

BUILD
DOWNTOWN BROWNSVILLE

This section outlines how the Plan's recommendations can be implemented over time. It identifies priority actions, partnerships, and funding tools, including the Downtown TIRZ, that support coordinated public and private investment. The section also describes phasing and responsibilities needed to translate the Plan's vision into on-the-ground projects.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Downtown Brownsville is entering a pivotal moment, with recent investments beginning to reshape its role as a civic and cultural center for the Rio Grande Valley. While progress has been made in public spaces, cultural destinations, and housing, key opportunities remain to enhance the public realm, improve connectivity and wayfinding, and expand activity throughout the day and evening.

The Downtown Renaissance Master Plan builds on this momentum by identifying a coordinated set of actions to strengthen Downtown as a regional destination while supporting businesses, residents, and visitors.

Instead of relying on a single large capital project, the Plan recommends a phased and incremental approach to implementation. This strategy focuses on advancing visible improvements in the near term while positioning the City for larger investments over time.

Many successful downtown revitalization efforts begin with smaller improvements that enhance everyday experience. Investments in lighting, sidewalks, shade, public spaces, and programming can quickly improve comfort, safety, and activity while building support for larger projects.

The implementation framework provides a roadmap for advancing the Downtown vision through early actions, strategic investments, and long-term initiatives, along with a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) friendly project list to guide decision-making and capital planning.

Downtown revitalization is most successful when improvements are phased and tested over time. Instead of waiting for large capital projects to be fully funded, many cities begin with smaller demonstration projects that can be implemented quickly and refined based on community feedback.

An incremental implementation strategy allows the City to:

- Build visible momentum early.
- Demonstrate progress and build community support.
- Test design concepts before committing to major investments.
- Adjust strategies based on performance and feedback.
- Encourage private investment alongside public improvements.

Examples of incremental strategies may include temporary street activations, pilot lighting improvements, pop-up events, tactical streetscape improvements, and temporary public space installations.

These early improvements help demonstrate the potential of Downtown spaces and create a foundation for larger investments over time. As momentum builds, incremental projects can evolve into permanent infrastructure improvements, major redevelopment efforts, and expanded programming that strengthens Downtown's identity and economic vitality.

Key Principles for Implementation

Successful Downtown revitalization requires coordination across multiple partners and a long-term commitment to implementation. The following principles help guide implementation of the Downtown Renaissance Master Plan.

Focus on Early Wins: Prioritize projects that create visible improvements in the near term and demonstrate progress to the community. Early successes can help build momentum and strengthen support for larger initiatives.

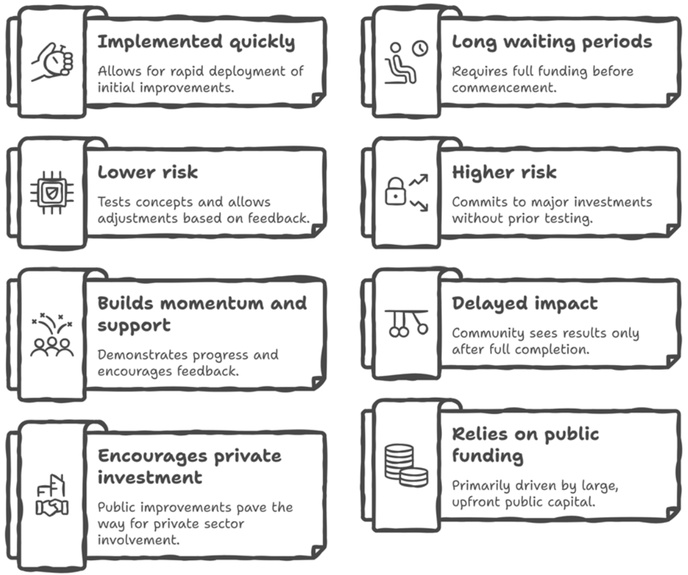
Improve Safety and Comfort: Investments in pedestrian lighting, sidewalks, shade, and streetscape amenities should be early priorities. Improving comfort and safety can encourage more people to spend time Downtown.

Support Downtown Businesses: Enhancing the public realm and increasing activity Downtown can help strengthen existing businesses while attracting new restaurants, retail, and services.

Activate Public Spaces: Programming, events, cultural activities, and public art installations can bring energy and life to Downtown streets, parks, and plazas.

Encourage Downtown Living: Increasing the number of residents Downtown can help support local businesses, create activity throughout the day and evening, and strengthen the long-term vitality of the district.

Leverage Partnerships: Downtown revitalization requires collaboration between the City, property owners, institutions, nonprofit organizations, and private developers. Strong partnerships will be essential to advancing many of the initiatives identified in this Plan.



PRIORITIZATION

To support implementation and prioritization, recommendations in this Plan are evaluated based on two key considerations: its potential impact and its feasibility. This prioritization method can also be used and applied to future decision making related to implementation of Downtown projects.

Impact

Impact refers to the extent to which a project advances Downtown revitalization.

- **Low Impact** - Projects that do not have broad impact on the overall downtown experience, the impact is limited to a small area or a narrow group of people. These priorities are still important to supporting downtown success, they just many not be creating that success on their own.
- **Moderate Impact** - Projects that produce noticeable improvements to downtown function, appearance, or activity levels. These usually affect multiple blocks, corridors, or user groups and contribute meaningfully to downtown vitality, accessibility, or economic performance.
- **High Impact** - Projects with the potential to significantly shape downtown character, activity, and long-term growth. These initiatives often create broad public benefit, influence multiple systems or districts, and serve as catalytic investments that can attract additional development, visitation, or reinvestment.

Feasibility

Feasibility refers to how readily a project can be implemented. This is influenced by factors such as cost, complexity, partnerships, regulatory requirements and funding availability.

- **Low Feasibility** - Projects that are difficult to implement due to substantial barriers such as high cost, complex approvals, land ownership issues, infrastructure constraints, political sensitivity, or limited funding capacity.
- **Moderate Feasibility** - Projects that are achievable but require coordination, phased implementation, or targeted problem-solving. These may involve some financial, regulatory, or partnership challenges, but are realistic with thoughtful planning and support.
- **High Feasibility** - Projects that are relatively straightforward to advance because they involve fewer barriers, lower costs, clear ownership or authority, and strong alignment with available funding, community support, and implementation capacity.

