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Guidelines for Assessing the NRHP Eligibility of
Commercial Historic Districts in Crossroads Communities
in Northwest-Central Texas

August 2011

Prepared by David W. Moore, Jr.



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Cover Image: Downtown Merkel, Texas, HHM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been prepared for the Texas Department of Transportation, Environmental Affairs Division, Historical Studies Branch under Work Authorizations 578 04 SH002 and 570 04 SH003. David W. Moore, Jr. of Hardy-Heck-Moore, Inc. (HHM) served as the Senior Professional Historian and principal author. Contributors include Tara Dudley, Erin Tyson, Kristina Kupferschmid, Beth Valenzuela (formerly of HHM), Holly Prather and Leah Roberson, all of HHM. The report provides the framework for assessing the eligibility of historic downtowns in the northwest portion of Central Texas for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The guidelines delineate a process for classifying the kinds of resources located in such settings and identifying their salient and character-defining features. It also provides guidance for applying the National Register Criteria for Evaluation and Seven Aspects of Integrity to assess the significance of these downtowns and their ability to convey such significance. The report has been prepared to provide TxDOT and THC staff as well as consultants a more consistent approach in the NRHP-evaluation process.

INTRODUCTION

This study provides guidelines for evaluating the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility of historic downtowns in crossroads communities in an area roughly described as northwest-central Texas. For the purposes of this report, a crossroads community is a relatively small city with a commercial center that developed at the intersection of two locally important roads or highways. Such a strategic location fostered the development of a node of activity devoted primarily to commerce and trade. The downtowns that evolved at these locations became prominent and distinctive areas within their respective towns and contained dense collections of buildings dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The level and sophistication of architectural design and ornamentation varies considerably, but collectively, the commercial buildings in the downtown of any crossroads community present a cohesive quality and character that sets the area apart from its surroundings. Some of the crossroads communities examined for this study evolved slowly over time and present a more eclectic collection of commercial buildings. This pattern of growth is indicative of the ongoing significance of these towns and their commercial centers in the surrounding region. Conversely, some of the downtowns developed rapidly over a short period of time and have a large percentage of buildings that share many of the same physical qualities and attributes. These downtowns typically mushroomed for a specific reason, most commonly following the discovery of oil, which played a significant role in the history and development in many parts of the study area during the early twentieth century.

The 12 downtowns visited for this project provide a cross section of the kinds of commercial nodes and types of buildings, structures, and objects typically found in such settings (Figure 1-1). These communities were selected following an analysis that considered their location, size, periods, and rates of growth of the towns within the context of primary historical themes of the region. Results from limited field investigations provided the foundation for defining property types found in crossroads communities and for developing a process with which to assess downtowns for potential NRHP eligibility and district designation. The Property Types section identifies the most common kinds of buildings that exist in the downtowns of the crossroads communities. The classification system used in the Property Types section relies principally on the plan or form of the building but also considers architectural style, movements, and traditions. This method of classifying buildings is consistent with approaches developed by architectural historians Richard Longstreth in *The Buildings of Main Street* and W. Dwayne Jones in *A Field Guide to Gas Stations in Texas*. The NRHP evaluation process applies National Park Service (NPS) guidelines to the kinds of buildings and downtowns that exist in crossroads communities in the region. The approach outlined in this report could easily be adapted to other parts and settings in the state.



Figure 1-1. Crossroads communities visited in northwest-central Texas.

The report begins with a **Historic Overview** that identifies some of the major themes that influenced the history and development of crossroads communities in the study area. Clearly lacking sufficient documentation to be a historic context, the Historic Overview nevertheless provides enough information to help readers or consultants understand factors, trends, and events that enabled crossroads communities to become regional hubs of commerce and trade. The viability of the downtowns relied heavily on transportation systems (highways and railroads) and oil, gas, agricultural, and ranching-related activities that established well-defined periods of growth, prosperity, and significance.

The **Property Types** section defines the primary kinds of resources found in these commercial settings and includes examples of each type, noting character-defining features. The primary categories are commercial buildings and gas stations, both of which include subtypes that further distinguish extant examples and provide a more effective means of evaluating, assessing, and comparing the resources. The Property Types section also includes information on the stylistic influences that are common to the building type, and provides images to illustrate each style on resources within a variety of property type classifications.

The next section of the report includes **Registration Requirements** and describes how to apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation and the Seven Aspects of Integrity for assessing the NRHP eligibility of these kinds of historic downtowns. It also identifies the areas of significance and contextual themes most likely to be appropriate and applicable for these and other comparable historic downtowns in the study area. The Registration Requirements section provides guidelines for gathering information that is useful for assessing the significance and integrity of commercial buildings, both collectively and individually.

The section entitled **Field Analysis for Assessing the Integrity of Historic Downtowns** directs consultants to consider multiple features and attributes while undertaking field investigations and analyzing data. This section contains a series of questions and identifies specific points to consider while in the field. It also includes specific examples using the points presented on the previous page.

Appendix A: Survey Methods describes how project historians selected the targeted communities and how they gathered information about the

downtowns and their resources. Field investigations adhered to windshield-survey-level standards and photo-documented typical and noteworthy resources as well as general settings and streetscapes in each of the downtowns. Project historians conducted only a limited amount of research at each community and primarily looked at county clerk and appraisal district offices for historic plat maps and tax records. More detailed information about the history and development was undertaken at various repositories in Austin.

Appendix B: Historic Background of the Targeted Communities includes summaries of each of the targeted communities. Like the Historical Background section, each summary in Appendix B highlights critical events and trends that affected the history of the communities.

Appendix C: Case Studies examines the communities of Merkel and Olney, which were subject to more in-depth analysis. Each case study applies the techniques outlined in the report and uses them to make NRHP-eligibility recommendations.

These guidelines are not comprehensive nor do they consider all aspects of the complex and varied histories of the downtowns of these and other similar communities in the region. However, these guidelines provide a method for documenting and assessing historic commercial areas and are intended to help consultants apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation and Seven Aspects of Integrity for the NRHP-eligibility process in a more consistent manner.

David Moore of HHM was the principal author of the report, but other HHM staff members made important contributions. Tara Dudley prepared the Historic Overview section and Historic Background of the Targeted Communities appendix. Beth Valenzuela, Erin Tyson, and Kristina Kupferschmid assisted with field investigations, Holly Prather prepared graphics for the Property Types examples, and Leah Roberson assisted with report production. The author of this report also wishes to thank and acknowledge staff members at various county courthouses, appraisal districts, and libraries who provided vital information for the project. In particular, the insights, suggestions, and guidance offered by Bruce Jensen and Summer Chandler of the Historical Studies Branch of TxDOT's Environmental Affairs Division were vital for the project's success and greatly appreciated.

HISTORIC OVERVIEW

The study area focuses on 10 counties in northwest-central Texas: Eastland, Callahan, Shackelford, Erath, Hamilton, Jack, Young, Taylor, Runnels, and Lampasas. The counties are situated within the Cross Timbers and Prairies, and the Rolling Plains eco-regions of Texas, where predominantly prairie land, dense brush, and mesquite trees are typical. The area historically was utilized for both ranching and farming; however, oil deposits in portions of the study area spurred regional development associated with the oil industry beginning in the 1910s.

Prehistoric occupation of the area by Native Americans consisted primarily of Kiowa, Caddo, Anadarko, and Jumano populations. The Apache conquered these groups and were in turn dominated by the Comanche. Eventually, the tribes were transferred to reservations. Prior to Anglo settlement, some Spanish exploration occurred in this region of Central Texas. In the sixteenth century, explorer and conquistador Francisco Vázquez de Coronado possibly traversed through Jack County. In Lampasas County, mineral springs noted for their healing qualities spurred investigations in 1721 and 1735. In 1759, Diego Ortiz Parrilla, military figure and commandant of San Sabá Presidio, crossed the northwest corner of Young County during a campaign against native tribes. In 1789, explorer Pedro Vial followed the Brazos River through the area en route to Santa Fe from San Antonio. Short-lived Spanish missions were established in Runnels County. As part of the Department of Bexar, Mexican land grants covering portions of the project area included Robertson's Colony (1822) and Austin's and Williams' empresarial grant (1831). The area around Callahan County was explored as part of the Chihuahua Expedition between 1839 and 1840. In the Republic era (1836 to 1845), the northeastern part of the study area was part of Peter's Colony (1841) (McDaniel, "Jack County"; Rhoades, "Lampasas County"; Leffler, "Young County"; Weddle, "Diego Ortiz Parrilla"; Chipman, "Pedro Vial"; Pinkney "Runnels County"; Long, "Callahan County").

Prior to the Civil War, the study area remained sparsely settled, primarily due to conflicts between settlers and Native Americans. Permanent settlements were organized in the form of military outposts after various United States Army investigations of the area. The establishment of Army forts to keep Indian attacks at bay somewhat decreased settlers' fears and encouraged settlements in the 1850s. Though the Army presence was one factor, the importance of water also affected colonization of some areas, though to a lesser degree. Winsett Spring, three miles west of Ranger, promoted the establishment of a community near that location. Texas Rangers used the spring as a base of operations in controlling the Comanche in the 1870s, inspiring the name of the future town of Comanche, Texas, after the tribe. In Coleman County, Comanche chief Santa Anna camped near springs at the foot of the mountains that now bear his name. The first houses built by Anglo settlers near the town of Santa

Anna were built facing east or west along the gap between the two peaks (Eastland County Book Committee, 635; Coleman County Historical Commission, 273, 274).

The agricultural economy in the area was also slow to develop. Initially present were small areas of improved land where inhabitants attempted crops including corn, oats, wheat, sweet potatoes, peas, and beans. While agricultural farming and small-scale cattle ranching rose steadily through the Civil War, increased settlement and land cultivation occurred in the 1870s with the end of Indian raids. Buffalo hunting and bone gathering by the earliest settlers of Taylor County ceased with the decline of the buffalo herds. This decade saw the growth in production of ginned cotton and cattle ranching as major economic endeavors. Settlers were drawn to Callahan County by the availability of grazing land. That county became a transit area for cattle drives heading to Dodge City, Kansas, with a portion of the Western Trail running through. A branch of the Chisholm Trail ran between Hico and Carlton in Hamilton County. Located on the direct route of many of these major cattle trails, Lampasas County also became a center of the cattle industry following the Civil War. Erath County was another location where stock farming gave way to cattle farming. Cattle ranching came to Eastland County a little later in the 1880s (United States Census, 1860, 1870, 1880; Leffler, "Taylor County"; Long, "Callahan County"; Leffler, "Hamilton County"; Rhoades, "Lampasas County"; Young, "Erath County").

The arrival of the railroad in the latter part of the nineteenth century significantly impacted physical and economic development as well as land-use patterns in the study area. In 1879, the Texas Central Railroad reached Dublin, opening Erath County's cotton crops to the nation's eastern markets. The town of Hico was moved to a location two-and-a-half miles from Honey Creek to newly laid tracks. Hico became Hamilton County's market center when Texas Central Railroad extended across the northeastern part of the county in 1880. Eastland County was affected by the arrival of two rail lines in 1881; the Texas Central Railroad and Texas and Pacific Railway intersected at Cisco, and the Texas and Pacific Railway led to the establishment of the new town of Ranger. Between 1880 and 1881, the Texas and Pacific Railway arrived in Callahan and Taylor counties. In Callahan County, Cross Plains was not yet affected by the railroad. In Taylor County, however, the railroad allowed for the development of new towns such as Merkel and Abilene, and spurred development of Runnels County to the south, which had no towns—only small settlements—at the time. The town of Moran was established in 1882 with the arrival of the Texas Central line. In Lampasas County, the new town site of Montvale was established in 1885 for the Gulf Coast Lines and San Francisco Railway; it was renamed Lometa the following year, having absorbed the population of Senterfitt, a town formerly located two-and-a-half miles westward. At Lometa, cattle, sheep, wool, cotton, grain, and pecans were loaded up for distant markets. The town featured a roundhouse and a turntable for servicing engines. The roundhouse

was destroyed by a tornado in 1988. (Young, "Erath County"; Hamilton County Historical Commission, 15; Leffler, "Eastland County"; Chrisman, 155; Leffler, "Taylor County"; Lampasas History Book Committee, 22).

Several towns in the study area were not affected by railroad development until the early twentieth century. Bryson gained access to the rail when the tracks of the Chicago, Rock Island, and Texas Railway were extended from Jacksboro to Graham in 1903. In July 1909, the Abilene and Southern Railway built tracks to Winters from Abilene. That same year, Olney was incorporated when rail service started with the Wichita Falls and Southern Railway, causing the town to move a mile north to gain access to the line. In 1910, the Gulf, Texas, and Western railroads began providing service through Olney. One year later, Rising Star, settled in Eastland County in the 1870s, was affected by the arrival of the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railway. Cross Plains gained access to the Texas Central line in 1912. Buildings on the east bank of Turkey Creek were relocated into town, beginning the formation of Main Street in Cross Plains. Also in 1912, a secondary line met the Santa Fe Railway at Lometa. The Scholten Railroad, a narrow-gauge railroad owned by Scholten Brothers Cedar Company, was used to haul cedar posts from San Saba County to the Santa Fe Railway; it ceased operation in 1920 (*The Americana*; Minor, "Bryson, Texas"; Hunt, "Winters, Texas"; Hunt, "Olney, Texas"; Wiggins, "Rising Star, Texas"; "Cross Plains, Texas"; Chrisman, 156).

Railroads encouraged immigration and opened the north area of Central Texas to commercial farming and trade. A significant increase in the number of farms occurred during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. New towns helped local economies to diversify, providing a variety of goods and professions. Cattle ranching, however, began to decline. Like the arrival of many rail lines throughout the project area, that of the Gulf Coast and Santa Fe in Lampasas County ended the cattle-trail era. Ranching also became more scientific as open ranges ceased to exist and longhorn cattle were abandoned for blooded breeds (i.e. Hereford). Instead, sheep ranching became prominent at the turn of the century, and the number of sheep raised began to outnumber that of cattle (Rhoades, "Lampasas County").

Also at the end of the nineteenth century, crop farming became more important than ranching in the study area counties. Most counties featured corn, oats, and wheat as the leading products. A rapid expansion of cotton cultivation occurred between 1880 and 1900, peaking around 1910. Various natural disasters in the 1910s contributed to the abrupt decline in cotton production. In Eastland County, crops were hit by a boll weevil infestation ca. 1910. Throughout the region, droughts also contributed to a significant decrease in cotton production, causing it to all but disappear by 1917. Agricultural busts in the 1910s caused depopulation of many towns. In most areas, farmers not forced to halt production altogether turned to other crops. In Young County, crop production focused on wheat by 1920. During this decade, a brief resurgence of agricultural

production occurred. Specifically in Rising Star, this recovery had an impact on the physical fabric of the town. The city voted in bonds to pave the downtown district and to put in water and sewer systems, four new hotels, and a number of brick buildings, including the Masonic lodge in 1923. Elsewhere in the study area, development trends, population (Table 2-1), and the number of farms followed patterns of agricultural fluctuation (Eastland County Book Committee, 637; Leffler, “Young County”).

Table 2-1. Population Data for Selected Crossroads Communities and Counties in West Texas

Location	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940
Eastland County	99	88	4,855	10,373	17,971	23,421	18,805	34,156	30,345
Rising Star						640	906	1,160	1,198
Ranger							16,205	6,208	4,553
Callahan County	n.r.	n.r.	3,453	5,457	8,768	12,973	11,844	12,785	11,568
Cross Plains							700	1,507	1,229
Shackelford County	44	455	2,037	2,012	2,461	4,201	4,960	6,695	6,211
Moran							1,055	907	710
Erath County	2,425	1,801	11,796	21,594	29,966	32,095	28,385	20,804	20,760
Dublin		77		2,025	2,370	2,551	3,229	2,271	2,546
Taylor County	n.r.	n.r.	1,736	5,049	10,499	26,293	24,081	41,023	44,147
Merkel				353		2,008	1,810	1,848	2,005
Lampasas County	1,028	1,344	5,421	7,584	8,625	9,532	8,800	8,677	9,167
Lometa							995	865	915
Runnels County	n.r.	n.r.	980	3,193	5,379	20,858	17,074	21,821	18,903
Winters						1,347	1,509	2,423	2,335
Hamilton County	489	733	6,365	9,313	13,520	15,315	14,676	13,523	13,303
Hico				649	1,480	1,437	1,635	1,463	1,242
Jack County	1,000	694	6,626	3,740	10,224	11,817	9,863	9,046	10,206
Bryson								641	806
Young County	592	135	4,726	5,049	6,540	13,657	13,379	20,128	19,004
Olney						1,095	1,164	4,138	3,497

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. n. r. stands for “no return.”

In addition to agriculture, mining and manufacturing also played a role in some of the counties in crossroads communities in northwest-central Texas. The northwest portion of Erath County was mined for coal by the Texas and Pacific Coal Company from 1888 to 1921. In the same area, the Thurber Brick Company was established in 1918 to manufacture tile, sewer pipes, paving bricks, and stoneware (Young, “Erath County”).

The national income was on the rise after World War I; this trend was reflected in the economies of the study area counties, primarily due to the discovery of natural gas and oil throughout the region. In 1910, Moran became an oil field service center after natural gas was discovered. Oil was discovered at Ranger on October 19, 1917, when the McCleskey well struck. This caused one of the most significant economic booms in the region, with direct impact on building

projects and town expansion. Weekly building permits were higher in Ranger than in the county seat of Eastland. Other benefits included higher wages for occupations across the board, the building of eight refineries and 14 lumber yards, and a combined \$5 million in the city's four banks. In addition, men hauled water from the nearby spring to provide for the rapid expanse in population. The oil boom encouraged railroads including the Eastland, Wichita Falls, and Gulf Railroad (1918) and Wichita Falls, Ranger, and Fort Worth Railroad (1919) to build in the area. The economic perks of oil discovery at Ranger caused it to be dubbed the "Tulsa of Texas" in comparison to the city in Oklahoma. The Ranger oil boom lasted until the 1920s. Young County also saw a significant oil discovery in 1917, though exploration had begun as early as 1887. By the 1920s, several boom towns were founded, and already-established towns such as Olney grew rapidly. A small boom began in Bryson in 1923. That same year, oil was discovered in Callahan County, and Pioneer Field in Callahan County first produced oil in 1925. In Lampasas County, most drilling endeavors were unsuccessful due to the presence of groundwater. However, the Tiger Lily well near Lometa was successfully drilled in 1938. Oil was first discovered in Shackelford County in 1910, but it was not until a significant find at the Ellenberger Formation¹ in 1946 that deeper exploration for expanded production was pursued. Similarly, oil was discovered in Runnels and Taylor counties in 1927 and 1929, respectively, but was not significantly part of the economy until the 1940s. The oil boom of the 1920s allowed the economies of the crossroads communities to survive between the decline of agriculture production in the late 1910s and its recovery at the end of the next decade (Beesley, "Shackelford County"; Eastland County, 633–635; Leffler, "Young County"; Chrisman, 157; Rhoades, "Lampasas County"; Pinkney, "Runnels County"; Leffler, "Taylor County").

The oil boom declined in the 1930s as did the number of farms in the crossroads communities, and economies continued to suffer throughout the years of the Great Depression. In the following decade, World War II and jobs in larger, urban areas supporting war industries drew young people from the rural regions, causing further decline in rural county populations. Pre-war trends in economic structure persisted after World War II. Ranching and farming remained the mainstay of economies throughout the study area. Technological advances such as mechanization of agriculture, however, continued the depopulation of Eastland County, and likely other counties, from the 1940s through the 1970s. The populations of crossroads communities tended to drop mid-century, rising slightly in the 1970s, then declining through the 1980s to the present. Among active businesses in the 1980s were agribusinesses, petroleum industries, steel tank manufacture, clothing, oil field equipment, manufacture of fabricated metals products and buildings, meat packing, construction, and wholesale and retail trade. While oil production in recent years does not match

¹ The site is alternately referred to in historic and secondary sources as the "Ellenberger" and "Ellenburger" Formation.

the volume of the oil booms of the 1920s, oil remains a viable industry in several counties (United States Census, 1920–2000).

PROPERTY TYPES

INTRODUCTION

Based on windshield surveys of selected downtowns of crossroads communities in the study area, project historians observed common types, distinguishing physical characteristics, and shared associative qualities among the buildings found in these settings. This section focuses primarily on the two most common primary property type categories—*Commercial Buildings* and *Gas Stations*—that largely define the historic and architectural character of the downtowns. Other kinds of resources also exist and reflect other aspects of the unique history of each community, such as warehouses, industrial complexes, and infrastructural elements (brick streets, curbing, etc.). While these other resources do not represent as large a component of the built environment as do *Commercial Buildings* and *Gas Stations*, they nonetheless are fundamental attributes that may contribute to a downtown’s ability to convey a sense of the past.

The following paragraphs identify the physical attributes and characteristics of the two primary property type categories and common subtypes within each grouping. Carefully identifying these qualities is an essential part of the process of assessing the significance and integrity of these resources individually and, more importantly, as part of a downtown being evaluated for NRHP eligibility as a district.

COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

The majority of resources fall within the property type category of *Commercial Buildings*. As the name implies, these resources served commercial purposes and provided spaces for various types of businesses such as retail stores, banks, offices, and hotels. Most are one- or two-story buildings with load-bearing masonry construction, but three- to five-story buildings also exist. Brick is the most common construction material, but examples of stone or even cast concrete construction also exist. Resources in this category typically have elongated rectangular plans that conform to the dimensions of the commercial lots that they occupy. Except for some of those built on corner lots, commercial buildings typically have symmetrically arranged storefronts with central entrances and large display windows at the street level. Many of those on corner lots often have angled entrances that open directly onto street intersections. Regardless of the composition of the front façade, the level and type of architectural embellishment and ornamentation vary considerably and largely depend on the original or intended use, the period in which they were built, and prevailing architectural trends at the time of the building’s construction. However, most, but certainly not all, commercial buildings in the crossroads communities lack elaborate architectural embellishment and ornamentation. However, the upper level of many buildings, especially in the parapets, often features masonry work that exemplifies a tradition of craftsmanship popular throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This property type category includes a wide range of buildings; however, noted architectural historian Richard Longstreth developed a guide that is useful for grouping the many kinds of commercial buildings into subtypes, which facilitates a comparative analysis. In his book, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*, Longstreth categorizes commercial buildings by the composition and organization of their primary (street-facing) façades rather than by their applied stylistic ornamentation. Such an approach provides a highly effective method of understanding the fundamental and distinguishing attributes of the “vernacular” of commercial buildings found in the crossroads communities of the study area as well as in other historic downtowns throughout the state and nation.

Longstreth’s typology relies on the building’s form and the organization of its façade; however, other aspects such as style and architectural embellishment remain important factors that also help categorize, understand, and assess commercial buildings and their respective integrity. For example, stylistic features can indicate a building’s date of construction. In addition, the amount, level, and complexity of ornamentation may also suggest the relative wealth of its original owner, and/or reflect prevailing broad trends in a town’s architectural history and development. The removal or covering of original architectural features and detailing can diminish a building’s ability to convey a sense of the past. Generally, however, the vast majority of the commercial buildings in the crossroads communities typically display only minimal detailing associated with a particular style or architectural movement.

Besides the many common physical attributes shared by all resources in this property category, commercial buildings also possess many associative qualities that further classify them as distinct resource types that can be used for comparative analysis. The following are some of the associative qualities these commercial buildings share:

- Used for commercial purposes involving the exchange of goods and/or services;
- Reflect the importance of commerce and the amount of traffic generated by their location at or near intersections of highways within the local road network;
- May be associated with railroad and industrial operations that are often located nearby;
- Common land-use pattern helps to unify the history of the downtown area with the physical attributes of the buildings; a shared and common purpose distinguishes the groupings of commercial buildings from the rest of the community;
- May be vital not only to the development of the community in which they are located, but also to area farmers and ranchers who purchased goods and supplies for themselves and/or for agricultural operations, and who transported their crops, livestock, and other commodities to town for processing, sale, or distribution; and

- Served as centers of commerce and trade that evolved with the discovery of oil nearby.

Based on the results of field investigations undertaken for the project, five subtypes within the *Commercial Buildings* property type category were identified. They include:

- *One-Part Commercial Block*
- *Two-Part Commercial Block*
- *Enframed Window Wall*
- *Temple Front*
- *False Front*

The attributes and character-defining features of each subtype are defined in the following pages. Photographic examples of each property subtype follow textual definitions and highlight salient architectural elements and features.

One-Part Commercial Block

The *One-Part Commercial Block* is the most common building subtype in the historic downtown of crossroads communities, and most examples in the study area date from the 1880s to the 1930s. The enduring popularity of this building subtype demonstrates the practicality of its design, efficient use of space, and economical cost of construction and maintenance. A resource in this category presents a one-story, box-like massing that typically maximizes available space of the lot(s) on which it sits. The principal composition of a *One-Part Commercial Block* building—and even most of the surface area of the primary façade—focuses primarily on pedestrian-related activity. The storefront typically has a three-part configuration with large plate-glass display windows in the outer bays and a centrally placed doorway. The primary entrance is sometimes placed within a recessed central bay, which has a second set of display windows at angles to the doorway. Canopies are often a particularly important architectural feature. Not only do they provide shade and shelter from the weather, they also define the pedestrian zone. They create a transitional area between the street and store, and set visual limits that direct passersby to look into the buildings. Canopies typically utilize rod or chain supports; however, some buildings have freestanding columns. Many buildings in this category have a row of fixed transom lights above the storefront as a practical design solution to allow natural light to illuminate interior spaces. A parapet is another common architectural feature of this building subtype, and it provides a relatively large surface area for signage and/or detailed craftsmanship along the cornice or end piers. The historic fabric and detailing in parapets often provide visual interest from the street and increase the attraction of potential customers. Resources in this category can be independent and freestanding, or they may be part of a row of buildings that share common walls.

Character-defining features:

- One-story load-bearing masonry construction with a rectangular plan or building footprint
- Storefront (usually a three-part configuration) with a single- or double-door entrance and large wood- or metal-frame plate-glass windows
- Canopy across the front, typically with metal rod or chain supports
- Row of fixed-light wood-sash transoms above storefront
- Parapet that obscures the slightly pitched roof

Other features that may be present:

- Detailed masonry work in the parapet, cornice, and/or wall surfaces
- Vertical brick piers defining storefront bays
- Cast-iron pilasters, door thresholds, or engaged columns
- Decorative tile flooring and/or inlay in entrance bay

Common associated architectural styles or movements:

- | | |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| ▪ Romanesque | ▪ Prairie |
| ▪ Revival | ▪ Spanish Colonial Revival |
| ▪ Queen Anne | ▪ Art Deco |



- 1 Detailed brickwork in stone-capped parapet
- 2 Segmental-arched window openings
- 3 Canopy across the front suspended with chain supports

Figure 3-1. Row of One-Part Commercial Block buildings in the 100 block of N. Robinson Street, Miles.

The buildings in this image are indicative of the kinds of stores built in the study area around the turn of the twentieth century. Although alterations diminish many of the distinctive qualities of this grouping, the buildings retain many of their character-defining features.

This row of *One-Part Commercial Block* buildings in Winters represents a common architectural form in crossroads communities throughout the study area (Figure 3-1). The buildings also exemplify the brick masonry artisanship that was popular throughout Texas downtowns during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and that is a common feature of the *One-Part Commercial Block* subtype from the period. The middle building retains many of the more important features of this category, such as the intricate brickwork in the parapet and segmental arches. However, the building's poor condition and storefront alterations (window and door replacements) detract from its overall historic character and integrity. The southern part of the building (to the right) shows how a relatively new canopy can visually overpower a historic storefront by covering salient architectural features (transoms and brickwork in the segmental arches). The northern section (at the left) has also been subject to multiple changes, but it presents a stronger sense of the past than the southern section. Taken together, the three storefronts of this building lack sufficient integrity to be individually significant. Exterior alterations such as the new canopy and window and door replacements diminish integrity of *Materials* and *Feeling*; however, the building retains the other aspects of integrity to a sufficient level to contribute, albeit minimally, to the historic character of downtown Miles.



- 1 Brick parapet with recessed panels
- 2 Corbelled brickwork in cornice
- 3 Brick pilasters define bays
- 4 Row of fixed-light transom window openings
- 5 Canopy across the front suspended with metal rod-and-chain supports
- 6 Three-part storefront with a recessed double-door entrance and flanking large wood-frame plate-glass windows

Figure 3-2. One-Part Commercial Block building in the 100 block of S. Main Street, Winters.

This store retains its character-defining features to a noteworthy degree.

This building in Winters is an outstanding and well-preserved example of a *One-Part Commercial Block* building (Figure 3-2). The store retains its original three-bay storefront with a recessed double-door primary entrance and angled display windows. Engaged cast-iron columns define the entrance bay. The three-part configuration at the pedestrian level extends to the parapet, which features recessed panels and brick piers. The cornice displays corbelled brickwork that is common to many *One-Part Commercial Block* buildings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Alterations include the covering of the transoms and the application of paint over the original brick finish. These changes diminish, but do not compromise, the integrity of *Materials* and *Feeling*. Otherwise, the building retains all of the qualities that distinguish it as a good example of its subtype. Note how the application of metal siding onto the exterior of the adjoining building on the right, and the replacement of the display windows have compromised the building’s historic character.



- 1 Dark-red brick parapet with tan-colored brick detailing creates contrast and sense of horizontality
- 2 Brick decorative motif on piers featuring geometric designs are suggestive of the Prairie School
- 3 Row of large fixed-light transom windows boarded
- 4 Canopy across the front suspended with metal rod-and-chain supports
- 5 Three-part storefront with a recessed double-door entrance and flanking plate-glass windows

Figure 3-3. One-Part Commercial Block buildings in the 100 block of N. Main Street, Cross Plains.

This store displays brickwork in the parapet that is suggestive of the Prairie style.

The west side of the 100 block of N. Main Street in Cross Plains includes a series of nearly identical *One-Part Commercial Block* buildings (Figure 3-3). Each has a three-bay storefront and a decorative parapet with noteworthy masonry work. The common scale, configuration, and aesthetic qualities that these buildings share strongly contribute to a strong sense of cohesiveness. The building in the center is representative of the entire group, and it exhibits many of the signature features that identify it as a *One-Part Commercial Block* subtype. The pedestrian zone includes a centrally placed, double-door entrance and large display windows on either side. Metal rods support the suspended canopy, and a row of fixed-light transoms rise above the canopy. However, the application of paint on brick surfaces, the covering of the transom windows, and the installation of new windows and doors at the storefront level detract from its historic character. The building is not significant on an individual basis, but it still retains enough of its salient physical features to contribute to the downtown's historic character.



- 1 Mission parapet
- 2 Row of small arched niches
- 3 Central quatrefoil adornment with inlaid tile
- 4 Stucco finish
- 5 Round-arched transom above plate-glass windows
- 6 Inlaid tile
- 7 Spiral columns

Figure 3-4. One-Part Commercial Block building at 120 N. Main Street (US 83), Winters. This building presents architectural ornamentation that is indicative of the Spanish Colonial Revival style.

Originally containing local offices for the West Texas Utilities Company, this building represents an outstanding example of a *One-Part Commercial Block* building with Spanish Colonial Revival features (Figure 3-4). It is nearly identical to a building in Merkel; both are believed to have been designed by noted Abilene architect, David S. Castle. Although the building has distinctive stylistic ornamentation, it displays all of the physical traits and qualities that distinguish the *One-Part Commercial Block* property subtype. It presents a one-story block-like massing and a one-part façade composition. It has a centrally placed single door and flanking display windows. It lacks a canopy but the parapet displays noteworthy detailing. Among the attributes that are indicative of the Spanish Colonial Revival style are the stucco and tile finishes, mission parapet, and quatrefoil. The building remains a prominent architectural landmark in the community. Its adaptive use as a library does not diminish its historic character; rather, its repurposing demonstrates the building’s importance to the town and its residents.

Two-Part Commercial Block

The *Two-Part Commercial Block* is another common commercial building subtype in the downtowns of crossroads communities. Extant examples in the study area date from the early 1880s through the late 1920s, but most were constructed around the turn of the twentieth century. This form features a primary façade with two distinct zones that are separated by a horizontal architectural element. The street-level or lower zone houses public-oriented functions, such as retail operations, and features a composition and organization that is similar to that of the *One-Part Commercial Block* building. Since it presents a pedestrian-oriented design, the lower zone typically has large fixed-glass display windows and prominent entrances with glazing. The large plate-glass windows at the street level create a sense of openness that contrasts with the windows in the upper zone, where a much greater percentage of the exterior surface area is of load-bearing masonry construction. The proportions of these upper-level window openings are relatively narrow, which creates a vertical effect. The number and configuration of lights in each sash provide visual clues that can help estimate dates of construction. Those with 4/4 lights typically date from the 1870s and early 1880s, while those with 2/2 lights date from the late 1880s to the very early 1900s. Single-light sashes date from the twentieth century. Ornate workmanship and embellishment commonly appear in the upper zone, especially in the parapet, cornice, and/or upper-level window treatments. Resources in this category can be either independent and freestanding, or part of a row of buildings that shares common or party walls.

Character-defining features:

- Multi-story load-bearing masonry construction
- Brick, limestone, or cast concrete construction
- Storefront (usually a three-part configuration) with a single- or double-door entrance and large wood- or metal-frame plate-glass windows
- Canopy with metal rods or chain supports across the front
- Row of wood-frame transoms above the storefront and/or canopy
- Multiple (typically three to six) window openings on upper floor(s)
- Double-hung, wood-sash windows on upper floor(s)
- Parapet with varying levels of ornamentation

Other features that may be present:

- Detailed masonry work in the parapet, piers, and wall surfaces
- Cast-iron pilasters, engaged columns, or door thresholds
- Hoodmolds and/or lintels above and sills below second-floor windows
- Round-, segmental-, or flat-arched openings, especially on second floor
- Pressed-metal detailing in cornice or parapet

Common associated architectural styles or movements:

- Romanesque Revival
- Queen Anne
- Classical Revival
- Prairie School

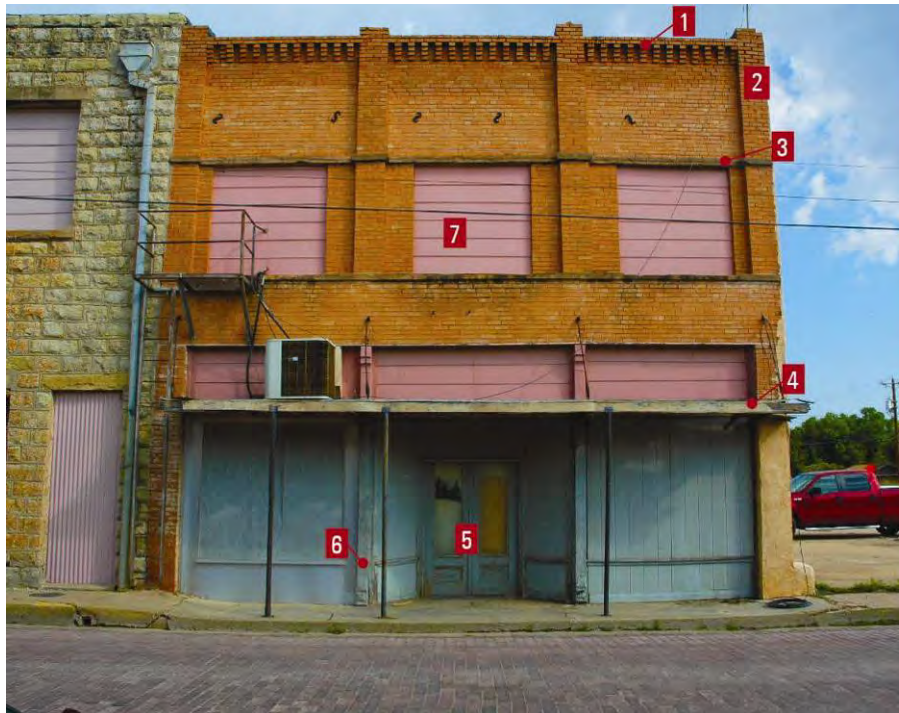


- 1 Segmental-arched openings on second floor with stone lintels
- 2 Double-hung wood-sash windows with one-over-one lights
- 3 Three-part storefronts on each side
- 4 Cast-iron columns and thresholds
- 5 Masonic Lodge dedication stone

Figure 3-5. Two-Part Commercial Block building at 224 N. Pecan Street, Hico.

This edifice is representative of *Two-Part Commercial Block* buildings constructed during the late nineteenth century. Recent rehabilitation efforts have returned much of the building's historic ambiance.

This building in Hico is an excellent and well-preserved example of a *Two-Part Commercial Block* building from the late nineteenth century (Figure 3-5). The segmental arches and keystones above the second-floor windows are indicative of a popular trend in commercial architectural design of the period. The building has two separate storefronts on the ground level; each retains its original three-part configuration and evokes a strong sense of the past. The second floor of the northern (right) half of the building served as a Masonic Lodge, as noted by a small and hard-to-discern carved stone in the middle center of the upper floor. Sanborn maps note that a one-story wood canopy once extended across the entire front. The building is a noteworthy local example of its subtype; it is significant on an individual basis and contributes strongly to the historic character of the downtown.



