



Main Street Matters!

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SPOTLIGHT ON ROCKWALL

Fast-Tracking Transformation: The City of Rockwall saw years of a slow decline that have turned around in under a decade.

*Written by Bethany Browning,
Main Street Manager, Rockwall
Main Street Program*

What Main Street Managers saw in Rockwall at the summer development session is a far cry from where the city had been in recent years. Among the highlights of the week's events were a walking tour of the Historic Downtown District, a rousing live music concert in the city's newest intimate open space venue, San Jacinto Plaza, and a sunset cruise on scenic Lake Ray Hubbard. Essentially, during their week in Rockwall visitors learned a little about the ups and downs experienced on the road to success in revitalizing the city's Historic Downtown District.

A Texas Main Street city without an actual Main Street, Rockwall has experienced an explosion of growth over the past 10 years in particular.



Rockwall is known for its charming Texas small town ambience, as expressed in the city's historic architecture, Old Town square, and traditional neighborhoods.

Yet, despite the burgeoning population, in decades past, Rockwall was not unlike any small Texas town. For many generations it was just that—small and cozy, where everyone was virtually family. High school football seemed like an even bigger deal because the whole town got involved. People knew one another and were friendly. The 20-ish mile distance from Dallas helped set Rockwall apart from big city life. More than anything else—the Square was the center of activity for the entire town. Slowly over time that began to change. Fast forward to today, when

Rockwall's Downtown District is once again becoming the center of activity for the community. Now the square is a place full of life and energy, where people can congregate, shop, relax, and have fun together—just like the days of old. It's funny when history repeats itself. The journey back to prosperity for Rockwall's Historic Downtown District has been both interesting and educational.

The bottom line is that Rockwall has a unique story to tell. The challenge, as current city leaders saw it, was how to revive and recapture the

historic essence of the downtown district while taking the community a step forward into the future at the same time. And really, isn't that what so many Main Street managers today hope to achieve? When Rockwall was designated as a Texas Main Street city in 2009, the downtown was struggling to survive. The area had not necessarily fallen into disrepair, but it definitely needed some TLC.

Already, Rockwall was beginning to experience rapid growth, although there was very little infrastructure to support it. Above all else, the challenge was how to drive people back downtown. As Rockwall grew, and it happened seemingly overnight, business had gradually moved to the interstate—away from the square. It's a natural progression that many towns face, but in that advancement, a town can often lose its spirit.

No one in Rockwall wanted that. The town has consciously built a reputation as a place that has successfully retained its small-town

charm in the midst of massive growth. That's quite a feat, and one that has been achieved through the careful planning by forward-thinking city leaders, notably at least a decade or so prior to Rockwall's Main Street designation.

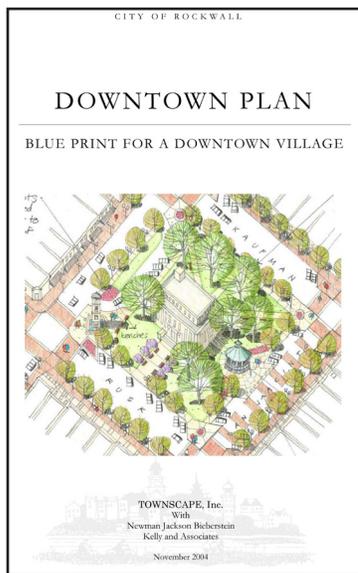
As far back as 2001, the council adopted a comprehensive plan to guide the city's growth through what they (rightly) assumed would be a myriad of changes on the horizon. Key elements of the plan included, "retaining and building on the charming Texas small town ambience, as expressed in the city's historic architecture, Old Town square, and traditional neighborhoods." The plan also stressed the importance of "welcoming and accommodating growth and change by building upon the city's distinctive sense of place and community spirit."

Since its inception, Rockwall's plan has helped to shape the future

for the lakefront community—by maximizing the dramatic landscapes, and utilizing those natural resources to develop and enhance a dynamic quality of life for both residents and guests alike.

