



ASH+LIME

NEW BRAUNFELS  
**DOWNTOWN**

ACTION PLAN • JANUARY 07, 2021



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# 1

## OVERVIEW

# OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Action Plan is to align the previous planning efforts with current circumstances and updated best practices, while staying true to the community and stakeholder goals from previous plans. New Braunfels has consistently focused on strategies that grow the Downtown district, and this document builds from and refines that meaningful work toward continued tangible action.

Interviews with business owners, document review, and in-person tours have helped the team to learn about Downtown. Much time and effort has been spent on creating thoughtful plans for Downtown New Braunfels, and while circumstances in the City have changed, the quality and vision for Downtown has not. Vibrant centers, parks and open space, community investment, and regional partnerships are going to be central to stabilizing and recuperating local business vitality.

As of this writing (in December 2020), the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have an unpredictable impact on many fronts. The crisis will have unforeseen, ongoing large-scale impacts on public health, small businesses, and housing, as well as local consequences on tourism, demand for retail and office space in and around Downtown, and city revenue.

On one hand, these uncertain circumstances may make it difficult for the City to make large capital investments. On the other hand, there is an increased importance of getting visible successes that help support progress toward long-term goals. This is an ideal time to begin relatively low-cost projects, with fast timelines, supported by engaged stakeholders. The City has conducted numerous high-quality studies, including the 2010 Downtown Implementation Plan. It has a good sense of its direction. This plan is focused on helping to identify tangible steps to make progress toward City goals.

This Action Plan is about adapting to the present circumstances, including the disruption the pandemic has caused, and leveraging available resources to obtain meaningful results. Central to this is identifying projects that can be realistically completed by the City, as well as downtown stakeholder groups.

## OBJECTIVES

- **Spark energy and interest in the Downtown and cultivate a foundation for continued momentum**
- **Support and plan for a variety of commerce, creating vibrancy all days of the year, and all times of the day**
- **Create increased pedestrian and bicycle use, while managing motor vehicle speeds and volumes**
- **Repair, improve, and connect existing infrastructure and destinations**
- **Support local business survival through the pandemic while adapting to changing health and safety concerns**
- **Identify opportunities for downtown stakeholders to actively support downtown improvements**

# PURPOSE

*Realign planning efforts to stay true to community and stakeholder goals in the face of future uncertainty*

## GOALS

- Take tangible steps toward achieving the primary objectives of the 2010 Plan
- Improve the Downtown pedestrian and cyclist experience
- Increase the number of hotel and residential units Downtown
- Improve parking management
- Improve connectivity between the convention center and the Downtown core
- Increase interest and spending in Downtown businesses
- Increase property tax revenue from new construction and increased property value
- Increase use of Main Plaza and other public spaces

## METRICS

- Square Feet of New Downtown Construction
- Square Feet of Renovations
- Hotel Rooms Occupied
- Convention Center Annual Users
- Downtown Retail & Restaurant Business Receipts
- Key Intersection Pedestrian Counts
- Downtown Road Cyclist Counts
- Increased Use of Existing Parking
- Compliance with Speed Limits
- Outdoor Dining Capacity
- Commercial Unit Occupancy Rate
- Number of New Housing Units
- Assessed Property Values
- Downtown Employment

# ASSESSMENT OF PLACE

Ash+Lime's "Assessment of Place" is a highly-specialized tool which allows us to examine numerous aspects of a place. Its purpose is to create a foundational understanding of the complexities of neighborhood life, allowing us to connect economic development, walkability, urban design, regional connectivity, etc, and create a more systems-focused Action Plan for New Braunfels, in order to achieve implementable results.

The Pyramid of Place, as shown in **FIG. 1-1** is the foundation of how this report examines the Downtown district and its potential nodes, corridor, and public spaces. Thus, it is important to understand the Pyramid, which is a breakdown of the elements that make a place what it is.

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The base of the pyramid deals with tangible surroundings ranging from undeveloped land to buildings, road design, climate, and scents. Physical form contributes to a location's "sense of place" in many ways. One fundamental example is the creation of space and a sense of enclosure. People tend to instinctively find comfort in corridors and spaces (whether outdoor or indoor), which create a sense of enclosure that in turn provide a sense of safety and comfort. This can be observed in successful public spaces of all sizes and scales, which serve as well-delineated "outdoor rooms."

Old photos of New Braunfels show Main Plaza has long been an example of this. Traditional Texas courthouse squares provide many other examples that are well-enjoyed to this day, but it is found in a variety of other contexts, ranging from big-city parks and plazas to tribal villages enclosed by trees or fences. While a focus on the physical environment is crucial, it should not be seen as the primary end in and of itself. Rather, there should be a concentration on ensuring that the built form supports the City's objectives. For example, a built form which supports human safety and comfort attracts people, thus helping attract visitors and enhance economic activity.

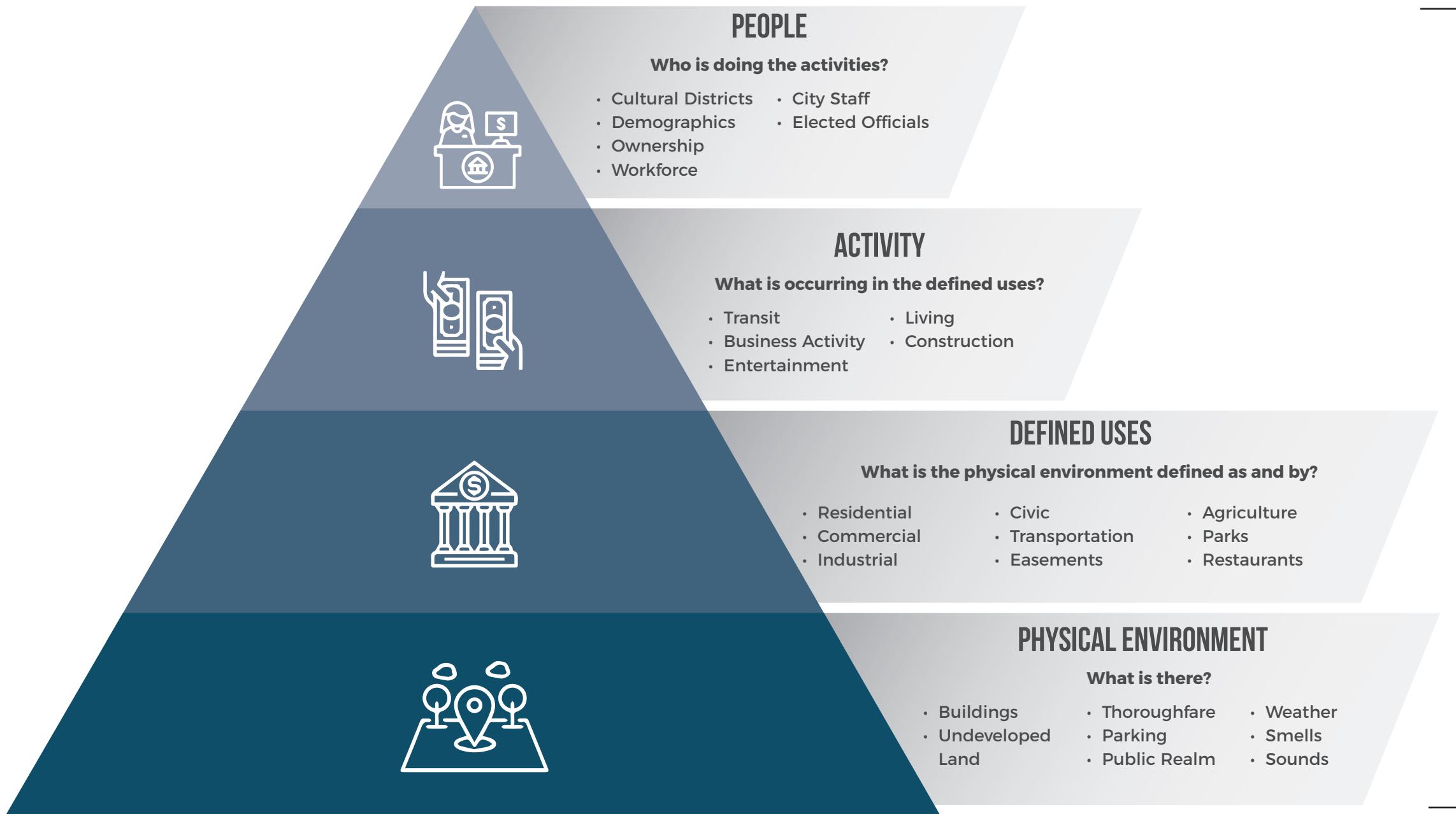


FIG. 1-1 - ASSESSMENT OF PLACE PYRAMID

## DEFINED USES

People do not go to the “commercial zoning district,” they go to the barbershop, or the candy store, or the museum. These words are important, because you can picture what a barber shop

looks like, what happens there, and who goes there without it having to be expressly detailed. This shared language informs and builds on our expectations of a place, how we describe it to others, and the stories that are attributed to it.



*It is implausible to define all uses for a building, space, or even road. It is also impossible to know and plan every activity that could or would occur in a place.*

**People often utilize places in ways that were not anticipated in the original design.**

*In particular, parks and public spaces often host a variety of unpredicted uses.*

**When public spaces are available, people will often activate them in ways that are unanticipated.** Sometimes cities design these spaces to limit “negative” uses of space. However, this can also suppress “positive” use of space such as people spontaneously dancing or playing games.



## ACTIVITY

Active utilization of the physical environment sometimes occurs according to planned (defined) uses but it often goes beyond them. A common example can be found in an art gallery. Art galleries tend to operate as retail uses in their day-to-day operations in addition to hosting monthly art openings. However, many galleries throw holiday parties, cater meals, screen films, host musical performances, or provide children’s programs. These are the types of activities that support creative, vibrant neighborhoods. However, since they are outside the most widely-expected uses of a gallery, they can also create a variety of regulatory and practical complications, for issues including fire codes, parking, alcohol service, and noise ordinances.

Certain uses, such as neighborhood-scale public spaces, lend themselves naturally to unexpected activity. When public spaces are available, people will often activate them in ways that are unanticipated.

## PEOPLE

People, in the context of the Pyramid, are those who do any activity in the physical environment. People engage in a variety of activities, such as selling, driving, shopping, walking, sleeping, building, eating, or even loitering.

People are not just the beneficiaries of places; their use of a place helps to define and create it. People who invest time, energy, and money into a place are stakeholders. Stakeholders are the source of each place’s vitality. A plan must involve close collaboration with stakeholders, both because they are experts in their place and because they are necessary for the plan to succeed.

## **Activation** - getting people into a physical environment through activity and defined uses

### **OPERATING SYSTEM**

The operating system controls and regulates a place. The goal of the operating system is to safely and effectively attract people to do positive activities in a physical environment. This process is often called activation in the planning and placemaking community. The system should decide what is meant by effective and safe activation and who the environment is built for.

From federal regulations to zoning ordinances to neighborhood groups to police enforcement patterns, these elements and the organizations that create them are referred to as the Place Management System.

In places with a single owner—such as a theme park—the operating system is often highly centralized, with one entity making many or most of the key decisions. This has the advantage of supporting orderly, efficient development, and ensuring that all investments are managed with the good of the whole in mind. While this is appropriate for certain contexts, this efficiency comes at a cost; such top-down decision making rarely supports the individualistic or uncommon on a district-wide scale.

In a district developed over decades by multiple owners, such as Downtown New Braunfels, place management functions are highly decentralized; while the City controls infrastructure, hundreds of property owners make various decisions within the regulatory framework set by the City. This allows the emergence of the unique and organic, but, in many cases, can be too incohesive to support a healthy district. Often, the

operating systems for such places must be strengthened in order to better support the whole. However, this must be done with a thoughtful balance.

No place's operating system can pre-define all of its uses. The more restrictively a place defines uses and activities, the less freedom people will have to choose how to program and manage that place. A mixed-use district may not be suitable for a top-down-heavy plan but can benefit from planning that lends support to grassroots efforts, with the whole in mind.

# IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

This Action Plan is not intended to sit on a shelf, unimplemented, for years. Rather, it is focused on helping the City, and its stakeholders, take meaningful action focused on visible, measurable results. For that reason, much of the focus is on near-term implementation strategies that the City – or active property owners, business owners, and downtown groups – can execute over a short period of time, with relatively low cost. While this is always a sensible approach, it is especially crucial during times of substantial uncertainty. The table on the adjacent page identifies the various recommendations detailed in this plan as well as the estimated cost range, location, and general description of each project. These recommendations are not intended as technical documents, but rather as a guiding framework for the City to work with appropriate partners, particularly downtown stakeholders and downtown-affiliated organizations for execution.

PROJECT	CATEGORY	LOCATION	COST	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Plants and Signage	Downtown Activation	Seguin / Landa	\$2,500 - \$5,000		City, TxDOT
Art and Community Space	Downtown Activation	Seguin / E. Bridge Street	Varies		City, Local Organizations
Visual Cues for Pedestrians	Downtown Activation	Seguin / E. Mill St, San Antonio / Comal	Varies		City, TxDOT
Food Truck Space	Downtown Activation	Main Plaza	Varies		City, Local Organizations
Bulbouts (Temporary)	Downtown Activation	W. San Antonio / Main Plaza, Hill Ave	\$2,000 - \$3,000		City, TxDOT
Bulbouts (Permanent)	Downtown Activation	W. San Antonio / Main Plaza, Hill Ave	\$10,000 - \$20,000		City, TxDOT
Crosswalks	Traffic Calming, Safety	W. San Antonio / Main Plaza, Hill Ave	\$3,000 - \$8,000	Per crosswalk	City, TxDOT
Public Space in Main Plaza	Traffic Calming, Safety	Main Plaza	Varies	Temporary volunteer-created space; permanent infrastructure	City, Local Organizations
Alley Beautification	Traffic Calming, Safety	148 S Castell	Varies		City, Private Landowner
Bicycle Infrastructure	Rightsizing Streets	TBD	\$135,000	Bike lanes	City, TxDOT
Planter Barriers	Rightsizing Streets	TBD	\$2,500 - \$5,000		City, TxDOT
Shade Structures	Rightsizing Streets	TBD	\$5,000 - \$7,000		City, TxDOT
Parklet Seating	Rightsizing Streets	TBD	\$5,000 - \$7,000		City, TxDOT
Outdoor lighting	Rightsizing Streets	TBD	\$5,000 - \$7,000		City, TxDOT
Window Displays	Walkability	NB Utilities	\$3,300 - \$5,300	FastSigns Quote	City, Private Landowner
Building Periphery Lighting	Walkability	TBD	Unknown		City, Private Landowner
Colorful Sidewalks	Walkability	TBD	\$3,000 - \$8,000	Per crosswalk	City, TxDOT
Pedestrian Cut-Through	Walkability	203-225 S Seguin, 240 S Seguin, 188-208 S Castell	Unknown		City, Private Landowner
Signage in parking lots	Wayfinding	TBD	\$5,000 - \$10,000		City, Private Landowner
Public space in parking lots	Wayfinding	TBD	Unknown		City, Private Landowner
Shuttles	Wayfinding	TBD	Unknown		City, Local Organizations
Murals	Alleyways	148 S Castell	\$5,000 - \$20,000		City, Private Landowner
Landscaping	Alleyways	148 S Castell	\$5,000 - \$20,000		City, Private Landowner
Store Access	Alleyways	148 S Castell	Unknown		City, Private Landowner
Parking	Alleyways	148 S Castell	Unknown		City, Private Landowner
Outdoor Seating	Alleyways	148 S Castell	\$5,000 - \$7,000		City, Private Landowner
Lighting	Alleyways	148 S Castell	\$5,000 - \$7,000		City, Private Landowner



2

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The physical environment of Downtown New Braunfels is largely the product of opposing user needs. It is positioned at the intersection of both a state highway and a major local thoroughfare, both of which are crucial to traffic circulation within the region. The importance of those streets is heightened by the fact that they are key access corridors to major tourist attractions (such as Gruene and Schlitterbahn) as well as local shipping traffic that must be managed.

Locally, Downtown is the historic center of small business and civic activity best accessed with slow traffic speeds and well-connected pedestrian routes. These two opposing forces can be managed together in a spirit of compromise, but the trade-offs between them must be recognized and understood.



SOURCE: NBTEXAS.ORG

*Due to its strategic location within the region, New Braunfels is positioned as a **gateway between San Antonio and Austin***

- One of the Fastest-Growing Cities in One of the Fastest-Growing Regions*
- I-35 Corridor, with Proximity to San Antonio and Austin*
- Positioned Within the High-Profile Texas Hill Country*

## REGIONAL CONTEXT

Downtown New Braunfels is located west of Interstate Highway 35, within Loop 337, Texas State Highway. The district is located in Comal County, within the greater San Antonio area. This location is in the south central section of the Texas Hill Country and includes a small section of the Comal River in the north. New Braunfels is approximately 32 miles northeast of Downtown San Antonio, 48 miles southwest of Austin, and 19 miles southwest of San Marcos.

The local market area is a growing and flourishing locale. This area is easily accessible from all points of the region due to the presence of I-35 and a network of state highways. Development of commercial uses in the immediate downtown and residential uses nearby, has expanded in the last few years and is expected to continue, at least assuming solid overall economic conditions.

There is still some vacant land available, although those parcels are quickly being purchased. Given its proximity to San Antonio and Austin, and location in one of the fastest-growing corridors in the nation, the local market area is projected to develop at a rapid pace for the foreseeable future.

Furthermore, New Braunfels' location within Hill Country substantially strengthens the City's already strong branding opportunity, particularly for tourism.

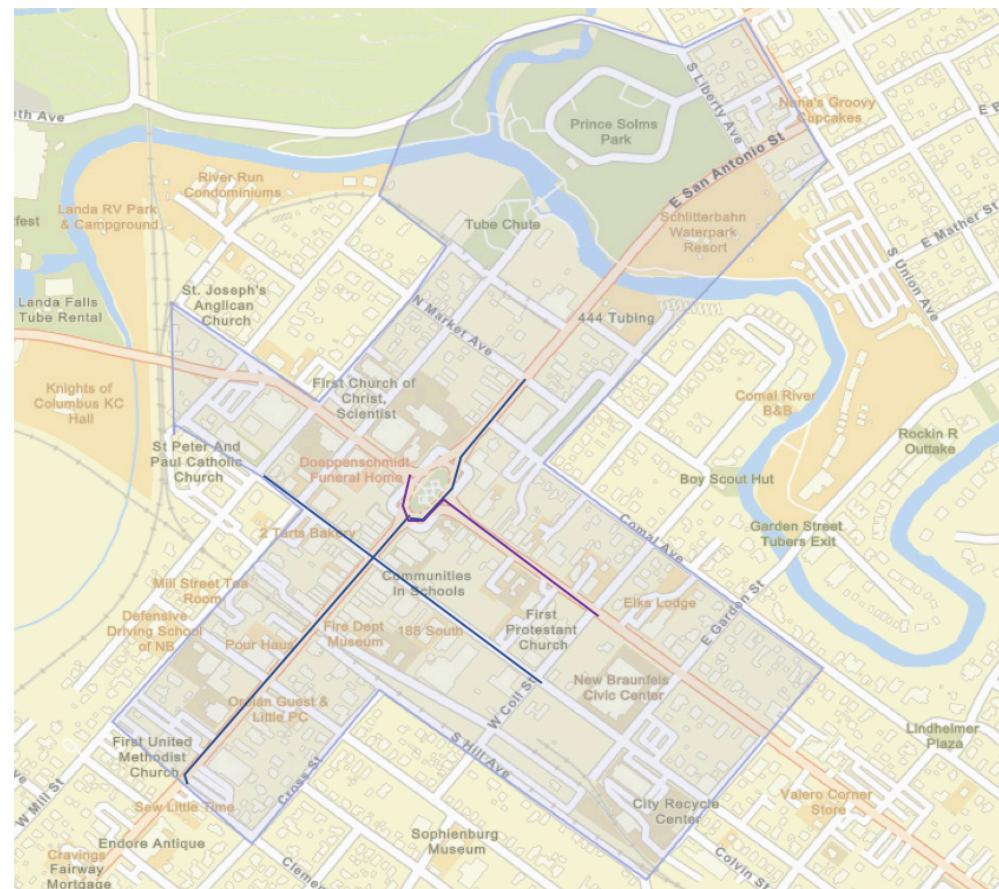


SOURCE: DOWNTOWNNEWBRAUNFELS.COM

# DOWNTOWN STUDY AREA

There have been various borders defined for Downtown New Braunfels over the years. This study recognizes that any boundaries set for the downtown are necessarily arbitrary. For the purposes of this study, we use the area identified in the 2010 Downtown Implementation Plan.

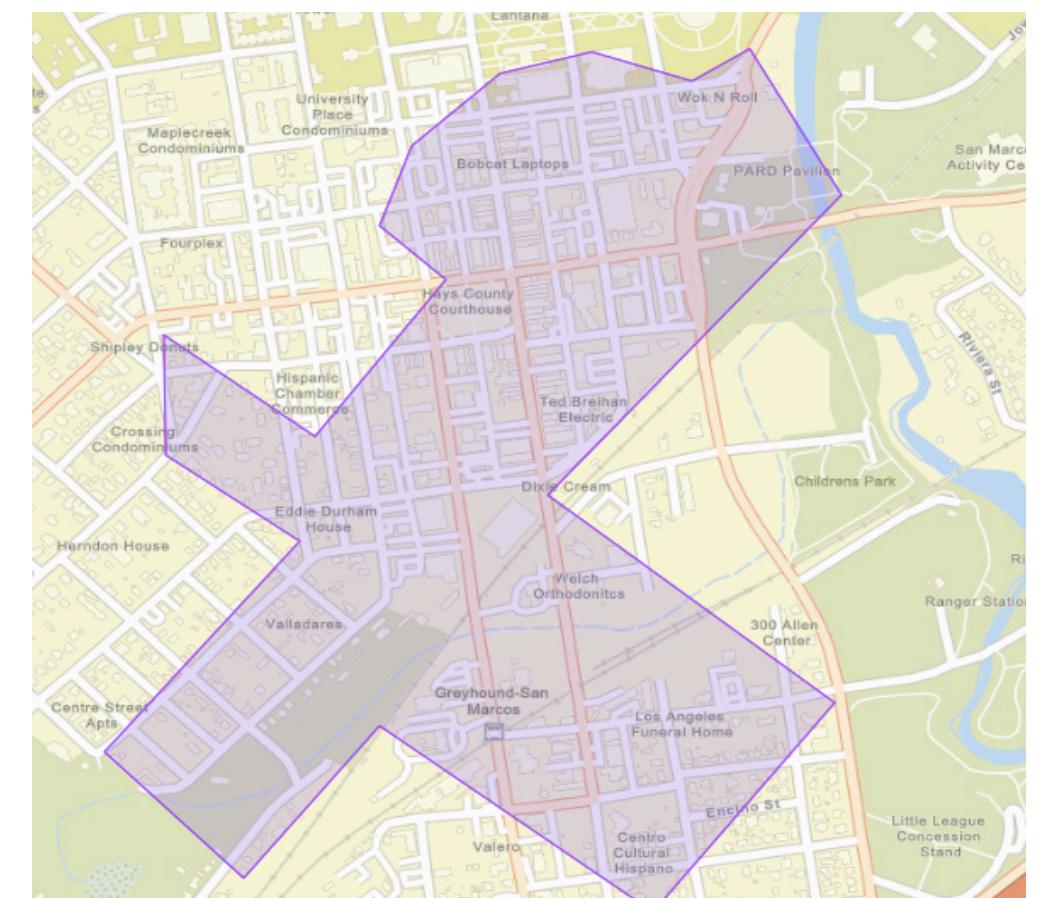
The Downtown is fundamentally rooted in the



DOWNTOWN NEW BRAUNFELS

walkable commercial district, which is marked approximately by:

- East San Antonio from North Academy to South Market Avenue
- South Castell from West Bridge to West Coll Street
- South Seguin from Main Plaza to West Coll Street



DOWNTOWN SAN MARCOS

*The study area encompasses approximately **196 acres** of New Braunfels, which is comparable to the core of San Marcos.*



FIG. 1-2 - THE 5-10 MINUTE WALKING DISTANCES FROM MAIN PLAZA ILLUSTRATE THE COMPACT NATURE OF THE WALKABLE CORE & SUPPORT THE ESTABLISHED STUDY AREA BOUNDARIES

## STREETS, ROADS, AND STROADS

The Strong Towns organization defines streets, roads, and stroads as three types of thoroughfares in our transportation system.

