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Main Street Matters!

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WELCOME TO NEW BRAUNFELS!

MAIN STREET TRAINING HELD IN NEW BRAUNFELS

Editor's note: In February, professional development for Texas Main Street's 87-member network of designated programs was held in New Braunfels in recognition of the community's 25 active and continuous years of Main Street participation. This article discusses some ongoing and previous projects in downtown, many of which participants heard about at the February meeting. This kind of focused activity has helped make New Braunfels a true destination. In fact, in 2005, the National Trust for Historic Preservation recognized New Braunfels as one of 12 Distinctive Destinations in the country.

San Antonio Street inside the New Braunfels Main Street District.

"Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity," is an ancient adage. Downtown New Braunfels has had tremendous "luck" in economic redevelopment downtown over the past three decades. In 2016, New Braunfels celebrates 25 years in the Texas Main Street program, and thanks to the hard work of many, the historic downtown is thriving and considered a destination for locals and visitors alike.

In 1846, Civil Engineer Nicolaus Zink designed the layout for Downtown New Braunfels and the adjoining acreage. He built the town on a human scale, which was designed to be walkable for residents and visitors coming to do business. This original concept of human-scale urbanism was the notion for the current downtown master plan. In 2009, a steering committee formed to propose a new downtown master plan called the downtown implementation plan (DIP), and it was adopted by the city council in 2010. The plan is based on five critical success factors: marketing opportunities, wayfinding, circulation and walkability, parking reform, and pedestrian infrastructure. Although the plan has not been fully achieved yet, there are many projects occurring to help them reach the goal of completion.

One of the projects that many Texas Main Streets have encountered or will in the near future is the placement of public restrooms in a historic downtown. A public restroom is extremely important for a downtown to maintain its

(Left image) The new public restrooms will be behind the building façade on the left. (Right image) Rendering of new public restrooms in downtown New Braunfels.

economic viability. Having a public restroom serves shoppers, tourists and patrons attending special events, etc. But site selection, site development, and construction is only the start; maintenance (and who the responsibility falls to), hours it remains open, safety, etc. all need to be addressed as well. This daunting process has begun in New Braunfels as a community project, and they hope to have it completed soon. Some time ago, the old Guaranty Bank Building proved structurally unsound. The building was demolished but the façade was left intact as a reminder of what was once a downtown landmark. The lot behind the building is where the new public restrooms will be built. Hidden behind a historical remnant of a significant building is a good fit for a modern convenience. The land was donated and the two local Rotary Clubs provided fundraising to cover the design and construction costs along with contributions from the 4B. The city is supervising construction and New Braunfels Parks and Recreation Department will maintain them. Once completed, it will be a much needed feature added to downtown.

Another major project put forth by the downtown improvement plan in New Braunfels is the undergoing of sidewalk improvements. They are currently in the midst of phase I of the project, which addresses the primary retail corridors of the district. One obstacle New Braunfels is dealing with during this phase is design options to comply with requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Some of their buildings have up to a four foot space between their front door and the sidewalk edge, which obviously proves tricky to bring the sidewalk grade up to the building's entrance. However, a primary project goal is to minimize disruptions to downtown businesses during this time, and the city is trying not to keep the construction in front of any one business for longer than two weeks. This makes the scheduling very complex, but Amy McWhorter, New Braunfels Main Street Manager and Historic Preservation Officer, says the key to the success of the sidewalk improvements is getting the downtown businesses on board with the plan. Once you have their cooperation, the scheduling becomes less complicated, and the city receives fewer complaints from these businesses.

Downtown New Braunfels has had many successes over the years as well. One of which is the Brauntex Performing Arts Theatre. The Brauntex Theatre is a former movie palace built in the Art Moderne style and opened in 1942. Prior to the theater's construction, the John Faust Grocery and the Clemens and Faust Dry Goods stores, associated with Walter Tips, later of Tips Iron & Steel in Austin, operated from the site. The theater was an important part of downtown New Braunfels for over 50 years, but slowly over time, this once grand establishment with smartly dressed ushers and a bright neon blade became a ghost of years past, and the theatre closed in

