1. 3:00 P.M. September 2020 Texas Main Street Interim Report Notice Of Quorum

Documents:

NOTICE OF QUORUM - SEPTEMBER 23 2020.PDF

1.I. 3:00 PM September 2020 Texas Main Street Interim Report Packet

Documents:

MAIN STREET INFORMATIONAL PACKET - SEPTEMBER 2020.PDF

NOTICE OF QUORUM OF THE CITY OF HAMILTON
HAMILTON HISTORIC MAIN STREET ADVISORY BOARD,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS, and
HAMILTON CITY COUNCIL

Wednesday, September 23, 2020 — 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

TELEPHONIC WORKSHOP

Phone: 346-248-7799 | Meeting ID: 893 254 5413 | Passcode: 2020

Notice is hereby given that a quorum of the Hamilton Historic Main Street Advisory Board, Hamilton Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors, and Hamilton City Council may be present during the Image the Possibilities Tour Small Working Group session on Wednesday, September 23, 2020 at 3:00 p.m. through a virtual meeting.

Remote participation will be offered in accordance with the order of the Office of the Governor issued March 16, 2020, to follow CDC and national guidelines to limit face-to-face meetings (also called "social distancing") to slow the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). The workshop agenda and packet are posted online at www.hamiltontexas.com.

The public dial-in number to participate in the meeting is: **346-248-7799**
The Meeting ID code to the public meeting is: **893 254 5413**
The Meeting Passcode is: **2020**

The public will be permitted to offer public comments as provided by the agenda and permitted during the meeting. A recording of the meeting will be made and will be available to the public upon written request in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. This notice is posted pursuant to the Texas Government Code, Chapter §551-Open Meetings.

AGENDA

I. Presentation of Community and Stakeholder Survey Results

II. Presentation of Texas Main Street Hamilton Resource Team's Interim Report

I, Joni Hoxsey, Hamilton Main Street Manager, do hereby certify that this Notice of Meeting was posted on the bulletin board of City Hall, 200 E. Main, Hamilton, Texas, at a place readily accessible to the general public at all times, on the 18th day of September 2020 at _____ and remained posted for at least 72 continuous hours proceeding the scheduled time of said meeting.

_____
Joni Hoxsey, Hamilton Main Street Manager

This public meeting is accessible to all individuals, including person(s) protected by the American Disabilities Act. Any individual requiring reasonable accommodation must submit a request 48 hours prior to the meeting to the Hamilton Main Street Manager. For accommodations or other information about the Hamilton Main Street Program, please call 254-784-5610 or email mainstreet@hamiltontexas.com.

HISTORIC MAIN STREET

HAMILTON

EST. 1858

INFORMATIONAL PACKET
SEPTEMBER 2020

HAMILTON HISTORIC MAIN STREET ADVISORY BOARD
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HISTORIC MAIN STREET
HAMILTON
EST. 1858

HAMILTON HISTORIC MAIN STREET ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

2020 COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

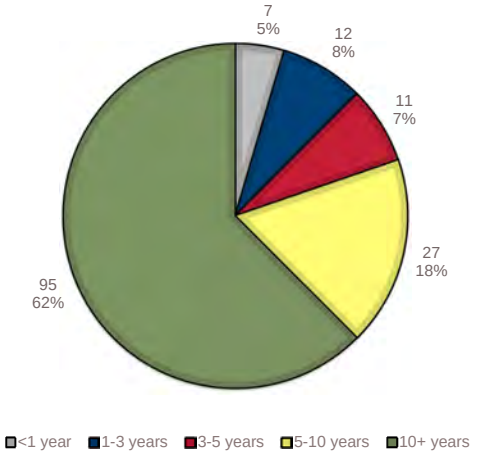
152 Responses Collected in Spring/Summer 2020

Presented by Hamilton Historic Main Street

1

How many years have you been a part of the Hamilton community?

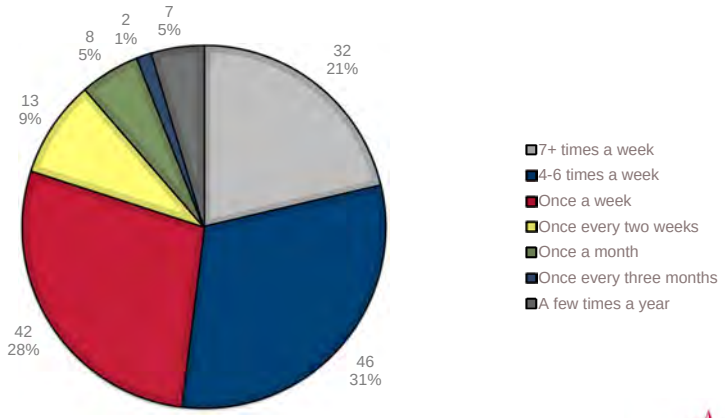
152 Responses



2

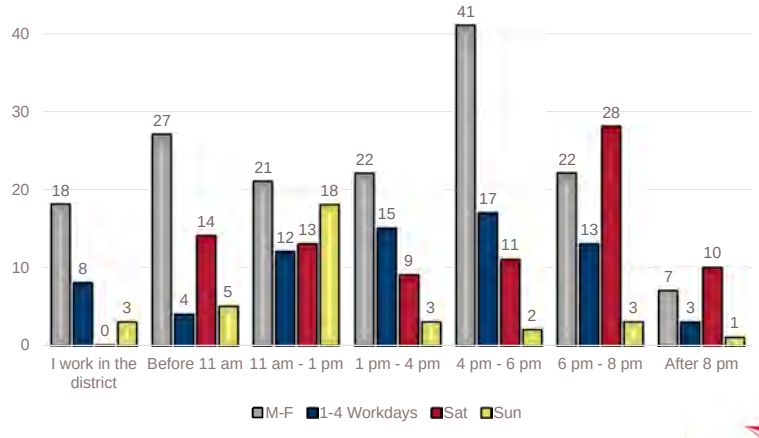
How often do you visit the Hamilton Historic Main Street District?

150 Responses



3

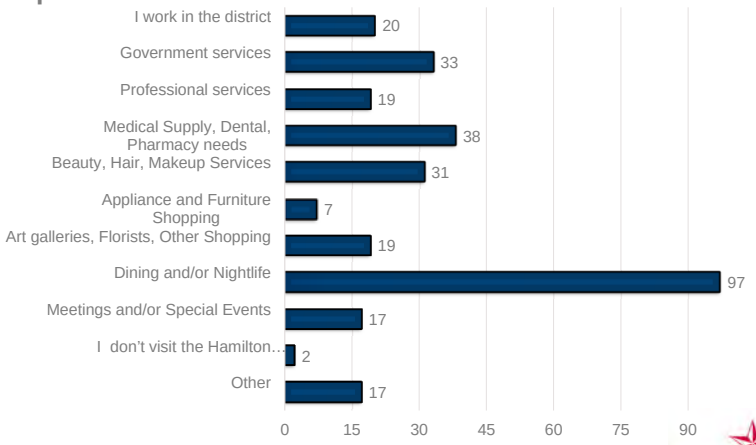
When do you most often visit the Hamilton Historic Main Street District?



4

What brings you the most often to the Hamilton Historic Main Street District?

149 Responses

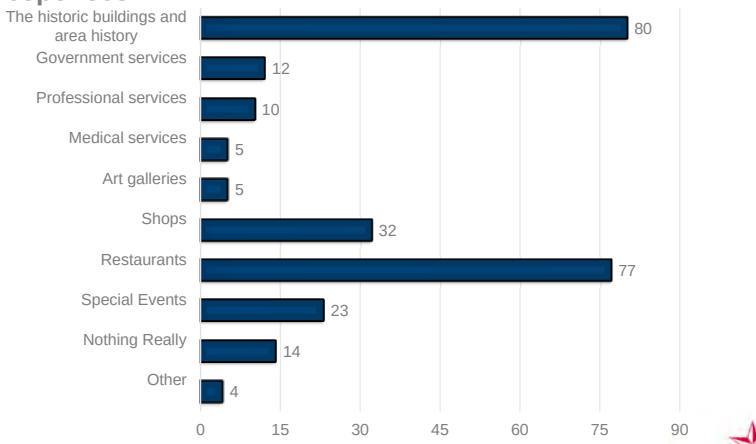


Other: Museum/Library/Civic Theatre/Church (6), Pass Through (4), Live in District (3), Multiple (2), Exercise (1), & Vote (1)

5

What do you like most about Hamilton Historic Main Street District?

149 Responses

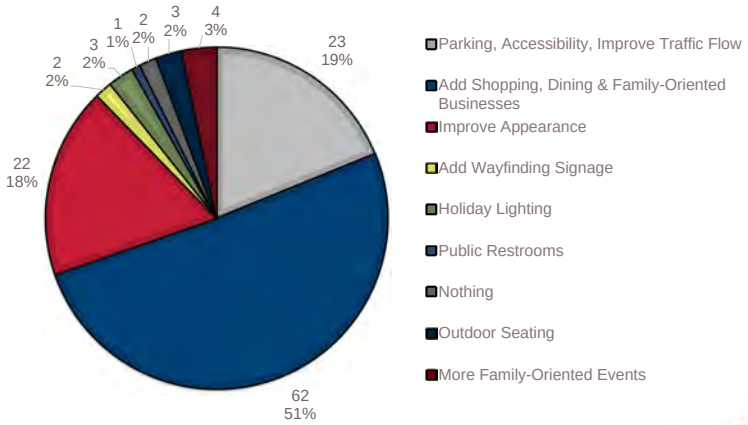


Other: Museum/Library/Civic Theatre/Church (2), Clean/Well-Kept Atmosphere (1), & Trail System (1)

6

What is one thing would you like to change about the HHMS District?

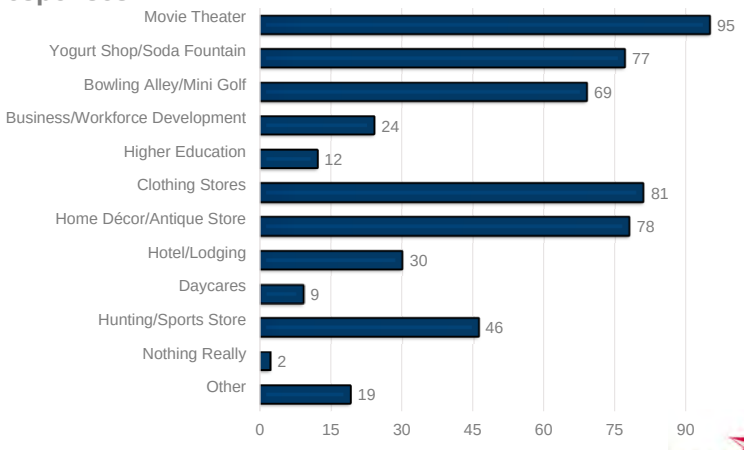
111 Responses



7

What type of businesses would you like to see expand/open within the HHMS District?

151 Responses

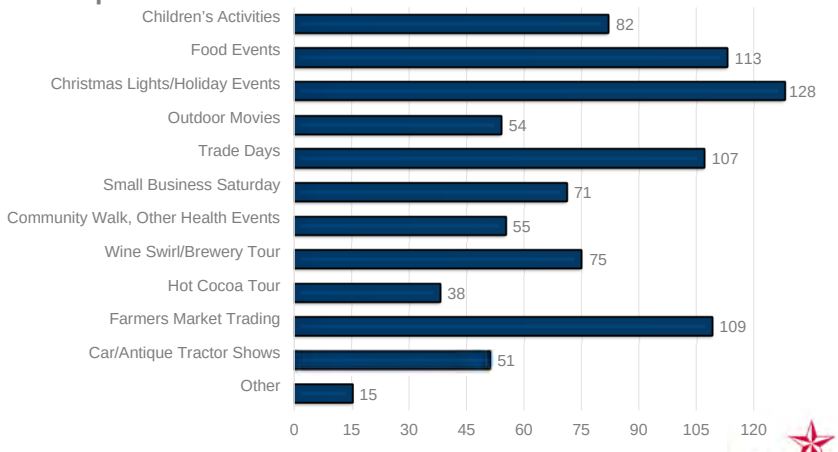


Other: Restaurant/Breakfast/Café (5), Arts & Crafts/Activity Center (2), Winery/Brewery Tasting Room (2), Activities for Children/Teens (1), Western Wear (1), Specialty Shops (1), Consignment Mall (1), Bookstore (1), Retail (1), Franchise Restaurants/Stores (1), Extended hours (1), Anything (1)

8

Which past/current/future special events in the district have/would you attend?

151 Responses

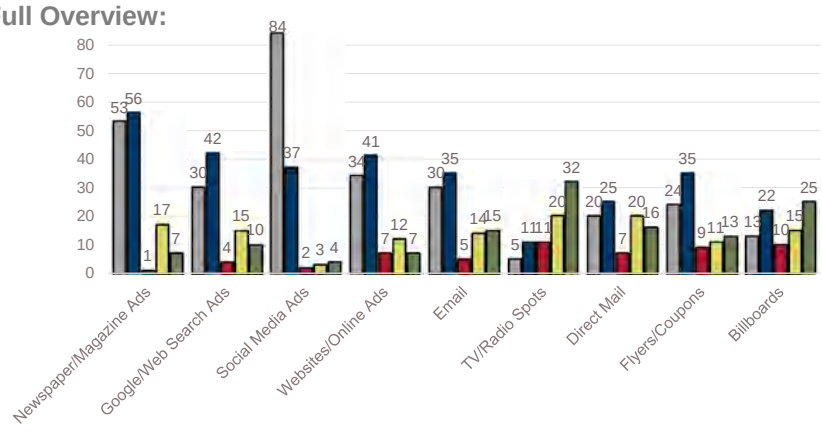


Other: Music (3), Family-Friendly Events/Other (2), Teen Hangout/Food Court (1), Rodeo (1), Shopping Events (1), Dove Fest (1), Dove Fest/Hunters' Lunch/Prom/Halloween (1), Heritage Events (1), Community Picnics (1), Parades (1), Live Theatre Events (1), None (1)

9

What do you rely on to learn about Hamilton businesses and community events?

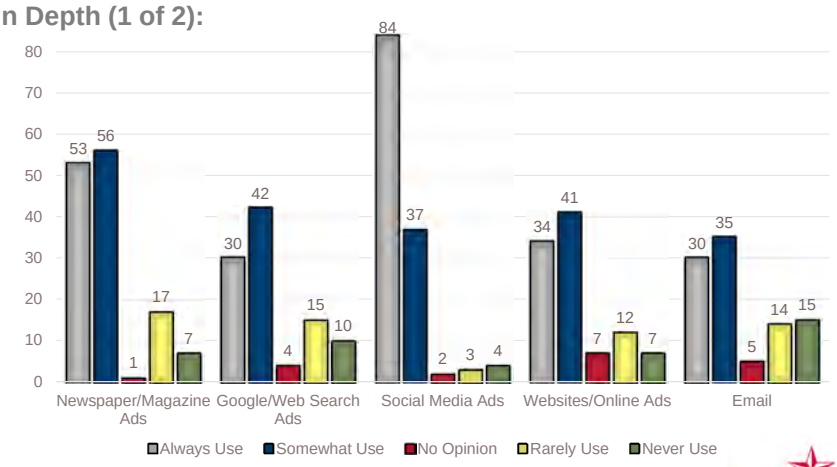
Full Overview:



10

What do you rely on to learn about Hamilton businesses and community events?

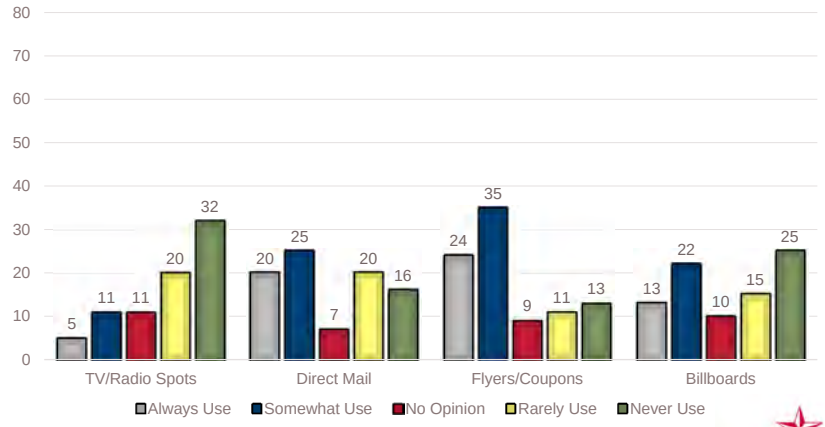
In Depth (1 of 2):



11

What do you rely on to learn about Hamilton businesses and community events?

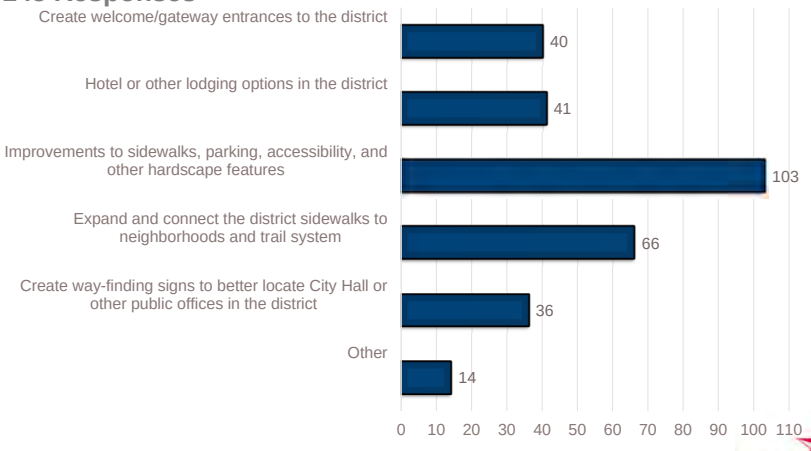
In Depth (2 of 2):



12

Which of the following HHMS potential projects would you like to see complete?

145 Responses

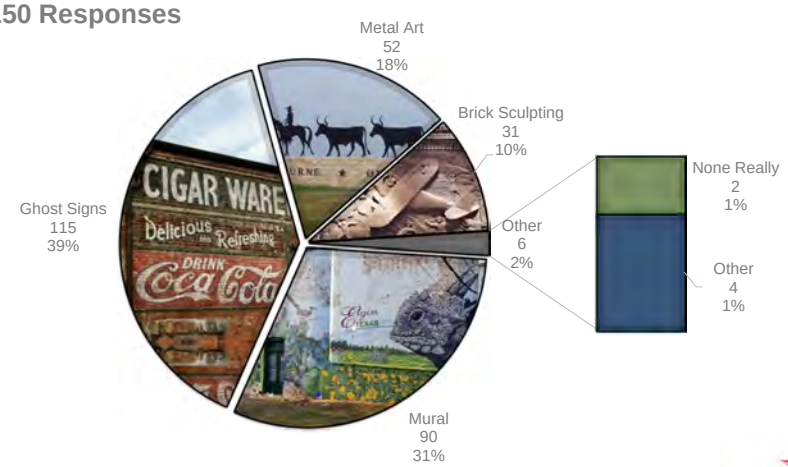


Other: Highlight & Beautify Historical Buildings (2), Improve the Parks (2), Outdoor Courtyard Space (2), More Small Shops/Restaurants/Family Entertainment (2), Improve Eyesore/Blighted Properties (2), Safe Parking (1), Book Store (1), Complete Thompson Building Project (1), Improve Streets (1)

13

What type of art would you like to see in the Hamilton Historic Main Street District?

150 Responses

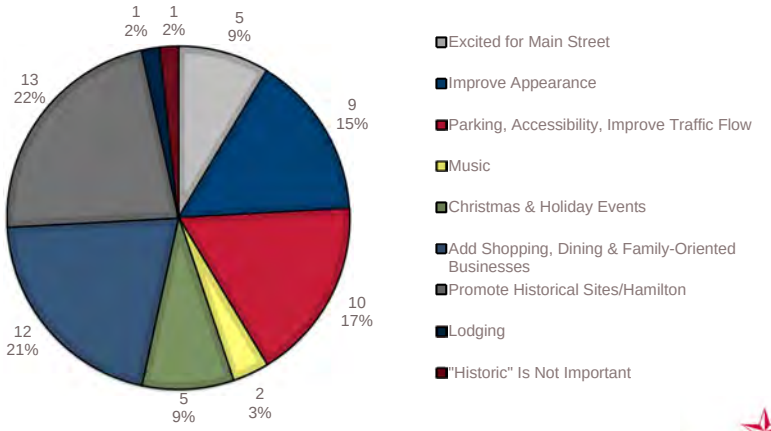


Other: Fiberglass Statues (1), Let A-B Honor Students/Graduates Paint Trail and Park Walks (1), Stress Kindness (1), Pictures submitted by Residents (1)

14

Please provide any additional feedback/suggestions on how we can better serve you and strengthen the HHMS District.

39 Responses



15

HAMILTON HISTORIC MAIN STREET ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
STAKEHOLDER SURVEY RESULTS

2020 STAKEHOLDER SURVEY RESULTS

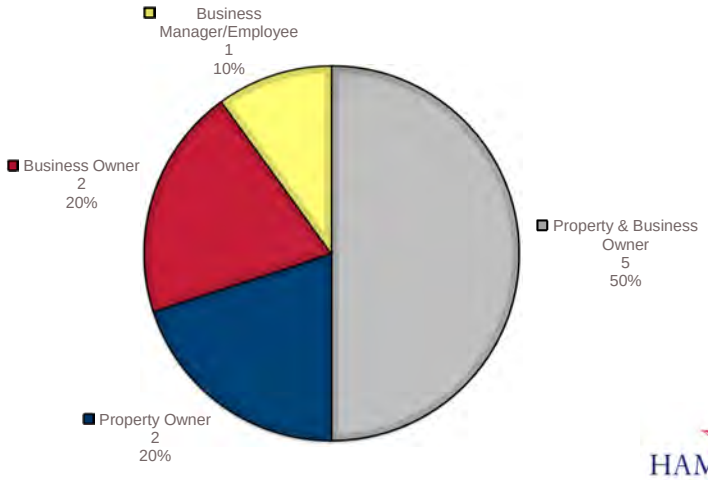
10 Responses Collected in Spring/Summer 2020

Presented by Hamilton Historic Main Street

1

What best describes your Hamilton Historic Main Street District stakeholder title?

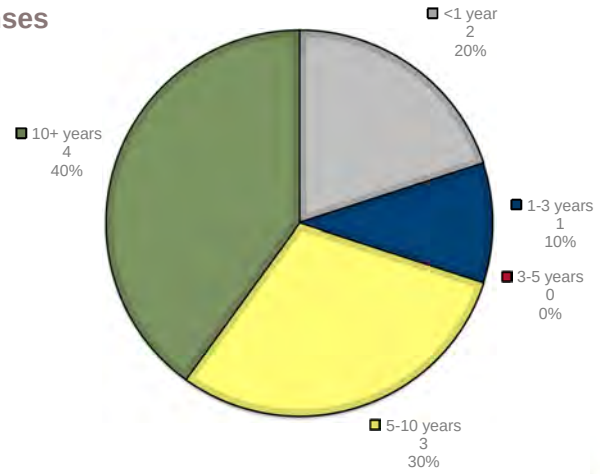
10 Responses



2

How many years have you been a stakeholder in the Hamilton Historic Main Street District?

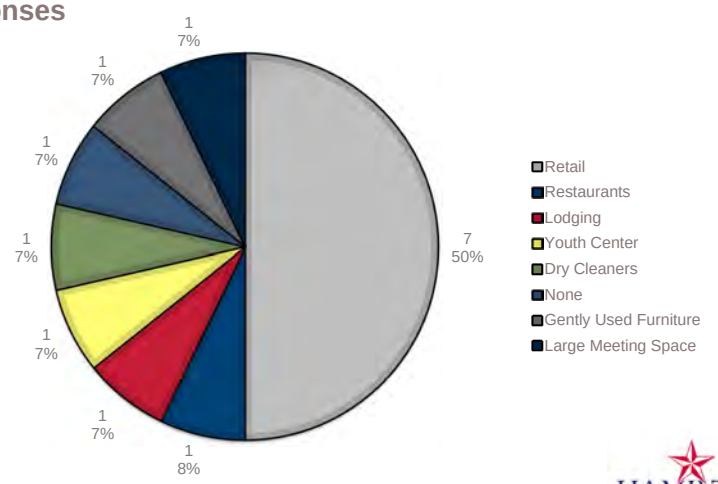
10 Responses



3

What type of business(es) would you like to see open in the district? Any common requests heard from customers?

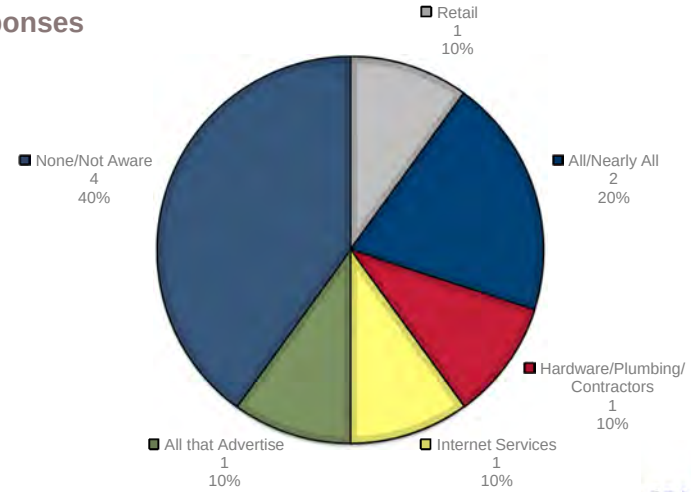
10 Responses



4

What current or potential businesses in the district complement your business?

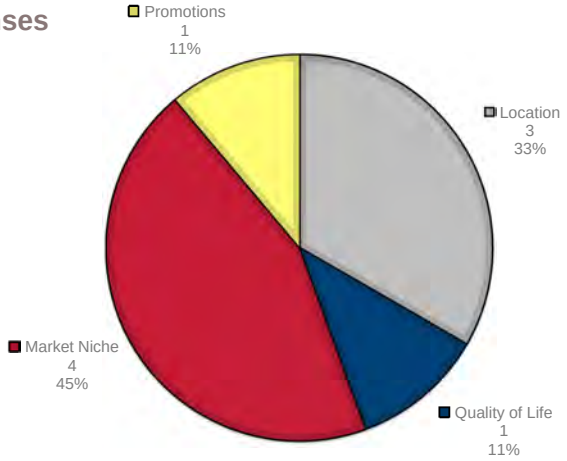
9 Responses



5

What is your best strength in doing business in the HHMS district?

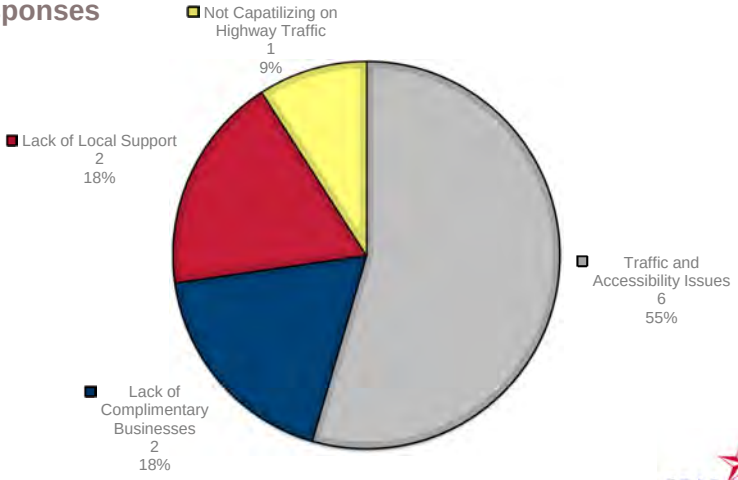
10 Responses



6

What is the most challenging part about doing business in the HHMS district?

9 Responses



7

What changes to public spaces in the district could enhance Hamilton as a signature destination?