High Impact, High Feasibility

Projects that offer significant benefits and are easy to implement.

High Impact, Low Feasibility

Projects with great potential but challenging to execute.

Low Impact, High Feasibility

Projects that are easy to implement but offer minimal benefits.

Low Impact, Low Feasibility

Projects with little benefit and difficult to implement.

Priority Actions

The Downtown Renaissance Master Plan includes a wide range of recommendations, with several actions identified as early priority actions that can generate visible progress in the near term. These projects represent high-impact, achievable initiatives that can significantly improve the Downtown experience for residents, visitors and businesses. These actions can be implemented in the near term and will help build momentum for larger Downtown revitalization efforts.

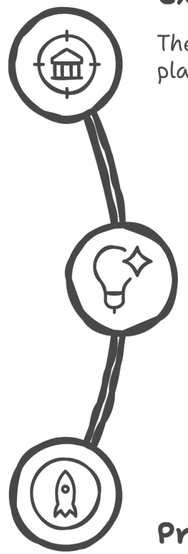
In addition to short-term improvements, the Plan identifies several catalytic projects that have the potential to reshape Downtown Brownsville over the next decade.

These projects typically require greater coordination, funding, partnerships and planning, but can significantly strengthen Downtown's role as a regional cultural and economic destination. Many of these initiatives focus on transforming key sites, enhancing major public spaces and creating the conditions needed to attract private investment.

Collectively, these projects represent long-term opportunities to expand Downtown's economic base, increase visitor activity and support sustained growth.

Priority Implementation Areas

Implementation actions are organized around several priority areas that reflect the major themes and catalyst opportunities identified throughout the planning process. These areas represent key focus areas where coordinated investments can strengthen Downtown Brownsville and support long-term revitalization.



Improved Downtown Experience

The ultimate goal of the plan

High-Impact, Achievable Initiatives

Actions that deliver significant results

Priority Early Actions

Immediate steps to build momentum

	Priority Area & Description	Impact	Feasibility	Considerations
1	**Public Realm First** Improving the quality, comfort and safety of the Downtown public realm.	Moderate	High	Moderate impact because it improves everyday Downtown experience and supports broader revitalization; high feasibility because many improvements can be implemented incrementally by the public investment.
2	**Mobility, Parking and Access** A balanced approach that combines improved parking management, shared parking strategies and enhanced mobility options.	Moderate	High	Moderate impact because it improves access and convenience without fundamentally changing downtown form; high feasibility because many strategies are policy- and management-based rather than capital-intensive. The City already has some plans and funding for these strategies.
3	**Downtown Living** Increasing the number of residents living Downtown.	Low	Moderate	Low impact because residential growth may be gradual and less immediately visible; moderate feasibility because it depends on market conditions, incentives, and redevelopment opportunities.
4	**Adams Street Paseo** A key Downtown corridor transformed into a destination.	High	Moderate	High impact because it can strengthen a key corridor, Downtown identity, and creates moderate feasibility because it requires design coordination, capital investment, major construction and stakeholder support.
5	**Plaza Mayor** Opportunity to establish a signature civic space.	High	Moderate	High impact because a signature civic space can become a major destination and community anchor; moderate feasibility because implementation depends on funding, partnerships, major construction and long-term management agreements.
6	**The Switchyards** Brownsville's most significant redevelopment opportunities.	Very High	Low	Very high impact because it could catalyze transformative Downtown redevelopment; low feasibility because of cost, complexity, phasing, dependence on the private sector and market, and other significant implementation barriers.

ACTION PLAN

The Downtown Brownsville Renaissance Master Plan includes a coordinated set of actions aimed at strengthening the public realm, supporting economic development, improving mobility, and encouraging Downtown living. To ensure these strategies are effectively implemented, recommendations are organized by time frame, priority and responsible partners. This structure allows the City and its partners to track progress, allocate resources and adapt over time as conditions evolve.

Actions

Each recommendation in this Plan is intended to either move forward independently or support broader initiatives. Some actions focus on programming, activation or operational changes that require minimal investment, while others involve capital improvements, policy updates or redevelopment efforts. Each action is given a short description in the following tables.

Type

Each action is given a category to help the City understand the level and type of effort an action might take.

Time Frame

To support sequencing and coordination, actions are grouped into four timeframes, some may include an initial time frame for implementation plus ongoing efforts.

Short Term (0–2 Years)

Focuses on early wins and visible improvements that can be implemented quickly. These actions help improve safety, comfort and activity while building momentum for larger investments.

Medium Term (2–5 Years)

Includes targeted public realm improvements, mobility enhancements and housing initiatives that require additional planning, design and coordination.

Long Term (5–10 Years)

Focuses on major capital investments and catalytic redevelopment opportunities that shape the future of Downtown Brownsville.

Ongoing

Includes programs, partnerships and strategies that continue across all phases and support long-term success.

Key Entities

Implementation will require coordination across public, private and nonprofit partners. Key partners may include the City of Brownsville (Planning, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Finance), the Brownsville Community Improvement Corporation, Downtown Brownsville organizations, UTRGV, property owners, TIRZ #3, Cameron County, developers and community-based organizations. Strong coordination between these entities will be critical to advancing projects and maintaining long-term momentum.

Cost Ranges

These are order-of-magnitude planning estimates, for the City's planning purposes, these are not engineer's estimates. Some projects may include more specific costs listed.

- Very Low: under $100,000
- Low: $100,000-$500,000
- Medium: $500,000-$2 million
- High: $2 million-$10 million
- Very High: $10 million+



PUBLIC REALM FIRST

Impact: Moderate | Feasibility: High

Improving the quality, comfort and safety of the Downtown public realm is one of the most immediate opportunities to enhance the experience of Downtown for residents, visitors and businesses. Investments in lighting, sidewalks, shade, furnishings, wayfinding and public art can create a more welcoming and accessible environment while supporting businesses and encouraging activity throughout the district. These improvements also respond directly to community priorities related to safety, cleanliness, comfort and identity. Special attention should be given to consistent lighting, pedestrian-scale safety improvements, shaded environments and ongoing maintenance to ensure long-term success.

