



# Main Street Matters

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS MAIN STREET PROGRAM

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## Spotlight on Harlingen

(Population approx. 74,950)

*Thanks to Cheryl LaBerge, Harlingen Main Street Director for providing this article.*

It is often said that people make the place, and downtown Harlingen is no exception. The Main Street district pulses with a diverse mix of folks pursuing their passions and doing what they're good at: whether it's restoring old buildings, organizing events, helping customers select clothes and jewelry, or satisfying cravings for hot enchiladas or juicy burgers.

When Harlingen first joined the Main Street Program in 1983, the downtown was virtually deserted (Harlingen was originally designated from 1983–1985 and recertified in 1997.) Today occupancy is 87 percent, with more than 160 businesses or organizations operating in renovated buildings of diverse architectural styles. Retail, while the most visible, represents only 22 percent of the business mix, the balance being service companies, restaurants, and financial institutions, plus government, nonprofit, and professional offices.

People are always excited by new businesses and these openings are marked with ribbon-cuttings and other festivities. The staying power of a dozen businesses that have operated downtown continuously for more than 50 years is also celebrated—which is quite an accomplishment in a town that just recently turned 100! Among those eager to welcome Main Street managers during Winter Training in Harlingen are Grimsell Seed Company (estab. 1909), Army Surplus Supply (estab. 1946), and Roberts Jewelry (estab. 1922). Roberts is the only jewelry store in the state that has received the prestigious Texas Treasure Business Award given by the Texas Historical Commission honoring businesses that have been in existence in Texas for 50+ years; and that have remained dedicated to our state



Top: Postcard view of the 1927 Reese-Wil-Mond Hotel. Middle: 2005 photo of the vacant landmark hotel. Bottom: August 2011 evening photo of the renovated Reese Plaza which is now mixed-use development.



Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. honors Roberts Jewelry with the Texas Treasure Business Award, November 2007.

for generations, creating jobs and stimulating economic growth.

The Harlingen Main Street Program offices in the 1917 Planters State Bank Building, with pressed metal ceilings and three vaults. This is a good example of how our Main Street program works to encourage preservation and repurposing of historic buildings. Across the street, a 1909 pharmacy is now an art gallery and a 1916 hardware store has become a showroom for classic cars. Down the block, a former Kress store is now Casa de Novia, a popular quinceañera and bridal shop, and a long-ago mortuary is the home of pop artist Tony Schaub, who lives above his studio and gallery.

In April 2011, a former 1927 hotel reopened downtown as the stylish



Thousands attend Jackson Street Market Days the first Saturday of every month.

Reese Plaza, the Rio Grande Valley's first mixed use development. Main Street managers will have an opportunity to hear from the investors, architects, and contractors who transformed this five-story, 73,000 square foot "white elephant" into an asset. In addition to learning how The Reese has jumpstarted

interest and investment in downtown Harlingen, Main Street managers will enjoy a delicious meal in Colletti's Italian Restaurant, the locally-owned anchor business on the first floor.

Thousands of residents and visitors attend events in downtown Harlingen, and one session of Winter Training will feature volunteers who work tirelessly to make these happen. Partners who organize our weekly Harlingen Farmers Market, monthly Jackson Street Market Days, summer Family Movie Nights, and annual Jackson Street Classic Car Show are among those scheduled to participate.

Other sessions will showcase media and tourism partners who help promote downtown as well as Code Enforcement, Police, and Public Works staff who work to make the district safer and more attractive. Managers will hear about repairs and upgrades to alleys, parking lots, sidewalks, and streets, as well as efforts to deter crime and counter vandalism, including graffiti.

