

ORDINANCE NO. 1610-02-2026

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GAINESVILLE, TEXAS, ADOPTING THE GUIDING GAINESVILLE DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN; PROVIDING FINDINGS; PROVIDING FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND USE; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the City of Gainesville desires to promote reinvestment, economic vitality, and placemaking within its downtown area; and

WHEREAS, the City of Gainesville has prepared the Guiding Gainesville Downtown Master Plan to establish a shared vision and framework for public improvements, private investment, and future planning efforts within the downtown area; and

WHEREAS, the Guiding Gainesville Downtown Master Plan is intended to function as a policy and implementation guide and does not, by itself, regulate land use or amend zoning regulations; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that adoption of the Guiding Gainesville Downtown Master Plan will support the goals and policies of the City's Comprehensive Plan and advance the public health, safety, and general welfare.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GAINESVILLE, TEXAS:

Section 1. Adoption.

The Guiding Gainesville Downtown Master Plan, dated January 2025, and attached hereto as Exhibit A, is hereby adopted as the official policy document of the City of Gainesville, Texas.

Section 2. Use and Effect.

The Guiding Gainesville Downtown Master Plan shall serve as a guide for future planning efforts, capital improvement programming, economic development initiatives, and related public and private actions within the downtown area.

Section 3. Relationship to Regulations.

Adoption of the Guiding Gainesville Downtown Master Plan does not amend the City's zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, or other development regulations. Any such amendments shall require separate action in accordance with applicable law.

Section 4. Severability.

If any provision of this ordinance or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect the other provisions.

Section 5. Effective Date.

This ordinance shall take effect immediately upon adoption.


INTRODUCTION, FIRST READING, CHARTER SUSPENSION

INTRODUCED AND READ FOR THE FIRST TIME BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GAINESVILLE ON THE 3RD DAY OF FEBRUARY 2026, AT WHICH THE CHARTER PROVISION OF THE CITY OF GAINESVILLE REQUIRING THE READING OF THE ORDINANCE ON THREE SEPARATE OCCASIONS WAS SUSPENDED BY A VOTE:

5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSENT, 0 ABSTENTIONS, 1 VACANCY

ATTEST:


DIANA LOCH, CITY SECRETARY


TOMMY MOORE, MAYOR

ADOPTION

ADOPTED IN REGULAR SESSION BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GAINESVILLE ON THE 3RD DAY OF FEBRUARY 2026 BY A VOTE OF:

5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSENT, 0 ABSTENTIONS, 1 VACANCY

ATTEST:


DIANA LOCH, CITY SECRETARY




TOMMY MOORE, MAYOR



FEBRUARY 2026

GUIDING **GAINESVILLE**

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN



LET'S SHAPE OUR FUTURE
TOGETHER 



PREPARED FOR:

City of Gainesville

200 S. Rusk Street
Gainesville, TX 76240

PREPARED BY:

Antero Group

109 N. Elm Street
Denton, TX 76201

Adopted February 3, 2026

FACILITATED BY:



Antero Group

Valley Quest
DESIGN

URBAN3

Acknowledgments

Transforming a historic downtown into a resilient and vibrant destination requires the shared commitment of visionary leaders and dedicated local advocates. The City of Gainesville is deeply grateful to the stakeholders and downtown champions who lent their expertise and passion to the **Guiding Gainesville Downtown Master Plan**. We specifically recognize the following individuals and teams for their leadership in crafting a strategic roadmap that honors our heritage while fostering a dynamic future for our community's heart.

GUIDING GAINESVILLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- ▶ **Tommy Moore**
Mayor
- ▶ **Linda Lewis**
Ward 1 Council Member
- ▶ **Mary Jo Dollar**
Ward 6 Council Member
- ▶ **Barry Sullivan**
City Manager
- ▶ **Martin Phillips**
Parks & Recreation Board Member
- ▶ **Mike Doughty**
Community Development Director
- ▶ **Allen McDonald**
Public Works Director
- ▶ **Andrea Grangruth**
United Way of Cooke County
- ▶ **Chad Henderson**
KNTX AM 1410
- ▶ **Susan Kleven**
Frank Buck Zoo
- ▶ **Arlene Lloyd**
Gainesville Economic Development Corporation
- ▶ **Ashley Murillo**
Guapos Barber Lounge
- ▶ **Kevin Phillips**
Chief of Police
- ▶ **Brenton Porter**
Airport Director
- ▶ **Misty Schmitz**
Tierra Real Estate Services
- ▶ **Tom Sledge**
North Texas Medical Center
- ▶ **Jason Snuggs**
Precinct 2 Commissioner

CITY STAFF

- ▶ **Paulina Schutt-Swiatkowski**
Communication and Outreach Specialist
- ▶ **Jami Maresh**
Tourism Marketing Coordinator

CONSULTING TEAM

- ▶ **Michael Schmitz**
Antero Group
- ▶ **Sean Norton**
Antero Group
- ▶ **Leslie Rios Cruz**
Antero Group
- ▶ **Jeremy Blad**
Valley Quest Design
- ▶ **Sean Hunt**
Valley Quest Design
- ▶ **Phillip Walters**
Urban3
- ▶ **Shea Bruer**
Urban3



Source: Gainesville Economic
Development Corporation

Executive Summary

The Guiding Gainesville Downtown Master Plan (“Plan”) serves as the City’s official strategic blueprint to realize the community’s vision for a vibrant, resilient, and economically robust downtown.

While the *Guiding Gainesville 2040 Comprehensive Plan* establishes a broad citywide vision, this document provides **the granular, site-specific direction required to enhance the City of Gainesville’s (“City”) historic core.** It covers all aspects of the district from historic stewardship and business recruitment to infrastructure and public space design and creates a cohesive roadmap to transform Downtown Gainesville (“Downtown”) into a premier destination that welcomes visitors while remaining a source of pride for residents.

This Plan functions as a tool for residents, City officials, and private stakeholders to coordinate policy, capital projects, and development review. By establishing a unified strategy, Gainesville can proactively shape Downtown’s evolution, ensuring that public and private investments work together to create a welcoming environment for future generations.

Parameters for Revitalization

To fulfill the community's vision of a *“vibrant and welcoming place where people gather, work, and live,”* the Plan identifies key parameters to elevate the district's performance:

- ▶ **ECONOMIC PRODUCTIVITY:** Leveraging Downtown's established status as the City's most productive area per acre to continue generating high-value retail, dining, and tourism revenue.
- ▶ **HISTORIC STEWARDSHIP:** Protecting the City's unique architectural identity while encouraging context-sensitive infill that honors the district's established character.
- ▶ **DISTRICT NAVIGATION AND BRANDING:** Enhancing the visitor experience through intuitive wayfinding and cohesive district branding that reinforces Gainesville's identity as a regional destination.
- ▶ **REGIONAL POSITIONING:** Strategically utilizing placemaking and programming to maintain a competitive edge within North Texas, ensuring Downtown remains a hub for heritage-based experiences.
- ▶ **MULTI-GENERATIONAL INCLUSIVITY:** Developing housing and public spaces that appeal to a diverse demographic spectrum, from young professionals and artists to families and long-term residents.

Summary of Findings

A data-driven analysis of existing assets and community aspirations informed the development of this Plan, focusing on the **district's fiscal health, physical character, and mobility performance:**

- ▶ **REGIONAL DRAW:** Downtown Gainesville serves as a high-productivity fiscal engine. Analysis shows that 74% of sales tax revenue originates from outside the Gainesville area, importing money that supports local community amenities.
- ▶ **EMPLOYMENT STABILITY:** The district is a stable employment hub that houses key professional services, retail, and governmental agencies.
- ▶ **BUSINESS RESILIENCE:** The district is anchored by a long-standing business community; 63% of businesses are owner-occupied, providing a buffer against rising rents and signaling deep long-term investment.

Public Realm and Space Activation

The public activation assessment integrated field observations and stakeholder input to evaluate the **performance of Downtown's gathering spots**:

- ▶ **CIVIC ANCHORS:** Facilities like the Cooke County Courthouse, the Library, and the Farmers Market provide essential green space and plaza areas for social interaction.
- ▶ **ACTIVATION POTENTIAL:** While these anchors are well-utilized, there are significant opportunities to expand activity into secondary corridors and alleyways. Stakeholders expressed a strong desire for more dining options, live music, and family-oriented programming.
- ▶ **ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS:** Acoustic interference from vehicle and train noise, as well as the “urban heat island” effect caused by uninterrupted concrete, were identified as factors that currently limit “dwell time” in certain areas.

Connectivity and Parking Performance

The Plan evaluated the **efficiency of the Downtown transportation network**, including pedestrian routes and parking utilization.

- ▶ **PARKING INFRASTRUCTURE:** The district possesses a robust supply of approximately 1,304 on-street spaces and 15 off-street lots.
- ▶ **UTILIZATION REALITY:** Observed on-street parking occupancy rates range from 6% to 20% overall, even during peak hours. This indicates that perceived parking shortages are primarily driven by a lack of directional signage and “time-to-destination” information rather than a physical lack of stalls.
- ▶ **PEDESTRIAN LEVEL OF SERVICE:** In the core, sidewalks are continuous. However, segments in the transitional neighborhoods often narrow below the 6-foot standard, which is the minimum recommended for two people to walk side-by-side comfortably or for the use of strollers and mobility devices.

Key Recommendations and Solutions

To achieve the community's vision for a resilient and thriving district, **the Plan establishes a framework of actionable recommendations and policy solutions organized into four strategic pillars:**

1. Economic Growth and Innovation

- ▶ **CULTURAL DISTRICT DESIGNATION:** Formally pursue a Texas Commission on the Arts ("TCA") Cultural District designation to unlock specialized funding and solidify the core's identity as a regional arts destination.
- ▶ **VISITORS BUREAU CENTER:** Establish a centralized "concierge" to provide resources for entrepreneurs and amenities for visitors, bridging the gap between tourists and the local business ecosystem.
- ▶ **PROACTIVE BUSINESS RECRUITMENT:** Develop vendor recruitment guidelines to attract a diverse mix of dining, retail, and entertainment options that complement the existing business mix.
- ▶ **FILM-FRIENDLY TEXAS PROGRAM:** Participate in this state program to attract film activity, leveraging historic architecture to generate new economic opportunities and creative-sector employment.

2. Downtown Character and Development

- ▶ **TWO-TIER OVERLAY SYSTEM:** Implement a Preservation Core for areas with high historic integrity and a Heritage Compatibility Zone for transitional areas. This ensures new development aligns with established massing, setbacks, and rooflines without being restrictive to growth.
- ▶ **TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT ("TOD"):** Establish a TOD node at the Santa Fe Depot to leverage Amtrak connectivity, driving mixed-use growth and creating a high-quality gateway for regional travelers.
- ▶ **URBAN RESIDENTIAL DESIGNATION:** Facilitate attainable "missing-middle" housing types, including duplexes, lofts, and artist studios, to increase residential density and support local merchants.
- ▶ **DESIGN GUIDELINES:** Consolidate clear, illustrated standards for building scale, materials, and façades to provide predictability for developers and property owners.

3. Public Space Activation

- ▶ **THE “LIVING STREET” MODEL:** Transform secondary passageways into Woonerfs or pedestrian-priority “living streets” which feature murals, catenary lighting, and outdoor dining potential to optimize the existing urban grid.
- ▶ **CULTURAL FRAMEWORK:** Execute a physical integration plan for the Cultural District, linking the Depot to Medal of Honor Park with consistent design motifs and public art installations.
- ▶ **INFRASTRUCTURE MODERNIZATION:** Implement a phased utility undergrounding program and an expanded Dumpster Beautification initiative to eliminate visual clutter and protect the district’s historic character.
- ▶ **ENVIRONMENTAL COMFORT:** Integrate ambient outdoor music systems and enhanced site furniture in high-traffic plazas to encourage prolonged social interaction and daily engagement.

4. Connectivity and Mobility

- ▶ **DOWNTOWN PEDESTRIAN PROMENADE:** Transition Main Street into a signature multimodal spine that expands pedestrian and bicycle capacity while maintaining necessary vehicle throughput.
- ▶ **COMPLETE STREETS AND COMFORT CORRIDORS:** Widen sidewalks to a minimum of 6 feet to ensure inclusive accessibility for all users. Comfort corridors or “Chill Streets” will utilize expanded tree canopies and native landscaping to provide thermal comfort and a park-like atmosphere along priority routes.
- ▶ **INTEGRATED WAYFINDING:** Deploy “Time-to-Destination” signage to communicate walking times (e.g., “3-minute walk to the Square”) and establish shared parking agreements to maximize the utility of existing private lots during off-peak hours.
- ▶ **ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN:** Develop a citywide plan with a specialized focus on Downtown to guide the systematic implementation of bicycle lanes and high-visibility pedestrian crossings.

Implementation and Stewardship

The **Guiding Gainesville Downtown Master Plan** is a living document that necessitates a shift from general municipal oversight to active district stewardship. Success is driven by the Master Implementation Matrix, which identifies the “critical path” for investment.

► **NEAR-TERM FOCUS (1-3 YEARS)**

Priorities focus on foundational policy updates, such as the Two-Tier Overlay, the TCA Cultural District designation, and the establishment of shared parking agreements.

► **COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT**

Implementation is led by a coalition including City Staff, the Gainesville Economic Development Corporation (“GEDC”), and the Downtown Gainesville Alliance (“DGA”).

► **GRANT READINESS**

The Plan adopts a “project-readiness” model, positioning the City to aggressively pursue state and federal funding to maximize public investment and minimize impact on the General Fund.

Downtown Gainesville stands as the City’s most valuable economic and cultural asset, representing a unique blend of historic character and modern opportunity. This Plan provides the strategic blueprint to amplify that value, ensuring the district remains a resilient, thriving, and high-performance center of commerce and community.

By committing to these coordinated strategies, the City is proactively shaping a future where its historic heart remains a vibrant and welcoming destination that honors its heritage while fostering innovation for generations to come. This document ensures that every public and private effort contributes to a cohesive legacy, cementing Downtown’s role as the definitive pulse of Gainesville’s cultural and economic life. ►

Table of Contents

01 SETTING THE COURSE FOR DOWNTOWN'S FUTURE	1
<i>Purpose</i>	
<i>Historic & Regional Context</i>	
<i>Downtown Character</i>	
<i>Downtown Visioning and Goals Planning Process</i>	
<i>Vision Statement</i>	
<i>Engagement Process</i>	
<i>Conclusion</i>	
02 ECONOMIC GROWTH, INNOVATION, AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY.....	17
<i>Overview</i>	
<i>Methodology</i>	
<i>Fiscal Health</i>	
<i>Goals and Recommendations</i>	
<i>Conclusion</i>	
03 DOWNTOWN CHARACTER AND DEVELOPMENT.....	31
<i>Overview</i>	
<i>Existing Land Use and Urban Character</i>	
<i>Regulations and Ordinances Influencing Development</i>	
<i>Development Approaches & Infrastructure</i>	
<i>Goals and Recommendations</i>	
<i>Conclusion</i>	
04 PUBLIC SPACE ACTIVATION	49
<i>Overview</i>	
<i>Current Conditions</i>	
<i>Goals and Recommendations</i>	
<i>Conclusion</i>	
05 CONNECTIVITY AND MOBILITY	77
<i>Overview</i>	
<i>Pedestrian Experience</i>	
<i>Roadways</i>	
<i>Parking Infrastructure</i>	
<i>Goals and Recommendations</i>	
<i>Conclusion</i>	
06 IMPLEMENTATION.....	101
<i>Introduction</i>	

The Stewardship Model
Plan Integration
Master Implementation Matrix
Active Monitoring and Annual Reporting
Conclusion

07 CONCLUSION	115
APPENDIX A: DOWNTOWN BUSINESS SURVEY	
APPENDIX B: DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN MAPS	

Acronyms

ATP: Active Transportation Plan
APA: American Planning Association
ATIIP: Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program
BCPI: Bloomberg’s Center for Public Innovation
BIG: Business Improvement Grant
BUILD: Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development
CDBG: Community Development Block Grant
CDR: Community Development & Revitalization
CIP: Capital Improvement Plan
CLG: Certified Local Government
CPTED: Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
DGA: Downtown Gainesville Alliance
DSUMP: Downtown Street and Utility Maintenance Program
EECBG: Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant
EMS: Emergency Medical Service
FHWA: Federal Highway Administration
GEDC: Gainesville Economic Development Corporation
GISD: Gainesville Independent School District
GLO: Texas General Land Office

HOLD: Heritage Preservation Overlay District
HOT: Hotel Occupancy Tax
HSGNA: Historic South Gainesville Neighborhood Association
KPI: Key Performance Indicator
LPI: Lead Pedestrian Interval
NACTO: National Association of City Transportation Officials
NCTC: North Central Texas College
NEA: National Endowment for the Arts
PUDO: Pick-up/Drop-Off
RCP: Resilient Communities Program
SBDC: Small Business Development Center
SS4A: Safe Streets for All
STBG: Surface Transportation Block Grant
SUMP: Street and Utility Maintenance Program
TA: Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside
TAP: Transportation Alternatives Program
TCA: Texas Commission on the Arts
TML: Texas Municipal League
TNC: Transportation Network Companies
TOD: Transit-Oriented Development
TFC: Texas Film Commission
THC: Texas Historical Commission
TxDOT: Texas Department of Transportation



01 **SETTING THE COURSE FOR DOWNTOWN'S FUTURE**

Purpose

The ***Guiding Gainesville Downtown Master Plan*** (“Plan”) serves as the strategic implementation guide to realize the community’s vision for a vibrant, resilient, and economically robust downtown. While the *Guiding Gainesville 2040 Comprehensive Plan* (“Guiding Gainesville 2040”) establishes a citywide vision, this document provides the granular, site-specific direction required to revitalize the City of Gainesville’s (“City” or “Gainesville”) historic core. It covers all aspects of the district from historic preservation and business recruitment to infrastructure and public space design, creating a cohesive roadmap to transform Downtown Gainesville (“Downtown”) into a destination that welcomes visitors while remaining a source of pride for locals.

Why Downtown Matters

Downtown serves as the gateway to the area’s history, embodying the heart and culture of the City. Successful cities leverage their downtowns as cultural assets and economic engines that generate tourism, retail, and dining revenue that circulate back into the local economy to support essential services.

Community feedback confirms that residents value Downtown’s aesthetic charm and historic identity. However, stakeholders also identified specific physical and operational challenges, such as parking management, walkability, and amenity gaps, which would enhance the district’s potential. Historically, Downtown Gainesville has evolved without the guidance of a dedicated master plan. The absence of a unified strategy has made it difficult to address these challenges holistically.

Therefore, developing this first comprehensive Master Plan is a critical step in fulfilling the vision of *Guiding Gainesville 2040*. By establishing a unified roadmap, Gainesville

can proactively shape Downtown’s evolution. It will encourage desirable development, protect historic assets, strengthen the local economy, and improve the quality of life for all.

Downtown is a significant source of tax-generating revenue, generating economic activity that supports public services, infrastructure, and citywide community amenities. Moreover, rising expenditures on public services, maintenance, and improvements highlight the need for a balanced strategy that generates income not only from local taxpayers but also from tourists who benefit from Gainesville’s historic and cultural assets. Given downtown’s contribution to reinvestment, it is also essential that public infrastructure and private development grow together. **This forward-looking approach ensures that public and private investments work together, resulting in a downtown that reflects community priorities, supports local businesses, and creates a welcoming environment for future generations.**

Downtown Study Boundaries

To fully support this long-term vision, this Plan extends the Downtown boundaries set forth in the 1997 Comprehensive Plan. The study area, illustrated in **Figure 1.1** on the following page, encompasses the full gamut of historic landmarks, cultural destinations, and emerging mixed-use corridors that define Downtown's identity. It also expands the study area to cover Medal of Honor Park, among other activity centers. This broader framework ensures that future development and preservation align seamlessly with the values outlined in *Guiding Gainesville 2040*.

Intended Audience and Document Usage

This Plan serves as a tool for residents, officials, and stakeholders, guiding policies and recommendations. Each group plays a distinct role in the Plan's development, implementation, and long-term success:



CITY STAFF

Directing daily and long-term decisions on capital projects, development review, and budgeting to ensure departmental actions align with the community's vision.



COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Empowering residents to engage in the planning process, understand the rationale for City actions, and champion projects that reflect shared goals.



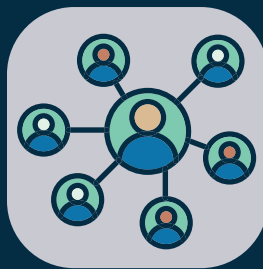
DOWNTOWN BUSINESS OWNERS

Guiding owners to collaborate on City initiatives, leverage incentives, and provide operational feedback that informs continuous improvement.



CITY COUNCIL

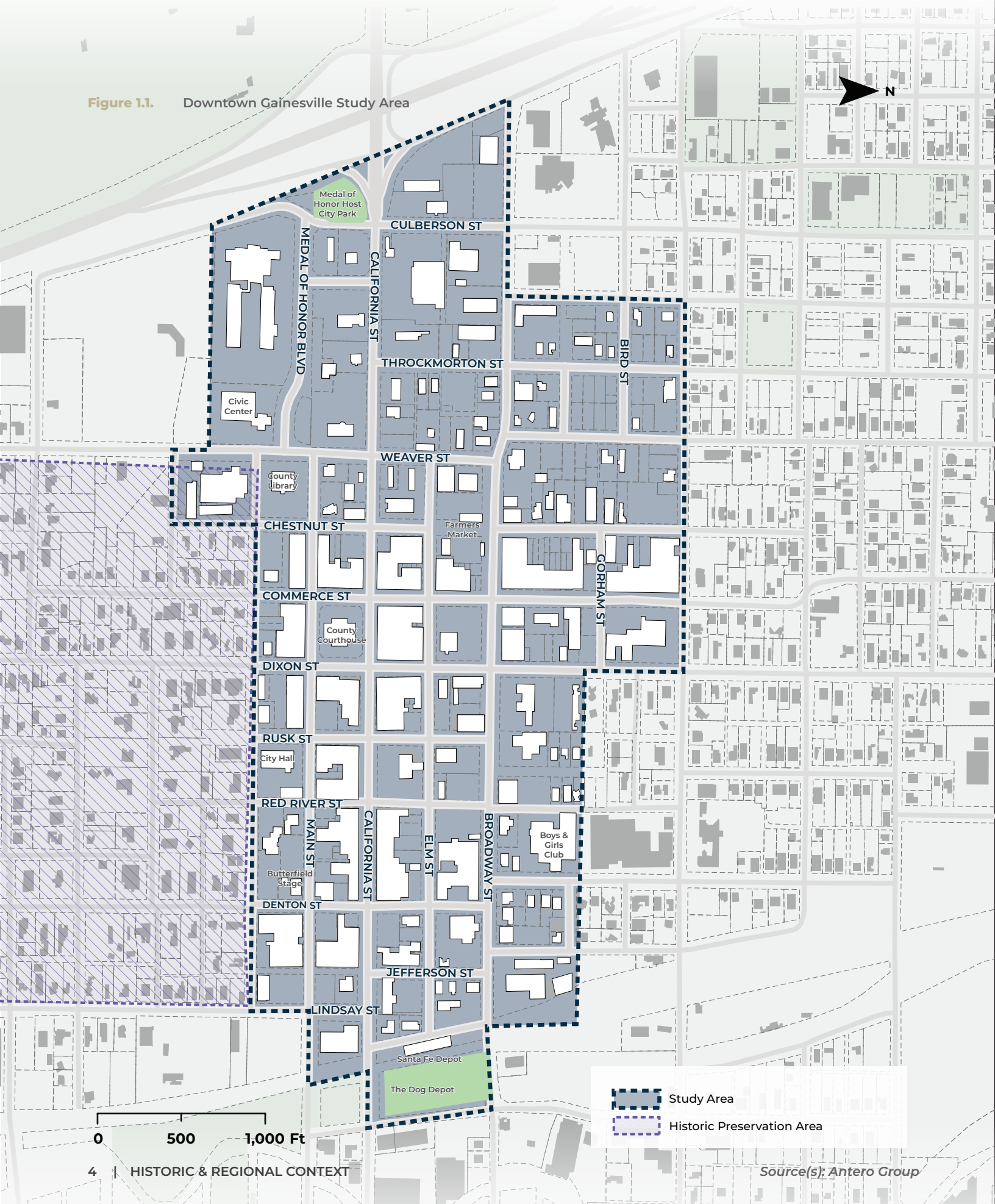
Functioning as the central policy guide for defensible and community-supported legislative actions and resource allocation.

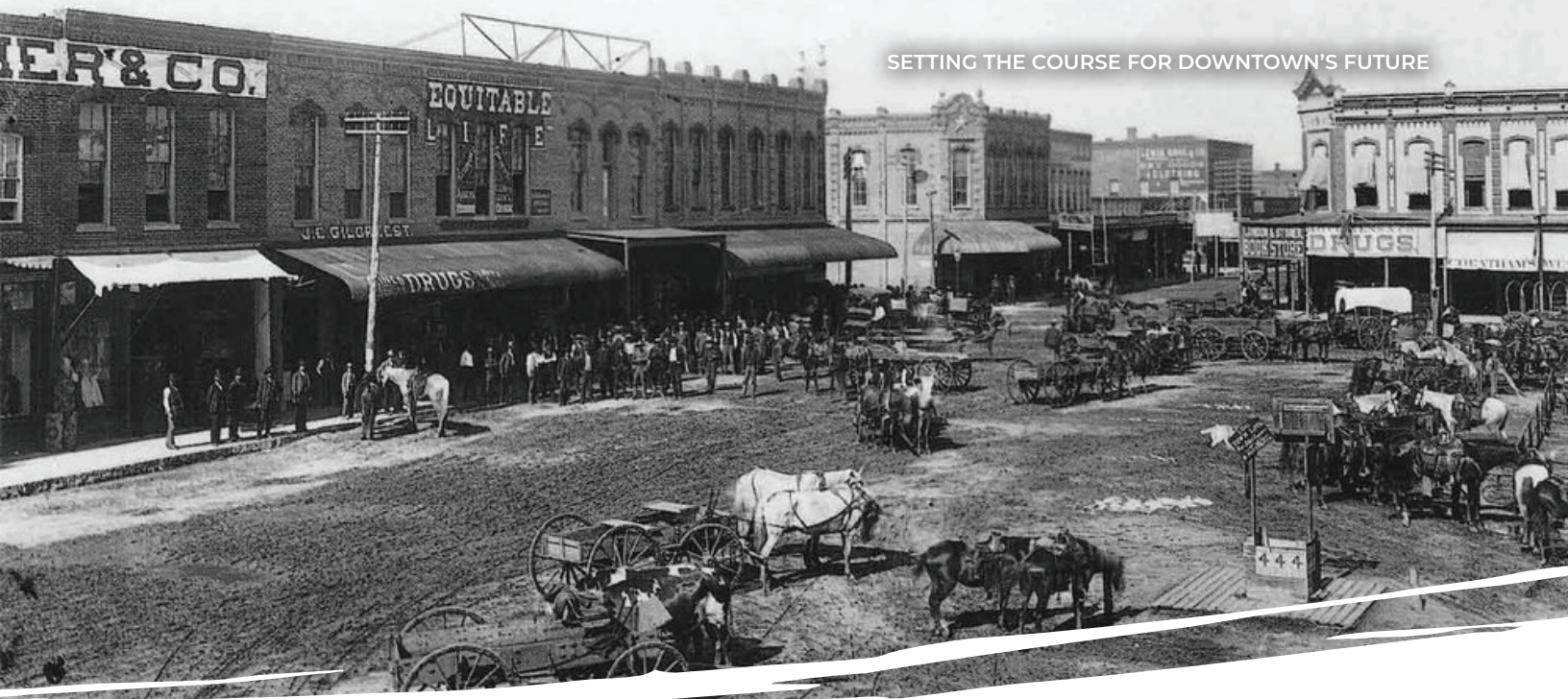


DOWNTOWN GAINESVILLE ALLIANCE

Serving as the primary partner for programming, advocacy, and coordination between the City and the private sector.

Figure 1.1. Downtown Gainesville Study Area





SETTING THE COURSE FOR DOWNTOWN'S FUTURE

Historic & Regional Context

A city's history can be understood as the collective story shaped by its defining places, key moments, and cultural identity. Understanding this history is fundamental to effective planning, as it guides decisions on preservation, land use, and development. This ensures revitalization honors the City's established character. Together, these elements reflect a community's origins and influence the legacy it carries forward.



