

Inside Main Street

News and information on Bastrop's Main Street Program July 21, 2010

City Council schedules Public Hearing on '923'

923 Main—the long vacant space immediately north of Baxters—will be the focus of a July 27 public hearing to air proposals for its future use. The hearing will occur during the regular City Council meeting, scheduled to begin at 6 p.m. in City Hall.

The Bastrop Main Street Program Advisory Board has already advanced one such proposal—transforming the site into an enjoyable green space, a respite for shoppers and visitors, complete with restrooms, and a venue for downtown events.

The MSAB sees this Central 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 Bastrop 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 and visually appealing.

Members of the MSAB initially presented the proposal to City Council on May 4 after participants in the Bastrop Main Street Program's strategic planning workshop enthusiastically endorsed the idea earlier in the year. While members of the Council applauded the concept, they agreed that other possible uses for the site, including commercial development, should be explored as well. The public hearing is intended to elicit such proposals.

Under the MSAB proposal, the space will remain City property and might be repurposed in the future should the City find an alternative use more desirable. Further information on the MSAB proposal may be found at [www.cityofbastrop.org/departments/main_street/docs/INSIDE MAIN STREET April 2010.pdf](http://www.cityofbastrop.org/departments/main_street/docs/INSIDE_MAIN_STREET_April_2010.pdf).

Preliminary approval by the Council of the BMSPP proposal will prompt the Program's four committees to refine design and cost estimates, develop a project timeline, build community support and seek financial underwriting.

Texas Chamber Execs pick Bastrop for 2012 convention

Bastrop has yet another feather in its cap—thanks to the Texas Chambers of Commerce Executives—and has been chosen as the site for its June 2012 annual conference.

While the Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort and Spa will be conference headquarters and the convention program will keep attendees very busy, Bastrop Chamber President/CEO Susan Wendel anticipates that locals will see a lot of the more than 300 execs, staff and spouses attending. Bastrop will be front and center for spouse tours and offsite events.

Susan, a TCCE board member for the past six years, was instrumental in pointing the association's way to Bastrop. She also credits Adena Lewis, president of the Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce; Gena Carter, president of the Greater Elgin Chamber of Commerce, and BEDC Executive Director Joe Newman for adding their voices to singing the praises of Bastrop County and the Hyatt.

"This is something like bringing a boyfriend home to meet the folks but without the jitters," Susan stated. "I'm really excited to bring my fellow execs—who have heard me proclaim Bastrop's virtues for years—'home' to see firsthand what a great place this is and how terrific the people are." She also admits to being a bit revved up about the money that this conference will bring to the Bastrop economy.

TCCE traces its roots to 1906 and is the oldest association of chamber professionals in the U.S. The annual conference is an intensive two-plus day schedule of sessions relating to promoting the business backbone of a community, vendor exhibits, honors and awards.

Ribbon cuttings mark Chestnut Street progress

More than 200 people were on hand July 17 to cut the ribbon and celebrate the completion of a major milestone in the Chestnut Street Improvement Project.

The event marked the culmination of many months of work on Phase 2 of the project: significant upgrades to Chestnut, between Water and Haysel Streets. Readily apparent changes are new curbing and stamped concrete crosswalks, upgraded sidewalks featuring commemorative medallions and new "period" lighting. Utility poles and overhead lines have been removed in favor of underground electrical, telephone and cable service; water lines have been replaced and sewer and storm water drainage has been improved. Phase 2 complements phase 1—the stone gateways and landscaping at the intersections of Chestnut with TX 71 on the west of the downtown area and TX 95 on the east. A final phase—extending the streetside work east of the railroad tracks and including a new bridge over Giles Branch—will dovetail with the completion of the new City Hall and the new Convention Center.

The three-phase project, estimated to be completed at a cost of \$2 million, is funded entirely by the Bastrop Economic Development Corporation through the one-half cent sales tax dedicated to local economic development as authorized by voters in 1995. Bastrop Mayor Terry Orr noted to those gathered that a large portion of this revenue—estimated at 70 percent—is generated from sales taxes paid by visitors and other nonresidents. He credited past City Councils, the BEDC board, BMSPP volunteers, the historical community and other key groups for their vision, adding that it has made a significant difference in the way the central business district looks, in how the city functions and in what it promises for the city's economic viability and vitality.

