



Main Street Matters

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS MAIN STREET PROGRAM

NOVEMBER 2012 • COMMUNITY HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION • P.O. BOX 12276, AUSTIN, TX 78711 • 512.463.6092

Spotlight on Vernon

(Population approx. 11,002)

Things are looking up in downtown Vernon. Two years ago, this small farming and ranching town was accepted as a Texas Main Street city; and during this initial start-up period, Vernon's Main Street stakeholders have organized themselves into an effective downtown improvement organization that has taken solid steps toward assuring a bright future for Vernon's central business district.

Getting Organized

During their first year of operation, the city of Vernon and Main Street supporters worked to create a firm foundation upon which to build a successful program. These foundation-building efforts included a search for a Main Street director. Vernon hired Dan Kelleher, who had experience running downtown improvement organizations in the

states of Virginia, Kentucky, and Washington.

Another such effort was establishing a Main Street Advisory Board that included representation from downtown merchants, property owners, and community leaders. After the Main Street director and the board were selected, they worked together to initiate several projects and programs that would facilitate future success.

Community Clean-up, Building Restorations, & Beautifications

After an initial community-wide strategic planning workshop and a follow-up visit from the Texas Main Street resource team, down-



The historic courthouse square in downtown Vernon with the Wilbarger Courthouse (left) and the historic Plaza Theater (right).

town improvement goals were established. These included the initiation of some special projects such as an annual spring clean-up day in association with the Don't Mess with Texas Trash-Off.

Other first-year activities included the establishment of several new programs including a Façade Improvement Matching Grant Program designed specifically to provide funding support for the resto-

ration of buildings; and a Physical Improvement Deferred Matching Loan Program, to help fund the costs of downtown beautifications that do not involve building improve-



This community-wide planning workshop (left) set in motion a new focus on downtown. Spring clean-up day (right), in association with the Don't Mess with Texas Trash-Off, resulted from goals established during the strategic planning workshop.



Metal siding has been removed and restoration work is now underway at the Brantley Wright Insurance Building as a result of the Main Street Façade Grant program.

ments. These are beautifications such as the installation of landscaping, public art, or upgraded public fixtures such as benches or trash cans.

Another first-year effort was raising money for these programs. The city of Vernon, The Vernon Chamber of Commerce, the Vernon Business Development Corporation, and Vernon College all donated start-up money for these efforts. Also, \$17,500 in hotel occupancy tax funds were allocated to the Façade Grant Improvement Program, and a local non-profit organization, the Vintage Vernon Foundation, donated more than \$10,000 to this Program.

In addition, a dozen community leaders raised more than \$10,000 for the Physical Improvement Deferred Matching Loan Program at a Celebrity Waiter Dinner that featured local celebrities waiting tables and competing with each other for tips that were contributed to this program.

After these programs were implemented and sufficiently funded, positive things started to happen. A dozen downtown property owners took advantage of the free design assistance offered by the Texas Main Street Program, and some applied for Façade Improvement Grants. One such application was for \$20,000 in funding support for a façade restoration at the Brantley Wright Insurance Building on Main Street. This application was approved and this façade restoration is now underway.

Also, a local civic group called Leadership Vernon applied for and received \$3,200 in funding to offset half of their costs of fabricating and installing 10 upgraded public trash cans in the pedestrian-oriented downtown district.

Economic Restructuring

While the above attention was being paid to downtown Vernon's physical environment, Vernon's Main Street Economic Restructuring Committee also busied itself developing new tools to help downtown merchants and property owners. They successfully petitioned the City Commission to



Customized, wrought-iron public trash cans in downtown

establish a program through which property owners who invest in restoration of their buildings can receive tax abatements for increases in property value that are associated with such improvements. Also during this time, Vernon's Business Development Corporation sought and received voter approval to engage in Type B economic development activities, thus enabling them to assist small retail businesses.

