

Bossier Plan

Chapter 10

Image & Design

All cities have an identity, an independent character that forms the city's unique personality. This character is demonstrated by the physical image of the city. It is found in the visual quality of the built and natural environment that defines the city's physical space. The visual elements, the parts of a city that residents and visitors see, are a reflection of the values held by the city's citizens and leaders.

This section of the Master Plan addresses the visual image of the study area. The chapter summarizes the visual image and physical conditions in the study area. Goals for improvement are outlined and finally, the chapter proposes concepts for the improvement and standardization of Bossier's visual image.

To foster economic development and support a good quality of life, cities must pay close attention to their visual image as they address their growth and renewal. This section of the master plan provides Bossier City with recommendations for improving existing conditions, and guidelines for use in new development. Using these concepts, and applying them to each specific situation, Bossier City will reshape its image, projecting a new character for the 21st Century.

The Built Environment

Human habitat is comprised of two distinct components. First, is the natural environment in which the community, town or city is located? Bossier City benefits from the lush southern climate and river delta setting in which it resides. The natural environment provides a number of amenities as well as challenges.

Within this natural setting lies the other component of human habitation, the built environment. The built environment is the physical space, which has been manipulated by human

activity to provide additional amenities such as housing, shelter for commercial activity, and transportation routes. This combination of natural and built

environments establishes the parameters for a city's identity.

Bossier, like other cities, is shaped by connections and divisions between its parts. Areas of common activity are successful if unified and at the same time separated from other areas, which are not compatible. Different areas of a city each have their own character based on the activities within the area and on the visual elements that give it identity.

Different areas of a city are successful if they are connected to form a unified whole. It is the activities within each area, the visual quality of physical elements, and the connection and separation that make up a city's character.

To improve or control the quality of the visual image, a city must control the quality of specific elements that contribute to the image. We can identify these physical elements, explore their uses, and propose ways to improve their performance for Bossier City. Consistent improvement of performance for each element will result in an improved performance of all and demonstrate the complete character of Bossier City.

The visual elements, the parts of a city that residents and visitors see, are a reflection of the values held by the city's citizens and leaders.

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Image Reflects Values

The natural setting for a city is a given condition. But the built environment is established and developed by the hand of man. The built environment is the visual component, which we control. More importantly, since the residents of a city control the appearance of the built environment, it is a reflection of their collective values. The appearance of new development represents current values. The appearance of older, existing structures and development represent the values at the time they were established, as well as the attitudes of citizens toward existing conditions. To control the image of the entire city, attention must be given not only to new development, but also to the appearance of what exists and has been in place for some time.

Often, residents become accustomed to the visible environment around them. Even when conditions are not attractive, familiarity can blind citizens to poor visual image. Those who are not familiar with an area pay a great deal of attention to visual quality, and make judgments about the character of a city based on the visual elements they encounter. City residents and leaders must remain vigilant, managing the existing conditions within a city while controlling the quality of new growth and development. Bossier has taken steps to change its visual character, but more work is needed.

To fully leverage economic opportunity and encourage economic opportunity and positive development, Bossier City must focus on and control the quality of its visual character.

Change in a city's visual image can occur. But it takes the collective will of the citizens and community leadership to make the change. The results are rewarding however. Since the image is a statement of the community's character, the image is also a statement to all who visit. We all know that "first impressions" are lasting. It is no less so with the visual impression of a city. Visitors, investors, tourists and prospective new residents base their assessment of a city's character on the images they see when they first arrive. Visual image is vital in communicating values. To fully leverage economic opportunity and encourage positive development, Bossier City must focus on and control the quality of its visual character.

Existing Conditions

Existing conditions are the starting point for change and improvement of visual image. The planning team members spent significant time riding the major corridors in and around Bossier, visiting each of the distinct neighborhoods, and documenting conditions with photograph and sketch. In addition, team leaders attended four Community Meetings to gather input from citizens of the area. Visitors to the meetings expressed strong support for improving the visual environment. Sketches depicting design options were on display and these generated a consensus that image enhancements are needed in many parts of Bossier. Team members collected comments on landscape, signage, lighting, and other design aspects. These comments are reflected in the recommendations provided within this chapter.

