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**RENEW
 TEXARKANA**
 comprehensive plan for tomorrow

A COMPREHENSIVE CITY



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COMPONENTS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The components of the Comprehensive Plan were developed based off of the needs of the city. The primary components identified for Texarkana are land use, transportation, parks & trails, & urban design. In depth analysis of segments of the city such as Neighborhoods/Downtown will be articulated in subsequent chapters.




Figure 4.1 | Texarkana Comprehensive Plan Components





At the core of a comprehensive plan is a well-thought out and articulated future land use framework that serves as a vision representing how citizens and stakeholders want their city to look in the future. This section describes the relationships between the existing land uses in Texarkana as well as the process the project team underwent to identify alternative land use scenarios that emphasize different visions for the city and to agree upon the eventual preferred scenario.


GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS


GOALS & VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF TEXARKANA LAND USE:


- 


CC1 - Promote redevelopment & revitalization of Downtown for the successful enjoyment of all in Texarkana.
- 


CC4 – Repurpose and preserve our older high-quality commercial buildings for new uses.
- 


ED1 – Promote, support and grow all higher educational systems (college, community college, vo-tech, etc.) which will advance the employee upward into higher quality employment resulting in better pay and additional economic development.
- 

ED2 – Promote growth in logistics, technology and distribution types of businesses which take advantage of Texarkana’s transportation network.
- 

ED5 – Grow our tourism, convention and family celebration job clusters as Texarkana has the history, unique bi-state location, outdoor sporting and affordability elements to offer.
- 

E2 – Promote a network of open space encompassing private and public developments within Texarkana.
- 

CG5 – Apply strategies to reduce the cost of city services by promoting a compact growth pattern.
- 

DA2 – Design our typical suburban developments for equally safe movement of pedestrians, bicycles and automobiles.
- 

RN5 – Use higher density residential types as a land use transition between single family and commercial developments.



EXISTING LAND USE

Today, Texarkana is 88% developed within the existing city limits. The highest percentage of developed land is low-density residential, which is characterized by smaller, older homes near downtown and newer homes on larger lots toward the edges of town. Within downtown there are very few residential uses as it is currently more of a commercial district. The existing zoning ordinance has nine residential zoning districts that vary in primary use and allowable density including three single-family districts, a planned unit residential district, duplexes, townhouses, and multi-family districts.

Retail uses make up just under 20% in Texarkana, the majority of which are located along the city’s major corridors including IH 30, IH 369, New Boston Road, and S. Lake Drive. Retail uses in Texarkana range from big box stores like Wal-Mart to smaller, locally-owned businesses like those found along State Line Avenue. The zoning ordinance has six districts related to commercial uses, including office, neighborhood services, general retail, limited commercial, commercial, and central business district.

Educational and institutional uses make up just under 10%, largely due to the Texas A&M campus in the northern part of the city. Other institutional uses include schools, churches, school administration buildings, and civic buildings, which are scattered throughout the city. There are also industrial uses, making up about 5% and mostly found along US 67 in the southern part of the city. Finally, parkland makes up just 2% of land in the city limits.

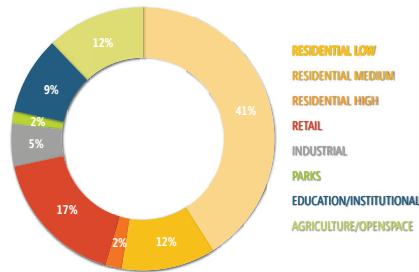


Figure 4.2 | Existing Land Use Categories Source: 2001 Comp Plan

In addition to the 29.5 square miles of incorporated Texarkana, there is an additional 53.84 square miles that is located within the city’s Extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ). If these areas were to be annexed, the city would have to provide municipal services and the land would be subject to zoning regulations.

Furthermore, there are other regulatory mechanisms that the city currently uses to regulate how land is developed. First, there are two overlay districts that impose additional regulatory standards in order to maintain certain design aesthetics. The Highland Park-Bingham Park Overlay District is roughly bordered by 23rd St. to the south, Olive St. to the west, 29th St. to the north, and Walnut St. to the east. This overlay is meant to preserve the historical integrity of this residential neighborhood by specifying additional development and design standards that are stricter than the standard zoning code. The other existing overlay district is the University Planned Development District which is centered around the Texas A&M campus. The purpose of this overlay district is to support the university’s unique character and significance within the city.

Additionally, there are two Tax Increment Refinancing Zones (TIRZ) within the city which were created in 2009 to attract new investment to specific areas. Taxes that are collected in a TIRZ area are set-aside to finance public improvements within that zone. One TIRZ district is located in downtown and along Texas Boulevard and W 7th Street. The second TIRZ district is located in the northwest part of the city. The city reports on the progress of these two TIRZ districts annually.

As identified during the stakeholder meetings and confirmed by citizens during the public input opportunities, the key land use issues and opportunities the city faces include:

ISSUES:

- No strong delineation of downtown limits
- Some incompatible uses (e.g. industrial next to residential)
- Preservation of historic neighborhoods
- Many older, dilapidated buildings
- Vacant/underutilized parcels
- Sprawled, uncontrolled growth

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Large area within ETJ for future expansion
- Opportunity for more economic development along major corridors and downtown
- Mixed-use development where appropriate

SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT: CITY-WIDE FRAMEWORK

An important part of the planning process is to develop alternative scenarios for stakeholders to review and comment. After the existing conditions had been established, the project team developed three city-wide growth scenarios that emphasize linkages, education, and economic development. These scenarios were then presented to stakeholders at the second public workshop.



FAMILY AND ENVIRONMENTAL LINKAGES SCENARIO

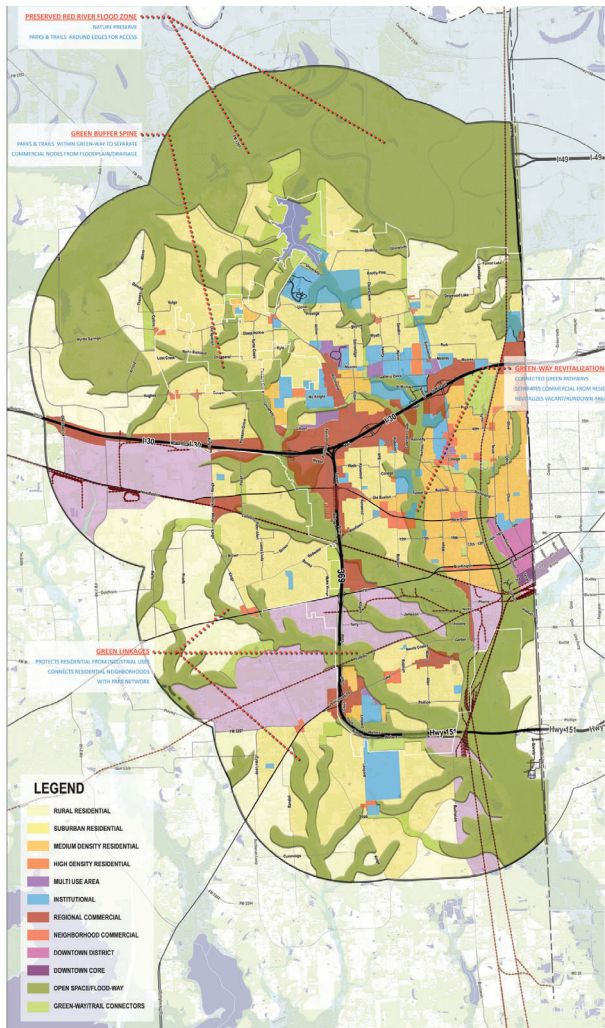


Figure 4.3 | Family and Environmental Linkages Scenario



Preserving natural resources and additional active transportation opportunities were mentioned throughout the visioning process. At the November 2016 public workshop, approximately 75% of questionnaire respondents thought that the city should have a more environmentally friendly development pattern in the future. In the Family/Linkages Scenario, the focus is to provide linkages throughout the city to connect natural areas with neighborhoods, schools, parks, and major employment centers. In order to accomplish these linkages, the scenario emphasizes preservation of natural areas within Texarkana such as the area around Bringle Lake and around the existing creeks and floodplain areas. Healthy living concepts are also promoted; the scenario presents smaller-sized regional centers that encourage travel options other than driving. Figure 4.3 depicts the Family and environmental Linkages city-wide scenario.

The Preserved Red River Flood Zone shown primarily in the northern ETJ could be conserved as a nature preserve with parks and trails around the edges for access. Additional parks and trails could be developed within the Green Buffer Spine to provide more separation between commercial areas and drainage ways in order to protect the city's water resources. In central Texarkana, Greenway Revitalization strategies could be applied to floodplains in run-down or vacant areas to help revitalize those communities by providing connections to more opportunities. Finally, in southwestern Texarkana where many industrial uses exist, Green Linkages could be used to provide a natural buffer between residential areas and industrial uses.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCENARIO

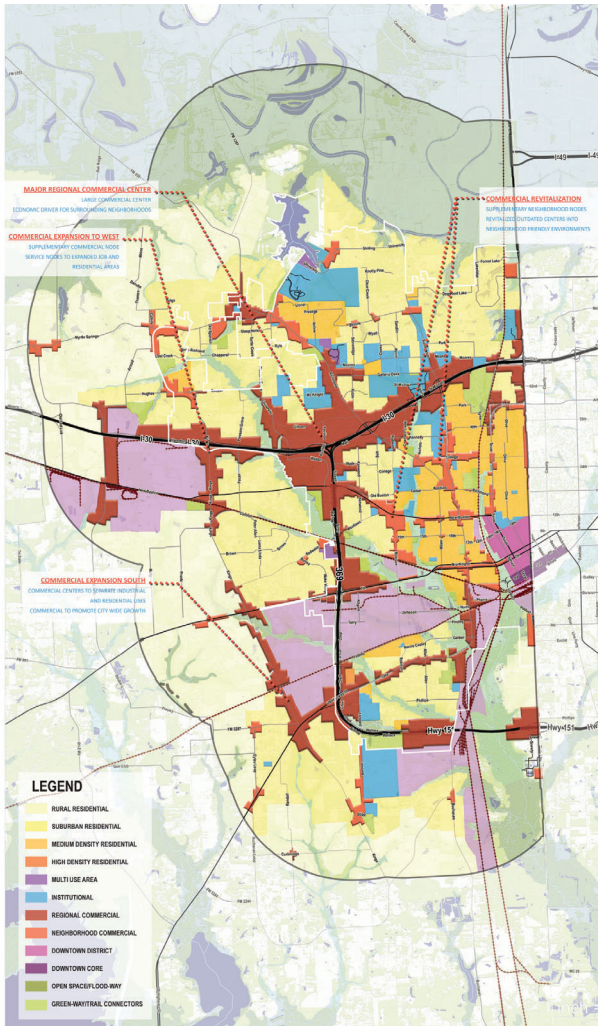


Figure 4.4 | Economic Development Scenario

Like any other community, stakeholders in Texarkana expressed that they wanted to see improved economic development in the community. At the November 2016 public workshop, approximately 70% of questionnaire respondents thought that economic development growth is of primary importance to the city. The Economic Development scenario would increase growth through new retail development and light industry that follows existing commercial corridors and takes advantage of existing transportation corridors. If the scenario is realized, both commercial revitalization and new commercial development would boost the local and regional economy. Figure 4.4 depicts the Economic Development city-wide scenario.

