

Historic Resources Survey Plan

Mercedes, Hidalgo County, Texas



Prepared for
The City of Mercedes, Texas

Prepared by
**Preservation Central
Historic Preservation Consultants**

July 15, 2026

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**Terri Myers, Project Director/Historian
Sophia Lerman, Research Associate**

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Executive Summary

This *Historic Resources Survey Plan* outlines a multi-phased program for completing a comprehensive Reconnaissance-level survey of Mercedes' historic-age (45 years old or older) resources (buildings, structures, objects, sites, and districts) as required by the city's status as a Certified Local Government (CLG). Certified Local Governments participate in an inter-governmental program that provides funding and professional expertise to cities and counties for qualified historic preservation projects. As a CLG, the City is required to establish and maintain an inventory of its historic resources derived from a comprehensive survey such as the Reconnaissance Survey recommended in this *Survey Plan*.

This *Survey Plan* details the research, field investigations and community engagement activities that served as the foundation for the consultant's conclusions and recommendations. It includes a Research Design with a catalog of sources on the history of the lower Rio Grande region and the City of Mercedes. The *Survey Plan* describes the pedestrian survey of Texas Avenue and a vehicular or "Windshield" survey of the original townsite, historic additions and selected outlying properties. It discusses the public meeting at which local citizens were asked to identify historic properties they consider worthy of preservation. These activities helped the consultant develop a rationale for this *Historic Resources Survey Plan*.

Based on the results of research, field investigations, community input and consultation with Marisol Vidales, Mercedes' Historic Preservation Officer, and Gabriel Ozuna, Hidalgo County Historical Commission Chairman, the consultant recommends a plan for a three-phased Reconnaissance Survey of all historic-age resources within Mercedes' corporate limits to be completed within three to four years. A Reconnaissance Survey identifies each historic-age property by address, photographs and minimally documents them through research, physical characteristics, and integrity, and evaluates them for National Register eligibility and/or local designation. The survey also identifies areas with concentrations of relatively intact historic properties for consideration as potential historic districts.

According to the *Survey Plan*, Phase I would cover Sector 1 (see map), historic-age properties in the eastern three-quarters of the original townsite west of Vermont Ave., as well as the East Mercedes Addition and selected high priority properties in outlying areas within the city's corporate limits. Phase II would cover Sector 2 (see map), the western quarter of the original townsite and all historic-age (pre-1980) additions. Phase III would cover Sector 3 (see map), all remaining historic properties within Mercedes' corporate limits, including farmsteads, industrial sites, irrigation features, and agricultural landscapes.

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Deliverables for the Reconnaissance Survey should include a Survey Report for each phase including a discussion of research and field methods, results, and recommendations. Phase I should also include a fully developed historic context to understand and evaluate the surveyed properties for National Register, eligibility. Appendices should include an inventory of all surveyed properties with thumbnail photographs and individual survey forms for each resource.

Ms. Myers conducted initial research and field work to gain an understanding of the types and significance of historic resources in the city. Field work consisted of a pedestrian survey of N. and S. Texas Avenue and a vehicular “Windshield” survey of the original townsite, selected outlying resources, and historic additions. The consultant identified good and representative examples of property types and architectural styles, recorded their physical characteristics, and evaluated them for historic and/or architectural significance. Candidates for national and/or local historic designation are listed in the Recommendations section of this report.

Map of Mercedes City Limits

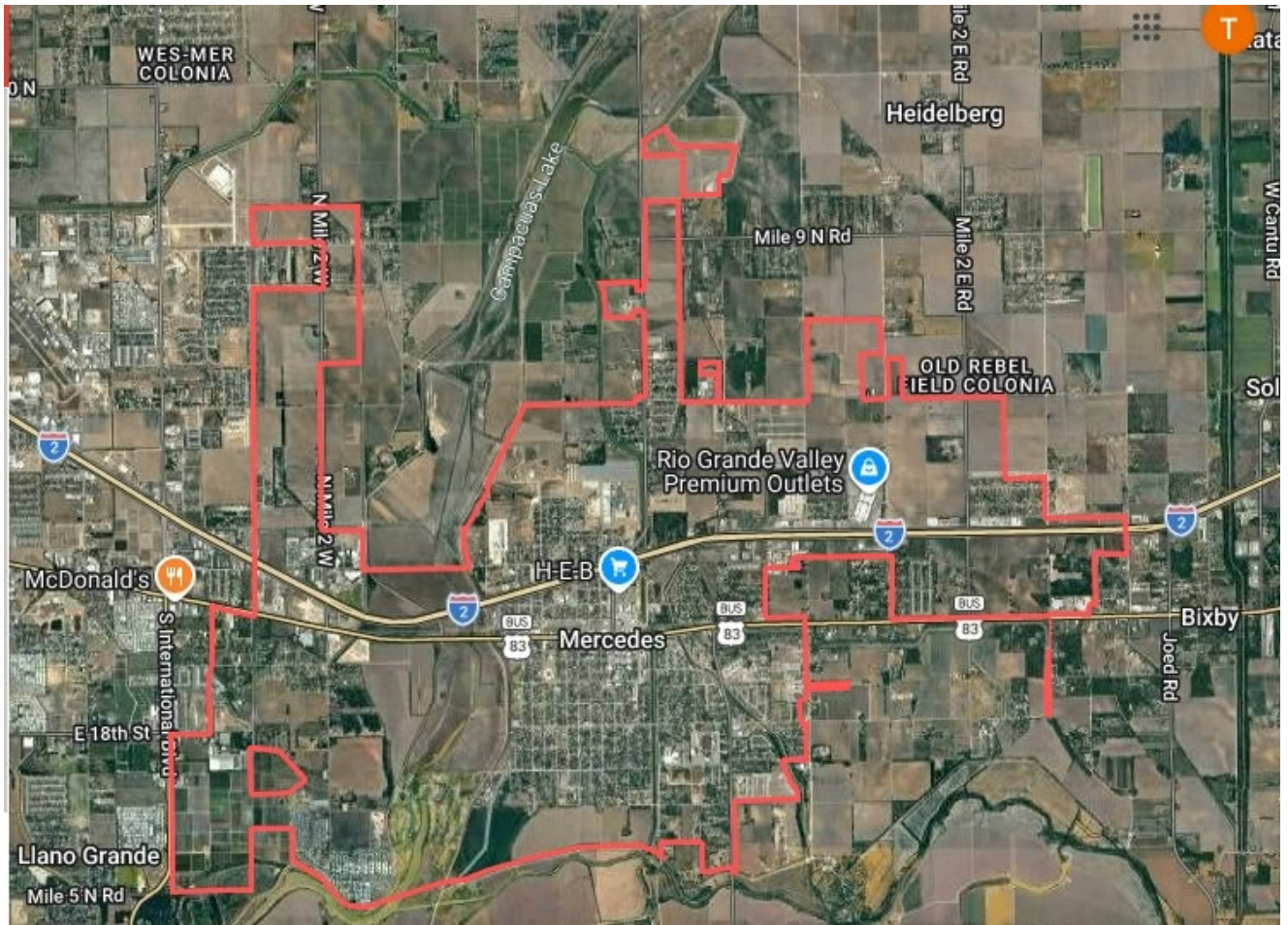


Figure 1: Mercedes Historic Resources Survey Area, Hidalgo County, Texas

Introduction and Statement of Purpose

In December 2025, the City of Mercedes engaged Preservation Central, an Austin-based historic preservation consulting firm, to prepare a plan for conducting a comprehensive survey of all historic-age resources (45 years old or older) within the city's corporate limits. Terri Myers, founder of the firm, served as the Project Director. She worked closely with Mercedes' Historic Preservation Officer, Marisol Vidales, and Hidalgo County Historical Commission Chairman, Gabriel Ozuna, on various aspects of the plan. This *Historic Resources Survey Plan* is based on research, community input, and field investigations conducted in the spring and fall of 2026.

The *Historic Resources Survey Plan* lays out a general strategy for conducting a Reconnaissance-level survey to identify, photograph, document, and evaluate the significance of Mercedes' historic resources - buildings, structures, objects, sites and districts – to protect and preserve them for future generations. The proposed multi-phased, multi-year Reconnaissance Survey will result in a complete inventory and photographic record of Mercedes' historic-age (pre-1980) properties. Each phase will be documented with a Survey Report that can be used as a planning tool for making decisions that affect the city's historic cultural resources.

Preservation Central developed the *Survey Plan* from information gathered through research and field investigations, and from people who shared their knowledge and insights about the city's history and development. The consultants are grateful for the support and assistance of the city's Historic Preservation Officer, Marisol Vidales, Hidalgo County Historic Commission Chairman Gabriel Ozuna, C. A. Hinajosa III, and other interested citizens met during the course of this project.

Historian Terri Myers of Preservation Central served as Project Director for the *Survey Plan* and is the principal author of this letter report. Research Associate Sophia Lerman provided technical support which included mapping the survey sectors and formatting the report. All work was completed by Preservation Central in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for professional preservation services.

