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Safe and well-connected neighborhoods are an important component to a comprehensive city. There are several in-town neighborhoods in Texarkana that have an identity, but are in need of improvements related to aesthetics and place-making. This section focuses on three in-town Texarkana neighborhoods and defines strategies for revitalization for neighborhood districts.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

GOALS & VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF TEXARKANA NEIGHBORHOODS

- 
CC5 – Maintain attractive and safe residential neighborhoods.
- 
ED3 – Look to grow residential housing Downtown which will then create supporting development resulting in new employment opportunities.
- 
CG3 – Ensure that Texarkana’s neighborhoods are protected from hazards and equipped for disaster preparedness.
- 
D3 – Establish Downtown as a neighborhood, which requires urban housing of many different types and densities is strategically important.
- 
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.
- 
RN2 – Work to get homes out of the danger of flooding and do not allow redevelopment in flood prone areas.
- 
RN3 – Establish Neighborhood Improvement Plans for in-town neighborhoods to create a comprehensive set of recommendations for revitalization and preservation.
- 
RN4 – Remove dilapidated, dangerous and vacant homes from all neighborhoods. Market these lots for redevelopment and/or consider them for new public parks.
- 
RN5 – Use higher density residential types as a land use transition between single family and commercial developments.
- 
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.

EXISTING CONDITIONS



Housing Existing Conditions

According to the American Community Survey 2015 5-Year Estimates, there are 15,105 total housing units in Texarkana. The following section uses 2015 American Community Survey and 2000 Census data to present a snapshot of existing housing conditions in Texarkana as well as changes over the past 15 years.

Household Characteristics: The average size of households in Texarkana is 2.63; this is an increase from the average size in 2000, which was 2.42. The vacancy rate is higher than other communities; in 2015, 16% of housing units were vacant, which is an increase from 6% in 2000. Additionally, 55% of occupied housing units are owner-occupied and 45% are renter-occupied. Finally, the median household income in 2015 was \$39,113, which is an increase from \$30,152 in 2000, but still less than the statewide median of \$53,207.

Texarkana Household Characteristics Trends			
	2000	2010	2015
Total Housing Units	15,105	16,115	16,280
% Occupied	89.8%	89.5%	83.9%
% Owner Occupied	58.7%	51.2%	55.1%
% Renter Occupied	41.3%	48.8%	44.9%
% Vacant	10.2%	10.5%	16.1%
Average Household Size	2.42	2.41	2.63
Single-Person Home	29.9%	32.4%	30.3%
Median Household Income	\$30,152	\$95,600*	\$106,400
Median Rent	\$377	\$488*	\$567
Median Household Income	\$30,152	\$39,319*	\$39,113

Table 5.1 | Texarkana Housing Statistics

Source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey (ACS) Five-Year Estimates, 2006-2010 ACS Five-Year Estimates, 2000 Census.



Housing Stock: The majority (70%) of housing units in Texarkana are single-family, either attached or detached. Additionally, 25% are multifamily units, 3% are duplexes, and 3% are mobile homes, boats, or other. Figure 4-X depicts the age of the existing housing stock. The percentage of multi-family units has increased since 2000, while the percentage of single-family units have decreased slightly. Age of housing stock is also an important factor to consider. 34% of housing units were built from 1960 to 1979, 27% built between 1980 and 1999, 17% built since 2000, 17% built between 1940 and 1959, and 5% built before 1939. This indicates that the housing stock is aging and needs to be revitalized since 57% of the existing stock was built prior to 1980.

Age of Housing Stock by Housing Unit Type						
Total Population	Housing Units (Total)	Racial Distribution				% Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity
		1939 or earlier	1940-1959	1960-1979	1980-1999	Since 2000
All Housing Types	13,931	765	2,358	4,758	3,729	2,321
		5%	17%	34%	27%	17%
Single Family (attached & detached)	9,708	6%	22%	41%	22%	10%
Duplex/Triplex/Quadraplex	1,359	4%	9%	19%	40%	28%
Multifamily	2,462	6%	4%	20%	33%	37%
Other	402	0%	4%	12%	58%	27%

Table 5.2 | Age of Housing Stock by Housing Unit Type

Source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey (ACS) Five-Year Estimates.

