City of Corpus Christi

PLAN CC

Uptown Corridors

REVITALIZATION STRATEGY - STAPLES & LEOPARD

[DRAFT]

NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

November 15, 2021

Inside cover

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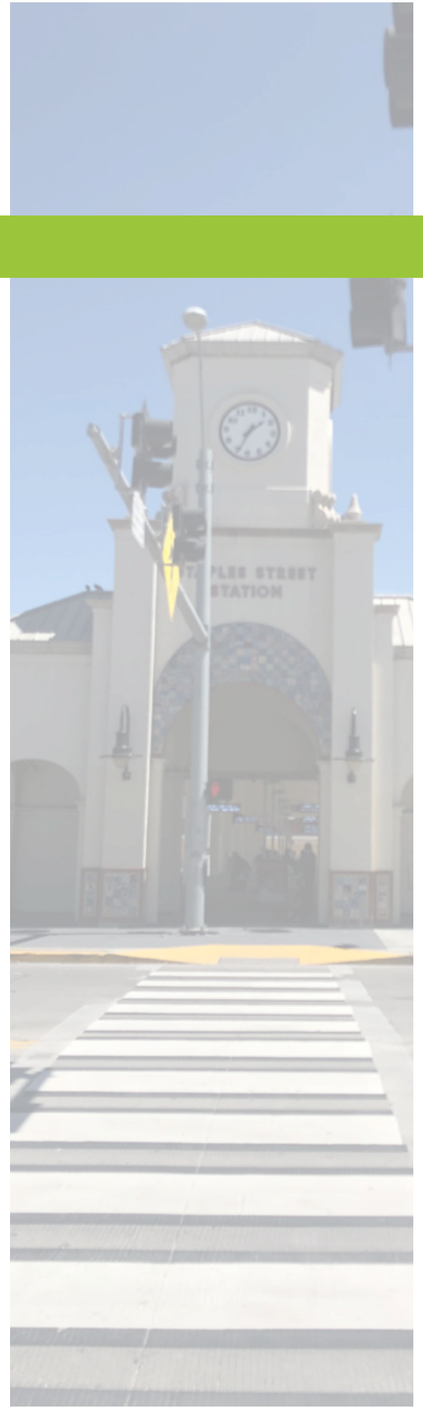
01.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Needs Assessment Report is conducted for the purpose of understanding the existing conditions of two Uptown Corridors - Staples and Leopard Streets. The report reviews the previous planning documents and investigates existing conditions, including demographics, infrastructure, transportation, businesses, and environment. Public engagement will also be used to help build the assessment with the community's knowledge and experience.



PROJECT BACKGROUND

About the Project

The Uptown Corridors Revitalization Strategy for Staples and Leopard Streets is a City of Corpus Christi Planning and Economic Development initiative. This initiative will evaluate the revitalization of Staples Street from Six Points to Interstate 37 and Leopard Street from Upper Broadway to the Crosstown Expressway (SH 286), which are key commercial corridors identified in the 2018 Downtown Area Development Plan.

This initiative will work closely with area businesses, property owners, and residents to develop a strategy for revitalization that will guide future public and private development and lay the foundation for a strong local economy. The plan will include conceptual drawings to help re-imagine these corridors with improvements, such as landscaping and streetscape amenities. The plan will also develop an implementation matrix to identify community priorities and potential funding sources for the next five fiscal years as well as a longer-term implementation strategy.

Corridor Context

Bordered by Interstate 37, Highway 286, and the Marina Arts District, the Uptown District is a major employment center, especially for government services, and a central community that connects many others. The northern portion of Uptown is home to a major employment center and some of

Staples and Leopard Intersection
Source: Asakura Robinson

A vacant lot along Staples Corridor
Source: Asakura Robinson

the City's tallest buildings. This area also houses governmental entities such as City Hall and the County Court House, as well as the Corpus Christi Regional Transportation Authority (CCRTA) transit hub. The central and southern portions of the district include residential structures, warehouses, and a large amount of vacant land. The Six Points area, at the very southern end of the district, is a historic commercial node, clustered with a number of iconic restaurants and retailers. Leopard and Staples are the key local corridors in the Uptown District. The Leopard Street corridor is 0.75 miles long. It connects the neighborhood on the west side of Highway 286 and Downtown. The Staples Street corridor is 1.25 miles long. It is a key north-south connection for the City. In previous planning initiatives, the two corridors were also identified as Livable Communities Initiative corridors in the 2013 Pedestrian-Transit Access Master Plan and reinvestment areas in the Downtown Area Development Plan.

Both corridors have four travel lanes and on-street parking on both sides. Auto access is strong on both corridors while the overall walking experience is poor. The relationship between the public realm and private property is not well defined and the right-of-way could be reconfigured to accommodate more active street life. Additionally, a number of people experiencing homelessness or dealing with drug addiction, and people that prey on these community members, congregate at Leopard and Staples Streets. These issues raise concerns for the community members needing mental health and housing support, as well as pedestrians and workers. A large amount of undeveloped land on both corridors are key opportunities for the future of the area.

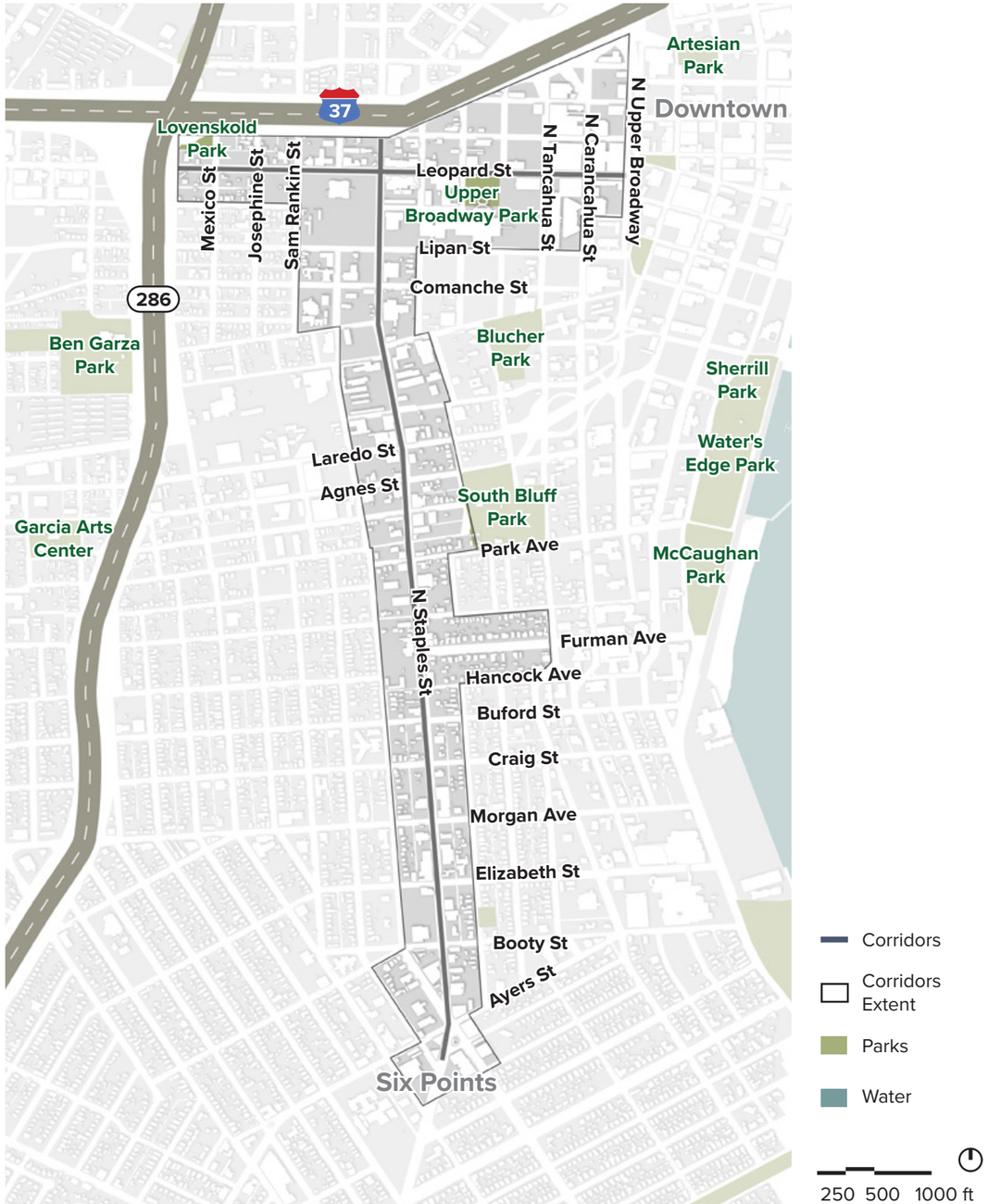
A bus station on Staples Street
Source: Asakura Robinson

Eastern side of Leopard Street
Source: Asakura Robinson

A parking lot on Staples Street
Source: Asakura Robinson

A storefront on Leopard Street
Source: Asakura Robinson

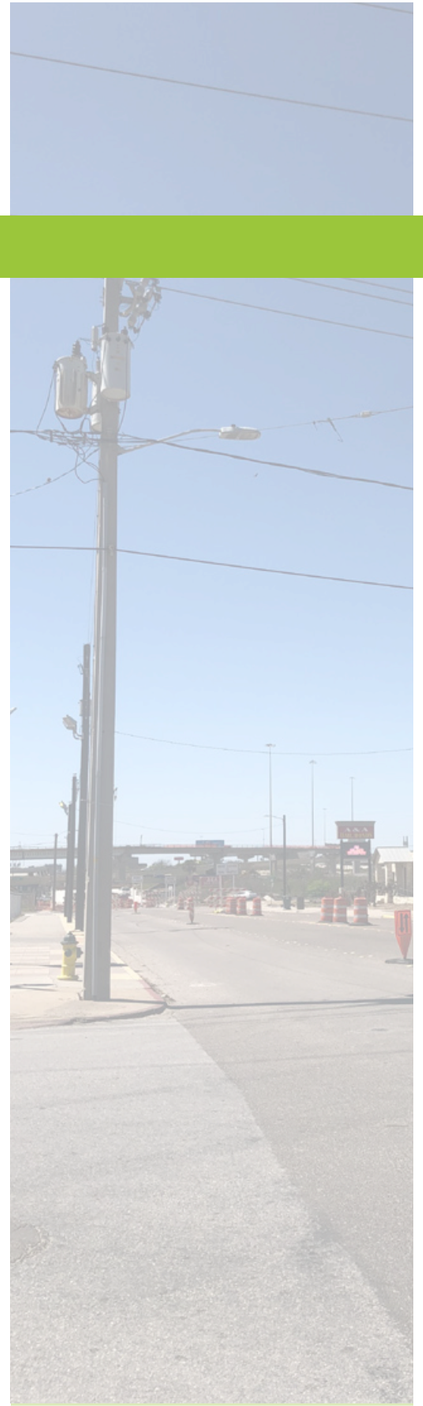
Map 1. Uptown Corridors

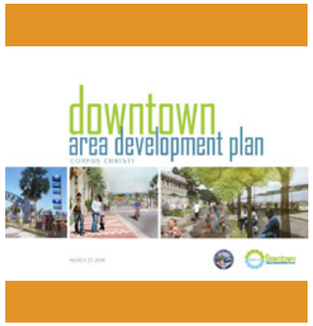


02.

PREVIOUS PLANNING

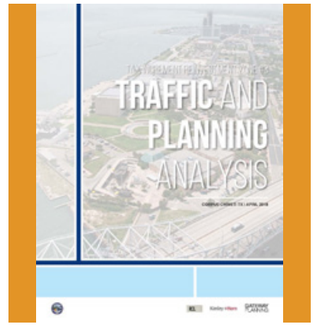
This strategy seeks to build upon tremendous planning efforts that have been made for Uptown and Corpus Christi. This section provides an overview of key planning documents and studies and summarizes relevant recommendations for this area.





Downtown Area Development Plan (2018)

In relation to the Leopard and Staples corridors, this plan identifies Uptown and its surrounding neighborhoods as opportunities for reinvestment with particular attention to new housing. The plan also recommends improvements to multi-modal transportation including bus routes and bike lanes. Additionally, the plan provides detailed guidance on development of street typologies that include Leopard and Staples Streets. These recommendations' goals are to create safe, vibrant, walkable corridors for living, working, and shopping. The plan also discusses expanding the Downtown Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ #3) to the Uptown Corridors Study area.



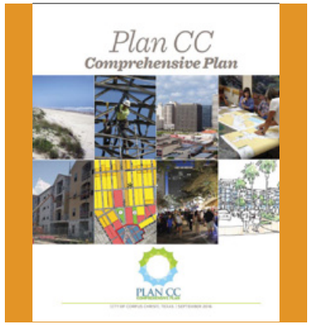
TIRZ #3 Traffic and Planning Analysis (2018)

The plan finds that a lack of residential housing options is a primary inhibitor for the greater downtown area to reach its full potential. Recommendations include extending TIRZ #3 to Agnes and Laredo Streets, clarifying responsibility for sidewalk maintenance and improvement, forming a parking alliance to encourage shared parking and implement the Parking Action Plan, and developing truck and loading zone standards. The market analysis identifies the Laredo/Agnes area as one of the potential areas for redevelopment, but the plan recommends focusing new residential development first in the Marina Arts district.

Corpus Christi Parking Action Plan (2017)

This plan is the implementation guide to the Parking Management Study and Strategic Plan completed in 2017. It contains parking strategies for the Uptown District, the SEA (Sports, Entertainment, and Arts) district, and the Marina Arts District. The Uptown District includes Leopard Street from Sam Rankin St to N Upper Broadway, and Staples Street from I-37 to Blucher Street.

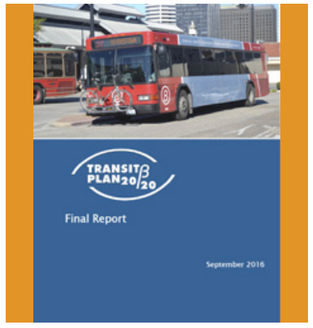
The plan found that parking supply is adequate but should be better managed. Recommendations for Uptown include: 1) instituting a 2-hour limit for all parking by fiscal year 2018; and 2) reviewing and updating current loading zones, policies and procedures by fiscal year 2019. These actions have not been completed.



Plan CC (2016)

The future land use map in the Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the City Council. It promotes high mixed-use in Uptown area and looks to build higher density residential in the surrounding neighborhood.

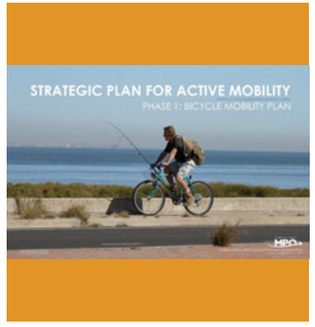
Plan CC also includes strategies to support established neighborhoods, including encouraging infill development and rehabilitating existing housing; supporting preservation and reuse of historic buildings; promoting neighborhood associations and similar organizations; and enhanced code enforcement and litter cleanup campaigns.



RTA Transit Plan 20/20 (2016)

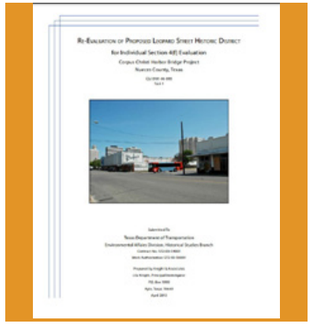
This plan outlines recommended bus service updates for the City including recommendations for updates to routes serving Staples and Leopard Streets. The plan also contains guidelines on bus stop placement and amenities that will affect new and improved bus stops along these corridors.

Specific recommendations include: more frequent service (every 15 minutes) along Leopard Street based on demand; increasing Sunday service and serving the same routes as Saturday; updating Route 2 Staples as a new route between Staples and Southside stations; updating Route 28 Leopard as a new route along Leopard Street between Staples Street Station and Omaha Drive.



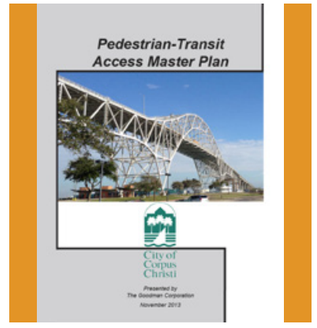
Strategic Plan for Active Mobility, Phase 1: Bicycle Mobility (2016)

The plan proposes one-way cycle tracks on both sides of Staples Street from Mesquite Street in the Sports Entertainment and Arts (SEA) District, to Comanche Street in Uptown. At Comanche Street, bike infrastructure moves off of Staples Street and onto Alameda Street. One-way cycle tracks on both sides, and a bike boulevard, are proposed on Alameda Street from Comanche Street to Clifford Street south of Six Points, with the cycle track continuing from Clifford Street to the proposed off-road multi-use trail along the Louisiana Avenue Ditch. A bike boulevard is proposed for Antelope Street, one block north of Leopard Street, beginning at Staples Street and continuing east to the waterfront. No bicycle infrastructure is proposed on Leopard Street itself.



