



TEXAS HISTORIC COURTHOUSE PRESERVATION PROGRAM

In 1999, the Texas Legislature and Gov. George W. Bush created the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program (THCPP) through House Bill 1341, appropriating \$50 million for the 2000-01 biennium. The idea began in 1997 when the governor proposed a state and local courthouse revitalization project to preserve and restore Texas' unique county courthouses. In 1998 and again in 2012, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named Texas courthouses to its list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places.

BACKGROUND

Texas has more historic courthouses than any other state. Today more than 240 courthouses still stand that are at least 50 years old. About 80 were built before the turn of the 20th century. By the end of that century, most of these structures were significantly deteriorated due to inadequate maintenance, insensitive modifications, or weather-related damage. The Texas Historical Commission (THC) documented the condition of 50 of the state's oldest courthouses in the late 1990s and determined that counties lacked the resources to preserve the buildings for future generations.

Providing assistance to counties reached a critical point when Texas county courthouses were added to the National Trust's 11 Most Endangered Places list in 1998. The state's response was to create the THCPP, the largest preservation grant program ever initiated by a state government. This nationally recognized preservation program has turned around the trend of disrepair and begun the process of restoring the state's most treasured historic landmarks.



1911 San Saba County Courthouse, San Saba.

The THCPP provides partial matching grants, up to 85 percent of eligible project costs for the restoration of historic county courthouses. The program also awards planning grants for development of architectural plans and specifications, as well as emergency grants. The program awards planning and construction grants based upon 22 established scoring criteria.

Since the program's inception, 143 courthouse preservation plans (the first step in program eligibility) have been submitted, and 134 of those have been approved. To date, the program funds have facilitated the restoration and preservation of 99 county courthouses.

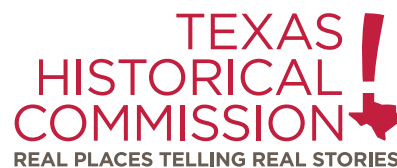
The urgent need to preserve the state's historic courthouses became evident during the first 10 rounds of grants, as did Texans' enthusiasm for the program. There are, however, nearly 180 nationally recognized historic courthouses across the state that could benefit from the THCPP.

IMPORTANT POINTS

- More than \$533 million in matching state and local courthouse grants has generated nearly 10,900 jobs, \$612 million in income, and \$750,612,748 million in gross state product 1999–2018.
 - The threat to historic courthouses is real. In 1993, fire ravaged the 1890 Hill County Courthouse in Hillsboro. In 1999, fires destroyed the 1911 Reagan County Courthouse in Stiles and damaged the 1891 Tyler County Courthouse in Woodville. In 2015, the 1930 Midland County Courthouse was demolished, and the 1956 Aransas County Courthouse was lost in 2017 due to damage from Hurricane Harvey.
 - On August 4, 2000, fire gutted the historic 1902 Newton County Courthouse just two weeks after the THC approved its master plan for the THPP. The THC provided emergency stabilization funds and Round III funding for full restoration of the courthouse.
 - Over 240 Texas historic courthouses are currently eligible for the program; 170 remain to be restored.
 - Texas courthouses date from the mid-19th century and were among the first permanent structures in many counties.
 - County courthouse projects serve as catalysts in economic revitalization in business districts surrounding courthouse squares throughout the state.
 - Historic courthouses are focal points for heritage tourism, one of the fastest-growing segments of the travel industry in Texas.
- A total of 142 Texas courthouses are listed in the National Register of Historic Places; 152 are Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks and 114 are State Antiquities Landmarks.
 - The state has invested over \$315 million, which has generated more than \$243.8 million in direct expenditures from participating counties and millions more in indirect expenses.
 - This program has been recognized by the Texas Society of Architects and the National Trust for Historic Preservation with honor awards. In May 2008, the program received the Preserve America Presidential Award.
 - Projects have increased employment in the construction industry, generated revenue in rural areas, and strengthened skills of craftspeople in many specialty trades.
 - Restored courthouses offer an efficient and healthy environment for conducting business through compliance with life safety codes, accessibility standards, and the removal of hazardous materials, mold, and outdated mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.
 - Restored courthouses provide safe and secure storage for vital county records, as well as more efficient space for use of the records by the public.
 - At least 21 major motion pictures include scenes shot in a historic courthouse, including "Bernie," "True Grit," "Lone Star," "Tree of Life," and "Hope."

HOW TO REACH US

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