



Main Street! Matters

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS MAIN STREET PROGRAM

JULY 2015 • COMMUNITY HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION • P. O. BOX 12276, AUSTIN, TX 78711 • 512.463.6092

25 YEARS AND ROLLING ALONG THAT REDEVELOPMENT ROLLERCOASTER

Article written by Amy Miller, Elgin Main Street Manager

Some things have come full circle in the last 25 years in Elgin. Properties that were run down and unoccupied are renovated and filled with thriving businesses. There are properties that are still run down and unoccupied, but the tenacious dedication of volunteers, property owners, and community and political leaders continues to pave the way for revitalization. Property owner W.C. Estes, who helped lead the establishment of the Main Street program in Elgin, was recognized as Texas Downtowner of the Year in 2002, and continues to invest in downtown Elgin. During the last 25 years, hundreds of individuals have shared their time to make the Main Street program successful. Today, new property owners are investing, new volunteers are leading projects, and familiar faces are still engaged in making this downtown great.

Allan Tolbert is a new property owner downtown. When asked, “What draws you to renovate a historic building?” he shared, “It is a joy to renovate buildings and put them back to good use. It would have been a terrible loss to have this building (101 North Main Street, see below) torn down. We see a lot of good people doing good work, and have for years. This makes things happen. You can see that things have come a long way in Elgin.”

Elgin has been a Nationally Accredited Main Street Community since 1998 and a Texas Main Street City since 1990. The private and public sectors have invested more than \$12.9 million in the downtown area.

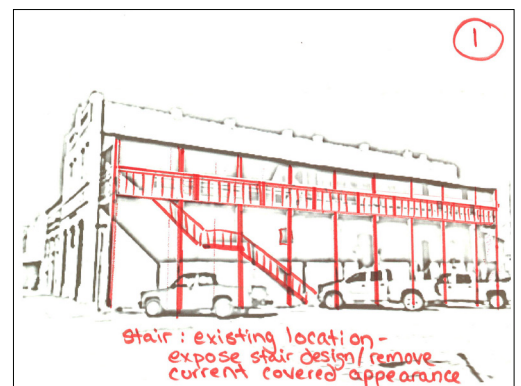
Tolbert and Estes are advocates for the assistance programs that support renovation. “Talk to the city from the beginning and the state. They have assistance programs that will help you. This



Before



After



Suggestions and design work for 101 North Main Street included opening up windows, signage options, color schemes, and options on what to do for their side balcony.

project would not be economically feasible without those programs,” said Tolbert. The downtown historic district is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and most properties downtown are eligible for a 20 percent federal tax credit and a 25 percent state franchise tax credit. The Elgin Economic Development Corporation offers a \$25,000 reimbursement grant for projects investing \$100,000 or more and a \$5,000 façade assistance program. The Main Street program offers a paint reimbursement program and a free roll-off dumpster for the removal of demolition and construction materials.

Always on the lookout for new ways to make downtown reinvestment financially successful, the Elgin City Council recently approved a zoning overlay that, in addition to the new state tax credit, is spurring new investment. The zoning overlay allows for more mixed-use in the downtown district.

“We are building four loft apartments on the second floor and will have commercial space and an apartment on the first floor, and we are closing on another property that will have seven apartments on the second floor,” said Tolbert.

On Main Street from Second to Central Avenue and on Central Avenue and Depot Streets, up to 50 percent of the rear first floor can be residential. In the area surrounding, 100 percent can be residential. The whole downtown area has a greater variety of business uses such as food processing, wineries, breweries, cabinetry making, pottery, and tile making.



Volunteers from the early days of the program.



Board members attending the National Main Street Conference in 1998 when Elgin was first recognized with national accreditation.



Infamous Sowpremes who sing at the Elgin Hogeye Festival yearly.

