

DOWNTOWN ARTS, CULTURE AND EVENTS PLAN

Downtown Plano is emerging as an arts district, further contributing to the area's rebirth as a diverse, vibrant urban center. A city's strength and reputation are tied to its economy, schools, parks and neighborhoods, but a city must also celebrate the arts to provide a superior quality of life. Great cities are known by their architecture and urban design. They have a strong cultural infrastructure of museums, theaters and institutions. More importantly, great cities of every size value artists and the creation of art. They cultivate artistic expression in all forms, including music, dance, drama, painting, sculpture and even the culinary arts. The arts reveal a city's character and give it identity. A strong community celebrates the arts. The arts build human understanding and empathy. The arts tell of a city's past and its vision for the future.

The arts should be celebrated throughout a city, but artists and artistic endeavors often gravitate to districts that provide a physical and social environment conducive to creating and sharing art. Large cities often have multiple art districts, each with a distinctive culture. Arts districts often begin organically through the investment of artistic entrepreneurs who are attracted to older commercial districts with visual appeal, but which are economically depressed. The opening of a gallery, small theater or entertainment venue provides the catalyst that attracts more artistic investment and synergy. In Dallas, districts such as Bishop Arts, Deep Ellum and the Cedars took root in this manner. Downtown Plano bears some similarity to these districts, especially with respect to restaurants. Growing and sustaining an arts district requires cooperation and positive action among property and business owners, artists, residents and government. This is also true for Downtown Plano. The following plan describes the goals, objectives, organization and actions for furthering downtown's artistic development. It was prepared in collaboration with downtown stakeholders and artists.

The Arts in Downtown Plano

The arts have a long history in downtown. The opening of the Houston and Texas Central Railroad depot in 1872 firmly established the location as the community's center of commerce. As downtown grew, hotels, saloons and opera houses were added. In 1909, the city opened a civic auditorium to host educational and cultural programs. The modern resurgence of the arts dates to the decision in the mid-1980s to enlarge Haggard Park for events and festivals. The improvements to the park included construction of a bandstand and the restoration of the Interurban Railway Station for use as a museum. The independent non-profit organization, ArtCentre of Plano, moved from Collin Creek Mall to downtown in 1991, and was soon followed by the Plano Repertory Theatre. The Plano Courtyard Theater opened in 2001 and the Cox Playhouse in 2003. In 2006, the Douglass Community Mural was completed and dedicated. During the last 15 years, more than ten restaurants have opened downtown, providing food, beverages and entertainment. Two galleries are in downtown and other artists' studios are located in the adjacent neighborhoods. Later this

year, The McCall Plaza Stage and the Saigling House cultural event center will be added to Downtown Plano's entertainment and cultural amenities.



Goal

Enrich life, build community and strengthen Downtown Plano's identity and sense of place through celebration and support of the arts.

Objectives

- Promote a variety of art venues downtown to create, display and perform the arts.
- Use all of downtown - dedicated venues, businesses, streets and public spaces to further the arts.
- Attract artists and patrons of the arts to downtown.
- Increase awareness of downtown as an arts district.
- Use the arts to attract people to work, shop, eat and live in downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Build stronger ties to the community and region through festivals and other artistic activities and events.
- Create a unique identity and sense of place through the arts.
- Preserve historic buildings and encourage adaptive reuse where appropriate.
- Establish downtown as destination for arts and heritage tourism.



Defining the District

The Downtown Plano arts district does not have precise boundaries. It is generally described as the commercial core and the surrounding area within walking distance. The Douglass, Haggard Park and Old Towne neighborhoods are included and provide homes and studios for area artists.

Venues

Theatres, outdoor stages, galleries and other venues are needed for displaying and performing the arts. Downtown Plano has a good base of existing and planned public venues. There is demand for additional space, but the near term focus should be improved management and use of the existing and planned venues. Below is a brief description of downtown's venues and their primary target use.

