

City of Mineral Wells

# **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategic Plan**

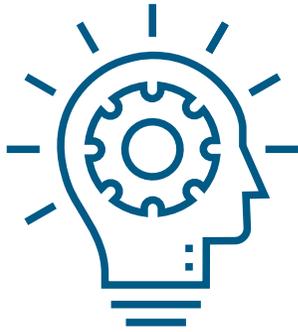
Phase I and II Project Update

February 2019



**MINERAL WELLS**  
WHERE TEXAS RUNS DEEP.

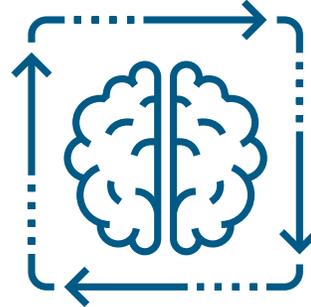
# THE PLANNING PROCESS



PHASE I

## UNDERSTANDING

An honest understanding of past and current conditions. How did the community evolve to where it is today? What happened along the way? What makes Mineral Wells unique? What is getting in the way? How is Mineral Wells making economic development happen? Is the community on the right track?



PHASE II

## BRAINSTORMING

Conceptualizing solutions that can help Mineral Wells realize its full economic potential. Phase II involves looking at all aspects of the community, including physical enhancements, programmatic changes, partnerships, new ideas, new approaches to established ideas, and discarding elements that could be getting in the way of success.



PHASE III

## RECOMMENDING

Finalizing and fully expanding upon the concepts that “stick”. Phase III adds detail and reality to ideas by addressing how each can be fully integrated into Mineral Wells, including action steps needed, funding or programmatic strategies, timing and ownership.

# UNDERSTANDING

Recent years have seen a great deal of self-reflection within Mineral Wells as stakeholders and leaders have become increasingly dissatisfied with the direction of the community. Through processes such as Envision Mineral Wells, the community has recognized many of the issues facing the community, as well as its incredible opportunities. In many ways, the community has begun to chart its new course. The Assessment section of this document builds upon prior assessments of Mineral Wells and the hard work underway within the community.



## RESEARCH

Data collection and analysis ranging from collection of histories and stories to statistics and structure.



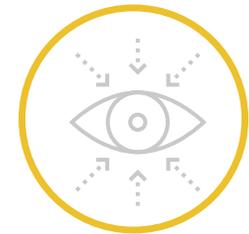
## INTERVIEWS

Discussion with community leaders, stakeholders and individuals interested in the community.



## STUDIES

Review the various planning and economic development studies completed in recent years.



## OBSERVATIONS

Conclusions resulting from walking and driving the area, reviewing material and interacting within the community.

# Winds of Change

What's Old is Becoming  
New Again!



## A Foundation on Health, Wellness and Nature

From the very beginning, the City of Mineral Wells was a tourist town. Numbers of residents and businesses swelled from the 1880s to the 1920s as the City gained a reputation as a place to become healthy and enjoy the surrounding natural beauty. The addition of the Baker Hotel and Crazy Water Hotel brought a resort focus and reduced emphasis on the surrounding outdoor activities. The Great Depression coupled with new medications reduced interest in the amenities available in Mineral Wells and mineral water.



## The Military and Manufacturing Come to Town

The presence of the military began relatively quietly in the 1920s but blossomed during World War II and then again for helicopter training during the Vietnam War. Simultaneously industry came to town with the discovery of oil but then as other companies manufactured, bricks, clay pipe, aircraft systems and more. In 1973, Fort Wolters was permanently closed and the majority of the property split into private parcels. Industry has remained a staple of Mineral Wells although the relationship has, at times, been bittersweet as businesses open and others consolidate or close.



## A Return to Roots in Health, Wellness and Nature

Mineral Wells has experienced a rise to national fame and played a major role in the safety of our country. The loss of both has struck Mineral Wells and the community has since struggled to find its identity - until recently. The community has once again begun to rediscover that the assets that brought fortune remain and could once again be a source of prosperity. Both public and private investment is building a slow and currently fragile economy around health, wellness and nature with the possibility of once again making Mineral Wells and its surrounds a destination worth visiting.

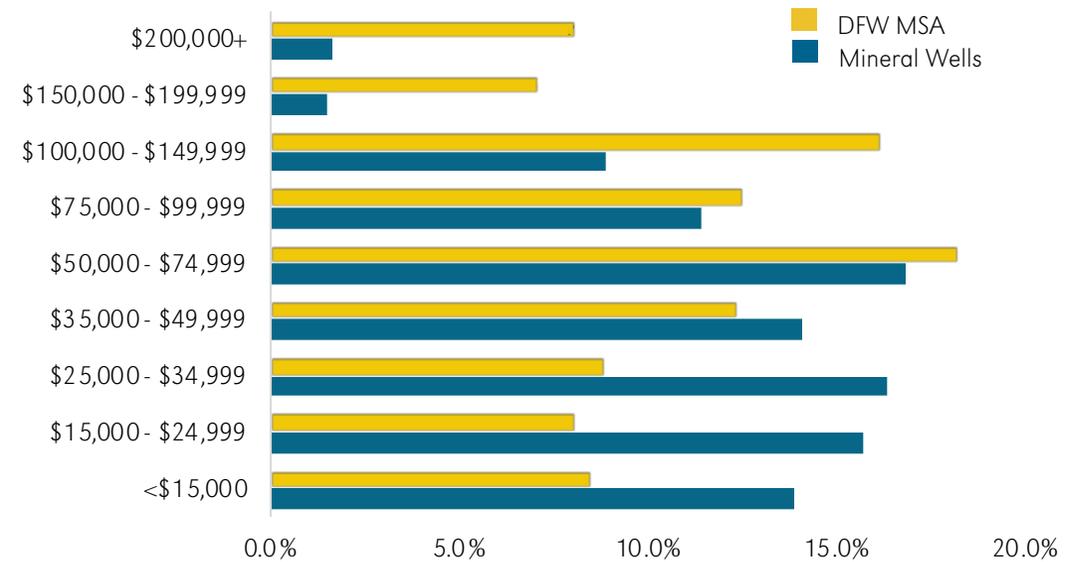
# Research About the Local Population

## RESIDENTS

	<b>Mineral Wells</b>	<b>Dallas/Fort Worth Area</b>
<b>Population</b>	15,233	7,516,037
<b>Daytime Population</b>	15,798	7,516,037
Workers	7,233	3,746,171
Residents	8,565	3,770,079
<b>Households</b>	5,601	2,681,057
<b>Average HH Size</b>	2.71	2.77

