



DESIGN DOWNTOWN DENTON

Final Report

Adopted on September 17, 2024



mend collaborative

Acknowledgements

Design Downtown Denton represents the vision and efforts of hundreds of passionate residents, business owners, developers, city staff, and city officials. In conversation with all of these groups, you see love for Denton and a desire to see Downtown continue to grow as a welcoming environment full of entertainment and prosperity for current and future Dentonites. The team learned much from our dedicated stakeholders and wanted to extend a heartfelt **THANK YOU** to everyone who contributed to this plan!



City of Denton

Cameron Robertson, AICP
Project Manager

Sean Jacobson
Assistant Project Manager

Tina Firgens, AICP
Planning Director

Gary Packan
Parks and Recreation Director

Scott McDonald
Development Services Director

Keisha Cyriaano
Assistant Planning Director

Hayley Zagurski
Assistant Planning Director

Brittany Sotelo
Economic Development Director

Farhan Butt
Deputy Director of Transportation

Chandrakanth Muruganandham
City Traffic Engineer

Chris Escoto
Park Planning Manager

Colleen Fitzpatrick
Park Project Coordinator

Kristen Pulido
Main Street Program Manager

City Council

Gerard Hudspeth
Mayor

Vicki Byrd
District 1

Brian Beck
District 2

Paul Meltzer
Mayor Pro Tem; District 3

Joe Holland
District 4

Brandon Chase McGee
At-Large Place 5

Jill Jester
At-Large Place 6

City Manager's Office

Sara Hensley
City Manager

Cassey Ogden
Assistant City Manager

Christine Taylor
Assistant City Manager

Frank Dixon
Assistant City Manager

Advisory Group

This group of residents and stakeholders supported the project by coming to regular meetings and giving us great feedback. Thank you!

Alexandria Valdez

John Williams

Brandy Pope

Brittany Foster

Desmond Moore

Hannah Raby

Melissa Lenaburg

Molly Carter

Pastor Don Lee

Peggy Riddle

Ken Willis

Meredith Butler

Maya Landgrebe

Rob Ramirez

Frances Punch

Jessica DeRoche

Seth Morgan

John Bramblitt

John Cartwright



Mend Collaborative

Planning, Design and Public Engagement

Zakcq Lockrem, AICP
Project Manager

Michelle Bright, SITES AP
Principal-in-Charge

Todd Austin
Deputy Project Manager

Sandy Meulners-Comstock, PLA
Lead Designer

Kennedy Rauh
Designer

Olivia Halsne
Designer



Jude Landry

Graphic Designer

We wanted to extend a huge thank you to Jude Landry for developing the brand, logo, and hero graphic for this project!



Nelson-Nygaard

Jackson Archer
Mobility Lead

Sam Ergina
Mobility Support



Post Oak Preservation

Historic Preservation

Ellis Mumford-Russell
Historic Resources Lead

Rachel Alison
Preservation Associate



The Catalyst Group

Market Research/TOD Strategy

Paris Rutherford
Market/TOD Strategy Lead



William Fulton Group

*Economic Development/
Implementation Strategy*

William Fulton, FAICP
Founder/CEO

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
Executive Summary	i
Overview.....	ii
Community Engagement.....	iv
Community Priorities.....	v
Recommendations	vi
Implementation	xi
Introduction	8
Engagement Process.....	14
Community Priorities.....	18
Recommendations	20
1 Better Utilize Downtown Denton's Street Space	22
1A Rightsizing and 4/3 Conversions	24
1B Pedestrian Priority Routes and Denton Chill Streets	28
1C Improve Bike Connections	34
1D Improve Transit	36
2 Build a Network of Improved Public Spaces	38
2A Quakertown Park Master Plan	40
2B Activate Vacant Lots	60
2C Utilization of Alleys	64
2D Utilization of Underutilized Streets.....	66
2E Create a New Park in Southern Downtown.....	68
2F Improvements to the County's Historic Park.....	70
2G Develop Public Art Plan	72

3| Target Development to Build on Downtown’s Character and Assets 74

3A Develop Southern Downtown.....	76
3B Encourage Downtown Living.....	78
3C Strengthen Historic Preservation Opportunities	80
3D Public Realm Design Guidelines and Zoning Recommendations	82
3E Explore Opportunities for Transformative Projects	92

4| Promote Nightlife, Music, Events, History, and Art. 94

4A Utilize Policy and Regulations to Support Music and Nightlife	96
4B Develop a Performing Arts Center.....	98
4C Expand Programs to Support Small Businesses	100
4D Expand on Downtown Events	102
4E Modify and Expand on Economic Development Tools.....	104
4F Establish a Downtown Brand.....	112
4G Establish a Public Improvement District	114

Plan Implementation 116

Implementation of Economic Development Tools	118
--	-----





Executive Summary



Campus Theater

Overview

Design Downtown Denton is a strategic blueprint for the next decade aimed at enhancing the vitality and character of Downtown Denton. This plan addresses key areas such as parks, housing, mobility, and historic preservation. Developed over a year with extensive community input, it provides a comprehensive guide for decision-making and resource allocation, ensuring that Denton's downtown remains vibrant, resilient, and responsive to the needs of its residents and businesses.

Why Plan?

The primary purpose of updating the plan for Downtown Denton is to ensure that it remains relevant and effective in addressing the evolving needs and challenges of the community. This update, conducted every ten to fifteen years, allows the city to adapt to growth, incorporate new demographic, economic, and environmental data, and engage the community in shaping the future of their city. Denton has experienced significant growth, and the updated plan reflects current and future demands. Regular updates provide an opportunity to integrate new data and address emerging challenges, ensuring that Downtown Denton continues to thrive.

How will the plan be used?

The Design Downtown Denton plan is used by city officials, developers, businesses, and residents as a comprehensive guide for decision-making and development. It provides a policy and regulatory framework to support desired growth and development, outlines actionable strategies to achieve the goals of the plan, and engages the community in ongoing and future projects. The plan also helps prioritize investments and allocate resources effectively to maximize impact and benefits for the community. By updating the plan every ten years, Denton ensures that its downtown remains vibrant, resilient, and responsive to the needs of its residents and businesses.

Project Schedule

The plan was developed over a year in four phases: Understand, Envision, Act, and Adopt. Each phase built upon the previous one, starting with understanding the current conditions and community needs, envisioning strategies for improvement, acting on refining these strategies, and finally, seeking official adoption by government bodies. This structured approach ensured that the plan was comprehensive, data-driven, and reflective of community input.





DESIGN DOWNTOWN DENTON

The City of Denton is updating its Downtown Plan and creating a new design for Quakertown Park, and we want to hear from you!

(La ciudad de Denton está actualizando su plan para el centro de Denton y creando un nuevo diseño para Quakertown Park y queremos saber de usted!)

Tell us about your downtown!
¿Cuéntanos sobre tu centro!

[QR Code](#)

DESIGN DOWNTOWN DENTON

ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

TOPICS

- Development and Street Mainstays
- History
- Arts & Culture
- Historic Preservation
- Parks and Public Space

TELL US

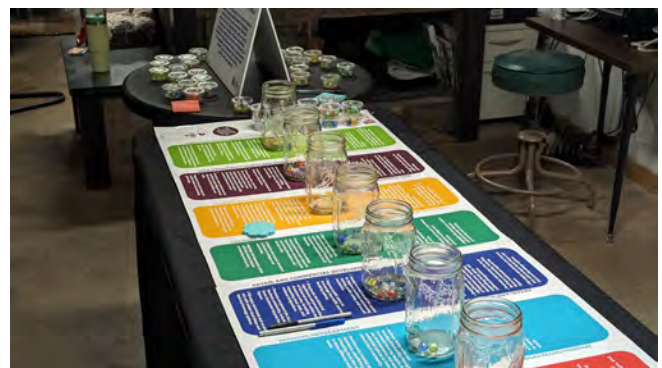
Community Engagement

The primary goal of our community engagement was to create a collaborative environment where residents, business owners, and city officials could share their vision for Downtown Denton's future. Our inclusive and iterative process ensured every voice was heard. We used a variety of online and in person activities to:

- **Understand the Community:** Gather insights through surveys, workshops, and direct conversations to grasp the unique needs and desires of Dentonites.
- **Envision Together:** Develop and refine strategies that align with the community's aspirations for a vibrant, inclusive, and prosperous downtown.
- **Act Collaboratively:** Prioritize and detail actionable steps, working closely with stakeholders to ensure the feasibility and community support for each initiative.
- **Adopt and Implement:** Present the plan to governing bodies, revising as needed to reflect the community's feedback, leading to official adoption and execution.



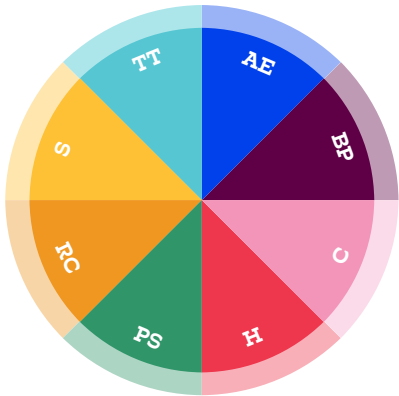
Our period of dialoguing with the public included fun and engaging pop-up events that allowed us to hear from a wider variety of people.



Design Downtown Denton to be a more walkable, beautiful, and fun destination for shopping, working, learning, and recreation that also serves as a hub of opportunity, welcoming all Dentonites. Cultivate a vibrant and diverse residential community. Preserve and expand the distinctive local businesses, foster a strong sense of community, and safeguard the historic and artistic character while promoting growth and development.

Community Priorities

Based on analysis of conversations with community members a vision statement and community priorities were developed. Throughout the plan, these priorities are represented by a pie. Each recommendation fulfils at least one of these priorities:



- **Arts, Entertainment, and Events:** Enhance public art, music initiatives, and festivals to enrich the downtown area’s cultural scene.
- **Bike and Pedestrian Mobility:** Improve walkability and bike safety through better streetscapes and connected routes.
- **Culture:** Promote diversity and inclusion by acknowledging history, celebrating local culture, and connecting Downtown to Denton’s colleges and universities.
- **Housing Development:** Address rising rents and housing affordability by increasing housing supply, mixed-use developments, and various residential options to foster a vibrant community.
- **Parks and Public Spaces:** Create a network of green spaces with amenities like gardens and play areas, and add more trees and landscaping.
- **Retail and Commercial Development:** Invest in local businesses, increase housing options, and preserve historic landmarks to boost economic growth.
- **Safety:** Improve the perception of safety by addressing homelessness concerns, designing streets to support outdoor events, defining key pedestrian corridors, and enhancing sidewalk maintenance
- **Traffic and Transit:** Improve roadway safety, enhance parking availability and management, and expand bus and bike routes to reduce parking demand and improve downtown accessibility.

Recommendations

In response to the extensive community input and collaboration among local stakeholders, Design Downtown Denton proposes a forward-thinking vision for revitalizing Downtown Denton. The plan emphasizes enhanced walkability, improved public spaces, and sustainable development that preserves the area's unique character. The following recommendations were informed by thorough stakeholder engagement, feasibility assessments, and best practices research, aimed at maximizing Downtown's potential while addressing current challenges. The recommendations are grouped into four categories.

1. Better Utilize Downtown's Streetscape

Improving the use of Downtown Denton's streets is essential for fostering a safer, more inclusive, and lively city core. The plan emphasizes the transformation of street space to prioritize pedestrian experiences. The introduction of 'Denton Chill Streets' is a

novel approach aimed at improving comfort and environmental resilience by optimizing shade and walkability. The plan advocates for improving links to vital destinations, thereby bolstering economic growth and encouraging eco-friendly transport options. Collectively, these initiatives are designed to cultivate a welcoming atmosphere for all modes of travel, thereby elevating the livability of Downtown Denton.

1A Rightsizing and 4/3 Conversions

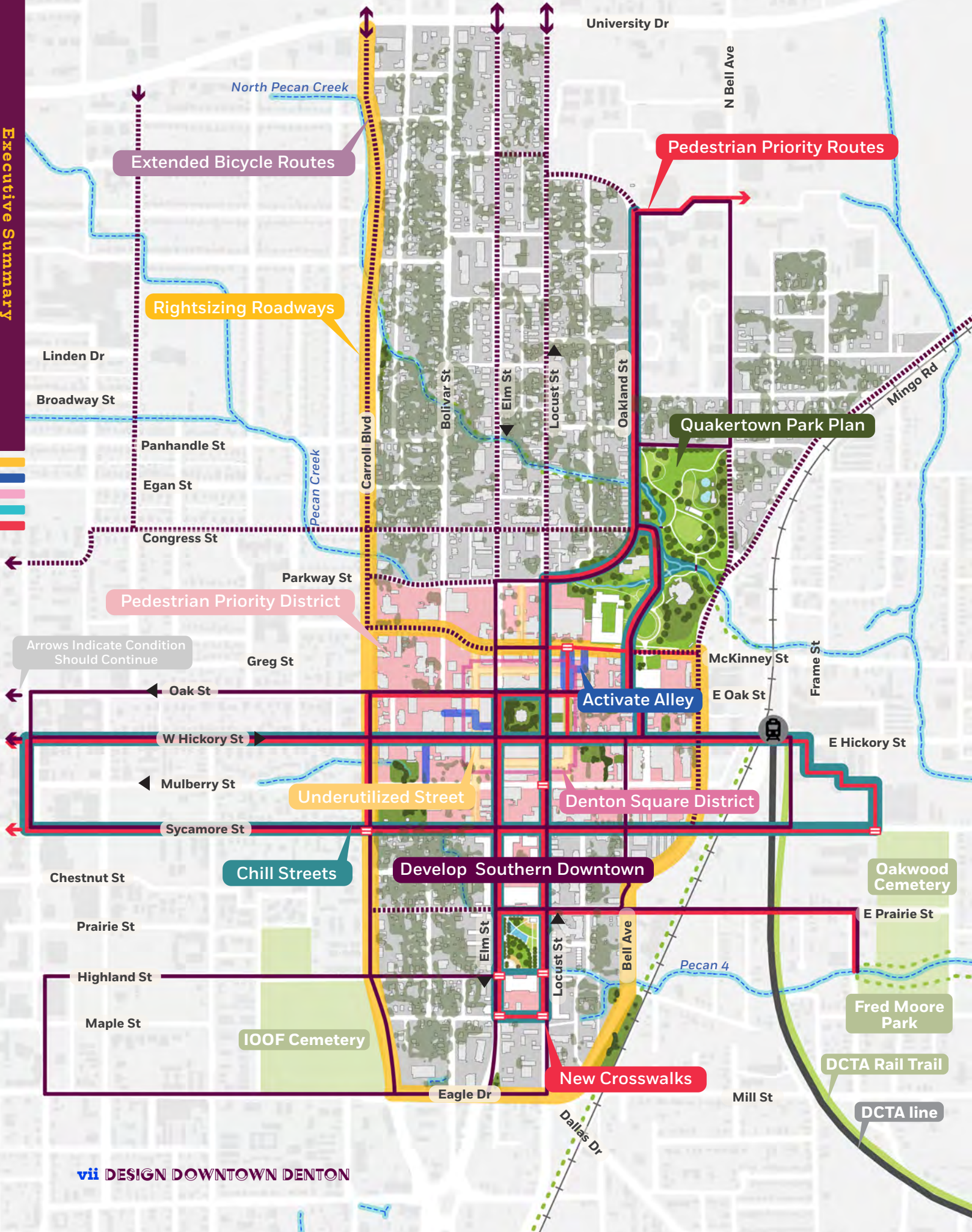
1B Pedestrian Priority Routes and Denton Chill Streets

1C Improve Bike Connections

1D Improve Transit



A rendering of a Chill Street. Image Source: Mend Collaborative



2. Build a Network of Improved Public Spaces

The revitalization of Downtown Denton's public spaces is pivotal for enriching residents' lives and stimulating economic prosperity. The plan emphasizes transforming new and existing parks and public spaces into dynamic hubs that bolster social engagement, wellness, and cultural activities. The strategy includes leveraging these enhancements to draw visitors, enhancing the local economy and prioritizes environmental stewardship. A key element of this vision is the redesign of Quakertown Park, acknowledging its layered history as a Freedmen's Town and its evolution into a city park. This plan seeks to honor the park's heritage while adapting it for contemporary community use. These enhancements are not just for recreation and aesthetics but are integral to the collective health and prosperity of Denton.

2A Quakertown Park Master Plan

2B Activate Vacant Lots

2C Utilization of Alleys

2D Utilization of Underutilized Streets

2E Create a New Park in Southern Downtown

2F Improvements to the County's Historic Park

2G Develop Public Art Plan



A rendering of the proposed new plaza adjacent to the Square. Image Source: Mend Collaborative

3. Target Development to Build on Downtown's Character and Assets

Emphasizing development is pivotal for ensuring Downtown Denton grows with the City while also preserving its distinctive character and assets. The updated approach focuses on fostering a vibrant community by introducing a mix of housing options that cater to various demographics, thereby promoting Downtown living and economic prosperity. The plan underscores the importance of preserving Denton's historic charm through strategic infill and civic investments, while also expanding open spaces for public enjoyment. Affordability remains a key concern, with actions aimed at ensuring housing accessibility for a diverse population. The preservation of historic sites is strengthened, and design guidelines are refined to ensure new developments complement Denton's architectural heritage. These measures are designed to bolster Downtown Denton's appeal as a place to live, work, and visit, contributing to its sustainable growth and preserving its historical and cultural legacy.

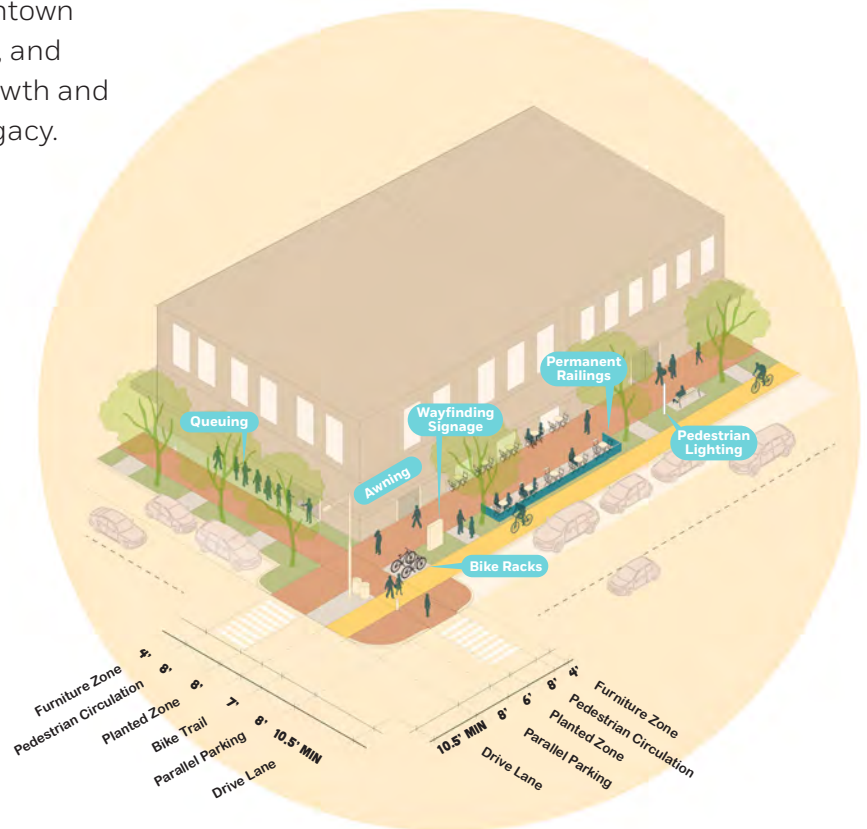
3A Develop Southern Downtown

3B Encourage Downtown Living

3C Strengthen Historic Preservation Opportunities

3D Public Realm Design Guidelines and Zoning

3E Explore Opportunities for Transformative Projects



Historic Square District and Chill Street on the Square.
Image Source: Mend Collaborative

4. Promote Downtown's Nightlife, Music, Events, History, and Art

Promoting Downtown Denton's unique nightlife, music, events, history, and art assets is essential for the City's cultural and economic vitality. The updated plan emphasizes the importance of supportive policies and regulations to foster a vibrant entertainment environment that attracts talent, investment, and visitors. The City's music and nightlife are key to its allure, drawing patrons and bolstering local commerce. Establishing music venues, bars, and events enrich the cultural fabric, making Downtown an appealing hub for both locals and tourists. By leveraging economic development tools, the city can encourage entrepreneurship and economic stability. Additionally, celebrating Denton's historical and artistic heritage through various initiatives can strengthen community bonds and pride. These efforts will maintain Downtown Denton's reputation for cultural offerings and energetic ambiance. Concentrating on these elements, the City aims to craft an unparalleled and unforgettable experience for all.



Many Denton businesses foster community with unique and fun outdoor spaces. Offering support to these businesses can help them continue to flourish. Image Source: Mend Collaborative



A school dance group performs on the Courthouse Square as part of Hispanic Heritage Month. Image Source: Mend Collaborative

4A Support Music and Nightlife

4B Develop a Performing Arts Center

4C Expand Programs to Support Small Businesses

4D Expand on Downtown Events

4E Expand on Economic Development Tools

4F Establish a Downtown Brand

4G Establish a Public Improvement District

Implementation



New development in southern Downtown. Image Source: Mend Collaborative

Overview of Implementation Approach

The successful realization of the Downtown Denton plan hinges on a well-coordinated implementation strategy. This phase is critical for translating the vision and recommendations into tangible outcomes. Strategic execution ensures that the initiatives are carried out effectively, fostering a more vibrant and sustainable downtown.

Key Implementation Steps

To ensure systematic progress, the recommendations have been prioritized based on their potential impact, feasibility, and alignment with the community's needs. A phased rollout will be adopted, starting with high-priority projects that can deliver immediate benefits. This phased approach allows for careful monitoring and adjustments as needed, ensuring that each step builds on the success of previous efforts.

Stakeholder Roles and Responsibilities

Effective implementation requires collaboration among various stakeholders:

- **City Government** - Will lead the effort by providing regulatory support, funding, and oversight.
- **Private Sector and Developers** - Will be key partners in executing development projects, contributing to public realm improvements, and adhering to updated guidelines.
- **Community Involvement** - Continuous community engagement is vital for maintaining public support and ensuring that the projects meet residents' needs and expectations.

Next Steps

The immediate actions involve initiating high-priority projects that can quickly demonstrate the plan's benefits. This includes starting with key infrastructure improvements, updating zoning regulations, and launching incentive programs for developers. Long-term goals will be achieved through continued investment in public spaces, fostering cultural activities, and ensuring ongoing community engagement. Milestones will be set to track progress and make necessary adjustments along the way.

Conclusion

The Downtown Denton plan represents a comprehensive vision for a thriving, inclusive, and dynamic urban center. By focusing on better utilizing street space, improving public spaces, targeting development, and promoting cultural activities, the plan aims to enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. The commitment to this vision reflects the community's aspirations and the city's dedication to sustainable growth and development.



We invite all stakeholders to join us in this transformative journey. Your participation, whether through feedback, investment, or active involvement, is crucial to the success of this plan. Together, we can create a downtown Denton that not only meets the needs of today but also paves the way for a brighter, more sustainable future. Let's work together to turn this vision into reality, ensuring that downtown Denton thrives for generations to come.

Introduction



Denton Square District

Introduction

The Downtown Denton Master Plan requires an update to guide the next 10 years of Downtown's growth priorities, including parks and open space, parking, housing, mobility, connectivity, and the preservation of existing neighborhoods and historic resources. The updated plan, Design Downtown Denton, covers the area bounded by Bell Avenue to the east, Carroll Boulevard to the west, University Drive to the north, and Eagle Drive to the south (*a map of the study area is available on page 12*). This plan outlines actions and recommendations that will build on Downtown's assets, highlight its history and character, and make it an even more enjoyable place to live. The plan was developed in four phases. The first three phases, understand, envision, and act, were completed over 9 months in 2023 and 2024. The Design Downtown Denton Advisory Group, twenty residents and stakeholders appointed by City Council, came together at each stage to provide valuable feedback on the progress of the plan and the needs of the community. The plan was adopted by City Council on September 17, 2024.

Phase 1: Understand

To understand Downtown Denton's existing culture, wants and needs, the City and project team examined the data on Denton's demographics, housing, transportation and more for a high-level assessment of conditions in Downtown. This analysis was merged with on the ground observations from first-person experience in Denton, walking the streets, exploring Quakertown Park, and visiting bars, restaurants and shops. Most importantly, extensive time was spent gathering feedback from business owners, city officials and residents who shared their time and ideas in contribution to this project. The data, observations and engagement results built a "Case for Action" that allowed project goals and strategies to be fully developed in the next phase.

Phase 2: Envision

In phase 2, draft strategies to address the wants and needs in Downtown Denton were studied, refined and developed in the Envision phase of the project. Projects, programs, and policies were considered as pathways to improve the conditions that most concerned Dentonites and would help support the growth of Denton

into the future. Based on community feedback in the Understand Phase, a vision statement (*see page 3*) and key priorities (*see page 4*) were created. These priorities were a guiding force behind the projects, program and actions recommended to address them.

Phase 3: Act

Phase 3 continued the refinement of strategies that began in the Envision Phase, moving the community closer to consensus on the strategies and how they might be prioritized given available time and resources. Recommendations were then developed to a level of detail that the next steps could be taken toward creation of the full plan and implementation.

Phase 4: Adopt

After completing the Downtown Plan, it must be approved by relevant government bodies. Consultants and City Staff will present the draft to boards, commissions, and other regulatory bodies, making necessary revisions following Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council meetings to move the plan closer to official adoption.



Project Schedule



Project Vision

During the Envision Phase, the project team synthesized information to create community priorities, breaking them into refined actions to guide final recommendations. Setting an overall vision for Downtown Denton was crucial before moving forward. Based on hundreds of hours of engagement, data collection, and conversation, the following vision statement was developed to steer Design Downtown Denton and its proposed actions toward the desired future for Downtown Denton:

Design Downtown Denton to be a more walkable, beautiful, and fun destination for shopping, working, learning, and recreation that also serves as a hub of opportunity, welcoming all Dentonites. Cultivate a vibrant and diverse residential community. Preserve and expand the distinctive local businesses, foster a strong sense of community, and safeguard the historic and artistic character while promoting growth and development.

In a joint committee meeting in December 2023, Denton's City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission approved the vision statement that was developed by the Advisory Group as the guiding principles for Design Downtown Denton.



Study Area Map

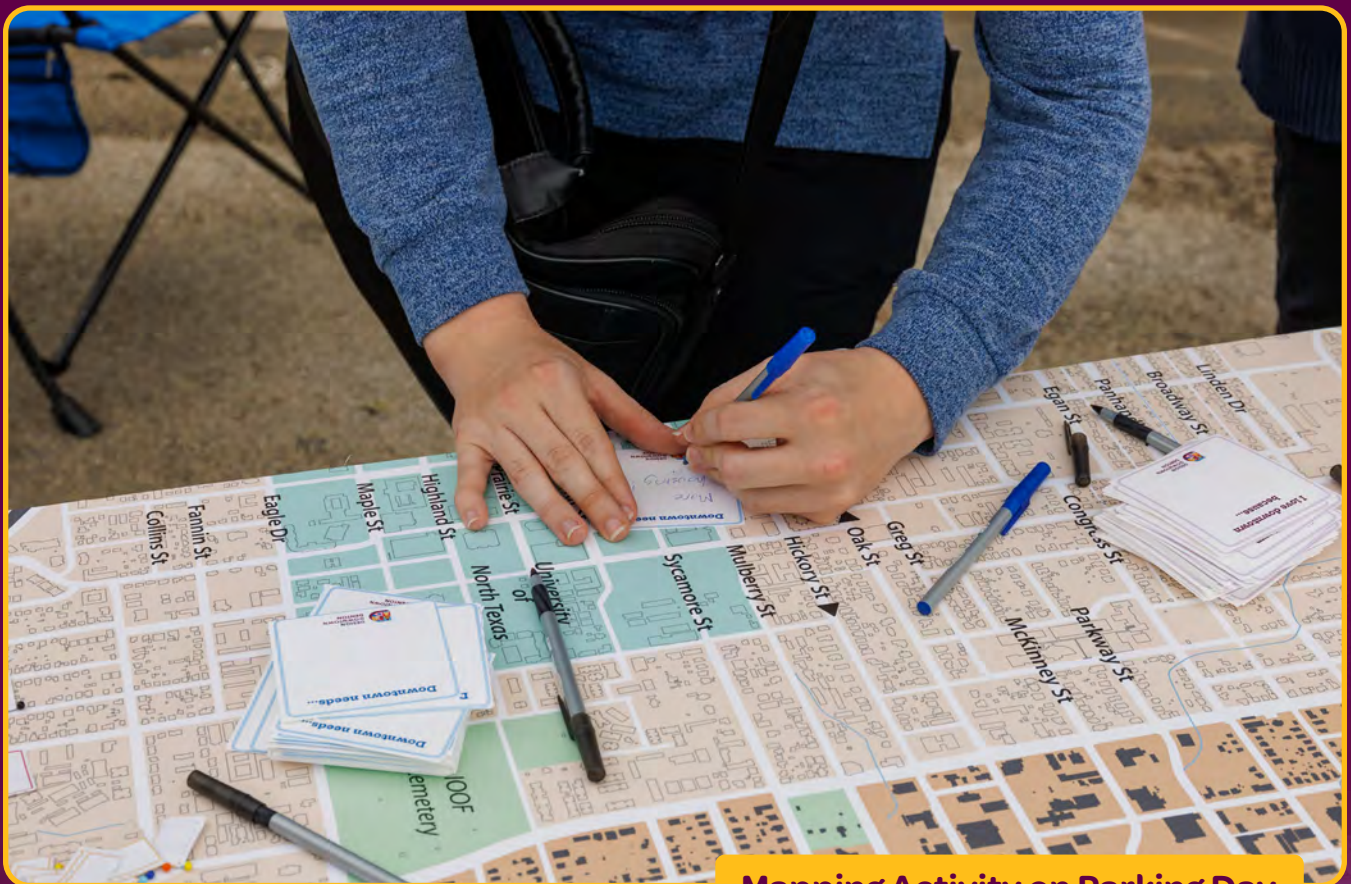
- Downtown Denton Study Area
- Outside Study Area



Design Downtown Denton Study Area:

- Extends from **Eagle Drive** at the south to **University Drive** to the north, and from **Carroll Boulevard** on the west to **Bell Avenue and Mingo Road** on the east.
- There are three institutions of higher education within or adjacent to the study area - **University of North Texas**, **North Central Texas College**, and **Texas Woman's University**.
- It includes the **Denton Square District** home to the **Denton County Courthouse** and other historic buildings, **City Hall** and other City facilities, **Quakertown Park**, and is adjacent to the **Greater Denton Arts Council** and the **Downtown Denton Transit Center**.
- At the time of this planning process the City was undergoing the **Southeast Denton Area Plan** to assure that future improvements reflect the residents and community members wishes and recommendations between the two plans are coordinated.

Engagement Process



Mapping Activity on Parking Day



Engagement

Dentonites had several opportunities to share their vision for the future of Downtown. Over the first three project phases, ideas and recommendations were drafted based on what the community shared with the project team and then the recommended proposals were brought back to the community members to be changed and refined. It was critical to the success of this project that community members were involved throughout the process and approved of the changes that could impact them where they live, work and play.



Engagement

We brought the Denton community together throughout the planning process for a series of fun and informative pop-up events with interactive activities for all. In the vibrant and engaging atmosphere at these events, all voices could be heard while celebrating the unique spirit of Denton. By incorporating interactive stations, creative workshops, and engaging displays, we not only gathered valuable feedback but also fostered a sense of community involvement and excitement about the future of downtown Denton.

Engagement Activities



**Community
Priorities**



**Local Business
Survey**



**Community Ideas
Map (At pop-ups
and online)**



**Imagine the Future
of Quakertown Park**



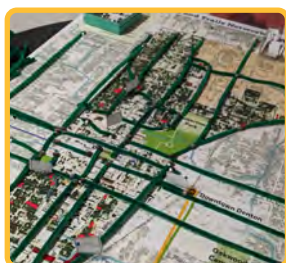
**Loves and Needs
Visioning Activity**



**Children's
Activities**



**Parks, Open Space
& Public Amenities**



**Downtown Parks
and Trails Network**



**Redesign Carroll
Boulevard**

Engagement Events

September

- 9/9 Arts and Autos
- 9/14 Advisory Group #1
- 9/15 Parking Day
- 9/15-17 Denton Blues Fest
- 9/28 National Night Out

October

- 10/6-8 Denton Arts and Jazz Festival
- 10/7 Quakertown Park Visioning Workshop
- 10/12 Twilight Tunes
- 10/19 Twilight Tunes

November

- 11/16 Advisory Group #2

December

- 12/5 Design Downtown Denton Visioning Workshop
- 12/6 Joint Committee Workshop
- 12/19 - 1/15 Online Survey

April

- 4/16 Advisory Group #3
- 4/17 Quakertown Park Design Workshop

May

- 5/9 The Feedback Finale
- 5/10-6/1 Online Feedback Finale

Several themes were established through an analysis of the hundreds of comments received during events, activities, surveys and online interactions. Some residents told stories of their experiences in the park system, others expressed their ideas for how to address parking issues in Downtown. Some of the most common topics we heard were:



Retail and Development

Invest in local businesses, increase housing, and protect historic landmarks.

