

# Texas DOWNTOWN

## Copperas Cove Downtown Assessment Report



Completed January 2026

## About Texas Downtown

Texas Downtown (TXD) was founded in 1985 to connect and serve communities, businesses, and champions of downtowns across the state. The organization just celebrated 40 years of downtown revitalization in 2025.

**Texas Downtown** empowers downtown leaders with **the** resources, advocacy, education, and connections they need to **drive transformation and revitalization**.

We support the development of **vibrant, thriving districts** that celebrate local character, **strengthen** communities, and foster a **strong sense of place**.

Our vision is to be the leading catalyst for downtown transformation in Texas, by uniting professionals to create vibrant communities that celebrate and preserve local heritage, foster inclusive and resilient districts, contribute to a thriving economy, and inspire a deep multi-generational connection to place.

## Downtown Assessment Process

Downtown assessments are offered as a Texas Downtown member service as part of our Downtown Assistance Program (DAP). They are designed to bring a group of downtown professionals to a city's downtown district to assess existing conditions and make realistic, attainable recommendations. The process begins with a downtown stakeholder survey and extensive research by assessment team members before arrival in the member community.

During the site visit, team members explore downtown, visit with business owners, and take notes. Team members are trained to identify opportunities and challenges, and to recommend best practices and strategies to enhance the downtown district and community. Team recommendations are compiled by Texas Downtown staff and include short (present-2 years) and long-range recommendations (5+ years).

Each assessment team is handpicked based on the community's existing needs and challenges. Led by Texas Downtown staff, the Copperas Cove team included the following members:

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Alex Philips, EDC Director, City of Burleson

Heth Kendrick, PLA, ULI, ASLA/Partner, Land Design

## Copperas Cove Facilitating Staff:

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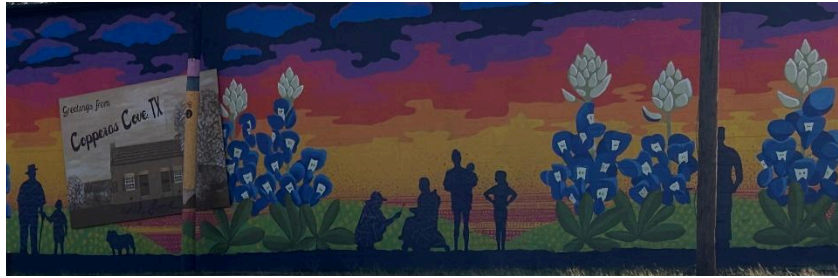
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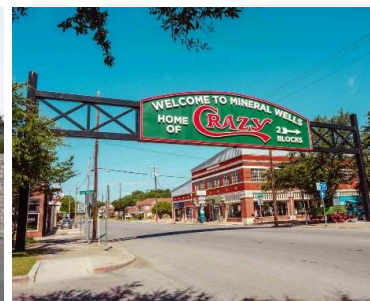


## Downtown Copperas Cove Comprehensive Assessment Summary

### Community Objectives

#### What success looks like (as stated + implied)

- **Guiding/Drawing people Downtown**
  - People have to know you're there and be able to find you
  - Wayfinding is a critical addition
- **Fill vacancies** and stabilize buildings so occupancy rises above the current 65%.
- Achieve a **more diverse, experience-based business mix** (food options, kid-friendly, retail, evening hangouts).
- Reduce over-concentration of **church/nonprofit** uses in the core blocks.
- Create a **true "community living room"** feel: linger, walk, meet friends, make memories.
- Deliver tangible progress: **4 blocks of the downtown plan implemented within 10 years.**
- Build a clear, repeatable identity: "We know who we are and can say it in one sentence."



#### What's driving urgency

- Growth pressure (projected 41,600+ and rising; housing growth along 116 north).
- Big infrastructure and corridor change underway: I-14 / Fort-to-Port projects, rail opportunities, gateway corridors.
- Downtown must become the **destination draw** because there is no "natural resource magnet" (lake/river/mountain), so downtown *becomes* the resource.

## What we heard (stakeholders + staff)

- Downtown should **matter again**, a true center of gravity, not a pass-through or go around.
- Strong interest in **identity, beautification, family-friendly things to do**, and a reason to **linger**.
- Desire for a **vibrant, fully occupied** downtown with an entertainment presence and a connected small-business community.
- **Desired Peer Models:** Georgetown, Salado, Belton, Granbury

**Comparable Peer Model:** Mesquite, Belton and Elgin

### “We Were You” Comparables

#### Mesquite, TX

##### Why it’s a match

- No courthouse square
- Car-oriented corridors + railroad barriers
- Previously “drive-through” perception
- Identity gap before intentional branding
- Strong city + EDC leadership pivot

##### What they solved

- Created a **defined downtown identity** where none existed
- Built a walkable entertainment district *incrementally*
- Used murals, wayfinding, lighting, and events to create gravity
- Leveraged TxDOT relationships and gateways

##### What Copperas Cove should study

- Downtown branding rollout
- Entertainment district framework
- How you used **public investment to unlock private buy-in**

*This is your #1 “believable success story.”*

#### Belton, TX

##### Why it’s a match

- Overshadowed by larger neighbors (Temple / Waco)
- Military + regional commuter population
- Had to reintroduce itself as a destination

### What they solved

- Strengthened downtown as a **local living room**
- Balanced events + everyday activity
- Improved business mix without losing local feel

### What Copperas Cove should study

- Incremental business recruitment
- Events that reinforce downtown *between* festivals
- Small but intentional streetscape investments

### Elgin, TX

#### Why it's a match

- Rail town with fragmented blocks
- Not “cute by default”
- Needed to *earn* linger time

#### What they solved

- Created **micro-destinations** (pocket parks, alleys, murals)
- Accepted imperfect businesses while building momentum
- Used food + drink as anchors

#### What Copperas Cove should study

- Green space insertion
- Alley activation
- Accepting progress over perfection

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## Finding Your Yourself

Downtown Copperas Cove is at a pivotal moment. City and EDC leadership recognize that while the community is growing, downtown has not yet evolved into the kind of place that **anchors identity, retains talent, attracts investment, and creates lasting memories**. The purpose of this Downtown Assessment is to help Copperas Cove clearly define *who it is, what it wants downtown to become, and how to move from incremental progress to transformational momentum*.

### 1. Establish a Clear Downtown Identity & Sense of Place

A consistent theme throughout conversations with leadership is the acknowledgement that **Copperas Cove does not yet have a clearly articulated identity**, particularly for downtown.

- Leadership openly recognizes the challenge of answering the question: “*Who are we?*”
- While the city is known as the **City of Five Hills**, this identity has not yet been translated into a compelling, lived downtown experience.
- There is strong interest in developing a **community-driven brand** that reflects:
  - the idea of “The Cove” as a place of protection, welcome, and belonging
  - the city’s rail, Chisholm Trail, and pioneer roots
  - its military-connected, family-oriented, and increasingly diverse population
  - the unique copperas mineral origin (including the teal/turquoise color cue)

**Objective:**

Create a downtown identity that is authentic to Copperas Cove—one that residents recognize as *theirs*, that visitors can immediately feel, and that provides a foundation for design, wayfinding, marketing, and business recruitment.



**2. Reposition Downtown as a Destination, Not a Pass-Through**

Downtown Copperas Cove currently functions more as a place people **drive around or through**, rather than a place they intentionally stop, gather, and linger.

- Highway realignments, rail crossings, and bypass routes have reinforced a “drive-around” pattern.
- Leadership is concerned that future infrastructure investments (I-14, Highway 190 improvements) could further divert traffic unless downtown offers a **clear reason to exit and explore**.
- **Wayfinding “Best Examples” are provided in the Addendum**
- There is a shared understanding that downtown must become the city’s:
  - front porch, third space, community living room, place for shared experiences

**Objective:**

Transform downtown into a walkable, intuitive, and inviting destination where people choose to park once, explore on foot, and spend time and money—rather than simply passing by

**3. Spark Private Investment & Overcome Redevelopment Barriers**

Leadership sees growing interest from entrepreneurs and small business owners who *want* to locate downtown, but face significant barriers.

- Deferred maintenance and code compliance costs make downtown buildings difficult to reuse.
- As a **Type A EDC**, Copperas Cove has funding limitations that require creative partnerships rather than direct intervention.
- The community is beginning to assemble a “toolbox”:
  - façade / business improvement grants
  - potential TIRZ exploration
  - CDBG and EDA infrastructure funding
  - conversations around PACE as a long-term building rehab tool
  - this info needs to be easily accessible for applicants and investors

**Objective:**

Lower the barriers to downtown investment by clarifying incentives, aligning public and private partners, and creating a visible pathway that encourages property owners and entrepreneurs to reinvest with confidence.

**4. Build on Early Momentum & Demonstrate What’s Possible**

Despite challenges, leadership is proud of recent downtown wins that prove progress is possible:

- Successful adaptive reuse projects (theatre, restaurant, boutique, brewery)
- Nelson Brew Works as a catalytic “proof point” that shifted perceptions of what downtown could be. Use the side of Nelsons building to give the project a full look of completion by adding a mural or downtown signage on outer exposed wall.
- Monthly farmers markets, Oktoberfest, National Night Out, and renewed efforts to bring major events back downtown
- A new downtown Chamber of Commerce location signaling institutional commitment

These successes have helped residents begin to **re-imagine downtown**, but they remain isolated rather than part of a cohesive district experience.

**Objective:**

Leverage existing success stories to build confidence, attract similar investment, and intentionally connect individual wins into a larger, visible downtown ecosystem.



## 5. Create a Downtown That Serves Families, Youth & Future Talent

Copperas Cove's median age is young, its school district is large, rated high and growing, and the city serves as home to many military families and returning veterans.

- Leadership is concerned about **talent leakage**—young people leaving and not returning.
- Downtown is seen as a critical tool for:
  - shaping memories
  - fostering emotional attachment to place
  - encouraging former residents to come back and build their lives locally
  - keeping multi-generations from leaving by retaining young families
- There is strong interest in more **family-friendly, youth-friendly, and multi-generational experiences** downtown. – **See Addendum for proven models**
  - **Easy Win:** create an evergreen scavenger hunt using your current downtown murals, QR code that includes a digital map and some fun facts/artist info/history and maybe some downtown swag for prizes
  - **Examples of Evergreen Self-Guided Tours:**
    - **Elgin:** <https://www.elgintexas.gov/206/Walking-Tours-More>
    - **San Marcos:** <https://www.visitsanmarcos.com/listing/lore-legends-and-landmarks-self-guided-walking-tour/1239/>
    - **Levelland:** <https://downtownlevelland.com/1638/Explore-the-Square>
    - **San Angelo:** <https://www.historicmuralsofsanangelo.org/guidebycell.html>

### **Objective:**

Ensure downtown becomes a place where children grow up making memories, teenagers feel welcome, young adults want to spend time, and families choose to gather—strengthening long-term community attachment.

## 6. Strengthen Partnerships & Shared Ownership of Downtown's Future

Leadership consistently emphasized that downtown revitalization cannot be achieved by the city or EDC alone.

- There is a desire to:
  - engage property owners more constructively
  - re-establish a downtown merchants/business association
  - strengthen collaboration between the City, EDC, Chamber, ISD, arts community, and residents
- Outside perspective is welcomed and valued to help reinforce priorities and build alignment.

### Objective:

Create a shared vision and implementation framework where downtown success is understood as a **collective responsibility**, supported by strong partnerships, consistent leadership, a dedicated downtown program and manager and clear roles.

## 7. Deliver Visible Progress While Planning for Long-Term Growth

Finally, leadership is balancing **immediate needs** with **long-range realities**:

- Aging infrastructure must be addressed before major streetscape investments.
- Growth projections (potentially doubling population in 15–20 years) require intentional redevelopment of existing areas.
- Downtown is viewed as one of the city's most cost-effective opportunities to accommodate growth through reinvestment rather than outward expansion.
  - Look to successful downtowns like Georgetown, McKinney, Denison and Denton for real economic growth data. (ie Downtown Georgetown is responsible for 42 million added to their economy in the past three years, with a TIRZ that produces \$700k/yr)
- Some great “visual victories” would announce good things are coming to downtown and attract more interest from property owners and small business developers
  - planters (establish a community planting day and invite the residents to come take part, adopt a planter, etc. (Ex: [Community Planting Day](#) – see below)
  - consider lighting that spans across major streets
  - art downtown
    - Evergreen Art
      - Corsicana's Art Alley: <https://www.navarrocouncilofthearts.com/art-alley.html>
      - San Angelo's Paint Brush Alley: <https://paintbrushalley.com/>
  - banners
    - use for upcoming event announcements
    - to designate the boundaries of your downtown district

- acting as wayfinding
- potential fundraisers (graduating class recognition, veteran recognition, etc.)
- use them to tell your history/story



- more vintage poles and/or handrails that are decorative
- consistent themed trash cans, planters, poles, etc.
- downtown Copperas Cove does not have a lot of historic architecture, so add in fun pops of color that trend with future theme to create your story



**Objective:**

Achieve early, visible wins that build public confidence, while aligning downtown improvements with long-term infrastructure, growth, and resiliency planning.

**A clear identity statement you can grow into**

If you want a crisp “who we are” phrase that matches the history and the future:

**Downtown Copperas Cove is the front porch of the Cove—where five hills, rail history, and a military-strong community come together to eat, stroll, gather, and stay awhile.**

## Initial Community / Downtown Observations

### Current conditions (the honest read)

- Downtown is **easy to miss** and currently functions like a place people *pass through* (drive-around community, bypasses, limited wayfinding).
- Rail is both a **story asset** and a **mobility disruption** (3 crossings, ~19 trains/day; darkness at night; drainage issues).
- Buildings face **deferred maintenance**, code barriers, and safety risks (fire risk from noncompliance).
- A small set of property owners—especially one with significant holdings tied to governance—creates a **bottleneck** (12 properties-same owner).
- Downtown lacks the basics that make people linger:
  - cohesive aesthetics (banners, planters, storefront consistency)
  - “third places” for families + teens + evening crowd
  - Lack of **landscaping, shade, and street furnishings** reduces comfort and visual life.
- Sidewalks are **narrow/uneven/inconsistent**, creating a poor pedestrian experience.
- **Accessibility gaps**: missing/insufficient ramps and required detectable warnings.
- **Overhead utilities** are visually prominent; opportunity to consolidate/underground during rebuilds.



