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MEDALIST**

Sulphur Springs Downtown

Sulphur Springs, Texas

Revival of a rural, small-town civic plaza,
adjacent streets, and Main Street



Overview

Submitted by: Ian Lockwood, PE

Completed: 2013

Total Development Cost: \$6.9 million

Like many small cities deep in rural America, Sulphur Springs (population 16,000) saw its downtown decline and development shift to be near highway interchanges following the construction of a bypass interstate in the 1970s and the conversion of its downtown streets to one-way traffic along the old state highway. Compounding these challenges, the city's historic plaza, framed by the picturesque 1895 Romanesque Revival Hopkins County Courthouse, was a featureless surface parking lot. By 2006, the downtown center was 80% vacant with the majority of the building stock boarded up.

In 2007, seeking professional expertise to revive its public realm and improve social and economic exchange and development, the city engaged Livable Transportation Engineer Ian Lockwood, now with Toole Design Group, to develop a revitalization strategy. Over two years, Lockwood and his colleagues led the community through a series of interactive meetings, public presentations, and design charrettes. The process yielded a 100-year plan focused on a reconstructed public plaza and enhancement of the downtown's central streets as key to the city's renaissance.

“Sulphur Springs Downtown illustrates the success of traffic calming, urban design, and traditional planning in revitalizing small downtowns.”

— 2019 Selection Committee

Completed in 2013, the core of Sulphur Springs Downtown includes a new, landscaped plaza featuring the Hopkins County Veterans Memorial, a splash fountain, and two unique public restrooms with mirrored, one-way glass walls. Brick paving, on-street parking, and bump-outs slow traffic on the surrounding streets, which were restored to two-way operation. Designed with flexibility and pedestrian accessibility in mind, the curbsless, flush streets can be closed to motorists to expand the plaza for special events. Broad sidewalks with trees and furnishings entice pedestrians to linger at shops in renovated buildings and sidewalk cafes that evoke small-town charm. The majority of the \$6.9 million reconstruction of the city’s four-acre plaza, adjacent streets, and Main Street was funded with tax increment reinvestment zone financing.

Now referred to as “The Celebration City,” Sulphur Springs hosts around 150 events and festivals a year. The once-deserted downtown is bustling with new residents and businesses, attracting visitors from the surrounding area and across the world and inspiring other rural towns and cities in Texas to consider similar interventions. It now boasts an occupancy rate over 80% with much of the remaining vacancies in different stages of development.

“The impact has been profound,” observed City Manager Marc Maxwell. “No longer do the locals refer to Sulphur Springs as ‘Suffering Springs.’

The citizens are elated and proud of their city now. It is incredible what the project has done for our collective self-image.”



The city’s streets and public plaza were redesigned with pedestrians in mind.



Sulphur Springs

MERAKI
shopping with soul

217
Main

CLOTHING

ANTIQUES

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GIFTS

HOME GOOD

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TEXAS
XPZ-8848

Project at a Glance

- The transformation of a four-acre area around the historic courthouse from a surface parking lot into a robust, landscaped public plaza with a new veterans memorial, splash fountain, and unique public restrooms with mirrored glass walls.
- The reconstruction of the plaza and four adjacent streets using state-of-the-art livable street design and traffic-calming measures to create a barrier-free, pedestrian-friendly environment.
- The restoration of two-way traffic on the state road running through downtown and bracketing the plaza.
- Integration of in-ground utilities and programming to support around 150 events a year.
- A \$6.9 million tax-increment-financed project that turned a once 80% vacant and boarded up downtown into a vibrant, 80% occupied destination with entertainment, restaurant, and retail venues.
- A model for the redevelopment of small towns struggling with the dynamics of disinvestment and competition related to big-box development and highway bypasses.

Project Goals

- Maximize social and economic engagement in downtown.
- Develop a 100-year vision through a planning process that engages local residents and businesses.
- Identify the community values to be reflected in the 100-year plan.
- Focus on improving the public realm to foster social and economic exchange and development.

Chronology

1839

General Kelsey H. Douglass, in service of the Republic of Texas, defeats the Cherokees inhabiting the area around the natural sulphur springs of northeast Texas.

1846

Hopkins County is created by the first Texas state legislature.

1895

The Hopkins County courthouse is rebuilt in "fireproof" Texas red limestone after the original one burns to the ground in 1894.

1957

Interstate 30 (I-30) from Dallas to Texarkana is completed, connecting Sulphur Springs to two metro areas.

1995

Marc Maxwell is appointed city manager in October.

1800

1900

1840

White settlers begin moving to the area, attracted by its 100 springs.

1870

The Texas state legislature establishes Bright Star as the county seat; the community is renamed Sulphur Springs in 1871 to capitalize on tourism related to the springs.

1937

The Carnation Milk Company establishes a new processing plant in the region, capitalizing on over 600 dairy farms in Hopkins County.

1984

The first Walmart is built at a new Sulphur Springs I-30 interchange and replaced by a Super Walmart in 1993.

2005

New Mayor Chris Brown tasks Maxwell with figuring out how to revitalize downtown. Maxwell responds with a four-page memo, and the city begins gathering input and support for a downtown redevelopment plan.

2007

After the city council rejects those proposals and directs Maxwell to “bring in an expert,” the city engages a design team led by Ian Lockwood, a livable transportation engineer.

2009

Downtown Revitalization Project and Financing Plan is approved.

Reconstruction of Connally Street is completed.

2013

Celebration Plaza is completed.

2000

2006

Maxwell and his team develop a set of initial proposals moving forward on the core principles of his 2005 memo.

2008

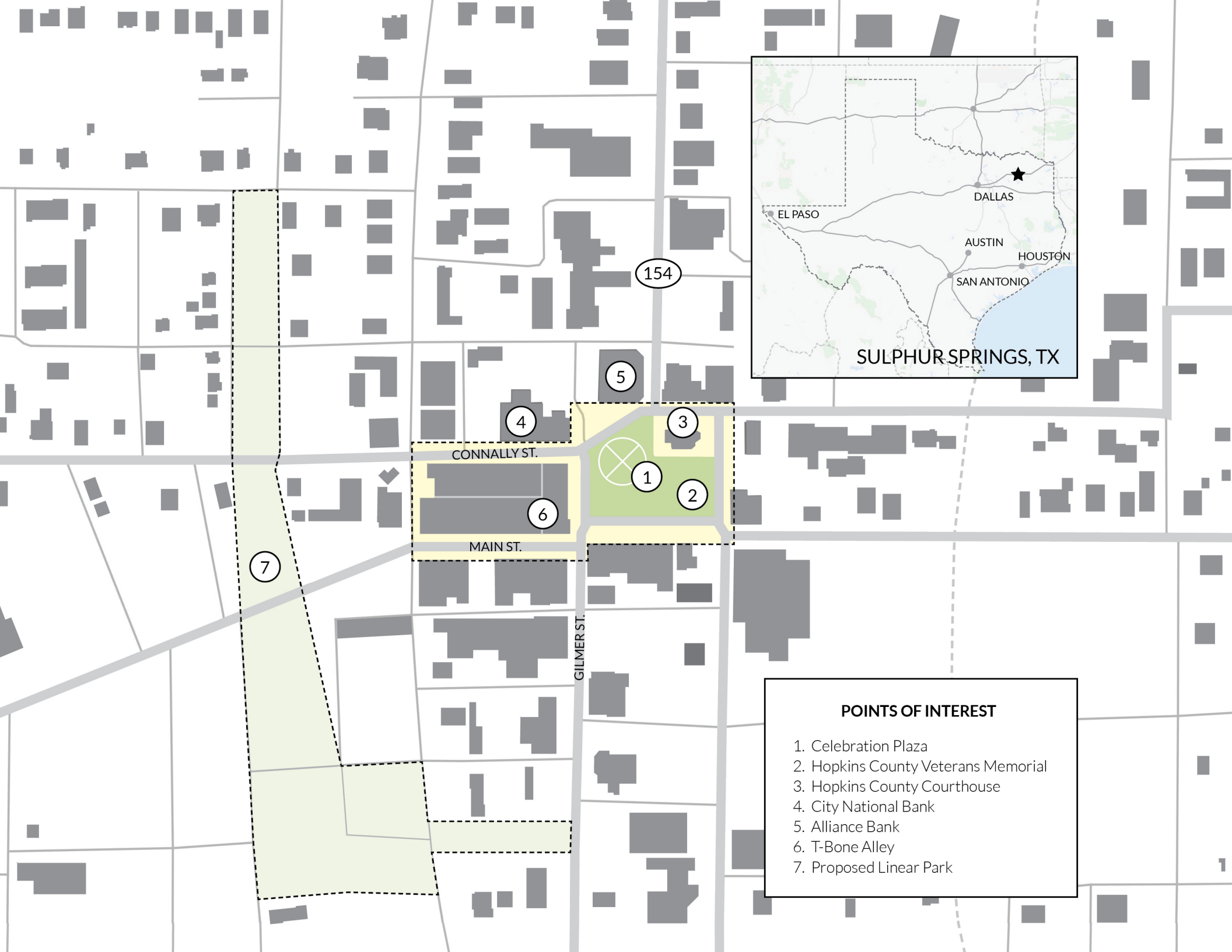
May 19: The first phase, reconstruction of Main Street, begins, funded by the city.

October 20: Tax increment redevelopment zone (TIRZ) is approved, providing additional financing for the project.

The Great Recession slows expected TIRZ performance.

2012

The city votes to allow alcohol sales in restaurants and bars downtown.



POINTS OF INTEREST

- 1. Celebration Plaza
- 2. Hopkins County Veterans Memorial
- 3. Hopkins County Courthouse
- 4. City National Bank
- 5. Alliance Bank
- 6. T-Bone Alley
- 7. Proposed Linear Park

Project Description

INTRODUCTION

Replacing a surface parking lot with an attractive and well-programmed courthouse plaza and redesigning its main and adjacent streets prepared the way for downtown Sulphur Springs, Texas (population 16,000) to change from 80% vacant and shuttered to 80% occupied and vibrant, with the remaining 20% of space in different stages of development.

Sulphur Springs' once-active downtown began its decline in the 1970s as the new Interstate 30 (I-30) bypassed the city, attracting big-box retailers to the highway interchanges and putting the locally owned shops and services out of business. The city used a deceptively simple approach to revitalization and making downtown a desirable place, including traffic calming, two-way streets, a new civic plaza, a veterans memorial, festival programming, public restrooms, pedestrian-friendly streetscaping, and attractive lighting. The project was financed largely through tax increment financing involving three taxing jurisdictions within the downtown area: Hopkins County, the City of Sulphur Springs, and the Hopkins County Memorial Hospital District.

The process was an example of the reflective practice of City Manager Marc Maxwell, elected officials at both the county and city levels, an

entrepreneurial business community, and the Hopkins County Veterans Memorial Committee. All of these participants, but especially Maxwell, were open to taking a chance on promoting walkable streets, public amenities, effective parking management, and inclusive public processes. Their process translated community values into a redesign of the downtown public realm, enabled the reversal of fortunes for the city, and offers a model for fellow Northeastern Texas small towns and other small municipalities in the rural United States.

CONTEXT

Sulphur Springs

The unique story of Sulphur Springs starts with the estimated 100 springs that contributed to the naming of the city and, of course, water and good soil for farming. In the early 1840s, pioneers camped in Northeast Texas at a place that came to be called Bright Star. They were attracted, in part, by the springs in the area where indigenous populations enjoyed the healing effects of the water. They were also attracted by the fact that General Kelsey H. Douglass, in service of the Republic of Texas, defeated the Cherokees in 1839. This encouraged additional White settlers to make the former Cherokee territory their home.

Hopkins County was re-mapped in 1870, reducing its size to its current 789 square miles and placing Bright Star in the center of the county. The new Texas constitution required counties to be as close to a square as possible and the county seat within three miles of the center of the county. This was meant to enable people to get to the county seat, vote, and return home in two days, assuming the ability to travel about 30 miles per day by horseback or carriage. This is how Bright Star became the Hopkins County seat and the reason Texas has 254 counties, most of them square and under 800 square miles. Ultimately, this approach to siting county seats led to the grid street layout of Sulphur Springs and the four-square-block configuration of most "courthouse squares" in Texas.

