

**CITY OF**  
**CastleHills**  
**State of the City and**  
**Recommendations**

**Spring 2006**

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## Introduction

This report has been a collaborative effort of eighteen graduate students of Texas A&M University's Master of Urban Planning Program. The students have come from a wide variety of backgrounds and countries, and nearly every student has professional experience. This combination has provided an excellent range of expertise for the project.

To accomplish the analysis of the City of Castle Hills, the class was divided up into focus groups: demographics and economics, environment and aesthetics, land use, transportation, and city history. This allows for a more thorough analysis of each aspect of the task at hand.

The analysis began with the gathering of general information on the City of Castle Hills. Newspaper articles, maps and Census data were the main sources of this data. A trip was then scheduled to have a personal look at the city and to meet with the former mayors and current city manager in order to gain perspective on the former and current workings of the city. An examination of the city budget, planning efforts and zoning followed. Face to face and phone

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conversations with residents were documented to build a more encompassing city history. Finally, a comparison was made between Castle Hills, the surrounding area, and comparable cities.

The sections that follow are the class's conclusions and suggestions for the future.

## Biographies of the Students

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## Biographies of the Students

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## History and Historic Preservation

The history of a city and the conservation of its heritage resources are intrinsically linked to maintaining a high quality of life, and, therefore, is an indispensable element of a city's economic development efforts. This chapter discusses the history of the city, its potential heritage resources, and the steps that must be taken to ensure the continuation of Castle Hills' rural character, which is so essential to maintaining the city's distinctive identity.

Prepared By:

**Christina Croxell**  
**Kristina Harpst**

## State of the City

It is important for the City of Castle Hills to identify and acknowledge its existing and future historic resources, for it is the buildings, places and sites of a place that help to define a community's unique identity. In the pursuit of economic development, an important factor is the sense of place and identity of a community, which can be achieved through historic preservation efforts. Since a comprehensive plan is a vision statement that provides the legal basis for any initiative the city wishes to undertake, including maintaining the essential rural character of the city, it is imperative that the City of Castle Hills address some of its potential historic resources, both current and future, in its comprehensive plan. Another reason why it is important to include a historic preservation element in the comprehensive plan is to protect the rural character of the city that is so important to city's residents.

## History of Castle Hills

The area now occupied by the City of Castle Hills was once occupied by Native Americans. The Coahuiltecans, Apaches and Comanche's all had settled in the area in turn between 1600 and 1875. The location along a water source and the large supply of flint

rock in the area (used for the creation of tools) made this a prime location for settlement.

In the 1920s, a handful of families located in the area attracted by the same water supply that attracted by the Native Americans. Many of the families had connections to the oil industry. One of the original families, the Slimp family, has built a large house on top of a hill. This house gave Castle Hills its name. The Slimp house still exists; it is now in operation as The Lodge restaurant.

After World War II, San Antonio entered a postwar expansion era. As San Antonio grew northward, it threatened to annex Castle Hills. San Antonio gave the citizens one chance to keep their town's individuality. On July 4, 1951, the citizens of Castle Hills were given one day to walk the boundaries of their city. Given the limited time frame to establish the boundaries of Castle Hills, "natural" boundaries were used to identify the city limits, which is why the City is bounded by the railroad tracks, Jackson-Keller, Lockhill-Selma, and Blanco. The city of San Antonio still tried to annex the area for itself. The matter was finally settled and Castle Hills became incorporated in 1952, but the City of Castle Hills considers the 1951 date as the official date of its founding.



**Figure 1 : The Lodge Restaurant and former home of the Slimp family.**

*Photograph by Kristina A. Harpst*

## Potential Historic Resources

According to a meeting on September 30, 2005 with some of the former mayors of Castle Hills, the first developed streets in the city were Dogwood Lane, Caladium Drive, Winston Lane, Fox Hall Lane, West Castle Lane, Wisteria Drive and the streets bordering Wisteria. Until recently, West Castle Lane was a gravel road, but the residents finally paid to have the road paved. Many of the homes on these streets were constructed between the 1930s-1950s and sit on large lots. Given the age of these residences they have the potential to be considered historic. Specific buildings include; 125 S. Winston, built in 1945 and home of Wayne & Terry Carter; 204 S. Winston, home of Merna & Eve Allen; and 212 Hibiscus Lane, built in 1932 home of Doug & Rosemary Lewis.



**Figure 2 : 125 S. Winston**

*Photograph by Christina Croxell*



**Figure 3 : 6701 West Avenue**

*Photograph by Kristina A. Harpst*



**Figure 4 : 212 Hibiscus**



*Photograph by Christina Coxell*



**Figure 5 : 111 S. Winston, used to serve as a military barracks**

*Photograph by Christina Coxell*



**Figure 6 : 209 S. Winston potential historic property**

*Photograph by Kristina A. Harpst*



**Figure 7 : 101 Hibiscus, potential historic property**

*Photograph by Kristina A. Harpst*

The residence at 212 Hibiscus was built by Mr. & Mrs. Felton, was on a much larger plot than it is on now. When the Felton's moved in, there was no electricity yet, so Mrs. Felton had to sell her electric sewing machine. A few years later Mr. Felton received a \$500 award for serving in WWI, and used the money to have electricity run from West Avenue to their home. Mr. Felton worked as a real estate agent and built a circular driveway in front of his house so he could drive up and "show" his house to people who were thinking of moving to Castle Hills. Although a few families lived in the house between the Felton's and the Lewis's, it was Mr. Felton who sold the house the Lewis's, who made several additions to the house during the 1960s in order to accommodate for their family of seven.

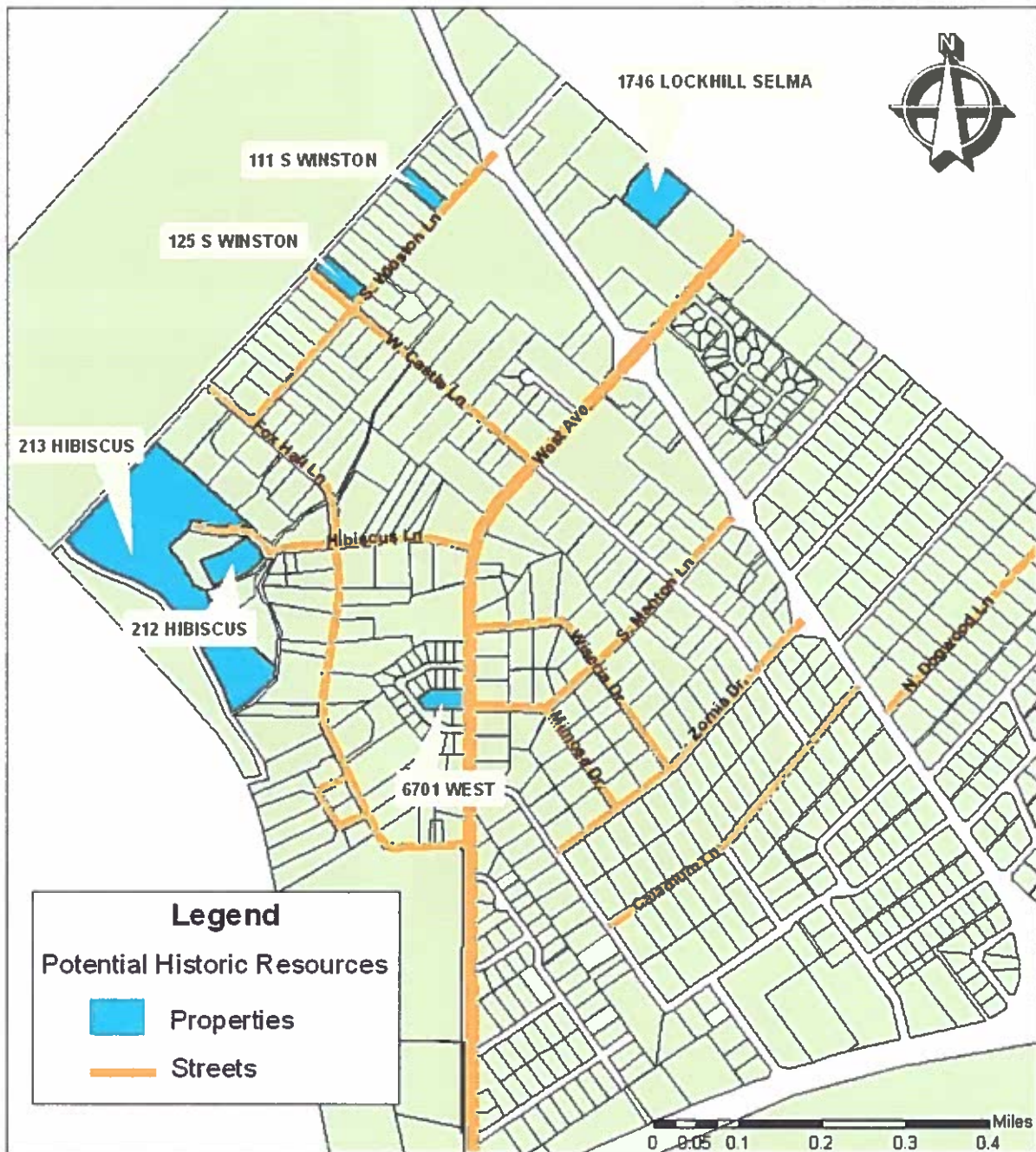
Other historically important buildings in Castle Hills include The Lodge, The Stables, and 6701 West Avenue. The Lodge is of particular importance since it is from this building that the city's name was derived. When Castle Hills was first being settled before its incorporation residents used to refer to The Lodge as the "castle on the hill," and later provided the inspiration for the city's name when it

incorporated. The Stables, located next to the railroad tracks on 20-25 acres (mostly in the flood plane) have been an institution in the city of Castle Hills since before 1930. Both the horses and stalls are available for rent to the residents of Castle Hills, and it currently owned by Mrs. Babbitt. The building at 6701 West Avenue sat on a seven-acre lot up until three years ago when the house and land were sold. The house remains but the lot was subdivided and new houses have been constructed around the original. Mrs. Lewis' father often entertained socially, it was popular gathering place for friends to socialize, drink and gamble. The house still stands but the addition that contained the primary entertainment room is gone.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Much of the information from this section was gained from conversations with three longtime residents of Castle Hills (Terry Carter, Eve Allen, and Rosemary Lewis), and the September 30, 2005 meeting with the former mayors of Castle Hills.





Map I : Identified Historic Resources

Map identifying potentially historic streets and properties within the City of Castle Hills



**Figure 8 : Examples of Potential Historic Streets in Castle Hills**

Top Row (l-r): Fox Hall Lane, West Castle Lane; Middle Row (l-r): S Winston Lane, Hibiscus Lane (Photographs by Kristina A. Harpst) ; Bottom Row (l-r): Wisteria Lane (Photograph by Kristina A. Harpst) , Empty lots across from the Baptist Church that used to have historic properties on them before they were torn down.

All photographs by Cristina Croxell, unless otherwise noted

## Ways to Improve

There are a few ways in which the city can acknowledge its historic resources. The first, and most important, was mentioned previously: add a historic resources section to the comprehensive plan. In order to accomplish that task, however, all existing historic, cultural, and aesthetic aspects of Castle Hills important to the city's distinctive character must be identified. Since Castle Hills is a relatively young city, and much of its architecture was built during the 1960s and 1970s, there are many properties that might be considered historic within a few years. If a number of resources are identified, there is the potential to establish a local register of historically and culturally significant properties that are located in Castle Hills. The next step, after identifying potential locally significant properties, is to ascertain if any of the locally significant properties have the potential to be listed on the Texas State Register or even the National Register of Historic Places. Listing on local, state, or national registers does not impede or prevent changes being made to the properties but serves to bring recognition to the properties and the history of the town. Having a local register and listing on state and national registers conveys to both citizens of Castle Hills and those outside of the city that Castle Hills takes pride in and places importance on its history and distinctive identity.

## History and Historic Preservation SWOT Analysis

*"The quality and character of the city's built environment influence a wide range of businesses and residential location decision and can serve as either a dampener or catalyst for tourism and other economic and cultural activities. Because of these factors, historic preservation has become recognized as an important economic development tool."*

*– Susan Robinson and John E. Petersen, Fiscal Incentives for Historic Preservation*

As the next step in reviewing potential historic data and resources associated with the City of Castle Hills, a SWOT: strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, threats; analysis was conducted. This process allows for a more encompassing view of the situation and helps to identify the best direction in which to proceed.

### Strengths

One strength of the city is its longtime residents. The community's interest in their city's history as well as their willingness to share their knowledge and experiences will allow a more comprehensive history to be written about the city. In particular, the Save Our Neighborhood's Group, the SONGsters, a residential neighborhood organization whose main purpose "encompasses a desire to preserve the residential integrity of neighborhoods, and the peaceful enjoyment of our homes," has been particularly active in their efforts to protect their homes and the rural character of Castle

Hills.<sup>2</sup> However, it is the historic resources themselves that are the greatest strength of Castle Hills with regard to its history. Even though most of the historic properties are not commercial but residential they can still play an important, even critical, role in the economic development efforts of Castle Hills. An especially important historic resource is The Lodge restaurant because it not only attracts residents but also those living outside Castle Hills, and as such a regional draw, it needs to be utilized to promote community character and history in relation to economic development schemes. Historic preservation can be used as a tool for economic development. Leading economic development expert, Donovan Rypkema, says that if communities wish to have and maintain a competitive edge, then historic preservation must be part of the economic development strategy because “utilizing a community’s historic resources is a strategy absolutely exclusive to that community. Someone else can duplicate your water lines, industrial park, tax rate or permitting process. No one can duplicate your historic resources.”<sup>3</sup>

## Weaknesses

The weaknesses lie in the city’s lack of acknowledgement of its historic resources, particularly in the comprehensive plan. Other related weaknesses include the need for a historic resource inventory to be done which will aid in establishing a local historic register. Finally, Castle Hills needs a more substantial written history as well as

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<sup>2</sup> Save Our Neighborhoods Group, Castle Hills, Texas, “Welcome to the SONGsters’ Website,” [www.songsters.org](http://www.songsters.org)

<sup>3</sup> Donovan D. Rypkema, *The Economics of Historic Preservation: A Community Leader’s Guide*, Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 27.



a city archive. However, these weaknesses need not remain as such, and can be overcome and turned into strengths of the city.

### Opportunities

The greatest opportunity is to preserve and document the history and historic resources as a way to highlight and preserve the rural character that is essential to Castle Hills' sense of place. One of the most important aspects of economic development is recruiting, and studies have shown that "improvements in neighborhood appearance from historic preservation have been critical to industrial and new business recruiting efforts.<sup>4</sup> More and more quality of life has become a crucial element regarding businesses location decisions because "companies recognize that the real assets are not plants and equipment but the people who work for them and that these employees want a quality place to raise their families.<sup>5</sup> Castle Hills has the opportunity to nurture and promote the city as a quality place to live, work, and raise a family. Using historic preservation as a way to protect their older neighborhoods and rural character is a means to promote and maintain a high quality of life.

Quality of life and sense of place are key considerations people use when deciding where to live and work. Regarding the quality of life issue, Rypkema states that there are three reasons why historic preservation is important to quality of life:

1. More than any other man-made element, historic buildings differentiate one community from all others.
2. Many quality-of-life activities—museums, symphonies, theatres, libraries, restaurants, and lodging are housed in historic buildings.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. "Report of the Joint Study Committee: Economic Development through Historic Preservation," 24.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

3. The quality of historic buildings and the quality of their preservation says much about a community's self-image. A community's commitment to itself is a prerequisite for nearly all quality-of-life elements.<sup>6</sup>

Quality of life is an issue that citizens are concerned about in many cities. Currently, Castle Hills has a high level of quality of life and its citizens do not want to place this asset in jeopardy. One way to protect against the loss of quality of life is to utilize historic preservation techniques, which will help to protect and promote the city's character and identity, and thereby maintain the high quality of life the residents of Castle Hills know and love.

## Threats

Given the importance of quality-of-life and sense of place on location decisions, it is important that Castle Hills takes a proactive stance regarding the protection of its historic resources. The major threat facing the city is that of teardowns in the historic neighborhoods. Demolishing historic residential buildings is happening in communities of all sizes all across the United States. If Castle Hills does not do anything to prevent their historic residential structures from demolition that seeks to make way for newer, bigger and supposedly better houses, then the city will in actuality be destroying the essence of Castle Hills, its rural character. The neighborhoods of the city greatly contribute to the unique character of Castle Hills, and if lost or severely altered jeopardize the entire rural identity the city strives to maintain and promote.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 29.

## Recommendations

### Lodging

The motto of Castle Hills is the "The City of Beautiful Homes," and if it wishes to maintain this motto, the city should pay more attention to the protection of its historic resources, specifically its historic neighborhoods.<sup>7</sup> Some of the ways in which Castle Hills can acknowledge and benefit from its uniqueness is by taking advantage of its proximity to the airport and downtown San Antonio by providing lodging to travelers and tourists. The quiet ambiance, tree covered streetscapes and historic houses would make an ideal location for a bed and breakfast. The best location for establishing a bed and breakfast in Castle Hills would be in the northern section of the city, preferably in a historic structure near the McGimsey Boy Scout Park or The Stables. The establishment of a bed and breakfast would provide a means for the historic resources of Castle Hills to bring economic development to the area.

### Document Historic Properties

Both current and future residents of Castle Hills would benefit from a record of the historic properties of Castle Hills. To

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<sup>7</sup> Save Our Neighborhoods Group, Castle Hills, Texas, "Why We Have Formed the SONGsters," <http://www.songsters.org/why.html>



accomplish this, this city should complete a historic resource inventory that definitively identifies current and future historic properties. A database would help in the organization of the inventory. This inventory can be used to establish a local historic register to recognize the resources that have contributed most to Castle Hills' history. Further, an inventory would also be helpful in protecting the quality of life and character of specific neighborhoods in Castle Hills because it can be used as a basis for establishing a historic district ordinance or a neighborhood conservation area.

## Historic District or Conservation Area

Numerous cities around Texas and across the United States have been using historic district ordinances and neighborhood conservation areas as mechanisms to protect their neighborhoods and historic resources. Cities in Texas that have successful neighborhood preservation programs include the East Side Historic District in Bryan, Texas, the Southside Historic District in College Station, Texas, and the Charnwood District in Tyler, Texas.<sup>8</sup> Thriving neighborhood preservation initiatives in other parts of the United States include those of Old West Durham, North Carolina, which is run by a "group of neighborhood residents working together to strengthen the sense of community in Old West Durham and to preserve and enhance the quality of life in OWD," and the Souldard neighborhood in the City of St. Louis.<sup>9</sup> The success of the Souldard neighborhood is due to a small group of residents who began quietly

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<sup>8</sup> City of Bryan, "History of Bryan, Texas," [http://www.bryantx.gov/history\\_of\\_bryan.htm](http://www.bryantx.gov/history_of_bryan.htm); "City of College Station, "Historic Preservation," <http://www.cstx.gov/home/index.asp?page=398>; Historic Tyler Inc., "Welcome to Historic Tyler Inc.: Charnwood District, 1999," [http://www.historictyler.org/historic\\_districts/charnwood\\_district/](http://www.historictyler.org/historic_districts/charnwood_district/)

<sup>9</sup> Old West Durham Neighborhood Association, "Old West Durham," <http://www.owdna.org/>; "Welcome to Souldard: A Thumbnail Sketch," <http://stlouis.missouri.org/souldard/>.

promoting their neighborhood. The benefits of the neighborhood parallel those of Castle Hills, Souldard has an “easy access” location along one of one St. Louis’s main highways (HW55), and their city services of police and fire department are above par. Souldard’s success is due to the strength, quality and vision of its residents. The residents took control and were responsible for the marketing and maintenance of the neighborhood’s unique character and identity.

### City History & Database

Finally, it is also suggested that a more comprehensive history of the city be established, which will require a great deal of assistance from the residents of Castle Hills. By conducting interviews of longstanding residents of the city, a more encompassing history of the city can be built. The interviewees may be able to provide historic documentation including newspaper clippings and photographs that can be scanned and photocopied to create the most complete and tangible written history as possible. The city might also want to consider the creation of a city archive or database of historical information and images similar to that of the City of College Station’s Project HOLD (Historic Online Library Database).<sup>10</sup>

The honoring and recognition of the history of the City of Castle Hills can be used to increase the wealth of the city. More than that, it can strengthen the pride of the citizens and create a tighter bond in the community. It is this pride and bond that will keep people in the city and will help attract future residents.

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<sup>10</sup> City of College Station, “Project HOLD,” <http://www.cstx.gov/home/index.asp?page=460>.

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## Environment & Aesthetics

Recent trends have shown the rising importance in the public consciousness of the environmental and aesthetic conditions of a city. Beautiful, ecologically healthy places are more livable places, and responsible planners recognize that these elements combine with the other characteristics of a city to make it a unique place. For this uniqueness to be celebrated, the principles that underlie it must first be understood.

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## Environmental Issues

### Environmental Analysis

The environmental analysis for the City of Castle Hills consists of reviewing the relationship between environmental quality and land development, current and potential future recommendations. The principles used for the analysis were derived from Environmental Planning and Decision Making by Leonard Ortolano, 1984.

### Air Quality

Air quality can be affected by a number of air-borne residuals. Most commonly in the City of Castle Hills, air quality is adversely affected by emissions from motor vehicle traffic, yard maintenance equipment, and wood-burning fireplaces. Given the rural suburban structure of the city, motor vehicle emissions and yard maintenance equipment are the largest contributors to reduced air quality.

The City of Castle Hills has several options to help mitigate these sources. A major trend in the country is to minimize automobile use through alternate transportation choices. The city can encourage walking and biking by providing paths to and around commercial/retail areas. The city can work with the local bus transit system to ensure bus stops are accessible to as many residents as

possible, as well as safe and environmentally protected. Another option is to minimize the use of yard maintenance equipment. This can be accomplished by utilizing native grasses that do not require as much maintenance as traditional lawn grass.

## **Biological Resources**

The City of Castle Hills has a wealth of flora and fauna, from the extensive tree cover to the diverse wildlife, such as deer and squirrels. The city should develop plans to protect these resources. Biological resources are not only a sign of a healthy environment, but can provide a positive economic impact to the community. A plan for the protection of these resources is important because the impact on biological resources can occur from extreme measures such as direct loss due to development of land, such as the Boy Scout reserve, to simple disruption of wildlife habitats that can occur from a number of sources.

The Boy Scout reserve may be the largest contributor to supporting the biological resources in the City of Castle Hills. Any development on this piece of land should take care not to adversely affect the biological resources supported by this large, heavily wooded property surrounded by development.

## **Noise**

Noise is a way of life in a suburban city. However, undesirable noise can be confined to high traffic areas, as well as controlled and almost eliminated in areas such as residential neighborhoods to

maintain a peaceful, rural-like neighborhood that appears to be miles and miles away from the city.

Noise pollution in the City of Castle Hills will typically be the result of motor vehicle traffic. Given the layout of the city, most noise is contained on the major thoroughfares. Buffer zones, utilizing sound deadening material such as plants, should be used near residential areas along these thoroughfares to help maintain quiet rural-like neighborhoods. The traffic on the IH-410 corridor will generate the most noise and be difficult to minimize without noise reducing structures.

## Visual Resources

Visual resources include items in a community that are visually appealing. One would think this could not apply to a suburban city. However, “visually appealing” not only includes an open meadow or rolling hills covered by trees and flowers, but also includes beautiful structures, tree lined streets, and historic neighborhoods.

The City of Castle Hills has numerous visually appealing areas, such as the extensive tree cover, the beautiful older homes, and the Boy Scout reserve. By capitalizing on the many visual resources, the City of Castle Hills can leverage the current stock to enhance the major thoroughfares and commercial areas. Also, with the creation of a unifying urban design, these items can be coupled together.

The City of Castle Hills should work to build a plan to protect and maintain the visual resources.



## Water Quality

Water is a precious, finite resource that should be appreciated and protected. Many land use activities can affect the quality of water; for example, soil erosion from vacant land or construction activities, and pesticides and other residuals in stormwater runoff from yards and parking lots.

The residential section of the City of Castle Hills with large lots is more efficient with stormwater runoff than the commercial/retail and smaller lot residential sections. The larger lots allow for more land to absorb stormwater, thereby decreasing hazardous runoff. To decrease hazardous runoff, the city can implement the use of xeriscape planting and native plants. The city can also implement an educational approach by working with the local Master Gardener program to educate the citizens on the proper use and application of pesticides. Proper application of pesticides helps reduce the pollution from runoff considerably.

## Tree Cover

A significant environmental advantage Castle Hills has over its neighbor San Antonio is the heavy tree cover throughout most of the city. These large, mature trees, specifically the native live oak, give the city a distinct sense of the nearby Texas Hill Country, which helps give Castle Hills its rural feel and identity. The two pictures below (one satellite, one GIS) show the kind of green cover the city has compared to the heavy impervious surface close by.

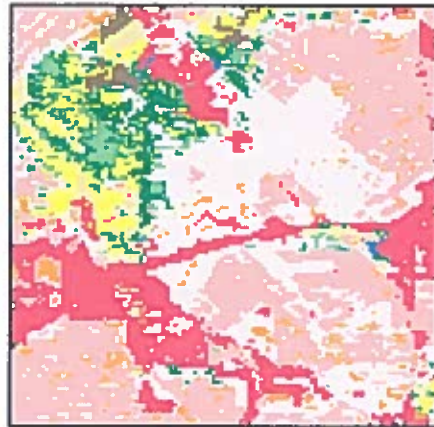


Figure 8 : TerraServer



Figure 9 : USGS

Tree cover is a very beneficial asset, both environmentally and aesthetically, since much of the native tree canopy is being lost each year to new development. As shown in Figure 10(next page), the city of San Antonio has lost an enormous amount of heavy tree canopy in the last 20 or so years. Castle Hills, being an older community with very little recent development, has not had this type of canopy loss, providing a competitive advantage for itself. According to the National Arbor Day Foundation ([www.arborday.org](http://www.arborday.org)), a mature tree sited near a house can represent 15-20% of the value of the home, and estimates based on the climate of the San Antonio area indicate that a site with moderate to heavy tree cover can expect to save \$75-\$100 per month on air conditioning costs due to the cooling effect of the tree canopy. ([www.americanforests.org](http://www.americanforests.org))

### Percent Tree Canopy Change 1985-2001

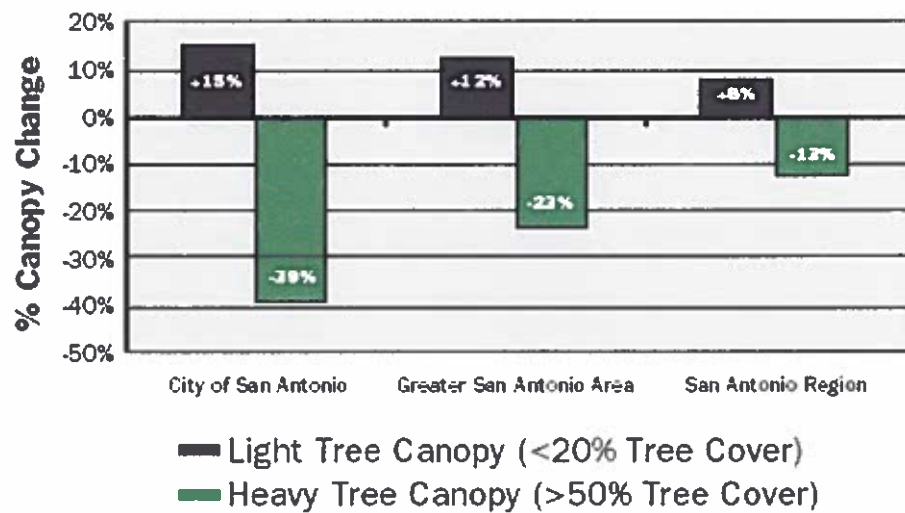


Figure 10 : Change in San Antonio tree cover since 1985

Source: [www.americanforests.org](http://www.americanforests.org)

Tree cover and green space have many other values to the community. For instance, the tree cover provides air pollution, noise and wind buffers. This natural barrier to human problems allows Castle Hills a setting that is cleaner, quieter and more peaceful than neighboring communities are. This is no small feat in a metropolitan area as large and busy as San Antonio, especially with the heavily trafficked Loop 410 so close.

A substantial number of trees and native plants also provide natural storm water management by keeping the soil in place with roots, allowing storm water to slowly trickle downward and providing nutrients to these plants at the same time. Natural vegetation areas have proved immensely valuable for storm water drainage, a very serious problem in the San Antonio area. Buffering the land from flooding, erosion, loss of property and loss of life are a few other reasons that the trees in Castle Hills are tremendous assets to the city.

Finally, in an era of skyrocketing oil and energy costs, tree canopy can substantially decrease the cost of cooling homes and businesses. In the warm climate of South Texas this is a very important economic consideration, as hundreds of thousands of dollars can be saved on electricity bills. Energy efficiency has been directly related to trees around buildings and Castle Hills has a natural advantage here as well. The following chart describes some of the above-mentioned benefits in monetary figures.

Table 1 : Forest Cover Values for 2001

#### 2001 Forest Cover Benefits

	Acres	Dense Tree Canopy	Stormwater Management Value (cu.ft.)	Stormwater Management Value (\$)	Air Pollution Annual Removal Value (lbs)	Air Pollution Annual Removal Value (\$)	Energy Savings - direct tree shading (kWh)	Energy Savings - direct tree shading (\$)	Carbon Stored (tons)	Carbon Sequestered Annually (tons)
San Antonio Region	1,679,100	19%	1,428,612,000	\$2.8 billion	36,682,000	\$67.5 million	N/A	N/A	14,641,942	118,239
Greater San Antonio Area	788,000	20%	677,508,000	\$1.3 billion	17,642,000	\$42.1 million	321,550,000	\$17.6 million	7,052,420	55,941
City of San Antonio	275,000	14%	215,694,000	\$431 million	5,032,000	\$12.0 million	262,686,000	\$14.4 million	1,983,410	16,200

Source: [www.americanforests.org](http://www.americanforests.org)

## Geology and Soils

Castle Hills' geology and soil are characterized by the Edwards Plateau and Blackland Prairies eco-regions of Texas. Generally the soils of these eco-regions range from shallow sandy clay with a limestone base to rich, fertile prairies. Both eco-regions support similar tree species.

### Edwards Plateau

The Edwards Plateau is limestone-based consisting of spring fed, perennially flowing streams. The Edwards Plateau also contains

many ephemeral streams, which are essential to proper storm runoff. The soils of this eco-region are typically shallow sandy to clays. The predominant trees of the Edwards Plateau are numerous oaks (*Quercus fusiformis*, *Q. buckleyi*, *Q. sinuata* var. *breviloba*), including the live oak (*Q. virginiana*), cedar elm (*Ulmus crassifolia*), and mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*).

**Blackland Prairies**

The Blackland Prairie eco-region is typically comprised of fertile soil and in its natural state would consist mainly as a grassy plain. The predominant tree species of this eco-region are numerous oaks (*Quercus* spp.), cedar elm (*Ulmus crassifolia*), mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*), and pecan (*Carya illinoensis*).

**Shade Tree Species**

The following species of tree are found extensively in the Castle Hills area and commonly used for shade in residential yards:

Texas Ash	Texas Red (Spanish) Oak
Arizona Cypress	Cedar Elm
Burr Oak	Mesquite
Live Oak	Mexican Sycamore
Shumard (Red) Oak	Pecan

**Fauna**

Common types of wildlife that can be expected in the area are white-tailed deer, raccoons, several species of skunks, and numerous wintering songbirds such as robins and cedar waxwings.

## Endangered Species

Bexar County is home to numerous endangered species. It is not known if any of those listed actually are located within Castle Hills, however they are listed for informational purposes.

Beetle, Helotes Mold	Cicurina Veni (Ncn)
Crane, Whooping	Harvestman, Robber Baron Cave
Plover, Mountain	Rhadine Exilis (Ncn)
Rhadine Infernalis (Ncn)	Spider, Government Canyon Cave
Spider, Madala's Cave	Spider, Robber Baron Cave
Spider, Vesper Cave	Vireo, Black-Capped
Warbler (Wood), Golden-Cheeked	

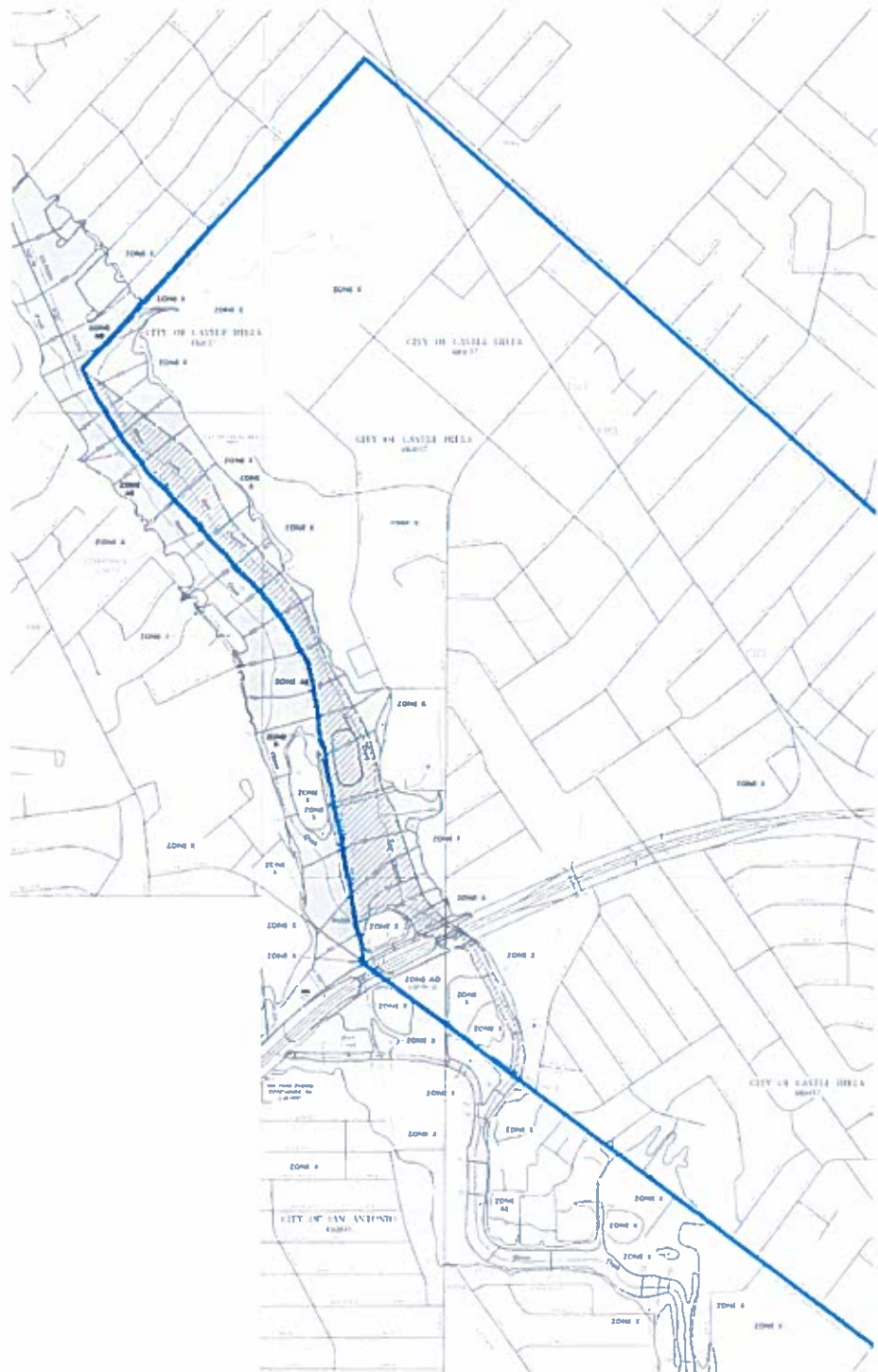
## Flood Hazards

Flooding presents a significant hazard in many areas, and as a natural phenomenon, deserves analysis as an environmental factor.

