

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Staff Recommendations to County Historical Commissions



Purpose

Chapter 318 of the Texas Local Government Code directs county commissioners courts to appoint a County Historical Commission (CHC) for the purpose of managing programs suggested by the commissioners court and the Texas Historical Commission (THC) for the preservation of the county's historic cultural resources. To this end, THC staff compiled recommended priorities for various programs and initiatives to help a CHC direct its program of work.

This information was compiled by THC's **CHC Outreach Program**. However, questions about a particular program or initiative should be directed to the program contact listed on the THC website here: www.thc.state.tx.us/contact.



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories

This packet contains staff recommendations for following THC programs and services. As additional recommendations are developed, CHC Outreach Program staff will expand this recommendation packet.

01—ROLE OF A COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION (CHC) APPOINTEE

02—HISTORICAL MARKERS PROGRAM

03—ARCHEOLOGICAL & ARCHITECTURAL TECHNICAL REVIEW

03-A—TxDOT RECOMMENDATIONS TO COMPLEMENT THC REVIEW

04—CEMETERY PRESERVATION

05—HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY

06—NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES (NRHP)

07—HISTORIC TAX CREDITS

08—TEXAS PRESERVATION TRUST FUND (TPTF)

09—TEXAS ARCHEOLOGY MONTH (TAM)

10—TEXAS ARCHEOLOGICAL STEWARDSHIP NETWORK (TASN)

01—ROLE OF A COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION (CHC) APPOINTEE

LEVEL 1

Develop constructive relationships

- **Organization**—complies with Texas Local Government Code (Chapter 318)—mission, structure, business, etc.
- **Education**—manages 1 preservation project/effort each year
- **THC interaction**—CHC maintains communication with THC and has an awareness of THC programs—knows how to contact staff members, provides current contact information for CHC, and responds to THC inquiries
- **Partnerships**—supports local history- and preservation-related efforts throughout county

Pursue Level 2 if Level 1 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 2

Serve best interests of county resources

- **Organization**—quorum at every meeting; all appointees have taken Open Meetings training
- **Education**—taps seasoned appointees to train new appointees; provides preservation presentations to public; working knowledge of county historic and cultural resources
- **THC interaction**—contacts THC regularly for consultation; participates in multiple THC programs
- **Partnerships**—reports in county commissioners court quarterly; meets with local and regional partners quarterly

Pursue Level 3 if Level 2 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 3

Demonstrate a county preservation ethic

- **Organization**—CHC appointees demonstrate well-rounded organizational diversity in terms of gender, age, geographic location within county, ethnicity, preservation knowledge, skillsets, etc.
- **Education**—provide and promote a well-rounded and balanced program of work from year to year
- **Leadership**—self-imposed term limits, so that appointees learn responsibilities for different roles and share the load (i.e., CHC's livelihood is not dependent on 1–3 appointees)

CHC Appointee Etiquette

- Provide your name, county, and property name for each call/email
- Be positive and solicitous to the public and to THC staff
- Preserve and protect ALL county historic and cultural resources
- All appointees must participate; chair must articulate expectations

Actions CHC Appointees Should Avoid

- Avoid assuming people know you or what you're talking about
- Avoid personality clashes with public, appointees, or officials
- Avoid guessing about issues that require preservation expertise
- Avoid speaking for county officials before checking with them

Work THC does not oversee

- THC does not oversee county policy—business, money, purchasing, legal issues, etc.
- THC does not oversee CHC options—bylaws, officer selection, etc.
- THC does not provide nonprofit guidance

02—HISTORICAL MARKERS PROGRAM

LEVEL 1

Develop constructive relationships

- Communicate with THC Marker Staff regarding historical marker applications, the Undertold Program, relocation or replacement requests, etc.
- Assist public with the marker application process.

Pursue Level 2 if Level 1 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 2

Serve best interests of county resources

- Establish a CHC marker chair to work with public and THC.
- Initiate applications to address gaps in county history.
- Participate in THC Marker Program training opportunities.
- Inventory and periodically assess the physical condition of RTHLs, HTC's, and subject markers.

Pursue Level 3 if Level 2 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 3

Demonstrate a county preservation ethic

- Based on conditions inventory, refinish faded markers.
- Report inaccurate or damaged markers to THC Marker Staff.
- Use inventories to create educational/promotional materials to encourage heritage tourism.

