

**NOTICE OF MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE
CITY OF NAVASOTA, TEXAS
JANUARY 23, 2023**

Notice is hereby given that a Special Meeting of the governing body of the City of Navasota will be held on the 23rd of January, 2023 at 4:45 PM at the City Hall in the City Council Chambers, Room No. 161, located at 200 E. McAlpine Street, Navasota, Texas 77868, at which time the following subjects will be considered, to wit:

To watch the City Council meeting live please visit the City of Navasota's Youtube here: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCItnx7BQt0TCIYJRiZ14g5w>

- 1 Call to Order.
- 2 Remarks of visitors: Any citizen may address the City Council on any matter. Registration forms are available on the podium and/or table in the back of the city council chambers. This form should be completed and delivered to the City Secretary by 4:30 p.m. Please limit remarks to three minutes. The City Council will receive the information, ask staff to look into the matter, or place the issue on a future agenda. Topics of operational concerns shall be directed to the City Manager.
- 3 Workshop on the Downtown Navasota Assessment Report conducted by Texas Downtown (TXDT). [Rayna Teicheira, Economic Development Director]
- 4 Adjourn.

DATED THIS THE 18TH OF JANUARY, 2023

/JW/

BY: JASON WEEKS, CITY MANAGER

I, the undersigned authority, do hereby certify that the above notice of meeting of the governing body of the CITY OF NAVASOTA, is a true and correct copy of said notice and that I posted a true and correct copy of said notice in the glass bulletin board, in the foyer, on the south side of the Municipal Building as well as in the bulletin board on the north side of the Municipal Building of the City of Navasota, Texas, a place convenient and readily accessible to the general public at all times, and said notice was posted on the 18th of January, 2023 at 04:31 PM and will remain posted continuously for at least 72 hours preceding the scheduled time of said meeting. Agendas may be viewed at www.navasotatx.gov.

The City Council reserves the right to convene in Executive Session at any time deemed necessary for the consideration of confidential matters under the Texas Government Code, Sections 551.071-551.089.

DATED THIS THE 18TH OF JANUARY, 2023

/SMH/

BY: SUSIE M. HOMEYER, CITY SECRETARY

THIS FACILITY IS WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE AND ACCESSIBLE PARKING SPACES ARE AVAILABLE. REQUESTS FOR ACCOMMODATIONS OR INTERPRETIVE SERVICES MUST BE MADE 48 HOURS PRIOR TO THIS MEETING. PLEASE CONTACT THE CITY SECRETARY'S OFFICE AT (936) 825-6475 OR (936) 825-6408 OR BY FAX AT (936) 825-2403.



REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM #3

<p>Agenda Date Requested: <u>January 23, 2023</u></p> <p>Requested By: <u>Rayna Teicheira, Director</u></p> <p>Department: <u>Economic Development</u></p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> Report <input type="radio"/> Resolution <input type="radio"/> Ordinance</p> <p>Exhibits: <u>TXDT Workshop Presentation & Final Downtown Navasota Assessment Report</u></p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"><thead><tr><th colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Appropriation</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Source of Funds:</td><td><u>N/A</u></td></tr><tr><td>Account Number:</td><td><u>N/A</u></td></tr><tr><td>Amount Budgeted:</td><td><u>N/A</u></td></tr><tr><td>Amount Requested:</td><td><u>N/A</u></td></tr><tr><td>Budgeted Item:</td><td><input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No</td></tr></tbody></table>	Appropriation		Source of Funds:	<u>N/A</u>	Account Number:	<u>N/A</u>	Amount Budgeted:	<u>N/A</u>	Amount Requested:	<u>N/A</u>	Budgeted Item:	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No
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AGENDA ITEM #3

Workshop on the Downtown Navasota Assessment Report conducted by Texas Downtown (TXDT).

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

Since 2016, Texas Downtown (TXDT) has conducted downtown assessments with the purpose of bringing a group of downtown professions to their client's downtown to discuss challenges and issues they are facing, tour the downtown district, meet with stakeholders, and provide a report with recommendations for the different stages of revitalization – short term, mid-range, and long-term.

In early 2021, City of Navasota staff began looking into grant opportunities to cover the cost of the Texas Downtown Assessment (\$1,500 plus travel costs for each committee member). In April 2021, staff submitted a grant application to BBVA, and in June 2021 was notified that the City of Navasota Foundation for Community Projects was awarded funds to cover the entire cost of the Texas Downtown Assessment.