Research and Field Methodology

Project Director Terri Myers and Research Assistant Sophia Lerman conducted archival and secondary research on Mercedes' growth and development prior to making a site visit to the city. Ms. Myers conferred with regional and local preservationists, led a public meeting to explain the purpose of the survey and discuss preservation goals and obstacles, and conducted a Windshield Survey of selected historic-age resources within the city's c.1980 limits. These efforts were made

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to better understand the city's historic resources and develop a *Survey Plan* for documenting them in a comprehensive multi-phase Reconnaissance Survey.

The following pages describe the types of research and field investigations conducted to create a *Historic Resources Survey Plan* for the City of Mercedes.

Research Questions

The consultants posed several research questions to be answered to create a *Survey Plan*, to produce a comprehensive inventory of Mercedes' pre-1980 cultural resources. The inventory should be useful to the City as a planning tool when making decisions that affect Mercedes' irreplaceable historic resources. These Research Questions guided efforts to identify relevant research sources and determine a strategy for conducting preliminary field investigations as the foundation of the *Survey Plan*.

They also lay the groundwork for developing one or more historic contexts in a future phase of the comprehensive survey, tentatively titled *Historic and Architectural Resources in Mercedes, Texas: 1905-1980*. The context(s) will provide a framework for identifying and evaluating the significance of historic resources in the comprehensive survey. It should detail the city's growth and development from its beginnings as a railroad station in 1904 and platting as a townsite by the American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company in 1907, to the end of the historic period c. 1980, nearly eight decades later.

Research Questions:

- What administrative support is available for the Survey Plan?
- What is the general history of Mercedes?
- What archival and secondary sources exist on the history of the city?
- Have previous historic resources surveys been done in Mercedes?
- Does the city have properties that are significant for architecture or historical associations?
- Are there concentrations of relatively intact historic-age properties?
- What are the city's corporate boundaries? How large is the entire survey area?
- How many historic-age properties exist within the city limits?
- What types of properties are found in the survey area?
- What is the period of significance for the survey area?
- What areas of significance apply to historic resources in Mercedes?

These questions were addressed largely through administrative support, a literature review, community outreach, and a Windshield Survey of historic resources in Mercedes. These activities are discussed in the following pages.

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Administrative Support

The consultant was contacted in the fall of 2025 by Gabriel Ozuna, Chairman of the Hidalgo County Historical Commission, on behalf of the Mercedes Historic Preservation Commission to discuss the components of historic and architectural surveys. Mr. Ozuna expressed the need for a comprehensive survey of all historic properties within the Mercedes c. 1980 city limits, as part of an effort to document and increase the number of designated properties in the city, culminating in a possible Multiple Property Submission (MPS). An MPS is a nomination under which multiple historic districts and individual historic properties can be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

They agreed that a *Survey Plan* was needed to identify and prioritize areas or sectors with concentrations of historic properties for a multi-phased approach to achieve a comprehensive survey of the city. They referred to a similar phased survey of Mission, Texas, which ended with an MPS listing several historic districts and half-a-dozen individual properties in the National Register. National Register listing does not prevent private property owners from altering or even demolishing their historic properties, but it does identify and document them for future research and preservation efforts. National Register listing also provides eligibility for tax credits for certified rehabilitation projects on income-producing properties.

The consultant held a virtual meeting with Mr. Ozuna and Marisol Vidales, Mercedes' Historic Preservation Officer. They agreed that the consultant should conduct a vehicular "Windshield" survey of the city's corporate limits – the proposed survey area – to locate concentrations of historic properties and significant individual properties for future survey efforts. The consultant would include the survey results and recommendations in a *Survey Plan* report to the Mercedes City Commission.

The Project Director further consulted with Ms. Vidales and Mr. Ozuna to outline a methodology for conducting an initial vehicular or "Windshield" survey of historic resources within the city limits. Together they planned a public meeting to discuss the proposed comprehensive survey of Mercedes with interested parties. Numerous email correspondence and telephone calls were made to confirm dates, times, meeting places, and equipment necessary for the presentation. This consultation continued for the duration of the project to ensure that goals and milestones were met. Consulting parties and specific tasks are identified below:

Consulting parties

- City of Mercedes, including the Historic Preservation Officer (HPO)
- Hidalgo County Historical Commission (HCHC), including the Chairman

Other consulting partners, such as neighborhood groups, advocacy groups, contractors, and property owners, may be identified during the course of conducting the comprehensive survey.

Contact with the HPO and HCHC Chairman

- Project updates and milestone reports
- Schedule site visits for research and a Windshield Survey
- Presentations to interested parties and city officials

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The consultant presented the HPO and HCHC Chairman with project updates for specific tasks including preliminary research and field investigations. She worked with them on dates for her site visit and presentation to the public. Ms. Myers, Ms. Vidales, and Mr. Ozuna worked together to plan and promote the public meeting which was held at the Dr. Hector P. Garcia Memorial Library on Monday, March 9, 2026.

At the meeting, Ms. Myers gave a slide presentation on the purposes and processes of conducting historic and architectural surveys. She discussed the purpose of the *Survey Plan* as a guide for conducting a comprehensive survey of the city's pre-1980 resources – buildings, structures, objects, sites, and potential districts – for the purpose of producing a complete inventory of the city's historic properties to meet the requirements of the GLG program.

Literature Review

Prior to making a site visit to the city, the consultant conducted a Literature Review to locate and study background information on the history of Mercedes, Hidalgo County, and the lower Rio Grande region. She first reviewed entries in the *Handbook of Texas Online* for a general understanding of Mercedes' origins, growth, and development. She added additional sources as the project progressed.

1. **Internet.** The literature review included an internet search for articles related to the area's basic history and development. The initial search was conducted in *The Handbook of Texas Online* for articles on Mercedes, Hidalgo County, and the Rio Grande Valley. These articles contain general histories of the city, county, and development of the lower Rio Grande region from the arrival of the railroad and establishment of irrigated farming in the early twentieth century to the end of the historic period c. 1980. Relevant articles included:

Alicia A. Garza, "Mercedes, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 11, 2026, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/mercedes-tx>.

Alicia A. Garza, "Hidalgo County," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 11, 2026, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/hidalgo-county>.

Mrs. Goldsby Goza, "American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 11, 2026, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/american-rio-grande-land-and-irrigation-company>.

David Vigness and Mark Odintz, "Rio Grande Valley," *Handbook of Texas Online*, updated September 29, 2015 [originally published 1952], accessed June 13, 2026, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/rio-grande-valley>.

2. **Books.** The Project Director also consulted books on the lower Rio Grande Valley to prepare for a site visit. Among the books reviewed are "Images of America" publications on the following places in the lower Rio Grande:

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Mercedes, Beatrice de León Edwards EdD, Arcadia Publishing Co., 2014

Weslaco, Karen Gerhardt and Blanca E. Tamez, Arcadia Publishing Co, 1999

Donna, Karen Gerhardt and Laura Lincoln, Arcadia Publishing Co., 2002

Edinburg, Janette Garcia, Arcadia Publishing Co., 2011

Hidalgo County, Texas, Karen Gerhardt and Rod Santa Ana III, Arcadia Publishing Co, 2000.

Other books in the consultants' library were reviewed. Among them are:

Amberson, Mary Margaret McAllen, James A. McAllen & Margaret H. McAllen, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas: A History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley & the People of the Santa Anita Land Grant*, Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2003.

Cook, Scott, *Mexican Brick Culture in the Building of Texas, 1800s – 1980s*, College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1998.

McAllen, Margaret, *The Heritage Sampler: Selections from the rich and colorful history of the Rio Grande Valley*, Edinburg, Texas: Hidalgo County Historical Museum, New Santander Press, 1991.

Sánchez, Mario L. Ph.D., R.A. editor, *A Shared Experience: The History, Architecture and Historic Designations of the Lower Rio Grande Heritage Corridor, second edition*, Austin, Texas: Los Caminos del Rio Heritage Project and the Texas Historical Commission, 1994.

Montejano, David., *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987.

Scott, Florence Johnson, *Historical Heritage of the Lower Rio Grande*, Rio Grande City: La Retama Press, first edition 1937, reprinted 1970.

Silva-Bewley, S. Zulema, *The Legacy of John H. Shary: Promotion and Land Development in Hidalgo County, South Texas 1912-1930*, Edinburg, Texas: University of Texas-Pan America Press, 2001.

3. Reports and Nominations. In addition to books, the consultant reviewed cultural resources reports and National Register nominations for properties in Hidalgo County. They include:

Lila Knight [Knight and Associates], *A Field Guide to Irrigation in the Lower Rio Grande Valley*, Texas Department of Transportation, Environmental Affairs Division, Historic Studies Report No. 2009-01, 2009.