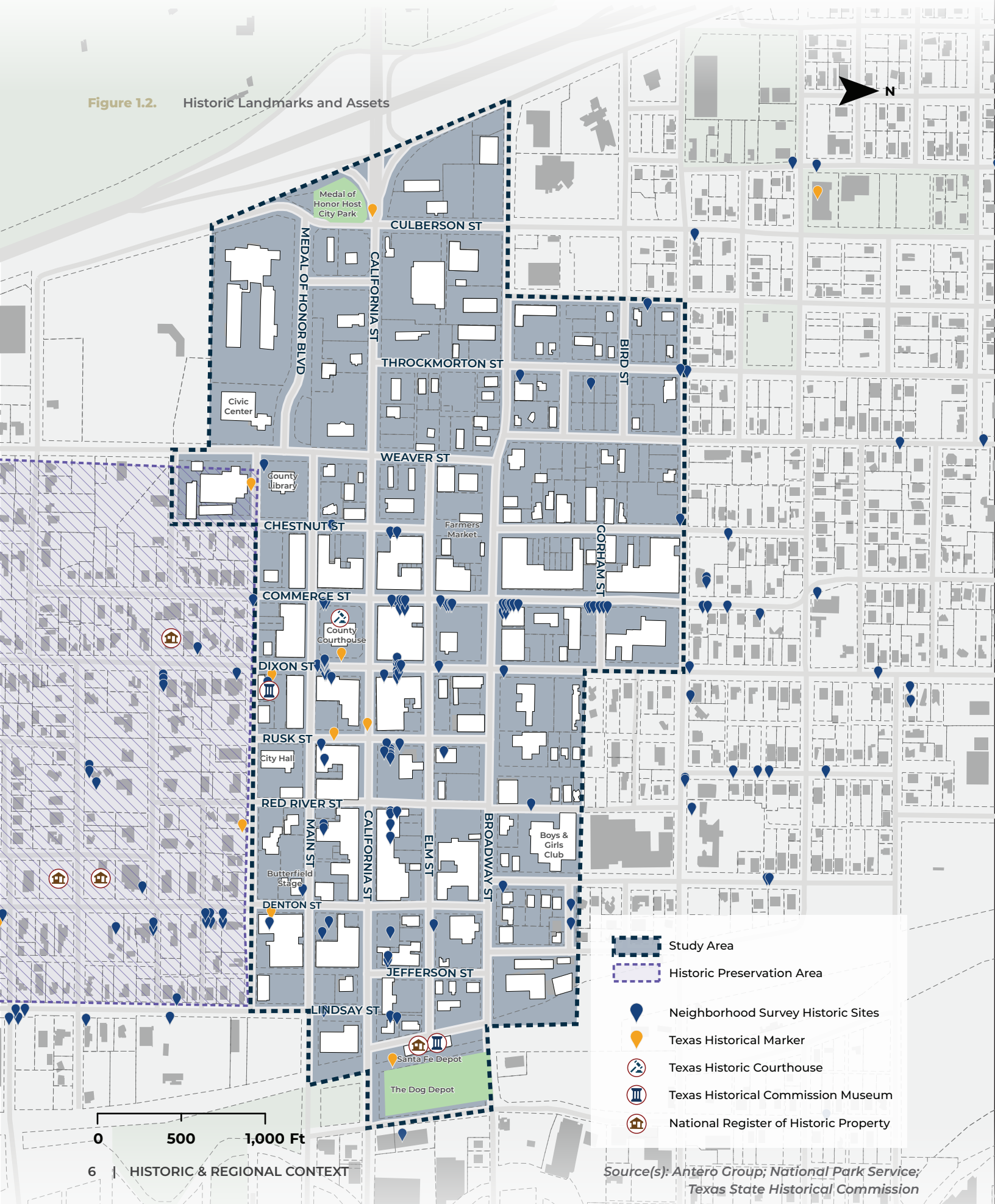
Source: Morton Museum of Cooke County

Commerce & Transportation

Downtown Gainesville's character is rooted in its longstanding role as a regional crossroad of commerce and transportation. Established in the mid-19th century, the City served as a stop for the Butterfield Overland Mail before transforming into a critical shipping hub with the arrival of the Gulf Coast and Santa Fe Railway. Today, the Amtrak Heartland Flyer continues this legacy, linking the City to a new generation of travelers between Oklahoma City and Fort Worth.

This enduring function as a trade and transit center underscores Gainesville's strategic importance within North Texas and informs current planning efforts by providing a natural foundation for the transit-oriented development and enhanced connectivity strategies detailed in **Chapter 5**.

Figure 1.2. Historic Landmarks and Assets



Civic Duty and Commitment

Gainesville's identity is equally defined by a deep commitment to honoring military service. Designated by Congress in 2001 as the nation's only Medal of Honor Host City, the community honors this legacy through annual public celebrations of service and sacrifice. This commitment is physically anchored in Downtown by the Medal of Honor Park, a dedicated space for remembrance featuring a waterfall, landscaped grounds, and tributes to recipients. This tradition not only shapes Gainesville's cultural identity but also informs downtown planning by influencing public-space design, event programming, and tourism strategies that reinforce the City's role as a regional destination for heritage-based experiences.



Together, these historic milestones shape Downtown Gainesville's unique identity and continue to influence its cultural and economic vitality.

Regional Context

Across North Texas, cities are revitalizing their urban cores to attract visitors through strategic placemaking, enhanced pedestrian streetscapes, and targeted programming. Communities such as Denton, Denison, and McKinney serve as regional benchmarks, actively investing in placemaking and programming.

- **Signature Events:** Cities like Grapevine, which is designated as the “*Christmas Capital of Texas*,” drive tourism through seasonal festivals.
- **Branding & Wayfinding:** Communities like Lewisville have strengthened their identity through cohesive district branding.

Downtown Character

A City's downtown character is defined by its uses, activities, and physical features that shape how people experience the area. Downtown Gainesville is influenced by a rich collection of cultural, architectural, and natural assets.

Historic Charm & Commercial Mix

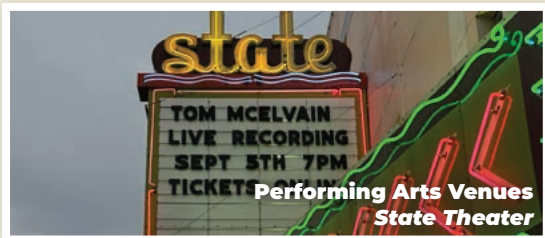
Downtown a diverse blend of housing, businesses, and public services. Historic homes and landmarks, identified on the map in **Figure 1.2**, showcase an impressive range of architectural styles, from Neoclassical to Victorian. These structures tell the story of Gainesville's past and provide a unique backdrop for commerce.



Boutiques
Infinite Rain



Local Restaurants & Bars
The County Seat Kitchen & Cocktails



Performing Arts Venues
State Theater



Shops & Art Galleries
Cahoots Handbags & Paige Davidson Studio



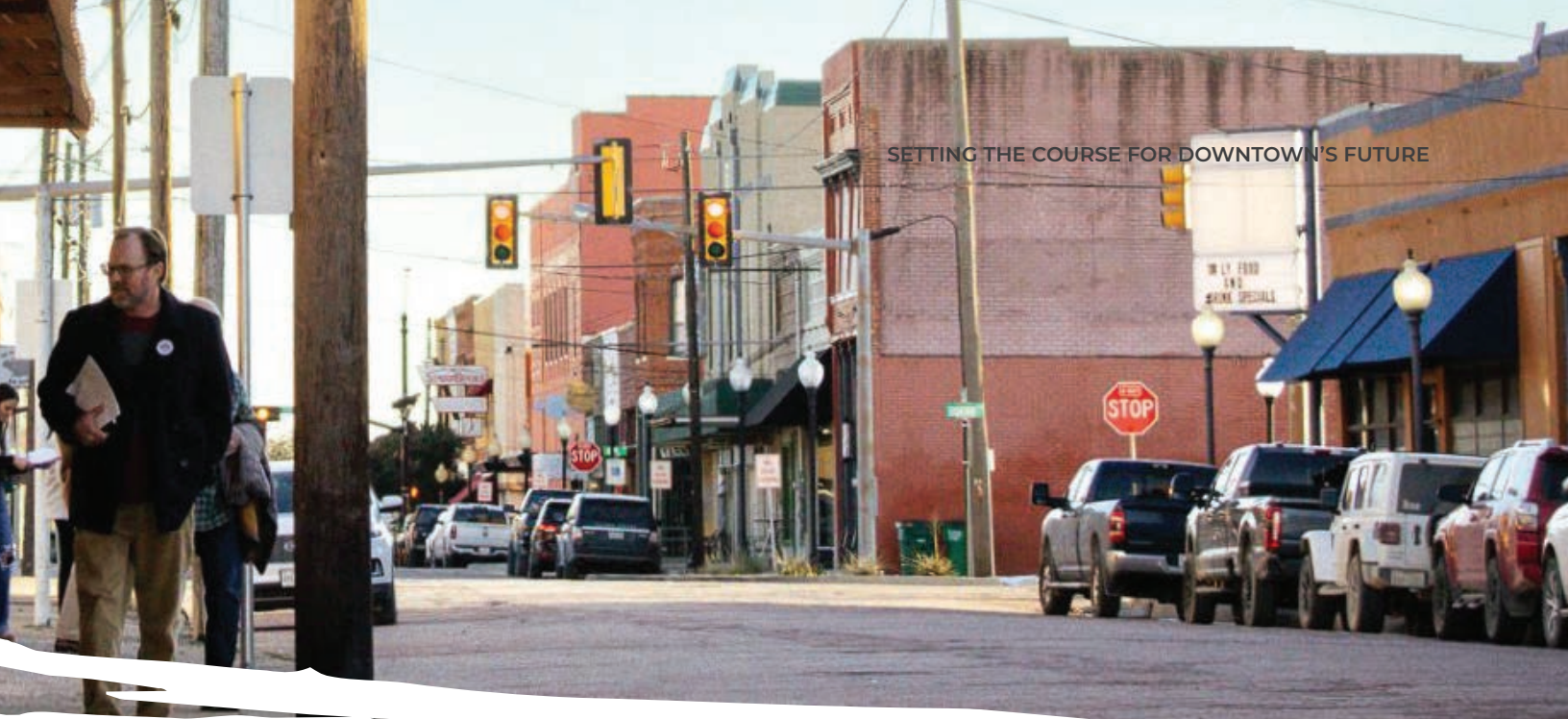
A variety of local businesses operate within the district, including clothing boutiques, restaurants, bed-and-breakfasts, and entertainment venues, such as art studios offering classes. These amenities complement professional offices and personal service establishments, including hairstylists, florists, and similar services. Together, they generate consistent foot traffic and contribute to local sales tax revenue.

In addition to commercial activity, Downtown Gainesville serves as a governmental hub, housing key Cooke County, and state agencies. This concentration of civic workforce supports daily activity and economic vitality.



Venues & Shared Workspace
Eucalyptus Room





Downtown Visioning and Goals Planning Process

Similar to *Guiding Gainesville 2040*, this Plan was shaped through a transparent, data-driven process that focused on understanding the community's aspirations. Through coordinated efforts among business owners, the Advisory Committee, and community partners, the Plan articulates a shared vision for Downtown's long-term growth. This Plan is structured as follows:

Chapter 1. Setting the Course for Downtown Gainesville's Future

Establishes the Plan's foundation by examining Downtown's history, importance, and the planning context.

Chapter 2. Economic Growth, Innovation, and Fiscal Responsibility

Summarizes Downtown's fiscal health and business conditions, outlining strategies to support a strong, sustainable economy.

Chapter 3. Downtown Character and Development

Examines the district's historic character and development patterns, creating strategies and regulations to preserve Gainesville's heritage.

Chapter 4. Public Space Activation

Evaluates existing public spaces and programming, identifying strategies to enhance the downtown corridor.

Chapter 5. Connectivity and Mobility

Assesses current mobility conditions and identifies gaps in connectivity, detailing strategies to improve access across all downtown corridors.

Chapter 6. Implementation

Provides a clear framework for action, including an implementation matrix, responsible partners, and potential funding opportunities.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

Summarizes existing conditions and recommendations, reinforcing the vision and strategic direction for Downtown's future.

Vision Statement

Building on community descriptions of Downtown as “beautiful,” “vibrant,” and “growing,” the planning team developed three draft vision statements and shared for public feedback. Through this consensus-based process, a preferred vision was selected to define the district’s direction.

The following statement now serves as the guiding framework for the entirety of this Plan:

Downtown Gainesville will be a vibrant and welcoming place where people gather, work, and live. The City will invest in downtown revitalization efforts, infill development, and bicycle infrastructure, supporting an active and thriving city center.

This vision is supported by five core principles:

▶ **A Vibrant Downtown**

Creating a dynamic destination that attracts visitors and serves as a community gathering spot.

▶ **Active and Passive Natural Spaces**

Integrating green spaces, parks, and bike and walking paths into the urban fabric.

▶ **A Dedication to Culture**

Nurturing artistic talent while strengthening Downtown’s presence as a dynamic arts district.

▶ **Sustainable Growth**

Bolstering the local economy to support small businesses and tourism.

▶ **Downtown Revitalization and Infill**

Encouraging reinvestment and context-sensitive infill to strengthen the downtown core.



Engagement Process

The planning process utilized a variety of communication methods to ensure the Plan accurately represents the perspectives of the community. From digital outreach to face-to-face workshops, this inclusive approach fostered a sense of ownership among residents and stakeholders.

Online Engagement

PROJECT WEBSITE

The planning team utilized GuidingGainesville.org as the central platform for the *Downtown Master Plan*. The site provided key dates, draft materials, and feedback opportunities in both English and Spanish to ensure accessibility for all residents.



DIGITAL & SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH

To broaden awareness, the City actively promoted project activities through Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. These campaigns successfully directed residents back to the project website and ensured consistent visibility for workshops and surveys.

Advisory Committee Involvement

A dedicated Advisory Committee comprising local business owners, nonprofit representatives, and City staff provided ongoing direction. Formed in July 2024, the group met regularly to review working drafts and refine the Plan's strategies. The committee also

participated in a walking tour of Downtown to evaluate pedestrian routes, visual quality, and areas for improvement firsthand. This site-level evaluation directly informed the Master Plan's recommendations.



**Downtown is busiest
on Wednesdays from
11 AM to 2PM.**

Downtown Business Community Input

Input from the Downtown business community was gathered through the *Downtown Gainesville Business Survey*. The results reflect a stable, long-standing business community, with many owners operating in the area over ten years. The survey also identified priority needs that affect business owners' ability to operate, grow, and attract customers downtown. Complete survey results can be found in **Appendix A**.

→ **Parking Operations**

Parking remained a primary concern, with 40 percent of respondents rating customer parking availability as poor or very poor. Owners noted that limited space, unclear layouts, and inconsistent enforcement of time limits make it difficult for customers to find convenient parking. Many suggested reorganizing parking areas and improving signage to make public parking easier to navigate.

→ **Operational Needs**

Beyond parking, business owners highlighted critical operational needs. Many expressed a desire for designated areas for trash storage and disposal tucked away from public view to maintain a clean, attractive streetscape.

→ **Visibility & Safety**

Owners requested improved exterior lighting to enhance safety and create a more welcoming evening environment. Additionally, there was a strong consensus on the need for clearer signage and wayfinding to guide visitors to shops.

→ **Streetscape**

Owners identified opportunities to improve pavement quality and add landscaping to strengthen Downtown's overall visual appeal. Many also noted that incorporating interactive storefront features such as awnings or hands-on attractions would help draw pedestrian attention.

Collectively, these comments reflect a shared commitment to enhancing Downtown's appearance, visibility, and walkability to support local businesses and stimulate economic activity.

Public Workshops

The planning process included four public workshops, all of which incorporated Downtown as a key topic. The first comprehensive workshop drew more than 200 attendees, demonstrating broad community interest. The final workshop, dedicated specifically to Downtown recommendations, attracted approximately 80 participants.

Across these engagements, feedback centered on minor refinements rather than major concerns—signaling strong community support for the Plan's direction and a clear desire to see meaningful changes implemented.



Guiding Gainesville Public Workshop

Community Input

Respondents to the *Guiding Gainesville 2040* survey identified distinct priorities for Downtown. The survey included 17 questions specifically focused on the district, covering visitation habits, amenities, and opportunities for improvement. **The responses provide a clear picture of how the community experiences Downtown today and what they envision for its future.**

→ Appearance and Character

Over half of the respondents view Downtown as attractive, citing its historic architecture and unique sense of place. However, participants consistently noted that preserving this identity must be paired with enhancements. Desired improvements include public art, landscaping, and beautification efforts to make the district more vibrant and memorable.

→ Desired Activation

Respondents expressed strong interest in expanding the variety of uses in Downtown. Many highlighted a desire for more dining options, live music, events, and cultural programming. A common theme was the need for activities that appeal to all ages, especially families. Participants emphasized that regular festivals, markets, and seasonal events are key to cultivating an active, inclusive environment.

→ Housing

The community expressed openness to new residential options in Downtown. Respondents supported apartments, lofts, and mixed-use formats that bring residents within walking distance of shops, noting that additional housing would help sustain local businesses and support a 24-hour environment.

→ Parking Conditions

Parking signage and availability were commonly cited as deterrents to visiting Downtown. Opinions varied, with some respondents believing supply is adequate while others find it challenging. However, many agreed that time limits should be communicated and enforced more consistently. Suggestions included expanded wayfinding and reconfiguring parking layout to improve user experience.

Conclusion

Downtown Gainesville's rich blend of historic character, cultural assets, and emerging opportunities positions it for a vibrant and resilient future. The insights gathered through this extensive engagement process, combined with an understanding of existing conditions, underscore both the district's strengths and its untapped potential. Residents envision a lively, welcoming, and culturally grounded downtown that honors its heritage while embracing new economic, recreational, and artistic opportunities.

The following chapter details the analysis of the district's economic health and outlines strategies to leverage these assets for sustainable growth. ➤

The rest of this page is intentionally blank.

This page is intentionally blank.



02 ECONOMIC GROWTH, INNOVATION, AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Overview

Downtown Gainesville features a mix of small, locally owned businesses and professional service providers that collectively anchor the district's daytime activity. These establishments support routine daily activity, serving residents, employees, and visitors who rely on Downtown for dining, services, and retail needs. Many businesses report a notable increase in visitors during mid-week activity, indicating a strong draw driven by lunchtime, professional appointments, and convenience retail.

This reported trend is further reinforced by the Community Input Survey results: 72% of respondents visit Downtown primarily to dine, shop, or access services. **This underscores the district's role as a hub for essential day-to-**

day activities, rather than solely for special events. Maintaining and strengthening this role is critical to Downtown and the broader City's long-term fiscal health.

Methodology

Given Downtown Gainesville's vital role, evaluating the district's fiscal resiliency is critical. This analysis incorporates feedback and quantitative data, including estimates prepared by Urban3 and information provided by City and County sources. Key data sources include:

- ▶ **Cooke County Appraisal District**
- ▶ **City of Gainesville 2024 Adopted Budget**
- ▶ **2020 City Street and Utility Maintenance Program ("SUMP")**
- ▶ **Guiding Gainesville Community Survey, which included Downtown-specific questions to inform key topics from the perspectives of local residents and visitors.**
- ▶ **Downtown Business Survey, which collected 57 responses from a range of Downtown businesses, including non-profits, professional offices, and restaurants. This survey captured perspectives on real estate costs, operational challenges, and parking conditions, providing insight into key factors affecting the district's fiscal health and long-term viability.**

Together, these sources provide a comprehensive overview of Downtown's fiscal performance, land use productivity, and economic role within the broader community.

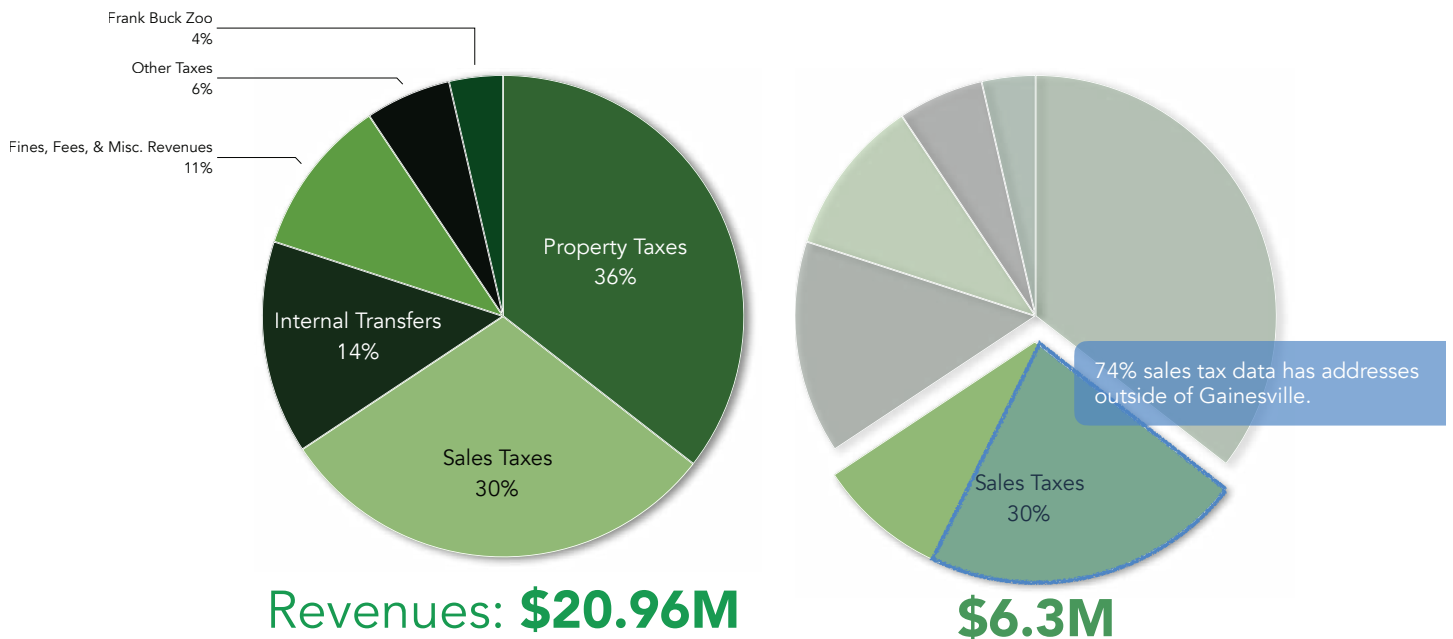
Fiscal Health

Community aspirations for Downtown closely align with broader citywide goals for economic vitality. **Guiding Gainesville 2040** identifies a need for higher-paying jobs, a diverse local economy, and increased private investment. Downtown plays a vital role in achieving these goals due to its high concentration of taxable value, employment density, and infrastructure investment.

Attracting industries that pay higher wages, such as technology, design, specialized healthcare, finance, or creative-sector enterprises, would raise income levels and support improvements in quality of life for residents. These sectors also tend to generate secondary economic benefits through increased spending at local businesses and demand for professional services.

Expanding entertainment, cultural programming, and restaurant options are equally vital for strengthening the area's fiscal performance. These uses help retain local spending and recapture regional spending potential. Downtown Gainesville functions as a fiscal engine, capturing regional spending and generating significantly higher sales tax revenue per acre than peripheral development. As seen in **Figure 2.1**, 74% of the sales tax data comes from outside the Gainesville area, reflecting a regional draw. This pattern imports tax revenue that benefits local service expenditures rather than relying solely on the circulation of local funds.

Figure 2.1. Downtown Sales Tax Contributions



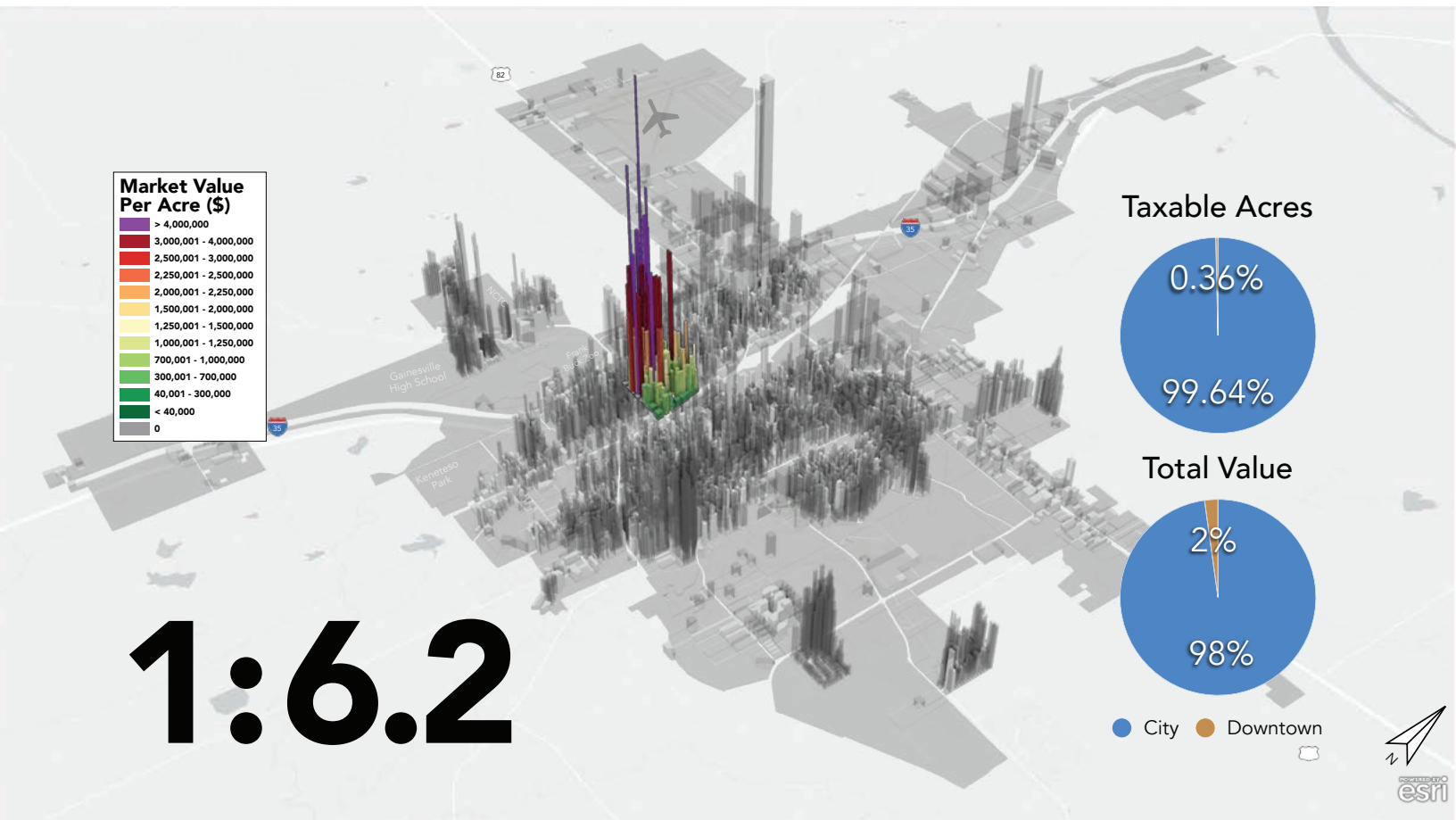
Source(s): Gainesville Adopted Budget (2024); Gainesville Sales Tax Data (Aug. 2024)

Productivity

Downtown Gainesville generates a high level of economic activity relative to its size.

Fiscal productivity analyses indicate strong sales and property tax performance, reinforcing downtown's role as a critical contributor to the City's overall financial health. Land Use productivity is the amount of tax revenue generated per acre of land. The productivity ratio, calculated by comparing public investment to taxable output, demonstrates the district's efficiency in generating revenue per acre when compared to other development patterns. This productivity ratio is shown in **Figure 2.2.**

Figure 2.2. Productivity Ratio (Downtown to City)



Economic and Employment Composition

Downtown Gainesville reflects a traditional courthouse-square environment with a heavy mix of professional services, local retail, personal care services, and a modest but active food and beverage sector. While the Downtown Business Survey captures a snapshot of the district's diversity, the feedback reinforces a community-wide demand for expanded dining and entertainment variety to complement the existing service-oriented economy. The industry composition, shown in **Figure 2.3**, of the downtown business survey responses is diverse but weighted toward service-oriented sectors:

→ Professional Services

Comprising legal firms, real estate offices, and healthcare providers, professional services represent the largest share of Downtown business establishments. While this sector accounts for nearly one-third of the district's business mix, it serves as the second-largest employment base with approximately 97 jobs, averaging six employees per establishment.

→ Retail

Specialty shops and boutiques constitute the second-largest business sector. These establishments are critical drivers of foot traffic and provide the "active frontages" necessary for a vibrant pedestrian environment..

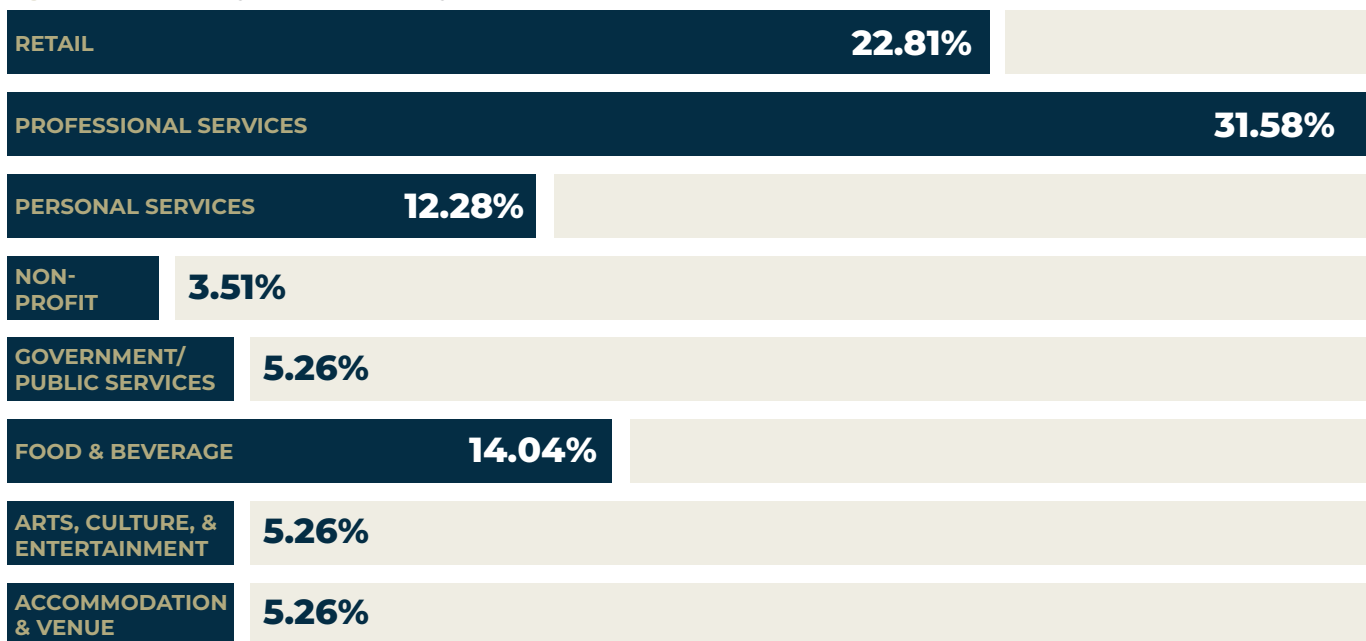
→ Government and Public Services

Although this sector represents a smaller percentage of total establishments, it is the primary employment anchor for the district. With a total of 139 employees, this sector is driven by Gainesville's role as the Cooke County seat and includes facilities such as the Cooke County Courthouse and the Texas Department of Public Safety. Government workers provide a consistent daytime population that supports the surrounding retail and dining ecosystem.

