

Future Urban Image



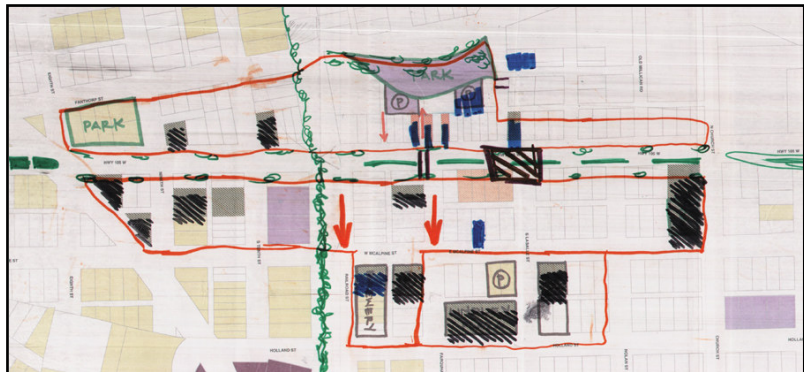
SECTION 24 – FUTURE URBAN IMAGE

Introduction

The following section is a plan for the improvement of the visual image of the City of Navasota. Many of the recommendations contained within this plan are based on the input received from citizens of Navasota during the public design workshop and citizen participation process. The plan specifically addresses the areas identified as needing attention in Navasota, including gateways, general streetscape appearance, parking demand, and signage.

Public Design Workshop

A public design workshop was held on March 9, 2004 in Navasota to obtain citizen's ideas and feedback. Fifteen participants including members from the Navasota City Council, Keep Navasota Beautiful, the Navasota Merchants Association, as



Public Design Workshop Participant Sketch

well as master gardeners and concerned citizens attended the design workshop. The participants were divided into three teams of approximately four to five



Public Design Workshop Participant Sketch

individuals, and placed at tables outfitted with various materials including City maps, tracing paper, markers, and a flip chart for notes. Students were assigned to each group to serve as facilitators and to answer questions. The

groups worked for roughly an hour and a half, brainstorming, and drawing their plans for how to make Navasota a better place to live, work, and play. Each team was then asked to present their plans to the group.

After the team presentations, common ideas were identified between the three plans. The urban design team then looked at ways to combine and expand upon the ideas generated at the workshop. Several more site visits were made to brainstorm additional ideas for developing the Concept Plan.



Public Design Workshop Participant Sketch

Concept Plan

Several key ideas were compiled from the plans produced by the participants in the design workshop. Such ideas include the identification of city gateways which lead into the City as a whole as well as gateways into Downtown, streetscape and landscaping recommendations, pedestrian crosswalk and safety improvements, traffic calming, parking management, and identification of infill opportunities.



Goals and Objectives

Goal #1: Identify and enhance the gateways to define entrances to the City of Navasota.

- Objective 1: The City should prepare specific city and Downtown gateway and corridor plans for landscaping and entrance signage.
- Objective 2: Appropriate monument signs should be designed that are visually appealing and installed at identified gateways.
- Objective 3: Landscape with suitable plants, natural to the climate, so as to minimize maintenance costs.
- Objective 4: Navasota should incorporate the land acquisition and gateway installation costs into the Capital Improvements Program and Annual Budget.
- Objective 5: Development should be regulated to prevent incompatible and unattractive land uses (i.e. open automotive storage, strip commercial zoning) along identified gateways.
- Objective 6: The City should regulate the location, heights, size, number, and type of signage along identified gateways.
- Objective 7: Navasota should establish overlay districts, either the length of an entire corridor or the width of a large intersection, to gain greater aesthetic control of signage, landscaping, building materials, and screening requirements within such overlay districts.

Goal #2: Identify and enhance the gateways to define Downtown Navasota.

- Objective 1: The City should enhance Downtown gateways through the use of “hardscape” materials (i.e. statues, monument signs, and concrete/brick pavers) and plant materials.
- Objective 2: Navasota should devise a wayfinding signage program to lead visitors from the bypass into Downtown Navasota.
- Objective 3: Thematic gateways should be established, each tying into the history of Navasota and the region with the commemoration of a statue (e.g. Mance Lipscomb, Native Americans, Washington-on-the-Brazos).