By 2004, this developed into a blueprint for a Downtown Village, which may have helped to lay the groundwork for the monumental changes that began occurring a short three years later. Several vital changes took place in 2007, and the momentum has only picked up from there. The city of Rockwall developed a downtown zoning district and a form based code, which dictated a specified look and feel for the area, and two anchor businesses took hold that helped make the Main Street city what it is today. Since Zanata and Groovy's moved to Rockwall, the square has never been the same.

Zanata's upscale Texas cuisine has become more of a dining experience than a simple, run of



(Left) The blueprint for the Downtown Village Plan was developed in 2004. Two of the many changes that occurred from this plan, which put Rockwall on the map, are two new anchor businesses: Trendy boutique Groovy's and a local restaurant, Zanata.

the mill restaurant. And Groovy's, a sought after, trendy retail boutique, welcomes eager shoppers time and again. These two businesses, unlike anything Rockwall had seen before, were a welcome change that helped forge a new beginning for downtown Rockwall—and became a catalyst for future success.

The following year, an ardent group of downtown supporters, the Friends of Downtown Rockwall, formed what has evolved into one of the most successful pop-up farmers markets in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. With an intention to drive foot traffic back to the area, the Rockwall Farmers Market has exceeded all expectations—now in its eighth year, with a weekly draw of about 2,000 customers, the market has earned its place at the top of the list for the region.

Shortly after Rockwall's Main Street designation in 2009, plans began to revitalize the district and improve the infrastructure downtown. One of the first steps was to hire a design architect and construction manager to put together a desired look and feel for downtown. The primary goal was achieving balance—giving the city a much needed 21st century facelift, to the tune of nearly \$9 million, while preserving the historic significance of the area. After that, voter approval was by no means a given, but much easier to attain due to careful attention to the design and planning process.

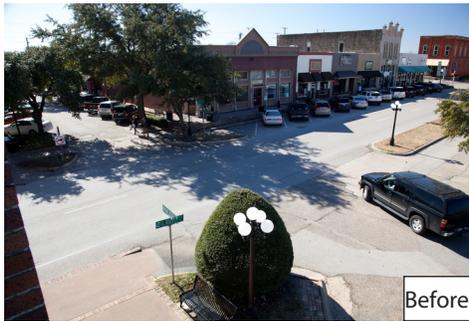
Planning and coordination consumed the majority of the next couple of years. City staff, along with design architect, La Terra Studio, worked tirelessly



Before



After



Before



After



Before



After

Street replacement, sidewalk enhancements, ADA accessibility, new landscaping, and seating are just some of the many improvements made downtown this past year.

collaborating with property owners, forming the project review committee, and creating a phasing plan to better manage the daily aspects of the project. Because of the project's massive size and scope, city leaders wanted to minimize the impact on local businesses and limit disruption to their commerce.

Phase one construction began in October 2013, resulting in three new public parking lots to provide relief during the construction project. The design team and city staff worked carefully and diligently to coordinate lane restrictions, road closures, and maintain pedestrian access to businesses

during construction. Phase two of the downtown improvements included connectivity planning, street replacement, sidewalk enhancements, storm sewer improvements, a pedestrian plaza, ADA accessibility and installation of lighting and landscaping.

The realignment of streets improved traffic flow and provided additional parking. Designers created a platform for public speaking engagements and entertainment on the east side of the historic courthouse. The reconstructed sidewalks provide visitors with improved surfaces for mobility and access. The teams

added seating walls in intervals to accommodate visitors and allow them to linger along the store fronts.

However, the biggest transformation occurred in a unique location just off the Square. The 100 block of San Jacinto Street has become a pedestrian plaza that has helped radically change the downtown landscape. In its original form, the one-way street contained 25 angled parking spaces, and was an underutilized piece of real estate.

Early in the downtown master planning process, this block was identified as a possible location for a central gathering space between the buildings. La Terra Studio implemented this vision with a design response that provided a beautiful area complete with a small stage, moveable tables and chairs, festoon lighting, seat walls, and the preservation of three large existing live oak trees.