For more information on the overlay and a map, visit www.elgintx.com/Sustainable%20Places.asp

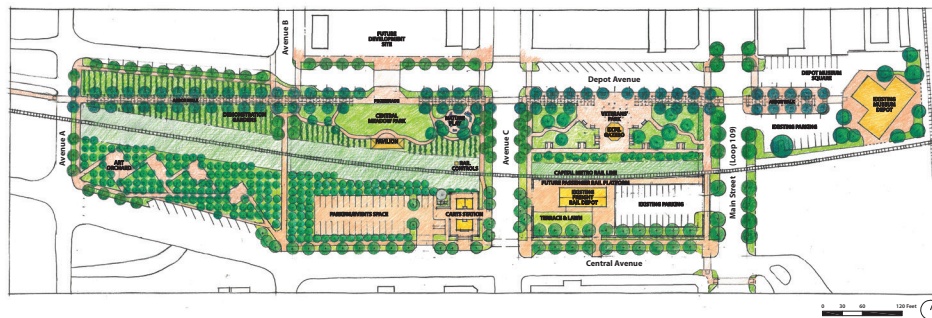
Volunteers are the foundation of Main Street programs, and in Elgin they've been making a difference in big and small ways since the mid 1980s. From setting up window displays, organizing Sip, Shop and Stroll, and coordinating training programs for business owners, to writing articles for *Downtown 78621*, our volunteers do it all and we could not be successful without them.

The City Council approved a master plan for development of 10 acres of open space in downtown as a central park. The area will expand Veterans Memorial Park to include a pavilion, nature play area, CARTS transit stop, public restrooms, a dancing water plaza, demonstration gardens, and public art and will create a seamless connection from the Union Depot Museum along Depot Street to Avenue A. Over the years, public investment in infrastructure, like the sidewalks in the picture below,



and the future central park lets the private sector know that there is a long term vision for the district.

The business community continues to grow downtown and Elgin is



DRAFT
ILLUSTRATIVE MASTER PLAN
Elgin's "Central Park"
Prepared by MC Case Adams Studio for The City of Elgin
FEBRUARY 5, 2015



Elgin's "Central Park" master plan was approved for development (top), and great businesses continue to open up in the downtown district. You can get a glass of wine at The Owl (bottom left) or a cup of coffee at G&M Dry Goods (bottom right).

now serving great coffee at two locations, Elgin Local Goods and G&M Dry Goods. We're home to The Owl, Wine Bar and Home Goods Store, recognized by the Texas Downtown Association as the Best Downtown Business in Texas. Businesses are hosting events like literary nights, live music, wine, beer and mead tastings, art classes, and more to bring more people downtown.

Our community partners like the Chamber and the Economic Development Corporation make many programs and projects possible that benefit the downtown district. "New businesses are opening downtown and as owners continue to invest in property, more locations will be available for more businesses. Supported by the new zoning overlay, local assistance programs, and an amazing Main Street team, we're ready for the next 25 years of downtown

investment!" said Ed Rivers, Main Street Board president, and a City Council member in the late 1980s and early 1990s when Elgin joined the Main Street program.

LIVING DOWNTOWN – EASIER SAID THAN DONE

*Article written by Emily Koller,
Texas Main Street Planner*

Downtown mixed-use development is a common phrase in our Main Street cities. Downtowners in the network certainly understand the value in creating a district with first floor commercial uses and upper floor residential. However, a series of recent questions prompted some additional research on the

appropriate way to balance a mix of uses in smaller Main Street cities. Mixed-use model ordinances primarily focus on places with a larger population and more market demand. Smaller cities and towns do not always have the market pressure that creates demand for prime restaurant and retail space on the ground floor and loft style residential above.

So is it necessary to implement a mixed-use zoning policy and will it change anything? The short answer is yes. Every town, no matter the size, needs to make sure that the historic development pattern can legally be built today. This historic pattern commonly includes multi-story, mixed-use buildings with zero lot lines and ground floor facades that interact with the street. While a zoning policy is not the magical single solution that will create the perfect mix of uses, it is a concrete action step that every municipality can take to provide certainty for potential investors in downtown.