Goal #3: Downtown Navasota should provide effective pedestrian circulation.

- Objective 1: The pedestrian environment in Downtown should be improved by creating an organized and efficient network of sidewalks.
- Objective 2: A comprehensive street lighting program should be developed throughout Downtown Navasota.
- Objective 3: Navasota should initiate a street lamp program that replaces existing streetlights with antique theme light poles. Navasota may want to explore the possibility of installing gas-lamps.
- Objective 4: Landscaped central medians should be established for the purpose of traffic calming and pedestrian comfort along Washington Avenue. The medians should be landscaped with trees that provide shade in the summer. The medians will serve as a safety measure for pedestrians crossing Washington Avenue.
- Objective 5: Where central medians are not easily facilitated, the City should consider paving turning lanes with cobblestone or other rough aggregate pavers to discourage continuous traffic and to protect pedestrians.
- Objective 6: The City should establish a central median where the hike/bike trail crosses LaSalle Street, in order to slow traffic and provide pedestrian safety.
- Objective 7: Navasota should coordinate with the utility providers to relocate lines underground in order to improve the safety and aesthetic quality of Downtown.

Goal #4: Establish Downtown Navasota as a destination, where people feel comfortable sitting, resting, talking, and shopping.

- Objective 1: The City should provide appropriate street furniture along Washington Avenue and within downtown parks. Existing

street furniture should be replaced with antique themed benches, trash receptacles, street planters, etc.

Goal #5: Downtown Navasota should incorporate landscaping elements within an urban context to enhance the aesthetic value of the pedestrian experience.

- Objective 1: The City should enhance the appearance of off-street parking areas. Include requirements in a landscape ordinance and parking policies to assure appropriate perimeter screening and interior landscaping of off-street parking.
- Objective 2: Navasota should improve the appearance of the railroad right-of-way along Railroad Avenue by planting low-maintenance plant material.
- Objective 3: Cedar Creek should be cleaned up and maintained.
- Objective 4: Navasota should encourage storefronts to open their businesses to the rear, towards the Creek, to provide a more attractive and dynamic mixture of uses along the creek.

Goal #6: Create an aesthetic and physically appealing character in Downtown Navasota that creates a unique destination for visitors.

- Objective 1: The city should utilize urban design guidelines consistent with Downtown's existing mixture of architectural styles to create a strong and cohesive sense of place. These guidelines should be based on the Secretary of Interior's Standards for new construction within a historic context (i.e. building scale, building materials, etc.)
- Objective 2: Navasota should begin contracting Texas A&M University architecture and landscape architecture students for additional design work, including possible façade recommendations and gateway designs for Downtown Navasota.

- Objective 3: The use of sidewalk canopies on storefronts should be promoted to create a comfortable and attractive pedestrian environment. Incentives should be provided to encourage property and business owners to install canopies to provide shade and shelter as well as an attractive cohesive appearance in Downtown Navasota.
- Objective 4: The City should offer a rebate for canopy installation/replacement to owners of targeted properties.
- Objective 5: Navasota should institute guidelines for pedestrian-scaled signage in Downtown with coherent material, size, color, and fonts to achieve consistency within the street façade over Washington Avenue.

Goal #7: Establish better utilization of existing parking within Downtown Navasota.

- Objective 1: The City should encourage Downtown merchants to require employees to park to the rear of their businesses. This policy will enable more customer parking along Washington Avenue.
- Objective 2: Navasota should improve lighting in off-street parking areas to the rear of businesses. In order to make patrons more comfortable in night time shopping more police should be assigned to the Downtown and a “Cop on the Beat” program should be established, where police officers walk a beat around town at the beginning of each shift.

Goal #8: Encourage infill opportunities within Downtown Navasota, to increase density, creating a more diverse, 24-hour destination.

- Objective 1: Navasota should create a bandstand and farmers’ market as a multifunctional public space to provide for better public interaction and community involvement.

