area would be included in the AAMPO's 25-year plan, their four-year list of prioritized transportation improvement projects, and their two-year work plan and budget (AAMPO).

29 Offer free wifi in public areas.



What: Comfort can create a free wifi mesh network and make it available downtown. At a minimum, coverage would extend for four square blocks between 6th St., 8th St., Front St, and Main St. Free wifi access would benefit tourists and residents alike, encouraging visitors to stay downtown longer while making Comfort a more attractive location for business startups.

Who: The Comfort Chamber of Commerce can lead this effort, working with Internet providers Hill Country Telephone Cooperative Inc (HCTC), Bandera Electric Cooperative (BEC), and others to develop a strategy for Comfort. The Comfort Public

Library and the Comfort Independent School District might also want to collaborate on this initiative.

How: Once community partners have an agreement in place, the Chamber might offer initial funding. The Comfort Public Library and Comfort ISD might also be eligible to apply for external grants. The Chamber will need to take a survey to determine the best location for network devices. The system can achieve long term financial sustainability by selling ads to appear on the public landing page. Local businesses can also invest in the network by donating unused bandwidth to the public zone.

30 Utilize the existing Community solar system.



What: Community solar systems rely on remote, shared power generation facilities that are larger than residential rooftop systems, yet smaller than typical utility-scale projects. Bandera Electric Cooperative's (BEC) existing community solar system allows individual Comfort residents to enjoy the benefits of clean, efficient solar energy without capital or maintenance costs. Community solar systems have an added benefit for the community, reducing loads on the electrical grid during peak hours.

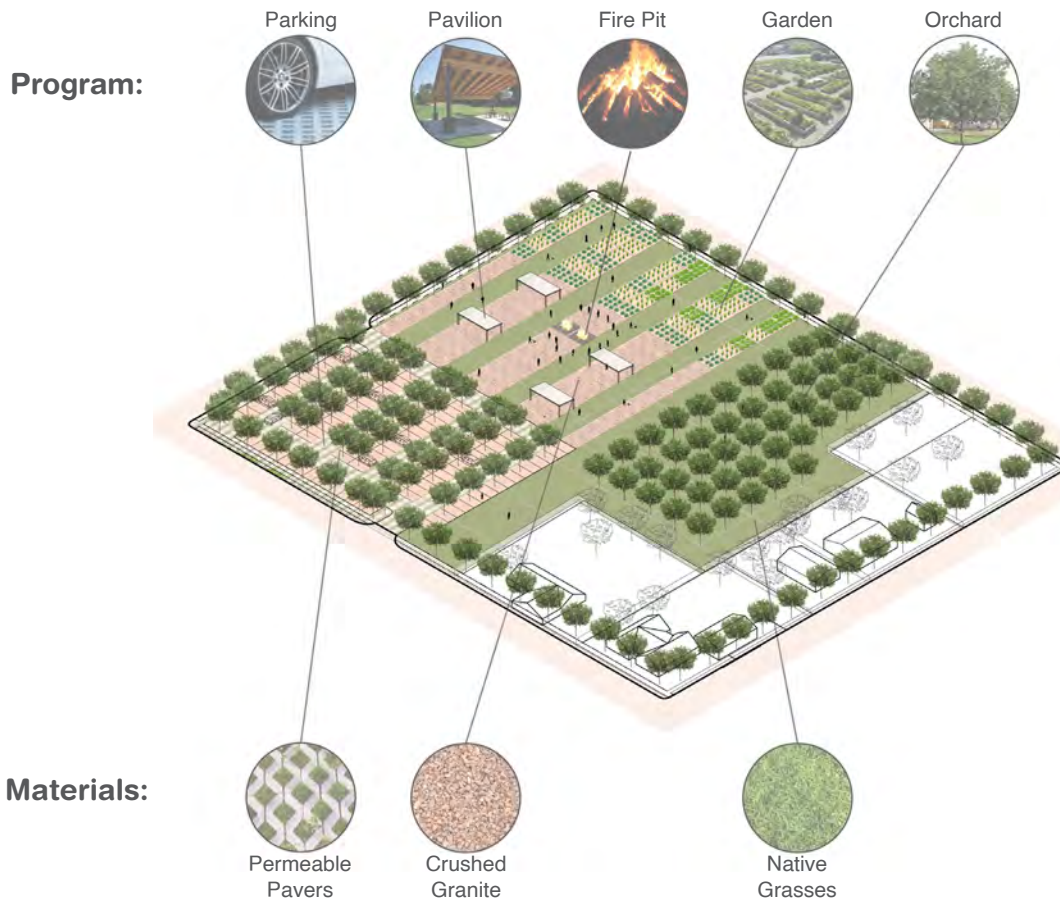
Who: The Chamber of Commerce can work with

BEC to raise the visibility of their community solar system, which has a facility in Leakey, TX.

How: Nearly half of all households are unable to install solar panels on their roofs due to structural or climatic limitations (Bandera Electric Cooperative). Other households simply don't want to invest in the capital infrastructure and system maintenance that solar power requires. Comfort residents can lease or subscribe to 100 kWh blocks from BEC and add additional capacity as needed.

Information:
www.banderaelectric.com

31 Develop new Community Park at 8th St. and Broadway.



What: Comfort can work with Kendall County to design and build a new Community Park at 8th St. and Broadway.

Who: This project would involve extensive collaboration between Kendall County and the Chamber of Commerce.

How: Kendall County owns the land for the new proposed Community Park. This lot is currently home to the community garden and site for the

annual Homecoming Game bonfire. A new Community Park would expand the community garden, add seating for the bonfire, overflow parking for community events, and flood control. A landscape architect, working for the Chamber, would lead the reprogramming and design of the new park. One potential source of funding is Community Development Block grants.

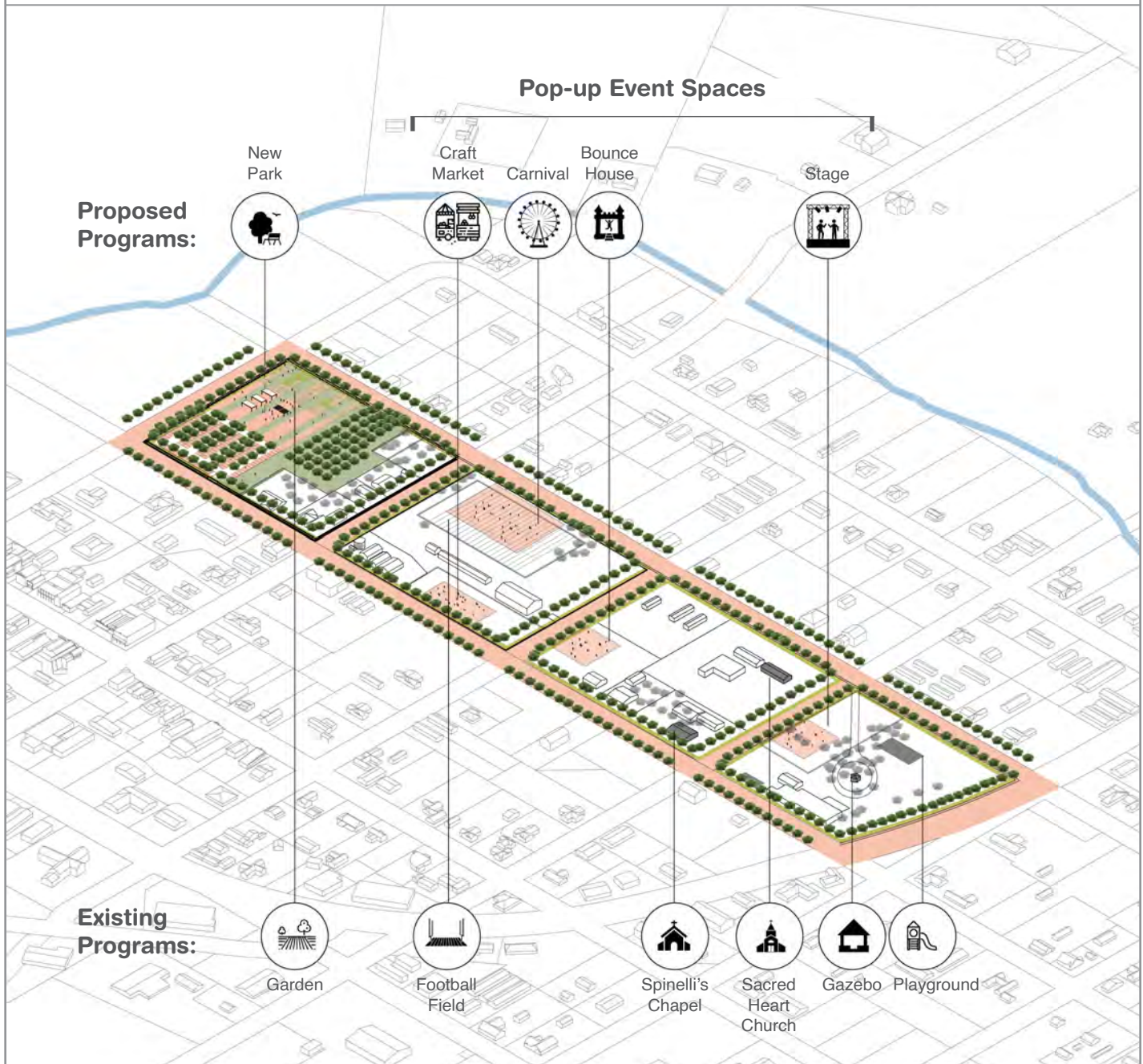
32 Build an inspiring new pedestrian promenade.

What: Comfort can work with Kendall County to construct an inspiring new gathering place for the community. A new pedestrian promenade would connect Broadway, 5th St., Main St., and 8th St., tying together Comfort Park and a new community park located on 8th St. and Broadway. The pedestrian promenade can connect the two parks with temporary civic programs like an arts fair or a carnival. The new community park would maintain the existing community garden, provide new seating pavilions, and also provide overflow parking for public events.

Who: This project would involve a collaboration between Kendall County and private landowners, with leadership from the Chamber of Commerce.

How: Kendall County owns both Comfort Park and the land for the proposed community park. They also own intermittent property along the route and could purchase more with bond support. Comfort ISD owns most of the property between 6th and 7th Streets. Strong collaboration between Kendall County, Comfort ISD, and the KCWCID #1 might encourage private landowners to begin developing additional programs along the promenade. A Texas Community Development Block Grant might pay for the public realm improvements, which would be led by a landscape architect with consulting from a civil engineer.







An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood, showing a grid of houses with varying roof styles, surrounded by trees and greenery. A central road runs vertically through the image, with speed limit signs for 30 visible. The word "Housing" is overlaid in a bold, orange font on the right side of the image.

Housing

Comfort Today

Comfort today faces a pervasive housing shortage. This trend limits choice for existing and potential residents alike. The housing shortage can be measured in three important ways: quantity, affordability, and typology.

Perhaps the biggest challenge is the absolute lack of available units in Comfort. In 2018, just 1.7% of the 1078 housing units in Comfort were vacant (eSite Analytics, 2019). The low vacancy rate begins to explain the difficulty that potential residents report finding housing. This situation is not surprising in a community whose population grew from 2,358 to 3,441 between the years 2000 and 2016 (American Community Survey). Still, it highlights the need for Comfort to find a way to build more residential supply as soon as possible.

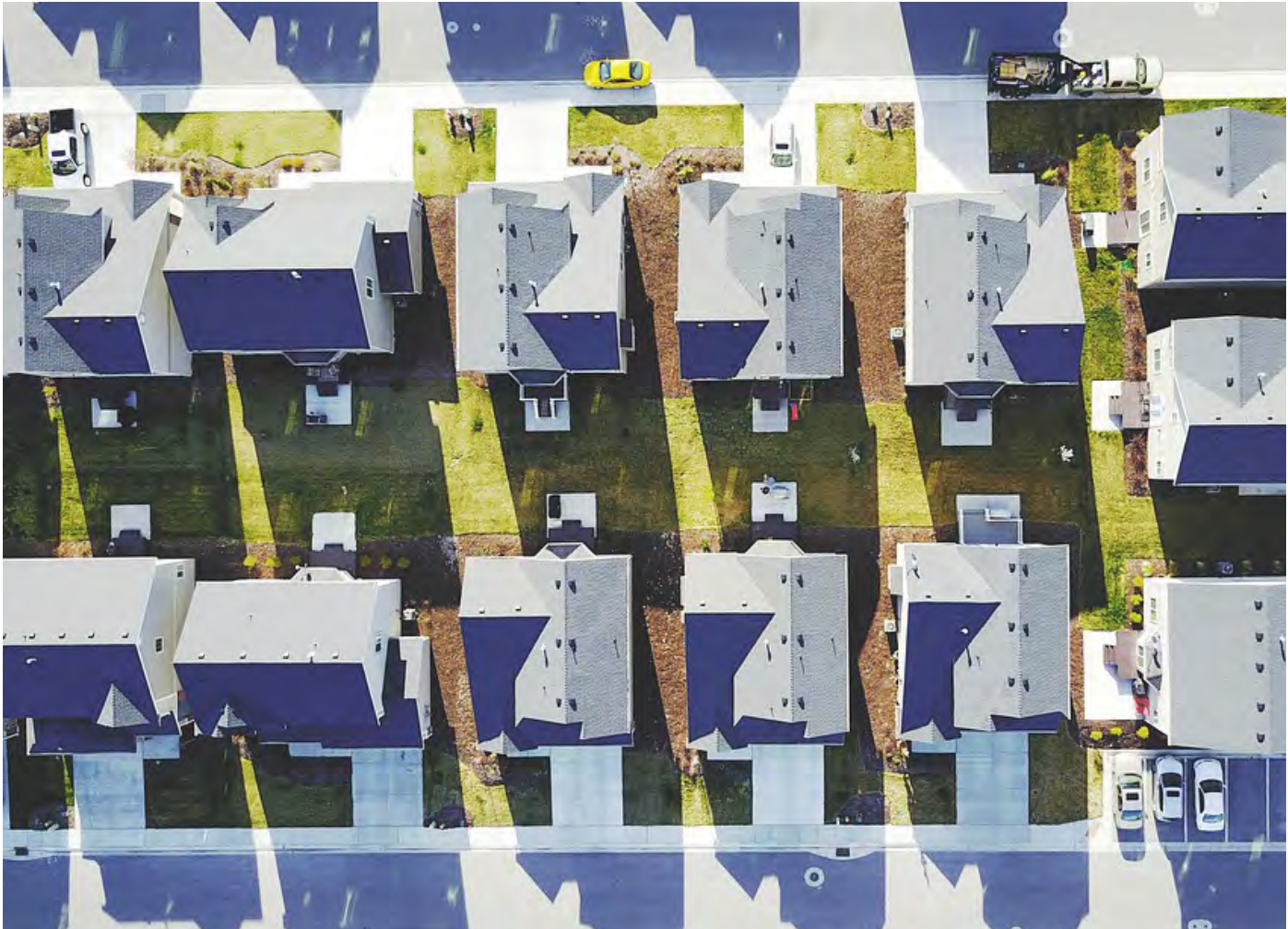
Affordability is another factor limiting housing choice in Comfort, as many single-family units are priced beyond the budgets of young people, retirees, and low-income residents. Anecdotal evidence collected during the 2019 vision sessions reveals that the Comfort Independent School District is struggling to attract and retain teachers and staff, some of whom report being priced out of the housing market. The 2014 Strategic Plan reinforced this observation, revealing that of the sixteen recently hired ISD staff members, just two lived within Comfort (Opportunity Strategies, 2014, p.7).

