# Community Design

*A welcoming community with small town character
and unique identity*

## GOAL:

Emphasize community branding and activities that protect, celebrate and promote local culture, history, businesses, residents, and schools.

## Policy Statements:

**1**    **Intentional Community Design:** *Royse City will promote and incorporate unique, functional community design components within new developments, public spaces, and streetscapes to enrich areas throughout the city, create distinctive character, and ensure a citywide pedestrian-friendly environment.*

**2**    **"All-In" on Downtown/Main Street:** *Royse City's highest priority will be to make Main Street and the surrounding area a vibrant town center that is the core of the economic and social life of our community, a center of civic, entertainment, and cultural activities, and the focus of our community's identity and branding efforts.*

**3**    **A Unique and Special Brand:** *Royse City will collaborate with the Community Development Corporation (CDC), Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Program and other partners develop a cohesive, unique branding message and materials that aggressively promotes the town's commitment to small town character, complete neighborhoods, people-oriented design, cultivation of entrepreneurs and local business, and family-friendly activities.*

**4**    **Activities and Events:** *Royse City will organize and implement a robust program of events and activities that promotes, celebrates, and protects the town's local character, history, businesses, residents, schools, and neighborhoods to enhance quality of life and enrich community culture.*

> *"The future of thriving and resilient cities will not be led by innovations around infrastructure and services, but by building the capacity of communities to drive their own shared value. The focus of government can be not just delivering better places to live, but building capacity for communities to preserve and create their shared wealth in the public realm."*

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### EVOLVING DEVELOPMENT



PLACE CAPITAL

Place-led
Place-sensitive
Discipline-led
Project-driven

EVOLUTION OF DEVELOPMENT

## Introduction

A majority of residents said that maintaining the small-town character of our community is important. We want to grow, but we aim to do so in a manner that protects the cultural and natural assets of our town; supports the strong network of relationships that are present in our schools, churches, and local business community; and provides neighborhoods that are attractive and affordable for multiple generations of families to live, learn, work, play, worship, and retire. We want Royse City to be a special and unique place.

To accomplish this, we must shift from a "project-driven" development approach to a "place-led" approach, where we focus on defining and creating the type of places we want and focus development and project investments to strengthen and grow them over time.

Details in street and signage design, the style and relationship of buildings to each other, the amount of tree canopy, the type and location of businesses, and quality of public spaces all contribute to the look and feel of a community. How the city's elected officials, staff, citizens and businesses communicate and collaborate to support each other and promote the community externally are also critical to the city's image. **The Community Design pillar focuses on the design, branding, and programming details that must be integrated in everything the city does in order to create thriving, prosperous neighborhoods and make Royse City the special place we know it can be.**

## What We've Heard from Residents
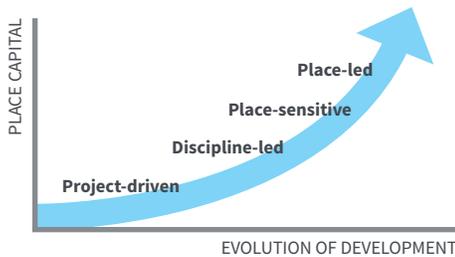
*"The city was built on the railroad system and should be promoted as such. This would make us unique in this area."*

*"We need more unusual attractions like wineries, breweries—things to draw people into town."*

*"I wish there were places to go eat with a patio! Or concerts on Main Street. Live music, food, drinks in the evening. A relaxing event, not so much focus on selling products. The 'pumpkin patch' area has so much potential when it is not a pumpkin patch. Would love to sit there under ambient lighting listening to a band with a drink in my hand!"*

*"We need more public events. Public Events promote a sense of pride and togetherness within the community."*

*"Royse City is all about real relationships. We need to protect that."*

*"Small city with big heart."*

*"Our city is prepared for growth but not at the expense of losing what makes Royse City great—Main Street."*

*"I love the fact that our town that I've lived in for 39 years is growing, but still has the feel of a small town! I love that our Mayor cares and gets involved along with our City Council. I like the fact that when I have a problem our City Manager gets on it immediately! I love that our town loves big, and gives back to those in need, and we take care of the ones that fight for us!"*

*"I like knowing my neighbors and local business owners. I like knowing who I'm living close to and where I'm spending my dollars."*

## MAKING SURE WE DON'T TURN INTO ANYWHERE, U.S.A.

If we do not make an intentional effort to make our community look and feel different, we will likely end up looking like just about every other suburb in North Texas. Incorporating unique, themed elements into the design of our community's roadway corridors, public spaces, neighborhoods, buildings and signage will help us to stand out from the crowd.