Steve Mills, chair of the BEDC board of directors, extended special credit to former BEDC Chair Tom Scott for the initial vision and guidance for the project. He noted that this project and the BEDC restoration and rehabilitation grants awarded to downtown establishments "work hand in hand to revitalize economic growth for the city's core." He went on to thank City Council for support and input and the City's Public Works and Utilities Departments for their "hard work and professional oversight." Steve singled out City Manager Mike Talbot, Public Works Department

Director Jim Rebeck and Construction Manager Doug Denny for their roles and Gene Kruppa and his firm (BEFCO) for planning and engineering work on this and other projects for the City and BEDC.

[BMSP thanks the *Bastrop Advertiser* for advance coverage; Debbie Denny for bottled water; Lost Pines Nursing Home and Rehabilitation Center for the event shuttle; the Ascension Catholic Church for use of its lawn.]

And about those medallions...

The Chestnut Street Improvement Project also includes newly created bronze medallions inset into the new sidewalks, and the ribbon cutting provided an opportunity to showcase those as well as the local foundry that cast them.

At the ribbon cutting, Bastrop Main Street Program Manager Nancy Wood recognized Mayor Terry Orr and his wife Pat for the initial idea of saluting Bastrop's historic heritage through the embedded medallions along the pedestrian friendly pathway from downtown to the Convention Center and City Hall. She took the idea to Deep in the Heart Art Foundry owner Clint Howard who readily embraced the idea and set about designing the medallions.

The result so far is a succession of 41 medallions, with more to be come during Phase 3 of the project (see story above). At each street corner—from Water to Haysel Streets—are medallions marking *El Camino Real de los Tejas*, the Old Spanish Road that transected the heart of Bastrop on its route from Old Mexico, through San Antonio, into East Texas and beyond into Louisiana. Each medallion is two feet in diameter and features a large star with the letters T-E-X-A-S on the points and "Bastrop, established 1832" within the star. Arching atop the star is "*El Camino Real de los Tejas*"; across the bottom is "Old San Antonio Road".

Inset into the new sidewalks along both sides of Chestnut from Water to the railroad tracks are a series of 19 medallions, with the center of each depicting a formative aspect of Bastrop's unique history. These medallions portray such events and places as Fort Puesta del Colorado, the Founding of Bastrop, Indian Conflicts, Bastrop's German Influence, the Bastrop Military Academy, the Fire of 1862, The Alamo, Dates of Texas Republic and Statehood, 1863 Emancipation, the Railroad, the Bastrop County Courthouse, the Bastrop Opera House, Historic Churches, Three Bridges, the Bastrop Advertiser, Bastrop State Park, the Legacy of the Coal Mines, Camp Swift and Kerr Community Center. Medallion topics were conceptualized by a citizen committee that included Sandra Chipley, Bill Ennis, Dock Jackson, Ken Kesselus, Mary McMurrey, Robbie Sanders, Kay Wesson, Marilyn Whites, and Bastrop Main Street Program Director Nancy Wood. Deep in the Heart Art Foundry owner Clint Howard then translated the topics into designs and oversaw the fabrication of the medallions at the foundry, located at 405 S. Jackson in the Bastrop Economic Development's Industrial Park.

The ribbon cutting also included the release of a new publication on the medallions—a 20-page booklet that provides information on the event or place depicted in each medallion and is designed to be a guide to a walking tour of the medallions. The booklet, funded by BMSP, is the collaborative work of Robbie Sanders, Ken Kesselus, Dick Smith, Cindye Wolford and Nancy Wood; booklet layout was executed by local graphic designer Josh Kemp. First run copies were available at the ribbon cutting; additional copies subsequently will be available at the Visitor Center by August 1.

Most of the attendees at the ribbon cutting thereafter jumped aboard a shuttle bus provided by Bastrop Lost Pines Rehabilitation and Nursing Home (and driven by Admissions Director Tina Holter) for a short spin to the Deep in the Heart Art Foundry...for its own ribbon cutting on its new Fireside Gallery and sculpture garden. Clint and foundry staff served as tour guides leading attendees through the foundry; the tour focused on the steps of the lost wax casting process—the process by the medallions were made—and various works in progress.