## INCOME

- Median household income in the City is \$38,504, which is approximately 40.3% below the DFW MSA average.
- Approximately 60% of households in the City make less than \$50,000 per year

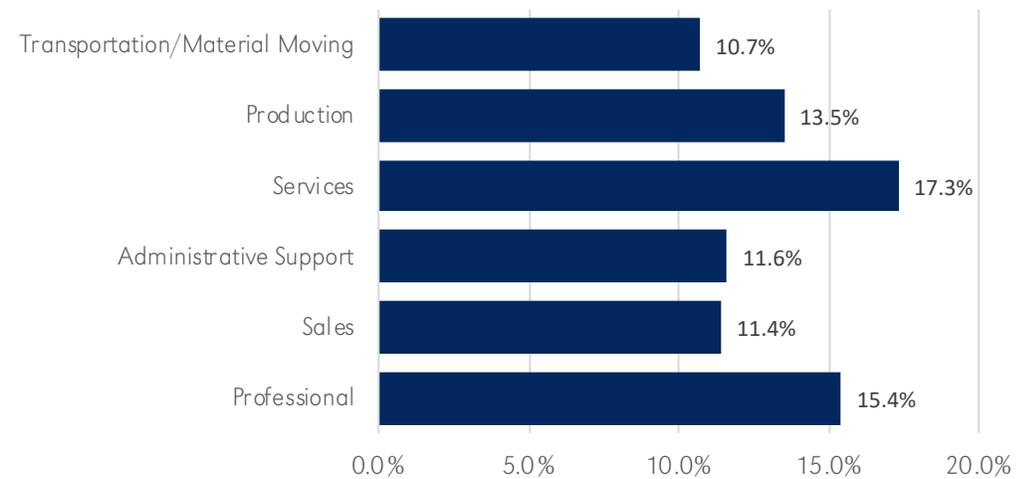
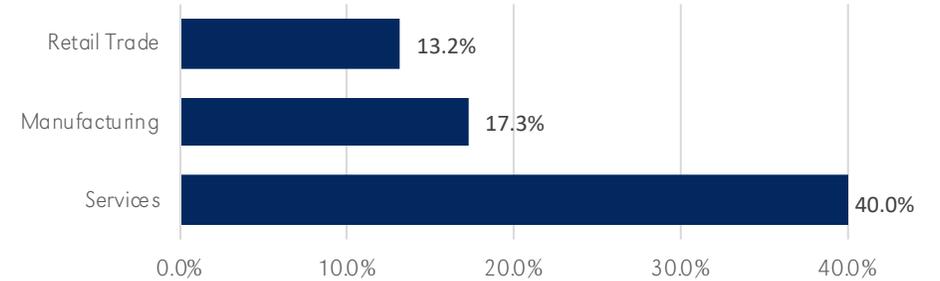


# Research

## About the Local Population

### EMPLOYMENT

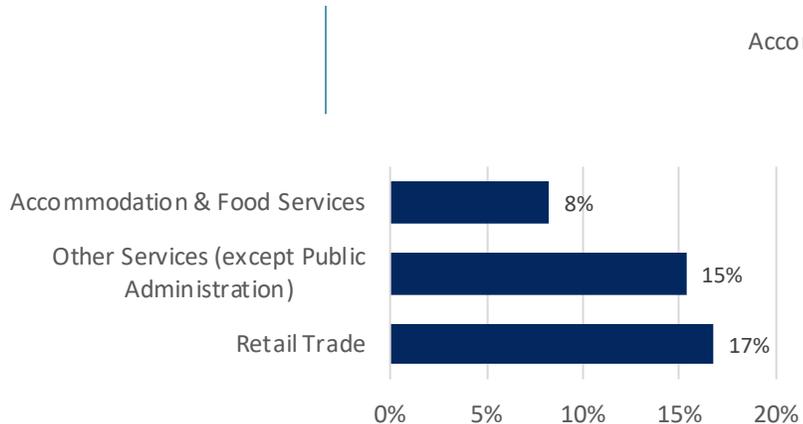
- Residents are primarily employed in the Services, Manufacturing and Retail Trade industries.
- With regards to occupation, the majority of the employed population, are employed in the Services industry, followed by Professional and Transportation/Material Moving.



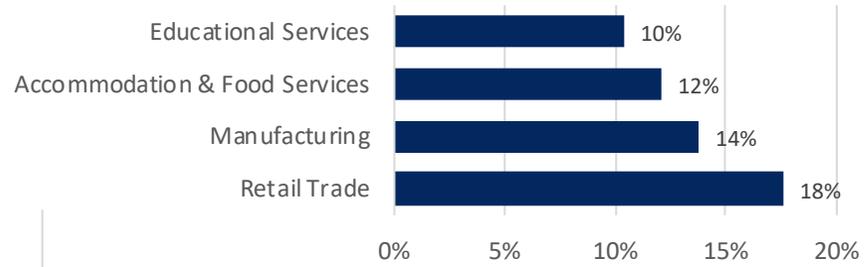
# Research About the Local Economy

## BUSINESSES

- There are approximately 658 businesses in the area employing over 5,900 employees.
- The largest industries in terms of number of businesses include retail trade, followed by other services and accommodation and food services.

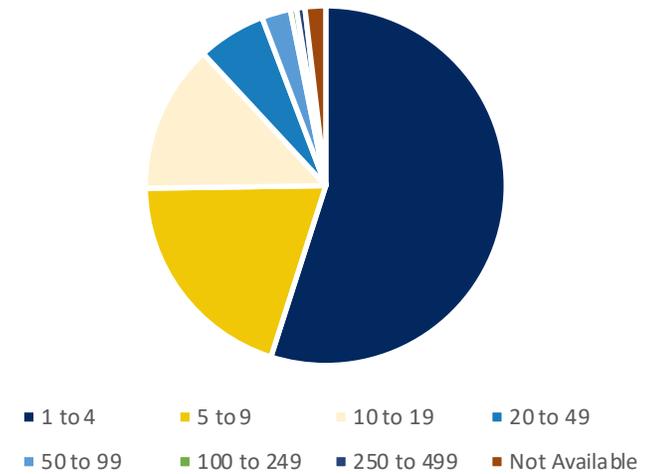


- In terms of the number of employees the largest industries include retail trade, followed by manufacturing, Accommodation and Food Services and Educational Services.