The city took the name Sulphur Springs in 1871 in an effort to market the local "healing waters" in what may well have been the first of several efforts to become a tourist destination. Only one year later, the railroad came

Mike Laeding



The 1895 Hopkins County Courthouse (top) remains a prominent feature of the plaza, which was once used for horses and carriages as well as large gatherings.

to Mineola (south of Sulphur Springs), enabling tourists to come by stage-coach and on horseback in what the Sulphur Springs City Historical Society described as “great numbers” to enjoy the mineral springs and sulphur baths. Those same springs and good soil underpinned the emergence of wheat and corn crops and positioned the county as early as the 1860s as a leader in agriculture. All this prompted the railroad expansion linking Sulphur Springs to new markets for its farm goods in all directions of the compass rose.

According to the City Historical Society, in the early 1880s, with a population of only 2,500 people, Sulphur Springs had a new courthouse just east of the public plaza, five churches, several schools, flour and saw mills, furniture and wagon factories, foundries and machine shops, tanneries, three hotels, an opera house, two banks, and two newspapers. A devastating fire burned its

original courthouse in 1894, and within one year the city built a new red Texas granite “fireproof” courthouse, still in use today.

The city continued to grow slowly through 1937 when the Carnation Milk Company built a new processing plant there, helping to establish the conditions for an industry-wide expansion of milk production in the county. Hopkins County was soon to be home to 600 dairy producers, making it the dairy capital of Texas.

The oil economy of the 1940s and 1950s created boomtown dynamics throughout Texas until the volatility of big oil made nearby towns like Big Spring, Paris, and Greenville approach ghost town status. Sulphur Springs, however, with its proximity to the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan region (known as the Metroplex) and Texarkana and its lower cost of living, continued

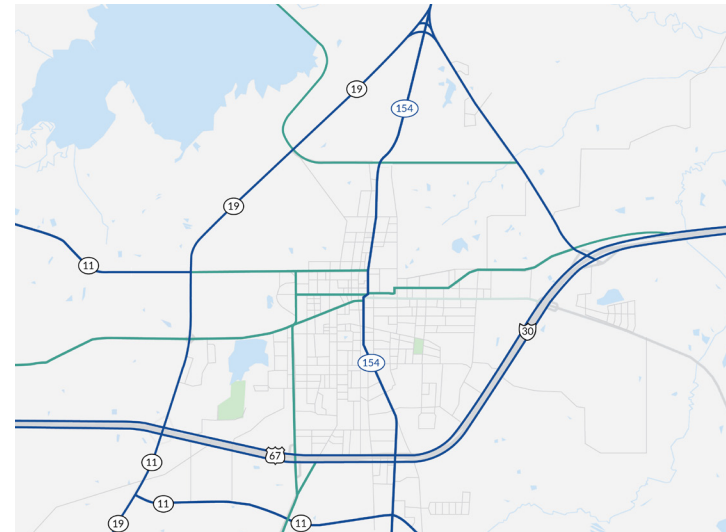
to attract residents and visitors, even in economic downturns. It was also somewhat less dependent on the oil economy while remaining very involved in the cotton and then dairy economies. While the number of dairy farms in Hopkins County has since consolidated to about 65 producers, they still produce a lot of milk—an estimated 54.6 million pounds in 2019—making the county number two in dairy production in Texas and a logical home to the Texas Dairy Museum.

Other large employers were attracted to Sulphur Springs between 1990 and 2005, including Pinnacle, Ocean Spray, Grocery Supply, Walmart, Saputo Foods, Jeld-Wen, Clayton Home Manufacturing, and Flowserve. It was people driving in large numbers from Sulphur Springs to the eastern Dallas suburbs of Mesquite or Rockwell for clothing and other retail purchases as well as entertainment that attracted Walmart. Lowes reported that 30% of the shoppers at its Rockwell store were from Sulphur Springs, prompting the company to establish a Sulphur Springs location in 2004.

The independent school district is the largest public employer in Sulphur Springs, followed by Hopkins County Hospital and county and city government. As recently as 2012, the city had less than 4.5% unemployment and has enjoyed a very modest average annual growth of 0.05% since the 2010 census. By 2017, there were an estimated 16,029 citizens, up from the 15,464 reported by the 2010 census and representing about half of the Hopkins County population.

The 2010 census showed the city as mostly White (80.8%) with 13.5% Latinx, 14.5% Black or African American, and less than 1% in all other categories.¹ Demographic trends over the current decade show a loss of about 3% of the White population and 1.5% of the Black population. These losses are accounted for by an increase of over 4% Latinx. The median income for a family in 2010 was \$36,802, with about 12.6% of families below the poverty

¹ Unless otherwise noted, references to race, ethnicity, and nationality throughout this case study reflect the terminology used by the source. In instances where there is no direct source, we have attempted to use the most inclusive, accurate, and appropriate language possible.



Interstate 30 and other roads were constructed to bypass downtown.

line. From 1890 to 2017, Sulphur Springs only posted one decade of negative annual growth (-0.26 from 1920-1930), with its highest annual rate of 2.92% growth between 1940-1950.

Transportation Infrastructure

Transportation infrastructure has played a big role in the rise, fall, and rise again of downtown Sulphur Springs. Access to the railroad to the north, east, south, and west of the city in the 1870s is part of the city's origin story. In 1872, stagecoach connections between Sulphur Springs and the Texas and Pacific Railway at Mineola improved access to Sulphur Springs to and from the south. By 1876, the East Line and Red River Railroad provided connections to Jefferson to the southeast and Greenville due west. Just a year later, the St. Louis, Arkansas, and Texas Railway connected Hopkins County to Sherman, Texas, just north of the area surrounding the Metroplex.

But it was the construction of the interstate highway system and I-30 that further propelled Sulphur Springs' growth in the 1950s and 1960s by making

Mike Leeding



By 2005, the historic plaza was paved in brick and used as a parking lot.

it easier to get to and from the Metroplex to the west and Texarkana to the east. As new interchanges were added to the interstate in Sulphur Springs in the late 1970s, big-box retail and commercial services located nearby, drawing commerce, restaurant, and entertainment business away from downtown. City leaders and long-time residents report that downtown was alive and well during the 1970s and early 1980s but began to lose its retail share of the market in a steady decline. These new interstate retailers and services include—in addition to Walmart and Lowes—a Dollar General and Walgreens, along with several hotels and a theater complex. Profits left town instead of being reinvested in town by local businesses, adding to the decline.

In the 1970s, while I-30 was being constructed, the Texas Department of Transportation converted its north-south truck route, State Highway 154, into a pair of one-way roads running through the city, exacerbating speeding and further contributing to downtown's decline.

As businesses relocated near the interstate and downtown Sulphur Springs lost its retail base, neighboring housing began to deteriorate. Downtown bottomed out in 2006 when it was over 80% vacant and the plaza was host only to municipal buildings, two banks, and the Plain and Fancy Sandwich Shoppe. The banks were considering leaving downtown, too. The decline of

downtown Sulphur Springs, contrary to the rust-belt environments of the Northeast, was not driven by the dynamics of population loss or volatile boom-bust economies. Rather, the decline occurred during a period of very modest economic and population growth.

Historically, the plaza itself was about four square blocks with the courthouse taking up the northwest quadrant. The rest of the plaza was a place to tether horses, park carriages, and hold large gatherings. As automobiles became the norm, dirt gave way to brick pavers in 1915. By 2005, the majority of the plaza had become a parking lot that served both the courthouse and surrounding businesses except for the rare occasions when cars were excluded to allow for farmers markets, flea markets, and other events. It included local veterans memorials, including a plaque and magnolia tree placed in 1928 to commemorate Civil War veterans and a Korean War sculpture by Larry Ludke, a veteran of that war, that was dedicated in 1999 at the periphery of the parking lot.

PROJECT HISTORY AND PARTNERS

The history of Sulphur Springs' downtown revitalization is best framed by the partners that made the plans a reality. While there were many, they all cohere around the city government, especially the city manager and his staff and their collaboration with Hopkins County and the Texas Department of Transportation. It is also framed by the important roles played by the local banks for investing in the proposed financial planning early on in the process and by the Veterans Memorial Committee in its stewardship and advocacy for making the memorial an integral part of the plaza development. Finally, this is a story of a consultant and his team who established a long-term and trusting relationship with the city, Hopkins County, the Veterans Memorial Committee, Sulphur Spring citizens, and the local business community.

The Banks

City National Bank made its place on the plaza in 1889, just four years after the new courthouse was completed. The bank was considering a move out of downtown to the growth areas to the south of the city in 2005, but after reviewing the possibility of tax increment reinvestment zone financing and the city's plans for downtown, its leaders chose to invest \$2.2 million in expansion starting in 2008 and finishing in 2009. City National Bank also



Ian Lockwood

Downtown emptied as businesses relocated to areas along the interstate.



The Plain & Fancy Sandwich Shoppe was among the few remaining businesses.

offered to match the city's investments in street lighting used in the plaza and landscape improvements.

City National Bank's neighbor Alliance Bank had a shorter tenure on the plaza, going back over 55 years, but it was also impressed with planning for the plaza and chose to stay and make new investments in its facilities. Both of these institutions were also part of the Hopkins County Veterans Memorial planning team. As early investors in the revitalization effort downtown, the banks gave those who followed more confidence in their investments.

The City Manager and City Staff

Marc Maxwell reports that it was within weeks of his inauguration in 2005 that Mayor Chris Brown charged him to "begin thinking about how to revitalize our downtown and historic areas." By January 17, 2005, Maxwell had submitted a three-and-a-half-page memorandum in response to this charge, outlining the strengths of previous gains in planning for the city and encouraging a continued focus on land use and investment in street, sewer, and potable water infrastructure.

All of these topics were in the plan developed by the city in 2002, which Maxwell described as a road map for recovery. In his view, it had met their needs even as "just a skeleton of a plan" that needed "to be fleshed out." The city had been making steady but slow progress on the plan, but it was not focused on downtown. His memo called for a "Community Development Plan" focused on downtown as an addition to the 2002 plan. He went on to charge the Planning and Zoning Commission, which had experience with the planning already in place, to create and help implement the addition.

He also memorably proposed the following framework for planning:

When it comes to downtown redevelopment, the current thinking is that you need a lot of yogurt. That's right, yogurt! For any downtown area to thrive, it needs to be a live culture. That is, it needs all of the elements that are found in any living culture: areas to live, work, play, and shop. For that reason, downtown redevelopment projects which incorporate all of these elements are sometimes referred to as "yogurt clusters."

Maxwell went on to explain that in order for a plan to be successful, it had to address what he described as a live-work-shop-play formula. He cited the city's previous two Main Street program failures as an example of problems defined in a narrow way and argued for the need to broaden "the scope of our efforts beyond shopping to include residential, entertainment, and business/commercial elements." He was clear that no single project would be "the answer" to downtown redevelopment and argued for "many, many tools in the tool bag." And he argued for a downtown redevelopment plan that would determine when and how to use such tools:

A Downtown Redevelopment Plan should identify the tangible improvements to be made and the intangible policies which are necessary for that to occur. It should set a goal, a vision of what we are trying to accomplish. It should answer the question: What do we want our downtown to look like and feel like when we are done? It should identify the obstacles to our success and the means by which to overcome those obstacles.

Maxwell's memo further asserted the following:

- "[T]he plan should set benchmarks to measure progress and ... establish concrete objectives."
- The mayor should avoid disjointed single-project answers, stressing the relationship among such obvious needs—such as parking, sidewalks, low-interest financing, historic preservation, demolition, and more—where each consideration is part of a redevelopment tool bag to be employed systematically.
- "Balance" was critical, specifically the relationship between preservation and demolition. Here, he was introducing a process designed to avoid the kind of intense controversy that could stop the project.
- The urban culture would depend on a mix of live, work, play, shop, and worship, returning to the "yogurt" metaphor and acknowledging the three churches in the downtown, the importance of those institutions in community life, and the value of bringing them into the process as partners.
- "[I]ncentives, regulation for quality, and the consideration of allowing alcohol in a dry county would be required."



City Manager Marc Maxwell (left) engaged Livable Transportation Engineer Ian Lockwood (right).

Maxwell thought his memo would be greeted with maybe a “thank you” and was surprised when he got a clear direction from the mayor to get started. In his words, “I had hoped to scare him off the idea, but no, he just said, let’s do it!”

Maxwell began serving as Sulphur Springs City Manager in 1995 and had seen many mayors and especially council members come, go, and come again. He knew the dynamics of what is often referred to as “weak mayor” forms of municipal governance, where power was vested in the city council and city manager. Mayors are elected for one-year terms and council members for three-year terms in Sulphur Springs, and they are an all-volunteer force.

