

Main Street Matters

WINTER 2020 • A PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS MAIN STREET PROGRAM

40 YEARS OF MAIN STREET

This year is one of celebration for Texas Main Street and the national Main Street movement! Forty years ago, Texas' was one of the first six states in the country selected to carry out a brand-new approach designed to bring life back to historic downtowns. A novel concept, no one could have truly realized back then how many communities across the country would be transformed by Main Street and its Four Point Approach™. Our anniversary celebration includes hosting the national Main Street Now conference of Main Street America™ in May. Almost 2,000 downtowners from across the country will converge in Dallas to celebrate four decades of the Main Street movement. We've also launched a 'Let's Texas, Main Street' Sweepstakes contest to win a travel package to Denton. (See the back page for full details.) This issue of Main Street Matters showcases Seguin, one of Texas' original Main Street communities. Main Street Manager Kyle Kramm shares Seguin's Main Street journey from 1981 through today. This remarkable story begins on page 2. In each issue of Main Street Matters, between now and May, we'll be spotlighting Texas' charter Main Street communities that still participate today: Seguin, Eagle Pass, Hillsboro and Plainview. As we start 2020, we also welcome our two newest communities into the network: Hamilton and Mineral Wells.



2020 New Main Street City, Mineral Wells. Photo Credits: Johnny Goodday



2020 New Main Street City, Hamilton



2020 Texas Main Street staff, Austin

DOWNTOWN SEGUIN – A 182 YEAR WORK IN PROGRESS



By Kyle Kramm, Main Street Manager,
Seguin

Famed Central Park architect Frederick Law Olmsted dubbed Seguin the “prettiest town in Texas” when he visited the state in 1854. And for decades, Seguin remained one of the most beautiful cities in Texas highlighted by architecture from some of the most influential architects including Robert H.H. Hugmann, J. Riely Gordon, Leo M.J. Dielmann, and Atlee B. Ayres. But like most cities across the nation, Seguin’s downtown started to lose some of its “pretty” as vacant storefronts and altered facades became the norm in the mid-1900s. As reflected in an article in the *Palestine Herald* about the Main Street Program’s origin, not even Seguin’s giant pecan was enough to save our downtown from the disinvestment felt across the nation.

“I think the word is all roads used to lead to downtown and now they lead out of downtown,” Anice Read, the Texas Main Street coordinator with the Texas Historical Commission, told the Associated Press during the first summit of the National Main Street Center. The summit held in January 1981 was the first time that all 30 local Main Street program

coordinators, state coordinators, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation met to train on the Four-Point Approach™.

Prior to designation as a Main Street city, Seguin had already started to take steps to improve its downtown. And when the call was released about nominating cities for the Main Street Program, Seguin was positioned well to take advantage of the opportunity. Seguin submitted their application in July 1980 to Governor Bill Clements, who later that month announced Seguin would be one of Texas’ communities included in the state’s application to the National Trust. Texas was one of 39 states to apply for the program, and Seguin was one of over 200 cities that applied. Six states were selected, and each state selected five cities.

To show the Governor’s commitment to the program, First Lady Rita Clements toured the five Texas cities during February 1981, thus beginning the tradition of the First Lady Tours that occur every year. Mrs. Clements would also join the board of the newly created National Main Street Center.

Seguin found much success with the Main Street Program very quickly. Within the first year a low-interest loan pool was established by local banks that led to over \$1.4 million reinvested in downtown Seguin, more than the other four Texas pilot cities combined. Becoming one of the first Main Street cities became a sense of pride for Seguin and drove downtown merchants and property owners to improve their facades.

Other projects Seguin Main Street worked on included beautification projects with trees and benches, starting to host regular events in downtown like a TGIF Brown Bag lunch in the park, and the listing of downtown Seguin in the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

Joe Bruns, Seguin’s first chair of the Main Street Advisory Board, recalled the community seeing the Main Street Program as an opportunity to get the community on board with a unified vision for downtown.

“The main thrust was to do the restoration of downtown and create a commonality for downtown,”



said Bruns, who still runs a law firm in downtown Seguin today. “We wanted to make sure Seguin was known for something that brought in tourists and locals.”

Seguin left the program in the mid 1980s and rejoined the Main Street movement in 1997 with a renewed interest in revitalizing downtown.

In 1998, the program started offering FIX-IT Façade grants and creating new events that brought in larger crowds to downtown. Then came large infrastructure projects that included new street lighting with period light poles, Texas Capital Fund grants to address aging sidewalks that lacked ADA access, and the burying of utility lines.

The community would show their support for downtown Seguin with the 2006 Destination Seguin Bond Elections that included funding for Central Park improvements like repairing the art deco fountain, building a new bandstand, and installing new benches. The bonds also included the restoration of the Walnut Springs Park on the western edge of downtown. The park was originally designed by Robert H.H. Hugman, San Antonio Riverwalk architect, in the 1930s, but many of the features were removed in the 1950s.

Seguin Main Street has relied on a variety of partners over the years, from Rotary volunteering every Fourth of July to work the parade to the local newspapers that provide space for a weekly downtown column.