Re-Evaluation of Proposed Leopard Street Historic District (2013)

This document evaluated the eligibility of Leopard Street as a federally recognized historic district. It includes historical background of Leopard Street starting in 1875, particularly its commercial activity. It also assessed the inventory of sites that might qualify Leopard Street as a historic district and determined that the area would not be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places due to diminished integrity of workmanship, design, and materials as a result of alterations to storefronts, windows, exterior materials, and additions to buildings over the decades.



Pedestrian-Transit Access Master Plan (2013)

This plan conducted an assessment of sidewalk, curb, lighting, and landscaping conditions in order to provide recommendations on improvements that create better streetscape access to transit.

The Plan identifies Staples Street from IH-37 to Morgan Avenue, and Leopard Street from Staples Street to N Upper Broadway, as Livable Communities Initiative corridors. It also recommends striped bike lanes on both sides of the road on Alameda Street from Lipan Street to Ayers Street; outlines design guidelines for sidewalks, curbs, and driveway bibs; ramps and crosswalks; pedestrian-level lighting; and landscaping for corridors covered by the plan.

03.

CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT

The corridor assessment in this section outlines the existing conditions of demographics, infrastructure, transportation, and environment. The goal of the assessment is to develop a comprehensive understanding of the corridors, including opportunities, concerns, and limitations.

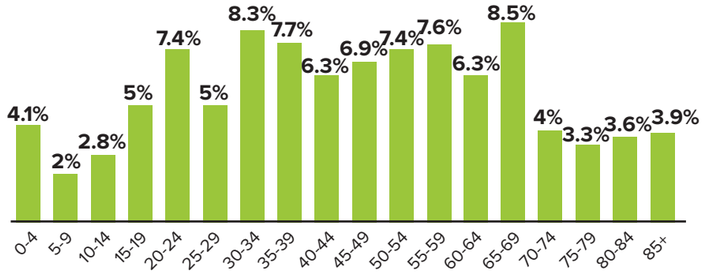
DEMOGRAPHICS

Age and Ethnicity

Demographic information was analyzed within ¼ mile of the Leopard and Staples corridors. Within this area, the majority of the population identifies as Hispanic or Latino (61.8%) and 30.5% of the population identify as White. People identifying as Black or African American comprise the next largest group (6.6%), followed by two or more races (0.7%), and Asian (0.4%). The median age of the area is 42.3, with the bulk of the population falling between ages 25 and 64.

Figure 1. Population by Age Range 2019

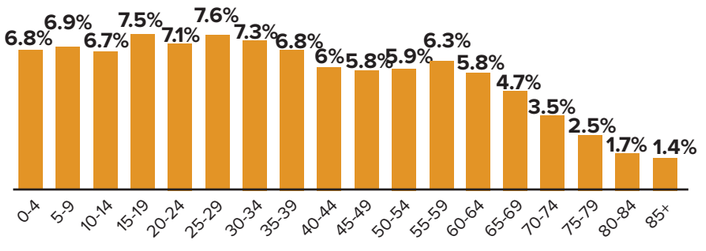
Study Area



Median age in the study area is

42.3

City of Corpus Christi



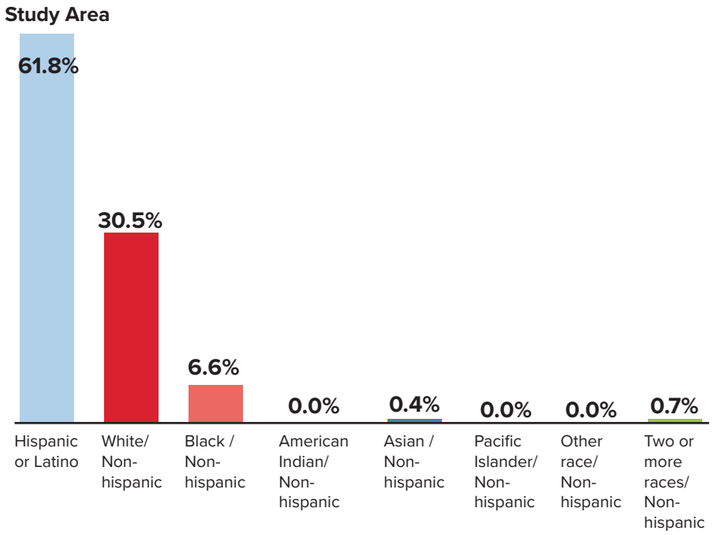
Median age in the City is

36.6

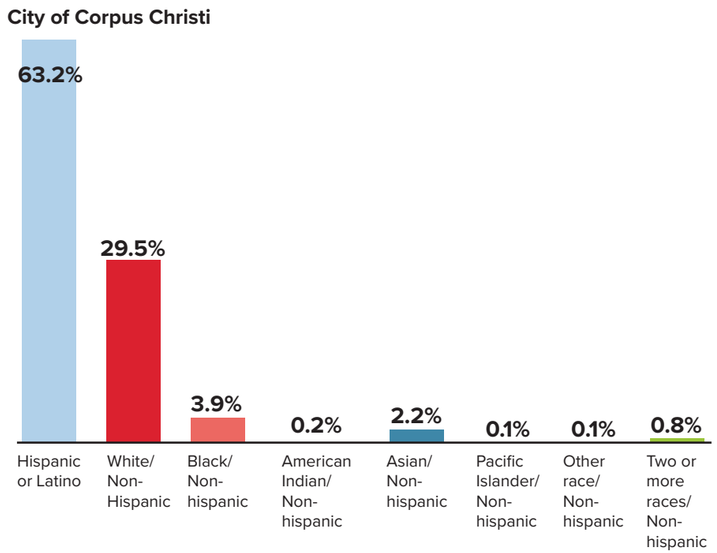
Data prepared by ESRI Business Analyst using American Community Survey 2015-2019 estimates

Data prepared by ESRI Business Analyst using projections for 2021 based on the 2010 Census.

Figure 2. 2020 Population by Race



61.8% of the study area population identifies as Hispanic or Latino



63.2% of the City population identifies as Hispanic or Latino

All data prepared by ESRI Business Analyst using American Community Survey 2015-2019 estimates

Household and Car Ownership

There are approximately 1,812 households in the area. Half of the area's households are defined as "family households" (members are related by either marriage, birth, or adoption), and half as "non-family households" (members are not related). Larger households are less common in the area. A majority of housing units in the area are renter-occupied (73%). While most households have a vehicle available, a significant portion of households do not have access to a vehicle (25%).

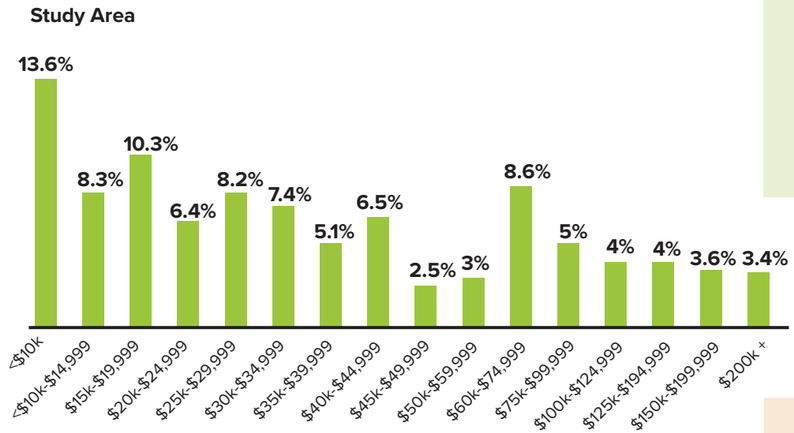
Household incomes in the study area are relatively low. The median household income is $31,982 and over 22% of households make less than $15,000 per year.

The study area contains

1,812 households and

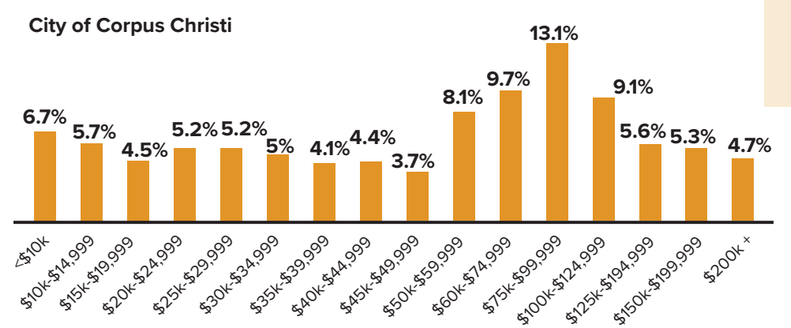
2,422 housing units

Figure 3. Households by Income Range



Median Household Income in the study area is

$31,982

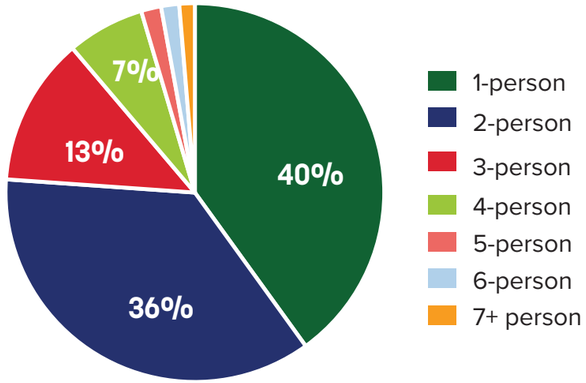


Median Household Income in the City is

$56,333

All data prepared by ESRI Business Analyst using American Community Survey 2015-2019 estimates

Figure 4. Study Area Household Size



52% of household in the study area are Family* households

*individuals related by birth, marriage or adoption

67.1% of households in the City are Family* households

*individuals related by birth, marriage or adoption

52% of housing units in the study area are renter-occupied

38% of housing units in the City are renter-occupied

24% of housing units in the study area are vacant

11.5% of housing units in the City are vacant

25% of housing units in the study area do not have a vehicle available

7.4% of housing units in the City do not have a vehicle available

All data prepared by ESRI Business Analyst using American Community Survey 2015-2019 estimates

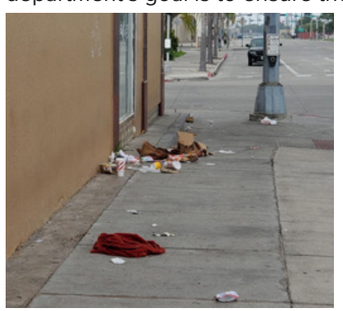
Homelessness

Homelessness presents a significant hurdle for activating the two corridors and fosters conditions that prevent people from walking and shopping along both Staples and Leopard Streets. People experiencing homelessness primarily gather around City Hall due to the nearby shelters and services. There are approximately eight facilities serving the homeless population within the quarter-mile area surrounding the Uptown Corridors. One area shelter, the Good Samaritan Rescue Mission, is preparing to relocate to a converted motel near I-37 and Nueces Bay Boulevard. In addition, The Salvation Army is in the process of transitioning to their new facility at Buford Street adjacent to 286. Both facilities are expected to complete their relocations by 2022.

Drug transactions and associated criminal activity may be observed in the area, with predation on the homeless population likely contributing to the occurrence of illegal activities. Litter, the use of awnings and storefronts for shelter, and a lack of sanitation further inhibits business investment in the area and decreases the attractiveness for residential uses.

The City has increased services and outreach within the Uptown area to address these issues. The Police Department has increased its presence though a Bike Patrol Unit, Enduro Unit, and a Mental Health Unit serving the area. The police department's goal is to ensure the safety of citizens while providing necessary services to the homeless in the area. In addition, three nearby fire stations are able to respond within the Uptown Corridors study area in less than five minutes, and a $9 million new fire station is included in the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Budget to replace the existing Fire Station #3 at Morgan Avenue and 12th Street. The new Fire Station investment is expected to help with neighborhood revitalization while supporting businesses in the area. Another City service enhancement included in the 2021-2022 Budget is an additional Solid Waste Services Litter Crew that will focus on areas needing enhanced and focused cleanups, such as the Uptown Corridors area.

Moreover, the Neighborhood Services Department, newly formed in 2021, unifies Animal Care Services, Code Enforcement, Grant Monitoring, and Homeless Services and Workforce Housing to provide coordinated services that promote and support neighborhood sustainability, growth, and safety. The Homeless Services and Workforce Housing division assists City residents to ensure that they receive equal housing opportunities. Providing more affordable housing options to accommodate people in the area is also key to promoting neighborhood and corridor revitalization. The Uptown Corridors Revitalization Strategy will work closely with all public agencies and area service providers on developing strategies for addressing homelessness and supporting diverse infill housing production.



Litter on street
Source: Jason Page

Good Samaritan Rescue Mission
Source: 101 Corpus Christi

Mother Teresa Shelter
Source: motherteresashelter.org

Map 2. Organizations Serving Homeless Populations

TRANSPORTATION

Street Network

Leopard and Staples Streets are both classified as Minor Arterials. Other minor arterials in the study area include Morgan Avenue, Ayers Street, and Alameda Street south of Ayers. Secondary arterials include Laredo and Agnes Streets. Minor collectors in the study area include Lipan and Comanche Streets, Alameda Street, Hancock Avenue, Elizabeth and Booty Streets, and most of the streets in the Marina Arts District. In addition, Staples Street, Morgan Avenue, and the Agnes/ Laredo corridor are designated as National Highway System Routes by the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration.

Leopard Street
Source: Asakura Robinson

Key Findings

- A comprehensive network of bike facilities is planned for the study area.
- There are some existing bike facilities at the Staples Street Station and at multiple bus stops on Leopard and on Staples.
- Much of the planned bike network has not yet been constructed.
- Multiple bus lines serve the area with varied frequency between 15-60 minutes. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic adversely impacting ridership demand, current frequency is between 20-60 minutes.
- 6 bus routes run every 20-30 minutes during the week, including routes along Staples and Leopard.
- 5 bus routes have the highest ridership during the week, including Staples and Leopard.
- Staples Street Station, which supports bus and bicycle facilities, is the busiest transfer station and experiences the highest ridership in the Corpus Christi Regional Transportation Authority (CCRTA) System. Greyhound offers long-distance intercity bus transportation options. In addition, several taxi companies provide on-demand transportation services which are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Map 3. Street Network

Source: City of Corpus Christi GIS Services

Parks

Water

Streets

Hierarchy:

- Minor Arterial (Undivided)
- Secondary Arterial (Divided)
- Minor Collector
- Primary Collecor
- Parkway Collector
- Freeway

Status:

- Existing
- Programmed

250 500 1000 ft

Leopard Street New Street Configuration

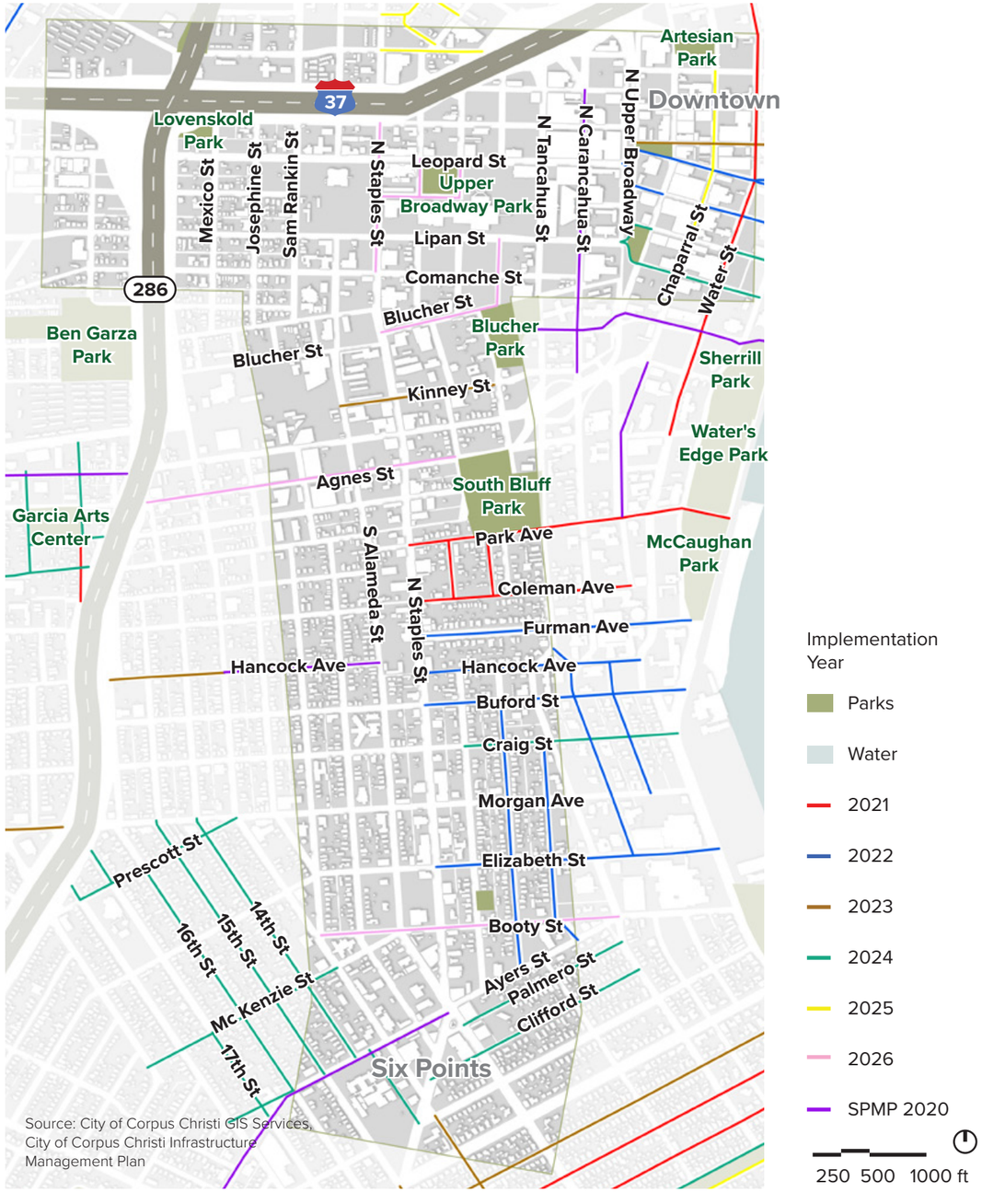
The Harbor Bridge project is a significant Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) project that involves aesthetic and active living features. The project also designed new road configurations at the western portion of Leopard Street. With the new design, the road traffic on the west side of Leopard will be elevated onto a bridge starting from Josephine Street. The graphic below indicates the detour and closures due the current construction work. Some side streets on the west side of Leopard Street such as Mexico Street will be affected by this new design as well. These changes will affect how people get to the western portion of Leopard. Providing wayfinding and better access for pedestrians and cyclists will be very important to this portion of the study area.

Construction on Leopard Street
Source: City of Corpus Christi

Map 4. Harbor Bridge Project Leopard Street Detours

Source: Texas Department of Transportation, August 2020

Map 5. Infrastructure Management Plan



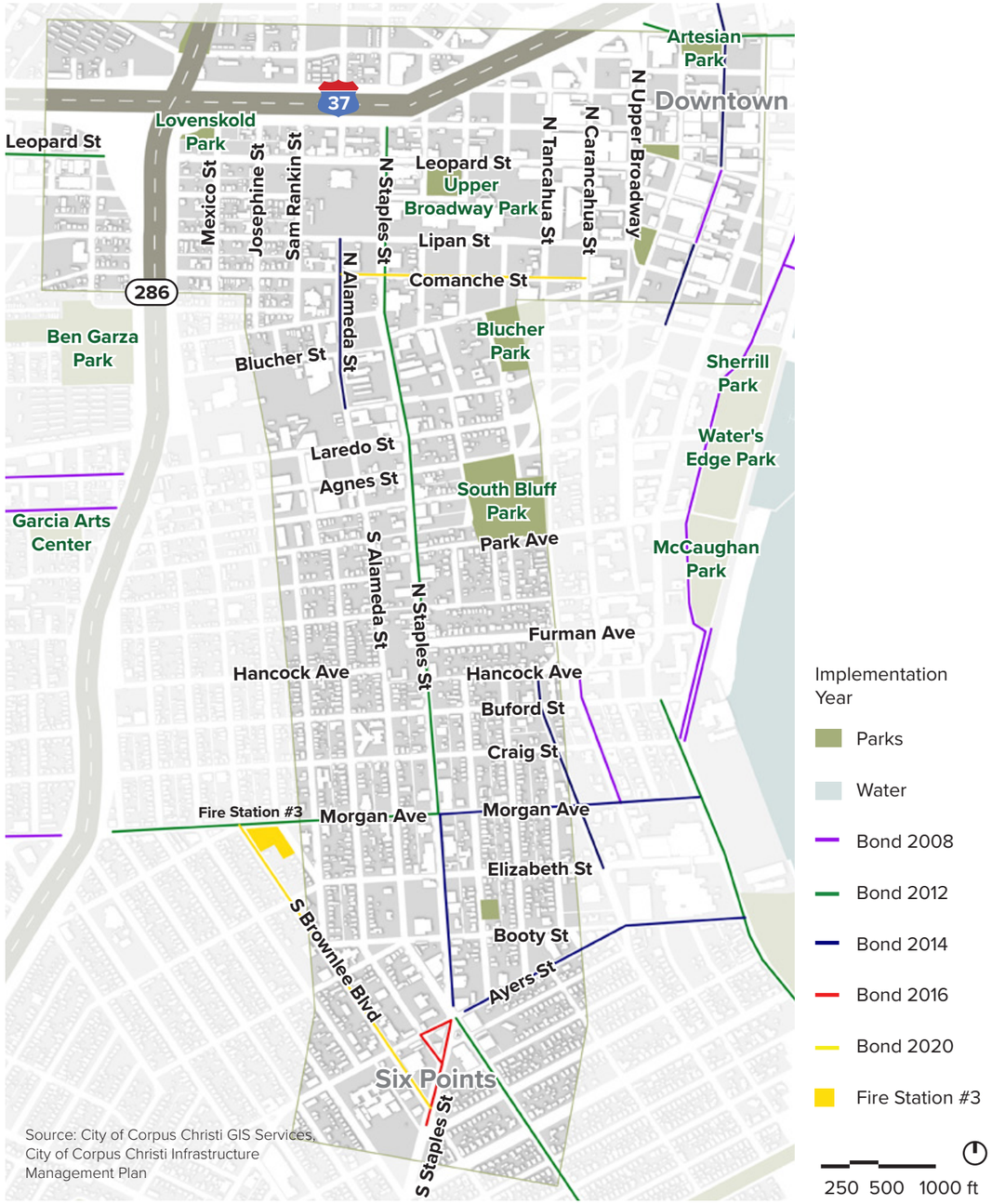
Source: City of Corpus Christi GIS Services, City of Corpus Christi Infrastructure Management Plan

Infrastructure Management Plan and Bond Projects

The Corpus Christi Infrastructure Management Plan (IMP) is a 5-year rolling program which focuses on street preventative maintenance and rehabilitation. The first two years of the IMP are considered to be complete in the planning process, while the subsequent three-years are considered to be on a rolling list that is utilized for planning purposes. The IMP is updated and presented to Council for adoption annually and residents are encouraged to visit https://www.cctexas.com/imp for the most current list of projects. As exhibited in Map 5, Elizabeth, Booty, Buford, Hancock, Furman, Coleman, and Park are identified for future rehabilitation. Craig Street will be reconstructed as a future Residential Street Rebuild Program project. Recently, Staples Street, Ayers Street, and Morgan Avenue were all completely reconstructed, with the inclusion of underground utilities, such as drainage as part of recent Bond projects. A portion of this new construction of Staples Street from Comanche Street to Antelope Street is already planned for preservation work in 2026. Six Points intersection improvements are also near completion and will improve access and provide safer pedestrian crossings.

Reconstruction at Morgan Avenue
Source: Asakura Robinson

Map 6. Bond Projects



Source: City of Corpus Christi GIS Services, City of Corpus Christi Infrastructure Management Plan

NACTO Urban Design guidelines for 4 to 3 lane conversions

NACTO, the National Association of City Transportation Officials, provides guidance for the conversion of neighborhood main streets from four lanes to three lanes. Studies have found that in most cases, “streets carrying up to 25,000 vehicles per day function effectively with three lanes, depending on the traffic volumes of nearby adjacent streets.” In fact, on streets with a 4-lane cross section, significant delays often occur due to the turning movements of vehicles, which is optimized through a 3-lane cross section. Additionally, according to NACTO, “4-lane configurations have been shown to increase rear-end and sideswipe vehicle crashes and pose a higher pedestrian crash risk.” Studies have also shown that 3-lane cross sections help in boosting the economy of the area and positively impact local business activity.

A car turning in the street
Source: Asakura Robinson

Traffic Volume

As displayed in Map 7, traffic volume data obtained from the Texas A&M Transportation Institute's Congestion Management Process Assessment Tool, or COMPAT, reveals average annual daily traffic counts below 10,000 along both Leopard and Staples Streets within the Uptown Corridors study area. This data is based on 2019 TxDOT volume data and predates impacts from the 2020 pandemic, as well as more recent construction at Leopard Street and Highway 286 related to the Harbor Bridge project. Staples Street is identified as a National Highway System route and is included in the Corpus Christi Metropolitan Planning Organization's (CCMPO) *2020 Corpus Christi Regional Congestion Management Process (CMP)*. The CMP reports that Staples Street, from IH37 to Ayers Street, has good travel times.

The intersection at Laredo Street and Staples Street
Source: Asakura Robinson

Map 7. 2019 Average Annual Daily Traffic

Source: 2020 COMPAT (using 2019 TxDOT RHiNO network/volume data), Texas A&M Transportation Institute.

Intersection of Staples St. at Ayers St.
Source: Asakura Robinson

Collisions

From 2016 to June 2021, there were 1,207 car collisions within a quarter-mile from the Uptown corridors. In this time frame, 10 percent of the collisions were on Leopard Street from Brownlee Boulevard to N Upper Broadway Street. Nineteen percent took place on Staples Street from Antelope Street to Ayers Street.

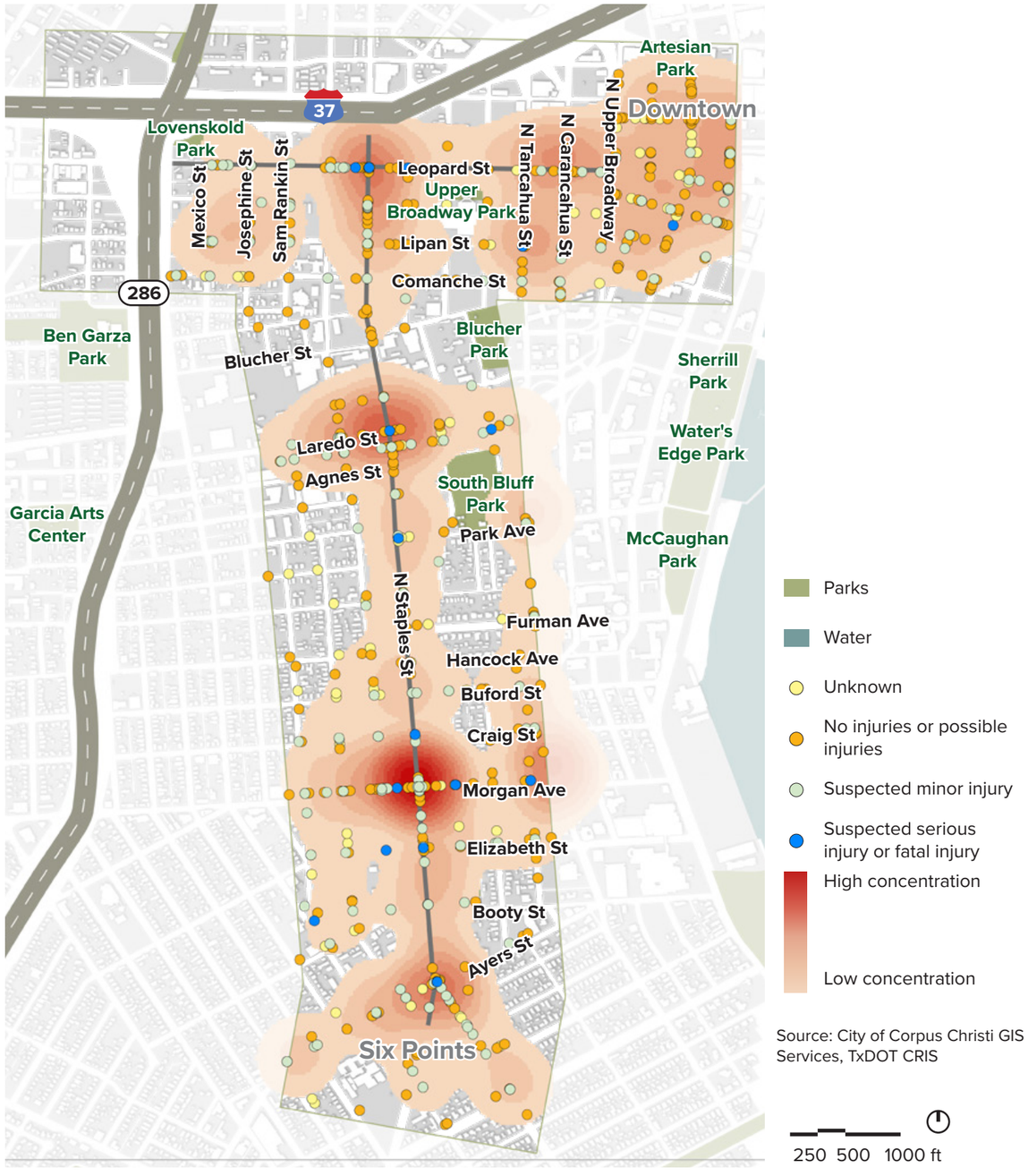
Between 2016 and June 2021, 107 collisions occurred at the intersections of Staples Street and Morgan Avenue. One hundred collisions occured on a single block of Staples Street between Laredo Street and Agnes Street - two which led to serious injury. Six Points saw fewer collisions at 60, but two still led to serious injury.

Much of the area falls within a multi-year construction zone and changing traffic patterns may be a contributing factor to a portion of these collisions. However, Map 8 also aids in identifying priority locations for additional study and safety enhancements.

Crash Severity	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 Through June
Intersection Crashes						
Minor or No Injury	141	159	121	128	123	56
Serious and Fatal	1	5	3	1	2	1
Unknown Severity	1	4	1	0	1	0
Non-Intersection Crashes						
Minor or No Injury	65	85	69	63	54	28
Serious and Fatal	1	0	0	2	2	0
Unknown Severity	16	23	23	11	15	2
TOTAL	**225**	**276**	**217**	**205**	**197**	**87**

Note: Minor or No Injury category includes crashes where no injuries, possible injuries, and suspected minor injuries were reported. The Serious and Fatal category includes crashes where suspected serious and fatal injuries were reported.
Source: TxDOT Crash Records Information System (CRIS), accessed October 26, 2021.

Map 8. Collisions and Injury Severity (January 2016 - June 2021)



Source: City of Corpus Christi GIS Services, TxDOT CRIS

Bus Network

The study area is served by a total of 16 bus lines, 14 of which pass through the Staples Street Station at the intersection of Staples and Leopard Streets. The Staples Street Station is both the busiest transfer station and highest ridership stop in the Corpus Christi Regional Transportation Authority (CCRTA) system. Most of the bus lines serving downtown Corpus Christi are local routes with frequencies at 30 minutes with bus lines 6, 76, 78 operating together during peak weekday hours. The 19 Ayers, 21 Arboleda, and 23 Molina routes run every 30 minutes during peak weekday hours, and the 29 Staples runs every 20 minutes. Additionally, three limited-stop express routes serve the area on weekdays: the 54 Gregory/ Downtown Express, the 83 Advanced Industries, and the 51 Gregory/NAS Express. On Saturdays, bus service drops to 12 bus lines with 5 high frequency routes arriving every 20-30 minutes (19 Ayers, 21 Arboleda, 23 Molina, 27 Leopard and 29 Staples). On Sundays, 10 bus lines travel to regional destinations with two services providing a 30 minute frequency (19 Ayers and 29 Staples). During this COVID-19 pandemic, the study area is served by 17 bus lines operating at reduced service levels. Prior to the pandemic, the area was served by 18 bus lines which operated at higher service levels.

North-south connections in the study area include the 29 Staples line which runs along Staples from Leopard Street to Saratoga Boulevard. The 17 Carroll/Southside and the 5 Alameda lines also serve the upper portion of Staples from Leopard Street to Agnes Street before jogging east onto Laredo Street and Agnes Street and down Brownlee Boulevard, connecting back to Staples at the Six Points intersection. Additional north-south connections include the 19 Ayers, 28 Leopard/Navigation, and 23 Molina which runs along Carancahua and Tancahua Streets, and the 76 Harbor Bridge Shuttle which serves the waterfront and Marina Arts District, connecting north across the Harbor Bridge.

