
7-PARKS, OPEN SPACE & PUBLIC ART

This chapter provides recommendations for the expansion of new parks, plazas and open space that serve the many user groups targeted for downtown. Providing parks and open space that accommodate different types of activities is essential to the vitality of downtown Georgetown, especially if it is to serve as an active place for residents as well as customers, workers and visitors. Public art should also be rigorously incorporated to the downtown landscape to make Georgetown memorable and accent its focus on arts and culture.

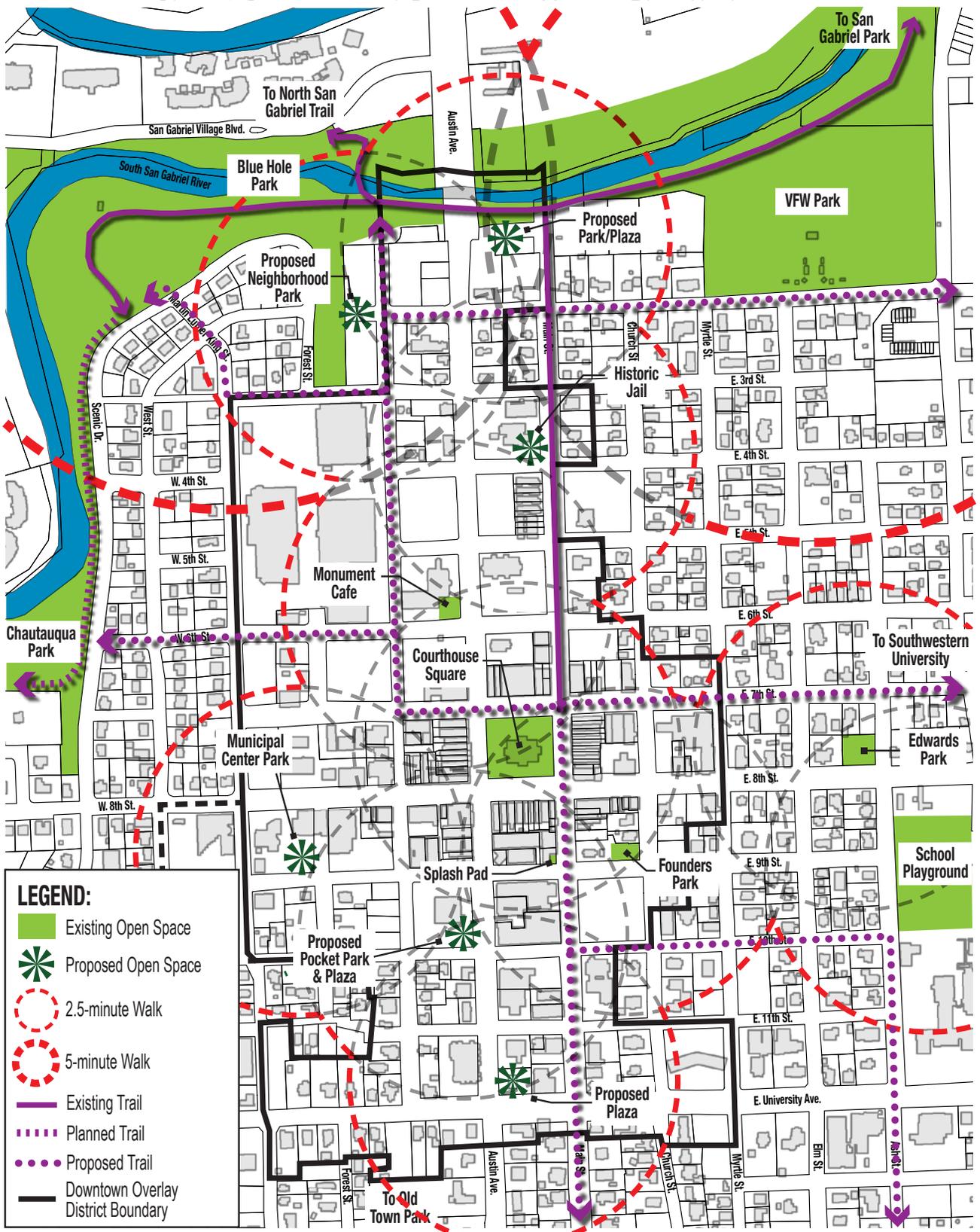
Outside of the courthouse square lawn, only a few plazas and one small park exist in downtown Georgetown today. These are used daily as places of rest and also serve as the location for festivals and other productions. While many successful events are orchestrated downtown, such as the Poppy Festival, Christmas Stroll, Market Days on the Square, First Fridays, and Concerts on the Square, there is a need for enhanced venues for these and future events. The challenge in creating a variety of places such as these is that many of them are used only for limited periods of the year. While space is needed for large ceremonial events at times, on many other days, such space is not required and, if developed to be used exclusively for such uses, will be empty at times. In response, the city should provide some spaces that can flex with differing use requirements throughout the year.

