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Public Transit and Livable Communities: Corpus Christi “After” Evaluation

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Abstract

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has a major initiative underway focusing on using transit to enhance livable communities. The Corpus Christi Regional Transit Authority (RTA) received a Livable Community grant from the FTA in 1995. This grant has been used to make physical improvements around two of the RTA's transit stations, located in a low income area of the city, and to develop additional social service programs to serve local residents. Assessing the impact of this project, as well as other FTA Livable Community projects throughout the country can provide a better understanding of the role transit can play in ensuring sustainable transportation systems. This research project examined the approaches taken by the RTA and by other Livable Community projects and the effects of those approaches on transit systems and the communities.

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Executive Summary

The Livable Communities Initiative (LCI) was begun in 1995 by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), under authorization from the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). This grant program was designed to improve mobility and community vitality by strengthening the links between transit facilities and neighborhoods, by improving access to jobs and education via public transportation services, and by encouraging community participation in neighborhood planning.

Corpus Christi, Texas was one of the communities selected for an LCI grant, with enhancements implemented in three different neighborhoods, each surrounding a local transit center.

- The Staples Street Station transit center, opened in 1994, serves a complex of government buildings as well as a social service center and a heavily transit-dependent residential neighborhood. To better serve the needs of neighborhood residents and those who commute in and out of the area, improved pedestrian connections and safety/security measures were implemented.
- The Six Points Station transit center is positioned at the center of a busy hub of residential and commercial activity in downtown Corpus Christi. The Six Points neighborhood has a number of well-established businesses and the potential for attracting more, but the area had become difficult to travel on foot or by transit. Enhancements to this area include better pedestrian connections to the transit center, such as crosswalks, street medians, and wider sidewalks; traffic calming measures; security lighting; and landscaping and building facade improvements.
- The Port-Ayers station is located in a neighborhood with high levels of both pedestrian and automobile traffic, and has a history of high accident rates as a result. Enhancements to this neighborhood, recently completed, include street medians, crosswalks, and other pedestrian enhancements similar to those constructed in the Six Points neighborhood, plus improved driveway access for the businesses along Port and Ayers streets.

In 1996, the SWUTC research report “Public Transit and Livable Communities: An Evaluation of the LCI Demonstration Project in Corpus Christi” evaluated conditions in the Staples Street Station and Six Points Station areas before these enhancements were made to the neighborhoods. The evaluation included interviews with pedestrians, interviews with business owners and managers in the Six Points neighborhood, crime reports from police districts in the two areas, and bus ridership for routes that passed through the transit centers.

This After evaluation focused on the Six Points Station neighborhood, comparing crime rates, bus ridership, and responses from pedestrian and business surveys to the results of the Before survey. Representatives from 12 businesses were interviewed, along with 150 pedestrians.

New businesses have been established in the Six Points neighborhood since LCI improvements were completed. Of five new businesses surveyed in the After evaluation, two cited the LCI improvements as a positive factor in their decision to open in Six Points, while the other three said the improvements were not a specific factor in their decision.

Of the businesses that had been at Six Points both before and after the LCI enhancements, opinions were mixed regarding the effects of the enhancements, but the new landscaping, crosswalks and lighting were the most popular additions to the neighborhood. The most common concerns were parking availability and traffic speeds.

Pedestrian reactions were similarly mixed, with similar concerns expressed about traffic speeds and pedestrian safety despite the measures taken to improve the pedestrian environment. Lighting and security were also named as ongoing concerns. Positive comments centered on the “new look” of Six Points, on the new businesses moving in, and on the general revitalization of the area.

Crime rates in the neighborhood have declined overall in the years following the enhancements. Bus ridership on routes going into the area increased through 1999 and has since decreased, mirroring the citywide bus ridership trends.

Overall, the LCI enhancements have had some positive effects, primarily relating to economic revitalization of the neighborhood. Recommendations for future improvements in the Six Points area include additional measures to reduce traffic speeds, signs to direct drivers to additional parking areas behind Six Points stores, and increased security lighting (already in progress as part of a scheduled renovation of the transit center).

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	vii
List of Tables	x
List of Figures.....	xi
Chapter 1. The Livable Communities Initiative	1
LCI Objectives.....	2
Nia Neighborhood Travel and Jobs Center	2
Tampa Ybor City Historic Electric Streetcar	3
Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative.....	4
Chapter 2. Corpus Christi’s LCI Projects	7
Staples Street Station and the Northside Area.....	7
Port-Ayers Station	7
Six Points Station.....	8
Chapter 3. Results of Six Points After Evaluation	15
Business Development at Six Points	15
Business Interviews	15
Survey of Transit Riders and Pedestrians.....	18
Safety and Crime in the Six points Neighborhood.....	23
“The B” Ridership at Six Points Station.....	25
Chapter 4. Conclusions and Recommendations	29
References	31
Appendix A. Six Points Business Interview Questions.....	33
Appendix B. Pedestrian Survey.....	37
Appendix C. Corpus Christi Crime Statistics for Police Beats Surrounding Six Points Area.	41
Appendix D. Ridership for Bus Routes Traveling Through Six Points Station.....	45

List of Tables

Table 1. LCI Objectives and Project Selection Criteria.	2
Table 2. Age and Sex of Survey Participants.	19
Table 3. Survey Ratings Averages, 2002 and 1996.....	20
Table 4. Ratings From “Bus Transfer Only” Respondents.	21
Table 5. Ratings From Respondents with Business in the Six Points Neighborhood.	22
Table 6. Reported Crimes, 1995-2001; Crime Reporting Districts Surrounding Six Points Station and the Six Points Neighborhood.....	24

List of Figures

Figure 1. Crossing to Six Points Station, before LCI enhancements.	8
Figure 2. Crosswalk to Six Points Station, after LCI enhancements.....	9
Figure 3. Street median at Six Points, before LCI enhancements.	9
Figure 4. Another view of a Six Points street median before LCI enhancements.....	10
Figure 5. Street median after LCI enhancements.	10
Figure 6. Six Points sidewalk before LCI enhancements.	11
Figure 7. Widened sidewalks and landscaping after LCI enhancements.	11
Figure 8. Another view of landscaping and sidewalks after LCI enhancements.	12
Figure 9. Crosswalks to Six Points Station, with widened median (after LCI enhancements).	12
Figure 10. Another view of crosswalks and median (after LCI enhancements).	13
Figure 11. Average overall ratings.	20
Figure 12. Average ratings from "bus transfer only" respondents.	21
Figure 13. Ratings from respondents with business in the Six Points Neighborhood.....	22
Figure 14. Reported Crimes per 1000 Population in the Six Points Area Reporting Districts, 1995-2001.	25
Figure 15. Annual overall and weekday ridership on bus routes through the Six Points area, 1992-2002.	26
Figure 16. Annual Saturday and Sunday ridership on bus routes through the Six Points area, 1992-2002.....	26
Figure 17. Total annual bus ridership for Corpus Christi (all routes). Data from TxDOT Public Transit Statistics reports, FY 1996-2001 (21).	27

Chapter 1. The Livable Communities Initiative

The intention of the Livable Communities Initiative, as envisioned by the Federal Transit Administration, is to improve not only mobility within its targeted neighborhoods, but also community involvement and overall quality of life for neighborhood residents.

