



Main Street! Matters

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS MAIN STREET PROGRAM

AUGUST 2014 • COMMUNITY HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION • P. O. BOX 12276, AUSTIN, TX 78711 • 512.463.6092

SPOTLIGHT ON CLIFTON

Population: 3,442

Article written by Ashley Abel, Main Street Manager, City of Clifton and Nathan Diebenow, Bosque County journalist

If there's one word that describes Clifton, Texas, it's tenacity. For 162 years, this small town in Central Texas has adapted to challenge after challenge after challenge. One could even say that "transition" is Clifton's middle name.

Clifton currently shares State Highway 6 between Dublin and Waco on the south side of Bosque County. But this wasn't always the case.

In 1852, several pioneer families of English, Scottish, and Irish origin settled on both banks of the Bosque River near Clear Branch roughly a mile north of present-day Clifton. This town site was called "Cliff-Town" in reference to the surrounding limestone cliffs carved out by the river over the centuries. This settlement remained in place as new German and Norwegian immigrants arrived before and after the Civil War.

A challenge came, however, in 1880 when a new railroad threatened



Downtown Main Street Clifton. Image courtesy Clifton Main Street.

to take away trade from the established river and horse carriage route system. All the same, local merchants decided that moving closer to the new railway station and its coal-powered supply chain was for the best. Thus, downtown Clifton in its modern incarnation was born. The Clifton community would officially incorporate in 1901.

Then, in 1906, tragedy struck: fire destroyed much of downtown Clifton. As a consequence, it gave the merchants a chance to reconsider their future. Since no one knew for sure which way Clifton would expand—east across the river or west to the highway—

the merchants rebuilt the facades of their buildings to look the same on both sides. The volunteer fire department was also organized that year.

After the Great Depression and both world wars, downtown Clifton blossomed. The inter-county passenger rail line continued well into the 1950s. By the 1980s, the gasoline-powered highway system had established itself as the dominate trade route. Once again, local small businesses moved their shops accordingly, this time along Highway 6, leaving Clifton's downtown district a shell of its former self only a few blocks away.

To address Clifton's historical downtown preservation and revitalization needs, a small group within the Clifton Chamber of Commerce organized an action committee. From its efforts, Clifton was accepted into the Texas Main Street program in 1995. The Clifton Main Street Forum was formed as a 501(c)3, nonprofit organization, with an office in Clifton City Hall.

Going on 20 years, the Clifton Main Street program has adhered to the Texas Main Street philosophy: organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring. The results have been nothing short of spectacular—as vintage clothing boutiques, art galleries, a fine restaurant, antique dealerships, and a classic car museum have opened and thrived downtown.

Among the program's first community projects was the creation of a beautiful new public park on the corner of FM 219 and Avenue E. Completed in 1999, Heritage Plaza serves as the gateway to Clifton's downtown



Heritage Plaza "The Gateway to Downtown"
Image courtesy Clifton Main Street.



Downtown Clifton 1989-1990. What an impact that the Main Street Program has made!
Image courtesy Clifton Main Street.

commercial district. The park features the life-size bronze statue "On the Banks of the Bosque" created by nationally acclaimed cowboy artist Bruce Greene. Thanks to the many local partners on this project recognized with paver bricks throughout the plaza, the value added to the community by the park is worth an estimated \$750,000.

Clifton Main Street has since partnered with many private investors in the rehabilitation of a majority of the buildings

downtown. Currently, all but three buildings have been rehabilitated and their stories preserved for future generations. Among the standout successes include:

The CLIFTEX Theatre—Texas' oldest continuously operating picture show was restored in 2008. Today, movie-goers can experience film four days of the week. The tradition of stopping the film for intermissions is still practiced here even with its new digital projector for its single silver screen. The space is also available for private parties, weddings, and group meetings. [Click for more information](#) on the Cliftex Theatre.