Since there was an unlimited timeline to expend the grant funds, staff determined it would be most beneficial to hold off conducting the assessment until after the Railroad Street drainage and street project was complete and the new businesses opened on Railroad Street. In April 2022, TXDT sent out an electronic survey to a comprehensive list of downtown stakeholders, provided by staff. And in early May 2022 TXDT held a Downtown Navasota Stakeholder meeting via Zoom to learn about the major challenges, advantages, and opportunities. Staff provided input on selecting the Texas Downtown Assessment committee, and on May 13, 2022, the committee conducted the assessment in downtown Navasota.

TXDT and the committee members who conducted the Downtown Navasota Assessment Report have decades of experience working in Main Street communities, as Downtown Managers, and in various capacities supporting downtowns across Texas. The Downtown Navasota Assessment Report provides our community, staff, and City Council with a guide of how to continue to support downtown businesses, encourage tourism, and begin thinking about long-term planning to continue a positive trajectory and success in downtown Navasota.

ACTION REQUIRED BY CITY COUNCIL

Holding a workshop and discussion on the Downtown Navasota Assessment Report conducted by Texas Downtown (TXDT).

Approved for the City Council meeting agenda



Jason B. Weeks, City Manager

1/18/23

Date

THERE'S SO MUCH TO LOVE ABOUT

NAVASOTA!

So much, so close.

CITY OF NAVASOTA, TEXAS



NAVASOTA!™

So much, so close.

DOWNTOWN NAVASOTA ASSESSMENT REPORT

FINALIZED AUGUST 2022

THE PROCESS

- Pre-assessment Questionnaire
- Downtown Survey
- Stakeholder Zoom Meeting
- Downtown Assessment – May 2022
- Final Report – August 2022



INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

- The City has shown a strong commitment to downtown efforts, which was recognized by business owners and employees
- The installation of the crosswalk on E. Washington/SH 105 is a step in the right direction for pedestrian safety
- Downtown Navasota is home to some destination businesses that are attracting both locals and visitors



A vibrant mural in the background depicts several African American blues musicians. In the center, a man in a hat and light-colored shirt plays an acoustic guitar. To his right, another man in a dark jacket is partially visible. The mural is set against a warm, yellowish background with architectural details like a window. A blue and red horizontal bar is at the top of the slide.

SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

- Survey Downtown Stakeholders
- Leverage Blues Capital of Texas designation
- Unify branding and marketing Navasota as a complete district – removal of sub-districts
- Establish of a Downtown Merchant Group
- Provide small business and entrepreneurial support
- Explore year-round shop local campaigns
- Signage
 - Property owners: Remove signage for businesses that are closed, handwritten signs, and political signage
 - City: Provide directional/wayfinding signage

SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS



- Continue downtown beautification, increase public art
- Engage the youth
- Create/enforce downtown design standards
- Explore trash initiatives to alleviate issues for downtown business owners
- Enhance pedestrian safety

SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assess impact of downtown events
- Explore opportunities for upper floor development
- Utilize Visitor's Center
- Test out placemaking
 - Example: Mance Lipscomb Park
- Utilize Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) Funds



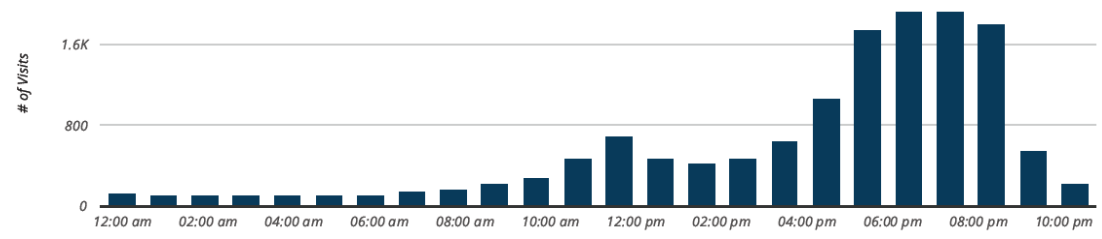


SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

- Address perceived parking concerns
 - City: Highlight availability of parking
 - Property owners: Leave spaces on Washington Ave and Railroad available for customers



Hourly Visits



DOWNTOWN PARKING – FREEDOM FESTIVAL

- In top 5 most populated days of the year for downtown Navasota – per cell phone analyses
- Aerial footage every hour from 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM
- Out of approximately 252 measured parking spots in downtown Navasota (excluding around City Hall – blocked for event) highest occupancy rate was 37.6%