GRAND OPENING
OF THE NEW
Brauntex Theatre
(The Modern Theatre in "The Beauty Spot of Texas")
★ COMFORTABLE SEATS ★ AIR CONDITIONED Temperature
★ LUXURIOUS LOUNGE ★ TILED REST ROOMS
BOX OFFICE OPENS AT 6 P. M.
You will have plenty of time to look around before the picture starts.
SOUVENIR PROGRAMS FOR ALL "FIRST NIGHTERS"
Come Early for Good Seats
A GRAND PICTURE FOR A GRAND OPENING!
The Greatest Musical Entertainment Since the Blues Were Born!
"BIRTH OF THE BLUES"
BING CROSBY
MARY MARTIN

(Top left image) Photo take circa 1900 showing the site of the Brauntex Theatre, formerly occupied by Faust Dry Goods Store. (Top right image) This advertisement from the New Braunfels: Herald-Zietung on January 2, 1942 promotes the Brauntex Theatre's grand opening on January 6, 1942. They opened with *Birth of the Blues*, starring Bing Crosby, Mary Martin, Brian Donlevy and Eddie"Rochester" Anderson. The most expensive tickets cost 27 cents, and children under 12 paid 9 cents. (Bottom left image) The Brauntex Theatre in 1942. (Bottom middle image) The Brauntex Theatre prior to renovations. Note the non-historic addition. (Bottom right image) The renovated Brauntex Theatre today.

1998. Through the dust, one could still see the gilded fittings of the Brauntex, but the seats were broken and the theater reeked of cigarette smoke. In September 1998 a local group of city and county officials, artists, engineers, an attorney, a performing arts technician, bank officials and many other concerned citizens, came together to try to save this once great theater. This plan soon grew and the whole city was eager to save this beauty. This group of 36 diverse participants had meetings, brainstorming the needs of the building as well as its potential uses. Out of this, the committee decided to mold this run-down movie palace into a full-scale theater, which was to be run by the Brauntex Performing Arts Theatre Association. In July 1999, corporate nonprofit status was acquired, and by December 1999, the Association became proud owners of the dilapidated gem, the Brauntex Theatre.

Almost immediately after the property was acquired, renovation began. Plans were drawn, ideas were submitted, and money was raised to give this structure a much needed face-lift. One of the first tasks was expanding the tiny movie theater stage, into a large performing arts stage. Another major structural change was to restore the balcony to its former glory, as the previous owner had closed it off to create a second theater. Before remodeling work began in 2000, there was an entrance to a barbershop to the right and to an office space to the left at the front of the theater lobby (non-historic addition built during renovation in 1999). The remodel removed these two spaces to enlarge the lobby area, which is carpeted in a reproduction pattern.

The renovation crew included many different local groups who volunteered to overhaul the theatre, including the USMC Junior ROTC from New Braunfels High School. In addition, several

volunteers formed a team who sewed some 600 seat covers to fit over the old movie seats. The renovation was completed quickly, reopening the theater on April 29, 2000 with a sold-out gala and performance by the San Antonio Symphony. The entire effort to restore this significant downtown presence truly took the entire community to complete.

The Brauntex Theater's prominence as a downtown commercial building near the county's courthouse, and its new role as a community center, helps residents and visitors remain connected to the city's past. Not just the heritage of its early settlers, but also its 20th-century history, when the city and the nation faced wartime conditions and new technologies, when Texas' population shifted to urban centers to support new industries, and the automobile and television began to expand people's visions of themselves and their futures. The Brauntex today represents a new era, when people, spurred on by nostalgia and economic sense, are turning back to their historic downtown resources to add lifeback into their community centers.

Another factor to New Braunfels successful downtown is the businesses that thrive there and have done so for many years. One of those, Johnson Furniture Co., is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2016. Furniture and home accessories have been sold at the Johnson Furniture location for over 155 years. Beginning in the 1850s, the DuMenil Mercantile Store housed the original wooden building. In 1902, C.J. Ludewig purchased the property and formed the C.J. Ludewig Furniture Company, and in 1929, he built the present brick building. When Wallace Johnson purchased the building in 1966, he began Johnson Furniture Co. This merchant has been serving its customers for 50 years at the same location, and now Carol Johnson, daughter of Wallace, has owned the business since 1989. "A small business is not successful without serving the community and the community serving back," said Ms. Johnson. "It's a win-win situation."

