

Main Street

News and information on Bastrop's Main Street Program April 16, 2010

Main Street Program to propose downtown plaza

On April 27, the Bastrop Main Street Program will ask City Council for a “go” signal on a proposal to facilitate a community-wide initiative to establish a Central Plaza in the downtown business district, a Plaza that would provide an enjoyable green space, a respite for shoppers and visitors and a venue for downtown events.

The BMSP Advisory Board sees the Plaza as significantly enhancing the preservation and restoration of an economically revitalized downtown business district and serving as a focal point for both Main Street and the larger Main Street Program area. Along with the improvements to Chestnut Street, the Plaza would boost Bastrop's efforts to make the Chestnut and Main Street corridor significantly more pedestrian friendly.

At the center of this vision is what has long been a conspicuously vacant space, at 923 Main Street, that once was the site of Texas' oldest drugstore and has twice been devastated by fire. The City recently purchased the entire lot, which runs from Main Street to Water Street, and is planning to use the eastern half of the property to provide additional parking for the downtown area. The western half of the property, fronting on Main Street, remains empty—a concrete slab enclosed on three sides by vintage two-story brick walls and, in local parlance, is known as “the burned out place”. Since the City acquired the property, the enclosed space has factored into various downtown events, ranging from Halloween Fest, Veterans Weekend Car Show and Christmas Holiday Weekend in 2009 to the Main Street Program's third birthday party in February of this year. Plans for Yesterfest 2010 include using this space as a performance venue.

The BMSP's vision for the Plaza includes:

- Handicapped accessible public restrooms along the east wall
- Replacement of concrete surfacing with a combination of hardscape and planted areas, including urban trees and grasses to create an oasis—cool, pleasant and green
- Providing wiring that would permit performers and vendors to tie in to City-provided electrical service
- Serving as a site for sculpture on loan from Deep in the Heart Art Foundry and possibly spaces for two-dimensional art as well
- Benches, trash barrels, lighting, fresh water drinking fountain
- An entranceway evocative of downtown's historic facades
- Access secured by gates and available from dawn to dusk daily

Those particulars would...

- Establish an “anchor” and point of orientation/reference for the central business district
- Create a controlled outdoor venue for respite and would tend to encourage shoppers and others to spend additional time in the Main Street area

- Serve as a convenient gathering spot for both daily use and for tours and other groups
- Provide an attractive, audience friendly venue for performances and might accommodate as many as 200 people
- Allow vendors, such as food service vendors, a space with appropriate City-provided electrical access and a safer alternative to running extension cords from Main Street buildings as at present
- Add needed public restrooms in the central business area
- Provide convenient access between Water Street parking and Main Street.

Subject to concept approval by City Council, the four standing committees of the Bastrop Main Street Program would each undertake coordinated activities to refine preliminary designs, secure estimates of project costs, reach out to community partners and explore possible sources of funding, including grants. The BMSP Advisory Board anticipates that it will be able to provide City Council with a firm plan of action, for its approval, within the next 90-120 calendar days.

Boosting sales is focus of free workshop

"Six Ways To Double (or Triple!) Your Sales Quickly... and Beat Competition" will be explored at a free business development workshop on April 22, from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. in the Bastrop Opera House.

Sponsored by the Bastrop Main Street Program, the "Business Building" workshop is open to local businesses and BMSP volunteers and will be presented by Darryl Mobley, from the Association of Small Business Marketers.

Darryl Mobley, former Procter & Gamble marketing executive, is a top Executive Coach and marketing/sales-growth consultant. He works with Fortune 100s and small businesses on brand-building, marketing and balancing work and life. Darryl is CEO of the Association of Small Business Marketers and president of Business-Growth Ace Consulting (www.BusinessGrowthAce.com), an organization focused on helping members increase their sales and profits. A West Point graduate, Darryl is a top-rated speaker and leads sales-growth seminars around the world. He has more than 300,000 subscribers to his business-building newsletters. He is also an author, an Executive-in-Residence at the University of Tennessee, and an Adjunct Professor of marketing and business.