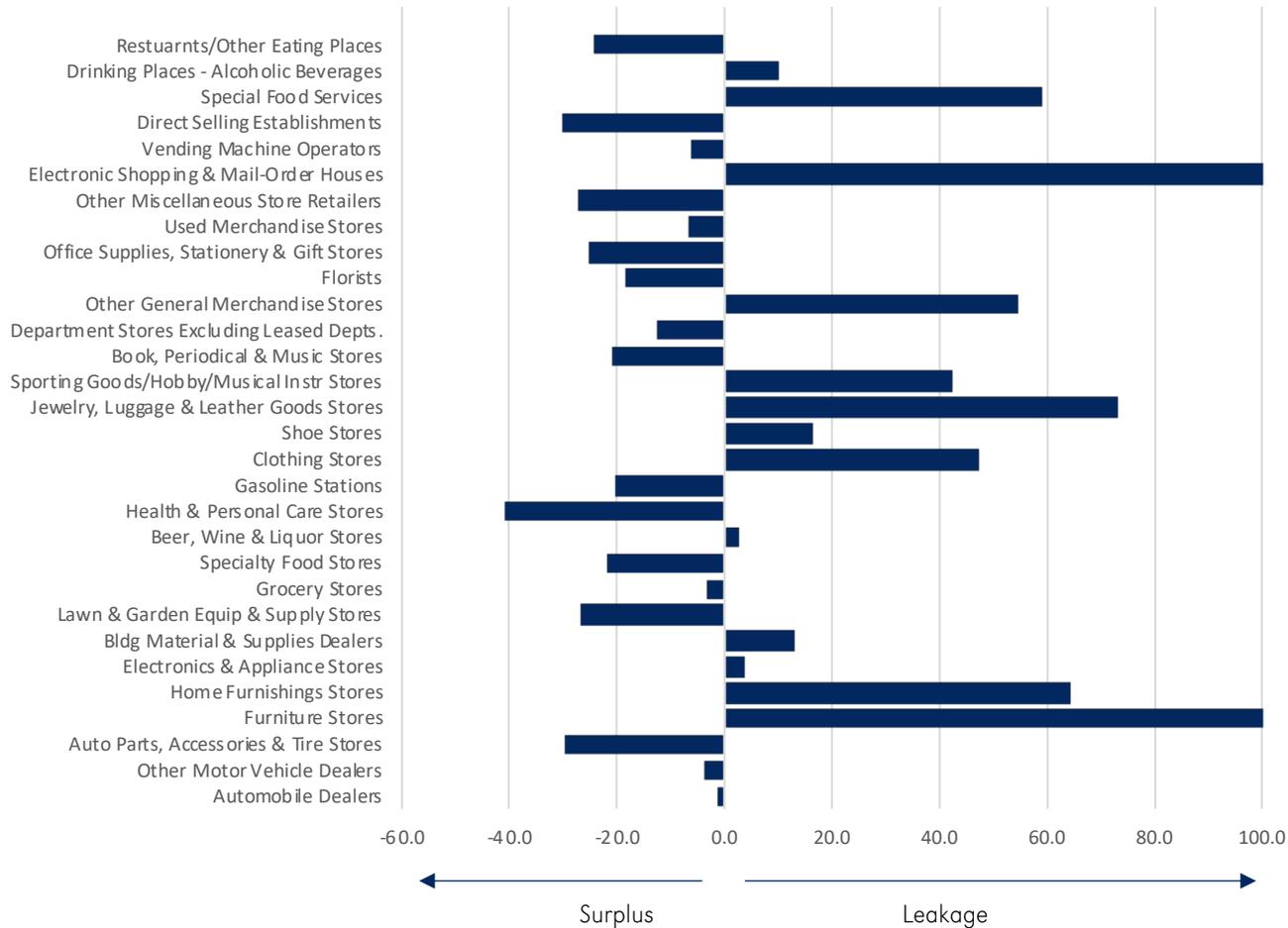


## SMALL BUSINESSES

- The majority of businesses, 75 percent, are small businesses with fewer than 10 employees.
- 43% of businesses currently require less than 2,500 sf of space



# Research About the Local Economy

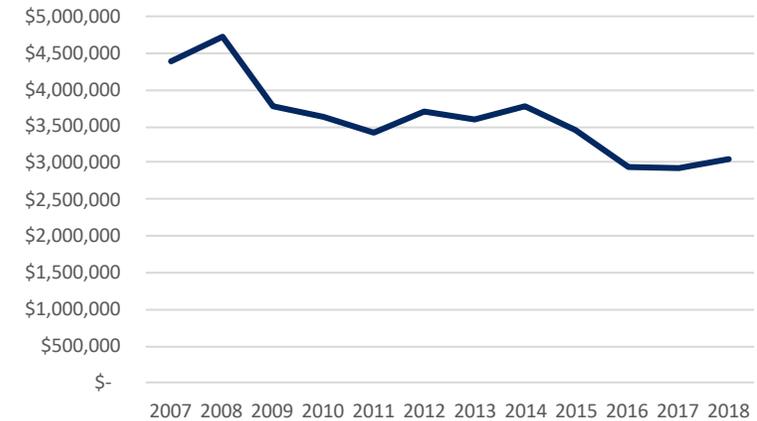


## RETAIL TRADE

- Overall retail supply (sales) exceeds retail demand.
- When demand and supply is broken down by industry, there are several industries where demand is leaking out of the area, including Special Food Services, Furniture Stores, Clothing Stores, Sporting Goods and Jewelry, Luggage and Leather Good Stores.

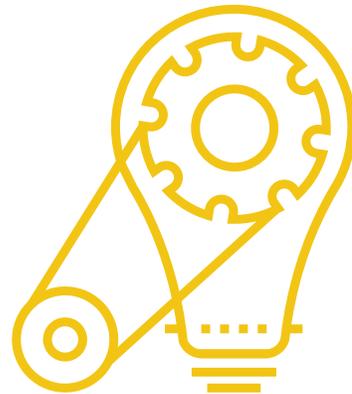
## SALES TAX

- Sales tax has declined by 31% since 2007, which reflects an average annual decline of 3.3%



# Studies

Beginning in 2015, the City of Mineral Wells completed a series of five studies designed to give direction to the community and address major issues. More than simply provide guidance, these studies are reflective of (or responsible for) the renewed focus on downtown revitalization and a brand that embraces the community's natural assets. In the instance of Envision Mineral Wells, the community-focused study has evolved into a living system of five "councils" of stakeholders focused upon implementation of goals and actions.



## **ENVISION MINERAL WELLS**

A more comprehensive, grassroots look at the general issues facing Mineral Wells; the determination of priorities, goals and strategies to address those issues; and the development of a means of implementation and continued community involvement.

## **DISCOVER DOWNTOWN: A REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR HISTORICAL MINERAL WELLS**

A plan for largely physical improvements to downtown aimed at transforming the area into a vibrant, well connected destination.

## **COMMUNITY TOURISM ASSESSMENT**

A review of Mineral Wells various tourism related assets in an effort to assess the effectiveness of existing resources.