Proposed economic development nodes include:

Major Regional Commercial Center: a large commercial center at the IH 30/IH 369 interchange could serve as a driver for economic development in surrounding areas like the Beverly neighborhood.

Commercial Expansion - West: expansion of commercial centers to the western part of Texarkana would serve the existing residential neighborhoods in the area and serve as a gateway to the community.

Commercial Revitalization: outdated commercial centers along New Boston Road near Texarkana College could be revitalized into more neighborhood-friendly environments.

Commercial Expansion- South: another opportunity area for economic growth is along Kings Highway in the ETJ southwest of the city; commercial centers could help promote city-wide growth.



EDUCATIONAL CAREER SCENARIO

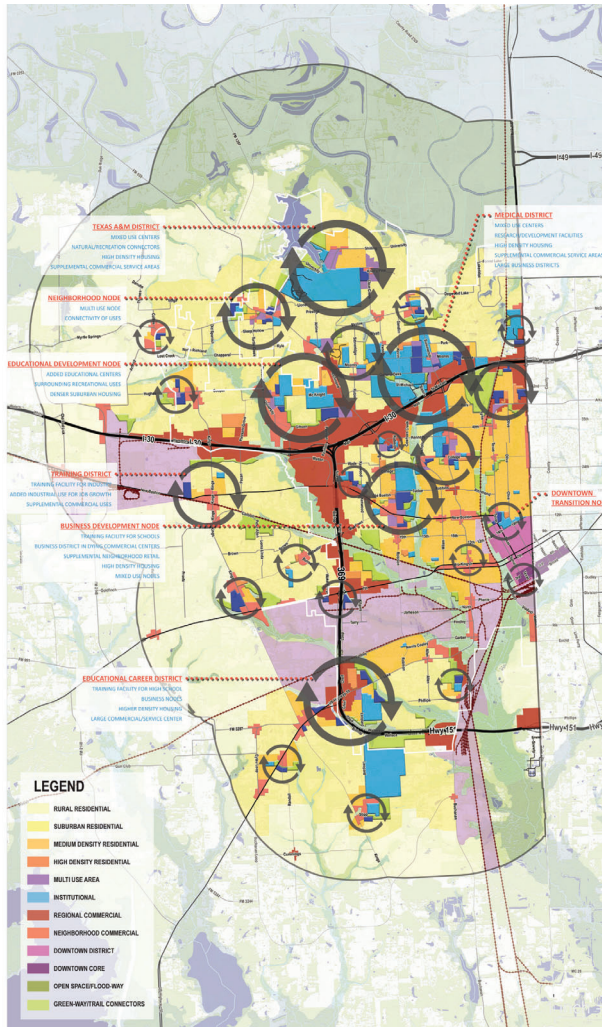


Figure 4.5 | Educational Career Scenario



Better job training and better retention of an educated workforce were commonly heard desires from stakeholders during the visioning process. At the November 2016 public workshop, approximately 90% of questionnaire respondents thought that the city should increase educational and employment opportunities for all. The main focus of the Educational Career Nodes Scenario is to include centers throughout the city that provide opportunities for increased education and business activities. Through improving existing and creating new education, business, and healthcare nodes, Texarkana can provide more job training and job opportunities and subsequently retain a more educated workforce. Synergies between the existing education and healthcare institutions and the Texarkana workforce would be capitalized in this scenario. Figure 4.5 depicts the Educational Career Nodes city-wide scenario.

Proposed educational career nodes include:

TEXAS A&M DISTRICT: incorporate mixed-use centers with high-density housing, commercial service areas, and natural connectors to make the campus area more appealing to students, employees, and visitors.

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT NODE: in the area just north of the IH 30/IH 369 interchange, additional education centers could serve surrounding residents more efficiently.

MEDICAL DISTRICT: to enhance the existing medical center in Texarkana, mixed-use development, supplemental commercial services, and research/development facilities could be added to attract more healthcare professionals and patients.

TRAINING DISTRICT: near the existing industrial center off of IH 30 west of IH 369, a training facility for targeted industries could be constructed to support current and potential workers and improve synergy.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT NODE: just southeast of the IH 30/IH 369 interchange, an older commercial center could be revitalized with a Texarkana ISD training facility and supplemental neighborhood retail.

EDUCATION CAREER DISTRICT: in southwestern Texarkana where IH 369 transitions into U.S. Highway 151, a training facility could be built for the high school as well as a large commercial/service center.

NEIGHBORHOOD NODE: located throughout the city, these nodes focus on connectivity of housing, neighborhood services, and educational uses.

DOWNTOWN TRANSITION NODE: serves as a transitional area to signify entrance into downtown core while maintaining the integrity of the nearby uses.



PREFERRED SCENARIO IDEALS

From the public and stakeholder meetings the pros and cons of each scenario was identified. This feedback helped narrow down the ideals of the community to drive the future of the future land use plan. The education and career node scenario had the most interest and became the preferred scenario. The pros/cons heard from each scenario at the second public meeting then helped define the plan into a final version.


At the November 2016 public workshop, meeting attendees were given the opportunity to place dots on each of the three alternative scenarios based on their preference. The general consensus was that attendees liked elements from all three scenarios, so the preferred scenario reflects these elements. Figure 4.6 depicts the preferred scenario which also serves as the future land use map.





FUTURE LAND USE


The primary component of the final land use plan focused on the development of district nodes where multiple land uses converge along intersections to create walkable, resilient nodes. The Business Education scenario brought about a new land use category to help enhance existing education/institutional uses and bring jobs and employment to the forefront of each node. This land use category differs from the typical office/institution category by focusing on research institutions, technology, trade schools, co-working spaces, and work-training facilities. It would not allow uses such as: cemeteries, fire stations, public works facilities, etc.


The different land use categories included in the future land use map are described below:


- 


REGIONAL COMMERCIAL: Regional serving retail and office land uses many times located adjacent to a regional highway or major arterial. Land along IH 30 and IH 369 are categorized as regional commercial.
- 

NEIGHBORHOOD RETAIL: Neighborhood serving retail and office land uses frequently located adjacent to neighborhood scaled roadways. Examples include hair salons, dry cleaners, and pharmacies.
- 

BUSINESS/EDUCATION CENTERS: Employment based land uses that may include office, professional, research and development (R&D), computer, educational support and business incubator development types. Typically near institutional uses and infilled in nodes to create a variety of opportunities.
- 

OFFICE/INSTITUTIONAL: Educational, municipal, medical, professional, and directly adjoining land uses. These uses are scattered throughout the city to serve all residents.
- 

PARKS: Public park facilities found throughout the city.
- 

FLOODPLAIN/OPEN SPACE: Land that is included in the city/FEMA's 100-year floodplain and general open space land near floodplains. Floodplain should remain clear of development but may contain recreation uses, trails, or open space for wildlife.
- 

MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT: A variety of dense land uses located around activity nodes and business/institutional centers to provide for more walkable, social, and aesthetically-pleasing environments.

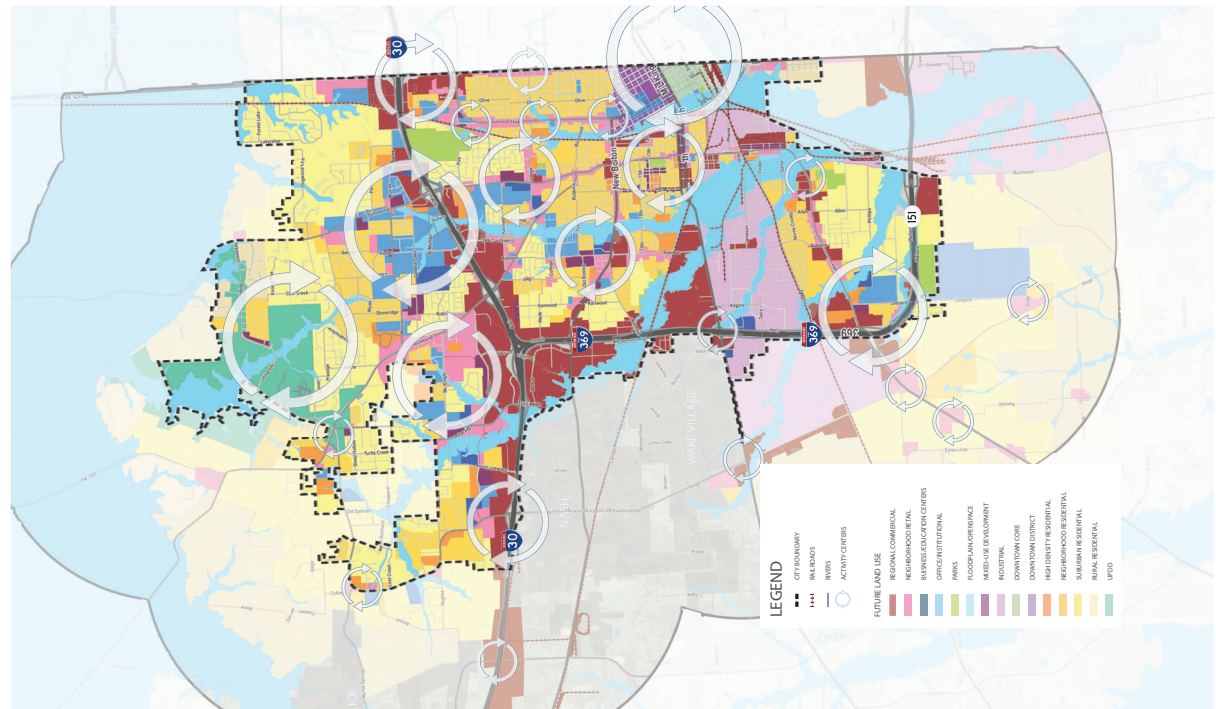


Figure 4.6 / FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Note: A comprehensive plan shall not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries.