The city manager, however, is a full-time, paid staff member, and Maxwell had an impressive track record. He had already overseen the rebuilding of the airport; construction of a new sports facility at Coleman Park, a new library, and the recreational Crosstown Trail (now under construction); and upgrades at the 1914 City Hall (originally built as a post office), to name a

few achievements. He had earned trust in his leadership and accomplished a lot with relatively few professional staff members who often wore many different hats.

The two years that followed Maxwell’s memo in January 2005 were characterized by him as “Directionless. We didn’t know what we were doing ... we did not know what we didn’t know.” But Texas farm culture is rooted in self-reliance, and there is a strong do-it-yourself attitude that meant the team initially resisted expert help on the planning. The process of rethinking the plaza, parking, streetscape, and circulation options related to one-way and two-way streets were fully agreed to by the staff, boards, commissions, and Sulphur Springs citizens, and it led to the development of three alternatives. Those alternatives were vetted by the city council, and in 2007, a vote was cast approving one of the options. In hindsight, Maxwell reports that if any of the three alternatives had been built, it would have been disastrous. All had flawed dimensions, including a focus on one-way streets and parking rather than pedestrians and place. All three options were more about facilitating through traffic than encouraging pedestrian-friendly short trips.

Fortunately, Councilman Clay Walker was not able to attend the meeting of the initial vote, and when he reviewed the alternatives, he suggested that none of them would work. He came with the credibility of a project manager who had some construction experience, which led him to the conclusion that the project, as designed, would not enable the necessary clearances for traffic to move. Wisely, the council and staff listened, did a full-scale test with traffic cones, and determined that Walker was correct. This led the council to reverse its vote on January 17, 2007, and subsequently direct Maxwell to bring in expert assistance.

Consultant Team

Maxwell spent the next several months doing some homework and discovering concepts like placemaking and urban design. Some web exploration took him to the Congress of New Urbanism (CNU), to some videos by urban planner and CNU founder Andres Duany, to urbanist and planner William H. Whyte, and to a livable transportation engineer



Sulphur Springs News-Telegram

Lockwood involved the community through a series of workshops.



Sulphur Springs News-Telegram

The iterative design process included meetings with small groups to discuss and test ideas.

named Ian Lockwood. Ultimately the city engaged Lockwood, then with Gladding Jackson (since acquired by AECOM) and now affiliated with Toole Design Group. The design team commissioned by the city also included Raj Mohabeer, a landscape architect and planner, and Ken Ray, a landscape architect, both now with Toole Design.

Lockwood came to town with a quiet and understated way of working that often involved tracing paper overlays of concepts that affirmed current thinking while concurrently demonstrating how much better they could be. As a livable transportation engineer, he brought the credibility of an engineer to discussions with the Texas Department of Transportation while helping the community understand that there was more to the project than addressing parking and minimizing travel times for motorists.

The team made two visits in the early days of their commission, meeting in workshop settings with community leaders, city staff, council members, and the Veterans Memorial Committee to think about what would become of the surface parking lot in the center of downtown. In the process, they all learned about fat sidewalks and skinny streets, traffic calming, unconventional approaches to parking, and how to relate street and sidewalk infrastructure to improve pedestrian activities and access to buildings. They all literally went to school with Lockwood and through publications from the CNU and the Project for Public Spaces. They listened as Lockwood outlined how “infrastructure drives outcomes.” Ultimately Lockwood led an iterative and very public process leading to a new proposal for what became Celebration Plaza and the reconstruction of Main Street, Connally Street, and the streets adjacent to the plaza. There were many controversies related to the specifics of the veterans memorial, parking, and traffic safety. Following the initial workshops, the approach was to meet in small groups, testing new ideas against the broad vision shaped by the first team visits.

During this year-long process, Maxwell constructed a “to-do” list that he labeled “Strategy for Downtown.” It involved 17 pages of lists, starting with “Physical Improvements” including everything from getting construction plans to everything those plans needed to address on Main, Connally, Oak, and Gilmer Streets and the plaza. It went on to include “Downtown

Management” items related to special and ongoing events. Then he covered something he called “Break out of the Market Box,” which was his look at the unique retail mix that his homework told him would be needed to make the project successful. The fourth item was to “Develop Zealous Nuts,” where he outlined the recruitment of city council members, staff, members of the media, and community leaders to speak at service clubs, travel to places like the Project for Public Spaces in New York City, write newspaper editorials, develop library collections relevant to the project, and approach the Hopkins County Manufacturers Association. The fifth entry was “Promotion.” Here he wrote about the need to “time the stories well,” focusing on holidays and weekends; the need to strategically use what he called “feeding frenzies;” and the need to plan stories months in advance.

What followed in the to-do list were 50 tactics, including “visible signs of progress on a paced regular basis, more parking on the periphery, resist the temptation to tear buildings down, use people for traffic calming, comfortable seating, take traffic counts, flag poles and banners,” and so on. In addition, Maxwell developed a long list of possible funding sources, including foundations, governments, the Small Business Association, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and local sources. Finally, he listed the metrics he considered important:

1. Vacancy rates
2. Assessed valuation
3. Parking vacancy
4. The proportion of women, children, and elderly
5. Presence of public displays of affection
6. The proportion of people in groups
7. Stores by types, target vs. neighborhood convenience
8. Average traffic speeds, before and after calming

Maxwell concluded with another list of 40 ideas, including an interactive fountain, “hide the dumpsters,” and streets with no curbs. It was a comprehensive approach to downtown development in 17 pages.

In spite of the number of items on Maxwell’s to-do list, this was not a long or even complex process. Lockwood described it as involving three basic iterative



Marc Maxwell

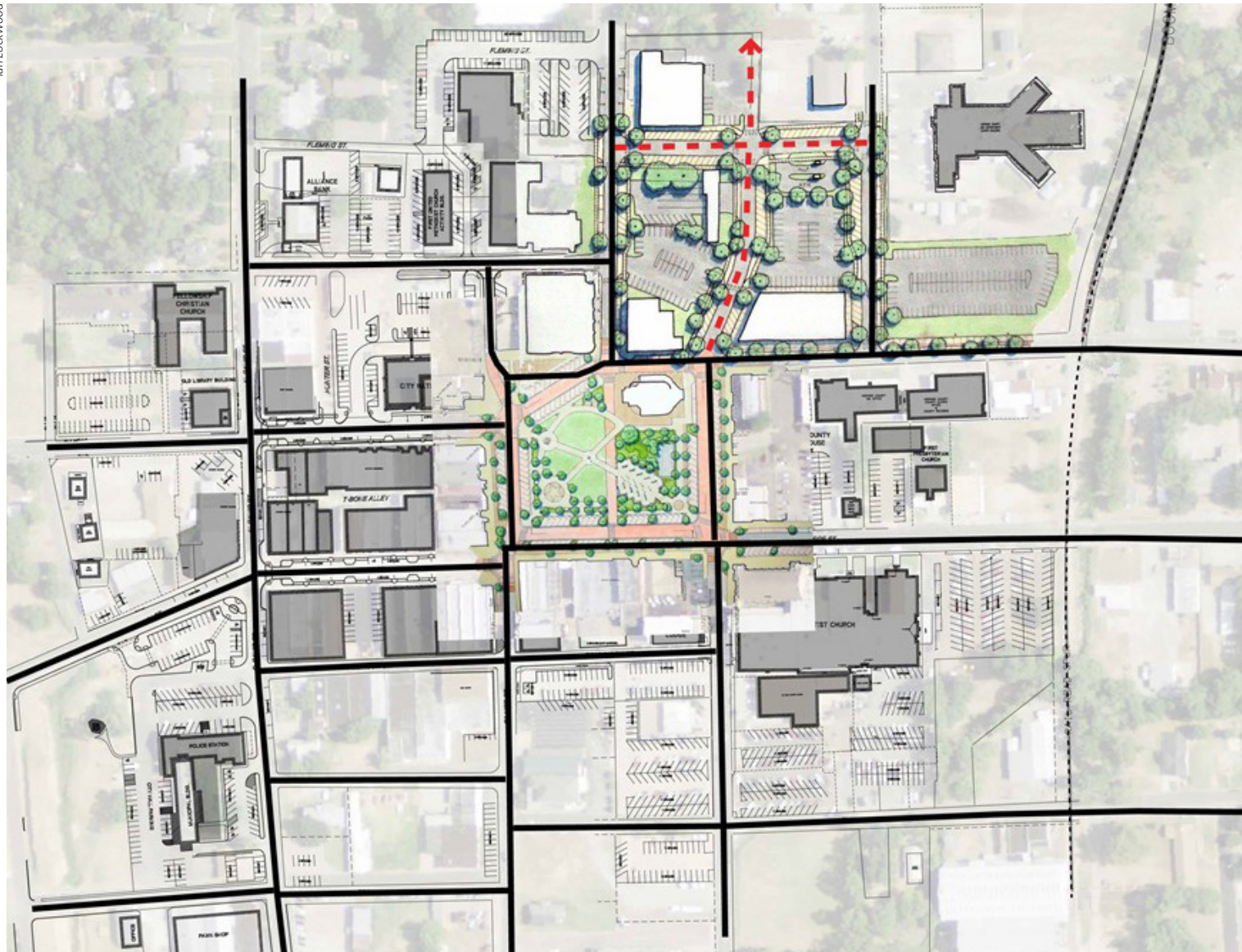
Prior to engaging Lockwood, the city spent two years rethinking the streets and plaza.



City of Sulphur Springs

Previous proposals focused on one-way streets and parking rather than pedestrians and placemaking.

Ian Lockwood



The iterative process led to development of potential scenarios for a 100-year vision for downtown.

steps: discovery, design, and decision. The discovery process initially lasted less than a week in early 2007, starting with Lockwood keynoting a large dinner with what was described as the city's "movers and shakers." Lockwood outlined the project opportunities and some basic urban design principles in the context of Sulphur Springs as well as the role of urban infrastructure in the creation of vibrant downtowns. This was followed immediately by three days of workshops and interviews with key community leaders, ending with a large community celebration. Many of the activities were held in City Hall, where maps and other contextual information were available.

Lockwood led these meetings, exploring with tracing paper and simple sketches how the principles he espoused could be applied to the plaza and streets of Sulphur Springs. In the process, those same sketches became his way of establishing "informed consent" and the physical manifestation of community values. He heard the values expressed broadly as the need to establish social exchange and economic activity downtown and then literally showed participants in real time how it might happen. Within months, the plan from Maxwell's memo was developed. Lockwood referred to it as "a 100-year plan for downtown" in an effort to get the public to think expansively about the prospects for downtown and the plaza. It laid the groundwork for what eventually became Lockwood's 2017 draft comprehensive plan for the city. As yet the plan has not been approved by the city council, but the improvements to Main Street were completed in 2007, Connally Street in 2008, and the plaza and surrounding streets between 2009 and 2013. Neither Maxwell nor Lockwood actually saw the plan as a 100-year plan, but they found calling it that to be useful in stirring the imagination of the public about what might be possible.

After the plan was created, more work and persuasion was needed to actually get the project done. The relationship between the county and the city had been troubled for some time, related to things like parking for the courthouse and the desire to give over more of the plaza to programmed events and a more profound veterans memorial. This was when Craig Johnson, then a city councilman, joined the Ark-Tex Council of Governments and rode to monthly meetings with County Judge Cletus Millsap. Johnson used the time to reinforce arguments for the project. Millsap, approaching retirement, was asked during

one of these rides, "Do you want to make your retirement speech in a parking lot or a plaza?"

Another kind of persuasion was to move the "wettest dry town in Texas" to the status of a "damp town." Sulphur Springs had been a dry city since 1920. Maxwell and his team believed the city needed to permit the sale of alcohol in its restaurants, brewpubs, and the like in addition to private clubs, but they did not push to remove all restrictions on the sale of hard liquor, instead offering a compromise to those strongly advocating to remain dry. While it was difficult, in 2012, the city voted to approve the sale of beer and wine for "off-premise consumption" along with the sale of mixed beverages in restaurants holding both food and beverage certificates. This was the first time it came to a vote in Sulphur Springs, and it was successful.