Improving the public realm can have a broad positive effect on how people experience downtown by making streets, sidewalks, and public spaces more attractive, comfortable, and usable. These improvements support walkability, safety, and overall downtown identity, but on their own they may not fully transform economic activity or redevelopment patterns without complementary private investment and programming.

Public realm improvements are often among the most implementable downtown actions because they can be pursued incrementally, aligned with routine capital improvements, and advanced largely through public-sector leadership. Many elements, such as streetscape enhancements, lighting, landscaping, seating, and wayfinding, are relatively straightforward compared to large-scale redevelopment projects.

Key	Action	Type	Time Frame	Lead Entity	Cost Range
1.a	Adopt this Plan as Downtown public realm standards and incorporate these standards into future development review and CIP project design review processes.	Plan/Policy	Ongoing	P&RD; Parks & Recreation; Downtown Manager	Low
1.b	Establish a Downtown maintenance and stewardship program with enhanced service levels for litter pickup, landscaping, power washing, graffiti removal, and repair response in the core.	Program	Short Term (0-1 Years + Ongoing	EPW; Parks & Recreation; Downtown Manager	Very Low + Low Annually
1.c	Install enhanced furnishings, wayfinding signage, and pedestrian crossings along priority corridors (Elizabeth, Washington, 6th, 7th, Ringgold, Polk, Adams, 11th and 12th). Consider future plans for these corridors and make sure the install of signage and furnishings can be removed and replaced when these corridors undergo larger redevelopment.	Capital Project	Short Term (0-1 Years)	P&RD; Downtown Manager; EPW; BCIC; Multimodal; B-Metro	Medium
1.d	Expand visible public safety and police presence Downtown.	Program	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Police Department; Downtown Manager	Low
1.e	Coordinate with Downtown businesses to develop a plan to address commercial waste.	Policy/ Program	Short Term (0-1 Years)	P&RD; Downtown Businesses Advisory Committee	Very Low
1.f	Conduct a sidewalk condition assessment, develop Downtown sidewalk standards and create a plan for prioritized phased reconstruction.	Study/Plan	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Downtown Manager	Low
1.g	Revise and expand existing Downtown grant programs to support amenities, sidewalk cafés, art installations, and public realm activation projects.	Program	Short Term (0-2 Years)	BCIC; P&RD Downtown Manager; CVB	Low
1.h	Create a public art and cultural placemaking program that commissions murals, gateways, interpretive elements, and artist-designed public realm features that reflect Brownsville's culture and identity.	Program	Short Term (0-2 Years)	P&RD; Parks & Recreation; CVB; BCIC; Mitte Cultural District	Low
1.i	Work with Sombrero Fest to finalize community-supported plans for Washington Park and support the Washington Park construction of those plans.	Action	Short Term (0-2 Years)	P&RD; Parks & Recreation; Corresponding Boards and Commissions	Very Low
1.j	Identify a capital program to reconstruct priority downtown corridors (Elizabeth, Washington, Palm Blvd, 6th, 7th, Ringgold, Polk, Adams, 11th and 12th) and rebuild them per the sections outlined in this Plan.	Capital Project	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	EPW; P&RD	High
1.k	Identify a capital program to upgrade lighting, furnishings, signage, and sidewalks in the areas that do not fall under priority corridors (secondary streets and neighborhood access streets).	Capital Project	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	EPW; P&RD	High
1.l	Design and install gateway signage or monuments at entry points on Palm and International.	Capital Project	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	EPW; P&RD Downtown Manager	Medium
1.m	Continue to expand and enhance Downtown events and programming calendar; utilize these as a way to celebrate and activate the existing and new spaces being put into Downtown.	Program	Ongoing	Downtown Manager	Low, annually
1.n	Provide strategically located public restrooms in Downtown to support daily use, events, and tourism.	Capital Project / Program	Short to Medium Term (0-5 Years)	EPW; P&RD; Parks & Recreation	Medium



MOBILITY, PARKING, AND ACCESS

Impact: Moderate | Feasibility: High

Improving access to Downtown was consistently identified as a top priority throughout the planning process. Parking availability, pedestrian connectivity and mobility options all play an important role in supporting Downtown activity. A balanced approach that combines improved parking management, shared parking strategies and enhanced mobility options can help make Downtown easier to access and navigate. Early actions should focus on better utilizing existing parking, improving wayfinding and addressing immediate access challenges. Coordination with regional partners, institutions and agencies will be essential to expand access and support long-term mobility improvements.

Addressing mobility and parking can significantly improve convenience, access, and user perception of downtown. Better management of existing parking and stronger multimodal connections can support businesses and reduce friction for visitors, employees, and residents. However, these changes are often more supportive than transformational, meaning they improve how downtown functions rather than fundamentally reshaping it.

Many mobility and parking strategies can be implemented through policy, management, signage, partnerships, or relatively modest infrastructure upgrades rather than major capital investment. Shared parking agreements, updated parking standards, circulation improvements, and better pedestrian connections are typically achievable in the near- to mid term with coordination and local leadership.

