

SAN YGNACIO

San Ygnacio located on a bluff overlooking the Rio Grande River is the oldest town in Zapata County (1830). The community lies 30 miles south of Laredo and 14 miles northwest of Zapata. The town has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places since 1972. U.S. Highway 83 passes through the eastern edge of the town. A January 2008 survey by Terri Myers for The River Pierce Foundation identifies 100 contributing historic properties within approximately 75 acres. Myers' report (San Ygnacio Historic District An Update of The National Register of Historic Places Nomination) defines a new historic district boundary. The historic district also includes the Treviño Fort (ca.1830) which is listed as a National Historic Landmark. This landmark is owned by the River Pierce Foundation which was established in 1990 and dedicated to the cultural and historic preservation of buildings within the town.

San Ygnacio is a tremendous asset for Zapata County and could serve as a strong focus for a tourism/heritage initiative for the county. The bird sanctuary in San Ygnacio is also well known nationally and internationally. Discussions regarding the expansion of the newly established bird sanctuary as part of a larger birding center for the county continues.

EXISTING LAND USE AND BUILDING PATTERNS

The town is laid out in a grid pattern that follows cardinal directions. A central plaza is the physical center of the town (fig. 2.24). Overlooking the plaza is Nuestra Señora del Refugio Catholic Church founded in 1872 (fig. 2.25).

The dominate land-use pattern in the community is detached single-family housing units. A small number of scattered commercial buildings are located along U.S. Highway 83 on the eastern edge of the town. Twenty-five manufactured housing units were counted in a building survey in 2007 which is an extremely high percentage with respect to the total housing inventory in the town. Manufactured housing is not appropriate for a historic town district. There is clearly a need for new infill affordable housing in the town that respects the architectural quality of existing historic buildings.

FACING THE FUTURE

Great care must be taken to preserve the historic uniqueness of San Ignacio, while still meeting the day-to-day needs of its residents. Some of the older structures have been remodeled in a manner that is inappropriate. Professional historic preservation and restoration advice is needed on a regular basis as work is undertaken. Academic professionals in historic preservation programs at both The University of Texas at San



Figure 2.24: Plaza del Pueblo.



Figure 2.25: Nuestra Señora del Refugio Catholic Church



Figure 2.26: Sanchez House/Amador Vela Store, ca. 1875 Washington & Gutierrez Streets.



Figure 2.27: Historic customs house. Trevino Street.

Antonio and Texas A&M University could be sought for assistance. The inappropriate use of cement based stuccos is one problem that was observed by consultants that could result in moisture accumulation in the stone and a more rapid deterioration of building walls. Careful attention is not only needed for the buildings but the streetscape of the historic district as well. Modifications to streets, sidewalks, lighting, signage, and general landscaping should follow a set of defined guidelines. New infill development should also be reviewed so that the integrity of the district is maintained and not diminished.