The concept of livable communities was introduced in programs such as the National Endowment for the Arts' Partners for Livable Places, begun in 1977 (renamed Partners for Livable Communities in 1993). In 1979 President Carter established an \$80 million Urban Initiatives Program through the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA). The objectives of the Urban Initiatives Program were similar to the already-existing Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG): both allocated money to assist private-sector efforts to rebuild and revitalize urban neighborhoods. The Urban Initiatives Program was able to use transit-related grants to fund such efforts in cities that did not qualify for the limited assistance that UDAG was able to supply. The program operated with similar objectives and criteria as the Livable Communities Initiative today: to use transit-related projects and improvements to enhance the surrounding urban environment, to involve the private sector, and to use the transit-related federal grant to leverage other funds where possible to aid in improvements.

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) allowed additional opportunities for using transit-related funds. The "flexible funding" provisions of the Act permitted money to be allocated for projects other than transit capital and operating costs. As a result, other transit-related improvements were made possible, and could be tailored to the needs of the community. Money for LCI projects came from a variety of fund sources:

- Transit Capital Discretionary Loan Program;
- Transit Formula Assistance Block Grants;
- Planning and Research Program;
- Planning and Design of Mass Transportation Facilities to Meet Special Needs of Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities;
- Rural Transit Assistance Formula Grant Program for Areas Other Than Urbanized Areas
- Surface Transportation Program (STP); and
- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) (1).

A number of LCI demonstration projects were selected across the United States, varying from single-facility improvements to neighborhood-wide renovations. Projects were selected based on LCI objectives and criteria, shown in Table 1.

Table 1. LCI Objectives and Project Selection Criteria (1).

<p>LCI OBJECTIVES</p> <p>“...to improve mobility and the quality of services available to residents of the neighborhoods by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the link between transit planning and community planning, including land use policies and urban design supporting the use of transit, and ultimately providing physical assets that better meet community needs; • Stimulating increased participation in the decision-making process by community organizations, minority and low-income residents, small and minority businesses, persons with disabilities, and the elderly; • Increasing access to employment, education facilities, and other community destinations through high quality, community-oriented, and technologically innovative transit services and facilities; and • Leveraging resources available through other Federal, State, and local programs.” 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Threshold Factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project was planned and developed by the community and has community support • Project will increase access to jobs, education, or social services • Project incorporates community services or other transit and pedestrian-oriented mixed use developments • Project provides opportunities for small or disadvantaged business participation in the planning, design, and implementation phases 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Other Rating Factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of community involvement • Evidence of coordinated transit and community planning • Increase of transit ridership and decrease of single-occupant vehicle trips • Responsiveness to community needs, e.g. community services and customer conveniences • Level of funding pledged by other Federal, State, and local programs • Improvement to physical environment, including safety and security • Stimulation of commercial and housing development around the transit facility • Generation of jobs for unemployed community residents • Local land use policies and business development initiatives • Market feasibility of project elements • Reasonableness of project’s financial plan 	

Some of the LCI demonstration projects and their results to date are summarized in the following sections.

NIA NEIGHBORHOOD TRAVEL AND JOBS CENTER

In March of 1998, the Nia Neighborhood Travel and Jobs Center was opened in Louisville’s West End as part of the City’s National Enterprise Community strategy to revitalize neighborhoods to support economic opportunity. Housed in a renovated building, the Center’s mission is to provide an “interactive environment that builds on the strengths of area residents to enhance business growth and development, to cultivate a

marketable workforce, and to improve mobility through increased public transportation access (2).”

The Nia Center project involved public, private and community interests working together. The City of Louisville and the Transit Authority of River City (TARC) worked with the Empowerment Zone community to purchase the building, and then renovated it with the assistance of a \$2.4 million LCI grant and \$600,000 in matching funds from the city. Additional funds came from TARC, the Department of Health and Human Services, local banks, and the U.S. Small Business Administration (3).

The Nia Center building, which was previously occupied by a factory, now houses retail and office tenants, and has space for light manufacturing in the basement. Anchor tenants include a TARC service center where photo I.D.s, information, and bus tickets can be obtained, Career Resources, Inc., a non-profit organization offering employment services such as job training, placement service, assistance with obtaining a GED, and the Louisville Business Resource Center, a city agency that brings together federal and local business development agencies (4,5). The property is managed by the Louisville Community Development Bank (LCDB) Enterprise Group, which also offices at the site. LCDB is a self-sustaining institution that is committed to supporting economic development within 12 inner city neighborhoods in Louisville. LCDB leases out office space in the Nia Center through its Enterprise Development Center small business incubator, which offers assistance to emerging small businesses in the neighborhoods it serves (6).

Transportation is a key part of making the employment connection. The TARC office at the Nia Center offers transportation assistance, and the Center is located near the intersection of two of TARC’s most heavily traveled bus routes. Four main line buses and two neighborhood circulators serve the Center. Additionally, TARC offers a door-to-door, individualized Night Owl service on a subscription basis to take residents or employees to and from work within the Empowerment Zone. The fee for Night Owl service is \$1.50, and there are now over 140 participants (7,8).

The Nia Center LCI project is meeting its objective of increasing transit access and ridership, and improving employment and business opportunities for residents and businesses within this Empowerment Zone neighborhood.

TAMPA YBOR CITY HISTORIC ELECTRIC STREETCAR

The TECO Line Streetcar System is a public investment in multimodal improvements to the city of Tampa, Florida. After three and one-half years of planning and almost two years of construction, the initial 2.3 mile circulator system connecting downtown Tampa, Channelside, and Ybor City opened in October 2002. This line includes ten stops, and the ride is scheduled to take 22 minutes (9). The streetcars operate seven days per week, and the system is thought to play a major role in providing access to the more than \$150,000 million in new development that is concentrating along the line. Ridership was expected to be 950 per day, and the current average is 1,100 per day (10).

The \$32 million in construction costs for Phase 1 were funded through a partnership between the City of Tampa, the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Florida Department of Transportation. Sixty-two percent of the system's construction costs were paid for with state and federal funds (11), the Ybor City contribution was a \$1.4 million LCI grant (12). Ongoing funding for the line will come from a partnership between Hillsborough Area Regional Transit (HART), the City of Tampa, and the local business community. Annual operating costs are estimated at \$1.3 million, and a business plan has been developed to operate the system without subsidy from HART or the City. Revenue will be generated from a new sales tax assessment district (comprising the area served by the streetcar), an endowment fund supported by private sector contributions for naming rights of the system (Tampa Electric Company (TECO) bought the naming rights to the system for \$1 million, vehicle naming rights are selling for \$250,000, and stations can be named for between \$75,000 and \$150,000), advertising, and fares (13). The endowment fund currently has \$6 million toward its target of \$10 million, including \$4 million in seed money from a settlement between HART and the Beneficial Corporation over another transit project. Interest generated from this fund is expected to provide approximately one-third of operating revenue (14).

This first phase of the project has had a clear impact in Ybor City. The streetcar line, along with HART's \$15 million investment in the Ybor City transit center, is helping to draw a more diverse group of people to the area and is expanding the types of entertainment available. The site of at least one \$45 million construction project was selected because of its proximity to the rail line. Although this first part of the project consists primarily of the streetcar maintenance facility and the functional rail, the maintenance building is set back from the street to allow for a second set of buildings in front. This space is planned as the site for bus bays and taxi queues, which will be added as the area develops (14).

