



Main Street Matters

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS MAIN STREET PROGRAM

MARCH 2009 • COMMUNITY HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION • P.O. BOX 12276, AUSTIN, TX 78711 • 512.463.6092

Spotlight on San Marcos

Population 50,371

"A healthy social life is found only, when in the mirror of each soul, the whole community finds its reflection, and when in the whole community the virtue of each one is living."

Rudolph Steiner

San Marcos is taking the first step in its quest to develop a museum district within the Dunbar Historic District. Established in the 1880s, the Dunbar area is the original African American neighborhood in San Marcos and was designated a historic district by the City Council in 2003. Four historic properties are included in the proposed museum district: The Calaboose African-American Museum, The Cephas House, the original African American Baptist Church, the 1880s former Hays County Jail and vacant land proposed to be converted into a park.



Calaboose African American Museum

The environmental design students of Texas State University adopted the museum district as a spring semester 2008 project. The project included the history and style of the structures, design analysis, current conditions, recommendations on adaptive reuse, site analysis and plan, floor plans, elevations, parking requirements and code assessments.

The City of San Marcos is currently working on hiring an architect to stabilize the Cephas House. Funds are still being sought to continue the renovation.

Calaboose African American Museum

Built as the first Hays County jail in 1873, the Calaboose has a sordid past. It originally housed prisoners in a large in-ground pit known as the dungeon. Prisoners were forced to endure inhumane conditions. After 1885, it held only black prisoners and those who were mentally challenged. In the 1940s the building was converted into a USO for African American servicemen.

Currently, it is the location of the Calaboose African American History Museum showcasing books, artifacts and objects representing African



Cephas House (top), and historic First Baptist Church (bottom)

American culture, including memorabilia from Eddie Durham, the famed jazz musician.

Project Proposal: Restore the building to its original state. Expose the infamous dungeon; install a clear, floor-grade glass cover. Develop a solution to display the objects in the museum more efficiently.

Cephas House

Across the street from the Calaboose is the former home of Ulyssis Cephas (1884-1952), son of slave parents, and an expert blacksmith, master wagon maker and carpenter. Cephas was the community link between the black community and the Ku Klux Klan. He often walked a dangerous



line as a mediator. Cephas rented the house to Eddie Durham's family.

Jazz legend Eddie Durham was born in San Marcos in 1906 and died in 1987. A prolific composer, arranger, and instrumentalist, Durham developed the first amplified guitar. He worked with Swing Era bands including Bennie Moten, Count Basie and Jimmie Lunceford. Durham composed or arranged for these bands such classics as Moten Swing, Topsy, One O'clock Jump and Swinging the Blues. He also arranged music for Artie Shaw and Glenn Miller including one of Miller's greatest and most famous hits, "In the Mood" (Center for Texas Music History.)

Project Proposal: Develop as the Eddie Durham Museum. Provide an educational and influential haven that displays Eddie Durham's impact on the community as well as the history of jazz music.

First Baptist Church

The 100-year-old First Baptist Church is next to the Cephas House and played a vital role in the life and culture of African Americans in San Marcos (History of the First Baptist Church). In addition to being a place for worship, it served as a meeting place, cafeteria, school and theater. A large three-story structure, it is one of the oldest public buildings in the area. The altar is centrally located with a community painted mural hanging above it. An overhead balcony parallels the altar.

Project Proposal: Adapt building for a community center for use to hold public events, display work of local artists, offer after-school and senior citizen programs and promote community interaction.

Hays County Jail

Behind the Calaboose Museum is the second Hays County jail built in 1885. It is two stories and made of natural limestone, and currently it is in a severe state of disrepair.

Project Proposal: Possible uses could include a café, law enforcement museum, Hays County history museum, jazz club. First step is stabilization of structure.

This exciting project is headed by the City of San Marcos, with assistance from the Center for Texas Music History and Department of History at Texas State University.

"The past is not the property of historians; it is a public possession. It belongs to anyone who is aware of it, and it grows by being shared."

Walter Havighurst

Thanks to Kelly Franks, manager of the San Marcos Main Street Program, for providing this article.

NEWS

Soft Economy Creates Hard Challenges for Some Communities

In November, the National Trust Main Street Center took the pulse of communities to gauge the economic health of commercial districts throughout the nation. We asked how the downturn of the national economy is affecting Main Street and what, if anything, is being done to counter negative impacts.

