

# TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION



**A View Along Elm Avenue**

The First Lady's Rendering demonstrates how an entire row of buildings in the Main Street district can benefit from simple yet effective design improvements. Changes to the building facades include uncovering, repairing, or replacing historic transom windows, replacing historic door configurations, replacing awnings or canopies, cleaning masonry, and developing new color schemes, signage, and window displays.

The success of the Texas Main Street Program extends beyond the realm of the individual building facade to encompass the public realm; the sidewalks and streets. Outdoor cafes, bicycle lanes, and small public parks (pocket parks or "parklets") all contribute to the vitality that is so essential for a successful Main Street district.



**! TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
*real places telling real stories*

*First Lady's Rendering*  
Waco, Texas

DATE: March 27, 2014  
ADDRESS: Elm Avenue  
DRAWN BY: Howard Langner  
NOT FOR REGULATORY APPROVAL,  
PERMITTING, OR CONSTRUCTION



## TEXAS MAIN STREET PROGRAM WACO RESOURCE TEAM REPORT *September 15-17, 2014*

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

How will being involved in the Main Street program make a difference in Waco? The answer to that question goes back many decades to when a change in mindset toward historic resources started to happen in the U.S.

In 1966, with the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act, Congress formally recognized both the importance of preserving our nation's heritage and that all across the country historic sites were succumbing to widespread destruction perceived as progress. The Act acknowledged that the preservation of historic places—defined as “a living part of our community life”—would also “assist economic growth and development”. About a decade later, the Main Street movement in this country began with a concerted effort by the National Trust for Historic Preservation—which received funding through the Act—to study the reasons for the serious decline of downtowns in the United States and to develop a comprehensive revitalization strategy that could effectively be administered within communities across the country. It was a complicated mission because for this activity to be successful, people nationwide had to come once again to believe that historic downtowns were worth saving. Decades earlier, development patterns had shifted and people and businesses for a long time been moving away from historic town centers and were comfortably living suburban lives. For the Main Street concept to be successful, mindsets and development patterns would have to shift once again. Through the Trust, the Main Street project created and carried out two pilot projects. The first tested an operational model in several communities that included hiring a program manager whose role was to work with the community to advocate for design improvements to historic structures and for economic revitalization strategies that would make it financially feasible to reuse these buildings. This test project resulted in a realization that a certain kind of community-based and preservation-centered strategy could work in communities of all sizes everywhere in the United States. Eventually, that strategy became known as the Four Point Approach™, which is still used by local Main Street communities today.

The second project came about as a realization that the Trust, or what would become the National Trust Main Street Center, did not have the capacity to provide the amount of assistance needed to every community in the country that needed it. So, in the early 1980s, states were offered the opportunity to create coordinating programs that would be designated by the Center to carry out the Approach and facilitate these preservation efforts in local communities. It was a competitive process and Texas became one of the first six states to create a coordinating program in this country. Texas took in its first five communities in 1981. Although none have participated continuously, four of the five are still designated as Main Street communities today.

The process of Main Street is strategic and realistic. A new program should start by undertaking more basic activities and projects and laying a solid foundation upon which to build. The structure of the Main Street Four Point Approach™ helps make this happen. Later, as the program and the community participants mature in their knowledge base, bigger, larger, more sophisticated projects will be undertaken. Eventually, the historic downtown marketplace will be in sound working order and the Main Street effort will focus more on maintaining a vibrant town center. These are called the catalyst, growth and management phases of Main Street. Although the Waco Downtown Development Corporation/Main Street (WDDC/MS) is a relatively new organization, it is already capable of taking on complex projects as evidenced by the fact that it was created as an entity to implement the vision of the Imagine Waco plan. Nonetheless, the WDDC/MS will find the basic components of the traditional Main Street model useful to help it in organizing its own work.

In the catalyst, growth and management phases, the Four Points of Main Street continue to be at work. The Four Point Approach™—Organization Promotion, Design and Economic Restructuring—addresses each of the areas of challenge the historic downtown faces. Each chapter of this resource team manual addresses one of these challenge areas. A Planning section complements the design portion.

## The Texas Main Street Program (TMSP)

As previously noted, the Texas Main Street Program was one of the first six in the country to be authorized under the national roll-out. There are currently 87 actively participating communities.

The participating Main Street communities in Texas reflect our widely diverse state: they range in size from very small (2,000 population) to very large (Laredo, with a population exceeding 230,000). Some are near major metropolitan areas; others are rural. Having been in existence for more than 30 years, the Main Street effort has proven itself as an economic development program, with more than \$2.8 billion having been reported as reinvested into participating Main Street communities and almost 31,000 jobs and 8,000 small businesses created (Figure 1.1).

Populations:	Length of time participating:
Less than 5,000 = 20	5 years or less: 14
5,001 – 10,000 = 18	5-10 years: 21
10,001 – 20,000 = 14	11-15 years: 16
20,001 – 50,000 = 21	16-20 years: 22
Over 50,000 = 14	20+ years: 14

Figure 1.1: The makeup of the Texas Main Street network, one of the largest in the country.

The Texas Main Street Program is a part of the Texas Historical Commission (THC), the officially recognized state agency for historic preservation. There are many other programs within the THC that are useful for communities engaged in reactivating their historic resources. There are agency programs that are connected to national efforts like the Main Street program, which is affiliated with the National Main Street Center, a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. There is the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program and the Texas Heritage Trails Program, other nationally recognized programs. More information about all of the THC's programs and activities can be found here: <http://www.thc.state.tx.us>.

### The Texas Main Street Resource Team site visit

Every community entering the program since 1981 has received a site visit from a team of professionals with backgrounds in historic preservation and downtown revitalization. Objectives of the multi-day site visit are to allow the Texas Main Street staff to start building their working relationship with local stakeholders; to meet with them and learn about their specific issues and challenges and from that, to build a plan of action that comes in the form of this resource team assessment manual which offers Main Street-specific recommendations and suggestions just for Waco. Other important hoped-for outcomes of a resource team site visit are:

- To assess the condition and potential of the new Main Street district Begin what will hopefully become a long-standing productive relationship between TMSP staff and the local program
- Give direction and plant thought
- Inform and educate the public on the Main Street concept, the value of historic resources, and their appropriate preservation
- Start to assist in building the volunteer corps for the program by making the public enthusiastic about the effort
- Provide a fresh look through the eyes of outside professionals.



## This Assessment Report

The following sections of this manual provide recommendations for Waco under the Four-Points of Main Street while still recognizing that it has come in under an existing organization, the WDDC. This manual should be used as a guidebook to help the local program develop its plan of action that will lead to success in the revitalization of its Main Street district. The program is designed for both staff administration and volunteer effort, so the manual is intended to be used by both. The manual should be used in conjunction with regular interactions with the TMSP office, utilizing its services as well as taking advantage of the national and statewide Main Street networks.

## Main Street Four Point Approach™

- **Organization:** involves getting everyone working toward the same goal and assembling the appropriate human and financial resources to implement a Main Street revitalization program. A governing board and standing committees make up the fundamental organizational structure of the volunteer-driven program. Volunteers are coordinated and supported by a paid program director as well. This structure not only divides the workload and clearly delineates responsibilities, but also builds consensus and cooperation among the various stakeholders.

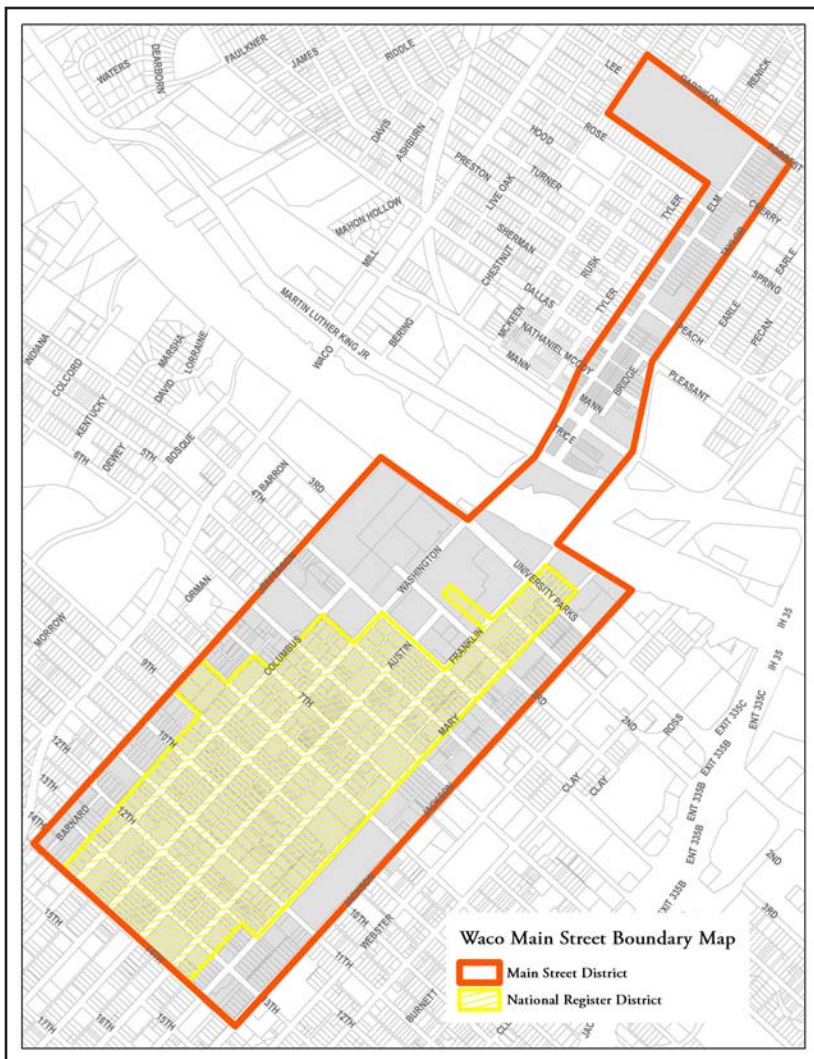


Figure 1.2: The designated Waco Main Street Program area.

- **Promotion:** sells a positive image of the commercial district and encourages consumers and investors to live, work, shop, play, and invest in the Main Street district. By marketing a district's unique characteristics to residents, investors, business owners, and visitors, an effective promotional strategy forges a positive image through advertising, retail promotional activity, special events, and marketing campaigns carried out by local volunteers. These activities improve consumer and investor confidence in the district and encourage commercial activity and investment in the area.
- **Design:** means getting Main Street into top physical shape. Capitalizing on its best assets—such as historic buildings and pedestrian-oriented streets—is just part of the story. An inviting atmosphere, created through attractive window displays, parking areas, historically-preserved buildings, building improvements, street furniture, signs, sidewalks, street lights, and landscaping, conveys a positive visual message about the commercial district and what it has to offer. Design activities also include instilling good maintenance practices in the commercial district, enhancing the physical appearance of the commercial district by rehabilitating historic buildings, encouraging appropriate new construction, developing sensitive design management systems, and long-term planning.

- **Economic Restructuring:** strengthens a community's existing economic assets while expanding and diversifying its economic base. The Main Street program helps sharpen the competitiveness of existing business owners and recruits compatible new businesses and new economic uses to build a commercial district that responds to today's consumer's needs. Converting unused or underused commercial space into economically- productive property also helps boost the profitability of the district.

## **Main Street Eight Guiding Principles**

- **Comprehensive.** No single focus, lavish public improvements, name-brand business recruitment, or endless promotional events can revitalize Main Street. For successful, sustainable, long-term revitalization, a comprehensive approach, including activity in each of Main Street's Four Points, is essential.
- **Incremental.** Baby steps come before walking. Successful revitalization programs begin with basic, simple activities that demonstrate that "new things are happening" in the commercial district. As public confidence in the Main Street district grows and participant's understanding of the revitalization process becomes more sophisticated, Main Street is able to tackle increasingly complex problems, and more ambitious projects. This incremental change leads to much longer-lasting and dramatic positive change in the Main Street area. Short, mid, and long-term goals are all essential.
- **Self-help.** No one else will save your Main Street. Local leaders must have the will and desire to mobilize local resources and talent. That means convincing residents and business owners of the rewards they'll reap by investing time and money in Main Street—the heart of their community. Only local leadership can produce long-term success by fostering and demonstrating community involvement, and commitment to the revitalization effort.
- **Partnerships.** Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the district and must work together to achieve common goals of Main Street's revitalization. Each sector has a role to play and each must understand the other's strengths, and limitations in order to forge an effective partnership.
- **Identifying and capitalizing on existing assets.** Business districts must capitalize on the assets that make them unique. Every district has unique qualities like distinctive historic buildings and human scale that give people a sense of belonging. These local assets must serve as the foundation for all aspects of the revitalization program.
- **Quality.** Emphasize quality in every aspect of the revitalization program. This applies to all elements of the process—from storefront designs to promotional campaigns to educational programs. Shoestring budgets and "cut and paste" efforts reinforce a negative image of the commercial district. Instead, concentrate on quality projects over quantity.
- **Change.** Skeptics turn into believers and attitudes on Main Street will turn around. At first, almost no one believes Main Street can really turn things around. Changes in attitude and practice are slow but definite—public support for change will build as the Main Street program grows and consistently meets its goals. Change also means engaging in better business practices, altering ways of thinking, and improving the physical appearance of the commercial district. A carefully planned Main Street program will help shift public perceptions and practices to support and sustain the revitalization process.
- **Implementation.** To succeed, Main Street must show visible results that can only come from completing projects. Frequent, visible changes are a reminder that the revitalization effort is under way and succeeding. Small projects at the beginning of the program pave the way for larger ones as the revitalization effort matures, and that constant revitalization activity creates confidence in the Main Street program and ever-greater levels of participation.

## Chapter 2: Executive Summary

In 2013, as part of its downtown revitalization effort, the Waco Downtown Development Corporation (WDDC) submitted an application to become an officially designated Main Street community. The application for 2014 entrance was accepted by the Texas Historical Commission, the state agency for historic preservation, and on Jan. 1, 2014, Waco became a Texas Main Street community, one of 87 in Texas and one of approximately 2,000 competitively accepted Main Street communities in the U.S. When the national Main Street Four Point Approach™ was first rolled out in the U.S. in the 1980s, Texas became one of the first state coordinating programs. Since that time, every year for every new Main Street community, the Texas Main Street Program (TMSP) has conducted a resource team visit. This team site visit has been a vital activity of Texas Main Street for more than 30 years. The effort involves Texas Main Street staff and guest professionals who spend several days in the new city, meeting with city leaders, business and building owners, and community members. Ours is a relationship-based program where continual services are being provided to designated communities at no charge to property owners or other stakeholders outside of a small administrative fee paid by the participating partner. A staff of 8 professionals in the TMSP office in Austin are dedicated full time to providing distinct services to designated Main Street communities through the framework of the Four Point Approach.™

**Organization.** A sound organization is in place to ensure all-around financial and community consensus and support and a shared vision is in place guided by visionary leadership and combined volunteer and staff effort. **Design** guides the use of historic assets as a primary opportunity for progress utilizing sound principles of preservation to guide action. The **Planning** aspect is also embedded within this focus area. **Economic Restructuring** creates the necessary financing and development tools so that the historic downtown is a catalyst for strategic downtown economic development. **Promotion** in Main Street means much more than being event-driven; it is the full-on branding and marketing of downtown to the many audiences who need to hear the message about what downtown is and what it can offer from locals and visitors to investors.

At the teamed resource team site visit that occurred in September 2014, initial observations were presented at a closing meeting. This is the comprehensive follow-up report to those initial observations. The report focuses on providing technical information to increase knowledge, and suggestions for action, all presented through the lens of the Main Street model. They are not presented as directives; rather as places from which we'll continue to develop our relationship and through which you will hopefully continue your progress in reaching the goal of the WDDC, which is to achieve the vision of the Imagine Waco plan.

The suggestions come from professionals in the field of Main Street -- and the entire staff of the Texas Historical Commission's Texas Main Street Program and Courthouse Square Initiative, the long-time manager of a highly acclaimed local Main Street program (Bastrop); and the retail recruiter for the Downtown Austin Alliance. This report is intended to guide but it should also be remembered that the state staff remains dedicated to your program and provides numerous technical services and assistance to your program throughout the course of your participation. Additionally, the national and Texas Main Street networks will be an invaluable resource.

### Organization

The organization section of this report discusses why the Organization focal area is so important to having an effective Main Street program and details five observations and recommendations: First, Waco Downtown Development Corporation/Main Street program's (WDDC/MS) existing committee-based model can provide guidance for future success and policy leaders for the organization should better familiarize themselves with the Main Street model and let it be a guide for future action. Then, structures of existing urban Main Street programs in both Texas and other places in the country are reviewed to see how they might also be a guide for WDDC/MS. Next, it is suggested that WDDC/MS use all of that information as it looks strategically at the way the organization is currently structured to make sure that this is the best model for carrying out its important work. It is noted that even if no changes are made, having the strategic discussions will be beneficial. Lastly, the importance of volunteer



engagement for downtown revitalization is reviewed. Volunteer engagement is one of the most dominant aspects of the traditional Main Street organizational effort and gives Main Street its grassroots identity. Every effort should be made to include all interested parties in the Waco Main Street effort and a sound volunteer engagement process should be set in place to help that happen.

## **Design**

Design means getting Waco's Main Street district into top physical shape, preserving its historic character, and creating a safe, inviting environment for shoppers, workers, and visitors. A successful revitalization will primarily take advantage of the visual opportunities inherent in the Austin Avenue/Elm Avenue commercial districts by directing attention to all of its physical elements: public and private buildings, storefronts, signs, public spaces, parking areas, street furniture, public art, landscaping, merchandising, window displays, and promotional materials. An appealing atmosphere, created through attention to all of these visual elements, will convey a positive message about Waco's historic commercial district and what it has to offer. Along with aesthetic concerns it is also important to instill good maintenance practices in the commercial district, enhancing the district's physical appearance through the rehabilitation of historic buildings, encouraging appropriate new construction, and educating business and property owners about design quality, and long-term planning.

## **Planning**

Waco has already recognized the importance of good downtown planning through the creation and adoption of the *Imagine Waco Plan for Greater Downtown*. The Planning section of this report is intended to provide guidance to the WDDC/Main Street on how to better manage implementation of *Imagine Waco* through prioritization of projects and alignment of financial resources. Recommendations include creating an advisory group of key decision-makers and the creation of a tracking system for progress. Recommendations also focus on prioritizing projects based on where the city's best historic assets and existing activity centers overlap. A proposal for character districts is explored in-depth as well as a list of specific *Imagine Waco* projects that should be immediate priorities including increased design standards and review for historic commercial property, street re-design implementation, sidewalk connectivity, installation of riverfront public amenities and a downtown living program.

## **Promotion**

The Promotion point focuses on selling the image and promise of Main Street to all prospects. Promotions help re-establish downtown as the center of social activity and excitement. The promotion section consists of both short term and long term goals that will bring people downtown to shop, have fun, work, and invest. Short term goals include developing a Main Street brand, developing an online presence for Waco Main Street, developing niche marketing campaigns, and making downtown event friendly. Long term and ongoing goals include education, public relations, and merchant support.

## **Retail Recruitment**

Downtown Waco has the potential to be a vibrant retail destination. Retail recruiting means bringing the best retailers as outlined in the retail strategy for a given area. This section explores proven retail recruitment strategies that can be utilized to bring more merchants to downtown Waco.

## **Economic Restructuring**

The Economic Development section of this report acknowledges that the City of Waco has all the tools necessary to revitalize their Main Street district and recognizes the unique challenges in the Austin Avenue and Elm Avenue districts. The report suggests that the Main Street program utilize its committee structure to address vacant and under-utilized property as downtown's most pressing problem. The report references authoritative research that quantifies the debilitating effects of vacant property and offers practical solutions ranging from changes to the City's Façade Improvement Program to alternative taxing policies.

The final section of this report recommends utilizing the Main Street model to form relationships with Baylor



University students and local employers to begin building an educated and sustainable workforce. Revitalization strategies for downtown include starting a collaborative pilot program with college graduates, developers, financial institutions and major employers. Staff recommendations identify other communities that are moving in this direction and their steps towards achieving this objective.

## Chapter 3: Organization

While this section is designed to specifically address the Organization aspect of Main Street's Four Point Approach,<sup>™</sup> board/leadership functions are also addressed.

More than 30 years ago, both the national and Texas Main Street programs were begun, and they were coordinated under a Four Point Approach<sup>™</sup> that had just been developed and trademarked by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and its fledgling National Trust Main Street Center. One of the four-point focal areas was Organization.

The intent of this target area was that it would:

- Provide a structure so that historic downtowns nationwide would be effectively viewed as places worth saving
- Help achieve grassroots broad community buy-in for the downtown revitalization effort so that everyone in the community would see that downtown's health was important, whether or not they had a direct stake in downtown as a property or business owner
- Create functional partnerships so that many different groups were all working together strategically for downtown while at the same time each group was also achieving its individual goals
- Help people realize that the Main Street effort was not another government program, which was an especially important message since huge government urban renewal efforts that had decimated large swaths of historic downtowns nationwide were still at that time part of the recent past
- Leverage the impact of staff, since there was a realization that most towns would only be able to afford or would commit to only one or two paid staff members and that engaged volunteers would be a critical component for successful efforts
- Allow for a Plan of Work, updated and approved annually by the Board, for each committee including Organization
- Be a mechanism for developing leadership that would result in stable program continuity

Organization in Main Street was then, and is now, completely about people. Leading them to believe in the value of the historic downtown to an extent that they want to be a part of the effort, the downtown revitalization effort becomes broad-based. Although that seems like something that could or should happen naturally, having distinct strategies to carry out the Organization effort in local Main Street programs is absolutely essential. This was true at Main Street's inception and is just as true today. Plus, organizations sometimes get so caught up in their day-to-day affairs and projects that strategic planning does not happen. The Main Street operational model helps focused strategies develop and maintains them over time.

Over the ensuing years as local programs have matured and the effort nationwide has become more sophisticated, the organization point has also transformed. In fact, at the present time, the National Main Street Center is conducting a survey of local and coordinating programs across the country to gauge what, if any, adjustments might be needed to the various elements of the Four Point Approach<sup>™</sup>. Some local programs continue to find that they do best when carrying out the organization point in its most traditional framework under the earliest definition:

“Organization establishes consensus and cooperation by building partnerships among the various groups that have a stake in the commercial district. The most effective Main Street programs get everyone working toward the same goal. With this level of collaboration, your Main Street program can provide effective, ongoing management and advocacy for your downtown or neighborhood business district. Through volunteer recruitment and collaboration with partners representing a broad cross section of the community, your program can incorporate a wide range of perspectives into its efforts. A governing board of directors and standing committees make up the fundamental organizational structure of volunteer-driven revitalization programs. Volunteers are coordinated and supported by a paid program director. This

structure not only divides the workload and clearly delineates responsibilities, but also builds consensus and cooperation among the various stakeholders.” Source: [http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street/the-approach/#.VEUxSvnF\\_To](http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street/the-approach/#.VEUxSvnF_To)

## Summary of Observations and Recommendations for the Waco Downtown Development Corporation/Main Street Program

### Observation and Recommendation 1

The Waco Downtown Development Corporation/Main Street Program (WDDC/MS) was originally set up under a committee-based model so a somewhat traditional Main Street framework already exists in Waco. With the WDDC/MS in a significant period of transition, the Main Street operational model can provide guidance for future success. The policy leaders and staff of the WDDC/MS should become familiar with the specifics of the Main Street model and let that model be a guide.

### Observation and Recommendation 2

Texas has 15 urban programs in its 87-city network, one of the largest in the country (Figure 3.1). Many of the urban Main Street programs in Texas have been designated for decades (Figure 3.2). While they have changed in structure and function over the years, their primary focus on preservation-based downtown revitalization has not. The structure of some of those urban programs are reviewed in this section to help guide the WDDC/MS. Each of the managers for those programs can be easily contacted for more information.

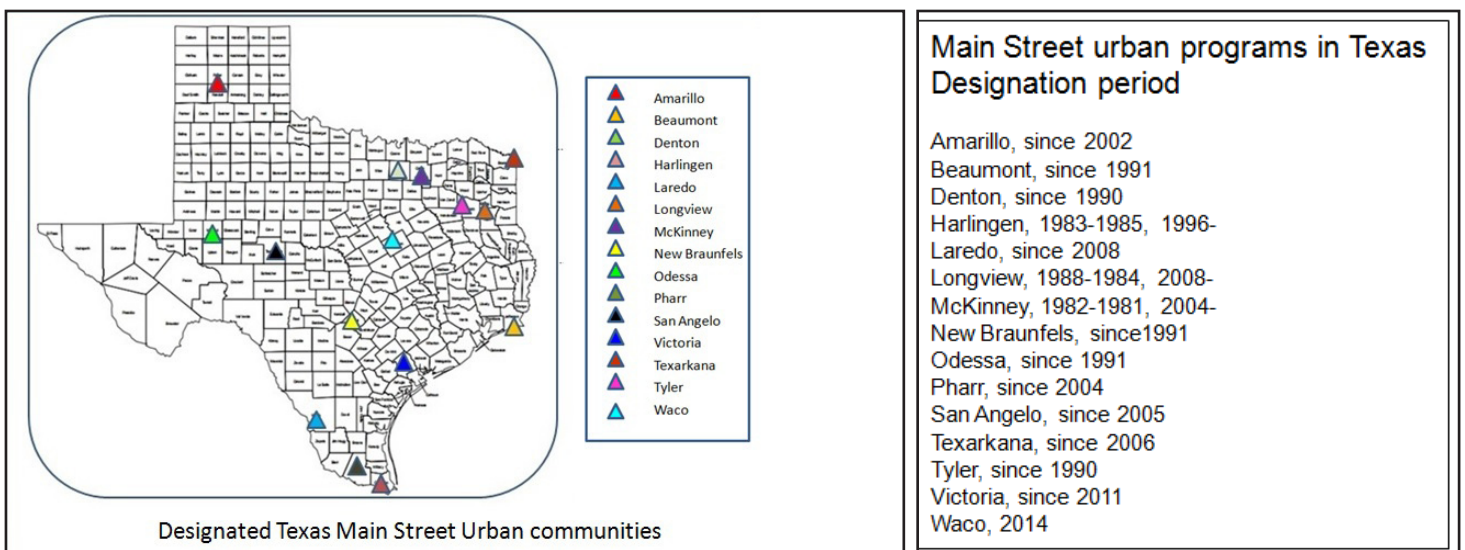


Figure 3.1 and 3.2: Designated Texas Main Street urban communities.

### Observation and Recommendation 3

There are a number of existing Main Street and non-Main Street urban downtown revitalization programs from all across the country that can provide insight to how WDDC/MS might strategically move forward in its own transition. The ones reviewed in this section are taxing authorities or receive directed funding from their municipal governments to carry out specific public functions in downtown. The WDDC/MS has numerous specific reasons to exist; at the top is their mission to achieve the vision and carry out specific projects of the Imagine Waco plan. The Main Street framework should be viewed as an important element in this process.

### **Observation and Recommendation 4**

Being in a period of transition, the WDDC/MS should look at its existing committee structure, organizational chart and staffing to ensure it is suitably established to carry out the functions that are expected of it and if its current makeup is the best way to achieve the Downtown Vision. Even if no changes are ultimately made to the existing committee structures, there could be value in having the discussions. Our office can help facilitate those strategy discussions should it be desired in a future planning session. Part of this might be just as simple as the development of an implementation spreadsheet to reflect the prioritization, initiation and progress of the specific projects outlined in Imagine Waco. Traditionally all Main Street programs have in place a Plan of Action that organizes their work by projects in order to keep them focused on the Vision they are trying to achieve. In this case, the Imagine Waco plan provides the birds-eye view; the Plan of Action/Implementation Spreadsheet provides the detail of what will be tracked. A suggested Implementation Spreadsheet is presented in the Planning section of this report. It is assumed that this will ultimately be a primary part of the official Plan of Work for the WDDC/MS, but there will also be activities that fall outside of the Implementation Plan that the WDDC/MS will take on. The organization's full Plan of Work should reflect all of these activities.

### **Observation and Recommendation 5**

Volunteer engagement is one of the most dominant aspects of the traditional Main Street organizational effort and gives Main Street its grassroots identity. Every effort should be made to include all interested parties in the Waco Main Street effort and a sound volunteer engagement process should be set in place to help that happen.

### **Rationale for Organizational Recommendations**

As reviewed in the Introduction to this report, there is a Four-Point focus framework that constitutes Main Street in its most traditional function. However, various committees and significant processes for action related to downtown development already exist in various organizations WDDC/MS, the Public Improvement District (PID) and the Tax Increment Financing program (TIF), the city and the chamber. Thus, the new Main Street effort in Waco was not ever expected to fall directly into that traditional framework.

Other programs from small and large population centers and especially those that have increased in their own maturity by having been designated as Main Street communities over many years have addressed the important organization function of Main Street in a variety of ways. In some, especially in the smallest communities where either fiscal resource or volunteers are limited, the board (most often an Advisory Board with the Main Street program under city government) takes on the role of Organization Committee and leads the volunteer engagement, partnership-building and program awareness function. The primary role for the Main Street Board of Directors is to set overall strategy and vision, plus provide leadership for the program, regardless of whether it is a Governing (like Waco DDC ) or an Advisory Board (with the program in city government and the program manager reporting to most often the city manager). In other programs, the board's Executive Committee acts as Organization Committee.

What is most important to note here is that the Texas program respects the individuality of each community that achieves Main Street designation and understands that the traditional framework may not work equally for all of them. Thus, the more important point is not whether an Organization Committee exists, but if preservation-based economic objectives are being met in accordance with Main Street principles. At the same time, the TMSP always recommends that a newly designated program operate as closely as possible in the traditional Main Street framework. In more than 30 years of operating, there is ample evidence to show that this structure works effectively to carry out a successful revitalization program for a historic downtown. For the Organization aspect specifically, what is most important is evidence of focused activities on volunteer engagement, program structure, partnerships and broad community support.

The WDDC/MS is in a unique transition in that the WDDC itself is a relatively new organization; the Main Street designation just became effective January 1, 2014; there were existing committees previously put in place that are



somewhat parallel to Main Street and now there are additional organizational changes ongoing as functions from both the Public Improvement District (PID) and the Tax Increment Financing district (TIF) both come in under the WDDC/MS umbrella through contractual arrangements. This brings numerous new players, opportunities and revenue streams into the existing organization. At the same time, there continues to be basically a one-person staff, with an additional position approved as was learned by the team during the site visit, and transitional support from numerous interns from Baylor University. That makes this an important time of transition for the WDDC/MS. Most of the rest of this section will look at this situation and provide some suggestions for how the Main Street framework can be utilized so that the WDDC/MS can be a force for success in the revitalization of historic downtown Waco, including the core center and the Elm Avenue corridor.