LOS ANGELES NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

The Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative (LANI) was founded in 1994 as a grass-roots movement in urban renewal for eight transit-dependent neighborhoods in the city. An LCI grant of \$3.4 million was used to initiate projects including bus shelters, transit information kiosks, signage, sidewalk landscaping, and later transit stores, security cameras and safety lighting around the transit centers in these neighborhoods (15). In the years since, LANI has grown to include 13 neighborhoods along transit corridors, and leveraged additional funding from grants and from public and private investment totaling nearly \$45 million (16).

The LANI projects emphasize community involvement from planning through implementation. The former Pico-Union neighborhood, renamed the Byzantine-Latino Quarter by LANI participants, involved neighborhood children to clean up sidewalk litter and to provide artwork that decorates new sidewalk trash receptacles (15, 16). The Reseda Village neighborhood has established its own Business Improvement District which will take over the maintenance of the LANI improvements (17). Similarly, other

LANI neighborhoods are moving toward independent control of and responsibility for their improvement projects. Some of the completed projects have significantly benefited local economics in their neighborhoods. The NoHo Transit Arts Park, initiated with \$100,000 in LANI funding, has brought eight new businesses and 30 new jobs into the neighborhood (16).

Chapter 2. Corpus Christi's LCI Projects

The LCI grants awarded to Corpus Christi through the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) focused on three newly-built public transit facilities and their surrounding neighborhoods: Staples Street Station, Six Points Station, and Port-Ayers Station. All three transit centers are located in an older part of the city which has declined economically as urban development patterns drew population and business growth elsewhere. In each of the three neighborhoods, the LCI projects were designed to improve pedestrian access, to encourage transit ridership, and to provide an environment conducive to people and businesses.

STAPLES STREET STATION AND THE NORTHSIDE AREA

The Northside social service complex was developed by the City of Corpus Christi and Memorial Hospital. The complex houses an early child development center, a senior citizens center, a medical clinic, and a job training center. The complex is within walking distance of the Staples Street Station transit center, which is also adjacent to the Nueces County Courthouse, City Hall, and other government offices. The surrounding residential neighborhoods are low-income and heavily transit-dependent.

Staples Street Station opened in January of 1994, replacing 6 on-street bus stops that served the area around the Leopard and Staples Street intersection. The transit center won awards for design, including a Presidential Award from the National Endowment for the Arts. The RTA's next priority was to improve the links between the transit center, the Northside complex, and the adjoining residential neighborhoods (18).

LCI enhancements for this area included a pedestrian promenade to create a walk-through between all the public service agencies in the complex, two pedestrian overpasses connecting the Northside neighborhood to Staples Street Station, and pedestrian improvements including widened sidewalks, curb cuts, improved street lighting and improved crosswalks around the station. Additional modifications to the pedestrian overpasses were underway in 2003.

PORT-AYERS STATION

The intersection of Port Avenue and Ayers Street is home to a mix of retail and services as well as the Port-Ayers Transit Center, all of which contribute to a high level of pedestrian traffic. Concerns for pedestrian safety are a significant portion of the impetus behind the Livable Communities improvements in this area, which were completed in early 2003. Sidewalk and crosswalk improvements are the focus of the enhancements, including flashing signal lights to warn drivers of pedestrians crossing the street, pedestrian refuge medians, and landscaping to separate walkways from the vehicular lanes and to provide vehicular traffic calming. Other improvements made to the neighborhood include improved driveway access for neighborhood businesses and new bus shelters (19).

SIX POINTS STATION

Six Points developed in the 1930s and 1940s as Corpus Christi's first urban commercial center outside of the downtown area. Surrounded by residential neighborhoods, and served by a public transit station since the late 1940s, Six Points remains a diverse, mixed-use neighborhood. The goal of the Livable Communities Initiative in this neighborhood was to vitalize the neighborhood by addressing some key problem areas:

- an unfriendly pedestrian environment, with fast-moving automobile traffic making it difficult and dangerous for pedestrians to cross streets to reach businesses or the transit center;
- poor sidewalk conditions, with many sidewalks in poor repair and of uneven widths;
- poor street configuration, needing changes in traffic signals, parking and pedestrian areas to reduce traffic speeds and create a "gateway" effect defining the Six Points neighborhood; and
- poor building façade conditions, with a number of older, historic buildings needing "facelifts" to restore their full attractiveness and character.

The enhancements made to the Six Points area, designed and implemented by the McGloin-Sween architecture firm, were focused toward addressing these problem areas. Pedestrian crossings were marked with striped crosswalks, and medians were widened to serve as pedestrian "refuges" at mid-crossing. Sidewalks were widened, and both sidewalks and street medians were landscaped to calm traffic (by decreasing road widths) and improve the look of the neighborhood. Figures 1 through 10 illustrate elements of the Six Points neighborhood before and after the LCI enhancements.



Figure 1. Crossing to Six Points Station, before LCI enhancements.



Figure 2. Crosswalk to Six Points Station, after LCI enhancements.



Figure 3. Street median at Six Points, before LCI enhancements.



Figure 4. Another view of a Six Points street median before LCI enhancements.



Figure 5. Street median after LCI enhancements.



Figure 6. Six Points sidewalk before LCI enhancements.



Figure 7. Widened sidewalks and landscaping after LCI enhancements.



Figure 8. Another view of landscaping and sidewalks after LCI enhancements.



Figure 9. Crosswalks to Six Points Station, with widened median (after LCI enhancements).



Figure 10. Another view of crosswalks and median (after LCI enhancements).

Chapter 3. Results of Six Points After Evaluation

In 1996, the SWUTC research report “Public Transit and Livable Communities: An Evaluation of the LCI Demonstration Project in Corpus Christi” evaluated conditions in the Staples Street Station and Six Points Station areas before these enhancements were made to the neighborhoods. The evaluation included interviews with pedestrians, interviews with business owners and managers in the Six Points neighborhood, crime reports from police districts in the two areas, and bus ridership for routes that passed through the transit centers.

The After evaluation focused on the Six Points area, where LCI enhancements had been completed in 1999. Using the results of the Before study as a benchmark, the evaluation focused on three key areas: effects on the neighborhood business environment, effects on the pedestrian environment, crime rates in the surrounding neighborhoods, and effects on bus ridership.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AT SIX POINTS

Since the 1996 survey and the subsequent Livable Communities enhancements, several new businesses have opened at Six Points. The former RTA building was purchased by Nueces National Bank. Eckards and Office Depot have opened new stores in the neighborhood, joining a specialty retail store, a shoe repair shop, and a restaurant as new residents in the blocks immediately surrounding the transit station.

BUSINESS INTERVIEWS

Interviews with Six Points merchants were conducted on May 14, 2002. Interview questions focused on the effects that the Livable Communities Initiative enhancements have had on Six Points businesses. Owners and/or managers at 12 Six Points area businesses were interviewed.

New and Existing Businesses

Seven of the interviewed businesses had been located at Six Points prior to the 1995 enhancements, four moved in following the enhancements being made, and one moved in during the construction phase. Of the owners/managers of the new businesses, two stated that their move to the Six Points neighborhood was unrelated to the roadway and sidewalk enhancements. The owner of the business that had moved into the area while the enhancements were being constructed had experienced difficulties since the building the business had initially occupied was sold during that time, requiring the business to move again, to a location across the street. Two stated that the enhancements had been a positive factor in their decision to open their business in the area.