7 Responses

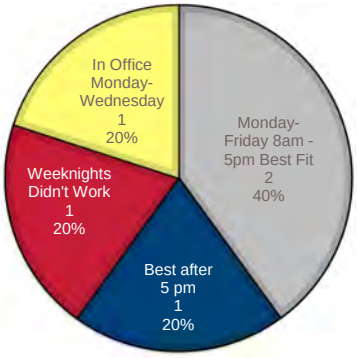
Appearance	Accommodations	Complementary
Aesthetics (2)	Parking (1)	Unique Businesses (1)
Signage (2)	Public Restrooms (1)	Wifi (1)
Lighting (3)	Bed and Breakfast (1)	Activities (1)
Music (1)		Thompson Building (1)

8

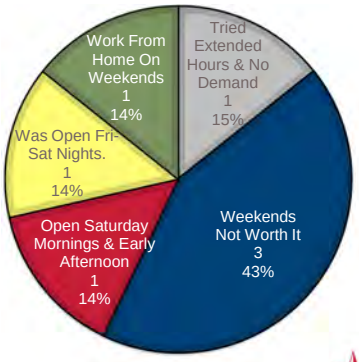
If you're currently open after 5 p.m. and/or on weekends, would you recommend it to others?
If not, why aren't you open after 5 p.m. or on weekends?

8 Responses

Weekdays



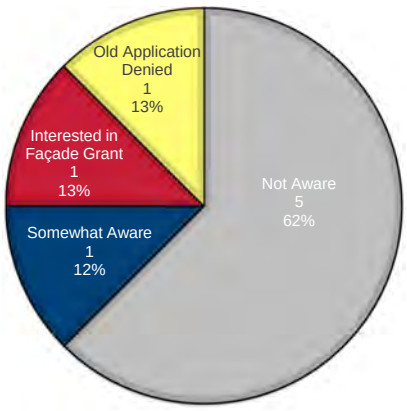
Weekends & Extended Hours



9

Are you aware of current grants available to help your business, and if so what ones?

9 Responses



10

What incentives could the city offer to encourage businesses?

6 Responses

Taxes

- Tax Abatements for Start-Up Business
- Lower Taxes

Grants

- Grants in Signage, Façade/Interior Beautifications
- Grants & Loans

Other

- Free advertising in statewide brochures
- Clean streets & look of pride

11

Which current special events in the HHMS District increase foot traffic in your business and/or sales volume?

7 Responses

None Currently
Dove Fest When on the square (2)
None at this time (1)

Community Events
Christmas, Prom, Events at Circle T (1)
Theatre & Lecture events (1)

No Comment
N/A (1)

Other: Music (3), Family-Friendly Events/Other (2), Teen Hangout/Food Court (1), Rodeo (1), Shopping Events (1), Dove Fest (1), Dove Fest/Hunters' Lunch/Prom/Halloween (1), Heritage Events (1), Community Picnics (1), Parades (1), Live Theatre Events (1), None (1)

12

Which current special events held outside of the HHMS District increase foot traffic in your business and/or sales volume?

7 Responses

None Currently
- None (3)

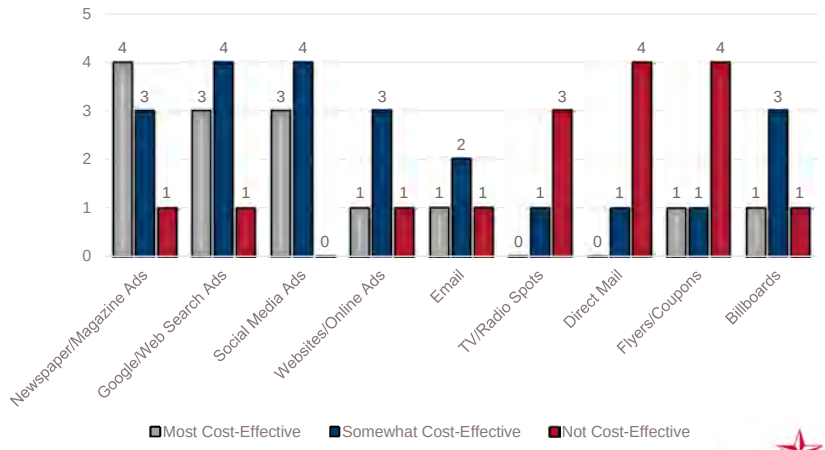
Events
- Circle T & Wine Tastings (1)
- Dove Hunting & High School events (1)
- Dove Festival brings foot traffic but no additional sales (1)

No Comment
- N/A (1)

Other: Music (3), Family-Friendly Events/Other (2), Teen Hangout/Food Court (1), Rodeo (1), Shopping Events (1), Dove Fest (1), Dove Fest/Hunters' Lunch/Prom/Halloween (1), Heritage Events (1), Community Picnics (1), Parades (1), Live Theatre Events (1), None (1)

13

What types of marketing and advertising do you find to be the most effective and cost-effective?



14

How have this past year's sales been compared to the year before?

9 Responses

Negative
- Lower (1)
- Substantially lower (1)
- Down due to COVID (2)
- Annual Decline (2)

Positive
- Up a little at 3.4% (1)
- Same with some increase in specific sales (1)

No Comment
- N/A (1)

Other: Music (3), Family-Friendly Events/Other (2), Teen Hangout/Food Court (1), Rodeo (1), Shopping Events (1), Dove Fest (1), Dove Fest/Hunters' Lunch/Prom/Halloween (1), Heritage Events (1), Community Picnics (1), Parades (1), Live Theatre Events (1), None (1)

15

What is one thing would you like to change about the HHMS District?

8 Responses

Appearance
- More Antique Shops/Other Stores (1)
- Create appeal to downtown (1)
- Unified Charming & Classy Look (1)

Accommodations
- Better Traffic Control (1)
- Directional/ Informative Signs (1)

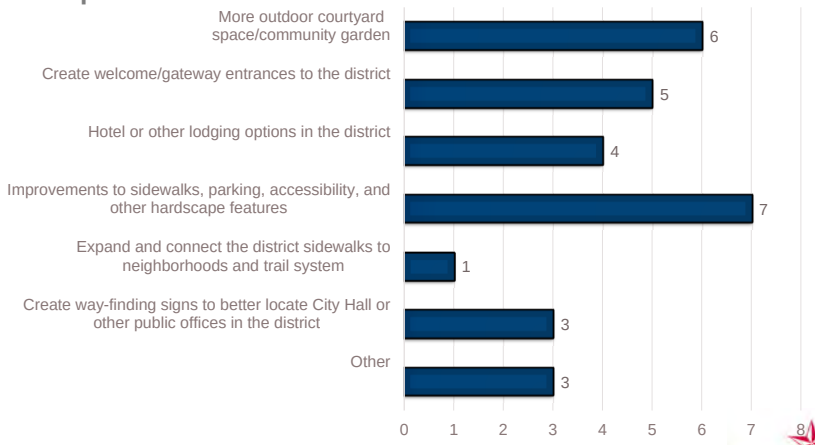
Other
- Hope for Main Street to be long-term (1)
- Don't know until Main Street starts (1)
- Main Street can't bring patrons

Other: Highlight & Beautify Historical Buildings (2), Improve the Parks (2), Outdoor Courtyard Space (2), More Small Shops/Restaurants/Family Entertainment (2), Improve Eyesore/Blighted Properties (2), Safe Parking (1), Book Store (1), Complete Thompson Building Project (1), Improve Streets (1)

16

Which of the following HHMS potential projects would you like to see complete?

10 Responses

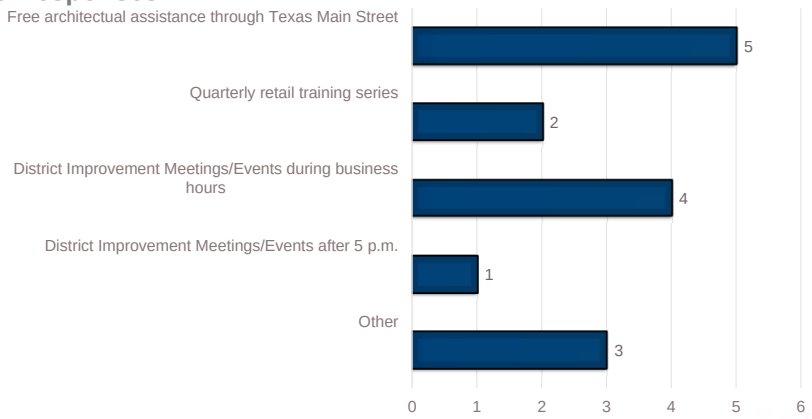


Other: More Out of Town Advertising (1), Benches around the square (1), Nothing above will bring people to Hamilton (1)

17

Which HHMS District program benefits would you be interested in?

9 Responses

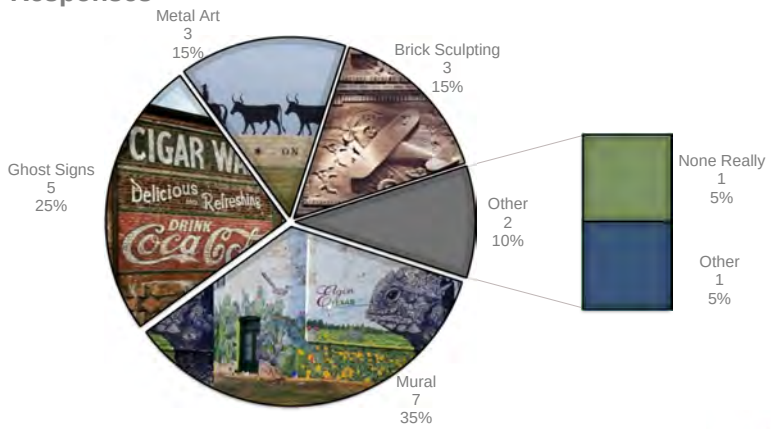


Other: Information on Operational Grants (1), Signs giving the history of the buildings (1), Stakeholders get-together with 1 or 2 main topics

18

What type of art would you like to see in the Hamilton Historic Main Street District?

10 Responses



Other: Give financial help to replace modern signs with historically accurate signs with current business names (1)

19

Please provide any additional feedback / suggestions on how we can better serve you and strengthen the HHMS District.

2 Responses

- Responses below are provided in full quotes:
  - Signage to direct people to Parking, talk with Hotels about putting binders in rooms that list Restaurants, shopping, etc, put more money into "dressing up" the courthouse, especially around Christmas, make the entrances (281 and 36) into Hamilton more eye pleasing (to many run down old businesses, overgrown yards, etc). Nothing really screams stop and spend your money here.
  - Clarify your goal. Shouldn't it be to bring more people in to Hamilton? Dressing up the ole girl isn't going to do that, although it would help once you got them here.

20

HAMILTON HISTORIC MAIN STREET ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
TEXAS MAIN STREET HAMILTON RESOURCE TEAM INTERIM REPORT

TEXAS MAIN STREET PROGRAM
HAMILTON RESOURCE TEAM
INTERIM REPORT

July 2020

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APPENDIX 58

The July 2020 Hamilton Resource Team Interim Report was written and compiled by:

Debra Drescher, Texas Main Street Program State Coordinator
Cara Lowrimore, Texas Main Street Program Assistant State Coordinator
Tara Bonds, Main Street Project Design Specialist
Teresa Caldwell, Heritage Trails Program Specialist
Daniela Cantu, Main Street Project Design Specialist
Alan Cox, Main Street Economic Development Specialist
Jamie Crawley, Main Street Architect and Design Lead
Kimberly Klein, Community Heritage Development Office Manager
Sarah Page, Texas Heritage Trails Program Coordinator
Christian Prado, Architect and Project Design Specialist
Kylie Woodlock, Main Street Special Projects Manager

MAIN STREET AMERICA™ Coordinating Program

TEXAS MAIN STREET

TEXAS MAIN STREET 1981 TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

REAL PLACES TELLING REAL STORIES

CHAPTER ONE

TEXAS MAIN STREET
TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

INTRODUCTION TO MAIN STREET

Introduction to Main Street and Executive Summary

—by Debra Drescher, Main Street Program State Coordinator

Hamilton became an officially designated Main Street community January 1, 2020. With acceptance of the Main Street application, Hamilton joined 88 other Texas communities of all sizes in one of the largest Main Street networks in the country.

The Texas Main Street Program (TMSP) is a part of the Texas Historical Commission (THC), the state historic preservation agency, whose mission is the protection and preservation of the state's historic resources. The TMSP supports this mission by working with locally designated Main Street programs to help ensure their historic town centers and Main Street districts are visually improved through sensitive preservation practices and they become economically viable. In addition to being a program of the THC, Texas Main Street is also affiliated with the National Main Street Center/Main Street America™. Following a series of pilot projects by the Center in the 1970s, a strategic approach to addressing the large-scale abandonment of historic town centers and commercial districts nationwide was introduced.

The operational model—called the Main Street Four Point Approach™—acts as a roadmap for revitalization and strategic transformation.

According to Main Street America™:

"Every community and commercial district is different, with its own distinctive assets and sense of place. The Main Street Approach™ offers community-based revitalization initiatives with a practical, adaptable framework for downtown transformation that is easily tailored to local conditions. The Main Street Approach helps communities get started with revitalization and grows with them over time."

Texas was one of the first six states in the country to begin assisting local communities in implementing this Approach to revitalization and has been successfully doing so for 40 years.

Currently, the Texas Main Street Program provides services to 89 designated Main Street communities. A map of currently designated Main Street programs can be found in the Appendix to this report..

The local program's work and the state office's services are centered on four areas of focus that drive the Approach:

Downtown is a marketplace with the potential for return on investment. The Economic Vitality strategy focuses on capital, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, catalyze property development, and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies.

Downtown's historic nature is what makes it special. The historic assets are worth saving and re-using. The Design strategy supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the commercial district apart.

Downtown is a vibrant, active place worth visiting. Through this strategy, downtown is positioned as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics.

The Main Street program is an effective organization through which achieving the downtown vision is possible. The Main Street organization—board and staff—take a leadership role in creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, resources, and community involvement for the district.

For this report, a section on Heritage Tourism is also provided. Further exploring tourism potential has been identified by local leaders as a priority. The TMSP is housed in the THC's Community Heritage Development Division, which also includes the state's heritage tourism/Texas Heritage Trails Program. Staff of that program have written a separate tourism chapter to provide guidance for that local priority.

As a preservation-based economic development effort, downtown revitalization through the Main Street Approach™ is designed to be a long-term proposition. Of Texas' 89 current programs, 68 have maintained their designations for a decade or more. Of those, eight have participated for more than 30 years. Similarly, local leadership and stakeholders in Hamilton should view the entrance into Main Street as an initial, foundation-laying phase of a long-term commitment.

Purpose of this Report

Local Main Street programs continually work over time with state office staff in a variety of ways that includes accessing services and resources. Although the state office's local liaison is the Main Street program manager, it is still critically important for TMSP staff to establish working relationships with leadership of the city and the Main Street board, as well as downtown's business and property owners. This enables TMSP staff to gain full understanding of local needs, desires, and challenges so that relevant guidance can be provided. To gain this full understanding, the TMSP team has traditionally met in person with these groups on a multi-day site visit and assessment for newly designated programs—called a resource team visit.

The ideal on-site Resource Team assessment accomplishes the following:

- Assess existing conditions and potential;
- Begin what will hopefully become a long-standing, productive relationship between TMSP and the local program;
- Cultivate thoughts, give direction early on, and develop an initial plan of action;
- Inform/educate the public at large on the Main Street concept and structure;
- Generate excitement;
- Provide a fresh look through the eyes of 'outsider' professionals.

Some of this groundwork was done in the first few months of 2020 through site visits by individual TMSP staff members for training and organizational development and to meet with property owners requesting design and economic development services. However, the ability to conduct a comprehensive resource team assessment and meet with stakeholder groups was stalled by the COVID-19 pandemic, with no determination of when it will be possible once again for travel and group gatherings to occur. Once unrestricted travel and gathering is once again possible post-COVID, TMSP will work with the local program to determine how to address activities—such as information gathering through in-person stakeholder meetings -- that would have occurred under a traditional Resource Team Assessment.

In the interim, in lieu of visiting in-person, this report is being provided to the Hamilton Main Street Program (HMSP) to:

- Introduce the Main Street Four Point Approach™ and the incremental and strategic nature of Main Street;
- Provide guidance for initial activities and projects that are doable for a newly organized program, yet impactful enough to allow program leadership to begin laying a foundation for future success;
- Organize the many, many ideas an excited new program will typically have into a strategic and realistic path forward;
- Present an initial plan of action under the Main Street formula in order to provide a solid first-year foundation for an emerging Texas Main Street community; and help the program begin its drive toward long-term sustainability.

Recommendations

The recommendations and proposals in this interim report are based on decades of experience the authors collectively have in Main Street, historic preservation, architecture, design, economic development, tourism, marketing, and organizational management. From this experience, we know that there are initial steps a new Main Street community should take through its four-point, committee-based structure. This report also includes Hamilton-specific recommendations for initial projects and activities based on what we have learned so far from the application, initial site visits, and conversations with Main Street board and staff. A summary of recommendations follows. Details for the recommendations are in each chapter.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

Hamilton is at an ideal moment to work with partners to focus efforts toward revitalizing downtown and take advantage of the proven fact that Main Street IS economic development. To achieve desired economic impact, collect and analyze market data and business needs to gain understanding of potential and challenges. The re-imagining of the Thompson Building will be an economic catalyst for downtown.

DESIGN

Gain deeper understanding of downtown Hamilton's building stock and physical/visual assets through education on historic preservation; survey and documentation; becoming public on DowntownTX.org; and accessing design/preservation services and resources. A design and economic plan for a catalytic project—the EDC-owned Thompson Building—is already in motion and should continue to move forward.

PROMOTION

Begin to shape perceptions and messaging as part of a branding effort toward increasing Hamilton's destination potential. You'll be able to identify and articulate these messages over time as your known existing assets are showcased alongside 'surprises,' and as successes are celebrated, strategic events are held, and potential is more fully realized.

HERITAGE TOURISM

Focus on short-term heritage tourism projects that can be implemented in one year or less to be better positioned to capitalize on longer-term opportunities later. These include ensuring dining and shopping opportunities exist for visitors downtown. Capitalize on heritage tourism assets through products, tours, and events specified in the chapter.

ORGANIZATION

Ensure that all important components of the program's organizational framework are in place, especially as related to finalizing strategies/market position statements and adopting the Main Street work plan with activities balanced across the four points. This should be followed by establishment of committees, committee chairs, and members.

WORK PLAN

To guide the work of the leadership team, each chapter's recommendations are woven into a proposed Transformation Strategy Plan of Work focused on entrepreneurship development; historic preservation; placemaking; tourism/heritage tourism including emergence as a day-trip destination; adaptive re-use of properties to realize market potential; and serving locals.

CHAPTER TWO

Economic Vitality

Economic Vitality

Downtown is a marketplace with the potential for return on investment. The Economic Vitality strategy focuses on capital, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, catalyze property development, and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies.

—by Alan Cox, Main Street Economic Development Specialist

An Economic Development Strategy to Revitalize Downtown Hamilton

The Main Street effort in Hamilton is both a funding and organizational partnership of the City and the Hamilton Economic Development Corporation (HEDC), a voter-approved entity authorized through the Texas Local Government Code to collect a sales tax for business development and job creation. This relationship is important because it signifies that local leadership has prioritized downtown and realizes its capacity to be central to Hamilton's economic development efforts. Main Street is a vehicle for helping to achieve those goals through the Main Street Economic Vitality component.

With the creation of Hamilton Main Street, the community now has a group solely focused on downtown operating through a grassroots effort that comes from the volunteer-driven Economic Vitality pillar of the Four Point Approach™. There are many common activities among the four pillars of the Approach that all new Main Street programs laying a foundation for future success will undertake, and these are outlined in the various chapters of this report. Under Economic Vitality, it will be critical to ensure that a common and continuing economic vision for downtown is in place and that all partners know what their role in it is. This is something that will be accomplished in harmony with the HEDC and influenced by that organization's strategic plan update, which was ongoing at the time of the completion of this report.

Main Street's Role in Economic Development

- **The Main Street Program and Economic Vitality Committee will carry out activities and strategies and provide leadership for an economically viable downtown**
- **Through an unique emphasis on small business/entrepreneurship development and realizing market potential, there will be ongoing, robust downtown activity**
- **Downtown will be perceived to be an economic development asset for the broader community**
- **The Main Street Program will have a seat at the Economic Development table.**

Main Street is Economic Development

In Main Street, the foundation for effort comes from a belief that positive economic impact comes out of a focus on historic assets, and that downtown is a unique marketplace because of its historic nature. These assets in the district are primarily the historic commercial properties, and they are the primary tools for creating measurable economic outcomes that benefit the community at large.

Locally owned and destination businesses in this historic sector create a unique and vital market economy that contributes to the broader economic health of the community and region and provide the community with a powerful and desirable identity and image.

To provide evidence of measurable economic impact, local Main Street programs collect and report reinvestment statistics to the state office each quarter. These are compiled into statewide and national statistics to show the positive impact of Main Street revitalization. The 2019 year-end figures showed impressive gains from Texas' 89 active programs.

Economic Development Opportunities

Hamilton finds itself at an ideal moment to begin focusing efforts toward revitalizing its downtown. During the last decade, the community has seen a reversal of its previously declining employment and population base. In other words, Hamilton is gradually becoming part of an emerging region located to the southwest of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, which presents Hamilton with ever-increasing options to grow and diversify its economy, expand its tax base, and attract new visitors. One of the best means for doing so would be to revitalize downtown Hamilton through increased business start-ups, enhancing tourism attractions, and leveraging other strategic opportunities.

In spring 2020, Hamilton Main Street staff conducted two surveys to best determine local preferences for potential improvements within the community's Main Street district. One survey targeted a small group of 10 downtown stakeholders, including property and business owners, and a single employee. The other survey was conducted among a broader swath of the community and included over 152 responses. This pool of respondents was primarily comprised of longtime residents (62 percent of whom have lived in Hamilton for at least 10 years), who visit downtown on a frequent basis (80 percent visit downtown at least once per week).

Two clear thematic trends emerge from the two surveys:

First, the Hamilton community appreciates the existing dining and entertainment options it has downtown, but would also like to see an expansion of other related activities.

By far, the most popular existing activity in downtown is its dining/nightlife. Moreover, about half rated more shopping, dining, and family-oriented activities should be the community's highest priority for new businesses among all other options. For example, the community specifically favored establishments such as a movie theater, yogurt shop/soda fountain, and a bowling alley/miniature golf as the types of businesses they would like to see downtown. While the community also appears to appreciate events such as Christmas lighting, food festivals, farmers markets, and trade days, downtown stakeholders voiced that few of such events had not succeeded in increasing the foot traffic for their businesses in the past. Expanding these events and focusing them on increasing spending opportunities at existing businesses and encouraging small startups should be a future focus. For example, Hamilton Main Street could encourage more trade days and farmers market events to transition local entrepreneurs from mere pop-up businesses to tenants of the proposed incubator in the Thompson Building who could then eventually graduate into brick and mortar locations throughout the downtown.

The second major current that ran through these two surveys was a strong desire to enhance the physical appearance of downtown while also easing the flow of traffic and accessibility by improving and expanding sidewalks throughout the district. Specific opportunities to improve the aesthetics of downtown that seemed to receive strong support were featuring existing ghost signs and creating more murals downtown. For example, one stakeholder responded by stating the community should "improve signage to direct people to parking" and should "put more money into 'dressing up' the courthouse, especially around Christmas, [and] make the entrances into Hamilton more eye pleasing."

Another idea to expand and connect sidewalks to surrounding neighborhoods and the trail system also appeared to be met with broad support.

Taken together, these two strategies of focusing on family friendly activities with a goal for increasing business activity, as well as investing in physical improvements to make the district more accessible and friendly for visitors, the Historic Hamilton Main Street district could go far in realizing the community's desires for a revitalized downtown that becomes a destination for the broader region.

To seize upon these opportunities, Hamilton Main Street will need to undertake a strategic plan of action to carefully chart a course for revitalization. Through the Economic Vitality area of focus, leaders of a new Main Street program consider the following recommendations:

- Developing common consensus on economic diversification strategies for downtown that will have a positive impact on the community at large
- Diversifying the downtown business base
- Creating strategies for entrepreneurship development
- Enhancing opportunities for visitor spending

These strategies will be intertwined in various ways among all four points of the Main Street Approach, and each chapter of this report includes recommendations for various aspects of them.

Initial Recommendations for Downtown Hamilton

One of the first priorities for a new Main Street program is to establish committees to support each pillar of the Four Point Approach™,

which is outlined in the introductory chapter. While the new board has been created to guide the program and has begun meeting, the four-point committees are in various stages of being organized. This report, and the sample Transformation Strategy committee work plans found in the Work Plan chapter will assist in setting strategic direction for the program and its committees.

The Economic Vitality committee will work toward enacting strategies to support the vision and economic revitalization of downtown. This committee could play a significant leadership role in the actual articulation of the broad vision for downtown, but if not, will certainly be a key player in carrying out strategies to drive toward the vision. Either way, the strategies and marketing positioning statements that are developed for the program, and where each committee will focus its work, will help the definition of that vision.

1 Continue Building a Team of Economic Vitality Partners to Promote Downtown Investment Opportunities

This team should be comprised of downtown merchants, property owners, and real estate brokers to act as professional representatives who can articulate a clear and achievable vision of downtown Hamilton's future and promote specific opportunities to potential investors, entrepreneurs, and existing businesses. A critical message the committee should be able to articulate is that downtown Hamilton's vision is inextricably aligned with the overall economic development goals and strategies set forth by the HEDC.

2 Utilize Data to Build Common Understanding of Downtown Hamilton's Market Realities and Potential

Data collection is an important factor in making informed decisions that lead to an effective and impactful Main Street revitalization effort. Data collection and analysis guides program activity; provides understanding as to downtown's relative performance in comparison to the area as a whole; assists in discovering latent opportunities for business growth; and demonstrates the success of the Main Street program as measured by investments, jobs, etc. over time.

Consideration should be given to collecting indicators such as the following:

- Population
- Employment
- Business counts
- Occupancy rates
- Property taxes
- Sales taxes
- Traffic counts
- Community and/or stakeholder surveys

Some of this information will be gathered and collected as part of the Texas Main Street Program's required reinvestment reporting process, and much may already be collected by local and regional partners. Working closely with partners will help determine what data are readily available and relevant to the on-going goals and activities of the program. With the assistance of the Texas Main Street program's community and economic development specialist, the Economic Vitality Committee should develop a standardized data collection system to establish a baseline of indicators to track trends in the downtown area.

An initial market assessment was performed by the Texas Main Street Program office (Please see the Hamilton Market Assessment in the Appendix on page 59). The major findings were:

- The overall population of the City of Hamilton and surrounding Hamilton County has remained remarkably consistent since World War II. Throughout, most of the county's population has lived in unincorporated areas.
- Migration data reveal that more people have been moving to the area than leaving, but the high death to birth ratio has prevented the population base from increasing.
- Regional population trends show that Hamilton County is located on the edge of two growth areas. Neighbors to the north appear to be receiving significant spillover flowing from the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, while areas along the I-35 corridor are also expanding rapidly.
- Hamilton's labor market has improved significantly in recent years following an earlier decline. The lack of a population decline during the same period provides a hint that area residents are reluctant to leave the community during times of economic distress.
- Job data show that Hamilton's traditional agriculture-related economy declined in the earlier part of the last decade and that recovery has been led by sectors, such as retail, leisure, and hospitality. This likely reflects a potentially ongoing transition of the area's economy to one that is integrating with wider regional trends that are influenced by visitor spending.
- While the construction of new housing remains low in Hamilton County, the price of rural land in the region points to it becoming an increasingly attractive investment opportunity for buyers.

3 Understand the Needs and Advocate the Interests of Downtown Business Owners

Identifying the needs of downtown interests (business and property owners) is a critical role for Main Street so it can act as an advocate for improvements.

- Using DowntownTX.org, continue building an inventory of stores and other businesses to ensure a thorough knowledge of what downtown has to offer.
- Establish an outreach program by making periodic visits with store and property owners to understand what they view as their challenges and opportunities.
- Create an annual survey for downtown shops and businesses to keep tabs on their opinions of Hamilton's downtown.
- Ensure that local businesses are aware of available technical and financial assistance.

4 Leverage Ownership of the Thompson Building to Meet Strategic Needs for the Community

Hamilton EDC's ownership of the Thompson Building provides the potential to jump-start the revitalization of downtown. Currently vacant, this building could become a new downtown hub that would serve as a place to meet strategic needs in the community, such as the one to increase business start-ups. The building's square footage provides ample space that could be divided into two main sections:

1) business incubator for local start-ups that can generate tax revenue for the City and
2) potential public uses such as continuing education/workforce development, entrepreneurial training, and a community meeting space.