“Work with economic development to help bring businesses that would make West side streets destinations, such as a coffee shop.”

Arts, Entertainment, and Events

Develop visual brand for Downtown area, bring new activities to Downtown, encourage and support artists, public arts, and art venues.

“The large murals on some of the downtown buildings is wonderful. I would love to see more of that. However, it needs to be quality art and maintained.”



Bike and Pedestrian Mobility

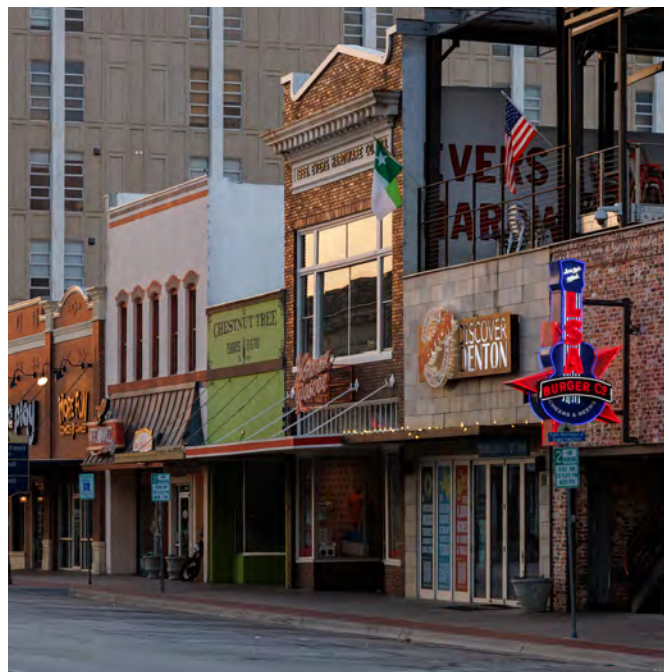
Enhance walkability, expand protected bike lanes, and close some streets to vehicles for events and gatherings.

“Downtown is the best area of Denton because it’s the only place where one can walk around, have a picnic, shop, and drink without a car!”

Parks and Public Spaces

Expand network of parks and public spaces, add trees and landscaping, program underutilized areas.

“Invest in more trees. Trees are important to cool the area, and also bring wildlife and happiness to people.”



Community Priorities

Community Priorities were developed based on conversations with community members and analysis of the development opportunities and assets in Downtown Denton. The Advisory Group provided direction and feedback on the draft priorities, leading to the final version presented at the Joint Workshop on December 5th.



Arts, Entertainment and Events

- AE1** Create a marketing brand for the Downtown area, and use that brand to tie Downtown to the surrounding community.
- AE2** Encourage and promote public art and music initiatives and festivals.
- AE3** Build on current successes by adding new activities and events, especially for children and families.
- AE4** Support the addition of interactive art, music, sculptures, and lighting to create engaging spaces.
- AE5** Explore the addition and improvement of a variety of music and art venues, stages, and theaters.

Bike and Pedestrian Safety and Mobility

- BP1** Enhance walkability by improving our streetscapes, including sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, and crosswalks.
- BP2** Implement safety measures at dangerous intersections.
- BP3** Connect key areas, including the universities, the Square and the transit center through public realm improvements and infill development and through a common Downtown brand.
- BP4** Promote a safer environment for cyclists by expanding protected bike lanes, bike parking, and trails.
- BP5** Regularly close side streets for public events and community gatherings.

Culture

- C1** Foster increased diversity and inclusion through the acknowledgment of history and increased opportunities for all Dentonites.
- C2** Protect/continue to embody what people love most about the feel of Denton: community pride, welcoming atmosphere, and historic scale.
- C3** Celebrate and connect Downtown to Denton's colleges and universities.
- C4** Highlight the Downtown culture within the broader Denton community and county.

Housing Development

- H1** Address rising rents and housing affordability through increased housing supply, mixed-use developments, and more residential options to foster a vibrant local community.
- H2** Provide more housing options Downtown, establishing a variety of housing stock that will appeal to many different residents' needs.

Parks and Public Space

- PS1** Create a network of green spaces and public parks with amenities such as community gardens, picnic areas and kids play areas.
- PS2** Add more trees and landscaping in public spaces to provide shade, and improve aesthetics.
- PS3** Build outdoor amenities like public seating, restrooms, water fountains, and more.
- PS4** Find ways to activate underutilized areas, such as alleys, vacant properties, and sidewalks.
- PS5** Preserve the view corridors and viewsheds of Downtown including the Courthouse-on-the-Square and the Morrison Milling silos and sign.

Retail and Commercial Development

- RC1** Invest in areas around the Square to improve business and housing variety, public safety, and overall aesthetics.
- RC2** Improve public space to encourage foot traffic and inspire building upkeep.
- RC3** Emphasize the historical significance and preservation of historical assets within the Downtown area, including expanding local, state, and national designations.
- RC4** Promote and protect the local business community, including those businesses beyond the Square.
- RC5** Fill empty storefronts and vacant lots with unique local shops and food and beverage options.

Safety

- S1** Improve perception of safety by partnering with service providers to address homelessness concerns and needs.
- S2** Design streets with infrastructure to enable street closures and to support outdoor events.
- S3** Define key pedestrian corridors and improve their streetscapes, shade canopy and lighting.
- S4** Improve maintenance and cleanliness on sidewalks.

Traffic and Transit

- TT1** Improve roadway safety for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists by implementing traffic closures on certain streets and during events, as well as exploring road rightsizing and traffic calming initiatives.
- TT2** Improve parking availability and management by upgrading lots with trees and landscaping, adding wayfinding signage to and from parking to destinations, using paid parking as a management tool, and considering the construction of a public parking garage in the Downtown area.
- TT3** Enhance accessibility to Downtown and reduce parking demand by expanding and improving bus and bike routes to the transit center and other key destinations.

Recommendations

Design Downtown Denton presents a vision for the future of Downtown Denton where local government, businesses, developers and community have taken collaborative action to change policy and develop public and private facilities that will:

- **Better utilize Downtown's streetscape** making downtown more walkable and accessible, with improved management of parking and mobility, and a focus on prioritizing all forms of transportation,
- **Build a network of improved public spaces** providing Dentonites with beautiful places to relax, play, and reflect, all within a short distance from their homes.
- **Target development to build on Downtown's character and assets** by preserving existing structures while building compatible housing, parks and retail that invite new families to make Downtown Denton their home,
- and **Promote Downtown's nightlife, music, events, history, and art** through branding and advertising that tells the story of Downtown Denton's history and culture while promoting its future, programs that provide support for artists and musicians, and projects that create new venues, events and entertainment.

The recommendations that follow each category are based on careful review of wants and needs expressed by local stakeholders, discussions on the feasibility and management of potential actions with city staff and developers, as well as research into the best practices for resolving challenges and taking advantage of opportunities to build on Downtown's current successes.



House

HR
PARKING

Food - Drinks
HOOOLIGAN

H
O
O
L
I
G
A
N
S

NORTH TEXAS
FOOT & ANKLE SPECIALISTS

NORTH TEXAS FOOT
AND ANKLE SPECIALISTS

PODIATRIST
FOOT SURGEON

Mon-Sat
9am-5pm
Friday
9am-4pm
& even more

Tu A. Dao, DPM
ntfootdocs.com
940-382-8801
NEW PATIENTS AND
WALK-INS WELCOME



1 Better Utilize Downtown Denton's Street Space



Oakland Street

1 Better Utilize Downtown Denton's Street Space

Why is this important?

The largest single amount of land that is owned and maintained by the City of Denton within Downtown is the right-of-way. Using Downtown's streets as a catalyst for creating a safer, more accessible, and vibrant urban environment is essential. Prioritizing walking and biking by rightsizing streets and improving street design will improve traffic flow and safety. Creating "Denton Chill Streets", a new type of street that prioritizes shade, walkability, and comfort in the public realm, will improve quality of life and climate resilience. Improving transit routes will additionally create connections between Denton's most important destinations. Together, these measures will support economic development, promote sustainable transportation, and enhance the overall quality of life in Downtown.

What are we attempting to accomplish?

Enhance Safety



Create a more secure and inviting environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers alike.

Image Source: Bike Denton

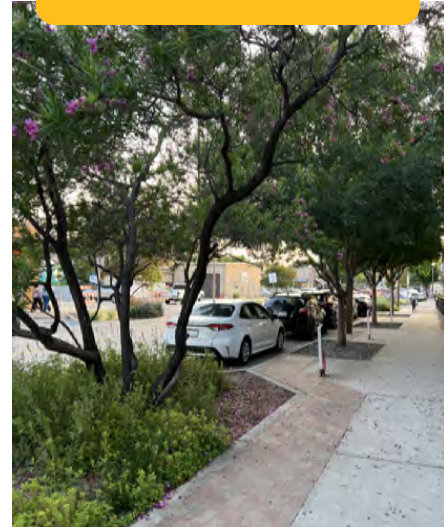
Improve Walkability



Expand pedestrian priority routes and create comfortable paths to make Downtown Denton more enjoyable.

Image Source: Mend Collaborative

Reduce Urban Heat



Design streets to prioritize shade, walkability, and comfort for pedestrians and to improve climate resilience Downtown.

Image Source: Mend Collaborative

1A Rightsizing and 4/3 Conversions

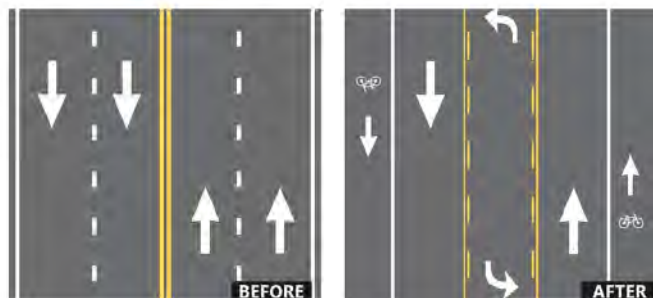
Downtown Denton is made up of a variety of street sizes and widths. While maintaining the flow of traffic and avoiding congestion are important city mobility goals, a healthy downtown must have a strong balance between maintaining sufficient capacity for car traffic and supporting street elements that allow for safe and comfortable walking and biking. This balance in street configuration makes getting to and moving around Downtown Denton safer and more convenient for people and facilitates community participation through a pedestrian-friendly environment.

Case for Action

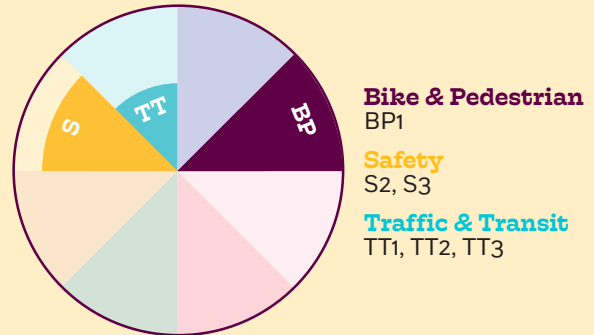
Narrowing streets can encourage people to cross the wide streets around downtown that currently create boundaries between Downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods and the wide streets within Downtown that make it hard to move between destinations. Downtown will be more uniformly enjoyed by those walking, biking and looking to enjoy Downtown and patronize businesses if those barriers are reduced.

Streets in Denton don't all fit neatly into street type categories. Streets that are oversized have more lanes than are needed to carry their typical daily traffic. Rightsized streets have enough lanes to carry their typical traffic. Carroll Boulevard, Elm Street, Locust Street, Bell Avenue, and McKinney Street are some

4-3 Conversion



1A Priorities Served



See the community priorities on page 18 for more information.

examples of oversized streets in Downtown Denton. Traffic capacity for streets was derived from the 2022 Mobility Plan. Wider streets incentivize speeding. The design of streets can impact drivers' speed more than the posted speed limit. Wider streets mean longer crosswalks and more time that pedestrians must spend crossing the street. A narrower street improves safety conditions.

Proposed Actions

- Adjust the width of streets to make Downtown Denton more walkable, safer, and make it simpler to move between neighborhoods using any mode of transportation.
- Implement 4-3 conversions, a common approach that creates room to add pedestrian and bicycle capacity without impacting vehicle throughput. Instead of being confronted by the potential barrier of a wide, intimidating four-lane road, a 4-3 conversion transforms a low-traffic street with 4 car lanes into one with 2 car lanes and a center turn lane.
- Prioritize the community and capacity needs for all modes of transportation.

Rebuild McKinney Street and Bell Avenue

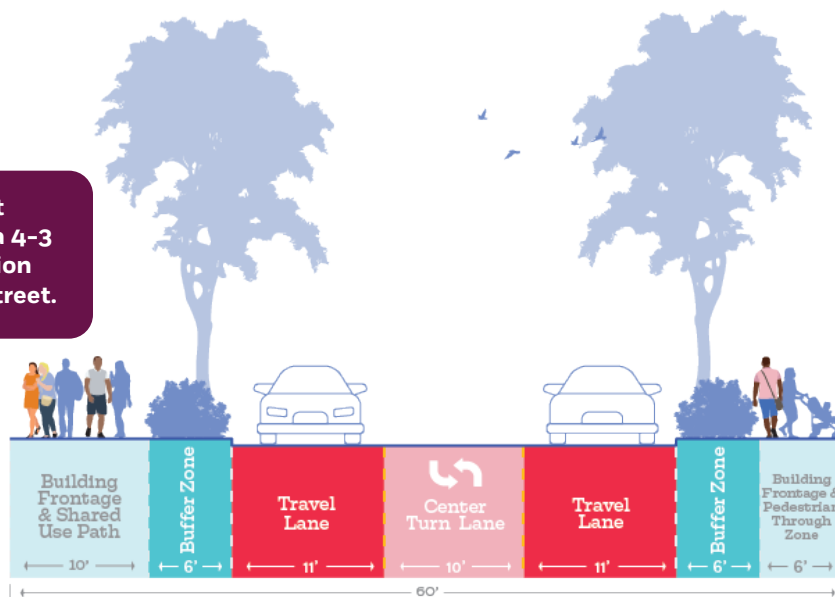
4-3 conversions can help these streets create connection where they currently divide the community. McKinney Street currently is a barrier between Quakertown Park and Downtown, while Bell Avenue divides Downtown from the Denton County Transit Center and Southeast Denton.

- On McKinney Street east of Locust Street and Bell Avenue, move curbs inward to create a narrower street that features one 11-foot lane in each direction with a 10-foot center turn lane.
- On McKinney Street west of Locust Street, narrow the street to feature one 11-foot lane in each direction.

- On McKinney Street and Bell Avenue, build a pedestrian-dedicated sidewalk on one side and a shared use path on the other. Both the sidewalk and shared-use paths should have buffer zones separating areas for walking and biking from the road.
- McKinney Street does not have a standard amount of right-of-way throughout Downtown. As such, some blocks may require a different design. Where right-of-way is limited, pedestrians should be prioritized over the inclusion of a turn lane. Streets Downtown should include clear sidewalks and a planted buffer from traffic whenever possible.
- For all cross sections, turn lanes at intersections may be modified as called for by the situation. For example, no center turn lane would be required if left turns are not allowed. In this case, adding a right turn lane at the intersection may be desirable.

All public realm recommendations must be evaluated against past approvals and funding received, which may impact the final design .

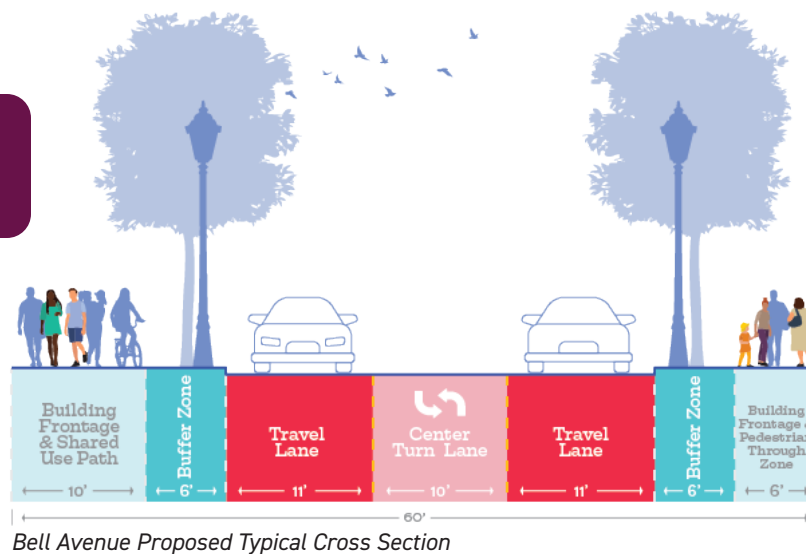
McKinney Street should become a 4-3 and 5-3 conversion east of Locust Street.



East McKinney Street Proposed Typical Cross Section

A dedicated left turn lane has been shown to create more efficient traffic flow and reduce overall congestion, even when paired with the removal of dedicated through lanes.

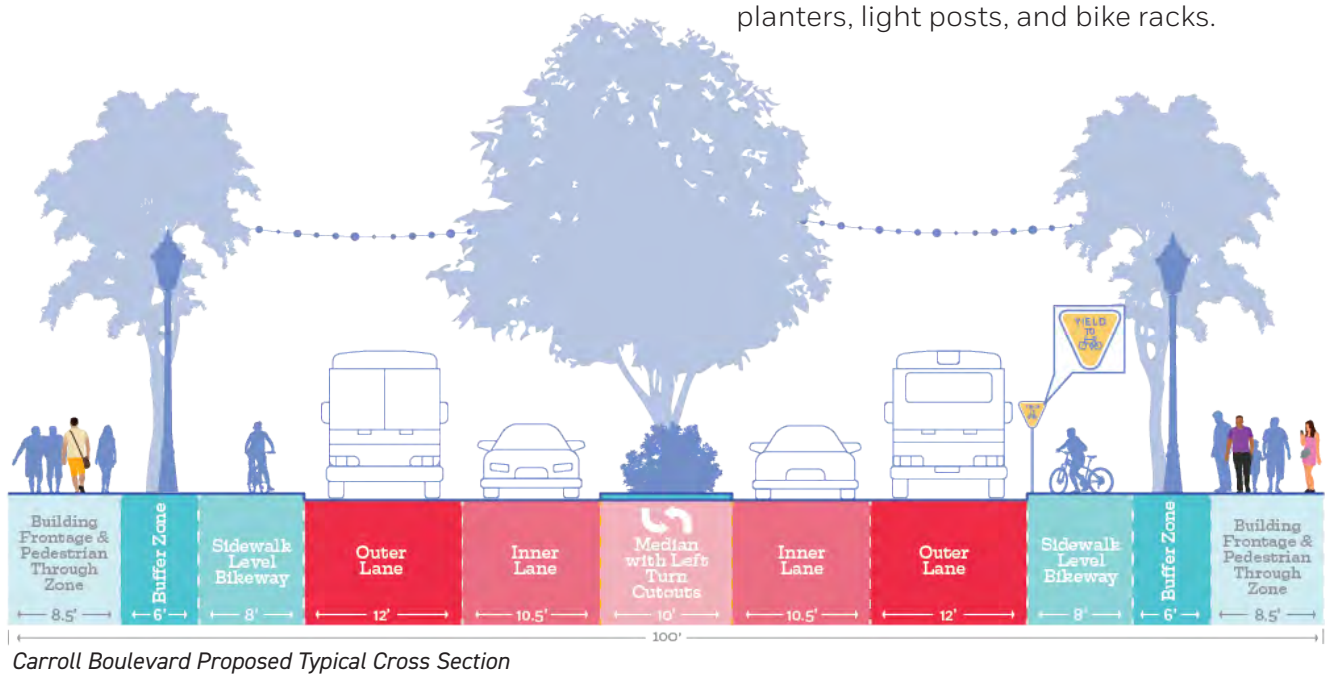
Bell Avenue should become a 4-3 conversion.



Rebuild Carroll Boulevard

Carroll Boulevard came up frequently in public engagement as a major barrier between Downtown Denton and UNT, and neighborhoods to the west - including the Oak-Hickory and West Oak Area historic districts. Carroll does not carry a volume of traffic that requires its wide cross section. Furthermore, there are numerous large, commercial parcels that could be redeveloped. A redesign of the street and reduction of lanes creates space for extended sidewalks, bike facilities, and space for trees and other planting, including an improved boulevard space.

- Convert inner vehicle lanes to 10.5 feet and outer lanes to 12 feet to support bus throughput.
- Enhance medians with tree planting and left turn cutouts.
- Implement warning signage that warn vehicles to yield to pedestrians and cyclists at all intersections within Downtown and along pedestrian and bicycle priority routes.
- Widen sidewalks, construct behind-the-curb protected bikeways, and create buffer zones between sidewalk and bikeway on both sides of the street to support street trees and other sidewalk amenities such as benches, planters, light posts, and bike racks.



Case Study: Lancaster Boulevard Redesign in Lancaster, California

The transformation of Lancaster Boulevard in Lancaster, California, from a mundane thoroughfare to a vibrant pedestrian hub has sparked significant economic growth and community revitalization. With an investment of \$11.5 million, the city embarked on a streetscape renovation project that yielded impressive results. Within four years, private investment soared to \$130 million, and the area generated \$273 million in economic output.

The makeover saw a reduction in automobile space in favor of pedestrian-friendly features such as off-street parking and a wide, tree-lined central promenade. Despite initial skepticism, the project garnered widespread success, with tax revenues nearly doubling between 2007 and 2012.

The revitalized downtown area now boasts 48 new businesses, contributing to the creation of 802 permanent jobs and 1,100 construction positions. Moreover, traffic accidents decreased by nearly one-third, with injuries dropping by 67 percent by 2013.

Key to the project's success was its design that accommodates large crowds for events like street festivals. The boulevard's success has been recognized with awards, including the US Environmental Protection Agency's Smart Growth Achievement Award.

The project's funding came from the local redevelopment agency, signaling a commitment to eliminating blight and fostering job creation. Lancaster's success serves as a blueprint for other communities seeking transformation through smart urban planning and collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Source: Congress for New Urbanism



Before. Image Source: Congress for New Urbanism



After. Image Source: Congress for New Urbanism



Image Source: Tamara Leigh Photography

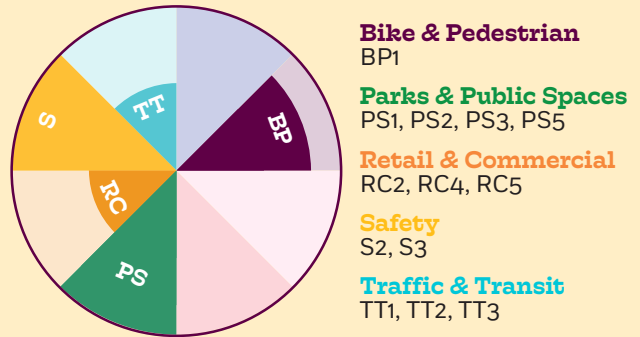
1B Pedestrian Priority Routes and Denton Chill Streets

Community members and stakeholders consistently laud the walkability of the Denton Square District. However, this pedestrian-friendly environment is confined to the immediate area around the square and fails to extend as a cohesive network linking essential destinations and institutions. Moreover, Denton's location in North Texas means it experiences hot temperatures for much of the year, exacerbating the need for shade for pedestrian comfort. Community priorities support pedestrian friendly districts and prioritizing cool, walkable routes to expand the pedestrian network into and around Downtown Denton

The Case for Action

Currently there is a lack of adequate tree canopy coverage around Downtown Denton's Historic Square District, a shortfall particularly pronounced as it falls short of the recommended 40% canopy density for adequate cooling. Properly installed tree canopy and awnings can help reduce peak summer ambient temperatures by 2-9°F and can keep surface temperatures 20-45°F cooler than similar unshaded urban materials. The proposed actions support the pedestrian network by creating a district that prioritizes pedestrians through improved and increased sidewalks, routes connecting public spaces, and by developing the Denton Chill Streets program.

3A Priorities Served



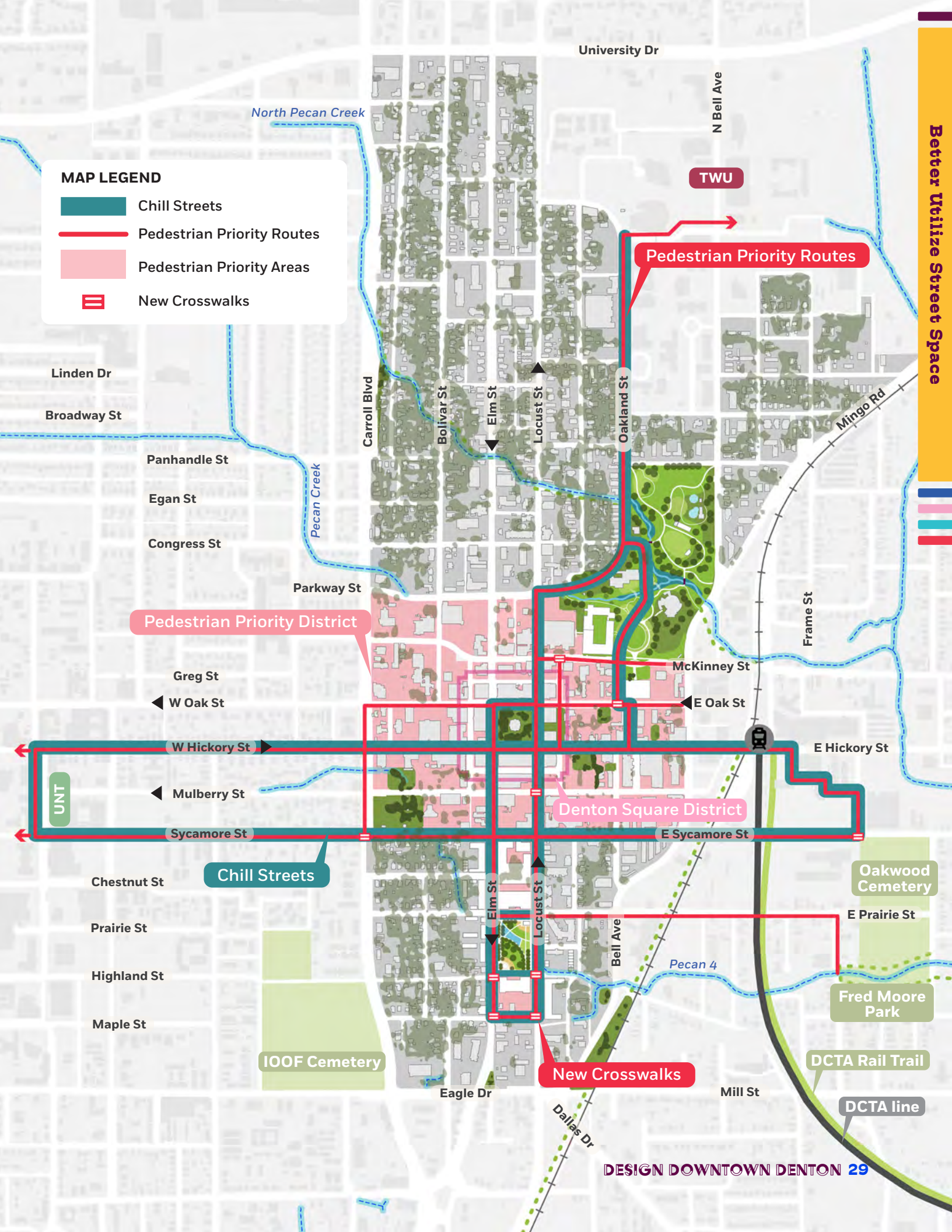
See the community priorities on [page 18](#) for more information.

What are Chill Streets?

Chill Streets prioritize features that make the air and surface temperatures of downtown Denton cooler and are situated along sidewalks, pathways or trails adjacent and/or parallel to streets, that are designed to serve residents who walk, bike, and use transit. These public realm features include natural and engineered shade, vegetation beds, green stormwater infrastructure, and light, reflective paving materials. Chill Streets, at a minimum, should prioritize a shade coverage target for pedestrian routes of 30% coverage as measured during the hottest times of the day. Chill Streets should aim for 40% or more shade coverage at the hottest times of the day from tree canopy or awnings. Engineered shade features such as awnings may have a higher percent coverage depending on how the feature is installed.

MAP LEGEND

- Chill Streets
- Pedestrian Priority Routes
- Pedestrian Priority Areas
- New Crosswalks



Proposed Actions

Develop a Denton Chill Streets Program:

- Undergo a geographically located tree inventory for Downtown.
- Set the parameters of what defines a Chill Street in Denton, and identify and designate streets as Chill Street.
- Create standards for Chill Streets that can be applied to public and private properties and include strategies such as:
 - Broad-leaf trees along sidewalks,
 - Vegetation beds and/or green stormwater infrastructure,
 - Awnings in areas that do not have tree wells and vegetation beds,
 - Light, reflective paving materials,
 - Shaded benches, seating areas and bike racks, and bus stops.
 - Wayfinding that directs people to parks, cooling stations, water fountains, and water features
 - New pedestrian crosswalks
- Expand the Downtown Design Guidelines (*refer to recommendation 3D: Public Realm Design Guidelines and Zoning Recommendations*) to include strategies for keeping pedestrian priority areas and routes cool and comfortable in the heat of the summer.
- Create a streamlined process for the permitting of development features that contribute to additional shade coverage or public realm cooling design.
- Focus Chill Street improvements along Hickory Street, Sycamore Street, Elm Street, Locust Street, Oakland Street, Exposition Street, and within Quakertown Park.
- Coordinate with DCTA to define specific bus stop design standards specific to identified Chill Streets.



Prioritize broad-leaf trees.



Where space is available, include green stormwater features.



The City should incentivize awnings and tree canopy coverage to create a comfortable experience.



Prioritize lighter color concrete or paving where possible.



Prioritize locating benches in shaded areas and around green space.



Prioritize connecting and communicating about hydrating stations.

- Develop tree planting and maintenance program with local organization(s) to promote planting trees on private property

What is a Pedestrian Priority District?

The Pedestrian Priority District is the area of Downtown where streets will prioritize pedestrian comfort, even in areas where the available right-of-way requires trade-offs between modes.

Create a Pedestrian Priority District:

- Use the Square as a core, defining the boundaries as Oakland Street and McKinney Street (north), Prairie Street (south), Bell Avenue (east), and Carroll Boulevard (west), and extending south to support new development in the zone suggested in recommendation 3A.
- Follow the design guidelines in recommendation 3D.

Develop and Improve Pedestrian Priority Routes (See map on page 29):

- Follow the design guidelines in recommendation 3D to create Pedestrian Priority Routes:
 - Between the universities and the square,
 - Between parks and public spaces,
 - Between City cooling stations,
 - To the Downtown Denton Transit Center (DDTC), and
 - To regional park trails.
- Upgrade pedestrian infrastructure, including crosswalks, along Hickory Street, Sycamore Street, Elm Street, Locust Street, Oakland Street, Exposition Street, Prairie Street, Oak Street, Austin Street, sections of Carroll Boulevard and within Quakertown Park.

Chill Streets

Rights-of-ways were identified as Chill Street candidates in Downtown Denton based on whether they connected key destinations, if they were important pedestrian routes currently, and if new development in the area could catalyze the development of improved public spaces. There is no one-size-fits-all for a Chill Street design and creative strategies must be considered. This rendering depicts a conceptual Chill Street along Prairie Street as part of development south of Downtown (see Recommendation 3A Develop South of Downtown).



Broad-leaf Trees

Shaded Bike Lane

Building Awning
(in background)

Light Concrete or Paving Materials

Raised Bike Lane

Native Plant Beds



Elm Tree

Shaded Seating

Silva Cells or Structural Soils

Shaded Sidewalk

1C

Improve Bike Connections

Building out protected bike infrastructure will further enhance Denton's mobility networks to improve safety and accessibility for those who ride bikes. Recent projects in Denton have created pieces to a network, but a more cohesive and connected set of routes with further investment and planning can better separate bicyclists from cars – an important next step in encouraging biking in the Downtown area. Safe biking connections will create a more inclusive environment for all modes of transportation, as well as for the range of skills and experiences people have with biking in Denton.