Finally, Comfort's residential supply does not offer a diversity of housing types. In 2012, 69% of all occupied housing in Comfort were single-family units, 29% were manufactured units, and just 2% were multifamily units (Holtkamp, 2014, p.7). These numbers reflect a lack of choice for residents, with an over-emphasis on single family homes and manu-

factured housing. Meanwhile, multi-family units are virtually non-existent in Comfort, a trend that limits options for residents that may not be in the market for a single-family home. The unusually large percentage of manufactured housing units further suggests a potential misalignment between Comfort's housing stock and economic profile, which in 2018 saw 25% of the population with an Income to Poverty Level below 1.0 (eSite Analytics, 2019).

One cause of the housing deficit is the Kendall County Development Rules and Regulations. The document severely restricts residential development by requiring a 3-acre minimum lot size for single family dwellings attached to a central water system and 6-acre minimum lot size for single family dwellings with individual water wells. Rental mobile home parks are exempt from the minimum lot requirement because they service all housing units from a single meter tap (Kendall County, 2010). Kendall County's minimum lot size requirements make large-scale residential development virtually impossible, except in cases where Kendall County grants an Administrative or Traditional variance to developers.

Kendall County's Rules and Regulations also have the positive effect of limiting tract housing. The Rule and Regulations, for example, prevent the construction of subdivisions with ½ acre average lot sizes that are now common in surrounding communities. During the 2019 vision sessions, multiple residents expressed concern that this type of "tract" housing would become commonplace in Comfort, thereby diminishing the community's semi-rural character. To be sure, 1/2 acre single-family lots create residential fabric that is too dense to provide the traditional benefits of rural living, yet too restrictive to allow multi-family options. In this regard, such de-



velopments can represent the “worst of both worlds.” Another concern involves the prefabricated and monolithic character of tract housing, which might diminish the historic architectural character of Comfort.

In response to the shortage of housing options in Comfort, Comfort Vision 2050 argues that instead of restricting density with minimum lot requirements,

the community seek to concentrate new residential density in compact blocks that accommodate well-designed, multi-family housing. This type of development would complement the historical downtown street grid, safeguard Comfort from encroaching residential sprawl, and most importantly increase housing choices for existing and future Comfort residents.

Vision Statements

Housing

- A** Comfort will expand multifamily housing options for current and future residents.
- B** Comfort will expand access to affordable and efficient housing options.
- C** Comfort will pursue compact development as one option for future residential growth.
- D** Comfort will encourage new developers to pursue mixed-use programming.
- E** Comfort will safeguard existing low-density, single-family fabric, allowing it to remain intact.

Strategic Initiatives

Housing

- 33** Pursue developers who offer multi-family housing.
- 34** Ask Kendall County to facilitate multifamily housing.
- 35** Add Accessible Dwelling Units to single-family homes.
- 36** Support affordable, accessible, efficient housing.
- 37** Encourage new gridded, compact development.
- 38** Pursue quality, mixed-use development north of I-10.
- 39** Imagine a dynamic future for AJW facility.
- 40** Selectively infill Comfort's existing residential grid.

33 Pursue developers who offer multi-family housing.



What: The best way for Comfort to address its housing shortage is to develop multifamily options that fit comfortably into Comfort's existing urban fabric. One way to accomplish this is to introduce new housing types like duplexes and bungalow courts. These types of small-scale multifamily options either look like or are complementary to existing single-family units.

Who: The Chamber of Commerce would pursue this goal in consultation with Kendall County.

How: The Chamber of Commerce can consider working with existing landowners to develop a request-for-proposal that solicits developers who build compact, walkable communities with single and multifamily options. Kendall County can incentivize development proposals by agreeing to facilitate the approval and construction of these residential developments.

Information:
www.missingmiddlehousing.com



34 Ask Kendall County to facilitate multifamily housing.



What: One source of Comfort's housing deficit are the Kendall County Development Rules and Regulations, which require a 3-acre minimum lot size for single family dwellings attached to a central water system and 6-acre minimum lot size for single family dwellings with individual water wells. To increase the quantity, affordability, and diversity of housing options in Comfort, Kendall County can grant variances to developers who offer high-quality multifamily options.



Who: The Chamber of Commerce can advance this request to the Kendall County.

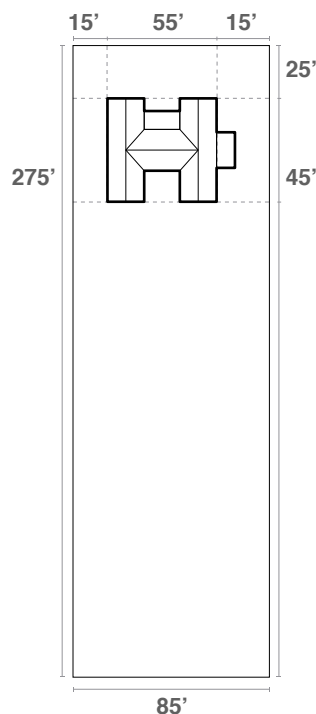
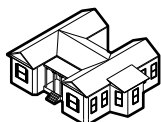
How: Current political reality requires the Commissioners Court to understand, interpret, and enforce Comfort's preferences as they consider requests from developers. For example, when a developer requests a variance from the County to build single-family "tract" housing on .25 acre lots, the Commissioners are left to decide whether this type of project is in the best interests of the community. If Comfort would like to introduce multifamily options to their community, then they must communicate this preference to the County Commissioners. Vision 2050 provides useful language, drawings, and housing precedents for this purpose.



Information:
www.co.kendall.il.us

Single Family Housing Types

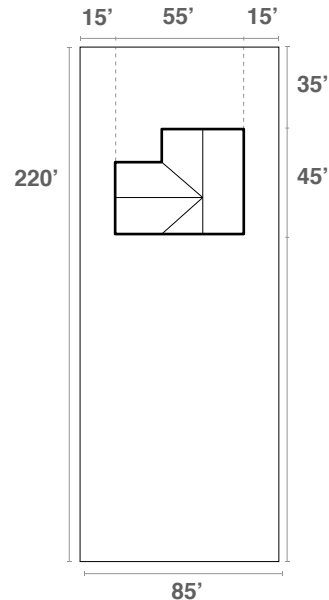
Folk Victorian House



1: unit/acre

Year: 1800-1910
Unit: 1500 sf
Lot: 0.5-0.75 acre

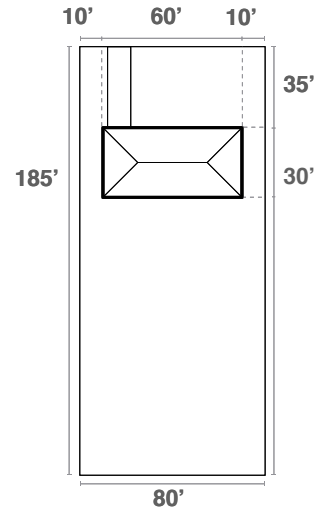
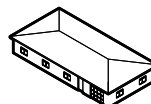
Craftsman Bungalow



2: units/acre

Year: 1905-1930
Unit: 2475 sf
Lot: 0.5 acre

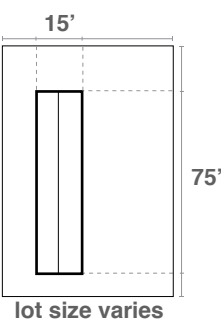
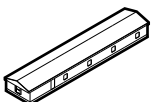
Ranch-Style House



2: units/acre

Year: 1930-1985
Unit: 1800 sf
Lot: 0.18-0.25 acre

Manufactured Home

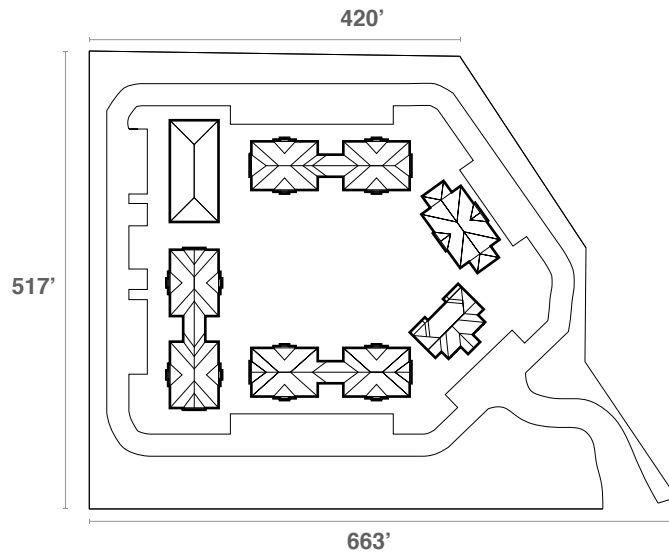
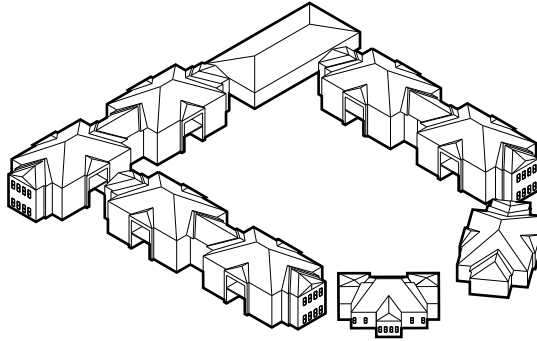


2-5: units/acre

Year: 1990-2019
Unit: 1125 sf
Lot: varies

Multi-Family Housing Type

Comfort Place



5: units/acre

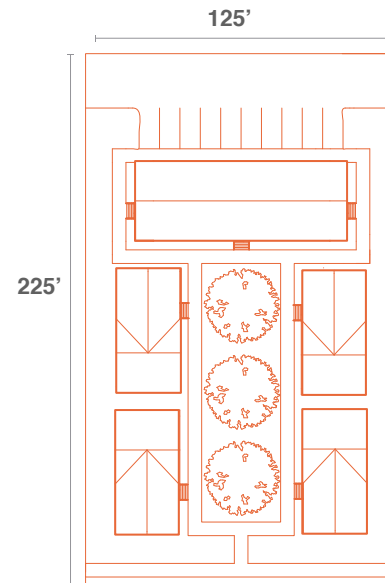
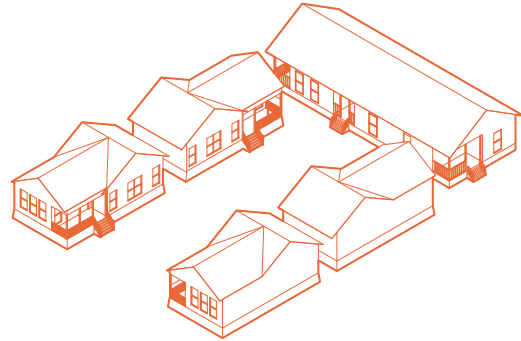
Year: 1990-2013

Unit: 1924 sf

Lot: 7.17 acre

Proposed Housing Type

Bungalow Court



10: units/acre

Year: Future

Unit: 1500 sf

Lot: 0.7 acre

35 Add Accessible Dwelling Units to single-family homes.



What: One of the simplest ways to expand housing choice in Comfort is to increase the use of Accessible Dwelling Units, or ADUs. By providing an affordable option for renters, these “granny flats” or “mother-in-law apartments” allow community members with moderate salaries to stay in the community. ADUs can also help seniors age in place. ADUs have the added benefit of providing extra income for existing homeowners.



Who: The Chamber of Commerce can encourage the construction of ADUs by inviting design-build firms and prefabricated manufacturers to make presentations to homeowners. In order to encourage neighborhood stability, this plan recommends that future ADUs rest on permanent foundations and connect to utilities.



How: ADUs can take multiple forms, including small apartments above garages, in-house apartments with separate entrances, and separate “out” buildings behind existing homes. The authority of Texas Counties to regulate land use authority is limited to the platting of subdivisions, transportation, and water (supply, waste, and storm). Therefore, no meaningful County-level restrictions exist on the construction and rental of ADUs

36 Support affordable, accessible, efficient housing.



What: Chapter 232 of the Local Government Code provides Counties with significant control over the platting process, allowing them to incentivize developers to provide new housing that is affordable, accessible, and energy-efficient.

Who: The Chamber of Commerce and the Comfort Area Foundation can collaborate to propose this amendment to the Kendall County Development Rules and Regulations.