Community Education and Outreach

During this same time, Vernon's Main Street organization committee processed and secured approval of organizational bylaws and a vision and mission statement for the organization. They also established an ongoing program of community outreach, public relations, and community education. They held a



Local celebrities served guests at the Celebrity Waiter Dinner and competed for "tips" to help raise \$10,000 for downtown beautifications.



Architectural appreciation essay and drawing winners during Preservation Month contest



The Main Street promotion committee recruited local gardeners, farmers and organic food enthusiasts to establish and lead a successful downtown farmers market

successful architectural appreciation essay contest and drawing contests that drew over fifty submissions. Winners received ribbons and cash prizes and they were recognized by the community during Preservation Month.

Marketing and Promotion

Not to be outdone by their colleagues, Vernon's Main Street promotion committee put together a potent promotional program on a shoestring budget. For a minimal cost, they developed a 20-minute promotional video featuring all downtown merchants, and they secured agreement from local hotel operators to play the video in their guest rooms on a looped, repeating basis—forever and for free. Also,

they started a program of cooperative advertising through which local merchants can pool their funds on advertisements, and receive matching funds from the Main Street Program to support their collective efforts. Finally, the Promotion Committee recruited local farmers, gardeners, and organic food enthusiasts to establish a downtown farmers market that has been very well attended and well received.

Downtown Vernon's future appears bright. Streets are being kept clean, buildings are being restored, beautification projects are being implemented, and the entire Vernon community has come together to support these efforts. Vernon is a town with a rich rural history; and now it seems it may also have a promising urban future.

Thanks to Dan Kelleber, Vernon Main Street Manager, for providing this article.

MAIN STREET AROUND THE STATE

Bastrop, Graham, and Victoria

Congratulations to Bastrop, Graham, and Victoria for being named finalists among 60 cities in America participating in a national competition to find the "prettiest painted places in America." The competition is conducted by the Paint Quality Institute, an informational entity whose mission is to educate the public about quality paints and coatings. From the list of finalists, the 12 prettiest painted places in America will ultimately be named.

Electra and Vernon

Both cities participate in the Texoma Area Main Street/ Downtown Improvement Coalition. This is a group of cities in fairly close proximity that gathers quarterly for a networking lunch, program, and short tour of downtown. Last quarter, the director of Hobart (OK) Main Street gave a presentation on its award-winning Junior Main Street Program. This quarter, Leslie Wolfenden with the Texas Main Street design staff will present on visual merchandising. The organization is open to Main Street communities and non-Main Street communities who support downtown improvement—there has been regular participation from Electra, Seymour, Childress, and Vernon, in Texas, and Altus, Hobart, and Mangum, in Oklahoma. The next meeting is in Mangum, OK at 11:15 a.m., for details call 940.839.8158.

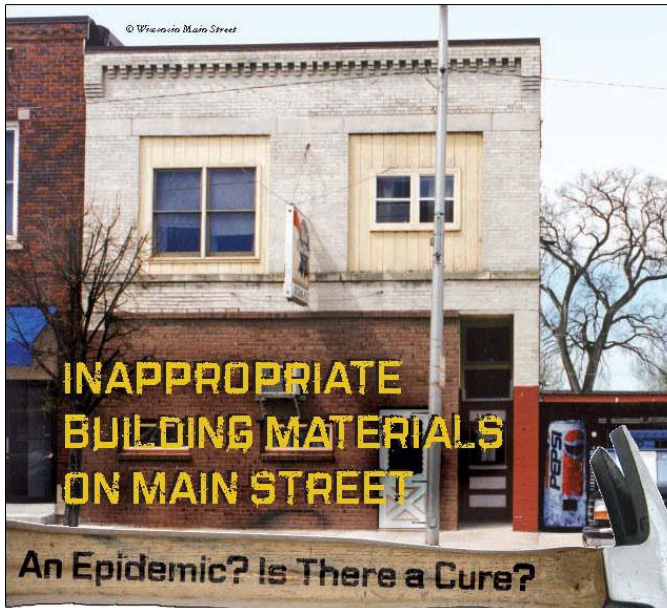
Taylor

The Taylor Economic Development Corporation (EDC) held a music and arts festival downtown while offering viewings of some of the 22 available buildings in downtown. About 300 people attended, including numerous visitors from out of town. According to the EDC, interest was generated and one of the great successes of the event was to reignite the interest of some building owners who live out of town. The effort also included considerable general clean-up work such as storefront windows washed and sidewalks swept.