In this understanding, the purpose of a *street* is to build community wealth within a successful place; the purpose of a *road* is to move people and goods between two successful places.

A *stroad*, in this context, is a hybrid of a street and a road, intended both to accommodate large speeds and volumes of motor vehicles and to serve as a social and economic hub of the community. Strong Towns founder Chuck Marohn often describes this as the “futon of transportation alternatives.” Just as a futon is an uncomfortable bed that turns into an uncomfortable couch, a stroad is a compromised road (drivers must drive slowly and stop frequently), and a compromised street (pedestrians and other users are unsafe or uncomfortable, making public space and commerce difficult).

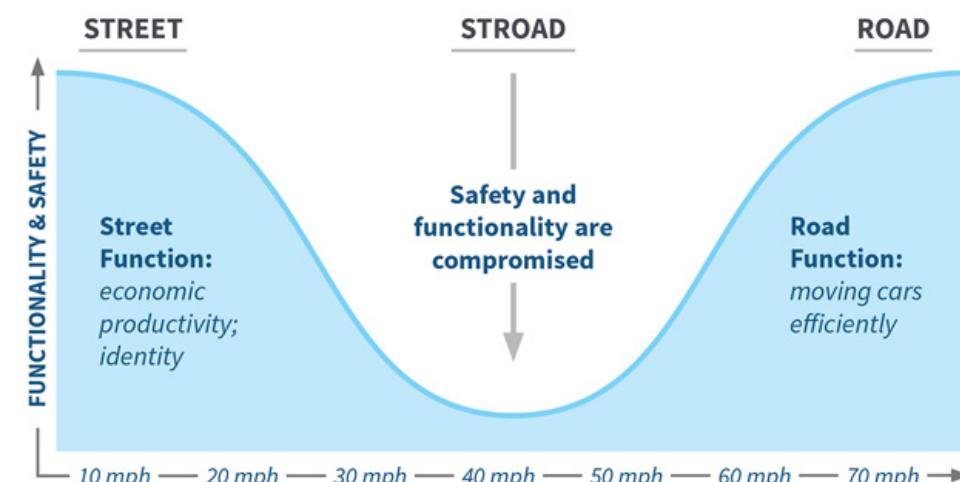
In the case of Downtown New Braunfels, the two primary thoroughfares (Seguin Avenue and San Antonio Street) function as stroads.

- They function partially as roads. They are the most important thoroughfares in the city. They have an outsized importance, since both cross the river as well as the I-35 Expressway; there are limited alternative streets for local circulation.
- They function partially as streets. They are the traditional main activity corridors of New Braunfels, as reflected in maps dating back to 1881 in historic photos and documents

In other words, these thoroughfares serve essential capacities as streets and roads, which compromises their ability to either as well as desired.

These same streets are the traditional main activity corridors of New Braunfels, as reflected in maps dating back to 1881 in historic photos and documents. In other words, these streets serve both capacities as a street and a road, which compromises their ability to do either as well as is desired.

## Compromised Street: anthropic transportation is unsafe or uncomfortable, difficult to create public space and commerce



### LINK

Street as a movement conduit

Design objective: save time



### PLACE

Street as a destination

Design objective: spend time



PRIORITIZED USERS

SECONDARY USERS

PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT

SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM SCOTT DOYON, PLACEMAKERS



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## DEFINED USES

*Downtown New Braunfels has a wide variety of uses. The key is to better connect them.*

- Variety of Stores and Restaurants*
- Numerous offices, including Comal County*
- Brauntex Theater*
- New Braunfels Civic/Convention Center*

## DOWNTOWN USES

Downtown New Braunfels hosts a wide variety of uses, including restaurants, retail, lodging, a 586-seat theater, various services, museums, the Comal County Courthouse, and county offices. Taken from the Downtown New Braunfels Map, dining and shopping dominates the downtown area. Play-and-Stay categories, consisting of theaters, museums, and hotels, make up about a quarter of the uses.

Shopping and dining opportunities are clustered primarily along two blocks of West San Antonio (and Castell Street) and a block of South Seguin, with additional uses scattered around Main Plaza. The Plaza itself, though the heart of Downtown, is not a safe and accessible destination. As noted before, the Plaza and its surroundings are likely deterrents for patrons trying to get to activities located on the other side. This has led to largely-separate pockets of activity instead of one cohesive district.

Many stakeholders mentioned Downtown tends to

be more vibrant during evening hours—particularly when COVID-related social distancing is not a factor. Numerous popular bars and restaurants—as well as the theater—support this evening activity. During the daytime, County offices, as well as the (soon to be relocated) New Braunfels Utilities offices, attract a consistent base of daily users.

On the far edges of Downtown are the Civic and Convention Center, Landa Park, and the Comal River, destinations for local and regional visitors. These destinations are not currently well-connected to the downtown core.

The number of high-quality historic assets provide an additional element for the downtown. This includes two exceptionally long-standing businesses – Naegelin's Bakery (founded in 1868), and Henne Hardware (founded in 1857) – and numerous buildings on the National Register of Historic Places. The core of the City includes four historic districts.

- 1 Gruene
- 2 Schlitterbahn Waterpark & Resort
- 3 Landa Park Golf Course
- 4 Wurstfest
- 5 Tubing at Comal River & Parking
- 6 Green Strip
- 7 New Braunfels Railroad Museum
- 8 Sophienburg Museum

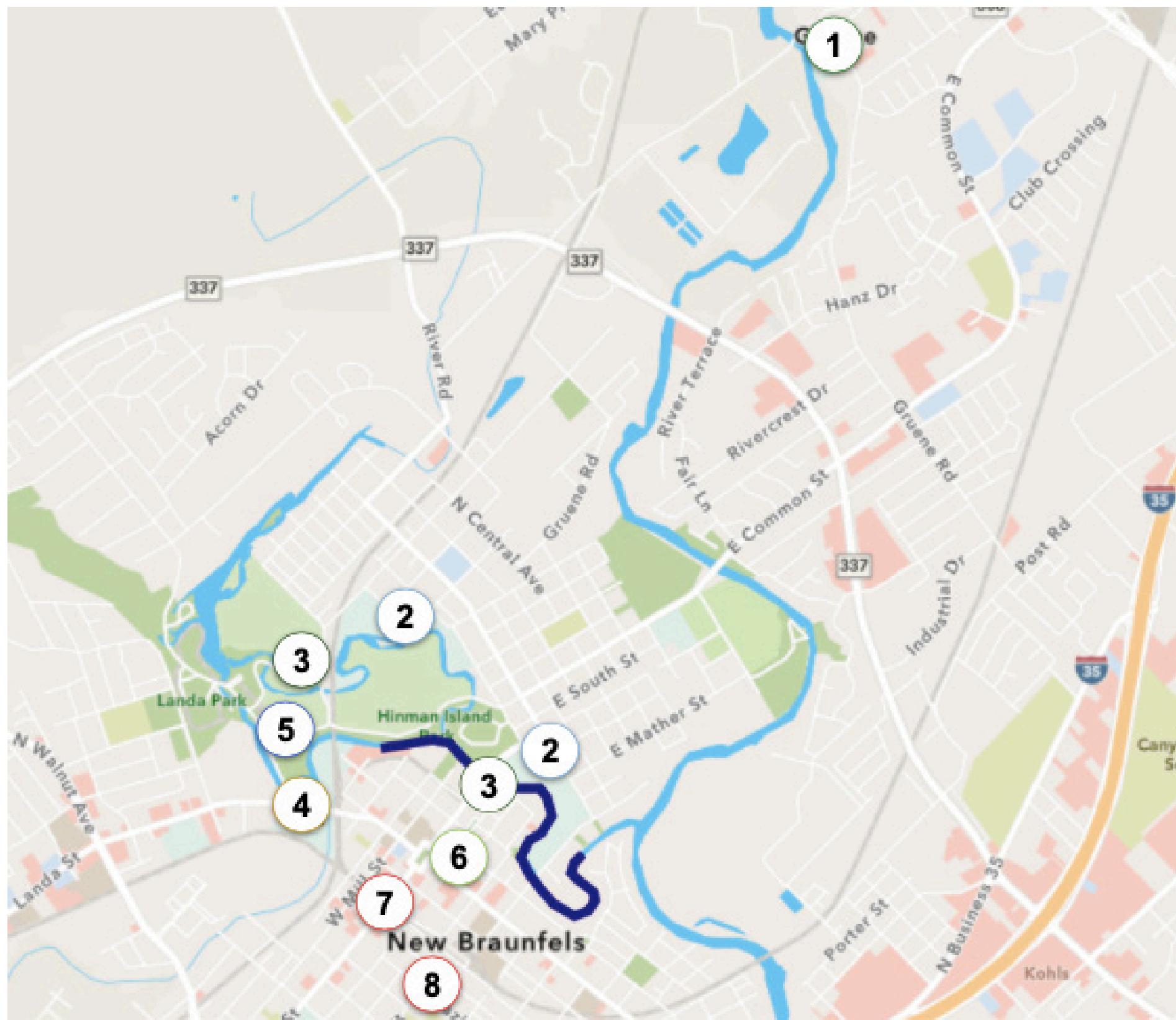


FIG. 1-3 - GREATER DOWNTOWN AMENITIES & DESTINATIONS

# PARKING

There are approximately **3,614 parking spaces** within the study area.

- Ample Parking, But Not Always Meeting Expectations*
- Poor Connectivity Makes Parking Access a Challenge*
- Challenge: Use Existing Spaces More Efficiently*

The 2016 Parking Plan identified 3,614 parking spaces in the Downtown study area, including 2,727 privately-available spaces and 887 publicly-available parking spaces. While the current study area is somewhat different than the area identified for this previous study, it reflects that there are ample parking spaces throughout most of Downtown although these spaces may not be known or immediately visible to downtown users. These recommendations seek to support the strategies identified in that plan. It should be noted that future planned uses may require additional parking not discussed in these recommendations.

The City is considering investing into structured parking. While this may be a wise investment, it should not be considered a cure-all. Parking garages are expensive and take up prime space. While the garage may help reduce some acute parking needs, no garage is itself sufficient to ensure that there is “enough” parking in a successful downtown for two reasons:

1. Even with a parking garage, many people expect

to be able to park immediately next to their destination. In a vibrant downtown with much activity, this is impossible.

2. Garages can themselves be inconvenient; creating delays compared to on-street parking, and can be perceived as unsafe, unpleasant, or otherwise inconvenient.

For those reasons and more, a cohesive strategy that ties to the “big picture” is necessary - with or without a parking garage.

A strategy to address parking should cover several areas, including parking regulations, existing space management, wayfinding, and maps. Many of the broader recommendations in this report, including improved pedestrian and bicycle connectivity are made largely in the spirit of improving accessibility to underutilized parking spaces or lots.

To address the perceived parking issues, people must interact with Downtown to form new habits, including parking in remote locations and walking to multiple destinations.



New Braunfels TX Current Occupancy - Public Weekday

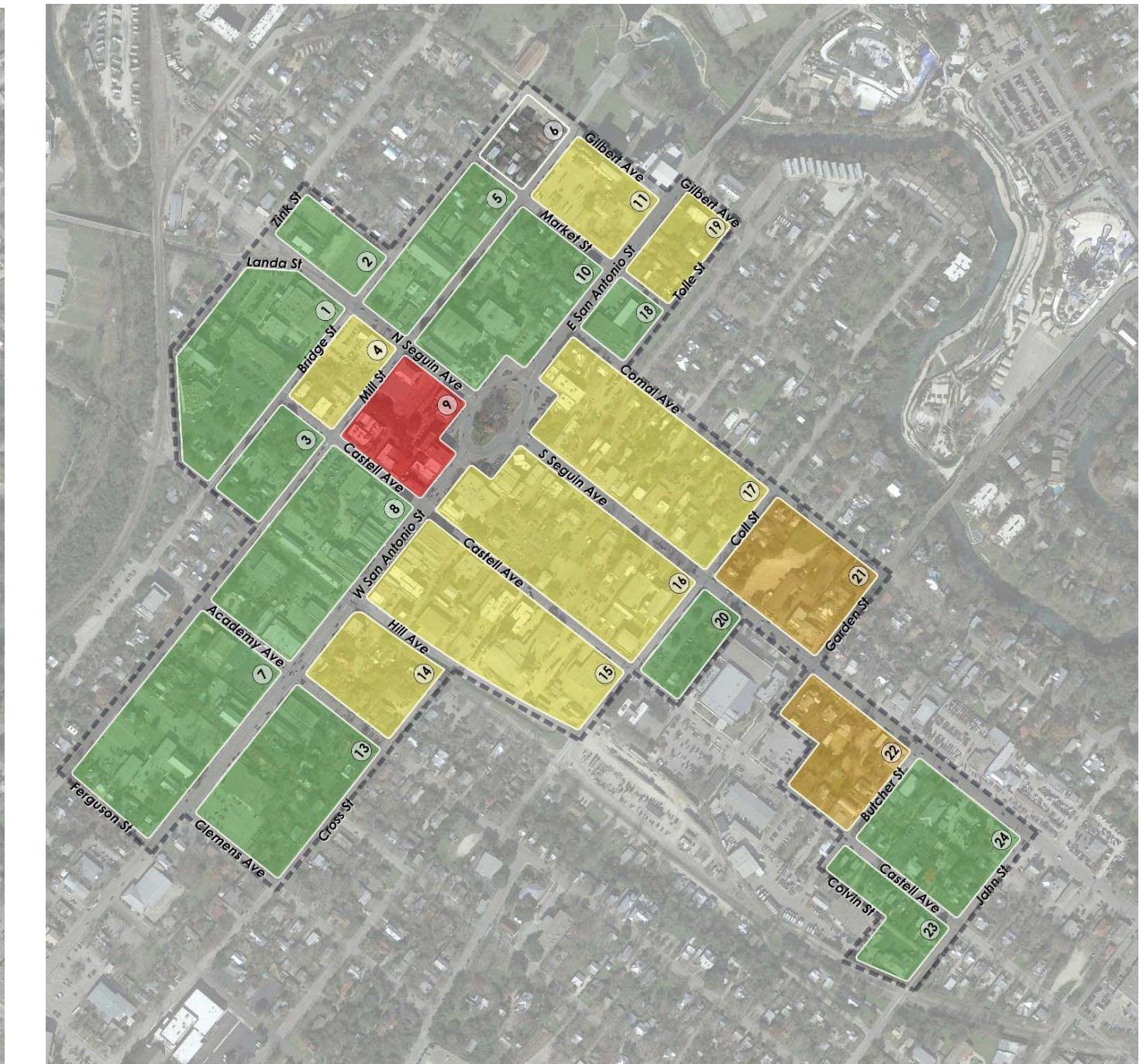
1 Block Numbers

— Study Area



Occupancy Percentage

Off-Street	00% - 49%	50% - 69%	70% - 84%	85% - 100%
On-Street	00% - 49%	50% - 69%	70% - 84%	85% - 100%



New Braunfels TX Current Occupancy - Private Weekday

1 Block Numbers

— Study Area



Occupancy Percentage

Off-Street	00% - 49%	50% - 69%	70% - 84%	85% - 100%
On-Street	00% - 49%	50% - 69%	70% - 84%	85% - 100%

FIG. 1-4 - DOWNTOWN PUBLIC & PRIVATE PARKING (SOURCE: CITY OF NEW BRAUNFELS PARKING STUDY, 2016)



Schlitterbahn Water Park

## PARKS, PUBLIC SPACE, & CIVIC USES

Within the Downtown core, there is a lack of sufficient public space for individual enjoyment, small groups, and large public gatherings. This is a limitation to Downtown's ability to attract people, host events, and keep people around for extended periods of time.

The primary public gathering space in Downtown is currently Main Plaza, a 0.6-acre historic park founded in 1845. This official Texas Historic Landmark is the city's traditional center for community events.

However, as has been discussed elsewhere in this document, Main Plaza has long been difficult to access, particularly for those who have limited mobility or disabilities. In addition, the layout limits the potential for anything more than an individual or small group to assemble. Despite any the historic role of the plaza, the current design and configuration limits its ability to serve as a meaningful public gathering space. For that reason, most substantial events happen on the primary block of San Antonio (between Hill and Castell), with some overflow to adjacent areas.

Market Plaza is also a secondary public space. The City has made modest improvements based on the 2015 Master Plan. The current plaza includes some benches, but it functions more as

a boulevard median than an active public space. Phase II plans include redesigning the park with two small fields for uses such as fitness, t'ai chi, yoga, and lawn games.

To address the shortage of accessible public gathering spaces, the 2010 Downtown Implementation Plan recommended creating a pilot parking lot in the Crosswalk Cafe parking lot. Given its central location, the proximity to the restroom, and the sense of enclosure at this location, this is a prime location. There is an opportunity to test and advertise this during downtown events, and rent it at a modest cost to small groups.

Prince Solom Park, north of the river, offers some walking-distance accessibility to the downtown core. However, it is several blocks walk from the primary downtown attractions, and has not been designed with the kinds of public spaces that are especially conducive to downtown pedestrians. In the future, this park may become a better connected activity center to Downtown New Braunfels.

Other civic places include various churches and the New Braunfels Civic and Convention Center, seven minutes from the downtown core. Additionally, four museums are located within a 10-minute walking distance from the Main Plaza.



FIG. 1-5 - PARKS & PUBLIC SPACE MAP

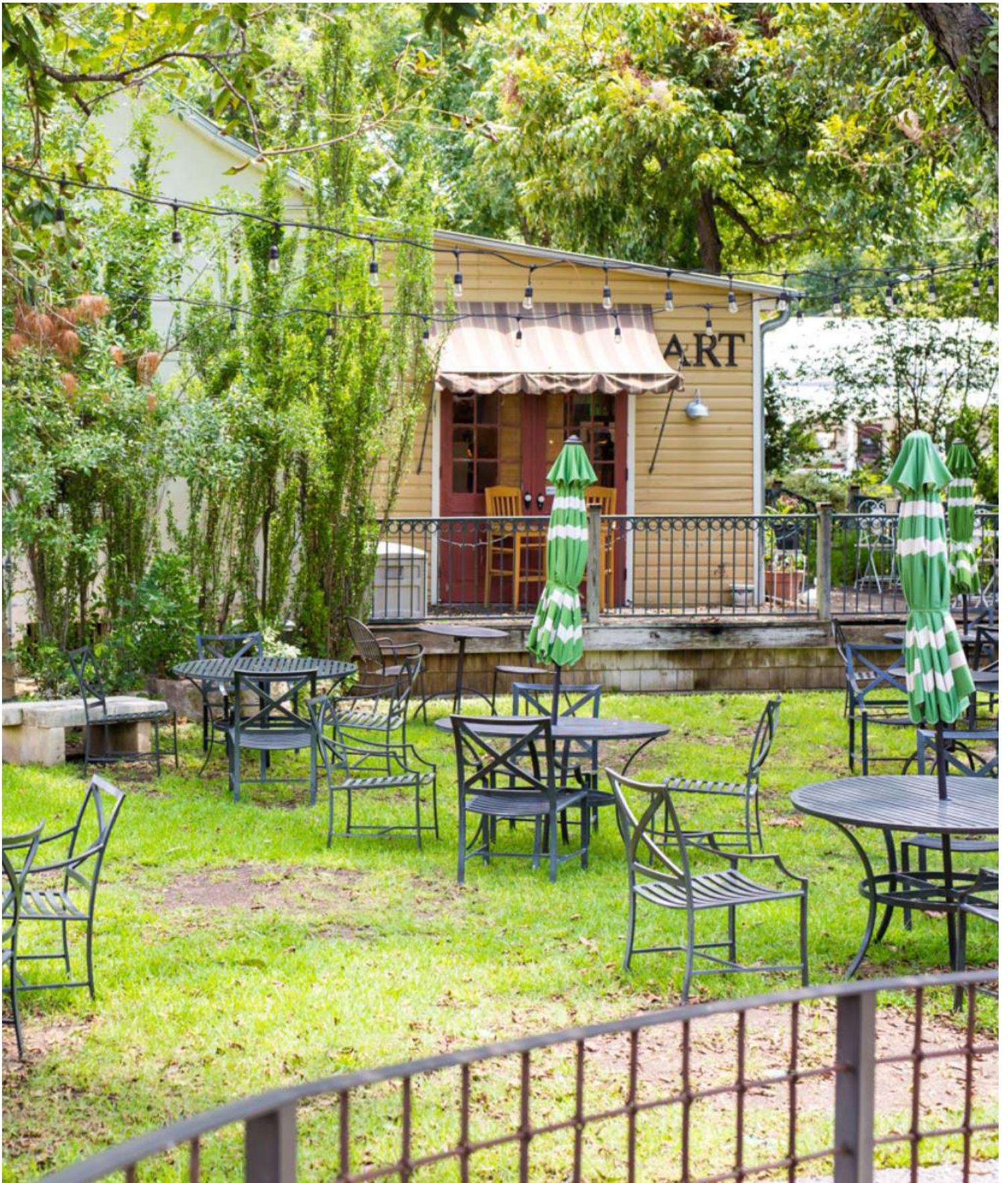




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ACTIVITY

There are many activity centers in greater New Braunfels, but the lack of connectivity in the area separates these activities from each other and limits their potential to grow. Retail plazas are abundant in and around the city, but there is not much else in those areas. Shopping hubs such as New Braunfels Center at Creekside offer shopping and entertainment, but are automobile-oriented areas with no areas to spontaneously gather and meet with friends. The Gruene neighborhood has a walkable setting that encourages strolling and window shopping, and offers experiences unique to the area, but does not cater to daily professional businesses or more frequent local use. Downtown New Braunfels is a historic, walkable district that has the elements of a complete, organic downtown, offering amenities for locals and visitors alike. It also has the capacity to develop further and grow all of these activities in one place.