Examination of Flood Insurance Rate Maps of the Castle Hills area reveals that the city does not have a problem with widespread flooding. Figure 10 shows the flood plains for the City of Castle Hills. They are concentrated at the western edge of the city, mostly north of Interstate 410. Those properties that lie adjacent to Olmos Creek are at the greatest risk of flood, but review of these areas reveal

them to be more sparsely populated than other parts of the city, reducing the risks to human life and property.

In addition to protecting life and property, sparse development in floodplains offers a city several other benefits: conservation of valuable tree cover, which can positively affect air quality and reduce the severity of the urban heat island phenomenon; preservation of wildlife habitat, which can stem the tide of animals fleeing into residential areas from habitats ruined by development; and protection of an important environmental resource, as riparian zones are among the most fragile of ecosystems, and their good health improves water quality downstream.



**Figure 11 : Composite flood plain map of the City of Castle Hills. Blue line delineates corporate boundaries.**

*Source: Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration.*



## Aesthetics

Aesthetically, the City of Castle Hills represents a semi-rural oasis within the bustling metropolis of San Antonio. Large lots and mature trees lend the residential areas a sense of living in the country, despite their location near the heart of San Antonio. Retaining this thick tree cover offers the city not only environmental and aesthetic benefits but also economic possibilities. Residents have increasingly shown a willingness to pay a premium for “quality of life” features for their homes and workplaces, and the “hill country” flair of Castle Hills will increase property values and attract new businesses.

Aesthetic features provide a “sense of place” for residents and promote new economic opportunity. This aesthetic appeal is strongest in the northern portions of the city, where the lots tend to be larger than in the southern areas. The southern areas, while showing a greater density of development than the north, manage to maintain the rural feel through the extensive existence of mature trees.

## Aesthetic Analysis

An aesthetic analysis of the City of Castle Hills consists of an assessment of various components of a city's image. The image components and the principles behind their assessment are adapted from Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City*. (1960, MIT Press)

### Paths

Paths are elements that provide movement. They supply visitors and residents to a city with routes into, out of, and within the city. Paths are vital to a city's image because they are central to the experience of the city for outsiders, who may be only passing through; their perception of the city will be formed by what they experience along these paths. In the case of the City of Castle Hills, the primary paths of concern are Interstate 410 and Northwest Military Highway. When entering the city on I-410, no visual cues are present to alert a traveler that he or she has passed from San Antonio to Castle Hills. This transition is essential to the city's image. Without it, travelers will see simply another stretch of suburban sprawl. Northwest Military serves as the major path for people traveling north-south. It passes through the rural, forested areas of northern Castle Hills and has great potential for showcasing the city's

character, though some commercial areas here may prove problematic.

## Edges

Edges are linear features that function as boundaries. They often act as barriers and divisive elements, but they can serve a unifying or organizational purpose, especially on the edge of city, where they can delineate what is or is not part of the community.

I-410, in addition to being a path, also serves as an edge, sharply dividing the city between northern and southern areas. While not a hard barrier that prevents travel or limits accessibility, the freeway serves as a mental dividing line between two portions of the city. Edges are notably lacking at the boundaries of Castle Hills. This can be improved with Urban Design.

## Districts

These areas usually encompass large portions of a city and are generally areas capable of being defined in a way that a visitor is aware they have entered “someplace.” Districts are usually identified as having some unifying characteristic that differentiates them from other areas.

Castle Hills can roughly be divided into a northern and southern district, with I-410 acting as the boundary between them. The northern district is characterized by large parcels, a high number of churches, extensive mature tree cover, and a rural atmosphere. While some areas south of I-410, particularly along Olmos Creek in the west, exhibit these same characteristics, the southern district

generally consists of smaller lots, more compact development, and a higher percentage of commercial uses than in the north. While the south still shows high levels of tree cover, the rural atmosphere is somewhat less pronounced here than in the northern district.

While more districts may exist on paper, such as neighborhoods and subdivisions, a survey of the area indicated a lack of unifying urban design features to make these districts apparent. A district must be centered on some unifying characteristic, and each residential neighborhood looks much like the next.

## Nodes

Nodes are the strategic points in a city, made important either because they are the main points of entry, the convergence of several important paths, or simply the symbol of or focus for a district. It is of utmost importance that cities capitalize on the visibility of nodes to project a positive image. The intersections of I-410 with Blanco Road, Northwest Military, and West Avenue are all important opportunities for the city to establish a presence and brand these areas as centers for Castle Hills.

## Landmarks

Like nodes, landmarks are a reference to a point in space, but their use is external, as opposed to something one must enter to use. Landmarks are often most useful when observed from a distance and may be simple physical features. On the other hand, particular local landmarks may be imbued with some higher meaning due to a role in the local historical record. One of the shortcomings of the city is a

lack of distinct landmarks recognizable from the major paths. Some local landmarks do exist, such as the Lodge, which has served as an icon of the community since before incorporation, but a greater number of landmarks would serve to greatly enhance the city's image and foster a greater sense of the city as a cohesive place.

### **General Residential Appearance**

The residential areas pose relatively few aesthetic problems. Aside from the presence of some dilapidated properties and abandoned homes, residences in Castle Hills are in generally fair condition for the age of the structures, and a large number of newer, high-quality structures were also observed. The large lot housing is consistent with the time period built and the surrounding region. The homes are well maintained, utilizing neutral colors and tones. Varieties of exterior surfaces are used consisting of brick, stone, and siding.



**Figure 12 : Typical housing style, Caladium Street**



**Figure 13 : Front yard fence: Chicken wire - Zornia Street**

## Front Yard Fences

Fronts yards are typically unobstructed by fencing, however some homes are surrounded by fences. A variety of fence material was used, including stone, chain-link, wood, and chicken wire as seen in Figure 13. Fence heights were also variable ranging from approximately two feet to over six feet.

## Commercial Areas

The main points of aesthetic concern for the city are the commercial areas. While the residential areas exhibit some degree of uniqueness, the commercial areas do not. Examination of the various shopping centers revealed a general failure to capitalize on the rural aesthetic so prevalent in the residential areas. Many of the commercial properties were in poor condition, and those in acceptable states of repair were not otherwise noteworthy in any visual sense (See Figure 14 below).



**Figure 14 : Two commercial centers in the City of Castle Hills**

The Prinz Center (left), located at 7107 Blanco, shows no signs of landscaping or attention to the city's rural aesthetic. The Castle Hills Executive Center (right), located at 1015 Jackson-Keller Road, exhibits signs of neglect and disrepair.



## Environment & Aesthetics SWOT Analysis

The purpose of the previously discussed research and survey was to allow for an overall assessment of the state of the city. This assessment has been used to benchmark the city's internal strengths and weaknesses with regard to environmental and aesthetic issues, as well as identify external threats to the community and opportunities that the city may be able to capitalize upon. This process is commonly referred to as a SWOT analysis, and each of the four elements is discussed in detail below.

### Strengths

The following factors are positive qualities the city possesses and should be viewed as assets upon which the community may find ways to capitalize. As mentioned in previous sections of this report, Castle Hills has a significantly higher level of mature tree cover within its corporate boundaries than many of the surrounding areas, including greater San Antonio. Coupled with the predominant large lots sizes (especially in the northern portions of the city), and houses set well back from the street, the city possesses a rural character. It gives the impression of an enclave, a rural oasis in the surrounding urban desert, which makes the area attractive to homebuyers and new residents.



Though the San Antonio River basin is an area of the state prone to flash-flooding, flood hazards in the City of Castle Hills are slight, located only along Olmos Creek, and the lack of polluting uses or toxic sites means that residents enjoy a low level of risk for environmental hazards.

The housing stock of the city is in good condition; a visual inspection of the residential areas revealed relatively few properties that could be considered blighted or in need of condemnation. Though the same survey showed a widespread use of similar colors and finishes throughout the residential areas, differences in architectural detailing and structure provide sufficient variation to avoid the “cookie-cutter” look commonly associated with suburban areas.

## **Weaknesses**

The following conditions represent negative attributes of the city that are impeding progress and should be addressed in any plans for future development. The primary weakness of Castle Hills is the lack of any sort of unifying urban design features to tie the city together and communicate community identity. Without such features, which establish a visual continuity throughout the city, outsiders may find it difficult to perceive the boundary between the City of Castle Hills and the City of San Antonio. Visitors to the San Antonio area may not even be able to detect the existence of a separate city at all and assume that Castle Hills is just part of San Antonio.

Related to this issue is the lack of effective visual transitions at the gateways to the city. The primary path for entry and exit of

Castle Hills is the 410 Loop. Location along this loop is a great asset to the city, but the full potential of this connection cannot be realized if travelers on the Loop are not aware of the transition between San Antonio and Castle Hills. At present, the corporate boundary on the Loop is marked with a sign on the base of an overpass, but the sign is of a style and drivers traveling at speeds of up to 70 mph easily miss color that resembles many other signs in the freeway environment.

The commercial areas of the city likewise show a lack of unifying urban design and generally do not reflect the same rural character as the residential areas. The newer commercial centers are generally in good condition, but a number of the older ones have fallen into disrepair and have become unsightly. A significant amount of commercial space in the city, while not necessarily in bad condition, exhibits generally poor aesthetics. Lack of landscaping, expansive parking lots, and inattention to designing for the human scale perpetuates the aesthetics of sprawl development and makes these places uninviting and visually unappealing. While aesthetics is an area in which the residential districts of Castle Hills excel, it is the downfall of the commercial centers.

## Opportunities

One of the prime opportunities for the city to provide its citizens with an amenity exists in conjunction with McGimsey Park, at the extreme northern end of Castle Hills. At nearly 140 acres, this area is the largest expanse of land in the city left in a more or less natural state and represents a great asset to the community. The park currently serves as the headquarters for the Alamo Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America, though a reversionary clause in the deed stipulates that the land shall become the property of the city if Alamo

Area Council should decide to abandon it. Considering the fact that the land serves as a major facility for the Council, it is unlikely that they will abandon it in the near future. In the meantime, the city could benefit from a partnership of some kind with the Council, possibly resulting in public use of at least part of the park. A proposal to this effect will be discussed in detail in the Recommendations section of this chapter.

## Threats

Though McGimsey Park is listed in the previous section as an opportunity, it also functions as a threat for the purposes of this analysis because it is a large parcel of tax-exempt land, and it represents the single largest aesthetic and environmental amenity in the city. Being denied any use of such an amenity would detract from the overall rural atmosphere of the area and damage the city's claim to being a "rural oasis."

Another threat exists in the city's method of dealing with sewage. A significant portion of homes in Castle Hills use septic tanks instead of relying on city services. Though the city is not situated in the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone, it does lie in the Artesian Zone, allowing the use of private wells to tap the aquifer. According to the Edwards Aquifer Authority, new wells must be drilled at least 150 feet away from existing septic systems.<sup>11</sup> Though a code enforcement campaign may be time consuming, violation of these rules, along with aging septic systems (which can be a significant groundwater pollution source), may pose a threat to the currently good environmental conditions in the City of Castle Hills.

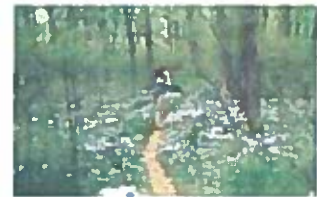
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<sup>11</sup> Edwards Aquifer Authority, *Edwards Aquifer Authority Rules*, revised 10 Feb. 2005, p. 234.

## Recommendations

### The McGimsey Nature Center

The McGimsey Boy Scout Park (located at the far northwest corner of Castle Hills) is a valuable asset to the community and to the area as a whole. Serving as the headquarters of the Alamo Area Council, its 140 acres consists of training grounds, camping areas, and scout facilities used to provide experience and lessons in outdoor life and recreation for scouts from all over the San Antonio region. It is unique, not only for its expansive green space inside of a major city, but for its abundance of wildlife. Deer, birds, and other native species call the land home, living among the natural live oaks, prairies and brush patches. This setting provides an opportunity for the scouts and its community to share the outdoor experience and learn about nature at the same time, a benefit to everyone.



The Boy Scouts represent the best of America – stewards of the community, good citizens, and interested in learning and teaching about nature. Their land, knowledge and abilities offer the chance for a one-of-a-kind nature center that would allow teaching, social interaction, environmental benefits and



would bring the community together for a great cause. Dubbed the "McGimsey Nature Center," this small portion of the park would be a small version of the San Antonio Botanical Gardens, with more emphasis on education, hands-on experience and natural settings. Imagine part of the land dedicated to wildscapes, ponds, hiking trails, bird watching and a new building to anchor the center. Castle Hills is proud of its rural heritage within San Antonio and bringing nature to the forefront in a partnership with the Boy Scouts would only cement that image, while providing a regional attraction in the process.

We think McGimsey Park is extremely important and do not wish to alter the park; in fact, we believe that this idea will improve the park and bring even more prestige to the Boy Scouts. The last thing we would want is for it to be developed and lose its charm; however, we believe that a portion of the land could give back to the community and benefit the scouts, simultaneously. The proposal: allocate 20-30 acres, mostly in the open space along NW Military, as the Nature Center land. It could be owned by the scouts, by the city, or by a third party created for this purpose, or it could be owned and leased by any of the three. The land would include any number of small buildings that would have architectural styles compatible with the land, none of them overwhelming, and have input from the scouts. The facilities would include the nature center, which would have a small nature museum, a few classrooms and a great hall for gatherings, receptions, rummage/bake sales, etc. Secondly, an outdoor pavilion or gazebo that could host parties, weddings, gardening/Master Naturalist gatherings or troop assemblies. Finally, a bed and breakfast would house nature tourists, city guests or anyone visiting from afar. This



lodge would be operated like a small B&B, not a motel, and would bring in revenue to the scouts, the city and increase interest in the new Nature Center. Any reception, weddings, etc. that would be allowed on the land would have to adhere to strict rules set by the scouts or city and would generate much-needed revenue to each.

Nature tourism is the fastest growing sector of the tourism industry and San Antonio has a beautiful natural setting, exemplified in the rolling hills, majestic live oak clusters and the abundance of wildlife. People are increasingly willing to pay to get outdoors, go bird-watching, camping, and stay in lodging that offer easy access to them. Offering trails, wetlands, and lookout points would allow great spots for deer, bird or waterfowl watching and the wildscapes would bring in hummingbirds and butterflies. The natural landscaping mixed with vegetation examples from the region, along with an organic garden, open prairie and live oaks will provide a relaxing, educational setting for those who simply want to enjoy the plant life.



The Boy Scouts and community will gain from the construction and maintenance of these gardens. Final Scout projects can be used to build key sections of the gardens or trails and interaction among local residents and the boys in learning about the plants will be valuable lessons for all. The idea is to capitalize on the location to be a landscaping example to San Antonio, offer new techniques and tools to landscaping and teaching all about the interaction of plants, wildlife and people. Schools could take field trips and have experts teach them and walk them around, similar to a zoo experience. Examples of habitat conservation, land restoration, outdoor activities, maintaining plants and open space, etc. are all ideas for the layout of the center. Establishing the San Antonio chapter of

the Urban Outdoor Program here is a wonderful idea, too. The Urban Outdoor Program has branches in Austin, Dallas, and Houston. This program provides outdoor skills training for youths in the area for little or no cost for the children. Having Master Naturalist volunteer program gatherings, lessons, and demonstrations connects professionals with interested citizens and teaches the Boy Scouts, as well. These programs also would involve the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and, perhaps, the Natural Wildlife Federation. There are also state and federal tax benefits to creating something like this. Creating a beautiful setting for locals, visitors and the scouts will be an asset this program will give the city and McGimsey Park for years to come.

## Tree Ordinance

Castle Hills has a tremendous advantage in its tree cover, yet nothing in place to prevent the demolition of current trees in new construction. As the homes begin to age, teardowns are a strong possibility. Newer homes almost always have a larger footprint and require a large construction site. This means that natural oaks and pecans preserved or planted half a century ago will have to be cut for the new homes to go in. A tree ordinance similar to the one in place in San Antonio would preserve large trees and replace smaller ones during construction. Designating trees of a certain inch in trunk diameter to be heritage (ex. 18") would foster preservation, if possible, or replacement of twice the lost inch spread elsewhere. This would be either on the same property or on city property (and could be any number of trees adding up to 36"). A tree over 36" would be mandated for



preservation and would require 4x the caliper inches planted if killed or maligned by construction crews. A tree fewer than 18" and over 6" would be considered significant and would have to be replaced at 1x the caliper inch. Having a policy in place would preserve the tree canopy and keep Castle Hills unique and beautiful.

## Streetscapes and Boulevards

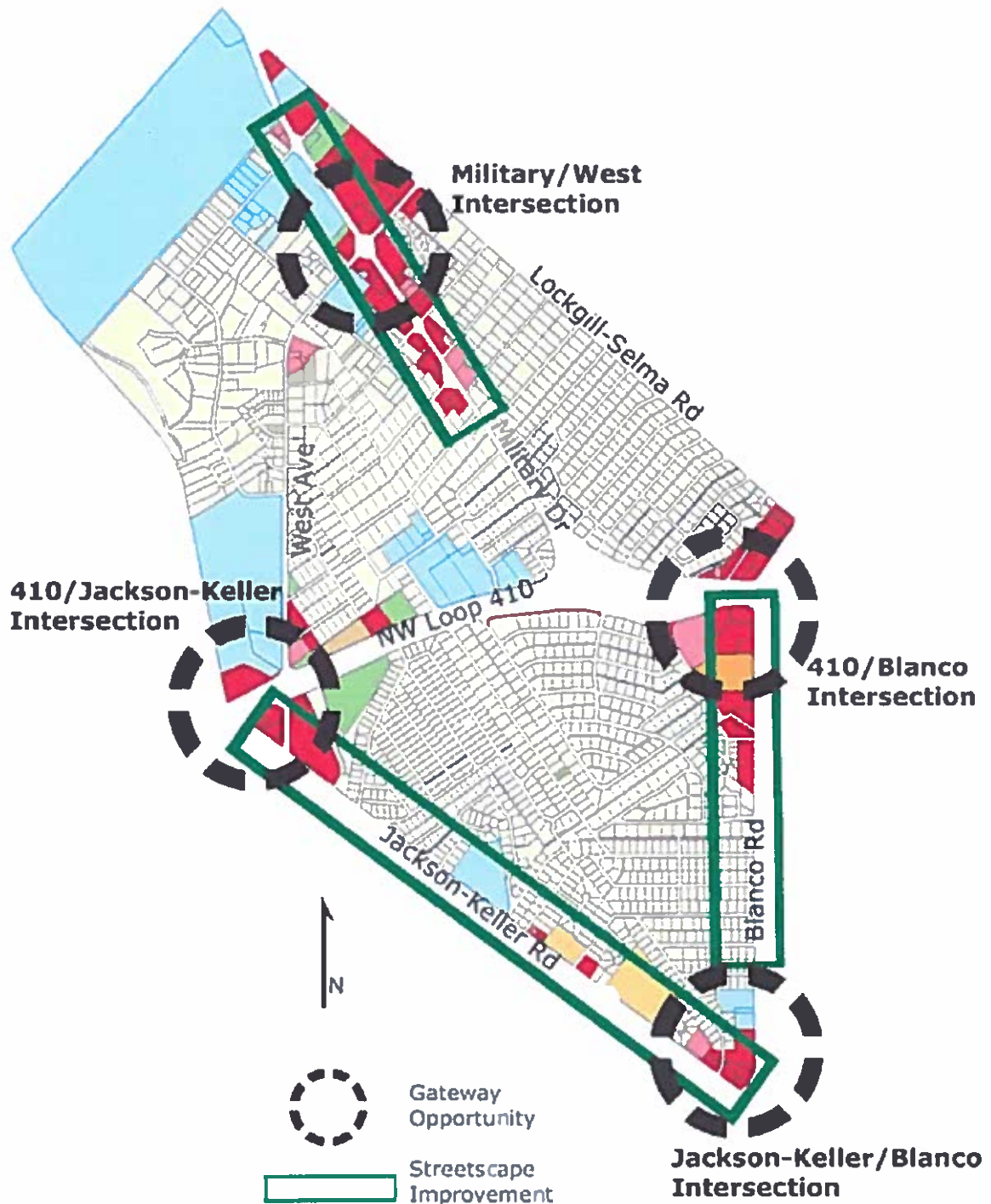
Castle Hills needs uniform landscaping standards along major thoroughfares and access points to tie in the country landscape throughout the city. We propose building landscaping medians along NW Military, West, and on roads in front of public buildings. The landscaping medians would be lined with trees, annual flowering plants and pavers (brick, stone or concrete pavers). Having these medians helps with turn lane congestion, calms traffic, beautifies streets, increases nearby land values, curbs air and noise pollution and ties into other urban design improvements around the city. Along Loop 410, planting medium size, flowering trees would distinguish Castle Hills from the rest of the clutter along the freeway, welcoming and letting passersby know they are in Castle Hills. This will go a long way in boosting the city's image, beautify a concrete jungle and provide a nice green air and noise buffer between the cars and the neighborhoods. These improvements can be classified into two separate project types: Gateway and Greenway (Map 2) indicates proposed locations for these project types.



A comprehensive pedestrian/bikeway plan should also be created to guide the development of walkways and bikeways in the



future. Access to alternate forms of transportation is important to preserving a high quality standard of living, which is both “environmental-friendly” and “people-friendly”.



Map 2 : Locations for Proposed Gateway & Greenway Projects

## **Gateway Project**

Gateway projects are strategically located at major roadway intersections with existing and potential opportunities to attract businesses. These gateways also serve as high impact entry points to the City of Castle Hills. Four areas are identified as potential sites: Military/West Intersection, 410/Jackson-Keller Intersection, Jackson-Keller/Blanco Intersection, and 410/ Blanco Intersection. At these major intersections and entrances to the City of Castle Hills, unique signage, plantings, and lighting should be established to distinguish the city from the surrounding areas.

General guidelines for the gateway elements include signage that is appropriate for highways and major intersections. They should use a unique logo developed for the City of Castle Hills. The signage should also be unique and integrate with the unifying urban design criteria. Plantings should be medium sized in order to attract attention. Lighting is also an important element to gateways to ensure visibility at night. However, lighting can also be an element which distinguishes the city from surrounding areas.

## **Greenway Project**

Greenway projects are streetscape improvements for strategically chosen major city streets. The greenways should be designed to serve as unified city edges to distinguish the City of Castle Hills from neighboring areas as well as carrying the unified look to the interior. As with the gateway project, the same set of design standards should be used in order to reflect the unique rural character of the city. Three city streets are identified as potential

sites for the Greenway project: Jackson-Keller Road, Blanco Road, and Military Drive.

Elements that should be addressed for greenways in order to provide a unified design include street signs, city markers, street and light poles, lighting style, addition of unique crosswalks, sidewalks, and bikeways to create a walkable/bikeable environment, public, commercial, and retail landscaping, and median landscaping.

## **Potential Funding Sources for Bikeways**

### **FEDERAL**

1. National Highway System - Federal Highway Administration
2. Surface Transportation Program Fund - Federal Highway Administration
3. Transportation Enhancement Activities – Federal Highway Administration
4. Recreational Trails Trust Fund
5. Federal Transit Formula Grants – Federal Transit Administration
6. Rivers and Trails Program – National Park Service
7. Land and Water Conservation Fund – National Park Service
8. Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program – National Park Service
9. United States Department of Health and Human Services ([www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov))

### **STATE**

1. Safe Routes to Schools Program – Texas Department of Transportation
2. Recreation Grants Program – Texas Parks and Wildlife

### LOCAL

3. Capital Improvement Projects
4. PRIVATE GRANTS
5. Active Living Policy and Environmental Studies ([www.alpes.ws](http://www.alpes.ws))
6. Charles Stewart Mott Foundation ([www.mott.org](http://www.mott.org))
7. Fannie Mae Foundation ([www.fanniemaefoundation.org](http://www.fanniemaefoundation.org))
8. Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation ([www.noyes.org](http://www.noyes.org))
9. John T. and Catherine D. MacArthur Foundation  
([www.macfound.org](http://www.macfound.org))
10. Local Initiatives Support Corporation ([www.liscnet.org](http://www.liscnet.org))
11. The Ford Foundation ([www.fordfound.org](http://www.fordfound.org))
12. The Energy Foundation ([www.ef.org](http://www.ef.org))
13. The Robert Wood Johnson ([www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org))
14. The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation ([www.hewlett.org](http://www.hewlett.org))
15. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy ([www.railstotrails.org](http://www.railstotrails.org))
16. Kodak American Greenways Program Awards  
([www.conservationfund.org](http://www.conservationfund.org))
17. HEB Community Investment Program  
([www.heb.com/heb/comm/commAI-invest.jsp](http://www.heb.com/heb/comm/commAI-invest.jsp))

### City Logo and Community Identity

One of the prominent weaknesses identified by the surveys was a lack of visual evidence of community identity. Conception of a logo and slogan that reflect the strengths and unique character of the community would be the first step in correcting this weakness. In the case of Castle Hills, a design that emphasizes either the city's history or the rural nature of the community and a slogan that does the same would be advisable.

An easily recognizable logo will substantially increase the City's ability to brand certain locations as unequivocally belonging to Castle Hills, most notably gateway locations and commercial corridors. Other small towns in the greater San Antonio area have implemented such measures (Figure 15 next page), allowing visitors to distinguish them from San Antonio and each other.

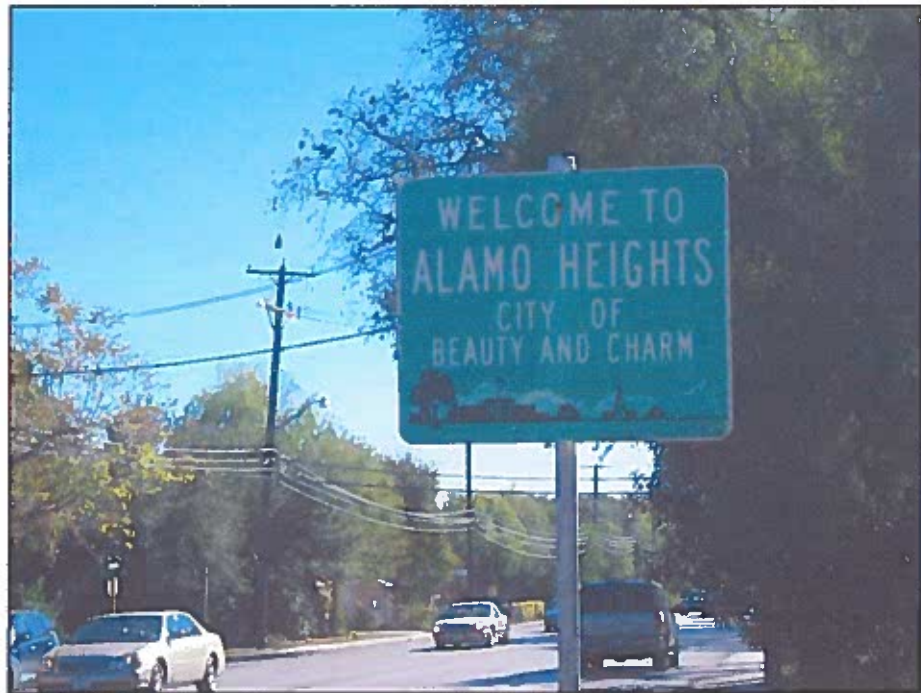


Figure 15 : City Limit signage for Alamo Heights (top) and Olmos Park (below)

*Photographs by Jordan Maddox*

## Demographic and Economic Base

Castle Hills has managed to evolve and develop at a comfortable pace since incorporation in 1951. Most of the property in Castle Hills remains private residential property, with large lots, an abundance of trees, superior education and public leadership, all of which exemplify the best of small city government. Castle Hills has roughly 4000 people in 2.5 square miles. This chapter is an analysis of the population and economics of Castle Hills.

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## Demographic Analysis

In this section, the trends of the population of Castle Hills are statistically analyzed in detail in terms of population growth, median age, density and age of household. These characteristics reveal the direction in which the city is headed with respect to the future demands on services and infrastructure. The assessment of the population and demographic changes is also necessary in order to identify the market potential of the city. It also helps the city guide future land use and decide what changes in land use may be necessary in order to achieve the desired objectives. This analysis also assesses the ability of the city to continue to provide services to the future population.

The following sections highlight the demographic changes that the city has experienced from 1960 up to the latest year of data availability of each respective indicator.

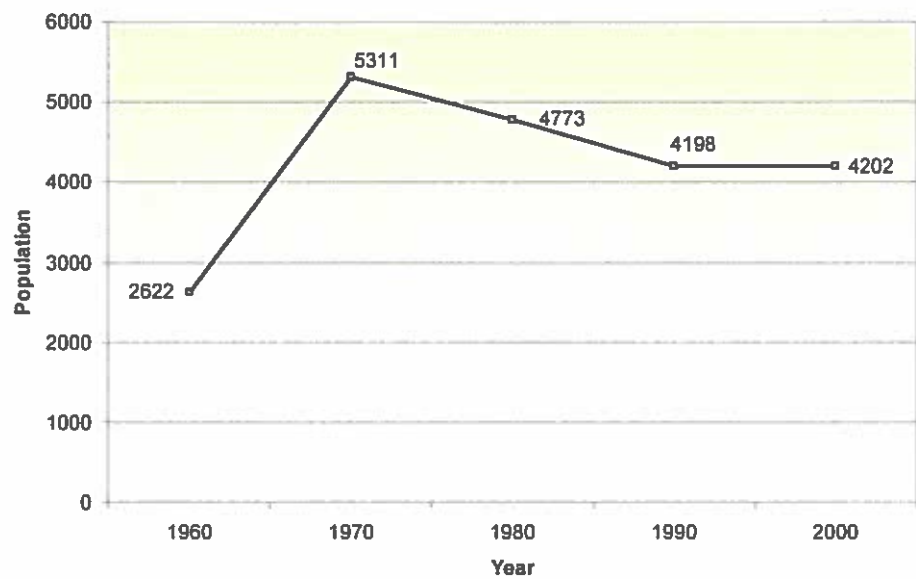
### Population trends

As shown in Graph I, the population of Castle Hills rose appreciably in the decade 1960-70. Then a downward trend followed

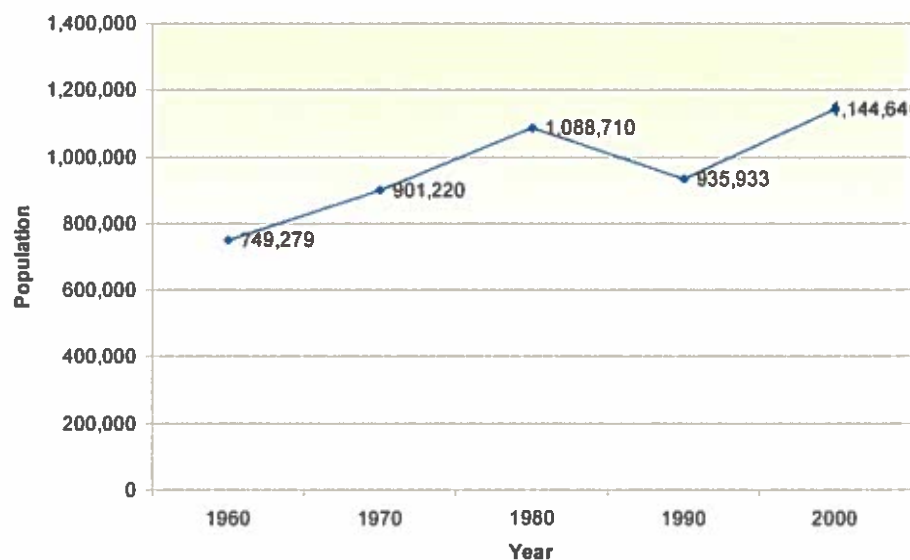


for the next 2 decades and finally stabilized at around 4200 persons between 1990 and 2000.

During the same time a similar decline in population was observed in San Antonio during the decade 1980-90 but it grew at a high rate, unlike Castle Hills, during the decade 1990-2000.



