



Main Street! Matters

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Texas Main Street Program 2009 Annual Report "Success in Main Street: Sustainability"

The U.S. economy was in a free-fall during 2009 and its fierceness impacted not only major national retailers but the small entrepreneurs on Main Street as well.

In a Dec. 15, 2009 report listing store closings across the country, just about every well-known national retailer appears: 273 Starbucks stores, 11 Macy's department stores, 160 Family Dollar outlets, hundreds of car dealerships and 118 Office Depot stores. Still others disappeared into bankruptcy. Almost 250 national retailers appear on the list, virtually all with multiple store closings. Plus, even before the recession, the American mega-mall was in decline. In the past two years, 400 of the nation's largest shopping malls have closed. Mall vacancy rates are at their highest levels since 2001.

Sure, it's been a tough year, but what Main Street stands for is more than a bottom line. Main Street represents community values as well: localism, smart growth, sustainability, economic priorities and quality of life. Nationwide, interest in buying locally and from independent businesses, plus the experience of shopping on Main

Street have helped Main Street districts survive 2009. Despite struggles in many corners, there was much to be proud of in Texas.

Milestones

During 2009, Mineola celebrated 20 consecutive years in Main Street, and Taylor reached 10.



Mineola, 20-year Main Street city



Celebrating Taylor Main Street's 10th anniversary: Williamson County Commissioner Ron Morrison, Main Street Board Chair Jan Konarik, Main Street Manager Jean Johnson, Past Board Chair Irene Michna, and U.S. Congressman John Carter.

Success stories

In Bastrop, a third-year city, a façade and interior renovation for the Bridges Building, assisted by a grant from the Bastrop Economic Development Corporation, resulted in seven new mixed-use businesses in the historic downtown. Rehabilitations to other buildings have resulted in the opening of a sports bar/restaurant, an upscale steakhouse (shared kitchen), a quilt shop, downtown living space and more.

In Tyler, more than \$150,000 in in-kind services and materials/labor donations resulted in the completion of the new Main Street program headquarters, an adaptive reuse project, and Gallery Main Street, an art gallery under direction of the Main Street Program in the heart of the Main Street district.

Since returning to the program just this past year, Weatherford has seen a number of physical improvement projects, building sales and business activity, ranging from the opening of a bakery, a salon, several professional offices and some unique retail shops. Weatherford recently voted to have the abil-

ity to sell alcohol, which prompted several existing restaurants to remodel and, in turn, brought more night-time traffic to the area.

Grapevine's 25th Annual Main Street Days Festival this year drew almost 100,000 visitors. Held during national Preservation Month in May, the festival also included a plaque dedication and introduction of a new mural on the Masonic Lodge building depicting famous Masons throughout history.

In Waxahachie, the city (of which Main Street is part), chamber and school district banded together for a "Choose Waxahachie" shop local campaign, with the mayor taking a prominent role in encouraging residents to keep their dollars at home (and in downtown).



Waxahachie's city magazine encourages shopping locally and gives accolades to Main Street for achieving National Recognition!

The Henry Ash building in Palestine (see images at right) included returning historic elements to the building, such as the rebuilding of the historic bay window, reintroduction of the first floor storefront, restoration of transom windows and cleaning brick. The \$50,000 project was funded with an Economic Development Corporation grant and owner contribution. It has already been leased to the Anderson County Arts Council's Art Gallery.

Below: Henry Ash Building, Palestine



Historic



Existing 2008



TMSP design rendering



Completion, 2009

There are many other stories just like these that are worthy of sharing to show how sustainable and strong the Texas Main Street network remains!

So, just what does sustainability mean in Main Street and how does the whole community benefit?

According to the National Trust Main Street Center, the Main Street Four-Point Approach® is a community-driven, comprehensive strategy and a common-sense way to address the variety of issues and problems that challenge traditional business districts.