INDUSTRIAL: Manufacturing based land uses that for this category includes light industrial, research and development (R&D), warehouse, flex warehouse and heavy industry. The Future Land Use Plan clusters industrial uses south of Findley Street where the majority of existing industrial uses are located.



DOWNTOWN CORE: Mix of retail, office, mixed-use and residential land uses, developed in an urban manner located in the downtown core as defined in the RENEW Texarkana Comprehensive Plan. More description is included in Chapter 5.



DOWNTOWN DISTRICT: Extension of urban style development as defined in the RENEW Texarkana Comprehensive Plan to allow for a variety of activity and land use development to occur in support of downtown revitalization. Focus on mixed-use development types with the quality and historic character that is iconic to this region. More description is included in Chapter 5.



RESIDENTIAL - HIGH DENSITY: Residential attached developments and land uses that generally are at 12 dwelling units (du)/acre and above. Includes garden style apartments, townhomes, etc.



RESIDENTIAL - IN TOWN NEIGHBORHOOD: Residential detached and attached developments and land uses that generally range between 7 du's to 12 du's/acre.



RESIDENTIAL - SUBURBAN: Residential detached developments that typically follow a pattern of curvilinear streets and generally range between 0.5 du to 7 du's/acre.



RESIDENTIAL - RURAL: Residential detached developments and land uses that may include large lots and/or gentleman ranching and generally is 2-acres in size (minimum).



ACTIVITY CENTER: Nodal development where a variety of land uses (residential, employment, commercial, health care, education and civic) are connected to create a resilient stable economic driver for the region. Characteristics include a high-level of pedestrian mobility, multi-modal access, shared and/or reduced parking ratios, ample public space, high quality Wi-Fi access with a mixed-use and multi-use pattern of development. Major activity centers include downtown, the hospital district, Texas A&M, and the commercial/employment center north of the IH 30 and IH 369 interchange.





LAND USE ACTIONS

- 4.1.1 • Use the Future Land Use Plan in this document as a guide for development decisions and future planning efforts. The plan should be used in coordination with existing regulatory tools to guide decisions regarding proposed new development and redevelopment. The plan should also be considered when developing other plans, such as small area plans, development master plans, parks master plans, etc.
- 4.1.2 • Develop policies and incentives that encourage development of activity centers.
- 4.1.3 • Update the city's zoning ordinance to incorporate the intent of each future land use designation.
- 4.1.4 • Prioritize economic development along commercial corridors.
- 4.1.5 • Coordinate zoning changes and future land use plan updates with Texarkana, AR along the state line.
- 4.1.6 • Develop a State Line Avenue Overlay District to assist in this process.
- 4.1.8 • Ensure that buildings incorporate good design principles such as articulation of facades, accentuated entries, and visually interesting features at street corners and where a building turns.
- 4.1.9 • True landmark buildings should be encouraged which provide contrast and stand out from the background at prominent locations.
- 4.1.11 • Communicate regularly (annually) with the Texarkana, Texas City Council about the results of the RENEW Texarkana Comprehensive Plan implementation.
- 4.1.15 • The subdivision and development process should include consideration of the way in which residential and nonresidential lots are laid out— adjacency and accessibility to park and open space areas should be optimized in all types of development.
- 4.1.16 • Encourage the use of “full-life cycle” (all stages of life)—young singles, professional couples, families with children, empty-nesters, retirees and seniors, including those requiring living assistance. This should include high income homes of various types (large lot, small lot, townhome, loft and condominium) and more affordable housing types (small lot/small home, townhome, loft, condominium, mother-in-law suite, carriage house and others).

This is a summary of the short term land use actions that could be started first. A full set of Land use actions are defined in the Implementation section.




TRANSPORTATION






The transportation system in a community has a profound impact on the quality of life, economic development, and potential for growth. A well-planned and functioning multi-modal transportation system helps ensure that residents and visitors can safely travel to, from, and within the city. This section assesses the existing transportation system in Texarkana and makes recommendations for future policies and actions that will result in a safer, more accessible, and better-connected transportation system.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS


GOALS & VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF TEXARKANA TRANSPORTATION:


 CC3 – Promote the redesign of State Line Avenue to spur quality redevelopment bringing this important corridor back as a tourism element and generator for economic development.

 CC6 – Support the I-30 commercial corridor having new high-quality standard for signage and billboard regulations. (ie: Defining no new pole signs and advertising billboards.)


  M1 – Move people across and through Texarkana with a variety of modal types on a comprehensive transportation network (automobiles, buses, bicycles, pedestrians, etc.)



  M2 – Maximize all opportunities to enhance Texarkana’s locational advantage in their transportation network (grow airport, railroad and trucking distribution systems).

 M3 – Create quality bus stops and pedestrian rest stations along primary walking/biking corridors which includes: benches, trash receptacles, and wayfinding signage.




  M4 – Create a transportation network where residents can walk, bicycle and use other forms of non-motorized transportation for exercise, recreation, and to get to daily destinations.

  M5 – Promote a Transportation Plan that keeps heavy truck traffic on the perimeter of the community and does not promote heavy cross-town truck movements.

 M6 – Create a transportation network that establishes a network of multi-modal street types each having a different cross section and functional need.

  ED2 – Promote growth in logistics, technology and distribution types of businesses which take advantage of Texarkana’s transportation network.

  DA2 – Design our typical suburban developments for equally safe movement of pedestrians, bicycles and automobiles.

   DA3 – State Line Avenue should be redesigned as a local treasure, by helping to define bi-state history, connecting Texarkana USA together, promoting new redevelopment and growing our local tourism industry.

  DA4 – Design all new streets and look to retrofit existing streets that have a walking population with pedestrian sidewalks at a minimum of 5’ wide.

EXISTING TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

According to the 2015 American Community Survey, 94% of commuters drove to work, 1% took transit, 1% walked, and 1% worked from home. While Texarkana is predominantly auto-oriented like other Texas cities, there are other options available within the region. The following section describes the different types of transportation facilities found in Texarkana.

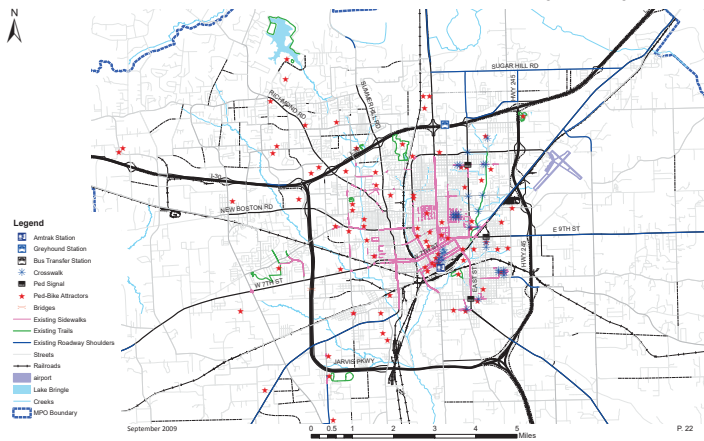


Figure 4.7 | Texarkana MPO Existing Conditions



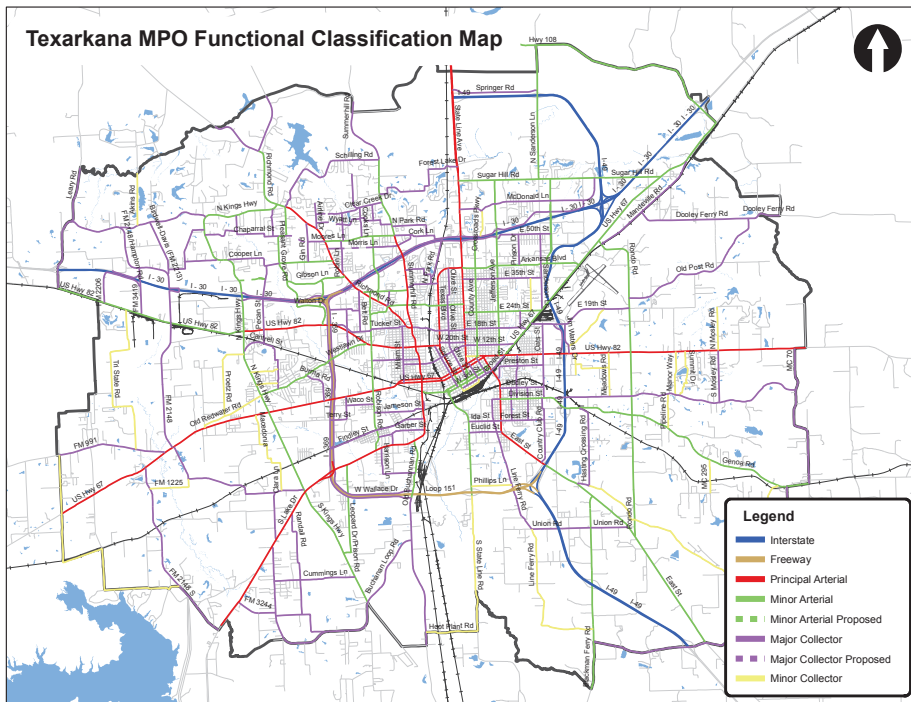


Figure 4.8 | Texarkana MPO Transportation Plan

ROAD TRANSPORTATION:

As defined by the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA) Functional Roadway Classification System, there are a variety of roadway types found in Texarkana. The following is a brief description and examples of each.