The National Main Street Center has developed some resources to help you:

[Ten Things Your Revitalization Organization Can Do Now](#)

[Ten Things Retailers Can Do Now](#)

See this complete article by by Andrea Dono at:

www.preservationnation.org/main-street/soft-economy.html

Why Independent Businesses are Important

As large retail chains have grown in number, consolidated and expanded their market share, many locally owned independent businesses have closed their doors, resulting in the displacement of tens of thousands of them.

They still command a substantial share of economic activity and resources and should not be forgotten, despite the recent decline of independent retail.

Stacy Mitchell of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance offers 10 reasons for the importance of locally-owned businesses. The full publication includes a detailed discussion (see source below). For more information and resources on strengthening locally owned business, see the institute's Hometown Advantage Web site at:

www.hometownadvantage.org

1. LOCAL CHARACTER AND PROSPERITY

In an increasingly homogenized world, communities that preserve their one-of-a-kind businesses and distinctive character have an economic advantage. Just as diversifying your interests leads to a stronger investment portfolio, communities with more businesses have a stronger,

more stable economic base. A town with numerous small businesses is less susceptible to fluctuations in the global economy and decisions made in distant boardrooms. The loss of one small business is not as devastating to the community as the closure, bankruptcy or relocation of a giant superstore.

2. COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

Locally owned businesses build strong communities by sustaining vibrant town centers, linking neighbors in a web of economic and social relationships and contributing to local causes. There is much to be said for the civic value of doing business with our neighbors. One study found that small businesses give twice as much per employee to charitable causes as do large companies.

3. LOCAL DECISIONMAKING

Local ownership ensures that important decisions are made locally by people who live in the community and who will feel the impacts of those decisions.

4. KEEPING DOLLARS IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Compared to chain stores, locally-owned businesses recycle a much larger share of their revenue back into the local economy, enriching the whole community. Local retailers also support a variety of other local businesses including suppliers, advertising outlets such as local newspapers and radio and local financial institutions among others.

5. JOBS AND WAGES

Locally owned businesses create more jobs locally and in some sectors provide better wages and benefits than chains do. Cities often forget that new big box stores will eliminate as well as create jobs.

6. ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship fuels U.S. economic innovation and prosperity and helps families move out of low-wage jobs and into the middle class.

7. PUBLIC BENEFITS AND COSTS

Local stores in town centers require comparatively little infrastructure and make more efficient use of public services relative to big box stores and strip shopping malls. Downtown businesses generate high property taxes while their compact arrangement ensures efficiency in the delivery of public services.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Local stores help to sustain vibrant, compact, walkable town centers, essential to reducing sprawl, automobile use, habitat loss and air and water pollution. Unlike centuries-old downtown buildings, chain stores and malls may last only a few years before being deemed obsolete as retailers move on to newer, bigger formats further out on the perimeter.

9. COMPETITION

A marketplace of tens of thousands of small businesses ensures innovation and low prices over the long term.

10. PRODUCT DIVERSITY

A multitude of small businesses, each selecting products based on their own interests and the needs of their local customers, not a national sales plan, guarantees a much broader range of product choices. Locally owned businesses yield significant dividends for communities. A number of economic, social and environment benefits result from strengthening and expanding home-grown businesses.

Accordingly, locally owned and operated businesses should not be over-

looked in planning for a community's economic future.

Source: 10 Reasons Why Vermont's Homegrown Economy Matters and 50 Proven Ways to Revive It, by Stacy Mitchell, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, see

www.ptvermont.org/publications/HomegrownEconomy/Homegrown%20Economy.pdf

EVENTS

Please remember if you want 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.

March 2, Gonzales

The Texas Independence Day celebration in Gonzales includes breakfast at the Old Jail followed by the historical program *Gonzales: The Beginning* at the district courtroom; wreath-laying ceremony on Texas Heroes Square; and a walking tour of the downtown historic squares. Location is the downtown Gonzales historic district. email: info@gonzalestexas.com

March 2, Seguin

Join in the celebration honoring the land and people who forged the Lone Star State during this salute to Texas Independence Day at Sebastopol House State Historic Site. E-mail: cvb@seguintx.org

March 7-8, Gonzales

Gonzales, "Where the Fight for Texas Liberty Began," will be the starting point of the Texas Independence Relay Race on March 7. More than 200 teams of 8-12 people per team will gather at the Gonzales Memorial Museum for the start of a 207 mile relay, which will end at the San Jacinto Monument. A replica of the "Come and Take It" cannon will

be fired every 15 minutes for the start of the races.