In addition, nine 200 gallon trees were installed, framing the linear paver area spanning the length of the Plaza. In order to provide the best chance possible for these large trees to flourish in the urban environment, the design team created root zone areas in line with the trees, using the DEEPROOT Silva Cell system. The process entailed digging a trench 8' wide, 6' deep and 150' long to support the tree roots as they grew, as well as utilizing a suspended paving system that also supports vehicle traffic, including a delivery truck, utility truck or even an event with food trucks.

In its newest form, the space has become a true community urban park and the heart of downtown Rockwall. The San Jacinto Plaza has

accomplished a lot in a short period of time, and has ultimately addressed a challenge Main Street managers often face—it has helped create a sense of place within historic downtown Rockwall, making it a destination. Now, shoppers stop to sit for a moment under the trees, and people gather to enjoy themselves. The venue provides an opportunity for regular events to energize the district, including live music every Friday and Saturday night throughout the

spring and summer.

It's been a long road to revitalization for historic downtown Rockwall. And truth be told, it's a journey that's never really complete. As the CIP construction project wrapped up earlier this year, city staff could finally take a breather and begin to appreciate all that went into the transformation. But that respite was short-lived, because the job of keeping a Main Street city in Texas thriving is never ending!



(Top) The DEEPROOT Silva Cell system was recently used for the San Jacinto Plaza and other various areas of downtown Rockwall. Large trenches were dug to support new trees and new linear paver areas. Evening events, such as Farm to Table (bottom left), and live music events every Friday and Saturday (bottom right) can now be enjoyed in the new spaces created.

PER UNIT, PER BEDROOM, OR NOT ALL? MANAGING OFF-STREET PARKING REQUIREMENTS

Article written by Emily Koller, Planner, Town Square Initiative, Texas Main Street Program

Parking is a subject in the Main Street field that will never go away. It presents challenges in every size downtown—from quiet communities with business owners parking all day directly in front of their shop, to busy university towns trying to reduce the number of students with cars through innovative development regulations. After several good questions from our Texas network, it struck me that many of our cities are at different stages in managing parking requirements but the general solutions are the same. The primary question is this:

How do you effectively manage off-street parking requirements that will not serve as a deterrent to redevelopment and will also promote good long-term planning?

We often see cities struggling over parking issues before there is much of a demand. When activity begins to pick up, the instinct can be—we need more parking!

This reaction should be curbed a bit. No pun intended. Why? Because whether you are just beginning your revitalization journey or have reached full occupancy, the parking solutions

are similar. Downtowns are places for people not cars, and parking policy should support this goal.

In downtowns beginning their revitalization journey, reduced off-street parking requirements can be used as an incentive to make it easier for developers to convert vacant buildings into reactivated mixed use projects. At the other end of the scale are progressive parking policies in urban areas that allow significantly fewer parking spaces or zero on-site altogether in order to reduce the dependency on cars and driving. This provides environmental benefits with reduced greenhouse gas emissions and is also a favorable solution for developers because the construction costs are far less. In 2014, downtown parking expert Donald Shoup estimated the average cost of an above ground parking garage space to be \$24,000.

The parking objectives in many of our cities are somewhere in between these two extremes. I reviewed the parking policies for some of our mid-size communities in order to better understand current practices and I was particularly focused on new residential uses in the downtown core:

Amarillo: Amarillo requires one off-street parking space per unit for new multi-family in the Central Business District.

Denton: Denton's Land Development Code provides an exemption for parking in the Central Business District for development or redevelopment of

all non-residential uses. Residential development or redevelopment is exempted in the CBD if 10 or fewer dwelling units are proposed. For larger multi-family projects, projects are required to provide parking based on the type of unit. One-to-three bedroom unit requirements range between 1.5-2 spaces per unit, while 4-bedroom + units are required to provide one space per bedroom. This is a result of the student residential construction trend of large complexes with four to six bedroom units, which are individually leased (ie. four bedroom unit equals four leases).

Harlingen:



Flexible parking regulations can help make major redevelopment projects, such as the Baxter Hotel in Harlingen, more feasible to interested developers.