- Objective 2: The City should create community parks to provide more open green space to the citizens of Navasota.
- Objective 3: Navasota should utilize an existing city block and vacant historical structures for the development of a bar and grill/microbrewery.
- Objective 4: An “Artisan’s Row” should be created in the Downtown area to both encourage small business and to utilize stores that are currently empty.

Gateway Recommendations

An enhancement of the gateways is necessary in order to define entrances into the City of Navasota. These gateways are identified in the Urban Image section (Section 14) on Maps 14.1 and 14.2. Gateway enhancements can be achieved in a number of ways, including the use of landscaping, monumental signage, landmarks, and paving materials. The City should regulate land use along identified gateways to prevent incompatible and unattractive uses, such as commercial strip zoning and open automotive storage. The City might also consider establishing overlay districts, either the length of an entire corridor or the width of a large intersection, to gain greater aesthetic control in these areas. Navasota should consider more vigorous control of signage, landscaping, building materials, and screening requirements within such overlay districts.

Citizens identified four gateways leading into Downtown Navasota, and suggested enhancing these gateways through the use of “hardscape” materials, such as statues and brick or concrete pavers, as well as with additional landscaping. The use of historically and culturally themed gateways utilizing appropriate commemorative statues and plaques should be considered.

Streetscape Recommendations

In order to improve the pedestrian environment in Downtown Navasota, an organized and efficient network of sidewalks must be implemented. This will make

all areas of Downtown accessible, promote public health, and encourage a sense of connection. Crosswalks should be improved in order to provide pedestrian safety.

Adequately illuminated areas provide a sense of comfort and attraction to pedestrians. The Comprehensive Plan recommends providing a street lighting program, which will extend the hours available for use and activity and provide a



Downtown Navasota Streetscape

sense of security for patrons. Historic lighting will help to create a sense of place in Navasota and tie together Navasota’s rich historic presence. Replacing existing street furniture along Washington Avenue and within downtown parks with antique themed benches, trash receptacles, and street planters will also create a cohesive Downtown fabric.

Citizens identified a need for more landscaping within Downtown. The Comprehensive Plan identifies areas where landscaped medians should be installed to calm vehicular traffic, promote pedestrian safety, and enhance the aesthetic value of Navasota’s streets. Trees are a very important element not only in the natural areas, but in the urban ones as well. Trees provide shade and barriers from traffic as well as traffic noise. Street trees encourage pedestrian activity, promote safety, and add an improved aesthetic quality. Table 24.1 lists suggested trees for use in Navasota.

Table 24.1: Suggested Tree Species

Large Tree Species		Large to Medium Tree Species	
<u>Scientific Name</u>	Common Name	<u>Scientific Name</u>	Common Name
<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>	Sycamore	<i>Gleditsia tricanthos</i>	Common Honeylocust
<i>Platanus x acerifolia</i>	London Planetree	<i>Ginko biloba</i>	Ginko, male only
<i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>	Bur Oak	<i>Koelreuteria paniculata</i>	Panicled Goldenraintree
<i>Quercus nigra</i>	Water Oak	<i>Ulmus Crassifolia</i>	Cedar Elm
<i>Quercus phellos</i>	Willow Oak	<i>Ulmus parvifolia</i>	Lacebark Elm
<i>Quercus shumardii</i>	Shumard Oak		

Planting of the street trees should be avoided under utility lines, at traffic intersections, or in front of traffic signs. Phasing utility lines underground will allow for urban planting in more areas of Downtown. Local foresters or horticulturists should be consulted for proper planting instructions. Urban Forestry Partnership Grants are available from the Texas Forest Service and may help in initiating an urban forest program in Navasota. General information and information on grants can be found at the end of this section.