Somethin's Brewing—In a restored corner pharmacy, this coffee and sandwich shop is a welcome addition to the local restaurant scene. Its original bar was brought in piece-by-piece from Italy. [Click for more information](#) on Somethin's Brewing.



The Cell Block- City Jail turned boutique hotel. Image courtesy Clifton Main Street.

The Screen Door Inn—This Bed & Breakfast features a different Clifton/Bosque County theme in each of its seven rooms. Built after the 1906 fire, the building has been used for many types of businesses, from doctors’ offices to retail. [Click for more information](#) on The Screen Door Inn.

The Cell Block—Legend has it that the infamous Bonnie and Clyde made frequent visits to Clifton, but somehow avoided stays in the old city jail tucked away in an alley on the west side of downtown. A local entrepreneur recently converted the old two-room concrete jail into a mini-hotel. [Click for more information](#) on The Cell Block.

Clifton Main Street promotes a number of events throughout the year to bring downtown back to life for the public’s enjoyment and to consequently enhance the City of Clifton’s sales tax base. Funds raised by these Main Street events are reinvested into the community by paying for the maintenance of Heritage Plaza and additional

work on restoration projects in downtown Clifton.

The [14th Annual FallFest](#) is a vendor event that lasts all day on the third Saturday of October. It attracts tourists to downtown as well as encourages stay-cations for residents looking for something family-friendly to do near home.

The “Trick or Treat with Main Street” held annually on October 31 is a highly popular event designed for families with children ages 12 and under. The event consists of kids “trick or treating”

at outside storefronts downtown in a safe environment. In past years, more than 40 local businesses have signed up to participate during the two-hour period that brings thousands of costumed children to town.

[The Clifton Swirl](#), now in its 7th year, is a retail event that partners Texas-based wineries, Clifton restaurants, and downtown merchants in the fall. Due to its success, the Clifton Boots ‘n Brew was added to pair Texas breweries with local downtown retailers in the spring.

The Clifton Main Street and downtown merchants recently launched the 2nd Saturdays Clifton Block Party event. On the second Saturday of every month, participating downtown businesses voluntarily remain open past their normal businesses hours to promote the value of shopping locally. Each party’s theme – along with entertainment extras, like music and/or food – changes depending on the time of the year. This August, an ice cream social will be held.



Annual Clifton downtown festival in October. Image courtesy Clifton Main Street.



Photos of downtown Clifton. Left image taken in 1989. Right image taken in 2014. Images courtesy Clifton Main Street.

In May 2014, Main Street held its first ever Glow Fun Run in an effort to raise funds for the continued restoration of Legacy Park, the old home economics building and auction barn used during the Central Texas Youth Fair & Rodeo. Located on the east side of downtown off FM 219, Legacy Park is also the current home for the Clifton Farmers Market.

In addition to partnering with the private sector, Main Street works with the city and the Clifton Economic Development

Corporation (CEDC) through a Façade Grant and Signage program. This program has been revisited and implemented over the last year, assisting with several facades and new signage for local enterprises. Main Street has also recently been awarded a grant from the CEDC for the installation of public Wi-Fi Internet in the downtown area.

Main Street partners with multiple other community civic organizations and groups, including the Bosque Museum, Bosque Arts Center, Goodall-Witcher Healthcare Authority, Sunset Ministries, Clifton

Independent School District, and Clifton Chamber of Commerce, during the year. These relationships are key to keeping life in Clifton resilient.

To tighten connections between downtown and local youth, Clifton Main

Street created a Junior Advisory Board. This board assists the Main Street Board with generating fresh ideas, leads the “Trick or Treat with Main Street” event, and serves as the liaison between Main Street and the community’s youth. As a direct result of the Junior Board presence, Main Street has increased its youth volunteer base greatly. Participants receive credit from the Clifton school district.

In preparation for future challenges, Main Street also created a Memorial Scholarship Fund. For the last two years, scholarships were awarded to outgoing Clifton seniors who show strong leadership in the community.