→ Food and Beverage

The dining sector remains a focal point for activation. According to the Community Input Survey, **72% of respondents visit Downtown primarily for dining and shopping.** This suggests a significant

Figure 2.3. Primary Business Industry



Source(s): Downtown Business Survey (2025)

opportunity to capture “leakage” by expanding restaurant options to serve both residents and the 230+ daytime employees in the professional and government sectors.

→ **Personal Services**

This sector, including hair salons, spas, and barber lounges, provides a steady contribution to daily activity. Like professional services, this sector averages six employees per establishment and relies on high-visibility storefronts to attract recurring local clientele.

→ **Arts, Culture, and Entertainment**

Currently a modest portion of the business mix, this sector holds the highest potential for growth through the proposed Cultural District designation. Strengthening this sector will diversify the Downtown economy and extend activity into the evening hours.

SUPPORTING SECTORS

→ **Accommodation and Venue**

These facilities support community gatherings and small conferences, helping to attract regional activity into the Downtown core.

→ **Non-Profit**

Charitable and community-based organizations provide essential services and contribute to the district’s social fabric.

The concentration of government and professional service employees creates a stable foundation for the Downtown economy. The impact of these workers extends beyond direct payroll; as daily commuters, they contribute to the local economy through routine spending on fuel, midday dining, and convenience retail. This captive audience represents a critical market for new businesses looking to establish a presence in Gainesville.



Business Stability, Ownership, and Challenges

The district's strong fiscal productivity is directly underpinned by the tenure of its business community. Long-term business retention is critical for maintaining the consistent sales tax generation and property value growth identified in the fiscal analysis. A high turnover rate would undermine this reliable tax base; fortunately, Gainesville benefits from a deeply rooted downtown business community.

Almost half of downtown business owners indicated they have operated in the district for more than 10 years, signaling long-term investment and fiscal resilience. A key indicator of this stability is the 63% rate of owner-occupancy, which significantly reduces a business's overhead costs. This frees up funds for reinvesting in operations, improvements, or long-term growth. It also makes businesses less susceptible to displacement, providing a buffer against rising rents in North Texas.

Supporting these reinvestment efforts, the Gainesville Economic Development Corporation offers the Business Improvement Grant ("BIG") Program, providing financial assistance to make exterior building improvements, an example of which is seen in **Figure 2.4**, with up to a 50% reimbursement on up to \$25,000 of improvement costs. The business must be in the Central Area Commercial District, a zoning designation, which covers the majority of the Downtown area.

Despite these strengths, parking remains a primary concern for both patrons and employees. Limited parking availability and the perception of inadequate parking management can deter visitors and employees alike, resulting in reduced foot traffic and diminished sales tax revenue for the City. Addressing parking challenges remains essential for sustaining economic vitality.

Figure 2.4. Business Improvement Grant (BIG) Recipient



Source(s): Gainesville Economic Development Corporation



Creative and Cultural Assets

Given Gainesville's historic character, emerging cultural resources, and concentration of creative assets, the City will actively pursue a formal cultural designation.

Pursuing this designation offers strategic opportunities to fortify economic, social, and cultural vibrancy while enhancing its identity as the community's historic core.

A cultural designation can unlock new funding opportunities at the state and federal level, supporting arts programming, preservation efforts, and public space improvements. These resources can be leveraged to expand cultural events, attract visitors, and enhance the pedestrian experience for residents and tourists alike.

In addition, designation provides a foundation for cohesive branding. Strategic and consistent branding highlights the district's historic and cultural character, enhancing its visibility. Branding initiatives can extend across signage, marketing materials, digital platforms, and

events, reinforcing downtown's identity and strengthening its position as a regional destination.

Economic benefits of a cultural designation include the potential to diversify the local economy by fostering growth in creative industries. Supporting artists, cultural entrepreneurs, and associated businesses generates new employment opportunities, stimulates secondary spending at restaurants, retail, and service businesses, and contributes to household income growth. These economic activities also support increased property values and tax revenues, further enhancing downtown's fiscal sustainability.

By establishing a recognized cultural identity, **Downtown Gainesville can celebrate its heritage, expand employment in creative sectors, attract visitors, and reinforce its role as a vibrant, economically resilient, and culturally rich destination.**

Goals and Recommendations



2.A. Foster Business Development and District Management

2.A.1: SUPPORT BUSINESS GROWTH BY EQUIPPING NEW AND EXISTING BUSINESSES WITH THE RESOURCES, TRAINING, AND PROCESSES NEEDED TO THRIVE.

2.A.1.a: Partner with Regional Institutions for Business Workshops

The City will partner with the Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Gainesville Alliance (“DGA”), the North Central Texas College (“NCTC”) Small Business Development Center (“SBDC”), and the Gainesville Economic Development Corporation (“GEDC”) to host quarterly workshops for current and prospective business owners. These sessions will address design guidelines, funding programs, permitting processes, and applicable codes and development standards that impact downtown operations. The partnership with the NCTC SBDC specifically leverages their expertise in helping entrepreneurs develop robust business plans and providing specialized training for small business owners, ensuring local enterprises possess both the operational skills and regulatory knowledge required to succeed. By improving clarity around regulatory requirements, the workshops will help reduce barriers to business growth and encourage reinvestment within the downtown district.

In addition to regulatory guidance, the workshops will provide opportunities for peer learning with neighboring chambers

of commerce and collaboration through coordination with members of the DGA.

Sharing best practices, lessons learned, and successful program models from peer communities will support local businesses and strengthen downtown’s entrepreneurial ecosystem.

To ensure inclusiveness, the City will also offer quarterly mini-sessions tailored to vendors without brick-and-mortar locations, such as pop-up businesses and market vendors. These sessions will focus on permits, health and safety requirements, and pathways to establishing permanent storefronts, ensuring that entrepreneurs understand the steps necessary to expand their operations within downtown Gainesville.

As a potential model, the **Oak Cliff Chamber of Commerce’s Small Business Incubator Program** demonstrates a structured approach to advancing small business growth through a combination of classroom-based education, mentorship, and coaching. Similar programs select a cohort of businesses through an application process and provide targeted training to strengthen operations, increase revenues, and navigate regulatory requirements. Gainesville can adapt elements

of this model at an appropriate scale to **foster a robust, resilient, and well-supported downtown business environment.**



2.A.1.b: Create a Visitors Bureau Center to Provide a Central Point for Business Resources and Essential Amenities

The City will evaluate the establishment of a Visitors Bureau Center to provide a centralized hub for information, services, and resources for both visitors and local enterprises. This facility will serve as the district's primary “concierge,” offering guidance on local attractions, parking, and essential public amenities, including restrooms, seating, and hydration stations.

Beyond tourism, the center will function as a Business Resource Hub to support entrepreneurs seeking to establish or expand operations within Gainesville. By providing clear, accessible information on permitting, local incentives, and networking opportunities, the center reduces “barrier-to-entry” friction for prospective business owners.

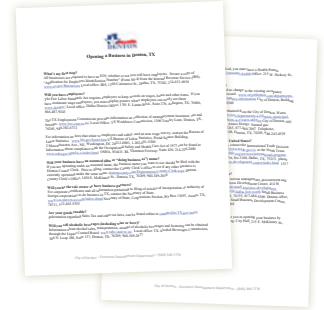
Gainesville will adopt a best-practice model used in other North Texas municipalities by developing integrated materials that promote Downtown as a premier destination for dining, retail, and cultural experiences.

These materials will provide engaging, interactive information for patrons while they utilize the center's amenities. The facility will feature rotating displays of local business products and services, as well as digital event promotion tools. Together, these elements bridge the gap between visitors and the local business ecosystem, contributing to a vibrant, well-managed district.

2.A.1.c: Develop vendor recruitment guidelines to proactively attract a diverse mix of dining, retail, and entertainment options

The City will develop vendor recruitment guidelines to proactively attract a diverse mix of dining, retail, and entertainment uses that support a vibrant and well-managed downtown. Clear, user-friendly guidance will help prospective business owners understand employment requirements, regulatory processes, and available resources.

As a best practice, the nearby city of Denton provides a concise two-page guide outlining what entrepreneurs can expect when establishing a business, including key points of contact within the economic development department. Gainesville can build this model by creating similar materials and establishing a coordinated business recruitment approach in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, the GEDC, real estate professionals, and other stakeholders. This coordinated effort may also include hosting networking events, workshops, and informational sessions to connect entrepreneurs, property owners, and service providers. It will support business retention, strengthening the business ecosystem.



2.A.1.d: Participate in the Film-Friendly Texas Program to attract film activity and generate new economic opportunities

Participation in the Film-Friendly Texas Program would position Gainesville as a welcoming and film-ready community, leveraging its historic downtown, landmark architecture, and surrounding landscapes as attractive filming locations. Film and media production activity has demonstrated economic benefits in comparable Texas communities, generating short-term employment, supporting local creative professionals, and increasing demand for local services.

Film productions create direct employment opportunities for local artists, performers, technicians, and support staff, while also generating indirect employment in hospitality, food service, retail, transportation, and event services. These industries benefit from extended stays by production crews, increased visitor spending, and higher utilization of downtown businesses during filming periods.

Communities such as Fort Worth have successfully used the Film-Friendly Texas designation to attract major productions, including *The Madison*, a *Yellowstone* spin-off. Smaller communities such as Palestine and Lockhart have similarly leveraged their historic downtowns and proximity to other filming locations to generate economic activity at a scale appropriate to their size. **Gainesville will create an asset map, showcasing a gallery of eligible locations for filming, easing research for prospective filmmakers.**

Locations, such as the historic Santa Fe Depot and cohesive downtown architecture enhance Downtown's competitiveness as a filming environment capable of supporting a range of production needs.

In many Film-Friendly Texas communities, the Chamber of Commerce and local

Over time, increased film and media production activity can **contribute to sales tax growth through spending on lodging, dining, fuel, and retail, while also elevating Gainesville's regional visibility and tourism appeal.** As participation expands, this strategy would connect Gainesville to a statewide network of more than one hundred designated communities, strengthening its economic resilience through diversification and creative-sector employment.



economic development department serve as program liaisons, streamlining coordination and permitting for production teams. Establishing a similar liaison structure in Gainesville will reduce barriers to entry for filmmakers, improve communication, and increase the City's ability to capture economic activity related to filming.



Butterfield Stage Players

Source: Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce



2.B. Leverage Cultural and Creative Assets for Economic Growth

2.B.1: FORMALIZE THE CREATIVE IDENTITY TO ATTRACT INVESTMENT, UNLOCK SPECIALIZED FUNDING, AND INCREASE REGIONAL TOURISM

2.B.1.a: Pursue and Secure a Cultural District Designation Through the Texas Commission on the Arts

The City will formally pursue designation as a **Cultural District** to capitalize on Gainesville's high concentration of historic and artistic assets. This designation serves as a powerful economic development tool, establishing a clear brand for the downtown core and making the district eligible for Arts Respond Cultural District Project grants.

To achieve this designation, the City and its partners will complete the following milestone actions:

→ **Establish a Management Partnership**

Formalize a collaborative structure between the City, the Downtown Gainesville Alliance, and key cultural stakeholders such as the Butterfield Stage Community Theater to lead the district's programming and advocacy.

→ **Define Geographic Boundaries**

Finalize the district boundaries to include the primary concentration of cultural assets, ensuring alignment with the proposed Downtown Pedestrian Promenade and the Santa Fe Depot TOD.

→ **Secure Municipal Endorsement**

Obtain a formal City Council resolution of support, a mandatory requirement that demonstrates local government commitment to the district's success.

→ **Execute the TCA Application Cycle**

Adhere to the annual Texas Commission on the Arts timeline, beginning with the submission of a Letter of Intent ("LOI") by the January 31st deadline, followed by the full application in June.

*While these actions establish the administrative and fiscal framework for the Downtown Cultural District, the physical activation of the zone, including its integration with the Downtown Pedestrian Promenade and the design of public art installations is detailed in **Chapter 4**.*

Conclusion

Downtown Gainesville serves as a powerful catalyst for economic activity within the City and region. The district generates high sales tax revenue, sustains strong property values, and contributes meaningfully to Gainesville's tourism and workforce-driven economy. Its historic character, concentration of civic institutions, and emerging cultural assets position downtown for continued growth and reinvestment.

The following chapter examines the district's physical character and regulatory framework needed to support these economic goals. ►

The rest of this page is intentionally blank.

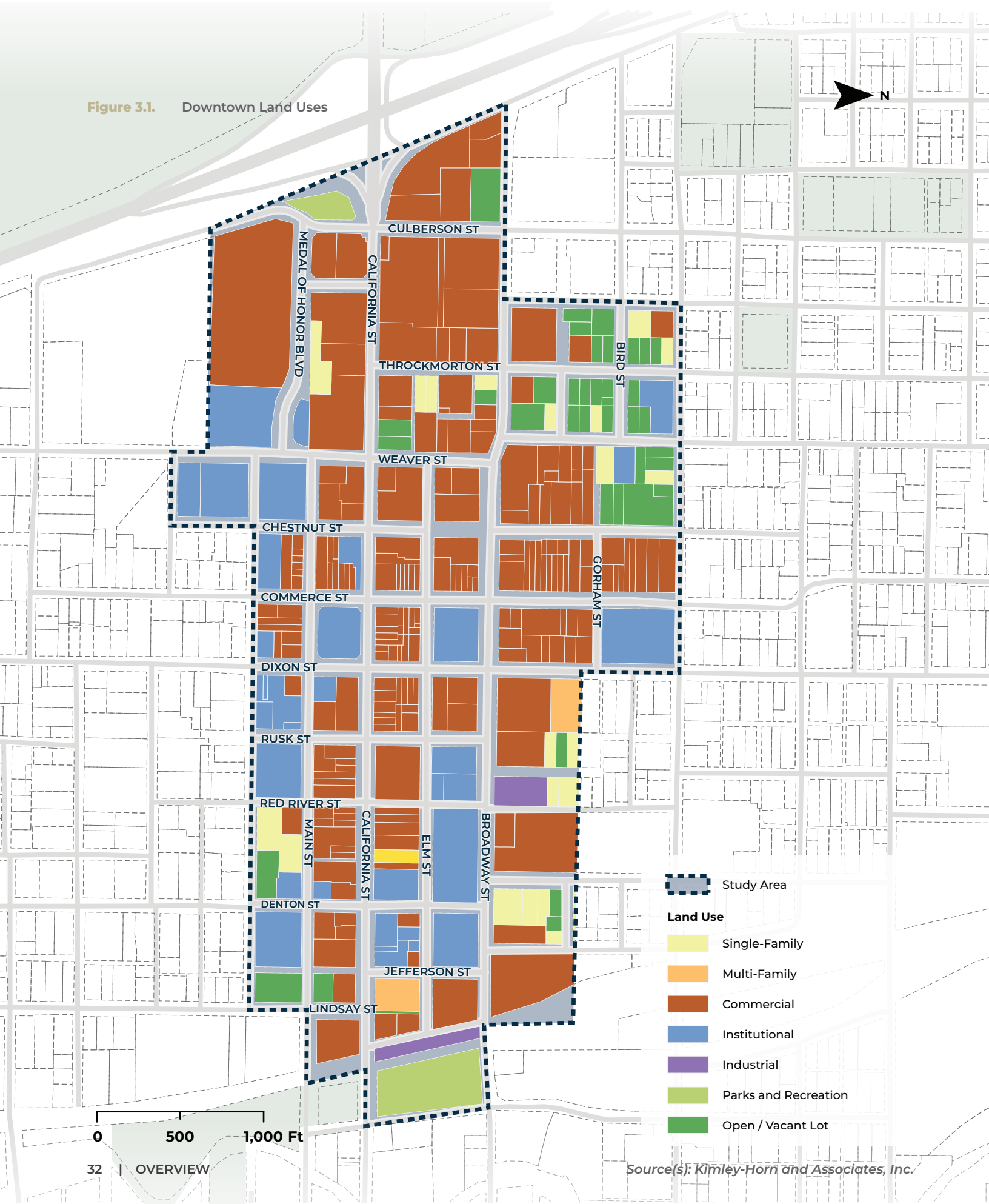


GUE COMPANY
The Story of
AND SATISFACTION

03

**DOWNTOWN
CHARACTER
AND
DEVELOPMENT**

Figure 3.1. Downtown Land Uses



Source(s): Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.



Overview

Land use and urban form shape the way Downtown Gainesville functions, evolves, and supports community life. Within the Guiding Gainesville vision, these elements help strengthen a walkable, mixed-use environment while preserving the district's historic legacy. Thoughtfully coordinated development patterns enhance the public realm, encourage economic activity, and reinforce a strong sense of place rooted in Gainesville's identity.

Existing Land Use and Urban Character

Downtown Gainesville features a mix of commercial, residential, and civic uses, framed by a historic neighborhood fabric.

The Central Business District anchors the core,

while much of the surrounding area is zoned for single-family residential, creating a distinctive transition between higher-intensity activity and traditional neighborhood charm.

Land Use Patterns

The majority of the district is classified as Commercial as shown in **Figure 3.1**. This land use classification permits retail, dining, entertainment, and service-oriented businesses that serve the community and the surrounding region (e.g., restaurants; grocery stores; shopping centers; gas stations). However, some areas contain housing, including single-family and multi-family units, which deviate from typical commercial uses and contribute to a mixed-use environment.

Alongside commercial and residential uses, Downtown also includes designated Open Space areas that provide recreational value, enhance walkability, and contribute to overall environmental quality. These spaces offer essential spatial relief within the urban fabric and ensure residents and visitors have access to greenery within the district.

Historic and Cultural Assets

Historic homes and landmarks contribute significantly to Downtown's character, and many are recognized by the Texas Historical Commission or a national historic society.

The district also includes theaters, museums, and other cultural destinations that enrich the community experience. Together, these uses constitute a distinct cultural land-use cluster within Downtown.

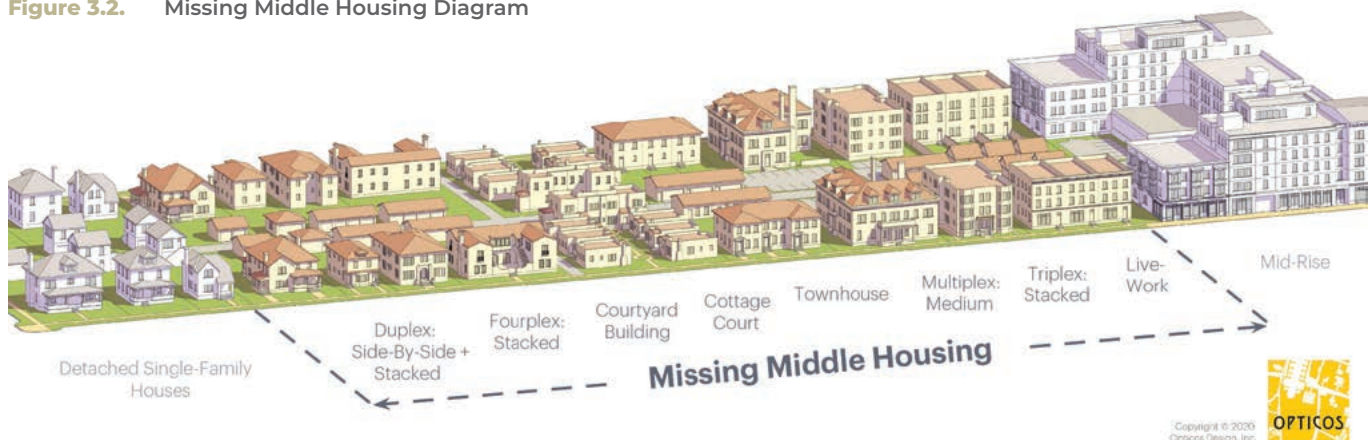
Moreover, these structures display a range of architectural styles and establish a unique backdrop for daily life and commerce. Mixed-use apartments within the district add vitality, with residential units above shops and restaurants, reinforcing the walkable environment.

Housing Diversity

Community input highlighted a growing desire for more “missing-middle” housing, including duplexes, townhomes, and small multiplexes (**Figure 3.2**). These housing types fit naturally within Gainesville's historic neighborhoods and can be designed to resemble traditional single-family structures while providing two to four dwellings.

Expanding these options would help address local housing imbalances and offer new opportunities for young professionals, artists, and families seeking attainable homes close to downtown amenities.

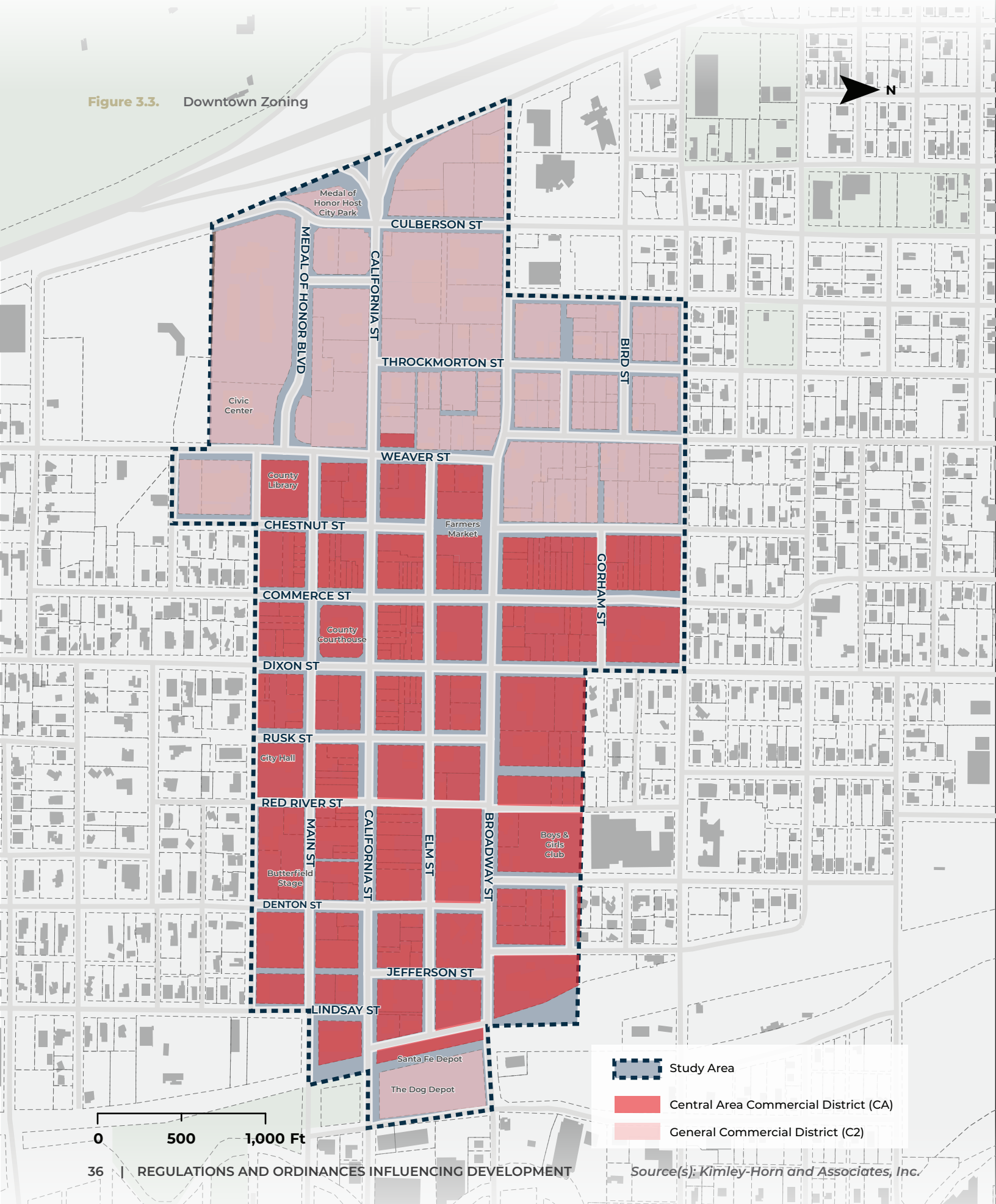
Figure 3.2. Missing Middle Housing Diagram



Source(s): Opticos Design, Inc. (missingmiddlehousing.com)

This page is intentionally blank.

Figure 3.3. Downtown Zoning



Regulations and Ordinances Influencing Development

A combination of overlay districts, zoning regulations shown in **Figure 3.3**, and citywide policies guides development in Downtown Gainesville:

- **Heritage Preservation Overlay District**
Establishes standards for height, architectural detailing, and building facades.
- **Loft Overlay**
Incentivizes the adaptive reuse of upper-story spaces for residential living.
- **Central Area Commercial District**
Provides community-serving shopping while limiting outdoor displays to preserve character.
- **General Commercial District**
Allows for broader community amenities and moderate outdoor displays.

These guidelines ensure new construction complements existing historic resources, maintaining a visual continuity within the district. **Recent historic assessments identified a high concentration of landmark-quality homes within the overlay, highlighting the importance of preservation.** These tools provide the foundation for the expansion and two-tier system proposed later in this chapter.

Development Approaches & Infrastructure

Developers interviewed for this Plan expressed a desire for more clearly defined development standards to improve consistency across projects. This clarity is essential not only for preserving the district's historic character but also for supporting infill development that complements the existing urban fabric. A stronger focus on infill can help reduce the strain that new development places on public infrastructure.

As noted earlier, community survey results indicate a willingness to explore missing-middle housing within the City and historic core. However, current regulations provide limited guidance for developers seeking to pursue these opportunities. Many North Texas communities have adopted dedicated Downtown design guidelines to ensure consistent, context-sensitive development. In Gainesville, the existing overlay district covers only a portion of the area, leaving gaps in

direction that make it challenging to achieve cohesive, compatible infill development.

The City's approach to managing impact fees for qualifying development encourages **reinvestment through strategic development agreements that reallocate fee obligations toward immediate infrastructure needs.** Rather than a waiver of fees, this policy allows developers to fund critical utility or roadway upgrades upfront, with these capital investments credited against their total impact

fee assessment. This model requires developers to pay the full equivalent of their impact fee obligations in advance through direct project funding, which supports the revitalization of older buildings while ensuring the City's financial requirements are met.

By facilitating this type of targeted reinvestment, the City enables improvements to be planned and executed strategically. In several recent projects, developers have funded specific utility upgrades in advance, helping the City implement the Water Master Plan and Wastewater Plan improvements. These contributions strengthen long-term service capacity—a key priority for Gainesville—and improve resilience to future demands.

Furthermore, enhancing this infrastructure network also increases the community's ability to withstand flooding and other environmental hazards. With expanded capacity, the City can integrate green stormwater solutions such as native vegetation, permeable surfaces, and engineered recharge zones into the urban landscape. This is vital for Downtown's revitalization, as it safeguards the progress made on beautification projects.

Integrating Community and Stakeholder Feedback

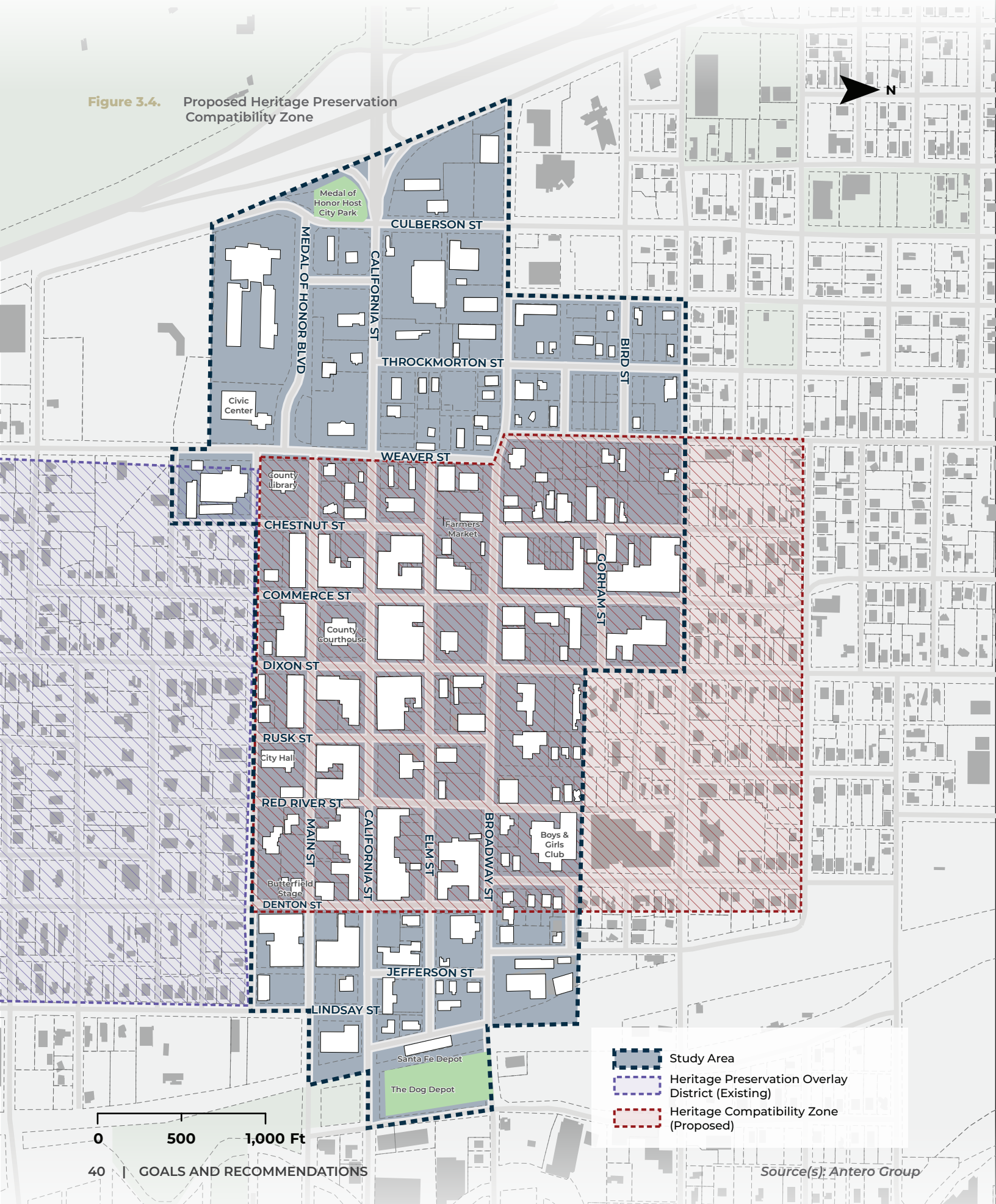
Both the Business Survey and broader community engagement indicate that residents, business owners, and stakeholders highly value Downtown Gainesville.

