



Main Street Matters!

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS MAIN STREET PROGRAM

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SPOTLIGHT ON SAN AUGUSTINE

Written by Tracy Cox, Main Street Manager, San Augustine Main Street Program, Population approx. 2,109

Located on El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail, San Augustine celebrates its fourth year as a designated Texas Main Street city. The town of San Augustine is busy restoring and maintaining the historic place that it is. The city is positioned about 23 miles from the Texas/Louisiana border in deep East Texas. San Augustine was founded in 1833, when settlers organized the town in Texas. With that heritage comes the proud ownership of many “Texas firsts,” like the establishment of the first university, home of the first governor, first churches, and the list goes on.

One notable site would certainly include the 1721 Mission Nuestra Senora de los Dolores de los Ais (Mission Dolores). The Texas Historical Commission recently accepted this site as a State Historic Site. The property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and has been named a State Antiquities Landmark. We are very



Mission Nuestra Senora de los Dolores de los Ais (Mission Dolores) is one of San Augustine’s notable sites. The Texas Historical Commission recently accepted this site as a State Historic Site. (Left) Mission Dolores Visitor Center, [Image Source](#). (Right) This small brass or copper bell was photographed by Jim Corbin during the 1977 excavations at Mission Dolores, [Image Source](#).

excited about all the prospective opportunities that the Texas Historical Commission presents.

Over the years, even before being named a Main Street city in 2013, the Texas Historical Commission and local preservationists have been laying the groundwork for San Augustine’s success as a Main Street city. Our Main Street district was drawn to include the buildings within the already established National Register commercial historic district. This is a major advantage when applying for grants and has many other benefits for

the Main Street district. A great influence on the whole county has been the restoration of the county courthouse through the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program. The courthouse is home of the Main Street manager’s office, and like many courthouses in Texas, it is the nucleus of the Main Street district.

The courthouse project, completed in 2010, now serves as the heartbeat of the Main Street district. With it not only comes the obvious historic significance, but also activity to generate sales in the surrounding



San Augustine's courthouse was restored in 2010. The original classical revival courthouse was built in 1927, constructed of limestone and concrete.

stores, restaurants, and professional offices in the pedestrian-friendly downtown district.

Upon entering the Main Street Program in 2013, the city council approved 11 people to serve as Main Street advisory board members and hired a Main Street manager. The San Augustine Main Street program has had tremendous support from the mayor, county judge, county commissioners, city manager, and city council members. The very first year was extremely busy with the writing of by-laws and defining the vision and mission statements. Before we knew it, we were in the middle of planning the First Lady's Tour, which incidentally created enormous community excitement. Numerous volunteers donated time, talent, and money to make this event successful.

The Main Street resource team visit came shortly after the First Lady's Tour. After a successful four-day visit

with staff from the Texas Main Street Program, we were eager to get things rolling. At first, the four committee structure was not set up, so everyone pitched in and got the work done. After work plans were created and set up for each committee, it was then that the implementation of the National Main Street Model Four Point Approach™ had found its place. As the months progressed and the training continued, the four committees were established.

The San Augustine Main Street Program has been very busy the last four years—from submitting and completing numerous design requests, to hosting popular events, to volunteer recruitment trainings and sessions. In the following paragraphs are examples of what has taken place over the last four years.

The **Organization Committee** has

been very busy acting as a leader in volunteer recruitment. The Texas Forest Trail Region supported San Augustine's Main Street Program by giving us access to the "20 Ingredients of a Successful Downtown Series." We used this to invite volunteers to training and discussion sessions, and it was great for recruiting volunteers.

Various partnerships among other clubs and organizations, as well as individual support, are at an all-time high. The resulting funding is assisting with rehabilitation of buildings within the Main Street district. Several grants are also helping San Augustine with downtown improvements. The grants are from a 501(c)(3) San Augustine Main Street Patrons and Loyal Supporters organization, a SAMSPALS 501(c)(3), which will help set up the Small Reinvestment Façade Grant to help downtown merchants, a Texas Department of Agriculture and Main Street Texas Capitol Fund Grant, and two Anice Read Fund/Texas Downtown Association Grants. Most of these grants will help downtown San Augustine's streetscape by supplying an oral history kiosk, new trash receptacles, new benches, and new downtown sidewalks.