Customer Volumes

The seven businesses that had operated at Six Points prior to the enhancements were asked to estimate how their customer volumes had changed since the enhancements were made. Five of the businesses have experienced no appreciable change in the number of customers. One has slightly fewer customers now, possibly due to difficulties with on-street parking. One has more customers now than before, attributing the positive change to increased safety and attractiveness of the neighborhood.

Travel Modes

All of the interviewed business owners regularly drive to work. This is consistent with the survey responses received in the Before study. Customers of these businesses generally arrive by car, as well, though three of the business owners have seen some of their customers arrive on public transit. Observed transit use by customers is slightly less frequent than in the Before survey, in which five businesses stated that some customers used transit. The Before survey also included responses from two Six Points businesses that observed customers walking to the store or business; the current business owners have not observed their customers arriving on foot rather than by car.

LCI Neighborhood Enhancements

Respondents were asked which of the following enhancements they believe has had the greatest benefit to their businesses and customers:

- crosswalk improvements
- wider street medians
- improved street/security lighting
- narrower vehicle traffic lanes
- additional on-street parking
- landscaping
- relocation of the Six Points Station fountain

Improvements to street lighting and improved crosswalks were cited most often as the most beneficial improvements to the neighborhood, with six votes apiece from those surveyed. Landscaping received five votes, the wider street medians two votes, and the narrower vehicle traffic lanes one vote. The positive response to the landscaping is particularly notable, as this enhancement was predicted to be the greatest benefit by only one respondent in the Before survey.

Parking continues to be a problem for businesses and their customers, who comment that the amount of regular and disabled parking is insufficient and that some of the potential parking space is taken up by landscaping. One respondent suggested time-limited parking spaces as one solution for this problem.

However, businesses have also received positive comments from customers on the “new look” of Six Points:

- “Everyone likes and comments on the landscaping.”
- “The red brick sidewalk/courtyard between Price Chef and the shops next door was a major improvement. It increased drainage and looks nice.”
- “My customers have been glad to see Six Points refurbished.”

Safety/Security

Traffic safety is a concern, with four of the respondents commenting on high traffic speeds and visibility problems. Comments on safety include the following:

- “The intersection is dangerous; traffic moves too fast.”
- “We need more visible traffic signs and pedestrian crossing lights. There used to be a pedestrian-activated light here [installed as part of the enhancements] but it was removed.”
- “The landscaping blocks the view of traffic; the intersection needs more or better traffic lights.”
- “There are lots of traffic accidents in the neighborhood.”

One respondent commented on the security concern of people loitering in the parking lots behind the stores. However, positive comments were also received regarding the safety of the neighborhood:

- “The changes have been good. It’s now a safer, neater, more attractive neighborhood.”
- “It feels safer, looks nicer, and makes it easier to do business.”

Customer Access

Four of the respondents thought that the Six Points LCI enhancements had “very likely” improved access to their businesses for their customers, and three stated that the enhancements had “possibly” improved customer access. Of the five that stated that access for their customers had not been improved by the changes, three commented that parking was still the major obstacle, and one commented that although general access had not improved, access for disabled customers was better. One respondent commented: “The new medians and street design bring more people through Six Points, so more people see my business.”

Other Concerns and Suggestions

Two respondents commented on the difficulties of doing business while the construction for the improvements was taking place; several Six Points businesses nearly had to close permanently or move elsewhere due to the disruption during the construction process.

The suggestion was made to give as much advance notice to businesses as possible before beginning similar projects, so that business owners have time to notify and possibly re-route their customers.

Other concerns and suggestions were as follows:

- “A lot of trash accumulates on sidewalks and landscaped areas.”
- “Lighting for the most part is good, but sometimes the lights are out.”
- “Restrooms at the transit station would help. A lot of bus passengers ask to use our restrooms.”

SURVEY OF TRANSIT RIDERS AND PEDESTRIANS

The After survey of pedestrians and transit riders was conducted on Wednesday, May 15, 2002. Bus riders, pedestrians, and shoppers in the Six Points neighborhood were surveyed concerning their perceptions of the neighborhood surrounding the Six Points transit station. Participants were asked to rate the neighborhood on the following criteria:

- Ease and comfort of walking;
- Attractiveness;
- Cleanliness;
- Safety of crosswalks, sidewalks, and intersections;
- Security provided by lighting, walkways, and visibility; and
- Ease of traveling in and out of the area.

Ratings were on a five-point scale, with a rating of 1 meaning “very bad” and a rating of 5 meaning “very good”. Survey participants were also asked for demographic information including age, residence ZIP code, mode of travel into the area (bus, car, walking, dropped off by another driver), and his or her purpose for being in the area (bus transfer only, work, shopping, eating, or personal business). Participants were also invited to provide comments as desired.

Results of the survey were compared with the results of the Before survey, conducted in February, 1996.

Demographics of Survey Participants

Age and Sex:

Seventy-one men participated in the survey, ranging in age from 16 to 90, with an average age of 45; 79 women participated, ranging in age from 15 to 86, with an average age of 48. This was a similar pool of participants to that for the 1996 Before survey; comparisons between the Before and After survey participants are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Age and Sex of Survey Participants.

	Before (1996)	After (2002)
Number of Participants	158	150
Number of Men	78	71
Male Average Age	44	45
Number of Women	80	79
Female Average Age	47	48

Purpose for Travel:

Fifty-five respondents were at Six Points only to transfer between buses. An additional 17 had walked or driven to Six Points Station to begin a bus trip. Of the remaining 78, 23 were shopping, 14 were eating at Six Points restaurants (three respondents answered both “shopping” and “eating”), 23 were on personal business, and 20 were in the neighborhood for other purposes (including work).

For comparison, in the 1996 Before survey, 90 of the respondents were transferring or otherwise boarding buses at the station, while 68 were shopping, eating, going to work, or conducting other personal business.

Mode of Travel:

Twenty respondents had walked to the Six Points neighborhood. Eighty-six had ridden the bus, 31 had driven, five had been dropped off by another driver, and two had reached the Six Points by other means.

Of those who were in Six Points to eat or shop, four walked, 10 rode the bus, 17 drove, two were dropped off, and one both walked and drove.

Of the respondents who had other personal business in Six Points, three walked, 20 had arrived by bus, 13 drove, three had been dropped off, and one had arrived by other means.

Survey Results

Overall: The average ratings for the six categories were nearly identical for the 1996 and 2002 surveys. While more positive ratings might have been expected following the enhancements to the neighborhood, it is possible that the LCI project has raised public expectations of what the neighborhood should be. Table 3 shows the average (mean) rating for each of the six categories in 2002 and in 1996, and the standard deviation for the 2002 ratings. Figure 11 graphs the average ratings for 2002 and 1996.

Table 3. Survey Ratings Averages, 2002 and 1996.