This community-wide branding starts by developing a unique and special brand that represents the history and culture of our town, but that can also serve as a magnet to attract the types of businesses, residents and visitors we want. Feedback received throughout the planning process indicated that a historic railroad town theme would be appropriate. Communication and marketing materials, streetscape, signage, event programming, and even to an extent, businesses in the Town Center area should be developed to fully commit to this theme, and do so to a level that makes Royse City a regional draw at certain times throughout the year. We have some excellent cultural assets, local businesses and event programming in our Main Street to build on as we look to enhance and expand our brand to a broader audience.

A good example of this is Grapevine, Texas. Downtown Grapevine has a vintage railroad station and rail-themed events at certain times of year, such as Thomas the Train and Polar Express. Adjacent to the station are artisan-type businesses such as leather working and glass blowing, which blend into local antique shops, boutique stores, coffee shops and restaurants up and down Main Street. Finally, the city hosts regular events in the downtown that are themed around a combination of wine, music and history. These destinations and events draw crowds from throughout North Texas, while providing entertainment, shopping and recreation opportunities for local residents.

*The cause of public space and place has fallen between the cracks of disparate disciplines and social movements. More than a competing cause, a focus on place can be a means through which we coalesce, and more fundamentally address, otherwise disparate causes.*

**Project for Public Spaces**
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*Downtown Grapevine embraces its historic rail location.*



THE BENEFITS OF
GREAT PLACES

+ Visually pleasing
+ Generally stimulating
+ Sense of belonging
+ Greater security
+ Better environmental quality
+ Feeling of freedom

+ More walkable
+ Safe for pedestrians and bicyclists
+ Compatible with public transit
+ Reduces need for cars and parking
+ More efficient use of time and money
+ Greater connections between uses

+ Greater community organization
+ Sense of pride and volunteerism
+ Perpetuation of integrity and values
+ Less need for municipal control
+ Self-managing

+ Small-scale entrepreneurship
+ Economic development
+ Higher real estate values
+ Local ownership, local value
+ More desirable jobs
+ Greater tax revenue
+ Less need for municipal services

PROMOTES SENSE OF COMFORT

CREATES IMPROVED ACCESSIBILITY

NURTURES & DEFINES SENSE OF COMMUNITY

PLACE

BUILDS & SUPPORTS THE LOCAL ECONOMY

PROMOTES HEALTH

SOCIAL INTERACTION

+ Increased physical activity
+ Access to fresh food
+ Greater security
+ Greater social inclusion
+ Enhanced environmental health

+ Improves sociability
+ More cultural exposure, interaction
+ Draws a diverse population
+ More women, elderly, children
+ Greater ethnic/cultural pluralism
+ Encourages community creativity

PROJECT FOR
PUBLIC
SPACES

## BRANDED CORRIDORS AND GATEWAYS

One of the key ways people experience our community is by driving through it. We want our community to stand out whether it's a family making a road trip on Interstate 30 between Arkansas and west Texas, a potential resident driving around town with their realtor, or someone from a neighboring community who works in Royse City or visits our area regularly. Streetscape, signage, lighting and landscaping in key corridors and gateways throughout our town need to be designed to reflect our brand and make it easy to tell when you're in Royse City.

## NEIGHBORHOODS THAT ENCOURAGE PERSONAL INTERACTION

It is also important to emphasize the close-knit relationships found in our town and preserve those through how we design and build future neighborhoods and activities we encourage residents to implement such as block parties and organized neighborhood improvement projects. The increasing demand for walkable traditional neighborhoods bodes well for us in this regard. We have an opportunity to build some new neighborhoods that hearken back to pre-1950s style with a diverse mix of architecture and building types, front porches and narrower streets. These neighborhoods naturally create and support more neighbor interaction and will be attractive in the regional marketplace, which is dominated by modern suburban style residential development.