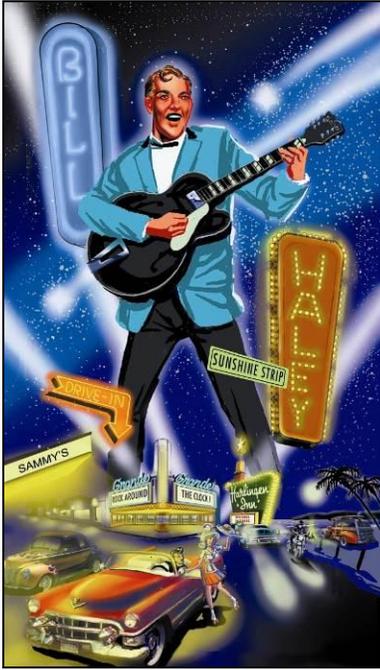
Finally, managers will see how downtown Harlingen uses larger-than-life-size murals to portray aspects of our community's history



The April 2010 dedication of the monumental History of Mexico and Mankind Mural

and culture and enhance the district's overall appeal. Among the original artworks that have become popular attractions are "A Tribute to Bill Haley and his Comets", "The Golden Age of Hollywood & Mexican Cinema in Harlingen," and the monumental, 905-piece "History of Mexico and Mankind" tile mural in our new Centennial Park.

For decades, Harlingenites have had the courage and chutzpah to dream big, work hard, and thrive, despite economic downturns, devastating natural disasters, and ever-changing times. Harlingen is excited to share our experiences and



A Tribute to Bill Haley and His Comets celebrates Harlingen's most famous resident.

insights with the Main Street managers, and learn together how everyone can enhance and sustain our historic downtowns for future generations to enjoy. See you in downtown Harlingen soon!

## NEWS

### Quality You Can't Replace The Value of Old Wood Windows

*Thanks to Audrey Holt, Project Design Assistant with the TMSP for providing this article.*

You've all met him/her—the replacement window salesperson. They drive into town with promises of “maintenance free” and “energy efficient” windows. They are so good at what they do that one starts to wonder, “Do those preservationists REALLY know what they are talking about when they claim that old wood windows are worth saving?”

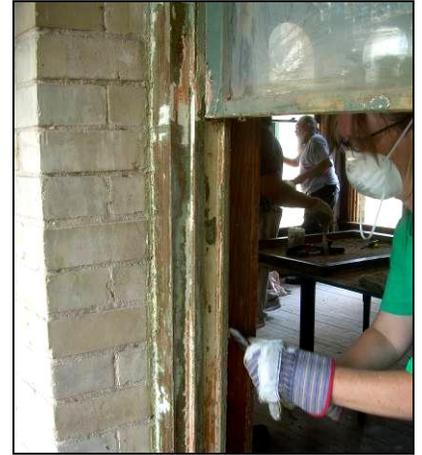
In order to be better prepared when called to argue for retaining

original wood windows, I decided to take a two-day class on window repair being offered by the City of San Antonio's Historic Preservation Office. The class was hands-on with participants actually working to repair the wood windows in a beautiful historic house on the HemisFair grounds. It was not glamorous work. Within the first hour, the group donned gloves and masks and got to work taking apart the windows, globbing on solvents, and scraping paint. Most of the windows were painted shut with layers upon layers of paint, much of which contained lead. On the bright side, these were gorgeous floor-to-ceiling arched windows made of old growth wood and really all they needed was a little TLC.



Project house in HemisFair Park, San Antonio, TX

By the end of the first day—this humble group, a mix of students, contractors, homeowners, and design professionals—was off to a good start repairing about eight of the home's 30 plus windows. All the windows had been taken apart by carefully removing the lower window sashes from the frames and discarding broken glass. We had carefully removed the layers of paint and applied linseed oil to protect the now bare wood. The more than 100-year-old wood was gleaming once again! The group was tired, but hopeful that we had made a good start and would be able to complete the project the next day.