When considering a mixed-use policy, start with two tasks.

The first step is obvious: check your zoning ordinance to understand what it actually says and does not say. In many of the smaller communities, the land use and zoning rules date back several decades. Multi-story buildings are typically regulated as a single use. Residential and lodging uses may not even be permitted at all. Check to get an accurate list of what specific uses are permitted by

right (meaning the business could open tomorrow); permitted with

conditions (requires approval by council/planning commission), or not permitted at all.

The second step is more difficult: define the intent. When talking about creating additional residential downtown, make sure the intent is clear.

- Do you simply want to allow residential downtown?
- Is the desire to incentivize more downtown residential to support the commercial businesses?
- Is the issue that building owners are living on the first floor spaces and occupying valuable commercial frontage?
- Or, is the goal to attract specific new projects to town like lofts for professionals or boutique lodging?

There are many ways to implement a mixed-use policy that encourages downtown residential. Defining the intent helps narrow the many options.

Basic Mixed-use Ordinances for Smaller Cities

Gainesville's Central Area Commercial District is a very good example of a straightforward downtown mixed-use zoning designation. The purpose is stated as the following:

The CA Central Area District is established to encourage mixed-use development within the downtown district of the City, while maintaining the unique historic character currently found within the district. This district is a pedestrian-friendly district.

Uses are limited to a succinct list and the ordinance clearly states that

residential uses "shall be located on or above the second floor, from ground level, of the commercial structure." There are more than 12 residential units on the courthouse square alone. Gainesville's ordinance located [here](#).



While Gainesville struggles to diversify its ground floor mix, it has a surprising number of downtown residential units – seven in this block alone.

Sealy's Downtown Preservation District ordinance is another good example of a simple, easy to administer downtown mixed-use ordinance. It is especially interesting because the city of Sealy does not have zoning in the rest of the community. The downtown district does not prohibit ground floor residential entirely (allowing for single family), but does require multi-family to be on floors two and above. The ordinance also allows the desired mix of uses for a typical, pedestrian-friendly experience and preserves the historic character and scale of downtown. Read Sealy's ordinance [here](#).

Zoning to Attract More Downtown Residential

Generally, if a downtown district is working actively to attract more residential, there are several critical pieces that need to be in place: a zoning policy that provides predictability to developers and investors; an efficient city

permitting program and incentives to attract the type of desired development. A developer-friendly mixed-use zoning policy can be the first step in moving downtown towards a “welcome investors!” reputation.

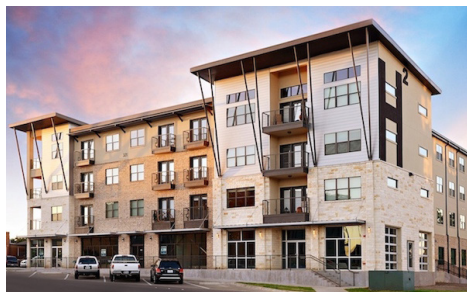
This was the case in San Marcos. The city implemented a form-based code downtown in 2011, which shifted the emphasis of development review from use to form. A form-based code is a land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form rather than separation of uses as the organizing principle for the code. Now, a mix of uses is allowed in any configuration within a single building, including a range of residential products. This was done with very few incentives available, but a more streamlined permitting process, increased density allowances, and predictability for future development created investor confidence. In addition to many small projects, special approvals for additional height beyond the 5-story limit have been granted for two residential towers between downtown and the university. The SmartCode is complicated, however, and not recommended as a universal option for smaller Main Street communities. Find the San Marcos SmartCode [here](#).

In some of the smaller Main Street communities that are not as fortunate to have a major state university a stone’s throw from downtown, a robust incentive policy may be necessary. Historic Downtown San Angelo offers

many incentives to any existing or new building with at least 75 percent of the floor area used as residential, retail, restaurant, or entertainment. Projects must also apply for historic overlay zoning approval. Find Historic Downtown San Angelo’s incentive program [here](#).