Interstate Highways: are officially designated as part of the Interstate Highway System and offer the most mobility and least accessibility. There are two interstates that connect the city of Texarkana:

- IH 30: this major interstate connects Texarkana to Dallas to southwest and Little Rock to the northeast. The six-lane interstate runs through the northern part of the city and has just one major interchange within the city limits with IH 369. Visitors coming from the west must exit IH 30 at State Line Avenue and travel a couple miles before reaching downtown.
- IH 369: this interstate is approximately 3.8 miles long and serves as a connection between IH 30 in the north and US Highway 151 to the south. The interstate is two lanes in each direction and provides access to Wake Village to the west of Texarkana.

Other Highways: non-interstate highways with separated travel lanes and limited access.

- US 151: this US Highway forms the southern border of Texarkana and connects IH 369 in the west to IH 49 in the east in Arkansas. The highway is four lanes wide and does not have continuous frontage roads.

Principal Arterials: provide significant through traffic and speeds that are medium to high. On-street parking is typically not provided and common land uses along these roadways are commercial uses due to the visibility. Examples of principal arterials in Texarkana include:

- SH 93/Summerhill Rd: this major arterial runs through highly urbanized parts of Texarkana going from the southwestern edge up towards Bringle Lake in the north. The majority of the road is five lanes with a center turn lane.
- SH 67: this arterial serves as a major east-west connector through the center of the city. East of the railroad tracks the state highway splits into W. 7th Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, which both run through downtown Texarkana. The majority of this road is five lanes with a center turn lane.
- SH 82/New Boston Rd: this major arterial also serves traffic going east-west towards downtown and ends at Texas Boulevard. The majority of this road is five lanes with a center turn lane.
- SH 71/State Line Ave: this iconic road serves as the boundary between Texas and Arkansas. As mentioned previously, it serves as the primary roadway for drivers travelling from IH 30 to get to downtown Texarkana. The roadway is five lanes with a center turn lane and parts of the roadway have sidewalks.
- Spur 559/Richmond Rd: this major arterial connects the newer parts of Texarkana north of IH 30 to the center of town. The majority of the road is five lanes with a center turn lane.
- US 14/Texas Blvd: this roadway is known as Texas Boulevard and Arkansas Boulevard in their respective states. It serves as a major roadway in downtown and is five lanes with a center turn lane.

Minor Arterials: provide connections between adjacent cities and within a city. Occasionally parking may be located on-street. Minor arterials receive traffic from local collectors and local streets. Examples of minor arterials in Texarkana include old Buchanan Rd and Kennedy Ln.

Local Collectors: provide localized connectivity to connect residential uses with other development. Driveway access on local collectors is common. Examples of local collectors in Texarkana include streets that connect residential areas to larger streets such as Serenity Ln and Dogwood Lake Dr.

Local Streets: provide direct driveway access to adjacent properties and allow roadside parking. Examples of local streets in Texarkana include residential streets such as Oakridge Cir and Belair Dr.

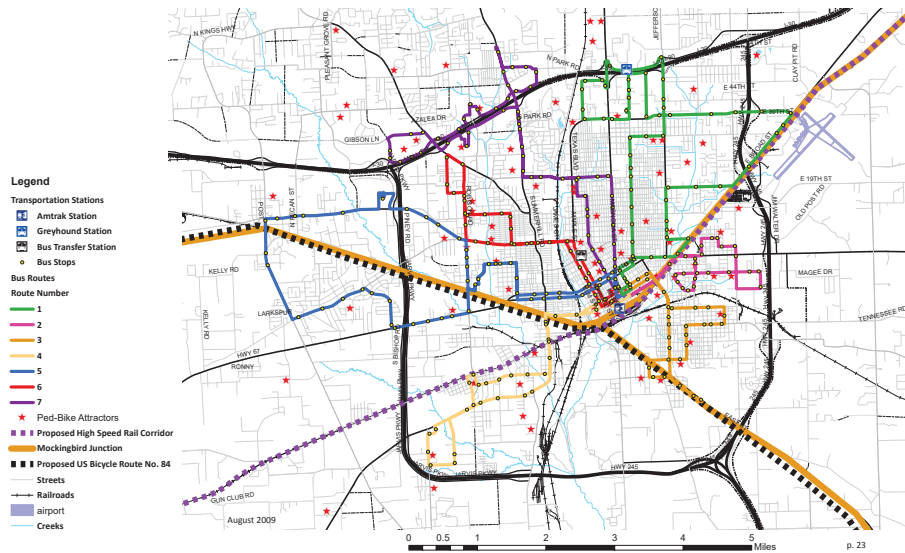


Figure 4.9 | Texarkana MPO Multi-modal Map

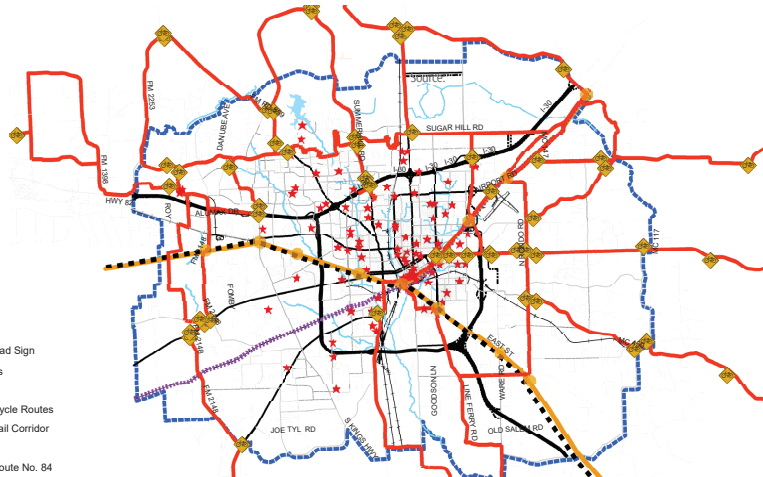


Figure 4.10 | Texarkana MPO Long Distance Bike Routes

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION:

The Texarkana metropolitan area is served by the Texarkana Urban Transit District, also known as the T-line. As of 2017, there are nine fixed bus routes serving Texarkana, Nash, Wake Village, and Texarkana, AR Monday through Saturday. Paratransit services are also offered by the transit company.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION:

Passenger rail service in Texarkana is served by the Texas Eagle route via Amtrak service. This route connects Los Angeles to Chicago. Texarkana Union Station is located on Front Street and straddles the state border. The once iconic rail station is now in need of preservation repairs. In addition to passenger rail, there are several freight lines that pass through the city.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION:

Active transportation includes walking and cycling and is made possible by having a well-connected network of sidewalks, trails, and bikeways. In Texarkana, there are many miles of existing trails, primarily within parks and around Bringle Lake. Sidewalks are included in some areas of town, but not throughout the entire city. Trails are more fully discussed in the Parks and Trails section of this document.

AIR TRANSPORTATION:

There is one regional airport serving the Texarkana region on the Arkansas side. The Texarkana Regional Airport has flights to cities in Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma. From the ground, the airport is accessible via US 67 from the south or IH 30 from the north.

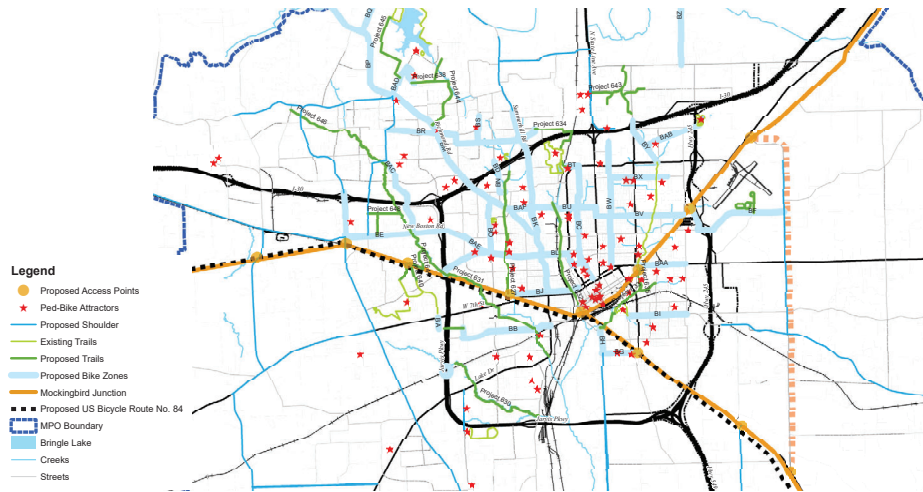


Figure 4.11 | Texarkana MPO Proposed Bike Plan

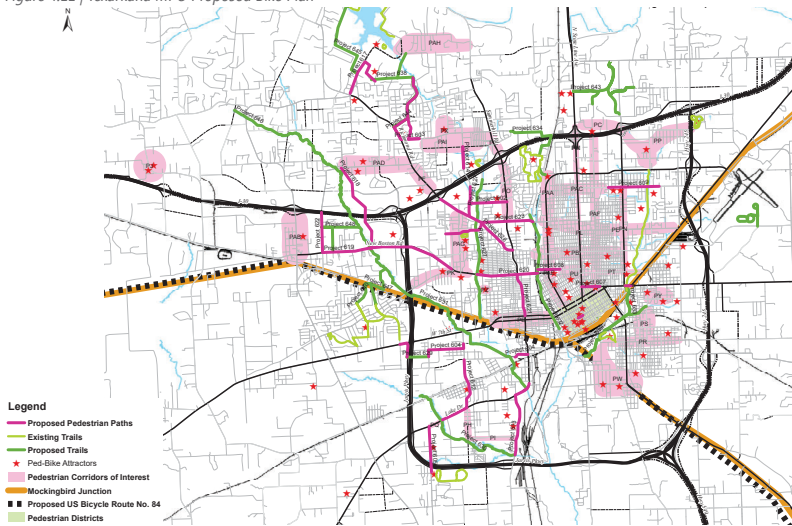


Figure 4.12 | Texarkana MPO Proposed Pedestrian Plan

EXISTING PLANS:

2015-2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan: In 2014, the Texarkana Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) adopted a long-range transportation plan for the Texarkana region to guide transportation investments through the year 2040. Recommendations for multi-modal improvements were made for the entire Texarkana Region and emphasis is placed on regional development projects such as the State Line Corridor restoration, Texarkana Main Street Program, and redevelopment of the TexAmericas Center.