- Courtyard Theater - A 321 seat, state-of-the-art, flexible format theater, with a large gallery space and reception hall unlike any other performing arts center in the DFW Metroplex. The modern, intimate feel is well suited for theatrical, dance and musical performances, lectures and exhibitions of visual art. Ideal events for this space are:
 - Theater performances for mainstream audiences including drama, comedy and musicals
 - Concerts from multiple musical genres - classical, rock, country, etc.

- Small ensembles and piano recitals
- Lectures, including TEDx
- Formal City events
- Cox Playhouse (the sister space to the Courtyard Theater) - An intimate black-box theater accommodating 80-100 persons in a wide variety of formats. Excellent for small, avant-garde theater and music performances and can be adapted as a gallery for display of visual arts. Ideal events include:
 - Niche market theater
 - Cabaret
 - Experimental theater or dance
 - Stand-up comedy
 - Niche market concerts
- Saigling House - A historic 4,000 square foot home restored and repurposed as a cultural, art and event center. The Saigling House serves the community as a full-time arts hub through the city's partnership with the ArtCentre of Plano. The house is well-suited for both touring and special exhibits of local and region visual art. Classrooms and meeting rooms can accommodate educational programs and cultural and social events. In addition to the home and art gallery, the large garden space can host a multitude of events, such as:
 - Weddings and receptions
 - Private parties and reunions
 - Catered dinners
 - Meetings, lectures and recitals
 - Small ensemble concerts
- Haggard Park and Bandstand - A five acre park, with a small lake and bandstand, provides an ideal setting for celebrations, ceremonies, festivals or simple leisure activities. It is a short walk to the Saigling House and the Courtyard Theater and Cox Playhouse. This location is perfect for multiple and concurrent activities and events. Ideal uses include:

- Festivals
 - Art shows
 - Weddings
 - Concerts
- McCall Plaza - Slightly larger than one-half acre, the McCall Plaza is designed as a flexible outdoor space with a covered stage designed for musical performances. The parking lot can accommodate standing room crowds of 500 people or more for performances, with dining opportunities in local restaurants and from food trucks. Small events are oriented to the plaza with room for 100-150 people. Ideal events would be:
 - Concerts - mainstream genres, regional acts
 - Local bands and “Battle of the Bands” contests
 - Street performance music and dance
 - Mimes and performance art
- 15th Street - 15th is downtown’s Main Street. On special occasions, 15th Street can be closed to traffic to accommodate large festivals and street fairs.
- Interurban Railway Museum - A historical museum and visitor center, the Interurban also serves as an archival repository for historians and an educational space for children. Exhibits include a train car that once traveled the tracks through downtown. Ideal uses include:
 - Meetings
 - Small receptions
 - Lectures



Future Venues

Performance Venue - Consideration should be given to the development of a larger multi-purpose theater for community and regional performances. No site has been identified, but ideally it would be located within walking distance of K Avenue and 15th Street.

Meeting and Reception Space - An indoor multi-purpose dining and meeting room not exceeding 1,500 square feet should be built in Haggard Park, east of the Saigling House.

Studio Space - There is a lack of studio space in downtown and the immediate surrounding area. Artists need large spaces with good ceiling clearance at low rent. It is possible that some of the commercial space along the K Avenue corridor may be suitable for conversion to studios.



Management and Coordination

Coordination of downtown activities and events is primarily the responsibility of five organizations: the City of Plano, the ArtCentre of Plano, the Plano Art Association, the Historic Downtown Plano Association and the Plano Conservancy. A brief explanation of the role of each follows:

- City of Plano – The city owns all the public venues listed previously. It is directly responsible for the management of the Courtyard Theater, Cox Playhouse, McCall Plaza and the use of streets and public rights-of-way for events. The city manages booking, scheduling and technical support for these facilities. In addition, the city produces some shows and events

at these facilities. The city maintains a master events calendar for all downtown events.