Graph 1 : Population of Castle Hills



Graph 2 : Population of San Antonio

On the basis of these past trends, the Texas State Data Center<sup>12</sup> has recently released population estimates for the years 2004 and 2005. The estimates released are the averages of estimates made using ratio-correlation, component-method II, and housing-unit methods. The component-method II estimates are calculated by standard component procedures using county-level birth and death data for 2000-04 from the Texas Department of Health, 2000-04 data from the Texas Education Agency on public school enrollment, and information from the Texas State Data Center survey of private school enrollment. In addition, the estimation utilizes data on Medicare enrollment and on the net movement of persons from the military to the civilian population obtained for counties from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The values for each of these items are allocated from counties to places prior to the completion of the place estimates. The general allocation procedures used for these items involve population subgroups closely associated with the item being allocated (i.e., women of child-bearing age, school-age population for school enrollment, the total population for deaths, persons 65+ years of age for Medicare enrollment, and the population 14-17 years of age for net movement). The number in the appropriate subgroups for each place and the remainder of the county in each county in 2000 were projected (using state-level survival rates for 1999-2001) to July 1, 2004, and the sum of the survival groups in each place and the remainder of the county were controlled to the county total for the item as reported from the appropriate agency to obtain the value for each place.

The housing unit method utilizes change in the number of housing units in the housing stock of an area, from the base date (in

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<sup>12</sup> Texas State Data Center, Institute for Demographic and Socioeconomic Research, University of Texas at San Antonio, 6900 North Loop 1604 West, San Antonio, Texas 78249-0704, (210) 458-6543.

this case, the 2000 Census) to the estimate date (in this case, July 1, 2004), to estimate population change .

The third method used is the ratio-correlation method. Ratio correlation estimates are made to allocate county populations to places (and non-place areas) using births, deaths and housing units for places as estimation items.

Results of these methods are as follows:

Place	2000 Census Count	July 1 2004 Pop. Estimate	Jan 1 2005 Pop. Estimate
	4,202	4,036	3,995
	1,144,646	1,238,983	1,250,030

The above estimations reveal that population of San Antonio is expected to continue to increase marginally but the population of Castle Hills is expected to remain around the same as in the year 2000 in indicating a high degree of stability in the present population.

This trend is of concern, as it implies that in the near future it is imperative to promote immigration into the city in order to ensure the vitality of the existing levels of services and the city functions. These are only statistical estimates and may not represent the actual population change. However, prudence dictates that future planning recognize this trend and frame appropriate mitigating policies.

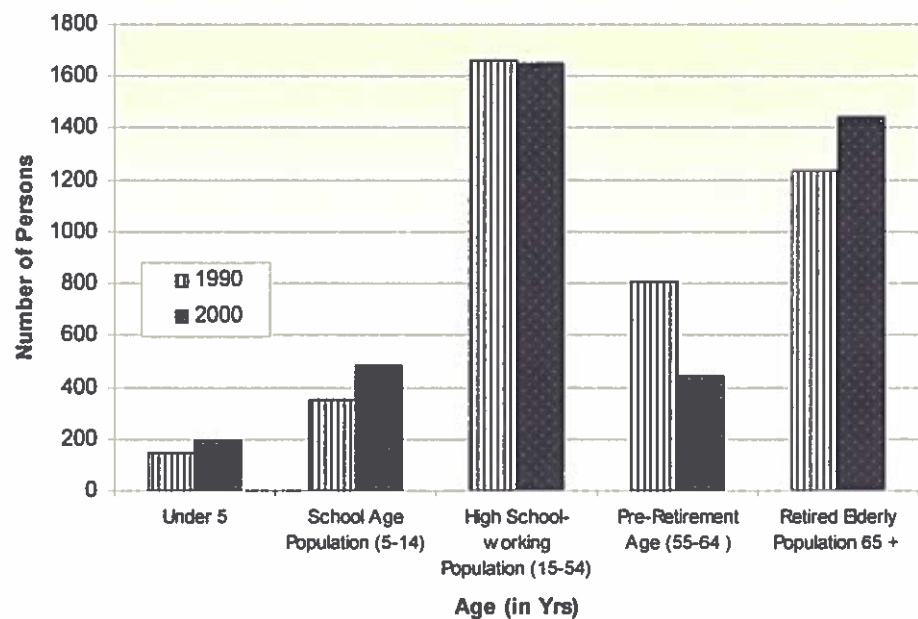
## Other Demographic Characteristics

Table I highlights the age structure of the population of Castle Hills.

Table 1 : Age statistics of the Castle Hills Population

Age Group	1990		2000		Change
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent
Under 5	146	3.48	191	4.55	30.82
School Age Population (5-14)	350	8.34	482	11.47	37.71
High School-working Population (15-54)	1663	39.6	1648	39.21	-00.90
Pre-Retirement Age (55-64)	808	19.25	441	10.5	-45.42
Retired Elderly Population 65 +	1231	29.32	1440	34.27	16.98
Median Age	53.87		50.7		-5.88

As is evident from the above data, the city itself has a relatively very small number of school-age children. The majority of the population is in a working age group, which has the advantage of increased spending capacity of the residents. However, as the number of persons in this age group has remained more or less constant over the 1990-2000 decade, there does not seem to be much immigration in this age group.



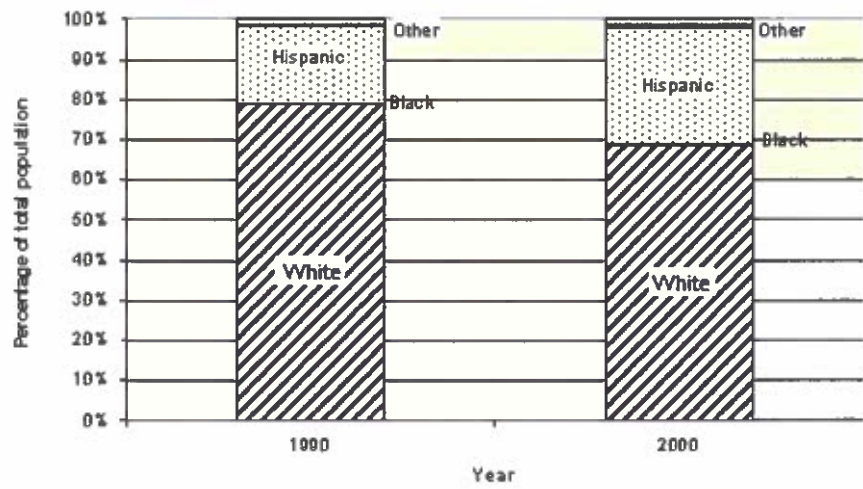
Graph 3 : Population of San Antonio

Another highlight of this analysis is the high median age of 50.7 yrs. Though the median age has dropped since 1990, this shows a high proportion of the population is in the pre-retirement and the retired age group. On the one hand it does provide a homogeneous population base that would facilitate agglomeration of correspondingly suitable businesses but on the other hand it represents health care and emergency response challenges. It is imperative that the city continue to maintain the present highly efficient level of emergency response services in light of the aging population. Data on households reveals that the city is increasingly home to elderly empty-nesters, many of whom live alone. Moreover, the number of non-family households is also increasing, and the average household size has declined 30% in 30 years from 3.21 persons per household in 1970 to 2.25 persons in 2000. All of these changes taken together indicate that in the next 20 years the city's social and economic character will undergo substantial changes.

Table 2 : Household Characteristics of Castle Hills

Household Characteristics			
Total households	1,833	1,800	1,866
Family households (families)	1,430	1,296	1,219
Married-couple family	1,264	1,131	1,013
Female householder, no husband present	127	128	162
Non-family households	403	504	647
Householder living alone	N/A	461	588
Householder 65 years and over	N/A	326	454

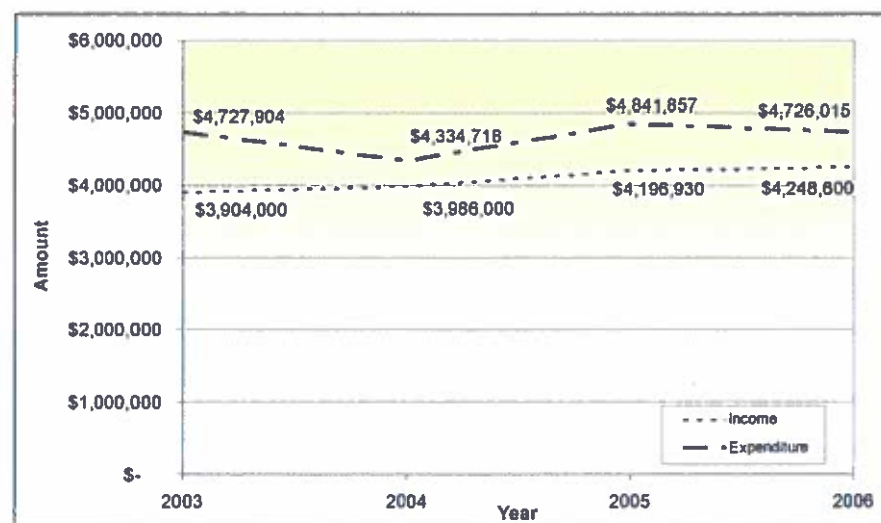
Graph 4 shows the change in the race characteristics of the population in the city. It is noteworthy that even though white have remained the dominant group in the city the population of Hispanics has increased by half in the decade 1990-2000. As a consequence, changes in the retail sector and the general commercial profile of the city may be expected.



Graph 4 : Ethnic mix in Castle Hills

## Economic Profile

The budgets for the last two years and the estimated budgets up to 2006 have been provided by Castle Hills for the purpose of this study. The analysis of the available budget documents reveals that the city expenses have exceeded the income since 2003. As per the city's existing budgetary estimates, this trend is expected to continue.



In view of the continuing budget deficit, the various sources of income and expenditure have been further analyzed in the following table.



Table 3 : Detailed Budget (2005 and 2006 are estimates)

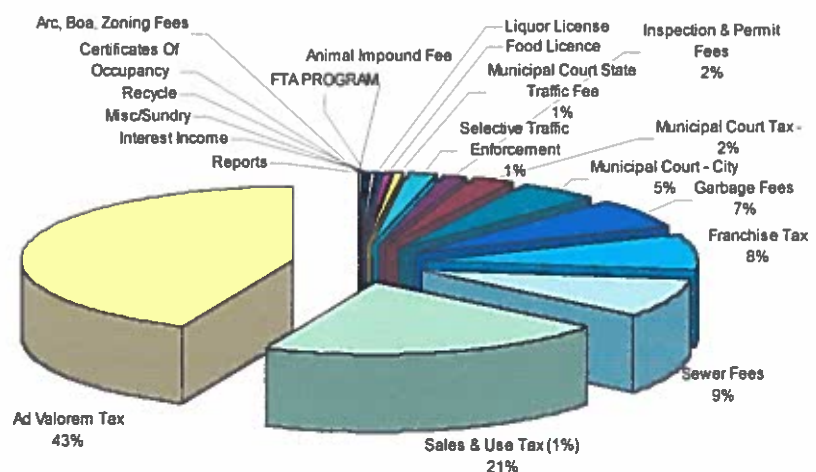
Budget Head	FY 2003	FY 2004	% change	FY 2005	% change	FY 2006	% change
<b>Income</b>							
Ad Valorem Tax	1720000	1751000	1.8	1838930	5.02	1850000	0.6
Animal Impound Fee	500	850	70	3000	252.94	2500	-16.66
Arc, Boa, Zoning Fees	2500	1500	-40	2500	66.66	3800	52
Certificates Of Occupancy	2500	2000	-20	3500	75	4000	14.28
Donations	3000		-100	6600		8400	27.27
Fema	300000		-100				
Food License	15000	14000	-6.66	14000	0	15000	7.14
Franchise Tax	325000	325000	0	325000	0	330000	1.53
FTA (Failure To Appear) Program	10000	10000	0	10000	0	15000	50
Garbage Fees	285000	270000	-5.26	320000	18.51	320000	0
Inspection & Permit Fees	75000	65000	-13.33	75000	15.38	80000	6.66
Insurance Claims				14295		2920	-79.57
Interest Income	10000	12000	20	36000	200	30000	-16.66
Liquor License/ Mixed Beverages	12000	12000	0	15000	25	15000	0
Misc./Sundry Income	15000	5000	-66.66	12000	140	12000	0
Municipal Court - City	175000	185000	5.71	180000	-2.7	205000	13.88
Municipal Court Tax - State	80000	100000	25	100000	0	120000	20
Municipal Court State Traffic Fee	law eff 9-1-2003	30000		60000	100	60000	0
Municipal Court Building Security	4200	See Special		800		600	-25

## Demographics and Economics Base

Budget Head	FY 2003	FY 2004	% change	FY 2005	% change	FY 2006	% change
		Fund					
Municipal Court Technology Fund	5500	See Special Fund		1200		1000	-16.66
Recycle Proceeds	3000	3000	0	4000	33.33	4000	0
Reports	2000	2000	0	2000	0	3000	50
Sales & Use Tax (1%)	885000	835000	-5.64	700000	-16.16	700000	0
Sewer Fees	370000	350000	-5.4	425000	21.42	435000	2.35
Selective Traffic Enforcement		60000		125000	108.33	125000	0
Warrants				30000		40000	33.33
Total Budget Income	3997200	4033350	0.9	4303825	6.7	4342220	0.89
<b>Expenses</b>							
General and Administration	734577	761000	3.59	555988	-26.93	577905	3.94
Municipal Court	87500	131500	50.28	267068	103.09	282855	5.91
Police Department	99920	179235	79.37	1476004	723.5	1460920	-1.02
Fire Department	51250	46250	-9.75	1198756	2491.9	1243990	3.77
Street Department	59950	56200	-6.25	241315	329.38	243220	0.78
Sanitation, Drainage, Sewer Departments	501650	465900	-7.12	908126	94.91	797625	-12.16
Total Salaries & Taxes	2509057	2532633	0.93		-100		
Total Capital Expenses	684000	162000	-76.31	194600	20.12	119500	-38.59
Total Budget Disbursements	4727904	4334718	-8.31	4841857	11.69	4726015	-2.39
<b>Budget Deficit</b>	<b>730704</b>	<b>301368</b>	<b>-58.76</b>	<b>538032</b>	<b>78.53</b>	<b>383795</b>	<b>-28.67</b>

The above data reveal that the city received a one-time grant of \$300,000 from FEMA in 2003. In the subsequent year the income increased by almost 1% in 2004 despite the lack of FEMA funds, due to the increase in selective traffic enforcement and municipal court earnings. These earnings doubled in 2005 but are expected to stabilize at this level. The budget deficit also decreased from 2003 to 2004 but increased sharply in 2005 with respect to the previous year. In the coming year, this deficit is expected to decline by around 28%.

The contribution of each of the sectors to the income of the city in 2005 is shown in Graph 5.

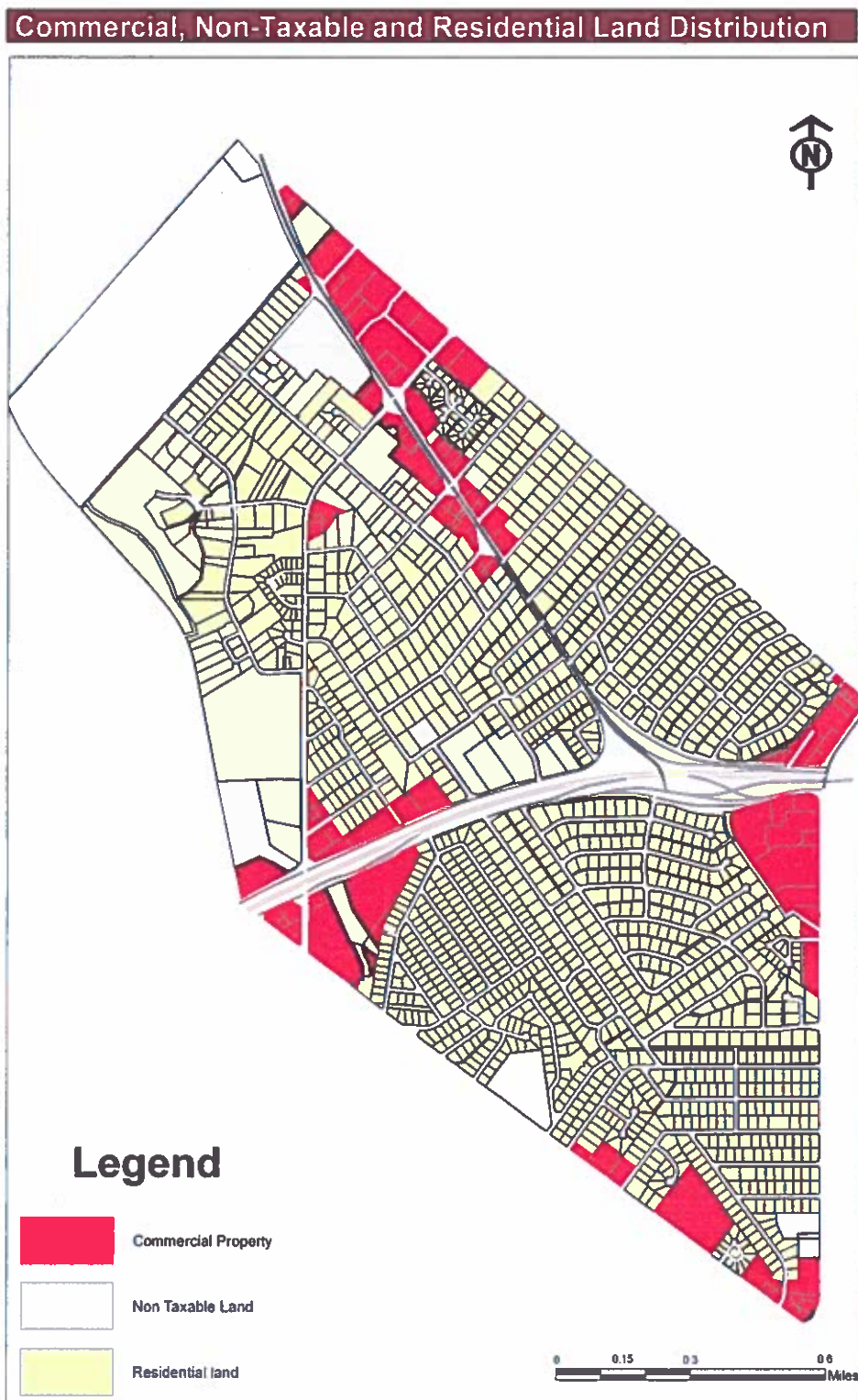


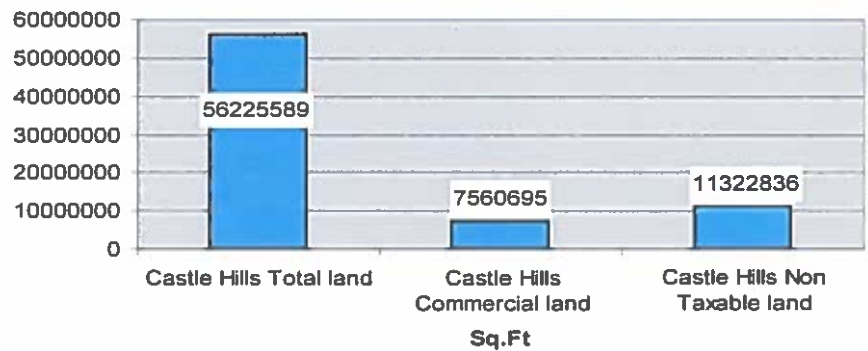
**Graph 5 : Sources of Income**

*Source: Castle Hills 2005 budget*

The above analysis reveals that property tax has continued to be the primary source of income for the city. This is characteristic of similar residential communities, where the property taxes meet the cost of infrastructure in the absence of any other means of income. The problem is compounded by the fact that a large proportion of the land in the city contains non-taxable uses. The area statistics and the geographic distribution of non-taxable land are shown in the Graph 6 and Map D1 respectively.

Map D1: Non-taxable Land





**Graph 6 : Distribution of Taxable and Non-taxable Land in Castle Hills**

The following table highlights the change in the residential property values in the city since 1999.

**Table 4 : Residential Home Values in Castle Hills**

Year	Total Appraised Value	Total Improvement Value	Total Land Value	Median Appraised Value
2005	\$285,565,392	\$228,653,411	\$56,634,333	\$163,725
2004	\$275,618,599	\$214,259,249	\$61,091,000	\$154,100
2003	\$261,742,632	\$201,287,292	\$60,145,190	\$143,000
2002	\$253,475,220	\$193,394,980	\$59,719,350	\$138,050
2001	\$249,150,247	\$188,853,937	\$59,930,380	\$135,300
2000	\$239,025,932	\$177,255,362	\$61,404,640	\$129,900
1999	\$225,283,781	\$163,441,081	\$61,488,170	\$123,050

Many of the homes in Castle Hills are large lot developments, averaging a little more than a half acre in size. The city's housing stock has consistently maintained high property values. Appraisal district data shows that residential properties in Castle Hills have appreciated in value nearly 20% in the last five years. The median value of a home in Castle Hills is currently \$163,725.

Table 5 : Age of Homes in castle Hills

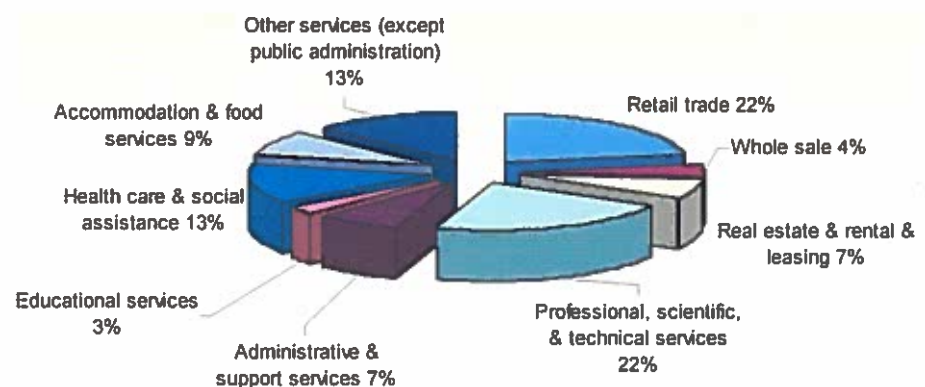
Age	#/Homes	Avg. Sq. Ft.	Median Value
0-15 yrs.	59	2982	\$241,730.00
Over 15 yrs.	1477	2599	\$161,910.00

However, the housing in the city is also very old. The median year homes were built is 1964, which means 50% of the homes in Castle Hills are 42 years old or older. The value of these older homes is starting to plateau, and in the coming years may fall as newer, larger homes are built throughout the San Antonio area. Analysis shows that even within Castle Hills, home that are 15 years or less are larger and have higher median values than home over 15 years old. On average, the newer homes have 15% more square footage, and have median values 49% higher than older homes. However, only 4% of the homes in Castle Hills are less than 15 years old. Another factor which may hurt sales of existing homes in Castle Hills is homeowners insurance. Information from the Texas Department of Insurance shows that owners of housing that is at least 15 years old could pay up to 21% more for homeowners insurance than the owner of a comparably sized new home, and for homes more than 25 years old, the rates could be more than 25% higher.

In view of an evidently high contribution of the property taxes to the city budget it is imperative to highlight that there exists a limit to which the contribution of the property tax can be stretched. It seems that Castle Hills has almost reached those limits. Any increase in residential tax income will only be as a result of increased residential land values. So the city will have to lay emphasis on increasing the quality of life and the city aesthetics in order to further push up the property values.

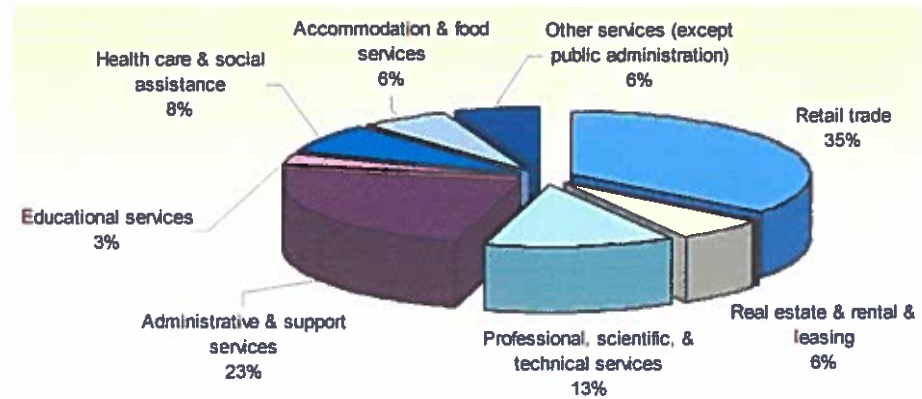
Also the city can no longer ignore the importance of sales tax that contributes a substantial amount of the city's budgetary resources.

Graph 7 shows the distribution of different types of businesses, and their percentages. It shows that the leading businesses in Castle Hills are professional, scientific, and technical services and retail trade. The first one includes legal services, accounting, tax preparation, bookkeeping, and payroll services, architectural, engineering, and related services, and computer systems design and related services. It captures 22% of the total businesses in Castle Hills. The second one includes motor vehicle and parts dealers, furniture and home furnishings stores, electronics and appliance stores, building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers, food and beverage stores, health and personal care stores, gasoline stations, clothing and clothing accessories stores, sporting goods, hobby, book, and music stores, miscellaneous store retailers, and non-store retailers. The retail trade businesses amount to 22% of the total businesses in Castle Hills. Health care and social assistance with other services (except public administration) account for 13% each of the total business distribution.



Graph 7 : Distribution of Businesses in Castle Hills (2002)

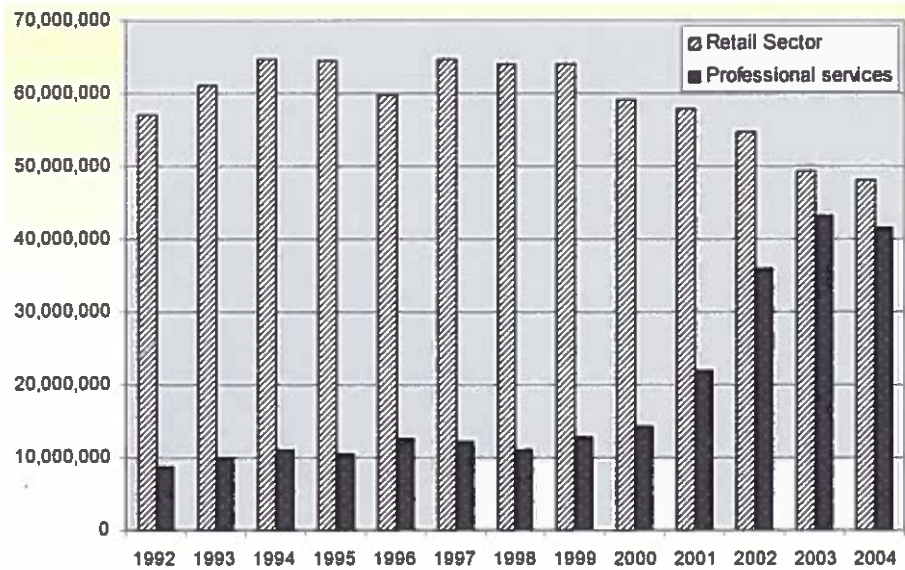
The composition of each of the sources of sales tax in the year 2002 is shown in the following figure.



**Graph 8 : Contribution of Businesses to Sales Tax income of Castle Hills (2002)**

The professional sector and the retail sector are maximum contributors to the sales tax revenues of the city. The health care sector and the administrative support services also contribute significantly to Castle Hills's income. The following graph shows the general trends in the contribution of retail and professional services to the sales tax. It is implied that the contributions are representative of the actual earnings of the respective sectors.





**Graph 9 : Contribution of Retail and Professional services to Sales Tax income of Castle Hills**

The contribution of the professional services has certainly increased significantly since 1999. On the other hand the retail sector has suffered a decline in income from 1999 onwards. These trends could be a result of a change in the market or could also be a result of some localized factors that negatively affected the retail sector. It is highlighted that by the nature of its trade, the retail sector is relatively more sensitive to localized physical changes (such as road construction) than the professional sector.

✓ The map D2 shows the geographic distribution of the retail commercial sectors in the city. As is common with such businesses they are clustered around the major transportation nodes and corridors. These also face competition from similar businesses that located just across the city boundary limits. The data from TxDot reveals that since 1999-2000 there have been ongoing road improvements in and around Castle Hills. The location of these road improvements highlights possible access problems to the existing retail markets. Thus possibly these improvements also have had a role

in decreasing the sales revenue of these retail markets by limiting access to them.

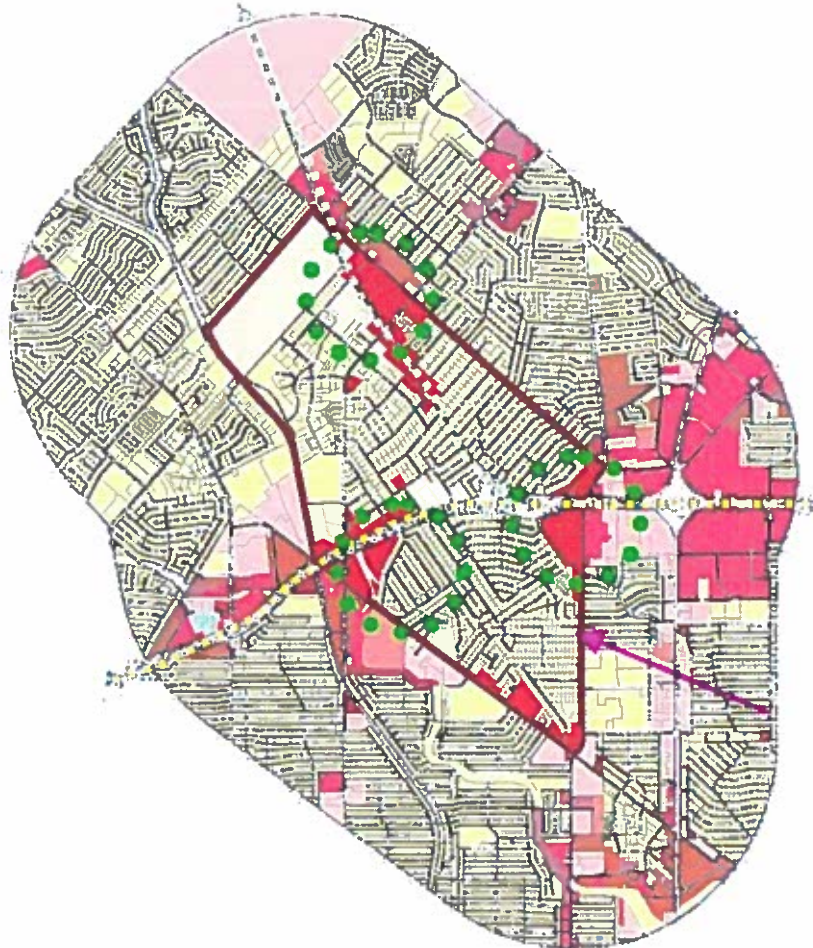
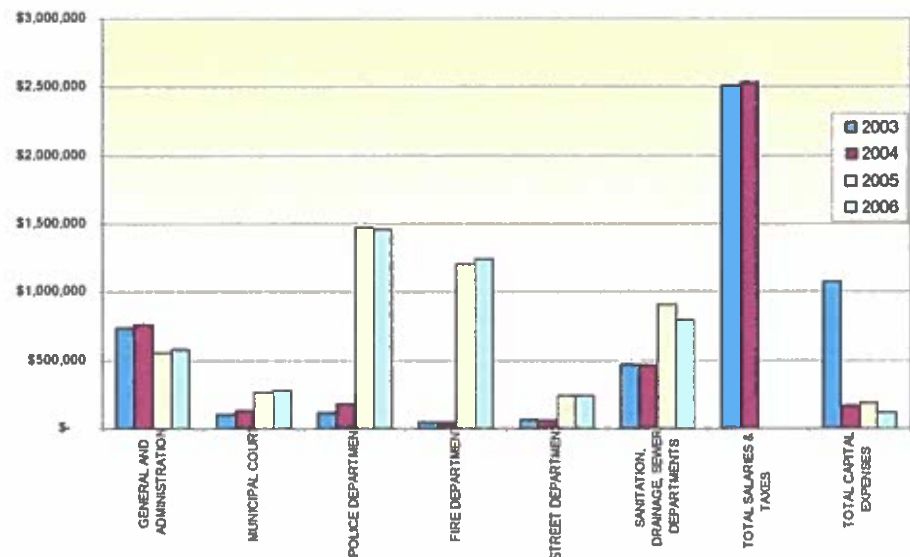


Figure 16: Location of commercial nodes in Castle Hills

Graph 10 shows the pattern of expenditure since 2003; 2005 and 2006 are city estimates provided by the local administration.



Graph 10 : Budgetary expenses of Castle Hills

The above graph may be misleading as the total salaries heading was merged into the respective sectors in the year 2005. Taking that into account the pattern of expenses reveals a similar pattern throughout. Only capital expenses seem to have peaked in the year 2003. This is as a result of a capital purchase made for the fire department in that year.

## Demographics and Economic Base SWOT Analysis

A SWOT Analysis is a strategic planning tool used to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats involved in a planning effort, a project, or a development venture. Strengths and weaknesses are internal to an organization (in this case the city). Opportunities and threats originate from outside. A SWOT analysis, usually performed early in the planning or project development process, helps to evaluate the various internal and external factors that the proposed development may face.

### Strengths

1. The homogeneity of the population in Castle Hills implies a selected niche market for the appropriate type of business. A consistent level of higher income range would certainly appeal to medium to high end businesses like professional services and quality retail.
2. As a service to the population with a high median age, the city has continued to maintain a high efficiency of emergency response services. This provides an intrinsic advantage to the city as it would attract people desiring a higher standard of living.
3. The higher property values and good quality of housing ensure a niche high end residential market in the San Antonio region.

4. There is some vacant commercial floor space in the existing commercial complexes that can attract targeted businesses. A location quotient analysis has been undertaken to identify such business in the following section.
5. Some of the commercial areas are still single floor and thus have room for vertical expansion by at least another floor. For example, the commercial complex on Blanco is single story; whereas the nearby commercial areas are all double storied.