Form Givers

A number of primary form givers or physical conditions which exert significant influence on the current organization and future growth of Bossier shape the community. The primary form giver is the Red River. The river, of course, is the original reason for Bossier's existence, and it drives the shape of the western boundary including the entertainment areas, the parkway and South Bossier. The river is a definitive boundary, but it provides opportunities for recreation, commerce and aesthetic appeal that many cities do not have. Until recently, the river was considered to be at the back door of the city, and development moved away from the water after World War II. Now, with the channelization and control of stream levels, the river is accessible. The Arthur Ray Teague Parkway has defined the character of much of the waterfront, but growth near Downtown and at the casinos is now impacting the river. In addition, development to the north and the south of the city along the river is being discussed. Positive steps should be taken to understand the river's value, and to support the quality environment the Red River provides to Bossier.

Another form giver is Barksdale Air Force Base. The air base is vital to Bossier's economy, not to mention our national security, and it has been a component of the community for a very long time. The air base is large, and consumes a very large portion of the land area within the city limits. Because of Barksdale's critical military mission it maintains

significant security. By nature, it limits Bossier’s circulation and growth patterns. Given Barksdale’s significant stature within the community and the Nation, the base must continue to be accepted as an important neighbor. Barksdale maintains it’s property and manages its boundaries efficiently. The base is well groomed, with a significant west entry that sets a standard for visual aesthetics. Future planning around the base should reflect similar characteristics.

In the future, planning base leadership will be needed to help coordinate the development of buffers, boundaries, and gateways that are both functional for Barksdale’s mission, and aesthetically pleasing to the community.

Finally, the third significant form giver for Bossier is its transportation arteries. Interstate 20, Airline, Benton Road, Barksdale Boulevard, and Highway 80 each create major corridors around which Bossier has shaped itself for most of the 20th Century. Each of these elements influences the current character of the city, and each must be considered as plans are made for changing and improving visual character. This chapter addresses concepts for improving the visual character of Bossier’s corridors, but their influence on the orientation of development must be appreciated. A great deal of Bossier is oriented to these byways in the form of strip retail. And, since these corridors are not on a right angle grid, one roadway intersects the next at obtuse or acute angles. This geometry impacts the visual image of Bossier. First, it creates some difficulty for visitors as they negotiate traffic. Most Americans are accustomed to right angle city planning, and subconsciously orient themselves to a rectangular grid. Bossier’s roadways do not respond to this mental orientation, and tend to limit the sense of orientation and reference points. In addition, the acute angles mean that one-roadway travel behind the strip development facing the adjacent road. So, visitors and residents alike have open views to the rear of retail and industrial development throughout the city. This perspective is frequently the least desirable view of a business or residence, but the condition is persistent throughout Bossier.

Key Community Image & Design Issues

Bossier City is composed of a variety of areas within the city, each with their own unique character and quality. And each area is connected by a network of corridors and roadways. These areas are shaped by the form givers and exhibit a wide

variety of visual qualities. The design team grouped study activities by areas of common characteristics. This chapter addresses community image and design based on the grouping of areas listed here:

- ◆ Corridors and Roadways
- ◆ Gateways
- ◆ Neighborhoods
- ◆ Commercial Areas
- ◆ Special Use Areas (Riverfront and Downtown)

Through examination of the city’s environment, and from input during Community Meetings, the team has identified a number of key issues related to visual image. These issues, the challenges that face Bossier, must be addressed to improve community image.

Issues of Identity:

Bossier and its component areas and neighborhoods lack identity.

- ◆ Entries into Bossier are not well defined.
- ◆ Circulation paths are linear, and provide little help in establishing consistent character.
- ◆ Business and Special Use Districts lack individual definition.
- ◆ Some neighborhoods, particularly the mature ones, lack definition too.
- ◆ No single unifying characteristic links Bossier as one community.

Issues of Separation:

Incompatible activities and functions have little separation from each other.

- ◆ Entries into different use areas are rare or nonexistent.
- ◆ Circulation paths are linear, and provide little help in establishing boundaries.
- ◆ Business and Special Use Districts have grown rapidly, overrunning adjacent functions and activities.
- ◆ Buffers and screening could be more widely used.
- ◆ Neighborhoods lack protection from incompatible uses.

Issues of Unity:

Bossier can benefit from unifying characteristics, image building and identity elements to improve its visual character.

- ◆ Corridors and roadways lack visual enhancement.
- ◆ Strip development and large retail centers still predominate the street frontage along major thoroughfares.
- ◆ Bossier’s Riverfront has unique character, and is a limited resource.
- ◆ There is a lack of unified wayfinding elements and directional signage.
- ◆ Bossier has not recognized any single visual unifying characteristic or element of identity.

Goals, Objectives and Actions

Given the issues observed by the team and the concerns raised by citizens during the Community Meetings, a listing of goals for image improvement is warranted. Goals, objectives and action statements represent an opportunity to physically and aesthetically capture the vision of the Plan. More, good design is not only appealing to both visitors and residents, but a source of accomplishment and pride in the community that residents call “home.”