How: Travis County is already incentivizing affordable and accessible housing by granting fee waiv-

ers to developers who sell a targeted percentage of new homes to families whose income is equal to or less than 80% of the area's median. The financial incentives come in the form of fee waivers to developers who sell between 10%-40% of a project's units to qualifying families. The County requires that these units are dispersed throughout the neighborhood and that they meet baseline accessibility requirements (Travis County, Section 482.107, 2019). Kendall County can pursue a similar incentive program to encourage the construction of affordable, accessible, or energy efficient housing.

37 Encourage new gridded, compact development.



What: Much of the Comfort's physical character emerges from Ernst Altgelt's original town plan, which features an orthogonal street grid, generous block sizes, large lots, numerous accessory buildings, and large building setbacks. Future urban development in Comfort should extend the logic of Altgelt's historic town plan to reinforce the physical heritage of the community.

Who: The Chamber of Commerce can encourage Kendall County to facilitate project approval for developers who plat and build urban fabric that compliments Altgelt's plan.

How: Ernst Altgelt's original town plan for Comfort utilized a strict orthogonal street grid composed of large square 550 foot long blocks. He subdivided

the blocks into generous lots with approximate dimensions of 100 feet by 275 feet, which provided room for landowners to build multiple accessory dwellings. These types of gridded town plans offer multiple advantages to residents: providing spatial consistency, programmatic flexibility, and continuous circulation for pedestrians, drivers, and bicyclists alike. Much of the recent development in the Texas Hill Country utilizes suburban culs-de-sac, which can isolate new and old neighborhoods from each other. During the Comfort Vision 2050 sessions, facilitators asked participants "What is your favorite street in Comfort?" Virtually all named streets within Altgelt's original town plan. Comfort ought to note of community preferences and build on the success Altgelt's original town plan.

38 Pursue quality, mixed-use development north of I-10.



What: Existing large and undeveloped lots north of I-10 are likely targets for big box retail, which can produce automobile-oriented landscapes with few connections to surrounding neighborhoods. Comfort and Kendall County should incentivize developers to embed retail options into compact and walkable neighborhoods with diverse housing options.

Who: The Chamber of Commerce can work with Kendall County to encourage new commercial developments that transcend typical suburban typologies.

How: Chapter 232 of the Local Government Code provides Counties with significant control over the platting process, allowing them to incentivize

developers who build retail environments that align with broader community preferences. The Chamber of Commerce can start by informing local residents about alternatives to traditional suburban typologies. This plan recommends that the community pursue commercial development that features complete and well-designed streets that connect to existing arterials, well-designed pedestrian networks, multiple housing options, a reduction of surface lots through shared parking options, and the mitigation of storm run-off through low-impact development strategies.

Information:

[www. formbasedcodes.org](http://www.formbasedcodes.org)
www. Smartgrowth.org
www.cnu.org

39 Imagine a dynamic future for AJW facility.



What: Comfort can reach out to the existing property owner in an effort to imagine exciting future scenarios for the empty AJW Architectural Products warehouse. One way is to create and distribute a marketing package that proactively visualizes redevelopment concepts.



Who: The Chamber of Commerce can collaborate with the Boerne Kendall County Economic Development Corporation to advance this effort.

How: Hire a forward-thinking architectural designer and developer team to generate 3-5 potential adaptive reuse scenarios. Each scenario would include options for creative programming, visualizations, and a schematic proforma. Focus on the facility's enormous potential for adaptive reuse: 412,000 square feet of enclosed space with uninterrupted floor plans, standard structural grids, triple-height ceilings, plenty of parking on a 45-acre site, a new roof and mechanical systems, and an easy-to-modify exterior envelope. The potential efficiencies provide a virtually limitless palette for innovation. Some of the many potential adaptive re-use programs include a Convention Center, School, Museum, Healthcare Complex, Library, Outdoor Park, Mixed-Use Big Box with Housing, and Sports Facility.



40 Selectively infill Comfort's existing residential grid.



What: Comfort landowners can selectively infill existing residential blocks to expand and diversify program.

Who: Individual homeowners will take up this initiative on an individual basis, incentivized by the potential to generate income.

How: Residential blocks within the historic district offer the greatest potential for infill. The key to suc-

cessful infill is the selective introduction of appropriate programs and building types. For example, accessory Dwelling Units are appropriate for the interior portion of blocks, single-family typologies site most comfortably at the block edge, commercial buildings reside best on corners. In all cases, it is important for landowners to be conscious of existing block morphologies and consider lot size, setbacks, building type, and street scale.





Preservation

Comfort Today

Comfort enjoys a well-preserved and well-documented historical architectural fabric. Comfort residents maintain a strong commitment to their community's heritage. The Comfort Heritage Foundation (CHF), a volunteer-operated group whose mission is to preserve the town's history and heritage, has provided significant leadership in this area. The group's efforts to document and preserve Comfort's physical heritage helped establish a National Register Historic District, land two properties on the National Register, and designate 21 historical markers in and around Comfort. Today the CHF cares for the Treue der Union Monument, Brownsboro Cemetery, and keeps an extensive archive of the town's history.

Comfort's architectural heritage enjoys a material connection to the rugged, rural setting of the Texas Hill Country. Much of this connection resides in the extensive use of limestone in early downtown buildings and the Treue der Union monument. It also lives in the widespread use of local cypress as a primary structural material in Comfort's historic building stock. The community's roots as an early German "Freethinker" settlement resonate in early fachwerk structures, the Freidenker pavilion, and the town's original Turn Verein, which now functions as the Camp Comfort B & B.

Comfort's unique sense of place is also inseparable from the community's rural character. This quality resides in Comfort's large downtown blocks and low residential densities, which average less than 1000 people per square mile (less than one-third than that of San Antonio). Both qualities exaggerate Comfort's spread out and horizontal character. Comfort's Hygieostatic Bat Roost offers an element of local spectacle, adding to the sense that Comfort is a unique and special place in the Texas Hill Country.

Comfort's active cultural institutions help to maintain a robust cultural heritage. Community service organizations like The Comfort Heritage Foundation, Comfort Area Foundation, and the Comfort Public Library are critical to the maintenance of Comfort's political and civic culture. Similarly, multiple religious institutions attend to the community's spiritual needs. Some of the larger congregations include the Comfort Baptist Church, Sacred Heart Church, Gaddis Memorial United Methodist Church, and Immanuel Lutheran Church. Finally, local businesses like Hotel Faust, Comfort Backyard, and High's Cafe act as cultural hubs, leveraging the community's widespread appreciation for history and heritage.

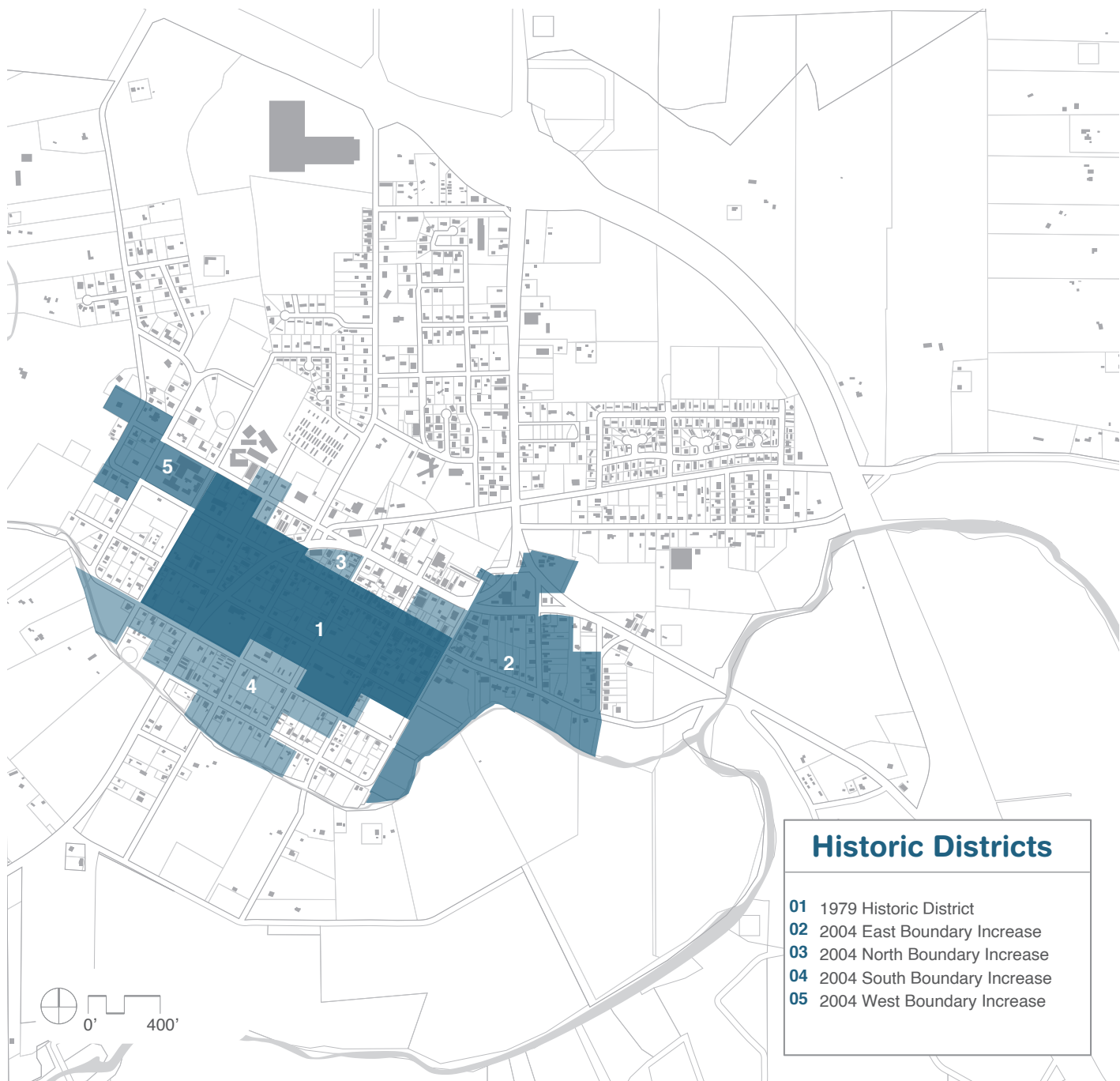
Comfort residents enjoy a high quality of life that emerges from a long tradition of ranching culture. Ranches have historically surrounded the town of Comfort and remain integral to the physical and living heritage of the community. These large tracts of land continue to protect the community against many of the negative impacts of urbanization while maintaining the native Hill Country ecosystems and dark night skies. Ranching culture is also central to the living heritage in Comfort. Hillingdon Ranch offers a great example of this: for generations the family has carefully managed the land, selectively grazing cattle, goats, and sheep on native plants that grow in the rangeland. Such practices remain typical of the community's deep understanding and respect for the natural environment.

Comfort, like much of the Hill Country, is experiencing rapid urbanization and loss of place. Population in the 17-County Hill Country region has grown exponentially since the middle of the twentieth century, from 800,000 in 1950 to 3.1 million in 2008. Current projections estimate that 4.3 million will live in the Hill Country by 2030 (Hill Country Alliance, A

Look at the Texas Hill Country, 2008, p.5). Kendall County has experienced similar trends, growing from 23,743 in the year 2000 to 39,010 in 2016 (American Community Survey). Rapid population growth and the process of urbanization that accompanies it continue to impact the physical character of historically rural communities like Comfort, as ranch and prairie land rapidly transform into subdivisions, strip malls, and office parks. The physical impacts of urbanization are intensified by a lack of county land use authority, which prevents officials from significantly guiding, focusing, or regulating development within the 90% of the Hill Country that remains unincorporated.



Comfort Historic District and Expansions



Historic Districts

- 01** 1979 Historic District
- 02** 2004 East Boundary Increase
- 03** 2004 North Boundary Increase
- 04** 2004 South Boundary Increase
- 05** 2004 West Boundary Increase

1 1979 *Established Historic District*

Log cabins and fachwerk structures characterized Comfort's first "boom." These structures, which clustered around the community's two public squares, displayed excellent craft and reflected the German heritage of early settlers.



2 2004 *Eastern Boundary Increase*

This area contains some of the oldest houses in Comfort, as well as an intact postwar residential development. Residential development from the early 20th century features a well-integrated mix of modestly scaled Craftsman Style dwellings and contemporary architect-designed homes.



3 2004 *Northern Boundary Increase*

Comfort features a well-preserved post-World War II development towards the north along State Highway 473 and US 87. Commercial development in this area increased when the railroad ceased operations in 1970. Historic homes date from 1880 to 1920.



4 2004 *Southern Boundary Increase*

Folk Victorian houses featuring an L-plan are common in this southern district. Queen Anne, Craftsman and Ranch Style Houses are also scattered throughout the area. Other significant structures include the Turn Verein and two groceries.