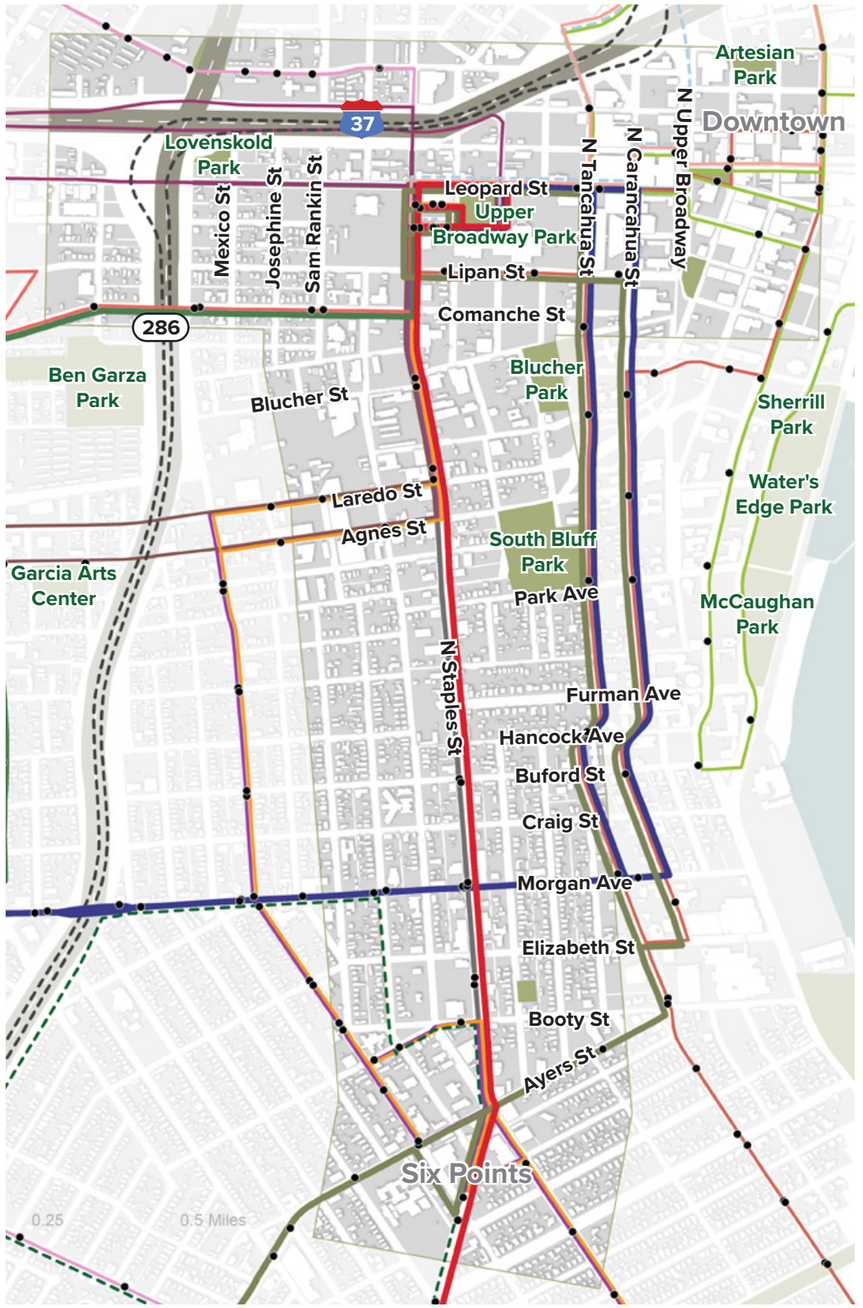
East-west connections include the 27 Leopard which runs east from the Staples Street Station, the 28 Leopard/Navigation which crosses highway 286 on Comanche Street, the 16 Morgan/Port which crosses highway 286 at Laredo Street and Agnes Street, and the 23 Molina which crosses highway 286 at Morgan Avenue.

Overall, bus services within the study area provide adequate transportation options. The CCRTA has plans to add amenities and improve the overall passenger experience. These improvements include the CCRTA's continued ADA compliant retrofit of multiple bus stops, and the continued addition of amenities and upgrades to stops within the study area.

The 19 Ayers, 21 Arboleda, 27 Leopard, 23 Molina and 29 Staples lines experience the greatest weekday ridership levels. The 54 Gregory/ Downtown Express, 78 North Beach shuttle, 83 Advanced Industries, and 51 Gregory/NAS Express have the least amount of riders during the weekday.

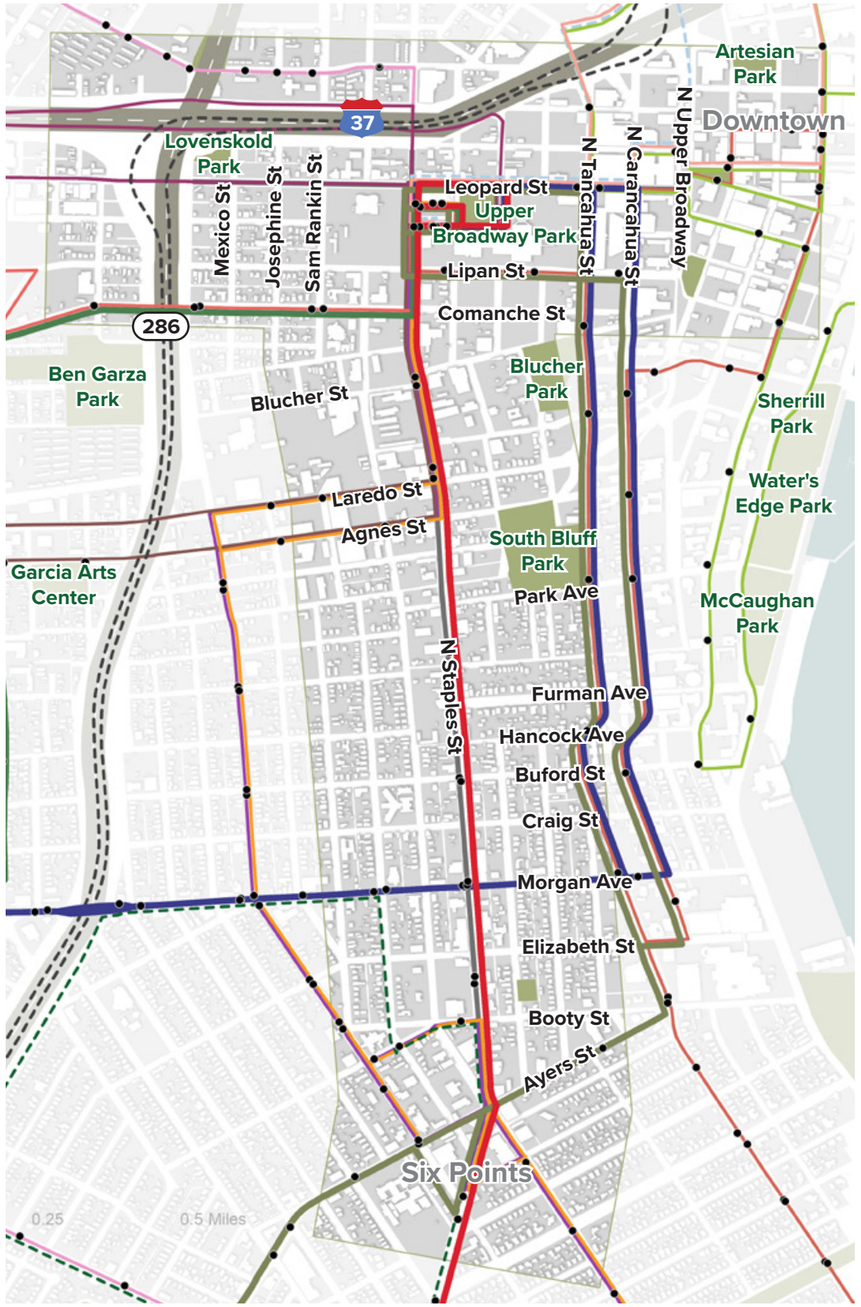
Bus service on Staples Street
Source: Asakura Robinson

Map 9. Bus Network and Frequency



Source: City of Corpus Christi GIS Services, Corpus Christi Regional Transportation Authority

Map 10. Bus Network and Ridership



Bus Ridership

Weekday Total Riders (line with most riders):

- 19 Ayers
- 21 Arboleda
- 27 Leopard
- 23 Molina
- 29 Staples

Weekday Total Riders (line with lesser riders):

- 5 Alameda
- 6 Santa Fe/ Malls
- 12 Hillcrest/ Baldwin
- 16 Morgan/ Port
- 17 Carroll/ Southside
- 28 Leopard/ Navigation
- 76 Harbor Bridge Shuttle

Weekday Total Riders (line with least riders):

- 54 Gregory/ Downtown Express
- 78 North Beach Shuttle
- 83 Advanced Industries
- 51 Gregory/ NAS Express

- Bus Stops

250 500 1000 ft

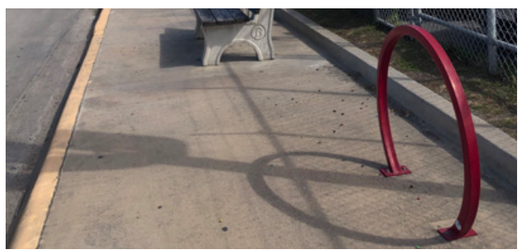
Source: City of Corpus Christi GIS Services, Corpus Christi Regional Transportation Authority

Bus Stops on Staples Street
Source: Asakura Robinson

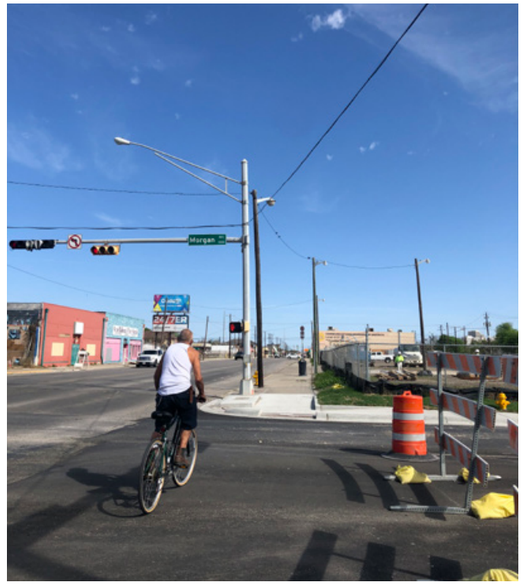
Bus Stops on Leopard Street
Source: Asakura Robinson

Bikeways

Existing bikeways in the study area are limited; however, in 2016 the City adopted the Corpus Christi Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO) Strategic Plan for Active Mobility, Phase 1: Bicycle Mobility Plan. This plan lays out a bicycle network connecting the entire City, including within the study area. Map 11 depicts bikeways that are planned (dotted lines), existing (solid lines), and under construction (solid lines). Existing bikeways include bike and pedestrian facilities on the new Staples Street Bridge crossing over I-37. Facilities under construction include a multi-use sidepath on Staples Street at the Six Points intersection and 1-way cycle tracks on Alameda Street south of Ayers Street. Most bikeways planned for the study area are 1-way cycle tracks or bike boulevards. Planned 1-way cycle tracks include facilities on Staples Street extending from the I-37 bridge to Comanche Street then jogging west onto Alameda and continuing past the Six Points intersection, and on Comanche Street crossing Highway 286. Planned bike boulevards include facilities on Antelope Street one block north of Leopard Street extending east from Staples Street into the Marina Arts District, on Coleman Avenue heading east from Alameda Street, and on 6th Street connecting south from Buford Street to Booty Street and Lawnview Street. Additionally, the new Harbor Bridge will have bicycle and pedestrian access that will connect the study area with North Beach and has a planned bay view overlook.



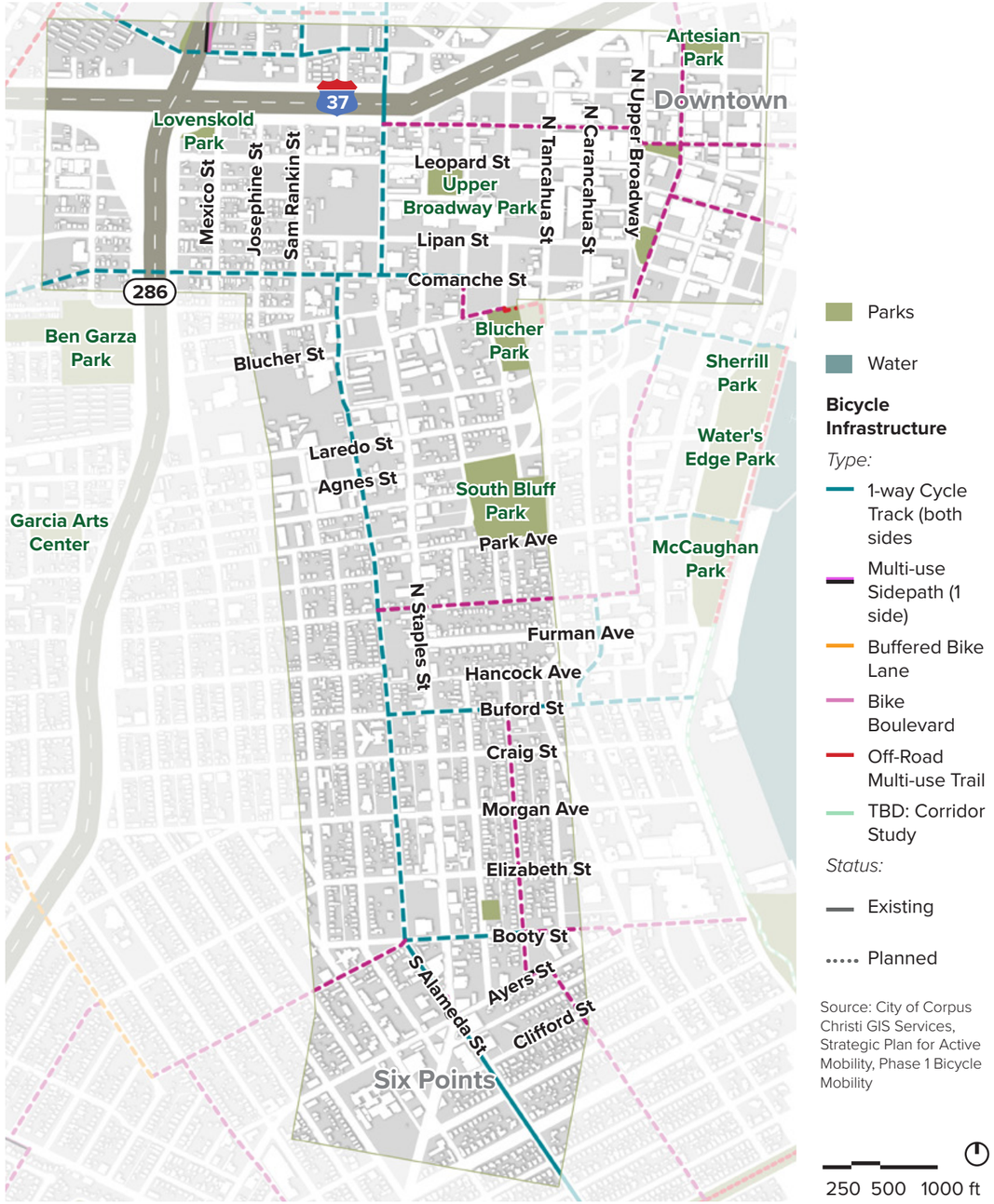
Bike amenities at CCRTA stop on Staples Street
Source: Asakura Robinson



A bicyclist on Staples Street
Source: Asakura Robinson

Bike amenities at CCRTA stop on Leopard Street
Source: Asakura Robinson

Map 11. Existing and Planned Bikeways



Source: City of Corpus Christi GIS Services, Strategic Plan for Active Mobility, Phase 1 Bicycle Mobility