Community feedback consistently highlighted the importance of preserving the district's historic character and maintaining its unique sense of place. Committee discussions reinforced these findings, emphasizing that future development should be compatible with existing architecture, streetscapes, and neighborhood fabric.

This input directly informs the planning approach by guiding recommendations for infill development, versatile housing, and design standards. **By prioritizing preservation while allowing for context-sensitive growth, the Plan reflects the community's desire to balance economic vitality with the protection of Downtown's historic and cultural assets.**

This page is intentionally blank.

Figure 3.4. Proposed Heritage Preservation Compatibility Zone



Goals and Recommendations



3.A. Protect and Showcase Historic Character

3.A.1: STRENGTHEN THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

3.A.1.a: Implement a Two-Tier Overlay System

To ensure long-term preservation, the City will expand the existing Heritage Preservation Overlay District (“HOLD”) into a two-tiered system (**Figure 3.4**):

→ **Preservation Core**

Reserved for areas with a high concentration of contributing historic structures. Regulations focus on the preservation and restoration of original architectural features, materials, and proportions. Alterations should strictly adhere to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

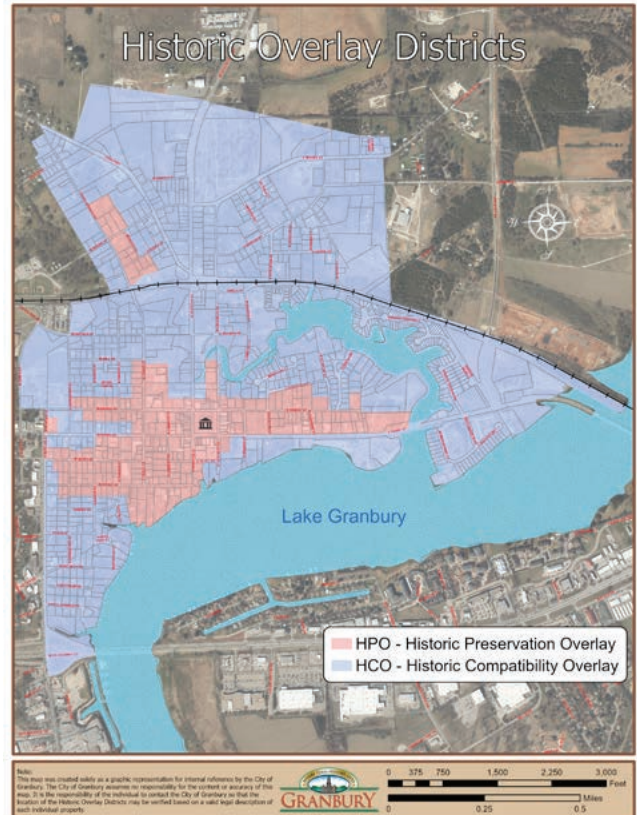
→ **Heritage Compatibility Zone**

Applies to transitional neighborhoods and the cultural district. Regulations focus on compatible new construction. While modern materials may be permitted, building massing, setbacks, rooflines, and window-to-wall ratios must remain consistent with the established character of the adjacent Preservation Core.

Comparable North Texas communities, such as the City of Granbury, utilize a two-tier overlay system consisting of a Historic Preservation Overlay to protect the core historic district and a Historic Compatibility Overlay to guide development in adjacent neighborhoods. These districts can be seen in **Figure 3.5**. This methodology allows municipalities to retain historical integrity while accommodating growth in surrounding areas.

Implementing a similar framework in Gainesville would safeguard landmark structures, reinforce architectural continuity, and ensure that new infill development in surrounding residential areas aligns with the established historic character. This two-layer approach creates a seamless transition between the Downtown core and nearby neighborhoods while strengthening overall preservation efforts.

Figure 3.5. Granbury Historic Overlay Districts



Source(s): City of Granbury, Texas

3.A.2: PROMOTE DESIGN EXCELLENCE AND VISUAL CONSISTENCY

3.A.2.a: Consolidate and Adopt Downtown Design Guidelines

While the City has already successfully adopted specific standards for sidewalk cafes and parklets, **a comprehensive set of clear, illustrated standards is needed to help property owners and developers navigate requirements for building scale, massing, materials, and façade treatments.** Establishing these formalized expectations reduces uncertainty during the development review process and fosters a partnership with the private sector that allows for housing and commercial growth while maintaining compatible aesthetics.

Design guidelines support creative infill development and the adaptive reuse of historic structures. This framework allows buildings to preserve defining historic features such as façade elements, roof forms, and window proportions while integrating modern building systems and sustainable technologies. These modern approaches enhance energy efficiency and long-term viability, ensuring that Gainesville's historic assets remain functional and economically relevant in a contemporary market.

To ensure a seamless transition between private property and the public right-of-way, **the guidelines will incorporate a standardized material palette defined for the public's infrastructure.** Private improvements within the furnishing zone, including lighting, seating, and landscaping, should align with the technical standards established in **Chapter 5**, specifically the use of black-powder coated steel or cast iron for site furniture and 12-15 foot historic-profile fixtures for pedestrian-scale lighting. Furthermore, new development along high-comfort pedestrian corridors and the Downtown Pedestrian Promenade should be encouraged to utilize the tiered paving accents (brick pavers or similar treatments) and native canopy tree standards to maintain visual and environmental consistency across the district.

Within the design guidelines, signage is a critical component influencing Downtown's visual character and legibility. Establishing clear, enforceable signage standards provides consistency across the district while maintaining flexibility for individual business needs. These standards require signs to be architecturally compatible, appropriately scaled, wayfinding-supportive, and sensitive to historic resources. **Collectively, the design guidelines preserve Downtown's visual integrity while facilitating predictable, context-sensitive development.**



3.B. Promote Strategic Development and Housing

3.B.1: ENCOURAGE INFILL & MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT THAT INCREASES DENSITY, CREATIVITY, AND VITALITY

3.B.1.a: Create an Urban Residential Designation

This designation facilitates a range of “missing-middle” housing types, including duplexes, townhomes, courtyard housing, and small-scale multifamily. Defined as house-scale buildings, these structures bridge the gap between detached single-family homes and mid-rise apartment blocks. **Establishing this designation provides a formal regulatory pathway for housing variety that currently exists only informally within the district’s transitional zones.** Permitting live/work units and artist studios by right within commercial and transition zones **reinforces Downtown’s evolving role as a cultural and creative center, directly supporting the proposed Cultural District.**

Addressing housing needs is equally crucial for Downtown’s long-term success. Developers interviewed for this plan praised the City’s flexibility and willingness to collaborate, noting that Gainesville is well-positioned to support a broader range of housing options. **Missing-middle housing, artist-oriented units, and small apartment buildings can provide attainable homes for young professionals, creative workers, and new families seeking walkable access to Downtown amenities.**

Other Texas communities demonstrate how strategic partnerships and creative redevelopment can expand housing choices in urban districts. For example, the City of Dallas has converted vacant office buildings into multifamily housing through a coordinated effort between the City, Downtown Dallas

Inc., and Housing Forward. This model has helped transform underused commercial properties into residential assets, supporting a complete and vibrant urban neighborhood.

A similar approach in Gainesville focused on infill, adaptive reuse, and targeted mixed-use housing near key corridors would help meet local demand while strengthening Downtown’s economic and social vitality.

3.B.1.b: Establish a Transit-Oriented Development Node.

The City will establish a TOD node at the Santa Fe Depot, connected to the downtown core via the Downtown Pedestrian Promenade, to promote walkability and mixed-use development for Amtrak riders.

Gainesville is already a recognized leader in integrated land use; in 2015, the Texas Historical Commission (“THC”) highlighted the City in its Main Street Matters publication as a good example of straightforward, effective mixed-use zoning.¹ Building on this established regulatory foundation, the TOD designation is designed to further enhance Downtown’s residential and commercial vitality by introducing specialized transition zones and strengthening multimodal ties to regional transit. Spatially, this node is distinct from the Preservation Core. While the Core prioritizes the strict retention of historic fabric, the TOD node, situated at the district’s edge near the rail line, allows for greater density and more flexible architectural forms suited to modern transit needs.

¹ Main Street Matters. July 2015. Texas Historical Commission. <https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/Main%20Street%20Matters%20July%202015.pdf>

As illustrated in **Figure 3.6**, Gainesville's existing mixed-use areas represent some of the district's most productive and strategically located land. By formalizing a TOD node, the City provides the specific structure needed for consistent design standards and predictable development review that aligns with modern transit-adjacent growth. **This approach allows Gainesville to extend its walkable, vibrant environment along key corridors and toward adjacent neighborhoods**, mirroring the organic mixed-use revitalization seen in peer communities like Georgetown, Texas, where mixed-use revitalization expanded organically from the courthouse square.

Community and stakeholder input reflected a strong desire for Downtown to flourish as a vibrant, livable district. Existing programs, such as Community Development Block Grant ("CDBG") incentives, currently assist local business owners in maintaining this vibrancy. However, adopting formal design standards specifically within the TOD node and broader district will **strengthen predictability for new builds, support continued reinvestment, and guide context-sensitive infill that respects the historic core.**



Figure 3.6. Value Per Acre: Downtown Gainesville's Mixed-Use Buildings

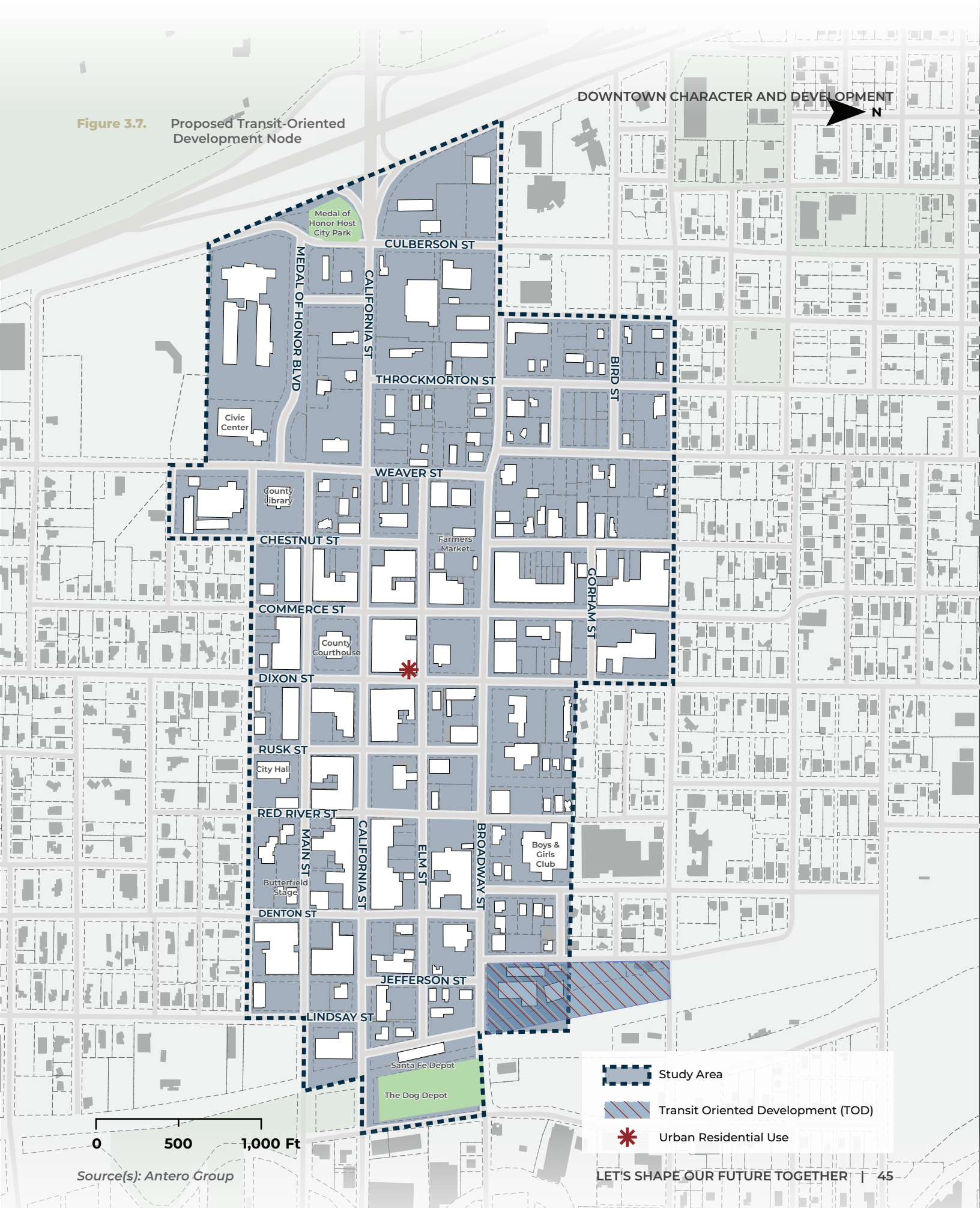


Source(s): Cooke County Appraisal District (CAD) (2024), Google Maps

A TOD district around the Santa Fe Depot as seen in **Figure 3.7** further supports Downtown's evolution by establishing a welcoming gateway for visitors arriving via Amtrak. The TOD node will concentrate mixed-use development—including residential, retail, and civic uses—within a short, walkable distance of the station.

Combined with the Downtown Pedestrian Promenade, the area will provide a scenic, safe pedestrian route for Amtrak users to reach local businesses. The proposed corridor enhances the current pathway by providing shade, street furniture, and other pedestrian amenities, showcasing Gainesville's character from the moment travelers arrive.

Figure 3.7. Proposed Transit-Oriented Development Node



Source(s): Antero Group

-  Study Area
-  Transit Oriented Development (TOD)
-  Urban Residential Use

Conclusion

By prioritizing preservation while facilitating context-sensitive growth, this framework reflects the community's desire to balance economic vitality with the protection of Downtown's historic and cultural assets. These strategies set the stage for Public Space Activation detailed in the next chapter, which outlines how the physical environment will connect these development nodes through enhanced streetscapes and active commercial amenities. ➤

The rest of this page is intentionally blank.

This page is intentionally blank.



04 PUBLIC SPACE ACTIVATION



Medal of Honor Parade
Source(s): Deschain Cellars

Overview

The American Planning Association defines public space as a “*public gathering spot that promotes social interaction and a sense of community.*”¹ These spaces range from parks and market plazas to sidewalks, streets, and the edges of public buildings, and serve as the setting for daily interaction, commerce, cultural expression, and community events. **When public spaces are both beautifully designed and highly functional, they create a welcoming downtown environment that encourages residents and visitors to linger, fostering a stronger sense of place and local economic vitality.**

Downtown Gainesville encompasses a diverse variety of public spaces and growing family-oriented programming. However, **physical space alone is not enough to ensure vibrancy**; activation through consistent programming, events, and partnerships is as fundamental to the district’s success as the site’s design. Existing events, such as the Summer Sounds music series, provide the foundation for Downtown’s identity. **Strategic future programming will build on this to increase foot traffic and enhance safety by encouraging frequent use of the district core.**

Guiding Gainesville 2040 envisions a vibrant Downtown, a goal that necessitates coordinated economic development, inclusive multi-generational programming, and activated public spaces. From an economic standpoint, high-quality public spaces serve as a catalyst for increase foot traffic and extended “dwell time,” which directly supports the success of surrounding businesses by encouraging visitors to explore and return. **Aligning these activation efforts with connectivity strategies ensures that public investments translate into sustained economic vitality and business longevity.**

¹ Salazar, K. (2024). *Quality of place and community development (CDCH-2-W)*. Purdue Extension. <https://extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/CDCH/CDCH-2-W.pdf>

Methodology

The public activation assessment integrated field observations and stakeholder input to evaluate the level of use, programming, and performance of Downtown public spaces.

On-site assessments conducted during the walking tour and parking study provided a comprehensive baseline of existing conditions for these spaces. A Geographic Information System-based inventory was utilized to identify and map publicly accessible assets, including parks, civic buildings, alleyways, and other sites.

Furthermore, an audit of existing event calendars and City-led initiatives, supplemented by stakeholder interviews, provided a clear picture of current programming dynamics. This mixed-methods approach provided critical insight into activity concentration and potential

gaps, identifying how public spaces currently catalyze—or inadvertently limit—Downtown’s vibrancy.

The assessment of existing conditions evaluated critical components of the public realm, including lighting, wayfinding signage, site amenities, and environmental comfort. These qualitative factors directly influence the user experience; where these elements are deficient, they serve as significant barriers to sustained public activation and extended lingering time. While this chapter prioritizes the internal quality and programming of these spaces, the analysis also considered the physical linkages between assets, which will be expanded on in **Chapter 5**.

Current Conditions

Downtown Gainesville encompasses a high concentration of municipal public assets, including several of the community’s most frequently visited and historically significant sites. This geographic density reinforces Downtown’s identity, character, and role as a civic and cultural center. However, the performance of these spaces relies on strategic management and intentional design to ensure they function as a cohesive, vibrant destination for residents and visitors alike.

Public realm optimization is achieved through a combination of intentional programming, supportive site amenities, and thoughtful, high-quality design that facilitates regular use. Assessment findings indicate that activity is currently concentrated along primary corridors and proximate to civic and commercial anchors. These locations successfully synchronize programming, visibility, and pedestrian infrastructure, effectively serving as nodes for economic activity and social engagement. However, these patterns also highlight clear opportunities to expand activation into underutilized perimeter areas and secondary passageways.

Figure 4.1. Cooke County Courthouse



Source(s): Zachary Mitchell, Facebook

Public Buildings and Market Spaces

Public buildings and their adjacent grounds represent a significant portion of Downtown’s accessible public realm. These assets are owned and maintained by public entities, including Cooke County, the City of Gainesville, and the State of Texas. While building interiors are restricted to operational hours, the surrounding open spaces remain publicly accessible, serving as permanent platforms for daily social interaction and civic activity.

As the Cooke County seat, Downtown Gainesville encompasses a high density of civic institutions that define its physical and social core. These assets function in two primary ways: as Civic Green Spaces providing physical open space, and as Civic Built Assets providing opportunities for visual engagement and placemaking.

CIVIC GREEN SPACES

Key facilities—most notably the historic Cooke County Courthouse (Figure 4.1)—provide essential green space and open lawns that function as informal gathering spots for residents, employees, and visitors alike. These Civic Anchors provide the

spatial relief necessary in a densifying urban environment.

Civic Anchors

- ▶ Cooke County Courthouse
- ▶ Cooke County Library
- ▶ Gainesville Civic Center

Market Plaza

- ▶ Farmers Market

CIVIC BUILT ASSETS

Other public properties, such as Cooke County Emergency Medical Service (“EMS”) Station 1 and various municipal buildings, offer limited green or open space but **represent significant opportunities for vertical activation.** Because these sites lack traditional lawns or plazas, their activation differs from the green spaces mentioned previously.

Their building edges and blank facades offer high-visibility opportunities for placemaking elements, such as public murals. Large-scale artwork featuring local musicians, historic figures, or tributes to Gainesville’s heritage enhances visual interest while reinforcing community identity. The Morton Museum provides a successful precedent for this

approach, as documented in **Figure 4.2**. When strategically coordinated, these installations can form mural corridors or gateways, which improve wayfinding and enhance the perceived safety of the pedestrian environment by increasing visual engagement.

SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY

Perceptions of safety are a primary determinant of public space utilization.

While many of Downtown's civic facilities feature adequate site-specific lighting, significant gaps in pedestrian route illumination, particularly between major anchors, discourage nighttime activity and limit safe, equitable access. In several instances, the "last block" of a pedestrian route is insufficiently lit, creating a fragmented experience that diminishes the overall usability of even well-maintained assets.

The Cooke County Library environs, shown in **Figure 4.3**, represent a notably serene asset; however, the surrounding street network is characterized by inconsistent sidewalk connectivity. While the library's interior programming is a vital resource for all generations, its exterior grounds remain underutilized as a community gathering space due to these infrastructure gaps. **Addressing these connectivity barriers for pedestrians is essential to transforming the library into a truly accessible multi-generational hub.**

Figure 4.3. Cooke County Library



Source(s): Antero Group

Figure 4.2. Morton Museum Mural Art



Source(s): Antero Group

Parks

Parks represent the most recognizable tier of the public realm, serving as the primary setting for community socialization and recreation. These assets provide essential, low-barrier spaces for physical activity, community wellness programming, and civic gatherings. The effectiveness of park-based activation relies upon the strategic alignment of amenities to ensure these spaces are flexible, comfortable, and adaptable to a diverse range of functions and demographic groups.

Within Gainesville, the park system serves as a cornerstone of social interaction, civic identity, and economic vitality. The City manages a network of approximately 14 parks and open spaces citywide, including Fairview Cemetery and the Gainesville Farmers Market (**Figure 4.4**), both of which function as significant civic gathering spaces. Within the Downtown district, three primary assets—The Dog Depot at Heritage Park (including Heritage Park South), Medal of Honor Host City Park, and the Gainesville Farmers Market—anchor the public realm, **providing accessible spaces with distinct identities and diverse programming potential.**

The assessment of Downtown's park system aligns with the ***Guiding Gainesville Parks and Trails Master Plan***, highlighting a framework of established strengths and targeted development opportunities. Collectively, these assets benefit from strong visibility, centralized locations, and a diverse range of amenities that facilitate social cohesion. The functional roles of these spaces span a broad

Figure 4.4. Farmers Market



Source(s): Antero Group

spectrum, from passive, commemorative environments to active event venues. However, the ability to support consistent, year-round programming varies significantly across the network. The capacity for sustained activation is primarily dictated by site-specific factors, including total acreage, the presence of event-support infrastructure such as utility hookups, environmental comfort such as shade and seating, and the character of adjacent land uses.

STRENGTHS

- **Typological Diversity:** A robust mix of assets, including the Dog Depot (recreational), Medal of Honor Host City Park (commemorative), and the Farmers Market (civic/commercial).
- **Strong Brand Identity:** Recognizable branding and high civic significance at major downtown anchors.

WEAKNESSES

- **Environmental Stressors:** Acoustic interference from vehicle and train noise.
- **Inconsistent Amenities:** Gaps in pedestrian-scale lighting and a lack of standardized seating or flexible site furniture.
- **Access Barriers:** Strategic infrastructure gaps, including sidewalk discontinuities and pedestrian-vehicle conflict points, which limit accessibility for families and residents with mobility issues. An example is presented in **Figure 4.5**.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Mural Corridors:** Utilizing blank civic walls and private facades to create thematic public art trails that reinforce Gainesville's identity.
- **Gateway Enhancements:** Leveraging parks as district entry points through iconic signage and landscaping.

THREATS

- **Environmental Hazards:** Risk of flood contamination and stormwater management challenges.
- **Land Use Conflicts:** Pressures from high-speed vehicular corridors and adjacent auto-oriented developments (e.g., drive-throughs) that detract from the pedestrian experience.

- **Environmental Quality:** Presence of mature tree canopies and modern infrastructure that enhance user comfort and a unique "sense of place."
- **Civic Infrastructure:** The Farmers Market provides essential flexible plaza space and public restrooms facilities.
- **Network Connectivity:** Close proximity to the broader recreational network (Kiwanis, B.P. Douglas, and Georgia Bass parks).

Figure 4.5. Accessibility Limitations at Dog Depot



Source(s): Antero Group

- **Infrastructure Upgrades:** Targeted improvements to pedestrian crossings and lighting to increase nighttime safety and utility.
- **The Downtown Pedestrian Promenade:** Establishing a formal linear connection that links these disconnected nodes into a single, cohesive pedestrian experience.
- **Development Pressure:** Competing needs for land use as downtown development intensifies.

Beyond the immediate district core, a surrounding ring of municipal assets, including Kiwanis Park, B.P. Douglas Park, and Georgia Bass Park, serves the broader Downtown community. **The proximity of these parks to the central business district enhances Gainesville's fiscal health by facilitating seamless pedestrian movement between recreational zones and the commercial core.** This increased foot traffic supports local business vitality by attracting potential patrons into the district for dining and retail. Furthermore, this interconnected park network provides the necessary capacity to distribute large-scale festivals and community events across multiple locations, reducing congestion while maximizing the economic reach of downtown programming.

Gainesville also features a unique skate park located within a half-mile of the district perimeter, providing a high-draw regional amenity that attracts a diverse demographic of local and visiting youth. While the collective park system offers a wide range of recreational features, disparities in physical condition,

ADA accessibility, and support infrastructure currently hinder the ability of certain sites to sustain consistent activation. Systematically addressing these catalytic gaps is essential to maximizing the performance of Downtown's open spaces and ensuring they function as dependable drivers of district vibrancy and community life.

Connectivity, comfort, and safety are the primary determinants of park utilization. Fragmented sidewalk networks, pedestrian-vehicle conflict points, inconsistent lighting, and the presence of auto-oriented development patterns currently act as significant barriers, discouraging fluid movement between the district's park assets and commercial destinations. However, **strategic opportunities exist to unify Downtown's green network through targeted infrastructure improvements, traffic-calming measures, and synchronized programming.**

These efforts will effectively “stitch” isolated spaces together into a cohesive, walkable public realm.

Alleys

Mirroring the potential of building edges, Downtown's network of alleyways presents a strategic opportunity for placemaking and urban activation. By introducing murals and pedestrian-centric design, these secondary spaces can be transformed from functional service corridors into vibrant public assets. Integrated mural programming reinforces Gainesville's local identity while stimulating activity in historically underutilized segments of the district. Simultaneously, **the implementation of pedestrian-scaled infrastructure improves environmental comfort, directly encouraging higher rates of foot traffic and localized engagement.**

Beyond their role as platforms for public art, **underutilized alleyways can be leveraged as vital pedestrian conduits that enhance district-wide connectivity and overall user experience.** When retrofitted with intentional lighting, high-quality paving, and integrated wayfinding, these alleys serve as effective secondary circulation routes. This creates a more permeable urban fabric, linking key destinations while offering safe, visually engaging alternatives to high-volume primary streets.

Currently, some alleyways, particularly those serving as transitional zones between the Downtown core into adjacent residential neighborhoods, remain underutilized and

lack essential infrastructure. Numerous segments suffer from inadequate lighting and deteriorating surface conditions, which discourage pedestrian use and exacerbate safety concerns. A notable example includes the corridor along Red River Street between Main Street and California Street (**Figure 4.6**). Stakeholder feedback consistently identifies insufficient illumination in these alleyways as a primary deterrent to activity, highlighting a critical need for targeted, safety-sensitive infrastructure improvements and placemaking interventions.

Lighting

As previously mentioned, lighting significantly influences the pedestrian user experience and a primary driver of the district's nighttime economy. **Consistent, high-quality illumination improves comfort and visibility but also reduces nighttime pedestrian crashes at intersections by up to 42%.²** While deficiencies in the lighting network impact all users, they disproportionately diminish the perceived safety and mobility of specific groups, including families, older adults, and nighttime employees. Current conditions reflect a fragmented system: *while primary corridors utilize historic pedestrian-scale poles, significant gaps persist in transitional zones and peripheral areas where existing illumination prioritizes vehicular movement over pedestrian security.*

Seasonal variations further emphasize these infrastructure disparities. While the impact of lighting gaps may be less noticeable during the summer months, these deficiencies become more evident during the winter season, a period that coincides with Gainesville's signature holiday programming. As earlier sunsets increase the community's reliance on artificial lighting, the quality of the pedestrian network becomes a primary determinant in the success of seasonal events and the overall continuity of the nighttime economy.

Figure 4.6. Red River Street



Source(s): Antero Group

Signage

Wayfinding signage is a fundamental component of the district's fiscal resiliency and heritage tourism strategy. Clear, consistent signage increases visitor confidence, encouraging the intuitive exploration of Downtown's assets and leading to higher rates of sales tax capture from non-residents. Currently, wayfinding infrastructure is inconsistent; while major anchors like the Farmers Market feature high-visibility markers, visitors utilizing secondary parking corridors often encounter a lack of directional guidance. This informational gap creates a fragmented visitor experience and can negatively impact the first impressions of those unfamiliar with the district's layout.