Case for Action

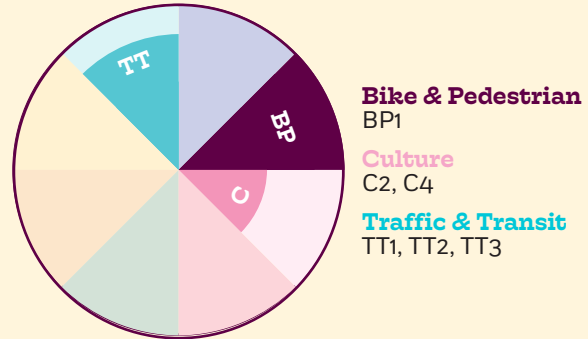
Downtown Denton has made recent progress towards creating a bike network, most recently through the Mobility Plan, which has identified areas of need for new bicycle infrastructure throughout the City. While projects like the E Hickory Street bike lane have been completed, many gaps in the network remain, and there is a disparity between the existing bike infrastructure and the safe and comfortable bike infrastructure needed to encourage riding a bike for all levels of riders. Destinations such as Downtown Denton Transit Center (DDTC), University of North Texas (UNT), Texas Woman's University (TWU), and Quakertown Park are close to Downtown, but the route between them is not always comfortable.

Proposed Actions

Build Behind-the-Curb Priority Network

- Focus City funding and construction efforts to prioritize bike lanes that connect to UNT, Denton Square, TWU, and Quakertown Park.

1C Priorities Served



See the community priorities on **page 18** for more information.

- Extend the curbs along this network so that there is enough space to put bike infrastructure behind it, taking cyclists out of the street and further separating cyclists from car traffic.

Develop Expanded Protected Bike Network

- Update the Mobility Plan to recommend construction of a larger network of protected and behind-the-curb bike lanes that allows bicyclists to reach major destinations like DDTC and the DCTA Rail-Trail, as well as University Drive, with minimal exposure to car traffic.
- Update Denton Development Code (DDC) and Criteria Manual to only implement sharrows* and non-protective infrastructure where there is not ROW available for protected bicycle infrastructure. Prioritize safety and quality of important routes over quantity of less protected infrastructure.

*road markings showing a biker with two arrows above it used to indicate a shared lane environment for bicycles and automobiles



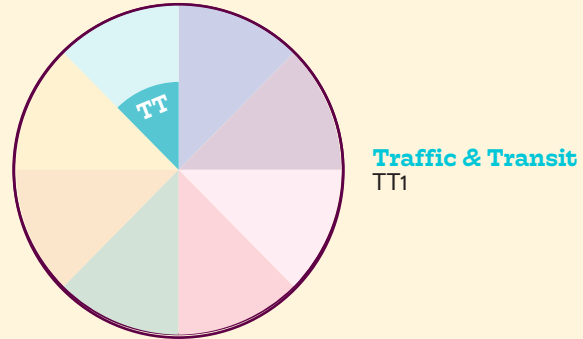
1D Improve Transit

A transportation system that improves connectivity across all modes of transportation improves accessibility for all of Denton's residents and visitors. While the Denton County Transportation Authority's (DCTA) GoZone and transit stops provide public transportation to Downtown Denton, its services and its stop designs can be barriers to ridership. With changes to bus stop amenity considerations, routing, frequency, and scheduling service design, the rider experience can be improved, providing more opportunities for new riders, and increasing the ability for people to move around Denton and across DCTA's expansive network.

Case for Action

Downtown Denton is itself a key destination within Denton that should be accessible by modes other than driving. Most bus stops in the Downtown area lack basic amenities to provide those waiting with a place to sit or shade from the sun. Currently, Denton Connect bus routes lack stops in key residential locations that make walking to the nearest bus stop infeasible for many Dentonites, while limited routing schedules make it difficult to enjoy Denton's night life car-free. While DCTA is currently making adjustments to increase frequencies and add stops to the Denton Connect routes by Fall 2024, continuing to improve the transit network in Denton, which will provide access to Downtown Denton for those who cannot or choose to not drive.

1D Priorities Served



See the community priorities on **page 18** for more information.

Proposed Actions

- Downtown Denton should work together with DCTA to improve or include bus stop amenities such as lighting, seating, and shade within Downtown to make transit service a safer and more comfortable experience. Enhancing bus stops at high ridership locations with the inclusion of real-time scheduling information can help transit riders know when the next bus is coming.
- The City should partner with the DCTA on increasing the frequency of buses, expanding hours of operation, and adjusting routes to improve connections between Downtown and key destinations throughout the City. DCTA should continue to evaluate the GoZone on-demand service to improve service delivery and ensure the GoZone is complementary to the Denton Connect fixed-routes bus service.



DCTA Transit Bus Source: 2005-2024 Community Impact Newspaper Co.

Build Out Bus Stops

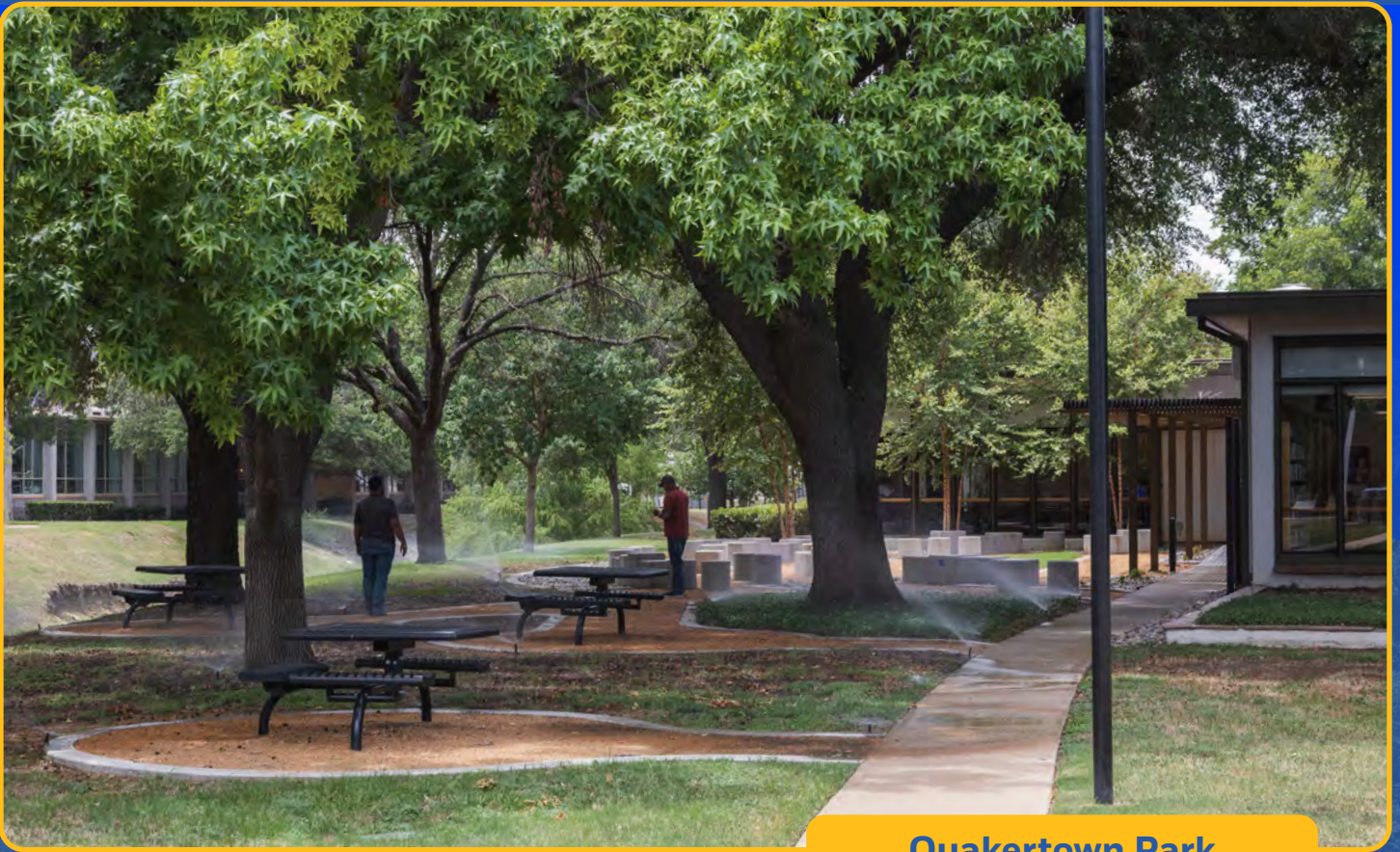
- The City and DCTA should update bus stop design standards to ensure all stops have an element of shade, whether from street trees, adjacent buildings, or a dedicated shelter.
- DCTA should consider updating bus stop design standards to ensure bus stop amenities are sensitive to the surrounding land use, neighborhood, and street context. Downtown bus stops could benefit from amenities such as benches, lighting, trash cans, real-time scheduling information, bicycle racks, and maps or other wayfinding information.
- The City and DCTA should coordinate on bus stop locations to ensure that all bus stops are accessible to all by connecting them to the greater pedestrian network using crosswalks, sidewalks, and curb ramps.
- DCTA should consider enhancements to the DDTC to better meet the needs of pedestrian and bicyclists.

Enhance Transit Service

- DCTA and the City should continue to seek regular public feedback regarding transit service frequencies and service delivery to understand the ongoing health of the transit network.
- DCTA should continue to prioritize increased frequencies and expanded service hours for existing and future routes into Downtown.
- DCTA and the City should continue to work together to identify areas for GoZone service delivery in Downtown to enhance the overall transit network. They should continue to evaluate the GoZone on-demand service origin and destinations to identify potential fixed-route service adjustments and new routes.
- Review the current Mobility plans to ensure that the Downtown Denton Transit Center (DDTC) serves as a transit hub for Downtown Denton by including it as a key point along Denton's bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure networks.



Build a Network of Improved Public Spaces



Quakertown Park



Build a Network of Improved Public Spaces

Why is this important?

Enhancing parks and public spaces will elevate both the quality of life and economic vitality of Downtown Denton. Activating vacant lots and utilizing alleys and underutilized streets will not only improve pedestrian safety but also make Downtown more attractive to residents and businesses alike, bolstering economic growth. New and improved parks will provide central gathering places for residents, boosting community cohesion and serving as a catalyst for development while enriching the cultural landscape, fostering creativity, attracting visitors, and enhancing the overall vibrancy of Downtown Denton.

What are we attempting to accomplish?

Enhanced Public Spaces



Create vibrant gathering areas to enrich the overall urban experience.

Photo Source: Discover Denton

Fostering Development



Leverage improvements in public spaces to stimulate economic activity.

Photo Source: Mend Collaborative

Featuring Denton History



Prioritize the preservation and unearthing of Denton's rich heritage and cultural identity.

Photo Source: Mend Collaborative



Quakertown Park Master Plan

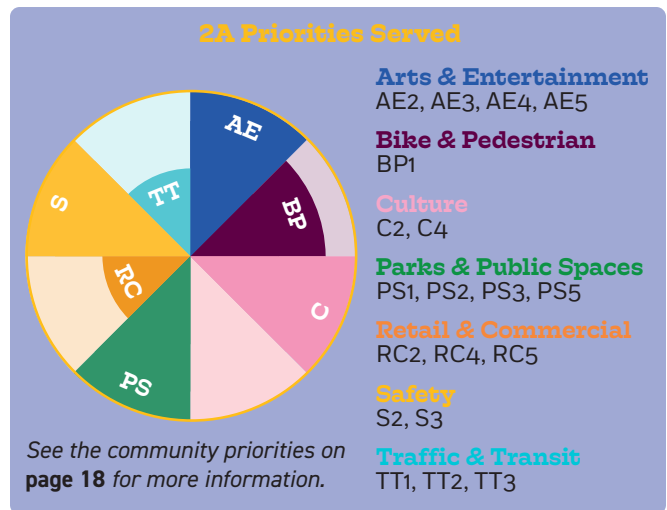
At 32 acres, the vast greenspace that is Quakertown Park is a distinctive and unique component of Downtown Denton. Historically a Freedmen's Town before being converted to a city park and later containing O'Neil Ford-designed civic structures and landscapes, Quakertown Park holds layers of history and story within its pastoral landscape. Today, the park is host to a variety of community events, civic spaces, and day-to-day activities, which this plan intends to continue to support. This plan aims to reveal and provide education and memorialization of the park's history while envisioning the next generation of park services.

This plan for Quakertown Park addresses four key goals:

- Recognize the Past 
- Reestablish Natural Waterways 
- Reconnect to Downtown* 
- and Reflect Downtown Today 

By realizing these goals through implementable actions outlined in this plan, a vision for park improvements, connections, and storytelling can be achieved.

**See Recommendation 1B for larger context of pedestrian routes and chill streets that connect with Quakertown Park.*



Quakertown Park is a pastoral landscape that is a unique feature of Downtown Denton. Image credit Mend Collaborative.

Recognizing the Past: A Position of Understanding

Recognizing the past involves telling full histories and acknowledging injustices. To make a case for action and outline proposed actions, telling the documented and oral history that we know so far of Quakertown Park is necessary to set a frame of reference.

What is now known as Quakertown Park was historically home to the freedmen's town of Quaker. Established by freed Black people in the 1870s, Quaker quickly became a thriving community with homes, businesses, churches, and a school. In the face of adversity and segregation, Quaker grew into a vibrant, self-reliant town within a town, with residents building a strong community that supported each other through mutual aid and cooperation.

Beginning in the 1870s, groups of families arrived in Denton as part of the wave of freed Black people relocating to urban areas after the full abolition of slavery in 1865. Like many freed Black people in the Reconstruction era, they prized education and its potential to create a better future for their children. The City's promise to construct a dedicated free public school for Black children played a major role in

their decision to settle in Denton. Constructed in 1878, the Denton Colored School, later renamed the Frederick Douglass School, occupied the corner of Terry and Holt avenues (near the present-day Denton Senior Center). Although it was a segregated school that received second-hand supplies from the Whites-only schools in the district, Frederick Douglass provided important educational access to Black children in Quaker.

Quaker continued to grow throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addition to the school, Quaker was home to commercial shops and restaurants, lodges for men's and women's social organizations, and several churches. Residents included Dr. E. D. Moten, the first Black physician in Denton; Henry C. Bell, an early principal of the Frederick Douglass School; Ford Crawford, who owned a grocery store; Bert Crawford, who owned a mortuary; Anthony Goodall, who owned a cafe; and Henry Taylor, a gardener and landscaper whose park-like yard contained rare and notable white lilacs.



Masonic Lodge. Image Source: Denton County Office of History & Culture



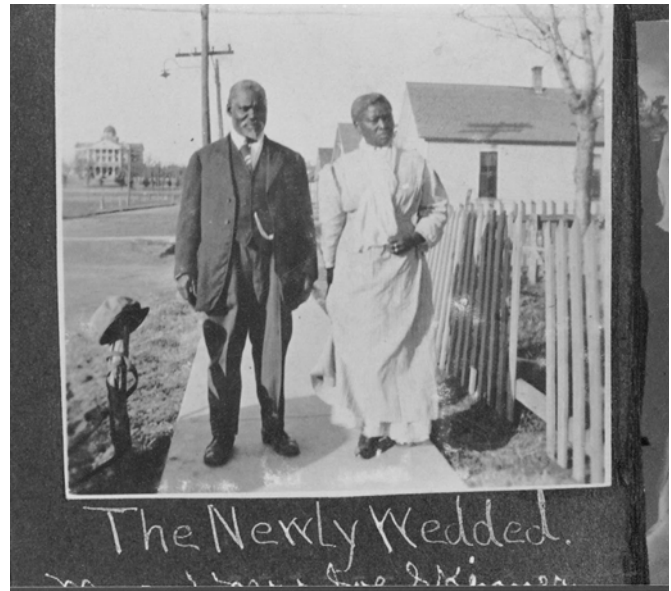
Ford Crawford store. Image Source: Denton County Office of History & Culture



Members of the House of Ruth, a women's organization, photographed circa 1910. Image Source: Denton County Office of History & Culture

In the 1910s, White city leaders began discussing the forced removal of residents from Quaker. The College of Industrial Arts (present-day Texas Woman's University) to the north of Quaker saw their proximity to the Black community as an obstacle to expansion and initiated the movement for displacement. White business leaders, civic organizations, and City officials joined in support and began promoting the idea of replacing Quaker with the City's first public park, disguising racist motivations behind Progressive-era improvements.

After the Frederick Douglass School mysteriously burned down in 1913, the City built a new school three years later in the southeast part of Denton, a less than desirable area located over a mile away from Quaker and well away from the city center. In 1921, the City voted to approve a bond issue to purchase the land occupied by Quaker and turn it into a park. Quaker residents were given the option to sell



Residents Joe and Alice Skinner shortly after their marriage in 1913. Image Source: Denton County Office of History & Culture

their property outright or have the city move their houses and other buildings close to the new school in southeast Denton.

The decision to displace Quaker sparked anger and resistance from its residents. Black leaders protested the forced removal of Quaker, arguing that it was an act of racial discrimination and a violation of property rights. Quaker resident Will Hill filed a lawsuit against the city, but eventually dropped the suit out of fear for his family's safety. Quaker residents were threatened if they tried to resist displacement or tried to move into established White neighborhoods, and most ultimately had little choice but to leave their Quaker property and move to southeast Denton or leave the city altogether.

By 1923, approximately sixty Quaker families had been displaced and over seventy buildings, including homes, churches, and businesses, had been moved or demolished. What had been a robust town became vacant land.

While White city leaders promoted the creation of a city park as justification for the removal of Quaker, the area remained largely vacant for decades. The Denton Women's Club, one of the early supporters of a city park, constructed a building along the east side of Oakland Street in 1928, and the City constructed the Emily Fowler Public Library to the south of the Women's Club in 1949.

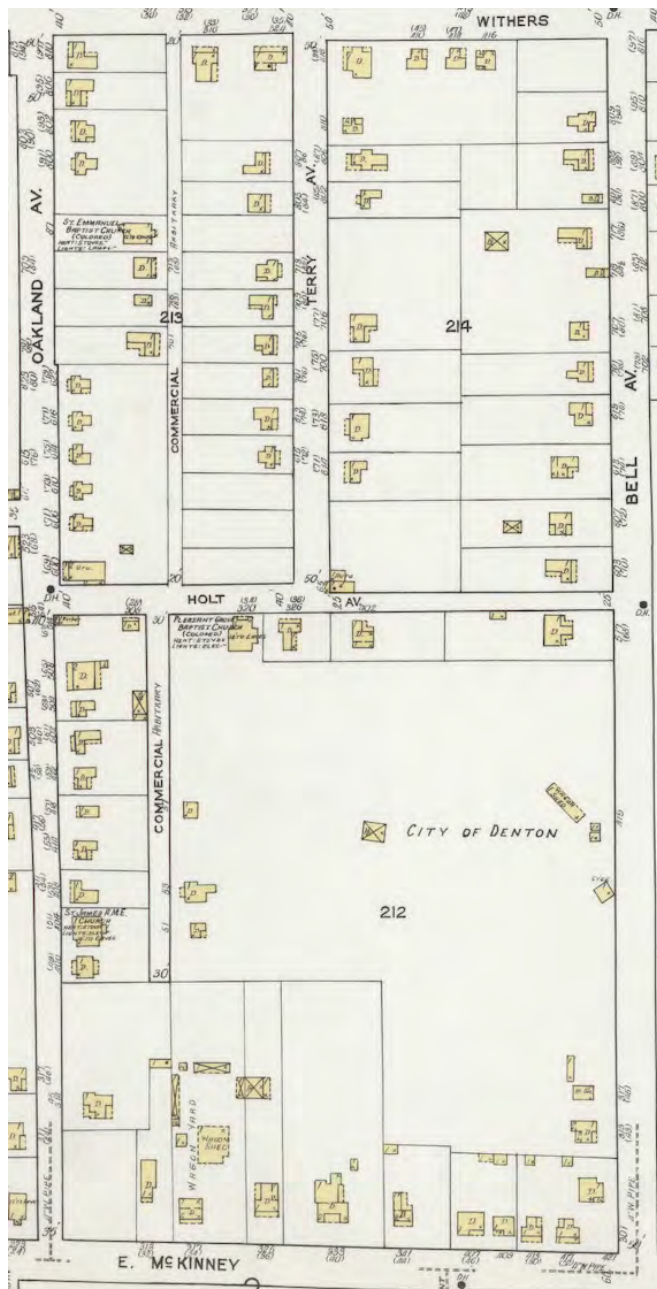


Image source: 1921 Sanborn map, Library of Congress

In the 1960s, the City hired famed Texas architect, O'Neil Ford, to design a master plan for the park, which would later become Civic Center Park. As part of the park, Ford designed a swimming pool with a sunbathing bank built into the landscape, the present City Hall with a front landscaped courtyard, the Civic Center, and an addition to the library. In the late 1970s, the Denton Senior Center was constructed in the park, designed to mimic Ford's original building designs.

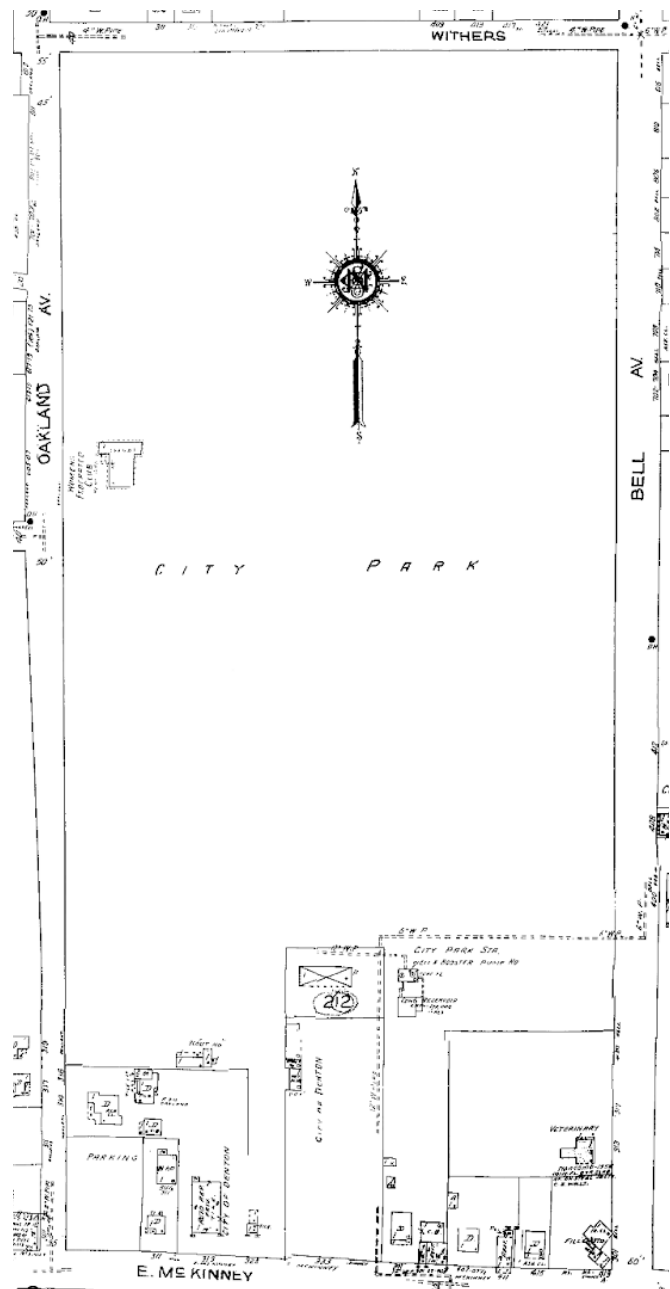


Image source: 1949 Sanborn map, ProQuest

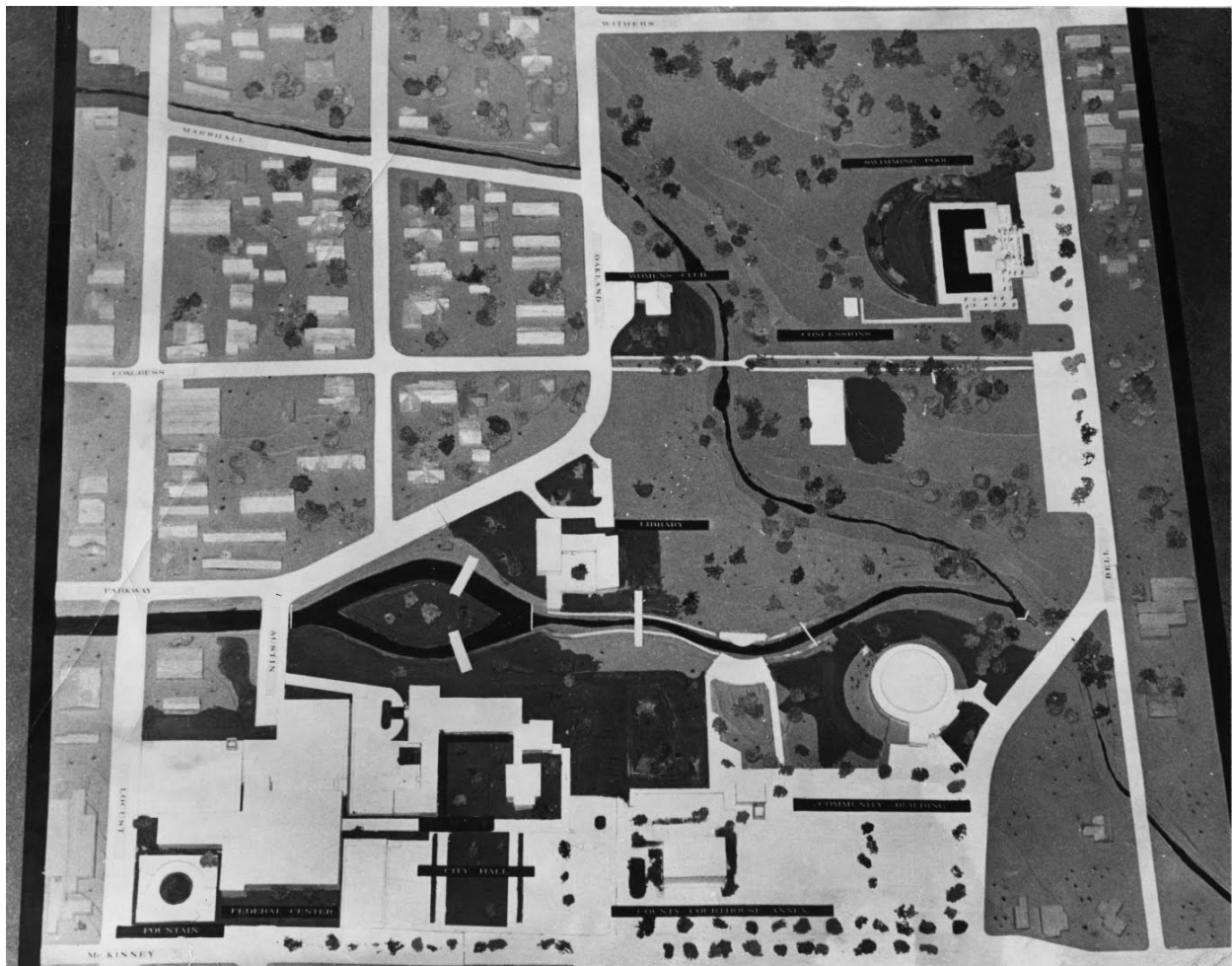
In 2006, the park was renamed Quakertown Park in recognition of its history. City of Denton Landmark Markers, Texas Historical Markers, and informational wayside signs have been installed, a start to documenting the history of Quaker and its residents.

The City of Denton has designated several local landmarks within the park, including a Quakertown marker, the Denton Women's Club building, and the O'Neil Ford Civic Complex, which encompasses the full boundary of the park as well as the Ford-designed buildings within the park.

The Case for Action

The destruction of Quaker has had a lasting impact on its residents and their descendants. It not only resulted in a loss of homes and businesses, but also disrupted the establishment of generational wealth and shattered a close-knit community that had endured decades of segregation and discrimination. Furthermore, this history and its impact was largely untold for decades. While recognition has begun within the city and its institutions, additional action is needed.

Note: The removal of the senior center and the pool at Quakertown Park reflects previous planning efforts and any final decisions will be made in the context of future public engagement associated with the design of the park. If these facilities are removed from the Quakertown location, the program will be replaced elsewhere in the Denton Parks and Recreation system.



Circa 1965 Master Plan, designed by O'Neil Ford. Image Source: Denton County Office of History & Culture

Overall Concept Plan for Quakertown Park

Parking

- 1 Existing Civic Center Loading
- 2 Event Staging Parking (see action 2A.20)
- 3 Public Parking Lot (see action 2A.20)
- 4 Reconfigured Library Parking (see action 2A.19)

Supporting Structures

- 5 Event / Convention Building with Underground Parking (see action 2A.31)
- 6 Mixed Use Hotel/Retail wrap around Public Parking Structure (see action 2A.17, 2A.20, 2A.21)
- 7 Retail and Restaurant Hub with Plaza (see action 2A.17, 2A.9, 2A.21, 2A.29, 2A.30)
- 8 City Hall Expansion with Underground Parking (see action 2A.9, 2A.20, 2A.25)
- 9 Park Support and Public Restroom Building (see action 2A.9)
- 10 Park Cafe / Beer Garden and Bike Rental Building (see action 2A.22)

Outdoor Civic Event Space

- 11 Park Entry Plaza (see action 2A.17, 2A.22, 2A.30)
- 12 Historic Bridge Plaza (see action 2A.22, 2A.26, 2A.29, 2A.30)
- 13 Civic Center Event Plaza (see action 2A.22, 2A.26, 2A.30)
- 14 Existing Nook at the Library

Historical Monument

- 15 Quaker Historical Monument (see action 2A.1)
- 16 Quaker History Walk (see action 2A.4)
- 17 Quaker Terry Avenue Monument Walk (see action 2A.4)
- 18 Quaker White Lilac Monument Garden (see action 2A.5, 2A.6, 2A.7, 2A.11)
- 19 Quaker Remembrance Monument (see action 2A.2, 2A.3)

Play

- 20 Playground
- 21 Exploratory Nature Play Area

Flexible Lawn Space

- 22 Welcome Lawn (see action 2A.27)
- 23 Main Amphitheater Lawn (see action 2A.23, 2A.27)
- 24 Community Event Lawn (see action 2A.27)

Connections

- 25 E McKinney Raised Park Crossing (see action 2A.17, 2A.18)
- 26 Treetop Raised Boardwalk (see action 2A.28)
- 27 New Wide Bridge (see action 2A.28)
- 28 New Pecan Creek Trail (see action 2A.28)
- 29 Widened Crossing at Historic Bridge (see action 2A.28)
- 30 Widened Pedestrian Park Entrance (see action 2A.22)
- 31 Land Bridge over Pecan Creek (see action 2A.28)
- 32 Pedestrian Park Entrance with Park Gateway (see action 2A.28)



Nature and Community Space

- 33 Wetland Garden (see action 2A.11, 2A.12, 2A.16)
- 34 Exploratory Creek Crossing (see action 2A.14)
- 35 Creekside Seat Walls (see action 2A.14, 2A.29)
- 36 New Western Park Entrance and Denton Writers Walk (see action 2A.19, 2A.26)
- 37 Naturalized Creek Edge (see action 2A.10, 2A.11, 2A.14, 2A.15)
- 38 Amphitheater Grove (see action 2A.11)
- 39 Interactive Water Sculpture and Sunbathing Hillside (see action 2A.8, 2A.24)
- 40 Stepped Creek Edge - Temporary Creek Pooling Area (see action 2A.10, 2A.14, 2A.15)
- 41 Main Amphitheater

- Proposed Tree
- Existing Tree
- Proposed Building
- Existing Building

Alternate Concept Plan for Quakertown Park



In the event that the full vision for Quakertown Park as envisioned on the previous page isn't able to be realized on the southern end of the park with the addition of a City Hall expansion and new Event / Convention building, an alternate, less development-intensive option is provided above.

In this alternate option, the lawn in front of the existing City Hall is formalized into an event lawn where stages can be set up for concert events. A small public plaza is added between

the lawn and City Hall's Courtyard, providing a space for vendors to set up and people to rest under the shade of the courtyard's mature canopy. A small community orchard provides a buffer from the adjacent property and a fun way for people to engage with the landscape.

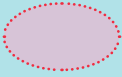
The Civic Center's parking lot can be significantly reconfigured to provide for more green planting areas and a buffered pedestrian route through the lot.

Event Set Up Plan for Quakertown Park

Quakertown Park is host to many of the City's most exciting and well-attended events. It is important that any new improvements in the park provide for stage/performance space, as well as for vendor space. This event set up diagram illustrates areas that have been identified in the concept plan where these activities can occur on event days.

The alternate concept plan on the previous page provides for additional event space.



-  Open Lawn for Stage or Performance
-  Vendor Space

Quakertown Park

As a beloved and historic space in Denton, Quakertown Park is a busy space. The concept presented in this report builds on Quakertown's most valuable assets. This illustrative rendering showcases how this plan improves event areas, creates new amenities to serve residents and park users on a day-to-day basis, considers revenue generation, restores natural waterways and creates a more intentional human connection to nature, and importantly creates intentional spaces to reveal the history of Quaker.