## Weaknesses

1. The whole of the city is built up leaving little room for future development except in selected vacant lots.
2. The existing sales tax rate is at its maximum, and the sales tax has very little room for further increase.
3. The increase in the income from selective traffic enforcement has been a steady contributor to the city income. This is a variable source of income and is prone to sudden erratic decline. Also, the city runs the risk of developing a reputation as a “speed trap.”
4. The primary source of income of the city is the property tax, which may decline in coming years as the value of houses declines with increasing age of the structures.

## Opportunities

1. There exist denser residential areas around the city that can serve as a potential market.
2. The city is in close proximity to the international airport and is extremely well connected with the rest of the region.

3. The city offers a location advantage to high end professional businesses and retail firms with high quality office complexes.
4. The proximity to specialized health services and facilities coupled with the peaceful ambience makes it a preferred residential choice in the localized region.

## Threats

1. New commercial development near the Blanco intersection with 410 could attract competing retail establishments.
2. The surrounding neighborhoods may in the near future improve their existing infrastructural facilities and provide better living conditions at comparatively lower costs.
3. The expansion or in-migration of more social uses as a result of the local ambience may result in increase of tax-exempt land in the city.
4. The aging housing stock may not be able to compete with newer comparable lots in the nearby areas.

## Location Quotient Analysis

The Location Quotient technique is the most commonly utilized economic analysis method. It was developed in part to offer a slightly more complex model to the variety of analytical tools available to economic base analysts. This technique compares the local economy to a reference economy, in the process attempting to identify specializations in the local economy. The location quotient technique is based upon a calculated ratio between the local economy and the economy of some reference unit. This ratio, called an industry "location quotient" gives this technique its name. Location quotients are calculated for all industries/businesses to determine whether or not the local economy has a greater share of each industry than expected when compared to a reference economy. If an industry has a greater share than expected of a given industry, then that "extra" industry employment is assumed to be "Basic" because those jobs are above what a local economy should have to serve local needs.

This analysis reveals localized regional advantages that promote agglomeration of such businesses. These advantages include existing subsidiary and support services that provide new firms with experienced subcontractors and finance, distribution, and marketing firms familiar with the needs and problems related to the particular industry. Thus agglomeration economies include the support

infrastructure that in turn becomes available to support additional capital and employment expansion. . Expansion, therefore, tends to come in those businesses that already exist in an area, increasing the concentration of firms in a particular business. It should be noted that although even smaller regions, such as cities, can experience agglomeration economies, the potential for expansion is limited due to limited innovation possibilities.

In the case of Castle Hills we identified the following businesses as the primary contributors to city employment:

1. Professional, scientific, & technical services
2. Retail trade
3. Real estate & rental & leasing; and
4. Health care & social assistance

In order to calculate the location quotient for each of these businesses we compared it with the next unit of economic aggregation, the San Antonio Metropolitan Area. The data for both geographic units are tabulated below:

**Table 6 : Income of Business in \$1000 (2002)**

Type of Business	Castle Hill	San Antonio Metropolitan Area
Professional, scientific, & technical services	33,737	3,753,355
Retail trade	91,556	18,780,427
Real estate & rental & leasing	14,990	1,591,106
Health care & social assistance	19,668	7,511,627
All Businesses	263,215	67,295,554



The location for each type of business was calculated as :

$$LQ = \frac{\frac{\text{Income}_{\text{Castle Hills}}}{\text{Total Income}_{\text{Castle Hills}}}}{\frac{\text{Income}_{\text{San Antonio MA}}}{\text{Total Income}_{\text{San Antonio MA}}}}$$

The location quotient analysis results are tabulated below:

**Table 7 : Location Quotient Analysis for Selected Businesses in Castle Hills**

Type of Business	Location Quotient
Professional, scientific, & technical services	2.30
Retail trade	1.25
Real estate & rental & leasing	2.41
Health care & social assistance	0.67

A LQ that is greater than zero provides evidence of basic employment for a given industry. When an  $LQ > 1.0$ , it can be concluded that local employment is greater than expected and it is therefore assumed that this "extra" employment is basic. These extra jobs then must export their goods and services to non-local areas which, by definition, makes them Basic sector employment. The above analysis reveals that professional services, real estate and retail trade businesses stand to benefit from agglomeration of economies in Castle Hills.

However, it is highlighted that although such concentration or dependence is not inherently bad, the local economy becomes

extremely sensitive to the prosperity or decline of the particular key industry(s). Should such a key or basis industry suffer serious declines in demand and production, the local economy loses the employment and income generated by the industry. The decline in the earnings of the retail sector in the past years may thus have been a major cause of the increased budgetary deficit of the city.

Further, as the city has a limited economic base, it is imperative that it maintain its location advantage in the respective sectors so as to benefit from the agglomeration of economies. In the recommendations section the ways and means to do so will be discussed in detail.

## **Recommendations**

Through the literature survey some innovative possible revenue sources were identified, as follows:

### **Impact or development fee**

Impact fees or development fees are funds used to build a portion of new infrastructure that provides services to new development. Impact fees are based on the type of land use being developed, the building area, and gross site area of the proposed development. The city charges the impact fees based on the estimated demand the development will place on city services and the estimated taxes the new development will generate to pay for infrastructure. Impact fees are considered equitable. It is a one-time fee and is generally used for new construction rather than maintenance.

### **Sales tax**

As approved by the legislature, local governments or cities can collect a special sales tax for economic development and allocate a portion of it towards infrastructure projects. The residents of the city

have to approve and vote in favor of this, for it to take place. The major advantage of this sales tax is that it can provide a consistent source of revenue. It is also tied to inflation as it is administered on a percentage basis. However, the disadvantage in implementing sales tax is that it may not be as equitable as some other taxes.

### **Traffic violations**

The revenue source from traffic violation fines is generally used to fund transportation projects by local governments. This is not a constant revenue source and can generate considerable public opposition.

### **Lodging taxes**

Under this tax, tourists often become the payers. Many states authorize lodging taxes to fund tourism – related transportation facilities. In Nevada, a room tax is funding road improvements along Las Vegas Blvd. Some other places that allow this tax are New Orleans, South Carolina, and Texas.

### **Tax increment financing**

Tax increment financing is a tool that local governments can use to publicly finance needed structural improvements and enhanced infrastructure within a defined area. These improvements usually are undertaken to promote the viability of existing businesses and to attract new commercial enterprises to the area. The cost of improvements to the area is repaid by the contribution of future tax

revenues by each taxing unit that levies taxes against the property. The additional tax revenue that is received from the affected properties is referred to as the tax increment. This revenue can be used to improve the transportation infrastructure of that area. This is most widely used method as it provides more revenue for overall improvement of the area. In Texas, areas using this technique are called Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones, or TIRZ.



## Land Use

The goal of this report is to examine the land uses and zoning within the City of Castle Hills and identify sources of potential revenue. This report covers the current uses within the city, vacant land parcels, and recommendations to the city for attaining the goal.

Prepared by:

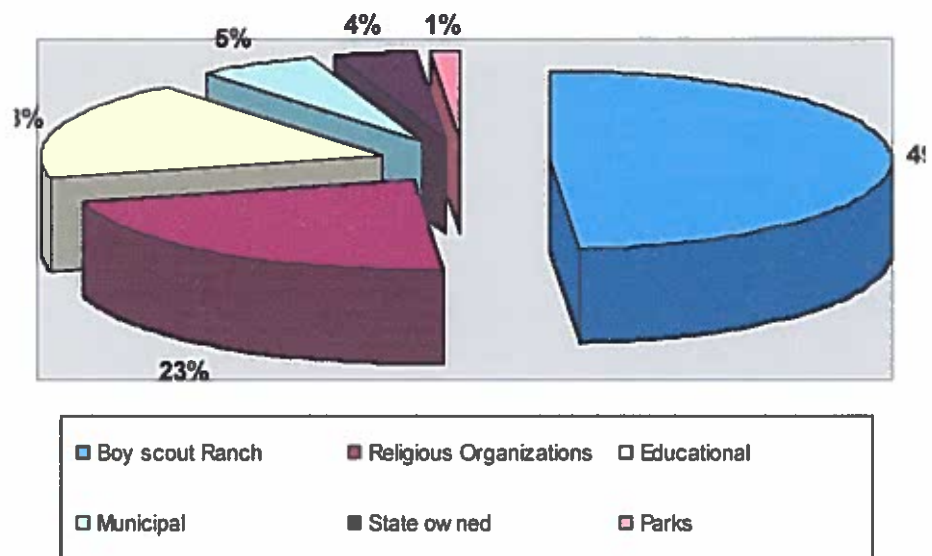
**Tom Li**  
**Lee Ann Roman**  
**John Toffer**

## Land Use

The City of Castle Hills is a predominantly residential community that is surrounded by the City of San Antonio. There is no extra-territorial jurisdiction and no opportunity for outward growth; therefore, redevelopment efforts are crucial for the city. According to Bexar County data, the land in the City of Castle Hills is 92% residential and 8% business.

Twenty two and one tenth percent (22.1%) of the land within the City of Castle Hills is tax-exempt. Tax-exempt land includes churches, parks, and schools. Churches occupy ten percent (10%) of the all land within the City of Castle Hills; all churches are automatically tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Service code 501(c)(3). In order for a church to be taxable, it would need to be under the jurisdiction and authority of the government; placing the church under jurisdiction of the government violates the First Amendment because the First Amendment of the Constitution places the church outside the jurisdiction of the government. IRS code 501(c)(3) places restrictions on churches by prohibiting them from addressing public policy. A church or religious organization can jeopardize its 501(c)(3) status by speaking out or organizing in opposition to public policy or anything that the government declares as legal. ([www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov))





According to the 1997 Master Plan, the community of Castle Hills has been divided into four (4) subsections or zones with boundaries based on existing thoroughfare patterns..

## Zone I

This zone is bordered by Northwest Military Hwy, West Avenue, Loop 410 and the Texas and New Orleans Railroad and Wedgewood. The unique feature of this zone is the presence of oversized lots of one acre or more. This zone boasts some of the largest home sites within the city. This area is primarily residential with the only non-residential parcels being Aggie Park, McGimsey Boy Scout Ranch, Antonian High School, and three churches, as well as commercially zoned parcels on Loop 410. Commercial areas are located in the far north and south, so there is residential continuity. This zone is mostly developed except for several residential tracts that have been purchased by Castle Hills Baptist Church.

The McGimsey Boy Scout Ranch is the largest tract of undeveloped land in Castle Hills. The land is owned by the Alamo Area Council and is deed restricted to allow only Boy Scout activities.

## **Zone II**

This zone is bounded by West Avenue, Loop 410, and Northwest Military Highway. This area is centrally located within Castle Hills. This zone has a mixture of low density residential and peripherally located commercial property; three churches, an elementary school, city hall, police and fire departments, and over forty businesses are located within this zone. Undeveloped acreage in this area is found along the Loop 410 frontage.

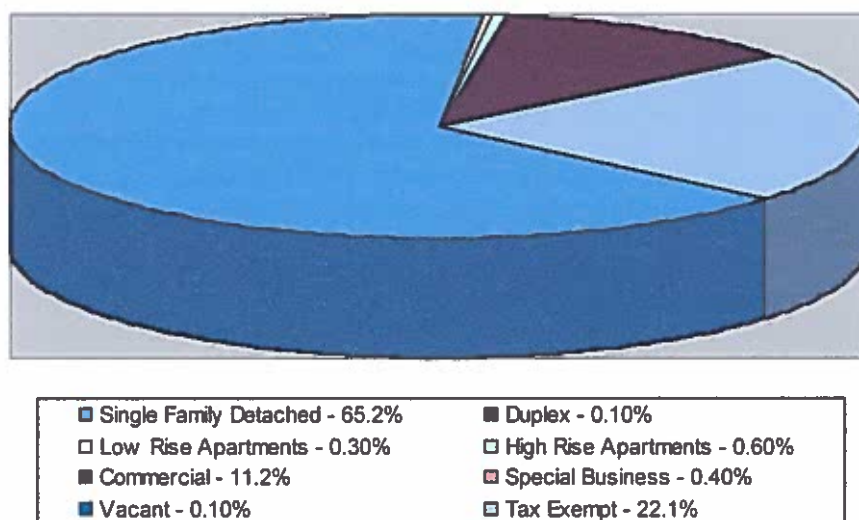
## **Zone III**

This zone encompasses an area within Blanco Road, Northwest Military, and Lockhill Selma Road. This area consists of primarily single-family housing with inlets of heavy commercial buildings. Most historical buildings within Castle Hills are located within this zone, for example: The Lodge.

## **Zone IV**

This zone is bounded on the north by Loop 410, on the east by Blanco Road, and on the southwest by Jackson Keller. This area is predominantly residential with several office buildings and churches, Jackson Keller Elementary School, Wedgwood Apartments, and H-E-B Food Pantry. This area has an undeveloped tract of land near Loop

410 that is 10.74 acres; this tract of land was recently purchased by the State of Texas "for the use and benefit of the permanent school fund." According to Bexar County Appraisal District, this plot of land, was sold to the State of Texas by E.R. Finck, Jr., and H.W. Finck, who were designated as the trustees for the land; 1.409 acre tract that is adjacent to the 10.74 tract was also sold to the State of Texas for the same purpose; the State of Texas purchased the land in May of 2005 from the trustees for approximately \$3.5 million. (Bexar County Appraisal District)



## Zoning

This zoning chart serves as a quick reference guide to the City of Castle Hills, Chapter 31 Zoning Ordinance. The information in the chart was taken directly from the ordinance. There are no conditional uses in the ordinance; all uses are permitted.

Each district within the zoning chart was designed to complement and preserve the character of the area. Districts A, AA,

B, C, D, and F are composed of regulations that will enhance and protect the residential character of the area. District E regulations are designed to protect and encourage the transitional character of particular areas within the City of Castle Hills. Districts G and H are composed of regulations that will allow development of areas within the district as well as protecting the surrounding and abutting areas.

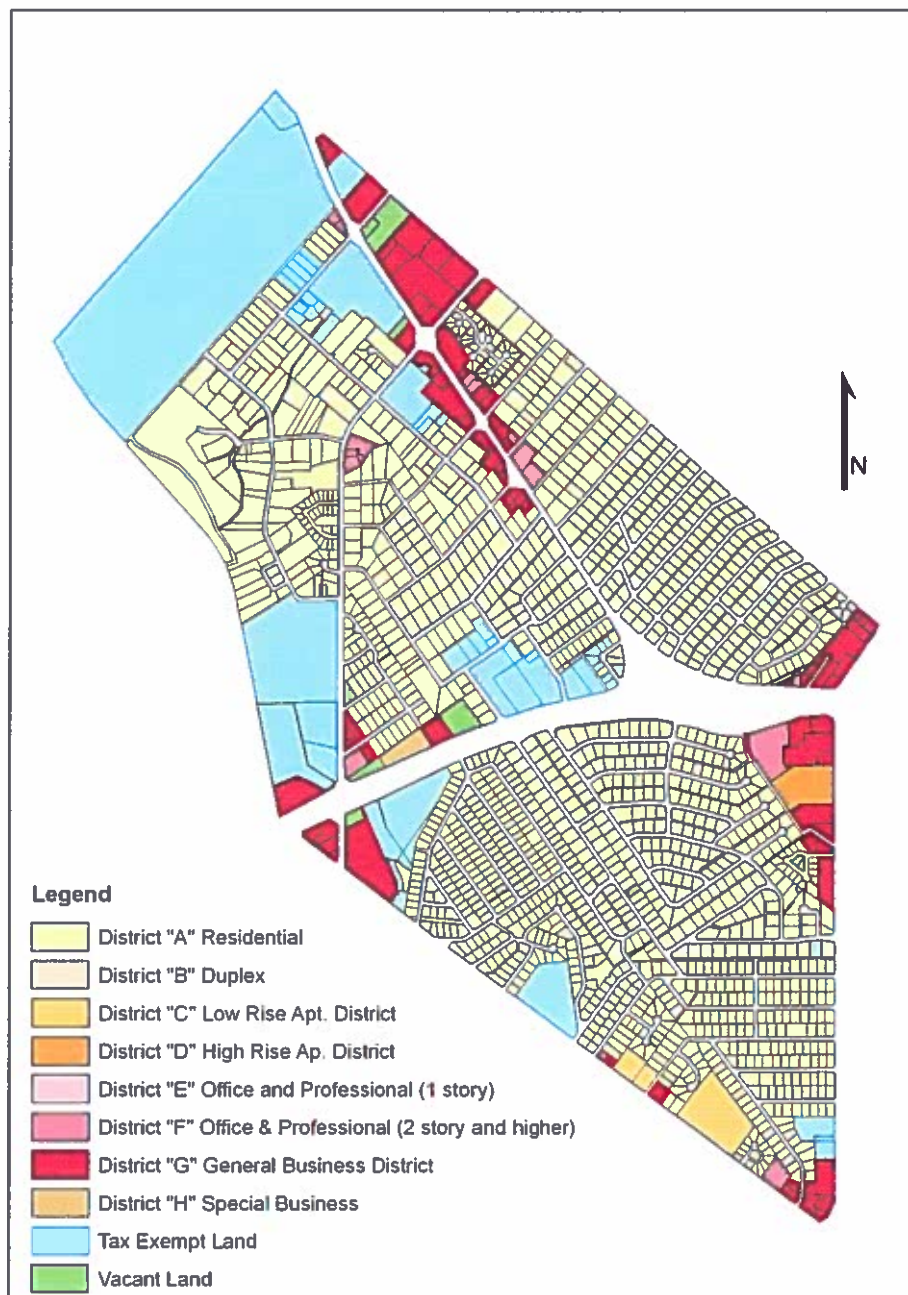
**Table 2 : Zoning Chart**

District	Zoning Type	Permit Uses	Prohibited Uses	Regulations
	Single Family	Single family dwelling Group housing for disabled Home occupations Parks Schools Churches	Commercial Industrial Apartments Mobile homes	Yard Area Parking
	Single Family / Garden Home	Single family dwelling Group housing for disabled Home occupations Parks Schools Churches	Commercial Industrial Apartments Mobile homes	Yard Area Height Masonry Parking
	Duplex Residential	Multi-family dwellings Group housing for disabled Home occupations Parks Churches Schools	commercial	Yard Area Building site
	Low-Rise Apartment	Multi-family dwellings Group housing for disabled Home occupations	Greater than two stories	Yard Area Building site
	High-Rise Apartment	Multi-family dwellings Group housing for disabled Home occupations	Greater than twelve stories	Yard Area Building site

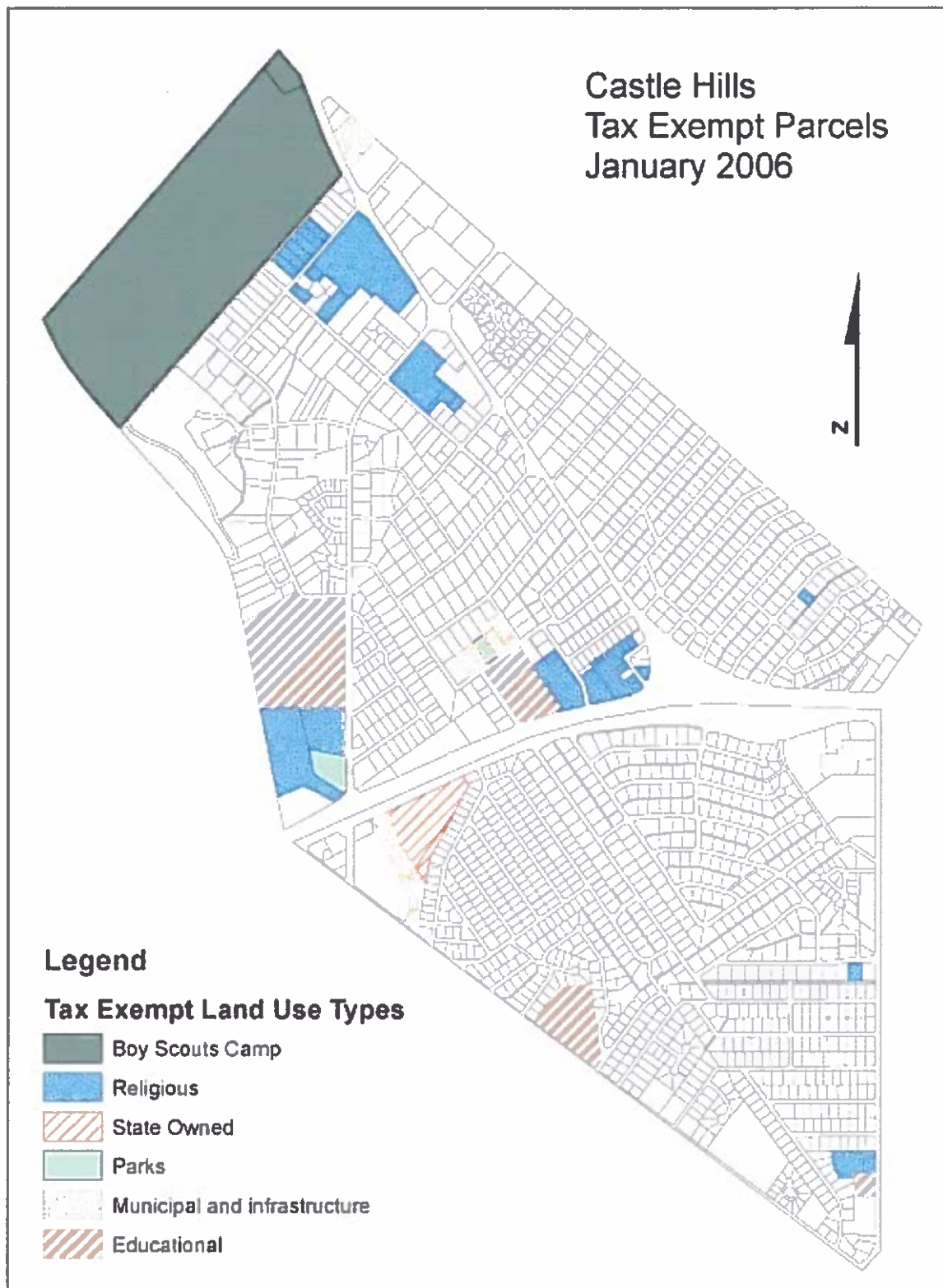
	Office- Professional	Professional offices Art galleries Photographic- studios District B- permitted uses	Greater than one story	Yard Area
	Office- Professional	Professional offices Art galleries Photographic- studios	Greater than two stories	Building site
	General Business	Restaurants Arts and crafts Automobile-gasoline service stations Banks	Greater than twelve stories	Yard
	Special Business	District G uses Wholesaling Light manufacturing	Manufacturing of toxic and/or hazardous chemicals or substances	
	Planned Unit Development	Limited to PUD in accordance with subdivision ordinance requirement regarding PUD's	Uses not shown on the PUD development plan	Area Yard Height Building coverage

\*Information gathered from City of Castle Hills – Chapter 31 Zoning Ordinance; for full descriptions, see City of Castle Hills: Zoning – Chapter 31

\*\*All listed uses are permitted, not conditional, per Castle Hills – Chapter 31 Zoning Ordinance



Map 3 : Land Use Map, Castle Hills: September 2005



Map 4 : Vacant Parcels in the City of Castle Hills





NW Loop 410 is a major arterial road linking people from the San Antonio International Airport to the west part of the City of San Antonio. The Loop is heavily trafficked and those properties lying along the two sides of the loop have a great potential for commercial activities. Parcels 2 through 6 are located along NW Loop 410 with parcels 2 and 3 on the westbound side and parcels 4, 5 and 6 on the eastbound side of the Loop. The Loop meets the City of Castle Hills on its west at Jackson-Keller Road and on its east at Blanco Road. Both Jackson-Keller Road and Blanco Road are major collector roads, so commercial activities flourish alongside them.

On the east side of the City of Castle Hills there are two large shopping malls, the Central Park Mall and the North Star Mall, located at the junction of NW Loop 410 with Blanco Road. These two large shopping malls have successfully drawn customers from the City of



Castle Hills because of its proximity and accessibility. On the west side of the City of Castle Hills, there is a railway running parallel to the Jackson-Keller Road. This makes the properties on the west side of the City less favorable for residential purposes due to noise. Nevertheless, this would not have the same detrimental effect on commercial activities. On the contrary, this creates a vibrant and active environment inviting pedestrians from the surrounding neighborhoods. This is exemplified by the establishment of an HEB grocery store and some small retail stores at the junction of NW Loop 410 and Jackson-Keller Road.

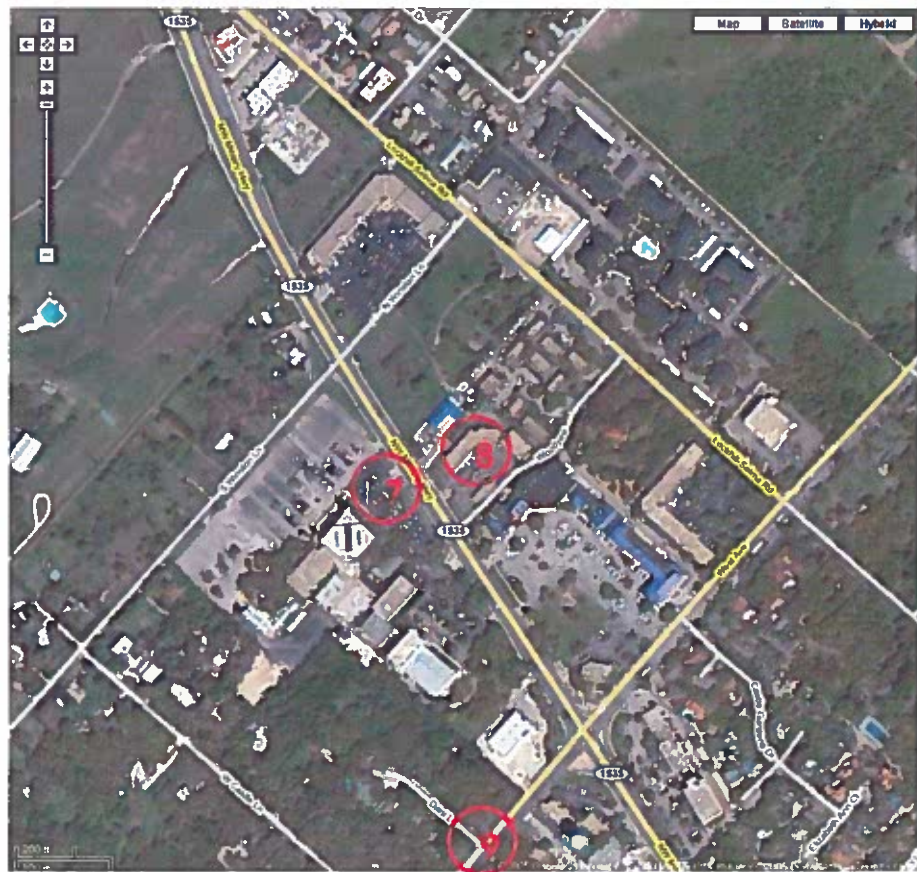
The combined land area for parcel 5 and 6 is 11.14 acres which is comparable to the adjacent parcel occupied by the HEB grocery store (8.82 acres). This large tract of land would be ideal for a large shopping center development, benefiting from the customers drawn by the HEB grocery store nearby.

The two narrow strips of land, parcels 2 (1.14 acres) and 4 (0.82 acre), are located at the corner of Loop 410 and West Avenue. Therefore, they have a locational advantage. They will be suitable for retail sales, fast food chain shops and small grocery stores serving the needs of the local residents and those just passing through. Automobile related business is another alternative, as their existence along the heavily trafficked road can avoid their encroachment on the inner rural character of the City of Castle Hills.

The medium sized parcel 3 (3.03 acres) would be good for locating hospitality services such as banking, hotels and medical services. From the demographic records, the aging population in the City of Castle Hills will pose a mounting pressure on the city for medical services. The provision of a medical center on parcel 3 can ease that pressure. Hotels and banking services are viable options as

they provide convenience services for travelers commuting between the airport and the downtown area of the City of San Antonio.

Parcel 1 is surrounded on all four sides by houses, schools and churches. Therefore, commercial activities will not be favorable so as to preserve the harmony of the environment. It can either be developed as public open space providing recreational facilities for the elderly or the children from the nearby school, or be developed as assisted living, specialty stores or offices where frequent traffic is not expected.



Parcels 7 and 8 lie between two major collector roads, NW Military Highway and Lockhill-Selms Road, and on the south side of N. Winston Lane. The area for these Parcels totals 506 acres.

Because of the close proximity to the two major collector roads, the surrounding areas have been used for commercial purposes and this parcel should not be an exception considering the cumulative effect of drawing in patrons from the nearby shopping areas. To maintain the aesthetics of the city, a height limit of one to two stories for the shopping center is encouraged. This is commensurable to the Winston Hills Shopping Center just across N Winston Lane.

The remaining vacant parcel, parcel 9 is situated next to the First Baptist Church and opposite to the Sonic restaurant across NW Military Highway. Considering the size of this parcel (0.73 acre), it would be good for locating clinical services or specialty stores of offices with low traffic volume. It also has the effect of buffering the quiet inner residential areas of the City of Castle Hills.

**A Summary of Characteristics of Vacant Parcels in the City of Castle Hills**

Parcel No.	Property ID	Area (acres)	Land Value	Total Value	Owner
1	283570	0.66	34,530	34,530	Talavera Sylvia E & Thelma
2	283637	1.14	220,000	220,000	Finck E.R. JR ET AL
3	283654	3.03	775,000	775,000	Grohman-Kahlig Sondra
4	283636	0.82	6,700	6,700	Finck E.R. JR ET AL
5	283638	10.00	1,419,000	1,419,000	Finck E.R. JR ET AL
6	283648	1.14	3,500	3,500	Finck E.R. JR ET AL
7	355702	0.70	135,680	135,680	Maribal Properties Inc.
8	355703	4.36	670,000	670,000	Maribal Properties Inc.
9	224158	0.73	155,000	155,000	Milwest JV

## **Recommendations for Land Use and Zoning:**

As stated previously, the goal of Castle Hills is to increase city revenues. After careful review of the data and research collected, the following are land use and zoning recommendations that can benefit the city and can be enforced to generate revenue:

1. Revise the City of Castle Hills zoning ordinance to allow churches a conditional use in residential areas instead of a permitted use

By making churches a conditional use, the city would have the authority to allow or not allow churches to locate in residential districts. Since the majority of land within the City of Castle Hills is residential, the change could limit future tax exempt parcels.

2. Update land use and zoning map

At this point in time, the City of Castle Hills was unable to locate a current zoning map. Unfortunately, when a customer of the city requests a rezone of parcel(s), even if the rezone is approved by the city council, it is not official until the rezone has been recorded on the current city zoning map, therefore, past rezones may not be official and should be fixed on the map immediately.

3. Increase city application fees

When customers fill out their application for a rezone, building permit, etc., the city can charge a fee. By increasing these fees, the City of Castle Hills can gain a small amount of revenue.

4. Research opportunities for businesses to locate on vacant parcels

Bringing businesses into the vacant parcels within the city creates revenue, unless the business is religious, not-for-profit, municipal, parks, educational, or state owned. The city can investigate possible incentives to bring businesses into the city and locate on the vacant parcels.

The data contained in this report was gathered from the following sources:

5. Castle Hills 1997 Master Plan
6. Castle Hills Chapter 31 Zoning Ordinance
7. Bexar County data
8. Land survey, conduct by Texas A&M University students
9. Internet data



## Infrastructure and Transportation

Infrastructure and transportation systems are essential to the functioning of all modern cities. These services are playing increasingly pivotal roles in determining the quality of a city's physical environment and the strength of its economy. This chapter discusses the existing state of infrastructure and transportation networks in the City of Castle Hills.

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### Transportation

Transportation is the movement of people, goods, signals and information from one place to another. Transport and communication systems are essential to the functioning of any modern city. There have been significant advances in technology and demands for speed of travel and communication over the last twenty years, with demands for further advances. During that period there have also been increases in the population, vehicle traffic, and economic pressures to send goods and information as quickly as possible.

The City of Castle Hills is located in northwest San Antonio. The city is very close to the San Antonio Airport (3 miles) and has easy accessibility to the major highway, I-410, that divides the city into two parts. Other roads that make the city more accessible from any part of San Antonio are Military Highway, which runs North-South to the city at the center, Blanco to the east and Jackson Keller to the west downtown (7 miles).

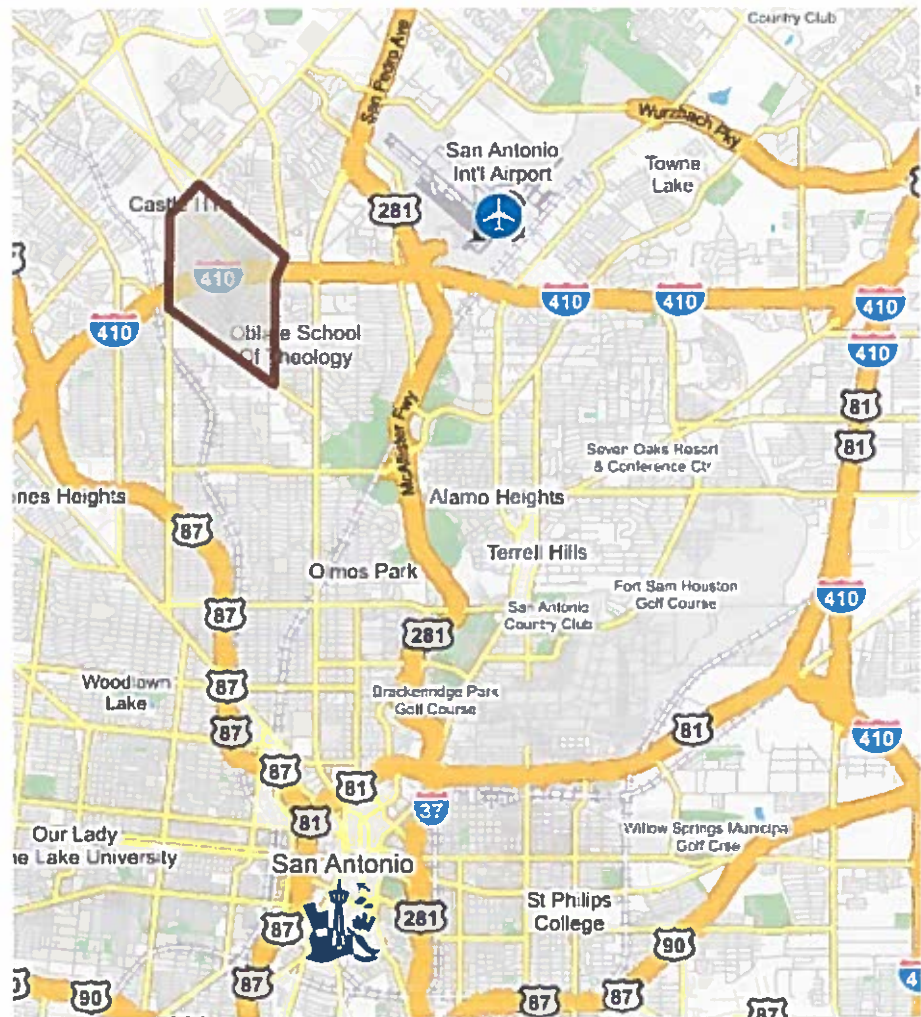
### Road Classification

Based on their function, each roadway can be classified as freeway, arterial, collector, or local streets.



