

TIRZ PRIORITY PROJECTS
DRIPPING SPRINGS TOWN CENTER
PRELIMINARY CONCEPTUAL PLAN
November 17, 2017

BACKGROUND

In December of 2016, the City of Dripping Springs established two Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ #1 & #2), with the purpose of promoting economic development, and planning critical infrastructure to support quality development within the central part of the city. Several Priority Projects have been identified by the TIRZ Board, including the improvement of Old Fitzhugh Road, future planning for the Triangle tract at the east end of Mercer Street, and the planning and potential development of a Town Center Project on properties currently owned and occupied by the City and the Dripping Springs Independent School District (DSISD) at the western end of Mercer Street.

Pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City, the TIRZ Board, DSISD and the Dripping Springs Community Library District, the parties agreed to pursue joint planning and evaluation of a Town Center concept on tracts currently occupied by DSISD administrative offices, City Hall, a portion of Mercer St Right of Way and, potentially, a small adjacent commercial tract. The intent of the Town Center Plan is to promote *“the availability of joint use spaces to provide for necessary facilities for the City, District, Library and local economic development”*. The MOU calls for a Preliminary Conceptual Plan for the Town Center Project to be completed by November 17, 2017, to allow the parties to evaluate the concept and make recommendations regarding its approval to their respective decision makers by December 31, 2017. This document summarizes the Preliminary Concept Plan, which has been prepared over the past two months. The Plan is based on available information, Stakeholder-provided program data and needs assessments, site visits and multiple Stakeholder Visioning and Work Sessions.

THE VISION AND THE NEED

Dripping Springs City Hall and the DSISD Administrative Offices occupy separate parcels of land at the western terminus of Mercer Street, the town’s historic main street. The City Hall is located in a former church building of approximately 7,100 square feet that is challenged to meet the needs of the growing community; the City estimates a need to double its facility over the next ten years to keep pace with rapidly-expanding municipal service needs.

The DSISD offices are located in sixty-year old former classroom and school buildings. Facilities Assessments recently conducted have highlighted its substandard and degraded conditions and have outlined the high costs of rehabilitation. A recent facility program plan estimates that a complex of approximately 64,000 square feet will be required by 2022, to fulfill the integrated complement of administrative, community services, technology, day care, training and meeting needs of the District.

In addition, the Dripping Springs Community Library, situated to the northwest of the Town Center, wishes to grow from a facility of approximately 9,200 square feet to one with expanded programs in a building of 30,000 to 35,000 square feet. As described in the MOU, the Library is interested in locating within the Town Center, where it can play a more visible, integrated, commercially-invigorating and central role in the life of the community.

To further reinforce the role of the Town Center as a place of cooperative civic government, Hays County also has the need for satellite office space of approximately 2,500 square feet to serve its constituents in the northern part of the County.

The Town Center is envisioned as a complex of civic and commercial buildings at the western terminus of Mercer Street that can meet the needs of the growing community and contribute to its economic viability. Shared uses within the Town Center should be optimized to the extent feasible to promote governmental efficiency and fiscal stewardship. The Town Center should provide a major focal point and gathering space – a “Town Square” - for special events, festivals and gatherings that can also serve as the symbolic heart of the community. Commercial uses capitalizing on US 290 frontage property should be included to extend the viability and visibility of Mercer Street as a regional destination, to promote an active pedestrian environment around the Town Square, and to offer a potential revenue stream that could help to offset capital and operating costs of the Town Center.

Each of the project components should be located on identified parcels of land that would allow them to proceed at their own pace, and with their own funding sources, but in a cooperative, harmonious and mutually-beneficial way, within a unified Planned Development District arrangement. It is assumed that DSISD, as the major property owner, would enter into agreements with the respective public entities as part of an ultimate implementation program that will be developed following Stakeholder approval of this Preliminary Concept Plan, and as part of a more detailed Development Plan process.