Goals for community image and design include:

- ◆ **Give Bossier City and its significant component areas a character of good visual quality.**
- ◆ **Define areas by certain activities and functions and establish ways to separate them from one another.**
- ◆ **Bring economic benefit and improved quality of life by unifying the visual characteristics of Bossier City.**

Community Identity:

Goal 10.1: Give Bossier City and its significant component areas a character of good visual quality.

Objective A: Enhance the visual image of Bossier city’s major entry points.

Objective B: Give definition to significant use districts such as the Downtown area, Riverfront area, and the Arena.

Objective C: Improve identity for what exists, and create a unified identity from those elements for new growth and development.

Objective D: Establish consistent way finding and signage elements throughout the city.

Action 10.1.1: Identify established commercial districts with design elements (such as banners, flags, monuments, public art, and unified lighting), signage, and boundaries.

Action 10.1.2: Provide signage requirements for businesses, including standardized size requirements and height restrictions.

Action 10.1.3: Ensure that signage and lighting standards limit visual distractions, set aesthetic values, and help to develop the character of districts such as downtown.

Action 10.1.4: Establish and enforce building standards, rules and guidelines, which reflect the wanted character of the area while still allowing businesses to establish their uniqueness within the boundaries of the code.

Action 10.1.5: Establish standards of design that encourage creative freedom for individual businesses while ensuring quality development within districts and neighborhoods.

Action 10.1.6: Create signage standards and unified wayfinding to aid visitors and citizens in moving around the district.

Action 10.1.7: Establish individualized theme or design criteria for special districts such as the Arena District and Downtown to allow each the ability to be seen as unique.

Action 10.1.8: Create a common design concept for gateways as landmarks into the city from major thoroughfares and the Red River in order to offer a sense of significance upon arrival or departure from the area.

Action 10.1.9: Install special lighting elements at major gateways and in other public areas to aid in creating a sense of character for arrival into the community or a special district.

Action 10.1.10: Create entry elements to establish uniqueness, identify location, signify importance, and give direction to Bossier neighborhoods and government campuses.

Action 10.1.11: Provide guidelines for new businesses to design their own gateways and bring another design element into the community to reinforce the image of the city.

Action 10.1.12: Create identity for districts through distinct boundaries that lets visitors know they have arrived at a very fun and festive place.

Action 10.1.13: Continue to enforce development standards for paving, walks, curbs, and landscape; establish new standards for mature neighborhoods; and allow pedestrian traffic to move about unimpeded and in a safe environment.

Action 10.1.14: Promote neighborhood associations and watch programs to build a sense of resident belonging, assist residents to maintain an active role in the community and enforce an adopted public image.

Action 10.1.15: Develop and stimulate market driven projects that ensure development in various districts is sustainable and continues to contribute to the community.

Action 10.1.16: Establish infrastructure support, including technology and utility upgrades, which will help businesses to compete in today's market.

Action 10.1.17: Create incentives for relocating professional and commercial offices to the downtown area.

Action 10.1.18 Introduce limited residential development into the downtown area to add a dynamic afternoon and evening character to the area.

Action 10.1.19: Provide public amenities that will encourage activity and promote downtown and other dynamic districts as places to spend time and money.

Action 10.1.20: Incorporate public art into the visual landscape that can capture public interest and add character to the individual districts.

Action 10.1.21: Establish a connection between downtown and new development along the Riverfront to

enhance the number of amenities the area has to offer to visitors and guests.

Action 10.1.22: Construct additional waterfront amenities for increased access to the Red River.

Action 10.1.23: Improve all access points to the Arthur Teague Parkway and connect various parts of the city to the corridor and the surrounding, very active park.

Action 10.1.24: Increase outdoor amenities, including additional jogging and bike paths, along the Arthur Teague Parkway.

Action 10.1.25: Protect the natural surroundings surrounding the Arthur Teague Parkway.

Separation of Activities:

Goal 10.2: Define areas by certain activities and functions and establish ways to separate them from one another.

Objective A: Protect neighborhoods from surrounding and incompatible activities and uses. Provide buffer zones between to help control conflict.

Objective B: Screen industrial and service areas of commercial development from thoroughfares and adjacent neighborhoods.

Objective C: Take advantage of, and protect the vital amenity of the Teague Riverfront Parkway.

Objective D: Condemn and remove abandoned and unsightly properties, and foster their replacement with new profitable buildings.