## Freeways

The San Antonio region's freeway network was designed on the spoke-and-loop system with eight radials, two loops, and a spur making up the roughly 200 mile system. The freeway network puts most of the Bexar County residents within 30-45 minutes of downtown San Antonio. There are currently 993 centerline miles and 3,107 lane miles of state-maintained highway in Bexar County. About 210 centerline miles and 1,100 lane miles of this total are controlled-access freeways.



Map 4 : Regional connectivity of the city

## Loop 410

Loop 410, known locally as just "The Loop," passes through the City of Castle Hills. The Loop is also named Connally Loop for former Texas Governor John B. Connally who assisted San Antonio greatly during the HemisFair World's Fair in 1968.

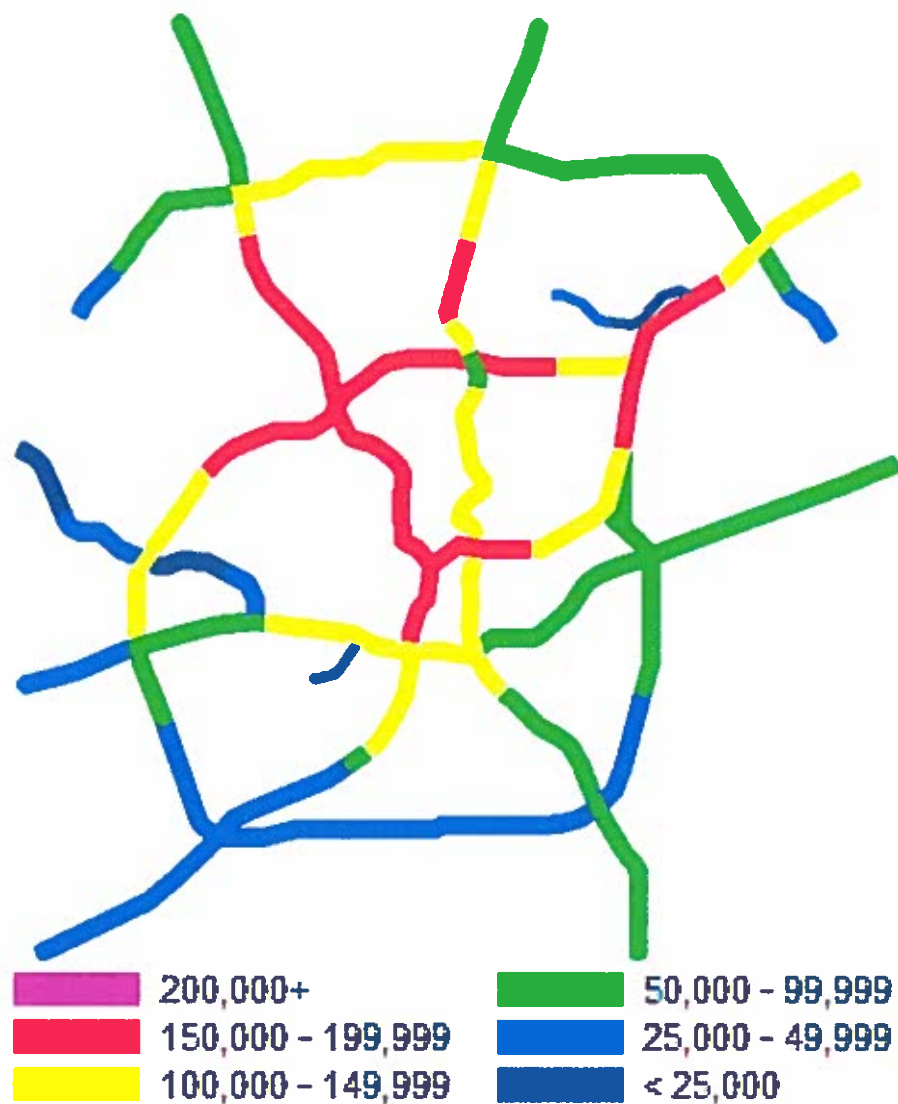


Figure 17 : Annual Average Daily Traffic -2004

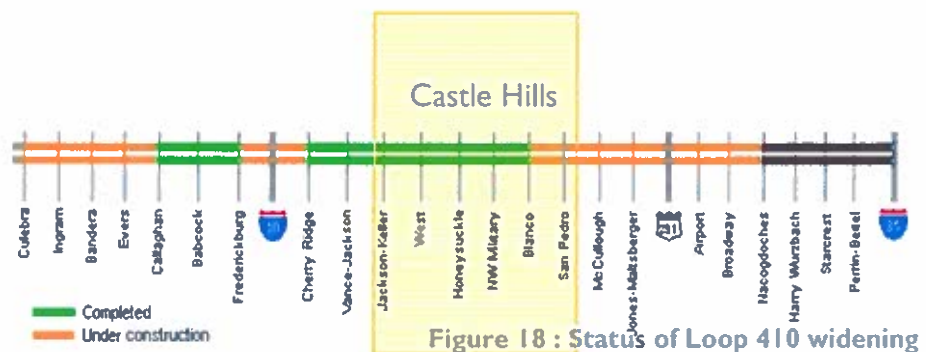
Source: The Texas HighwayMan Pages (<http://home.att.net/~texhwyman/traffic.htm>)

The Loop is one of the most heavily traveled freeways in the region and is home to most of the city's shopping malls as well as a

major portion of the area's suburban office space. The Loop also provides access to the International Airport, Stinson Municipal Airport, the South Texas Medical Center, the Southwest Research Institute, Sea World of Texas, Ft. Sam Houston, the San Antonio Missions Trail National Park, and the cities of Castle Hills, Balcones Heights, Leon Valley, Kirby, and Windcrest.

The northern part of today's I-410 route was originally part of Loop 13. The section east to NW Military was in place as early as 1950. By 1957, however, the present-day route from NW Military around the west side of the city to I-35 South was proposed. The remainder of the loop was complete by 1967, including an upgrade of the original highway (from Austin Highway to NW Military) to freeway standards. That section, however, was signed as State Loop 410 until August 1969, while the rest of the new freeway was designated I-410 as it was built. The segment from West Avenue to Cherry Ridge was expanded to 10 lanes (eight actually marked for the time being) in 1997. The section from West Avenue to Blanco was widened to 10 lanes (eight currently marked lanes) in 2005.

In 2000, TxDOT started a program to expand Loop 410 to 10 lanes across the north side of San Antonio. The expansion included the portion of the Loop passing through the City of Castle Hills. The entire stretch of the Loop within the city limits is now 10 lanes.



## Arterials

The City of Castle Hills has five arterials. These are Jackson-Keller Road on the southwest, Blanco Road on the southeast, Lockhill-Selma Road on the northeast, West Avenue on the north and northwest, and northwest Military Highway passing through the city north of the Loop.

Jackson Keller is named after Judge C.A. Keller (1851-1918), an active leader in the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, and William Houston Jackson (1803-1888), who was a Brigadier General in the Civil War. Jackson Keller Road provides an east-west link between North McCullough Avenue, West Avenue, San Pedro Avenue and Vance Jackson Road, which runs north-south just outside the city. Jackson-Keller Road separates the City of Castle Hills from the City of Balcones Heights on the east and also provides access to downtown San Antonio via San Pedro Avenue.

Military Highway is also State Highway 1535. Military Highway is one of the city's connections to Loop 1604, also known as the Charles Anderson Loop. The city's prime retail establishments are located on Military Highway.

Blanco Road is also State Highway 2696, and provides access to Loop 1604 on the north, and to downtown San Antonio via San Pedro Avenue.

## Collectors

The city has three collector roads: Antler Drive, Honeysuckle Lane and Lemonwood Drive. In addition, the frontage roads along the Loop also serve as collectors.

## Local Streets

All other streets in the city are local streets that provide access to individual properties. The streets are in good or acceptable condition, as described later in this report. Most local streets are two lanes wide with sidewalks on only one side. Only a few streets end in cul-de-sacs.

## Traffic Condition

The commute times of the city residents are less than San Antonio residents. The average travel time to work for Castle Hills residents is only 20 minutes. Even for public transportation, travel time is 30 minutes which is much less than that of San Antonio (44 minutes). This shows that the city is well connected to the regional centers and has a good public transportation system. Most of the roads inside the city have relatively low traffic, although I-410 and Military highway pass right through the city (see Table I: Travel time in minutes). About 88% of the people in the city use private

automobiles to commute to work, and only 1.4% people use public transportation. Even though the city has a good public transportation system, not many people use it; this is same as San Antonio. Interestingly, 8.3% of the people work at home (see Table 2: Transportation to work).

**Table 3 : Travel time in minutes**

	<b>Castle Hills</b>	<b>San Antonio</b>	<b>Texas</b>
Average travel time to work	20	24	25
Average travel time using public transportation	30	44	47
Average travel time using other transportation	20	23	25

*Source: 2000 census, U.S. Census Bureau*

**Table 4 : Transportation to work**

	<b>Castle Hills</b>	<b>San Antonio</b>	<b>Texas</b>
Public transportation	1.4	3.8	1.9
Car, truck, van or motorcycle	88.3	90.9	92.3
Walk	1.6	2.2	1.9
Work at home	8.3	2.2	3

Table 5 : Average annual daily traffic

LOCATION	1990	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	'90-'04 % CHG
W of I-35N	109000	127000	121000	124000	113000	117000	7.00%
Nacogdoches Rd.	155000	178000	167000	166000	141000	151000	-3.00%
Broadway	172000	189000	179000	179000	150000	162000	-6.00%
McCullough Ave.	187000	179000	180000	182000	165000	159000	-15.00%
Blanco Rd.	190000	199000	184000	185000	157000	164000	-14.00%
Vance Jackson Rd.	180000	201000	183000	195000	159000	165000	-8.00%
Evers Rd.	142000	177000	174000	170000	156000	174000	23.00%
S of Bandera Rd.	116000	157000	152000	158000	142000	144000	24.00%
N of US 90W	79000	109000	110000	113000	99000	101000	28.00%
S of US 90W	51000	82000	80000	82000	70000	81000	59.00%
Pearsall Rd.	25000	46000	53000	51000	44000	48000	92.00%
W of I-35S	20000	39000	41000	45000	38000	42000	110.00%
W of Poteet-Jourdanton Hwy.	14000	33000	29000	29000	28000	30000	114.00%
E of Poteet-Jourdanton Hwy.	14300	33000	28000	30000	30000	34000	138.00%
W of Roosevelt Ave.	17100	38000	32000	38000	39000	37000	116.00%
E of Roosevelt Ave.	16800	37000	31000	38000	38000	35000	108.00%
W of I-37	18700	36000	35000	33000	38000	40000	114.00%
E of I-37	18700	35000	35000	36000	41000	42000	125.00%
Southern Blvd.	22000	39000	38000	39000	44000	47000	114.00%

Source: Texas HighwayMan Pages (<http://home.att.net/~texhwyman/i410.htm>)

### Public Transportation

The City of Castle Hills is well connected to San Antonio by public transportation system. VIA Metropolitan Transit Authority provides bus service to the city. The city is served by 4 different VIA routes: 652, 651, 534, and 602. Bus frequency varies from half an hour to an hour. There are 12 bus stops in the city along Blanco, Jackson-Keller, Military Highway, West Avenue and Lockhill-Selma.



Figure 19 : Fixed route and para-transit service

In addition to public transportation buses, the city is well served with paratransit services provided by VIAtrans. VIAtrans provides complimentary door to door paratransit to individuals who have disabilities that prevent them from using fixed route bus service. Interestingly, VIAtrans also has a fixed pick up/drop off point in the city at the Assisted Living and Alzheimer's Residence on Jackson-Keller.



## Upcoming Transportation Projects

The San Antonio and Bexar County Metropolitan Planning Organization has included the roadway improvement of Blanco, Lockhill-Selma and Military Highway in its Transportation Improvement Projects list. Lane expansion has been recommended for all three roads. Emphasis is being laid on construction of sidewalks, curbs and bike lanes on all three roads as well.

**Table 6 : List of upcoming transportation projects**

Project	Description	To	Funding Program
Blanco Road (FM 2696) 3121.0	Glade Crossing Reconstruct & expand from 2 to 4 lanes w/turn lane, sidewalks & bike lanes	Wilderness	7-Metro Mobility \$10,325,000 January 2007
Blanco Road (FM 2696) 3496.0	Wilderness Oaks Expand roadway from 2 to 4 lanes with center left turn lane, bike lanes and sidewalks	W. Oak Estates	7-Metro Mobility \$10,143,000 January 2007
Blanco Road (FM 2696) 3210.0	Lockhill Selma Construct sidewalk on west side of roadway	West Avenue	7-Metro Mobility \$528,988 August, 2005
Lockhill Selma 3139.0	West Avenue Reconstruct & expand from 2 to 3 lanes (curbs, sidewalks, bicycle lanes & drainage)	N.W. Military	7-Metro Mobility \$1,889,688 October, 2005
NW Military Hwy (FM 1535) 678.0	Braseview Reconstruct & expand from 4 to 6 lanes w/ CLTL(curbs, sidewalks, drainage)	Huebner	7-Metro Mobility & 11,864,000 May, 2006

Source: Transportation Improvements Program

### Physical Infrastructure

Physical infrastructure of a city includes water, sewerage, electricity, transportation, communication, and all the structural elements that facilitate urban development. Modern cities and urban systems are heavily dependent on infrastructure networks to make their economic and social systems function effectively. An efficient infrastructure facilitates delivery of information, goods and services, supports economic growth and assists in achieving social objectives such as raising the living standards and educational levels.

Transportation appears to have significantly more impact on the design and functioning of the cities than other components of physical infrastructure. Therefore, transportation issues are discussed in a separate section. This section discusses the current state of physical infrastructure in the City of Castle Hills.

### Electricity and Natural Gas

City Public Service (CPS) provides electricity to the City of Castle Hills. CPS is the nation's largest municipally owned energy company providing both natural gas and electric service. The San Antonio area, including the City of Castle Hills, is not yet deregulated. Therefore, there are no competitive electric service providers in the

area. The energy charges for residential use in Castle Hills are around 6.275 cents per KWh for all KWh. These charges are quite low when compared with those for the City of Houston, where electricity service is provided at 17 cents per KWh for first 1,000 KWh.

The electricity charge for commercial usage in City of Castle Hills and the City of San Antonio is 6.31 cents per KWh for the first 1,600 KWH. Surprisingly, the electricity charges for commercial usage in the City of Houston is 11.6 cents per KWh, which is lower than most of the residential rates.

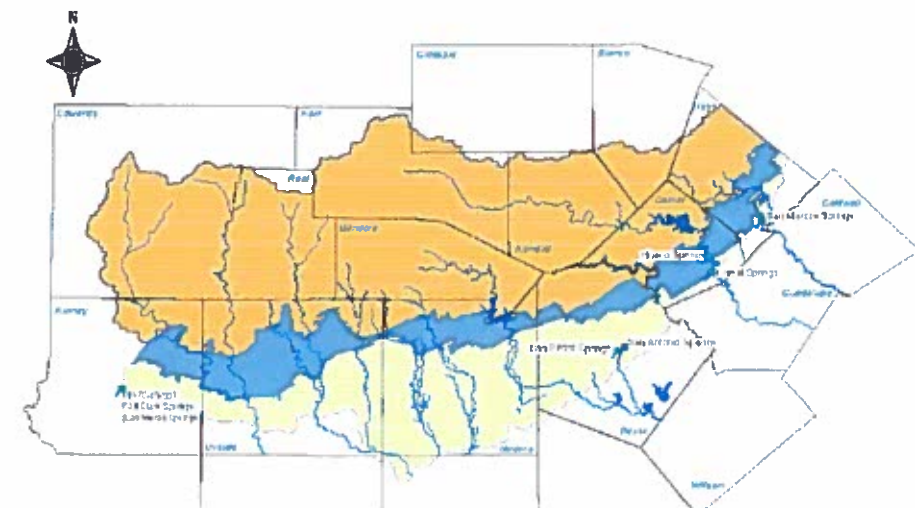
City Public Service (CPS) also provides natural gas connections to the residents of the City of Castle Hills. CPS charges about 43.8 cents for every 100 cubic feet (CCF) of gas consumption. CPS also provides natural gas to the City of San Antonio at the same rate. However, for the commercial establishments, the natural gas charges are 39.8 cents for every 100 cubic feet.

## **Water Supply**

The Bexar Metropolitan Water District (BMWD) supplies water to the City of Castle Hills. The water is drawn from the Edwards Aquifer and Medina Lake, located approximately 25-30 miles from the City. BMWD uses an ultra-filtration plant that draws water from the Medina River and removes solids, organics and pathogens by forcing the water through a series of thin membranes. Preliminary treatment removes suspended solids, such as sediment, dirt and other organic material from the water. Using membrane filtration technology, the water is filtered by being pressured through several hundred very small ultra-filtration pores. The water is then

disinfected to kill disease-causing microorganisms and to further improve the quality and safety of the drinking water.

Annual estimated groundwater discharge for Bexar County from the Edwards Aquifer for the year 2004 was 328,900 acre feet. The BMWD charges an "Edward Aquifer Authority fee" of \$0.01549 per 100 gallons. The water supply fee for the City is \$0.1378 per 100 gallons. The 9 million gallons per day capacity plant is the largest ultra-filtration water treatment plant in the United States and the first in Texas.



**Figure 20 : Aquifer**

Source: Edwards Aquifer Authority, *Hydrologic Data Report, 2004* ([http://www.edwardsaquifer.org/pdfs/Hydro%20Reports/Hydro\\_Rept04.pdf](http://www.edwardsaquifer.org/pdfs/Hydro%20Reports/Hydro_Rept04.pdf))

## Sewers

San Antonio Water System (SAWS) is the only sewage treatment agency in this area. The City of Castle Hills owns the sewerage network within the city limits. The City's sewerage network connects with, and routes the sewerage into, the SAWS system. The

SAWS network carries the sewerage to its treatment facilities and bills the city based on sewerage transferred to its system.

The sewerage charges for the City of Castle Hills are the same as those for the City of San Antonio and are approximately \$8.00 for the first 1,500 gallons. In the case of Houston, the sewerage charges are \$5.74 upto 3,000 gallons. Therefore, the sewerage charges for the City of Castle Hills are the same as that for the City of San Antonio, but are higher than those for the City of Houston.

### **Garbage collection:**

Solid waste is picked up by the city and transported to Covell Gardens (approximately 20 miles one-way from the city, in southwest San Antonio off Old Pearsall Road outside SW Loop 410). Browning-Ferris Industries owns the landfill. The city charges a flat fee of \$10.16 per month for garbage collection, plus \$2.53 as a brush fee and \$1.30 as an environmental service fee to all its residents, bringing the total to \$13.99 per month per household.

The solid waste and garbage collection rate for the city of San Antonio is \$12.21 per month. There is no fee for residential garbage collection in the City of Houston. Garbage and light trash are collected weekly. Therefore, it is evident that the City has fairly high garbage collection rates.

### Social Infrastructure

A social infrastructure is important as it promotes a safe and healthy environment for people to live in. This section includes city hall, police services, fire services, education services, health services, and other services such as post office, churches and libraries.

#### City Hall

The City of Castle Hills has a Mayor/Council type of municipal government. The city has four departments; police, fire, public works, and municipal court. It has 60 full-time employees and up to 11 part-time people who are under contract as needed. The city also has a Zoning Commission, Board of Adjustment, and Architectural Review Committee. On July 3, 1951, the City of Castle Hills filed incorporation papers and the first location for city facilities was at 6915 West Avenue at the corner of Northwest Military Highway, where they remained until 1999 when all facilities moved to the current location, 209 Lemonwood Drive within the north part of the City of Castle Hills. The city hall has no real problems except for some inconveniences on space.

## Police Services

The police department of the City of Castle Hills provides exceptional service to the citizens. It has one station located at 209 Lemonwood Drive. The average response time is less than 2 minutes, which is one of the strengths of the police department. However, the police system does not operate its own 911 system but incorporates it in the Bexar County 911 system and provides its own dispatch services.

Table 7 : Crime in Castle Hills 2001-2003

Type	2001	2002	2003
<b>Murders</b>	1	0	0
<b>per 100,000</b>	23.8	0	0
<b>Forcible Rapes</b>	0	1	0
<b>Per 100,000</b>	0	23.8	0
<b>Robberies</b>	5	5	5
<b>Per 100,000</b>	119	119	119
<b>Assaults</b>	1	3	0
<b>Per 100,000</b>	23.8	71.4	0
<b>Burglaries</b>	29	27	34
<b>Per 100,000</b>	690.1	642.6	809.1
<b>Larceny counts</b>	217	287	241
<b>Per 100,000</b>	5164.2	6830.1	5735.4
<b>Auto thefts</b>	13	10	13
<b>Per 100,000</b>	309.4	238	309.4
<b>Crime Index (ILS)</b>	343.9	396.7	346.5

(Source: <http://www.city-data.com/city/Castle-Hills-Texas.html>)

The City of Castle Hills has a very low rate of violent crimes. Crime data for Castle Hills from 2001 to 2003 (Table 7) shows that crime levels have more or less remained the same. There was a slight

Violent?  
Property?  
greater  
on  
less

increase in the number of burglaries in 2003. The part of the crime data of most concern is that the crime index of Castle Hills is slightly more than the average US city. This data presents an 'unsafe' picture of the city even though the level of violent crime is very low. This unsafe perception is obviously harmful to the attractiveness of the city for its current and prospective residents.

## Fire Services

The fire station is located next to City Hall at the corner of Lemonwood and Persimmon Drive in Castle Hills. It is a full-time, paid department dedicated to the protection of lives and property from the destruction of fire to assist the public in medical emergencies or other catastrophic events. Currently, it has 20 full time employees, one Chief and one Assistant Chief. The fire service is mainly funded by the city.

The fire department operates 24 hours, 7 days a week. All the employees are arranged for 3 shifts, each of which is comprised of 6 men, and each shift is responsible for 24 hours standby with 48 hours off thereafter. Shift change occurs at 7 am per day. The fire department provides fire, first respondent for EMS, search and rescue, vehicle extrication, etc, within the area of 2.5 square miles. The equipment in use includes:

1. 1995 Chevrolet Rescue Truck
2. 1998 E-one 75' Aerial Ladder Truck with 1500 GPM pump
3. 1989 1250 GPM Pump Truck

The department is using a Bullard Thermal Imaging Camera to detect small differences in temperature which will allow the department to do a variety of things including locate people when



visibility is restricted by darkness or smoke, search for hot spots in a fire, or check for gas leaks. In 2004, the Department received approximately 750 calls with a large majority of them being First Responder calls (EMS related). The Department has contracted with the City of San Antonio for Emergency Medical Service but it also does respond to start initial patient care<sup>13</sup>. The city officials claim an average response time of 2 minutes or less.

## **Education services**

The City of Castle Hills has 8 schools. Apart from these schools there are 6 more public schools within a mile range of City of Castle Hills.

## **Public Schools**

There are only two public elementary schools in the city; Castle Hills Elementary School and Jackson-Keller Elementary School.

### **Castle Hills Elementary School**

Castle Hills Elementary School is located at 200 Lemonwood Dr, Castle Hills. It has the special honor of being the oldest school in the North East Independent School District. It is for grades kindergarten to four. The main building was actually constructed in 1951 and given the name of Castle Hills Elementary (CHE) in 1952. Over the years, the original L-shaped building grew to contain a gym, cafeteria, auditorium, and library. It is now in a new and exciting stage of its long history. The original building, along with its additions, was

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<sup>13</sup> Source: E-mail from City Manager, City of Castle Hills  
Master of Urban Planning

demolished to make a new two-story school building which was completed during the 2001-2002 school year. “

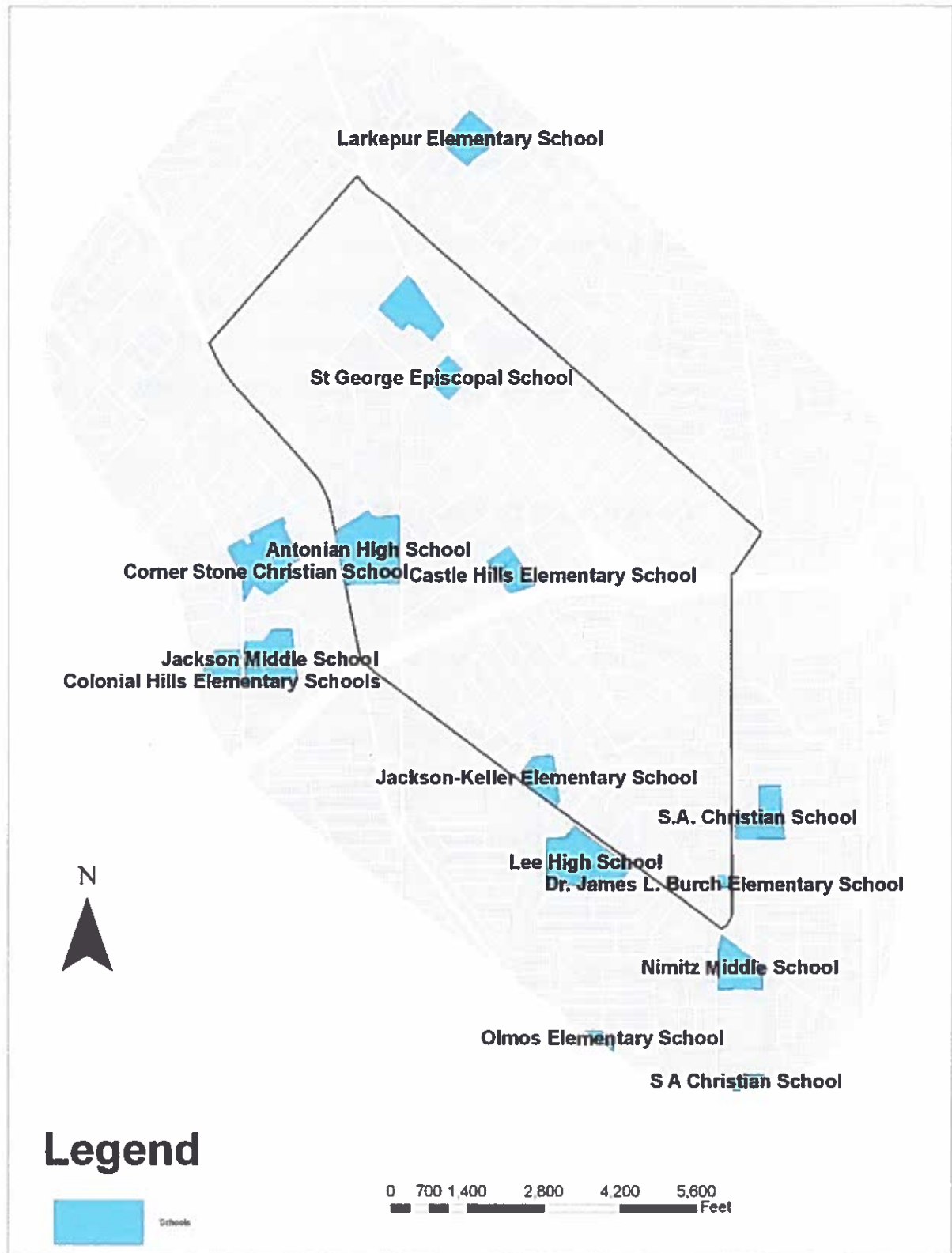
### **Jackson-Keller Elementary School**

Jackson-Keller Elementary School is located off IH-410 inside the loop of West Avenue and Jackson-Keller. It now has 640 children and includes kindergarten to fifth grade. “In 1989, Jackson-Keller re-opened as a Professional Development School in association with Trinity University. Trinity University and Jackson-Keller worked as a partnership for training college students to be teachers. In 1992, Jackson-Keller became the first Basic School in Castle Hills. “

## **Private Schools**

### **Castle Hills First Baptist School**

Castle Hills First Baptist School is located at 6900 West Avenue. This is a private elementary and secondary school with a membership in the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). It is for grades kindergarten to grade twelve.



Map 5 : Schools in and around Castle Hills

### **St George Episcopal School**

St George Episcopal School is located at 2220 N.W. Military Highway. The school is an early childhood program/day care center. It is for grades pre-kindergarten and kindergarten.

### **San Antonio Christian School**

San Antonio Christian School is located at 19202 Redland Road, San Antonio. "It provides quality Christ-centered education that is based on biblical truth and prepares students for works of service."

### **Corner Stone Christian School**

Corner Stone Christian School is located at 4802 Vance Jackson Street, San Antonio. It is a member of American Association of Christian Schools (AACS).

### **Dr. James L. Burch Elementary School**

Dr. James Burch Elementary School is located at 5703 Blanco Rd. It is for grade PK-6 and total enrollment is 372.

## **Public Schools near the city**

Other public schools, though not within the area of city limits, are very easily accessible as they are within a mile range of the city:

- **San Antonio's Robert E. Lee High School**

San Antonio's Robert E. Lee High School is located at 1400 Jackson-Keller in Castle Hills. In 1995, the high school attendance

boundaries changed which made this school lose many children from the north part of town. It is one of six comprehensive high schools in the North East Independent School District, with 2500 students and 200 professional staff members on campus in 2005. The school highlights two programs: the gifted and talented North East School of the Arts (NESA); and the International School of the Americas with an emphasis on global and cultural understanding. The NESA is a gifted and talented program in the arts, structured as a magnet school on the campus of Robert E. Lee High School. The students come from all over San Antonio/Bexar County metropolitan area.

Other schools outside the city are

1. Nimitz Middle School (located at 5426 Blanco road, San Antonio)
2. Jackson Middle School (Located at 4538 Vance Jackson, San Antonio)
3. Colonial Hills Elementary School (located at 2627 Kerrybrook Ct, San Antonio)
4. Larkspur Elementary School (Located at 11330 Bel Air, San Antonio)
5. Olmos Elementary School (located at 1103 Allena Dr, San Antonio)

School performance is very important since it can be a factor impacting the possibility of future residents selecting the City of Castle Hills as their optimal living community. Fortunately, the North East Independent School District provides campus ratings for each public school in its area from 2000 to 2005. Schools are classified in one of four levels: 1. Exemplary, 2. Recognized, 3. Academically Acceptable, and 4. Academically Unacceptable. The detailed information about the schools mentioned earlier is in Table 8. (The data were just public schools, and ratings were suspended by the

state for the 2002-2003 school years due to the first year implementation of the TAKS test.)

The information in table 9 clearly demonstrates that almost all the public schools varied their performance from 2000 to 2005. Castle Hills Elementary School and Jackson-Keller Elementary School were still keeping at the "Recognized" level, all other schools remained at the "Acceptable" level until 2005.

The ratio of students to teachers and average years of experience of teachers are also very important indicators to measure the educational quality of schools. Table 15 includes this information for 2004: Findings from Table 16 are summarized as follows:

1. Except for Castle Hills Elementary School, Jackson Middle School, Larkspur Elementary School and Antonian Middle School, the teacher/student ratios for all schools are lower than the Texas average level.
2. Only Colonial Hills Elementary School has higher average years of teachers' experience (12.9) than the average NEISD level and the Texas level.
3. None of the schools has average years of teachers' experience higher than the average NEISD level and Texas level.