- ArtCentre of Plano – The ArtCentre manages and operates the Saigling House and the bandstand in Haggard Park. In addition to conducting its own program of arts, cultural and educational activities, the ArtCentre books, schedules and provides supports to other organizations and individuals wanting to make use of the facilities. The ArtCentre is responsible for the organization of an Arts Leadership Council dedicated to maintaining communication among arts organizations.
- Plano Art Association – The Plano Art Association encourages artistic development of its members, advances artistic values in community projects, provides art education and sponsors creative activities related to art. The Association's offices and gallery are located in Eastside Village I adjacent to the DART rail platform.
- Historic Downtown Plano Association – HDPa is an organization of downtown property owners and businesses. It is responsible for promoting and marketing downtown, including conducting festivals and special events. HDPa is supported through member dues, event income and funds generated by the downtown Public Improvement District.
- Plano Conservancy – The Plano Conservancy advocates and supports the preservation of Plano's historic assets. Its primary program of services is the operation of the Interurban Museum located in Haggard Park. This facility is also available for special events.

Art and Cultural Organizations

Plano has a sizeable number of arts-related organizations. Most have very small administrative staff, with some part-time positions for specific technical requirements. Growth of the arts organizations is critical to the city's cultural development and success of downtown. Most of the arts and cultural organizations are dependent on the city for funding through the hotel/motel tax. The City Council has capped annual support from this source at \$800,000 per fiscal year. Although many groups do receive philanthropic support from businesses and individual giving, current funding is a significant limitation on organizational growth. Much work is needed to build sponsorships and general philanthropic giving.

Organizations Conducting Programs Downtown

- Repertory Theater Company – founded in 1986 and based in Richardson, the Repertory Theater Company stages theatrical productions and sponsors a youth educational program in theatrical arts.
- ArtCentre of Plano – founded in 1982, the ArtCentre of Plano is a community arts center for diverse arts programs and education.
- Plano Art Association – formed in 1969, the Association has a gallery located in Downtown Plano and sponsors exhibits and arts education programs.
- Men of Note – formed in 1985 after a merger with a Dallas group devoted to a cappella harmony, the Men of Note perform regularly at the Courtyard Theater and support local charities.
- Theatre Britain – promotes British theater and performs at the Cox Playhouse.
- Plano Community Band – performs an annual series of free summer concerts in Haggard Park.
- Edge Dance – sponsors a children's theater program and offers dance recitals for its students at the Courtyard Theater.
- Dallas Cirque Theater – features acrobatics and other aerial acts as part of its performances held at the Courtyard Theater.
- Plano Metropolitan Ballet – founded in 1987, Plano Metropolitan Ballet offers dance classes for children and performs at the Courtyard Theater.
- Plano Children's Theater – founded in 1991, Plano Children's Theater provides performing arts education for children and family entertainment.



Photo Courtesy Mike Newman

Events and Activities

Events and activities are important to attract people to Downtown Plano and increase regional awareness. Major festivals hold the greatest opportunity for increasing exposure, but they are resource intensive and revenues seldom cover true costs. Festivals are not uniform in their benefits to businesses and organizations, and should be planned to minimize disruption to business operations and residents. Four large annual festivals are recommended. Each should be limited to a single day in duration. Smaller events to be held in only a portion of downtown may be conducted with greater frequency.

- Festivals
 - Dickens
 - Plano International Festival
 - Steins on 15th
 - Party on the Bricks
 - Asia Fest
- Events
 - Haggard Park Arts Show
 - Historic Tour and Home Show
 - Night Out on 15th
- Series
 - Courtyard Texas Music Series

- McCall Plaza Performances
- Movie Nights
- Thursday Night Live Plano
- Unscheduled Events
 - Parties and Receptions
 - Gallery Shows
 - Organizational Activities

Individual Initiatives

The most significant contributions to the arts will come from individual initiatives. Below are just a few of the ways that shops, restaurants and other downtown businesses can foster and support the arts:

- Encourage street musicians and artists in downtown.
- Display art on consignment for sale in businesses and restaurants.
- Provide live music, poetry slams and stand-up comedy.
- Incorporate the arts in business marketing.
- Offer discounts for people who attend a downtown event or are benefactors to an arts organization.
- Post announcements of upcoming events in store windows and on websites and social media.
- Open private art galleries.

