Singer/songwriter Bob Dylan, who recorded *The Times They Are a-Changin’* in 1964, later said that the ballad was to him a ‘song with a purpose’ reflecting societal changes of the 1960s. The sentiment certainly rings true today, with major societal, economic, technological and political changes in our local communities and across the globe. Admittedly, there’s been much bad news. But there have been bright spots as well, especially when we drill down to ‘our’ world—the Main Street universe. That’s important to note, because many believe that the grassroots, preservation-based and time-tested Main Street model has given many communities their ‘edge.’ Main Street is now and has the capacity to always be an economic driver, not only in Texas but across the country.

“The past biennium brought historic change to the Texas Historical Commission (THC),” states THC Executive Director Mark Wolfe in the introductory letter of the THC’s 2011-2012 Biennial Report. “Despite significant losses, including a budget reduction of nearly 50 percent and elimination of 47 employees, we continued our efforts to maintain our mission to preserve and protect Texas’ distinctive heritage. In the process, we also helped improve the state’s economy.”

**Does Main Street pay off?**
Certainly Main Street, at work in Texas since 1981, has played an important role in improving local economies through the use of historic preservation as an economic development tool.

The estimated annual average operating expenses for local Main Street Programs in Texas is $105,000. Meanwhile the state office spends approximately $540,000 annually to operate the coordinating program. In a period roughly equivalent to state fiscal year 2012, this combined Main Street investment helped spur more than $211 million in downtown reinvestment. Each dollar invested in Texas Main Street yielded an additional $8 in private downtown reinvestment and a total downtown reinvestment of $22. These investments raise the taxable value of downtown property, continuing to generate revenue for years to come. By focusing community efforts on revitalizing the downtown, the Main Street effort plays a critical role in helping physical and business climate improvements take place.

Historically in Texas, reinvestment data collected by local programs

A quick glance at the last three fiscal years shows that economic activity in Main Street downtowns has remained stable, with notable growth in overall reinvestment.
show how valuable historic preservation can be to a local economy. Since 1981, more than $2.6 billion has been reinvested into the Main Street districts of designated communities. Of this, the majority of $1.7 billion, has been invested by the private sector with the remainder contributed by government to spur the economy or through public/private partnerships. During this time Texas Main Street communities have added on average more than 900 new downtown jobs and 239 downtown businesses annually, totaling almost 29,000 jobs and more than 7,400 new, expanded or relocated small businesses.

Despite adverse economic conditions in recent years, Main Street cities continue to show stability and growth. Between fiscal years 2011 and 2012, designated Texas programs reported only a modest 1% increase of private reinvestment but a 12% increase in overall reinvestment when public-private partnerships and public expenditures are included. After notable declines around 2009, the overall value of private reinvestment in our downtowns has climbed and is now approaching pre-recession levels. During the economic downturn, rehabilitation and construction expenditures recovered more quickly than real estate values and sales. These statistics come from tracking a variety of indicators including real estate transactions, rehabilitations, new construction, public projects, new businesses and jobs.

Final calendar year 2012 reinvestment statistics are not due until mid-January, however in the first six months of 2012 the reported reinvestments have already eclipsed the total figures for the entire 2011.

During the past few years, the public sector contributed largely to the growth, fueled possibly helped in part by funding for projects through the federal economic stimulus program. Recent figures for the second and third quarters of 2012 show an overall increase in reinvestment of $17.9 million, with private reinvestment accounting for almost all of the increase.

Regardless of the reporting period considered, there is clear evidence that local Main Street efforts all across the state provide considerable economic value.

What about small business?
A May 2012 report on entrepreneurship by the National Economic Council, which is part of President Barack Obama’s executive office, acknowledged the importance of small business to the U.S. economy: “From Main Street shops to high-tech startups, America’s small businesses and entrepreneurs are the engine of our economy and one of our country’s greatest assets.”

The kind of activity created by these small businesses are largely what make up the figures reported in the Main Street reinvestment reports.

A limited survey of Main Street businesses done by the Texas Main Street office in 2012 was distributed by many local managers to their merchants and garnered more than 100 responses from small businesses of all sizes, ages and in all corners of the state and provided some interesting information. For many, according to their responses, the uniqueness of the historic downtown is what brought them there in the first place. Secondly, they found properties “well suited” to their business needs in the historic downtown. Downtown is the brand and the recruitment tool! Many of the responses also reiterated what Main Street managers already know: an organization dedicated to downtown is important.