Cost of Housing: From 2000 to 2015, median home values in Texarkana rose 62% from \$65,800 to \$106,400. Median rent also increased 50% in that timeframe, from \$377 to \$567. Despite these increases in housing costs, median household income only increased 30% from \$30,152 to \$39,113 today. While housing cost is likely one of the most important factors when deciding where to live, the cost of transportation can also play a large role in one's overall cost of living. The Center for Neighborhood Technology created a 'Housing and Transportation Affordability Index' to determine a more accurate cost of living for various geographies throughout the United States. In Texarkana, average housing costs make up 27% of one's income and transportation costs account for 29% of one's income. This is a total of 56% of one's income that residents in Texarkana spend on average for housing and transportation costs. While this is very high, residents in peer cities spend a similar percentage of their income on housing and transportation on average, including: Texarkana, AR (55%); Longview (54%); Tyler (56%); Marshall (55%); and, Sulphur Springs (54%).



SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT: NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION



Three 'in-town' neighborhoods within Texarkana were identified as focus areas for neighborhood revitalization scenarios. These neighborhoods were chosen based on their proximity to downtown, neighborhood involvement, and opportunities for revitalization. All three scenarios consider neighborhood gateways, pedestrian trails and sidewalks, commercial redevelopment at strategic locations, pedestrian safety, and code enforcement. For all three focus neighborhoods and many others in Texarkana, some of the identified needs are sidewalks, ADA-accessibility, better lighting, neighborhood gateways, safe routes to school, and drainage improvements.

Beverly Neighborhood: located northwest of downtown, this neighborhood is roughly bordered by Richmond Rd. and College Dr. to the north, Summerhill Rd. to the east, New Boston Rd. to the south, and N Robison Rd. to the west. This neighborhood includes Texarkana College, the Texarkana Water Treatment Plant, commercial along New Boston Rd. and Summerhill Rd., and hundreds of older, small single-family homes on tree-lined streets. Existing issues in this neighborhood include vacant structures, lack of pedestrian infrastructure, proximity to the water treatment plant without a visual buffer, and lack of sense of place approaching Texarkana College.

The proposed strategies in the Beverly scenario include streetscape improvements along Robison Rd, Richmond Rd, and New Boston Rd, revitalization of neighborhood retail along New Boston Rd, incorporating a buffer to provide separation between the homes and water treatment plant, and creating gateways into the Texarkana College campus.

Highland Park Neighborhood: located just north of downtown, this neighborhood is roughly bordered by College Dr. to the north, State Line Ave. to the east, Martin Luther King Jr Blvd. to the south, and Texas Blvd. to the east. This area is almost all residential, with a few commercial and institutional uses in the southern portion just north of downtown. Existing issues in this neighborhood include lack of wayfinding signage to the historic district, vacant or blighted homes along State Line Ave., lack of pedestrian infrastructure, and poor streetscape features.

The proposed strategies in the Highland Park scenario include streetscape improvements along W 13th street to signify transition to downtown area, gateways along key entrances, wayfinding to the historic district, and neighborhood revitalization along State Line Ave.

Rose Hill Neighborhood: this is a large area originally defined as the area bordered by New Boston Rd. to the north, the railroad tracks to the east and south, and IH 369 to the west. Existing issues in this neighborhood include lack of definition of the large area, limited pedestrian infrastructure, proximity to the water treatment plant without visual buffer, and vacant or blighted homes along the eastern edge of the neighborhood.

The proposed strategies in the Rose Hill scenario include neighborhood and commercial revitalization along the major corridors, streetscape improvements along Summerhill Rd. and New Boston Rd., and neighborhood gateway portals at key points.