The Texas Main Street Program (TMSP) is one of the oldest state coordinating programs in the country, having become one of the first official state coordinating programs in 1981. TMSP also has some very long-serving programs that have stood the test of time and achieved organizational sustainability, a very important element for success in downtown revitalization and economic development through historic preservation. As of Dec. 1, 2009, the cities in the Texas Main Street network range from about 1,000 in population to more than 220,000. With Wills Point and Eagle Pass coming on board Jan. 1, 2010, the total number of full-time Texas Main Street programs is 86, making it one of the largest in the country.

In Main Street, sustainability is not single-minded; each of the Four Points (organization, design, economic restructuring and promotion) must play a role. The organizational sustainability of local Main Street programs depends on the sustainability of the Main Street districts they manage, and vice versa. Economic stability is critical as well, with a strong mix of busi-

nesses and an environment that supports and encourages creative and unique entrepreneurial businesses.

A sustainable community is one that balances the objectives of economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity. These three E's—economy, environment, and equity—are key to the vitality and long-term viability of a place.

Main Street districts have many characteristics that make them inherently environmentally sustainable. The reuse and rehabilitation of existing buildings uses less raw material and energy than new construction. Though old buildings may be perceived to be energy hogs, in fact this is not the case.

“Green” features of historic commercial buildings include:

- **Shared party and thick masonry walls** help conserve heat in the winter and cool air in summer.
- **Traditional canopies and awnings** provide shade and help reduce a building's cooling load.
- **Operable windows and transoms** and **high ceilings** help supply natural ventilation while keeping the lower six feet of air space cool in hot weather.
- **Daylighting** from large storefront and transom windows reduces the need for artificial lighting.

While new buildings that are “built green” may possess many of these features, historic buildings are the “original green” —designed for energy efficiency in an age without air conditioning, and constructed from local, durable materials that have stood the test of time.



Addressing deteriorating elements in historic buildings (transom windows, storefront) and aesthetics (cleaning, paint) can give an already green building new life as this recent project in Hillsboro shows. (top to bottom: existing, TMSP rendering, and completed project.)

At the neighborhood scale, the environmental benefits of the Main Street approach are even greater. By promoting reinvestment in historic buildings and communities, Main Street programs counter some of the effects of sprawl. The benefits of revitalizing historic commercial districts include:

- **Reduced Automobile Dependence.** The smaller scale of streets and buildings in Main Street districts enables people to drive less and rely on alternate transportation, such as walking or bicycling.

- **Land Conservation.** Revitalizing an existing commercial district can reduce pressure to build on previously undeveloped land. This helps preserve important wetlands, wildlife habitat, and agricultural land.
- **Efficient Use of Infrastructure.** Rehabilitating historic buildings does not require the construction of new streets or extension of water and sewer lines. Using existing infrastructure means that municipal resources can be conserved for infrastructure maintenance and the provision of other services.

Furthermore, there are many economic and social benefits that come with downtown revitalization. Main Street has a proven record as an economic development tool and also builds “social capital” within a community. Places with high levels of social capital tend to be more resilient than places where neighbors or business owners may not know or interact with each other.

Though there is much that is inherently sustainable about historic downtowns, this is not to say they could not be made more sustainable, and here local Main Street managers and boards have a significant role to play. They can encourage adaptive reuse of vacant buildings and promote a mix of uses in close proximity, including bringing residential uses to upper stories of commercial buildings. Implementation of Buy Local campaigns by Main Street programs helps promote economic and social sustainability. And there are many other initiatives that Main Street organizations can be a part of, from providing education to property owners on green retrofits for historic buildings, to making sure that infrastructure improvements take alternative and public transporta-

tion into account. By taking a proactive role in making their cities more sustainable, Main Street programs can take the lead on improving quality of life. The Four-Point Approach of Main Street™ provides a structured path towards achieving the three E's—protecting and improving the environment, developing the local economy, and elevating social well-being by preserving and enhancing the places at the heart of our communities.

This article was written by Debra Farst and Dana Serovy.