# Town Center Focus Area

Many of the issues, opportunities and priority projects identified during the assessment phase are related to the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods – commonly referred to today as the "Heritage District". As a direct result of this input, aspects of each Planning Pillar and many of the priority action items are connected to this area. The purpose of this chapter is to provide additional direction for how to apply the guiding principles and policies to implement recommendations within the proposed Town Center and surrounding neighborhoods.

## STATE HIGHWAY 66

State Highway 66 (SH 66) is a TxDOT corridor that carries a significant amount of traffic through downtown. The two-way traffic and four-way stop conditions along Main Street keep speeds down, which is good, but the high volume of trucks makes it difficult to provide an environment that is comfortable and attractive to pedestrians. The city, county and TxDOT have been working together to evaluate options to accommodate projected future increases in traffic, one of which is converting SH 66 to a couplet using Main Street for eastbound traffic and either Burton or Church for westbound. The design of SH 66 through downtown will have an enormous impact on the look and feel of the area, so it is critical to get right.

## CONDITION AND OWNERSHIP OF EXISTING BUILDINGS

Many of the existing buildings along Main Street are old and require significant repairs and improvements in order to meet current codes. Some business owners who own their buildings have invested in repairs, but buildings that are being leased out are not being maintained. Programs to incentivize improvements or replacement of buildings and transitioning them to local ownership should be explored. Another option would be for the city to purchase and consolidate properties and then make them available to developers for purchase and redevelopment.

## HISTORIC/CULTURAL ASSETS

There are several historic properties and buildings that contribute to the cultural identity of Royse City and should be incorporated into the branding of the Town Center. The granary, lumber yard, and calaboose, for example, all sit right on the railroad; these could form the foundation for a historic railroad town theme. The



*Main Street*



*Granary*



*Historic Royse City Calaboose*



*Wood Street*

Royse House is also located in the vicinity, but the structure is in poor condition and would be costly to preserve.

### ADJACENT RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

The existing neighborhoods to the north and south of downtown were constructed in the traditional development pattern of narrower streets and smaller lots laid out in a grid. These types of neighborhoods are growing in demand, especially those that are in close proximity to daily needs, restaurants and entertainment. The streets and utilities are some of the oldest in Royse City and are in need of repair, but at the same time, improving the infrastructure in these areas will likely generate a dramatic rise in property values and lead to an increase in infill and redevelopment activity.

### CITY LAKE PARK

City Lake Park is currently the largest park in Royse City and conveniently located near the Town Center and surrounding neighborhoods. Some of the city's more popular events are held here, but maintenance, accessibility and additional parking are issues that need to be addressed. The daily use and economic impact of the park could be improved by providing a prominent connection through the existing neighborhood to the south and into the Town Center.

### PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT (ACCESS, TREES, LIGHTING, WAYFINDING)

For the Town Center to achieve its full potential, the pedestrian environment must be improved. Existing sidewalks in front of businesses are not wide or shaded enough to provide comfortable gathering spaces for outdoor dining and interaction, and the crosswalks at the Main, Elm and Arch intersections are not well painted. The network of sidewalks throughout the downtown and into surrounding neighborhoods is sporadic, and there are no bike lanes. Improving signage and lighting would address citizens' concerns about wayfinding and safety, especially at night.

### MUNICIPAL FACILITIES AND CITY-OWNED PROPERTIES

The City Hall, Library, Chamber/CDC office, Fire Station, Police Station, and Post Office are all located in the Town Center. The City also owns a few properties in the area, including a vacant lot on Main Street that is being converted into a public pocket park. Staff indicated that their preference is to keep City Hall in its current location, but additional space will be required in the future.

### DRAINAGE AND UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

A lack of drainage facilities and undersized, aging water and sewer systems will impact the rate and quality of development in downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. Before significant investments are made by the city or private entities, it will be important to evaluate future needs and identify locations where open space and underground lines need to be located and upsized. Investing some resources to study these areas in the near-term will enable the city to negotiate mutually beneficial agreements with developers and maximize the productivity of land, open spaces, easements and pipes.