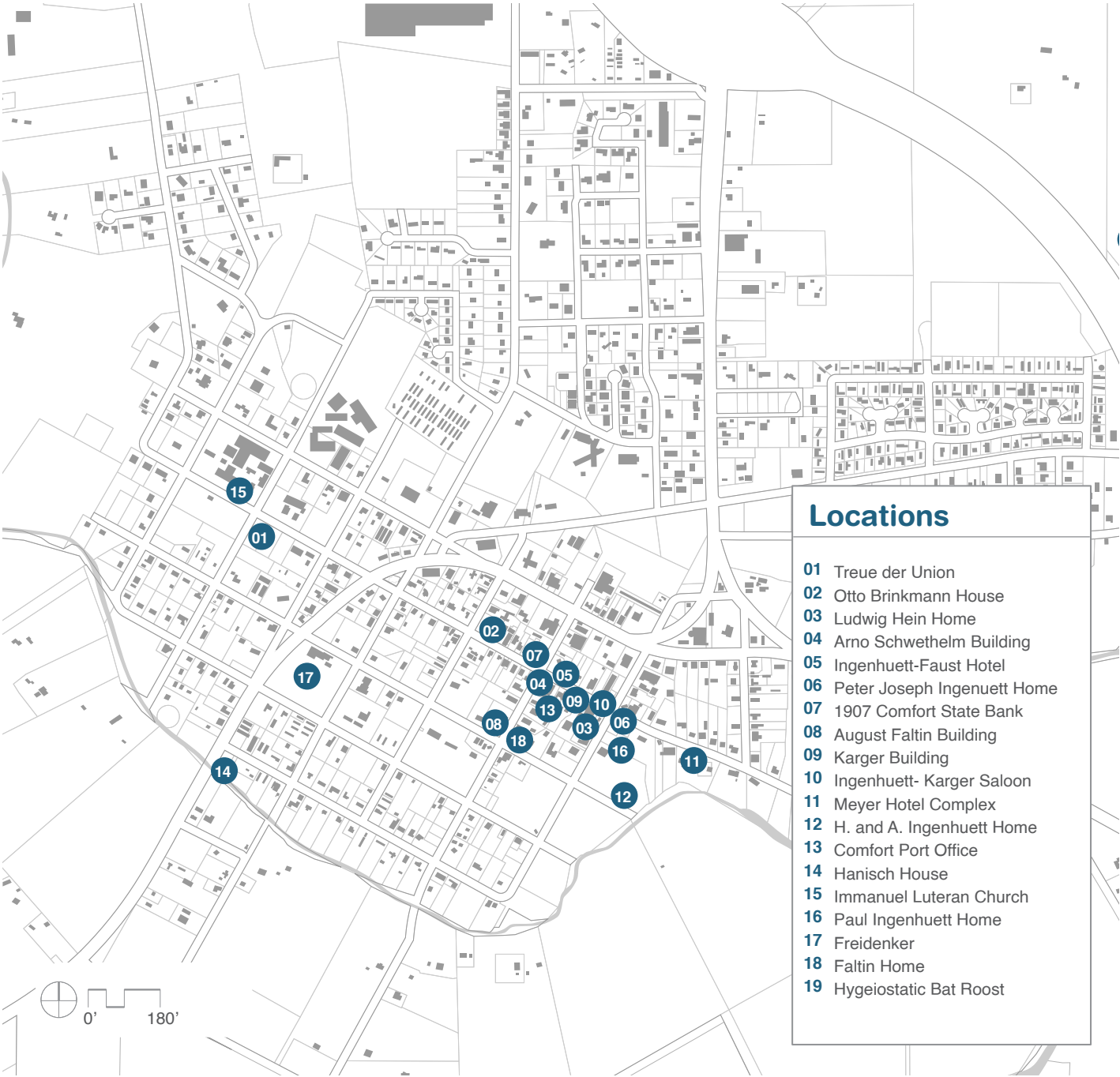


5 2004 *Western Boundary Increase*

This section is mostly residential with sparsely developed wooded lots that contain pre-1920 houses homes. Aside from the modern school buildings, the most prominent structures are large homes such as the Holekamp House, the Hubert Ingenhuett House, and the Gaddis House complex.



Historic Markers in Comfort, Texas





01 Treue der Union Monument



02 Otto Brinkmann House



03 Ludwig Heim Home



04 Arno Schwethelm Building



05 Ingenhuett-Faust Hotel



06 Peter Joseph Ingenhuett Home



07 1907 Comfort State Bank



08 August Faltin Building



09 Karger Building



10 Ingenhuett-Karger Saloon



11 Meyer Hotel Complex



12 H. and A. Ingenhuett Homestead



13 Comfort Post Office



14 Hanisch House



15 Immanuel Lutheran Church



16 Paul Ingenhuett Home



17 Freidenker

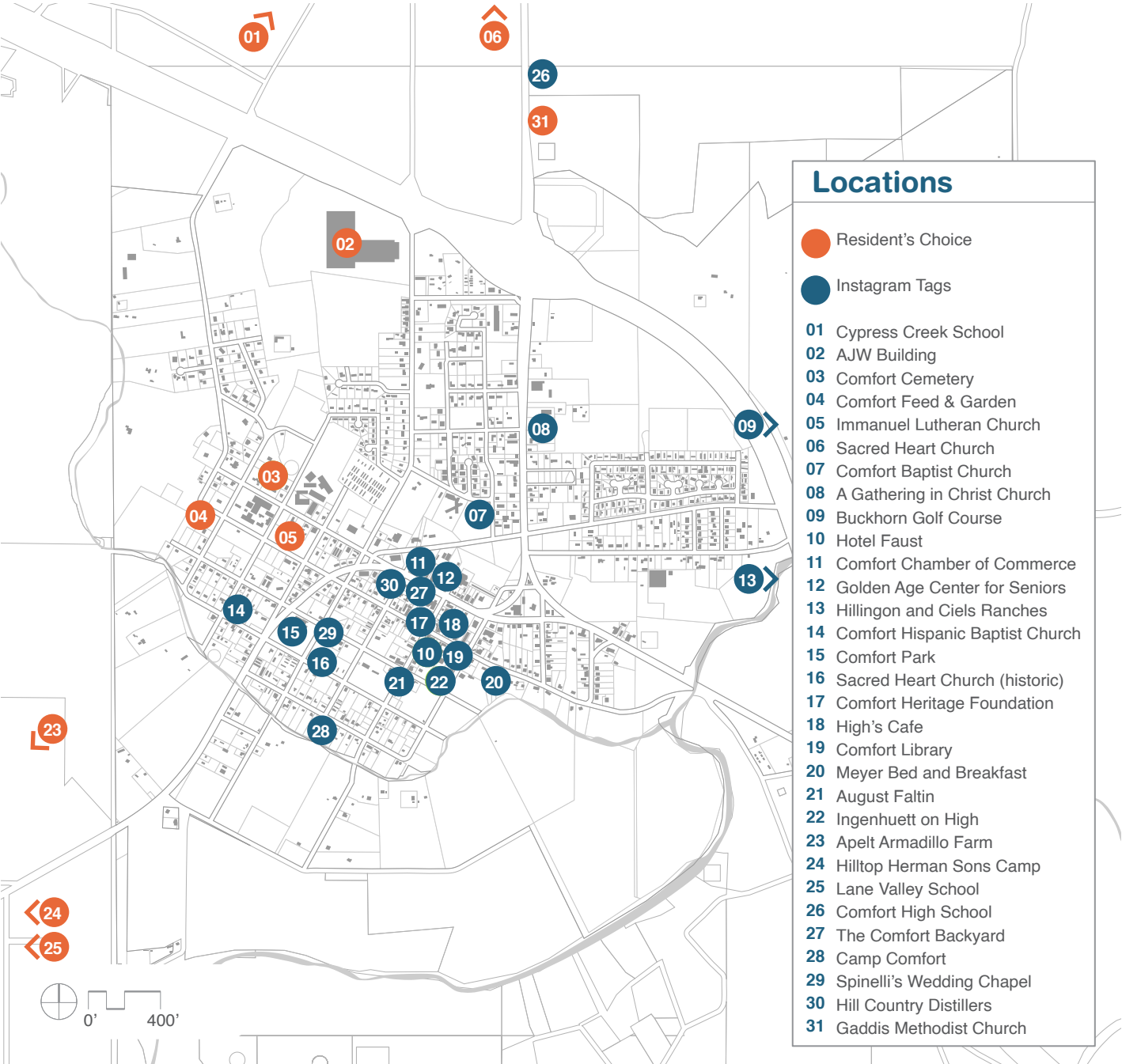


18 Faltin Homestead



19 Hygeostatic Bat Roose

Cultural Heritage in Comfort





01
Cypress Creek
School



02
The AJW



03
Comfort
Cemetery



04
Comfort Feed &
Garden



05
Immanuel
Lutheran Church



06
Sacred Heart
Church



07
Comfort Baptist
Church



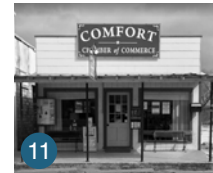
08
A Gathering in
Christ Church



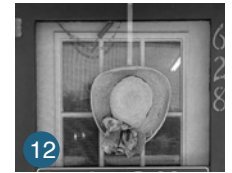
09
Buckhorn Golf
Course



10
Hotel Faust



11
Comfort
Chamber of
Commerce



12
Golden Age
Center for
Seniors



13
Hilltop and
Riverside
Hermann Sons



14
Comfort Hispanic
Baptist Church



15
Comfort Park



16
Sacred Heart
Catholic Church
(historic)



17
Comfort Heritage
Foundation



18
High's Cafe



19
Comfort Library



20
Meyer Bed and
Breakfast



21
August Faltin
Building



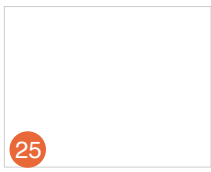
22
Ingenhuett on
High



23
Apelt Armadillo
Farm



24
Hillingdon & Ciel's
Ranches



25
Lane Valley
School



26
Comfort High
School



27
The Comfort
Backyard



28
Camp Comfort

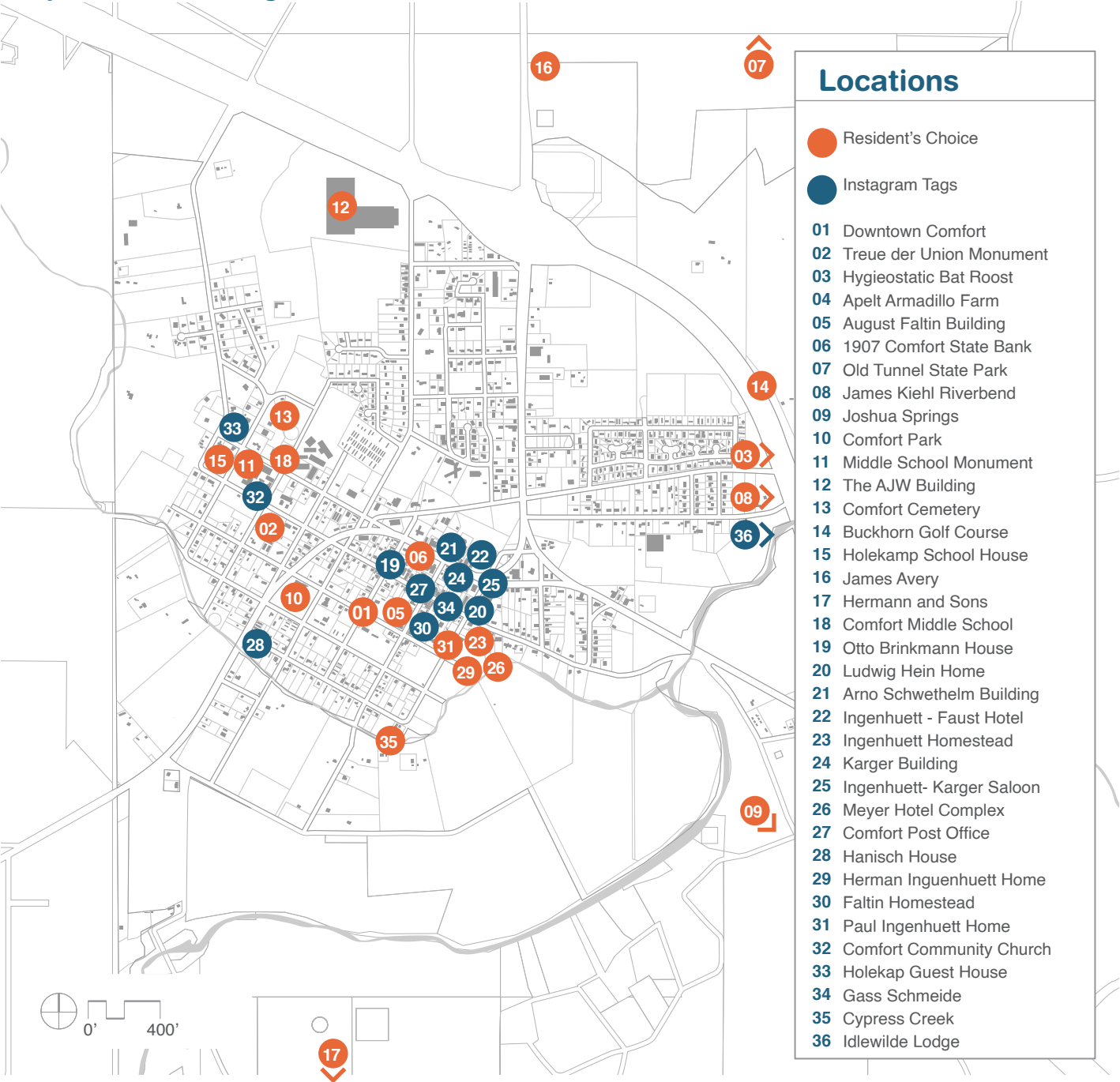


29
Spinelli's
Wedding Chapel



30
Hill Country
Distillers

Physical Heritage in Comfort





01

Downtown



02

Treue der Union
Monument



03

Hygieostatic Bat
Roost



04

Apelt Armadillo
Farm



05

August Faltin
Building



06

1907 Comfort
State Bank



07

Old Tunnel State
Park (Bat Cave)



08

James Kiehl River
Bend Park



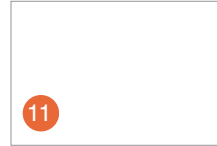
09

Joshua Springs
Park and Preserve



10

Freidenker Pavilion



11

Comfort Middle
School Monument



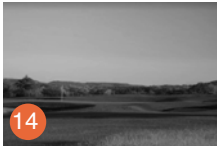
12

The AJW Building



13

Comfort Cemetary



14

Buckhorn Golf
Course



15

Old Holekamp
School House



16

James Avery



17

Hermann Sons



18

Comfort Middle
School



19

Otto Brinkmann
House



20

Ludwig Hein Home



21

Arno Schwethelm
Building



22

Ingenhuett - Faust
Hotel



23

Peter Joseph
Ingenhuett Home



24

Karger Building



25

Ingenhuett-Karger
Saloon



26

Meyer Hotel
Complex



27

Comfort Post Office



28

Hanisch House



29

Herman & Antione
Ingenhuett Home



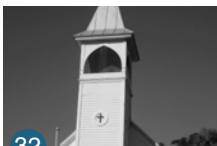
30

Faltin Homestead



31

Paul Ingenhuett
Home



32

Comfort
Community Church



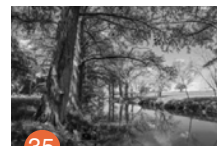
33

Holekamp Guest
House



34

Gass Schmeide



35

Cypress Creek



36

Idlewilde Lodge

Vision Statements

Preservation

- A** Comfort will expand local capacity to advance historic preservation.
- B** Comfort will invest in physical heritage by valuing and preserving buildings and infrastructure.
- C** Comfort will invest in living heritage by supporting and utilizing active civic organizations.
- D** Comfort will safeguard rural character by working to keep remaining large tracts of land intact.
- E** Comfort will construct new buildings that complement existing architectural heritage.