Referring back to the Designation Chart shown in this section, Texas' 15 Main Street urban programs vary in how they carry out their efforts. As one can see from that chart, Texas' urban programs range from those relatively new (Victoria and Waco, both within the past three years) to Denton, Odessa, Tyler, Beaumont and New Braunfels having all participated since the 1990s. Several others were originally designated in the 1980s when the state and national programs were just beginning, and then returned later by applying for recertification. The length of participation time shows that the framework of Main Street provides worthwhile benefit to these large communities.

The next few paragraphs review the organizational structures of these urban Main Street programs under the assumption that WDDC/MS might find this information helpful as it undertakes its own 'new beginnings'. Contact information for those programs can be found under the Current Participants page of the Texas Historical Commission/Main Street website.

There are eight urban programs which are stand-alone non-profits, not including Waco. They each have their own independent governing board of directors. Each receives funding, generally in the \$60,000 to \$75,000 range from their local government to contractually carry out certain functions, such as management of the downtown improvements grants programs or for operational support. Those seven are Amarillo, Beaumont, Laredo, Longview (which operates under the chamber umbrella), Odessa, San Angelo, Texarkana and Victoria. (Note: the Odessa program is in the process of dissolving the non-profit and moving it into the city.) The others are largely hybrids of a non-profit and city structure. Harlingen, for instance, operates as a quasi-public entity by receiving assessment funding. In Denton, the Main Street function falls under the city's economic development division and all design and economic development functions are handled there while a stand-alone non-profit Main Street Association manages the promotion and organization aspects to carry out the local downtown revitalization effort. A similar situation exists in Tyler, with the Main Street manager as a city department head, but in this case the board that oversees the volunteer functions for Main Street is an advisory, not governing, board. Some of Texas' urban Main Street programs have a variety of other responsibilities, such as McKinney which manages the performing arts center and Tyler, which manages a downtown art gallery.

All local Main Street programs are required to turn in monthly reports outlining what activity has occurred in each of the four-point areas. From the urban perspective, the reports show that the organization component is largely focused on relatively traditional activities:

- Coordinating educational and retention opportunities for staff and volunteers --
  - San Angelo—coordinate a regional roundtable meeting
  - Amarillo—coordinate an evaluation follow-up meeting to review the just-held major downtown festival and thank-you volunteer event for festival supporters plus prior to the festival, organized a safe-handling training for food being served
- Outreach to partners
  - Beaumont—Young Creatives (volunteer group of under-30 age group interested in downtown) presented an update to city council

- o Denton–“Bootstrap” Creative Mixer “to get downtown techies together to collaborate” (quote from monthly report)
- o Harlingen–Monthly “Good Morning Downtown” coffee (rotates from business to business) to provide downtown updates (Georgetown regularly has a similar “Downtown Lo-Down” breakfast meeting). These are similar to the chamber’s 1000 Friends of Waco.
- o Longview–Connecting with Leadership Longview to educate them about Main Street involvement
- o McKinney – spoke to local Lions Club and Volunteer McKinney to recruit Oktoberfest volunteers
- Program structure items
  - o Laredo–draft resolution for suggested new boundaries for the Main Street district
- Sponsorships (non-profit)
  - o Texarkana–Each board member sells tickets to Gala, with organization committee managing the event, which includes an awards program
- Beautification
  - o Texarkana–Operation Power Wash and fall planting event planned
- Event Planning (this does not always fall just under the Promotion Committee)
  - o Tyler–Black Tie Bingo fundraiser to support operations/ event planning and sponsorship solicitation

It is our understanding that the WDDC was initially set up under a quasi-Main Street model, with a number of operational committees that provided an avenue for volunteer involvement:

- Finance and Incentives
- Real Estate and Urban Design
- Organization
- Communications and Public Outreach

The PID also has a number of committees as outlined in their service plan:

- Organization Leadership and Planning
- Baylor/PID Committee
- Marketing and Promotion Committee
- Merchant Support
- Design and Service Delivery

While there are some different service areas and over-arching objectives for each group, this existing committee structure and the new relationship with Main Street opens up some other places for thought and possibly some structural refinement as noted in Observation and Recommendation 4. To provide a start for this conversation, we looked at a variety of other urban Main Street programs in different organizational structures across the country and found several that can provide some insight to WDDC/MS.

Should additional staff be added to the WDDC in the future who might be tasked with carrying out aspects of a more traditional Main Street program, an analogy to a program in Easton, Pa. could provide useful information. In the Greater Easton Development Partnership there is an Ambassador program that focuses on improving the cleanliness and safety of downtown; a menu of incentive offerings including grant and loan opportunities; and business outreach and support. Under the Partnership there are also two subsidiary non-profits which are a traditional Main Street program focusing on a defined area within the Partnership's larger districts and a Farmer's Market. Both are separately staffed.

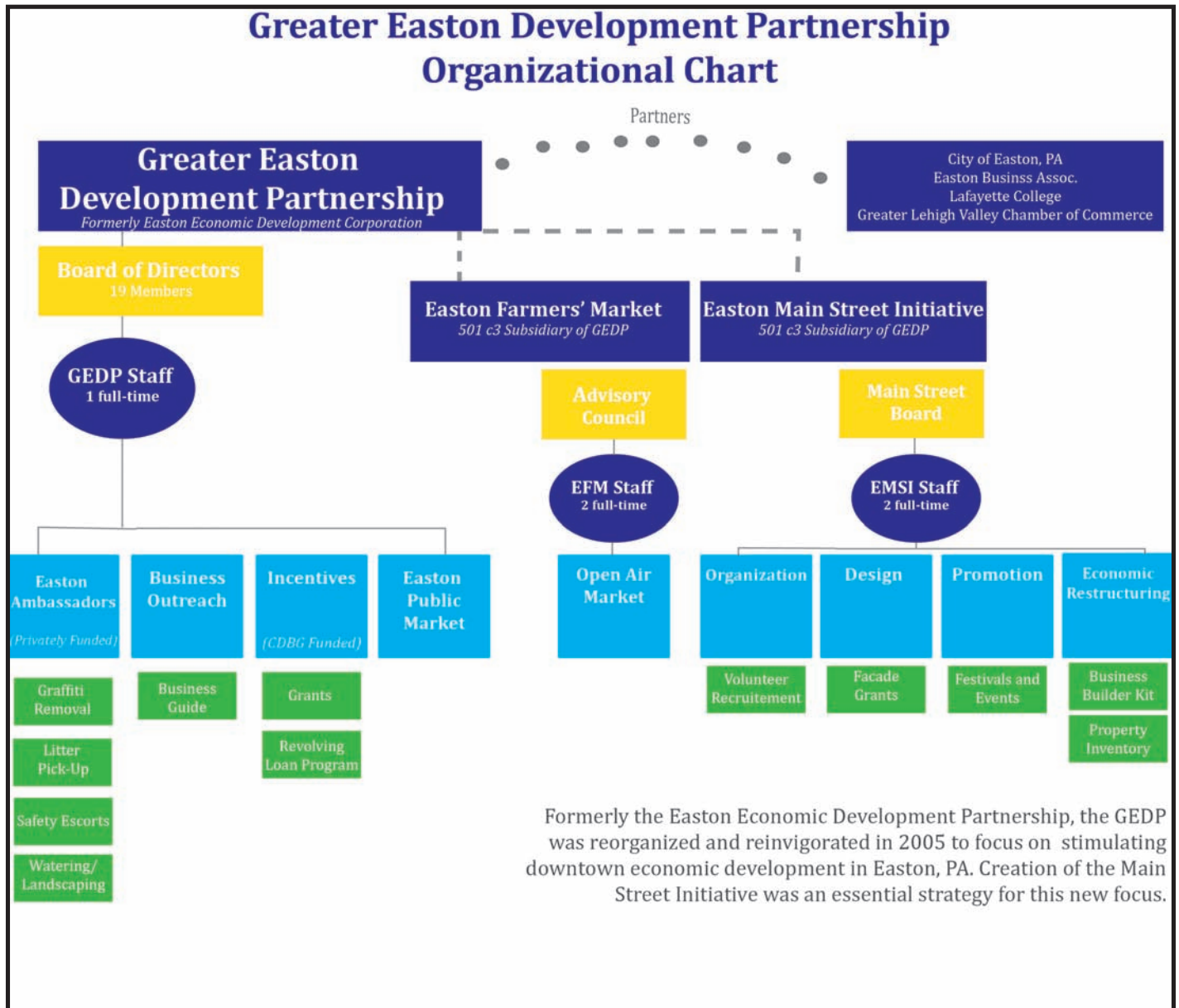


Figure 3.3. Organization chart from Easton, PA is an example of how Main Street can be structured within a larger context of downtown revitalization.

In Cheyenne, Wyoming the Main Street program there just came into existence 18 months ago, but it came in under the umbrella of the Cheyenne Downtown Development Authority (a taxing authority). In those 18 months, the DDA has restructured its existing organizational framework and functions into a more Main Street-traditional model that still maintains its DDA-required activities (Figure 3.4).

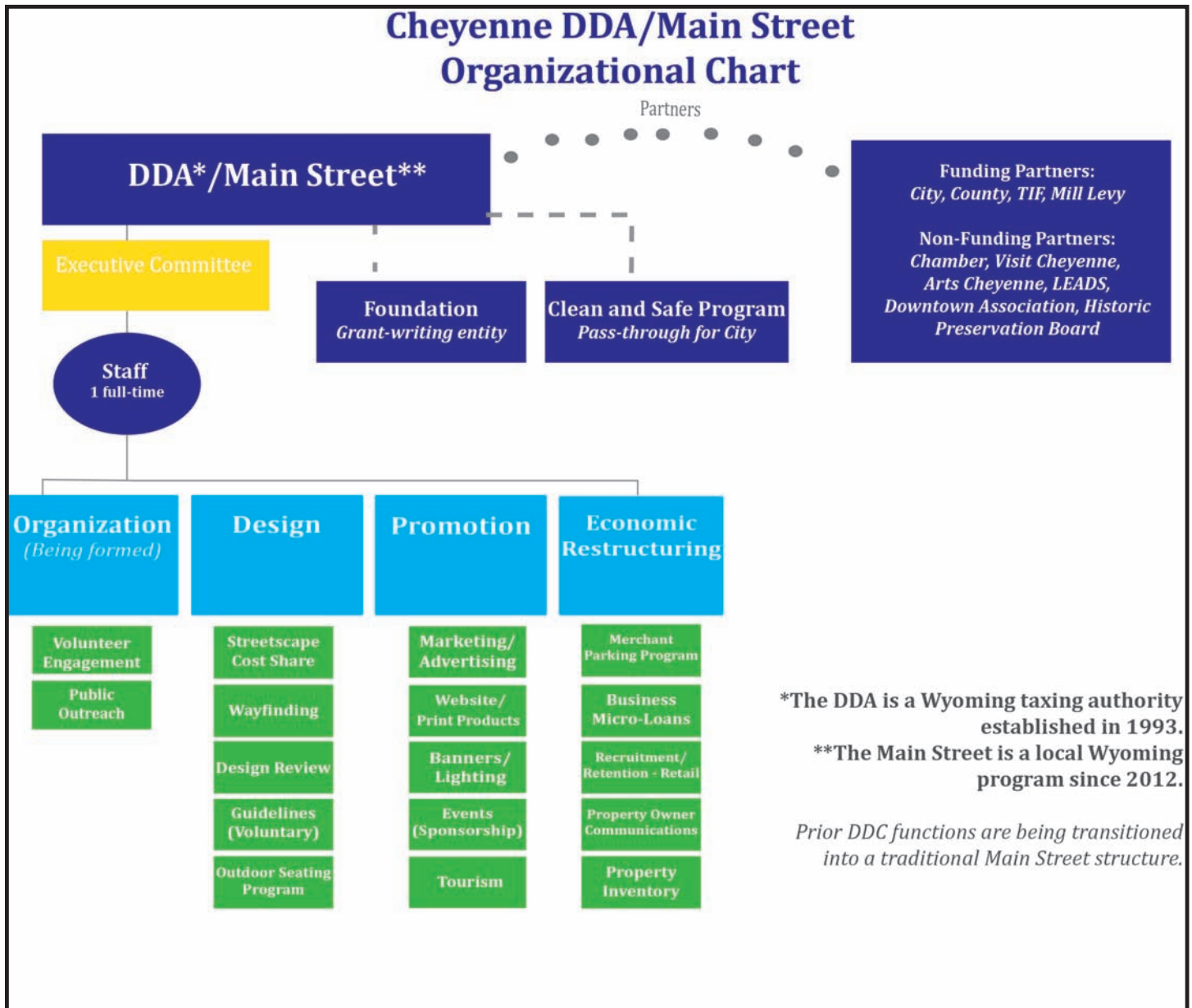


Figure 3.4. Organization chart from Cheyenne, Wyoming is an example of how Main Street can be structured within a larger context of downtown revitalization.



Similar to Waco, Downtown Fort Worth, Inc. (DFWI), which is not Main Street designated, the city delegates authority to manage the downtown program, a PID and a TIF. That organizational chart can be seen in Figure 3.5. Additionally, a similar structure exists for management of the downtown program in Austin by the Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA). Since the retail recruiter for the DAA served on the Waco resource team, some information was shared during our visit, but additional information can be gathered by visiting their website at [www.downtownaustin.com](http://www.downtownaustin.com) or contacting DAA management staff here: <http://www.downtownaustin.com/daa/staff>.

(Note: all of the organizational charts presented in this section are our interpretations; they are not their official internal organizational charts. Additionally, some of these programs are in transition so their structures could fluctuate.)

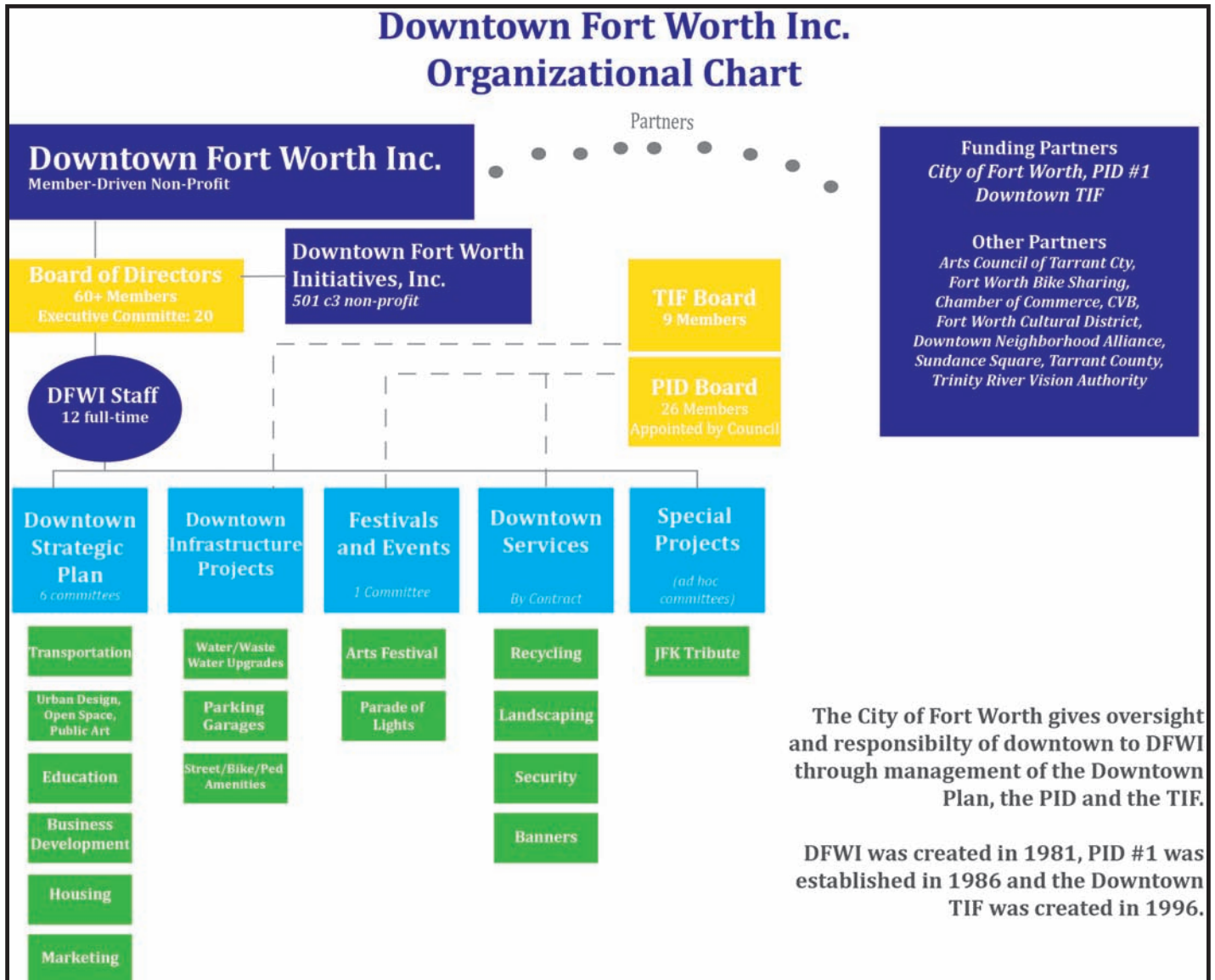


Figure 3.5. Organization chart from Fort Worth, Texas is an example of how Main Street can be structured within a larger context of downtown revitalization.

If something more Main Street traditional were deemed to be necessary in Waco, the Main Street coordinator (new hire) might:

- focus throughout the entire district and all relevant program areas on historic preservation; merchant and business outreach and connectivity; event planning and follow-through, volunteer engagement, and
- on addressing Elm Avenue as though it were a traditional small Main Street district.

At the same time, current WDDC staff might concentrate on implementation of the Imagine Waco plan. This dual-purpose organizational structure could serve to effectively allow the creativity, activation and vision of downtown to be realized.

In just 15 years, when the state Main Street office first began collecting volunteer data, more than 1.1 million hours has been contributed in effort to local Main Street programs in Texas. This calculates to a dollar value of more than \$26 million! As noted at the start of this section, volunteers leverage the impact of small staff and they are invaluable for creating community wide buy-in for preservation and the downtown effort, plus they are an absolute necessity for carrying out the many projects and activities set forth in the organization's Plan of Work. Obviously, there are many people interested in downtown Waco's health as shown by the fact that the chamber's 1000 Friends of Waco has more than 4,000 friends!

There are many Main Street resources for implementing and creating a strategy for an effective volunteer program, which should include recruitment, retention and orientation. These resources include articles in the National Main Street Center's Main Street Now magazine such as this one: [http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/main-street-now/2011/march-april/members-only/growing-your-volunteer.html#.VEV4MPnF\\_To](http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/main-street-now/2011/march-april/members-only/growing-your-volunteer.html#.VEV4MPnF_To) or the national center's Solution Center: [http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/resources/?main\\_street\\_issues=volunteer-management#.VEV48fnF\\_To](http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/resources/?main_street_issues=volunteer-management#.VEV48fnF_To). Additionally there is the Texas Main Street listserv where questions on volunteer management and development can be posed. Orientation for volunteers can be provided on site by the Texas Main Street staff and we will provide any support we need so that you can create and maintain an effective and substantial Main Street volunteer corps. The first step should be to start developing strategies and rationale for why WDDC/MS needs volunteers and track that alongside the strategy discussions on committee structures. The Appendix of this manual includes a description of committee roles and responsibilities in Main Street's most traditional form.

The function of Main Street covered in this section is not always the most glamorous or exciting, but it is the way to build a strong, sound organization capable of achieving its goals and objectives and in doing so, building and maintaining an economically healthy historic downtown.

*The author of this section was Debra Drescher, State Coordinator, Texas Main Street Program, Texas Historical Commission.*

## Chapter 4: Design

The design component of the Main Street Four Point Approach™ seeks to create an attractive, coordinated, and quality image for the downtown by capitalizing on its unique assets and heritage. The Texas Main Street Design Staff was utilized during the Waco Main Street Program Resource Team to go beyond the realm of the individual building restoration project. They looked at the physical history of the town and its patterns of growth in order to determine opportunities for future physical development. After listening and observing, the resource team design professionals developed recommendations that attempt to inspire the community to set goals for itself. When this happens, the spirit of the Waco Main Street Program has truly started to take shape. Citizens become committed to achieving renewed success for the revitalization of their downtown, ensuring that the goals and achievements of their predecessors will live on and be honored by future generations.

Every successful Main Street design committee starts out by implementing a process that involves research and investigation, survey and inventory, planning, and finally, rehabilitation. Waco is at a crucial period in its history with the prospect of significant economic growth in the years to come. Now is the time to plan for that growth by understanding and preserving the past.

### Main Street Design in Three Easy Steps

#### Step one

The first step in Main Street Design is to stop, look, and listen. While the impulse might be to come out of the gates running, it is much more important to take the time to evaluate and assimilate before brick and mortar projects are planned. The first task that should be undertaken is a district-wide inventory of every building, lot, street, sidewalk, parking space, sign, and window display. You must know what you have and what condition it is in before you can start making plans for improvement.

The Texas Main Street Design Staff has compiled two maps that focus on 1, the historic integrity of buildings within the Main Street district (Figure 4.1) and 2, the degree of rehabilitation work that would need to be done to individual buildings within the district in order to bring them to an aesthetically pleasing and lease-ready level of finish (Figure 4.2). These two maps follow:

Figure 4.1 reveals a rather substantial amount of buildings with historic integrity within the district, especially west of the river (lime green color). This is good because these buildings provide the raw ingredient for the Main Street physical rehabilitation effort.

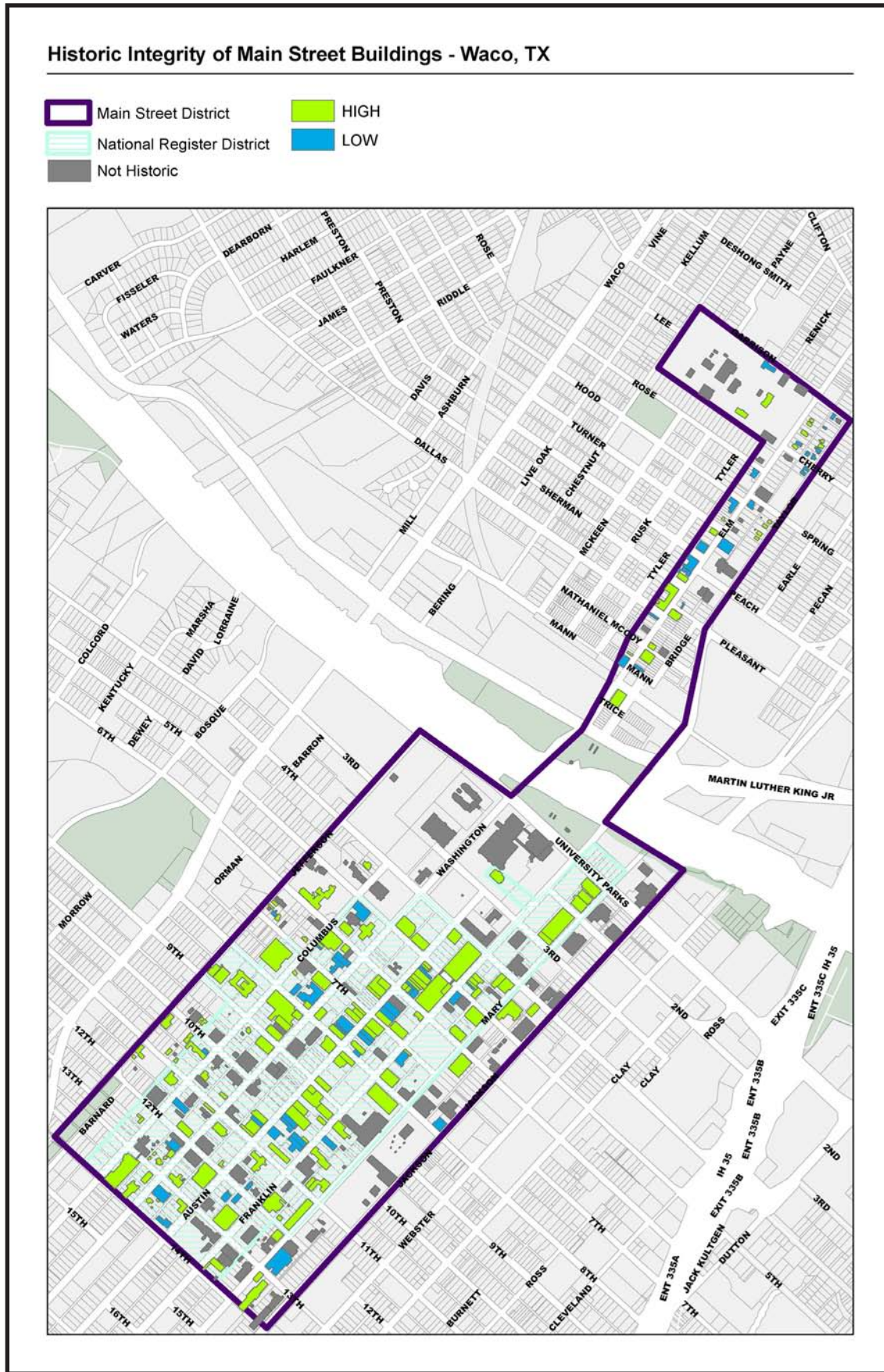
Figure 4.2 reveals the degree to which the buildings with historic integrity will need to be worked on to get them to be at their best aesthetically and ready for lease. Again, there is good news; a substantial amount of the buildings require only minor work (orange color).

You also have to think about your city as a sociologist might by looking at places people like to go, where they are at various times throughout the day, which areas in town seem to be consistently devoid of people, where do people have difficulty crossing the street, where are there too many cars and too little in the way of pedestrian amenities? Here, interested individuals or groups are encouraged to walk around the district with map, camera, pencil, and paper in hand and make notes about what the experience of walking the district reveals. How is walking different than driving? What might make the walking experience more comfortable? What amenities or design features might attract more pedestrians to the district?

#### Step two

After you've made your observations and collected your data in step one, you need to organize your data. You create categories based upon degree of difficulty for financial, personal, or political reasons. You assign a dollar figure to







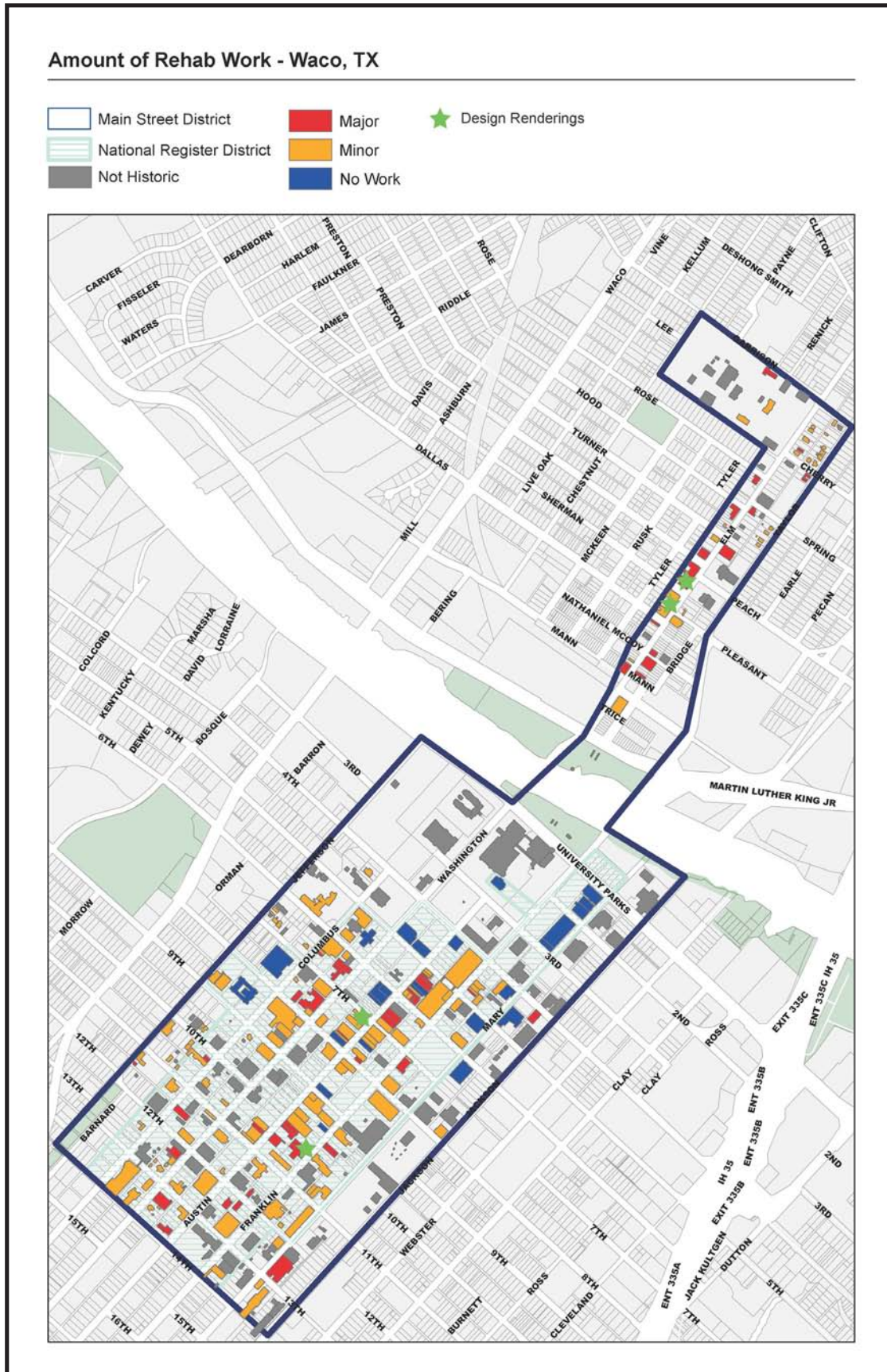


Figure 4.2. This figure reveals the degree to which the buildings with historic integrity will need to be worked on to get them to be at their best aesthetically and ready for lease. Again, there is good news; a substantial amount of the buildings require only minor work (orange color).

tasks and determine potential sources of funding. When deciding upon solutions look for similar situations and successes in nearby Main Street communities. Find out which professionals, craftspeople, and products people have already had success with.

### Step three

The final step is completion of the task. You're ready to tackle the problem because you have done the necessary homework in steps one and two that prepares you for a responsible and sensible outcome.