Kerrville: In Kerrville's Downtown Core, a conversion to a new use will not require additional off-street parking, unless the project includes an addition. New residential requires two spaces per dwelling unit.

McKinney: McKinney has a form-based code in place and in the Downtown Historic Core they require new residential uses include one off-street parking space per dwelling unit; however, shared parking can be used to meet the requirement. New non-residential uses are not required to provide parking. Existing building conversions into both non-residential and residential uses are not required to provide off-street parking.

Nacogdoches: In the Central Business District, off-street parking space for all buildings is required at the ratio of one space for each 2,000 square feet of floor area. However, if the computed number is less than ten, none is required.

Rockwall: Rockwall requires 1.5 spaces for studios/one-bedroom units, 2 spaces for 2-bedroom units and 2.5 spaces for 3 or more bedroom units. The city, however, offers many alternatives to meeting the parking needs for new projects. Required spaces for ground floor restaurant and



Rockwall's downtown code allows a property owner in the historic core to lease off-street spots in city-owned lots like this or provide a cash-in-lieu payment.

retail uses are credited back to the project. The total can then be met on-site, curb-side, by lease from the city or by payment of cash-in-lieu. Properties in the historic core are also offered a “discount” on a lease fee or cash-in-lieu payment.

San Marcos: San Marcos also has a form-based code and encourages high density mixed use development in downtown. The code offers reductions for projects within ½ mile of a planned transit-oriented development as well as the ability to use off-site spaces within 1000 feet. The rehabilitation of existing buildings does not require the provision of new parking and most new development in the Central Business Area is not required to provide parking; however, new multi-family projects require one space per bedroom plus 5% for visitors anywhere in downtown. This is a relatively recent amendment in reaction to new large-scale student residential projects. Previously the code called for one space per dwelling unit for residential uses.

Waxahachie: Waxahachie has no parking requirements for its “Central Area,” the downtown zoning district. However, the city recently built a large public parking facility to ease parking demand generated by the county facilities and new redevelopment projects.

I was curious about other cities that seem to always come up in “great downtown” conversations including Lafayette, Louisiana, Mississippi and Oxford. Lafayette’s downtown code is newly adopted and does not require off-street parking for buildings that are five stories or less. Oxford exempts commercial uses from new

parking and requires one off-street parking space for each newly built residential unit.

These examples demonstrate the following trends:

- Conversion of existing buildings into a new use typically does not trigger additional parking requirements in downtown.
- New residential construction is typically required to provide off-street parking while commercial uses are not.
- The average off-street parking requirement for a residential use is between one and two spaces per unit. The most recently adopted codes suggest one space per dwelling unit is an accepted standard.
- In college towns, construction trends for lease-by-the-bedroom projects force cities to require one space per bedroom.

Should you be interested in pursuing more ways to incentivize developers with parking reductions or, depending on your strategy, encourage “car-light” downtown living, here are some code suggestions:

1. Do not require additional off-street parking for a change of use within the existing floor area.
2. Exempt additions up to 1,000 square feet or 25% of existing gross floor area, whichever is less.
3. Allow parking spaces to be provided off-site within a comfortable walking distance, such as 800-1000 feet using an alternative parking plan/ agreement. Rockwall permits property owners to lease spaces from a city-owned lot.

4. Allow existing on-street spaces to count for retail/commercial space requirements.
5. Require new construction projects install bike parking at a reasonable ratio, such as one space per 2,000 square feet of gross commercial space.
6. Consider reducing or waiving parking requirements through a fee-in-lieu program. In Berkeley, CA, the fees go to support transit, but in Texas, it would make sense to support public parking facilities.
7. Consider “unbundling” the purchase/rental of housing units from the purchase/rental of car parking. Each type of unit and parking space is priced and sold/leased independently.
8. Manage on-street residential parking through a residential permit parking program. If your city chooses to not require new residential development to accommodate all residents with off-street parking, consider a residential parking permit program where you can direct downtown residents to certain streets away from businesses.
9. Plan far in advance for public parking lots and garages—identify suitable lots and budget for parking management.