- 1 Cornice with corbelled brickwork
- 2 Brick pilasters
- 3 Cast-stone string courses
- 4 Canopy across the front with chain supports
- 5 Storefront with a recessed double-door entrance flanked by large windows
- 6 Cast-iron pilasters
- 7 Second-floor window openings likely include paired double-hung windows

Figure 3-6. Two-Part Commercial Block building in the 100 block of E. Dale Street, Winters.

This two-story building is indicative of a *Two-Part Commercial Block* building from the early twentieth century.

This building in Winters is a *Two-Part Commercial Block* from the early twentieth century (Figure 3-6). It retains many of its salient and character-defining features, including the corbelled brickwork in the cornice and the three-part storefront with its recessed double-door entrances and angled plate-glass windows. The double doors with glazing and panels are original and add to the ability of the pedestrian zone to convey a strong sense of the past. The canopy appears to be original but the metal poles are added elements that provide greater stability and supplement the suspended chain supports. Several other alterations, most notably the covering of the windows and transoms, detract from the building’s historic character and diminish its integrity of *Design*, *Materials*, and *Feeling*. Although it lacks sufficient integrity to be individually eligible for the NRHP, the building still retains enough of the physical qualities and attributes to contribute to the downtown’s historic character.



- 1 Brick parapet with pediment and entablature form
- 2 Stacked bricks forming dentils
- 3 Remains of embellishment embedded in the center of pediment
- 4 Brick pilasters
- 5 Cast-stone lintels and sills on second-story windows
- 6 Cast-stone string course
- 7 Wrap-around canopy rests atop metal freestanding columns
- 8 Storefront on the ground floor with an entrance flanked by large frame windows
- 9 Secondary independent entrance to second floor

Figure 3-7. Two-Part Commercial Block building at the northeast corner of N. Main Street and Second Street, Cross Plains.

This two-story building is an example of a *Two-Part Commercial Block* building with Classical Revival detailing.

This building in Cross Plains features two distinct zones on the primary, west-facing façade that identify it as a *Two-Part Commercial Block* building (Figure 3-7). It exhibits a pediment parapet and other architectural features that reflect an influence of the Classical Revival style. This movement enjoyed widespread popularity during the early twentieth century. A number of alterations diminish some of the building’s ability to convey a sense of the past. Examples include the replacement windows and doors at the ground level, the installation of a new canopy across the front and a portion of the south wall, and the covering of second-floor window openings. Nevertheless, the building has cast-stone lintels above the second floor and dentil-like brickwork in the parapet and recessed panels in the side elevation. The exposed square-shape area in the pediment likely contained a decorative panel – probably a logo for a lodge that once met in the upper floor and used a separate entrance that led to the upstairs meeting hall. Although it is a good local example of its subtype and contributes to the overall historic character of the downtown, the building lacks sufficient integrity to be individually eligible for the NRHP. The covering of the second-floor windows, changes to the storefront, and roof covering diminish its integrity of *Materials, Design, and Feeling*.



- 1 Parapet reinforces a sense of horizontality
- 2 Cast-stone frieze
- 3 Stone lintels sit above second- and third-floor windows
- 4 Cast-stone facing divides the upper and lower zones of the front façade
- 5 Brick pilasters
- 6 Storefront on the ground floor with off-center single-door entrance and large plate-glass windows

Figure 3-8. Two-Part Commercial Block building in the 100 block of N. Rusk Street, Ranger.

This three-story building features two distinct zones and is thus an example of a *Two-Part Commercial Block* building. It exhibits architectural ornamentation that is associated with the Prairie School movement.

Rising three stories, this building in Ranger features two distinct zones that warrant its classification as a *Two-Part Commercial Block* (Figure 3-8). The building also displays a horizontal emphasis that reflects an influence of Prairie School traditions, which enjoyed a degree of popularity in many of the historic downtowns in the study area during the 1910s and 1920s. This style often reflects the prosperity many crossroads communities enjoyed following the discovery of oil in nearby areas. Ranger is a particularly good illustration of this trend. The building above is noteworthy because of the sophistication and quality of its design and ornamentation. It is one of several impressive architectural landmarks in downtown Ranger. The original brick and cast-stone finishes remain unaltered, and the fenestration in the upper floors retains its historic character. Most of the changes are confined to the lower zone and include the removal of the canopy, the covering of transoms, and the reconfiguration of the storefront. Despite these alterations, which detract from integrity of *Materials*, *Design*, and *Feeling*, the building retains most of its salient features and is a good local example of a *Two-Part Commercial Block* building with Prairie School influences.

Enframed Window Wall

The *Enframed Window Wall* building subtype is a commercial building form that was built in downtowns throughout the study area from as early as the 1910s to the 1950s. With its cube-like form, it resembles a *One-Part Commercial Block* building, especially throughout the study area where most extant examples are single-story buildings. However, an *Enframed Window Wall* building typically presents a simpler and less ornate storefront. The physical traits that distinguish this form from other commercial buildings are the organization and composition of its primary façade. An *Enframed Window Wall* building features a large, glazed center section that extends across almost the entire width of the front. This glass section has a continuous border on all sides that frames the window-like wall, hence its name. The overall effect creates a large expanse of glass that achieves an even greater sense of openness than that of other commercial building subtypes. Other physical attributes such as the detailing featured in the parapet, doors, and windows also often compare to the *One-Part Commercial Block*, but they typically exhibit characteristics of early twentieth century architectural movements and trends. Resources in this category can either be independent, freestanding buildings or are part of a row of buildings that shares common or party walls.

Character-defining features:

- One-story load-bearing masonry construction with a rectangular plan or building footprint
- A single expanse of glazing that stretches across almost the entire length of the primary façade
- Well-defined piers at each end of the storefront that frames the primary façade
- Single- or double-door entrances and large wood- or metal-frame plate-glass windows
- Canopy across the front with metal rod or chain supports, or resting on free-standing wood or metal columns
- Row of fixed-light transoms above storefront
- Parapet that obscures the slightly pitched roof

Other features that may be present:

- Detailed masonry work in the parapet, piers, and wall surfaces.

Common associated architectural styles or movements:

- Prairie
- Art Deco
- Modern



- 1** Cast-stone coping
- 2** Brick decorative motif on piers and parapet featuring geometric designs
- 3** Embedded glazed terra cotta plaque notes date of construction and original occupant
- 4** Row of large fixed-light transom windows
- 5** Canopy across the front suspended with metal rod supports
- 6** Storefront extends across nearly the entire length of the primary façade
- 7** Large metal-frame plate-glass windows

Figure 3-9. Enframed Window Wall building in the 100 block of W. Main Street, Olney. Despite alterations to the storefront, this building possesses all of the signature traits of an *Enframed Window Wall* building.

This is an example of an *Enframed Window Wall* in Olney (Figure 3-9). Almost the entire pedestrian level features large expanses of glass in display windows, transoms, and doors, and are indicative of this form. The parapet displays a modest influence of Prairie School architecture, which enjoyed a degree of popularity in the downtowns of many crossroads communities in the study area. The installation of anodized aluminum window and door frames, as well as the use of tinted glass, diminishes the building’s ability to convey significance as an example of this property subtype classification. The negative effect these changes have to integrity of *Materials*, *Workmanship*, and *Feeling* disrupt its ability to convey significance as an example of this architectural plan type. However, it retains, albeit marginally, sufficient integrity to contribute to the historic character of the downtown.



- 1 Cast-stone coping along parapet
- 2 Cast-stone string course reinforces sense of horizontality
- 3 Engaged piers frame each storefront
- 4 Separate canopies across each storefront
- 5 Storefronts with central entrances flanked by plate-glass windows

Figure 3-10. *Enframed Window Wall* building in the 100 block of Avenue C, Olney.

This building displays ornamentation that is suggestive of the Art Deco style. The capped piers with cast-stone pedestals reveal a mild influence of this architectural movement. The building has two separate storefronts, each of which has alterations that affect integrity to varying degrees.

This building in Olney has two separate storefronts, both of which feature large expanses of glass that are framed on each end by prominent brick piers, a signature trait of an *Enframed Window Wall* (Figure 3-10). Side by side, these storefronts provide an opportunity to show how changes can affect the historic character and integrity of a building. The store on the north (right) side retains most of its original features and materials, but the one on the south (left) side has been subject to some modification. The display windows and door on the south side are replacements that utilize metal framing that contrasts with the wood-frame units on the north side. The metal-covered shed canopy on the south obscures the transoms and has become a visually prominent physical feature that detracts from the historic character of the storefront. Despite these changes, the building retains most of its important architectural features and remains a typical example of a relatively common building type. The modifications detract but do not compromise integrity of *Materials*, *Design*, and *Feeling*. While not individually significant, the building contributes to the historic character of the downtown.



- 1 Dark-red Roman brick masonry
- 2 Canopy
- 3 Storefront extends across the entire length of the primary façade
- 4 Large metal-frame plate-glass windows
- 5 Vertical piers at each end of front facade

Figure 3-11. Enframed Window Wall building in the 100 block of N. Main Street (US 83), Winters.

This building is a noteworthy example of this property subtype. The storefront appears to date from the 1950s.

This building in Winters is easily recognizable as an *Enframed Windows Wall* as most of the storefront level is comprised of a series of large plate-glass windows (Figure 3-11). The front plane of the building is set back at a slight angle on the south (right) side. That feature, as well as the use of elongated brick in the parapet, presents a character suggestive of the 1950s and likely is a remodeled storefront. Additional field investigations and research are needed to confirm the estimated date of construction. While the building is a good local example of an *Enframed Window Wall* subtype, it does not date from the period when Winters achieved its primary significance. Other than its masonry construction and scale, it shares few of the physical traits and characteristics that the vast majority of the historic commercial buildings in Winters possess. It is, however, reflective of the organic and ever-changing quality and commercial viability of the downtown over time.

Temple Front

As its name suggests, a *Temple Front* building is a commercial edifice with columns, pediments, and other physical elements that reflect Classical Greek or Roman architectural traditions. Extant examples in the downtowns of the study area typically date from the mid-1900s to the mid-1920s. This commercial building form usually possesses one or two stories and has a box-like massing. The entrance is often set within a recessed middle bay that is framed by large pilasters or freestanding columns. The façade may also include a pediment or entablature with dentils, a cornice, and other details associated with the Classical Revival style. A signature trait is a symmetrically composed front that exhibits structure, order, and balance. Banks originally occupied most buildings within this property subtype, and the use of traditional architectural forms evoked a sense of strength and stability, qualities a banking institution would want to convey to its customers. Buildings in this category typically are prominent landmarks in the downtowns of crossroads communities and usually display some of the most ornate and architecturally ambitious ornamentation in such settings. Most, but not all, temple front buildings are on corner lots and appear highly visible from public right-of-ways.

Character-defining features:

- One- or two-story building with a rectangular plan or building footprint
- Load-bearing masonry (brick) construction
- Large columns and/or pilasters that are a dominant feature on the front façade
- Formal and prominent primary entrance centrally set within recessed bay with columns
- Hoodmolds and/or lintels above and sills below second-floor windows
- Round-, segmental-, or flat-arched openings, especially on second floor
- Entablature with decorative molding, dentils, and/or other classically inspired architectural features
- Parapet that obscures the slightly pitched roof

Other features that may be present:

- Tiled flooring in recessed entrance bay
- Steps that extend partial- or full-width at the front façade, leading up to the primary entrance

Common associated architectural styles or movements:

- Classical Revival



Figure 3-12. Temple Front building at the southwest corner of Edwards Street and N. Second Street, Merkel. This former bank is a good example of Temple Front building and features Classical Revival detailing.

From its strategic location at one of the busiest intersections in downtown Merkel, this building stands as a prominent local architectural landmark (Figure 3-12). The building is a good local example of a *Temple Front* building and formerly served as a bank. From the street corner, the building presents a unified design that dates from the early 1910s; however, the rear and south sides utilize cast-stone construction with a rough-cut finish. Historic photographs confirm that the building was originally constructed in the early 1890s but was extensively remodeled in the early twentieth century. Although not original to the building, the present primary façade contributes to the property’s historic character and is a significant part of its history and physical evolution. Window and door replacements and covering detract somewhat from the building’s integrity of *Materials* and *Design*, but it remains easily recognizable from the downtown’s historic period of significance. The building still possesses sufficient integrity to convey its significance individually as a good example of a *Temple Front* building with Classical Revival styling, and likewise, contributes to the historic character of the downtown.

False Front

Only a small number of commercial buildings within the downtowns of crossroads communities fall within this property subtype; nonetheless, the *False Front* building is among the most distinctive commercial architectural forms of the late nineteenth and very early twentieth centuries. Its most unique and character-defining feature is the parapet or false front that extends vertically from the primary façade and largely obscures its gabled roof from public view. Longstreth's typology places this form in the *One-Part Commercial Block* category, since its façade presents a single composition. However, the distinctive qualities of its stepped parapet and gabled roof, as well as its wood-frame construction, justify its categorization as a separate property subtype. This vernacular commercial building form provided a relatively inexpensive and easy-to-construct means of establishing a place of business in an area experiencing rapid growth, particularly during initial periods of development. It is also sometimes called a "boomtown" building. This building subtype is often associated with early commercial development in cities throughout the western United States, and examples still exist in the crossroads communities of the study area. The level of architectural detailing and embellishment varies considerably, but extant examples within the crossroads communities display minimal amounts of ornamentation.

Character-defining features:

- One-story building with rectangular plan or building footprint
- False front on primary façade with a stepped form; the central block is higher than the flanking sides
- Wood-frame construction with horizontal or board-and-batten wood siding
- Front-gabled roof that is largely obscured by parapet or false front
- Symmetrically arranged façade with single-door entrance and plate-glass windows on the front
- Canopy across front with turned or chamfered wood columns
- Pier-and-beam foundation
- Independent and freestanding

Other features that may be present:

- Painted signage in parapet
- Wood porch flooring



- 1 Large parapet conceals front-gabled roof
- 2 Painted sign mounted on parapet
- 3 Canopy across front with turned columns
- 4 Decorative trim
- 5 Symmetrical arrangement of central entrance flanked by large window openings

Figure 3-13. False Front building in the 300 block of Ground Street (FM 880), Moran.

Although believed to have been relocated to its present site, this modest one-story wood-frame building is a vestige of the kind of commercial stores erected during the early years of many crossroads communities in the study area.

This building presents a façade composition that is often associated with “boomtowns” in western states, including Texas (Figure 3-13). Extant examples are found in several of the crossroads communities documented for this study. The broad false front largely obscures the gabled roof and makes the building appear to be grander and more substantial than it actually is. The sign in the parapet notes that the building was constructed by “Rockwell Bros. & Co. - 1906.” The turned-wood columns rest on a concrete slab that is not original to the building. The building is located about a half block from the historic downtown and likely was moved to its current site at an unknown time. Despite its relocation and being set back from the nearby highway, the building retains many of its salient features that are indicative of the *False Front* subtype. The lattice panels over the windows are easily reversible alterations that detract minimally from the building’s historic character. The most significant change is the building’s new site, which compromises its integrity of *Location* and *Setting*.

Common Alterations (Affected Aspects of Integrity)

Each property type discussion identifies the character-defining features and physical attributes of its respective subtype category. None of the buildings documented for this study remain in their original state or are unaltered from the period of significance. How changes and modifications affect the integrity of a commercial building depends on the character-defining features of the subtype category, when the changes occurred, the severity and reversibility of these alterations, and the unique setting and history of the host community. For example, changes to a storefront during the period of significance may actually contribute to the historic character of an individual building and the district as a whole. In contrast, changes that have occurred since the end of the period of significance diminish the ability of the resource to convey its significance. The combined effects of multiple alterations completed outside the period may diminish the integrity of a resource to such a degree that it detracts from the downtown's historic character. Likewise, the cumulative impact of multiple buildings with these kinds of changes may render the downtown unable to convey its connection to the period of significance.

Field investigations revealed common trends among the communities visited for this study. The level and severity of the changes vary considerably, as does the degree to which the aspects of integrity are affected. The following are among the most common kinds of alterations noted in the field. Further discussions and photographs are presented in subsequent pages.

Common Alterations and Conditions (Affected Aspects of Integrity)**General:**

- Vacant and in a state of disrepair (*Feeling and Association*)
- Introduction of non-historic materials or finishes onto exterior surfaces (*Materials, Design, and Feeling*)

Storefront or pedestrian level:

- Replacement or covering of doors, windows, or transoms (*Materials, Design, Feeling, and Workmanship*)
- Reconfigured storefront and changes to fenestration (*Design, Materials, and Feeling*)
- Removal of historic canopy and/or construction of new canopy that does not resemble form and materials from period of significance (*Materials, Design, Feeling, and Workmanship*)
- Changes to tile work at front entrance outside the period of significance (*Materials, Feeling, and Workmanship*)

Upper zone or floor(s):

- Covering or removal of architectural embellishment or ornamentation (*Workmanship, Materials, Design, and Feeling*)
- Replacement or covering of historic windows (*Materials, Design, and Feeling*)
- Changes to fenestration (size, location, and rhythm of window openings) (*Design, Materials, and Feeling*)
- Installation of new roof with a different pitch and/or covering (*Materials, Design, and Feeling*)



**Figure 3-14 (left).
Vacant buildings in the
100 block of S. Austin
Street, Ranger.**

These buildings date to the oil boom era of Ranger and show how important the discovery of oil was to the community and the downtown. These buildings are in poor condition but retain many of the physical attributes and qualities that add to the ability of the downtown to convey significance.

**Figure 3-15 (right).
Vacant buildings in the
100 block of W. First
Street, Cross Plains.**

The buildings are clearly historic but their deteriorated condition interferes with their ability to convey a sense of the past.

Condition

The buildings in Figure 3-14 are among several vacant buildings in downtown Ranger. The *Two-Part Commercial Block* building on the left was a store, while the *One-Part Commercial Block* building on the right was a theater. Both have been abandoned for many years. Most of the openings have been covered with sheets of plywood or corrugated plastic panels, and several of the second-floor windows on the two-story building are exposed, leaving the interior vulnerable to decay and water damage. While the store and theater fronts are covered, most of the original façades are still visible and retain their ability to convey a sense of the past despite each building's overall deteriorated condition. While they lack sufficient integrity to be significant on an individual basis, they retain sufficient integrity of *Design, Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling* to add to the historic character of the downtown and would be considered contributing resources within a district.

The buildings in Figure 3-15 are abandoned and in a deteriorated state. They are located just off Main Street and display many of the physical attributes that are common throughout Cross Plains' historic downtown. However, large plywood and particleboard panels cover the window and door openings and affect the ability of each building to convey a sense of the past. Although the fenestration and original window and door features may be intact underneath, they are completely obscured by the panels. Water seepage and deteriorated mortar in the masonry walls have also caused damage to the structural stability and integrity of the buildings. Portions of the brick parapet of the building in the foreground have been rebuilt. The buildings present a degree of their historic character, but their deteriorated condition compromises integrity of *Feeling, Materials, and Design* to such an extent that they no longer add to the ability of the downtown to convey significance.



**Figure 3-16 (left).
Garage in the 100 block
of S. Austin Street,
Ranger.**

Sanborn maps note that this building was a garage and was built in the 1920s. The building retains some of its historic qualities, yet the introduction of new materials at the street level overwhelm its historic character. Only a small portion of the building's original exterior finish is visible.

**Figure 3-17 (right).
Hodges-Neal Building
in the 100 block of W.
Main Street, Ranger.**

Extensive changes at the pedestrian level detract from the building's integrity of *Materials*; however, the upper two floors retain their exterior finishes to a sufficient level to enable the building to retain its integrity and convey significance.

Exterior Finishes

The building in Ranger presented in Figure 3-16 exemplifies the kind of changes that occur in crossroads communities. The building's form and massing remain intact. In addition, the parapet displays brick masonry work that distinguishes the building and showcases the skills of its builder. However, modifications at the street level, such as the entrance and the application of metal panels, do not date from the downtown's period of significance and have a negative effect on the building's historic character. Street-level changes represent about two-thirds of the surface area of the front. The combined effect of these alterations is substantial enough to compromise the building's integrity of *Design, Feeling, Setting, and Materials*. While vestiges of the building's original exterior remain visible, a large amount of the surface area on the primary façade no longer retains its historic finishes, and the building lacks sufficient integrity to be individually eligible or even be a contributing resource within a district.

The Hodges-Neal Building is noteworthy within Ranger because it displays a high level of architectural design and ornamentation that reflects the city's prosperity during the oil boom of the late 1910s and 1920s (Figure 3-17). Like the previous illustration, however, the building has experienced severe changes at the pedestrian level. The enclosure of the windows and doors and the removal of the canopy negatively affect the building's historic character and integrity. However, the vertical piers, though difficult to discern in this image, still divide the street level portion of the building into seven bays. They are also consistent with the original fenestration pattern, which remains intact on the upper floors. Pedestrian-level changes diminish the building's integrity of *Materials, Design and Feeling* to a degree, but the rest of the building is largely intact and still retains the ability to convey its significance as a noteworthy building from the oil boom era. It contributes to the historic character of the downtown but lacks sufficient integrity to be individually eligible in its current state.



**Figure 3-18 (left).
Building in the 100
block of W. Dale Street,
Winters.**

This *One-Part Commercial Block* building retains some of its character-defining features, but changes to the fenestration overpower the building's ability to convey its historic character.

**Figure 3-19 (right).
Building in the 400
block of W. Main
Street, Ranger.**

Despite severe alterations at the pedestrian level, this building retains some of its most important architectural features.



Fenestration

Changes to the arrangement and rhythm of window and door openings (fenestration) represent one of the most common types of changes to resources within the *Commercial Buildings* property type category. The building shown in Figure 3-18 provides graphic documentation of the effect changes to fenestration can have to a building and how such alterations affect multiple aspects of integrity. While the rhythm of the bay openings is maintained by the presence of the brick and cast-iron engaged columns, the bricked-in windows and doors and the placement of corrugated metal panels over the transoms change the character of the building. Besides disrupting the fenestration pattern and integrity of *Design, Feeling, and Workmanship*, the introduction of non-historic materials compromise the building's integrity of *Materials*. In contrast, the upper part of the building (parapet) remains virtually unaltered; however, changes at the pedestrian level overwhelm the building's overall ability to convey a sense of the past. This illustration also demonstrates how important fenestration is to a *One-Part Commercial Block* building. Although the parapet is a distinctive part of the front, the pedestrian zone represents a far greater percentage of the façade surface area and is more directly associated with the way people perceive and experience the building and the businesses operating inside. The building clearly has potential to be rehabilitated, but in its present state, changes to the fenestration diminish the building's ability to convey its significance individually or as part of a district.

Figure 3-19 provides another opportunity to show how important fenestration is to a building. This *Two-Part Commercial Block* building features noteworthy craftsmanship and detailing as well as terra cotta and tiled exterior finishes that make the building noteworthy within downtown Ranger. Despite the distinctive architectural ornamentation, the complete enclosure of the fenestration on the ground floor represents a major alteration that diminishes multiple aspects of integrity (*Design, Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling*). Despite the severity of these changes as well as the covering of transoms and upper-floor window openings with plywood panels, the building still retain sufficient integrity, albeit minimally, to contribute to the ability of the downtown to convey significance. It clearly lacks sufficient integrity to be individually eligible.



Figure 3-20 (left).
Dublin National Bank
Building at 128 S.
Patrick Street, Dublin.

All of the historic windows and doors on this building have been replaced. Although some of the original architectural ornament is intact, the multitude of changes to the exterior disrupts the building's integrity and historic character.

Figure 3-21 (right).
Building in the 100
block of N. Main Street,
Winters.

Storefront alterations diminish much of the historic character of this *One-Part Commercial Block* building. However, the building retains enough of its salient features to contribute, if only to a marginal level, to the historic character of the downtown.

Windows and Doors

The Dublin National Bank building is a prominent architectural landmark in downtown Dublin (Figure 3-20). With a strong horizontal emphasis and distinctive ornamentation, the building exhibits a stylistic influence of the Prairie School, which enjoyed a degree of popularity in many crossroads communities in the study area during the 1910s. Although the bank possesses significance for these qualities, the window and door replacements, along with the new canopy and sign, disrupt integrity of *Materials*, *Design*, and *Feeling*. Their overall impact to the building's historic character and ambiance is so severe that the building lacks sufficient integrity to convey significance for its physical attributes. When viewed from the front, the building's noteworthy architectural qualities are no longer discernible. The side elevation retains more of its historic fabric, but the effect of the window replacements is even more pronounced. The bank and its continued operation provides a link to, and continuity with, the period in which the downtown achieved significance; however, changes to the windows and doors as well as other alterations diminish its contributions to the downtown's historic character.

The building in Figure 3-21 is one of a series of *One-Part Commercial Block* buildings in downtown Winters. While the parapet is completely unaltered and retains its character-defining features to an exceptional degree, the ground level has been subject to multiple changes. The original door and windows, for example, have been replaced with non-historic units that are inconsistent with the building's historic appearance and feel. In addition, the sheet metal panels over the transoms and the removal of the canopy are other historically insensitive changes. On the other hand, the pedestrian level retains its prominent and finely crafted brick pedestals and cast-iron columns, and the fenestration (rhythm) is largely intact. Despite window and door changes and other modifications, the building retains marginal integrity of *Design*, *Materials*, *Workmanship*, and *Feeling*, and contributes to the significance of the downtown.



Figure 3-22 (top left). Higginbotham Store, Cross Plains.

The existing canopy is a strong visual element that encompasses much of the exterior surface of the building.

Figure 3-23 (top right). Parade in downtown Cross Plains, 1940s.

This image, posted at <http://crossplainstx.com>, shows the building with its original canopy.

Figure 3-24 (bottom left). Buildings in the 200 block of N. Robinson, Miles.

The replacement canopies are less obtrusive than those on the Higginbotham Store in Cross Plains.



Canopy Removal and Changes

Canopies are an often overlooked architectural element of resources in the *Commercial Buildings* property type category; however, they are a prominent part of the composition and organization of the façade and are important visual element. They also separate pedestrian/street-level zone from the rest of a building. The removal of a canopy or the replacement with non-historic materials and/or different profile, shape, or size can change the aesthetic quality of a historic commercial building. Figure 3-22 presents a good example. This building has a broad, shed-roofed, composition-shingle-covered canopy that extends across the front and continues to the side. It constitutes almost 50 percent of the surface area of the front façade. Although the corbelled brick and historic painted sign in the parapet are noteworthy, the canopy visually overwhelms these features and much of the building's historic fabric. Compared with the historic photograph (Figure 3-23), it is clear that the present canopy changes the character of the building. Other changes at the street level including the replacement of windows and doors as well as sidewalk alterations disrupt the building's historic character, but the canopy is the biggest factor and detracts from integrity of *Design, Materials, and Feeling*.

The row of *One-Part Commercial Block* buildings in Miles includes three separate stores with replacement canopies (Figure 3-24). In contrast to the general store in Figure 3-22, the canopies do not represent as massive a visual and architectural feature and are less obtrusive. They clearly diminish the ability of the buildings to evoke a sense of the past, but are not as severe as the building in Cross Plains. In addition, the storefronts on these buildings retain their original configuration and have been subject to fewer changes. These buildings lack sufficient integrity to be individually eligible but retain enough of their historic fabric to be contributing to a downtown historic district.



Figure 3-25 (left). Two-Part Commercial Block building in the 100 block of N. Patrick Street, Dublin.

Multiple changes to this historic building diminish its ability to convey significance. Some character-defining features are visible, but the combined effect of alterations compromises the building's integrity.

Figure 3-26 (right). Building in the 100 block of Edwards Street, Merkel.

While this building has been subjected to multiple alterations, it retains sufficient integrity to contribute to the district's historic character and significance.

Combined Effect of Alterations

Most of the resources in the *Commercial Buildings* property type category retain some their character-defining features, but have been altered to varying degrees. Many of these buildings are clearly recognizable as historic resources, but the combined effect of multiple, oftentimes reversible alterations, can diminish aspects of integrity to such an extent that the building no longer conveys significance. The building in Figure 3-25 is a *Two-Part Commercial Block* building in downtown Dublin that has been subject to multiple alterations. While the fenestration on the second floor has been maintained and the original 2/2 double-hung windows are still in place, the application of stucco disrupts the building's integrity of *Materials* and *Feeling*. The stucco also obscures but does not completely compromise the noteworthy brickwork in the cornice and hoodmolds. These elements remain visible. The new canopy is another obtrusive element that also detracts from the building's historic character. Its profile and use of metal are not consistent with the original canopy. First-floor changes include replacement windows and doors, but the fenestration is largely intact, at least on the front (east) façade. While some elements of the building's historic character are still visible, the combined effect of the many alterations compromises its integrity of *Materials*, *Design*, *Workmanship*, and *Feeling*. The building has the potential to be rehabilitated, but in its present state does not possess the ability to convey significance either individually or as part of a district.

The building in Figure 3-26 has also been subjected to numerous modifications over the years. The exterior brick finish has been painted, and plywood sheets cover the entire set of transom windows. In addition, all of the windows and doors at the building's two storefronts have been replaced, and glazed tile presently covers the entire exterior surface. These changes diminish the building's integrity of *Materials*, *Design*, *Workmanship*, and *Feeling*. However, the intricacy and artisanship of the building's detailed corbelled cornice is intact, and the canopy, though itself a replacement, has a low, unobtrusive profile and is supported by a series of metal rods. Furthermore, the fenestration at the street level retains its original configuration. Although the building has been altered and lacks sufficient integrity to convey significance on its own, it retains enough of its integrity of *Materials*, *Design*, *Workmanship*, and *Feeling* to contribute to the ability of the downtown to be significant.

GAS STATIONS

The other major property category found in the downtowns of crossroads communities is the *Gas Station*. Under a work authorization by TxDOT, architectural historian and preservation planner W. Dwayne Jones developed an effective guide to categorize and evaluate the many kinds of historic gas stations found throughout the state. The report is entitled *Historical Studies Report No. 2003-03: A Field Guide to Gas Stations in Texas*. Jones based his typology on the following attributes: the basic form of the gas station, the kinds of architectural features and detailing utilized, the period in which it was built, and the companies whose products were sold. The many gas stations observed in the field for this study fit the classifications described in Jones' report. The integrity analysis in the report also provides useful guidelines for assessing how changes affect the ability of a gas station to convey significance.

Based on the results of field investigations undertaken for the project, five subtypes within the *Gas Stations* property type category were identified. They include:

- *House with Canopy*
- *Box with Canopy*
- *Oblong Box with Canopy*
- *One-Part Commercial Block*

The attributes and character-defining features of each subtype are defined in the following pages. Photographic examples of each property subtype follow textual definitions and highlight salient architectural elements and features.

House with Canopy

This property subtype features a house, functioning as a small office, with a square or rectangular footprint and an attached canopy. The office, which is at the back of the building's overall layout, contains a space reserved primarily for the station attendant. Extending from the office to the street, the canopy creates an open bay where vehicles have direct access to the gasoline pump(s) yet remain protected from the elements. The canopy and open bay represent the signature physical attributes of this property subtype. A hipped, gabled, or flat roof often surmounts the arrangement. Resources in this category consist of freestanding buildings that typically occupy corner lots and sit at a 45-degree angle to the street intersection. Such building placement enables the gas station to be accessible from either of the streets.

Character-defining features:

- One-story house with wood-frame or load-bearing construction
- Gabled or hipped roof over house
- Exterior finish of brick, wood, stucco, or metal
- Single-door entrance
- Wood-frame, double-hung windows
- Visually prominent canopy with flat, gabled, or hipped roof
- Open bay within canopy
- Prominent columns at each corner of the canopy
- Driveways from the street, facilitating vehicular access to the property
- Company-specific graphic features and attributes that are described in more detail in *A Field Guide to Gas Stations in Texas*

Other features that may be present:

- Pumps (a historically vital function to this property type, but often removed for safety and/or environmental reasons)
- Concrete pavement under canopy
- Free-standing signs at street corners

Common associated architectural styles or movements:

- Craftsman
- Modern



- 1 Hipped roof
- 2 Open service bay
- 3 Brick columns with corbelling at corners of canopy
- 4 Cast-stone lintels above windows and doors
- 5 Wood-frame, double-hung windows
- 6 Small office at rear of building
- 7 Oblique orientation of edifice on corner lot

Figure 3-27. House with Canopy building at the northeast corner of First Street and Elm Street, Hico.

This gas station is a good example of a *House with Canopy* subtype. It retains many of its original architectural features.

Despite the construction debris on the lot, this gas station retains the salient features that identify it as a *House with Canopy* subtype, including the hipped roof and open service bay (Figure 3-27). It occupies a corner lot that fronts onto two streets at the outskirts of the downtown, and the building's angled orientation makes it easily accessible from two sides. In addition, the office still has wood-frame double-hung windows and wood-paneled doors with glazing. The open service bay has pressed metal ceiling tiles. The most obvious alterations are the absence of gas pumps and the lack of a concrete driveway. This *Gas Station* type was common throughout the study area during the early years of the automobile age, but this building is one of the intact and least-altered illustrations. Although it is no longer used as a gas station, which diminishes its integrity of *Association*, the building retains all other aspects of integrity. It still possesses the ability to convey significance as a good local example of its subtype, both individually and as part of a district.

Box with Canopy

A gas station in this category shares many of the same physical characteristics exhibited as those resources classified as *House with Canopy*. Like its counterpart, a *Box with Canopy* gas station has a small office with an attached canopy and an open bay with pumps. However, resources classified as a *Box with Canopy* typically have flat-roofed offices and canopies giving the buildings their distinctive box-like form. Gas stations in this category are freestanding and often occupy corner lots, and have driveways that make them accessible from the intersecting streets.

Character-defining features:

- One-story office with wood-frame or load-bearing construction
- Flat-roofed office and canopy
- Exterior finish of brick, wood, stone, stucco, or metal
- Single-door entrance
- Wood-frame, double-hung windows
- Visually prominent canopy that is attached to office
- Open bay within canopy
- Prominent columns at each corner of the canopy
- Driveways from the street, facilitating vehicular access to property
- Company-specific graphic features and attributes that are described in more detail in *A Field Guide to Gas Stations in Texas*

Other features that may be present:

- Pumps (a historically vital function to this property type, but often removed for safety and/or environmental reasons)
- Concrete pavement under canopy
- Free-standing signs

Common associated architectural styles or movements:

- Craftsman



Figure 3-28. Box with Canopy building in 400 block of Ground Street, Moran.

This severely altered gas station is one of the few examples of a *Box with Canopy* subtype observed in the communities visited for this study.

This is the only example of a *Box with Canopy* gas station subtype documented for this study (Figure 3-28). Located in Moran, it presents a box-like massing that is the most distinctive physical characteristic of this subtype. The additions, introduction of new materials, and overall condition diminish the building’s integrity of *Materials, Feeling, Design, and Workmanship*. Furthermore, the gable-roofed rear addition changes the building’s overall massing and form and greatly diminishes some of the most important features that define this gas station within this property subtype. Since this building has been subject to extensive alterations that interfere with the gas station’s integrity, it no longer retains the ability to convey its significance, either individually or as part of the historic downtown. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy, albeit marginally, as the only extant example of a *Box with Canopy* gas station in the crossroads communities documented in this study.

Oblong Box with Canopy

The two previously defined subtypes of the *Gas Station* building type category are distinctive primarily because each form has a prominent attached canopy that extends from the office. The *Oblong Box with Canopy*, in contrast, features a less dominant and off-center canopy that creates an L-shaped footprint. The main building is laterally arranged and typically is one room deep and two or three rooms wide. This configuration provides spaces for an attendant office and restrooms as well as one or two service bays. The canopy is often offset to, and extends at a right angle from, the office. Like other gas stations, the *Oblong Box with Canopy* is a freestanding building that typically occupies a corner lot; however, it faces directly onto one street and is not set at an angle like most other types of gas stations.

Character-defining features:

- One-story main building with an attendant office, restrooms, and service bay(s)
- Flat roof
- Exterior finish of brick or porcelain enamel tile
- Single- or double-door entrance
- Large plate-glass windows
- Large overhead doors that provide access to service bays/garage
- Flat-roofed canopy that extends from office and provides coverage over pumps
- Open bay within canopy
- Narrow columns/supports that create a cantilevered-like quality to the canopy
- Driveways from the street, facilitating vehicular access to property

Other features that may be present:

- Pumps (a historically vital function to this property type but often removed for safety and/or environmental reasons)
- Concrete pavement under canopy
- Free-standing signs

Common associated architectural styles or movements:

- Modern



- 1 Flat roof
- 2 Partial width, flat-roofed canopy
- 3 Overhead doors with glazing
- 4 Large plate-glass windows
- 5 Off-center office with single-door entrance
- 6 Corner location with concrete driveways

Figure 3-29. Oblong Box with Canopy building in the 100 block of N. Main Street (US 183), Rising Star.

This gas station is a relatively intact example of an *Oblong Box with Canopy*, a popular type of gas station from the mid-twentieth century.

This building in Rising Star is an example of a mid-century gas station (Figure 3-29). Located on the north end of the downtown, the gas station marks the southbound entrance into Rising Star’s historic commercial center along US 183. The building has been subject to some change, most notably the removal of gas pumps and the placement of an overhead metal door in one of the garage bay openings. However, the building retains other salient features of an *Oblong Box with Canopy* gas station including its elongated plan and canopy over the pumping area. Other noteworthy features include the wood paneled garage doors with glazing and the original wood-frame windows, transoms, and doors. The building is presently vacant, which affects its integrity of *Association* and to a lesser degree integrity of *Feeling*, but it still retains other aspects of integrity and contributes to the historic character of the downtown.