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Anne Malanka and Terri Myers [Hardy-Heck-Moore & Myers, Inc.] *Historic and Architectural Resources of Mission, Hidalgo County, Texas*, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, Austin, TX: June 1998.

Terri Myers [Hardy-Heck-Moore & Myers, Inc.] and Karen Weitze, PhD., *Louisiana-Rio Grande Canal Company Irrigation System* [Hidalgo Pumphouse and associated buildings and structures], National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 1994.

Megan J. Stubbs, M. Edward Rister, Ronald D. Lacewell, John R. Ellis, Allen W. Sturdivant, John R. C. Robinson, and Linda Fernandez, *Evolution of Irrigation Districts and Operating Institutions: Texas, Lower Rio Grande Valley*, Texas Water Resources Institute, Texas A&M University, July 2003.

4. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps are historic “footprint” maps showing buildings and structures in cities at various times. The sets for the city of Mercedes were reviewed online through the Austin Public Library Database “Texas Digital Sanborn Maps,” for the following dates: July 1917, March 1925, January 1931, March 1949 [updated “paste-overs” of January 1931 maps]. The maps identify the historic core of the city, its early additions, direction(s) of growth, commercial districts, residential areas, civic properties and industrial zones. They also identify churches, schools, canals, and other areas of interest.

The maps were printed and used in the field during the Windshield Survey. A comparison of maps from different years illustrates how the city was originally developed and how it was redeveloped from 1917 to 1949.

5. Previous Surveys. The consultant found two previous cultural resources surveys for Mercedes. Only one survey is listed in the Texas Historical Commission’s Historic Sites Atlas. It was done by THC staff member Peter Maxson for a single resource, the original 1928 City Hall, in 1982. The entry for the building had minimal information: it was designed by Weslaco architect R. Newell Waters, described as “Jacobean” in style, with a brief architectural description.

In 2001, TxDOT conducted a survey of historic resources along Business Highway 83 (Second Street) as part of its requirements for use of federal funds to widen the highway between FM 491 and FM 800. A total of 76 properties in the area of potential effect (APE) were surveyed as historic properties; 13 were determined eligible for National Register listing.

6. Previous Local Designations. The consultant learned that the City of Mercedes has designated 37 local landmarks; three share the same street address – 323 S. Ohio Avenue – but occupy separate lots and blocks. Most of the city’s designated landmarks lie within the original townsite boundaries. Their addresses are listed below:

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- 236 S. Missouri Ave.
- 300 S. Missouri Ave.
- 320 S. Missouri Ave.
- 337 S. Missouri Ave.
- 405 S. Missouri Ave.
- 407 S. Missouri Ave.
- 407 S. Missouri Ave.
- 412 S. Missouri Ave.
- 426 S. Missouri Ave.
- 949 S. Ohio Ave.
- 323 S. Ohio Ave. (Original Townsite Lot 10, Blk 14)
- 323 S. Ohio Ave. (Original Townsite Lot 11, Blk 14)
- 323 S. Ohio Ave. (Original Townsite Lot 12, Blk 14)
- 301 W. 2nd Street
- 703 W. 3rd Street
- 402 W. 10th Street
- 322 S. Vermont Ave.
- 102 N. Texas Ave.
- 112 N. Texas Ave.
- 126 N. Texas Ave.
- 134 N. Texas Ave.
- 141 N. Texas Ave.
- 143 N. Texas Ave.
- 214 S. Texas Ave.
- 224 S. Texas Ave.
- 229 S. Texas Ave.
- 230 S. Texas Ave.
- 246 S. Texas Ave.
- 300 S. Texas Ave.
- 301 S. Texas Ave.
- 304 S. Texas Ave.
- 310 S. Texas Ave.
- 334 S. Texas Ave.
- 338 S. Texas Ave.
- 402 S. Texas Ave.
- 817 Iowa Ave.
- 208 S. Illinois Ave.

7. Previous State Designations

The consultants reviewed information on Mercedes from the Texas Historical Commission's Historic Sites Atlas. Designations include Official Texas Historical Markers (OTHM), Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks (RTHL), Historic Texas Cemetery (HTC). The entries below are for designated state historic sites in and around the City of Mercedes. Some cemeteries are marked but there are no designated Historic Texas Cemeteries or State Archeological Landmarks (SALs) listed in the Atlas for Mercedes.

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After the first entry, the other sites are listed in alphabetical order by name in the Historic Sites Atlas:

1st North Dakota Infantry, 1916-1917 (OTHM No. 1156, placed 1960, S. Ohio Avenue and W. 10th Street).

American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company Building, pending, constructed 1920 (RTHL, Marker No. TBD, application 2025, 301 W. 2nd Street).

American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation System, established 1905 (OTHM, Marker No. 5285, placed 1979, 301 2nd Street).

Camp Mercedes, World War I-era army training camp established 1917 (OTHM, Marker No. 17130, placed 2012, 105 E. 10th Street intersection at Florida Ave.)

Campacuas Cemetery, cemetery dates to 1836 on Rancho Guadalupe (HTC HG-C001 and OTHM Marker No. 13002, placed 2003, Mile 1 West/Mile 9 North).

Colegio Jacinto Treviño, pending, Spanish language college (OTHM Marker No. 24109, application 2023, S. Missouri Ave.)

Dr. Hector P. Garcia, Civil Rights activist, especially for Mexican-American Veterans (OTHM Marker No. 16712, placed 2011, 434 S. Ohio Ave.)

Ebony Grove Cemetery, established 1922 in a cluster of ebony trees (HTC HG-C082 2006, OTHM, placed 2007, Jose M. Cantu Rd. – FM 491).

El Horcón Tract and Rio Rico, “island” cut off from the south bank of the Rio Grande by an unauthorized canal leading to dispute between Mexico and the U.S. as to territorial jurisdiction (OTHM Marker No. 1421, placed 1993, US 281 .5 miles E of intersection with FM 491).

Hidalgo County Bank and Trust Company, built in 1907, this was the oldest Hidalgo County bank still in operation (OTHM Marker No. 2469, placed 1982, 301 S. Texas Avenue).

Immanuel Lutheran Cemetery, established in 1913 on land donated by the American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company (OTHM, west end of Anacuitas Street).

Immanuel Lutheran Church, congregation established in Mercedes in 1910, new building constructed in 1929 (OTHM Marker No. 15788, placed 2009, 703 W. 3rd Street).

Mercedes City Hall, Gothic style building with meeting rooms and fire station constructed in 1928 (RTHL No. 3342, placed 1994 at 323 S. Ohio Street).

Mercedes Enterprise, first newspaper established 1908 (OTHM No. 14012007 at 230 S. Texas Ave.)

Mercedes Memorial Restlawn, cemetery (HG-C092, north side José M. Cantú Rd. west of Rio Rico Rd.).

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Military Highway of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, historic road used by Native Americans, Mexican and U.S. military (OTHM No 12064, placed 1997, on roadside park on 281 4 miles S. of Mercedes).

National Guard Marker, Private marker commemorating service of North Dakota National Guard unit, 1916-1917, S. Ohio and 10th Street).

Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church, founded by Oblate Fathers, church on Hidalgo Street built on land donated by Capisallo Land Company in 1909, new church built at 3rd Street and Vermont Ave. 1922 (OTHM No. 17248, placed 2012, 322 S. Vermont Ave.)

Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Cemetery, on 4 acres donated by the Capisallo Land Company (OTHM No. 11677, placed 1999, Anacuitas Street).

Prince of Peace Presbyterian Cemetery, (HG-C091, aka Principe de Paz and Iglesia Presbyteriana Mexicana, located in far western part of Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Cemetery).

Relampago Ranch, part of Spanish land grant, the Relampago Ranch community grew up around Thaddeus Rhodes ranch between Rio Grande City and Brownsville (OTHM No. 4239, placed 1980, on U.S. Highway 291).

Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show, first livestock show in 1913, reinitiated in 1939 with a focus on agricultural education (OTHM No. 17915, placed 2014 at 1000 N. Texas Ave.)

Rosario Cemetery, aka Rosario Ranch and El Rosario del Guadalupe (HG-C007).

Temple Beth Israel, Jewish congregation of Hidalgo and Cameron County families dating to 1910s (OTHM No. 16329, placed 2010 at 402 W. 10th Street).

Zacatel Ranch Cemetery, aka Cementario de la Vuelta del Esteno, Rancho Conception (HG-C009, located on FM 491).

8. Previous National Designations

Currently Mercedes has no National Register properties or districts. However, the consultant identified a number of properties that appear to be eligible for listing in the National Register during the course of her field investigations for this project.

9. Archives and Repositories

The consultant met with HPO Marisol Vidales who showed her around the Texas Room in the city's Dr. Hector P. Garcia Memorial Library. The room contains numerous secondary and archival materials on the city's founding, early history, growth and development from its 1904 origins as Stop 14 on the Sam Fordyce Branch of the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico Railroad, through the 1960s, to the end of the historic period in 1980, and beyond. The Texas Room also contains historic photographs of locations in the city. The HPO/librarian, Marisol Vidales, made these reference materials available to the consultants for use in the library.

