

Inside Main Street

News and information on Bastrop's Main Street Program March 19, 2010

Moving on down that road

Chestnut Street is buzzing, banging, beeping, clanging and chugging with three major construction projects, each clipping along at good speed.

- The **Chestnut Street Improvement Project**, headed to an early summer completion.

The project runs along Chestnut Street from Water Street to the railroad tracks, just east of Haysel Street. Readily apparent changes will be new street surfaces and curbing, sidewalks featuring commemorative medallions and decorative lighting. Utility poles have been removed in favor of underground electrical, telephone and cable lines; water lines have been replaced and sewer and storm water drainage have been improved.

Bastrop Main Street Program Manager Nancy Wood reports that the medallions will be cast in bronze and are the work of Deep in the Heart Art Foundry, located in the Bastrop Business and Industrial Park. Installation of the medallions will occur after the sidewalk and street work is completed. An "El Camino Real De Los Tejas" medallion—two feet in diameter—will be inset at each corner of intersections along Chestnut—from Main through Haysel and ultimately to SH 95. Each medallion features a large star with the letters T-E-X-A-S on the points and "Bastrop, established 1832" within the star. Arcing atop the star will be "El Camino Real De Los Tejas"; at the bottom will be "Old San Antonio Road".

Additional medallions—each unique and depicting some aspect of Bastrop's history—will be inset in sidewalks on either side of Chestnut Street to create a historical walkway. These medallions will be of the same size and replicate the "El Camino Real De Los Tejas" and "Old San Antonio Road" display of the street corner medallions; historical images will replace the star for these medallions.

- The new **Convention Center**, slated for completion early next spring.

The Convention Center site—on the north side of Chestnut in the area previously occupied by the River Valley Farmers' Market—has had a makeover as site preparation proceeds at full speed. The site has been cleared and regraded; the yellow frame cottage has been repositioned and will eventually serve as the office of the Center director and the Bastrop Main Street Program (BSMP).

The design for the Center was developed by a community task force in consultation with the project architect, Fatter & Evans Architects, Inc., and will feature tilt-wall construction. The design includes a tower top with a galvanized silo, evocative of the site's previous use as a cotton gin and granary.

When completed, 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**, to be finished within nine months.

Site preparation is well underway also for the new City Hall, on the south side of Chestnut Street, roughly across the street from the new Convention Center. When completed, 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 19th century train station.

Concept designs and construction updates on the new Convention Center and City Hall may be found on the City website, [www.cityofbastrop.org/docs/Notes from Const Man 03012010.pdf](http://www.cityofbastrop.org/docs/Notes_from_Const_Man_03012010.pdf).

The collective impact of these three projects was the focus of a guest column by Mayor Terry Orr in the February 12 ***Bastrop Advertiser***. Mayor Orr sees in these three projects “a unique opportunity for Bastrop to attract the private capital and investment necessary to guide development of this important commercial corridor within the Main Street Program.” He also sees the work as presenting an outstanding opportunity for Bastrop to springboard on its past successes in the downtown business district, to create “an important, economically vibrant, blend of office buildings, restaurants, hotels and retail shops [along the Chestnut Street corridor] that will be a great asset to this city.”

He noted that the BMSP is “taking on the challenges of blending the historic aspects of our town with the new development that Bastrop will inevitably face during the next decade. I will be looking to important City of Bastrop entities – the Historic Landmark Commission, Planning and Zoning Commission, the Bastrop Economic Development Corporation and the Main Street Program – to work together leading the way in developing a pattern for economic vitality that takes full advantage of the initiatives and vision of other organizations such as the Downtown Business Alliance and Chamber of Commerce.”

The full text of the Mayor’s column may be found on the Advertiser’s website, at <http://bastropadvertiser.com/2010/03/12/main-street-matters-chestnut-street-improvements>.

Recruiting small business workshop scheduled

Seats are still available at next week’s workshop on bringing new business to downtown, to be held March 24, from 4 to 7 p.m. in City Hall.

Alysia Cook, LCRA senior economic development specialist, will facilitate the workshop laying the groundwork for creating a business development plan for Chestnut Street. The plan is envisioned to encompass retaining, attracting and developing a mix of businesses that will enhance the central business district for convention attendees and tourists and that will help make the BMSP area the first, preferred stop for local shoppers.