One-Part Commercial Block

Like a retail store or other commercial buildings within the same category, a gas station classified as a *One-Part Commercial Block* is a one-story building with a cube-like massing and a flat or slightly pitched roof. Examples of gas stations in this category typically occupy corner lots and have open bays on the two sides that front onto the intersecting streets. Although curbing may exist at the street corner, the driveways that lead to the open bays lack curbing and have inclined paved driveways that allow vehicles easy access to and from the pumping-bay area set within the building. The office is set at an angle to the street intersection, and the garage or service bays have a separate entrance on one side of the building.

Character-defining features:

- One-story building with a rectangular plan or footprint
- Load-bearing construction with brick or masonry exterior finish
- Single- or double-door entrance and large, wood-frame, plate-glass windows
- Open pumping bay area accessible from two streets
- Large masonry pier at front corner overlooking street intersection
- Parapet that obscures the flat or slightly pitched roof

Other features that may be present:

- Pumps (a historically vital function to this property type, but often removed for safety and/or environmental reasons)
- Concrete pavement within service bay
- Garage or service bay on side with separate entrance
- Pressed metal ceiling tiles in open pumping bay area
- Free-standing signs

Common associated architectural styles or movements:

- Prairie School



- 1 Massing and form similar to commercial building
- 2 Large inset open bay
- 3 Prominent masonry pier at corner
- 4 Large plate-glass windows
- 5 Overhead doors to garage/service bay
- 6 Corner location accessible from two sides

Figure 3-30. One-Part Commercial Block building at the southwest corner of Avenue C and E. Elm Street, Olney.

This gas station subtype closely resembles the *One-Part Commercial Block* subtype within the *Commercial Buildings* category.

This building in Olney is a good example of a *One-Part Commercial Block* building, and remains largely recognizable as a gas station despite the removal of pumps (Figure 3-30). The open service bays and corner location are among the most distinctive features of this subtype. Although not visible in this photograph, the ceiling in the open service bay has pressed metal tiles, again another common architectural element of this form. The application of paint over the brick exterior service, removal of gas pumps, and rear additions diminish integrity of *Materials* and *Design*. However, it retains other aspects of integrity to sufficient levels to contribute to the historic character of the downtown. Furthermore, its massing, form, and setback are consistent with those attributes of the vast majority of other commercial buildings in the downtown.

Common Alterations (Affected Aspects of Integrity)

As with resources within the *Commercial Buildings* property type category, none of the gas stations documented for this study remain unaltered and in their original state. The degree to which changes and modifications affect their respective integrity depends primarily on the character-defining features of each subtype, but also considers the date of the changes, their reversibility and severity, and the unique circumstances of the resource and its setting. The most common changes include the removal of gas pumps and the abandonment or repurposing of the gas station for other uses or functions. The combined effects of multiple alterations completed outside the period may diminish the integrity of a resource to such a degree that it detracts from the downtown's historic character. Field investigations revealed common trends among the communities visited for this study, and the most common kinds of alterations are noted below.

Common Alterations and Conditions (Affected Aspects of Integrity)

- **General/setting:**
 - Vacant and in state of disrepair (*Feeling and Association*)
 - Conversion for use as an office, store, or other function (*Association and Feeling*)
 - Removal of associated signage (*Feeling, Setting, and Association*)
- **Office or storefront:**
 - Replacement or covering of doors, windows, or garage doors (*Materials, Design, Feeling, and Workmanship*)
 - Reconfigured storefront and service bay/garage openings; changes to fenestration (*Design, Materials, and Feeling*)
 - Introduction of non-historic materials or finishes onto exterior surfaces (*Materials, Design, and Feeling*)
- **Pumping area within canopy:**
 - Removal of historic canopy (*Design, Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling*)
 - Enclosure of canopy/service area and introduction of materials, forms, and architectural elements that do not date from period of significance (*Materials, Design, Feeling, and Workmanship*)



Figure 3-31 (left). Brick-paved street in 900 block of N. Second Street, Merkel.

Increased popularity of automobiles in the 1910s and 1920s led many towns, such as Merkel, to install brick paving in downtowns.

Figure 3-32 (right). Decorative concrete sidewalk in the 100 block of N. Patrick, Dublin.

This is a relatively rare example of a historic downtown sidewalk with decorative features. Its date of construction is not known, but it likely dates to the 1930s. It is a noteworthy feature of the downtown and adds to its historic character.

OTHER TYPES OF RESOURCES

Besides the aforementioned types of properties, the historic downtowns in crossroads communities have other kinds of resources that are not only part of the overall cityscapes but may also enhance, or in other instances detract from, the ability of a commercial area to convey a sense of the past. These resources do not necessarily constitute a large or significant part of the built environment, nor are they critical in defining the overall historic character of the downtown. Nonetheless, they do constitute features that should be documented and evaluated as part of a historic district analysis. As with resources in the previously defined property subtypes, it is important to establish the degree to which these other resource types retain their character-defining features and to determine if they date from the period of significance. Such factors are fundamental to property type analysis. The following are among the most common examples documented during field investigations, and are grouped by their physical characteristics and associative qualities.

Brick-paved streets – an infrastructural improvement dating from the early twentieth century (Figure 3-31). Many of the crossroads communities still retain their brick-paved streets, and this feature may be a significant physical attribute that contributes to the downtown’s historic character. Common alterations that can affect integrity include covering or patching brick paving with non-historic materials.

Concrete or brick sidewalks – an often-overlooked feature that is associated not only with individual buildings but also with the entire downtown (Figure 3-32). Other sidewalk elements include scoring, inlaid tiles, and embedded metal rings. Changes, modifications, and replacement of sidewalks can diminish the downtown’s overall ability to convey a sense of the past. Common alterations that can affect integrity include covering or patching sidewalks with non-historic materials.

Stone or concrete curbing – part of the roadway infrastructure. Like sidewalks, this feature is a resource type that represents an important aspect of the historic downtowns of crossroads communities (Figure 3-33). Some curbing



Figure 3-33 (top left).
Stone and concrete
curbing in Miles.



Figure 3-34 (top right).
Historic fountain in
downtown Hico.

Figure 3-35 (bottom).
Freestanding sign in
Rising Star.



observed during field investigations included multiple layers with different materials that reflected trends in local and/or state-funded public works projects. In addition, the curbing may have inlaid tiles or painted street signs and other decorative features, such as stamped imprints. Common alterations that can affect integrity include covering or patching curbs with non-historic materials.

Landscaping elements – any of a variety of designed features such as fountains, parks, site furnishings, etc., that typically compose a broader landscape in a downtown area (Figure 3-34). Although relatively rare in crossroads communities, landscape elements may be an important part of the city centers’ historic character that often commemorates a significant event, trend, person, or organization within the community. It is particularly important to establish or estimate the date of construction or placement. Those that postdate the period of significance may actually detract from the historic character of a downtown.

Freestanding signs – a detached and independent structure typically placed in front of a commercial building or other enterprise within the downtown (Figure 3-35). Such features are rare within crossroads communities and usually were erected late during the period of significance. In addition, attached signs that extend from a parapet fulfill a similar function and may be an important element to an individual building. Rather than being counted as a separate resource, a detached sign may be a character-defining element of a historic building.



**Figure 3-36 (left).
Embedded stop sign in
Merkel.**

Many of the crossroads communities have similar kinds of objects that are a vivid reminder of the early years of the automobile era. This sign was manufactured by George C. Christopherson of Wichita, Kansas, likely from the late 1910s. Ghost marks showing the outline of such objects are still visible at street intersections in some cities, such as Miles.

**Figure 3-37 (right).
Railroad tracks
extending through
downtown Lometa.**

The railroad played a critical role in the history and development of Lometa. The tracks influenced the physical growth of the town and have remained a focal point within the community.

Embedded stop signs – objects used to control vehicular traffic within the downtowns (Figure 3-36). Some crossroads communities still retain antiquated traffic stop signs that are embedded at busy intersections, usually in the middle of secondary streets. They typically are in locations where the historic brick paving remains intact. These signs are of metal construction and have the word “STOP” in large raised letters that can be seen, at least in theory, by drivers. They were designed to be noticed, not to impede traffic. The practice of using such devices soon lost its appeal, as they no doubt proved to be ineffective. Although they were used for a relatively short time during the early years of the automobile era, they can enhance the ability of a downtown to convey a sense of the past.

Railroad tracks – an important physical feature in almost all of the historic downtowns of crossroads communities (Figure 3-37). Not only did the tracks affect the physical development of the downtown, they played a significant role in the economic, industrial, commercial, and even agricultural growth of the communities and surrounding areas. Although part of a large system that extends far beyond a particular commercial area, railroad tracks represent an important physical feature of any crossroads community and can be used to define the limits of a commercial district and serve as a boundary of a historic district. The materials originally used for tracks have all been replaced over time due to the ongoing use and safety concerns; however, they still strongly convey a sense of the past and contribute to the historic character of any downtown.

Grain mills and elevators and feed mills – part of an industrial complex used to store, process, and ship grain (Figure 3-38). Since farming and the cultivation of wheat, among other crops, historically represent fundamental aspects of the agricultural-based economies of many crossroads communities and surrounding areas, grain mills and elevators are a common resource type. They typically are located adjacent to and have direct access to railroads. They are often grouped in industrial zones, usually located on the opposite side of the tracks of commercial and retail areas or, as is the case in Winters, between the downtown and the railroads. These industrial operations typically include one or more offices, as well as a series of large multi-story concrete cylinders and

groupings of metal silos or storage bins. A complex system of conveyors moves and distributes grain within the complex.



Figure 3-38 (left). Grain mill and elevator in Winters.

This industrial complex supports the local agriculture-based economy.

Figure 3-39 (right). Warehouses within railroad right-of-way in downtown Merkel.

This large warehouse is directly adjacent to a grain elevator complex in Merkel.

Figure 3-40 (bottom). Oil tanks in railroad right-of-way, Lometa.

This complex, which also includes an associated warehouse/office, is a common resource type built along railroad right-of-ways.

Warehouses – utilitarian structures used to store goods, materials, and equipment for shipment and distribution, typically located near railroad tracks (Figure 3-39). The warehouses may reflect important trends in the local economy. For example, Lometa is in an area where many ranchers raised sheep and goats. Several warehouses were built in the downtown area near the railroad during the early twentieth century to facilitate the shipment of locally produced wool and mohair by rail. Warehouses in crossroads communities are usually wood-frame structures with corrugated metal siding and gabled roofs. They typically lack distinctive architectural detailing, but have large sliding doors that provide easy access to loading docks.



Oil tanks – above-ground cylindrical metal storage tanks placed on metal stands, typically located adjacent to railroad tracks (Figure 3-40).

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Following guidelines the National Park Service (NPS) developed for National Register Multiple Property nominations, the Registration Requirements in this section define parameters to evaluate resources for NRHP eligibility within the framework of a historic context and associated property types. Furthermore, they promote a more consistent application of the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, assessments of integrity, and NRHP eligibility recommendations. Registration Requirements must be customized to evaluate the kinds of resources found within a defined geographic area and period of time; in this instance, historic downtown areas in crossroads communities from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the northwest part of Central Texas. Although these Registration Requirements are intended to set a standard that can be applied in similar settings throughout the region, they should not be considered static. Rather, they can and should be revised as more information is learned about the history and the types of resources in the region.

The steps outlined for these Registration Requirements consider both the physical attributes and associative qualities of a historic downtown and its components (buildings, structures, objects, and sites) in their existing state and condition, and delineate a process of comparing resources within a local context. They also facilitate an understanding of what makes a group of resources significant for its associations with important trends, events, or persons of the past. The grouping may also possess significance collectively even if the buildings lack significance on an individual basis. For example, a downtown may contain a cohesive collection of architectural styles, forms, or methods of construction. These Registration Requirements provide guidelines for assessing to what degree any grouping of historic-age resources retains those qualities and attributes to evoke a sense of the past and conveys its significance.

KEY DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

Federal regulations clearly state that NRHP eligibility is a two-step process that requires a resource to 1) possess significance under at least one of the National Register Criteria, and 2) retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance. Understanding what these standards are and how they are to be applied is critical for these Registration Requirements to be an effective decision-making tool.

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

The National Register Criteria for Evaluation address the quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture that is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity

of *Location, Design, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling, and Association*, and:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of significant persons of the past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.¹

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS

The National Register also includes exceptions to the four criteria, which are known as criteria considerations. Ordinarily, cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures; properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes; buildings or structures that have been moved from their original locations; reconstructed historic buildings; properties that are primarily commemorative in nature; and other properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years are not considered eligible for the NRHP. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts or conform to the following criteria:

- A. A religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic importance.
- B. A building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or it is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event.
- C. A birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no other appropriate site or building directly associated with his or her productive life.
- D. A cemetery that derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events.
- E. A reconstructed building, when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived.
- F. A property primarily commemorative in intent of design, age, tradition, or symbolic value that has invested it with its own historical significance.
- G. A property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.

¹ National Register Bulletin: *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, 1990, p. 2.

SEVEN ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY

The National Register recognizes the ability of a resource to convey its significance through seven aspects of integrity, each of which is defined below:

Location – the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.

Design – the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.

Setting – the physical environment of a historic property.

Materials – the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.

Workmanship – the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.

Feeling – the property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.

Association – the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

A resource need not retain all of the seven aspects of integrity to be eligible for the NRHP, and conversely, a resource possessing all of the seven aspects of integrity is not necessarily eligible for the NRHP. The degree to which an NRHP-eligible property retains its integrity depends on the qualities that make it significant and under which National Register Criteria the resource derives significance. For example, a district that possesses significance under Criterion C as a good collection of early twentieth-century commercial architecture must retain its physical aspects of integrity (*Materials*, *Design*, and *Workmanship*) to a higher degree than a district that is significant for its role in the commercial development of a community (Criterion A). Nonetheless, the district must still be recognizable to the time or era in which it attained significance.

AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE

National Register guidelines require the identification of the specific historical or cultural theme(s) in which a resource attained significance. The NPS calls these themes "areas of significance," and they must be defined and explored in the associated historic context. Mere association with an area of significance does not mean that a resource meets any of the National Register Criteria, nor do the historic functions that took place within an individual property or district automatically indicate that it possesses significance. The resource must have become important and achieved significance within that area. For example, a retail store is not necessarily significant in the area of *Commerce* because of its historical operation as a commercial enterprise. The retail store may be noteworthy if the business operating in it played a pivotal role in the broader patterns of the community's commercial history and development.



Figure 4-1 (left). 100 block of W. Main Street, Lometa.

This streetscape presents a cohesive grouping of commercial buildings that date from the turn-of-the-twentieth century. It reflects the city's emergence as an important retail and shipping center in northwest Lampasas County.

Figure 4-2 (right). 100 block of N. Main Street, Rising Star.

This streetscape is typical of many historic downtowns in the study area. It features a high density of one- and two-story masonry commercial buildings that reflect the significance of Rising Star when agriculture and oil-related activities provided the underpinnings of the local economy.



PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

The NPS defines the period of significance as the length of time in which a property gained significance and was associated with important events, trends, themes, activities, and/or persons; or in which it attained the characteristics that enable it to meet any of the National Register Criteria. The period of significance may be as short as one year, such as the date in which an architecturally significant property was built, or it could be a range of years in which a downtown or commercial area developed over time (Figures 4-1 and 4-2). In the case of a historic district, the period of significance often begins with the date of construction of the oldest extant resource within the district. However, a district's period of significance may also begin with the year in which the original plat was filed at the county courthouse. In such a situation, the plat represents a direct response to economic conditions and other trends and patterns that existed at the time, and/or the plat established the physical layout and configuration for subsequent development. The close of the period of significance depends on the reasons the resource attained significance. For example, if a district is significant under Criterion C as a noteworthy collection of architecture, the period of significance typically ends when the district was fully developed and the district's salient physical features and attributes were established. On the other hand, the period of significance for a district significant for its historical associations may conclude when the historical theme that fueled the district's development ended.

The period of significance usually does not extend beyond the 50-year age threshold normally required for NRHP eligibility. However, the close of the period of significance can be less than the recommended 50-year threshold if the resource possesses exceptional significance within the recent past in compliance with Criteria Consideration G.

National Register guidelines state that the 50-year threshold can be used as the closing date for the period of significance when the activities by which the resource attained significance continue to have importance and a specific date cannot be defined to end the historic period. However, National Register

Bulletin 16a clearly states that, “continued use or activity does not necessarily justify continuing the period of significance. The period of significance is based upon the time when the property made the contributions or achieved the character on which significance is based.”²

ASSESSING THE NRHP ELIGIBILITY OF A HISTORIC DISTRICT

A district includes a cohesive grouping of historic-age resources within a well-defined area that is distinct from its surroundings. To be eligible for the NRHP, a district must possess significance under at least one of the National Register Criteria and retain enough of the attributes and qualities to convey its significance and evoke a strong sense of the past—usually to a specific period. The resources within the district must also share many common physical traits that enhance the area’s overall cohesiveness. Collectively, the resources must retain a relatively high degree of their historic character and integrity from the period when the district attained significance and/or share a common history and development, depending on the reason(s) the district derives significance. The resources within a district do not necessarily possess significance on an individual basis; rather, they derive significance collectively and are considered as a single entity. Although buildings of more recent construction (built after the district’s period of significance) inevitably exist within the district’s boundaries, these modern buildings must be limited in numbers and have a minimal impact on the area’s overall historic character and ambiance. Any resource constructed outside the district’s period of significance cannot be a contributing element of the district. Likewise, changes, alterations, and the loss of historic fabric to individual resources must also be considered and may render a historic building as a noncontributing element. The combined effect of these kinds of modifications may diminish the area’s ability to convey its sense of the past to such an extent that the district may not even be eligible for inclusion in the NRHP.

A single building usually reflects the significance of a particular event, person, or architectural style, type, or form; however, a historic district provides a more complete cross-section of local history and reflects broad themes and influences that contributed to the overall growth and development of a community. The historic downtown of a crossroads community, for example, may also indicate how this area within the host city functioned within a local context and how it illustrates important trends and patterns in commerce and trade. The architectural forms and stylistic influences within a district can also reveal much about local developmental patterns and can show how local designers, builders, and contractors followed prevailing tastes in commercial architectural design. For example, the downtown may represent a noteworthy collection of buildings that illustrates the brick masonry traditions and craftsmanship that largely defined commercial construction of the late nineteenth or early twentieth

² National Register Bulletin: *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, 1997, p. 42.

centuries. It could also reflect local access to outside markets that introduced new materials and architectural forms.

Many factors are taken into consideration when assessing the NRHP eligibility of a historic district. Among the most important are the analysis of the predominant physical characteristics of the area and its resources along with an assessment of how the district survives as a cohesive grouping that is distinct from its surroundings. Typically, a historic district includes a significant concentration of buildings that are of a similar type, age, use, style, and/or form. This is certainly true of the downtowns of crossroads communities in the study area where the vast majority of the buildings are commercial properties built during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries near the intersection of two locally important highways or routes.

Other physical features to be considered in the designation of a historic district include the scale, siting, and orientation of historic properties, as well as landscaping efforts. These elements can further evoke or enhance a feeling of a specific time or place. The physical layout of the blocks and lots often contributes to the historic setting and feeling of the area and can demonstrate important growth patterns. In downtowns of crossroads communities, the historic-age resources typically are one- or two-story commercial buildings of masonry construction that face onto either of the two regionally important roads that intersect in the community. The downtown is readily recognizable as a distinct part of the host community.

Besides considering existing physical attributes, a historic district must also be evaluated based on the associative qualities shared collectively by the resources within its limits. In a crossroads community in the study area, the downtown represents the historic core of commerce and trade. The businesses that operated in the buildings were cornerstones of the local economy and facilitated the sale, trade, and distribution of goods and services. This activity enabled town residents, as well as nearby farmers and ranchers, to enjoy the region's economic prosperity. The shared history and common purpose of buildings within the district serve as important unifying factors that set the downtown apart from its surroundings.

A historic district that is eligible for the NRHP must possess significance under at least one of the National Register Criteria as well as retain a sufficient amount of its historic character and integrity to convey that significance. To that end, the following section of the report provides guidance for assessing the NRHP eligibility of commercial historic districts in crossroads communities in the study area. These guidelines are based on the limited field investigations and research undertaken at selected cities in support of this project. They also stem from the author's knowledge of and experience with these types of resources and the



Figure 4-3 (left). Area within historic downtown, 100 block of S. Main Street (US 83), Winters.

This image, looking northwest, shows a concentration of one- and two-story commercial buildings that date from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Figure 4-4 (right). Transitional area outside southern limits of downtown, 200 block of S. Main Street (US 83), Winters.

This view, looking southwest, shows how the density seen in the 100 block breaks down dramatically to the south. Many of the crossroads communities documented for this study have relatively new post offices that are just beyond the historic downtowns.

process of applying the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. These guidelines are subject to change and revision based on further investigations and analysis following the completion of supplemental field surveys and more in-depth historical research.

DETERMINE THE BOUNDARIES OF A HISTORIC DISTRICT

Since a historic district is distinct from its surroundings, the process of delineating the limits of the district is among the most important steps for evaluating NRHP eligibility. The boundaries must rely heavily on information and observations noted during field investigations; however, they must also consider historical patterns of development and other research-based data sets. This two-step approach provides the only effective means of considering not only the multitude of factors that contributed to a downtown's development, but also the ability of the downtown to stand apart from its surroundings and convey significance within a local context.

Field Investigations

Information obtained from field investigations clearly represents the foundation for determining the boundaries of an area being evaluated for NRHP eligibility as a district. Historians must inspect the downtown itself and record historic-age resources, but they must also examine adjoining areas during field investigations (Figures 4-3 and 4-4). Such a process will reveal significant concentrations of resources that share common physical traits and associative qualities, and will also identify transitional areas where the cohesiveness of land use and building forms in the downtown begins to break down and ultimately ceases. Field investigations may also confirm many of the historical trends and patterns noted during the preparation of the Research Design and the development of the historic context. The three primary factors to consider while undertaking field investigation are:

- Changes in patterns of development and land use;
- Man-made features (such as railroads and landscaping); and
- Natural and topographical features (such as waterways).



Figure 4-5 (left). 400 block of W. Railway Street, Lometa.

The railroad tracks in Lometa are a physical barrier that separates the city's commercial and retail center on the west from the light-industrial zone to the east.

Figure 4-6 (right). Taylor County Highway Map, 1940 and 1960.

These images show how the construction of IH 30 bypasses Merkel. In 1940 (left), US 80 runs parallel to the Missouri-Pacific Railroad. The construction of IH 30 in the late 1950s utilized much of the right-of-way of US 80 by veering to the north to avoid Merkel. The bypass redirected much of the through traffic that previously ran through Merkel and changed the dynamic of the historic downtown.

The core of a historic downtown includes a cohesive grouping of buildings that share a common scale, materials, function, and age, and in the case of crossroads communities, stands at the intersection of two regionally important roads (Figure 4-5). Commercial development emanates from the intersection but eventually transitions into non-commercial zones, typically residential neighborhoods that encircle the downtown.

In some communities, this transition is abrupt and readily apparent, but in other settings, the change is subtle and gradual. Documenting these transitional areas in the field typically must be supplemented with research to ascertain the size of town lots and how development occurred over time, based on historic maps and aerial photographs (Figure 4-6). Within the crossroads communities visited for this study, historic gas stations are a common type of property and visual clue that often mark the limits of a historic commercial area (Figure 4-7). They typically front onto the primary roads extending through the city and are strategically located on corner lots, making them highly visible and easily accessible for motorists. Other property types commonly found just outside the commercial areas of crossroads communities include new post offices, public housing complexes, and volunteer fire stations.



Figure 4-7 (left). 100 block of S. Avenue C (formerly SH 79), Olney.

This block features multiple gas stations that once marked the primary northbound entrance into downtown. The brick street and the now-abandoned gas stations reflect the importance this thoroughfare once enjoyed within the community.

Figure 4-8 (right). 100 block of S. Main Street (US 183), Rising Star.

This bridge extends over a small creek bed that extends south of the downtown and separates the city's historic commercial area from areas to the south.

Man-made features also play an important part in defining the limits of a commercial historic district. The most obvious factor is the local transportation network, such as roads and railroads (see Figure 4-5). Such features can be physical barriers that influenced development patterns and encouraged or inhibited commercial development in a particular direction. Property on one side of the railroad, for example, may have developed as a center for retail and wholesale businesses, while the opposite side may have evolved into an industrial area or residential neighborhood. Alignment shifts or the relocation of highways can redirect commercial activity, depending on the proximity of these routes to the existing downtowns. Another man-made factor that influenced development is the delineation of commercial lots (long and narrow parcels), although field investigations alone will not always reveal or discern such an influence. Plat maps will confirm such a trend; however, historians should be aware that entire blocks and street corners serve as the clearest and most distinct means of defining the limits of a district.

Natural features may also be a factor when defining the boundaries of a historic district, although they may not make up the most critical considerations in the downtowns of crossroads communities. A commercial area that spans a creek may contain a more intact grouping of historic-age properties on one side of the waterway, as evident in Figure 4-8. The boundaries of the district could extend along the creek bed rather than the plat if the existing physical characteristics and/or historical patterns of development support such a boundary determination. However, this is not likely based on field investigations for this project.

Historical Research

Building upon field investigations, information obtained through research reveals much about patterns of history and is also effective for delineating the boundaries of a historic district. Sources highlighted in subsequent paragraphs should be undertaken before, during, and after field investigations. Some of the information is available online through internet-based research, but other materials can only be viewed at repositories that necessitate in-person visits

and review of primary source materials. The most common sources of information that support the delineation of boundaries for a historic district are:

- Legal records and plat maps;
- Tax abstracts;
- Aerial photographs; and
- Fire Insurance maps.



Figure 4-9 (left). Montvale Town Plat, Office of the County Clerk, Lampasas County Courthouse Annex, Lampasas.

The original name for Lometa was Montvale, and it was established by the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railway. Note the narrow and deep commercial lots on most property fronting onto the railroad. This configuration established the pattern for subsequent patterns of development.

Legal records and plat maps are public records that can be copied at the county courthouse, tax office, or tax appraisal district and can be reviewed during the field investigation phase of a survey. Unless a fire or other calamity destroyed records at the courthouse, the original town plat and/or subdivision maps should either be available in deed records or plat map file cabinets at the county clerk's office (Figure 4-9). The original plat maps delineate blocks, lots, and streets and graphically depict original or intended patterns of development and uses of property. For example, narrow yet deep lots typically indicate that the property is targeted for commercial use. The number of blocks with such lots reveals how large the town founder(s) envisioned the downtown to be and the relative size of the community. Comparing existing concentrations of historic commercial buildings identified through field investigations with the original plat shows how the town grew and evolved (Figure 4-10).

Figure 4-10 (right). Aerial of Lometa from Google Maps.

This rotated image shows that the town generally developed in conformity with the original town plan.

Tax abstracts are county records that present a year-by-year valuation of property based on the legal descriptions (Figures 4-11 and 4-12). Compiled in large, bound volumes similar in size to deed records, they contain tax information for a multi-year (usually a five-year) period. The county tax office maintains these records, which are used so infrequently that county staff

sometimes is unaware that they exist or know little about them. However, tax abstracts are very useful for historians and researchers because they identify property owners, track improvements through increases in property values, and note sales and transactions of properties. Such records are more useful for intensive-level surveys, but a quick review of these materials can provide vital site-specific information for a reconnaissance-level survey as well as general construction activity and trends of development over time. Since they are organized by legal description rather than the name of the property owner (ad valorem tax records, copies of which are available at the Texas State Library and Archives), they are an invaluable tool for historians not only when evaluating downtowns in crossroads communities, but also for undertaking any type of historic resources surveys.



Figure 4-11 (left).
Assessor's Abstracts,
Young County, Office of
the Tax Assessor-
Collector, Young County
Courthouse, Graham.

These records provide a year-by-year list of all property in the county. Property evaluations can indicate improvements to a lot and can also serve as a barometer of the local economy.

Figure 4-12 (right).
Detail of Assessor's
Abstracts, Young
County.

This detail of a page for Block 1 in Olney shows how tax abstracts record property values by legal description on an annual basis.

Year	Owner Name	Value
1926	J.P. Beazleton	500
1927	R.W. Beazleton	500
1928	Mrs. J. Beazleton	500
1929	R. J. Beazleton	500
1930	Mrs. B.C. McElchey	1650
1931	G. B. Elliot	1700
1932	Mrs. M. P. Beazleton	500
1933	J. B. Carpenter	300
1934	J. A. Kerton	500
1935	Mrs. B.C. McElchey	1650
1936	E. L. Carter	1000
1937	A. B. Elliot	1650

Aerial photographs—both current and historic—are effective for identifying areas of concentration, patterns of development, and changes over time. For example, they can identify patterns and transitional zones between commercial, residential, and/or industrial areas that may not be obvious in the field. These images also enable historians to determine if an empty lot marks the site of a now-demolished building or if the empty lot existed during the period of significance. Current aerial photographs are available online from such websites as Google Earth/Maps (<http://maps.google.com/maps>) and Bing Maps (<http://maps.bing.com/maps/>); however, the resolution and ability to zoom in to close ranges varies considerably (Figures 4-13 and 4-14). Both websites include other mapping features that can be useful for historic district evaluations and historic resources surveys. Google's street view feature provides low-resolution images with 360-degree views that are taken at street level from public right-of-ways. Depending on coverage, Bing sometimes offers bird-eye views that provide contextual views from different perspectives. Another useful online source of historic aerials is the Texas Natural Resources Information System (TNRIS). Current aerial photographs can be downloaded free of charge, and historic aerial photographs can be ordered for a fee from their website (<http://www.tnr.is.state.tx.us/AerialPhotos.aspx>). Yet another source of aerial photographs is P2 Energy Solutions, which has all historic aerial

photographs and land-surface ownership maps from Tobin International. Maps and aerial photographs can be purchased by accessing the company’s website at http://www.tobin.com/data_historical_aerialortho_tx.asp. Coverage is limited, but the website provides a complete inventory of available historic aerials and maps.



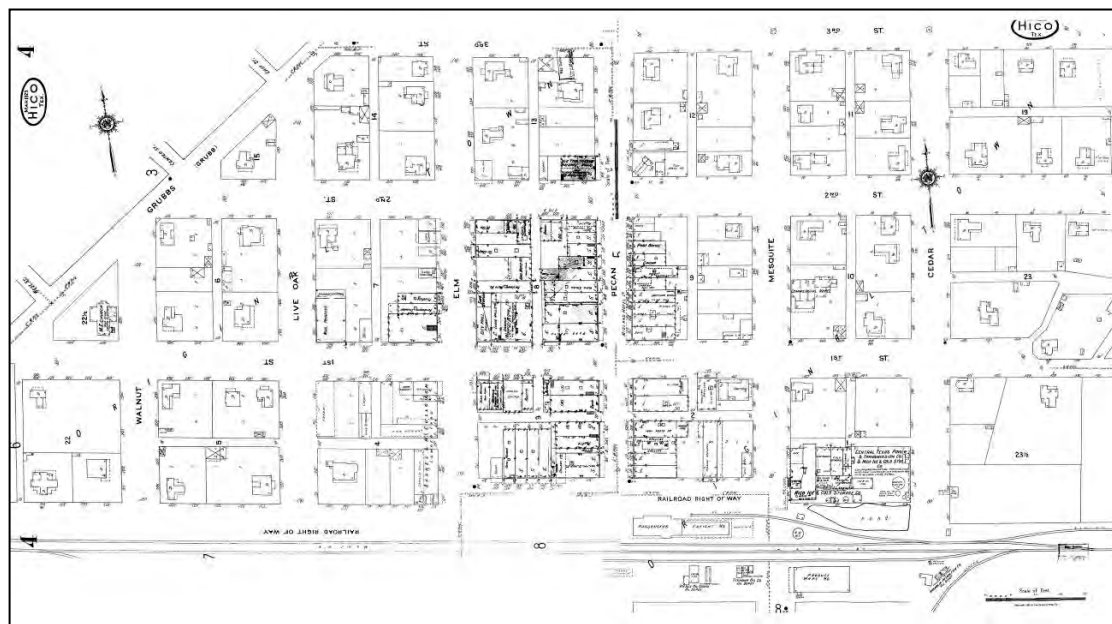
Figure 4-13 (top left).
Street view of the 100 block Pecan Street, Hico. Google Maps.



Figure 4-14 (top right).
Aerial view of 100 block of Pecan Street, Hico. Bing Maps.

Fire insurance maps published by the Sanborn Map Company and other entities provide another useful tool that can be used to help delineate the boundaries of a commercial historic district, but they also have other applications in the evaluation of historic districts (Figure 4-15). These maps depict building footprints, as well as the number of stories, use, construction materials, addresses, and other valuable information. Since they were published and/or updated at selected years, they also provide an effective means of documenting patterns of growth and changes over time. Local libraries often possess historic editions of these maps, but national and regional repositories, such as the Perry-Castañeda Library and the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin, also maintain extensive collections of fire insurance maps. Digitized copies of many sets and editions of maps are available

Figure 4-15 (bottom).
Composite of fire insurance maps of Hico, Sanborn Map Co., 1923.



www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/sanborn/texas.html. Another source of Sanborn maps is Environmental Data Resources, Inc. (EDR), which acquired the Sanborn Map Company in 1996. EDR allows the downloading of digitized copies for a fee at its website (<http://www.edrnet.com/sanborn.htm>). For many of the smaller communities not subject to Sanborn Map coverage, the Texas State Library and Archives (TSLAC) maintains another set of fire insurance maps. Prepared by the Texas State Board of Insurance and its predecessor, the maps represent another important source of information for documenting development in historic downtowns. The collection at TSLAC covers only parts of the state; other sets are maintained at regional repositories of TSLAC at the University of Texas at El Paso Library Special Collections and the University of Texas at Arlington Library Special Collections. For more information about the maps and to view an index for coverage in the collection, visit the TSLAC website at <http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/arc/findingaids/fireinsurancemaps.html>.

Delineate the Boundaries

The next step in determining the boundaries of a district requires a thorough review, analysis, and synthesis of the compiled field and research data. The district's boundaries typically extend along the property lines within the original town plat and/or an early subdivision or addition. In most cases, the boundaries include a contiguous grouping of lots within an entire city block and do not cut through the middle of a block. The boundaries may also run along alleyways so that the district includes entire streetscapes, not just one side of a street. However, depending on circumstances, the boundaries may stretch along the middle or edge of a street or road if properties on the opposite side lack any of the physical qualities and/or historical associations that distinguish the district as distinct from its surroundings.

The boundaries of the potential historic district may be justified through the following steps:

- Use plat maps to further refine and justify the boundaries based on historical patterns of development and existing concentrations of historic-age properties;
- Consider how man-made features, such as roadways, as well as development patterns or land use distinguish the downtown from its surroundings;
- Consider how natural features, such as waterways, drainages, or changes in topography distinguish the downtown from adjoining areas;
- Inspect existing conditions within the downtown and note changes in use and/or physical characteristics of the buildings, structures, and objects both within the downtown and in adjoining areas;
- Consider patterns of development and the dates of construction and use of property within the downtown and how they contribute to or detract from the historic character of the historic district;



Figure 4-16 (left). Aerial view of Cross Plains. Google Maps. Patterns of development are easily discernible from aerial images.



Figure 4-17 (right). Bird's eye view of Merkel. Bing Maps. The area on the left (west) includes the historic downtown, which exhibits a density of development that contrasts sharply to that of the residential areas on the right (east).

- Confirm that all resources that contribute to or enhance the ability of the downtown to convey a sense of the past fall within the period in which the district attained significance;
- Determine what historical associations link and unite areas of the district that extend into multiple additions, subdivisions, or plats; and
- Exclude areas that function as a buffer between the district and surrounding properties—the boundaries must be limited to only those areas that include resources sharing a common function, history, and/or physical characteristics that collectively enable the district to convey its significance.

The boundaries may be subject to change pending further analysis of the physical elements and/or historical associations that distinguish the area as a historic district, especially as part of intensive-level investigations that answer unresolved questions from a reconnaissance-level survey. Figures 4-16 and 4-17 show how aerial photographs can help discern patterns of development and land uses.

ASSESSING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A HISTORIC DISTRICT

To possess significance for the purposes of NRHP eligibility, a historic district must be more than a collection of historic buildings, structures, objects, and/or sites within a well-defined area; it must derive significance that stems from its historical associations (Criterion A or B) and/or design qualities (Criterion C) within a clearly defined and historical-based period of significance. This section of the report provides guidance to consider how historic downtowns in the study area may possess significance under the National Register Criteria. Additional guidance for assessing the integrity of a district is provided in a separate section of the report. However, it is important to remember that NRHP eligibility requires that a resource not only must possess significance under at least one of the National Register Criteria but also must retain the ability to convey that significance (integrity).



Figure 4-18 (left). 100 block of Edwards Street, Merkel. Photo from *A History of Taylor County* by Juanita Daniel Zachary.

As the most important local node of activity, the downtown represents the community's historic core and derives significance for this role.

Figure 4-19 (right). Building in the 200 block of N. Avenue C (formerly SH 79), Olney.

This building was constructed in the 1950s when the resurging local oil industry brought a new period of growth and prosperity to the community.