## REGIONAL OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

New Braunfels offers a variety of outdoor activities. The most prominent is tubing at the Comal River. The Comal River is located entirely within city limits and is one of the City's most popular attractions drawing about a quarter million visitors per summer. This natural spring-fed river eventually merges with the Guadalupe River, but just before it does, it flows 2.5 miles, including through an area in Downtown New Braunfels.

Schlitterbahn Waterpark is another popular activity in New Braunfels. The over 70-acre waterpark is opened year-round with over 51 attractions ranging from river rides to waterslides and attracts over one million visitors a year. It is widely considered one of the best waterparks in the United States.

In addition, The Resort at Schlitterbahn offers guests a variety of lodging accommodations from luxury resorts to cabins. The German-descended word Schlitterbahn means "slippery road," which coincides with the town's German history.

*Due to a unique combination of conditions, New Braunfels has some of the **best tubing opportunities in the world.***

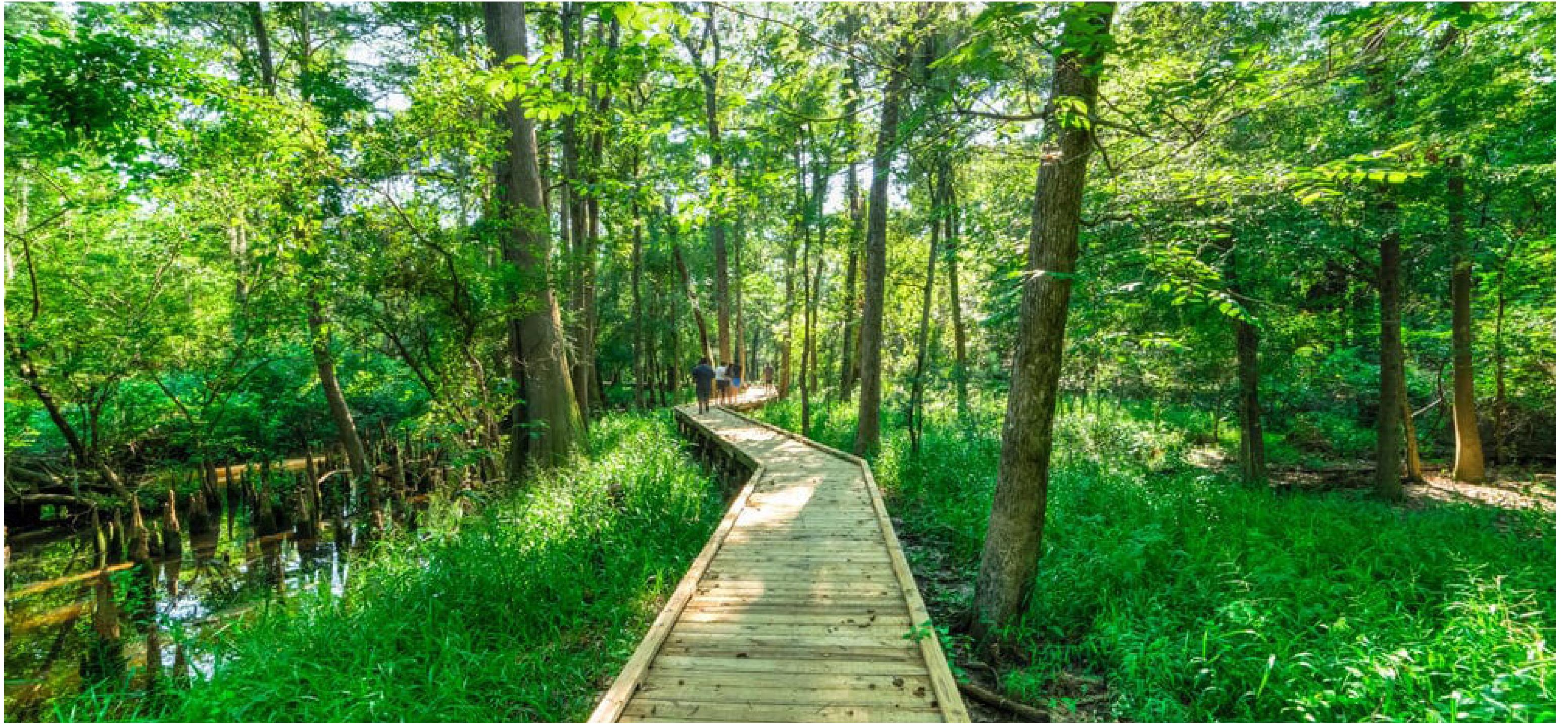
- New Braunfels Boasts a Variety of Outdoor Activities*
- Recreational Opportunities Can Be Leveraged to Attract Visitors to Downtown*
- Downtown Improvements Support Existing High Regional Quality of Life*



(Above) River Tubing; (Below) Schlitterbahn

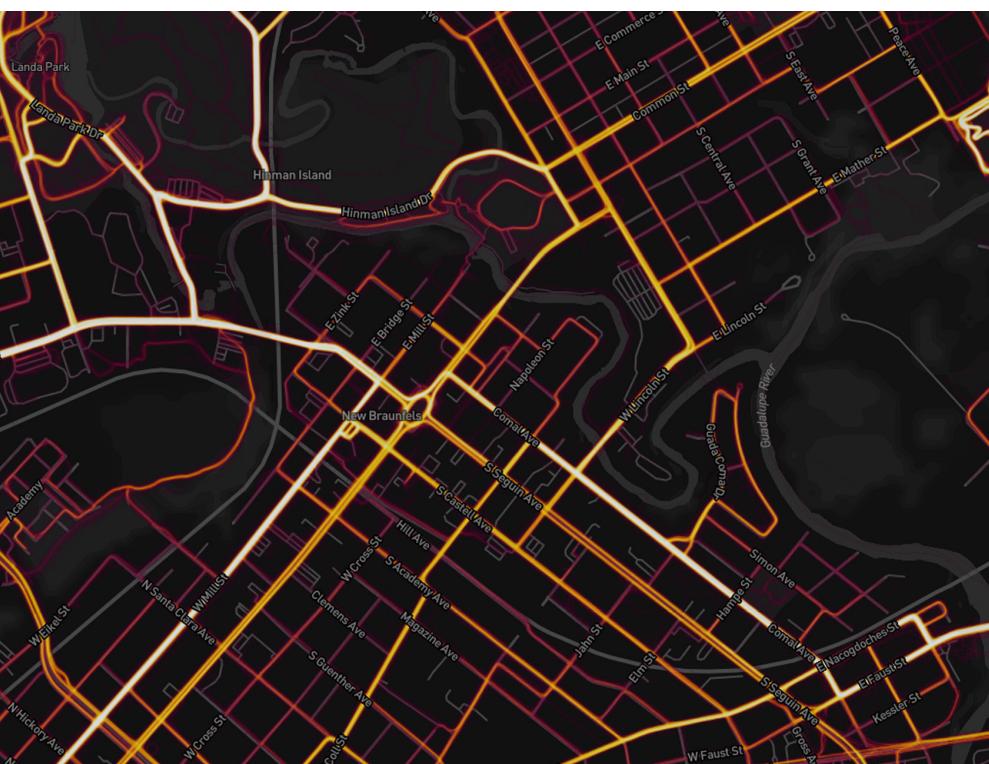


Landa Park Golf Course and fishing at Canyon Lake is especially popular amongst locals. Landa Park Golf Course is a 122-acre golf course suited for players at every level. The 18-hole public course is located along the Comal River and surrounded by impressive views of the Texas Hill Country. The locals also enjoy fishing, especially optimal since New Braunfels is surrounded by numerous bodies of water.

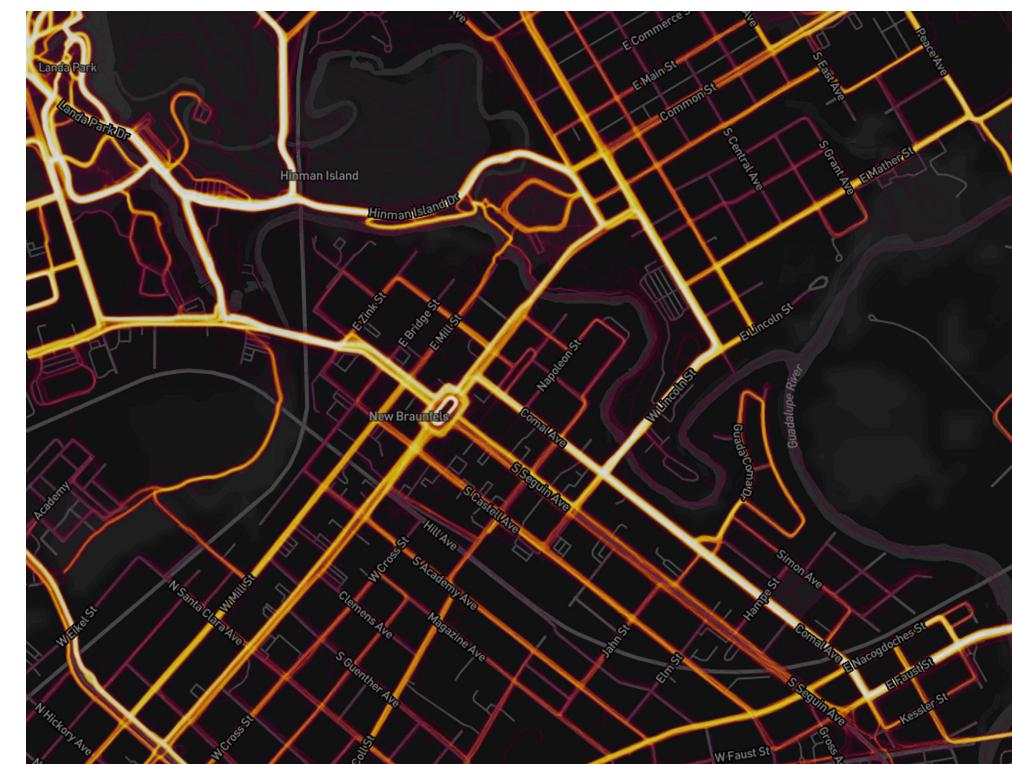


New Braunfels Hiking Trails

**Anthropic transportation** on foot, and to a lesser extent bicycle, ties a region more closely together than does motorized transportation, creating the strongest threads of urban fabric for an area.



BIKE ACTIVITY



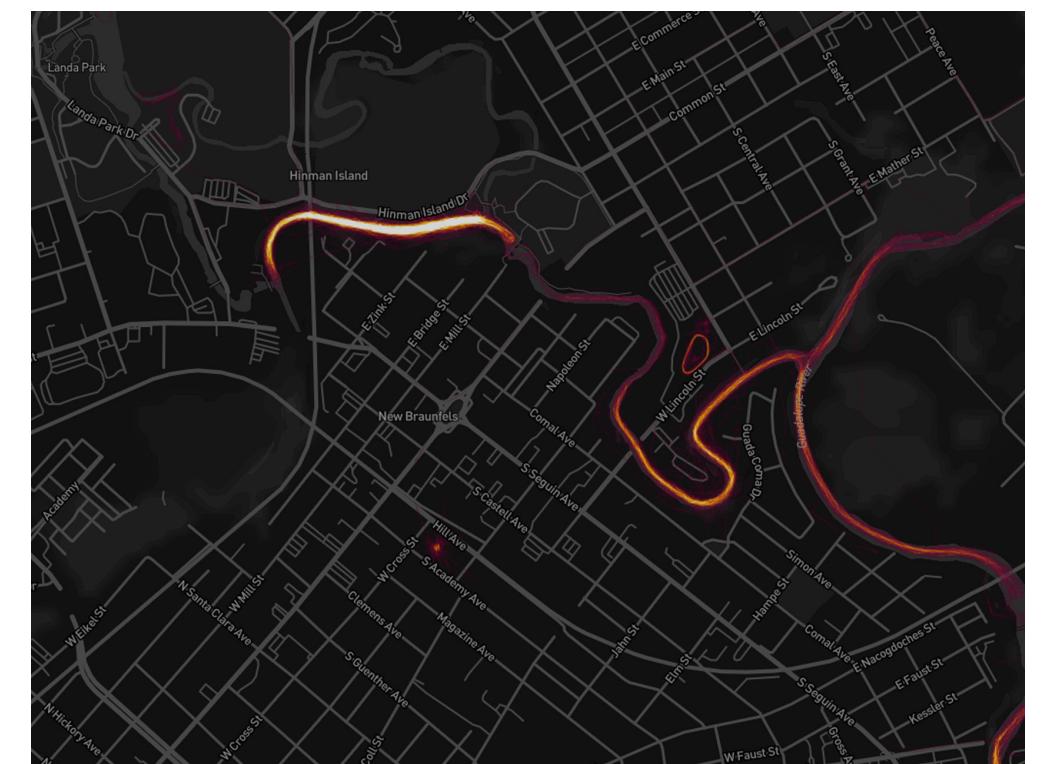
RUN, WALK ACTIVITY

## PEDESTRIAN, BIKE, AND WATER ACTIVITY

Throughout history, trails have marked where people have traveled. They are created naturally by a cumulation of trips, laying natural paths of least resistance and level terrain that minimize danger and maximize convenience. These paths are not planned, but rather created by a combination of individuals who have made a decision to take a different route.

With today's technology, we can observe people's records of their own behavior, in much the same way. Based on this data, we can see that people walk, bike, and run extensively

in the Downtown district. As could be predicted, San Antonio Street is a primary corridor for these activities. One block to the Northeast, Mill Street - with a more mixed/residential/commercial historic character - is also heavy in these activities. While North Seguin appears to be less pedestrian or bicycle friendly than some other parts of the downtown core, it can also be seen that many people walk, run, and cycle along the corridor. The residential portions of the district are used heavily for walking. Residents can be seen at various times of the day and night out strolling amongst the streets and thoroughfares.



WATER ACTIVITY

# INGRESS AND EGRESS

*The district has clear and convenient highway access, with plenty of through traffic; however, there is a **lack of visibility** from I-35.*

The Downtown area has strong access due to the proximity to Interstate Highway 35 (IH-35) and Texas State Highway 377 (SH 377). IH-35 provides the primary northeast/southwest access to and from the area. Just south of Downtown, IH-35 separates into two directions extending through San Antonio (to the southwest) and Austin (to the northeast) toward Dallas and Fort Worth. The highway merges once again just north of the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex, extending through Kansas City to Minneapolis and the northern United States.

State Highway 80 (SH-80) is another primary artery that extends in a southeasterly direction through the city of Luling, connecting to Interstate Highway 10. This roadway provides a means of transportation from Houston and beyond to the eastern coast of the United States and Los Angeles on the western coast.

Local area accessibility is generally good, relying on the following transportation arteries:

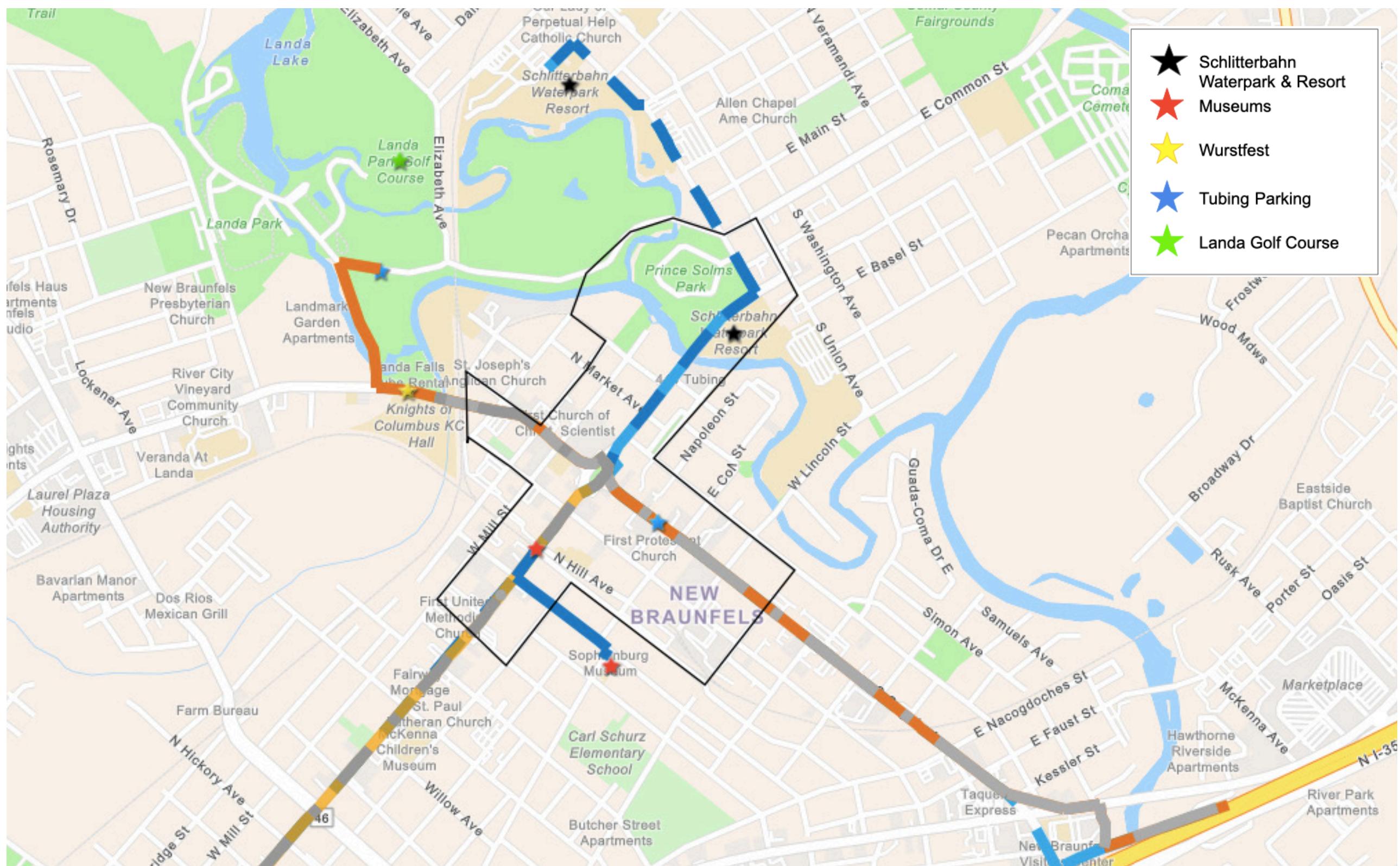
## LOCAL

San Antonio Street, Seguin Avenue, Lincoln Street, Landa Street, Walnut Avenue.

## REGIONAL

IH-35 provides regional ingress and egress with the nearest access point just over a mile south of Downtown at the SH 121 interchange. Loop 337 is another major thoroughfare and is accessible approximately two-and-a-half miles from Downtown in multiple directions.

The Ingress and Egress map on the adjacent page illustrates routes visitors and locals are likely to take to travel to popular destinations. The attractions identified are Schlitterbahn Waterpark, Schlitterbahn Resort, Wurstfest, Tubing parking, Landa Golf Course, and McKenna Children's Museum and The Sophienburg Museum. These connections underscore the importance of East San Antonio Street and Seguin Avenue within the transportation system.



### FIG. 1-6 - INGRESS & EGRESS MAP



5

PEOPLE

The wealth gap identified in the 2017 *Economic Development Plan* will likely be exacerbated by current economic conditions. 39 percent of jobs in New Braunfels were blue collar, a large percentage of which are vulnerable due to the pandemic. Low local wages and high housing costs, compared to surrounding areas, mean that these individuals were likely part of the commuter population, and may not return to their old jobs. Growth in New Braunfels may also be affected, as the largest group moving to New Braunfels were those in the 50-80% of medium income bracket, and new housing has been largely limited to single family and luxury construction outside of Downtown.

## INTRODUCTION

Downtown New Braunfels has a substantial surrounding local population, which already helps support many of the activities that promote previously-established downtown goals. There are many reasons to believe that people will want to get back to normal soon, giving Downtown the perfect opportunity to attract both locals and tourists and build those amenities which will keep them coming back. This process of building back will be more vital once the City has a better understanding of business conditions after the crisis.

Investing in people will be just as important as investing in downtown. Tourists will continue to come to New Braunfels, lured by destinations that cannot be found elsewhere, but City investments will dictate what tourists find when they arrive. As the second-fastest growing community in the country, New Braunfels will still attract new residents, and the investments made today will provide local amenities for these new residents - or these newcomers will take their business to surrounding cities.

Sales tax accounted for just over 30% of budgeted city revenue. Perhaps surprisingly, one-third of gross tax receipts come from visitors. 64% of visitors drive over 35 miles to stay in New Braunfels, creating a large capture area for local businesses. Visiting small businesses is a popular activity in New Braunfels according to yelp.com, with most popular locations in downtown or the Gruene Historic District. This large visitor population is a huge opportunity for the City to invest in the recently unemployed by enacting some of the entrepreneurship strategies found in the 2017 *Economic Development Plan*.

Downtown needs visitors to reach its full potential - but it must attract locals first, in order to be a place which maximizes benefits for New Braunfels residents.

Population groups hit hardest by the current economic shutdowns are those with the highest level of previous hardship, and whose improvement will have the biggest impact on creating economic sustainability. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that women, immigrants, young adults, and those with less than a college degree have been hardest hit with job and wage losses. This is closely mirrored by a Gallup poll showing the top five impacted employment sectors are:

- Service workers
- Arts and entertainment
- Small businesses
- Construction
- Sales

A more vibrant downtown will provide opportunities for entrepreneurial startup and incremental investments for the

people in these sectors will support sustained economic growth, a closing of the wealth gap, and continued population growth.



SOURCE: KRAUSE'S CAFE - DOWNTOWNNEWBRAUNFELS.COM

# DEMOGRAPHICS & HOUSING

The demographic information spells out a willing and able consumer population seeking interesting things to do, but who do not want to go too far to get there. Based on our team's experience, we can anticipate that many will want to get out of the house, without having to always drive to locales such as San Antonio or Austin. The area's high population density will help make a dense downtown market viable, and should be encouraged through local residential infill projects to support economic development and growth.