### RAILROAD

The railroad presents challenges and opportunities. It is a physical barrier between the downtown area and the neighborhood to the south that involves special requirements in order to cross. On the positive side, the railroad could be utilized to develop a unique business/entertainment district, especially if a two-way "vintage recreational route" could be established like what is currently run between Grapevine/Fort Worth and Rusk/Palestine The right-of-way adjacent to the railroad can be used for temporary parking, but might also be used for a multipurpose trail connecting to Fate/Rockwall to the west and east to future development around 2642.


City Lake Park


Main Street


City Hall


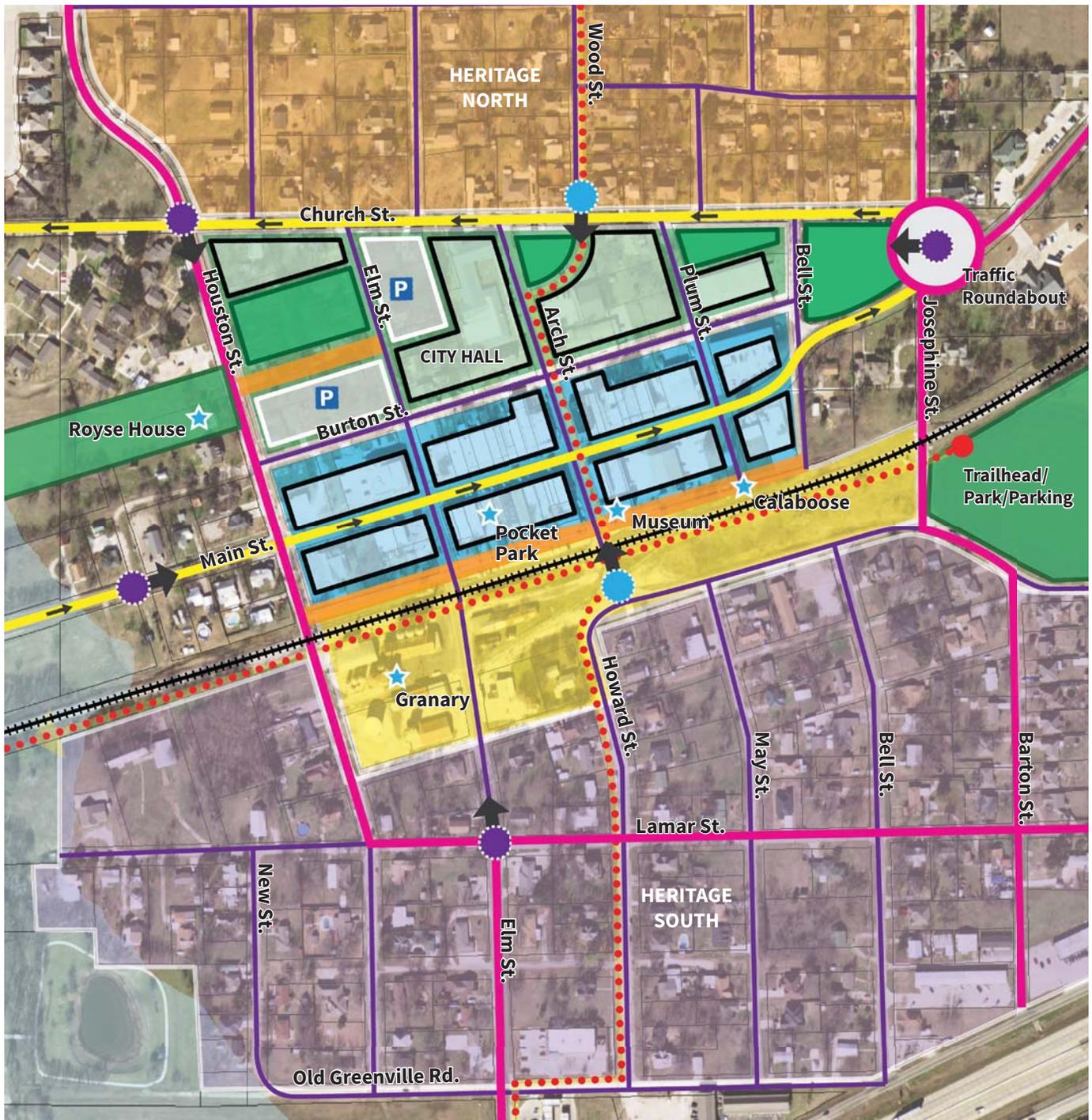Rail corridor, south of Main Street

## Town Center Recommendations

Royse City has a tremendous asset in its historic Main Street and town center area. Historically, this is our city's commercial and cultural heart, and today it represents one of our best opportunities to spur focused economic activity and civic involvement.