## **DOWNTOWN MINERAL WELLS ASSESSMENT REPORT**

Findings of a team from the Texas Downtown Association that include practical programmatic and physical enhancements.

## **HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY REPORT**

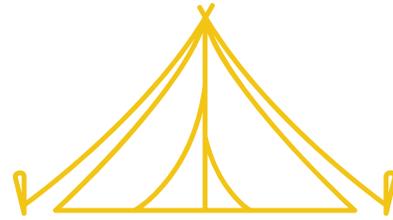
A detailed study that determined National Register eligibility for nearly 100 downtown structures and possibility of a historic district.

# Interviews



## Industry

- Industry is primarily located at the former military base, airport and industrial park
- Need for more industrial land
- Industrial land should be in Palo Pinto County (does not fall under urban EPA rules)
- Need land/buildings that businesses can grow into
- Look at opportunities at the airport including unmanned aviation, manufacturing, larger hangars etc.
- Fort Walters Army Base - need to "clean up"



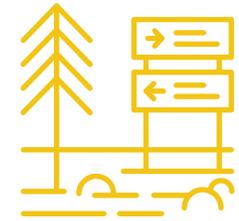
## Tourism

- There are a number of recreational amenities and activities in the area including trails, state and local parks, campgrounds, rock climbing, lakes.
- The City is full of history, Baker Hotel, Crazy Water, Military Base
- Tourism should be targeted to the different audiences, local and regional
- The City is starting to push events in the area including Halloween festival Spooky Wells and Christmas festival Merry Wells
- Capture some of the drive thru traffic going to the Possum Kingdom Lake and the State Parks
- Need to better market the area, currently tourism is volunteer based



## Downtown

- Downtown is growing but also struggling
- The Market (90 vendors)
- Need for traffic and customers
- Crazy Water Hotel and Baker Hotel need to redevelop
- For smaller businesses there is land and structures
- Businesses are not always successful in part because people open without a plan or experience



## Quality of Life

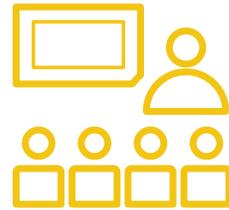
- First impression of Mineral Wells is not great when you drive in
- Need to enhance gateways/entryways
- Need daily services, you have to go out of town for most of things.
- Would like to see an events center, things for kids to do, other than organized sports and a community center

# Interviews



## Economic Infrastructure

- Lack of confidence in the economic development system
- Chamber takes on a strong economic development role
- The future of the industrial foundation
- Economic development currently is heavily focused on industrial, there is a need for staff that can address both retail and industrial
- Improve County/City relationship and coordination



## Education/Workforce

- Workforce is a problem, currently recruiting from outside the City
- Large number of in-commuters for high wage jobs, hard to bring in white collar families
- Incubator program would work well
- Good educational system, but they focus on lower economic and troubled kids
- Would like to have a training program or technical college come and assist with education and workforce skills. Need technical training for existing businesses
- Partnerships with colleges



## Public Infrastructure

- Need for new city facilities
- Working with TXDOT to have a truck by pass to get trucks off downtown streets
- Infrastructure is hard to maintain, was built during the time of base, the footprint is probably too large for a community of this size
- Lack of infrastructure, have tracts of land that are appealing, but no water sewer connections, punitive on lot cost.



## Housing

- Housing is a big issue, employees are living elsewhere because of limited housing options
- There is a need for new mid to high level housing
- Focus on quality of life issues to attract housing

# Observations

Mineral Wells deserves credit for recognizing that the community's identity rests in its history and the natural resources that made it famous. The community has selected a logo and slogan that uniquely represent Mineral Wells and has begun to spread its use. While more work remains, crafting an economic development program without first understanding the community's marketable identity is a frequent flaw that Mineral Wells has very successfully avoided.

## A Clear (and Near Perfect) Definition of Community Identity is Underway



The image shows a screenshot of the Mineral Wells website. At the top left is the logo for Mineral Wells, featuring a stylized 'M' and 'W' with the text 'MINERAL WELLS' and the slogan 'WHERE TEXAS RUNS DEEP.' below it. To the right of the logo are navigation links: 'ABOUT', 'SEARCH', and a Facebook icon. Below these are three main menu items: 'THINGS TO DO' with a location pin icon, 'WHERE TO STAY' with a house icon, and 'EAT & DRINK' with a fork and knife icon. The main content area features a large banner image of a street in Mineral Wells with several vintage cars parked along the side. Overlaid on the banner is the text 'TOP 10 THINGS TO DO' in large, white, bold letters. Below the banner is a white text box with the following text: 'Find out where to go and what to do, and discover why Mineral Wells runs deep in this list of things to do and see in and around Mineral Wells, Texas.'

# Observations

## The Area has Great Resources

Mineral water may have historically brought crowds into the area, but the rich scenery and abundance of amenities proved equally enticing. Today's Mineral Wells is in an even better position. Beyond a resurging downtown the community offers Clark Gardens Botanical Garden and a variety of museums. Lake Mineral Wells State Park and the connecting trail offer stunning views and activities that are only rivaled in the area by Possum Kingdom State Park. With Palo Pinto Mountains State Park on the way, the community has every reason to celebrate its natural and cultural heritage.



# Observations

The Discover Downtown document recommended development of gateways and a wayfinding program to establish a sense of arrival and assist in navigation. Downtown is not the only area that struggles to be recognized or found. Efforts by the consultant team to discover and enjoy several of the city's assets proved cumbersome. Similar issues occurred while trying to reach the natural areas surrounding the city.

Yes, the Area has Great Resources -  
When You can Find Them



# Observations

Mineral Wells is facing the financial realities of rebuilding a community with an aging infrastructure. That infrastructure could potentially be a detriment in efforts to attract investors and will certainly impact efforts to reinvigorate tourism. Infrastructure and amenities can range from the obvious such as Crystal Canal and City Hall to less the less obvious water lines, roadways and less visible facilities such as the Dunbar Community Center. Other infrastructure and amenities such as Mineral Wells Airport and the helicopter land pads scattered throughout the area are unique to the community and could prove very economically advantageous.

## Public Infrastructure and Facilities are more than a Quality of Life Issue



# Observations

## The Baker Hotel is an Asset, Not the City's Savior

The Baker Hotel opened to the Great Depression but over time brought a new level of fame to Mineral Wells. Since its closure, a variety of developers have proposed to refurbish and reuse the Baker Hotel, including a current suitor that may be the most likely candidate to succeed. To assist in its resurgence the City has set aside funds and many property owners have chosen to hold off on property improvements or on selling to another party for fear of losing out.