References for the above article:
http://retailindustry.about.com/od/storclosingsandopenings/a/2009_us_retail_store_closings_list_alphabetized_3.htm
www.theweek.com/article/index/94691/The_vanishing_shopping_mall
www.preservationnation.org/main-street/main-street-news/2009/05/members-only/state-of-main-street-09.html
www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street/

The Year in Review

TMSP started off quickly in early January 2009, with new managers and board members attending basic training in Georgetown. Their three days of learning was in one of Texas' highly successful Main Street communities!



New managers and board members with TMSP staff at January training.

A few weeks later, new managers completed their basic Main Street training and were joined in Bastrop by 70 other managers from across Texas for the February Annual Meeting and Winter Training.



New managers finished their basic training in Bastrop.



Winter training in Bastrop was held in the historic Opera House.



Retail consultant Rick Ferrell, Retail Market Answers, was brought in for summer training held jointly in Beeville and Goliad.

The annual statewide downtown revitalization conference hosted by

the Texas Downtown Association (TDA) and the TMSP was held this year in Tyler, a 19-year Main Street city. Both Tyler and Brenham won big at the TDA President's Awards ceremony, with Moore Grocery Lofts in Tyler, a tax-credit project that was fully preleased, winning for Best Adaptive Reuse.



Moore Grocery Lofts, Tyler.

Tyler was also recognized for Best Marketing Program (Goodman Museum Marketing project); Best Downtown Business (Discovery Science Place); and Best Downtown Partner (the City of Tyler).

Brenham's *fancy that!* was recognized with TDA's Best Commercial Interior award. Brenham Main Street's highly successful summer concert series, Hot Nights, Cool Tunes, also received accolades as Best Promotional Event.



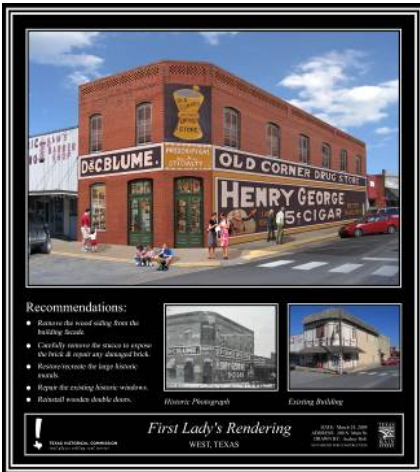
Hot Nights, Cool Tunes, Brenham.

Throughout the year, at this and other state and local meetings and conferences, TMSP staff was involved in planning and speaking. TMSP architect Wayne Bell also spoke in 2009 at the National Main Streets Conference in Chicago and served on a Main Street resource team in Vineland, NJ.

In 2009, Rockwall and West became new Main Street communities, while Weatherford was recertified. In 2010, Wills Point enters as a new Main Street city while Eagle Pass, an original 1981 Texas Main Street city, is recertified.



Rockwall Main Street Manager Bethany Golden with Anita Perry, First Lady of Texas, during the 2009 First Lady's Tour.



Design rendering for the West First Lady's building.

During the year, 59 Main Street cities received at least one (most received more than one) site visit from a member of the TMSP staff. Additional technical services were provided to these and others during the year via phone consultation, email etc. There is a broad range of services provided by the TMSP staff. Remember, all official Main Street cities can access the services provided by the TMSP on site or via other avenues throughout the year. Make it your New Year's resolution to take advantage of all the

TMSP and the THC have to offer to expand and leverage your own local resources!

In design, services range from exterior renderings for comprehensive building rehabilitations to paint schemes, infill for new construction, sign designs and even logos for businesses and the Main Street program itself. The design staff also consults on ADA issues and interior space planning as it affects the exterior façade and assesses maintenance issues, which are extremely important for extending the life of historic buildings. Even for projects that may not require a rendering or site visit, staff is available for telephone consultation. Other services provided by the TMSP staff include economic development assistance to the public and private sector, strategic planning services for local Main Street programs, on-site or regional board and committee trainings and the numerous workshops and seminars provided during the year. These and all of the services are provided to officially designated Main Street programs without charge (except for small administrative fees paid one time annually).

