

Main Street Matters

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TAYLOR

Written by Deby Lannen, Main Street Manager, Taylor Main Street Program

Taylor is a beautiful city with a thriving downtown area that is rich with history and charm.

It all began as Taylor was founded in 1876 and incorporated in 1882. Prior to that, there was not much to mark the present location. In 1876, the Texas Land Company auctioned lots in anticipation of the International-Great Northern Railroad's arrival. The town grid was laid out, and the area was named Taylorsville after a railroad official, Edward Moses Taylor. Along with the railroad, this location

also marked the intersection of State Highway 95 and U.S. Highway 79. The name was changed to Taylor in 1892. Immigrants from Moravia and Bohemia (now the Czech Republic) and other Slavic states, as well as from Germany and Austria, settled in Taylor. The rich farmland and pastureland was abundant and it quickly became a pivotal shipping mecca for cotton, cattle, and grain.

By 1878, Taylor boasted 1,000 residents and 32 businesses. The town was indeed flourishing. Disaster struck when 29 of these businesses were destroyed by a fire in 1879. Taylor rallied by replacing the destroyed buildings with the brick and stone structures, and some still boldly stand today. A water works system was established to supply the town with water from underground springs and later piped from the San Gabriel River. *(Cont. on page 2)*



The city was named after Edward Moses Taylor, a railroad official, under the name Taylorsville. It officially became Taylor in 1892.

By this time, the Taylor, Bastrop, and Houston Railway had reached the community, and there were machine shops and a roundhouse to service both rail lines.

Taylor was incorporated in 1882 with a mayor-council form of city government, and Daniel Moody was elected the first mayor. His son, Dan Moody, would later become the youngest governor of the state of Texas. He is known for a legal battle against the Ku Klux Klan that he won in 1924. The growing town soon established a public school system, followed by banks, the first savings and loans company in Texas, electric company, cotton compress, and several newspapers published in English as well as German and Czech. Churches sprang up, and a cemetery was established. Taylor had its foothold and continued to grow. In the early years of the 20th century, the city drilled an artesian well, built a city hall, and established a hospital.

By 1940, the city boasted 7,875 residents and 225 businesses. Though other industries were added in the early 1900s, cotton was the leading product. Taylor proclaimed itself “the largest inland cotton market in the world.” Maize, wheat, and cattle were also being produced in the area. Taylor added a bus line,

an airport, five freight lines, and two main highways. The diverse population had grown to include people of English and Scots-Irish background, as well as Czechs, Germans, Swedes, Hispanics, and African Americans.

The city continued to grow and added public sports facilities with tennis courts, swimming pools, rodeo arena, hike and bike trail, and lighted baseball diamonds. The public schools offered vocational training, junior college extension courses, and adult education programs in a number of fields.

Along with this growth, Taylor experienced another trending phenomenon—our once-thriving downtown was dying as most new businesses, and many of the local ones, moved to the edges of town. It was alluded that this was more convenient to residents as Taylor expanded. It left many buildings vacant in our once-bustling downtown. Interest in downtown revitalization resulted in the hiring of a Main Street project manager in 1983, and restoration work began. The timing was not quite right and the endeavor did not catch on. In 1999, the program tried again, and today, it is evident that the Main Street concept is working in Taylor.

One of the first big projects as a Main Street city was the downtown streetscape. This provided handicap-accessible sidewalk ramps, shade trees, banners, better parking, and more accessible entrances for businesses. It began in 2007 and brought a refreshed look into downtown.

In 2010, the city of Taylor, along with Taylor Economic Development Center, partnered to focus on an active campaign to recruit businesses and residents into the downtown area. In October of that year, a Celebrate Downtown event was held to showcase the empty buildings in downtown and announce the newly organized rental assistance program by the city. This program was designed to help recruit businesses into the downtown area by subsidizing their rent payments to the landlord for 10-12 months. The city paid half



Starting in 2007, a downtown streetscape project started taking shape with new features including sidewalk ramps, landscaping, signage, parking, and more accessible entrances for businesses.



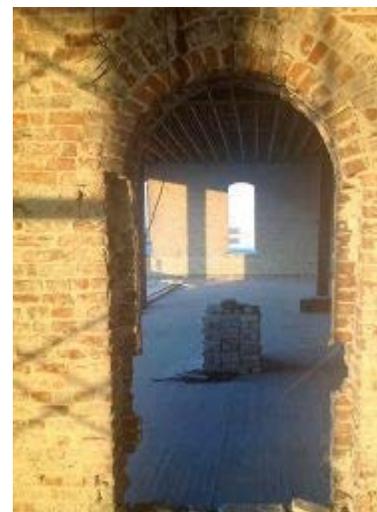
We have had businesses move to Taylor, start up in Taylor, and grow in Taylor. There is a wide collection of boutiques, antique stores, restaurants, and entertainment venues.

of the rent up to \$750 monthly if the business met the qualification guidelines. These guidelines included a business plan, long-term lease agreement, and a retail-type business classification. The city wanted to ensure that the new business was making a financial impact on Taylor by bringing in tax dollars. The day of the event, the first application was received and the program began its journey. Nearly seven years later, we can attest that the program was a success evidenced by the number of occupied buildings we currently have.