Consideration should be given to the following:

- Creating a workforce development center to allow for an opportunity to have continuing education in Hamilton. Options could include connections with a regional university, regional small business center, and/or workforce resources. Job training courses could also be offered. Programming the building as a closer to 24-hour presence on the square with day and night options for occupants and activities could be very desirable, scalable, and adaptable over time.
- Economic Development/Main Street offices could also utilize a small portion of the space for meetings and as a catalyst opportunity for events. The adjacent parking lot can be both controlled and adapted for events (farmers markets, art or auction days, etc.). Combining this office use with a workforce development center should also be considered and would allow for a community event space (local non-profits, senior activities, etc.).
- In the additional space, an incubator could be created to provide a place for small start-ups and assist them becoming established in the community and allowing for growth to future brick and mortar locations in downtown Hamilton. Two primary options for the incubator space are one that specializes in retail or another that provides food services. The second option, however, would likely be much more expensive as it would require the construction of a kitchen including a grease trap.

DOWNTOWNTX.ORG

A Tool for Economic Vitality and Beyond

—by Kylie Woodlock, Special Projects Coordinator

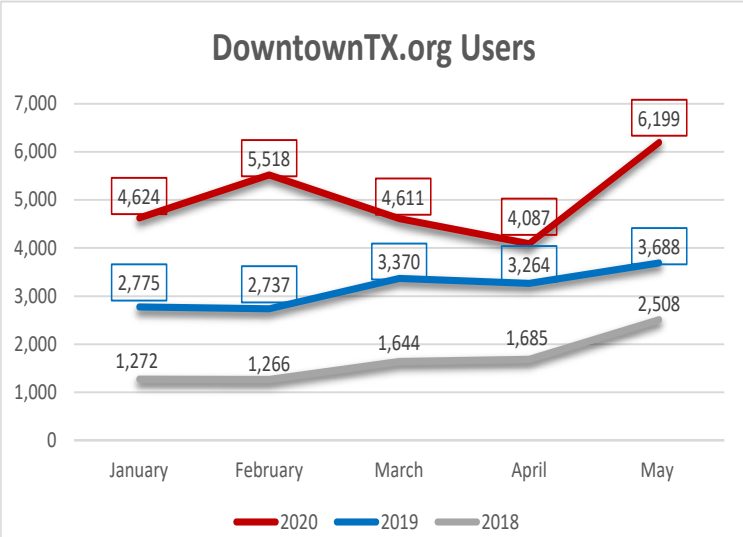
DowntownTX.org is a real estate and building inventory tool developed by Texas Main Street for cities in the Main Street and Certified Local Government programs. As a new Main Street city, Hamilton's information has been added to the site but is not yet visible to the public.

As the first of its kind in the downtown revitalization field, the software's unique combined features enable program managers to:

-- Promote the visibility of downtown buildings and business opportunities in the larger context of place and community;

-- Inventory a community's downtown commercial building stock, including storing and making public building histories, photographs, and historic resource information, and;

-- Build historic preservation, economic development, and design initiatives through its powerful capabilities for downtown program management



DowntownTX unique users per month. The site has extended its reach over the last three years and continues to provide a new audience for investment opportunities in Main Streets across Texas.

Steps for DowntownTX Success

Hamilton is primed to successfully integrate DowntownTX as a Main Street development tool with the following recommendations:

1) Launch Hamilton's public site

Reaping the benefits of the site's listing service requires the information to be publically available

2) Host an Imagine the Possibilities Tour

Currently, plans for a virtual tour are on-going, contingent on the public site launch

3) Update and Maintain Business and Building Inventory

Accurate business and building information is required for THC staff to help with certain analyses, such as a business-mix or a historic resource survey

The site may also be used to foster community support of Hamilton Main Street's preservation initiatives long-term:

4) Collect building histories from community resources, such as local museums, saved newspaper articles and photographs, and verified oral histories

5) Host a "Getting to Know You" session with local real estate agents to build relationships that will help maintain accurate real estate listings

CHAPTER THREE

Design

Design

Downtown's historic nature is what makes it special. The historic assets are worth saving and re-using. The Design strategy supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the commercial district apart.

—by Jamie Crawley, Tara Bonds, Daniela Cantu, Christian Prado, Main Street Design Team

Historic Preservation-Based Design to Revitalize Downtown

Attention to the historic physical environment is key to Main Street revitalization. As noted by Main Street America™: "Every community and commercial district is different, with its own distinctive assets and sense of place." Design, one of four points within the Main Street Approach™, focuses on ensuring that downtown is an inviting, inclusive, people-centered place where historic character is celebrated, and which results in increasing the local quality of life. Spurred by the Main Street revitalization effort, design activities range from regular maintenance, infill development, the rehabilitation of historic structures, and the creation of inviting public spaces.

This chapter focuses on three primary areas to influence initial design efforts and first steps for the new Hamilton Main Street program:

- Accessing assistance from the Texas Main Street design staff
- Downtown Hamilton's development history and initial observations
- Initial recommendations

Underlying these recommendations is an understanding that physical and visual change takes time, and careful prioritization and patience in needed. To accomplish lasting change, community buy-in and momentum-building takes relational and financial investment. In coordination with the three other Main Street points in the Approach, small victories in design contribute to long-term momentum and substantial change.

Design Assistance

As part of the Texas Main Street Program (TMSP), communities have access to many tools and resources to assist local leaders with preservation and design within historic downtowns. Services, technical assistance, and consultation provided to the local program and its property/business owners can range from, but are not limited to:

- Site visits with building or business owners
- Verbal advice or simple sketch
- Photographic renderings for a project
- Written recommendations and/or technical information
- Sign or business logo design
- Color schemes
- Conceptual site plans
- Conceptual drawings for new construction
- Design Committee training

The local Main Street Manager is the conduit and liaison between the property owner and the TMSP staff. To request design assistance, the process begins with an initial conversation between the Main Street Manager and the requestor. A review of project goals, budget, and timeline will provide the Main Street Manager with the information needed to complete and submit the TMSP Design Request form. The Main Street Manager will need detailed specifics to best request services from TMSP staff and understand how the completion of the project will impact benefit the requester and larger community revitalization efforts. Design assistance is most often requested for exterior work, yet design staff can assist with interior work as well. The budget should be carefully considered, as TMSP design staff wants to ensure the provided design ideas align with the available resources and can be realistically implemented by the requester.

The Design staff will need to know if the building is a National Register Property, a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL), a State Antiquities Landmark (SAL), a local landmark as designated by the town, or a contributing structure to a historic district. Certain designations require review from other THC staff and/or local preservation leaders. Based on designations and existing conditions, design staff will assess whether the property is being preserved, rehabilitated, restored, or reconstructed, and will proceed with recommendations accordingly. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties is used for guidance in making design decisions about the property. For more information on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, please refer to the following website: http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm. Providing current and historic photographs is also an important part of this process.

Current photographs of the property should include views of all sides of the building in high resolution with additional close-up shots highlighting areas of concern or architectural details.

The TMSP design process includes evaluating the property and identifying character-defining features, which are the visual and physical features of a building or place that give it a unique identity and distinctive nature. Features that need attention such as masonry problems, covered windows, or other alterations to the original façade will be identified, and technical information and/or design drawings will be provided.

Design drawings, such as plans, elevations, and perspectives, and/or images of successful project examples from other communities might be provided to visually communicate design ideas and recommendations. Design staff will package the information in a Design Report. Serving 89 Main Street communities, turnaround times for delivery of a full design report can range from two weeks to three months. When the request is received, Design staff will provide a general timeframe when the Main Street Manager can expect to receive recommendations from staff. But some design requests do not require a full design report and can be handled quicker. Pictured above is a sample design request for Hamilton in progress at the time of this report to provide rehabilitation recommendations for two properties (center and right).

Design recommendations in this case will include but not be limited to the removal of the metal slipcover.

Development History and Initial Observations

In addition to the commercial structures within the Main Street district, the agricultural structures adjacent the downtown district hold great potential for redevelopment, both as functional public spaces and to become more central to the community's identity. The large spans and covered open spaces hold great potential for public gatherings, both special events and regular use.

Along streetscapes, there are few places for people to linger and enjoy being downtown. Creating places to sit beneath canopies or trees and with sufficient lighting should be a priority. Additionally, wayfinding coupled with gathering spaces for residents and visitors could become a way for Hamilton Main Street to tell its unique story of place.

As is typical in Texas downtowns, there have been questionable repairs and alterations to historic buildings over many decades. In Hamilton, there are opportunities for minor projects to correct these items that would also have immediate impact on the streetscape and improve the pedestrian experience, such as reinstalling canopies, unblocking transom windows, removing slipcovers, and replacing/removing inappropriate materials. Within the downtown, there are also positive preservation efforts underway, indicating the community sees the historic fabric as an asset.

With the passion and commitment of residents, city staff, and Main Street board members, Hamilton's historic downtown structures and mix of downtown businesses show great potential for increased economic vitality and a more welcoming physical environment. The space needed to foster creative and entrepreneurial energy is available. The history of Hamilton, including its agricultural roots, connection to bridge history, and passion for outdoor activities, present opportunities for cultivating and sharing the dynamic story of this unique small town in Texas.

This aerial photo shows the lack of pedestrian-friendly spaces in Hamilton.

Initial Recommendations

Becoming a participant in the Texas Main Street Program is a proactive step toward protecting Hamilton's historic building stock and revitalizing downtown. The following recommendations build upon Hamilton's local assets and programs to encourage future rehabilitation plans and revitalization efforts.

1 Research and Capture Property Information within DowntownTX.org to Create an Accurate Inventory and Foster Appreciation for Local History and Preservation

In its first year, Hamilton Main Street should prioritize the completion of an inventory to create a strong foundation for the program. In addition to design and preservation efforts, the inventory will assist in meeting other objectives, such as recruiting businesses to suitable spaces, helping property owners with building maintenance and rehab work, and implementing preservation and design guidelines. In the last period—June 2020—there were almost 7,000 unique site users, providing strong evidence of DowntownTX.org's capacity as a viable economic development tool.

At the time of this writing, the effort addressed in this recommendation was already underway.

Survey the Main Street District to Document Structures and Properties

Much of this work is already happening as part of the work being done to establish Hamilton on DowntownTX.org. The first step to improving the physical environment and increasing preservation efforts is gaining a greater understanding of existing conditions.

In addition to the Main Street Manager, its important the Main Street board, volunteers, and other decision-makers take time to experience downtown from the perspective of a local resident and first-time visitor. Walking the district as a group allows time and space to take a closer look and see the district with fresh eyes.

Additionally, surveying the district is essential for an eventual nomination to create downtown as a National Register Commercial Historic District. The Texas Historical Commission (THC) has an agency survey coordinator who can assist with advice on conducting a survey and completing the required forms, as can the National Register staff within the agency. Another resource that can be useful for either surveying or familiarization of historic properties in the city and/or downtown is the Texas Historic Sites Atlas that can be found at https://atlas.thc.texas.gov/.

Completing the inventory can easily become an activity of the design committee or the entire leadership team of staff and board if desired and organized through DowntownTX. To complete the inventory, consider dividing the district in quadrants or grouping of blocks—and assigning these areas to board members, volunteers, etc. The inventory process should be completed as methodically as possible, noting building history and current specifics, including use. Consider a range of resources, such as those already mentioned and possibly also including newspaper articles, historic maps, appraisal district records, personal stories, library/local archives, property sales records, and online searches.

There is a Building Inventory Form in the TMSP Online Resource Library, and the THC survey coordinator can also provide resources and forms. Information pertaining to necessary fields for Downtown.TX.org should be included in the survey activity.

2 Working with TMSP Design Staff, Identify Opportunities and Assets within Hamilton's Physical Environment that could be Improved or Leveraged within Future Design Projects

Consider assets, 'doable' projects, and opportunities that the program has the capacity to address within the next year to three years. The first three years of a Main Street program are considered the foundation-laying catalytic years during which basic revitalization skills are developed and initial projects undertaken. This sets the stage for future success and sustainability. For example: identifying portions of alleys/city right-of-way that could be transformed into park space; a weekly gathering that warrants new seating or informational signage in the meeting location; a privately-owned, blank wall along a sidewalk that could be used for downtown signage or public art. Consider a wide breadth of possibilities with the understanding that only a small handful of projects will be undertaken in the first several years. Time, budget, and manpower needed to implement design projects will need to be carefully considered.

The assets and opportunities noted thus far by Texas Main Street Design Staff include:

Thompson Building (Photo of current condition below): A full rehabilitation would be recommended with design options adaptively reusing the building and reoccupying the space with new uses for economic vitality. A variety of program options appear viable for the prominent property on the square, controlled by the Economic Development Corporation. With a large parking lot behind this area could also be phased as an outdoor market, exterior dining option, or music space. Welcoming entrances in front and back can create a pass-through to the square and increase connectivity.

The Square: Define boundaries of what alterations may be allowed to 'soften' exterior edges and corners. The courthouse is a State Antiquities Landmark and is the properties' strongest protection along with its easement. Thus any proposed design strategies will need to consider this designation and work with THC staff for any design recommendations. Explore a temporary "parklet" strategy of corner installations that can accommodate seating, landscape elements, public art, and string lighting anchor points. Lighting can then be strung to buildings on the square for holidays and special events.

Agricultural Structures: The range of agricultural structures adjacent to downtown present opportunities for exterior gathering spaces and outdoor activities, such as a backdrop for a music venue or covered structures for a local farmers market..

Historic Gas Station: This property just off the northwest corner of the square has a distinct historic architectural character suitable for rehabilitation as a restaurant and would provide added visibility to public activity adjacent a vehicular corridor with outdoor dining. Discuss the TxDOT Field Guide to Gas Stations in Texas as a resource with Main Street Design staff when considering rehabilitation options for this property.

Public Art: There are numerous opportunities to have both the Hamilton community and visitors engage with public art. The focus on the transformation of parking lot spaces to parks, streetscape, parklets, alleys, and restoration of ghost signs, and the possibility of a backdoor beautification project for areas immediately adjacent the square, are perfect opportunities to incorporate new murals and encourage pedestrian exploration of Hamilton. A focus on public art can include functional art (benches, bike racks), water features in the parks (sculptures), and possibly lighting installations in the alleys.

Eight Row Flint in Houston is a rehabilitation example of a historic gas station turned restaurant.

Ghost Signs: There are an abundance of unilluminated, flat wall signs. A wider variety of appropriate signage could enhance the character of downtown. Consider drafting a sign code specific to downtown. This should also address preservation of the existing ghost signs. Work with the Heritage Tourism team to provide a pamphlet/printout containing this info for tourists. This is more fully covered in the Heritage Tourism chapter of this report.

Public Art Resources:

Elgin Main Street Public Art Plan
- A design committee project

Best Practices for Murals

Call for Artist Resource Guide, Americans for the Arts

As part of the process of identifying assets, your program should also note the major design challenges facing downtown. Examples may include TxDOT rights-of-way, sidewalk condition, insensitive building alteration, etc. As you move forward, consider how they may impact the ability to carry out your work improving downtown's physical and visual environment.

3 Use Your Soon-to-be-Developed Main Street Plan of Work to Prioritize Design Activities

After identifying the communities' assets and opportunities, it is important to consider the range of possible design projects and prioritize which ones the Design Committee will pursue. The Main Street Plan of Work and the Transformation Strategy revitalization model and processes are covered in the Organization chapter of this report and will guide the work of all four committees. Recommendations made in each chapter are summarized and moved into a suggested template for a Baseline Plan of Work that the program can use to make decisions about its forthcoming activities.

Changes to the physical environment take substantial time and financial investments, so limiting focus to two projects will more likely lead to completion and build momentum for the Main Street Program. Each project should have a specific list of action steps with a timeline for their execution. These projects may relate or overlap within another area of the Four Point Approach.

Restoration of a ghost mural in progress in Paris, Texas.

4 Encourage Preservation in the Main Street District through Educational Programming, Resources, and Ordinances

Repairing and maintaining a historic property is a daunting task and many property owners do not know where to start. Educational programming and resources are the key to encouraging building maintenance and supporting property owner needs. The Main Street program, TMSP design staff, and local partners can develop resources that make this process easier for owners. Education partners could include local historic societies, local museums, and the school district.

Educate the Community on Historic Materials in Hamilton

This can also tie into the history and maintenance manuals/guides for property owners, as well as other preservation-based educational programming for the community and property owners.

Limestone Masonry: Several buildings surrounding the square are constructed of limestone masonry (rock-faced coursed ashlar) that was quarried close to the Hamilton area. Examples: Hamilton County Courthouse, Rice Building, Hamilton County Abstract Company, El Jardin restaurant, 206 North Bell Street, and the adjacent structure.

Other unique materials/features that remain intact: Sheet-metal façade on 104 E Main St, prismatic transom windows at studio on the square/bay window at studio on the square.

Modern Materials: Structural glass present at Jordan Pharmacy and the bulkhead areas of the Gallery building, angled and recessed aluminum storefronts, as well as glass block and aluminum display windows are present in the downtown.

Educational programming can include training provided by preservation professionals, such as THC staff, city staff, or citizens involved in preservation; and hands-on workshops with craftsman exploring construction techniques, such as masonry construction, window repair, and brick repointing.

Become Familiar with Preservation Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation Work

A local preservation program must root itself in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, which are the national standard on the treatment of historic properties. The link to the Standards was provided earlier in this chapter. There is also a webinar series "Creating a Strong Preservation Program" in the Online Resource Library that was created by Texas Main Street and Certified Local Government staff at the THC.

Overall, the Standards (Department of the Interior regulations, 36 CFR 67) are a series of concepts about maintaining, repairing, and replacing materials on a historic building, as well as designing new additions or making alterations.

They provide a framework and guidance for decision-making about improvements or modifications to a historic property. The Standards can be applied to historic properties of all types, materials, construction, sizes, and use. They include both the exterior and the interior and extend to a property's landscape features, site, environment, as well as related new construction. The Standards are to be applied to rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility. The Standards offer four distinct approaches to the treatment of historic properties:

Preservation—maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of a property's form as it has evolved over time.
Rehabilitation—acknowledges the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the property's historic character.
Restoration—depicts a property at a period in its history, while removing evidence of other periods.
Reconstruction—recreates vanished or non-surviving portions of a property for interpretive purposes.

Each treatment type incorporates eight to 10 standards and has supporting guidelines for each standard that provide additional information.

Begin a Community Conversation and Advocate for the Adoption of Appropriate Ordinances to Protect and Preserve Downtown's Historic Buildings and Create a Pedestrian-Friendly Public Realm

Adopting the appropriate land use tools is an important aspect of any downtown program. Downtowns typically utilize a historic preservation ordinance and a downtown-friendly zoning code to facilitate revitalization. Main Street programs are instrumental in advocating the necessity of these tools as they make it easier and more efficient to redevelop buildings and sites that are pleasant, walkable, and consistent with historic scale, character, and design. Now is the time to begin a community conversation about what these tools are and how they can enhance downtown. Identifying your assets and challenges should provide this starting point for your conversation.

Brief explanations for possible land-use tools for Hamilton are included below. Depending on Hamilton's priorities, the Main Street Program may choose to pursue one, both, and none in the first year.

Downtown Mixed-Use Zoning Ordinance or Overlay: This land-use tool encourages a mix of uses as well as design standards to enhance the public realm and is intended to encourage downtown development in a historically appropriate pattern while also addressing a number of common land use and design challenges such as managing ground-floor uses, encouraging storefront design that engages the street, and provisions that require owners to maintain minimum standards for the condition of their buildings.

Historic Preservation Ordinance: A historic preservation ordinance is the primary method by which communities protect their historic resources and ultimately their character. The ordinance provides an extra level of protection for properties designated as historic.

A strong ordinance promotes survey and designation of properties citywide, while also establishing a historic preservation commission, a historic preservation officer (HPO), and a design review process to prevent insensitive alterations and demolition of those designated properties. Long-term, the city can consider becoming part of the Certified Local Government (CLG) program, which provides guidance, technical assistance, and grants for cities whose preservation programs meet certain standards.

Increase Understanding through Accessing Available Resources

THC links:

Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program - Project consultants for Previous and Current THCPP Projects
https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/THCPP%20Project%20Consultants_0.pdf

Finding and Hiring a Preservation: Consultant:
https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/publications/hiring-preservation-consultant.pdf

THC Preservation Funding for Businesses:
https://www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/buildings-and-property/funding-preservation-projects/preservation-funding-businesses

CLG Reference Center: Webinar Series Building a Strong Preservation Program:
https://www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/projects-and-programs/certified-local-government/clg-reference-center-0

Texas Main Street City Links:
Georgetown: New Property Owner's Guide
https://mainstreet.georgetown.org/files/2019/08/GTXMS_Trifold_PRINT_2018.pdf

Denison: A Quick Guide for New Downtown Property + Business Owners
https://www.cityofdenison.com/sites/default/files/fileattachments/main_street/page/7551/quick_guide_for_new_downtown_property_and_business_owners.pdf

Palestine: Maintenance Guide
http://www.cityofpalestinetx.com/departments/development-services/historic-preservation/maintenance/

National/Federal Links:
National Park Service Preservation Briefs
https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm

General Services Administration Historic Preservation Technical Documents:
https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate/historic-preservation/historic-preservation-policy-tools/preservation-tools-resources/technical-documents

Main Street America™ Design Handbook
https://www.mainstreet.org/howwecanhelp/resourcecenter/handbooksandguides.

Contractors
One tool to aid property owners in rehabilitating their buildings is to develop a list of local or regional contractors with expertise in historic buildings. Craftspeople with experience in traditional buildings trades can be hard to locate, so creating a list or database and publishing it on the Downtown Hamilton website can save property owners a lot of time and effort.

Window Preservation Alliance: https://windowpreservationalliance.org/directory

Custom Building and Restoration Trades Directory: http://www.restorationtradesdirectory.com

San Antonio Rehabbers Club Contractor List: https://www.sarehabberclub.com/contractors/

CHAPTER FOUR

Promotion

Promotion

Downtown is a vibrant, active place worth visiting. Through this strategy, downtown is positioned as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics.

—by Cara Lowrimore, Main Street Program Assistant Coordinator

At its most basic, Promotion for Main Street is marketing your downtown as a vibrant, active place—a place worth visiting, and a place worth investing in.

While it's tempting to think of Promotion as simply "special events," in reality, a smart promotion strategy usually includes several crucial components:

- Defining the unique assets of your town—and then using those assets to build your brand
- Celebrating successes to generate, and sustain, enthusiasm for downtown
- Producing strategic special events—or tying in with existing ones—that serve as signature events for your community and draw both locals as well as day-trippers and overnight visitors.
- Taking care of the basics

Related content and recommendations can be found in the Heritage Tourism chapter of this report.

Defining the Hamilton Brand

What Exactly is Branding?

Branding is a term that gets thrown around a lot. What do we mean exactly? Think of branding as the difference between a cup of coffee…and a Starbucks. A cookie…and an Oreo. (When you think about buying a pack of Oreos, you know what you're getting: rows of neatly-stacked cookies; a crisp outside that can be twisted off its creamy middle; each cookie is guaranteed to be tasty and delightfully comforting—just like it was when you were a kid.) In other words, a brand is a collection of associations, perceptions, and feelings about a product or place that drives a customer to choose one product or location over others.

What Does this Mean for Hamilton?

As Main Street leaders, you will shape people's perceptions and associations about downtown Hamilton. Once defined, it will be your job to promote and manage the Downtown Hamilton brand. This goes way beyond just having a groovy logo.

It's really about defining what Hamilton is, and what you want downtown Hamilton to become.

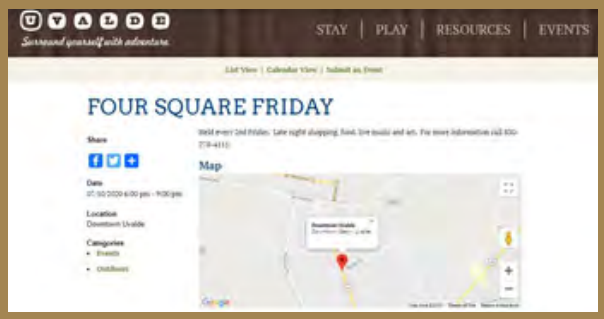
City staff and community leaders already have some exciting visions for downtown Hamilton. But you may need to host a brainstorming session to dig deeper and zero in on downtown's essence. This session should at least include staff and Main Street board but might include additional stakeholders as well. Questions like these can serve as a guide:

1) What do we want to be known for?
2) How can we stand out from the crowd and be more competitive?
3) What thoughts and feelings do we want to come to mind when people think of us?
4) How can we bridge any gaps between the 1st three questions?

One of the intents of this report, as noted in the Introduction, is to provide outsider perspective as a means of guidance to the local Main Street leaders. From that perspective, it is clear that Hamilton already has a steady flow of visitors, especially on weekends: hunters, fishermen, and participants at Circle T. *You are already a true destination for outdoor enthusiasts*—and perhaps this is your answer to "Who are we?" If that's the case, then your central promotions goal is to *more holistically and strategically cater to that audience and attract that audience downtown.* If, over time, you can begin to add related shopping experiences for those groups and their families, as well as address possible parking obstacles off the square for larger vehicles with trailers, etc..., you should be able to lure more and more of this audience downtown. So maybe "who you become" is simply a more crystallized version of who you already are: *a friendly downtown that fully embraces and celebrates its natural resources and outdoor enthusiasts.*

Secondly, Hamilton has some real surprises: the Red Wing Dove Winery, the gliding opportunity, the incredible Ramsey Collection, and some fun and casual dining/live music options. This constellation of surprising activities, possibly marketed as a weekend package—could be a secondary branding opportunity—though likely aimed at a different, more urban, audience than the "outdoors" brand. This secondary strategy could be undertaken later—once the Main Street program has had time to get on its feet.

An example related to both of these possible branding strategies can be found on the visitor site for Uvalde at https://www.visituvalde.com/. Uvalde is a nine-year Main Street community. The Main Street program is housed within the Visit Uvalde tourism organization. The visitor site promotes not only recreational and outdoor opportunities, but also shopping experiences that include downtown as well as Main Street's Four Square Fridays regularly occurring event. In Hamilton, much of this promotion and messaging already exists on both the city and chamber's websites. Over time, an opportunity for the Hamilton Main Street team might be to find ways to integrate more content showcasing downtown into these existing platforms.



Uvalde Main Street's Four Square Fridays events are showcased on the tourism bureau's website.

Celebrating Successes!

There's plenty of opportunity for the newly established Main Street team to strategically promote downtown in ways that may have not previously occurred.

1 Newspaper

Hamilton is fortunate to have a weekly newspaper to cover downtown happenings. Especially with Main Street and the newspaper in shared offices next door to one another, feeding news stories to the Herald will undoubtedly continue to be a win-win situation for Main Street and the publication.

2 Think "Lively," Especially on Social Media

Main Street downtowns are historic places, which is part of their unique nature. At the same time, successful downtowns are vital, lively, forward-looking places. This combination is how your branding efforts should be shaping peoples' perceptions. (For good examples, check out the Facebook pages for Downtown Denison, Main Street Bastrop, and Main Street Denton). Use Facebook to celebrate the many successes of Main Street: new businesses, property improvements, etc. There is plenty of opportunity to increase followers. Start by ensuring that each board member is a follower—and challenge each of them to invite 20 people to follow it also. You might also consider paying to 'boost' Main Street's special events on Facebook. Boosting will expand your reach, allowing you to reach people in a larger geographic area than just Hamilton. Over time, you might also consider adding Instagram to your social media mix. With young adults and young families coming into town for Circle T events and hunting, you'll want to market to a younger audience. Although the use of Instagram is low in rural areas relative to urban ones, it is high among 18-to-39-year-olds.

And you don't have to reinvent the wheel for Instagram; posting what you've already posted on Facebook is absolutely fine.

3 Use Social Media to Highlight Downtown Businesses

As you tell the story of Main Street Hamilton, remember that your business owners and their customers (and other stakeholders) are the heroes of the story. While you will want to celebrate program successes, you'll also want to post about your individual businesses, making the owners and their customers the stars of these posts.

Events to Drive Downtown Activity

Why Events?

Events are an important part of Promotion because they help create energy and activity downtown. A special event will be especially important in Hamilton, as a way to chisel away at any idea that "there is nothing to do downtown." It's imperative that the local business owners remain open during the entirety of the event. Even if event-goers don't go inside a store, they may take note of the store, see something in the window, etc.—and return later. Retailers should be encouraged to "get in on the act" by tying store windows to the event, offering in-store promotions and drawings. Likewise, event organizers need to be careful that event-goers have easy access to the stores and restaurants during events.

4 Piggyback on Existing Events

You don't have to start from scratch on everything. Take advantage of existing events —like Christmas in the Square or Trick-or-Treat Around the Square—and add a new element that strengthens the relationship between locals and downtown shops and restaurants.

