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NEWSLETTER

TEXAS MAIN STREET PROJECT

VOL. 3, NO. 2

APRIL 1983

FLASH! FLASH! FLASH! FLASH!

Realizing that rehabilitation projects are labor intensive, Congress added \$25 million to the recent jobs bill for 50-50 matching grants to encourage restoration of properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These grants will be made in Texas through the Texas Historical Commission's National Register Department.

Texas will receive some \$480,000, but the regulations regarding use of these funds have not been published. The following requirements are in the bill:

1. Funds must be obligated to projects before October 1, 1983.

2. Work must be in progress before January 1, 1984.

3. All federal funds must be outlayed by September 30, 1984.

4. Funds must be matched on a 50-50 basis with non-federal funds.

'Cities are like a puzzle. To put the pieces together we must have an image. Often the picture is not on the box top; it's only in our minds and dreams.'
—Morton Hoppenfeld, Vice-president
The Enterprise Development Corporation

1983 CITIES ANNOUNCE LOW INTEREST LOAN PROGRAMS

The financial institutions in all of the 1983 Main Street cities have developed low interest loan programs to encourage rehabilitation of buildings in their central business districts (CBDs). These programs give strong support to the local Main Street projects: the private sector financial institutions are making a commitment to the revitalization of the downtowns and expressing their confidence in the future of the CBDs.

In Stamford, the First National Bank and the Big Country Savings and Loan have established a \$50,000 loan pool with interest rates of 8½%.

The First National Bank of Waxahachie, Citizens National Bank, and Waxahachie Bank and Trust have established a \$150,000 loan pool at 7%.

In Brenham, the Brenham National Bank, the Washington County State Bank, First National Bank of Brenham, First Savings Association of Brenham, South Central Savings, and Brazos Savings Association of Texas have developed \$120,000 in loan funding at 8%.

Six financial institutions in Lufkin have established a \$100,000 low interest program at 8%. Participating are Angelina National Bank, Community State Bank, First City Bank, Home Savings and Loan, Lufkin Federal Savings and Loan, and RepublicBank Lufkin.

Harlingen will have \$145,000 available at 7% to be used for facade renovation of downtown buildings. Participating in this funding are Harlingen National Bank, Harlingen National Bank South, Interfirst Bank of Harlingen, Bank of the Southwest, Town and Country Bank, Rio Grande Savings & Loan, Valley Federal Savings, and Valley National Bank.

Gainesville, a 1983 Main Street city, has just formed its low interest loan program. First State Bank, Gainesville National Bank, First Texas Savings and Loan, and North Texas Bank and Trust have committed to an \$80,000, 8% low interest loan plan.

The financial institutions in Texas Main Street cities have set an example that is being copied around the United States. Small community banks and savings and loan institutions have played a strong part in our most successful Main Street programs.

NTSU LIBRARY

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NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS SUPPORTS MAIN STREET

The design assistance provided to building owners in our Main Street cities is funded this year by a grant to the Texas Historical Commission from the National Endowment for the Arts. The Endowment is an independent agency of the federal government, created to foster the nation's cultural resources.

Each year the Endowment makes grants to nonprofit bodies for support of various art projects. This year their design arts program is supporting preservation and adaptive reuse of architecturally and historically significant buildings and spaces. Their guidelines suggest such projects as:

- * The role reused buildings can play in enhancing the economics and livability of communities and neighborhoods.

- * The conversion of unused buildings to housing, retail, office, industrial, or commercial uses to meet the changing needs of a community, town, or city.

- * The encouragement of public policy that will support the reuse of abandoned public buildings.

The next deadline for applying for such grants is May 20, 1983. To receive additional information and an application, write Design Arts Program, National Endowment for the Arts, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20506.



ACCOLADES CAN ENCOURAGE MORE RESTORATION

At the Georgetown Annual Chamber of Commerce Banquet this year, five of seven beautification awards went to downtown building owners who had completed outstanding renovations on their buildings.

The Austin Heritage Society has an annual awards banquet at which eight to ten awards are given for successful rehabilitation projects. This year's awards went to developers such as Trammel Crow, Rust Properties, BWC Associates, and Mrs. Rita Clements and the Friends of the Governor's Mansion for the restoration of the Governor's Mansion.

Investment in the rehabilitation of a downtown building should bring not only loyal patronage by the shopper and business community, but also the plaudits and thank-yous from the entire community. Such public demonstrations of support will encourage additional rehabilitation.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Many of the articles in this edition are included at the suggestions of readers' letters and telephone inquiries to the Texas Main Street Center.