Predictions by the faith-based community and others opposed to the change were that once alcohol was allowed, there would be public drunkenness, higher crime rates, and more drunken driving. The reality, according to several members of the city council, has been fewer arrests for drunken driving, no evidence of serious public drunkenness, fewer arrests for bootlegging, and a positive impact on property values, with no increase in violent crimes. This legislative move was a controversial one that strained relationships with the religious community, but the legislators felt it was essential to the successful attraction of entertainment venues downtown. The potential revenue growth made for less risky development, and it has yielded new restaurant, wine bar, and brewpub life downtown.

The history of dry-to-wet conversions in municipalities appears to reinforce the position taken by Sulphur Springs. A 2008 study by the Perryman Group illustrated that a Texas community of 25,000 people could expect an average of \$19 million in annual spending and see 185 jobs as a result of allowing liquor sales. In response, Texas made it easier for municipalities to hold a referendum on the topic in 2011, and most dry counties changed course: the 62 dry Texas counties in 1986 dwindled to just five by the end of 2018.

Part of building vibrancy downtown according to the Sulphur Springs Business Association required the city to allow the sale of alcohol and establish the



The planning process engaged members of the Veterans Memorial Committee.



The committee is responsible for many memorials, including the Korean War sculpture.

process needed to make it happen. One solution was to zone downtown as a heavy commercial zone, thus allowing private clubs that can sell alcohol. These ordinances required a 100-yard distance between such clubs and churches. Under Texas laws, members can purchase beer, wine, and alcohol in such a club but nowhere else. Instead of rezoning the downtown, the ordinance was changed to also allow alcohol in areas zoned “central commercial,” thus opening the door for the city to go “damp.” This move was further codified with a council motion in 2012 assuring that commercial interests in investments in bars and restaurants would be profitable and not requiring them to take the private club route to serve alcohol. The inclusion of alcohol in downtown Sulphur Springs venues corresponds to those business owners reporting success in their new businesses.

Veterans Memorial Committee

The revitalization planning brought together a committee comprised of leaders throughout the county who focused on the Veterans Memorial. Committee members include people like Clayton McGraw, a Marine Corps veteran credited with the idea to form the Veterans Memorial Committee. Mickey Barker, also a veteran, came to Sulphur Springs in 1978 to interview for a job with GTE Phone Company. At the time he found a dead plaza, a friendly population, and the need to develop a more comprehensive memorial to veterans. Danny Davis is a 23-year veteran of the US Air Force who returned to Sulphur Springs to work at Texas A&M University College in Commerce, just 18 miles from Sulphur Springs, because his parents still lived in the area. He turned down employment options in Dallas because he preferred the “Mayberry-like” atmosphere of Sulphur Springs and believes his hometown is the best-kept secret in Texas. When he returned to Sulphur Springs, he asked for and got the appointment to be the Veteran’s Service Officer for the county. He also ran for city council treasurer and won.

Since 2006, this committee has been working with legacy memorials, including the plaque and magnolia tree commemorating Civil War veterans and the Korean War sculpture in the courthouse plaza. The goals of the committee were to plan and design elements of a memorial to the veterans of all wars and oversee the maintenance of the memorial.

The process of development accelerated in 2012 when Sargent Tanner Stone Higgins, a 23-year-old Army Ranger from Sulphur Springs, lost his life in combat. Higgins graduated from the local high school in 2007, the year after initial planning for the enhanced veterans memorial began. He was killed in a firefight in Logar Province in Afghanistan. His service was recognized by several medals and honors, and his actions during the combat that took his life led to the posthumously awarded Bronze Star Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal, and the Purple Heart. Historically, the city and county governments did not always work well together, but the emotional impact of Higgins' passing was one of several catalysts for the collaboration between the two governments. It also brought together community groups, faith-based organizations, and businesses in common cause with the Veterans Memorial Committee.

Initially, many veterans opposed the redesign of the plaza. In many ways, this established an opportunity to demonstrate how well Lockwood and Maxwell listened to and translated the committee's vision into something even better. It actually created a trust in the work. And when Sgt. Higgins was killed, the hometown hero created a reverence for the memorial and its prominence in the plaza. It also attracted new supporters for the monument, including veteran volunteers and attendees at the Freedom Ball to raise money for the maintenance of the memorial.

The Veterans Memorial Committee's work includes facilitating the identification of 250 Hopkins County veterans who were killed in action and the names of the 2,500 to 3,000 veterans who served that are to be etched in the walls of the monument. The etching cost per name runs about \$50. The committee handles oversight of the memorial and consulted on the in-kind donations from the city for the initial installation, estimated at over \$250,000, including plumbing for waterfalls, electricity for lighting, security, sidewalks, and landscaping.

The committee also coordinates with the military coalition that takes care of the site where decommissioned flags are kept and with the Marine Corps League to manage the American flag at the center of the plaza and maintain the eternal flame that is part of the memorial. During the last two years, the



The Sulphur Springs Downtown Business Alliance was active in the planning process.

committee has orchestrated an annual Freedom Ball in Celebration Plaza to help cover expenses.

A new bench was provided by the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 2017 to commemorate veteran service in World War II. A life-sized wounded veteran, designed by Kansas artist John Parsons, was dedicated in the plaza on Veterans Day 2019, joining the fully integrated memorials focused on the Civil War, World War I, World War II, and the Korean War, along with other features offering more general remembrances of the sacrifices of county veterans in all branches of service in all wars since the War of 1812.

The Sulphur Spring Downtown Business Alliance

With a membership of over 62 institutions representing property owners, banks, insurance companies, entertainment venues, retail establishments, health-care providers, and both private and public office functions of all kinds, the alliance's mission is to "develop and maintain a working partnership with city and county governments as well as other advisory boards dedicated to the revitalization of Downtown Sulphur Springs."

Oscar Aguilar

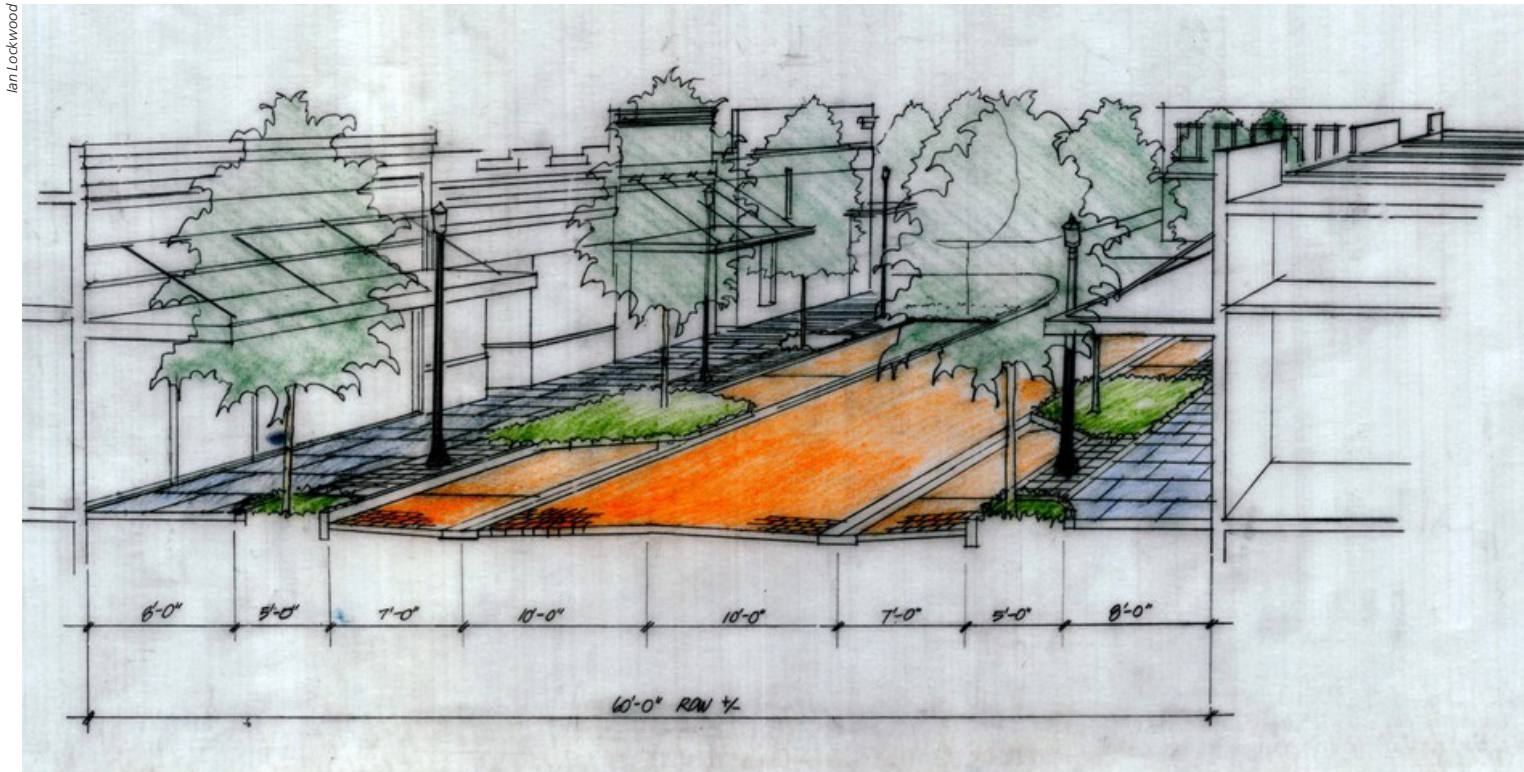


The three-phase project involved the redesign of the plaza and four city blocks.

The alliance was incorporated in June of 2005. Many of its members were part of the 2008 workshops run by Lockwood and the city and remain active participants in the ongoing planning for an improved pedestrian-friendly downtown. New members since that time represent about half of the membership today.

Alliance members were the first to invest in the new downtown, taking advantage of city programs that provided matching funds for facade restoration on buildings facing Main and Connally Streets. In so doing,

they were also leveraging investments in the street and sidewalk infrastructure designed to make downtown more pedestrian friendly and attractive. Some Business Alliance members are also developers, and by April 2019 they had created a total of 12 new apartments and lofts within the two-block project area. Three members own 23 of the buildings on Main and Connally Streets. Billie Ruth Standbridge is president of the Downtown Business Alliance and owns seven buildings. Two other members, Bethany Ashby and John Heilman, own four and 12 buildings, respectively.



Connally Street and Main Street were reconstructed with brick paving, new street lamps, and broad tree-lined sidewalks.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Sulphur Springs Downtown involved the redesign of the streetscapes and plaza surrounding the Hopkins County Courthouse and the four city blocks adjacent to the plaza to the west. It was developed in three phases, with the initial stage (2008) addressing Main Street running west from the plaza for one block (245 feet). The second phase (2009–10) came along a year later to transform Connally Street, to the north of and parallel to Main Street. It also connects to the plaza. The third phase (2012–13) was the plaza itself and its adjacent streets.

The Scope of the Work

The technical description of the full scope was described in the *Downtown Revitalization Plan* implementing the Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone #1:

1. Reconstruction of the economically critical streets and sidewalks.
2. Replace all water and sewer mains ... found in any street segments.
3. Where it is economically feasible, place electric service underground.
4. Assist business owners with improvements to their building facades according to the architectural standards and style as established by the city as a part of the grant program.



Brick paving, narrow traffic lanes, and parallel parking slow traffic.



"Silly walk" signs remind drivers to watch out for pedestrians.

5. Establish within the central plaza a park including approved parking.
6. In conjunction with other public and private processes, facilitate as much as possible numerous forms of business development which will enhance progress on the redevelopment purposes of the district.
7. Design and construct on Main Street a roofed central market area/ event facility.

The last element was abandoned based on the judgment that the use of temporary tent and booth structures would allow greater flexibility and not leave an empty building when there was no market.

Phase 1: Main Street, Connally Street, and Sidewalk Infrastructure

Perhaps the most significant design move was the restoration of the one-way streets to two-way streets and introduction of traffic calming measures, including some areas of flush, curbless streets; pinch points; well-articulated crosswalks; wide sidewalks; on-street parking; and narrow travel lanes. The reconstructed Main Street includes a 60-foot right-of-way with 34 feet curb to curb, seven-foot parallel parking rows, and 10-foot travel lanes with eight feet of sidewalk and five more feet of furniture zones in strategic places. The installation of "silly walk" crossing signs, referencing a classic comedy sketch from the 1970s *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, expands the focus on pedestrians and introduces drivers to the fact that this is not your normal "speed through" intersection. This program of urban infrastructure was offered in tandem with incentives for street-facing facade improvements. The city offered to match private investments up to \$20,000. That facade grant program was also amended to enable the purchase of three communal grease traps that collect and treat fats, oils, and grease from restaurants prior to their introduction into the sewer systems. This helped to reduce individual operator costs and facilitate other property investments by downtown businesses.