Significance for Historical Associations under Criterion A or B

Downtowns in the study area reflect the importance of trade and commerce during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Factors that contributed to this growth stemmed primarily from increased production from surrounding farms and ranches, the ascension of these communities as regional centers of retail and wholesale enterprises, and the opening of oil and natural gas fields in the 1910s and 1920s. Many of these communities experienced rapid growth and development, and the downtowns reflect these historical associations. They may be representative of broad trends in local history but also dynamic individuals who attained wealth, status, and prominence in their own communities and sometimes in a much broader area (Figures 4-18 and 4-19).

The following questions are intended to aid in the evaluation process to consider the NRHP eligibility of a crossroads community's downtown that derives significance from its associations with important events or trends (Criterion A), or individuals of the past (Criterion B).

- Does the downtown possess significance because it reflects a critical period, trend, or event that marked a pivotal time in local history? Consider what makes the downtown important for this historical association.
- Is the downtown important because it is strongly associated with a public or private institution that made pivotal contributions to local history?
- Is the downtown noteworthy because it contains an eclectic grouping of historic-age properties that reveal the identifiable characteristics and/or physical evolution of the downtown area within a well-defined span of time (period of significance)?
- Does it derive importance because it reflects the growth of a community that developed into a regional center for commerce and trade that served the community and surrounding farms, ranches, and other types of properties?

- Does the downtown possess significance because it reflects how the discovery and exploitation of nearby oil and gas reserves affected the community? Has this significance been sustained over time, or has it been subject to boom-bust cycles that have resulted in clear and distinct periods of prosperity and economic downturns?
- Is the downtown important because it is associated with a historical figure that played a pivotal role in local history whose contributions and significance are best represented by the historic district?

A district that has historical associations does not necessarily mean that it possesses significance within the framework of the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. The documentation must include a cogent argument describing how the district derives significance from this association. A resource that simply fulfills its function likewise does not justify significance. For example, stating that a downtown is associated with commerce and trade does not provide enough information to show how it possesses significance; it simply identifies an association with a trend in history. A stronger and more effective argument would be built on the assertion that the downtown served as the primary center for commerce and trade for the community and surrounding areas since the 1880s. This statement provides the contextual framework within which to assess the importance of the downtown relative to other activities and locations in a defined area.

Significance for Physical Attributes or Design qualities Under Criterion C

A historic district may also possess significance because of the cohesive qualities of its resources, which may lack distinction on an individual basis but are noteworthy when considered collectively as a single unit and/or grouping of resources. The following provide guidance for assessing a historic district that derives significance from the physical qualities of its design and/or association with the work of a master (Figures 4-20 and 4-21).

- Does the downtown possess significance because it contains a grouping of historic-age resources that lack individual distinction but collectively are noteworthy?
- Is the downtown significant because it includes a unified collection of historic-age resources built within a short period of time that possesses similar physical characteristics, or were they constructed over an extended time period but still convey a strong sense of the past?
- Does the downtown possess significance because its buildings present a collection of resources that are noteworthy for their form or method of construction?
- Is the downtown significant because its layout and/or configuration embody distinctive or innovative planning principles?



Figure 4-20 (left). Buildings with significance under Criterion C, 100 block of N. Rusk, Ranger.

These buildings are among the best and most intact collections of early twentieth century commercial architecture in the study area. They retain most of their original physical qualities and features, which distinguishes them as noteworthy architectural landmarks in the community.



Figure 4-21 (right). Buildings with significance under Criterion C, 100 block of Edwards, Merkel.

The buildings in this image do not possess sufficient significance or integrity to be eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C on an individual basis. However, they illustrate how buildings lacking significance for their own merits can be noteworthy as a grouping because of their physical attributes.

- Is the downtown significant because it is associated with a well-known architect, designer, craftsman, builder, or contractor and also is noteworthy within the context of the career of that individual or firm?

Determining the Period of Significance

The period of significance is the span of time in which the historic downtown attained the qualities that make it significant and enable it to meet at least one of the National Register Criteria. Defining the period of significance is particularly important, since it establishes the time limits for determining if the district meets the recommended 50-year age threshold for NRHP eligibility. Furthermore, the period of significance is critical when assessing if an individual historic-age resource contributes to or detracts from the district's ability to convey a sense of time and place, or if major changes and alterations to a building occurred within the time period that the district gained significance.

The period of significance can vary widely, depending on the reasons that make the downtown noteworthy. For example, a commercial area that contains an eclectic grouping of commercial buildings that date from several time periods and/or display different types of architectural ornamentation or embellishment is likely to be indicative of a community that has experienced slow and steady growth. Such a downtown typically reflects broad historical trends that occurred over an extended period of time, such as the dominance of an agriculture-based economy dependent upon the cultivation of cotton and other crops during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Conversely, a downtown that contains examples of only a few styles, types, and/or forms typically presents a more cohesive character and often reflects the significance of a single historical event or trend with a more clearly defined beginning and end. The discovery of oil in certain parts of the study area during the 1910s and 1920s, for example, resulted in a relatively brief era of intense commercial development and speculation that dissipated almost as quickly as it erupted. Thus, a district containing buildings exhibiting only a few architectural styles or forms typically will have a period of significance that is relatively short. This brevity reflects a distinct trend and pattern of development that defines the historic architectural

character of the district. Other factors to consider, especially for crossroads communities in the study area, include the realignment or shifting of one of the highways that was critical to the development of the downtown. Such an occurrence typically bypassed the downtown, often shifting commercial development to the new highway, and contributed to the economic decline of the historic downtown. A downtown may also have multiple periods of significance that reflect specific historical themes, events, or trends. Regardless of the defined span of time, historical research serves as the basis for determining the period of significance.

The beginning of the period of significance for a historic downtown in a crossroads community typically starts from:

- The year or estimated date in which the oldest extant contributing building was constructed;
- The year in which a particular historical event occurred that subsequently played a pivotal role in the history and development of the downtown, such as the discovery of oil near Ranger in 1924, which ushered in a construction boom that dramatically transformed the size and physical character of the town; and/or;
- The year or estimated date in which a historical trend or pattern began (such as the year of the town's founding or the period when the crossroads community became an important center for commerce and trade).

The closing date of the period of significance marks the end of the historical event, pattern, or trend when the district attained significance and/or when the district's overall physical character was established. In general, the close of the period of significance is usually determined by:

- The year or estimated date of construction of the last group of buildings that enabled the district to convey its significance and sense of time and place; and/or;
- The year or approximate year in which the historical association (trend, pattern, or event) concluded or diminished to such an extent that it was no longer significant.

Examples include:

- Abandonment of rail service to the community, such as the abandonment of the Wichita Falls and Southern Railway through Olney in 1942, which led to a decline in commercial and industrial activity in and around the downtown;
- A prolonged drought that significantly reduced regional agricultural production and led to a downturn in the local economy and the viability of the downtown, which occurred throughout the study area during the 1950s;



Figure 4-22. Texas Highway Destination File for Merkel Loop in Merkel.

This image, captured from the TxDOT website, indicates how a segment of US 80 extending through Merkel was re-designated as Merkel Loop following the completion of IH 20 in 1958. This information also notes this designation was cancelled in 1990 and that the road was renamed BI 20-P.

- Natural events and/or disasters, such as the 1951 tornado that caused widespread damage to Olney;
- Collapse of the local oil market, such as the one Ranger experienced after local wells became depleted just a few years following the discovery; and/or
- Construction or realignment of new highways that redirected traffic from more heavily congested historic downtowns, such as the construction of IH 20 near Merkel that bypassed downtown Merkel (Texas Highway designation files are available online at www.dot.state.tx.us/tpp/search/query.htm and can be a useful tool to determine when state highways were completed and/or dedicated) (Figure 4-22).

The period of significance acknowledges a chronological timeline based on historical events or trends. It defines when the district attained significance, relying on facts linked to local history, and must not be set arbitrarily to meet the recommended 50-year age threshold used by the National Register or the cut-off date used for the survey. The use of a contract letting date for a TxDOT project has no bearing on historical developmental trends in a particular setting or community and provides no justification for defining the close of a period of significance. If, however, the district's period of significance extends to a year that is less than 50 years, the district must be evaluated under Criteria Consideration G. In such a case, the district must possess "exceptional significance," as defined by National Register guidelines. For more information, please see National Register Bulletin 12: *How to Apply National Register Criteria for Evaluation*.

APPLYING THE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

NPS Bulletin 15 provides the most detailed and explicit instructions for applying the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. These guidelines can be downloaded at the NPS publications website at: www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/. NPS prepared these guidelines in such a fashion to allow the greatest amount of flexibility for assessing a broad range of resources in different kinds of settings and situations. However, the following section of this report applies these guidelines specifically to the kinds of issues typically encountered in crossroads community downtowns. While they do not account for every scenario, they do cover the most likely and common types of resources and conditions in the study area.

National Register Criterion A

A historic district that meets National Register Criterion A possesses significance because it is associated with important historical patterns, trends, or events and possesses significance for that association. Furthermore, these historical associations are part of the historic context developed for the community/setting in which it is located. In support of this report, historians identified some of the major themes, patterns, and events important to the history and development of crossroads communities in the study area. The historic backgrounds prepared for the communities targeted for study are intentionally broad and are not intended to be a definitive history and in-depth analysis of the events, patterns, and events critical to the targeted cities.

CRITERION A THEMES

Research undertaken for this study has identified the following themes that influenced the development of downtowns in crossroads communities in the study area.

- *Improvements and expansion of transportation systems including railroad and highway networks.* Every crossroads community studied for this report has strong ties to and is largely dependent upon transportation. Indeed, their strategic location at the intersection of major roads and/or railroads served as the foundation of their existence. They prospered during the early twentieth century because they served farmers and ranchers in surrounding areas and evolved into regionally important centers for commerce, shipping, and trade. The rising popularity of motorized vehicles as a means to bring goods to market as well as improved road networks further facilitated the shipment of locally produced goods and commodities. This transportation-related trend added to the importance of crossroads communities, which enhanced their role as regional shipping and distribution centers. During its early period of development, Olney stood at the intersection of two highways, as well as two railroad lines. Property adjacent to the railroad intersection developed into a mostly industrial area containing mostly agricultural processing operations, such as cotton gins and grain elevators. The nearby highway intersection (about two

Figure 4-23 (right). Composite of fire insurance maps of Olney.

Olney relied on two types of transportation systems: railroads and highways. Local farmers, utilizing the local road network, brought their crops to Olney for processing or shipment. Once in town, they shopped at nearby retail stores.

Figure 4-24 (bottom left). Warehouses in the downtown area of Lometa.

The railroad played an important role in the history and development of Lometa. Sheep and goat ranchers utilized Lometa as a shipping point for locally produced wool and mohair. This image shows how significant these activities were to the community and to area farmers and ranchers.

Figure 4-25 (bottom right). Grain elevator in the 300–400 blocks of W. Dale Street (Texas Loop 438), Winters.

Cotton and wheat were the primary crops grown by farmers in the vicinity of Winters. Much of the property between downtown and the railroad tracks extending through the community contained cotton gins and grain elevators. While many of these agriculture-processing enterprises no longer exist, the one shown in the far right of this picture remains in operation.



blocks to the northwest) became the city’s retail center, and the concentration of gas stations lining the northbound entrance into the city (Avenue C, formerly SH 79) further underscores the importance of transportation to the development of Olney’s downtown (Figure 4-23).





Figure 4-26 (left). Buildings from the oil-boom era in Ranger, 300 block of W. Main Street (RR 1010), Ranger.

Most of the extant buildings in Ranger date from the 1920s and attest to the significant role the discovery of oil nearby had to the community. These and other contemporaneous commercial buildings also show and how the oil boom affected the physical character and development of the downtown.

Figure 4-27 (right). 200 block of Robison Street (RR 1692), Miles.

The community of Miles was an important node of commerce and trade in southwestern Runnels County. These buildings served residents of the community and area farmers and ranchers who came to the city for goods and merchandise.

- *Development of strategically located nodes of commercial activity and trade to serve a mostly agriculture-based economy.* Lometa, for example, evolved into an important shipping point in Lampasas County for locally produced agricultural commodities including crops as well as wool and mohair.

Lometa boasted a number of businesses devoted to the processing, storage, and shipment of agricultural products. Several metal-clad warehouses are on the opposite (east) side of the tracks from the downtown. One of the warehouses is identified as the “Lometa Wool & Mohair Co.” The influx of ranchers and farmers from the surrounding region spurred retail activity in the downtown (Figure 4-24).

- *Tapping the region’s agricultural potential and the expansion and improvement of farming and crop cultivation, especially cotton and wheat.* Grain elevators in downtown Merkel and Winters are just two of the multiple examples of how crossroads communities enabled area farmers to tap productive farmlands in their respective regions (Figure 4-25). The shipment of agriculture-related equipment and machinery further increased yields and led to increased prosperity, trade, and commerce.

- *Rapid growth and development associated with the discovery of oil and gas in the region.* Ranger was among several crossroads communities that prospered from the tapping of oil and gas reserves in the late 1910s and early 1920s. Oil and gas production ushered in a period of intense and unprecedented development that transformed the downtowns in these communities (Figure 4-26). A resurgence in oil production activities in the region during in the 1950s and 1970s spurred commerce and trade but lacked the scale that occurred following the original discovery of oil.

POSSIBLE AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE UNDER CRITERION A

A commercial downtown area does not necessarily meet Criterion A simply because it is associated with any of the major themes listed above; it must possess significance within the context of that theme. Association alone is insufficient justification for determining significance. To meet Criterion A, a

commercial historic district in a crossroads community in the study area is most likely to be noteworthy under at least one of the following areas of significance:

- *Commerce*. The district includes an intact grouping of retail stores that serves the community and area residents from nearby farms and ranches (Figure 4-27); the district may include the primary center for the exchange of goods and services within a significant part of the county; this area of significance is most likely to be applicable to crossroads community downtowns. The following are among the kinds of topics to consider when arguing significance in the area of *Commerce*:
 - Describe how the downtown functions as the primary commercial center of the community, and compare it with other commercial nodes;
 - Analyze the downtown’s role as a node of commercial activity, and the reasons it is important in a local context or setting;
 - Discuss the underlying factors that enabled the downtown to remain a center of commerce and trade within the community, and how external factors, such as extended drought collapse of the local oil boom, or changes in agricultural patterns, influenced and affected commercial activity in the downtown.
- *Community Planning and Development*. The district is noteworthy because it reflects an important part of the city’s history and growth, and it influenced patterns of development over time; a downtown typically evolved as the focal point of the community and as the primary center of activity, especially in crossroads communities. Consider the following if arguing significance in the area of *Community Planning and Development*:
 - Assess how continued commercial-related activity in the downtown affected the physical character of other parts of the city, such as development of property fronting onto the highways leading into the downtown;
 - Consider how increased vehicular traffic along highways leading into downtown cores affected land use;
 - Examine how the physical expansion of the downtown over time influenced patterns of development.
- *Industry*. The district includes a collection of light industrial buildings near the railroad tracks whose operations contributed directly not only to the local economy but also specifically to the downtown (Figure 4-28). For a downtown to have significance in the area of *Industry*, it must derive a large degree of its importance from the establishment and operation of industries within its boundaries. When assessing significance in the area of *Industry*, consider the following:



Figure 4-28. (left) Agricultural-processing businesses near downtown Merkel.

The grain silo in the foreground is one of several light industrial operations that served area farmers. Tracks of the Union-Pacific Railroad, originally part of the Texas and Pacific Railway system, extend between the silo and the downtown (in the right background). Merkel's success was largely dependent on this and other similar agriculture-related processing operations.

Figure 4-29 (right). Depot 100 block of S. Commerce, Street, Ranger.

The passenger depot in Ranger is the physical link between the railroad and the downtown. It symbolizes the importance of the railroad to the community and its downtown. Furthermore, it was a primary means by which many speculators first arrived in the community during the 1920s oil boom.

- Examine if the association between areas containing industrial operations and the downtown is based simply on location or their proximity, and/or if the downtown's continued viability as a node of commerce and trade was dependent upon these industries;
- Evaluate if the varied types of industrial properties are integral to the history and continued success of the downtown, or if the industrial operations should be evaluated for NRHP eligibility separately from the downtown.
- **Transportation.** The district includes a building, structure, or groupings of resources directly linked to transportation systems that contributed to the development of the city. This association must be tangible in that the transportation network or system contributed directly to the historic resources. The fact that crossroads communities relied heavily on various modes of transportation for their existence does not necessarily mean that they attain significance for that association. Consider the following:
 - Discuss how the resources in the downtown enable the district to derive significance because of direct associations with transportation systems. This association must be tangible and have influenced the development and continued success of the downtown (Figure 4-29).

Other areas of significance may be applicable under Criterion A and are dependent upon the unique history and development of the district and its role within the framework of the host community.

National Register Criterion B

A historic district that meets National Register Criterion B possesses significance that is derived from associations with persons of the past who made important contributions to history. The downtown of a crossroads community is unlikely to meet Criterion B because of the nature of how such areas developed over time. The commercial center of any community reflects the combined efforts of numerous individuals over time and rarely does the contributions of a single individual rise to such a level that a district will derive significance for its association with an important individual of the past. Nevertheless, a downtown could be significant for its association with important personages and typically is

significant at the local level within a local context. For example, a historic downtown in a crossroads community may meet Criterion B for an individual who gained considerable wealth from businesses he or she established in such settings. The most obvious and noteworthy example for this study is Conrad Hilton, who launched his career by establishing a series of hotels in communities throughout the study area. Additional research undertaken at the local level may identify other individuals whose significance and contributions to the past are linked with buildings within the historic downtown of crossroads communities.

Figure 4-30 (left). Conrad Hilton portrait on cover of *Time* magazine.

Conrad Hilton, whose portrait appeared on the cover of the July 19, 1963, edition of *Time* magazine (<http://www.time.com/time/coversearch/>), established his first hotel, the Mobley, in Cisco in 1919 following the discovery of oil in Eastland County. Hilton benefitted from the ensuing oil boom and went on to establish one of the most successful hotel chains in the world.

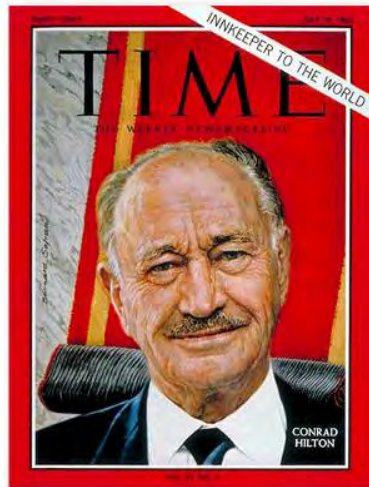


Figure 4-31 (right). Mural on Cross Plains Public Library).

This mural celebrates local author Robert E. Howard's ties to the community. It also notes that Howard's manuscripts are maintained at the library, which occupies a commercial building in downtown Cross Plains. Although these documents are a source of local pride, the building was not vital to or even a part of the successful career of Cross Plains' most famous resident. Both the building and the downtown do not derive significance from this association.

The justification that a district meets Criterion B must clearly state the significance of that individual, establish how the building(s) derive(s) significance from its association with the individual, and must date to the district's period of significance (Figure 4-30 and 4-31).

POSSIBLE AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE UNDER CRITERION B

Among the areas of significance in which the commercial historic district is likely to be noteworthy include:

- *Commerce*. The district may be closely associated with an individual who played an influential role in the commercial development of the community or region (e.g., Conrad Hilton);
- *Industry*. The district may be closely associated with an individual who established an industrial operation that played a pivotal role in the development of the community.

Other areas of significance may also be applicable, such as *Ethnic History* for the first African American to open a business in the downtown. They are dependent upon the unique history and development of the district and its role within the

framework of the host community. However, commercial districts are unlikely to derive significance under Criterion B.

It is worthwhile to note that if locally important individuals lived in a crossroads community, it does not necessarily mean that a downtown meets Criterion B; significance with an important person of the past must be derived specifically from that individual's contributions and his or her association with the downtown. For example, Robert E. Howard, who was a Cross Plains-based author and is best known as the creator of the *Conan the Barbarian* stories, lived and worked in the community. The local municipal library in the downtown features a large mural that celebrates Howard's ties to Cross Plains, but no research suggests that the downtown derives significance for this association.

National Register Criterion C

As defined by the NPS, National Register Criterion C considers the significance of a resource based on its physical attributes and/or the quality of its design. A crossroads community downtown may be significant because it:

- Presents good and noteworthy example(s) of a style, type, form, or method of construction, such as one- or two-part commercial block buildings that reflect the rich masonry traditions and workmanship seen in downtown areas throughout Texas during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries;
- Represents the work of a master builder, architect, engineer, or designer, such as buildings designed by David S. Castle of Abilene, who was one of the most important architects in the region during the early twentieth century; he designed arguably the most prominent buildings in Merkel and Winters for West Texas Utilities Company that demonstrate his considerable architectural design skills;
- Possesses high artistic value; or
- Includes a collection of resources that may lack distinction individually but is noteworthy as a whole or single entity; such a grouping in the study area may, for example, include a collection of early twentieth century buildings that share, among other attributes, a common scale, use of materials, orientation, and set-back, and convey a strong sense of cohesiveness (Figure 4-32).

A historic downtown in a crossroads community is most likely to meet Criterion C under the first and last of the above-listed bullets. A historic downtown meets Criterion C if the majority of the historic resources are relatively unaltered, retain their salient, character-defining features, and present a strong sense of the time when the downtown achieved significance. The buildings do not necessarily need to be the most impressive or rarest example of a style, type, form or method of construction, but they should be noteworthy for their cohesive quality and their ability to evoke a sense of time and place. The district



Figure 4-32 (left). 100 block of W. Main Street (FM 581), Lometa.

This image shows a grouping of commercial buildings with uniform setbacks, common forms, and rhythm. These buildings exemplify the kinds of commercial architectural forms found in similarly sized communities throughout the state and remain as an intact and cohesive grouping from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Figure 4-33 (right). Detail of plat map of Merkel, Office of the County Clerk, Taylor County Courthouse, Abilene.

The town plan of Merkel was filed by the Texas and Pacific Railway in 1884. It exemplifies a common town form of the era. This detail of the original plat shows how property fronting onto the railroad had narrow and deep lots that were intended for commercial development. The relationship between the lots and the railroad typified common planning principles of the period.

need not be comprised solely of historic-age resources built within the period of significance, but must include a majority of the resources that retain their salient and character-defining features.

POSSIBLE AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE UNDER CRITERION C

A commercial historic district that meets Criterion C will be noteworthy in the area of significance of *Architecture*, which NPS defines as the practical art of designing and constructing buildings and structures to serve human needs. A district may also be eligible under Criterion C in the area of significance of *Community Planning and Development*. The district may derive significance as a good example of urban planning principles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, railroad companies established several of the crossroads communities in the study area including Merkel and Lometa. The railroad companies generally utilized standards and laid out a town plat that exemplified a common trend of the late nineteenth century. Such towns exhibit a configuration that not only reflected the importance of the railroad, but it also dictated how the city would grow and how the land would be used (Figure 4-33).

National Register Criterion D

This study is limited to non-archeological sites, and in accordance with instructions from TxDOT ENV HIST, does not evaluate resources under Criterion D for their potential to yield important information about the past.

ANALYZING THE ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY

To be eligible for the NRHP, a resource—either an individual property or a historic district—must meet at least one of four National Register Criteria and must retain its integrity of *Location, Design, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling, and Association* to such a degree that the resource still has the ability to convey its significance. Assessing integrity is a critical and vital part of the NRHP evaluation process and requires a deliberate and thoughtful review of those qualities (seven aspects of integrity) that NPS uses to define integrity. This is particularly relevant for the downtown areas in crossroads communities

because they almost always possess significance under one of the National Register Criteria. As commercial retail centers, they played important roles in the history and development of their respective communities and contain the best concentrations of historic commercial buildings, forms, and types. These facts only underscore the importance of analyzing the aspects of integrity.

The integrity evaluation must consider how changes over time diminish the qualities that convey significance. Furthermore, this evaluation assesses the district and its resources in their current condition and does not consider their potential to be restored and/or rehabilitated. Such a distinction is important since the integrity analysis must remain focused on a resource in its existing state. The process is more complicated for a district because an integrity evaluation must consider the area as a whole as well as the combined effect of changes to the historic buildings within the district. To aid in this determination, this section of the report will discuss each of the aspects of integrity and will identify the kind of changes, alterations, and modifications that can affect integrity. Some of the items discussed for a particular aspect of integrity may apply to multiple aspects. Such changes should be considered for all of the applicable aspects of integrity because they may affect the district's overall ability to retain sufficient integrity to meet National Register Criteria.

Integrity of Location

Integrity of *Location* generally refers to the site on which the resource was originally built or the location on which it achieved significance. Integrity of *Location* links a resource to a specific site. A resource that has been moved loses one of the most important aspects of its historic character; however, if the relocation took place within the defined period of significance, the resource may still retain its integrity of *Location*. A commercial historic district does not retain its integrity of *Location* if the majority of the buildings were relocated to new sites outside the period of significance. Such an occurrence is uncommon.

Integrity of Design

Integrity of *Design* refers to physical elements that define the physical character of a resource and includes such attributes as scale, massing, form, and layout. Integrity of *Design* also includes such physical elements as applied architectural ornamentation, the placement of windows and doors, the arrangement of interior spaces, and the type of structural systems and materials that are employed in the property's construction.

The importance of integrity of *Design* varies considerably and depends largely on the reasons for which the district is eligible for the NRHP. A district significant under Criterion C derives its significance from the shared physical characteristics of the individual components within its boundaries and the cohesiveness and qualities they present collectively. Resources in the district eligible under Criterion C must retain their integrity of *Design* to a noteworthy degree. In



Figure 4-34 (left). 300 block of Fisher Street, Moran.

The combined effect of changes to these buildings renders the historic downtown of Moran unable to retain its integrity of *Design*. Alterations include the covering of window and door openings, the application of paint over original brick surfaces, and the removal of canopies, as well as vacant lots that disrupt the historic rhythm of the downtown and diminish other aspects of integrity (*Materials, Feeling, Setting, and Craftsmanship*).

Figure 4-35 (right). 100 block of N. Pecan Street, Hico.

Landscaping, planters, and benches in the middle of Pecan Street reflect local efforts to renew interest in downtown Hico. However, these features were not part of the original town plan and postdate the period of significance. They diminish integrity of *Design*, as well integrity of *Feeling, Materials, and Setting*.

contrast, a commercial historic district eligible under Criterion A or B need not retain its integrity of *Design* to as high a standard. However, it still must remain recognizable to the period in which it attained significance and convey a strong sense of the past (Figure 4-34). The kinds of changes and alterations that can affect integrity of *Design* of historic resources in a district can include but are not necessarily limited to:

- Enclosure (full or partial) of windows, doors, or storefronts;
- Installation of new windows, doors, canopies, or awnings;
- Installation of windows and/or doors that are different in size, configuration, or arrangement from those originally/historically used;
- Removal of and/or changing of canopies, supports, columns;
- Removal of distinctive architectural detailing and/or ornamentation;
- Demolition of all but the front façade of a building; and
- Construction of additions onto front or side façades visible from public right-of-ways.

The combined effect that these changes have on an individual resource and on the entire district is critical to consider for assessing integrity of *Design*; however, other factors also need to be taken into consideration, such as the number, severity, and reversibility of the changes, and the types of resources affected. For example, the reconfiguration of a storefront and the installation of new windows and doors may represent relatively minor changes when considered separately; however, when considered together, they can severely diminish integrity of *Design*. A commercial historic district does not retain its integrity of *Design* if the majority of the historic-age resources have been modified to such a degree that the fundamental physical elements and qualities of these properties have been compromised.

Among the other factors to consider while assessing the integrity of *Design* for the district as a whole are:

- How the original town plan has been maintained;
- Introduction of new landscaping elements, street enhancements, and/or sidewalk improvements (Figure 4-35); and



Figure 4-36 (left). 100 block of N. Main Street (US 83), Winters.

Sidewalk improvements have changed the relationship between the buildings and the main highway that extends through downtown Winters. The stepped configuration is not consistent with the historic sidewalk and curbing that once existed at this location.

Figure 4-37 (right). Brick street in 100 block of S. Robinson Street, RR 1692, Miles.

The brick pavement in downtown Miles is an important attribute that distinguishes the downtown and reinforces a sense of cohesiveness. The brick paving is an important part of the downtown's integrity of *Setting*.

- Buildings and public spaces that retain their spatial relationships as originally conceived or when the district attained significance.

Integrity of Setting

Integrity of *Setting* refers to the relationship between a resource and the spaces surrounding it. Integrity of *Setting* also refers to the physical context and placement in which a resource exists, its orientation, topographical features, landscape elements, vegetation, and/or the arrangement and placement of buildings. This aspect of integrity is particularly important for a district since much of a district's significance is derived from the relationships the buildings share with one another within an urban-like landscape. Some of the bulleted items listed below apply to an individual resource; however, the combined effect they may have to the district as a whole can diminish the area's integrity of *Setting*. The many kinds of changes that can affect integrity of *Setting* can include the following:

- Removal of canopies and supports/columns in front of buildings;
- Removal or alteration of existing landscape features that are critical components of the property's historic character and/or use;
- Introduction of new and historically inappropriate landscape features such as planters, trees, and light poles;
- Construction of new buildings;
- Demolition of buildings from the period of significance;
- Empty lots that disrupt the visual and aesthetic rhythm of the downtown;
- Infrastructural changes outside the period of significance, such as sidewalk improvements;
- Installing or removing street medians (Figure 4-36);
- Removal of / covering of brick streets (Figure 4-37);
- Construction of new buildings on property historically associated with the district; and
- Reorientation of a resource on its existing site.

A commercial historic district does not retain its integrity of *Setting* if it includes multiple new buildings, empty lots, and/or non-historic landscape features that disrupt the overall character of the downtown to its surroundings. No set percentage of affected buildings or features can be defined to determine if this aspect of integrity has been lost, since the overall effect of these changes depends entirely on the size, character, and significance of the downtown.



Figure 4-38. 100 block E. Dempsey Street (US 380), Bryson.

The application of board-and-batten siding obscures original building materials that largely defined the historic physical and architectural character of this block. The existing appearance bears little resemblance to the time when the downtown enjoyed its primary period of significance. The wood siding also affects integrity of *Workmanship* and *Feeling*.

Integrity of Materials

Integrity of *Materials* examines the fundamental physical elements that are combined to create a historic property. For the purposes of this study, integrity of *Materials* is limited to exterior physical elements and includes the materials used in the construction, sheathing, or detailing of a resource, as well as exterior finishes used for window frames, doors, canopies, and other character-defining elements. This aspect of integrity is more

applicable to individual resources, but it still must be part of the integrity evaluation for a district. For example, the analysis of integrity of *Materials* serves as a primary consideration for classifying a historic resource as either a contributing or noncontributing element within a district. The combined effect of modifications in the use of materials to the collection of buildings within a district must be considered while assessing integrity of *Materials*, as well as the ability of the district to meet National Register Criteria, especially under Criterion C. A district does not retain its integrity of *Materials* if the majority of its resources are negatively affected by the following types of alterations or modifications:

- Installation of stucco, aluminum, or other materials over original exterior finishes, or materials that postdate the period of significance (Figure 4-38);
- Construction of new buildings utilizing materials that are not consistent with those used during the period of significance and are incompatible with the district's historic character;
- Construction of additions onto historic buildings that utilize non-historic materials, especially if visible from public right-of-ways;
- Installation of new windows or doors utilizing non-historic materials that do not match the color, size, and/or texture of original finishes and fenestration pattern;
- Installation of wood-shingled shed-roofed canopies across front facades;
- Removal of all materials (roof, flooring, fixtures, interior walls, etc.) except those used on the front façade;
- Enclosing windows or doors with brick or other non-historic materials;
- Use of non-historic Portland cement in mortar joints that is not the same material as that from the period of significance; and

- Severe degradation of the materials such that the parts are missing and/or the physical stability of the building is in question.



Figure 4-39. 200 block of W. Main Street, Ranger.

Renovations from the 1960s and 1970s to this grouping of buildings obscure noteworthy architectural embellishment. While the changes reflect a changing dynamic in the mid-century local oil-dependent economy, the renovations completely overwhelm the original historic character of the buildings. They also compromise integrity of *Workmanship*, as well as other aspects of integrity.

Figure 4-40. 100 block of E. Main Street, Olney. This block contains buildings that date from the 1920s. While the buildings retain their basic form and façade composition, changes from the 1950s and 1960s obscure masonry work, and little of the architectural fabric from the period of significance is visible. Integrity of *Workmanship* has been compromised.

A commercial historic district does not retain its integrity of *Materials* if the majority of the buildings utilize exterior materials that were applied after the period of significance and detract from their ability to convey a sense of the past.

Integrity of Workmanship

Integrity of *Workmanship* is the physical evidence that demonstrates the skill of a craftsman’s labors or expertise and can be based on common building traditions, a popular architectural style or form, or innovative work techniques or skills. Integrity of *Workmanship* is particularly critical for a historic district

that is significant under Criterion C because it derives significance from its physical traits and attributes. These aspects are manifested by the architectural detailing and/or ornamentation of the buildings within the district. These qualities typically are not only indicative of an architectural style or movement; they may also illustrate the expertise of a builder, contractor, or carpenter. Although a vernacular or traditional resource may lack noteworthy or distinctive stylistic ornamentation, it should still be evaluated for its integrity of *Workmanship*. A historic resource that possesses integrity of *Workmanship* must retain sufficient integrity of materials and methods of construction to illustrate an understanding of the craftsmanship involved in the resource’s construction, as well as building technologies and aesthetic traditions that prevailed during the district’s period of significance. The many kinds of changes that can affect integrity of *Workmanship* can include:

- Removal of architectural ornamentation/embellishment on wall surfaces and in windows, doors, canopies, storefronts and drive-thrus;
- Replacement or installation of architectural ornamentation with modern or anachronistic elements (Figure 4-39); and
- Use of stucco and other materials to cover architectural features that display noteworthy craftsmanship, such as corbelled brickwork in the cornice (Figure 4-40).

A commercial historic district does not retain its integrity of *Workmanship* if the majority of the buildings with distinctive craftsmanship no longer display such



Figure 4-41 (left). 300 block of Fisher Street, Moran.

The community of Moran enjoyed its greatest prosperity during the early twentieth century as a regional agricultural processing and shipping point for area farmers. The community's slow decline for the last several decades is evident by the existing character of the downtown, which diminishes its integrity of *Feeling*.

Figure 4-42 (right). 100 block of S. Patrick Street (US 377), Dublin.

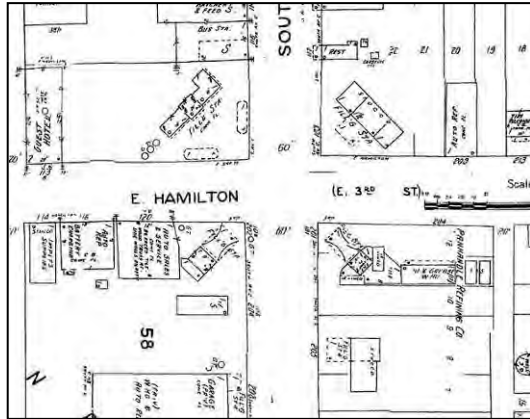
The prevalence and severity of alterations compromise the downtown's ability to convey a sense of the past. It is unable to retain its integrity of *Feeling*, as well as other aspects of integrity (*Design, Materials, and Craftsmanship*).

features. The lack of such elements diminishes the ability of the district to convey a sense of time and place.

Integrity of Feeling

Integrity of *Feeling* is measured by the degree to which the aesthetic and historic character of a resource is conveyed. A property that retains its integrity of *Feeling* closely resembles its appearance at the time it achieved significance and remains in a good state of repair. Integrity of *Feeling* can be compromised by minimal changes that by themselves are not particularly severe, but when combined may have a significant effect on a resource's historic character. A resource that no longer retains other aspects of integrity, such as *Design, Materials, Setting, and Workmanship*, will no longer possess integrity of *Feeling*. If the majority of the buildings in a district lack such qualities, the district likewise does not retain sufficient integrity of *Feeling* to meet NPS standards. The introduction of new infrastructural improvements or the creation of public spaces on former building sites may also detract from this aspect of integrity for a district. A historic downtown area in a crossroads community that possesses its integrity of *Feeling* conveys that the area served as the local center for retail and wholesale operations and visually communicates that role and historical association. As such, integrity of *Feeling* is a fundamental part of the integrity analysis process. The many kinds of changes (Figures 4-41 and 4-42) that can affect integrity of *Feeling* include:

- Construction of buildings outside the period of significance;
- Occurrence of vacant lots, public parks, or open spaces at sites formerly occupied by buildings from the period of significance;
- Introduction of new curbing and/or street-paving materials;
- Installation of new windows or doors with different fenestration patterns than originally used;
- Reconfiguration or enclosing of bays;
- Application of paint over historic masonry surfaces;



**Figure 4-43 (left).
Intersection of S. Avenue C (formerly SH 79) and E. Hamilton Street, Olney.**
This intersection once marked the northbound entrance into Olney. It contained gas stations at each corner that catered to the high volume of traffic that passed through this once strategic and important intersection in Olney during the oil boom era of the 1920s and 1930s.

**Figure 4-44 (right).
Abandoned gas stations in 100 block of S. Avenue C, Olney.**
In 1939, the re-routing of SH 79 two blocks to the east shifted traffic and activity away from this block and led to a gradual decline of the area. The abandoned gas stations underscore the importance of the city as a crossroads community and its dependence on transportation. However, their deteriorated state and abandonment negatively affects the downtown's integrity of *Association*.