The following are recommendations for improving the experience in Royse City's town center:

**A** Create a bike and pedestrian path along Wood Street to create a convenient connection between Main Street and Citylake Park.

**B** Establish Main Street and Church Street as low-speed "complete streets" with bike paths, on-street parking, and wide sidewalks to encourage greater pedestrian activity.

**C** Close off Arch Street to vehicle traffic so it can serve as a primary pedestrian corridor.

**D** Conduct drainage and utility master plans for the town center area.

**E** In the immediate term, use wide street rights-of-way (ROW) in the town center to paint on-street parking and bike lanes, and create space for pop-up parklets and vendor booths.

**F** Create a plan for City Hall expansion and purchase ROW for an additional building (or altogether new City Hall) and parking. The purchased property can begin as a parking lot, and later evolve into a structure if and when the town center is generating enough activity.

**G** Use the pocket park space on Main Street to feature downtown businesses, local entrepreneurs, and artists.

**H** Use tactical events to evaluate different options and uses for the space between the railroad tracks and existing businesses fronting Main Street.

**I** Highlight the historic importance of the city's location along the railroad by promoting the vintage railroad concept as a theme in the town center.

**J** Establish themed districts around town center, each with its own coherent character and identity.

**K** Improve wayfinding and lighting in town center.

**L** Develop a program for the City and the Economic Development Corporation to support efforts to purchase and improve existing buildings in town center.

# Town Center Concept Plan



**LEGEND**

**Sub-districts**

| | |
|---|---|
| ▢ | Civic Center |
| ▢ | Main Street |
| ▢ | Rail-oriented development |
| ▢ | Heritage South |
| ▢ | Heritage North |

| | |
|---|---|
| ⬤➤ | Gateway (vehicle traffic) |
| ⬤➤ | Gateway (pedestrian) |
| ★ | Point of interest |
| ▢ | Building |
| 🅿 | Parking |
| ▢ | Public green space |

**Corridors**

| | |
|---|---|
| ➤ | S.H. 66 couplet |
| ▬ | Traffic corridor (street section B*) |
| ▬ | Interior street (street section C*) |
| ▬ | Pedestrian corridor |
| •••• | Trail |

*See Mobility chapter for street sections

*Downtown McKinney's pedestrian-friendly setting is a year-round regional tourism magnet.*


*Custom-painted crosswalks can add a dose of local character to otherwise unremarkable places.*


*Utility box murals have become a popular way of incorporating local art into everyday life.*

# Policies and Priority Action Items

The following policy statements will be used to guide decisions related to community design, branding and event programming. The priority action items are what the city should focus on in the next few years in order to get the big things right.

**1**

## Intentional Community Design

*Royse City will promote and incorporate unique, functional community design components within new developments, public spaces, and streetscapes to enrich areas throughout the city, create distinctive character, and ensure a citywide pedestrian-friendly environment.*

### Priority Action Items

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Incorporate unique, citizen-led efforts to integrate art and local flavor into downtown and certain neighborhoods. |
| 2 | Review and update zoning ordinance, building codes and design guidelines (every five years) to ensure alignment with the city's most recent vision and priorities. |
| 3 | Evaluate and make revisions to parking regulations to ensure a balance between the needs of various transportation options, creating good community form, and maximizing fiscal productivity of development. |
| 4 | Create "Corridor Design Guidelines" to identify unique gateway, streetscape and signage themes for the I-30 and SH 66 corridors, the Town Center area, and the city's major arterials and intersections. |
| 5 | Develop streetscape design standards that include tree plantings, lighting, street furniture, and wayfinding guides to enhance the pedestrian environment. |
| 6 | Evaluate and create incentives to relocate overhead utilities underground for new development and redevelopment projects. |