### Let's have a closer look at the buildings

Waco comes into the Texas Main Street Program with a good deal of experience under its belt along with a number of very successful building rehabilitations.



Figure 4.3. Kress Building Facade.

In the example to the left (Figure 4.3), the old Kress Building façade was rehabilitated to include open transom windows, a restored tie-rod supported canopy, a storefront with glass doors, display windows, and bulkheads meeting the sidewalk. These improvements have led to a more visually engaging street environment for pedestrians and have increased sales potential by increasing the display area of merchandise.

In Figure 4.4, a completely under-utilized retail space with most of its historic façade material already gone has been rehabilitated into a vital business with a new façade that respects its historic neighbors in scale, material, and signage. The roof has been utilized as an outdoor terrace thereby providing a welcome amenity within the district. In some situations a roof terrace such as this would be more successful visually if it were set back further from the front façade plane.



Figure 4.4. A completed facade on an under-utilized building on Austin Ave.



Some of the rehabilitation efforts have kept important parts of the remaining historic building (such as the long party wall in Figure 4.5) but have rehabilitated other, less historic portions to accommodate new uses. In the example below loft apartments have been created within the shell of a former retail space. New windows, doors, landscaping, and balconies have been cleverly utilized to establish a welcome new pedestrian-friendly environment in the middle of the district. The under-utilized plaza that was adjacent to the building prior to the rehabilitation was recreated as a private garden for the building's tenants, but the garden wall that was built to provide visual privacy and security still makes a positive contribution to the street with its fanciful gate.



Figure 4.5–4.6. An example of rehabilitation of a remaining historic building.

There are cases where some additional attention paid to the historic look of the façade could have resulted in a more sensitive rehabilitation. Figure 4.7 was taken during a site visit to Waco while this infill storefront was being constructed. Although an historical photograph was not available, it was rather easily surmised that the façade originally had a composition and configuration more closely resembling what is seen in the design rendering Figure 4.8. Although the approach taken in the rendering may result in higher initial rehabilitation costs, those costs are often recouped early on through increased customer activity directly related to the visual appeal of the façade. Please note that the Texas Main Street Center design staff is available to provide these renderings to business/property owners within the Main Street district as part of membership in the Texas Main Street Program.



Figure 4.7–4.8. Facade under construction (left) and Main Street design staff suggestion (right).

There were other buildings within the district that the Texas Main Street Center design staff targeted for potential rehabilitation even though there did not appear to be any planned rehabilitation effort in the works. Staff developed the following before/after sampling for current and future property owners to consider:



Figure 4.9–4.10. Upper floor windows covered (left) and Main Street design staff suggestion for new storefront and revealing upper floor windows (right).



Figure 4.11–4.13. Existing conditions (left), design suggestion from Texas Main Street design staff (right), and historic photo for reference (bottom).



Many of the buildings within the district are in relatively good shape but they have either had their windows covered up or had their window openings altered. In the example on the left (Figures 4.9–4.10) this prominent three story corner building is shown with reopened/restored windows on the upper floors and restored transom windows, display windows, and bulkheads on the first floor. Existing masonry is shown cleaned and new signage is illustrated as well.

Again, these two adjacent facades, shown in Figures 4.11–4.13, are rendered to recall the original historic configuration. It helps tremendously when there is a historic photograph to reference for specific details. Notice how much more appealing the increased amount of glass area is on the photo-based renderings versus the existing conditions.



Figure 4.14–4.16. Existing storefront (left) and Texas Main Street design staff suggestion (right).

A good deal of the character is still in place in this example on Elm Ave. Once again, historic photos guide the design towards appropriate window replacements for the upper floor as well as providing evidence of signage that was painted directly on the building. A unique rolled metal canopy was also included in the design recommendation based upon the canopy in the historical photograph. All of these cues were translated into a new design recommendation that serves to provide the current owner with a sound foundation for future visually-based decisions (Figures 4.14–4.16).

## Blighted Elm Avenue building eyed for art mecca

Story Comments Image (4)

Print Font Size

Posted: Tuesday, March 5, 2013 8:01 pm | Updated: 1:05 am, Wed Mar 6, 2013.

By J.B. SMITH jbsmith@wacotrib.com



Staff Photo— Jerry Larson

A truck passes the building at 600 Elm Ave., where businesswoman Nancy Grayson and a Dallas artist hope to create an art-centered business.

Buy this photo



The building at 600 Elm Ave. that the city of Waco sold for \$5,117 on Tuesday would generously be called a fixer-upper, with missing upstairs windows and a red inspection tag declaring it unsafe.

But a prominent sculptor and an educator-turned-entrepreneur have big plans for it, and city officials say the sale could help facilitate ongoing rehabilitation of the Elm Avenue neighborhood in East Waco.

Dallas artist Dan Brook is working with Nancy Grayson, the Rapoport Academy founder, on a plan to renovate the building, with uses including a gallery and a studio for local artists.

“What we’d both like to see is some kind of landing pad for artists to be created, where people can have a place to come and experiment and grow,” said Brook, a 1983 Baylor University graduate known for sculptures at Texas Christian University’s

Figures 4.17–4.18 portray a situation where a uniform row of storefronts is adjacent to an empty lot that is being targeted for a new building (new infill development). The design recommendation maintains the look and character of the overall complex by leaving the stone veneer intact across all stores. The composition is further reinforced by the addition of a long horizontal canopy. The stores achieve their own character and identity with individualized signs that relate to one another in size and shape, but differ in color and content. Individuality is also achieved through the use of creative storefront displays. The new infill building design relates in scale, proportion, and general character with its neighbor.



Figure 4.17–4.18. Existing building (top) and suggested new infill building compatible in design with existing commercial row with signage improvements (bottom).



The final design rendering (Figure 4.19) in this report depicts the section of Elm Avenue used in the Waco First Lady's Rendering in March of 2014. This picture highlights the practical side of many preservation projects; simple repairs, new paint, uncovered windows, signage, and landscaping. When the goal is to create an environment that attracts use, Main Street provides the ideal stage.



### A View Along Elm Avenue

The First Lady's Rendering demonstrates how an entire row of buildings in the Main Street district can benefit from simple yet effective design improvements. Changes to the building facades include uncovering, repairing, or replacing historic transom windows, replacing historic door configurations, replacing awnings or canopies, cleaning masonry, and developing new color schemes, signage, and window displays.

The success of the Texas Main Street Program extends beyond the realm of the individual building facade to encompass the public realm; the sidewalks and streets. Outdoor cafes, bicycle lanes, and small public parks (pocket parks or "parklets") all contribute to the vitality that is so essential for a successful Main Street district.



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
real places telling real stories

## First Lady's Rendering Waco, Texas

DATE: March 27, 2014  
ADDRESS: Elm Avenue  
DRAWN BY: Howard Langner  
NOT FOR REGULATORY APPROVAL,  
PERMITTING, OR CONSTRUCTION



Figure 4.19. First Lady's rendering for Elm Avenue.

## Getting the Public Involved in Design Issues:

### Activities:

It is essential for the Waco Design Committee to keep the community informed and involved. The best way to do this is to create an on-going program of activities that help interested parties become familiar with the Main Street district's unique character and assets. A few activities that have proven popular in other Main Street communities include:

### Walking tours and brochures

An architectural walking tour and brochure would generate interest in the Waco Main Street district.

### Library events

The local library is a veritable treasure trove for the Waco Main Street design committee; not only are there historic photographs, newspapers, and memorabilia, there are people running the library who have an interest in the town's history and often a passion for getting other people interested as well. As mentioned earlier, one of the first places to start when considering a building rehabilitation is by researching historic photographs of the property; covered transoms, missing architectural features, vacant properties, and overall street views that are available at the library can fill in the gaps and get the project off on the right foot.

### Site visits from the Texas Historical Commission

The staff of the Texas Historical Commission is eager to assist the public with all of the programs the Commission offers. Lectures, tours, site visits, or seminars can be developed with Waco's specific interests in mind.

### Excursions to nearby Main Street towns

One of the best resources for the Waco design committee is the wisdom that can be obtained from nearby urban Main Street programs (Denton, McKinney). There is no need to reinvent the wheel and you can learn from other's triumphs as well as mistakes. It is especially useful to see how the design committees in these other towns planned its short and long term goals; did they embark upon banners, planters, or simple façade restorations? Did they have a façade grant program in place? How useful was a low interest loan in getting smaller rehabilitations underway?

### Technology

The internet is a proven tool for obtaining useful preservation information. The Texas Main Street Center design staff can guide your search for information related to design guidelines, maintenance techniques, preservation-friendly products, maintenance videos, and webinars.

### Resource Library

The Waco design committee should establish a Main Street resource library for building owners, contractors, and craftspeople. Approved product samples and brochures, literature from state and federal agencies, National Main Street Center videos and books, and a local referral service can work out of the resource library. As mentioned earlier, it is important for the design committee to maintain a presence in the community with relevant projects that are organized and carried out by committee members and other interested volunteers. Here are some suggestions to get the ball rolling:

### Building and Historic Resource Inventory

The building inventory, when used as a comprehensive planning tool, is a working document that holds valuable information regarding building statistics such as date of construction, square footage per floor, method of construction, history of owner/builder/architect, past and current uses, lease information such as per square foot income, and market availability.



### **Local Newspaper Column**

A talented writer can be a tremendous asset to the Waco Design Committee. In addition to keeping readers abreast of ongoing preservation projects, the column can serve as a source of information on preservation, architectural history, and important maintenance techniques.

### **Identify the Building**

One very popular event that has met with success is a series of contests that involve identifying unique architectural details throughout the downtown. It works like this: various photographs of architectural features are displayed in the newspaper, Main Street office, or some other central location and participants are challenged to seek out the location of the details in order to win a prize. The value of this contest is, of course, to get folks to take a closer look at the architectural history that surrounds them and get them interested in preserving it.

### **Preventing Demolition of Historic Resources:**

A long lecture is not required here. Suffice to say that historic resources are irreplaceable. There are a multitude of reasons why old buildings are not worth saving but none of these reasons make sense when you are looking at the empty ground where the old buildings used to stand. A successful historic preservation program such as Main Street relies upon an understanding and agreement that historic resources will be protected.

Design guidelines and a local historic preservation ordinance is one of the best ways to offer protection for historic sites and structures. They give the community the ability to recognize and then offer protection for resources that are significant to the history of the city. Encouraging and ensuring the proper treatment of a building's character-defining features such as storefronts, window openings, historic awnings, and building materials is essential to maintaining the authenticity and integrity of the structure. Design guidelines and a preservation ordinance can also address new construction in an historic area by encouraging compatible and sensitive building design. Waco is a part of the Certified Local Government Program (CLG) at the Texas Historical Commission, which can work with you to achieve maximum benefits from the guidelines and ordinances you have already adopted.

### **Getting Building Owners to Work on Their Buildings:**

Waco is a unique place. It has assets that can be found no place else. But it is also similar to many other towns around Texas in that it is going to be difficult to motivate people to work on their buildings.

Every Main Street manager wants to encourage building owners to renovate or rehabilitate their historic downtown buildings and invigorate their businesses. The hurdles are almost too numerous to mention; owner's lack of interest, lack of money, lack of customers, lack of inventory, lack of merchandising concept, lack of business plan, lack of reliable business hours, abundance of deceased pigeons or bats in the display cases, moldy wallpaper, scantily-clad mannequins from the 1960's, plywood-sheathed display windows, metal slipcovers, bricked-up window openings, poor customer service, inferior products, deteriorated acoustic tile ceilings, skylights with broken glass, partially collapsed walls or roofs, and so on. Good design cannot take care of all of these problems, but it will get customers in the door. The Waco Main Street Board members and design committee must persuade building owners to work on their buildings by explaining that an attractive building, a quality renovation, can grab the attention of prospective customers. It isn't enough to suggest that fixing up an old building is a thoughtful civic gesture. Building owners can't be expected to spend their time and money renovating when there is little hope of making any return on their investment. Savings, low interest loans, or grants usually fund improvements. Grants, however, are usually difficult to obtain. Building owners have also leased-out previously unused portions of their buildings in order to increase cash flow or have taken advantage of tax credits to help defray costs. Building owners need to understand that renovations and maintenance should be regarded as necessary business expenses, along with inventory, payroll, and advertising. It is important to emphasize the role that the building's appearance plays in an overall business strategy. Explain how fixing up the building, in-and-of itself, is a meaningless exercise unless there is a coordinated effort to provide good customer service and good products along with an attractive physical environment. Of course, the building owner must exhibit some initiative, some desire, to run a quality business. The Main Street

manager, the design committee, and the Main Street staff can provide encouragement, incentives, and technical assistance, but the building owner must make the biggest commitment towards the success of his/her business. The owner must place the renovation of their building into the context of the entire historic district of the town. Above all else, the owner and the rest of the building owners must appreciate that the unique heritage of Waco, the authenticity of its historic commercial district, and its unique buildings give the community a sense of place that attracts visitors, connects the city to its past, and improves the quality of life for its residents. People must come to understand that protecting these historic resources will be a key element in the success of the city's revitalization efforts for its downtown district and the entire community.

### **Some Final Thoughts about Design Issues in Historic Waco:**

It is very important that the Waco Design Committee be as open and visible about Main Street Program problems as it is with Main Street Program opportunities; remember it is only possible to fix a problem after it has been identified.

Be patient, do your research, and keep moving forward!

*The author of this section was Howard Langner, Architect, Texas Main Street Program, Texas Historical Commission. Design Team members: Howard Langner, Sarah Blankenship, and Marie Oehlerking*

## Chapter 4: Planning

The Texas Main Street Program recently added a professional planner to their staff to assist in developing the a new initiative. This position is also available to provide planning assistance to Main Street cities. During the TMSP Resource Team visit in September, it was evident that downtown planning plays a significant role in the work of the Waco Downtown Development Corporation (WDCC)—in fact the WDDC was created to carry out implementation of the Imagine Waco Plan. It was also clear during the visit that there is general consensus behind Imagine Waco, but there is not a system in place to manage ongoing implementation efforts. This section of the report is intended to provide guidance to the WDDC on how to better manage implementation primarily through prioritization of projects and alignment of financial resources.

The Imagine Waco plan is comprehensive and high-quality. However, it is now five years old and addresses some items in a surface way that are integral to the Main Street approach to downtown revitalization. So while this section reviews and prioritizes the specific implementation steps in the plan, it is important to keep in mind that the Main Street team also recommends strategies beyond the projects and policies outlined in Imagine Waco. As described in Chapter 3: Organization, implementation of the Imagine Waco plan will ultimately be a primary part of the official Plan of Work for the WDDC/MS, but there will be additional activities beyond the plan that the WDDC/MS will take on.

In addition, implementation of a plan cannot be done successfully without the downtown organizations all working together and moving in the same direction. A major focus of the Resource Team visit in September was to discuss a downtown strategy for how the many stakeholders (WDDC/Main Street, TIF Board, PID Board, the City of Waco, Chamber of Commerce, CVB, Historic Landmark Commission, non-profits and more) could be more coordinated and more strategic as they carry out their work. Since the WDDC/MS is charged with oversight of the plan, it is ultimately their responsibility on whether the various downtown players can come together and participate as part of the WDDC/MS structure. This is discussed at length in the organization section of the report, but is woven throughout the Planning recommendations as well because strong committees with diverse representation will be critical to actually getting things done.

### Observation and Recommendation 1

There is a need to establish a sustainable decision-making framework to oversee implementation of the plan. This should include an advisory group of key decision-makers in downtown that can champion the related recommendations made in the plan AND a tracking system for progress. Many cities utilize a simple spreadsheet to assign timelines, a responsible department and funding sources. A draft of a working spreadsheet was provided to the WDDC/MS after the Resource Team visit. Another example from New Braunfels is shown in Figure 5.2.

It would be logical to create a quarterly standing meeting with this group where the agenda is always reviewing implementation progress. It is imperative that projects make it from the spreadsheet and into budgets and work plans of the various offices, agencies and departments. The way the plan is written, ushering projects along is a major responsibility of the WDDC and it cannot be done unless the key decision-makers are at the table together.

In addition to establishing an advisory group of key decision-makers, it is also necessary to involve the right downtown partners “on-the-ground” as part of working committees, not just advisory in nature. As the WDDC assumes administration of the PID and TIF, it provides great opportunity to comprehensively analyze downtown needs and how they can be met. Developing a coordinated downtown strategy should start first with the projects, which should be identified, prioritized and mapped. At that point, the appropriate responsible entity and funding source will be clear. To that end, the PID and TIF should be thought of more as finance tools to help pay for projects and less as organizational entities. Most downtowns use PID funds to pay for annual reoccurring service contracts like security, watering and landscaping, sidewalk cleaning and graffiti removal. TIF funds are commonly



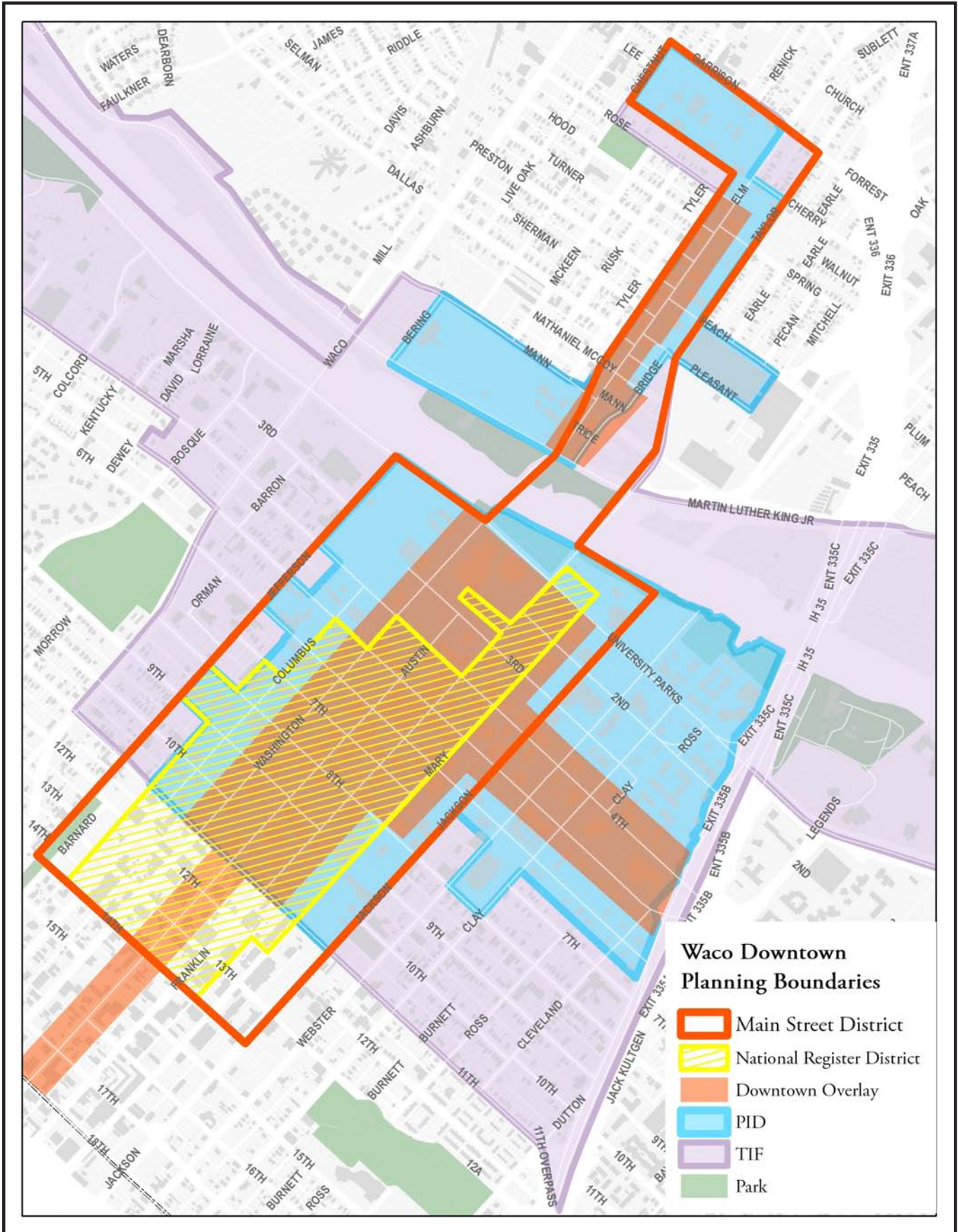


Figure 5.1. Waco Downtown Planning Boundaries.



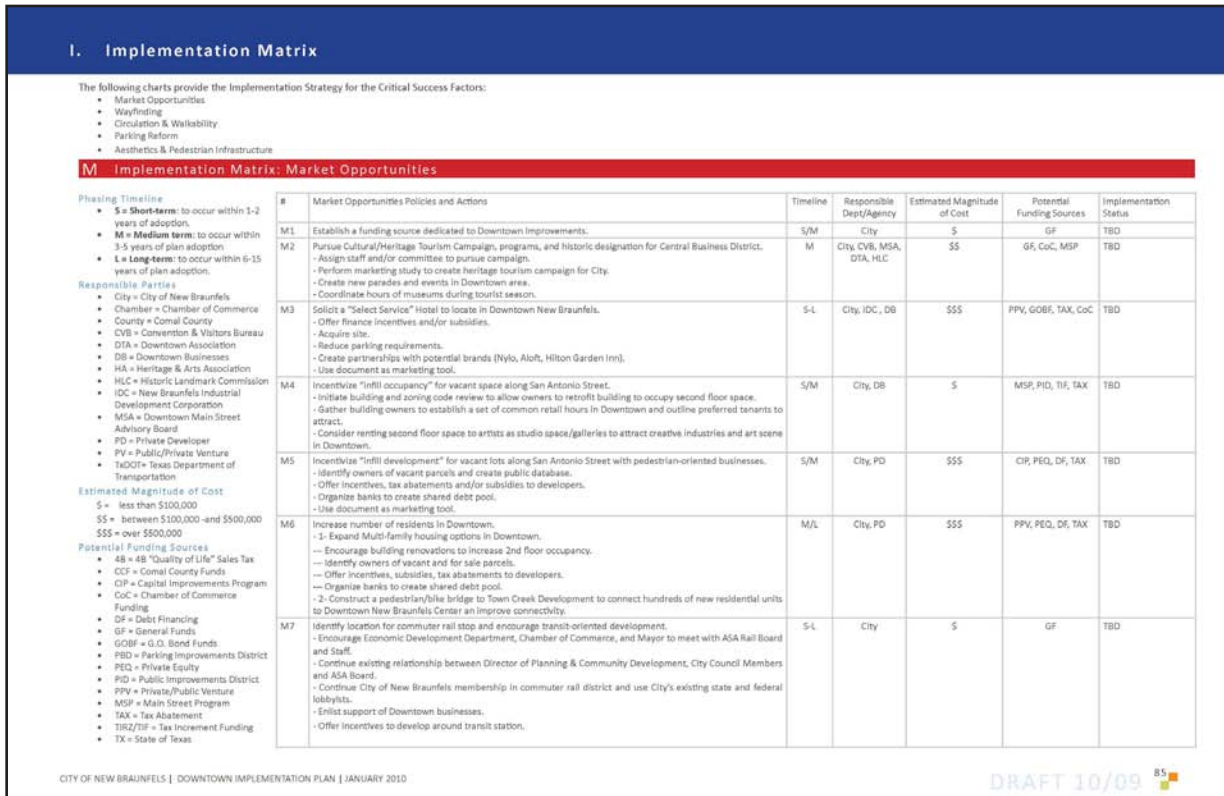


Figure 5.2. Downtown implementation matrix from the City of New Braunfels Downtown Implementation Plan completed by consultant team Torti Gallas and Partners, Inc and adopted in 2010. <http://www.nbtexas.org/index.aspx?nid=1115>

used to pay for public infrastructure projects not associated with a single development. Given the quantity of public improvement projects in the implementation plan, this is something Waco should seriously consider.

Downtown Fort Worth Inc (DFWI) provides a good comparison. Its executive board provides strategic direction, while the the PID and TIF Boards oversee the approval process for the service plan and project plan respectively. DFWI committees are project-oriented and are have diverse membership. The committees include Festivals/Events, various special projects (ie projects with fixed time-frames or fundraising goals) and each element of the Downtown Master Plan—Transportation, Urban Design, etc. The PID pays for events, marketing, banners, security, while the TIF is used to support major infrastructure upgrades. A separate non-profit assists with fundraising.

**Observation and Recommendation 2**

There is a need to prioritize projects from the *Imagine Waco* plan. In an attempt to balance *Imagine Waco's* emphasis on riverfront development and infill construction with the historic preservation principles of the Main Street approach, TMSP staff recommends prioritizing future projects where existing activity centers and the city's best historic assets overlap. When analyzed together, districts based on local character become apparent - the goal of WDDC/MS should be to concentrate resources in these defined areas as a strategy to "incubate" the districts. This allows clusters of businesses to help support one another, public works projects to have a greater impact, and financial incentives to generate more private reinvestment.

Generally the priority areas from a historic preservation perspective are Elm Avenue and Austin Avenue. As small successes become evident and the market gets stronger, the large scale infill and new development along the riverfront and between campus and downtown becomes more feasible.

Immediate action steps by the WDDC/MS to focus resources in these areas include:

- Strengthening preservation ordinances
- Creating incentives accessible to small businesses and individual property owners

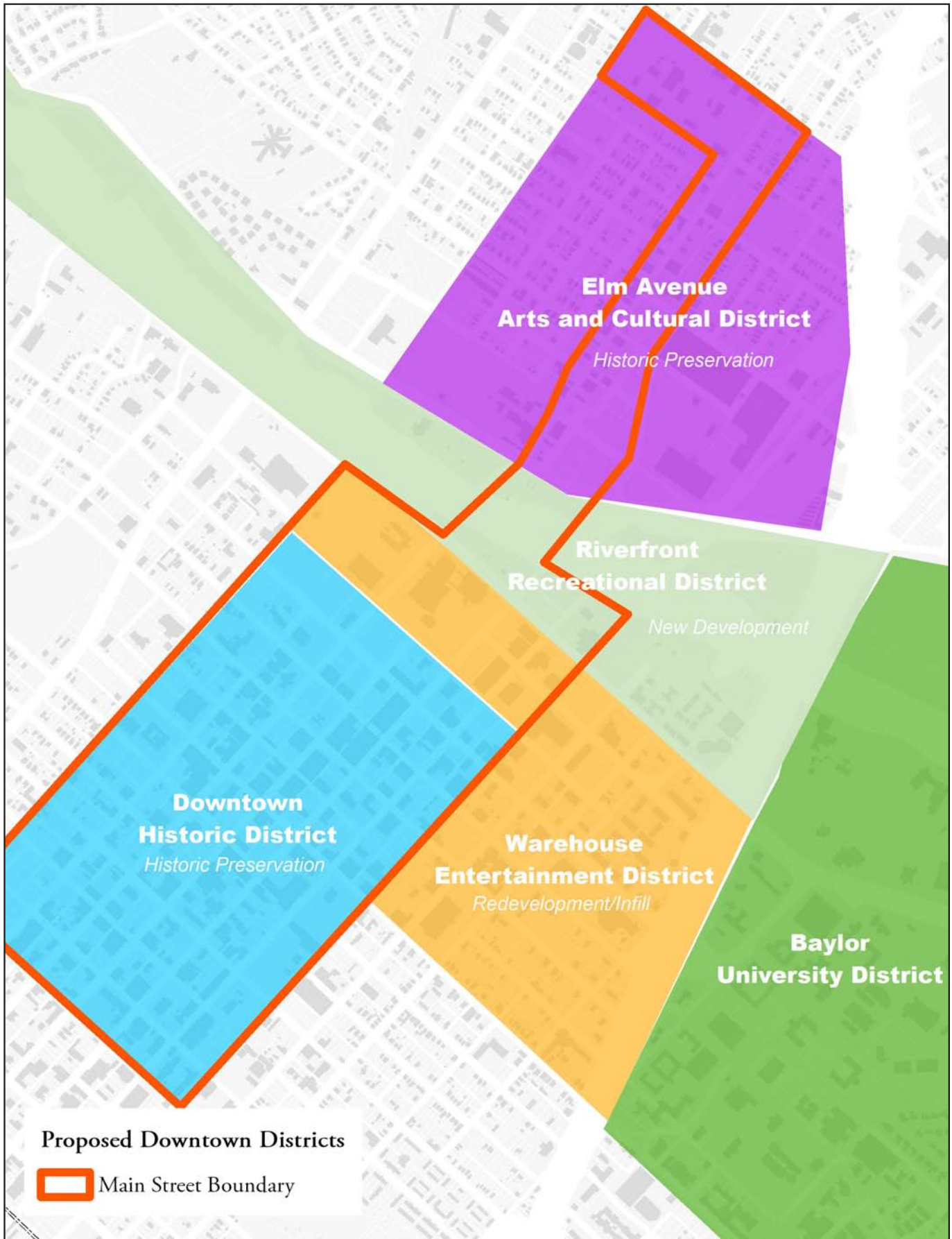


Figure 5.3. Proposed downtown districts.

- Constructing the transportation, streetscape improvements and public amenities called for in the plan in these areas
- Branding the districts

### Observation and Recommendation 3

There is a need to translate some of the big picture action steps into more manageable projects. Following the Resource Team visit, TMSP staff provided a comprehensive review of the Implementation Strategies and Action Items outlined in the plan with suggestions for manageable projects and prioritization of those that could/should be undertaken now. As part of that review, the following Imagine Waco action items are recommended as immediate priorities for the WDDC/Main Street:

- Development facilitation on the transformative projects—Brazos Commons and Elm Avenue entry
- Riverfront public amenities
- Tree canopy and sidewalk connectivity throughout downtown
- Increased design standards/review for historic commercial property
- Street re-design implementation
- Revitalization of Elm Avenue through Main Street Model
- Downtown Living program
- Website and marketing materials to tell the downtown story

In addition, recommendations were made on possible projects for the action items that were more vague in nature. For example: expand, preserve and enhance the bike and pedestrian trail system to connect easily to the pedestrian bridge and destinations on both sides of the river.

The WDDC might consider the following projects to meet this action item:

#### Short-Term:

- Complete sidewalk connectivity study and designate annual budget appropriations for riverfront sidewalk improvements to fill gaps.
- Install wayfinding signage that brands the districts (Elm, Downtown, Riverfront) and guides people to and from each.
- Extend Cameron Park signage along riverfront towards downtown.
- Create running trail system with loop options.

#### Long-term

- Work with all partners (Brazos River Partnership, Baylor University, etc. ) to complete redesign of riverwalk.

The TMSP staff is available to assist in further strategic work in prioritizing implementation projects and aligning financial resources.