	Ease of Walking	Attractiveness	Cleanliness	Safety	Security	Ease of Traveling In and Out
2002 average	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.7
Standard deviation	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.3	1.3	1.0
1996 average	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.7

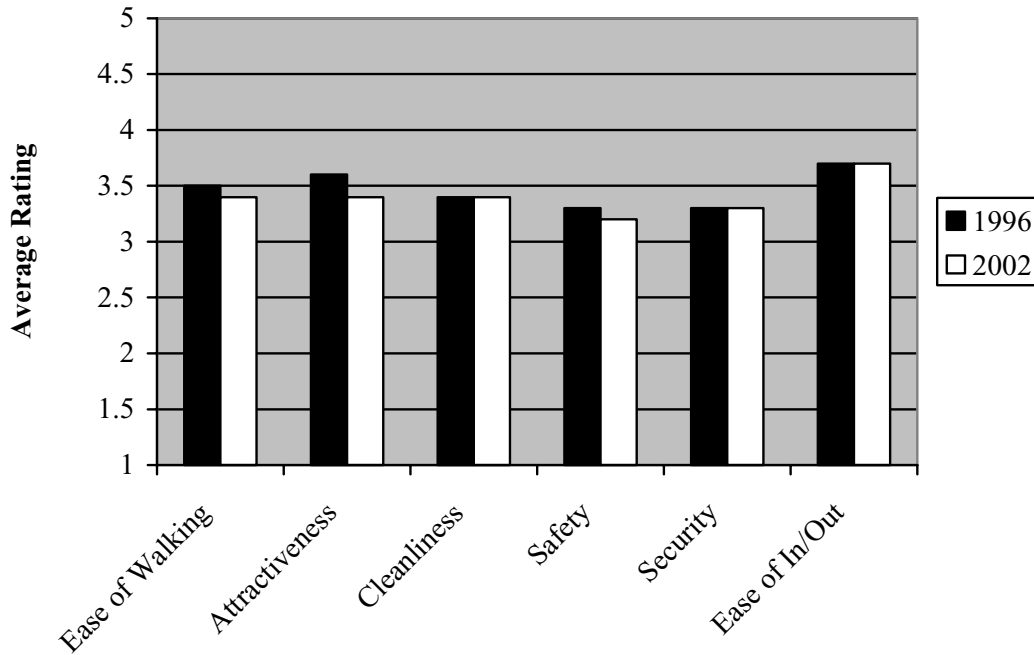


Figure 11. Average overall ratings.

Variation by Purpose of Travel: Responses from those who were transferring between buses at Six Points Station were slightly different than the responses from those who were conducting other business in the neighborhood (and therefore were more likely to use the pedestrian facilities and crosswalks). What is notable here is that in 1996, average ratings received from “transfer-only” bus passengers at Six Points Station were nearly all higher than those from respondents who were not at the transit center or who left the transit center for other parts of the neighborhood. Ratings from “transfer-only” respondents declined somewhat between 1996 and 2002, which may be due in part to the

unavoidable aging of the transit center (which was nearly new in 1996), or simply to raised expectations of its users.

Conversely, ratings from respondents who were traveling elsewhere in the neighborhood (or who left the transit center for other parts of the neighborhood), rose between 1996 and 2002 for “security” and “ease of entering and leaving the neighborhood”. Table 4 and Figure 12 show the average ratings given by survey respondents who listed their purpose of travel through Six Points as “bus transfer only”. Table 5 and Figure 13 show average ratings given by respondents who had other business (shopping, eating, work, or personal business) in the Six Points neighborhood.

Table 4. Ratings From “Bus Transfer Only” Respondents.

	Ease of Walking	Attractiveness	Cleanliness	Safety	Security	Ease of Traveling In and Out
2002	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.2	3.1	3.8
1996	3.7	3.8	3.3	3.5	3.6	4.0

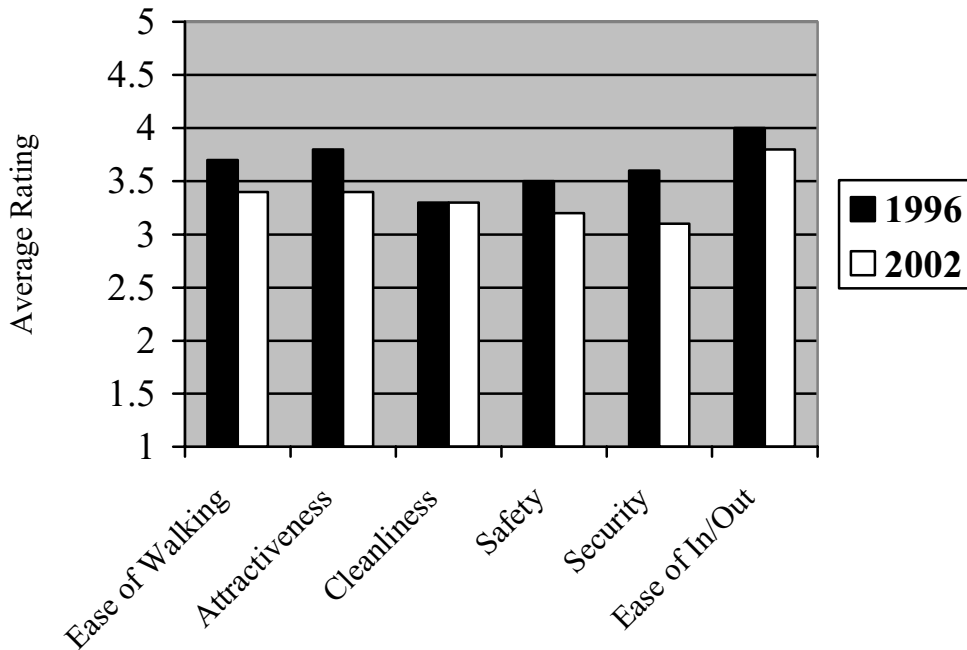


Figure 12. Average ratings from "bus transfer only" respondents.

Table 5. Ratings from Respondents with Business in the Six Points Neighborhood.

	Ease of Walking	Attractiveness	Cleanliness	Safety	Security	Ease of Traveling In and Out
2002	3.4	3.3	3.5	3.2	3.5	3.7
1996	3.5	3.4	3.5	3.0	2.8	3.3

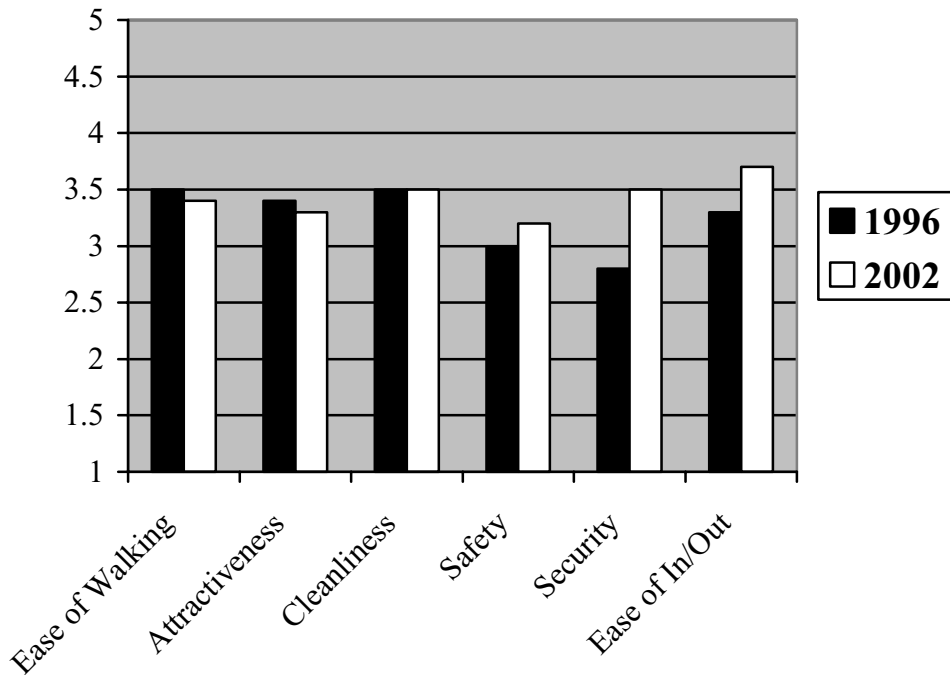


Figure 13. Ratings from respondents with business in the Six Points Neighborhood.