The area has a healthy working adult population, but the significant number of young adults should also be highly regarded as an asset. Educated young adults in particular are likely to value socially active downtown areas, and are more likely to return after receiving a college education and become the next generation of job creators.

Many of the jobs in New Braunfels are not conducive to work from home, with 13% and 12% of jobs in construction and manufacturing respectively.

## NEW BRAUNFELS



**68%**

WAGE WORKERS  
WHO LIVE OUTSIDE  
NEW BRAUNFELS



**\$16.45**

AVERAGE LOCAL  
HOURLY WAGE



**\$23.36**

LIVING WAGE FOR  
AVG. FAMILY (2  
ADULTS, 1 CHILD)



**9%**

HIGHER COST  
OF LIVING THAN  
NATIONAL AVERAGE

## POPULATION



**60%**

WITH BACHELOR'S  
DEGREE OR HIGHER



**1,491**

PER SQUARE MILE  
DENSITY



**10%**

PRE-PANDEMIC  
POVERTY RATE FOR  
WOMEN



**15%**

PRE-PANDEMIC  
POVERTY RATE FOR  
HISPANICS

SOURCE: CLARITAS SPOTLIGHT, 2019

Over 18% of jobs are in wholesale or retail, which is an area that has experienced significant impacts from the global pandemic, but that could provide a possible opportunity for delivery or online sales.

33% of the population works in "Other," and depending on the industry, may be a population to attract downtown to work or spend time.

# REGIONAL VISITORS

Tourism is one of New Braunfels largest industries, with approximately four million visitors attracted to various year-round activities and entertainment. This tourism economic focus also means that the global pandemic has had an immediate impact on the city and its residents, including reduced Hotel Occupancy Taxes. The full impact will not be known for some time, but it is safe to assume that the most vulnerable will be the most affected.

Throughout this process, stakeholders have repeatedly identified Downtown New Braunfels as missing out on much of the tourism economy. Gruene Historic District, Schlitterbahn, and river tubing—as well as annual festivals—all serve as major visitor attractors and city wealth generators. Many of these visitors and their dollars pass directly through Downtown on their way to these destinations. A vibrant, reimagined Downtown is an opportunity to keep them in town longer.

Strengthening local spending in Downtown may provide some stability. This can be achieved by attracting more locals Downtown and connecting them to second and third destinations while they are there. Local social media marketing strategies, pedestrian encouragement programs, and small COVID-friendly events may encourage locals to think about the Downtown more often and patronize more shops.

## TEXAS REGION



One-third gross tax receipts from visitors



30% downtown visitors from Austin/San Antonio



7.5% local tax receipt increase



Visitors have income range of \$50,000 - \$150,000



34% downtown visitors from Houston/Dallas/Ft. Worth



Visitor head of household age ranges from 25 - 65

SOURCE: SOURCE: CLARITAS SPOTLIGHT PRIZM PREMIER, 2019



6

## ACTION ITEMS

# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

The adjacent map illustrates action items suggested for implementation in Downtown to enhance aesthetics, walkability, and overall economic vitality.

**Element 1** is focused on improving the aesthetics along Seguin Avenue and Landa Street. This corridor is what many visitors see first when entering Downtown, so it is recommended to add plants and a welcome sign to ensure Downtown makes a positive and lasting first impression. **Element 2** is to encourage walkability and usage of the highlighted parking lot by adding art and community space. This enhancement will attract people to the space and encourage them to walk and explore more of Downtown by utilizing the wayfinding map we also suggest is added there. **Element 3** and **Element 7** are the blocks and corridors we suggest adding visual cues, such as lights to the trees and building peripheries, in addition to window displays and historic murals.

The Main Plaza was meant to serve the community as a public space for people to enjoy. We suggest creating a space for food trucks and micro-vendors as the fourth activation element to

attract the community back to the Main Plaza. In order to ensure pedestrian safety, we suggest adding bulbouts and visible crosswalks as a traffic calming strategy (**Element 5**). For **Element 6** we recommend extending the community space to tie it all together and create an engaging and attractive Main Plaza for the community to enjoy.

Large blocks make it difficult to cultivate a walkable downtown because of the extended amount of time pedestrians take to walk the block. For this reason, **Element 8** is breaking up the three large blocks illustrated to reduce the amount of time pedestrians take to walk around the block, increase visibility of local shops and restaurants, and encourage exploration by foot. **Element 9** is one that was brought forth by a local concern that Downtown does not have enough public community spaces. Activating alleyways can transform that environment into a community space by adding elements such as planters, sitting areas, art, and lights.

## DOWNTOWN ACTIVATION ELEMENTS

- 1 Add plants & signage
- 2 Encourage walkability & parking lot usage by adding art & community space
- 3 Promote walkability by adding visual cues for pedestrian engagement
- 4 Create space for food trucks/micro-vendors at Main Plaza
- 5 Add bulb-outs & visible crosswalks for traffic calming & pedestrian safety
- 6 Create community space at Main Plaza
- 7 Promote walkability by adding visual cues for pedestrian engagement
- 8 Break up large block by adding a pedestrian cut-through
- 9 Activate alley by transforming it into a community space



# GATEWAY LOCATION

Main Plaza is a gateway location, connecting different parts of Downtown. While most activity is on or adjacent to West San Antonio Street, there are substantial commercial enterprises on South Seguin and, increasingly, East San Antonio Street. This is a gateway to these areas with access to parking.

## MAIN PLAZA

### MAIN PLAZA

The Main Plaza area is the “keystone” to helping Downtown New Braunfels find greater success based on several reasons, including traffic speeds and volumes, dead zones, and plaza accessibility.

### Traffic Speeds and Volumes

High speeds and high volumes of motorists create conditions that are uncomfortable and unsafe for pedestrians - and, if taken to the extreme, are intimidating even to drivers. The current design encourages cars to speed through the plaza at high speeds - repelling pedestrians, and the visitors and investments that they support.

### Dead Zone

While there are some active uses, most of the area surrounding and leading up to Main Plaza is a “dead zone,” which is incompatible with its location at the most central part of Downtown

- While there are two coffeehouses, a bar, public restrooms, and some retail, most uses are

passive and do not consistently attract visitors throughout the day and night.

- The automobile-oriented zone is unnecessarily large and further increases pedestrian discomfort,
- There are few visual cues – either in the day or evening – to signify that people should walk to (or beyond) the plaza. This has the effect of separating the three commercial pockets (West San Antonio/Castell; South Seguin Avenue; East San Antonio) from each other - as well as the parking lots and other assets near North Seguin
- Most of the storefronts at, or leading up to the plaza, do not have engaging displays

### Accessibility to the Plaza

- The plaza is unsafe to access due to traffic volumes and due to motor vehicle unpredictability pedestrian crossings are not recommended
- ADA accessibility is limited, for example, only one point is wheelchair accessible
- Increasing walkability and pedestrian safety

The consequences of these issues are profound. Main Plaza, which should be an attractor, acts more as a repellent and visitors are less likely to visit the amenities on and adjacent to it. Additionally, visitors are less likely to park at one location and walk through the Plaza to reach their destination, thus limiting the possibility of maximizing existing parking. Finally, this limited access means there is no true common public space for the entire community. In our team's opinion, there is no simple fix to these challenges - but addressing them is the most important thing that can be done to improve downtown.



SOURCE: NBTEXAS.ORG - MAIN PLAZA

# MAIN PLAZA

We have several key recommendations to strengthen Main Plaza's status as the "keystone" of Downtown New Braunfels.

## **(+) Increase Crosswalk Visibility**

The faded crosswalks on the streets surrounding Main Plaza contribute to the poor pedestrian conditions. Increasing the visibility of crosswalks will help give drivers cues to slow down and yield to pedestrians, as well as enhancing the aesthetics of the area.

## **(+) Bridge Crosswalks to Plaza**

We suggest adding additional crosswalks to expand connectivity to Central Plaza and increase crosswalk visibility through vibrant colors. Adding crosswalks to bridge the gap between pedestrian crossing islands and the Central Plaza, increases pedestrian safety by identifying specific crossing locations. This will require ongoing negotiations with Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT).

In order for the City to add crosswalks on the roundabout streets surrounding Central Plaza, it

will be necessary to negotiate with TxDOT to make it more feasible to implement.

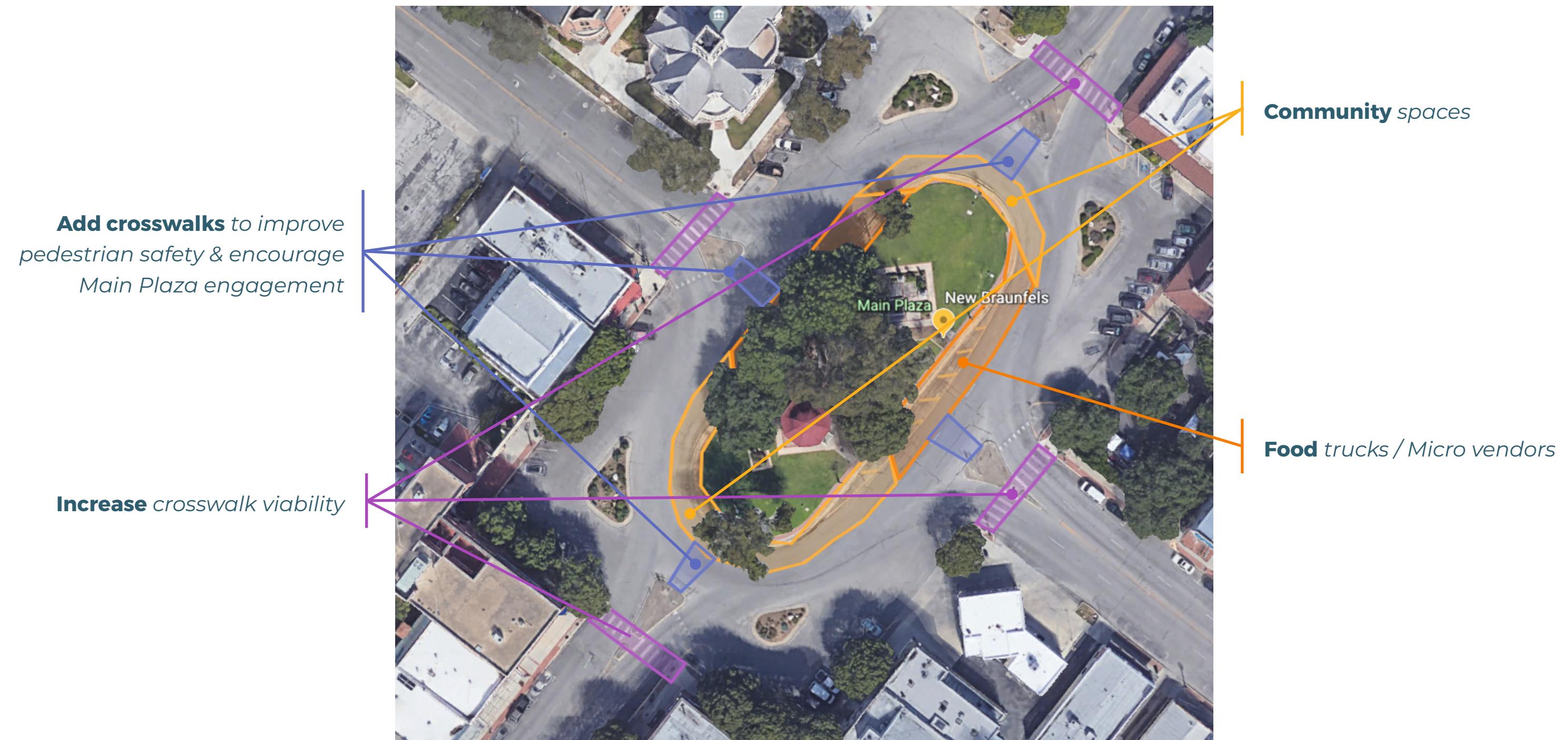
## **(+) Reutilize Roadway Space**

Take over more roadway at Main Plaza with community spaces that serve pedestrians and provide a buffer from cars.

## **(+) Activate Spaces**

Consider using food trucks, micro-vendors, music in the gazebo, and a small activity series to activate Main Plaza.

# MAIN PLAZA



# MAIN PLAZA

## INCREASING WALKABILITY & PEDESTRIAN SAFETY



# MAIN PLAZA

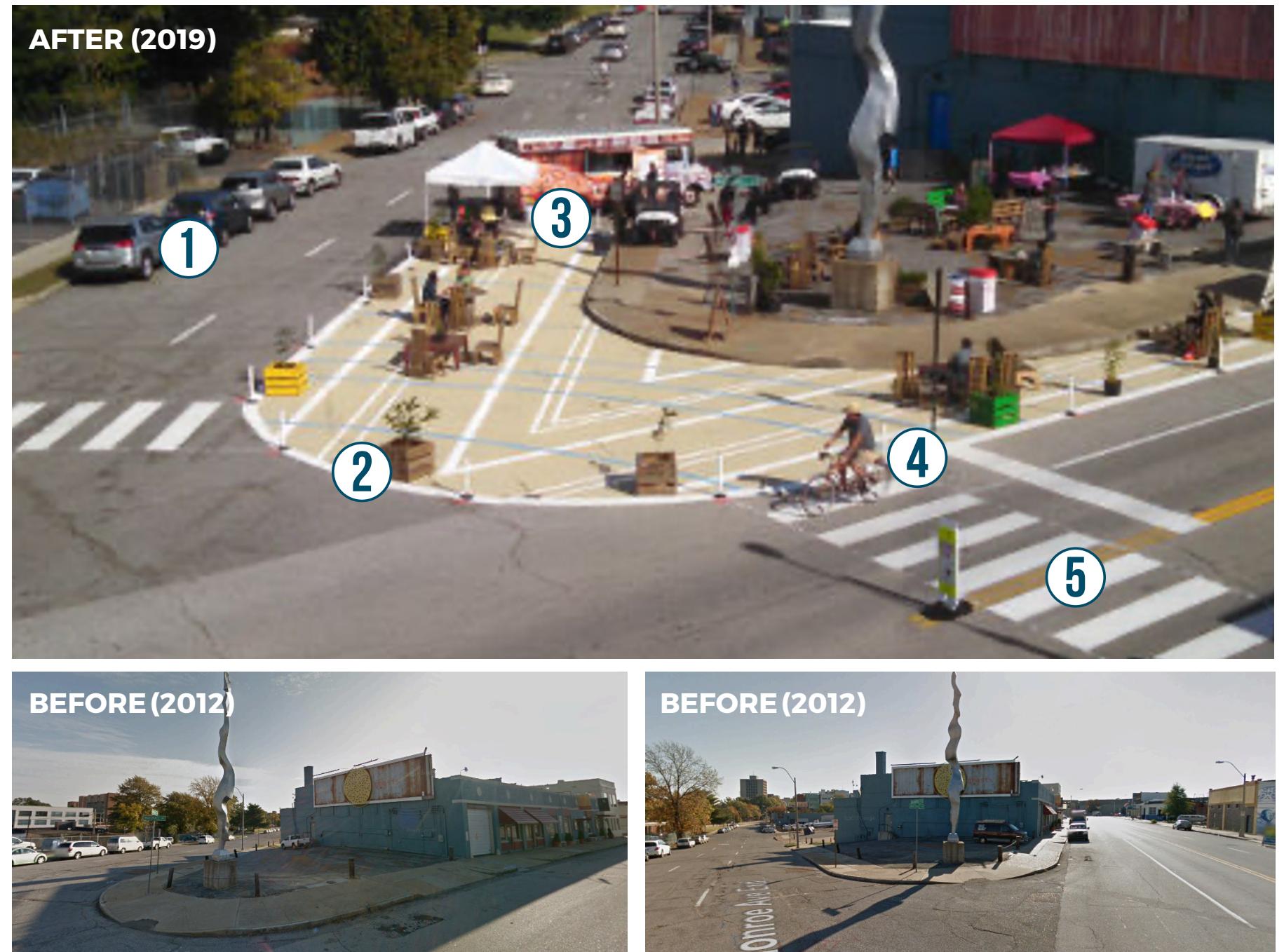
## CASE STUDY - MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

### MARSHALL & MONROE INTERSECTION

The intersection of Marshall and Monroe in Memphis, Tennessee, also known as Edge District, was redesigned and temporarily activated to demonstrate the “art of the possible.” The group responsible is known as MEMFIX, which was born out of a public/private partnership to demonstrate the potential quality of public spaces and redesign communities in Memphis. Bike lanes, micro-vendors, murals, “street fixes,” and other interventions were tested in the Edge District. It proved so successful that the temporary activations were made permanent and have since then completely redefined that space.

The Memphis case study is a prime example of how temporary activations can showcase a space’s potential, allow people to experience a space, and let the public decide whether they wish to make changes permanent or let it revert back. It also shows how people-centric elements can transform an underutilized space into a social and economic driver.

- 1 On-Street Parking
- 2 Bulbouts, Large Planters, Epoxy Gravel Create Pedestrian Space
- 3 Micro-vendors
- 4 Multimodal Transportation
- 5 Visible & Shortened Crosswalks



# STREETS & ROADWAYS

*Project for Public Spaces, an international placemaking organization, has conducted extensive research on the benefits of street rightsizing.*

## ( + ) Rightsizing Streets

Street rightsizing, or street narrowing, is a reduction of the width and number of traffic lanes to improve multiple aspects of the physical environment. Slowing and taming motor vehicle traffic in Downtown New Braunfels will support pedestrian activity, reduce roadway maintenance and construction costs, and even improve motorist safety.

Street rightsizing allows space to become available for elements like bicycle racks, planters, street furniture, shade structures for protections from the Texas sun, and outdoor restaurant seating.

- Cost Estimate: \$500 per table (on average) with umbrella \* 6 = \$3,000 (approximately)
- Planters: \$15-\$50 per large planter (depending on material) \* 10 = \$150-\$500 (approximately)
- Plants: \$300.

Street rightsizing can be tested through temporary pilot programs, in order to assess traffic speeds, volumes, delays, and other factors before making permanent changes.

## ( + ) Bulbouts

Bulbouts act as extensions of the curb at key intersections, narrowing the vehicular right-of-way and thereby also reducing crossing distances. The goal is to discourage speeding while improving the safety and comfort of pedestrians; it is particularly crucial for many people with limited mobility or other disabilities. It should be noted that bulbouts typically use space dedicated to either turning vehicles or parking; they do not usually narrow or eliminate vehicular travel lanes.

We recommend bicycle racks and outdoor planters be placed at these intersections for improved anthropic transportation, beautification, and safety.

- Cost Estimate to Add Temporary Bulbouts: \$2,000 - \$7,000 (per extension)
- Cost Estimate to Add Permanent Bulbouts: \$10,000 - \$20,000 (per curb extension)

# RIGHTSIZING STREETS

## CASE STUDY - MANSFIELD, TEXAS

### PARKLET ACTIVATION

Mansfield is a DFW-area suburb which has done much to support businesses and outdoor activities in its downtown. Out of need to increase safe seating and keep business in Downtown Mansfield operational during the pandemic, business owners have added parklets to extend their space. Parklets are additional seating that are incorporated in on-street parking spaces, giving business owners much-needed space where sidewalks are too narrow for traditional outdoor dining.

Business owners have expressed concern that businesses were struggling in Downtown Mansfield due to the pandemic and made the case that parklets would “ease concerns of overcrowding.” Parklets give the option for people to come enjoy Downtown Mansfield while feeling safe and socially distancing. With help from Downtown Mansfield Inc. and local business sponsors, parklets are being added starting at \$6,000 each. The first parklet added at Downtown Mansfield was named The Panorama Parklet, after a sponsor (Panorama Antenna).

#### References:

<https://dfw.cbslocal.com/2020/07/29/parklets-downtown-mansfield-business-owners-coronavirus-pandemic/>

<https://www.downtownmansfield.org/parklet-projects>



Photo Credit: Downtown Mansfield

# RIGHTSIZING STREETS

# FEASIBLE & COST-EFFECTIVE ACTIVATIONS

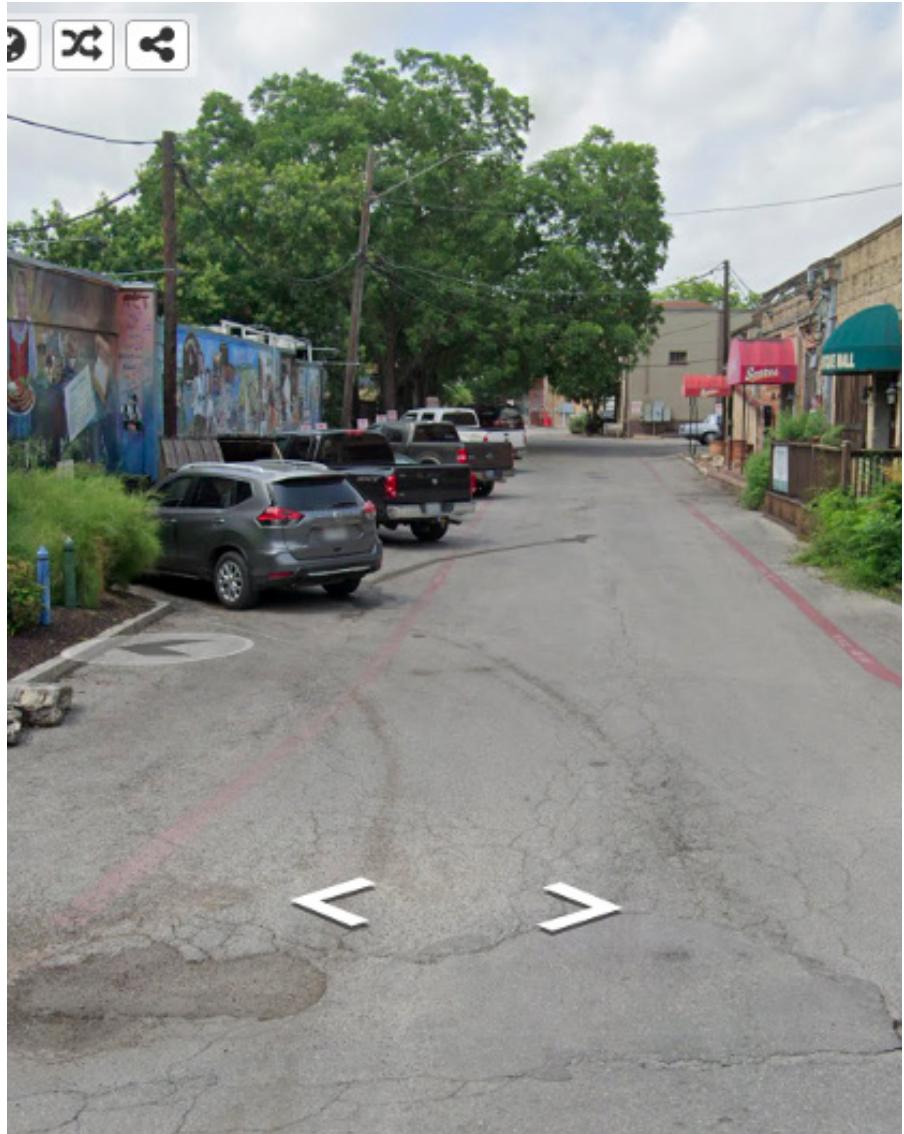
## ON-STREET PARKING OUTDOOR SEATING

Estimated cost to add on-street outdoor seating: \$5,000 - \$7,000\*



## COMMUNITY OUTDOOR SPACE & PEDESTRIAN CORRIDORS

Estimated cost to add outdoor seating and large planter pots: \$2,500 - \$3,000



\*Based on budgets of actual restaurants who have incorporated on-street outdoor seating. Cost includes lights and dining area.