CHC Appointee Etiquette

- Working with THC—THC has a professional relationship with 254 counties and more than 5,000 CHC appointees. Please be patient as we serve everyone in an orderly fashion.
- Working with public—CHC appointees represent the county and county officials who made the appointment, so take care with what you say and do.
- If possible, designate a public and media spokesperson. You can also refer public to THC staff.

Actions CHC Appointees Should Avoid

- Avoid marking everything. Quality vs. quantity—the goal isn't to get as many markers as possible but to focus on the substantial and/or undertold stories for a county.
- Avoid fielding questions from the public/media without all of the facts. Call THC to verify answers to questions from public.

Work THC does not oversee

- THC does not assist the planning or implementation to establish a county or city marker program to identify and mark significant local topics.
- THC staff occasionally act as speakers at THC-related events as workload allows; however, THC does not find/book speakers for local dedications and events.

03—ARCHEOLOGICAL & ARCHITECTURAL TECHNICAL REVIEW

LEVEL 1

Develop constructive relationships

- Know how to identify the THC archeology and THC architectural regional reviewers for county.
- Respond to correspondence from THC.
- Be aware of CHC’s ability to be a consulting party under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
- Notify the THC Division of Architecture of threats to historic properties in the county, particularly if demolition is proposed. Notify the THC Archeology Division when unmonitored digging and/or looting is taking place.

Pursue Level 2 if Level 1 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 2

Serve best interests of county resources

- Maintain regular contact with the THC architectural and archeology reviewers, so THC is regularly informed about proposed/ongoing development in county.
- Familiarize appointees with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Antiquities Code of Texas.
- Familiarize appointees with the following county resources: (A) properties that are designated as historic (including Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks, State Antiquities Landmarks, and preservation covenants and easements); and (B) significant archeological resources. [THC archeologists have this information.]

Pursue Level 3 if Level 2 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 3

Demonstrate a county preservation ethic

- When able, participate as a consulting party in the Section 106 process.
- Monitor RTHLs, SALs, and covenant/easement properties on an annual basis; notify THC regional reviewers if unauthorized changes are made.
- Notify THC regional reviewers about potential threats to historic and cultural resources stemming from local development projects.

CHC Appointee Etiquette

- CHC may/may not have a role in state or federal projects that THC reviews.
- CHC may be a mouthpiece for the county but doesn’t speak for the THC.
- When discussing proposed work with property owners or developers, please keep the tone and content informative rather than adversarial.
- Always confer with THC archeologists with any questions about what information should and should not be shared with the public.
- Always refer the owner/agent to THC regional reviewers assigned to a project review to discuss questions/concerns.

Actions CHC Appointees Should Avoid

- Don’t attempt to perform/predict the path or outcome of a THC project review.
- Never indicate THC may take legal action; not county’s role to speak for THC.
- Avoid participation and/or promotion of events that highlight artifact collecting and uncontrolled digging of archeological sites.

Work THC does not oversee

- Local advocacy efforts. CHC should advocate for county historic properties. Appointees must secure county officials’ approval before advocacy campaigns and provide progress reports to ensure officials are informed and supportive of efforts.

03-A—TxDOT RECOMMENDATIONS TO COMPLEMENT THC REVIEW

LEVEL 1

Develop constructive relationships

- Know how to identify name of county's TxDOT District Environmental contact.
- Respond to correspondence from TxDOT.
- Be aware of CHC's ability to be a consulting party for TxDOT projects under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Pursue Level 2 if Level 1 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 2

Serve best interests of county resources

- Maintain regular contact with TxDOT District Environmental contact, so that the CHC is regularly informed about proposed/ongoing development in county.
- Familiarize appointees with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, specifically TxDOT's role as a lead agency for a variety of proposed undertakings.
- Familiarize appointees with county's historic road resources, especially historic bridges. Other road resources: Bankhead or Meridian Highways, Works Progress Administration resources, or historic rest areas.

Pursue Level 3 if Level 2 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 3

Demonstrate a county preservation ethic

- When the opportunity arises, participate as a consulting party in the Section 106 process.
- Assist TxDOT in identifying historic properties that may be impacted by proposed road projects.
- Notify TxDOT District Environmental staff of any locally important considerations related to culturally sensitive resources that could/will be impacted by a project.