New street trees, grass, and flowers were planted that accentuated the valley gutter system and help to manage the runoff. Taken together, these landscape elements optically narrow the streets even further. Wide sidewalks and repurposed parking areas invite outdoor dining when streets are closed to motorists. Ornamental street lights with wrap-around shelves at elbow height to hold food and drinks during festivals and market days are provided

at regular intervals on both Main and Connally Streets, making the area still more inviting. The alleys provide 220-volt plug-ins to support Saturday markets on the street, and all utilities were placed underground. Mural art is on display in the larger “T-Bone Alley” running parallel to and between Main and Connally Streets. The alley also provides some of the electric connections needed to support Connally and Main Street life. The alley itself was described by Lockwood as a service alley and was not actively programmed.

Other features include music broadcasts into the street, which are programmed for different audiences (daytime workers, evening entertainment seekers, etc.). Twelve new residences in new or renovated buildings along with literally dozens of shops on the street front give round-the-clock life to the street.

Many people still think of this phase of work as predominantly about the controversy of one-way to two-way street restoration; the perceived loss of parking (even though in the end there was actually one more parking space than there had been before the project); and serious debate about the head-in versus back-in diagonal, on-street parking on the streets adjacent to the plaza. The fear was that the traffic calming would not work, the city might be introducing serious safety problems, and downtown visitors would have to walk farther, thus defeating their retailing aspirations. Lockwood illustrated the absurdity of parking concerns by placing an overlay of a Walmart building and parking lot on the plan for the plaza. The Walmart building footprint alone was larger in area than the combined areas of the plaza and its adjacent streets.

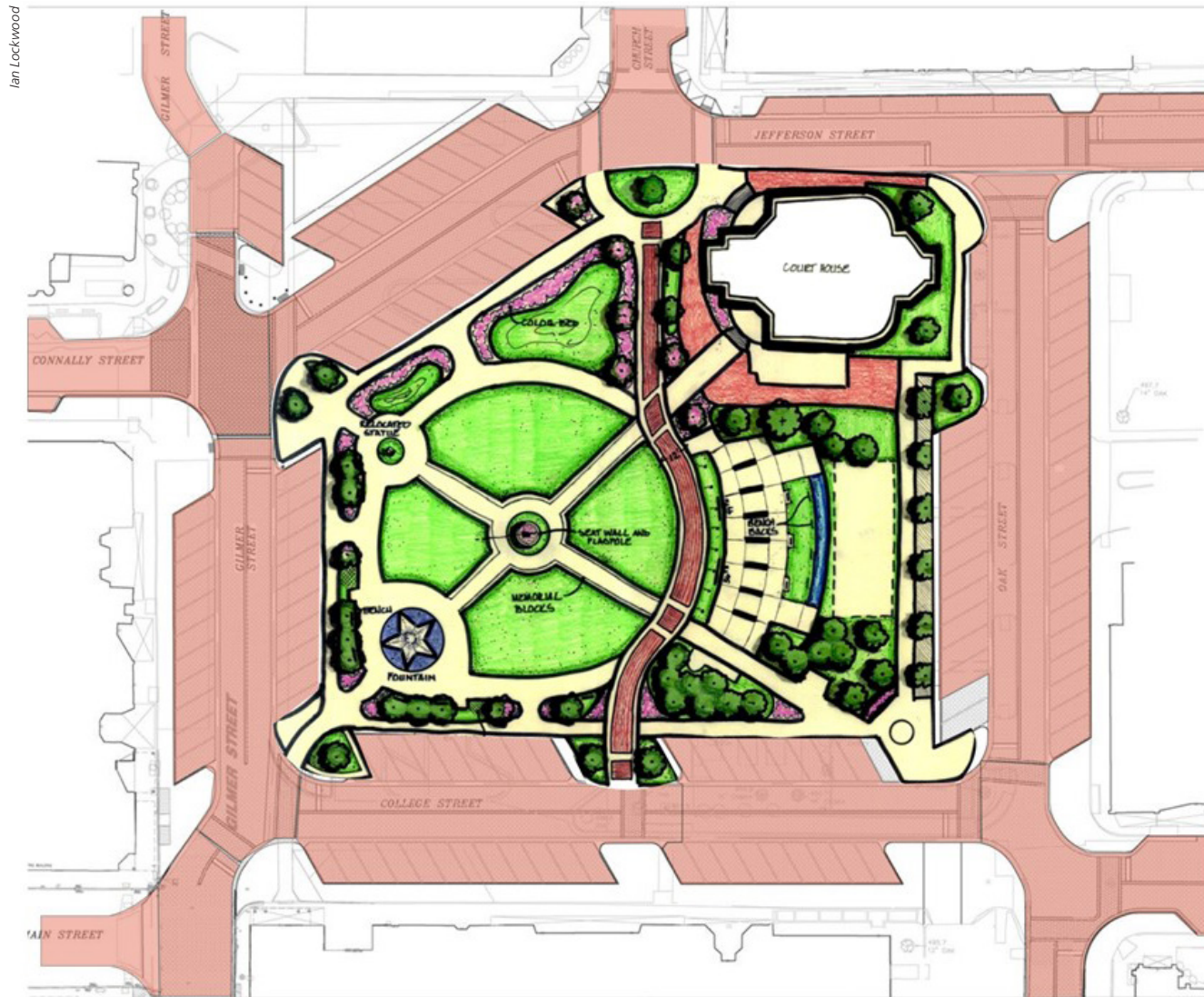
In public meetings on the perceived loss of parking and the approach to the on-street parking, county representatives and members of the Veterans Memorial Committee led the charge. Some of their resistance involved accommodations the committee had already made regarding the placement of the memorial on the plaza in front of the courthouse. The county was concerned about providing parking for the jury pool. Both the county and the veterans committee were part of a three-hour council meeting where angry citizens and organization representatives argued that the proposed design would not work. The solution, after several design iterations, was to move the majority of the monument to the land bordering the plaza south of the courthouse parallel with Oak Street in a manner that screens the



Landscaped “bump-outs” help to capture stormwater runoff.



Lampposts have shelves to hold food and drink and charge cell phones.



The redesigned Celebration Plaza is the centerpiece of downtown.



Diagonal parking spots line both sides of the streets surrounding the plaza.



The brick-paved areas and streets are used for special events.

courthouse utility box. The surface parking lot was replaced with on-street parking on the streets adjacent to the plaza. By most accounts from retailers and from city personnel, the animosity of the 2007-2008 controversy has been replaced with pride that the right decisions were made.

Phase 2: Celebration Plaza

The plaza design avoids making either the courthouse or the Veterans Memorial the most important features. In fact, the site lacks hierarchy except for a flagpole with a very large American flag positioned at the center. It includes allocations of space for parking on both sides of the streets around the plaza as a compromise to those who sought still more parking within the plaza.

The landscape treatment includes a simple and bold color palette of plantings that are adjusted twice annually and a large lawn where evening movie nights, concerts, and festivals occur.

The infrastructure work supporting Celebration Plaza is equally effective, employing the “silly walk” crosswalk signage, wide sidewalks on Church Street to support drop-offs/deliveries at the courthouse, and curbsless streets allowing the plaza to expand seamlessly to include the street(s) when events demand it, simply by closing one or more streets to motorists.

Other infrastructure on the plaza supports its flexible use. There are widely distributed in-ground electrical outlets that provide flexibility and power for events, and the plaza was kept flat to assure accommodation of a broad mix of uses and people, including those with mobility impairments, strollers, etc. The city has two temporary stages it deploys on the plaza: a smaller one for weekend events and another one large enough to accommodate Northeast Texas Symphony Orchestra programs. Closest to Main Street in the southwest quadrant of the plaza, a large Texas star doubles as a children’s splash pad during warmer months, with underground water systems that also support public restrooms with one-way glass and sprinkler heads used for irrigation. There are also tables and benches and games, including two-to-three-foot high chess pieces on a chessboard ready to play. Lampposts with elbow-height shelves offer places to hold plates of festival food and drinks and serve as cell phone charging stations. The entire plaza is barrier-free.

Cindy Roller



The Veterans Memorial includes sandstone walls engraved with the names of service members.



Another stone wall features a bas relief sculpture and eternal flame.

Hopkins County Veterans Memorial

The east part of the plaza is more formal due to the large memorial that includes seven unpolished sandstone walls with the names of veterans etched on their surfaces; a bas relief sculpture of a train-loading platform taken from a historic postcard; an eternal flame; and eight flags, including one for service members missing in action, one for prisoners of war, the Texas state flag, and flags for each of the branches of service. These flags are arrayed in an arc with focused views onto a much larger 50-foot pole-mounted US flag that flies in the center of the plaza. Views to the courthouse, other monuments on the plaza, and the landscape are all part of the experience of the plaza.

Public Restrooms

The two public restroom facilities were a welcome addition to the plaza, offering a new and essential service and an element of delight in the mundane. The idea for mirrored glass enclosures for the public bathrooms came from Maxwell, who was inspired by the European “Don’t Miss a Sec” public toilet installation in London. As of this writing, Sulphur Springs claims to have the only functional, ADA-compliant glass bathrooms with one-way mirrors in the world. When the light is brighter outside than in, people using the facility can see out, but no one can see in. There are no lights needed inside in the daytime, and in the evening, the LED lights are turned on outside the glass enclosure, ensuring it remains brighter outside. The fully accessible facilities feature stainless steel fixtures. By all accounts, the publicity (including YouTube videos posted by users) and the delight exhibited by visitors indicate the glass boxes are well received.

Resilience

The plaza and street/sidewalk design pay a lot of attention to water and runoff conditions, using the landscape where possible to hold and slow-release stormwater. The choice of materials and landscape treatments are robust and relatively low maintenance.

What’s Next: The 100-Year Plan

The long-term revitalization plans for downtown include three key components. The first was completed with the realignment of Connally Street to create better east-west relationships and the completion of the new street

and sidewalk infrastructure. The second component, building on the success of the first, will establish a new trail system. The trail will provide an opportunity immediately west of downtown for a new linear park and dense housing. The third, also part of the trail, involves daylighting a creek and the restoration of a small stone channel bounding the west, south, and east sides of downtown with the goal of eventually creating a green corridor and a small lake. It is a new amenity that will reduce flooding and establish a site for new residential development within walking distance to downtown. All of this and more are part of an ambitious 2017 draft comprehensive plan produced by Lockwood with the city. The original idea for daylighting came from Lockwood during the design of the plaza. While Maxwell reports it was well received as a concept, it has not been formally put to a council vote and remains an item to take to the city council “when the time is right.”

Construction

For the most part, this project was completed by proud in-house public works crews and resulted in real cost savings (no profit margin and working with already-committed city overhead). The city reports it used high-quality materials, including, for example, brick paving in concrete trays to address expansive clay soils and glass restrooms with one-way mirrors and stainless steel fixtures. It also reports that it built the project with a significant amount of volunteer labor.