LAND USE/ BUILDING USE

Current Zoning

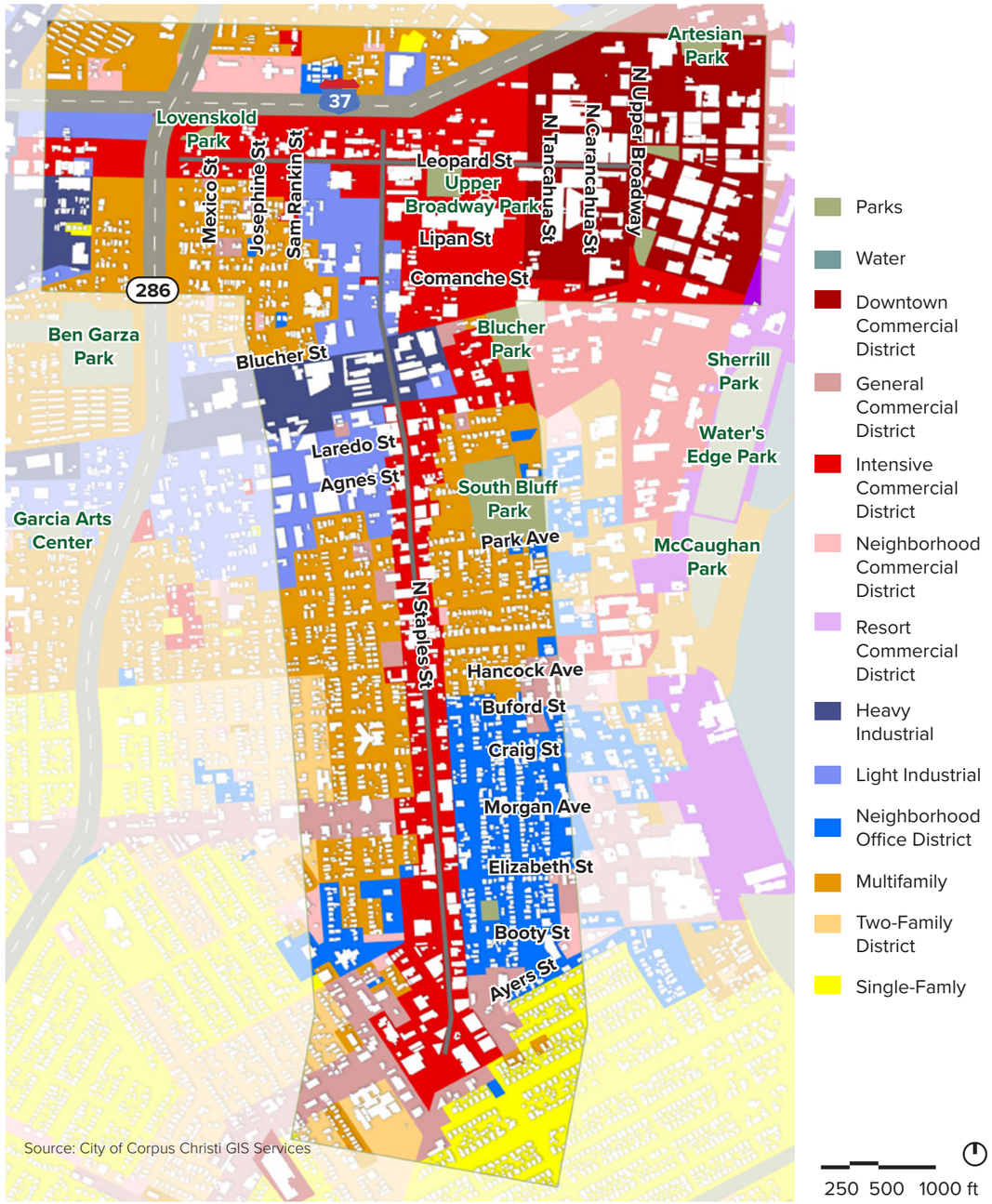
The Uptown Corridors quarter-mile study area includes land zoned for parks, Downtown Commercial, Intensive Commercial, General Commercial, Neighborhood Commercial, Resort Commercial, Heavy Industrial, Light Industrial, Neighborhood Office, Multifamily, Two-family, and Single-family districts.

Most of the area adjacent to Leopard and Staples Streets is zoned for Intensive Commercial land uses, and this district does not require any building setbacks from the street. There are some light and heavy industrial-zoned areas on the west side of Staples Street from Agnes Street north toward Leopard Street. Multi-family zoning is found west of City Hall and in the central portion of the study area to the east and west of Staples Street. Neighborhood Office and Single-family districts are located in the southeastern section of the study area.

Key Findings

- Land value per acre is highest where there is a higher density of businesses and places that attract foot traffic.
- Future land use shifts from low density and medium density residential land uses toward more medium density and high density residential and commercial land uses.
- Vacant land is found throughout the quarter-mile project area along the commercial corridors, and throughout residential areas.
- The ground floor condition adjacent to the corridors consists of a wide array of retail, commercial, govenment, and residential spaces with vacant and green spaces. Large stretches of the corridors lack continuous active frontages and some buildings are set back far from the streets.
- Most of the Leopard and Staples corridors contain a low density of businesses that contribute to street life.
- Clusters of businesses exist at the Six Points intersection of Staples, Ayers and Alameda; near the intersection of Staples and Comanche; and in the areas where Leopard Street intersects with N Upper Broadway.
- There were 188 commercial and residential building permits within the study area since 2016. Permits were evenly spaced out over the years with a small increase in 2019.

Map 12. Zoning



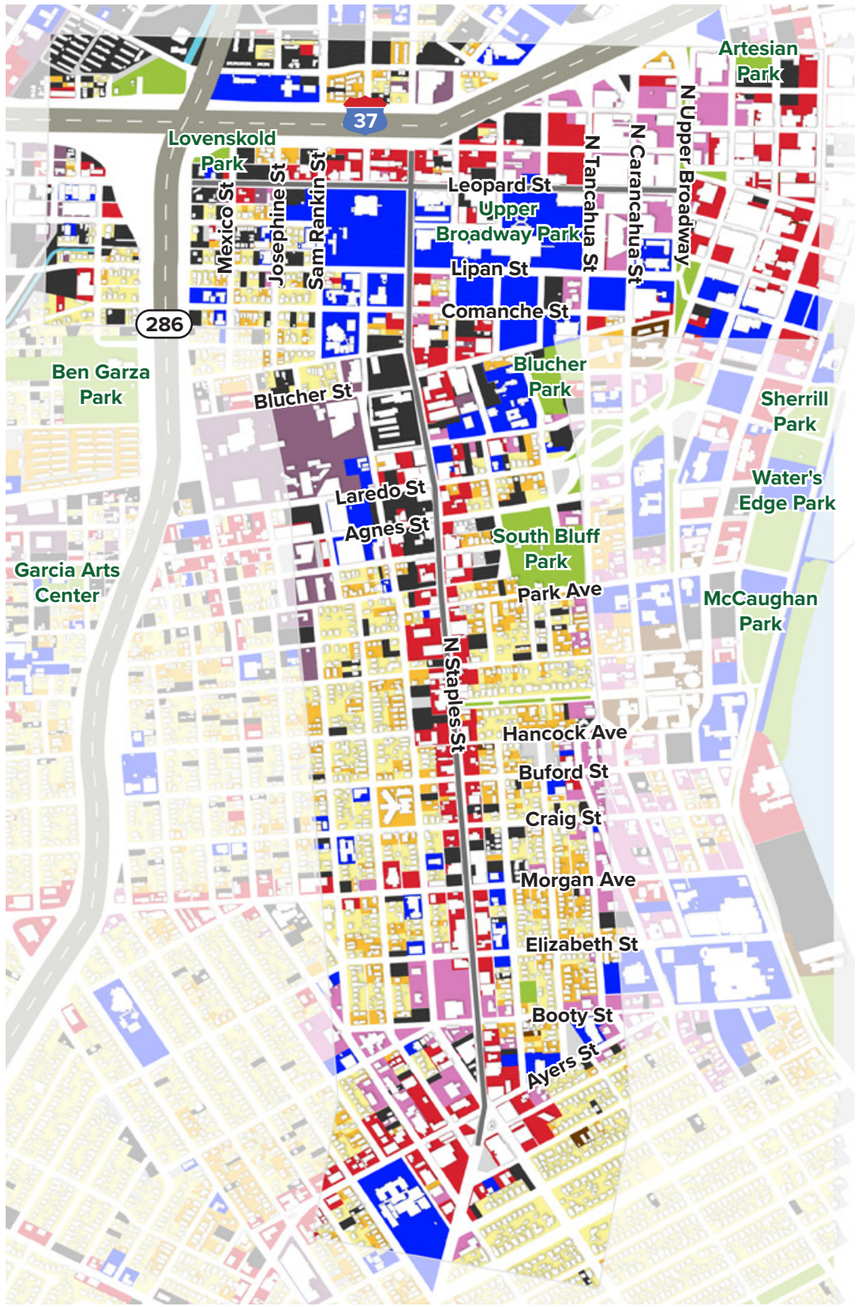
Source: City of Corpus Christi GIS Services

Current Land Use

The Uptown Corridors quarter-mile study area contains a well-connected and intact street grid. Commercial and Government uses are predominantly found along Staples and Leopard Streets, along with vacant parcels and buildings. Professional office uses are located along Leopard Street closer to Upper Broadway, as well as the Six Points area, which is near Spohn Shoreline Hospital just to the east of the study area. The land uses along Staples Street are complemented by two key park spaces within the quarter-mile study area, Blucher Park and South Bluff Park. Moving east and west from Staples Street, low- and medium-density housing is located in the area extending south from Park Avenue.

Leopard Street
Source: Asakura Robinson

Map 13. Current Land Use



Data from June 2021

- Water
- Park
- Drainage Corridor
- Public/Semi-Public
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Commercial
- Professional Office
- Light Industrial
- Vacant Lots and Buildings

Source: City of Corpus Christi GIS Services

250 500 1000 ft

Future Land Use

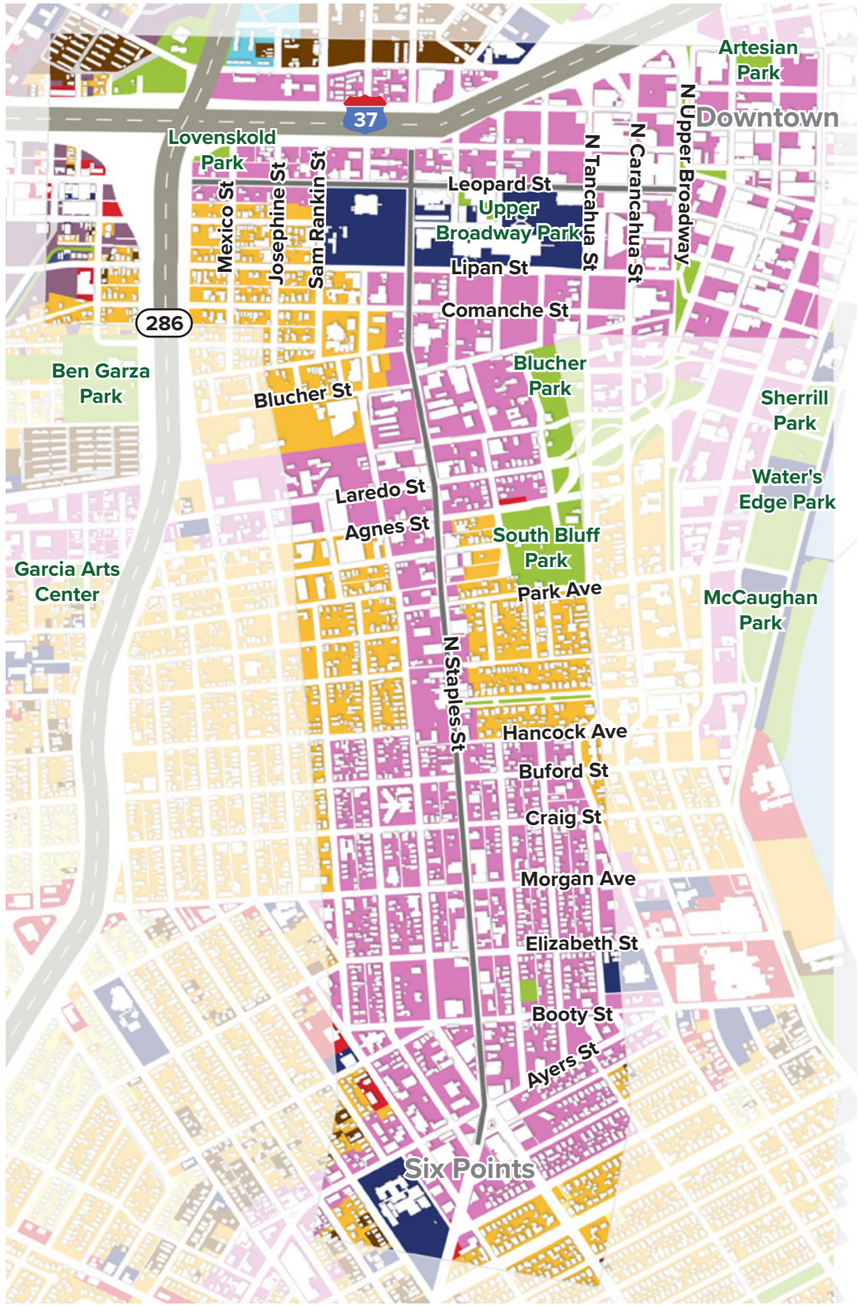
The Future Land Use Map, adopted as part of Plan CC in 2016, shows mixed-use areas all along the Leopard and Staples Street corridors. As described in Plan CC, “Mixed-use centers, ranging from vibrant downtown environments to active urban villages, include residential, retail, and office uses. Mixed-use centers are pedestrian-friendly and provide concentrated population and activity centers that can support enhanced transit. The mixture can be vertical, with uses on different floors of a building, and horizontal, with different uses side by side, and include multifamily, townhouse, cottage and small-lot single-family residential, retail and services, offices, hotels and live/work structures." The designation of Leopard and Staples Streets as a mixed-use center promotes a vision for active and pedestrian-friendly commercial corridors, anchored by a strong local government center in the north portion of the study area and medical service activities to the south in proximity to Spohn Shoreline Hospital.

Figure 5. Land Use Comparison

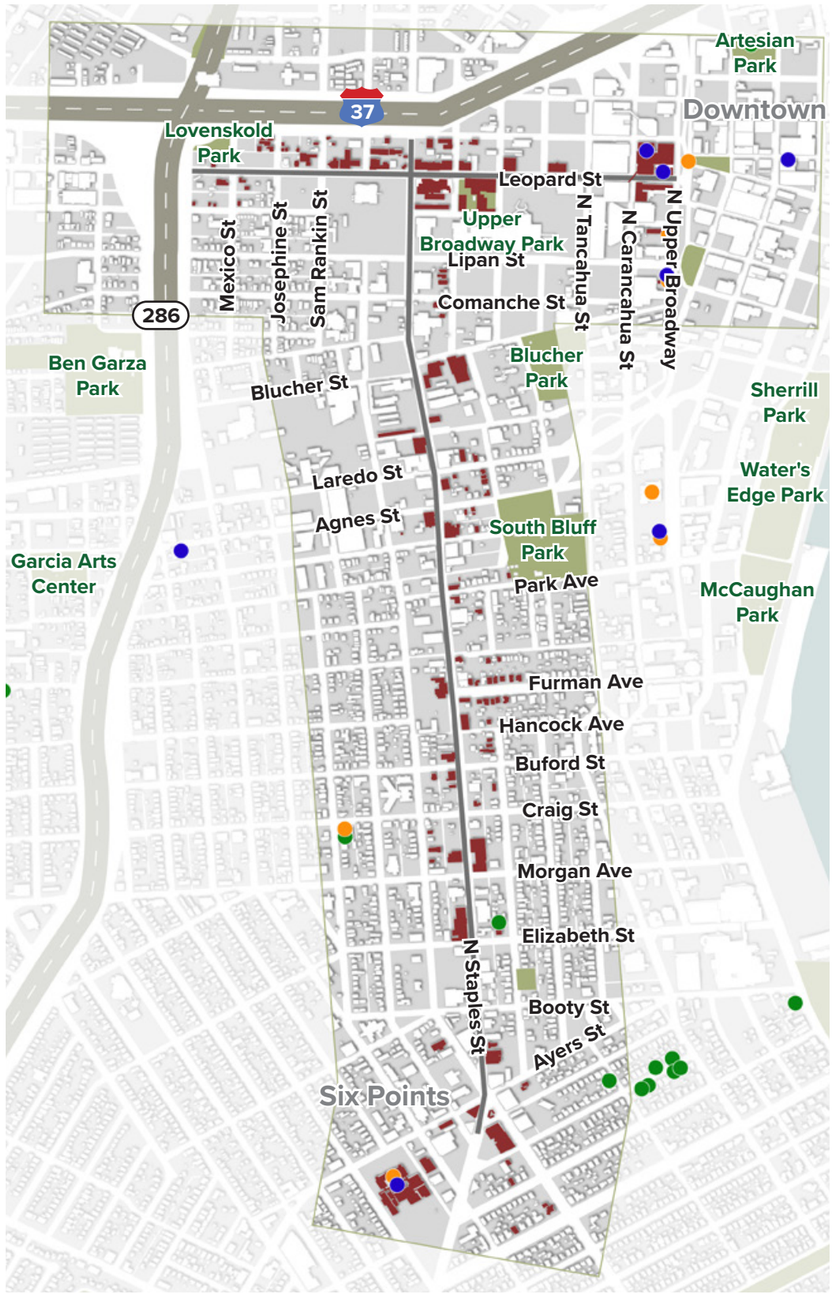
Project Area (1/4 radius Land Use Comparision)				
	Current Land Use	Acreage	Future Land Use	Acreage
Commercial	17%	138	1%	8
Mixed-Use	<1%	0	49%	418
Floodplain Conservation/Drainage Corridors	<1%	2	<1%	2
Industrial (Heavy and Light)	6%	46	1%	8
Professional Office	10%	85	0%	0
Public and Semi-Public (Institutional/Government)	17%	140	7%	60
High Density Residential	1%	9	3%	25
Medium Density Residential	11%	93	22%	189
Low Density Residential	21%	172	<1%	1
Park Space/Green Space	5%	38	4%	36
Vacant Land/ Building	13%	111	13%	111
TOTAL*		**834**		**858**

*Discrepancy of 24 acres exists. This is a result of rounding off and I-37 median parcels only included in one dataset.