- Facades have been altered/covered; peeling paint, oxidized signage, neglected masonry diminish character.
  - Historic character is one of the biggest draws to a downtown corridor. Could slipcovers be removed to restore original charm? (See Downtown Denison for advice)
  - Restoration of metal awnings would give a more cohesive look
- Positive momentum with some new restaurants/retail diversifying the mix.
- Downtown needs more **daily + destination** offerings and a more intentional mix.
- Too many non-retail “dead spots” (church/nonprofit concentration) is a known desire to correct.

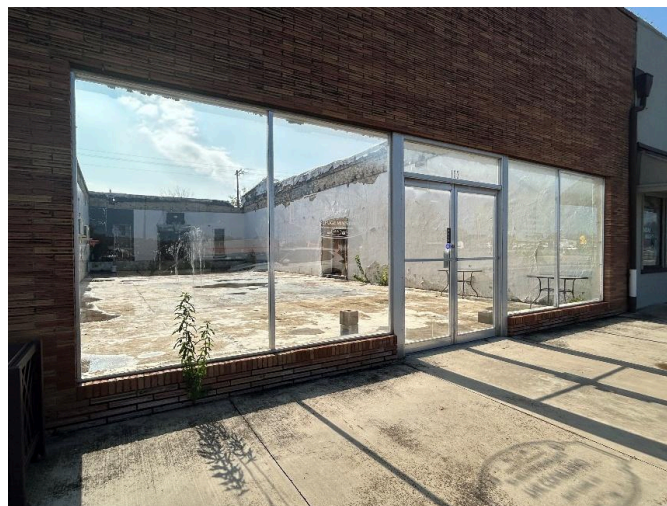
## Safety + “night feel”

- Tripping hazards and limited lighting contribute to a “closed/unsafe” feel after sunset.
- Encourage downtown businesses to contribute to lighting, when possible, maybe offer a lighting incentive or grant
- Add vintage light poles to further define the district and increase lighting after dusk
- Add some ambient warmth with lights that run across the streets when possible and give that “Halmark” feel.



## Momentum and bright spots to build on

- **Chamber moved downtown**—that’s a major credibility win.
- Strong volunteerism: cleanups, adopt-a-spot, artistic community.
- Events that already pull huge crowds (Rabbit Fest 40–50k; Kris Kindle 11–12k; Fall-o-ween 8k; etc.) show the community *will show up* when it’s compelling.
- Street widths + angled parking create a **good pedestrian scale**; proportions feel comfortable.
- Vacant buildings are not generally boarded up; some creative reuse is happening.
  - Seek talks with this property owner to better utilize or create a community space. Is there opportunity for purchase by EDC to use for public restrooms and/or third space



# Economic Development & Small Business Mix

## Who you are economically (what's unique)

Copperas Cove is not trying to be a courthouse-square tourist town. It's a:

- **military-adjacent, family-heavy, younger median age (34)** community,
- a regional commuter/exporter of labor,
- positioned between larger destinations but growing into its own mid-sized identity,
- with a **serious industrial/rail opportunity** (business park, Fort Cavazos Rail Center proximity, potential rail park).



## What downtown should become economically

Downtown should be branded and recruited as:

- **The Experience District:** food + social + family + local retail + arts
- **The “Welcome to the Cove” zone:** the place you take visitors
- A place that supports:
  - daytime (services + coffee + lunch)
  - after-school (treats + teen-friendly + safe hangouts)
  - evening (sports bar / brewery adjacency / patios / live music)
  - weekend (markets, events, shopping, casual dining)

## What to prioritize (recruitment + incentives)

- Build a **targeted tenant list** (specific businesses/operators), not generic categories.
- Use incentives + the Master Plan as a visual “here’s how you fit” tool for prospects.
- Explore incentive tools suggested by the team: tax breaks tied to investment thresholds, fee reimbursements, etc.

- **Small Business Incentives: Retention and Recruitment**

There are so many ways you can beef up your façade grants and incentives for recruiting the businesses you want and/or need to your downtown. That being said, retention is always easier than recruitment. We have included a strategy from our friends at Main Street America that we’d like to share with you that is accessible through your membership portal (make sure you’re logged in) and visit the Resource Library / District Management / [Creative Approaches to Place Based Entrepreneurship](#).

It's important to support your current businesses downtown and give them the tools to be successful. These are things that your downtown manager could use to help with retention and also for supporting and encouraging small pop-up installations/shops that could grow into a tenant for a larger self-sustaining place. \*There are many other resources that would also be great to explore under District Management.

- With regards to Incentives for current business/property owners or to use for recruitment efforts, go to the Resource Library / Incentives / Lubbock – Downtown Grant Program, or Seguin – Protect It – Grant Guidelines. These are great programs that can be funded with a Downtown Overlay Tax Increment Financing District, a TIRZ, or by committing to set aside a percentage of General Fund each year that can be used to support those efforts.

### **Public/private development strategy**

- Consider **strategic land banking** / acquiring catalytic properties for redevelopment (EDC role).
- Consider using city property to spark **private investment** and/or create **public space** downtown.

### **Best-practice tools to use (and why)**

- **Downtown recruitment playbook + incentives**: define what you want and reward it (target uses + tenant improvement/facade/codes support).
- **“Pathway” for existing owners**: many won't respond to email/social; use door-to-door, short in-person touchpoints, and a single trusted messenger (Downtown Manager + business captains).
- **Fix the “rehab barrier”**: create a clear menu:
  - facade grants (already coming)
  - code coaching + pre-development assistance
  - project pro formas
  - lender relationships / PACE pathway (if eligible)
  - a small pool of “deal structure” options (lease-to-own, master lease, shared tenant improvement)

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## **Physical Downtown Design**

### **What downtown needs to *feel* like**

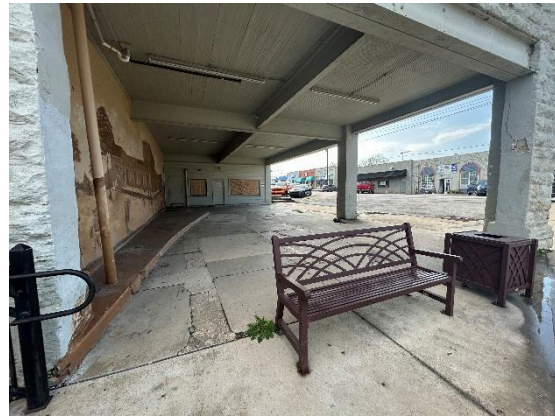
you repeatedly described the goal as:

- historic on the outside, modern and welcoming on the inside
- a place you park once and walk
- “transported to another place” (cohesive aesthetics + lighting + greenery + places to sit)

### **Core physical gaps to prioritize**

- **Wayfinding/gateways**: multiple entry points, easy to miss.

- **Lighting:** downtown is very dark; night comfort matters if you want an entertainment district.
- **ADA sidewalk continuity + crossings:** the “walkability promise” must be real.
- **Green space:** even a small pocket plaza changes dwell time dramatically.
- **Drainage:** water issues undermine comfort, safety, and building integrity. Install **raingardens/landscape islands** to manage stormwater and improve aesthetics.
- **Visual cohesion:** banners, planters, pole lighting consistency, storefront cues.
- **High-impact physical priorities**
  - Sidewalks/alleys/lighting/streetscape need overhauling, paired with visible identity elements like banners and color.
  - Add “comfort infrastructure” that supports lingering: shade, seating, greenery



- **Alley activation (destination-making move)**
  - Activate alleys for murals, outdoor dining, and pedestrian use—keep them service corridors, but make them **artful connectors** with lighting.



**Practical best practices (small-town proven)**

- **“One block at a time”** transformation: pick the first catalytic corridor (Main + Ave. D) as stated) and do it right.

- **“Paint + planters + lighting + seating”** can create immediate change before major capital projects.
- Treat alleys as **assets** (art walk, lighting, murals, “paintbrush alley” vibe) if safety and maintenance are addressed. (great wall inventory for future art/murals)




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## Promotion & Special Events

### What’s already working

- you already have “event proof” (huge attendance numbers). The issue isn’t demand—it’s **downtown capture**.
- Businesses are “ready to be part of the vision,” and there’s energy—needs structure + city support.

### Ideas to better capture existing audiences

- Strengthen veteran connections through visible actions (veteran parking; Veterans Day/Memorial Day weekend offers).
- Use heritage storytelling events (Heritage Days / Pioneer Days) and visible historic imagery downtown.
- Create/maintain a **downtown-focused social presence** (team recommendation).

### Best-practice shift: from “events happen” → “events build downtown”

- Build a strategy where major events:
  1. **start** downtown or include downtown activations,
  2. create **repeat habits** (2nd Saturday market is a strong anchor),

3. feed business retention and recruitment.

### Promotion priorities

- Create a single, easy-to-update **Downtown Finder** (QR-driven directory + map + hours + parking).
  - Put “Downtown” as a **main button** in the Chamber app and/or city site.
  - Use QR code wayfinding so you’re not constantly reprinting signs when businesses change.
    - See Discover Temple: <https://www.discovertemple.com/partnership/>
    - See Brownsville’s Downtown Passport: <https://visitbtx.com/downtown-passport/>
  - Position signature events to reflect identity themes (see Identity section below).
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## Organizational Processes

### The missing operating system

Copperas Cove doesn’t just need ideas. you need a downtown “machine” that runs weekly.

### Best-practice structure

1. **Downtown Manager** (even part-time to start, but consistent and visible) “Downtown needs coordination” and roles still feel fuzzy—this structure helps fix that.
  - **Ann Seneca** is already working in this capacity and has worked hard to establish that rapport and trust within the downtown community and its partners. We would recommend making that official and changing or adding to her title, so the downtown stakeholders see the intention, focus and commitment to downtown.
2. **Downtown Merchants Association** (lightweight, action-oriented, not bureaucratic) with consistent monthly meetings to unify business voice and communication.  
See Discover Temple: <https://www.discovertemple.com/downtown/stakeholders/>  
Contact Visit Georgetown for info on their “Downtown Low Downs”
3. **Property Owner Table** (quarterly, deal-focused, with clear asks and incentives)
4. **Implementation scorecard** (monthly metrics and wins)

### The property owner bottleneck (12 buildings)

This is a solvable pattern, but it requires a deliberate approach:

- Treat this as a **relationship + vision + deal structure project**, not a moral battle.
  - Put the conversation in terms of:
    - risk reduction (fire/code/liability)
    - value preservation
    - “here’s how we help you win without you doing it alone”
  - Use peers: bring in a respected outside voice (another property owner from a comparable city) to show what’s possible. Don’t “target” any “one” property owner but bring them all to the table with proposed incentives and resources, and ask them to be a part of the conversation and plan for intentional recruitment and downtown revitalization efforts.
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## Additional Comments

### Identity and Brand Direction...“Who are we?” — a brand truth that actually fits Copperas Cove

Copperas Cove’s strongest identity isn’t one thing—it’s a *blend* that no one else has in the same combination:

**The Cove:** Lean into “**The Cove**” as the emotional promise: safety, shelter, respite, protected, welcoming place among five hills

**The Rail Story:** town moved to follow the railroad; downtown shaped by crossings and history

**The Military Neighbor:** family-forward, veteran-heavy, service-minded community

**The Active + Arts Undercurrent:** bikes/runs, murals, local creatives, youth/family energy

**The Gateway:** the “edge of Hill Country” feel without being a tourist trap

#### Brand platform direction (simple, repeatable)

**Core promise:** “Welcome to the Cove: a place to gather, explore, and stay awhile.”

**Downtown role:** “Copperas Cove’s front porch—historic outside, vibrant inside.”

#### Visual/creative hooks you can own

- **Copperas teal/turquoise** Use the **blue/teal copperas mineral cue** as a signature downtown visual system (street furnishings, planters, awnings, benches, poles, banner arms, brand accents etc.); the downtown “visual thread”
  - **Five Hills** as a pattern/mark system (subtle, modern, not clip-art)
  - **Rail-inspired wayfinding** (tracks, stamps, “platform” references, depot nods)
  - **“Cove” language** (comfort, sheltered, neighborly, come-as-you-are) \*Consider brand language shift to **“Uptown Cove”** (positioning + differentiation).
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## Phased Priorities Action Plan: 0-24 Months, 3–5 Years, 10+ Years

### A. Low Hanging Fruit (0–24 months)

These are high-visibility, lower-cost moves that build confidence and momentum.

#### 1) Make downtown findable (immediately)

- Temporary gateway and wayfinding: “Downtown → 3 min” at key entries
- QR-based “Downtown Map + Directory” live now (no perfection needed)
- Add a Downtown button in Chamber app / city site with the QR directory

**Best practice:** Start with *simple* and update often. The win is clarity, not fancy tech.

#### 2) Create one “signature block”

Pick the priority corridor (Main + Ave. D) and do a mini “place makeover”:

- lighting upgrades (even temporary string lighting where appropriate)
- planters + adopt-a-planter program + community planting day
- coordinated banners using the teal identity cue
- seating clusters + shade where possible

**Best practice:** One concentrated transformation beats scattered improvements.

#### 3) Fix the night experience basics

- Identify the darkest/safest walking routes and prioritize lighting
- Launch “Light It Up Downtown” as a visible campaign

#### 4) **Downtown activation you can do tomorrow**

- Expand the farmers market day into a “2nd Saturday Downtown Day”:
  - kids activity corner
  - live music
  - merchant specials
  - “passport stamp” that encourages walking

#### 5) **Organize the people side**

- Form the Downtown Merchants Association as an action group:
  - meets monthly, 45 minutes, agenda is “wins + needs + next month”
  - launch a targeted tenant outreach list with collaborative and incentivized messaging
- Start a Property Owners Roundtable (quarterly)
- Assign one point-person (Downtown Manager or designated lead) to do weekly touchpoints

#### 6) **Start a “code-to-occupancy” pathway**

- Create a simple one-page process:
  - “Want your building leased faster? Here’s the step-by-step.”
- Offer code navigation help (not enforcement—support)
- Pilot with 3 willing properties first

### **B. Mid-Term Moves (3–5 years)**

These are structural shifts: policy, capital, and “big levers” that change the trajectory.