“One of the most important partners for downtown Seguin has been Guadalupe County,” said Mary Jo Langford, Seguin Main Street Manager from 1996 – 2014. “The county rehabilitated the Justice Center, built the parking garage, and restored the courthouse investing more than \$20 million in downtown from 2010 to 2017.”

In addition to the public entities investing in downtown, the private sector has invested heavily in downtown Seguin with complete building rehabs and restorations.

In 2012, the popular home goods store Gift & Gourmet purchased 212 South Austin Street and completed a full rehab of its first floor and removed a slip cover to expose the historic wooden windows that had remained hidden for over four decades. In 2019, the owner continued the rehab of her building with the completion of three two-bedroom apartments on the second floor.



Gift & Gourmet - Before



Gift & Gourmet - After

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION	PROJECT: JICITA & AUSTIN CITY: SEGUIN DRAWN BY: SARAH J. BLANKENSHIP DATE: 1/22/2019 ARCHITECT: HOWARD LANGNER NOT FOR REGULATORY REVIEW, PERMITTING, OR CONSTRUCTION	SHEET NUMBER 2
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Magnolia Hotel - Before



Magnolia Hotel - After

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION	PROJECT: 201 S. CROCKETT CITY: SEGUIN, TX DRAWN BY: AUDREY DOLE DATE: APRIL 11, 2013 ARCHITECT: HOWARD LANGNER NOT FOR REGULATORY REVIEW, PERMITTING, OR CONSTRUCTION	SHEET NUMBER 1
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One of downtown Seguin's most iconic landmarks, the Texas Theatre, had fallen into rough shape with sunlight coming through the roof. The Seguin Conservation Society purchased the landmark and the community rallied to raise over \$2.5 million to restore the theater.

The Magnolia Hotel, once listed on the National Trust's Most Endangered Historic Places, was purchased and the restoration of the hotel has proven to be a large attraction to downtown Seguin as people come for the historic tours and the popular ghost tours.

New stores are opening monthly in storefronts that have been rehabilitated, while long-term businesses continue to thrive. Starcke Furniture, a recipient of a Texas Treasure Business Award from the THC, has been family owned and operated in downtown Seguin since 1910 and continues to offer the quality customer service that has allowed it to survive for over 100 years. The Oak Tavern, the longest continually licensed operating bar in Texas, offers visitors a sense of nostalgia as they come in for the coldest beer in town. Across the street from the oldest bar, you will find one of the newest establishments, Seguin Brewing.

Downtown Seguin has changed a lot over the last 40 years. Numerous new businesses have filled vacant storefronts, buildings have been rehabbed, streetscapes and sidewalks have been upgraded with trees and benches, and the community continues to support downtown.

However, some things have not changed in those 40 years. Reading an interview from Seguin's first Main Street Manager, Vince Hauser, was like reading an interview that I would have given today. Hauser reflected on how every day is different with the variety of projects that he is involved in, the ability of Main Street to bring together a variety of stakeholders, and how Main Street helped to start to change the attitude of locals about their community.

The article reads "His (Hauser) job has varied from being a building consultant to doing public relations for the city to being a researcher in city ordinances." Hauser goes on to reflect, "It's been interesting to see a

shift in attitudes of people here. People are looking at the potential of the city instead of the problems."

The passion of the community for downtown continues to this day and it is a testament to the Main Street Program's adaptability that it still works as a way to create vision for downtowns and encourage viability of historic districts.

As we look back on the last 40 years, we are pleased by the successes that have been accomplished and are excited about what lies ahead for the next 40 as work on our second floor vacancies, recruitment of restaurants, and growing downtown events. One thing is for sure, downtown Seguin's success in the future will be due to the foundation created by the Main Street program 40 years ago.



City Council hires first Main Street Manager, Vince Hauser



IONA LANE...Director of the Main Street Project is joined on her right by Anice Read of the Texas Historical Commission Main Street center in planting the first tree as part of the Downtown Beautification project Friday.

(Staff photo)

DOWNTOWN MOBILITY HUB IN SAN MARCOS



*By Josie Faletta, Main Street
Manager, San Marcos*

In 2015, a vacant lot sat in the middle of Downtown San Marcos. Previously home to Sunshine Cleaners, the city acquired the lot but didn't make immediate moves due to the fact that it was a brownfield site from years of leached cleaning chemicals. The empty, underutilized space became an unintended pet relief area, and was leaning toward blight when several community members decided to dream big. This is the story of how a literal trash pit was transformed into San Marcos' brand new Downtown Mobility Hub, which opened November 18, 2019. It's also a lesson on the importance of community-driven and supported placemaking projects, and the role Main Street Programs can play as facilitators and change-makers.

In 2016, Main Street's Economic Vitality Committee identified the empty lot at 214 E. Hutchison Street as their primary project for the year. The committee began generating ideas, and the concept of a downtown mobility hub was formed. The Design Committee was brought in to brainstorm potential amenities for the space, and the committees worked together to build a vision. The Advisory Board at the time included a City Council member who was passionate about multi-modal transportation, and she helped carry the project when Main Street presented it to council. This support was integral to the success of the project, as it was developed and backed by community members, who were empowered to become the staunchest champions of the mobility hub.