Saturday, the Texas Freedom celebration will continue with music on the square and various vendors serving a taste of Gonzales. Enjoy Sunday evening, March 8, listening to local gospel singers.

For more information about the race, see:

www.texasindependencerelay.com.

For more information about the Freedom Celebration call 830/672-6532 or see www.gonzalestexas.com.

March 14, Beaumont

Beaumont Main Street presents **DOG-tober Fest 2009!** Bring the family and the pooch to downtown Beaumont on Saturday, March 14 to enjoy a day filled with PAW-sitively fabulous fun! Kick off the day with our "Strutt Your Mutt" parade at the Big Fire Hydrant near the Fire Museum of Texas. Check in for the parade at 9:30 a.m. There are no entry applications or fees. The parade begins at 10 a.m. Following the safe, short strut you will find yourself at the fabulous DOG-tober Fest 2009! Enter many contests, including Master/Dog Look Alike and Best Dressed Dog, or enjoy our BONE Apetit Food Court. Try the relaxing SPAW, with PET-icures, for the doggie diva. Then shop til you drop at our Neiman BARKus Boutique. Cake Walk Your Dog or try our BARKery for those of you with a sweet (canine) tooth! Entry is free, and so is parking.

For more information call 409/838.2202 or visit

www.beaumontmainstreet.com

March 28, Grand Saline

Grand Saline Main Street is proud to present the 5th Annual Bloomin' Festival Saturday at Depot Plaza in downtown. The 5K Fun-Run for all ages starts things off at 7:30 a.m. Vendors and exhibitors will display

gardening-related products including live plants and trees, shrubs, hanging baskets and bedding plants, landscaping products, yard art, fountains, yard ornaments, tractors, mowers and more. Vendors are open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. A special section for the kids will have hands-on fun and learning for children ages 4 to 10. Entertainment is being scheduled all day long with live music, the Bloomin' Idiot Hat contest, prize drawings and experts speaking on a variety of nature topics. Call 903/962-4257 or go to www.gsmainstreet.com for more details.

GRANTS

The Texas Commission on the Arts is introducing a new approach to their grant programs this year, be sure to check them out at www.arts.state.tx.us. Many of our Texas Main Street cities have used TCA traveling artists, musicians, etc. in the past to enhance their events.

CONFERENCES/ WORKSHOPS

Texas After Dark Regional Summit

Extending Hours, Expanding Audiences and Improving Your Community is the theme for this upcoming Texas Forest Trail regional conference **March 5-6** in **Nacogdoches**. Some of the session topics will include: Turning Day Attractions into Evening Events, Putting Your Rural Destination on the Map, Murder on Main Street Mystery Theater, Producing After hours Events A-Z, and many more. For more information, see www.texasforesttrail.com

International Downtown Association 2009 Spring Conference

The **International Downtown Association** will hold its spring conference in San Antonio this year **April 25-27**. Location will be at the Grand Hyatt in historic downtown San Antonio. For more information, see www.ida-downtown.org/eweb/DynamicPage.aspx?Site=IDA&WebKey=d91ad3a5-40d4-43d4-b75f-d09f327efecd.

2009 Calendar of Events

- **April 15–17, Lakeway**

THC's 2009 Annual Historic Preservation Conference, Real Places Telling Real Stories. For more information, visit www.thc.state.tx.us

Web Sites 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
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
Handbook of Texas Online: www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/
Institute for Cultural Landscape Studies: www.icls.harvard.edu
Keep Texas Beautiful: www.ktb.org
League of Historic American Theaters: www.lhat.org
National Main Street Center: www.mainstreet.org
National Park Service: www.nps.gov
National Trust for Historic Preservation: www.nthp.org
Office of Rural Community Affairs: www.orca.state.tx.us
Preservation Easement Trust: www.preservationeasement.org/home
Preservation Directory: www.preservationdirectory.com
Preservation Texas: www.preservationtexas.org
Project for Public Spaces: www.pps.org
Rails to Trails: www.railstotrails.org
Sacred Places: www.sacredplaces.org
Scenic America: www.scenic.org
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: 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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