#### 1) **Establish the district that matches their goals**

- Formalize an **Entertainment/Refreshment District** across the downtown blocks (if feasible)
- Tie it directly to standards: cleanliness, lighting, wayfinding, and safety

**Best practice:** If you create a district, you must also create the operating plan behind it.

#### 2) **Build a real downtown green space**

- Identify the best “starter” pocket plaza:
  - near food truck park, rail-side opportunity, or civic-adjacent parcel
- Deliver a phase 1 version first: turf, shade, seating, lighting, small stage pad

#### 3) **Make alleys an attraction (not an afterthought)**

- Pilot one alley as an “art walk connector”:
  - lighting, murals, wayfinding, seating nooks
- Design it with drainage and maintenance in mind from day one

#### 4) **Solve the “rehab barrier” at scale**

- Expand incentive tools:
  - façade + TI support
  - structured partnerships with lenders
  - feasibility for PACE (if applicable)

- Launch a “Downtown Buildings Ready” program:
  - pre-vetted spaces with known costs and code pathway

#### **5) Advance the civic anchor strategy**

- If City Hall relocation to downtown is feasible:
  - treat it as a downtown foot-traffic and identity anchor
  - combine with a public plaza and improved streetscape

#### **6) Recruitment strategy with teeth**

- Create an “Incentive Agreement Menu” tied to target uses:
  - sports bar / family dining
  - dessert/gelato
  - youth-friendly third space
  - local retail cluster (unique finds)
- Recruit intentionally, not opportunistically.

### **C. Long-Term Transformation (10+ years)**

These are “legacy” moves that future-proof downtown through growth and regional change.

#### **1) Downtown as the region’s “stop and stay” place**

As I-14 / bypass patterns evolve, downtown must become:

- a place people intentionally detour to,
- anchored by a true district identity and multiple “reasons to go.”

#### **2) Major infrastructure + streetscape rebuild**

- Coordinate street improvements with:
  - undergrounding utilities where possible
  - drainage solutions
  - ADA full compliance
  - complete streets upgrades
- Align improvements with long-term maintenance funding.

#### **3) Re-create or reinterpret the historic depot story**

- The “old depot at Main & D” is a powerful narrative anchor.
- Long-term: interpretive installation, small structure, plaza feature, or public art landmark that becomes a “photo moment.”

#### **4) Downtown housing where feasible (within height constraints)**

- Even modest upper-floor residential and mixed-use adds:
  - constant foot traffic
  - safety
  - demand for dining and retail
- If vertical is limited, focus on:
  - creative adaptive reuse
  - courtyard housing forms
  - small-footprint residential strategies.

#### **5) Water resilience as downtown leadership**

- Incorporate “functional landscaping” (rainwater abatement, drought-tolerant plantings).
  - Treat downtown as the pilot for water-smart placemaking.
- 

### **Simple “North Star” Metrics (to track progress)**

If you want buy-in for tax support and to build credibility, measurement matters.

#### **Track monthly/quarterly:**

- occupancy rate (65% → 75% → 85%+)
  - number of code-compliant, leasable storefronts
  - event-day foot traffic + merchant sales anecdotes
  - new business starts + expansions downtown
  - public realm improvements completed (block-by-block scorecard)
  - stakeholder engagement: merchants association attendance + volunteer participation
- 

## **Texas Downtown Comparables for Copperas Cove**

### **1. Gatesville, TX**

#### **Why it’s one of the best true comparables**

##### **Similarities to Copperas Cove**

- Military-adjacent (Fort Cavazos spillover)
- Family-oriented, mid-sized community
- Not a traditional tourist destination
- Downtown had to *manufacture* its draw
- No lake/river as the primary hook

##### **What Gatesville is doing well**

- Repositioned downtown as a **community destination**, not just retail
- Leveraged **events + civic pride + small wins** to rebuild momentum
- Focused on **walkability, aesthetics, and consistent programming**
- Strong partnerships between city, chamber, and downtown stakeholders

##### **What Copperas Cove can learn**

- How to activate downtown *without* relying on natural tourism assets
- How to use events to retrain local behavior (“we go downtown now”)
- How to right-size improvements for a non-tourism-driven economy

##### **Who to connect with**

- City leadership and downtown champions involved in revitalization efforts
- Event and streetscape implementers

## 2. Belton, TX

### Why this is a critical “next-stage” model

#### Similarities

- Central Texas
- Military-adjacent market
- Regional pass-through traffic
- Downtown had to overcome being overlooked by neighbors

#### What Belton is doing well

- Built a **clear downtown identity** (historic + social + food-forward)
- Invested in **public spaces** that encourage lingering
- Coordinated private investment with public improvements
- Created a downtown that works **daytime + evening + weekends**

#### What Copperas Cove can learn

- How to transition from “we need activity” to “we are a place people choose”
- How to use **public realm investment** to unlock private reinvestment
- How to balance historic character with modern interiors

#### Who to connect with

- Downtown manager / city staff
- Public works + planning staff who coordinated improvements

## 3. Granbury, TX

### Why it’s useful (with the right lens)

#### Similarities

- Strong identity rooted in history
- Downtown as the community’s front porch
- Heavy reliance on walkability and experience

#### Important distinction

- Granbury *does* have tourism and water—but the **mechanics** of success still apply.

#### What Granbury is doing well

- Cohesive branding and wayfinding
- Tight control of downtown aesthetics
- Strong merchant collaboration
- Clear sense of “park once, walk everywhere”

#### What Copperas Cove can learn

- How to create a **community living room**
- How to enforce cohesion without stifling individuality
- How to manage parking perception vs. reality
- How to use historic character as a *framework*, not a museum

#### Who to connect with

- Downtown merchants association leaders
- City staff involved in design standards and events

## 4. Georgetown, TX

### Why it's aspirational but still instructive

#### Similarities

- Historic core that anchors identity
- Downtown is the emotional heart of the city

#### Key difference

- Georgetown has scale and resources Copperas Cove doesn't—yet.

#### What Georgetown is doing well

- Extremely strong **identity clarity**
- Downtown-first mindset in city decision-making
- Aggressive use of **placemaking + programming**
- Merchants understand their role in the district experience

#### What Copperas Cove should study (not copy)

- Governance structure for downtown
- How identity is embedded into:
  - banners
  - signage
  - events
  - marketing
- How the city consistently reinforces “downtown matters”

#### Who to connect with

- Downtown staff / Main Street leadership
- Branding and placemaking leads

## 5. Johnson City, TX

### Why it's a powerful lesson in “small but intentional”

#### Similarities

- Small footprint
- Historic assets
- Had to *decide* what kind of place it wanted to be

#### What Johnson City is doing well

- Clear positioning
- Focused business mix
- Leveraging history without being dusty or stale
- Strong sense of arrival and place

#### What Copperas Cove can learn

- How clarity beats scale
- How to curate business mix intentionally
- How to make downtown feel cohesive even when small

## 6. Mesquite, TX

### Why this is an under-the-radar but very relevant example

#### Similarities

- Large commuter population
- Not traditionally seen as a “destination city”
- Needed to activate downtown through policy and programming

#### What Mesquite is doing well

- Refreshment/entertainment district strategy
- Leveraging policy changes to support downtown vitality
- Using programming to change perceptions

#### What Copperas Cove can learn

- How to structure and manage a **refreshment district**
- How policy supports culture change
- How to safely and effectively activate streets

## 7. San Angelo, TX

### Why it matters for alley activation + arts

#### Similarities

- Needed to reimagine overlooked spaces
- Strong arts community
- Downtown reinvention required creativity, not just capital

#### What San Angelo is doing well

- Alley activation (Paintbrush Alley)
- Public art as economic development
- Turning infrastructure into experience

#### What Copperas Cove can learn

- How to activate alleys safely and intentionally
- How to partner with artists and youth
- How to create Instagrammable, memory-making places

## 8. Taylor, TX

### Why it's a cautionary + opportunity case

#### Similarities

- Rail-oriented history
- Downtown reinvestment challenges
- Big external pressures (growth, infrastructure, industry)

#### What Taylor illustrates

- How rail, identity, and redevelopment can align
- The importance of proactive downtown planning before growth overwhelms capacity

## What Copperas Cove can learn

- How to prepare downtown for future growth
- How to protect identity amid regional change

## How to Use These Comparables Strategically (Best Practice)

Instead of saying “*we want to be like X*”, Copperas Cove should ask:

- **Who solved the problem we’re facing right now?**
- **What did they do first—not last?**
- **What did they stop doing?**
- **How did they organize people and decision-making?**

## Recommended Next Step for Copperas Cove

Create a **3–5 city peer learning cohort**, for example:

- Gatesville
- Belton
- Granbury
- Mesquite (for refreshment district learning)

Then:

- schedule peer calls or site visits
- ask very tactical questions (staffing, funding, governance, early wins)
- See Addendum for plan of attack



## Individual Team Assessment Notes

### Downtown Copperas Cove Professional Advice – Alex Philips

#### Community's Objectives:

- Need to better understand who they are and where they would like to go
- To be like:
  - Georgetown
  - Salado

#### Initial Community/Downtown Observations: *(positive and/or negative)*

- Old/Lack of care
- Great bones and layout of downtown
- Hard to find downtown
- Lack of signage/wayfinding
- Lack of lighting

#### Economic Redevelopment & Small Biz Mix: *(focuses on funding, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, capitalize on property development, and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies.)*

- Look at ways to utilize city property for private investment or public space
- Create a TIF for downtown and include more properties than downtown is today
- Great businesses thus far but need to keep the energy and create new programs for small businesses to invest more
- Tax breaks for certain levels of investment, permit fee reimbursement, etc.
- EDC to look at purchasing property for land banking. Strategic pieces for redevelopment.

#### Physical Downtown Design: *(supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical, visual, and historic preservation assets that set the commercial district apart.)*

- The downtown has some great buildings
- The sidewalks, alleys, lighting, streetscape needs overhauling
- Need banners or something that celebrates downtown.
- Hardscape additions for flowers or public art. Some color to brighten the area
- Public space is needed for events and natural gatherings

#### Promotion & Special Events: *(positions the downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique personality.)*

- Need to have a social media page dedicated to downtown and tourism
- Downtown business association. We heard from many businesses and they are ready to be a part of the vision for a vibrant downtown
- The EDC staff has energy and is ready to go to work but they need the support of the city and council to capture that energy and build on it. I understand it is money but they

need to decide where the importance of the future lies. A vibrant downtown will draw new investment that will bring more property taxes, sales tax and more buy in.

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## Downtown Copperas Cove Professional Advice – Heth Kendrick

### Community’s Objectives:

- Create a vibrant, fully occupied downtown anchored by active businesses throughout the week and a strong entertainment presence. Foster a well-connected business community that prioritizes small-scale retail and preserves the intimate, local character that defines the district.
- To be like:
  - Georgetown, TX
  - Belton, TX
  - Granbury, TX
    - All are walkable, active, cohesive architectural style, centralized green/open space

### Initial Community/Downtown Observations: *(positive and/or negative)*

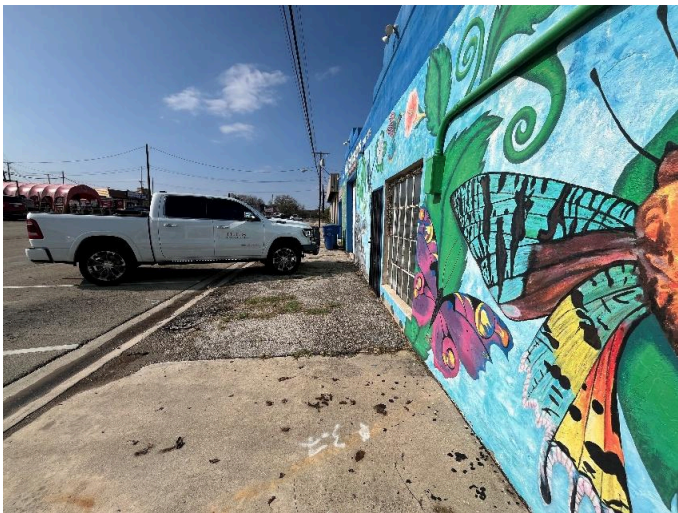
- Streetscapes
  - Positive:
    - Street widths and angled on-street parking create an appropriate pedestrian scale. The relationship between building heights and street widths also feels well-proportioned and comfortable for pedestrians.

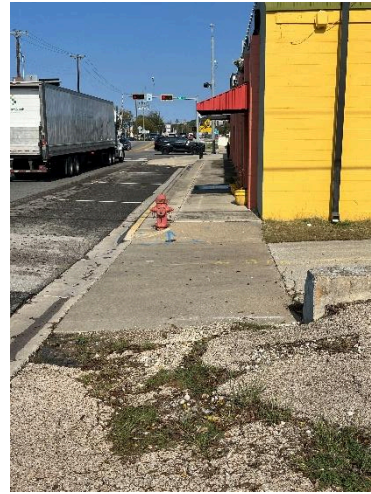




o **Negative:**

- There are significant concerns regarding walkability in the downtown area. Sidewalks are narrow, cracked, blocked, and uneven, with steep slopes and inconsistent materials—including concrete, asphalt, and gravel—that create an uncomfortable and unsafe pedestrian experience.





- Sidewalks throughout downtown provide limited accommodation for residents with mobility challenges, including individuals with disabilities, senior adults, and parents with strollers. Several locations lack accessible ramps, include ramps that do not meet federal width or slope requirements, or are missing required detectable warning features such as truncated domes and audible pedestrian crossing signals.