Of course, a Main Street is never successful without its signature events. One of those in New Braunfels is their Wassailfest. The first Thursday of each December is Wassailfest, which began in 1992 as a way for downtown merchants to thank customers for their patronage and to highlight the beauty of charming downtown New Braunfels during the holiday season. During Wassailfest, downtown merchants host open houses in their businesses and invite the public to sample wassail, a type of hot, mulled cider, and do some holiday shopping. The event also includes a contest among merchants to determine who has the best wassail recipe. Other activities are live music, dance performances from the local school and other community groups, and the sale of commemorative wassail mugs. This festival typically draws large, primarily local, crowds of 5,000 to 7,000 revelers.

An outsider can call the rejuvenation of downtown New Braunfels luck, but it is actually the product of hard work by an entire community. The progress New Braunfels Main Street has made over the past 25 years is impressive and shows that

(Left image) The C.J. Ludewig building (1929) has been the home of Johnson Furniture Co. for 50 years. (Right image) The Comal County Courthouse and Plaza lit for the annual Wassailfest.

it takes time to breathe new life into a Main Street, but with persistence and determination, it can be done over time. Congratulations to New Braunfels Main Street on your 25th anniversary.

MAIN STREET SIDEWALKS

Article written by Howard Langner AICP, Texas Main Street Program

The Main Street Approach to downtown revitalization works best when people get out of their automobiles and walk. Walking in a Main Street environment allows one to appreciate the intricate details that were incorporated into our historic facades, to linger at attractive window displays, or take a break from a hectic world and enjoy life at a slower pace.

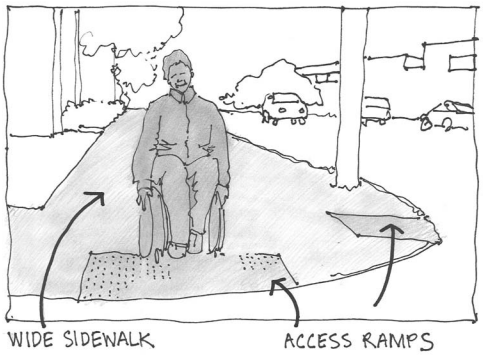
Unfortunately, too many of our Texas Main Street Cities have sidewalks that create obstacles to walking safely. There are sidewalks with broken concrete, sidewalks that are too narrow, and sidewalks that are inaccessible to people with disabilities.

Good sidewalk design leads to more pedestrians and having a greater number of pedestrians creates a more vital downtown environment. Good sidewalk design also recognizes the fact that a sidewalk can be so much more than a narrow strip of concrete on the edge of a busy thoroughfare. Instead, good sidewalks act more as vital public spaces where people can walk, sit, shop, and interact with one another.

According to the 2013 publication *Active Design: Shaping the Sidewalk Experience* (see bibliography below) there are six key factors that make for a successful sidewalk experience: accessibility, connectivity, continuous variety, human scale and complexity, safety, and sustainability and resilience.

Accessibility

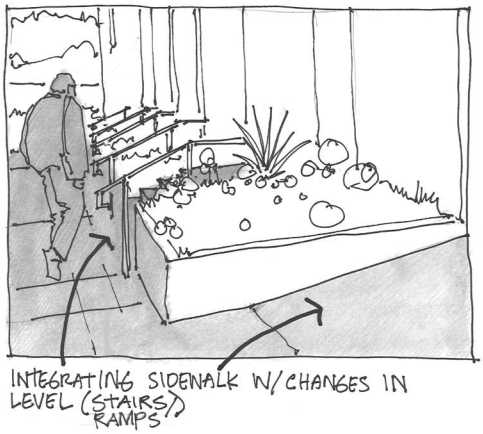
The sidewalk needs to be accessible to a wide variety of users. This includes people that are confined to wheelchairs, the elderly, and others with mobility needs. Some individuals may find walking difficult and may be more inclined to use the sidewalk if they know that they will have plenty of places to sit and rest along the way. Young children experience sidewalks from a different vantage point than adults, a particularly important consideration if the sidewalk is used as a route to get to and from school. All accessibility ramp designs must conform to the requirements of the Texas Accessibility Standards https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/ab/abtas.htm



Sidewalks should be designed in accordance with the Texas Accessibility Standards.

Connectivity

A good sidewalk network allows people to choose multiple paths, including the most direct route between point of origin and final destination, allowing walking to be an efficient mode of transportation. Integrating ramps, stairs, and landscaping features affords the pedestrian a variety of choices and creates greater visual interest along the circulation path.