CHC Appointee Etiquette

- If the CHC fields a question about a road project, contact the TxDOT District Environmental staff for clarification prior to contacting the THC. District staff can put CHC in direct contact with TxDOT specialists with answers.
- If looting or vandalism is noted on State Right of Way (ROW), CHC should immediately contact TxDOT District Environmental staff by phone/email.
- If archeological human remains are discovered on State ROW, CHC should immediately contact TxDOT District Environmental staff by phone/email.

Actions CHC Appointees Should Avoid

- Do not undertake investigation and recording of archeological resources on State ROW.
- Avoid role confusion. CHC, with or without official consulting party status, should not identify themselves as a representative of TxDOT.

Work THC does not oversee

- Work with museums and educational centers within the county to develop archeological and architectural heritage exhibits. At times, this type of work may be included in federal review mitigation agreements.
- Advocate for the maintenance and preservation (or removal to perpetual care) of unmarked cemeteries when they are discovered within existing or proposed State ROW.

04—CEMETERY PRESERVATION

LEVEL 1

Develop constructive relationships

- Familiarize appointees with the Cemetery Program’s personnel, programs, publications, and the THC Historic Sites Atlas.
- Respond to THC correspondence.
- Communicate with THC Cemetery Program staff about threats to endangered cemeteries.

Pursue Level 2 if Level 1 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 2

Serve best interests of county resources

- Appoint a Cemetery Chair.
- Familiarize appointees with basic cemetery laws available on the THC website.
- Inventory and periodically assess cemeteries within your county.
- Familiarize yourself with the activities other cemetery preservation groups in your county. Provide them with the THC Cemetery Program’s technical guidance publications and consider collaborative efforts.
- Ensure the THC Historic Sites Atlas accurately reflects the location of all identified cemeteries in the county.

Pursue Level 3 if Level 2 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 3

Demonstrate a county preservation ethic

- File Notice of Existence of Cemetery forms and/or initiate Historic Texas Cemetery designations for endangered cemeteries.
- Score all cemeteries in the county using the Endangerment Level handout.
- Using endangerment scores, create and implement a master plan to prioritize for the preservation of all cemeteries in the county.

CHC Appointee Etiquette

- If a cemetery is surrounded by private property, work respectfully with the surrounding landowner. Landowners and cemetery visitors each have legal rights—you need to be aware of these rights.
- Unless you are personally related to the deceased, the headstone and grave are considered private property. Any damage done to the headstone, grave, grave offerings, or plantings—even in the name of perceived preservation—may be considered desecration and punishable by law.

Actions CHC Appointees Should Avoid

- Avoid prioritizing historical markers until basic protection needs are met. Focus first on signage, fencing, and maintenance.
- Avoid pursuing HTC designations for well-established and actively maintained cemeteries over lost, threatened, and endangered cemeteries.

Work THC does not oversee

- Cemeteries are protected by law. However, the THC is not the agency that enforces this law. Local law enforcement should be called if a law relating to cemeteries has been broken (i.e., including breaking and entering, theft, vandalism, and desecration.)
- THC staff does not have a role in issues that involve access to cemeteries that are surrounded by private land or other legal issues. THC doesn’t ensure access to cemeteries or mediate local disagreements about access.
- THC does not oversee cemetery location signs; signs fall under TxDOT purview.

05—HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY

LEVEL 1

Develop constructive relationships

- Communicate with THC Survey Staff regarding local and county-wide surveys.
- Contact THC Survey Staff to see what historic resources survey reports are on file in the THC library; request copies.
- Gather locally available county history information into one location (books, papers, documents, photos, etc.) that is accessible to the CHC and/or public.

Pursue Level 2 if Level 1 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 2

Serve best interests of county resources

- Request and/or participate in THC Survey Program training opportunities.
- Create a list of known historic resources in the county. Most can be found on the THC Historic Sites Atlas online.
 - Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks (RTHL)
 - State Antiquities Landmarks (SAL)
 - Historic Texas Cemeteries (HTC)
 - National Register of Historic Place (NRHP) individual properties and districts
 - Local landmarks and districts

Pursue Level 3 if Level 2 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 3

Demonstrate a county preservation ethic

- Work with county or city staff to plot known historic resources on a map; digital format preferred.
- If no county-wide survey has been done or previous survey is over 10 years old, start planning process for doing a historic resources survey.