Whether it was this program or the fact that Taylor's time was just right, we have experienced exciting growth. We have had businesses move to Taylor, start up in Taylor, and grow in Taylor. We have a collection of boutiques, antique stores, coffee shops, and entertainment venues that draw crowds throughout the week and weekends. If you get hungry while shopping,

you just have to stop in to one of our great eating establishments. Whether you want barbecue, home cooked delights, farm to deli, authentic Mexican dishes, or soups and sandwiches, you can find them within walking distance.

We have been extremely fortunate to have one of our largest vacant buildings bought and renovated by an individual who had a vision for the corner of Main and Second. The building had been vacant for many years and was quite daunting at over 33,000 square feet. As the renovations progressed, we realized there was not quite enough parking, so the adjacent building was purchased and added to the project. Great things were uncovered during the extensive renovation. Arched windows that were bricked up became doorways, and bricked-over windows were opened to light once again. This grand project is



One of Taylor's largest vacant buildings located at Main and Second was recently bought and restored. It is now home to over 20 vendors, and it includes upper loft apartments.

now home to Texas Beer Company, Curb Side Coffee House, 2nd Street Farm to Market Deli, 2nd Commercial Kitchen, Pilot Knob Vineyard, Red Rider Studios, CWMRY Boyd II, LLC, Jorgenson Realty Network-Taylor, TAG at 120 ART, True Barber Shop, Peace Studios, R & G Window Cleaning, LLC, Westlund Piano Studio, Equine Essentials, Deb Howe Photography, Art Off Center, Noren Products, Denise Rodgers-Health Coach, Puro Corazon Shop, and J. Mucha-Tax Preparation. Who would have thought you could house all these great, diverse businesses in one fabulous building? There are four loft apartments included also. This brought so much to our community, and it has become the anchor for that area. This individual owns another building in downtown to serve as her studio; she is an artist as well.

We know that many of you have experienced what Taylor has. Once work begins on a project, others catch the fever. One of our long-vacant buildings next to this project was renovated by the owner and now houses a gym. He commented that he wanted to be a part of what was going on. Two more buildings in this area have been renovated as entertainment venues. We now have parking and pedestrian concerns in our downtown. What a great problem to have!

Taylor also has a very busy schedule as a Film Friendly City with the Texas Film Commission. The great architecture in our downtown, along with our proximity to Austin, makes us a convenient location for filming such movies as “Transformers 4,” “Texas Chainsaw Massacre,” “Friday Night Lights,” and “Varsity Blues” to name just a few. Harley Davidson, Indian, and Slingshot motorcycles have all shot recent marketing campaigns in our historic downtown. Our buildings are popular as backdrops.

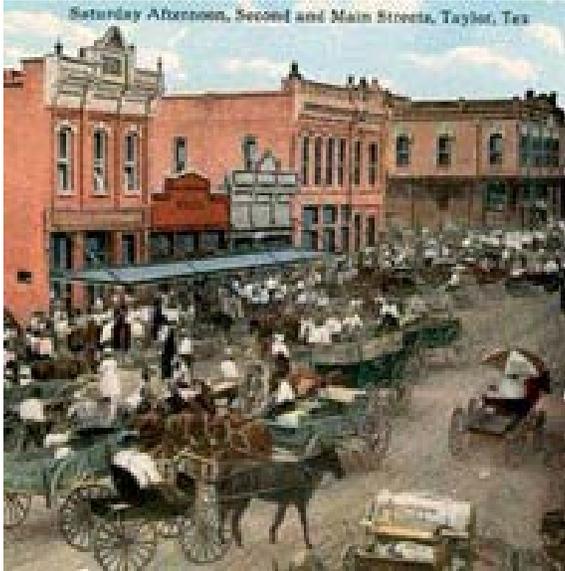
Our historic downtown is becoming a force to be reckoned with. Our business owners support and even create more downtown activities. From Third Thursdays to Wine Swirls to Blackland Prairie Days to Main Street Car Show—they are ready to roll up their sleeves, pitch in, and work to make downtown Taylor a better place to be.

