

BELT LINE CORRIDOR AND TOWN CENTER STUDY FAQ SHEET

Purpose of the Study

The Belt Line Corridor and Town Center Study is part of the larger Picture Wilmer 2040 planning initiative that includes a Vision Plan (adopted April 20, 2023) and Comprehensive Plan (adopted February 15, 2024).

This study is intended to provide a conceptual plan and design guidelines for the future Town Center area along and in close proximity to Belt Line Road from I-45 to the railroad. The concept plan (see below) for the Belt Line Corridor and Town Center represents a future build-out vision for the area, which can be implemented over time as development and redevelopment opportunities arise.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is a Belt Line Corridor and Town Center Study needed?

This study is an important tool for the City as a blueprint for future development. Wilmer lacks a recognizable community center that supports the needs and desires of residents, including community gathering spaces, new businesses, and family-friendly activities. This study provides a strategy for creating a town center space that is inviting, safe, and prosperous. Through adoption of this plan, Wilmer will have vision for the future and be better situated to be a candidate for various grant programs that often request that applicants have plans in place to inform how awarded funding would be utilized.

What are other ongoing projects in the study area?

Near-term projects for which there may be identified funding or conceptual plans are incorporated into this study as they inform the direction for the future Town Center District. This study incorporates near-term projects produced through other planning efforts and develops new recommendations that contribute to the desired character of the district. The relevant planning efforts considered by this study include:

- **Future Municipal Complex** – This will be an anchor along the corridor and is the impetus for implementing public gathering spaces to support community events within the Town Center. Construction of the municipal complex will be a catalyst for future development and investments in the surrounding area.
- **TxDOT Green Ribbon Program Funding** – The City was awarded over \$1,000,000 by TxDOT to enhance five intersections, including Belt Line Road and I-45, which is within the Town Center District. The improvements implemented from the Green Ribbon Project will springboard future streetscape improvements recommended for the district.

How is this Study related to the other Picture Wilmer 2040 planning initiatives?

The City of Wilmer contracted with Halff in June of 2022 to develop a series of planning studies to inform future growth and development patterns. The first phase of this planning series was the development of the Vision Plan which is a strategic document that establishes long-term direction for the community. The second phase was the development of the Comprehensive Plan, which is a long-range policy document that guides future growth and development. Communities typically update a comprehensive plan every ten years; Wilmer’s last comprehensive plan was completed in 2009, so it was time for an update.

Both the *Vision Plan* and *Comprehensive Plan* provide key direction for the development of the future Belt Line Corridor and Town Center as a place for community gathering and events and part of the city that reflects the community’s identity. The Belt Line Corridor and Town Center Study provides more detail for future implementation of this district as a component of the Comprehensive Plan.

What are the different components included in the Belt Line Corridor and Town Center Study?

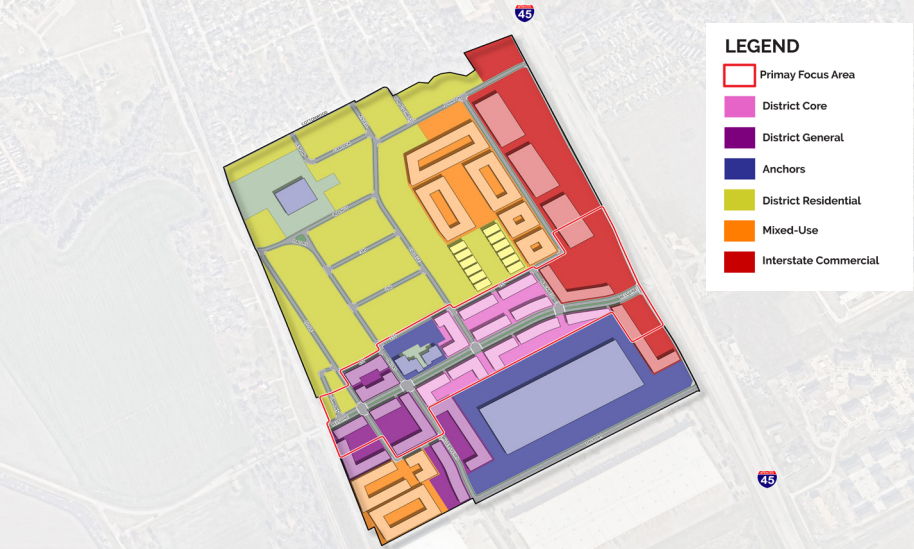
The Belt Line Corridor and Town Center Study is organized as follows:

- **Study Purpose:** This section of the study establishes the objective and vision, identifies linkages to principles addressed in the Comprehensive Plan, and summarizes feedback received from the community and stakeholders.
- **Corridor Assessment:** Several assessments were conducted including review of the built and natural environments, existing infrastructure, and relevant planning efforts. A traffic assessment was conducted for Belt Line Road to determine the impact of future development. A SWOT analysis evaluated the study area’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to be either mitigated or leveraged in the future. Lastly, the market conditions were reviewed to identify the market demand for the district to inform future development opportunities.
- **Corridor Recommendations:** The recommendation section contains several components. The framework for creating an overlay district based on sub-districts that involve specific development characteristics is addressed, as well as the framework for developing building and public realm standards to promote cohesive, distinct, and human-scale development. Connectivity throughout the district is prioritized through recommendations for multi-modal connections and implementation of gateway elements to signify entrance into the Town Center District and informational signage to assist with navigation. A concept plan is included, illustrating the recommended development patterns for the district. Lastly, an implementation plan provides guidance for implementation of specific strategies to achieve the build-out vision of the district over time.

Please use the following links to access relevant resources:

- [Current Zoning Map](#)
- [City of Wilmer Zoning Ordinance](#)
- [Adopted Vision Plan](#)
- [Adopted Comprehensive Plan](#)
- [Draft Belt Line Road Corridor and Town Center Plan](#)
- [Picture Wilmer 2040 Website](#)

Belt Line Corridor and Town Center Concept Plan



Note: The concept plan is illustrative in nature to portray ideas for a future Town Center.

What public and stakeholder engagement was conducted for the Study?

The development of this study was informed by several community engagement activities. A kick-off meeting was held with city staff to introduce the study and begin initial conversations about the vision for the Town Center District and key issues and opportunities to be considered. A workshop was held with the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) to initiate discussion about the future of the Belt Line Corridor and Town Center District. During the workshop, committee members provided feedback on the vision for the district, key elements for future public investment, accessibility of the area, and components necessary for successful implementation. In Fall 2023, a community meeting was held, in which participants provided feedback on a series of interactive presentation boards focused on topics about the vision, future uses, architectural preferences, and streetscape designs for the Town Center District. The community meeting was advertised through flyers and on the project website. Meeting materials for these public and stakeholder meetings can be found on the project website at [PictureWilmer.com](#).

What is the current zoning for properties along Belt Line Road and within the future Town Center District?

The properties that abut Belt Line Road are currently zoned Commercial Restricted (C1). Beyond these properties, the zoning is either Single Family Residential (SF-1 or SF-2) or Multi-Family Residential (MF). There is a portion in the southern part of the Town Center District that is zoned Light Industrial (I1). Some of the existing properties within the study area do not match the current zoning, meaning that they were built prior to the zoning being changed. These are referred to as legal non-conforming uses. Based on the City’s development regulations, structures within non-conforming uses cannot be expanded or rebuilt unless they conform to the current zoning district standards. The City of Wilmer Zoning Regulations can be viewed [here](#).

The study recommends that an overlay district be established for the district to require future development to adhere to higher-quality building design and public realm elements than what is required in the base zoning district. The adoption of the Belt Line Road Corridor and Town Center Study does not change any zoning or adopt an overlay district. These are actions that will need to be individually taken to a Council public hearing for consideration.

What is eminent domain, and will it be utilized for implementing the vision of the Study?

Eminent domain gives municipalities the authority to take public property for public use, provided property owners are fairly compensated. This is typically exercised for projects that generate public benefits such as constructing roads, schools, and similar public infrastructure/services, and not a tool for municipalities to arbitrarily seize property. For future implementation of the Town Center, eminent domain is not a tool the city will use. It is proposed that an overlay district be established to regulate future development of vacant properties and redevelopment of existing properties as opportunities for a new use arise. Additional improvements to the area target public rights-of-way which will be improved by the City through a variety of funding sources such as grants.

What are some near-term outcomes for which this Study lays the foundation?

This Study, as well as the Comprehensive Plan, proposes several strategies that would require additional funding sources for implementation. Many funding programs prefer, if not require, that the projects submitted through their application process be identified as part of a larger city planning initiative. This Study provides the necessary details that the City can use when applying to various grant programs. Some of these recommended projects for the Belt Line Corridor and Town Center include:

- Reconstructing Belt Line Road as a Complete Street
- Implementing bicycle-oriented infrastructure on Belt Line Road
- Implementing new or improved sidewalks along roadways within the Town Center District
- Improving the street grid connectivity
- Developing a future public park site