The foundry was established in 1980 on Alley A and relocated to BEDC's Industrial Park in 2002. It is one of four foundries in the nation that casts monumental bronze art and has earned an international reputation; tour participants were treated to a larger-than-life bronze vignette destined for Oklahoma where it will commemorate Route 66.

And check out that other *Medallion*

Check out pages 18 and 19 of *The Medallion* magazine for July/August: Bastrop is once again featured...this time as a full color picture of a Main Street music event. The photo illustrates "The Main Street Experience: Preserving Texas' Historical Downtowns Involves More than Physical Revitalization".

The Medallion? Texas Historical Commission's bimonthly news and feature magazine for good info about historical preservation initiatives across Texas. Current and previous issues of *The Medallion* are available on line at www.thc.state.tx.us/medallionmagdefault.shtml). A hardcopy subscription is yours for the asking, at the same site.

AND onto *Texas Highways*

The May 2010 issue of *Texas Highways* gives a nod to Bastrop on being named a National Trust for Historic Preservation "Distinction Destination". The page 22 story highlights local businesses and restaurants and prompts reads to visit the Bastrop County Historical Society Museum.

Main Street Advisory Board elects leadership

In its annual reorganization, the Bastrop Main Street Advisory Board elected new officers on July 12. Steve Dewire, general manager of the Hyatt Lost Pines Resort and Spa, assumes the chairmanship; photographer and Telling Your Story owner Jane Hunt was reelected vice chair, and Debbie Moore, columnist for the *Bastrop Advertiser*, was voted secretary.

These three officers will form the executive committee of the Board. Voting members of the Board also include Debbie Denny, Martha Granger, Frank Huffman, Dock Jackson, Shawn Pletsch and Dick Smith. Nonvoting *Ex officio* members include Pat Crawford and Joe Newman (BEDC), Christy Kossier (Planning and Zoning Commission), Kay McAnally (City Council), Susan Wendel (Chamber of Commerce), Marilyn Whites (Historic Landmark Commission) and

City Manager Mike Talbot. Assisting the Board is Bastrop Main Street Program Director Nancy Wood.

Bastrop featured in KEYE-TV “Field Trip”

If you watched KEYE-TV (CBS) over the second weekend in July, you saw lots of Bastrop...one of the featured attractions in the local station’s “Field Trips on a Fill Up” series.

And, if you missed the airing, check it out on YouTube:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=wo2JllCnhQQ

A promotional gambit of the City of Bastrop, the four-minute video is part of an hour-long KEYE program showcasing attractions within an easy traveling distance of Austin. Speaking up for Bastrop were Bastrop Visitor Center Director Cindy Wolford, Pecan Street Inn owner Shawn Pletsch, Mayor Terry Orr, Chamber of Commerce President/CEO Susan Wendel and Loblolly General Goods owner Marc Elson.

Gearing up for ‘Lost Pines Christmas’

While Christmas is almost six months away, local groups are scurrying to develop their plans for Bastrop’s “Lost Pines Christmas” weekend, December 9-12.

The BMSP Promotions Committee, led by co-chairs Terry Moore and Debbie Denny, is gathering information in preparation for creating a marketing campaign to entice distant audiences to Bastrop for the weekend. Central to the campaign is “bundling” all the activities under the “Lost Pines Christmas” marquee and creating and disseminating materials to spread the message to the state’s major metropolitan markets, to tourism centers, to travel websites and to the travel press generally. And central to all of that is getting word out early.

All identified local activities—from a holiday open house at the new City Hall to the annual Lighted Christmas parade—will be given star billing on a special Bastrop “Lost Pines Christmas” website. That website will serve, as it did this past year (the first year of the Lost Pines Christmas push), as a key link in getting the word out to audiences, near and far. Terry notes that each of the event sponsors will still be working hard to get the word out locally and to nearby communities, including Austin. The BMSP initiative is aimed at more distant audiences and will include billboards, rack cards, ads and news releases.

Further information, contact Terry at tlbmoore@hotmail.com or Debbie at ddenny@bastropadvertiser.com.