Sources:

“Smarter Parking Codes to Promote Smart Growth” by Neha Bhatt
<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/2014/08/12/smarter-parking-codes-to-promote-smart-growth/>

“The High Costs of Minimum Parking Requirements” by Donald Shoup
<http://shoup.bol.ucla.edu/HighCost.pdf>

SPECIAL VOLUNTEERS

We continue to spotlight in each edition of *Main Street Matters* those volunteers whose contributions and dedication are so important to the success of local programs. If you would like to honor a special volunteer with a spotlight, please send a short narrative and image to sarah.marshall@thc.texas.gov.

Keith Brown, Canyon Main Street Program

With the help of many volunteers over the past several years, Canyon is able to continuously improve quality of life for its citizens, as well as attract visitors to the area. The most recent historical preservation project in Canyon is the restoration of the Texas Panhandle’s beloved cowboy, Tex Randall. Community volunteers have been instrumental in the restoration of Tex Randall, as well as all other Canyon Main Street projects and events.



Originally built in 1959 by local curio shop owner Harry Wheeler, the 47-foot tall cowboy statue has

battled the elements of the Texas Panhandle for the past 57 years. Tex Randall was gifted to Canyon Main Street in 2010, and Canyon Main Street, along with a committee of volunteers, has been working ever since to raise funds to restore the cowboy and develop the area surrounding the statue.

Chairing the Tex Randall Steering Committee since 2010 is Texas Panhandle Native, Keith Brown. Keith is a 1991 graduate of West Texas A&M University in Canyon, and is the executive director of Opportunity Plan, Inc., a non-profit corporation providing scholarships and loans to students pursuing higher education. Prior to his employment with OPI, Keith was the executive director of the WTAMU Alumni Association.

Along with his involvement with the Canyon Main Street Program and The Tex Randall Project, Keith is a member of the Canyon Rotary Club and the North Plains Chapter of the Association of Fund Raising Professionals. He has served as president of several nonprofit boards, including the Canyon Chamber of Commerce and the Education Foundation of Canyon ISD. He also serves as a General Officer for Phi Delta Theta International Fraternity.

It is obvious to many people that Keith has a huge heart for everything Canyon. In 2016, he was named Canyon Citizen of the Year. Keith’s positive, upbeat, and outgoing personality makes him the go-to person for serving as a Master of Ceremony for community and nonprofit events. He has volunteered his time to be a Master

of Ceremony for Canyon Main Street's June Jams concert series, Tex Randall fundraiser, A Night For Tex Randall, and Canyon Merchant Associations Style Show, just to name a few.

Canyon Main Street Program is grateful to all its volunteers, and would like to give a shout out and recognize Keith Brown for his fundraising efforts for The Tex Randall Project, and his time



volunteered with various Canyon Main Street and community events. Tex Randall has been completely restored and site work is currently underway to beautify the area around him. Without Keith's hard work, dedication, and perseverance for the past six years, none of this would be possible. Keith exemplifies someone who has a true love for his community and will go to all ends to make Canyon the best place to live, work, and visit. From all of us here in Canyon who are blessed to enjoy this great town because of your dedication to our community, thanks Keith!

MAIN STREET EVENTS

ELGIN

Sip Shop and Stroll
Thursday, August 11, 2016
5–8 p.m.

Sip a little wine and shop as you stroll through the stores in historic downtown Elgin. You will find merchandise, eclectic decor, artwork by local artists, and live music in many of the venues.

BRENHAM

Live Music at Home Sweet Farm
Friday, August 19, 2016
Saturday, August 20, 2016
6–11:55 p.m.

Join Home Sweet Farm in the biergarten every Friday and Saturday night for live music, craft beer, wine, and fun in a relaxing outdoor environment.

GEORGETOWN

Music on the Square Summer Concerts
Fridays in August
6:30–8:30 p.m.

All summer, enjoy live music on the Courthouse Square every Friday night in the Music on the Square Summer Concert Series. All concerts are free. Pick up dinner at one of the downtown restaurants or bring your picnic (no glass please). See [website](#) for the 2016 Summer Line Up.