Map 14. Future Land Use



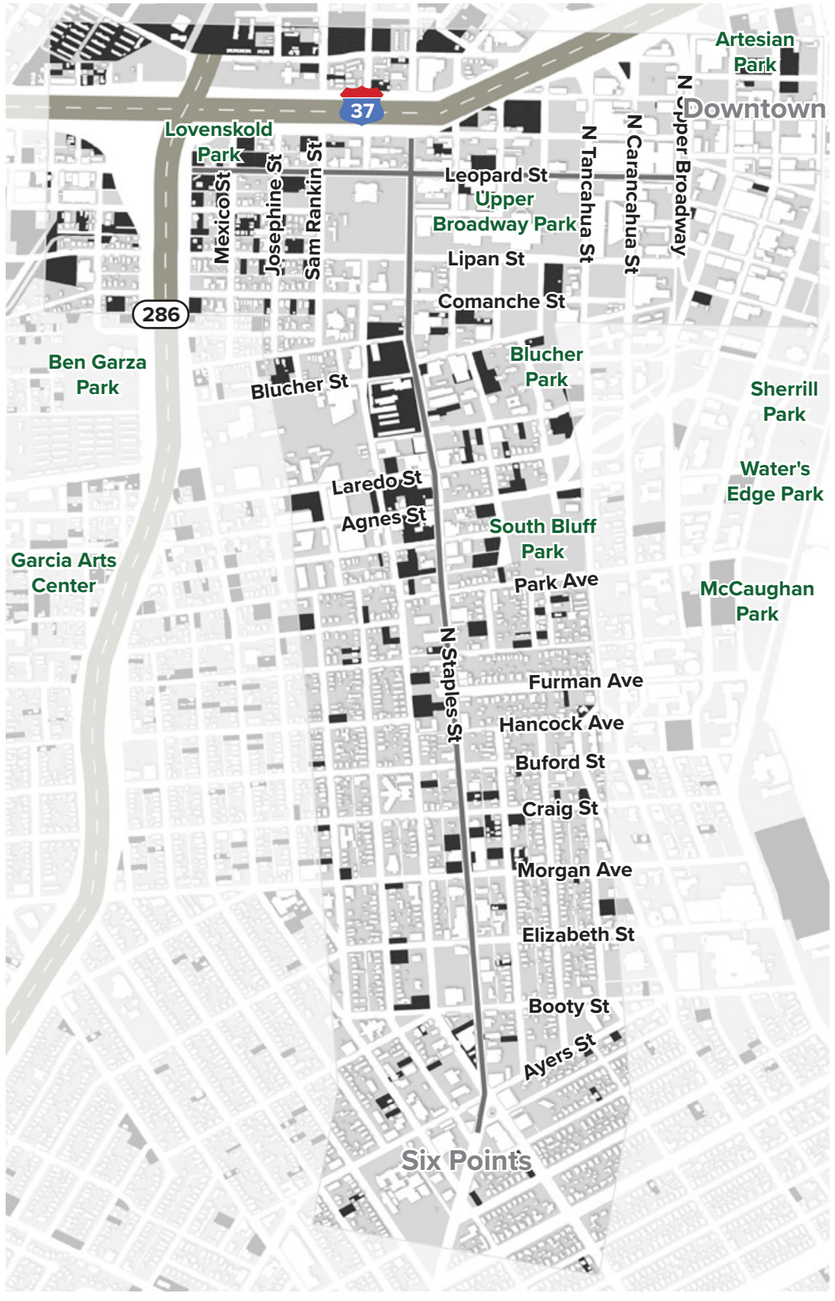
Map 15. Historic Buildings



Historic Buildings

The Uptown Corridors area includes historic buildings that might be able to qualify for state and national historic tax credits. Map 15 focuses on historic structures fronting and adjacent to Leopard and Staples Streets identified in 1991 and 2012 surveys. Some of these buildings date from the 1900s and can vary in styles such as classical revival, art deco, and Spanish colonial revival; however, an updated historic resource survey for the area may reveal that some of these structures have not survived or have fallen into further disrepair over the past couple of decades. Some cities have successfully employed adaptive reuse programs to encourage new investment in vacant and underutilized structures that promote local goals of economic development, historic preservation, and environmental sustainability. Example programs include Phoenix, Arizona; Palestine, Texas; and the Dallas, Texas, Small Business Adaptive Reuse Program.

Map 16. Vacant Lots



Data from June 2021

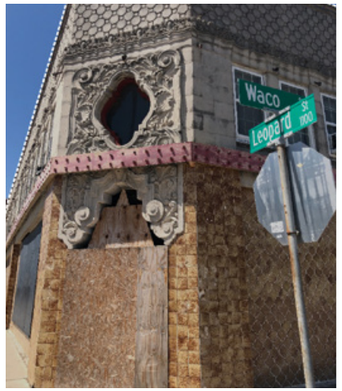
Vacant Lots & Buildings

Source: City of Corpus Christi GIS Services

250 500 1000 ft

Vacant Lots and Buildings

The Uptown Corridors study area has varied vacant land types directly along the corridors and within the adjacent residential areas. This vacant land presents an opportunity for achieving Future Land Use goals of increased development density and mixed uses. In addition, vacant land has an impact on the character and visitor perception of the corridors, creating urgency for catalytic real estate investments. Future redevelopment projects along the corridors can capitalize on utilizing existing vacant buildings that have good aesthetics and add to the character of Uptown. In addition, the building heights and openings allow them to be easily adapted for various commercial, retail, and office uses.



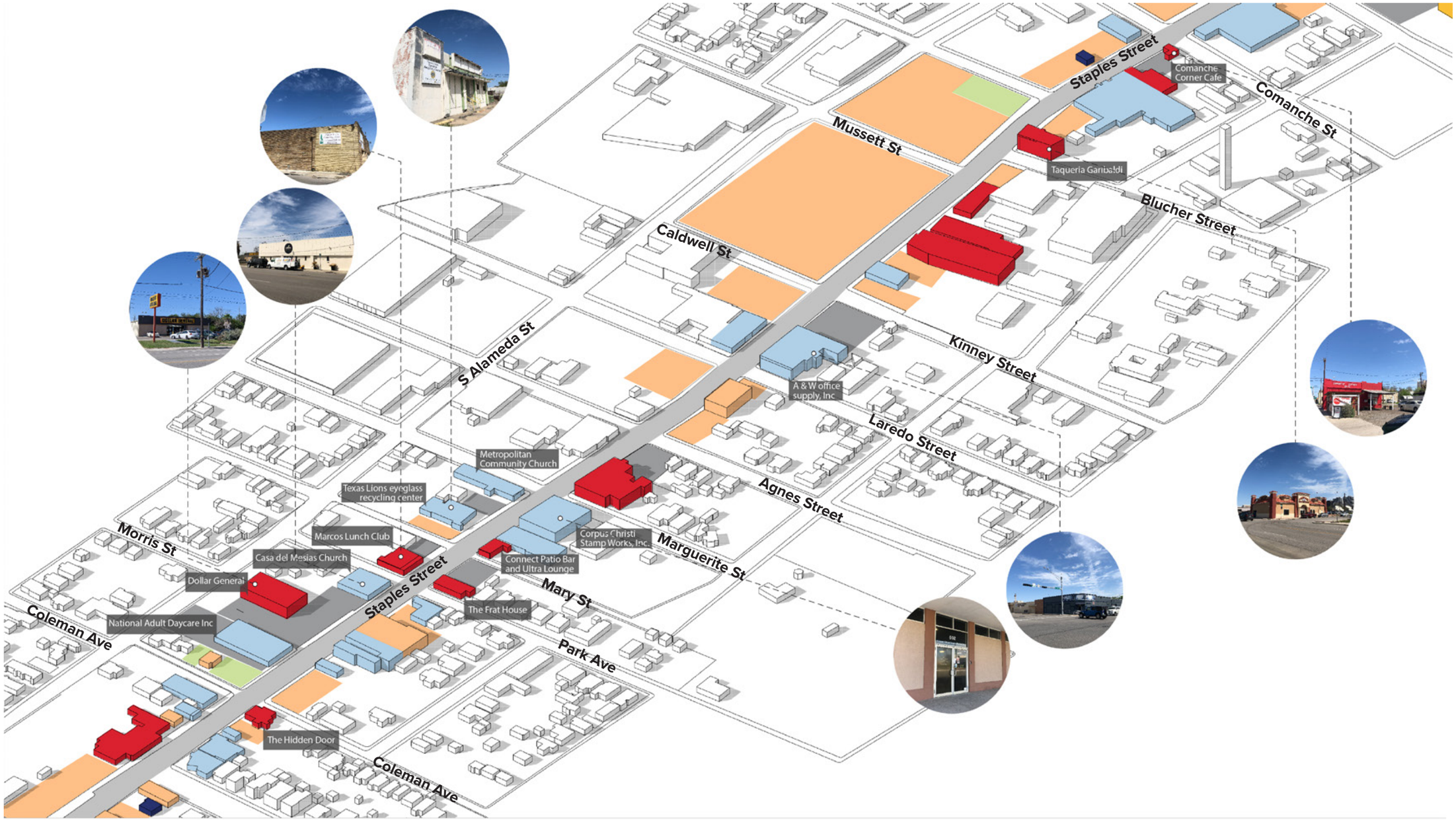
Vacant building front examples
Source: Asakura Robinson

Map 17. Ground Floor Use - Leopard Street and North Staples Street

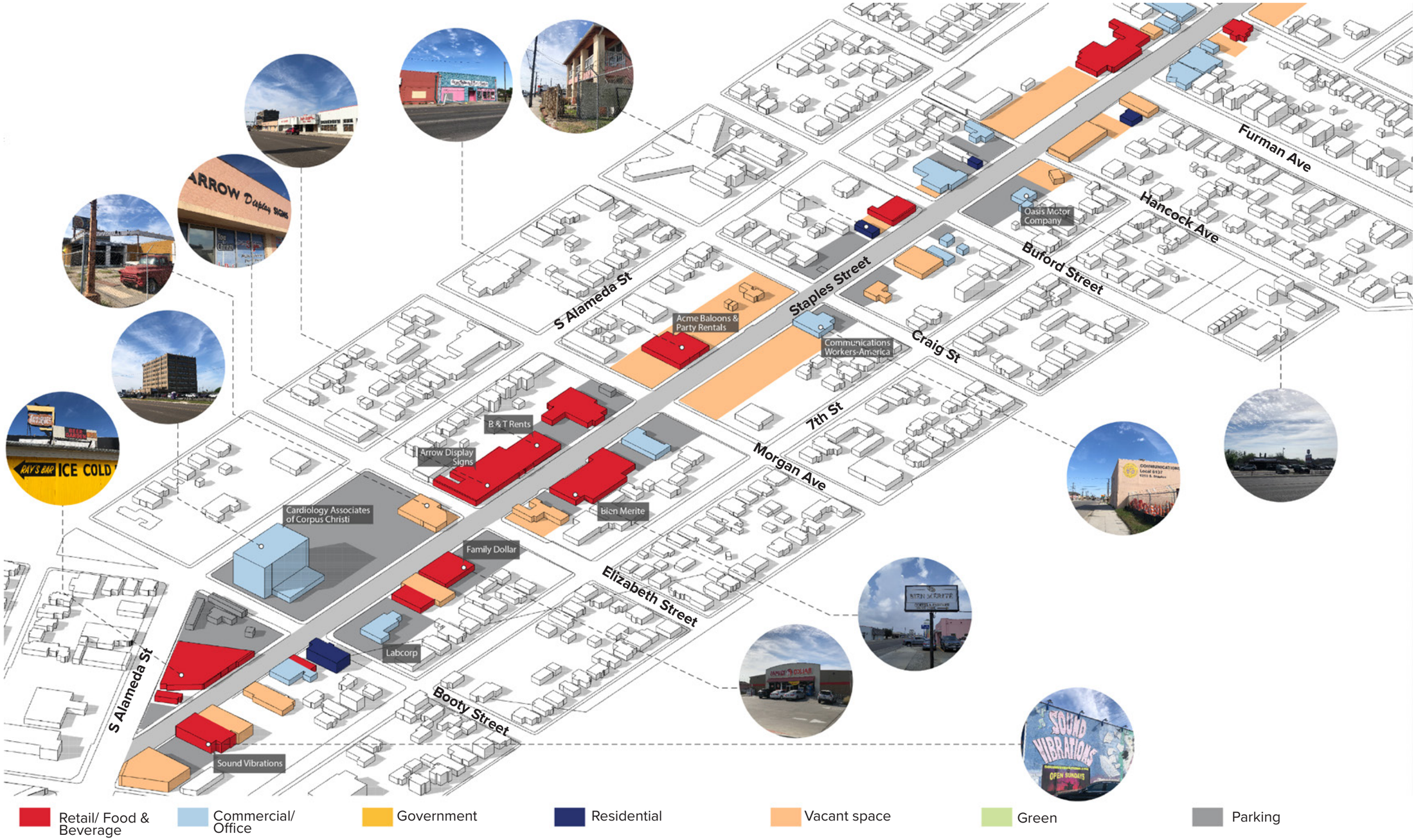
Ground-floor use

Walking along Staples and Leopard Streets, there are very limited active ground floor uses such as cafés, retail, event venues, or busy building fronts. Such spaces are very far apart from each other and fail to create any collective impact in activating the sidewalks. Large stretches of the corridors feel desolate due to blank facades, empty storefronts, and vacant land.

Map 18. Ground Floor Use - Mid-Staples



Map 19. Ground Floor Use - South Staples



Map 20. Density of Business that Contribute to Street Activity

Source: City of Corpus Christi GIS Services, ESRI Business Analyst

Activity Density/Street Life

Businesses that generate activity at the street level can contribute to a sense of place and an appealing pedestrian environment, especially when clustered together. Map 20 depicts the density of businesses and establishments that contribute to street life. Businesses and establishments identified include: Clothing, Entertainment, Food, Government (which includes community centers, libraries, post offices), Personal care, Recreation (which includes theme parks, galleries, casinos, museums, recreation centers, skating rinks), Shopping, Sporting goods, Tech, and Historic Places. In order to visualize density, a 3-block radius is drawn around each identified business to represent its service area. Areas with significant overlap are visualized as red and areas with no overlap are visualized as green, with a gradient of yellow to pink in between. Most of the Leopard and Staples corridors contain a relatively low density of businesses that contribute to street life. Clusters of such businesses exist at the Six Points intersection of Staples, Ayers and Alameda Street; near the intersection of Staples and Comanche Streets; and in the Marina Arts District where Leopard intersects with N Upper Broadway.