Location	Time	Total Spots	Total Empty	Total Filled
1st Block 10th St	6:41:00 PM	21	17	4
Prosperity Parking Lot	6:41:00 PM	36	15	21
Beside Warehouse	6:41:00 PM	6	3	3
Last Block RR St	6:41:00 PM	18	16	2
EDC Parking Lot	6:42:00 PM	32	18	14
Cross (10th & Washington)	6:42:00 PM	59	46	13
Mance Lipscomb Park	6:43:00 PM	32	19	13
Wells Fargo	6:43:00 PM	48	27	21
Total		252	161	91
Percent		100.00%	63.89%	36.11%
1st Block 10th St	7:32:00 PM	21	14	7
Prosperity Parking Lot	7:32:00 PM	36	27	9
Beside Warehouse	7:32:00 PM	6	3	3
Last Block RR St	7:32:00 PM	18	16	2
EDC Parking Lot	7:32:00 PM	32	17	15
Cross (10th & Washington)	7:32:00 PM	59	44	15
Mance Lipscomb Park	7:33:00 PM	32	20	12
Wells Fargo	7:33:00 PM	48	28	20
Total		252	169	83
Percent		100.00%	67.06%	32.94%
1st Block 10th St	8:37:00 PM	21	10	11
Prosperity Parking Lot	8:37:00 PM	36	14	22
Beside Warehouse	8:37:00 PM	6	3	3
Last Block RR St	8:37:00 PM	18	16	2
EDC Parking Lot	8:38:00 PM	32	15	17
Cross (10th & Washington)	8:38:00 PM	59	45	14
Mance Lipscomb Park	8:38:00 PM	32	19	13
Wells Fargo	8:38:00 PM	48	36	12
Total		252	158	94
Percent		100.00%	62.70%	37.30%



MID-RANGE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider hiring downtown staff & apply for Main Street City designation
- Pedestrian Safety
 - Consider additional crosswalks across Washington Ave.
- Continue Small Business and Entrepreneurial Support
- Explore a downtown overlay
- Encourage downtown and community housing
- Offer downtown incentives
- Explore downtown/community art projects

LONG TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop long-term infrastructure improvement plans
- Focus on Cedar Creek Development
- Enhance downtown connectivity & walkability



MOVING FORWARD

- Historical Tax Credit Lunch & Learn/Walking Tour
- Cedar Creek/Mance Lipscomb Park Development & Clean the Creek Campaign
- Cell Phone Analyses & Downtown Sales Tax Custom Reports
- Main Street City Designation
- Wayfinding Project
- Parking Assessment & Signage





QUESTIONS

Rayna Teicheira, Economic Development Director
rteicheira@navasotatx.gov

Committee Members:

Alysia Cook, Opportunity Strategies
Josie Falletta, City of San Marcos
Shelly Hargrove, Texas Downtown
Amy Miller, City of Elgin
Catherine Sak, Texas Downtown



Downtown Navasota Assessment Report

August 2022

Prepared by



About Texas Downtown

Texas Downtown was founded in 1985 to connect and serve communities, businesses, and champions of downtowns across the state. Today, our mission is to provide members with resources, advocacy, education, and connections to develop vibrant districts. We represent over three hundred members from cities and towns, economic development corporations, nonprofits including chambers of commerce and business groups, small business, and individuals.

Downtown Assessment Process

The City of Navasota invited Texas Downtown to complete a downtown assessment on May 13, 2022. Downtown assessments are offered to members as part of our Downtown Assistance Program and are designed to bring a group of downtown professionals to a city's downtown district to assess existing conditions and make realistic, attainable recommendations. The process begins with a downtown stakeholder survey, public meeting, and extensive research by assessment team members prior to arrival in the member community.

During the day-long site visit, team members explore downtown, visit with business owners, and take notes. Team members are trained to identify opportunities and challenges, and to recommend best practices and strategies to enhance the downtown district and community. Team recommendations are compiled by Texas Downtown staff and include short (present-2 years), mid-range (2-5 years), and long-term recommendations (5+ years).

Each assessment team is handpicked based on the community's existing needs and challenges. Led by Texas Downtown staff, the Navasota team included the following members:

Alysia Cook, Opportunity Strategies
Josie Falletta, City of San Marcos
Shelly Hargrove, Texas Downtown
Amy Miller, City of Elgin
Catherine Sak, Texas Downtown

Initial Observations

- The City has shown a strong commitment to downtown efforts, which was recognized by business owners and employees.
- The installation of the crosswalk on E. Washington Street/State Highway 105 is a step in the right direction for pedestrian safety.
- Downtown Navasota is home to some destination businesses that are attracting both locals and visitors.

Potential Funding Sources for Downtown Projects & Promotion

- Anice Read Fund – Texas Downtown – The Fund offers support for downtown projects and programs
- Economic Development Administration (EDA)
- Economic Development Sales Tax – Up to 10% of economic development funds may be used for marketing
- Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT)
- Small Business Administration (SBA)
- Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) – TCA hosts the Texas Touring Roster, a list of Texas based artists, musicians, storytellers, and performers. Grants are available to offset the costs associated with booking.
- Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA)
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Division (TPWD)
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Texas Downtown and the assessment team are committed to working with the City of Navasota and its partners as the community continues to move forward with downtown development and revitalization efforts. Please do not hesitate to reach out for assistance with a downtown project or to get connected to another Texas Downtown member.