Zoning to Create Residential in Specific Areas

Interestingly, there aren’t many examples of codes that prohibit first floor residential entirely in a downtown district. The majority allow single family in at least a portion of the district but require multi-family to be on floors two and above. Denton’s code is a good example. They have four different downtown districts, which permit a variety of residential uses. This allows for a more nuanced approach to permitting specific housing products. For example, two districts allow detached single family and two districts do not; multi-family units are permitted in three of the four; and live/work units are permitted in all four. Read the ordinance [here](#).



Mixed-use zoning was implemented in Denton’s greater downtown area in 2002. A variety of housing types are now available in downtown including townhomes and apartments with ground floor commercial such as the 42-unit H-Squared project (pictured above) which opened in 2014.

Rather than thinking about prohibiting first floor residential,

it may be more beneficial to think in terms of requiring ground floor “active uses.” These are typically in concentrated areas where there is a desire to create a specific cluster of activity. It would be difficult to mandate this in a downtown district as a whole, but it has been done in smaller communities in the most prominent commercial areas. While not Texas, Milwaukie, Oregon, (population 20,512) provides a good example.

Downtown Storefront Zone

The Downtown Storefront Zone is established to preserve and enhance the commercial “Main Street” character of downtown Milwaukie, ensuring that new development in areas designated DS is compatible with this desired character. This zone allows a full range of retail, service, business, and residential uses. Retail or restaurant uses are required as the predominant uses on the ground floors of buildings fronting on Main Street. Residential uses are allowed only on upper floors. Warehousing and industrial uses are not allowed. The desired character for this zone includes buildings that are built to the right-of-way and oriented toward the pedestrian, with primary entries located along streets rather than parking lots.

Read Milwaukie’s ordinance [here](#).

Defining Residential Uses

Another thing to consider for downtown residential is the wording. One word can make a difference in a zoning policy, so it is important to describe exactly what you mean when you say downtown residential. Here are

a variety of residential housing terms to think about:

- Single-family Residence/Dwelling
- Attached Single-family Residence/Dwelling
- Accessory Residence/Dwelling Unit
- Rowhouse
- Courtyard House
- Lofts
- Dwellings Above Businesses
- Live/Work Units
- Duplexes
- Multi-Family Dwellings (can be specified on second floor and above)
- Apartment Building
- Fraternity or Sorority House
- Dormitory
- Group Homes
- Household Living

Model Mixed-Use Zoning Ordinance

Finally, the American Planning Association has prepared a model mixed-use zoning district. This is not specific to smaller cities with historic downtowns, but does provide a good starting point for those considering a mixed-use policy. www.planning.org/research/smartgrowth/pdf/section41.pdf

VOLUNTEERISM



New Caldwell Main Street Manager, Michelle Mafhouz, had a great gathering of her stakeholders for team building, Main Street 101 that included council members, city manager, county judge and a THC Commissioner.



Longview Main Street's recent full-day retreat included both a presentation on the basics of the Main Street framework, plus strategic discussions about the evolution of the eight-year-old recertified urban program.



During June, new Marshall Main Street Manager, Sarah O'Brien, brought together her board and city representatives for a day-long retreat held at the THC's Starr Family Home State Historic Site. In the morning, Kilgore Main Street Manager, Melida Heien, and the city planner joined the group for Main Street 101.



Beeville Main Street and the Kingsville Main Street program met July 1 for Main Street 101. Attendees included Kingsville's tourism director and a board member, along with the new Beeville Main Street manager, all new board members, and the newly elected county judge.

Registration is still open for Summer Manager training in San Marcos!

New Manager Training
August 4 - 5, 2015

All Manager - Professional Development
August 5 - 7, 2015

Register now!

<http://smtxsummertraining.weebly.com/>

MAIN STREET EVENTS

BASTROP

Bastrop Homecoming and Rodeo July 29–August 2, 2015

This event originated in 1947 to welcome back 90,000 soldiers who had been based at Camp Swift during WWII. Today, visitors enjoy live music, a rodeo, carnival, tournaments, dances, and a Grand Parade. Mayfest Park, 25 American Legion Drive. More details visit [here](#).

