

SECTION 6 – IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

No plan has much value unless it is implemented. This section of the Navasota Economic Development Plan contains a five-year Action Agenda for implementing the proposals that are contained in this document. The sequencing and the timing of each Action Agenda item were carefully evaluated to ensure that they would be practical, prudent, and realistic. The Action Agenda is structured so as to facilitate the four types of actions required for plan implementation. These include:

- Administrative Actions
- Organizational Actions
- Financial Actions
- Executive Actions

Many if not all of the actions identified in the agenda that follows are discussed at length in the sister document – the Navasota Comprehensive Plan. Several parts of the Future City section of that plan are particularly relevant. They include the parts pertaining to land use, historic resources, and urban image.

It should be noted that the following Action Agenda calls for the creation of five voluntary citizen support groups. They include the following:

- Business Support Task Force: This group helps people who want to go into business by teaching them how to prepare a business plan, organize their business, advertise, etc. Membership would include local bankers, local business people, and educators.
- Tourism Commission: This group actively promotes tourism as a component of the City's economy. It identifies historic properties in Navasota that could be used for bed and breakfast businesses. It also assists property owners in establishing bed and breakfast businesses with ideas on planning and

operations. It establishes rules of operation that are included in the City's land use controls. It is composed of business people who are interested in historic preservation as well as those who actually operate a bed and breakfast business. People who live in other cities (Bryan, Brenham, etc.) could also be asked to serve in an advisory capacity.

- Business Unity Council: This group is composed of delegates from the business communities along Texas Highway 6 and Downtown. The work of this group consists of identifying actions that can be taken by both the private sector and the City to reduce friction between the two respective business communities and to improve the general business climate for Navasota. A City staff person serves as the facilitator/director for the Council.
- Business Idea Council: This group is essentially a "think tank". It identifies businesses that are needed in Navasota or those that would have a good chance of prospering. This group organizes and sponsors semi-annual workshops to present ideas on perceived business opportunities. The work of this group would interface and support that of the Business Support Task Force discussed above. This group is composed of creative people.
- Urban Revitalization Committee: This group assists the City in identifying, planning, and executing actions directed towards physically revitalizing Navasota. Most of its work would center on the identification of vacant lots, underutilized sites, or deteriorated properties that could be used in the revitalization program. Membership on this group is open to all citizens but would probably be heavily influenced by real estate, development, and finance professionals.

POTENTIAL PROJECTS

The potential projects and programs that could be undertaken by Navasota to improve the local economy are limited only by the confines of the imagination.

Extended discussions between and among the members of the Target Cities Team produced the following ideas:

1. The Caboose Bar and Grill on Railroad Street
2. A dinner or theme theatre
3. A luxurious day spa catering to clients from Houston
4. Enhancement of the area around *The Wood Factory* with related shops
5. Theme or specialty restaurants that would serve customers from College Station/Bryan as well as Houston
6. A living history farm with animals, old buildings, and people dressed in period costumes demonstrating lost crafts and skills
7. A large, attractive pottery store similar to the one located in Marshall, Texas
8. A physical therapy complex
9. A holistic medicine complex
10. An executive retreat and conference center serving the corporate community in Houston
11. Specialized vocational or trade schools
12. A large, City owned and managed recreational vehicle park to serve as a winter haven for people from the northern states
13. A specialty music store with knowledgeable staff offering products oriented toward guitars, band instruments and other medium to high end uses
14. A game supply store (Billiards, air-hockey, arcade, etc)
15. A Youth Fine Arts Academy (music lessons, art classes, etc) in collaboration with the new Navasota Recreation Center or as a stand-alone business
16. A custom serving old-fashioned bread products, specialty pastries, etc, to serve both the existing community and potential bed and breakfast tourism
17. Custom made furniture and Restoration
18. Hi-Tech consultants (web designing, database management, etc.) serving clients throughout the region

19. A construction trades school offering courses and certificates in carpentry, plumbing, electrical skills, and masonry
20. A bus/recreational vehicle repair or customization facility
21. A manufacturing business specializing in the sale and installation of in-ground storm shelters
22. A dinner/excursion train led by a steam locomotive
23. A large format nursery (i.e. trees, grass, poinsettias, orchids, etc.)
24. A self-service format farm (i.e. berries, flowers, Christmas trees, etc.) catering to the State Highway 6 trade as well as customers from Houston
25. A dude ranch resort
26. A large vehicle/equipment operator training school (i.e. truck, buses, earth moving equipment, etc.)
27. A large engine repair facility and training school

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Both the Navasota Comprehensive Plan and this Plan contain suggestions for numerous actions that could be taken in the pursuit of community goals. The following list constitutes action priorities that were identified by the Target Cities Team. These priorities form the basic structure for much of the Action Agenda that follows.

- Employ a Planning and Economic Development Director. This staff member would ultimately be charged with the “planning” duties currently conducted by the City’s Building Division. For example, this person would be responsible for preparing staff reports and presenting cases before the planning and zoning commission regarding zoning changes. Additional duties could include answering developer and citizen questions about regulations. This staff position would also serve part-time to assist the Economic Development Corporation and to oversee the implementation of this Plan. This individual would also be responsible for directing the City’s proposed business incubator as well as the Geographic Information System.

