

Inside Main Street

Information on Bastrop's Main Street Program

July 20, 2009

Texas, Bastrop tourism focus of July Summit session

Take a guess: how much did tourism contribute to the Bastrop and Texas economies last year?

The odds are that you **way** underestimated, as did all the participants in the July 16 Small Business Stimulus Summit session, conducted by Emily Lutz, coordinator of the Brazos Trail Region of the Texas Historical Commission's Heritage Trails Program (of which Bastrop County is a key component).

The answers, from data assembled by the state and covering all "direct travel spending" (excluding airfare) - For 2007-08 alone, \$56.7 **billion** to the Texas economy and \$120.2 **million**—to the Bastrop economy. The latter figure encompasses tourism-sustained employment (\$1370) and tourism-generated local tax receipts (\$2,609,000). (See www.travel.state.tx.us/TravelResearch.aspx)

Emily noted that Texas tourism was "hot"—the fourth most visited state after New York, California and Florida. Tourism is also the third biggest industry in Texas, after oil/gas and technology/agriculture sectors.

The "Top Ten" Texas destinations encompass historic sites, recreational resources and shopping venues: the Alamo, Galveston, the San Antonio River Walk, San Marcos Outlet Mall, the Capitol, Padre Island, Cabela's, Six Flags, Sea World, the Fort Worth Stockyards. Emily sees Bastrop's central asset as its historical character and what she views as downtown Bastrop's "wow" factor: "Bastrop has, in its revitalized and picturesque downtown, what others want to be." She added that "destination tourists" typically spend only about 20 percent of their time engaged in what brought them to the area and emphasized that entertainment, recreation and shopping were therefore important components of the experience.

Emily went on to highlight publications and services available to visitors to the region, including the regional website [Bastrop's Patriotic Festival celebration in July was one of the featured events]: www.texasbrazostrail.com. She commented that Bastrop was "an exemplary participant in the regional tourism effort" and acknowledged the support she has received from Chamber of Commerce President Susan Weems Wendel and Bastrop Main Street Program Manager Nancy Wood. She affirmed her commitment to helping Bastrop enhance its visibility as a tourist destination and asked that participants keep her informed of events and other items of interest to tourists. (See also www.texasbrazostrail.com/docs/brazos_trail_info.doc)

Emily's presentation was the latest in Small Business Stimulus Summit sessions at the Bastrop Opera House. Nancy—who doubles as Summit coordinator—puts out the welcome mat for Bastrop MSP area businesses and volunteers who, she thinks, will find the free sessions of great interest because of implications for the downtown area. The series kicked off on March 26 and continues on first and third Thursdays through September. Each session runs from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. and is held in the Opera House. The first session on March 26 identified issues and

challenges facing small businesses and defined topics for the next several sessions. Sessions thus far have focused on creative advertising (April 2); using the web and social media to sell/market (April 16); developing the “Summer Sunday” concept (May 7); the economic outlook for Bastrop presented by City Manager Mike Talbot (May 21); improving window displays (June 4), and customer service (June 18). Planned for August are sessions on Extraordinary Customer Service (August 5) and Planning Fall and Holiday Promotions (August 19).

The Summit is the brainchild of the Economic Restructuring Committee. Copying and other such workshop expenses are underwritten by the Bastrop Economic Development Corporation. For further information, contact Nancy at (512) 332-0068 or Mainstreet@cityofbastrop.org.

Texas Main Street Program offers summer training opportunities

The Texas Main Street Program’s 2009 Summer Workshop will feature a tale of two cities—Beeville and Goliad—when it convenes August 5 through 7 in those cities.

Open to Main Street professionals, boards and volunteers, the program kicks off in Beeville, at 1 p.m. on August 5, with an address by Rick Ferry, president of Retail Market Answers, an innovative program for downtown revitalization focusing on preferred and sustainable growth strategies. Following that will be a tour of the Bee County Courthouse, a tour/discussion of the Rialto Theatre restoration project, a dinner/presentation in the newly restored Bowie Street buildings and, afterwards, dessert at the famous Beeville Art Museum.

Thursday morning continues in Beeville with a session on farmers markets and the Go Texan Program. Breakout sessions (with topics ranging from social media to promotion) and a THC legislative update will wrap up the Beeville offerings.

About noon, the venue shifts for the day to Goliad for sessions on retail promotions that work, on stimulating business start-ups and on a downtown Goliad restaurant, cooking school, and bed and breakfast enterprise. After the sessions, participants will tour the Goliad County Courthouse and Presidio La Bahia. A dinner hosted by the Goliad MSP Board will follow, with participants returning to Beeville that evening.