Downtown Taylor has changed so much over the past few years, and Saturday afternoons are still hopping like they did in the past. The population is on the rise, and a lot more traffic is coming through as well



Taylor’s historic downtown is home to many events throughout the year. The Main Street Car Show (top), Blackland Prairie Days Festival (middle), and even filming for movie backdrops (bottom). “Transformers 4,” “The Rookie”, and “Secondhand Lions” are just a few of the many movies filmed in the area.

as businesses. Craig Pinkley and his wife Beth, owners of Pilot Knob Vineyard, commented on downtown Taylor noting that, “There seems like there’s a definite movement afoot to have this nice little entertainment district.” (Source)



Historic postcard of downtown Taylor depicting a typical Saturday afternoon.

TRAFFIC PATTERNS: CHANGING THE PRIORITIES OF TXDOT STREETS IN DOWNTOWNS

Article written by Riley Triggs, AIA, Architect, Texas Main Street Program

Space is for movement; Place is for pause.

What happens when the space of a Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) facility (road) intersects with the place of a Texas downtown can be as varied as the number of towns in which it occurs. Some towns depend on through traffic, some become choked by it, and most are somewhere in between on the spectrum of benefits and detriments of that road to the community. Each road, however, affects the quality of the place it is a part of, and the intentionality—or the priorities that made it the way it is—are what define the essence of its

town square. In the places of downtowns, people, not through car traffic, should be the priority of streets.

A traffic engineer will typically use an equation such as

$$Q=KV$$

where Q is the lane flow in vehicles per hour, K is the density in vehicles per mile and V is the space mean speed in miles per hour combined to determine how to design a road. Notice the optimal result is directly related to speed. Missing from the equation are some very important elements that relate the calculations to the people in the place.

There are no terms that consider the effects of the flow of traffic, like the ability of a person to comfortably jaywalk; the feeling of ease of a parent with small children; the likelihood a senior with a walker will be comfortable crossing the street; the distance from the street a person must be to feel OK walking on the sidewalk; the affordance for seasonal decorations; the amount of dappled shade necessary to create visual relief on a reflective paved surface; or, at the most basic level of importance to a downtown, the tolerance threshold for a person to want to cross a street. These are essential for making a good place that people want to be in, but they are missing in the equation because a traffic engineer has priorities different than an average citizen.

There are four elements of traffic to prioritize when designing a road, and an engineer is taught and expected most of the time to prioritize in the following order:

1. Traffic Speed
2. Traffic Volume
3. Safety
4. Cost

People tend to individualize their own personal connections to a situation, so asking everyone else how they would prioritize yields quite a different result:

1. Safety
2. Cost
3. Traffic Volume
4. Traffic Speed

This prioritization sets the intention for the space and has a tremendous amount of influence on the character and quality of a place. For instance, this Google Street View from 2008 of Rockwall, TX (below) shows a typical scale, proportion, and intentionality of a Texas town square street. The courthouse is directly to the right behind a layer of shade-producing trees and a row of nicely detailed street lights. The street itself is two-way, narrow lanes with a painted turning median that keeps auto speeds low. The opposite side of the street is lined with gentle steps that can encourage people to cross the street anywhere since auto speeds are low. Flowers in planters and seasonal decorations show evidence of care and effort to make this a particular, local, and grounded place for people.

If I were to ask you what you would do if you had a few million dollars to improve this stretch of road, what would you suggest? Maybe a landscaped median with a row of trees; more streetlights on the opposite side of the street; narrower lanes to slow traffic more, curb cuts on the courthouse side to make it easier for people to walk through the landscaped islands; a bike lane; or decorative crosswalks protected by embedded warning lights. These items would allow this street to contribute positively to the value of downtown Rockwall and be an asset. The TxDOT improvements, though, have other priorities, and now the road is a potential liability to the success of downtown.

The priorities for improving N. Goliad St. that runs north-south through Rockwall, however, were speed and volume—not safety, cost, nor use value to people already at their destination in town. This led to the introduction of a road ‘couplet’ of two one-way streets with more, wider lanes and higher speeds for through traffic. The road also has 18-wheeler truck traffic, which coupled with the higher speed limits and

wider lanes, creates a very unfriendly experience for people trying to walk alongside or across the highway-strength road through their town square. The trees and streetlights were eliminated for safety concerns, although it seems like those would serve to protect people. This street is now re-intentioned to not be a pedestrian-centric experience, but rather a faster car-centric expressway for cars passing through, instead of going to, downtown.

Afterward, more remediation for unsafe conditions caused by the improvements was necessary. Elimination of the historic steps and the introduction of a restrictive guardrail were necessary just in case anyone still thought walking across the street was a good idea. Single bulb streetlights with less visual appeal were reintroduced. It is worth noting that the Christmas decoration effort has been limited to the single light poles, which is about one-quarter the decorations found in the previous Halloween season on the two-way street. Also gone are the planters full of blooming flowers because of the reduced space as a consequence of the remediation.

The sort of car-centric roadway improvement found on N. Goliad St. in Rockwall should cease. The Town Square Initiative is working to generate people-prioritized transportation standards for downtowns to begin a discussion with TxDOT. Included in those standards should be restrictive 20 mph speed limits, four-way stops instead of traffic signals, well-marked crosswalks, landscaped medians, appropriate street lighting, mid-block crossings, embedded warning lights, bump-outs, etc.