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University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV)

The consultant spent a day conducting research in the Special Collections section of the university library. She reviewed historic promotional brochures and copies of *Monty's Monthly*, a “booster” magazine that highlighted construction and development projects in the lower Rio Grande, often with good photographs. She copied articles related to Mercedes and photographs of the schools built in the 1920s, three of which are still extant. In future survey efforts, consultants should consider further research in Austin at the Briscoe Center for American History and the State Library and Archives.

Museum of South Texas History

The consultants had previously obtained several books on towns of the lower Rio Grande from the Hidalgo County Historical Museum, now the Museum of South Texas History. The Museum features exhibits on the region's history, but it also contains archival collections with vertical files and historic photographs and maps. The archives are open to researchers by appointment. The consultants should consider further research at the Museum of South Texas History during the Reconnaissance Survey.

For advanced research in future survey efforts, researchers should review relevant materials at the Texas State Library and Archives and the Briscoe Center for American History for the following items:

Texas State Library and Archives

- Vertical Files: Mercedes, Hidalgo County, American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation System, the Mexican Revolution and Bandit Era, and related topics
- Historic Photographs
- Historic City and Irrigation District Maps

Briscoe Center for American History

- Vertical Files (See Texas State Library and Archives above)
- Texas Southwest Quarterly issues
- Historic Photographs, including the Runyon Collections
- Historic Maps, including color renditions of Mercedes Sanborn Maps
- W.P.A. Survey of County Records

Community Engagement

The consultant endeavored to maintain contact with the HPO, Marisol Vidales, and the HCHC Chairman, Gabriel Ozuna, as outlined in the Administrative Support above. Together they set a date and time for a public meeting to coincide with the start of field investigations in Mercedes. With their help, the consultant led the public meeting on March 9, 2026. Attendees included members of the city's Historic Preservation Commission, members of the Hidalgo County Historical Commission, and local residents who had an interest and knowledge about the city's history and its cultural resources.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the purpose and procedures of the *Historic Resources Survey Plan* and to solicit input from local persons. The consultant presented a slide show outlining the survey goals, methods, and expected results of the survey Plan illustrated with historic images of early buildings

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and structures in Mercedes. She briefly explained the difference between local, state and national historic designations and what they mean for private property owners.

She described the current project as consisting of research and field investigations for the purpose of developing a *Survey Plan* to document Mercedes' historic resources, i.e., buildings, structures, objects, sites, and districts. The survey would minimally document the physical characteristics of each resource and determine their eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. She explained that a comprehensive survey would result in an inventory of the city's historic-age (pre-1980) resources. Each resource would be assessed as a High, Medium, or Low priority for preservation. The inventory should be used as a planning tool for making decisions that affect the city's irreplaceable cultural resources.

An important aspect of the public meeting was asking attendees to identify cultural resources in the city that they considered "historic" and worthy of protection and preservation. They arrived at a number of properties including:

- The original Mercedes City Hall on Ohio Avenue
- American Rio Grande Land & Irrigation Company building
- Texas Avenue commercial strips
- Old Elks Lodge/Mercedes Hotel on Missouri Avenue
- Numerous individual residences on Missouri Avenue
- Former public schools on S. Ohio Avenue
- Llano Grande Country Club
- Camp Mercedes officers' bungalows
- Queen City Annex
- Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church

The consultant asked the participants to identify boundaries of any perceived historic districts. Attendees mentioned S. Missouri Avenue, the officers' bungalows at old Camp Mercedes, and the commercial zone from about 200 N. Texas Ave. to about 300 S. Texas Ave. There was some discussion about the former *Enterprise* newspaper office and the American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company building on E. Second Street (U.S. Bus 83), the regional highway that effectively divides the town into north and south halves.

Ms. Myers also asked if there are communities in Mercedes that are historically associated with ethnic groups such as Hispanics or African Americans. Residents agreed that Mercedes was historically segregated with Hispanic residents and businesses on the north side of Second Street (Old Highway 83), and Anglo residents and businesses on the south side of the street.

The consultant asked the attendees for additional research sources, repositories, or contacts for interviews and/or information on the history of Mercedes. Several people mentioned former mayor Buddy Ross as a good candidate for an interview as he was very knowledgeable about Mercedes' history and development. Ms. Myers thanked everyone, shared her business card with those present and invited them to get in touch if they had additional information for her.

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A final presentation to City of Mercedes officials and staff was planned for the consultant to discuss the results of the initial Windshield Survey and the *Survey Plan* for conducting the comprehensive survey of the city's historic resources.

Field Investigations: Windshield Survey Methods

Prior to field investigations in Mercedes, the consultant team printed Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps for all years (1917, 1925, 1931, and 1949) to study and use in the field. From the historic maps, the consultant was able to identify commercial and residential zones, industries and main roads, churches, schools, and a major irrigation canal on the east side of the townsite. She planned to use the maps as field maps in a vehicular "Windshield" Survey of the city.

Upon arriving in Mercedes on the afternoon of March 8, 2026, Ms. Myers drove the north-south streets in the south side of the city from 2nd St (U.S. Bus 83) to the southern termini of the avenues to become familiar with the general location, distribution, and density of historic fabric within the pre-1980 city limits. She noted that the historic commercial strip ran from about the 200 block of N. Texas Ave. to about the 300 block of S. Texas Ave. From the Sanborn maps she knew that Business Highway 83 (2nd St) was once lined with numerous commercial and light industrial resources, but current field investigations showed that much of the original building fabric has been lost to redevelopment or demolition, leaving numerous vacant lots and/or parking lots along its length.

Between Monday, March 9 and Friday March 13, the consultant and Hidalgo County Historical Commission (HCHC) Chairman Gabriel Ozuna worked closely together on a Windshield Survey. They initially drove to sites identified as significant by Mercedes' residents, including irrigation resources, the commercial strip along Texas Ave, the former public school campus on S. Ohio Ave., and properties in the S. Missouri Ave residential section. In general, the consultant surveyed and photographed properties based on their apparent architectural significance, known historical significance, or because they were good, representative examples of a particular type or style. In some cases, she photographed streetscapes with good concentrations of largely intact historic properties for consideration as potential historic districts.

Ms. Myers photographed each surveyed resource and minimally documented them on Preservation Central field forms. She recorded their estimated dates of construction based on her experience with similar resources. She recorded their Property Type; the most common Property Types in Mercedes are Domestic and Commercial resources but the city also has numerous Religious and Educational resources, among others. She also recorded distinguishing Plan Types or Roof Forms, and Stylistic Influences. She noted any unique architectural details, known historical associations, landscape features, materials and alterations.

Each surveyed resource was given an initial preservation priority assessment of High, Medium, or Low. In general, a High priority property is 50 years old or older, a very good or excellent example of its type or style, largely intact to the historic period, with good historic and architectural integrity. High priority properties may be individually eligible for local, state, or national designation. Medium priority properties are good or typical examples of their type or style; they may have several alterations but must retain fair-

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to-good historic and architectural integrity. High and Medium priority properties would be Contributing resources in a potential historic district. Low priorities are either non-historic or historic properties that have had severe alterations; they do not convey a good sense of history. They would be Noncontributing resources in a historic district.

Ms. Myers and Mr. Ozuna first visited the Anacuitas flume along the city's original eastern limits, accessed off of the 200 Block of S. Illinois Ave. Ms. Myers photographed the canal and some of its structural elements (Photo 1), as well as the city incinerator and smokestack across the canal to the east (Photo 2).



Photo 1 – east of 200 Block S. Illinois Ave.



Photo 2 – east of 200 Block S. Illinois Ave.

They surveyed a compound of historic educational buildings set on a grass-covered campus in the southeastern quadrant of the original townsite. Resources included a former Grammar school (Photo 3) and a Junior High School with an auditorium (Photo 4) on the south side of the central mall and the High School and gymnasium on the north side of the campus (Photo 5).



Photo 3 - 837 A S. Ohio Ave

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Photo 4 – 837 C S. Ohio Ave



Photo 5 – 837 B S. Ohio Ave

None of the buildings are still in use as schools, though the High School recently served as an Early College Academy. All of the buildings are remarkably intact to their early twentieth century construction dates. Though some have been vacant for a while, all retain a high degree of historic and architectural integrity. The consultant photographed the buildings and their setting (Photo 6), noting that they were High priorities for preservation.



They identified and surveyed a high style Spanish Revival stucco house with a red clay tile roof and accents at 202 W. 14th St at its intersection with S. Illinois Ave (Photo 7). The house is an excellent example of the style and possesses high integrity; it was given a High priority assessment.

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Photo 7 - 202 W. 14th St.

On the east side of the canal they drove through former Camp Mercedes, a World War I-era training camp. A good, largely intact example of the c. 1917 bungalows was photographed at 817 S. Iowa Ave (Photo 8). Turning back to the west side of the canal, they surveyed and photographed the Contemporary style First United Methodist Church at approximately 200 W. 16th St. (Photo 9).