The Clifton Main Street Program continues today on its journey of history, heritage, preservation, and economic development with the belief that downtown is an essential piece of Clifton’s economic framework.

Clifton has reported more than **\$30 million** in reinvestment, **337 jobs** created, and **104** new or expanded businesses over their 19 years of Main Street participation.

Clifton Main Street 1995 - 2014

LOVE THOSE PRESSED TIN CEILING!

*Written by Howard Langner, Main
Street Architect*

One of the greatest delights of a Texas Main Street site visit is looking up and seeing a beautiful pressed tin ceiling over your head. Some of these ceilings have been around for more than 120 years and occasionally they look as good as the day they were installed.

This brief article will take a look at the history of pressed tin ceilings as well as provide some information on care and maintenance.

Pressed tin ceilings peaked in popularity in North America in the late 1800's. They were available from more than 30 different manufacturers, some of whom offered hundreds of different patterns to choose from. One of the most successful companies was and still is W.F. Norman out of Nevada, Missouri.

Half of the business W.F. Norman does these days is for the residential market, but it still serves the Main Street commercial building market as well. Interestingly, W.F. Norman pressed tin ceilings have always been made of steel with a tin coating, just like a tin can. Back in the day tin was the generic name for sheet metal much like Kleenex implies tissue today.

Pressed metal originally became popular because it was relatively inexpensive and widely available. It was used for ceilings, cornices, wall panels, and wainscots. An almost uniquely North American design element, pressed metal was seen as an alternative to the elaborate plasterwork that was commonly used in stately European buildings and homes. The fact that tin ceilings were durable, lightweight, and fireproof made them especially appealing.



Pressed tin ceiling in historic building in Luling.

Pressed metal panels were (and are) made just like you would have imagined: sheets of tin were stamped one at a time using rams and cast iron molds. The top piece of the stamping mechanism, the ram, was lifted (manually) by a rope and dropped onto the cast iron mold with the sheet metal piece sandwiched between. The force of gravity would embed the pattern of the cast iron mold (or die) onto the sheet



Left: pressed metal soffit on underside of canopy
Right: Interior view of encapsulated transom window with pressed metal trim

metal. You would go through this process a few hundred times and, lo and behold, you'd have enough tiles to make a ceiling! If you would like to see this process in action, [go to this website](#) and watch the video at the bottom of the webpage.

As far as finished appearance, pressed metal ceilings were usually painted white so that they had the appearance of hand-carved or molded plaster, again, just as in those elegant European homes and shops. Of course, by the 1920s and certainly the 1930s, tastes had changed and new ceilings were designed with a simpler, cleaner, and more planar look and decorative pressed metal lost favor. When a building was being stylistically “updated,” the pressed metal ceilings were usually left in place and simply covered up with Tectum or suspended acoustic tile; good news for preservationists today! As it turns out, if there was no prolonged exposure to moisture, the tin ceilings usually fared well.

Re-exposed press metal ceilings usually need a bit of repair and maintenance when they are brought back even when they haven't been attacked by moisture. Sometimes the old paint needs to be stripped (the old paint likely has lead in it so proper procedures/precautions must be undertaken), and the metal treated with a protective base coat. When an area of the overall ceiling has noteworthy damage and replacement is the goal, there are three options: 1. Take ceiling panels from an obscure (unseen) area of the ceiling such as from

a back storeroom and replace in the area undergoing rehabilitation, 2. Buy a replacement panel (some ceiling panel designs are still being manufactured), or 3. Create a mold from a good existing panel and have a new tile pressed.

Original pressed metal ceilings are considered to be important character defining features of many of our Texas Main Street commercial buildings. Every effort should be made to repair and maintain them for the enjoyment of generations to come.

MAIN STREET BRANDING. MORE THAN A LOGO.

*Written by Rebekka Adams, Assistant
State Coordinator, Main Street Program*

Can you verbalize, in two sentences or less, what your Main Street is? Do you have an elevator pitch for your downtown? How do you sell your downtown? These few sentences that describe your downtown are easy if you have a successful brand. A successful Main Street not only has a definable brand; the people that visit that Main Street can see, feel, and experience this brand firsthand.