Sponsored by the BMSP Economic Restructuring Committee and addressing one of the four strategic goals established by the BSMP for the coming year, the workshop is designed for city

officials and members of Economic Restructuring Committee and the Main Street Advisory Board, as well as members of the Bastrop Economic Development Corporation Board and leadership of the Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Business Alliance. Other interested BMSP volunteers are welcomed on a space-available basis.

The workshop is free and includes a working supper for participants. For additional information and to reserve a spot, contact BMSP Manager Nancy Wood at Mainstreet@cityofbastrop.org.

New grants awarded, others in the works

A new round of Bastrop Economic Development Corporation/Bastrop Main Street Program Rehabilitation and Restoration grants have been awarded by City Council, upon BEDC's recommendation.

A "mega grant" of \$25,000 was approved for renovation of the C.R. Haynie Building, at 1010 Main Street, the site of Anita's Mexican Food restaurant. The overall project is anticipated to cost \$121,618; Mega grants cap out at \$25,000 or one-fourth of the projected cost, whichever is less.

Also approved were "façade grants" of \$2,200 to Lil' Bit of Country, at 809 Main Street and \$1,000 to the Bastrop Chamber of Commerce, 927 Main Street. Façade grants cap at \$5,000 or one-half of the project cost, whichever is less.

In process now are requests to two additional façade grants. One for Apothecary's Hall Antique Shop goes to the BMSP Design Committee on March 25 while another—for Tina Zapalac's law office and mediation center at 503 Pecan—received a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Landmark Commission on March 10 for work proposed for the building.

In development are requests for a façade grant for Lock Drugs, at 1003 Main Street, and a mega grant for Bastrop Copier, at 1002 Main Street. These requests will be submitted to the BMSP Manager for consultation and initial approval; thereafter the requests will go to either the BMSP Design Committee or the City's Historic Landmarks Commission before being sent to the BDEC board and City Council.

Since BEDC established the façade program more than 10 years ago and the mega grant program in 2008, more than \$330,000 has been awarded owners of business properties in the Main Street Program area and, in doing so, has helped promote private investment—to the tune of more than \$3 million—in the structures. For the current fiscal year, BEDC has budgeted \$150,000 for new grants.

And just who was that mystery shopper?

Nobody is saying but the mystery shopper had a lot to say about 38 local business and 14 restaurants "he/she/they" visited late last year.

The visit reprised a smaller initiative commissioned by the Economic Restructuring Committee in 2008 to help business owners identify customer service strengths and weaknesses. And, as in 2008, the mystery shopper found a lot to like—principally good customer service with small town friendliness.

The 38 shops visited this year consistently got high marks for window displays and signage, merchandise selections, greetings upon entry and helpfulness/direction thereafter. The cumulative score for a 20-criteria rating was 87.12, out of a possible score of 100 points. While the local business survey results abound with positives, the visit did highlight an area of potential weakness relating to closing the sale—asking for an order, suggesting additional items and services. Results of the restaurant survey are still being compiled.

BMSP Manager Nancy Wood will contact each of the merchants to explain the program, share overall results and offer individual store/restaurant results. Nancy will also offer possible training opportunities, similar in kind to the Small Business Stimulus Summit series offered in 2009 by the Economic Restructuring Committee, in conjunction with BEDC.

Mark your calendar: the first of the 2010 training opportunities will occur on April 22—from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. in the Bastrop Opera House—and will focus on “Six Ways to Double (or Triple!) Your Sales Quickly... and Beat Competition”. Again sponsored by the Economic Restructuring Committee, the session is open to and at no charge to any local business. For further information, contact Nancy at Mainstreet@cityofbastrop.org.

Cupcakes, music, balloons, Oh My!

Sunny skies and a lot of sunny smiles as well: 'twas the stuff of a great third birthday party for the Bastrop Main Street Program.

During those three years, more than \$3.8 million in private funding has been spent in restoring and rehabilitating downtown businesses and another \$1.3 million in public expenditures (including the Chestnut Street Improvement Project, now in progress). During those three years as well, visitors have discovered—and locals have rediscovered—downtown Bastrop through a series of events and promotional activities that have drawn tens of thousands. The celebration focused on these realities and on the partnerships that have made the transformation possible.