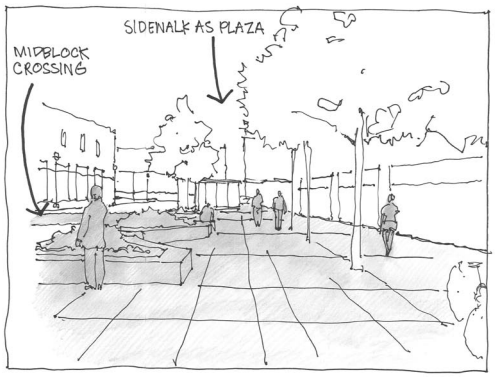
Sidewalk variety creates a more-interesting pedestrian experience.

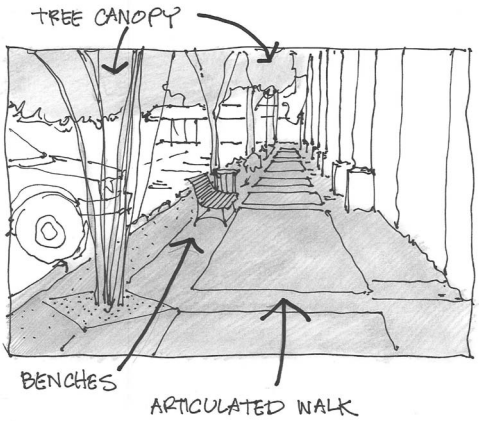
Continuous Variety

Sidewalks function and are perceived at multiple speeds, and pedestrians have more time than automobile passengers to absorb their surroundings. Therefore, it is important to design with enough complexity and detail to maintain the pedestrian's interest. Historic Main Street commercial districts are ideal environments in which to capture a pedestrian's interest. High density areas require sidewalks that allow people to move where they want to go quickly, but the best sidewalks often allow for a variety of pedestrian walking speeds. An adequate clear path for express passage allows for fast-paced walking, but creating an environment that invites people to meander and pause or stop for periods of rest or refreshment can add to the diversity and interest of the sidewalk space.

By catering to a range of speeds at which pedestrians can move, the

best sidewalks allow for a variety of activities including leisurely strolling, chance encounters between old acquaintances, and surprise introductions to new people. Sidewalk spaces should allow pedestrians to take a step aside and visit with their neighbors, to pause against a storefront to window-shop, and to rest beneath the shade of a tree, take a photo, or make a phone call. When appropriate, sidewalks should allow for resting and people-watching on public benches, for cafés and restaurants to spill out and activate the street, and, sometimes, for stores to extend beyond their doors and into the public realm to entice potential customers.





(Top image) Sidewalks can actually be perceived and used as public spaces when circumstances allow. (Bottom image) Sidewalks are defined by what is to either side and above the path of travel; shade, seating, recessed storefronts, and a simple yet carefully detailed sidewalk surface can enhance the pedestrian experience.

Human Scale and Complexity

Understanding how the human body perceives space is a first step in designing sidewalks that improve human comfort while walking through space. This requires conscious design decisions that recognize sidewalks are three-dimensional spaces that need to be designed like a public living room.

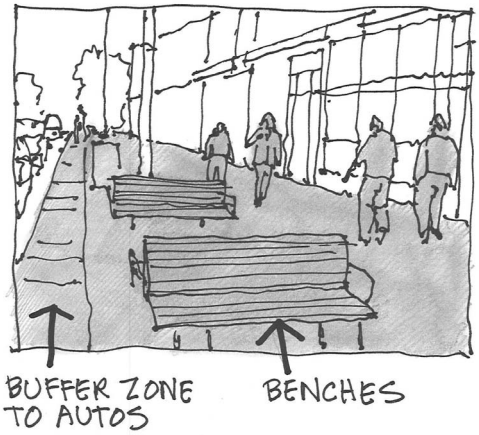
Safety

The sidewalk experience is only enjoyable if users feel safe. Sidewalks should be appropriately lit at night, with pedestrian-scale lighting spaced at appropriate intervals to provide the correct level of illumination. Facing building entries and windows toward the sidewalk can help walkers feel that other people are nearby, and can make the sidewalk feel more interesting. Adding residential units to the mix in downtown commercial areas increases the likelihood that an area will be populated after regular office/shopping hours. Restaurants and similar establishments that support residential populations can help sidewalks stay active during the day and into the evening, keeping "eyes on the street" (**Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities**).

