



AT A GLANCE

4 LOCAL
HISTORIC
DISTRICTS

85 LOCAL
HISTORIC
LANDMARKS

12 PLACES
ON THE NATIONAL
REGISTER

2 NATIONAL
HISTORIC
DISTRICTS



URBAN DESIGN AND CULTURAL, HERITAGE AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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EXISTING CONDITIONS

URBAN DESIGN AND CULTURAL, HERITAGE AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

New Braunfels' architecture and urban form are powerful reflections of the community's identity. Its collection of iconic buildings and public spaces tell the story of the community's rich and diverse heritage, and form the backbone of a unique and special place. In addition to making New Braunfels a vibrant, attractive place to live, these resources contribute to the community's special appeal for visitors and tourists from around the world. To enhance New Braunfels' future requires maintaining its architectural and cultural past.

As the community grows and transforms, it will be critical both to preserve the history enshrined in New Braunfels' architecture, and to find ways of incorporating that history into new development. This chapter provides a baseline for New Braunfels' historic architectural and cultural assets, establishing these resources as foundational elements of the community's vision for its future.

The Urban Design and Cultural, Heritage and Historic Preservation Plan Element focuses on New Braunfels' urban form, the built environment and its impact on public health, architectural design, the arts and public art, and historic preservation. This element nurtures the community's unique history, ensuring its rich and diverse cultural heritage is preserved.



URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

Broadly, New Braunfels' urban design falls into four typologies.

Downtown New Braunfels and Gruene feature compact, walkable layouts typical of historic central business districts traditionally seen in other communities throughout the state. Anchored by main streets, these downtown areas are flanked by older residential neighborhoods that tend to follow gridded road alignments.

Lining the segments of Interstate Highway 35 (and its frontage roads) that pass through New Braunfels are primarily conventional commercial and strip retail development patterns. This type of urban form is geared toward the automobile with larger roads and ample parking amenities.

Moving generally northwest of downtown New Braunfels, north of Gruene and south of Interstate Highway 35, the urban form transitions to a residential suburban one. This typology typically features larger lots with detached single family homes on curvilinear surface streets.

However, newer developments like the Cotton Crossing/Gruene Lake Village development, Towncreek and the currently unbuilt Veramendi project blend this type of residential development with elements of the historic downtown typology. In addition to combining a mix of housing types, including single-family homes, row houses and apartments, this "new urbanist" type of development blends residential uses with retail and office uses within a neighborhood. The new urbanist projects in New Braunfels and elsewhere also typically integrate parks and open space with other land uses.



A two-dimensional map or "figure-ground" diagram of New Braunfels illustrates relationships between buildings (black) and unbuilt space (white).

DOWNTOWN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

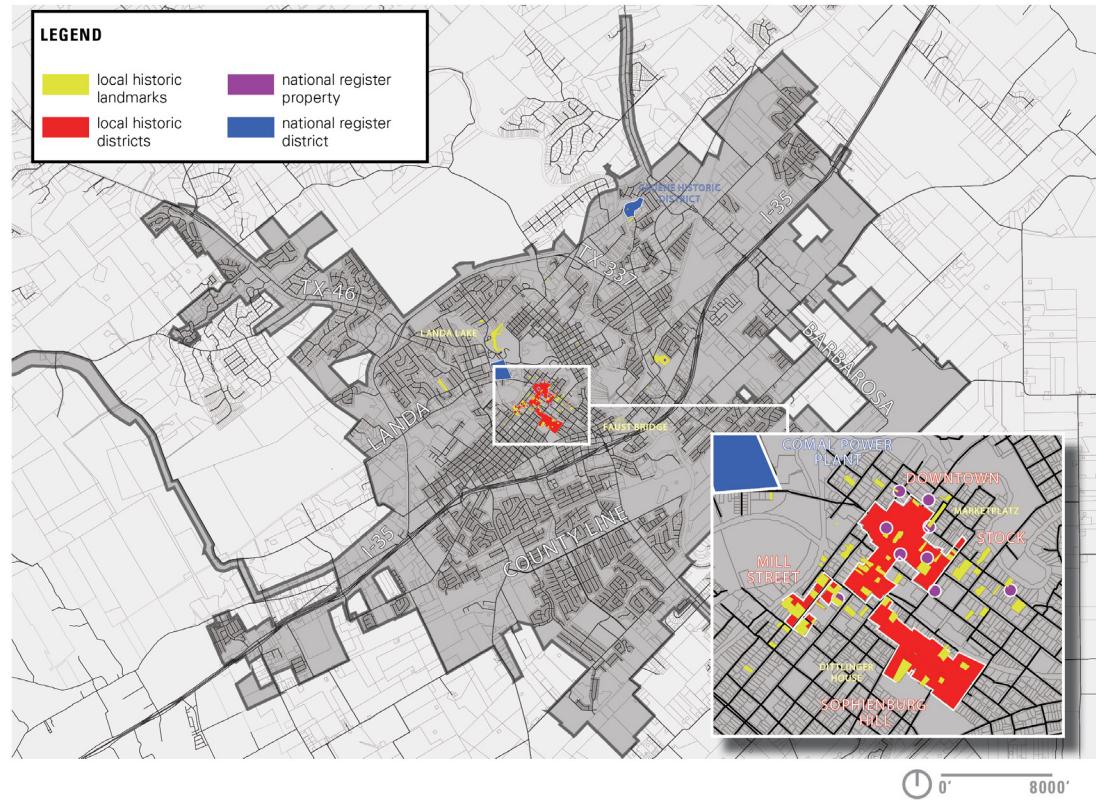
Approved in 2010, the Downtown Implementation Plan functions as the roadmap for economic development and revitalization work in downtown New Braunfels. In addition to addressing financial tools and policies to catalyze investment, the plan also recommends urban design interventions to activate downtown for residents, visitors and developers.