The party was the culmination of a month-long spotlight on the Bastrop Main Street Program—beginning on February 3 with Bastrop’s being named a “Distinctive Destination” by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Other highlights of the month included a salute—in the form of a proclamation—by City Council and the February 18 special insert to the ***Bastrop Advertiser***—“Bastrop’s Main Street Program: A work in progress”.

The party was held in the vacant space next to Baxters on Main restaurant (a space that BMSP hopes to have dedicated as a public plaza/gathering spot). Event sponsors included the First National Bank of Bastrop, Frontier Bank, the Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort and Spa, the Insurance Network of Texas/JBA Properties, the Lost Pines Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Maxine’s on Main, Bluebonnet Electric, and Collier Construction. “Candles on the Cake” contributors include Bastrop Abstract, Jimmie Ann Vaughan Realty and attorneys Aleta Peacock, Virginia Piper, Joe Grady Tuck, Jim Kershaw, Victor Gonzales and Derek Van Gilder, all of whom have offices in the BMSP area.

And, on that note...

City Council added an exclamation mark to the BMSP's celebration in the form of a proclamation unanimously approved by the Council at its February 9 meeting.

The proclamation recognizes the BMSP as a catalyst in the revitalization of the downtown commercial district and the effect that BMSP and its partners have had on fostering private reinvestment and building public awareness of Bastrop's downtown architectural treasures.

The proclamation goes on to affirm the value of this effort in promoting heritage tourism and the recognition that it has brought to the city, most recently in the form of having been named a 2009 "Distinctive Destination" by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Website weaving continues

Martha Granger, volunteer Bastrop Main Street Program webmeister, continues to refine and supplement site content. Latest additions include

- a PDF of the recent BMSP insert to the ***Bastrop Advertiser***
- A PDF of City Council's February 9 proclamation honoring the BMSP
- pictures from the BMSP "birthday party"
- archived and new issues of ***Main Street Matters***, a monthly publication of the Texas Historical Commission's Main Street Program, and
- archival and new issues of ***Inside Main Street***.

While you're shopping the website, make a note that there are now two pathways to the site. In addition to navigating down through the City of Bastrop site (www.cityofbastrop.org), you can get there more directly through an alternate URL: www.bastroptxmainstreet.com.

Please thank Martha for her work on the website and relay any suggestions you might have for improving the site to fringeme@austin.rr.com.

Lights, action, RADIO

Three one-act plays—a comedy, a drama and a mystery—take to the stage (oops, make that the air) at the Bastrop Opera House on March 27, at 7:30 p.m. and March 28, at 2:30 p.m.

All three are written and performed in a 1940s-style broadcast radio format. The theatre audience assumes the role of studio audience, watching the ensemble "On the Air", clapping on the "Applause" cue, and witnessing the "Foley artists" overlay sound effects.

The plays will be

- ***The Pussycat and the Expert Plumber Who Was a Man***, a comedy written by Arthur Miller and directed by Don Gooding.
- ***Panic in Salem***, a drama by Wilfrid H. Petitt and directed by Nick Collier
- ***12 Skulls Mean Death***, a mystery by Winston Weathers and directed by Janet Spencer.

The plays will feature local talent and, after these two performances, will join the repertory of Opera House offerings available throughout 2010 for special bookings. Opera House Director Chester Eitze noted that the plays will become part the theatre's ongoing Tourism Development Project, a trailblazing effort initiated in 1987 for day visitors, tour groups, tour bus excursions and special events.

General admission tickets, at \$5 per person, will be available at the door 30 minutes before the show. For further information about the cast and the production, visit www.bastropoperahouse.com.

And while you're on the Opera House website

Check out "Always...Patsy Cline", the Bastrop Opera House's next production, running from April 9 through May 1.

The musical play, written by Ted Swindley and produced by special arrangement with Ted Swindley Productions, centers on legendary country music singer Patsy Cline and her friendship with Louise Seger, a fan from Houston during the last two years of the singer's tragic life. According to program notes, the show's title was inspired by Cline's letters to Seger, letters consistently signed "Love ALWAYS...Patsy Cline."