Additional Recommendations

The following are additional recommendations for enhancing the arts in downtown Plano:

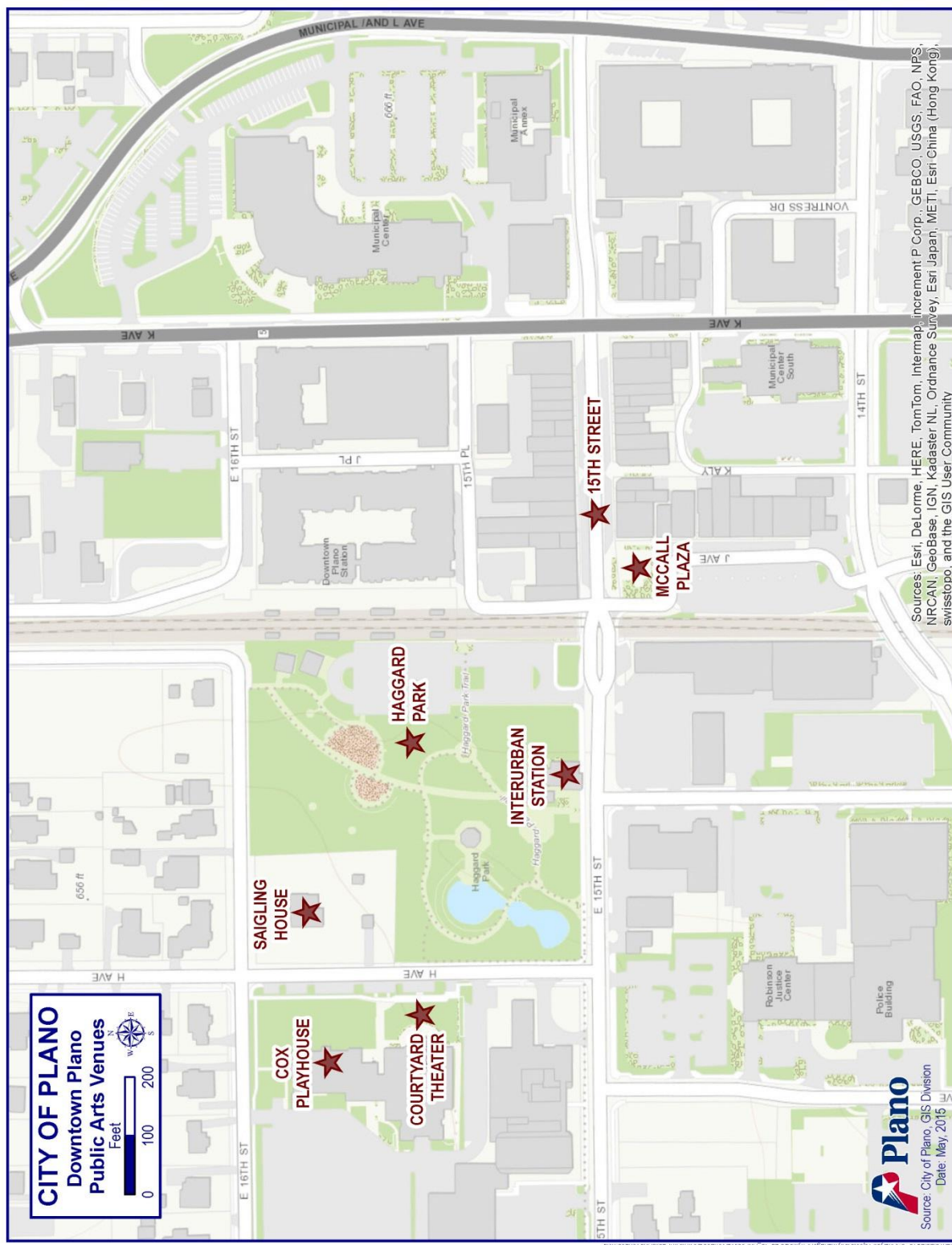
- Review and update zoning regulations for artists' studios and galleries as an accessory use in neighborhoods adjacent to downtown.
- Develop a parking management plan for events and festivals.
- Seek corporate sponsors to support downtown events and arts organizations.
- Incorporate the arts in downtown marketing.
- Conduct a cultural exchange program with other similar arts districts in the region.
- Seek formal designation as a Cultural District from the Texas Commission on the Arts.
- Link DART and ART, by offering discounts for DART riders.
- Establish an arts leaders' network for sharing information, ideas and schedules.
- Consider incentives for working artists to locate downtown and in adjacent neighborhoods.
- Develop cooperative programs with area universities to teach, perform and exhibit the arts downtown.