- Replacement of original or historic materials of a different color, shape, or texture than originally used;
- Construction of new roofs with different profiles, types, and/or pitches than originally used;
- Abandonment of resources, allowing them to fall into disrepair; and
- Significant alterations to streetscape elements, such as roads, medians, and lights.

A commercial historic district does not retain its integrity of *Feeling* if the majority of the buildings have been modified or changed, and/or the district contains a significant number of non-historic buildings or materials. This aspect of integrity is also affected by the loss of important associations (abandonment of railroads or the re-routing of one of the major highways extending into the community) and/or important character-defining features of the downtown.

Integrity of Association

Integrity of *Association* links a resource to the historic trends or events through which the resource achieved significance. A property retains its integrity of *Association* if it still fulfills a role that is the same as, or similar to, the function it filled during the period of significance. A resource used for an entirely different purpose than its intended use is often modified to such an extent that integrity of *Association* may be compromised (Figure 4-43 and 4-44). The degree to which integrity of *Association* is affected is dependent upon the new use and effect it has on the ability of the resource to convey its significance. If the resource's original or historic appearance is no longer recognizable, and its historic function is no longer discernible, then the resource no longer possesses integrity of *Association*. Factors affecting integrity of *Association* include:

- The use of buildings in ways that are not historically linked with past operations or occupants and/or that did not occur within the period of significance;
- Abandonment of buildings in a deteriorated state or condition.

INTEGRITY THRESHOLDS FOR COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

The degree to which the district must retain integrity to meet NRHP standards is directly dependent on the factors that make the district significant and meet National Register Criteria. A commercial historic district does not need to retain all seven of the aspects of integrity, but must rely on an established threshold and standard that is geared specifically to applicable National Register Criteria. The systematic analysis and consistent application of the aspects of integrity provide the framework for identifying to what level a district and the resources within it must retain integrity. Furthermore, these integrity thresholds provide the basis for classifying resources as either Contributing or Noncontributing elements (see discussion of these topics later in this section of the report) in accordance with National Register guidelines and regulations.

Commercial Historic Districts Meeting Criterion A or B

A commercial historic district that meets either Criterion A or B is noteworthy because it possesses significance for its historical associations. It may also retain other aspects of integrity (*Design, Materials, and Workmanship*) that are more directly related to the district's overall physical character, but they are not as important in the integrity analysis process for a district eligible under Criterion A or B. However, the district must still meet a threshold that establishes a benchmark by which integrity can be evaluated and used to assess NRHP eligibility. The district must retain a sufficient level of those physical qualities of its historic character and associations to illustrate its significance. The district must be recognizable to the period in which it achieved significance and still convey a strong sense of time and place.

For the purposes of this study, a commercial historic district eligible under Criterion A or B must retain, at a minimum, the following aspects of integrity to a high degree:

- *Location*
- *Setting*
- *Feeling*
- *Association*

In addition, the district should also possess enough of its integrity of *Design, Materials, and Workmanship* to convey its significance. The district must evoke a sense of the past from the period of significance. The combined effect of alterations and changes over time to the district as a whole and the resources within its boundaries must be taken into consideration.

Commercial Historic Districts Meeting Criterion C

A commercial historic district that meets Criterion C possesses significance because it includes a cohesive collection of historic-age resources that retain their physical qualities to a noteworthy degree. These buildings may be

individually eligible for the NRHP for those qualities, or they may lack distinction on an individual basis but are noteworthy as a grouping because of their shared physical characteristics and history. Since the commercial historic district is noteworthy primarily for its physical qualities and attributes, it must retain those aspects of integrity devoted to physical characteristics to a higher degree than a district that derives significance from its historical associations. For the purposes of this study, a commercial historic district that meets Criterion C must retain, at a minimum, the following aspects of integrity:

- *Location*
- *Design*
- *Workmanship*
- *Setting*
- *Material*
- *Feeling*

Ideally, the district should also retain its integrity of *Association*, but it is less important for NRHP eligibility under Criterion C. As with a district that is eligible for its historical associations, a commercial historic district that possesses significance under Criterion C must convey a strong sense of the past, retain a high degree of its character-defining features, and be recognizable to the period in which it achieved significance. The combined effect of alterations and changes over time to the district as a whole and the resources within its boundaries must be taken into consideration.

CLASSIFICATION OF RESOURCES WITHIN A DISTRICT

NPS regulations require a complete and comprehensive inventory of all resources (buildings, structures, sites, and objects) within the boundaries of an NRHP-eligible property or district in order that these resources be classified as either Contributing or Noncontributing elements. As a general rule, a majority of the resources should be classified in the Contributing category. A Contributing resource dates from the period of significance and adds to or enhances the district's ability to convey its significance and sense of the past. Such a resource retains the majority of its character-defining features. Conversely, a Noncontributing resource includes either a historic resource that was modified to such an extent that it no longer retains its historic character, or it may be a resource constructed after the period of significance and thus shares few, if any, of the physical attributes that distinguish the area as a historic district.

Contributing Resources

A resource classified in the Contributing category must retain the majority of the salient and character-defining features that identify it as an example of one of the associated property types and enable it to enhance the district's ability to convey significance. The degree to which the resource must retain character-defining features is directly dependent on applicable National Register Criteria, the property type classification, the frequency and severity of changes and

alterations, and how the resource relates to similar properties and to the district as a whole.

Noncontributing Resources

A resource classified in the Noncontributing category includes those properties that were built after the district's period of significance or historic resources that are so severely altered that they lack integrity and detract from a district's historic character.

FIELD ANALYSIS FOR ASSESSING THE INTEGRITY OF HISTORIC DOWNTOWNS

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The first step in assessing the potential for historic district designation takes place during a reconnaissance-level survey when the area is being examined at a broad level, including the general physical characteristics and attributes of the downtown. At this stage, the survey considers those qualities that a downtown must possess to evaluate its potential historical and/or architectural significance, integrity, and NRHP eligibility. Based on the overall impressions and general characteristics of the historic downtown, this analysis takes into account how changes in use, alterations and additions to historic buildings, as well as new construction—collectively and individually—affect the downtown’s historic character and ability to convey significance. The identification of the associative and physical qualities that define the historic downtown and make it distinctive in a local setting are fundamental to assessing integrity for NRHP eligibility. They are also key to understanding how the downtown achieved significance and to determining the period in which it attained that significance.

To aid with this assessment, this section of the report provides guidelines to evaluate and assess the overall physical character of the downtown and examine salient physical features and attributes that are fundamental to the types of resources within the downtown. This assessment must be part of a reconnaissance-level survey in accordance with TxDOT SOU guidelines. It is important to keep in mind that the assessment of how a downtown retains the ability to convey its significance must be undertaken throughout the entire evaluation process. This assessment also considers overall general impressions of the downtown and how the combined effect of changes contribute to or detract from the historic qualities of the downtown. Other considerations include the reasons the area may possess significance and the salient and character-defining features of the property types in the downtown. A more detailed, systematic, and analytical examination of the individual resources within the downtown typically occurs as part of an intensive-level survey.

This section of the report poses a series of questions and discussions that will assist with the evaluation of integrity while undertaking field investigations. Each set of questions also includes bulleted lists of specific topics and provides representative images that illustrate common features likely to be encountered during this stage of the evaluation process. Captions for each figure provide explanations of how the various aspects of integrity may have been affected. For clarification, integrity of *Location* is not discussed, since all of the downtowns remain in place and have not been moved. The questions posed do not identify all of the aspects to be taken into consideration for assessing the historic district potential of a historic downtown, but they do provide the framework for NRHP-eligibility and integrity assessments, particularly for a reconnaissance-level survey.

Does the downtown remain a center of commercial and retail activity within the community, and are most of the buildings still occupied and in use?

A commercial historic district that is eligible for listing in the NRHP typically continues to function as an active center of commerce and trade. This continuity in use over time links the past with the present and reinforces any significance derived from the area's contributions to the history and commercial development of the community and surrounding areas. Most of the communities visited for this study meet this standard and remain the focus of commercial and retail activity. They are clearly recognizable as downtowns and provide the foundation for establishing significance under National Register Criterion A. Not all of the buildings need be occupied, but the majority of them must be in use and not vacated for the downtown to convey a sense of the past and significance within local historical trends.

Things to look for:

- Alternate commercial areas along highways bypassing the more congested parts of town.
- Abandoned and unoccupied buildings in the historic downtown.

This step primarily supports the assessment of integrity of *Association*, *Setting*, and *Feeling* for a downtown that is eligible for its historical associations (Criterion A or B). However, this step may also help evaluate other aspects of integrity and assess a district that possesses significance under Criterion C. Since *Association* is the direct link between the property and the historical event or person from which a property derives significance, this aspect of integrity is affected if the downtown no longer remains the center of commercial activity in a community. Large grocery stores, fast-food restaurants, and convenience stores constructed in recent years, as well as auto-oriented stores and enterprises from the postwar era along highways leading into the city, reflect the diminished role of a historic downtown. Such trends can interfere with the link between the downtown and the past, thereby reducing the area's overall integrity of *Association*. In addition, the redirection of commercial activity away from the downtown often detracts from the area's ability to convey its sense of place. As a result, the number of vacant buildings may increase, which negatively affects integrity of *Setting* and *Feeling*. The diminished role of the downtown as a commercial center often led storeowners to make changes to storefronts to lure people back into the downtown. Many of the building modifications and upgrades implemented during the 1950s and 1960s covered or obscured architectural features that largely defined the downtown historic character from its primary period of significance. Such changes also compromised those aspects of integrity largely dependent on physical attributes (*Design*, *Materials*, and *Workmanship*). The effect of these alterations may diminish the ability of a downtown to convey significance under Criterion A, B, or C.



Figure 5-1 (left). 100 block of Patrick Street (US 377), Dublin.

Downtown Dublin continues to be an active hub of commercial and retail activity with a constant flow of local and out-of-town traffic.

Figure 5-2 (right). 300 block of Fisher Street, Moran.

Moran experienced a decline during the last half of the twentieth century, and its downtown contains many empty lots and vacant buildings.

The historic downtown of Dublin (Figure 5-1) remains at the juncture of two regionally important highways: US 377 and SH 6. Unlike many other crossroads communities in the study area, Dublin does not have a bypass highway to relieve traffic congestion in the downtown. Many local businesses continue to occupy most of the historic commercial buildings. While the area's commercial viability remains strong and stable and retains its integrity of *Association* to an exceptional degree, most buildings have been subject to extensive alterations that diminish the downtown's overall historic character. The overall effect of these modifications compromises other aspects of integrity (*Materials, Design, Workmanship, and Feeling*).

Moran is a small crossroads community in Shackelford County that became a regional hub of activity during the early twentieth century. In contrast to Dublin, its downtown (Figure 5-2) contains numerous vacant buildings and empty lots that attest to the area's diminished role as a commercial center for the community and surrounding environs. While the downtown remains a direct and tangible link to Moran's most prosperous period during the early twentieth century and possesses significance for that association, the near abandonment of the downtown and altered historic fabric diminish its integrity of *Association, Setting, and Feeling*. The combined effect of changes to the extant buildings and the demolition of other historic properties further compromise the downtown's integrity of *Design, Workmanship, and Materials*.

When did the downtown experience its most intense period(s) of development, and does the downtown still convey a sense of time and place from a particular period that makes it noteworthy within a local context (period of significance)?

Establishing the period of significance is an extremely important step in the evaluation process because it defines the time when the downtown attained the qualities that make it significant for its historical associations and/or physical qualities. The period of significance also serves as a benchmark for classifying resources as Contributing or Noncontributing elements based on original dates of construction and dates of alteration. The existence of a large number of buildings less than 50 years of age may be indicative of an important trend that affected the downtown's physical character and prevailing conditions within the local economy. For example, changing market conditions and technological advances revitalized the oil and gas industry throughout the region for brief periods during the last half of the twentieth century. This trend spurred construction activity in many downtowns in the study area and resulted in modifications and upgrades to many existing buildings and the construction of new banks, stores, and offices. While these specific changes may reflect important patterns in the history of a community and downtown, they are not the primary reason the downtown possesses significance and often do not meet the recommended age threshold for NRHP eligibility. Significance attained less than 50 years must be of exceptional importance and is rare, as stated in the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.

Things to look for:

- Groupings of historic buildings that share a common look and feel and that exhibit similar architectural features and/or ornamentation. These buildings may represent the primary basis for defining the period of significance.
- Isolated and/or one-of-kind buildings that are at least 50 years of age and that reflect uses or functions different from those that prevail throughout the downtown may be associated with a completely different historical event or contextual theme.
- Multiple historic buildings that were subject to intense remodeling and modifications within a short time period may reflect an entirely different historical trend or pattern. The degree to which such alterations affect the downtown's historic character and integrity depends on the date of the modifications, the historical factors that led to the changes, and the combined effect the alterations have on the historic downtown.



Figure 5-3 (left). 100 block of W. Main Street (FM 581), Lometa.

The commercial buildings in this block illustrate Lometa's primary period of development. The relative lack of alterations to the buildings contributes to the ability of the downtown to convey a strong sense of the past.

Figure 5-4 (right). 100 block of W. Main Street (SH 114), Olney.

A grouping of buildings dating from the oil boom of the 1920s. Unlike those in downtown Lometa, the buildings in Olney have been subject to varying degrees of alteration over time. These changes give the downtown a more eclectic physical character and quality.

- Determine the approximate dates of construction of the buildings and consider how they reflect and/or are associated with the important historical trends discussed in the context.

In addition, it may be necessary to undertake research to determine when the town experienced growth and development that defines its historic character. Among the many events and trends that many crossroads communities experienced in the past include the establishment of railroad service; the discovery of oil or gas in the region; the growth of the livestock (cattle, sheep, and goat) industry; and the cultivation, processing, and shipment of locally cultivated crops, such as cotton, wheat, corn, and pecans.

This step supports the assessment of all of the aspects of integrity that meet National Register Criterion A, B, or C. It is crucial in the NRHP-evaluation process because it helps determine and justify the period of significance. Furthermore, it is essential for defining the district's historic character (*Feeling*) and sense of place (*Setting*) within a specific timeframe and is based on events, trends, and patterns in local history (*Association*). This step helps determine whether the downtown retains its salient features and whether changes and alterations to the buildings and downtown occurred within the period of significance, as supported in the associated historic context. Modifications completed after the period of significance can affect integrity of *Design*, *Materials*, and *Workmanship*.

The buildings in downtown Lometa (Figure 5-3) reflect the community's role as a regional retail and distribution center in northwestern Lampasas County. Most of the extant buildings date from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when Lometa gained significance as a shipping point for locally produced cotton, pecan, and other crops, as well as for shipment of mohair and wool. The buildings in this image and others nearby reflect the downtown's importance from a well-defined and easily recognizable period of time and are tangible links to distinct historical patterns and trends.

Most of the buildings in Figure 5-4 date to the late 1920s, when the discovery of oil near Olney ushered in a brief yet intense period of growth and development.

A resurgence of local oil and natural gas activities during the 1950s and 1960s led many downtown property owners to modify their storefronts to reflect a more robust economy. While these alterations are linked to important historical trends, they do not represent the primary qualities from which the downtown derives significance, and these changes diminish all but integrity of *Feeling, Design, Materials, and Workmanship*.

Do most of the buildings date from the period of significance?

The majority of the buildings must date from the time in which the downtown attained significance for its associations with important trends, events, or individuals of the past and/or the physical qualities of the downtown and its resources. Buildings constructed outside the period of significance detract from the downtown's overall historic character and diminish its ability to convey significance within the framework of the National Register Criteria. Although NRHP guidelines do not explicitly require a specific number or percentage of buildings to date from the period of significance, standard practice within the state establishes the 50-percent mark as a minimum threshold. Regardless of the number or percentage, the intent is to assure that enough of the extant resources within the downtown date from the period of significance and enhance its ability to convey a sense of the past. The buildings do not necessarily need to remain unaltered, but the majority of the resources must retain salient physical qualities and attributes to be clearly and easily recognizable from the downtown's period of significance. Conversely, historic buildings may also be so severely altered after the close of the period of significance that they detract from the overall historic character of the downtown.

Things to look for:

- A concentration of commercial buildings constructed within the period of time when the downtown attained the qualities that made it significant. Estimated dates may be used based upon property type classification that takes into account architectural styles, embellishments, and other physical attributes.
- Buildings that post-date the period of significance. Consider the number and location of these non-historic buildings and the degree to which they define the present character of the downtown. The greater the number of buildings outside the period of significance and the more prominent their location, the less likely the area is able to convey a sense of the past.
- Historic buildings that are extensively modified and changed outside the period of significance. The cumulative effect of these alterations may detract from the downtown's overall historic character to such an extent that the area no longer retains sufficient integrity to be eligible for the NRHP.

This step supports the assessment of all aspects of integrity because the underlying concept behind any district requires that a grouping of resources date from a specific and well-defined period of time. With very rare exceptions, that period must have ended at least 50 years ago, as stated in the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. While NPS guidelines do not specify a particular percentage, a sufficient number of resources should exist within a cohesive



Figure 5-5 (left). 100 - 200 blocks of W. Main Street (RR 101), Ranger.
The majority of buildings in downtown Ranger date to the oil-boom era of the late 1910s and 1920s and represent the community's most prosperous period of development.

Figure 5-6 (right). 100 block of Robinson Street, Miles.
Downtown Miles developed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and served area farmers and ranchers.

concentration and be within an area that is distinct from its surroundings. Enough of the extant historic resources should retain their salient physical features and associative qualities to convey a sense of the past from which the downtown derived significance. This step is necessary for a downtown that possesses significance under National Register Criterion A, B, or C.

Ranger is a community that experienced unprecedented growth following the 1917 discovery of oil in the region. During the next several years, most of the extant buildings in the downtown were constructed. The oil boom brought great wealth to the community and its residents, but that prosperity lasted for only a brief time. The city was in decline by 1930. The buildings in Figure 5-5 provide a tangible link to this period and are a vivid reminder of the community's significance as a regional oil-producing center through much of the 1920s. Many of the buildings in downtown Ranger exhibit a scale and level of craftsmanship and detail that stand out among other downtowns documented in the study area. The equally dramatic bust in the local oil industry in the 1930s triggered by overproduction and poor management of resources had a profound effect on the downtown. Many of the buildings were simply abandoned and left to deteriorate. Today, empty lots mark the locations of stores and offices erected during the oil boom and many buildings stand vacant in dilapidated condition.

The buildings in Figure 5-6 present a cohesive collection of commercial buildings in Miles that form the core of the community's historic downtown. Built in the early twentieth century, they reflect Miles' emergence as a regionally important farming and ranching center in southwest Runnels County. All of these buildings date from the downtown's primary period of significance and supported retail and commercial activities in the area. This role has declined over time, as the local economy has remained relatively stable but has experienced little growth since the mid-twentieth century. The construction of the US 67 bypass about two blocks south redirected most retail operations away from downtown. While the buildings have been modified to varying degrees over time, they still retain many of the qualities that reflect the downtown's significance from the early twentieth century.

Is the downtown distinct from its surroundings and does it present a clearly defined concentration of buildings and/or node of activities that contrasts with adjoining areas or neighborhoods?

Among all of the communities visited for this study, each downtown is clearly distinct from its surroundings and adjoining areas. Most of the properties outside the downtown are used for residential, light industrial, and other non-commercial purposes. A common trend observed during field investigations for this study noted the prevalence of ca. 1980s post offices, metal-frame and -clad stations for volunteer fire departments, and public-housing units just beyond and/or along the periphery of most downtowns. These and other non-commercial buildings near the downtown areas typically exhibit densities of development and physical characteristics (e.g., scale, materials, setbacks, and architectural ornamentation) that contrast sharply with those attributes in the historic commercial areas. In some cases, commercial development expanded over time and increased the size and physical limits of the downtown, typically along the same primary thoroughfares that were the historical focal points of commercial activity. However, the physical characteristics of the buildings constructed in the expanded commercial area typically were built outside the period of significance and are distinctly different from those in the historic downtowns. The ability of a downtown to be distinct from its surroundings must be maintained if it is to be eligible for the NRHP as a historic district. A downtown that lacks this attribute does not meet a fundamental requirement for NRHP eligibility as a district.

Things to look for:

- Areas where commercial buildings and other resources associated with the historic downtown are not prevalent and/or are not present.
- Areas where non-historic commercial buildings are the dominant type of resource and exhibit few, if any, of the physical attributes that reflect commercial activity present in the historic downtown.
- Natural or man-made features, such as waterways or railroads, that set the downtown apart from adjoining areas. Waterways and drainages (creeks and streams) are typical natural man-made features. Railroads, industrial zones, streets, block/lot configuration, and open, undeveloped lots are examples of man-made features that can set the downtown apart from its surroundings.

This step supports the delineation of a district and the assessment of integrity of *Setting, Association, Feeling, Materials, and Design*. The unique physical character of the buildings (*Material, Workmanship, and Design*) and the common history and function they share (*Association*) are among the most important attributes that unite a downtown and distinguish it from other parts of a city. These qualities are used to define and delineate the boundaries of a district. They are also critical for evaluating the ability of the buildings to convey a sense of the time (*Feeling*), and place (*Setting*), and if they exhibit an



Figure 5-7 (left). 200 block of Grand Avenue, Olney.

A transitional area south of the City Hall (far left) separates the downtown from an adjoining residential neighborhood.

Figure 5-8 (right). 900 block of S. First Street (BI 20-P), Merkel.

Looking east at the historic eastbound entrance into Merkel along US 80 (Bankhead Highway).

architectural character that unites them as a distinct entity whose individual components may lack distinction. For a district to convey its significance under any of the National Register Criteria it should retain these qualities to a sufficient degree to allow the downtown to be distinct from adjoining areas and convey significance for its historical association and/or physical attributes.

Figure 5-7 shows the area immediately south of the historic downtown of Olney and demonstrates the transition between the city's commercial center and an adjoining residential neighborhood. The house in the foreground shares few of the physical qualities and traits evidenced in downtown buildings. A large empty lot and a metal-clad volunteer fire department building are between the house and the two-story city hall building at the left side of the image.

Figure 5-8 looks east and was taken from a now-abandoned gas station in Merkel at the intersection of S. First Street and Taylor Street. The image shows how property beyond the intersection exhibits a physical quality that is distinctly different from that of the downtown. Although the lumberyard is used for commercial purposes, it is part of a transitional zone immediately east of downtown. This area also includes another lumberyard, a fire station, and single-family dwellings. They are near but clearly outside the more densely developed historic downtown. The lumberyard's location near the railroad and the local depot also enabled building materials to be moved easily within a short distance for sale to local customers.

Do the streetscapes present a largely continuous and uninterrupted grouping of historic buildings with a lack of new construction and/or vacant lots?

Density of development is an important attribute to take into consideration while assessing the significance and integrity of historic downtowns in crossroads communities within the study area. The construction of buildings outside the period of significance and the existence of vacant lots where buildings once stood detract from the downtown's ability to convey its historic character and diminish its cohesiveness and sense of place. The degree to which these factors affect the historic qualities of a downtown depends on their location and prevalence. Although most of the downtowns in the crossroad communities continue to function as primary centers of local commercial and retail activity, they typically have not experienced much growth and expansion since the period when they initially developed and attained significance. In addition, empty lots marking the sites of historic buildings may also have a negative effect on the historic character of a downtown. Fires, neglect, and/or lack of use are among the many factors that can lead to the demolition of historic buildings in such settings. Empty lots have a more pronounced effect on the downtown's historic character when they are at street intersections. Buildings that once stood at corner lots typically were among the more notable edifices and often featured two facades that fronted onto each street. They often displayed noteworthy craftsmanship and/or architectural detailing and ornamentation. Empty lots situated in the middle of a block can also have a negative effect on the downtown's overall historic character and can disrupt the continuity and sense of cohesiveness that is often a distinguishing attribute of a historic downtown. While a survey may focus on the built environment, it must also consider vacant lots and the effect they have on the overall rhythm and continuity of the streetscape.

Things to look for:

- Buildings and structures constructed outside the period of significance, especially those that are inconsistent with the continuity, rhythm, and cohesive quality of the building designs prevalent in the historic downtown.
- Vacant lots within the downtown, especially those with concrete-slab foundations that mark the sites of former buildings.
- Exposed party walls with voids noting locations of roof trusses/joists.
- Ghost marks noting roof or ceiling lines of former buildings.

Although this step supports the assessment of most of the aspects of integrity, it is particularly useful for evaluating integrity of *Setting*, *Design*, and *Association*. During the early twentieth century when most crossroads communities enjoyed their most prosperous period, their downtowns contained dense concentrations of one- and two-story buildings. These buildings lined blocks immediately adjacent to the intersections and subsequent growth



Figure 5-9 (left). 100 block of N. Main Street (US 83), Winters.

This block has no empty lots to disrupt the rhythm and uniformity of this part of the downtown.



Figure 5-10 (right). 100 block of S. Austin Street, Ranger.

Foundations and flooring mark the sites of former commercial buildings and disrupt the cohesive quality of the block.

outward as the city and downtown grew over time. The construction of the typical long and narrow commercial buildings on town lots fulfilled the intended use of property in these locations. Downtowns retaining these qualities are able to evoke a strong sense of the past. Vacant lots and the construction of buildings that postdate the period of significance disrupt the downtown's ability to convey a sense of time and place by interrupting the rhythm, density, and aesthetic quality that defined the downtown during its period of significance. These types of changes thus diminish integrity of *Design, Materials, Setting, Feeling, and Association*. Their impact is greater on a downtown that possesses significance under Criterion C, but can also detract from a downtown that is significant for its historical associations under Criterion A or B.

The grouping of early twentieth-century commercial buildings in Figure 5-9 provides graphic evidence of the importance an uninterrupted streetscape plays in defining the historic character of a downtown. As part of the historic core of the community, these buildings reflect the city's prosperity as a regional center of retail and trade. The downtown stands out within a local context because of the cohesive quality and physical attributes of its historic resources. They are concentrated within a well-defined area and exhibit many physical traits and characteristics that are unlike those in adjoining areas and neighborhoods. The building at the far left is a bank that was constructed in 1909 that continues to function as such. The present façade likely dates to 1954. Although the present façade is over 50 years old, the building shares few of the physical qualities that make downtown Winters significant. It is reflective of the evolving nature of the downtown but is not associated with the primary period of significance.

The tiled flooring and exposed slab-on-grade foundation shown in Figure 5-10 illustrate a common trend in Ranger, where a number of empty lots disrupt the cohesive quality of the downtown. The site in this image is among the most obvious examples because extant features are visible at grade level; however, other examples are more subtle and less obvious. Ghost marks and exposed roof joist holes are other visual clues. Fire insurance maps and historic aerials are the best resources to learn if a building once stood on the site and will help determine the approximate time or period when a building was demolished.

Are most of the buildings constructed with uniform setbacks from the streets?

A common feature of any historic downtown is the uniform setbacks of the buildings. Indeed, such a trend often reflects the desire of property owners to maximize the use of their land and make the stores easily accessible for pedestrians. This attribute also offered storekeepers exposure and frontage onto thoroughfares to display their goods to passersby while still providing ample room to maintain large stocks and inventories of merchandise. The trend to make the most efficient use of the property brought the stores physically closer to streets but also led to uniform building setbacks that added to a greater sense of cohesiveness. This trend prevailed in the downtowns of crossroad communities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By the late 1910s and 1920s, however, the growing popularity of automobiles began to have an effect on this pattern of development, which led to less consistent building setbacks. The advent of stand-alone gas stations required additional surface area for vehicles to obtain fuel, and/or receive service, and resulted in the construction of buildings set back farther from the road. This trend accelerated during the mid-twentieth century, as commercial development patterns adapted to a culture increasingly dependent upon the automobile.

Things to look for:

- Buildings that are set back at a uniform distance from the street. The greater the consistency of setbacks, the greater the sense of cohesiveness.
- Determine if buildings with different setbacks date from the period of significance and if they are associated with the patterns of history or design qualities from which the downtown derives significance.
- Consider the combined effect that empty lots and inconsistent setbacks have to the overall historic character of the downtown.

The placement of buildings relative to the street and to one another is an important attribute of a downtown and primarily affects its integrity of *Setting* and *Feeling* but also integrity of *Design*. Uniform setbacks contribute to a sense of place and cohesive quality that prevail in all of the downtowns in the study area. Any disruption in that rhythm, such as empty lots or the construction of new buildings with a different setback, diminishes the relationship between the resources and the street and the aesthetic and historic character of the downtown. Notable exceptions include gas stations built within the period of significance. Building placement in the downtown reflects the intended use of land as laid out in the original town plan. Property owners typically exploited the lay out and configuration of town lots and used as much space as possible to construct stores and businesses in the downtown.



Figure 5-11 (left). 400 block of W. Railway Street, Lometa.

This streetscape presents an uninterrupted block with uniform setbacks that adds to the cohesive quality of the downtown.

Figure 5-12 (right). 200 block of W. Dale Street (Texas Loop 438), Winters.

Although this streetscape presents a largely uniform setback, changes to the buildings, empty lots, and new construction diminish its historic character.

The grouping of buildings in Figure 5-11 fronts onto railroad tracks that extend through the city. Each building maximizes the amount of frontage they have on the road that runs parallel to and directly abuts the railroad. This property likely was the most valuable during the city's period of significance. The uniform setbacks enhance the cohesive quality of the downtown and are fundamental aspects to the downtown's sense of time and place. Despite their current state, they nevertheless contribute, albeit marginally, to the historic character of the downtown. Their overall condition and abandonment diminish their integrity of *Association*, *Design*, *Materials*, and *Feeling*, but they retain enough of these qualities to help the downtown convey its significance.

Figure 5-12 shows a grouping of early twentieth-century buildings in Winters that faces onto the primary road that historically linked the downtown with the depot of the Abilene and Southern Railway. All of the buildings maximize the amount of available space, extend to edge of the lot lines, and thus add to the cohesive quality of the western limits of the historic downtown. However, the metal panels across most of the front of the store on the far left, and the lack of anything but exterior brick framing of the three middle stores, diminish the ability of these buildings to convey a sense of the past. Although the uniform setbacks contribute to some aspects of the downtown's integrity of *Design* and *Feeling*, the lack of other character-defining elements such as windows, doors, roofs, rear walls, and interiors negatively affect all aspects of integrity except integrity of *Location*. The combined effect of these modifications is so great that the buildings lack sufficient integrity and do not contribute to the downtown's ability to convey significance. While they are reminders of the buildings that once existed during the period of significance, they no longer retain enough of the physical qualities to appropriately convey past association with the historic downtown.

Are the sidewalks intact and do they utilize original and/or historic materials that are in stable condition?

Sidewalks are an important unifying factor that can physically link the buildings to one another and to the streets that extend through the downtown. Although they are not fundamental to the establishment of a district, they nonetheless enhance a sense of cohesiveness and can be a character-defining feature of a commercial historic district. They may also reveal important historical trends or associations. For example, the curbing may be associated with worker-relief programs of the 1930s. Based on field investigations, most of the sidewalks are cast-in-place concrete slabs with expansion joints. They may also contain inlays, decorative scoring, and other features that contribute to the district's historic character. The introduction and use of materials outside the period of significance, especially those that are different from and contrast with historic materials, can actually diminish the downtown's cohesiveness and its ability to convey a sense of the past.

Things to look for:

- Introduction of new materials and/or designs in the sidewalks that are not consistent with the historic character of the downtown.
- Inlays and other features embedded in the sidewalk that may add to the downtown's historic character and evoke a sense of time and place or reflect a historic building program.

This step supports the assessment of integrity of *Materials, Design, Setting, and Feeling*, and may also help with integrity of *Workmanship*.

As an often-overlooked feature, sidewalks can enhance the ability of a downtown to convey significance under Criterion A or B, but may be more important under Criterion C. Modifications to sidewalks can therefore affect integrity of *Materials, Setting, Feeling, and Design*. The replacement of historic-age concrete with materials, such as brick or tile, introduces new materials to the district that do not date from the period of significance. Likewise, these kinds of changes diminish the ability of the downtown to convey its historic and aesthetic quality and sense of the past. Sidewalks improvement projects, including the construction of ADA-compliant ramps, can be problematic since they can change the original layout of the town plan, introduce new landscape elements, and/or result in the removal features attached to or embedded in the historic sidewalk.



Figure 5-13 (left). 100 block of W. Dale Street (Texas Loop 438), Winters.

A distinctive sidewalk feature in downtown Winters that dates from the period of significance.

Figure 5-14 (right). Sidewalk at northwest corner of SH 6 and N. Pecan Street, Hico.

This image shows how a non-historic sidewalk can detract from the historic character of a building and the downtown.

The concrete sidewalk in Figure 5-13 is at the southeast corner of W. Dale Street and the alley that runs behind the 100 block of S. Main Street (US 83) in Winters. The curved segment of the curb includes an inlay that notes the business “E. A. Shepperd Insurance & Loans” that occupied the adjacent building at the time of the sidewalk’s construction. This feature is an important landscape element that should be recorded and classified as a contributing element and character-defining feature of the downtown. Other kinds of historic sidewalk-related features include metal rings, inlaid tile, and light poles.

Other than their functionality, sidewalks are sometimes used for other purposes. As Figure 5-14 shows, a sidewalk can be a marketing tool designed to attract customers, in this case, to the restaurant that operates in the adjoining historic building. The tile surface, however, is a relatively recent alteration, and it does not date from the downtown’s period of significance. In addition, the tile reproduction of the famous “Billy the Kid” photograph does not represent a direct historical link or connection with the building. The effect of the sidewalk to the downtown’s overall historic character is negative, and the sidewalk should be considered a noncontributing feature.

Does the curbing remain continuous and utilize original and/or historic materials that are in stable condition?

Like sidewalks, curbing is another physical attribute common to historic downtowns and can help reinforce a sense of cohesiveness within the downtown. Not only does street-side curbing delineate property boundaries, it also functions as a buffer between the commercial activity taking place within the buildings and vehicular traffic on the adjoining roads. Curbing is not a critical factor in evaluating the NRHP eligibility of a commercial historic district, but the existence of this historic feature can enhance the ability of the downtown to convey a sense of time and place. Conversely, changes to the curbing outside the period of significance can diminish the downtown's historic character.

Things to look for:

- Interruptions in the curbing to accommodate new buildings and/or new functions in historic buildings.
- Buildings with different setbacks, which can indicate new construction and business operations that do not reflect patterns and trends from the period of significance. For example, the construction of a bank drive-through may require the elimination of historic curbing to accommodate vehicular access to the facility.
- Changes in the curbing grade and/or repairs to existing curbs.
- Introduction of new curbing materials that are not consistent with historic patterns and trends or materials, such as the removal of stone curbing with concrete.

While curbing is not a vital part of the integrity analysis process, this feature can be an effective means of understanding and documenting the physical evaluation of the downtown and can support the assessment of integrity of *Materials, Association, Setting, and Feeling* for the downtown as a whole. Breaks in curbing and the installation of ramps are visual clues that typically indicate the construction of new buildings or the conversion of older buildings into new uses, thereby affecting integrity of *Association*. Changes in the curbing can also affect the relationship between the buildings and street network (*Setting*) and subtly diminish the aesthetic historic character and sense of the past (*Feeling*). New construction materials may also be introduced that are not consistent with those dating from the period of significance and thus may interfere with integrity of *Materials*. This step in the integrity analysis can be applied to a downtown that derives significance under any of the National Register Criteria, but may have a greater effect on one that is significant for its physical attributes under Criterion C.



Figure 5-15 (left). 100 block of W. Dale Street (Texas Loop 438), Winters.

The continuous concrete curbing along this block adds to the downtown's overall historic character and is a contributing feature.

Figure 5-16 (right). 100 block of Edwards Street, Merkel.

The continuous concrete curbing along this block adds to the downtown's overall historic character and is a contributing feature.

The curbing shown in Figure 5-15 is representative of the kind of continuous concrete curbing found in crossroads communities throughout the study area. The segment of curbing in this image remains in good condition and retains its salient features to a noteworthy degree. In other downtowns, the curbing has often deteriorated over time or has been repaired or patched with in-kind material. The curbing shown in this image contributes to the ability of the downtown to convey a sense of place from the period of significance.

Figure 5-16 shows multiple kinds of materials used in the curbing and sidewalks of downtown Merkel. The concrete curbs and gutters were likely constructed in the 1930s or 1940s, although that estimated date is not confirmed. Historic images of downtown Merkel show the prevalence of cut stone as an early curbing material that predates the concrete curbs and gutters. In addition, the brick street paving, concrete sidewalks, and tiled flooring in the inset bay of the now-abandoned bank building in the background further reveal the layered physical evolution of the downtown and shows how features other than buildings (objects, landscape elements, etc.) define its historic character.

Does the layout of streets, blocks, and lots remain unchanged and/or follow original or historic patterns?

The street pattern and delineation of lots and blocks are fundamental characteristics of a historic downtown and greatly influenced both the patterns of development over time, and the physical character of any historic commercial area. Any changes to these aspects can have a profound impact on the overall historic character and quality of the downtown and its ability to convey a sense of the past.