Scraping layers of old paint

The next day began on a high note with a visit from a wood expert from a local lumber store, Alamo Hardwoods. He explained the characteristics of many different species of wood, and his thoughts on the immense quality of the old growth wood used in historic wood windows. Most interesting to me, he explained just exactly what “old-growth wood” is. When new trees grow in a natural forest, the older trees have already formed a dense canopy overhead, making the new trees compete for light and nutrients. This results in the new trees growing much slower, forming tighter growth rings, which makes for an overall denser wood. This denser wood is stronger, therefore less prone to rot. Most of the virgin forests that contained this old growth wood were cleared many years ago, and the ones that were not cleared are now protected.



Showing the difference in rings in new growth and old growth wood



Replacing broken glass and reglazing

This, combined with the current methods of tree growing and harvesting that encourages rapid tree growth, makes this old-growth wood that was used in most old windows literally priceless.

After his informative presentation, the group got back to work. With the paint removal completed, we moved on to installing new glass where the old glass had been broken, reglazing the windows (essentially replacing all the old, brittle caulk and putty), and restoring the fascinating counterweight system so the windows were once again operable.

Unlike replacement windows, historic wood windows weren't simply stuck in the window opening, they were actually built into the wall. The original intent was for the windows to be in perfect balance and to operate by sliding both the lower and upper sash up and down (hence the term, double-hung). Over time, the cords holding this simple but ingenious system break down and snap, and the windows are stuck in an inoperable position. By simply opening a small "hidden" door on the lower inside of the window frame and behind the trim, the cast-iron weight was able to be retrieved, the old rotten sash cord cut off, and new cord tied on—voila! —the windows were once again operable, sliding up and down with ease.

With the new glazing, these windows fit snugly, banishing any thoughts of these being "drafty old windows." There was much excitement in seeing the group's hard work pay off, transforming windows that were painted shut and broken only the morning before, now fully functioning with shiny new glass and raw honey-colored wood gleaming.

The group left this two-day workshop energized—excited about the value of the historic wood windows and confident in our (and any willing person's) ability to repair them. These windows were *made* to be



A look at the 'hidden' door that holds the cast iron counterweights (participant is seen holding weight)

repaired! Seeing and experiencing the craftsmanship and quality of these windows enabled everyone to feel an emotional connection to them. Were any of the group to walk by this house, years in the future, and see these windows being thoughtlessly ripped out and discarded in a landfill only to be replaced with shiny new replacements, we would be as heartbroken as if we had lost an old friend. The metal and vinyl-clad replacement windows have no soul. Replacement windows are far from being



The restored, operable lower sashes

"maintenance free"—in reality, these windows are not designed to be maintained over long periods of time. If a part of a replacement window breaks, the entire window must be removed and replaced—essentially making "disposable window" a better term. Most of these replacement windows have a 20-year lifespan at best. The beautiful historic wood windows in this 100 plus year old project house are now ready to last another 100 years if properly maintained. So, I encourage you not to view a historic wood window as a liability needing replacement, but instead as a high quality asset that one can repair, or have repaired, and maintain for generations to come.

## NEWS

### Don't Mess with Texas Trash-Off

The Don't Mess with Texas Trash-Off will be Saturday, April 14. This is the single largest one-day cleanup event in the state and serves as Texas' signature event for the Great American Cleanup, the nation's largest community improvement program, held annually from March 1 through May 31.

In 2011, more than 1,905 Great American Clean-up events were held, with more than 90,000 volunteers contributing 417,448 hours in 912 communities across Texas.



Canton celebrates 10 years of Main Street with the Main Street board, the local community, city and county officials.

More than six million pounds of trash was collected along with 1.2 million pounds of electronics! For more information on how your community can be involved, see [www.dontmesswithtexas.org](http://www.dontmesswithtexas.org).

