

Main Street Matters

SPRING 2020 • A PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS MAIN STREET PROGRAM

40 YEARS OF MAIN STREET

This year is one of celebration for Texas Main Street and the national Main Street movement! Forty years ago, Texas was one of the first six states in the country selected to carry out a brand-new approach designed to bring life back to historic downtowns. A novel concept, no one could have truly realized back then how many communities across the country would be transformed by Main Street and its Four Point Approach™. The initial states testing and rolling out the approach between 1979 and 1981 included Texas, Massachusetts, Kentucky, Georgia, Colorado, and North Carolina, and today all continue to provide Main Street services to participating communities in their states. In each issue of Main Street Matters over the next few months, as part of our anniversary celebration, we will be showcasing the state's initial programs who remain active participants today. Last month's issue spotlight was Seguin, in Central Texas. This issue showcases Plainview, a town of about 21,000 in Texas' Panhandle region. Program Manager Melinda Brown shares Plainview's Main Street remarkable journey from 1981 through today.



Please refer to the Covid-19 and Main Street Now conference note on page 4 of this issue. The Texas Main Street office and the National Main Street Center/Main Street America™ will continue to keep our networks and registrants informed and updated on the status of the conference as the decision-making process moves forward. We appreciate your patience.

DOWNTOWN PLAINVIEW'S LEAP OF FAITH



*By Melinda Brown, Main Street
Manager, Plainview*

As one of the first five Main Street cities in the Texas program, Plainview had a vibrant downtown for a time in which many downtowns were abandoned or dilapidating. The City Council agreed to participate in the program and hired Mary Crites, a student at Texas Tech University finishing her degree in architecture.

“The first five cities were busy inventing what the program looked like for each city,” said Crites, Plainview’s first Main Street Manager. “Plainview had great support from the businesses and we did a variety of things.”

The “variety of things” included downtown becoming a National Register Commercial Historic District, a traffic study, design workshops for businesses, a merchant organization (Plainview Downtown Association – still active today), low-interest loans, and several events to bring citizens downtown. They

also had several new businesses open during the first two years.

Crites learned about the position from her Texas Tech professor, Will Robinson. He noted there was a new preservation program in Texas and she should contact Anice Read. Crites met with Read to learn more about the program and was hired by then-Plainview City Manager John Hatchel.

“Anice deserves the credit for making Texas a Main Street State—I learned a lot from her,” said Crites. “One of Anice’s saying—It is better to catch flies with honey than with a flyswatter—is something I still use in my career 40 years later.” Today, Crites is a practicing architect in Lubbock.

After a three-year trial run of the Main Street program, the Plainview City Council voted to not renew the contract to participate in the program. Crites moved back to Lubbock to begin her architectural internship, a downtown anchor business closed, and retail began popping up on Plainview’s west side near the interstate. These events resulted in a downturn of business and activity in Plainview’s downtown district. Fortunately, after six years of not being a Main Street city, Plainview reentered the program in 1992 with Muff London as the Main Street Manager.

“With their reentry into the Main Street Program, Plainview is starting from scratch with business owners and city officials willing to take the time to provide the



Anice Read (on far right) meeting in downtown Plainview



FIRST VISITOR — Mrs. Rita Clements (center), wife of Gov. Bill Clements, tours the downtown area Tuesday to kick off Plainview’s “Main Street Project” to restore many of the historical buildings there. Flanking the state’s First Lady are Mary Crites, project director who led the tour, and Mayor Bob Wayland. Mrs. Clements’ one-hour stop in Plainview was part of a two-day tour of the five cities in the state selected to participate in the historical preservation program. She was joined on the walking tour by Michael Ainslie, head of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, officials of the Texas Historical Commission, and a member of the governor’s budget office.

help or support needed to move towards success,” said Jim Jeffers, Plainview City Manager (1992).

Under London’s guidance, she gained tremendous support from the town and created a sound program based on the Four-Point Approach™ for Main Street. A mover-and-shaker with a great promotional and aggressive attitude toward the success of Plainview’s downtown, London characterized her role as Main Street manager as being a catalyst to directing businesses through the implementation of marketing and promotional ideas.