Main Street commercial districts have the potential to be ideally configured for pedestrian safety; ground floor retail supplies activity and ambient street lighting while upper floors provide residential "eyes on the street."

Sustainability and Resilience

A sustainable and resilient sidewalk is one that has been designed to suit the local context. Sidewalks in Texas are exposed to climate and weather variation, and it is necessary to plan for and consider local seasonal patterns in their design. Protecting a sidewalk from overexposure to heavy rains and extreme heat can affect a pedestrian's comfort levels and influence his or her decision to walk. Where appropriate (and there are a number of factors that determine appropriateness), trees should be planted at regular intervals (approximately 25-foot spacing), with tree pits at least 5 feet wide to ensure their long-term survival. If designed appropriately, tree pits and planting strips can help manage storm water levels during heavy rains. Tree canopies also help clean the air, reduce heat, and shelter pedestrians from the hot summer sun.



In addition to tree canopy, street orientation and building height affect sidewalk comfort. Separating benches from automobile parking with a paved buffer zone provides additional piece of mind.

While streets in Texas Main Street commercial districts range from big, vehicular thoroughfares to

quiet local-serving streets with little auto traffic, most should be made sufficiently wide for pedestrian movement, site furnishings, and trees. So many existing sidewalks lack a comfortable place to stop and sit, and lack the sun protection necessary for a truly inviting pedestrian environment. The potential to use existing sidewalk space for pedestrian amenities, enhanced planting, and other elements such as public art is rare. The unique scale and configurations of our historic downtown commercial districts offers a great opportunity to enhance the public realm through sidewalk enhancement.

Bibliography:

1. Active Design: Shaping the Sidewalk Experience http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/sidewalk_experience/active_design.pdf

2. Federal Highway Administration Bicycle and Pedestrian Program https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/publications/sidewalks/chap4b.cfm

3. National Association of City Transportation Officials http://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/street-design-elements/sidewalks/

SPECIAL VOLUNTEERS

We continue to spotlight in each edition of *Main Street Matters* those volunteers whose contributions and dedication are so important to the success of local programs. If you would like to honor a special volunteer with a spotlight, please send a short narrative and image to sarah.marshall@thc.state.tx.us.

Nacogdoches board member, Rikki Leigh Willoughby has been a great asset to the Nacogdoches Main Street Program. You can find her involved in everything from general planning to stuffing swag bags two days before an event.

Rikki Leigh Willoughby, Nacogdoches Main Street Program

Rikki Leigh Willoughby is a Main Street board member and longtime volunteer for the Nacogdoches Main Street program. She currently works at CBH insurance in Nacogdoches. When she's not volunteering for Main Street, she and her husband, Jacob, are working at their new Crossfit gym, and she loves spending time with her husband and their four dogs.

For Main Street, Willoughby works tirelessly behind the scenes and is involved in everything from general planning on the Main Street Board to stuffing bags two days before a big event. Willoughby has played a part in Wine Swirl, Big Nac, and Boots and Brew.

She was only 2 years old when she moved to Nacogdoches in 1984 from Odessa. She attended Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches for one year until she moved to Tennessee to finish school and work in the music industry. Willoughby's interest in downtown started when she moved back to Nacogdoches in 2009 from Tennessee.

Something she has enjoyed about volunteering downtown is the relationship building. She considers herself a people person and these friendships are one of her favorite parts about Main Street. As a long-time volunteer she was also pleased by the dedication and hard work of Amy Mehaffey, newly appointed communications/Main Street director. Willoughby thinks Mehaffey has taken on the challenge of working with Main Street and done an incredible job.

Overall, she loves being able to help promote downtown and help the area grow. She believes to volunteer one must have a vested interest in Main Street and preservation. It takes a lot of hard work and dedication. However, she knows, if you truly care about Main Street and have enthusiasm and support, it makes volunteering easy.

MAIN STREET EVENTS

DENISON

Texoma KidsFest
Saturday, March 19, 2016
10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Free games and activities at Heritage Park. See website for more information.

ELGIN

Sip Shop & Stroll
Friday, March 11, 2016
5–8 p.m.

Sip a little wine and shop as you stroll through the stores in historic downtown Elgin. You will find diverse merchandise, eclectic decor, artwork by local artists, and live music in many of the venues.

