

PROPOSALS FOR HISTORIC DOWNTOWN RICHARDSON

Adopted unanimously by the Directors of
The Richardson Historical & Genealogical Society

November 16, 2022

Presented to the City of Richardson

November 17, 2022

Introduction

There is no question that Downtown Richardson—largely the two blocks of East Main Street that lie between Interurban Street and Greenville Avenue—is the historic heart of the city. This is the place where Richardson was “born” in 1873, when the Houston & Texas Central Railway built a depot here, and also the business, social, and governmental center of the town until well after the middle of the twentieth century—the spot where nearly everything important in Richardson’s early history occurred. This is also the place where the city’s oldest structures, mostly commercial buildings that bore witness to those events, still stand. For these reasons, we believe that it is vital that this small but significant area not only be preserved, but also called to the attention of both citizens and visitors, so that they and future generations might come to appreciate the historical weight and worth of this noteworthy district.

The following list are proposals for specific actions that could be taken by the City of Richardson to achieve these ends.

1. A BROCHURE OR LEAFLET, with map, listing the most significant historic sites in Downtown Richardson, to be freely available at all the current businesses in this district.
2. IDENTIFYING SIGNAGE. There should be erected two large signs—one on the right-hand side of East Main Street, at the intersection of E. Main and Interurban Street and another at the intersection of E. Main and Greenville Avenue—that read “Welcome to HISTORIC DOWNTOWN RICHARDSON, Established 1873,” or something similar. A good example of this sort of signage are the signs, already erected by the City, that identify Richardson’s various parks and neighborhoods, or perhaps a more decorative sign, made of wood or some other, more durable material, such as the prototype seen on the following page.



Prototype Downtown Richardson Identifying Sign
(Modeled after a sign erected in Denison, Texas)

3. IDENTIFYING BANNERS. Identifying banners, such as the City already uses to announce upcoming events, could be displayed from poles alongside E. Main Street.



Prototype Identifying Banner
(Modeled after banners displayed in Denison, Texas,)

4. SIGNPOSTS. Signposts such as the one seen below, erected in Denison, Texas, could point out the location of district businesses, including those not housed in historically-significant building.



A sign such as this one, erected on Denison's historic Main Street, could be erected on Main Street in Historic Downtown Richardson.

5. EXPLANATORY SIGNAGE: In addition to the above, there could be erected near or affixed to the older buildings in this district signage that explains to passersby the historical significance of each building—its age, for example, and what sort of businesses occupied the site over the years, and anything of importance that occurred there. The explanatory signs that one sees in state and national parks are good examples. The sort of signs the City of Richardson has already erected in some parks, such as trail maps, are another good example, as are the explanatory signs seen in Allen’s Old Stone Dam Park, shown below:



Signs such as these could also be erected at sites where there is no longer a structure to be seen, such as the site of the old train depots or Mrs. Allen’s post office, for instance.

6. **ANNUAL EVENTS.** In order to bring more people into Historic Downtown Richardson, and to acquaint them with it, the City of Richardson could hold one or more annual events in the district. A two-or-three-day **MAIN STREET FESTIVAL**, for example, similar in style to the old Richardson Community Fairs of the 1920s through 1970s, could be held, featuring live outdoor music, street vendors and entertainers, carnival-style rides and games, fireworks, and a special attraction of some kind, would almost certainly attract people to the area. An arts and crafts fair, something like those already held in public parks, could also be scheduled.
7. **SEASONAL AND HOLIDAY DECORATIONS.** Seasonal lighting and decorations of a secular nature, along with a large community holiday tree, could be erected and displayed in December. In July, there could be patriotic decorations such as flags and banners. Seasonal banners and decorations likewise.
8. **HERITAGE PARK.** The small park recently created at the NW corner of E. Main and Greenville Avenue could be designated “Heritage Park.” A statue of a pioneer or turn-of-the-twentieth-century family could be erected. A bust on a pedestal of Alfred Stephen Richardson, the city’s namesake, could be erected,
9. **REPLICA DEPOT.** On vacant land in the district, a replica of Richardson’s first train depot could be erected and used as a combination visitor center and museum. A vintage steam locomotive or Interurban car could be obtained and placed on tracks nearby, such as was done in Allen, Texas. (See photo below.)



Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.