Table 8: School profiles

Schools	Castle Hills Elementary	Jackson-Keller Elementary	Lee High School	Castle Hills First Baptist	St George Episcopal	Nimitz Middle	Jackson Middle	Colonial Hills Elementary	Larkspur Elementary	Olmos Elementary	Antonian Middle	San Antonio Christian	Corner Stone Christian	NEISD	TX
Student Number	585	489	1957	759	460	885	990	753	745	806	620	981	577	56,008	4,311,502
Teacher Number	36	36	157	55.5	44.1	62.7	63	55.4	46	56.7	38	92	48.5	a	299.202
S/T Ratio	16	14	12.4 7	13.7	10.4	14.1	16	13.6	16	14.2	16.3	11	11.9	a	14.41
Ave Yr Exp	11	9.1	11.8	N/A	N/A	9.2	11	12.9	9.8	8.5	N/A	N/A	N/A	12	11.8
Ave Yr Exp Dis	5.5	5.7	6.8	N/A	N/A	6.4	6.7	7.2	6.8	4.5	N/A	N/A	N/A	7.4	7.8

Source: North East Independent School District (<http://www.neisd.net/neisdinfo/campusperformances.htm>)

Table 9: School performance

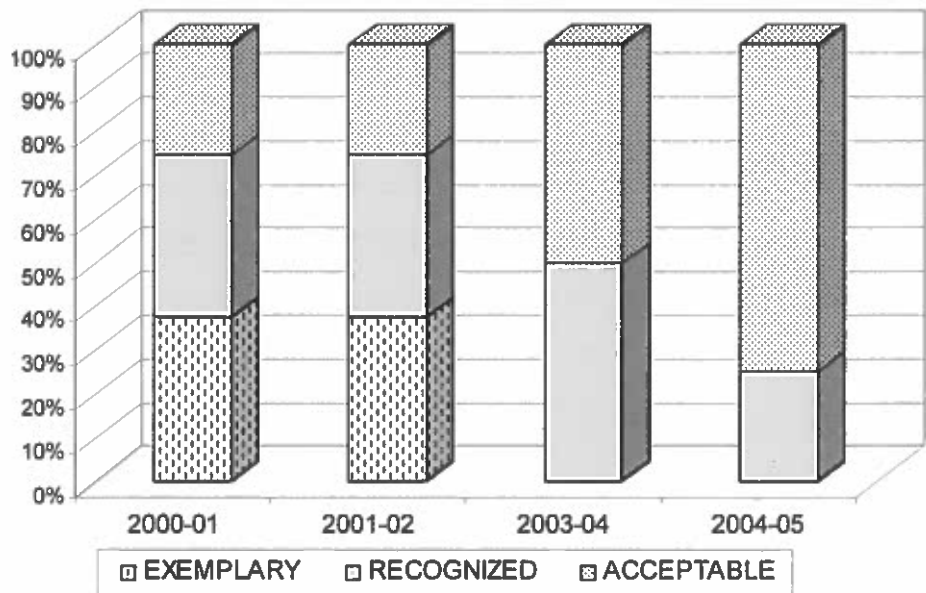
Schools	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Castle Hills ES	Exemplary	Exemplary	N/A	Recognized	Recognized
Jackson-Keller ES	Exemplary	Acceptable	N/A	Recognized	Recognized
Robert E Lee HS	Acceptable	Recognized	N/A	Acceptable	Acceptable
Castle Hills First Baptist S	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
St George Episcopal S	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nimitz HS	Recognized	Acceptable	N/A	Recognized	Acceptable
Jackson MS	Recognized	Recognized	N/A	Recognized	Acceptable
Colonial Hills ES	Acceptable	Exemplary	N/A	Acceptable	Acceptable
Larkspur ES	Recognized	Exemplary	N/A	Acceptable	Acceptable
Olmos ES	Exemplary	Recognized	N/A	Acceptable	Acceptable
Antonian MS	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
S.A. Christian S	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Corner Stone Christian S	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: North East Independent School District (<http://www.neisd.net/neisinfo/campusperformances.htm>)

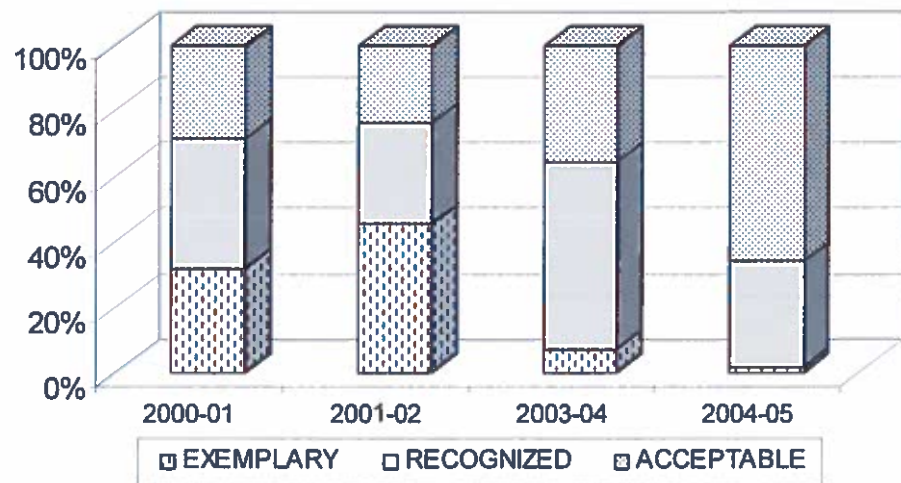


(NEISD stands for North East Independent School District; Ave Yr Exp stands for average years of teachers' experience; Ave Yr Exp Dis stands for average years of teachers' experience within the NEISD)

The performance variation of the public schools in/near the City of Castle Hills compared with that of the public schools in the North East Independent District as a whole is as follows:



Graph 11 : Performance of public schools in and near Castle Hills



Graph 12 : Performance of Public Schools in the NEISD

The above two graphs show that the performance of public schools in/near the City of Castle Hills is declining, as are the public schools in the whole North East Independent School District. Although the performance of public schools in/near the City of Castle Hills is becoming worse, they can still be considered as desirable schools to attend. Castle Hills Elementary School and Jackson-Keller School are at the “recognized” performance level in the year 2005, which is the main reason why many non-residents petition to attend them. Residents prefer Castle Hills Elementary School to Jackson-Keller Elementary School although the latter has higher TAKS test scores than does the former. This may be attributed to the fact that Castle Hills Elementary School is the oldest in the district, enjoying a long-term good reputation. “In addition, Lee High School suffers from a bad perception of its mixed demographics and its physical condition despite a recent exterior renovation. However, the perception is gradually changing.” (Source: The second feedback session with officials from Castle Hills)

## Health

There is no hospital inside the boundary of the City of Castle Hills. The hospitals within a range of six miles (12-minute drive) around the city are shown in Table 10 below:

**Table 10 : Hospitals Within Six Miles of the City of Castle Hills**

	Number of Beds	Distance to Castle Hills
Texan Heart Hospital	60	3.0 miles
Audie L. Murphy Memorial Veterans Hospital	554	5.5 miles
Kindred Hospital-San Antonio	59	3.4 miles
LifeCare Hospitals of San Antonio	34	5.6 miles
Methodist Childrens Hospital	198	5.4 miles
Methodist Hospital	1,248	5.4 miles
Methodist Specialty and Transplant Hospital	183	5.6 miles
Saint Luke's Baptist Hospital	299	4.9 miles
Southwest Mental Health Center	52	5.4 miles
Texas Specialty Hospital	30	4.9 miles
University Health System	454	5.8 miles
Warm Springs Rehabilitation Hospital	65	6.0 miles

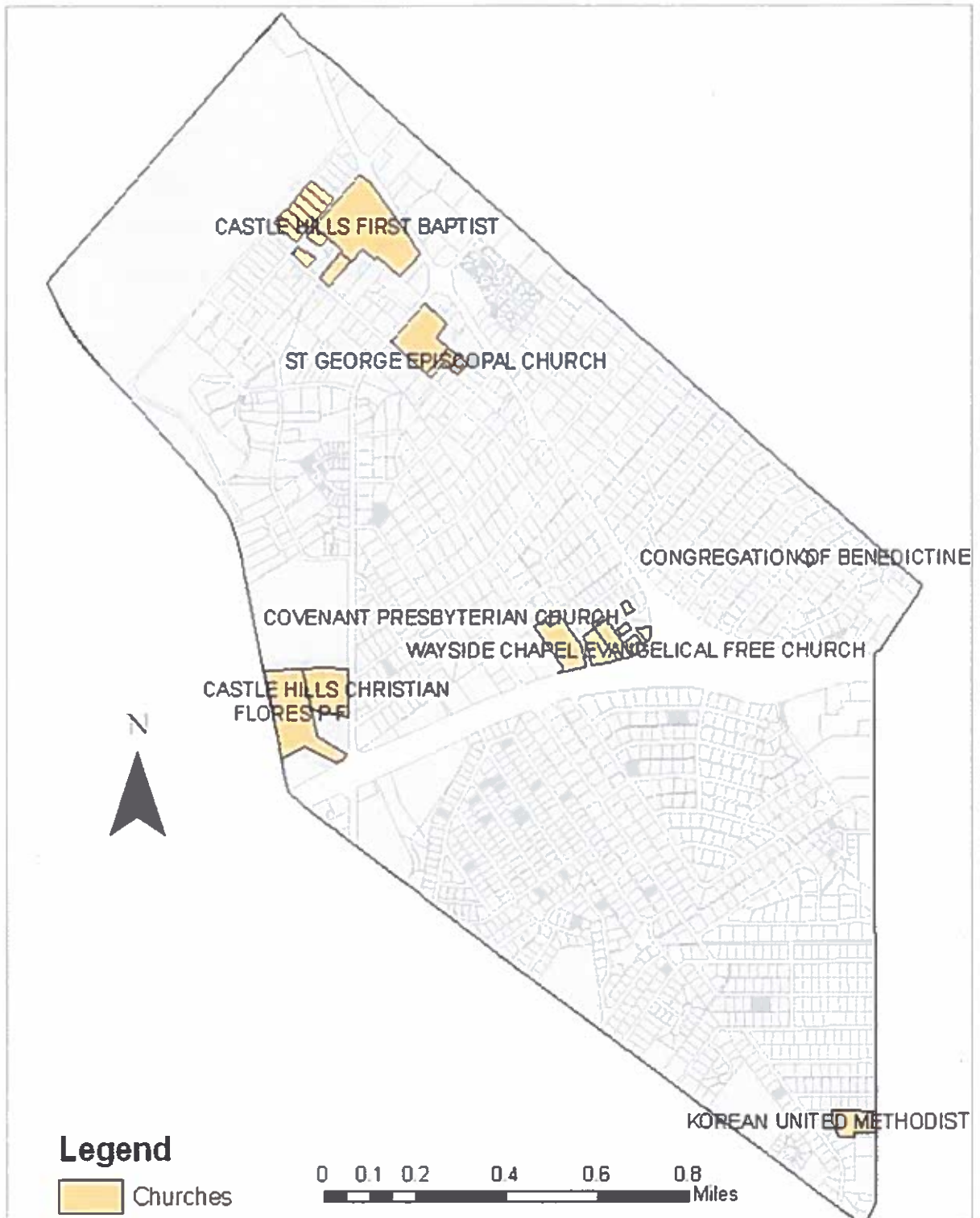
## Post Office

Castle Hills does not have any post office. There are 5 post offices within a three mile range of the City of Castle Hills. This means that the mailing address of Castle Hills residents and businesses is San Antonio, which is not good for creating city identity.

## Churches

There are seven churches in the City of Castle Hills.

1. Castle Hills First Baptist
2. St. George Episcopal Church
3. Wayside Chapel Evangelical Free Church
4. Covenant Presbyterian Church
5. Congregation of the Missionaries of the Holy Family
6. Korean United Methodist Church
7. Castle Hills Christian Church



Map 6 : Churches in the City of Castle Hills

### Public library

There is no public library in the city because Castle Hills' population is below the community development standard level, which requires at least 5,000 people to have a public library. There are two libraries within a range of three miles from the City of Castle Hills: Cody Branch Library and Westfall Branch Library.

## Infrastructure and Transportation SWOT Analysis

The following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were identified on the basis of the above observations

### Strengths

The characteristics that positively contribute towards improving the quality of life of the residents in the city are termed as “strengths”. Strengths are identified based on existing conditions. The City of Castle Hills has the following strengths.

#### Proximity to regional activity centers

The city enjoys good regional connectivity due to proximity to the Loop 410 which passes through the city. Regional connectivity is instrumental in reducing travel times and costs, thus lowering the overall cost of living. For this reason, regional connectivity is one of the “choice factors” considered by potential residents and businesses.

#### Prompt EMS response times

The city has low response times for emergency services. This can be attributed to the availability of good transportation infrastructure, and to the fact that the city has its own, well-funded

EMS department. Both the factors together ensure that the city is adequately equipped to effectively meet the emergency service requirements of the residents and businesses.

### **Rural character of the city**

In spite of being located close to a large urban center (San Antonio), the City of Castle Hills has a charming “rural” ambience due to dense vegetation cover, low traffic volumes on internal roads, and wide setbacks. The “rural” character of the city, and “urban” infrastructure services together provide a rare, much sought-after combination for the residents.

### **Good public transportation by VIA.**

The city is well served by fixed-route and para-transit services provided by VIA. Given the demographic profile of the city, with a proportionately large elderly population, the public transportation services are essential.

### **Lower traffic volume on internal roads**

In spite of the fact that the regions most traveled freeway segment cuts through the city, the internal roads in the city have very low traffic volumes. Low traffic volumes make the residential areas safe for children and elderly residents, and enhance the “rural” character of the city

## **Weaknesses**

The characteristics that do not contribute positively towards improving the quality of life of the residents in the city are termed as



“weaknesses”. Weaknesses are identified based on existing conditions. The City of Castle Hills has the following weaknesses.

#### **Tax exempt land**

Almost 20% of the total area in land parcels, and an additional 10% area used by roads, together constitute the tax exempt land area of the city. This high proportion of tax exempt land is a unique characteristic of the city. Since tax exempt land uses continue to use city services without paying the property tax that is used to maintain these services, the tax exempt land is a major weakness of the city.

#### **Insufficient walking and cycling lanes**

In spite of the “rural” character of the city, the bike and walk paths within the city are minimal. Lack of walking and biking infrastructure limits the desired walkability and bikability of the city.

#### **Comparatively high sewage rates**

The sewage rates in the city of Castle Hills are relatively high when compared with those for the City of San Antonio. Higher sewerage rates mean a higher cost of living, which is not a positive aspect. However, the sewerage rates are only a small portion of the overall cost of living and thus are not seriously detrimental for residents.

### **Opportunities**

The strengths and weaknesses provide opportunities for the city to make changes that can be useful in further improving the quality of life in the city. Some opportunities are as follows:

### **Improved schools**

Though the schools in the city have better academic standings than those in the surrounding area, the academic standings of the schools in the city and nearby areas have rapidly fallen over the last four years. This can be a hurdle in attracting younger households to the city.

### **Upcoming transportation projects**

TxDOT has plans to introduce new walking and biking infrastructure within the city area. These projects could significantly reduce the city's burden of investment in transportation infrastructure. The fact that the major roads of the city are state roads provides an opportunity for the city to concentrate efforts in these areas.

## **Threats**

Like the opportunities, the city faces some threats, both from within and from outside, that limit the city's ability to attract more residents and businesses. Some threats are as follows:

### **Sewage system**

The age of the city's sewerage system, and the high cost of the sewerage service keep certain kinds of businesses away from the city. Improving the efficiency of the sewerage system could prove beneficial in attracting certain businesses and facilitate better and intense use available land and other resources.

**Academic standings of the schools**

The declining academic performance of the school limits the city's attractiveness to younger households that seek to relocate closer to good academic institutions. Since the rankings have gone down considerably in the last four years, the city must address the issue as high-priority, or create a vision of itself that focus more on attracting households with no children.

### **Benchmarks and Opportunities**

Schools are one of the most important amenities which attract families to settle in any place. The elementary and high schools in the city are below the average standard stated by the Texas state and NEISD. The city should partner with the NEISD and strive to achieve the 2001 school standards. The city can contribute by developing the school areas, by improving the walkability and bikability, and incorporating traffic calming measures.

The City of Castle Hills has a fairly good system of VIA bus services for its transportation needs. The city can extend the service to areas that are not currently served to further improve mobility of the city residents.

TxDOT is improving the four major arterials of the city namely Blanco, Lockhill Selma and NW Military Road. The city should concentrate on improving the road conditions for the segments of internal roads that are below the city's average road condition.

## Windshield Survey

An evaluation of road conditions was performed on September 30, 2005 in the City of Castle Hills. Roadway condition was evaluated using a drive-by technique. The physical characteristics of each road were noted, including total number of lanes, street direction (1-way / 2-way), medians, sidewalks, bike paths, amount of traffic, noise levels, street lighting, drainage and aesthetics.

General road surface conditions were observed and arranged in four categories. Roads were determined to be either in good condition, satisfactory condition, poor condition or in need of urgent repair. Pedestrian friendliness was gauged by the presence of sidewalks, crosswalks, road crossing traffic lights, curbs, and other features such as medians.



Figure 21: Road condition and aesthetics

Overall the aesthetics of the roads were evaluated in three categories: good, satisfactory and poor. A road with good aesthetics

is one which has trees, is pedestrian friendly, has good drainage, is well lighted, and blends in with its surroundings. Satisfactory aesthetics includes roads that have acceptable pedestrian use, are lighted and have a level road surface. Roads with poor aesthetics are ones which have poor road surface, are not pedestrian friendly and are in stark contrast with the surroundings.

### Observations

A majority of the roads are in satisfactory and good condition. Few roads are in poor condition. No road is in need of urgent repair. Roads identified to be in poor condition were Biltmore, Blued Lane, Persimmon Drive and part of Lockhill-Selma. Overall road condition is satisfactory and there is no need for any urgent road repairs.

The roads are not pedestrian friendly. Most of the roads do not have sidewalks. A few roads like Blanco have a sidewalk on one side.

A majority of the roads have good aesthetics; they mix with surroundings very well. The roads are designated in the satisfactory category mainly because of lack of pedestrian facilities.

Even though I-410 passes right through the City of Castle Hills, still the traffic on the inner roads is low. The windshield survey shows that traffic volume is very low on all the local streets.



**Figure 22: Roads of Castle Hills**

A majority of the roads inside the City of Castle Hills have inadequate street lighting and street drainage.



Map 7 : Existing Road Conditions in City of Castle Hills



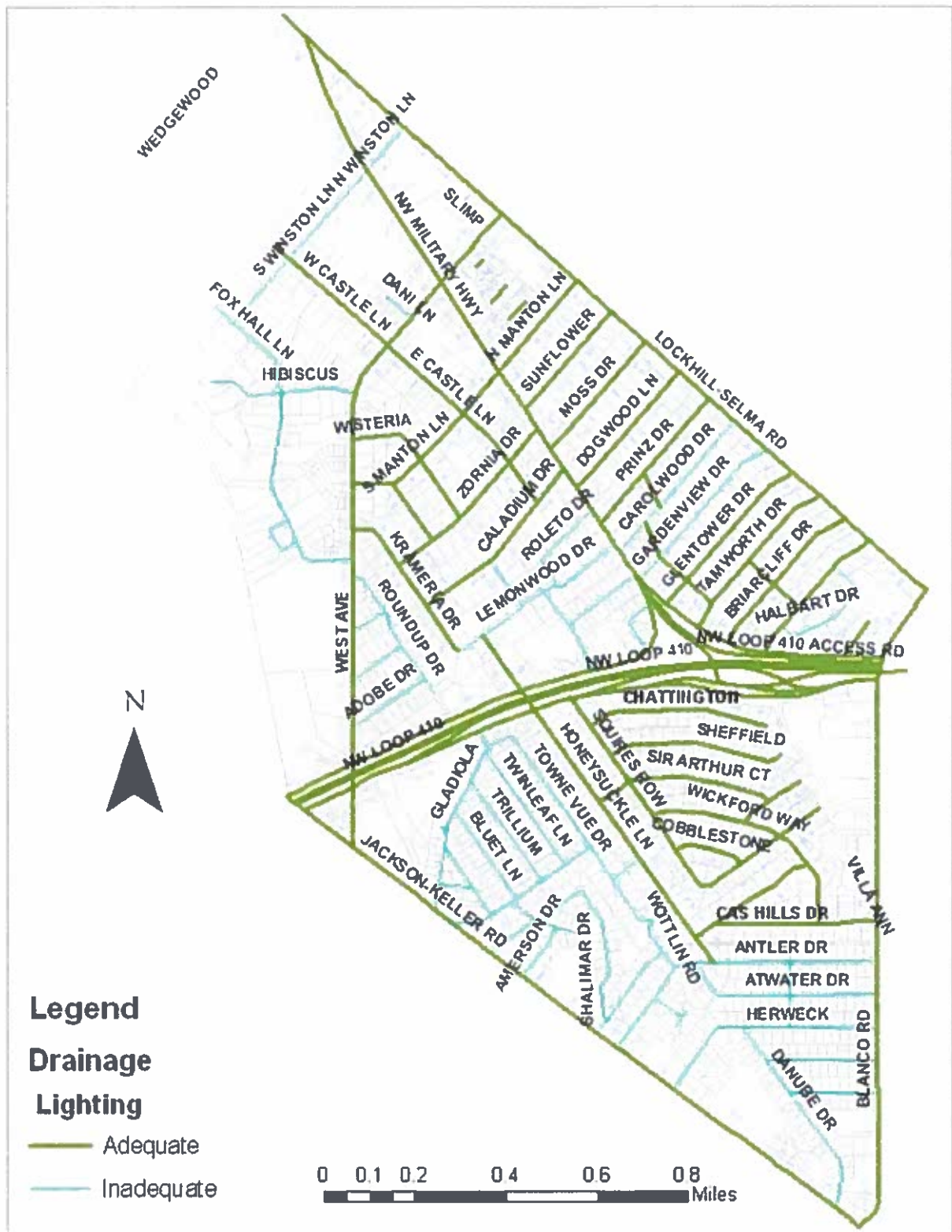


Figure 23: Street Lighting and Drainage

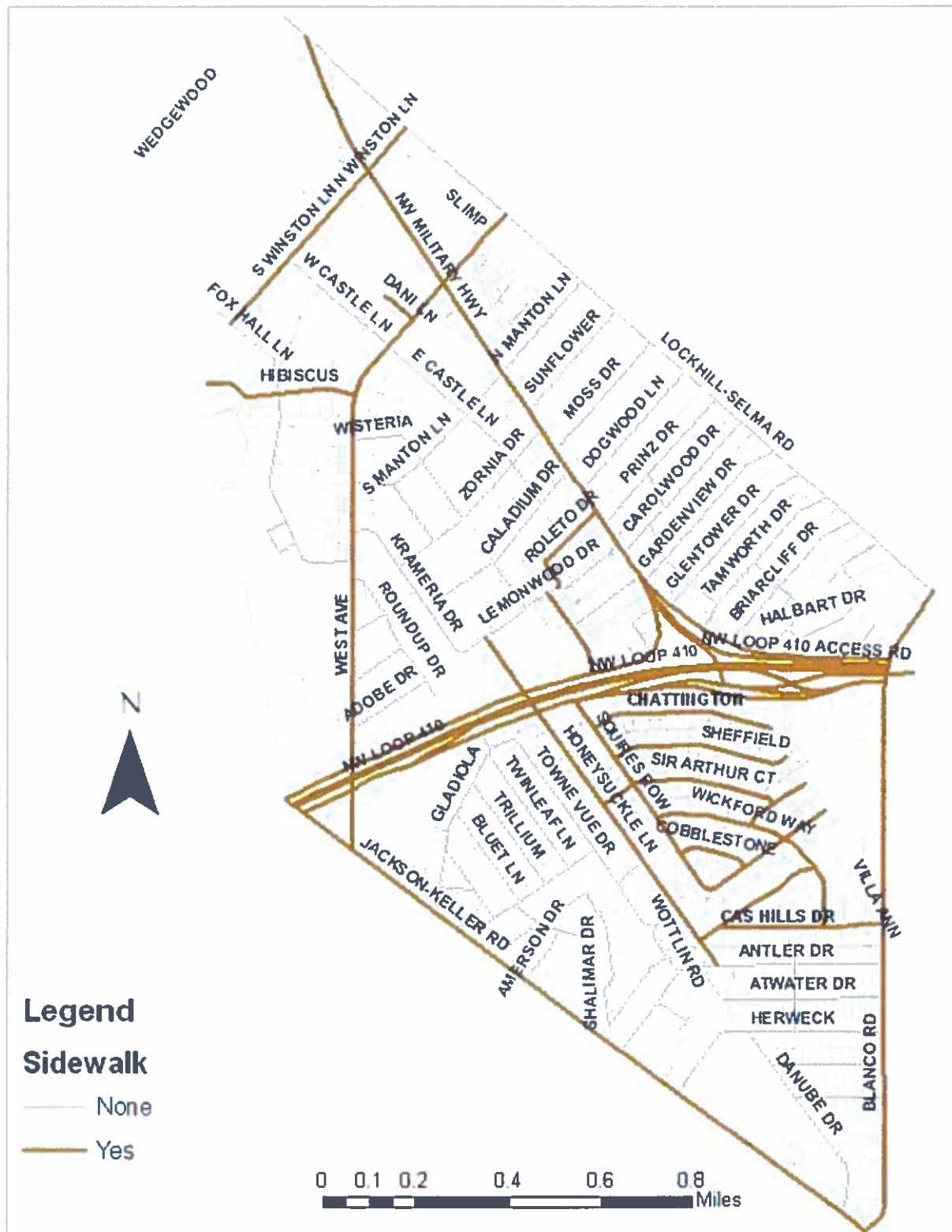


Figure 24: Streets with sidewalks

## Recommendations

After working mostly in separate groups for months the students came together to compare group recommendations for the city. The outline that follows is a list of the collective recommendations.

### **Establish a Vision for Castle Hills**

1. Proactively set the direction for development in Castle Hills by revamping the comprehensive plan, bringing the official zoning map up to date and revising the zoning ordinance.
2. Propose a zoning code Amendment to make churches a conditional use in residential areas, instead of a permitted use.
3. Possible conservation district overlay for the northern section of the city to protect the character.
4. Look at adopting standards aimed at the protection of the Edwards Aquifer.
5. Develop marketing strategy for inspiring development in Castle Hills
6. Urban Logo and Slogan project to help identify Castle Hills from the surrounding area.
7. Use the logo and slogan on street signs, overpasses, landscaped areas etc., in order to increase awareness of city identity and to visually mark certain areas as belonging to Castle Hills, not San Antonio

### **Recognize the City's History**

1. Add a historic resource section to the Comprehensive Plan
2. Establish a conservation district to protect the older section of the city.
3. Look at starting a bed and breakfast near the northern edge
4. Create an inventory of current and future historic resources
5. Start a local historic register to recognize those resources that have contributed to the city's history
6. Create a comprehensive history of the city
7. Start a city archive

**Invite Customers and Visitors into the Commercial Core of Castle Hills**

1. Conduct a phased upgrade of roads and the aging sewer system
2. A preferred location for commercial development is at the intersection of Loop 410 and Blanco, diagonally across the new commercial development. The surrounding area can be developed as an aesthetically pleasing activity area with food court etc.
3. Create east and west gateways at Loop 410 to attract drivers
4. Erect signs that announce the arrival into Castle Hills from nearby spots along Loop 410
5. Establish Corridors along major streets to attract customers to the commercial zones
6. Install unified street design elements along Military Highway and West Avenue to create a sense of place and to beckon travelers towards the commercial core of Castle Hills
7. Design elements could include street lights, decorative elements on lamp posts, benches, pavers on sidewalks, medians, etc...
8. This work could coincide with TXDOT addition of sidewalks and biking lanes to Military Highway that is due to be completed in 2007
9. Investigate the possibility of partnering financially with TXDOT on some of these items
10. Involve the business and residential community around the commercial core in the preparation of a plan to seek economic development suggestions and potential financing resources
11. The corridors' emphasis would be on economic redevelopment and aesthetic improvements of aging commercial properties
12. Implement soft-scaping to decrease the hard urban edges that can form during development

13. Implement street-scaping to increase the beautification of the corridors
14. In the commercial areas crosswalks, sidewalks and walking paths should be created to increase walkability for the customers
15. Consider selective vertical expansion of existing commercial zones to increase visibility and available retail space
16. Offer incentives for new commercial businesses to move in
17. Develop the vacant parcels adjacent to West Avenue and Loop 410 (Western Gateway)
18. Look towards physically reinvigorating retail at Blanco and Loop 410 (Eastern Gateway)

### **Develop Plans to Invigorate the Southern Tip of Castle Hills**

1. South Castle Hills should also have a strong sense of place
2. A small competitive rivalry between North and South Castle Hills could benefit the city overall
3. Businesses along Jackson Keller or Blanco Road could build up to the southern tip of Castle Hills southward along Jackson Keller or Blanco Road
4. A landmark could be placed indicating the southern tip of Castle Hills

### **Others**

1. Negotiate with the Boy Scouts for recreational use of their facilities
2. Look at the possibility of imposing impact fees

## Implementation

To accompany the recommendations given earlier, a team of students worked together, brainstorming to come up with a list of implementation strategies to help the city get started on its path to revitalization. These strategies include design ideas, financial strategies, and legal consideration.

Prepared by:

**Christina Croxell**  
**Stephan Gage**  
**Kevin Gifford**  
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**Ji Li**  
**Sze Lun Li**  
**Jordan Maddox**

### Design Implementation

#### Design Suggestions:

- City Branding
  - Logo
  - Gateways
  - Entrance Signage
  - Corridors
- Commercial Area Design Guidelines
- Streetscape Improvements & Landmarks
  - Public Art
  - Uniform Signage Throughout Entire City
  - Landscaping
- Tree Ordinance
- Redevelopment/Re-Zoning

#### How to Accomplish

- Partner with TxDOT, the city needs to align itself with current projects that TxDOT already had planned in order to establish gateways, streetscaping and signage improvements.
- Hold a citizen art competition for public art and landmarks
- Have local artists design different city logos, then let citizens vote

### Municipal Urban Design and Landscape

Castle Hills gets much of its reputation from its beautiful natural landscape, although development has diminished some of that



landscape. Castle Hills is mostly developed, although considerable natural green space remains, on private property; thus this resource could be threatened by further development. However, natural visual resources can be expanded and protected on public and private property through landscape and tree ordinances, unified urban design standards and greenways. Extensive tree cover, particularly native Live Oaks, is a great asset to Castle Hills that exemplifies its natural, country-like setting. Maintaining the atmosphere provided by these trees throughout the city helps distinguish the City of Castle Hills from adjacent areas and boost economic possibilities by maintaining a strong sense of place and quality of life for its citizens.

The landscape and urban design aesthetic appeal of a community is very important, providing cohesiveness to an area that promotes a sense of community. By providing unifying design features, such as lighting, signage, and material of sidewalks, the community feels this local connection and the city distinguishes itself further from surrounding communities. The challenge lies in the creation of ways to tie seemingly disjointed areas together. However, understanding the purpose of aesthetics to the community must be addressed first. The overwhelming purpose is to promote a sense of place, which gives the residents and businesses pride in their community that lends itself to a purpose and desire to beautify the community, utilize the community, and even attract business from surrounding areas.

Castle Hills needs to assert itself as a city separate from San Antonio. The citizens of Castle Hills are proud of their status as an incorporated city, but this status is not easily recognizable by those not from the city. When driving through Castle Hills on the loop and when entering it off the Northwest Military exit, it is not clear that one is driving through a city separate from San Antonio. In order to

encourage economic development, one of the first steps the city should take is to improve its visibility. The easiest and best way to accomplish this is through distinctive urban design. The addition of entrance gateways, streetscape improvements, landmarks, and even a city logo will go a long way to draw attention to the city as independent and distinct from San Antonio.

## City Branding

### City Logo

Castle Hills needs to establish a simple city logo that it can use on signage and on its water tower. Ideally, the city should hold a community meeting to discuss the reasons for establishing a logo (i.e. branding, marketing, economic development). The city should either devise the logos itself or enlist the aid of local artists to design a few different options. The community members should then be allowed to vote on which logo they feel will best represent their city. (See Figures 1-3).



CITY OF  
**CastleHills**

Figure 1: Proposed Logo by Sudhish Verma



Figure 2: Proposed Logo by Jordan Maddox



Figure 3: Proposed Logo by Kevin Gifford

## Examples of Other City Logos



Figure 4: City of Bryan, TX Logo

Source: [www.bryantx.gov](http://www.bryantx.gov)

Figure 5: City of Pearland, TX Logo

Source: [www.silverlaketexas.com](http://www.silverlaketexas.com)

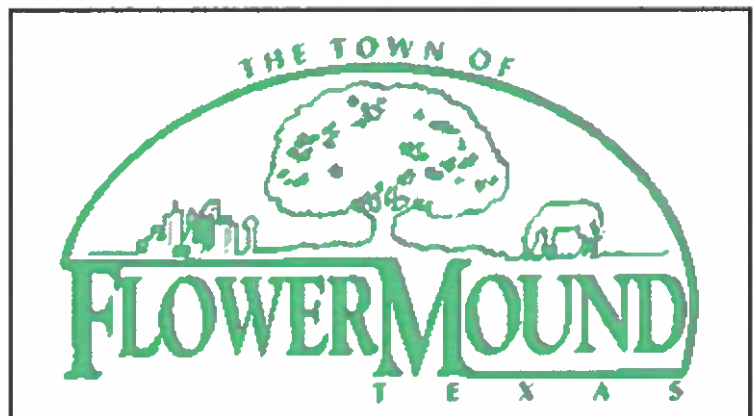


Figure 6: The Town of Flowermound, TX Logo

Source: [www.mckamyband.org](http://www.mckamyband.org)

## Gateways

There are five main gateways that Castle Hills should take advantage of to promote the city by signage, landmarks or some type of distinguishable entryway. As part of the branding of the city, new city logos, welcome signs or city landmarks should be very noticeable

to drivers entering and exiting the city limits. The NW Military and Loop 410 entry way and the Blanco/410 overpass are two particular areas we targeted for new signs and landmarks. Other entry points labeled on this aerial include: West and Loop 410, Military and Lockhill-Selma, and Blanco and Jackson-Keller.



### Entrance Signage at the Blanco Overpass

Currently, there is only a small, blue/green sign announcing the entrance to the City of Castle Hills. Most people driving on Blanco probably do not take note of the sign because it is not distinctive or even big enough to be noticeable. The city should work with TxDOT to devise a way to announce, in large lettering, the entrance to the city on the side of the 410 overpass (see figures 1-2).

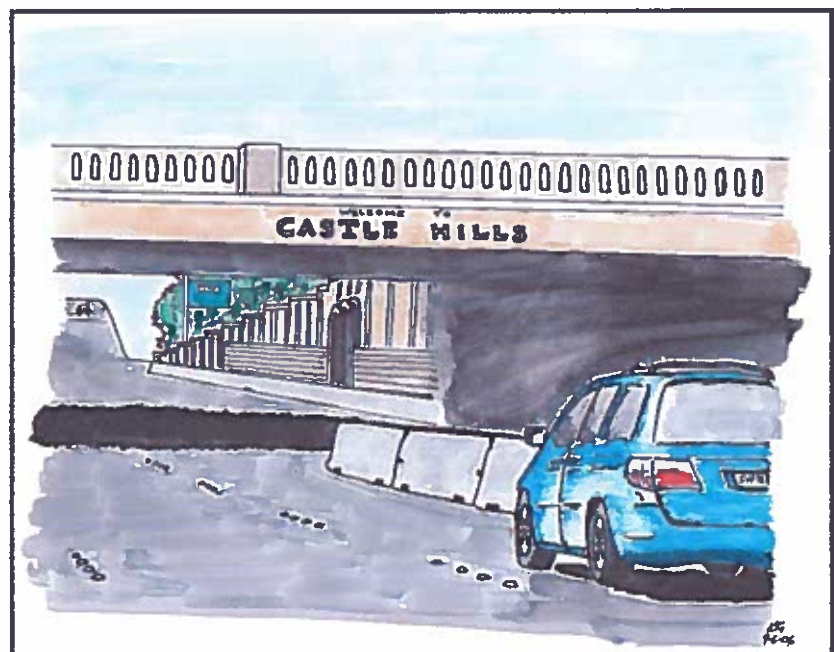


As an alternative, if TxDOT will not allow the City to hang a sign, the City should look into finding local artists to paint a welcome sign.