Comments

Comments made by pedestrians in the survey fell into the following categories:

- **Traffic and pedestrian safety issues:** speeding traffic, lack of time to cross at the crosswalks, blocked views of traffic, and inadequate traffic lights and signage were concerns of eight of the respondents. Comments included the following:
 - “Since the solid wall has been installed between streets, there is no place to stand and avoid traffic. The blinking signal light is dangerous! The

- one-way street is not identified well enough. Some of the trees are dead and block the view.”
- “Trim the trees – they block the view.”
- “Landscaping blocks views, need traffic lights, lack of pedestrian crossing lights is a hazard.”
- “Need more lights at intersections – crossing is dangerous.”
- “Need more enforcement of signs at crosswalks.”
- **Lighting and security issues:** eight respondents commented on lighting and security issues, some related to the station, some referring to the neighborhood in general. Comments included the following:
 - “Would like to have police/security in the areas during rush hour especially.”
 - “RTA needs to keep lightbulbs on at night.”
 - “Need brighter lights.”
- **Other suggestions:** two respondents commented that additional “attractive” stores in the neighborhood could continue to improve the Six Points area.
- **Positive comments:**
 - “I grew up being familiar with the Six Points area (going to the movie) and really enjoy the improvements.”
 - “I think everything is nice.”
 - “I always stop here and spend time now; used to go through without stopping.”
 - “It’s generally improved a great deal. I like the new businesses that have come in.”
 - “Crosswalk light beeper is good.”
- **Other comments:** several respondents commented, positively or negatively, on the transit station or bus service. These comments are not detailed here, as they were unrelated to the neighborhood improvements.

SAFETY AND CRIME IN THE SIX POINTS NEIGHBORHOOD

One measure of a neighborhood’s livability is its safety and security. While the pedestrian surveys in the Six Points neighborhood indicate the perceived level of security in the area, actual crime rates can provide objective, easily measurable information about this aspect of the neighborhood.

In September 1995, the Corpus Christi Police Department established a crime analysis unit to improve their ability to track crime patterns. Reported crimes, beginning with 1995 data, are entered into computer records and summarized according to police “beats” within the city. Each police beat spans several city blocks, and is divided into several small reporting districts. Violent and non-violent crimes are totaled within each reporting district. Surrounding the Six Points Transfer Center are district 3001 from police beat D60 and districts 3002, 4006, 4011, and 4017 from police beat D70.

A brief spike in property-related crimes occurred in 1997, around the time that construction began on the streets surrounding the Six Points station. Since that time, however, property crimes have decreased. The rate of violent crime, much lower than that of property crimes, has fluctuated year to year, but overall has not substantially increased or decreased since 1995.

Table 6 and Figure 14 show the number and rates of annual crimes committed in the Six Points area from 1995 through 2001. Crime rates are per 1000 population in the area.

Table 6. Reported Crimes, 1995-2001; Crime Reporting Districts Surrounding Six Points Station and the Six Points Neighborhood (20).

Year	Violent Crimes		Property Crimes		Total	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
1995	46	15.4	349	116.6	395	132.0
1996	53	17.7	304	101.6	357	119.3
1997	58	19.4	401	134.0	459	153.4
1998	47	15.7	365	122.0	412	137.7
1999	57	19.0	335	111.9	392	130.9
2000	35	11.7	286	95.6	321	107.3
2001	57	19.0	276	92.2	333	111.2

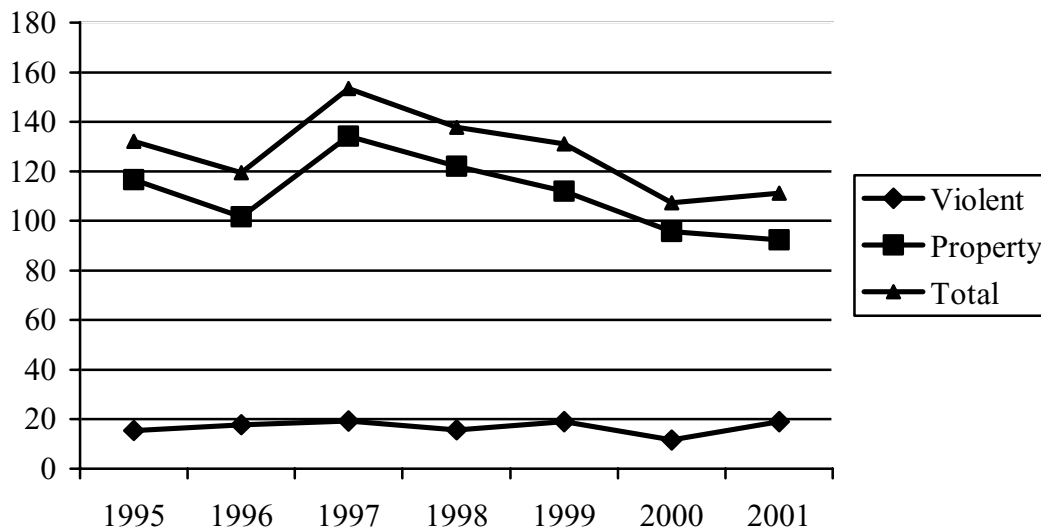


Figure 14. Reported Crimes per 1000 Population in the Six Points Area Reporting Districts, 1995-2001.

“THE B” RIDERSHIP AT SIX POINTS STATION

The Before analysis showed a steady increase in overall reported ridership from 1992 to 1995 on routes that traveled through the Six Points station and the other two recently-built transit stations, which was attributed in part to the opening of these new stations. As shown in Figures 15 and 16, reported ridership on routes traveling through the Six Points station continued to rise from 1995 through 1999, then declined somewhat from 2000 to 2002. This trend closely follows that of overall transit ridership in Corpus Christi, as shown in Figure 17, so it is not likely that the LCI enhancements had a significant effect, positive or negative, on ridership trends within the neighborhood.