# BULB-OUTS

## TEMPORARY BULB-OUTS

Estimated cost to add temporary bulb-outs: \$2,000 - \$7,000\*



Source: [http://www.pedbikesafe.org/PEDSAFE/countermeasures\\_detail.cfm?CM\\_NUM=5](http://www.pedbikesafe.org/PEDSAFE/countermeasures_detail.cfm?CM_NUM=5)

## PERMANENT BULB-OUTS

Estimated cost to add permanent bulb-outs: \$10,000 - \$20,000\*



Source: Traffic Calming Strategies at D.C. by DDOT



# WALKABILITY

## ( + ) Window Displays and Vinyls

Pedestrians are sensitive to details, and first-story windows are one of the most important (and underrated) details. They are the “seams” between the private and public realms, and provide essential cues about the overall vibrancy of an area. A window with no engaging displays creates a dead zone, similar to a blank wall. This is most acute in the evening, The area near Main Plaza is an especially strong example of this phenomena, including both the banks and office buildings facing San Antonio southwest of the Plaza and several of the uses in the Plaza.

We recommend a program to visually activate storefronts, particularly with lighting for evening uses. This could include retail businesses (which traditionally focus on window displays) as well as more “passive” uses such as banks, title firms, and insurance companies. This is an opportunity for City and Downtown stakeholder groups to partner with these entities, perhaps through modest storefront or facade grants or awards given to the most creative storefronts. The City may also consider hiring an artist (or take on part of the costs) in order to ensure quality. This can be a public-private art

initiative that complements the top-notch murals at multiple downtown locations.

## ( + ) NBU Window Displays

While New Braunfels Utilities (NBU) is planning to leave its current headquarters—and has a Request for Proposals to replace its building—the current building is part of the visual “dead zone” near Main Plaza. The City should consider partnering with NBU to create window displays. Potential subject matters may include:

- Art competition (energy-themed)
- History of New Braunfels
- German culture
- The future of Downtown

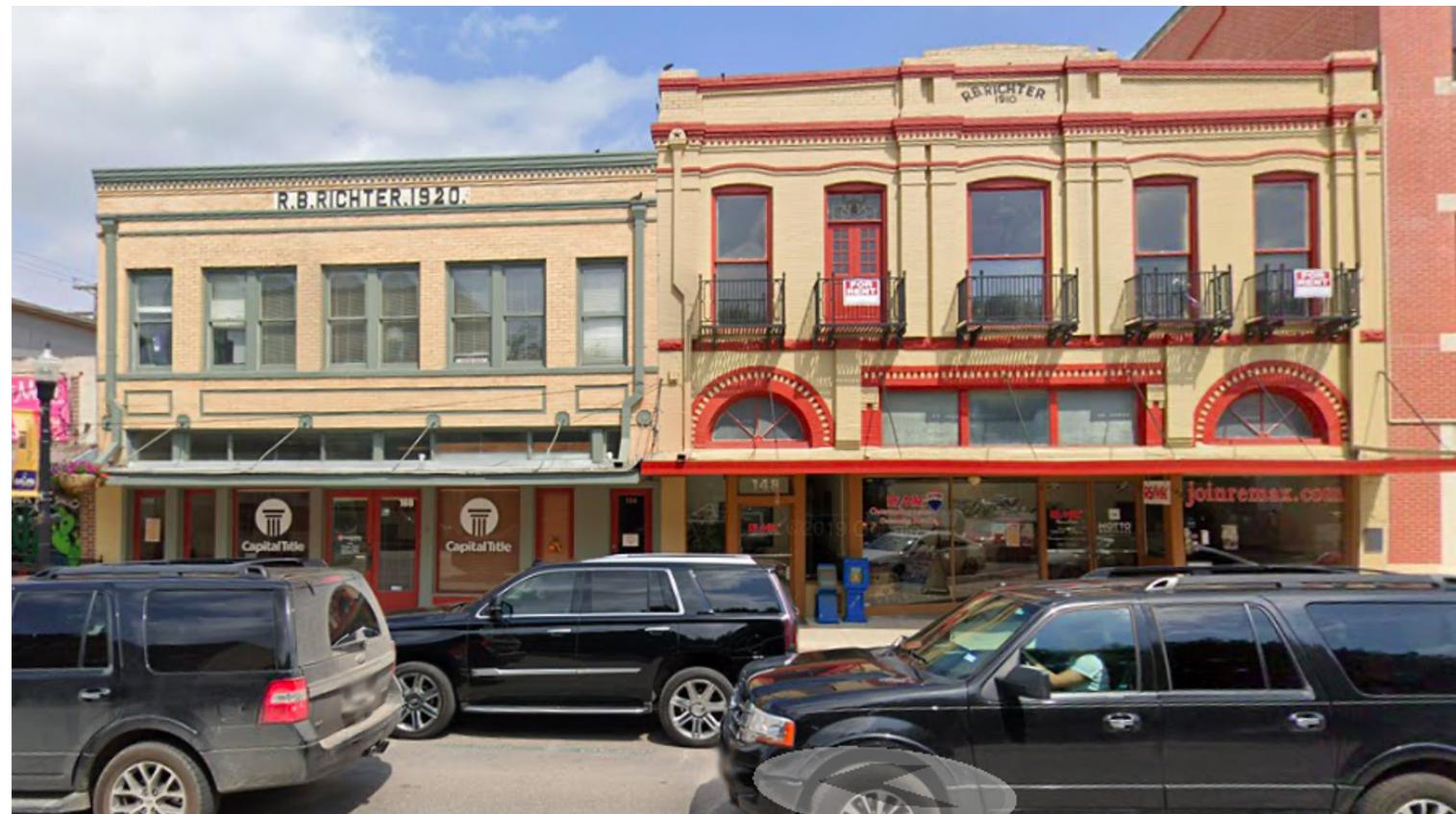
## ( + ) Adding Lights on Trees

Downtown New Braunfels lacks visual cues, such as lighting, that encourage pedestrians to stay downtown. Lighting encourages walkability while creating an aesthetically pleasing environment. We recommend collaboration between the City and NBU to install lights on trees and encourage the City to request LED lighting, which will last longer and will save expenses on utility bills in the long run.

*Many improvements  
Downtown can be done by  
private business and property  
owners at modest cost.  
Partnerships with the City and  
downtown groups can help  
facilitate these changes.*

# WALKABILITY

- Window Displays Showing Historic Charm of New Braunfels
- Lights Around a Building's Periphery



# WALKABILITY

## VISUAL CUES IN DOWNTOWN NEW BRAUNFELS

Adding visual cues, such as:

- Lights on the peripheral of buildings
- Window displays and vinyls with historic images or information
- Adding lights to trees

These cues attract pedestrian interest, improve downtown aesthetics, activate walkability, and engage passersby to Downtown amenities.

*The blocks highlighted in the adjacent map are places recommended for adding visual cues to activate spaces and engage pedestrians*



# VISUAL CUES

## CASE STUDY - GREENVILLE, TEXAS

Greenville, Texas is a revitalizing historic small town in East Texas. One key building at the heart of the Main Street was an eyesore, with several vacant windows. The building owner, who was concerned about the entire district, hired a Wimberly, Texas-based artist to create a window display of historic photos, celebrating the city's rich history while improving the downtown's visual feel and pedestrian experience.



For every **\$1 invested** in encouraging walkability & bikeability, cities gain an estimated **return on investment of nearly \$12**

Average: \$3,000 / crosswalk [http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/cms/downloads/Countermeasure%20Costs\\_Report\\_Nov2013.pdf](http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/cms/downloads/Countermeasure%20Costs_Report_Nov2013.pdf)

Maintenance Cost - \$10,000 - \$12,000 / crosswalk - typically last 3 to 5 years

## WALKABILITY

### ( + ) Lights on the Periphery of Buildings

Lights on the periphery of buildings also serve as visual cues to draw pedestrians in, make people feel safe walking at night, and help signal that one is in a downtown “destination” environment. In addition to lit up street trees, we recommend adding lights to the periphery of buildings. Adding lights on the iconic historical buildings of Downtown New Braunfels will highlight the buildings’ architectural features and support a more vibrant downtown. We advise for energy-efficient LED light bulbs as a durable and cost-effective option.

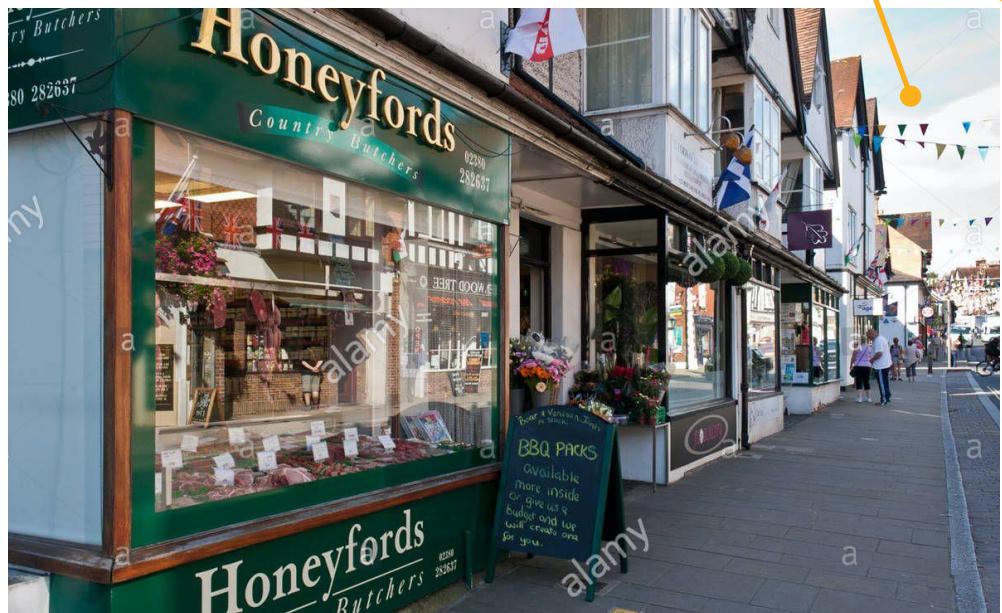
The City can take an active role in partnering with business and property owners to provide matching funds or otherwise incentivize or support this lighting. In particular, NBU’s key location makes it an especially important site; we recommend prioritizing collaboration between the City and NBU to help accomplish this.

### ( + ) Colorful Crosswalks Throughout Downtown

Most of the downtown crosswalk conditions are faded and have limited visibility. This serves as a signal to both motorists and pedestrians that automobiles have priority throughout the district. While any clearly-visible crosswalks would help to lessen this, vibrant, colorful crosswalks give drivers a particularly strong visual cue to slow down and yield to pedestrians. We recommend adding vibrant and color crosswalks as elements used to encourage a walkable Downtown, ensure pedestrian safety, and improve the Downtown’s image.

It should be noted that this type of intervention can be done at a variety of costs, and can also be piloted temporarily to build public support.

# PERIPHERAL LIGHTING



# COLORFUL CROSSWALKS

## SHORTER & VISUAL CROSSWALKS

- Increases pedestrian safety
- Increases Downtown aesthetics
- Encourages walkability

The **fuchsia**-colored rectangles are crosswalks we recommend improving via visual enhancements.

The **iris**-colored rectangles are spaces we recommend adding crosswalks to increase pedestrian safety access to Main Plaza,



Highly Visible Crosswalk Example



# ACADEMY & SAN ANTONIO

## IMPROVING AESTHETICS & ENHANCING VALUE

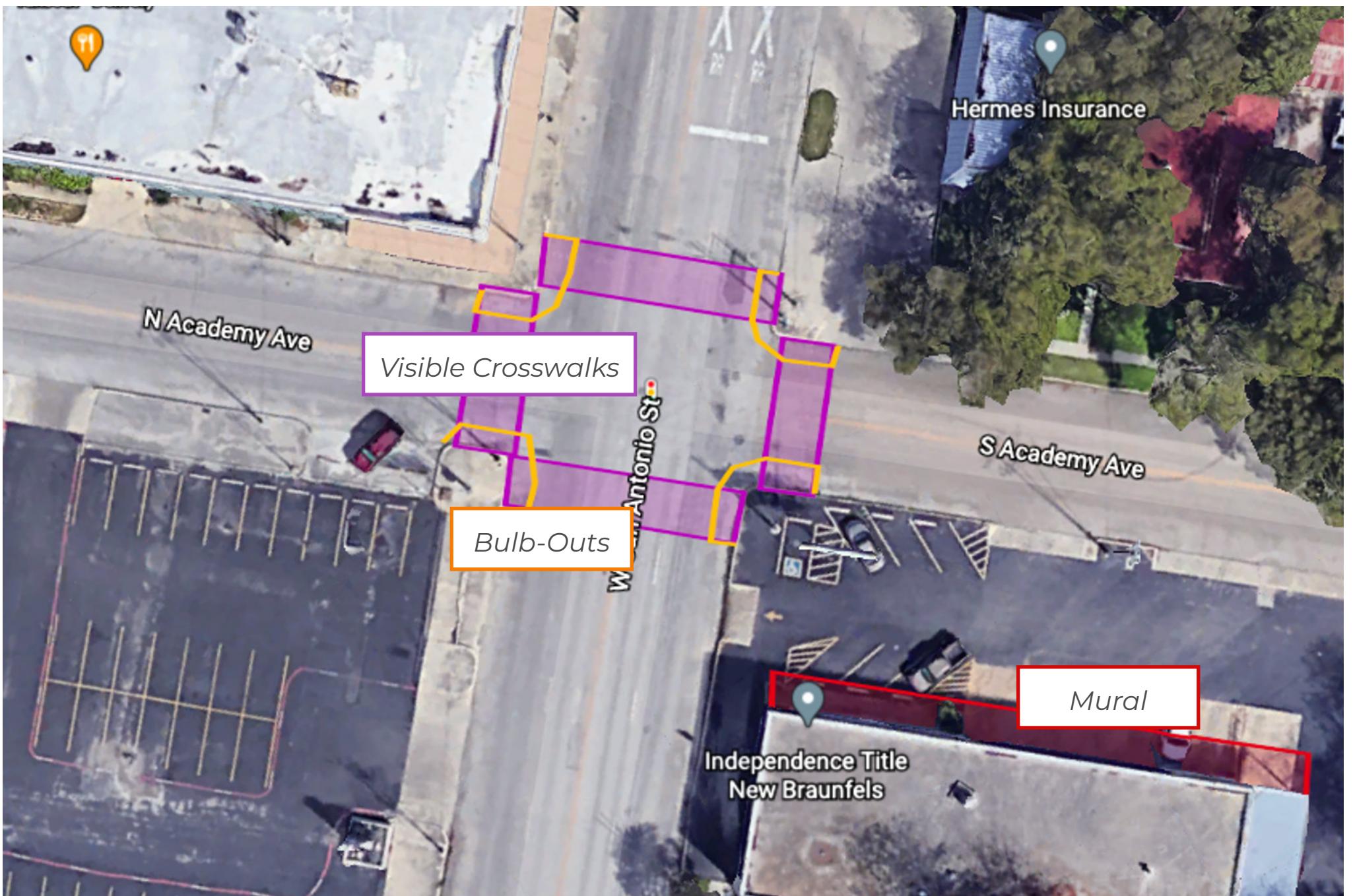
Improving the aesthetics at the intersection of North Academy Avenue & West San Antonio will:

- encourage pedestrians to continue to walk from the commercial uses on West San Antonio Street
- expand the vibrant Downtown and encourage investment southwest
- support Arlan's Market and other uses southwest of Academy Avenue
- increase visibility to Downtown Social and the Pour House
- expand pedestrian activity on the primary commercial corridor
- reinforce planned investments in sidewalks and walkability within this part of the district.

The **fuchsia**-colored rectangles are crosswalks we recommend improving via visual enhancements.

The **orange** color is where we recommend adding bulb-outs to improve pedestrian safety by shortening crossing distances.

The **red** color is where we recommend adding a mural to improve Downtown aesthetics and attract pedestrians.





Pedestrian Cut-Through Examples

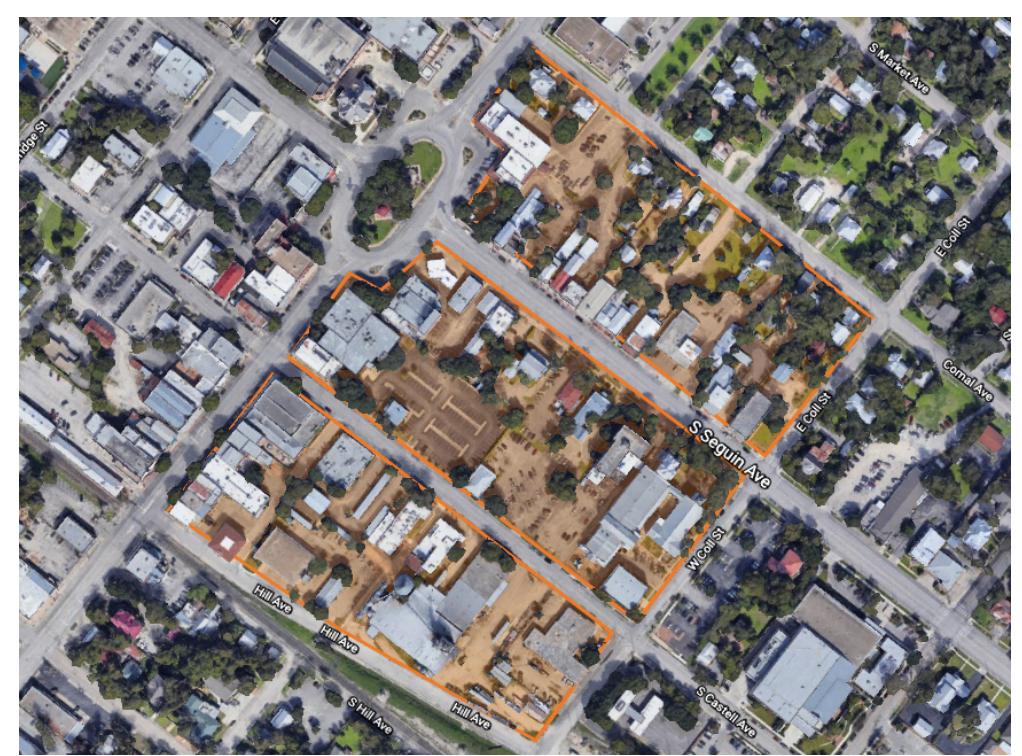
## MEGA BLOCK

### (+) Pedestrian Cut-Through

Three blocks in Downtown New Braunfels, southwest of San Antonio Street, average to 876' x 397'; this is considered to be a mega block. Mega blocks inhibit walkability because they increase the distance that pedestrians must travel to their destination. Although there is no specific "ideal" block size, on average a block closer to 275' is more workable, as it is the distance an average walker can walk in a minute. This makes it easier for pedestrians to explore the town on foot, choose different routes, take walks around the block, and increase exposure to local businesses.

Although it is not feasible for the City to cut the blocks exactly in half, any efforts to reduce block distance by adding pedestrian cut-throughs are recommended. Pedestrian corridors and walk-throughs are a workable solution to mega blocks'

walkability challenges. We suggest the City make investments to establish pedestrian walkway alleys by creating agreements with property owners as well as purchasing easement rights where necessary.



Downtown New Braunfels' Mega Blocks

# MEGABLOCK CUT-THROUGH

## **Mega blocks (or large blocks) inhibit walkability.**

Large blocks create an environment where pedestrians are forced to go out of their way and walk longer to get to their destination.

**Pedestrian corridors and walk-throughs** are a solution to large blocks' walkability challenges.

**A variety of strategies** can be used to support these cut-throughs, including gateways, colored pavement, covered corridors, signage, and creation of buildings or vendors fronting the cut-through.