5 Contests as "Events"

Not every event is a festival. Another fun idea used by several Main Street towns, especially during COVID-19, is a 'bingo' contest. Draw up a bingo card, where each square is a Hamilton business or activity or a social media task (For example, create a personal Facebook post promoting your favorite business on Rice Street). Once customers complete a row, they can turn in the card (with receipts, screenshots, and photos as proof of completing the tasks) to be eligible for a drawing. The 'bingo' game could be used to boost sales for local businesses and generate some excitement for the new Main Street program.

6 Farmer's Market

Hamilton leadership has expressed interest in adding a downtown farmer's market into the mix of events. Many Texas Main Street communities have had great success with farmer's markets as a means of driving people into downtown—and a farmer's market is obviously an excellent fit with Hamilton's rural/agricultural resources. (Note: Since a farmer's market business already exists, any implementation of this project by Main Street will need to take that into consideration and plan accordingly).

Taking Care of Basics

One of the most basic components to downtown's visual aesthetic and appeal is general physical upkeep. Leaders have already mentioned the need for a general cleanup of the downtown area. An organized cleanup of the area can give an energy boost to a fledgling program and begin to re-shape perceptions of downtown: "Wow! Downtown is looking really good!"

Another important activity that the Main Street program has already begun, and which should always be a priority, is regular check-ins with businesses. Set some dates to walk downtown and check in with them. Make sure they're aware of free services and benefits of being a Main Street city, upcoming events, etc. Ask if there are any issues they need help with. As a way to introduce the importance of having an online presence, make sure each of your businesses is, at the very least, listed in Google My Business. It's easy to do and ensures that the businesses will be easily "found" in Google searches.

Although not all are specifically organized through the Main Street program, many Texas Main Street communities have downtown farmer's markets.

CHAPTER FIVE

TEXAS BRAZOS TRAIL

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
TEXAS HERITAGE TRAILS PROGRAM

Heritage Tourism

Heritage Tourism

Downtown is a place where travelers can experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of Hamilton's past. These experiences enrich the visitor while providing revenue to local businesses and the overall Hamilton economy.

—by Teresa Caldwell and Sarah Page, Texas Heritage Trails team, in consultation with Andrea Barefield, Executive Director, Texas Brazos Trail Region

What is Heritage Tourism?

Cultural heritage tourism as defined by the National Trust for Historic Preservation is "traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes historic, cultural, and natural resources."

Understanding America's heritage and exploring distinct communities continues to grow in importance in attracting the traveler. More people are seeking travel experiences that connect them to local culture and unique stories. This is good news for Hamilton. Travelers want to visit places that showcase their past and dynamically weave their traditions and historic built and environmental fabric into contemporary life. Places that value preservation as a core community development tool often become ideal destinations for travelers seeking heritage tourism experiences.

What Benefits does Heritage Tourism Offer?

Studies on the characteristics of heritage tourists reveal them to be an attractive audience. These high-value visitors spend more on accommodations, shopping, entertainment and dining than any other type of tourist. If this group has a quality experience, they tend to come back more often than other tourist segments and tell their friends about the place.

For a community of its size, Hamilton is fortunate to have a number of heritage tourism assets, which are listed below:

1. Historic Downtown Square, including the Hamilton County Courthouse (with some exhibits)
2. Hamilton County Historic Museum, located in the 1930s Art Deco jail on the square
3. Three art galleries located downtown, open to the public by appointment only
4. Downtown shops and restaurants
5. Red Wing Dove Winery
6. Circle T Resort (covered arena with on-site lodging, RV park, and restaurant and home to youth and adult rodeos, barrel racing, team roping, and other rodeo-type events)
7. Hamilton's historic bridges, historic walk-in safes, historic gin, and ghost murals.

Heritage Tourists are interested in your unique cultural resources such as historic bridges and murals, local architecture, and local shops.

Short-Term Recommendations for Increasing Heritage Tourism

The recommendations listed below are all things that can be implemented in one year or less. Once these short-term recommendations have been accomplished, downtown Hamilton will be much better positioned to capitalize on opportunities that might require a longer amount of time. These are easily attainable measures that will set you up for a successful future.

1 Ensure Dining and Shopping Opportunities Exist for Visitors Downtown

All tourists love to eat and drink, especially the heritage tourist. Family-owned, local ethnic restaurants, coffee shops, and tea rooms are popular with heritage tourists and are preferred to chain restaurants. This makes sense as heritage tourists want to experience the "local flavor" of your community.

Hamilton has a good selection of locally owned restaurants for a community of its size. There are nine restaurants in the Main Street district. Five are open all weekend, while four are open Saturdays but closed on Sundays. Before COVID, another was open weekends and was a major pull of music tourism in the area.

No one likes to shop more than the heritage tourist, especially in specialty stores and shops featuring local crafts. The downtown district contains several shopping opportunities where visitors love to spend their money. In the 2020 Community Survey conducted by Hamilton Main Street in spring/summer, over half of the respondents (51.7 percent) indicated that they like restaurants the most about the Hamilton Historic Main Street District, while 21.5 percent liked the shops in downtown the most.

To have a destination downtown for locals and visitors, it is vital that the shops and restaurants are open regular hours, including weekends. Nothing is more frustrating to a heritage tourist than to travel to a site, store, or restaurant during regular business hours and find out that it is not open. Establishing and then following posted hours of operation is essential for maintaining visitor satisfaction, including weekend hours if you want to attract visitors downtown.

Additionally, there should be shopping and eating establishments open after 5 p.m. each day to keep tourists from leaving your community at night. Remember, if downtown Hamilton rolls up its streets in the evening, then neither your visitors nor residents will have any choice but go elsewhere for goods, food, and amusement! Not extending business hours is very simply a missed opportunity.

2 Develop a Downtown Walking Tour Brochure

This includes the buildings with the new HCHC interpretive plaques, the WPA Post Office mural, and other interesting community stories. Additional thematic tours could help visitors learn more about Hamilton's history or architecture, as well as appeal to specific visitor segments, and hopefully entice them to stay longer. Alpine has developed an historic walking and windshield tour that can be used as a model, and information about their tour can be found here: www.historicalpine.org/historic_walking_tour.htm

3 Develop a Guided Downtown Ghost Tour

It does not have to be entirely historically accurate as long as that is stated up-front. It is a ghost tour after all! Granbury does a nice job with its Granbury Ghosts and Legends tour that features a walking tour of Granbury's historic downtown square led by a guide dressed in period attire. Additional information is also available on the audio tour. Visit http://www.granburytours.com to learn more.

4 Create a Quarterly "Heritage on the Square" Event

In the same 2020 Community Survey conducted by Hamilton Main Street in spring/summer mentioned above, the majority of the respondents (53.7 percent) indicated that they like the historic buildings and area history the most about the Hamilton Historic Main Street district, while 15.4 percent liked special events the most in downtown.

In order to capitalize on Hamilton's heritage tourism assets and gauge interest in its offerings to visitors (and locals), create a quarterly "Heritage on the Square" (name TBD) event consisting of the following participants/elements to be held in conjunction with the four largest rodeo events that occur at the Circle T Resort:

- Event times: 10am—4pm and 7pm—9pm (exact times TBD) on a Saturday. Ensure that there are three to five open shops/block (for a minimum of 12 open stores) during the entire event, including at least one art gallery.
- Ensure that at least one downtown restaurant is open during the entire event.
- Bring the Red Wing Dove Winery in to be stationed at the Hamilton County Historical Museum or in a stand-alone tent during event hours, if visitors can consume alcohol while walking around downtown. Check with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (https://www.tabc.state.tx.us/) to find out the rules for downtown Hamilton.
- Provide self-guided, and periodic guided, tours of the Hamilton County Historic Museum during the entire event.
- Ensure that the Hamilton County Courthouse remains open during event hours and provide periodic guided tours.
- Provide periodic guided downtown walking tours highlighting the buildings with the new HCHC interpretive plaques, WPA Post Office mural, as well as other interesting community stories.
- Provide a downtown walking tour brochure of those same assets and stories for distribution at the event for self-guided tours.

- Provide a guided downtown ghost tour for the evening portion of the event.
- Ensure sufficient restrooms are open and accessible, including in the courthouse and museum. Bring in additional port-a-potties if necessary.
- Provide "Instagramable" selfie stations and information kiosks in appropriate locations. A modified version of this step can even be done year-round!

CHAPTER SIX

Organization

Organization

The Main Street program is an effective organization through which achieving the downtown vision is possible. The Main Street organization—board and staff—take a leadership role in creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating resources, partnerships, and community involvement for the district.

—by Debra Drescher, Main Street Program State Coordinator

Adopted by the Hamilton Main Street Advisory Board, April 2020

Vision: "The Hamilton Historic Main Street program preserves and enhances Hamilton's history and historic architecture to be an inviting destination for small businesses, residents, and tourists to eat, play, shop, and explore."

Mission: "We will utilize the Main Street principles of Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Development to preserve Hamilton's small-town charm, promote our businesses and attractions, and encourage small business growth in our community."

Regardless of whether a local Main Street program is just starting or has been in place for decades, there are some common elements that increase the likelihood for success and positive impact over time. The foundation of Main Street is built upon core principles centered on a belief that the historic downtown is a community and economic asset which has positive impact on local quality of life, and is a contributor to the community's identity and image. The initial local organizational effort for submitting a designation application to the THC helps leaders acknowledge that value, and it will typically help them begin realistically exploring downtown's potential. A high-functioning Main Street program and leadership ability at both the staff and volunteer levels are essential to attaining these goals.

The ability to organize, grow, and maintain a successful Main Street over time largely rests in the hands of the program's leadership team —Advisory Board and staff. This leadership capacity is central to the Organization aspect of the Main Street Four Point Approach™.

1 Ensure Success through Effective Organizational Structure

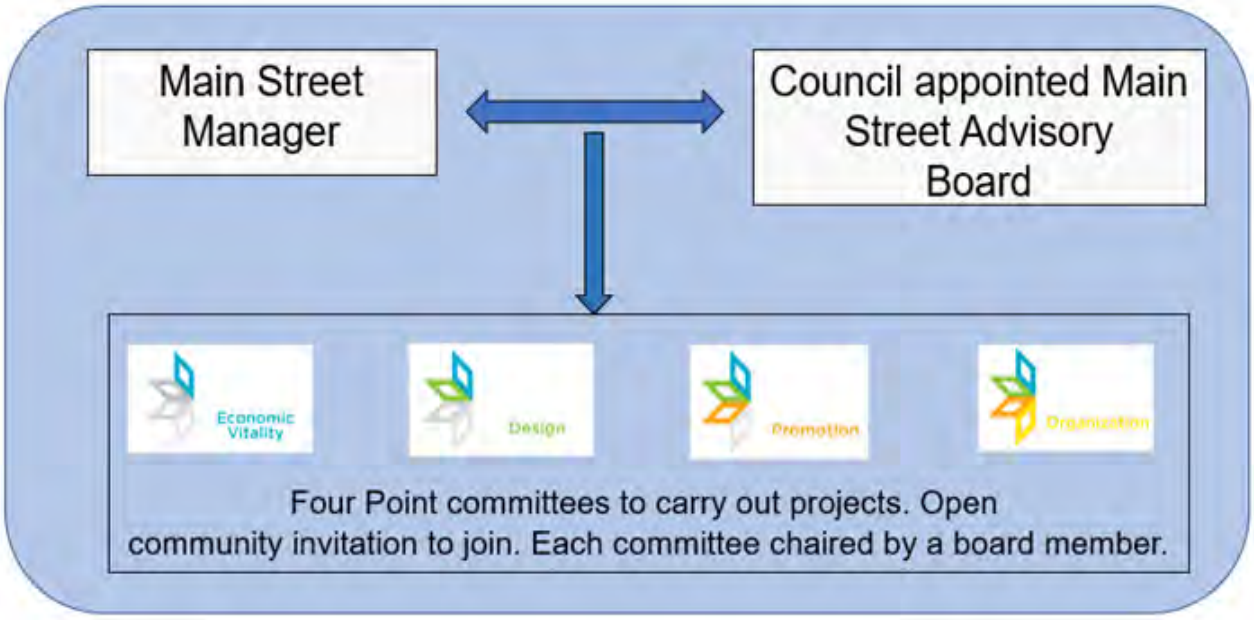
Local Main Street programs in Texas are required to have full-time, paid staff as well as a volunteer Main Street board.

While the Main Street program manager's responsibilities are outlined in job descriptions related to their employment, the Main Street board is defined as being "a strong, action-oriented board representing a cross-section of the community. They give their time and passion to create positive change. The success of a commercial revitalization effort depends largely on the board's ability to identify and mobilize resources, build volunteer support, develop new leadership, and maintain clear focus on the district's needs and opportunities."

The local Main Street program also needs to be a mission-driven organization through adopted Purpose Statements and have in place an annual Plan of Work/Action Plan to guide revitalization activities. These primary responsibilities are embedded within the national Main Street Standards of Performance upon which a program is evaluated each year:

- Broad-based community commitment
- Leadership and organizational capacity
- Diverse and sustainable funding
- Strategy-driven programming
- Preservation-based economic development
- Demonstrated impact and result

A program will typically carry out the activities and projects of the work plan through a four-point committee structure. While the Main Street Advisory Board is seated through a formal, public nomination process and acceptance by City Council—with bylaws outlining organizational structure—participation on a four-point committee is open to anyone with an interest in downtown. Formal nomination or approval is not needed. Thus, the committee structure opens engagement and participation in the program's activities to anyone in the community. Projects and activities of the program are carried out through the committees under an annual work plan. To ensure two-way communication between board and committees, it is recommended that each committee is chaired or co-chaired by a board member. In some cases, the Organization committee may function as a sub-committee of the Advisory Board.



2 Carry out the Plan of Work

Regardless of the phase of development it is in, a Main Street program always has a lot it needs to accomplish. A written, board-adopted annual action plan keeps the program on track. The annual plan organizes work into manageable steps; helps everyone find a place with the organization; and lays out projects, budgets, and timelines.

It is important to note that the Main Street work plan is a living document—it can and should be adapted if circumstances shift. It should not, however, be something that is overhauled continuously, as this is an indication that the program is not being strategic about its work. Also, this interim report is being delivered while the EDC's strategic plan update process is also ongoing. Thus, the recommendations and strategies that come out of that process may cause the Main Street program to shift some of its projects or priorities so that both are strategically aligned. Lastly, since the production of this report occurred during the COVID pandemic, local conditions may be in a more fluid state for the foreseeable future.

Several years ago, a refined Four-Point Approach and a new Transformation Strategy model for Main Street programs was introduced. The new work-planning model maintains the elements that for decades have proven effective in re-establishing (transforming) historic Main Street downtowns. At the same time, it allows more flexibility, and encourages development of strategic program goals with measurable outcomes. The centerpiece of the transformation model is strategy development through which Main Street leadership teams of staff and board will be able to confidently articulate overarching strategy statements that drive the work of four-point committees or project teams. This occurs through information gathering; a collaborative, community-engaged process; and an understanding of market realities and potential.

Four Point committees should operate in harmony with one another and all be driving toward the program's Main Street overarching strategies.

This report introduces a draft Baseline 2020-2021 Plan of Work for the Hamilton Main Street Program that is provided in the next chapter. The Plan is constructed from:

- Information included in the application for Main Street designation submitted in 2019;
- The authors' professional knowledge of what a community new to Main Street should do in its foundational period to set the stage for future success;
- Recommendations made in each chapter of this report;
- Previous planning meetings (virtual) with staff, as well as in-person site visits with city leadership, property owners, board members, and other stakeholders (pre-COVID).

Knowledge gained from these meetings and resources suggested that several overarching strategies for the HMSP may be appropriate at this time and they are woven into the draft plan. They include: entrepreneurship development; placemaking; tourism/heritage tourism including emergence as a day-trip destination; adaptive reuse of properties to realize market potential; and serving locals.

The plan is provided as a means of guidance and a resource for the HMSP. Program leadership should refine and adapt it as needed in the coming months.

In conclusion, during the remainder of 2020, the HMSP should ensure that the important components of the Organization framework are in place as outlined in this chapter. This will set the all-important foundation for future success.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TEXAS MAIN STREET
TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Hamilton's Work Plan

INTRODUCTION TO THE DRAFT HAMILTON MAIN STREET PROGRAM PLAN OF WORK 2020-2021

—by Debra Drescher, Main Street Program State Coordinator

This chapter features four primary items:

1. A summary of each chapter's **recommendations.**
2. An explanation of the **Board's leadership role** as pertaining to a Main Street work plan. (Below)
3. A suggested **Baseline Plan of Work** for the HMSP with committee assignments and activity/project suggestions in eight areas of focus based on the recommendations in each of this report's chapters. (Separate document)
4. An '**Opportunity Analysis**' of the community and stakeholder surveys completed earlier this year by HMSP staff. The analysis takes the survey data and translates it into opportunity areas for the work plan. (Separate Document)

The Board's Leadership Role

Working alongside the Main Street Program Manager, the HMSP Advisory Board is responsible for ensuring that the work plan is carried out in the following ways:

- **Prioritization of projects and activities**: This may occur either UP from committees, with the committees recommending their priorities and associated projects and acceptance/adoption to the Board, or DOWN from the Board to committees (Board prioritizes and sends down to the committee level). At this point, since committees have not yet been fully formed or populated, the recommended course of action is the latter.

  These discussions, prioritization, and decisions should occur over the next few board meetings.
- **Refinement, adjustment of the work plan** as needed based on above decision-making process and perceived capacity of the program at the present time.
- **Formal adoption of the Plan of Work** (including the Goal Statement).
- **Formation and population of committees**
  - A board member should chair each committee (or co-chairs). Subsequently, each board agenda should include reports from each committee.
  - As part of the publicity surrounding the adoption of the work plan (below), announcement of the establishment of committees and their roles in achieving the goals of the Main Street revitalization effort, and the invitation to join a committee can be made by the board. The publicity should include contact information for each committee chair so that interested volunteers can sign up to participate.
  - The process for how each committee will meet can be made either prior to populating committees (and then announcements of the first meeting is made in the publicity) or determined by consensus of the committee after each group is formed.
- **Public promotion of work plan adoption and invitation to join a committee.**

Hamilton Main Street Program DRAFT Baseline Plan of Action 2020-2021					
Transformation Strategy **GOAL** and MARKET Position STATEMENT*		**Downtown Hamilton will grow as an economic engine for the city. Downtown is a sought-out destination for local residents and visitors. These occur through adherence to sound preservation and design principles, and the Main Street framework.**			
Project/Activity	Timeline	Budget, Funding Source/ Partner	Implementation Partner(s), if applicable	**Committee/ Project Lead** as addressed in Interim Report chapter	KPI – Key Performance Indicator**
1. BRANDING INITIATIVE. Begin a process of research and action to develop a plan for a downtown brand within, if applicable, Hamilton's existing community brand and/or coordinate an effort to brand downtown as a destination and showcase its unique attributes. Notes: • Initial step should be to determine if there have been past efforts or a current process underway • Before initiating a branding effort, key players need to be on board (i.e. City, EDC) • There are many private branding firms that can be hired under fee for service/contract, if it is not to be done internally	Suggested: August-October 2020: research, brainstorm, and set tentative process (stakeholder meetings, etc.?) October-December: analyze and draft plan development January 2021: Unveil	TBD	All/any organizations involved in promoting Hamilton <u>THC staff resource</u> Cara Lowrimore, Assistant State Coordinator, TMSP THC Heritage Tourism staff Sarah Page and Teresa Caldwell, & Andrea Barefield, Brazos Trail Executive Director	Chapter reference: Promotion & Heritage Tourism (assets) Additional reference: Market analysis, survey **Committee assigned: Promotion** (might be a broader community-based task force initiated by HMSP?) Project lead(s): _____	Increased image of and activity downtown, shown through: • Messaging adopted/January 2021 • Integration of messaging voluntarily by local businesses • Continually increasing reinvestments (through quarterly report)/4 quarters by year-end 2021
2. CELEBRATE SUCCESS—ACTIVE PUBLIC PRESENCE downtown and also for HMSP's efforts as a new organization. Coordinate an effort for: • Regular newspaper coverage, • Social media—increase following on Facebook, Instagram • Business spotlights	Immediate & ongoing	TBD	<u>THC staff resource</u> Drescher, Lowrimore, Page, Caldwell, Barefield	Chapter reference: Organization, Promotion & Heritage Tourism **Committee assigned: Promotion with Organization (joint committee effort)** Project lead(s): _____	• Increased followers on Facebook • Instagram created • Monthly (TBD) business spotlights • Selfie kiosk

3. EVENTS. Implement new and/or support existing events in ways that increase the vitality and image of downtown. • Support, and/or provide addition to, Chamber events—Dove Festival, Heritage Days, Trick or Treat Around the Square, Christmas on the Square • Showcase downtown businesses • Heritage on the Square for rodeo events? (Heritage Tourism chapter) • Ghost Tour (Heritage Tourism chapter) • Guided downtown walking tours (Heritage Tourism chapter)	Immediate: brainstorm	TBD	TBD-Sponsors of existing events; determine possible partners if applicable for new events. County and/or local historical/heritage commissions/groups THC staff resource Lowrimore, Page, Caldwell, Barefield	Chapter reference: Promotion & Heritage Tourism Other reference: Survey **Committee assigned: Promotion** Project lead(s): _____	• Existing event(s) supported; downtown component added. • New event?
4. PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT. Walking Tour/Ghost Tour/Mural Tour brochure (secondary—assist chamber or other organizations with posters, flyers, etc. for existing events?)	Immediate: brainstorm Fall 2020—Update any existing product or develop new one. Set target for desired viewership & audience (did you run out?) Distribute.	TBD	County and/or local historical/heritage commissions/groups Chamber of Commerce	Chapter reference: Promotion & Heritage Tourism **Committee assigned: Promotion** Project lead(s): _____	• Product produced, distributed. • Set & meet target for viewership, audience.
5. DOCUMENT INVENTORY AND PROMOTE INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY IN DOWNTOWN. DowntownTX.org and Imagine the Possibilities Tour. Prepare for public upload, which is required before a tour can be held.	Immediate. Ongoing (updating)	TBD	EDC THC staff resource Kylie Woodlock, DowntownTX project coordinator	Chapter reference: EV, Design, DowntownTX **Committee assigned: Economic Vitality/Design** Note: Joint committee effort or a separate project task force. Project lead(s): _____	• Public upload completed. • Regular updating as needed. • Tour held. • Evidence of property investment interest and/or property sold/leased. • Inventory/ documentation completed
6. SUPPORT FOR DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES. • Regular check-ins & outreach • Provide services, programming as needed (i.e. workshops, access to resources, online assistance through TMSP etc.)	Immediate: brainstorm, analyze survey results, market data.	TBD	EDC THC staff resource Alan Cox, economic development specialist, Lowrimore	Chapter reference: EV, Promotion **Committee assigned: Economic Vitality**	• Needs determined through outreach and appropriate action taken

7. THOMPSON BUILDING.	Support EDC as property owner. Immediate: review recommendations; current preliminary plans (EDC). Brainstorm possible next steps with EDC. Set appropriate timelines.	TBD (EDC)	EDC THC staff resource Jamie Crawley, TMSP Architect & Design Team. Alan Cox, economic development specialist	Chapter reference: EV, Design, Case Study **Committee assigned: Economic Vitality, Design with EDC** Note: Joint committee effort or a separate project task force.	• Re-imagine process fully underway with decisions made, distinct timelines set & some physical improvements/uses determined/completed as possible (EDC)
8. SPUR PROPERTY & PUBLIC SPACE IMPROVEMENTS. • Publicize TMSP design services & financial assistance to owners • Access design services • Design/preservation training for committee/owners from TMSP design staff (virtual) • Prioritize design activities	Ongoing	TBD (improve-ment grants-EDC)	EDC THC staff resource Jamie Crawley, TMSP Architect & Design Team.	**Committee assigned: Design**	• Reinvestment

***** The National Main Street Center/Main Street America has a spreadsheet of examples for a variety of broad market characteristics. These can be found on the MSA website. References for this Goal can be found in: Dining & Entertainment | Family Friendly/Family Serving | Tourists & Tourism. **** Key Performance Indicator (KPI**) is a measurable value. What part of the goal does this address and how?

BOARD TABLE. ----------

OPPORTUNITY ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN STREET SURVEY-SUPPORTING THE WORK PLAN

This section features an '**Opportunity Analysis'** of the community and stakeholder surveys completed earlier this year by HMSP staff. The analysis takes the survey data and translates it into opportunity areas for the work plan. (Separate Document). There were 152 survey responses from the community.

Category	Summary data	Why is this an opportunity?
How long have you lived here?	62% have lived in Hamilton 10+ years.	Clearly, 'long-timers' are likely to be highly vested in Hamilton, and even though population growth in the past few years has been slightly declining or flat, at some level Main Street's activity should also target newer residents.
How often and when are you most likely to be downtown?	Combing categories, 80% of the respondents come downtown from once a week to daily. (52% 4-7 times/week). Of those who come on weekdays, 70% are here after 4 pm, as well as 49% of those who are downtown on Saturdays. Sixty-five percent of respondents state they come downtown for dining &/or nightlife.	This all supports the destination goal in the work plan including expansion of dining and entertainment opportunities.
What do you like most about downtown?	People care about downtown's legacy and history: Well over half (80 of 149) stated the 'historic buildings and area history' is what they like most about downtown. The next highest rank was 'restaurants' (77).	Supports the goals of proactive improvements (design); heritage-based events and tours, dining opportunity (promotion). Opportunity gap areas: Only about 25% state they come downtown to shop or for special events. In another category (areas for improvement) more than 50% wanted to see more shopping/dining opportunity and family-friendly businesses. These all indicate possible target sectors for growth. (Also refer to the question pertaining to desired kinds of businesses respondents would like to see downtown.)
Desired projects/ improvements.	"Hardscape" improvements (sidewalks, etc.) was stated by almost 75% of respondents. Additionally, in another questions, 19% wanted to see improvements to traffic flow, accessibility, and parking, and 18% additionally noted improvements to overall appearance.	Supports Main Street design goals.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Economic Vitality

1. **Continue building a team of Economic Vitality partners and allies to promote investment opportunities in downtown Hamilton.**
2. **Utilize data to build common understanding and agreement of downtown Hamilton's market realities and potential.**
3. **Understand the needs and advocate the interests of downtown business owners.**
4. **Leverage ownership of the Thompson Building to meet strategic needs for the community.**

Design

1. **Research and capture building/property information within DowntownTX.org to create an accurate inventory and foster appreciation for local history and preservation.**
2. **Working with TMSP design staff, identify opportunities and assets within Hamilton's physical environment that could be improved or leveraged within future design projects.**
3. **Use your soon-to-be-developed Main Street Plan of Work to prioritize design activities.**
4. **Encourage preservation in the Main Street District through educational programming, resources, and ordinances.**

   — Educate the community on historic materials in Hamilton. This can also tie into the history and maintenance manuals/guides for property owners, as well as other preservation-based educational programming for the community and property owners.

   — Become familiar with preservation standards and guidelines for rehabilitation work.

   — Begin a community conversation and advocate for the adoption of appropriate ordinances to protect and preserve downtown's historic buildings and create a pedestrian-friendly public realm.

   — Increase understanding through accessing available resources.

Promotion

1. **Define the brand and image for downtown Hamilton: through a community engagement process, define what Hamilton is, and what you want downtown Hamilton to become.**
2. **Celebrate successes with an active public presence.**
3. **Drive traffic downtown through strategic events.**
4. **Take care of basics such as business check-ins and a clean, visually appealing downtown that will drive a healthy image and economic environment.**

Heritage Tourism

1. **Ensure dining and shopping opportunities exist for visitors downtown.**
2. **Develop a downtown walking tour brochure.**
3. **Develop a guided downtown ghost tour.**
4. **Create a quarterly "Heritage on the Square" event to drive traffic downtown.**

Organization

1. **Ensure that a strong foundation is being set for the program's future success and sustainability that includes being a mission-driven organization and building program capacity through the Main Street Four Point Approach™.**
2. **Refine as needed and adopt the baseline work plan in this report, so the committees can fully begin their project-based activities.**

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Thompson Building: A Case Study

The Thompson Building: A Case Study

—by Jamie Crawley, Texas Main Street Program Architect

The project scope for the Thompson Building was centered on exploring both programmatic options through economic analysis, development trends, gap studies, and architectural design options for the building as it occupies approximately 10,000 square feet and a prominent historic location on the courthouse square. It is anticipated that a full rehabilitation would be recommended with both design options adaptively re-using the building and reoccupying the space with new uses. This Main Street approach promotes economic vitality through the lens of preservation.