Chester Eitze, now celebrating his 25th anniversary at the helm of the Opera House, will direct. Terry Lyne Moore, rapidly gaining national recognition as a singer (as well as local recognition as co-chair of the BMSP Promotions Committee), will portray Cline while acclaimed local actress Engela Edwards will portray Seger. The show includes 27 songs, each of which carries Cline's indelible signature.

Performances will occur Fridays and Saturdays, April 9-May 1, at 7:30 p.m. The run will include one matinee performance, Sunday, April 25 at 2:30 p.m. Tickets are \$15, reserved seating, and may be purchased at www.bastropoperahouse.com.

The talk around town...

- The ***Bastrop Advertiser*** reported, on March 13, that **Bastrop sales tax collections** continue to climb while neighboring communities—and cumulatively the state—were down. For 2010, Bastrop has thus far received \$1,003,448; up \$62,505 for the same period in 2009.
- April is Child Abuse Prevention Month and the Children's Advocacy Center will get the jump on it with the center's sixth annual **Cowboys & Caviar** fundraiser on March 27 in Riverbend Park in Smithville. The center, headquartered at 1002 Chestnut Street and serving Bastrop, Lee and Fayette counties, provides intervention and therapeutic services to child abuse victims and their non-offending family members. Table sponsorships are available and tickets may be purchased in advance of the event for \$75 per person. The event will feature dinner, musical entertainment and a live auction. For further information, visit www.childrensadvocacycenter.org.
- Just under 1,300 bicyclists—and at least one unicyclist—came to town for the Family Crisis Center's ninth annual **Pedal Thru the Pines** on March 8. A training ride for those participating in the MS 150 later this year and some rigorous hill climbing for everyone, the

ride began at Bastrop High School and wound through Bastrop State Park and beyond, for rides of 16, 27, 50 and 63 miles.

- Ready to ramble? The Bastrop Rotary Club is inviting owners of Vettes, Volvos and Van (and any other drivable vehicle) to shine 'em up and chug on down to the Club's third annual **Road Rally** on April 10 at the Bastrop Rodeo Arena. Billed as "a friendly competition for great causes", the event is a fundraiser underwriting local scholarship, community charitable initiatives and projects, various youth activities and international service projects. Vehicles will vie for singular distinction: Most Un-Classic, Most Lovable, Most Talked About, Best Dressed and the more prosaic Best Set of Wheels. The event includes a "driving quest," something of a scavenger hunt on wheels, prizes and raffles, live music provided by the Peterson Brothers, Thumbs Up and Still Rockin'...and lots of food provided by Baxters on Main, Grace Miller's Restaurant, Cedar's Mediterranean Grill, Maxine's on Main, Benny's Texas BBQ and China Buffet. For more information, event times, rules and registration, visit www.bastroproadrally.com.
- The 2010 Texas Poet Laureate, Karla K. Morton will be in town on March 30 and 31. She was invited to work with high school students on a combination project of art and poetry and will make presentations to students at the Jerry Fay Willhelm Center for Performing Arts both days she is here. On March 31st from 5-7 p.m. she will be hosted at The Book Basket, 913 Main Street, for a **Wine, Women and Poetry** evening and the public is invited to attend and enjoy the evening.

Ms. Morton is a board member of the Greater Denton Arts Council, and a founding member of the Denton Poet's Assembly. Morton, who has a Journalism degree from Texas A&M University, is currently featured on the *Art of Living Gallery* national television show (episode titled *Commemorating Life*) and loves to promote poetry, logging hundreds of miles across Texas, and reading her work at schools, universities, conferences and festivals. Morton lives in Denton, Texas.

For more information on the Texas Poet Laureate visit to Bastrop, contact Nancy Wood at mainstreet@cityofbastrop.org or call 512-332-0068

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:

March 24	Economic Restructuring Committee, 4 - 7 p.m., in City Hall Council Chambers
March 31	Organization Committee, noon in the Chamber Conference Room
April 5	BMSP Advisory Board meeting, 6 p.m. in City Hall
April 14	Economic Restructuring Committee, 5:15 p.m. in Chamber Conference Room
April 15	Design Committee, 5 p.m. in City Hall
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

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