- Flooding and leaking awnings contribute to an uninviting storefront environment and present challenges when exiting parked vehicles, crossing streets, or walking beneath awnings, especially during rainfall events.



- The streetscape also lacks landscaping and street furnishings. Minimal shade and the absence of street trees result in limited comfort, character, and visual interest, reducing the sense of life and activity along downtown streets.



- Overhead utilities are highly visible throughout downtown. Several Oncor power lines could be consolidated to one side of the street rather than spanning both sides, creating a better street frontage for retail signage. Telecommunications lines could be placed underground when street curbs and driving surfaces are replaced.



- **Public health, safety, and welfare concerns.**
  - **Positive:**
    - Downtown feels safe and inviting for visitors to walk and explore. No public safety concerns were observed along streetscapes, alleys, or in parking areas.

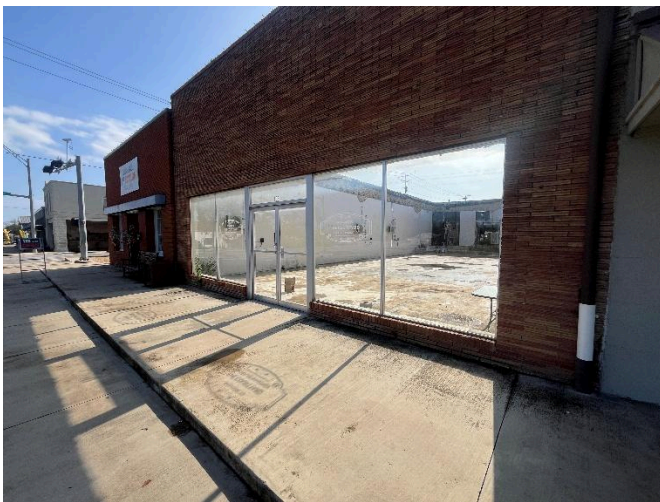


- **Negative:**
  - Tripping hazards are present throughout downtown, including sidewalk grade transitions without color differentiation. Steps with more than two risers lack handrails, creating additional safety concerns.



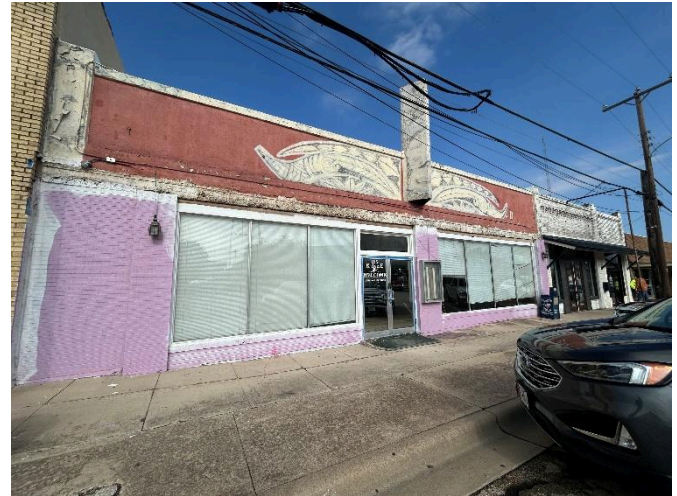


- Low lighting levels after sunset contribute to a perception that downtown is “closed” or unsafe, making the area uninviting for families.
- **Architectural treatments**
  - **Positive:**
    - Vacant buildings are not visually unappealing or boarded-up. Structures with missing roofs have been adaptively reused, such as the church basketball court and the Nelson outdoor patio, maintaining functionality and community engagement.



- o **Negative**

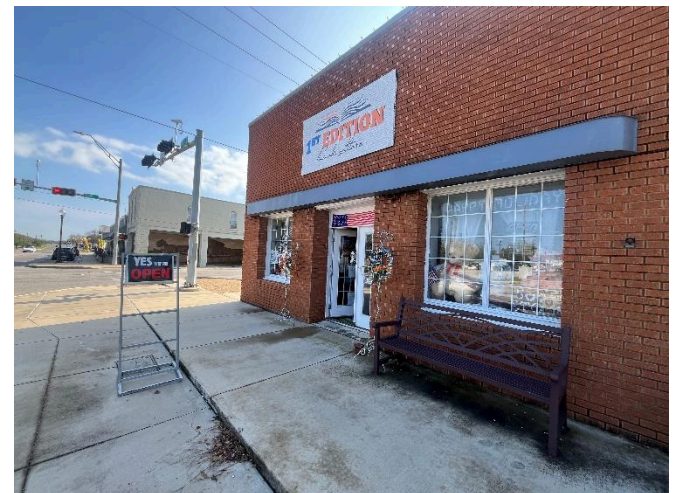
- Original historic facades have been obscured over time, concealing windows, doors, and the unique character of downtown buildings. Many facades appear dated, with issues such as peeling or unpainted surfaces, oxidized signage, and neglected masonry, including dirty surfaces and deteriorating joints.



- **Land Uses**

- o **Positive**

- The introduction of new restaurants and retail stores adds vibrancy and interest to downtown. It is encouraging to see businesses emerging that diversify the area beyond government offices, antique shops, and bail bond services.





o **Negative**

- There is a lack of residential development in the downtown core. Introducing housing would help attract additional retail and professional office opportunities.
- Existing church and school uses create conflicts with restaurants' ability to serve alcohol and provide outdoor dining, limiting certain business operations.

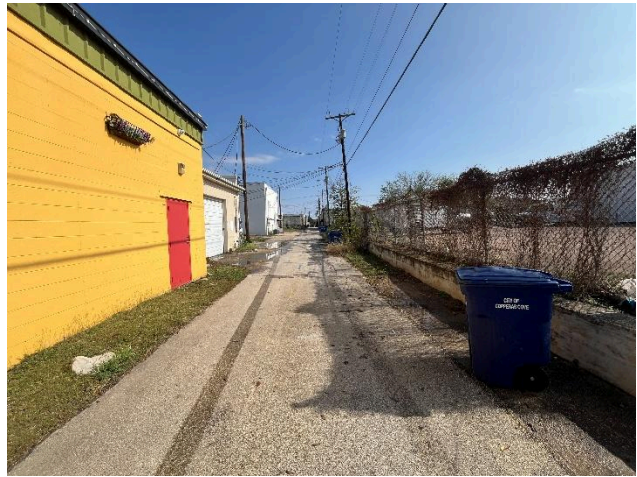
**Economic Redevelopment & Small Biz Mix:** *(focuses on funding, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, capitalize on property development, and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies.)*

- Recommend that the Economic and Community Development (ECD) team develop a targeted tenant list for downtown. Rather than a general wish list (e.g., “ice cream shop” or “coffee shop”), focus on specific businesses that could thrive in the area. Engage with local business owners in surrounding areas to explore opportunities for opening a second location downtown or relocating when current leases expire.

- Provide incentives to attract businesses and use the downtown Master Plan as a visual tool to demonstrate how potential retailers could fit within the district. Consider attending the ICSC conference in Las Vegas to connect with prospective tenants.

**Physical Downtown Design:** *(supports a community’s transformation by enhancing the physical, visual, and historic preservation assets that set the commercial district apart.)*

- Enhance streetscapes with landscape islands designed as raingardens to capture and manage stormwater, releasing it more gradually or directing it during rainfall events. These raingardens can incorporate xeriscape materials, providing both environmental benefits and aesthetic enhancement for downtown.
- Consider activating alleyways for outdoor dining, murals, and pedestrian use. Installing pendant or string lighting can create a welcoming atmosphere. While alleys would continue to function as utility and service corridors, they can also become unique, artful destinations that attract visitors and enhance the character of Copperas Cove.



**Promotion & Special Events:** *(positions the downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community’s unique personality.)*

- Leverage connections with the local veteran community by designating veteran parking spaces and encouraging businesses to offer discounts on Veterans Day and Memorial Day weekends.
- Celebrate Copperas Cove’s history through events such as Heritage Days or Pioneer Days. With many new residents, these events can help bridge the connection between the community and the city’s founding. Ideas include horse-and-buggy rides downtown, a stage at the historic Train Depot, and placing printed historic images throughout downtown to visually connect residents to the past.

**Organizational Processes:** *(involves creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, broad-based community involvement, and federal, state, regional and local resources for the district.)*

- Recommend establishing a Downtown Business Association to strengthen collaboration and communication among local business leaders. Monthly meetings would provide a

forum to discuss opportunities, address concerns, and unify as a collective voice when engaging with City Council.

**Additional comments:**

- Lean into “The Cove” as a marketing and rebranding opportunity. The name conveys a sense of safety, shelter, and respite from daily life, and residents already appear to embrace this identity for the community’s core.
- Incorporate the signature blue/teal color of the copperas mineral into downtown street furnishings—such as planters, awnings, benches, and related elements—to create a distinctive visual identity. This color differentiation can reinforce a sense of arrival and strengthen the district’s unique character.
- Consider transitioning from the term “downtown” to “**Uptown Cove**.” This shift elevates the brand, avoids the negative connotation of “down,” and aligns with the area’s higher topography relative to its surroundings. Psychologically, positioning the district as “up” or elevated can help reshape perceptions. The rebranding would also set Copperas Cove apart from neighboring communities. Lean into the proximity of the Texas Hill Country and rebrand into something similar to:
  - Where the Hill County Rises to Greatness
  - Where Hill County Reaches New Heights
  - Where Community and Opportunity Rise Together
  - Rising Strong in the Heart of Hill County
  - Where Tradition Meets Tomorrow
  - Where the Spirit of Hill County Soars
  - Elevate Your Life in Copperas Cove
  - Rising with Pride, Rooted in Community
  - Where Hill County’s Heart Reaches New Heights

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## **Downtown Copperas Cove Professional Advice – Tania Moody**

### **Community’s Objectives:**

#### **What you’ve heard verbally**

- They want downtown to “matter again”: a real center of gravity, not just a pass-through.
- Strong interest in identity, beautification, more things to do, and family-friendly activity.
- They’re looking to TXD and this assessment to help them figure out “who” downtown is and how to prioritize.

#### **What the documents say**

- The **EDC Strategic Plan** explicitly positions **downtown revitalization as a core tool for building the City’s identity**, calling for new retail and commercial real estate

downtown to “cultivate a City brand through retail destinations and community gathering places,” while also growing brick-and-mortar space for local entrepreneurs.

- The **Comprehensive Plan / Transportation Master Plan** describes the historic downtown as a district of **local streets** whose economic vitality depends on high pedestrian accommodations, aesthetic elements, efficient parking, and a “strong sense of location identity.”
- The **Downtown zoning district (DT)** is already structured to allow a **mix of commercial, civic, and residential uses** to reinforce traditional downtown character and walkability.
- The **Downtown map and boundary** clearly show a compact district with strong connectivity to nearby neighborhoods and major corridors – a scale that’s workable for phased projects and pilot programs.

### What this suggests

You’re not pushing a new agenda; you’re helping them **activate the agenda they’ve already adopted on paper**. Their current objectives line up almost perfectly with:

1. **Clarifying identity** (who downtown is in their ecosystem of corridors and neighborhoods).
2. **Making downtown the “livable core”** through streets, spaces, and small businesses that feel like a true city center.
3. **Treating downtown as the physical expression of the EDC strategy** – the place where their “distinct local identity” shows up in real life.

### Initial Community/Downtown Observations: *(positive and/or negative)*

#### What you’ve seen/heard

- Downtown feels fragmented by traffic and the rail line; it functions more like a cut-through than a destination.
- Strong assets (history, some civic anchors, potential for mixed-use) but underleveraged.
- Lots of questions about parking, walkability, and how to get people to slow down and stay.

#### What the documents say

- The Comprehensive Plan notes that all streets in the historic downtown area (except Avenue B) function as local streets, *but* many are congested due to through trips from northwest neighborhoods; major changes should be part of a holistic Downtown Master Plan update.
- Business 190 was re-designated when the bypass opened; current plans aim to improve access along Business 190 while diverting more regional traffic away from downtown.
- There’s a strong emphasis on Complete Streets and active transportation as tools to improve quality of life and economic vitality, with citizens specifically asking for more sidewalks and better connectivity.

## What this suggests

On-the-ground observations are backed up by Copperas Cove's own plans: traffic, access, and walkability are central problems — and already flagged as issues that should be solved *as part of a downtown-specific plan*, not just piecemeal projects.

Next-step framing for them:

- Current Comp Plan states that major changes downtown should be tackled holistically. This assessment can serve as the on-the-ground reality check and the bridge to that updated Downtown Master Plan.

## What success looks like (as stated + implied)

- **Fill vacancies** and stabilize buildings so occupancy rises above the current 65%
- Achieve a **more diverse, experience-based business mix** (food options, kid-friendly, retail, evening hangouts).
- Reduce over-concentration of **church/nonprofit** uses in the core blocks.
- Create a **true “community living room”** feel: linger, walk, meet friends, make memories.
- Deliver tangible progress: **4 blocks of the downtown plan implemented within 10 years.**
- Build a clear, repeatable identity: “We know who we are and can say it in one sentence.”

## Current conditions (the honest read)

- Downtown is **easy to miss** and currently functions like a place people *pass through* (drive-around community, bypasses, limited wayfinding).
- Rail is both a **story asset** and a **mobility disruption** (3 crossings, 19 trains/day; darkness at night; drainage issues).
- Buildings face **deferred maintenance**, code barriers, and safety risks (fire risk from noncompliance).
- A small set of property owners—especially one with significant holdings tied to governance—creates a **bottleneck** (12 properties under one councilman).
- Downtown lacks the basics that make people linger:
  - ADA sidewalk consistency, lighting, seating, shade/greenery
  - cohesive aesthetics (banners, planters, storefront consistency)
  - “third places” for families + teens + evening crowd

## Momentum and bright spots to build on

- **Chamber moved downtown**—that's a major credibility win.
- Strong volunteerism: cleanups, adopt-a-spot, artistic community.
- Events that already pull huge crowds (Rabbit Fest 40–50k; Kris Kindle 11–12k; Fall-o-ween 8k; etc.) show the community *will show up* when it's compelling



### What's driving urgency

- Growth pressure (projected 41,600+ and rising; housing growth along 116 north).
- Big infrastructure and corridor changes underway: I-14 / Fort-to-Port projects, rail opportunities, gateway corridors.
- Downtown must become the **destination draw** because they don't have a "natural resource magnet" (lake/river/mountain). So downtown *becomes* the resource.