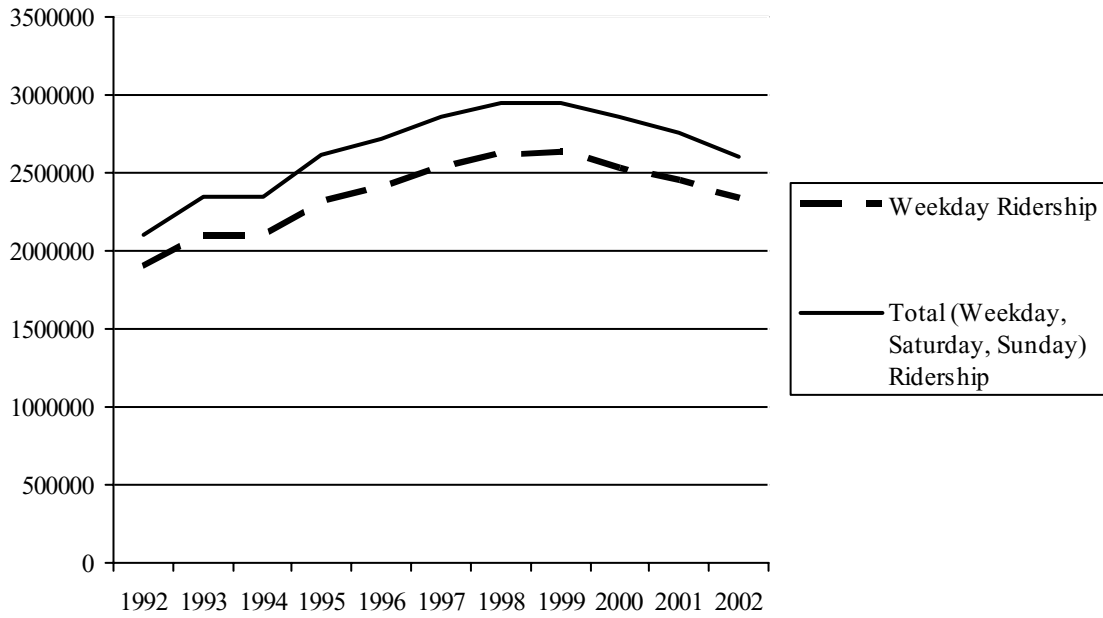


Figure 15. Annual overall and weekday ridership on bus routes through the Six Points area, 1992-2002.

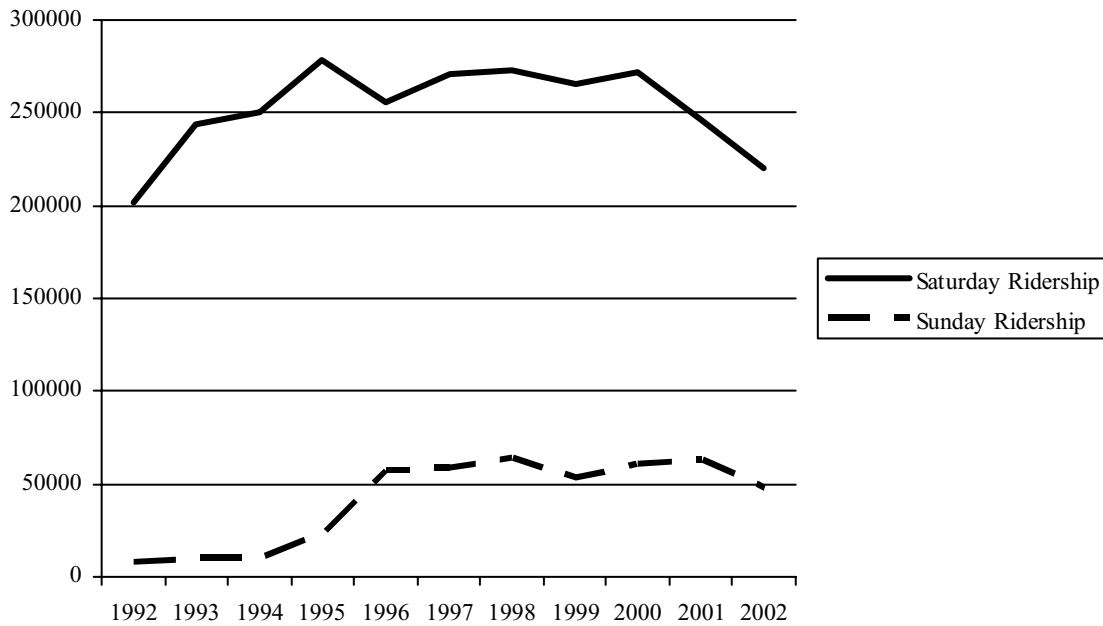


Figure 16. Annual Saturday and Sunday ridership on bus routes through the Six Points area, 1992-2002.

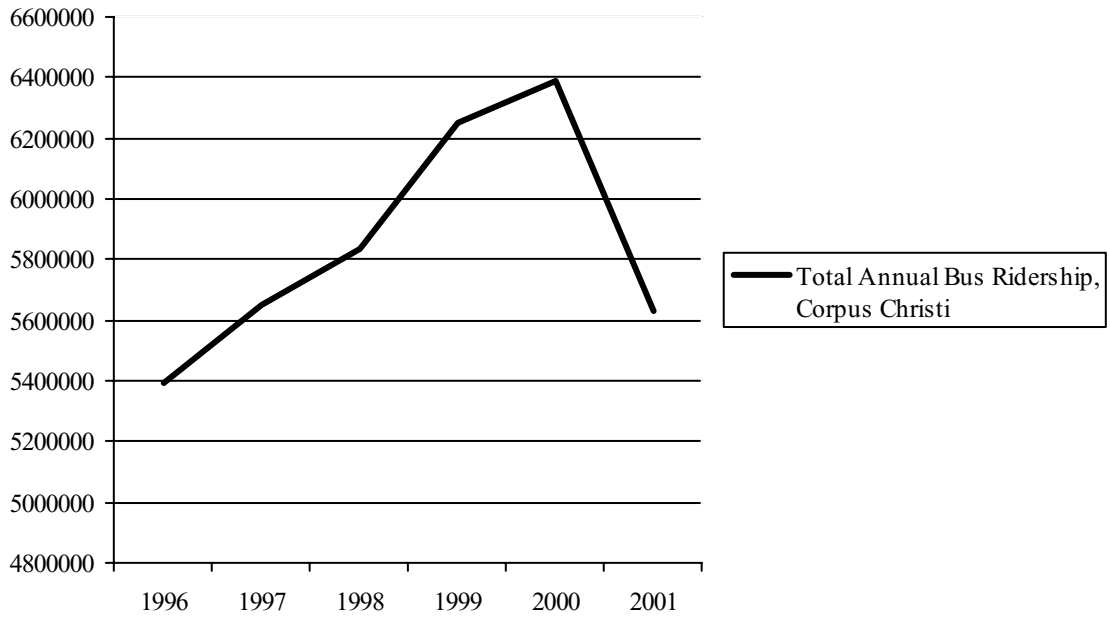


Figure 17. Total annual bus ridership for Corpus Christi (all routes). Data from TxDOT Public Transit Statistics reports, FY 1996-2001 (21).

Chapter 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall the Livable Communities project appears to have benefited the Six Points neighborhood, though public reactions have not been unanimously positive. New businesses have been drawn to the refurbished neighborhood, and positive comments were received from both businesses and pedestrians on the “new look” and revitalization of Six Points.

Some of the objectives for the Six Points neighborhood have been achieved. Sidewalk conditions have been improved with wider sidewalks, pedestrian-scale lighting, and adjacent landscaping. Pedestrian “refuge” medians and well-marked crosswalks have improved pedestrian access to the transit station. While only a few retailers have upgraded their building facades to date, the landscaping installed along the sidewalks has helped to improve the look of the neighborhood, and has been positively received by pedestrians and businesses.

The Six Points revitalization effort earned the Trans Texas Alliance Community Impact Award in 2000. In 2002, the design earned the American Institute of Architects-Corpus Christi Design Award of Honor.