Parks provide recreation opportunities for residents and visitors and enhance the livability of the community. Parks within the city center should serve the Georgetown community at-large, regional residents and visitors, as well as downtown dwellers and employees.

The green lawn that surrounds the historic courthouse building should continue to be actively promoted and used as open space in the downtown. While it is currently used this way for events like Market Days and Concerts on the Square, these efforts should be continued and expanded to bring other users downtown. Visual and performing art venues would work very well in this grand, central space.

The following parks, plazas and open spaces should be added to the downtown:

- Large plaza(s) for **organized events**
- **Playground** for children
- **Passive green space** to serve nearby residents
- **Seating areas** for pedestrians to relax
- Small **outdoor space for modest assemblies**
- **Performance space** for outdoor concerts and for other cultural events
- The **farmer's market** should be brought back downtown and in an enhanced venue that can be adapted to market days but also can serve other purposes at other times



MAP 16 | PARKS AND OPEN SPACE STRATEGY

Georgetown Master Plan Update
 Georgetown, TX
 March, 2014



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PARKS AND PLAZAS

A series of new parks and plazas are proposed for the Downtown Overlay District. Each park/plaza listed should be open to the public and be flexible to accommodate for special events. In addition to the public parks/plazas listed, new development should also incorporate semi-public and private open space for tenants and building users to enjoy. The following is a list of proposed parks and plazas from north to south:

TERRACE AND/OR PARK ON THE RIVER

A terrace or park overlooking the South San Gabriel River on the site just east of the Austin Avenue bridge should be incorporated as it redevelops. This open space could be part of a nice restaurant, residential development, hotel or other but regardless of the building use, the space should be open to the public. A small riverside amphitheatre or performance area could bring events down to the river.



The terrace and/or park on the river could include a small riverside amphitheatre or performance area.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

A small neighborhood park with a playground is proposed at the western terminus of 2nd Street. This new park would

be activated by new residential uses that are proposed for the area, as well as county employees from the nearby Justice Center. This park is proposed in the current location of the district stormwater detention area, which would need to be reconfigured into an underground tank.



A new neighborhood park with playground should be provided to support new residential uses.

PROPOSED POCKET PARK AND PLAZA

The block where First Texas Bank sits, at 10th and Austin Avenue includes significant trees that should be saved. There is an opportunity to create a small pocket park and plaza at the northwest corner of 10th and Austin, where the new crosswalk is proposed, which would help activate this area of Austin Avenue while keeping the existing building and trees.



A pocket park and plaza along Austin Avenue could help activate this area.

OLD JAIL PARK

A portion of the block that contains the historic jail building could be developed as an interpretive park, with markers explaining the history of the site. This also could serve as an amenity for the adjacent neighborhood.

MUNICIPAL CENTER PARK

A park should be developed in conjunction with the proposed municipal center. This should be designed to serve as an amenity for the library and for use during festivals. It could include a small amphitheater for outdoor concerts or performances and should also include an area for a small playground or “tot lot” for children.

FESTIVAL STREET IN THE MUNICIPAL CENTER

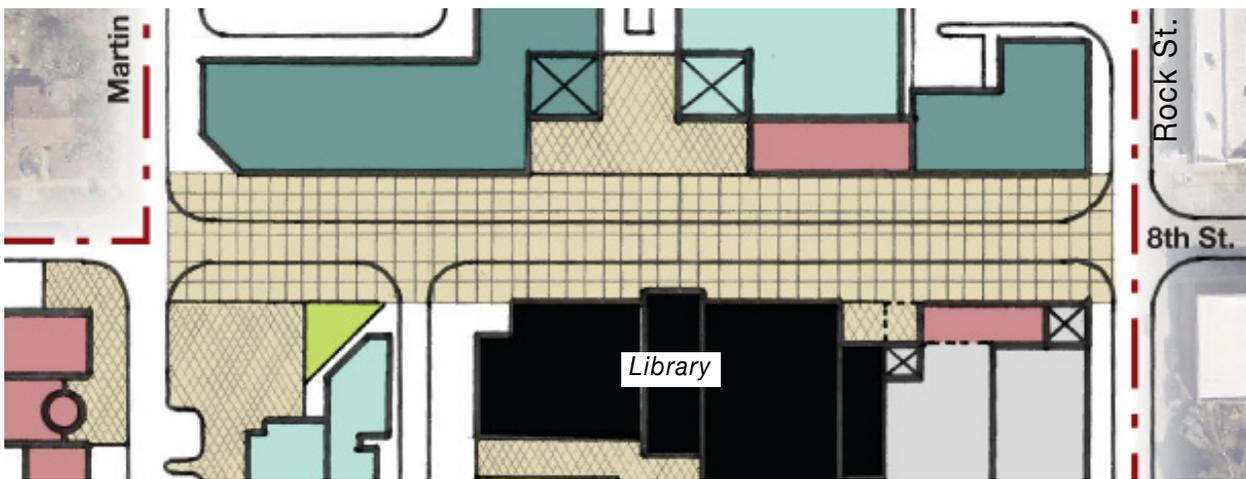
One effective means of providing flexibility in open space is to design a parking lot or a street such that it can be converted into a plaza for special events. To do so, decorative paving, trees, shrubbery and ornamental lighting should be provided. In addition, utility hookups should be installed to accommodate use of electrical equipment and water.