2009 Texarkana Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan: The MPO has also conducted a region-wide bicycle and pedestrian plan to assess opportunities and constraints to make the city more accessible to non-drivers. Some of the major recommendations as a result of this process include establishing an advisory panel, including bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure when rebuilding roads, building sidewalks in new subdivisions, collecting crash information data, and educating the public on how bicycles and cars can share the road.

As identified during the public engagement process, the key transportation issues and opportunities the city faces include:

ISSUES:

- Lack of sidewalks, designated trails, and bike-friendly roadways
- Poor impression of community along parts of major roadways
- Traffic congestion (especially along Richmond Road)
- Limited connectivity between transportation modes
- Dead end bike/pedestrian pathway
- Limited pedestrian infrastructure

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Redevelopment of State Line Avenue into a strategic gateway into downtown
- Creation of better connected sidewalks, trails, and bikeways
- Coordination with transportation partners to assess a light rail connection in Texarkana
- Interconnect to regional bike trails

TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the future land use map, transportation is a major component to an overall comprehensive plan. The proposed elements of the future transportation system in Texarkana would make the system safer, more accessible, and create connections for all modes. The major elements of the proposed transportation system are described below:

Transportation Nodes: multi-modal hubs that occur when 3 or more major transportation modes meet near activity centers. Transportation types include major arterials, healthy corridors, trails, bus routes, and bike lanes. They promote easy access and visibility and can act as catalysts for economic development. Nodes are recommended in Texarkana in downtown, along IH 30 and IH 369, and along other major roadway corridors.

Healthy Corridors: healthy streets will include at least one of the following: wide walkway for pedestrian access; safe bicycle mobility; water management strategies (rain gardens); street trees; street buffers; and, signage controls, and more. Detailed study is needed for each corridor to determine what design interventions are most appropriate. These corridors should promote active transportation alternatives, accessibility to destinations and recreation, and help create a healthy environment to the corridors they serve.

Existing Trail: existing off-street trails throughout the city, primarily found near or within parks.

MPO/MTP Proposed trails: off-street trails that were identified by the Metropolitan Planning Organization/ Metropolitan Transportation Plan or City in various planning documents.

MPO/MTP/City Proposed Bikeways: on-street bicycle infrastructure that was identified by the MPO or City in various planning documents. These include trails/bikeways that connect up to Bringle Lake, the university, Texarkana College, downtown, and along creek corridors.

Proposed Trails: additional trails identified by the project team to provide active transportation connectivity throughout the city. These are additional connections that could be made to connect parks, schools, commercial areas, and downtown beyond the routes identified by the MPO or the City.

Proposed US Bike Route #84: the American Cycling Association and American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) have identified national biking routes for future implementation and one route passes through the center of Texarkana following the railroad.

Bus Routes: existing bus routes as provided by the Texarkana Urban Transit District (T-Line).

Proposed Light Rail Corridor: existing regional plans show a potential light-rail corridor along an existing rail corridor in the southern portion of the city leading to downtown.

Since these improvements cannot happen all at once, it is important to prioritize. Early implementable actions could include updating the bicycle/pedestrian master plan, making updates to thoroughfare standards to reflect the proposed standards.

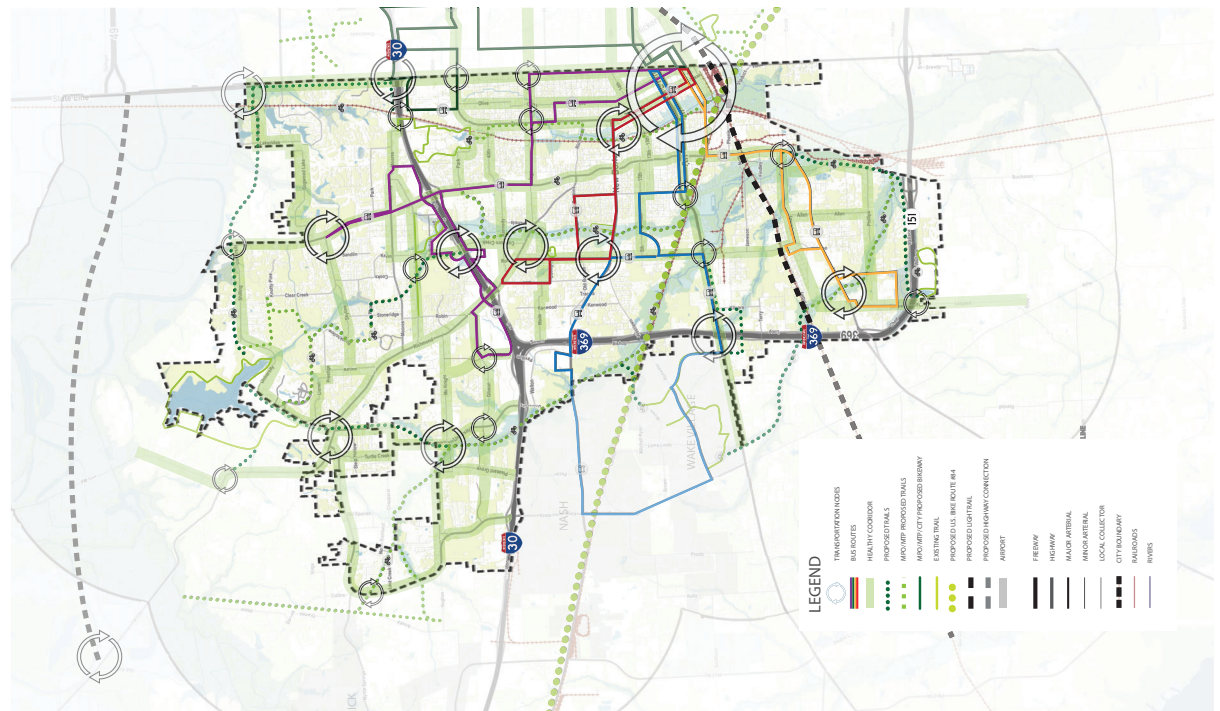


Figure 4.13 | TRANSPORTATION PLAN



TRANSPORTATION ACTIONS

- 4.2.1 • Continue to actively participate in regional transportation planning activities to advance funding and other improvements in Texarkana. Continued involvement in the Texarkana MPO's committees and planning processes is critical to ensure that the city's transportation needs are incorporated into regional priorities.
- 4.2.2 • Proactively pursue mutually beneficial transportation projects with neighboring municipalities and area partners. Traffic problems typically do not end at city limits and often cross into multiple jurisdictions. Local transportation issues therefore may be best and most cost-effectively addressed through coordination and partnerships. Opportunities for partnership on shared transportation projects could include road maintenance, traffic counts, corridor improvements, coordinated traffic signals, wayfinding signage, sidewalk and trail network connections, and new transit services.
- 4.2.4 • Design and implement roadway treatments to support place making and economic development, particularly on State Line Avenue. Streets are the prime place for place-making and economic development. Specific design guidelines for the different roadway function classes should be created to complement the adjacent land uses. State Line Avenue in particular is prime for redevelopment and needs better designed roadway treatments.
- 4.2.5 • Complete a detailed inventory of existing sidewalks in the City. Compile and map a detailed inventory of all existing sidewalk and crosswalk segments in the City. The inventory should include the type of construction materials used, width, presence of a buffer between back of curb and sidewalk, presence of impediments to travel (e.g., utility poles, landscaping, etc.), compliance with American with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations, and a condition assessment. This information should be mapped in Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping software and should be used to develop a prioritized improvement program.
- 4.2.11 • Conduct a city-wide multi-modal thoroughfare plan. This plan should more fully assess existing conditions, define typical sections, categorize all roadways, and catalogue planned improvements. Coordination with Texarkana, AR should occur while developing this plan.

This is a summary of the short term land use actions that could be started first. A full set of Transportation actions are defined in the Implementation section.




PARKS & TRAILS





Parks and trails are important elements that help to create a comprehensive city with high quality of life; they provide scenic relief as well as opportunities for exercise and respite. A well-maintained parks and recreation system can help attract and also retain residents and businesses and is often times a major determinant when choosing where to live. This section provides a brief assessment of the existing parks system in Texarkana and identifies recommendations to further enhance the system.


GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS


GOALS & VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF TEXARKANA PARKS & TRAILS


 CC2 – Preserve existing East Texas pine trees and plant more in proposed new development, so we do not lose the native pine character.


 M4 – Create a transportation network where residents can walk, bicycle and use other forms of non-motorized transportation for exercise, recreation and to get to daily destinations.

 ED4 – Leverage the abundance of Texarkana’s natural resources (water and wood pulp) toward creating new technologies and industry.


 E1 – Provide for the realistic preservation of Texarkana’s unique environmental resources.


 E2 – Promote a network of open space encompassing private and public developments within Texarkana.


 E3 – Connect Texarkana through a framework of parks, pedestrian trails and recreation facilities that respond to community needs and match population demographics.

 CH6 – Create safe walkable routes for children to access on foot their local elementary and middle schools (sidewalks & trails).

 DA1 – Use the native dense landscape of East Texas to create buffers between land uses that need separation.

 DA2 – Design our typical suburban developments for equally safe movement of pedestrians, bicycles and automobiles.