What makes Main Street work?
Those who already work in the business know that in large part success comes from the focus and structure that the organization itself brings to the process of preservation-based downtown revitalization. It is also the people and their passion, the power of the network and everything else that gets wrapped into the Main Street Four Point Approach™.

One important element to the local Main Street structure, and to ensuring success, is the development and implementation of appropriate preservation and economic development tools in the community. (Because as we all know, the successful downtown does not happen by magic!) It’s not just a single action here or there, but a complement of strategically adopted tools, a defined process and a preservation-minded community that ensures a quality preservation project gets done. One good project after another leads to a visually appealing downtown that serves its community well.

Throughout this report are numerous examples of quality preservation projects and activities that occurred during 2012. The next section reviews an important pilot project done by several Texas Main Street Program (TMSP) and other Texas Historical Commission (THC) staff in Pittsburg, a long-time Texas Main Street community. This historic resources survey project has important implications for many other Main Street communities.
The Pittsburg historic resources survey/National Register project

As reported in the March 2012 Main Street Matters, the TMSP launched a pilot program in Pittsburg with a historic resources survey project. A historic resources survey is an inventory of historic and non-historic buildings and structures within a designated area along with information about individual building histories and physical descriptions. Pittsburg was selected after looking at all of our Main Street cities to see which ones needed the most assistance – the ones with no building inventory and no National Register buildings or districts in town (or even in the county). These cities also needed to have a downtown district that was not overly large but with lots of good building stock, an effective Main Street board with functioning committees, and an active historical commission or society. With input from Greg Smith, National Register coordinator at the THC, Pittsburg in Camp County was selected as the initial city for the pilot project with the potential of turning the historic resources survey into a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) historic district nomination.

After an initial site visit by THC staff in February, the first public meeting was held in Pittsburg in May to inform Pittsburg citizens about the project and the need for volunteers to assist in the physical survey and gathering of information and images. During the visit, local community members brought in photographs and provided historical background information about the buildings and the town. Survey work was done by THC staff and Pittsburg volunteers the following morning. This consisted of taking photographs of every building in the district and filling out an inventory form for each one.

Information gathered during the survey was entered into an Access database by THC staff along with historical and photographic materials. Historical context was written by Pittsburg volunteers Vernon Holcomb and Stan Wiley, and then edited by THC Staff Leslie Wolfenden and Carlyn Hammons. A historic context is a narrative of the broader historical patterns that have influenced the development and character of the survey area, which includes geography, settlement, transportation, industry and commerce, social history and culture, physical development, and building patterns.

Over the following months, THC staff transformed the gathered information into a National Register Historic District nomination. A National Register listing, an honorific designation, is an excellent heritage tourism tool. It provides national recognition of a property’s historical or architectural significance and provides special consideration to the properties during federal projects. It also makes available a federal rehabilitation tax credit to qualifying building projects.

To wrap up the project, THC staff held a public meeting in the Pittsburg City Hall in late November to inform Pittsburg citizens about the National Register nomination and what it entails. Mr. Holcomb said he found the nomination “…will do more to preserve our local history than anything we could have ever done.” The Pittsburg National Register Commercial Historic District nomination will go before the State Board of Review this month before being sent on to the National Park Service (NPS) for final approval and listing.

Once NPS finalizes the National Register nomination, the newly created survey database and images...
will be sent to Pittsburg so that city staff can easily update the information. The completed inventory can be coupled with the efforts of the economic restructuring committee for a complete database of downtown buildings including historic and current information. New photographs should be taken every time a major façade renovation occurs and a complete photographic survey can be done every five years.

Many thanks to Pittsburg Main Street Manager Clint Hardeman; Camp County Historical Commissioners Vernon Holcomb and Stan Wiley; the Pittsburg volunteers and city staff; Camp County staff; and THC Staff Leslie Wolfenden, Carolyn Hammons, Greg Smith, Judy George-Garza, Howard Langner, and Audrey Holt, who helped bring this all together for a great National Register Historic District nomination as well as creating a working inventory tool for Pittsburg to use now and in the future.

In the current Texas Main Street network, 57 do not have National Register commercial districts and 75 do not have local commercial districts downtown, so there are tremendous opportunities to expand this program.