Things to look for:

- Construction of decorative landscaping elements in areas that historically lack such features. For example, a popular trend in urban planning and design during the 1960s and 1970s led to the construction of sidewalks, planters, and other features to help revitalize downtowns in many of the country's large metropolitan areas. This trend gradually filtered down to smaller communities. Despite the best of intentions, such improvements have a negative effect on the downtown's overall historic character and introduce elements with no historical precedence. While they reflect a common trend from a period of time, these features typically do not date from the period of significance when the downtown achieved that significance.
- Expansion and/or changes to the road/street network completed outside the period of significance that involved the taking of land previously used for commercial purposes. The alterations do not reflect the historical themes and patterns from the time period in which the downtown achieved significance.
- Establishment of a park or public space on the site of historic buildings. The establishment of such elements can disrupt the cohesive quality and intended design, use, or function of land. Confirm the historic use of the land through research (Sanborn fire insurance maps or tax abstracts) and review historic photographs to determine if a building once existed on the site and if the open space dates from the period of significance.
- Comparison of the existing road network with historic plat maps on file at the county courthouse or the county appraisal district make it possible to confirm any changes or alterations to the fundamental layout and configuration of the downtown.

This step supports the assessment of integrity of *Setting*, *Design*, and *Feeling*, but may also help with integrity of *Association*. Changes to the street layout or lot/block configuration can affect some of the most fundamental aspects of a downtown. For example, the original town plat established the pattern for subsequent growth and development and influenced how land would be used (*Design*). It also set the standard for how buildings in the downtown would relate to one another and to the street (*Setting*). Modifications to street widths



Figure 5-17 (left). Southwest corner of E. Main Street and Avenue C, Olney.

A reconfigured sidewalk and ramp at an important intersection in downtown Olney.

Figure 5-18 (right). 100 block N. Pecan Street, Hico.

The new landscaped median alters the historic character of the downtown and its original layout.

and/or reconfigured street intersections may disrupt these qualities and diminish the ability of the downtown to convey its historic and aesthetic character (*Feeling*). The introduction of new public spaces also is not consistent with the historic associations that contribute to the cohesive quality and shared history of the area (*Association*). This step in the evaluation process applies to any downtown that possess significance under Criterion A, B, and/or C. However, it is important to determine if any of these types of changes occurred within the period of significance and if they contribute to the qualities that make the downtown noteworthy and meet any of the applicable National Register Criteria.

As seen in Figure 5-17, the extension of ramps into the street changes the layout of the street intersection and alters the relationship between the nearby building and the street corner. Efforts to revitalize downtowns through sidewalk improvement projects and to provide ADA-compliant ramps sometimes can have a negative effect on the historic character of a downtown.

Figure 5-18 shows how a downtown revitalization project, however well intentioned it may be, can introduce completely new elements to the landscape and change the layout and configuration of the original town plan. The median disrupts the wide expanse of this historic thoroughfare, which terminated on the south at the former railroad depot and was a character-defining feature of the downtown. Segments of the street one block north, outside of the downtown, retain that open character. The median presents a distinct demarcation that separates each side of the downtown. It also changes the aesthetic quality and introduces new materials, landscaping, and features that postdate the downtown's period of significance.

Does the paving surface of streets extending through the downtown retain original and/or historic materials? If applicable, does the existence of historic paving surfaces enhance a sense of cohesiveness within the downtown and evoke a strong sense of the past?

Based on field investigations, most of the downtowns in the crossroads communities visited for this study were originally paved with brick that helped to facilitate the increasing amount and flow of traffic during the early twentieth century. Most of these towns experienced their most intense period of development at this time, and the existence of paving surfaces from the period of significance can greatly enhance a sense of cohesiveness within the downtown, evoking a strong sense of the past. While not a fundamental part of the district evaluation process, historic brick paving is among the most important historic resources that should be documented and noted during field investigations.

Things to look for:

- Partially exposed brick streets that may be covered with asphalt or other paving material.
- Side streets that retain historic paving material; the application of new non-historic paving material may be visible from side streets.
- Defined ends or limits of brick paving, which may reflect a historic perception of area within the defined commercial historic district.

This step supports the assessment of integrity of *Materials*, *Setting*, and *Feeling* for a district that derives significance from its historical associations (Criterion A or B) and/or for its physical attributes (Criterion C). This step is not a critical part of the integrity analysis process, but the existence of historic paving materials may enhance the ability of the downtown to convey a sense of time (*Feeling*) and place (*Setting*). Brick paving, for example, may serve as a link that contributes to the downtown's visual cohesiveness (*Materials*) and reinforces the interrelationships between the street network and the buildings. The degree to which the existence of historic paving materials and surfaces enhance the district's historic qualities depends on the amount, area, and location of these materials.



Figure 5-19 (left). 900 block of N. Second Street, Merkel.

Most of downtown Merkel retains its historic brick paving, which enhances the area's ability to convey a sense of the past from the period of significance.

Figure 5-20 (right). 100 block of S. Main Street, Cross Plains.

A typical asphalt-paved road surface in the downtown.

Among all of the crossroads communities visited for this study, Merkel retains the highest percentage of its historic brick-paved surfaces (Figure 5-19). The brick streets contribute to a sense of cohesiveness and function as a physical and aesthetic link to the red brick masonry buildings that comprise much of the downtown.

In contrast to downtown Merkel, Cross Plains retains little of its original historic brick-paved streets. Figure 5-20 shows how the covering of brick paving with asphalt takes away some of the historic qualities of a historic downtown, as is evident when compared with Figure 5-19. While the buildings in this block are historic and retain their integrity to varying degrees, they would convey a stronger sense of cohesiveness if the original brick paving was intact and visible.

Does the downtown convey its historic character and sense of the past at the pedestrian level? Do storefront renovations date from the period of significance, and what is the combined effect these alterations have on the historic integrity of the entire downtown?

The pedestrian level is the area below and including the canopy extending across the front of most commercial buildings. Modifications within this zone are particularly important in the NRHP evaluation of downtowns because they are directly linked to the kinds of activities that are fundamental to downtowns in the study area. They are also an important aspect of how people experienced the buildings and the businesses operating within them. Storekeepers, for example, used large plate-glass windows to display their merchandise and post signs to attract potential customers. Many entrances have recessed bays and angled sets of display windows. Single- or double-door entries typically featured large glass lights that were designed to entice pedestrians to step inside buildings. In addition, many of these recessed entrances have decorative tile work in the floors that functioned as another architectural element to attract the attention of passersby. Sanborn fire insurance maps confirm that most of the downtowns included in this study area had wood canopies that stretched across the entire storefront. They represent a character-defining feature of the individual buildings and to the downtown as a whole. Common kinds of alterations at the pedestrian level include the reconfiguration of the traditional three-bay storefront, the installation of new canopies, and the introduction of exterior materials and finishes that do not date from the period of significance. The degree to which the historic buildings collectively retain their salient features at the pedestrian level is an essential factor that must be considered when evaluating the downtown's potential for historic district designation. Furthermore, it is particularly important for downtowns comprised mostly of one-story commercial buildings, since this area represents such a large percentage of the front facade.

Things to look for:

- Removal of original, and/or installation of new, canopies or other elements that were historically used at the pedestrian level.
- Reconfiguration of storefronts including changes in fenestration and covering of entrance bay flooring.
- Introduction of new materials, such as the application of stucco or stone veneer over historic exterior finishes.
- Construction of canopies that do not reflect the size, shape, or form and/or use of materials with those elements dating from the period of significance.

This is a crucial step in the integrity analysis process and aids with the assessment of integrity of *Design, Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling*. While this analysis applies to a district that derives significance under Criterion A or B, it is especially important for a downtown that has significance for its physical



Figure 5-21 (left). 100 block of S. Austin Street, Ranger.

A group of altered buildings in downtown Ranger.



Figure 5-22 (right). 100 block of S. Patrick Street (US 377), Dublin.

Altered storefronts within the pedestrian zone.

attributes or design qualities (Criterion C). This step requires that surveyors consider how alterations undertaken at the pedestrian level affect not only an individual building but also the entire downtown area. This step can be particularly challenging if the upper zone of a building retains most of its salient features. However, it is important to remember that buildings include both upper and lower zones, and that historically, the pedestrian level is the more important area, since this is how most people experienced the buildings. The introduction of new materials, changes to the storefront and fenestration, and the replacement or removal of canopies can have an effect on scale, layout, and configuration (*Design*), physical elements used in construction or finishes (*Materials*), architectural forms or ornamentation (*Workmanship*), and sense of place (*Setting*). The combined effect of these changes (*Feeling*) is vital to determine if the downtown retains the qualities that enable it to convey significance.

The buildings in Figure 5-21 show how changes at the pedestrian level can overwhelm the historic character of a streetscape. The brickwork in the parapets of both historic buildings is particularly noteworthy and is indicative of commercial architectural trends in the region during the early twentieth century. While the upper zones of the buildings retain much of their original historic character, the introduction of new materials, the partial enclosure of window openings, and the installation of modern overhead sliding garage doors are major alterations that have a negative effect on each building's character-defining features. While the buildings are recognizable to the period when Ranger enjoyed its most prosperous era as an oil-boom town, the combined effect of these modifications detracts from the downtown's historic character and integrity.

The storefronts depicted in Figure 5-22 have been subject to extensive alterations. The introduction of new materials that are unlike those used during the period of significance greatly diminishes the original historic character and aesthetic quality of the downtown when it achieved significance. Other changes include new windows and doors and the reconfigured fenestrations of several buildings. This block retains few of the qualities that reflect the downtown's historic character.

Do most of the historic buildings still retain their original exterior materials, finishes, and detailing from the period of significance?

The degree to which the historic buildings collectively retain their salient features is an essential factor to be taken into account when evaluating the downtown's potential for historic district status. The cumulative effect of alterations and modifications after the period of significance can greatly diminish the downtown's ability to convey a sense of the past from the time it achieved significance. The buildings need not remain unaltered; however, the number and extent of the alterations must be considered in an objective and analytical fashion. This evaluation must rely on the kinds of resources that are still present and the extent to which they retain their character-defining features based on their property type classification. The fact that the downtown contains a high concentration of historic buildings is not sufficient to meet NRHP eligibility as a historic district. The overall historic character and quality of the buildings and a collective sense of cohesiveness must be retained to a sufficient level for the downtown to possess significance and retain the integrity necessary to convey that significance. Although the reversibility of changes to exterior finishes and ornamentation is a somewhat mitigating factor, the combined effect of such modifications must be considered. The downtown must be considered in its existing state and condition, not by its rehabilitation potential. While an in-depth analysis is usually undertaken as part of an intensive-level survey, field investigations at the reconnaissance-level must gather enough information to make a preliminary assessment and cite the need for supplemental investigations on a building-by-building basis.

Things to look for:

- Introduction and/or application of non-historic materials to:
 - Parapets (e.g., application of stucco or aluminum false fronts);
 - Exterior wall surfaces along the storefront;
 - Installation of aluminum frame windows and doors.
- Replacement of original window, door, and transom materials within the original configurations (typically, they are easily reversible alterations).
- Installation of new windows or door openings, and/or closure or covering of window and door openings.

This step in the integrity analysis process is vital for a district that derives significance under any of the National Register Criteria, but is particularly important for a downtown that is significant under Criterion C. This analysis supports the assessment of integrity of *Design, Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling*, and may also help with evaluating integrity of *Association and Setting*. The combined effect of modifications to salient physical features and attributes to buildings within a district may impact the ability of the downtown to convey its significance, and includes such elements as changes to exterior finishes



Figure 5-23 (left). 100 block of S. Patrick Street (US 377), Dublin.

A group of altered historic buildings in downtown Dublin.



Figure 5-24 (right). 100 block of E. Dempsey Street (US 380), Bryson.

A group of one- and two-story brick and wood-frame commercial buildings in downtown Bryson.

(*Materials*) and architectural ornamentation (*Design* and *Workmanship*). The use of non-historic materials, along with changes to windows, doors, and other architectural features, will interfere with the important physical qualities that define resources as examples of types, forms, or methods of construction (*Design*). The extent to which these physical qualities are changed may, in turn, affect the sense of place and time (*Feeling*) historically significant in a downtown core as well as the qualities that distinguish the downtown.

All of the buildings in Figure 5-23 date from the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries and present a scale and proportion that typify contemporaneous commercial architectural design in other crossroads communities throughout the study area. While the upper floor bays remain discernible, the fenestration on all but the stone building at the far right has been compromised due to the application of stucco onto exterior surfaces and window openings. The stucco covers many of the buildings' most important architectural features and diminishes their aspects of integrity. In addition, alterations at the pedestrian level also detract from the buildings' historic character. Aluminum-frame plate glass windows and doors, covered transom windows, and new canopies are among the most common kinds of changes in Dublin. The combined effect these alterations have to the buildings diminishes almost all aspects of integrity to such an extent that the downtown lacks the ability to convey significance under any National Register Criteria.

The grouping of buildings in the small crossroads community of Bryson (Figure 5-24) illustrates how the use of non-historic materials can affect the historic character and integrity of a streetscape. The building at the far left of the picture is a one-story board-and-batten building that may be the oldest of all the buildings. The application of board-and-batten siding to the two-story brick building creates a more unified, rustic effect at the pedestrian level. However, this appearance is not consistent with the historic character of the two-story brick building. While the upper floor retains much of its original fabric, the visual impact of the board-and-batten siding and other changes at the pedestrian level compromise the historic character to such an extent that integrity is lost and the building no longer retains the ability to convey significance.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY METHODS

SURVEY METHODS

FIELD INVESTIGATIONS

Project historians conducted two separate field trips during the early stages of the project. The initial visit took place during the week of August 25, 2008, when a historian visited Rising Star and documented existing conditions within the NRHP-eligible commercial historic district. The historian completed extensive photographic and architectural documentation in support of mitigative documentation being prepared for the historic properties affected by a previously completed TxDOT-sponsored project. While gathering material for that documentation effort, the historian also examined other areas within the community's historic downtown. This information supported the development of preliminary guidelines for evaluating historic downtowns in Northwest-Central Texas.

During the first field trip, the historian also visited Hico, Dublin, and Ranger, and conducted limited field investigations. The historian photo-documented historic buildings in these commercial settings and noted significant crossroads of transportation routes, railroad routes, and other factors associated with cultural landscapes of these historic downtowns.

The second field trip occurred during the week of September 22, 2008, when a historian conducted a windshield survey of the downtowns of the other communities identified during the research design phase. At each destination, the historian conducted limited field investigations and historical research. The historian found that the overall conditions and levels of integrity varied greatly depending on the economic viability of the targeted community and the degree to which the commercial centers remained primary nodes of commerce and trade. The historian also observed some trends related to existing road networks and how highways bypassed and extended through these commercial centers.

The locations of each of the communities visited during field investigations are noted in subsequent pages.

Bryson, Jack County – one city block with commercial buildings and one partial block; US 380 and FM 1191 intersect in the downtown (Figure A-1).

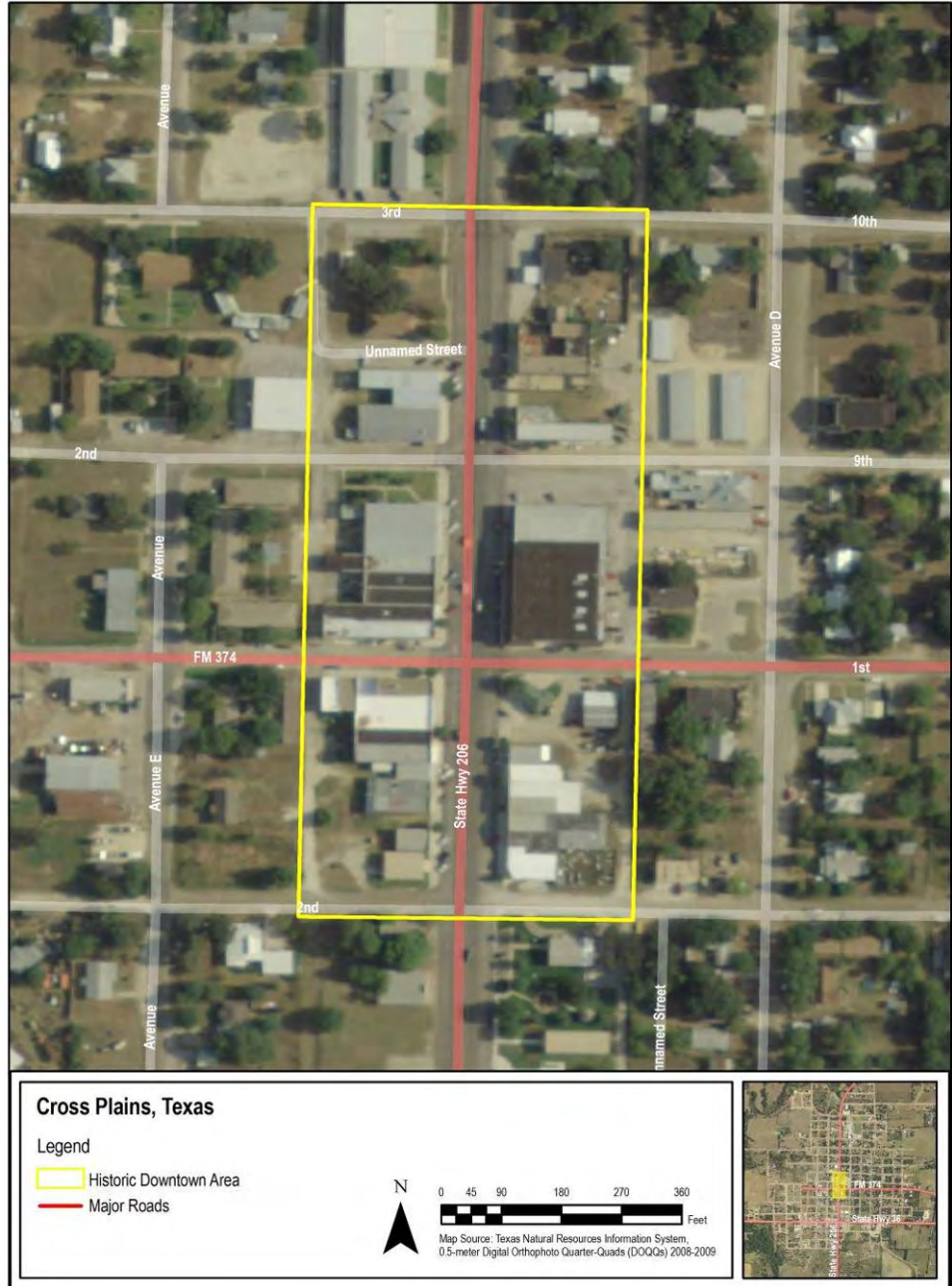
Figure A-1. Downtown Bryson.
Map Source: Texas Natural Resources Information System.



Cross Plains, Callahan County – six city blocks with commercial buildings; SH 206 and FM 374 intersect in the downtown; SH 36 bypasses the downtown and is a few blocks to the south (Figure A-2).

Figure A-2. Downtown Cross Plains.

Map Source: Texas Natural Resources Information System.



Dublin, Erath County – six city blocks with commercial buildings; US 377 and US 67 intersect with SH 6 in the downtown (Figure A-3).

Figure A-3. Downtown Dublin.

Map Source: Texas Natural Resources Information System.



Hico, Hamilton County – four complete and two partial city blocks with commercial buildings; SH 6 runs through northern boundary of the downtown (Figure A-4).

Figure A-4. Downtown Hico.

Map Source: Texas Natural Resources Information System.



Lometa, Lampasas County – three city blocks with commercial buildings and two partial blocks with railroad-related industrial buildings; US 183 and Ranch Road 581 intersect in the commercial center (Figure A-5).

Figure A-5. Downtown Lometa.
Map Source: Texas Natural Resources Information System.



Merkel, Taylor County – four city blocks with commercial buildings and three partial blocks; BI 20-P (formerly US 84) and FM 126 intersect in the downtown, near the railroad tracks; IH 20 bypasses the historic commercial center to the north (Figure A-6).

Figure A-6. Downtown Merkel.
 Map Source: Texas Natural Resources Information System.



Miles, Runnels County – four city blocks with commercial buildings and two partial blocks with commercial buildings; CR 363 and RR 1692 intersect in the downtown; CR was former US 67, which now extends just south of the downtown (Figure A-7).

Figure A-7. Downtown Miles.

Map Source: Texas Natural Resources Information System.



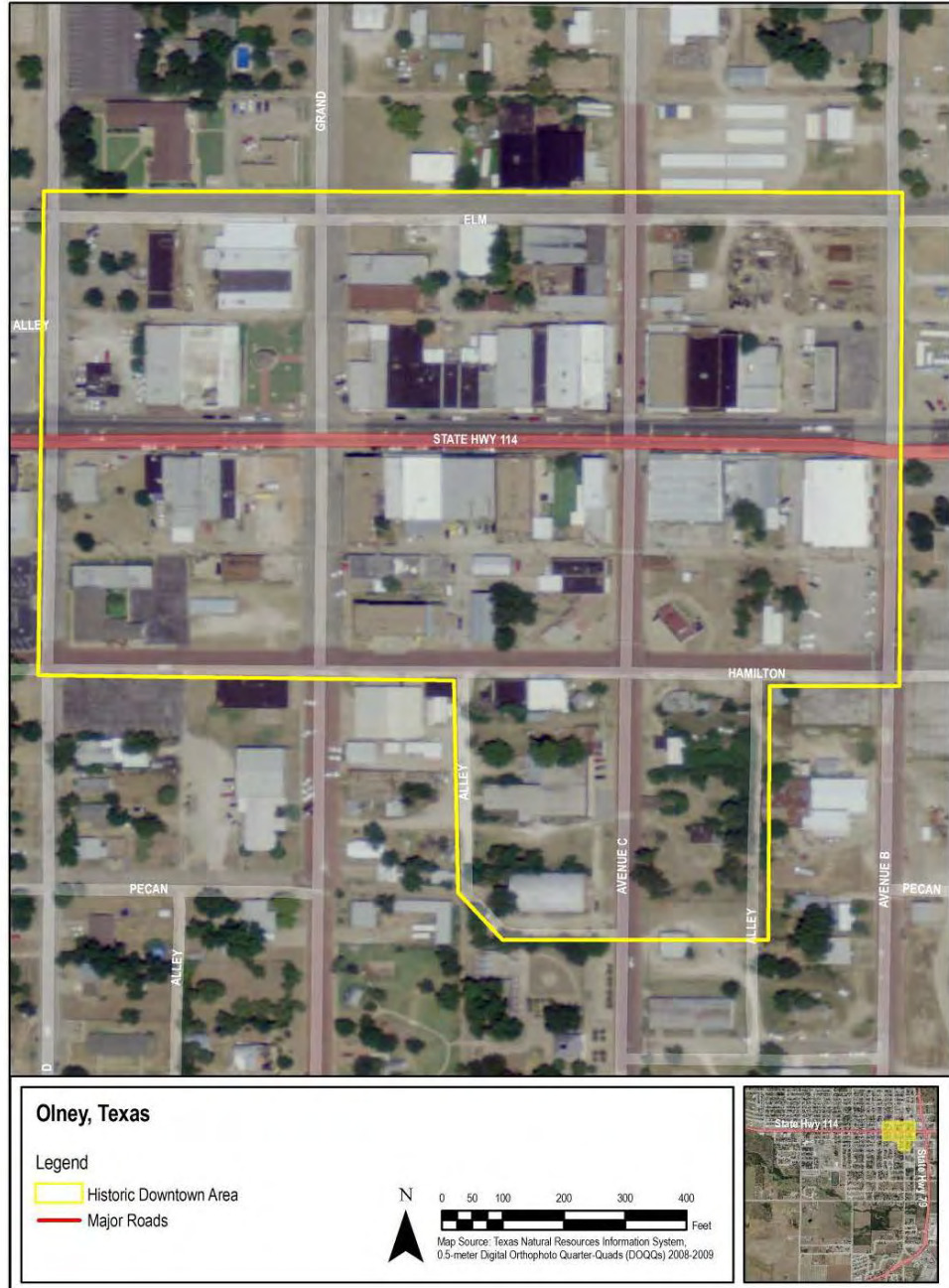
Moran, Shackelford County – two city blocks with commercial buildings and two partial blocks with railroad-related industrial buildings; FM Roads 576 and 880 extend through the commercial area while SH 6 bypasses the downtown to the east (Figure A-8).

Figure A-8. Downtown Moran.
Map Source: Texas Natural Resources Information System.



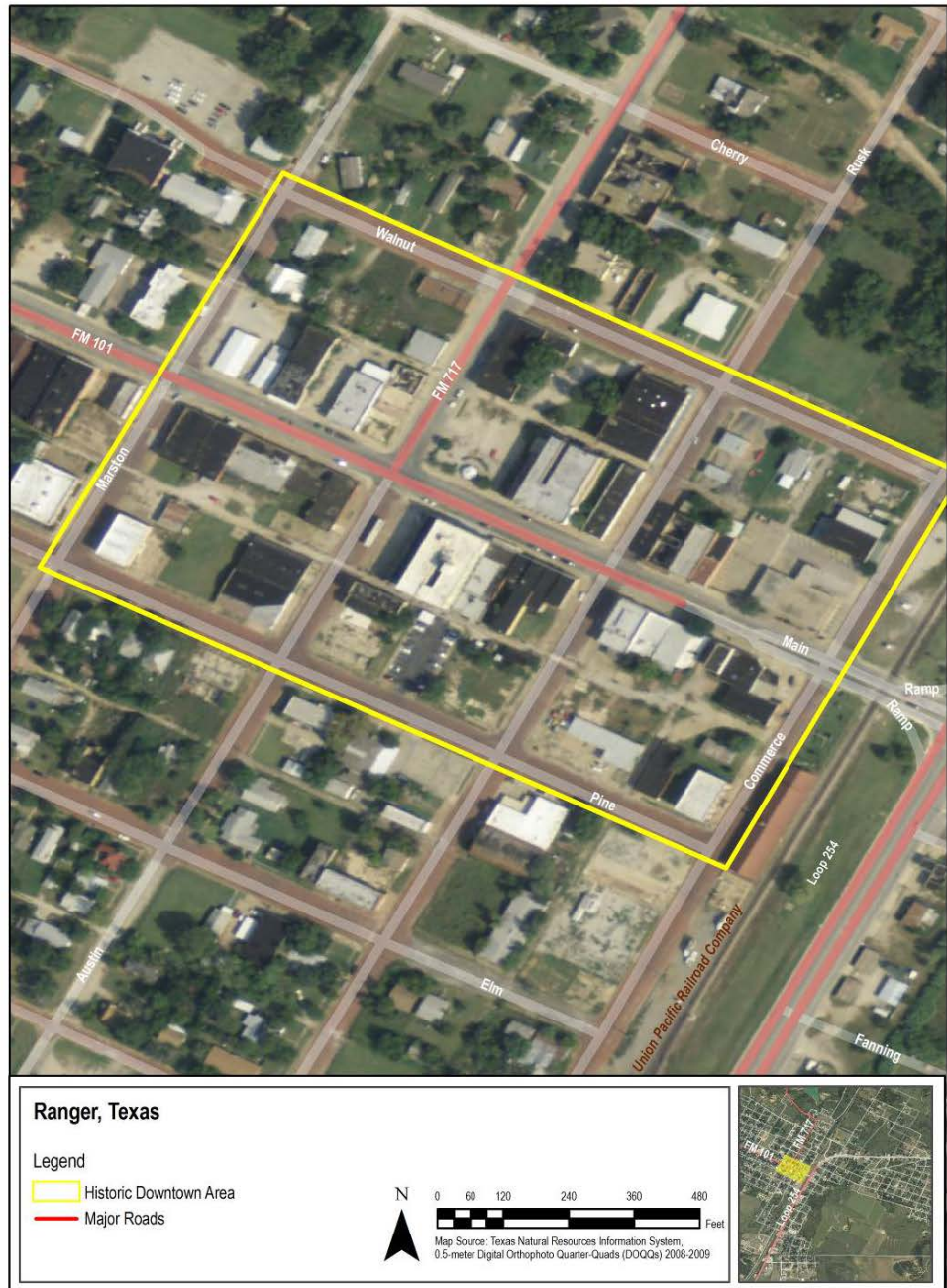
Olney, Young County – six city blocks with commercial buildings and three partial blocks; SH 114 extends through the center of the historic commercial district. SH 79 has been re-routed two blocks to the east but formerly extended along Avenue C (Figure A-9).

Figure A-9. Downtown Olney.
Map Source: Texas Natural Resources Information System.



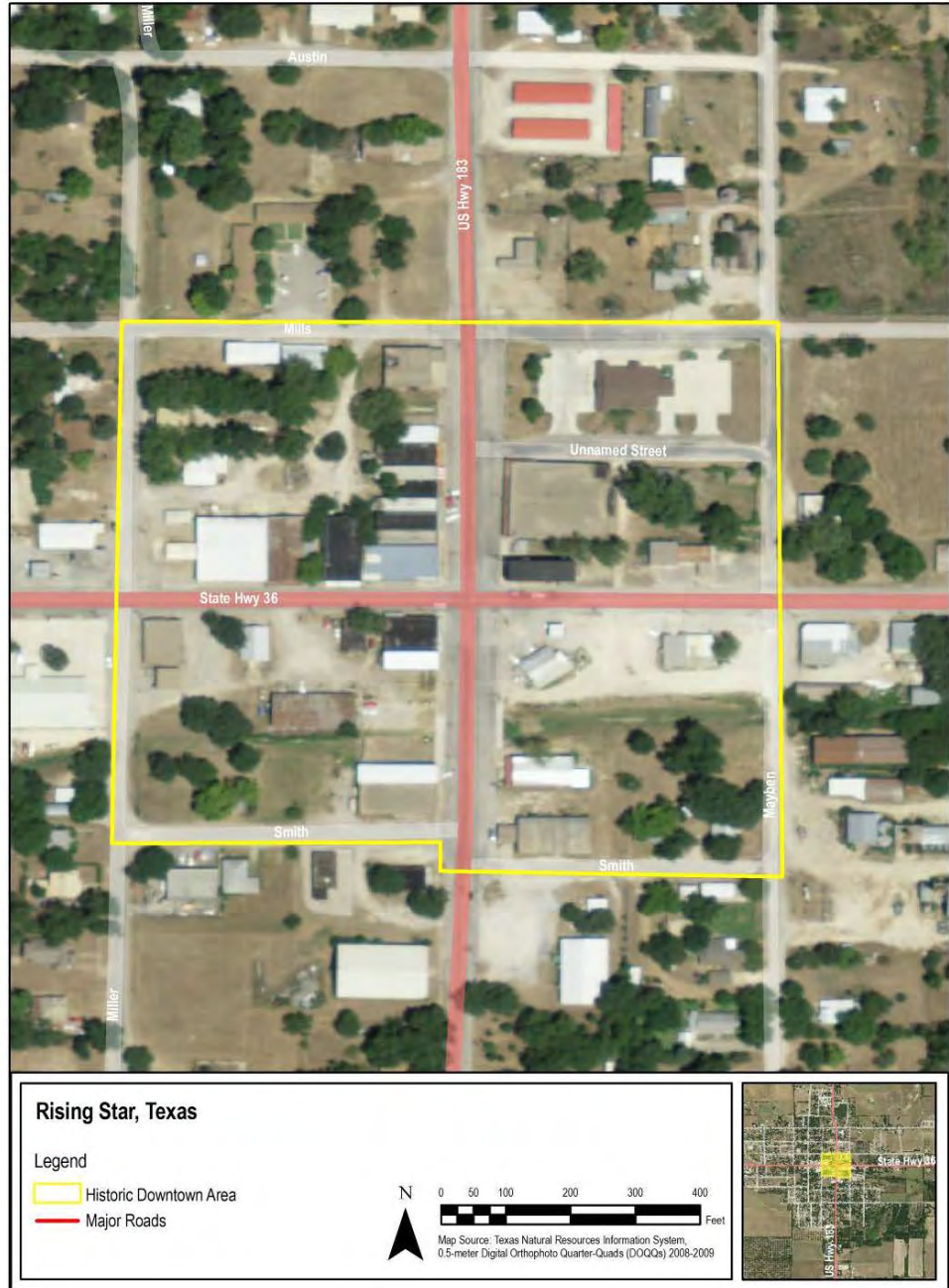
Ranger, Eastland County – eight city blocks with commercial buildings and two partial blocks with railroad-related resources; RR 717 and RR 101 intersect in the downtown; IH 20 bypasses the town (Figure A-10).

Figure A-10. Downtown Ranger.
 Map Source: Texas Natural Resources Information System.



Rising Star, Eastland County – four city blocks with commercial buildings; US 183 and SH 6 intersect in the downtown (Figure A-11).

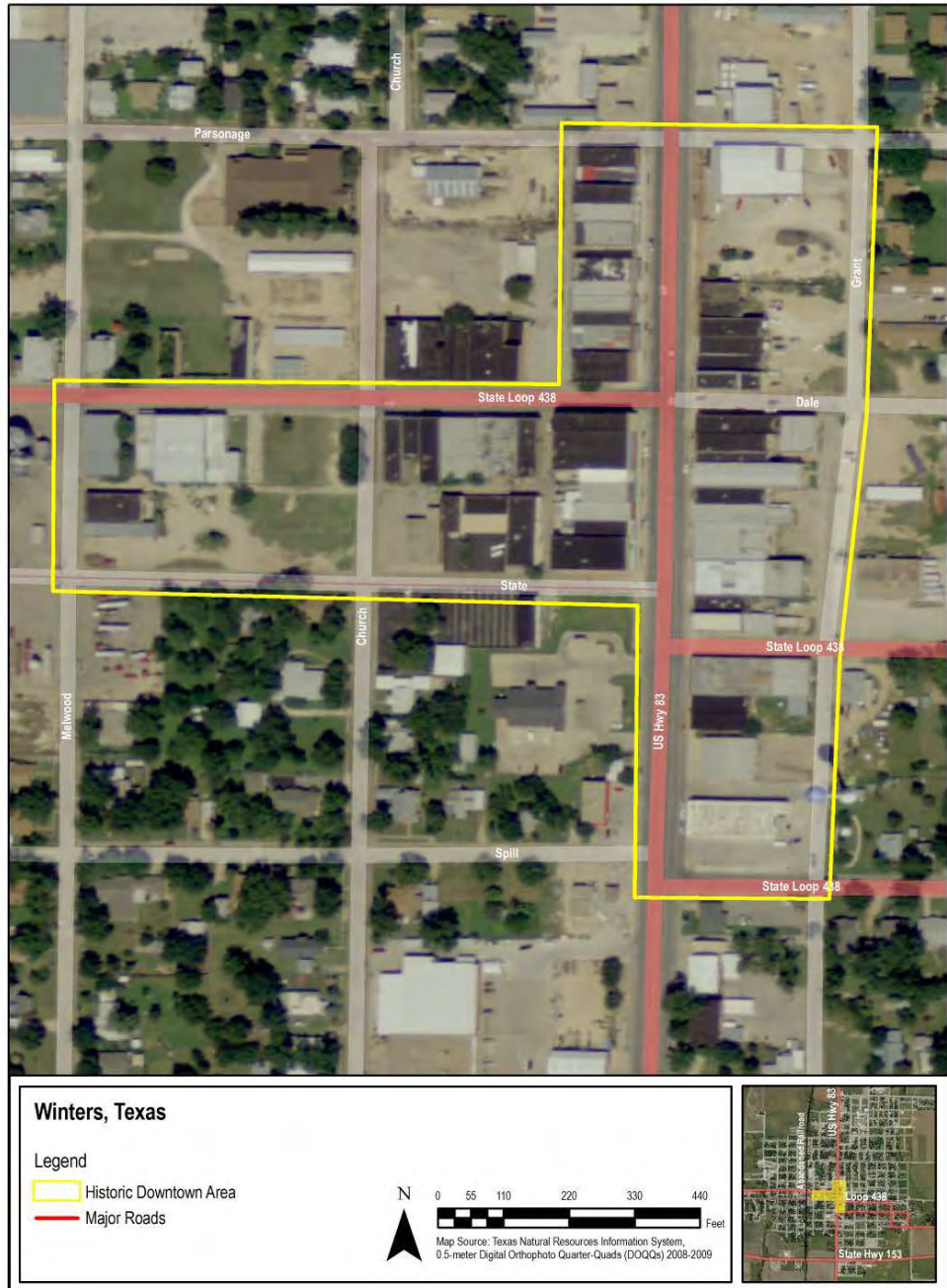
Figure A-11. Downtown Rising Star.
Map Source: Texas Natural Resources Information System.



Winters, Runnels County – seven city blocks with commercial buildings and three partial blocks with commercial and railroad-dependent industrial operations; US 83 and Texas Loop 438 intersect in the historic commercial center (Figure A-12).

Figure A-12. Downtown Winters.

Map Source: Texas Natural Resources Information System.



HISTORICAL RESEARCH

In conjunction with field investigations, project historians reviewed a wide range of both primary and secondary source materials at repositories in Austin and in the study area. A historian copied Texas Historic Sites Inventory forms and photographs of historic commercial properties in the targeted communities on file at the THC. Research at the THC library also yielded several county histories. Through online examination of the Texas Historical Sites Atlas, a historian also compiled a list of state historical markers and NRHP-listed resources in each of the counties included within the study area.

Project historians obtained census data from population schedules for selected years from volumes at the Texas State Library reading room. A historian also reviewed agricultural and industrial schedules at The University of Texas Perry-Castañeda Library.