### Rationale for Planning Recommendations

From a planning perspective, Waco is a very fascinating city. The amount of surface parking came up repeatedly during the Resource Team visit—downtown is too “spread out,” there’s too much “dead space,” it is “not walkable.” Until a visitor has knowledge of the 1953 tornado and its devastating effect on the buildings in downtown, the city does



Figure 5.4. Waco city hall and square before 1953 tornado. The Texas Collection, Baylor University



not make much sense. But once you understand that event, and some of the efforts made since that time, the story of downtown becomes interesting – even though the current experience on foot may be less so.

While “dead space” can mean opportunity, here it is the biggest obstacle to implementation of the Imagine Waco plan. The plan relies heavily on large-scale infill development. Infill is obviously an accepted urban development strategy, but the amount of land that is recommended for infill is massive and this will be frankly impossible without market demand for higher-end office, residential and retail lease rates. It also takes years of coordinated public/private work to move large projects through phases of the development process from entitlements to site preparation to construction. It is clear from the plan that the WDDC was envisioned as dedicating itself to real estate development.

So now, five years later, the WDDC is responsible for implementing a plan that relies heavily on infill development on surface lots along a riverfront while the Main Street approach is intended to preserve and reuse historic commercial buildings in a central business district. The planning recommendations are meant to assist the WDDC/MS in identifying projects that will further both of those objectives given the market realities. And once again, the organizational structure will be essential to how the work is executed (Reference Chapter 3 on various scenarios).

### **Developing Districts Based on Local Character**

The second planning recommendation noted above was to prioritize projects where existing activity centers and the city’s best historic assets overlap with the goal of concentrating resources in defined areas. An analysis was done of existing activity centers in downtown including:

- McLane Stadium
- River Square restaurants and shopping
- Austin Avenue from the courthouse to the Hippodrome
- Lulu Jane’s
- The riverfront and the farmers market
- Cameron Park

While the perception is that these centers are disconnected and not walkable, this can be justified by their geographic location. A quarter mile is the distance the average American is comfortable walking, which is about five minutes. From the map (Figure 5.5), it is apparent the places that are currently attracting people and generating activity in downtown are not within a comfortable walking distance from the next lively activity center.

As shown in Figure 5.6, when the existing activity centers are overlaid with a map of the buildings with the best historic integrity, districts begin to emerge. They are proposed in this report as the following:

- Elm Avenue Arts and Cultural District
- Historic Downtown District
- Riverfront Recreational District
- Warehouse Entertainment District
- Baylor University District

Another city with similar characteristics (excess surface parking and geographically dispersed) is Tulsa, OK. The city has successfully branded and connected its distinctive downtown districts using history, architecture and major activity centers. See [www.tulsadowntown.org](http://www.tulsadowntown.org) (Figure 5.7).

Giving an identity to an area through a brand tells your visitors where they are, what their expectations for the experience should be in that area, and what is just around the corner. After agreeing on the district character and the



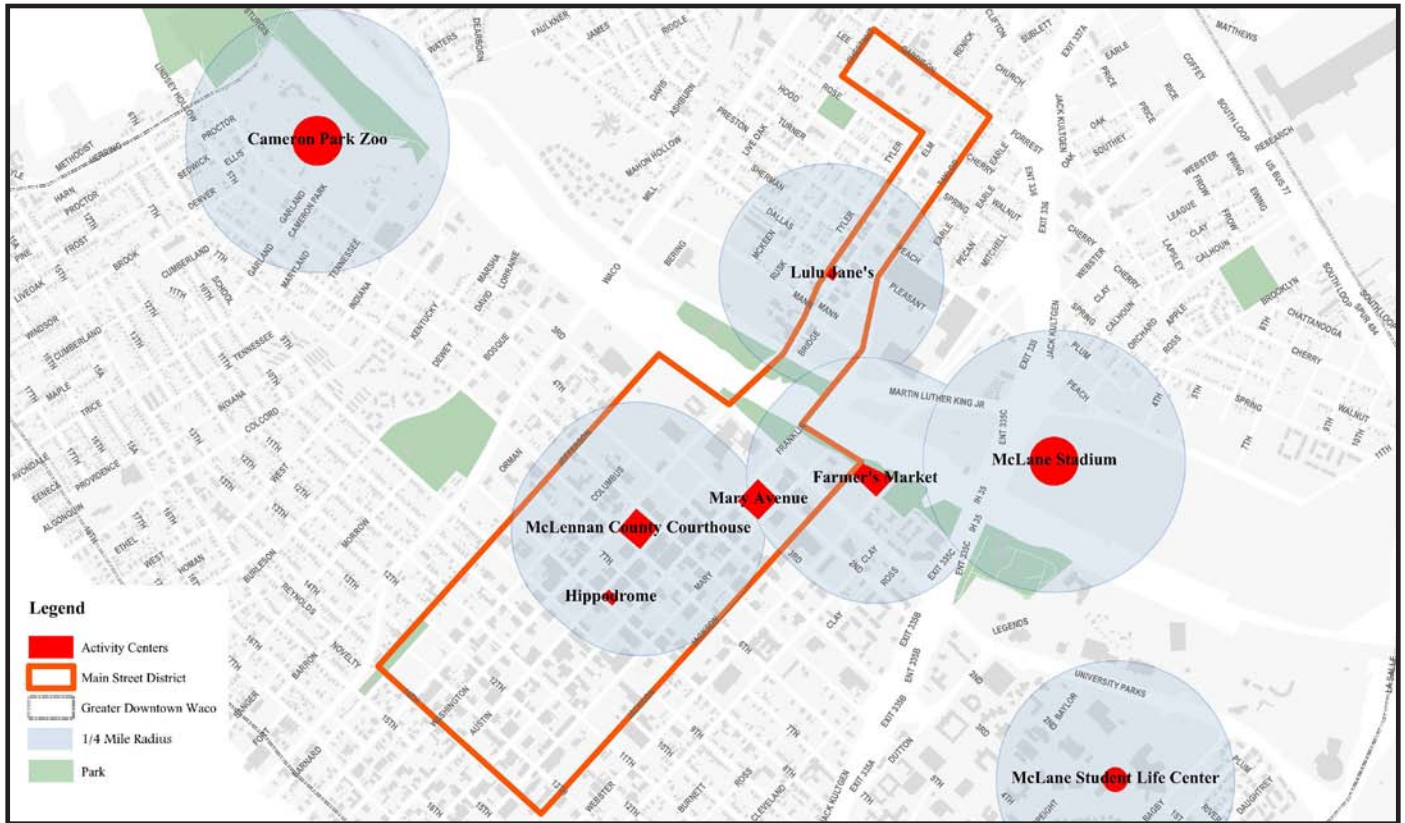


Figure 5.5. Downtown activity centers and ¼ walking distance buffers.

boundaries, the first project should be wayfinding signage, which would include the district brand and distances to manage expectations for visitors. While the Imagine Waco plan ultimately recommends infill development as a way to fill the dead space and draw people out of the cars, branding these areas through wayfinding can be a high impact, lower cost and easily implementable strategy that is still consistent with the plan.

As part of this project, Waco should also consider interpretative signage and public art for downtown that chronicles its urban development history. From the original courthouse square, to the 1953 tornado, to the installation and removal of the pedestrian mall on Austin Avenue in the 1970s and 1980s, it is a story that will resonate with many audiences and help visitors make sense of the city. The City of Austin through their Art in Public Places program has recognized the history of flooding in a functional installation in a prominent location along the Colorado River.

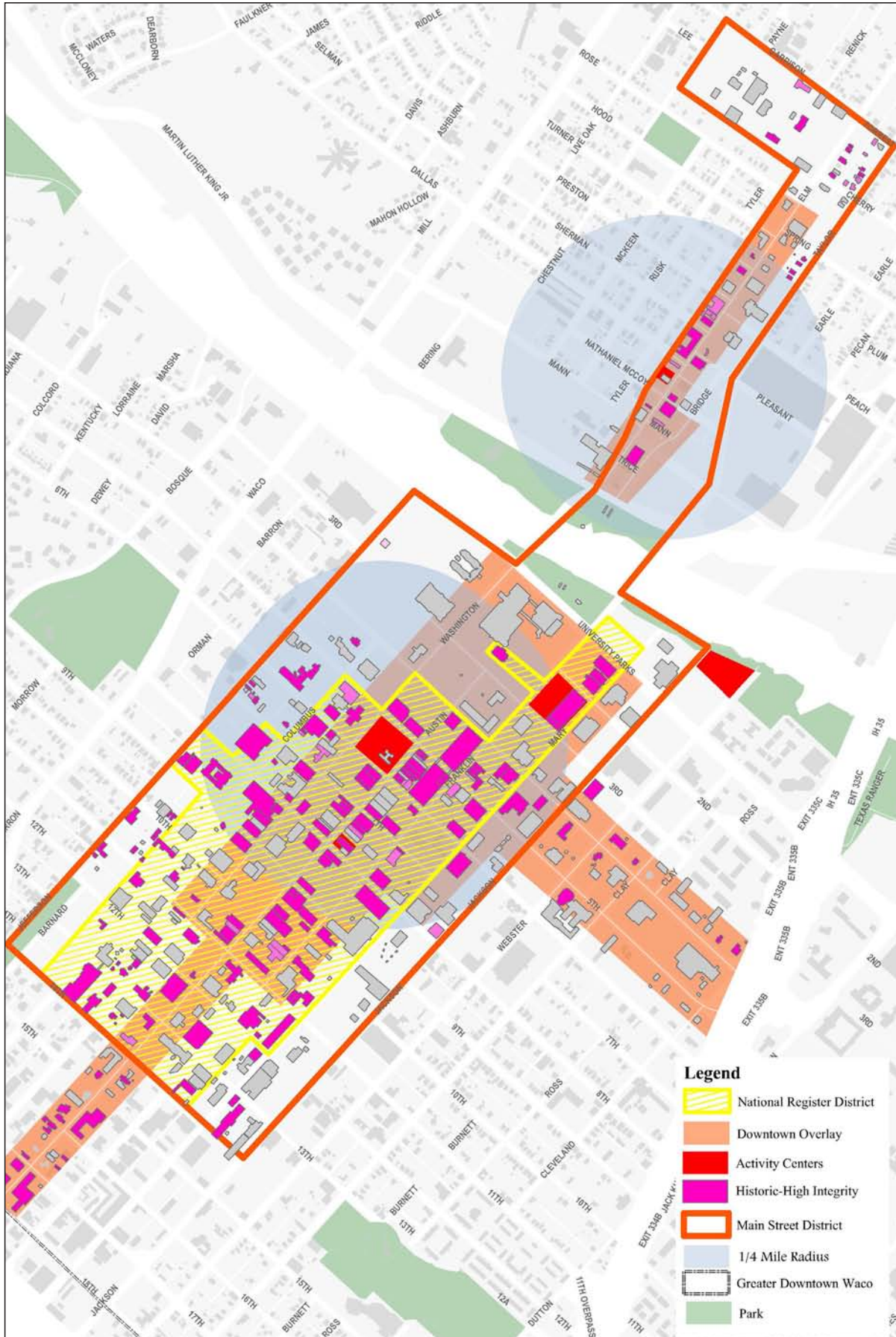


Figure 5.6. Downtown activity centers (red) and buildings with high historic integrity (pink).



## Prioritizing Projects

As noted above, the districts can also be used as a rationale for the prioritization of projects. Once the districts take shape, the redevelopment strategies for each area become more clear as well. The Downtown Historic District and the Elm Avenue Arts and Cultural District will rely more heavily on preservation-based redevelopment strategies, while the Warehouse and Riverfront will require infill and new development. Preservation strategies can be undertaken immediately and the Main Street model provides preservation expertise for existing building stock. Ongoing preservation efforts combined with catalytic public improvement projects on each side of the river will provide visible and impactful change.

For example:

- Consider re-imagining your county courthouse area to create a programmed urban park that provides a central gathering space and gives a modern interpretation to the former courthouse square.
- Consider construction of the active, family friendly plaza identified in the plan as a focal point of the Elm Avenue District.
- Consider immediate implementation of the livable streets policies in the plan and focus on the streets where the history integrity of the buildings is highest.
- Provide safe, well-designed paths and connections from each district to the river. The river is seen as Waco's common ground—make it as easy and pleasant as possible to access it.



Figure 5.7. Tulsa branded their distinctive districts well by using landmark historic buildings.



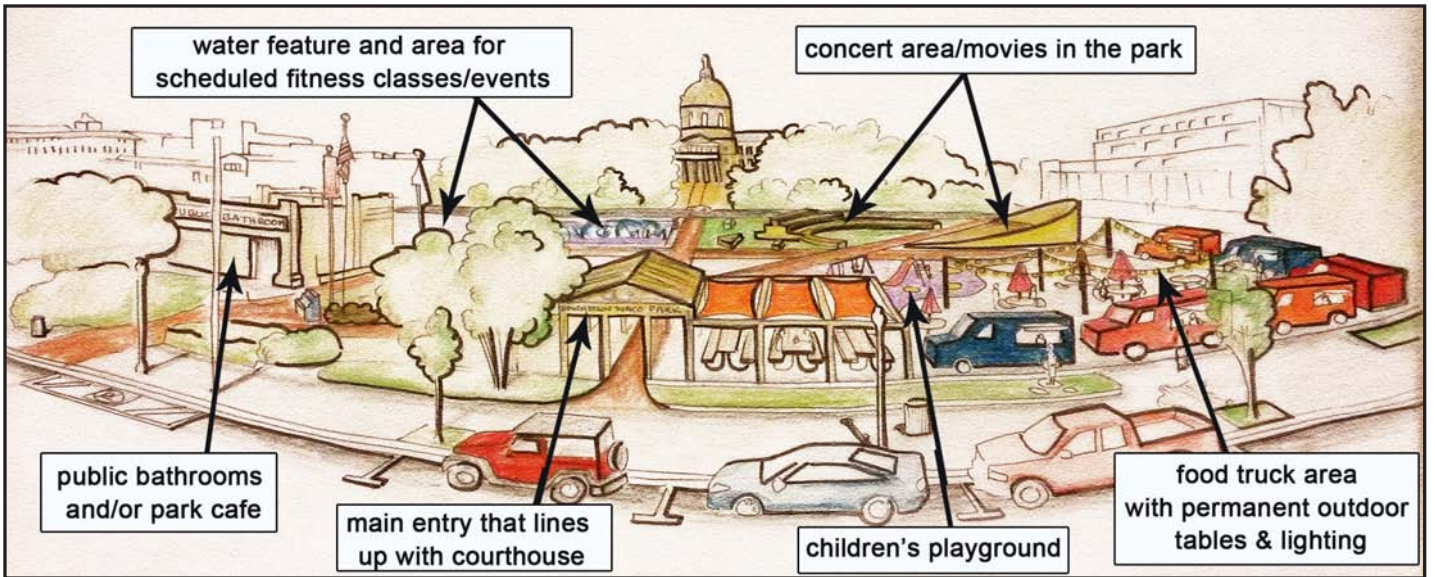


Figure 5.8 and 5.9. Imagine Waco recommends creating new urban parks. TMSP staff re-imagined the courthouse as a programmed public space in the downtown district.

*The author of this section was Emily Koller, Planner, Texas Historical Commission.*

## Chapter 6: Promotion

Promotion means selling the image and promise of Main Street to all prospects. Promotions help re-establish downtown as the center of social activity and excitement. The goal is to bring people (residents and visitors alike) downtown to shop, have fun, work and invest. Promotion has a two-fold purpose —branding and marketing, and special events.

Following are some of the promotional assets that downtown Waco has which attract both local residents and visitors:

### Promotional Assets

- Historic downtown
- A handful of strong retail businesses
- Downtown is easily accessible and located off a major thoroughfare IH 35
- A strong group of people dedicated to making positive change in Waco
- Popular, crowd pleasing events already being held in the community
- Location, location, location. This makes it easy to become a draw for day trips for folks from both Austin and Dallas/Ft. Worth.

The Promotion Committee (or substitute committee) should be comprised of downtown stakeholders—merchants, property owners, residents, downtown organizations, and volunteers with sales, marketing, or event experience. This is a working group of individuals who come together to positively promote downtown as the social and economic center of Waco. It is recommended to develop a strong committee of stakeholders to oversee and implement the promotion of downtown. The role of this group is to research, oversee, and implement anything related to the image and experiences of downtown, including working on the following recommendations. Between the PID, the TIF, the DDA, the Main Street program, the Chamber of Commerce, and the CVB, there are several organizations that work in downtown that are committed to marketing. Make sure that all of these interests are recognized and involved with the promotion committee.

### Recommendation 1: Brand Downtown Waco

The most identifiable brand for Waco and the surrounding area is the ‘Heart of Texas’ regional tourism brand that is a partnership between Waco and several other nearby communities. Waco’s brand identity is also discussed briefly in the city’s Economic Development Strategic Plan (May 16, 2014). If appropriate or realistic, the ‘Heart of Texas’ brand might be the foundation for building a strong, unified Downtown Waco brand that captures who and what you are. It might not be, but regardless, downtown Waco needs to be uniquely identifiable. Downtown Waco needs a strong, unified brand that captures who and what you are. A downtown brand is the condensed version of your community’s unique identity. It’s the sum of your history, culture, people, and stories distilled down to a handful of unique attributes. It clearly communicates who you are, what you do, and how you do it differently.

A brand is your communication strategy. It is the story that all of your buildings, business, and assets tell together. Branding is a process of working all of the Main Street four points together to create a unified vision and message for your downtown. Under your brand you develop a marketing strategy, a communication strategy, strategic partners, and growth strategies. A good brand will not only help you understand who you are as a community, it will help you determine what you can be.

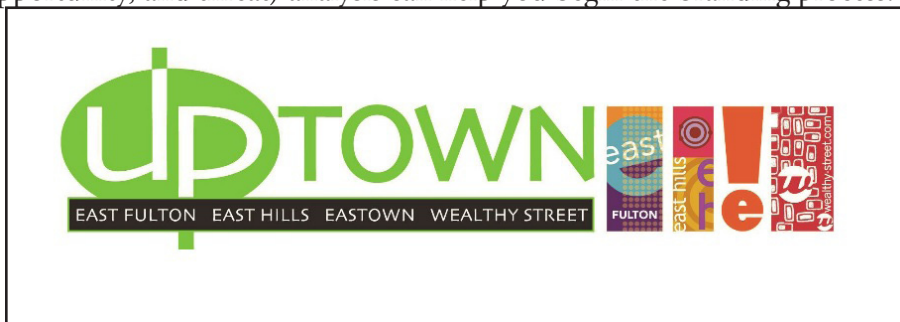
“A strong brand is a powerful economic development tool. It creates demand for your place, it increases your ability to attract, recruit, and retain residents, talent, businesses, investors, and tourists.” -Carmody Consulting, presented at 2014 National Main Street Conference



Not only does a brand tell the story of who you are, it also calls people to action—to visit, to stay, to get involved. As a Main Street community, you rely heavily on volunteers. Your brand is what inspires your volunteers to act. Branding builds loyalty. It creates demand. It produces brand advocates.

Branding is a process. Branding is not something that can be accomplished by a Main Street manager alone. It must be developed from top down and from the inside out. An inclusive process is essential to the community. For a brand to be effective, community leaders must be on board and endorse the brand. It is the community who must live the brand and endorse and invest in the brand for it to be successful. Everyone in your community must work together to bring the brand to life.

As a community process, you need to determine your assets, who you are, and what you want to be, and capitalize on this. Brands can be inspirational, but they must be grounded in reality. A SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat) analysis can help you begin the branding process.



Begin by building an umbrella brand for downtown Waco. It should be easily recognizable and appealing to the public. Using the suggestions from the design and planning teams, look at existing assets and determine your activity centers. Waco has several activity centers in one geographic region (Austin Ave., Elm Ave., and the riverfront). The activity centers may be branded separately, but all should fall under the umbrella brand. Using an

Figure 4.1: The “Uptown” brand encompasses four commercial corridors in one geographic area, while each corridor continues to have its unique identity and individual brand underneath the Uptown umbrella brand. Image courtesy of Uptown Corridor Improvement District, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

umbrella brand is a way to cohesively tie these areas together but yet still capture the uniqueness of each activity center. Figure 4.1 shows a brand from another community which had four business districts in one geographic area. Uptown is used as the umbrella brand with each district still having a unique identity.



Figure 4.2: Examples of other Texas Main Street logos.

Graphics are the second part of the branding effort. It is recommended to work with a professional graphic designer to develop a logo/tag line for both the umbrella brand and the activity center brands. Once the logo is adapted, it will be placed on every marketing piece that is produced and distributed. It needs to be unique and easily identifiable, as well as look good in black and white and in color. Make sure any lettering can be seen in a small version. See Figure 4.2 for examples of logos from other Texas Main Street cities. signage, print publications, and marketing and advertising pieces. Note that brands evolve over time, but it is important to start with a strong and consistent brand.

### Recommendation 2: Website Development

Both the Convention and Visitor’s Bureau (Waco Heart of Texas) and the Greater Waco Chamber have impressive websites geared for driving tourism to Waco. Additionally,



1000friendsofwaco.com has a burgeoning downtown website. On the Waco Heart of Texas tourism site, historic downtown is not separately an option, but within each of the five options on this site (Culture, Heritage, Sports, Nature, Lifestyle) there is ample opportunity to increase or add downtown content. Additionally, there are sample itineraries on this site and a downtown itinerary might be developed. On the chamber website, downtown is

prominently showcased as one of five menu options. WDDC might explore opportunities to add downtown-specific content and/or marketing campaigns with any or all of these partners. Both organizations have amazing websites geared for driving tourism to Waco. Explore partnership opportunities to add downtown specific campaigns.

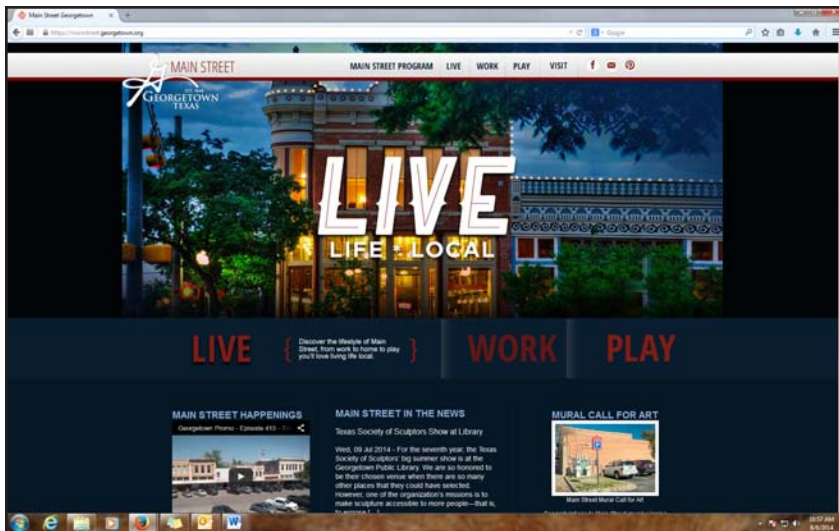


Figure 4.3: Georgetown Main Street has an effective website whose focus audience is visitors to their downtown.

Look into the benefits of having a downtown specific website that encompasses all activities of the DDC, TIF, PID, and Main Street but make sure that the website is used as a marketing tool to attract visitors (locals and tourists alike). Georgetown Main Street has a highly effective website that showcases all aspects of downtown Georgetown in a user-friendly layout (Figure 4.3).

A dedicated website to your Main Street program will give you:

- Creative control
- The ability to keep a consistent brand for your Main Street
- Ability to optimize SEO (search engine optimization) to drive visitors directly to your downtown
- Ability to add social media links which makes it easier to interact with your community
- Ability to add updates and make changes on a consistent basis
- Updates to policies or regulations from other platforms/social media will not affect your website

Ideas for components on your website; gathered from industry sources:

- Educational—educate your visitors about your community. Compelling photographs and smart copy can work to set your community apart from your neighbors.
- List of Events—exert more control over marketing your special events, including allowing sponsorship advertising. Note that an actual calendar isn't recommended unless you have events happening more than 15 days per month. A calendar with only one or two events per month looks empty. A list looks busier and more exciting to visitors.
- Promotion of Downtown Businesses—Google claims that 51 percent of small businesses do not have their own websites. Enhance your businesses online presence by adding a downtown business directory to your website.
- Branding—this website should be unique to your community and reflect your downtown/Main Street brand. See recommendation 1 for information on branding.
- Business Recruitment—highlight market data that shows your community assets and why your community is a great place in which to locate a business.
- Fun—make your website a resource for fun events and activities.
- Wayfinding—add a map to showcase how to get to and around your downtown.
- Volunteer Recruitment—generate a call for volunteers to assist in special projects or events. You are even

able to embed a contact form for volunteers to sign up directly on your website. Make it as easy as possible to involve people in your program.

- Fundraising or sponsorships—often your donors and sponsors want more information on your program before handing over a check. Make this information available to everyone so you do not miss opportunities.

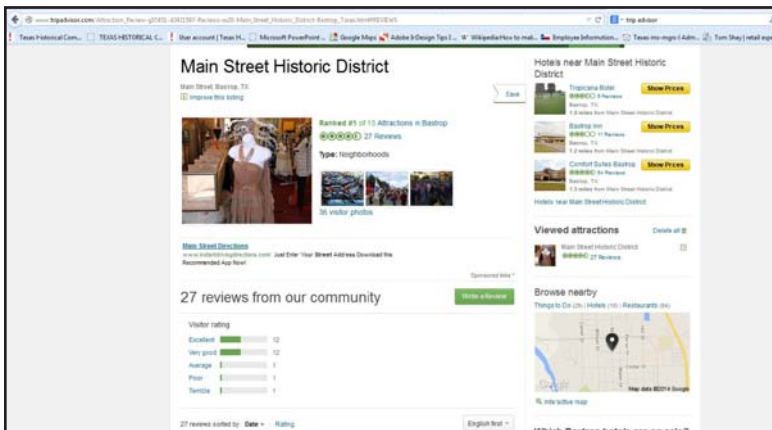


Figure 4.4: Bastrop Main Street Trip Advisor page.

One final thought on websites that should be noted is that you do not have to pay thousands of dollars to build a website. There are several software programs that allow you to choose templates and add your own content. Work with your promotion and organization committees to research the best software for your Main Street website. Keep in mind that over 50% of web traffic now comes from mobile devices. Make sure that your website is mobile compatible when you begin the development process.

### Recommendation 3: Market Online

The Convention and Visitor's Bureau works hard to promote Waco: The Heart of Texas (HoT) through

brochures, pamphlets, website, etc. Work with them to find the gaps in online marketing that the promotion committee can fill. There are several online marketing opportunities to take advantage of, many of which are free. Some examples are:

- Google Local—help businesses claim their Google Local listings with mention to the downtown brand (discussed in recommendation 1)
- Yelp—create a downtown yelp page and assist businesses to claim their own yelp pages
- Local Advertisers—use venues such as Chisolm Crossing and local media to promote downtown to locals
- Trip Advisor—create a page for downtown Waco. Bastrop Main Street works hard to promote their historic district on Trip Advisor (Figure 4.4)
- Bloggers—partner with travel bloggers to feature downtown Waco. Work with lifestyle bloggers to promote aspects of life in downtown (coffee, antiques, shopping and style, foodies, etc.)
- Social Media—look into best practices for utilizing Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest to market and promote downtown as a whole. Only start accounts on platforms that can be constantly updated. It is better to pick one or two platforms and use them effectively than to spread yourself too thin on all platforms.

Note that between the PID, the TIF, the DDA, and the Main Street program, the Chamber of Commerce, and the CVB, there are several organizations that work in downtown that are committed to marketing. When you develop your promotion committee, make sure to incorporate players from each of the entities that are working hard in downtown. All players have a stake in downtown and are committed to seeing it grow, but the general public will not be able to differentiate between organizations if there are numerous social media and online marketing accounts for each organization. Work together, under the brand developed in recommendation 1, to holistically promote downtown with one vision, regardless of the organization.

### Recommendation 4: Develop Niche Marketing Campaigns

You have built-in audiences already in Waco. Consider creating special campaigns to bring those groups into downtown for shopping or special events.

- Develop campaigns geared towards downtown office workers – special lunchtime events, loyalty discount program, etc. Downtown Amarillo hosts “High Noon on the Square,” a free lunchtime concert series with an

affordable lunch available. Read more here: <http://amarillo.com/lifestyle/our-town/2014-05-25/high-noon-square-returns>

- Develop campaigns to bring more Baylor students into downtown – events, loyalty programs, etc. Consider partnering with retailers to create a discount card for Baylor students. Go Local Austin is an example of one such program, offering discounts for people patronizing local Austin businesses. A similar program could be adapted for Baylor students. More information on GoLocal can be found at <http://golocalaustin.com/>.
- Explore opportunities to engage local Wacoians to come downtown. Develop specific marketing materials to encourage “be a tourist in your own town” or a downtown “staycation.” There is potential to partner with your CVB for this campaign.

### Recommendation 5: Make Downtown “Event Friendly”

There are currently a lot of organizations holding events. Instead of becoming an events organization, work to make your downtown “event friendly” by creating marketing materials that will support other organizations coming into downtown to hold events. For example, provide information on event logistics: who to contact for police, road closures, permits, etc. Make it as easy as possible for other organizations to hold their events downtown.

Consider starting an incentive program to encourage events in downtown Waco. Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc. has the “Let’s Go Out” program that supports events through a variety of methods, including, promotion through social media, staff assistance and guidance in the development of events, and financial support in limited cases. They support events that “energize downtown merchants, provide cultural enhancement of the downtown, and brand downtown Grand Rapids as a place of inclusion, vitality, community, culture and entertainment. The desired outcome is a comprehensive offering of diverse, high quality events that provide compelling reasons to come

downtown.” They additionally offer grants for both small and signature events that support their marketing and promotion goals.

More information on their program can be found here:

Grand Rapids “Let’s Go Out” program. [http://www.downtowngr.org/lgo\\_overview.php#requirements](http://www.downtowngr.org/lgo_overview.php#requirements)

Grant Application: <http://www.downtowngr.org/uploads/files/Event%20Grant%20Application%281%29.pdf>



Figure 4.5: Wild About Waco hospitality training program.

events. Partner with these organizations to make sure that downtown events are continuously added to this calendar and assist them with marketing their calendars.

### Recommendation 6: Education

Work with the CVB to develop a downtown component to their hospitality training program (Wild About Waco) to let the first points of contact in the hospitality industry know of the unique businesses and places to visit in your downtown (Figure 4.5). Coordinate your downtown stakeholders and merchants to also take this training so that they are educated on all attractions in the greater Waco area as well as downtown.