Texas Society of Sculptors' Ninth Annual Summer Show
June 26–September 23, 2016
Georgetown Public Library
402 W. Eighth Street

Fine art pieces created with bronze and other metals, stone, terra-cotta, clay, ceramics, mosaics, cement, wood, paper, and mixed media. See [website](#) for more information and library's hours.

LEVELLAND

Movie on the Square
Thursday, August 11, 2016
"Charlie and the Chocolate Factory"
8:30 p.m.

We are celebrating our 10th year! The first movie ever played in Levelland was "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory," so for our 10-year celebration we will show "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory." We will also sell chocolate bars with hidden "golden tickets." The event will be sponsored by downtown businesses and we will partner with Levelland ISD and the Levelland Art Walk.

ROCKWALL

San Jacinto Plaza Music Series
Fridays and Saturdays in August
6:30 p.m.–9 p.m.

Spend an evening in downtown Rockwall's newest public gathering space. Colorful café style tables and chairs add to the ambiance of this live music venue.

Rockwall Farmers Market
Saturdays in August
8 a.m.–12 p.m.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Farmers Market is a Saturday morning staple! With over 30 vendors, the market offers local fruits and vegetables, fresh baked breads, natural beef and poultry, seafood, cheese, farm eggs, pasta, honey, and much more. The market has become one of the area's most popular destinations to purchase fresh produce.

SEGUIN

178th Birthday Party
Friday, August 12, 2016
5:30 p.m.–8:30 p.m.

Free festivities include a homemade ice cream contest, snow cones, a barbecue dinner, live music, and a proclamation celebrating Seguin's history.

WAXAHACHIE

Summer Moonlight Move
Friday, August 12, 2016
"Charlotte's Web"
9 p.m.

Join us for a FREE movie under the stars in downtown Waxahachie! Concessions on site; Franklin Street between College & Jackson. Bring your blankets or lawn chairs and have a family friendly night downtown.

Trucks 'n Tunes
Saturday, August 13, 2016
6–10 p.m.

106.9 THE RANCH brings their annual Battle of the Bands to partner with gourmet food trucks for a night of fun, food, and great entertainment.



(Top) The Texas Main Street Program is excited to be helping the City of Sherman develop their new Main Street program. Texas Main Street staff recently completed Sherman's resource team that had great participation from many stakeholder groups and the Main Street Advisory board. Denison Main Street manager Donna Dow also served on the team. (Middle) Main Street managers, new and old, gathered together mid July, for Summer Professional Development in Rockwall. (Bottom) Rosenberg Main Street board and staff gathered together with State Coordinator Debra Drescher for a staff retreat in July.

Websites of Interest

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation: www.achp.gov

African American Heritage Preservation Foundation: www.aahpfdn.org

(The) Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation: www.ahlp.org

(The) American Institute of Architects: www.aia.org

American Planning Association: www.planning.org

American Society of Landscape Architects: www.asla.org

(The) Cultural Landscape Foundation: www.tclf.org

(The) Handbook of Texas Online: www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online

Keep Texas Beautiful: www.ktb.org

League of Historic American Theatres: www.lhat.org

National Main Street Center: www.preservationnation.org/main-street

National Park Service: www.nps.gov

National Trust for Historic Preservation: www.preservationnation.org

Partners for Sacred Places: www.sacredplaces.org

Preservation Easement Trust: www.preservationeasement.org

PreservationDirectory.com: www.preservationdirectory.com

Preservation Texas: www.preservationtexas.org

Project for Public Spaces: www.pps.org

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy: www.railstotrails.org

Scenic America: www.scenic.org

Texas Department of Agriculture: www.TexasAgriculture.gov

Texas Commission on the Arts: www.arts.state.tx.us

Texas Downtown Association: www.texasdowntown.org

Texas Folklife Resources: www.texasfolklife.org

Texas Historical Commission: www.thc.state.tx.us

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department: www.tpwd.state.tx.us

Texas Rural Leadership Program: www.trlp.org

Texas State Preservation Board: www.tspb.state.tx.us

Urban Land Institute: www.uli.org

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