Texas Historical Marker Applications Available

Texas historical marker applications will be taken through **Nov.**

15. Applications are only accepted from county historical commission chairs and marker chairs. See www.thc.state.tx.us/markerdesigns/madapply.shtm



PART 2 IN A THREE PART SERIES

BY JOE LAWNICZAK

FOCUS ON MAIN STREET DESIGN

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The “Culprits”

So what are the most common inappropriate materials? While there are many, we will look in detail at three of the most common: Exterior Insulation Finishing System (EIFS), vinyl siding, and vinyl windows. This article does not imply that these products are inappropriate for all applications. Instead, it focuses on the ways these materials are used inappropriately on Main Street.

Exterior Insulation Finishing Systems (EIFS)

The dreaded aluminum slipcover of today seems to be the Exterior Insulation Finishing System (EIFS), also known as Dryvit, Parex, Sto, and by many other manufacturers’ trade names. In general terms, EIFS is a lightweight, synthetic stucco used for new construction

and alterations on both residential and commercial buildings. More specifically, it is a multi-layered wall system that admittedly is easy to install, energy efficient, flexible, and available in a number of colors and textures.

According to one contractor who installs it regularly, “EIFS is one of the most versatile

wall cladding systems available today.” He goes on to say that “placing EIFS on the outside face of the wall protects the structure from thermal forces and significantly reduces air infiltration,” adding that “EIFS is a durable wall cladding that will not have to be painted or refinished.”

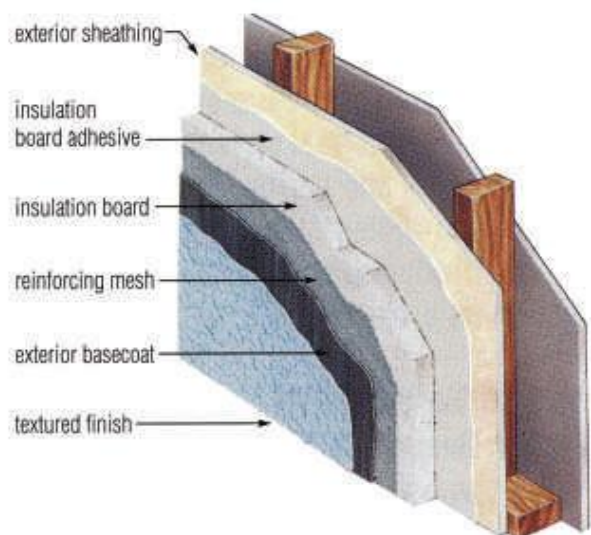
Admittedly, there is some degree of truth in these statements and they are most likely what a consumer will hear from any EIFS salesperson. But these statements don’t tell the whole story.

The biggest problem with using EIFS on Main Street is not necessarily the product itself, but how it is used. Most of the time, EIFS is applied to a deteriorating wall

because it is easier and sometimes less costly than repairing the existing wall. The problems with this approach are many, not the least of which is that it simply covers up the problem.

Assume that EIFS is applied to a historic masonry wall. If the existing masonry has deteriorated due to water damage, it may very well have become a structural concern. Adding a layer of EIFS won’t stabilize the wall. Also, water infiltration in masonry walls does not always occur at the wall face. Very often, it occurs at faulty roof flashing, roof coping, window sills, etc. The water entering the wall from these locations will not stop because a layer of EIFS has been applied. In fact, the problem will only get worse because the water is now trapped between the masonry and the EIFS, causing damage to both.