GONZALES

The Wall that Heals
March 23-26, 2016
Open 24 hours to public

Honor the more than 58,000 who made the ultimate sacrifice during the Vietnam War, and experience the healing power of The Vietnam Veterans Memorial with The Wall That Heals. See Facebook page for more details.

HILLSBORO

3rd Saturday Downtown Flea Market & Sidewalk Sale
Saturday, March 19, 2016
9 a.m.–1 p.m.

Vendors and downtown merchants will be set up on E. Elm, E. Franklin, and N. Waco streets selling antiques, food, crafts, art, and a variety of other merchandise.

LA GRANGE

La Grange Uncorked: Wine and Food Festival
Saturday, March 19, 2016
4–8 p.m.

Enjoy an afternoon with good friends, great tasting wine, wonderful downtown shopping, and scrumptious culinary delights. Visit www.lagrangeuncorked.com for more information and to purchase your tickets today!

PARIS

Fire of 1916 Centennial
Monday, March 21, 2016
12 p.m.

This commemorates the actual centennial of the Fire of 1916. Various community organizations will be involved, including the fire station, post office station, and children's choirs. T-shirts are being made and can be purchased here.

PILOT POINT

2nd Annual Easter Egg Hunt
Saturday, March 29, 2016
10–12 p.m.

There will be music, games, activities, over 6,000 filled eggs, and of course, the Easter Bunny!

ROCKWALL

Night Owls Late Till 8!
Thursday, March 10, 2016
5–8 p.m.

Downtown shops extend their hours until 8 p.m., offering promotions, live music, and discounts. Follow Downtown Rockwall, Texas on Facebook to acquire monthly event details.

SAN MARCOS

Corn Dog Day
Saturday, March 19, 2016
12–4 p.m.

National Corndog Day has been celebrated in San Marcos since 2003 and moved to downtown San Marcos in 2014. Since 1992, this event has been held nationwide in conjunction with March Madness and features corndogs, basketball, as well as party favors and games for the whole family.

Downtown Gallery Night
Thursday, March 24, 2016
5–8 p.m.

We invite the public to come join 218 Studio Works, Dahlia Woods Gallery, Rio Claro Studios, and Cafe Monet for an evening of wine and art. Walk along the streets of downtown San Marcos, and the galleries will be ready to greet you with wine and give you a chance to see all the available art. Every gallery you visit, you will receive a stamp on the card that comes in your wine glass. When you visit all four galleries, you can drop your card off in Kissing Alley to be entered to win a prize! For more information visit our Facebook page.

SEGUIN

ArtsFest 2016 "A Celebration of Seguin's Western Heritage"
Saturday, March 12, 2016
10 a.m.–9 p.m.

Includes a fun run, arts and craft vendors, poetry readings, live bands, and more. Events are at Central Park, Starcke Park, Court Street Coffee, and Texas Theater.

WAXAHACHIE

Junk in the Trunk
Saturday, March 12, 2016
9 a.m.–2 p.m.

Vendors will see anything you can imagine: antiques, hand-crafted items, repurposed furniture, vintage finds, and junk! They wil be set up around the beautiful courthouse square for a morning of fun and interesting commerce. Visit the Waxahachie Downtown Merchants Facebook page or website for more information or to sign up as a vendor.

Cars 'n Crawfish
Saturday, March 19, 2016
10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Awesome vehicles from a variety of car clubs will be parked around the Ellis County Courthouse for viewing and coveting, while the crawfish, food and beer garden will be at 300 S. Rogers. Explore all of downtown and see what treasures lie around each corner. Visit the Waxahachie Downtown Merchants Facebook page or website for more information.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

(Top image) Managers gathered in New Braunfels for Professional Development in early February. (Middle image) Along with New Braunfels Main Street Manager Amy McWhorter and TMSP design staff, managers toured beautiful downtown New Braunfels. (Bottom image) Managers toured the recently restored Comal County Courthouse. County engineer Tom Hornseth discussed the history and important of civic spaces in downtown during this tour.

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.state.tx.us

Texas Downtown Association: www.texasdowntown.org

Texas Folklife Resources: www.texasfolklife.org

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

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department: www.tpwd.state.tx.us

Texas Rural Leadership Program: www.trlp.org

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

Urban Land Institute: www.uli.org

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TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories

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