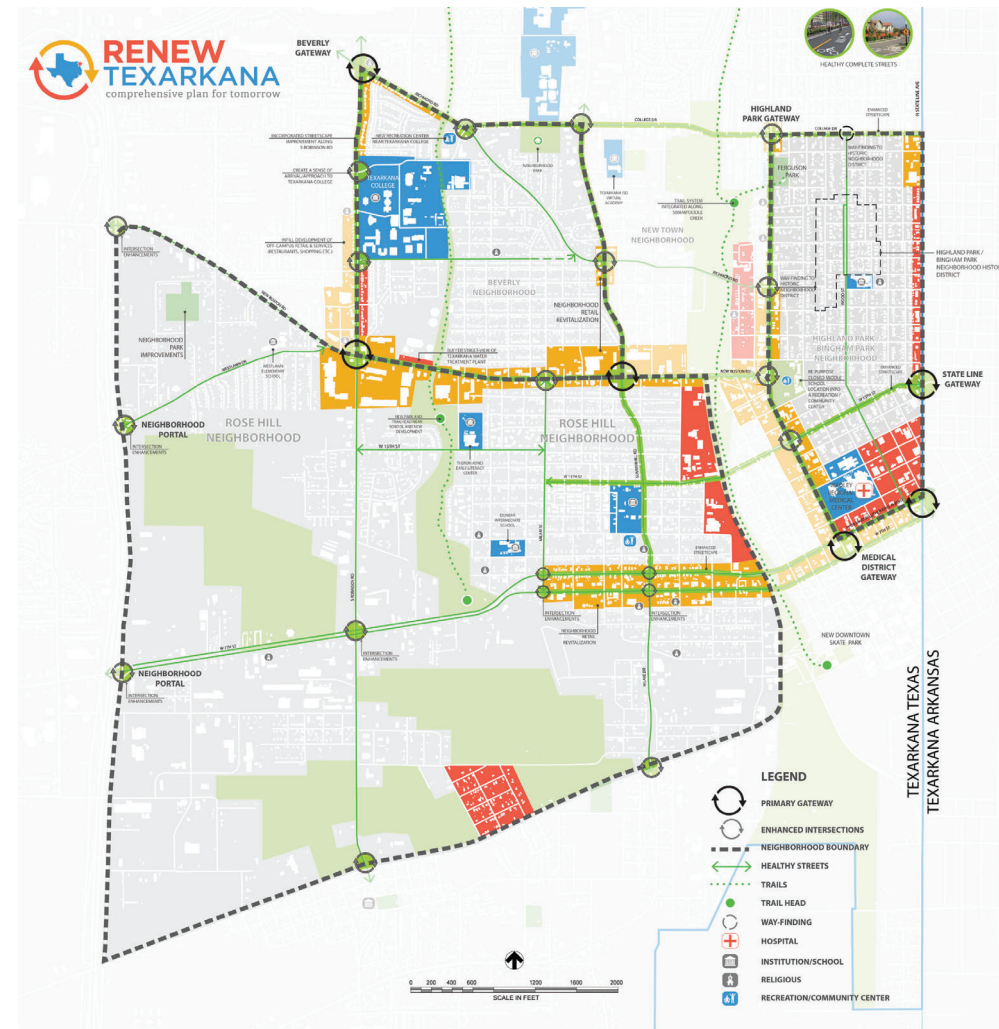


Figure 5.1 | Texarkana Neighborhood Scenarios

PUBLIC INPUT

Key themes for neighborhood revitalization:

- PRIDE
- ORIGINALITY
- CELEBRATION
- STREETScape
- STREET LIGHTING
- GATEWAYS
- REMOVE BLIGHT
- STREET MAINTENANCE
- REDEVELOPMENT

During the second public meeting, attendees indicated their preference for the three scenarios and provided input on the pros and cons of each.

The Beverly Neighborhood scenario received the most preference votes and positive aspects that stakeholders noted included a strong focus on education, good opportunities for parks and trails, walkability to neighborhood commercial, good gateway locations, and an overall connected neighborhood. A noted con for the Beverly scenario was that it needed more focus on business revitalization.