Another common reason for using EIFS is to give a building a new look. As mentioned earlier, this should never be an acceptable reason for any alteration. Moreover, many historic buildings have varying degrees of ornamentation and projections. When EIFS is applied



EIFS is essentially a layer of sheathing and rigid insulation covered by a textured coating.



In this case, the EIFS was applied to conceal historic elements of the building, such as this decorative stone cornice.

to change a building's appearance, these elements are usually concealed, or worse, removed entirely.

Using EIFS on historic Main Street buildings is also a bad practice due to its limited durability when compared to other building materials. EIFS has only been around since World War II, and its use in the United States has only become prevalent during the past few decades. Thus, it has not yet stood the test of time. And, unfortunately, based on the number of lawsuits,

and the number of cases of water damage in the past few years, it seems that EIFS is not as durable as some had hoped.

Let's compare EIFS to a masonry wall. If properly maintained, masonry walls have been known to last hundreds of years. Many EIFS systems installed in just the past 10 to 20 years have had to undergo major repairs or total replacement. Essentially, EIFS is nothing more than a layer of sheathing and rigid insulation covered by a textured coating, which makes it highly vulnerable to puncturing, especially when installed at the ground level. In addition, when installed in close proximity to grade, EIFS can act as a wick, absorbing moisture into the wall; it can also be highly susceptible to termite infestation.

EIFS also has a propensity to attract and show dirt easily, and any moisture beneath the surface will cause discoloration. Cleaning EIFS is a sensitive procedure. It often cannot be pressure washed because of the risk of puncturing the surface. While EIFS salespeople tout it as a low-maintenance product because it doesn't need to be painted, they neglect to inform the consumer that it will need to be cleaned on a regular basis, often every couple of years.

Caulking and sealing, especially at joints, sills, etc., also needs to be maintained.

In Santa Fe, New Mexico, with its large concentration of stucco and adobe structures, the use of EIFS is restricted. Ac-

ording to a member of the Santa Fe design review staff, EIFS may be used in Santa Fe's historic districts, but only on new construction, or on walls backed by concrete masonry units (CMU) or other stable wall materials. If the original historic building is adobe, however, the design review board generally does not approve EIFS. Typically, the design review board will recommend cementitious stucco even on non-historic or new buildings because EIFS tends to have a "plastic" appearance that is undesirable.

EIFS manufacturers and contractors often argue that faulty installation, not the product itself, is to blame when problems arise. It is not the intent of this article to debate that claim. Instead, the fact that EIFS is generally used for inappropriate reasons on Main Street is the best argument we can make to deter its inappropriate use.



The biggest problem with using EIFS on Main Street is not necessarily the product itself, but how it is used.



Vinyl Siding

If EIFS is the aluminum slipcover of today for historic masonry walls, then vinyl and aluminum siding are the current slipcovers for historic wood-sided structures. While they are occasionally applied to masonry walls, these sidings are used far more often on wood-sided structures. Over the past decade, vinyl siding has become more prevalent than aluminum; it is a standardized,



EIFS is highly susceptible to puncturing, especially when installed in close proximity to grade.



This faded aluminum siding is obviously concealing an original brick wall.



The character-defining cornice, corner boards, trim and even the original windows were all removed to make way for this vinyl siding.

While it is advertised as a maintenance-free material, vinyl siding at best should be considered a fairly low-maintenance item. And that is only true because it doesn't need painting and it is easy to remove everyday dirt. The problems arise when the siding is damaged. While vinyl is fairly flexible and resilient to minor contact, it is susceptible to other types of irreparable

damage, including graffiti, cracking, melting from nearby fire, and shattering in extremely cold climates.