The food court on Leopard Street
Source: Asakura Robinson

Building Permits

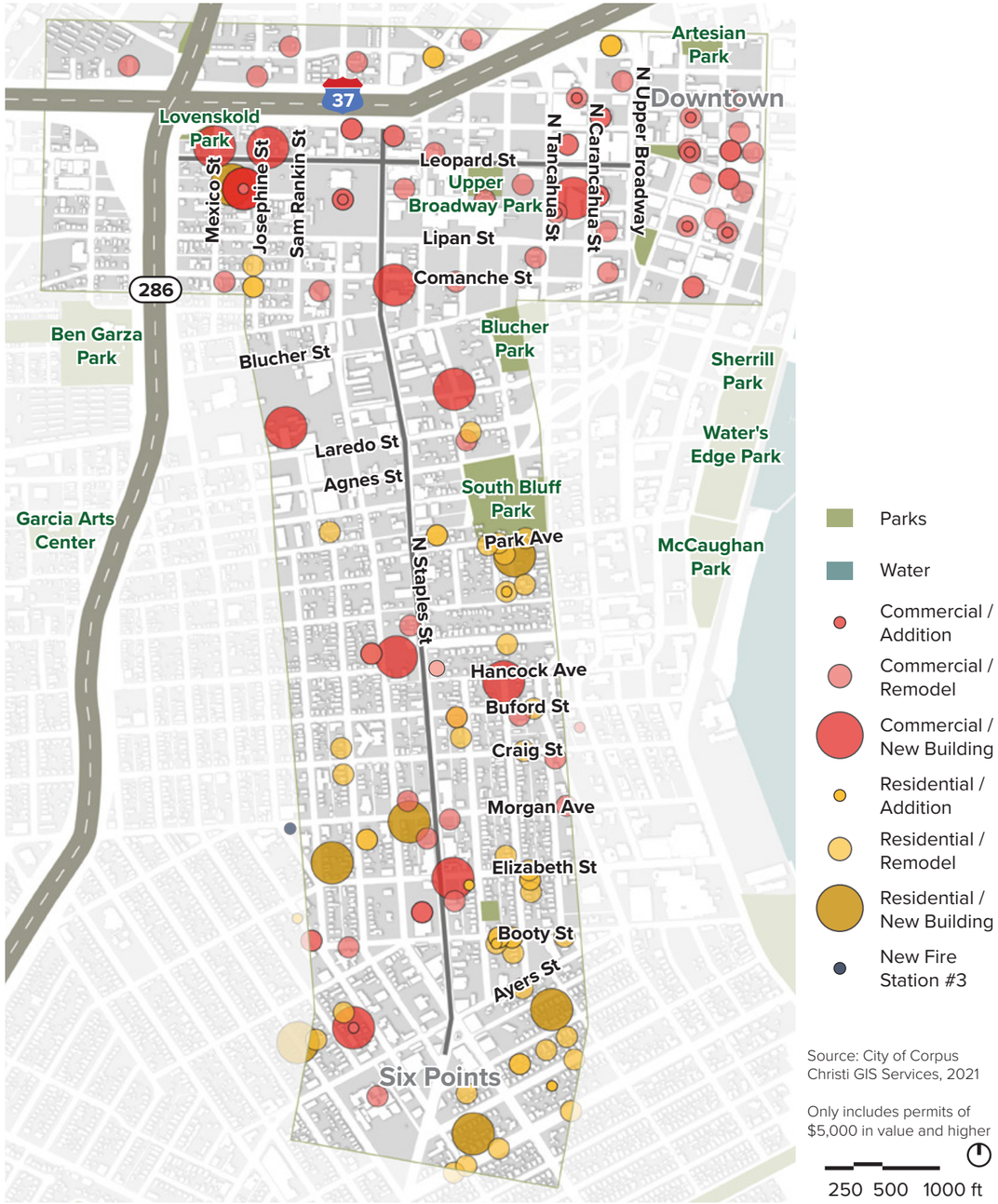
There were 188 commercial and residential building permits over $5,000 in value within the study area since 2016. Permits were evenly spaced out over the years with a large increase in 2019. Sixty-one percent of these permits were for commercial buildings: nine were on Leopard Street and 16 were on Staples Street. Half of the permits were within a quarter-mile of Leopard Street - largely remodels of commercial buildings which can help reactivate to the corridor. More than half of the residential permits were south of Morgan Avenue. Of the 188 building permits in the study area, 21 were for new buildings. These new buildings could generate new energy and bring more diverse activities to the corridors.

Boarri Butcher Shop adaptive reuse of historic building at 817 S. Staples St.
Source: City of Corpus Christi, Planning Dept

Permit Type	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 Through June
Commercial / Addition	0	1	2	8	3	1
Commercial / Remodel	17	15	14	22	11	7
Commercial / New Building	2	2	3	2	3	1
Residential / Addition	1	1	1	2	1	1
Residential / Remodel	15	9	8	10	16	1
Residential / New Building	1	1	1	1	1	3
TOTAL	**36**	**29**	**29**	**45**	**35**	**14**

Source: City of Corpus Christi GIS Services, 2021

Map 21. Building Permits (January 2016 - June 2021)

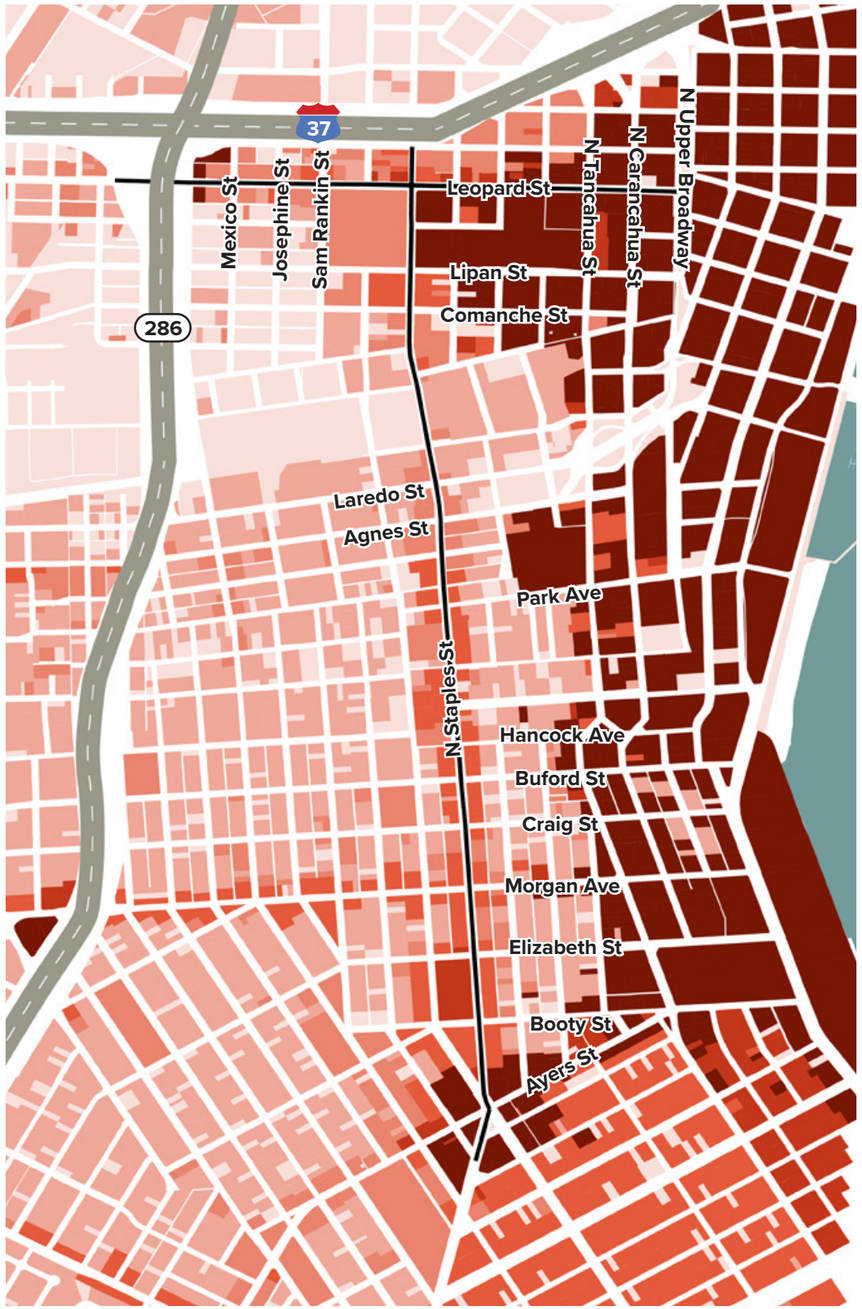


Source: City of Corpus Christi GIS Services, 2021

Only includes permits of $5,000 in value and higher

250 500 1000 ft

Map 22. Land Value Per Acre



Source: Nueces County Appraisal District

Land Value per Acre

The land in and around Downtown Corpus Christi has some of the highest land value per acre in the City. Within the study area, this applies to the stretch of commercial and municipal buildings along Leopard Street east of N Staples Street. The highest land value per acre along Staples Street is near Six Points where business density is significantly greater and at Leopard Street where there are multiple municipal buildings. Land value per acre is also higher along commercial corridors like Leopard and Staples Streets than residential areas, particularly west of Staples Street. This shows that a higher density of businesses and places that attract foot traffic can lead to higher land value per acre. Understanding the areas where land value per acre is lowest can show where the corridor can benefit from these kinds of businesses.

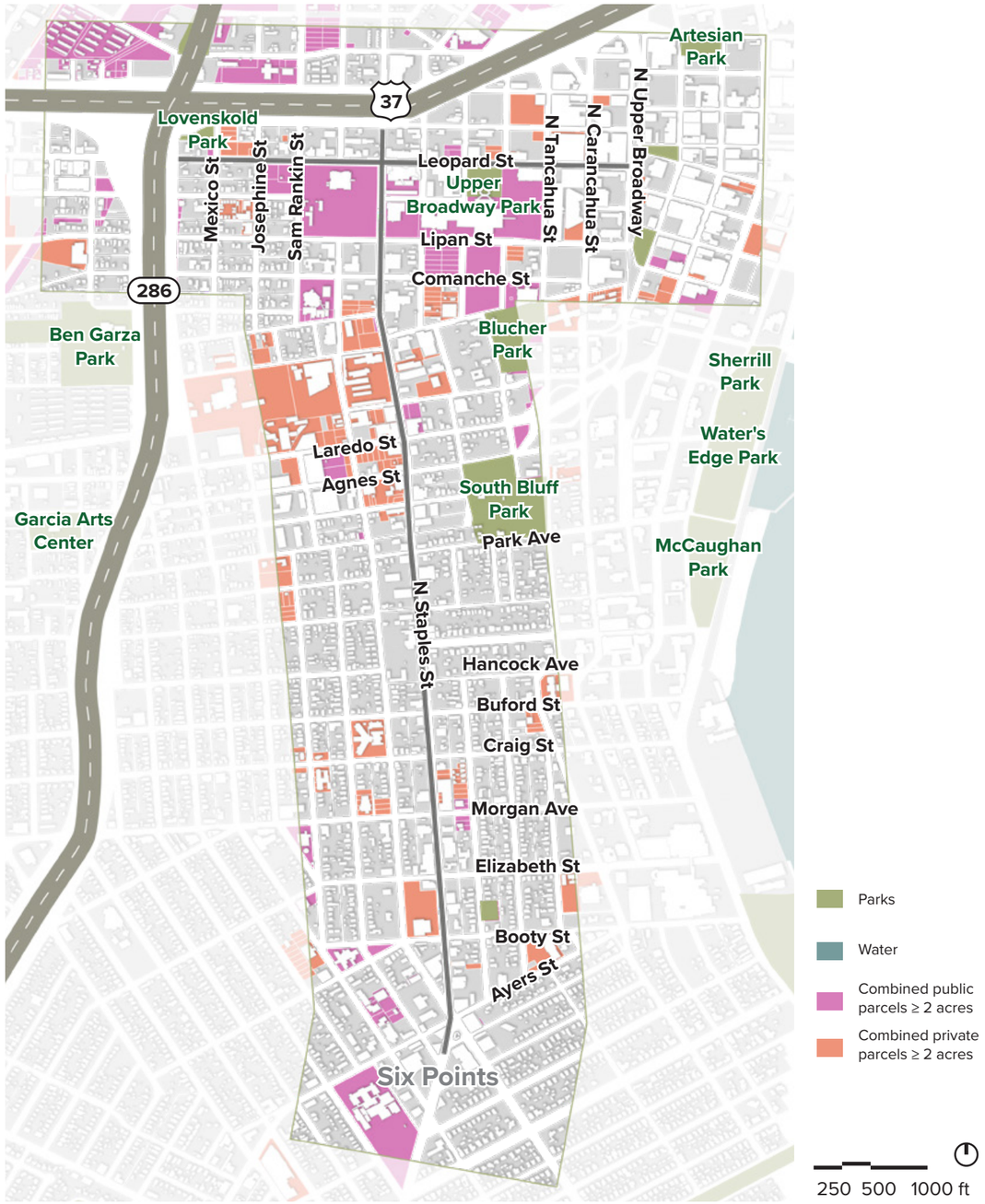
Land Ownership

Large amounts of land around the study area could be reutilized into different uses that correspond with Corpus Christi's vision of the future. There are a number of parcels within a quarter-mile buffer of the study area greater than two acres that could be reutilized, especially when looking at multiple parcels held by a single property owner. This analysis focuses on land owners who own a combined total of more than two acres.

There are more than 84 acres of publicly-owned parcels within the study area. Public ownership includes the City of Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Corpus Christi Regional Transportation Authority, Corpus Christi Independent School District, and TxDOT. The City of Corpus Christi owns just under 48 acres of land in the study area.

The Ed Rachal Foundation Real Estate Company, as a private stakeholder, owns 56.3 acres of combined land in the study area. Map 23 identifies other public and private land that may provide opportunities for redevelopment and activation.

Map 23. Land Ownership



PARKING

The main form of parking along North Staples Street is surface parking. Almost all of the buildings along this stretch are commercial and they typically have an accompanying surface parking lot. In particular, the auto repair shops have large parking areas in front of their buildings. On-street parking is also available all along North Staples Street; however, the parallel parking lanes along Staples Street are very narrow and present safety hazards to drivers exiting and entering their vehicles.

Both on-street and surface parking is available along Leopard Street. The commercial buildings have small parking lots, but the municipal buildings have significantly larger lots. Once Leopard Street approaches the edge of Downtown Corpus Christi, a combination of surface and structured parking is used.

The amount of surface parking available is disproportionately large compared to the number of visitors, especially considering that there is ample street parking available. The City of Corpus Christi faces immense challenges from climate change and rising heat, which are exacerbated by excessive surface parking. Parking lots in front of businesses also create a less pleasant pedestrian and transit user experience.

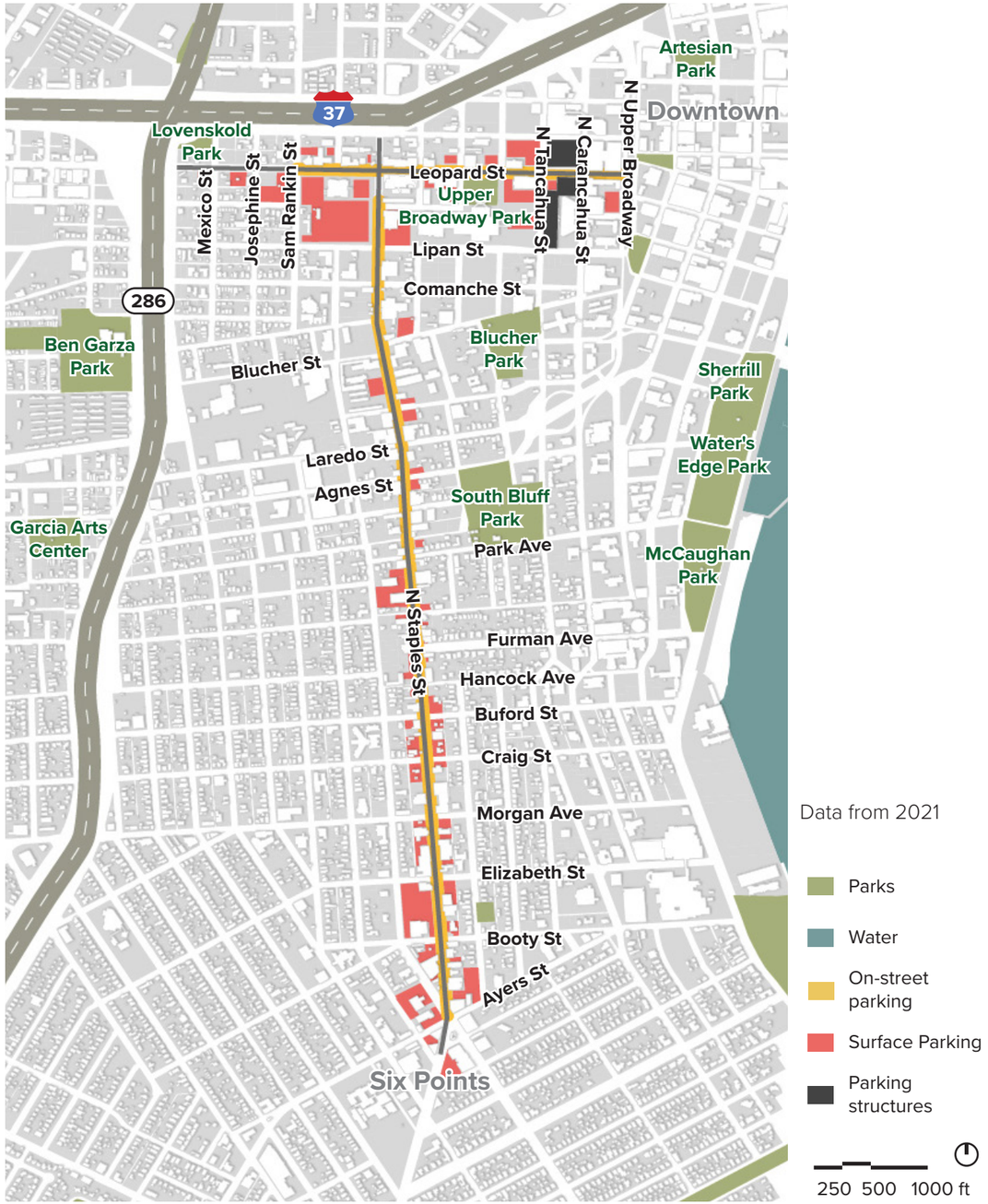
Key Findings

- There is a great surplus of parking along Leopard Street and Staples Street in the form of surface parking and on street parking.