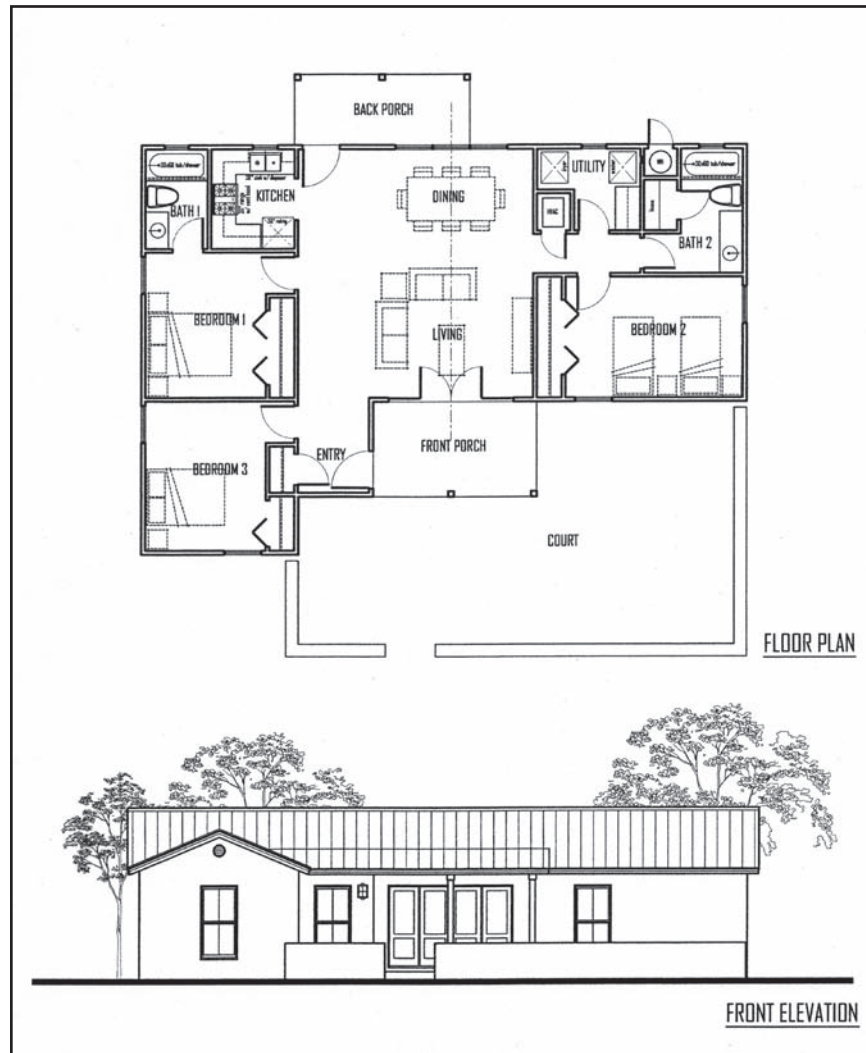


Figure 2.28: Providing affordable infill housing that is compatible with the historic structures in San Ygnacio is critical to meeting housing needs and maintaining the historic character of the town. This example combines compatible features with an cost efficient modular plan that can be easily expanded.