The Don't Mess with Texas Trash-Off is part of the partnership between Keep Texas Beautiful and the [Texas Department of Transportation](http://www.txdot.org). Participants can receive trash bags, volunteer giveaways, promotional items, and more. See <http://ktb.org/programs/dont-mess-with-texas-trash-off.aspx>



### Be Involved with Preservation and Share Your Successes

Don't miss out on the networking opportunities and information

available on the new **Statewide Preservation Plan** website. This is the place to join the preservation network, tell your story, learn about exciting things going on around the state, and get updates on valuable topics like grants. It has been created to make it easy for you to share what works in your community and directly contribute to the success of this plan. Fill out this form to submit your local project, program, success story, or best practice directly to the website. Upload photos and documents, too. See [www.preservationconnection.com/](http://www.preservationconnection.com/)

### AROUND THE STATE

#### Canton

Canton Main Street celebrated its 10th anniversary in the Texas Main Street Program with an open house reception on December 8, 2011 at The Plaza Museum. A Power Point presentation showing accomplishments and "before-and-after" photos of buildings and the downtown area ran continuously throughout the reception.

Representatives from many businesses and organizations in the Canton area dropped in to congrat-

ulate the Main Street team for 10 years of successful downtown revitalization. Main Street managers and board members from Mineola and Grand Saline visited and representatives from several other cities attended. A plaque was presented to Canton Main Street by the Texas Main Street Program with congratulations for 10 years of participation in the state program.

Past and present board and committee members attended, including past Main Street Manager Jim Stephens. Also making an appearance was Mayor of Canton Cary Hilliard, former mayor Don Hackney; City Council members Ross Maris, Clay Nicklas, Candice Bensen and Charles Huddle; City Manager Andy McCuiston, City Secretary Julie Seymore and several other city staff members; County Judge Rhita Koches and County Commissioners Ricky LaPrade, Virgil Melton, Ron Carroll and Duane Harvey and several other county officials.

#### Corsicana

More than two years of planning, sculpting, casting, and refining culminated November 8 in the installation of *Quittin' Time*, a new bronze sculpture in downtown commemorating Corsicana's oil-field workers from a bygone era. The worker carries a lunch pail in one hand and a large pipe-fitting tool over the opposite shoulder.

The project was spearheaded by Joe Brooks and the Arts in Public Places Committee and funded by the E.M. Sheppard Foundation, with support from the Convention and Visitors Bureau.

A plaque explaining the sculpture was installed nearby on the sidewalk, while another plaque, describing a stop on the historic walking tour of downtown, was placed on the building behind it. Rounding

out the improvements was the first of 45 new benches planned for downtown by the Main Street advisory board. The bench was donated by local preservationists Lowell Dunn and Derek Miner.

#### More in Corsicana...

Hosted through a great partnership with the Small Business Development Center at Navarro College, nationally renowned retail expert Marc Willson shared tips and insights for staying relevant to customers in a changing economy during a well-attended breakfast on November 14. The audience consisted of numerous merchants, city staff, and elected officials, all focused on revitalizing downtown.

Willson stressed the need for businesses to define their customer, then create a culture and atmosphere that touches the core values of that customer base. He also covered merchandising standards for store displays and encouraged business owners to clean, straighten, and replenish all day long, noting that activity breeds activity.

Following the presentation, Willson conducted a windshield assessment



Quittin' Time bronze commemorating Corsicana's oilfield workers from a bygone era installed in downtown

of the downtown district and met one-on-one with 14 businesses. Among the positives Willson observed was our distinctive architecture, cleanliness, parking, motor vehicle volume, and window displays. He also provided suggestions for improvements in downtown. Good work, Corsicana Main Street!

#### Levelland

The Miss Merry Christmas Pageant is an annual fundraiser for Main Street improvements in downtown Levelland. In 2011, proceeds from this pageant purchased six elegant black benches in downtown and in front of the Hockley County Courthouse. In December 2011, the pageant brought in more than \$3,800!