The Highland Park Neighborhood scenario received the second most preference votes. Pros that stakeholders noted were that the scenario focused on historic aspects, business revitalization, green street connections, walkability, and a connected neighborhood. Noted cons for this scenario were that there is limited area for new residential and limited opportunities for public space.

Finally, the Rose Hill Neighborhood scenario received the fewest preference votes and noted positive remarks were that it provided good revitalization of corridors and good connectivity to downtown. Noted cons were that it was disconnected by many barriers, that there were a lot of adjacent industrial uses, and many vacant properties.

At the neighborhood break-out session during the third public meeting, participants were asked several questions related to their priorities for neighborhood improvements. The two highest priorities for neighborhood revitalization that attendees noted were quality, safe pedestrian infrastructure and safe, active complete neighborhoods with little vacancy. Furthermore, attendees defined a high quality neighborhood as one that has connected, safe sidewalks and street lighting. In regards to single family home maintenance, debris in front yard was noted as the biggest 'turn off' in a neighborhood. There was also support for the city working with neighborhood associations to fundraise for neighborhood entry features and for the city to provide funding for pedestrian infrastructure and amenities in neighborhoods.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussions with public workshop attendees and the Steering Committee, the following goals were developed for the final neighborhood revitalization strategies.

- CREATE SMALLER, MORE CONNECTED NEIGHBORHOODS
- ENHANCE BUSINESS REVITALIZATION OPPORTUNITIES
- CREATE HEALTHY STREET CORRIDORS TO CONNECT NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES AND DESTINATIONS
- OPTIMIZE PUBLIC SPACE/PARK OPPORTUNITIES
- ENHANCE REVITALIZATION CORRIDORS
- IDENTIFY GATEWAYS INTO DISTRICTS
- MAINTAIN ATTRACTIVE AND SAFE RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

RECOMMENDED NEIGHBORHOOD DISTRICT SCENARIO:

The project team developed a neighborhood map that is reflective of the input received from the Steering Committee and public workshop attendees. Additional input from the steering committee indicated that the neighborhood map should serve as a framework for other neighborhoods in Texarkana as well. Therefore, the map shows modified district boundaries to remove natural or physical barriers from within neighborhoods and instead makes these barriers the suggested boundaries. For example, Cowhorn Creek runs through the middle of the Beverly and Rose Hill Neighborhood, but in the proposed neighborhood plan, the creek serves as the boundary for these neighborhood districts. Figure 5.2 is the proposed neighborhood plan.