It is CRITICAL to recognize that the Baker Hotel is only one asset in a larger effort. It will NOT survive without other equally interesting attractions and amenities.

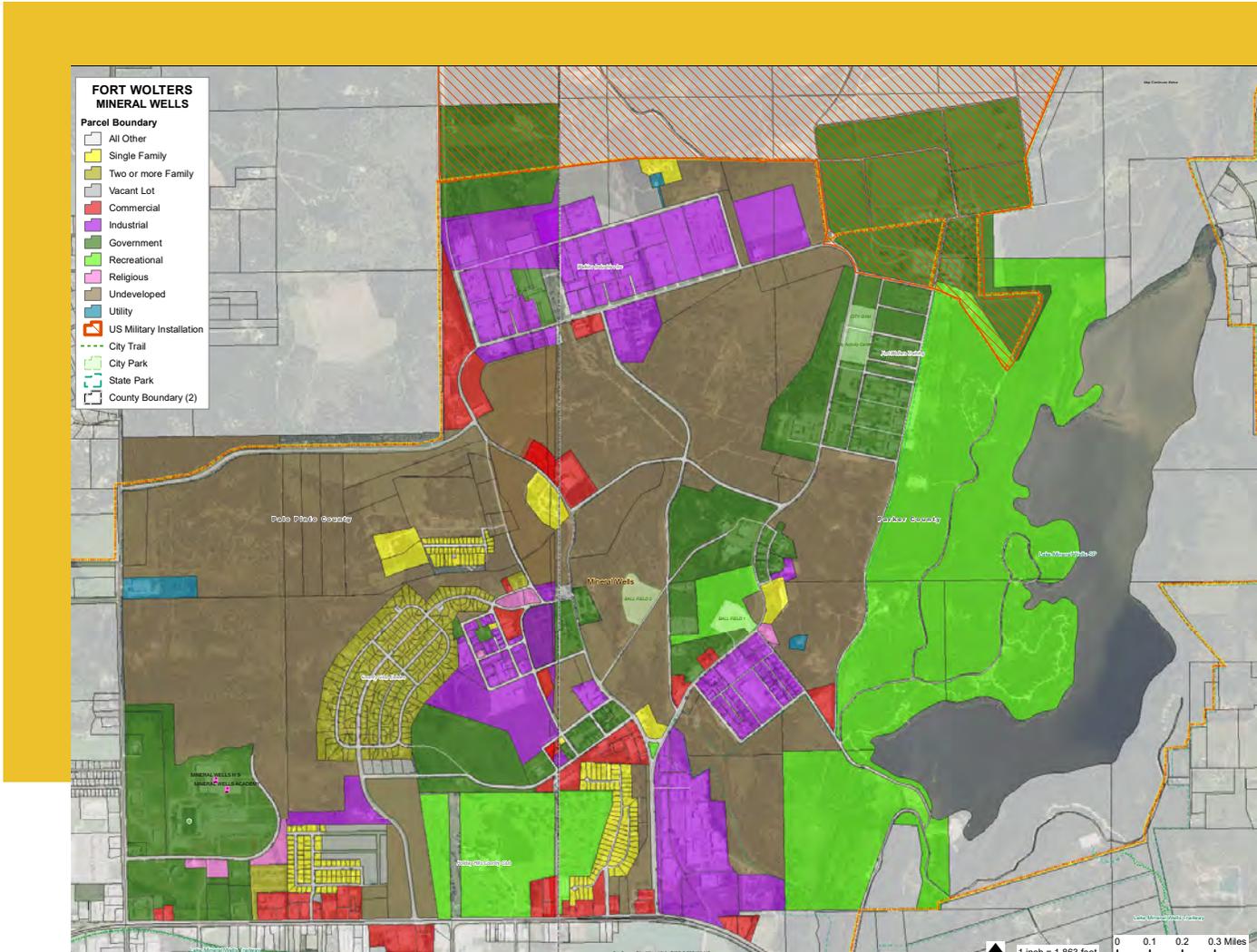
By holding resources based upon the possibility of redevelopment of the Baker Hotel, both the public and private sectors slow revitalization that would increase the likelihood of redevelopment of the hotel and the long term success of both the facility and the community.



# Observations

When Fort Walters was permanently closed the decision was made to privatize the large majority of the land. Today's mix of uses and ownership stems from that decision, including creation of the portion of that site now known as the Wolters Industrial Park. Stakeholders interviewed as part of this project indicated that much of the property would be a poor fit for industrial activity with its current configuration and topography. While potentially true, the property could still serve any number of various functions if properly planned.

## The Former Site of Fort Wolters Is Complicated but Offers Great Potential



# Observations

It all started with wells that offered “healing powers”. What followed was not only testament to the powers of mineral water, but also to the innovative nature of its residents. From invention of the paper clip to automated flight operations the City of Mineral Wells has been a welcome home to people with great ideas and the willingness to turn those ideas into a business. Mineral Wells is among the best examples of historic proof of the power of entrepreneurship as a means of building prosperity. Ironically the community does very little to recognize and promote it.

## City is Losing its Historic Love Affair with Entrepreneurship



# Observations

## Too Many Cooks Managing Economic Development

### **Mineral Wells Industrial Foundation**

A 501(c)(6) organization that assists almost exclusively with the industrial and manufacturing businesses. The Industrial Foundation has land ownership and land banking capabilities and makes strong use of the Texas Capital Fund to create incentives. The foundation is assisted by a consultant that serves as staff and is managed by a Board of Directors.

### **Mineral Wells and Palo Pinto County Area Growth Council**

A five member board that is associated with the Industrial Foundation. The members include the City of Mineral Wells, Palo Pinto County, the Chamber of Commerce, the Industrial Foundation, and the Mineral Wells Index.

### **Mineral Wells Downtown Association**

A recently created organization established for purposes of promoting and representing the downtown business community.

### **Mineral Wells Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau**

The Chamber of Commerce supports local business through a variety of activities and events, including a “shop local” program during the Christmas season and events such as Merry Wells and Spooky Wells. The chamber manages the community brand and utilizes a portion of Hotel Occupancy Tax revenues to promote the city. Recently, the chamber made changes to manage Envision Mineral Wells and support the five ongoing “councils”.

### **Envision Mineral Wells “Councils”**

Developed to implement the goals and strategies of Envision Mineral Wells, each Council consists of a group of stakeholders led by a Vice-Chair. Councils include Community Redevelopment, Economic Development, Education and Workforce, Government Relations, and Tourism & Hospitality. The Economic Development Council includes committees focusing on Advanced Manufacturing, Aviation, Health Care, and Small Business. Each council spearheads progress in its respective area of focus, including discussion of projects and solutions.