At TxDOT's Environmental Affairs office, a historian obtained electronic copies of TxDOT Control-Section-Job (CSJ) log book records that helped to establish dates of construction and major changes to state-operated roadways in the targeted crossroads communities. Project historians also obtained copies of General Highway Maps for each county in the study area. Among the earliest sets of maps were those originally published in 1936, but were updated in 1939. These maps presented some population data and also depicted the presence and condition of major roadways, as well as other major industrial and cultural resources in the communities. Additional map research included a review and analysis of fire insurance maps published by the Sanborn Map Company. The maps provide a wealth of information about the physical characteristics and patterns of development for most of the targeted communities. The only towns not documented by the Sanborn Map Company were Bryson, Moran, and Lometa.

Besides examining materials at repositories in Austin, project historians conducted a limited amount of historical research at local libraries, museums, and governmental offices in the study area. Among the best sources of information were the county clerk and tax-assessor offices at the county courthouses. Historic plat maps and tax records (city lot registers) were particularly important sources of information.

SUPPLEMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS

Under a separate Work Authorization, the project historians conducted additional field investigations and research for two selected crossroads communities to test the evaluation methods outlined in this study. The two communities targeted for further study were Merkel and Olney; each had downtowns with local historical associations but possessed marginal integrity to meet National Register standards.

During the week of December 20, 2010, the HHM field team visited both communities to perform more in-depth field investigations of the buildings in each downtown. The field team included the Senior Professional Historian and two Assistant Historians. Information was recorded on survey forms created by the field team prior to the trip. Digital photographs were taken of each resource surveyed. In addition to photographing each building, the field team took contextual photographs of each downtown. The field team also photographed areas surrounding the downtowns in order to document the contrasting nature of the buildings and streetscapes between the downtowns and surrounding areas. In Olney, the team surveyed 73 historic resources and took 600 photographs. In Merkel, the team surveyed 39 historic resources and took 278 photographs. The field team also gathered historical information from local repositories during the week. At the Young County Courthouse in Graham, Texas, the team photographed the original plat map for Olney at the Young County Clerk's office. At the Young County Tax Assessor-Collector's office, information was gathered on yearly property value and tax data from leather-bound City Lot registers. At the Olney Public Library, the team gathered information from historic photographs, newspaper articles, and city directories. In Merkel, the team conducted research at the City Hall and the Merkel Public Library. Additional historical information was located and copied at the Abilene Public Library where copies of original plat maps were photographed.

APPENDIX B

HISTORICAL OVERVIEWS OF TARGETED COMMUNITIES

HISTORICAL OVERVIEWS OF TARGETED COMMUNITIES

The section provides brief overviews of the history of each of the crossroads communities visited for the project. These overviews identify the major historical events, themes, and trends that were important to the founding of the communities and their sustained growth over time. This contextual information provides the framework that helps to understand how the historic downtowns evolved over time and how they represent historic and current economic trends and their dependency on road networks and transportation systems. Although these overviews are not fully developed historic contexts, they nonetheless provide sufficient background information to identify the major historical factors that affected growth within the communities.

It should be noted that each community stands at the intersection of two regionally important highways; hence, they are called “crossroads communities.” A dependence on railroads is another common historical theme that each community shares, as the availability of rail service provided a means for local farmers and ranchers to ship their goods and commodities to market. Residents in outlying areas came to these cities via the regionally important highways that met near the railroads. The amount of activity at the intersections spurred the physical and commercial development of downtowns. Retailers who opened stores in the downtowns relied heavily on railroads to obtain their merchandise. The convergence of all these factors proved to be vital to the history and development of the downtowns in each of the highlighted communities.

The discovery of oil and natural gas reserves near many of these cities also had a profound effect on their development, which led to massive building campaigns that literally transformed the physical and architectural character of the downtowns and surrounding neighborhoods. The most intense period of development typically occurred soon after the discovery and exploitation of these reserves. The new buildings reflected this prosperity. As the boom faded, the downturn remained less vibrant but the impressive buildings remained as tangible links to this period. Increased demands for oil, changing market conditions, and new technologies created other sets of oil-related spurts of growth. Although some new construction occurred, most building activity involved renovations and upgrades to existing building inventories that reflected prevailing trends in architectural trends at the time.

Those crossroads communities whose economies were more dependent on agriculture likewise experienced boom and bust cycles, but they were less dramatic and erratic. Market influences certainly affected agricultural trends but so too did broad historical factors such as World War II, increased mechanization, and the consolidation of family farms into agri-businesses, as well as the widespread devastation and hardships created by the extended drought of the 1950s.



Figure B-1 (left). 100 block of E. Dempsey Street (US 380), Bryson.
North side of the block looking northeast.

Figure B-2 (right). 100 block of E. Dempsey Street (US 380), Bryson.
North side of the block looking northwest.

Today, most of the crossroads communities are stable but no longer retain the vitality they possessed in their prime. The buildings in the downtown have typically been altered and modified over the years, and some are vacant, unused, and even in deteriorated condition. Highway bypasses and new commercial construction along these roadways have siphoned off much of the business that once took place in the downtowns. Still, the historic buildings that do exist are reminders of the time when these communities were primary nodes of local commerce and trade.

Bryson, Jack County

Bryson (Figures B-1 and B-2) is located in west central Jack County at the junction of US 380 (Dempsey Street) and FM Road 1191 (Depot Street). The area was settled in the late nineteenth century. When a post office was established in 1878, the town was called Mount Hecla until the 1880s.

In 1903, the Chicago, Rock Island, and Gulf Railway line arrived in Bryson. The tracks, however, are not shown on the 1906 plat map of the town. It depicts Bryson as a 9-block site on 13 acres with only four named streets – Dempsey, North, West (Depot) and East streets. Narrower lots for commercial development were planned on Dempsey Street between present-day College and Boland streets. West Street led south to the depot at Clayton Street. The small town was utilized by area cattle ranchers as a center for trade and education.

In the 1920s, Bryson became a processing center for oil producers, influencing population growth. The cattle and oil industries sustained Bryson’s residents through the Depression; in 1947 the population was at its height at 806. Research does not indicate how Bryson’s commercial area was impacted by the economy during this period.



Figure B-3 (left). 100 block of N. Main Street, Cross Plains.

West side of the block looking southwest.



Figure B-4 (right). 100 block of S. Main Street, Cross Plains.

West side of the block looking southwest.

From the 1930s through the 1950s, local roads that provided access to and from the surrounding rural areas were established as SH 36 and FM 1191. In 1975, the Chicago, Rock Island, and Gulf Railway went into bankruptcy; operations were taken over by the Kansas City Terminal Railway company four years later. After a court-ordered bankruptcy liquidation in January 1980, all locomotives, rail cars, and tracks were sold by summer 1984. The railroad tracks at Bryson were removed, undoubtedly affecting those cattlemen who still utilized the rail line for shipping. Bryson's economy was further changed by the decrease in oil production after mid-century. The town's population had decreased to 450 in 1970. By 1988, it rebounded to 690 and the town had seven businesses. At the 2000 census, 529 people resided in Bryson. The commercial area reflects the decline of the small town, with only a few historic resources extant.

Cross Plains, Callahan County

Cross Plains, in the southeast corner of Callahan County, is situated at the intersection of State Highways 36 (Fifth Street) and 206 (Main Street) (Figures B-3 and B-4). The town was originally settled at and named after Turkey Creek, which presently runs through Treadway Park at the western edge of Cross Plains. Cross Plains was founded as a post office in 1877 and named due to its location at the crossing of stage coach and military roads. One of these was the Fort Mason-Camp Cooper Military Road leading to those outposts at present day Mason (Mason County) and Throckmorton (Throckmorton County), respectively. Between 1880 and 1910, Cross Plains' population grew from 25 to 600.

In January 1911, the town moved from the west banks of Turkey Creek to its present site in anticipation of the arrival of the Texas Central Railroad. Cross Plains became a trading center for cotton because farmers from outlying areas and buyers now had a central location from which to transport produce. Early on, an established commercial district was developed, primarily along Main Street between Sixth and Ninth streets. Historic photos from the early 1900s depict masonry structures at the intersection of Main and Eighth streets. The 1921 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map indicates that these consisted primarily of banks and drugstores. The commercial area also included a general store, restaurants, hardware stores, lumber yards, and grocers. The railroad station was located on Sixth Street between Main Street and Avenue E. Lots designated as

the “cotton yard” were situated at the southeast corner of the intersection of Main and Sixth streets. Buildings were also moved from the old town site. The Kemper Hotel (formerly Mathis Hotel, present-day Cromer Hotel) was relocated from Turkey Creek to the southwest corner of Main and Ninth streets.

The discovery of oil just east of Cross Plains at Pioneer in Eastland County and at other nearby fields initiated an oil boom in 1925. As opposed to the effects of the Great Depression and the decline of oil production that affected the economies of other North-Central Texas towns, the economy of Cross Plains remained stable through mid-century; the town’s population was over 1,200 in 1940. The 1939 Sanborn map illustrates increased infill of the commercial area and the addition of new enterprises, primarily auto sales and repair shops and filling stations. Cross Plains’ stability was further enhanced as the roads (SH 36, SH 206, and FM 880) leading from Cross Plains to outlying rural areas and other Midwest Texas towns were further developed throughout the mid-twentieth century as noted on General Highway Maps and in TxDOT highway designation files.

The Missouri, Kansas, Texas Railroad (which absorbed the Texas Central Railroad) abandoned its tracks in Cross Plains by 1980. This affected the town’s commercial area very little, with the exception of lots becoming available for development at Block 60 per Cross Plains’ current plat.

In 2007 Cross Plains’ population was 1,068. Though part of the Abilene metropolitan area, the town appears to have maintained a stable economy and commercial development. Some of the Cross Plains Economic Development Corporation’s (EDC) accomplishments in 2006 included the purchase of a building for Main Street Pool House and Surf Shop, the purchase of 22 acres of land for businesses, giving grants to local businesses to improve the outside of their buildings, and recruiting owners for a motel. A plaque in the commercial area also commemorates the sidewalk improvement project undertaken by the EDC. The Cross Plains Planning Committee, a sub-committee of the City Council, was formed in September 2008 to foster the continuation of the commercial area by addressing city funding, business space, dilapidated buildings, and general beautification projects.



Figure B-5 (left). 100 block of N. Patrick Street (US 377 and US 67), Dublin.

East side of the block looking northeast.



Figure B-6 (right). 100 block of N. Patrick Street (US 377 and US 67), Dublin.

West side of the block looking northwest.

Dublin, Erath County

Dublin is located in the west-central portion of Erath County (Figures B-5 and B-6). It is positioned at the intersection of US 67 and 377 (Patrick Street) and SH 6 (Blackjack Street). Old Dublin was founded in 1854 and experienced growth in the mid-1870s with the acquisition of a stagecoach line and post office. New Dublin was formed in 1881 when the Texas Central Railroad built tracks through to Mount Airy; the new town was formed on the rail line four miles southwest from Mount Airy and had 45 businesses within a year. An additional rail line, the Fort Worth and Rio Grande, which was completed to Stephenville in 1889, was also present west of Post Oak Street. The new town's growth around the rail lines spurred economic progress as cotton farmers now had better access to eastern markets.

Dublin's commercial area formed around the intersection of Patrick and Blackjack streets. The 1891 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map illustrates commercial development primarily along Patrick Street between the railroad tracks north to Live Oak Street. The downtown area featured several general merchandise stores, drugstores, barbers, hardware stores, and other retail establishments. Notably present are lumber yards and cotton gins with easy access to the rail lines. Also in 1891, the Dublin Dr Pepper plant was established at the southeast corner of Patrick and Elm streets behind a drug store. The plant is the nation's oldest Dr Pepper bottler, producing Dr Pepper continuously since its opening, six years after the soft drink was first manufactured in Waco, Texas.

Dublin's commercial growth continued through the mid-century. Fire insurance maps completed at regular intervals in 1896, 1907, 1912, 1921, 1934, and 1943 depict continued growth of the commercial area with the construction of additional buildings. By 1907 a railroad spur at the western edge of the commercial district along Sackville Street was shown leading to a lumber yard. The 1921 map depicts the addition of the Wichita Falls and Southern rail line heading from south of the commercial area out of town to the northwest. Dublin also possessed streetcars; one of the first towns in the state of Texas to do so. While commercial development appears to have been consistent, agricultural trends in Erath County did affect Dublin. Dublin's population decreased from



Figure B-7 (left). 100 block of S. Pecan Street, Hico.

West side of the block looking northwest.



Figure B-8 (right). 100 block of S. Pecan Street, Hico.

East side of the block looking southeast.

3,229 to 2,546 between 1920 and 1940. The county population dropped every decade between 1910 and 1940 due to loss of cotton production and the closure of the coal mines in the town of Thurber, in northeast Erath County. By 1945, agricultural production in the county shifted from cotton farming to ranching.

Due to its location on major thoroughfares and rail lines, Dublin’s economy has remained consistent, allowing for the maintenance and preservation of its downtown district. As of the census of 2000, Dublin’s population was 3,754.

Hico, Hamilton County

Hico is located at the crossroads of US 281 and SH 6 and 220 in the northeastern corner of Hamilton County (Figures B-7 and B-8). The old town was founded in 1856 on Honey Creek, two-and-a-half miles south of its present location. It had eight businesses in 1874. In 1880, Old Hico was moved to access the line of the Texas Central Railroad. Hico’s agricultural economy relied on some cotton production but mostly cattle and horses.

By the time of its incorporation in 1883, Hico became a major shipping center. The commercial area developed northward along Pecan Street from the railroad tracks to Second Street (SH 6). Within a few weeks of each other in 1890, two fires destroyed the buildings on either side of Pecan Street, prompting residents to begin building in stone. At that time, Hico’s population was 1,480. The 1893 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map depicts general stores, drugstores, hardware stores, and grocers in the commercial area. The only bank shown was undoubtedly the First National Bank of Hico, which was chartered in 1890. Offering services to local businesses, farmers, ranchers, and dairymen, it is the oldest banking institution in Hamilton County. Several lumber sheds were located adjacent to the tracks in the railroad right-of-way. South of town at the end of Elm Street at the Bosque River were the Hickman & Barbee cotton gin and corn mill, and the J. F. Weiser and Company flour and corn mill.

By 1903, the city’s commercial area expanded westward onto Elm Street; this trend continued through 1907. In April 1908, the town was affected by a serious flood. Overflow of the Bosque River often resulted in flooding that reached the railroad tracks and even extended into the business section of the town. This



Figure B-9 (left). 100 block of W. Main Street, Lometa.
North side of the block looking northeast.



Figure B-10 (right). 100 block of W. Main Street, Lometa.
South side of the block looking southwest.

natural occurrence did not hinder Hico’s physical or economic development. On December 8, 1908, the *Hico News Review* reported that 25,000 to 40,000 bales of cotton were being shipped from the town each year, and the town possessed 95 businesses. After boll weevil infestations decimated cotton crops in the late 1910s, farmers increasingly turned to raising cattle for dairy production, allowing for a stable economy and viable commercial district through mid-century even though the population declined in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, and beyond. New business establishments included cinemas and filling stations. Hico even boasted an airport northwest of the town between SH 6 and US 281 and County Road 134 per the 1936 General Highway Map. US 281, SH 6, and SH 220 were established on existing roadways connecting the town to surrounding rural areas in the 1930s and 1940s.

By 1970, Hico’s population was at a low of 925, and the railroad tracks were removed. The town rebounded, however, as new businesses opened in 1978. Once a vibrant cotton and cattle market center, Hico is now a tourist town destined to be “the next Fredericksburg.” Its historic downtown area is well-preserved, containing a variety of shops and businesses.

Lometa, Lampasas County

Lometa is located at the intersection of US 183 (Fourth Street, formerly US 190 and 284) and Ranch Road 581 (Main Street) in south-central Lampasas County (Figures B-9 and B-10). The town was founded at the site of the Frank Longfield Ranch in 1885 on the Santa Fe Railway line as it extended from Lampasas, 15 miles to the east. Longfield deeded the required 100-foot right-of-way in June and sold an additional 2,000 acres to the railroad for the development of a town the following month. Originally platted as Montvale in May 1886, the town’s name change occurred in July with the application for a post office. Early commercial development in Lometa included businesses that relocated from the village of Senterfitt three miles to the west in order to be on the railroad line. Agricultural production in the outlying areas included cattle, sheep, wool, cotton, grain, and pecans; farmers and ranchers utilized the railroad at Lometa to ship their livestock and produce. Lometa’s commercial area developed around Main and Fourth streets, just west of the railroad.

In addition to household goods and farm implements, lumber was a commodity received as freight via the railroad. In its early days, Lometa's commercial area consisted of wood-frame structures. Fires in 1893 and 1894, and then in 1896, destroyed the buildings west and east of the tracks, respectively. As a result, masonry buildings were constructed. Among these was the Wilhite Mercantile Building and Lometa State Bank.

A prosperous period in Lometa's history was ushered in with the expansion of the Santa Fe rail line through the construction of the westbound spur to Eden (Concho County) in 1909. Real estate values doubled, and business activity increased. Economic development was furthered in 1913 with construction of the Scholton Brothers' track to San Saba County to transport and market virgin cedar posts and stays. This enterprise lasted until 1920. Lometa's second bank was established in 1914. At that time, Lometa's population was 700, and businesses included cotton gins, grocers, tailors, general stores, and hotels. New buildings in the downtown district included the McCrea Building at the northeast corner of West Main and North Fourth streets.

The discovery of oil did not have the impact on Lometa as it did other North-Central Texas towns. Still, a 1915 photograph depicts teamsters at the intersection of West Railway and West Main streets preparing to deliver pipe to the oil well on the Neil Ranch. The farming and ranching economy was briefly affected by drought in 1917 and 1918 but rallied in 1919 with sufficient rains. Lometa thrived in the 1920s, as evidenced by the City Council's regulation of automobile driving "due to the rapid increase of motor traffic" in the town. Vehicular laws affected the manner of parking in the commercial area, and filling stations were removed from curbsides and constructed as drive-ins.

With the downturn of the economy during the Depression, Lometa's development declined. The population dropped from around 1,000 in 1920 to 865 in 1931. A slight increase was experienced in the 1940s with the presence of military operations in Lometa. From mid-century on, the population declined steadily, reaching 666 by 1982.

Lometa, part of the Killeen–Temple–Fort Hood Metropolitan Statistical Area, had a population of 782 at the 2000 census. Despite its modest population, business is still transacted in Lometa and agricultural enterprise remains a staple of the economy. Business continues to be attracted to the town, like that of the auction barn established in 1946. Roads leading from Lometa to rural areas were developed as state highways. The town is also serviced by FM Roads 581 and 2942. Despite its founding as a railroad town, Lometa no longer depends on the railroad. While not as successful as it was during the first decades of the twentieth century, Lometa's commercial area was maintained despite the decrease in business activity and vacant buildings.



Figure B-11 (left). 100 block of Edwards Street, Merkel.

East side of the block looking southeast.



Figure B-12 (right). 100 block of Kent Street, Merkel.

West side of the block looking northeast.

Merkel, Taylor County

Merkel is located off of IH 20 in the northwest portion of Taylor County (Figures B-11 and B-12). The town is situated at the intersections of Business Interstate Highway 20-P/State Highway Loop 39 (North First Street; former portion of US 80) with FM 126 (Kent Street and South Ash Street). Oak Street is another major thoroughfare that runs south from Business Interstate 20.

Merkel was founded in 1881 with the arrival of the Texas and Pacific Railroad in Taylor County. As such, the town quickly became an important shipping point for the cotton industry. Business enterprises sprang up in Merkel for town-dwellers and farmers from outlying rural areas to purchase their goods. The 1884 plat map depicts narrower lots for commercial development along the railroad tracks at North Front and South Front streets (present North First and South First streets). Sanborn maps from 1908 depict commercial development at the railroad on North Front Street between Kent and Lamar streets as well as northward along Kent, Edwards, and Lamar streets for two blocks. Businesses included Farmers and Merchants National Bank (founded 1904) at the southwest corner of Elm and Edwards streets, three lumber yards, a wagon yard, and various retail stores. Most buildings were of masonry construction. Extant historic resources in the downtown area were built by 1908. The railroad depot and Wells Fargo Express buildings were located on the rail right-of-way between North Front and South Front streets at Oak Street. Three cotton gins were present in the town and its immediate vicinity.

In 1926, the Noodle Dome Oil Field opened approximately four miles west of Merkel along US 80. In addition to continued growth in the commercial area, the fire insurance map from the previous year shows the presence of three oil companies in the railroad right-of-way between Cherry and Orange streets in anticipation of the effect of nearby oil production on Merkel's economy. Maps from 1925 and 1944 also illustrate the presence of increased numbers of cotton gins close to the rail lines. The population of Merkel decreased in 1920 and 1930, but regrouped in the following decade. In spite of the Depression and the decline in cotton production elsewhere in North-Central Texas, Merkel's status as a trade center was maintained because of steady oil and cotton production.



Figure B-13 (left). 300 block of Fisher Street, Moran.

South side of the block looking southwest.



Figure B-14 (right). 300 block of Fisher Street, Moran.

North side of the block looking northeast.

In the 1940s and 1950s, existing roads through Merkel and to the surrounding countryside became part of US and Interstate Highway systems. IH 20 was constructed at the northern edge of Merkel in 1959. IH-20 provides easy access to larger markets and Dyess Air Force Base, but also makes Merkel accessible to visitors. As of the census of 2000, there were 2,637 people in Merkel; many residents are engaged in agricultural, oil-related, and military-related employment.

Moran, Shackelford County

Moran is located at the intersections of SH 6, FM Roads 880, 576, and 2408 in the southeast corner of Shackelford County (Figures B-13 and B-14). The town was founded in 1882 with the construction of the Texas Central Railroad. Early commercial growth of the small town was influenced by Moran's position as a center from which area farmers and ranchers shipped their goods.

When natural gas was discovered in 1910, Moran became an oilfield service center. The town's population reached 1,055 by 1920. A historic photograph from 1924 depicts the downtown area looking west. A combination of masonry and wood-frame buildings is shown along unpaved streets. With consistent agricultural and natural gas production, and the means to transport products via railroad and various roads leading to outlying rural areas, Moran's economy and commercial development was relatively stable. The Depression, however, influenced the town's development as the population dropped to 710 by 1940. With the termination of rail service in 1969, Moran underwent further decline, and the population has declined steadily, reaching 233 in 2000.

While roads were maintained through Moran, with the removal of the rail line and construction of IH 20 approximately 10 miles to the south, the commercial area's function as a center for trade has declined dramatically as local consumers have access to larger and less expensive retail stores in nearby larger towns.

Olney, Young County

Olney is located in north-central Young County at the crossroads of SH 79 and 114 (Main Street), FM 210 (Spring Creek Road) and 1768 (Hall Road), and SH Loop 132 (Avenue M) (Figures B-15 and B-16).



Figure B-15 (left). 100 block of W. Main Street (SH 114), Olney.

North side of the block looking northeast.



Figure B-16 (right). 100 block of N. Avenue C, Olney.

West side of the block looking southwest.

The area was settled just south of Olney's present downtown beginning in 1879. In 1909, the town was incorporated and moved one mile north to access the Wichita Falls and Southern Railway. A 1907 plat map recorded for the Olney Townsite Company in preparation for the sale of town lots at the new location depicts plans for commercial development westward along Main Street from the railroad tracks and along Grand Avenue. Avenue C, later part of SH 79, was designated as a "Public Road." An additional rail line, the Gulf, Texas and Western Railroad, was added just south of Olney's downtown area in 1910. As a result of access to two rail lines, Olney became a shipping and trade center for area residents engaged in cattle ranching.

Oil production in the Olney vicinity caused a major population increase in the 1920s; the number of inhabitants rose from 1,164 at the beginning of the decade to 4,138 in 1930. The 1921 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map shows most businesses as located on two blocks of Main Street. These included banks, hardware stores, furniture stores, as well as a garage, cinema, and post office. One of the groceries was located in the historic resource currently known as "The Tree House" at the southwest corner of Main Street and Avenue C. Lumber companies, a wagon yard, and several gins and mills were located just east and south of the downtown area near the rail lines. A few years later in 1926, continued growth of the downtown area is apparent. Commercial growth extends to Grand Street. Lots that were previously empty acquired tenants, one of which was the historic Hamilton Hotel at the southeast corner of Main Street and Grand Avenue. Most buildings extant in Olney's downtown area were constructed by 1926. The establishment of a prosperous commercial district with buildings of permanent masonry construction was due in large part to Olney's status as an oil town. The General Highway Map of 1936 depicts pumping stations and wells north of town between present-day FM 1768 and the Baylor County line and southwest of Olney between SH 79 and 251.

Olney flourished through the Depression and after the mid-century period, despite the termination of rail service through the town in 1942. Important thoroughfares through town (Main Street and Avenue C) into surrounding rural areas became part of the state highway system in 1939. City Hall moved from Main Street into the grand and opulent Classical Revival building at the northeast corner of South Grand Avenue and East Hamilton Street. Several filling stations



Figure B-17 (left). 100 block of W. Main Street (FM 101), Ranger.
South side of the block looking southeast.



Figure B-18 (right). 200 block of W. Main Street (FM 101), Ranger.
South side of the block looking southeast.

were located throughout downtown to accommodate vehicular traffic. The town even boasted a tourist park just south of the commercial area. In recent years, a portion of SH 79, between FM 1768 and SH 251, was redirected from Avenue C to the former Wichita Falls and Southern Railroad right-of-way. Continued use of thoroughfares through and around Olney aided the economy, which remains grounded in agribusiness and oil production, and maintained Olney’s standing as a market center and tourist attraction. As a result, despite some demolition and non-historic infill, Olney’s commercial district remains largely intact.

Ranger, Eastland County

Ranger is located in the northwestern portion of Eastland County, just north of IH 20 (Figures B-17 and B-18). Major thoroughfares which intersect downtown are US 80 and FM 101 and 717. Ranger was established when the inhabitants of Ranger Camp Valley on the Palo Pinto Creek permanently relocated a few miles west to the new tracks of the Texas and Pacific Railway Company in 1880. The railroad aided farmers with the transport of their produce and allowed for goods to be brought into the town. Thus, agricultural enterprise assisted in Ranger’s physical and economic development. Ranger was a trade center for the wheat-producing Stephens County to the north. In 1904, Ranger continued to be a small town of 750 inhabitants with its economy based on agricultural production in the surrounding countryside.

The commercial development of Ranger was significantly altered with the discovery of oil at the McClesky Well in October 1917. “Farmers who had barely eked a living out of the sandy dunes on crops of meager peanuts, cotton, and livestock, found their sandy acres worth thousands of dollars.”¹ In addition to providing farmers with impetus to lease their land, the oil boom affected the development of the town. During the summer in 1919, a local newspaper noted that Ranger, the “Tulsa of Texas,” possessed eight refineries, fourteen lumber yards, and four banks. Oil production and its effects on the town were often negative. Fires from oil derricks were common and destroyed two city blocks in the spring in 1919. In addition to commercial enterprises, Ranger possessed a number of gambling houses and brothels. Even with the huge increase in population, which was 16,201 in 1920 and may have reached an unrecorded

¹ Eastland County Book Committee, *“Gateway to the West,” Eastland County (1989)*, p. 632.

30,000 during the height of the boom, Main Street remained unpaved. Historic photos and accounts detail experiences with the “narrow boghole that became the main street of Ranger.”² Other roads, which were the main routes from outlying farms into town, provided access to the various oil fields. The 1939 General Highway Map shows US 80, routed in 1927, and the network of roads just north of Ranger leading to the additional oil sites. With the addition of a second railway line, the Wichita Falls and Southern Railroad, trains running between Abilene and Fort Worth made stops in Ranger five times a day. The Ranger oil boom lasted from 1917 to 1921; its end was caused by diminished production of wells in Eastland County and a number of bank failures. Ranger’s population dropped to 6,208 in 1921. Most of Ranger’s extant commercial area was developed around this time. The 1920 and 1929 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps show dense development between (Travis) Marston and West Front (Commerce) streets and Walnut and Pine streets.

After the decline in oil production and the Depression, Ranger’s economy recovered as inhabitants turned to sheep and goat ranching and diversified their agricultural production with peanut, cotton, and sweet potato cultivation. In July 1952, the Texas State Highway Department let a contract for a proposed four-lane section of US 80 between Eastland and Ranger to reduce existing driving hazards. IH 20 was constructed just southeast of the city limits in 1959; in 1991 a portion of IH 20 was designated as SH Loop 254. While this major bypass provides access to the cities of Fort Worth and Abilene, it has contributed to the decline of Ranger’s commercial development, since goods and services are readily accessible in larger markets. Businesses in the commercial area are negatively impacted by outside competition, resulting in less impetus to establish new services as well as closures and vacancies in the downtown area. In 2000, Ranger’s population was 2,584. As opposed to any associations with commerce and trade, Ranger College, the city’s second-largest employer, notes the area’s recreational offerings and proximity to the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex as advantages.

Rising Star, Eastland County

Rising Star is located at the crossroads of US 183 (Main Street, formerly US 283) and SH 36 (College Street) in the southwestern portion of Eastland County (Figures B-19 and B-20). The area was settled in 1876. A post office was established in 1878 with the town named Copperas Creek, the body of water between the forks of which it was located. Rising Star received its present name in the early 1880s.

² *Ibid.*, p. 633.



Figure B-19 (left). 100 block of W. College Street (SH 36), Rising Star.

North side of the block looking northeast.



Figure B-20 (right). 100 block of N. Main Street (US 183), Rising Star.

West side of the block looking northwest.

The early development of the town's commercial district occurred along US 183 and SH 36, indicating their historic presence and use. Establishment of the present US 183 was probably based on the road that cut through the countryside in the late 1870s as a mail route between Cisco and Brownwood, both of which had railroad access. SH 36 and Ranch Road 587 lead east to Sipe Springs, from where early settlers received mail and sent cotton to be ginned. Businesses in the mid-1890s were present along both sides of Main Street, particularly north of College Street.

In the spring of 1911, a fire destroyed much of the southeast portion of the town. As a result, the wood-frame buildings that dominated downtown were replaced with masonry buildings. Most of them were one-story with iron column structural systems. Also in that year, the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad was built through Rising Star on its path from Cross Plains (Callahan County) to De Leon (Comanche County), which significantly affected the growth of Rising Star's commercial district. The line extended along Mills Street, one block north of the town's crossroads intersection. The arrival of the railroad brought additional economic opportunities for those involved in agricultural endeavors in outlying rural areas, particularly cotton farmers and buyers. Formerly, cotton farmers shipped their freight by wagon to Cisco or Brownwood, two- and three-day roundtrips, respectively, because of the distance and the poor conditions of the roads. With the instigation of rail service, Rising Star became an increasingly important center of commerce and trade as area farmers bought their cotton to town for sale. Buyers used the railroad to transport cotton to markets elsewhere. A 1914 boll weevil infestation ruined cotton crops throughout the area, forcing farmers to learn to cultivate other crops such as peanuts. Though Rising Star's economy was affected by these changes, the town continued to grow. Rising Star's 1919 plat map and the 1921 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map illustrate dense commercial development extending from the intersections of Main and College streets after the fire and the development of the railroad.

Although oil was first discovered in the area in 1909, Rising Star did not experience an oil boom until 1920, when an oil strike near the town attracted attention and ushered in an era of rapid growth. The oil boom led to the improvement of the local road network and also helped to transform the physical character of town, especially within Rising Star's commercial district. Most of the



Figure B-21 (left). 100 block of N. Main College Street (US 83), Winters.

West side of the block looking northwest.

Figure B-22 (right). 100 block of W. Dale Street (Texas Loop 438), Winters.

North side of the block looking northwest.

buildings extant today were constructed during the 1920s. Concurrently, the primary roads that extended in rural areas and linked Rising Star with other communities were upgraded. Upon completion of SH 36, then known as the West Pike, leading to Pioneer and the Callahan County line, the local newspaper noted that the repairs were “worth much to the people along the way as Rising Star [was] the market and trading point for [a] wide scope of the country.” and farmers now had better roads over which to haul their produce to Rising Star for market (Eastland County Book Committee, 637; *Rising Star X-Ray*, July 10, 1924).

By the 1930s, Rising Star’s commercial district was developed and the present historic resources were constructed. Roads providing access to Rising Star were in place, allowing for its success as a market center, which in turn prompted the construction of permanent buildings. The decline of oil production and changes in agricultural cultivation stymied further physical development. Mid-century road improvements, however, enhanced the town’s appeal during phases of economic depression; Rising Star’s population rose slightly every decade from 1920 and 1940. The consistent presence of viable businesses has allowed for the continued use of the commercial district.

Winters, Runnels County

Winters is located at the intersection of US 83 (Main Street) and SH Loop 438 (West Dale Street/Tinkel Street) in north-central Runnels County (Figures B-21 and B-22). Original settlement in the area occurred at Bluff Creek Valley, one mile southeast of the present town, in 1880. Sources do not indicate when the town was relocated.

Winters’ population was 163 in 1892. Historic photographs show that the commercial area of the town changed little between 1895 and 1905. Buildings consisted primarily of one-story, wood-frame construction with false fronts and shed-roof porches supported by square posts.

The Abilene and Southern Railroad built an extension from Abilene through Winters in 1909. By that time, the town’s population was 600. That year, the town was incorporated and business endeavors grew. One significant enterprise was the opening of a cottonseed oil mill. With the introduction of the railroad,

farmers and ranchers in the surrounding countryside now had a means to conveniently transport goods to distant markets, and Winters grew as a trade center. Winters developed into a major and important shipping point for cotton during the early twentieth century. By 1917, Sanborn Fire Insurance maps show significant commercial development on Main Street from Tinkle (State) to Parsonage (Church) streets and along Post Office (Dale) Street from the railroad tracks to Grant Street. Businesses included general stores, grocers, hardware stores, auto sales, garages, wagon yards, lumber yards, and various retail establishments. The historic Rock Hotel was located at the northwest corner of Post Office and Divide streets near the railroad depot and was built to house railroad passengers traveling through Winters. The Winters Cotton Oil Company and two gins were located along the rail line, and two additional gins were present east of Grant Street. At one time, there were as many as 12 cotton gins in Winters and the surrounding vicinity. Most of the resources extant in the downtown area were constructed by this time.

The town experienced an increase in population from 1910 to 1930, with a slight decrease during the 1930s, probably as result of the Depression. The 1925 Sanborn maps depict the continuation of growth in the commercial area, including the addition of venues such as a movie theater, a skating rink, and a tourist hotel. Maps from 1930 and 1939 further indicate that Winters' economic development was constant through the 1930s. In 1936, an airport served the community and was approximately one mile northwest of the city limits. Roads previously utilized as thoroughfares joining the market center became part of recognized road and highway systems in the 1930s and 1940s and later in 1988.

In addition to cotton, the cultivation of wheat, grain sorghum, cattle, and sheep aided in the maintenance of Winters' agricultural economy at mid-century and beyond. Oil production also became a factor when the first productive well was discovered in 1949. Winters' continued development was enhanced with the addition of two light metal manufacturers in the 1970s. One recent downfall was the termination of railroad service through Winters in 1989. The owner at that time, Union Pacific Railroad, sold the rights of the line, and all railroad-related resources in Winters, including the depot and rails, were subsequently removed. Still, Winters retains a viable economy, reflected in the well-preserved state and continued use of the commercial area.

APPENDIX C

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDIES

INTRODUCTION

Two of the communities visited for the preparation of this report were subject to further analysis and evaluation under a separate Work Authorization issued by TxDOT. These additional investigations allowed the project historians to follow and implement the procedures presented in the body of the report and evaluate the potential NRHP eligibility of the downtowns of Merkel and Olney. These communities proved to be good candidates for the case study evaluations because each presents a broad range of issues and marginal integrity that require thoughtful and deliberate evaluations and analytical arguments to assess NRHP eligibility for historic district status.

For the purposes of this evaluation, each downtown is assumed to possess significance under Criterion A because they are historically important nodes of commerce and trade that served the citizens of each city, as well as area ranchers and farmers. Merkel's economy and downtown rely primarily on ranching and farming; however, it has benefitted from the discovery of oil in the area and from the establishment of Tye Army Air Field in 1942 (now known as Dyess Air Force Base). Oil played a prominent role in Olney, and the construction boom that ensued after its discovery in the 1920s had a very dramatic effect on the size and physical character of the downtown. Agriculture and the processing and shipment of locally cultivated crops, such as cotton and wheat, also contributed to Olney's economy and likewise affected patterns of development within the downtown. However, both communities attribute their founding to railroads that serviced each community. The Texas and Pacific Railway actually created Merkel, while the community of Olney moved about one mile north to its present site in 1909 to have access to the newly constructed line of the Wichita Falls and Southern Railway. The local road networks and highway system that extended through these crossroads communities played critical roles in the growth, development, and history of each downtown. The significance of these commercial nodes is manifested in the dense concentrations of mostly one- and two-story buildings, the vast majority of which date from the early twentieth century.

ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

Does the downtown remain a center of commercial and retail activity within the community and are most of the buildings still occupied and in use?

Merkel

The downtown of Merkel is near the geographic center of the community (Figures C-1, C-2, and C-3). Edwards Street is the primary commercial thoroughfare in the downtown; however, Kent Street, one block to the west, has a growing number of commercial establishments since it extends northward to IH 20 and provides egress to and from the highway. The construction of IH 20 in the late 1950s redirected through traffic away from the downtown, and roadside establishments such as gas stations, restaurants, and some retail stores exist along the frontage roads and entrance/access ramps to IH 20. What was once known as the Bankhead Highway and later as US 84 is now designated as Business Interstate (BI) 20-P. Since this thoroughfare was along one of the state's earliest and most important highways, it also contains a number of commercial buildings, many of which are auto-oriented. Several of these commercial buildings are extant but the construction of IH 20 has had a negative effect on their commercial viability.