In addition to providing needed civic and commercial space, a key part of the Town Center vision is to improve the vehicular and pedestrian circulation systems of the area, including planning for a new signalized intersection at Creek Rd. and US 290, and providing improved local connectivity and flows between Mercer Street, Parade Way and Creek Road. Maintaining vehicular access to Walnut Springs Elementary School by school buses and by parents dropping off and picking up their children is also a critical component of this circulation plan.

The existing site developments occurred prior to water quality regulations by the City and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Edwards Aquifer (TCEQEA) program, thus, water quality treatment measures are not found. Walnut Springs Elementary School has an existing detention pond in the southwest property corner to manage peak runoff rates to levels required by City ordinances. The site drains towards the Dripping Springs Tributary of Onion Creek. The proposed Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) floodplain maps do not show flooding on this site but do identify structures south (downstream) of US Highway 290 in the floodplain. Thus, it will be important for the Town Center project to implement a consolidated water quality and stormwater detention system to safely convey runoff through the site, treat runoff quality, and mitigate peak flow impacts to protect downstream businesses and residents.

THE CONCEPTUAL PLAN

The attached plan provides a preliminary approach to meeting the program needs of the governmental and public entities in a way that maintains the existing historic, small-town scale and character of Dripping Springs. Key components of the Plan include:

- *A Network of Local Streets:* The Plan creates a localized network of tree-lined streets with sidewalks that provide connectivity to the surrounding community. Primary access to the Town Center will occur through a signalized intersection of US 290 and the extension of Creek Road north of US 290. Mercer Street will realign to form a roundabout at its intersection with Creek Road, allowing for the free movement of traffic destined to and from the historic core. The extension of Parade Way to Creek Road further promotes access and circulation through the Town Center.
- *A Town Square:* In the tradition of Texas towns, a town square will provide a western terminus to Mercer Street, shared by each of the community's key public facilities. The square will provide a civic focal point for the community and a place for public gatherings, special events and festivals.
- *The Extension of Mercer Street:* The inclusion of commercial buildings along the southern edge of the square extends the look, feel and commercial activity of the town's historic core along the US 290 frontage, thereby promoting the visibility and destination appeal of the Mercer St. Historic District. Approximately 25,000 square feet of retail, restaurant and upper level office space is envisioned in four to five buildings along the extension of Mercer St and US 290.
- *A New City Hall:* A City Hall building of approximately 12,000 square feet (one to two-stories), occupies the western edge of the square, preserving its existing presence on Mercer St. and promoting easy public access to City services.
- *A County Precinct Office Building:* Adjoining the City Hall (either as a separate one-story building or as an integral wing of the City Hall), Hays County would occupy approximately 2,500 square feet of space on the square.
- *A New Community Library:* The library would occupy a distinctive corner of the square in a two-story building of approximately 34,000 square feet. Outdoor open space in a courtyard could be used by the library for programmed events.
- *DSISD Offices, Community Services and Day Care:* Adjoining the Library building and defining an internal courtyard, DSISD's administrative functions and its day care facility would occupy a two-story building of approximately 49,000 square feet.
- *Shared Board Room/Council Chambers:* At the symbolic heart of the Town Center in direct proximity to the DSISD office building, the Library and City Hall, the Plan proposes a 16,000-foot structure of two to three floors that would house a shared Board Room and Council Chambers with associated meeting, conference and support spaces.
- *Shared Parking:* Parking would be shared throughout the district and among the civic and commercial uses. Each use experiences a unique fluctuation of parking demand throughout the day, and a mixed-use development is ideal for sharing parking. It is estimated that peak demand (weekday afternoons) will generate the need for 450 new parking spaces. These 450 spaces are distributed along streets and driveways and in the parking areas between the Town Center and Walnut Springs Elementary School (WSES). No parking is displaced from WSES, and the bus staging area could operate as over-flow parking for special evening and weekend events.
- *Queuing for Student Pick-Up and Drop-Off:* The school circulation for WSES will maintain existing student pick-up and drop-off locations and bus loading. Through the reconfiguration of driveways, the Plan includes designated WSES student pick-up and drop-off lanes, increasing total on-site storage from the existing 1390 lineal feet to 2020 lineal feet. School buses will access the existing WSES bus staging area from the reconfigured intersection of Creek Road and US 290.