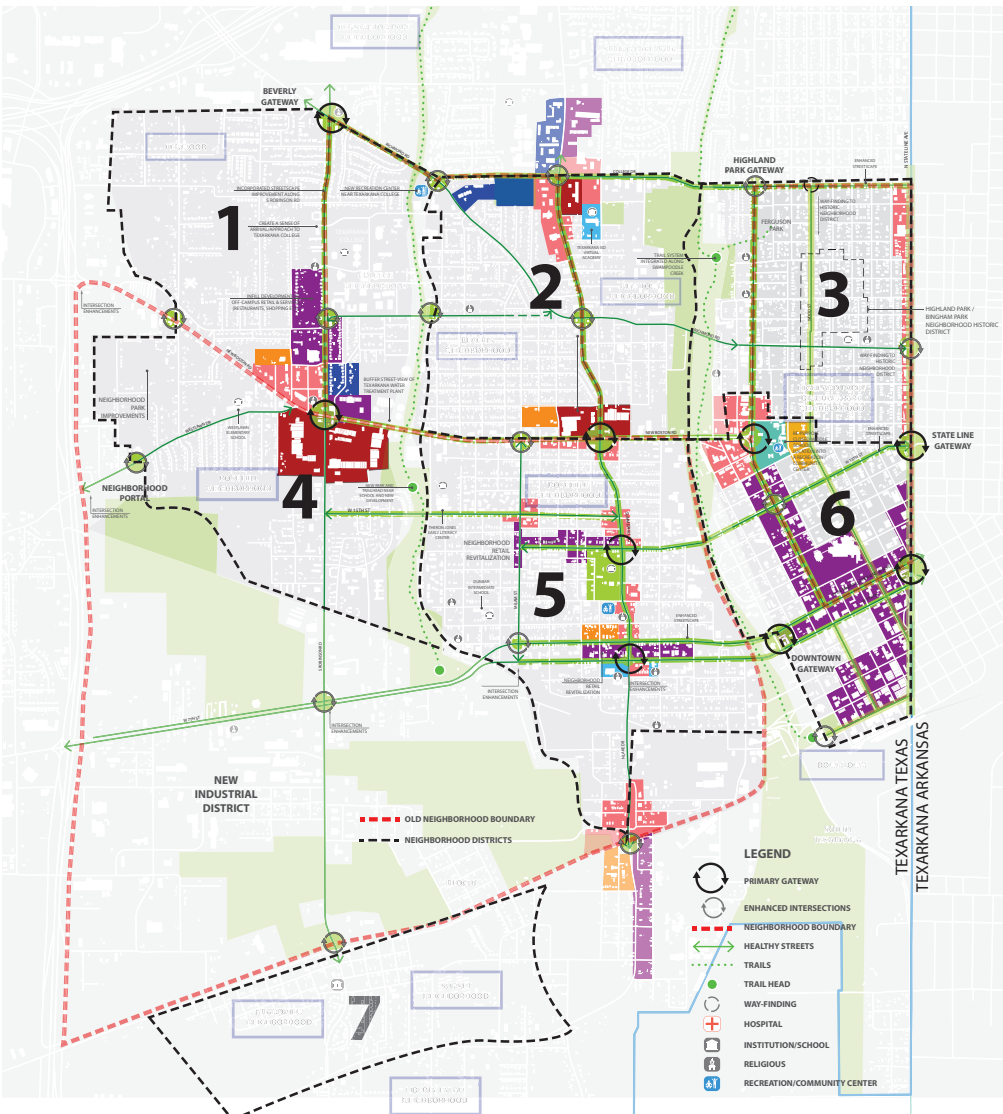


Figure 5.2 | Texarkana Neighborhood Plan

Primary Gateway: serves as a primary entrance to a neighborhood district, primarily at major intersections. Features at these primary gateways could include statues, landmarks, or signage.

Enhanced Intersections: intersection enhancements can include pavement treatment, small signage, street sign toppers, and lighting. These enhancements are identified for secondary intersections within the neighborhood districts.

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; 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.

Trails: off-street hike and bike paths that connect parks, schools, neighborhoods, and commercial districts.

Trail Head: key points along the trails that serve as a major entrance and offer amenities such as informational signage, benches for respite, and water fountains.

Wayfinding: can be incorporated via directional signage to direct visitors to significant landmarks or buildings within a neighborhood district.



“Suburbs will need to evolve into more self-contained, culturally rich, and diverse communities.”

— Joel Kotkin, *The New Suburbanism, A Realists Guide to the American Future*



NEIGHBORHOOD ACTIONS

- 5.1.1 • Continue to promote citizen-led neighborhood revitalization programs in key neighborhoods including Rose Hill, Beverly, Downtown, and other neighborhoods throughout the city.
- 5.1.2 • Continue to identify and formulate neighborhood partnerships that serve to identify funding opportunities, serve as a sounding board for improvements, and advocate for neighborhood improvements.
- 5.1.3 • Develop an online database with information about neighborhood associations, district maps, contact information, and meeting information.

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



DOWNTOWN



A strong downtown has many benefits for a community; it can serve as a central gathering place for events and public and private investments can often have positive economic development spin-off effects. Downtown Texarkana has begun to see a resurgence in recent years; public improvements such as Kidtopia Park and the planned Regional Arts Center rehabilitation has spurred some private investment in the area. This is evident on Main Street where new restaurants and bars are drawing in residents and visitors alike. But downtown still has many vacant and dilapidated buildings, which detracts from the overall character of the area. With a targeted downtown strategy, these buildings and public spaces could be renovated or redeveloped with additional private and public sector investment. This section describes the existing conditions in downtown, discusses three downtown redevelopment scenarios, and presents recommendations for implementing a targeted strategy for downtown.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