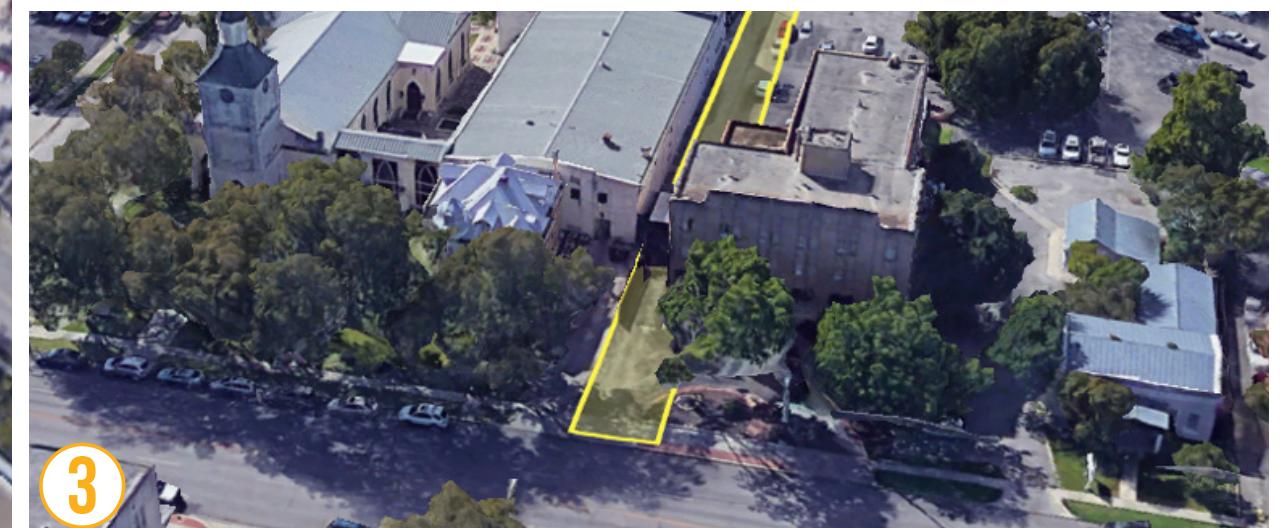
Pedestrian Corridor Examples



# MEGABLOCK CUT-THROUGH



PEDESTRIAN CUT-THROUGHS



# MEGABLOCK CUT-THROUGH

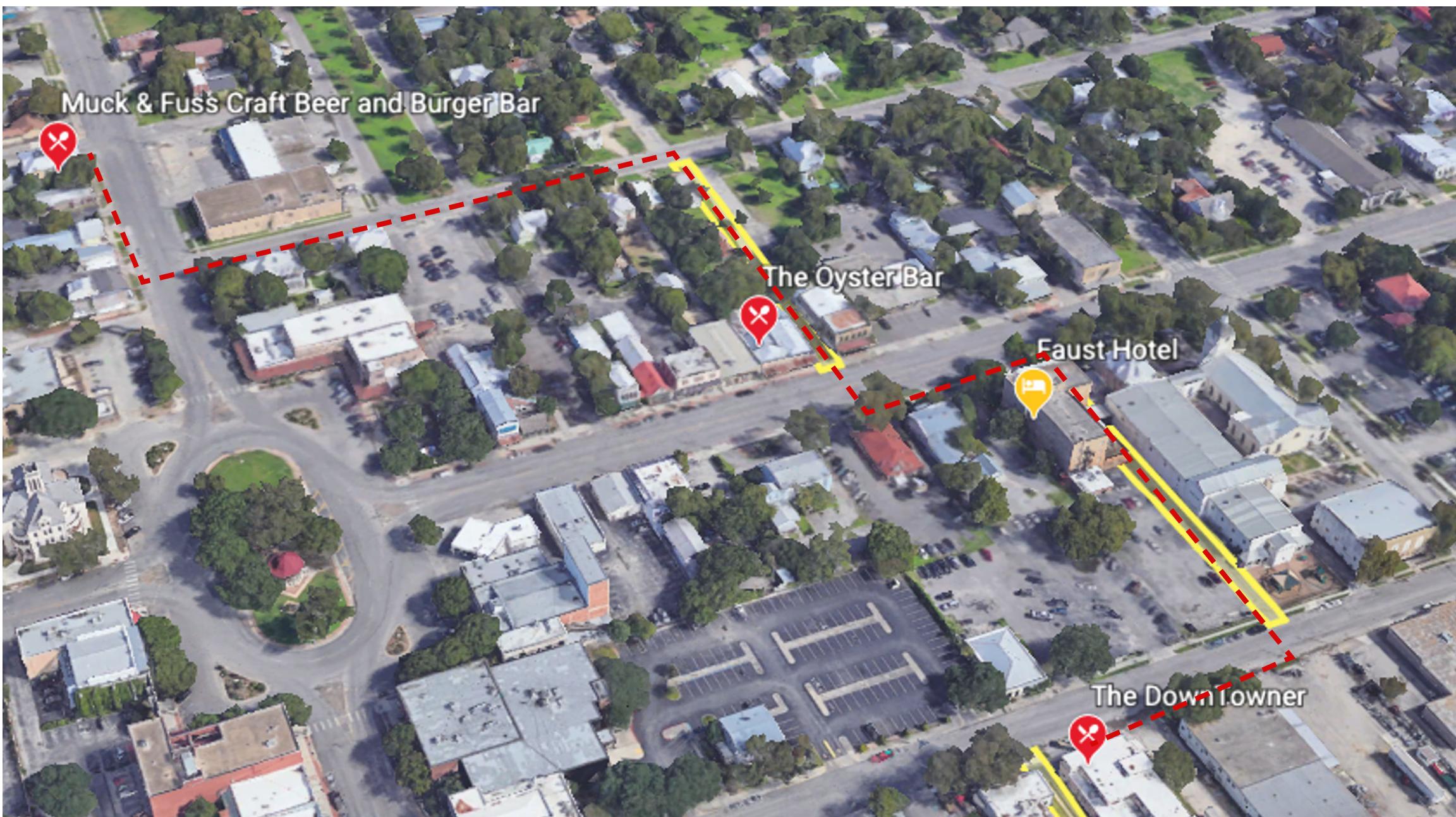
## MUCK & FUSS → THE OYSTER BAR → THE DOWNTOWNER = 0.5 MILES

This scenario envisions a likely route for someone going to three locations in one visit to Downtown New Braunfels. In addition to adding to travel distance, this detour limits the quality of the pedestrian experience



# MEGABLOCK CUT-THROUGH

MUCK & FUSS → THE OYSTER BAR → THE DOWNTOWNER = 0.4 MILES



# MEGA BLOCKS

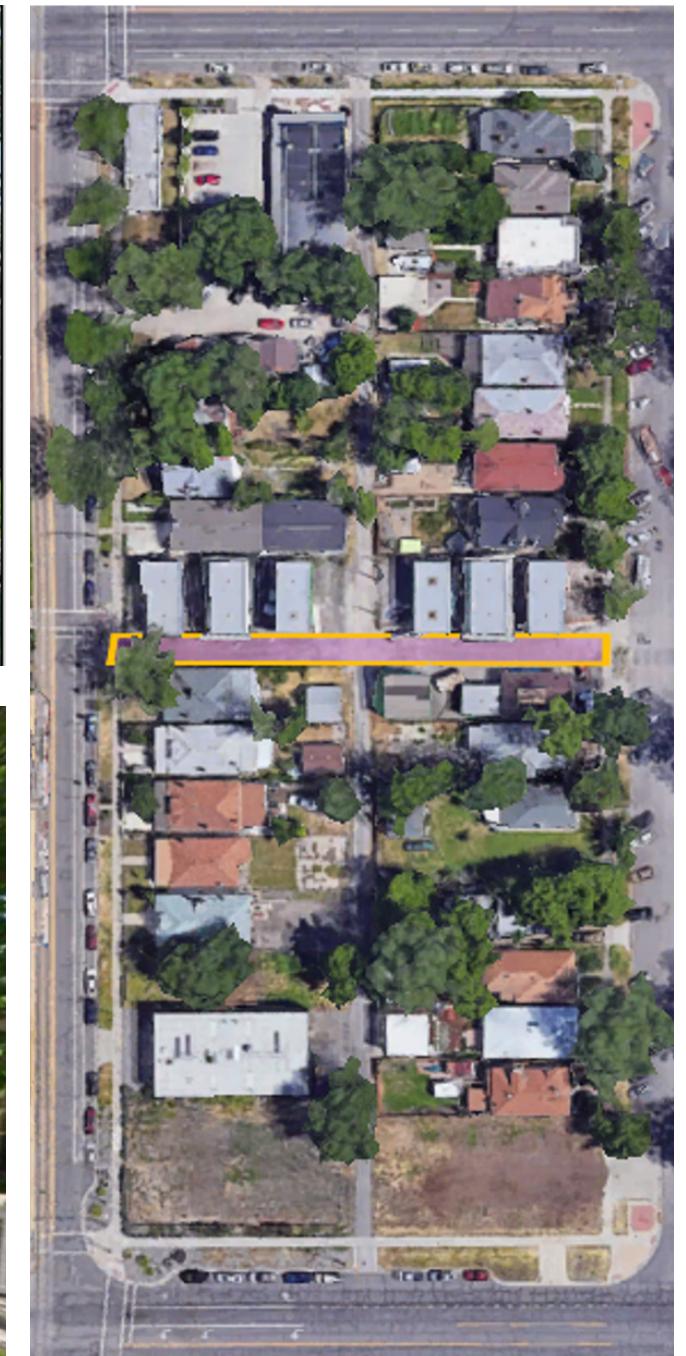
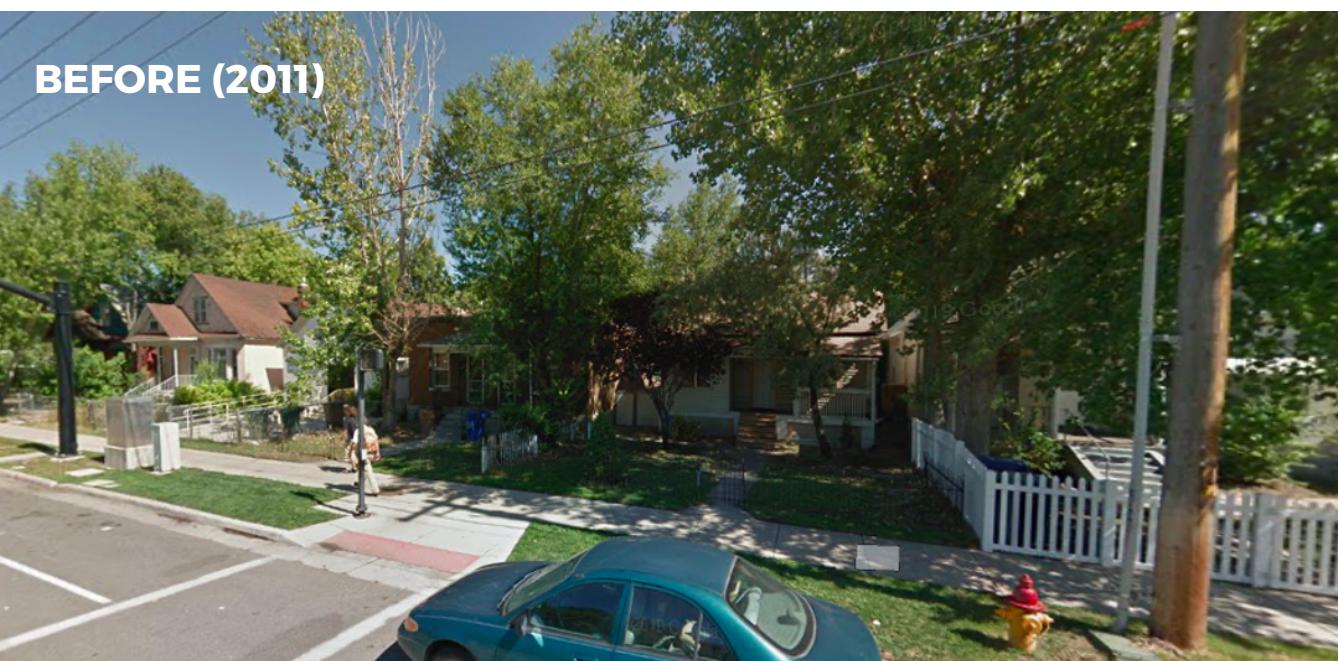
## CASE STUDY - SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

### JEFFERSON WALKWAY, SALT LAKE CITY

Location: 116 State Route 19

Salt Lake City, Utah is known for having the largest blocks of any major city in the U.S. at an average size of 660 x 660 feet per block. Large blocks are key contributors behind why pedestrians opt out of walking. The large blocks in Salt Lake City are a reflection of its heritage and now antiquated transportation conditions. Projects to reduce Salt Lake City's block size have been implemented in recent years. The Jefferson Street Mid-Block Walkway Project serves as a strong example.

Designed by the Redevelopment Agency of Salt Lake City, a mid-block pedestrian corridor was added to increase pedestrian activity. This allows pedestrians to have easier access to get to their destination and thus increasing walkability. In order to construct the pedestrian corridor and cut the block size in half on private property, the City had to gain access with a public easement. This easement was also necessary to facilitate property maintenance. This project is especially advantageous, in terms of walkability and pedestrian-centric design, because it not only reduced walking time, but also gave direct access to the mass-transit TRAX line.



# ACTIVATION

## ( + ) Parking Lots

Some parking lots in Downtown New Braunfels' are in zones with little activity - despite close proximity to clusters of key destinations. For that reason, these spaces are often overlooked and underused, contributing to a perception that there is insufficient parking in the district. Additionally, these lots reinforce the inactive nature of these areas, creating a self-reinforcing cycle that decreases the likelihood of future investments. An example can be seen on North Seguin Avenue, immediately northwest of the plaza area.

Our team recommends a strategy to attract activities and bring increased visibility to these areas. Examples may include:

- Assigning dedicated spaces to curated food trucks and vendors
- Small gathering space with tables
- Use of art and pavement colors
- Wayfinding, signage

A wayfinding map showing areas of attraction and

its proximity should also be placed at the parking lots. This is vital to encourage walkability from parking lots by better connecting the parking lots to the rest of Downtown. Wayfinding signs should also show walking distance to attraction spots.

## ( + ) Improved Signage, Wayfinding

Wayfinding provides a foundation for a more economically-thriving, resilient, and enjoyable Downtown. Signage and maps should direct visitors to perimeter parking facilities and greatly support the value of the pedestrian experience.

A successful wayfinding system relies on balancing functionality, usage, scale, placement, color, the look and feel and how signage can reinforce the character of a place. The larger goal is to improve navigation, clarity of direction, and the look and feel of the downtown. This will enrich the visitor's experience, allowing them clarity of access to parking and key destinations.

Signage is especially important in a downtown that attracts a lot of tourists. It helps the visitor to

# PARKING LOTS

## ENCOURAGING ACTIVATION

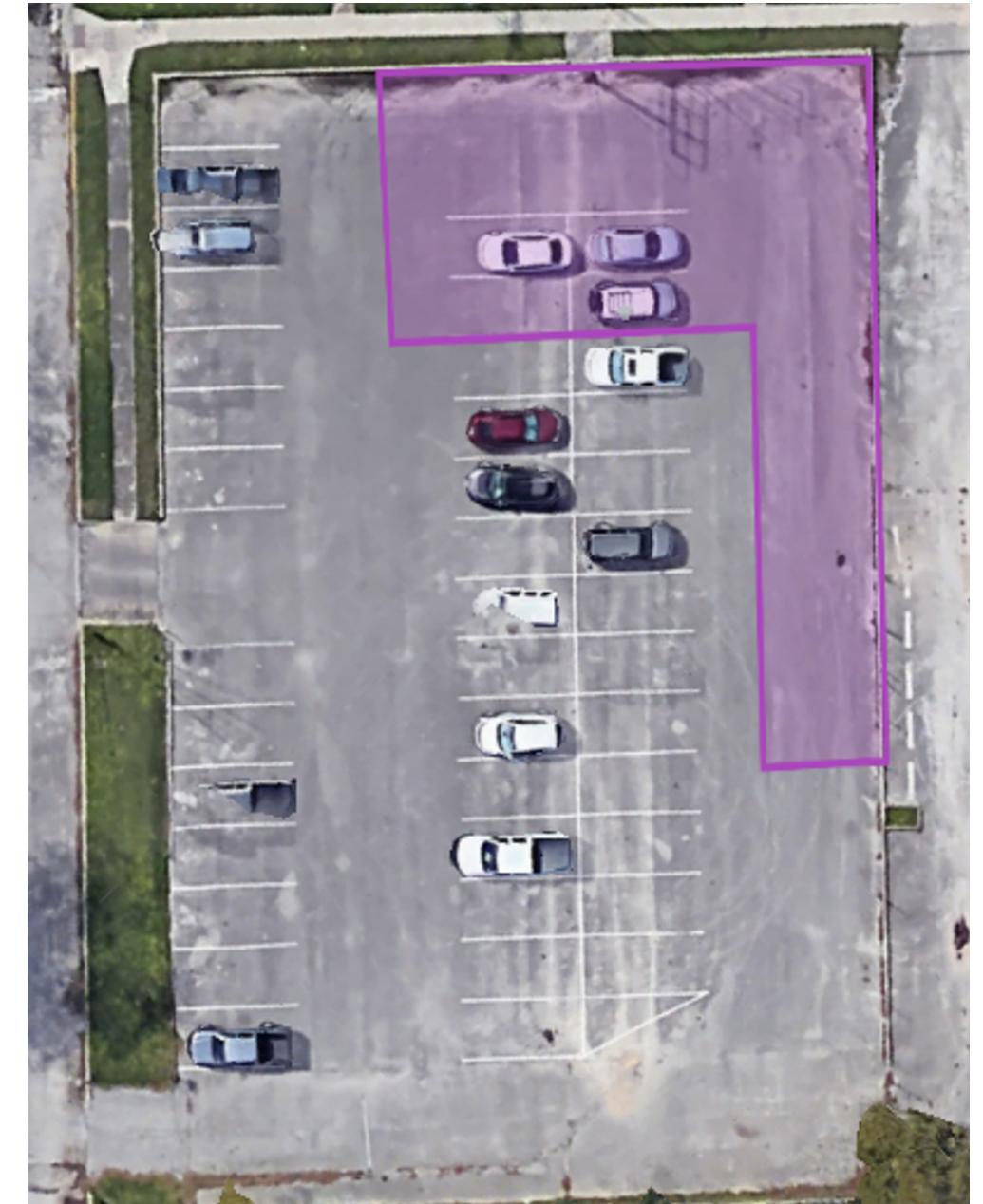
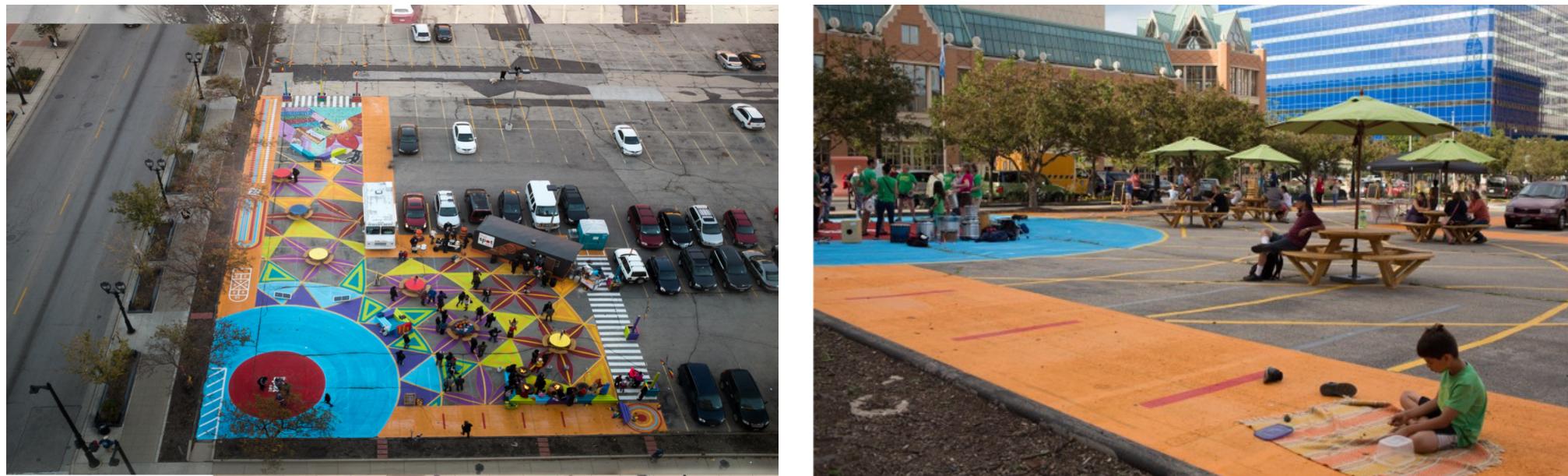
### WAYFINDING SIGNS