Strategic Initiatives

Preservation

- 41** Expand capacity of Comfort Heritage Foundation.
- 42** Train new historic preservation advocates.
- 43** Send local contractors to the Rehabber's Club.
- 44** Ask the San Antonio Conservation Society to do a workshop.
- 45** Start a Historic Preservation Tax Credit Education Program.
- 46** Create an online archive of Comfort's physical heritage.
- 47** Work with a historic preservation specialist.
- 48** Document Comfort's physical heritage with a 3D Lidar map.
- 49** Seek financial assistance for restoration from the NTCIC.
- 50** Document oral histories to extend Comfort's living heritage.
- 51** Ask Partners for Sacred Places to support local churches.
- 52** Encourage conservation easements on agricultural property.
- 53** Create Voluntary Design Guidelines in the Historic District.

41 Expand capacity of Comfort Heritage Foundation.



What: The Comfort Heritage Foundation (CHF) is vital to the preservation of Comfort's history and physical character. The tax-exempt, chartered organization tends to important heritage sites, maintains a historical archive, and organizes tours of local historic homes. The CHF can expand their organizational capacity by fundraising and making their work, mission, and goals more transparent and accessible to the public.

Who: The CHF will lead this effort.

How: The CHF can pursue a membership drive

aimed at signing up downtown businesses. The immediate goal would be to hire a part time staff person. Currently, the majority of the organization's funds goes to utilities and upkeep of the Treue der Union monument and Brownsborough Cemetery. The CHF would benefit by hiring a part time staff member to update the website, develop a social media campaign, and streamline communications involving preservation programs, projects, and events. The San Antonio Area Foundation and the Conservation Society of San Antonio are potential funding sources for these efforts.

42 Train new historic preservation advocates.



What: Expand the number and capacity of historic preservation advocates. With new skills and strategies, advocates can help to advance physical and cultural continuity in Comfort.

Who: The Comfort Heritage Foundation (CHF) can coordinate this initiative, working in collaboration with the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

How: The CHF can contact the Houston office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation to schedule an educational presentation about historic preservation advocacy. The CHF might also con-

sider joining the Preservation Leadership Forum. This is an online platform maintained by the National Trust for Historic Preservation that connects users to historic preservation webinars and grant funding for projects. CHF members can attend the National Trust's "Past Forward" workshop to learn more about historic preservation advocacy.

Information:

www.savingplaces.org

www.forum.savingplaces.org

www.pastforwardconference.org

43 Send local contractors to the Rehabber's Club.



What: Local contractors and craftspersons can expand their technical expertise and ability to help preserve historic architecture in Comfort. The community can leverage San Antonio's large pool of historic preservation and restoration experts for this purpose.

Who: The Comfort Heritage Foundation can kick this off by putting local contractors in contact with the San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation.

How: The San Antonio Office of Historic Preserva-

tion's Rehabber Club offers training, certification, community events, and networking to support historic renovation projects. Contractors and craftspersons in Comfort, Texas can participate in workshops and certified training courses covering topics like historic wood window repair, abatement, and porch repair.

Information:
www.sarehabberclub.com

44 Ask the San Antonio Conservation Society to do a workshop.



What: Historic property owners, local construction professionals, and individuals with an interest in preservation can benefit from educational workshops offered by preservation experts with experience in the region. The San Antonio Conservation Society is one such resource. It is composed of professionals with a deep understanding of preservation and advocacy in Bexar and adjacent counties.

Who: The Comfort Heritage Foundation is well-suited to lead this effort.

How: The Comfort Heritage Foundation can ask the San Antonio Conservation Society to schedule an educational workshop covering historic preservation techniques and advocacy. The target audience would be local contractors, construction workers, and historic property owners, as well as individuals with an interest in preserving the physical character of Comfort, Texas.

Information:
www.saconservation.org

45 Start a Historic Preservation Tax Credit Education Program.



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories

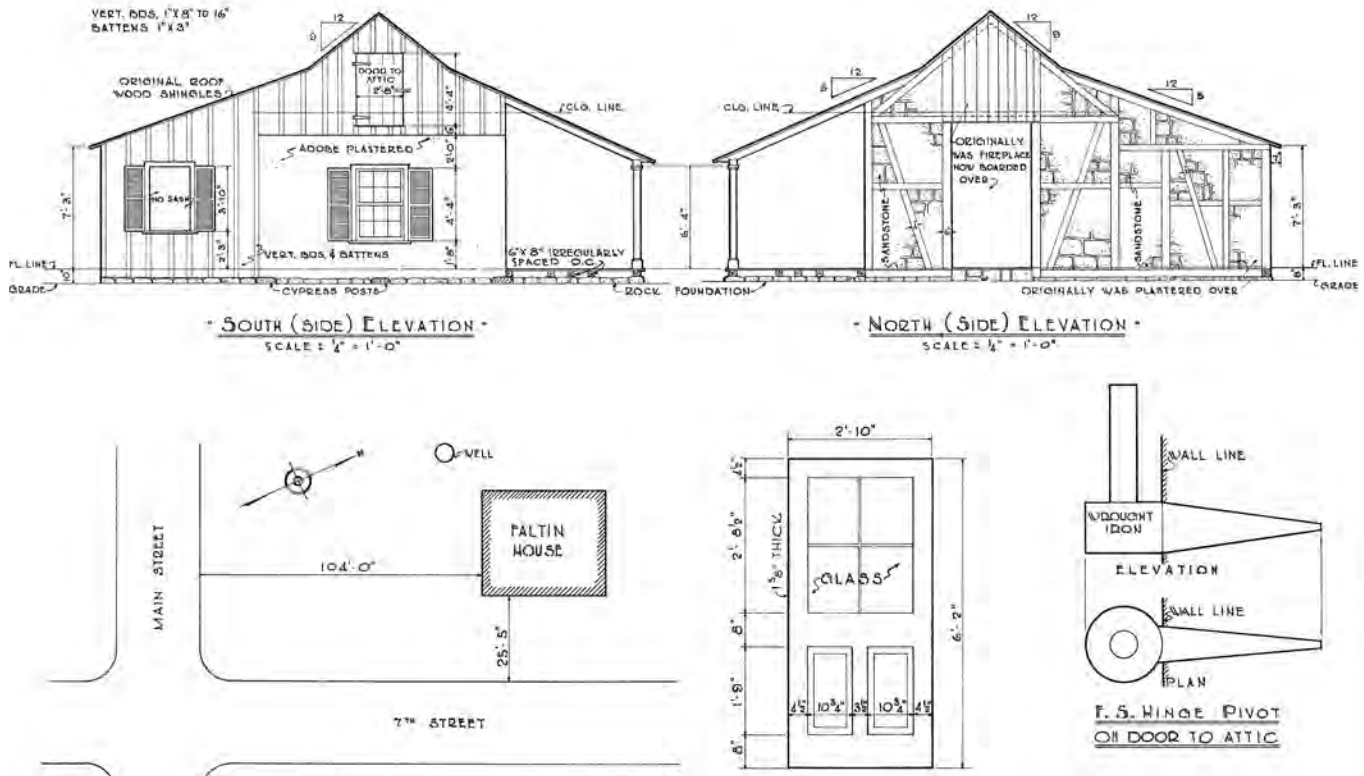
What: The State of Texas and the federal government provide tax incentives to restore historically significant buildings that produce income or house non-profit organizations. Property owners within Comfort's Historic District would benefit by learning more about preservation tax credits, which provide significant financial benefit to the community while helping preserve its physical heritage.

Who: The Comfort Heritage Foundation (CHF), in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, can implement a Historic Preservation Tax Credit Education Program for business owners within the Comfort Historic District.

How: The CHF can ask the Texas Historical Commission's Tax Credit Program Specialist and Tax Credit Reviewer to schedule a tax incentive workshop in Comfort or online. Another option would be for members of the CHF to attend the annual Real Places conference in Austin, Texas. This conference covers a number of historic preservation related topics, including state and federal preservation tax incentives. Attendees could then return to Comfort, schedule their own event, and present information that they collected at the Real Places conference.

Information:
www.thcfriends.org

46 Create an online archive of Comfort's physical heritage.



What: Create a digital online archive of Comfort's physical heritage to backup valuable physical documents and increase access for residents and researchers.

Who: The Comfort Heritage Foundation (CHF) can lead this effort, creating an online version of their current archive, then adding new documents as funds allow.

How: This initiative involves gathering existing dig-

ital files, creating high-resolution scans of existing physical documents, and digitally documenting new critical assets. An architectural librarian and web designer can then work together to develop an online archive that is easy to navigate. A grant from the Texas Historical Commission Texas Preservation Trust Fund could fund this effort, as could local donations.

47 Work with a historic preservation specialist.



What: Heritage tourism helps preserve architectural character and expand local economies in small, historically-distinct communities like Comfort.

Who: The Comfort Heritage Foundation, in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and local High St. business owners, can work with a consultant who specializes in developing economic strategies related to historic preservation. This consultant would help Comfort leverage its antique charm to

expand the local service economy.

How: The UTSA Center for Cultural Sustainability has multiple faculty experts who are available to collaborate on projects.

Information:

www.ccs.utsa.edu

48 Document Comfort's physical heritage with a 3D Lidar map.



What: Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) technology reflects beams of light off of physical surfaces in order to create an accurate and detailed surface map of an object or space. This technology can help to document Comfort's critical physical heritage sites, providing accurate and detailed information to support future preservation and development projects.

Who: The Comfort Heritage Foundation (CHF) can utilize LIDAR spatial mapping to create digital 3D models of Comfort's architectural heritage sites.

How: The CHF can explore several options to procure the required funding: one approach is to apply for a Historic Resource Survey Funding from the Texas Historical Commission's Texas Preservation Trust Fund. Another strategy is to apply to become a partner in the United States Geological Survey's 3D Elevation Program, which funds the acquisition of LIDAR data.

Information:
www.thc.texas.gov
www.usgs.gov

49 Seek financial assistance for restoration from the NTCIC.



National Trust Community Investment Corporation

a subsidiary of the
National Trust *for* Historic Preservation

What: Comfort must procure investment funds in order to pay for necessary restoration work within its Historic District.

Who: The Chamber of Commerce, National Historic Trust, and individual property owners can collaborate to advance this effort.

How: The Chamber of Commerce can work with property owners in the Historic District to create an investment package to present to the National Historic Trust's Investment Corporation. This orga-

nization supports architectural heritage, community development, and renewable energy initiatives by providing Federal and State Historic Preservation, Low-Income Housing, Renewable Energy, and New Markets Tax Credits. Since the year 2000 they have raised over \$909 million in equity for historic tax credit projects (National Trust Community Investment Corporation).

Information:
www.ntcic.com

50 Document oral histories to extend Comfort's living heritage.



What: Comfort can preserve its local heritage by documenting the stories of local residents in audio recordings housed at the Comfort Library, the Comfort Heritage Foundation's existing archive, or in a new digital online archive.

Who: The Comfort Heritage Foundation can lead this effort and collaborate with the Comfort Public Library.

How: StoryCorps, a national non-profit organization whose mission is to preserve and share stories, provides training, support, and recording services to help communities like Comfort pre-

serve their heritage. Comfort residents can make use of StoryCorps' DIY program, which is available through a free trial. The Heritage Foundation can also ask StoryCorps for additional training or partner with them to collect, record, and preserve the community's oral histories. "Recuerdos de mi Familia," sponsored by TexasTejano.com, offers a similar program to share and preserve the stories of Hispanic families, lives, and histories.