Work under the Preserve America grant awarded to the TMSP in 2008 began in earnest during the summer. The teamed site visits to participating communities are designed to enhance the existing preservation ethic in these communities that has been developed over time under the national Main Street model. To date, seven Main Street /Preserve America cities (Electra, Celina, Clarksville, Mineola, Palestine, Paris and Pilot Point) have received reassessment visits from a team of downtown revitalization professionals hired through the grant, along with TMSP staff. The effort also includes the production

of a comprehensive workbook of findings.



Preserve America reassessment team in Clarksville.

The grant also includes a series of seminars on critical preservation topics to be held throughout the year. The first seminar is scheduled for Feb. 18, 2010 in Waxahachie, a 15-year Main Street city. (At the time of this writing, the seminar leader had not yet been named. This will be announced soon.) Being mindful of our programs' limited travel budgets, the workshop, which is open to the public, will be held at the same time as Main Street winter training so that managers can attend the workshop and meet their training requirements at the same time. Managers are encouraged to invite others involved in preservation in their communities to attend the February 18th workshop. The to-be-named topic will be relevant to anyone with an interest in preservation and/or downtown revitalization, including city managers, architects, volunteers, planners, code officials and others.



From all of us here at the TMSP, we look forward to continuing to work with you in your local communities throughout 2010 and beyond,



State Coordinator



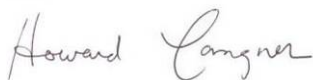
Assistant State Coordinator



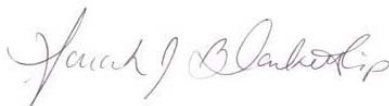
Program Specialist, Economic Development



Design, TMSP Architect



Design, TMSP Architect



Senior Designer



Project Design Assistant



Project Design Assistant



Office Manager



Administrative Technician

2010 Calendar of Events

- **Jan. 20-21, Georgetown, Texas**
Board training (will end at noon on Jan. 21)
 - **Jan. 20-22, Georgetown, Texas**
Training for new Main Street managers
 - **Feb. 17-19, Waxahachie, Texas**
Preserve America Workshop (one day, Feb. 18) combined with Main Street Annual Meeting
 - **Apr. 22-24, Houston, Texas**
Texas Historical Commission Annual Historic Preservation Conference, see www.thc.state.tx.us
 - **May 2-5, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma**
National Main Street Conference, see www.preservationnation.org/main-street
 - **Oct. 26-30, Austin, Texas**
National Preservation Conference, see www.preservationnation.org
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Web Sites of Interest

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation: www.achp.gov
African American Heritage Preservation Foundation: www.aahpfdn.org
(The) Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation: www.ahlp.org
American Institute of Architects: www.aia.org
American Planning Association: www.planning.org
American Society of Landscape Architects: www.asla.org
(The) Cultural Landscape Foundation: www.tclf.org
Handbook of Texas Online: www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online
Institute for Cultural Landscape Studies: www.icls.harvard.edu
Keep Texas Beautiful: www.ktb.org
League of Historic American Theaters: www.lhat.org
National Main Street Center: www.preservationnation.org/main-street
National Park Service: www.nps.gov
National Trust for Historic Preservation: www.preservationnation.org
Texas Department of Rural Affairs: www.orca.state.tx.us
Preservation Easement Trust: www.preservationeasement.org
Preservation Directory: www.preservationdirectory.com
Preservation Texas: www.preservationtexas.org
Project for Public Spaces: www.pps.org
Rails to Trails: www.railstotrails.org
Sacred Places: www.sacredplaces.org
Scenic America: www.scenic.org
Texas Commission on the Arts: www.arts.state.tx.us
Texas Downtown Association: www.texasdowntown.org
Texas Folklife Resources: www.texasfolklife.org
Texas Historical Commission: www.thc.state.tx.us
Texas Parks and Wildlife: www.tpwd.state.tx.us
Texas Rural Leadership Program: www.trlp.org
Texas State Preservation Board: www.tspb.state.tx.us
Urban Land Institute: www.uli.org

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