Action 10.2.1: Condemn and demolish dilapidated or neglected properties that detract from the appearance of the MPC Planning Area and can deter new businesses from moving into the community.

Action 10.2.2: Offer economic incentives for renovations and improvements to grounds for existing businesses in at-risk areas that will stimulate growth and economic prosperity.

Action 10.2.3: Establish boundaries between neighborhoods and adjacent incompatible areas of use and shield unnecessary noise and traffic from intruding into neighborhoods.

Action 10.2.4: Place buffer yards between adjacent, unrelated activities.

Action 10.2.5: Identify traffic patterns and keep neighborhood streets free from unwanted traffic and congestion in order to keep neighborhoods safe and quiet.

Action 10.2.6: Determine major access routes and traffic patterns to control over use of highways by prioritizing usage, including restricting heavy use from light use areas.

Action 10.2.7: Replace above ground utilities with an underground system to permit a safer environment for vehicular traffic and reduce maintenance costs.

Design Unity

Goal 10.3: Bring economic benefit and improved quality of life by unifying the visual characteristics of Bossier City.

Objective A: Achieve a unified identity of design elements that is apparent and recognizable throughout Bossier City.

Objective B: Strengthen the visual quality of major form givers, corridors, thoroughfares, Barksdale Air Force Base, and the Riverfront area.

Objective C: Set examples of good visual character within the public domain to help and inspire private commitment to improve the surroundings.

Objective D: Build public support for good visual character by bringing awareness to the residents of the community's image and fostering building codes that reinforce this character.

Action 10.3.1: Landscape public right of ways, including the introduction of street trees and seasonal plantings in a way that is reminiscent of small town character, complements the surrounding natural setting, helps to shield unneeded noise levels and reduce visual clutter.

Action 10.3.2: Develop landscape and tree planting programs in and around city neighborhoods to provide shade, sound absorption and pleasing visual appearance to the community.

Action 10.3.3: Establish and maintain community parks, playgrounds and open spaces that encourage community recreation and provide a place for the whole community to come together and play.

Action 10.3.4: Develop additional community projects that encourage participation in the outdoors.

Action 10.3.5: Actively plan the location of schools to offer close proximity to area neighborhoods allow children to relate to their surroundings and give sense of ownership to parents.

Action 10.3.6: Introduce new long-term and seasonal design elements, such as flags and banners indicating upcoming events and important dates, into the community to provide both vitality and public awareness.

Action 10.3.7: Standardize lighting with common design elements to add to the sense of identity and help to create a unique character for the community.

Action 10.3.8: Improve signage and wayfinding requirements to better guide visitors and residents, allow for easy recognition of signage and landmarks, and improve the public landscape.

Action 10.3.9: Unify size and placement of sidewalks and curbs by adding color, texture, and patterns that can make these areas more appealing and safer.

Action 10.3.10: Provide sufficient pedestrian amenities, including benches, litter receptacles, kiosks and shade structures, to encourage individuals to take a slower pace and have a look around.

Action 10.3.11: Invest in additional lighting and security utilities, such as call boxes, that will give the sense of safety to citizens and visitors.

Action 10.3.12: Improve vehicular access and circulation within and around various districts.

Elements of Image

Individual areas of a city are divided or connected to other areas of the city. Each area, such as the Downtown or a neighborhood, contains specific visual elements, which either contribute to or detract from their visual quality. We can identify specific elements that affect visual quality. Elements that impact the visual image of a city include landscape, paving and walks, fences and buffers, lighting, signage, art and utility services.

By understanding the role these elements play, we can explore design options, which will enhance the visual image of Bossier City.

Landscape

The natural environment is the physical setting for Bossier, but significant improvement can be made with landscaping. Elements include trees, shrubbery, plantings, seasonal flowers, lawns, and irrigation. Modification to the ground surface is often beneficial. Berms increase elevation and provide screening and sight line breaks. Ponds and water features can also bring great visual benefits.

Street trees are a simple but significant addition to the visual environment. They create order, establish boundaries and improve orientation. And of course, they look nice and provide shade.

Landscape can be used on a large scale to improve the visual image for much of Bossier's public space. Transportation corridors will benefit significantly from a consistent enhancement with landscaping.

Paving and Walks

Some form of paving or walk surface covers a significant portion of the ground surface in a city. Parking lots and roadways dominate a considerable portion of Bossier City. Some areas have gravel surfaces, or suffer from deferred maintenance. Paving materials are primarily asphalted and concrete. These materials are often taken for granted, but consistent finish and color along with decorative accents when appropriate, can make a big impact on the visual environment. Bossier has a wide variety of paving finishes, but the city would benefit from consistent application and maintenance. Decorative treatment such as color, or materials such as washed gravel or brick pavers will make effective improvements in the visual quality of paved areas.