Land Bridge

New Park Bridge

Amphitheater

Park Support Building

Main Amphitheater Lawn

Public Restrooms

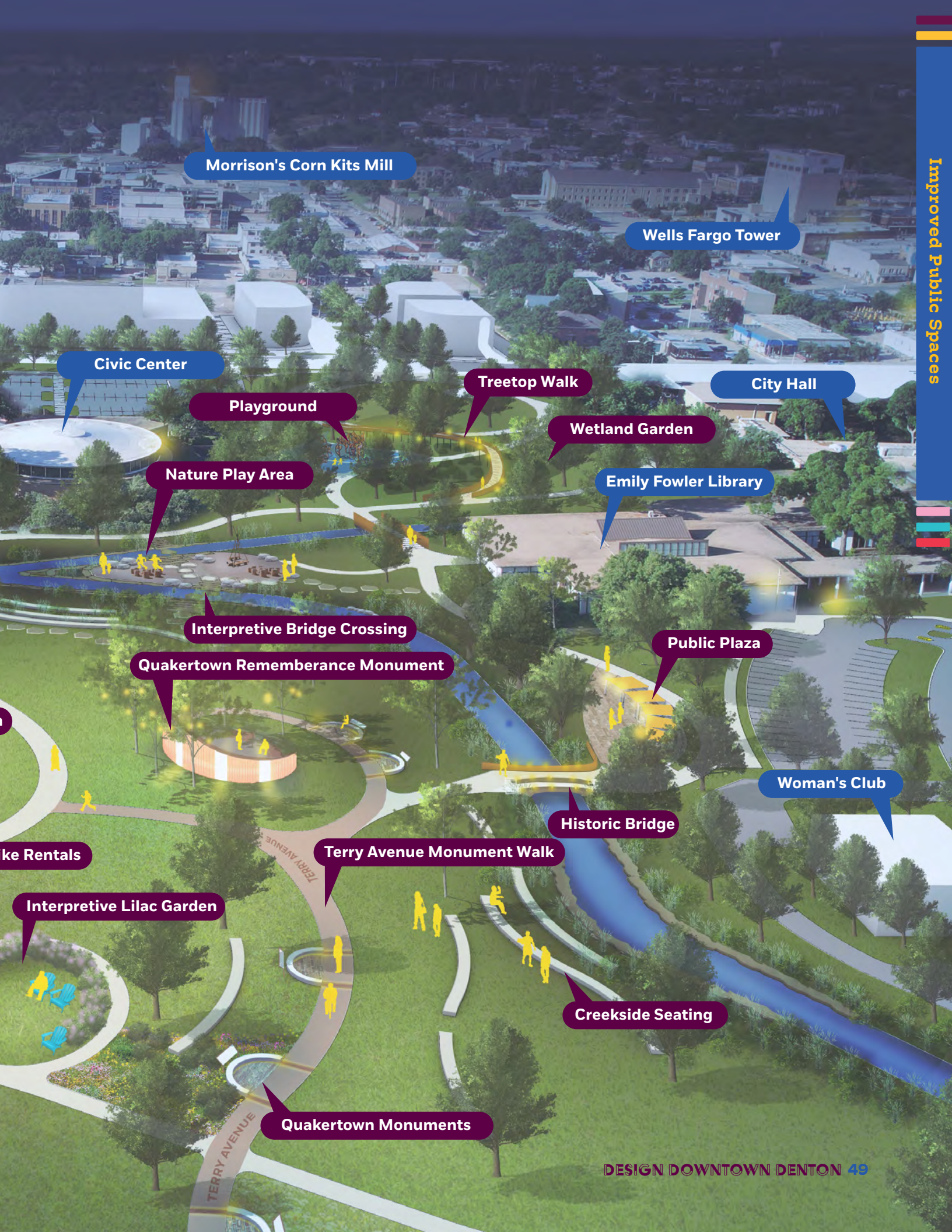
Park Cafe + Beer Garden

Park B

Playground

Public Plaza

Interactive Water Sculpture



Morrison's Corn Kits Mill

Wells Fargo Tower

Civic Center

Playground

Treetop Walk

City Hall

Wetland Garden

Nature Play Area

Emily Fowler Library

Interpretive Bridge Crossing

Quakertown Remembrance Monument

Public Plaza

Woman's Club

Historic Bridge

Terry Avenue Monument Walk

Interpretive Lilac Garden

Creekside Seating

Quakertown Monuments

Proposed Actions

The history of Quaker is both a testament to the resilience of Quaker residents and a reminder of the systemic racism Black communities continue to face today. This history should be well-represented in the future plans for Quakertown Park to encourage reflection on the past and help inform a more equitable future. Representation of this history should be designed in close collaboration with the Black community of Denton, especially the descendants of Quaker residents.

The following recommendations reflect comments from a series of listening sessions and discussions with the Black community and descendants of Quaker residents held in the spring of 2024. Recommendations demarcated with a numerical label can be directly cross-referenced with the Overall Concept Plan for Quakertown Park on page 35 and example images.

Intermediary Actions Prior to the Start of Construction of Park Improvements:

The City should establish plans, procedures, and funding for future archaeological investigations in sensitive areas likely to experience ground disturbance in future redevelopment work. Test holes and/or remote sensing, such as ground penetrating radar, could be utilized to inform future planning.

Additionally, the City should encourage and facilitate further oral history interviews with Quaker descendants. These oral histories should be recorded, transcribed, indexed, and placed in a public repository at UNT, TWU, or the Baylor Institute for Oral History.

Descendants of Quaker have also expressed desire for the City to identify a permanent interior space for an exhibit on Quaker. The City should begin identifying where an existing building can support this, or if a new space should be created.

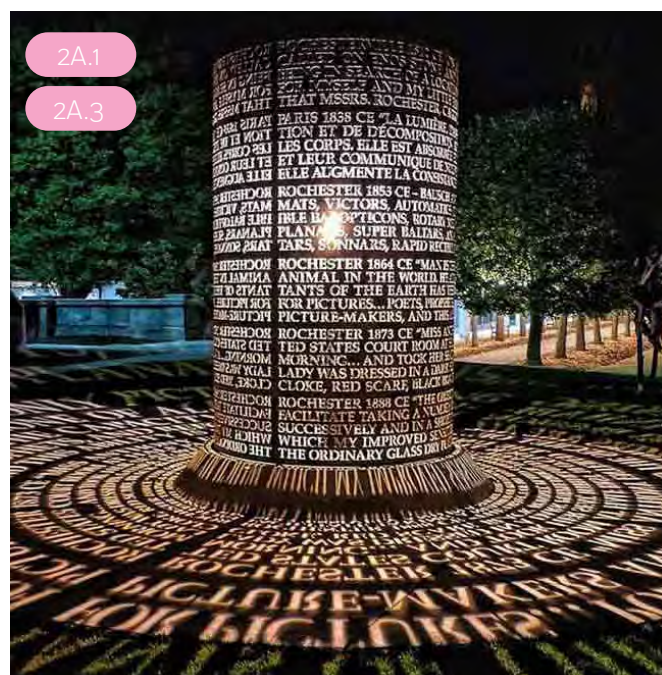
Park Design Actions:

- The park should contain multiple monuments to represent the history of Quaker throughout the entirety of the park.
 - » 2A.1 Monuments throughout the park can vary in size and impact, but ones closer to the park edges should be highly visible from outside of the park to draw visitors in. For example, size and/or lighting could be used to create visual impact and draw people in.
 - » 2A.2 The Frederick Douglass School was an important catalyst for the establishment of Quaker and should be commemorated with a monument.
 - » 2A.3 Names of the Quaker residents who were displaced should be commemorated in a monument. Additional research may be necessary to ensure all displaced residents are included.
 - » 2A.4 Physical locations of at least some buildings, including churches, stores, and residences, should be commemorated along the "Terry Avenue" walk. This could be through markers/signage and/or through physical representations of buildings.
 - » Consider how monuments will interact with the current use of the park. For example, monuments installed flush with the ground may not be practical, especially during events with hundreds of visitors walking and park vehicles driving across the grounds.
- The park should contain informational signage throughout that tells an accurate, authentic story of Quakertown.

- Landscaping should be utilized to reflect the history of Quaker.
 - » 2A.5 White lilacs should be incorporated as a design motif to commemorate Quaker resident Henry Taylor's garden.
 - » 2A.6 Landscaping should incorporate native or adapted plants that bloom in all seasons to represent the perpetually thriving and resilient Quaker community.
 - » 2A.7 A healing or tranquility garden should be incorporated to provide visitors with a place to reflect and rejuvenate.
- The City should establish dedicated funding for ongoing maintenance of monuments and markers/signage.
- The City should consider creating a permanent exhibit within a new or existing building to display artifacts and documents, play oral histories, and show the future Quaker documentary. The proposed new civic structures in the park could contain a permanent exhibit while providing space for rotating exhibits.



The Smokey Hollow commemoration "spirit houses" in Cascades Park in Tallahassee, FL and the ghost houses at Franklin Court in Philadelphia are examples of how buildings can be physically represented. Image sources: Architect Magazine, National Park Service



Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester - "Argentum: Double-Positive" Image by J. Adam Fenster



Interpretive signage with etched glass/plexi panels can be used to reference the historic built landscape. Image source: National Park Service

Historic Preservation Actions related to Development Opportunities:

- **2A.8** Revise and clarify the local landmark designation of Quakertown Park to limit it to the O'Neil Ford-designed buildings and landscape features that remain intact:
 - » City Hall & courtyard
 - » Civic Center
 - » Sunbathing Hillside at the current Civic Center Pool
 - » Emily Fowler Library
 - » General shape of the creek
- **2A.9** Generate design guidelines for new construction in the park that protect the historic character. New construction should:
 - » Be compatible in materials and massing to the historic buildings
 - » Avoid touching the historic buildings or, if necessary, use a visually lightweight hyphen to connect to the historic building
 - » Retain the City Hall courtyard
 - » Retain viewsheds of the primary elevations of the buildings
- Require archeological monitoring for any new construction that will lead to ground disturbance in areas suspected to have Quaker-era or Native American below ground resources.
- **2A.10** Remove excess concrete and re-naturalize the creek to align with the original O'Neil Ford design for the park, which followed the natural contours of the creek bed and took advantage of existing topography for vistas and pathways.

Programming Actions:

- Create an annual event that commemorates Quaker, similar to the Tulsa Black Wall Street Legacy Festival.
- Create guided and self-guided tours that tell the history of Quaker. Creating and leading tours could be an opportunity for partnership between the City of Denton and the Denton County Office of History and Culture.
- Initiate an Artist-In-Residence program that works with the City, specifically within Quakertown Park and throughout Downtown on installations regarding the commemoration of Quaker. The Artist-In-Residence will advise on major City initiatives, lead their own artistic and curatorial projects, and have dedicated workspace within a space in or near Quakertown Park. This program will work to fulfill artistic story-telling about Quaker until and beyond the realization of permanent artistic monuments are realized.



The 2024 Black Wall Street Legacy Festival in Tulsa, OK is a "series of free events and programs in May commemorating the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. The event is led by survivors and descendants, with the intent of sharing truth, inspiring hope, and extending tradition". Image and Quote Source: The Black Wall Street Times

Reestablishing Natural Systems: The Case for Action

Over time, the natural systems in Quakertown Park have been neatly hemmed into a tidy, well-manicured, and efficient park landscape. Unfortunately, the landscape of the park today is a departure from sustainable land management practices, and reduces the already fragmented natural habitats of many beneficial plants and animals.

Expanses of tidy lawns, often perceived as quintessential features of human-inhabited landscapes, carry significant ecological drawbacks. Their vast expanses disrupt natural systems by displacing native vegetation, reducing biodiversity, and altering soil composition. Traditional lawn care practices, such as frequent mowing and fertilization, contribute to environmental degradation by polluting waterways and harming beneficial insects and wildlife. Lawns also have no effect in slowing water movement in large storms, and can exacerbate accelerated stormwater flow.

In a similar capacity, natural creek edges offer ecological and aesthetic benefits that concrete creek edges do not. The organic shape and diverse vegetation of natural creek edges provide vital habitat for many plant and animal species, fostering biodiversity and supporting local ecosystems. In contrast, concrete creek edges increase water temperatures, accelerate water flow, hinder the movement of wildlife, and do not support natural vegetation. Naturalized creek edges absorb excess water during heavy rainfall, reducing the risk of flooding and erosion, and help keep water cool.

Natural landscapes also contribute to the scenic beauty of parks and green spaces, enhance recreational opportunities, and promote community well-being. By restoring natural spaces in Quakertown Park, we can safeguard ecological integrity, mitigate flood risks, encourage a deeper human connection to nature, and enhance the overall resilience of our landscapes. The Overall Concept Plan seeks to “unhem” some of the edges of these systems, reestablishing a more natural function to the park’s ecologies.



Non-natural creek edges lead to dangerous maintenance routines on steep slopes and increased erosion. Image by Mend Collaborative



Large expanses of lawn have their place in event areas, but there are many opportunities to introduce more natural landscaping for visual interest and ecological health in the park. Image by Mend Collaborative

Proposed Actions

Vegetation improvements in the park will increase flora and fauna diversity and contribute to an improved park experience for visitors:

- **2A.11** Increase areas of natural vegetation in the park with native plant beds of shrubs, perennials, and trees.
- **2A.12** Implement Green Infrastructure strategies, such as rain gardens or bioswales, in areas of the park where water frequently collects or swales toward the creek.
- **2A.13** Create areas of native pollinator habitats in areas of the park that are less actively used to support pollinators that have been observed in the park, such as butterflies, bees, and moths, with native plant beds and pollinator lawns. These areas could occur on the grounds within the park, or on green roof installations on buildings within the park.

Naturalizing the creek edges in strategic locations will contribute to improved water quality, assist in mitigating extensive flooding events, and provide scenic areas for people to gather and explore:

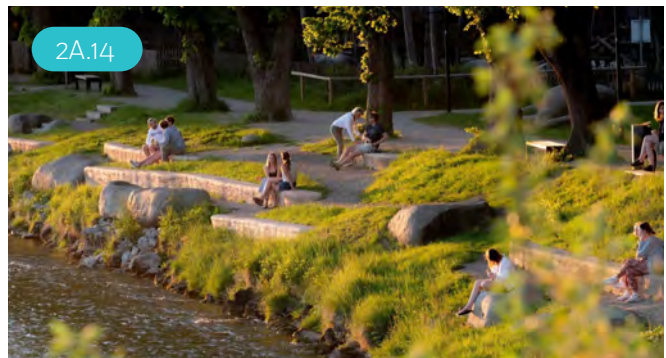
- Remove the concrete channel within the central portions of the park and restore the creek edges in both branches of Pecan Creek with a variety of strategies:
 - » **2A.14** Gabion baskets or stepped edges can provide ways for people to sit along the creek edge and relax along a more natural shore.
 - » **2A.15** Reduced slope and naturalized planted edges will provide habitat for flora and fauna, and can provide critical breeding habitat for water species.
- **2A.16** Slow down stormwater and treat it where it falls by building rain gardens or naturalized channels where water naturally rests or flows through the park toward Pecan Creek.



Clover lawns can function as traditional mown lawns but also provide ecosystem services. Image from Outsidepride.



Natural plant beds can frame spaces and enhance the beauty of the park. Image from Frank+Grossman Contractors.



Areas of seating outcropping from a naturalized creek edge allow people to connect to nature. Image of Park "Taubenloch" by Uniola.



Naturalized creeks provide areas of habitat and increased ecological function and visual interest. Image of La Rosa Reserve Stream Daylighting by Boffa Miskell.

Reconnect to Downtown: The Case for Action

Today's connection to the core of Downtown Denton from Quakertown Park is difficult to navigate, with unclear access routes into the park, safe routes along accessible sidewalks, and a visual barrier to the park due to large expanses of unprogrammed lawn space and parking lots. Close to 50% of the park edges are drive entrances or parking lots. Quakertown Park is a respite in the City, a place to cool down, to engage in recreation, and to gather with community. For such an incredible resource so close to Downtown, Quakertown Park is missing a "grand entrance"; a sense of arrival in a welcoming green space that some of the best parks provide. Due to the size of the park, there is opportunity to create various entrances depending on the direction park visitors are traveling from or what their intended targeted use within the park is.

For Quakertown Park to become a seamless part of Downtown Denton, it needs to be reconnected at its edges and along main downtown arterials with safe and accessible pedestrian routes, clear bike routes, and by repurposing parking areas for added park space.



Aachen Station Square in Belgium. Image and design by HH+F Architekten Hentrup Heyes + Fuhrmann

Proposed Actions

- **2A.17** Create an intentional park entrance for travelers using the East McKinney and Oak Street corridors. Create a raised, expansive crossing for pedestrians and bicyclists over East McKinney Street just east of Oakland Street, stretching the park over McKinney to create an intentional, welcoming entrance to the park on the southern edge.
- **2A.18** Implement improvements along streets connecting to the park from the Downtown core, allowing for safe and accessible routes for pedestrians and bicyclists to navigate between the two spaces.
- **2A.19** Create an intentional park entrance for travelers coming from the Locust Street corridor by converting the parking lot behind the library into park space. This would create a welcoming and intentional entrance into the park from the west. The current library parking would then need to be relocated across Oakland Street to the vacant city-owned lot at the corner of N Austin Street and Oakland Street.
- **2A.20** Reduce the amount of surface street parking that occupies the edges of the park by removing areas of surface parking and creating structured parking across East McKinney Street.

Reflect Downtown Today: The Case for Action

Quakertown Park has been a vital place for community gathering, civic activities, festivals, and daily park use for decades. Updating Quakertown Park's features and amenities for modern uses is crucial to ensure that this valued public space remains relevant, accessible, and enjoyable for the Denton community. As societal needs evolve and urban landscapes change, parks must adapt to meet the diverse demands of their users. Integrating contemporary features such as sustainable landscaping, accessible amenities, and customized facilities that better serve park users of today will not only enhance the overall appeal of the park but will also foster a sense of inclusivity and well-being among park visitors. With the overall vision of the future of Downtown Denton proposed to enhance downtown into a vibrant, dynamic place that enriches the quality of life for residents and visitors alike, Quakertown Park should be considered a key component of achieving that vision.

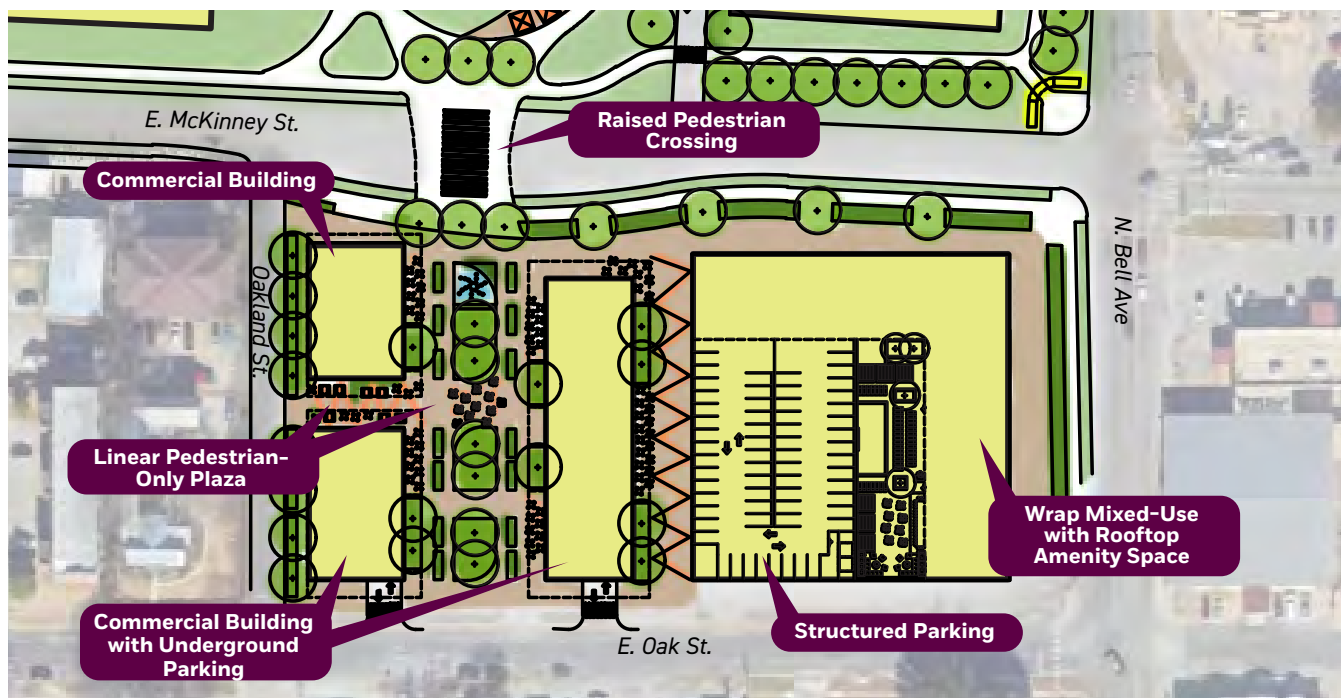


Ithaca Commons is a pedestrian-friendly linear plaza flanked by restaurants and retail, flexing between vibrant day-time activities and exciting evening and night-time programming. Image Credit Sasaki.

Proposed Actions

Creating development opportunities within the park and near the park will expand the vibrant commercial activity in Downtown through the park:

- **2A.21** Extend Quakertown Park across East McKinney Street, connecting the park to a new development of commercial and public spaces south of the park. This new development area should:
 - » Establish a connection between park and downtown
 - » Be a transition between downtown and park (and vice versa) with commercial (restaurant/retail), permanent market space for a farmer's market, and open public spaces.
 - » Feature a centralized public plaza within the new development area that creates a visual connection to Quakertown Park for gathering, seating, landscaping, food trucks, and water play.
 - » Provide temporary programming, such as food truck spaces, pop up splash pads, pop up vendor markets, or chalk events.
 - » Anchor the corner of Bell and McKinney with a mixed-use building with restaurants or retail facing the park and wraps a parking structure for public parking.
 - » Install temporary bollards to close East McKinney for special events, such as the Arts and Jazz Festival.
- **2A.22** Build buildings and facilities within the park to support cafes, bike rentals, and pop-up or food truck spaces to activate different areas of the park and create commercial activity in unique spaces.
- Create a policy to prioritize or incentivize programs and opportunities for Black Dentonites to have primary access to commercial and/or incubator spaces within City-owned spaces at or near the park (intent to right historic damages where displacement removed generational wealth opportunities for this community).



The Porch in Cincinnati's Washington Park is a great example of a community rest stop in the park, where folks can drop by for a soda, beer, wine, or snack, and sit in the shade surrounded by nature. Facilities like this can operate via contracted vendor, City-operated vending, or seasonal/rotational vending. Image Credit Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation.



Farmers Market Pavilion and Plaza in Eugene, OR. Image Credit City of Eugene, OR.

Many facilities in Quakertown Park have reached a point in their lifespan where they either require significant facility updates, renovations, or new facilities in order to meet modern uses and function properly. The Overall Concept Plan recommends:

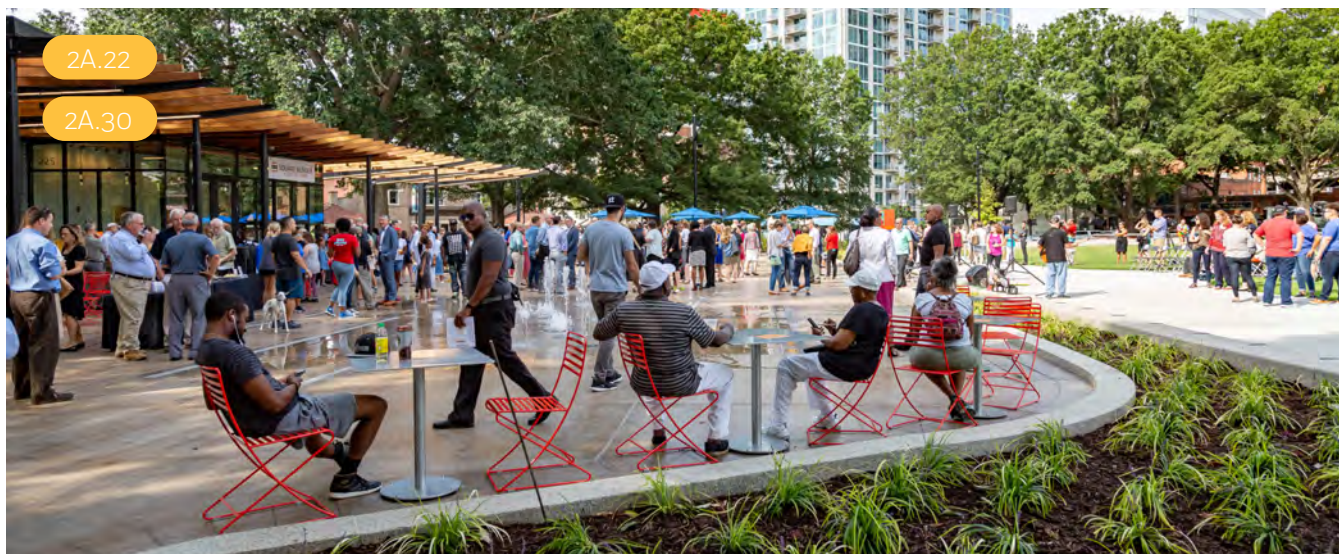
- **2A.23** Relocate the Senior Center elsewhere in Denton, creating a new state-of-the-art facility for seniors and turning this area of Quakertown Park back to green park space.
- **2A.24** Re-vision the Civic Pool to an interactive and artistic spray feature, play area, and community sunning hill.
- **2A.25** Expand City Hall to the south to provide much needed space for city staff in a modern facility while preserving the existing O'Neil Ford building.
- **2A.26** Update the landscaping around the Civic Center and the Emily Fowler Central Library to provide more outdoor space for activities and events at these facilities.



The interactive and artistic fountain in Klyde Warren Park in Dallas excites kids with shooting jets, fantastic water shows, and provides a cooling and pleasing environment. Image Credit OTL.

Design the park with the intention of accommodating for large events in a more organized and intentional manner, including:

- **2A.27** Creating more intentional spaces for performance areas and stages, including a new main amphitheater and several open lawn areas for temporary stages.
- **2A.28** Updating circulation routes to alleviate congestion and make the park safer for larger gatherings, including adding a third bridge over Pecan Creek near the Civic Center and "exploratory" creek crossings between City Hall and the Library and where the creek branches converge.
- **2A.29** Design seat walls throughout the park near areas where vendors will regularly set up to provide concealed yet convenient places for vendors to hook up to power and water for events.
- **2A.30** Adding open plaza spaces that can be easily occupied by vendors during events. These spaces should be paved in brick or concrete, have adequate space for vendor booths/tents and visitors, and provide utility hookups such as power. When not used for vending, these spaces can be occupied by cafe tables and chairs for use by park users.
- **2A.31** Build a new event or convention building adjacent to the Civic Center. This building should have underground parking to accommodate for its users, as well as Civic Center guests and general park users.



2A.22

2A.30



2A.27

The Fayetteville Festival Park Performance Pavilion is a beautiful sculptural piece of architecture when not in use, and provides a stunning experience for audiences while in use. Image credit Clark Nexsen.



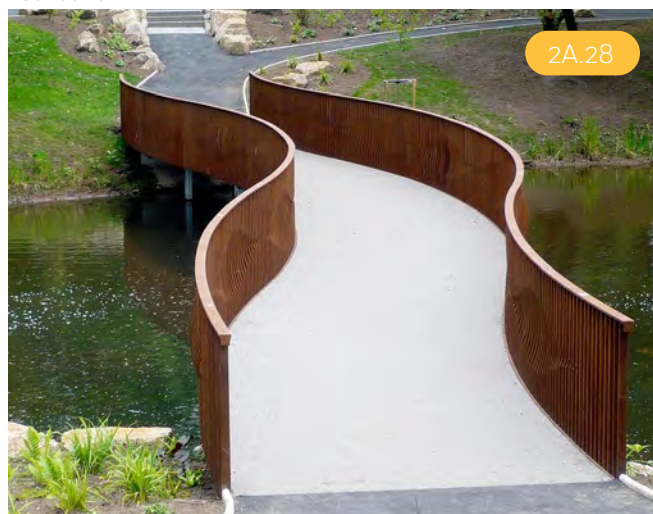
2A.30

Moore Square in Raleigh, NC was designed to allow for flexibility of spaces for different programming. There are permanent structures for vendors in the park, with plenty of park seating during casual park days, but also areas where these spaces can be converted to pop-up vending for events and festivals. Images from Moore Square Market and Landscape Architecture Foundation.



2A.29

Concrete seat walls within the park landscape can be clever ways to provide park seating, but double as utility hook ups for vendors during events. Image credit Architonic.



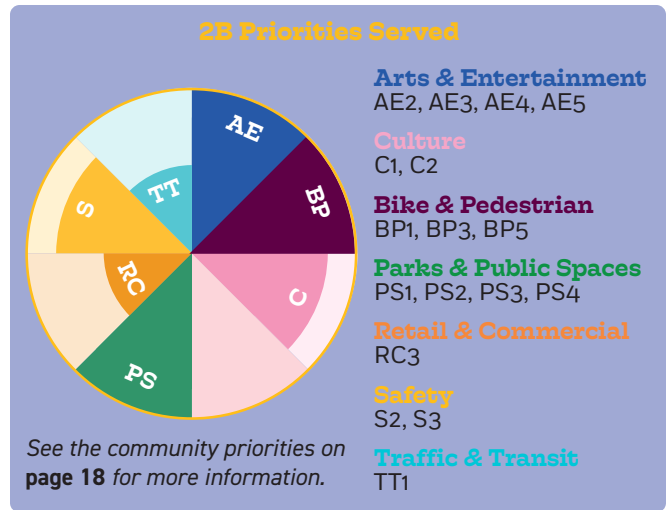
2A.28

A new bridge like this one in Barnes Park, Sunderland, UK, will alleviate heavy traffic in the park, increase safety during events, and add touch of modern flare to the park.



Activate Vacant Lots

Downtown Denton has several underutilized or vacant lots. Activating these parcels offers opportunities to enhance the public parks and open space network, combat extreme temperatures through additional greenspace, and increase economic opportunity within Downtown through events. Initial low-cost improvements such as trees, planters, and benches will enhance comfort. As Denton grows, strategic plans and guidelines for additional pocket park spaces should be created for public and private development.



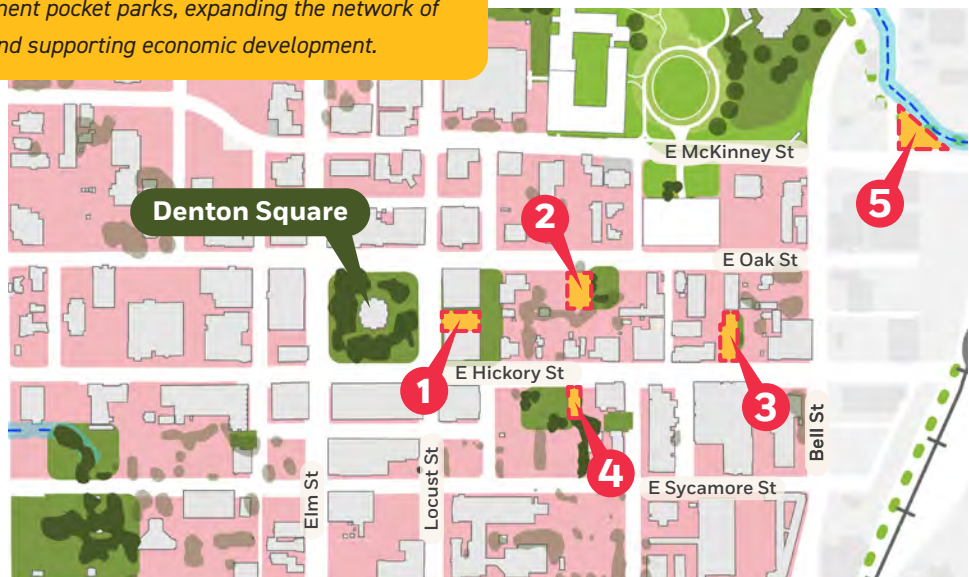
The Case for Action

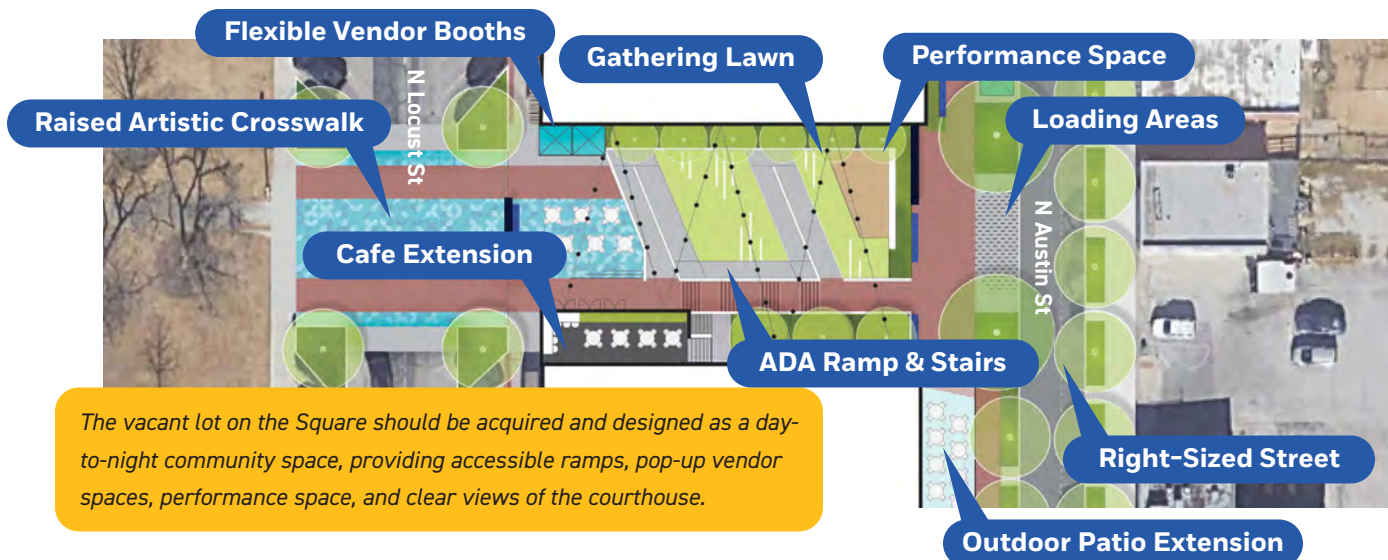
As Downtown is further developed, vacant and underutilized parcels should be identified to build the parks and open space network and support economic development goals. The vacant lot on the Square has the potential to enhance the downtown public realm and connect the Square to other active areas Downtown such as Austin Street.