GOALS & VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF DOWNTOWN TEXARKANA

- 
 CC1 - Promote redevelopment & revitalization of Downtown for the successful enjoyment of all in Texarkana.
- 
 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.
- 
 CC4 – Repurpose and preserve our older high-quality commercial buildings for new uses.
- 
 CH2 – Promote the distribution of locally grown and produced food via our Downtown Farmers’ Market, neighborhood gardens and other local operations.
- 
 DA6 – Establish public sector projects Downtown that are created to result in a direct private development action (cause and effect relationship).
- 
 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.
- 
 D2 – Create a business incubator Downtown that is focused on technology start-up companies. Locate it where there can be other opportunities for downtown synergy.
- 
 D3 – Establish Downtown as a neighborhood, which requires urban housing of many different types and densities is strategically important.
- 
 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.



GOALS & VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF DOWNTOWN TEXARKANA



D5 – Define Downtown as a fun exciting place to be, and therefore program Downtown with special community events for all in Texarkana. They may include: Downtown Art Walk, Octoberfest, Christmas, Easter Egg Hunt and others.



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.



EXISTING PLANS

Downtown Texarkana is centered on the Texas/Arkansas state line, so the area considered downtown falls within both states. For this downtown strategy, the approximate borders of downtown on the Texas side are defined as State Line Ave. to the east, the railroad tracks to the south, Swampoodle Creek to the west, and W 7th St. to the north.

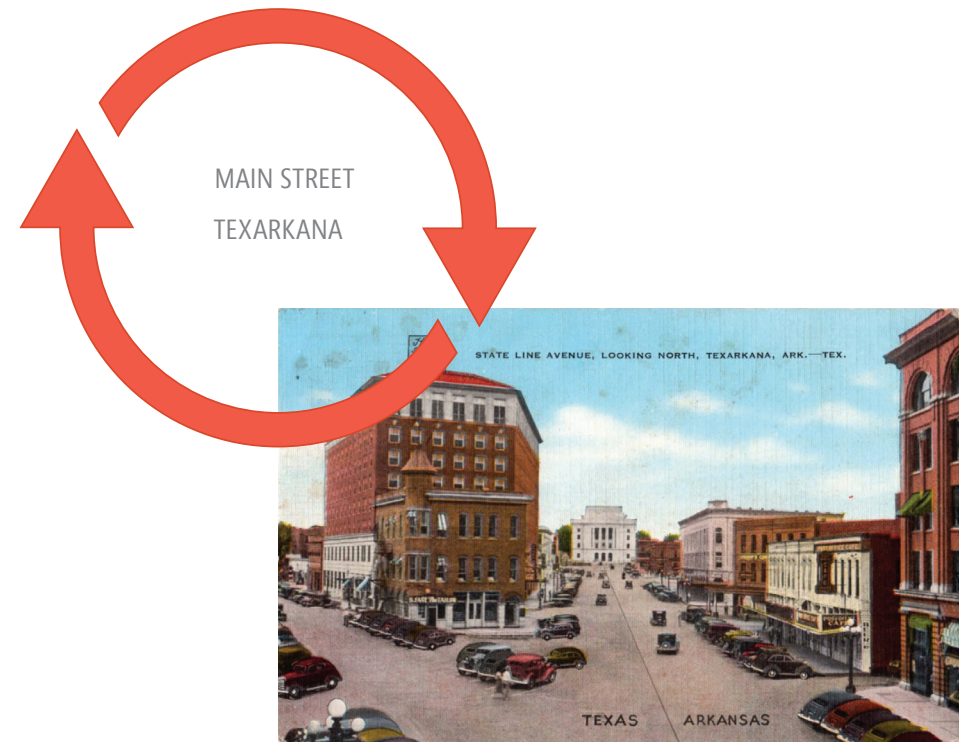
Attractions in downtown include the Post Office that straddles the state line and offers unique photo opportunities, historic Perot Theatre, Discovery Place Children's Museum, Texarkana Regional Arts & Humanities Council, and Museum of Regional History. Other municipal attractions include Kidtopia Park and Texarkana Public Library. Additionally, the Arts and Historic District in downtown is designated as a Texas Cultural District by the Texas Commission on the Arts. There are also several historic properties, many of which are designated by the National Register of Historic Places. These sites include the Saenger Theater, Grim Hotel, Texarkana US Post Office, Texarkana Union Station, and Rialto Building. However, some of these historic properties are dilapidated and in need of rehabilitation and reinvestment.