Key	Action	Type	Time Frame	Lead Entity	Cost Range
2.a	Establish a shared parking partnership program with template agreements and incentives that encourage private property owners to make parking available during evenings, weekends, and special events.	Program	Short Term (0-2 Years)	P&RD; City Attorney; Downtown Manager; TSC, UTRGV, County; Multimodal; B-Metro	Very Low
2.b	Install a wayfinding and parking guidance system that directs drivers to public lots, key destinations, civic assets, and accessible parking areas. Coordinate with action 1.c above.	Capital Project	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Multi-Modal Transportation; CVB; EPW; B-Metro; BCIC	Low
2.c	Develop a Downtown access and curb management program that organizes loading zones, passenger pickup and drop-off areas, rideshare locations, and delivery windows to reduce conflicts on main streets. Preserve Downtown curb and street flexibility for future BRT implementation	Program / Policy	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	Multi-Modal Transportation; Police; P&RD	Low
2.d	Establish a pedestrian safety program that enhances crossings, ADA access and safety treatments as noted in the recommendations of this Plan.	Capital Project	Short Term (0-2 Years)	Multi-Modal Transportation; EPW and P&RD Downtown Manager to support	Medium
2.e	Develop a phased Downtown alley activation and maintenance program.	Program	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	P&RD; Multi-Modal Transportation; Downtown Manager	Low
2.f	Expand bicycle and micromobility networks to strengthen connections between Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, coordinating with corridor improvements in Action 1.i.	Capital Project	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	Multi-Modal Transportation; EPW and P&RD DT Manager to support	Medium
2.g	Consider Implementation for a Downtown modern trolley circulator and coordinate stops with primary destinations, public parking and park and ride locations.	Capital Project + Program	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	B-Metro; Multi-Modal Transportation; EPW and P&RD DT Manager as support	Medium
2.h	Improve pedestrian crossings across International Boulevard at Adams and Ringgold.	Partnership	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	Multi-Modal Transportation; County; TxDOT	Medium
2.i	Coordinate International Boulevard corridor management and bridge access improvements with partner agencies.	Partnership	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	Multi-Modal Transportation; County; TxDOT; EPW	Very Low
2.j	Improve 11th and 12th Streets as pedestrian-priority connectors between parking, Market Square, and Downtown destinations.	Capital Project	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	Multi-Modal Transportation; P&RD	Low
2.k	Coordinate Palm Boulevard highway access, gateway, and safety improvements with TxDOT and RGVMPO.	Partnership	Long Term (5-10 Years)	Multi-Modal Transportation; TxDOT; RGVMPO	Very High (shared)
2.l	Coordinate highway access and operational improvements at 6th and 7th Streets.	Partnership	Long Term (5-10 Years)	Transportation; TxDOT; County, RGVMPO	Very High (shared)
2.m	Explore public-private partnerships and development agreements for future structured parking facilities to support Downtown growth, housing, and commercial activity.	Capital Project / Partnership	Long Term (5–10 Years)	P&RD; BCIC; Private Developers; Multi-Modal Transportation	Very High



DOWNTOWN LIVING

Impact: Low | Feasibility: Moderate

Increasing the number of residents living downtown can support local businesses, activate streets throughout the day and evening and strengthen long-term economic vitality. Encouraging upper-story housing, adaptive reuse of historic buildings and mixed-use development can introduce new housing opportunities while preserving downtown's character. Addressing financial and regulatory barriers will be critical to enabling housing development in downtown.

While adding more residents can strengthen downtown over time by supporting local businesses, increasing activity, and creating a more consistent customer base, the pace of residential growth is often gradual. In the near term, this strategy may not generate immediate visible change at the same scale as public space or catalytic redevelopment projects, especially if market demand is still emerging.

Downtown housing is possible, but it often depends on market conditions, development interest, financing, and supportive policies. It may require incentives, redevelopment of underutilized properties, zoning flexibility, or public-private partnerships. These factors make it more achievable than a highly complex catalytic site, but less straightforward than public improvements or operational changes.

Key	Action	Type	Time Frame	Lead Entity	Cost Range
3.a	Ensure a Downtown housing strategy is included in the Brownsville Housing Master Plan to identify priority housing types, target price points, adaptive reuse opportunities, and barriers such as code requirements, parking minimums, and financing gaps.	Plan	Short Term (0-2 Years)	P&RD; Grants and Community Department as supporting dept.	Very Low
3.b	Update codes and create an incentive package to support mixed-use housing, upper-story residential conversion, infill apartments, and redevelopment by reducing regulatory barriers and improving development feasibility.	Policy / Program	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	P&RD	Very Low
3.c	Launch an adaptive reuse pilot program targeting underused Downtown buildings for upper-floor housing conversion through façade assistance, Code compliance upgrades sunsidies, and developer outreach.	Program	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	BCIC; P&RD	Medium
3d.	Redevelop the Bougainvillea Housing Development to support future development along the Jefferson Corridor and broader Downtown housing goals.	Capital Project	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	BHA	High
3.e	Support adaptive reuse and infill housing through public-private partnerships, strategic property assembly, and redevelopment coordination for underutilized Downtown sites.	Program / Partnership	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	City Manager's Office; P&RD; BCIC	Medium
3.f	Establish a public-private housing incentive program that includes development fee reductions, infrastructure participation, and targeted incentives for mixed-use and infill residential projects Downtown.	Program / Funding Tool	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	City Manager's Office; P&RD; BCIC	Medium
3.g	Explore vacancy reduction tools or incentives to encourage the activation of empty ground-floor spaces along priority corridors (Elizabeth, Washington, 6th, 7th, Ringgold, Polk, Adams, 11th and 12th).	Policy / Program	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	BCI ; P&RD	Very Low
3.h	Invest in residential-supportive amenities such as grocery access, parks, dog areas, childcare partnerships, and neighborhood-serving retail to make Downtown living more practical and attractive over time.	Program / Project	Long Term (5-10 Years)	P&RD; Parks & Recreation; BCIC	Medium-High
3.i	Adopt single-stair building code amendments and allow up to eight-unit residential buildings through IRC standards to reduce barriers to housing development.	Policy / Regulatory	Short Term (0-2 Years)	P&RD; Building Services; City Commission	Low
3.j	Establish a Neighborhood Empowerment Zone to support reinvestment, small-scale housing, and incremental development in and around Downtown.	Program / Policy	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	P&RD; Economic Development; BCIC	Low
3.k	Develop a Downtown curb appeal improvement program, including an idea book and funding tools to support façade and property upgrades.	Program	Short Term (0-2 Years)	P&RD; Downtown Manager; BCIC	Low
3.l	Explore directing a portion of TIRZ #3 revenues and Downtown-generated investment toward affordable and workforce housing initiatives within the Study Area.	Policy / Funding Tool	Medium Term (2–5 Years)	P&RD; BCIC; City Manager's Office	Medium



ADAMS STREET PASEO

Impact: High | Feasibility: Moderate

Adams Street is a key Downtown corridor connecting Market Square, Washington Park, and the Mitte Cultural District. While it currently functions primarily for vehicles, it has strong potential to become a pedestrian-focused destination. A shared street, or paseo, can prioritize people while maintaining low-speed access, supporting outdoor dining, events, and daily activity. Implementation can begin with a short pilot near Market Square and expand over time using flexible elements such as bollards, enhanced paving, shade, and lighting. This approach allows the corridor to evolve into a vibrant, walkable public space.