#### Seguin

Seven downtown business and property owners in Seguin purchased a bench and plaque in appreciation of their Main Street manager, Mary Jo Filip. The bench is part of the new Walnut Springs Park that is located on the west side of downtown and also behind Mary Jo's home. She worked on the Walnut Springs Park project for 11 years. Only seven phone calls were necessary to raise the \$1,375 for the bench. What a great tribute to Mary Jo—not only the wonderful bench and plaque, but just seven calls!

The seven donors surprised her by taking her to the park. She knew the bench was there but had no idea they had gotten it sponsored with the plaque for her. She was totally surprised! The plaque says: "With appreciation for all the work of Mary Jo Filip." Mary Jo's response: "Best gift. Best surprise. Ever. I love my bench!"



Mary Jo Filip, Seguin Main Street manager, receives appreciation gift from downtown business and property owners.

A \$3 million construction project for Phase I in the park is completed. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and an enhancement grant from TxDOT are underway for the balance of the project. Eventually, it will be a \$10 million linear park project providing more than two miles of hike and bike trails along the Walnut Branch, connecting the downtown historic district to parks, schools, and Texas Lutheran University.

Congratulations, Mary Jo, on a very well deserved appreciation gift!

#### Vernon

Visitors to Vernon now have a new way to be introduced to the city. Vernon's Main Street program is teaming up with local businesses and has produced more than a dozen promotional pieces that will play on a special channel on hotel televisions. The spots are offered to the businesses free of charge. The Outreach to Visitors program shows guests the opportunities and attractions available in Vernon, and organizers say it benefits all involved.

Mayor Jeff Bearden says, "This project is a true partnership between our Main Street group, tourism committee, and our hotel owners to bring a little bit of Vernon to

visitors who come and stay in our hotels.” Two hotels have already picked up the program, and organizers say they hope more hotels will soon follow suit.

**The County Line Magazine announced its 2011 pics for “Best of...” which included numerous Main Street cities:**

Best of the Upper East Side of Texas **Hall of Fame** awards in Main Street cities included:

**Winnsboro:** Double C Steakhouse for best chicken fried steaks; Cibo Vino for best pizza; and, Winnsboro, for best small town downtown.

**Canton:** Dairy Palace for best hamburgers, malts and shakes

**Mineola:** Nature Preserve for best nature walk and bird watching

**Best of 2011...**awards in Main Street cities included:

**Greenville:** Ta Molly’s Mexican Restaurant for best Tex-Mex and best salsa and tortilla chips

**Longview:** The Butcher Shop Bakery for best salad; and, Johnny Cace’s for best seafood

**Mineola:** The Oaks for best bed and breakfast; and Mineola for the 2011 best small town downtown in upper east Texas.

**Nacogdoches:** Butcher Boys Smokehouse and Deli for best hamburger

**Pittsburg:** Los Pinos Ranch Vineyards for best winery

**Rockwall:** Best Lakeside Town

**Tyler:** Wasabi Sushi Bar and Asian Bistro for best restaurant; and Tyler Rose Museum and Tyler Municipal Rose Garden Center for best attraction

**Winnsboro:** Zazuz for best pizza; Crossroads Music Co. for best live music venue; and Granny’s Pie Shop for best pie

We are not surprised that so many of these awards went to Main Street cities; and, while not all of these establishments are in downtown, we know most of them are great partners to downtown. Congratulations all!

### EVENTS

Please remember if you want one of your Main Street events posted here, email [jill.robinson@thc.state.tx.us](mailto:jill.robinson@thc.state.tx.us) at least three weeks ahead of the month in which you want the posting.