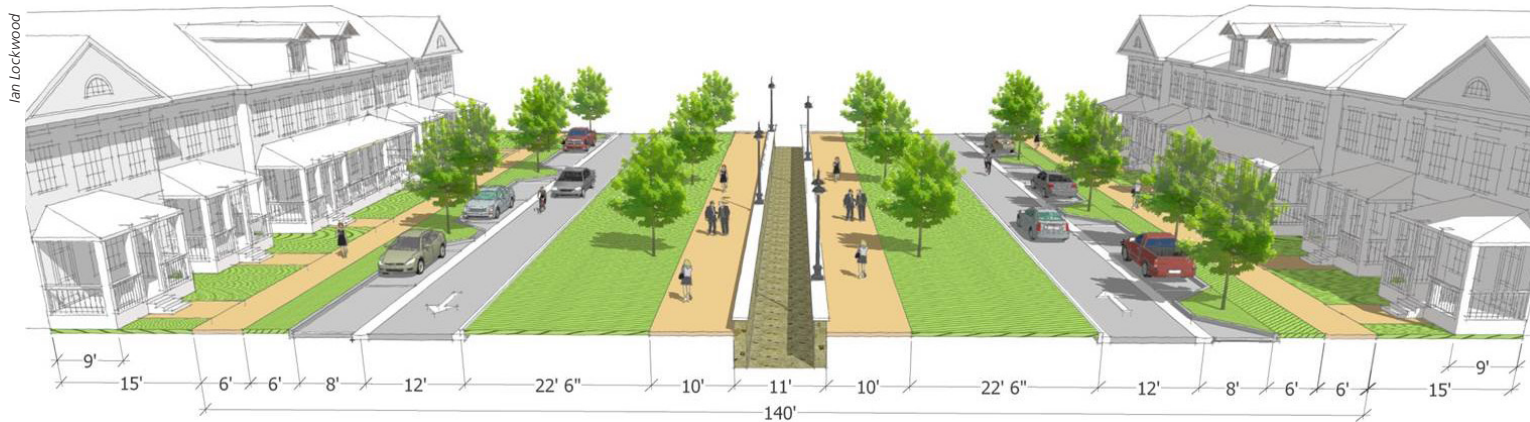
Construction management was described by public works staff as “organized chaos.” The bathroom plumbing was done by the city with an experiment that vented the facility into surrounding plantings using oversized vent pipes, thereby avoiding roof penetrations. The city also did the plumbing for both fountains along with the electrical work, landscaping, and concrete work for much of the whole site. Veterans themselves did the construction on the memorial, including walls and seat walls, sequencing their work to minimize disruptions from closed streets. Initially, the city relied on a Dallas-based contractor to lay the plaza bricks with a concrete tray technology: the ground was prepared, utilities were laid down, concrete trays were poured, and then a one-inch sand layer was added. The Dallas company then taught the city concrete crews how to lay an entire pallet of bricks in four minutes. Concrete crews then laid bricks at various crosswalks leading up to the plaza.



The plaza is designed to accommodate large events and temporary stages.



Mirrored glass public restrooms have become a tourist attraction.

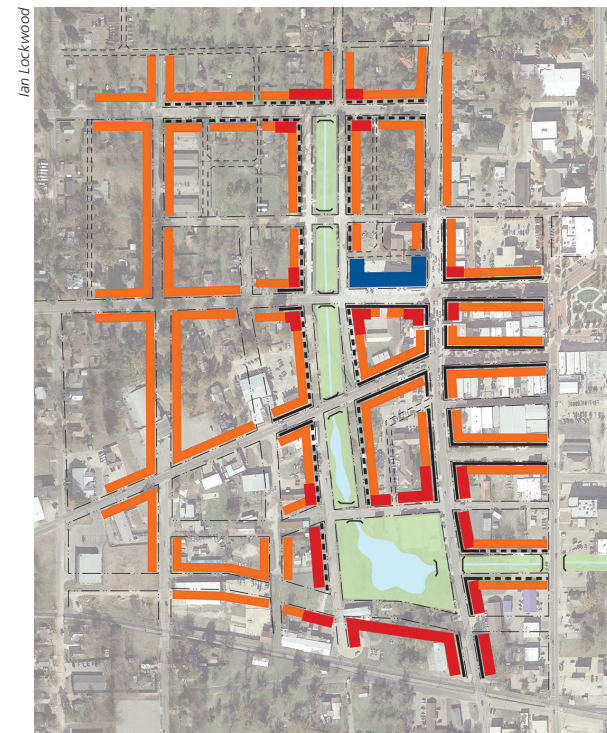


The 100-year plan includes a proposal for a green corridor lined with housing.

One challenging aspect of the construction process was the relocation of a few original monuments memorializing veterans. *The Soldier Statue*—a soldier in World War II gear with a Korean War era rifle, meant to honor all who served in any war—was perhaps the most difficult. It was in the surface parking lot towards the City National Bank building and needed to be moved and restored in its new place on the axis of the path that runs southeast to northwest through the plaza. The approach involved blocks of ice, careful rigging, and a new foundation. The move was accomplished without damage. The sculptor, Lawrence M. Ludtke, had passed away, and the Veterans Memorial Committee believed extraordinary measures were required to align the sculpture on its new foundation, moving it to exactly match the pins that would hold it on the ice, reducing rigging pressure on the limbs of the soldier.

Maintenance and Operations

The splash pad in the form of the Texas star and the waterfall at the Hopkins County Veterans Memorial are the biggest maintenance issues for the city in the restoration project, mostly due to equipment cycling on and off, recycled filtered water, and the need to drain and refill the system once a week. Otherwise, maintenance is handled by a two-person crew focused



The corridor includes a newly daylighted creek and small lake.



Marc Maxwell



Marc Maxwell

The first phase of construction included the rebuilding of Main Street and Connally Street (pictured above).

on downtown. They mow the lawn, maintain the landscape, and clean the bathrooms. The same crew also tends the landscaping on Connally and Main Streets. Programming in the plaza is widely disbursed among a range of business and nonprofit organizations and is coordinated by a single staffer with the city.

ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

About 150 events per year offer a wide assortment of activities and levels of attendance at various locations in the new downtown. Food events are especially popular on the plaza, including a Cattleman's Classic Ribeye Roundup, a Hopkins County Stew Contest, Claws for a Cause Crawfish Boil, pancake breakfasts, farmers markets, and beer and wine events. There are also flea markets, music festivals, weekly yoga, a quilt show, ladies night events, and Fotos for Freedom. The Northeast Texas Symphony Orchestra performs periodically. Event sizes range from small yoga classes with 20 to 40 people to over 5,000 people or more at concert events or holiday celebrations, including Cinco de Mayo and Independence Day, which draw

about 4,500 celebrants each. Outdoor movie nights are made possible by inflatable movie screens, and there two sizes of portable stages that can be employed according to the size of the event. Street fairs, live music, and parades are programmed on the streets, often coordinated with programming on the new plaza. While 150 calendar events may seem like a lot, the variety and attendance suggest the experience of the new downtown and plaza is that of an outdoor living room for the community with the occasional large holiday or festival party.

The Sulphur Springs Business Alliance hosts or co-hosts many events, such as the Annual Reds, Whites, and Brews (Texas wine and beer festival); the weekly Saturday night Celebration Market; family movie nights on the plaza; the Mission 22 Car Show; and the annual Corvette Club Corvette Show. The alliance website reveals it is aligned with the Hopkins County Chamber of Commerce, which shares a similar mission for the county. The business community sees these events drawing visitors from the Metroplex as well as from surrounding towns and cities and from as far east as Texarkana.



Celebration Plaza hosts a weekly farmers market from May through September.



Approximately 150 events per year draw people downtown.

The Celebration Market was originally intended to be a permanent structure on the plaza, but the plan was abandoned in favor of a more flexible range of opportunities for vendors. It is host to a weekly farmers market that runs on Saturdays from May through September and is coordinated by city staff. The 20-30 vendors on a typical Saturday are responsible for supplying what they need to operate their booths and often spill out from their covered structures in an array of umbrellas and portable pavilions on the plaza lawn. Items offered for sale include produce from nearby farms, such as honey, eggs, fruits, and vegetables. Also for sale are plants and flowers, clothing, wearables, and upcycled used clothing. There is usually an array of baked goods, canned goods, meat, and poultry as well as craft items.

All told, over 33 businesses are now contributing to the life of downtown. Restaurant, bar, and entertainment venues are in the majority, but there is also a large variety of specialty and boutique retailing.

FINANCING

Financing for the \$6.9 million project was deceptively simple. The whole of Main Street was done with city labor at a cost of \$550,000 paid for by city operational funds. This work was performed prior to the approval of the tax increment reinvestment zone (TIRZ). Connally Street was next and was able to draw on the TIRZ agreement for \$550,000. Celebration Plaza (\$880,000) and the Veterans Memorial (\$1,100,000) were in the third phase of work. Funding sources involved a TIRZ created by the city, Hopkins County Memorial Hospital, and Hopkins County that sold bonds yielding \$3.6 million, to which the city added an additional \$2,155,532 of municipal funding. An additional \$1.1 million covered the costs of the Veterans Memorial with \$900,000 from private funds and the remaining \$200,000 from the city and county. The city estimates an additional \$250,000 was invested in the plaza through its in-kind construction services. Overall the costs were about \$6.9 million, not including the in-kind contributions that were available from the city to execute the work on the two streets and the plaza or the in-kind support to construct the Veterans Memorial provided by veterans and friends.

For the first three years, facade grants provided matching funds for owners for the cost of facades facing Main and Connally Streets as well as the plaza

up to a \$20,000 limit. Larger lots and multiple stories have allowed for larger matching grants. Only a few of the grants were below \$20,000, and the largest three grants were \$40,000.

The best information on the specific uses of the outlined funds is provided in the *TIRZ #1 Project and Financing Plan* produced in April 2009. It shows a total of \$5,700,000. The TIRZ plan requires the city to fund the effort up to \$200,000 per year from its operating budget. As of 2019, the city has a line on what Maxwell calls the "Budget Page" (general fund) for \$350,000 per year supporting downtown. The funds are used for the maintenance of Main, Connally, and the four streets around the plaza: \$233,000 for maintenance, \$150,000 for programming, and the rest for contingencies, all from the city's general fund.

The Hopkins County and City of Sulphur Springs TIRZ agreement, as well as the one with the Hopkins County Hospital, specify 2007 as the par year for establishing property values. The county and the city will pay 100% of the taxes collected above the base property value in the 2007 "par" year through 2032 or at such time as the bond is paid off or no new increments are being created. The agreement was executed on July 2, 2008, by Maxwell for the city and on June 23, 2008, by Cletus Millsap, a county judge. A similar agreement was executed between the City of Sulphur Springs and Hopkins County Memorial Hospital, except that the hospital agreed to deposit 25% of the tax increment into the fund. That agreement was executed on October 20, 2008, by Maxwell and Tim Kelty as president of the hospital board. The boundary for the TIRZ district was about twice as large as the boundary of the immediate project (four acres on the plaza and surrounding the streets and 245 lineal feet of street on Connally and Main Streets). This increase in size supports the idea that the TIRZ would affect the neighboring properties and that those properties would then influence still larger returns when the bonds were paid.

Following the agreement, a *Downtown Revitalization Project and Financing Plan* was prepared dated April 2009 and approved by the TIRZ Board on April 21, 2009, and subsequently by the Sulphur Springs City Council on June 2, 2009. The 2008 recession resulted in early returns being lower than



Marc Maxwell

Matching facade grants encouraged property owners to invest in improvements.



Marc Maxwell

Grants ranged from up to \$20,000 for single facades and as much as \$40,000 for larger or multiple facades.

TABLE 1: DEVELOPMENT SOURCES AND USES

SOURCES	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	TOTAL
Tax increment reinvestment zone (TIRZ) bonds	\$3,600,000		\$3,600,000
City operations	\$2,155,532		\$2,155,532
Veterans Memorial	\$200,000	\$900,000	\$1,100,000
Total	\$5,955,532	\$900,000	\$6,855,532
USES			
Traffic study and preliminary design	\$130,000		\$130,000
Planning and engineering	\$420,000		\$420,000
Celebration Plaza	\$880,000		\$880,000
Main Street (pre-TIRZ funding)	\$555,532		\$555,532
Connally Street	\$550,000		\$550,000
Streets surrounding Celebration Plaza	\$2,200,000		\$2,200,000
Street transitions (away from Plaza)	\$400,000		\$400,000
Oak Avenue and Gilmer Street intersection	\$120,000		\$120,000
Veterans Memorial (capital costs)	\$200,000	\$900,000	\$1,100,000
Contingency	\$500,000		\$500,000
Total	\$5,955,532	\$900,000	\$6,855,532