Proposed design strategies range in scale, but are coordinated to create a vibrant, walkable downtown with a historic identity. The plan recommends enhancing and diversifying the downtown's wayfinding portfolio to connect motorists to downtown, and to direct pedestrians to downtown destinations. It also proposes a variety of strategies, including sidewalk improvements and traffic calming measures, to promote bicycle and pedestrian circulation. The plan also proposes parking reforms to ease enforcement, manage demand and reduce traffic. Finally, the plan recommends a broad program of streetscape and amenity improvements, including increased open space in target areas, an expanded trail network and enhanced furnishings (lighting, benches, trees and other elements) to improve downtown's aesthetic quality.



HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION

Landmarks that represent New Braunfels' heritage are celebrated and protected by local, state and federal designations. This section describes those designations, and introduces some of the resources that make New Braunfels special. The Comal County Courthouse, former Comal Power Plant, and Gruene area all receive some level of historic designation and protection.





Downtown New Braunfels includes several properties worthy of preservation by the National Register of Historic Places.

LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK DISTRICTS

Central to New Braunfels' historic preservation are four Local Historic Landmark Districts: the Mill Street Historic District, the Downtown Historic District, the Sophienburg Hill Historic District and the Stock Historic District. Though these districts are concentrated in and near the city's downtown core, each features a unique architectural character that represents different moments in and aspects of New Braunfels' history.

For example, the Sophienburg Hill Historic District features excellent examples of Victorian-era homes, testifying to that area's long history as a residential neighborhood. Meanwhile, the range of property types and architectural styles in the Downtown Historic District, some of which date back to New Braunfels' founding in 1845, reflect that area's past (and present) as the community's civic and commercial hub.

Local Historic Landmark District designation allows members of the Historic Landmark Commission (HLC) and, in some cases, City staff, to review any work that impacts the exterior appearance of properties located within these areas, and ensure that alterations do not threaten the historic character of key buildings and areas. Additionally, Local Historic Landmark District designation offers property owners economic benefits—all properties within a District receive a 20 percent reduction in City-assessed ad valorem taxes.

LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS

While the district designations help preserve structures located within the district's boundary, it is not necessary for a structure to be located within a district to be preserved. Properties that meet the criteria described in the Historic Landmark Preservation Ordinance are eligible to be designated as Local Historic Landmarks, even if they fall outside of the larger districts. Of New Braunfels' 85 Local Historic Landmarks, 46 fall outside of Local Districts.

Most Local Historic Landmarks are buildings, and the roster of Landmark buildings outside of the Landmark Districts features iconic structures like the Andreas Breustedt House. Significantly, these landmarks do not have to be actual structures; current Local Historic Landmarks include heritage oak trees, limestone mile markers and other non-structural features that embody an aspect of New Braunfels' particular history.



STATE AND NATIONAL

In addition to these local designations, many of New Braunfels' historic and cultural resources are listed on the Department of the Interior's National Register of Historic Places. While this designation does not provide the Historic Landmark Commission (HLC) or City staff the opportunity to review alterations, it does afford a level of federal review under circumstances. Listing on the National Register also makes properties eligible for federal tax credits that can be used for redevelopment or building improvements.

New Braunfels is home to 10 buildings on the National Register, including the Comal County Courthouse and First Protestant Church in downtown New Braunfels. Additionally, Gruene and the former Comal Power Plant are both listed as National Historic Districts.