Information:

www.storycorps.org

www.texastejano.com

51 Ask Partners for Sacred Places to support local churches.



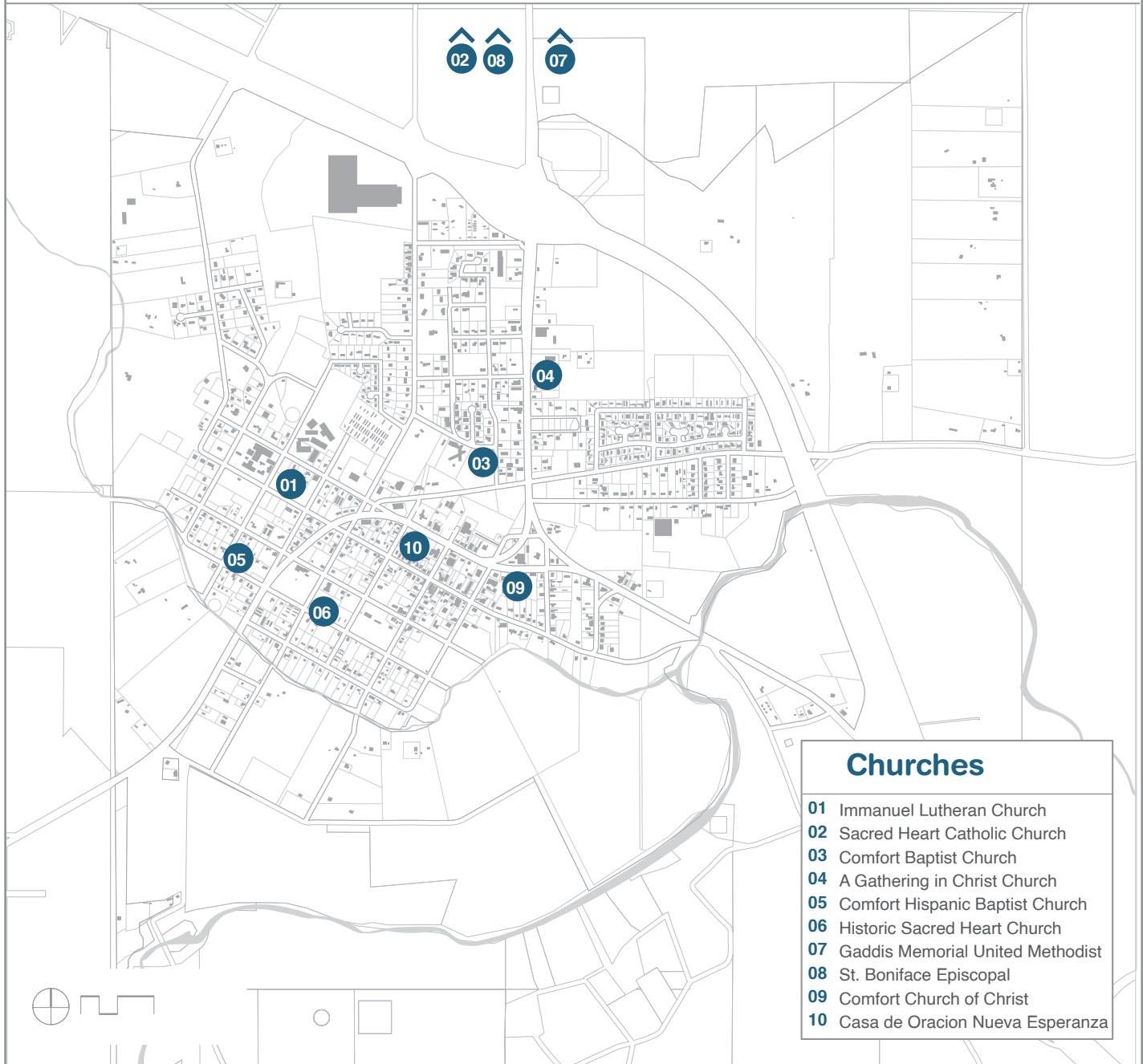
What: Local religious congregations and the buildings that they occupy offer a spiritual center for the daily lives of many Comfort residents. Financial support for the physical operations of these organizations will reinforce their critical contributions to the community while protecting Comfort's living and physical heritage.

Who: Leaders from Comfort's religious community can contact the nonprofit organization Partners for Sacred Places, whose mission is to build the capacity of historic sacred places to better serve

their communities.

How: A collaboration with Partners for Sacred Places will allow local religious leaders to develop capital campaigns, hold training workshops, and engage more fully with the larger communities of Comfort. The larger goal of this initiative is to elevate and increase the use of the historic religious places within Comfort, Texas.

Information:
www.sacredplaces.org



52 Encourage conservation easements on agricultural property.



What: Conservation easements allow landowners to resist the financial pressures of development while protecting natural habitats and scenic open spaces for future generations to enjoy. Conservation easements, which are monitored by the Texas Agricultural Land Trust, are legally binding, written into property deeds, and exist in perpetuity. Land owners retain the title to their property, are eligible for tax benefits to offset their land's development potential, and often continue their day-to-day agricultural operations.

Who: The Comfort Chamber of Commerce can petition the Kendall Soil and Water Conservation District to pursue policies with local landowners.

How: The Kendall Soil and Water Conservation District can present landowners with introductory information about the benefits, costs, and details of conservation easements. This presentation can include a representative from the Texas Agricultural Land Trust. More information about land easements and the conservation easement application process is available online at the Texas Agricultural Land Trust.

Information:

www.txaglandtrust.org

www.landtrustalliance.org

53 Create Voluntary Design Guidelines in the Historic District.

Massing and Form of Residential Additions

1

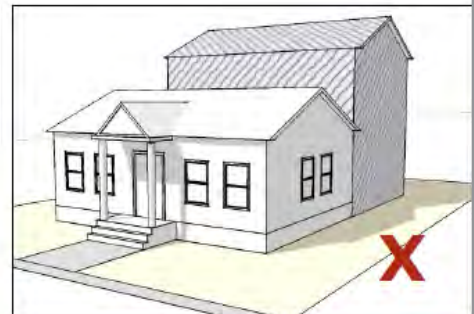
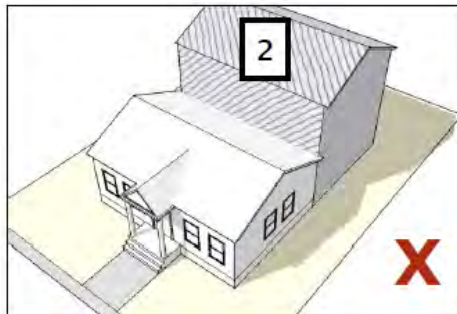
Site residential additions to the rear of the building whenever possible and provide a clear distinction between old and new building forms using a setback or other visual transition.

2

Residential additions that overwhelm or fundamentally change the overall massing of the original structure in terms of their height and building footprint are not appropriate.



Appropriate one-story addition attached to the rear of the original structure.



Inappropriate two-story addition attached to the rear of the original structure

What: The extensive collection of historic buildings in Comfort's Historic District provides the community with a distinct and invaluable sense of place. By producing a set of Voluntary Design Guidelines for Comfort's Historic District, Comfort can help architects, contractors, and developers protect the community's physical heritage.

Who: The Comfort Heritage Foundation (CHF) would lead this effort. They might also collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce as a way to represent the financial interests of business owners.

How: The CHF would enlist an architect who specializes in historic preservation to write and illustrate a booklet of Voluntary Design Guidelines for Comfort's Historic District. The UTSA Center for Cultural Sustainability is a potential collaborator for this effort. The Heritage Foundation would distribute copies of the document to property owners who plan to renovate existing buildings or build new structures within the Historic District.

Information:
www.ccs.utsa.edu





FORT
★
of COMMERCE

Economics

Comfort Today

Comfort today functions as a tourist destination.

Comfort's economic profile is inseparable from its success as a destination for tourists from San Antonio and the surrounding Hill Country. Many visitors come to experience Comfort's historic business district, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and features a well-preserved collection of structures built between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. Comfort is also well known for its antique shops, galleries, wineries, and the Hill Country Distillers. Much of this retail activity is focused on High St., which offers a bustling pedestrian environment on weekends and during the holiday season.

For overnight guests, the Greater Comfort Area offers multiple and diverse forms of lodging including hotels, B&Bs, Guesthouses, and other related dwellings. An informal count taken by the Comfort Chamber of Commerce noted 29 different lodging locations with 203 units capable of accommodating 514 individuals, not counting Airbnbs. The number of B&Bs and Guesthouses in particular is growing rapidly in the area.

Comfort functions as a bedroom community.

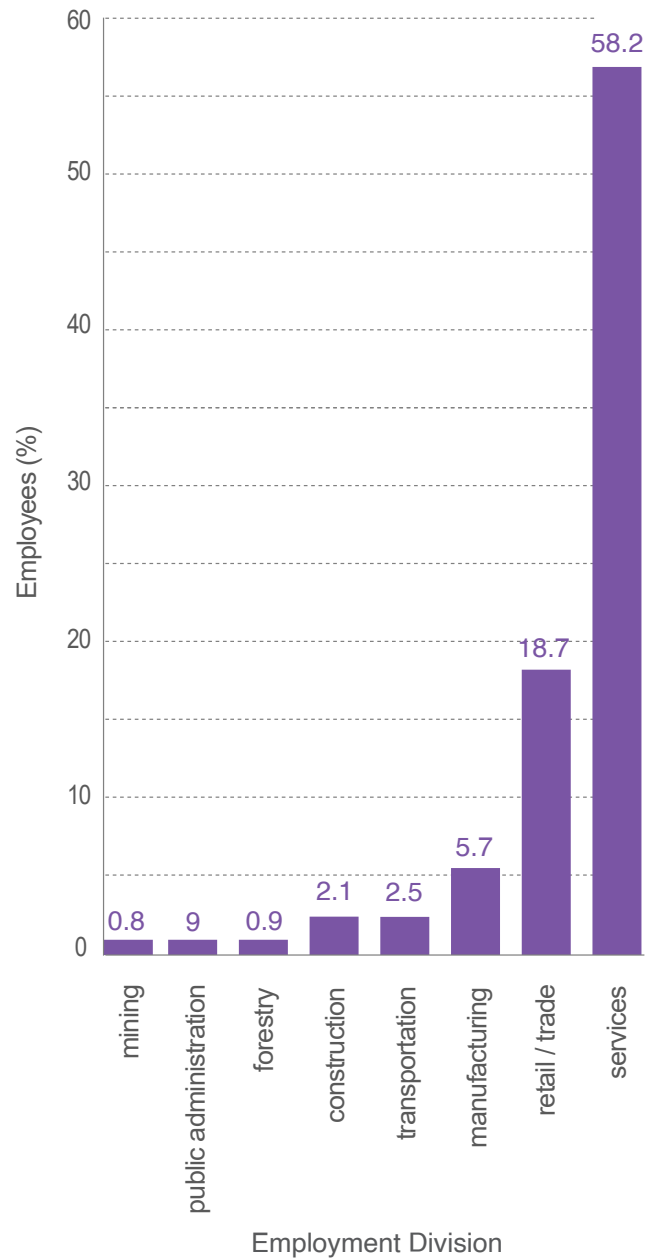
For local residents, Comfort primarily functions as a bedroom community for job centers in Boerne, San Antonio, and surrounding areas. The daily net outflow of 751 residents is indicative of this trend and likely reflects a relative lack of high-paying jobs in Comfort (eSite Analytics, Experian). In the 2014 strategic survey, just 53% of 177 employed respondents indicated that they worked in Comfort, while 13% reported that they worked in San Antonio, 8% in Boerne, 7% in Kerrville, and 18% elsewhere (Opportunity Strategies, 2014).



Comfort’s economy is dominated by service-sector employment. The job market that does exist in Comfort is dominated by service-sector positions, which account for 58% of local employment. More than half of these service jobs reside in the relatively low-paying field of education (Dun & Bradstreet Corporation). The next most prominent sector is retail trade, which accounts for 19% of the jobs in Comfort (eSite Analytics, Dun & Bradstreet Corporation). These employment trends might explain responses from qualitative interviews prior to the 2019 vision sessions, which suggested a need for more- and better-paying jobs in Comfort. Data collected in the 2014 strategic survey revealed similar trends, as 64% of 268 respondents suggested that Comfort should focus on new job creation (Opportunity Strategies, 2014).

Job creation is an issue for Comfort. Household income data in Comfort reinforces the need for job creation in the community. In 2018, 50% of households in Comfort reported annual incomes below \$39,999, while 419 out of 3040 households reported an annual income below the poverty level (eSiteAnalytics, Experian). Conversely, 20% report annual incomes above \$100,000. The relatively bi-furcated income structure, coupled with the lack of available and affordable housing, could begin to explain the high demand for low-cost manufactured housing in Comfort.

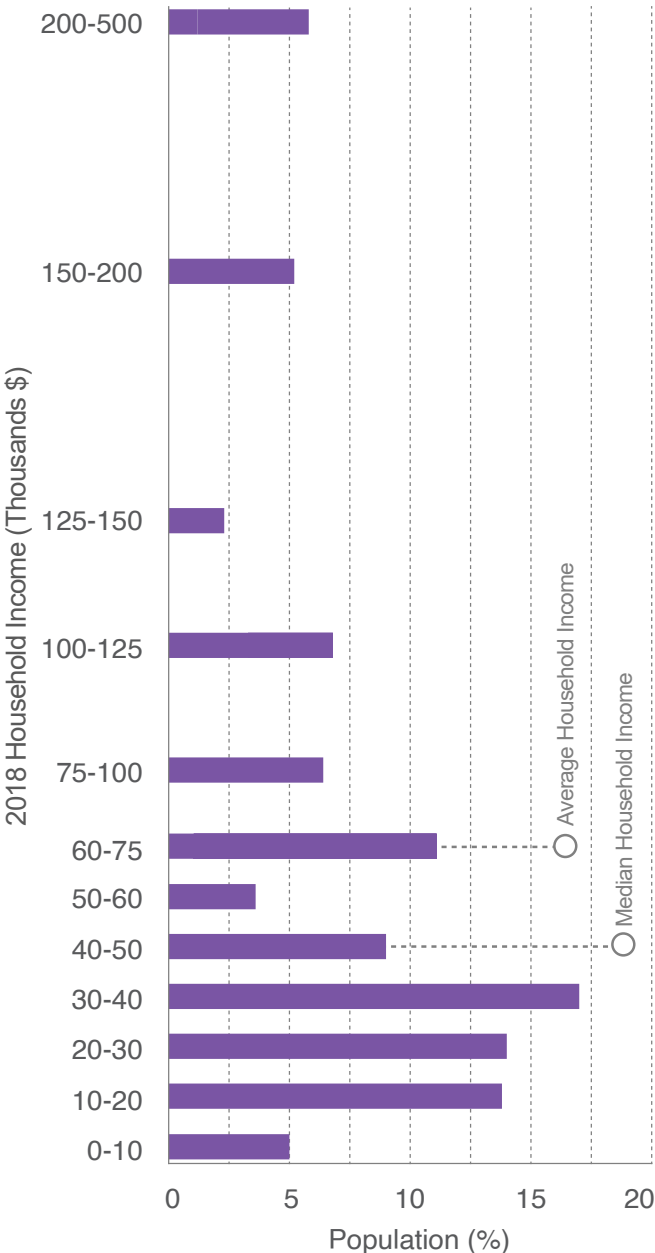
Comfort’s lack of municipal government limits policy options. As Comfort considers strategies to expand the community’s economic options, the lack of municipal government puts policy makers at a distinct disadvantage. For example, the community cannot collect sales tax; offer tax credits, tax rebates, or tax abatements; engage in tax increment financing; or provide permit fee waivers. The introduction to



this document offers an expanded discussion of the topic.