Remaining concerns following the LCI changes center on parking availability, traffic speeds, and traffic and pedestrian signaling. While there are a substantial number of off-street parking spaces available behind several of the Six Points businesses, these parking lots are not always obvious to drivers, leading to the perception that Six Points has inadequate retail parking. Vehicular traffic speeds through the neighborhood are still too high for the comfort of many pedestrians, despite the traffic calming elements that have been included in the Six Points street design. More and brighter lights in the neighborhood were another request of several pedestrians and businesses.

The following are recommendations for future improvements in the Six Points area, based on the above concerns:

- Signs directing drivers on the street to the off-street parking lots behind Six Points stores.
- An additional stoplight or stop sign, lowered posted speed limits, and/or speed limit enforcement to lower traffic speeds through the neighborhood.
- Additional lighting around Six Points Station (already planned, as described below).

As of September 2003, the Six Points Station is undergoing repairs and renovations as part of the RTA’s ongoing facility maintenance. Among the renovations will be the installation of security lighting at the station and an additional crosswalk connecting the station to the surrounding neighborhood. The project is expected to be completed in January of 2004.

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Appendix A. Six Points Business Interview Questions

**Corpus Christi Livable Communities Assessment
Six Points Business Survey**

1. Was your business located in the Six Points area prior to the enhancements to the neighborhood?
 Yes No

2. If not, did the enhancements affect your decision to open your business at Six Points?
 No Yes, positively Yes, negatively

Reasons: _____

3. Did the number of customers visiting your business change after the enhancements (or after your move to Six Points)?
 No change Fewer customers now More customers now

4. Which of the following enhancements do you think has had the greatest benefit for your business/customers?

 Crosswalk improvements to and from Six Points Station
 Additional/wider street medians on Alameda and Staples
 Improved street/security lighting
 Narrower automobile traffic lanes
 Additional on-street angled parking
 Landscaping
 Relocation of the Six Points fountain

5. What comments have your customers had on these enhancements?

6. What mode of transportation do you normally use to get to work?
 Automobile The "B" Walking Other _____

7. What mode of transportation did you use to get to work prior to the enhancements (or prior to your business opening at Six Points)?
 Automobile The "B" Walking Other _____

8. What mode of transportation do most of your customers use to get to your business?
 Automobile The "B" Walking Other _____

9. Do you think that the enhancements give your customers easier access to your business?
 Very likely Possibly Unlikely

Date _____

Please add any comments on the back of this form. Thank you very much for your help!

Appendix B. Pedestrian Survey

Appendix C. Corpus Christi Crime Statistics for Police Beats Surrounding Six Points Area.

Crime Statistics, Beats D60 and D70, Corpus Christi Police Department.

Year	RD*	BEAT	POP.	VIOLENT	PROPERTY	RATE (Total)	RATE (Violent)	RATE (Property)
1995	3001	D60	281	8	68	270.46	28.47	241.99
1995	3002	D70	765	21	121	185.62	27.45	158.17
1995	4006	D70	697	5	42	67.43	7.17	60.26
1995	4011	D70	586	1	52	90.44	1.71	88.74
1995	4017	D70	664	11	66	115.96	16.57	99.40
1995	total		2993	46	349			
1996	3001	D60	281	14	49	224.20	49.82	174.38
1996	3002	D70	765	18	79	126.80	23.53	103.27
1996	4006	D70	697	3	61	91.82	4.30	87.52
1996	4011	D70	586	5	51	95.56	8.53	87.03
1996	4017	D70	664	13	64	115.96	19.58	96.39
1996	total		2993	53	304			
1997	3001	D60	281	15	61	270.46	53.38	217.08
1997	3002	D70	765	15	107	159.48	19.61	139.87
1997	4006	D70	697	6	63	99.00	8.61	90.39
1997	4011	D70	586	8	79	148.46	13.65	134.81
1997	4017	D70	664	14	91	158.13	21.08	137.05
1997	total		2993	58	401			
1998	3001	D60	281	17	42	209.96	60.50	149.47
1998	3002	D70	765	12	109	158.17	15.69	142.48
1998	4006	D70	697	4	58	88.95	5.74	83.21
1998	4011	D70	586	8	63	121.16	13.65	107.51
1998	4017	D70	664	6	93	149.10	9.04	140.06
1998	total		2993	47	365			
1999	3001	D60	281	13	93	377.22	46.26	330.96
1999	3002	D70	765	24	80	135.95	31.37	104.58
1999	4006	D70	697	4	57	87.52	5.74	81.78
1999	4011	D70	586	5	39	75.09	8.53	66.55
1999	4017	D70	664	11	66	115.96	16.57	99.40
1999	total		2993	57	335			
2000	3001	D60	281	15	101	412.81	53.38	359.43
2000	3002	D70	765	6	53	77.12	7.84	69.28
2000	4006	D70	697	3	42	64.56	4.30	60.26
2000	4011	D70	586	5	39	75.09	8.53	66.55
2000	4017	D70	664	6	51	85.84	9.04	76.81
2000	total		2993	35	286			
2001	3001	D60	281	18	64	291.81	64.06	227.76
2001	3002	D70	765	15	53	88.89	19.61	69.28
2001	4006	D70	697	4	60	91.82	5.74	86.08
2001	4011	D70	586	3	50	90.44	5.12	85.32
2001	4017	D70	664	17	49	99.40	25.60	73.80
2001	total		2993	57	276			

*RD = Police Reporting District

Appendix D. Ridership for Bus Routes Traveling Through Six Points Station

Weekday Route Analysis

Route	Name	1996 255 days	1997 254 days	1998 255 days	1999 256 days	2000 254 days	2001 255 days	2002 256 days
05	Alameda	264,925	263,428	258,915	239,466	232,358	225,081	217,091
15/19	Ayers/Christi-Norton	579,998	600,012	590,663	606,439	552,555	523,370	486,319
16/17	Agnes/Ruth-Carroll/Southside	508,257	521,672	524,682	528,277	525,398	538,859	512,951
23/29	Molina-Staples/Flour Bluff	1,051,128	1,146,584	1,240,401	1,252,265	1,214,421	1,163,214	1,112,459
TOTAL								
WEEKDAY		2,404,308	2,531,696	2,614,661	2,626,447	2,524,732	2,450,524	2,328,820

Saturday Route Analysis

Route	Name	1996 53 days	1997 53 days	1998 52 days	1999 52 days	2000 53 days	2001 52 days	2002 50 days
05	Alameda	15,646	17,106	15,522	16,119	15,283	16,015	16,357
15/19	Ayers/Christi-Norton	82,789	83,813	81,791	81,210	73,572	72,609	66,993
17	Carroll/Southside	37,172	36,867	39,958	38,154	37,072	38,897	36,353
29	Staples/Flour Bluff	120,325	133,369	135,874	129,909	145,641	118,901	100,425
TOTAL								
SATURDAYS		255,932	271,155	273,145	265,392	271,568	246,422	220,128

Sunday Route Analysis

Route	Name	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
		55 Days	55 Days	55 Days	54 Days	56 Days	53 Days	56 Days
02S/29S	Hillcrest-Staples	33,246	33,127	36,871	29,531	35,652	35,842	24,257
05S	Alameda/Malls	10,694	12,554	12,256	10,542	11,376	13,933	10,710
15S	Ayers/Molina	13,343	13,106	14,016	12,353	13,326	12,336	13,027
TOTAL		57,283	58,787	63,143	52,426	60,354	62,111	47,994
SUNDAYS								