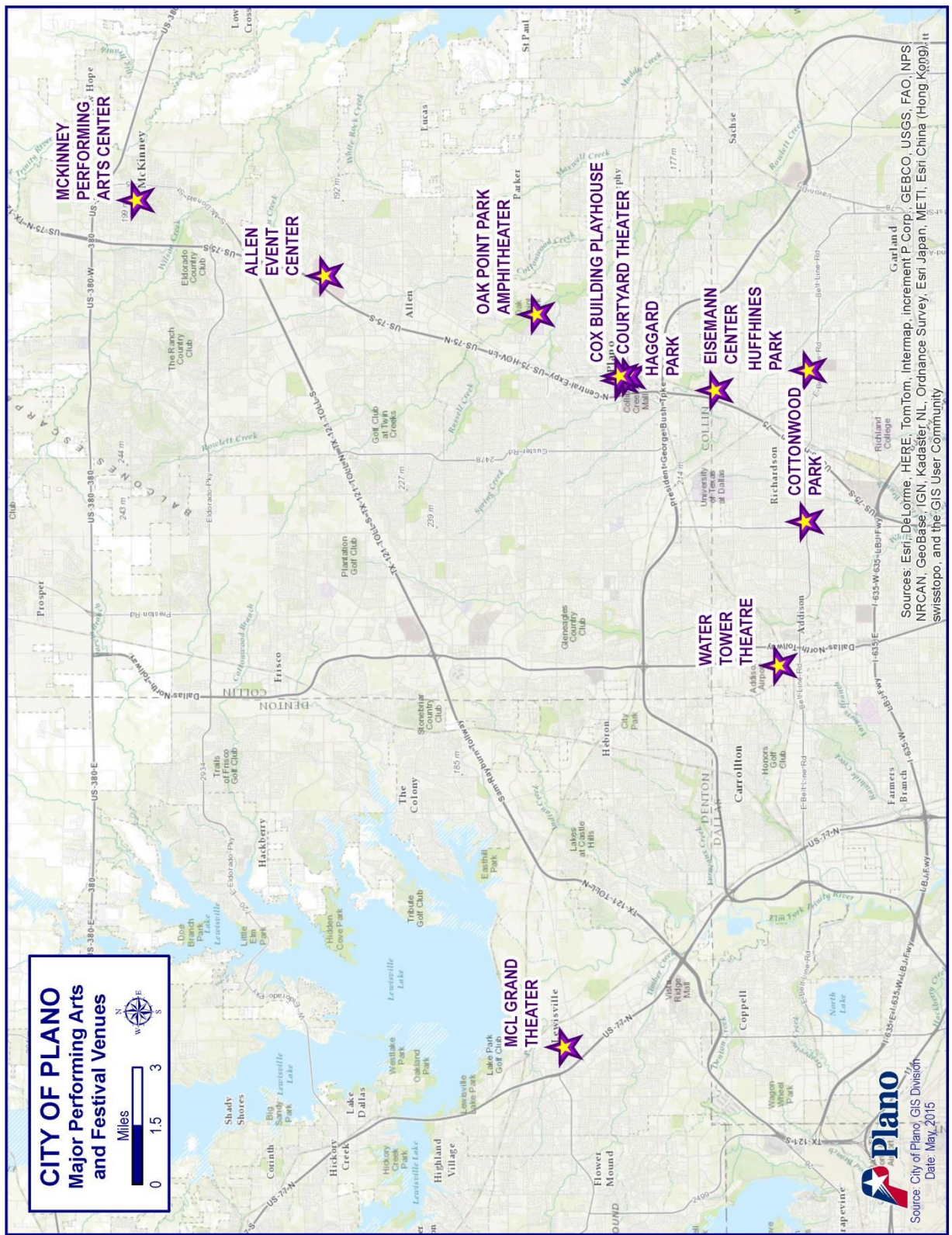
- Develop an arts themed way-finding signage program to lead people to downtown.
- Encourage extended stays in downtown by promoting development of boutique hotels and bed and breakfast facilities.
- Encourage all Plano arts organizations to conduct at least one event or performance in Downtown Plano.
- Attract a boutique hotel development to Downtown Plano.
- Expand and improve the use of downtown signage and kiosks inform visitors to art venues and activities.
- Develop an interactive arts space for children.
- Increase the display of public art downtown, including streetlight banners and murals on blank parking garage walls.
- Seek grant funding to support the arts.