Parking Recommendations

Currently Navasota has a more than adequate amount of parking available, but it remains underutilized for a variety of reasons. A number of parking spaces exist in the parking lots that exist adjacent to Cedar Creek. Citizens expressed safety concerns for the utilization of these areas after dark. For this reason, all alleys and off-street parking lots should be well lighted for the comfort of their users. To better facilitate traffic flow this plan recommends that the two alleys that connect Washington Avenue to the Cedar Creek parking lots be converted to one-way access. Downtown business owners and their employees should be encouraged to use these parking spaces and reserve the on-street parking for customers and

visitors. To satisfy the parking demands of future development, two parcels of unimproved property have been proposed as future off-street parking sites. These sites are located adjacent to a proposed microbrewery and another adjacent to the police department and proposed bandstand/farmers’ market site.

Signage Recommendations

Citizens in attendance at the public meetings expressed an interest in regulating signage within Downtown. In order to present a more cohesive visual image and to enhance the physical appearance of Downtown Navasota’s street facade, it is recommended that the City institute guidelines for pedestrian-scaled signage with coherent material, size, color, and fonts. Uncontrolled placement and unlimited numbers of signs degrade the aesthetic attractiveness of the natural and manmade attributes of the City thereby undermining the economic value of tourism, visitation, and permanent economic growth.



Navasota Signs

Sidewalk canopies, or awnings, have been traditionally used to protect the pedestrian from the climate and compliment the architecture of buildings. More recently, sidewalk canopies have also been used as a type of signage. In order to provide an attractive and unified appearance in Downtown, sidewalk canopies should be regulated for coherence in material, color, type, size, and location on the building.

Concept Sketches

A separate document has been prepared in conjunction with this plan. The document entitled “Navasota Conceptual Designs” contains a series of illustrations for projects that have been discussed in several sections of this document. It is hoped that these designs will serve as an inspiration to civic leaders and interested citizens.

The following 10-year action agenda is suggested for implementation of this section of the Comprehensive Plan.

Action Agenda (2005-2015)

Year 1:

- Create a commission and charge it with the task of implementation and the procurement of funds for all Downtown improvements.
- Revise the zoning ordinance to regulate land use and signage along all identified gateways.
- Establish a committee for developing urban design guidelines for Downtown Navasota.

Year 2:

- Implement a rear-parking policy in Downtown Navasota.
- Improve lighting in rear-parking lots.
- Establish a greater police presence throughout Downtown and rear-parking lots.
- Begin developing urban design guidelines.

Year 3:

- Clean up and maintain Cedar Creek.
- Begin preparation of design documents for Downtown streetscape improvements.
- Begin contracting with Texas A&M architecture and landscape architecture students for additional design proposals, including possible gateway designs and façade recommendations for Downtown Navasota.
- Establish overlay districts within Downtown Navasota and along identified gateways for greater aesthetic control.

Year 4:

- Procure vacant and undeveloped property in the effort to utilize those sites in conjunction with public/private sector partnership agreements.
- Begin the recruitment of businesses to locate desired in-fill projects, such as a bar-and-grill/microbrewery.
- Improve alley access to rear parking lots from Washington Avenue by implementing one-way circulation policies.

Year 5:

- Begin placement of wayfinding signage aimed at drawing people into Downtown Navasota.

- Erect kiosks or staffed informational booths to assist tourists.

Year 6:

- Promote the establishment and maintenance of sidewalk canopies.
- Explore the possibilities of providing financial assistance for façade improvements of Downtown Navasota properties.

Year 7:

- Begin contracting with Texas A&M landscape architecture students for design proposals for the extension of the existing hike/bike trail along Cedar Creek, connecting to Downtown Navasota.

Year 8:

- Begin construction of hike/bike trail expansion along Cedar Creek.
- Improve the railroad right-of-way with low maintenance landscaping.

Year 9:

- Begin construction of a complete sidewalk system throughout Downtown Navasota.
- Create community pocket parks to provide more open green space to the citizens of Navasota.
- Incorporate gateway acquisition costs into the Capital Improvements Program and Annual Budget.

Year 10:

- Begin contracting with Texas A&M landscape architecture students for additional design proposals for city gateways.
- Begin construction of city gateways.
- Coordinate with the utility providers to relocate the utility lines underground, where currently located within alleys, in order to improve aesthetics and the safety of Downtown Navasota residents.