### DOWNTOWN NEW BRAUNFELS PARKING LOT OPPORTUNITY



### MILWAUKEE, WI EXAMPLE



# PARKING LOTS

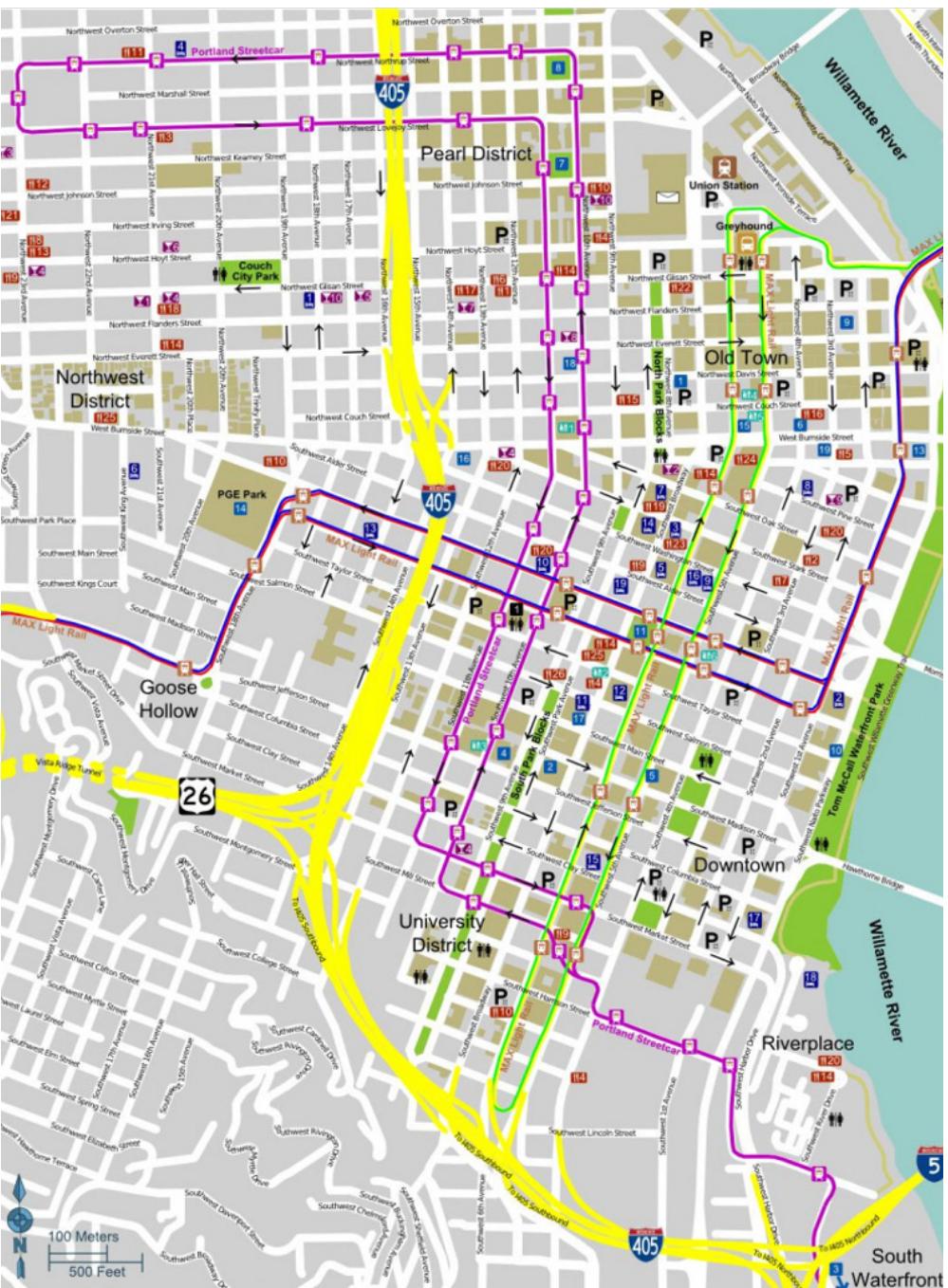
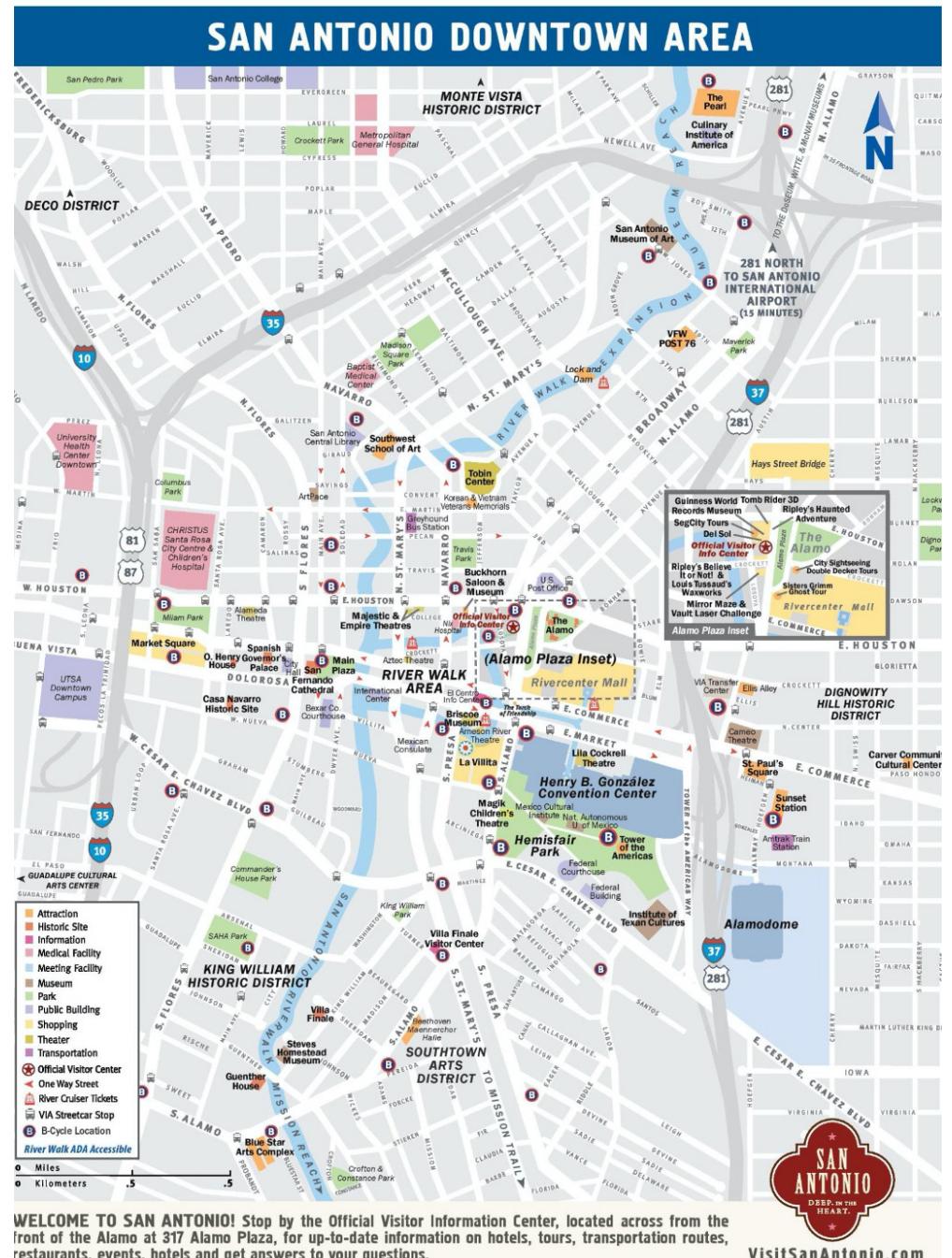
Incorporating a small gathering space, public art, tables and chairs, bright colors, and periodic vendors creates an inviting space that encourages walkability and activity



## BURTONSVILLE, MD - EXAMPLE



# WAYFINDING



generate anticipation about multiple experiences, enriching their visit, encouraging exploration, and can lead to additional restaurant/retail spending. Studies show that pedestrians may spend as much as 65% more than drivers; wayfinding and signage is an important step in reinforcing New Braunfels' status as a high-quality destination.

Estimated cost to add low-cost wayfinding signs throughout Downtown: \$1,600 (80 signs)

## (+) Create a Printable, Virtual Map

Map should include parking, nightlife, historic attractions, and overall Downtown area.

## (+) Bike Lanes

At the moment, there is limited, disconnected, and poorly-enforced bicycle infrastructure in Downtown New Braunfels. A bicycle-friendly downtown has many economic, environmental, and social benefits. Safe, comfortable, and connected bicycle infrastructure encourages

people to actively interact with downtown, which contributes to the city's vitality. In fact, a 2018 study reveals bicyclists spend about 40% more money at local businesses than car drivers. It also minimizes the use of cars, reducing pollution, congestion, road maintenance cost, and the parking burden.

Creating space for cyclists makes sense in Downtown New Braunfels, because automobile speeds and volumes are inconsistent with a pedestrian-friendly downtown core. Bike lanes slow down traffic which encourages motorists to notice businesses - crucial in a downtown where many people drive through.

We recommend the City build more bicycle infrastructure to cultivate a bicycle-friendly community for both locals and visitors. To begin to design a bike a friendly town the City should first understand the four types of cyclists:

- **Strong and Fearless:** People willing to bicycle with limited or no bicycle-specific infrastructure
- **Enthused and Confident:** People willing to bicycle if some bicycle-specific infrastructure is in place
- **Interested but Concerned:** People willing to

bicycle if high-quality infrastructure is in place

- **No Way, No How:** People unwilling to bicycle even if high-quality bicycle infrastructure is in place

Understanding the four types of cyclist is the first step towards designs that target likely cyclists. For example, it may initially be unrealistic to design a network where "interested but concerned" cyclists would be confident, but supporting "enthused and confident" cyclists may be very feasible. Intersections and driveways are the most dangerous areas for cyclists. We advise the City to focus resources on these areas to ensure cyclist safety. This could be done via four key design strategies:

- a refuge island at the corner of intersections,
- a forward stop bar for cyclists to wait safely at red lights,
- a setback bicycle and pedestrian crossing, and
- bicycle-friendly signal phasing.



SOURCE: <https://www.ecosia.org/images?q=bicycle%20safe%20intersection&license=share#f=true&id=C3E306B0468D0C052CD17FA95FFC7BCE56F6FBF8>

# WALK[YOURCITY]

There are feasible and low-cost options to encourage walkability with help from organizations like Walk[YourCity]. Walk[YourCity] is a non-profit whose mission is to encourage people to walk (and cycle) more by making street signs that aim to inform potential walkers/cyclists on what amenities are walking and cycling distance and how long it will take to get there. We recommend the City utilize these low-cost and feasible options to encourage active transportation choices by placing roughly 40 signs throughout Downtown.

We recommend placing the Walk[YourCity] signs in locations such as Schlitterbahn Resort and Waterpark, museums, Wurstfest, by tubing parking lots, and the New Braunfels Civic/Convention Center.

Each sign cost \$20 to create; we advise the City to invest roughly \$800 to adding these types of wayfinding signs, with the goal of testing and piloting an eventual pedestrian-oriented update to the permanent wayfinding system. We believe this to be an impactful investment that will pay for itself. It is an inexpensive tool which will promote visibility of local businesses, encourage healthier communities, and encourage people to spend money locally.

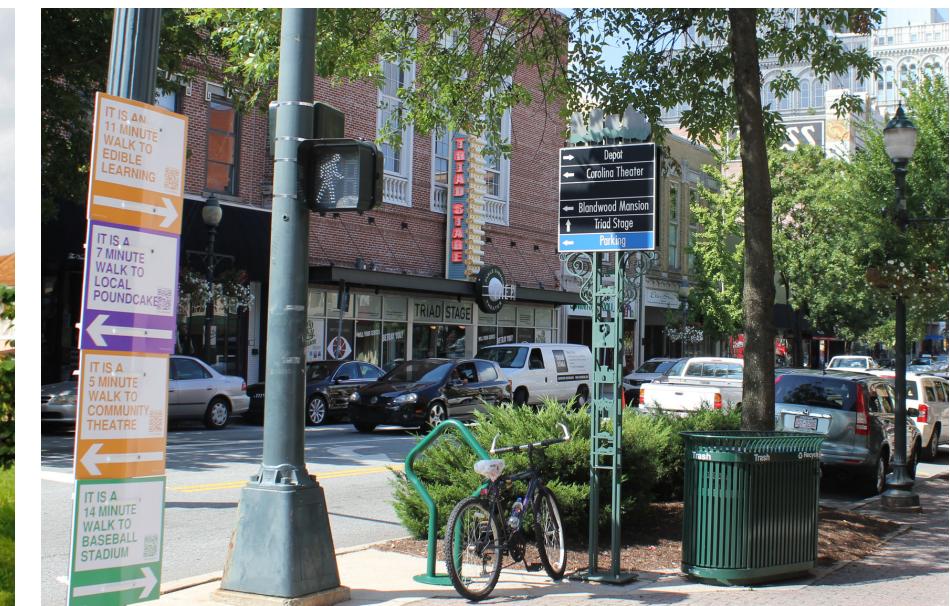
## WALK[YOUR CITY]



Walk [YourCity] Signage Example



Walk [Mount Hope] Project Implementation



Walk [Downtown Greensboro] Project Implementation

SOURCE: [HTTPS://WALKYOURCITY.ORG](https://WALKYOURCITY.ORG) (CASE STUDIES)

# SHUTTLE BUS SERVICES

## ( + ) Shuttle Bus Services

Downtown tends to receive only modest benefits from the numerous visitors to Gruene, Schlitterbahn, river tubing, and large special events - representing a loss of many potential overnight stays. It is also notable that there is no mass transit system in the city. For these reasons, shuttle buses could be of great service to Downtown. We recommend the City collaborate with shuttle bus operators to provide services to and from parking lots and event and popular destination sites.

Shuttle services also offer an excellent opportunity for partnerships. For example, the Schlitterbahn Resort offers a complimentary shuttle service to its visitors, and tube companies run their own fleets of shuttles, which are rented independently on a per-hour basis, and make their services available during special events such as Wurstfest. Some hotels also provide additional shuttle services. Broadly speaking, research in March 2020 related to the New Braunfels Transit Plan noted that there were about 50 tube shuttle vehicles in the New Braunfels area, and that one transportation company has a

fleet of approximately 40 vehicles available.

Downtown New Braunfels has several potential locations that should be considered as locations for shuttle bus and cycle hubs, including:

- Convention Center Parking Lots
- Public Parking Lots
- Wurstfest Event Space
- Downtown

It can be used as a tool to bridge the gap between commuters' final destination and either parking lots or homes, also known as "the last mile."

During this pandemic, it is likely that most available shuttle buses are underutilized. This may present an opportunity to explore shuttle services to offer connections between Downtown (including the Convention Center), both Schlitterbahn locations, Gruene, the Children's Museum, tubing launch points, and hotels. We recommend creating an updated list of available shuttles, assessing their availability, and partnering with the various

entities to identify opportunities to maximize the use of these shuttles. While this will require some City investment, the existing service presents a resource that may be leveraged at a modest cost due to the decrease of service due to the pandemic. It is an opportunity to “optimize” visitors who go to the City’s attractions - and ensure that they are supporting multiple parts of New Braunfels.

It should be noted that Texas Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) regulations identify “funding transportation systems for tourists” as one of nine permissible uses of these funds. Since use of these funds are highly restricted, this is a strong source of possible funding for the City to support these shuttles.

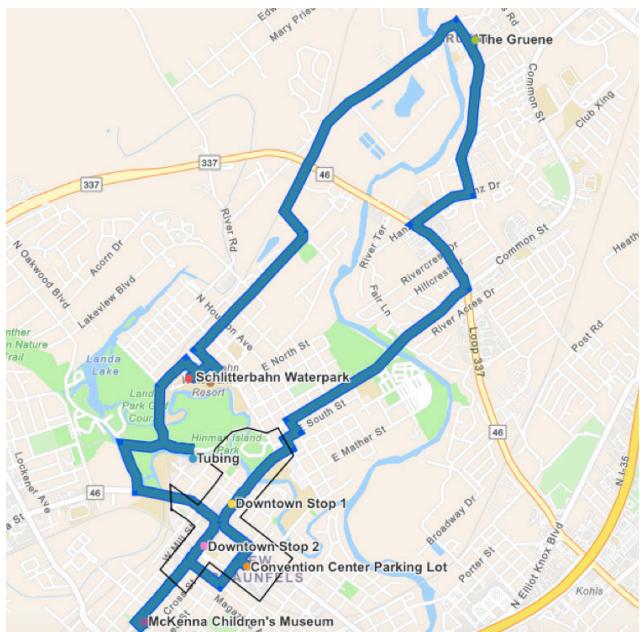


FIG. 1-1 - EXPANDED POTENTIAL SHUTTLE ROUTE

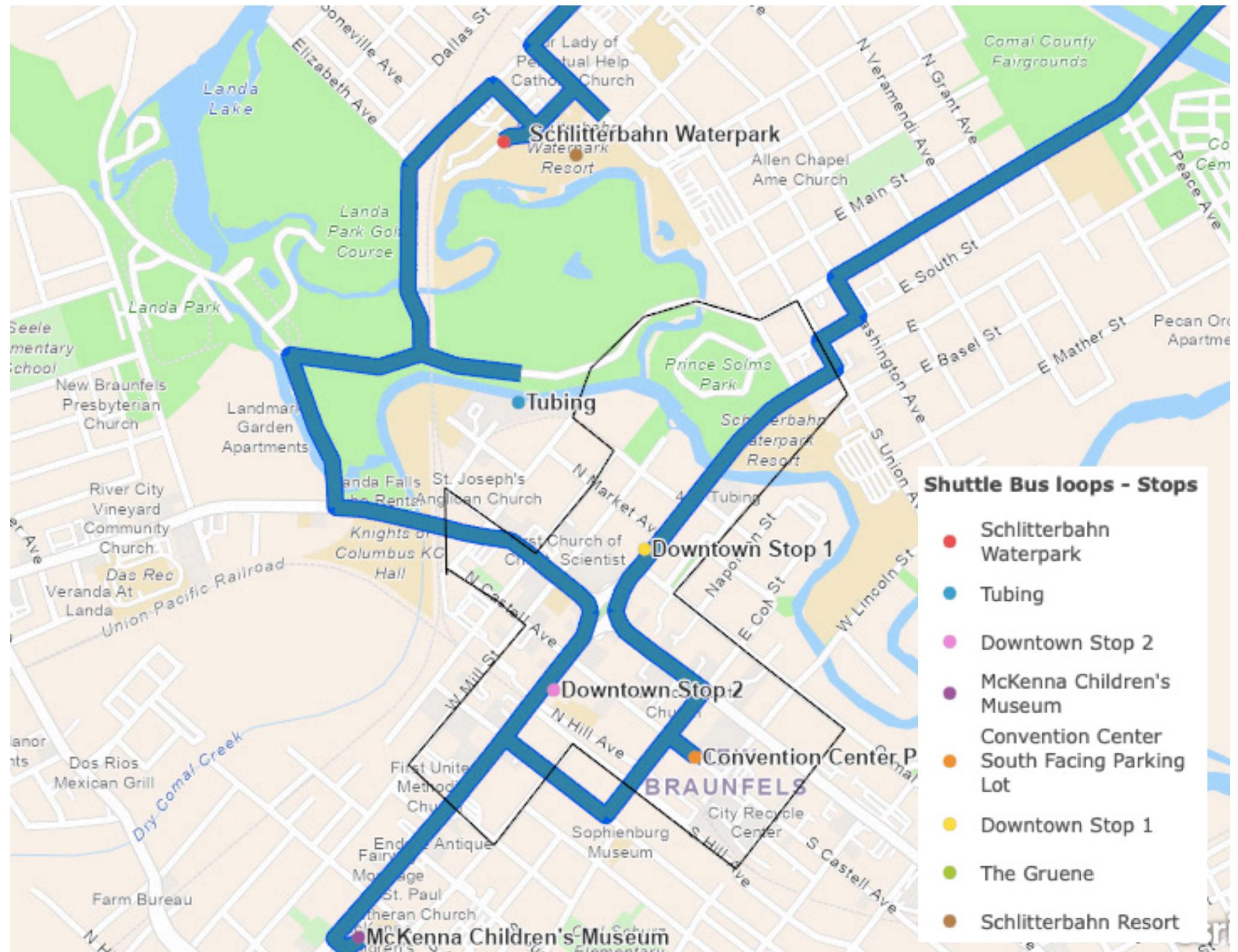


FIG. 1-2 - POTENTIAL SHUTTLE ROUTE THROUGH DOWNTOWN NEW BRAUNFELS

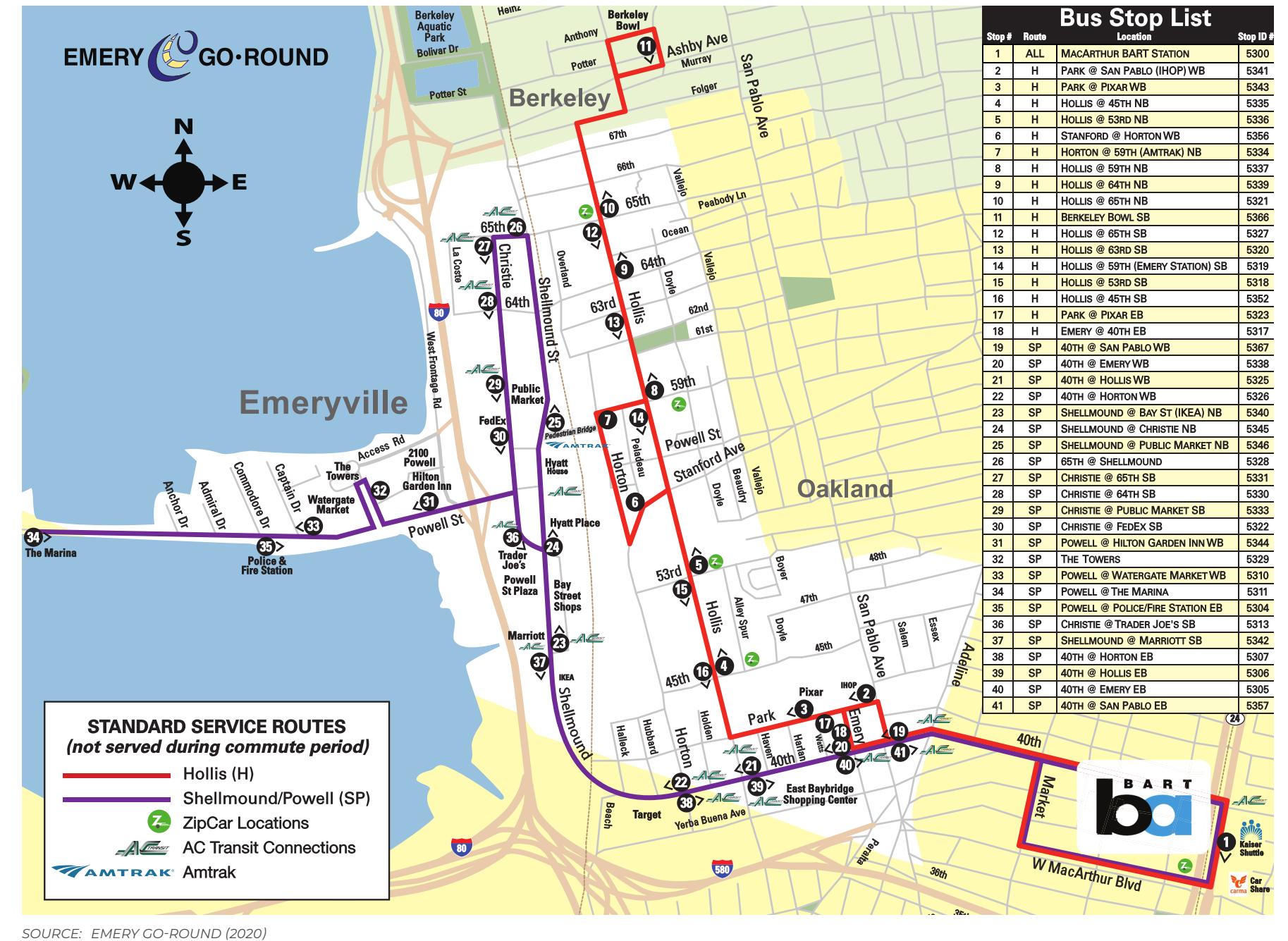
# SHUTTLE SERVICES

## CASE STUDY - EMERYVILLE, CALIFORNIA

Shuttle bus services are an effective resource, especially for small to mid-sized cities with large tourist populations, to encourage visitors and residents to use multimodal transportation.

The small town of Emeryville implemented Emery Go-Round Shuttle as a solution to bridge the gap between other modes of transportation and riders' final destinations.

Fully funded by the town's business associations and free to riders, Emery Go-Round has proven to be a success. It has brought businesses to the area, increased ridership, and become an essential tool to the town's economy.



# ALLEYWAY ACTIVATION

## ( + ) Alleys to Community Spaces

While alleyways are designed for utilitarian purposes such as trash disposal and service vehicle access, they also provide opportunities to create unique, distinctive community spaces. In the case of New Braunfels, the alleyway adjacent to Krause's already serves much of that function, due both to the substantial number of exceptional murals and to the presence of multiple businesses with alleyway-facing rear entrances.

In addition to providing needed public space, active alleyways support the aesthetics of a vibrant downtown. Service needs can be met by consolidating waste management services and coordinating pick-up times so that they do not interfere with outdoor areas.

## ( + ) Increase Outdoor Seating

During these challenging times, it is more important than ever to support adaptability in order to help businesses thrive during COVID-19 restraints. We, therefore, recommend taking a proactive approach to increase outdoor seating. Where businesses are

restricted to narrow sidewalks, we recommend either identifying nearby outdoor spaces or utilizing on-street parking spaces, which can provide this additional seating space. In order to establish a safe outdoor seating area in an on-street parking space where guests feel comfortable, it is vital to have certain elements. One is having barriers such as planters that provide buffers between the road and the outdoor seating space.