MAIN STREET MEMOS

Cafe on the Square, with private club, has opened in **GEORGETOWN**. The P.A. Smith Hotel in **NAVASOTA** has been sold to a Houstonian for adaptive reuse. 201 Main Limited of **HOUSTON** has become a new corporate sponsor of the Main Street Project. Mary Crites, **PLAINVIEW** Main Street Project Manager, has left to work for an architect in Lubbock. The Downtown Association has taken over her responsibilities. **STAMFORD**'s Downtown Association's Easter promotion brought folks from miles around to scour the downtown in search of a hidden prize Easter egg worth \$500. Spring brings brown bag lunch-on-the-square to many cities, including **GAINESVILLE**, **PLAINVIEW**, **SEGUIN**, and **KINGSVILLE**. Participants will enjoy music programs in the surroundings of historic downtowns.

TEXAS MAIN STREET CENTER

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1982 WAS THE YEAR OF REHABILITATION

In 1979, David C. Tolzman, vice-president of Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company, wrote: *"We believe that the majority of the real estate which will ever be built in the United States has already been built."*

Members of the architecture and building construction fields shook their heads and smiled, and few believed. But in the past few years the United States has seen a complete turnaround in attitudes toward the financial feasibility and practicality of reusing and restoring older buildings.

In 1982, commercial rehabilitation projects totaled \$51.6 billion, 84% more than the \$28 billion total for 1982 new commercial construction. Historic rehabilitation projects using the investment tax incentives under the Economic Recovery Tax Act totaled \$922 million, 300 times that of the 1977 total.

These impressive nationwide figures can be better appreciated in real terms in both our small and large cities in Texas. The Texas Historical Commission certified more than \$112 million in rehabilitation projects last year. Historic preservation and economic development have joined hands, and proven David Tolzman right.



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'It's not how many people live in a city. It's how many people use it.

—Jim Rouse
 The Rouse Co.

MAIN STREET PROJECT MANAGERS

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Harlingen

With this issue of the Main Street Newsletter we continue our profiles on 1983 Main Street cities. Lufkin, Stamford, and Waxahachie will be featured in subsequent issues.

With a population of 43,500, Harlingen is the largest of the 1983 Texas Main Street cities. This thriving Rio Grande Valley community, located in Cameron County, has experienced much growth and prosperity since its founding in 1910.

Harlingen was the dream of businessman Lon C. Hill. Hill believed that by developing proper irrigation techniques in the South Texas area he could create a successful agricultural settlement. Through devotion and determination Hill achieved his goal and led in the development of the new town of Harlingen. In its early years the town suffered Mexican bandit raids and other border problems. But the decade of the twenties brought phenomenal growth to Harlingen, as population increased 680% from 1920 to 1930. In subsequent years Harlingen survived the Great Depression, a severe hurricane, and other setbacks to forge ahead as a winter tourist resort and industrial center. The hospitality and warm climate of Harlingen have made it a home away from home for winter vacationers across the country. Tourists are also attracted to the Confederate Air Force Museum in Harlingen, a collection of historic World War II aircraft.

Today Harlingen continues to experience rapid residential and economic growth. As a hub for the South Texas Valley, the city has witnessed much urban development. An industrial park, regional airport, strong transportation system, navigation port, and proximity to the Gulf Coast and Mexican border contribute to the town's activity. However, most of Harlingen's growth has been away from the downtown area. Deterioration of downtown buildings and insufficient parking facilities have added to problems in the city's central business district.

Downtown merchants, city officials, civic leaders, and local citizens who witnessed the downtown's decline decided to do something about it. They formed, through the Chamber of Commerce, a Downtown Redevelopment Committee to concentrate on improving the central business district's image. This group soon realized, how-

ever, that the task before them called for coordination, organization, and comprehensive planning. The Texas Main Street Project offered the assistance Harlingen was seeking.

City leaders are eager to see downtown improvement efforts regain momentum through the Main Street program. They are interested in seeing a downtown revitalization that will both sustain the city's economy and preserve its heritage. They believe that the 328 buildings in downtown Harlingen's 52 blocks are key elements in the city's future.

Downtown Harlingen has much to offer the city. Historic buildings, dating to the 1920s and 1930s, display unique architectural styles. Downtown construction has been steady in recent years, and has included two major remodeling projects for local banks. The area is served by a variety of businesses, offices, financial institutions, restaurants, public services, specialty shops, and governmental operations. Downtown Harlingen also has the distinction of being divided into eastern and western sections by the town's historic railroad lines, the Missouri Pacific and Southern Pacific. The freight offices of these lines, both designated landmarks, anchor the historic character of the central business district.

Working with these advantages, Harlingen's city leaders are pursuing three goals as participants in the Texas Main Street Project: to strengthen downtown business through economic development; to improve central business district appearance through revitalization; and to demolish those structures that are hazardous and beyond rehabilitation. Support for achieving these goals will come from the Downtown Merchants Association, the Chamber of Commerce, local historical groups, including the Rio Grande Valley Museum Association, and committed individuals.

As city leaders prepare for an anticipated annual growth rate of 2½ to 3% in the next ten years, they also will be preparing to make downtown Harlingen a vital part of the city's prosperity. The dream of Lon Hill, Harlingen's founder is still alive.