Texas Friendly Hospitality Program training is also an excellent program to offer local business leaders and the staff of downtown businesses and attractions to make sure they foster a friendly environment and have up-to-date customer service skills—offered through the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension office, <http://agrilife.org/texasfriendly/>.

## Recommendation 7: Public Relations

Engage local media to ensure positive news coverage of downtown Waco. It is recommended to develop a database of local/regional media. From that list, begin developing relationships with reporters and educate them on your Main Street program and your downtown. Consistently send press releases for all news or events happening in downtown and follow up with the reporters to ensure coverage. Explore other opportunities to partner with local magazines, newspapers, and other publications to provide consistent coverage on downtown or write a regular column that highlights downtown assets.



Figure 4.6: Bastrop Mobile App

Consider inviting members of your local media to participate on your promotion committee. Lufkin Main Street has consistent media coverage of their Main Street program as they invited the publisher of their local newspaper to be involved with their board of directors.

## Recommendation 8: Merchant Support

There are several ways for Main Street to interact with downtown merchants. Develop strong relationships with the downtown merchants through business visits. Develop a schedule for consistent business visits to see new merchandise/products, listen to your retailers, develop relationships, and find out their needs. This is a task of all members of the Main Street board and promotion committee. Main Street is more than a manager and it is important for merchants to see how many people are involved in creating downtown as a destination in its own right.

In Waco, there is a need for a merchant's organization that can help coordinate and market downtown businesses and retail events. Main Street can provide support to downtown merchants and encourage them to organize as a self-sustaining merchant's group with representation from Main Street, communication can be open between both groups.

Once an organized merchants group is functioning, there are several ways for Main Street to help support the group: Work with Merchants Association to promote downtown businesses.

- Using the downtown brand, develop marketing materials and visuals for downtown businesses that will help identify and promote the Main Street program. Examples include window clings for storefronts, posters, and rack cards.
- Consistently update and broaden distribution of the downtown business directory. Place in businesses, at POS in retailers, and other avenues throughout downtown and greater Waco (hotels, Baylor, etc.). For future publications, contract with CVB to develop and distribute downtown marketing materials.
- Explore best practices and develop downtown specific social media campaigns that promote retail, restaurants, events, and general downtown promotion.
- Consider developing a smartphone app for the downtown area. This can be done fairly inexpensively and provides easy access for visitors and tourists. Bastrops smart phone app is an example.
- Work to coordinate deals with local and regional media for co-op advertising with downtown merchants.
- Provide opportunities for retailers to improve their businesses through business training sessions.
- Identify and build partnerships with educational institutions and business professionals (SBDC, SCORE,

Baylor, etc.) to provide opportunities to train downtown businesses in areas that will help them improve their businesses. Some examples of trainings are visual merchandising, building customer databases, social media, store promotions, and bookkeeping.

- Work with the Merchants Association to develop “welcome packs” for new retailers/business explaining the downtown brand and how they can be involved in downtown promotions.

*This author of this section was Rebekka Adams, Assistant State Coordinator of the Texas Main Street Program, a program of the Texas Historical Commission, with contributions from Nancy Wood, Main Street Manager, Bastrop.*

## Chapter 7: Retail Recruitment

### What is retail recruiting?

Retail recruiting means bringing the best retailers as outlined in the retail strategy for a given area. The person designated as the retail recruiter is tasked with building relationships with retailers and serving as a matchmaker between the retailer and the property owner. The best way to build these relationships is face to face.

The retail recruiter's first step in beginning this process is to meet with the property owners and expose them to vision and strategy for the area. Understanding also how the vision and strategy interrelates with the financial expectations of the property owner is critical.

The retail recruiter needs to identify key spaces for retail. If those spaces are leased, the recruiter needs to know when those leases end, so given the opportunity they can re-tenant the space with a tenant that fits the mix. Coordinate volunteers to help with retail recruitment.

### Waco Retail Overview

Downtown Waco has the potential to be a vibrant retail destination. Slow two-way traffic and an abundance of parking allow for easy access to the area. Existing buildings have historic character providing unique spaces that inspire all types of creative uses. These buildings cannot be recreated in a mall or shopping center. On Austin Avenue, cultural anchors provide destinations that drive foot traffic and create a hive of activity. Elm Avenue is a wonderful opportunity to re-energize an area, rich with cultural capital along the Brazos River. All the ingredients are present for the revitalization of these historic retail districts. The 40% vacancy rate creates challenges and opportunities. The opportunity is a clean slate to strategically re-tenant downtown. The challenge is to sell a vision for these areas to pioneering retailers.

### Recommendation:

#### Recommendation 1: Property Owner Outreach

Understand the owner's goals and plans for the property. It is imperative that a clear understanding of the property owner's desires be considered when creating the retail strategy. The property owner is the ultimate decision maker for the first floor tenants. If the owner does not want to have retail, then don't waste your time trying to bring a retailer to that space. Find a group of owners willing to allow retail in their buildings. Great first floor tenants brand the building and add activity; they add value to the overall property and area. Vacant properties are never thought to be high value, even if they actually are quite valuable.

#### Recommendation 2: Inventory of Current Retailers

Know the current mix of retailers—number of restaurants, bars, and stores. These numbers will provide a great snapshot of the current retail environment. Understanding categories that are in abundance and areas that are lacking will be key when creating the retail strategy. When creating a marketing campaign these numbers will also be useful for recruiting companies downtown, selling to potential conventioners, and for recruiting more retailers. They are also a useful metric for tracking patterns over time.

#### Recommendation 3: Define Retail Blocks

Retail efforts need to be focused. Focus on a few blocks for retail development. Not every block needs or supports retail. Designated retail blocks need to be close to anchors, such as cultural and natural anchors in this case. Retail needs to be successful on the main street first, and then it can grow into other areas over time.





Figure 7.1: Current sign ordinance requires signage to be flush to the building. This makes visibility limited for both pedestrians and drivers (left). The blade sign is more visible for both the pedestrian and driver (right).

#### Recommendation 4: Retail Space Inventory

- Waco Prospector

The Waco Prospector is a great tool. Make sure it remains up-to-date and is marketed not only to the brokerage community but to potential retailers.

- Building Information/Building Inventory

If you are trying to entice the retailer to come downtown, be armed with information so you don't waste time. It is very helpful to keep a database of all the floor plans of viable retail spaces. Other important information is historic use, zoning, window size and grease traps. If the ownership is replacing retail windows, encourage them to use clear glass windows. Tinted windows are not good for retail.

#### Recommendation 5: Psychographic Information

You must be able to understand the downtown shopper (or potential shopper). Psychographic information is similar to demographics, however instead of just aggregating total numbers, psychographics provide a study of the values, personality, interests and lifestyles for of a given trade area. These studies are helpful for recruiting retailers by providing hard numbers to support their decision to move into the market. Most national retailers will require psychographic studies prior to opening stores. Psychographic information can be purchased online through companies such as Mosaic, Tapestry, and Prism.

#### Recommendation 6: Community Vision for Downtown Retail

Elm Avenue and Austin Avenue are key streets in Waco, TX. The retail vision needs to incorporate the needs of the community. Get the community involved in the planning process; it is critical to the success of the area. If the community doesn't buy into the overall vision, then the vision will not succeed.

#### Recommendation 7: Create a Retail Strategy

The retail strategy is the culmination of all the information that has been gathered. This document needs to use the psychographic information, the retail inventory, the community vision, and the property owner goals to outline the retailers that would be most successful in the defined areas. This strategy does not need to have specific retailers names, it needs to be laid out in broad categories. The retail strategy needs to implement the recommendations from the Imagine Waco plan. The brokerage community needs to also buy into this vision because they are the ones who are making the retail leases.

### **Recommendation 8: Pedestrian Experience**

Make the pedestrian experience safe and inviting. Fill the empty spaces with lights, art, advertising, historic pictures, and anything that will activate the space. Clean and fix all the broken windows in the area. Encourage all retailers to leave their lights on at night for additional street lighting and to help highlight retailers after hours. It is suggested to amend sign ordinance to allow blade signs, for improved business visibility (Figure 7.1) on previous page.

### **Recommendation 9: Work with Existing Retailers**

Make sure existing retailers are successful. The best way to attract more retail users is through strong existing sales numbers. Provide the existing retailer with a clean, safe, and activated environment. Continue to promote the area with events such as First Friday. Distribute the downtown shopping guide at the all hotels, community centers, the convention center, and in other districts of the City. Partner with Baylor University to create a partnership with the retail fashion merchandising departments to help existing retailers with merchandising and windows. This partnership could also be with property owners, allowing the students to decorate vacant window during the holiday season.

*This author of this section was Meredith Sangner, Retail Recruiter, Downtown Austin Alliance.*

## Chapter 8: Economic Restructuring

Economic restructuring strengthens your community's existing economic assets while diversifying its economic base. This is accomplished by retaining and expanding successful businesses to provide a balanced commercial mix, sharpening the competitiveness and merchandising skills of business owners, and attracting new businesses that the market can support. Converting unused or underused commercial space into economically productive property also helps boost the profitability of the district. The goal is to build a commercial district that responds to the needs of today's consumers.

The City of Waco's Main Street program has opportunities not typically found in other Main Street cities. The community has a unified vision created through thoughtful planning and analysis; it has the financial resources, organizational capacity and they clearly understand the value of an infrastructure. However, despite all the planning and analysis, it appears the community lacks cohesiveness when it comes to prioritization or implementation. As such, the City should use its Main Street program to prioritize objectives, formulate time sensitive actions and commit resources to successfully implement the community's vision.

This report suggests short-term program and policy choices that might be implemented by the Main Street program and its local partnerships. However, this report also attempts to illuminate some of the systemic issues that challenge the community's future competitiveness.

### Background

Waco's Main Street area is comprised of two distinct districts. The Austin Avenue section represents a more traditional retail corridor that extends from North 14th Street to the Brazos River; the Elm Avenue district has a strong neighborhood presence that extends from Garrison Street to the river. Both sides present a unique set of challenges and opportunities for redevelopment completely separate and distinct from one another. However, the one element that significantly impacts each is the abundance of vacant storefronts and empty lots.

Development is like water; it follows the path of least resistance. If it is easier for developers to rehab buildings along Austin Avenue than to build new ones along I-35, that's what they'll do. If it is easier for entrepreneurs to open businesses in the Elm Avenue neighborhood than in the Richland Mall, that's what they'll do.

Consequently, the City needs to make a deliberate choice to revitalize Austin Avenue and Elm Avenue. Since downtown investment is more uncertain than other locations, revitalization efforts will require strategic public investment to draw the attention of developers and preserve the character of each district.

### Downtown Observations

The critical impediments to Main Street's building redevelopment are:

- Small storefront with long and narrow floor plans
- Low achievable rents
- High construction costs
- Outdated mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems
- Potential environmental issues

### Austin Avenue and Elm Avenue

While Austin Avenue is no longer the heart of retail commerce, it retains importance as a government, financial, and cultural center and has symbolic importance that affects investment decisions community-wide. As with many urban centers, downtown Waco is the victim of sprawl, consumer preference and job loss. These demographic shifts have resulted in a glut of vacant and under-utilized property.





Figure 8.1: Vacant property degrades surrounding property values

The problem with vacant property is that they reduce city tax revenues in three ways: they are often tax delinquent; their depressed value means they generate little in taxes; and they degrade property values across an entire district. Economist Donovan Rypkema calculated that a vacant storefront with \$250,000 in annual sales costs a community over \$222,000 annually in lost rents, property and sales taxes and utility supplies, services and salaries not paid. If approximately 40%, or 50 of Main Street’s 125 storefronts are vacant, loosely translated this means that the City is losing nearly \$11 million of revenues annually.

Researchers from Philadelphia measured the correlation between property value and its distance to a vacant property. Overall, vacant property reduced market values in Philadelphia by 6.5 percent citywide and by as much as 20% in neighborhoods with a concentration.

Following the Philadelphia model, if Main Street Waco experiences a 6.5 percent reduction in the appraised value of the district’s 299 properties, \$125,454,666, would amount to an annual loss of \$8,154,553. Accounting for the direct and indirect costs, the combined cost to the City rises to \$19,154,553 annually. The burden of these costs is disproportionately distributed since Austin Avenue accounts for 89.5% of the appraised value in the Main Street district. Moreover, these figures do not account for fire, code enforcement, police, board-up or demolition costs typically incurred by local government. Therefore, the City’s inability to address the vacant property situation; in effect, subsidizes the negligent behavior of vacant property-owners. Fortunately, an aggressive investment strategy to bring vacant properties back on the market can restore property values and tax revenues.

Property Value and Distance from a Vacant Building			
<b>Distance to Vacant Property</b>	≤ 150'	151' - 300'	301' - 450'
<b>Property Value</b>	-\$7,627	-\$6,819	-\$3,542

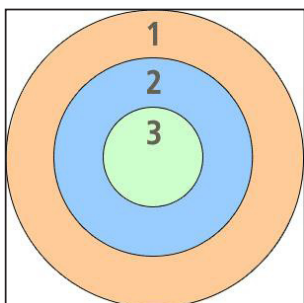


Figure 8.2. Property value and distance from a vacant building.

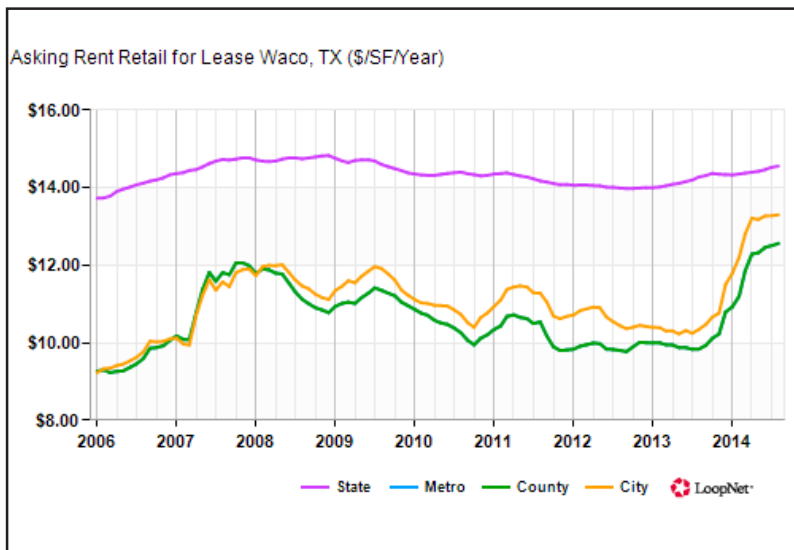


Figure 8.3. Asking rent retail for lease, Waco, Texas (\$/sf/year)

From conversations with area realtors, it is the combination of perceived high rehabilitation costs and low lease rates that discourage the renovation of downtown buildings. In this way, neighborhoods such as Elm Avenue begin to look run-down and businesses are unlikely to remain in such locales.

According to LoopNet (Figure 8.3), the average asking rental rate per sq. ft. /year for retail commercial properties in Waco, TX as of August, 14, 2014 was \$13.30.

This represents an increase of 0.9% compared to the prior 3 months, with an increase of +28.5% year-over-year. County-wide, average rental rates in Waco are +2.0% higher at \$12.56 per sq. ft. / year for retail commercial properties currently for lease.

Despite the significant gains, as long as the demand for downtown space remains inadequate to justify redevelopment costs, an aggressive reinvestment strategy should be pursued.

### Vanilla Shell Program

Main Street could assist downtown property owners to create a clean, plain, tenant-ready storefront known as a “plain vanilla shell.” Many of the downtown storefronts are not move-in ready; they are filled with debris or otherwise not ready for occupancy. Main Street should consider establishing an incentive program (parallel to the façade incentive) for stimulating the clean-out of retail space in order to make them leasable or less objectionable.



Figure 8.4. Minneapolis Post 8/6/13 (left) and Georgia Cities Newspaper 2013 (right).

As a program of the WDDC, Main Street is separate and apart from the city and therefore, not connected with code enforcement, which may appeal to more reticent vacant property-owners. Main Street should pursue an agreement with property owners to use the inside of display windows to hang posters or banners. Storefront displays (below) might be specifically created for that location, identify historical references about the district or reinforced a community’s vision for the future.

**Tax Abatement**

The City’s current tax abatement policy favors buildings larger than 5,000 sq. ft. with a minimum investment of \$100,000. This policy is not adequately structured to address the 40% vacancy that exists within Main Street. Instead, the City should look upon investment as a percentage of the property’s value when determining eligibility. The rehabilitation of many downtown buildings is currently cost prohibitive in light of lease rates or resale value. Research on tax abatement has shown that economically distressed areas need to offer larger tax abatements to offset negative perceptions or compensate for locational disadvantages. Changing the City’s Tax Abatement policy to encourage investment in smaller, historic commercial buildings should be used as part of a comprehensive strategy. Tax abatements are just one possible means to create a better climate for downtown property rehabilitation.

Figure 8.5 proposes a tax abatement schedule for the Main Street district over a 5-year period. Tax Abatements beyond 5-years typically succumb to the law of diminishing marginal returns and lose much of their allure as an investment incentive.

Main Street Tax Abatement Schedule		
Investment ≥ 20% but ≤ 50% of the County Assessors most recent property appraisal	Year	Rebate Level
	1,2,3	70%, 50%, 25%
Investment ≥ 51% but ≤ 75% of the County Assessors most recent property appraisal	Year	Rebate Level
	1,2,3	80%,60%,50%
Investment ≥ 76% of the County Assessors most recent property appraisal	Year	Rebate Level
	1,2,3,4,5	90%,75%,60%,50%,25%

Figure 8.5. Main Street tax abatement schedule.

**Lease Payment Assistance**

Main Street might consider offering a lease payment assistance program for new retail businesses choosing to locate in the Main Street district. The program could be paid for with Tax Increment Finance funds and offer up to a 50% rebate of the first year’s rent. In return, property owners would agree to invest a percentage, 25%, of the annual rental receipts during the term of the program toward rehabilitation.

**Functional Obsolescence**

The City should create a program to encourage the redevelopment of properties that have become functionally obsolescence. These properties often have structural deficiencies, inadequate utility systems, and other factors that prohibit redevelopment. As has been proven, these conditions lead to prolonged vacancies that have a drag on the value of surrounding properties, and it is therefore in the city’s financial interest to redevelop. Therefore, Main Street should:



- Create an Obsolete Property Rehabilitation District to assist in the adaptive reuse of older commercial buildings
- Encourage the development of vacant lots, surface parking, along Austin Avenue

The Obsolete Property Rehabilitation District could be created as an overlay district by the City's Planning Department that aligns with the Main Street boundaries. The overlay allows Main Street, WDDC and the City to tailor financial incentives specifically to the problems of the district. Once Waco's Chief Building Official declares a property functionally obsolete, the City could allow a 12-month moratorium on code enforcement unless there is an imminent threat to the public's health and safety. During which time, the property owner becomes eligible for low-interest-loans, façade grants and tax abatement. Main Street personnel would assist property owners through the application process and to connect with contractors. The State of Michigan has successfully utilized this strategy to target and leverage public-private incentives.

### Vacant Lots and Surface Parking

With approximately 24% of the land in Greater Downtown Waco vacant, the repurposing of surface lots should be viewed for their investment potential. Currently, both Austin Avenue and Elm Avenue suffer from what is known in urban design as the "Missing Tooth Syndrome". This syndrome is found in cities where the relationship between building frontages and continuity of sidewalks is not parallel or concurrent.

In theory, the more continuous the building frontages along uninterrupted sidewalks, the more energy, livability, and alive the perception becomes. Since the market for conversions and infill housing is still in its infancy, public subsidy in the form of park space and financial incentives should be considered. However, subsidies should only be offered for projects that set high standards of design for the public (sidewalks, pedestrian lighting, landscaping, etc.) and private (ground floor space, doors, windows, building materials, etc.).

Texas A&M University professor John L. Crompton measured the benefits of public parks in the Dallas/Fort Worth region on surrounding real estate values. Crompton's study showed a 20% premium for lots within 100 feet of parks, and a 10% premium at 300 feet. Although factors such as location, maintenance, programming and other factors play a role, there is power in park space to create real estate value.



Figure 8.6. Potential Brownfields on Elm Avenue (left) and Elm Avenue view facing downtown (right)

### Workforce Retention

There's a saying in business, "It's easier to keep your current customers than it is to attract new ones." The same principal holds true in workforce development; it is easier to retain the talent already living, studying and working in Waco than to convince people to come to Waco.

Research shows that 58% of a city's success, as measured by per capita income, can be directly attributed to post-

secondary degree attainment. According to Baylor University's Institutional Research and Testing student (Figure 8.7) enrollment from McLennan County continues to decline and may be systematic of the area's lack of college graduates.

Student Enrollment at Baylor University from McLennan County						
2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
15.7%	14.6%	13.9%	12.3%	11.5%	11.0%	10.6%

Figure 8.7. Student Enrollment at Baylor University.

Figure 8.8 demonstrates the comparative disadvantage of the region when measuring the number of college degrees as a percentage of the area population compared to the national average. Consequently, the City of Waco and McLennan County would need to add 9,111 and 16,179 college graduates to its existing resident to meet the national average.

Bachelor's Degree or higher (age 25+)		
City of Waco	McLennan County	United States
21.2%	21.8%	28.5%
-9,111	-16,179	

Figure 8.8. Percentage of Population with College Degree

However, if Waco continues to lose its creative class, the highly educated, and well-paid segment of the workforce on whose efforts corporate profits and economic growth increasingly depend, it will become incapable of building the intellectual infrastructure required to attract future industry and investment. Companies that depend on highly specialized skills typically cluster around universities, and this is particularly true of high-tech and information-based companies. An educated workforce has a synergy to attract employers that bring high value services and products and wages. There is empirical evidence that clustering a dense group of talent helps foster entrepreneurial and economic opportunities.

### Initial Impressions

Waco Main Street could advocate for more widespread and systematic use of internships that allow students to gain experience, lowering recruiting costs for employers, and enhancing the reputation of the college. In particular, advocacy efforts would help students, especially non-natives, who have lower retention rates, learn more about local job opportunities and form networks in the region. Internships are one way to engage students and make it less likely that they will leave because of lack of information or misperceptions about the job market.

Austin and College Station are recognized for their intellectual infrastructure to attract high-tech companies, entrepreneurs and investment. Texas A&M University in College Station is combining leading-edge research with manufacturers to accelerate new commercial opportunities. The University is the impetus behind the 1,100-acre Texas Triangle Park expected to generate tens of thousands of jobs for the community.

### Perceptions

From conversations with Baylor University students, it became apparent that there is a negative perception about downtown, its quality of life, and employment opportunities. However, as students graduate, the city is not an option because little has been done to change perceptions that eventually become reality.

- **Welcome Waco:** Main Street could introduce Waco’s offerings to Baylor’s freshman class at orientation. Provide bus tours of the downtown hosted by Department Deans and faculty of the University. Provide “Welcome” bags of information, coupons, and brochures about Waco.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Collaborate with Baylor’s Accelerated Ventures Program and ThInc Space to provide seed money to start-ups within Main Street. The Baylor Angel Network through the Hankamer School of Business provides \$5,000 of venture capital to early stage companies that could be leveraged with WDDC funds to repurpose vacant storefronts. The Angel Network is a group of more than 40 investors. Entrepreneur Magazine consistently ranks AVP as one of the premier early-stage entrepreneurship programs in the nation.

Accelerated Ventures Program graduates have started more than 25 companies over the past 5-years, 75% of which are still in business. Figure 4.0 shows the four companies in 2013 selected for Baylor Angel Network seed money. Many of these start-ups might well occupy some of the vacant storefronts along Main Street.

### Residential Recruitment

Main Street and its partners might focus much of its resources on bringing new residents downtown. Bruce Katz of the Brookings Institution refers to this revitalization tactic as the 2% Solution. The rationale is if you can convince just 2% of surrounding MSA population to live downtown, then your troubles will be few. Since residential recruitment programs are not as common as business recruitment programs this is an opportunity for Waco to differentiate itself from most other communities. The city has a walkable downtown, arts and culture, health care and affordable housing which is a great recruitment tool for college students and retirees.

A starting point might be for Main Street to collaborate with local employers to create a “Farm System” of larger employers that offer incentives to Baylor graduate/undergraduate students to make a smooth transition into the working world. The program could argue the recruitment savings and improved retention rates by employing recent Baylor graduates. Company incentives could be tailored to resonate with recent graduates such as tuition reimbursement and first time home buyer incentives for graduates who reside within the city.

In March 2012, the City of Chicago launched Chicago College to Careers which places community college students in area businesses and subsidizes their wages for up to six months. More recently, the City of Niagara Falls started a student loan reimbursement program of \$7,000 distributed over two years to graduates who buy a home or rent an apartment in a targeted neighborhood. City officials’ see knowledgeable professionals, and their discretionary income, as the difference between the city’s success and failure.

2013 Baylor’s Accelerated Ventures Program Graduates	
<b>Thread Collection</b>	On-line collaboration of up-and-coming fashion designers
<b>Adanote</b>	Online collaborative for students to upload, study and share notes for free
<b>Garcinia Fit</b>	Health supplements company selling 100% pure garcinia cambogia
<b>TourMuseo</b>	Replaces exiting museum audio tours w/ multi-media smartphone tour app.
Source: Entrepreneur Magazine, 2013	

Figure 8.10. 2013 Baylor’s Accelerated Ventures Program Graduates. Source: Entrepreneur Magazine, 2013.

The simple fact is the more people that live downtown, the greater the demand for downtown retail goods and services. However, it is essential that Waco’s downtown housing market adapt to serve changing needs. This means that an appropriate balance of rental and for-sale housing must be available.



Consequently, Main Street could use its network of local employers and a “preferred developer” to construct new downtown housing for recent college grads. The homes could sell for less than the home’s market value because of a soft second mortgage provided by the WDDC. The program could be designed so that homebuyers, who qualify, enter into a contract with the preferred developer and receive down payment assistance from their employer with low-cost-financing provided by a consortium of local lenders. WDDC’s soft loan could be made to match a participating employer’s contribution of \$5,000 to \$7,000 spread over two years.

For each year of downtown residency, 50% of the down payment assistance is forgiven by the employer and the WDDC. When an affordable program homeowner sells his/her home the homeowner recovers the investment of the down payment and the principal paid on the home, as well as a defined appreciation on that investment.

In this way, the WDDC and local employers give recent college graduates the opportunity to purchase a home and benefit from the potential gain on that investment, while creating tax revenue for the City while lowering the employer’s recruitment costs and increasing employee retention. The Mueller Affordable Homes Program in Austin is a potential model for Waco to consider.

The “Farm System” might originate as a pilot Healthcare Recruitment program with Providence Healthcare Network and Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center who have a combined workforce of 4,200 employees. According to the Texas Dept. of State Health Services Center for Health Statistics, Texas has an inadequate supply of Registered Nurses (RN) per 100,000 population to those of comparable states. The report stresses that RNs age 50-64 make up 32% to 38% of the RN workforce in the Northeast, Midwest, South, and West regions of the US. In 2013, 41.3% of the RNs in Texas were 50 years or older.

### **Commercial Property**

Since there is an anemic market for downtown office and retail space, an alternative approach might be if commercial property renovations and tax credits could be packaged, through a series of participating property owners, creating the required critical mass over which construction costs could be spread; allowing some marginal projects to make financial sense. Accordingly, the WDDC might consider the following:

- Combine institutional financing and TIF funding to capitalize a revolving loan fund tied to real estate development, financing and construction
- Enter into agreements for Main Street projects with WDDC dictating the terms, and/or entering into financing agreements with developers or developing projects itself
- Set up WDDC to own and manage assets within Main Street and channel profits for redevelopment purposes
- In the long-term, position WDDC as a business entity to facilitate the coordination of residential, commercial and retail development activities within the Main Street district

The downtown TIF district currently generates \$6.6 million annually for the WDDC has statutory powers that allow them to receive public property and to make deals that might otherwise be stymied by regulation. Transfer of public property to the WDDC involves only a public hearing and does not require a competitive bid process or independent asset valuation.

Accordingly, the WDDC might acquire vacant lots from among the City’s arsenal of 600 parcels to affect infill development within Main Street. Broader control of vacant property will better position the WDDC to facilitate the redevelopment of the Elm Avenue neighborhood.

## Proposed Changes

- Attract a “preferred developer,” not interested in turning a quick profit and instead is in it for the long-term hold value with a possible WDDC guarantee on the backend
- WDDC and local bank(s) could form a low-interest loan pool, from which a “preferred developer” and participating property owners could borrow money at lower interest rates, closing the financing on marginal projects

## Façade Grant Program

Main Street might propose a Façade Grant Program that provides a matching grant for exterior improvements with a partial match for interior building renovations. Property owners would receive a matching grant on exterior improvements and a 50% match on the cost of interior improvements to address obsolescence and bring to code. The 50% match could be in the form of a credit for exterior building improvements. The program ensures both aesthetics and utility without sacrificing one at the expense of the other. Program rebates should be released on a percentage of completion to avoid property owners from carrying project costs from start to finish. Projects of this size typically reply upon subcontractors and the phasing of activities should not increase project costs.

## Developers Program Guide

Main Street’s Marketing and Economic Restructuring Committees could assist entrepreneurs and property owners by creating a Developers Program Guide. The guide could identify redevelopment opportunities and public incentives and highlight Main Street property. The simple fact is that not all property owners are business people. Sometimes owners want to maintain or reuse vacant properties but lack the know-how. Main Street could provide technical assistance on how to compare costs and potential returns from a property investment, how to rehabilitate a building, how to finance the rehabilitation, how to find reliable contractors, attract quality tenants and what public incentives are available. The Texas Main Street program can also act as a resource for industry data, case studies and best practices to assist property owners through the investment decision process.

## Public Improvement District Initiatives

As the administrator of the PID, WDDC might challenge the very culture that created the need for PID. Once everything is clean, and well-maintained, the broader issue becomes how can the PID entice people away from suburban shopping malls and back to downtown? Toward this end, the PID may have to take the marketing of downtown to the suburbs; and promote commercial projects in targeted areas.

Since parking on game days is critical for downtown retailers, PID services should take-on more of a business approach. Next season, downtown parking on game days should adopt a pricing structure to direct consumer behavior. A tiered pricing system for parking might encourage people to come downtown early. Early bird parking and retail specials could be packaged to encourage patrons to arrive early and spend money in shops instead of on parking. Parking options might also be situated to entice game day patrons to pass through retail corridors with merchant’s on-the-ready. Many zoos, museums already direct patrons to exit via the gift shop. The same principal applies here as well.