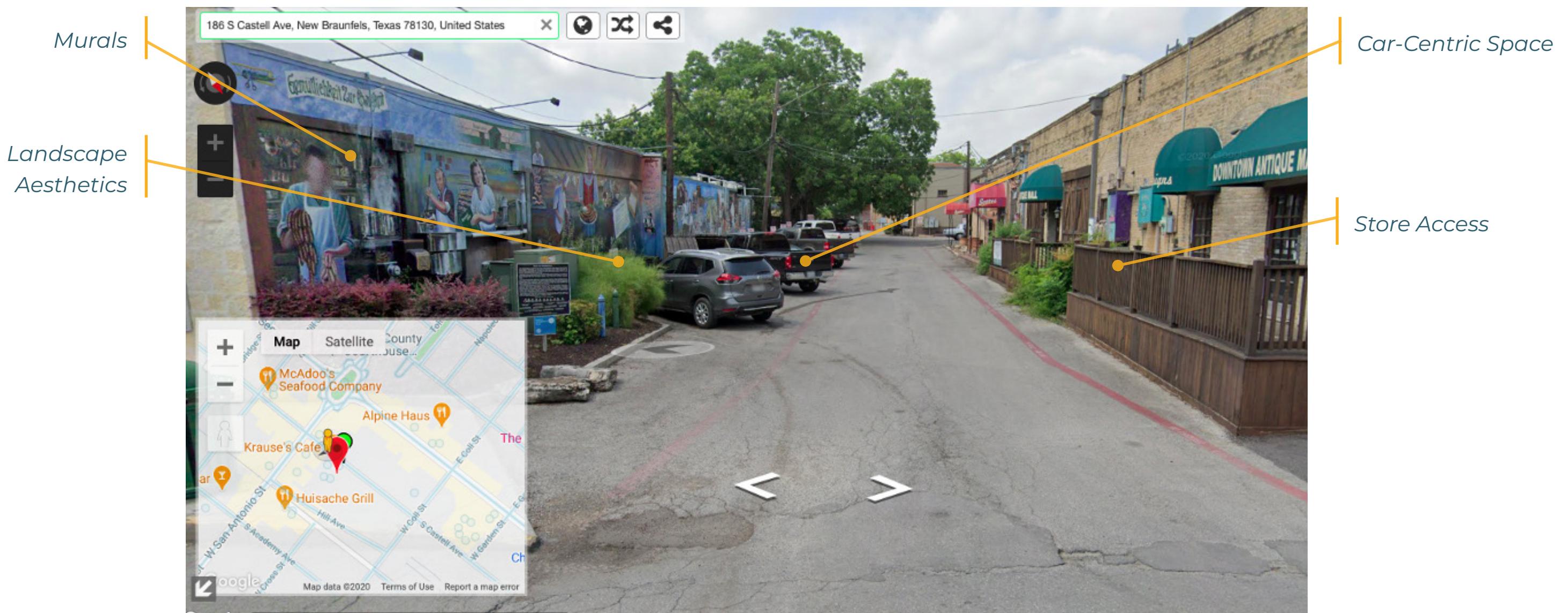
# ALLEYWAY ACTIVATION

# ALLEYS TO COMMUNITY SPACES



# ALLEYWAY ACTIVATION

## ACTIVATING ALLEYS TO COMMUNITY SPACES



# ALLEYWAY ACTIVATION

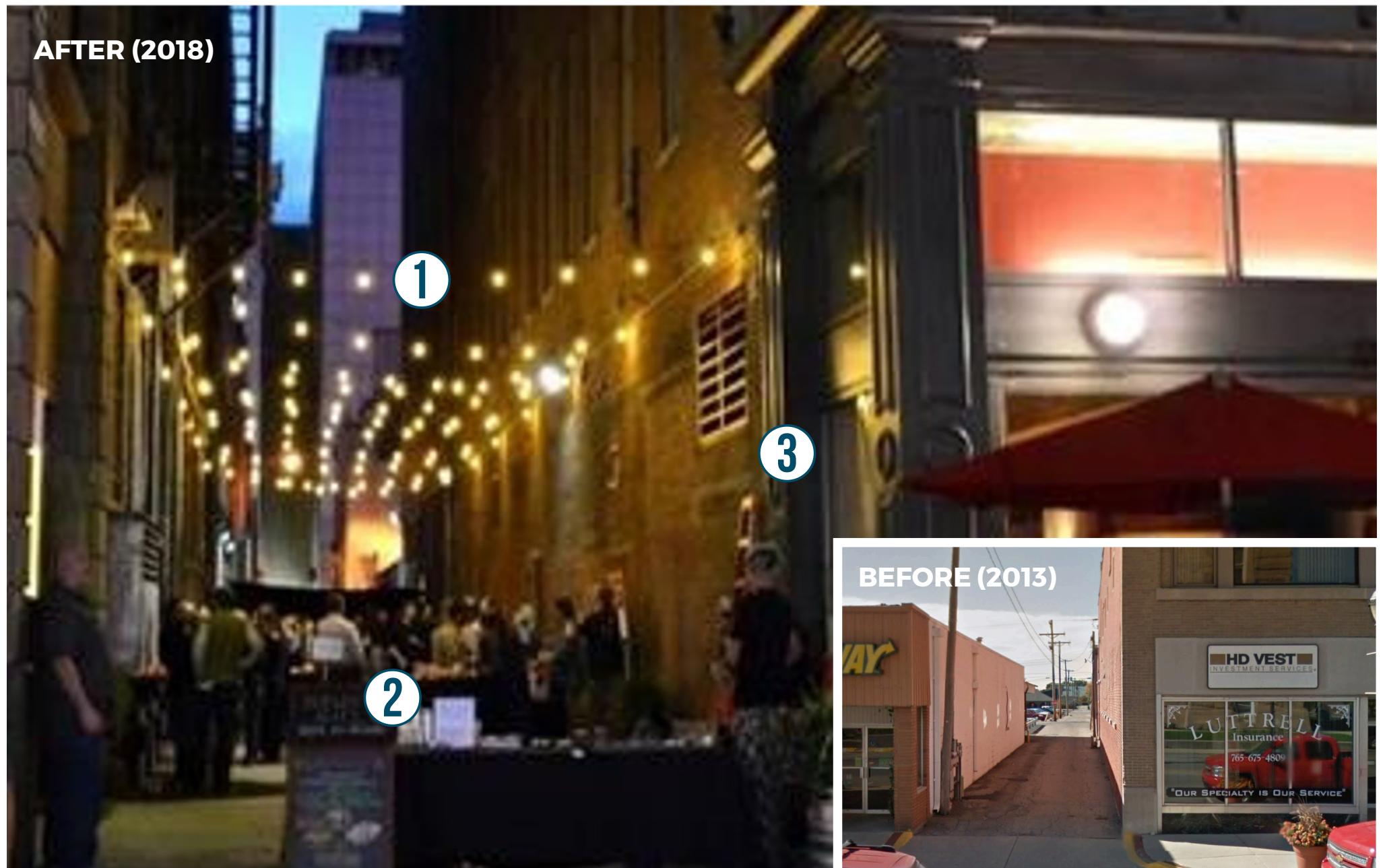
## CASE STUDY - TIPTON, INDIANA

### LIGHTING UP ALLEYS

The alleyway in Tipton, Indiana also known as “The Alley” was born from concerns the downtown did not have enough community spaces. The Alley was created in partnership with the Tipton County Economic Development Foundation and the Tipton Main Street Association. Together, the partners were able to raise \$40,000 to make this vibrant idea a reality.

There's a couple of factors that make this project successful and adds vibrancy to the downtown – lighting being one of them. The lighting style brings an artistic element and cultivates a safe environment for people to enjoy at night. This project was also successful was because it responded to the call for more quality spaces in downtown and was built by the community, therefore cultivating a personal connection to Tipton residents.

- 1 Street lighting improves aesthetics and increases safety
- 2 Outdoor Seating
- 3 Pedestrian Corridor



SOURCE: [HTTPS://TIPTONMAINSTREET.ORG/THE-ALLEY](https://TIPTONMAINSTREET.ORG/THE-ALLEY)

# ALLEYWAY ACTIVATION

## LIGHTING UP ALLEYS

Alleyways provide opportunities to create unique spaces. Lighting is one of many essential elements to improve the aesthetics of alleyways and redesign them into public spaces and cozy pedestrian corridors.

It is encouraged to add accent lighting in alleyways to engage people, add a visual interest, and increase feelings of safety. This should be done in addition

to adding lights on edges of buildings to showcase building façades and improve overall ambiance.

Art installation of lights is highly encouraged. Light art not only will have a functional purpose, it will also engage and attract the community and create a unique space for people to enjoy.



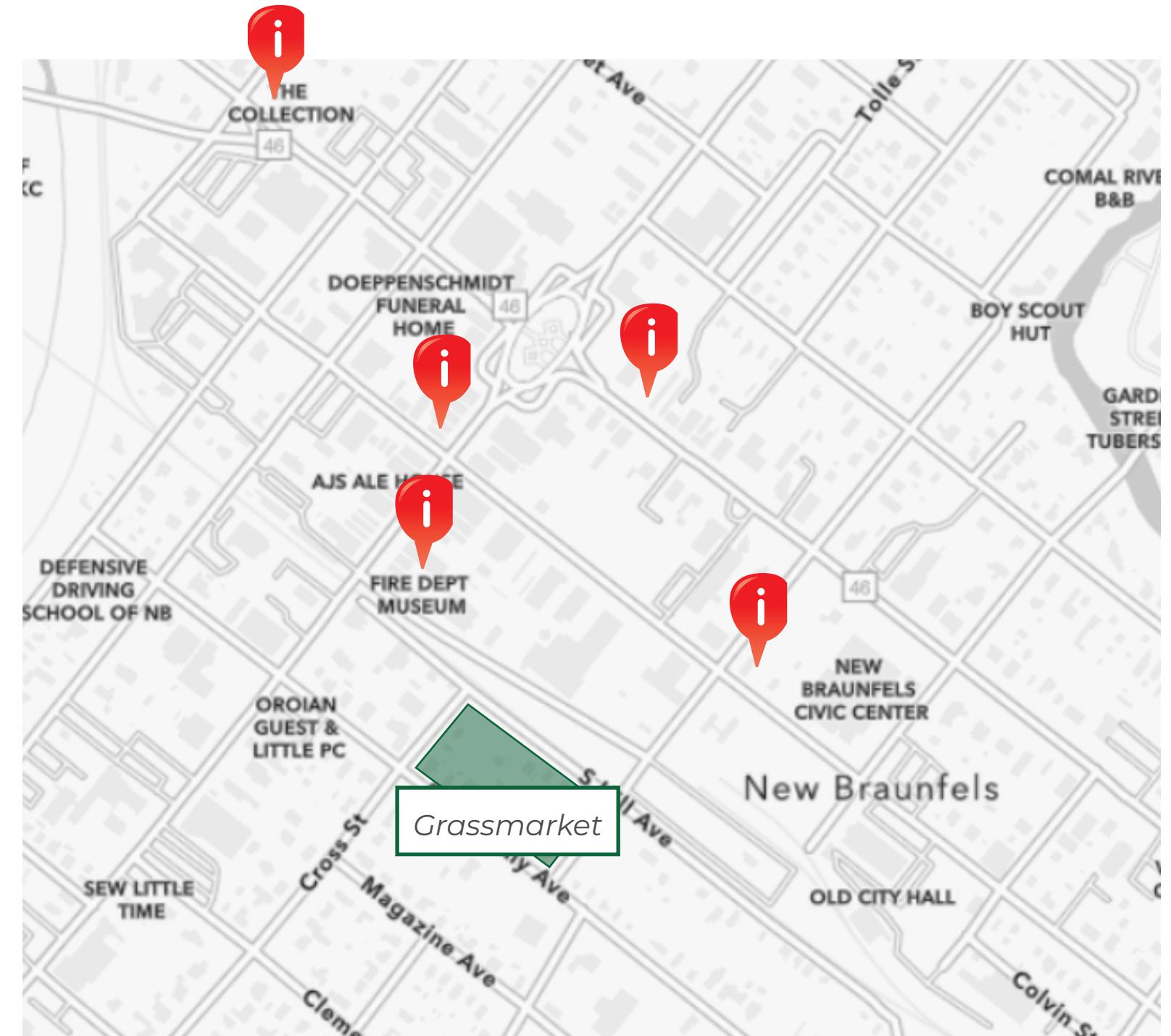
# GRASSMARKET

## ACTIVATION & WAYFINDING

The Grassmarket area, anchored by the Huisache Grill, is a unique hidden gem in New Braunfels. While only a short block away from the heart of San Antonio Street, it offers a different character than the rest of Downtown - similar to an artist village. It offers several boutique, small-scale retail venues and—at least during normal conditions—evening entertainment.

While the Grassmarket benefits from a charming “secret garden” ambiance, the lack of visibility makes it difficult for new people to discover. To address the visibility challenges, we recommend adding signage on San Antonio Street. In addition, there should be a branding and marketing campaign to support the mini-“district”. This could include signage, logos, gateway designs, and other strategies, in addition to ensuring the area is well-advertised as part of the tourism and social media strategies. San Antonio’s La Villita Historic Arts Village provides a larger-scale case study for this type of “village within a city.”

The **red information icons** are some of the locations we recommend adding wayfinding signs. We also recommend the City to aid the Grassmarket branding and marketing efforts. Wayfinding should include a list of all attractions, public parking sites, map of illustrating all the above, distance from current location, and a “You are here” point.

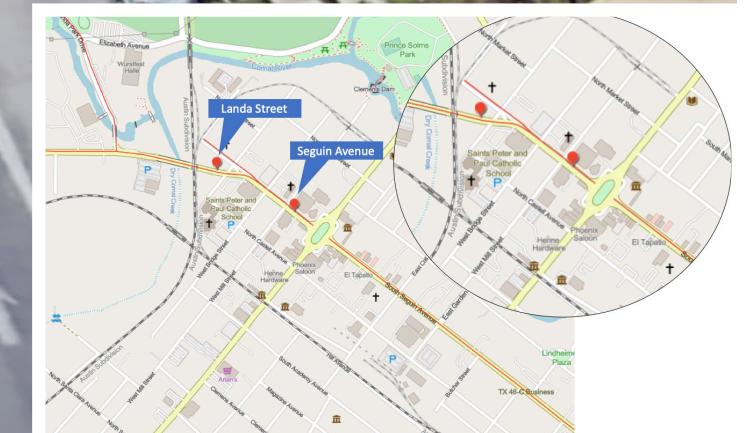


# SEGUIN & LANDA

## BEAUTIFICATION & SIGNAGE

The intersection of Seguin and Landa represents an automobile-oriented street design which is inappropriate for a downtown context. In addition to being inconvenient and uncomfortable for pedestrians, it serves as a visual indicator that undermines any attempts to integrate surrounding blocks with the vibrant parts of Downtown. While the overall function will remain the same—it is a segment of State Highway—design can be leveraged to mitigate the impact.

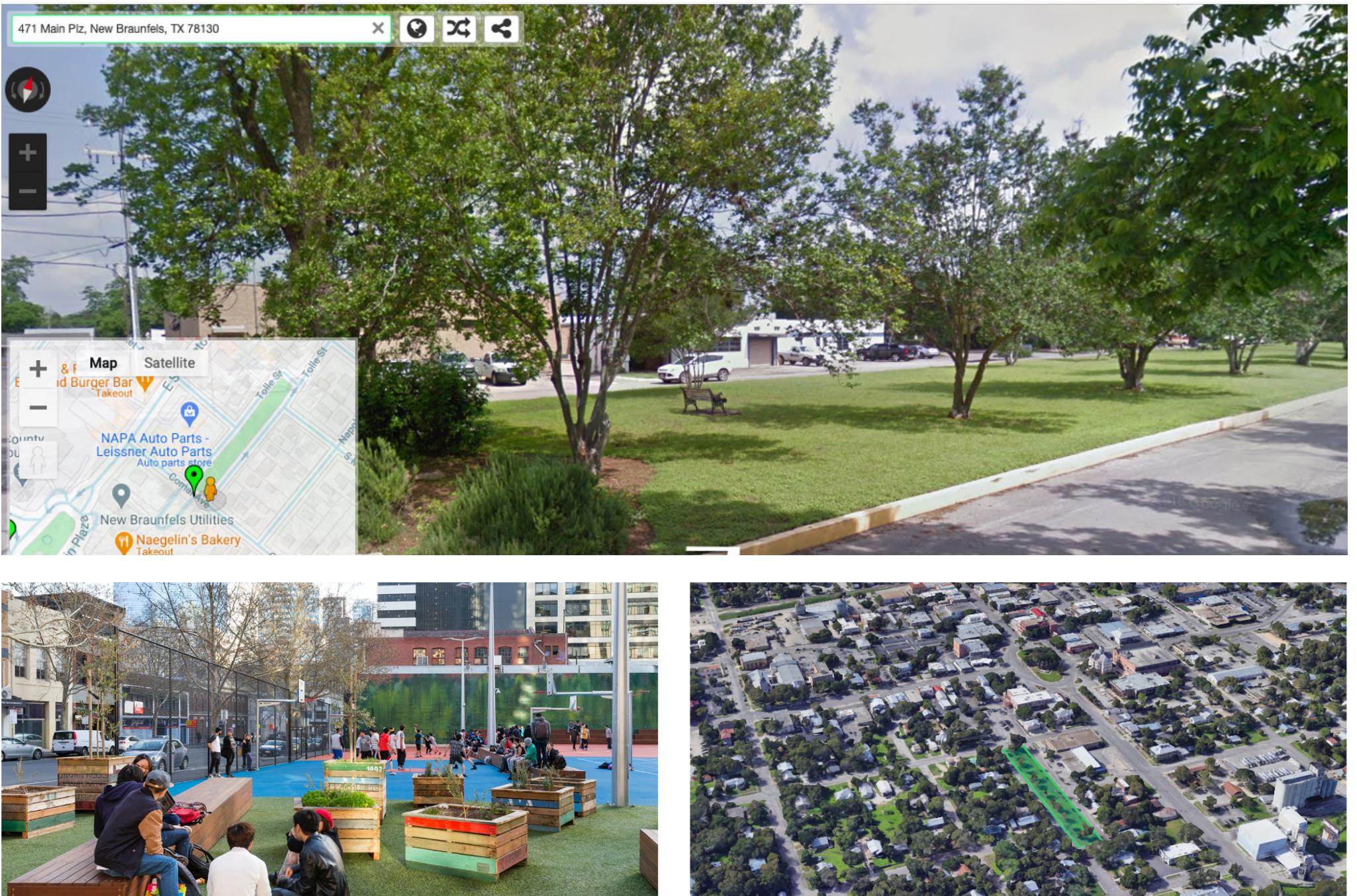
Adding a Welcome sign and low native vegetation will improve the aesthetics of this space and create a warm gateway for visitors.



# MARKET PLAZA

As the only substantial public space in the downtown core (outside the Main Plaza), the Market Plaza represents a key opportunity to be leveraged for the district. As noted in the assessment, future plans will redesign the park with two small fields for active uses. Currently, however, the improvements that have been made make it feel like a median boulevard, not a public space that is likely to be attractive to people.

As an interim measure, we recommend the City consider placing seating, and games at the market plaza to encourage use. The Dallas-based Wikiblock project\* includes a variety of outdoor furniture, which can be assembled affordably and easily by community members. While the furniture can be vulnerable to the elements, it offers a low-cost way to activate space.



SOURCE: [HTTPS://WWW.BETTERBLOCK.ORG/WIKIBLOCK](https://www.betterblock.org/wikiblock)



SOURCE: NBTEXAS.ORG

## ORDER OF MAGNITUDE

The table on the following page identifies each of the strategic recommendations identified in this Action Plan, which are intended to help Downtown New Braunfels in the near-term become a more walkable, pedestrian-friendly and activated environment. Although rough estimates of cost have been included in some areas of this report based on similar undertakings in other communities, these estimates are intended to only serve as a relative gesture of what these recommendations could actually entail. It is recommended that the City undertake more detailed cost estimates for each of these strategies.

Recommended projects were broken down into four cost ranges:

- \$0 - \$1,000
- \$1,001 - \$5,000
- \$5,001 - \$15,000
- \$15,0001+

Although most of the projects recommended could be fairly inexpensive and easy to implement, some require further estimation, study, and coordination with various agencies and professionals.

PROJECT	ESTIMATED COST RANGE
<b>Main Plaza Improvements</b>	
Increase Sidewalk Visibility	\$\$ - \$\$\$
Bridge Crosswalks to Greenspace	\$ - \$\$
Mid-Block Crossings	\$\$
Reduce Roundabout Lane Width	
<b>Rightsizing Streets</b>	
On-Street Parking Outdoor Dining	\$\$\$
Community Outdoor Space & Pedestrian Corridors	\$\$
<b>Bulbouts</b>	
Add Temporary Bulbouts	\$\$ - \$\$\$
Add Permanent Bulbouts	\$\$\$ - \$\$\$\$\$
<b>Walkability</b>	
Colorful Crosswalks	\$\$ - \$\$\$
Crosswalk Maintenance	\$\$\$
Pedestrian Shade Structures(5)	\$ - \$\$
<b>Activation</b>	
Improved Wayfinding, Signage(4)	\$
Shuttle Service / Established Route	\$\$\$\$
Bike Lanes	\$\$\$\$
Increase Outdoor Seating	\$\$
Overhead String Lighting(6)	\$ - \$\$
Market Plaza Improvements	\$\$\$\$

**COST RANGE KEY**

\$	= \$0 - \$1,000
\$\$	= \$1,001 - \$5,000
\$\$\$	= \$5,001 - \$15,000
\$\$\$\$	= \$15,001 +



7

## APPENDIX

# STAKEHOLDER SUMMARY

Downtown New Braunfels has an active group of business owners, property owners, and active citizens who have invested their time, money, and energy into the district's revitalization. In order for us to understand the community, its assets, and its challenges the following stakeholders were interviewed:

- Mike Keyser, The Pour Haus/Downtown Social
- Fred Heimer, Downtown Developer
- Carol Johnson, Johnson Furniture
- Jan Kingsbury, Spass Walking Tours
- David Kneuper, Downtown New Braunfels Board
- Seana Rousseau, Chain Link Bicycle Shop
- Tim White, The Pour Haus/Downtown Social
- Patrick Winn, Total Art Design and Architecture

Based on our conversations, there is a broad optimism about the future of Downtown New Braunfels. Stakeholders believe the 2010 plan was on track, and the City has the leadership to help implement it - but they want to see more follow-ups with a focus on site-specific funding and partnerships.

Although groups have been able to raise money, there is still a need for more permanent and consistent funding sources for Downtown (such as a district-wide funding mechanism). The Main Street Plaza was prevalent to be a vital intersection and a place to focus on. Stakeholders were pleased with the packages that City, Chamber, and EDC created and the help it provided to businesses. Some downtown investments received positive feedback, one of them being the downtown sidewalk project.

Long-term concerns were expressed and noted. For example, parking challenges and the need for bicycle infrastructure were mentioned several times. Stakeholders expressed a need for support on social media exposure, business incubation or co-working space, and on advising land owners on development.

We want to thank all the stakeholders for giving us their time and informing us on how we can help make their downtown even better.



ASH+LIME

THANK YOU