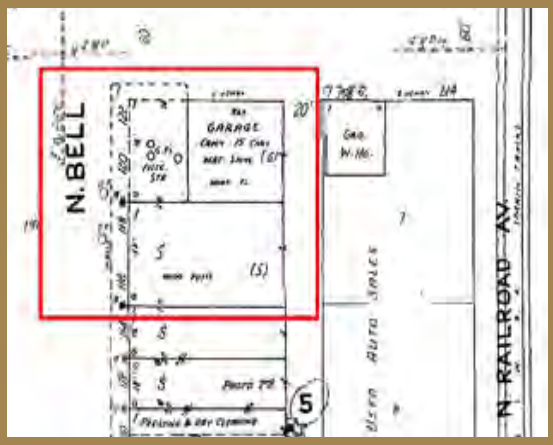
Prior to the design request a structural engineer was engaged for a preliminary review of the property and specifically the integrity of the "party-wall." Also an environmental study and hazardous material review and abatement has occurred. A slipcover exists at the exterior primary façade and further investigation of the material fabric behind has not been conducted but has been recommended. The proposed structural engineering further investigation has been discussed with the Main Street Manager and the building owner and is considered advisable at this time.

Visual review of the property by the Texas Main Street Architect on site did not indicate any major building concerns that would preclude recommending rehabilitation. This review was only of areas visible and exposed at the time, but it is understood the structural engineer will further review structural integrity of the roof system, perimeter wall, and foundation. Evidence of disrepair from lack of occupation was evident but not uncommon, noting the damaged ceiling grid and tiles appears bad but is not an indication of the actual roof or roof structure as that is above the drop ceiling. Similarly, there is some cracking and spalling of floor and wall surfaces but not observed to an extent to cause significant concern. The lower section of the current façade had been modernized with the date of this modification unknown based on current research available.

Any proposed design work presented in this case study is not intended to be considered a reconstruction of a specific era as that would be a historic misappropriation without additional documentation to guide the effort. Rather, this abbreviated analysis and recommendation is intended to illustrate the possibilities of a prominent building asset in Hamilton's Main Street district that would serve as a true catalyst for the program and future development projects.

Analysis

When rehabilitating a historic building, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards should be considered. The Standards for Rehabilitation are a series of concepts about maintaining, repairing, and replacing historic materials, as well as designing new additions or making alterations. They provide a framework and guidance for decision-making about work or changes to a historic property. All changes, additions, and modifications to the building should comply with the Standards and the Local Design Standards. Limited historic research was done due to a shortened timeframe but historic photos and Sanborn Insurance Maps available have been included for context in this analysis. Additional exhibits highlight specific building elements as they are now and recommendations in their rehabilitation.



1925 – Photo and Sanborn Map appear to show the building footprint is similar to the current configuration, however at this time it was a filling station with a garage on the corner and a market next door.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps were created from the late 1800s to mid-1900s to determine fire insurance liability in urbanized areas across the United States. These maps include detailed information about a building including number of stories, openings, and construction materials, unique features, and types of businesses that occupied them. Today, we use these maps to learn more about the history of downtown buildings.

1 *Brick*

Do not paint brick surfaces that have not previously been painted. However, previously painted brick surfaces similar to the side of the Thompson Building can be repainted or utilized as opportunities for murals. Murals provide an excellent opportunity for Main Street communities to connect broader community themes with significant locations and activate areas of their historic streetscape. It should be noted painting these materials can trap moisture in the building and cause significant damage to the cladding as well as the underlying substrate and sheathing over time, leading to additional maintenance and repairs.

3 *Canopy*

Canopy could remain intact. If replaced, tie rods or tie rod anchor points (if discovered) should remain thin and connect to the same locations on the facade. Historic photos referenced in this report, as well as design recommendation illustrate consistency of this detail and though repairs are likely needed the scale, material, and aesthetic should be maintained in this context.

2 *Windows*

Require further investigation if transom windows (above canopy) are discovered under existing slipcover. Best practices would highlight repair of any historic transom windows if discovered as they are apparent in the photo research versus replacement of windows. Replacement windows such as metal, vinyl, or synthetic clad components cannot accurately depict historic profiles. New storefront windows proposed at the lower storefront in the accompanying renderings could be of a modern material to not be considered a historic appropriation or reconstruction, as there is no photographic evidence of a prior iteration at this location. However, the scale and geometry should be consistent with the overall proportion of the façade in its context.

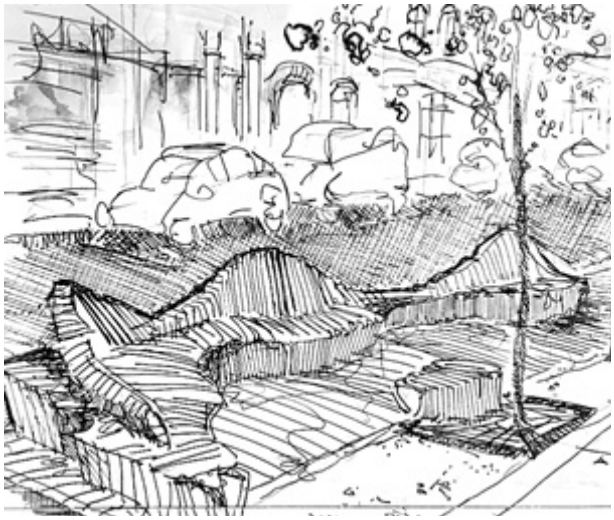
4 *Storefront*

Though a specific determination of its significance was not made, if it was deemed both historic due to its age as well as significant through further research, it would be recommended to repair and restore the storefront as well as any associated cladding.

Recommendations

Conceptual recommendations are intended to reflect a design intent, though further adjustment in development of any construction documents would be expected.

Program Options



1 *A Parklet*

Seating options, shade, lighting, and overall pedestrian activity will benefit the property as well as the overall downtown. This parklet can and should be strategically replicated throughout the downtown based on scale and budget, and could include public art and landscape elements as components. These interventions could also be removed so as not to disrupt or interfere with city utility or stormwater run-off.

2 *A Workforce Incubator*

Options could include connections with local/regional university, regional small business center, and/or workforce resources. Job training courses could be offered. Programming the building as a closer to 24-hour presence on the square with day and night options for occupants and activities could be very desirable, scalable, and adaptable over time.

3 *Main Street Offices and Events*

Main Street offices could utilize a small portion of the space both for meeting, but, as a catalyst opportunity for events. The adjacent parking lot can be both controlled and adapted for events (farmers markets, art or auction days, etc). Combining this office use with option #2, the offices could occupy the same square footage, as well as a small event space that could serve as a community event space (local nonprofits, senior activities, etc).

4 *Alternative Incubators—Restaurants*

Alternate incubator could be of a restaurant type and occupy a portion of the overall square footage. This would require additional infrastructure, kitchen space, grease trap, utilities, etc. However this investment and if planned properly could allow the space to be later converted to a restaurant tenant. Phase One could be restaurant incubation for a food service (day) and bakery (night), allowing for allowing for growth to future brick and mortar locations in Hamilton. Phase Two if incubators are successful: one or more of these businesses could develop and rehabilitate other spaces and one could even occupy this original incubator space as the main tenant. The office side for Main Street and event/education space could remain untouched.

Appendix

Map of 2020 Main Street Cities, referenced in Chapter 1, "Introduction to Main Street"

Hamilton Market Assessment

— by Alan Cox, Main Street Economic Development Specialist

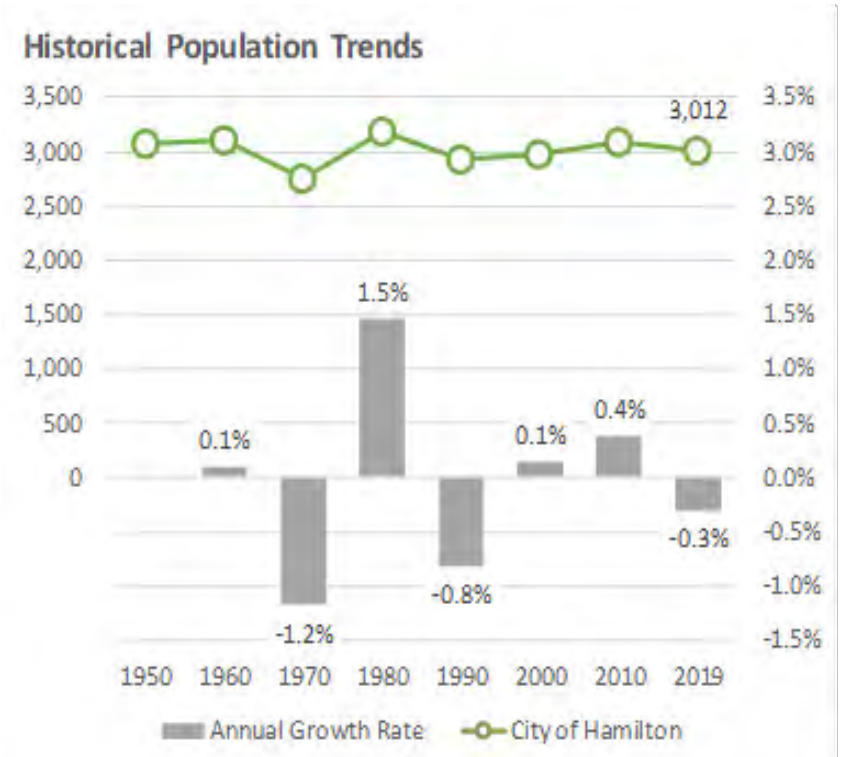
Referenced in Chapter Two: Economic Vitality, page 15.

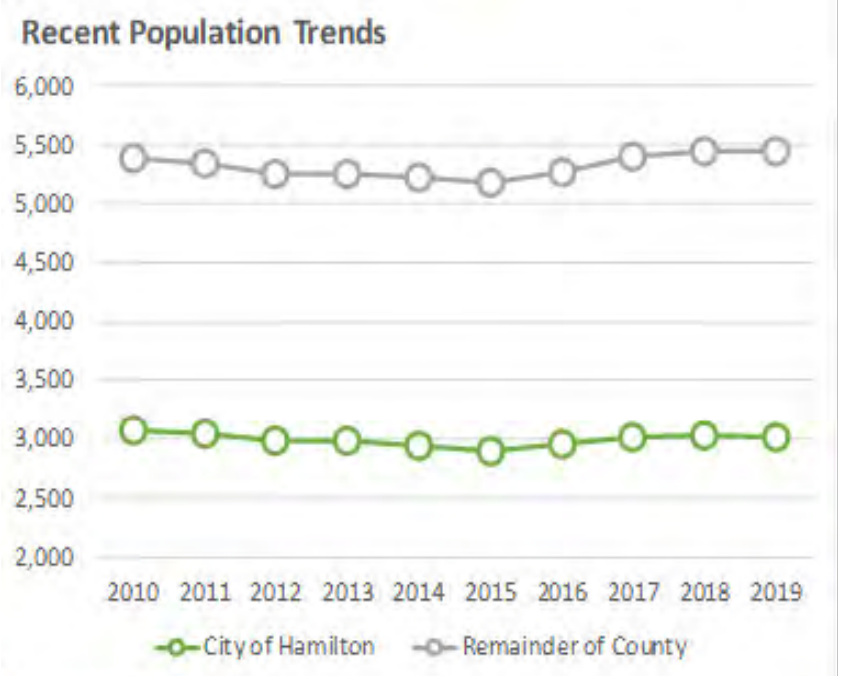
The following market assessment is an overview of demographic and economic trends within the Hamilton area. The purpose for this evaluation is to assist Hamilton Main Street in understanding the major forces that are shaping the local region and to uncover potential opportunities for revitalizing downtown Hamilton..

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- The overall population of the City of Hamilton and surrounding Hamilton County has remained remarkably consistent since World War II. Throughout, most of the county's population has lived in unincorporated areas.
- Migration data reveal that more people have been moving to the area than leaving, but the high death-to-birth ratio has prevented the population base from increasing.
- Regional population trends show that Hamilton County is located on the edge of two growth areas. Neighbors to the north appear to be receiving significant spillover flowing from the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, while areas along the I-35 corridor are also expanding rapidly.
- Hamilton's labor market has improved significantly in recent years following an earlier decline. The lack of a population decline during the same period provides a hint that area residents are reluctant to leave the community during times of economic distress.
- Job data show that Hamilton's traditional agriculture-related economy declined in the earlier part of the last decade and that recovery has been led by sectors, such as retail, leisure, and hospitality. This likely reflects a potentially ongoing transition of the area's economy to one that is integrating with wider regional trends that are influenced by visitor spending.
- While the construction of new housing remains low in Hamilton County, the price of rural land in the region points to it becoming an increasingly attractive investment opportunity for buyers.

Population Trends



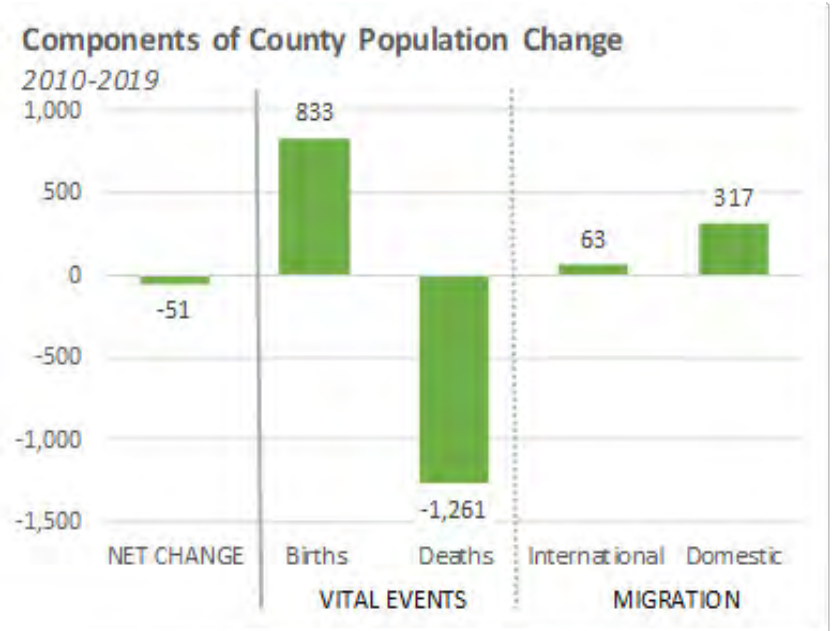


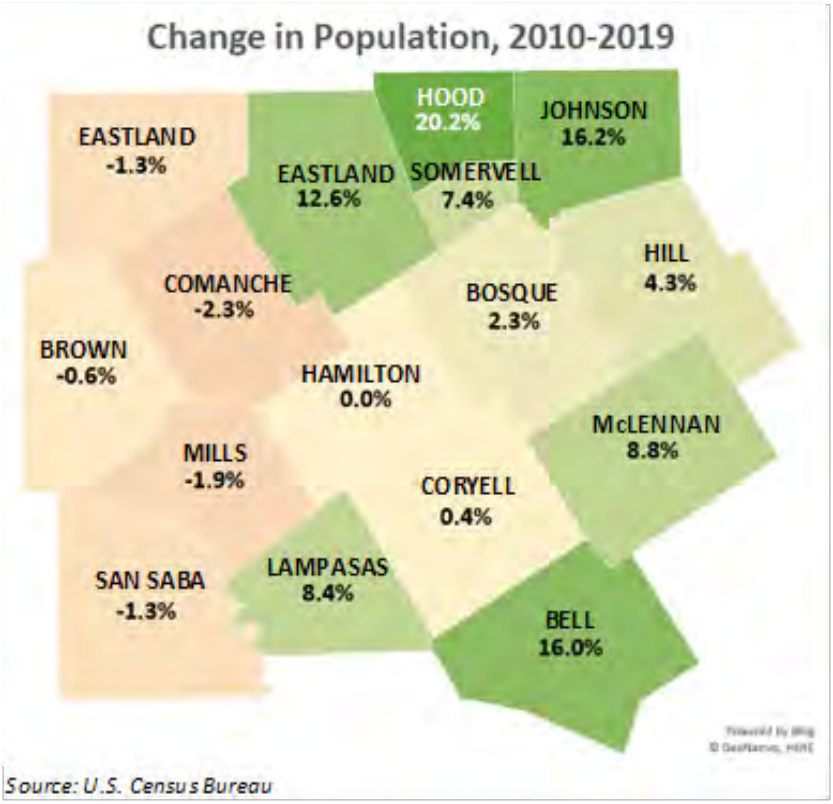
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Since the end of World War II, the population of Hamilton has remained remarkably constant and has hovered within a range of approximately 3,000 people. While many other smaller Texas communities have seen dramatic shifts in their populations due to the arrival or departure of various industries that restructure the local economy or because of sprawl creeping out from the state's major metropolitan areas, Hamilton seems to have largely been unaffected by these sweeping economic changes over the decades.

Moreover, population within Hamilton County has also seen little change during the last decade. Of note, however, is the fact that most of the county's population lives outside of Hamilton proper, reflecting the essential rural nature of the area.

Population *(continued)*





Source: U.S. Census Bureau

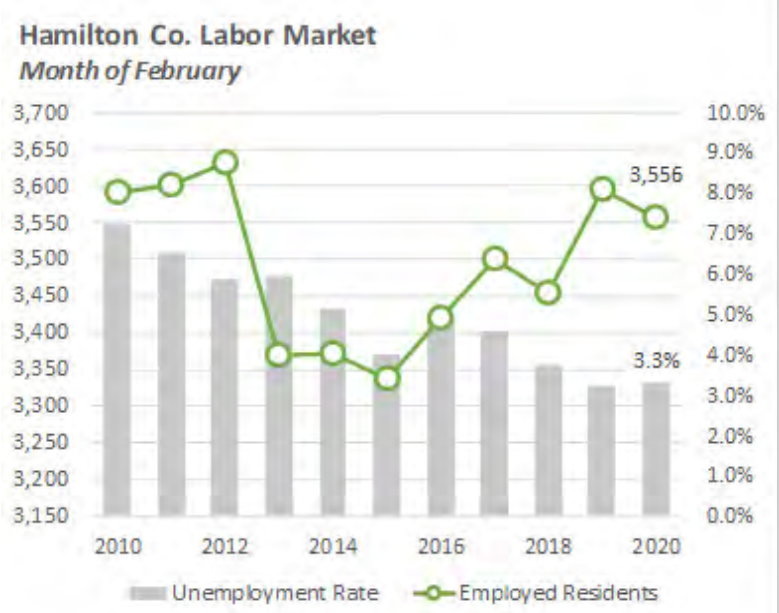
The population of an area changes directly from only a few factors: children are born, people die, and individuals and families move to and from that area.

From 2010 to 2019, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates Hamilton County's population fell by 51 people (city-level components of change are not available). During that time, it is estimated that 833 children were born, and 1,261 residents died. While this is reflective of larger national and statewide trends of falling birthrates, it presents an extreme case. Due to the low number of births and high number of deaths, it indicates that Hamilton County has an older-than-average population. According to the most recent Census estimates, 25 percent of Hamilton County residents are 65 years of age or older, while only 13 percent of statewide residents are of equivalent age. Regardless, if much of the loss in population is due to vital events, the area is still attracting new residents who choose to move to Hamilton County. During the last decade, 380 more people (net migration) moved to the county than left, with the vast majority of those coming from elsewhere in the country.

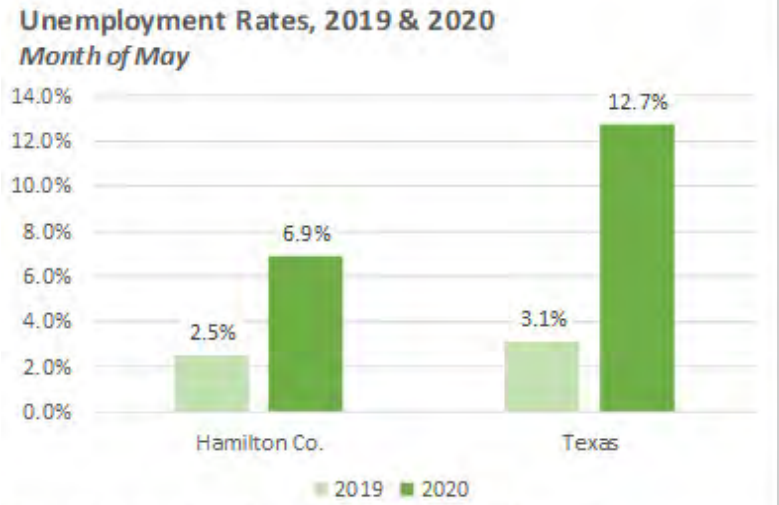
A glance at the larger region's population changes from 2010 to 2019 shows that Hamilton's position west of the I-35 corridor and southwest of the rapidly growing Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex likely plays a large factor in the stability of its population as new residents spillover from those growing areas. Regional population change patterns also clearly indicate that those counties farthest from I-35 and Fort Worth experienced overall declines in their populations.

Labor Market Trends

Each month, the Texas Workforce Commission's Labor Market Information division in conjunction with the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates the number of residents 16 years and older who are in the labor force and actively looking for work as well as the number of residents who are employed. The month of February from each year during the last decade was selected to compare trends in local employment patterns while also capturing the labor market picture immediately before the outbreak of the ongoing COVID-19 induced economic crisis.



During the middle of the decade, Hamilton County saw a steep drop in employed residents followed by a gradual increase since 2015. At the same time, the county enjoyed consistently falling unemployment rates. This would indicate that those residents who lost their jobs likely dropped out of the workforce but did not move away as evidenced by the area's stable population during that period. It also may provide a hint that people who live in Hamilton hold a strong preference for staying there, even in times of economic difficulty.

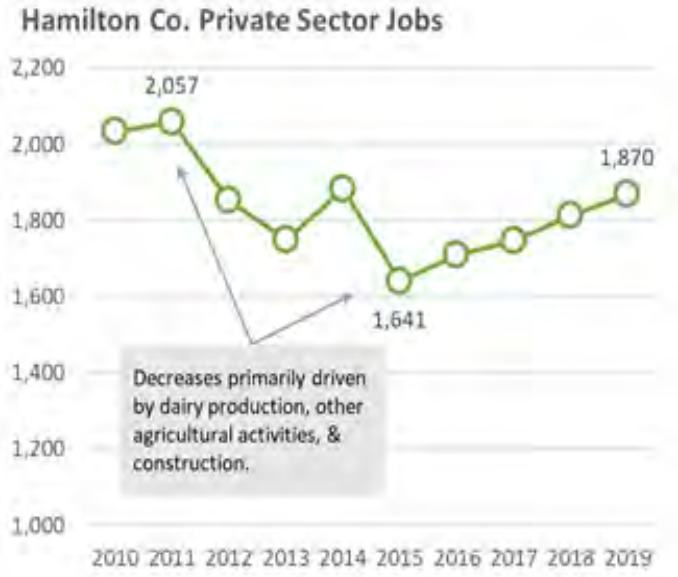


Source: Texas Workforce Commission - Labor Market Information

After the arrival of COVID-19, the nation's and state's economies have hemorrhaged an enormous number of jobs, forcing skyrocketing unemployment rates. In May 2019 (the latest month for which data are currently available), the state's unemployment rate stood at a near record low of only 3.1 percent, while in May of this year Texas's unemployment rate rose to a seasonally unadjusted all-time high 12.7 percent. Hamilton County, however, has fared far better since the crisis began and only saw its unemployment rate increase to 6.9 percent by May.

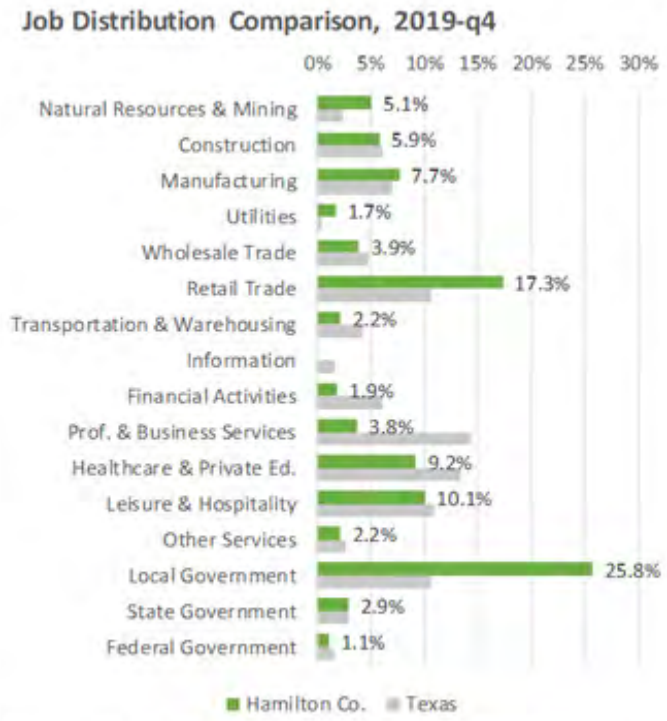
Job Trends

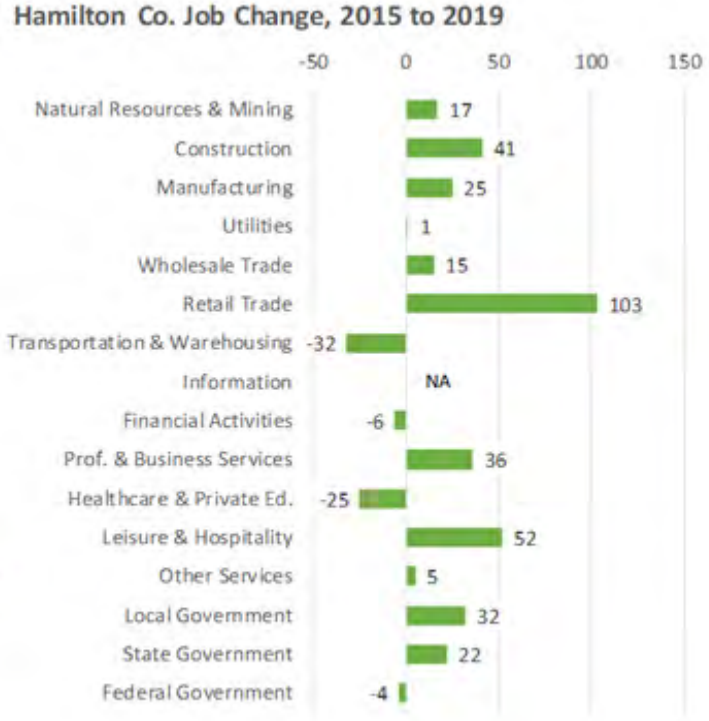
While labor trends focus on employed residents, other data sets provided by the Texas Workforce Commission focus solely on job growth and the distribution of jobs across a spectrum of industries or employment sectors. These data also show a downturn and recovery in the local economy during the last decade. An analysis of the data revealed that the largest decreases occurred within dairy and other agricultural activities (embedded within the larger Natural Resources and Mining sector), as well as the Construction industry.



Since 2015, however, Hamilton County has seen a steady increase in the number of jobs located in the area, rising from 1,641 in the fourth quarter of 2015 to 1,870 in the last quarter of 2019 (the latest period for which data are available). During those five years, job growth was led by Retail Trade (+103 jobs) and followed by Leisure & Hospitality (e.g., restaurants, bars, hotels, arts, and recreational activities), Construction, and Professional and Business Services.

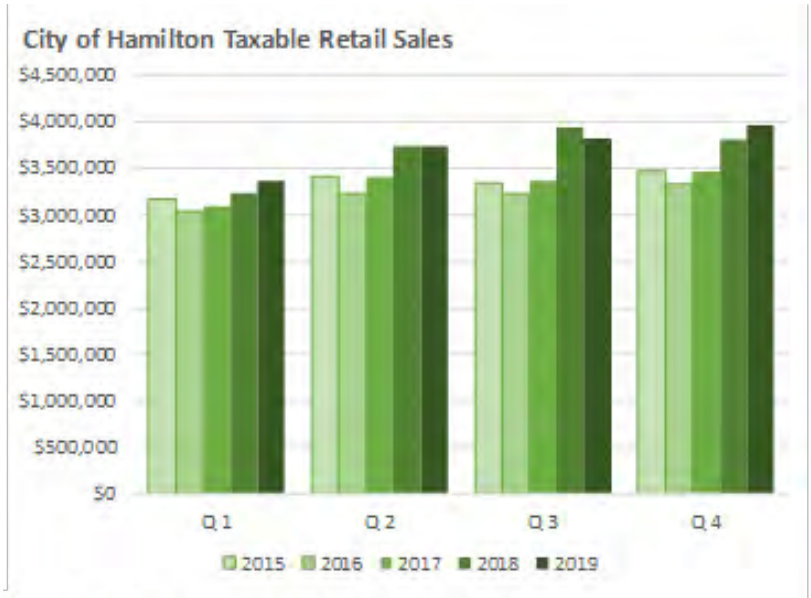
This great rise in local retail has led to the sector now accounting for approximately 17 percent of all jobs in Hamilton County, which is much higher than the state's 11 percent share. The one sector that dominates the local job picture more than any other, however, is local government, which includes city and county employees as well as those of school districts.