Transforming Adams Street into a paseo or signature corridor could elevate Downtown identity, improve the pedestrian experience, and create a stronger sense of place. Because it focuses on a visible and important corridor, the project could generate meaningful benefits for adjacent businesses and public life. Its impact is substantial, but still geographically focused rather than downtown-wide.

A corridor transformation is achievable, but it typically requires coordinated design, capital investment, traffic and access considerations, and buy-in from adjacent property owners and stakeholders. Depending on the scope, it may also involve phasing and tradeoffs related to vehicle circulation, parking, or maintenance responsibilities, making implementation more complex than basic streetscape improvements.

Key	Action	Type	Time Frame	Lead Entity	Cost Range
4.a	Implement a temporary paseo demonstration using weekend closures, movable seating, shade, lighting, art, programming, and tactical materials to test the concept and refine the long-term design, including during events such as First Friday, CicloBia, and parade celebrations.	Pilot Project / Program	Short Term (0-2 Years)	P&RD; Downtown Manager; Police	Low
4.b	Continue developing a corridor concept design as noted in the recommendations of this Plan, and operations study for Adams Street that defines street sections, event operations, traffic impacts, deliveries, emergency access, and a phased implementation strategy.	Plan / Study	Short Term (0-2 Years)	P&RD; Multi Modal Transportation	Low
4.c	Design and construct Phase 1 of the permanent Adams Street paseo, the three blocks along 10th through 13th Streets.	Capital Project	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	EPW; P&RD	High
4.d	Create an adjacent business frontage improvement program that supports façade upgrades, outdoor dining permits, signage improvements, and storefront activation along the corridor.	Program	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	BCIC; P&RD	Low
4.e	Establish a corridor programming and management plan that supports recurring markets, performances, cultural events, and seasonal activations so Adams Street functions as an active destination.	Program / Plan	Ongoing	Downtown Manager; CVB; Parks & Recreation	Low
4.f	Continue designing and constructing future phases of the permanent paseo, north to Palm and south to UTRGV.	Capital Project	Long Term (5-10 Years)	EPW; P&RD; EPMO (Capital Improvement Dept.)	High
4.g	Envision, design, and construct future phases of the permanent paseo on other east/west corridors.	Capital Project	Beyond the horizon of this Plan.	EPW; P&RD; EPMO (Capital Improvement Dept.)	High



PLAZA MAYOR

Impact: High | Feasibility: Moderate

Plaza Mayor represents an opportunity to establish a signature civic space that reinforces Downtown Brownsville's cultural identity and community life. Anchored by the Cathedral and Market Square, the plaza can evolve into a flexible gathering space that supports events, daily activity, and regional tourism. A phased approach allows for early improvements to streets, walkability, and programming, while setting the foundation for long-term transformation. Enhancements such as improved connections, shaded open spaces, and active edges can strengthen the plaza's role as Downtown's civic heart.

A signature civic space can become a defining downtown destination and a focal point for community life, events, tourism, and civic identity. If designed and programmed well, Plaza Mayor could serve as a major catalyst for increased activity, strengthen Downtown's image, and support surrounding investment. Because of its symbolic and functional importance, this type of project often has a disproportionately strong influence on downtown perception and use.

Although a civic space can deliver major benefits, implementation may depend on site control, design quality, funding, partnerships, and long-term operations or programming. These factors make it achievable, but not simple. Success also depends on selecting the right location and ensuring the project is supported by surrounding activity and ongoing stewardship.

Key	Action	Type	Time Frame	Lead Entity	Cost Range
5.a	Work with the Archdiocese to finalize a vision and partnership model that defines the plaza's purpose, design principles, programming strategy, maintenance standards, and long-term operating structure.	Plan	Short Term (0-2 Years)	P&RD; City Manager's Office; Legal; Finance; EPW	Very Low
5.b	Secure land control and partnership agreements through acquisition, land swaps, easements, or public-private partnerships needed to advance the preferred plaza site.	Real Estate / Partnership	Medium Term (2-5 Years)	City Manager's Office; P&RD; Legal; Finance	Medium
5.c	Establish a Planned Development District (PDD) Overlay to support design quality, active uses, and development patterns aligned with the Plaza Mayor vision and adopted Downtown standards.	Policy / Regulatory	Short Term (0–2 Years)	P&RD; UDC; CMO; Legal	Low
5.d	Design and construct Phase 1 of Plaza Mayor, as noted in the recommendations of this plan. This includes enhancing Adams Street streetscapes (coordinate with action 4.c above), the pedestrian pass through, enhanced alleys, and new surface parking.	Capital Project	Medium Term (2-3 Years)	P&RD; EPW; City Manager's Office	High
5.e	Launch a signature programming initiative with opening-year events, cultural programming, and community partnerships so the plaza becomes an active civic destination from the outset.	Program	Ongoing	P&RD; Downtown Manager; CVB; Parks & Recreation	Low
5.f	Design and construct Phase 2 of Plaza Mayor, as noted in the recommendations of this Plan. This includes enhancing the first iteration of the Plaza Mayor as a multi-functional space.	Capital Project	Medium Term (3-5 Years)	P&RD; EPW; Parks & Recreation	High
5.g	Design and construct Phase 3 of Plaza Mayor, as noted in the recommendations of this Plan. This includes adding a parking garage, removing parking from Plaza Mayor, and building a garden area.	Capital Project	Long Term (5-10 Years)	P&RD; EPW; Parks & Recreation	Very High
5.h	Design and construct a future phase of Plaza Mayor that includes redevelopment along the Cathedral edge and additional mixed-use buildings framing the plaza to strengthen enclosure, activity, and long-term urban character.	Capital Project	Beyond the horizon of this Plan	P&RD; EPW; Parks & Recreation	Very High

THE SWITCHYARDS

Impact: Very High | Feasibility: Low

The Switchyards area represents one of Downtown Brownsville's most significant redevelopment opportunities, with the potential to transform underutilized rail-adjacent land into a mixed-use district. Anchored by a future rails-to-trails corridor, the area can support housing, adaptive reuse, and new development while reconnecting surrounding neighborhoods to Downtown. Strategic investments in connectivity, open space, and catalytic sites can unlock long-term growth, while preserving the area's industrial character and creating a unique destination.