Pedestrian paths are often over looked, but sidewalks, running, and bike paths are effective visual improvements. Sidewalks in particular vary in width, color, and finish. Also, there are many areas without sidewalks. Not only can walks contribute visually; they provide access for pedestrian circulation, which is vital to the success of business areas like the Downtown or the casino areas.

Fences, Buffers and Screens

Divisions between areas of varied use are important. Neighborhoods for instance, should be separated from adjacent roadways or commercial areas. These divisions protect both use areas, providing a visual screen from one to the other.

Fencing is the most common method of separation between use areas. Fencing is very effective and can be an aesthetic improvement. Other elements used for dividing functional areas include screens and landscape buffers.

These elements can play a significant role along Bossier's heavily traveled roadways. Separating vehicular traffic visually from neighborhoods and schools are common in many cities. Bossier can benefit from the screening of commercial and industrial areas from visitor and local traffic so the driver's visual image is focused on the roadway and surrounding corridor. This assumes the corridor is aesthetically treated. In particular, commercial loading docks, industrial yards and storage functions can be screened at the rear of businesses to protect surrounding areas from view of their operations.

Lighting

Privately owned lighting features in commercial and residential developments have a strong impact on the visual environment. Signage lighting in particular can dominate a cityscape at night. Privately owned lighting features can be managed by zoning restrictions and building standards. And, sign lighting can be managed in the same way. Bossier should consider privately owned lighting when the city establishes or updates building standards and zoning regulations. Like other building elements, lighting should be planned to be effective, and aesthetically pleasing.

Public area lighting provides a significant opportunity to impact the visual quality of a city. Not only does lighting create mood and contrast at night, but the lighting elements themselves, the poles, bollards, standards and heads can be architectural in character and establish a design intent or theme.

Public lighting should be planned for safety and functional effectiveness, but the lighting units should be selected to support the general visual character of the area they

serve. Special use areas such as the Downtown or the riverfront area near the casinos can benefit from lighting elements that correspond in design to the character of the area. The design team cautions, however, that public lighting units are a long-term investment, and discretion should be used when selecting specific elements. Designs should have a timeless quality and be attractive 20 years after they are installed. The team recommends that privately developed projects have the most trendy design elements, and that public areas support private design themes but maintain some distance and restraint from the latest styles and fads.

In addition to lighting function, lighting standards and poles can carry signage and decorative banners. In public areas where signage and decorative elements are important, the city should incorporate these elements with the lighting scheme to unify the visual impact and provide some cost efficiency.

Signage

Without question, visual element most frequently discussed during the Community Meetings was signage. Citizens noted the variety and, in some cases, the poor quality of commercial signage. With city growth and the emergence of the riverfront casino entertainment area, the need for clear directional signage has not kept pace with development.

Advertising and business signage presents a formidable impact on the visual environment of Bossier City. A long history of strip commercial development, along with minimal controls over size, type and location, have created a wide variety of signage elements. The condition of commercial signage varies as well. A significant number of signage elements observed by the design team were outdated and in poor repair.

The team observed a number of signage categories to address:

Traffic and Directional Signs

These sign elements are critical for vehicular circulation and wayfinding. Visitors, in particular, need simple cues to direct their travel and aid in navigation to specific destinations. Much of this signage is under the control of the State or Federal highway systems. But, Bossier City should take steps to evaluate the effectiveness of the traffic signage system, and seek resolution to conflicts and standardization.

Festival and Decorative Signs

The city has a number of opportunities to incorporate decorative signage, banners, flags and other signage elements into public spaces. These decorative elements provide queues to festivals and activities, mark boundaries, gateways or delineate byways, and add visual interest to other design elements. Planning for specific enhancements should consider these signage opportunities in coordination with other visual elements in the city.

Commercial and Advertising Signage

The issues surrounding this type of signage has been noted above. Residents are very conscious of the commercial signage issues in Bossier. Addressing the issues of signage control, and revising existing signage. Steps must be taken to standardize commercial signage, allowing business owners the opportunity to promote their companies and products, but providing some visual continuity to the city.

Utilities

Services such as electrical power, cable television, and landline telecommunications are typically routed above ground on poles or tower structures. These services are vital to a city and its business economy. But, above ground utilities are a visual barrier, can be dangerous to the public, and require maintenance of trees and landscape that may interfere with the line routing. This puts above ground utilities in direct conflict with improvements like street trees. Routing public utilities underground is becoming a common method for dealing with these services in urban environments.

