

# 2020 OVERVIEW FROM THE TEXAS MAIN STREET PROGRAM



## THE TEXAS MAIN STREET TEAM IN 2020

In the 53 workdays between January and mid-March 2020, the Texas Main Street team conducted **20** in-person site visits across the state – sometimes with multiple team members or over multiple days – to provide assistance to designated programs. We all know what happened in mid-March. COVID ground the world to a halt. Many of you—and our entire team—were sent home to work in quarantine.

One of the most immediate impacts was the cancellation of the national Main Street Now conference, scheduled for May in Dallas. This conference was specifically selected to be held in Texas as a way for our program to showcase its stature as one of the first coordinating programs in the country 40 years earlier, as well as to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the national Main Street movement.

Despite the disruptions of COVID—as well as the fact that half of our team was new on the job in 2020 and we all continue to work from home today—the TMSP crew had an incredible year of effort and progress. Since we showcased the innovative and inspiring work you all were doing during the pandemic in follow up notes to our COVID network calls and in Main Street Matters, this overview is meant to give you a glimpse of our team’s work in 2020.

**Together, we are all showing that ‘when the going gets tough, the tough get going.’**



## STRATEGIC PLAN

Over the past several months, our team has been meeting (virtually) to create our new Strategic Plan. We consider it to be “A living document



that ensures the Texas Main Street team consistently works both independently and collaboratively towards an agreed-upon vision and goals, and that our services are tailored to provide highly effective and relevant services to our programs.”

As outlined in our refreshed Statements of Purpose, we will meet **OUR goals** by helping you meet **YOUR goals**. Our work will focus on and we’ll drive toward achieving thoughtfully designed, sensitively preserved, and economically vibrant town centers. A part of our Core Values statement says it all: “We view ourselves as public servants working in harmony with local communities as they strive to meet their objectives.”

You will hear a lot more about all of this as we embark upon new initiatives and activities related to the plan’s goals during the year – and we’ll be seeking your input along the way. In fact, the first one – the first quarter schedule of virtual network gatherings and continuing COVID conversations – has already been announced and kicked off this week.



but also hope for the future. In looking at the 6-months from April to September as well as the two 12-months period between mid-2018 and mid-2020, we learned that overall annual reinvestment was down about 9%. However, public investment increased during the COVID time period. While there were significant job losses and businesses closing, there were also business openings. Much of this data supported anecdotal information we had heard on the calls. The complete reports are in the Online Resource Library.



## WORKING VIRTUALLY

The virtual work environment has not kept your TMSP team down.

Despite not being able to conduct in-person site visits, we ‘traveled’ virtually all over the state continuing to provide services. On more than **300** occasions since April, the state team has provided services to your programs in the form of board trainings, new manager orientations, planning workshops, DowntownTX trainings, economic development/market assistance, and preservation-design technical assistance/consultation/reports for properties and



*Two Preservation Scholar interns assigned to Texas Main Street worked with design and economic development staff - and Texarkana Main Street - to begin development of a plan for the Jamison building in Texarkana. The property is the namesake of Dr. Garling Uriah Jamison, Sr. who moved to Texarkana in 1906 to practice medicine. He also founded the Texarkana Negro Business League. For many years, the Jamison Building was the center of economic, cultural and social life for the city's African American community. It is still owned by Jamison family members.*

spaces in your Main Street districts. Many of these are projects for which we would have normally conducted an in-person site visit. These figures do not include the network COVID calls, or participation of various staff members on internal THC committees, as well as on statewide, national and international committees and task forces for other organizations. We also worked with several students during the year, including a University of Texas architecture student and two Preservation Scholars interns, a program of the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission.