Photo 8 – 817 S. Iowa Ave.



Photo 9 – 200 W. 16th St.

On March 12, Ms. Myers and Mr. Ozuna conducted a pedestrian survey of about six blocks on N. and S. Texas Ave, the city's main historic commercial district. A pedestrian survey was warranted due to the dense concentration of historic resources, many with shared side walls, and greater traffic considerations. They agreed that the two sections – one historically associated with Hispanic businesses on N. Texas Ave. (Photo 10) and the other with Anglo businesses along S. Texas Ave. (Photo 11) – should be top priorities for more intensive survey.

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Photo 10 – 100 BK N. Texas Ave



Photo 11 – 200 BK S. Texas Ave

Separated by a broad swath of U.S. Highway 83 (Business) the two commercial strips are highly visible and widely recognized as the city's historic downtown shopping, entertainment, and banking section. Though most of the one- and two-story buildings have been altered with slipcovers and changes to their fenestration patterns, they are good candidates for restoration and rehabilitation efforts that could prove a catalyst for a city-wide preservation program.

Together, the commercial strip extends only about five blocks in length from the 200 block of N. Texas Ave. to the 400 block of S. Texas Ave. with Business Highway 83 essentially taking out the 100 block of S. Texas Ave; the highway visually and physically separates the two districts. Starting in the morning on the west side of the 200 block of N. Texas, they photographed and minimally documented each resource, regardless of age or condition (Photo 12).



Photo 12 - Mary's Hair Salon at 256 N. Texas Ave

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They proceeded along the west side of the street through the 400 block of S. Texas Ave. As the sun shifted to the west in the afternoon, they moved to the east side of the street where they commenced surveying at the southmost end of the 400 block of S. Texas Ave (Photo 13).



Photo 13 – 428 S. Texas Ave.

They proceeded north along the east side of the street, past the 300 and 200 blocks of S. Texas (Photo 14 & 11), and continued across the highway to complete the survey in the 100 block of N. Texas Ave (Photo 10). There are no historic resources in the 200 BK of N. Texas Ave.



Photo 14 – 300 BK S. Texas Ave.

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Several excellent examples of commercial buildings are on Texas Ave. including the former First National Bank, a Neoclassical style edifice at 334 S. Texas (Photo 15) and the c. 1915 two-story commercial building at the northwest corner of N. Texas Ave. and W. 1st St., about 102 N. Texas Ave. (Photo 16).



Photo 15 – former First National Bank 334 S. Texas Ave.



Photo 16 – 102 N. Texas Ave.

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Commercial resources on the west side of the 200 block of S. Texas Ave tend to be typical examples of Mid-Century Modern commercial buildings (Photo 17). The commercial building at 202 S. Texas Ave now occupied by Mission Bautista Frontera is a good, typical example of a c. 1920 commercial building with historic period storefronts (Photo 18).



Photo 17 – 214 S. Texas Ave.



Photo 18 – 202 S. Texas Ave.

Though its façade has been altered somewhat, the El Fenix Café at 126 N. Texas Ave (Photo 19) is significant for historical associations with the Hispanic community.



Photo 19 – 126 N. Texas Ave.

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On March 13, Mercedes resident, C. A. Hinojosa III, who owns several historic buildings on S. Missouri Ave. in the survey area, took the consultant to some of the historic buildings and structures mentioned by other residents at the public meeting on Monday. They started at the former Elk's Club at 236 S. Missouri Ave; the building was later repurposed as the Mercedes Hotel (Photos 20 & 21). They drove through much of the city's original townsite to identify and discuss the city's cultural resources; Ms. Myers again took photographs and recorded information on resources. Her observations are noted in the inventory included with this report.



Photo 20 – 236 S. Missouri Ave.



Photo 21 – 236 S. Missouri Ave.

Several excellent Spanish Revival style houses were found on the south side of Mercedes, including one at 202 W. 14th St (Photo 7) and one at 401 W. 15th St (Photo 22).



Photo 22 – 401 W. 15th St.

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They drove the length of Palm Heights, an addition in Mercedes' southeast quadrant. Houses on the street included frame bungalows with modest Craftsman details and several Tudor Revival style dwellings (Photo 23).



Photo 23 – 742 Palm Heights Dr.

They drove to the south end of Florida Ave. in the East Mercedes Addition, then on a dirt road to the “Waterfall Bridge” over a floodway canal with a “waterfall” that aerates the water (Photo 24). Irrigation was the lifeblood of Mercedes and other early twentieth century towns in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.



Photo 24 – Canal Floodway

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In addition, they drove through residential sections on the north side of the city, which was historically a Hispanic neighborhood. They noted the presence of early postwar frame houses on Heidrick St. (Photo 25).



Photo 25 – 600 BK of Heidrick St.

After the tour, the consultant continued field investigations in the original townsite of Mercedes. She worked in a systematic manner first on north-south running avenues, then on the numbered east-west streets. She took notes on the general character and building fabric in selected blocks and photographed typical, good, and excellent examples of certain property types and/or architectural styles. Ms. Myers completed field investigations on Saturday March 14, 2026. Her survey notes and thumbnail photographs are contained in the inventory appended to this report.

Results

Windshield Survey: Sample of Mercedes' Historic Properties

The Windshield Survey was not comprehensive, but a sample of the property types, architectural styles and levels of historic and architectural integrity found in the project area. The consultant photographed and minimally documented 129 historic resources within Mercedes' corporate limits. Most were found in the original townsite though several high priority properties like Llano Grande Resort and Golf Club and Wes-Mer Drive-in Theater were recorded in outlying areas.

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Thirty-five of the 129 properties were assessed as High preservation priorities. High priority properties are very good or excellent examples of a property type or architectural style, with only a few slight alterations. High priority properties may be individually eligible for listing in the National Register. Another 65 properties were assessed as Medium priorities. Medium priority properties are good or typical examples and may have several alterations without compromising their integrity. Twenty-six of the surveyed properties were assessed as Low priorities, either because they were found to be non-historic or because they had been severely altered since the end of the historic period. High and Medium priority properties would be considered Contributing resources if located in a historic district; Low priorities would be Noncontributing resources.

The majority of properties surveyed were either Domestic or Commercial Property Types which is typical for a small “downtown core.” The consultant surveyed 53 Domestic properties and 49 Commercial properties. Other Property Types found within the Mercedes City limits were Religious resources (6), Educational resources (4), Recreational resources (1), Industrial resources (6), and Infrastructure resources (1). Seven properties were not identified by Property Type.

As expected, a variety of architectural styles dating to the early twentieth century were found in the original townsite. Among them are Craftsman, Neoclassical, and Period Revival styles including Spanish Revival, Mission Revival and Tudor Revival houses. But early postwar Minimal Traditional and Minimal Ranch styles are also present, as well as a number of “classic” Ranch style houses. Mercedes also has numerous vernacular houses. Twenty-eight resources were listed as having “No Style,” not that they were insignificant, only that they didn’t display a recognized architectural style. Historic commercial buildings were generally classified as one-part and two-part Commercial buildings.

The consultant found the greatest variety of architectural styles on S. Missouri Avenue, the fashionable part of the city in its first decades. Among them are Judge S. P. Silver’s Mission style house at 305 S. Missouri Ave (Photo 26), a Neoclassical style house at 805 S. Missouri (Photo 27), a Spanish/Pueblo Revival style bungalow with an array of pinnacles on the front of the roof at 1119 S. Missouri (Photo 28), the Colonial Revival style Logan House with a full façade front porch at 1404 S. Missouri (Photo 29), and a Tudor Revival style house at 1502 S. Missouri Ave (Photo 30).



Photo 26 – S. P. Silver House 305 S. Missouri Ave.

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Photo 27 – 805 S. Missouri Ave.



Photo 28 – 1119 S. Missouri Ave.



Photo 29 – 1404 S. Missouri Ave.



Photo 30 – 1502 S. Missouri Ave.

The consultant found good examples of Ranch style houses on S. Texas and S. Ohio Avenues, including those at 1532 S. Texas Ave (Photo 31) and 1518 S. Ohio Avenue (Photo 32).



Photo 31 – 1532 S. Texas Ave.



Photo 32 – 1518 S. Ohio Ave.

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An outstanding example of a brick Neoclassical style house was documented at 1509 S. Ohio Ave; the hipped roof dwelling features a *porte cochere* and an entrance defined by classical columns (Photo 33).



Photo 33 – 1509 S. Ohio Ave.

A Prairie School house was photographed at 328 S. Georgia (Photo 34). In the same block is a Spanish Revival style bungalow at 337 S. Georgia (Photo 35).



Photo 34 – 328 S. Georgia Ave.