Short Term Recommendations

Survey Downtown Stakeholders

To build a vision for downtown, getting feedback from stakeholders is vital. In this case, stakeholders include community residents, business owners (from downtown and the community), and downtown property owners. Be sure that local teenagers are aware of the survey and are told that their input is critical. In just a few years these kids will be opening their own businesses and serving as local leaders.

Ask respondents what types of businesses, activities, and events they would like to see downtown. Get feedback on current downtown efforts and share information about available incentives and programs. Be sure to share survey results with City Council and the public.

Two sample surveys from the City of Seguin have been included as attachments to this report.

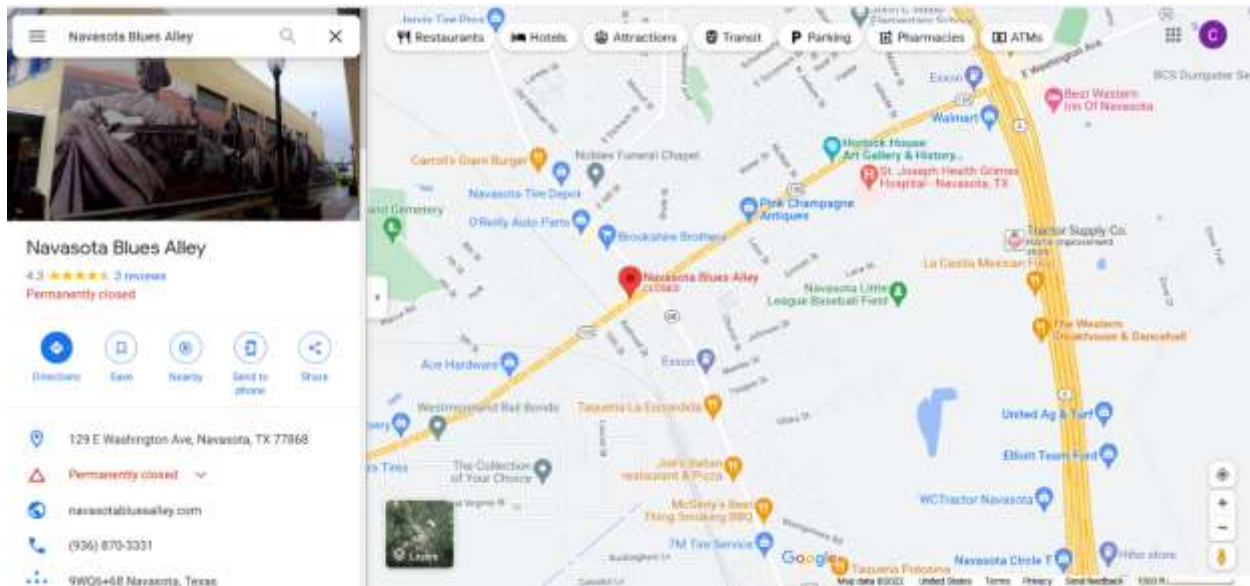
Blues Capital of Texas

Leverage Navasota's designation as the Blues Capital of Texas. Include information about the designation on the City's website and promotional materials.

Research the requirements necessary to become a designated [Texas Music Friendly Community](#) and consider applying for this recognition in the future.

The Texas Historical Commission has been tasked by the Legislature with development of the [Texas Music History Trail](#) to promote tourism related to the musical heritage of the state. This could be a great way to raise awareness about Texas blues musicians including Mance Lipscomb and the City should reach out to THC staff members Sarah Page (sarah.page@thc.texas.gov) or Mallory Laurel (mallory.laurel@thc.texas.gov) to stay in the loop about updates and opportunities.

Update the Google listing for Blues Alley. At the time this report was written, it was tagged as permanently closed as shown in the next image.



Branding & Marketing

Downtown Navasota should be branded and marketed as a complete district. Given the size of downtown, it does not make sense to create mini districts that will divide rather than unite small business owners. The team recommends removal of references to a Rail or Railroad District since the entire downtown is an asset of the community.

Before taking on more daily responsibilities, City staff needs to determine their capacity level, then identify who will manage marketing platforms (social media, e-newsletters, etc.) Whatever platforms you commit to, do them well. It is better to use fewer platforms with excellent content and engagement than to use all the platforms with mediocre content and engagement.