#### Feb. 21, Kerrville

Mardi Gras on Main started in 2005 as a celebration of Kerrville Main Street’s 10th anniversary. It has since evolved into a festival that focuses on fine food, fine music, and fine wine. Each year since its inception, hundreds of people gather to celebrate Mardi Gras Texas style. The event will be held



at the YO Ranch Hotel and Conference Center with signature wine in place and entertainment by Ponty Bone and the Squeezetones. All proceeds will benefit Kerrville Main Street’s downtown public art project. For event information, see <http://kerrville.org/index.aspx?NIID=150&ART=5426&ADMIN=1>

### SEMINARS/WORKSHOPS

#### Event Planning Webinar

Keep Texas Beautiful program staff will be conducting a web-based Event Planning session on Thursday, Feb. 16 at 11 a.m. covering the following topic areas:

- Basics of event/meeting planning
- Event promotion and marketing
- Working with and developing a budget

See [www.ktb.org/get-involved/calendar.aspx?pageid=1206](http://www.ktb.org/get-involved/calendar.aspx?pageid=1206)

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## 2012 Calendar of Events

### ■ Feb. 7–8, Harlingen

Main Street training for new managers (afternoon of Feb. 7 and morning of Feb. 8)

### ■ Feb. 8–10, Harlingen

Main Street Winter Workshop for all managers (begins afternoon of Feb. 8 through noon on Feb. 10)

### ■ Apr. 1–4, Baltimore, Maryland

National Main Streets Annual Conference ([www.preservationnation.org/main-](http://www.preservationnation.org/main-)

[street/training/conference/2012baltimore\)](#)

- **June 12–13, (to be determined, bids due Feb. 3)**  
Main Street Summer Training for new managers (afternoon of June 12 and morning of June 13)
  - **June 13–15, (to be determined, bids due Feb. 3)**  
Main Street Summer Workshop for all managers (begins afternoon of June 13 through noon on June 15)
  - **Nov. 6–9, Wichita Falls**  
Texas Main Street/Texas Downtown Association annual conference
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## Websites of Interest

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation: [www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov)  
African American Heritage Preservation Foundation: [www.aahpfdn.org](http://www.aahpfdn.org)  
(The) Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation: [www.ahlp.org](http://www.ahlp.org)  
(The) American Institute of Architects: [www.aia.org](http://www.aia.org)  
American Planning Association: [www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org)  
American Society of Landscape Architects: [www.asla.org](http://www.asla.org)  
(The) Cultural Landscape Foundation: [www.tclf.org](http://www.tclf.org)  
(The) Handbook of Texas Online: [www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online)  
Keep Texas Beautiful: [www.ktb.org](http://www.ktb.org)  
League of Historic American Theatres: [www.lhat.org](http://www.lhat.org)  
National Main Street Center: [www.preservationnation.org/main-street](http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street)  
National Park Service: [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)  
National Trust for Historic Preservation: [www.preservationnation.org](http://www.preservationnation.org)  
Texas Department of Rural Affairs: [www.tda.state.tx.us](http://www.tda.state.tx.us) (TDRA has now become the Office of Rural Affairs within the Texas Department of Agriculture)  
Partners for Sacred Places: [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)  
Preservation Easement Trust: [www.preservationeasement.org](http://www.preservationeasement.org)  
PreservationDirectory.com: [www.preservationdirectory.com](http://www.preservationdirectory.com)  
Preservation Texas: [www.preservationtexas.org](http://www.preservationtexas.org)  
Project for Public Spaces: [www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)  
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy: [www.railstotrails.org](http://www.railstotrails.org)  
Scenic America: [www.scenic.org](http://www.scenic.org)  
Texas Commission on the Arts: [www.arts.state.tx.us](http://www.arts.state.tx.us)  
Texas Downtown Association: [www.texasdowntown.org](http://www.texasdowntown.org)  
Texas Folklife Resources: [www.texasfolklife.org](http://www.texasfolklife.org)  
Texas Historical Commission: [www.thc.state.tx.us](http://www.thc.state.tx.us)  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department: [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us)  
Texas Rural Leadership Program: [www.trlp.org](http://www.trlp.org)  
Texas State Preservation Board: [www.tspb.state.tx.us](http://www.tspb.state.tx.us)  
Urban Land Institute: [www.uli.org](http://www.uli.org)

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