Other underutilized or private parcels around Downtown could become pocket parks that offer public amenities and integrate public art to enhance the overall Downtown environment. The proposed actions focus on the identified parcels (See map below) and offer considerations that can be applied to other properties around Downtown.

This map shows existing and proposed open space and identifies vacant lots that could become temporary or permanent pocket parks, expanding the network of parks and open space Downtown and supporting economic development.

- 1 118 N Locust Street
(Lot on the Square)
- 2 206 E Oak Street
- 3 179 E Hickory Street
- 4 321 E Hickory Street
- 5 427 E McKinney Street





Proposed Actions

General Recommendations for Lot Activation:

- Develop guidelines for pocket parks within future Parks and Open Space plans.
- Create a Lot Activation Policy to support the temporary activation of privately- and publicly-owned lots to enhance vacant space until they can be developed.
- Add trees for shade and/or planters to combat rising temperatures in summer.
- Seek public input for amenities, considering benches, water fountains, pet waste stations, restrooms, trash cans, etc.
- Work with the Public Arts Committee to identify opportunities for temporary or permanent artworks.
- Integrate developed branding and wayfinding to distinguish public spaces, see *Recommendation 4F*.

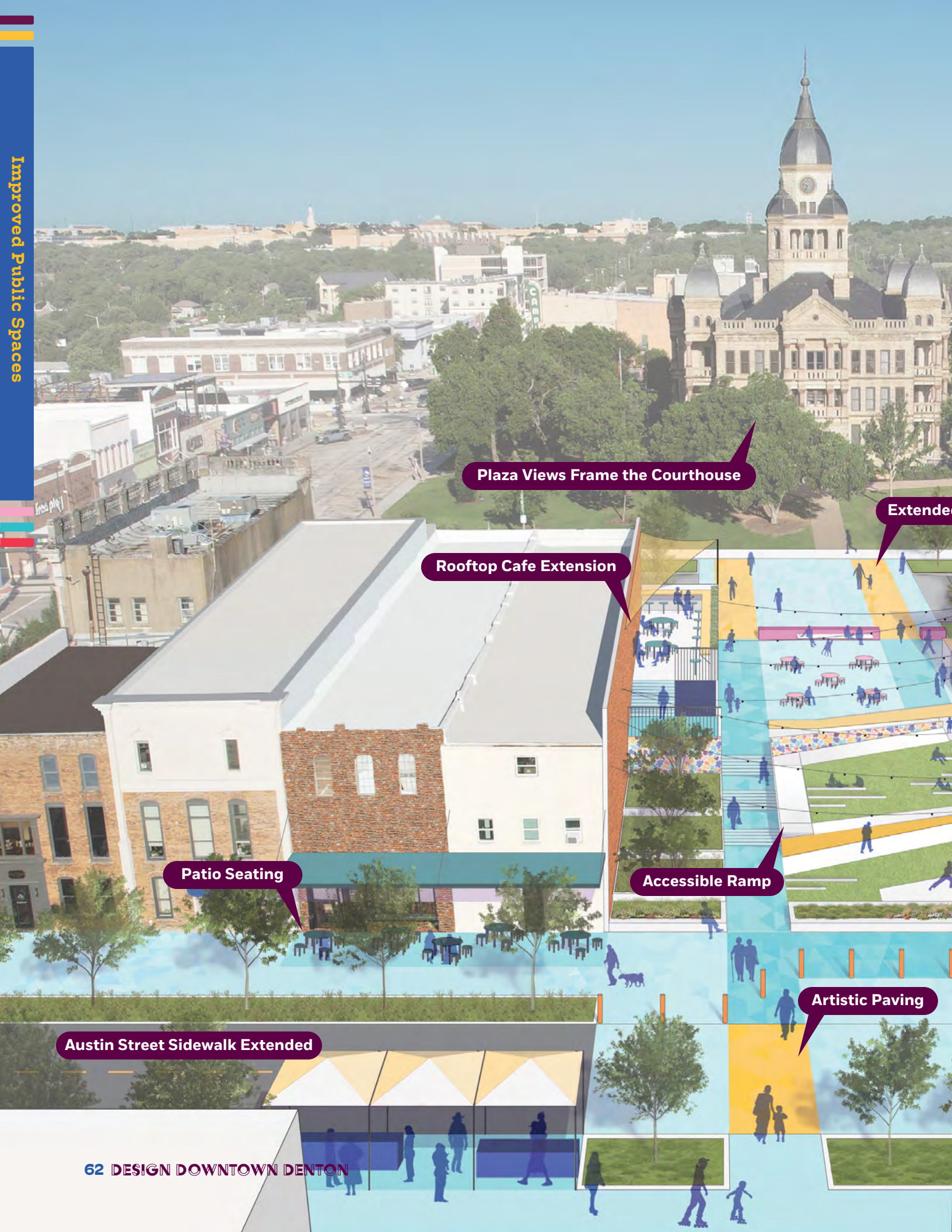


Temporary planters, umbrellas, and cafe seating transform a corner lot in Philadelphia, PA. Source: NACTO

Activate the Lot on the Square:

This lot has been identified as a potential catalyst project for Downtown improvements, integrating Chill Streets and Pedestrian Priority Routes in *Recommendation 1B*. See pages 62 and 63 for the full vision.

- Purchase and develop the parcel as a multi-use public plaza.
- Cater the space to support markets and temporary events that will support economic activity by integrating vendor booths.
- Extend the plaza across N Locust Street, towards the courthouse, through a mid-block, raised crosswalk.
- Integrate a stage and terraced seating for events, working with existing grade changes across the site.
- Use this connection to develop an ADA-compliant pedestrian network east from the Square.
- Create space for outdoor cafe seating and work with local restaurants and/or create opportunity to support food trucks or pop-up cafes.
- Extend design improvements along Austin Street, adding trees, bollards, and flexible event space to ensure cohesive activation.



Plaza Views Frame the Courthouse

Extended

Rooftop Cafe Extension

Patio Seating

Accessible Ramp

Artistic Paving

Austin Street Sidewalk Extended

The Plaza on the Square

The Plaza on the Square is an identified catalyst site to activate vacant lots Downtown (see Lot 1 identified on page 46.) This public space partners with local businesses and the City to offer flexible vendor booths, a performance stage, a gathering lawn, and a rooftop cafe that can be utilized from day to night. The new plaza highlights views of the courthouse and offers safety features for pedestrians such as bollards and raised crossings. Other design features such as an ADA accessible ramp, murals, artistic pavers, and street trees create a fun, unique, and accessible space for the community to enjoy year-round.

and Sidewalk

Flexible Vendor Booths

Murals

Gathering Lawn with Terraced Seating

Performance Space

Welcome Sign

Flexible Vendor Booths

Bollards for Safety

Trees & Plantings

Vehicle Loading Zones



Utilization of Alleys

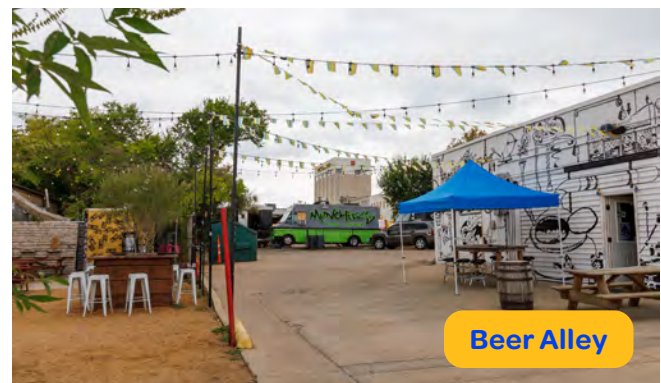
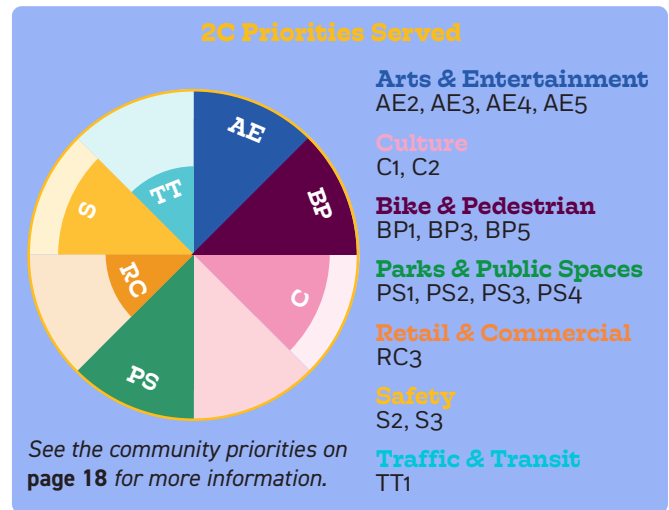
Denton has several alleys that are underused or feel unsafe to walk through. Enhancing these areas offers an opportunity to improve the perception of safety, beautify them and connect them to the Downtown pedestrian priority district. To activate these alleys, improvements should focus on lighting, seating, paving and plantings to enhance comfort and create a sense of place for pedestrians and businesses. Initial, low-cost activations could include hosting events and adding lighting and art to the walls and pavement.

Case for Action

Alleys like Oakland Street and Beer Alley, with their connections to businesses and entertainment, can be transformed to better suit pedestrian mobility, promote safety and provide summer shade. Throughout the plan, efforts are being made to support enhanced walkability and pedestrian facilities. Proposed alley improvements will create inviting corridors, offering convenient access from the Square and Quakertown Park to Hickory Street and off-site parking.

Cleaner, more vibrant streets will improve the perception of safety Downtown. These alleys can become active streets supporting Denton's arts culture and enhancing infrastructure. Enhancements like outdoor cafe seating, courtyards, plazas, overhead structures with shade, and private nooks will create small enjoyable spaces, and boost business visibility, helping them thrive.

Mid-block through-alleys without connections to businesses, such as between Mulberry Street and Hickory Street east of Carroll Boulevard, can be improved through minor lighting, wayfinding and aesthetic improvements to improve safety and better integrate these pathways into the pedestrian network.



Proposed Actions

- Establish partnerships with alley-adjacent property owners on maintenance, events, and closures.
- Develop strategies to integrate operational needs of alleys including service and emergency vehicle access, trash and waste disposal needs, and parking/vehicular access. Typical times for services outlined in the closure plan will also be posted on regulatory signs near alleys.
- When possible, reduce two-way vehicle access to one-way in order to prevent congestion, safety issues and potential damage to alley and mew features when vehicles pass one another. Design alleys to give priority to pedestrians and non-motorized vehicles, thereby ensuring vehicles operate at safe speeds
- Install removable/retractable bollards installed near entrances of alleys to alert vehicles to temporary closures.
- Raise the alleys to curb height to remove distinction between pedestrian and driving space while making it easy for necessary vehicles to operate close to businesses.
- Adding trees and plantings clearly identify alleys as pedestrian spaces by providing a human scale element that provides color and texture to the space. Trees in alley spaces should be placed in areas near seating to provide shade.
- Integrate a variety of outdoor spaces within the alleys including outdoor cafe seating, courtyards, plazas and private nooks. Seating should be accommodated along alley corridors in the form of dispersed benches surrounded by planting or in plaza/courtyard settings. Moveable chairs and tables should be considered where possible, as well as seat-walls in public spaces.



Lighting



Gateway



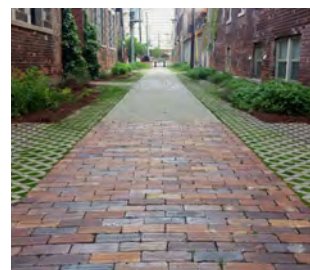
Events



Plantings



Art



Pavers

- Overhead strand lighting can add some attractive lighting to the space complementary to well-spaced pole- or wall-mounted fixtures that illuminate the alley.
- Wayfinding signage should be added at ends of alleys to show distance and direction to destinations at the opposite end integrated with Downtown branding.
- Alleys should be immediately recognizable as pedestrian environments at the entry point with a gateway sign or structure and pavers differentiating it as a primarily pedestrian space.
- Activation Pilots: Install low-cost improvements to lighting and public art, and host events to improve the perception of alleys.

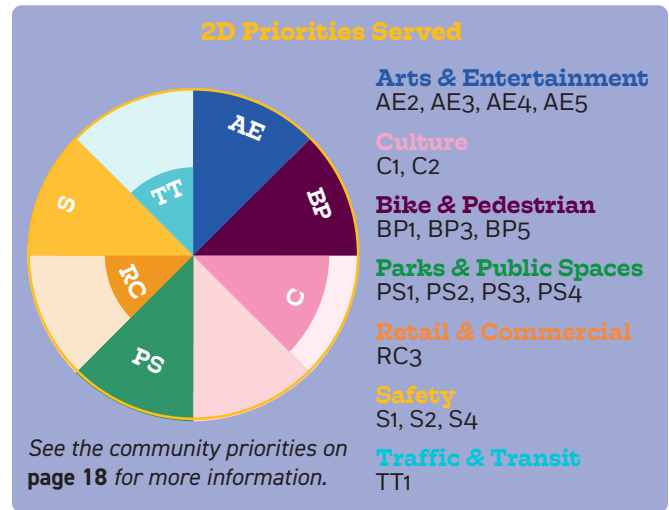


Utilization of Underutilized Streets

Denton Square is an anchor for retail, restaurants, and cultural venues, but some streets surrounding the Square are quiet, primarily used for parking, utilities, and a few businesses. There is an opportunity to transform these spaces, often called mews streets, to be more pedestrian-focused and develop a plan to use these streets for temporary events. Small improvements could be made to improve the pedestrian experience and begin to activate the space. As Downtown Denton grows, a strategic plan should be developed to activate underutilized streets as public spaces.

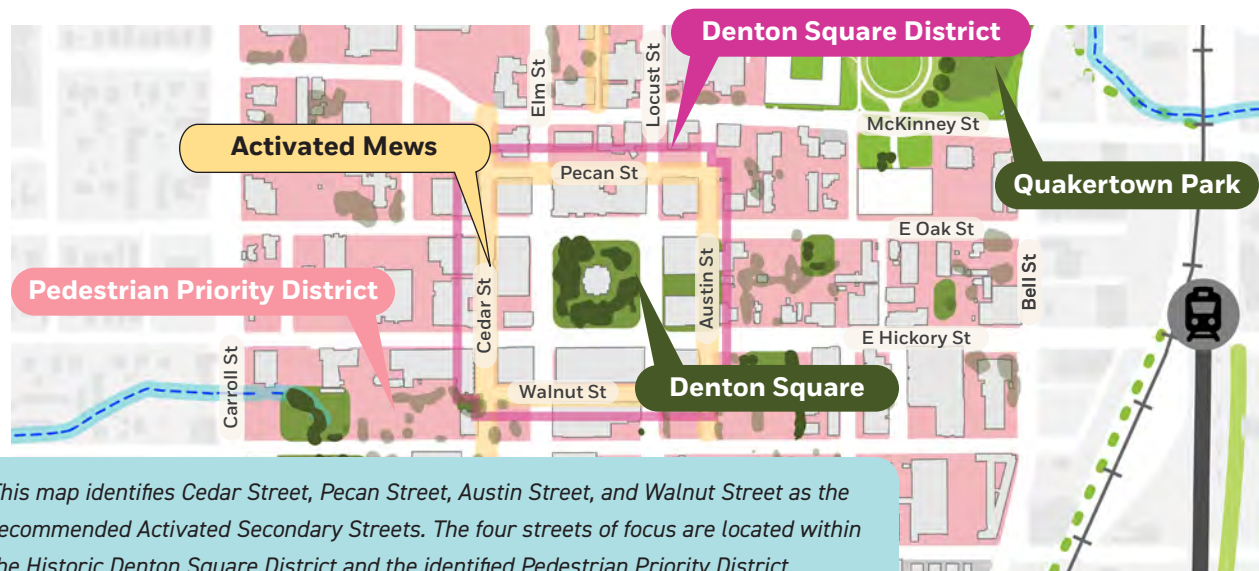
The Case for Action

Streets like Pecan, Austin, Walnut, and Cedar are located near most of the Downtown activity, but have few business entrances and lack the street infrastructure to support pedestrian traffic. There is an opportunity to beautify these mews streets, focusing on the pedestrian network around the Square, and use these streets to hold events. These proposed actions focus on improving the pedestrian experience along mews streets through beautification, climate



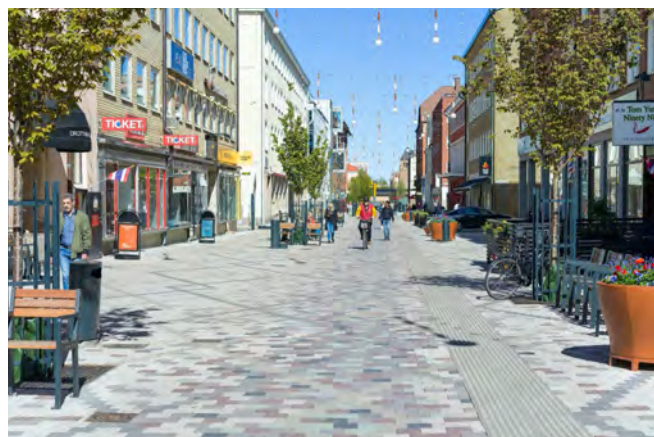
Mews Streets are public right-of-ways that prioritize pedestrian and bicycle use, but accommodate vehicles in small numbers and at low speeds for local access such as loading, services and deliveries, and on-street parking.

experience, and safety, and suggest minor improvements to infrastructure to support these spaces for events. All improvements must follow the Denton Square District Standards and Guidelines.



Proposed Actions

- Consider reducing parking on the mews streets by limiting parking to permit holders, such as local business owners or vendors during temporary events.
- Identify loading areas for business owners, performers, event vendors, and delivery and maintenance vehicles.
- Redesign Cedar Street and Austin Street to support events. Reduce the street width and make traffic one-way on Cedar and Austin.
- Collaborate with Downtown groups to develop a plan for temporary street closures and schedules for programming.
- Consider raising the street and/or adding chicanes, offset curb extensions, to calm traffic speeds. (See Illustration.)
- Add electrical outlets every 50 feet for vendors and performers in areas identified for special events.
- Add retractable/removable bollards across the ends of streets identified for special events to protect visitors.
- Consider purchasing and stocking temporary street elements such as water stations, portable restrooms, seating, and portable shade that can be added to make events more successful.
- Add trees and plantings to provide necessary shade and improve the climate experience.
- Install pedestrian-scale lighting to increase safety. This could be through typical light poles, street-wide string lighting, or through artistic lighting installations.
- Work with the Public Art Committee to integrate public artworks throughout, considering murals, temporary installations, and small details like pavers and street elements throughout the design process.



Paving details can create interest and distinguish space along streets. Source: Karavan, Landezine



Temporary street-wide installations. Source: Claude Cormier Landscape Architecture, Landezine



Chicanes are offset curb extensions that reduce speeds and increase public space along a corridor. Source: NACTO



Create a New Park in Southern Downtown

By dedicating a large central open space as a community park and incorporating a range of activities and amenities, the southern downtown redevelopment area can become a vibrant and inclusive destination. Activating the park's edges, repurposing historic buildings, ensuring safe access, and creating a comfortable microclimate will all contribute to a dynamic and welcoming urban park that serves the community year-round.

The Case for Action

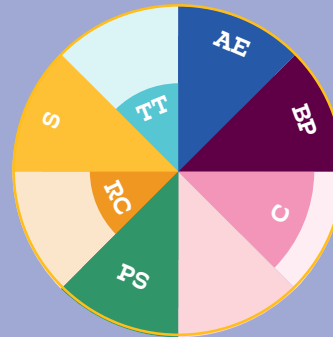
A centralized green space in Southern Downtown can serve as an anchor to catalyze proposed development and economic opportunities. As the central hub of the proposed development area, this park can serve the community, host events, provide recreation and play opportunities, and foster community connections.

Proposed Actions

Dedicate a large central open space in the new southern downtown redevelopment area as a community park that achieves the following:

- Provide a robust range of activities in the park to encourage all day, year round use such as an open lawn space, a hammock grove, a playground, an interactive water feature, a performance stage, an amphitheater (see bullet below), and a cafe.
- Activate the edges of the park by creating a performance stage area and shaded amphitheater to host events and concerts.
- Convert the historic Zoom-Zooms building into a cafe with an outdoor patio.
- Provide food truck hookups on the western side of the park.

2E Priorities Served



Arts & Entertainment
AE2, AE3, AE4

Culture
C1

Parks & Public Spaces
PS1, PS2, PS3, PS4

Retail & Commercial
RC4

Safety
S1

See the community priorities on **page 18** for more information.

- Establish a robust tree canopy over the park to create a comfortable, shady microclimate within the park. Prioritize planting large shade trees that shade 40% of the park surface.
- Provide safe and accessible park entrances and crosswalks by installing signed or signaled crosswalks at surrounding street intersections, and reviewing existing ADA compliance in the area.



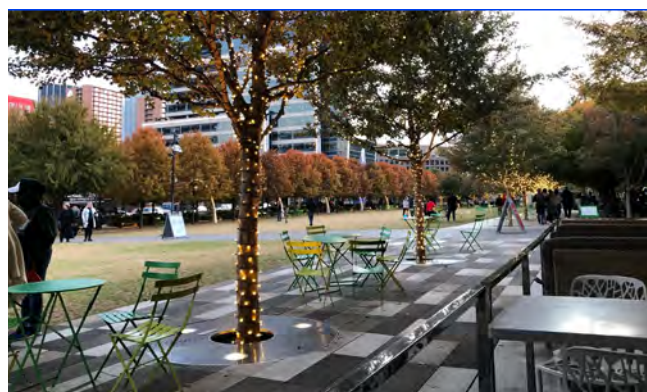
Hammock groves provide fun, comfortable seating options.
Source: James Corner Field Operations



Amphitheater seating carved into the sloping landscape.
Source: Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park



Concerts during the evening activate the park throughout the night. Source: MN State Fair

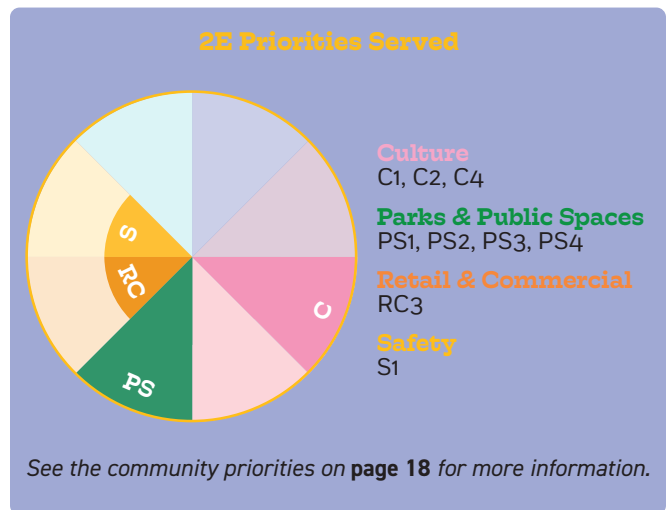


Mature, healthy tree canopies provide spaces to sit and enjoy the park on sunny days. Source: Klyde Warren Park



Improvements to the County's Historic Park

Denton County's Historical Park located on Mulberry Street and Carroll Boulevard is an important historic landmark and open space in downtown featuring multiple structures depicting historic life in and around Denton County. The Historical Park features the Bayless-Selby House museum and the Quakertown House museum, as well as a Welcome Center. Future plans include renovating the Taylor Log Cabin and the Woods House, adding to the park's attractions. The space also currently hosts various community events, including farmers' and community markets, live music, and storytelling sessions.



The Case for Action

Currently, the layout of the Historical Park and how it connects to the downtown can be improved and there are opportunities to collaborate on historical programming, and to assist with preservation policy updates.



The County Historical Park is directly adjacent to Carroll Boulevard, a busy roadway in downtown that acts more as a barrier to the park.

Proposed Actions

Collaborate with the County on Historic Park Improvements:

- Collaborate on wayfinding and messaging for the Historical Park.
- Work with the County on improvements to the Historical Park especially with how they relate to the public realm and surrounding city context.
- Work with the County on the relocation of the community market to keep the market in the Downtown area, potentially being relocated to the new park in Southern Downtown.

Assist with Preservation Policy Updates:

- Ensure that the City's Historic Preservation Officer is involved with future policy updates

Collaborate on Programming and Storytelling:

- Collaborate on rotating exhibits between the Quakertown homes in the Historical Park and the future exhibit space within Quakertown Park. The Denton County Office of History and Culture can aid in the preservation of archival materials, and rotating exhibits can help connect the Quakertown homes in the Historical Park to their original locations within Quakertown Park.
- Collaborate on guided and self-guided walking tours that tell the story of Quakertown. Tours could include a walk from Quakertown Park to the Quakertown homes in the Historical Park.



The Community Market currently uses the space on weekends.



Updates to the Park may require relocating the market.



Prioritize exploring opportunities to collaborate on storytelling.

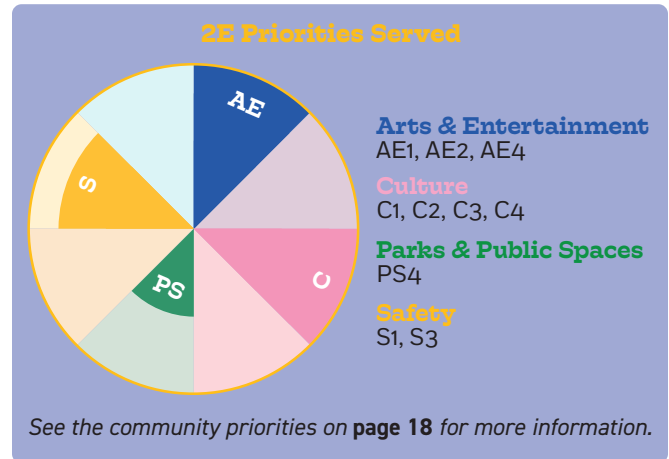


Develop Public Art Plan

Developing a public art plan for Downtown Denton will allow the City to further define the cultural and historical characteristics of the downtown, utilize future development as an economic opportunity, and continue to exhibit the unique local talent with its community and tourists. Denton has made steady and successful strides to prioritize public art over the last two decades. The Public Art Policy, established in 2007, was last revised alongside the creation of the Public Art Committee in 2013. In 2016, a Public Art Master Plan was adopted. These documents have guided Denton's artistic identity and led to programs like the Artscapes Mural Art Initiative, which activated available spaces by adding murals around Denton to help beautify the city and minimize graffiti. A downtown-specific public art plan would allow the city to develop a modern identity, working with the historic character and new public and private development to create a cohesive environment through public art placement, material choices, colors, art form, and more.



Mural on the former SCRAP Denton building at Prairie and Bell by Mick Burson, removed in 2021. Image Source: Mick Burson



The Case for Action

Downtown Denton is a vibrant home of iconic murals, sculptures, and monuments. With the recent designation of the Original Denton District (ODD) as a cultural district by the Texas Commission of the Arts in 2019, there is an opportunity to implement public art strategies alongside public and private development. Downtown, highlight cultural and historic resources, and set the tone for public arts in Denton. The City can use the boundaries of the ODD to strategize public art placement, set goals, and implement policies that work with developers and the Denton Square District. The Public Art Committee, City staff, and other interested stakeholders should work together to review established documents – Public Art Policy (2013), Denton Public Art Master Plan (2016), and Denton Square District Standards and Guidelines (2019) – and consider opportunities for revisions to these documents, or a create a new public art plan specifically for Downtown Denton.

Proposed Actions

Actions for the Public Art Plan:

- Review established documents relating to public art in Denton and develop a new public art plan or revise existing documents.
- Identify a new boundary, like the Original Denton District, to prioritize improvements.
- Specify projects or locations of interest such as neighborhood branding, gateway monuments, or sculpture walks. These could be high-traffic areas or under-utilized corridors.
- Develop a public space material palette for each area as well as for local and national historic districts. This could limit colors for murals within certain blocks, and define functional elements like bollards and wayfinding.
- Implement an annual temporary art installation program in Quakertown Park. This could be developed as its own event or coincide with other Denton festivals.

Increase Diversity, and Strengthen Community Impact and Education:

- The Public Art Committee could set specific goals to increase diversity like holding seats for student representation, local artists, and art educators and providing an honorarium.
- The City could develop a statement committing to equity in the arts - highlighting the importance of creative expression and addressing inequities within the Denton and regional arts communities.
- Set goals to diversify artists represented in the Denton community and develop a list of pre-qualified artists.
- Expand upon local partnerships to support underrepresented communities.
- Continue to work with the Greater Denton Arts Council to work with emerging artists.