Another major success involves three of San Augustine's longest running businesses—San Augustine Drug Company, San Augustine Motor Company, and San Augustine Tribune—receiving the Texas Treasure Business Award. At the Texas Treasure Heritage Festival in May 2015 and June 2016, a presentation was held where each business received a



Three of San Augustine's longest running businesses: San Augustine Drug Company (left), San Augustine Motor Company (middle), and San Augustine Tribune (right) all received the Texas Treasure Business Award. A special award ceremony was held at the Texas Treasure Heritage Festival.

special award. Elected officials, THC staff, and San Augustine residents were just some of the many attendants at this event.

The **Promotions Committee** has been a large part of the San Augustine Main Street program's efforts. Events and activities are held to promote Main Street, assist downtown businesses, and in some cases to generate income.

Various events and activities have taken place over the years. Some of the most successful ones include: Junk in the Trunk Trades Days, an American Main Street 911 appreciation event, Texas Treasure Heritage Festival, Happy Birthday San Augustine fundraiser, Main Street Halloween Spooktacular Movie Under the Stars, Dinner

Theaters, and Christmas Jubilee Days.

The **Design Committee** has been busy from day number one. While conducting the resource team, the TMSP design staff received 11 different requests for various rehabilitations in downtown San Augustine. It did not take long before renderings were coming back for business owners to look at. Some business owners are still dreaming of the day that they can do the work on their buildings, where others have completed work and asked for more renderings.

Some of the restorations that have taken place include the San Augustine County Jail, interior restoration of the Old Town Barber Shop, San Augustine Body Shop

LLC, Ayish Bayou Mercantile, Grace Church, Texas Star Retail, and Mills Hardware.

One challenging project was the J.P. Mathews Building and Mathews Medical Building. The buildings were adjoined by one big slip-cover. Owners contacted the TMSP design staff wanting to remove the slip-cover, restore it to its former glory, and create two individual buildings. After investigation and researching historical images, TMSP design staff revealed that the original two buildings each had transom windows and ghost signs.

After great care was taken to ensure the façade was not damaged during the removal of the slipcover, owners found the original ghost-



One of the secrets to San Augustine's success are their many events and promotions. From left are a promotional postcard for Junk in the Trunk, SFASU Theater Department at the Texas Treasure Heritage Festival, an event flyer for Christmas Jubilee Days.

signs and transom window openings were still intact. After the ghost-signs were repainted and the transom windows were replaced, one big building became two individual buildings.

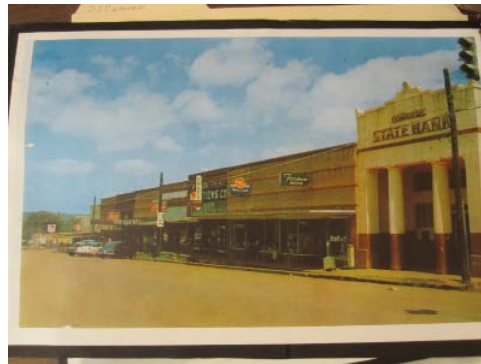
The **Economic Vitality Committee** is astounded at the impact of San Augustine Main Street Program since its inception in 2013. Reinvestment totals of the program are now at \$1.2 million. Several new tenants leasing space from current owners have recently moved in as well. New tenants include Liberty Tax, Computer Services, Construction Company, the Fat Cow Restaurant, and Double EE Boot and Saddle Repair.

It takes everyone to accomplish goals and be successful. Many of the activities and projects over the past four years have already had a positive economic impact on San Augustine. Our goal is to become a destination city while focusing on revitalization and preservation of the historic downtown district. Our stakeholders continue to anticipate a sustainable program with a bright future.