Additionally, there are existing programs and organizations committed to improving downtown Texarkana. One is Main Street Texarkana, which is a bi-state organization under the umbrella of the nation-wide Main Street America program. The organization is governed by a citizen board that works to implement strategies to improve downtown. The Main Street Texarkana group's approach to revitalizing downtown includes design, organization, promotion, and economic vitality.

Key input on Downtown Texarkana:

- Stakeholders want a renovated, vibrant downtown like other communities have
- The downtown area and State Line Avenue need the most planning help
- When stakeholders think of Texarkana, downtown was the most frequently mentioned as the first mental image they have of the city
- Commercial, mixed use, and housing were noted as development needed in downtown

Main Street Texarkana. "About Us." <http://www.mainstreettexarkana.org/about-us.html>.



SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT

Scenario Development: Downtown Revitalization

While there are many cultural and historic attractions in downtown, there are also numerous vacant properties and dilapidated buildings that are in need of repair. This presents opportunities to either renovate these buildings or to redevelop them into a more productive use. As part of the Renew Texarkana process, the project team developed three complementary scenarios for how downtown could be revitalized over time. The three scenarios offer various strategies related to creating public spaces, improving streetscapes, working with property owners to define the market for redevelopment, creating public amenities, and increasing programming for the Central Business District. These three scenarios were presented to stakeholders at the second public workshop.



3RD STREET SCENARIO



Figure 5.3 | 3rd Street Scenario

3rd St. is a major one-way thoroughfare in the southern part of downtown that serves as the dividing line between the original city historic district and the Main Street Historic District. This scenario is focused on revitalization strategies for 3rd St. from State Line Ave. to Elm St. Major attractions along this part of 3rd St. include the historic Grim Hotel, several museums, Perot Theatre, Texarkana City Hall, Texarkana Public Library, and Kidtopia Park. The easily recognizable Scott Joplin mural also fronts 3rd St. In between these historic and cultural landmarks are unsightly, dilapidated buildings, underutilized surface parking lots, and uninviting sidewalks. The 3rd St. Scenario offers strategies for streetscape improvements and redevelopment opportunities to revitalize this central section of downtown. Figure 5.3 depicts the 3rd St. downtown scenario.

At the intersections of Elm St. on the western side of the corridor and Pine St. on the eastern side it is recommended that primary gateways be created. Gateways should signify the entrance to a significant district with monuments or changes in signage and lighting. Enhanced intersection crossings such as decorative pavement treatment could be applied to the intersections at Texas Blvd. and Main St. This would draw more visitors to the farmers' market which is planned to be moved to the intersection of 3rd St. and Texas Blvd. Streetscape enhancements such as pedestrian crossings, wider sidewalks, and bikeways could make 3rd St. more accessible to all roadway users, not just automobiles. Complete street enhancements such as landscaping, lighting, and site furnishings could enhance Oak St., Spruce St., Texas Blvd., Main St., and Pine St. The impetus driving this scenario is the thought that these smaller scale improvements could serve as a catalyst for property owners or investors to redevelop existing vacant and dilapidated buildings.

CENTRALIZED GROWTH SCENARIO



Figure 5.5 | Centralized Growth Scenario

Throughout downtown Texarkana there is an excess amount of surface parking lots. While surface parking can serve a purpose, they often aren't the best utilization of land, especially in a downtown environment where land is more expensive. An alternative would be to develop denser residential downtown and construct a parking garage to serve the new residents and existing businesses Figure 5.5 depicts the Centralized Growth downtown scenario.