The Chamber is the community’s strongest economic advocate. In the absence of city government, Comfort’s greatest economic advocate is the local Chamber of Commerce, which has been representing the community’s economic interests for more than sixty years. The Chamber maintains an online business directory and website, manages Comfort Park, and produces major community events such as Christmas in Comfort, Independence Day Celebration, and the Scarecrow Invasion. Christmas in Comfort is far and away the largest annual community event, attracting visitors from across the Texas Hill Country for a holiday shopping extravaganza that features more than 125 vendors and a variety of holiday events. This year the Chamber will add a new event called Harvest Fest, which will offer live music, wine and food tastings, and a pumpkin patch. The event intends to bring people into Comfort overnight to support both businesses and B&B establishments.

Sponsorships from Chamber and community members support Comfort’s two major annual events, July 4th and Christmas in Comfort. This financial support from sponsors, along with countless hours of support from volunteers, makes these events possible. The Chamber’s primary source of funding for operations and administration is through membership fees, which are \$175 for businesses, \$100 for 501(c)(3) organizations, and \$75 for individual members. Proceeds from some of the event activities support causes like scholarships, park upgrades, CVFD donations, community signage, and other specialty items like community and business event promotion. Still, the Chamber’s annual budget remains limited. For example, the Chamber decided not to join the Boerne



Kendall County Economic Development Corporation (BKCEDC) to avoid incurring the \$1500 annual fee.

Kendall County did recently undertake a notable collaboration with BKCEDC: In February 2015 AJW Architectural Products announced that it would close a factory in China and relocate the jobs to Comfort. BKCEDC helped the State and County assemble the incentive package that beat out Dallas and Boerne for the AJW warehouse (MacCormack, 2015). BKCEDC even helped the company cover some of the construction costs (Business Wire, 2015). Initial estimates predicted the arrival of 120 new jobs, news that generated significant enthusiasm in the Comfort. AJW unfortunately shuttered the warehouse after just a few years. Today the 45-acre site remains vacant.

Comfort lacks services and amenities. One consistent concern that Comfort residents voiced during the 2019 vision sessions involves Comfort's lack of professional service providers, retail options, and cultural amenities. Each of the vision groups indicated that they travel to neighboring towns like Boerne, Fredericksburg, and San Antonio on a weekly basis to access medical, banking, and other professional service providers. The same holds true for retail shopping, as most residents make weekly trips to neighboring communities to visit national big box retailers (HEB, Walmart, Home Depot), restaurants, museums, and galleries. The responses from the 2019 vision sessions align with data from the 2014 survey, which indicated that 57% of respondents want better access to health services. Similarly, when asked about how the quality of life in Comfort could be improved, 100% of respondents strongly requested better restaurants, 59% mentioned retail, and 43% asked for arts and culture (Opportunity Strategies, 2014).



Vision Statements

Economics

- A** Comfort will continue to emerge as a destination for retirees.
- B** Comfort will maintain and expand its existing tourist economy.
- C** Comfort will solidify and expand economic leadership in the community.
- D** Comfort will increase the retail and service capacity of existing businesses.
- E** Comfort will pursue new, well-paying jobs in industries that do not threaten rural character.

Strategic Initiatives

Economics

- 54** Expand the Golden Age Center.
- 55** Pursue new senior living facilities.
- 56** Petition Kendall County to collect Hotel Occupancy Tax.
- 57** Plan for a Comfort Visitors Center.
- 58** Leverage potential tourism from Youth Camp.
- 59** Expand the Chamber of Commerce's mission and resources.
- 60** Encourage businesses to extend hours.
- 61** Establish and promote a Shop Local Campaign.
- 62** Support Comfort entrepreneurs and start-ups.
- 63** Leverage the resources of the BKCEDC.

54 Expand the Golden Age Center.



What: Since opening in 1987, the Golden Age Center (GAC) has emerged as an indispensable resource for local seniors, providing services in the areas of physical and mental health, nutrition, and education. Increased financial capacity and a larger facility will allow the GAC to better serve existing residents while making Comfort a more attractive destination for new seniors.

Who: The Greater Comfort Area Chamber of Commerce will work with the GAC, a 501(c)(3) and the Comfort Senior Citizens group to explore funding opportunities and a new facility.

How: The GAC recently completed a successful fundraiser which netted \$40,000. The GAC will continue this fundraising campaign thru 2020.

55 Pursue new senior living facilities.



What: In order for Comfort to become a more attractive destination for retirees, it must multiply and diversify housing options for seniors. One of the more popular retirement facilities is the Comfort Place Apartments, which opened in 2014 and offers 48 income-restricted 1- and 2-bedroom rental units. This facility is fully occupied.

Who: The Greater Comfort Area Chamber of Commerce will collaborate with developers who are interested in building additional senior living options in Comfort.

How: A senior living facility is currently under development adjacent to 5th St. This project, which will contain approximately ten individual dwellings located on small lots, will provide a test case for design concepts and economic viability. The Chamber will evaluate the success of this project, then provide support for a local landowner to develop an RFP for future senior living facilities.



56 Petition Kendall County to collect Hotel Occupancy Tax.



What: Comfort's unincorporated status means that it lacks the authority to collect sales tax revenue. This prevents Comfort from pursuing economic and community investments that could benefit residents. One way to capture potential revenue from hotels, B&Bs, and Airbnbs is to collaborate with Kendall County to implement a Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT).

Who: Kendall County would have to approve a HOT and identify or establish an entity to collect and distribute the proceeds.

How: A recent proposal calls for Kendall County to submit HOT proceeds to the Kendall County

Tax Assessor. The Assessor will in turn distribute funds to a HOT Board of Directors composed of residents from Comfort and the Greater unincorporated Boerne Area. This Board would have fiduciary responsibility for the HOT funds and would allocate funds in accordance with Texas Code 352. The Greater Comfort Area Chamber of Commerce could potentially manage Comfort's portion of the HOT funds, while a similar organization would do the same for unincorporated portions of Boerne. Preliminary estimates indicate that the potential annual revenue from the HOT initiative is \$400k-500k.

57 Plan for a Comfort Visitors Center.



What: A Comfort Visitors Center (CVC) will provide a meeting venue for mid-sized corporate and civic events with up to 30 individuals.

Who: The Greater Comfort Area Chamber of Commerce would lead this effort, leveraging funds from a proposal Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT).

How: The Greater Comfort Area Chamber of Commerce can leverage proposed HOT funds to

procure land for a structure and initiate an RFP. Proposed HOT funds can qualify for this purpose if several guidelines are met, including a requirement that at least 50% of CVC functions host out-of-town visitors. One way that the Chamber can assist with parking requirements is by targeting locations adjacent to the proposed park at Main St. and 8th St., which will provide ample surface parking.

58 Leverage potential tourism from Youth Camp.



What: The Hermann Sons Youth Camp draws campers from more than 120 Hermann Sons Lodges across Texas. The Comfort Lodge alone has 1,700 members. Each year, 2,400 campers and 200 counselors attend. This influx of visitors provides Comfort with an excellent opportunity to expand its tourist population.

Who: The Greater Comfort Area Chamber of Commerce can establish a relationship with the Hermann Sons organization to enhance the experience of the families who drop off and pick up campers in Comfort.

How: Comfort can distribute marketing materi-

als to Youth Camp parents that highlight lodging, shopping, and dining options in Comfort. Since these families are already driving to Comfort twice to pick up and drop off their kids, the Chamber can encourage them to explore the area and patronize local businesses. Businesses can offer coupons or discounts specifically for Youth Camp parents. The hardest part of growing a tourist economy is often convincing new people to visit a community. The consistent influx of Youth Camp families provides Comfort with an opportunity to turn summer visitors into summer tourists.

Note: 2014 Community Strategic Plan Initiative

59 Expand the Chamber of Commerce's mission and resources.

THE COMFORT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

What: Comfort Vision 2050 calls for the Greater Comfort Area Chamber of Commerce to lead multiple initiatives that will advance economic and cultural welfare in Comfort. As the Chamber assumes this expanded role, it must simultaneously expand its organizational resources and clarify its mission, vision, and values.

Who: An outside facilitator can help the Chamber achieve this goal by engaging the Executive Director and Board of Directors in a capacity-building exercise.

How: For sixty years the Chamber has successfully promoted local business and culture in Comfort. Today, the Chamber dedicates 80%

of its effort to continue this critical mission and the remaining 20% to maintaining Comfort Park and to internal administration. In order for the Chamber to expand the scope of these activities, the organization will need to expand its budget. Despite growing membership, dues currently cover just 10.5 months of the Chamber's annual operating budget. The pending Hotel Occupancy Tax will provide the Chamber with the resources to pursue some of the long-term and ambitious initiatives spelled out in Comfort Vision 2050. A capacity-building exercise, run by a professional facilitator, will reinforce the Chamber's capacity to act as successful stewards of the HOT funds.

60 Encourage businesses to extend hours.



What: Local businesses can expand service to local residents by strategically extending their hours of operations.

Who: The Greater Comfort Area Chamber of Commerce can implement and manage this program.

How: This program would strategically target themes and locales, for example extending the hours of High St. business during the “First Friday” of every month or the hours of local galleries

during a “Gallery Walk” on the second Saturday of each month. The cost to local businesses could be subsidized by the Chamber, using funds from the proposed Hotel Occupancy Tax. Alternatively, businesses might decide to participate voluntarily for a defined period of time. For example, High St. businesses could pilot the “First Friday” for 3 months over the summer to gauge the potential impact.

Note: 2014 Community Strategic Plan Initiative

61 Establish and promote a Shop Local Campaign.



What: Comfort has the opportunity to develop a Shop Local Campaign to bolster businesses owned by Comfort residents.

Who: The Greater Comfort Area Chamber of Commerce would organize this effort.

How: In order for a Shop Local Program to succeed, it must include a community-wide marketing campaign that focuses on the importance of sup-

porting locally-owned businesses. The successful campaign will include an easily accessible list of locally-owned business, economic incentives for consumers (discounts, coupons, gifts), and a list of benefits for participants.

Note: 2014 Community Strategic Plan Initiative

62 Support Comfort entrepreneurs and start-ups.



What: The UTSA Small Business Development Center (SBDC) can provide education and business advice to small business owners in Comfort.

Who: Local entrepreneurs and start-ups are free to contact the SBDC, which serves communities within the larger Southwest Texas Border Small Business Development Network.

How: Business advisors at the UTSA Business Development Center can help small business owners to develop and update business plans, identify sources of capital, set up record-keeping systems and analyze financial records, identify foreign

markets for products or services, conduct specialized research geared to specific needs of business owners, create marketing strategies and advertising campaigns, help with government regulations, increase opportunities to sell to federal, state, and local governments, and analyze statistical and demographic data. Comfort business owners can request assistance from the South-West Texas Border Small Business Development Center Network.

Information:

www.utsa.ecenterdirect.com

63 Leverage the resources of the BKCEDC.



What: The Boerne Kendall County Economic Development Corporation (BKCEDC) is an independent, 501(c)(6) nonprofit organization that supports local commercial economies in Boerne and Kendall County. BKCEDC can help Comfort attract quality businesses and job-producing capital investment, while supporting existing companies who want to stay, expand, and improve their performance.

Who: The Greater Comfort Area Chamber of Commerce can join the BKCEDC on an annual basis.

How: Membership in the BKCEDC requires a

\$1500 annual fee. The Chamber does not currently have available funds for this purpose. Still, the addition of HOT funds would make membership possible. Membership in BKCEDC represents a wise investment, as it would assist new and potential businesses with site location, provide industry and demographic information, help navigate city and county location processes, facilitate interagency cooperation on projects, help research tax benefits or incentives, and provide referrals.

Information:
www.bkcedc.com





Community

Comfort Today

Comfort residents remain committed to both individualism and community. When facilitators asked residents during the 2019 vision sessions “what makes Comfort Comfort?,” one resident explained “...in Comfort, we like to do things ourselves, together.” The community’s simultaneous commitment to balancing freedom with collaboration emerged as a consistent theme during interviews. This sentiment likely has roots in the Comfort’s founding by German Freidenkers and abolitionists during the mid-nineteenth century. It might also begin to explain the community’s continued opposition to municipal incorporation.

A number of respondents emphasized the importance of Comfort’s bi-cultural heritage. This was a clear reference to the community’s parallel German and Tejano roots. This history was a strong point of point of pride for many respondents. Interestingly, other respondents pointed to Comfort’s widespread social segregation, a characteristic that also came up during multiple resident interviews. To be sure, turnout for the 2019 vision sessions was relatively homogeneous, as white residents and people who claimed German heritage were particularly well-represented, while relatively few Latinos or people who claimed Mexican heritage attended. That said, virtually everyone described the community as friendly, relaxed, and safe. These qualities appear to reinforce the small-town, rural life that attracts many people to Comfort.

Still other residents described the community’s strong spirit of volunteerism. A relatively large number of retirees live in the Comfort and many appear to contribute significant time to local organizations. Interestingly, several local leaders told a slightly different story, sharing that a relatively small number of reliable community members produce most of the



volunteer hours in the community.

Comfort does display a significant amount of social need. Hunger is a critical issue, as 400 families a year rely on nutritional assistance from social service agencies. The local nonprofits that provide food--like Comfort Table, Daily Bread Ministries, Stage Coach, and Meals on Wheels--compete for financial donations from the same local sources and don't appear to coordinate their efforts (Opportunity Strategies, 2014). Access to healthcare presents another challenge. The Hill Country Mission for Health runs an ambulatory clinic that serves 15-20 patients each week and has investigated the possibility of opening a permanent location in Comfort (Opportunity Strategies, 2014).



Vision Statements

Community

- A** Comfort will remain a community that embraces its multi-ethnic heritage.
- B** Comfort will work to increase professional service options to all ages and income brackets.
- C** Comfort will expand on the existing spirit of volunteerism.
- D** Comfort will invest in a new generation of leaders.
- E** Comfort will become a community dedicated to lifelong learning.