- *WSES Track:* In order to accommodate all desired Stakeholder facility needs and parking requirements within the property constraints of the MOU, the Plan proposes to reconfigure the existing Walnut Springs Elementary School track and playfield, shifting it to the north and west. The total length of the track would be reduced by about 25% from 920 feet to 685 feet, but the Plan provides for an additional 450 feet of trail that would connect the track with the Sportsplex Drive-Parade Way intersection and with the school campus.
- *Drainage and Water Quality:* The Preliminary Town Center plan proposes to increase or maintain the existing Walnut Springs School detention pond volume to manage peak flow rates draining towards the southwest, with the addition of rain gardens, permeable pavement systems, rainwater harvesting, and other low impact development systems throughout the site to manage stormwater runoff in accordance with the City and TCEQEA requirements. A tree lined stormwater detention basin and vegetative buffer is envisioned along the northeastern portion of the site to complete the drainage plan. An underground storm drainage network will be used to connect the stormwater components and discharge treated runoff in a safe and non-erosive manner into the Dripping Springs Tributary to Onion Creek.

CONCLUSIONS

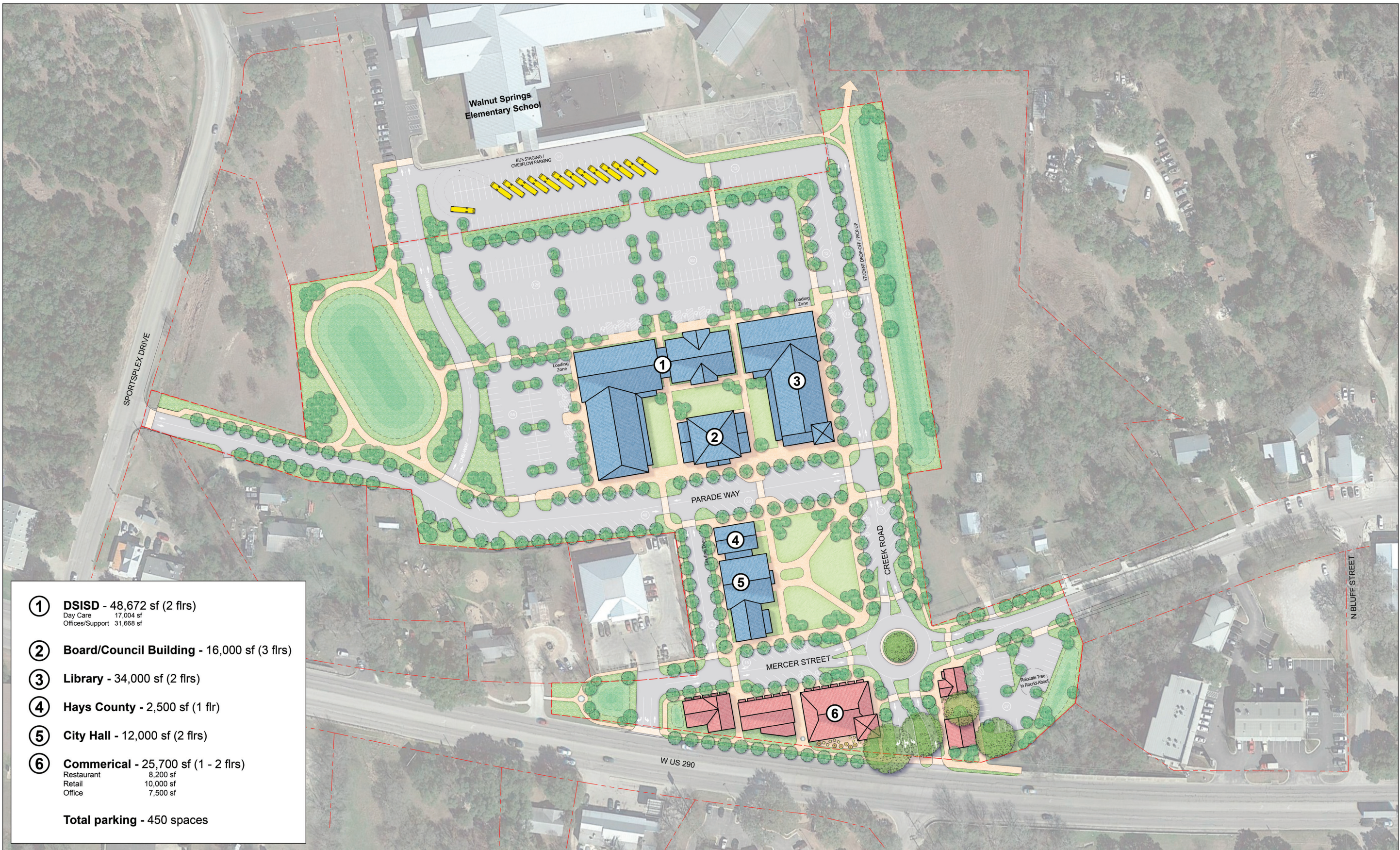
On the basis of this preliminary planning effort, the consultant team has made the following findings:

- The programmatic needs of the City, Library, County and School District can be accommodated within the proposed study area, in a way that will create a strong Town Center that will enhance the image, identity and economic vitality of Dripping Springs and promote it's attractiveness as a regional destination for years to come.
- The Plan will improve local circulation within Dripping Springs, enhancing access to WSES, providing a more connected street network and a safer intersection at US 290 and Creek Road through new signalization.
- The Plan will enhance the visibility and potential economic viability of Mercer Street as the commercial and civic heart of the community, extending it and creating a mixed-use Town Square with new uses, populations and vitality at it's western end.
- The Plan will require relocation and alterations to the existing WSES track in order to accommodate the full program of Stakeholder facilities and the associated parking requirements.
- The Plan build-out option assumes amicable acquisition of an existing 0.25-acre commercial site immediately west of DSISD property on US 290. If this acquisition is not feasible, the Plan could still be achieved with a reduced Town Square.
- A drainage system can be created within the study area to mitigate runoff increases and provide for water quality treatment, within the standards of the City and the TCEQ Edwards Aquifer Program.
- The site will provide a sufficient number of parking spaces to meet the peak weekday demand of the programmed uses on the site. Additional evening and weekend parking (approximately 90 spaces) could be provided on the WSES bus staging area.

NEXT STEPS

Under the terms of the MOU, if the parties each satisfy their obligations, approve the Preliminary Conceptual Plan and come to further “Conditional Agreements” to pursue the Town Center Concept, then additional joint planning, studies, investigations and research will be undertaken, resulting in the creation of a refined “Development Plan,” including:

- A real estate market study to finalize the program of commercial uses and their operational criteria by March 31, 2018;
- Discussions with TxDOT to develop the reconfiguration of the US290 intersection and prospective new signalization;
- More detailed drainage studies to refine the design and estimate the cost of detention and water quality measures to meet TCEQ and City regulations;
- More detailed programmatic analysis to optimize shared use opportunities among the governmental and public entities;
- Development of an implementation program that sets forth land disposition strategies, possible participation of a private developer, and roles and responsibilities for implementation of capital improvements.
- Assessment, analysis and preliminary cost estimates of utilities and critical infrastructure needed to enable and implement the plan.
- 3D Model and Renderings



- ① **DSISD** - 48,672 sf (2 flrs)
Day Care 17,004 sf
Offices/Support 31,668 sf
 - ② **Board/Council Building** - 16,000 sf (3 flrs)
 - ③ **Library** - 34,000 sf (2 flrs)
 - ④ **Hays County** - 2,500 sf (1 flr)
 - ⑤ **City Hall** - 12,000 sf (2 flrs)
 - ⑥ **Commerical** - 25,700 sf (1 - 2 flrs)
Restaurant 8,200 sf
Retail 10,000 sf
Office 7,500 sf
- Total parking - 450 spaces**



DRAFT
TOWN CENTER PRELIMINARY CONCEPT
Dripping Springs TIRZ Priority Projects
Prepared by McCann Adams Studio for the City of Dripping Springs
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