The Switchyards represent a large-scale redevelopment opportunity with the potential to reshape Downtown's physical form, economic base, and long-term growth trajectory. Because of its size, visibility, and strategic importance, successful redevelopment could unlock new investment, create destinations, attract residents and jobs, and serve as a generational catalyst for Downtown Brownsville.

Projects of this scale typically face substantial barriers, including high capital costs, infrastructure needs, environmental or site preparation issues, ownership complexity, market uncertainty, and the need for multiple partners and long-term phasing. Even with strong vision and support, catalytic redevelopment sites often require sustained coordination and significant resources over many years, making them the most difficult to advance.

Key	Action	Type	Time Frame	Lead Entity	Cost Range
6.a	Prepare a regulatory plan, subdivision and plat plan for the Switchyards that assigns zoning to parcels, establishes block structure, infrastructure and public space needs, mobility connections, historic asset integration, phasing, development parcels, and redevelopment readiness through ownership, entitlement, environmental, utility, drainage, historic, and code constraint assessments.	Plan/Policy	Short (0-2 years)	P&RD; City Manager's Office	Medium-High
6.b	Design and construct the rails-to-trails corridor from Palm to Sam Perlman.	Capital Project	Short (0-2 years)	Multi Modal Transportation,P&RD	Medium
6.c	Undertake design and construction for rehab of the historic depot and land around it as a new public or civic space.	Plan + Capital Project	Medium (2-5 years)	Parks & Recreation; P&RD	Medium-High
6.d	Develop a catalyst infrastructure and site-readiness program that delivers backbone improvements such as streets, utilities, drainage, broadband, environmental remediation, and site preparation needed to support redevelopment.	Capital Project / Program	Medium (2-5 years)	EPW; P&RD; BCIC	Very High
6.e	Support the new fire station project in the Switchyards area to help catalyze further development.	Capital Project	Medium (2-5 years)	P&RD; EPMO; CMO	High
6.f	Develop a developer solicitation and partnership strategy that issues request for information or proposal packages for key parcels and establishes public objectives, performance expectations, design standards, and phasing requirements.	Partnership / Development Program	Medium (2-5 years)	City Manager's Office; P&RD; BCIC	Very Low for procurement; High+ with incentives
6.g	Work with developers to implement pocket and neighborhood parks along the trail corridor as new development comes online.	Capital Project	Long Term (5-10 Years)	Parks & Recreation; P&RD	Medium
6.h	Design and construct the 3rd Street crossing, which may be vehicular or bike/ped only, depending on needs at the time. Coordinate with TSC's plans for the mall.	Capital Project	Long Term (5-10 Years)	EPW; P&RD	High - Very High
6.i	Design and construct the 6th/7th Street crossing.	Capital Project	Long Term (5-10 Years)	EPW;P&RD	Very High
6.j	Design and construct the new drainage and trail improvements, per others and part of a larger regional plan.	Capital Project	Long Term (5-10 Years)	EPW; P&RD	Very High

SUPPORTING AND ENABLING ACTIONS

Action	Type	Time Frame	Lead Entity	Cost Range
Present and adopt this Plan as the guiding roadmap for TIRZ #3 Downtown public investment strategy, integrating projects into annual work programs and multiyear capital planning efforts.	Governance	Ongoing	TIRZ #3; City Manager's Office; Cameron County; P&RD	Very High
Identify a Downtown implementation team that meets regularly, coordinates across departments, tracks decisions, and prepares an annual work program tied to priority actions.	Program / Governance	Ongoing	City Manager's Office; P&RD	Very Low
Align Downtown priorities with the capital improvement program, utility replacement schedules, sidewalk work, and grant cycles so projects can be bundled and delivered more efficiently.	Policy / Program	Ongoing	EMPO, Finance; EPW; P&RD; Parks and Recreation; Fire Dept; BPD; Multimodal Transportation; B-metro, Grants and Community Development, etc	Very Low
Develop a Downtown funding strategy that pursues grants, BCIC participation, bond funding, transportation funds, and public-private partnerships matched to each project type.	Plan / Funding Strategy	Ongoing	City Manager's Office; EMPO, Finance; EPW; P&RD; Parks and Recreation; Fire Dept; BPD; Multimodal Transportation; B-metro, Grants and Community Development ; BCIC; RGVMPO	Very Low
Create a Downtown metrics dashboard that tracks storefront occupancy, residential units, event attendance, pedestrian activity, parking utilization, and capital investment over time.	Program / Monitoring Tool	Ongoing	P&RD; Downtown Manager	Low

Removing Barriers to Infill Development.

Action Items

Existing regulations play an important role in shaping how Downtown develops. In some cases, current standards may limit redevelopment potential or create barriers to investment. Key considerations include:

- Strengthening historic preservation incentives:
  Current market conditions and allowable density may discourage reinvestment in historic buildings. Additional incentives or regulatory adjustments may be needed to support preservation and adaptive reuse.
- Support compatible infill development:
  Clear design guidelines or pre-approved plan sets to help guide new development to be compatible with Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, while reducing uncertainty for developers.
- Clarify decision-making processes:
  Refining the review and appeal structure for historic preservation decisions can improve clarity and consistency. Consideration should be given to aligning final decision authority with the City Commission.
- Refine development standards based on recent projects:
  Recent infill developments provide an opportunity to evaluate how existing standards are performing, identify targeted updates to improve design quality and outcomes, and amend the UDC accordingly.

Addressing these regulatory considerations can help reduce barriers, improve predictability and support higher-quality development in Downtown.

Impact of Development Regulations

Understanding how development projects move through the review process is critical to improving implementation.

Determining the platting status of the property:

- Identifying zoning and applicable overlays
- Confirming permitted uses
- Applying development standards such as setbacks, height and building type
- Evaluating design elements including building form, materials and streetscape requirements
- Determining whether projects can be approved administratively or require additional review

While many projects can be approved administratively if they meet established standards, the overall process can still be complex for applicants.