CALDWELL

Farmer's Market Every Saturday in June and July. 7:30 a.m. until sold out.

Located downtown on the Square.

FERRIS

Trades Day July 11, 2015 8:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Vendors showcase and sell their goods on the town's square.

GREENVILLE

July Concerts at the Texan Theater www.texantheatergreenville.com/

July 11, 2015 Ricky Nelson
Remembered
July 16, 2015 Suzy Boggus
July 17, 2015 Suzanna Choffel
July 19, 2015 Evening in the Round
July 23, 2015 Eddy Raven & Frank Meyers

July 25, 2015 Chuck Hawthorne & Libby Koch

GRAPEVINE

Farmers Market April 9, 2015–October 17, 2015 8:00 a.m.–4:00 pm Town Square Gazebo

Eat healthy with locally-grown produce and products.

LA GRANGE

Movie Nights on the Square July 17, 2015

All movies are shown on the Fayette County Courthouse Lawn, 151 N. Washington Street. Movies begin PROMPTLY at 8:30 p.m. Please bring a chair or blanket. Refreshments will be available.

LEVELLAND

Early Settlers Day July 11, 2015 9:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

Every second Saturday in July, one of the biggest events on the South Plains is held in Levelland. Celebrate the city's rich heritage with good food, music, fellowship, arts, crafts, a parade, and much more!

ROCKWALL

San Jacinto Plaza Music Series 6:30 p.m.–9:00 p.m.

Live music in the plaza Friday and Saturday evenings. Bring your chair, food, and libations and enjoy free music in the newly constructed San

Jacinto Plaza. Music schedule at www.rockwall.com/mainstreet.

ROSENBERG

Lady's Night Out Event July 23, 2015 5:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m.

Downtown shopping and dining promotion.

SAN MARCOS

Art Squared July 11, 2015 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Come on out and meet the artists and listen to live music. Bring the kiddos to this fun, family event in downtown San Marcos!

Farmers Market 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. Every Saturday on the square.

UVALDE

Junque July 11, 2015 9:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.

Trophy Antique Hunting Picker's Paradise.

Community Movie Night July 18, 2015 Downtown Plaza

Websites of Interest

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation: www.achp.gov

African American Heritage Preservation Foundation: www.aahpfdn.org

(The) Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation: www.ahlp.org

(The) American Institute of Architects: www.aia.org

American Planning Association: www.planning.org

American Society of Landscape Architects: www.asla.org

(The) Cultural Landscape Foundation: www.tclf.org

(The) Handbook of Texas Online: www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online

Keep Texas Beautiful: www.ktb.org

League of Historic American Theatres: www.lhat.org

National Main Street Center: www.preservationnation.org/main-street

National Park Service: www.nps.gov

National Trust for Historic Preservation: www.preservationnation.org

Partners for Sacred Places: www.sacredplaces.org

Preservation Easement Trust: www.preservationeasement.org

PreservationDirectory.com: www.preservationdirectory.com

Preservation Texas: www.preservationtexas.org

Project for Public Spaces: www.pps.org

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy: www.railstotrails.org

Scenic America: www.scenic.org

Texas Department of Agriculture: www.TexasAgriculture.gov

Texas Commission on the Arts: www.arts.texas.gov

Texas Downtown Association: www.texasdowntown.org

Texas Folklife Resources: www.texasfolklife.org

Texas Historical Commission: www.thc.state.tx.us

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department: www.tpwd..texas.gov

Texas Rural Leadership Program: www.trlp.org

Texas State Preservation Board: www.tspb.state.tx.us

Urban Land Institute: www.uli.org

Texas Historical Commission
P.O. Box 12276
Austin, TX 78711-2276
512.463.6100
fax 512.475.4872
thc@thc.state.tx.us



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories

www.thc.state.tx.us