**Town Square Initiative**

**Downtown Action Plan Application**

The Town Square Initiative was created in 2014 to provide more advanced and specialized services to help revitalize historic downtowns. Working as an affiliate of the Texas Main Street Program, an interdisciplinary team (architecture, planning and economic development) focuses on the challenge of unoccupied and underutilized historic buildings by holistically reshaping existing downtown conditions through design, planning, placemaking, market analysis, and more.

TSI’s work is guided by a place-driven and market-informed philosophy meaning that we prioritize viable redevelopment projects in communities that are strongly motivated by enhancing the quality of place in their downtowns. Our technical assistance includes:

* Conceptual design and financial feasibility studies analyzing redevelopment potential;
* Coordinated downtown action planning strategies to address development barriers;
* Increasing and influencing the market exposure of available properties; and,
* Best practices and shared education materials to positively impact local policy.

**Completing the Downtown Action Plan Application**TSI works with one community at a time to develop a downtown action plan. We accept applications on a rolling basis; however, acceptance is dependent on the application scoring and current team capacity.

TSI’s downtown action planning process results in prioritized physical projects along with program and policy recommendations to comprehensively address local barriers to redevelopment and reinvestment. TSI’s approach focuses on fostering local entrepreneurs and building owners in order to create a sustainable long-term strategy to reactivate downtown spaces resulting in high quality, vibrant, and inherently local places. This service is designed to support smaller, more rural towns who have restored their courthouse with assistance from the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program (THCPP) and are poised to continue their revitalization efforts through a coordinated downtown strategy. However, participation in the THCPP is not required.TSI works long-term and at a high level of expertise with one community at a time to develop the respective plans, and then continues working closely with the city team after plan adoption as an implementation partner.

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| **Completed applications are to be emailed to:**Emily Koller - emily.koller@thc.texas.govRiley Triggs – riley.triggs@thc.texas.govAlan Cox – alan.cox@thc.texas.gov | **Additional materials may be mailed to:** Texas Historical CommissionTown Square InitiativeP.O. Box 12276Austin, Texas 78711-2276 |
| ***Questions?*** Contact Emily Koller, AICP, Town Square Initiative Planner, at 512-463-7466.[www.thc.state.tx.us/preserve/projects-and-programs/town-square-initiative](http://www.thc.state.tx.us/preserve/projects-and-programs/town-square-initiative)  |

**Section 1: Applicant Information**

Applications must be submitted by the local government. Applicants must be current participants in one or more of the Texas Historical Commission’s programs listed below.

**Project Manager Contact Information**
Last Name: First Name:
Phone: Email:
Name of City and County:
Title:
Participation in THC Programs *(check all that apply)*:
 [ ]  Texas Main Street Program
 [ ]  Certified Local Government
 [ ]  Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program
 [ ]  Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*I understand that the information provided will be used to determine eligibility for the Texas Historical Commission’s Town Square Initiative and that any final reports or findings become the property of the Texas Historical Commission and may be used to promote the services of the Town Square Initiative.*

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Program Manager Contact Date

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City Manager Signature Date

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County Official (Courthouse Representative\*) Signature Date

\*Required if applicant is a THCPP participant.

**Section 2: Downtown Questions**

*Please complete in a narrative format. Attach additional sheets as necessary.*

**1. Project and Vision.** Please explain why you believe a downtown action plan will benefit your downtown? What do you plan to use it for? Do you have the necessary support from key decision-makers to be successful at creating a new community vision for downtown and implementing the recommended action steps?

**2. Assets.** This is an asset-based analysis**.** Describe your downtown’s best assets? What opportunities do you believe are currently untapped?

**3. Challenges**. Please describe the major challenges currently facing your downtown that you hope this process will address?

**4. Participation.** Stakeholder participation is essential. Please list the downtown stakeholders (including key property and business owners) and partnering organizations. Describe how engaged they currently are in downtown and how you hope a new downtown vision and plan can meet their needs?

**5. Financial Resources.** Public/private financial partnerships are critical to success. Please describe what resources are available to commit to implementation through the city, EDC, and other public sources. Are there private partners who could help financially such as local banks or foundations?

 **Section 3: Policies, Incentives and Demographic Data**

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| **Has the city grown in population over the last five to ten years?** [ ] Yes [ ] NoCity population current: City population 2010:County population current: County population 2010: |
| **Has a master plan ever been completed for downtown?** [ ] Yes [ ] NoIf yes, when was it adopted?**Has the downtown been part of a streetscape enhancement project?** [ ] Yes [ ] NoIf yes, when and what was the public investment level?**Does the city have a historic preservation ordinance in place?** [ ] Yes [ ] No **If so, is there a designated historic district which requires design review in downtown?** [ ] Yes [ ] No**What other overlays or regulatory requirements are in place downtown?****What is the average commercial rental rate (per sq ft) in downtown?** In the rest of the city?**What is the average residential rental rate (per sq ft) in downtown?** In the rest of the city? |

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| **What public funding sources are available to assist with downtown projects (*check all that apply*)?**[ ]  Hotel Occupancy Tax [ ]  TIF or TIRZ [ ]  Type A/B EDC Funds [ ]  CDBG[ ]  Other (Please describe.)  |
| **What financial incentives are available for downtown projects (*check all that apply*)?** [ ]  Façade grants [ ]  Building improvement grants [ ]  Sign grants [ ]  Development agreements [ ]  Waiver of permit fees [ ]  Low interest loans [ ]  Tax abatement [ ]  Other (Please describe.) |
| **Has the city or other partner completed a retail market analysis for downtown?** [ ] Yes [ ] NoIf yes, when and by whom?**Has the city or other partner completed a residential market analysis for downtown?** [ ] Yes [ ] NoIf yes, when and by whom? |
| **Are there other regulatory barriers or other policy challenges that you feel are deterring downtown investment?** [ ] Yes [ ] No If yes, please describe. |