Despite an ongoing trend for greater decentralization of retail trade and commerce during the last half of the twentieth century, the downtown remains vibrant and the primary destination for most local shoppers. Such prominent downtown fixtures as the Merkel Drug Store and American State Bank continue to attract local customers. While some of the buildings are vacant, most contain locally owned and operated businesses. On-street parking in the 100 block of Edwards can be limited during the weekdays, and traffic in the 100 blocks of Kent and Edwards can be congested. Downtown Merkel remains a center of commercial and retail activity and most of the buildings are still occupied.

Figure C-1. Map of Merkel and downtown area.

The area shaded in gray includes the historic downtown. Aerials of the area in gray follow. Source: Bing.com

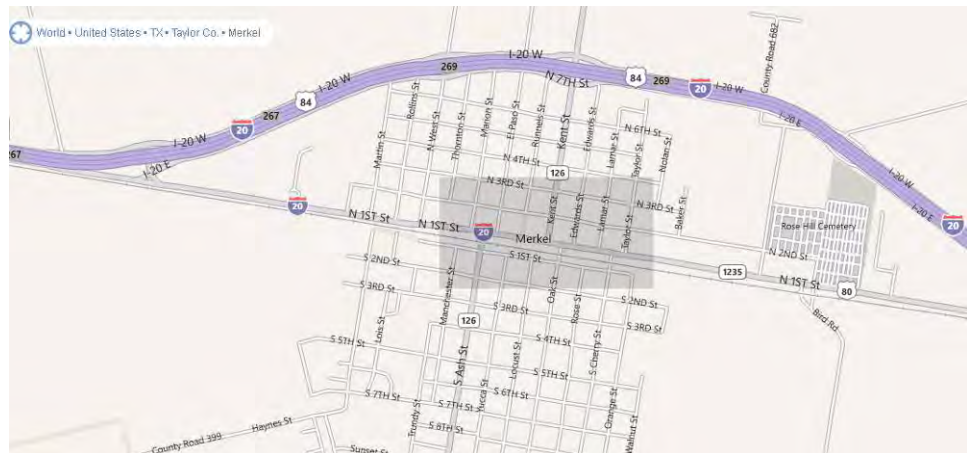


Figure C-2 (top). Aerial view of downtown Merkel.

Commercial area with street names. Source: Bing.com

Figure C-3 (bottom). Aerial view of downtown Merkel.

Commercial area without street names. Source: Bing.com



Olney

The city's historic commercial zone is at the east-central part of the community (Figures C-4, C-5, and C-6). The downtown is centered along the 100 blocks of W. and E. Main Street, which is also a segment of SH 114. SH 79 intersects SH 114 in the 300 block of E. Main Street; however, Avenue C formerly functioned as the major north-south highway extending through the city. The intersection of Main Street and Avenue C represented the most important street intersection and function as the core of the city's downtown. Today, the many stores in the 100 blocks of E. and W. Main Street indicate that the downtown remains the city's primary node of retail trade and activity; however, side streets such as Avenue C and Grand Avenue lack such vitality. The highway bypass has attracted commercial development, but its proximity to the historic downtown, in effect, has actually expanded the downtown rather than created a separate commercial node. Areas at the west end of Main Street contain a more dispersed pattern of commercial development, with detached buildings and large front parking lots that cater to a more auto-oriented client base. Most of the buildings, such as grocery stores, restaurants, and convenience stores,

date from the mid-twentieth century and share few of the physical qualities of resources in the historic downtown.

Downtown Olney continues to be an important part of the local economy, and the many stores still in business along the 100 and even 200 blocks of W. Main Street attest to the area's viability. Avenue C, however, stands in sharp contrast to Main Street. While it once was the primary north-south thoroughfare extending through the community, the street has limited traffic and contains many vacant buildings ranging from fair to poor condition. Nevertheless, downtown Olney clearly remains the commercial hub of the town, and most of the buildings contain locally owned and operated businesses.

Figure C-4 (top). Map of Olney and downtown area.

The area shaded in gray includes the historic downtown. Aerials of the area in gray follow. Source: Bing.com

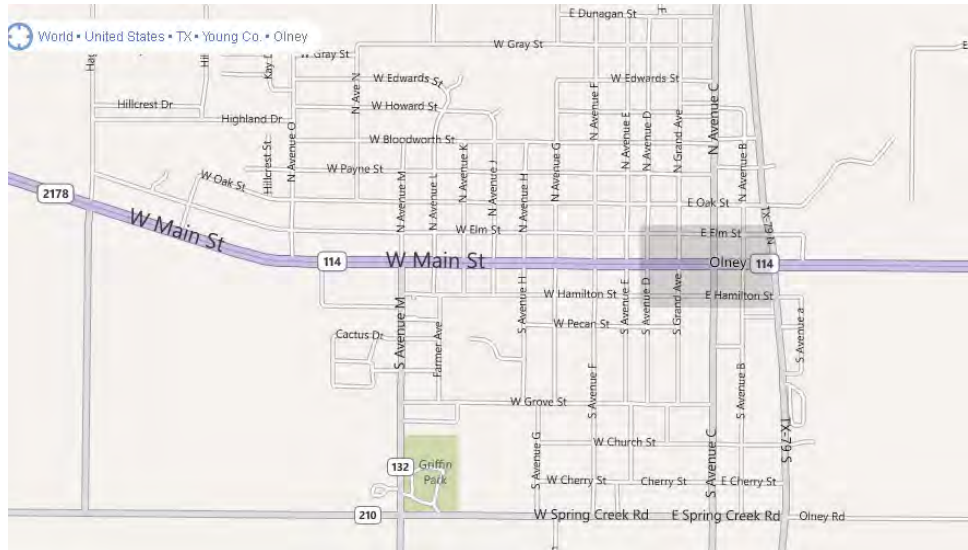


Figure C-5 (bottom). Aerial view of downtown Olney.

Commercial area with street names. Source: Bing.com



Figure C-6. Aerial view of downtown Olney.
Commercial area without street names.
Source: Bing.com



When did the downtown experience its most intense period(s) of development and does it still convey a sense of time and place from a particular period that makes it noteworthy within a local context (period of significance)?

Merkel

The Texas and Pacific Railway Company filed the town plat for Merkel on July 25, 1884, and development began soon thereafter. Although the plat established commercial lots on both sides of the company's railroad tracks, land on the north side, and particularly along N. First Street (BI 20-P) and Edwards Street, developed as the commercial node. The oldest extant buildings are one- and two-story buildings that date from the 1890s and 1900s, according to cast-iron plates on door thresholds. These nameplates identify original builders or tenants and original construction dates.

The town prospered during the first quarter of the twentieth century and served surrounding areas as an important processing and shipping point for locally produced cotton, wheat, and other crops (Figures C-7, C-8, and C-9). Sanborn maps of 1908, 1914, and 1925 provide graphic documentation of the downtown's physical evolution. By 1925, both Edwards Street and N. First Street contained uninterrupted rows of masonry commercial buildings that conveyed a strong sense of cohesion and density. That pattern of development is evident today.

One of the nation's first major roadways—the Bankhead Highway—extended along N. First Street and paralleled the railroad tracks. However, the city's proximity to Abilene prevented Merkel from reaping the kinds of benefits this roadway brought to other communities. Nevertheless, by the time of the Great Depression, much of the present physical character of downtown Merkel was in place. The vast majority of the extant buildings had been constructed, and the

downtown remained the city's primary commercial node. While the downtown's ongoing significance as a center for shopping and related activities continued through the postwar period (Figure C-10), the construction of IH 20 in the late 1950s extended north of the city and diverted much of the traffic that formerly passed through downtown Merkel.

The downtown's primary period of significance extends from ca. 1890, the estimated date of the oldest extant building in the downtown, until 1925 when most of the buildings had been erected, as noted by Sanborn maps. This period (ca. 1890 to 1925) represents the downtown's era of greatest prosperity and significance. The ongoing role of the area as a local node of commerce and trade extends to ca. 1959, following the completion of IH 20. The opening of the interstate highway that bypassed the city marked a major event in local history, especially to the downtown. The downtown continued to serve the local community but lacks the vigor it had during the early twentieth century. Thus, the primary period of significance is ca. 1890 to 1925 and the secondary period of significance is 1925 to ca. 1959.



Figure C-7. Streetscape of 100 block of Edwards Street.
Date unknown. Source: *A History of Rural Taylor County*.



Figure C-8. Streetscape of 100 block of Edwards Street.
Date ca. 1920. Source: *A History of Rural Taylor County*.



Figure C-9. Streetscape of 100 block of Edwards Street.
Date ca. 1925–1930. Source: *A Merkel Area History*.



Figure C-10. Streetscape of 900 block of N. First Street.
Date ca. 1960. Source: *A Merkel Area History*.

Olney

The extension of the Wichita Falls and Southern Railway into Young County in 1909 triggered the relocation of Olney, which was a dispersed rural settlement located about one mile south of the present site. Consequently, downtown development began later relative to other crossroads communities, including Merkel. Olney grew rapidly as the railroad proved to be the economic catalyst that most local residents had hoped. The discovery of the nearby Swastika Oil Field fueled construction activities within the downtown and spurred even greater commerce and trade. The establishment of several cotton gins, as well as a cotton oil mill, and a feed and grain mill between downtown and the railroad further stimulated the local economy. A comparison of Sanborn maps published between 1921 and 1926 depicted a dramatic change and transformation of the physical character and density of development in the downtown, much of it attributed to the oil boom.

While the boom eventually peaked, oil continued to play an influential role to the community and downtown area, but ranching and farming also were important (Figure C-11 to C-16). However, during the late 1930s and early 1940s, two important transportation-related developments changed the dynamics of the city and particularly the downtown. In 1939, according to TxDOT Highway Designation files, SH 79 replaced Avenue C as the major north-south corridor, which shifted new commercial development two blocks to the east. Many of the auto-related businesses, including all of the gas stations in the 100 to 300 blocks of S. Avenue C, eventually ceased operations. In 1942, the Wichita Falls and Southern Railroad (successor to the Wichita Falls and Southern Railway) discontinued service to Olney, which affected both the agricultural and oil production business in the city. A tornado struck Olney in 1951 and caused widespread damage. Its effect on the downtown has been fully documented, but the number of stores with remodeled storefronts from the 1950s would suggest that the tornado damaged buildings in the downtown area.

At present, Olney's downtown remains the city's primary commercial center, and most of the buildings along Main Street are still occupied. The most notable vacant building is the Hamilton Hotel at the southeast corner of Main Street and Grand Avenue. The period of significance begins at ca. 1910, when the earliest buildings were constructed. The conclusion of this period of significance is based on the discontinued service of the Wichita Falls and Southern Railroad in 1942. Continued commercial activity enables the downtown to remain vibrant and an important node of activity, but the postwar era does not reflect the primary reasons the downtown has significance within National Register Criteria. Thus, the period of significance is ca. 1910 to 1942.



Figure C-11. Aerial view of downtown Olney.
Date unknown. Source: *Photographic Collection at Olney Public Library, Olney, Texas.*



Figure C-12. Aerial view of downtown Olney.
Date unknown. Source: *Photographic Collection at Olney Public Library, Olney, Texas.*



Figure C-13. Women walking in downtown Olney.
Date ca. 1940. Source: Olney subject clippings file at *Olney Public Library, Olney, Texas.*



Figure C-14. Movie theater in downtown Olney.
Date ca. 1940. Source: Olney subject clippings file at *Olney Public Library, Olney, Texas.*

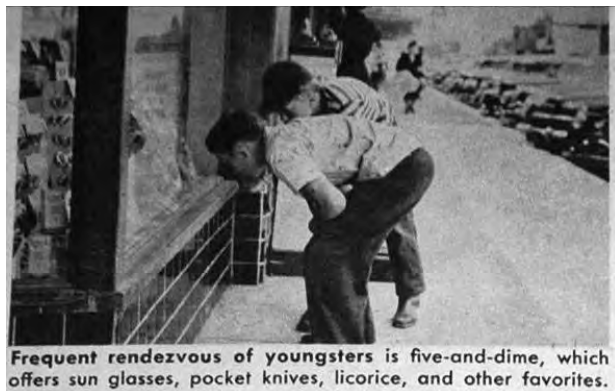


Figure C-15. Looking through display window in downtown Olney.
Date unknown. Source: Olney subject clippings file at *Olney Public Library, Olney, Texas.*



Figure C-16. Parade along Main Street in downtown Olney.
Date 1950s. Source: *Photographic Collection at Olney Public Library, Olney, Texas.*

Do most of the buildings date from the period of significance?

Figure C-17. Overlay of downtown Merkel.

This composite view includes the 1944 update of fire insurance maps published by the Sanborn Map Co. and a current aerial from TNRS.

Merkel

Sanborn maps (Figure C-17) and field investigations confirm that approximately 65 percent of the extant buildings in the core of the historic commercial area date from ca. 1892 to 1925.



Figure C-18. Overlay of downtown Olney.

This composite view includes the 1948 update of fire insurance maps published by the Sanborn Map Co. and a current aerial from TNRS.

Olney

Over 75 percent of the extant resources in the downtown predate 1942, the year marking the end of the period of significance as determined through historical research, according to an analysis of Sanborn maps (Figure C-18) and information obtained through tax roll research and from field investigations.



Is the downtown distinct from its surroundings and does it present a clearly defined concentration of buildings and/or node of activities that contrasts with adjoining areas or neighborhoods?

Merkel

The downtown includes a multi-block area in the center of the community and on the north side of the railroad that extends through the city. BI 20-P defines the south boundary (Figure C-19). It runs parallel to and north of the wide Union Pacific Railway right-of-way, which contains a commemorative historic windmill and a grain elevator and feed mill adjacent to the tracks. The openness and relative lack of development in the railroad right-of-way contrasts sharply to the character of the downtown. Lamar Street, which is parallel to and one block east of Edwards Street, marks the transition between the downtown and a predominately residential neighborhood to the east. Property on the east side of the 100 block of Lamar Street includes two lumberyards, a water tower, and the local volunteer fire department (Figure C-20). The 900 block of N. Second Street likewise marks a transitional area. While the south side contains a high concentration of early twentieth-century commercial buildings, the north side has only two historic commercials, both in fair to poor condition. The large Craftsman bungalow at the northwest corner of N. Second Street and Lamar Street shares none of the physical qualities that prevail in the downtown. In addition, the park and gazebo at the opposite corner are not historic age. The 200 block of Edward contains a noteworthy concentration of historic resources, but that continuity diminishes at the north end, where a new post office and a vacant 1960s-era grocery store stand as prominent features. Similarly, both the north side of the 1000 block of N. Third Street and the west side of the 200 block of Kent Street have commercial buildings that are not historic age and do not exhibit the materials, scale, massing, or form of downtown buildings. Areas beyond these blocks included dispersed residences that date from the early twentieth century. The 100 block of Kent Street contains groupings of historic commercial buildings along the west side, but areas beyond (to the north) lack the concentration and eventually transition into a residential neighborhood (Figure C-21). The area of greatest density of historic commercial buildings encompasses the 100 block of Kent Street and the 100–200 blocks of Edward Street. In conclusion, most of the buildings date from the period of significance, and the area roughly bounded by properties fronting onto the 100 block of Kent Street, the 1000 block of N. Third Street, the 900 block of N. Second Street, the 100 block of Lamar Street, and the 900 to 1100 blocks of N. First Street encompasses the downtown that is clearly distinct from its surroundings. This step supports the argument that the downtown retains integrity of *Setting*, *Association*, and *Feeling*.

**Figure C-19 (top).
Birdseye view of
downtown Merkel.**

This view shows existing patterns of development in and surrounding downtown Merkel. Source: Bing.com.



**Figure C-20 (middle).
100 block of Lamar
Street, Merkel.**

The streetscape is immediately east of downtown Merkel and exhibits few of the physical traits of buildings in the downtown.

**Figure C-21 (bottom).
200 block of Kent
Street, Merkel.**

This block has commercial development that postdates the period of significance of the downtown.



Olney

The downtown encompasses an area that includes the 100 blocks of E. and W. Main Street and extends another block to the north and south. This area includes most of the city's retail, banking, and other commercial businesses. Property outside this area lacks the density of development, resource types, and physical qualities that exist within the downtown. Transitional areas on all sides function as a buffer between the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, but lack the continuity and cohesiveness of either zone (Figures C-22 through C-25). Properties to the south and southeast contain a few of the agricultural processing facilities that once were so prevalent in this part of the city; the large tracts of land mark the sites of former cotton gins and other agricultural processing concerns. Blocks to the east and northeast include large commercial and light-industrial operations that take advantage of their proximity to SH 79, which extends to Wichita Falls, the region's largest and most important metropolitan center. Areas to the northwest and southwest are mostly residential, with early twentieth-century houses. Almost all of the lots facing onto W. Main Street beyond the 100 block are used for non-residential purposes and include several churches and other retail establishments. They have a more automobile-oriented focus, with large parking lots and driveways that provide easy egress to and from W. Main Street. Overall, the 100 block of East Main Street, the 100 blocks of N. and S. Grand Avenue, and the 100 blocks of N. and S. Avenue C represent the most intact collection of historic commercial architecture in the city. The physical characteristics and associative qualities shared among the buildings within the downtown set them apart from surrounding properties. This step supports the argument that the downtown retains integrity of *Setting*, *Association*, and *Feeling*.

Figure C-22. 100 block of W. Hamilton Street, Olney.

The Olney City Hall is on the left, and the Volunteer Fire Department is on the right. The scale, type, and materials of buildings on the right (south) share few of the physical characteristics of the downtown.



Figure C-23 (top). 200-300 blocks of S. Avenue C, Olney.

This view shows the types of buildings in the industrial zone south of the downtown.



Figure C-24 (middle). 200 block of N. Avenue C, Olney.

This area is north of downtown. The new complex of metal storage units marks a sharp break from the historic downtown



Figure C-25 (bottom). 300 block of W. Main Street, Olney.

Just beyond the western limits of the historic downtown, a number of churches functions as a buffer between the city's commercial center and residential neighborhoods.



Do the streetscapes present a largely continuous and uninterrupted grouping of historic buildings with a lack of new construction and/or vacant lots?

Merkel

The 100 block of Edwards Street is the single streetscape in the downtown that presents a mostly continuous row of commercial buildings. The only disruption is the empty lot between the Merkel Drug Store and the American State Bank building, but its effect to the cohesive quality of the rest of the block is minimal. In contrast, the setback placement of the ca. 1990 garage in the 900 block of Front Street interrupts the rhythm of historic buildings fronting onto the block (Figure C-26). Most other blocks in the downtown have either new buildings or vacant lots that disrupt the aesthetic quality and sense of cohesiveness of the downtown. The 100 block of Edwards Street is the only streetscape in downtown Merkel that retains a largely continuous and uninterrupted grouping of historic buildings. This step suggests that new construction and vacant lots have diminished the downtown’s integrity of *Setting, Design, and Feeling*. The only area that is minimally affected by these changes is the 100 block of Edwards Street.

Figure C-26. 900 block of N. First Street, Merkel.

The non-historic garage in the middle of the block disrupts the cohesive character and rhythm of this streetscape.



Olney

Buildings fronting onto the 100 block of W. Main Street present an almost continuous series of historic buildings with uniform setbacks. The only exception is the vacant lot adjacent to the bank building at the southwest corner of Main Street and Avenue C (Figure C-27). Other blocks within downtown have multiple vacant lots that diminish some of the important qualities that distinguish the downtown. Examples include the park and gazebo at the northwest corner of W. Main Street and Grand Avenue, the entire west side of S. Grand Avenue, and both sides of the 100 block of W. Hamilton Street. Sanborn maps confirm that buildings stood at these locations during the period of significance, and their absence detracts from the downtown's overall historic character. The only block that retains a noteworthy concentration of historic buildings with minimal interruptions is the 100 block of W. Main Street. Based on this analysis, vacant lots and construction outside the period of significance have had a negative effect on the downtown's integrity of *Setting*, *Design*, and *Feeling*. The only area that is minimally affected by these changes is the 100 block of W. Main Street.

Figure C-27. 100 block of W. Main Street, Olney.

The vacant lot in the left center of this image diminishes the historic character of this block.



Are most of the buildings constructed with uniform setbacks from the streets?

Merkel

With few exceptions, the buildings in downtown Merkel have uniform setbacks that maximize land use on commercial lots (Figure C-28). Notable exceptions include a small metal-clad garage in the 900 block of N. First Street and the city hall/library building at the northeast corner of Kent Street and Front Street. A small gas station at the northwest corner of the same intersection has an office and service garage that is set back from the street, allowing customers ample room to drive up to pumps to fuel their cars. Otherwise, the setbacks of most historic resources present a high degree of consistency and uniformity. Both sides of the 100 block of Edwards and the west side of the 200 block of Edwards are the most cohesive. This quality enhances the ability of the downtown to convey a sense of the past and supports integrity of *Setting, Feeling, and Design*.

Figure C-28. 900 block of N. Front Street, Merkel.

The uniform setbacks contribute to the sense of cohesiveness within the downtown.



Olney

Downtown Olney includes significant concentrations of buildings with uniform setbacks. The highest percentage is along the 100 block of W. Main Street, where mostly One-Part Commercial Block buildings line both sides of the thoroughfare (Figure C-29). The area marks the historic core of the downtown and retains the strongest sense of cohesiveness in the downtown area. That continuity breaks down on side streets, including Avenue C and Grand Avenue. While the One-Part Commercial Block gas station at the southwest corner of Avenue C and Elm Street maintains the consistent setback, the gas station at the opposite side, as well as an adjacent 1950s detached office building, disrupts the uniformity of the building placement. Based on this analysis, the 100 block of W. Main Street contains the most significant concentration of buildings with even setbacks, which enhances the downtown's integrity of *Setting, Feeling, and Design*.

Figure C-29. 100 block of W. Main Street, Olney.

This row of historic commercial buildings on the north side of the block presents a uniform grouping of buildings with the same setback from the street.



Are the sidewalks intact and do they utilize original and/or historic materials that are in stable condition?

Merkel

Sidewalks in Merkel utilize a wide range of materials and are at varying levels of condition and disrepair. Most of the sidewalks are undistinguished concrete panels with expansion joints; however, a significant number of buildings have sidewalks with brick pavers (Figure C-30). While the effect may have been intended to provide a visual link with the brick-paved streets, the appearance is not based on historical precedent, and the uneven surface and poor condition actually detract from the downtown’s historic character. The inconsistent aesthetic quality of the use of different materials in the sidewalks detracts from the downtown’s integrity of *Materials* and *Setting*.

Figure C-30. 100 block of Edwards Street, Merkel.

The brickwork in the sidewalk in this downtown block is in poor condition and is a hazard for pedestrians. These are Thurber bricks, but other sidewalks in Merkel have modern brick pavers that present a very different character and feel.



Olney

Main Street has been subject to a sidewalk improvement program that has introduced new sidewalk paving materials that are not consistent with the downtown's historic character. Specifically, the 100 block of W. Main Street, which contains the greatest concentration of historic resources and represents the core of the downtown, has brick-paved sidewalks that are an intrusive visual element (Figure C-31). Most of the other sidewalks in the town utilize concrete that dates from the period of significance. Since the sidewalks in front of the most important concentration of historic buildings have sidewalk materials that postdate the period of significance, the downtown's integrity of *Materials* and *Setting* are diminished.

Figure C-31. 100 block of W. Main Street, Olney.

Most of the sidewalks in downtown Olney have brick-paved sidewalks similar to that seen in this image.



Does the curbing remain continuous and utilize original and/or historic materials that are in stable condition?

Merkel

Stone and concrete are the two kinds of curbing used in downtown Merkel (Figure C-32). With few exceptions, the curbing is continuous and features materials that date from the period of significance. Notable exceptions include driveway cuts for several buildings that face onto N. First Street (BI 20-P) such as the new auto-repair shop in the 900 block, the city hall/library in the 1000 block, and the gas station in the 1100 block. The stone curbing is the older of the two materials used but its placement is not known. Research has not determined the date or period when the concrete curbing was installed; however, the curbing likely was part of the brick-paved street improvement program that probably was undertaken in the 1920s. Most of the curbing in the downtown is in good condition and dates to the period of significance; therefore, it contributes to the downtown's integrity of *Materials, Setting, and Feeling*.

Figure C-32. 900 block of N. Front Street, Merkel.

The concrete curbing in this block is in stable condition.



Olney

The streets of downtown Olney retain concrete curbing that likely dates from the period of significance (Figure C-33). The lack of disruptions or breaks to the curbing adds to the downtown's overall historic character and sense of cohesiveness and enhances its integrity of *Materials*, *Setting*, and *Feeling*.

Figure C-33. 100 block of S. Avenue C, Olney.
The curbing in this block typifies conditions throughout downtown Olney.

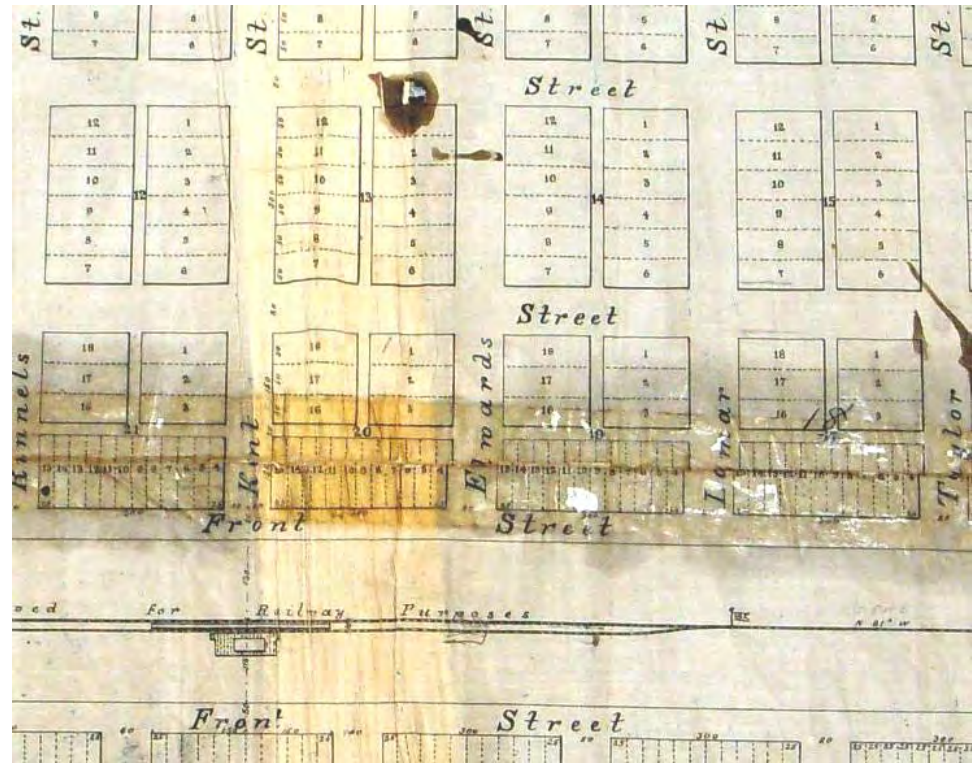


Does the layout of streets, blocks, and lots remain unchanged and/or follow original or historic patterns?

Merkel

The original layout of Merkel remains unaltered (Figure C-34). The alignment and right-of-ways for the streets adhere to the original plat map. Although the general orientation of blocks and lots are unchanged, commercial development in the north end of blocks 19, 20, and 21 (100 block of Kent, Edwards, and Lamar Streets) included larger-sized lots that were subdivided for commercial use. This change does not affect the historic character or diminish any of the physical qualities of the original town plan. As such, the relative lack of alterations to the layout of streets, blocks, and lots contributes to the downtown’s integrity of *Design, Setting, Association, and Feeling*.

Figure C-34. Detail of original plat map for Merkel.
This map shows how commercial development was intended to be concentrated on the two streets fronting onto the railroad. Although this pattern did not occur, commercial development adhered to the original configuration of the plat.

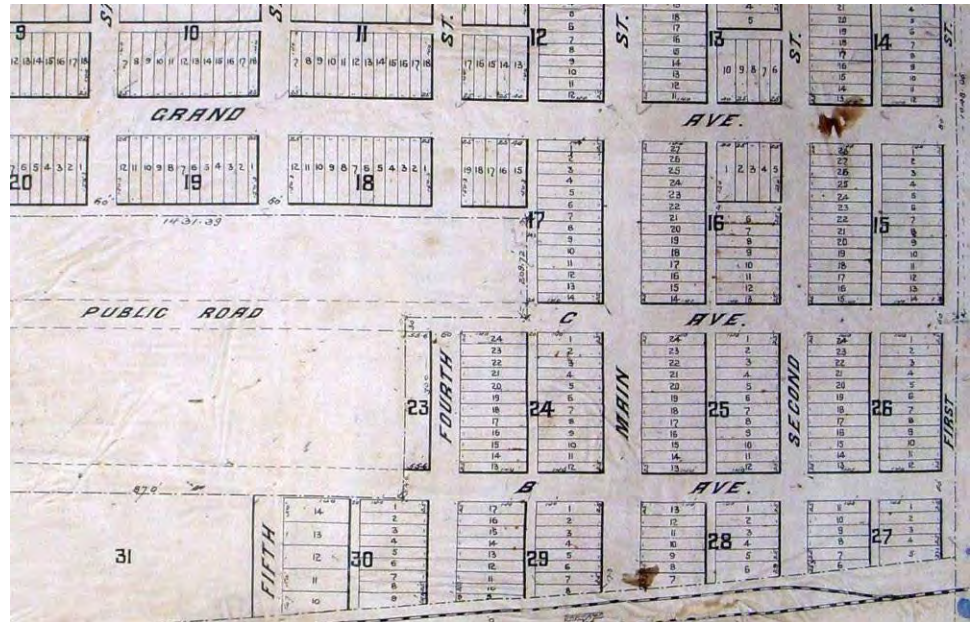


Olney

Although much of the original town is intact, sidewalk improvements at the corner of Main Street and Avenue C extend into the street right-of-way and change the relationships between the streets and the buildings at each corner. Otherwise, the overall plan and layout of the downtown area is consistent with those aspects of the original town plat (Figure C-35). Changes associated with the ramps at street corners diminish but do not compromise downtown's integrity of *Design, Setting, Association, and Feeling*.

Figure C-35. Detail of original plat map for Olney.

This map shows that town founders envisioned Olney to be a large community with an appropriately sized downtown. Although the town did not become an important regional center as anticipated, development largely adhered to the original plat. Note the "public road" along Avenue C, which indicates the importance of the thoroughfare to the road network.



Does the paving surface of streets extending through the downtown retain original and/or historic materials? If applicable, does the existence of historic paving surfaces enhance a sense of cohesiveness within the downtown and evoke a strong sense of the past?

Merkel

Field investigations noted most streets in downtown Merkel with historic brick-paved surfaces, which are an important physical attribute of the area (Figure C-36). The most notable exception is N. First Street, which is also designated as BI 20-P. Since it is part of the federal and state highway systems, it has asphalt paving in part to meet highway safety standards. The brick streets remain in very good condition with minimal changes or interruptions. They add much to the downtown’s historic character and are considered as a single contributing resource. Aerial photographs provide graphic evidence of their visual and aesthetic contributions to defining the limits of the downtown, which independently confirm the limits of field investigations for the survey. The historic paving enhances to the downtown’s integrity of *Materials, Design, Workmanship, Association, and Setting*.

Figure C-36. 100 block of Edwards Street, Merkel.

Most of the streets in downtown Merkel retain their brick-paved surfaces. They remain in good condition and contribute to the historic character of the area.



Olney

Olney has multiple brick streets in the downtown, but the main thoroughfare, Main Street, where the greatest concentration of historic resources is found, has asphalt paving material. The brick paving on side and secondary streets (Grand Avenue, Avenue C, Elm Street, and Hamilton Street) is largely intact, but repairs using different kinds of materials diminish the brick streets' contributions to the historic character of the downtown (Figure C-37). The inconsistent character of the street paving materials in the downtown have a negative effect on the downtown's integrity of *Materials, Design, Workmanship, Association, and Setting*.

Figure C-37.
**Intersection of Main
Street and Avenue C,
Olney.**

Some of the original brick paving is exposed, but repairs diminish its integrity and ability to contribute to the downtown's historic character.



Does the downtown convey its historic character and sense of the past at the pedestrian level? Do storefront renovations date from the period of significance, and what is the combined effect these alterations have to historic integrity of the entire downtown?

Merkel

Most of the buildings in downtown Merkel have been subject to varying degrees of change and modifications (Figure C-38 through C-41). Most of these alterations are at the pedestrian level, where owners replaced windows and doors and removed or installed new canopies. In particular, the west sides of the 100 block of Kent Street and the 200 block of Edwards include cohesive groupings of One- and Two-Part Commercial Block buildings that have been altered to such an extent that their collective historic character has largely been compromised. In contrast, some streetscapes have been subject to less severe changes at the street level, including the 100 block of Edwards Street, the north side of the 900 block of Front Street, and the south side of the 900 block of N. Second Street. A small number of the buildings have been severely altered and are no longer recognizable to the period of significance; however, these are exceptions. The fenestration of the majority of the buildings is intact and some, such as the Merkel Drug Store, have remodeled storefronts that have become an important part of the physical character of the building. Since these kinds of alterations date to the period of significance, they contribute to the historic character of the building and the downtown as a whole.

Figure C-38. 100 block of Edwards Street, Merkel.

Although storefront alterations to the Merkel Drug Store date from the mid-1940s and contribute to the downtown's historic character, alterations to the majority of other storefronts in this image have a negative effect on character-defining features of the One-Part Commercial Block buildings that prevail.



Figure C-39 (top). 900 block of N. Second Street, Merkel.

The stores in this block present storefronts that date from the period of significance. The building in the foreground has a tiled exterior finish that is similar to that seen on the Merkel Drug Store in the previous image.



Figure C-40 (middle). 200 block of Edwards Street, Merkel.

The storefronts in this block have been subject to severe alterations that do not date from the period of significance. The overall effect detracts from the district's historic character.



Figure C-41 (bottom). 900 block of N. Second Street, Merkel.

While the historic fenestration pattern is still evident, the deteriorated condition, covering of window openings, and the introduction of new materials diminish the ability of these buildings to convey significance from the past.



Olney

Alterations at the pedestrian level to most of the buildings in the 100 blocks of E. and W. Main Street compromise character-defining features of the One- or Two-Part Commercial Block buildings that line the street. Not only have most of the original windows and doors been replaced and canopies removed, many of the storefronts have been reconfigured and fenestration patterns have been changed. About half of the historic buildings on the side streets (Grand Avenue, Avenue C, Hamilton, and Elm Street) have been so severely altered at the pedestrian level that their historic storefronts are no longer recognizable. The introduction of new materials and finishes and reconfigured storefronts not only disrupts the historic character of the buildings but compromises the ability of the downtown to convey a sense of the past (Figure C-42 through C-46).

Figure C-42 (top). 100 block of W. Main Street, Olney.

The storefronts on all of the buildings on the south side of the block have been extensively modified. The combined effect of these changes disrupts the downtown's historic character.



Figure C-43 (bottom). 100 block of E. Main Street, Olney.

Although the two middle buildings retain much of their historic storefronts, the buildings on either side have been severely altered and convey little of their historic character from the period of significance.



Figure C-44 (top). 100 block of W. Main Street, Olney.

The storefront typifies the kinds of changes that have been made to many of the commercial buildings in the downtown. Hardly any of the historic fabric or character survives.



Figure C-45 (middle). 100 block of W. Main Street, Olney.

Most of the storefronts have been altered on a moderate to severe level.



Figure C-46 (bottom). 100 block of W. Main Street, Olney.

While the historic fenestration pattern is intact, new materials and the canopy diminish the ability of the building to convey a sense of the past.



CONCLUSION

Is the downtown eligible for listing in the NRHP as a historic district?

Merkel

Based on this analysis, the area that best captures and reflects the city's historic downtown is roughly bounded by Lamar Street on the east, the 900 and 1000 blocks of N. Second Street, the alley between Kent and Edwards Street, and the 900 and 1000 blocks of N. First Street. Historic commercial buildings exist outside this area, but as a whole lack the continuity and integrity that exists within the historic downtown. The 100 block of Edwards Street represents the historic core of the downtown and contains the best concentration of buildings. While some buildings, most notably the Temple Front building at the southwest corner of Edwards and N. Second Street, retain their integrity to a high degree and are individual landmarks, the majority of the buildings have been subject to alterations that have diminished the integrity of many of their character-defining features. While the brick streets add to the historic character, the downtown as a whole lacks sufficient integrity to convey significance under Criterion A. The downtown is recommended *Not Eligible* for listing in the NRHP as a historic district.

Olney

The majority of the buildings in downtown Olney have been modified and changed so extensively that relatively few retain sufficient integrity to contribute to the historic character of the downtown and its ability to convey a sense of the past. Although the downtown contains relatively few buildings that postdate the period of significance, the combined effect of storefront changes, non-historic materials added to facades, and window and door replacements to the extant historic resources is severe. Some of the buildings retain their historic character, but the majority lack sufficient integrity to be listed as contributing resources in a district. Therefore, downtown Olney is recommended *Not Eligible* for listing the NRHP as a historic district.