

Community Focus Statement E: Improve the appearance of the community.

Action Statement E.1: Establish a compatible/unifying theme for downtown areas and businesses.

E

Benchmark: A report on community preferences for design guidelines, streetscape furnishings, and a wayfinding/branding strategy is funded and completed.

Champion: Volunteer group or person or can be identified by the community

Estimated Cost: \$20,000 to conduct community engagement, and \$50,000–\$100,000 to develop the three components (design guidelines, streetscape furnishings palette, and wayfinding/branding strategy)



Unified theme in downtown retail district. Photo source: Ken Lund

Establishing a consistent and compatible design for downtown areas will help beautify the Hilltop communities and establish a clear identity and sense of place in these areas. A unified character for each of the downtown areas can help to improve the appearance of and encourage investment opportunities in each area. A design theme is intended to reflect each community’s character and heritage and instill a sense of pride in the local community. The Hilltop communities can choose to have one unifying design theme across all communities or to establish unique characteristics to distinguish each area.

The components of a unifying design strategy include the following products intended to establish attractive streets and shopfronts in downtown areas: a streetscape furnishings palette, wayfinding signage, and design guidelines for downtown businesses. Design guidelines establish specific guidance on how to modify existing buildings and construct new ones in a manner that complements existing development and enhances the desired character of the downtown. Design guidelines can address how businesses present themselves to the public, including architectural styles, business signage, entrances, external lighting, awnings, and shopfront windows. Attractive and coordinated streetscape furnishings (for example, benches, streetlights, planters, shade trees, and bike racks) create a uniform street design and contribute to a clear identity. Public art and creative street furnishing design can be commissioned from local artists to reflect the character of the communities. Wayfinding signage includes information kiosks, maps, directional signs, banners, and other signage that orients and helps guide people to various destinations. Banners on street poles can identify the downtown areas and announce upcoming events. A welcome sign and unique gateway features can announce arrival into the communities and the downtown areas, and are recommended to create inviting entrances.

Development of the branding strategy, streetscape palette, and design guidelines should be a community-based planning process. Design preferences for materials and styles should be determined with the close involvement of the communities.

Action	Action Leader	Timeline	Resources
1. Hold a meeting to establish a Design Committee.	Champion	Months 1–2	<p>Crest Forest Sign Program – San Bernardino County Development Code 83.13.035 http://www.sbcounty.gov/Uploads/lus/DevelopmentCode/DCWebsite.pdf</p> <p>Running Springs Chamber of Commerce http://www.runningspringschamber.com/</p> <p>Design Guidelines (see chapter 5 of Downtown Lancaster Specific Plan) http://www.cityoflancaster.ca.org/home/showdocument?id=5446</p> <p>Streetscape Furnishings Palette and Wayfinding Strategy (See respective sections in the Mesa Fiesta District Public Realm Guidelines) http://www.mesaaz.gov/home/showdocument?id=11173</p>
2. Develop an outreach strategy to engage the community in establishing the components of a unified design theme. Consider creating a community-based design committee with key stakeholders from the community to help guide the process.	Design Committee with Running Springs Chamber of Commerce, community	Months 1–2	
3. Seek funding to support this project, including benefit assessment districts and sponsorships.	Design Committee	Months 3–5	
4. Engage the community and conduct meetings to gather input on preferences for design guidelines, streetscape furnishings, and wayfinding and branding.	Design committee	Months 6–9	
5. Prepare streetscape furnishings palette. Consider using any combination of the following approaches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time • Professional Request for Proposals (RFP process) • Student course project internship 	Design committee	Months 10–12	
6. Establish wayfinding and branding strategy. Consider using any combination of the following approaches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time • Professional RFP process • Student course or project internship 	Design committee	Years 1 – 2	
7. Establish design guidelines for downtown businesses. Consider using any of the following approaches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time • Professional RFP process • Student course or project internship 	Design committee	Years 2 - 3	
8. Submit design package to County for review and possible adoption.	County Land Use Services	Year 3	