Opportunities to improve the process include:

- Streamlining review steps where possible
- Improving clarity of requirements and expectations
- Reducing uncertainty in approval timelines
- Providing clear guidance for Downtown-specific development

A more transparent and efficient review process can help encourage investment, reduce delays and support successful implementation of the Downtown Renaissance Master Plan.

Capital Improvement Planning

Implementation of the Downtown Renaissance Master Plan will require coordination across multiple City departments, partner agencies, and private stakeholders. To support this effort, the City conducted a staff implementation workshop to identify project champions, supporting agencies, funding opportunities, key implementation steps, dependencies, potential barriers, and measures of success for priority Downtown initiatives.

This process is intended to take the short- and mid-term capital projects from the action plan and present them similarly to a CIP. This helps align these actions with the City's existing processes of departmental work programs, annual budgeting, grant opportunities, and long-range capital investments. By identifying responsible parties and sequencing considerations early, the City can more effectively coordinate public investments and support private development over time.

The matrix on the following pages expands on those CIP-related projects identified and discussed with staff, and provides additional information to help incorporate these into City CIP planning.

Action Category	Action ID#	Action Description	Action Champion	Supporting Partners	Funding Status *for City use	Funding Sources	Timeframe	Steps	Dependencies	Success Measure	Potential Barriers
Public Realm & Mobility	1.c	Install enhanced furnishings, wayfinding signage, and pedestrian crossings along priority corridors (Elizabeth, Washington, 6th, 7th, Ringgold, Polk, Adams, 11th and 12th).	DTM	EPW; BCIC; PRD; CVB; KBB; BPUB		Grants; CIP; BCIC; TIRZ	0-2 Years	▪ Develop Downtown wayfinding strategy ▪ Establish sign family and branding standards ▪ Coordinate lighting improvements with BPUB and CMO ▪ Incorporate projects into the CIP	BPUB coordination and CIP funding.	▪ Increased wayfinding coverage and sign installations ▪ Improved visitor navigation and Downtown identity	▪ Delays in pedestrian lighting improvements ▪ Existing wiring and infrastructure constraints
	2.b	Install a wayfinding and parking guidance system that directs drivers to public lots, key destinations, civic assets, and accessible parking areas.									
	1.j	Identify a capital program to reconstruct priority Downtown corridors (Elizabeth, Washington, Palm Blvd, 6th, 7th, Ringgold, Polk, Adams, 11th and 12th) and rebuild them per the sections outlined in this Plan.	EPMO	DTM; EPW; MMT; BMT; TxDOT		CIP; RGVMPO; TxDOT	3-5 Years	▪ Identify specific projects ▪ Identify funding source ▪ Implement Phase	Downtown wayfinding strategy and sign standards.	▪ Increased pedestrian and bicycle activity along target corridors ▪ Completion of priority corridor improvements	▪ Funding availability ▪ Coordination with multiple partners
	2.f	Expand bicycle and micromobility networks to strengthen connections between Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.									
	2.j	Improve 11th and 12th Streets as pedestrian-priority connectors between parking, Market Square, and Downtown destinations.									

Champion & Partners Legend

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CVB - Convention & Visitors Bureau
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Action Category	Action ID#	Action Description	Action Champion	Supporting Partners	Funding Status *for City use	Funding Sources	Timeframe	Steps	Dependencies	Success Measure	Potential Barriers
Public Realm	1.k	Identify a capital program to upgrade lighting, furnishings, signage, and sidewalks in areas that do not fall under priority corridors (secondary streets and neighborhood access streets).	EPW/Traffic	Internal Services; DTM		CDBG Grants; TxDOT; TIRZ; CIP	3-5 Years	Incorporate improvements into the CIP.	Funding availability.	Targeted corridor improvements completed.	Competing capital priorities.
	1.l	Design and install gateway signage or monuments at entry points on Palm Boulevard and International Boulevard.	EPW	DTM; HPC		Grants; TIRZ; CIP	3-5 Years	Design and construct gateway features.	ROW and design approvals.	Gateway features installed.	Funding constraints.
	1.d	Expand visible public safety and police presence Downtown.	Police; CMD	CMD; IT; BPUB; EPW		CIP; TIRZ	3-5 Years	Coordinate and expand patrol presence Downtown.	Staffing availability.	Increased police visibility.	Staffing limitations.
Mobility	2.d	Establish a pedestrian safety program that enhances crossings, ADA access and safety treatments as noted in the recommendations of this Plan.	EPW/Traffic	BCIC; MMT		FHSA SS4A; BCIC; CDBG; MMT	3-5 Years	Coordinate with BCIC and MMT to incorporate Downtown priorities into corridor improvement plans.	Corridor improvement funding and agency coordination.	Intercept study of usage in target corridors vs. baseline or % increase in facility improvements in target corridors vs. baseline.	Competing corridor priorities.
	2.g	Consider implementation of a Downtown modern trolley circulator and coordinate stops with primary destinations, public parking and park-and-ride locations.	BMT	PRD; DTM; Visit BTX; MMT; Mitte Cultural District		BCIC; Visit BTX	3-5 Years	Identify and procure a suitable Downtown trolley vehicle.	Build grant for mobility hub under the highway.	Implementation of circulator service.	Funding and operating costs.
Downtown Living	3.d	Redevelop the Bougainvillea Housing Development to support future development along the Jefferson Corridor and broader Downtown housing goals.	BTX Housing Authority	PRD		BHA Grants	0-2 Years	Advance redevelopment planning and pursue implementation funding.	Coordination with the Brownsville Housing Master Plan.	Completion of the Bougainvillea redevelopment project.	Community concerns regarding the Medical Overlay.
Adams St Paseo	4.c	Design and construct Phase 1 of the permanent Adams Street Paseo, the three blocks from 10th through 13th Streets.	EPMO	MMT; EPW		BCIC; TIRZ; CIP	3–5 Years	Complete design and construction of Phase 1	Funding and coordination with adjacent streetscape projects.	Completion of the Adams Street Paseo.	Funding constraints and utility conflicts.