 DA4 – Design all new streets and look to retrofit existing streets that have a walking population with pedestrian sidewalks at a minimum of 5’ wide.

 D4 – Use green spaces (typically parks) as a catalyst for creating new Downtown development. Quality parks that are well designed and positioned become an amenity for many downtown land uses.

EXISTING PARKS AND TRAILS SYSTEM

PARKS

The existing parks system in Texarkana include 11 parks totaling approximately 500 acres. The Parks and Recreation department also manages the Collin Senior Center and Southwest Community Center. The types of parks found in Texarkana are described below:

Neighborhood Parks: typically 5-10 acres in size and serve a population within walking distance or short drive. An example of a neighborhood park in Texarkana is Beverly Park. Citywide there are six neighborhood parks totaling 36 acres.

Community Parks: typically at least 25 acres in size with more amenities that serve residents within 1-2 miles. Grady T. Wallace and Karrh parks are the two community parks in Texarkana totaling just over 100 acres.

Regional Parks: large, signature parks that draw visitors from across the city and beyond. Spring Lake Park is the only regional park in Texarkana totaling 145 acres.

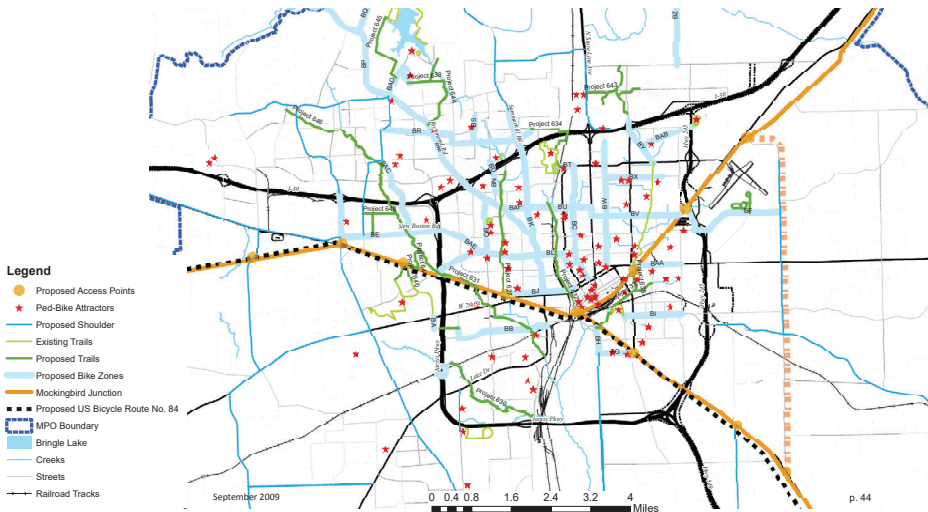
Special Purpose Parks: includes special purpose facilities that are not found at other parks in the system. The one special purpose park in Texarkana is the Kidtopia skate park in downtown totaling 3 acres.

Natural Areas: open space that is primarily used as passive parkland. Bringle Lake Wilderness Area totaling 144 acres is the one natural area within the city.

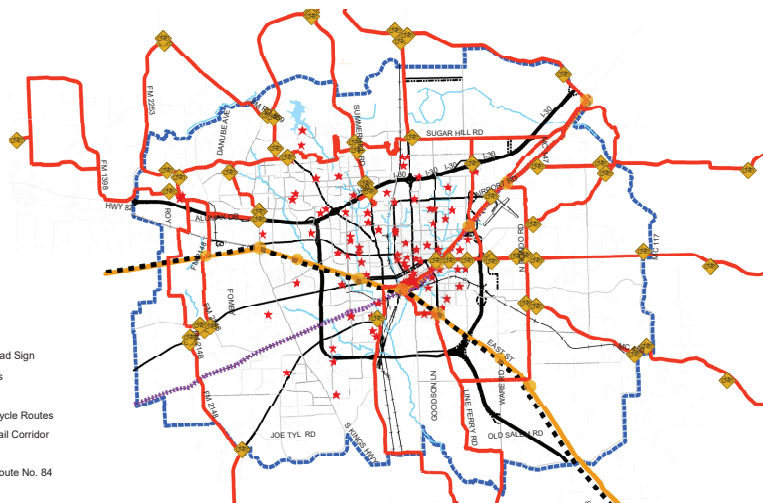
With the existing park acreage, the city has 13.41 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents. This is a relatively high percentage compared to other Texas cities. Figure 4.14 depicts the amenities that are included in the existing parks system. In addition to the amenities listed in Table 4.14, Spring Lake Park – the city’s signature regional park – features a disc golf course, dog park, and splash pad. These are amenities that are emerging trends in parks and recreation, so it’s evident that Texarkana is keeping up with trends.



Figure 4.14 | Inventory of Parks in Texarkana



Texarkana MPO Proposed Bike Plan (previously referenced as Figure 4.9).



Texarkana MPO Long Distance Bicycle Routes (previously referenced as Figure 4.10).

TRAILS

Existing trails in the city are located in the city at Bringle Lake Wilderness Area, Spring Lake Park, and Grady T. Wallace Park.

Spring Lake Park: the Phillip McDougal Walking/Biking Trail located is a 1.75 mile hard-surface trail that traverses the park.

Bringle Lake Wilderness Area: a 10-foot wide hard-surface trail approximately 2 miles long connects Bringle Lake East to the Waterworks Spillway. There is also a soft-surface mountain biking trail with beginner, intermediate, and advanced courses for varying skill levels.

Grady T. Wallace Park: a hard-surface walking/jogging trail runs around the 5 acre lake within the park.

Texarkana College: there is a short walking path on the campus of Texarkana College northwest of downtown.

RECREATION FACILITIES

City-run recreation centers are often part of a municipal park system, of which there are two in Texarkana.

Collins Senior Center: located adjacent to Ferguson Park, the 2,600 SF senior center is open to adults ages 55 and older. The facility is open Monday through Friday and offers activities such as armchair aerobics, art classes, bingo, socials, classes, knitting, and quilting.

Southwest Community Center: located adjacent to Southwest Park, the 20,000 SF building serves as a community center and offices for parks and recreation staff. The facility features a gymnasium, game room, children's library, meeting rooms, cardio room, and kitchen. Programs that are offered include sports lessons, basketball tournaments, health fairs, and summer programs. The facility is open Monday – Saturday.

PARKS & TRAILS RECOMMENDATIONS

City/MPO Proposed Trails: off-street trails that were identified by the MPO or City in various planning documents.

Proposed Trails: additional trails identified by the project team to provide active transportation connectivity throughout the city.

Primary Trail head gateways: locations where trails meet major intersections, healthy corridors, and development nodes. These gateways connect destinations and provide access to the trail networks and active transport corridors. There are over 30 gateways in the ultimate parks and trails build-out plan.

Proposed US Bike Route No. 84: the American Cycling Association and American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) have identified national biking routes and one route passes through the center of Texarkana.

Proposed park zones: areas from the future parks master plan map that cover neighborhoods that aren't currently being served by a neighborhood park. These locations are centered around trails and healthy corridor intersections to allow for recreational access and active visibility. There are six proposed park zones – five of which are north of IH 30 and one just north of downtown.

Proposed healthy corridors: Healthy streets will include at least one of the following: wide walkway for pedestrian access; safe bicycle mobility; water management strategies (rain gardens); street trees; street buffers; and, signage controls. Detailed study is needed for each corridor to determine what design interventions are most appropriate. These corridors should promote active transportation alternatives, accessibility to destinations and recreation, and help create a healthy environment to the corridors they serve.

PHASING

The parks and trails map is an ultimate build-out map, so there needs to be phasing that occurs over time since there is not enough funding to build everything at once.