**Economic Redevelopment & Small Biz Mix:** *(focuses on funding, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, capitalize on property development, and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies.)*

### What you've heard

- Desire for a more intentional business mix: food, drink, retail, services, and experiences instead of random one-offs.
- Recognition that downtown needs both **daily-use businesses** (services, quick bites) and **destination businesses** (evening/weekend, events).

### What the documents say

- The **EDC Strategic Plan** is crystal clear:
  - Copperas Cove is **overweighted in residential** development; commercial and industrial space is limited and concentrated along Business 190.
  - As they seek a **distinct local identity**, they specifically call out **revitalizing downtown with new retail and commercial real estate** to build a city brand *and* expand space for local entrepreneurs.
- The Plan notes Copperas Cove is an **outward-commuting city** with more resident workers than local jobs in every occupational group – which means local entrepreneurship and small business growth is a key lever.

- Zoning tools designate the Downtown district as the right place to focus **mixed-use, pedestrian-scaled commercial growth**, rather than adding more scattered strip retail.

### What this suggests

Need for:

- **Clustered, experience-driven “retail destinations”** in downtown (aligned with the EDC plan language).
- Using **downtown as the “entrepreneurship district”** – incubating small, local businesses that match the veteran/young talent pipeline the Strategic Plan highlights.
- Making sure incentives and programs (façade grants, rent assistance, pop-up pilots) are **coordinated with EDC goals**, not operating in a silo.

### Who they are economically (what’s unique)

Copperas Cove is not trying to be a courthouse-square tourist town. It’s a:

- **military-adjacent, family-heavy, younger median age (34)** community,
- a regional commuter/exporter of labor,
- positioned between larger destinations but growing into its own mid-sized identity,
- with a **serious industrial/rail opportunity** (business park, Fort Cavazos Rail Center proximity, potential rail park).

### What downtown should become economically:

Downtown should be branded and recruited as:

- **The Experience District:** food + social + family + local retail + arts
- **The “Welcome to the Cove” zone:** the place you take visitors
- A place that supports:
  - daytime (services + coffee + lunch)
  - after-school (treats + teen-friendly + safe hangouts)
  - evening (sports bar / brewery adjacency / patios / live music)
  - weekend (markets, events, shopping, casual dining)

### Best-practice tools to use (and why)

- **Downtown recruitment playbook + incentives:** define what you want and reward it (target uses + tenant improvement/facade/codes support)
- **“Pathway” for existing owners:** many won’t respond to email/social; use door-to-door, short in-person touchpoints, and a single trusted messenger (Downtown Manager + business captains).
- **Fix the “rehab barrier”:** create a clear menu:
  - facade grants (already coming)
  - code coaching + pre-development assistance
  - project pro formas
  - lender relationships / PACE pathway (if eligible)

- o a small pool of “deal structure” options (lease-to-own, master lease, shared tenant improvement)

**Physical Downtown Design:** *(supports a community’s transformation by enhancing the physical, visual, and historic preservation assets that set the commercial district apart.)*

What you’ve seen

- Downtown has “bones” (historic grid, civic uses, some anchors), but the public realm and streetscapes don’t yet match the kind of environment they say they want.
- There’s tension between traffic movement and place-making.

**What the documents say**

- The Comprehensive Plan / Transportation Master Plan:
  - o Calls out the historic downtown as a cluster of commercial local streets where design decisions can significantly improve economic vitality.
  - o Recommends high pedestrian accommodation, aesthetic elements, and a strong sense of location identity as the key to getting people to linger and spend.
  - o Emphasizes Complete Streets and active transportation design as a policy direction, including sidewalk implementation and multi-use pathways that connect to downtown and parks.
- The existing Downtown zoning + map together signal a desire for compact, walkable, mixed-use form in that core area.

**What this suggests**

Current master plans and data support that to be economically strong, you need high-quality public realm, sidewalks, and a clear sense of place.

We recommend you lean into:

- A phased public realm plan (low-cost pilots → permanent upgrades).
- Aligning downtown street projects with the Complete Streets policy they’ve already embraced.
- Using physical design (lighting, crosswalks, planting, furnishings, public art) to reinforce whatever identity theme is chosen

**What downtown needs to *feel* like**

Repeatedly described as:

- historic on the outside, modern and welcoming on the inside
- a place you park once and walk
- “transported to another place” (cohesive aesthetics + lighting + greenery + places to sit)

**Core physical gaps to prioritize**

- **Wayfinding/gateways:** multiple entry points, easy to miss.
- **Lighting:** downtown is very dark; night comfort matters if they want an entertainment district.
- **ADA sidewalk continuity + crossings:** the “walkability promise” must be real.

- **Green space:** even a small pocket plaza changes dwell time dramatically.
- **Drainage:** water issues undermine comfort, safety, and building integrity.
- **Visual cohesion:** banners, planters, pole lighting consistency, storefront cues.

### Practical best practices (small-town proven)

- “**One block at a time**” transformation: pick the first catalytic corridor (Main + Ave. D) as stated) and do it right.
- “**Paint + planters + lighting + seating**” can create immediate change before major capital projects.
- Treat alleys as **assets** (art walk, lighting, murals, “paintbrush alley” vibe) if safety and maintenance are addressed.

**Promotion & Special Events:** *(positions the downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community’s unique personality.)*

### What you’ve heard

- Desire for more things “to do” downtown, more family-friendly and nighttime activity, and better marketing of what already exists.
- Interest in using events to test and build downtown’s identity.

### What’s already working

There is clear “event proof” (huge attendance numbers). The issue isn’t demand—it’s **downtown capture**.

### Best-practice shift: from “events happen” → “events build downtown”

- Build a strategy where major events:
  1. **start** downtown or include downtown activations
  2. create **repeat habits** (2nd Saturday market is a strong anchor)
  3. feed business retention and recruitment.

### Promotion priorities

- Create a single, easy-to-update **Downtown Finder** (QR-driven directory + map + hours + parking).
- Put “Downtown” as a **main button** in the Chamber app and/or city site.
- Use QR code wayfinding so you’re not constantly reprinting signs when businesses change.
- Position signature events to reflect identity themes (see Identity section below).

### What the documents say

- The **EDC Strategic Plan** leans heavily on **quality of life and “distinct local identity”** as Copperas Cove’s competitive edge, especially given its location near Fort Cavazos and between major metro areas.

- The newly adopted **alcohol consumption ordinance** creates a legal framework for **consuming alcohol in the public right-of-way within downtown**, which is exactly the enabling condition cities need for successful sip-and-strolls, street festivals, and patio culture.

### What this suggests

- The City has already done one of the hardest things: **they changed the rules to support downtown activation** (alcohol in public ROW downtown).
- Events and promotions aren't just "fun extras" for them – they're a strategic way to:
  - Test the new ordinance in a controlled, positive way.
  - Create the kind of "**retail destination**" **experience** the EDC plan describes.

Recommendation for a **curated downtown event calendar** (anchored in their emerging brand) rather than a random assortment of standalone events.

**Organizational Processes:** *(involves creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, broad-based community involvement, and federal, state, regional and local resources for the district.)*

### What you've heard

- There is awareness that there is a need for coordination, but roles and responsibilities for downtown (City, EDC, businesses, property owners) are still fuzzy.
- There's some confidence, but also a lingering "we're not sure who we are" narrative.

### What the documents say

- The **EDC Strategic Plan** frames downtown as central to their **citywide economic narrative**, not a side project – which implies the EDC should be at the table as a key downtown partner.
- The Plan also talks about Copperas Cove's **location, affordability, and young population** as major strengths – all assets that can and should be expressed downtown.
- The **Comprehensive Plan** underscores that any significant downtown transportation or street changes should be done via an integrated **Downtown Master Plan**, not as isolated fixes.
- The **zoning map and districts** show that the City has already made some structural decisions about where mixed-use and walkable commercial should go – downtown is the designated lab for that.

### What this suggests

From an organizational/process standpoint, the documents are practically begging for:

1. **A coordinated "Downtown Team"** (City, EDC, key property and business owners) that owns implementation.
2. **A formal Downtown Master Plan update** that braids together:

- o The EDC’s economic goals and target sectors,
  - o The Comp Plan’s transportation/Complete Streets direction, and
  - o The zoning and alcohol ordinance tools they’ve already adopted.
3. A **clear identity + messaging framework** (building off their “Potential Identity” work) so all partners are telling the same story in marketing, recruitment, and programming.

### **The missing operating system**

Copperas Cove doesn’t just need ideas. They need a downtown “machine” that runs weekly.

### **Best-practice structure**

1. **Downtown Manager** (even part-time to start, but consistent and visible)
2. **Downtown Merchants Association** (lightweight, action-oriented, not bureaucratic)
3. **Property Owner Table** (quarterly, deal-focused, with clear asks and incentives)
4. **Implementation scorecard** (monthly metrics and wins)

### **Property Owners with Vacant or Non-Maintained Buildings**

This is a solvable pattern, but it requires a deliberate approach:

- Treat this as a **relationship + vision + deal structure project**, not a moral battle.
- Put the conversation in terms of:
  - o risk reduction (fire/code/liability)
  - o value preservation
  - o “here’s how we help you win without you doing it alone”
- Use peers: bring in a respected outside voice (another property owner from a comparable city) to show what’s possible.
- Adopting new measures/ordinances that assess fees for storage use, and non-code compliance

### **Additional comments:**

#### **“Who you are” — a brand truth that actually fits Copperas Cove**

Copperas Cove’s strongest identity isn’t one thing—it’s a *blend* that no one else has in the same combination:

**The Cove:** a protected, welcoming place among five hills

**The Rail Story:** town moved to follow the railroad; downtown shaped by crossings and history

**The Military Neighbor:** family-forward, veteran-heavy, service-minded community

**The Active + Arts Undercurrent:** bikes/runs, murals, local creatives, youth/family energy

**The Gateway:** the “edge of Hill Country” feel without being a tourist trap

#### **Brand platform direction (simple, repeatable)**

**Core promise:** “Welcome to the Cove: a place to gather, explore, and stay awhile.”

**Downtown role:** “Copperas Cove’s front porch—historic outside, vibrant inside.”

#### **Visual/creative hooks you can own**

- **Copperas teal/turquoise** as the downtown “thread” (poles, banner arms, brand accents)
- **Five Hills** as a pattern/mark system (subtle, modern, not clip-art)
- **Rail-inspired wayfinding** (tracks, stamps, “platform” references, depot nods)

- **“Cove” language** (comfort, sheltered, neighborly, come-as-you-are)

## The Action Plan: Low Hanging Fruit, 3–5 Years, 10+ Years

### A. Low Hanging Fruit (0–18 months)

These are high-visibility, lower-cost moves that build confidence and momentum.

#### 1) Make downtown findable (immediately)

- Temporary gateway and wayfinding: “Downtown → 3 min” at key entries
- QR-based “Downtown Map + Directory” live now (no perfection needed)
- Add a Downtown button in Chamber app / city site with the QR directory

**Best practice:** Start with *simple* and update often. The win is clarity, not fancy tech.

#### 2) Create one “signature block”

Pick the priority corridor (Main + Ave. D) and do a mini “place makeover”:

- lighting upgrades (even temporary string lighting where appropriate)
- planters + adopt-a-planter program + community planting day
- coordinated banners using the teal identity cue
- seating clusters + shade where possible

**Best practice:** One concentrated transformation beats scattered improvements.

#### 3) Fix the night experience basics

- Identify the darkest/safest walking routes and prioritize lighting
- Launch “Light It Up Downtown” as a visible campaign

#### 4) Downtown activation you can do tomorrow

- Expand the farmers market day into a “2nd Saturday Downtown Day”:
  - kids activity corner
  - live music
  - merchant specials
  - “passport stamp” that encourages walking

#### 5) Organize the people side

- Form the Downtown Merchants Association as an action group:
  - meets monthly, 45 minutes, agenda is “wins + needs + next month”
- Start a Property Owners Roundtable (quarterly)
- Assign one point-person (Downtown Manager or designated lead) to do weekly touchpoints

#### 6) Start a “code-to-occupancy” pathway

- Create a simple one-page process:
  - “Want your building leased faster? Here’s the step-by-step.”
- Offer code navigation help (not enforcement—support)
- Pilot with 3 willing properties first

### B. Mid-Term Moves (3–5 years)

These are structural shifts: policy, capital, and “big levers” that change the trajectory.

#### 1) Establish the district that matches their goals

- Formalize an **Entertainment/Refreshment District** across the downtown blocks (if feasible)
- Tie it directly to standards: cleanliness, lighting, wayfinding, and safety

**Best practice:** If you create a district, you must also create the operating plan behind it.

## 2) Build a real downtown green space

- Identify the best “starter” pocket plaza:
  - near food truck park, rail-side opportunity, or civic-adjacent parcel
- Deliver a phase 1 version first: turf, shade, seating, lighting, small stage pad

## 3) Make alleys an attraction (not an afterthought)

- Pilot one alley as an “art walk connector”:
  - lighting, murals, wayfinding, seating nooks
- Design it with drainage and maintenance in mind from day one

## 4) Solve the “rehab barrier” at scale

- Expand incentive tools:
  - façade + TI support
  - structured partnerships with lenders
  - feasibility for PACE (if applicable)
- Launch a “Downtown Buildings Ready” program:
  - pre-vetted spaces with known costs and code pathway

## 5) Advance the civic anchor strategy

- If City Hall relocation to downtown is feasible:
  - treat it as a downtown foot-traffic and identity anchor
  - combine with a public plaza and improved streetscape

## 6) Recruitment strategy with teeth

- Create an “Incentive Agreement Menu” tied to target uses:
  - sports bar / family dining
  - dessert/gelato
  - youth-friendly third space
  - local retail cluster (unique finds)
- Recruit intentionally, not opportunistically.