Many new developments incorporate underground utility service. There is a greater first cost to this method of service routing, but the visual impact is profound. Bossier City should promote underground utilities in new developments, and consider re-routing above ground utilities in areas where demands on visual impact are significant. Special use areas such as the entertainment areas of the Riverfront, and in Bossier's Downtown area will benefit significantly from underground service.

Public improvements to major corridors should consider underground utilities as well. Upgrades to corridors such as Barksdale Boulevard would have limited success unless utilities were re-routed. Often, street widenings have

moved traffic and curb lines very close to exiting power poles. One example is in Downtown where power poles are immediately adjacent to the roadway. With greater traffic volumes and speeds, both vehicles and power structures are subject to damage.

Art and Architecture

Art and architecture are the most visual elements in the built environment. Residential architecture typically accounts for the highest volume of construction. But private business, and public service facilities are often the most visible to both residents and visitors. Along with architecture, the landscaping and artwork provide the predominant visual impact of a community. Bossier City must give appropriate attention to these elements, and develop strategies for their management.

Casino



Public art is a common enhancement used in many cities to enhance visual quality. Bossier should expand its efforts to incorporate art in landscape and public areas. Art elements can include sculpture, paving mosaics, building graphics, and lighting projects. Private developments can include art pieces too, and incentives from the city can promote the inclusion of art into private projects. Bossier should set public examples of good community artwork, and challenge private developments to continue the standard.

Public Architecture

Architecture in the public domain is an important part of any community's image. Bossier has a civic center and public library which are appropriate in scale and appearance. The new arena has made a significant contribution to the quality of Bossier's public image. There are a number of other public facilities in the city, but some are aging and due for replacement. Restoration of older public facilities is admirable, but should be undertaken only if the structure can continue to make a significant contribution. The East Bank Theater is a successful restoration project. Some have even considered renovation of the Old Bossier City Hall. Projects like these capture Bossier's history and heritage, and add complexity to the built environment that new development alone can not offer. City leaders should continue to search for projects that celebrate the community's history.

New facilities offer the greatest opportunity for improved image. The Bossier Arena is a prime example of how new public construction can re-direct the image and character of a neighborhood and the city as a whole. This project and future public facilities are important tools for influencing community image. City leadership should take a proactive position, and demand high quality design for future work. Any new public facilities should continue the trend of quality design established by the arena and civic center.

Private Architecture

Private development has contributed to the city's image as well. Much of Bossier's commercial buildings have historically been retail in nature. The primary roadways are lined with street fronting retail. And, there are a number of large retail centers and a regional shopping mall. These existing structures dominate the visual image of Bossier. Concerted effort should be made to establish some quality standards. Better results will be gained by raising the public consciousness of the visual environment, and rewarding private property owners who take steps to improve their contribution to Bossier's image.

New private development has centered around the casino and hotel projects on the Red River. These are monumental in scale and are rapidly becoming the predominant architecture in Bossier. Although no new

casinos are expected soon, supporting development around the gaming boats will continue to expand.

Casino



Growth along the Riverfront, in conjunction with the casinos, will likely be entertainment in nature. Bossier must take an active role in guiding these projects.

The racetrack is also an entertainment venue, and planners indicate new supporting development at this location on Bossier’s eastern side. Here too, city leaders should work to influence the quality of these very visible private projects, and take advantage of new construction to improve the city image.

Summary

Identifying elements in the built environment that significantly influence visual character is mostly common sense. Landscape, paving and walks, fences, lighting, signage, art and architecture, and utilities are the image elements that make the most visual impact. This chapter has suggested general ideas for improving each. The following section of the chapter takes these elements in context, and suggests ways in which they can be changed or manipulated to improve the visual character of Bossier.

Image Concepts

This chapter provides an overview of the visual environment in Bossier City. Key issues have been identified along with a summary of the elements, which create that environment. The following section deals with design options. The team has explored some examples to show how changes to design

elements can create a significant difference in the appearance of Bossier’s image. These design options are intended to be examples of what is possible. Final design solutions require significant time and input from local leadership.

There are two realms where changes can occur. First, is private property, the buildings and grounds owned privately. Second is the public realm, the space owned by the City or other governmental agencies.