Photo 35 – 337 S. Georgia Ave

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One of the best examples of a Craftsman bungalow in Mercedes was found at 339 S. Georgia Ave. (Photo 36). It has numerous elements of the Craftsman style including exposed rafter tails, triangular knee braces, and tapered wood porch posts set on square brick piers.



Photo 36 – 339 S. Georgia Ave.

Good, typical examples of bungalows were also found in South Mercedes, including a Neoclassical style bungalow at 1243 S. Virginia (Photo 37) and the modest board-and-batten Craftsman bungalow at 637 S. Virginia (Photo 38).



Photo 37 – 1243 Virginia Ave.



Photo 38 – 637 S. Virginia Ave.

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Residential sections on the traditionally Hispanic north side of the city have some early twentieth century bungalows, but most are early postwar Minimal Ranch and Minimal Traditional style frame houses like those in the 600 block of Heidrick St (Photo 25).

Period of Significance, Property Types, and Potential Areas of Significance

Period of Significance

Research and field investigations conducted to date indicate that the Period of Significance for the original townsite of Mercedes as a whole extends from its founding in 1907 to the end of the historic age in 1976.¹ Most properties in the original townsite date to the early twentieth century (1915-1941) and the early postwar era (1945-1965), though a few properties like the irrigation canal were built as early as 1905 and as late as last year, like the newly finished house at 1106 S. Washington Ave. Downtown development on N. and S. Texas Ave, and along Business Highway 83, spans a wide timeframe from about 1910 through the end of the historic period.

Potential historic districts in Mercedes' more recent additions may have shorter periods of significance depending on the timeframe in which their resources were constructed. For instance, the period of significance for a subdivision platted in 1945, and built out over two decades after World War II, would likely be 1945-1965 based on the construction dates of its resources. On the other hand, the period of significance for a district along S. Missouri Ave. with resources dating to as early as the 1910s and as late as 2025, would be longer, extending from the earliest property built c. 1907 to 1980, the end of the historic age for this project.

Property Types and Architectural Styles

Historic Domestic properties found in the Windshield Survey include a c. 1907 Folk Victorian style cottage at 205 S. Georgia (Photo 39), 1910s-era Neoclassical style houses and bungalows on S. Missouri (Photo 40 & 41), 1920s-era Craftsman bungalows (Photo 42), 1920s and 1930s Period Revival style houses like on 789 E. 17th (Photo 43), postwar Minimal Ranch and Ranch style houses like at 1118 S. Vermont and 340 4th St (Photo 44 & 45), and Public Housing Authority houses and duplexes dating to the 1960s on the 900 block of W. 10th St (Photo 46).

¹ Future field investigations should include properties built as late as 1981, for planning purposes.

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Photo 39 – 205 S. Georgia Ave.



Photo 40 – 337 S. Missouri Ave.



Photo 41 – 300 BK S. Missouri Ave.



Photo 42 – 424 S. Georgia Ave.



Photo 43 – 789 E. 17th St.

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Photo 44 – 1118 S. Vermont Ave.



Photo 45 – 340 4th St.



Photo 46 – 900 W. 10th St.

Most of Mercedes' historic Commercial buildings are classified simply as 1-part (one-story) or 2-part (two-story) commercial buildings. A good example of a 2-part brick commercial building lies at the intersection of W. 1st Street and N. Texas Ave (Photo 16). Typically, those along Texas Avenue, the main commercial strip, were attached to one another at their side walls and had shallow setbacks from the street. Many feature low parapets and wood awnings. Some are load-bearing masonry buildings while others are frame, with brick veneers, or are clad in stucco (Photo 47).

Historically, these commercial buildings housed retail and dry goods stores, but there were also several banks, drug stores, restaurants, and movie theaters (Photo 49). A few display some stylistic characteristics such as the Neoclassical style bank (Photo 48) or the Streamline Moderne style former HEB store (Photo 50). Modern commercial resources include a bevy of fast food restaurants and gas stations on or near the highway.

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Photo 47 – former Mercedes Enterprise office 230 S. Texas Ave.



Photo 48 – 334 S. Texas Ave.



Photo 49 – State Theater 344 S. Texas Ave.

Though most historic commercial buildings were attached to one another, others are stand-alone buildings like the former HEB store at 402 S. Texas Ave (Photo 50). Several commercial warehouses are found west of Texas Ave, near the irrigation canal, like the one at 348 S. Illinois Ave (Photo 51).

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Photo 50 – former HEB 402 S. Texas Ave.



Photo 51 – 348 S. Illinois Ave.

Industrial resources include the Anacuitas canal flume (Photo 52), the city incinerator and smokestack (Photo 53), and the railroad tracks.



Photo 52 – east of 200 Block S. Illinois Ave.



Photo 53 – east of 200 Block S. Illinois Ave.

Religious and Educational resources are scattered throughout the residential neighborhoods. Schools include old Mercedes High School and gymnasium, Junior High School, and Grammar School along S. Ohio Ave between W. 8th and 10th Streets (Photos 3-6). A parochial school affiliated with Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church is located next to the church at approximately 324 S. Vermont Ave (Photo 54).

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Photo 54 – Parochial School 324 S. Vermont Ave.

Religious properties in the original Mercedes townsite include Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church (Photo 55), Immanuel Lutheran Church (Photo 56), a Seventh Day Adventist Church (Photo 57), El Buen Pastor (Photo 58), Mision Luterana Emanuel (Photo 59), and a Methodist Church (Photo 9).



Photo 55 – Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church, 322 S. Vermont Ave.



Photo 56 – Immanuel Lutheran Church, 703 W. 3rd St.

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Photo 57 – 404 S. Virginia Ave.



Photo 58 – 341 S. Virginia Ave.



Photo 59 – 257 S. Washington Ave

Areas of Significance

As indicated by research and field investigations, potential Areas of Significance include the following fields:

- Architecture
- Planning and Community Development
- Commerce
- Industry
- Hispanic Heritage.
- Agriculture/Citrus Industry
- Transportation
- Military
- Recreation

Other areas may be identified as research and field work continue.

Recommendations

Based on research, community input, and field work conducted for this *Historic Resources Survey Plan*, Preservation Central recommends a comprehensive Reconnaissance-level documentation program (survey) for all historic-age (pre-1980) resources in Mercedes to be implemented in three phases over a three- to four-year period. A historic context should be developed in Phase I of the Reconnaissance survey to assist in National Register eligibility assessments.

Elements of a Reconnaissance Survey

A Reconnaissance Survey requires the completion of a Texas Historical Commission Historic Resources Survey Form for each surveyed property. The Forms consist of three main sections, each of which is divided into sub-sections. The sections are:

- Section 1: Basic Inventory Information
- Section 2: Architectural Description
- Section 3: Historical Information and Assessment

Section 1: Basic Inventory Information

Basic Inventory Information includes the property type (building, structure, object, site, or district), any current designations, and whether the resource is a contributing or noncontributing property in a designated or potential historic district. If in a potential National Register district, the surveyor will record the name of the district. The surveyor will also enter the known or estimated date of construction, names of the architect and builder, if known, and the property's current and historic functions.

Section 2: Architectural Description

In Section 2, the surveyor will compose a short but precise narrative description of the resource at the time it is surveyed. The surveyor will record the narrative description in the space provided on the form. In general, the description of a building included its property type and subtype, number of stories, roof form, porch type and supports, siding materials, fenestration type and pattern, chimney location and materials, character-defining details and stylistic influences, if any. Noteworthy modifications and their approximate dates will be noted. Ancillary buildings and landscape features will be identified and noted.

Section 3: Historical Information and Assessment

The professional will identify and record the associated context or contexts for each resource. Applicable National Register criteria will be checked and areas of significance identified. The period and level of significance will be identified and noted. The surveyor will identify the degree to which the resource possesses the seven aspects of integrity: integrity of location, design,

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materials, workmanship, setting, association, and feeling. The presence or absence of integrity factors into the surveyor's evaluation of resources.

The surveyor will make a preliminary determination of National Register eligibility for each property, identifying whether it is potentially eligible for individual listing or if it would be a contributing or noncontributing property in a potential historic district.

Each identified historic resource will be assigned a High, Medium, or Low preservation priority based on age, historic significance, architectural significance, and integrity. Low priority resources are either non-historic or have suffered severe alterations to the extent that they no longer retain architectural integrity; they are noncontributing properties in a potential historic district. Medium priority properties are good or typical historic resources that retain architectural integrity to a good or moderate degree; they are contributing resources in a potential historic district. High priority properties are significant resources with outstanding design qualities and a high degree of historic and architectural integrity; they are contributing resources in a potential historic district. High priority properties may also be individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Finally, source information will be recorded.

Following field investigations, detailed maps identifying the location of all surveyed sites and potential districts will be prepared for inclusion in the Survey Report. If available, local planning/zoning maps showing parcels should be used as the base map. Sites will be identified on the map by site numbers keyed to a tabular inventory form. Finally, a Survey Report and all work products including an inventory with thumbnail photographs, maps, and individual survey forms for each surveyed property will be completed and presented to the City of Mercedes and the Texas Historical Commission.