## C. Long-Term Transformation (10+ years)

These are “legacy” moves that future-proof downtown through growth and regional change.

### 1) Downtown as the region’s “stop and stay” place

As I-14 / bypass patterns evolve, downtown must become:

- a place people intentionally detour to,
- anchored by a true district identity and multiple “reasons to go.”

### 2) Major infrastructure + streetscape rebuild

- Coordinate street improvements with:
  - undergrounding utilities where possible
  - drainage solutions
  - ADA full compliance

- complete streets upgrades
  - Align improvements with long-term maintenance funding.
  - 3) Re-create or reinterpret the historic depot story**
  - The “old depot at Main & D” is a powerful narrative anchor
  - Long-term: interpretive installation, small structure, plaza feature, or public art landmark that becomes a “photo moment.”
  - 4) Downtown housing where feasible (within height constraints)**
  - Even modest upper-floor residential and mixed-use adds:
    - constant foot traffic
    - safety
    - demand for dining and retail
  - If vertical is limited, focus on:
    - creative adaptive reuse
    - courtyard housing forms
    - small-footprint residential strategies.
  - 5) Water resilience as downtown leadership**
  - Incorporate “functional landscaping” (rainwater abatement, drought-tolerant plantings).
  - Treat downtown as the pilot for water-smart placemaking.
- 

### **Simple “North Star” Metrics (to track progress)**

If you want buy-in for tax support and to build credibility, measurement matters.

#### **Track monthly/quarterly:**

- occupancy rate (65% → 75% → 85%+)
  - number of code-compliant, leasable storefronts
  - event-day foot traffic + merchant sales anecdotes
  - new business starts + expansions downtown
  - public realm improvements completed (block-by-block scorecard)
  - stakeholder engagement: merchants association attendance + volunteer participation
- 

### **Copperas Cove Provided Information:**

Population: 39,000

Median Household Income: \$69,000

Poverty Rate: 9.4%

Promotional Video: <https://youtu.be/6jke659A6Vs?si=LHLAsYnwPsaUZfzo>

City Website: <https://www.copperascovetx.gov/>

Chamber Website: <https://copperascove.com/>

EDC Website: <https://coveedc.com/>

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# Identity for Downtown Copperas Cove

## Brand & Destination Strategy



### I. Identity Foundation: Who Downtown Copperas Cove Is The Truth at the Core (What Sets Them Apart)

Copperas Cove's power is not one thing — it's the **intersection** of several things no other Texas downtown combines in quite the same way:

- **The Cove**  
A protected, welcoming place nestled among **Five Hills** — safe, neighborly, familiar. Locals don't just say Copperas Cove... they say *"the Cove."*
- **Railroad Roots & Movement**  
The town literally **moved** to follow the railroad. Trains still shape daily life downtown — disruption, yes, but also a defining story of momentum, connection, and grit.
- **Military + Family DNA**  
A place shaped by Fort Cavazos: service, resilience, diversity, transience mixed with deep loyalty. People arrive from everywhere — and many choose to stay.
- **Young, Growing, Creative Energy**  
Median age ~34. Strong arts community. Youth sports, murals, bikes, runs, festivals. This is not a sleepy historic town — it's active and evolving.
- **No "Natural Attraction" — So Downtown *Is* the Attraction**  
No lake. No river. No mountain postcard. Which means downtown becomes the place you come **to experience something different**, not just see something pretty.



## **Brand Truth:**

Downtown Copperas Cove isn't a backdrop. It's the experience.

## **II. The Big Idea: The Brand Platform**

### **Brand Positioning Statement**

**Downtown Copperas Cove is the front porch of the Cove — a welcoming, walkable district where rail-town grit, military pride, and Hill Country character come together to eat, gather, explore, and stay awhile.**

### **The Promise**

- You'll feel welcome even if it's your first time.
- You'll discover something unexpected.
- You'll linger longer than you planned.
- You'll leave with a story.

## **III. Brand Personality (How It Feels)**

This is critical for tone, visuals, events, and marketing voice.

### **Downtown Copperas Cove is:**

- Welcoming, not polished
- Confident, not flashy
- Playful, not precious
- Historic on the outside, modern on the inside
- Local-first, visitor-friendly

### **Not:**

- Museum-like
- Overly western or cowboy-themed
- Generic Hill Country copycat
- Big-box or corporate-feeling

## **IV. Naming + Language Strategy**

### **Primary District Name**

**Downtown Copperas Cove** (retain clarity and searchability)

### **Secondary / Experiential Name (Used in Marketing)**

**The Cove**

or

**Uptown Cove** (as a playful reframe — optional, campaign-based)

Examples:

- *Meet Me in the Cove*
- *Made in the Cove*
- *Spend the Day in the Cove*
- *The Cove After Dark*
- *Cove Days. Cove Nights.*

This lets them **play** without confusing wayfinding or governance.

## V. Visual Identity System (Conceptual Direction)

### Color Story

- **Copperas Teal / Turquoise** (signature): pulled from the mineral origin
- Warm neutrals (stone, cream, soft charcoal)
- Accent pops: sunset orange, rail rust, deep navy

Teal becomes the downtown thread: banners, poles, planters, benches, wayfinding, murals.

### Graphic Motifs

- Subtle **rail lines / track geometry**
- Abstract **Five Hills** shapes (not literal illustrations)
- Hand-drawn or stamped textures (movement + grit)
- Simple icons: train mark, hill line, star, gathering circle

### Typography (directional, not prescriptive)

- Strong, readable serif or slab for headlines (historic nod)
- Clean modern sans-serif for body copy
- Occasional hand-lettered or stamped accents for personality

## VI. Kitchy, Fun & Experiential Hooks (This Is the Differentiator)

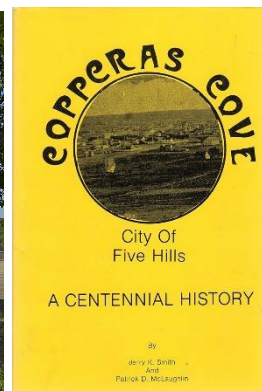
These are the things people photograph, talk about, and remember.

### Signature Ideas

- **“Cove Stops”** – rail-inspired markers around downtown highlighting shops, food, art, history
- **“Wait for the Train” Moments** – benches, murals, or signage that turn train delays into part of the experience
- **Santa Fe Plaza Mural Wall** – rotating murals, photo ops, community painting days
- **Adopt-a-Planter: Cove Edition** – locals/businesses sponsor and style planters
- **Downtown Passport** – stamps from businesses, events, or Cove Stops

### Events with Personality

- *Cove After Dark* (evening strolls, music, food)
- *Mineral & Makers Market*
- *Rails & Ales* (future refreshment district tie-in)
- *Little Cove Days* (kids-first downtown programming)



## VII. Marketing Strategy (Modern, Flexible, Low-Cost)

### Core Marketing Message

**“You don’t just visit Downtown Copperas Cove — you experience the Cove.”**

### Tools & Tactics

- QR-driven Downtown Directory (easy updates)
- Downtown landing page / app button
- Guerrilla wayfinding (temporary signs, sidewalk decals, banners)
- Strong photo storytelling: people > buildings
- Short-form video: “A Day in the Cove”
- Business-led content (owner stories, behind-the-scenes)

### Target Audiences

1. Local families (habit-building)
2. Military families & veterans
3. Young adults & creatives
4. Regional visitors looking for something *different*

## VIII. Rollout Strategy & Timeline

*(phased, achievable, confidence-building)*

### Phase 1: Identity + Early Wins (0–12 Months)

#### Goals:

- Build clarity
- Show momentum
- Create visual cohesion fast

#### Actions:

- Finalize brand platform (language + visuals)
- Launch Downtown Cove messaging (website + QR directory)
- Install banners, planters, and lighting accents in signature teal
- Pilot Cove Stops + Passport program
- Anchor monthly events to identity (2nd Saturdays → “Cove Days”)
- Begin storytelling campaign: *Why We Love the Cove*

### Phase 2: Placemaking + Partnerships (1–3 Years)

#### Goals:

- Increase dwell time
- Support business recruitment
- Strengthen partnerships

#### Actions:

- Formalize Downtown Merchants Association under Cove brand
- Expand public art + alley activation
- Establish refreshment/entertainment district (if approved)
- Create one signature pocket plaza / gathering space

- Coordinate incentives and recruitment around Cove identity
- Host peer-city exchanges under the Cove banner

### Phase 3: Destination Maturity (3–5+ Years)

#### Goals:

- Reinforce reputation
- Future-proof downtown
- Tie identity to infrastructure

#### Actions:

- Gateway installations on major corridors
- Permanent wayfinding + rail-story elements
- Reinterpret the historic depot story
- Expand branding into capital projects and streetscapes
- Align downtown housing and mixed-use with Cove promise
- Track success metrics (occupancy, foot traffic, event capture)

## IX. How This Identity Solves Their Objectives

- **Vacancies:** clearer story → better recruitment → stronger demand
- **Business Mix:** identity guides what belongs downtown
- **Wayfinding:** Cove branding makes downtown visible and legible
- **Community Buy-In:** locals already call it “the Cove”
- **Tourism Without a Lake:** experience replaces scenery
- **Differentiation:** no one else is doing *this* version of Central Texas



## X. The One-Sentence Identity (The Test)

If Copperas Cove can confidently say this — the brand is working:

**“Downtown Copperas Cove is the front porch of the Cove — where rail-town roots, military pride, and Hill Country character come together to eat, gather, and stay awhile.”**

#### Examples:

##### 1. Sample Taglines

*(Use these interchangeably depending on audience, event, or season)*

### **Primary / Evergreen Taglines**

These define the place.

- Meet Me in the Cove
- Welcome to the Cove
- The Heart of the Cove
- Find Your Place in the Cove
- Downtown Copperas Cove — Stay Awhile
- The Cove Starts Here

### **Experiential / Playful Taglines**

Great for posters, social, events, and banners.

- Eat. Wander. Repeat.
- Park Once. Stay Longer.
- Come Curious. Leave Connected.
- Small Town. Big Personality.
- Unexpected Finds. Real Connections.
- Not a Drive-Through. A Stay-Awhile.

### **Evening / Entertainment / Event Taglines**

- The Cove After Dark
- When the Sun Sets, the Cove Comes Alive
- Dinner. Drinks. Downtown.
- Lights On. Music Up. Welcome In.
- Your Night Starts in the Cove

### **Heritage + Rail-Inspired Taglines**

Used sparingly as texture—not the whole brand.

- Built by the Rails. Rooted in the Cove.
- All Aboard for Downtown
- Where the Rails Met the Hills
- From Tracks to Tables



## 2. Poster Copy (Plug-and-Play)

### Poster Concept 1: General Downtown Awareness

#### Headline:

**Meet Me in the Cove**

#### Body Copy:

Tucked between five hills and shaped by the rails, Downtown Copperas Cove is where locals gather, visitors linger, and stories are made. From unexpected eats to one-of-a-kind shops and community events, this is the front porch of the Cove.

#### CTA:

- Walk it. Taste it. Stay awhile.
- Downtown Copperas Cove

### Poster Concept 2: Family-Friendly / Daytime

#### Headline:

**Make a Day of It in the Cove**

#### Body Copy:

Shop local. Grab a bite. Let the kids roam. Downtown Copperas Cove is built for afternoons that turn into memories—and weekends you don't rush through.

#### CTA:

- Downtown Copperas Cove
- Park once. Explore more.

### Poster Concept 3: Evening / Entertainment

#### Headline:

**The Cove After Dark**

#### Body Copy:

When the lights come on, downtown comes alive. Dinner, drinks, music, and that easy feeling you only get in a place that knows how to welcome you.

#### CTA:

- Tonight starts in the Cove

### Poster Concept 4: Kitchy / Tourist Bait (On Purpose)

#### Headline:

You're Not Lost. You Found the Cove.

#### Body Copy:

No lake. No mountain. Just great food, cool shops, and a downtown that feels like it's been waiting for you.

#### CTA:

- #MeetMeInTheCove
- Downtown Copperas Cove

### 3. Banner & Wayfinding Text

*(Short, bold, readable at speed)*

#### Light Pole Banners (Rotate these)

- Welcome to the Cove
- Meet Me in the Cove
- Downtown Lives Here
- Eat • Shop • Gather
- The Cove Starts Here
- You're in the Right Place

#### Gateway / Entry Banners

- Downtown Copperas Cove
- This Way to the Cove →
- Find Your Way to the Cove
- Next Stop: Downtown

#### Guerrilla Wayfinding / Sandwich Boards

- Yes, This Is Downtown
- Keep Walking — It Gets Better
- Train Stopped? So Should You.
- One More Block = Worth It
- Downtown Is Closer Than You Think

### 4. Visual Mockup Concepts (Clear Direction)

These are **concept-ready**—a designer or Canva user could build them quickly.

#### Mockup Concept A: “Meet Me in the Cove” Poster

**Format:** Vertical poster (11x17 or 18x24)

**Background:**

- Warm off-white or light stone texture

**Visual Elements:**

- Large bold headline at top: **MEET ME IN THE COVE**
- Subtle rail line graphic running horizontally or diagonally
- Abstract “Five Hills” line graphic near bottom
- Teal accents (underline, dot, or border)

**Photography:**

- One strong image: people laughing, walking, eating—not buildings

**Footer:**

- Downtown Copperas Cove logo or wordmark
- QR code to Downtown Directory

#### Mockup Concept B: Light Pole Banner Series

**Format:** Tall vertical banners

**Color Blocking:**

- Top ⅔: Copperas teal
- Bottom ⅓: cream or soft charcoal

**Text Examples:**

- **WELCOME TO THE COVE**
- **EAT • SHOP • GATHER**

**Graphic Accent:**

- Thin rail line motif
- Minimal hill silhouette

These should feel **confident, not busy**.