Private Property

Property owned privately by individuals or businesses is a major part of the visible environment. Control of visual quality can be achieved to some extent by zoning codes and building standards. Areas, such as neighborhoods, have fairly tight constraints on the form and materials used in construction. Other areas, particularly the older strip retail, have few restraints. In some cases there may have been no restraints at all when a specific property was constructed. Dramatic changes to the appearance of existing private property are difficult to achieve through governmental regulations. New private development can be influenced through zoning codes and standards.

Retail Image



The best strategy is to change private landowner values. This is best achieved by demonstrating the impact of visual improvement, and by generating public support for quality visual image. City leadership can set examples for

private landowners by demonstrating image improvements on public property.

Public Property

The citizens of Bossier have their best opportunity to influence the visual environment by improving the appearance of public lands and facilities. Public parks can be a primary target for this renewal effort. Another very visible part of Bossier’s environment is the public rights-of-way. Streets, roadways, and major traffic corridors offer significant opportunities for enhancing visual quality. Bossier should take aggressive steps to utilize these areas.

The design options offered in this chapter are intended as recommendations for general approaches to solving image issues. The concepts shown here will demonstrate some possible solutions to existing image problems. The concepts are not intended to be final or even complete solutions. Each specific location or area of the city should be addressed in detail to create design solutions appropriate to both the location and the larger context of the city.

To organize the design concepts, the team grouped issues into categories that address specific segments of the community. The following examples illustrate existing conditions and show the visual impacts made by the design concepts. Examples are grouped as follows:

- ◆ Corridors and Roadways
- ◆ Gateways
- ◆ Neighborhoods
- ◆ Commercial Areas
- ◆ Riverfront Entertainment Area
- ◆ Downtown
- ◆ Teague Parkway
- ◆ Arena Entertainment Area

Corridors and Roadways

Traffic circulation routes are one of the primary form givers to Bossier’s visual environment. These features provide significant public land area, which can be enhanced. Enhancement of corridors and roadways is common practice in a number of areas throughout the U.S. Design concepts, which have application to Bossier, include:

- ◆ Street trees and large plantings;
- ◆ Roadside wildflower plantings;
- ◆ Screening adjacent commercial and industrial areas;
- ◆ Screening and fencing adjacent neighborhoods;
- ◆ Commercial signage controls;
- ◆ Unification of signage and wayfinding features;
- ◆ Standardization of lighting elements;
- ◆ Addition of banners and seasonal flags;
- ◆ Curb cuts and access control;
- ◆ Unified sidewalks and curbs;
- ◆ Pedestrian amenities like benches and trash bins; and,
- ◆ Underground utility placement.

Gateways

Gateways have become common design elements used to define the entries to residential developments. Gate structures are often brick, stone, or other solid materials to imply significance to a location. Gates define the entry or boundary, and are important features for wayfinding. Bossier City can benefit from gateway elements at three scales. First, develop gateways into the city proper. Secondly, develop gateways to neighborhoods or larger development areas to improve aesthetic interest and support wayfinding.

Neighborhoods

There are a wide variety of neighborhood types within Bossier City. A significant number of new developments are located to the north, while a number of mature neighborhoods are located to the south. In addition, there are neighborhoods that stretch along the East Side of Bossier between Barksdale and the Red River.

There is variety in the age and scale from one neighborhood to another. Yet all Bossier Neighborhoods need similar conditions to flourish and maintain their property values. First, neighborhoods must have identity and character to encourage a sense of ownership for the residents. This can be established with building standards, and consistent common area features such as signage, paving and lighting. Next, neighborhoods must be protected from adjacent uses that are not compatible. Protection can take the form of gateways, fencing and landscape buffers. Neighborhoods adjacent to major roads or rail can benefit from sound barriers as well. And finally, neighborhoods need amenities either within their

boundaries, or immediately adjacent. Amenities include parks, recreation facilities, schools and convenience shopping.

Many of the newer residential areas benefit from these features. Bossier should consider each neighborhood, and provide resident planning and input to help each area benefit from the same opportunities.

Commercial Areas

Street frontage retail is a predominant development theme in Bossier City. But, there are large numbers of new retail centers, light industrial business, and warehouse showroom operations. Both existing commercial areas and new developments need attention. Building and signage standards help manage the visual appearance of structures. Zoning requirements establish parameters that protect the design integrity of the city.

As centers of commercial activity shift with changing residential development and traffic patterns, existing commercial structures decline in use and appearance. Examples of this trend can be seen along parts of Barksdale Boulevard south of I-20 and on Texas Street. Other transitional areas exist throughout Bossier. Changing land use patterns are always a challenge to the visual image of a city. Conditions similar to Bossier's exist in every community in the U.S.

