TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories

PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT: Debbi Head, 512.463.4565, debbi.head@thc.state.tx.us
Sharon Fleming, 512.463.6268, sharon.fleming@thc.state.tx.us
DATE: April 30, 2014

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION AWARDS ROUND VIII COURTHOUSE GRANTS

FORT WORTH, Texas—The Texas Historical Commission (THC) announced Round VIII grant recipients of its nationally recognized Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program at its quarterly meeting on April 30 in Fort Worth. Commissioners awarded matching grants totaling more than $5 million to 18 Texas counties to help preserve their historic courthouses.

The communities to receive funds in Round VIII of the program are: Callahan, Dickens, Dimmit, Houston, Hunt, Jefferson, Karnes, Lamar, Lee, Limestone, Lipscomb, Lynn, Polk, Rains, San Saba, Upshur, Wilson, and the city of Hidalgo. The awards are all emergency grants totaling $5,906,955 that included funds held in reserve from the previous grant cycle.

The THC requested $20 million for the Round VIII grant cycle, but was appropriated $4.2 million by the 83rd Texas Legislature. While the significant reduction is a temporary setback for the 76 counties that currently qualify for additional funding, Round VIII emergency grants will address serious building deficiencies affecting usability, including flooding, fire and electrical hazards, and structural and safety issues in historic (more than 50 years old) county courthouses.

A total of 24 grant applications totaling more than $18 million in project costs were submitted in Round VIII. Pending additional funding from the Texas Legislature, the THC anticipates continuing the highly successful program with additional rounds of grant opportunities.

"The goal of this program is to assist as many communities as possible," said THC Architecture Division Director Sharon Fleming. "Counties receiving grants this round are in imminent danger of experiencing a catastrophic event, such as a fire, electrical hazard, or structural mishap that could cause injury or further endanger the building to the point where it is unusable. The Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program strives to not only preserve our historic courthouses, but make them functioning, safe, and up-to-date facilities."

-more-

Round VIII Grants, 2-2

In 1998, Texas' courthouses appeared on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's list of America's Most Endangered Historic Places. As a result, the Texas Legislature established the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program, and appropriated funding to preserve and protect them.

Leaky roofs, poor site draining and water seeping through walls, threats to structural integrity, equipment, and threats to county records are all serious problems facing Texas' historic courthouses. With less money to work with, the THC program's current grant cycle will provide smaller, but a larger number of grants to assist with emergency needs.

In the previous seven rounds of the program, the State of Texas has allocated $247 million, and counties have provided local matches of approximately $174 million, to fully restore more than 60 of the state's historic county courthouses. The successful partnership created more than 10,000 jobs and generated more than $21 million in local taxes.

"With strong support from the Texas Legislature and the Texas Land Title Association we remain committed to restoring all of the historic county courthouses, while also ensuring they do not become vulnerable again," said THC Executive Director Mark Wolfe. "These structures are symbols of pride and democracy, and need to be nurtured to guarantee they continue to safeguard the real stories of Texas for future generations."

Many of the state's more than 230 historic courthouses are in disrepair due to insufficient funding for building care and maintenance.

For more information, contact the THC's Architecture Division at 512.463.6094 or visit www.thc.state.tx.us.

The Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program was established in 1999 by Gov. George W. Bush and the Texas Legislature to restore Texas' county courthouses to their original splendor and make them safe, functional, and a source of pride for Texas communities. The Texas Historical Commission administers the $247 million program.

-30-