Sculptures in the Carroll Boulevard Art Trail. Image Source: Al Key, Denton Record-Chronicle



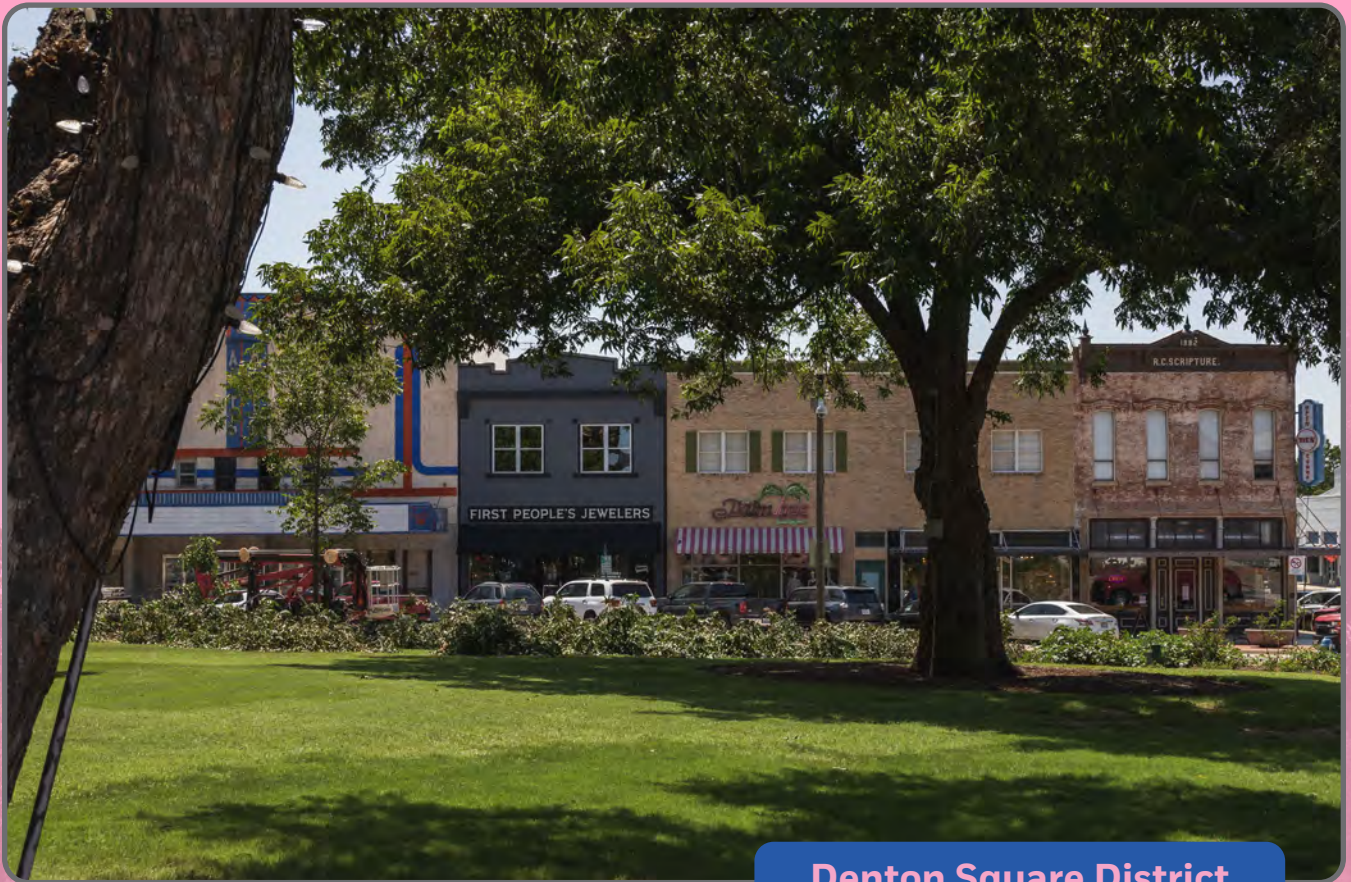
Andy's Bar Mural by Dan Black. Image Source: Independent Venue Week

Other Actions:

- Establish a Commitment to the Environment or Sustainability clause that would define preferred materials for permanent work and prioritize projects that use recycled or recycle-able materials.
- Develop an inspirational Public Arts Ideas List that contains examples of sculptures, benches, gateways, lighting, paving details, planters, and more.
- The city could implement a Percent-for-Art program or a Public-Art-in-Private-Development policy, which would require a percentage of the overall project budget, often 1%, to go towards public art.

3

Target Development to Build on Downtown's Character and Assets



Denton Square District

3 Target Development to Build on Downtown's Character and Assets

Why is this important?

Capitalizing on successful floodplain mitigation efforts and the strong market, Denton has opportunities for redevelopment. With an aim to accommodate the city's growth, these projects seek to bolster the area's vibrancy while preserving its historic character through targeted infill, civic investments, and new open spaces. Encouraging downtown living through the addition of residential units further fosters community growth and economic vitality, complemented by affordability actions. Finally, strengthening historic preservation efforts and updating design guidelines to ensure quality development.

What are we attempting to accomplish?

Redevelopment



Develop and expand the Southern Downtown area.

Image Source: Catalyst Group

New Residents



Encourage downtown living to accommodate Denton's forecasted growth.

Image Source: Catalyst Group

High Quality Development



Strengthening guidelines to preserve Denton's unique character.

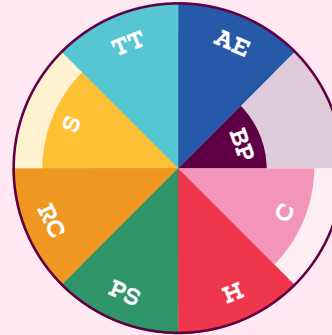
Image Source: dallasfarmersmarket.org

3A

Develop Southern Downtown

The projects aimed at mitigating the floodplain south of the Square have been successful, removing approximately 24 acres from the flood zone. This achievement opens up new opportunities for development that were previously impractical. These newly available areas can now host private redevelopment as well as public improvements. Southern Downtown also presents an opportunity to expand the Downtown, supporting Denton's present and future growth. Southern Downtown can accommodate significant development that complements the historic Square.

3A Priorities Served



See the community priorities on page 18 for more information.

Arts & Entertainment
AE3, AE4, AE5

Bike & Pedestrian
BP1

Culture
C2, C4

Housing
H1, H2

Parks & Public Spaces
PS1, PS2, PS3, PS5

Retail & Commercial
RC2, RC4, RC5

Safety
S2, S3

Traffic & Transit
TT1, TT2, TT3



Development precedent imagery from around north Texas.
Image source: Catalyst Group

The Case for Action

An in-depth analysis of the financial conditions throughout Downtown Denton was conducted, examining land values, ownership complexity, tax base trends, and infrastructure. This analysis aimed to identify areas where development might be most feasible. The findings revealed that, largely due to the complexity of ownership and existing infrastructure challenges, much of Downtown will require partnerships to advance development. These partnerships could focus on projects such as public realm or utility improvements, as well as other types of public investments like new parks, which can stimulate further development.

Additionally, an analysis of the market for new development was conducted, providing a ten-year forecast. This forecast indicated the market viability for 358,000 additional square feet of retail space, with over 50% dedicated to food and beverage, and the capacity to absorb nearly 50,000 square feet of office space. The approximately 24 acres of newly developable land south of the square offer a prime opportunity for this type of development, all while preserving the historic character of the square.



Proposed Actions

Encourage the redevelopment of Southern Downtown with the following intended results:

- 1. Mixed-Use Redevelopment:** Two-block infill combining residential, restaurant, and small commercial space.
- 2. Targeted Infill:** Small retail and restaurant spaces to complement existing development and streetscape.
- 3. Civic Presence:** Place new office/residential mixed-use buildings and a performing arts facility (or alternate site for City Hall or County offices) along with a public parking structure on each end of the park for a strong civic presence.
- 4. New Open Space:** Create a new open space in Southern Downtown that complements the historic Square. Maintain and create retail pavilion buildings, provide gathering and event spaces, including a new stage, and serve as a central anchor feature for the southern Downtown district.
- 5. Townhomes:** Targeted infill of for-sale townhomes on underutilized land within existing development.
- 6. Loft-Office Development:** Mixed-use loft-office development with maker spaces at ground level.

3B

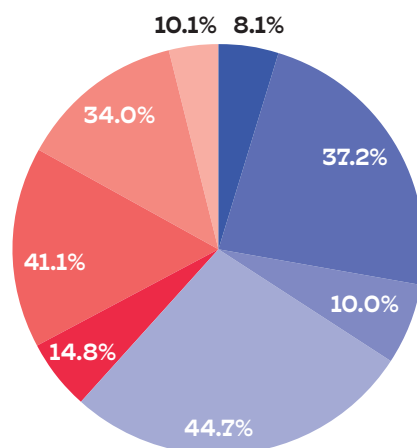
Encourage Downtown Living

Adding residential units and additional housing options within the heart of the city will continue to grow Downtown's role as a thriving community where people live, work, and play. Setting a specific housing goal will encourage a diverse mix of residents, foster a lively street life and support local businesses. Moreover, it will contribute to the revitalization of Downtown, breathing new life into historic buildings and encouraging new construction. Ultimately, the addition of residential units Downtown will enhance the overall quality of life for residents while bolstering the economic and cultural vitality of the city as a whole.

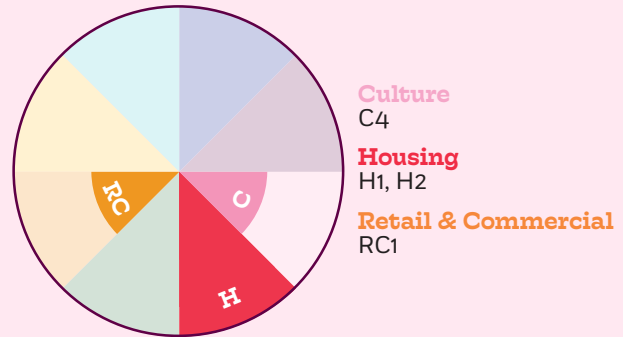
The Case for Action

Denton has grown quickly throughout its existence, and the next decade will be no different. An analysis of the city's forecasted growth revealed a potential gain of more than 21,000 additional residents, including a significant demand for infill development.

In addition to potential new residents, research has also identified a need for more housing that is affordable. In Downtown and the adjacent areas, over 40% of renters are spending more than 30% of their income on housing.



3B Priorities Served



See the community priorities on **page 18** for more information.

Proposed Actions

- Set a goal of encouraging an additional 1,500 units constructed Downtown within the next ten years. Assuming an average of 1.8 people per unit (The average household size in the United States is currently 2.6 people per household, but Downtown's nationally average between 1.2 and 1.9.), these 1500 units would enable Downtown to house approximately 2,700 new residents.
- Set a further goal of 500 of those units being affordable to assist the city in achieving its housing goals.

Downtown Housing Need: Anticipated 10 year market forecast

- Rental - Market/Affordable
- Rental - Up Market
- Rental - Luxury Market
- Rental - Senior and Assisted Living
- Ownership - First Time Buyers
- Ownership - Move Up / Family Buyers
- Ownership - Empty Nest / Move Down Buyers
- Ownership - Senior Flats

Source: Catalyst, ESRI, NCTGOG

Zoning and Regulatory Actions:

- Ensure the types of units produced should represent a variety of housing types that meet diverse housing needs.
- The majority of the Downtown area is currently zoned R3, R7, or Mixed Use Districts. All of these districts allow for townhouse or duplex development, as well as Accessory Dwelling Units. The City should allow tri- and fourplexes within all Downtown districts.
- The City should take actions that will encourage additional development of Accessory Dwelling Units within Downtown, including pre-approving standard ADU plans, waiving fees, or creating grant opportunities.
- In combination with *Recommendation 3A*, larger scale, mixed use development should be targeted for southern Downtown.
- Opportunities for residential conversion of existing buildings, especially historic buildings, should be explored.
- Parking requirements for multi-family housing should be reduced.
- Provisions for shared parking between multiple developments strengthened by raising the percentage of parking that can be provided above 50% when other tools, such as 'unbundled' parking or shared micromobility are also in use.
- The City should work with residential developers to build shared public-private parking garages.

Affordability Actions:

- The City should consider density and height bonuses for the provision of affordable housing.
- The City should encourage the utilization of Affordable Housing Tax Credits.
- The City should encourage "unbundling" of parking in larger apartment buildings, while also reducing parking requirements, allowing residents to save money on their units if they choose not to utilize a parking spot.
- The City, in collaboration with the "Music Friendly Board" and local organizations such as DMAC, should seek opportunities for affordable "Culture Bearer" housing and live/work spaces for artists and musicians. This could be achieved through partnership with national organizations such as Artspace.



Townhouses are desirable housing types for first time homeowners and empty-nesters due to the ease of upkeep, and are good transitions between denser districts and historic neighborhoods. Image source: AI Generated



Strengthen Historic Preservation Opportunities

Preserving historic resources is crucial for sustainability, providing affordable housing, supporting small local businesses, and retaining the character that makes Denton unique. By continuing to strengthen and expand existing historic preservation tools, the City of Denton can thoughtfully adapt and develop the downtown area to meet current and future needs while retaining the historic character that the community connects with and loves.

The Case for Action

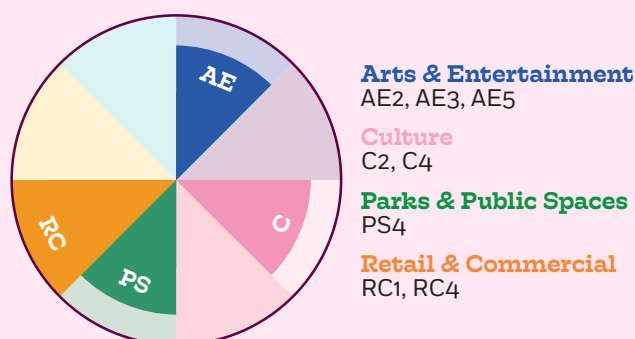
The City of Denton has a history of successful preservation efforts and has a robust foundation of existing historic preservation tools. However, due to the ongoing growth of Denton, historic structures downtown are facing increasing development pressure. Preservation provides development opportunities that make economic sense and protect community identity. The proposed actions support and strengthen the 2019 Denton Historic Preservation Plan.

Proposed Actions

Strengthen Local Grants and Incentives:

- Focus on education and advocacy to increase use of the existing local property tax exemption programs.
- Conduct an audit of the existing programs to examine what is working or what might need adjustment.
- Create a local historic district tax exemption program and explore additional local district designation opportunities to increase the number of properties eligible for tax exemption without individual designation.
- Offer additional incentives or create a grant program for legacy businesses to help preserve cultural institutions. Incentives and/or a grant program could include general relief funds, rent stabilization, and business assistance (see *Recommendation 4C Expand Programs to Support Small Businesses*). The cities of Austin and San Francisco both have legacy business programs with examples of these incentives.
- Offer additional incentives, such as fee reductions for Building Permits and Consumer Health Permits for owners and tenants of eligible historic properties. This could further incentivize preservation and adaptive reuse as well as support business activity in the historic downtown area.
- Offer incentives for the retention of historic-age buildings throughout the downtown area or the city, regardless of whether they are designated, to prevent wholesale demolition of historic resources as development pressure continues. The Preservation Bonus and related Sustainability Bonus in the City of Austin's current HOME initiative are strong examples of such an incentive.
- As recommended in the 2019 Historic Preservation Plan, contract with a local architecture firm to offer free or reduced fee

3C Priorities Served



See the community priorities on **page 18** for more information.

facade and storefront improvement design assistance for owners of eligible historic properties. This could bolster the existing facade improvement grant program and help ensure that work aligns with historic preservation best practices and local design guidelines.

Promote Historic Tax Credits (See table below)

- Focus on education and advocacy to increase interest in Historic Tax Credits (HTCs).
- Explore and promote additional state and national designation opportunities to increase the number of properties eligible for HTCs as identified in the 2019 Historic Preservation Plan.

Create Conservation Districts:

- Conservation Districts can be used to recognize and preserve areas that contain distinctive historical, architectural, cultural, or aesthetic significance but that might lack sufficient integrity to qualify as a historic district. The City of Denton has included eligibility provisions for historic resources within historic conservation districts in its tax exemption program for historically significant sites, but the City does not yet have designated conservation districts.
- Create conservation districts for the Downtown areas identified in Figure 7 in the 2019 Historic Preservation Plan.

- Explore additional opportunities for conservation districts beyond those identified in 2019.

Enact View Protections for the Denton County Courthouse and Morrison's Corn-Kits Sign

- Study public view protection policies for the most significant lines of sight for the Denton County Courthouse and the Morrison's Corn-Kits sign as recommended in the 2019 Historic Preservation Plan.

Update & Strengthen Design Guidelines:

- Conduct an audit to examine what is working or what might need adjustment in the Denton Square District overly.
- As new local historic districts and conservation districts are created, develop a single design guideline document with tailored chapters for each district for ease of use.
- Update mural guidelines to ensure alignment with preservation best practices without stifling creativity.
- Enact accumulative penalty guidelines, such as stop work order fines, for property owners that are not in compliance with the design guidelines.
- Consider adoption of a vacant building policy that creates maintenance requirements and fines building owners who do not maintain or secure their vacant building.

Historic Tax Credits							
	Applies to	Value	Chill Street	Eligible Uses	Req'd Designation	Investment Threshold	Time Limit
Texas	Franchise OR Insurance Premium Tax	25% QREs	Yes	Income producing or non-profit	NR, RTHL, SAL	\$5,000	None
Federal	Income Tax	20% GREs	No	Income Producing	NR	= to value of building	2 or 5 years

NR = National Register of Historic Places; RTHL = Recorded Texas Historic Landmark; SAL = State Antiquities Landmark

3D

Public Realm Design Guidelines and Zoning Recommendations

Developing design guidelines for downtown Denton is essential for several reasons. It ensures a pedestrian-friendly environment that encourages walkability and accessibility, promoting a vibrant and active streetscape. The guidelines serve as a framework for creating spaces that cater to the diverse needs of the community, fostering inclusiveness and a sense of belonging. Additionally, design guidelines help to direct development towards public realm projects that serve the public good, such as installing street trees, wide sidewalks, lighting, and bike racks, enhancing the overall quality of life in Downtown Denton.

The Case for Action

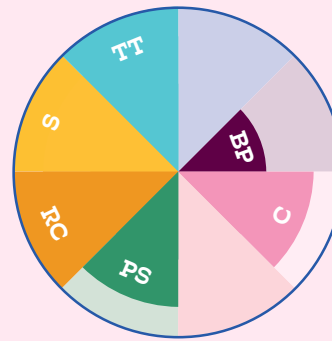
Downtown Denton's Denton Square District has established guidelines to preserve its unique character. However, as Downtown Denton continues to evolve and grow, there is a recognized need for these guidelines to extend beyond the historic square to encompass other parts of downtown. One crucial aspect that these expanded guidelines should address is the incorporation of "Chill Streets" to combat the heat that characterizes much of the year in North Texas.

Proposed Actions

Strengthen and Expand Downtown Denton's Public Realm Design Guidelines:

- Utilize downtown study area map (p. 4) to develop boundaries for the new design guidelines.
- Develop process for updating the landscape requirements, design criteria manual, and the Denton Square District standards and

3D Priorities Served



Bike & Pedestrian
BP1

Culture
C1, C2

Parks & Public Spaces
PS2, PS3

Retail & Commercial
RC1, RC2, RC4, RC5

Safety
S1, S2, S3, S4

Traffic & Transit
TT1, TT2, TT3

See the community priorities on [page 18](#) for more information.

guidelines to reflect the addition of new guidelines OR create an entirely new design guidelines document for Downtown Denton.

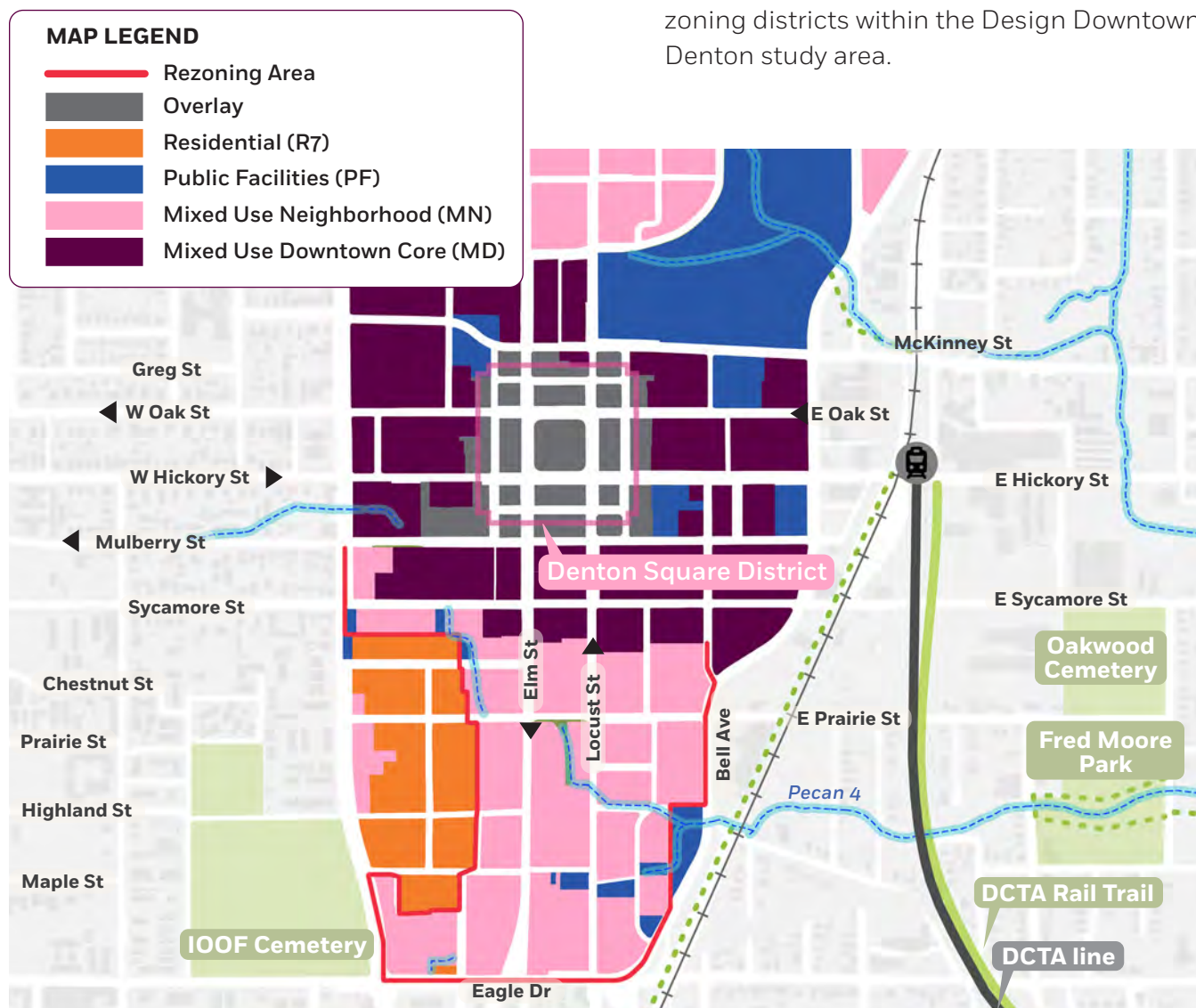
- Consider bringing back a revised version of the Streatery/Parklet program which allows businesses to turn parking spaces in front of their business into an eating or park area.

Reinforce developer commitment to public realm improvements:

- Create simple and streamlined process for ROW use permitting to simplify development process.
- Create or expand developer incentive program for installing and enhancing public realm improvements.
- Develop use and maintenance agreement for private property establishing requirements for utilizing public ROW, including stewardship of trees and vegetation.

Update Downtown's Zoning:

- Rezone SC districts along Carroll Boulevard and University Drive to MN.
- Examine rezoning the MN parcels south of the square to MD to stimulate development south of Downtown. MD zoning allows higher development and has less required parking, which corresponds with the plan's goals of encouraging walkable places and shared parking. However, as both Mixed-Use Districts have identical standards for "Building Height in Transition Areas," building height restrictions on parcels adjacent to parcels zoned R7 will not be impacted by this change.
- Examine rezoning the MN parcels along Carroll Boulevard to MD in coordination with the implementation of recommendation 1A.
- Consider exceptions to the City's short-term rental policies Downtown, until a hotel is developed.
- Disallow surface parking as an allowable use within the Downtown area.
- Reduce parking requirements for all uses within the MD zoning district and encourage shared parking arrangements, or create a fee-in-lieu for parking that can be spent on expanding public garages.
- Allow up to fourplexes in all residential zoning districts within the Design Downtown Denton study area.



Denton's current zoning map, with the area proposed to be examined for rezoning as MD outlined.

Source: Denton Development Services GIS Hub, <https://development-services-dentontxgis.hub.arcgis.com/>

Design Guidelines Table			
Site Element	Outside Denton Square District	In Denton Square District	Chill Street
Building Entrances	Where possible building primary entrance must face the street or other public spaces	Building primary entrance must face the street or other public spaces*, prioritize on the Square	Where possible building primary entrance must face the street or other public spaces
Pedestrian Sidewalk	5' minimum**, shall comply with the most recently adopted ADA, PROWAG, and FHWA standards	8' minimum, shall comply with the most recently adopted ADA, PROWAG, and FHWA standards	8' minimum, shall comply with the most recently adopted ADA, PROWAG, and FHWA standards
Furniture Zone Depth	4' minimum	4' minimum	4' minimum
Tree Planting Bed (Configuration may vary)	6' minimum, use Silva Cells or structural soil systems if installed sub-grade below paving	8' minimum, use Silva Cells or structural soil systems if installed sub-grade below paving	8' minimum, use Silva Cells or structural soil systems if installed sub-grade below paving
Large Tree Spacing (Deep Shade/ Broadleaf) - Elms - Maples - Honey Locust - Ginkgo (male)	30' minimum - 40' maximum on center between trees	30' minimum - 40' maximum on center between trees	30' maximum on center between trees, prioritize broadleaf trees, if space allows prioritize double row, alternate planting

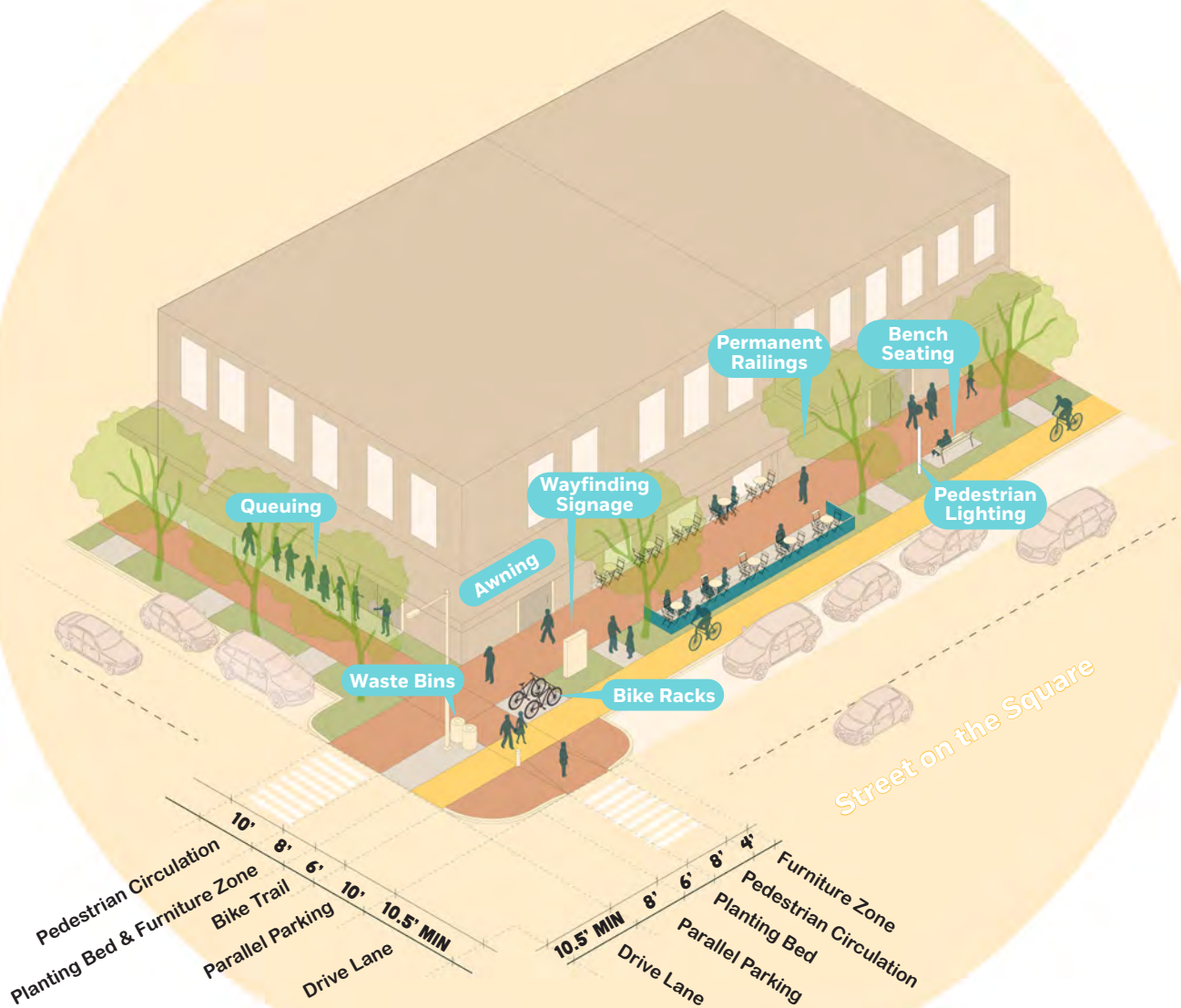
ADA = Americans with Disabilities Act, PROWAG = Proposed Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines,
 FHWA = Federal Highway Administration

Design Guidelines Table			
Site Element	Outside Denton Square District	In Denton Square District	Chill Street
Medium Tree Spacing (Dappled Shade/ Narrowleaf) • Desert Willow • Buckeye • Redbud • Golden-ball Lead-tree • Myrtles	15' minimum on center, depending on species	15' minimum on center, depending on species	15' maximum on center, depending on species, prioritize planting medium/small trees with perennial vegetation planted under
Perennial Planting Bed	6' minimum width	6' minimum width	8' minimum width, prioritize perennial vegetation areas with medium/small trees
Green Stormwater Infrastructure (Rain Garden)	Sized and graded for the micro watershed the feature treats	Sized and graded for the micro watershed the feature treats	Sized and graded for the micro watershed the feature treats, prioritize these features
Dark Sky Compliant Pedestrian Lighting (12/14' high)	Evenly spaced along block taking into account tree canopy, the City and developers should coordinate and consolidate utilities	Evenly spaced along block taking into account tree canopy, the City and developers should coordinate and consolidate utilities	Evenly spaced along block taking into account tree canopy, the City and developers should coordinate and consolidate utilities
Dark Sky Compliant Bollard Lighting (4' high)	Evenly spaced along block, coordinate and consolidate utilities	Evenly spaced along block, coordinate and consolidate utilities, prioritize bollard lighting in parks and plaza spaces	Evenly spaced along block, coordinate and consolidate utilities

Dark Sky Compliance: Lighting that is certified dark sky compliant restricts the amount of upward-directed light, minimizes glare, reduces light trespass, and reduces light pollution.

Location Reference:

Daytime Denton Square District and Chill Street with a 90 foot ROW on the Square and 80 foot ROW.



Location Reference:

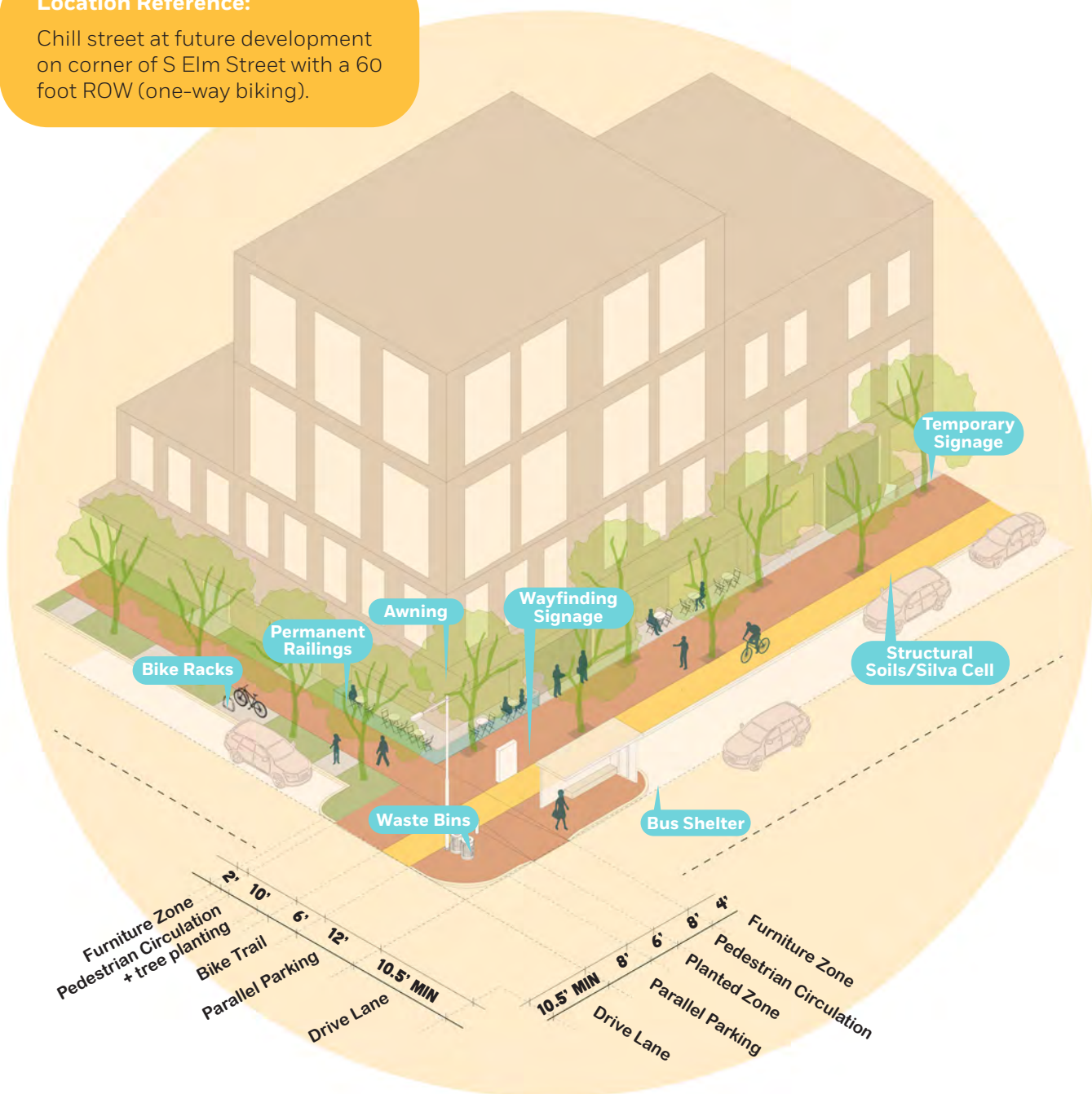
Nighttime Denton Square District and Chill Street with a 90 foot ROW on the Square and 80 foot ROW.