In addition to the individual services, here are some examples of our broader virtual work during quarantine over the last few months:

- Orientations/Main Street 101s for 13 new Main Street managers, along with several board and committee trainings
- The whole team conducted a traditional first-year assessment/resource team for Hamilton Main Street that included creation of a baseline Main Street Plan of Action, a full program planning report, design ideas for specific properties and participation by the THC Heritage Tourism team
- Completed a feasibility study for the Ritz Theater in Corpus Christi
- Delivered multiple comprehensive trade area reports requested by programs
- Completed the 2021 Main Street application process that resulted in Stephenville becoming a newly designated Main Street community. Met virtually with local key stakeholders and staff to begin the process of establishing their program
- Presented Main Street in Texas to the Preservation Dallas summer lecture series; joined by Beverly Abell/Mesquite and Amy Rosenthal/McKinney
- Developed our 2021 strategic plan to guide the TMSP team
- Rolled out a Quarter 1 2021 series of lectures for programs on Main Street-

specific content; will continue throughout 2021

- Began a comprehensive refresh of the Online Resource Library to make it easier to navigate (underway)

Several new staff members were added to our team during 2020, including two (Jamie and Kylie) who were only in the office for a few months before we were all sent home and another (Cara) who was hired after virtual interviews and has never worked a day in-person in Main Street's physical offices!

## **DOWNTOWNTX.ORG**

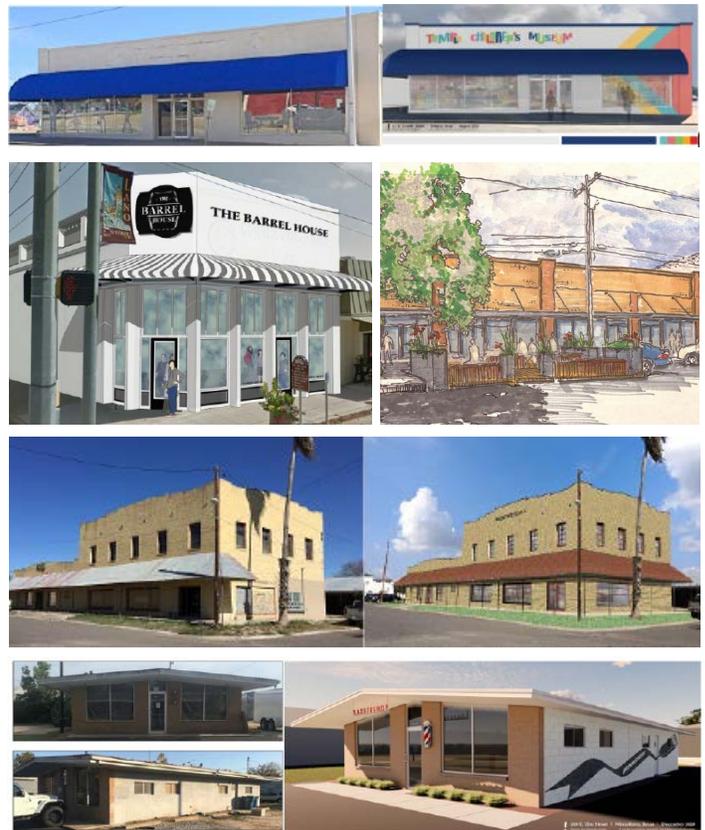
DowntownTX experienced a record-breaking year in 2020. Through 2020, the site garnered **68,453 unique user visits** with over **81,733 sessions** (i.e. unique user visits + returning visits) and **248,970 page views**. Currently, the site hosts data from **98 communities** (active Main Streets, inactive Main Streets, and Certified Local Government Programs) with information on **19,614 inventoried properties** across the state, including: 286 buildings for sale; 360 vacant or underutilized lots; 307 with available lease space; 550 locally designated landmarks; 2610 contributing to local historic districts; 340 individually listed in the National Register; and 2828 contributing to a National Register Historic District.

**10** cities have launched their public site (i.e. have “gone live”) since January 2020: Ennis, Grand Saline, Hamilton, Kilgore, Laredo, Mesquite, New Braunfels, Pittsburg, and Rockwall. This brings our total active site participation to **56 out of 88 cities**, or **64%**. Several communities are actively working on their pages and may



launch within the first quarter of 2021. Although a record **30 cities** initially signed up to participate in the annual “Imagine the Possibilities” tours, the in-person tours were indefinitely postponed in-line with agency safety efforts. However, many programs adapted and hosted virtual tours throughout the summer and into fall, simultaneously creating engaging, downtown-centric content for their social media audience and promoting available opportunities or local stories.

Phase 3 of software development is currently open for select city testing and is expected to deploy site-wide early 2021. This will enhance existing administrative functionality for our programs and further local preservation efforts.



*A broad variety of technical assistance and reports was produced and delivered to local programs by the TMSP design team during 2020.*