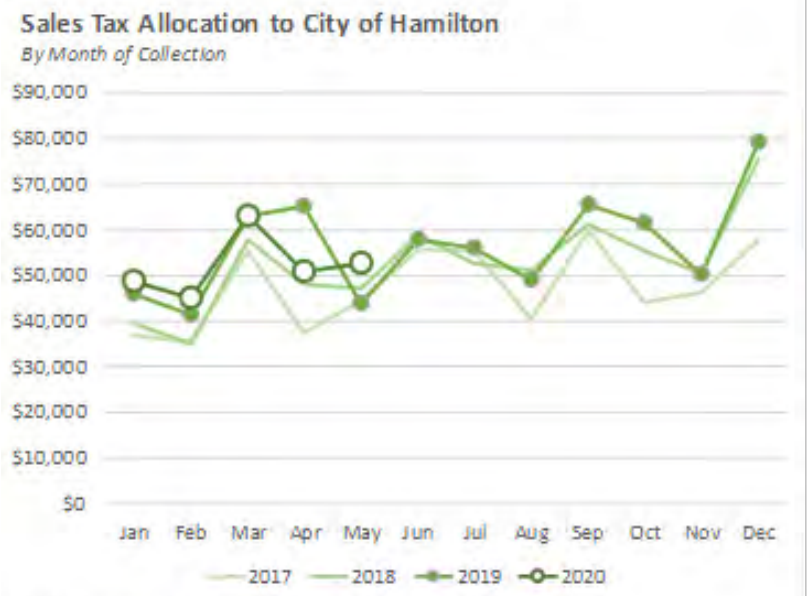




Source: Texas Workforce Commission, Labor Market Information

Retail and Sales Tax Trends





Source: Texas Comptroller's Office

An analysis of retail sales and sales tax data provided by the Texas Comptroller's Office reveals that trends have been trending positively in the past few years. Quarterly data on taxable retail sales in the City provides information on both the direction of sales over time as well as the seasonal nature of sales. As to the latter, the data clearly show that retail sales slowly rise over each year from the first quarter, which is the slowest, to the fourth quarter, which includes the traditional Christmas shopping season. The taxable retail sales figures also show a slight drop in spending from 2015 to 2016, perhaps reflecting the previously discussed slump in employment and jobs during that period.

In Texas, sales tax on spending is collected at the retail establishment and sent directly to the state's Comptroller's office. Two months later, that agency distributes back to local governments their portion of the sales tax that is graphically displayed in the chart on the left. These monthly data show the monthly cycle of spending and reflect peak spending months in Hamilton, with December typically being the busiest.

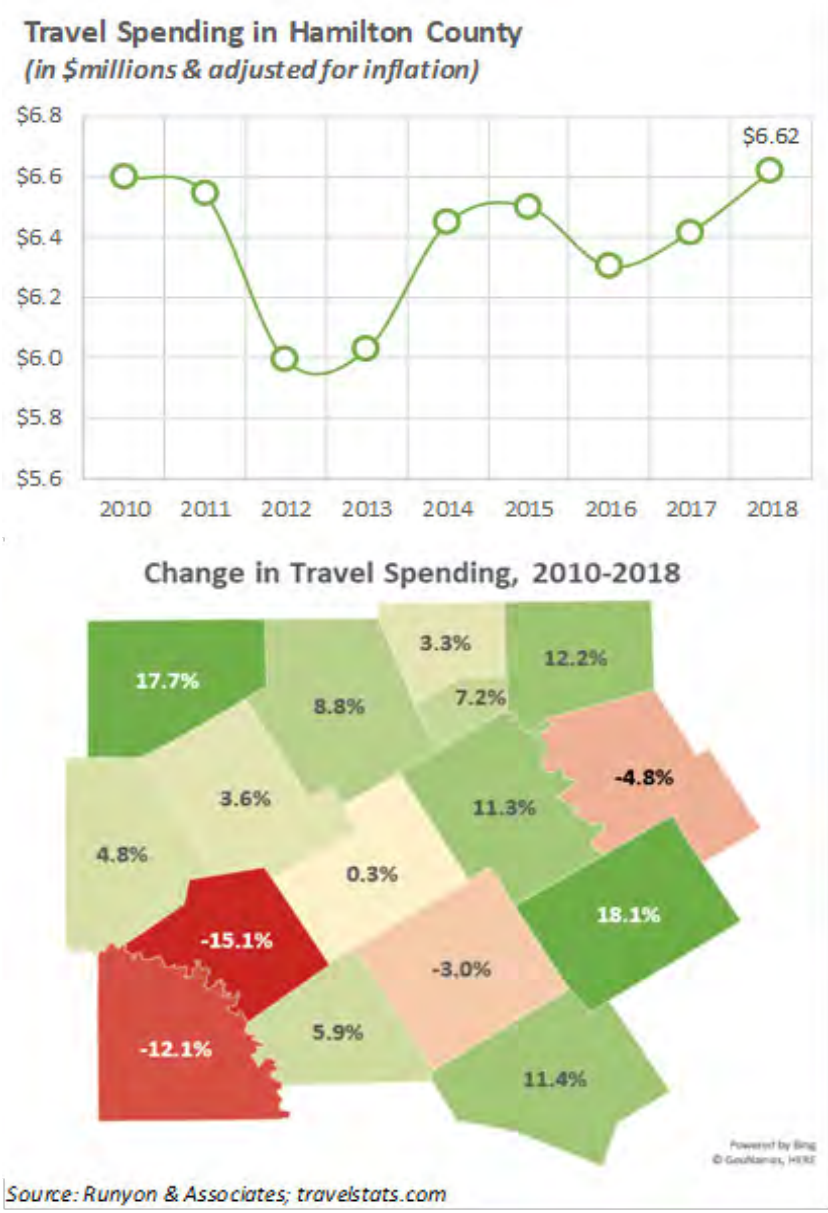
The trend is easiest seen on the 2019 trend line, which shows bumps in spending during the spring months of March and April, a smaller one in June, and then another in September. The more recent 2020 sales tax data show a drop in April (perhaps returning to the standards of previous years or a reduction in spending due to COVID-19. May 2020 sales tax data, however, are higher than all previous years. What is most remarkable about this is that it appears to indicate at this early date spending in Hamilton has not been greatly affected by the ongoing economic and healthcare crisis. In other words, Hamilton's shoppers are continuing to spend in the local community at similar, if not higher, levels than historically.

Travel Spending Trends

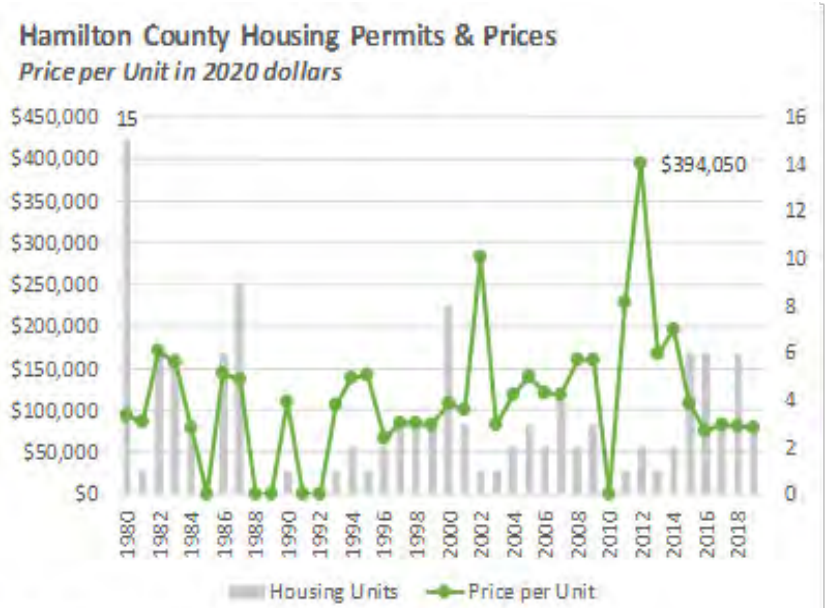
Dean Runyan Associates is a market research and economic analysis firm specializing in travel, tourism, and recreation trends, and has been under contract with Travel Texas, the state's lead tourism promotion agency, to produce an annual report on travel spending throughout the state.

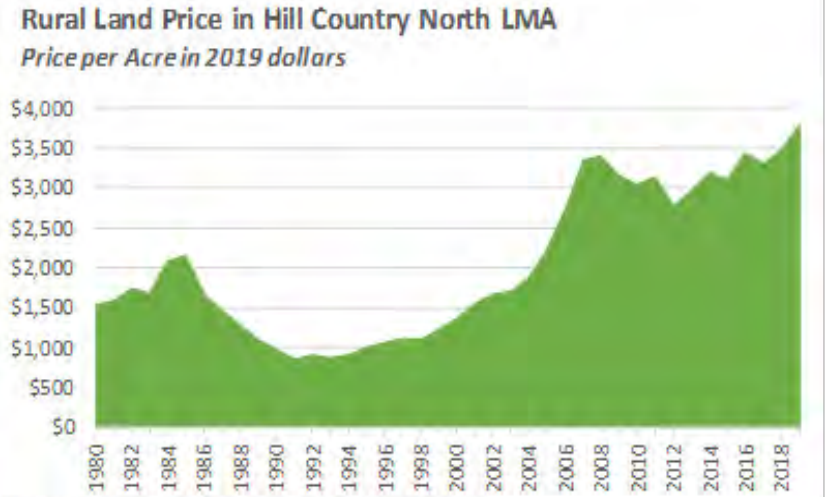
When adjusted for inflation, their data show that travel spending in Hamilton in 2018 is approximately the same as it was in 2010. Between those two years, however, travel spending took a steep decline in 2012 and 2013, followed by another rise and small dip. That said, travel spending in Hamilton generally appears to have been rising for the past several years.

A look at travel spending within the region shows that Hamilton County's immediate neighbors, Erath, Somervell, and Bosque counties, have enjoyed especially strong travel spending growth, while Mills and San Saba counties have experienced steep declines. These data suggest that the spending is most likely from travelers who are visiting the area from the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Lampasas to the south has also enjoyed an increase in spending, which may be tied to its location along the U.S. 281 highway. Taken together, these trends point to the potential for continued increased travel spending in Hamilton if more opportunities were made available to visitors to the area.



Real Estate Trends





NOTE: Hill Country North Labor Market Area includes Hamilton, Lampasas, McCulloch, Mills, & San Saba counties.

Source: Texas A&M Real Estate Center

The Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University in College Station collects housing sales, new construction permits, and land prices to track the state's real estate market. While home sales data are not available for smaller areas such as Hamilton County, they do provide historical information on permits and their costs.

The number of housing permits issued in Hamilton County has historically remained low, with its peak in 1980 at 15. Activity appears to have been greatest during the mid-1980s, the late 1990s, and in recent years. It is also during those years when the price per housing unit was the most stable and at affordable prices in the inflation-adjusted $100,000 dollar range. Spikes in prices tended to occur when very few permits were issued, and were likely expensive custom-built homes and not for the mass market.

The Texas A&M Real Estate Center provides rural land values based off sales at the multi-county regional level. The region in which Hamilton County is located, Hill Country North, has seen land values increase from a historically low period in the early 1990s, which followed the 1980s real estate bubble. Another real estate bubble can also be seen in the mid- to late-2000s during a period of high real estate speculation prior to the Great Recession. The overall consistent rise in rural land prices throughout, however, indicate that it is seen as an increasingly desirable investment opportunity for buyers, which underscores previous data showing growth flowing southwestward from Fort Worth.

PRESERVATION TAX INCENTIVES

The Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit program provides a 20% income tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic, income-producing buildings. As of 2018, over $2.7 billion has been reinvested into the Texas economy through the federal tax credit program. The Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit, first effective in 2015, provides a parallel tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic buildings in the state of Texas. Income-producing buildings, non-profits, and public universities are eligible to receive a transferrable 25% credit that can be applied to either the state franchise tax or state insurance premium tax.

The M.L. Edwards Building in Mount Vernon (1916) once housed a hardware and general store. Through the state and federal tax credits, it has been rehabilitated into a retail shop and events venue.

Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program

During the 83rd legislative session, the Texas Legislature passed House Bill 500 to establish a state tax credit for the certified rehabilitation of certified historic structures. This incentive requires that work to a historic property meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (Standards) to qualify for the credit. Certified historic structures can include properties that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as part of a historic district, or designated as Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks, or State Antiquities Landmarks. The credit is worth 25% of eligible rehabilitation costs for the project, which must be at least $5,000 in value to qualify. In the absence of a state income tax, the credit is applied against a business's Franchise Tax liability, or starting in 2017, Insurance Premium Tax. These tax credits may be freely sold and transferred. Many projects pair this tax credit with the federal 20% tax credit for rehabilitation (see below).

The Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program became effective January 1, 2015 for properties placed in service on or after September 1, 2013. Administrative rules for implementation of the Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program were adopted in Sections 13.1–13.8 of Chapter 13 (Title 13, Part II of the Texas Administrative Code).

Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives

A 20% federal income tax credit is available for the rehabilitation of historic, income-producing buildings that are listed in or determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Established in 1976, the federal rehabilitation tax credit program is administered in Texas by the National Park Service (NPS) in partnership with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Texas Historical Commission (THC). As the State Historic Preservation Office for Texas, the THC works in conjunction with the NPS to review proposed work to ensure it complies with the Standards.

Eligible Buildings and Costs for the Federal Credit

- **The building must be listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places, contributing to the significance of a historic district, or determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register**. A building determined eligible for National Register listing does not need to be officially listed at the time the tax credit is claimed but must be listed within 30 months of claiming the credit.
- **Only buildings qualify for the tax credit**. Structures such as bridges, ships, railroad cars, grain silos, and dams are not eligible for the credit.

- **The building must be income-producing**. For example, it may be used as a hotel or for offices; commercial, industrial, or agricultural purposes; or for rental housing. Owner-occupied residential properties are not eligible for the credit.
- **The work to the building must be a substantial rehabilitation** and not a small remodeling project. In general, the rehabilitation costs must exceed the greater of $5,000 or the adjusted basis of the building. The adjusted basis is the purchase price, minus the cost of the land, plus improvements already made, minus depreciation already taken.
- **The work undertaken as part of the project must meet the Standards for Rehabilitation**. The entire project is reviewed, including related demolition and new construction, and is certified, or approved, only if the overall rehabilitation project is determined to meet the Standards.
- **Most rehabilitation costs qualify for the credits**, such as structural work, building repairs, electrical, plumbing, heating and air conditioning, roof work, and painting. Architectural and engineering fees, site survey fees, legal expenses, development fees, and other construction-related costs are also qualified expenditures if such costs are reasonable and added to the property basis. Some costs are not eligible for the credit, such as property acquisition, new additions, furniture, parking lots, sidewalks, and landscaping.
- **The building must be placed in service (returned to use) after the rehabilitation.** The tax credit is generally allowed in the taxable year that the rehabilitated property is placed in service.

Eligible Buildings and Costs for the State Credit, in Addition to the Qualifications Listed Above:

- The building must be listed in the National Register of Historic Places, either individually, or as part of a historic district, or designated as Recorded Texas Historic Landmark or State Antiquities Landmark at the time the credit is awarded.
- The qualified rehabilitation costs must exceed $5,000 for any single application. Applications may be submitted in consecutive years for new projects.
- Buildings with a nonprofit use, as well as buildings with a for- profit use, can qualify for the state credit. Buildings owned and operated by public university systems may also participate.
- Documentation of the Placed in Service Date (project completion date) must be provided by means of a Certificate of Occupancy, or an architect's Certificate of Substantial Completion.

The Application Process

Applications for Federal and state tax credits may be submitted simultaneously or separately if the applicant's intention is to apply for one of the credits, but not for the other. An application for the tax credits must be submitted before the project is completed, although work may begin prior to the application or approval. Ideally, the application should be submitted during the planning stages of the work so the owner can receive the necessary guidance to ensure that the project meets the Standards for Rehabilitation and therefore may qualify for the credits. The application process consists of three parts:

Part 1 or A of the application, the Evaluation of Significance, determines if the building already has a historic designation or if the property is eligible for the National Register or contributes to the significance of a National Register historic district.

Part 2 or B of the application, the Description of Rehabilitation, describes the existing condition of the building and the proposed work. Photographs are required showing the major character-defining features of the building prior to the start of work.

Part 3 or C of the application, the Request for Certification of Completed Work, is submitted upon completion of the work and documents that the work was completed as proposed and in keeping with any conditions required at the review of Part 2/B of the application. Once the NPS (federal credit) or THC (state credit) certifies that the completed work meets the Standards and approves Part 3/C of the application, the project is a "certified rehabilitation" and qualifies for tax credits.

Please note that THC staff cannot give tax advice. Consult a tax advisor regarding the IRS regulations or Texas franchise tax rules and their implications for your particular tax situation.

For More Information

Visit www.thc.texas.gov for more information about the federal and state rehabilitation tax credit programs.

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories

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TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL HISTORIC PRESERVATION TAX CREDIT PROJECT

Contact the THC as soon as possible if considering historic preservation tax credits.

- We can help guide you determine if your project is a good fit for our program, and provide up-front guidance related to National Register eligibility, whether or not your project will meet the Standards for Rehabilitation, and how to submit your application.
- Look at our tax credit programs website, check out the applications, and read through the handy application guide booklet. Applications and the Application Guide can be downloaded from THC's website.
- Applications submitted after construction work has begun can be problematic if there is not enough documentation of pre-rehab conditions, or if inappropriate work has already been completed. Work begun prior to approval is at your own risk and could result in denial if not appropriate.
- If your project is completed and you have not submitted your Part 1 or Part A, your project is likely ineligible to receive tax credits.

Talk with your attorney or tax accountant to understand how you can use the credits.

- THC cannot provide advice about your personal financial situation. It is up to the applicants to ensure that they understand the financial implications associated with the tax credit programs.

Take lots of photographs to document your building and your rehab project.

- Take photographs of the building before doing any work!
- Photograph the interior and exterior of the building. Take overall shots of each elevation and each room, and detailed shots to show any unique details, or any areas or features that require special work as part of your rehab project.
- Make sure photos are in focus and that the subject is clearly visible, and not blocked by anything (like trees or fingers).
- Print photos on photo-quality paper, at least 4 x 6 inches in size for each photo. Photos do NOT have to be printed on glossy paper, but should not be printed on plain printer/copier paper as inks can bleed.
- Label all photos as directed in the Application Guide and key your photos to site plans and/or floor plans of your building.
- If you have already begun construction, your application should include pre-rehab photos and photos showing the current condition of the building.

Complete your application thoroughly and clearly.

- Fill in all blanks, describe all aspects of your project in detail, and provide all necessary supporting documentation. As you compile your application, remember that THC staff may not see your building in person until your project is completed. If you are applying for the federal credits, the National Park Service will likely never see your building. Make sure that the reviewers can gain a full understanding of the pre-rehab condition of your building and your proposed project. If your submission is incomplete, THC staff will request more information from you, which may delay approval of your application.
- Consult the THPTC Application Guide to ensure you are providing us with all necessary information.
- The amount and level of supporting documentation will vary based on the size and complexity of your project. A small project may be adequately described in a narrative, in combination with the photos and photo key. A larger project is likely to require a full set of architectural plans.
- Make sure to send the appropriate number of copies of applications and supporting documentation. This is based on which program or programs you are applying for. More information is in the Application Guide.
- Send in application forms with original signatures!
- Send a check for your review fee with your state applications. Your application cannot be processed without a check.
- **DO NOT BIND APPLICATION MATERIALS.**

Understand the National Register designation process, and plan accordingly.

- If your building is not listed in the National Register when your project begins, the designation process must be completed before your finished project can be certified.
- The Part 1 and Part A applications must include enough historical documentation to support the building's eligibility for listing in the National Register, or its contributing status within a listed historic district.
- The National Register nomination process is separate from the tax credit application process, but much of the same documentation can be used for both.
- It takes about a year to complete the National Register process for an individual property. Listing of a new district will take longer and will likely require cooperation of other property owners and assistance from local government.
- Consider hiring a qualified consultant to save time and help ensure a smoother application process.
- Stay in communication with THC's National Register staff in order to keep your nomination on track.

Plan architectural work carefully.

- THC and NPS review work planned for the exterior AND interior of buildings.
- The design of additions and new construction are also reviewed, for their impact to the historic building.
- Landscape plans are also reviewed, although with less scrutiny, to ascertain how changes to the landscape effect the overall character of the historic property.
- THC staff can speak or meet with you and your architect, contractors, consultant, etc. to help provide feedback about your plans before they are finalized. If your proposed plans are not appropriate, they may need to be altered in order to obtain approval.

Remember that this is a *historic preservation* program.

- All projects are reviewed for compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The Standards for Rehabilitation allow for alterations to historic buildings to support modern use and functionality, while retaining historic fabric and character.
- Historic fabric, especially character-defining features, should only be replaced when deteriorated beyond repair. Always document the conditions of deterioration and, ideally, get the THC's approval before removing or replacing character-defining features or other significant historic fabric.
- Historic fabric must also never be removed in order to change the appearance or character of a building or space. Historically finished spaces must remain that way. Never remove wall or ceiling finishes to expose structural elements that were never historically exposed.
- Retain primary spaces within historic floorplans. These generally include spaces that were designed or used as public spaces, such as lobbies, commercial spaces, corridors, auditoriums or other assembly spaces, etc.
- Missing historic features can be restored, but are not necessarily required to be restored.
- Some features may be historic even if they are not original. Understand the history of changes to your building and retain added features that have gained significance over time.
- Additions, alterations, or new features should be in keeping with the historic character of the building, but should not be designed to blend in or be mistaken for historic features.
- Projects can be denied certification because of individual work items that do not meet the Standards for Rehabilitation and are especially problematic, such as replacement of windows that are not deteriorated. Additionally, the cumulative effect of multiple, less significant work items that do not meet the Standards for Rehabilitation as completed can lead to a denial.

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5 Things to Know about Downtown Buildings

Texas Main Street Program

Rule #1 **Repair before Replace. Everything, always.**

- Buildings aren't built the way your downtown buildings were. Historic buildings are unique because of the construction methods and craftsmanship that went into building them. Repairing saves the unique character.
- Regular maintenance can prolong the life of a building and reduce the expense of rehabilitation.
- Repairing materials keeps waste out of landfills.

Rule #2 **Brick is durable, but not invincible.**

- Don't paint it. Sealing brick in any way can trap water in the wall.
- Don't sandblast it. Pressure washing is acceptable at a low pressure.
- Don't use hard mortar. Contemporary mortar is too strong for soft, old brick. Use a mortar mixture that matches the original during repointing.

Rule #3 **Water is the enemy.**

- Uncontrolled moisture is the most common source of deterioration in historic buildings.
- Inspect buildings regularly for signs of leaks, trapped water, etc.

Rule #4 **Most properties change over time. Work with what you have.**

- Respect the different eras of a building.
- Identify unique materials, signs, and features that should be preserved.
- Don't make unnecessary, costly changes.

Rule #5 **When in doubt, ask for help.**

- Consult Texas Main Street Design Staff.
- Consult local or regional professionals such as: architects, engineers, conservators, craftspeople, etc.
- Review National Park Service Preservation Briefs and other technical preservation guidance documents.

MAIN STREET
A Publication of the National Trust for Historic Preservation

Keeping Up Appearances

Storefront Guidelines

What makes for a successful Main Street business? It can't be measured exactly; there is no single success formula. Product, price, display, service, location and market all play a part. So too does the appearance of the store, the outside image of the business.

Many store owners seem to regard appearance as secondary to the more immediate concerns of running a business. Too often, the building is neglected or mishandled.

Yet experience shows, time and again, that appearance is important to a healthy business downtown. With merchants working together to create an attractive image, downtown as a whole can benefit.

The 20th century brought changes for Main Street. The automobile brought new competition from commercial strips and shopping centers. Downtown merchants turned their attention to passing cars, erecting shiny new storefronts and eye-catching signs. Main Street stores tried to imitate their modern competitors.

In many ways, the result has been a sorry one. Downtown now appears as a curious cross between neglected old buildings and a commercial strip. It presents a confused image to the shopping public.

The idea of visual relatedness is crucial to the goal of an integrated Main Street. Historically, Main Street facades complemented and reinforced one another. Compare the drawings on this page. Notice how the remodeling of the old facades has destroyed their continuity. They are no longer visually tied together. Each facade is unrelated to the next, and the character of the building group as a whole suffers.

With its buildings, history, setting and place within the community, downtown is unique and special. It makes sense to acknowledge these resources and take full advantage of them—to develop the qualities that are already present downtown.

What improvements can make your building work better for you? How can you make it more attractive to shoppers? The following pages present suggestions for improving appearances as well as ideas for prolonging the life of old buildings.

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The traditional commercial storefront can be considered the cornerstone of Main Street. Dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries, these buildings share a remarkable similarity—a consistency that creates a strong visual image for the downtown.

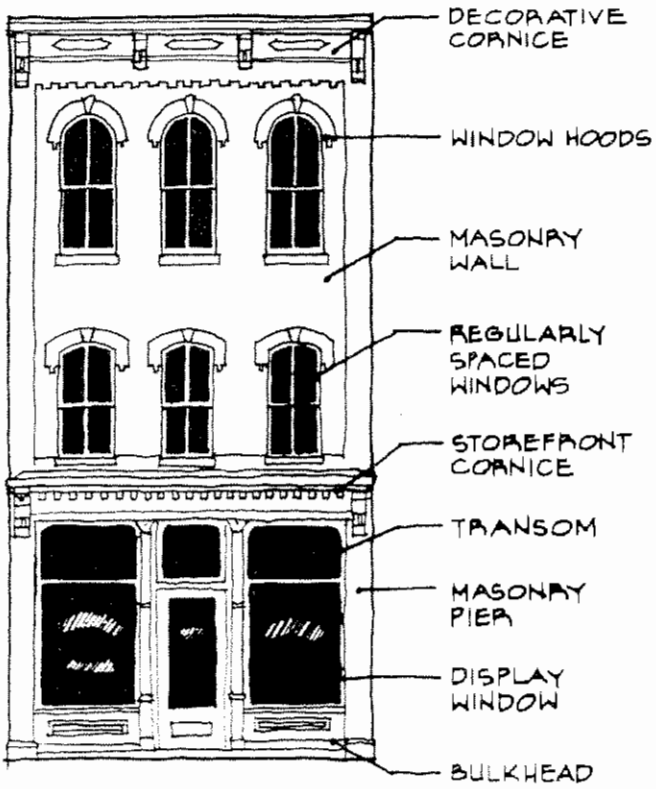
Because they were composed of similar parts, the blocks have a consistent, organized and coordinated appearance. Any one facade is visually related to its neighbors.

The parts of the facade were often compatible enough to be interchangeable. A commercial building from the mid 1800s could be easily modernized by inserting a new 1900s storefront. Although the styles and details changed, the proportions remained the same.

Technological developments, coupled with changing tenants and merchandising trends, encouraged frequent storefront changes, while the upper facade stayed the same, deteriorated or was covered over.

The storefront became increasingly transparent, but it still fit into the framed opening provided by the original building. When a storefront is not contained within this frame, it looks out of proportion with the upper facade.

The basic commercial facade consists of three parts: the storefront with an entrance and display windows, the upper facade usually with regularly spaced windows and the cornice that caps the building. These components appear in many shapes, sizes and styles but result in essentially the same facade.