What is a brand for Main Street?

Your brand is the condensed version of your community's unique identity. It's the sum of your history, culture, people, and stories distilled down to a handful of unique attributes.

It clearly communicates who you are, what you do, and how you do it differently. Without a brand, you are just another place that exists. With a brand, you are a place to experience. Below are some tips to help you brand your Main Street.

Brand ≠ Logo

A logo is the visual representation of who and what you are. But your logo is just the beginning of your brand. A brand is what sets your community apart from others.

Brand is the way that outsiders view your downtown. Not sure of your brand? Ask visitors to your community their perceptions. You may be surprised by their responses.

Brand is the way you speak. It is the way that you articulate what sets your downtown apart from the thousands of other downtowns across the nation.

Brand is the whole array of your communication tools. Brand is everything from the quality of signs that you use to the graphic design



you use for event posters to the visuals you use online. A good brand is consistent and can be used in all aspects of promotion and marketing your downtown.

Brand is your people. Brand is your people and the way they represent you. Having a good team involves getting community consensus on your brand. If your downtown merchants or local residents are not on board, you will not have a successful brand.

Brand is your buildings and atmosphere. Is your community clean? Well lit? Inviting? Does it have signage that is consistent with your visual standards? Does it look and feel alive? Your environment is your brand.

Brand is your customer service. Downtown is a collection of businesses that can sometimes be hard to convince to collaborate. Each business has its own brand, and together, they help contribute to your downtown brand. You need to work individually with each business to help foster a sense of community so that they in turn will give back to your downtown and help reinforce your brand.

Brand is your logo and visuals, too. A great brand deserves a great logo and great graphic design and visuals. It can make the difference when the customer is choosing between two great places. But these alone cannot make your brand great.

Why you need a Main Street brand

A brand is your communication

strategy. It is the story that all of your buildings, business, and assets tell together. Branding is a process of working all of the Main Street four points together to create a unified vision and message for your downtown. Under your brand you develop a marketing strategy, a communication strategy, strategic partners, and growth strategies. A good brand will not only help you understand who you are as a community, it will help you determine what you can be.

Not only does a brand tell the story of who you are, it also calls people to action – to visit, to stay, to get involved. As a Main Street community, you rely heavily on volunteers. Your brand is what inspires your volunteers to act. Branding builds loyalty. It creates demand. It produces brand advocates.

Branding is a process

Branding is not a project. It is a process. Branding is not something that can be accomplished by a Main Street manager alone. It must be developed from top down and from the inside out. An inclusive process is essential to the community. For a brand to be effective, community leaders must be on board and endorse the brand. It is the community who must live the brand and endorse and invest in the brand for it to be successful. Everyone in your community must work together to bring the brand to life.

As a community process, you need to determine your assets, who you are, and what you want to be, and capitalize on this. Brands can be aspirational, but they must be grounded in reality. For example,

if you claim to be the hot dog city, make sure you have some outstanding hot dog restaurants and shops where one can purchase small souvenirs related to hot dogs. A SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat) analysis can help you begin the branding process.

Outcomes of Branding

As mentioned, a brand is more than a logo and pretty graphics. Community stakeholders use it as a tool to make decisions based on what the community is and what it can be. Here are some tangible outcomes of place branding efforts:

- Logo, tagline, graphics
- Stakeholder consensus
- Internal/external brand adoption
- A brand strategy
- A brand style guide

Consistency is key when utilizing your brand. You should develop a set of standards of how and when to use your brand. Your brand should be the same on your website, social media, banners and signage, print publications, and marketing and advertising pieces.

In summary, when developing a brand it must be driven from the top, include local authorities and stakeholders, and align with a downtown business strategy and a larger community brand. When utilized effectively, it is a long-term economic development tool used to attract visitors, residents, investors, and stimulate development.