- Maintain the Geographic Information System (GIS) that has been prepared for the City. Ongoing maintenance of the new GIS should be conducted to provide up-to-date information for the implementation of this Plan. Maintenance of economic related data could be conducted along with the maintenance of other City data.
- Maintain and routinely revise the Internet website that has been created for the City. The economic development web site should serve as an effective brochure for potential developers and businesses considering Navasota. The information contained on the site should be up-to-date, and its layout should periodically be modified to provide a "fresh" look to the site. The future possibilities of incorporating interactive GIS maps and site selection tools should be considered as well.
- Construct gateways.
- Gateways are intended to be attractive combinations of signage, sculpture, and landscaping. They announce the presence of a city and serve as a physical and visual welcome sign. The design and attractiveness of a gateway is often perceived as an indicator of a community's status and health. The absence of gateways or the presence of unattractive and unkempt gateways is often associated with an unprogressive, declining city. Navasota should pay particular attention to the northernmost gateway on State Highway 6. This location is probably best suited to the creation of a design that will have a positive long-term impact on public perception. Suggested designs for gateways have been included in a separate associated document entitled: *Navasota Conceptual Designs*.
- Engage in Downtown revitalization
- Recommendation actions could include the following: zoning modifications to allow mixed-use projects, improvements in street lighting, additional landscaping, crosswalk and pedestrian safety improvements, sign controls, parking area enhancements, adoption of aesthetic guidelines, provision of sidewalk canopies, increased public art, new street furniture, parking area reconfiguration, and other similar initiatives. All of these recommendations are discussed in detail in Section 24 of the Comprehensive Plan.

- Create an Artisan's Row in the Downtown. Create an Artisan's Row in Downtown. Several adjoining or closely spaced buildings could be converted to provide live/work/display space for local artists. The first floors could provide room to display and sell the artist creations, while the upper stories could be loft apartments with room for artist to live and work. Another possible arrangement is to use a historic building fronting on Washington Avenue or another major downtown street as the primary display/sales space, with adjoining our nearby buildings providing the live/work loft apartments. This arrangement might be well-suited for "back alley" or accessory buildings currently underutilized, with a more prominent building serving as a central sales space employing a knowledgeable and full-time staff.
- Build a brewery or brewpub and create a new restaurant row along Railroad Street. Build a brewery or brewpub and create a new Restaurant Row along Railroad Street. Convert empty buildings in the southern block fronting along Railroad Street into an entertainment anchor for downtown. The associated brewpub could make local recipe microbrew beers available only on tap at the brewpub, and restaurants in the Restaurant Row. These beers could also be made available to other restaurants in the City. The selection might include three or four beers heavily branded to identify their association with Navasota. This concept has worked well in the King William's District of San Antonio, where local microbreweries and restaurants have a strong association with local artists and downtown/historic tourism. In addition to the brewery facilities, other local or downtown friendly franchise restaurants could be recruited to locate in adjacent buildings or on redeveloped city property also on this block.
- Redevelop the vacant service stations on LaSalle Street.
- The presence of two vacant service stations on LaSalle Street creates an unsightly and shabby appearance to that part of Navasota. Efforts should be made to correct this problem with the redevelopment of both structures. Suggested designs for the re-utilization of these structures has been included in a separate document entitled: *Navasota Conceptual Designs*.

- Create and administer a business incubator.
- A business incubator is a place where people who have ideas for starting a business can pursue their dreams. These facilities provide start-up space, secretarial/staff assistance, telecommunications services, and other benefits. They serve as a launch pad for entrepreneurship.
- Create a Research and Development Business Park. Create a Research and Development Business Park. This development would serve in a support role for existing and future businesses within the industrial park. Administrative offices, research and development, and other office related activities currently conducted within the industrial park or in other cities could be relocated to this development. An aesthetically pleasing development style should be encouraged to give an attractive "gateway" feel to the development.
- Use property located in the northeast corner of Navasota for a combined Arboretum and LaSalle Fair. These facilities are to be located in Planning Area 1, as described in see Section 17 of the Navasota Comprehensive Plan, and as shown in this section of the NEDP on Map 6.1. The Arboretum component of this project would be patterned after the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center located just outside of Austin. It would provide a place for tourists to visit and would integrate with the flea market activities associated with LaSalle Fair. The Arboretum would also blend well with Martha's Bloomers located nearby on the east side of State Highway 6. LaSalle Fair is intended to be a multi-venue facility for the display and sale of items, not unlike the very large facility located in Canton, Texas. For an indication of the Canton facilities, please see www.cantontradedays.com. The City could rent booths and space to vendors and the facility could be used for the sale of art, arts and crafts, and other items. LaSalle Fair could also be used as an outdoor amphitheater for concerts, plays, dances, etc. The location of this facility on State Highway 6 would give it a visual presence along that emerging transportation corridor and would help to ensure its success. It is anticipated that tourists and customers from College Station/Bryan, as well as Houston and the North Houston area would patronize this facility.