Survey Implementation

Based on the number of historic-age (pre-1980) resources in the city, the consultant recommends that the Reconnaissance Survey be conducted in three phases to cover three sectors within Mercedes' corporate limits. Sectors were based on geographic location relative to the original townsite, the estimated number of historic-age properties in each sector, historic associations with Mercedes' earliest period of development, potential threats to preservation, and number of high priority sites identified in the initial field work for this *Survey Plan*.

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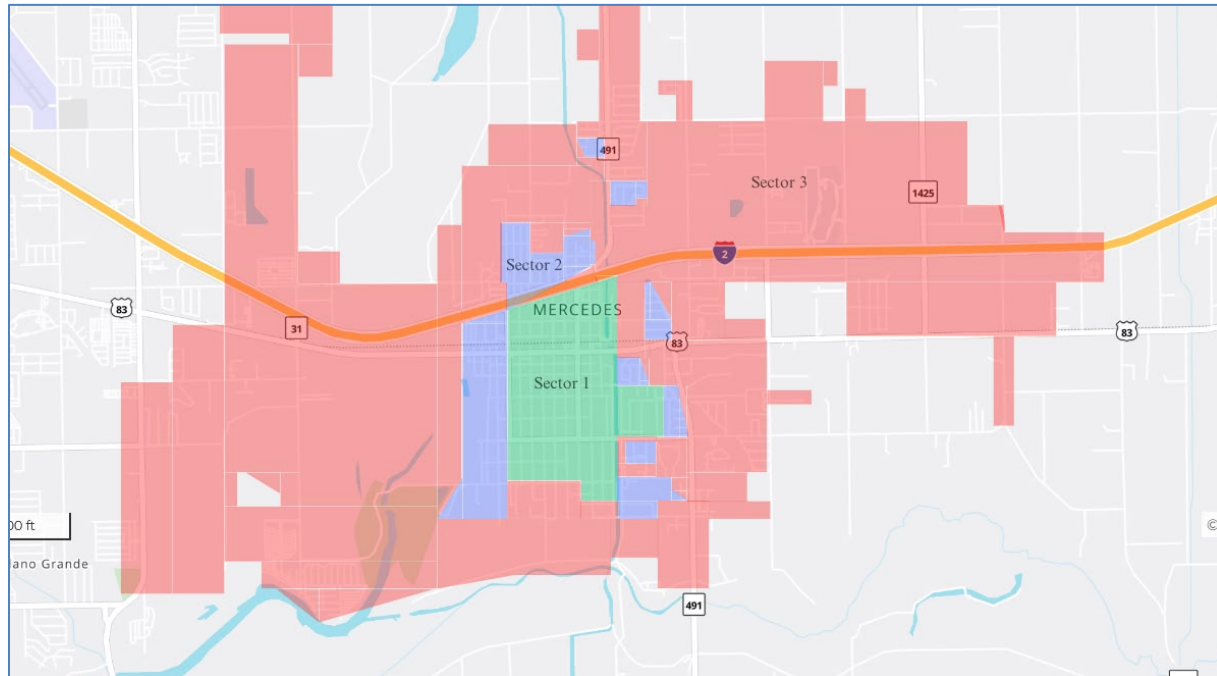


Figure 2: City of Mercedes Sector Map

Phase I, Sector 1

Phase I of the survey is recommended for Sector 1, which covers the eastern three-quarters of the original townsite, East Mercedes Addition, and selected high priority sites beyond the original townsite boundaries. The East Mercedes Addition is included in Phase I, Sector 1, because of its historic associations with World War I-era Camp Mercedes. High priority resources found in outlying parts of the city during the Windshield Survey should also be surveyed in Phase I. The consultant estimates that Sector 1 contains about 1,100 historic properties to be surveyed over a two-year period.

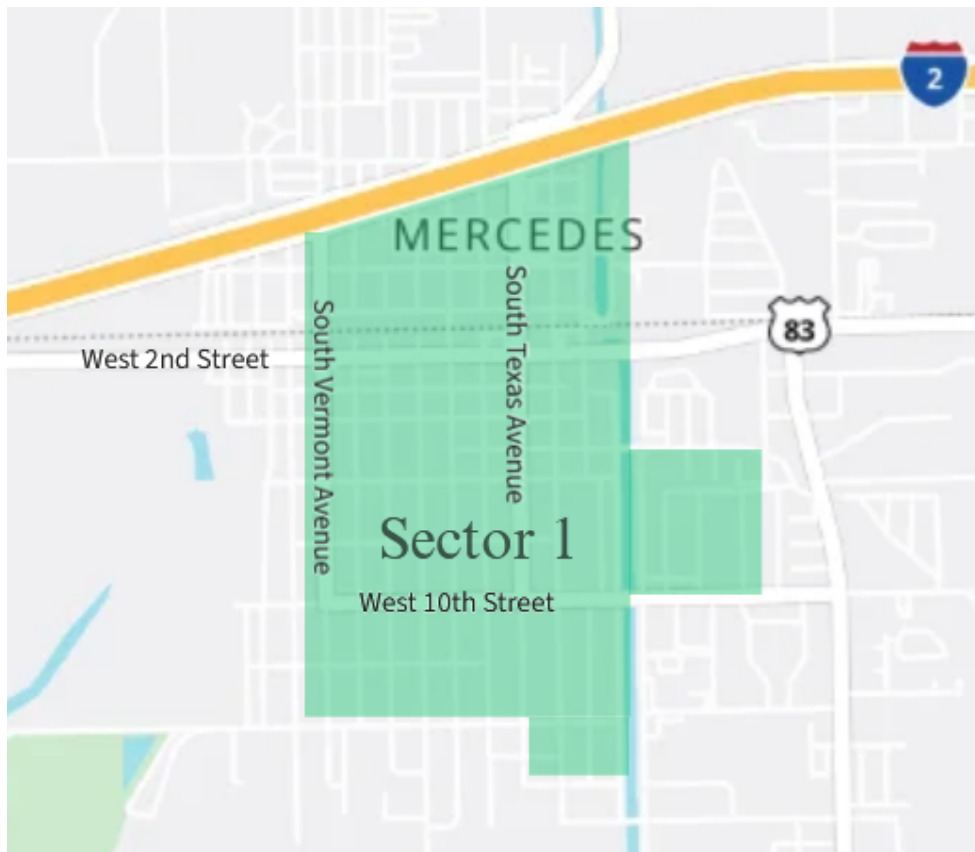


Figure 3: Sector 1

Sector 1 is the top priority for the Reconnaissance Survey because it contains the oldest and rarest historic resources in the city, including the city's original commercial strips on N. and S. Texas Avenue. The commercial zone has high visibility and strong historic associations with the early growth and development of Mercedes. Other factors behind the recommendation include the concentration of historic resources, their potential for city-initiated revitalization, and the availability of state and federal rehabilitation tax credits as incentives for restoring and/or preserving the historic buildings in this sector.

In fact, many of the historic resources found in Sector 1 are income-producing or potentially income-producing properties which may make them eligible for substantial state and federal tax rehabilitation credits. State tax credits can be taken for as much as 25% of certified rehabilitation costs and federal tax can be taken for as much as 20% of certified rehabilitation costs; state and federal tax credits can be taken together for a total tax credit of 45% of the cost of rehabilitation.

The following is a preliminary list of properties the consultant considered high priorities based on architecture and/or known historical significance. These properties may be individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or as Contributing resources in a

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potential historic district. Most of these properties lie within the original townsite boundaries. Others lie outside those boundaries but because of their unique type, style, or historical associations, the consultant recommends them for survey in Phase I. In addition, all designated City of Mercedes landmarks should be surveyed in Phase I.