Strategic Initiatives

Community

- 64** Celebrate German-Texan and Tejano heritage.
- 65** Organize exchanges between local churches.
- 66** Attract recent graduates from medical professional schools.
- 67** Attract urgent care or family medicine facility to Comfort.
- 68** Encourage Comfort ISD grads to move home after college.
- 69** Help Hill Country Mission for Health set up in Comfort.
- 70** Create a Comfort Community Service Program.
- 71** Formalize internship opportunities for high school students.
- 72** Participate in a leadership training institute.
- 73** Create a Mothers' Day Out Program.
- 74** Increase participation in adult education programs.
- 75** Support the Comfort Public Education Foundation.

64 Celebrate German-Texan and Tejano heritage.



What: Preserve the living heritage of Comfort by adding German-Texan and Tejano heritage events to Christmas for Comfort and Independence Day Celebration events. This would leverage existing festivals to celebrate the diversity of Comfort's cultural traditions in art, food, history, and language.

Who: The Comfort ISD, The Comfort Chamber of Commerce, and the Comfort Heritage Foundation could collaborate on this effort.

How: Organizers can contact the German-Texan



Heritage Society and the Tejano Heritage Society to consult and connect organizers with heritage-specific vendors such as baile folklorico groups, German food vendors, and musicians who specialize in classic Tejano music. The Comfort ISD might also get involved, providing local school children with the ability to participate in a living history event.

Information:

www.germantexans.org

www.texastejano.com

65 Organize exchanges between local churches.



What: These exchanges allow clergy from different churches to welcome new voices into their pulpits and congregations to host and be hosted by other congregations. The goal here is to deepen community ties and create fellowship between congregations.

Who: This program will require collaboration between at least two churches in Comfort.

How: A single clergy member can initiate the pulpit exchange by inviting the leader from another church to participate in a selected worship. As participation in the program expands, churches can establish a regular rotation or else makes the invitations via lottery. Eventually, one congregation can invite an entire congregation to join them for services and fellowship.

66 Attract recent graduates from medical professional schools.



What: Network with Medical, Dental, and Optometry schools within a 150-mile radius to encourage professional graduates to settle in Comfort.

Who: The Chamber of Commerce is well positioned to lead this marketing effort.

How: Develop a marketing campaign for young graduates that focuses on the high quality of life in Comfort. Direct the marketing campaign to placement counselors at regional professional educational institutions.

Note: 2014 Community Strategic Plan Initiative

67 Attract urgent care or family medicine facility to Comfort.



What: Comfort residents would benefit by attracting an urgent care clinic or family medical facility to their community. Critical needs include urgent care, family medicine, eye care, preventative care, and OB/GYN.

Who: The Comfort Chamber of Commerce can work with the Boerne Kendall County Economic Development Corporation (BKCEDC) to lead this effort.

How: BKCEDC is aware of the need for an urgent care facility in the area and is well-equipped to locate a venue, investors, and financial incentives. Potential collaborators include Hill Country Memorial Hospital or other regional healthcare providers with resources to expand operations in Comfort area. The Chamber might investigate ways to subsidize office space for a satellite medical facility in Comfort.

Note: 2014 Community Strategic Plan Initiative

68 Encourage Comfort ISD grads to move home after college.



What: One way to expand the professional services community is to convince Comfort High graduates to return home after college or graduate school.

Who: The Chamber of Commerce can collaborate with Comfort ISD to lead this marketing effort.

How: Partner with the Comfort ISD to distribute marketing materials to high school seniors before graduation. Focus on the high quality of life in

the community. Create a database to track students who attend college and graduate school outside of Comfort. Keep in touch with graduates and continue to market the community as a great place to raise a family. Organize networking and reunion events during the summer and winter holidays when graduates are home visiting family.

Note: 2014 Community Strategic Plan Initiative

69 Help Hill Country Mission for Health set up in Comfort.



What: The Hill Country Mission for Health provides healthcare to low-income and uninsured residents of Kendall County. Help them establish a location and collaborative network in Comfort.

Who: The Chamber of Commerce is well-positioned to help locate a facility.

How: The Hill Country Mission for Health runs a mobile clinic that serves 15-20 patients per week in Comfort. 400 local patients depend on

them for healthcare services. The organization also started a Community Garden to help residents grow, prepare, and preserve healthy food. The Hill Country Mission for Health would like to open a 1000-square foot facility in Comfort. This facility would allow them to collaborate with other local nonprofits to better meet the needs of their patients, thereby improving population health in Comfort.

Note: 2014 Community Strategic Plan Initiative

70 Create a Comfort Community Service Program.



What: The 2019 vision sessions revealed the importance of volunteerism as a community value. A formal Comfort Community Service Program would build on this strength by consolidating and expanding an already extensive volunteer network.

Who: The Comfort Area Foundation (CAF) could administer the Comfort Community Service Program in collaboration with local partners like the Comfort ISD and Comfort Golden Age Center. This would focus the program on young people and retirees, who can offer the most to and benefit the most from the program.

How: The CAF would create and maintain a database of volunteers and opportunities. Alternatively, they could work with a non-profit organization like VolunteerMatch.com. The volunteer database would serve organizations like Comfort ISD and the Comfort Golden Age Center, matching interested students and retirees with local organizations. For high school students, this practice would have the added benefit of helping them gain admission to universities, who value applicants with a record of community service.

Note: 2014 Community Strategic Plan Initiative

71 Formalize internship opportunities for high school students.



What: The Comfort ISD has students who need hands-on experience and on-the-job training, while local employers need interns and apprentices. Comfort has an opportunity to formalize this mutually beneficial relationship.

Who: The Chamber of Commerce can lead this effort, providing a conduit between local employers and the Comfort ISD.

How: The Comfort ISD can assess the opportunities and constraints of an internship program, especially as it relates to their existing curriculum. Still, it might benefit from access to a professional network of business and industry opportunities. The Chamber can create and maintain this database, helping Comfort ISD to match apprenticeship needs with employment opportunities.

Note: 2014 Community Strategic Plan Initiative

72 Participate in a leadership training institute.



What: The 2019 vision sessions included just a handful of participants under the age of 55. They did not include any under the age of 25. A leadership training program can help Comfort develop the next generation of leaders while bringing new ideas and skills to the community.

Who: The quickest way to get this started would be to work with an existing organization that provides leadership training sessions. The Comfort Chamber of Commerce can research opportunities, decide which best align with Comfort's values, assemble a group of local participants, and send Comfort's first "class" to leadership training.

How: The Chamber can leverage scholarships, endowed by local businesses, to attract participants.

Leadership training can target teenagers, young adults, mid-career professionals, and retirees alike. Participants would agree to provide a minimum of two years community service upon completion of the program. For example, they might join the Board of CAF or the Chamber of Commerce, or perhaps run for a public office. The leadership sessions will likely take place outside of Comfort, allowing local residents to connect with leaders from neighboring communities.

Information:

www.amalafoundation.org
www.leadership-women.org
www.agrilifeextension.tamu.edu
www.educationinaction.org
www.txssc.txstate.edu

73 Create a Mother's Day Out program.



What: Comfort can establish a community Mother's Day Out Program, which allows parents to drop off their babies or toddlers at a central location for a few hours a week.

Who: The local Ministerial Alliance can provide this community service with the assistance of two or more local churches.

How: These types of programs can be religious-based or non-parochial. They can also serve a range of age groups. These programs allow parents to run errands while their children practice critical skills like sharing, patience, and fair play. In addition to providing support for parents, these programs help prepare children for Kindergarten.

Note: 2014 Community Strategic Plan Initiative

74 Increase participation in adult education programs.



What: The Comfort community has the opportunity to expand adult education.

Who: The Comfort Public Library is well positioned to lead this effort.

How: Currently, the Comfort Public Library offers classes in digital literacy, English-as-a-Second Language (ESL), general literacy, phonics, and

language experience curriculum. In order to expand their adult education efforts, the Comfort Public Library can complete a community needs assessment, then network with community organizations to develop curricula, raise funds, and supply volunteer instructors.

Note: 2014 Community Strategic Plan Initiative

75 Support the Comfort Public Education Foundation.



What: The Comfort Public Education Foundation (PEF) “...is a nonprofit, philanthropic charitable organization devoted to providing resources, support and enrichment opportunities to cultivate the hearts and minds of Comfort ISD students.” Comfort PEF can raise money and distribute scholarships to students who agree to return to Comfort to practice their trade, profession, or start a local business.

Who: Comfort Area Foundation (CAF) can work with a volunteer from PEF to advance this effort.

How: In order to raise revenue for the program, the Comfort PEF can collect donations from local residents and businesses. The Comfort PEF can also establish a Legacy Giving Program, allowing people to donate money or property posthumously. To make this easier, the Comfort PEF can ask a local estate lawyer to produce legal language for residents to include in their will and estate.

Note: 2014 Community Strategic Plan Initiative





Implementation

Comfort Vision 2050

Current decision-making structure. Comfort Vision 2050 crafts a unique vision for the future, one specifically tailored to the political realities in Comfort today. The vision plan pursues four objectives: describing and assessing the current conditions in Comfort; articulating a set of values to guide decision-making; generating a set of Strategic Initiatives; and prescribing an approach for implementation. The fourth objective is the subject of this final section.

Currently, the decision-making and administrative structure in Comfort is dispersed amongst multiple actors including county authorities, local volunteer organizations, non-profits, local businesses, and individual residents. This type of arrangement keeps Comfort running on a day-to-day and year-to-year basis, but does not allow the community to address long-term issues related to future growth.

A brief consideration of the roles of community actors clarifies the current and potential leadership structure in Comfort: Kendall County remains the most important governmental actor because it controls land use. The County accomplishes this not through traditional zoning mechanisms but rather by controlling the subdivision of land via the regulation of water supply, drainage, transportation infrastructure, and environmental controls (Capital Area Council of Governments, p.3, 2009). Many of the Strategic Initiatives in Comfort Vision 2050 require significant cooperation from Kendall County. Neighboring Kerr County, Comfort's upstream neighbor, also remains an important collaborator, especially as a partner for infrastructure and flood control projects.

The Kendall County Water Control and Improvement District #1 catalyzes new development by investing in water and sewer infrastructure. KCWCID #1 figures prominently in multiple Infrastructure Initiatives in

this plan. Local organizations like the Comfort Area Foundation (CAF), the Comfort Heritage Foundation (CHF), and the Chamber of Commerce handle many of the critical day-to-day affairs in Comfort. Each organization also plays a critical role in Comfort Vision 2050: CAF as a potential lead for Community Initiatives and as a facilitator for the overall plan; CHF as a participant in many of the Preservation Initiatives; and the Chamber as a key participant in most of the Economics Initiatives.

Non-profit organizations such as Comfort Table and Hill Country Mission provide crucial nutritional and healthcare assistance to residents in need. The Comfort community counts on these contributions, which are indispensable given the lack of a municipal social safety net. Comfort's business owners also serve the community with generous civic investment and philanthropic support. Finally, individual residents in Comfort offer daily leadership in the community.

Given Comfort's unincorporated status, Comfort Vision 2050 offers an implementation strategy that is decentralized, incremental, actionable, coordinated, measurable, and transparent. The following sections discuss these characteristics, describing how each would contribute to the overall success of the plan.

Working groups offer a decentralized, non-governmental approach to decision-making. Comfort Vision 2050 recommends 75 discrete Strategic Initiatives that community volunteers, organized into working groups, can accomplish with a minimum amount of coordination. In order to facilitate this process, Comfort Vision 2050 proposes the formation of the following six working groups, each composed of 4-8 members: Environment Working Group, Infrastructure Working Group, Housing Working Group, Preservation Working Group, Economic Working

Group, and Community Working Group.

The first charge for each working group will be to elect a Coordinator to convene meetings and communicate with CAF. The next order of business will be to decide which Strategic Initiatives the group intends to pursue in the first year. Working groups can approach this task in different ways: One group might choose to tackle the easiest initiatives first; while another could decide to focus on areas where they see the most community need. Similarly, some working groups might choose to pursue a single initiative in the first year; while another might take on five. Decisions about the scope and pace of work will depend on the aspirations and capacity of working group members.

Comfort Vision 2050 offers Strategic Initiatives that are incremental and actionable. Comfort Vision 2050 provides 75 Strategic Initiatives that are diverse in scope and complexity. Some of the initiatives are large, some are small; some will take years to complete, some can be accomplished in a short amount of time. When taken together, the 75 initiatives advance Comfort's comprehensive vision for the future. Still, it is possible for a working group to accomplish any single initiative without relying on the success of the 74 others. In this regard, the Strategic Initiatives in Comfort Vision 2050 are fully incremental in nature.

CAF will coordinate Comfort Vision 2050. Comfort Vision 2050 proposes that the CAF coordinate the plan's decentralized, non-governmental approach to decision-making. CAF's responsibilities here will include convening meetings, forming working groups, providing administrative support, facilitating communication amongst working groups, facilitating communication between working groups and outside

organizations, and managing media communications and online content.

Comfort Vision 2050 is measurable and transparent. In order for participants to know if Comfort Vision 2050 is working, they must be able to measure, track, and evaluate progress. To facilitate this process, the plan recommends that CAF host a Comfort Vision 2050 Progress Summit on a semi-annual basis. This Summit will provide a venue to publicly assess progress across the 6 topic areas and 75 Initiatives. Each working group will provide a public progress report, celebrate success, and provide guidance and support to their fellow residents. This event will honor self-reliance and the ability of individual residents to exhibit community leadership in the absence of local government. Comfort Vision 2050 recommends that CAF commission a website to track progress via pre-established metrics. Critical measures can include the number of initiatives begun, the number of initiatives complete, and the percentage of progress for each initiative.

Timeline.

December 2019: CURPR submits final copy of Comfort Vision 2050 to the CAF and NALCAB.

January 2020: The CAF makes Comfort Vision 2050 available to the public via online publishing and free online download.

January 2020: The CAF schedules a public roll out for Comfort Vision 2050. During this meeting interested participants form working groups.

January-December 2020: The CAF convenes semi-annual meetings with working groups.

December 31, 2020: Each working group completes at least one initiative by the end of the first year.

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