Reserve your spot by contacting BMSP Manager Nancy Wood at (512) 332-0068 or mainstreet@cityofbastrop.org. For more information about the Association's courses, publications and membership services, go to www.associationofsmallbusinessmarketers.com.

Yesterfest, YES!

It may look like a Chinese fire drill—with people dancing, tapping, hula-hooping, running, and even spitting—but it's really a closely choreographed multi-ring circus...as thousands of people take to the downtown area for this year's Yesterfest on April 24

With a nod to its principal sponsor, the “AT&T Yesterfest 2010” kicks off at 9 a.m and runs full tilt until 5 p.m. In between, participants will celebrate the past by stepping into three periods of history: pioneer days, the jazz era, and rockabilly post-war years. And attendees are encouraged to come in costume, reflecting their favorite era, and get in on the action.

The southern end of Main Street will be given over to pioneer days and will include a simulated gun fight, rope tricks, story telling, Native American dancers, live music of the period and a chuck wagon cooking demonstration. The 1000 block of Main Street will be transformed into the jazz age with live music of the period. Bonnie and Clyde, reputed to have once visited Bastrop, are rumored to have their eye on the old First National Bank. A period speakeasy will include G-men and flappers and, of course, dancing. The 50’s stage on Spring Street will showcase that period, with dj and live music, dancing (lessons as well), a hula hoop contest and a simulated drive-in restaurant (with carhops on skates).

Throughout the day will be an opportunity to try “spitting off the bridge”—a revered local tradition. For the fleet of foot, a Runaway Scrape race will be held from Spring Street, down the Riverwalk and back up to Main Street. Those with a yen to shop will find much to like in Main Street businesses and in the street market. Kids—young and old—will want to spend time in the Children’s area where they will find a petting zoo, pony rides, derby car races, as well as a wide range of kids’ crafts (beadwork, halos, bracelet making, face painting, etc.).

“Choreographers” of the event are Downtown Business Alliance members and volunteers. Chairing the event are Paula Pate and Jimmie Ann Vaughan. “Ring leaders” of the various activity centers are, for the Pioneer Era, Connor McAnally; the Jazz Era, Connie Naumann; the 50’s Era, Majestic Lamone, and the kid’s area, Dr. Michelle Mix.

For further information on Yesterfest, visit www.bastropdba.org/yesterfest.html. The site also includes information on other activities downtown: The Book Basket’s “First Annual Authorfest” featuring eight authors speaking on local history and “Always...Patsy Cline”, the Bastrop Opera House’s powerful tribute to the legendary country singer.

Did someone say ‘party’?

No, but still big cause for celebration as the City of Bastrop formally breaks ground on its new Convention Center and City Hall on Monday, April 26 at 3 p.m. The public is invited to attend the event, to be held sequentially at each site. Check the City website (www.cityofbastrop.org) and the *Bastrop Advertiser* for more details.

The groundbreaking is more symbolic than actual (site preparation has been going on for weeks): it marks a significant moment as the City moves full speed ahead on two projects that, with the Chestnut Street Improvement Project, will transform the eastern entrance to Bastrop and enhance Bastrop’s draw as a convention and tourist destination.

The design for the Center was developed by a community task force in consultation with the project architect, Fatter & Evans Architects, Inc., and will include a tower topped with a galvanized silo, evocative of the cotton gins and granaries that once dominated the area. When completed next spring, the center will contain 26,000 square feet that can be partitioned into as many as six spaces to accommodate large and small meetings as well as concurrent events.

The new City Hall, at 1311 Chestnut is sited on the south side of Chestnut Street, roughly across the street from the new Convention Center. When completed in late 2010, the new facility will contain 15,000 square feet, inclusive of unfinished reserve space for later expansion as needed. The design for the structure is also the vision of the community task force that worked with project architect Fatter & Evans Architects, Inc. on the Convention Center design. The City Hall design is intended to evoke a turn-of-the-century train station.

‘Alley B’ infrastructure improvements under consideration

With first reading approval by the City Council on April 13, “Alley B”—running from Chestnut Street to Pine Street—is several steps closer to a substantial utility makeover. The next step will occur on April 27 when the Council will conduct a second reading and may grant final approval of the project.