High Priority properties recommended for Phase I Reconnaissance Survey:

1. Immanuel Lutheran Church, 703 W. 3rd St.
2. Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church, 322 S. Vermont Ave.
3. First United Methodist Church, 200 E. 16th St.
4. Old Mercedes City Hall, 323 S. Ohio Ave.
5. American Rio Grande Land and Irrigation Company Building, E. 2nd St.
6. Elks Lodge/Mercedes Hotel, 236 S. Missouri Ave.
7. Each of the Schools on Campus, 837 S. Ohio Ave.
8. Spanish Revival style house 202 W. 14th St.
9. Spanish Revival style house 401 W. 15th St.
10. Dr. Silver House - Mission style house, 305 S. Missouri Ave.
11. Neoclassical style House, 805 S. Missouri Ave.
12. Craftsman Bungalow, 339 S. Georgia Ave.
13. Neoclassical style bank, 334 S. Texas Ave.
14. Mer-Tex Café, S. Vermont at W. 2nd Street (Bus. Highway 83)

Properties denoted with an * lie beyond the original townsite but should be surveyed in Phase I

15. Water District complex east of canal on Business Highway 83*
16. Llano Grande Resort and Golf Club, 2215 E. West Boulevard*
17. Wes-Mer Drive-in Theater, 2090 W. Business Highway 83*
18. Camp Mercedes bungalow, 817 S. Iowa Ave.*
19. Livestock Show and Rodeo Grounds*
20. IWBC Mercedes Field Office*
21. Texas A&M Kingsville Citrus Center*
22. Rodeway Inn (EXPY 83 and Mile 2)*
23. Cortino's Italian Restaurant, 3812 Bus. 83*

Potential Districts recommended for Reconnaissance Survey include:

1. Downtown commercial district – N. and S. Texas Ave.
2. S. Missouri Ave. residential district
3. School Campus District
4. Palm Heights
5. Queen City Annex
6. Camp Mercedes
7. Irrigation Canal/System
8. Public Housing Complexes in both N. and S. Mercedes

Properties and districts closely associated with Hispanic heritage:

1. Commercial zone on N. Texas Ave.
2. Residential zone in N. Mercedes

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These areas were recommended for Reconnaissance level survey because they contain some of the city's oldest, rarest, and most distinctive cultural resources, because they are among the city's most endangered historic areas due to neglect, abandonment, or incompatible rehabilitation efforts, and because they should be documented before further loss occurs.

Furthermore, immediate attention to these areas may help stimulate growth and prosperity in downtown Mercedes and ultimately contribute to the city's overall preservation goals. The unique architecture found in these areas should make them prime candidates for downtown revitalization efforts and historic tax credits. The survey identified a number of historic properties that may be eligible for National Register status, either as individual resources or as contributing elements in potential historic districts, one of the criteria for obtaining tax credits. If property owners in this highly-visible central area take advantage of such tax credits to restore their properties and contribute to downtown revitalization, it may help promote restoration efforts elsewhere in the city.

Phase II, Sector 2

Phase II of the Reconnaissance Survey should include Mercedes' early- to mid-twentieth century additions or subdivisions in Sector 2, including but not limited to:

1. Silver Subdivision (1919)
2. Colonia Garza (1926)
3. Queen City Annex (1927)
4. Afton Place (1927)
5. La Gloria/La Gloria Heights (1944)
6. North Mercedes Heights (1945)
7. Garden Park Subdivision (1946)
8. Colonia Lopez (1953)

In addition to the historic additions in Sector 2, the following sites would be surveyed in Phase II:

1. San Jacinto Public Housing
2. Taylor Public Housing
3. Taylor Elementary School and Stadium
4. Retama Public Housing
5. City incinerator and smokestack

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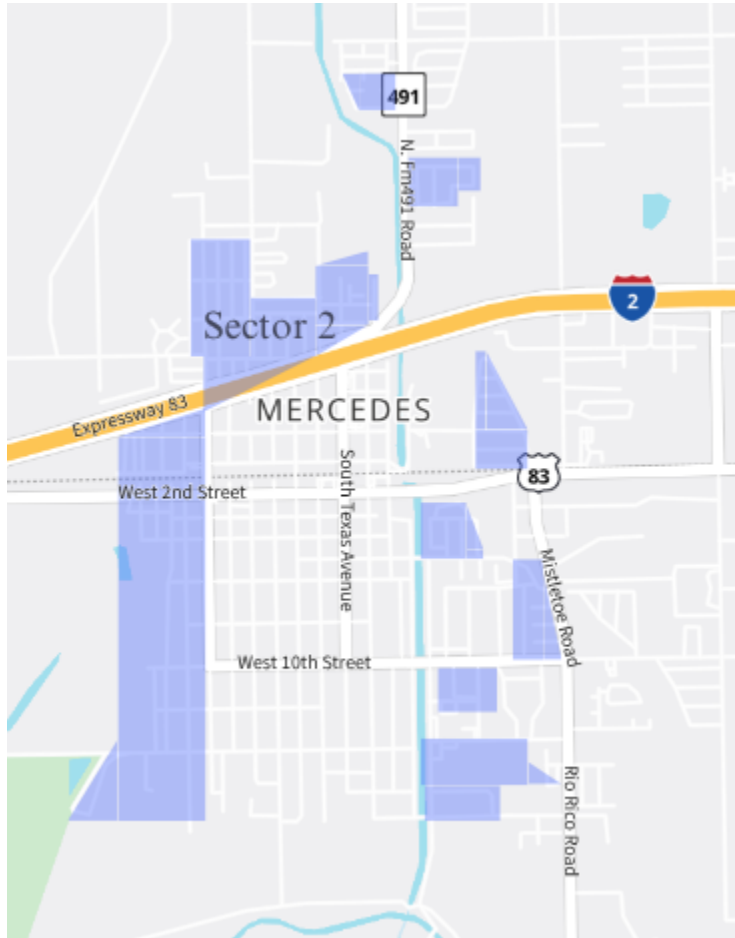


Figure 4: Sector 2 Map

Phase III, Sector 3

Phase III of the Reconnaissance Survey should include the remaining historic-age resources within Mercedes' corporate limits in Sector 3. Among the resources expected in Sector 3 are:

1. agricultural landscapes
2. farmsteads and ranches including dwellings, barns, sheds, corrals, etc.
3. packing sheds and loading stations
4. other agricultural/industrial properties
5. irrigation-related features
6. bridges
7. historic roads and trails

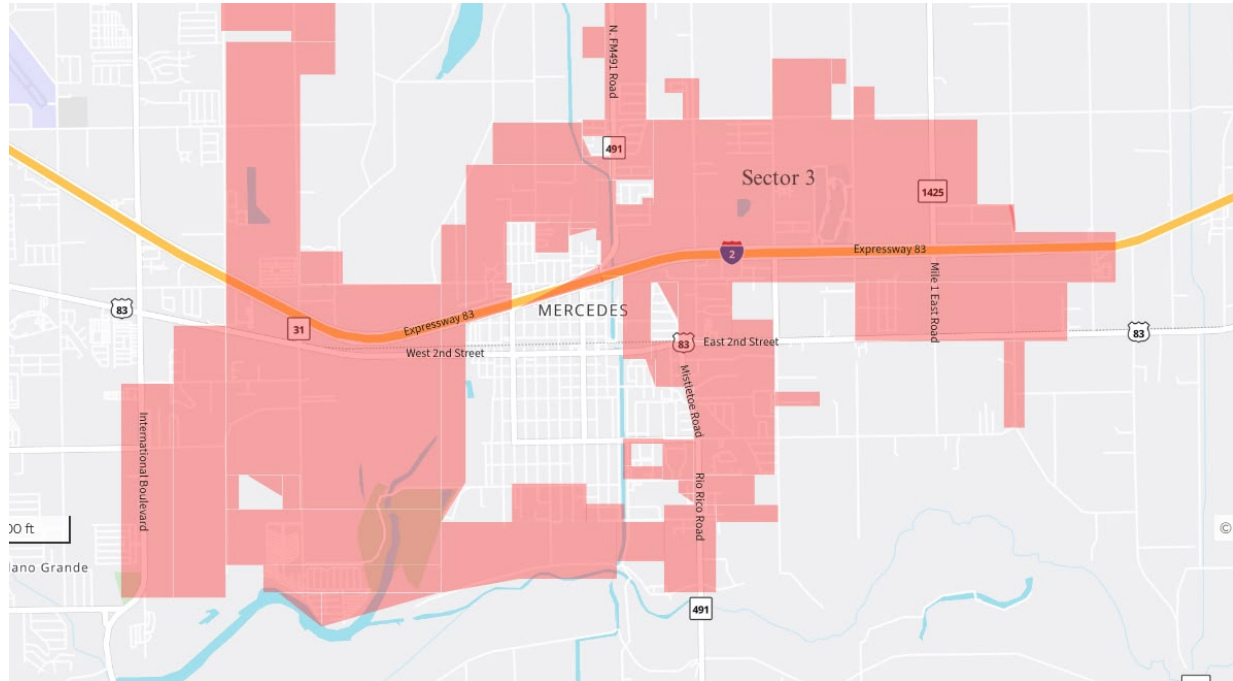


Figure 5: Sector 3 Map

Summation

Preservation Central completed a basic Research Design and Windshield Survey of selected historic properties within the original townsite of Mercedes, and selected outlying areas to arrive at a plan for future Reconnaissance-level survey. The Windshield Survey shows that Mercedes has a number of individual properties that may be eligible for historic designation at the local level and/or for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, the city contains several areas with good concentrations of relatively intact historic resources that could warrant designation as local districts or National Register districts.

The consultants recommend a comprehensive Reconnaissance Survey to more fully document the city's historic buildings, structures, objects, and sites, and provide a framework for protecting and preserving these irreplaceable resources. The Survey could be completed in three phases over a three-to-four-year period. It would result in a comprehensive inventory of the city's historic properties to be used as a planning tool for making decisions that may affect these resources.

All aspects of the survey and photography adhere to the standards of the Texas Historical Commission and the Secretary of the Interior.