London’s success earned her a promotion to Community Coordinator and Debby Gibson was hired to oversee Main Street. In her tenure, downtown saw the film production of Steve Martin’s “Leap of Faith.” The movie also starred Debra Winger and Liam Neeson.

“Leap of Faith” included two months of preproduction and 11 days of actual shooting in the summer of 1992. The short stay of filming pumped more than \$1 million dollars into the Plainview economy and many residents had the opportunity to not only view the filming but serve as extras in the movie as well.

Following Gibson’s tenure, Cindy Gasaway was the Main Street Coordinator during the renovation of the Fair Theater. Local businessman David Wilder led a \$200,000 restoration effort through various fundraisers, private donations, and grants to refurbish the building. They had to gut the building and start over, obtaining local prisoners do handle the labor work (60 inmates worked on Fair and only three have returned to prison). The work included stage curtains, lighting systems, sound systems, central heat and air,

and seating. The main auditorium and lobby were restored to original grandeur and the Fair re-opened in October 1999.

The new millennium saw a continuation of the Plainview Main Street Program with coordinators Matthew Tsakanikas, Jason Thompson, Paula Mayfield, Eric Turner, and Sarah Castillo.

Their tenure saw the increase of events including Cowboy Days—a day long event that continued for more than ten years. This event payed homage to one of the biggest industries in the area—cattle—and included a parade down Broadway Street led by Texas longhorns, a chuckwagon meal, and various events throughout the day. Another event organized by local dairy families highlighting area industries is the Red, White & Moo Festival. The event continues to this day and includes a parade, petting zoo (including baby cows), cow milking demonstration, dairy tours, and free ice cream, milk, and cheese.

There was also a focus on tourism, especially with the Convention and Visitor’s Bureau Board becoming part of the Main Street program, the creation of Millennium Park, a green space for events and gatherings, as well as coordinated efforts for encouraging local entrepreneurship during the first fifteen years of the millennium. One of those local entrepreneurs, David Splawn, opened a coffee shop called The Broadway Brew in 2006. Located in an old diner called the Quik Lunch, it was the site for many scenes during “Leap of Faith” and was the catalyst for bringing business and people back to downtown.

Still funded by the city, the Main Street program also had a brief re-organization and was placed within the Chamber of Commerce from 2013–2014. “I



enjoyed working with the staff of the chamber and we coordinated on various events but the logistics were not conducive for a Main Street Coordinator,” said Sarah Castillo. “Not being located downtown made it difficult to see what was happening and visit with businesses.”

The Council made the decision in 2014 to move the Main Street organization back under the city and office out of the Fair Theater, right in the middle of downtown Plainview. In 2015, current Main Street Manager Melinda Brown was hired and Tori Huddleston, Special Projects Assistant, joined the team a year later.

In the past five years, downtown Plainview has seen more than a dozen young (under 35) entrepreneurs open businesses, the creation of a monthly shopping event called 2nd Saturday organized by Plainview Downtown Association, updated codes to ensure the historical and architectural integrity of downtown buildings, and the implementation of the TIRZ district.

Several notable projects recently completed or currently in the works include the renovation of the Conrad Lofts and the Downtown Streetscape Plan. The fifth hotel built by Conrad Hilton, it is the tallest building in Plainview and was a destination for



COVID-19 UPDATE

Texas Main Street and Main Street America™ will continue to provide updates to registrants on the status and plans for the Main Street Now conference scheduled for Dallas. There is a note from Main Street America™ on the Main Street Now conference page and a Covid-19 Resources page providing community and small-business guidance can also be found on the MSA website. Likewise, Texas Main Street has distributed information to its network and has convened numerous focus groups to help Main Street managers provide effective assistance as needed to their Main Street entrepreneurs.

travelers around the area in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. After decades of dilapidation, several local citizens began an effort to clean up the building and in 2016, MRE Capital received state and federal tax credits to renovate the building. Now known as Conrad Lofts, the building includes 29 units and is fully occupied. This project was profiled as a Spotlight article in the [July 2019 issue of Main Street Matters](#).

“Jake (Mooney) and I enjoy doing these projects across Texas and the old Hilton Hotel was in great shape and proved to be a winner for us and the community,” said David Sailer, co-owner of MRE Capital, the company that purchased and led the restoration of the former Hilton Hotel.