The Friday morning program—in Beeville—will focus on the city’s successful Tax Increment Financing District and on diversifying a business in tough economic times. The workshop concludes with an 11:15 to noon presentation on the Bee County Library and Museum rehab project.

Please alert Nancy Wood if interested in attending and for information about the program and Beeville accommodations.

Bastrop Main Street Program column premiers

Nancy Wood’s take on how far, how fast and how well the Bastrop Main Street Program has come in its 30-month history is the focus of a her column appearing in the July 2 *Bastrop Advertiser*.

The column (see the appended PDF, reprinted with the permission of the *Advertiser*) is the first of what is intended to be an ongoing series of “As I see it” columns on the local program, each column from a different perspective and run as space permits. Ken

Kesselus, who is spearheading this effort on behalf of the Organization Committee, notes that the next column, appearing later this summer, will be written by Bastrop Visitor Center director Cindy Wolford to address visitor feedback collected over several years: what visitors are looking for and what impressions they take home.

Hasler Brothers Steak House opens

Mike and Cindy Herman's dream for "Hasler's Corner"—the southeast corner of Main and Chestnut—continues to become reality with the opening early this month of Hasler Brothers Steakhouse at 703 Chestnut. It also represents the 34th new business within the Bastrop Main Street Program since the program began 30 months ago.

The restaurant's unique entrance alcove, crisp linens, the owner's commitment to superior service, a piano bar, and a menu featuring steaks, seafood and lamb chops give the restaurant a sense of "someplace special" and bring to downtown Bastrop its second "fine dining" establishment.

The steakhouse shares a kitchen with Cindy's Downtown, fronting on Main Street and the first segment of this multi-stage project to be completed. The project entails extensive renovation and rehabilitation of contiguous structures dating from the late 1870s and once encompassing a saloon, a dry goods store, a grocery and general store and a warehouse. The Hermans anticipate realizing the next stage in August, with the opening of a cigar lounge on the second floor to the building.

Hasler Brother's Steakhouse is open Monday through Saturday from 4:30 to 11 p.m.; valet parking is available Thursday through Saturday. For questions or reservations, call 321-4701.

Bastrop billboards sprout on 290 and 71

Travelers from Houston will have a graphic reminder that Bastrop is well worth a stop: recently installed billboards on U.S. 290 (at Hempstead) and TX 71 (at Sealy).

Funded by a Preserve America grant, the billboards are an outgrowth of research undertaken during the City of Bastrop's effort to establish an identity or "brand" around which Bastrop would market itself as a tourist destination. Visitor feedback underpinning that effort found that Bastrop tourism draws most heavily from Houston and enjoys a highly favorable response among visitors from that city. Nancy Wood stated that the billboards are intended to reinforce that draw, build on the positive word-of-mouth that Bastrop enjoys among Houston residents, and encourage travelers from that area to visit Bastrop as a stopover or as a getaway destination.

The two billboards will be up until June 1, 2010.

Y'all come!

Bastrop Main Street Program volunteers and other members of the public are welcome to attend any Committee and Advisory Board meeting in which they have an interest. Holidays

and scheduling conflicts among participants may prompt changes in meeting, time and place; please check with Nancy Wood at Mainstreet@cityofbastrop.org for updated information.

July 20	Promotions Committee, 5:30 p.m. in Chamber Board Room
July 22	Organization Committee, noon in the Chamber Board Room
August 3	Bastrop Main Street Program Advisory Board meeting, 6 p.m. in City Hall
August 12	Design Committee, 5 p.m. in City Hall
August 11	Economic Restructuring Committee, 5:15 p.m. in Chamber Board Room
August 17	Promotions Committee, 5:30 p.m. in Chamber Board Room
August 26	Organization Committee, noon in the Chamber Board Room
September 8	Economic Restructuring Committee, 5:15 p.m. in Chamber Board Room
September 9	Design Committee, 5 p.m. in City Hall
September 14	Main Street Advisory Board, 6 p.m. in City Hall

For information about upcoming community activities, consult the events calendars at www.bastropdba.org, www.bastropchamber.com, www.cityofbastrop.org and www.visitbastrop.org

Inside Main Street is a monthly electronic newsletter for Bastrop Main Street Program participants...intended to keep you “in the loop” on MSP developments, the work of its four standing committees (Promotions, Economic Restructuring, Design, and Organization) and the activities of the Advisory Board. It is compiled and edited by Dick Smith on behalf of the Organization Committee and the Advisory Board.

Please share this newsletter with others who have an interest in how Bastrop’s Main Street Program is making a difference.

Feedback and suggestions welcomed! Contact Dick at soyrps@gmail.com or Nancy Wood at Mainstreet@cityofbastrop.org