SOLAR POWERED EVERYTHING

Article written by Marie Oehlerking-Read, Project Design Assistant, Texas Main Street Program

Summer is coming, and in Texas we know that means two things: high temperatures and loads of sunshine. While these factors may have many of us seeking shade and sunscreen, those solar rays can be put to work in your downtown to power everything from street lights to entire businesses. This



(Top) A major renovation project in San Augustine was J.P. Mathews Building and Mathews Medical Building. The owners wanted to remove the giant slipcover, and split the large building into two buildings. The Texas Main Street design staff helped the owners research and investigate what the buildings once looked like (middle left), and how to restore them back to their former glory (middle right). (Bottom left and right) Ghost signs were revealed and touched up, and new transom windows were replaced.

article takes the opportunity to highlight communities around the state and nation that have put the sun's rays to good use.

Solar-Powered Street Lights

Solar powered street lights have become a popular new piece of municipal infrastructure across

Texas from the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex to the Rio Grande Valley. In Irving, over 200 grid-connected streetlights have been replaced with new American-made, solar-powered LED lights along one of the city's major thoroughfares, Irving Boulevard. It is estimated that these new lights will save the city more than \$1 million in energy costs over

the first three years of use. The project was funded by a U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program.



Solar-powered street lamp along Irving Boulevard. Source: <http://www.dfwsolartour.org/locations/irvingstreetlights/>

In Hidalgo County, 164 off-grid solar lights were installed in neighborhoods that previously did not have street lighting at all. The LED lights increased community safety after sunset and added no additional electricity costs because each post creates enough energy to power itself. Money was also saved during the installation process because the lights do not require new trenches and wiring systems to connect to the existing utility infrastructure.

Yet another advantage of solar lighting is that it continues to shine during brownouts and blackouts, which is becoming increasingly important with the increased stress on the electric grid and extreme weather events. The county used funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to install the solar power lights. (For more information: http://www.sustainablecitynetwork.com/topic_channels/energy/article_99879cde-6fd2-11e3-b257-001a4bcf6878.html)

You may notice that the design of the solar-powered light fixtures described above may not be compatible with

most downtown historic districts. However, solar technology is being applied to decorative lamp posts in other parts of the country. For example, Deming, New Mexico, a Main Street community (<http://demingmainstreet.org/>), installed solar-powered LED fixtures on existing gas-fueled streetlight posts to produce their own electricity. The purpose of the installation was to replace the existing source of power without changing the unique design of the lamp post. The LED light re-creates the ambience of a gas light instead of the typical intense illumination that is often associated with LED light sources. This ambience was created by using a warmer yellow light bulb instead of the standard blue LED. Funding for the project was received through an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block grant, funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.



Example of solar-powered LED lights that replaced natural gas-powered lights in the city of Deming, New Mexico. Source: Department of Energy, <http://energy.gov/articles/energy-efficiency-new-mexico-frees-money-local-coffers>

Solar Street Furniture

Solar panels can be applied to street furniture as well. The Solar Bench below uses a solar panel to generate electricity and create shade for a picnic table, which has a built-in charging station for cell phones and laptops. This style bench could also be used for unique downtown branding. Imagine these benches with signage saying “Luling Main Street” or “Downtown Harlingen.” That would really grab people’s attention.



Solar bench that combines shade and charging station. Source: <http://www.greensunrising.com/>

Cambridge, Massachusetts upgraded several of its downtown benches with solar-powered charging stations. For now, the units benefit pedestrian traffic and add another amenity to the district. In a later phase, the “smart benches” will record different types of data levels of heat, light, and noise in public spaces. Pedestrian foot traffic data will also be collected for localized market research. For example, if a downtown district is trying to attract a grocery store or pharmacy to a neighborhood that doesn’t have one yet, the city will be able to easily access pedestrian foot traffic counts collected through the benches and use this information to grab a business’ interest.



Smart bench in Cambridge Massachusetts. Source: <http://www.govtech.com/fs/Boston-Pilots-Smart-Solar-Powered-Benches.html>

Solar power can also be added to public art installations. In San Francisco, Wi-Fi Flowers were installed in Yerba Buena Gardens. The flower sculptures serve multiple purposes, including outdoor seating, Wi-Fi hotspots, and cell phone charging stations—all amenities that encourage pedestrians to sit down and stay awhile in the gardens. This project was also a promotional

piece for Toyota to market several of its products. Small solar panels are attached to the back of the sculpture to power the installation.