Add social media channels for Downtown Navasota. Social media is an excellent free resource, and without any social media platforms for downtown, visitors and locals have no way to digitally show support for the district and its businesses. Social media is the best free resource to market your district because it allows for crowd-generated content. Visitors will happily check into businesses digitally and tag businesses and the district in photos, etc. This is also an excellent method of encouraging businesses to support other businesses. A notable example is the love affair @industrysmtx and @davenportsanmarcos have with their neighbors on Instagram.

Branding is about far more than logos, fonts, and colors. Your brand is your identity as a community. Think about what makes Downtown Navasota stand apart from other downtowns. This brand identity should flavor everything you do,

from photos to written content to paid advertising to event and business promotion. Consistency is key, so think about the “voice” of your page(s).

Use cell phone data compiled by the City’s consultant to target potential visitors, business owners, and developers.

Downtown Merchant Group

The team was glad to hear that downtown business owners are using Facebook to communicate with one another and plan events. If there continues to be interest in developing a formal group, then it should be led and managed by business owners themselves, not City staff. We are happy to connect Navasota business owners with merchant groups in other cities.

[Historic Granbury Merchants Association – HGMA](#)

HGMA is one of the oldest merchant groups in Texas. The organization is comprised of downtown business owners and works closely with City of Granbury staff along with community organizations to promote downtown, host events, and encourage collaboration among business owners.

[Garland Downtown Business Association – GDBA](#)

The GDBA is dedicated to the promotion and success of Downtown Garland businesses and to serve as a cohesive voice of downtown business and property owners.

The City can support a downtown merchants group by offering funding for ad campaigns targeting visitors for overnight stays, supporting shop local efforts, offering small business workshops, and promoting downtown events and activities.

Small Business and Entrepreneurial Support

Connect with home-based business owners and small-scale manufacturers in the community and ask about their plans and interest in brick-and-mortar locations. Learn about these less visible business owners by surveying residents.

Review the process for opening a business in the City to identify hurdles for potential small business owners. Develop an online Small Business Resource Guide that walks potential entrepreneurs through the process of starting their own business in Navasota. [Georgetown](#) and [Sulphur Springs](#) have both created excellent resources for local small business owners and entrepreneurs that are worth exploring and replicating.

Schedule regular visits with small business owners so City staff and elected officials can hear directly from business owners and share information about resources, programs, and events. These visits are also opportunities for City and

economic development staff to support business retention, inquire about expansion plans, and connect with business suppliers that could be interested in relocating to Navasota.

Finally, be aware that businesses on the west side of the tracks feel disconnected and uninformed about events and projects. Some owners mentioned that Wine Walk vendors were reluctant to locate in west side businesses due to lack of traffic. Moving the start of the event to one of the west side businesses would force attendees to begin their explorations on that side of the tracks before moving to the east side where there is a greater density of businesses.

Shop Local/Shop Indie Campaigns

The team was impressed by how the City has increased participation in the annual Shop Small Business Giveaway. A year-round shop local/shop independent campaign would allow residents to learn about the products and services offered by local small businesses and how these businesses contribute to both the economy and culture of Navasota. Ideally this campaign would allow for the City, Chamber, and other community organizations to partner on this effort for maximum exposure.

At the height of the pandemic, the City of Mesquite Economic Development department partnered with students from Mesquite ISD to create videos of local small business owners sharing their stories. While a teacher was assigned to oversee the project, the students gained experience with all aspects of the video production process. These videos were shared on the City's social media channels and eventually picked up and highlighted by a news station in the DFW market, allowing for greater exposure for the businesses.

Signage

Encourage property owners to remove signage for businesses that are closed, and to share contact information for leasing or sale in display windows.

Directional signage to public parking would be helpful as would general wayfinding throughout downtown. Elgin collaborated with a consultant to design their wayfinding system and to coordinate with TXDOT, but produced and installed the signage using City staff and resources. Other communities have collaborated with consultants for design, production, and installation.

Handwritten signs that do not look professional should be discouraged. Similarly, display windows should not be used for political signage. These signs can be off-putting to visitors and customers.

Downtown Beautification & Arts

The Pretty City Committee is a wonderful initiative by the City to make improvements to downtown and the community. Since Texas Downtown became aware of the committee, staff has shared the idea with other downtowners to illustrate how a city can contribute to beautification efforts and encourage collaboration between City departments.

The Governor's Community Achievement Awards hosted by Keep Texas Beautiful offers cash prizes for beautification projects and the prize amount for Navasota size communities is \$130,000. If the City has not yet submitted the Pretty City Committee for consideration, then the team encourages staff to do so in the next cycle.

Public art contributes to the culture of downtown and adds color and interest and is also a fantastic way to engage residents of all ages. The Blues Alley mural is a great draw for downtown and the team encourages the City to explore and consider expanding public art offerings.