Unlike wood, damaged vinyl cannot simply be repaired. In most cases, the entire section needs to be replaced. This may sound easy enough, but over time, exposed siding fades. When a replacement piece must be installed, chances of finding a perfect color match are slim.

Wood, on the other hand, is a fairly straightforward and simple material to repair. If properly maintained, wood can last for centuries. Since wood is nearly always painted, it is

mass-produced material that seeks to imitate wood sidings.

Just like EIFS, the biggest problem with using vinyl siding on Main Street buildings is not necessarily the product itself, but the way it is used: to conceal deteriorating wood siding and chipped paint, to "avoid" future maintenance, or both. The problems with this approach are many.

First, it does nothing to fix the problems with the original wood siding or trim. Most owners aren't concerned about the original wood because it will be concealed by the new siding for many years. Concealing the original siding or trim will eventually make the problem worse, however, because there is no way to detect or monitor future deterioration.

It is often argued that the installation of vinyl siding is reversible because it can be removed. Frequently, however, the nailing process causes damage, while historic trim or other decorative details are often removed to make installation easier. Removing or damaging any historic element to make way for a new material should never be considered reversible.

Appearance is another issue. Typically, historic wood-sided structures were clad with clapboard-style, beveled, board-and-batten, or shake siding. Main Street buildings were often constructed in the "boomtown" style, with pronounced wood corner boards, trim, and clapboard siding.

The scale and proportions of these elements are a large part of what defines the building style. Thus, when vinyl siding is installed, the siding reveal is often wider than the original clapboard width, and the wood trim and corner boards are concealed, eliminating most of the character-defining elements.

Most vinyl siding is embossed with fake wood graining. Historically, the degree of exaggeration present in the vinyl's grain pattern would have been undesirable for real wood siding. In fact, this type of graining would only be visible on real wood after excessive weathering or from sandblasting. Not exactly the look for which an owner should be striving.



Z-brick, with its false felt, adhesive "mortar," and thin brick, being removed from an original masonry wall.

easy to conceal repairs. With the advent of epoxies and other new technology, even drastically deteriorated wood can be repaired for very little cost. Admittedly, regular maintenance is necessary to keep this painted coating intact. Typically, two coats of good quality paint on a properly prepared surface should last from 8 to 10 years. To be blunt, if a building owner is not willing to perform this type of regular maintenance, he or she really shouldn't own an historic building, or any building for that matter.

Vinyl Windows

Another popular product that is touted as maintenance free and energy efficient is the vinyl window. Again, the biggest problem with putting vinyl windows on Main Street buildings is not necessarily the product itself, but how it is used—to replace historic wood windows. Typically, vinyl windows are installed on the upper stories of Main Street buildings, where the original windows were nearly always of uniform size and spacing, as compared to each other and to adjacent buildings on the street. Typically, these windows were double-hung and wood framed. In some cases, they had character-defining shapes or elements, such as arched tops or true muntins (dividers).

In recent decades, many of these original windows were removed and replaced with smaller windows that did not fill the entire opening in the mistaken belief that the reduced glass area created better energy efficiency. Not only did this drastically alter the appearance and composition of the building, it nearly always resulted in higher electricity bills because less natural light was allowed in.

In colder climates, a smaller glass area meant less solar heat gain, and

higher heating bills. Smaller windows also reduced the amount of natural ventilation in warmer months. When compared to vinyl, wood has a much better insulating value. While most new vinyl windows have the latest in energy-efficient glass, the framing itself has a low rating.

When air leakage occurs at historic wood windows, it is most often the caulking and glazing that needs repair, not the window itself. Wood windows can often be retrofitted to accommodate new double-glazed or more efficient glass.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards state that wood windows (and all historic elements) should only be replaced when they are deteriorated beyond repair; and when replacement is necessary, it should duplicate the original in size, shape, texture, and whenever possible, material. Standard vinyl windows cannot duplicate the original profile of wood window framing, and thus should never be considered a "duplicate replacement."