And now for Bastrop’s ‘Main Event’

Bastrop’s “Main Event”—the new second Saturday market in the Lumberyard Music Hall—got off to a promising start on July 10. Running from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., the first market featured six

vendors—all home based businesses selling new brand name and handcrafted items—and, as the “buzz” spread down Main Street, saw an increasing flow of shoppers.

Bastrop’s “Main Event” owes its roots to the Smithville “Main Event”—a like market that provided women working out their homes a once-a-month opportunity to sell their goods in a public setting. Operating out of leased space on Smithville’s Main Street, the market went inactive after the group lost its lease. After some discussion among the participants and interest in the growing vitality of Bastrop’s downtown area, Sheila Boyland (a Miche handbag vendor) set about recreating the “Main Event” here and found in Jeff and Jane Brister supportive landlords.

From this early success, Sheila is planning ahead for second Saturday Main Events through December and is anticipating markets of between 10 and 16 vendors. For further information about the market, contact Sheila at michebagsbyshelia@yahoo.com

Arts take over the Mercantile

In its two-plus years in operation, the R.A. Green Mercantile has “incubated” a broad mix of local businesses—a photographer, clothier, kitchen shop, to name just a few. Now the Mercantile reflects “mixed media” of a different type with all space occupied by mini-galleries/shops of various arts and crafts.

Newly joining longtime tenant Teresa McKenna (Logos and Lace, custom embroidery) are 13 local artists and artisans:

- ArtMakers Collective—showcasing the work of Linda Neubauer, Susan Hanft, Michael O’Brien, Stephanie Strange, Oscar Silva and Susan Hettleman. Works include jewelry, pottery, sculpture, assemblages.
- Lea Cundy—with her colorful wildflower pottery. Bluebonnets in abundance!
- Mark Cundy—Lea’s 16-year-old son whose fused glass pendants sparkle brightly and who also works in metal, creating both jewelry and small sculpture.
- Bill McGlaun—who can be seen transforming clay into amazing full figure sculptures to be cast in metal or hydrostone.
- Artists in Action—featuring works of Jeanette Condray (oils), Patricia Rendulic (etched and painted glass), Sharon Irwin (jewelry) and Jo Watts (polymer resin, watercolor, pottery and porcelain sculpture)
- Wild Thyme Herb Shop—(Nancy) has assembled a broad collection of herbal soaps, lotions, teas (and great little teapots and coffee pots “for one”).

Regular hours are currently 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Thursday through Saturday. Artists in Action and the Wild Thyme Herb Shop will be open Monday through Saturday; during August, Artists in Action will be open seven days a week.

Summer training on historic preservation slated

Historic preservation is the focus of a special Texas Main Street Program seminar in New Braunfels on August 19. The day-long session is funded by a Preserve America grant and is free and open to the public—registration by August 11 is required however. The seminar is targeted to professionals and volunteers involved in all aspects of planning, preservation and revitalization work in historic downtowns.

Topics will include managing and enhancing the design environment; on-site study of various historic commercial buildings, including Mesker storefronts; and preservation planning. Seminar leaders are Nicholas Kalogeresis from The Lakota Group of Chicago, Illinois and Darius Bryjka of B-W Consultants Inc. in Springfield, Illinois. According to conference planners, Bryjka is nationally known for his expertise in Mesker storefronts, identified by their galvanized steel or cast iron elements. (The façades of several of Bastrop's historic downtown buildings incorporate such materials.)

The Texas Main Street Program is offering the seminar through a grant from Preserve America, a federal preservation initiative of which the City of Bastrop has been a grant recipient, and is being co-hosted by the New Braunfels Main Street Program.

BMSP Director Nancy Wood is anticipating a highly productive seminar and would like to see a large Bastrop contingent of BMSP volunteers and interested citizens attending. The seminar will run from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Seekatz Opera House, 265 W. San Antonio Street. For further information on the day's program, lodging information and registration forms, visit www.thc.state.tx.us/mainstreet/mswork.shtml. If attending, please contact Nancy about possible carpooling arrangements: Mainstreet@cityofbastrop.org.

Web savvy volunteer needed!

The Bastrop Main Street Program has just secured a space on Gozaic.com, the Heritage Tourism website for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and is looking for a volunteer to assist with Bastrop's being a featured destination.