# Observations

## Too Many Cooks Managing Economic Development

### **City of Mineral Wells Community Development Corporation**

An entity created for the purpose of administering the City's Type B economic development funds. A sales tax of 0.125% is devoted to economic development, most specifically redevelopment of the Baker Hotel.

### **City of Mineral Wells Industrial Development Corporation**

An entity created for purposes of considering issuance of Industrial Revenue Bonds.

### **Mineral Wells Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone Number Two**

An entity to support redevelopment in the downtown area. Revenues collected from the increment in tax revenue are administered by the Board of the reinvestment zone.

### **City of Mineral Wells**

No city staff member is specifically dedicated to economic development or land management activities. City Council participates in economic development through action and funding for programs such as Envision Mineral Wells.

### **City of Mineral Wells Economic Development Task Force**

A local task force created by City Council for the purpose of seeking the most effective means of economic development for the City of Mineral Wells.

### **Palo Pinto and Parker Counties**

No staff member in either county is specifically dedicated to economic development. Palo Pinto County participates by funding economic development entities in Mineral Wells, including the Chamber of Commerce through the county's Hotel Occupancy Tax.

# Observations

## Major Aspects of Economic Development are Going Unmet



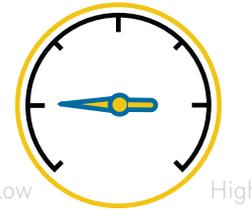
### **New Business Attraction**

Traditionally reactive approach to new business development. Limited largely to industrial-related businesses and then not through aggressive outreach. Responsibility for industrial-related, new business attraction falls to the Industrial Development Corporation



### **Business Retention & Expansion**

The Chamber of Commerce performs a loose-knit visitation program, but no actual program exists to conduct Business Retention and Expansion



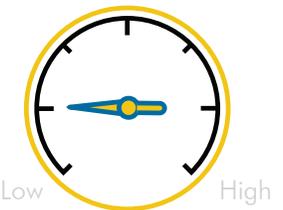
### **Entrepreneurship & Small Business Development**

No local organization is responsible for promoting entrepreneurship or nurturing the survival and growth of local small business.



### **Marketing & Brand Identity**

The Chamber of Commerce has successfully taken on the role of crafting and growing the community's identity. The Chamber has recently established a new promotional website and strategically advertises the community.



### **Business Intelligence & Information Delivery**

The Chamber of Commerce and Industrial Foundation share limited roles in data collection and provision. Critical information is not readily acquired or available by any of the respective agencies focusing on economic development.

# Observations

## The Limited (and Limiting) Tools in Use to Promote Economic Development

### **Type B Sales Tax**

The City of Mineral Wells and Palo Pinto County both receive a share of the sales tax available to local government (1.5% and 0.5%, respectively). A small portion of the City's sales tax (0.125%) is allocated to economic development and is currently considered reserved for redevelopment of the Baker Hotel.

### **City of Mineral Wells Industrial Revenue Bonds**

Taxable or tax exempt bonds have been used to support industrial development. Bonds are typically paid by the private developer.

### **Tax Increment Reinvestment Funds**

The City utilizes its ability to create reinvestment zones and capture tax increment to support new development or redevelopment, but currently limits that tool to the downtown area.

### **Leveraged Federal and State Grant Funds**

The City and its partners have some history of successfully acquiring federal or state grants and tapping in programs for purposes of capital improvements or redevelopment.

### **Hotel Occupancy Tax**

The City of Mineral Wells and Palo Pinto County collect a Hotel Occupancy Tax on hotel guests for purposes of promoting activities that bolster the tourist and hotel industries. The majority of city HOT funds and a portion of the county HOT funds go to the Chamber.

### **Texas Capital Fund**

The Industrial Foundation has a solid record of utilizing the Texas Capital Fund as a means of reducing cost to industrial businesses interested in Mineral Wells.

# Observations

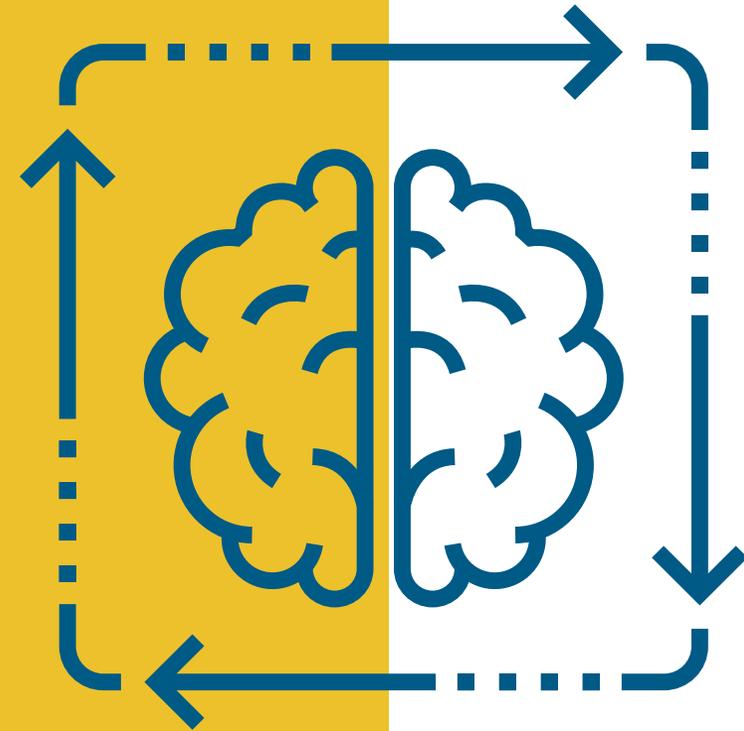
With limited guidance on economic development, the private sector has begun to carve its own path. In downtown, community stakeholders have been revitalizing the core, including a locally “crowdsourced” approach to restoring the Crazy Water Hotel. While admirable, the current process misses out on the ability to leverage the community’s resources and maximize each partner’s investment.

## The Private Sector isn’t Waiting for Leadership to Catch Up



# BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming is intended to be exactly that – a group of initial ideas or concepts. Some of these ideas or concepts will resonate with the community and will be fully detailed to become recommendations in the final report. Others may require some amendment or be discarded. The intent is to gain feedback and to ensure that the plan is headed in the right direction.



# Concept 1

## Economic Development Infrastructure Should be Restructured

The consultant team sees restructuring the current system for managing economic development as critical to improving performance and addressing the facets of economic development that are not currently being fully addressed.