As proposed and unanimously approved by the Bastrop Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors on March 29, the project entails improving water and waste water services and electric services along the west side of Main Street, including service to The Crossing.

Project costs, inclusive of engineering, are estimated to run \$147,000 for water and waste water and \$250,000 for electrical improvements. The entire cost would be funded by BEDC from revenues generated by the one-half cent sales tax specifically dedicated to economic development, a tax authorized by voters in 1995.

Business is blooming

New business is cropping up all over the 65-block Main Street Program Area along Main Street and Chestnut from Highway 71 to Texas 95:

- **Amber’s Wildfire Café** opened April 16 at 912 Main Street (the former location of Big Mouth Grill), touts “southern dining with a touch of class”. Breakfast is served daily from 6 to 11 a.m.; lunch daily from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dinner hours are 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday. (512-321-5522)
 - **Mayfield Fine Photography**, relocating from Waco to 1004 Main Street (former location of the Bridal Shop), brings more than 15 years experience in portrait and landscape photography to Bastrop. Contact Brigham or Jenna Mayfield at 512-308-0230.
 - **Now ‘N Then Gift Shoppe** has opened at 906 Chestnut Street and features French, Asian, Mexican, and Italian collectibles and antiques and “made in Bastrop” pickles, jams and relishes. (512-321-7111)
 - **Old West Mercantile**, featuring western décor, art and personal accessories and formerly on Highway 71 at Smithville, has relocated to The Crossing, in the former site of Sweet William collectibles. (512-581-3100) www.OldWestMercantileTX.com
 - **Renee Patrick Salon** recently opened at 906 Chestnut Street and features full salon services. (512-308-9115)
 - **Nirvana Cosmetic Spa at 1018 Main** features hair removal, eyelash extensions and related products (512-299-1830) www.nirvanacosmeticspa.com
-

‘Bastrop Spring’ project envisioned

Bastrop Spring, named by the City Council as a significant historical landmark in 2008, may gain new prominence if an effort launched by Environmental Stewardship Executive Director Steve Box gains momentum.

Steve proposed to the City Council on March 23 that a local stakeholders group be formed to develop a plan for restoring the spring and providing interpretative signage about the historic and ecological significance of the site adjacent to the Riverwalk. Proposed participants include the City Parks Board, the Parks Department, the Historic Landmarks Commission, the Bastrop Main Street Program, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Lost Pines Master Naturalist, the Sierra Club Lost Pines Conservation Committee, Environmental Stewardship and private citizens. Steve conceives that grants and private sources would provide all funding and requested permission to scout grants.

The Council unanimously authorized City Manager Mike Talbot to work with Steve in identifying potential sources of funding and to bring the project back to Council prior to grant submission. For further information visit www.environmental-stewardship.org/bastropsprings.aspx or contact Steve at (512) 300-6609.

Art Guild tackles huge “canvas”

The Bastrop Fine Arts Guild has no shortage of vision...and their plans for a new gallery, artisan work spaces and administrative offices reflect it. The Guild envisions a great leap from its current quarters, on the ground floor of 1009 Main Street, down Chestnut Street to the large metal building currently home to an auto shop.

According to plans presented at its Fourth Annual Artful Afternoon Gala and Auction on April 11, the Guild has a one-year option to purchase the site from owner Clyde Clardy and plans to transform the 10,000 square-foot metal building into a large gallery/exhibition space as well as classrooms for art instruction. Preliminary plans include reserving a corner of that building for rental space, to house a specialty shop where visitors might purchase teas, wine, cheeses to enjoy in outdoor sculpture garden planned for the site. Other plans include converting a smaller building, positioned north of the larger facility, into administrative offices and repurposing the silos, also on the north, into glass, pottery, and sculpting workshops/demonstration studios. The tallest would be converted to a studio and, with a second story efficiency apartment added, accommodations for a proposed artist-in-residence program.