Youth Engagement

It is important for the next generations to feel connected to downtown if they are going to commit to carrying on the efforts made over the last few decades.

The Navasota ISD has several Career and Technical Education programs that could benefit downtown efforts. Some ISDs offer internships that allow students to learn from small business owners. In Waxahachie, students from the high school culinary arts program host an annual downtown dinner that raises funding for the program. Students are responsible for planning, cooking, and serving the meals to attendees using locally grown and produced ingredients.



Photo credit: City of Waxahachie

Downtown Design

In addition to stellar businesses, Downtown Navasota is home to some outstanding architecture. Since the Navasota Commercial Historic District is on the National Register for Historic Places, the City may regulate building materials under [legislation passed in 2019](#) within the district boundaries.

If there is not the political will for a preservation ordinance and enforcement, we encourage the City to create a guide for owners of historic commercial property that provides an overview of historic architectural features, recommended design guidelines, and examples of historic renovation, rehabilitation, and restoration projects.

Tie rod canopies are one example of an architectural feature that also makes sense for the Texas climate. These awnings provide more shade, protect products in display windows, and offer pedestrians respite from the weather.

Transom windows are another. Many downtown buildings have transom windows that have been covered by slipcovers, plywood, or paint. Uncovering these windows would allow more natural light into downtown businesses and contribute to the building's façade.

Trash

During our visit, the team learned about dumpster challenges, especially in the alley adjacent to the hotel. Centralized dumpsters would allow a cluster of businesses to share trash services. The City could absorb the additional cost as a

means of making up for the extra distance from businesses/residences. Dumpsters would need to have a lock as provided by the waste management collection team and only authorized users would have access.

Connect with staff in Denton and Ennis to learn about their downtown trash initiatives. In 2019, the City of Denton started a valet trash service for downtown businesses in response to ongoing trash and dumpster challenges. Their goals were to improve customer service by offering daily pickup, improve downtown aesthetics and odors, and reduce illegal dumping and contamination. We have included a flier about the program as an attachment this report.

The City of Ennis became the first in Texas to install underground dumpsters in January 2022. Eventually sixteen will be installed throughout their downtown.



Photo credit: City of Ennis

Pedestrian Safety

We were thrilled to see the crosswalk under construction on E. Washington Street/State Highway 105. During our visit team members noticed that the crosswalk buttons were not yet operational. Adding countdown clocks would

be helpful in the future so pedestrians and drivers can gauge remaining time to cross.

The team also noticed some of the sidewalks were uneven and could cause safety issues. Public Works should review downtown sidewalks for trip hazards and add railings or paint that draws attention to elevation changes.



Photo credit: Texas Downtown

Events

Events are designed for a variety of goals including quality of life, raising awareness, fundraising, or small business support. They also require significant staff time and resources to execute successfully.

Assess the impact of City-hosted events on small businesses by visiting with owners during and after each event to gauge their successes, failures, areas of improvement, and learn about their efforts to connect with event attendees.

Explore Opportunities for Upper Floor Development

Downtown Navasota has an abundance of multistory buildings, but most upper floors are vacant or used for storage and many windows are covered with metal or plywood. To effectively screen vacant upper floors and storage, black fabric or material should be installed from the inside so that those upper floors look more active from the street.

Review the development process for upper stories and remove any restrictions unrelated to public health and safety that could limit the transition.

If residential development is not possible for a building owner in the short term, they should be encouraged and/or incentivized to open the space for short term use as a meeting or event venue so that more locals and visitors can experience downtown at another level and potentially be inspired to take the next steps towards transitioning these spaces to residential use.

[This article](#) from Wisconsin Economic Development offers case studies of communities that have incentivized upper floor housing in Wisconsin and elsewhere. [Downtown Clifton](#), North Carolina offers a \$5,000 in-kind permit waiver for new residential development. The City of Denison has a [Fire Suppression Grant Program](#) that is worth a look.

The Main Street America [Housing Report](#) released in early 2022 explores some of the challenges of downtown housing and reviews existing housing in different states.

Visitor Center

The visitor center was locked during our visit, despite having posted hours. We appreciate the effort of the City to make marketing materials and public restrooms available to visitors, but the center must be open as advertised. Restrooms in the rear of the visitor center need frequent maintenance and checks for cleanliness. During the team's visit the restrooms were clean, but broken and dirty pipes and pipe sections were found in both.

Since many downtown businesses are not able to offer restroom access to customers, the City could create signs like the ones in Downtown Waxahachie that direct downtown visitors to those at their visitor center.



Public restroom signage. Photo credit: City of Waxahachie

Placemaking

Mance Lipscomb Park is located on North LaSalle Street and features a statue of Mr. Lipscomb and a Texas Historical Commission marker about Navasota's Commercial Historic District.