CHC Appointee Etiquette

- State statutes direct CHCs to “institute and carry out a continuing survey of the county.” Pursuing survey should be viewed as the first step to long-term care of county resources.
- Survey should be viewed as a tool to determine and prioritize need, which leads to an effective program to protect and preserve county historic resources.
- The THC has a free Historic Resources Survey Packet that contains helpful survey information and an Access database already set up for survey data so the CHC doesn’t have to reinvent the wheel, so to speak.

Actions CHC Appointees Should Avoid

- Avoid survey/inventory strategies that identify only buildings that are ornate or “pretty.” All resources work together to tell your county’s history, even minimal or modest ones.
- Don’t keep all your eggs in one basket—if you have one or two people that have a lot of local historical knowledge in their heads or homes, transfer that information into written format, so that it can be shared and accessed.

Work THC does not oversee

- CHCs are the agents who should use survey information to create educational materials and promote local heritage tourism efforts.
- CHCs must initiate local events related to gathering survey data. For example, some CHCs host a “Share Your Family History” event to find historical info from the public.
- CHCs must influence local governments to initiate/maintain historic resources surveys.

06—NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES (NRHP/NR)

LEVEL 1

Develop constructive relationships

- Be familiar with the National Register program and the nomination process, its implications for property owners, and the NRHP criteria for evaluating historic properties.
- Notify the THC History Programs Division of threats to non-designated historic properties in the county, particularly if demolition is proposed.
- Direct members of the public to the THC National Register staff for all inquiries about new nomination proposals.

Pursue Level 2 if Level 1 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 2

Serve best interests of county resources

- Maintain an inventory of NR listings in the county and report on the status of listed properties, especially if a particular property is threatened or has been lost.
- Identify potential NR nominations in your county, consult with THC staff on eligibility of identified properties, and initiate NR applications for those properties.

Pursue Level 3 if Level 2 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 3

Demonstrate a county preservation ethic

- Assist potential NR applicants with preparing documentation for eligibility inquiries.
- Assist applicants with research for new NR nominations.
- Identify potential NR district nominations in your county, consult with THC staff on eligibility of identified districts, and initiate NR applications for those districts.

CHC Appointee Etiquette

- Provide your name, county, and property name for each call/email
- Be positive and solicitous to the public and to THC staff

Actions CHC Appointees Should Avoid

- Avoid preparing/submitting NR nominations prior to consultation with THC staff.
- Avoid historic designation confusion—get the facts on the application and legal parameters associated with various historic designations.

Work THC does not oversee

- THC does not oversee local landmark programs with the exception of those associated with Certified Local Government communities.

07—HISTORIC TAX CREDITS

LEVEL 1

Develop constructive relationships

- Direct property owners who are seeking information on funding sources for historic properties to the THC Division of Architecture.
- When able, read tax credit information on the THC website.

Pursue Level 2 if Level 1 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 2

Serve best interests of county resources

- Understand basic facts about tax credit programs available through the THC (state and federal rehabilitation tax credits).
- Direct potential applicants to the appropriate contact at the THC, as well as, tax credit information on the THC website.

Pursue Level 3 if Level 2 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 3

Demonstrate a county preservation ethic

- Promote historic preservation tax credits in its county—understand basic tax credit eligibility requirements, identify potential tax credit projects, and communicate this information to potential applicants.
- Interact with the THC regarding these potential tax credit projects in its county—share a list of potential tax credit projects, along with pertinent date, location, age, photos, known history, and proposed use.
- Promote historical designations, especially for historic districts.

CHC Appointee Etiquette

- Provide your name, county, and property name for each call/email
- Be positive and solicitous to the public and to THC staff

Actions CHC Appointees Should Avoid

- CHCs should not make definitive statements regarding whether a particular project would or would not qualify for tax credits or attempt to offer tax advice.
- CHCs should not attempt to review or make a determination as to whether a particular project or part of a project meets the Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Work THC does not oversee

- THC does not oversee local landmark programs with the exception of those associated with Certified Local Government communities.

08—TEXAS PRESERVATION TRUST FUND (TPTF)

LEVEL 1

Develop constructive relationships

- Direct a public entity (city or county) or private entity (private property owner) or non-profit organization that is seeking information on funding sources for historic properties/sites (architecture or archeology) to the THC Division of Architecture.
- Maintain an endangered and demolished list of historic properties in county.