² U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. (2013). *Lighting* (FHWA-SA-13-XXX). https://highways.dot.gov/sites/fhwa.dot.gov/files/Lighting_508_0.pdf



Programming and Activation

Downtown Gainesville's programming is characterized by a blend of seasonal events, local markets, and informal daily utilization. Specific assets, such as the Farmers Market, benefit from consistent activation, high visibility, and established institutional partnerships. **A diverse coalition of local organizations, including the Downtown Gainesville Alliance, Historic South Gainesville Neighborhood Association, and the Chamber of Commerce, collaborates with the City to coordinate events that drive community engagement and support local business vitality (Figure 4.7).** These partnerships are essential for attracting a steady influx of both residents and regional visitors to the district core.

Private sector stakeholders also play a vital role in the district's social landscape. For example, local businesses such as Landon Winery frequently partner with community organizations to host signature events like the annual Gainesville Wine Stroll. Furthermore, Downtown serves as a venue for specialized interests, exemplified by the Texoma F-100

Figure 4.7. Downtown Programming



Source(s): Historic Downtown Gainesville; Gainesville Summer Sounds; Texoma F-100 Round Up (Facebook)

Round Up, which caters to regional car enthusiasts. **Collaborative efforts like the Summer Sound event series further demonstrate the synergy between the City, the Chamber, and the business community, providing a diverse programming calendar that appeals to a wide variety of target audiences.**

Despite these successes, activation remains unevenly distributed across the district and the broader City. Many areas experience limited engagement due to a combination of physical constraints, programming gaps, or a lack of supporting site amenities. This geographic imbalance influences pedestrian circulation patterns, which in turn impacts the perceived vibrancy and security of the public realm. Addressing these activation deserts is a critical component of the district's overall revitalization strategy.

Public engagement results indicate a significant demand for programming that serves a broader demographic spectrum, specifically families with children.

Prioritizing family-focused activation reinforces Downtown's identity as an accessible, multi-generational environment. **Similarly, well-programmed public spaces provide essential socialization and networking opportunities for teenagers and young adults.** While several residents noted limited awareness of existing events, others cited improved marketing and outreach following the hiring of the Tourism and Marketing Coordinator. This suggests an unmet demand and a strategic opportunity to further refine marketing efforts to ensure Downtown's cultural assets are fully utilized.

The rest of this page is intentionally blank.

Goals and Recommendations

The following framework establishes a roadmap for the systemic enhancement of Downtown Gainesville’s public realm. These goals are structured to be mutually reinforcing: physical infrastructure improvements facilitate functional accessibility, while strategic programming ensures these upgraded assets are utilized to their maximum economic and social potential. **This integrated approach ensures that capital investments in the “hardware” of the City are optimized by the programmatic “software” of community life.**



4.A. Establish and Activate the Downtown Cultural District

4.A.1: ENHANCE CULTURAL EXPRESSION AND PLACEMAKING BY ESTABLISHING DOWNTOWN AS A PREMIER DESTINATION FOR ARTS AND HERITAGE.

4.A.1.a: Execute the Physical Framework for the Cultural District

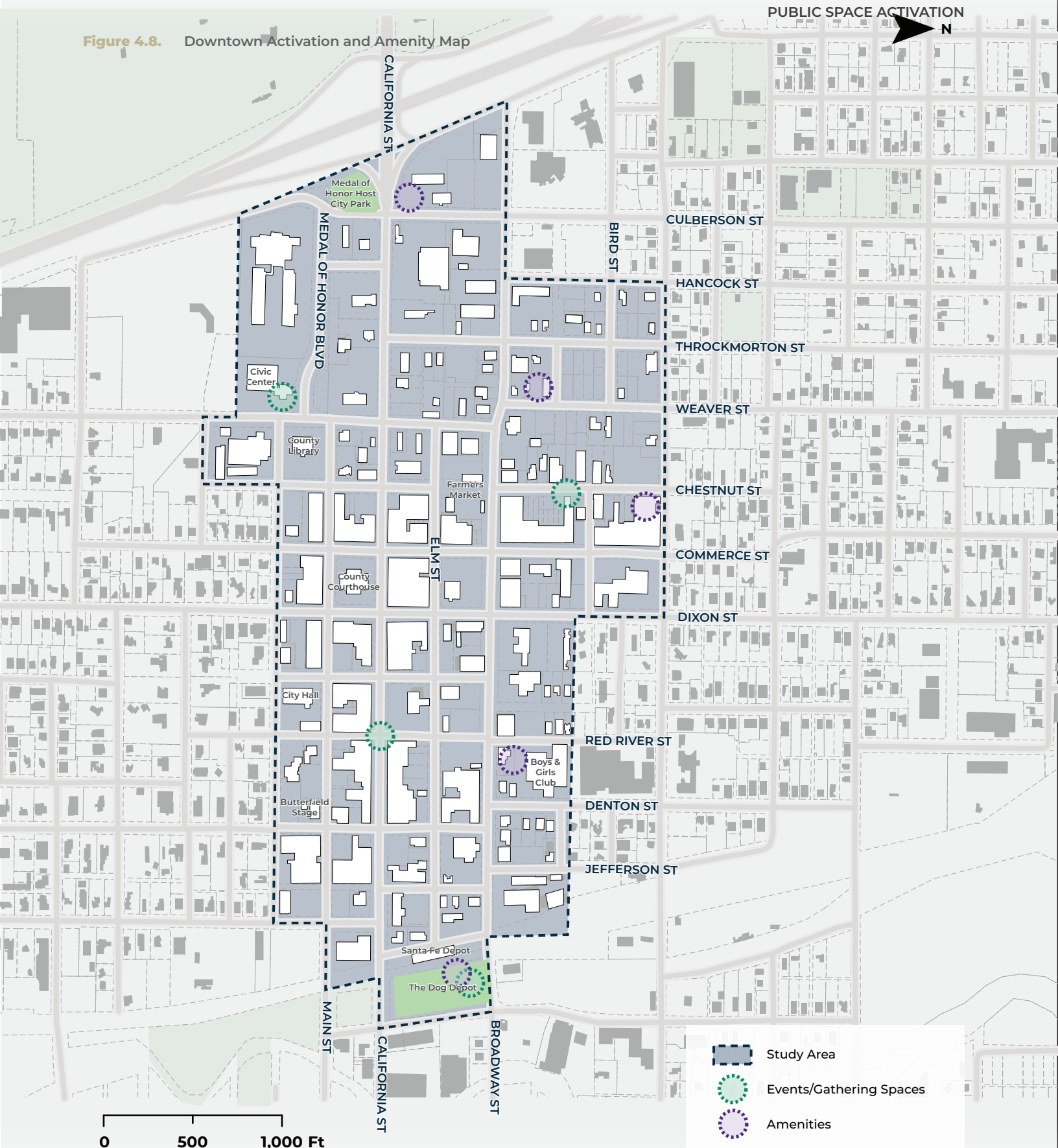
While Strategy 2.B.1.a in **Chapter 2** establishes the administrative and fiscal framework for securing the Texas Commission on the Arts (“TCA”) designation, this strategy focuses on the physical manifestation of the Cultural District within the Downtown landscape. This framework utilizes urban design to celebrate local creativity and unify historically fragmented areas through visible, high-impact public space enhancements. **By guiding the placement of public art and establishing a cohesive visual identity, the physical framework ensures that the district functions as a legible and navigable destination for both residents and heritage tourists.**

To translate the geographic boundaries of the cultural district into a functional public realm, the City will implement a physical integration plan. This effort ensures that the primary concentration of cultural assets extends from the Santa Fe Depot to the Medal of Honor Park, linked by consistent design motifs and pedestrian-scale amenities. To guide

these physical enhancements, the City will utilize the Downtown Activation and Amenity Map in **Figure 4.8**, which identifies strategic locations for event programming, new site furniture, and micro-amenities. These locations were selected based on their proximity to core anchors and their potential to serve as high-visibility gathering spots that bridge existing gaps in the public realm.

By aligning the district’s physical markers with the Downtown Pedestrian Promenade, the City creates a seamless “cultural spine” that naturally directs foot traffic toward historic sites and performance venues. This spatial alignment ensures that the district’s boundary is not merely a line on a map but a visible, navigable corridor that enhances the district’s legibility for visitors and supports long-term Transit-Oriented Development (“TOD”) goals. While the mobility network and connectivity standards for this corridor are outlined in **Chapter 5**, this chapter addresses the programmatic elements such as art locations and event capability that activate the space.

Figure 4.8. Downtown Activation and Amenity Map



Source(s): Antero Group

ACTIVATION NODE STANDARDS

To support the locations identified in the **Downtown Activation and Amenity Map**, the City will implement specialized “amenity clusters” designed to encourage prolonged engagement. While technical specifications for lighting and streetscape are found in **Chapter 5**, these standards focus on the functional requirements for public gathering:

- **Event Infrastructure:** Activation nodes should include “plug-and-play” utility access (standardized electrical outlets and water hookups) to reduce the cost and complexity of staging community events.
- **Flexible Gathering Furniture:** In identified nodes, the City should utilize a mix of permanent and movable seating to allow for diverse uses—from small social groups to larger community performances. (See *Strategy 5.C.1.a for material standards*).
- **Placemaking Signage:** Beyond standard wayfinding, nodes should include interpretive elements or “storytelling” plaques that reinforce the Cultural District’s identity. (See *Strategy 5.A.1.e for wayfinding legibility standards*).
- **Enclosure and Comfort:** Utilize integrated planters and shaded rest areas to define the boundaries of gather spaces, providing a buffer from moving traffic and increasing “dwell time.” (See *Strategy 5.C.1.d for landscaping standards*).
- **Safety Illumination:** Nodes must be prioritized for the pedestrian-scale lighting upgrades defined in Strategy 5.C.1.f to ensure these spaces remain viable for evening and nighttime activation.

4.A.1.b: Implement an Annual Mural and Public Art Partnership

To sustain the momentum of the Cultural District designation, the City will develop a formalized Annual Mural and Public Art Partnership. This initiative focuses on the physical activation of building facades and secondary conduits, such as alleyways, through recurring commissions prioritized for local artists. **By integrating permanent murals and temporary installations into the built environment, the program increases the visual complexity of the streetscape and transforms underutilized infrastructure into high-value cultural assets.** Furthermore, the selection of themes tied to local history and community narratives ensures that the physical environment serves as a reflective medium for Gainesville’s unique identity.

Peer community precedents demonstrate the efficacy of utilizing public art to reinforce local heritage. For example, Edinburg, Texas, leveraged a civic commission in 2020 to create a large-scale mural honoring local veterans (**Figure 4.9**). This intervention effectively transformed a blank building facade into a significant commemorative landmark, beautifying the streetscape while celebrating the community’s history of military service. Similarly, **Gainesville will explore opportunities to utilize murals to celebrate seasonal events, such as the Summer Sound**

Figure 4.9. Edinburg’s Home Grown Heroes Mural



Source(s): City of Edinburg

Figure 4.10. Conceptual Mural Art

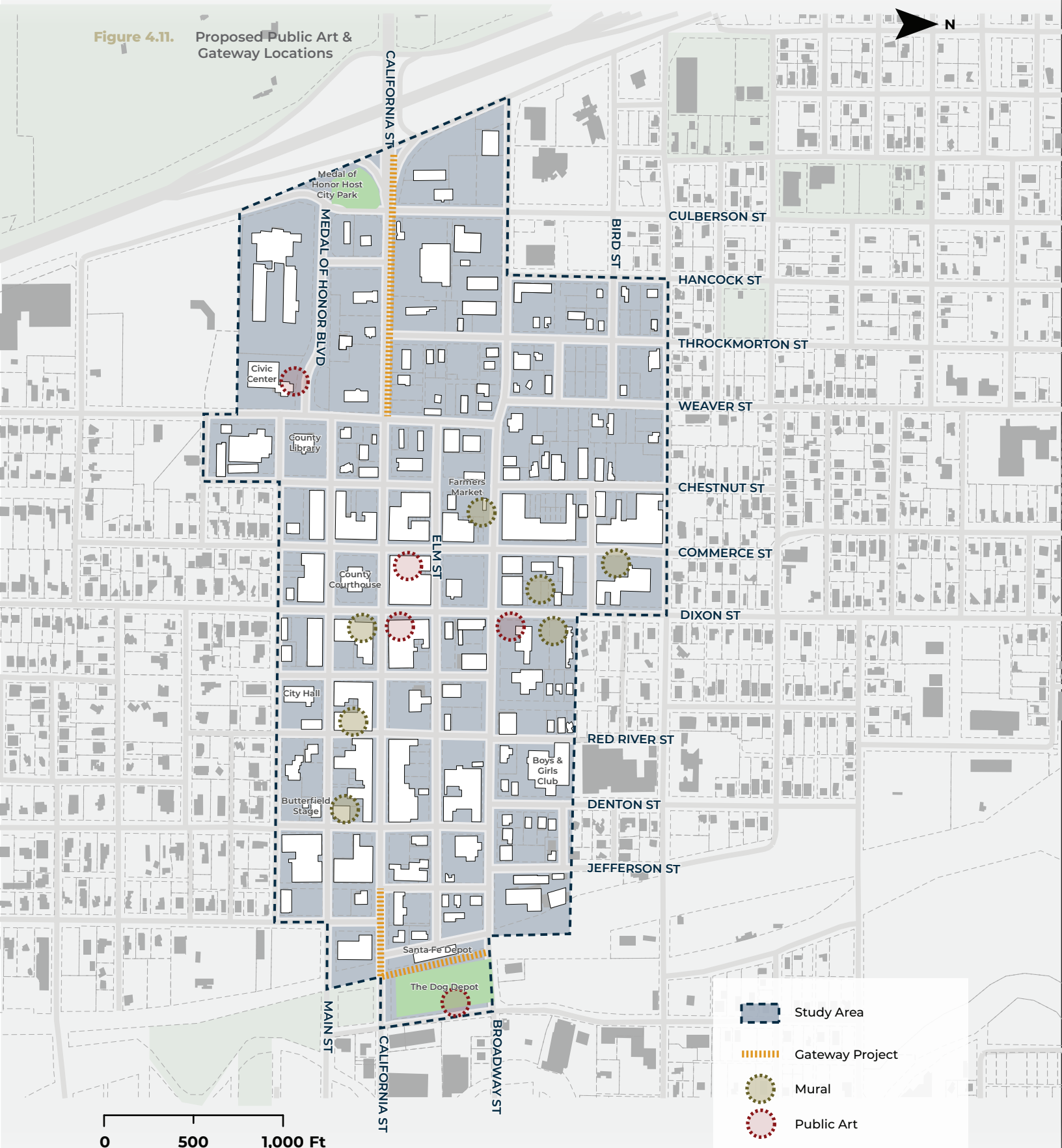


Source(s): Antero Group

series included in the conceptual rendering in **Figure 4.10**, to ensure the public realm remains an evolving destination. This dynamic approach to the “living” built environment encourages repeat visitation and reinforces the Cultural District’s status as a vibrant, rather than static, urban space.

Recommended areas for additional public art installation can be found in **Figure 4.11** on the next page.

Figure 4.11. Proposed Public Art & Gateway Locations



4.A.1.c: Install District Gateways

To further distinguish the Downtown Cultural District, the City will install iconic gateway elements at primary points of entry, including the Santa Fe Depot and the I-35 Corridor. These physical landmarks signal arrival into the district and provide a high-visibility opportunity to reinforce Gainesville's unique heritage. By incorporating integrated public art, native landscaping, specialized lighting, and cohesive signage, these gateways transform functional entry points into commemorative spaces that improve first impressions and strengthen the physical connection between Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

These installations are designed to align with established pedestrian and bicycle routes, ensuring that gateway features support both multimodal connectivity and visual legibility. Rotating or seasonal installations within these gateway zones provide ongoing opportunities for creative expression and local artistic partnerships, allowing the public realm to adapt over time. **This approach ensures that the “entrance” to Downtown remains a dynamic environment that enhances safety through increased activity and supports the continuity of both daytime and nighttime branding initiatives.**



4.B. Enhance Public Comfort and Dwell Time

4.B.1: CULTIVATE A HIGH-COMFORT ENVIRONMENT BY INTEGRATING SENSORY AMENITIES AND CREATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE THAT ENCOURAGE PROLONGED ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL INTERACTION WITHIN THE PUBLIC REALM.

4.B.1.a: Integrate Ambient Sensory Infrastructure

To elevate the sensory character and atmosphere of Downtown's public spaces, the City will explore the installation of ambient outdoor music systems in key parks and plazas. Unlike the episodic festivals and concerts identified in the programming section, ambient audio provides a consistent, passive layer of activation that enhances environmental comfort and makes the district core more welcoming for daily use. This infrastructure reduces barriers to spontaneous activity by ensuring spaces are “event-ready” while providing a background soundscape that complements daily social interactions. As demonstrated in successful precedents like Downtown Cary Park in North Carolina (**Figure 4.12**), these systems can be zoned to reinforce the specific character of a space by

Figure 4.12. Downtown Cary Park



Source(s): Downtown Cary Park (Instagram)

providing vibrant audio for active plazas or reflective soundscapes for commemorative zones.

The implementation of these sensory systems provides a unique platform for institutional collaboration. **By partnering with local musicians and student talent from GISD and NCTC, the City can curate localized content that reflects the community's creative identity.** This strategy not only elevates the atmosphere of the public realm but also establishes a sustainable pipeline for cultural expression, integrating the arts into the daily life of Downtown while uplifting emerging local talent in highly visible public spaces.

4.B.1.b: Pilot Temporary Public Restroom Facilities and Evaluate Long-Term Integration

The availability of public restrooms is a fundamental requirement for a comfortable and inclusive Downtown environment. **To address immediate needs while managing long-term capital risk, the City will utilize tactical urbanism strategies by piloting temporary restroom amenities in high-traffic areas.** The City will evaluate the efficacy of managed-access models, such as the system utilized by the Los Angeles Metro, which employs QR-code entry and automated timers to ensure facility turnover and discourage loitering (Figure 4.13). **This pilot approach allows the City to test high-performance, flexible solutions that respond directly to the operational challenges of public facility management.**

Feedback from the Community Input Survey identifies public restroom access as a priority requirement for Downtown Gainesville. By addressing this infrastructure gap, the City can significantly increase dwell time, allowing visitors to remain in parks and commercial zones for longer durations without departing the district to seek basic amenities. To address this infrastructure gap, the City will implement this temporary pilot program for a total of

Figure 4.13. LA Metro Temporary Restroom



Source(s): Throne Labs

three weeks. The activation coincides with a major community event, such as Depot Day or Medal of Honor Week. These temporary pilots will serve as a feasibility study to evaluate optimal geographic placement, maintenance requirements, and user traffic patterns. **Data collected during the pilot phase will provide the evidence-based foundation required to design and fund permanent, high-quality restroom facilities that ensure the long-term inclusivity and functionality of the Downtown public realm.**

4.B.1.c: Create Interactive Passageways and Woonerfs

The City will prioritize the activation of pedestrian passageways and alleyways as high-yield placemaking opportunities. By adopting the “Woonerf” model, these secondary conduits are transformed from functional service corridors into vibrant, human-centric destinations. Originating from Dutch planning principles, a Woonerf is a “living street” where pedestrians and cyclists have priority over motorists. The design uses shared paving, low speed limits, and physical barriers like planters to force vehicles to move at a walking pace, blurring the line between sidewalk and street. **Activation will be**

achieved through a combination of creative wayfinding signage, murals that celebrate local heritage, and overhead decorative elements—such as catenary lighting or seasonal banners—that create an intimate and inviting atmosphere. This approach encourages district exploration and extends pedestrian activity beyond primary thoroughfares, optimizing the utility of Downtown’s existing urban grid.

These “living streets” will be engineered to align with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (“CPTED”) principles.

The installation of overhead lighting and vibrant murals functions as both an aesthetic upgrade and a tool for Territorial Reinforcement, signaling that these spaces are actively managed. Furthermore, encouraging outdoor dining and retail spillover into these corridors promotes Natural Surveillance (“eyes on the street”). Regional precedents, such as the Bishop Arts District in Dallas (**Figure 4.14**), demonstrate the efficacy of repurposing alleyways into primary conduits for outdoor dining and retail activation. Adapting this

Figure 4.14. Bishop Arts District Alley Activation



Source(s): The New York Times

model to the Gainesville context as seen in the conceptual rendering in **Figure 4.15** provides a scalable method to animate the district, reinforcing the Downtown core as a multi-layered destination where even secondary spaces contribute to the overall vibrancy and safety of the public realm.

Figure 4.15. Red River Woonerf Concept



Source(s): Antero Group



4.C. Modernize Infrastructure for Visual Integrity and Resilience

4.C.1: ENHANCE DOWNTOWN'S HISTORIC CHARACTER AND PUBLIC REALM PERFORMANCE BY REDUCING VISUAL CLUTTER AND IMPROVING THE RELIABILITY OF UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE.

4.C.1.a: Minimize Visual Clutter and Improve Utility Reliability Through a Phased Undergrounding Program

Gainesville is susceptible to severe weather events, including high winds, flooding, and tornadoes, which present significant risks to the district's overhead utility and communication infrastructure. The high concentration of aerial lines in the Downtown core increases vulnerability to downed infrastructure during storm events, which can obstruct emergency access, jeopardize public safety, and cause prolonged operational disruptions for local businesses. **Implementing a phased utility undergrounding program is a critical resilience strategy to mitigate these risks and ensure the long-term continuity of essential services.**

Beyond physical resilience, overhead utilities contribute to significant visual clutter that detracts from Downtown's historic character and undermines preservation efforts. This aesthetic blight often conflicts with modern streetscape investments and reduces the perceived quality of the public realm. Peer communities, such as Paris, Texas, have successfully initiated communication and utility relocation projects to eliminate these visual obstructions, as seen in **Figure 4.16**. By aligning utility undergrounding with other planned capital improvement projects, **Gainesville can**

achieve a dual benefit: restoring the district's historic integrity while reducing long-term maintenance costs through intentional, modern design.

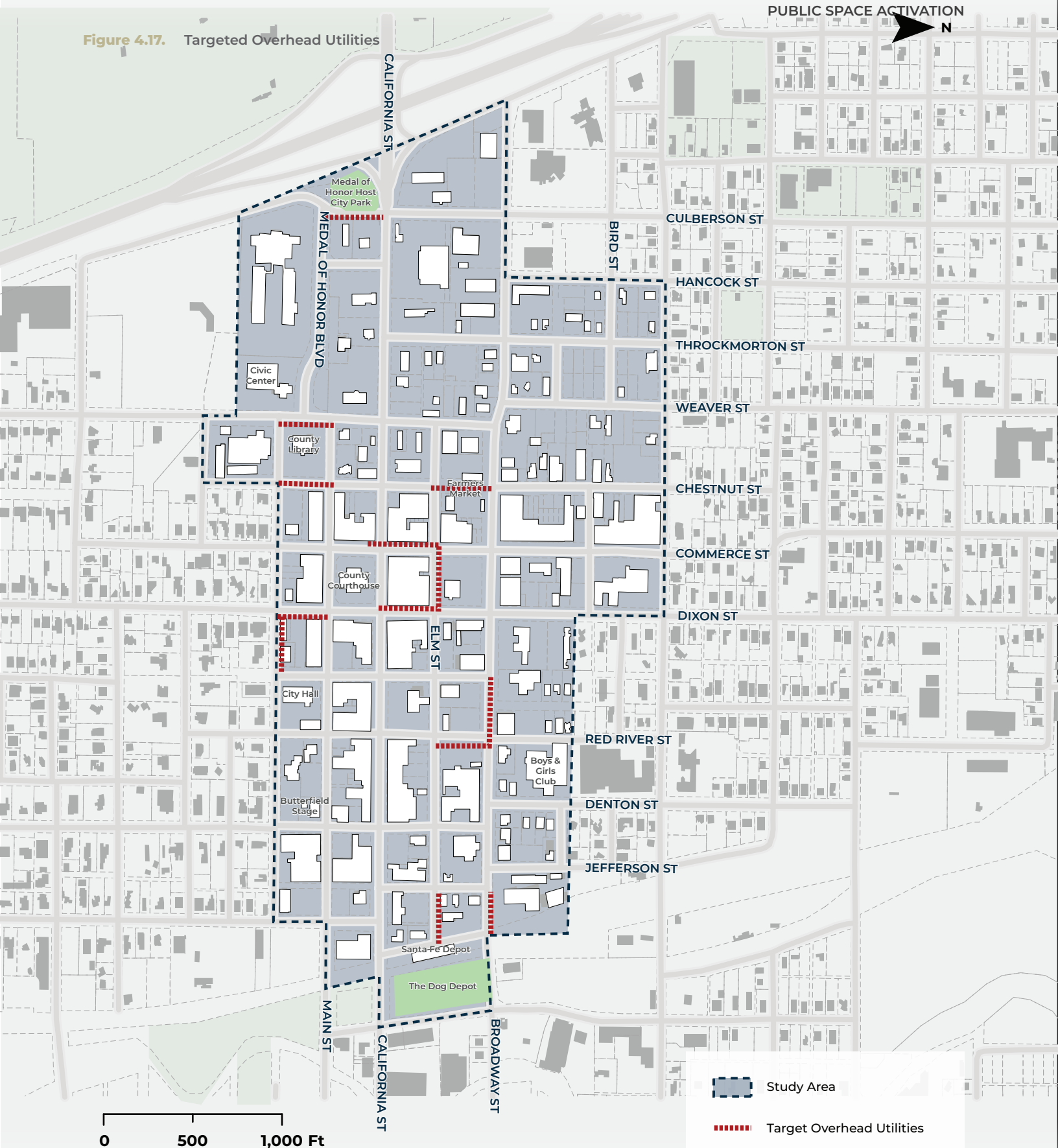
Key overhead utility lines in Downtown Gainesville recommended for relocation are illustrated in **Figure 4.17** as follows.

Figure 4.16. City of Paris Downtown Improvements



Source(s): City of Paris/The Paris News

Figure 4.17. Targeted Overhead Utilities



Source(s): Antero Group

Parallel to the undergrounding of utilities, the City will standardize a pedestrian-centric lighting hierarchy that prioritizes safety at intersections and mid-block crossings.

Guided by CPTED's Natural Access Control strategies, new illumination will be engineered to eliminate "dark spots" that currently fragment the nighttime experience. By ensuring clear sightlines for both pedestrians and law enforcement, the lighting network serves a dual purpose: **reinforcing the district's historic aesthetic while functioning as a primary deterrent to crime through improved visual transparency.**

4.C.1.b: Expand the Integrated Public Art and Sanitation Program

Building on the statewide recognition of Gainesville's dumpster beautification efforts, the City will expand the program to additional strategic locations throughout the Downtown district. This expansion will prioritize high-visibility areas and secondary conduits such as alleyways and transitional corridors that currently lack formal masonry enclosures. **By utilizing beautified, high-quality waste receptacles in these locations, the City achieves a dual objective:**

maintaining essential sanitation services while simultaneously mitigating the visual blight typically associated with exposed utility infrastructure.

To ensure the success and durability of this expansion, the City will implement the following standards:

- **Strategic Siting:** Placement will focus on "activation deserts" and secondary pedestrian routes identified in **Chapter 5**, ensuring that sanitation assets serve as high-visibility landmarks rather than obstructions.
- **Artist Partnerships:** The City will continue to commission local artists to provide custom themes that reflect Gainesville's historic and cultural identity, reinforcing the goals of the Downtown Cultural District.
- **Visual Mitigation:** In corridors where space constraints prevent the construction of traditional permanent enclosures, these beautified units will serve as the primary tool for "territorial reinforcement," signaling that these secondary spaces are actively managed and maintained.



4.D. Position Downtown as a Regional Destination

4.D.1: SECURE GAINESVILLE'S STATUS AS A PREMIER NORTH TEXAS DESTINATION THROUGH EXTERNAL VALIDATION, STRATEGIC BRANDING, AND COORDINATED REGIONAL MARKETING.

4.D.1.a: Execute a Coordinated Downtown Activation and Marketing Program

To elevate Downtown Gainesville's profile beyond its physical boundaries, the City will establish and fund a comprehensive Downtown Activation Program. This initiative unifies marketing, signature festival creation, and live entertainment sponsorships under a single, coordinated framework. By integrating

the efforts of the City, Downtown organizations, and private stakeholders, the program maximizes operational efficiency and ensures a consistent brand narrative. **Centralizing these efforts through the Tourism and Marketing Coordinator addresses current informational gaps, driving increased foot traffic and sales for local enterprises while reinforcing the district's identity as a year-round cultural hub.**

Figure 4.18. Downtown Gainesville Dumpster Artwork



Source(s): City of Gainesville

To amplify the impact of these physical and cultural investments, **the City will coordinate comprehensive public relations efforts through strategic social media partnerships and targeted digital campaigns.** By collaborating with local businesses, artists, and regional influencers, the City can deploy event-focused storytelling, such as behind-the-scenes artist spotlights and visitor experience testimonials, to build anticipation and expand the district's reach. This proactive outreach addresses documented gaps in event awareness and utilizes the Tourism and Marketing Coordinator to maintain a dynamic, multi-channel presence that positions Downtown Gainesville as an active and engaging year-round destination.

4.D.1.b: Pursue External Recognition and Awards

Establishing Downtown Gainesville as a premier regional destination requires consistent validation from external professional

and tourism organizations. **External accolades serve as third-party verification of the City's progress, boosting community pride while reinforcing the "Gainesville Brand" to prospective investors, residents, and visitors.**

Gainesville has already demonstrated success in this area, recently receiving recognition from the Texas Municipal League's ("TML") Texas Town & City publication. The City was highlighted for its innovative approach to downtown beautification, specifically the transformation of functional sanitation infrastructure into public art assets (**Figure 4.18**).³ This initiative, which successfully integrated essential public works with high-visibility placemaking, involved commissioning a local artist to paint dumpsters in downtown Gainesville for a modest cost. The same publication featured the City's Wine and Country Festival as a premier regional event, further validating the district's event-programming strategy.