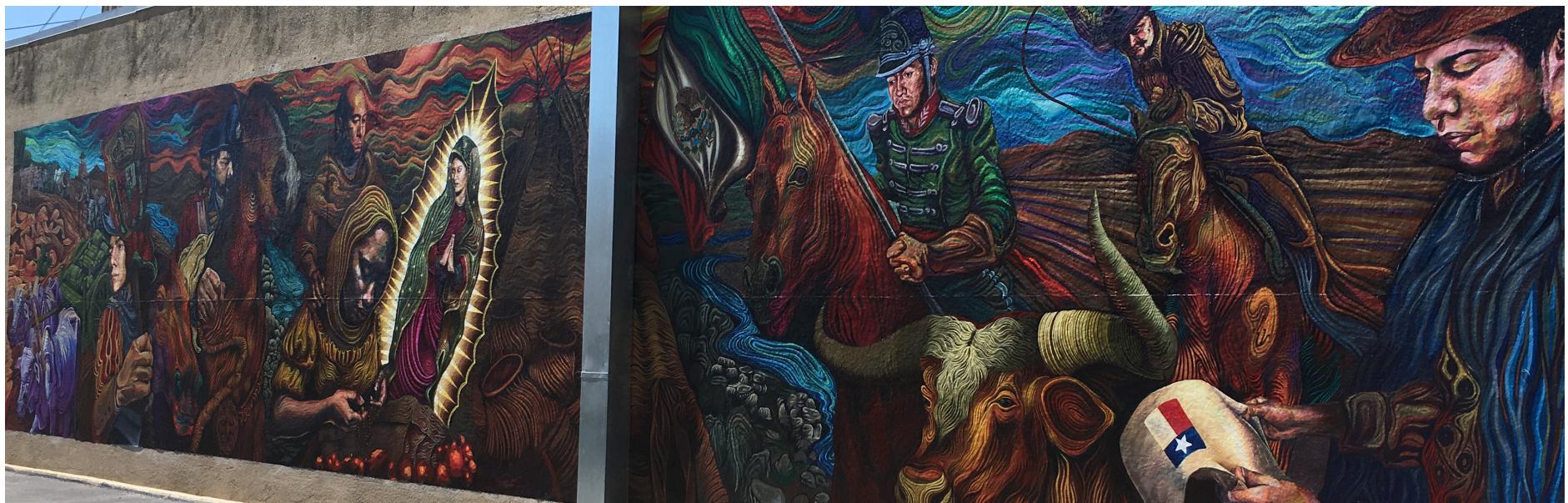
MAIN STREET PROGRAM

Since 1991, New Braunfels has leveraged the Texas Main Street program to promote historic preservation and economic development in the city's historic downtown core. Administered by the Texas Historical Commission, the program provides participating communities with a range of resources, including technical expertise on funding mechanisms and design practices, to simultaneously maintain identity and stimulate investment through historic preservation. In New Braunfels, the Downtown Board administers the Main Street Program, advising City Council on the program's four key topics: design, promotion, economic restructuring and organization.



CULTURAL ARTS AND HISTORY

The City of New Braunfels strongly supports both the cultural arts and historic preservation. New Braunfels Performing Arts and The Performing Arts Academy of New Braunfels are both nonprofit organizations devoted to promoting the arts. The City is home to Wurstfest, Wassailfest, Soul Searching Night Ramblings in the Comal Cemetery, Wein and Saengerfest, Dia de los Muertos, Folkfest, Concerts in the Park, and many more events that celebrate heritage and history. The Historic Outdoor Art Museum, also a nonprofit organization, supports and promotes public art that commemorates landmark events and figures from the community's rich past. The museum's collection, which includes seven murals and one sculpture, is spread throughout town.



PLAN ELEMENT ADVISORY GROUP RECAP

STRENGTHS

- New Braunfels' historic building stock tells the story of the community's rich heritage and identity.
- The friendly, small-town feel provides an alternative to the growing metropolises elsewhere in the region.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Building upon New Braunfels' strong program of downtown events and activities could provide additional opportunities to celebrate the community's unique identity.
- An iconic new hotel downtown could bolster the tourist economy and catalyze new investment.
- Promoting walkability through traffic calming and enhanced pedestrian facilities could increase the value and attractiveness of New Braunfels' urban fabric.

PRIOR GOALS (2016)

The Plan Element Advisory Group conducted an inventory of the 2006 Comprehensive plan goals and determined which ones were and were not achieved and identified the gaps that Envision New Braunfels could work to complete. Refer to the [Technical Report Appendix](#) for a matrix of the reviewed goals.



URBAN DESIGN AND CULTURAL, HERITAGE, AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION GOALS

1. Grow and target historic preservation efforts.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8

2. Increase and improve the understanding, appreciation, and learning of historic and cultural assets.

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3. Promote a compact urban fabric that includes walkable streets, mixed use development, and high-quality public spaces.

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4. Create new and unique destinations and experiences that build on New Braunfels' historic resources.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8

APPLICABLE STRATEGIES
REFER TO PAGE 178

1



SUPPORT VIBRANT CENTERS

2



ACTIVATE NEIGHBORHOODS

3



BALANCE JOBS AND HOUSING CHOICES

4



INNOVATE IN PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES

5



BOLSTER RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE

6



COORDINATE CITY INVESTMENTS

7



CONNECT ALL

8



CULTIVATE LOCAL AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

 INDICATES A STRATEGY THAT SUPPORTS THE PLAN ELEMENT GOAL