The root of this issue is societal: the changing of commercial activities and routes of circulation. Little can be done visually to stop these trends. However, much can be done within the public domain to sustain reasonable image and appearance. Zoning enforcement is the start, but Bossier must work to maintain good aesthetics in public areas, along major corridors, and on public grounds. Regulations along with proactive management of public spaces are vital. Together, these actions can sustain a quality visual environment and continue the viability of businesses and land values for longer periods of time.

Riverfront Entertainment Area

The Bossier Riverfront has undergone significant change over the last decade. Changing from a backwater, the area has seen the addition of Red River channelization, the Teague Parkway, and most importantly, riverboat casinos. Bossier is now in the process of turning it's face back to the river.

Currently, the entire Riverfront is viewed as a single use area, but the design team sees three separate functions along the length of this area. For this reason, image concepts are divided into three groups, the Entertainment Area, the Parkway, and the Arena Area.

Adjacent to Bossier's Old Downtown, the Entertainment area is dominated by riverboat casinos. Each of these casinos supports gaming, dining, shopping, entertainment, and hotel accommodations within their respective properties. Each has significant structured parking to support their operations. The casinos are competitive, but the entire district would benefit from strong pedestrian circulation paths, and the injection of public grounds to connect these separate operations into a true district. In addition, other private development is being planned in this area to take advantage of the high volume of visitor traffic.

Bossier should coordinate the development activities so there is consistent quality and character. And, the city should provide the framework of circulation and services that tie the area together, bringing a higher benefit from the combined activities.

Downtown Bossier

Much has been made of Bossier's Downtown area. Discussions with focus groups have confirmed that a true and viable downtown business district does not exist. Historically, Bossier's City Hall functioned from a building on Barksdale Boulevard. Other merchants and financial institutions made their home nearby, however, many of these features are now gone.

But citizens feel strongly about the old city center, and they want to see a return of the original focus. Image enhancement is important in supporting the re-growth of an existing area, but people and activities are critical to success. Bossier leadership must bring in new businesses and corporate headquarters, and inject a significant level of commercial activity into the now quiet area. Without a higher volume of people conducting business, there will be no "Downtown".

The design team studied some concepts for image enhancement that can give the old downtown a sense of identity. The adjacent casino area and the new riverfront entertainment district under development will set

aesthetic directions of their own. The Downtown should acknowledge its riverfront heritage, but avoid trendy themes by using a professional, commercial character, reflecting Bossier's 21st Century business sense.

Arthur Ray Teague Parkway

The Parkway, the casino entertainment area, and the arena area have all been defined as a "riverfront" district. All three areas front on the Red River, and promote entertainment in some form, yet each area has a unique character. The design team sees these as three distinct areas, connected to and by the river, yet each independent in use and character.

The Parkway is a major circulation route from South Bossier and the Arena, north to Downtown and the casinos, making it the unquestionable link between Bossier's two primary entertainment venue attractions.

The Parkway itself has a completely different character than the areas at each end. An open landscape fronting the river, the Parkway exhibits a natural setting for outdoor recreation. There is an existing jogging path and boat launches as well as significant green belts for open-air activities. The roadway provides access, but also limits accessibility from the east, protecting the green belt from encroachment. Bossier should support the Parkway's connective function, and at the same time protect its natural setting for use as Bossier's largest parkland and outdoor activity area.

Arena Entertainment Area

The third section of the Riverfront District is the Arena Entertainment Area. The design team has identified this as a distinct function, connected by the Parkway to the separate but related Riverfront Entertainment Area near Downtown.

The Arena can house a variety of sporting and performance programs, as well as serve as a major assembly hall for the community. At the southern end of the Parkway, and surrounded by large tracts of vacant land, the Arena appears to be disconnected from other entertainment activities. However, its programs are different from the casino activities. So its separation is not a deficiency and in fact, this southern location provides a balance to the city's growth patterns.

Other development is sure to follow the Arena, and Bossier should encourage compatible activities on the surrounding property. Other athletic facilities might benefit from an adjacency, and there is an opportunity for restaurants and

other entertainment support. Development of this entire area can be positive for the city. At the same time, care must be given to protect the adjacent residential areas from encroachment of noise, traffic and nighttime lighting.

The scale of the Arena, and the area around it is grand. Visual enhancements can not afford to be tentative. Landscaping, gateways, fencing, and lighting features must be scaled to address this spacious character. The area calls for well-defined avenues and large-scale street trees. Gate elements should be very big and incorporate significant landscaping to support large pylons or other architectural features.