Stories from each other
The power of the Main Street network has been the theme of more than one annual-report issue of Main Street Matters (MSM) over the past few years and for good reason. We can and do learn from each other, through spotlight articles in each MSM, trainings and conferences, the Main Street listserve and through many other avenues.

Main Street, by its nature of incremental progress leading to comprehensive success, means that downtown is redeveloped, reimagined step by step, project by project. Even the smallest of efforts sometimes is cause for big celebration. The next section showcases some 2012 activities and projects.

‘Seasoned’ programs still hard at work
GEORGETOWN, which celebrated 30 years of downtown effort during 2012 (22 of them as a designated Main Street program), recent activities and projects made significant economic impact during the year and are likely to provide strong return for many years to come. There were 15 building improvement projects either begun or finished during 2012, including a major new restaurant construction and repair of structural damage on a signature downtown building. Activities are being guided by the city’s 2003 downtown master plan, its TIRZ project list, a marketing study and the Main Street Advisory Board strategic action plan. Major areas of focus are physical (infrastructure), business retention/attraction, recruitment of wineries, arts and culture, involvement of Southwestern students and staff, signature events and marketing/communication. Announced during 2012 were other significant projects to come, such as a new downtown winery and reuse of the historic fire house bays and first floor of old city hall. (Refer to the December 2012 issue of Main Street Matters for some other activities of Georgetown Main Street)

SEGUIN, a Main Street program recertified since 1997, saw several significant projects during 2012 with major façade work on the Tips Building and restoration of the

During 2012, two other Main Street communities, Cotulla (left) and Mineola (center), successfully created National Register downtown commercial districts and at the end of the year the Fisk Medical Arts building (right) in Amarillo’s Main Street district was individually listed. Rehabilitation and conversion into a Courtyard by Marriott hotel was also a tax credit project. Of three certified tax credit projects completed in Texas in 2012, two are in Main Street cities. (The other one was Valley Fruit Co. in Pharr). The historic Cotulla picture is now the Cotulla Main Street office!

Texas Main Street Program Main Street Matters, January 2013
building housing Gift & Gourmet. “All have helped to impress upon the public how special the historic fabric of Seguin is,” says Seguin Main Street manager Mary Jo Filip. These two projects, in addition to the local FIX-IT Façade Grants for Historic Preservation program, are inspiring more projects expected to come to fruition in 2013, including the purchase of a 20,000 square foot historic downtown property for conversion into hotel and executive office space for oil and gas clients with public-use restaurant, bar and event space. In 2012, major increases to support downtown economic development came from the City of Seguin economic development department, Hotel Occupancy Tax, and a $250,000 low interest loan program.

CORSICANA, a continuous Main Street participant since 1985, secured a Targeted Brownfields Assessments grants from the Environmental Protection Agency in 2012 for three buildings in the Main Street district. The assessment work was done in response to specific investor/developer interest in the buildings. Although the particular deals did not come to fruition, the assessments are being used to leverage interest in the buildings for possible future redevelopment since potential owners can be assured that no major asbestos or lead-based paint contamination exists within those properties.

BEAUMONT. After years of contemplation and planning, this 20-year-old urban program, created “Save and Secure,” in which the Main Street program takes proactive action by becoming the building’s owner to address barriers to rehabilitating severely neglected historic buildings in danger of being lost. Carolyn Howard, Main Street executive director, tells the story: “The basic premise is to approach each of these owners as individuals…What do they want? What do they want to hear? Second, make sure we can take on this property. Can we pay the property taxes? Is there a clear title, etc. We ask the property owner to give us the building and possibly take a tax deduction for the contribution. We pay for the appraisal. The minute we own it, we put our plan in place which includes curb appeal and a first-class marketing plan. We put together an incentive package and give the building to the new owner for only what we put into the property. The new property owner agrees to certain deed restrictions including no demolition, a restoration with some time constraints and become a member of Main Street. The building has been SAVED and is now SECURE. What money we do spend comes from a revolving loan fund. We simply loan money to ourselves and pay it back once the building has sold to the new owner.” Supporting the program is a campaign aimed at increasing local preservation awareness and appreciation that includes six public service announcements (PSA) produced for just $2,000 and paid for with a sponsorship. See the PSA’s at www.beaumontmainstreet.com/psa.html.
White elephants—this is NOT your year!
COLORADO CITY. During 2012, in response to a community visioning process, the city council adopted its top priorities, which included development of a plan for the restoration of the Baker Hotel. At the same time, the Main Street board’s planning efforts led to a desire to experiment with new activities and events to keep the program fresh. That in turn led to the “Baker Haunted Hotel,” which utilized the existing building to serve as a creative way to appeal to local youth and young families to get them interested in downtown and preservation efforts, especially as related to the Baker Hotel. The event also included the filming of a “thriller” zombie video inside the Baker that was uploaded to YouTube™: www.youtube.com/watch?v=DxqBTraH3OQ. The entire event cost less than $300 to produce, but raised more than $3,000!