The second project is the Downtown Streetscape Plan. Part of the 2017 bond package passed by citizens, the Streetscape Plan will include corner and mid-block bulb outs with ADA ramps, lighting, landscape, benches, trash cans, and more. Construction work is slated to begin mid-summer.

“Downtown Plainview has wide streets that make it difficult for pedestrians crossing the street and visiting stores,” said Jeffrey Snyder, City Manager. “We wanted to create a place that would be more walkable, a place that you want to visit and shop. It is an exciting time for our Downtown.”

Plainview is proud of our long participation in the Main Street program and we look forward to the next 40 years!

DESIGN GUIDELINES FROM THE TMSP DESIGN TEAM

*By the Design Team, Texas Main Street Program,
Texas Historical Commission*

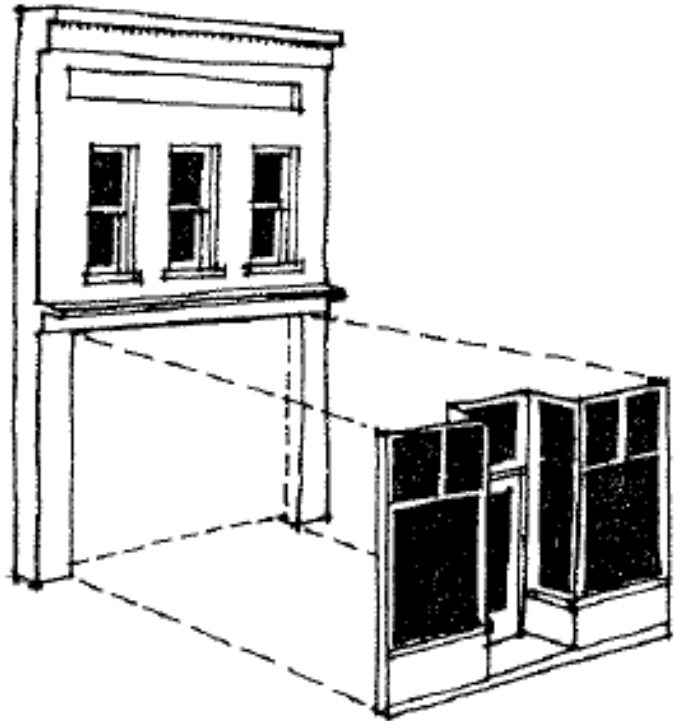
If you have received design assistance through our Texas Main Street Design team, you likely have noted reference to both the Secretary of Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties as well as the National Parks Service Preservation Briefs. The Standards guide our approach and the NPS Preservation Briefs provide specific information on preserving, rehabilitating, and restoring historic buildings. The publications are often included in our team's Design reports as they highlight recommended methods and approaches for owners of historic properties to recognize and address relevant issues, as well as provide guidance for potential resolutions that are consistent with the building's historic character.

Though we will continue to highlight relevant NPS publications in our reporting, the Texas Main Street Design Team has, for the last several years, been working on additional guides tailored to the needs of our constituent communities and the building owners we assist. The Texas Main Street Design Guidelines are a living document that we will continue to expand and edit. Some of you who were with us at the training last summer in Mount Pleasant may recall the presentation given for the first ten topics the team developed.

The newest section of the Texas Main Street Design Guidelines excerpted here features Storefronts, and simply put, it is quite important to literally 'keep up appearances.'

STOREFRONT | Texas Main Street Design Guide

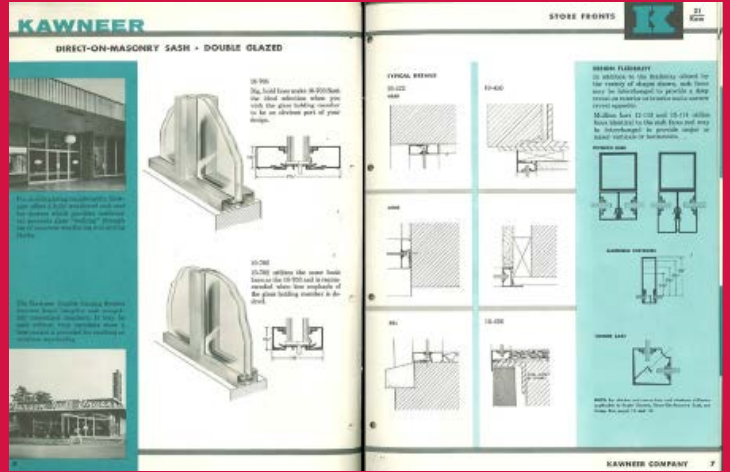
Along Texas Main Streets, storefronts are important architectural and economic elements promoting activity and exchange. As one component of the building façade, the traditional storefront was composed almost entirely of windows and designed to fit within a large opening(s) along the sidewalk.