The site is historic in nature, having figured prominently during the extended period when cotton was Bastrop’s leading agricultural output. The site was once home to Powell Oil Mill—a cotton hull, seed and oil extraction facility and was strategically placed next to the railroad on the east and between cotton gins north and south of the mill. [Sanborn maps for the early 1900’s show the American Round Bale Company—later the Kennedy and Andrews Gin Company—directly to the south, across Chestnut Street, and the W. E. Goodman Gin directly to the north, across Spring Street.] The Guild plans to incorporate historical artifacts in the project and has enlisted the assistance of Texas Historical Commission’s Texas Main Street architect Howard Langer in creating conceptual drawings of the facility.

In pursuit of its vision, the Guild has commissioned environmental assessments and has launched a fundraising program. According to Karol Rice, a Guild board member and chair of

the fundraising committee, the Guild will seek public and private grants as well as individual donations to fund the estimated \$400,000 project cost.

For further information, contact Karol at (512) 565-6912 or, Guild Board President Jeanette Condray at (512) 576-1100 and watch for updates to the Guild's website:
www.BastropFineArtsGuild.com.

Historical Society launches new website

With the launch of its new website, The Bastrop County Historical Society has blazed another web trail leading to information on Bastrop and its unique past.

The product of months of effort by BCHS Vice President Robbie Sanders, with assistance by Dick Smith and web designer Elliott Gurwitz, the new site significantly expands the web's attention to Bastrop history and takes its place as a key local "favorite" in defining Bastrop.

The new website—www.BastropMuseumAndVisitorCenter.org—provides a gateway not only to a great deal of information about the museum and Bastrop's history but also to two major BCHS web initiatives: the Bastrop "Old Town" Visitor Center site (also accessed via www.VisitBastrop.org) and the annually updated Holiday Homes Tour site (also accessed via www.BastropHolidayHomesTour.com). The new site and these companion sites were conceptualized as parts of a whole, using compatible graphics and navigation..

New content about the museum ranges from operational information (hours, guided tours, etc.) to support (sponsorships and BCHS itself), from news (the new "Cotton is King" exhibit, for instance) to "What is this" identification queries. One pathway on the site takes the user to information on BCHS' initiative to renovate and enhance the old City Hall as new quarters for both the museum and Visitor Center...while the news page reports on the substantial progress BCHS has made toward meeting its funding objective.

Getting with the program!

The Bastrop Main Street Program advances on the talents and energies of its all-volunteer army...and fresh recruits are always needed and welcomed. Pick up some volunteer brochures from Nancy Wood and enlist your friends and neighbors.

In the meantime, welcome...

- Classic Bank Vice President of Business Development Tommy Frizell to the Economic Restructuring Committee, and
 - Shauna Wells, a teacher at Cedar Creek Middle School, to the Organization Committee.
-

The door is always open...

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. The calendar thus far includes:

April 19	Promotions Committee, 5:30 p.m. in Chamber Conference Room
April 28	Organization Committee, noon in the Chamber Conference Room
May 3	BMSP Advisory Board meeting, 6 p.m. in City Hall
May 12	Economic Restructuring Committee, 5:15 p.m. in Chamber Conference Room
May 17	Promotions Committee, 5:30 p.m. in Chamber Conference Room
May 20	Design Committee, 5 p.m. in City Hall
May 26	Organization Committee, noon in the Chamber Conference Room
June 7	BMSP Advisory Board meeting, 6 p.m. in City Hall
June 9	Economic Restructuring Committee, 5:15 p.m. in the Chamber Conference Room
June 17	Design Committee, 5 p.m. in City Hall
June 21	Promotions Committee, 5:30 p.m. in the Chamber Conference Room
June 30	Organization Committee, noon in the Chamber Conference Room

For information about upcoming community activities, consult the events calendars at www.bastropchamber.com and www.visitbastrop.org. Advance stories on upcoming events also may be posted at <http://bastropadvertiser.com/category/events>.

Inside Main Street is an electronic newsletter to keep Bastrop Main Street Program participants “in the loop” on program developments, the work of its four standing committees (Promotions, Economic Restructuring, Design and Organization) and the activities of the Advisory Board. Produced monthly (except December), ***Inside Main Street*** 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 learning 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