In addition to the ‘haunted’ project this year, the first concert in 40 years was held in the hotel; the property became a drive-in movie theater showing “Gone in 60 Seconds” during a car show; was the focus of a television program called ‘Expedition Texas’ and has been proposed as a possible location for the Mitchell County Hospital District’s assisted living facility.

NACOGDOCHES. During 2012, the rehabilitation of two ‘white elephant’ buildings began. Two years ago neither the Annie Hoya Building nor the Main Street Theater, both large vacant properties, had hope of being saved. One had structural issues; the other severe water damage. Through the city’s demolition by neglect ordinance, and “some luck,” says Main Street manager Sarah O’Brien, both buildings have new property owners and the spaces are being converted to multi-use.

Funding Main Street
It’s well known that grants of any size are critically important tools to help spur investment into downtown. Most Main Street programs have some sort of grant program to assist with exterior, interior, paint, signage and other improvements. Several new wine-based events in 2012 raised tens of thousands of dollars for improvement programs and in at least one case, created the first pool of money for projects. New events in Paris, Clifton and Huntsville were modeled after Georgetown’s Swirl that has been going on for several years. These ticketed events not only raise money for grant programs, but also support local commerce through wine and food pairings showcased in local shops and promote downtown visitation. Nacogdoches Main Street has its inaugural Wine Swirl scheduled for February 9, 2013.

In Goliad, one of the smallest Main Street communities in Texas, a holiday ice skating rink done for the first time during 2012 drew 900 skaters (Goliad’s population is less than 2,000) and “created a new ex-

The Hoya building in Nacogdoches, then (left), now (middle) and TMSP rendering (right).
needed directional signage to get travelers off of the highways bypassing downtown—these have worked especially well and have gotten compliments from locals as well.”

**And, Bastrop has an App for that**
During 2012, the Bastrop Main Street promotion and economic restructuring committees partnered to bring to fruition the Bastrop App effort (because there’s an app for that!) This is a project any Main Street program could do,” says Wood.

**The younger crowd needs a place on Main Street, too**

**FERRIS**, a 16-year Main Street program with a population of less than 2,500, had a historic photo contest for high school students during 2012 which received 102 entries. The art teacher created a collage of the winning entries, which was made into the cover of the 2013 Ferris Economic Development Map.

In **BEAUMONT**, a local movement of 20 to 30-year-olds called REcreate has spurred YCFDR-Young Creatives for Downtown Revitalization, which did two events for Main Street that raised more than $15,000 for the program! One of the founders of REcreate is now on the Beaumont Main Street board. The group’s goal in the coming year is to assist in the economic development effort for downtown living by finding 500 people interested in living downtown and then sharing that information with potential loft developers. These young creatives are also helping increase the Main Street program’s use of social media.

**Celebrations**
In 2012, Main Street communities swept the Texas Downtown Association’s (TDA) annual awards program, taking home the award in 10 of 11 categories. Main Street projects recognized were in Denton, Amarillo, Seguin, Bastrop, Waxahachie, Georgetown and Tyler. Carolyn Howard, from Beaumont Main Street, received the Susan H. Campbell Award for Professional Excellence, named for the late Susan Campbell, who was a Texas Main Street manager, TDA president and THC staff member. Awards are listed here: [www.texasdowntown.org](http://www.texasdowntown.org).

San Angelo, urban Main Street program, received the First Lady’s Texas Treasures Award and a visit from First Lady Anita Perry, who also visited new 2012 Main Street city Victoria that same day.