For functional reasons, storefronts were designed to be as transparent as possible, allowing the maximum amount of natural light into a typically narrow, windowless store. It also allowed the potential customer a full view of the retail interior, both for merchandise displays, and the space itself with all its engaged inhabitants. As an intentionally minimized barrier between store and sidewalk, the two realms seemed to melt into one. The commercial space became part of the public street, readily accessible to patrons. As a major character-defining feature, the storefront should retain as many original architectural elements and features as possible. However, storefronts were frequently modified to keep up with current trends and thus often appear quite different than their original design. Some of these modified and more modern storefronts may now be historic in their own right.

MATERIAL HISTORY

In the mid to late 1800s, storefronts were constructed mainly of wood with some also incorporating cast iron detailing and columns. In the early 1900s, wood remained in use while metal window frames were introduced for the main display windows and transom windows, including copper and leaded glass. By the mid-century, aluminum was the predominant material.



Samples of BRASCO Manufacturing Co from Sweets Catalog (1938) (left), Zouri Storefronts (1939) (middle), and Kawneer Catalogs (right).

In contemporary construction, aluminum storefront continues to be the most commonly used on Texas Main Streets, yet it comes with many challenges. The shape and size of most contemporary aluminum storefront is bulkier than historic metal storefronts and not appropriate for Main Street buildings. Even in the 1960s with the advent of newer aluminum storefront assemblies, it began to be more challenging to create a recessed entry and this remains the case with contemporary material suppliers. This is illustrated by the [Kawneer](#) catalog. The choice of materials can be critical to the overall success of your storefront design. Subtle dimensions and details can be the difference between a successful and clunky outcome.

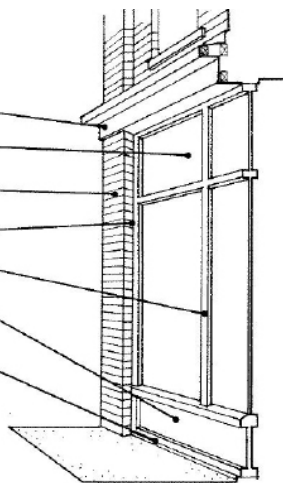
GUIDANCE AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Recalling the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties for guidance, if the historic storefront remains in place, proper maintenance, and repair should be prioritized to preserve this significant feature. If the historic storefront is no longer intact, a replacement storefront should be based on the traditional storefront design, historic photographs, existing conditions, and/or local building practices of the era.

The new design should “be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features” as stated in Department of the Interior Standard #9. The design should also use simple and unobtrusive materials to emphasize display windows and the entry door.

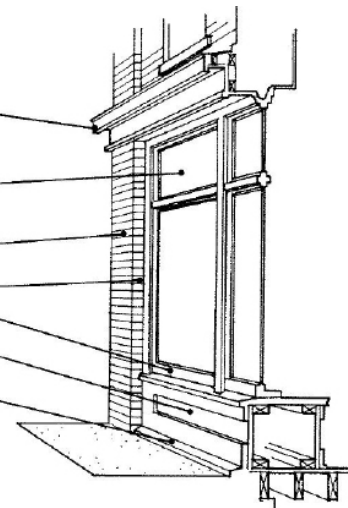
STOREFRONT WITH CONTEMPORARY MATERIALS

- A cornice is made with sheet metal over a wooden frame.
- Optional transoms can be stained glass, clear glass or opaque.
- Masonry piers are uncovered and match the upper facade.
- The storefront is recessed 6 inches into the opening.
- The storefront and windows are framed with dark anodized aluminum or painted aluminum.
- Bulkheads are constructed of aluminum framing and a plywood panel clad with aluminum.
- The storefront rests on a masonry or concrete base.



