

Each year, County Historical Commissions (CHCs) provide a report of their preservation activities to the Texas Historical Commission (THC). Outreach staff evaluate annual reports to identify statewide trends in CHC organizational efforts. Below are the primary trends documented by CHCs for the 2021 reporting cycle.

## Return to In-Person Programs

In 2021, CHCs returned to holding in-person events. Many offered K-12 programs, participated in heritage tourism events, and hosted seminars. Some expanded community outreach through partnerships with historic sites, local organizations, and universities. As partners, appointees staffed outreach tables at local events, served as liaisons, and gave tours of historic buildings and county courthouses. Because CHC resources are limited, and appointee activity decreased



during the pandemic, partnerships play an increasingly important role in programming. You can read more about expanding organizational reach by visiting the [Expanding CHC Partnerships](#) webpage.

## Monitoring Historic Resources Increases

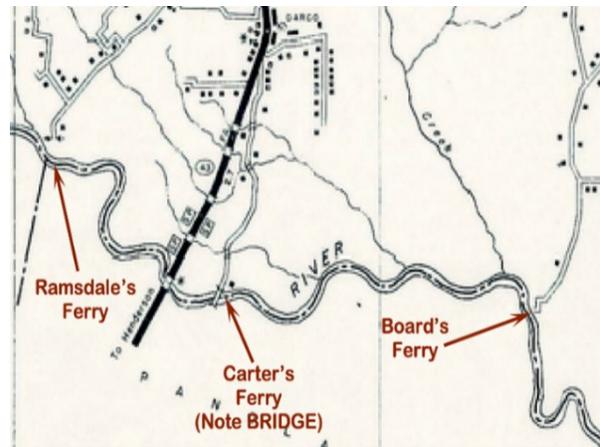


*Appointee refinishing Texas Historical Marker. Photo courtesy of Scurry CHC.*

The pandemic made it difficult for CHCs to monitor their county's historical markers, cemeteries, and properties with historic designations ([NRHP](#), [RTHL](#), [SAL](#)). In 2021, appointees regrouped and increased their efforts to monitor historic resources. The number of CHCs reporting they visited and monitored cemeteries (105) and historical markers (111) increased significantly. During site visits, appointees noted damages, reported necessary information to THC staff, refinished historical markers, and clarified locations of lost or abandoned cemeteries. CHCs reporting they visited and monitored properties with historic designations (55) increased in 2021, but at a lesser rate. Appointees used these opportunities to educate property owners about Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and to document alterations or needed repairs. The THC encourages CHCs to continue efforts to monitor their county's historic resources. Visit the [THC Recommendations](#) webpage to learn more about preservation activities that take into account social distancing guidelines.

## Online Efforts Continue

During the pandemic, CHCs found ways to reach new audiences and engage with their communities through online platforms. Many created social media pages and websites, shared their research with web-based partners, and even offered online seminars. In 2021, online efforts continued as appointees commemorated Texas Archeology Month and Women's History Month on social media, created videos to share their county's history, and live streamed seminars on YouTube. Some developed online mapping tools that guide visitors to their county's historic landmarks using their mobile phones. When used appropriately, online and social media platforms are excellent outreach tools. You can learn more about CHC online efforts by visiting the [CHC Game Changers](#) webpage. There you can access the [Social Media](#) and [Websites](#) pages.



*Harrison County historic water crossing mapping project. Photo courtesy of Harrison CHC.*

## Meetings Attendance is Focus of Improvement



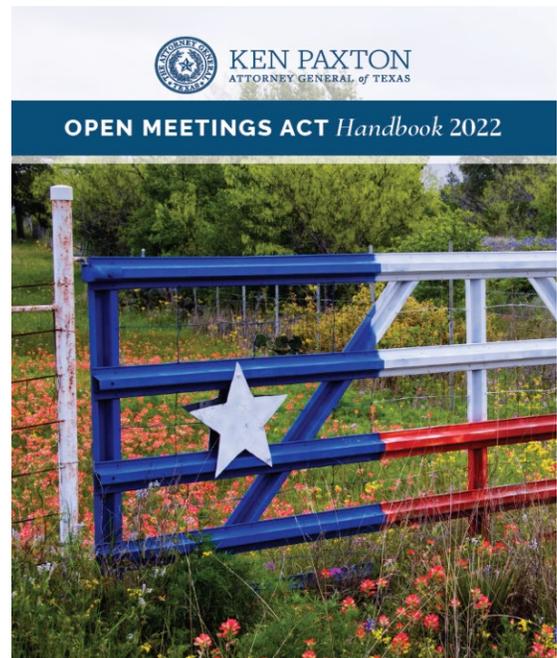
*Appointees holding CHC meeting outdoors. Photo courtesy of Marion CHC.*

In 2021, CHCs met an average of five times per year. During the pandemic, CHCs were unable to hold regularly scheduled in-person meetings. Many offered remote conferencing options, while others chose to keep in contact by phone and email. Exemptions that allowed meetings to take place remotely expired in September 2021. Consequently, appointees focused on returning to in-person meetings. In fact, 87 CHCs said improving attendance was their top organizational priority in 2021. CHCs focused on recruiting appointees that are willing and able to meet in-person, congregating in larger venues or outdoors, revising bylaws to require in-person attendance, and sending frequent meeting notifications. Because in-person meetings are critical to advancing preservation efforts, Outreach staff worked with

appointees to offer suggested actions to improve in-person attendance. You can access these resources on the [2020 Real Places Content for CHCs](#) webpage. Scroll down to the Meeting Attendance links.

## Quorum Remains a Challenge

Appointees expressed difficulty achieving quorum at meetings in 2021. Without quorum, CHCs cannot vote on advancing preservation projects or expenses. In response to this challenge, many CHCs reviewed [Chapter 318 of the Texas Local Government Code](#) and the [Texas Open Meetings Act](#). With this guidance, many have updated their bylaws to clarify meeting attendance requirements, consequences for missed meetings, and some have added an excused absence policy. Many have also focused on recruiting appointees committed to attending meetings. Because recruitment is an ongoing priority, Outreach staff and appointees identified actions to improve recruitment opportunities. These are accessible on the [2020 Real Places Content for CHCs](#) webpage. Scroll down to Group Discussions and visit the Training and Onboarding links.



*2022 Open Meetings Act Handbook. Photo courtesy of the [Attorney General of Texas](#).*