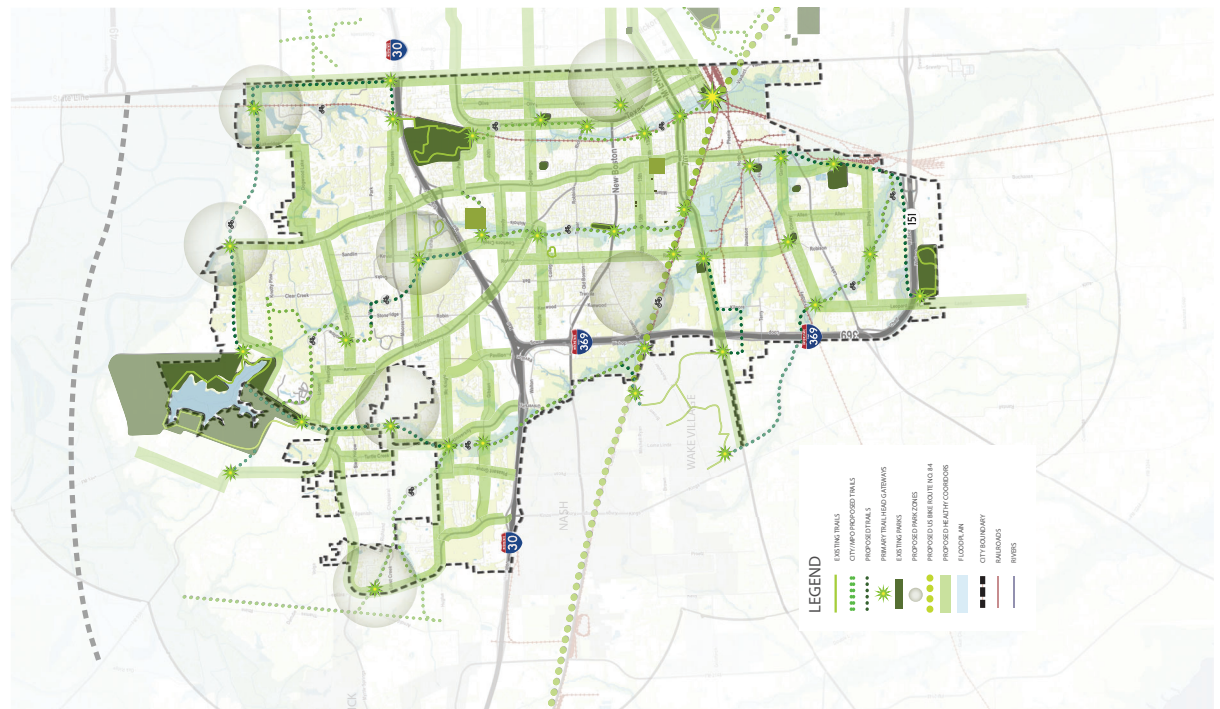


Figure 4.15 | PARKS AND TRAILS PLAN

PARKS & TRAILS ACTIONS

- 4.3.1 • Provide and maintain high-quality parks. Ensure that adequate funding and staffing is available to maintain a safe and attractive park system. This includes routine maintenance and repairs as well as implementing improved landscaping. Continue to make improvements to existing parks and recreation facilities as outlined in the Capital Improvement Plan.
- 4.3.4 • Conduct a recreational programming assessment as part of the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan. This plan should consider the recreational needs of Texarkana today and in the future as growth occurs and demographics shift.
- 4.3.5 • Periodically review the existing parkland dedication ordinance and other subdivision design ordinances. These ordinances are meant to ensure that adequate parkland and open space remains available even as Texarkana continues to grow.
- 4.3.7 • Pursue partnerships with public and private organizations to leverage park and recreation investments. Develop agreements for joint use of facilities and shared maintenance agreements with public and private organizations where possible and appropriate. Such organizations could include the Chamber of Commerce, universities, and major employers.
- 4.3.8 • Establish design standards for different park classifications. Standards for each park category would help ensure that the parks system is consistent and equitable throughout the city.
- 4.3.9 • Create trail connectivity within the city and to Texarkana, AR. As the trail network is developed, the City should work with surrounding communities, especially Texarkana, AR, to ensure that appropriate connections are made.
- 4.3.10 • Work with developers and property owners to develop hike and bike trails on greenways and other linear open spaces. Where possible and appropriate, the City should create open space corridors along major creeks and drainage ways to develop trails.
- 4.3.11 • Floodplain areas are generally not able to be developed and therefore should be key element of a city wide framework of protected open space.
- 4.3.12 • Maximize visibility of open space areas by locating parks in prominent locations that help to long term create value for neighborhood and community.

This is a summary of the short term land use actions that could be started first. A full set of Parks and Trails actions are defined in the Implementation section.













URBAN DESIGN



Urban design, or the design of a community, affects the overall experience residents and visitors have. Urban design can be focused at a variety of scales – from streets and public spaces to neighborhoods, districts, and even entire cities. Common elements associated with urban design include landscaping, site furniture, lighting, gateways, intersection treatments, and public art. This section presents recommendations for incorporating comprehensive urban design strategies within Texarkana.


GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS


GOALS & VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF TEXARKANA URBAN DESIGN


- 
 CC3 – Promote the redesign of State Line Avenue to spur quality redevelopment bringing this important corridor back as a tourism element and generator for economic development.
- 
 CC6 – Support the I-30 commercial corridor having new high-quality standard for signage and billboard regulations. (Defining no new pole signs and advertising billboards.
- 
 M3 – Create quality bus stops and pedestrian rest stations along primary walking/biking corridors which includes: benches, trash receptacles and wayfinding signage.
- 
 E4 – Promote using LED lighting for the exterior of new commercial developments and street corridors, replacements and in downtown as a cost effective and energy saving tool.
- 
 E5 – Provide a city-wide recycling program linked together with waste management for cardboard, glass, plastic, metal cans and other items that are cost effective.
- 
 CH5 – Integrate planning for local citizens through healthy community design into a comprehensive framework for Texarkana's future development (pedestrian trails, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, parks and good air-quality are included, etc.).
- 
 DA2 – Design our typical suburban developments for equally safe movement of pedestrians, bicycles and automobiles.
- 
 DA3 – State Line Avenue should be redesigned as a local treasure, by helping to define bi-state history, connecting Texarkana USA together, promoting new redevelopment and growing our local tourism industry.





GOALS & VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF TEXARKANA URBAN DESIGN


- 

DA4 – Design all new streets and look to retrofit existing streets that have a walking population with pedestrian sidewalks at a minimum of 5' wide.
- 

DA5 – Create opportunities to retrofit and/or revitalize areas in Texarkana with similar planning and design tools that have been used in the University Planned District (near Texas A&M Texarkana campus).
- 

D1 – Establish a quality pedestrian environment with streetscape amenities such as; benches, shade trees, wayfinding signage, bike racks, trash receptacles, and lighting which creates an energy towards revitalization.
- 

D6 – Develop a Master Plan with Bowie County for the Downtown Bowie County Sheriff's Annex and Jail. That plan should propose to screen elements of the building, paint the building a natural color, eliminate all razor wire from view and create a quality entry setting worthy of being downtown, at a minimum if it is to stay downtown.
- 

RN1 – Create a program to improve the image of in-town residential neighborhoods by building such items as: neighborhood entry features with community name, pedestrian sidewalks, buffers, history markers and other items.
- 

RN6 – Increase the number of street lights and make street repairs in our in-town neighborhoods to improve safety and increase citizen's quality of life.

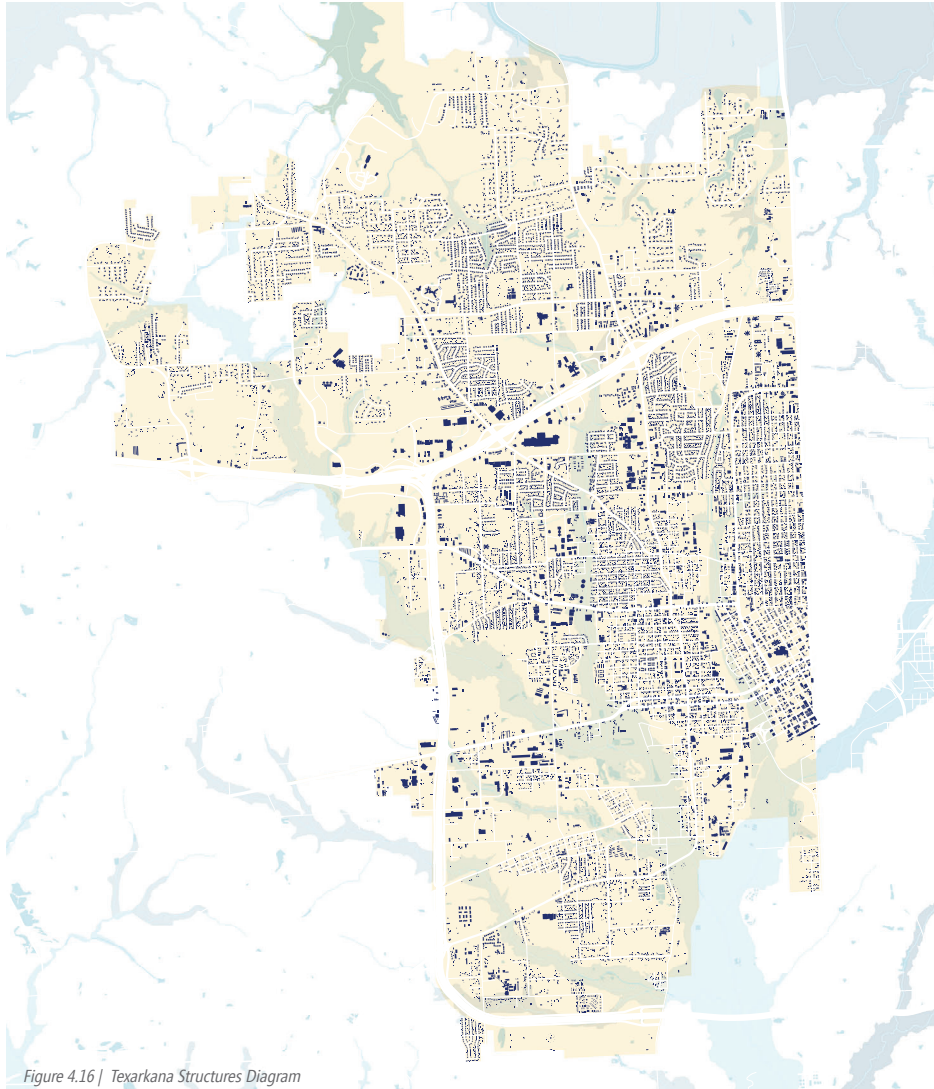


Figure 4.16 | Texarkana Structures Diagram

EXISTING CONDITIONS – URBAN DESIGN CHARACTER

Strong design of streets, neighborhoods, and the overall community leaves a positive impression on visitors and residents in a community. While there are areas of Texarkana that evoke strong elements of urban design, the majority of the city lacks a cohesive urban character. The Center for Design Excellence states that urban design is composed of buildings, public spaces, streets, transportation options, and landscape. The following section describes the existing character of these elements in Texarkana.

BUILDINGS:

Areas of Texarkana were developed over time, which is evident by the variety of building styles found in the city. Older buildings with historical features are found closer to downtown, while buildings north of IH 30 are newer and more suburban. Urban design, however, is more concerned with how buildings are laid out in a particular area rather than the architectural style of individual buildings.

As seen in Figure 4.16, the residential buildings located in the ‘in-town’ neighborhoods to the north and west of downtown are located on smaller lots and on more of a gridded street pattern. Alternatively, residential buildings in neighborhoods in the northern part of the city are on larger lots and resemble more traditional suburban subdivision development patterns. Also, the closer you get to the edges of the city, the more spread out the homes are. Development along the interstates and major thoroughfares is spread out and auto-oriented, with little regard to other modes of transportation. There aren’t many strip center style commercial uses where multiple commercial buildings are connected, but rather each building is on its own site and surrounded by parking. Additionally, development in the southern part of Texarkana is characterized by large industrial buildings located near clusters of small residential buildings.



PUBLIC SPACES:

There are a multitude of public spaces in the downtown Texarkana area: the federal building that straddles the state line offers some green space and lots of picture taking opportunities; the farmers’ market that is held near the Regional Arts Center is a great option for socializing when the market is open; and redevelopment of individual buildings along Main Street has helped to create a public space along the street. Other existing public spaces in Texarkana include the numerous parks located throughout the city and gathering spaces at the universities.