In 2018, three years after the original spark, the Downtown Mobility Hub was included in the Fiscal



Year 2019 budget as a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) project, and we celebrated the ribbon cutting this past November! The mini park now features seating and shade structures, a mobility-focused mural, and native plant species. It has electrical outlets throughout to support events. It hosts a bike corral, air pump, and repair station. The water fountain has streams for people, dogs, and water bottles. There is still a pet relief area! This one is grassy and includes signage, baggies, and a trash receptacle. The lot also includes three parking spaces, though future plans call for installation of an electric charging station, and promotion of priority parking for rideshare.

It's now 2020, and we know that a space is only as successful as its activation. To that end, our program is busy planning for ways to bring the public to their new Mobility Hub. In December, we decorated one of the shade structures with lighting, ornaments, mistletoe, and greenery for the holidays. For February, we're planning a Love Downtown décor theme. We have initiated partnerships with our San Marcos Arts Commission for potential public art initiatives and our San Marcos Public Library to curate the



Ribbon Cutting Event

Little Free Library we are in the process of building. Our team added the Downtown Mobility Hub as a Google location, so that it can be geotagged on social media.

In short, the work doesn't end! The staff, board, and community members who developed this idea are not all still in the picture, yet we carry their legacy forward. This is the beauty of Main Street, the sometimes – minute progress of incremental change. We each have our part to play in that process. Perhaps you are the one who sparks an idea which will become a successful project five years down the road. Maybe you'll be fortunate enough to see the completion of a project, and have the opportunity to do the "fun stuff" like build a little library or dream up seasonal art installations. Wherever you are in that process, I wish you all the best!

Additional information

Timeline:

- 2016 – several groups of community activists begin separately brainstorming alternate uses for a tiny, city-owned vacant lot
- 2017 – Task Force is determined by City Council, community input collected, design rendered by consultant Kimley-Horn
- 2018 – the Downtown Mobility Hub is included in FY 2019 CIP Budget
- 2019 – Mobility Hub is constructed summer 2019

- November 18, 2019 – ribbon cutting for newly completed Downtown Mobility Hub
- Present – Main Street works to activate space

Amenities:

- 3 parking spaces
- Water fountain for people, 4-legged pets, and water bottles
- Bike corral parking x2
- Bike repair station
- Bike air pump
- Mural – mobility focus
- Green space
- Picnic tables
- Shade
- Electricity
- Dog waste station
- Trash and recycling receptacles x2 of each
- Rain garden
- Native plants, trees, and flowers



Holiday Decor

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



The Texas Main Street staff kicked off January 2020 with New Manager Orientation held in Elgin, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary of Main Street designation this year. This orientation is designed especially for new program managers, but we always have board members and seasoned managers join us as well. At the day-long orientation January 28, the newest entries into our network attended from Bridgeport, Buda, Caldwell, Corsicana, Hamilton, Livingston, San Marcos, Sealy, Taylor, Victoria, and Waco. We were also joined by long-timers from Denton and Mount Pleasant. Thanks to our Elgin hosts who treated us well, including (of course) serving Texas Main Street cake! Expert managers from San Marcos (Josie Falletta) and Georgetown (Kim McAuliffe) joined the state staff in presentations and Elgin program director Amy Miller ended the day with a walking tour of the Main Street district.

Main Street is Economic Development

\$314.4 Million

TOTAL DOWNTOWN REINVESTMENT DURING 2019

Total includes private reinvestment of \$202.4 million and public investment of \$111.9 million. The 2019 totals are a 46% above 2018.

508

small businesses and 2,007 jobs were created.



156,780

volunteer hours

(= \$ value of \$3.9 million contributed to local programs to support the revitalization effort)

30 YEARS IN 2020



MAIN STREET *Now* CONFERENCE

JOIN US IN
THE LONE STAR STATE
AS WE CELEBRATE

40 YEARS OF THE
MAIN STREET MOVEMENT!

DALLAS, TX // MAY 18-20, 2020



We hope everyone is making plans to join us in Dallas May 18-20, 2020 for the national Main Street Now conference and that you've entered the Let's Texas, Main Street Sweepstakes to win a travel package to Denton, a 30-year Texas Main Street community and a Great American Main Street Award winner. Here's to 40 years of the Main Street movement!

Main Street Now registration and schedules:

<https://www.mainstreet.org/howwecanhelp/mainstreetnow>

Conference blogs:

- Main Street in the Lone Star State: <https://www.mainstreet.org/blogs/national-main-street-center/2019/10/18/main-spotlight-its-all-great-in-the-lone-star-stat>
- The Anniversary: <https://www.mainstreet.org/blogs/national-main-street-center/2020/01/14/embracing-the-big-four-oh>
- Field Sessions: <https://www.mainstreet.org/blogs/national-main-street-center/2019/11/19/in-and-around-out-and-about-dallas>

Let's Texas, Main Street Sweepstakes—Win a travel package to Denton!