Design Guidelines Table			
Site Element	Outside Denton Square District	In Denton Square District	Chill Street
Bench/Table Seating	4/block face	4/block face, sited to match the character of the historic district	4/block face, sited in the deepest shade
Bike Racks	8 spots/block face or larger facilities (refer to the 2023 Denton Design Criteria Manual for location standards)	8 spots/block face or larger facilities (refer to the 2023 Denton Design Criteria Manual for location standards)	8 spots/block face or larger facilities, site in the shade where possible (refer to the 2023 Denton Design Criteria Manual for location standards)
Waste Bins	2/block face	3/block face, prioritize branded trash bins	2/block face
Hardscape	Utilize ADA surfaces	Utilize ADA surfaces, prioritize pavers that contribute to the historic character such as brick	Utilize ADA surfaces, prioritize light colored materials where possible
Wayfinding/ Signage/Map	Sited at busy intersections or important public institutions and civic spaces	1-2/block face, prioritize branded features	Sited at busy intersections or important public institutions and civic spaces, directs people to parks, cooling stations, water fountains, and water features
Murals	Murals size varies depending on location	On facades fronting on the Square, murals may not cover more than 25% of the total facade, a mural on a separate panel must be mounted so as to prevent damage to the wall behind the panel*	Prioritize murals that depict chill street trees or nature motifs

Location Reference:

Chill street at future development on corner of S Elm Street with a 60 foot ROW (one-way biking).



Design Guidelines Table			
Site Element	Outside Denton Square District	In Denton Square District	Chill Street
Outdoor Events	Varies	Provide accessible electrical outlets on street corners to support events	Varies
Utilities	Underground/overhead utilities consolidation, install grease traps internally for new buildings	Underground/overhead utilities consolidation, install grease traps internally for new buildings	Underground/overhead utilities consolidation, insure utilities do not conflict with tree canopy, install grease traps internally for new buildings
Shade Structure (see below) • Awnings • Canopies • Sails & Other Structures	Placed to prioritize weather protection for pedestrians	Placed to prioritize weather protection for pedestrians, see below guidelines for shade structures	Placed to prioritize weather protection for pedestrians, prioritized in areas where street trees are not feasible

References:

*2019, THE DENTON SQUARE DISTRICT: Standards and Guidelines

**2023, Denton Design Criteria Manual

Shade Structures:

- Awning, canopies, balconies and other covered-projected types of building features must comply with the following:
 - Must be consistent in height with similar covered-projected features on adjacent or adjoining buildings.
 - Must be mounted in locations that do not obscure ornamental features over storefronts, such as rooflines, arches, and banding.
 - Must not exceed the width of the sidewalk.
 - May encroach partially into the public right-of-way, but require completion and approval of a City of Denton Right-of-Way Use permit/application.
- Must not be torn, frayed, ripped, faded, or stained, soiled or dirty. When not specifically addressed by this ordinance, provisions of the City of Denton property maintenance code shall apply.
- Must not have convex or dome frames.
- Colors of such building features must enhance and complement the building to which they are attached, rather than overwhelm the building scheme. Colors must not call more attention to the projected-covered building feature than the building.
- The frame structure of such building features must be finished to match the metal storefront system color or the fabric color of the associated projected-covered type of building feature.
- Historic existing awning hardware should be repurposed where possible.

Public Right-of-Way Encroachment Element	Outside Denton Square District	In Denton Square District/ Chill Street
Permanent railings for dining areas	Unobstructed pedestrian walking is maintained (5' min), must not exceed a maximum 4' from ground level*	Unobstructed pedestrian walking is maintained (8' min), must not exceed a maximum 4' from ground level*
Temporary Seating and Tables	Unobstructed pedestrian walking is maintained (5' min)	Unobstructed pedestrian walking is maintained (5-6' min)
Temporary Signage	Unobstructed pedestrian walking is maintained (5' min)	Unobstructed pedestrian walking is maintained (5-6' min)
Temporary Sales Tables & Racks	Unobstructed pedestrian walking is maintained (5' min)	Unobstructed pedestrian walking is maintained (5-6' min)
Temporary Planter or Divider	Unobstructed pedestrian walking is maintained (5' min)	Unobstructed pedestrian walking is maintained (5-6' min)
Temporary Decorations	Temporary holiday lighting is permitted, must be removed and not harm trees or vegetation	Temporary holiday lighting is permitted, must be removed and not harm trees or vegetation
Temporary Load Zones	Site loading zones as close to the talent entrance as possible, coordinate with City Streets department to get a loading zone parking spot	Site loading zones as close to the talent entrance as possible, coordinate with City Streets department to get a loading zone parking spot
Queuing for Ticket Purchases	4' from building face, Unobstructed pedestrian walking is maintained (5' min)	4' from building face, Unobstructed pedestrian walking is maintained (8' min)

References:

*2019, THE DENTON SQUARE DISTRICT: Standards and Guidelines

**2023, Denton Design Criteria Manual

3E

Explore Opportunities for Transformative Projects

Design Downtown Denton seeks to emphasize Downtown Denton's existing strengths as a strategy for economic development and quality of life. Building on the recommendations for new development (3A and 3B) and the improvement of public spaces discussed in Chapter 2, there are a number of buildings or program types that would enhance Downtown's strengths. The programming recommended here seeks to build on Downtown's walkability, the community's entrepreneurship, and to celebrate Denton's relationship with music and the arts.

The Case for Action

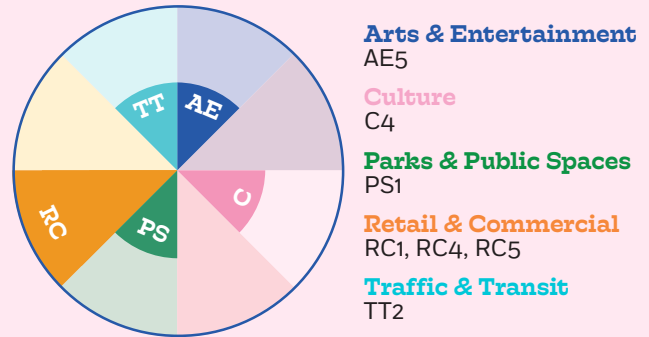
Through the Design Downtown Denton process, community members have expressed a desire for several new amenities. For private investors, these are uses that have been identified as desirable and would be supported by the community.

Proposed Actions

Public or Shared Parking

There is a perception that parking in Downtown Denton is limited. However, the findings of the 2024 Downtown Denton Parking Study suggest that the greater issue may be with the management and visibility of parking. As Downtown continues to develop, shared and public parking will become an even more important component of the overall development strategy. Parking, including new public or public-private parking garages, should be located and managed so that people are encouraged to park on the edges of Downtown, allowing the Downtown core to emphasize its historic walkability. Parking should be managed

3E Priorities Served



See the community priorities on **page 18** for more information.

to encourage off-street parking by allowing free parking in garages and paid parking on the street. New developments, such as develop in southern Downtown and around Quakertown Park should be encouraged/incentivized to build shared parking garages instead of lot parking. Amend the DDC to significantly increase the percentage of required parking that can be provided through shared parking, and streamline the approval process.

Public Market

Downtown Denton currently has numerous opportunities for smaller vendors to have temporary space, including a wide variety of events and festivals. The city is recommended to pursue creation of permanent locations for vendors that would allow the incubation of new business ideas that could grow and relocate into brick-and-mortar establishments. Special programs to support minority- and women-owned businesses could also be facilitated.

Hotel

There is a strong desire for at least one Downtown hotel, whether a major hotel brand or independent boutique. This would also create an opportunity to partner with the University of North Texas' hospitality program.

Music and Art Venues

In coordination with *recommendation 4A*, developing a larger music venue (1,000-2,500 attendees) would allow Denton to compete for larger national acts.

Case Studies: Desired Downtown Amenities



In this example in Fargo, ND, parking is well signed and cost is managed to encourage shoppers to park off street. Image Source: Mend Collaborative



The Palace Theater in St. Paul, MN is a 2500 person venue that attracts national touring acts. Image Source: Mend Collaborative



The Dallas Farmer's Market includes both permanent and temporary vendor space. Image Source: dallasfarmersmarket.org



The Cantilever Hotel and Distillery in Ranier, MN has a unique program. A 20 room hotel is anchored by a distillery and restaurant. Several wellness based companies also rent space. Source: Mend Collaborative

4 Promote Nightlife, Music, Events, History, and Art



Dan's Silver Leaf

4 Promote Nightlife, Music, Events, History, and Art

Why is this important?

Implementing policy and regulations that bolster music and nightlife in Downtown Denton is vital for enriching its vibrancy and stimulating economic development. By enacting supportive regulations, the City can cultivate a thriving entertainment ecosystem, attracting talent, investment, and visitors while nurturing a distinct sense of place.

Music and nightlife are integral to Downtown Denton's identity, drawing visitors, supporting local businesses, and fostering community cohesion. Live music venues, bars, and events contribute to the area's cultural richness, making it an inviting destination for residents and tourists.

What are we attempting to accomplish?

Cultural Vibrancy



Foster live music, festivals, and the arts, enriching the area's identity and sense of place.

Image Source: Mend Collaborative

Small Business Support



Foster entrepreneurship and economic resilience.

Image Source: Mend Collaborative

Economic Development



Utilize economic development tools to ensure successful implementation.

Image Source: Mend Collaborative

4A

Utilize Policy and Regulations to Support Music and Nightlife

Leveraging policy to advance music and nightlife is crucial for enhancing Downtown Denton's vibrancy and economic growth. By implementing supportive regulations the city can foster a thriving entertainment ecosystem. Strategic policies not only attract talent and investment but also cultivate a unique sense of place, making Downtown Denton a dynamic destination renowned for its music and nightlife scene.

The Case for Action

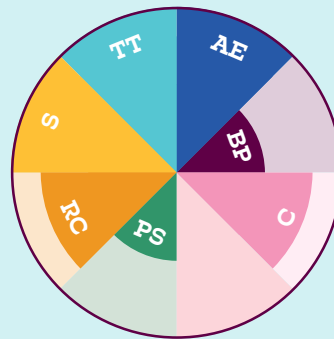
Music and nightlife are vital to Downtown Denton's vibrancy and identity. They attract visitors, support local businesses, and foster a sense of community. Live music venues, bars, and events contribute to the area's cultural richness, making Downtown Denton an inviting destination for residents and tourists alike. At the same time, Denton's position within the Metroplex means that many musicians and artists move to other areas in region after experiencing success. Recommendations that strengthen Denton's music-related infrastructure, support local musicians and businesses, foster cultural diversity, and help to keep musical talent in Denton can be a key economic development strategy for Downtown.

Proposed Actions

Join Sound Music Cities

The city should join Sound Music Cities and take advantage of their resources. Sound Music Cities works to support and promote vibrant music ecosystems in cities worldwide. Sound Music Cities also provides resources and guidance to cities aiming to develop and sustain thriving music scenes, helping them recognize the economic, social, and cultural benefits of a robust music industry.

4A Priorities Served



See the community priorities on page 18 for more information.

Hire a "Nightlife Mayor"

In the long term, once additional events and venues are added to Downtown hire a "Nightlife Mayor" who would be tasked with supporting nightlife in the City through the proposed Public Improvement District (*Recommendation 4G*). This new role would serve as a support to businesses that are open after the hours, when City offices are typically closed.

Support Historic Music Venues

In partnership with the Music Friendly Denton Task Force, the city should update policies relating to issues such as code compliance and fire systems to support historic music venues, especially as Downtown's residential population grows. An "Agent of Change" policy would protect historic venues from noise complaints from new residential neighbors.

Support the addition of additional music venues

In coordination with *Recommendations 3E and 4B (Explore Opportunities for Transformative Projects and Develop a Performing Arts Center)* and *Recommendations 2A and 2E (the Quakertown Park and Southern Downtown Park*

concepts) work to establish opportunities for more music venues in Denton, including a venue that accommodates 1000-2500 people, which is a larger venue than currently exists, and one or more new outdoor stages that would allow Denton to compete with other areas of the Metroplex in attracting larger acts.

Ensure Public Realm Improvements and Streetspace Management benefits musical performance

In coordination with public realm *Recommendations 1B, 2B, 2C and 2D*, redesign some streets to support limited street

closures for outdoor performances on a regular basis. Limited street closures will help to accommodate more outdoor musical performances.

Create housing support for culture bearers

In coordination with *Recommendation 3B*, partner with local and national organizations to design policies to facilitate the creation of affordable living opportunities for musicians and artists, including live-work spaces.



A jazz performance at Steve's Wine Bar. Image Source: Mend Collaborative

4B

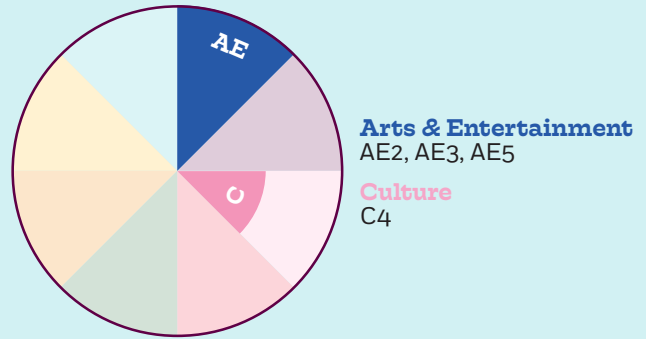
Develop a Performing Arts Center

As established in recommendation 4A, building on the Denton's reputation as a center for the music and the arts is an important component of Downtown Denton's economic development strategy. Establishing a performing arts center in Downtown Denton would significantly enhance the cultural landscape of the city, providing a centralized venue for a diverse array of artistic expressions and a point of connection between university programs and Downtown. Such a center would serve as a vibrant community hub, attracting both local talent and renowned performers, thereby fostering a rich cultural exchange.

The Case for Action

Denton boasts a rich and vibrant history of musical performance, dance, theater, and film, thriving both at its universities and through the city's robust festival culture. Research, interviews, and public engagement have revealed that various arts organizations need office and rehearsal space. Many organizations could expand their programming from annual festivals or events to more consistent, year-round activities if proper spaces were available. A new performing arts center would serve as a hub for existing organizations and provide a valuable resource to enhance Denton's arts scene. This center would not only boost the local economy through increased tourism and business opportunities but also cultivate a deeper appreciation for the arts among residents.

4B Priorities Served



See the community priorities on **page 18** for more information.

Proposed Actions

Establish a state-of-the-art performing arts facility in Downtown Denton, utilizing public investment as a catalyst for further development.

- Include versatile performance spaces, rehearsal studios, and exhibition areas to accommodate various art forms, from theater and dance to music and visual arts.
- Offer both market-rate and below-market-rate office space and establish relationships with existing organizations, including those promoting Denton's festivals and the universities' arts and music programs. Develop partnerships with resident organizations to ensure the center hosts a range of events and educational programs throughout the year.



*Denton's festival's successes are driven by local performers.
Image Source: Mend Collaborative*



*A school dance group performs on the Courthouse Square as part of Hispanic Heritage Month.
Image Source: Mend Collaborative*

Case Study: Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston (MATCH)

The Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston (MATCH) is a dynamic cultural hub located in the heart of Houston's Midtown district. It serves as a versatile performance and exhibition space, catering to a wide range of artistic disciplines, including theater, dance, music, and visual arts. With its state-of-the-art facilities, MATCH provides artists and organizations with flexible venues that include multiple theaters, rehearsal spaces, galleries, and meeting rooms. The center fosters a vibrant community atmosphere, supporting both emerging and established artists while offering the public access to diverse and engaging cultural experiences.



Source: Midtown Arts and Theater Center, Houston

4C Expand Programs to Support Small Businesses

In the Design Downtown Denton process, stakeholders emphasized the importance of small, local businesses to the City's identity. Proposed actions include expanding Downtown Reinvestment Grants, establishing a program to help business owners purchase their buildings, and creating a 2% loan program for new and existing businesses. Additionally, forming a "Small Business Benefits District" is recommended to offer non-traditional benefits. These initiatives aim to prevent chain stores from dominating, support existing businesses, and enhance ownership access for minority- and women-owned enterprises, fostering economic resilience and continuity in Downtown.

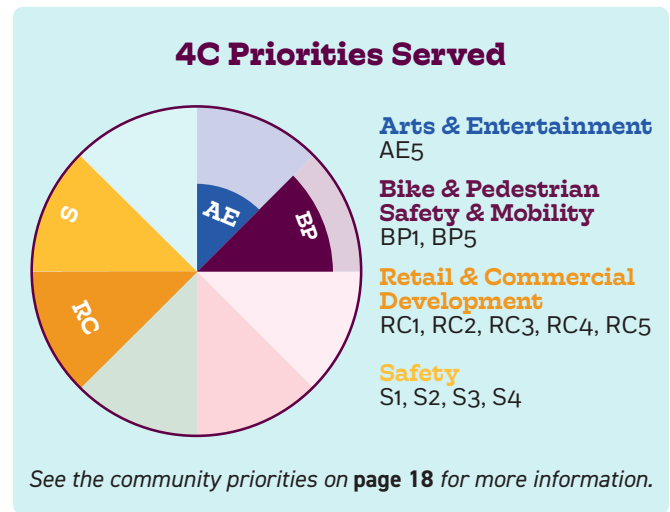
The Case for Action

Throughout the Design Downtown Denton public engagement process, one of the clearest messages from stakeholders was the importance of small, local businesses to Downtown Denton's character and identity. Downtown Denton boasts a variety of locally owned, unique businesses that would make most cities envious. Stakeholders also expressed a strong desire to prevent Downtown from being taken over by chain stores, to ensure that existing small businesses can thrive, and to expand access to business ownership for minority- and women-owned businesses.

Proposed Actions

Expand the use of Downtown Reinvestment Grants

Downtown Reinvestment Grants, funded by the TIRZ, have benefited Downtown businesses seeking façade improvements and utility upgrades. With expanded TIRZ funding (see *recommendation 4E*), the city should proactively identify locations and business sectors to assist.



To preserve affordability, establish a program to assist business owners in the purchase of their buildings

Research has shown that one of the most effective ways for small businesses to ensure long-term real estate affordability is through building ownership. Empowering small business owners through grants, low-interest loans, or loan guarantees with community banks creates the opportunities necessary for businesses to secure their premises, ensuring long-term stability. The City should work to provide education and training for small business owners on negotiating a right of first refusal in their leases. This would offer them a fair chance to buy their properties before they are sold, preventing displacement and preserving the character and diversity of the local economy. Additionally, the City should include a grading criteria for building owners who receive City funding or grants to encourage a right of first refusal to be included in lease agreements. This will assist small business owners in purchasing their buildings, allowing them to build equity, reinvest in their operations, and contribute more effectively to the local economy, promoting economic resilience and continuity.

Establish a 2% Loan Program

A low-interest loan program for new and existing businesses will expand investment in Downtown small businesses. The program should include flexibility in the uses of funds, including:

- Building construction
- Interior improvements
- Lighting, windows and doors
- Roofing, plumbing and electrical
- Mechanical systems and air conditioning
- Sustainable building improvements
- Masonry repairs and other façade improvements
- Repairing or replacing of cornices, entrances, doors, windows, decorative details and awnings
- Architectural design services for plans and specifications
- Landscaping
- Building identification/signage
- Handicap access improvements
- Streetscape costs
- Purchase of machinery and equipment
- Leasehold improvements
- Installation of a fat, oil, and/or grease interceptor system ("grease trap")

Loans could utilize a 10-year repayment schedule and would include credit requirements, though these could be waived or modified if the proposed business owner belongs to a historically underrepresented group of business owners, including minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses.

Establish a "Small Business Benefits District"

The City will partner with the Economic Development Partnership and Denton Main Street Boards to create a "Small Business Benefit District" that can provide non-traditional benefits to small businesses such as lower insurance rates, joint purchasing, and consolidated back-of-house functions.



Programs such as a loan program and a small business benefit district would help to alleviate the challenges faced by small local retailers. Image Source: Mend Collaborative



Many Denton businesses foster community with unique and fun outdoor spaces. Offering support to these businesses can help them continue to flourish. Image Source: Mend Collaborative

4D

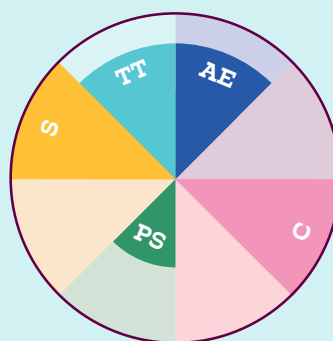
Expand on Downtown Events

Downtown Denton thrives with a dynamic event calendar that enriches the community and adds the area's cultural landscape. From lively festivals to intimate gatherings, these events serve as vibrant magnets, drawing people from all walks of life to experience the city's unique atmosphere. Beyond merely entertaining, these gatherings foster a sense of belonging and pride among residents while also attracting visitors, injecting energy into the streets, and bolstering local businesses. By welcoming people of diverse backgrounds and interests, Downtown Denton's events not only enliven the area but also contribute to its identity as a thriving cultural hub.

The Case for Action

Various organizations coordinate events of different sizes within downtown Denton. For example, the Denton Mainstreet Association orchestrates Twilight Tunes on the County Courthouse lawn in spring and summer. The City of Denton hosts large-scale events around the Square and in Quakertown Park year-round. Additionally, Denton's Black Chamber sponsors an electrifying blues festival. These events are further supported and promoted by Discover Denton, operating under Denton's Chamber of Commerce. There are opportunities to streamline and organize the event hosting process, enabling a greater number of events to reach and benefit a broader spectrum of community members.

4D Priorities Served



See the community priorities on **page 18** for more information.

Proposed Actions

Continue to Develop a Tiered Approach for Permitting Different Sized Events:

- Align tiers with permitting timelines, allowing for shorter timelines for smaller events.
- Develop a tool to determine tier level and provide specific permitting guidelines per tier - Similar to the City of Austin's Special Events Permit Process.

Streamline the Event Permitting and Planning Process

- Update and simplify the Right-of-Way use permitting process.
- Update the requirements for the Traffic Control Plan for road closures, including showing example plans.
- Update the requirements in Event Parking Plan for road closures, including showing example plans.
- Offer educational workshops on the Denton event permit process to community groups and members.

- Create Downtown parking plan for larger events that includes clear mapping and signage identifying available public and private lots, which lots are paid or free, and other relevant information.
- Develop noise ordinance for outdoor music pop-ups or venues.
- Hire additional staff to work a forecasted growing number of events in Denton.

Collaborate with Partners to Expand Downtown Events:

- Continue collaborating with downtown partners to bring exciting events to the city at multiple locations and times of year.
- Coordinate with Downtown Denton's branding effort (refer to recommendation 4D Establish a Downtown Brand Recommendation) to promote and market events.



Denton's Holiday Lighting Festival is an event that brings huge crowds and balances multiple stages, activities, performances, and partners Image Source: Mend Collaborative.



The Denton Blues festival held in Quakertown Park, by the Denton Black Chamber of Commerce, brings fantastic music, large crowds, stages and food trucks into the park. Image Source: Mend Collaborative.



Denton's Day of the Dead Festival is a free, family-friendly event held outside on the streets of Denton complete with live music, dancing, arts, and food. Image Source: dentondayofthedeafestival.com

4E

Modify and Expand on Economic Development Tools

Denton employs a variety of economic development tools to enhance its Downtown area, yet many of these tools remain underutilized or are not applied with a clear strategy. Some resources available to the city are not utilized at all, leading to missed opportunities for growth and improvement. To address these challenges, it is crucial to explore how these tools can be used more effectively and strategically. By expanding, sharpening, and combining these economic development tools, Denton can ensure a more robust and successful implementation of its vision for Downtown.

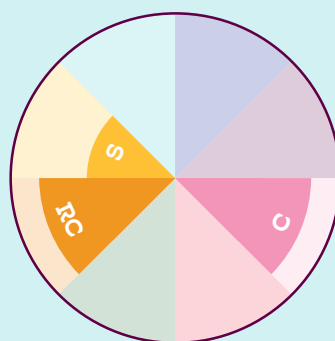
The Case for Action

A review of Denton's existing funding sources revealed that several key economic development tools are in place but have not been extensively utilized.

The Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) retains incremental increases in property tax revenue within a designated district, accumulating a balance of \$3.5 million and generating \$1 million annually. These TIRZ funds support Downtown Reinvestment Grants, providing up to \$200,000 per year to reimburse downtown businesses in building improvements such as roof and foundation repairs, new signs and awnings, and utility and fire suppression upgrades.

380 Agreements offer tax rebates or grants for new construction aimed at economic development. TIRZ revenue was used to provide grant funds for such an agreement with the Railyard project, now complete.

4E Priorities Served



Culture
C1, C2

Retail & Commercial
RC1, RC3

Safety
S4

See the community priorities on **page 18** for more information.

The Catalyst Fund, designed to support economic development initiatives citywide, currently has a balance of \$4.3 million and funds entrepreneur tech, expansion, and job-based grants.

Finally, Historic Tax Credits offer an annual property tax exemption of up to 50% on designated buildings with up to \$10,000 in qualifying improvements or restoration, but only two properties downtown currently utilize this exemption according to the city database.

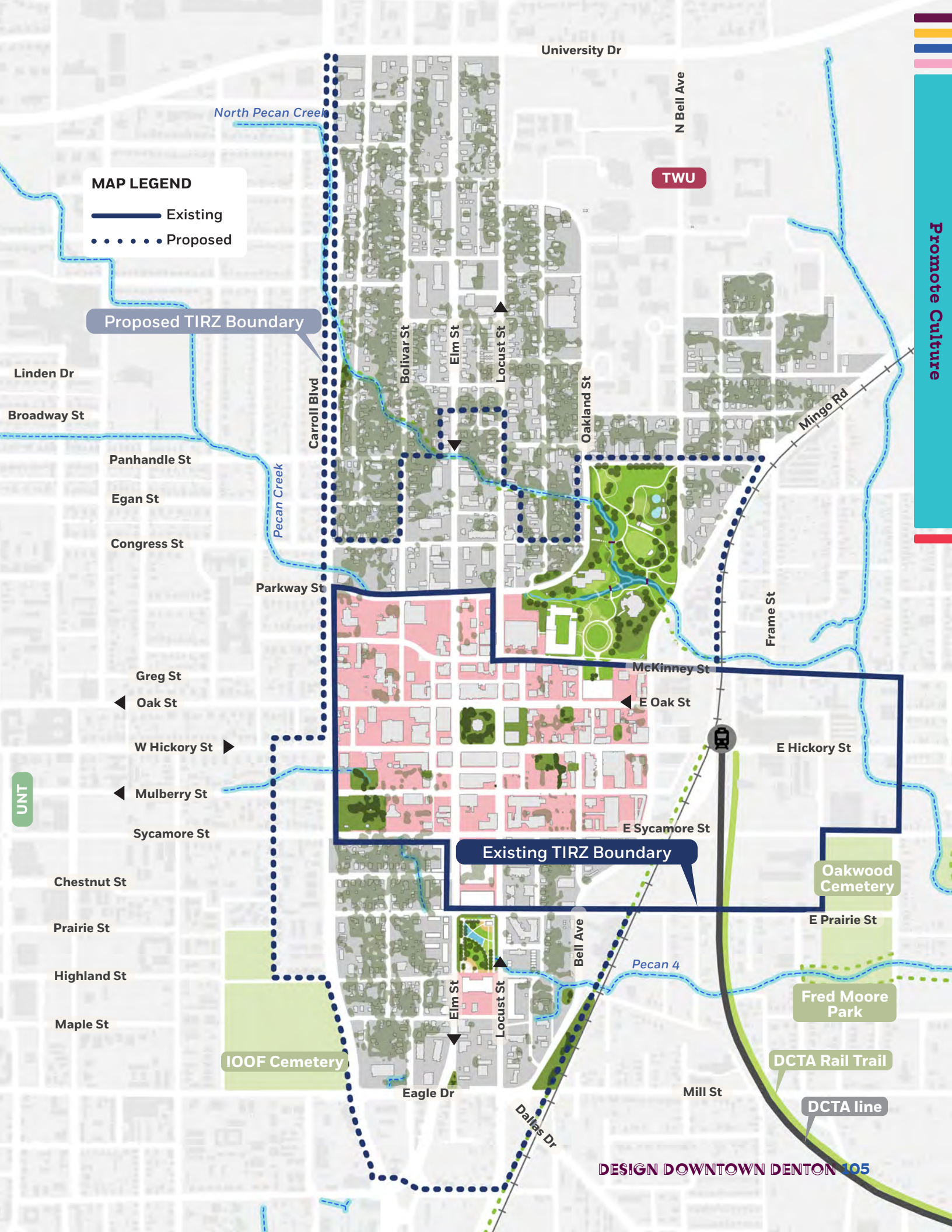
Proposed Actions

The City of Denton should expand economic development opportunities in the following areas.

Existing Funding Sources to be Modified:

Tax-Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ)

The current TIRZ covers a limited area, though it is now generating almost \$1 million per year in revenue and has \$3.5 million in current funding reserves.



MAP LEGEND

- Existing
- Proposed

Proposed TIRZ Boundary

Existing TIRZ Boundary

The TIRZ should be expanded. Now that the infrastructure bond has passed and PEC-4 will likely be constructed without TIRZ funding, the City should, as part of the TIRZ expansion, create a new TIRZ plan identifying priority projects including:

1. Incentivizing downtown housing construction.
2. Building out streetscape and public realm improvements to improve public seating areas, pedestrian safety, more pedestrian-oriented intersections, and bicycle facilities.
3. Consider areas of Southeast Denton to include in the expansion per the Southeast Denton Master Plan.

TIRZ revenue has been used to fund Downtown Reinvestment Grants and 380 Agreements. This funding should continue and expand if the TIRZ expands, but such funding arrangements should only be executed if doing so serves a strategic goal in implementing the Downtown plan – that is, the City should be proactive rather than reactive.

Downtown Reinvestment Grants

Downtown Reinvestment Grants, funded by the TIRZ, have benefited a few Downtown businesses seeking façade improvements and utility upgrades. In some cases, however, a grant to a property owner has prevented the city from providing another grant to a tenant business on the same property. With expanded TIRZ funding, the City should re-evaluate current TIRZ policies and proactively target catalyst projects.

380 Agreements

380 Agreements offer tax rebates or grants for new construction aimed at economic development. Only two 380 agreement have been executed Downtown (Railyards and Fine Arts Theater) using TIRZ funds. The City should expand the use of 380 Agreements for both

housing and other new construction Downtown, using funds from an expanded TIRZ and possibly from the Catalyst fund.

Historic Tax Credits

The City should inventory historic significant sites Downtown and, based on business and residential opportunities that exist, prioritize buildings that need improvement and could benefit from the Historic Tax Credit and reach out to relevant landowners. The Designated Sites or Historically Significant Tax Credits should be used where appropriate. Such efforts could complement Downtown Reinvestment Grants and/or 380 Agreements involving specific businesses located in historic structures.

Catalyst Fund

The citywide Catalyst Fund has a balance of more than \$4.3 million. The catalyst fund is intended for major projects of citywide importance. A portion of the Catalyst fund can used to encourage the Entrepreneur Tech Program, establish 380 Agreements and direct business assistance for startups in the Downtown, especially those that serve a strategic Downtown goal such as supporting diverse local food and beverage establishments, preserving Denton history and culture, or recruiting tech companies downtown in partnership with Stoke.

Texas PACE program

Under Texas law, property owners are able to obtain low-cost capital for energy and water conservation improvements that are paid back by a property assessment. The City should partner with the Texas PACE Authority to provide this opportunity to property owners Downtown as an additional incentive to improve their property.

New Funding Opportunities:

Qualified Hotel Project Tax Rebate

A Qualified Hotel Project permits the rebate of state hotel and sales tax for hotel that is connected to meeting space of 10,000 square feet or more. Denton became eligible for this benefit as a result of legislation in 2023. As part of the East McKinney project, the City should consider including a boutique hotel and meeting space that would qualify for the rebate, as both would increase foot traffic Downtown. A different location could be considered for the hotel and meeting space; but the meeting space may be more desirable if located close to City Hall.

Parking Benefit District

If the pending parking utilization study shows that some areas have more parking demand than supply, the City should create a Parking Benefit District that would administer paid parking in those areas and use the funds to manage the parking and pay for ped/bike facilities and street redesign. The Parking Benefit District should be part of a larger, comprehensive parking management effort that includes all publicly owned (or managed) on-street and off-street parking Downtown.