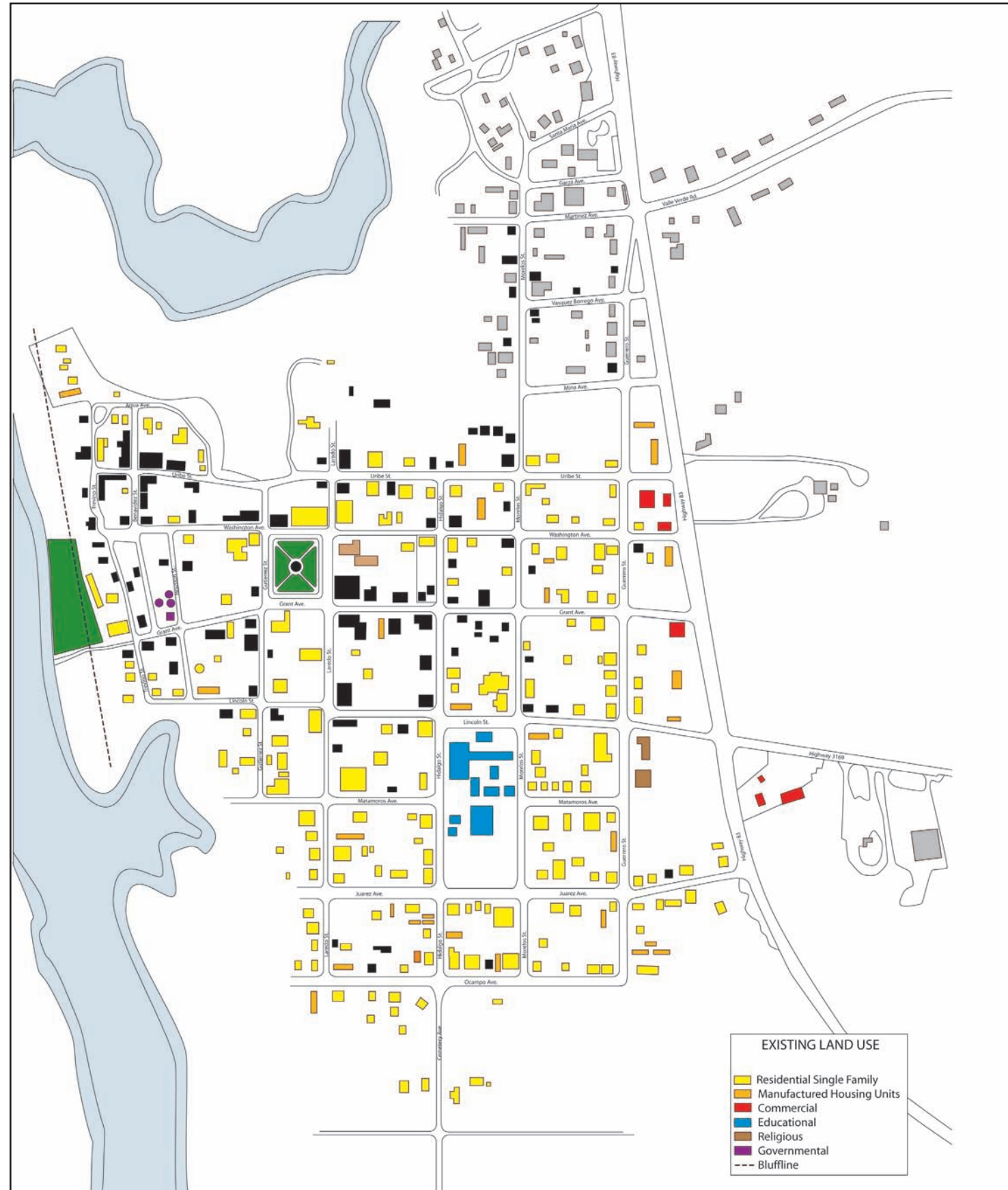


Figure 2.29: Existing Land Use, San Ygnacio.



2.16

Figure 2.30: Existing Historic Buildings in San Ygnacio.

A TRANSECT ZONE PLAN FOR SAN YGNACIO

A proposed transect plan for San Ygnacio involves four zones and a special historic district and is shown in fig. 2.31.

ZONE T1: RURAL PRESERVE

A rural preserve is an open space that is legally protected from development. A T1 Zone includes surface water bodies (Rio Grande River); protected wetlands and habitats (San Ygnacio Bird Sanctuary); public open space; and conservation easements.

ZONE T2: RURAL RESERVE

A rural reserve includes land that should be protected from development through public acquisition or control. This zone can include flood plains, steep slopes susceptible to erosion, and critical aquifer recharge areas. Within this category is the arroyo north of town and land areas along the Rio Grande River that fall within the 100-year floodplain.

ZONE T3: SUB-URBAN

A sub-urban zone includes the least dense populated areas and includes the fringe residential areas of San Ygnacio.

ZONE T4: GENERAL URBAN

The T4 Zone includes established and developing neighborhood areas. The general urban zone in San Ygnacio would permit limited office buildings, lodging and retail on designated parcels of land. Buildings would be a maximum of two stories in height. Open spaces would include plazas and courtyards similar to the historic district in San Ygnacio.

ZONE T4A: LODGING AND RETAIL

Existing and future retail and lodging should be located in the T4A zone. A new plaza could become a focal point for development in this area.

THE HISTORIC DISTRICT

A historic district is proposed for the primary historic core of the town. The boundaries defined in the Myers' report provide justification for the inclusion of buildings in the district. A set of historic district guidelines and design review criteria should be developed for this important place to protect it in future decades.