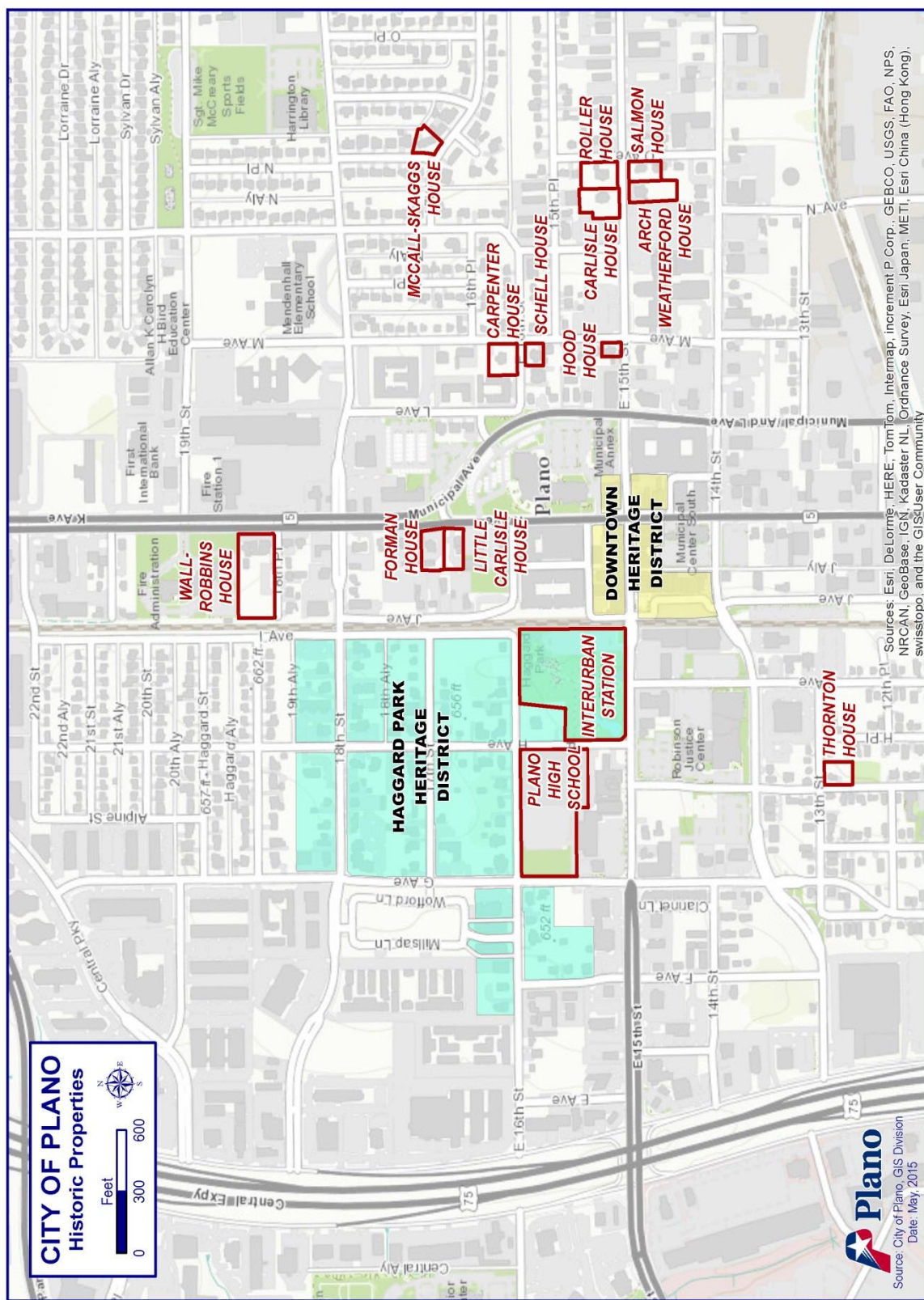


Summary

The long-term success of Downtown Plano's establishment as a regional arts district requires collective action. Marketing, festivals, events, fundraising and other initiatives require significant coordination and management. The arts certainly add an important dimension, but must be balanced with the other core functions of downtown. However, community civic and business leaders know that art districts are place makers that enrich the community fabric and contribute to the city's economic vitality. Downtown Plano has the potential to become one of these important places.







City of Plano

2013 ACS Population Estimate	266,740
2015 Population Estimate	271,140

2013 ACS 5 Year Summary Data

Median Age	37.5
-------------------	------

Race and Ethnicity

Hispanic	14.6%
Non-Hispanic	85.4%

African American or Black	6.9%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.4%
Asian	18.1%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0.1%
Some Other Race	0.2%
White	57.6%

Foreign Born	23.9%
--------------	-------

Educational Attainment

No High School Diploma	6.6%
High School Diploma/GED	13.3%
Some College, No Degree	19.1%
Associates Degree	6.8%
Bachelor's Degree	34.0%
Graduate/Professional Degree	20.2%

Household Income Distribution

Under \$25,000	11.1%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	17.9%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	16.9%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	13.6%
\$100,000 to \$149,000	19.1%
Over \$150,000	21.5%

Median Household Income	\$82,484
--------------------------------	----------

Per Capita Income	\$40,938
--------------------------	----------

Poverty

Population below poverty	7.7%
--------------------------	------

Median Housing Value	\$217,800
-----------------------------	-----------

3 Mile Radius of Downtown Plano

(Source: 2013 American Community Survey (ACS))

Total Population	89,979
-------------------------	--------

Median Age	41.1 years
-------------------	------------

Race and Ethnicity

Hispanic	25.5%
Non-Hispanic	74.5%
African American or Black	8.3%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.2%
Asian	9.2%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0.1%
Some other Race	0.0%
White, Non-Hispanic	54.6%

Educational Attainment

No high school diploma	12.6%
High School Diploma and Higher	87.4%
Bachelor's Degree or higher	40.9%

Household Income Distribution

Under \$25,000	14.4%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	23.3%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	18.7%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	14.4%
\$100,000 to \$149,000	16.2%
Over \$150,000	13.1%

For more demographic and community information visit:

<http://www.plano.gov/664/Maps-Demographics>

<http://www.planotexas.org/>