**2**

## "All-In" on Downtown/Main Street

*Royse City's highest priority will be to make Main Street and the surrounding area a vibrant town center that is the core of the economic and social life of our community, a center of civic, entertainment, and cultural activities, and the focus of our community's identity and branding efforts.*

### Priority Action Items

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Utilize Wood Street Reconstruction project to establish pedestrian and cycling connection between downtown and City Lake Park, create framework for revitalization of the neighborhood and establish precedent for citizen engagement in future projects. |
| 2 | Coordinate with TxDOT to get SH66 routed around downtown (or if that's not possible, a slow-speed design for a couplet on Main and Church). |

| | |
|---|---|
| 3 | Establish Main Street and Church Street as low-speed "complete streets" with on-street parking, wide sidewalks and separated bike lanes to encourage higher pedestrian safety and activity. |
| 4 | Create a simple Striping and Wayfinding Plan for downtown and utilize tactical urbanism methods to paint on-street parking spaces, bike lanes and crosswalks and add wayfinding signage in the area. |
| 5 | Create a form-based code for Town Center to guide development in the area that combines information from the Town Center Place Type, current Heritage District Guidelines and the Town Center Focus Area findings and recommendations in this plan. |
| 6 | Utilize tactical projects and pop-up events to shift downtown events from Main Street to Arch Street, which will help extend the downtown environment and begin to establish Arch Street as the primary pedestrian corridor in downtown. |
| 7 | Utilize tactical projects and pop-up events to evaluate options and uses for the space between the railroad tracks and existing businesses on south side of Main Street. |
| 8 | Identify properties in the Town Center that may serve as catalysts for redevelopment and develop activation strategies for each of them. |
| 9 | Develop program to allow small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs to utilize vacant buildings/storefronts downtown to test out ideas |
| 10 | Implement a program to aggressively support the renovation or replacement of existing buildings in Town Center that do not meet acceptable code levels. |
| 11 | Complete the design and buildout of the downtown pocket park. |
| 12 | Improve pedestrian environment in Town Center by adding wayfinding/signage, lighting and additional tree canopy/shade structures. |



*Main Street, Royse City*



*Downtown events like the annual Main Street Car Show are a popular draw for residents of both Royse City and the broader region.*



*Duncan Switch Street Market in Duncanville, TX*

**3**

## A Unique and Special Brand

*Royse City will collaborate with the Community Development Corporation (CDC), Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Program and other partners develop a cohesive, unique branding message and materials that aggressively promotes the town's commitment to small town character, complete neighborhoods, people-oriented design, cultivation of entrepreneurs and local business, and family-friendly activities.*

**Priority Action Items**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Look into establishing a vintage railroad station and recreational route between Greenville or Sulphur Springs (similar to Grapevine-Fort Worth and Palestine-Rusk routes) and build development identity and event programming around it. |
| 2 | Update brand, logo, websites, and marketing materials for the City, Chamber, CDC, and downtown/Main Street organizations to reflect the themes and priorities outlined in this Plan. |
| 4 | Develop and implement a social media marketing campaign that utilizes social media channels to promote projects and stories from elected officials, staff, residents and businesses. |

| **Priority Action Items** | |
|---|---|
| 5 | Make a promotional video featuring current downtown businesses, community events, schools and neighborhood activities. |
| 6 | Emphasize traditional neighborhood development as a centerpiece of Royse City's identity. |

**4**

## Activities and Events

*Royse City will organize and implement a robust program of events and activities that promotes, celebrates, and protects the town's local character, history, businesses, residents, schools, and neighborhoods to enhance quality of life and enrich community culture.*

| **Priority Action Items** | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Utilize downtown "pocket park" space to host regular pop-up events to promote existing businesses, aspiring entrepreneurs and local entertainers and artists. |
| 2 | Plan regularly scheduled programming that caters to a wide variety of residents of the city and surrounding communities. |
| 3 | Organize tactical improvement and resident networking events in existing neighborhoods, such as tree planting, crosswalk painting and "street art", community gardens, property maintenance days, and block parties. |
| 4 | Incorporate music and art into Town Center businesses and events |