San Angelo, urban Main Street program, received the First Lady’s Texas Treasures Award and a visit from First Lady Anita Perry, who also visited new 2012 Main Street city Victoria that same day.
If you ask Rand McNally and USA Today, Gainesville, recertified Main Street city since 2001, is the “Most Patriotic City in America”. Denton, urban Main Street city since 1990, was among six finalists for the most fun town in America according to their “Best of the Road” annual contest.

There were also some important anniversary milestones during 2012. The following began 2012 having completed in Main Street:

- Twenty years: Bay City, Beaumont (Plainview, 20 years recertified)
- Fifteen years: Bowie (Goliad, Harlingen and Seguin, 15 years recertified)
- Ten years: Canyon, Del Rio, Pilot Point and Rio Grande City (Waxahachie, 10 years recertified)
- Five years: Bastrop, Cotulla (Kilgore, five years recertified)

During 2012, we also welcomed into the network numerous new Main Street managers: Terri Wilson (Celina), Joe Cruz (Eagle Pass), Bridgette Bise (Goliad), Stephanie Riddle (Henderson), Misty Kothe (Kerrville), Cynthia Martin (Kingsville), Doris Messer (Llano), Kayla Catey (Longview), Derek Hall (Luling), Carolyn Teague (Mount Vernon), Jeremy Sander (Pilot Point), Paula Morris (Roys City), Bill Hodges (Sonora), Ina McDowell (Texarkana) and Sara Rodriguez (Victoria).

**At the TMSP office**

It was a busy year in Austin at the TMSP office as well. Although we had reduced staff, we still completed 109 site visits to provide a variety of services to our designated programs. This includes design-oriented site visits, board/manager trainings, facilitating strategic planning sessions/retreats and to provide other specialized services.

Designated programs have access to all TMSP services, so don’t hesitate to call upon us during the year. Additionally design staff worked on 222 projects for our programs. This number includes the production of 503 façade renderings (taking into account that many projects require the creation of multiple versions, color schemes etc.).

During the year we completed the end of the site visits under our Preserve America grant, having done 24 multi-day site visits and reports over the course of the grant. In Brenham, we also held another Preserve America preservation seminar under the grant on financing downtown housing. In January 2013, the remaining Preserve America funds will be used to bring in a downtown economic development expert to discuss market analysis techniques during Main Street training in Llano. The speaker in Llano, Joshua Bloom, represents The Community Land Use and Economics (CLUE) Group, with whom the TMSP will be working with throughout the year to bring added economic restructuring services to the network.

We also officially welcomed Victoria into the program in 2012 as a new urban program and conducted a resource team for that community during the year. The 2012 application process brought three programs into the network, effective January 1, 2013: San Augustine, Childress and Cuero (recertified). TMSP staff will spend considerable time with these communities during 2013 helping them develop and achieve their preservation and revitalization goals.

**It’s the people, really**

Each year, the Texas Main Street annual report could feature thousands of activities and projects individual programs undertake to increase the vitality of their historic downtown commercial districts. In the interest of space we could only select a few here to spotlight so we
picked ones that we hoped would provide you with good ideas for possible projects of your own. You can be sure that in any Main Street community when there’s activity downtown—whether it’s a new business opening, a historic building being rehabilitated or an event bringing people in—that it didn’t magically happen. Main Street had something to do with it! The statistics show that Main Street really works, but behind those numbers, it is truly the people behind the programs that bring it all together.

This article was written by Debra Farst, state coordinator, TMSP, with assistance from Leslie Wolfenden and other THC staff.

Looking forward to working with you during 2013 and beyond,

Sincerely,

The staff of the Texas Main Street Program

Calendar of Events

- **Jan. 29–30, 2013, Llano**
  New manager training prior to the beginning of Winter Training for all managers. New manager training will last all day Jan. 29 through noon Jan. 30.

- **Jan. 30 (afternoon)–Feb. 1, 2013 (noon), Llano**
  Winter Main Street training for all Texas Main Street managers

- **Apr. 14–16, 2013, New Orleans** National Main Streets Conference, theme: *Main Street and the Cultural Economy*

- **June 4–5, 2013, LaGrange**
  New manager training prior to the beginning of Summer training for all managers. New manager training will last all day June 4 through noon June 5

- **June 5 (afternoon)–June 7, 2013 (noon), LaGrange**
  Summer Main Street training for all Texas Main Street managers
Websites of Interest

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.tsplb.state.tx.us
Urban Land Institute: www.uli.org