- Hire an Economic Development Director or make the Chamber leader the ED Director to provide overall management of economic development and address gaps currently going unmet
- Refocus the Chamber (based upon the direction chosen for ED Director) to also address gaps in the system, including business retention and expansion, brand management, tourism and more.
- Merge a number of the entities into a single Economic Development Corporation that can address many of the elements currently being managed by multiple organizations.
- Consider the option of the Economic Development Director and the Economic Development Corporation as shared resources between the City of Mineral Wells and Palo Pinto County.
- Bake transparency and open fiscal management directly into the new program

# Concept 2

## Load Up the Local Economic Development Toolbox

The concept proposes a more robust series of local economic development tools that can be used to spur economic growth ranging from Chapter 380 agreements to a microloan program designed to assist small businesses. It also proposes reconsideration of some current programs including Type B and Hotel Occupancy Tax funds.

- Type B funds should be expanded in scope and resources should be put to work now
- HOT funds should increasingly go toward marketing and the types of tourism that “puts heads in beds”
- Build a Chapter 380 (and Chapter 381) program that could be case-by-case, area-focused or both
- Put the Opportunity Zone program to work immediately
- Consider strategic use of captured sales tax for uses such as infrastructure and other quality of life improvements
- Consider more aggressive use of special districts (TIRZ, Management Districts, and more) to finance and maintain improvements and spur revitalization
- Establish a Revolving Loan Fund/Microloan fund for business development/expansion
- Strategically leverage federal/state programs, local funding and private funding
- Welcome crowdfunding
- Continue promoting the Texas Capital Fund where appropriate and in conjunction with other funds

# Concept 3

## Employ a Planner and Assign a Series of Planning Tasks

A number of the issues and opportunities related to economic development in Mineral Wells are best addressed through employment of an urban planner, including opportunities with downtown and the Main Street Program, development of a comprehensive plan, review and amendment of development codes, grantwriting, and development of a master plan for the area that was formerly Fort Wolters and now includes Wolters Industrial Park.

- Join the Main Street program and allow the planner to serve as the director of the program
- Complete a true comprehensive plan for Mineral Wells (and possibly the surrounding area to best build on ALL resources)
- Update and amend land development code, policies, processes and practices to be friendly to today's designs and needs
- Advocate strongly for code enforcement and activism
- Manage downtown development/redevelopment efforts
- Collect and share critical data
- Assist in management of Envision Mineral Wells
- Complete a Master Plan for Fort Wolters area and strategically expand opportunities for industrial areas, particularly related to key focus areas of UAS and bio-related fields
- Assist (or lead) efforts to acquire state and federal funds

# Concept 4

## Health, Wellness and Nature Represent a Lasting Brand and Strategy

People are once again travelling to destinations for health or wellness as a primary focus, just as they travelled to Mineral Wells in the past. Mineral Wells has an extremely strong cultural and physical foundation to fully support health and wellness – not just as a brand, but as an industry. From spas to spirituality and from bike trails to bath houses, Mineral Wells has assets and options entirely unique to this community.

- Attract uses that are connected to health and wellness and build upon the mineral water, downtown, lakes, trails and more including wellness spas, bath house, resorts, bike and kayak/boat rentals
- Expand upon the Mineral Wells State Park Trailway to connect a maximum number of amenities
- Encourage restaurants to provide health conscious options and, where possible, promote farm-to-table ingredients
- Maintain and expand the Farmer's Market as a contributor to the health industry
- Work with local health institutions in creating/expanding local health and wellness programs for local and wellness tourism
- Promote local programs that offer health and wellness activities, such as walking, hiking, yoga, meditation, cycling, kayaking, and healthy culinary activities
- Develop a series of major events or activities such as a half marathon, triathlon, cooking competition, or other that can capture a regional (or larger) audience.
- Market the area towards wellness and nature retreats

# Concept 5

## Make Downtown Mineral Wells the City's Primary (but not only) Destination

Downtown Mineral Wells has the potential to offer a small town urban experience that is highly complementary to the surrounding rural, natural and cultural amenities. In the city and surrounding area. Downtown can offer the bustle of shops, spas, restaurants, bars, urban parks, and activities and much more, preferably by car, bike or walking.

- Promote the development of a cluster of businesses that follows the 10-10-10 rule - 10 unique restaurants, 10 interesting shopping options and 10 businesses that remain open past 6pm.
- Capitalize on Opportunity Zones and the establishment of Opportunity Funds for redevelopment in the downtown area.
- Implement the findings of the ongoing downtown design study to provide physical enhancements and infill development to downtown.
- Consider implementation of programs recommended in the assessment completed by the Texas Downtown Association including those related to vacant buildings, demolition by neglect, pop-up retail.
- Establish a “graduation program” in coordination with property owners that allows pop-up, incubator and farmer’s market vendors to transition into downtown brick-and-mortar stores.
- Complete the state and local registry process

# Concept 6

## Take Full Advantage of the Natural Attractions Surrounding Mineral Wells

The scenic beauty and natural amenities that surround Mineral Wells are the perfect complement to a health and wellness brand – both from the perspective of marketing the community as a great place to live and invest as well as a place worth visiting.

- Coordinate with the state in joint use and marketing of park facilities and trails, as well as making improvements (and the means of finding resources to make them happen and maintain them) that are important for wellness and nature tourism. This includes continued coordination in development of Palo Pinto Mountains State Park
- Expand the trail network to connect the amenities that can be found throughout the area. Improve amenities along trails and consider addition of services such as bike rentals and refreshments at trailheads.
- Coordinate with the state and counties to establish events, festivals and/or activities that can utilize the amenities of the state parks, including music festivals, athletic events and tournaments.
- Aggressively promote the active and passive recreational lifestyle that comes with living and investing in Mineral Wells.
- Coordinate signage and wayfinding programs to ensure that visitors see commonality and can navigate to various facilities with ease.

# Concept 7

## Go “All In” on Unmanned Aircraft Systems and Bio-Processes – with a Pivot Strategy

Industry and manufacturing have been a part of the economic development fabric and the built environment of Mineral Wells for generations. A recent focus on business related to Unmanned Aircraft Systems is smart because it takes full advantage of systems and facilities already in place and it taps into a rising market. Biochar has the potential to do the same; however, the consultant team suggests expanding this scope to a larger field of biosciences including biofuels and others that are both directly rising markets, but also can actively contribute to and protect the quality of life and place that is part of the community's brand.

- Preserve resources such as the various helipads available throughout the region for potential use in the Unmanned Aircraft System program.
- Continue to aggressively pursue a foundation for the UAS and biosciences programs to include development of the educational, entrepreneurial, research, training and development pipelines.
- Actively partner with educational institutions, the private sector, government entities, and think tank/foundations to provide the facilities and resources to promote both technologies.
- Assess development codes to ensure that business clusters are permitted and promoted where appropriate and in a manner that both blends into the community and provides the potential for evolution and (if necessary) redevelopment.
- Establish a component of Envision Mineral Wells or the Economic Development Corporation that is consistently considering new markets and realistically assessing the condition of current areas of focus.