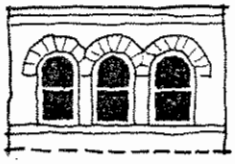
TYPICAL UPPER FACADES

Early to Mid 1800s

- SIMPLE CORNICE
- LINTELS OVER WINDOWS
- SMALL WINDOW PANES

Mid to Late 1800s

- BOLDLY DECORATED CORNICE
- WINDOW HOODS
- 2 OVER 2 WINDOWS



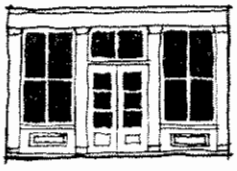
Late 1800s to Early 1900s

- CORBELLED BRICK CORNICE
- LARGE, ARCHED WINDOWS

Early 1900s to 1930s

- SIMPLE BRICK CORNICE
- LARGE WINDOW OPENINGS WITH MULTIPLE UNITS

TYPICAL STOREFRONTS



Early to Mid 1800s

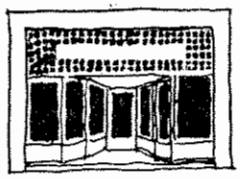
- POST AND BEAM FRAME
- DIVIDED DISPLAY WINDOWS
- SIMPLE DECORATION

Mid to Late 1800s

- BOLDLY DECORATED CORNICE
- CAST IRON COLUMNS
- LARGE DISPLAY WINDOWS

Late 1800s to Early 1900s

- SIMPLE CORNICE
- TRANSOM WINDOWS
- RECESSED ENTRANCE



Early 1900s to 1930s

- METAL WINDOW FRAMES
- STRUCTURAL GLASS
- RECESSED ENTRANCE

The appearance of downtown is the result of an evolutionary process in which buildings either stay the same, are altered or are completely replaced. This process is continuous and inevitable. But its success or failure depends on how sensitive these changes are to the existing framework of buildings.

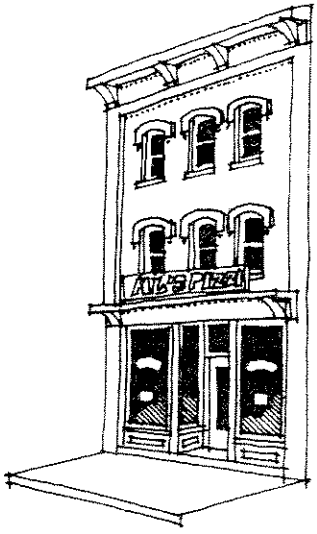
The typical Main Street facade inherently exhibits some basic qualities resulting from its architectural style, construction materials and composition.

Sensitive change accepts these facade qualities and builds on them. The result is a harmonious blending of new design elements within the existing facade. Insensitive change, on the other hand, ignores and often eliminates the design qualities of the original building and creates an unnecessary clash between new and old.

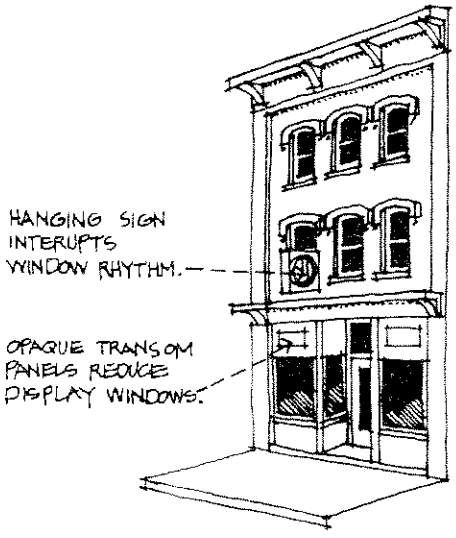
The series of drawings below shows how a typical facade might have changed over time.

Changes happen gradually and have a cumulative effect on a building's appearance. While some alterations are hardly noticeable, change upon change over the years can completely ignore the original facade.

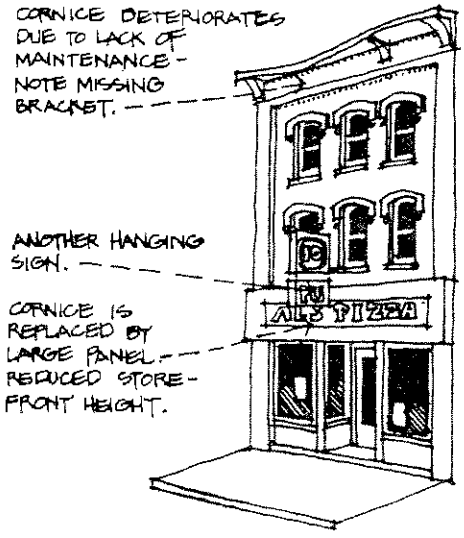
1. THE ORIGINAL FACADE— THE VISUAL RESOURCE



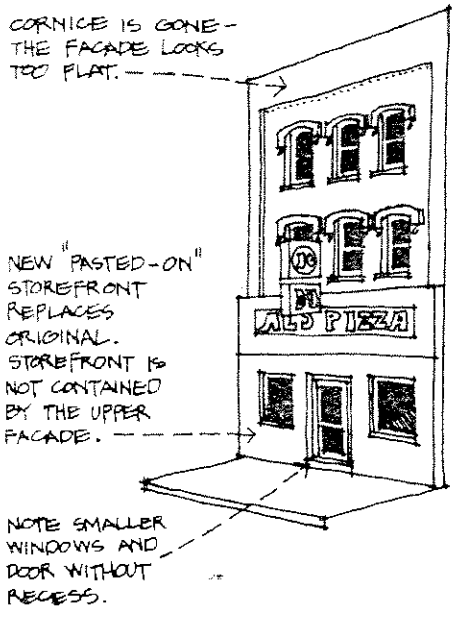
2. MINOR FACADE CHANGE



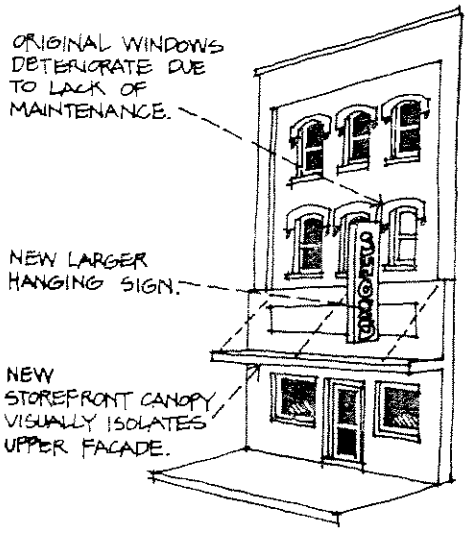
3. MORE MINOR FACADE CHANGE



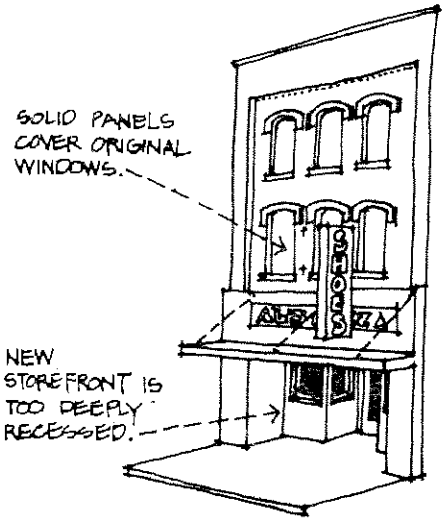
4. STOREFRONT REMODELING— THE FACADE LOOKS CUT IN HALF.



5. MORE STOREFRONT CHANGE



6. ANOTHER STOREFRONT REMODELING



MAINTENANCE

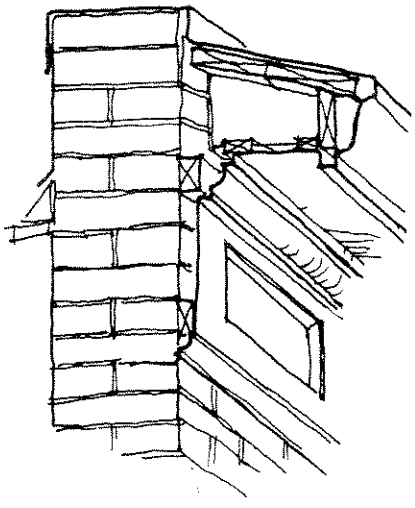
Improper maintenance often results in an insensitive change. Broken windows are boarded over; deteriorated cornices are removed rather than repaired; and walls with peeling paint are covered with aluminum. Proper maintenance is better than any quick-fix approach. It prolongs the life of the building while relying on the quality of the original materials and intended design.

A typical commercial building is composed of a number of materials, each with its own characteristics and problems.

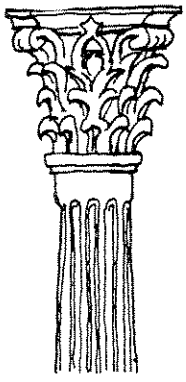
CAST IRON AND SHEET METAL

Cast-iron and sheet metal decorations were often applied to a brick facade; sometimes entire facades were made of a combination of the two.

Cast iron is quite permanent and has been used extensively for storefront columns and window lintels. Regular painting will prevent corrosion. A chemical paint remover or low pressure dry grit blasting (80–100 psi) can be effective for removing built up paint and rust. Missing parts can be recast in aluminum or fiberglass from existing pieces or substituted by wooden pieces.



SHEET METAL CORNICE



CAST IRON COLUMN

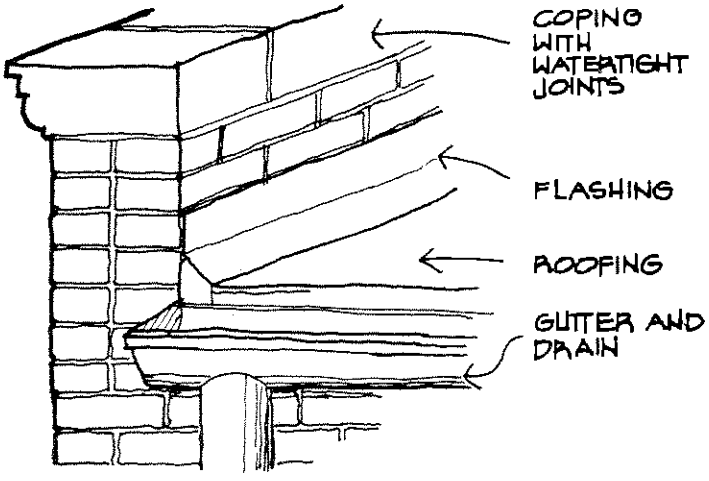
Stamped metal is much lighter and bends easily. Elaborate cornices are often made of stamped metal nailed to a wooden framework attached to the building. Stamped metal usually is coated with zinc to retard rusting although it is very susceptible to rust if the surface is scratched or left exposed. It must always be painted. If stamped metal must be cleaned, use a chemical paint remover. Never use dry grit blasting.

Missing parts can be duplicated by a sheet metal shop.

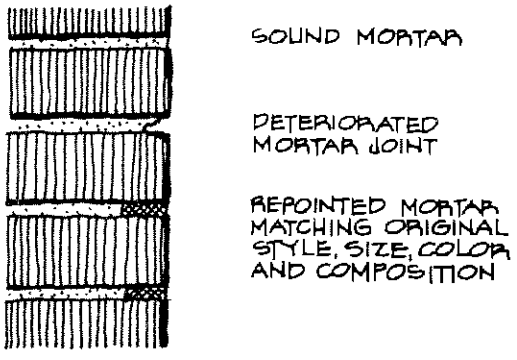
MASONRY SURFACES

Brick or stone walls can be very durable although they are susceptible to moisture, pollution and age. The most frequent problems to look for are deeply recessed mortar joints and crumbling masonry units.

Moisture. The appearance of mold or discoloration of a masonry surface may indicate a moisture problem. Moisture commonly enters through the top of a wall or where the wall meets the roof. Damage can also be caused by moisture from a clogged drain spout, a broken gutter or from water splashing up from the pavement. The roof, flashing, wall coping and drainage system should be periodically checked for water tightness.



Repointing. Mortar disintegrates with age and weathering. When the mortar joints are loose or crumbling, or have recessed more than a half inch, they should be repointed with new mortar to keep out water and continue to hold the masonry units in place. Repointing deteriorated sections should be done with care; new mortar joints should match the style, size, composition and color of the originals. Typical mortar for older buildings contains one part Portland cement to two parts lime to nine parts sand. Never allow a high content of Portland cement to be used. It is very hard and can crack older brick, which is softer. Pick a reputable masonry contractor and examine other repointing jobs the contractor has completed.



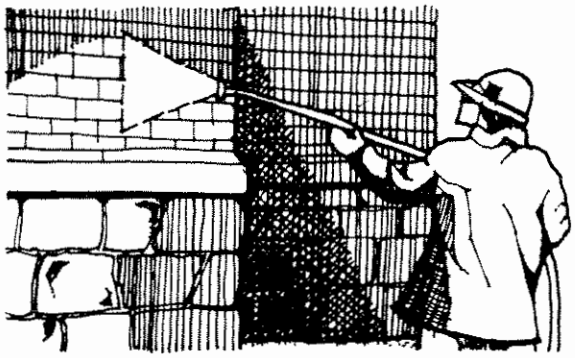
Cleaning Masonry. High pressure water or steam cleaning should be considered for unpainted masonry buildings. Masonry cleaning can give the surface of a building new life by removing pollutants and restoring the natural qualities of the brick or stone.

Improper cleaning can result in further deterioration of masonry. Sandblasting or other abrasive cleaning methods should never be used. They erode the surface of the masonry material and can permanently damage the building. Once the outside skin of the brick has been removed, water can saturate the surface and deteriorate the brick. Sealants can not effectively replace this outer surface.

ABRASIVE CLEANING

Low pressure water cleaning (not more than 600 psi), scrubbing with a bristle brush and the use of gentle detergents is usually sufficient to clean dirt and grime from a masonry surface. Be sure to use only natural bristle brushes, not metal. Metal can disturb the mortar and damage masonry.

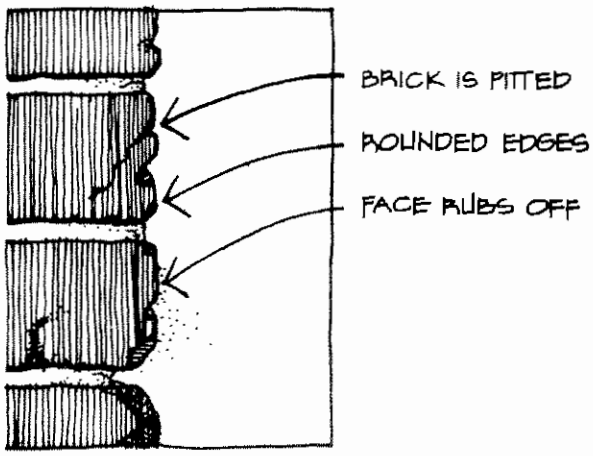
HIGH PRESSURE WATER CLEANING



In some instances, a chemical cleaner is required if paint or heavy grime must be removed. The masonry is usually prewet to soften any dirt. Then a chemical paint remover is applied and allowed to remain on the building surface. Finally, the chemical is rinsed off, usually with water. This process may be repeated several times to remove built up paint.

Finding the right chemical for the job is the biggest challenge. Every company seems to have its own solution. One thing to remember is that chemical cleaners can be either alkaline or acidic. Be sure the right chemical is chosen for your building. Acidic products should never be used on limestone or marble.

Cleaning should only be undertaken by experienced professionals. It may be necessary to look outside of your town for the right company. Check the Yellow Pages under "Building Cleaning—Exterior." After identifying potential contractors, investigate examples of their work and ask for a test patch on your building in advance to see how effective the cleaning method will be. Look for possible damage to the mortar joints and any residue on the wall surface caused by the cleaning process. Also look for any damage to the masonry units. Are the edges more rounded? Does the face rub off? Some masonry surfaces may be too soft to be cleaned.



Remember never to clean a building if there is any possibility of frost because the moisture may crack the masonry if it freezes.

Painting. Unless it is necessary to protect the surface, exposed masonry should be left unpainted. A previously painted surface should be repainted rather than chemically cleaned.

Before painting a masonry surface, the mortar should be checked and repointed as needed. Loose paint should be scraped off. The building may be cleaned with a low pressure water wash. Then a masonry primer should be applied to the entire area and one or two final coats of semigloss or flat latex paint applied to the wall surface.

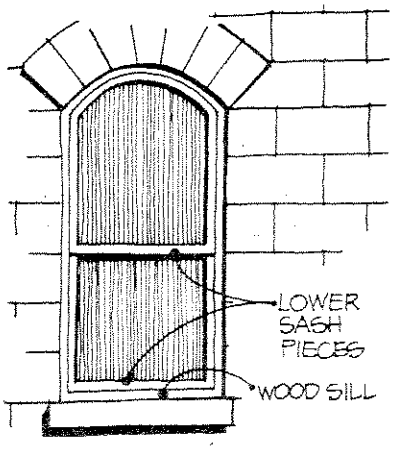
UPPER-STORY WINDOWS

The visual importance of upper-story windows is evident in their steady march down Main Street. They give buildings an appearance of vitality and use, even if the upper floors are vacant. They create a repeated pattern that helps tie together the facades.

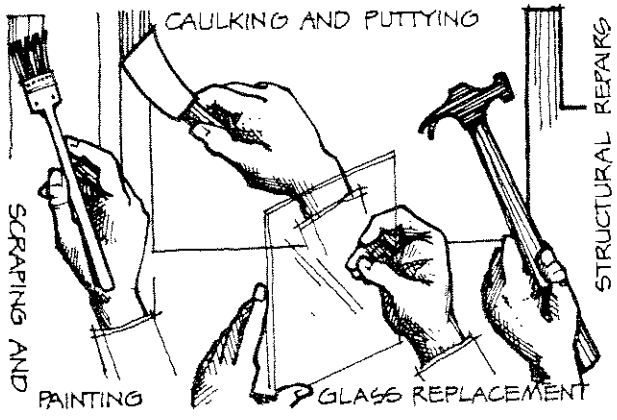
Often, deteriorated upper-story windows have been inappropriately replaced or boarded up. This treatment cheapens not only the character of the building but the streetscape as well—a negative image that can be avoided through proper maintenance.

Window Maintenance Checklist

- Check the wood parts of the window. Are there portions that are soft, cracked or split? Pay particular attention to the window sills and bottom of the window sashes where water has collected. If sashes or frames are deteriorated, window glass can fall out and endanger pedestrians below.



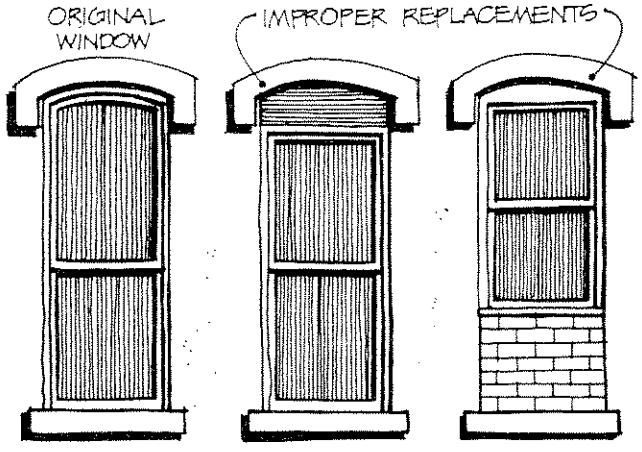
- To maintain the windows properly, all deteriorated wood should be replaced with new pieces and the old paint scraped off. All cracks should be filled with caulk or wood putty and the surfaces sanded. Loose glazing putty should be replaced and the frames primed with a good quality oil-based primer and painted with one or two coats of latex or oil-based paint.



- Loose or broken window panes can be easily fixed. First remove all broken glass and old glazing putty. Replace the glass with new panes similar to the existing glass and, using glazier's points and putty, reglaze both the new glass and loose panes. It may be easier to remove the window sash from the frame to perform these activities.
- The joints between the window frame and the masonry opening should also be checked. Loose caulk should be removed and the joints recaulked to prevent air and water infiltration.

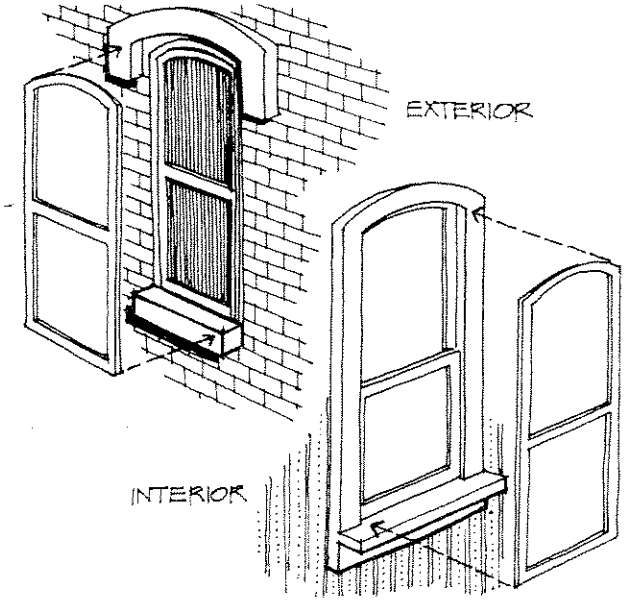
Window Replacement

- If a window has deteriorated beyond repair or is missing, the replacement should match the original window. Replacement windows should always fill the entire opening and duplicate the original pattern. For example, a double hung sash window should not be replaced by a single fixed pane of glass. Avoid the use of windows and shutters that are not in keeping with the style of the building.
- If possible, match the material as well as the design of the original windows. Standard wood windows are relatively easy to buy or have made. They may not be as expensive as you might think, averaging between $100 and $350 each. More unusual styles can be custom ordered.



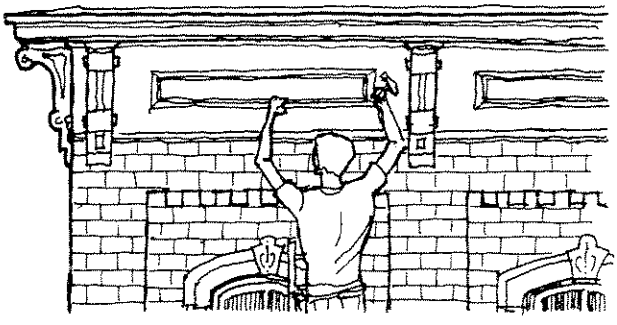
- In some instances double-glazed aluminum frame windows may be desired. If aluminum must be used, it should duplicate the design of the original window. It should be in a dark anodized or baked enamel finish rather than a light metallic color.

Storm Windows. Storm windows are a good idea for conserving heat and energy, especially on upper floors. When mounted on the exterior, these windows should be painted to match the color of the window sash and should duplicate the shape. On the front of a building, it may be desirable to install storm windows on the inside where they will not be seen. Care must be taken that they are ventilated to prevent moisture from accumulating and damaging the wood.



WOOD

Wood is often used for cornices and storefronts and sometimes for upper wall surfaces. Always try to retain any original exterior woodwork. Deterioration can be prevented with regular maintenance, and decayed portions can be repaired. Check for soft, rotted areas, areas where the wood has split and places where nails have corroded. Up to a point, these problems can be fixed by renailing, filling and caulking the wood and then by using an oil primer and painting the wood with latex or oil-based paint.

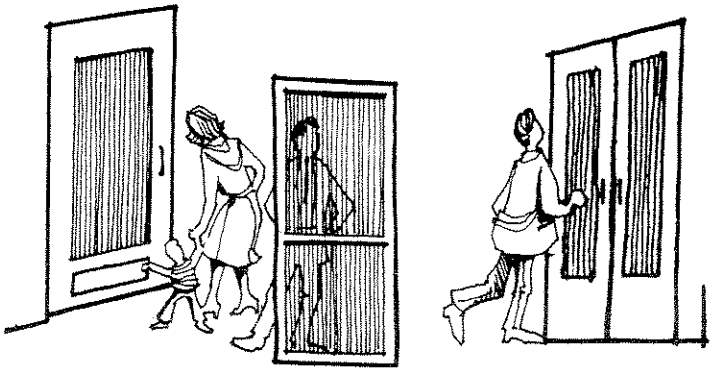


Sometimes it will be necessary to have a carpenter replace some pieces that have rotted or are missing. Any replacements should match or at least complement the existing details.

DOORS

Every storefront has a door or pair of doors that enter into the place of business. Traditionally, the entrance door was made of wood with a large glass panel. Every effort should be made to maintain and repair an original door, if possible.

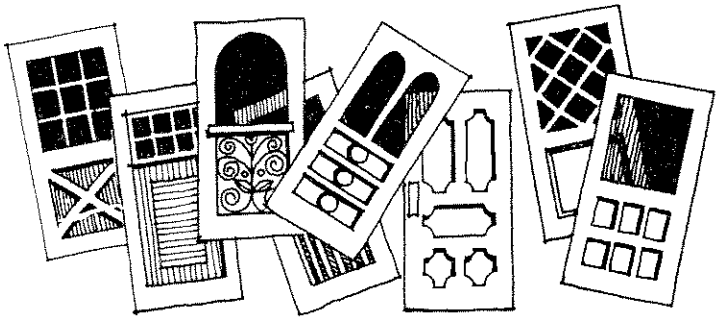
Painting Aluminum. Many original doors have been replaced by standard aluminum and glass commercial doors. Although lacking in historical character, they are generally unobtrusive. Aluminum doors and storefronts can be made more compatible by painting them a dark color. An exposed aluminum surface must be cleaned and prepared for a zinc chromate primer or metal primer, followed by appropriate finish coats as recommended by the primer manufacturer. New aluminum should be exposed to weather for at least two months before painting.



Door Replacement. If a door is to be replaced there are three basic options:

- Have a new door built with the same design and proportions of the original.
- Find a manufactured wooden or steel door that resembles the traditional store door.
- Use a standard aluminum commercial door with wide stiles and a dark anodized or baked enamel finish.

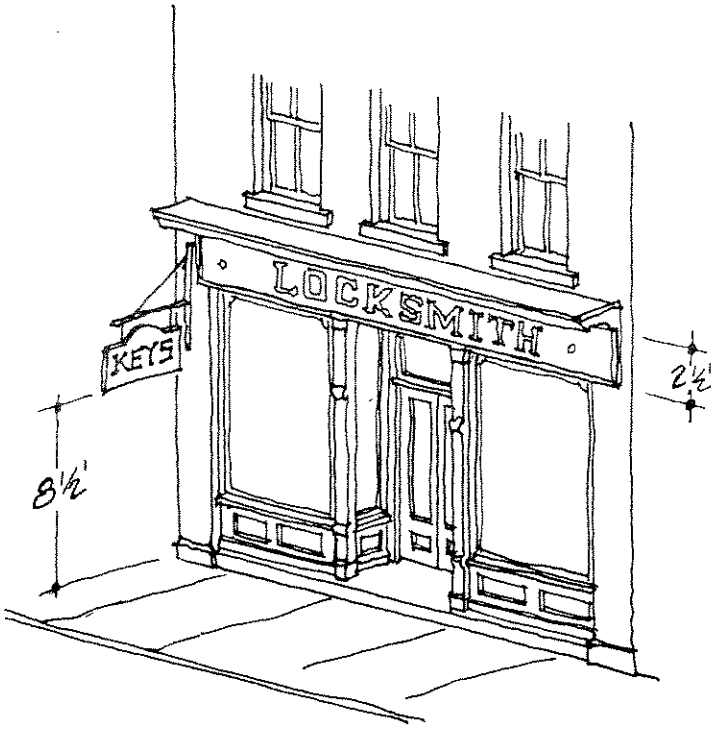
Do not use doors decorated with moldings, cross bucks or window grills. These doors are more residential in character and can look out of place on commercial buildings.



SIGNS

Signs are a vital part of any Main Street. With a sign, you call attention to your business and create an individual image for your store. But it is often forgotten that signs contribute to an overall image as well. Merchants try to out-shout one another with large, flashy signs. A successful sign can reinforce the image of the downtown as well as serve the needs of the business. Consider the following guidelines:

- A sign should express an easy to read, direct message: Keep it simple.
- A storefront should not have more than two signs—one primary and one secondary.
- A flush-mounted sign board may extend the width of the storefront but should not be more than 2½ feet high. The sign should be mounted somewhere above the storefront display windows and below the second-story window sills. Generally, lettering should be 8 to 18 inches high and occupy only about 65 percent of the sign board.



- A hanging sign should be mounted at least 8½ feet above the sidewalk and should project no more than 5 feet. The size and location of a hanging sign should be carefully considered so that it does not interfere with neighboring signs.
- Window signs should not obscure the display area. The color of the letters should contrast with the display background. Light colored letters or gold leafed letters with dark borders are effective.
- Awnings can also serve as signs with contrasting letters painted or sewn onto the valance. Usually, 6 to 8-inch letters are sufficient.
- There are hundreds of letter styles available. A letter style should be chosen that is easy to read and that reflects the image of the business it represents.