However, Main Street merchants must cater to game day patrons who are walking or taking the shuttle. Merchants should provide an array of carry-out services or “brown bag” offerings complete with travel cups, plastic utensils, etc. Where appropriate, the City should allow side walk dining and merchants should offer curbside retail services. The game day experience should begin as soon as you arrive downtown not at the stadium.

## Additional Resources

- Economic Development Handbook (Texas Attorney General) <http://www.governor.state.tx.us/files/ecodev/txcodevohdbk2013.pdf>
- Texas Ahead (Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts) <http://texasahead.org/>
- Texas Economic Development Council [www.texasedc.org/](http://www.texasedc.org/)

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## Appendix A: History of Waco

From the *Handbook of Texas Online*

WACO, TEXAS. Waco is in central McLennan County about seventy miles south of Dallas near the confluence of the Brazos and Bosque rivers. The city's transportation links include Interstate Highway 35, U.S. highways 84 and 77, State Highway 6, the Missouri Pacific Railroad, and the St. Louis Southwestern Railway. The city is built on the site of an ancient agricultural village of Waco Indians. About 1830 a group of Cherokee Indians moved into the area and drove the Wacos from the village. Fort Fisher, a Texas Rangersq outpost and the first white settlement in the area, was established in 1837, but was abandoned after only a few months. In 1844 George Barnard began operating Torrey's Trading Post No. 2 on a small tributary of Tehuacana Creek, eight miles south of the old Waco village (see TORREY TRADING HOUSES). A year later Neil McLennan moved onto land nearby on the South Bosque River. A log smithy was erected at the present site of East Waco in 1846 by Jesse Sutton, a blacksmith. In 1848 Gen. Thomas J. Chambersq sold a two-league grant of land, including the old Waco village site, to John S. Sydnor of Galveston. Sydnor struck a deal with land agent Jacob De Cordova to divide the property and dispose of it at a dollar an acre. George B. Erath, who had first visited the area as one of the rangers stationed at the old 1837 outpost, was one of De Cordova's surveyors, and he urged that the new townsite be placed at the former Indian village. In 1848 the tract was sold to Nathaniel A. Ware and Jonas Butler of Galveston; they became De Cordova's partners in the venture.

On March 1, 1849, Erath laid out the first block of the new town and divided it into numbered lots that were sold for five dollars each, with "farming lots" selling for two to three dollars each. The property owners had earlier chosen Lamartine as the name of the new town, but Erath was successful in persuading them to call it Waco Village. When McLennan County was organized in 1850, Waco Village was selected as the county seat after De Cordova and his partners in the Waco townsite donated free lots in the town for public purposes. The first courthouse was built later that year. De Cordova induced a number of important citizens to move to the new townsite, including Capt. Shapley P. Ross, a ranger and Indian fighter, who established and operated a ferry across the Brazos. Ross also owned the town's first hotel and served as its first postmaster, frequently carrying the letters around inside his beaver hat. By 1852 the town had Methodist and Baptist churches, and in 1854, when the town was growing rapidly, George Lambdin began publishing the Waco Era, the town's first newspaper. In 1856 Waco Village was incorporated as the town of Waco, and a new county courthouse was built that year. The town continued to grow as cotton culture spread along the Brazos, and by 1859 there were 749 people living there.

Situated in the midst of a flourishing plantation economy, many of the town's most prominent citizens sympathized with the Southern secessionist cause during the Civil War. Seventeen companies of Confederate soldiers were raised from Waco and the surrounding countryside, and six Confederate generals were from the town. Soldiers from the area participated in a number of the great battles of the war, including the fight at Gettysburg. The Confederacy produced cotton cloth in Waco at Barron's Mill, part of the Waco Manufacturing Company, but the war enervated the local economy as the area's manpower was drained by the Confederate military. Postwar emancipation of the many slaves in the area caused additional dislocations and led to conflicts and animosities in Waco during the era of Reconstruction. Lt. A.F. Manning, the Freedmen's Bureau agent assigned to the town, complained in 1867 that a local grand jury refused to indict a white man accused of killing a freedman. Later that year Manning's black ward was castrated by two local physicians and a white accomplice; when one of the doctors was arrested, the local populace became so agitated that soldiers were detached to guard the jail. Local citizens complained when the federal government confiscated the Waco Manufacturing Company, which the government claimed had been a Confederate enterprise during the war. The town's peace was also marred by a race riot during the late 1860s.

Waco's economy recovered rapidly in the years just after the Civil War. After 1868 the town was on a spur of the Chisholm Trail used by cattlemen to drive steers to market, and cattlemen and their employees often stopped

in the town to buy supplies and for recreation. By 1871 between 600,000 and 700,000 cattle had been driven through the town. Waco's economy especially began to boom after 1870, when the Waco Bridge Company opened a suspension bridge spanning the Brazos. Upon completion of the bridge, Waco was quickly reincorporated as the "City of Waco." In 1871, when the Waco and Northwestern Railroad was built into the city, Waco became an important debarkation point for thousands of prospective settlers headed west and the primary shipping point for a broad area. The town had many saloons and gaming houses during the 1870s, attracting cowhands, drifters, and others who helped earn the town the nickname of "Six Shooter Junction." A red light district called the "Reservation" also grew during this period, and prostitution was legally recognized, licensed, and regulated by the city until the early twentieth century.

When two other railroads, the St. Louis and Southwestern and the Missouri-Kansas-Texas lines, built into Waco in the early 1880s, the city became the hub of a transportation network linking the area's cotton farmers and nascent industries with factories and consumers across Texas and the nation. By 1884 there were about 12,000 people living in Waco, and an estimated 50,000 bales of cotton, 900,000 pounds of wool, and 500,000 pounds of hides were being shipped through the city annually. Industries in the city that year included a cotton factory producing yarns and socks, a woolens factory, two cottonseed oil mills, and two planing mills. By the 1890s Waco had become one of the most important cotton markets in the south, and many cotton agents had moved into offices around the town square. In 1893, according to one estimate, farmers from surrounding cotton fields took about 40,000 bales of cotton into Waco by wagon, and another 80,000 bales were shipped to the city by rail from small towns without their own compresses. By 1898 Waco's Kirksey Woolen Mills was among the largest in the south, and the city had ice plants, grain elevators, flour mills, foundries, boiler plants, and bottling works. During the late nineteenth century artesian wells were drilled, two natatoriums were built, and the city was widely advertised as a health resort. By 1900 the city had 163 factories and six banks and was continuing to expand; about 1,300 new houses were built that year. Waco's population grew from 3,008 in 1870 to 7,295 by 1880; by 1900 there were 20,686 people living in the city, making it the sixth largest population center in Texas.

Even as Waco became an increasingly important commercial center, during the late nineteenth century the city also attracted a number of educational institutions and in some circles was known as the "Athens of Texas." Waco Classical School, established in 1860, became Waco University in 1861 and in 1887 merged with Baylor University, which moved to Waco at that time. In 1872 the African Methodist Episcopal church opened Paul Quinn College. Sacred Heart Academy, a Catholic school, was founded by the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur in 1873. Other private or sectarian schools, including Waco Academy, Waco Select School, and Leland Seminary, were also operating in the city at that time. Waco Female College was first established in 1856; it closed its doors in 1893, but by 1895 Add-Ran College occupied the buildings. Add-Ran became Texas Christian University in 1902.

The city's first gas plant began operation in the 1880s, and by 1890 streetcars pulled by mules ran regular routes through the town. In 1891 some of the mule-drawn cars were replaced by electric cars operated by the Waco Railway and Electric Light company; by 1901 the Citizen Railway company was operating twenty electric trolleys on city streets. In the early 1890s the town began to build a system of city parks, often with land donated by private citizens. A street-paving program began in 1905. In 1909 the city's elaborate Cotton Palace was built, and its Fall Exposition soon became one of the most popular fairs in the south; in 1913 an estimated 500,000 people visited the site. An electric interurban railway opened in 1913 connected the city with Dallas. By 1914 Waco had grown to about 35,000 residents and was becoming an important center of the state's insurance industry. The Amicable Insurance Building, a twenty-two-story structure completed in 1911, was deliberately designed to be the tallest building in Texas at the time.

During World War I Waco was selected as the site for Camp MacArthur, an infantry training base covering more than 10,000 acres of what is now the northwestern part of the city. The 35,000 troops assigned to the camp between 1917 and 1919 virtually doubled Waco's population for the duration of the war, and the city's economy boomed as its hotels were filled with soldiers' families. Encouraged by the United States Army's attempts to eliminate



temptations for the soldiers, the city's ministers and others waged an anti-prostitution campaign in 1917, and the "Reservation" was shut down.

Between 1900 and 1930 the racial composition of the city changed as rural blacks moved to Waco in search of better jobs and educational opportunities. By the 1920s a black middle class had begun to appear in the city. Perhaps partially in response to this development, Waco became a center of Ku Klux Klan activity and influence during the 1920s. Lynchings had occurred in Waco in 1905, 1915, and 1916, and on at least one occasion the black victim was publicly burned in the town square; in the 1920s mobs of white citizens hanged or burned other blacks as well. In 1923 more than 2,000 Klansmen paraded through the city, and the organization boycotted businesses of people unsympathetic with its agenda. Many of Waco's business and political leaders at least implicitly supported the Klan during this period, and one member claimed that the Klan "controlled every office in the city of Waco" during the 1920s.

By 1930 Waco had grown to a population of 53,848, but the onset of the Great Depression undercut the city's momentum. As prices for cotton and other agricultural products fell and farmers reduced their spending, businesses in Waco were forced to lay off employees. Ultimately, many businesses closed their doors and unemployment rose. The Cotton Palace fair, long a symbol and source of the city's prosperity, was shut down. Federal New Deal programs helped to create employment opportunities and infused money into the city. A National Youth Administration training program was set up at Baylor University. The Works Progress Administration also established an office in the city and paid for the construction of University High School and other local projects (see WORK PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION). During the depression Waco also became a distribution center for the government's surplus commodities program. The 1930s saw the demise of the city's electric trolleys, which were replaced by buses in an attempt to keep up with a "progressive" trend being established in other cities around the country. Waco's population grew slightly during the 1930s, and by 1940 there were 55,982 people living there.

World War II revived demand for cotton and cotton products, and Waco's economy was invigorated by the construction of war plants and military bases in or around the city. Mattress and canvas industries grew in the city, and by 1942 Waco was the armed forces' leading manufacturer of cots, tents, mattresses and barracks bags. The war also brought the Waco Army Flying School, established eight miles north of the city, and the Blackland Army Air Field, set up at nearby China Spring. Meanwhile, the Bluebonnet Ordnance Plant was built in MacGregor. The area's new defense industries opened many new employment opportunities for local residents, especially women; according to one estimate, in 1942 about three out of five workers in Waco's nine defense plants were women. A housing shortage was created as workers and military families moved into Waco by the thousands. In November 1943 the War Manpower Commission estimated that only four apartments were vacant in Waco and that high housing prices were causing hardships for the area's poorer residents. Near the end of the war the city was chosen to be the site of a new General Tire and Rubber plant, the first major tire factory in the southwest.

Though the area's military installations were closed after the war, in 1948 Waco Army Air Field was reactivated as Connally Air Force Base (see JAMES CONNALLY AIR FORCE BASE) and Waco continued to grow during the 1940s and early 1950s. By 1952 about 84,300 people were living there, and the city was the sixth largest industrial center in Texas, with more than 250 factories producing cotton goods, tires, glass, furniture, sporting goods, caskets, dry-cleaning equipment, and other products. On May 11, 1953, however, Waco was ravaged by a destructive tornado that tore through the heart of the city. The storm killed 114 people and seriously injured another 145; 196 business buildings were completely destroyed and 396 were damaged so badly that they had to be torn down. After the tornado many shoppers began to frequent suburban shopping centers, contributing to the decline of the city's downtown business district. "White flight" also contributed to urban decay, especially after the city's schools were integrated in the late 1960s. Connally Air Force Base was closed in 1966, dealing a blow to the city. By 1970 the population had declined to 95,326.

The Waco Urban Renewal Project was begun in 1958 to deal with the problem of inner-city blight, and in 1967

the city was chosen for the federal government's "Model Cities" program. By 1978 the Urban Renewal Project had helped to channel more than \$125 million into renovating the city's urban core. Slums were cleared and a number of new buildings were constructed, including new apartment complexes, a shopping center near Baylor University, and a convention center. The Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum was dedicated in 1976. Though Waco's economy suffered a downturn in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the city worked to bring tourist dollars into the area by building a zoo at Cameron Park and attracting the Texas Sports Hall of Fame. The city's population rose slightly to reach 101,216 by 1980 and 103,216 by 1990. The Waco area received worldwide attention in 1993 during a confrontation between federal officers and the Davidians led by David Koresh.

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## Appendix B: Waco Resource Team Members

### **Rebekka Adams**

Rebekka Adams joined the Texas Historic Commission as the Assistant State Coordinator for the Main Street Program in March 2014. Prior to the THC, she worked with the Austin Independent Business Alliance overseeing marketing and promotion for 8 commercial corridors in Austin, TX. Prior experience includes community development, non-profit management, and economic development experience including the formation of two tax increment finance (TIF) districts. Previous Main Street experience includes implementation of the Main Street approach in the Uptown and Southtown commercial corridors in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Additionally, she has a background in retail management, including running her own retail business.

Rebekka has a Bachelor's of Arts in Behavioral Science and a Master's of Arts in Public Administration, both from Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and a Graduate Certificate in Tourism from James Cook University in North Queensland, Australia.

### **Sarah J. Blankenship**

Sarah J Blankenship has been a designer with the Texas Main Street Program since 2003. Through computer renderings and technical advice she assists building owners in preserving their buildings. From 2006-7 she took a hiatus from the TMSP to explore her passion for painting and faux finishing with a company called In Your Space. She has volunteered as a board member in the Georgetown Main Street Program and is served on Georgetown's Historic and Architectural Review Commission. Blankenship graduated from the Savannah College of Art and Design in 2002 with a bachelor in Historic Preservation and a minor in Computer Art.

### **Debra Drescher**

Since 2006, Debra Drescher has been the State Coordinator for the Texas Main Street Program of the Texas Historical Commission serving as team lead for the state Main Street staff and for a new project called the Courthouse Square Initiative. Additionally, Ms. Drescher helps 87 designated local Main Street communities build and maintain program capacity. Prior to joining the THC, Ms. Drescher was with the Texas Downtown Association, a statewide membership organization. Other positions through a 30-year career have included localized work heading a chamber of commerce, an economic development organization, a private sector business and as a reporter. Elected service includes more than a decade on a school board in a fast-growth independent school district, on the state school board association and currently on the national executive council of state Main Street coordinators. She also serves as an ex-officio member of the board of the Texas Downtown Association. Ms. Drescher has a bachelor of arts in journalism from University of North Texas and a master of public administration from Texas State University.

### **Emily Koller**

Emily joined the Texas Historical Commission as a Planner working with the Texas Main Street Program and Courthouse Square Initiative in April 2014. She has worked as a Main Street director for an urban program on Route 66 in Tulsa, OK, as a small area planner for the City of Tulsa, OK, and most recently as a planner for the City of San Marcos, TX. In San Marcos, which is a Main Street community, she worked on all aspects of downtown planning including form-based code administration, parking management, streetscape improvements, one-way to two-way conversion and economic incentives.

Emily has a master's degree in Art History from the University of St. Thomas (2007) in St. Paul, MN, and graduated from the University of Texas at Austin in 2011 with a master's degree in Community and Regional Planning and a specialization in Historic Preservation.



### **Howard Langner**

Howard Langner is an architect with the Texas Historical Commission in Austin. He provides preservation assistance in historic towns throughout Texas as part of the Texas Main Street Program.

Prior to joining the Texas Historical Commission staff in 1999, Langner was a project architect with Centerbrook Architects and Planners of Essex, Connecticut, which received the 1998 National AIA Firm Award, the highest honor that the American Institute of Architects confers on a firm. Mr. Langner is a graduate of the Cornell University College of Architecture, Art, and Planning in Ithaca, New York.

### **Brian D. O' Connor**

O'Connor is the Economic Development Specialist for the Community Heritage Development Divisions, new Courthouse Square Initiative. Mr. O'Connor is certified in economic development through the National Development Council and holds a Masters Degree in City Planning from the Maxine Goodwin Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University. Over the past 20-years, he has utilized his business and commercial banking background in Ohio, Michigan and Florida where he has specialized in combining progressive planning principles with innovative economic development strategies. His efforts have led to the creation of strategies to eliminate obsolescence and blight in order to preserve local culture and revitalize downtowns. Projects include the Cleveland Clinic Cole Eye Center, Collinwood Yards Industrial Park in Cleveland and the \$113 million Consumers Energy Corporate Headquarters in Jackson, Michigan. Awards include the 2005 Phoenix Award for Brownfield redevelopment and a property tax reversion program called the New Neighbor Program from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

### **Brad Patterson**

Patterson is the Director for the Community Heritage Development Division leading the staff dedicated to helping communities create and support their historic preservation infrastructure through the Main Street, Certified Local Government, and Texas Heritage Trails Programs. He has significant experience in historic preservation and architecture, having completed undergraduate architectural work at Miami University and a Masters of Architecture degree with a Certificate in Historic Preservation from The University of Texas at Austin. With the Commission since 1996, Mr. Patterson previously worked in the agency's Architecture Division coordinating the architectural staff reviewing projects under federal and state laws; federal tax incentives, Americans with Disabilities Act compliance, and the agency's Texas Preservation Trust Fund grant program. He also oversaw the restoration of numerous historic county courthouses through the nationally recognized Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program. In addition, Mr. Patterson has helped lead the agency's disaster related response and recovery efforts for historic structures, including Hurricanes Rita and Ike as well as notable experience with post-fire recovery efforts at historic buildings, including the Texas Governor's Mansion.

### **Meredith Sangner**

Meredith Sanger helps the Downtown Austin Alliance to prospect for successful independent retail operators that fit the retail vision for downtown Austin. She builds relationships between property owners and prospective tenants to encourage an appealing retail mix. Meredith also helps existing retailers maximize their effectiveness through education, marketing, and merchandising assistance.

Meredith joined the DAA in 2011 and previously worked in healthcare venture capital as a communications manager for TEXO Venture. She has a bachelor's degree in government from The University of Texas at Austin and a master's in public administration from New York University.

### **Nancy Wood**

As the Bastrop Main Street Program Director for over seven years, Nancy Wood has been involved in the historic preservation and economic revitalization efforts of Bastrop's unique downtown. Their program has been very successful thanks to relationships with partners like the Bastrop Economic Development Corporation and the Down-

town Business Alliance. With over \$23.5 million reinvested, and over 64 new business starts which added 170+ jobs in the downtown area, the city center is thriving. The Bastrop Main Street Program continues to keep over 50 volunteers busy through goals established by an Advisory Board in concert with city government.

She came to the position in Bastrop from a career as a performance development professional with over twenty years of experience in Organizational Development consulting, course design and development, program implementation, classroom instruction and team facilitation. She ran a successful consulting business that took her around the world facilitating Diversity-focused training for large corporations. Her work background includes retail management, customer service, project management and corporate sales management.

## Appendix C: Preservation Tools: Texas Historical Commission (THC)

### PROTECTION OF FEDERAL AND STATE DESIGNATED HISTORIC RESOURCES

#### DESIGN REVIEW

Design review for both federal and state designated historic resources and projects takes place in the Architecture Division (DOA) at the Texas Historical Commission (THC). There are two main groups within DOA at the THC. One group, oversees the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program which provides matching grants to assist county courthouse restoration projects throughout the state as reviewers work on the courthouses. The other, the Project Review staff, reviews all other projects including those subject to review under various state and federal laws, historic designations, and incentive programs, and provides technical assistance to property owners. While a local Main Street program may have involvement with a county courthouse restoration, it is more likely that local Main Street staff, Advisory Board, or committee members will interact with DOA's project review staff through the other various federal and state protection and incentive programs.

DOA staff ensures that preservation projects are carried out in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties which are available online at [www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/standguide/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/standguide/index.htm). These Standards, as they are commonly referred to, are established by the National Park Service and are the basis for preservation projects across the United States. There are four specific treatment approaches within the Standards: Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction. The majority of all projects reviewed by the DOA are expected to follow the Standards for Rehabilitation. There are 10 standards within this treatment approach that aim at preserving historic fabric and overall historic character while allowing for changes in building uses and upgrading for modern functions. Following the Standards, appropriate changes are allowed to historic properties depending on the property and the specific project. To ensure that projects meet the Standards and move smoothly through the various review processes detailed below, property owners and other parties involved in preservation projects are encouraged to contact the DOA early on in the planning process.

DOA Project Review staff consists of five reviewers that work with all projects within a specific geographic region of the state, with the exception of projects at all active military sites. Contact information for each reviewer can be found on the THC's website at [www.thc.state.tx.us/contactus/cot106reviewers.shtml](http://www.thc.state.tx.us/contactus/cot106reviewers.shtml) or by calling the main DOA number at 512.463.6094. Project reviewers, with some limitations, can travel to projects within their region to assist property owners. DOA staff and Main Street architects and designers communicate on projects within local Main Street districts that also require review by the DOA.

#### HISTORIC DESIGNATIONS

Several different historic designations exist at both the state and national level, some of which trigger review of potential construction work by DOA staff. The actual nomination and designation of historic resources is coordinated by the THC History Programs Division and Archeology Division. All designations apply to the historic property itself and remain in place through changes in ownership.

To verify a building's historic designations, please contact the History Programs Division at 512.463.5853 or check the THC's Historic Sites Atlas at <http://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/>.

#### NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK (NHL)

National Historic Landmark designation recognizes resources with national significance, such as the Alamo, Fort Sam Houston Historic District, Strand Historic District, and the Governor's Mansion. Although designation as an NHL does not trigger review by DOA staff in and of itself, care must be taken on these important historic



owners and stewards of NHL properties.

## **THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES (NRHP)**

Listing in the National Register of Historic Places is the most common type of historic designation. The National Register is a federal program administered in Texas by the THC in coordination with the National Park Service. The NRHP provides national recognition of a property's historical or architectural significance and provides special consideration to the properties during federal projects. Buildings, sites, objects, structures and districts can be listed in the National Register. This is primarily an honorary designation—it does not automatically impose restrictions on property owners or trigger review of proposed work. Review is required for properties making use of the 20 percent Rehabilitation Tax Credit or federal projects subject to Section 106.

## **TEXAS SUBJECT MARKERS**

Subject markers are educational and relate aspects of local history that are important to a community or region. A subject marker places no restriction on the property or site, and the DOA has no review authority for work to a site or building with a subject marker only.

## **RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARKS (RTHL)**

Recorded Texas Historic Landmark designation is our agency's most common state-level designation. RTHLs are at least 50 years old and judged worthy of preservation for both architectural and historical significance. Buildings with this designation display an official Texas historical marker.

Property owners are required to notify the DOA at least 60 days before beginning a project that will affect the exterior of a RTHL. Notification should include a cover letter describing the scope of work, current overall photographs and close-up photographs of the areas requiring repair; drawings, specifications, and a proposal from a contractor may also be required. Staff will respond within 30 days, either allowing work to proceed if it complies with the Standards for Rehabilitation or recommending other alternatives to consider. For proposed demolition or inappropriate alterations that may result in loss of the designation, the THC may invoke an additional 30-day waiting period to consult with properties owners on alternatives that meet the Standards.

## **STATE ANTIQUITIES LANDMARK (SAL)**

State Antiquities Landmarks are designated by the THC and receive legal protection under the Antiquities Code of Texas. This is the highest designation that can be given at the state level and is more commonly applied to publicly-owned buildings or archeological sites. Buildings must first be listed in the National Register of Historic Places before they can be nominated for SAL designation. Property owners must apply for an official Historic Structures Permit for all proposed work, other than routine maintenance, to the exterior and public spaces of the interior of a SAL. DOA staff review applications for compliance with the Standards for Rehabilitation and must issue a permit before work may commence. Upon conclusion of the project, a completion report must be submitted to the DOA that documents the permitted work.

## **FEDERAL AND STATE MANDATE REVIEWS**

### **PROJECTS INVOLVING FEDERALLY-OWNED HISTORIC RESOURCES OR RECEIVING FEDERAL FUNDING REVIEWED UNDER SECTION 106**

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires that federal agencies consider the effect of their actions on historic resources, including but not limited to buildings, bridges, districts, streetscapes, irrigation canals, and cultural landscapes. Projects on federally-owned resources and projects receiving federal funding, permitting, licensing or other approval on non-federally owned resources must be submitted to the THC for review if those resources are 45 years of age or older. Information on what is needed for our office to review a project under Section 106, including a submission form and supporting documentation, can be found online at [www.thc.state.tx.us/crm/crmsend.shtm](http://www.thc.state.tx.us/crm/crmsend.shtm). Once a complete project submission is received, the THC has 30 days to complete its

During this period, the Archeology Division reviews all Section 106 projects with a potential to effect archeological resources. The History Programs Division determines if above-ground resources have any historic designations and if not, if the resources are eligible for listing in the NRHP. If the resources are listed or eligible for listing, DOA staff will determine the effect of the federal undertaking on the historic resource. If the project is found to have no effect or no adverse effect on any historic resources, the project may proceed as planned. An adverse effect on any historic resource will require the federal agency to avoid, mitigate, or minimize that effect, and provide an opportunity for the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to comment on the proposal.

Almost any federal action with the potential to impact historic resources is required to undergo Section 106 Review. It is the responsibility of the federal agency to carry out this process, utilize appropriate professionals and make the determinations. As the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), the THC consults on the process along with other stakeholders and the public. Some common examples of actions and agencies subject to Section 106 that impact Main Street communities include the following; US Department of Housing and Urban Development including block grant programs, cellular and other communications towers under FCC permits, US Department of Agriculture activities, US Army Corps of Engineers permits and projects, Texas Department of Transportation and Federal Highways Administration, Texas Capital Fund projects which originate with federal funds, and construction related to new federally chartered banking institutions.

## **STATE REVIEW UNDER THE ANTIQUITIES CODE OF TEXAS**

The Antiquities Code of Texas protects historic buildings and archeological sites on state or local public land. Under the Antiquities Code, a state agency may not alter, renovate, or demolish a building owned by the state that is 50 years of age or older without notifying the THC at least 60 days in advance of the proposed work. State agencies and political subdivisions of the state, including cities, counties, river authorities, municipal utility districts and school districts must notify the THC of any action on public land involving 5,000 or more cubic yards of earth moving, five or more acres of ground disturbance, or any project that has the potential to disturb recorded historic or archeological sites.

Information on what is needed for our office to review a project under the Antiquities Code including a submission form and supporting documentation can be found online at [www.thc.state.tx.us/crm/crmsend.shtml](http://www.thc.state.tx.us/crm/crmsend.shtml). Upon receipt, the THC will issue a response to the project proposal within 30 days.

## **INCENTIVES FOR BUILDING REHABILITATION**

### **FEDERAL REHABILITATION TAX CREDITS**

The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program is the best financial tool available for rehabilitation in Texas, and is one of the nation's most successful and cost-effective community revitalization programs. Through the Internal Revenue Service and National Park Service, the federal government offers 10 percent or a 20 percent tax rehabilitation tax credits; the credits cannot be taken together.

### **20 PERCENT REHABILITATION TAX CREDIT**

The 20 percent tax credit is available for certified rehabilitations on income-producing buildings that are listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The building does not need to be designated at the beginning of the application process but must be listed within a set time period after completing the work in order to retain the tax credit. Any work undertaken on the building as part of this program must comply with the Standards for Rehabilitation, and will be reviewed by the DOA and the National Park Service.

To qualify, the rehabilitation must be substantial. The rehabilitation costs must exceed \$5,000 or the adjusted basis of the building—whichever is greater. (The adjusted basis is generally the purchase price, minus the cost of land, plus improvements already made, minus depreciation already taken). This tax credit (not deduction) can be claimed through the IRS for 20 percent of all qualified rehabilitation expenditures after the completion of the project. Qualified expenditures include costs associated with the physical work undertaken on the building, as well as

and engineering fees, site survey fees, legal expenses, development fees, and other construction-related costs.

The 20 percent rehabilitation tax credit has a three-part application that must be submitted to the THC. Part 1 consists of National Register eligibility, Part 2 covers the physical rehabilitation work, and Part 3 is the certification of completed work. There is no requirement that applications be submitted before work begins, but it is strongly recommended to ensure that the work meets the Standards.

## 10 PERCENT REHABILITATION TAX CREDIT

The 10 percent rehabilitation tax credit can be taken for commercial buildings constructed prior to 1936. To be eligible, buildings must not be individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places, or must be determined to be non-contributing if within a National Register district. Buildings must be depreciable and must be rehabilitated for non-residential uses. Rehabilitation work must be substantial, with costs exceeding \$5,000 or the adjusted basis of the building—whichever is greater. (The adjusted basis is generally the purchase price, minus the cost of land, plus improvements already made, minus depreciation already taken). There is also a specific physical test for the retention of external walls and internal structural framework. The THC does not review work under the 10 percent rehabilitation tax credit.

More information on the tax credits can be found online at [www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/index.htm).

## STATE OF TEXAS TAX CREDIT (*begins January 1, 2015*)

We are proud to introduce the new Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit, which offers a complementary program to the Federal 20 percent tax credit. Applicants may make use of either or both credits at the same time. The state tax credit provides 25 percent of qualified rehabilitation expenditures, which is used against owed business franchise tax. The state credits are also transferable, meaning they may be sold in whole or in part, to any company or entity that is able to use them.

There are other differences that make the state program more flexible, including a lower minimum project cost of only \$5000. Non-profits and government entities are also welcome to apply to the state program, although the building still must be rehabilitated for an income-producing use. In addition to being listed on the National Register (individually or in a district), properties may also qualify for the state credit if they are listed as a Registered Texas Historic Landmark or a State Antiquities Landmark, or as a contributing building in a certified local historic district. Listing, however, must be complete by the time the credit is taken. Find more information about State and Federal tax credits at: <http://www.thc.state.tx.us/preserve/projects-and-programs/preservation-tax-incentives>

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In addition to reviews under the preceding programs, DOA staff offers technical assistance to owners of historic properties and other involved parties. Technical assistance provided is guidance only and DOA staff does not produce plans for projects. Project Review staff can provide general guidance on specific architectural and preservation issues, such as masonry repair and repair of historic windows, along with information and publications related to individual projects and issues. Project Reviewers may advise consultation with a qualified architect, structural engineer or contractor as necessary to address major issues.

DOA Project Reviewers are often consulted about how building codes for life safety and accessibility apply to historic buildings. Historic buildings are not exempt from code requirements and the THC strongly feels that all historic buildings should meet the appropriate building codes to the greatest extent possible. Project Reviewers are available for basic guidance about how a project may be designed to both meet codes and protect historic fabric and can provide letters of support when variances for specific elements of a code based on historic status or presence of historic materials. Although DOA staff can consult with code officials to express concerns related to historic

preservation, local building code officials have the final authority on all code-related issues.

The Guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Texas Accessibility Standards (TAS) both provide for a minimum set of requirements that can be applied in instances where meeting the full code will destroy significant historic features. Approval for using these minimum standards must come from the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation which specifically requires a letter of support from the THC. DOA staff are not experts on the TAS and do not give approval on projects, but can offer general advice on how to make a building accessible while retaining historic materials and character.



## D. Community Heritage Development Division (CHD)

The Community Heritage Development (CHD) division is comprised of three THC programs including Texas Main Street Program, Certified Local Government, and Texas Heritage Trails. These three programs work closely with one another in providing technical assistance to local communities and regions throughout the state. More information about each of these programs and the State Coordinator's contact information is listed below.

### Certified Local Government Program (CLG)

The CLG program is a national initiative created in 1980 to ensure the broadest possible participation of local governments—town, city, municipality and county—enabling them to develop and sustain a strong preservation ethic that influences zoning and permit decisions critical to preserving local historic resources. Texas municipalities that achieve CLG status from the National Park Service (NPS) are eligible to receive valuable technical assistance, training and matching grants tied to developing and maintaining a local comprehensive preservation planning program.

Projects eligible for grant funding may include architectural, historical, archeological surveys, oral histories, nominations to the National Register of Historic Places, staff work for historic preservation commissions, design guidelines and preservation plans, educational and public outreach materials such as publications, videos, exhibits and brochures, training for commission members and staff, and rehabilitation or restoration of National Register listed properties. Grant funds are distributed through the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), administered by NPS and allocated to each state. As the Texas State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the THC reserves at least 10 percent of the State's annual HPF allocation to fund CLG historic preservation grant projects. Applications are available from the THC and may be submitted at any time during the year. Applications for CLG matching grants, available only to CLGs, are usually due in the summer of each year.

Contact: Community Heritage Development Division  
512.463.6092  
[community-heritage@thc.state.tx.us](mailto:community-heritage@thc.state.tx.us)

### Texas Heritage Trails Program (THTP)

The THTP is the THC's award winning heritage regional heritage tourism initiative. This economic development initiative encourages communities, heritage regions and the state to partner and promote Texas' historic and cultural resources. These successful local preservation efforts, combined with statewide marketing of heritage regions as tourism destinations, increase visitation to cultural and historic sites and bring more dollars to Texas communities.

The program began with the establishment of the Texas Forts Trail Region in 1998. Other heritage regions made a formal application to the program, demonstrating knowledge of the area attractions and broad support from organizations and local government. The suite of trail regions was completed in 2005 with the additions of the Texas Pecos and Hill Country Trail Regions. Individuals and communities are encouraged to participate in the program. Begin by visiting [www.thc.state.tx.us/heritagetourism/htprogram.shtml](http://www.thc.state.tx.us/heritagetourism/htprogram.shtml) and select your region from the map to get involved with this successful heritage tourism initiative.

Contact: Teresa Caldwell, state coordinator  
512.463.5755  
[teresa.caldwell@thc.state.tx.us](mailto:teresa.caldwell@thc.state.tx.us)

### Texas Main Street Program (TMSP)

The Texas Main Street Program helps Texas cities revitalize their historic downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts by utilizing preservation and economic development strategies.

The Texas Main Street Program began in 1981. Affiliated with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the

Appendix D: Community Heritage Development Division (CHD)

year, the THC may select up to five communities as official Texas Main Street cities. Selected communities are eligible to receive a range of continual on-site services in the areas of manager and board training, strategic planning, economic development and design assistance. Through this program more than 160 Texas cities have been assisted resulting in the public and private reinvestment of \$2.6 billion in downtown and neighborhood commercial districts, 28,770 new jobs, and more than 7,425 business starts, expansions or relocations.

Contact: Debra Drescher, state coordinator

512.463.5758

[debra.drescher@thc.state.tx.us](mailto:debra.drescher@thc.state.tx.us)

## Appendix E: The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

The Standards (Department of Interior regulations, 36 CFR 67) pertain to historic buildings of all materials, construction types, sizes and occupancy and encompass the exterior and the interior, related landscape features and the building's site and environment as well as attached, adjacent or related new construction. The Standards are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

## Appendix F: The Texas Downtown Association

The Texas Downtown Association (TDA) is a non profit organization designed to encourage the development, redevelopment and improvement of downtown areas throughout the state. Open to downtown organizations, neighborhood groups, governmental entities and individuals, the association provides a forum for members to exchange information about common experiences, needs, problems and solutions. The organization is governed by a fifteen-member board of directors.

Members of the TDA have access to a statewide listserv and receive an electronic newsletter that shares ideas and activities from downtown groups, as well as programs, legislation and issues important to downtowns.

A premiere program of the TDA is an annual awards program that showcases and celebrates the special projects, programs and people in Texas downtowns. The TDA also partners with the Texas Main Street Program on an annual statewide downtown revitalization conference.

Other programs of the TDA include the Anice Read Fund that provides grants for downtown projects; regional educational roundtable programs and a cooperative advertising program in major publications. For a membership application and additional information, contact:

The Texas Downtown Association  
Catherine Sak, Executive Director  
P.O. Box 546  
Austin, TX 78767-0540  
Phone: 512.472.7832  
Fax: 512.472.7495  
[info@texasdowntown.org](mailto:info@texasdowntown.org)  
[www.texasdowntown.org](http://www.texasdowntown.org)



## Appendix G: Websites of Interest

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation: [www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov)

African American Heritage Preservation Foundation: [www.aahpfdn.org](http://www.aahpfdn.org)

(The) Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation: [www.ahlp.org](http://www.ahlp.org)

American Institute of Architects: [www.aia.org](http://www.aia.org)

American Planning Association: [www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org)

American Society of Landscape Architects: [www.asla.org](http://www.asla.org)

(The) Cultural Landscape Foundation: [www.tclf.org](http://www.tclf.org)

Handbook of Texas Online: [www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/)

Institute for Cultural Landscape Studies: [www.icls.harvard.edu](http://www.icls.harvard.edu)

Keep Texas Beautiful: [www.ktb.org](http://www.ktb.org)

League of Historic American Theaters: [www.lhat.org](http://www.lhat.org)

National Main Street Center: [www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org)

National Park Service: [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)

National Trust for Historic Preservation: [www.preservationnation.org](http://www.preservationnation.org)

Texas Department of Rural Affairs: [www.tdra.state.tx.us](http://www.tdra.state.tx.us)

Preservation Easement Trust: [www.preservationeasement.org/](http://www.preservationeasement.org/)

Preservation Directory: [www.preservationdirectory.com](http://www.preservationdirectory.com)

Preservation Texas: [www.preservationtexas.org](http://www.preservationtexas.org)

Preserve America: [www.preserveamerica.gov](http://www.preserveamerica.gov)

Project for Public Spaces: [www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)

Rails to Trails: [www.railstotrails.org](http://www.railstotrails.org)

Partners for Sacred Places: [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)

Scenic America: [www.scenic.org](http://www.scenic.org)

Texas Commission on the Arts: [www.arts.state.tx.us](http://www.arts.state.tx.us)

Texas Downtown Association: [www.texasdowntown.org](http://www.texasdowntown.org)

Texas Folklife Resources: [www.texasfolklife.org](http://www.texasfolklife.org)

Texas Historical Commission: [www.thc.state.tx.us](http://www.thc.state.tx.us)

Texas Parks and Wildlife: [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us)

Texas Rural Leadership Program: [www.trlp.org](http://www.trlp.org)

Texas State Preservation Board: [www.tspb.state.tx.us](http://www.tspb.state.tx.us)

Urban Land Institute: [www.uli.org](http://www.uli.org)

## Appendix H: Texas Main Street Program Cities

In 1981, Texas was one of the first six states to become a coordinating program for the National Main Street Center which had a new philosophy for revitalizing central business districts across the nation. In 2014, the Texas Main Street Program has 87 cities participating in program.

### Texas Main Street Cities (population 50,000 and fewer)

Bastrop	Huntsville
Bay City	Kerrville
Beeville	Kilgore
Bowie	Kingsville
Brenham	La Grange
Bridgeport	Levelland
Caldwell	Livingston
Canton	Llano
Canyon	Lufkin
Carthage	Luling
Celina	Marshall
Childress	Mineola
Clarksville	Mount Pleasant
Clifton	Mount Vernon
Colorado City	Nacogdoches
Corsicana	Palestine
Cotulla	Paris
Cuero	Pecos
Decatur	Pilot Point
Del Rio	Pittsburg
Denison	Plainview
Eagle Pass	Rio Grande City
Electra	Rockwall
Elgin	Royse City
Farmersville	San Augustine
Ferris	San Marcos
Gainesville	Sealy
Georgetown	Seguin
Gladewater	Sonora
Goliad	Taylor
Gonzales	Uvalde
Graham	Vernon
Grand Saline	Waxahachie
Grapevine	Weatherford
Greenville	Winnsboro
Henderson	
Hillsboro	

### Urban Texas Main Street Cities (population more than 50,000)

Amarillo
Beaumont
Denton
Harlingen
Laredo
Longview
McKinney
New Braunfels
Odessa
Pharr
San Angelo
Texarkana
Tyler
Victoria
Waco

## Appendix I: Role of Main Street Committees

An advisory board, Main Street manager and committees make up the fundamental organizational structure of the volunteer-driven program. Committees are the life blood of the Main Street organization. They are the workforce implementing the plan that has been developed by the advisory board. Ideally each committee is led by an advisory board member creating a direct line of communication between both. Committees should meet (or at least be in contact, by email or phone) monthly and keep minutes of the meetings for reference and accountability. Copies of the program work plan should be available and referenced at all meetings so everyone understands how their committee work fits into the larger scope of the program. The work plan should define the projects taken on by each committee. Following are brief descriptions of each committee and general suggestions for appropriate projects.

Following are brief descriptions of each committee and general suggestions for appropriate projects. You will notice that some of these are similar to recommendations suggested in each individual section of the reassessment report. In this manner, you can use the recommendations from this reassessment report to update your current work plan with tasks for the upcoming year(s). There are also other projects listed under each committee below from which your program can glean ideas.

### Organization Committee

Organization involves getting everyone working toward the same goal and assembling the appropriate human and financial resources to implement a Main Street revitalization program. This committee builds an effective coalition of public and private sector stakeholders working in partnership with organizations that share an interest in the health of downtown and the community. Suggested projects for the Organization Committee:

- Maintain and update the annual work plan for distribution to the advisory board and all committees.
- Develop a Main Street orientation packet for new members of all committees.
- Put together a media resource list.
- Develop a speakers bureau (board and committee members that can speak to local groups about the Main Street Program).
- Develop a volunteer recruitment strategy and recruit volunteers for all committees, as well as for individual projects.
- Utilize high-school or college students as program interns.
- If incentive grants are not funded through your city, develop a fundraising strategy to assist in these efforts.
- Produce a newsletter (print or electronic).
- Create a local Main Street website.
- Create a Facebook page (and explore other social media opportunities).
- Educate the community about the local history and cultures. (i.e., newspaper columns highlighting the history of downtown buildings, ghost stories of downtown, oral history projects led by students, etc).
- Plan National Preservation Month (May) activities.
- Write grants for specific projects.
- Produce a program brochure (perhaps one that can be updated with new figures and pictures every few years).
- Create a volunteer orientation process.
- Plan quarterly Main Street mixers for business owners, board members and downtown stakeholders.
- Order *Revitalizing Main Street: A practitioner's guide to comprehensive commercial district revitalization* (2009) from the National Main Street Center at [www.preservationbooks.org/Bookstore.asp?Item=1361](http://www.preservationbooks.org/Bookstore.asp?Item=1361). This is an excellent resource for fundamental concepts, as well as inspiring Main Street success stories.
- Plan an annual meeting recognizing volunteers and local preservation advocates.
- Write a newspaper column, or be a presence on other local media such as radio or TV.
- Write and distribute press releases for all Main Street events and major activities.
- Develop and nurture partnerships with downtown stakeholders. Some of these partnerships will include:
  - Local non-profit corporations
  - City government

- Chamber of Commerce
- Downtown/neighborhood associations
- Building and business owners
- Media – newspaper, TV, radio
- Financial institutions
- Garden club
- Churches
- Schools/universities
- Local civic organizations: Rotary, Lions, etc.
- Arts organizations

## Promotion Committee

Promotion sells a positive image of the commercial district and encourages consumers and investors to live, work, shop, play and invest in the Main Street district. By marketing a district's unique characteristics to residents, investors, business owners and visitors, an effective promotional strategy forges a positive image through advertising, retail promotional activity, special events and marketing campaigns carried out by local volunteers. These activities improve consumer and investor confidence in the district and encourage commercial activity and investment in the area (National Trust Main Street Center).

Suggested projects for the Promotions Committee:

- Analyze existing promotional calendar and events; add fresh promotions/ads, new activities.
- Create a logo for the Main Street district (work with Organization and Design Committees).
- Produce an annual promotions calendar that includes pictures of Main Street events from the previous year.
- Produce a business directory (or brochure for small cities).
- Develop unified retail promotions and create tie-ins for retailers to existing events.
- Organize special downtown events (be sure to discuss why you are having an event—to promote the program, attract people downtown, raise funds for façade grants, etc.).
- Define a marketable image of downtown.
- Develop a good working relationship with the local and regional media (newspaper, radio, TV, etc.).
- Do your promotional events need sponsorships? Develop a plan regarding the solicitation of sponsorships.
- Create downtown banners (rotate on a seasonal basis).
- Have a poster contest for your major annual event to involve the arts community and to create a collection series for the community to look forward to.
- Have a Taste of Main Street event highlighting the local restaurants.
- Create a downtown gift card (instead of gift certificates) to be purchased at the Main Street office that can be used anywhere in the downtown district. You will need to work with your local bank. Have a committee member research this possibility on the internet.
- Create a month-long downtown summer event of concerts in the park, free outdoor movies, etc.
- Create youth events downtown (i.e., chalk art contests in conjunction with the National Recreation and Parks Association, see [www.nrpa.org](http://www.nrpa.org) for details).
- Do you have an upcoming Main Street anniversary (5th, 10th, etc.)—be sure to plan a special event to celebrate.

## Design Committee

Beyond the issue of building maintenance, it is important to discuss the role of the Design Committee as a critical element in the success of the Main Street Program. What does the Design Committee do? What short- and long-term goals do they set? The following is a list of possible assignments:

- Develop design guidelines.
- Develop design workshops, training and walking tours for the community.
- Target specific buildings for renovation projects.
- Survey historic buildings and properties and target noteworthy buildings at least 50 years old that are being



considered for Recorded Texas Historic Landmark or National Register of Historic Places status.

- Research and utilize the Americans with Disabilities Act and Texas Accessibility Guidelines.
- Establish Incentive Grant Funds for signs and paint.
- Inform building owners about the benefits of the 10 percent and 20 percent Federal Investment Tax Credit for Rehabilitation available for income-producing buildings constructed before 1936.
- Inform building owners about the 50 percent tax credit (within certain limits) for all modifications to their buildings that bring them into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. This includes the addition of, or modification to, a restroom for handicap compliance.
- Establish low interest loan programs.
- Develop sign guidelines.
- Research zoning issues.
- The city building permit process must be researched and understood.
- There must be an awareness of building code issues.
- Potential problems with infrastructure (utilities and sidewalks) must be recognized.
- General landscaping and maintenance issues need to be understood.
- Target Texas Enhancement Act and Texas Capital Fund projects for streetscape and infrastructure improvements.
- Rehabilitation should be celebrated and publicized.
- Utilize display windows for display purposes. Artwork or promotional materials should be displayed if actual merchandise is unavailable.
- Understand the value of publicizing design issues downtown.

Just as important as understanding your responsibilities as a Design Committee member is understanding what goals are the most realistic and which are the most necessary to accomplish. It is important to understand that your goals can be derived from observations of perceived problems. In the following list, what problems would suggest the need for landscape/streetscape design guidelines? What problems would suggest the need for parking guidelines? What problems would suggest the need for sign guidelines?

- Is it easy for visitors to find the downtown?
- Does the downtown have an attractive atmosphere?
- Do historic buildings look clean and in good repair?
- Are the city's architectural jewels being shown off?
- Are storefronts designed to tempt customers inside?
- Are newer buildings stylistically compatible with older ones?
- Is parking convenient and adequate in the downtown area?
- Does traffic flow seem sensibly arranged?
- As a pedestrian, is it easy to cross the streets?
- Are sidewalks wide and unobstructed?
- How effective and attractive are access ramps for the handicapped?
- Are streets well lit with attractive fixtures?
- Are utility poles and wires noticeably intrusive?
- Are business signs attractive, easy to read, well proportioned and well placed?
- Are street signs clear and do they provide good directions?
- Do signs, landscaping, sidewalks and street lighting seem stylistically coordinated?
- Are there plenty of rest and shade areas for pedestrians?
- Are Dumpsters and trash cans available, but out of sight?

Design means getting Main Street into top physical shape. Capitalizing on its best assets, such as historic buildings and pedestrian-oriented streets, is just part of the story. An inviting atmosphere, created through attractive window displays, parking areas, building improvements, street furniture, signs, sidewalks, street lights and landscaping, conveys a positive visual message about the commercial district and what it has to offer.

Suggested projects for the Design Committee (Be sure to include the Texas Main Street architects in these discussions as appropriate. Remember, this is a free service):

- Conduct a building inventory.
- Become familiar with local building codes and ordinances.
- Visit with building owners regarding possible building improvements.
- Hold a clean-up day.
- Conduct a traffic/parking study.
- Work with the Economic Restructuring Committee on incentive grants (façade, paint, signs, etc.).
- Create a quick guide brochure for new downtown property and business owners that includes answers to common building improvement questions (e.g., Do I need approval to put up a new business sign?), permits, inspections and incentive grants.
- Identify sites for historic markers/districts and work with the Organization Committee to apply for a National Register district or Texas historical markers.
- Establish a collection of historic downtown photos from the community. Scan and create an electronic record of these.
- Make sure your wayfinding signage is current and user-friendly to the general tourist. If not, work with your city and state (in some cases) rules to put up appropriate signage.
- Work with businesses on appropriate signage and sign placement (pedestrian signage, sandwich boards, etc)
- Work on landscaping improvements for downtown.

### **Economic Restructuring Committee**

Economic restructuring strengthens a community's existing economic assets while expanding and diversifying its economic base. The Main Street Program helps sharpen the competitiveness of existing business owners and recruits compatible new businesses and new economic uses to build a commercial district that responds to today's consumers' needs. Converting unused or underused commercial space into economically productive property helps boost the profitability of the district (National Trust Main Street Center).

Suggested projects for the Economic Restructuring Committee:

- Collect existing local data: market studies (however informal or formal), master plans and current incentives.
- Conduct a business survey.
- Obtain *The Economics of Historic Preservation, a Community Leader's Guide* by Donovan Rypkema and educate your community about the fact that preservation makes sense and cents.
- Maintain a Main Street progress chart of rehabs, jobs, new businesses, investment, tax revenue, etc.
- Create business recruitment packets and have readily available with current demographics.
- Work with the Design Committee on incentive grants (façade, sign, and paint grants).
- Work with the city to create local incentives such as tax abatements.
- Research and make available all financial and technical assistance opportunities available for business owners.
- If your city does not receive Community Development Block Grant funds, you are eligible to apply for a Texas Capital Fund Main Street downtown infrastructure grant (for sidewalks, wiring, drainage, etc.) See the Texas Department of Agriculture website at [www.tda.state.tx.us/agr/program\\_render/0,1987,1848\\_6050\\_0\\_0,00.html?channelId=6050](http://www.tda.state.tx.us/agr/program_render/0,1987,1848_6050_0_0,00.html?channelId=6050)
- Educate your building owners about federal tax credits for historic rehabilitations, see [www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax](http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax).
- Create an orientation kit for new business owners.
- Maintain a link on your local Main Street page to showcase available properties and business opportunities in downtown.
- Explore the possibility of a business/retail incubator (downtown building furnishing multiple spaces for start-up entrepreneurs, see [www.gaebler.com/Texas-small-business-incubators.htm](http://www.gaebler.com/Texas-small-business-incubators.htm)).
- Hold workshops for business owners on such topics as customer service, floor planning and business plans.
- Develop a shop local campaign in conjunction with the Promotion Committee.
- Conduct a market analysis, assess consumer attitudes and identify market opportunities. A free step-by-step

market analysis process (developed by Main Street professionals) and downloadable survey are available at [www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/downtowns/dma/index.cfm](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/downtowns/dma/index.cfm).

- Develop business incentives.

The projects of these four committees under the guidance of the advisory board will work together to build a sustainable and complete downtown revitalization effort.

## Appendix J: Economic Development Tools

### Texas Historical Commission – Main Street Program 10 Funding Methods for Main Street Communities

*These funding methods are only some of the many ways to fund projects in Main Street districts. There are other documents on the Texas Historical Commission (THC) website that provide additional assistance including “Funding A Local Main Street Program” ([www.thc.state.tx.us/mainstreet/msrevitalize.shtml](http://www.thc.state.tx.us/mainstreet/msrevitalize.shtml)).*

*The options listed below are not in any priority order.*

#### 1. Texas Department of Agriculture, Texas Capital Fund, Main Street Improvements Program.

This program provides eligible Texas Main Street communities with matching grants to expand or enhance public infrastructure in historic Main Street districts. The program aids in eliminating handicap barriers and deteriorated conditions in the downtown. Grants range from \$50,000 to \$150,000 per community. Through this partnership with the Texas Department of Agriculture, designated Main Street Programs have received more than \$11.1 million in grants and leveraged more than \$23.7 million in projects.

For more information:

<http://texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/RuralEconomicDevelopment/TexasCapitalFund/MainStreetImprovementProgram.aspx>

#### 2. Texas Department of Agriculture, Infrastructure Development Program

This program provides grants for infrastructure development to create or retain permanent jobs in primarily rural communities and counties. The funds are for public and private infrastructure projects and are intended to encourage new business development and expansion. Applications are accepted on the 20th of each month. These grants, which are available to non-entitlement communities as defined by the federal government or to county governments, range from \$50,000 to \$1.5 million.

For more information:

<http://texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/RuralEconomicDevelopment/TexasCapitalFund/InfrastructureDevelopment.aspx>

#### 3. Texas Department of Agriculture, Real Estate Development program

This program provides zero-interest loans to fund real estate acquisition or improvements to create or retain permanent jobs in primarily rural communities and counties. Funds can be used for acquisition, new construction or rehabilitation. Loan amounts range from \$50,000 to \$1.5 million. Applications are due the 20th of each month.

For more information:

<http://texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/RuralEconomicDevelopment/TexasCapitalFund/InfrastructureDevelopment.aspx>

#### 4. Economic Development Sales Tax

(Type A; Type B)

Allowed under the Industrial Development Corporation Act of 1979, a city in Texas can adopt by community election a Type A or a Type B economic development sales tax on top of existing sales taxes, as long as the total local sales tax option does not exceed 2%. (State sales tax rate of 6.25%; local rate up to 2% for a total sales tax of 8.25%.) Type A economic development corporations are typically created to fund industrial development projects but have been used for downtown economic development efforts for a project with a primary employer. Type B is more often used for Main Street projects and activities. In Section 505.158 of the Local Government Code, municipalities under 20,000 in population may also use the Type B tax “to promote new or expanded business development.” Both are dependent on a variety of factors such as the Act itself, the type of tax adopted



activities and projects of the Main Street program.

The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts provides an overview of the Type A tax here:

[www.texasahead.org/tax\\_programs/typeab/](http://www.texasahead.org/tax_programs/typeab/)

The statute for the Type A tax can be found here:

[www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.504.htm](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.504.htm)

The statute for the Type B tax can be found here:

[www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.505.htm](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.505.htm)

*Note: a community can also have both Type A and Type B taxes in place as long as the total option remains at 2% or below.*

## 5. Hotel Occupancy Taxes (HOT)

Authorized through the Texas Tax Code and implemented through local ordinance, the categories for use are outlined in Sec. 351.101 of the code and include as an allowable use: “historical restoration and preservation projects or activities or advertising and conducting solicitations and promotional programs to encourage tourists and convention delegates to visit preserved historic sites or museums...”

The statutes can be found here:

[www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/TX/htm/TX.156.htm](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/TX/htm/TX.156.htm)

[www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/TX/htm/TX.351.htm](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/TX/htm/TX.351.htm)

## 6. Chapter 380 Agreements

Chapter 380 of the Local Government Code allows for the governing body of a municipality to “establish and provide for the administration of one or more programs, including programs for making loans and grants of public money and providing personnel and services of the municipality, to promote state or local economic development and to stimulate business and commercial activity in the municipality.”

The statute is here:

[www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.380.htm](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.380.htm)

## 7. Tax Increment Financing/Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIF/TIRZ) and management/improvement districts

Authorized under the Tax Increment Financing Act and described in Chapter 311 of the Texas Tax Code, tax increment financing through a reinvestment zone is a tool used to restore areas that “constitute an economic or social liability.” By creating a TIF/TIRZ, a municipality creates a baseline value. In ensuing years as values rise, the increment between the baseline and current values is returned to the district to fund improvements. Additional taxes are not paid by property owners in the district, nor does it adversely impact the taxes being collected by other taxing authorities. Numerous Main Street communities have created TIF/TIRZ districts in their downtown. As downtown activity increases, the increments can be used for a variety of downtown projects including infrastructure and building improvements. In a public improvement or municipal management district, there is

an extra assessment levied to property owners.

Informational web links for tax increment financing:

[www.window.state.tx.us/taxinfo/proptax/registry/zone.html](http://www.window.state.tx.us/taxinfo/proptax/registry/zone.html)

[www.texasahead.org/tax\\_programs/increment\\_finance/](http://www.texasahead.org/tax_programs/increment_finance/)

Statute for tax increment financing - [www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/TX/htm/TX.311.htm](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/TX/htm/TX.311.htm)

Statute for public improvement districts - [www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.372.htm](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.372.htm)

Statute for municipal management districts - [www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.375.htm](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.375.htm)

#### **8. Texas Historical Commission Certified Local Government Program (CLG)**

CLG grants provide funding to participating city and county governments to develop and sustain an effective local preservation program critical to preserving local historic resources. The grants can be used for local historic preservation projects, including surveys of historic properties/districts, preparation of nominations to the National Register of Historic Places and other community-based preservation projects.

Web link: [www.thc.state.tx.us/grantsincent/graclg.shtml](http://www.thc.state.tx.us/grantsincent/graclg.shtml)

#### **9. Localized action: funding Main Street revitalization through general debt/bonded funding, waiving fees or abating sales/property taxes**

Under its general authority, a municipality may opt to pay for public improvements in the downtown through its tax-supported general revenue fund. There are also numerous types of bonds a city can use to fund projects, some of which require voter approval and some which do not. Projects funded in these ways may or may not result in a tax increase to the community at large. Likewise, a city has the authority under various provisions of the Texas Tax Code, Local Government Code and Government Code to abate or freeze taxes or waive fees to spur economic development activity. In the historic downtown, any private entity receiving public funds through an incentive program should be required to meet certain thresholds. They should be required to undertake the rehabilitation project in a historically sensitive manner, which is why preservation ordinances and formal design review are so important.

Other programs and information that Texas Main Street participants should be aware of for downtown economic development activities:

#### **Preservation Tax Credits**

While not directly a funding source, preservation tax credits are an important tool for economic development in the historic downtown. A federal tax credit worth 20 percent of the eligible rehabilitation costs is available for buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The IRS also allows a separate 10 percent tax credit for buildings constructed prior to 1936, but not listed in the National Register.

Web link: [www.thc.state.tx.us/historicprop/hpcredits.shtml](http://www.thc.state.tx.us/historicprop/hpcredits.shtml)

#### **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) tax credits**

Can be utilized for making ADA improvements: [www.ada.gov/taxcred.htm](http://www.ada.gov/taxcred.htm)

#### **Brownfields Site Assessment (BSA) and Targeted Brownfields Assessment (TBA) programs**

These programs address underutilized properties where the property transaction is complicated by the real or perceived presence of contamination such as asbestos or lead paint. Also includes involvement with the Texas Commission of Environmental Quality (TCEQ). Region 6 is the EPA Region that includes Texas. TCEQ regions are numbered differently. Contact EPA Region 6 Main Office at 214-665-2760 or 1-800-887-6063 [www.epa.gov/region6/r6coment.htm](http://www.epa.gov/region6/r6coment.htm)

**Business financing: Community Banks and the Small Business Administration (SBA)**

The localized nature of community banks lead them to be good partners and connectors in Main Street communities since most of the loan needs come from very small businesses. Various SBA programs provide financial and technical assistance to small businesses in the Main Street district. In turn, helping these small businesses succeed is a critical component of the successful local economic development effort. The three primary loan products of the SBA are called the 7(a), microloan and CDC/504 programs. Assistance is provided through SBA District Offices and Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) in each state. There are seven district offices and more than 100 sites in Texas, including the SBDC locations that provide business assistance. The SBA are called the 7(a), microloan and CDC/504 programs. Assistance is provided through SBA District Offices and Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) in each state. There are seven district offices and more than 100 sites in Texas, including the SBDC locations that provide business assistance.

Web link: [www.ibat.org](http://www.ibat.org)

Web link: [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)

**Other State of Texas resources****Office of the Governor**

Texas Leverage Fund: [http://governor.state.tx.us/ecodev/financial\\_resources/loan\\_assistance/](http://governor.state.tx.us/ecodev/financial_resources/loan_assistance/)

(Below are for larger projects, not usually applicable to the smaller Main Street projects)

Texas Enterprise Fund: [http://governor.state.tx.us/ecodev/financial\\_resources/texas\\_enterprise\\_fund/](http://governor.state.tx.us/ecodev/financial_resources/texas_enterprise_fund/)

Emerging Technology Fund: <http://governor.state.tx.us/ecodev/etf/>

**Texas Department of Agriculture**

Community Development Fund

<http://texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/RuralEconomicDevelopment/RuralCommunityDevelopmentBlockGrantCDBG.aspx>

The Go TEXAN Partner Program (market and promote agricultural products)

[www.gotexan.org/ForMembers/GOTEXANPartnerProgram.aspx](http://www.gotexan.org/ForMembers/GOTEXANPartnerProgram.aspx)

Planning and Capacity Building Program

<http://texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/RuralEconomicDevelopment/PlanningandCapacityBuildingFund.aspx>

[RuralCommunityDevelopmentBlockGrantCDBG/PlanningandCapacityBuildingFund.aspx](http://texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/RuralEconomicDevelopment/PlanningandCapacityBuildingFund.aspx)

**Texas Enterprise Zone**

The Texas Enterprise Zone Act (Government Code, Chapter 2303) established “a process that clearly identifies severely distressed areas of the state and provides incentives by state and local government to induce private investment in those areas by removing unnecessary governmental regulatory barriers to economic growth and to provide tax incentives and economic development program benefits”.