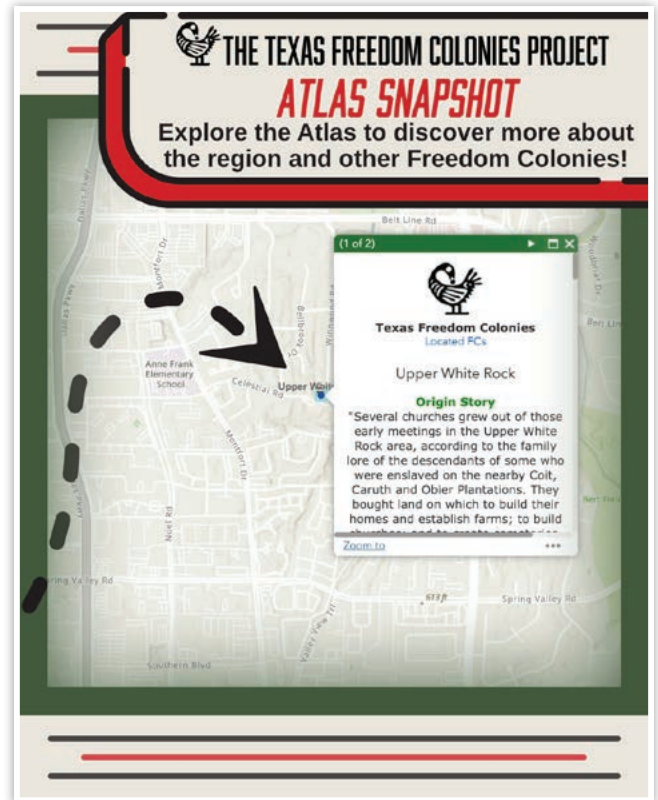
³ Texas Municipal League's, *Texas Town & City Magazine*, August 2025, <https://online.publicationprinters.com/html5/reader/production/default.aspx?pubname=&edid=9f948ae5-84bc-437d-9216-38e1ec106971>

The City will proactively seek accreditation and awards from entities such as Texas Downtown, the American Planning Association (“APA”), and state tourism boards. These accolades provide third-party verification of the district’s progress, boosting community pride and reinforcing the “Gainesville Brand” to prospective investors and visitors. This recognition-focused strategy ensures that cultural investments and public space improvements are widely visible beyond the local level and contributes to the district’s long-term prestige and fiscal competitiveness.

4.D.1.c: Develop a Self-Guided Storytelling Tour

To deepen the visitor experience and celebrate Gainesville’s local heritage, the City will develop a Self-Guided Storytelling Tour program. This initiative enables users to engage with historical assets and community narratives at their own pace via a coordinated system of physical signage, QR codes, and mobile-enabled audio commentary. By adopting a methodology similar to the Texas Freedom Colonies Project (**Figure 4.19**), the program will prioritize “narrative ownership” by incorporating oral histories, archival photographs, and site identifications

Figure 4.19. Texas Freedom Colonies Project Atlas



Source(s): The Texas Freedom Colonies Project contributed by long-term residents and local historians. **This authentic, community-driven approach transforms Downtown’s buildings and landmarks into an interactive “outdoor museum,” reinforcing the district’s role as a premier destination for heritage tourism.**



4.E. Activate Sidewalks for Dining and Retail

4.E.1: SUPPORT A VIBRANT STREET-LEVEL ECONOMY BY IMPLEMENTING FLEXIBLE OUTDOOR AMENITIES AND CLEAR REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS THAT ENCOURAGE PEDESTRIAN ENGAGEMENT AND BUSINESS VITALITY.

4.E.1.a: Expand Outdoor Dining and Micro-Retail Opportunities.

Public engagement data identifies dining and retail as the primary drivers for visiting Downtown Gainesville. To capitalize on this demand, **the City will utilize its existing design guidelines for sidewalk cafés and parklets to actively encourage small-scale commercial amenities within the district core.** By maintaining a predictable permitting process and clearly communicating these established standards, the City can reduce barriers for local entrepreneurs while ensuring that outdoor expansions enhance, rather than obstruct, the public realm. These flexible amenities encourage visitors to linger, strengthening the physical and economic connections between various Downtown destinations.

To ensure these spaces remain functional and attractive year-round, **the City will incentivize the use of modular or removable elements, such as high-quality shade structures, integrated landscaping, and durable site furniture.** In areas with constrained sidewalk widths, the City will promote the expanded utilization of parklets—temporary or permanent platforms that extend the sidewalk into underutilized on-street parking spaces. Leveraging the City’s adopted 2016 Parklet Guidelines and the successful precedent set by St. Joe’s Pizza on Commerce Street (**Figure 4.20**), the City will work to increase visibility of these options and encourage broader adoption among downtown merchants. These interventions prioritize pedestrian comfort and animate the streetscape, transforming static infrastructure into active social spaces that support adjacent business health.

Furthermore, **the City will expand opportunities for micro-retail and mobile vending, including concessions, kiosks, and pop-up vendors.** Similar to the success of the Farmers Market, formalizing policies for limited-duration permits and designated vending zones provides a low-barrier entry point for local start-ups and creative entrepreneurs. These small-scale activations—such as a morning coffee kiosk or an evening food vendor—address the community’s desire for expanded dining options and create diverse gathering spaces that appeal to multiple age groups, contributing to a more resilient and vibrant Downtown environment.

Figure 4.20. Outdoor Seating



Source(s): St. Joe's Pizza, Instagram

Conclusion

The revitalization of Downtown Gainesville's public realm is predicated on a balanced integration of high-quality physical infrastructure and consistent social activation. **By leveraging the district's historic assets through strategic initiatives, including public art installations, sensory amenities, and the repurposing of secondary conduits, the City can establish a premier destination for arts, heritage, and civic life.** Aligning these activation strategies with community-driven demand and local business needs ensures that Downtown functions as a resilient, year-round environment that fosters social equity and economic vitality.

Having established the programmatic and aesthetic framework for the district's activation, the following chapter will examine the Connectivity infrastructure required to support these efforts. **Chapter 5** provides a detailed analysis of current mobility conditions and introduces the physical frameworks necessary to ensure a seamless, high-performance, and inclusive experience for all users. ►

The rest of this page is intentionally blank.

This page is intentionally blank.



05 CONNECTIVITY AND MOBILITY



Overview

A well-connected Downtown serves as the physical framework that supports safe and efficient travel for all users, regardless of their chosen travel mode. Connectivity is a fundamental driver of economic and social health, fortifying access to local businesses, services, and points of interest.

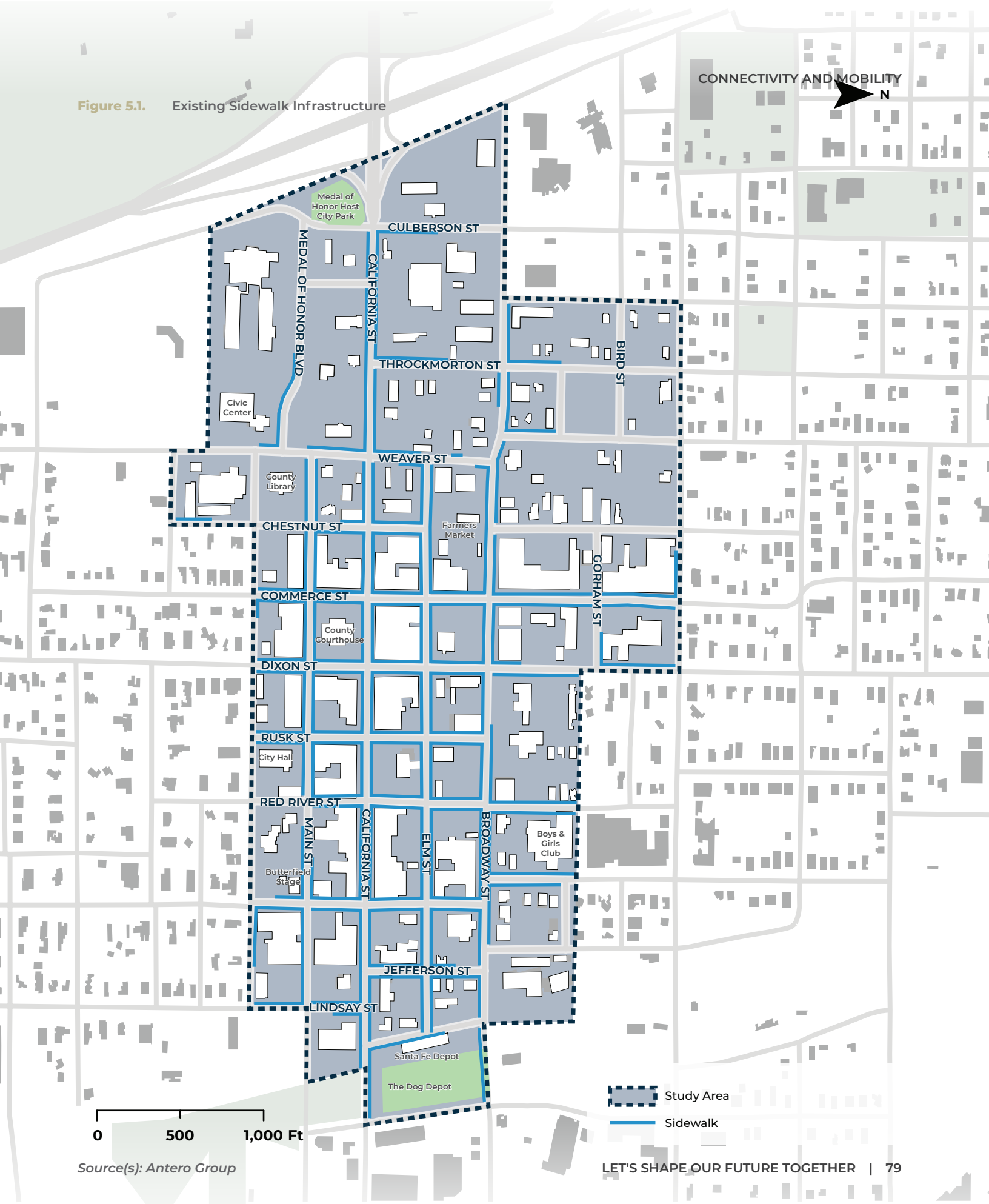
By identifying and removing physical barriers, particularly for individuals with mobility limitations, the City can create a more navigable, inclusive, and intuitive environment. This seamless infrastructure not only enhances the pedestrian experience but also encourages extended dwell time, making the district a more attractive destination for residents and visitors alike.

Pedestrian Experience

Sidewalk Infrastructure and Quality

Figure 5.1 illustrates 2025 field observations alongside the 2021 Master Thoroughfare Plan, identifying both the existing sidewalk network and critical infrastructure gaps. In the district's core, particularly around the Cooke County Courthouse, sidewalks are continuous and well-maintained.

Figure 5.1. Existing Sidewalk Infrastructure



These corridors function as “complete streets” or roadways designed for safe use by all travel modes, including walking, biking, driving, and public transit. By prioritizing pedestrian comfort, safety, and accessibility consistent with Federal Highway Administration (“FHWA”) Complete Streets principles, these areas support a robust multimodal transportation network.

Outside the district core, several areas lack complete street facilities, as illustrated in **Figure 5.2**. In these perimeter areas, sidewalks are frequently discontinuous, insufficiently narrow, or entirely missing, which significantly reduces pedestrian connectivity. **These gaps lower the overall pedestrian level of service and create substantial barriers for individuals with mobility impairments, effectively isolating civic anchors from the walkable core.**

Field observations further indicate that multiple sidewalk segments in Gainesville do not meet the commonly accepted minimum sidewalk width of 6 feet. This width is the standard recommended by FHWA for two-way pedestrian travel in urban environments, as it allows two people to walk side-by-side comfortably.¹ Substandard sidewalk widths constrain pedestrian circulation and restrict the use of mobility devices, strollers, and other

Figure 5.2. Corner of California Street & Main Street (Chestnut Street)



Source(s): Antero Group

assistive equipment. Along corridors with higher vehicular volumes and speeds, narrow sidewalks increase pedestrian exposure to traffic, contributing to elevated perceived and actual safety risks, consistent with findings in FHWA pedestrian safety and roadway design guidance.²

Bicycle Infrastructure

Downtown Gainesville currently lacks dedicated bicycle infrastructure within its boundaries.

Community feedback suggests a latent demand for these facilities; nearly half of the survey respondents expressed support for protected bicycle lanes to improve safety and comfort for those bicycling and walking.

Furthermore, of the 789 survey respondents, 230 specifically identified additional bicycle parking as a priority improvement for Downtown.

While responses reflected a range of perspectives, survey results indicate a clear preference for locating bicycle facilities on lower-volume, lower-speed streets rather than on principal arterial roadways like California Street. Consistent with Texas Department of Transportation (“TxDOT”) and National Association of City Transportation Officials (“NACTO”) guidance, this approach prioritizes comfort and safety by aligning facility types with their street context to ensure that cycling is a viable option for a broad demographic of users.

¹ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, 2014

² Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Pedestrian Safety Guide and Countermeasure Selection System, 2017

Roadways

Road Quality

Roadway quality emerged as the highest-ranked concern in the Community Input Survey, underscoring its direct influence on Downtown connectivity and mobility comfort. As established in Chapter 1, Downtown roadways are vital to Gainesville's local economy, supporting significant taxable activity. California Street generates approximately \$1.5 million per acre, while Grand Avenue generates \$0.8 million per acre. **Maintaining these corridors is not merely a matter of convenience; it is a fiscal necessity to support ongoing investment and ensure accessibility for those contributing to the district's economic health.**

Pavement conditions within Downtown Gainesville currently vary. While many streets within the Downtown core remain in fair to good condition, several segments exhibit surface deterioration, uneven pavement, and faded markings. These deficiencies affect all roadway users but pose the greatest challenge to pedestrians, bicyclists, and individuals using mobility devices by reducing overall comfort and perceived safety. **Furthermore, roadway quality shapes visitor perceptions,**

influencing the ease and attractiveness of navigating Downtown Gainesville.

Pavement conditions directly impact the durability and effectiveness of low-cost, striping-based improvements, such as high-visibility crosswalks and bike lane delineations. Implementing these treatments on deteriorating surfaces can lead to premature wear, reduced visibility, and higher long-term maintenance costs. For these "tactical" mobility enhancements to be successful, they must be synchronized with the underlying structural integrity of the street.

Maintaining high road quality is a fundamental component of a multimodal system, as advised by both TxDOT and NACTO. Poor pavement serves as a physical barrier to bicycle and pedestrian upgrades and can restrict Complete Streets initiatives. The City's current Capital Improvement Plan ("CIP") offers a strategic opportunity to address these issues through targeted repairs and resurfacing. By aligning roadway maintenance with the installation of better crosswalks, wayfinding signage, and median crossings, the City can maximize the value of its infrastructure investments while simultaneously improving safety and comfort.

Congestion

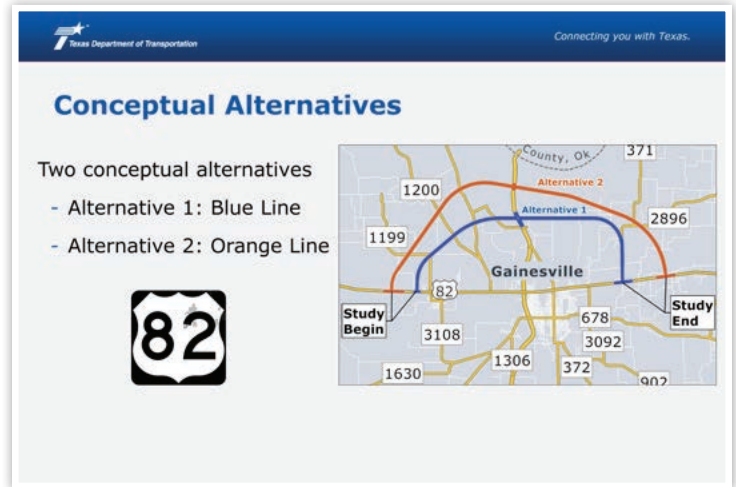
A primary congestion point is California Street, a critical east–west corridor that carries heavy daily traffic. Congestion along this corridor creates operational constraints and negatively impacts the overall perception of Downtown mobility.

A proposed northern relief route, identified in Figure 5.3, is intended to reduce traffic volumes within the Downtown core.

Specifically, the Highway 82 Reliever Route is designed to divert through-traffic away from California Street, thereby alleviating congestion and improving circulation for local residents and visitors. This TxDOT-led initiative is a critical component of Gainesville's long-term strategy to reclaim its historic core from regional pass-through traffic, allowing Downtown streets to function more effectively as destination-oriented spaces.

In addition to congestion along main corridors, localized delays occur at key access points into the City, largely due to ongoing TxDOT construction along Interstate 35. These construction activities frequently conflict with primary entry routes into Gainesville, causing delays and altering travel patterns for vehicles attempting to access the Downtown core. Despite these temporary constraints,

Figure 5.3. US Highway 82 Reliever Route



Source(s): Texas Department of Transportation

the district benefits from a direct roadway connection that funnels vehicles from the interstate into the heart of the district, reinforcing Downtown's role as a central and accessible destination.

Input gathered at the Public Workshop identified several intersections with visibility obstructions. At these locations, drivers reported difficulty seeing cross-traffic when making turning movements without pulling beyond the stop line. This forced maneuver places vehicles within the travel way and significantly increases safety risks for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists alike.

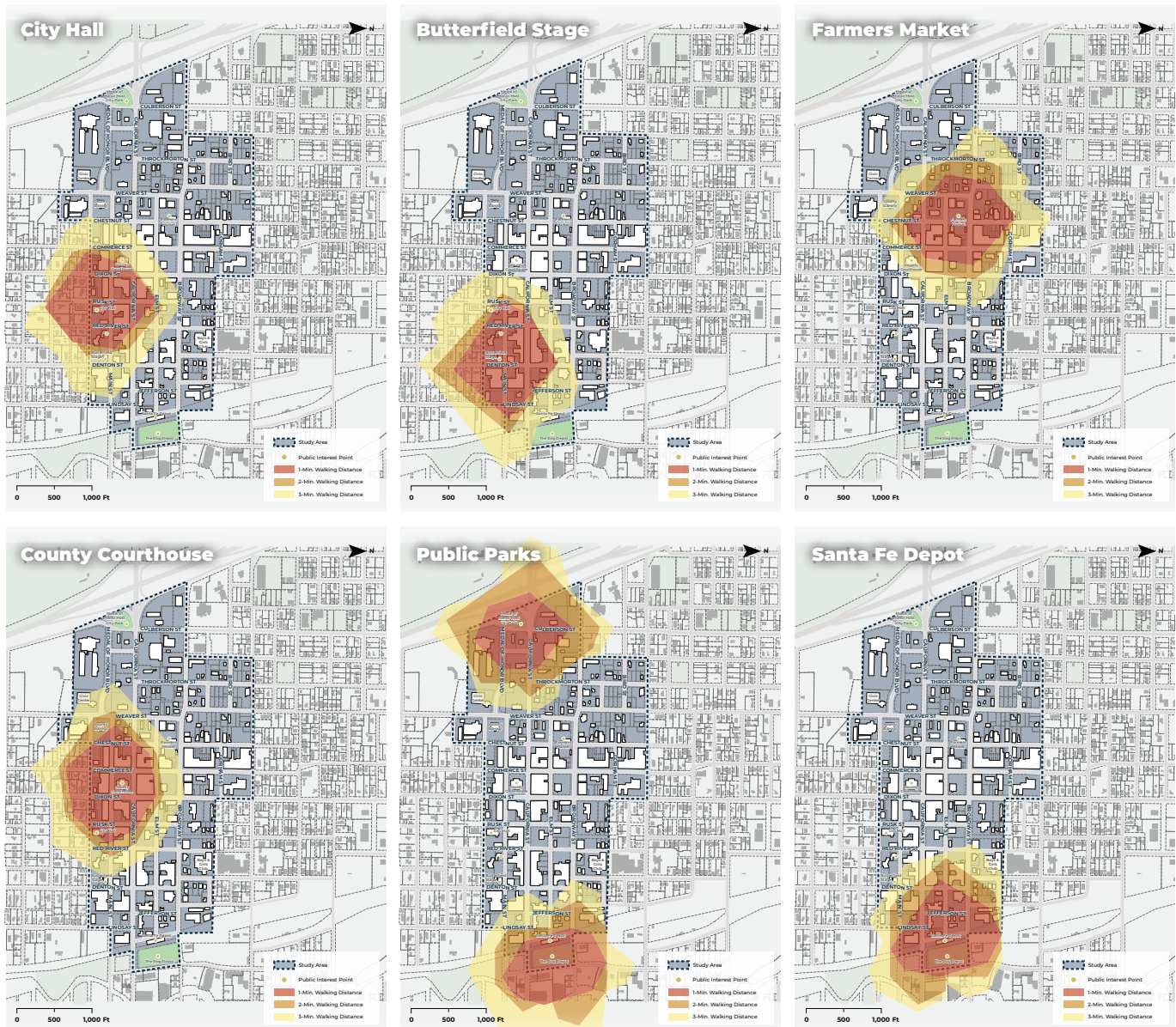
Public Perception

The functional reach of Downtown's public realm is determined more by the quality of the path than by the distance as the crow flies. The accompanying walkshed analyses shown in **Figure 5.4** illustrate the five-minute walking radius from key district anchors, including City Hall, Butterfield Stage, the Farmers Market, the Cooke County Courthouse, and the Santa Fe Depot. Full-page versions of these maps can also be found in **Appendix B**. While these destinations are geographically clustered, the overlapping zones reveal

Figure 5.4. Walkshed from Key Downtown Anchors

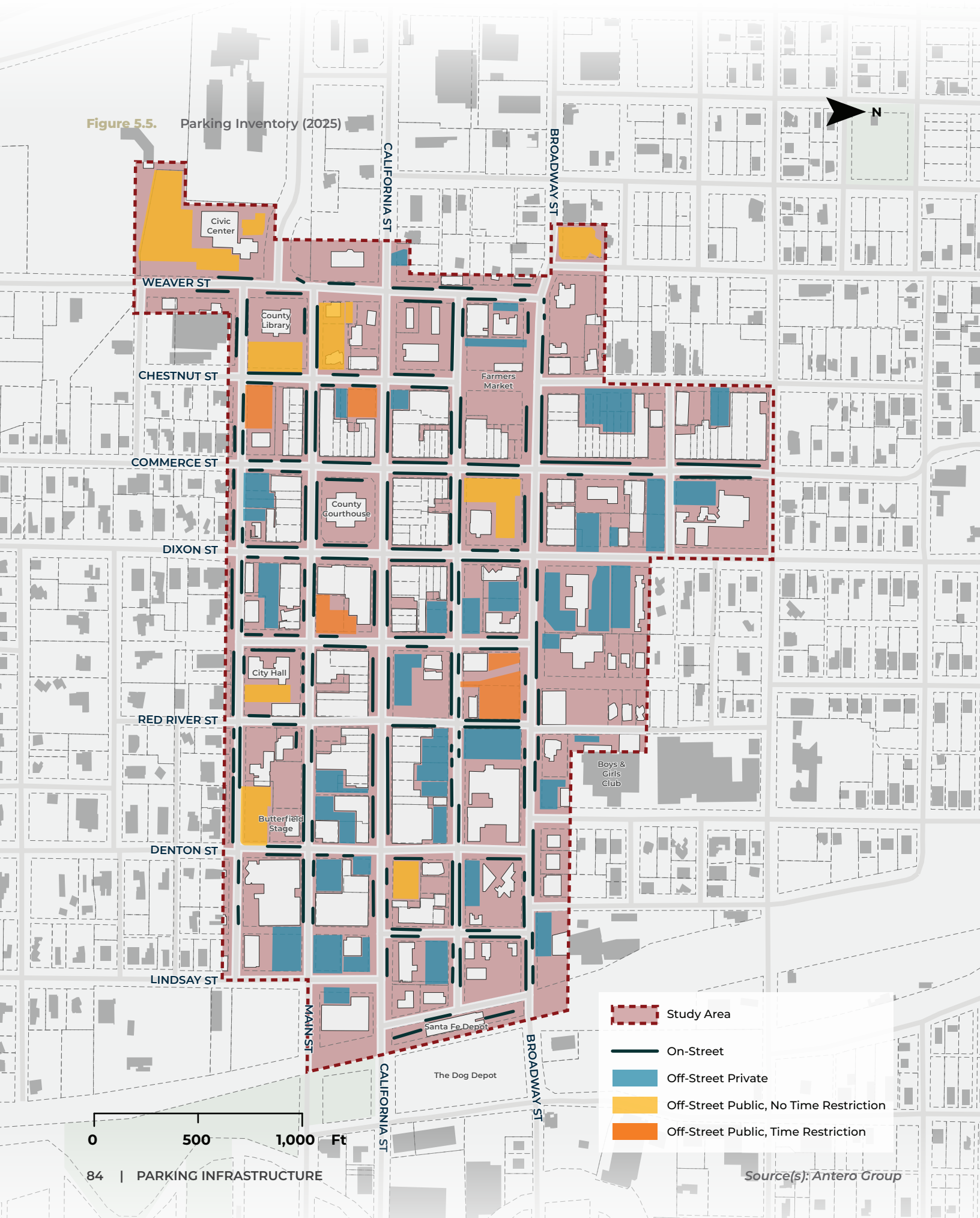
a disconnect: the physical infrastructure deficiencies effectively “shrink” the usable district for many visitors.

When a sidewalk ends abruptly or a crossing feels unsafe, it creates a psychological barrier that discourages exploration. These “islands of accessibility” prevent Downtown from functioning as a single, cohesive destination. Bridging these gaps is not just a matter of compliance; it is a strategy to expand the functional size of Downtown, ensuring that a visitor parked at the Depot can intuitively and comfortably reach the Courthouse square without hesitation.



Source(s): Antero Group

Figure 5.5. Parking Inventory (2025)



- Study Area
- On-Street
- Off-Street Private
- Off-Street Public, No Time Restriction
- Off-Street Public, Time Restriction

Source(s): Antero Group

Parking Infrastructure

Respondents for both the community and business surveys identified parking as a significant constraint to visiting and conducting business in Downtown Gainesville. As the City grows, this sentiment is likely to intensify, potentially acting as a ceiling to the

success of future development. **Addressing the actual and perceived barriers to parking is essential for the successful implementation of the broader land-use and public space activation strategies proposed in this Plan.**

Inventory Methodology

The planning team collected the initial parking inventory using high-resolution satellite imagery to identify and categorize available spaces. **The study area was intentionally focused on the zones most directly serving Downtown destinations and primary activity centers.** To capture a comprehensive picture of parking behavior, on-site observations were

conducted across two days—a Wednesday and a Saturday—at two-hour intervals from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. This methodology allowed for the collection of data on both occupancy (how many spaces are full) and turnover rates (how long vehicles remain in those spaces), providing an evidence-based foundation for future management strategies.

Existing Conditions

The analysis of current conditions indicates that Downtown Gainesville maintains an adequate overall parking supply, totaling **approximately 1,304 on-street parking spaces and 13 off-street parking lots.** Figure 5.5 illustrates the overall parking infrastructure that is distributed throughout the entire district. **Figure 5.6** identifies the capacity in each off-street parking lot evaluated as part of this assessment. **However, the physical condition and legibility of these assets vary significantly.** While certain areas feature clear signage and visible pavement markings, others exhibit faded or missing striping and inconsistent directional signage. **This variability impacts wayfinding, creating a sense of uncertainty for visitors—particularly for those unfamiliar with the district—which often translates into a perception of “limited” parking even when supply is sufficient.**

Figure 5.6. Off-Street Parking Inventory

PARKING LOT NAME	SPACES
Butterfield Stage	53
City Hall	32
Morton Museum	32
Cooke County Juvenile Probation	24
Cooke County Library	45
Gainesville Civic Center	99
Texas Department of Public Safety	19
Cooke County Courthouse Annex	15
Cooke County Tax Appraisal	54
Public Parking Lot	132
Lighthouse Preschool/ First Baptist	59
Gainesville Sheet Metal	31
Cooke County Public Parking	39

Source(s): Antero Group

PARKING UTILIZATION PATTERNS

An analysis of parking utilization reveals that demand is significantly higher on weekdays than on weekends, driven primarily by the workforce presence at County and City offices, civic buildings, and Downtown businesses. Consequently, the Downtown core, particularly near the courthouse and other government facilities, experiences the most concentrated weekday demand.

Despite the perception of limited availability, observed on-street parking occupancy rates range from six to twenty percent, representing a relatively low overall utilization rate even at peak hours. On weekends, while total demand declines, the spatial distribution remains consistent with weekday patterns. However, parking availability increases significantly near civic anchors as employee-reserved spaces and municipal lot restrictions are typically lifted or less enforced, providing a significant “latent” supply for weekend visitors.