The work entails organizing Bastrop-specific text and photos and uploading them to this web tool. Gozaic provides online tools to expedite this task; some familiarity with such tools will be helpful.

And the result? Bastrop will "take its place" on the site and provide members an easy way to access information about heritage rich destinations as well as tools for members to connect and share their interests and experiences.

Please contact Nancy Wood if you are interested: (512) 332-0068 or mainstreet@cityofbastrop.org.

Local training set for Aug. 2

Bastrop Main Street Program volunteers, local officials and interested citizens are invited to attend a training session on the evening of August 2 in City Hall.

While aimed at new board and committee members, the training's scope also constitutes a primer for those who are interested in finding out more how the "Main Street model" functions and what can be learned from other towns and cities in the Main Street Program.

Facilitating the session will be Jill Robinson, assistant state coordinator for the Texas Main Street Program of the Texas Historical Commission. The session, running from 6 to 7:45 p.m., will focus on program modeling by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the history of this state and national initiative, the roles and responsibilities of board members and committees as well as those of the local director. Along the way, the presentation will include leading examples of project undertaken by other Main Street Program communities.

Work in progress...

The Bastrop Main Street Program is driven by its four all-volunteer citizen committees, working in close collaboration with BMSP Director Nancy Wood and meeting monthly or more frequently.

- The Organization Committee has been engaged with planning and executing the July 17 public event to mark the completion of Phase 2 the Chestnut Street Improvement Project. (See story in this newsletter.) Efforts now turn to supplementing the BMSP contact database to include property owners within the 62-block program area.
- The Promotions Committee continues to gather information on local activities during the second weekend in December and toward promoting Bastrop as the destination to visit/place to be during this "Lost Pines Christmas" weekend. (See story in this publication.) The committee is continuing efforts to build a database of business contacts throughout the BMSP area and is working on a strategy to highlight and foster good customer service.
- The Design Committee has recommended that the City enter into an agreement with an Austin-based consulting firm to identify optimal locations, design and content for vehicle and pedestrian wayfinding signage welcoming visitors and leading them to the central business district, convention center, historic neighborhoods and other community assets of interest. If the recommendation is approved, consultant work would begin Oct. 1 and continue 16 weeks.
- The Economic Restructuring Committee continues to recruit new committee members and to research business mentoring programs and to lay the groundwork for drawing new business and business reinvestment into the Chestnut Street corridor.

Committees welcome community participation in all committee work—either through adding your time, talents and energies to the mix by joining one of the four standing committees (Promotions, Economic Restructuring, Design and Organization) or by attending committee meetings. Please contact Nancy at Mainstreet@cityofbastrop.org if you would like to volunteer or need additional information.

Come on in and take a seat...

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:

July 28	Organization Committee, noon in the Chamber of Commerce Conference Room
August 2	BMSP Advisory Board meeting/THC Training, 6 p.m. in City Hall
August 11	Economic Restructuring Committee, 5:15 p.m. in the Chamber of Commerce Conference Room
August 16	Promotions Committee, 5:30 p.m. in the Chamber of Commerce Conference Room
August 19	Design Committee, 5 p.m. in City Hall
August 25	Organization Committee, noon in the Chamber of Commerce Conference Room
September (TBD)	BMSP Advisory Board meeting, 6 p.m. in City Hall (Labor Day conflict)
September 8	Economic Restructuring Committee, 5:15 p.m. in the Chamber of Commerce Conference Room
September 16	Design Committee, 5 p.m. in City Hall
September 20	Promotions Committee, 5:30 p.m. in the Chamber of Commerce Conference Room
September 29	Organization Committee, noon in the Chamber of Commerce 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 volunteers and the business community informed on program activities and to provide news on events, plans and issues affecting the 65-block BMSP area.

Produced monthly (except December), ***Inside Main Street*** is compiled and edited by BMSP volunteer Dick Smith. Feedback and suggestions welcomed! Contact Dick at soyrps@gmail.com or Nancy Wood at Mainstreet@cityofbastrop.org.

Please share this newsletter with others who have an interest in learning how the program is making a difference. Past newsletters are available online at www.bastroptxmainstreet.com.