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Action Category	Action ID#	Action Description	Action Champion	Supporting Partners	Funding Status *for City use	Funding Sources	Timeframe	Steps	Dependencies	Success Measure	Potential Barriers
Plaza Mayor	5.d	Design and construct Phase 1 of Plaza Mayor, as noted in the recommendations of this Plan. This includes enhancing Adams Street streetscapes (coordinate with Action 4.c above), the pedestrian paseo through, enhanced alleys, and new surface parking.	CMO	EPQ; PRD; DTM; PRD; Immaculate Conception Church		Grants; TIRZ; CIP	2–5 Years	Complete design and construction of Plaza Mayor Phase 1.	Completion of Adams Street improvements.	Activation of Plaza Mayor Phase 1.	Funding availability and stakeholder coordination.
	5.f	Design and construct Phase 2 of Plaza Mayor, as noted in the recommendations of this Plan. This includes enhancing the first iteration of Plaza Mayor as a multi-functional space.	CMO	EPW; PRD; DTM; PRD; Immaculate Conception Church		Grants; TIRZ; CIP	2–5 Years	Complete design and construction of Plaza Mayor Phase 2.	Successful implementation of Plaza Mayor Phase 1.	Delivery of a multi-functional civic space.	Long-term funding and phasing requirements.
The Switchyards	6.b	Design and construct the rails-to-trails corridor from Palm Boulevard to Sam Perlman Drive.	MMT	Cameron County; TxDOT		CIP; RGVMPO; TxDOT	0-2 Years	▪ Execute MOU with Cameron County ▪ Complete trail design and construction	Cameron County ownership of the former railroad ROW.	Execution of MOU with Cameron County.	▪ Ongoing negotiations with Cameron County ▪ Delays in securing ROW agreements
	6.c	Undertake design and construction for rehabilitation of the historic depot and land around it as a new public or civic space.	EPMO	PRD; Historic Preservation; DTM		TIRZ	3-5 Years	Complete rehabilitation of the historic depot and surrounding civic.	Coordinate with related arts and historic initiatives.	Public opening and annual visitation.	Limited support from partners and funding entities.
	6.d	Develop a catalyst infrastructure and site-readiness program that delivers backbone improvements such as streets, utilities, drainage, broadband, environmental remediation, and site preparation needed to support redevelopment.	PRD	EPW; IT		CIP; Grants; TxDOT	3–5 Years	Implement priority infrastructure and site preparation improvements.	Completion of infrastructure and utility studies.	Site-ready parcels available for redevelopment.	High infrastructure costs and funding limitations.
	6.e	Support the new fire station project in the Switchyards area to help catalyze further development.	Fire Department	PRD; EPMO; CMO		CIP	0-2 Years	Construct the new fire station in the Switchyards area.	Completion of Fire Department planning and approvals.	Fire station operational.	Historic relocation and site constraints.

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Economic Development Strategies that Support Implementation

Downtown Brownsville has demonstrated strong resilience, with sustained demand from both established businesses and new entrepreneurs. Growth will be shaped by regional trends, including LNG expansion, the space sector, and improved connectivity to Matamoros. Near-term development will focus on infill and redevelopment of underutilized sites. Long-term, the City should also target corporate or regional headquarters in sectors like finance, insurance, and engineering to diversify the economic base.

Strengthen the mix of Downtown businesses: Focus on attracting restaurants, experiential retail, entertainment venues and cultural uses that increase activity and support a vibrant urban environment. Incentives should be targeted toward uses that enhance quality of life and reinforce Downtown as a destination.

Attract hotel development: Downtown remains underserved in hotel rooms and meeting space despite its proximity to cultural assets and emerging tourism opportunities. Strategic use of incentives, publicly owned land and partnerships can help offset development challenges and attract hotel operators.

Encourage market-rate housing: Building on recent affordable housing efforts, the next phase of development should support a broader mix of housing options. Increasing market-rate housing can strengthen local spending power, support businesses and increase daily activity. A target of approximately 10 new units per year can help build steady momentum.

Address infrastructure and parking needs: Aging infrastructure, including sidewalks, streets and public spaces, limits Downtown's long-term potential. Continued investment in these systems, along with structured parking solutions, will be necessary to support future growth and increased density.

Facilitate redevelopment of public and institutional land: Public agencies and institutions often control key properties in Downtown. Proactive coordination with these entities can help unlock redevelopment opportunities. Strategic partnerships, land swaps and targeted incentives can help transition underutilized sites into productive uses.

Funding Mechanisms

Funding tools

- Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ): Capture and reinvest increases in property tax revenues within Downtown to fund infrastructure, public space improvements and redevelopment initiatives.
- Facade and Building Improvement Programs: Continue and expand grant or matching programs to support façade upgrades, building rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic structures.
- City/Developer Agreements: Utilize development agreements to coordinate infrastructure, public realm improvements, parking, housing, and other community benefits tied to Downtown redevelopment.
- Special Purpose Districts: Explore the creation of targeted districts to support programming, maintenance, marketing and economic development efforts in Downtown.
- TIRZ and Development Contributions: Utilize Downtown-generated revenues and development contributions to support infrastructure and public realm improvements within the Study Area.
- Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT): Allocate eligible HOT revenues to support tourism-related improvements, events, marketing and destination enhancements.
- Local, State and Federal Grants: Pursue competitive funding opportunities for transportation, parks, resilience and economic development projects.

Partnership Models

- Public-Private Partnerships (P3): Collaborate with private developers to deliver mixed-use development, structured parking and catalytic redevelopment projects.
- Public-Public Partnerships (PUP): Coordinate with partner agencies such as Cameron County, the Brownsville Community Improvement Corporation and regional entities to align funding and implementation.
- Institutional Partnerships: Work with major institutions such as UTRGV, healthcare providers and cultural organizations to support investment, programming and place-based initiatives.

State and Federal Grants

- TxDOT Transportation Alternatives and Bicycle and Pedestrian Programs: Support sidewalks, crossings, trails and connectivity improvements within and around Downtown.
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Local Park Grant Program: Provide matching funds for park acquisition, improvements and amenities such as shade, landscaping and recreation features.
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): Support public infrastructure, accessibility improvements and projects that increase economic activity and quality of life.
- FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance: Fund infrastructure improvements that address flooding, extreme heat and long-term resilience.
- USDA Rural Development Programs: Provide grants and low-interest financing for small business support, building rehabilitation and community facilities.