Throughout both weekdays and weekends, the central Downtown core consistently experiences higher demand than the eastern portion of the study area. While the eastern area remains within a comfortable walking distance of key destinations, it exhibits noticeably lower occupancy levels. This discrepancy indicates that visitors may perceive these peripheral spaces as less convenient or remain unaware of their location. **Bridging this gap is a primary objective of the “Time-to-Destination” wayfinding strategy, which aims to recalibrate visitor perceptions of walking distances.**

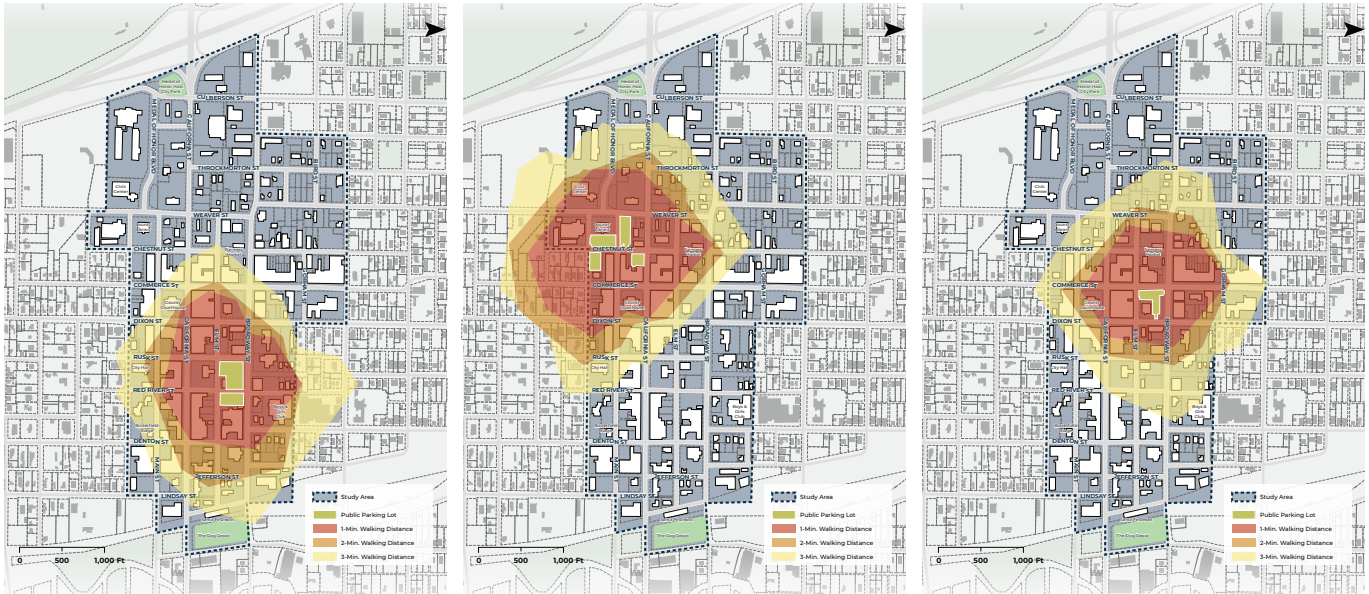
Notably, across all observed periods, areas equipped with clear and consistent parking signage experience higher usage rates. This finding suggests that visible wayfinding and branded striping increase driver confidence regarding the legality and availability of a space. **By improving informational transparency, the City can effectively “unlock” underutilized supply and redistribute demand across the district without the immediate need for capital-intensive new construction.**

Public Parking Walkshed

The parking data informed a walkshed analysis to evaluate pedestrian access between available parking supply and primary Downtown destinations. This analysis, illustrated in **Figure 5.7** on the following page, utilized 1-, 2-, and 3-minute walking intervals to reflect the district’s compact, walkable scale. This granular approach provides a clear understanding of the immediate proximity between parking spaces and the area’s key destinations.

While the DGA provides a webpage with information on available parking lots for visitor convenience, the “unprepared” visitor—

someone not utilizing the DGA website—remains reliant on physical cues. **Walkshed results indicate that nearly all Downtown points of interest are located within a three-minute walk of existing public parking.** However, the perceived walk is often lengthened by environmental barriers such as gaps in sidewalk connectivity, inconsistent lighting, and a lack of pedestrian-scale infrastructure. Addressing these “first and last block” barriers is critical to bridging the gap between physical proximity and user comfort.

Figure 5.7. Point-of-Interest Walksheds

Source(s): Antero Group

Goals and Recommendations



5.A. Optimize Parking Management and Visibility

5.A.1: ENHANCE THE EFFICIENCY OF EXISTING PARKING ASSETS AND ENSURE A HIGH-QUALITY VISITOR EXPERIENCE

5.A.1.a: Establish Additional Shared Parking Agreements with Private and Civic Property Owners to Expand Availability During Off-Peak Hours

The parking analysis indicates that while the overall supply is adequate, localized demand creates pressure during specific times. **To address this without the high cost of land acquisition or construction, the City will pursue additional shared parking agreements.** These partnerships, primarily with religious institutions, private offices, and county offices, will allow underutilized private lots to serve as public or event-based parking during evenings and weekends.

By formalizing these agreements, the City can provide event organizers with a clear inventory of available parking spaces to communicate to visitors in advance.

This reduces driver uncertainty, minimizes unnecessary circulation in the core, and maximizes the utility of existing paved surfaces, supporting a more sustainable and fiscally responsible approach to urban parking management.

5.A.1.b: Evaluate Long-Term Structured Parking Needs and Opportunities

As Gainesville grows, the nature of parking demand will shift from surface-level management to a need for higher-density solutions. **The City will evaluate the feasibility and strategic placement of structured**

parking to supplement existing surface supply. This proactive evaluation will focus on identifying underutilized or “re-adaptive” sites such as parcels which contribute little to the district’s tax base where a structured facility could more evenly distribute demand and reduce congestion within the core.

A central component of this strategy is the implementation of a comprehensive wayfinding and branded signage system. Clear, consistent signage will direct drivers from primary gateways and congested corridors toward available parking facilities, including underutilized surface lots and future structures. By reinforcing the Downtown identity through unified branding, this system will **minimize unnecessary vehicle circulation (“cruising” for spots) and increase driver confidence in the availability of parking** outside the immediate courthouse square.

Rather than viewing a garage as a standalone infrastructure cost, this strategy explores opportunities for integrated or shared structured parking. This includes facilities tied to new mixed-use developments or civic expansions, allowing the same structure to serve employees during the day and diners or event-goers in the evening. As part of this feasibility study, **the City will also explore parking validation programs, encouraging turnover and incentivizing visits to local businesses.** This long-range, adaptive approach ensures that future parking investments remain fiscally responsible while supporting Gainesville’s urban design goals and economic vitality.

5.A.1.c: Define Curbside Zones to Distinguish Roadway from On-Street Parking

The City will implement physical curb delineation and standardized pavement markings to resolve ambiguity regarding on-street parking locations. The parking analysis noted that in areas where the physical edge of the road is undefined, drivers often fail to utilize available space or park in a manner that encroaches on the travel lane. **By installing physical curbs or utilizing high-visibility striping where either do not exist along select segments, the City will clearly separate the “active roadway” from the “parking and loading zone.”**

This strategy aligns with TxDOT’s curb management and access management principles, and serves several operational purposes:

- **Predictability:** Clearly defined spaces allow drivers to park with confidence, reducing the tendency to “double-park” or leave excessive gaps between vehicles.
- **Operational Efficiency:** Formalized curbside zones provide dedicated areas for loading, passenger pick-up/drop-off, and ADA-accessible stalls, ensuring these critical functions do not disrupt traffic flow.
- **Traffic Calming:** Physically defining the parking lane narrows the effective visual width of the roadway, which naturally encourages lower operating speeds—a core objective of the Complete Streets framework.

5.A.1.d: Designate Dedicated Pick-Up and Drop-Off Zones to Support Community Events and Commerce

To manage modern mobility demands and improve traffic safety, the City will designate specific zones for rideshare (“TNC”) staging, commercial loading, and passenger pick-up/drop-off (“PUDO”). By assigning these activities to specific, well-marked curb locations, the City can reduce vehicle congestion and minimize pedestrian-vehicle conflicts during peak activity periods. This initiative is a critical step in positioning Gainesville as “event-ready,” demonstrating the operational preparedness needed to host signature events like those discussed in Chapter 4.

Establishing recurring PUDO zones during seasonal festivals or holiday activities creates a predictable environment for both drivers and pedestrians. This approach mirrors successful models in peer communities like McKinney and Addison, Texas, which utilize designated shuttle and rideshare hubs to maintain mobility during high-attendance events and provide festival maps to attendees for ease in identifying PUDO zones (Figure 5.8). Implementing these zones in Downtown Gainesville will enhance the visitor experience by streamlining arrival and departure, ensuring that increased transportation demand does not lead to localized congestion or safety hazards.

5.A.1.e: Standardize Signage and Pavement Markings to Improve Parking Legibility and Efficiency

The City will implement a unified system of signage and pavement striping across all public parking assets to eliminate confusion and increase user confidence. Clear communication regarding time limits, permit requirements, and connectivity to nearby destinations is essential to reducing “cruising” for spots. Currently, inconsistencies in

how parking regulations are posted across the district create uncertainty; standardizing these elements will ensure that both residents and visitors can navigate the parking network with ease.

To further assist visitors, the City will require that all sanctioned Downtown events include a standardized visual parking map in their promotional materials. By providing a clear reference to nearby lots and available street parking in advance, the City can set expectations early, reduce arrival-time uncertainty, and improve the overall event experience.

Figure 5.8. Oktoberfest, City of McKinney



Source(s): City of McKinney

Figure 5.9. City of San Jose Walk Your City



Source(s): Richard Masoner/Cyclelicious

A critical component of this strategy is the integration of “Time-to-Destination” wayfinding. Following concepts pioneered by urban planners like Matt Tomasulo and piloted in cities like San Jose (**Figure 5.9**), **Gainesville will adapt signage that communicates the walking time (e.g., “3-minute walk to Courthouse Square”) rather than just distance.** This strategy is supported by walkshed analysis showing that nearly all key destinations are within a 3-minute walk of existing public lots. Visualizing this radius on signage helps overcome the psychological barrier of “remote” parking. This approach reinforces the district’s compact scale and encourages visitors to utilize available parking in the eastern study area, knowing their destination is only a short walk away. **To support the Cultural District, these signs will incorporate the district’s visual branding and provide directional cues to the activation nodes identified on the Downtown Activation and Amenity Map within Strategy 4.A.1.a.**

The type, placement, and design of parking signage also influence how information is perceived. Currently, areas include time-limit signage while others do not, creating inconsistency across Downtown. **Parking signage will be standardized, incorporating Downtown branding and regulations such as time limits and permitted uses.** To ensure maximum efficiency, the City will refresh faded pavement markings to clearly define individual stalls and proper vehicle alignment. During on-site parking observations, it was observed that poor striping led to vehicles occupying more space than necessary, effectively reducing the available supply. **By clearly delineating stalls and providing fair, consistent notice through branded signage, the City will improve compliance and overall parking throughput before considering more intensive enforcement measures.**



5.B. Cultivate a Multimodal “Complete Streets” Network

5.B.1: ESTABLISH A BALANCED TRANSPORTATION ENVIRONMENT THAT PRIORITIZES SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL TRAVEL MODES

5.B.1.a: Develop and implement a City Active Transportation Plan

The City will develop a comprehensive Active Transportation Plan (“ATP”), with a specialized focus on the Downtown district, to guide the systematic design and implementation of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. This plan will establish formal policies, design standards, and a transparent project prioritization framework. By coordinating Downtown recommendations with existing capital planning, the City ensures that active transportation investments are context-sensitive, fiscally responsible, and aligned with long-term safety goals.

Implementation will follow a phased, pilot-based approach, beginning in lower-conflict environments such as parks before expanding into the high-traffic Downtown core. This “incremental implementation” strategy allows the City to evaluate operational impacts and build public support before committing to permanent infrastructure. To maintain fiscal responsibility, the City will leverage a mix of CIP allocations, competitive state and federal grants, and potential public-private partnerships with micromobility providers and local institutions to fund the expansion of this network over time.

To maximize the impact of these investments, the City will synchronize the installation of active transportation facilities with scheduled street maintenance and resurfacing projects. This “dig once” approach allows for the cost-effective integration of high-visibility striping, bike lane delineations, and sidewalk repairs. Additionally, the City will use “quick-build” materials such as paint,

bollards, and modular planters to test new configurations. These low-cost treatments provide immediate safety benefits while allowing for real-world data collection and design refinement before committing to capital-intensive permanent construction.

5.B.1.b: Establish Micromobility Policies and Performance Standards

As new forms of personal mobility such as electric bicycles and scooters become more prevalent, **the City will establish a regulatory framework to manage their operation within the Downtown district.** This policy will define “parking zones” for micromobility devices to prevent sidewalk clutter and ensure that pedestrian pathways remain clear and ADA-compliant. This strategy directly supports and extends the goals established in the *Guiding Gainesville Parks and Trails Master Plan* by ensuring a seamless transition between the municipal trail network and the urban core.

To build public confidence and evaluate operational impacts, **the City will initiate micromobility pilot programs within local parks before expanding into the high-traffic Downtown core.** Utilizing the controlled environment of the parks allows the City to refine “rules of the road,” test parking compliance, and monitor user behavior in a setting with lower vehicular conflict. This phased rollout directly supports the goals established in the *Guiding Gainesville Parks and Trails Master Plan*. By aligning Downtown micromobility hubs with the trailheads and park connections identified in that Plan, the City creates a seamless transition between recreational trails and the urban core.

Learning from the comprehensive 2023-2024 program relaunch in Dallas, **Gainesville will implement a “performance-first” regulatory model.** Key details, illustrated in **Figure 5.10**, to be adapted from the Dallas precedent include:

- **Designated Parking Corrals:** Implementing on-street “corrals” and mandatory parking zones to eliminate sidewalk clutter and preserve ADA clearances at ramps and storefronts.
- **Geo-Fenced Control Zones:** Utilizing GPS technology to enforce “No-Ride Zones” (such as specific plazas or sidewalks) and “Slow-Ride Zones” (automatically capping speeds at 10 mph in high-pedestrian areas like the Courthouse Square).
- **Operational Curfews:** Establishing hard shut-off times (e.g., 9:00 PM) to minimize nuisance and safety issues during late-night hours.
- **Enforcement Mechanics:** Requiring vendors to implement end-of-trip photos to verify legal parking and maintaining a fine structure for users and operators who violate district-specific rules.

By adopting these proven performance standards, **the City can ensure that micromobility functions as a viable “last-mile” solution** by effectively bridging the gap between peripheral parking lots and a visitor’s final destination while maintaining a clear, safe, and orderly public realm.

Figure 5.10. Shared Dockless Vehicle Program



5.B.1.c: Implement a Downtown-Specific Street and Utility Maintenance Program

The City will establish a Downtown-Specific Street and Utility Maintenance Program (“DSUMP”) to align with and enhance the citywide SUMP. This alignment ensures that infrastructure investments within the district are coordinated, performance-driven, and protected against premature failure. Because the Downtown core supports the City’s highest density of economic activity and event traffic, maintaining a “state of good repair” is a critical requirement for long-term fiscal sustainability and public safety. Proactively maintaining Downtown streets and utilities creates a predictable, safe, high-quality public realm that supports growth, improves visitor experience, and keeps Downtown walkable, connected, and economically resilient.

The DSUMP serves as the technical foundation for all “above-ground” improvements. By coordinating pavement resurfacing and utility upgrades with the installation of sidewalk extensions, bike facilities, and comfort corridor amenities, the City avoids the “rip and replace” cycle by minimizing construction disruption to local businesses and reducing overall project costs.

Aligning this program within the citywide SUMP allows the City to track conditions, prioritize projects, and fosters interdepartmental collaboration while

Source(s): City of Dallas

Figure 5.11. Conceptual Pedestrian Crossing Improvements



maintaining a clear focus on Downtown needs. Furthermore, establishing a dedicated DSUMP demonstrates Gainesville's administrative readiness to state and federal agencies.

This structured approach to maintenance strengthens the City's position when competing for external funding opportunities tied to connectivity, complete streets, and active transportation, by showing a clear plan for the long-term stewardship of grant-funded assets.

5.B.1.d: Widen Sidewalks to Enhance Pedestrian Comfort and Safety

Sidewalk analysis revealed that several sidewalks are narrower than the recommended NACTO minimum recommendation of 6 feet. Narrow sidewalks serve as a physical barrier to accessibility and discourage the "dwell time" necessary for a thriving retail environment. **By expanding the effective walking width, the City creates a "Complete Street" network that accommodates people of all ages and abilities.**

Wider sidewalks do more than facilitate movement; they serve as a catalyst for economic vitality. As discussed in **Chapter 4**, increased sidewalk depth allows for outdoor dining and street-level activations, transforming a simple transit path into a social

destination. This expansion also contributes to traffic calming by visually narrowing the roadway, encouraging slower vehicle speeds, and reinforcing a pedestrian-oriented street environment. Paired with street redesign efforts, sidewalk improvements will shift Downtown streets toward people-first mobility while maintaining necessary vehicular access.

5.B.1.e: Identify Pedestrian Priority Routes and Implement Pedestrian Crossing Improvements

Improving pedestrian crossings, such as those illustrated in **Figure 5.11**, complements sidewalk widening and is essential for creating a continuous, safe pedestrian network. **Therefore, the City will assess Downtown streets near public destinations, parking areas, transit stops, and comfort corridors to reduce conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles by conducting a study to identify streets without adequate crossing infrastructure.** This strategy focuses on reducing "modal conflict" where pedestrian paths intersect with vehicle lanes. A phased approach will be used to implement infrastructure that shortens crossing distances and increases driver awareness.

Figure 5.12. Downtown Main Street, Frisco, TX



Source(s): City of Frisco

Key treatments will include:

- **High-Visibility Crosswalks:** Utilizing “continental” or “ladder” striping patterns that are more visible to approaching motorists.
- **Curb Extensions (Bulb-outs):** Reducing the distance a pedestrian must travel in the active roadway and improving sightlines for both drivers and walkers.
- **Pedestrian Refuge Islands:** Providing a safe midpoint for pedestrians crossing wider segments, such as portions of California Street.
- **Improved Signal Timing:** Evaluating Lead Pedestrian Intervals (“LPI”) to give walkers a head start and establish themselves in the crosswalk where they are more visible to turning motorists and, therefore, reduce the risk of collisions.

Peer cities in the North Texas region are currently leveraging major regional events to accelerate these infrastructure investments.

For example, the City of Frisco is currently completing a comprehensive Main Street overhaul that includes full-depth pavement replacement, decorative pavers, and upgraded signals as shown in **Figure 5.12** to enhance the public realm in anticipation of the 2026

FIFA World Cup. **By adopting a similar coordinated approach, Gainesville can align its infrastructure upgrades with placemaking and activation strategies to maximize long-term value and readiness for future regional growth.**

5.B.1.f: Transform Downtown Streets for Year-Round Connectivity

The City will designate select Downtown corridors as comfort corridors or “Chill Streets,” utilizing a phased approach to transform them into low-speed, people-focused environments. A central tenet of the Chill Street concept is the expansion of the urban tree canopy. These interventions are not merely aesthetic; they function as critical thermal infrastructure. By prioritizing shade, these corridors reduce ambient surface temperatures, ensuring that the connectivity network remains usable during Texas’ high-heat months. Without this thermal bridge, the pedestrian network fails during peak heat, severing the connection between parking and retail.

Amenity-rich Chill Streets will feature a coordinated set of design treatments, including reduced speed limits, enhanced crossings, curb extensions, seating, and

landscape elements. Green infrastructure will be integrated wherever feasible to support both placemaking and active street-level activity.

Lighting is critical for extending Downtown hours and shaping the public perception of safety. Well-lit streets improve visibility and wayfinding, encouraging social and economic activity long after sunset. Conversely, poor or inconsistent lighting can actively discourage walking, reduce foot traffic, and shift activity away from certain corridors, especially during winter months with limited daylight. This creates uneven activation across the district and can lead to negative economic impacts for businesses located on less-illuminated streets.

Priority for these enhancements will be given to areas currently characterized by “uninterrupted concrete” and limited shade.

A notable example is the lot on Lindsay Street, between Main and California Street, which currently exhibits uneven pavement and a total lack of shade (**Figure 5.13**). These factors contribute to visual blight and exacerbate the urban heat island effect, where heat absorption and high radiated surface temperatures create a physical barrier for pedestrians.

Proposed lighting and landscaping improvement locations are illustrated in **Figure 5.14**.

Figure 5.13. Lindsay Parking Lot

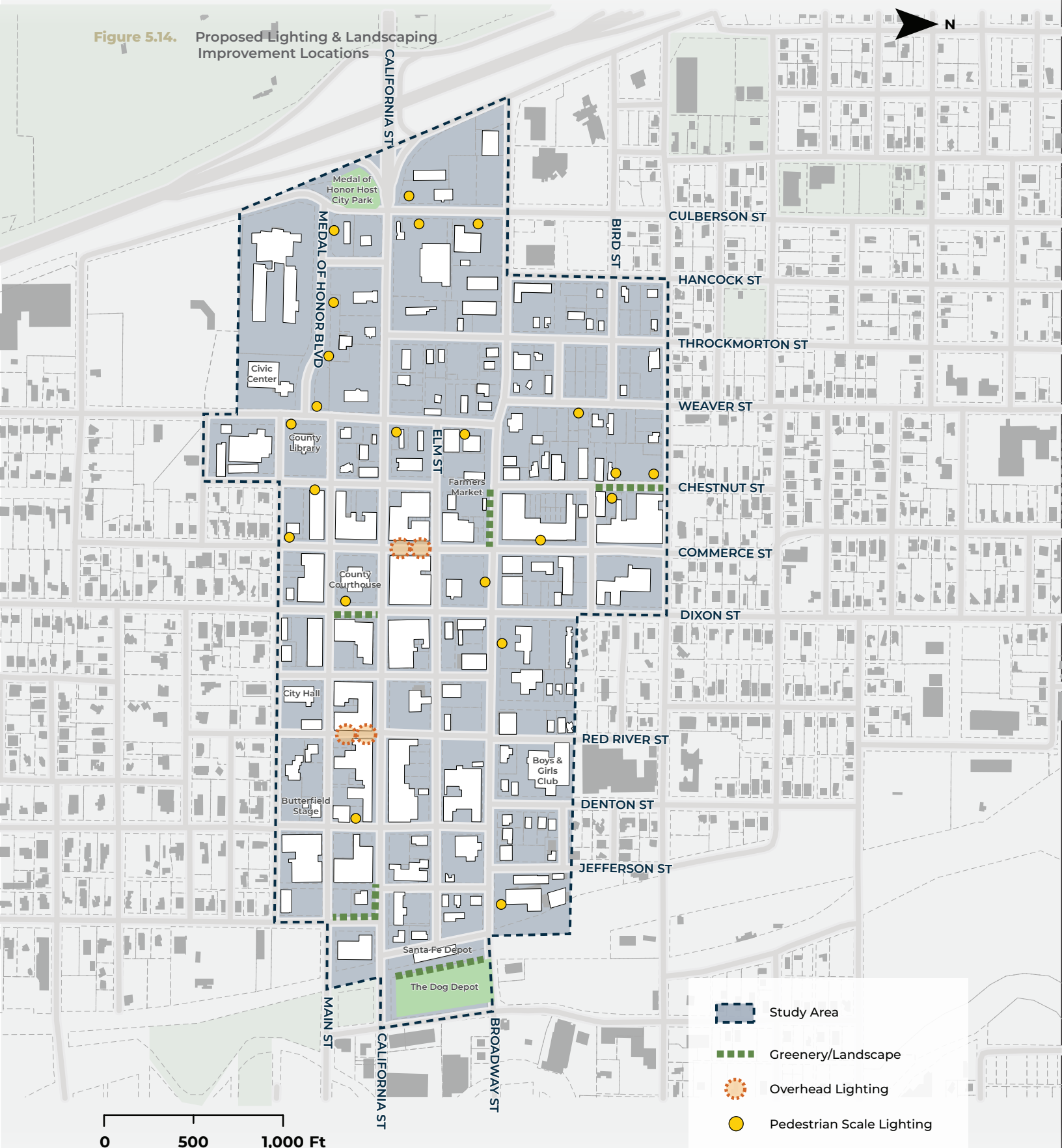


Source(s): Google Street View (May 2023)

To fortify the district’s connectivity, the City will incorporate:

- **Landscaped Islands and Tree Canopy:** To provide thermal comfort and visual relief.
- **Stormwater Management:** Integrating bioswales and permeable surfaces where appropriate to manage runoff while generating a more attractive parking environment.
- **Improved Transitions:** Utilizing landscape features to create a “visual separation” between parked vehicles and sidewalks, ensuring a high-quality “first-and-last-mile” experience for every visitor.
- **Coordinated Illumination:** Prioritizing the pedestrian-scale lighting standards outlined in Strategy 5.C.1.f along these routes to extend the usable hours of the network and shape a positive public perception of safety.

Figure 5.14. Proposed Lighting & Landscaping Improvement Locations





5.C: Invest in a Downtown Pedestrian Promenade

5.C.1: CREATE AN INVITING AND WALKABLE DOWNTOWN EXPERIENCE

The City will implement the **Downtown Pedestrian Promenade as a signature connectivity investment and placemaking asset**. This corridor, identified in **Figure 5.15**, will transition Main Street from a vehicle-dominant roadway into a balanced, multimodal environment that expands pedestrian and bicycle capacity while maintaining necessary vehicle throughput and on-street parking.

5.C.1.a: Implement Comprehensive Streetscape Improvements to Support Connectivity

The **Downtown Pedestrian Promenade will serve as a key east-west corridor in the Downtown transportation network, strengthening connections between activity centers, public destinations, and areas within the TOD district**. By prioritizing safe and comfortable walking and bicycling, the

promenade improves first- and last-mile connectivity to transit, public parking, and Downtown destinations, reducing reliance on short vehicle trips.

To support this connectivity with a unified district aesthetic, streetscape improvements will utilize a standardized palette of high-durability materials. All site furniture, including benches, waste receptacles, and bike racks, shall consist of materials such as black powder-coated steel or cast iron in order to ensure a unified historic aesthetic across the Promenade. Furthermore, the City will utilize decorative brick pavers or similar accent treatments at intersections and activation nodes to signal pedestrian priority and distinguish the corridor from standard roadway surfaces.

Figure 5.15. Downtown Pedestrian Promenade



5.C.1.b: Integrate Dedicated Bicycle Infrastructure to Promote Multi-Modality

The City will incorporate dedicated bicycle infrastructure including clearly delineated bike lanes, shared-use paths, and strategically located bicycle parking will be incorporated to improve network continuity and reduce conflicts between modes. Bicycle facilities will be coordinated with land uses, transit access points, and public parking locations to encourage multimodal travel during both daily use and unique events.

5.C.1.c: Ensure Vehicular Visibility Triangles to Mitigate Pedestrian-Vehicular Conflicts

Sidewalks and shared-use paths will be continuous, accessible, and legible, with consistent widths and materials that reinforce pedestrian priority. Design treatments will strictly preserve visibility triangles at intersections and driveways to maintain safe sightlines for all users, adhering to AASHTO and TxDOT sight-distance standards. Landscaping, street furniture, and vertical elements will be strategically placed to support comfort and wayfinding without creating blind spots or obstructing movement.

5.C.1.d: Utilize Landscaping to Enhance Pedestrian Comfort and Calm Traffic

Street trees, native landscaping, and furnishing zones will serve both safety and mobility purposes. These features buffer pedestrians and bicyclists from moving vehicles, visually narrow travel lanes to encourage lower operating speeds, and improve thermal comfort along key walking routes. Expanded tree canopy is especially important for maintaining walkability during warmer months and supporting year-round pedestrian activity.

Landscaping within the Promenade and identified gathering nodes will prioritize the Comfort Corridors initiative. Priority will be given to native, drought-tolerant canopy trees

to provide maximum shade. **At the activation nodes identified in Chapter 4, planters will be designed as “living buffers” to separate pedestrians from vehicular traffic, providing both physical safety and environmental comfort for gathering groups.**

5.C.1.e: Implement Permeable Surfaces and Pavers Without Compromising Access

Where feasible, permeable and accessible surface treatments will be incorporated to support stormwater management while maintaining mobility performance.

Permeable pavers and decorative materials may be used at crossings, intersections, and pedestrian-priority zones to reinforce shared space and reduce vehicle dominance. To ensure compliance with ADA standards, all such surfaces must remain smooth, stable, firm, and slip-resistant.

5.C.1.f: Install Pedestrian-Scale Lighting to Drive District Vitality

The City will implement consistent, well-designed pedestrian-scale lighting to improve nighttime visibility and extend the usable hours of the Downtown network.

Proper lighting directly influences route choice and perceived safety, particularly during winter months when daylight is reduced. By eliminating poorly lit “gaps,” the City ensures that foot traffic remains steady across all corridors, preventing the shift of activity away from businesses located on secondary segments of the Promenade.

Light fixtures should be 12-15 feet in height with a “historic” profile to distinguish the district from standard roadway lighting. These fixtures should utilize warm-toned LED lamps to enhance the district’s historic character while ensuring energy efficiency. **Lighting implementation will be sequenced to begin at the activation nodes identified in Chapter 4 to ensure these spaces are safe and inviting for nighttime events and social interaction.**

Implementation Framework

PHASED IMPLEMENTATION

The City will deliver improvements in phases, beginning with temporary or quick-build treatments to evaluate lane configurations, crossings, and curb space allocation.

This methodology allows for real-world data collection and public feedback before committing to permanent materials through the CIP.