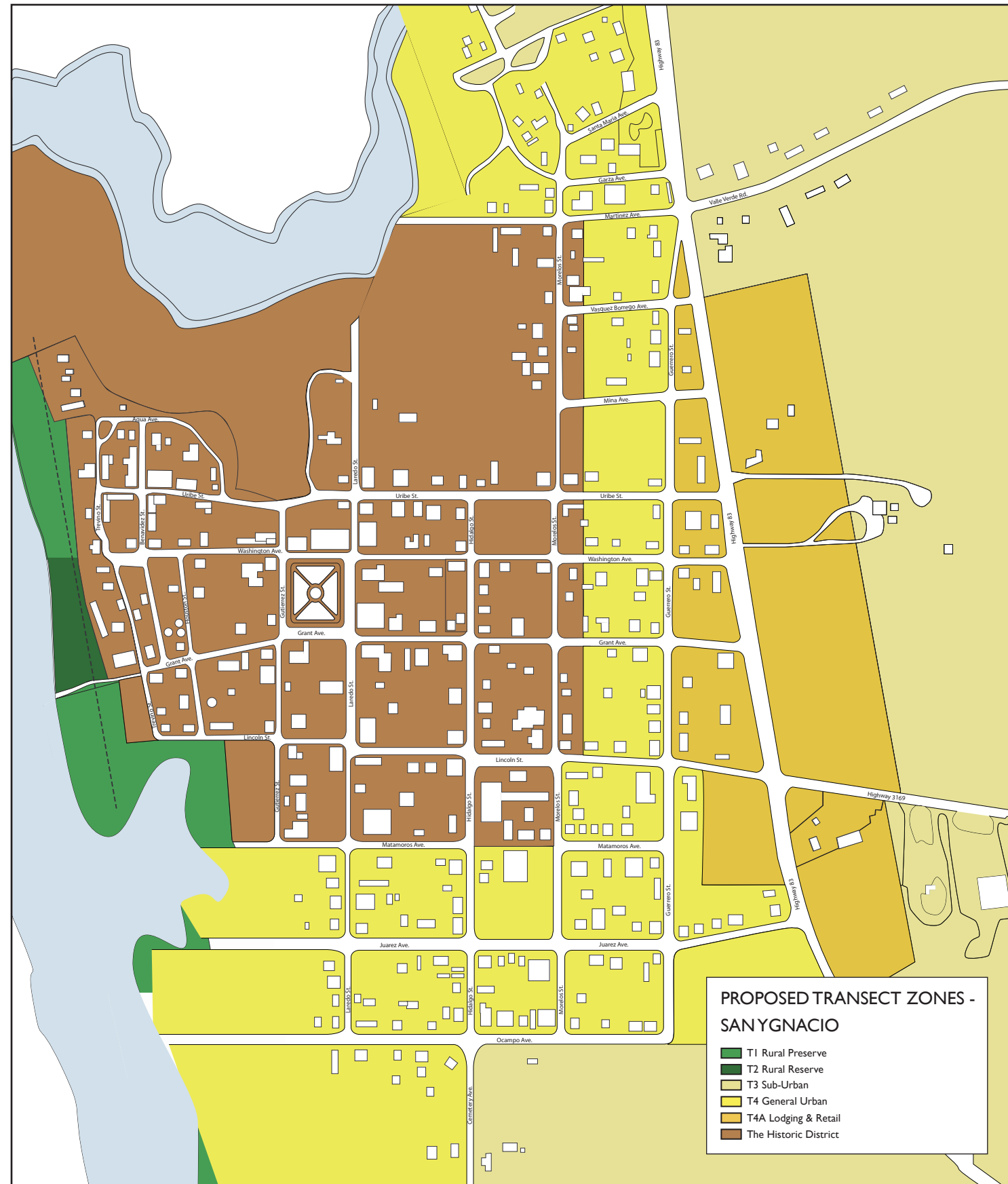


Figure 2.31: Transect Zone Plan for San Ygnacio.