Pursue Level 2 if Level 1 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 2

Serve best interests of county resources

- Understand basic facts about the TPTF Grant Program that is available through the THC and be able to direct potential applicants to the appropriate contact at the THC and TPTF information on THC website.
- Use endangered lists to identify potential TPTF projects; refer owners to THC staff to discuss TPTF program.

Pursue Level 3 if Level 2 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 3

Demonstrate a county preservation ethic

- Interact with THC regarding potential TPTF grant applications in its county: be able to provide pertinent date, location, age, photos, known history, and proposed use, so that THC can advise on grant eligibility.
- In coordination with county officials, apply for TPTF grants to help fund projects that involve county-owned historic property; projects must fall within program eligibility parameters. Prepare grant application with help from the THC staff. If granted, manage projects in cooperation with THC staff and TPTF guidelines.

CHC Appointee Etiquette

- Call the THC to verify TPTF grant program guidelines and verify answers to TPTF grant program questions.

Actions CHC Appointees Should Avoid

- Do not make definitive statements regarding whether a particular project would or would not qualify for the TPTF grant program.
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Work THC does not oversee

- THC does not prepare TPTF applications for potential applicants but can, given necessary lead time, review complete drafts of applications and provide constructive criticism to improve quality of application.

09—TEXAS ARCHEOLOGY MONTH (TAM)

LEVEL 1

Develop constructive relationships

- Communicate with THC’s Archeology Division (AD) regarding potential or scheduled TAM events. This will ensure that events promote preservation and culturally sensitive interpretation.
- Refer other organizations to AD concerning questions about the TAM program.
- Refer other organizations planning TAM events to pertinent resources such as “How to Plan and Manage an Archeology Fair” and the associated “Supplementary Resource Guide,” both of which are available for download on the THC website.

Pursue Level 2 if Level 1 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 2

Serve best interests of county resources

- Submit TAM event information via online form on the THC website, if CHC is hosting one or more events. This ensures inclusion in TAM Calendar of Events.
- Submit request for educational brochures to be distributed at TAM event(s) to be hosted by CHC. These brochures are listed and available for download at www.thc.state.tx.us/preserve/archeology/archeology-publications-resources. Online request form is on the THC website.

Pursue Level 3 if Level 2 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 3

Demonstrate a county preservation ethic

- Encourage other history- and preservation-related organizations to participate in TAM; refer organizations to AD and the THC website.
- Connect regional TAM efforts together to expand the audience for, and impact of, TAM efforts.

CHC Appointee Etiquette

- Archeology is often confused with paleontology; the “What Does an Archeologist Do?” brochure (see link at <http://www.thc.state.tx.us/preserve/archeology/archeology-publications-resources>) provides a useful explanation.
- Be careful to not divulge specific locations of archeological sites in your county. Revealing locations may inadvertently encourage illegal trespassing and looting of sites.
- Always confer with THC archeologists with any questions about what should and shouldn’t be shared with the public.

Actions CHC Appointees Should Avoid

- Avoid participation and/or promotion of events that highlight artifact collecting and uncontrolled digging of archeological sites. Consult with THC archeologists to confirm appropriateness of event and key players.

Work THC does not oversee

- Promotion of TAM events in your county via web and media outlets.

10—TEXAS ARCHEOLOGICAL STEWARDSHIP NETWORK (TASN)

LEVEL 1

Develop constructive relationships

- Communicate with THC Archeology Division (AD) regarding the Texas Archeological Stewardship Network (TASN) program.
- Refer questions about the TASN program and/or requests for TASN contact information to THC archeologists.
- When able, read TASN information on the THC website.

Pursue Level 2 if Level 1 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 2

Serve best interests of county resources

- Refer requests for steward assistance to AD archeologists. Frequently these requests relate to regulatory matters that are more appropriately handled by THC staff archeologists.
- Become aware of the TASN stewards that reside in your county/region.

Pursue Level 3 if Level 2 responsibilities managed effectively

LEVEL 3

Demonstrate a county preservation ethic

- Identify nominees for the TASN program. Submit nomination(s) to THC archeologists; nomination forms available for download on the THC website.

CHC Appointee Etiquette

- Refer concerns or complaints about individual stewards to the THC archeologists.

Actions CHC Appointees Should Avoid

- Please refrain from distributing personal contact information for stewards. Refer such queries to THC archeologists, as noted in Level 2 notes above.

Work THC does not oversee

- THC does not oversee public outreach efforts (i.e., talks, demonstrations, etc.) performed by members of the TASN.
-