TABLE 2: CAPTURED TIRZ VALUE

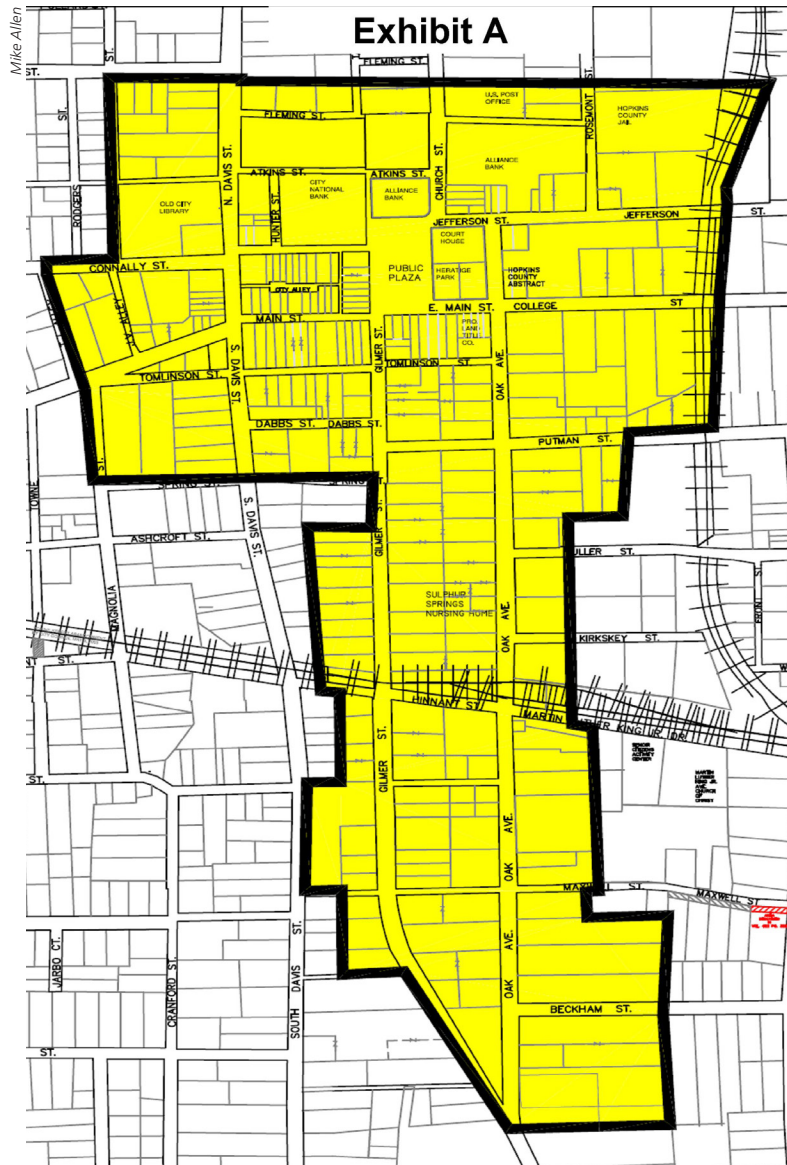
YEAR	CAPTURED VALUE	TAXABLE VALUE	CAPTURED TIRZ REVENUE
2007	\$0	\$14,147,500	0
2008	\$319,210	\$14,466,710	\$3,614
2009	\$1,239,340	\$15,386,840	\$13,101
2010	\$1,747,000	\$15,894,500	\$18,841
2011	\$2,105,830	\$16,253,330	\$22,911
2012	\$2,045,292	\$16,192,792	\$22,394
2013	\$2,554,580	\$16,702,080	\$27,765
2014	\$2,991,310	\$17,138,810	\$34,436
2015	\$3,343,150	\$17,490,650	\$38,894
2016	\$5,209,720	\$19,357,220	\$59,844
2017	\$6,716,800	\$20,864,300	\$76,955
2018	\$7,711,835	\$21,859,335	\$88,051
Total	\$35,984,067	\$205,754,067	\$406,805

anticipated. Overall, however, the TIRZ captured value has risen steadily year over year from under \$400,000 in 2008 to almost \$7,800,000 in 2018. The city claims a total return of over \$35 million. The annual tax base in the TIRZ has risen from \$14 million in 2007 base year to almost \$22 million in 2018.

Funding to continue work on greater downtown and other city street improvements was assisted in 2018 by doubling the number of dollars in funds

invested in city infrastructure and street repairs. Essentially, the city council added a street fee of \$5 per month for households and \$10 to \$12 per month for businesses to support street projects, increasing from 6 to 7 streets per year to 10 to 12 streets of infrastructure improvements.

The fruits of the Veterans Memorial Committee included in-kind donations from the city estimated at over \$250,000, including plumbing for waterfalls,



A tax increment reinvestment zone was established to raise funds for the project.

Exhibit A

power, lighting, security, sidewalks, landscaping, and more. It included the donation of design services valued at \$150,000 by the Dallas architect Don Patterson and a local structural engineer Don Roundtree (who helped manage the memorial construction). The annual Freedom Ball fundraiser attracted over 400 people in its second year (April 2019) to support maintenance of the memorial.

The new wounded warrior memorial received a donation of \$50,000 from Mickey McKenzie, whose family founded the Sulphur Springs-based Grocery Supply Company, to support the creation and installation of the monument. In addition, the World War II bench was recently installed through a gift from the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

PROJECT EVALUATION

The project has changed the attitude of residents towards their city. Sulphur Springs citizens expect something nice rather than mediocre, and they believe they can accomplish things that heretofore were unimaginable. In a short period of time, downtown shifted from 80% vacant to 80% occupied and counting, all the while making downtown a destination when it was once a place to be avoided.

Downtown buildings that once sold for \$15,000 to \$20,000 or less are now worth up to 20-30 times as much according to city staff. There have been no foreclosures since the project started. Downtown is now a catalyst for change in other sites as well; for example, four other east Texas small towns have engaged Lockwood as a consultant, buoyed by the idea that “If they can do it in Sulphur Springs, we can do it here.” With downtown now a destination, the city is attracting new industry, including Armorck, NextLink, Load Trail, My Perfect Pet, JetTribe, Plant Process Fabricators, Diversified Storage Systems, and JB Weld Epoxy, which started in Sulphur Springs and was bought by a Chicago firm that initially planned to move but decided to stay after seeing the city and its new downtown.

The project has increased tax revenue without raising taxes and is projected by the city to begin making the full bond payment within

Marc Maxwell



A surface parking lot was transformed into a vibrant public plaza.

Cindy Roller



Celebration Plaza is a popular venue for local and regional festivals.

five years. Tourism increases are measured by the more than doubled hotel bed taxes received since the project began and by the growth of tax revenues.

The project has also created an inspiring memorial to all the men and women who served in all branches of the armed forces with a special nod to those from Hopkins County who paid the ultimate price.

IMPACT

Increased Vibrancy

Year-round programming including parades and music events add life to downtown and bring business to the new entertainment venues. There is music programmed to offer different types of clientele what they like based on the time of day: one kind of music for downtown visitors during the workday lunch and afternoon, another for an older crowd in the mornings, still another to meet the tastes of the happy hour crowds, and still more variation for the younger population.

There is an eclectic range of retail and entertainment venues downtown developed as a result of the first phase of street and sidewalk redesign but certainly benefiting also from the transformation of the former plaza/parking lot into Celebration Plaza. Several downtown business owners claimed in interviews that their revenues doubled from year one to year two. Members of the Downtown Business Alliance offered that the moment the street infrastructure was in place, they committed to developing their properties, proving Lockwood's assertion that "infrastructure drives outcomes."

New or improved commercial activity on blocks of Main and Connally Streets and the plaza includes the following businesses:

- Auturo's Pizza
- The Bookworm Box
- Brumley's Uniforms
- Burgerland
- Caps & Flasks
- Coffee Off the Square
- The Connally Street Gallery
- The Corner Grub House
- Everything Unique
- Gourmet Kitchen and Company
- Hampton House Jewelry
- Joe's German Restaurant
- John's Potato House
- Landers Creek Outfitters

- Los Mochis
- Magic Scoop General Store and Café
- Main Street Theater
- Margo’s Brush of Class
- Marlene’s Sass and Class
- Merle Norman
- Muddy Jakes
- Phinessé Farms Winery
- Pioneer Café
- Redneck Bar and Grill
- Rooster Roast Coffee Bar
- Secret Garden Shop
- Simply Spoiled
- Sister Babyz Boutique
- The Sushi Guy
- Texas Art & Frame
- Town Square Antiques
- The Venue @ 219

Both banks adjacent to the plaza have worked to landscape and improve their street frontage to boost the vitality of street life. In a comparable way, Hopkins County has sold two buildings on the perimeter of the plaza in order to return them to business use, one to the Chamber of Commerce and one for retail to avoid the appearance of government uses taking over what should be a more active social space on the sidewalk.

Increased Pride

All of this activity and the successful redevelopment of two major streets and the plaza beyond what many thought was possible has helped generate a new sense of pride in the citizens of Sulphur Springs. Once dubbed “Suffering Springs,” it is now proudly referred to as “Celebration City,” and anecdotal accounts tell of mid-career people returning home to care for parents, open new businesses, and take up small family farming. Many business owners and community members compare Sulphur Springs to the fictional town of Mayberry from the 1960s CBS television series *The Andy Griffith Show*—a town that, like Sulphur Springs, evoked nostalgia for family barbecues, freshly baked pies, tolerance for quirky personalities, and the values of small-town life. This nostalgia has attracted new interest from outside the community, and festivals and celebrations on the plaza and new entertainment venues offer further evidence of residents’ feelings of pride.

Developing and Implementing a Vision

The irony of much of this project is that many of those involved in the planning process admit they did not believe the plan outlined in Maxwell’s memo to



Once nearly vacant, downtown is now 80% occupied.



Property investment and values downtown are increasing.



Downtown is now a destination for residents and tourists.



New businesses have opened, including Phinessé Farms Winery.

the mayor would actually be implemented. This included a judge, conservative legal and financial managers serving the city, businesspeople, and everyday citizens who all offered doubts but nonetheless supported the project. Some believed resistance to two-way traffic and narrow streets would stop the work; others believed the parking arrangement put cars too far from the courthouse and people would not walk that far. Others felt the faith-based community would balk at the transition from a dry to “damp” alcohol policy and erode faith in the project’s potential. Persistence, an extensive public process, and evidence-based proposals, however, allowed the project to proceed.

Economic Impact

The \$6.9 million dollar project is demonstrating a consistent rise in tax revenues year over year and created new life downtown. The tourism draw created by Celebration Plaza and events programming has increased hotel occupancy taxes from a low of \$95,000 in 2007 to \$185,000 in 2018. The city brought on line three new hotels in that time frame: a Holiday Inn Express in 2007, a LaQuinta in 2009, and a Hampton Inn in 2010 (all located by the interstate). The city estimates the total private investment catalyzed by the downtown revitalization to be over \$23 million.

Tourism, as measured by hotel stays, is up, and the number of new businesses on Main and Connally Streets as well as around the plaza is growing. Demographic data over the years indicates a reasonable minimum wage and low unemployment. While there is not a lot of eagerness to grow, there is an aspiration for the city and downtown to be better. The citizens want to maintain Sulphur Springs’ small-town flavor and have a downtown that is socially active and vital.

The Sulphur Springs story illustrates that there are small-town revitalization strategies that are not just about manufacturing. Even so, a promising agreement signed between the City of Sulphur Springs and Luminant Mining Company, LLC in October of 2018 proposes to convey 4,901 acres of land for the purposes of reclamation and reuse, including office buildings and maintenance facilities, tank farms, warehouse and warehouse yards, storage, and parking as well as rail sidings.

Increased Understanding of Urban Design

One way to evaluate the project is to see how it married a robust application of best practices in pedestrian-friendly street design and whether it has established precedents that can be applied in the future as the city continues to improve. The design of the memorial, the lawn, and the relocation of the parking from the surface lot to on-street parking has both freed up the site for more activity and enabled the memorial to embrace the whole site without forcing it to be just about the memorial. In quiet times when there is no programmed activity, the whole site is read as memorial; during active times, the memorial is experienced with the full life and vitality of the programs in the plaza with music, the laughter of children, the smell of good food, the visual excitement of quilts and the farmers market, etc. It places the memorial and the veterans it remembers in the context of the life of downtown.

Further evidence of the learning generated by the project is that Lockwood has consulted with several nearby towns including Denison, Commerce, Emory, and Paris, all of which are eager to take advantage of the success of Sulphur Springs to improve their own downtowns. He has also convinced the Texas Department of Transportation of the importance of slower and shorter trips within cities being prioritized over longer and faster trips through cities. He has demonstrated the increase in the vibrancy and economic viability of a town or city when streets are thought of this way. Traffic calming through skinny streets, wide sidewalks, angled parking, two-way streets, no curbs near the plazas, and even, in some conditions, no traffic lights have all created a precedent in Texas without any negative consequences to traffic flow or safety. Given how deserted downtown was and how lively it is now, it may seem surprising that there are no spikes in pedestrian-car accident statistics, but the traffic-calming measures require drivers to pay more attention to their surroundings, making the streets safer for pedestrians and drivers alike.

Downtown Revitalization as Catalyst

There are indications that the new investments around City Hall, Backstory Brewery, and the planned greenway are evidence of an interest in new development. Much of the rest of the area closer to and in downtown is still challenged with aging housing stock, poor infrastructure, and low levels of investment.