Currently there are very few residential uses in downtown, just a few multi-family units and single-family homes to the north of downtown. Part of what makes successful downtowns vibrant is residences close to businesses. This scenario proposes residential growth in downtown Texarkana through the addition of urban townhomes along 3rd St. to replace existing surface parking lots. These townhomes would be attractive to people that work downtown and want to have the option to walk or bike to work or to those that like being close to cultural attractions in downtown. To accommodate additional growth and to compensate for the loss of parking, the scenario also proposes to construct a parking garage behind City Hall and the Perot Theatre. Even though the construction costs for parking garages are higher, they provide a more attractive way to store vehicles and can be a revenue generator for the city. The driving forces for this scenario is to make downtown Texarkana a more attractive place to live which can then serve as a catalyst for more redevelopment.

ANALYSIS

At the second public workshop, attendees were able to view and comment on the three complementary downtown scenarios. While each of the three scenarios have similar components, each scenario focuses on a slightly different area of downtown. The steering committee discussed pros and cons of each of the three scenarios to begin to narrow in on the potential recommendations.

3rd Street Scenario: Stakeholders noted that 3rd St. provides good connectivity and is a corridor that is ripe for redevelopment. The scenario also promotes entertainment and the arts and identifies key locations for gateways into downtown. The main drawback that stakeholders had with this scenario is that it is too linear and ignores key parts of downtown.

Front Street Scenario: Positive aspects of this scenario include good screening of the jail facility, which was a desire expressed by many during the public workshop. Other pros include a good modification to Front St. and the creation of public space that can be a catalyst for new development. Negative aspects to this scenario are that it's neglecting other parts of downtown by keeping the focus too far south. The connection to historic buildings downtown is also not as strong as the other scenarios.

Centralized Growth Scenario: Stakeholders liked the strong centralized core that this scenario created and that it ultimately increases parking capacity. Negative aspects were that it didn't connect all of downtown and that the parking garage is not well-screened. There are also no gateways at the entrances to downtown.





DOWNTOWN ACTIONS

- 5.2.1 • Coordinate a downtown master plan with Texarkana, AR. A separate downtown plan would further develop concepts introduced in the Renew Texarkana plan and would include individual site assessment, a phased development plan, and detailed costs for implementation.
- 5.2.2 • Consider adoption of a downtown overlay in the existing zoning ordinance. The downtown overlay should focus on the area defined in the downtown plan and should allow for complete street improvements, gateways and wayfinding signage, and mixed-use development.
- 5.2.3 • Create a community development corporation that includes a focus on marketing downtown to potential investors. A truly revitalized downtown will require dedicated resources from staff and community leaders. A task force composed of city and community leaders can develop marketing materials, start conversations with developers, and research funding opportunities.
- 5.2.4 • Develop a multi-departmental approach to evaluate the utilization of vacant, unsafe or dilapidated structures within downtown.
- 5.2.5 • Consider replacing the street signs in Downtown with a unique sign to establish a special area of character. Sign toppers signify an area of interest and can be tied into other gateway elements.
- 5.2.6 • Enhance the role of Downtown as the cultural and social center of the City, by supporting local efforts (like the Arts & Historic District) to create business awareness, promote social events, and create community ties and investment.
- 5.2.7 • Encourage a diversity of housing types including mixed-use in downtown to enliven the district, support destination retail and provide opportunities for pedestrian-oriented young professional and “empty nester” living.
- 5.2.8 • Create open spaces, plazas and urban parks (such as Downtown’s ArtSpark) to serve as focal points, landmarks, and gathering places for socializing and celebrations.
- 5.2.9 • Increase recreation and entertainment opportunities in downtown via programming and community venues.
- 5.2.10 • Increase pedestrian linkages / connections between downtown & neighborhoods through planning efforts. Consider the Complete Streets Model where appropriate.
- 5.2.11 • Continue to provide incentives for the adaptive re-use of historic and valuable structures to preserve the City’s architectural heritage and ensure that new development contributes to the evolution of a strong, historic, pedestrian-oriented downtown.