STOREFRONT WITH TRADITIONAL MATERIALS

- A cornice can be constructed with wood framing, plywood and moldings with a sloping sheet metal cap to shed water. The cornice spans the top of the storefront, often covering a structural beam or unfinished brick.
- Transoms are optional design elements that help to break up the massive effect of very large sheets of glass. Transom windows can be clear, tinted or stained glass.
- Masonry piers are uncovered and match the upper facade.
- The storefront is recessed 6 inches into the opening.
- The storefront and windows are framed in wood. The sill slopes forward for drainage.
- The bulkheads are constructed with wood framing and a plywood back with trim applied to it.
- The storefront rests on a masonry or concrete base to prevent water damage.



When designing and constructing a new storefront of aluminum or another material, it's important to select a manufacturer with a minimum profile and one that allows the spatial configuration and intent of the historic storefront to be maintained. In all cases, off-the-shelf windows and doors designed for residential applications are not appropriate for Main Street buildings. Additionally, the storefront design should carefully consider the spatial relationship to the sidewalk and interior. Traditionally, storefront windows were slightly recessed within the facade opening, typically 6 to 12 inches, and the main entry door(s) was recessed several feet. Many contemporary storefronts and entry doors have been improperly aligned. This alignment gives the appearance of the storefront being pasted onto, rather than being held within the frame the façade creates. These subtle details truly define the character of Main Street and the promotion of activity and exchange.

CASESTUDY AND RESOURCES

- Example below: 26 North Main Street, Elgin
- National Park Service Preservation Technical Brief #11: "This Preservation Brief is intended to assist owners, architects, and planning officials in answering such questions about how to evaluate and preserve the character of historic storefronts. In so doing, it not only addresses the basic design issues associated with storefront rehabilitation, but recommends preservation treatments as well. Finally, although the Brief focuses on storefront rehabilitation, it is important to review this specific work in the broader context of preserving and maintaining the overall structure. Money spent on storefront rehabilitation may be completely wasted if repair and maintenance problems on the rest of the building are neglected." (Additional Info: <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/11-storefronts.htm>)
- Storefront examples
- Keeping up appearances and building improvement



DOWNTOWNTX.ORG: SETTING THE STAGE FOR A RECORD- BREAKING YEAR



By Kylie Woodlock, DowntownTX.org Special Projects Manager, Texas Main Street Program

Editor's Note: Kylie joined the staff of the Texas Main Street Program in January 2020 to manage the continued evolution and growth of DowntownTX.org, an important tool for our programs. Local Main Street program managers who are not already working with Kylie to update existing public content or to prepare your pages to go live should contact her at: kylie.woodlock@thc.texas.gov.

Launched in May 2017, DowntownTX.org is a real estate and building inventory aggregate tool developed by the Texas Main Street Program for Texas downtowns participating in the Main Street or Certified Local Government Programs. The vision of DowntownTX.org is to showcase and increase the visibility of historic downtowns in Texas as viable places for investment.

The site features two interfaces: the public, or “live,” site and the administrative dashboard. The public site largely focuses on showcasing investment opportunities in the context of the community; the administrative dashboard allows each community to manage their building and business data, storing information beyond what is publicly displayed, and offering office-use only functionality to save additional documents, photos, and reports all in one safe place.

It’s an exciting time for DowntownTX.org!

As of March 2020, the site broke several records as more cities became “live” (i.e., public-facing, currently 50 cities with 4 actively in the process) and more users are exploring the site (5,518 users in February 2020). Thirty live or soon-to-be live cities initially volunteered to host “Imagine the Possibilities” tours across the

2020
Imagine the Possibilities Tours

| | | |
|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Amarillo | Goliad | Rio Grande City |
| Beaumont | Harlingen | San Augustine |
| Beeville | Kilgore | San Marcos |
| Brenham | Kingsville | Sherman |
| Brownsville | Levelland | Taylor |
| Caldwell | Linden | Temple |
| Childress | Mesquite | Texarkana |
| Corsicana | Palestine | Vernon |
| Denison | Paris | Victoria |
| Elgin | Pilot Point | Waco |