**Figure 7: Blanco Underpass, Existing**

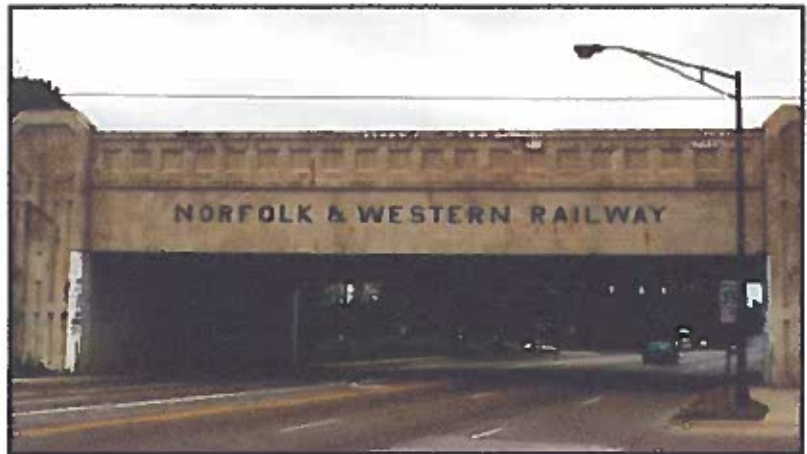
*Photographed by Jordan Maddox*



**Figure 8: Blanco Underpass, Poposed**

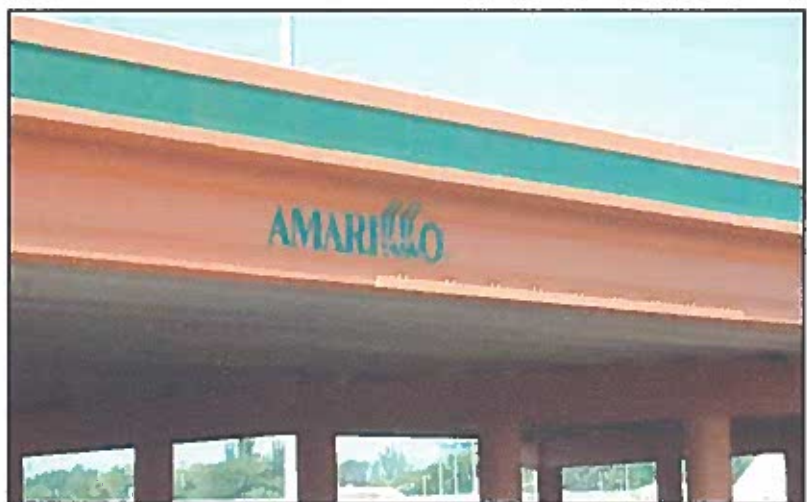
*Designed by Kevin Gifford*





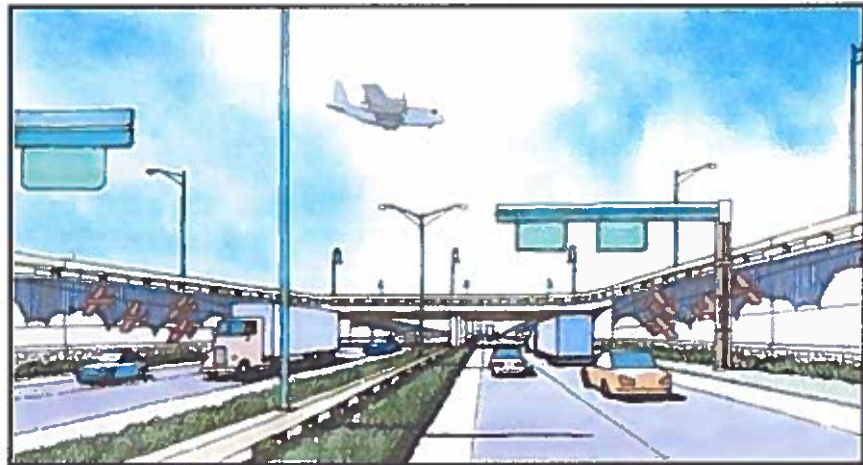
**Figure 9: Columbus Ohio**

Source3: [http://home.frognet.net/~mcfadden/wd8riflimg/nw\\_br1.jpg](http://home.frognet.net/~mcfadden/wd8riflimg/nw_br1.jpg)



**Figure 10: Amarillo, Texas Bridge Overpass**

Source: <http://www.lipslideproductions.com/images/Amarillo/Overpass.jpg>



**Figure 11: Proposed Kelly Parkway – San Antonio, TX. Incorporates Kelly's History as an Air Force Base with Wall Murals.**

*Source: <http://kelly-parkway.com/Images/Renderings/Military.jpg>*

## Northwest Military Gateway Corridor

At the Northwest Military exit, there is no sense of arrival. It would bring greater recognition to the city if this area was improved through landscaping and a landmark (see figures 6-7). The city may also want to consider establishing this area as a gateway corridor and naming it. Naming the corridor will help to bring further distinction and recognition both to the city as well as a way to honor a significant community member or famous person/Texan. As with the logo, this would be a great way to involve the citizens by allowing them to offer suggestions for the name and then hold a community vote. At the entrance to the corridor the city should add signage as well as improve the area through landscaping by removing the tree that is currently there and adding in lower shrubs, and flowers. In order to accomplish this Castle Hills should also consider establishing design guidelines for the commercial areas in the city, especially along Military.



Fi

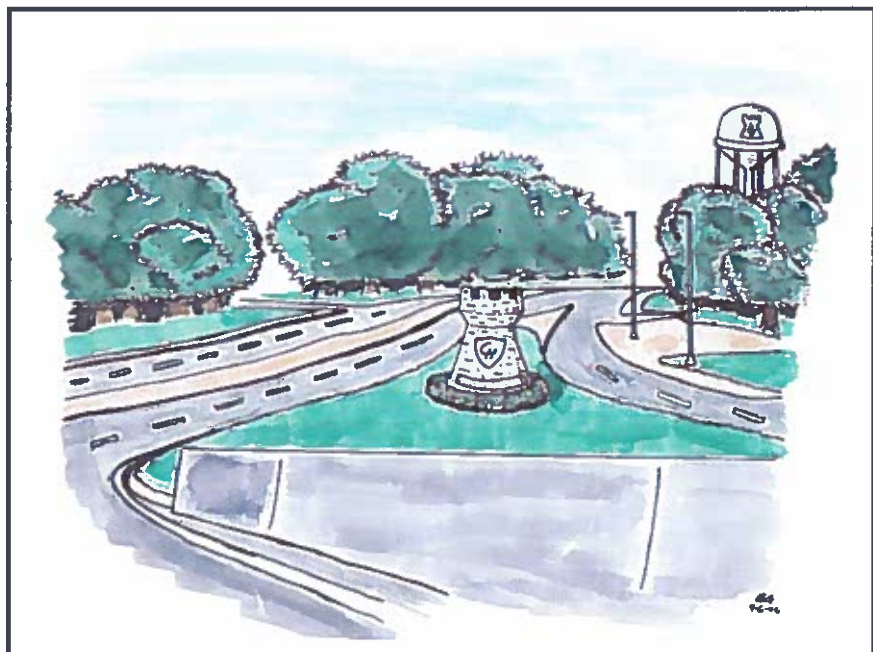
figures 13, 14) and the Military Commercial Corridor Targeted for Design Improvements. Green Indicates Neighborhood Corridors Targeted for Greenway Improvements

Source: Google Earth



**Figure 13: NW Military, Existing**

*Photograph by Jordan Maddox*

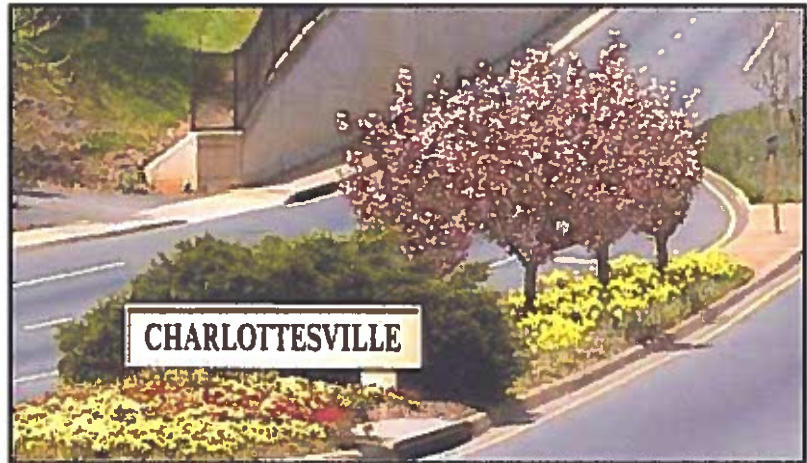


**Figure 14: NW Military, Proposed**

*Design by Kevin Gifford*

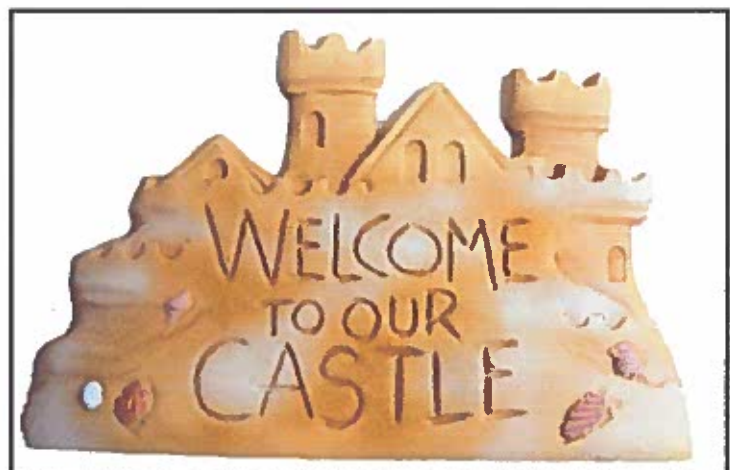


## Examples of Other City Entrance Signage



**Figure 15: Gateway and Entrance Signage to Charlottesville, VA**

Source: [http://stowekeller.com/Portfolio/CityParks/CommonImages/Charlottesville\\_FreeBridgeSign1\\_375x215.jpg](http://stowekeller.com/Portfolio/CityParks/CommonImages/Charlottesville_FreeBridgeSign1_375x215.jpg)



**Figure 16: Kissimmee, Florida**

Source: <http://www.coastaldecorshop.com/Merchant2/graphics/00000001/welcomecastle.jpg>



Figure 17: Rainbow City, Alabama

Source: <http://www.rbcAlabama.com/assets/images/welcomeSign.jpg>



Figure 18: Mallard, Iowa

Source: <http://www.mallardiowa.com/images/MallardSign.jpg>

## Commercial Areas Design Guidelines

Commercial design guidelines could benefit Castle Hills by improving the look and feel of a site, neighborhood or district and create more attractive places for people to live, work and shop. Design guidelines can stipulate architectural and landscaping standards, signage regulations as well as traffic calming methods. In addition to providing a connection, design guidelines have distinct economic advantages. When places are more visually interesting and welcoming, people are more likely to go there which translates into more customers patronizing the business. Design guidelines also help to give direction to business owners and developers of what is expected. By inspiring business owners to install a high quality sign (that is appropriate in size, limited in number, and suited to the overall context) or adding some planters, trees or other landscaping elements that screen parking lots and provide shade to people and cars, the overall visual appeal of the building is greatly increased. Furthermore, Scenic America, a national non-profit, says, "surveys have found that increasing landscaping also increases the property value of commercial real estate."<sup>14</sup>

Many towns have developed commercial development design guidelines that determine architectural styles, streetscape and landscape alternatives, etc. For example, Manor, Texas (a small town near Austin) has user-friendly urban design guidelines in their expectation of growth approaching from Austin. Examples of commercial design from the Manor guidelines:

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<sup>14</sup> Scenic America, "Scenic Beauty Benefits Business: Basic Design Guidelines for Businesses & Historic Districts," [www.scenic.org](http://www.scenic.org)

### Architecture

- Buildings that represent the local landscape, cultural and residential flavor
- Sensitive to scale, massing, variation of styles, materials, colors



**Figure 19: Rendering of Borders in San Diego, CA. Example of Architectural Design for NW Military Commercial Corridor**

*Source: [www.ergoarchitecture.com](http://www.ergoarchitecture.com)*



**Figure 20: Walgreen's in Surprise, AZ. Further Example of NW Military Architectural Design Possibilities**

*Source: <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/>*





**Figure 21: Rendering of Commercial Strip in Miami, FL as part of Commercial Facade Improvement Plan**

Source: [www.miamigov.com/planning/](http://www.miamigov.com/planning/)

## Streetscape Improvements & Landmarks

By encouraging and adopting more unified urban design and landscaping standards, a more interesting landscape is created which makes for a more unique community. They help improve the look and feel of an area and can help to create safer and more attractive places for people to live, work and shop. Distinguishing specific nodes in a community provides a focus for surrounding neighborhoods and a more cohesive connection between residential and commercial areas. By inspiring a uniform set of guidelines for streets by way of signage, planters, trees or other landscaping elements which screen parking lots and provide shade to people and cars, the visual appeal of the community is greatly increased. Safety of walkways must be given equal consideration, utilizing methods such as traffic calming techniques, well-designated crosswalks, and proper lighting for nighttime use. “Visually appealing” and “pleasant” are somewhat interrelated terms; for example, trees can soften the hardscape but also provide protection from the hot sun. When places are more visually interesting and welcoming, people are more likely to go there,

which translates into more customers patronizing the business. Further, Scenic America, a national non-profit, says “surveys have found that increasing landscaping also increases the property value of commercial real estate.”<sup>15</sup> In order to accomplish this Castle Hills should also consider establishing a tree ordinance that protects the existing landscaping in the city.



**Figure 22: Landscaped Median**

*Source: [www.olivebranches.org](http://www.olivebranches.org)*

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<sup>15</sup> Scenic America, "Scenic Beauty Benefits Business: Basic Design Guidelines for Businesses & Historic Districts," [www.scenic.org](http://www.scenic.org)



**Figure 226 : Landscaped Median Using Native Texas Plants and Materials**

Source: <http://www.faith-church.org/images/Franciscan%20-%20parking%20median%20after%205.jpg>

Castle Hills may also want to hold a citizen art competition for public art and landmarks to liven up the community and encourage citizen involvement. Other communities have established a standard form and then allowed local artists and community groups to paint their own designs on the statutes. The cities that have done this have met with a lot of success, including College Station's trains and the cowboy boots located around Cheyenne, WY (see figure 13). The important part is that the cities deciding to implement some form of public art that is easily indefinable with a unique aspect of the community.



**Figure 24: Cheyenne, WY, Example of Public Art Reflective of the City**

*Photograph by Kristina Harpst*

General guidelines for the treatment of signage and landscape/streetscapes are listed below. Castle Hills should also look to similarly situated cities (such as Georgetown and Sugarland) that it likes the look and feel of and use their ordinances as a guide. The city also needs to ensure that all street signs throughout the city are uniform, particularly along the major thoroughfares (i.e. NW Military, Blanco, Lockhill-Selma, and Jackson Keller).

### **Landscape/Streetscape**

- Variety of native plants and trees in groupings
- Plantings in islands, medians and entryways
- Tree canopy along roads and window fronts
- Use of street furniture, lighting
- Parking lots broken up by islands, “green space”



**Figure 25: Example of Island & Median Plantings**

*Source: [www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)*



**Figure 26: Trees and Lighting**

*Source: [www.cedarbendproject.com](http://www.cedarbendproject.com)*



**Figure 27: Parking lots broken up by islands**

*Source: [www.signaturelandscapes.com](http://www.signaturelandscapes.com)*





**Figure 28: Lighting and Paving**

Source: [www.towncenterinfo/ly\\_town/aliquippalframes\\_pages/al\\_frames\\_right.htm](http://www.towncenterinfo/ly_town/aliquippalframes_pages/al_frames_right.htm)

### Signage

- Signage that reflects buildings architecture
- Soft lettering, coloring, and background
- Ground placement and unit consolidation



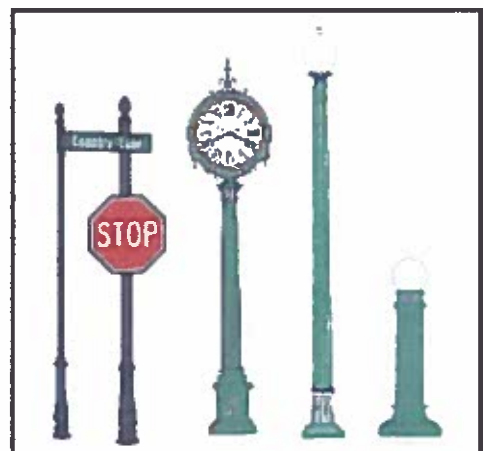
**Figure 29: Signage Examples**

Source: [www.signworksofla.com](http://www.signworksofla.com)



**Figure 30: Commercial Signage**

*Source: [www.cityofmanor.com](http://www.cityofmanor.com)*



**Figure 31: Signage Examples**

*Source: <http://www.thestreetscapecompany.com/images/polestop.gif>*

Design guidelines can also stipulate traffic calming measures or will reference a separate traffic calming program that should be used in conjunction with design guidelines in specified places (such as nodes or districts). Traffic calming measures are implemented to:

- Encourage citizen involvement in the traffic calming process by incorporating the preferences and requirements of the citizens
- Reduce vehicular speeds
- Promote safe and pleasant conditions for motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, and residents
- Improve the environment and livability of neighborhood streets
- Discourage use of residential streets by non-citizens cut through vehicular traffic<sup>16</sup>

The benefits of traffic calming and other design guidelines such as quality signage, cohesive architectural and landscape features, are many. From increasing the safety for vehicles and pedestrians and enhancing property values, to making places more aesthetically pleasing and welcoming to business owners, customers and residents, design guidelines are necessary to create viable, intrinsic places within communities.



**Figure 32: NW Military Commercial. Both Photos are only one block from each other and illustrated the difference the presence of trees make for making an area more inviting and aesthetically pleasing.**

*Photography by Jordan Maddox, March 2006.*

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<sup>16</sup> US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, General Objectives of Traffic Calming.  
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/icalm/part1.htm>



## Partnerships

Move to p. 219

The San Antonio Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has targeted Blanco, Lockhill-Selma and Northwest Military as Transportation Improvement Projects and the city needs to work with the MPO and TxDOT to add landscaping, accents and right-of-way access for signage, landmarks or community project locations. Funding for these projects can be negotiated as part of the original cost of the construction, through TEA-21 grants, city infrastructure funds or special improvement districts, such as Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIF). Castle Hills should also consider financing these projects through the solicitation of private funding or contributions. The city should encourage input from citizens, offer projects to local groups such as the Boy Scouts, business groups and residents. Any designs should correlate with landmarks, gateway signage and local architecture of the city. The roads and gateways of Castle Hills are important to the character of the city and should be reflected in the design process and final version of urban design standards. Protecting the local values and resources while adding unifying site features will go a long way economically and socially for the community.

## Tree Ordinance Requirements

It is recommended that Castle Hills enact a tree ordinance to preserve and replenish the tree canopy and supply of native trees within the city. The San Antonio tree ordinance is a good example to follow, especially since it is the neighboring comparison. Castle Hills should research the San Antonio ordinance, found online at: [http://www.ci.sat.tx.us/dsd/pdf/tree\\_ord97332.pdf](http://www.ci.sat.tx.us/dsd/pdf/tree_ord97332.pdf), and tailor them to the special needs of Castle Hills. A tree ordinance should protect the natural resource capital and encourage long-term viability of the resource. It should not discourage development or become a burden to homeowners and local businesses and should reflect the values that Castle Hills wishes to espouse. Below is a description of some basic regulations in the San Antonio tree ordinance that may serve as an example for a Castle Hills tree ordinance.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> [http://www.ci.sat.tx.us/dsd/pdf/tree\\_ord97332.pdf](http://www.ci.sat.tx.us/dsd/pdf/tree_ord97332.pdf)

	<b>Single-family Dwellings</b>	<b>Multi-family and Non-residential Uses</b>
<b>Significant Trees</b>	35% within each platted lot, excluding street right of way and easements, plus each builder on a single family dwelling lot shall also be required to plant two, 2" caliper new trees, which trees shall generally be native, large canopy trees.	40% within the entire site, excluding the street rights-of-way and easements
<b>Significant Trees under 6" DBH</b>	35% within each platted lot, excluding the street right of way and easements OR 35% of the number of total count of all such trees	40% within the entire site, excluding street right of way and easements OR 40% of the number of total count of all such trees
<b>Heritage Trees</b>	100% within each platted lot	100% within the entire site
<b>100 year flood plain(s)</b>	80% of the trees within the flood plain, which shall not apply toward preservation requirements on the remainder of the lot	80% of the trees within the flood plain, which shall not apply toward preservation requirements on the remainder of the site.
<b>Mitigation Maximum</b>	Up to 90% of Significant and Heritage trees may be mitigated rather than preserved	Up to 90% of Significant and Heritage trees may be mitigated rather than preserved



**Figure 33: Four-Lane Road in Mobile, AL. Importance of Street Trees to Ambience and Character of City Streets.**

*Source: <http://www.people.virginia.edu/~rtg2t/kin/mobile/michiganave.jpg>*

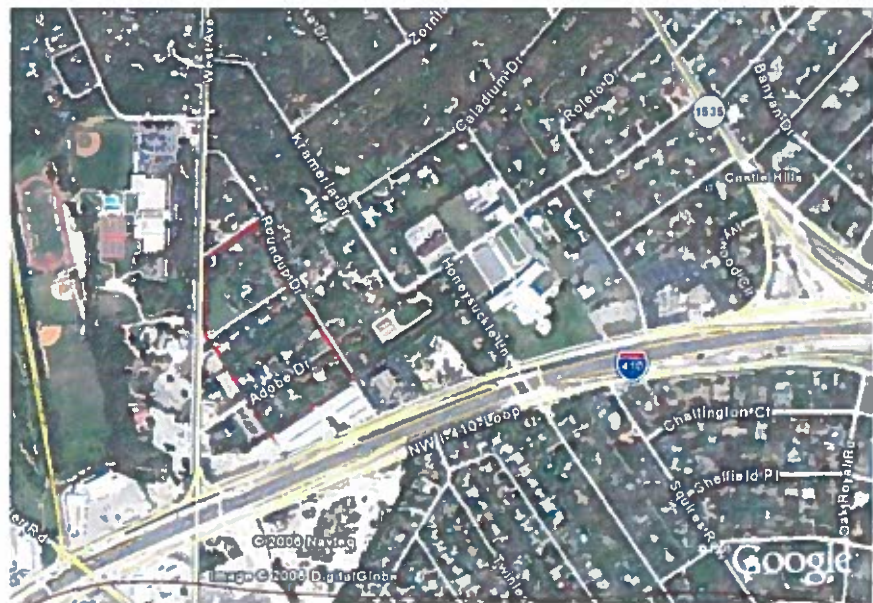
## Potential Redevelopment/Re-zoning

One

~~Two~~ areas Castle Hills should explore redevelopment or possible re-zoning are in a neighborhood near the West Avenue and Loop 410 intersection (see figure <sup>34</sup>~~35~~) and the ~~NW Military frontage~~ currently occupied by the McGimsey Park. (see figure 34) The Boy Scout land will involve the transaction of private property of course, but, in the event that it does happen, the city can be prepared to promote a development, possibly a town center or mixed use development, that best typifies the area.

The ~~second~~ area occupies several streets near the western boundary, near 410 and West (see figure 35). As Castle Hills has shown an interest in promoting developments like town homes or garden homes, this area may be prime for re-zoning as it contains extra-large lots with very low density, aging homes and excellent location. These blocks could be interesting to developers for a project or planned development such as the city has hinted at. To serve the aging population and expand the tax base, these higher-density town homes of one or two stories can provide safe, attractive, low-maintenance housing the express the values of the city without threatening nearby residents. Castle Hills should explore this possibility as a short or long-term solution to the needs of the community and the potential economic considerations offered here.





**Figure 33: Aerial of Castle Hills at NW Military and Lockhill-Selma. Potential Future Commercial or Mixed Use Strip on Military Frontage of McGimsey Park.**

Source: Google Earth

FIX  
LABEL



**Figure 34: Aerial of Castle Hills at NW Military and Lockhill-Selma. Potential Future Commercial or Mixed Use Strip on Military Frontage of McGimsey Park.**

Financing the recommendations

## Financing the recommendations

Earlier sections of the report have made a list of recommendations on improving the city based on the works done by the five focus groups, namely demographic and economics, environment and aesthetics, land use, transportation, and city history. These recommendations cannot be implemented without gaining both financial and political commitment from the city government. Therefore, this section will focus on 1) summarizing all the recommendations, 2) finding various sources of funding which are available to fund the recommendations, 3) matching each source of funding to each recommendation, and 4) providing contact information for those funding sources.

The recommendations can be broadly grouped into physical improvements and policy initiatives. The proposed physical improvements include:

### Short Term

1. Establish corridors and gateways
2. Establish landmark/logo at major interchanges

### Long Term

1. Phase upgrade of roads and the aging sewer system

2. Streetscaping
3. Commercial area improvements
4. Addition of sidewalks and biking lanes to Military Highway

### **The proposed policy initiatives include:**

#### **Short Term**

1. Initiate urban logo and slogan project
2. Develop marketing strategy for inspiring development in Castle Hills
3. Set the direction for development in Castle Hills by revamping the comprehensive plan and clarifying the zoning map and ordinance.
4. Negotiate with the Boy Scouts for recreational use of their park

#### **Long Term**

1. Establish unified street design elements along Military Highway and West Avenue
2. Create an inventory of current and future historic resources

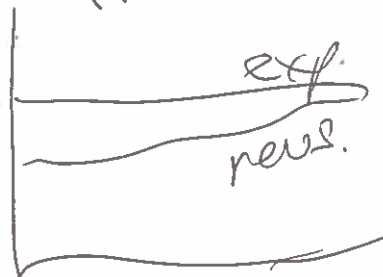
All the proposals listed above are important and play an important role in overall development of the city. However the success of the proposed physical improvements hinges on the availability of funds to finance these proposals. This following section attempts to outline some recommendation in the city's budget followed by financing solutions for the proposals listed above.



Tan find more

Implement:

traffic tickets?  
fire truck?



email to ~~Sept~~  
+ ask him to add  
his analysis to  
look in ..

## Budget analysis

Moved with  
demo & Economics  
in page 86 +

A budget is really just a forecast, a statement of expected revenues and expenses. If done correctly it can be a serviceable estimate. The main finding from the budget analysis is that the expenses were rising over the years but the income was diminishing as compared to the expenses. The figure below shows the pattern of expenditure since 2003, 2005 and 2006 are city estimates provided by the local administration.

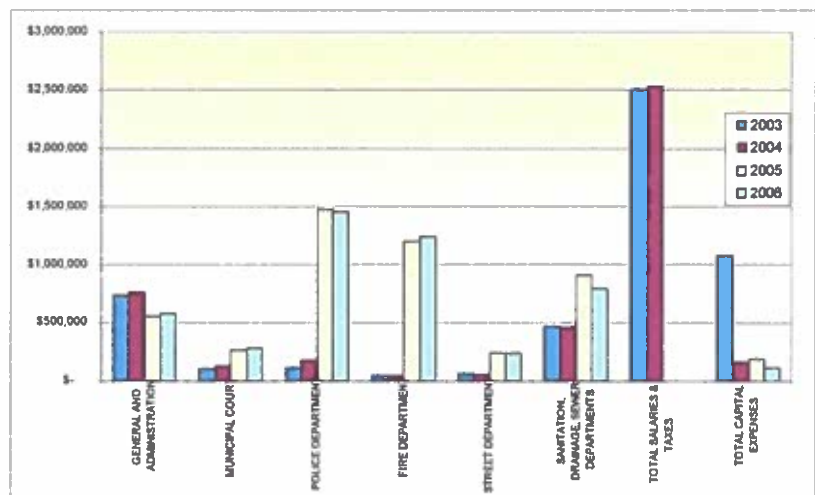


Figure 1: Budgetary expenses of Castle Hills

The above graph may be misleading as the total salaries head was merged into the respective sectors in the year 2005. Taking that into account the pattern of expenses reveals a similar pattern throughout. Only capital expenses seem to have peaked in the year

2003. This is as a result of capital purchase made for the fire department in that year.

General fund revenues are generated within the city predominately through property and sales tax. Apart from these two there is no other constant source of revenue. Most of the city's expenditures are dedicated the police and fire departments.

The professional sector and the retail sector are maximum contributors to the sales tax revenues of the city. The health care sector and the administrative support services also contribute significantly to the Lewisville's income. The contribution of the professional services has certainly increased significantly since the year 1999. On the other hand the retail sector has suffered a decline in income from 1999 onwards. These trends could be a result of a change in the market or could also be a result of some localized factors that negatively affected the retail sector. It is highlighted that by the nature of its trade, the retail sector is relatively more sensitive to localized physical changes that the professional sector.

From the budget it is found that the city is getting a certain amount as <sup>0-</sup>donation from one of the church<sup>02</sup>. This may be considered as a good option and the city can try to contact other churches and work out some agreement to receive a donation every year. This seems to be a possible source of revenue for the city. Currently the city is mining their off budget funds to attain their expense level. Proper planning can be done to equate income and expense to overcome this problem. In deficit situations the cities tend to tighten their expenditures by delaying maintenance and replacement of assets. This is not advisable as this may save little money now but in future leads to huge expenses.

## Recommendations

Through literature review some general recommendations for improving budgeting were made. They are

### Understand the problem

How much of the fiscal crisis is short term, and how much is long term? Is it driven by revenue or expenses, or both? These are some questions to be answered before developing the budgetary process. Basically the government needs to understand and estimate the scale of the problem.

### Set the price

Establish up front how much citizens are willing to pay for the results they want from government, what percent of their personal income they are willing to devote to taxes, fees and charges. Every jurisdiction has its own price and it is usually stable over time. History is a good guide, as it provides the trends and consequences happened due to budget change.

### Priorities

Define the outcomes that matter most of the citizens, along with indicators to measure progress. Citizens don't think in terms of programs and activities, they want results like safety, health etc. officials need to find out and articulate what matters most to their constituents.

### Price the priorities

Divide total revenue among the priority outcomes on the basis of their relative value to the citizens. The officials can again ask the citizens for guidance to divide the revenue among their priorities. There is no right answer to this question; it's a matter of judgment. The elected officials must make the final call, but knowing what citizens think makes their job a lot easier.

### Rightsizing

Some organizations work better when reduced in size, but others are crippled. Finding the right size does not start with layoffs. Rather, it starts by asking whether organizations are doing the right work, aimed at producing the right results, in the most effective way. Then, it is essential to make sure the organization has the right staff with the right mix of skills to maximize the value delivered. Eliminating bureaucratic layers and closing regional offices can help an organization find the right size, while human-capital planning can help it develop the right skills.

These are some general recommendations which might make a budget work more efficient. The City of Castle Hills might consider some of these recommendations. Following is the list of possible funding sources to improve the economic base of the city. The City cannot basically expect funding from outside source to improve their situation. To make them sustainable the City has to do some major investments improving the infrastructure and other services. This may provide as a base for future economic development and constant revenue source. The following sections provides possible funding options the City can adopt to improve their economic base for future.

### Department of Housing and Urban Development Programs

Community development activities include many different programs that provide assistance to a wide variety of grantees. Begun in 1974, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is one of the oldest programs in the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The CDBG program provides annual grants on a formula basis to many different types of grantees through several programs. Some of the funds that are available for Castle Hills are:

State Administered CDBG<sup>18</sup>: Every year, each city with more than 50,000 people and each county over 200,000 in population, gets CDBG money automatically. These cities and counties are called "entitlement" areas because they are "entitled" to CDBG by virtue of their size. (Dallas, Houston and others, receive CDBG monies directly from HUD, and are called "entitlement" areas.) Entitlement areas get 70% of the money. The remaining 30% will be given directly to states, which, in turn, provide the funds to small, rural cities with populations less than 50,000, and to counties that have a non-metropolitan population under 200,000 and are not eligible for direct funding from HUD. These small communities are called "non-entitlement" areas because they must apply for CDBG dollars through the Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA). In Texas,

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.orca.state.tx.us/>

Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA) is the state agency dedicated solely to rural Texas and makes the broad resources of state government more accessible to rural communities. It administers several federally funded grant programs designed to assist rural leaders with their local and regional development needs.

Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program (Section 108 Program)<sup>19</sup>: Section 108 is the loan guarantee provision of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. It allows local governments to transform a small portion of their CDBG funds into federally guaranteed loans large enough to pursue physical and economic revitalization projects that can renew entire neighborhoods. Such public investment is often needed to inspire private economic activity, providing the initial resources or simply the confidence that private firms and individuals may need to invest in distressed areas. Section 108 loans are not risk-free, however; local governments borrowing funds guaranteed by Section 108 must pledge their current and future CDBG allocations to cover the loan amount as security for the loan. Regulations governing the Section 108 program may be found at 24 CFR 570, Subpart M, "Loan Guarantees."

Texas Capital Fund<sup>20</sup>: The Texas Capital Fund (TCF) program is administered by the Texas Department of Agriculture through an interagency agreement with the Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA). The TCF program encourages business development, retention, or expansion by providing funds to eligible applicants. Funds will be awarded for the express purpose of assisting in the creation of new permanent jobs or retention of existing permanent jobs, primarily for low and moderate income (LMI) persons. In order

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/108/>

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.agr.state.tx.us/eco/rural\\_eco\\_devo/capital\\_fund/fin\\_tcf.htm](http://www.agr.state.tx.us/eco/rural_eco_devo/capital_fund/fin_tcf.htm)

to comply with the national goal of expanding economic opportunities for LMI persons, a minimum of 51 percent or more of all the jobs created or retained by the business must benefit persons who qualify as LMI.