STREETS:

The different street typologies are discussed more fully in the Transportation section, but certain types of streets can play a significant role in urban design. Streets that are designed in a way that is sensitive to the surrounding context are considered to have strong urban design. An example of a street that has some context-sensitive elements in Texarkana is Main Street in downtown; the sidewalks are buffered from the street, aesthetically-pleasing landscaping lines the street, and pavement treatment is added near intersections. Most other streets in Texarkana don’t have streetscape amenities and only some streets have sidewalks. Amenities that could be added to major roads to help enhance urban design include landscaping, decorative paving at major intersections, wayfinding signage, benches, trash receptacles, and bike racks.



TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS:

The primary mode of transportation in Texarkana, like other Texan cities, is a single-occupant automobile. While there are multiple bus routes in the city, according to the 2015 American Community Survey, 94% of commuters drove to work. There are also lots of gaps in the sidewalk network, which means it is difficult for people to walk and bike safely in the city. Additionally, there are some off-street trails found within or near parks, but they don’t link different parts of the city so they don’t serve as viable commuting options.

LANDSCAPE:

Landscaping features can enhance a public space, street, or district. In downtown, there are a few street sections that have nice added landscaping but for the most part there are not many street trees or plant beds to add natural relief to the streets. One example of a well-landscaped area in Texarkana that adds to the urban character is the streetscape improvements implemented in downtown.

URBAN DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Through discussions with staff, the steering committee, and input from the public, the project team developed an urban design framework to guide future improvements. The different elements identified on the map are described in the following section.

DISTRICTS:

Districts are formed around major institutional/employment centers with a variety of uses to spur economic growth and potential. They can include enhanced connectivity and urban design standards to create a sense of place for each district. The framework identifies the following districts:

Professional District: located north of IH 30 from roughly N. Kings Hwy to Richmond Rd, this district is centered on the existing commercial uses and institutional uses as shown in the future land use plan. Major schools, businesses, and commercial centers are located here. Urban design elements in this district could include small public spaces for professionals to eat lunch or gather, streetscape enhancements, and bicycle/pedestrian improvements to connect these centers together.

Medical District: located to the north and west of the IH 30/Summerhill Rd intersection, this district includes the existing hospital/medical uses and future land uses to supplement the existing conditions. Urban design elements in this district could include site furnishings, lighting, and wayfinding signage.

University District: centered on the Texas A&M University-Texarkana campus in the northwestern part of the city, this district includes a larger area than the existing university to encompass future spin-off development. Urban design elements in this district could include wayfinding signage, bicycle/pedestrian connectivity improvements, and gateway landmarks.

Gateway District: there are two proposed gateway districts in the city, one is located off of Summerhill Rd just south of IH 30 and includes institutional centers. The second district is located in the southwestern corner of the city east of IH 369 which is near the location of the Liberty-Eylau ISD administration building and high school. Urban design elements in these districts could include bicycle/pedestrian connectivity, lighting, and key landscaping improvements.

College District: this district is centered on Texarkana College between New Boston Rd and Richmond Rd. Urban design elements in this district could include wayfinding, lighting, and bicycle/pedestrian connectivity improvements.

Downtown District: this district is roughly bounded by the railroad to the west and south, State Line Ave to the east, and New Boston Rd to the north. Urban design elements that could be included in this district are gateway landmarks, wayfinding, historic preservation and character elements, and streetscape enhancements. This district encompasses the northern and southern portion of downtown and acts as a general overlay for the downtown region.

Industrial District: this district is bounded by 7th St to the north, the railroad to the east and south, and just past IH 369 to the west. This area encompasses the majority of the existing industrial uses but also extends the area to focus future industrial development in this area. Urban design elements that could be included in this district include streetscape enhancements and lighting.

State Line District: this district follows the State Line Ave corridor from IH 30 in the north to downtown in the south. Urban design elements that could be included in this district are gateway landmarks, sidewalk improvements, and pavement treatment.

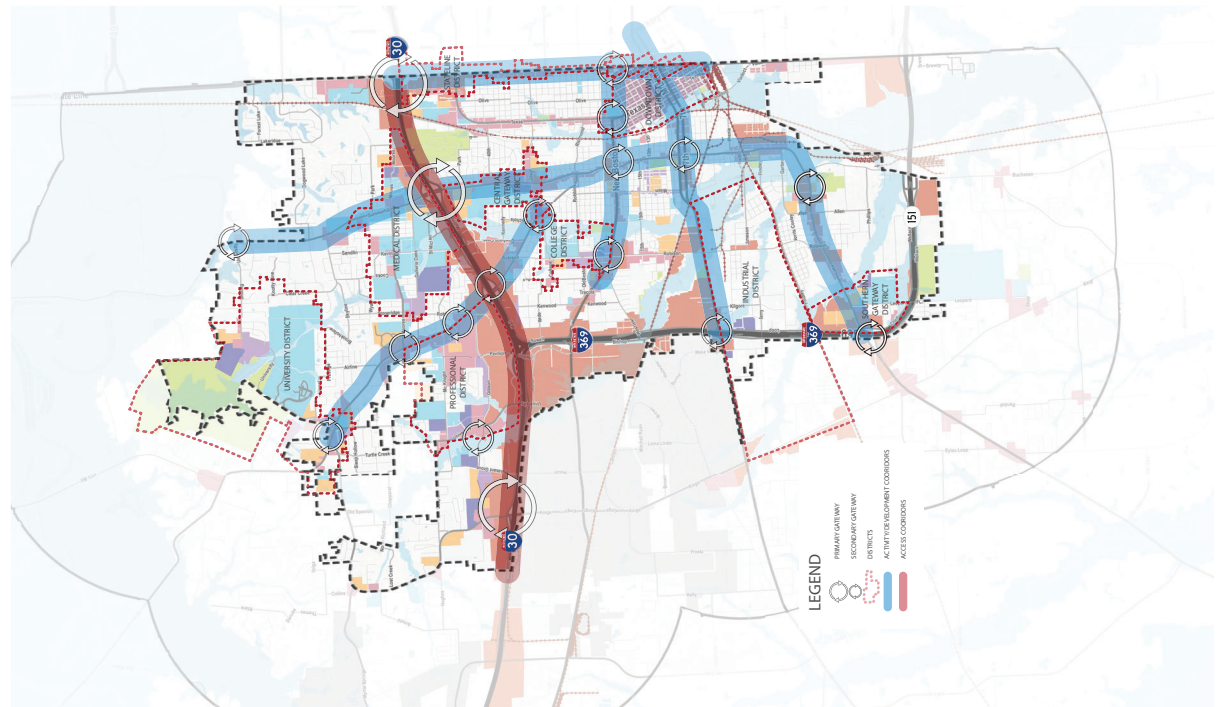


Figure 4.17 | URBAN DESIGN PLAN

PRIMARY GATEWAY:

These are major entrances into districts from primary access roads. The gateways allow for opportunity for signage and place-making characteristics along roadways. Suggested areas for primary gateways are along IH 30 at the intersections of Kings Hwy, Summerhill Rd, and State Line Ave. A primary gateway could be signage or sculpture signifying that you are entering a particular district or area.

SECONDARY GATEWAY:

These are major transition zones into districts from primary access roads. The gateways allow for opportunity for signage and place-making characteristics and can set design standards to attract development. Examples of secondary gateways include the intersection of State Line Ave. and New Boston Rd. on the northern boundary of downtown as well as IH 369 and S. Lake Dr in the southwestern part of the city. A secondary gateway could be enhanced signage or even a street sign topper that has the district or neighborhood's name.

ACCESS CORRIDOR:

Primary means for access into Texarkana. IH 30 is identified as an access corridor in Texarkana as this highway experiences the most traffic.

ACTIVITY/DEVELOPMENT CORRIDOR:

Primary connectivity corridors throughout Texarkana. They reach all major districts and allow for easy access to major destinations. Activity/Development corridors in Texarkana include State Line Ave, Summerhill Rd, Richmond Rd, New Boston Rd, and 7th St.

PHASING OF URBAN DESIGN IMPROVEMENTS:

All of the recommendations outlined in the urban design framework map cannot occur at once, so it is important to prioritize improvements. Some near-term implementable improvements include making modifications to the city's development standards to allow for primary and secondary gateways. Early achievable gateways could be the downtown district and university district since those areas are already defined as well as one primary gateway along IH 30. Urban design improvements within the State Line Ave district will also soon be prioritized through a design effort and can then more easily be connected to funding in the short term. Longer-term actions would be the rest of the secondary gateways and streetscape improvements to the other Activity/Development corridors.





URBAN DESIGN ACTIONS

- 4.4.1 • Require all new streets to have minimum 5', fully ADA-compliant sidewalks on both sides to promote walkability. Sidewalk connectivity is lacking in many parts of Texarkana, so a requirement for new development to install sidewalks would enhance pedestrian access.
- 4.4.2 • Update the applicable development and thoroughfare standards to allow for primary and secondary gateways along roadways. Appropriately sized gateways will help attract investment and visitors to different districts in the city.
- 4.4.3 • Formally establish urban design standards for each district identified in the urban design framework map. These standards could act like an overlay district and should include what type of elements should be included and prioritized and also what is not appropriate in each district.
- 4.4.4 • Conduct a State Line Avenue Corridor Study to further define needed improvements. This type of study would develop urban design, policy, and transportation recommendations to transform both sides of the corridor into a cohesive gateway into Texarkana, USA.
- 4.4.5 • Continue to coordinate with TxDOT and the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department on future primary gateways along IH 30. Since the interstate is owned by the states, early coordination with both TxDOT and the ArDOT is needed before any gateway design concepts are developed.
- 4.4.6 • Create volunteer task forces for each of the defined districts to help create a sense of place. Community leaders would be ideal to spearhead these task forces to develop marketing materials, give presentations, and help with any future specific area study planning efforts.

This is a summary of the short term land use actions that could be started first. A full set of Urban Design actions are defined in the Implementation section.