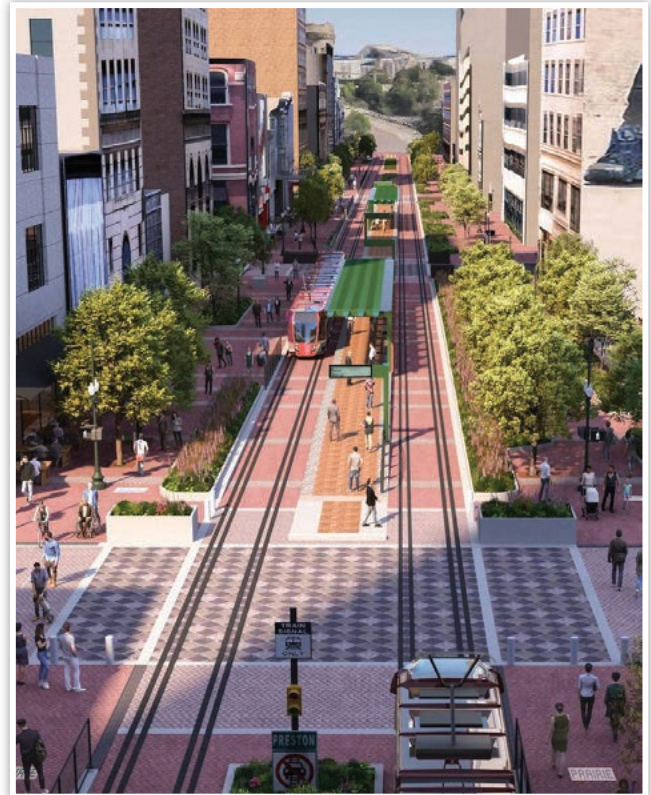
COORDINATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Consistent with the DSUMP (Strategy 5.B.1.c), **Promenade implementation will be synchronized with scheduled street maintenance and utility upgrades.** This coordination minimizes commercial disruption and ensures that infrastructure investments support long-term economic vitality.

REGIONAL PRECEDENT: HOUSTON MAIN STREET PROMENADE (FIFA 2026)

This multimodal approach mirrors the phased investment currently underway in the City of Houston (**Figure 5.16**). Functioning as a “cool, connected corridor,” the Houston project links major destinations and accommodates everyday programming while maintaining

Figure 5.16. City of Houston Main Street Promenade



Source(s): City of Houston

traffic operations. **Gainesville will adopt this model to strengthen its mobility network and manage travel demand through incremental upgrades, maintaining the operational readiness required for future regional events.**

Conclusion

This chapter has established a comprehensive framework for Downtown Gainesville’s connectivity networks, identifying current infrastructural strengths and critical areas for modernization. The strategies outlined range from the optimization of existing parking assets through wayfinding to the development of a multi-modal Downtown Pedestrian Promenade and are directly informed by the existing conditions analysis. By synthesizing parking usage patterns, pedestrian walkshed data, and street network performance, the Plan provides a technically grounded foundation for targeted investments.

Implementing these recommendations will require a coordinated approach, aligning infrastructure upgrades with fiscal responsibility and the district’s long-term economic goals. By prioritizing safety, accessibility, and environmental comfort, Gainesville will ensure its Downtown remains a resilient and connected destination for residents and visitors alike. The following chapter will detail the execution process, including project prioritization, potential funding sources, and Plan ownership. ►



06 IMPLEMENTATION



Introduction

Revitalizing a historic core requires a shift from general municipal oversight to active district stewardship. While previous chapters established the vision, this chapter provides the operational manual for the ***Guiding Gainesville Downtown Master Plan***. It defines the specialized roles, funding logic, and performance tracking required to sustain Downtown as the City's premier economic and cultural asset.

The Stewardship Model

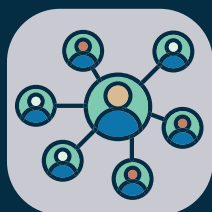
Downtown Gainesville functions as a unique ecosystem where public infrastructure and private investment must remain synchronized. Success relies on a Management Coalition that leverages municipal authority alongside private-sector advocacy:



STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT

The City Manager and City Council ensure that the district remains a top priority within the CIP and annual budget cycles. They provide

the high-level authorization for the specialized zoning overlays and capital investments, such as the Downtown Pedestrian Promenade, needed for long-term growth.



REGULATORY ALIGNMENT

Advisory bodies, including the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Parks & Recreation Board, utilize this Plan as their primary policy guide. Their role is to ensure that development

requests and park improvements strengthen the district's character and align with the established Two-Tier Overlay.



ADMINISTRATIVE FACILITATION

Designated City Staff and the GEDC serve as the primary facilitators of district reinvestment, managing the

specialized grants, film-friendly initiatives, and technical resources that drive business growth.



COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

As a voluntary association of local businesses, the DGA serves as the "voice of the district." The DGA provides the critical feedback loop between

the private sector and City Hall, championing community-led events and advocating for the needs of the merchant community to ensure that public investments remain responsive to local business conditions.

Plan Integration

The **Guiding Gainesville Downtown Master Plan** is a specialized tool designed to fit within the *Guiding Gainesville 2040* framework while maintaining its own performance-driven focus.

Resource Allocation

The City will prioritize investments that generate a high “return on character” and fiscal productivity:

- ▶ **Catalytic Funding:** Prioritizing “quick-win” projects like District Gateways and Signage Upgrades to build immediate momentum.
- ▶ **Infrastructure Synchronization:** Aligning utility undergrounding and street repairs with the Street and Utility Maintenance Program (SUMP) to maximize efficiency through a “dig-once” methodology.

Master Implementation Matrix

The **Master Implementation Matrix** is the district’s definitive work program. It provides a standardized data set for every recommendation, ensuring transparency for residents and predictability for investors. The matrix utilizes the following components:

Priority Level

The priority level reflects the strategic urgency and the potential for the project to catalyze further investment within the Downtown core.

- 1. High-Priority:** Critical “foundational” actions that must be initiated immediately to unlock subsequent projects. These often include regulatory changes (like the Two-Tier Overlay) or high-impact public safety and accessibility improvements.
- 2. Medium-Priority:** Essential strategies that are necessary for the district’s long-term health but may require a longer lead time for design, public consensus, or specialized funding coordination.
- 3. Low-Priority:** Supportive initiatives that enhance the district’s character but are less urgent. These projects are typically scheduled after the high-productivity infrastructure and policy needs have been addressed.

Time Frame

Time frames provide a roadmap for project delivery, accounting for the realities of municipal procurement, grant cycles, and construction phasing.

- ▶ **Near-Term (1–3 years):** “Quick wins” and policy foundations. These are projects that can be executed within current administrative cycles using existing staff or modest budgetary allocations (e.g., TCA Designation or Vendor Recruitment Guidelines).
- ▶ **Mid-Term (3–5 years):** Programmatic growth and design-intensive projects. These often require a dedicated budget cycle or a standard state grant application (e.g., Wayfinding Systems or Pilot Public Facilities).
- ▶ **Long-Term (5–10 years):** Large-scale capital anchors. These represent significant physical changes to the Downtown landscape that require detailed engineering and major funding (e.g., Downtown Pedestrian Promenade).
- ▶ **Extended-Term (10–15 years):** Transformational infrastructure. These projects require complex, multi-year funding strategies and coordination with external utility or transit providers (e.g., Phased Utility Undergrounding).

Cost Levels

Cost levels represent the estimated total investment required from the City, acknowledging that many projects will be supplemented by external grants.

- ▶ **\$ – Low Cost:** Minor expenses (typically under \$25,000) that can be absorbed within existing departmental operating budgets or represent staff-time-only policy changes.
- ▶ **\$\$ – Moderate Cost:** Projects (typically \$25,000 – \$250,000) requiring specific line-item funding in the annual budget, GEDC assistance, or matching grants.
- ▶ **\$\$\$ – High Cost:** Substantial capital investments (\$250,000 – \$1M+) likely requiring large-scale state/federal grants or the reallocation of significant municipal funds.
- ▶ **\$\$\$\$ – Very High Cost:** Major, transformational investments (\$1M+) that typically necessitate voter-approved bonds, specialized finance districts, or multi-year federal funding.

Responsible Parties & Key Partners

This identifies the internal “project owner” and the external “allies” necessary to move a strategy from paper to pavement.

- ▶ **Responsible Party:** The City department or municipal organization (e.g., Public Works, Community Development, GEDC) charged with managing the project’s timeline, budget, and ultimate delivery.
- ▶ **Key Partners:** External stakeholders or regional agencies (e.g., DGA, TxDOT, Amtrak) whose cooperation, technical expertise, or advocacy is essential to the project’s success.

Performance Metrics

Performance metrics are the Key Performance Indicators (“KPIs”) used to track the impact of a strategy. These go beyond simple “completion” to measure the functional success of the investment.

- ▶ **Quantitative Metrics:** Data-driven indicators such as “total linear feet of sidewalk widened,” “number of new business permits issued,” or “percentage increase in nighttime foot traffic.”
- ▶ **Qualitative Metrics:** Indicators based on user experience and district perception, such as “successful state-level designation,” “reduction in reported parking confusion,” or “improved environmental comfort” as measured by community feedback.

Potential Funding Opportunities

Prioritizes Grant Funding Identification to minimize reliance on the General Fund.

STRATEGIC GRANT COORDINATION AND PROJECT READINESS

To minimize reliance on the General Fund, the City will utilize a proactive “project-readiness” model. Rather than reacting to grant announcements, the City will maintain a state of readiness by completing the foundational policy work such as the Two-Tier Overlay and Design Guidelines required to satisfy the technical scoring criteria of state and federal agencies.

City staff should monitor recurring grant cycles through the “System of Plans” logic established in this document, such as the following:

- ▶ **Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) - Cultural District Programs**
Staff should monitor the TCA annual cycle for the Cultural District Designation (typically requiring a Letter of Intent in early Q1) and subsequent Arts Respond Cultural District Project grants. These funds are essential for the physical framework of the Cultural District.
- ▶ **Texas Historical Commission (THC) - Certified Local Government (CLG) Grants**
As a Certified Local Government, Gainesville is eligible for specialized sub-grants to fund historic resource surveys and the refinement of preservation ordinances. The adoption of the Two-Tier Overlay System (Strategy 3.A.1.a) is a critical step in maintaining eligibility and competitiveness for these funds, as it demonstrates the heightened level of stewardship required by the THC.
- ▶ **Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) - Transportation Alternatives (TA)**
Major corridor projects, specifically the Downtown Pedestrian Promenade, should be positioned for the biennial TxDOT TA Set-Aside call. These are highly competitive “Active Transportation” funds that prioritize projects with clear multimodal connectivity and community support.
- ▶ **Texas A&M Forest Service - Community Forestry Grants**
The expansion of the Downtown tree canopy—a core component of the “Chill Streets” initiative—aligns with state-level grants focused on urban heat island mitigation and community resiliency.

To ensure the City captures these opportunities as they arise, responsible parties should conduct a “Funding Audit” every six months. This internal review will align the progress of the Master Implementation Matrix with the current release schedules of the agencies such as those mentioned above.

The page is intentionally blank.

GOAL	OBJECTIVE	NO.	STRATEGY/ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	COST	PARTNERS	METRICS	POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
ECONOMIC GROWTH, INNOVATION, AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY										
2.A. Foster Business Development and District Management	2.A.1: Support business growth by equipping new and existing businesses with the resources, training, and processes needed to thrive	2.A.1.a	Partner with Regional Institutions for Business Workshops	LOW	Near-Term	GEDC	\$	Chamber of Commerce, Local Businesses, NCTC SBDC, DGA	Number of local business owners/ entrepreneurs attending quarterly sessions annually; percent of participating businesses reporting improved capacity or growth	GEDC; SBDC Federal/State Funding
		2.A.1.b	Create a Visitors Bureau Center to Provide a Central Point for Business Resources and Essential Amenities	MEDIUM	Mid-Term	Communications & Outreach	\$\$-\$\$\$	Chamber of Commerce, GEDC, DGA	Completion of a feasibility study and site selection; annual visitor/ entrepreneur foot traffic counts post-opening	GEDC; CDBG; HOT Funds, GEDC Grants
		2.A.1.c	Develop Vendor Recruitment Guidelines to Proactively Attract a Diverse Mix of Dining, Retail, and Entertainment Options	HIGH	Near-Term	GEDC, Communications & Outreach	\$	Community Development, Chamber of Commerce, DGA	Adoption and publication of the guidelines; percentage increase in new retail/dining permit applications	City-Funded
		2.A.1.d	Participate in the Film-Friendly Texas Program to Attract Film Activity and Generate New Economic Opportunities	MEDIUM	Near-Term	GEDC, Communications & Outreach	\$	Chamber of Commerce, Local Artists & Associations, Historic Associations, TFC	Achievement of the "Film-Friendly" certification from the Texas Film Commission (Yes/No); number of film inquiries or permits issued	TFC Grants
2.B. Leverage Cultural and Creative Assets for Economic Growth	2.B.1: Formalize the creative identity to attract investment, unlock specialized funding, and increase regional tourism	2.B.1.a	Pursue and Secure a Cultural District Designation through the Texas Commission on the Arts	HIGH	Near-Term	Communications & Outreach	\$	GEDC, DGA	Successful submission of the Letter of Intent and full designation by the State	TCA Arts Respond Cultural District Project Grants
DOWNTOWN CHARACTER AND DEVELOPMENT										
3.A Protect and Showcase Historic Character	3.A.1: Preserve historic assets by maintaining the visual appeal and integrity of downtown buildings	3.A.1.a	Implement a Two-Tier Overlay System with a “Preservation Core” for High-Integrity Resources and a “Heritage Compatibility Zone” for Transitional Neighborhoods	HIGH	Near-Term	Community Development	\$	Planning & Zoning Commission, Downtown Gainesville Alliance, Heritage/ Historic Societies	Official adoption of Two-Tier Overlay System and Updated Zoning Map	THC CLG Grants; GLO RCP
	3.A.2: Promote Design Excellence and Visual Consistency	3.A.2.a	Consolidate and Adopt Downtown Design Guidelines	HIGH	Near-Term	Community Development	\$	Planning & Zoning Commission	Adoption of the Downtown Design Guidelines; 100% compliance rate for new Certificate of Appropriateness filings	GLO RCP
3.B. Promote Strategic Development and Housing	3.B.1: Encourage infill & mixed-use development that increases density, creativity, and vitality	3.B.1.a	Create an Urban Residential Designation	MEDIUM	Near-Term	Community Development	\$	Commercial & Housing Developers, Planning & Zoning Commission	Number of "missing-middle" or live/ work units permitted within the new designation area	City-Funded
		3.B.1.b	Establish a Transit-Oriented Development Node	LOW	Mid-Term to Long-Term	Community Development	\$\$-\$\$\$\$	Commercial & Housing Developers, BNSF, Amtrak, TxDOT, Planning & Zoning Commission	Completion of a Santa Fe Depot Master Plan and adoption of transit-oriented development zoning standards	TA/TAP; BUILD Grant; CBDG Programs

GOAL	OBJECTIVE	NO.	STRATEGY/ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	COST	PARTNERS	METRICS	POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
PUBLIC SPACE ACTIVATION										
4.A. Establish and Activate the Downtown Cultural District	4.A.1: Enhance cultural expression and placemaking by establishing Downtown as a premier destination for arts and heritage	4.A.1.a	Execute the Physical Framework for the Cultural District	MEDIUM	Mid-Term	Community Development	\$\$-\$\$\$	Planning & Zoning Commission	Total linear feet of "cultural spine" improvements completed between the Depot and Medal of Honor Park	TCA Grants; NEA Our Town/ Arts Grant
		4.A.1.b	Implement an Annual Mural and Public Art Partnership	MEDIUM	Near-Term to Mid-Term	Communications & Outreach	\$\$-\$\$	GEDC, Local Artists	Number of new murals or public art installations commissioned and completed per fiscal year	HOT Funds; Private Sponsorships; TCA Grants
		4.A.1.c	Install District Gateways	MEDIUM	Mid-Term	Public Works, Communications & Outreach	\$\$-\$\$\$	Local Artists, Students, Local Community	Installation of at least two permanent gateway landmarks at primary district entry points; number of public art installations	GEDC; CDBG Programs; Arts Respond Project; Private-Public Partnerships
4.B. Enhance Public Comfort and Dwell Time	4.B.1: Cultivate a high-comfort environment by integrating sensory amenities and creative infrastructure that encourage prolonged engagement and social interaction within the public realm	4.B.1.a	Integrate Ambient Sensory Infrastructure	LOW	Near-Term to Mid-Term	Parks & Recreation, Public Works	\$\$	Radio Stations, Local Musicians and Artists, GISD, NCTC	Installation of outdoor music systems in high-traffic plazas; user feedback on environmental comfort; number of opportunities provided to local musicians and artists	Private Endowments; Private-Public Partnerships; TCA Grants; NEA Our Town / Arts Grants
		4.B.1.b	Pilot Temporary Public Restroom Facilities and Evaluate Long-Term Integration	LOW	Mid-Term	Public Works, Public Safety	\$\$	Private Companies	Completion of a 3-week pilot during a major event; analysis of usage data and maintenance costs	City-Funded
		4.B.1.c	Create Interactive Passageways and Woonerfs	MEDIUM	Mid-Term	Public Works, Community Development	\$\$-\$\$\$	Local Artists	Percentage of planned alleyway segments converted to "living streets" with lighting and paving upgrades	BCPI Love Your Block Grant; Private Endowments; TA/TAP
4.C. Modernize Infrastructure for Visual Integrity and Resilience	4.C.1: Enhance Downtown's historic character and public realm performance by reducing visual clutter and improving the reliability of utility infrastructure	4.C.1.a	Minimize Visual Clutter and Improve Utility Reliability Through a Phased Undergrounding Program	MEDIUM	Long-Term to Extended-Term	Public Works	\$\$\$\$	Oncor, Utility Providers	Total linear feet of overhead utility lines relocated underground; reduction in weather-related utility outages	Grid Resilience Utility and Industry Grants; EECBG Program; Bond Proceeds
		4.C.1.b	Expand the Integrated Public Art and Sanitation Program	HIGH	Near-Term	General Services - Solid Waste	\$\$-\$\$	Local Artists and Art Clubs, GISD	Total number of beautified waste receptacles deployed in high-visibility areas without enclosures; increase coverage incrementally each year to reach 100% of eligible sanitation facilities	TCA Cultural District Project Grants; BCPI Love Your Block Grant; America Walks/ Active People Healthy Nations Community Change Grant
4.D. Position Downtown as a Regional Destination	4.D.1: Secure Gainesville's status as a premier North Texas destination through external validation, strategic branding, and coordinated regional marketing	4.D.1.a	Execute a Coordinated Downtown Activation and Marketing Program	HIGH	Near-Term	Communications & Outreach	\$\$	Local Non-Profits and Businesses, Butterfield Stage, Newspaper, Radio Stations, Social Media Pages	Growth in digital engagement (website/social media) and attendance figures for signature events; number of new events and entertainment options available; number of new event sponsorships	HOT Funds; City-Funded
		4.D.1.b	Pursue External Recognition and Awards	MEDIUM	Near-Term	Communications & Outreach	\$	City Manager, GEDC	Number of external award submissions and accolades received from professional bodies	City-Funded
		4.D.1.c	Develop a Self-Guided Storytelling Tour	MEDIUM	Near-Term	Communications & Outreach	\$\$-\$\$	Local Organizations, GISD, Volunteer Organizations, HSGNA	Number of QR-coded historical markers installed; unique users accessing digital audio/narrative content	America Walks/ Active People Healthy Nations Community Change Grant; THC Heritage Tourism Grants, City-Funded
4.E. Activate Sidewalks for Dining and Retail	4.E.1: Support a vibrant street-level economy by implementing flexible outdoor amenities and clear regulatory frameworks that encourage pedestrian engagement and business vitality	4.E.1.a	Expand Outdoor Dining and Micro-Retail Opportunities.	LOW	Mid-Term	GEDC, Community Development	\$	Chamber of Commerce, Local Merchants	Number of new sidewalk café or parklet permits issued to downtown merchants	N/A

GOAL	OBJECTIVE	NO.	STRATEGY/ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	COST	PARTNERS	METRICS	POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
CONNECTIVITY										
5.A. Optimize Parking Management and Visibility	5.A.1: Enhance the efficiency of existing parking assets and ensure a high-quality visitor experience	5.A.1.a	Establish Additional Shared Parking Agreements with Private and Civic Property Owners to Expand Availability During Off-Peak Hours	HIGH	Near-Term	City Manager	\$	Local Property Owners	Number of formalized shared parking agreements signed with private or civic property owners	N/A
		5.A.1.b	Evaluate Long-Term Structured Parking Needs and Opportunities	LOW	Long-Term	GEDC	\$\$-\$\$\$	Local Property Owners, Businesses, and Real Estate	Completion of a parking garage feasibility/site study; percentage increase in parking wayfinding signage	Potential Parking Benefit District; Public-Private Partnerships
		5.A.1.c	Define Curbside Zones to Distinguish Roadway from On-Street Parking	MEDIUM	Long-Term	Public Works	\$\$	TxDOT	Total linear feet of newly delineated curbside parking and loading zones	TA/TAP; CBDG Programs; SUMP
		5.A.1.d	Designate Dedicated Pick-Up and Drop-Off Zones to Support Community Events and Commerce	LOW	Mid-Term	Public Safety, Communications & Outreach	\$\$	Private Rideshare Companies, Event Coordinators	Identification and marking of dedicated rideshare/loading zones at strategic event-heavy locations; track PUDO compliance for events	N/A
		5.A.1.e	Standardize Signage and Pavement Markings to Improve Parking Legibility and Efficiency	HIGH	Near-Term to Mid-Term	Public Works, Community Development	\$\$-\$\$\$	TxDOT	Implementation of “Time-to-Destination” signage; reduction in reports of parking confusion in surveys	TA/TAP; America Walks/ Active People Healthy Nations Community Change Grant
5.B. Cultivate a Multimodal “Complete Streets” Network	5.B.1: Establish a balanced transportation environment that prioritizes safety and accessibility for all travel modes	5.B.1.a	Develop and Implement a City Active Transportation Plan	HIGH	Mid-Term to Long-Term	Public Works, Public Safety, Community Development	\$\$-\$\$\$	Amtrak, BNSF, TxDOT, Project Zero	Adoption of the citywide Active Transportation Plan with specific Downtown corridor priorities	SS4A
		5.B.1.b	Establish Micromobility Policies and Performance Standards	LOW	Near-Term	Community Development	\$	Public Works, Planning & Zoning Commission, Private Micromobility Companies	Adoption of performance standards; number of designated micromobility corrals installed	City-Funded; Micromobility Franchise Fees
		5.B.1.c	Implement a Downtown-Specific Street and Utility Maintenance Program	HIGH	Extended-Term	Public Works	\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$	TxDOT, City Manager	Annual improvement in the Downtown Pavement Condition Index score and total lane-miles rehabilitated	STBG Program; ATIIP; Bond Proceeds
		5.B.1.d	Widen Sidewalks to Enhance Pedestrian Comfort and Safety	HIGH	Mid-Term to Long-Term	Public Works	\$\$\$	TxDOT	Total square feet of sidewalks widened to meet NACTO/ADA minimums	SUMP; Community Traffic Safety Grants; ATIIP; Road to Zero Community Traffic Safety Grant; CBDG Programs; Bond Proceeds
		5.B.1.e	Identify Pedestrian Priority Routes and Implement Pedestrian Crossing Improvements	HIGH	Long-Term	Public Works	\$\$-\$\$\$	TxDOT, Project Zero	Number of intersections retrofitted with high-visibility striping, bulb-outs, or refuge islands	SS4A
		5.B.1.f	Transform Downtown Streets for Year-Round Connectivity	MEDIUM	Mid-Term to Long-Term	Public Works, Parks & Recreation	\$\$-\$\$\$	Texas A&M AgriLife	Increase in total Downtown tree canopy percentage; installation of pedestrian-scale lighting on priority routes	Texas A&M Community Forestry Grants

GOAL	OBJECTIVE	NO.	STRATEGY/ACTION ITEM	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	COST	PARTNERS	METRICS	POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
5.C Invest in a Downtown Pedestrian Promenade	5.C.1: Create an Inviting and Walkable Downtown Experience	5.C.1.a	Implement Comprehensive Streetscape Improvements to Support Connectivity	MEDIUM	Long-Term	Public Works	\$\$	Amtrak, BNSF	Total square feet of streetscape reconstructed with upgraded paving, curbs, and pedestrian-centric furniture	TA/TAP; STBG; Bond Proceeds
		5.C.1.b	Integrate Dedicated Bicycle Infrastructure to Promote Multi-Modality	LOW	Long-Term	Public Works, Community Development	\$\$\$	TxDOT, Local Cycling Clubs	Total mileage of new, clearly delineated bike lanes or shared-use paths within the Promenade corridor	TA/TAP; TxDOT Education and Safety Grant Programs
		5.C.1.c	Ensure Vehicular Visibility Triangles to Mitigate Pedestrian-Vehicular Conflicts	HIGH	Mid-Term	Public Works, Community Development	\$-\$\$	TxDOT	Number of intersection audits completed; 100% removal of sightline obstructions at identified conflict points	SS4A
		5.C.1.d	Utilize Landscaping to Enhance Pedestrian Comfort and Calm Traffic	HIGH	Mid-Term to Long-Term	Public Works, Community Development	\$\$	Texas A&M AgriLife	Net increase in the number of street trees planted and square footage of native landscaping along the corridor	Texas A&M Community Forestry Grant; SS4A
		5.C.1.e	Implement Permeable Surfaces and Pavers Without Compromising Access	MEDIUM	Long-Term	Public Works, Parks & Recreation	\$\$-\$\$\$	N/A	Increase in square feet or percentage of pedestrian-priority areas utilizing permeable or decorative pavers that meet ADA firmness and stability standards; percent of annual stormwater runoff reduction compared to before permeable surfaces installed	CIP; GLO CDR
		5.C.1.f	Install Pedestrian-Scale Lighting to Drive District Vitality	HIGH	Mid-Term to Long-Term	Parks & Recreation, Public Works	\$\$-\$\$\$	N/A	Total number of new pedestrian-scale light fixtures installed; elimination of all "dark spots" as verified by a post-installation illumination study	Grid Resilience Utility and Industry Grants; CDBG Programs; EECBG Program

Active Monitoring and Annual Reporting

To ensure Downtown Gainesville remains a dynamic and resilient environment, the City will utilize a continuous feedback loop:

- ▶ **Annual District Report Card:** A public-facing summary of progress made against the Matrix's Performance Metrics, highlighting successes and identifying barriers.
- ▶ **Adaptive Strategy Review:** A major audit every five years to recalibrate the Time Frames and Priorities based on current economic trends and community feedback.

Conclusion

The stewardship framework established in this chapter ensures that the *Guiding Gainesville Downtown Master Plan* remains a dynamic and accountable work program. By focusing on project readiness and cross-departmental coordination, Gainesville provides the municipal flexibility and private-sector commitment needed to amplify its historic core for future generations.

With the tools for management and the roadmap for implementation now firmly in place, the Plan turns from the technical details of execution to a final synthesis of the community's future. The following chapter provides the concluding summary of this shared journey, reaffirming the strategic direction that will guide Downtown Gainesville as it sustains and amplifies this vision into a vibrant, resilient, and enduring reality. ►

This page is intentionally blank.



07

CONCLUSION

The ***Guiding Gainesville Downtown Master Plan*** serves as the City's official strategic blueprint for physical and economic development over the next two decades. Grounded in extensive community input and strengthened through data-driven analysis, the Plan provides a clear framework to guide future land use, capital investment, and district management. It reflects a shared vision for a sustainable yet ambitious future—one that honors Downtown's historic character while positioning the district for continued growth and private-sector reinvestment.

Closely aligned with the outreach conducted for ***Guiding Gainesville 2040***, community feedback was instrumental in identifying key opportunities and informed the technical depth of the Plan's analysis. In-depth evaluations across four core pillars established a clear performance baseline:

- ▶ **Economic Growth and Innovation:** Documenting Downtown's role as a high-productivity fiscal engine that captures significant regional spending.
- ▶ **Downtown Character and Development:** Establishing the regulatory framework for context-sensitive infill, missing-middle housing, and the Santa Fe Depot TOD node.
- ▶ **Public Space Activation:** Identifying strategies to maximize "dwell time" through the Downtown Cultural District and enhanced public real amenities.
- ▶ **Connectivity and Mobility:** Designing a seamless, multimodal network focused on pedestrian safety, comfort corridors, and the signature Downtown Pedestrian Promenade.

This analysis highlights Downtown's inherent strengths while providing a roadmap for the targeted infrastructure and policy support required to address the Plan's recommendations.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Building on this foundation, the Plan outlines a comprehensive set of policies designed to advance the community's vision. These include:

- ▶ **Economic Resilience:** Supporting local businesses and attracting new industries to ensure long-term fiscal productivity.
- ▶ **Historic Stewardship:** Preserving and enhancing Downtown's architectural character while accommodating sustainable growth through modern design standards.
- ▶ **Destination Activation:** Transforming Downtown into a premier North Texas destination for dining, retail, and entertainment.
- ▶ **Multimodal Connectivity:** Reinvesting in safe, reliable, and inclusive mobility network that serves residents, businesses, and visitors of all abilities.

Chapter 6 details the implementation framework, providing a transparent and adaptable approach to execution. Strategically, these policies are directly supported by and integrated with ***Guiding Gainesville 2040*** and the ***Parks and Trails Master Plan***, creating a unified “system of plans” strategy.

Like ***Guiding Gainesville 2040***, the success of this Plan relies on formal accountability through the integration of these strategies into the City’s annual budget and CIP. Ongoing monitoring and periodic updates will ensure the Plan remains a living, responsive tool as Gainesville evolves.

Downtown Gainesville is a defining asset of the City that rich in character, history, and opportunity. This Plan represents a shared commitment to steward the district’s character while shaping a dynamic and sustainable future. **Through deliberate implementation of this Master Plan, the City is positioned to amplify and sustain its core as a vibrant, resilient, and inclusive destination: one that strengthens the local economy, celebrates community identity, and fulfills the vision of a place where people truly gather, work, and live for generations to come.** ►



GUIDING ***GAINESVILLE*** **2040**