Helvetica **Palatino**

Benguiat Korinna

Arnold **Franklin**

Clarendon **Goudy**

Bookman **Souvenir**

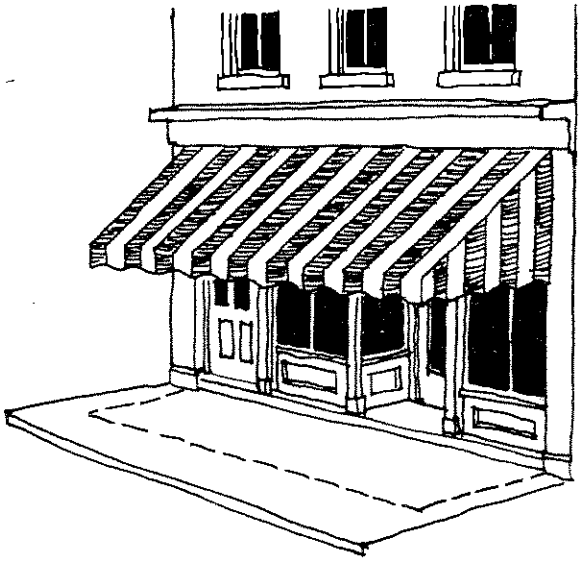
Broadway

- Letters can be painted or mounted directly on a sign board, storefront or wall. Three dimensional letters are available from sign makers in wood, marine plywood, metal and plastic. Remember, letters should not be too large.
- Sign colors should complement the colors of the building. Light colored letters on a dark background are easier to read.
- Illuminated signs can be appropriate downtown if they respect the proportions of the storefront and the guidelines outlined above. Painted signs can be directly illuminated with florescent or incandescent lights. Internally lit signs are most effective with light letters on a dark opaque background. Exposed neon letters can also be effective, adding color and vitality to the street.
- Choose a sign maker carefully. Quality of workmanship and construction is as vital as any of the considerations just discussed. Ask where you can see examples of previous work.

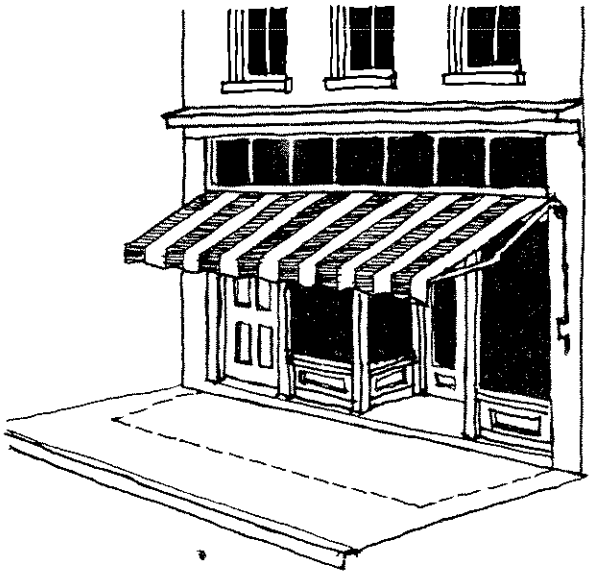
AWNINGS

The canvas awning was an important design element in the traditional storefront. It provided cover, added color and served as a transition between the storefront and the upper facade. Most buildings that face the sun had awnings. Look at old pictures of your building to see how awnings were used.

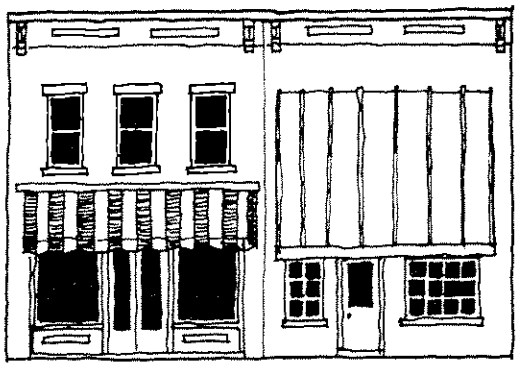
A standard street-level awning should be mounted so that the valance is about 7 feet above the sidewalk and projects out between 4 and 7 feet from the building. A 12-inch valance flap is usually attached at the awning bar and can serve as a sign panel.



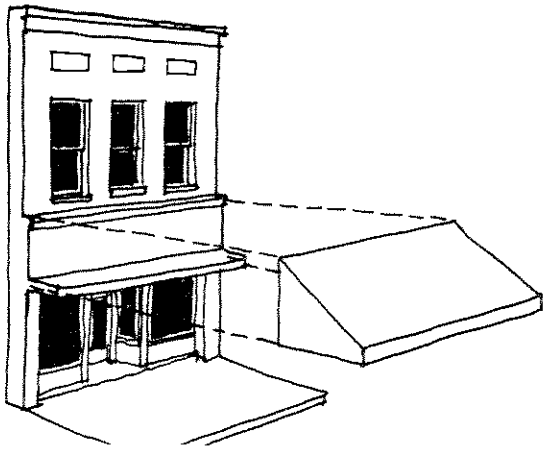
An awning can be attached above the display windows and below the cornice or sign panel. Sometimes it is mounted between the transom and the display windows, allowing light into the store while shading the merchandise and pedestrians from the sun.



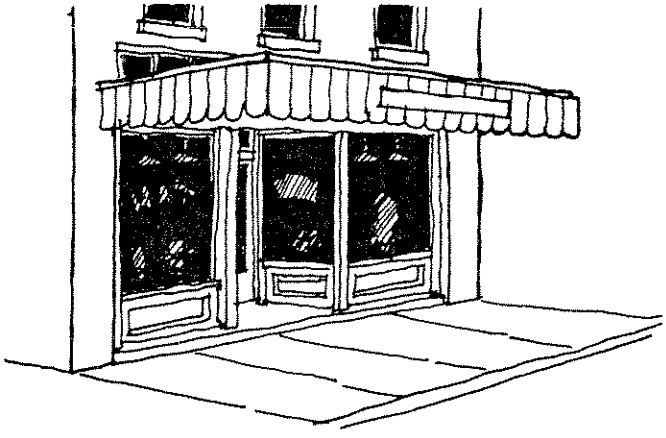
An awning should reinforce the frame of the storefront and should not cover the piers or the space between the second-story window sills and the storefront cornice.



Inappropriate storefront alterations can be effectively disguised by mounting an awning over the alterations while maintaining the proportions of a traditional storefront.



Aluminum awnings or canopies generally detract from the historic character and should not be erected. If a flat canopy exists, it can be dressed up with a 12- to 24-inch awning valance.



Various awning materials offer different colors and patterns. There are several to choose from: canvas, vinyl-coated canvas and acrilan, a synthetic material. Each varies in cost and relative durability.

COLOR

Painting can be one of the most dramatic improvements you make to your building. Choosing the right combination of colors can unify the building elements within the facade as well as relate the building to others on the street. Three colors are sufficient to highlight any facade.

The base color appears on the upper wall and piers flanking the storefront. Often this color will be natural brick and will not require paint. If the building has been painted, a color should be selected that relates to the surrounding buildings.

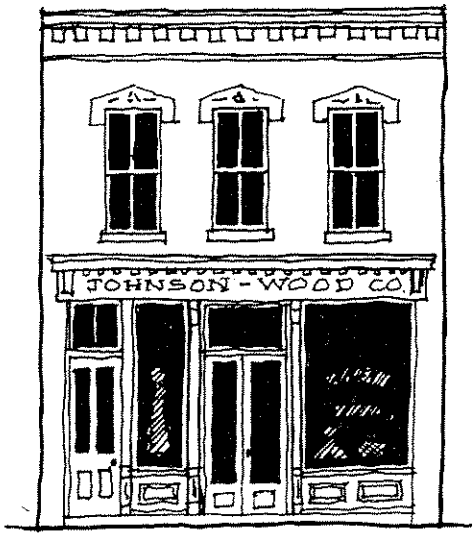
The major trim color defines the decorative elements of the building, tying together the upper facade trim and the storefront. The trim color should complement the base color. If there is a natural stone or terra-cotta trim on the facade, it should serve as a trim color. Major trim elements include the building cornice; storefront cornice; window frames, sills and hoods; and storefront frame, columns and bulkheads (including aluminum framing).

The minor trim color should enhance the color scheme established by the base and major trim. Often a darker shade of the major trim can be used to highlight the window sashes, doors and selective cornice and bulkhead details. Care should be taken not to over decorate the facade.

Color can also be used to minimize facade problems visually. A poorly patched and repointed wall is not as noticeable when it is painted; a missing upper cornice can be re-created with a one dimensional paint scheme; and inappropriate materials can be made more compatible with paint color.

Historic color schemes varied by availability of pigments, the stylistic preferences of a particular period and by regional differences dictated by climate. To get an idea of which colors were appropriate to your building, use a sharp pen knife carefully to scrape away the layers of paint from small areas where the base color and trim colors may have been. Lightly sand the scraped area and wet the surface. These colors can serve as a guide when choosing new colors.

MINOR TRIM
- WINDOW SASH
- DOORS
- STOREFRONT FRAME
- SMALL DETAILS ON CORNICES, WINDOW HOODS AND BULKHEADS



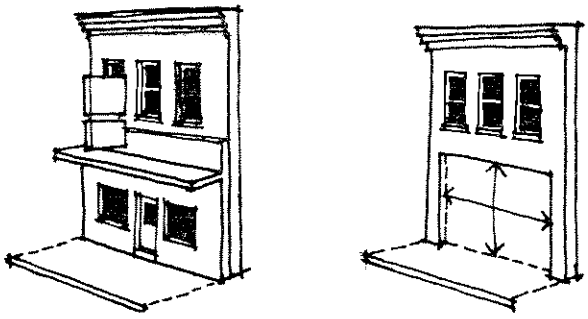
MAJOR TRIM
- CORNICE
- WINDOW CAPS
- WINDOW FRAMES
- STOREFRONT CORNICE
- STOREFRONT COLUMNS
- BULKHEADS

BASE COLOR
- WALL SURFACES
- STOREFRONT PIERS

STOREFRONT DESIGN

Every traditional Main Street facade has a well-defined opening that the original storefront filled. The area is bounded by a pier on either side, the sidewalk on the bottom, and the lower edge of the upper facade on top.

Many problems with facades today are a result of this fact: The storefront has been allowed to stray out of its natural place within the facade. It no longer looks contained; instead it appears pasted on.

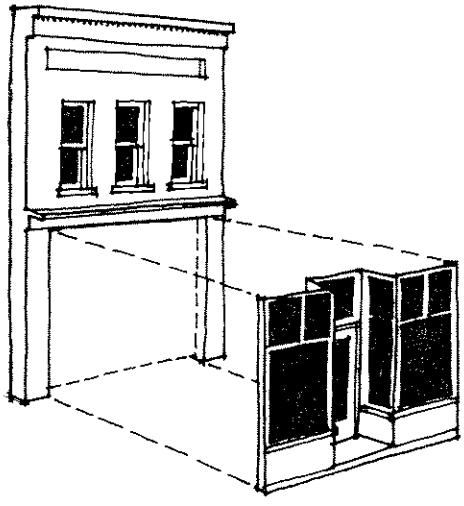


Whether you are considering a restoration or more contemporary treatment, the storefront should be based on a traditional storefront design. The basic configuration can often be derived from old photographs of the building.

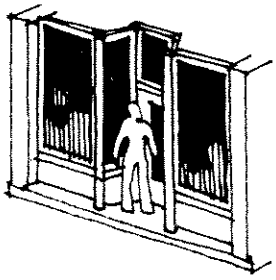
The following ideas suggest ways to think about a change in your storefront. Each is founded in the design of the traditional storefront; however, these ideas are not historical in nature. They are functional and make the storefront more attractive and accessible to shoppers.

- *Contain the Storefront*

A general rule for future remodeling can be stated as follows: A storefront should be designed to fit inside the original opening and not extend beyond it.



To emphasize this feeling of containment, a storefront might be set back slightly (6 to 12 inches) from the front.



- *Make It Transparent*

The traditional storefront was composed almost entirely of windows, providing maximum light and display. This large glass area creates a visual openness that is part of the overall proportional system of the facade and is as valid today as it was in the past.

With the storefront closed in, the building on the right looks disjointed. The storefront does not relate to the facade; it is pasted on. As a result the building is not as inviting.

The traditional ratio of window to wall area is significantly less than it should be. Generally there should be more glass and less wall at the storefront level, balanced by more wall and less glass on the upper facade.

• *Storefront Materials*

The color and texture of the storefront materials should be simple and unobtrusive: (1) The storefront frame can be wood, cast iron or anodized aluminum; (2) the display windows should be clear glass; (3) transom windows can be clear, tinted or stained glass; (4) the entrance door should have a large glass panel and can be made of wood, steel or aluminum; (5) the bulkheads can be wood panels, polished stone, glass, tile or aluminum-clad plywood panels; (6) the storefront cornice can be made of wood, cast iron or sheet metal or sometimes the horizontal supporting beam can serve as the storefront cap; (7) the side piers should be the same material as the upper facade, or stuccoed and painted to look the same.

Certain materials and design elements should never be used on a traditional commercial building. A mansard roof with wooden shingles, rough textured wood siding, fake bricks or stone and gravel aggregate materials are not appropriate.

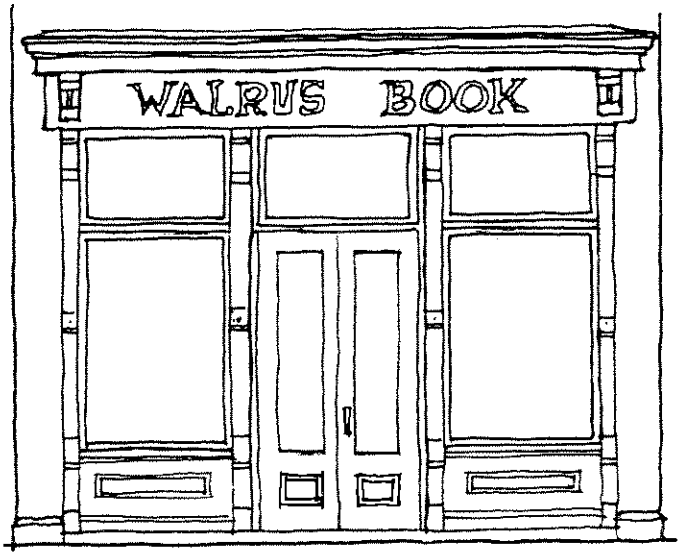
Inappropriate historical themes should be avoided. Small window panes, a colonial door and storefront shutters are 18th-century elements that do not belong on most 19th or 20th-century facades.

INAPPROPRIATE HISTORICAL THEME

• *Keep It Simple*

When designing a new storefront or renovating an existing storefront, remember the emphasis should be on transparency. The basic storefront design should include large display windows with thin framing, a recessed entrance, a cornice or a horizontal sign panel at the top of the storefront to separate it from the upper facade and low bulkheads at the base to protect the windows and define the entrance.

This basic configuration can be constructed from traditional or contemporary materials, achieving the same result.



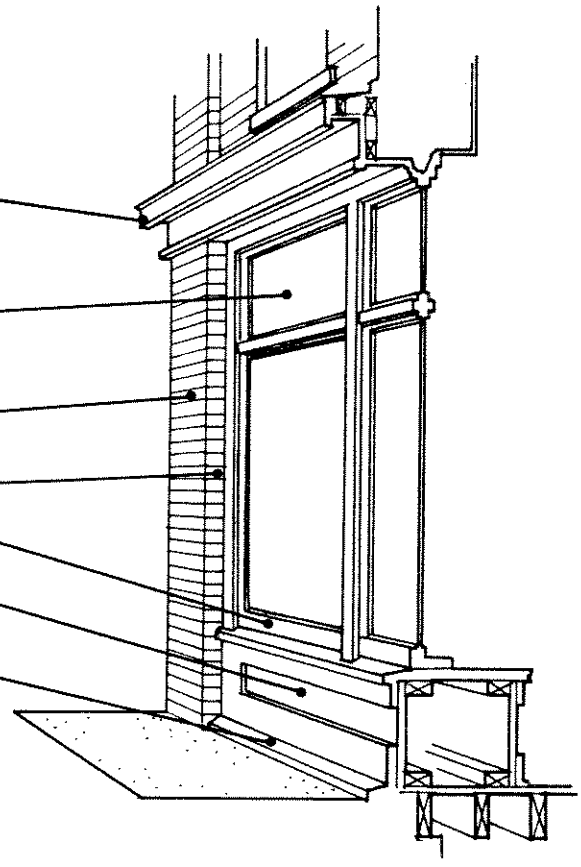
TRADITIONAL STOREFRONT

CONTEMPORARY STOREFRONT

The following page illustrates the construction techniques for a traditional wooden-framed storefront and for a more contemporary aluminum-framed storefront.

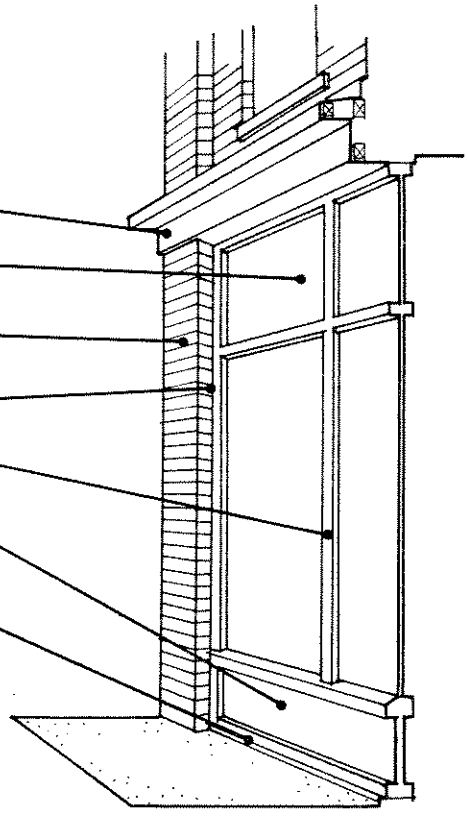
STOREFRONT WITH TRADITIONAL MATERIALS

- 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.

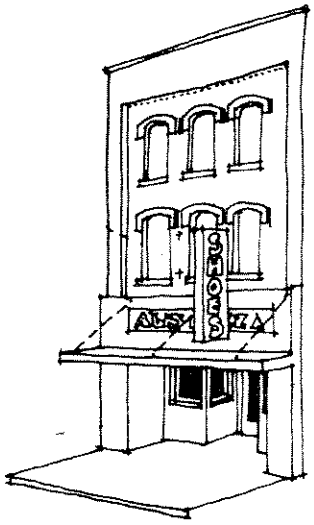


STOREFRONT WITH CONTEMPORARY MATERIALS

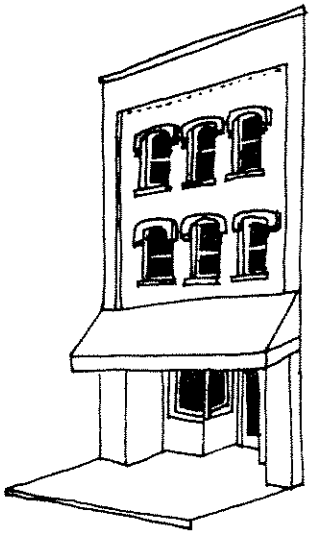
- A cornice is made with sheet metal over a wooden frame.
- Optional transoms can be stained glass, clear glass or opaque.
- Masonry piers are uncovered and match the upper facade.
- The storefront is recessed 6 inches into the opening.
- The storefront and windows are framed with dark anodized aluminum 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.



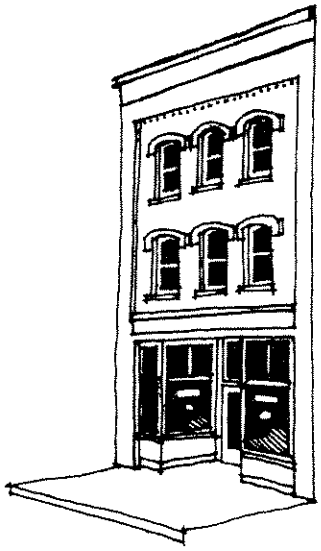
FACADE IMPROVEMENTS



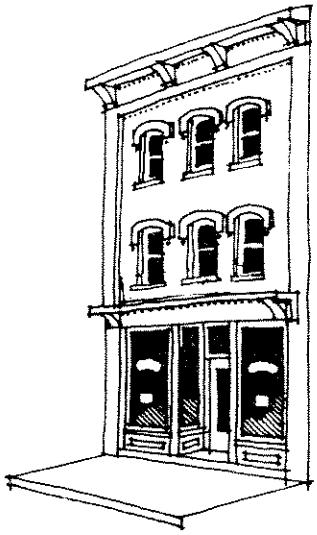
EXISTING FACADE



MINIMAL REHABILITATION
$3–5,000



MAJOR RENOVATION
$8–15,000



RESTORATION
$10–20,000

What to Do?

If you wish to improve your storefront, a good place to start is by finding old photographs of the building and studying how it originally looked. Determine what changes have been made and how they have affected the appearance of the facade. Investigate to see if the original storefront and facade elements have been covered over or removed. (Sometimes parts may have been removed and stored in the basement or on the upper floors.)

Depending on the condition of the building and the amount of money you have budgeted, there are three basic approaches you may want to consider.

Minimal Rehabilitation

This preservation approach to rehabilitation requires basic maintenance, necessary replacement (missing windows), removal of extraneous materials (over-sized signs, and tacked-on storefront coverings) and simple design improvements (properly proportioned sign, new paint scheme and new awning). Cosmetic treatments can help to unify the building by covering over a blocked down storefront with an awning or painting a contemporary storefront a dark receding color to minimize its effect.

Major Renovation

This approach retains the existing original elements of the facade while using contemporary as well as traditional design and materials for replacement of inappropriate elements. For instance, when installing a new storefront any of these three alternatives would be appropriate: (1) a contemporary design constructed in wood or anodized aluminum; (2) a simplified version of a traditional storefront in wood or aluminum; or (3) a traditional period storefront constructed in wood. In all major renovations, care must be exercised to insure that the design of any improvement is understated so as not to compete with the overall character of the facade.

Restoration

This approach requires that the facade be brought back to its original condition. It involves the exact duplication of the original storefront, detailing, color schemes and sign placement. If a building has undergone only minor alterations, restoration may be inexpensive and desirable.

In considering each of the above approaches, always remember to retain as much of the original facade as possible and to analyze carefully the effects of any improvement both to your building and to the streetscape.

INFILL CONSTRUCTION

The construction of new buildings on vacant lots in downtown should be encouraged. The design of a new infill building, particularly its front facade, is a special problem. The new facade should be designed to look appropriate and compatible in the midst of the surrounding buildings.

What is good infill design? There is no absolute answer; a good design will vary according to its setting. Because an infill building is new, it should look new. However, its appearance must always be sensitive to the character of its neighbors without mimicking them.

There are several ideas that should govern the visual relationship between an infill building and its neighbors.

- *Proportions of the Facade*

The average height and width of the surrounding buildings determines a general set of proportions for an infill structure or the bays of a larger structure.

The infill building should fill the entire space and reflect the characteristic rhythm of facades along the street.

If the site is large, the mass of the facade can be broken into a number of smaller bays, to maintain a rhythm similar to the surrounding buildings.

- *Composition*

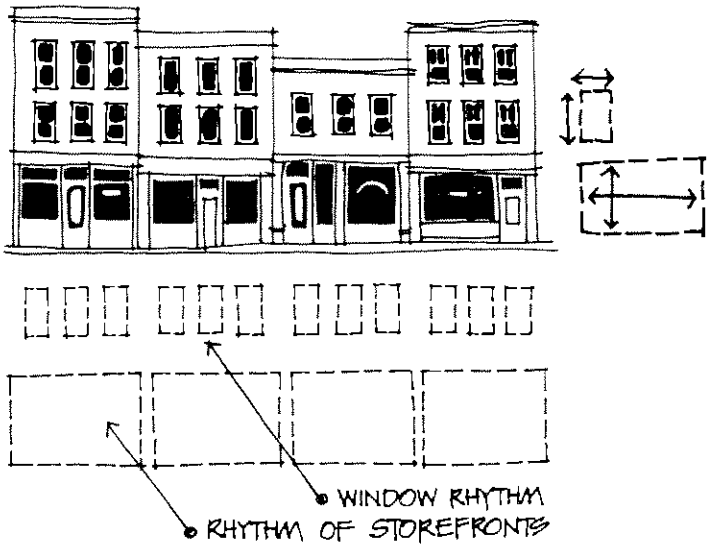
The composition of the infill facade (that is, the organization of its parts) should be similar to that of surrounding facades.

Rhythms that carry throughout the block (such as window spacing) should be incorporated into the new facade.

- *Proportions of the Openings*

The size and proportion of window and door openings of an infill building should be similar to those on surrounding facades.

The same applies to the ratio of window area to solid wall for the facade as a whole.



- *Detailing*

Infill architecture should reflect some of the detailing of surrounding buildings in window shapes, cornice lines and brick work.

- *Materials*

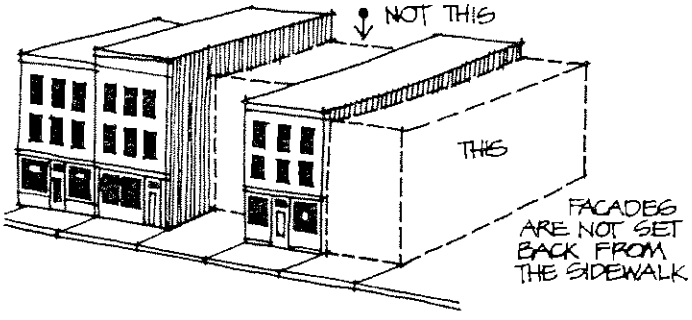
An infill facade should be composed of materials similar to the adjacent facades. The new building should not stand out against the others.

- *Color*

The colors chosen for an infill facade should relate to the building's neighbors.

- *Building Setback*

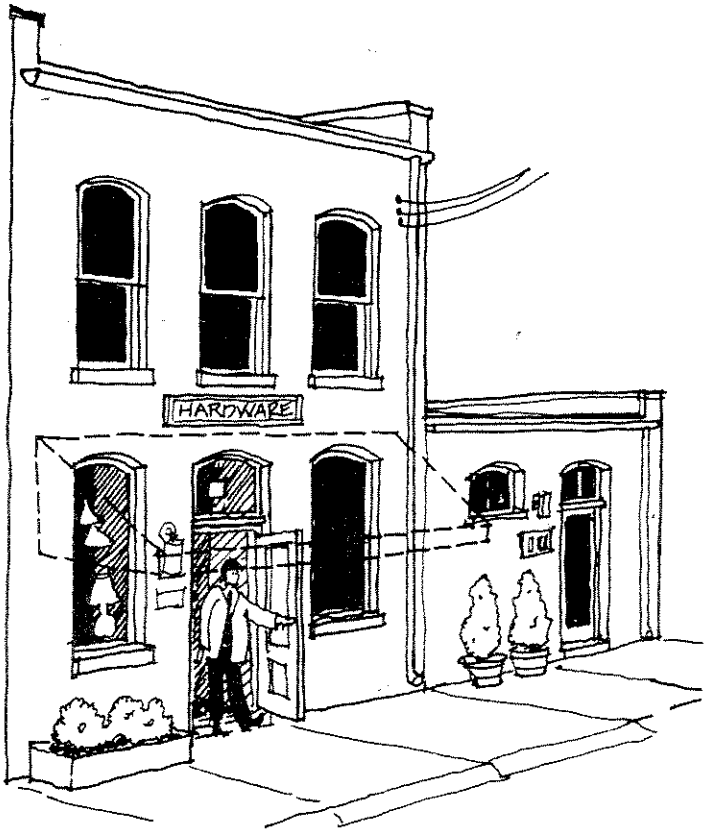
The new facade should be flush to its neighbors.



REAR ENTRANCES

As parking areas are developed behind stores, the backs of buildings are becoming more visually important. By improving the appearances and developing rear entrances, this back facade can serve for more than just deliveries. A rear entrance can provide direct customer access to your store from parking areas as well as improve circulation between the parking lots and the street.

In considering a rear entrance, think about some of these ideas:



- You may have to rearrange your display and storage area to handle the change in circulation.
- The rear facade should be clean and well-maintained. It should welcome customers, not threaten them.
- A small sign at the rear door should identify the store.
- An awning can be added for visual identification and convenience.
- Back windows can serve as secondary display windows.
- If there is enough sun, planter boxes might be added.
- Refuse containers should be hidden with a fence or simple enclosure.

KEEPING UP APPEARANCES

These guidelines are not restoration guidelines. They are based on simplicity and quality of design, they are intended to help you make improvements that are appropriate to older commercial districts and can apply to most commercial buildings, both old and new.

You should consult your state historic preservation office and *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* when considering a restoration or a project in which you intend to take the 25 percent investment tax credit for rehabilitating a certified historic structure.

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