- Revise the City’s zoning ordinance to facilitate and encourage mixed-use districts (see Section 17 of the Navasota Comprehensive Plan).
- Encourage and support the expansion of bed and breakfast lodging businesses (see Section 22 of the Navasota Comprehensive Plan).
- Materially expand vocational training programs and design the curricula to meet the needs of local and regional businesses and industries.
- Produce an annual report on the economic development activities that have been conducted during the past year.

ACTION AGENDA

The process for the implementation of the following Action Agenda is graphically shown on Figure 5-1 at the end of this section of the NEDP. Certain actions requiring specific sites are shown on Map 5-1, also located at the end of this section.

Year 1

- Adopt this Navasota Economic Development Plan or a variation of it.
- Create and maintain an Internet Website for economic development purposes.
- Employ a full-time staff person who will serve as the Economic Development/Planning Director for the City and who will also be responsible for overseeing the business incubator.
- Locate a building that can be used as a small business incubator.
- Create and activate the Business Support Task Force.
- Create and activate the Tourism Commission.
- Create and activate the Business Unity Council.
- Create and activate the Urban Revitalization Committee.

Year 2

- Create a promotional and marketing packet of materials for promotional purposes.
- Create a brochure containing a walking/driving tour of Navasota’s historic resources.

- Meet with local banks and financial institutions to identify financial assistance opportunities.
- The Business Support Task Force should sponsor a training program for local residents who want to create a business plan.
- Build a tourist information kiosk, staff it with volunteers and place it conspicuously near the intersection of Texas Highway 6 and Washington Avenue.
- Contact outlet mall operators in San Marcos, Hillsdale, and Gainesville to determine the feasibility of creating an outlet mall in Navasota.
- Create a database and GIS file of vacant sites suitable for businesses.
- Create a database and GIS file of vacant or underutilized buildings appropriate for business.
- Monitor and encourage regular meetings of all of the voluntary commissions and advisory groups identified in Year 1, above.

Year 3

- Improve streetscapes and public spaces in Navasota's Downtown.
- Revise the Zoning Ordinance to encourage artisan's studios, galleries, specialty shops, and niche restaurants in mixed-use districts.
- Identify regional builders and contact them in an effort to encourage the creation of high-end housing, moderate-income housing, and specialty housing such as assisted living facilities.
- Purchase the land for the Navasota Arboretum/LaSalle Fair and begin design/construction of it.
- Create and adopt an urban redevelopment plan aimed at using vacant and underutilized sites for new and expanding businesses.
- Improve Navasota's gateways.
- Create a City/private sector partnership to engage in the development of the proposed Brewery/Brew Pub block.
- Create a City/private sector partnership to engage in the redevelopment of the two vacant service stations across from the Police Department on LaSalle Street. It is suggested that these structures be used for artist's studios/galleries or, alternatively, niche restaurants.

- Monitor and encourage regular meetings of all of the voluntary commissions and advisory groups identified in Year 1, above.

Year 4

- Continue improvements in the Downtown.
- Apply for state grants to support economic development activities.
- Apply for federal grants to support economic development activities.
- Provide modest financial support or free studio space for an annual Visiting Artist who would be used as a key figure in the establishment of Artisan's Row.
- Begin active operation of the Arboretum and LaSalle Fair.
- Monitor and encourage regular meetings of all of the voluntary commissions and advisory groups identified in Year 1, above.

Year 5

- Continue improvements in the Downtown.
- Apply for state grants to support economic development activities.
- Apply for federal grants to support economic development activities.
- Provide modest financial support or free studio space for an annual Visiting Artist who would be used as a key figure in the establishment of Artisan's Row.
- Monitor and encourage regular meetings of all of the voluntary commissions and advisory groups identified in Year 1, above.
- Revise, adopt and reactivate the Navasota Economic Development Plan

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Cities pursuing economic development must market and promote themselves. There is no escape from this responsibility. Navasota is not an exception to this rule. Thus, it is vital that the City initiate actions directed at marketing and promoting itself. The following actions should be taken immediately:

The City should employ a marketing team or other professional service to produce (1) a new City Logo and (2) a new City Motto. Communities frequently rely on local students and citizens to produce these items. This is a mistake. The logo and the motto can be very effective marketing and promotional tools but they must be done right to be successful. Trained professionals who have experience and a successful track record should be responsible for the preparation of these “branding” icons.

Additionally, Navasota should set aside a portion of the annual general municipal budget for marketing and promotion. Outlets for advertising could include:

- The City’s economic development Internet website
- Popular periodicals such as *Texas Monthly Magazine*
- Major newspapers such as the *Houston Chronicle*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and others
- Houston radio and television commercials advertising shops, services, and tourism in Navasota
- Attractive brochures that can be distributed at the proposed information kiosk as well as being sent to potential businesses and industries