Complete schedule at DOWNTOWNTX.org

Imagine THE Possibilities
FOR DEVELOPERS, INVESTORS, ENTREPRENEURS, & RESIDENTS
THE ORIGINAL HISTORICAL PROPERTIES TOUR 2020

#DowntownTX

Logos: FIND YOUR PLACE DowntownTX.ORG, TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION, FRIENDS OF THE TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The Spring 2020 Imagine the Possibilities tours have been postponed, but keep an eye out for the schedule at <https://www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/projects-and-programs/texas-main-street/downtowntxorg/imagine-possibilities>

| | Cities "Live" | Avg. Users per month | Total Sessions |
|---------------------------|---------------|----------------------|----------------|
| 2017 (May - December) | 26 | 1,135 | 13,000 |
| 2018 | 38 | 1,842 | 29,324 |
| 2019 | 45 | 3,620 | 40,592 |
| 2020 (January - February) | 50* | 5,071* | 13,944 |

***and counting!
DowntownTX.org implementation**

state later this year to promote their community's pages and available listings. Although the tours have been temporarily postponed, the initial response from these cities has been to reschedule when available and we hope to use this delay to add even more cities to the 2020 tour roster.

Switching host servers in January drastically reduced page-loading times, which we hope will in turn further increase user retention; more importantly however, it sets the stage for Phase 3 code development, which will deploy later this year to bring our managers an enhanced user interface, clean-print reports, and optimized mobile functionality.

Lauren Philp, Beaumont Main Street's Development Director, enthusiastically described the effect of implementing DowntownTX.org in her community, "[the site] has brought in outside investors—both people purchasing buildings and opening businesses in available lease spaces. We recently had attorneys from Houston and San Antonio open up offices, and a skateboard shop... Exposure of your spaces is easy, and you're advertising your downtown!"

Ed Meza, Harlingen's former Main Street director, also noted the city's success since implementing DowntownTX.org and hosting an "Imagine the Possibilities" tour every year since the 2017 launch.

"DowntownTX.org and Imagine the Possibilities Tour have been extremely beneficial to Downtown Harlingen...because these two tools promoting property that is available for lease or sale has shown growth to downtown... Since the beginning of our participation with the Imagine the Possibilities Tours, we have leased property to new merchants every time after each event. DowntownTX.org has brought more interest and awareness of Downtown Harlingen from everywhere. As a result, we get calls and emails from various investors and interested parties about available property in Downtown."

It's clear that business owners, investors, and residents want to live and invest in downtown areas because they recognize the inimitable sense of "place" in a community is right at its core. Amidst this drive for development and investment, Main Street Managers hustle to strengthen their downtowns while preserving the historic resources that make their cities unique.

How can Texas Main Street Managers simultaneously promote their downtown's availability, keep an eye on their district's building and business inventory, and track their historic resources? DowntownTX.org.



The map of cities currently "live" on DowntownTX.org



Harlingen's Imagine the Possibilities tour had a fun twist: golf carts!



Scan the QR code on your smart phone to explore DowntownTX.org today!

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



(Left) Hamilton, a 2020 incoming Main Street community, held its first meeting of the newly appointed Main Street Advisory Board. During February and early March, the boards and staff of both the Plainview and Mount Vernon (bottom left) Main Street programs—each 25+ years in Main Street—held separate planning retreats to begin development of their Main Street Community Transformation/ Revitalization strategies. A Transformation Strategy process will typically begin with collecting information from i.e. stakeholder surveys, community surveys, market analysis. The second step is analysis of that information and the third step is development of the strategies and subsequent Main Street Plan of Work. Also during the month, the boards and staff of the Main Street programs in Rockwall, Royse City, Celina, and Farmersville joined together in Rockwall (bottom right) for a regional training in this new revitalization model. #WeAreMainStreet.



Main Street is Economic Development

\$314.4 Million

TOTAL DOWNTOWN REINVESTMENT DURING 2019

Total includes private reinvestment of \$202.4 million and public investment of \$111.9 million. The 2019 totals are a 46% above 2018.

508

small businesses and 2,007 jobs were created.



156,780



volunteer hours

(= \$ value of \$3.9 million contributed to local programs to support the revitalization effort)

30 YEARS IN 2020