## State Administered CDBG

According to the <sup>previous</sup> aforesaid definition, Castle Hills with a population of around 4,000 is thus a "non-entitlement" area, which can apply for State administered CDBG only through the ORCA. In order to get the CDBG grant from the state, the "non-entitlement" area should ensure that both the HUD requirements and the ORCA requirements are satisfied. The primary objective of the Community Development Block Grant program is to develop viable communities by providing decent housing and suitable living environments, and expanding economic opportunities principally for persons of low- to moderate-income.

To achieve these goals, the CDBG regulations outline the eligible activities and the National Objectives that each activity must meet. Each project HUD funds should meet one of three National Objectives:

- Benefit low- and moderate-income persons;
- Aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight; or
- Meet a need having a particular urgency, which represents an immediate threat to the health and safety of residents.

In line with the federal objectives, ORCA administers its CDBG programs according to the following goals:

- Improve public facilities to meet basic human needs, principally for low- and moderate-income persons.
- Improve housing conditions, principally for persons of low- and moderate-income.
- Expand economic opportunities by creating or retaining jobs, principally for low- and moderate-income persons.
- Provide assistance and public facilities to eliminate conditions hazardous to the public health and of an emergency nature.

All projects funded through the CDBG program typically meet the first national objective (benefit low- and moderate-income persons) by benefiting at least 51 percent low- to moderate-income persons, which are defined as those who:

- Earn equal to or less than 80 percent of the area median family income figure (where the area is a metropolitan statistical area or a non-metropolitan county) or
- Earn equal to or less than less than 80 percent of the statewide non-metropolitan median family income figure, as defined under the US Department of Housing and Urban Development Section 8 Housing Assistance Program.
- For income eligibility in your area, please review the most recent Income Limits document.

Some projects funded through the CDBG program may meet the second national objective of aiding in the prevention or elimination of slum or blight while the remainder of CDBG projects will fall under the third national objective. The third national objective includes activities designed to meet community development needs

having a particular urgency, which the CDBG Program applies to Disaster Relief and Urgent Need Fund projects.

To check if a city project fulfills the above criteria and make an application for the State administered CDBG, Castle Hills should call Ms. Oralia Cardenas, CDBG Program Director<sup>21</sup> for details. Contact details are available at the following websites:

<http://www.hud.gov/local/tx/community/cdbg/index.cfm>

<http://www.orca.state.tx.us/>

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<sup>21</sup> Contact information are listed in the appendix

## Section 108 Program

Nonentitlement communities that are assisted in the submission of applications by States that administer the CDBG program are eligible to the Section 108 program. So, if Castle Hills can secure state administered CDBG, it is also eligible to the Section 108 program.

Castle Hills should observe that Section 108 financing is only possible for activities listed below:

- Economic development activities eligible under CDBG;
- Acquisition of real property;
- Rehabilitation of publicly owned real property;
- Housing rehabilitation eligible under CDBG;
- Construction, reconstruction, or installation of public facilities (including street, sidewalk, and other site improvements);
- Related relocation, clearance, and site improvements;
- Payment of interest on the guaranteed loan and issuance costs of public offerings;
- Debt service reserves;
- Public works and site improvements in colonias; and

- In limited circumstances, housing construction as part of community economic development, Housing Development Grant, or Nehemiah Housing Opportunity Grant programs.

For purposes of determining eligibility, the CDBG rules and requirements apply. As with the CDBG program, all projects and activities must either principally benefit low- and moderate-income persons, aid in the elimination or prevention of slums and blight, or meet urgent needs of the community. For loan details about the Section 108 program, Castle Hills may check the following website:

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/108/>

## Texas Capital Fund

These funds are a part of the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and are known as the Texas Community Development Program (TCDP) in Texas. The program is only available to non-entitlement city or county governments. Non-entitlement cities/counties do not receive direct funding from HUD and typically include cities with a population of less than 50,000 and counties of less than 200,000. Awarded cities and counties receive funds to make public infrastructure and/or real estate improvements to support a specific business that is expanding or beginning operations in the applicant's jurisdiction and are contingent upon the business making a capital investment and creating/retaining jobs for Texans. As discussed before, Castle Hills qualifies as a non-entitlement area. Therefore, Castle Hills may apply for this fund too.

Currently, TCF has four program areas, namely Main Street Improvements, Real Estate Development, Infrastructure Development and Downtown Revitalization Program. Castle Hills is advised to check the official website of the Texas Department of Agriculture<sup>22</sup> for the eligibility criteria for each program areas. Castle Hills should

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<sup>22</sup> [http://www.agr.state.tx.us/eco/rural\\_eco\\_devo/capital\\_fund/fin\\_tcf.htm](http://www.agr.state.tx.us/eco/rural_eco_devo/capital_fund/fin_tcf.htm)

also take note of the application deadlines for each program area if it wants to submit an application.

The City of Burleson with an estimated population of 30,000 is also utilizing the Texas Capital Fund in two program areas: Infrastructure Development and Real Estate Development. Castle Hills may contact the Office of Economic Development for the City of Burleson at (817) 447-5400 ext. 215 for Burleson's experience and check Burleson's website<sup>23</sup> for further information.

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.burlesontx.com/>

## Tax Increment Financing<sup>24</sup>

The terms "Tax Increment Financing" (TIF) and "Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone" (TIRZ) are terms used interchangeably. TIF is a tool that local governments can use to publicly finance needed structural improvements and enhanced infrastructure within a defined area. These improvements usually are undertaken to promote the viability of existing businesses and to attract new commercial enterprises to the area. The statutes governing tax increment financing are located in Chapter 311 of the Texas Tax Code.

The cost of improvements to the area is repaid by the contribution of future tax revenues by each taxing unit that levies taxes against the property. Specifically, each taxing unit can choose to dedicate all, a portion of, or none of the tax revenue that is attributable to the increase in property values due to the improvements within the reinvestment zone. The additional tax revenue that is received from the affected properties is referred to as the tax increment. Each taxing unit determines what percentage of its tax increment, if any, it will commit to repayment of the cost of financing the public improvements.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.window.state.tx.us/specialrpt/ecodev03/08ch5.html>



Tax increment financing may be initiated only by a city. Once a city has begun the process of establishing a tax increment financing reinvestment zone, counties, school districts and special districts are allowed to consider participating in the tax increment financing agreement.

### **Initiating the Process**

There are two ways that tax increment financing can be initiated:

A petition must be submitted by owners of property that constitutes at least 50 percent of the appraised property value within the proposed zone.

Tax increment financing may also be initiated by City Council without the need for a petition.

If not initiated by petition, an area may be considered for tax increment financing only if it meets certain criteria. The criteria are stated in the Handbook on Economic development Laws for Texas Cities.<sup>25</sup>

If an area qualifies for tax increment financing, the process involves ten steps. The ten steps are briefly stated as follows (Please refer to the Handbook<sup>26</sup> for further details):

- The governing body of the city must prepare a preliminary reinvestment zone financing plan.
- The city must provide 60 days' written notice of its intent to designate a reinvestment zone and of the hearing on the

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.oag.state.tx.us/newspubs/publications2.shtml>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.oag.state.tx.us/newspubs/publications2.shtml>

proposed zone to the other taxing units that levy property taxes within the area.

- Once the city has provided its 60-day notice of a proposed zone, the other affected taxing units within 15 days must designate a representative to meet with the city to discuss the project plans.
- In addition to meeting with the other taxing unit representatives, the city must provide a formal presentation to the governing body of each county and school district that levies real property taxes within the proposed zone.
- After the city has made its formal presentations to the other taxing units, the city must hold a public hearing on the creation of the reinvestment zone.
- After the public hearing, the governing body of the city may, by ordinance, designate a contiguous area within the city as a reinvestment zone for tax increment financing purposes.
- After the city has adopted the ordinance creating the zone, the board of directors of the zone must prepare both a “project plan” and a reinvestment zone “financing plan.”
- After the project plan and the reinvestment zone are approved by the board of
- directors and by the city’s governing body, the other taxing units with property within the zone contract with the city regarding the percentage of their increased tax revenues that will be dedicated to the tax increment fund.
- Once the reinvestment zone is established, the board of directors must make recommendations to the governing

body of the city on the implementation of the tax increment financing.

- The city must submit an annual report to the chief executive officer of each taxing unit that levies taxes on property within the zone.

## State Assistance

If there are concerns about the tax increment financing laws, Castle Hills can seek assistance from the State. In 2001, the Texas Legislature authorized the State Comptroller to provide assistance regarding the administration of the Tax Increment Financing Act upon request of city council or upon request of the presiding officer of the city (mayor or city manager). Further, the Governor's Office of Texas Economic Development and Tourism and the Comptroller's Office may provide technical assistance to a city regarding the designation of a tax increment financing reinvestment zone or the adoption and execution of project plans or reinvestment zone financing plans.

### School Districts

It is important to note that the 1997 and 1999 Legislatures changed school funding laws regarding the ability of school districts to achieve a reduction in taxable property value due to the existence of tax increment financing. Until September 1, 1999, local school districts were able to reduce the value of taxable property reported to the state to reflect any value that was effectively "lost" due to tax increment financing participation by the district. The ability of the school district to deduct the value of the tax increment that it contributed prevented the school district from being negatively affected in terms of state school funding. However, the 1997 and

1999 legislative amendments changed the treatment of TIF reinvestment zones created after September 1, 1999. It appears that the Comptroller will no longer reduce taxable property value for school districts to reflect tax increment financing losses for zones that are created on or after September 1, 1999. As a result, participation in tax increment financing by a school district in those zones will likely result in lower state aid to the school district assuming all other factors are constant. However, there are certain potential exceptions that may apply. School districts should consult directly with the Comptroller's Office about how a particular tax increment financing agreement by the district would impact the district's funding from the State of Texas.

## State Infrastructure Bank (SIB)<sup>27</sup>

State Infrastructure Banks (SIB) were authorized in 1995 as a part of the National Highway Designation Act (NHS) to help accelerate needed mobility improvements through a variety of financial assistance options made to local entities through state transportation departments. The overall goal of the SIB program is to provide innovative financing methods that will add to the list of options available to communities to assist them in meeting their infrastructure needs. The SIB program allows borrowers to access capital funds at lower-than-market interest rates. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) administers the SIB program in Texas<sup>28</sup>.

The SIB used federal and state funds to provide the initial capitalization of the Bank. The SIB offers eligible customers a range of loans and credit enhancement products. Also, the SIB offers its financial services to finance or financially enhance transportation projects which meet its selection criteria. As loans are repaid to the SIB, additional assistance will be granted for more transportation projects. The SIB, in effect, is a revolving loan fund.

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.dot.state.tx.us/moneymatters/sibtoc.htm>

<sup>28</sup> State Infrastructure Bank. At <http://www.dot.state.tx.us/moneymatters/facts.htm>. Accessed on 02/25/2006

In Texas, SIB financial assistance can be granted to any public or private entity authorized to construct, maintain or finance an eligible transportation project. Projects must be eligible for funding under the existing federal highway rules (Title 23) to comply with SIB requirements. This usually requires a project to be on a state's highway system and included in the statewide Transportation Improvement Plan. Work eligible for the program's funding in Texas includes planning and preliminary studies; feasibility, economical and environmental studies; right of way acquisition; surveying; appraisal and testing; utility relocation; engineering and design; construction; inspection and construction engineering.

Unlike the HUD programs discussed above, any public or private entity authorized by law to construct, maintain or finance a transportation project is eligible to apply for financial assistance from the SIB. Besides, for a project to be eligible for financial assistance from the SIB, it must qualify for federal aid under existing federal rules. This generally means the project must be on the state highway system and be included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan. In most cases, residential city streets and county maintained rural roads will not be eligible. However, there are exceptions to this requirement, such as off-system bridges.

According to the draft FY 2006-2008 Transportation Improvement Program for San Antonio, the following highway systems have sections fall within or close to Castle Hills city limit:

Hwy	Limits from	Limits to
IH 410	IH 35	Valley Hi Drive
Project Description: Install Median Barrier (Wire Rope/Cable Safety System)		
Salado Creek	Wetmore	Blanco
Project Description: Construct Bike lane		
Blanco Road (FM 2696)	Lockhill Selma	West Avenue
Project Description: Construct sidewalks on West side of roadway		
Wurzbach Parkway	Blanco Road (FM 2696)	West Ave

Project Description: Construct 4 lane divided roadway		
IH 410	IH 410	@ FM 1535 (NW Military Hwy)
Project Description: Landscape Development		
Lockhill Selma Rd.	West Avenue	NW Military
Project Description: Reconstruct & expand from 2 to 3 lanes (curbs, sidewalks, bicycle lanes & drainage)		
NW Military Hwy (FM 1535)	Braesview	Huebner
Project Description: Reconstruct & expand from 4 to 6 lanes w/CLTL (curbs, sidewalks, drainage)		

The above highway sections within or close to Castle Hills city limit are major roads leading to the commercial areas of Castle Hills. Therefore, any road improvements and streetscaping works are definitely beneficial to Castle Hills and Castle Hills should take the initiatives to discuss with local TxDOT district office about the feasibility of extending streetscaping works to the linked city streets. For information about whether a specific project qualifies for SIB assistance, a consultation with local TxDOT district office is advised. There is a TxDOT's San Antonio district office<sup>29</sup> nearby in San Antonio which may provide additional information about the SIB financing.

For further details about SIB financing, the Texas Department of Transportation has published a State Infrastructure Bank Applicant Handbook which provides useful information on how to make an application. This handbook can also be downloaded at the following website:

<http://www.dot.state.tx.us/moneymatters/sibtoc.htm>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.dot.state.tx.us/sat/>



## Benefits of using SIB

According to TxDOT, they are able to fund only 36% of the needed transportation projects in Texas. Due to lack of funds, TxDOT funds only high priority transportation projects. However, a project considered a very high priority by one community, may not be ranked high enough on a statewide basis to receive funding for several years. The SIB funding is also available to the internal roads of the City of Castle Hills and If the City of Castle Hills wants the project completed faster, it could borrow money from the SIB and advance the project by several years. Early completion of the proposed transportation project would generate additional economic development; the neighborhood may receive enough revenue from the increased tax base to easily pay the financial assistance from the SIB. Thus, the City could get its project completed much sooner with little or no additional costs<sup>30</sup>.

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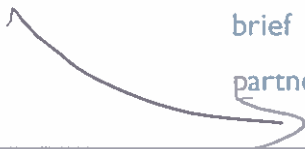
<sup>30</sup> State Infrastructure Bank: Applicant's Handbook. At <http://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdot-info/fin/sib/handbook.pdf>. Accessed on 02/25/2005

## Public – Private Partnership

A public private partnership is a partnership between the public and private sector for the purpose of delivering a project or service which was traditionally provided by the public sector<sup>31</sup>. A public private partnership exists when the public sector includes civic-groups, community-based organizations, families, and citizens in pursuit of common goals<sup>32</sup>.

In some types of PPP, the government uses tax revenue to provide capital for investment, with operations run jointly with the private sector or under contract. In other types (notably the Private Finance Initiative), capital investment is made by the private sector on the strength of a contract with government to provide agreed services. Government contributions to a PPP may also be in kind (notably the transfer of existing assets)<sup>33</sup>. In neighborhood revitalization project, public private partnerships can be used to involve local people and local business in the development process. A brief explanation of a successful example of a use of public-private partnership in a neighborhood revitalization project is given below.

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P. 185



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<sup>31</sup> Public Private partnerships. At <http://www.environ.ie/DOEI/DOEI/Pol.nsf/wvNavView/wwwPPPPartnership?OpenDocument&Lang=en>. Accessed on 02/25/2006

<sup>32</sup> Guide to Successful Public-Private Partnerships. At <http://www.financeproject.org/Publications/ostpartnershipguide.pdf>. Accessed on 02/25/2005

<sup>33</sup> Public-Private partnerships. Wikipedia. At [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public-private\\_partnership](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public-private_partnership). Accessed on 02/25/2006

## Case Study: Jaycee Park Neighborhood Revitalization Project

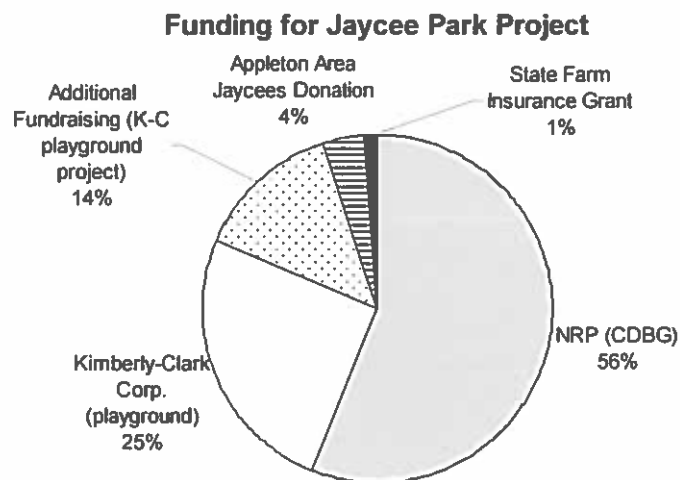
Jaycee Park Neighborhood Revitalization Program was the first project initiated by the City of Appleton, Wisconsin, in September 1996 and it was completed by September 1997. In May 1996, Jaycee Park neighborhood residents responded to a general survey. Residents identified improvements to the park as a high priority. In August 1996, the City of Appleton's Parks & Recreation Department conducted a detailed park survey as part of their five-year plan. The residents identified several key components, which were not a part of the five-year plan. These were landscaping, decorative lighting, new sidewalk, permanent seating/picnic tables, and new playground equipment.

The project was initiated as part of the City's Neighborhood Revitalization Program. A neighborhood representative committee was formed, which became an integral part of the renovation project. They not only helped in revitalizing the project but also the neighborhood surrounding it. The tasks performed by the neighborhood representative committee are as follows:

- Developed park conceptual design
- Presented the plan to various committees which led to its adoption by the council as the official five-year Park Plan
- Actively participated in common council meetings

- Assisted in the creation of a neighborhood newsletter
- Planned and organized several neighborhood activities
- Utilized the plan to raise funding from the park namesake, the Appleton Area Jaycees
- Utilized the plan to raise funding for playground equipment from Kimberly-Clark Corporation
- Generated and distributed various communications with residents
- Served on various teams/committees relating to park improvements and implementation
- Assisted in selection of park equipment/amenities
- Organized and held fundraising event in neighborhood
- Volunteered with park improvements implementation
- Re-established a Neighborhood Watch Program

The total project cost \$98,800.00, which was funded by both the public and private sectors. About 56% of the funding came from the Neighborhood Revitalization Program through Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). The private sector funded the rest of the project.



<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Amount</b>
NRP (CDBG)	\$55,442.00
Kimberly-Clark Corp. (playground)	\$25,000.00
Additional Fundraising (K-C playground project)	\$13,378.00
Appleton Area Jaycees Donation	\$4,000.00
State Farm Insurance Grant	\$1,000.00

**Table 11: Funding Source for Jaycee Park Project**

The revitalization project also included 20 housing rehabilitation projects. 17 of those were single family home owners and three were rentals. \$312,736.00 was distributed as loans, which makes the average loan amount of \$15,636.00 for each project. Most of the funding (83%), for Housing Rehabilitation Projects came from the City Housing Rehabilitation Loan fund, and the rest amount was fund by the Neighborhood Revitalization Project.

## Advantages of Public-Private Partnerships

As can be seen in this <sup>previous</sup> example,

One of the biggest advantages of public-private partnerships is that they involve the local people, local business, and with the city in the development process. This improves the chances of success for the project.

Move to  
~~P.218~~  
~~or~~  
P.221  
✓  
done

## **Selected Mechanisms For Generating Funds For Proposed Interventions In The City**

After the detailed study of the available funding mechanisms for the City, the proposed interventions have been tabulated with possible funding mechanisms in the following table.





Table 1: Possible Funding Sources for the Proposed Projects

Category	Suggestions	Possible Funds			
Streetscape	1. A corridor beautification project along Military Highway, Jackson-Keller Road and Blanco Road  2. Repairing and improving the streets  3. Addition of sidewalks and biking lanes to Military Highway  4. Upgrade of roads and the aging sewer system	S108	State Administered CDBG	TIF	SIB
		S108	State Administered CDBG	TIF	SIB
		S108	State Administered CDBG	TIF	SIB
		S108	State Administered CDBG	TIF	SIB
Commercial Area Improvement	1. Provide tax incentive or grant to improve the aesthetic outlook of the shopping center.  2. Consider façade improvement programs to the shopping centers.			TCF	TIF
				TCF	TIF
Gateway	Identify four major gateways into the city Military/West Intersection 410/Jackson-Keller Intersection Jackson-Keller/Blanco Intersection 410/Blanco Intersection  2. Establish a corridor icon at the four major intersections				TIF
Remarks: Please note the additional eligibility criteria for each fund stated in the previous sections.					

\* Take care while painting

FLIP OR HOLD PUNCH ON OPPOSITE SIDE

## Special Financial Recommendations for Landmark/logo, Streetscape, commercial area improvement

*done pg. 228*

~~exact~~ implement the design recommendations  
~~To enhance and promote~~ for enhancing the image  
of Castle Hills  
~~In regard to the insufficiencies of landmark/logo and~~  
~~streetscape in the City of Castle Hills,~~ the following design financial  
recommendations are provided:

### Create vitality at commercial core of Castle Hills (intersection of West Avenue and Military Highway):

- Unified street design elements along Military Highway and West Avenue creating a sense of place and beckoning travelers towards the commercial core of Castle Hills
  - Design elements could include street lights, decorative elements on lamp posts, benches, pavers <sup>on sidewalks</sup> ~~on sidewalks~~, medians
- Establish better <sup>pedestrian</sup> ~~connections~~ between each retail center by use of crosswalks, sidewalks and walking paths.

*medians*

### Invite customers and visitors into the commercial core of Castle Hills:

- East and West Gateways at Loop 410

Several, almost indistinguishable, miles of Loop-410 Implementation

Several miles of

almost indistinguishable

- Distinguish and announce the arrival into Castle Hills from the ~~other miles of Loop-410~~ by using landmarks or logos which make the commercial core ~~more popular and attractive to the~~ <sup>to entice</sup> citizens of Castle Hills and visitors

to attract ~~entire~~ visitors drivers to visit the commercial core of Castle Hills

Improve the aesthetics ~~outlook and facade~~ of the shopping center <sup>replace</sup> façade

- Increase the tree cover, highlight logo, ~~refresh~~ <sup>replace</sup> the façade materials, etc.

~~The design recommendations for landmark/logo, streetscaping, and commercial area improvement can only be achieved through available funding support.~~ In addition to the funding <sup>source</sup> described above, there are other financial resources specifically available for the city to explore from state, and local levels. The most <sup>possible</sup> funding resources will be <sup>both</sup> introduced as follows:

<sup>presented on the</sup> following pages:

<sup>promising</sup>

## State level

### TXDOT funding opportunity

The San Antonio and Bexar County Metropolitan Planning Organization has included the roadway improvement of Blanco, Lockhill-Selma and Military Highway in their Transportation Improvement Projects list. Lane expansion has been recommended for all three roads. Emphasis is being laid on construction of sidewalks, curbs and bike lanes on all three roads as well. In particular, there will be an expansion from 4 to 6 lanes for Northwest Military Highway including reconstruction of curbs, sidewalks and drainage in May, 2006. This is a very good opportunity for the City of Castle Hills to cooperate with San Antonio and Bexar County MPO in developing the sidewalks, streetscape, streetlights, etc. in the commercial core. The city can go to talk with MPO to see if it can include the design elements proposed by the city for Military Highway into consideration and thereby provide useful funding for the city to vitalize the commercial core at the intersection of West Avenue and Military Highway.

## Local Level

### Temporary increase in local sales tax

It is also possible for the city to explore the opportunity of a temporary increase in local sales tax to collect funding for the gateway landmark/logo or streetscaping. For example, there was a project in Greeley, Colorado where the city raised about \$4 million from temporary increase in local sales tax to do the landscape, streetscape, gateway, etc. improvements for the city. Therefore, the city can propose a temporary increase in local sales tax to improve the east and west gateways at Loop 410.

### Private Donations (PD)

One of the main weaknesses is that the city has a large portion of tax-exempt land; including schools, churches, etc. The city may go to talk with churches in the City of Castle Hills to find out the possibility for them to “pay in lieu of taxes”. For example, the streetscaping may need to add light poles, benches, decorative elements, etc. The city can ask for donations of the above properties from the churches if approved by them. In return, the City of Castle Hills can mark the name of the property donator on the donated properties. This is a good way for city to save expenses in this kind of

improvements. Another example is that the donation program in the City of Arlington. The City of Arlington asks their citizens to voluntarily donate either a one-time gift or a monthly recurring donation to city service such as Care & Share, Urban Forest, Animal Services, Library etc and the donation can be included in the monthly utility bills. The City of Castle Hills can also explore the similar opportunity to raise the funding for the streetscaping, landmarks/logo, etc.

### **Involvement of Civic Clubs(ICC)**

The City of Castle Hills can also take advantage of the civic clubs in the city to do some fundraising and beautification program. For example, in the City of Lewisville, TX, there is a neighborhood organization named “keep Lewisville Beautiful” which partners with the City of Lewisville to conduct beautification projects to help make it beautiful. The city can just go to talk with those interested citizens who would like to contribute to the neighborhood revitalization. Possibly the city can raise some funds from those interested groups for the landmark/logo or streetscaping. For example, as proposed in policy initiatives, the city needs to negotiate with the Boy Scouts for recreational use of their park. Under this circumstance, the city can talk with the Boy Scouts owner to ask them to open its park for public activities. By doing this, the city needs to give some benefit for the Boy Scouts, such as offering to advertise the ranch and the Boy Scouts on their neighborhood logos.

## Matching Funds from the City (MF)

In regard to the commercial area improvements, one strategy can be used is to give incentive to those commercial property owners. The city can provide matching funds for the façade improvement of shopping centers. For example, there was a residential façade improvement in Beach, Florida. The city provided matching grants up to \$15,000 to single family owner occupied residential property owners and they are responsible for the remaining 50% of the funds. In similar, the City of Castle Hills can also offer matching funds to make up for the partial required funding for the façade improvements in commercial area. The matching fund can be obtained from other financial recommendations such as TIF, CDBG, etc.

## Revolving Funds (RF)

Another possibility for city to explore is that the city can provide revolving funds for the commercial property owners. The revolving funds have much lower interest than the bank loan interest. The commercial property owners can use the revolving funds to improve the appearance of the façade and then pay back the funds to the city in certain years. Of course, the city needs to talk with the commercial property owners about the advantages of façade improvement and aesthetic outlook improvement of the shopping center. Typical reasons include improving the attractiveness of the property and increasing the possible customers' quantity. The city then can reuse the revolving funds from the commercial property owners for other community revitalization projects.

### Innovative revenue resources

Through the literature survey some innovative methods were identified to fund infrastructure improvements inside the City of Castle Hills. These funding sources are developed for the city to self sustain itself and to provide a constant revenue source for the future. They are:

#### Sales tax

As approved by the legislature, local governments or cities can collect sales tax and allocate a portion of it towards infrastructure projects. The residents of the city have to approve and vote in favor of this, for it to take place. The major advantage of sales tax is that, it can provide a consistent source of revenue. It is also consistent with inflation as it is administered on a percentage basis.

#### Impact or development fee

Impact fees or development fees are funds used to build a portion of new infrastructure that provides services to new development. Impact fees are based on the type of land use being developed, the building area, and gross site area of the proposed



development. The city charges the impact fees based on the estimated demand the development will place on city services and the estimated taxes the new development will generate to pay for infrastructure. Impact fees are considered equitable. It is a one-time fee and is generally used for new construction rather than maintenance.

### **Severance tax**

Severance taxes are weight-based charges levied on natural resources. Some of these are extraction operations, such as removal of timber, coal or stone. These taxes are useful in constructing rural or remote roads. These taxes are used in Alabama, Alaska, Minnesota, Tennessee and Virginia.

### **Lodging taxes**

Under this tax, tourists often become the payers. Many states authorize lodging taxes to fund tourism – related transportation facilities. In Nevada, a room tax is funding road improvements along Las Vegas Blvd. Some other states that allowed this tax are New Orleans and South Carolina.

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## Legal Recommendations

The zoning ordinance and other legal documents were reviewed, when and where available, to determine their validity and to ascertain their effectiveness in regulating land use and aiding economic development in the City of Castle Hills. The review of these documents was cursory, and it is highly recommended that the City have a thorough professional legal review of its articles of governance.

Based on the review conducted by our team, the follow in recommended:

### Create a new Comprehensive Plan for the City.

The plan that was initiated in 1994 was never completed, and is now outdated. A new plan should reflect the new goals of the city. Although state law does not required a city to create a comprehensive plan (Texas Local Government Code Chapter 213.002) law mandated that zoning regulations be based on a comprehensive plan. Therefore, in order to enact zoning, a municipality must first create and adopt a comprehensive plan (Texas Local Government Code Chapter 211.004).

## Revise the zoning ordinance.

The following review of Chapter 31, Zoning, is not an exhaustive legal review of the current code. It is suggested that, for a complete review, a certified practicing land use law attorney be retained by the city.

A more complete review of the effectiveness of the Castle Hills Zoning Code would have been aided by the availability of the zoning map. Please keep in mind that all comments and observations that follow were made without having had access to the zoning map.

### **Sec 31.100: Definitions**

31.145 Shared Group Housing for Disabled Persons. This definition limits such housing to no more than six disabled persons. A legal review in light of *City of Edmonds v. Oxford House, Inc.* [(115 S. Ct. 1776 (1995))] is in order as the Supreme Court exempted establishments housing disabled persons, as qualified by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), from local “family” zoning definitions.

### **Sec 31.400 “A” Single-Family District**

31.401 (2) & (12): This language is cumbersome and confusing. 12 indicates that all uses listed in numbers 2-11 require a special use permit as per §31.1702. #2 lists “churches.”

However §31.1702 states that the following uses are permitted by means of a special use permit: “institutions of religious or philanthropic nature other than churches permitted in any district.”

Compliance with Texas Religious Freedom Restoration Act (TRFRA) is required.

### **31.403 Height Regulations:**

“No building shall exceed two standard stories in height.”

The term “standard story” is not defined. No methodology for calculating permissible height is given. No actual height is listed. No mention of roof pitch or consideration of unusual roofs (e.g., mansard) are described or taken into consideration.

### **31.405 Other Regulations:**

5 states, “No vehicles whatsoever shall be parked beyond eight hours on city owned unimproved right-of-way at any time.” This needs to delineate whether the code limits parking to eight continuous hours within a twenty-four hour period or say, eight separate hours within a calendar year.

### **31.400.102(8): “Masonry required.**

Dwellings shall be constructed of masonry to the extent of not less than 75% of overall exterior wall.”

This must be clarified to exempt from or to include in the area calculation that portion of the wall encumbered by fenestration. Also the use of the term “constructed” is problematic. Very few residential structures of any type are currently “constructed” of masonry. Structure typically consists of wood or steel and masonry serves as a veneer that provides no load bearing assistance to the actual structure of the residence. This leaves the provision open to technical and therefore legal challenge.

**Sec 31.500 “B” Duplex Residential District**

31.502 Specifications: living area minimum for single-family and duplex residences should be reviewed against recent case law involving such standards. Unless these standards can be directly tied to safety issues they have traditionally been viewed by courts as economically, and often racially, exclusionary. Such minimums are usually found in private contractual (deed) restrictions not controlled by governmental entities.

**31.504(5):**

The term “lot coverage” is not defined within the ordinance. Does this include all impervious surfaces? Raised wooden decks? Pools?

The City should consider existing building and land uses when revising and/or updating the zoning ordinance. Moreover, the effect of zoning regulations on economic development should also be considered.

**Create Design Guidelines.**

The City of Castle Hills would be well served a set of design guidelines or standards as the city looks to encourage redevelopment in its commercial areas. The purpose of most design guidelines is to ensure that redevelopment or new projects are compatible with existing styles in the surrounding neighborhood. While most design guidelines are developed for historic districts, they can be established for development in other areas as well. Design guidelines can also provide clear guidance to developers about the municipality's preferred designs, so that these preferences can be incorporated in

the early stages of developing a project, rather than later in the process when it is more costly.

Design guidelines can address some or all of the following design elements: site layout; building orientation; location of parking; connectivity and transition between land uses; vehicular and pedestrian access and circulation; building facades; building materials and colors; windows and doors; landscaping and screening; lighting; and signage.



## Vision

Many of the ideas that came out of the brainstorming session involved cooperation with the Boy Scouts that use the park on the north side of the city. Before any of these ideas can begin, a relationship must be established with the Boy Scouts. Initiating this relationship can be difficult, but the benefits will be long lived.

Approach the Boy Scouts with the opportunity to get involved in projects within the city. This gives the Boy Scouts a chance to give back to the community next to their facilities and city that their facilities occupy. Let the Boy Scouts feel like they are part of the revitalization. Get their input on design features and naming possibilities for beautification projects.

The city can benefit by getting the Boy Scouts involved in some of the beautification projects suggested in the design section. Day projects such as tree planting and landscaping can help the city accomplish its corridor beautification as well as help the scouts get involved with betterment of the city.

Once a strong relationship has been built, negotiations can start for the use of the Boy Scout park. Festivals can be held there that can be mutually beneficial to both the scouts and the city. Ideas for these festivals can come from the citizens of Castle Hills as well as the

Boy Scouts. The Castle Hills Women's Club would be a great resource for themes as well as ideas for event organization. Some of the ideas that came out of the brainstorming sessions were: Fourth of July celebrations, cook-offs, craft-fairs (with crafts made by locals), and renaissance festivals.

If these festivals grow in popularity, parking can become an issue. Before this happens, it would be advantageous to get on good terms with the local churches. The use of their parking lots may become necessary. The churches may look into charging a small fee for the parking as compensation for the use of their property.

Festivals can increase the number of people spending money inside of the city limits of Castle Hills. These visitors would need a place to stay. Bed and Breakfasts, near the park where the festivals would take place, would give an increased economic benefit for the area. The visitors would also need a place to eat, bringing money to local restaurants.