**Mockup Concept C: Wayfinding Sign / A-Frame**

**Format:** A-frame or temporary sign

**Copy:**

- Front: **YOU FOUND THE COVE**
- Back: **DOWNTOWN → THIS WAY**

**Design Style:**

- Bold typography
- Playful arrow
- Teal + black + cream palette

**Mockup Concept D: Social / Digital Tile**

**Format:** Square (Instagram / email header)

**Text Overlay:**

- **Park Once. Stay Longer.**
- or
- **Tonight Starts in the Cove**

**Background:**

- Motion shot of downtown activity
- Teal overlay at 10–20% opacity

**Mockup Concept E: Mural / Photo-Op Wall**

**Text Options:**

- MEET ME IN THE COVE
- MADE IN THE COVE
- YOU BELONG HERE

**Style:**

- Hand-painted feel
- Teal base with warm accent colors
- Instagram-ready but authentic

## Implement a Grassroots Marketing Team

### Hype Team Marketing Strategy:

Login to your TXD account and go to: <https://texasdowntown.org/document-library>

Click on Marketing and view everything from the process to the application, etc.

This is a GREAT way to stretch your marketing dollars and with a re-branding you could give the team, t-shirts, and city swag as a way of saying thank you. You can even get pets involved with swag bandannas, etc.



**A Hype Team Is Born**



**Hype Team = Social Influencers**



**Hype Hounds!**

## Downtown Wayfinding: Best Examples

### I. DRAWING PEOPLE OFF THE HIGHWAY

(“*Oh—there’s something there.*”)

These examples succeed because they **interrupt autopilot driving** and make downtown feel intentional and easy to reach.

#### Georgetown, TX

##### Why it works

- Clear, repetitive “Downtown / The Square” signage starting miles out
- Consistent typography and color
- Simple language — no overthinking

##### What Copperas Cove should copy

- Start signage **before** the decision point
- Use the *same phrase* everywhere (e.g. “Downtown Copperas Cove” or “The Cove”)
- Don’t stack too many destinations on one sign

##### Copperas Cove application

From I-14 / Hwy 190:

“DOWNTOWN COPPERAS COVE → 1 MILE”

followed by

“THE COVE – NEXT RIGHT”

#### Fredericksburg, TX

##### Why it works

- Uses **district identity** instead of just street names
- Reinforces the idea that downtown = experience

##### What to copy

- Treat downtown as a *place*, not an address
- Layer identity with direction

##### Copperas Cove version

“THE COVE DISTRICT →”

(not “Main St.” or “First St.” alone)

#### Belton, TX

##### Why it works

- Highway signs lead to downtown parking, not just downtown streets
- Removes fear of “Where do I park?”

### **What to copy**

- Wayfinding to **parking first**, businesses second

### **Copperas Cove version**

“DOWNTOWN PARKING →  
WALK TO SHOPS & DINING”

## **II. GATEWAY MOMENTS (ENTERING DOWNTOWN)**

*(“I’ve arrived.”)*

This is where Copperas Cove is currently weakest — and where gains will be most visible.

### **Waco, TX (Downtown Core)**

#### **Why it works**

- You *feel* the transition
- Lighting, banners, and vertical elements all change at once

#### **What to copy**

- Stack cues together:
  - banners
  - lighting
  - pavement markings
  - signage

### **Copperas Cove opportunity**

At rail crossings and main entry points:

- Branded banners
- Pavement stencil: **“THE COVE”**
- Vertical sign: **WELCOME TO DOWNTOWN COPPERAS COVE**

### **Granbury, TX**

#### **Why it works**

- Entry points clearly announce downtown before you’re “in it”
- Reinforces walkability

#### **What to copy**

- Downtown announcement *before* storefronts begin

### III. WAYFINDING *WITHIN* DOWNTOWN

*(“I know where I am and what’s nearby.”)*

This is where people decide whether to **stay longer or leave**.

#### **McKinney, TX**

##### **Why it works**

- Pedestrian-scale signs
- “You Are Here” maps
- Walking distances, not driving directions

##### **What to copy**

- Distance-based language:
  - “2-minute walk”
  - “Next Block”
- Simple map icons

#### **Copperas Cove version**

“FOOD & DRINK → 2 MIN WALK” “SHOPS & ART → NEXT BLOCK”

#### **Brenham, TX**

##### **Why it works**

- Consistent look across:
  - blade signs
  - maps
  - parking signs

##### **What to copy**

- One visual system, many formats
- Nothing fancy — just consistent

#### **Elgin, TX**

##### **Why it works**

- Informal, human, slightly playful
- Makes imperfect blocks feel intentional

##### **What to copy**

- Humor lowers anxiety
- Reassures visitors they’re in the right place

#### **Copperas Cove-ready language**

- “YES, THIS IS DOWNTOWN”
- “KEEP WALKING — IT’S WORTH IT”
- “YOU’RE ALMOST THERE”

## IV. GUERRILLA + LOW-COST WAYFINDING

*(Fast, flexible, personality-driven)*

These are ideal for Copperas Cove **right now**.

### San Marcos, TX

#### Why it works

- Temporary signs tested before permanent investment
- QR codes tied to maps and events

#### What to copy

- Test → refine → formalize

### Copperas Cove version

- Sandwich boards
- Yard signs during events
- QR codes linking to:
  - o downtown map
  - o business directory
  - o event calendar

### Lockhart, TX

#### Why it works

- Doesn't over-direct
- Encourages wandering

#### What to copy

- Fewer signs, better placement
- Trust curiosity

## V. WHAT ALL GREAT WAYFINDING SYSTEMS HAVE IN COMMON

No matter the city size, the best systems:

### 1. Repeat the same words

- o Downtown
- o The Cove
- o District name

### 2. Solve fear first

- o Where do I park?

- o Am I in the right place?
  - o Is there more ahead?
3. **Use people language**
- o Walk time, not block numbers
  - o Plain English, not planner speak
4. **Layer the system**
- o Highway → gateway → pedestrian → reassurance

## VI. A SMART WAYFINDING STACK FOR COPPERAS COVE

If I were advising them directly, I'd say:

### Phase 1 (0–12 months)

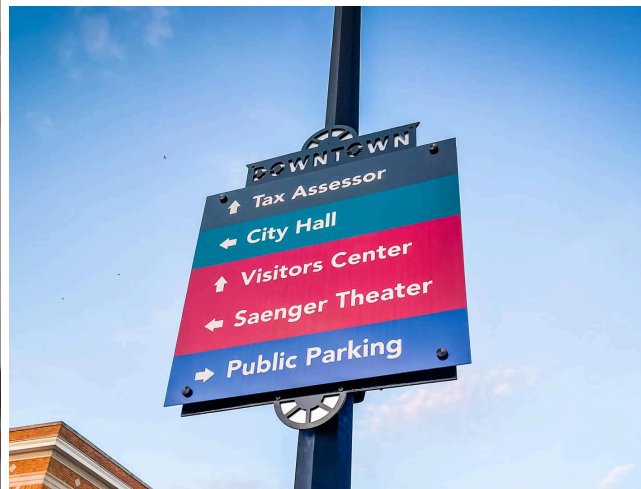
- Highway directional signs (TxDOT coordination)
- Entry banners + “Welcome to the Cove”
- Guerrilla signs + QR map

### Phase 2 (1–3 years)

- Permanent gateway markers
- Pedestrian blade signs
- Parking-first signage

### Phase 3 (3–5 years)

- Sculptural or artistic wayfinding
- District markers
- Nighttime lighting cues



# Youth-Friendly, Family-Friendly & Multi-Generational Downtown Experiences

## Proven Models Copperas Cove Can Implement

### I. EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES (Not Events)

These matter more than festivals — they build **habit**.

#### 1. Downtown Play Loops

##### What it is:

A short, walkable circuit with multiple micro-experiences kids can interact with.

##### Successful Examples

- **Brenham, TX** – interactive art + scavenger maps
- **Georgetown, TX** – splash pad + shaded seating nearby
- **Elgin, TX** – pocket park + murals + food nearby

##### Copperas Cove Version

- Murals with touchable/interactive elements
- Painted sidewalk games (hopscotch, compass roses)
- Small seating nooks for parents
- Loop connects food, art, and shops

##### Why it works

- Parents walk.
- Kids lead.
- Everyone lingers.

#### 2. Downtown Treat Anchors

##### What it is:

One or two dessert-first destinations that kids ask for by name.

##### Successful Examples

- **Granbury, TX** – ice cream + candy shops
- **Fredericksburg, TX** – fudge + gelato
- **Belton, TX** – soda shop + bakery

##### Copperas Cove Version

- Gelato shop franchise: Merry Scoops in Crockett
- Soda fountain throwback
- “after practice” downtown stop

## **Why it works**

Dessert = permission for families to visit downtown *often*.

### **3. Family-Friendly Evening Hangouts**

#### **What it is:**

Spaces where adults relax *and* kids are welcome.

#### **Successful Examples**

- **McKinney, TX** – beer gardens with games
- **San Marcos, TX** – lawn games + food trucks
- **Boerne, TX** – patios with live music

#### **Copperas Cove Version**

- Brewpub patio + cornhole
- Food trucks near seating
- String lights + casual stage

#### **Why it works**

Military families want normal, social, low-pressure places.

## **II. LOW-COST, HIGH-JOY PLACEMAKING**

### **4. Pop-Up Green Space**

#### **What it is:**

Temporary turf + seating on vacant lots or wide sidewalks.

#### **Successful Examples**

- **Elgin, TX** – temporary park before permanent build
- **Lubbock, TX** – pop-up plazas
- **Waco, TX** – interim gathering spaces

#### **Copperas Cove Version**

- Turf + shade sails
- Moveable seating
- Kid-safe zone during events

#### **Why it works**

Tests demand before capital investment.

### **5. Art You Can Touch**

#### **What it is:**

Art that invites interaction, not just photos.

### **Successful Examples**

- **Abilene, TX** – storybook murals
- **Tyler, TX** – sculpture walks
- **San Angelo, TX** – Paintbrush Alley

### **Copperas Cove Version**

- Military story murals
- Hills / rail / Cove-themed art
- Art walk with kid prompts

### **Why it works**

It gives kids a reason to slow adults down.

## **III. PROGRAMS THAT BUILD TRADITIONS**

### **6. First Friday: Family Edition**

#### **What it is:**

Monthly evening downtown with rotating activities.

#### **Successful Examples**

- **Brenham, TX**
- **Georgetown, TX**
- **Belton, TX**

#### **Copperas Cove Version**

- Chalk art
- Food trucks
- Live music early
- Shops stay open late

#### **Why it works**

Predictability builds loyalty.

### **7. Downtown Storytime + Play**

#### **What it is:**

Library or school-led activity downtown.

#### **Successful Examples**

- **McKinney, TX**
- **San Saba, TX**

#### **Copperas Cove Version**

- Library pop-ups
- Veterans reading stories
- Tie-ins with murals

### **Why it works**

Brings young families downtown in the morning/daytime.

### **8. Seasonal Traditions**

#### **What it is:**

Small, repeatable rituals that families expect every year.

#### **Successful Examples**

- **Granbury, TX** – holiday windows
- **Fredericksburg, TX** – seasonal décor
- **Georgetown, TX** – pop-up photo spots

#### **Copperas Cove Version**

- “Meet Me in the Cove” holiday moments
- Downtown scavenger hunts
- Military appreciation days

## **IV. YOUTH-FOCUSED EXPERIENCES (TEENS + TWEENS)**

### **9. Teen-Friendly Hang Zones**

#### **What it is:**

Safe, places teens *want* to be to “hang-out” (don’t over program...let them make it their own)

#### **Successful Examples**

- **San Marcos, TX**
- **Belton, TX**

#### **Copperas Cove Version**

- Game nights
- Open mic
- Skate-friendly areas
- Wi-Fi + seating

#### **Why it works**

Teens become downtown’s biggest ambassadors. See Addendum for establishing “Hype Ambassadors” (teens love social media/influencers)

### **10. Youth Markets & Makers**

#### **What it is:**

Let kids and teens sell things downtown. (ex. Lemonade Day, Young Entrepreneurs)

## **Successful Examples**

- **Georgetown, TX**
- **Abilene, TX**

## **Copperas Cove Version**

- Youth vendor days
- School partnerships
- Military kids entrepreneurship days

## **Why it works**

Families show up to support *their* kids.