# Concept 8

## Return to a Culture of Innovation and Entrepreneurship

The history of innovation and entrepreneurship in Mineral Wells is a story of its own – and one that is worth celebrating and making a mainstay feature of the community. A program that encourages the generation of ideas, experimentation, failure and success through persistence will not only promote new business development but it will provide an avenue to prosperity at all income and education levels. More, that level of innovation is attractive to a segment of firms and individuals equally beneficial to Mineral Wells.

- Construct an “entrepreneurship pipeline” of facilities that allow individuals to move from ideas to startups and on to successful businesses including a system of incubators, the farmers market, trucks and containers, digital strategies, shared facilities, and more.
- Coordinate education and workforce development programs to ensure that youth entrepreneurship and innovation is an active part of an immersive learning process.
- Seek out university or foundation entities interested in a center for innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Pay particular attention to opportunities for entrepreneurship in the major areas of focus for Mineral Wells such as health, wellness, nature/nature sciences, technology/aviation (UAS), and biosciences (biochar), tourism, lifestyle products and amenities, agribusiness, and food.
- Establish an Increment Development program in Mineral Wells to internally create the next generation of community builders and developers.

# Concept 9

## Make Small Business and Local Ownership a Critical Economic Development Strategy

Very few communities fully appreciate the role that small business plays in the local economy. Nor do they realize the full impact and benefit of local ownership. A strategy aimed at supporting a thriving small business industry plays a number of roles. It enhances the sense of place as more unique establishments arrive in the community. It increases the avenues for prosperity for all income and education levels. Finally, small businesses that expand into larger businesses are intensely loyal to the community that supported them through the leanest years.

- As mentioned in other concepts, develop the pipeline that allows businesses to successfully grow from the garage to successful brick and mortar stores, from incubators and pop up retail stores to food trucks and local markets. The variety of options allows businesses to grow at reduced risk.
- Ensure that development codes allow and, in some areas, actively promote a variety of business types from home occupations and coworking to food trucks and container courtyards.
- Establish programs and marketing materials that aggressively promote shopping locally and supporting local businesses more than during the holiday season. Inclusive in this effort is an equally aggressive business to business network.
- Coordinate with local financial institutions and interested organizations to establish a variety of financing methods for growth and development of small businesses from microloans and revolving loans to grants for targeted business sectors.

# Concept 10

## Expand Partnerships for Workforce and Business Development

For Mineral Wells to reach its full potential in nearly all of its preferred market segments it must have the educational infrastructure in place to develop and maintain a highly skilled and well educated workforce beginning in the early stages of childhood through retirement. Fortunately, the world of education is rapidly evolving to adapt to today's needs and the digital age is ensuring that small city's can be just as competitive as their counterparts.

- Consider a robust business retention and expansion program as a critical means of gathering information related to workforce needs
- Seek out the best practices in education at all levels that can be effectively applied in Mineral Wells.
- Build an educational partnership with a variety of technical schools, colleges, universities and related organizations, including private business, to meet the needs of the workforce and particularly the preferred market segments of Mineral Wells.
- Establish one or more specialized institutes or incubator facilities, such as a culinary institute, biosciences research center, health and wellness medical center or production “makerspace” that can blend into the education system at all levels, build skills and provide access to materials and mentorship on an enhanced level.

# Concept 11

Nearly every study for Mineral Wells has included a desire to add art into the community. A more aggressive strategy would promote Mineral Wells as a welcome home for artists and artisans. Mineral Wells offers many of the ingredients attractive as a home for artists. Space and homes are currently affordable. An infrastructure already exists for the arts and there is a desire to see the arts expanded. The natural setting is highly desirable for a variety of many artists and artisans. More, artists represent a first wave for redevelopment. The “cool factor” typically draws interest and investment from other households with greater disposable income.

## Invite the Artists and Artisans and They will Provide the Arts and a New Audience

- Develop a program for housing and live/work space in Mineral Wells that focuses on individuals that add value beyond disposable income, including artists and artisans.
- Rehabilitate Cullen Grimes Elementary as a facility promoting art, including the possibility of studio spaces, galleries, classes and more.
- Coordinate with downtown business owners interested in displaying art within their establishments as a means of promoting a local arts industry.
- Establish public spaces for the public display of artwork, including permanent, rotating and “pop up” installments.
- Consider expansion of this segment to other avenues of liberal art including writers and the performing arts.

# Concept 12

## Community Development is Good Economic Development

Envision Mineral Wells smartly recognizes that quality of life has become a major driver in the decision to make any investment in a community. For that reason it is important to continue to make improvements in the everyday services and amenities that can enhance life and living in Mineral Wells – and make it a great place for residents, employees and guests.

- Place an emphasis on strategic roadway and infrastructure repair
- Enhance streetscapes, public spaces and public facilities to both meet the needs of the community but to also enhance the impression people have of the community.
- Enhance entryways and gateways to the City to provide a welcoming introduction to Mineral Wells that is reflective of the community's brand.
- Ensure that connectivity includes a strong system for the pedestrian and bicycle activity that should be a major amenity in Mineral Wells.
- Aggressively enhance efforts to enforce codes and maintain a high standard of appearance, including programs to maintain vacant facilities.
- Improve, modernize and enhance community parks and facilities including City Park and the Dunbar Community Center as showcase facilities reflective of a standard expected in the private sector and with the amenities that make them a relevant and desirable draw, potentially even for an area that extends beyond Mineral Wells.

# Concept 13

## Housing and Other Development Practices Should be Mineral Wells Centric

Housing has been an issue cited by a number of stakeholders as one of the major weaknesses facing Mineral Wells. While housing is important, it is equally important that the approach to housing be one that can effectively address multiple issues and end in a product that is appropriate to the brand and demands of the community.

- Establish an aggressive program aimed at revitalization and redevelopment of the existing housing stock. A program should require standards to ensure redevelopment maintains the character of the neighborhood and is reflective of a small town urban environment. Inner city, small town living is increasingly attractive to a rising audience with disposable income. The program should be strongly coupled with access to amenities and entertainment.
- Consider loft living as another housing option that contributes to an active downtown atmosphere.
- New housing development should be reflective of and build upon the character of the area and also meet the demand of a variety of audiences, including introduction of a variety of development patterns, sizes and types of housing.
- Avoid an exclusive focus on promoting construction of new “traditional” tract housing that offers the same product available in surrounding communities.
- Ensure that development codes offer the flexibility to allow a variety of housing types, mixes densities and development patterns.