MAIN STREET EVENTS

August 2

Sonora

Main Street's Open Soap Box Derby

Soap box race with prizes. [Click here for more information.](#)

August 2

Rio Grande City

Keepin' It Rio Market Days

Free to the public. 11 a.m.–3 p.m. [Click here for more information.](#)

August 8–9

Vernon

Summer's Last Blast

Classic auto show and cruise. The event will feature a preliminary Test & Tune, a Burnout Contest, a Show & Shine Car Show, a Nostalgic Cruise Night, and live entertainment. [Click here for more information.](#) Video on [Youtube](#).

August 9

Gladewater

4th Annual Art Stroll

Art showcased from some of East Texas leading artists, 20 antiques shops, wine, and live music. Tram provided for tour. 12–5. [Click here for more information.](#)

August 10

Tyler

Black Tie Bingo

6:30–11 p.m., Fair Building, 117 S. Broadway, [Click here for more information.](#)

August 30

Waxahachie

Trucks 'n Tunes

Food trucks and open mic around the Ellis County Courthouse square. 5–9 p.m. [Click here for more information.](#)

September 6

Paris

6(square)'d

Community art fundraising event. Painted canvases (size 6 by 6 inches) are sold to the public via a pop up gallery. All proceeds go to the Main Street program for assistance in building a public restroom. Gibraltar Hotel, 5 p.m. [Click here for more information.](#)

September 6

Tyler

ArtWalk

Save the date. More information coming soon.

September 13

Caldwell

30th Annual Kolache Festival

Celebration of Czech heritage including polka dance, food, crafts, and more. [Click here for more information.](#)

September 13

Denton

15th Annual Arts, Antiques, & Auto Extravaganza

Over 200 cars, chalk art festival, arts and crafts vendors, antique appraisals, silent auction, kids activities, local band, and tasty eats. 9–3 p.m. Denton County Courthouse-on-the-Square. [Click here for more information.](#)

September 13

LaGrange

Patriot Day Ceremony

Ceremony honoring emergency service volunteers and staff with 21-gun salute, bagpiper, and 9/11 commemorative flag presentation. Emergency vehicle services will be available for children. Fayette County Courthouse lawn, 9 a.m.

September 19–21

Greenville

Rally 'Round Greenville Festival

[Click here for more information.](#)

September 20

Greenville

Cotton Patch Challenge Bicycle Tour

[Click here for more information.](#)

September 20

Waxahachie

Sip 'n Stroll

Taste 12 different wines as you stroll through a variety of merchants stores in downtown Waxahachie. [Click here for more information.](#)

September 24–27

Tyler

International Film Festival

Save the dates. More information coming soon.

September 26–27

Hillsboro

Cotton Pickin Fair and BBQ Cook Off

[Click here for more information.](#)

If you would like one of your Main Street downtown events posted here, email: rebekka.adams@thc.state.tx.us at least one month in advance.

MAIN STREET PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Texas Capital Fund Application Webinar August 8

This webinar gives extra points on the Texas Capital Fund (TCF) grant application. The TCF supports rural business development, retention and expansion by providing funds for public infrastructure, real estate development, or the elimination of deteriorated conditions. The TCF application deadline for the Main Street Improvements Grant is Oct. 2. [Click here for more information.](#)

AUGUST 19–20 Friends of Texas Historical Commission Development Seminar Series.

August 19, 9–4 p.m, Development 101: Understanding How to Secure Financial Resources for Your Nonprofit. Wednesday, August 20, 9–4 p.m., Grant Writing Workshop. Registration for both sessions closes on August 12. [Click here for more information.](#)

November 4–7 Granbury

Texas Downtown Development & Revitalization Conference
Co-sponsors: Texas Main Street Program/
Texas Downtown Association. [Click here for more information.](#)

March 30–April 2, 2015
Atlanta, GA
**National Main Streets Annual
Conference** More information coming soon.

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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