Affordable Housing Tax Exemption

The City recently established a Public Finance Corporation eligible to own land on which affordable housing is built, thus providing such projects with a property tax exemption. The City's PFC should aggressively seek developers to build affordable housing Downtown, especially given the recent passage of the \$15 million affordable housing bond. Among other things, this would provide greater incentives for constructing housing Downtown – even market-rate housing, as the PFC law allows mixed-income developments. Although the PFC law has been controversial (and subject of considerable discussion in Denton), the law was tightened up in the last legislative session.

New Market Tax Credits

New Market Tax Credits are federal tax credits for investments in development projects located in qualifying communities by qualifying entities (Downtown Denton qualifies). These are typically non-residential projects. The City should identify high-priority mixed-use or non-residential projects that might qualify for New Market Tax Credits and identify a qualified entity to help bring NMTCs into the financing picture for important Downtown projects.

HUD Section 108 Loan Guarantees

HUD Section 108 loan guarantees are low-cost, flexible loans for economic development available to CDBG recipients from private lenders. Loans are guaranteed by the federal government. The City should identify critical Downtown projects that could qualify for HUD 108 loan guarantees and identify CDBG recipients that could assist in bringing this financing mechanism into key deals Downtown.

Private and Philanthropic Funding

Philanthropic and foundation funding is increasingly used for park and open space improvements. The City should explore opportunities to expand Philanthropic funding for major projects.

Bundling Economic Development Tools Together

As valuable as each individual economic development tool is, the use of tools together can create a powerful set of incentives to implement the goals of the Downtown Master Plan. This was done recently for the Fine Arts Theater, which received a grant from TIRZ revenue through a 380 agreement as well as an Historic Tax Credit. In the future, a Downtown property owner could, for example, seek a Downtown Reinvestment grant for façade and sidewalk improvement, a Historic Tax Credit to maintain an historic building, and a PACE financing to upgrade energy and water systems. A developer might be able to bundle different tools in a similar fashion. The City should create a menu of tools and incentives that can work together – one menu for current Downtown property owners, one for current downtown business owners, and one for prospective Downtown developers.

Land Banking

Land banking should be used as a strategic tool to acquire, manage, and repurpose vacant, abandoned, or underutilized properties to stimulate economic development. Utilize land banking to ensure that land is used in ways that best benefit the community, such as for affordable housing, green spaces, or commercial projects that meet plan goals, and to assist with land assembly that will allow larger scale projects to move forward in areas with divided land ownership.

Active Transportation Funding Opportunities

There are a variety of programs at the federal and state levels that administer funding through TxDOT and NCTCOG and are designed to address improvements to active transportation through infrastructure, education and

awareness, and operational improvements. This has been further supported by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, making more funding available for projects and programs that improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and access, a high priority for Downtown Denton.

Strategies like nesting active transportation elements into larger project applications can increase the competitiveness of projects. For example, building intersection safety improvements into highway or street corridor projects can be attractive to application evaluators seeking to fund multimodal projects that establish connections well beyond the project boundaries.

Federal Resources

USDOT - Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Grant Program

Type: Non-competitive

Fund Uses: Planning, Capital, and Operations

The RCN Grant Program combines two discretionary grant programs: the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) and the Neighborhood Access and Equity (NAE) program. These programs are available for planning, capital, and regional partnership projects that focus on addressing gaps in the transportation networks, specifically those that have affected historically disadvantaged communities. The outcomes for projects that receive funding from this program are those that improve access to key destinations, foster equitable development and restoration, and redesign highways to remove barriers to community connectivity.

USDOT - Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant Program

Type: Non-competitive

Fund Uses: Planning, Capital, and Operations

The SS4A Grant Program is a discretionary program that funds regional, local, and Tribal projects and programs that aim to prevent

roadway deaths and serious injuries. SS4A Grants fall into two buckets: a Planning and Demonstration Grant, and an Implementation Grant. Planning and Demonstration Grants fund strategies that prevent roadway deaths and serious injuries, including a comprehensive safety action plan, which is needed to apply for an Implementation Grant.

USDOT - Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant Program

Type: Competitive

Fund Uses: Planning, Capital, and Operations

Previously known as TIGER and BUILD, RAISE grants are available to fund the planning, pre-construction, and construction of public transportation projects, intermodal projects, and roadway projects, among others. The grant covers 80% of project funding in urban areas and 100% of funding for projects in rural areas and for planning grants in Areas of Persistent Poverty.

FHWA - Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment (ATIIP) Program

Type: Competitive

Fund Uses: Planning, Capital, and Operations

The ATIIP Program is a new competitive grant program that supports construction projects to provide safe and connected active transportation facilities in active transportation networks or active transportation spines. Networks are defined as facilities that connect destinations within a community or metropolitan region, while spines are facilities that connect between communities, metropolitan regions, or states. The grant program is split into two types of grants: Planning and Design and Construction grants. To be eligible for a Planning and Design grant, planning and design costs must be at least \$100,000 and to be eligible for Construction grants, construction costs must be at least \$15 million.

FHWA - Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program

Type: Non-competitive

Fund Uses: Planning, Capital, and Operations

The CMAQ Improvement Program is a non-competitive long-standing grant program that aims to improve air quality and reduce traffic congestion, particularly in areas of the country that do not attain national air quality standards. Examples of CMAQ projects include signal coordination, intersection improvements, park-and-ride facilities, sidewalks, non-recreational bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and transit investment, among others. Many of these project types directly apply to specific mobility hub elements and related local infrastructure. TxDOT distributes CMAQ funds to local MPOs, and government entities are eligible to apply.

FHWA - Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG)

Type: Non-competitive

Fund Uses: Planning, Capital, and Operations

The STBG Program funding is non-competitive – a formula is used by FHWA to apportion STBG funds to each state. The funds are then sub-allocated to NCTCOG from TxDOT using a population-based formula. Transportation Alternatives, or bicycle, pedestrian, transit, and other small-scale multimodal projects, are required to make up 10% of STBG funds. STBG funds are intended for public roadways where bicycle and pedestrian improvements, transit connections, and other mobility hub improvements can be supported.

State Resources

Most state funding is through the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and is allocated for tolled and non-tolled highways. However, TxDOT and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) offer a few funding programs eligible for active transportation projects in Texas.

TxDOT - Transportation Alternatives Set-aside (TA) Program

Type: Competitive

Fund Uses: Planning and Construction

The Transportation Alternatives (TA) Set-Aside Program and its predecessor programs are competitive funds meant to support stand-alone bicycle and pedestrian projects. The TxDOT-administered program addresses planning and construction of bicycle and pedestrian improvements that improve mobility options for active transportation modes.

TxDOT - Education and Safety Grant Programs

Type: Non-competitive

Fund Uses: Education and Safety

As part of TxDOT's Highway Safety Plan, federal grant funding is available to a variety of organizations and levels of government for implementation of education and safety programs that reduce fatalities, injuries, and crashes. These non-competitive funds are available only for strategies that help educate, monitor, and report on bicycle and pedestrian safety.

TxDOT - Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

Type: Competitive

Fund Uses: Planning, Capital, and Operations

The SRTS program is a comprehensive competitive grant program that provides funding for planning, development, and implementation of projects and programs that improve safety, comfort, and access for children grades K-8 to get to school to walk or bike to school. This includes education and awareness campaigns, traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution reduction.



4F

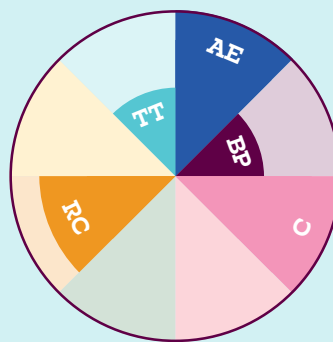
Establish a Downtown Brand

Downtown Denton boasts a vibrant identity deeply rooted in its arts and music scene, rich history, unique architecture, and quirky charm. This distinctive personality is reflected in the lifestyle of Dentonites, who celebrate their community through art, merchandise, and events. To enhance Denton's reputation as an exceptional place to live, work, shop, play, and learn, a cohesive branding strategy is essential. This brand should effectively communicate Denton's unique character to visitors and potential new residents while help them navigate to their destinations and discover what Denton has to offer nearby.

The Case for Action

Downtown Denton has multiple iconic landmarks such as the Denton County Courthouse, the Morrison's Milling sign, and the Campus Theater, unique businesses for food, drink and shopping, and the historic Quakertown Park. These landmarks should be easily identified as Downtown Denton and help provide a cohesive and singular sense of place. Right now that cohesion is lacking, due to a deficiency of visual connection between these landmarks. Visitors to Beer Alley may not feel they are within walking distance of the Square. A cohesive brand marked by signage, banners, and wayfinding can support walkability by connecting these unique features in one area. Branded Wayfinding positioned in key parking areas can also help people move more easily between their car and desired destinations.

4F Priorities Served



See the community priorities on **page 18** for more information.

Proposed Actions

- Release an RFQ to develop a brand strategy and design including logo, colors, wayfinding, and signage led by local artists with input from Economic Development and Downtown Stakeholders. Branding should be colorful, vibrant and attractive, being consistent with the personality of its people, events and businesses.
- Use branding in wayfinding signage that directs to businesses, universities, parks and historic features throughout Downtown.
- Identify pathways and trails that can have plaques, signage, or other features that tell the history and story of notable groups and features of Downtown Denton and their impact on the city, such as:
 - Black Americans
 - Native Americans
 - Music History
 - University History
 - Growth of Denton History
 - Public Art Walk

- Develop a policy for branding requirements specifying limitations on the use of branding elements such as logos, slogans, copyrighted designs, and other brand features.
- Integrate the branding of visual components with the Public Art Plan, Denton Square District, and other design standards and guidelines.
- Review the brand guidelines annually with Economic Development and Downtown Stakeholders to ensure consistency as Downtown develops.
- Update Sign Ordinance, and banner and signage programs.
- Develop unique branding for Quakertown Park and surrounding blocks, highlighting the historic park.
- Integrate University branding into wayfinding and banners, highlighting UNT along Hickory and Sycamore Streets and TWU along Bell Avenue and Locust Street.
- Look for funding for improvements from Texas Commission on the Arts, which identified the Original Denton District as a cultural district in 2019.

Logo and Design Examples



Wayfinding Examples



Existing Branding & Wayfinding



Existing wayfinding is not part of a cohesive brand for Downtown Denton and does not provide enough clear and specific information to support businesses or walkability. Image Source: Mend Collaborative

Banners Examples



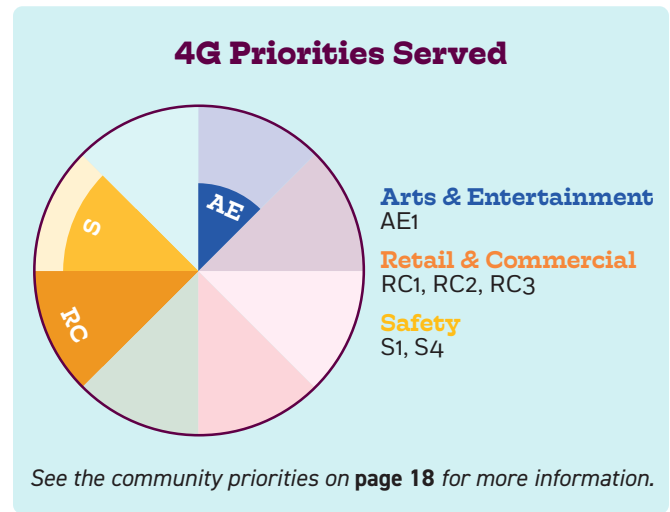
4G Establish a Public Improvement District

Successful Texas downtowns typically maintain a wide variety of organizational tools, each with different statutory abilities and funding mechanisms that can be utilized in tandem to achieve an overall vision for the community. A Public Improvement District (PID) is a special district created by a city or county to fund public improvements and services within a designated area. Establishing a PID would provide Downtown Denton with a more robust set of tools and dedicated funding to finance projects that enhance the downtown area's quality of place.

The Case for Action

Downtown Denton currently has Denton Main Street, which is a part of a state and national Main Street Program, a Texas Cultural District, and a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ), each providing valuable assets for implementing Design Downtown Denton. However, due to Denton's population growth, these tools do not offer all the statutory abilities that a growing city of Denton's size may need.

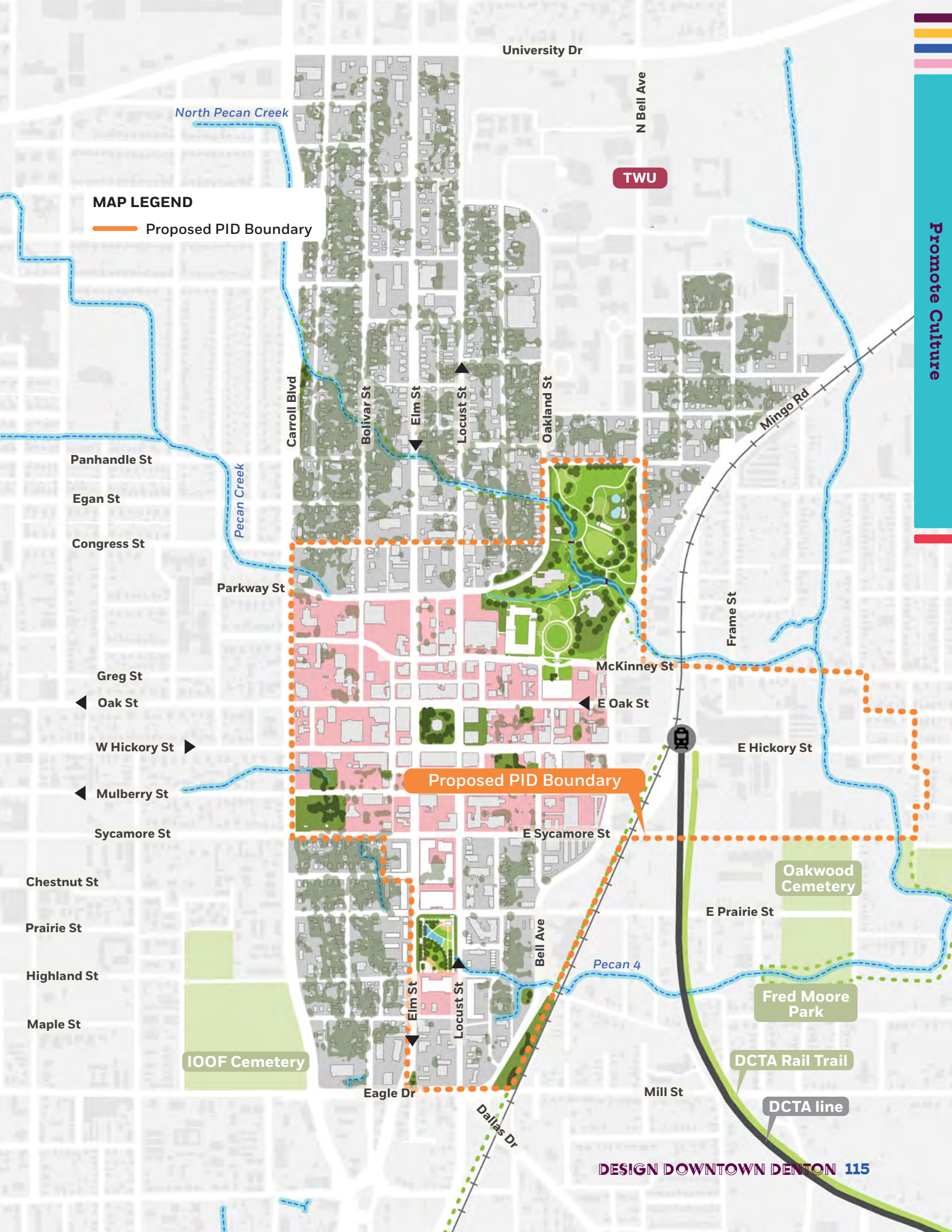
Three types of Texas districts were analyzed for Downtown Denton: a Public Improvement District (PID), a Municipal Management District (MMD), and a Municipal Development District (MDD). While each of these entities is similar, their establishment processes and funding sources vary slightly. An MMD would allow the use of sales tax for economic development but would require reallocating funds from DCTA, making it less preferable. PIDs and MMDs are very similar, but ultimately, a PID was identified as the candidate that would provide the city with the greatest amount of control.



Proposed Actions

PIDs are established through a petition process initiated by property owners, followed by formal approval from the city. At least 50% of the property owners within the proposed district, or the owners of 50% of the land within the proposed district, must sign the petition. This requirement ensures significant support among the property owners who will be affected by the PID before it is created. Given Downtown Denton's small lot sizes and variety of ownership, this is no small task. While this report provides a goal for the area to be contained within the PID, the process of acquiring signatures may alter the final boundaries of the district.

The city should begin by approaching large landowners. It is important that the city has ready information regarding the amount of additional taxes that individual owners would pay, the cumulative amount of funding that would be generated, and the activities that could be funded through the district. The city should consider utilizing the same board structure for the PID as is used for the TIRZ, allowing for better coordination in their actions.



5

Plan Implementation



Plaza on the Square Rendering

5 Plan Implementation

Introduction

The Downtown Denton Master Plan requires a refresh to steer growth over the next decade. This update focuses on enhancing parks and open spaces, parking, housing, mobility, connectivity, and preserving existing neighborhoods and historic sites. The new plan aims to leverage Downtown's strengths, honor its history and character, and create an even more enjoyable living environment.

The recommendations and actions outlined in the plan need thoughtful implementation and prioritization. This will help the City make decisions on actions to take to further the goals of the plan.

Prioritizing Actions



Prioritizing what should happen first.

Image Source: Wikimedia Commons

Bundling Incentives



Exploring opportunities to bundle incentives.

Image Source: Mend Collaborative

Unlocking Funds



Unlocking funds such as tax rebates for qualified hotels.

Image Source: Wikimedia Commons

Implementation of Economic Development Tools

Implementing Denton's new Downtown Master Plan will require the City to move quickly to establish additional revenue sources, and new and expanded programs to use that revenue to move Downtown forward. In addition, expenditure of funds for implementation of the plan must balance three different types of projects:

- Construction and maintenance of public infrastructure and public realm improvements
- Incentives for business owners
- Incentives for property owners and developers

Prioritizing Policy Recommendations

Policy-related recommendations also were prioritized based on whether other projects are dependent on that particular policy action. A timeline range was assigned to the policy recommendation. The below table shows this in more detail.

This portion of the implementation section prioritizes the economic development tools identified in the Design Downtown Denton Plan and articulates steps required to use those tools effectively in order to implement the plan over the next several years. The City does have a number of other economic development tools available citywide that might also be used, including a sales tax rebate on construction materials, utility improvement reimbursement, and a reduction in electrical demand charges.

Department Key	
Development Services	DS
Parks and Recreation	PR
Economic Development	ED
Engineering Services	ES
Streets Division	SD
Real Estate	RE
Capital Improvement Projects	CIP
Public Improvement District	PID
Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone	TIRZ
Main Street Association	MSA
Greater Denton Arts Council	GDAC
Denton County Transportation Association	DCTA

Policy Recommendation	Lead Department(s)	Timeline
4E Expand TIRZ	ED	Year 1
4G Establish a PID	ED	
		<i>Other Recommendations Are Dependent On These</i>
3B Encourage Downtown Living	ED, DS, PID, TIRZ	Year 5
4A Utilize Policy and Regulation to Support Music and Nightlife*	ED, DS, PID	
4C Expand Programs to Support Small Businesses	ED, DS, MSA, PID, TIRZ	
3D Adopt Public Realm Guidelines and Zoning Recommendations	DS	
4E Expand on other Economic Development Tools	ED	
3C Strengthen Historic Preservation Opportunities	DS	Complete As Opportunities Arise
3E Pursue Opportunities for Transformative Projects	ED, PID, RE	
4D Expand on Events	PID, MSA, PR	
*4A Hire Night Major	ED, DS, PID	

Priority 1 (Year 1)

The top priorities focus on establishing additional revenue sources and clarifying how those additional revenues will be used.

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone: Boundaries, Revenue, and Use of Funds

The Downtown Plan calls for an expansion of the boundaries of TIRZ #1. Along with the TIRZ expansion will come an increase in revenue and a need to create a new Project Plan that identifies eligible projects and allocates funds among different purposes.

The new Project Plan should include:

- Expanded boundaries - phased approach if applicable
- Clarification of timeframe (longer timeframe)
- Projected revenue

The City should also clarify use of TIRZ funds, considering the following questions:

- a. *Will TIRZ funds still be used for Downtown Reinvestment Grants and 380 Agreements?*
- b. *Will TIRZ funds be used for a new low-interest loan program?*
- c. *Will TIRZ funds be used to incentivize private development and if so how?*
- d. *What public realm improvements and public infrastructure will be paid for with TIRZ revenue?*
- e. *How should TIRZ revenue be divided among all these goals?*
- f. *Should the City bond against TIRZ revenue?*

Public Improvement District

The City should also move quickly to create a Public Improvement District (PID) for the core part of Downtown.

The City should:

- Determine the boundaries of the PID (which must win the support of both most property owners and most of the assessed value inside its boundaries).
- Develop PID revenue projections for the coming years.
- Determine what activities can be paid for with PID revenue. Activities that might be covered by PID revenue could include:
 - a. Ambassadors/safety programs
 - b. Marketing and events
 - c. Public realm maintenance

Catalyst Fund

The City has recently revamped some of its economic development incentive revenues into one fund called the Catalyst Fund. The Downtown Plan recommends setting aside a certain percentage of the Catalyst Fund for Downtown projects. The City should determine what percentage of the Catalyst Fund should be set aside for Downtown and what those funds should be used for, perhaps focusing especially on the Entrepreneur Tech Program. If Catalyst Funds citywide are intended to support major projects, the City may want to consider using the Downtown Catalyst Funds to incentivize large private development projects that will “catalyze” transformation of Downtown.

Catalyst Projects –

Initial Planning and Underwriting

The Downtown Master Plan includes a series of catalytic developments that have been identified due to their strategic locations and ability to generate synergies in use and activity that may “seed” the larger plan goals. These include new development that better connects downtown to Quakertown Park across McKinney Street, forming stronger urban gateways between Carroll Blvd and the downtown square area through urban infill, forming a southern development district on the land reclaimed out of the floodplain around the new park space, forming a connection from the Square eastward through the current vacant parcel, and infill development around the Wells Fargo tower.

Many of these projects require private investment through the commercial real estate industry to be implemented, and some of these developments may have an economic gap between present market conditions and the City’s desired outcomes that must be filled for the private development marketplace to advance. There are common areas where the various implementation tools available to the City can be utilized to help close such gaps including the partial funding of shared parking garages, the funding of required infrastructure and streetscape enhancements around key private developments, and writing down the cost of particular uses the City desires where appropriate.

To advance such projects, there is initial economic development work the City should do which includes prioritizing the developments,

clarifying and detailing the prioritized development concepts, and communicating the opportunity to the marketplace. With this as context, the following outline may be used to advance such developments.

- Identify any city-controlled obstacles impacting the potential implementation of each project, and devise strategies for how the City can remove said obstacles
- Prepare simple vision statements for each catalyst project with supporting technical data including what the City is willing to do in order to remove potential obstacles, this should include a simple financial gap analysis
- Identify existing land owners within each catalyst project area and arrange meetings to discuss their potential interest in participating in such implementation, either as principal, through land transaction, or in partnership with a developer
- Research similar projects in the North Texas region that have been implemented within the previous 10 years, and build a list of the developers that completed this work, with the goal being 5-10 developers per project type
- Hold informal discussions with these developers to present the information prepared on the projects deemed well-suited to their experience, and gauge their interest in advancing forward with the City
- Identify 2-3 projects and coordinate meetings between related willing land-owners and developers

Priority 2 (Year 1-3)

Priority 2 items focus on setting up longer-term revenue sources and setting up or highlighting tax-related incentives that individual property owners can take advantage of independent of the City. Denton will still need to maintain and move forward the funding mechanisms mentioned in Priority 1.

Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE)

The PACE program allows property owners access to low-cost financing for energy and water conservation improvements. The city should make an agreement with the Texas PACE Authority to set up the opportunity for Downtown property owners. Given the Economic Development Director's experience with the PACE program, this could be a Year 1 priority if the ED Department has the capacity to execute it.

Historic Tax Credits

The City has two generous Historic Tax Credit programs that few Downtown property owners have taken advantage of – one focused on “designated” historic structures and the other focused on “significant” historic structures. The City should promote the use of both Historic Tax Credits Downtown, especially in combination with other possible incentives and programs.

Affordable and Mixed Income Housing Tax Exemptions

The City recently established a Public Facilities Corporation, which will allow the City to partner with developers on affordable and mixed-use development projects by providing a property tax exemption. The City should identify developers and projects that could take advantage of this opportunity as part of the effort to add 1,500 housing units Downtown in the next decade.

Parking Benefit District

As part of the Downtown parking management effort, the City should create a Parking Benefit District that will collect revenue from the paid parking spaces that are created. At least part of that revenue should be returned to the Downtown for use there.

Small Business Benefit “District”

One innovative idea that emerged from the Downtown Plan process was an informal “district” that would allow small businesses downtown to obtain such benefits as lower insurance rates, common back-office HR and payroll services, and so forth. Possibly with a nonprofit partner, the City should pursue the creation of such a “district” for the benefit of Downtown businesses.

Catalyst Projects – Project Selections

Work with the private development teams established during the underwriting phase to explore specific needs to advance, including the potential filling of reasonable economic gaps in order to finalize these developments for implementation.

Priority 3 (3+ Years)

Priority 3 items focus on very long-term efforts, such as efforts that facilitate private development projects that will take several years to come to fruition.

Use of City Land

The City's land on McKinney Street is an extremely valuable economic development asset, allowing the City not only to incentivize new development if necessary but also, as landowner, to identify and direct specifically what type of development is desired. In combination with the Quakertown Park plan and possible relocation of City offices, the City should use City-owned land strategically to incentivize the most important desired development. Due to the proximity of the park and municipal facilities, the City may consider the following strategies to accomplish the vision for this area set forth in the Downtown Plan.

- Explore the economic benefit that the contribution of land to a private development that achieves the public goals outlined in the Plan
- Explore the use of a shared parking garage that serves both public and private uses in order to reduce the cost of both development types
- Explore the use of the implementation tools identified in this section to achieve the desired development type and quality for this strategic location

Qualified Hotel Project

Denton desires a boutique hotel Downtown. If such a hotel is located within 1,000 feet of meeting space totaling 10,000 square feet or more, it can qualify for state sales and bed tax rebates. The City should consider including a hotel in the McKinney Street redevelopment and using the Qualified Hotel Project tax rebate as part of an incentive package to make the deal work.

New Market Tax Credits

New Market Tax Credits provide private businesses and developers with equity by offering tax credits that can be sold to private investors. The tax credits are only available in certain disadvantaged locations, but Downtown Denton qualifies. The funds can be used for a wide range of projects, including retail, market-rate and affordable housing, office buildings, and community facilities. Although most entities offering tax credits are community development entities, local governments can qualify. The City of Denton should qualify as an entity offering New Market Tax Credits and identify the projects best suited to use such tax credits.

HUD 108 Loan Guarantees

The City should identify critical Downtown projects that could qualify for HUD 108 loan guarantees and identify CDBG recipients that could assist in bringing this financing mechanism into key Downtown deals.

Proactive Implementation Efforts

In the past, the City has taken a largely demand-responsive approach to incentives for Downtown improvement, often using economic development incentives in isolation from one another. For example, the Downtown Reinvestment Grant program has funded one-off improvements based on applications from property owners and business owners.

Where possible the City should take a more proactive approach to economic development, bundling incentives together to increase the likelihood that the Downtown Plan's goals will be achieved. This bundling can be done differently depending on the different entities to which the incentives might be targeted including current Downtown business owners, startup business owners, current Downtown property owners, and developers seeking to add new buildings and spaces to Downtown.

For example, current Downtown property owners seeking to upgrade their older buildings might bundle a Downtown Reinvestment Grant, an Historic Tax Credit, and a PACE energy and water conservation upgrade.

Similarly, current Downtown business owners might bundle a Downtown Reinvestment Grant, a low-interest loan (under a program yet to be created), and participation in the informal Small Business Benefit "District" that could reduce operational costs.

Developers as well could benefit from bundled incentives, especially as the City seeks to redevelop its own property along East McKinney Street and/or encourage development in the southern part of Downtown.

For example, if the City pursues major redevelopment along East McKinney, it could bundle together a wide variety of incentives, including TIRZ funding for public improvements, city land at a below-market price for a parking garage and private development, Qualified Hotel Project tax rebates for a hotel in close proximity to meeting space, and New Market Tax Credits to provide low-cost equity for either commercial or residential parts of the project or both.

In southern downtown, TIRZ funds and New Market Tax Credits could be combined, possibly with additional financing from the city's Catalyst Fund, in order to make a project work. In either case, TIRZ funds and Parking Benefit District funds could be used for public realm improvements that would complement private development.

In each of these efforts, the City would be taking a more proactive role than it has historically utilized to see the Plan goals realized. And while such proactivity may include providing economic gap funding, it may also simply take the form of the City brokering ideas and relationships between private interests around a desired common goal.

Prioritizing Project Recommendations

The recommendations were prioritized by:

- The level of community support,
- The overall cost, and
- Whether the recommendation depends on or catalyzes another project.

The below table outlines this in more detail and assigns a timeline range for each of the projects.

Department Key

Development Services	DS
Parks and Recreation	PR
Economic Development	ED
Engineering Services	ES
Streets Division	SD
Real Estate	RE
Capital Improvement Projects	CIP
Public Improvement District	PID
Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone	TIRZ
Main Street Association	MSA
Greater Denton Arts Council	GDAC
Denton County Transportation Association	DCTA

Project Recommendation	Lead Department(s)	Timeline
2B Create New Park on the Square	PR, RE	Years 1-5
1B Pilot Denton Chill Streets	CIP, DS, ES	
1A Re-stripe Bell and McKinney	SD, DS	
2G Develop a Public Art Plan for Downtown	PR	
1D Improve Transit	DS, DCTA	
2A Initiate Implementation of the Quakertown Park Plan	PR	
2D Complete small improvements like lighting, trees and art	DS, ES	
4F Branding and Advertising, Wayfinding Plan and Historic Interpretation	PID, MSA, PR	
3A Develop Southern Downtown	ED, DS, RE	Years 6-10
1C Improve Bike Connections	DS	
2C Improve Utilization of Alleys	PID, PR	
2B Other Pocket Park Improvements	PR, PID	
1A Rebuild Carroll Boulevard	CIP, DS, ES, PID, TIRZ	
2D Redesigns that upgrade streets for closures for festivals and events	CIP, DS, ES, PID, TIRZ	
2E Develop a new park in Southern Downtown	PR, RE	
2F Partner with County to improve Historic Park	DS	Years 11-15
4B Develop an Arts Center	ED, RE, CIP, PID, TIRZ, GDAC	
4D Gateway Monuments	PID, TIRZ, DS, PR	



Implementation of Economic Development Tools

Tool	Priority	Revenue Source	Public		
			Clean & Safe / Ambassadors	Public Infrastructure	Public Realm Improvements
TIRZ	1	Tax Increment		•	•
380 Agreements	1	TIRZ			
Downtown Reinvestment Grants	1	TIRZ			
Low Interest Loans	1	TIRZ			
Public Improvement District	1	Property Assessment	•	•	•
Catalyst Fund	1	Variety of citywide sources			
PACE	2	Property Assessments			
Historic Tax Credits	2	Property Tax Exemptions			
Affordable Housing Tax Exemptions	2	Property Tax Exemptions			
Parking Benefit District	2	Parking revenue		•	•
"Small Business Benefit District"	2	Business Owners			
City Land	3	City Land Equity			•
Qualified Hotel Project	3	State Sales and Bed Tax Rebates			
New Market Tax Credits	3	Federal Tax Credits			
HUD 108 Loan Guarantees	3	Community Development Block Grant Funds			
Tax Abatement (Ch.312 of the Texas Tax Code)	Existing	Tax Abatement			
Sales and Use Tax for Construction	Existing	Tax Rebate			
Water/Wastewater Utility Line Fund	Existing	Reimbursement			
Economic Growth Rider	Existing	Reduction in electrical demand charge			
Tourism Public Improvement District	Existing	Property Assessment			

Tool Location and Purpose

Existing Private			New Private		
Support for Existing Downtown Businesses	Support For Commercial Property Owners	Support for Residential Property Owners	Incentivizing New Commercial Development	Incentivizing New Housing	Support for Startups Based Downtown
•	•		•	•	
			•	•	
•	•				•
•					
•			•	•	•
	•				
	•	•			
				•	
•					•
			•	•	
			•		
			•		
			•	•	
	•	•			
•					
	•	•			
•	•	•			
•					•

