

Photo Guidelines for Texas Main Street Program

Using photos on social media comes with three main considerations: selecting strong images, ownership, and credit or attribution.

Choosing Photos

Social media is visual. The words do matter, but it's the images that catch users' eyes as they scroll. A photo that isn't well suited to social media won't make users stop long enough to read what you have to say.

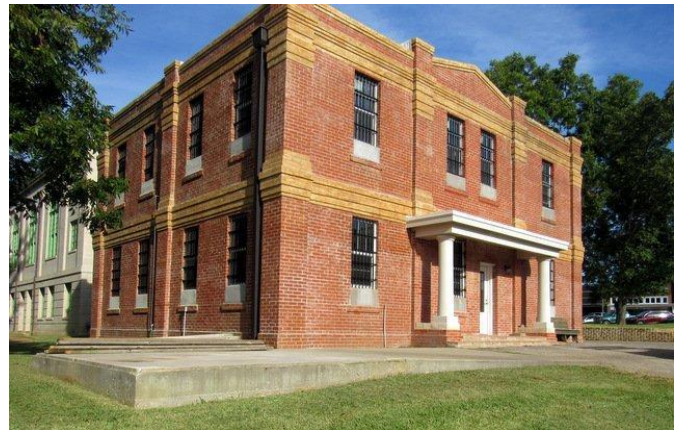
Your goal should be to share images that showcase your Main Street community's best self. Look for photos that are attractive, appealing, interesting... Of course, this is subjective, so review the following comparisons for guidance.

Angle/Perspective/Framing: The way a photo is framed can make a huge difference. Some angles are flattering and others are not!

Avoid this: too much parking lot, low detail



Better: more interesting angle, more building detail



Avoid this: too tight, no breathing room



Better: more sense of space, not constricted



Avoid this: too panoramic, will display poorly



Better: stick to square or around 2:3 proportions



Photo credit: Travel Texas

Visual Interest: color, shape, variety vs. simplicity, and more.

Okay: nice buildings and framing, bland colors



Better: more color and character



Photo credit: Tammi Paul

Okay: nice moody colors, but mostly asphalt



Better: shows more of the place itself



Photo credit: Library of Congress, Carol M. Highsmith

People: The THC's current social media audience doesn't respond well to photos featuring present-day people—they simply aren't excited about it. (Note that this may be entirely opposite to how your local audience responds on your own Main Street social media pages.) There can be people *in* the photo, but the main subject should be the *place*.

Avoid this: focus is on people vs. place



Better: focus is on place, with people in it



Quality: Given the pace of technology, a snapshot taken today on a cellphone may be much higher quality than a professionally shot photo from 20 years ago. Don't be afraid to walk around the block and use a phone to grab up-to-date images of your community. Remember to consider the framing!

Okay: nice angle/concept, but low resolution



Photo credit: Texas Comptroller, 2012

Better: sharper, clearer colors in 2022



Ownership

Just because a photo is on the internet, that doesn't mean that you can use it however you want. It's important to get permission to use the photo and properly credit the photographer.

If a photo is not clearly sourced from the public domain, or is taken by a photographer who is not a THC employee, the photographer owns the copyright and we must give that photographer credit for their work.

However, if a state or federal employee shoots video or takes a picture on government time with a government-supplied camera, the image/video belongs to the agency, not the photographer.

- Examples:
 - THC state historic site staff member on duty takes a photo of a pretty sunset over their site; THC owns the photo
 - Travel blogger takes a photo of that same sunset while visiting the SHS; photographer owns the photo
 - Park ranger takes a photo of geology at Big Bend National Park; NPS owns the photo
 - Army photographer in WWII takes photos of military installations for the U.S. government; photos may be owned by a number of different entities (U.S. Army, National Archives, etc.) and is likely in the public domain

Credit/Attribution

Unless the photo was created by the THC, or you have a reliable source showing that it is in the public domain, *photo credit is required* in order for the agency to post the image on our social media (or use it in other media).

Depending on the source, a credit line may be very short and simple (the photographer's name, name of the agency) or extensive (including collection name, accession number, date taken, or other details).

- Examples:
 - 📷: Photographer Name (or 📷: @photographername)
 - Photo courtesy Travel Texas
 - Photo: UTSA Libraries Special Collections
 - 📷: E.O. Goldbeck, "Living Insignia of the Famous 36th Division, Palacios, Texas, July 1926," © E.O. Goldbeck, San Antonio, Collection of The Grace Museum, Gift of Alice and Bill Wright

It is your responsibility to confirm the correct attribution for any photo you intend to use on social media.

Pro tip: As soon as you choose a photo, save or edit its file name to include the appropriate credit, along with other relevant details such as location or building name. Examples:

- Downtown_Nacogdoches_CREDIT_Travel_Texas_Pierce_Ingram.jpg
- La_Salle_County_Courthouse_CREDIT_Wayne_Wendel.jpg
- Galloway_House_Burnet_CREDIT_Library_of_Congress_Lyda_Hill_Texas_Collection_of_Photographs_in_Carol_M_Highsmiths_America_Project.jpg