Consider testing out some placemaking concepts at the park to raise awareness about Mr. Lipscomb and to activate this space. Host a community art project, set up some hammocks or other temporary seating, invite musicians to perform, historians to speak, or partner with the property owner to activate the lot adjacent to the park into a community space for a day.

Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) Funds

Make sure that use of HOT Funds complies with the two-part test prescribed by Texas law. The Texas Municipal League should have the most recent version of the state's requirements.

The City of San Marcos has a Downtown CoMarketing Fund. This is a 50/50 matching reimbursement grant to businesses that do paid advertising outside of San Marcos. The City's only ask is that they include the phrase "Downtown San Marcos" in their ad. Businesses win by only paying 50% of the price of the ad,

and the district wins because they are advertising the entire district with every ad. The program also stretches public funds since the HOT is paying less for more advertisements.

HOT funds may also be utilized for billboards, social media marketing, events that generate tourism, digital advertising, and much more. If the City's General Fund is constrained, marketing dollars can be supplied by HOT.

Parking

Parking was cited as an issue in the stakeholder survey and during in-person visits. This is a common complaint from downtowns of all sizes since so many people believe that parking directly in front of their downtown destination should always be available. Often people do not have these same expectations for larger and big box retailers.

A simple exercise to illustrate this dichotomy is to take an outline of the local Walmart – both the building and the parking lot – and overlay it on a map of downtown. On the next page, we estimated what that would look like in Navasota. The red boxes are approximate but clearly show that the Walmart parcel is smaller than Downtown Navasota, but not by much.

Downtown property owners, business owners, and employees should leave spots on Washington Street available for customers and park behind their businesses or on adjacent streets. Education of business owners on this topic is paramount. We encourage the City to host a workshop or webinar that can be recorded and shared in the future.

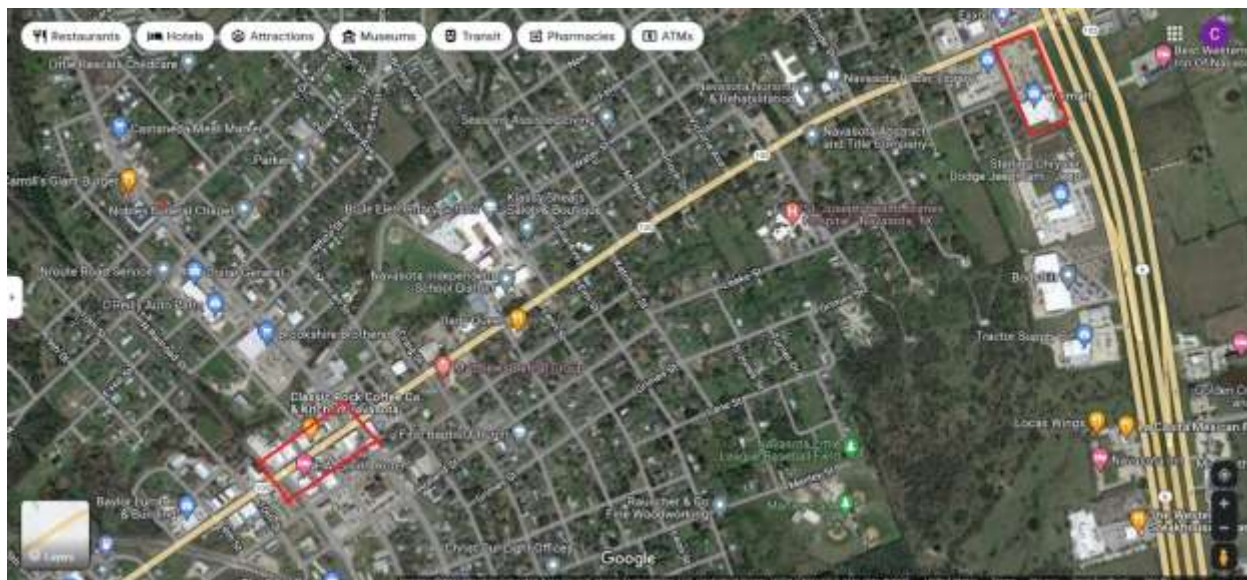


Photo credit: Google Maps, Texas Downtown

In March 2022, we hosted a webinar on Downtown Parking featuring Jaime Snyder of Walter P Scott. She shared some excellent tips and strategies for downtown parking that are worth exploring.