8th Street between Rock and Martin Luther King Streets is proposed as a “festival street” where downtown farmer’s markets and other events could be held.



More flexible space is needed downtown to accommodate a range of public events.



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PUBLIC ART

Public art can help to establish a unique identity that cannot be copied elsewhere and it can contribute to a special image beyond conventional streetscape elements. Public art may include individual art objects that are installed in gateways to downtown, along sidewalks and in association with public buildings, parks and open space. It also may include spaces or sites that can accommodate performances and other cultural events. Other art installations may incorporate decorative painting, murals and modifications to street furniture that provide surprise and delight in the urban setting.

Freestanding sculptures, wall murals and decorative sidewalk mosaics are some examples of familiar public art media. Other more unusual forms may include wind, water and even plant materials. Another unusual example is the “wrapping” of utility boxes throughout downtown that Georgetown has begun to initiate, which should be continued. A series of such art installations can add accent to the downtown’s fabric while also challenging a new awareness on behalf of viewers.

Art in public places should be defined broadly to include a wide range of media and experiences. In most cases, the City should seek out professionally executed public art installations. Public art installations in the downtown should include the following types:

PERFORMANCE OR EVENTS SITES

These include small plazas or amphitheatres designed to accommodate performances.

ART SITES

These sites should be installations that are strategically located to serve as accents in the community, such as at gateways into the downtown or as focal points in public parks. In general, art sites should consist of objects placed in or integrated into the urban environment.



Art sites are strategically located to serve as accents to the community

STREETSCAPE ART

These installations should be designed as integral components of the streetscape elements. In these cases, the artist would “customize” or reinterpret conventional features of a streetscape design. For example, an artist might design a special decoration for a selection of public planters, or reinterpret a bench or bike rack design as art.



Streetscape art should be designed as integral components of the streetscape elements.

SCULPTURE GARDENS

Sculpture gardens are small spaces like plazas or courtyards that incorporate a series of sculptures. These are to be enjoyed as passive outdoor spaces used for leisure, relaxation and contemplation. One area in Georgetown that has been envisioned as such a space is the “alley” behind the row of buildings just south of the courthouse, on the block between 8th and 9th Streets and Austin and Main.

ART PARKS

These are sites where artists would be commissioned to develop an entire site as an art installation that would be considered a part of the parks system. An art park could expand on a theme, such as an interpretation of the city’s agricultural heritage. In some cases, the artist could collaborate with landscape architects or other design professionals.

MURALS

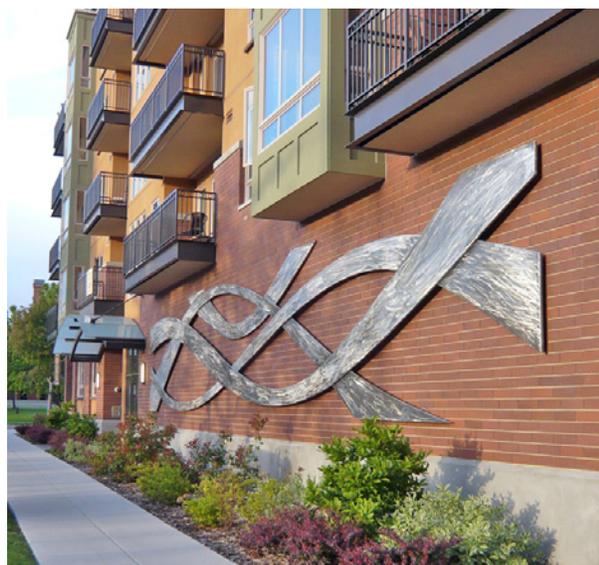
Murals on buildings, as long as they do not damage historic materials, also contribute to a downtown arts appeal and provide interest along an otherwise empty facade. This would mainly happen on private property.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- Adopt a policy to allocate a percentage of construction costs for public buildings to public art.
- Adopt an incentive program for private individuals to donate or loan art to be used in public places.
- Develop a process for evaluating and selecting public art for the downtown.



Art parks are sites where artists are commissioned to develop an entire site as an art installation (art credit: Joe McGrane - Longmont, CO)



Murals add interest to an otherwise empty facade.