Wi-Fi Flowers in San Francisco’s Yerba Buena Gardens. Source: <http://muniwireless.com/2009/09/17/wifi-flowers-come-to-san-francisco/>

Solar Trash Receptacles

Downtown trash and recycling cans can even benefit from solar power. Denton installed Big Belly trash and recycling containers around the courthouse square and other parts of its Main Street district. The solar energy powers the internal compactor, which allows the bin to collect five times more trash and an internal console notifies city staff when they are full. This technology decreases the number of times each bin needs to be emptied, which reduces costs for labor and fuel. Funding to purchase the containers came from several sources including the Texas Commission

on Environmental Quality Solid Waste grants administered through the North Central Texas Council of Governments, and another grant from Keep America Beautiful.



Big Belly trash and recycling containers in downtown Denton. Source: <http://www.dentonrc.com/local-news/local-news-headlines/20120522-belly-up-to-the-bin.ece;> <http://www.cityofdenton.com/Home/Components/News/News/1427/35?arch=1&npage=13>

Similar style trash bins in New York serve double duty as a Wi-Fi hotspot. With the help of New York city-based Downtown Alliance, Big Belly has been conducting a pilot test in which several bins were turned into free public Wi-Fi hotspots, which

will add to the pedestrian experience on the street. (For more information: <http://www.gizmag.com/bigbelly-wi-fi-hotspot-solar-powered-recycling-garbage-bins/38561/>)

Small interventions such as solar-powered lighting, street furniture, and trash containers can make your downtown more efficient and sustainable. It can also change how people interact and use your downtown district, not to mention the positive impacts renewable energy can have on the environment as a whole. These steps will eventually lead to entire communities running on renewable energy, like Georgetown, which will be using 100 percent renewable energy by 2017. (For more information: <https://gus.georgetown.org/renewable-energy-faqs/>) We

always have an excess of sunshine in Texas Main Streets. Make those solar rays work for your downtown!

For funding sources, please visit the following:

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality - http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/permitting/waste_permits/waste_planning/wp_grants.html

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program - <http://energy.gov/eere/wipo/energy-efficiency-and-conservation-block-grant-program>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency grants - <https://www.epa.gov/grants>

Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency - <http://>

programs.dsireusa.org/system/program?state=TX
PACE Nation - <http://www.pacenation.us/about-pace/>

TEXAS FIRST LADY CECILIA ABBOTT VISITS 2016 MAIN STREET CITIES

In May, Texas First Lady Cecilia Abbott continued the grand tradition of the Texas Main Street Program's First Lady's Tour, and welcomed Sherman, Corpus Christi, and Brownsville as the 2016 Texas Main Street communities. During all three visits, Mrs. Abbott was joined by Chairman John L. Nau, state and local officials, local



(Top left) Brownsville rendering by project design assistant Marie Oehlerking-Read; (Top middle) Corpus Christi rendering by project design assistant Sarah Blankenship; (Top right) Sherman rendering by former architect Howard Langner. (Bottom left) Putegnat Elementary School students receive book signed by Mrs. Abbott for their library in Brownsville; (Bottom middle) The ceremony in Corpus Christi concluded with a selfie; (Bottom right) Mrs. Abbott received a key to the city at the Sherman ceremony.

business owners and volunteers, and dozens of local residents eager to see the Main Street vision for their respective towns.

The First Lady's design renderings, done by the design staff of the Texas Main Street Program, is a tradition of the annual event, and was unveiled at the ceremonies. The architectural drawing shows the potential and showcases possibilities for the historic downtown by demonstrating how a prominent building in the Main Street district might benefit from design improvements.

Special thanks to the Independent Bankers Association of Texas for sponsoring this year's First Lady's Main Street Tour. They have been the sponsor for the last 22 years, and we could not do it without them!



We are looking forward to next year's tour and finding out which cities will join the program in 2017.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Board members, interested community members, and staff of the Goliad and Cuero Main Street programs recently met in Goliad council chambers for a Main Street 101 volunteer training.



A handful of TMSP Staff and Main Street Managers all across Texas, recently traveled to Milwaukee, WI for the National Main Street Conference, Main Street NOW!

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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