If the original windows had muntin bars, the replacement muntins should be true dividers, not the snap-in-place fake muntins often found on vinyl windows. Another disadvantage of vinyl is that it cannot be painted; in fact, it usually only comes in white, which drastically limits the building's color scheme.

As stated previously, wood is easily repaired and can last for centuries. While wood windows do need maintenance every few years, they are more energy efficient, easier to repair, and allow more flexibility in color schemes; having to repaint or re-caulk them every 8 to 10 years is a small price to pay to keep a building's historic integrity intact.

Coming in the December issue, Part 3: 'Are All Substitute Materials Inappropriate?' and 'The Tools,' which will address how a community can ensure restorations are done properly.

Thanks to Joe Lanniczak, the Design Specialist for Wisconsin Main Street for providing this article. In his more than 10 years with the program, he has worked with countless building owners throughout Wisconsin in planning for the restoration of their historic buildings. Prior to this he was an active volunteer for On-Broadway, Inc., a Main Street district in Green Bay, from 1995 to 2001. Also, thanks to Audrey Holt, Texas Main Street project design assistant, for obtaining the correct permissions and reformatting the article for this newsletter.

Article reprinted with permission. Originally printed in the November 2006 issue of Main Street News, (currently known as Main Street Now), the monthly journal of the National Trust Main Street Center.

EVENTS

If you would like one of your Main Street events posted here, email jill.robinson@thc.state.tx.us at least three weeks ahead of the month in which you want the posting.



Nov. 10, Grand Saline

Grand Saline Main Street Program will present the third annual Great American Peanut Butter (PB) Festival in historic downtown. Events will include pictures taken with Buddy McNutty, Peanuttiest pet contest, PB recipe contest, a PB pancake breakfast, PB parade, PB&J sandwich eating contest,

crowning of the festival PB queen. This year, the festival will attempt to break the world record for the largest PB cookie. See www.greatamericanpeanutbutterfestival.com/#!

Nov. 10, Henderson

The tradition of ribbon cane syrup making will be commemorated at the Annual Heritage Syrup Festival from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Experienced syrup makers operate the museum's antique mule-powered equipment to produce "old fashioned" cane syrup on the Depot Museum grounds. From the museum, the festivities spread six blocks to Heritage Square, which is located in the National Register Historic District. Call 866.650.5529 or see www.hendersontx.us/index.aspx?NID=14

Nov. 15–18, New Braunfels

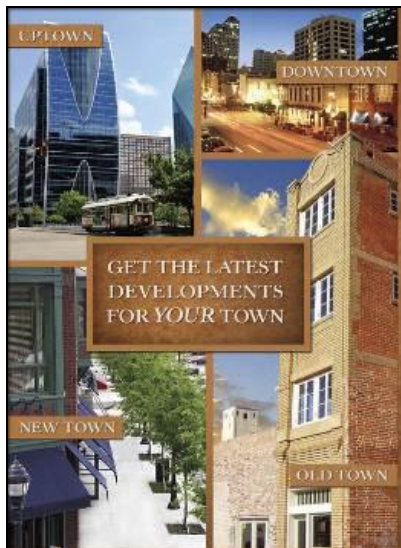
Experience the German Christmas shopping market, Weihnachtsmarkt, featuring unique gift items and antiques from distinctive merchants and artisans. The location will be the New Braunfels Civic Center and the market will benefit the Sophienburg Museum and Archives. See www.sophienburg.com.

TRAINING

Visual Merchandising

A training session for retailers on visual merchandising by Texas Main Street design specialist Leslie Wolfenden will be held in Vernon on Nov. 13 at 8 a.m. Call 940.839.8158 for details.