## **V. WHAT ALL SUCCESSFUL FAMILY-FRIENDLY DOWNTOWNS SHARE**

They:

- Feel **safe**
- Feel **welcoming**
- Feel **easy**
- Offer **choice**
- Respect **multiple generations at once**

They don't:

- Overprogram
- Overbuild
- Exclude adults to serve kids

## **VI. WHAT I'D PRIORITIZE FOR COPPERAS COVE**

### **Quick Wins (0–12 months)**

- Downtown play loop
- Treat anchor recruitment
- Pop-up green space
- Guerrilla wayfinding for families

### **Mid-Term (1–3 years)**

- Permanent pocket park
- Regular family programming
- Youth markets

### **Long-Term (3–5+ years)**

- Signature family destination
- Downtown as “memory-making zone”

## Strategic Comparables Plan

Instead of saying “we want to be like X”, Copperas Cove should ask:

- **Who solved the problem we’re facing right now?**
- **What did they do first—not last?**
- **What did they stop doing?**
- **How did they organize people and decision-making?**

### Recommended Next Step for Copperas Cove

Create a **3–5 city peer learning cohort**, for example:

- Gatesville
- Belton
- Granbury
- Mesquite (for refreshment district learning)

Then:

- schedule peer calls or site visits
- ask very tactical questions (staffing, funding, governance, early wins)
- avoid chasing aesthetics before systems are in place

### 1) Copperas Cove Objectives → Cities That Solved Them

**Objective A: Fill vacancies + stabilize buildings (raise occupancy above ~65%)**

**Best-fit peer(s): Belton, Gatesville, Taylor (for reinvestment patterns)**

**What to learn**

- How they **recruited the “right first wave”** of businesses (not just any tenant)
- How they used **façade grants, code enforcement strategy, and incentives**
- How they tackled **problem properties** without starting a political war
- How they created “proof of momentum” so the market followed

**Objective B: Diverse, experience-based business mix**

(food, kid-friendly, retail, evening hangouts)

**Best-fit peer(s): Belton, Granbury, Johnson City**

**What to learn**

- The “**district menu**” approach: what downtown must have to function (day + night)
- How they built **anchors** (brewery, eatery, small entertainment) that unlocked spin-off businesses
- How they made downtown **family-normal** (not just festival-only)

**Objective C: Reduce over-concentration of churches/nonprofits in core blocks**

**Best-fit peer(s): Belton, Taylor**

### **What to learn**

- How they **set expectations** through zoning/overlay, incentives, and leasing norms
- How they **steered certain uses** to adjacent blocks while protecting the core
- How to do this diplomatically: “not anti-church—pro-downtown vitality”

### **Objective D: Create a true “community living room”**

(linger, walk, meet friends, make memories)

**Best-fit peer(s): Granbury, Georgetown (systems), Johnson City (small-footprint magic)**

### **What to learn**

- How they designed/maintained the **public realm**: shade, seating, lighting, crossings, bathrooms, wayfinding
- Programming cadence: **weekly rhythm** beats “big event bursts”
- The “park once” experience and **parking perception management**

### **Objective E: Tangible progress—4 blocks implemented within 10 years**

**Best-fit peer(s): Belton, Georgetown (governance), Mesquite (policy tools)**

### **What to learn**

- How they turned plans into a **phased capital program**
- What their **first 12–24 months** looked like: quick wins + enabling projects
- How they built a scoreboard (KPIs + annual reporting) that kept councils aligned

### **Objective F: Clear, repeatable identity**

“We know who we are and can say it in one sentence.”

**Best-fit peer(s): Georgetown, Johnson City, Granbury**

### **What to learn**

- How they built a brand from **true assets**, not slogans
- How they enforced consistency across:
  - banners / poles / gateways
  - wayfinding
  - events + district voice
  - business recruitment message
- How they got stakeholder buy-in so it didn’t become “staff’s brand”

### **Objective G: Wayfinding + gateways + “you can’t miss downtown”**

**Best-fit peer(s): Granbury, Georgetown, (and Mesquite for corridor + signage coordination)**

### **What to learn**

- Wayfinding systems that are **editable over time** (QR/digital directory + fixed signage)
- Coordination with TxDOT and area engineers
- How they built an “arrival moment” even when roads and rails complicate access

## **Objective H: Entertainment district / refreshment district success**

**Best-fit peer(s): Mesquite, Granbury (management + culture)**

### **What to learn**

- The ordinance mechanics and enforcement
- How they prevented it from becoming messy (security plan, boundaries, permitted containers, vendor compliance)
- How they tied it to programming and business recruitment

## **Objective I: Alley activation + arts as economic development**

**Best-fit peer(s): San Angelo (alley model), Georgetown (standards), Belton (integration)**

### **What to learn**

- How to do alleys safely: lighting, surfaces, maintenance, code, ownership permissions
- How they created repeatable “art + activation” programming
- How to make it **evergreen** not just a one-time mural

## **Objective J: Work productively with the “big property owner” dynamic**

(one prominent owner + political influence)

**Best-fit peer(s): Gatesville, Belton (soft power + leverage), Taylor (long game)**

### **What to learn**

- “Vision + incentives + accountability” sequencing
- How they structured a **developer/property-owner roundtable**
- How to use carrots (programs, visibility, grants) + sticks (fire/code enforcement) without blowing up trust

## **2) “Who to Call + What to Ask” Playbook**

Use this like a script. The magic is not the city—it’s asking the *right questions*.

### **A) Downtown governance + staffing**

#### **Who to call**

- Downtown manager / Main Street manager (if applicable)
- City manager assistant / economic development staff
- Chamber CEO (if chamber is active downtown)

#### **What to ask**

- “What is your downtown management structure today—and what was it *before* it worked?”
- “If you could fund only one position first, what would it be responsible for in the first 90 days?”
- “How do you coordinate city departments so downtown doesn’t get ‘lost in the shuffle’?”
- “What does your downtown advisory group/board do monthly—specifically?”

## **B) Vacancies + business recruitment + incentive strategy**

### **Who to call**

- EDC staff (especially if Type A/B constraints matter)
- Planning/zoning lead
- A property owner who rehabilitated a building (the “hero” voice)

### **What to ask**

- “What business types did you recruit first—and why?”
- “What incentives did you offer that actually moved the needle?”
- “What did you stop doing that wasn’t working (or was attracting the wrong tenants)?”
- “How did you handle a building that was functionally storage / unsafe / code noncompliant?”
- “How do you price leases in a way that supports entrepreneurship but doesn’t undervalue downtown?”

## **C) Refreshment/entertainment district (policy + operations)**

### **Who to call**

- City attorney or staff lead on ordinance
- Police chief / event operations lead
- Downtown merchants association chair (if exists)

### **What to ask**

- “What boundaries did you choose and why?”
- “What were your unexpected operational headaches?”
- “How do you keep it family-friendly and safe?”
- “How did you communicate rules to visitors so it didn’t create confusion?”
- “What does success look like on a normal weekend—not a special event?”

## **D) Placemaking: streetscape, shade, seating, lighting, ADA, parking**

### **Who to call**

- Public Works Director / City Engineer
- Planner who handled streetscape/ADA
- TxDOT area engineer (if state highway runs through)

### **What to ask**

- “What was your first streetscape phase and what did it cost?”
- “What design choices do you regret?”
- “How did you handle ADA compliance block by block?”
- “How did you solve the parking *perception* problem?”
- “What maintenance plan did you create so improvements didn’t degrade?”

## **E) Identity + brand + wayfinding system**

### **Who to call**

- Communications/marketing staff
- Downtown org lead

- Wayfinding consultant contact (if they used one)
- A business owner who benefitted from the brand shift

### What to ask

- “What is your one-sentence identity statement?”
- “How did you get buy-in across stakeholders?”
- “What did you standardize first (banners, signs, typography, color palette, gateway markers)?”
- “How do you keep the brand consistent as leadership changes?”

### 3) High-ROI Site Visit Itineraries (2–3 Options)

These are designed for **staff + council + major property owners**. Each itinerary includes the *why*, a suggested *half-day schedule*, and the “must-see” elements.

#### Itinerary 1: Belton + Gatesville

**Best for:** occupancy, business mix, practical public realm wins, “not a tourist town but it works”

#### Why this is high ROI

- Very relevant Central Texas context
- Shows what “functional + charming” looks like without fantasy budgets

#### Half-day structure (ideal)

1. **Welcome working session (60–75 min)**
  - Downtown management model
  - Incentives used
  - What they did in first 24 months
2. **Walking tour (60 min)**
  - Key blocks that changed
  - Before/after buildings
  - Public space nodes
3. **Owner-to-owner conversation (45 min)**
  - Bring one Copperas Cove key property owner into a peer conversation
4. **Debrief lunch (45 min)**
  - “What would we steal and adapt?” list
  - Top 3 policy changes + top 3 physical changes

#### What Copperas Cove should look for

- The “anchor” businesses and what came after
- How they created evening energy
- How they set standards without over-regulating

#### Itinerary 2: Mesquite

**Best for:** refreshment district mechanics, policy tools, “identity came later but momentum came first”

#### Why this is high ROI

- Direct relevance to Copperas Cove’s interest in an entertainment district

- Great for council + police + city attorney + EDC all together

### Half-day structure

1. **Ordinance + operations briefing (60 min)**
  - Boundaries, rules, container policy, enforcement
2. **Tour of district during an active period (60–90 min)**
  - Go when it's functioning (evening or weekend)
3. **Roundtable: “what we'd do differently” (45 min)**
4. **Implementation checklist handoff (30 min)**
  - Ask them for their internal docs, signage templates, and event ops plan

### What to pay attention to

- How they communicate rules clearly
- How they keep it clean/family-friendly
- How the district supports business recruitment

### Itinerary 3: Georgetown + (optional) Taylor

**Best for:** governance, identity, long-term plan execution, standards, and “downtown always wins” culture

### Why this is high ROI

- Shows the **systems** behind success (staffing + policy + consistency)
- Useful for Copperas Cove’s “4 blocks in 10 years” objective

### Half-day structure

1. **Governance + funding deep dive (75 min)**
  - staffing model
  - annual work plan
  - performance reporting
2. **Brand + wayfinding walk (45–60 min)**
  - what's consistent and why
3. **Capital improvements + maintenance conversation (45 min)**
  - how they keep it looking great
4. **Council-to-council peer chat (30 min)**
  - “how did you keep political alignment over time?”

### What to pay attention to

- How identity shows up everywhere without being cheesy
- How they handle the boring-but-essential parts: maintenance, standards, implementation discipline

### Quick recommendation: which itinerary first?

If Copperas Cove wants the fastest “we can do this” momentum:

1. **Belton + Gatesville** (most directly applicable day-to-day)
2. **Mesquite** (if entertainment/refreshment district is moving quickly)
3. **Georgetown + Taylor** (to build long-term systems and standards)

# Learn from The “Best” Texas Downtowns

## **BEST TEXAS DOWNTOWN PLAYBOOK (Webinar available in Resource Library)**

### ***What Denison & Georgetown Teach Us About Real Revitalization***

**This isn't about one project.**

It's about building a downtown ecosystem that drives economic strength, community pride, and long-term transformation.

## **THE 5 PILLARS OF SUCCESSFUL DOWNTOWN TRANSFORMATION**

### **1. Relationships Before Projects**

*“Your champions are built long before you ask for support.”*

#### **What you did**

- Face-to-face meetings with businesses and property owners early
- Ongoing touchpoints (business breakfasts, meetings, updates)
- Engagement during planning, not after decisions

#### **Why it works**

Trust makes hard things possible: streetscapes, construction, policy changes, funding, and long timelines.

#### **Do This**

- Create a “New Business Welcome” process
- Host a quarterly Downtown Business Roundtable
- Keep a running contact list + notes on each stakeholder

### **2. Downtown Operates as an Economic Engine**

*Downtown is not just pretty — it produces measurable value.*

#### **What they did**

- Business retention visits + targeted recruitment
- Close coordination with Economic Development
- Programming tied to economic outcomes (shopping events, foot traffic drivers)

#### **Proof from the webinar**

- Denison: **26% of citywide sales tax** comes from downtown
- Georgetown: **\$42M reinvested in 3 years**

#### **Do This**

- Track downtown sales tax share (via finance dept.)
- Track number of businesses + jobs
- Identify your “desired business mix” and recruit intentionally

### **3. Preservation = Competitive Advantage**

*“You can't build a historic building.”*

#### **What they did**

- Used historic buildings as identity + reinvestment drivers
- Paired preservation with infill development
- Used design guidelines + review processes to create predictability

## **Why it works**

Historic fabric attracts investment, tourism, authenticity, and local pride.

### **Do This**

- Adopt or update design guidelines
- Promote tax credit projects as wins
- Frame preservation as an *economic* strategy, not nostalgia

## **4. Partnerships Multiply Capacity**

*No downtown succeeds alone.*

### **Key Partners Highlighted**

- Economic Development
- Chamber & Downtown Associations
- Preservation groups
- Parks & Rec
- Arts & Culture
- TXD & Main Street networks

### **What changed the trajectory**

- EDC support for grants and recruitment
- City council support → more staff + budget
- Sponsorships funding façade and sign grants
- Statewide networks sharing solutions

### **Do This**

- Make a “Partnership Map” (who helps with what)
- Meet with each partner annually to align goals
- Tie partnerships to specific deliverables

## **5. Inclusion + Experience Build Belonging**

Downtown must feel like it’s for *everyone*.

### **What they did**

- Multigenerational events (festivals, family programming)
- Translation of materials (Spanish noted)
- ADA-accessible websites
- Sensory supports (earplugs at events)
- Representation in marketing imagery
- Volunteer engagement as a pathway to belonging

### **Why it works**

People protect what they feel part of.

### **Do This**

- Audit your event calendar (Who is this for?)
- Review marketing visuals for representation
- Add low-cost accessibility improvements

## **TOP 10 ACTIONS ANY DOWNTOWN CAN START NOW**

1. Meet every new business owner within 30 days
2. Track sales tax and reinvestment data quarterly
3. Host a recurring “Downtown Update” meeting or breakfast
4. Create a downtown business retention visit schedule
5. Identify your top 3 target business categories
6. Map your key partners and their roles
7. Add at least one visible public art or placemaking element
8. Launch one family-friendly event if you don’t have one
9. Review your marketing materials for inclusivity
10. Start thinking in 5–10 year timelines, not annual wins

### **STARTER METRICS TRACKING TEMPLATE**

Use this quarterly or annually.

<b>Category</b>	<b>What to Track</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>Economic Impact</b>	Downtown % of city sales tax	Finance Dept
	Number of downtown businesses	Field count / permits
	Jobs (FT/PT estimate)	Business survey
<b>Reinvestment</b>	Private investment (facades, renovations, new builds)	Permitting office
	Public investment (streetscape, infrastructure, grants)	City budget
<b>Engagement</b>	Grants awarded	Program tracking
	Event attendance	Event reports
	Survey participation numbers	Engagement tools
<b>Experience</b>	Business meeting attendance	Sign-in sheets
	Number of events	Event calendar
<b>Inclusion</b>	Public art pieces added/rotated	Arts tracking
	Materials translated	Marketing review
	Accessibility improvements made	Project list

### **MINDSET SHIFTS FROM AWARD-WINNING DOWNTOWNS**

- **Think “we,” not “I.”**
- **Patience + persistence win.** Major projects can take 5–8 years.
- **Clean and cared-for matters.** Pride is visible.
- **Tell your story with numbers.**