Business surface parking lot on Staples Street
Source: Asakura Robinson

On-street parking on Leopard Street
Source: Asakura Robinson

Map 24. Parking on Corridors



CORRIDOR CONDITIONS

As the major connections in Uptown, the street configuration of Staples and Leopard Streets are primarily designed for vehicles. However, pedestrians and cyclists are not frequently observed along the corridors. To better understand the corridors, this section explores the infrastructure conditions and analyzes the current streetscape design.

Street Configuration

Staples and Leopard Streets provide driving lanes, parking lanes (in most areas), and a sidewalk creating a 'public right-of-way' (ROW) which does not vary much along their lengths. The corridors are key connections to other areas of Corpus Christi.

Streetscape

Streetscape conditions in this area vary from block to block. Generally, there is a lack of active building frontages, large building setbacks in many areas, and an absence of street elements such as street furniture, bicycle stands, kiosks. There are many vacant areas along the corridors which create streetscape discontinuity. The City can aim to create places for people to stroll, mingle, and participate in urban life.

Key Findings

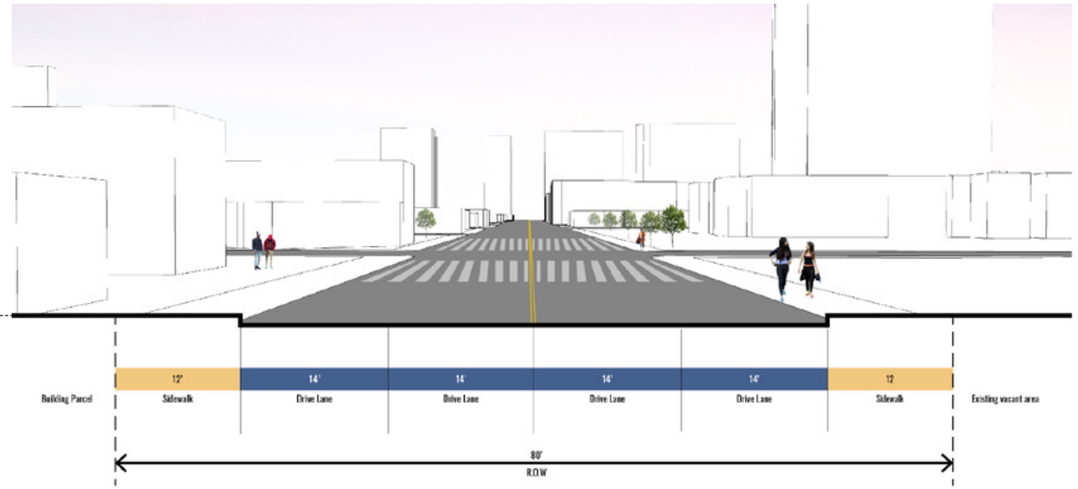
- There is a lack of continuous, active streetscape due to inactive building frontages, buildings that are set back far from the street, and a a lack of street furniture that would invite pedestrians.
- Both Leopard Street and Staples Street are sectionally very similar having a sidewalk, drive lane and often a parking lane, as well.

Sidewalk on Leopard Street
Source: Asakura Robinson

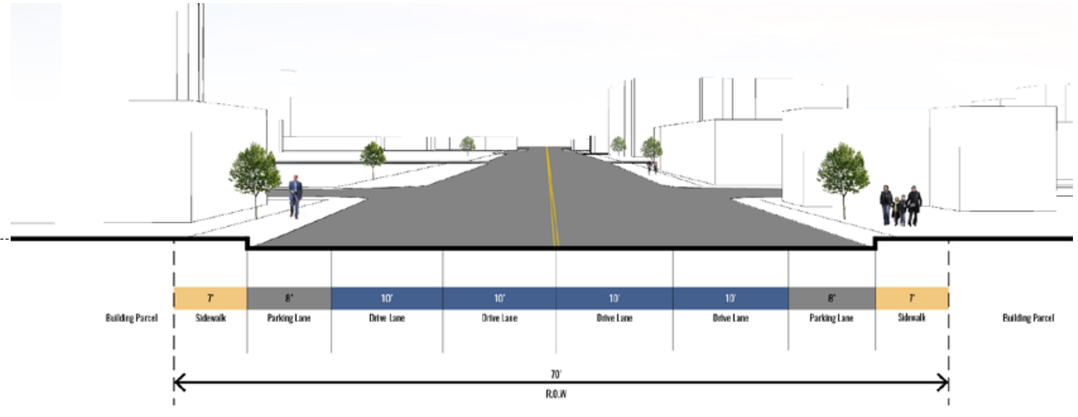
Source: Asakura Robinson

Map 25. Typical Street Configuration

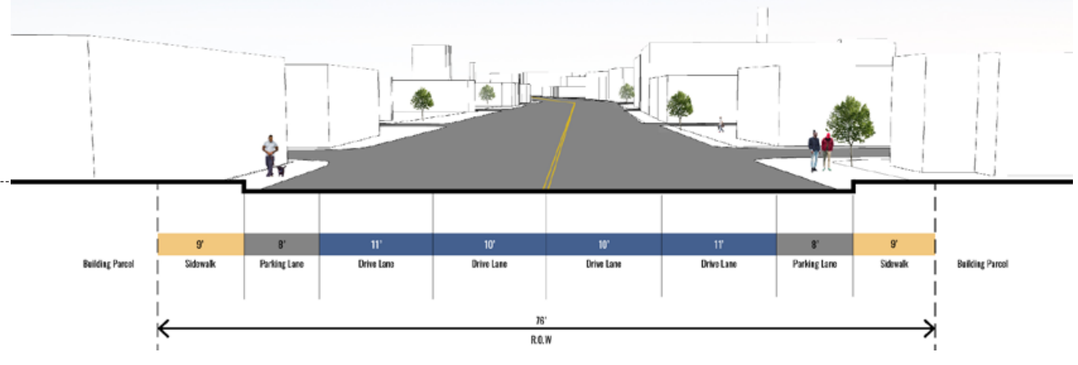
Section 1: Leopard Street



Section 2: Staples St at Comanche St



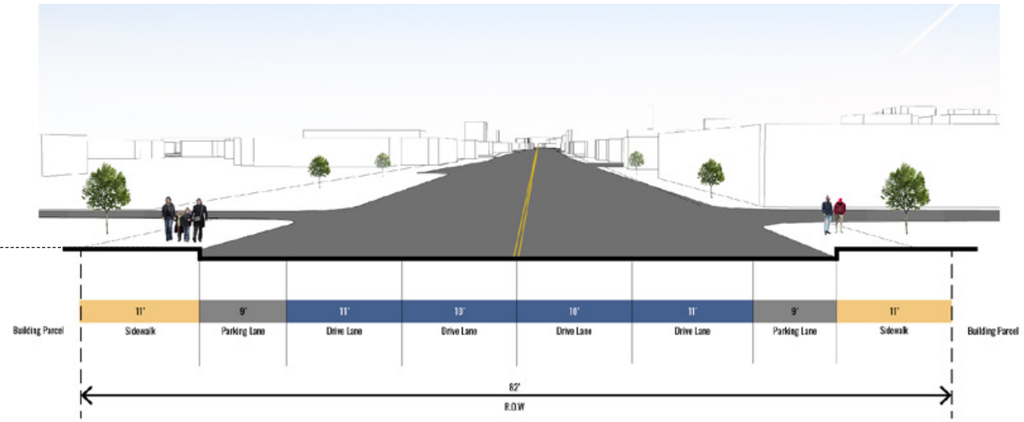
Section 3 : Staples St at Park Ave



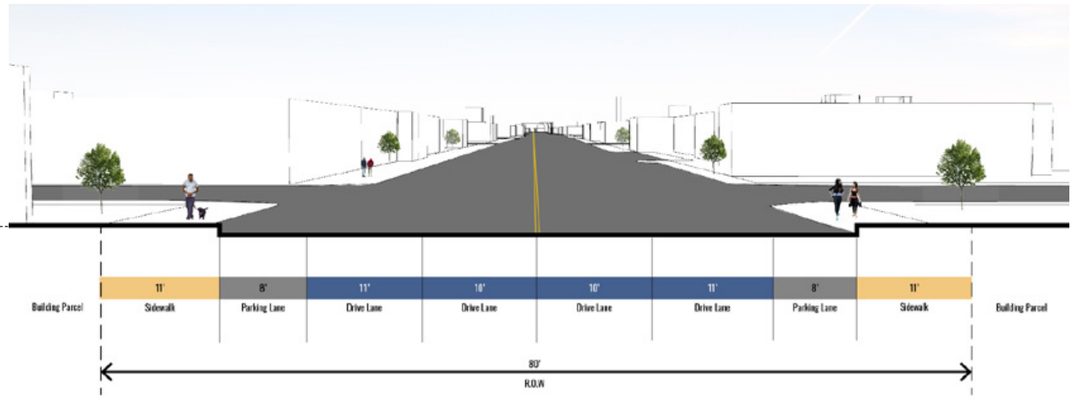
Map 26. Typical Street Configuration

80 160 320 ft

Section 1 : Staples St at Hancock St



Section 2 : Staples St at Elizabeth St



Setback

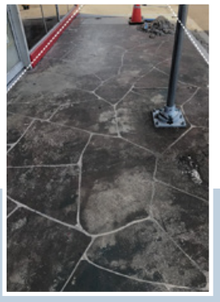
The setbacks in this area vary from buildings built right at the edge of the sidewalk to an entire parking lot between the sidewalk and the building face. This has created many holes in the continuity of the streetscape. Excessive setbacks create a disassociation of the pedestrian from the built form and generate long distances from sidewalks to building entrances which limits interaction between pedestrians and buildings.

Crosswalk

Not all intersections along the corridors include a crosswalk. The major intersections like Staples and Leopard Streets, Staples and Laredo/Agnes Streets, Staples and Ayers Streets have proper crosswalks with audible pedestrian signals for crossing. The City should target to install tactile ramps, audible pedestrian signals, and striped crosswalks at additional intersections for the safety of pedestrians.

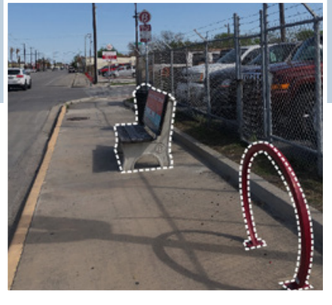
Sidewalk

Sidewalk quality is in overall good condition in the study area. There were no areas identified with missing sidewalks and only a few places where the sidewalk width was narrow. There are three types of pavers used for the sidewalk - concrete, brick, and concrete pavers.



Site Furniture

Street elements such as bike parking, benches, and pedestrian lighting support pedestrians' and cyclists' use and help increase street activity. They provide a place with character and identity and encourage people to enjoy these outdoor spaces. The area is generally lacking in any street furniture or other elements. There were no seating and trash bins observed along the corridors other than the ones provided for the bus stops. The lighting on the corridors is not pedestrian-friendly.



CLIMATE COMFORT

Open Space

The study area includes several parks and recreation facilities. Blucher Park is an important habitat for migrating birds with dense tree canopy, diverse vegetation, and a natural creek. South Bluff Park is home to the popular Al Kruse Tennis Center, which includes increasingly popular pickleball courts. Other green spaces in the study area include Upper Broadway Park on Leopard Street, in front of the Nueces County Courthouse building; Catalina Martinez Park, a neighborhood park between Elizabeth and Booty Streets just east of Staples Street; the green space between Upper and Lower Broadway Streets along the bluff between Uptown and Downtown; and La Retama and Artesian Parks in Downtown. Beyond the study area boundaries are the bayfront parks to the east and Ben Garza and Garcia parks to the west of the Crosstown Expressway (SH 286).

Key Findings

- There are 38 acres of park areas through the project area.
- Residents in parts of the study area have low access to parks and open spaces and there are very few street trees and shade structures which increases the urban heat island effect.

Upper Broadway Park on Leopard Street
Source: Asakura Robinson

Blucher Park
Source: Visit Corpus Christi

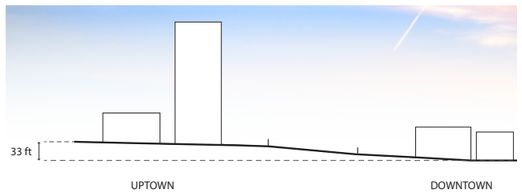
South Bluff Park
Source: Downtown Corpus Christi

Despite these park amenities, the study area lacks green space and tree canopy. Using the U.S. Forest Services i-Tree Landscape tool to analyze the study area reveals an absence of tree canopy cover, primarily only found in the park areas, and a nearly 70% impervious land cover in the area. Increasing tree canopy and access to parks throughout the study area will create a more inviting commercial experience and help advance private investment and revitalization efforts along Staples and Leopard Streets. This can come in the form of increasing vegetation, such as trees and landscaping, and connecting the commercial corridors to existing and new park amenities in the area. Increasing this access to shade and green space improves corridor conditions for all users, from shoppers and visitors to residents and employees that work in the area.

Flooding

Flooding resulting from extreme storms or heavy rainfall events can create mobility issues and impact area residents, business owners, and employees. Flooding can damage buildings and limit the ability of residents to commute. Within the Uptown Corridors study area, neither Staples Street nor Leopard Street is located within a floodplain due the natural bluff and elevation separating Uptown from the Downtown. Maintaining a drainage system that can handle heavy rainfall events is key to ensuring that both corridors remain safe and accessible routes during weather events.

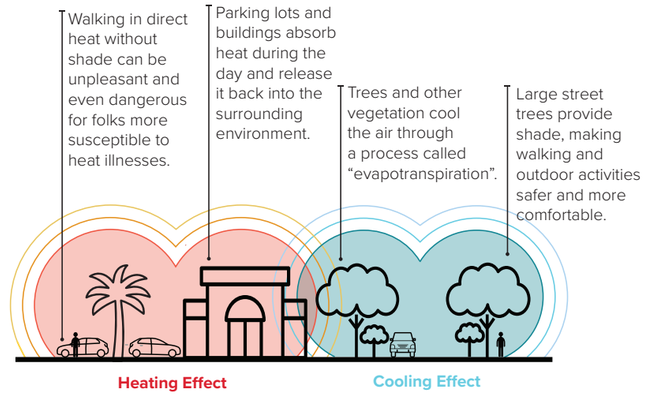
Figure 6. Elevation Change Between Uptown and Downtown



Urban Heat

Maintaining a cool climate is essential for ensuring that residents and patrons have a pleasant experience along Leopard and Staples Streets. Land surface temperatures in Corpus Christi were recorded on August 26, 2020 by the U.S. Geological Survey. The average for that day was about 73.9 degrees Fahrenheit with the highest temperatures reaching 97 degrees Fahrenheit. Increasingly hot summers can make short trips uncomfortable and even cause heat-related illnesses The study area benefits from being close to Corpus Christi Bay, but having a sparse tree canopy can mean residents and visitors are overexposed to the sun during the summer. The warmest temperatures recorded by the U.S. Geological Survey along the corridor are at the intersections of North Staples Street and Elizabeth Street and North Staples Street and Ayers Street. Both of these locations have more concrete despite having a few trees nearby. Planting trees or placing shade structures along Leopard and Staples Streets will allow residents, especially those more vulnerable to heat, to be comfortable as they enjoy the corridors.

Figure 7. How Urban Microclimates Work



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City of Corpus Christi

Uptown Corridors

REVITALIZATION STRATEGY - STAPLES & LEOPARD