Texas Downtown Association / Texas Main Street Annual Conference



Texas Downtown Association (TDA)/Texas Main Street Annual Conference registration is open for the annual conference in Wichita Falls **Nov. 6–9**. Keynote speaker for the conference will be internationally-recognized speaker Jon Schallert, business expert specializing in teaching businesses and communities how to turn themselves into consumer destinations. Conference session topics will include Inventing and Investing in New Business, Cash Mobs, Pop-up Stores in Downtown, Historic Preservation in Downtown, Funding/Fundraising for Downtown Projects, Culinary and Agritourism, and more. TMSP coordinator Debra Farst will lead a session Wednesday on historic preservation as economic development, and Leslie Wolfenden, TMSP design staff, will lead a session Thursday on understanding the value of mid-century architecture. See www.texasdowntown.org

AWARD NOMINATIONS Texas Historical Commission (THC) Annual Awards

The THC is now accepting nominations for the Governor's Award for Historic Preservation and the John L. Nau, III Award for Excellence in Museums. Nominations must be received no later than Monday, Dec. 3, 2012.

The THC's most prestigious award, the **Governor's Award for Historic Preservation**, is presented in a special ceremony arranged with the staff of the Governor's Office. A wide variety of projects and volunteer efforts may be recognized through the Governor's Award.

The John L. Nau, III award recognizes an individual in the museum field for significant achievement. The award is presented at the facility that earns the distinction. Anyone may submit a nomination in accordance with the guidelines presented below each award as listed on the THC website at www.thc.state.tx.us.

The THC also offers the Award of Merit, which recognizes the efforts and contributions of a group or individual involved in preserving Texas' cultural and historic resources. Nominations for this award may be submitted anytime throughout the year.

For more information, contact the THC's History Programs Division at 512.463.5853.

Calendar of Events

- **Nov. 6–9, 2012, Wichita Falls**
Texas Main Street/Texas Downtown Association Annual Conference
- **Jan. 29–Jan. 30, 2013, Llano**
New manager training prior to the beginning of Winter Training for all managers. New manager training will last all day Jan. 29 through noon Jan. 30.)
- **Jan. 30 (after noon)–Feb. 1, 2013 (noon), Llano**
Winter Main Street training for all Texas Main Street managers
- **Apr. 14–16, 2013, New Orleans** National Main Streets Conference, theme: *Main Street and the Cultural Economy*
- **June 4–5, 2013, LaGrange**
New manager training prior to the beginning of Summer training for all managers. New manager training will last all day June 4 through noon June 5)
- **June 5 (after noon)–June 7, 2013 (noon), LaGrange**
Summer Main Street training for all Texas Main Street managers

Websites of Interest

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation: www.achp.gov
African American Heritage Preservation Foundation: www.aahpfdn.org
(The) Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation: www.ahlp.org
(The) American Institute of Architects: www.aia.org
American Planning Association: www.planning.org
American Society of Landscape Architects: www.asla.org
(The) Cultural Landscape Foundation: www.tclf.org
(The) Handbook of Texas Online: www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online
Keep Texas Beautiful: www.ktb.org
League of Historic American Theatres: www.lhat.org
National Main Street Center: www.preservationnation.org/main-street
National Park Service: www.nps.gov
National Trust for Historic Preservation: www.preservationnation.org
Partners for Sacred Places: www.sacredplaces.org
Preservation Easement Trust: www.preservationeasement.org
PreservationDirectory.com: www.preservationdirectory.com
Preservation Texas: www.preservationtexas.org
Project for Public Spaces: www.pps.org
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy: www.railstotrails.org
Scenic America: www.scenic.org
Texas Department of Agriculture: www.TexasAgriculture.gov
Texas Commission on the Arts: www.arts.state.tx.us
Texas Downtown Association: www.texasdowntown.org
Texas Folklife Resources: www.texasfolklife.org
Texas Historical Commission: www.thc.state.tx.us
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department: www.tpwd.state.tx.us
Texas Rural Leadership Program: www.trlp.org
Texas State Preservation Board: www.tspb.state.tx.us
Urban Land Institute: www.uli.org

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TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
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