[www.window.state.tx.us/taxinfo/enterprise\\_zone/ez\\_program.html](http://www.window.state.tx.us/taxinfo/enterprise_zone/ez_program.html)

Statute - [www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/GV/htm/GV.2303.htm](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/GV/htm/GV.2303.htm)

**Neighborhood Empowerment Zone:** [www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.378.htm](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/LG/htm/LG.378.htm)

DF July 2, 2013

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# Defining Local Historic District Character

For Any Main Street, Texas



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION



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## PART 1

### Introduction

#### Texas Main Street Program

The Texas Main Street Program (TMSP) is part of the Community Heritage Development Division of the Texas Historical Commission. The TMSP is the state coordinating program that operates in affiliation with the National Main Street Center of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Cumulatively since 1981, Texas Main Street communities have realized well over \$2 billion in reinvestment into their historic downtowns, and have added more than 27,000 jobs and almost 7,000 new small businesses. These reinvestments show that significant economic development impact can be realized through historic preservation. There are many reasons why downtown revitalization is a crucial tool for enhancing the economic and social health of a community. In addition to being the most visible indicator of community pride and economic health, the historic downtown is also the foundation of community heritage. The historic buildings in a downtown are prime locations for the establishment of unique entrepreneurial businesses and can also be tourism attractors, all of which add to the community's sales tax collections and property values. Today, big-box development permeates the national landscape, making it even more important that communities be proactive in saving and using their historic spaces to avoid becoming featureless places.

#### Your Main Street

There is no other place just like your Texas Main Street. The buildings, structures, objects, and landscape features within a historic district work together to create a unique sense of place. As a whole, a historic district becomes more than just a collection of individually significant historic buildings. Based on its own unique combination of building forms, architectural styles, streetscape features, and landscape features, a district gains a distinct historic character. Character of a building or district refers to “all those visual aspects and physical features that comprise the appearance of every historic building. Character-defining elements include the overall shape of the building, its materials, craftsmanship, decorative details, interior spaces and features, as well as the various aspects of its site and environment” (National Park Service, Preservation Brief 17: 1). Because the significance of each property within a historic district is linked to its neighbors, it is especially important that property owners work together to maintain and preserve each property for the shared benefit of the whole historic district. Additionally, property owners should create a common strategy for preserving and maintaining a historic district's sense of place.



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The purpose of this report is to get you to look at your town in a new light. Familiarity of a place can make you lose sight of the attributes that make your district distinctive. This report should help you to take a fresh look at your historic district and “see” what makes your Main Street different. The end result will help your town attract visitors to your Main Street district because it is different from any other town in Texas.

**This report provided by the Texas Historical Commission’s Main Street staff will pose a variety of questions and observations for you to consider and research. As you go through this report, check off the open bullets on the left side of the pages when you answer the question.**



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## Research Your Town's History

Do research on your town's history. This will be useful not only for your Main Street program, but also for the Main Street board members, committees, and city officials, as well as the general public. This history is intended to be brief. A detailed history can be included as an appendix.

- When and how did your town get started?
- Who were key people in your town's history?
- What were pivotal events in your town?
- What caused your town to prosper?
- What connections did your town have with neighboring towns or counties?
- Does your town have an iconic structure such as a commemorative monument or fountain? If yes, how did this come about?
- Did your town have art movements? Theaters and movie houses? A drive-in movie theater?
- What modes of transportation affected your town? What were the lasting influences of transportation?
- What were the key products that your town produced? Cotton? Lumber? Oil? Bricks? Cattle? Something else?
- What happened in your downtown during national events, such as westward expansion or emancipation?
- When did your town get electricity?
- What happened in your town during Prohibition? The Great Depression? World War I? World War II? How do these events connect your town to Texas and the national historic context?



## Your Main Street Yesterday and Today

Now that you have looked at your Main Street and have assessed its distinctive features, recurring patterns, and streetscape from the historical standpoint, let's analyze both the historical views of your Main Street and what your Main Street looks like today. It is important to be as open and visible about problems or issues with the historic district as it is with opportunities; remember it is only possible to **fix** a problem after it has been identified. Take an honest look at the existing district including buildings, streetscape, and accessories.

### How Has Your District Character Changed?

Look at changes in your Main Street.

- What changes have occurred to the buildings?
- What has been the pattern of alterations? Addition of slipcovers? Stucco laid on top of existing material? Changed-out windows? Altered canopies?
- How many buildings have been demolished or have deteriorated from neglect?
- What characteristic details have been obscured by additions or removed?
- What inappropriate changes have been made?
- Are the changes reversible?
- Would reversals require minor or major undertakings?
- How have these changes altered the distinctive character of your Main Street?
- What are the common changes that obscure the historic character of your Main Street's architecture?
- Are there vacant lots where buildings used to stand? How has that affected the building and street rhythm?

### Changes to Canopies and Awnings

Canopies and awnings provide shade from the sun and shelter from the rain, as well as regulate the amount of light and heat entering the building. Canopies were often a recurring pattern on commercial buildings and therefore a unifying element. This type of canopy should be retained as much as possible. Look at your town's historical photographs for clues about canopies and awnings.

- What types of canopies did your Main Street buildings have?
- How were they supported (tie-rods, chains, poles)?
- What materials were they made of?



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## Your Historically Distinctive Main Street

### Your Main Street Story: Why Your Town is Different

Often a downtown or Main Street was the economic and social center of the town. The Main Street district typically has a collection of building types that help tell the story of your Main Street. This historic character provides several positive aspects by offering a distinct identity for businesses, fostering heritage tourism, and attracting investments.

- What made your downtown/Main Street area significant?
- Why was downtown important socially and culturally during various time periods (events, daily business, gathering place, etc.)
- Was downtown important regionally and why?
- What population groups did business downtown?
- Is there one building or a group of buildings that stands out or does not seem to fit historically? Why?
- What effect did the unusual building or group have on the community at large?
- What memories do current residents hold about downtown?

### Historical Photographs and Records of Your Main Street

Take a look at distinctive features and recurring patterns, streetscape elements including canopies and awnings, signage, street lights and street furniture, and parking configurations. Historical photographs are valuable resources for discovering what your historic district used to look like, as are maps, paintings, tax records, city directories, and documents. Keep in mind that a picture is worth a thousand words.

- What did your district look like historically?
- Does your town have a courthouse square or public square?
- How was the town laid out? On a square grid pattern? Linear? Colliding grids? Radial?
- What did your Main Street look like?
- What types of buildings did your Main Street have? One story? Two story? Multi-story?
- What architectural styles were present?
- What visual rhythms were present (such as building widths or heights, recurring architectural features)?



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- Did the canopies/awnings cover the transom windows?
- Have the canopies been altered significantly?
- How many have been removed or replaced with different types of canopies or awnings?

**Changes to Storefronts, Windows and Doors**

Main Streets typically featured stores that contained glass display windows with an entry door to the business. Recessed entryways are common in Main Street towns. Windows were commonly framed with painted wood or sometimes metal of bronze or brass. Doors were often wood-framed glass panels and paired to allow for a wider doorway. A secondary door is sometimes found on the façade for entry to the second floor. Transom windows placed over doors and windows augmented the natural lighting that came through the display windows. Operable transoms also provided ventilation.

- What type of storefronts did your Main Street have? How have they changed? When were they changed?
- Have the doors been changed to more modern steel or aluminum doors?
- How many windows have been replaced with solid walls or smaller windows?
- Were transom windows covered up?
- What type of glass was used in the transom windows? Stained? Prism? Glass block?

Retaining existing historic glass storefronts, transom windows, doors, and recessed entries should be encouraged. Where these elements have been removed entirely, replacement with glass display windows is encouraged to recreate the visual socialization, increase display space, and augment natural lighting. However, keep in mind that some modernizations of storefronts have now become historic in their own right, such as Art Deco and Moderne.

**Changes to Decoration and Detailing**

The details and decorative elements create texture and visual interest for the streetscape. These details should not be hidden or altered as they contribute to what makes your Main Street distinctive.

- What are the prominent details of your Main Street past and present?
- Is there a particular architectural style or form that is prominent, such as Art Deco or decorative cast iron?
- Do the corner buildings have angled entries?



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- Do the buildings have stepped parapets?
  - Do the buildings have decorative brickwork or colored brick or tile?
  - Do the buildings have pigmented structural glass, such as Vitrolite or Carrera?
  - Do the buildings have decorative pressed metal cornices or details?
  - Do the buildings have cast iron storefronts?
  - Do any buildings have turrets or oriel windows?
- Now, look at your Main Street from the positive standpoint.
- How much of your Main Street's historic character remains?
  - What details are still intact?
  - What buildings retain most of their original configurations, materials, and details?
  - Are any of the changes noteworthy and deserve preservation in their current state?

### Streetscape Changes

A streetscape refers to the street environment.

- What changes have occurred to the streetscape? Are there street accessories (trash cans, benches, lighting, signs)? What do they look like?
- What are the common and unique elements of your Main Street's streetscape?
- Historically, how was parking organized? Has that changed? If so, how much has it changed?
- Have demolished buildings created voids or altered setbacks from the sidewalk? If so, how many? How has that affected the block as a whole?
- What were the sidewalks like originally? How have they changed? Have the sidewalks been updated to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements?



**Changes to Lighting and Miscellaneous Items**

Street lighting evolved from gas lights to electric lights. Sanborn maps are useful for tracking down power plant locations and getting approximate dates of arrival. Newspapers would also be helpful in tracking down exactly when electricity arrived.

- Are there street accessories (trash cans, benches, lighting, signs)? What do they look like?
- When did electricity arrive in your town?
- What types of lighting were present along the street?
- Singular light poles?
- Multi-branched light poles?
- Taller street lighting?
- How has the lighting changed?
- How could the lighting be improved?

Street accessories, such as benches and trash cans, were historically scarce. Today, street lights, trash cans, and street furniture are necessary items for downtown areas today for safety, cleanliness, and rest.

- Did your Main Street historically have street accessories, such as benches or trash cans?
- Does your Main Street have street accessories now? What kinds?

Other items that were not utilized historically are satellite dishes, newspaper vending machines and drop boxes, and public art.

- Does your Main Street have satellite dishes on the facades of the buildings?
- Are the newspaper vending machines and drop boxes scattered around or are they grouped together in less conspicuous locations?
- What could be done to improve their looks or location?
- Do your streets include public art?



### Changes to Signage

Signage was used to advertise the name of the business as well as what products were sold within. Look at your historical photos for clues for what types of signage were used as well as font styles.

- What types of signs did your Main Street have? Board signs? Wall signs? Canopy signs? Perpendicular signs?
- When did illuminated signage show up?
- How has the signage changed over time?
- Do the modern signs hide architectural details? Do they detract from the historic character by being over-scaled or too dominant to the overall building or block?

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## **PART 2**

### **What's Next?**

#### **How Can Your District be Used?**

##### **Gathering Place**

Your Main Street's historic district is and should continue to be used as a gathering place. In addition to the typical holiday parades and bazaars, other events could be a farmers markets or annual festivals that capitalize on your Main Street's distinctive assets.

Think of your historic downtown as an outdoor museum and your historic buildings as artifacts to be interpreted. Research on the history of buildings and businesses often uncovers interesting, funny, or provocative stories that can create tremendous value for residents and visitors. Share these authentic stories through walking tour brochures, interpretive plaques, live tours, and storytelling events to reveal the history of your town. This will provide additional leisure and educational opportunities to be enjoyed downtown.

##### **Government Services**

What government services does your town have in the Main Street historic district? These types of facilities are reliable draws for local residents. Encourage your town to keep these facilities downtown as the users and employees of these facilities can also be customers for the surrounding local businesses.

##### **Retail**

What types of retail stores does your Main Street have? How can these be supplemented to encourage more people to come downtown? Food businesses are key in downtowns because if visitors need to eat lunch or get refreshments, they probably will not make the effort to return to resume shopping as the place where they do get sustenance will also have shopping opportunities. Locally owned stores are more likely to have specialized items that are tailored to your town's personality than chain stores.

##### **Entertainment**

How could your larger buildings, such as masonic halls or theaters, be repurposed for entertainment (assuming they are not already in use)? Art shows by artists or school children are another possibility that could be showcased in various shops along Main Street.





**Professional**

The upper floors of the multi-story buildings could be used to house lawyers, tax consultants, dentists, etc. The first floors utilized by professional businesses often lead to blocked-up storefront windows – detracting from the historic character of the building and weakening the pedestrian friendliness of the streetscape. As these professions often prefer privacy for their patrons, upper-floor operations might be more ideal.

**Residential**

The upper floors of the multi-story buildings could be rezoned for residential purposes. Residential use of buildings would supply additional income for building owners and businesses.

**Planning****Existing Codes and Ordinances**

A community that actively seeks to protect its historic buildings provides an attractive investment for those who want to live in and be a part of an authentic community. As mentioned in the introductory section, it is important that property owners work together to maintain and preserve each property for the shared public benefit of the whole historic district. Additionally, property owners should create a common strategy to preserve and maintain a historic district's sense of place. One way to do this is to have building codes, zoning, and ordinances in place to protect historic resources.

Local preservation ordinances, zoning laws, and building codes are tools traditionally used to maintain the balance between the welfare of the general public and the interests of individual property owners.

- What codes has your town adopted?
- Are these codes appropriate for historic properties?
- Where are they kept on file?
- What sign and zoning ordinances does your town have?
- Does your town have a historic preservation ordinance?



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**Financial Assistance**

- Does your town have financial assistance programs set up to help local property owners or business owners?
- What are the programs for? Is information about these programs easily accessible by the owners and board members?
- What is the design review process?
- Does your town have any tax incentives, such as property tax abatements or property tax freezes? Tax abatements are where the city may enter into an agreement to waive and/or postpone property taxes. Tax freezes lock in property values at the pre-rehabilitation value for a certain period of time.
- Does your town have a revolving loan fund or low interest loan fund to help owners make historically appropriate building improvements?
- Does your town have any grant programs for façade, sign, and/or paint projects?

**Future Development Needs**

As with any town, changes will occur in your Main Street. How your Main Street changes is up to the city and its residents and property owners.

- What changes may happen in the future?
- Is there a Master Plan in place that protects historical buildings?
- How can sensitive changes be guided?
- What can be initiated to encourage historically appropriate development?

As part of the Main Street Program, your Main Street should, at a minimum, follow the **Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation** for any alterations done to its historic buildings, or preferably set up design guidelines for its historic district. The Standards are broad, philosophical principles meant to guide preservation practice. Although most design guidelines are based on the Standards, local design guidelines contain specific recommendations tailored to the characteristics of a particular district or neighborhood, while the Standards do not take into account local economics, politics, attitudes, and goals.

**Design guidelines** are more practical and applicable for your Main Street than the Standards as the design guidelines would be created with your Main Street in mind specifically, rather than the Standards’ broad ideas intended to guide preservation practice as a whole. The



guidelines would afford your Main Street more input into how it wants its historic areas to develop. Design guidelines are written and graphic instructions created for preservation commissions and property owners to encourage appropriate exterior alterations, additions, demolitions, and new construction within local historic districts. Design guidelines illustrate the desired appearance of new development so that it most appropriately mixes with historic architecture and enhances overall value. Design guidelines typically suggest compatible scale, setbacks, roofline, size of openings, texture, and other elements that produce suitable new construction. Design guidelines are a great tool for ensuring that growth in your Main Street's treasured historic area meets certain standards and enhances the character. For more on creating design guidelines, contact your Texas Main Street Program representative.

In addition to creating design guidelines for the historic district, other helpful items are a Historic Preservation Committee, a Certificate of Appropriateness, tax incentives for historic preservation, and historical markers. A **Historic Preservation Committee** typically is comprised of a small number of local citizens. The role of the committee varies by town, but its purpose is generally to review historic zoning cases; to approve certificates of appropriateness and tax abatement applications for city landmarks, and sign and building permits in historic districts; to review applications for historic preservation tourism and grant monies; to maintain city survey of cultural resources; and to promote historic preservation activities.

A **Certificate of Appropriateness** is a document that the Historic Preservation Commission approves, stating that specific work has been approved by the Commission. A Certificate of Appropriateness ideally is required before most exterior work begins and before a building permit can be issued. Changes involving new construction, reconstruction, alteration, demolition, major maintenance, exterior color changes, and the introduction of fences, walls, lighting fixtures, permanent landscaping, etc. require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

**Tax incentives** can be utilized to encourage private participation in preservation. In considering appropriate incentive, the city should conduct a cost/benefit analysis to measure the anticipated loss of tax revenue against potential economic gains to the community from preservation activities. Tax incentives help to promote the rehabilitation of historic structures of every period, size, style, and type. Tax incentives can be instrumental in preserving the historic places that give cities, towns, and rural areas their special character. Tax incentives for preservation can attract private investment to the historic cores of cities and towns. They also can generate jobs, enhance property values, and augment revenues for state and local governments through increased property, business, and income taxes. A **Tax Credit** is a reduction from the tax bill and is usually a percentage of the money spent on rehabilitation or a property or structure. **Tax increment**



**financing (TIF)** is a fairly common tool available to local governments for economic development. TIF is a technique to publicly finance needed structural improvements and enhanced infrastructure within a defined area. These improvements usually are undertaken to promote the viability of existing businesses and to attract new commercial enterprises to an area. The cost of improvements to the area is repaid by the contribution of future tax revenues by each taxing unit that levies taxes against the property. The additional tax revenue that is received from the affected properties is referred to as the tax increment. Each taxing unit determines what percentage of its tax increment, if any, it will commit to repayment of the cost of financing the public improvements. Only a city may initiate a TIF; however other entities may join if they choose. The term Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) is the new name for TIFs — these terms are used interchangeably.

**Historical markers** are another useful tool to utilize. Historical markers are plaques that commemorate a wide variety of historical subjects including events, people, buildings, sites, and organizations as official recognitions of historic resources. These can be recorded at the local, state, or federal levels. Having historical markers on the local, state, and national levels are useful in several ways including:

- May help qualify property owners for grant funding or tax incentives
- Give property owners priority access to technical assistance from the Texas Historical Commission staff
- Guide travelers to places of historical interest, although owners need not to provide public access
- Identify properties in Texas that deserve protection
- Assist government and private groups planning new development
- Recognize properties of local, state, and national significance

## Assistance

### Agencies to Assist Owners

Property and business owners can get help for their buildings within the historic district area from the following sources:

- Your Main Street manager and advisory board
- Your town's City Hall, planning department, historic preservation officer
- The Texas Historical Commission
  - o Main Street program



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- \* Design assistance
- \* Technical information
- \* Economic information
- o Certified Local Government program
- o Visionaries in Preservation program
- o Division of Architecture program
- o Division of History and Archeology program
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- National Register of Historic Places
- The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

### Resources for Researching Building Histories

Finding out information about a historic building helps with the rehabilitation process. If you know what your building looked like in the past based on historical photographs, it will be easier to replicate details or make sympathetic alterations. Sources of information for historic buildings and other information include:

- Local and county historical societies
- Local newspapers
- Local and county libraries
- Sanborn Fire Insurance maps (available online through your local library)

### Maintenance & Repairs

The historic buildings of your Main Street should have regular maintenance inspections and repairs. A small repair now can save hundreds or thousands of dollars of extensive repairs later – the clichés of “a stitch in time saves nine” or “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” are very applicable for historic buildings. The National Park Service’s Preservation Briefs are great resources that cover many maintenance issues for historic buildings. <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/preshom.htm>.

- Compile a list of qualified contractors, craftsmen, and artisans to assist building owners and business owners on their projects
- Compile a list of appropriate materials that are generally compatible with your buildings



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## Architectural Glossary

**Bulkhead:** The member of an entrance frame that forms a base for a sidelight adjacent to a door.

**Canopy:** A covered area that extends from a wall of a building, protecting an entrance.

**Corbel:** A projection or one of a series of projections, each stepped progressively outward with increasing height, and usually projecting from a wall or chimney.

**Cornice:** Any molded projection that crowns or finishes the part to which it is affixed; the exterior trim of a structure at the meeting of the roof and wall.

**Door frame:** An assembly built into a wall consisting of two upright members (jambes) and a head (lintel) over the doorway.

**Inset sign area:** A recessed portion of a wall that is designed to contain a sign.

**Pier:** A member, usually in the form of a thickened section, that forms an integral part of a wall; usually placed at intervals along the wall to provide lateral support or to take concentrated vertical loads.

**Tie rod:** A rod in tension, used to bind parts of a structure together.

**Transom bar:** A horizontal member that separates a door from a window, panel, or louver above.

**Transom window:** A window located above a door or window, which may or may not be operable.

**Window frame:** The fixed, non-operable frame of a window designed to receive and hold the sash or casement and all necessary hardware.

**Window hood:** A cover placed above a window to shelter it.



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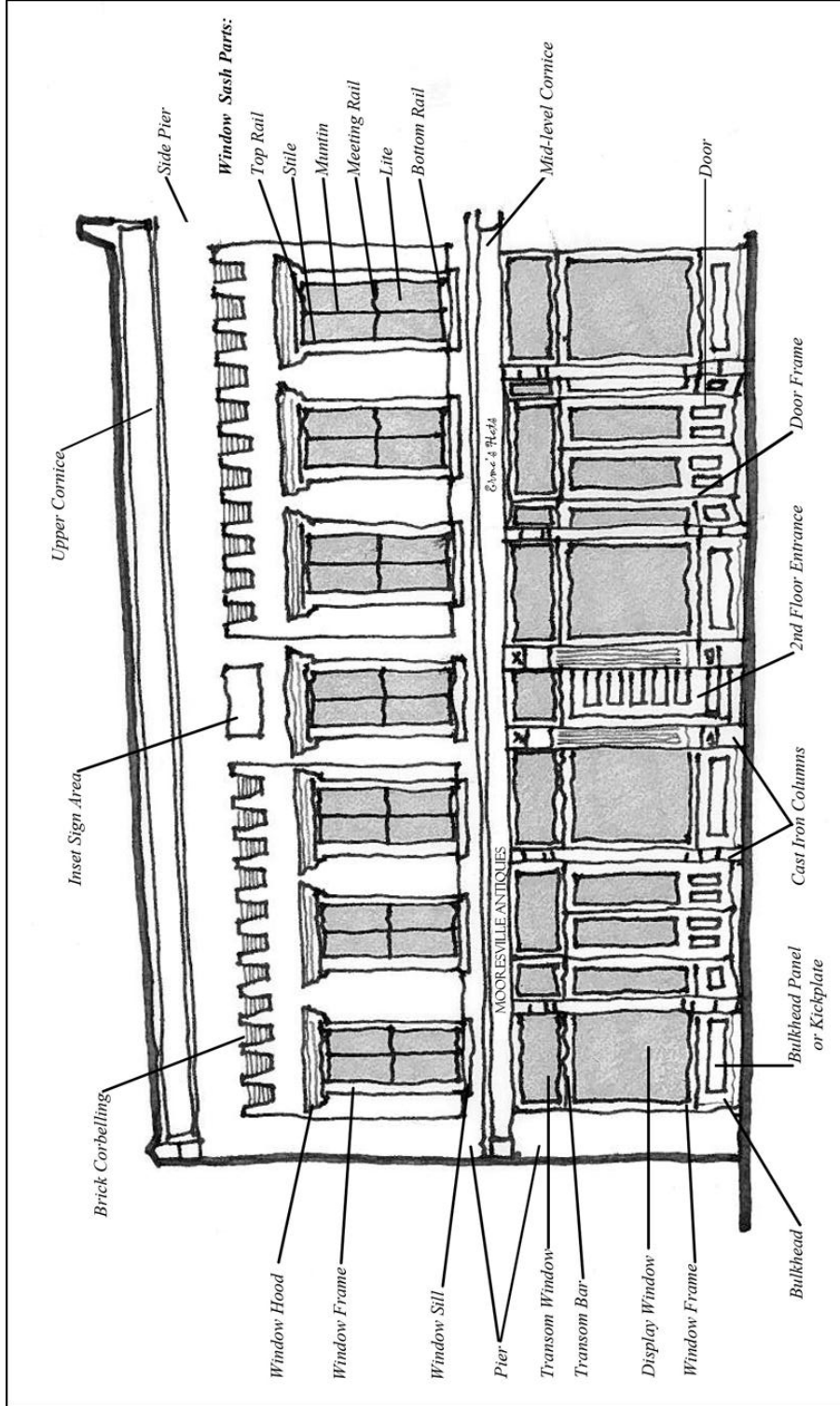
**Window sash:** Any framework of a window; may be moveable or fixed; may slide in a vertical plane or may be pivoted. Window sash parts: top rail, stile, muntin, meeting rail, lite, bottom rail.

**Window sill:** The horizontal bottom member of a window frame or other frame.



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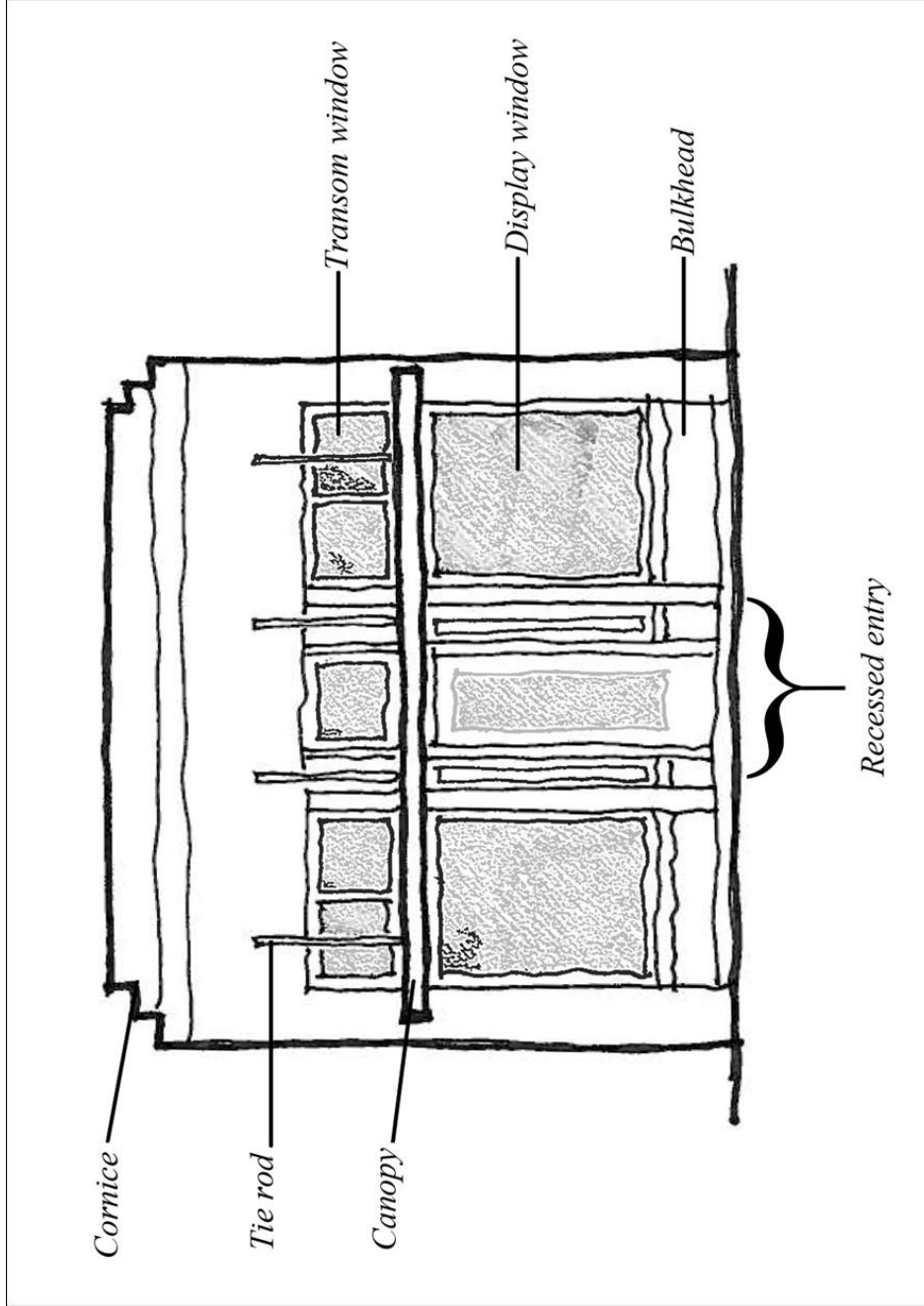
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Architectural terms for a two-story building.







Architectural terms for a one-story building.

## Marketing and Promoting Your History

From the marketing and heritage tourism aspects, look at what is distinctive about your Main Street for event ideas and advertising possibilities. The following phrases might help you to consider some possibilities that could be used for ideas.

- Nicknames for your town
- Your town is known for...
- Characteristics of your town
- Effect of transportation on your Main Street
- Does your town have a historic train depot?
- Does your town have a county courthouse? Historic courthouses are always special and deserve marketing and heritage tourism attention. The history of the town can often be told through the courthouse history. What role did the courthouse play in town planning?
- Is your town along a historic trail or highway?
- Is your town along a scenic drive or does it have a natural attraction?
- Does your town have a historic dancehall and is there still an active music culture? Theater culture?
- Does your town have civic, women's, or fraternal organization buildings?
- Does your town have any buildings designed by architects? What are the stories behind these special buildings?
- Does one (or more) of your buildings have significant architectural features or construction method not commonly found?
- Was the Civilian Conservation Corps or Works Progress Administration active in your town? What structures did they build? How did they affect the community?
- Does your town have the "first", "last", "only", "longest continually operated" store, theater, etc.?
- Did your town have a significant event? Did a famous person live in your town?
- Did your town host a special festival every year in the past, such as a cotton festival or old settlers reunion?
- Is your town near an old battlefield or fort?



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- Does your town have a listed National Landmark, National Register property, State Archeological Landmark, Historic State Cemetery, listed historic district, or local historic designation?
- Does your town have a historical museum?
- Does your town have a historic/archeological site, memorial, heritage site, historic structure, or object?
- Does your town have park or recreation area?
- Does your town have culturally significant foodways that can be experienced in local restaurants? Are there cooking demonstrations or classes?
- Do you have artist studios in your historic downtown and can people take lessons or workshops from these artists (painting, photography, sculpture, weavers, glass blowing)?