Mid-Range Recommendations

Downtown Staff

There is currently not a City staff member that is dedicated to downtown. Tasks are currently divided among a few different staffers. The team believes Downtown Navasota would benefit from having a City staff member who could focus on downtown business recruitment and retention, downtown events, and related programs. If the City were to apply for reinstatement as a Texas Main Street City then a full time downtown manager would be required. If that is not an option for the next few years, a staff position funded by general revenue who could focus on downtown at least fifty percent of the time would be ideal and would allow the City to tackle some of the more pressing downtown challenges.

Pedestrian Safety

Pedestrian safety should continue to be a focus for Downtown Navasota. Additional crosswalks on Washington would be helpful for downtown visitors and help with slowing traffic.

Small Business and Entrepreneurial Support

The Bastrop Economic Development Corporation hosts an annual Career Day that introduces high students to a variety of careers with local industries. Employers can visit one on one with high school juniors and seniors, and students are able to get firsthand experience with equipment and learn about local companies.

Learn more about the Bastrop Career Day event in this recorded [Texas Downtown webinar](#) that also explores coworking, local partnerships, and workforce development.



*Bastrop High School students try out virtual welding during the 2022 Career Day.
Photo credit: Bastrop ISD.*

Consider hosting a series of small business and entrepreneur workshops. The Mesquite Business Retention and Expansion Task Force hosted its third Entrepreneur Day in May 2022. This year's event featured a local entrepreneur as keynote speaker as well as sessions on business planning and management principles, marketing, real estate, finance, and working with City departments. The Task Force includes representatives from the City of Mesquite, Mesquite ISD, Dallas College, Workforce Solutions, and the Mesquite Chamber of Commerce. Business owners and employees told team members they would welcome technical training on relevant topics including social media, photography, and online marketing.



2022 Mesquite Entrepreneur's Day promotion. Photo credit: City of Mesquite

Downtown Overlay

In September 2014, the City of Elgin City Council approved a [zoning overlay](#) for the Downtown Historic District creating two areas with mixed uses. The core area of downtown from 2nd Street to Central Avenue allows for 50% residential on a first floor in the rear of a structure. The remaining areas allow up to 100% residential uses. Commercial uses include a variety of options in C-1 and C-2. The zoning overlay added uses such as wineries, breweries, cabinetry making, metal smithing, food processing, and glass blowing.

The overlay has encouraged property owners to create new residential spaces, leading to improvements in downtown alleys and better sized commercial spaces that are attractive to new small business owners.

Downtown & Community Housing

According to available data, 82% of the local workforce commutes to work in Navasota and this certainly contributes to workforce challenges faced by business owners in downtown and the community.

Diverse housing types can allow a community to meet the needs of residents.

After a 2020 tornado, the Bowie City Council approved a zoning change to allow tiny homes. While these small homes will not work for large families, they can be perfect for singles, couples, or small families. In Central Texas, [Pflugerville](#)

[high school students](#) built industry standard tiny homes, and [Community First](#) has used tiny homes to house the homeless.

Denison, Goliad, and McKinney all have robust downtown residential development. We encourage the City to visit with staff in these communities to learn about programs, incentives, and eliminating barriers to redevelopment.

Downtown Incentives

Incentives do not have to equal cash payments, loans, or matching grants – see examples below.

- Waive or discount permit fees
- Expand permitted uses in a defined downtown district
- Owners of properties included in the Navasota Commercial Historic District on the National Register may take advantage of state and federal preservation tax credits.

The City must ensure that downtown incentives are awarded with the utmost transparency and accountability.

Downtown Art

In Pittsburg, Texas, the City and EDC are currently collaborating with high school students to create downtown banners celebrating local heroes who have contributed to community and recognize the student artists.

A few years ago, Downtown Garland hosted two community art projects – a paint-by-number mural and a sculpture garden created using recycled materials. Both events attracted record crowds, including many who were not regular downtown visitors.



Photo credit: Robert Smith



Photo credit: Robert Smith

Long Term Recommendations

Infrastructure Improvements

Downtowns tend to have the most historic buildings and infrastructure. Planning for future infrastructure repairs and improvements is vital so that the City can secure necessary funding and business and property owners can anticipate disruptions.

Long term infrastructure improvement plans should be shared with property owners when appropriate and should allow for input before adoption.

Cedar Creek Development

Cedar Creek is an undeveloped asset just north of Washington Street. In the long term, adding trails to the banks of the creek would provide another access point to downtown and provide visitors a link to nature.

Downtown Connectivity & Walkability

In 2021, TXDOT offered grants for pedestrian and alternative transportation routes. This type of funding would be helpful in connecting downtown to other neighborhoods. Monitor updates from the agency so the City can apply in the future to support this type of project.

This article from the [National Association of Realtors](#) explores how small and rural communities can respond to residents' interest in connectivity and walkability. The [AARP](#) published a Walk Audit Tool Kit that is helpful for communities of all sizes.