Investment includes newly constructed housing downtown.



Property owners are improving existing buildings.



Community partners aligned around a shared vision and core values.



Past and present city council members participated in the planning process.

OBSERVATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

In this project, the lessons learned are both obvious and worth restating. It was a “simple” project focused on very basic ideas. It embodied an appreciation for how important it is to build partnerships, to lead, and to focus on core values in project execution. All of this is clearly dependent on evidence-based design strategies that come from a rich understanding of what it takes to build vibrant places for people and to not allow transportation and parking systems to disrupt the opportunity for human interaction and public spaces.

The Value of Partnerships

It is likely the Sulphur Springs Downtown revitalization project would not have happened without the city and county partnership. Both entities shared land ownership at the beginning but not very much else as common ground. They disagreed about the primacy of parking on the plaza, about the approach to traffic calming that was being proposed, and about the importance of the paired one-way street pass-through for State Highway 154 through downtown and along the plaza. The Business Alliance and the Veterans Memorial Committee were more aligned with the county view than the city, and there were disagreements among city council members. But all agreed that if they were going to get past the “Suffering Springs” nickname and be able to claim that “Sulphur Springs is the best small city in Texas for raising a family, celebrating life, and doing business” (from their 2017 draft comprehensive plan), they were going to have to work together. They did and found some areas to compromise (how much and what kind of parking?), and some to test (how narrow can the two-way Main Street be and how wide can the sidewalks be?), and some to simply avoid (back-in diagonal parking around the plaza).

Starting with Chris Brown in 2005, mayoral leadership put out a bold charge: “It is time to do something about downtown.” Then, in one-year term successions, mayors continued to support and engage. The city manager took up the challenge, stayed strong, and was competent enough to know that he did not know what he did not know. He failed, sought help, got great help, and learned from all of it while “taking it on the chin,” according to his new partners in the business community, the city council, and the county. He learned the importance of engaging the public in all its forms, local



The City of Sulphur Springs has received local and national recognition for its downtown renewal.

Cindy Rolfer



Sulphur Springs is now referred to as "Celebration City."

businesses, community organizations, county officials, city officials, and the Texas Department of Transportation early on and throughout the process.

Focusing on Values and Vision

Including community values and what is important historically and culturally in design helps identify what is essential. It facilitates decision-making and implementation down the road. This project is best described as one that required careful listening about the importance of the Veterans Memorial, the desire for a vibrant downtown, and the pride citizens wanted to feel in their city. It accomplished this in spite of (or perhaps because of) what many initially believed could not be accomplished. To their credit, they gave it a try, and by most accounts from the partners, are glad they did.

During the Texas Municipal League 104th Annual Conference and Exhibition at the Austin Convention Center on October 4-7, the City of Sulphur Springs was presented the 2016 Municipal Excellence Award in the City Spirit category for cities under 25,000 in population. The award recognizes the city for the downtown Celebration District. Less than 10 years ago, the City of Sulphur Spring's downtown district suffered from high vacancy rates. According to the press release announcing the award on October 3, 2016, the district has transformed into a bustling center of economic and social activity through thoughtful design, vision, and investment.

In 2016, the Texas Downtown Association presented the Susan H. Campbell Award for downtown vision to Marc Maxwell for his part in the revitalization of Downtown Sulphur Springs. Maxwell is quick to point out he did not do this alone, yielding significant credit to the leadership of the city and county he served, to the consultant team he worked with, to his staff, and to the Veterans Memorial Committee who together helped merge their vision with a still larger public vision of what the plaza could be and make that vision a reality.

MEETING PROJECT GOALS

GOAL: Maximize social and economic engagement in downtown.

The successful programming of the plaza with some 150 events per year and the increase in the number of retail and restaurant businesses and above-the-store residential space suggests this goal has been met.

GOAL: Develop a 100-year vision through a planning process that engages local residents and businesses.

The long-term vision called for in the initial memo from Maxwell to the mayor is now codified in the downtown revitalization plan completed in 2017. The first two phases involving Main and Connally Streets and the plaza were completed in 2013 and codified in the *City of Sulphur Springs Tax Increment Finance Zone #1 Downtown Revitalization Project and Financing Plan*, which is in play through 2041. While not really 100 years, the planning does provide a direction and vision for the city that will set the tone for prosperity well into the future.

GOAL: Identify the community values to be reflected in the 100-year plan.

The project has invited people to come back downtown and do business in a pedestrian-friendly environment that is entertainment rich. Conflicts over parking, one-way streets, back-in parking, narrow streets, and wide sidewalks were all overcome without key partners walking away. Members of the community were respectful of the Veterans Memorial and focused on the fun and opportunities for connection offered by the game tables and ground-mounted chess and checker boards, the fountain, and the festivals and performance events. There is, concurrently, a respect for the history of the former plaza and the courthouse, celebrated with a careful vista to and from the courthouse and the memorial. And there is, of course, the aspiration to make all this self-sufficient, sustaining business viability and a tax base that enables the city to best serve its citizens.

GOAL: Focus on improving the public realm to foster social and economic exchange and development.

The project employs best practices in the new urbanist tool kit and what Lockwood calls “traditional” town-planning values. It privileges pedestrians over cars and the experience of people in the city on destination trips to downtown over fast through traffic on one-way streets. In a fundamental way, it is about beauty, scale, and making places that invite commerce, social interaction, and delight.

SELECTION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

The Selection Committee recognized Sulphur Springs Downtown as a powerful example of a grassroots approach to government innovation and leadership. The project turned around a struggling downtown through the use of basic urban design, traffic-calming measures, and walkable street principles. The committee agreed that it provides a valuable model for other small towns in Texas and across America, especially where businesses and new development have shifted away from downtown to the outer edges along bypasses and highways.

The committee was impressed by the public sector’s role in driving the planning and implementation of Sulphur Springs Downtown (it is the only government-led initiative among the five RBA winners this cycle). The committee saw the project as a good example of government innovation that highlights the involvement of city workers in aspects of its development and implementation and praised the city manager as an “entrepreneurial bureaucrat.” They agreed that the idea of developing a long-range, 100-year vision was unusual in government-led development and suggested that the project could provide a road map for other municipally driven revitalization efforts.

The committee observed the combination of uses and events that take place within Celebration Plaza, noting that it manages to work, despite the contemplative nature of the memorial and wide variety of activities associated with events and festivals. They asked about the mix of downtown businesses and whether there were services, like a hardware store. One committee member observed that as more people in America do their shopping online and in suburban areas, many downtowns are becoming “jewel boxes,” occupied by upscale housing, retail, and restaurants, rather than offering services that respond to day-to-day needs. Although the number of special events held downtown was impressive, the committee wondered whether 150 was too much and if the space was working if so much programming was needed. At the same time, the committee recognized the wide range of events that are offered and the difference between one-time festival events and the plaza’s regular farmers market, movie night, and concert venues.

“Sulphur Springs Downtown elevates what is possible, providing inspiration for other cities, especially small towns in America.”

Some committee members felt that the design would have benefited from more attention to the quality of green space and less to parking. They noted the symbolic importance of the courthouse and suggested that the design of Celebration Plaza should have done more to respond to the building’s entry. The committee also highlighted the need for shared ownership of the project, especially given the critical role of the city manager in its creation and implementation.

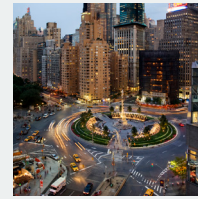
Although they appreciated the attention to urban design, committee members agreed that other, better examples of downtown plaza design exist. Even so, they agreed that Sulphur Springs Downtown elevates what is possible, providing inspiration for other cities, especially for small towns in America.



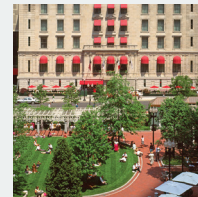
Sulphur Springs Downtown illustrates how public realm improvements can help to attract people and investment to rural urban centers.

RELATED RBA WINNERS

Several RBA winners have been “come back” stories that addressed areas of disinvestment or improvements to the public realm of their community. Like Sulphur Springs Downtown, they have included investments in alternative approaches to parking and vehicular and pedestrian circulation.



COLUMBUS CIRCLE PUBLIC PLAZA in New York City (2007 Silver Medalist) is an artful resolution to a complex traffic configuration on the southwest corner of Central Park. Improved pedestrian circulation, including a new traffic circle with a park and fountain in the center, transformed a dangerous and ugly traffic island into a beautiful urban public space.



The PARK AT POST OFFICE SQUARE in Boston (1993 Silver Medalist) replaced a 1954 parking garage in poor condition with a new public park atop a seven-story below-ground parking facility. The four-acre plaza and parking structure were completed entirely with private-sector funds, and revenues from the garage underwrite maintenance of the park.



LOWERTOWN, in Saint Paul, Minnesota (1995 Silver Medalist) includes the redevelopment of a historic warehouse area into a mixed-use neighborhood with artist live/work space, housing, offices, retail, and entertainment venues. The approach, which incorporated streetscape improvements and new and renovated parks, became a model for other cities.

Other related RBA winners that involve the revitalization of urban centers via public realm and transit infrastructure improvements include Santa Fe Railyard in Santa Fe, New Mexico (2011 Silver Medalist); Downtown Silver Spring in Silver Spring, Maryland (2005 Silver Medalist); and Roslindale Village Main Street in Boston (1991 Silver Medalist).

More information about these and other RBA winners can be found at www.rudybruneraward.org.

Resources

This report was compiled from information gathered from the project application; an extensive site visit by Simeon Bruner, Anne-Marie Lubenau, and Robert Shibley (lead author) in April 2019; and research and interviews conducted during those processes and throughout the writing of this report. Titles and positions of interviewees and URLs listed below were effective as of the site visit unless otherwise noted.

INTERVIEWS

Bank Officials

- **Dwight Bell**, President, Texas Heritage Bank
- **Ricky Reynolds**, President, City National Bank
- **Craig Roberts**, President, Guaranty Bank

Chamber of Commerce

- **Kim Beck**, Board Member
- **Lezley Brown**, President
- **Butch Burney**, Board Member
- **Meredith Caddell**, former President

Downtown Business Owners, Building Owners, and Residents

- **Bethany Ashby**, building owner
- **Lara Colby**, Magic Scoop Ice Cream Shop and Celebration Antiques, Inc.
- **Marlene DeYoung**, Marlene's Sass & Class
- **John Heilman**, building owner
- **Scott Keys**, Muddy Jakes, and former publisher, *The Sulphur Springs News-Telegram*
- **Art Kunzman**, Arturo's Woodfired Pizza
- **Billie Ruth Standbridge**, President, Downtown Business Alliance, building owner, and resident
- **David and Myra Watson**, building owners and residents
- **Ben Whillock**, BackStory Brewery
- **Phil and Vanessa Williams**, Phinessé Farms Winery

Hopkins County and City of Sulphur Springs

- **Oscar Aguilar**, former member, Sulphur Springs City Council
- **Mickey Barker**, Commissioner, Hopkins County
- **Chris Brown**, Executive Director, Ark-Tex Council of Governments (former Sulphur Springs mayor and Hopkins County judge)
- **Danny Davis**, Treasurer, Hopkins County
- **Emily Glass**, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Sulphur Springs (and downtown building owner)
- **Judge Robert Newsom**, Judge, Hopkins County
- **Russ Nuss**, Public Works, City of Sulphur Springs
- **John Sellers**, Mayor, City of Sulphur Springs and County Historian
- **Gary Spraggins**, former member, Sulphur Springs City Council

Hopkins County Veterans Memorial Committee

- **Tommy Allison**, member
- **Pam Elliot**, member
- **Clayton McGraw**, member

Nearby Municipalities

- **Donna Dow**, Main Street Director, City of Denison
- **Jud Rex**, City Manager, City of Denison
- **Wyman Williams**, Mayor, City of Commerce

Press and Media

- **Kerry Craig**, Reporter, *The Sulphur Springs News-Telegram*
- **Dave Kirkpatrick**, Reporter, Media Radio
- **Jimmy Rogers**, News Director, KFBZ Television

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This is an excerpt of:

Changing the Narrative

The 2019 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence



**RUDY
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FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE

BRUNER FOUNDATION, INC.

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Edited by Elizabeth Chesla, MA

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020910092
ISBN: 978-0-578-70196-7

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130 Prospect Street
Cambridge, MA 02139
www.brunerfoundation.org

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