Coincidentally, efforts for this sort of traffic overlay are already underway by Jennifer Eckermann and her board in Brenham to discuss these issues with



(Left) A two-way N. Goliad Street in Rockwall before TxDOT improvements-Google Street View 2008. (Right) N. Goliad Street re-intentioned by TxDOT for high speed through traffic-Google Street View 2013.



N Goliad Street is now completely car-centric with the addition of handrails to protect people from the higher speed traffic now possible—Google Street View, 2016

local representatives and sympathetic TxDOT district engineers. Hopefully this can parlay into a larger policy initiative for the whole state. The time has come for turning TxDOT roads from safety and experience liabilities into proactive assets for creating quality places to pause in our Texas downtowns.

SPECIAL VOLUNTEERS

We continue to spotlight in each edition of *Main Street Matters* those volunteers whose contributions and dedication are important to the success of local programs. If you would like to honor a special volunteer with a spotlight, please send a short narrative and image to sarah.marshall@thc.texas.gov.

Rockwall's Wonder Women!, Rockwall Main Street Program *Written by Bethany Browning, Main Street Manager, Rockwall Main Street Program*

Rockwall is fortunate to have a wonderful group of volunteers who are responsible for coordinating so many great downtown events! These remarkable women demonstrate their vision and leadership by volunteering countless hours. As wives, grandmothers, business owners, civic leaders, and copious other roles, these ladies find time to pour their heart and soul into planning extraordinary community events and fundraisers.

It unofficially started in the summer of 2008 when Barbara Coleson and Claudette Hatfield had the courage to start a pop-up Farmers Market on the Courthouse Square. Naturally, the two wanted to bring fresh quality food to the community, but they were equally eager to bring large crowds to downtown. With only a handful

of vendors and many stating “this will never take off,” eight years later, these ladies are proud to boast about their reputation as one of the best farmers markets in DFW. The market brings thousands to downtown weekly, resulting in a healthy profit to boot. Barbara and Claudette coordinate volunteers to work every Saturday from May through October. They also set out vendor signs every week and solicit and review all market applications—they run the entire business! All market proceeds go to local charities and to the revitalization of downtown Rockwall. We can't say enough about the years of hard work these ladies have dedicated to the program; it's incredible.

Barbara and Claudette's leadership efforts inspired and led others to move forward with their own ideas as well. Among the first to test the waters was downtown business owner Tammy Sharp. For years, the city, the county, the Historical Foundation, civic organizations, and the downtown business association have been working independently, coordinating wonderful events for the community. While all of the events were successful in their own right, Tammy felt strongly that if all the groups worked together, they could be more impactful and provide a better overall experience for residents and visitors. She spent months meeting with leadership from all entities, presenting her plan, and convincing them the plan would work!

Once she received buy-in, Tammy went to work with Main Street to schedule entertainment, secure volunteers, advertise the event—all of it! In fact, on event day Tammy's entire family was on hand putting out barricades, selling t-shirts, sweeping sidewalks, and all of those fun event details that we know all too well. Again, we are blessed to have volunteers like Tammy, who not only share their ideas, but implement them too. Three years later, Hometown Christmas is a wonderful event that draws thousands to the downtown area. The event improves each year and Tammy's efforts will be enjoyed for many years to come. As if she hasn't accomplished enough already, she also coordinated our Celebrate Downtown event, an end of construction party for the masses, complete with a parade and carousel!

Dee Dee Roe and Denise Webb are neighbors, with shops located in the downtown San Jacinto Plaza. These ladies conspired and decided to host Movers, Shakers & Makers Market; Corks & Canvas; and Hometown Farm to Feast, all in the month of May! Following Tammy's

lead, they were certain their new event ideas would be well received and good for downtown. When the annual Founders Day event was relocated four blocks from downtown, Dee Dee filled the void by creating Corks & Canvas to help drive crowds back downtown that day. The day-long celebration features a fine art and wine walk designed to get foot traffic in and out of storefronts. In her first effort, Dee Dee was pleasantly surprised with the event's success. She quickly began brainstorming new ideas to make this year's event bigger and better than the first. She worked with Main Street to establish a shuttle service that would run between Founders Day at the park and Corks & Canvas downtown. The event turned out to be another great success for Dee Dee and downtown Rockwall, and she is already critiquing and brainstorming for next year.

Hometown Farm to Feast is the association's biggest fundraiser and the credit goes to Denise Webb for dreaming it up and making it happen. Denise planned, coordinated, and executed the first Farm to Feast in only eight weeks, and it was awesome! To date, she has hosted three dinners and raised thousands for the downtown business association. She works with downtown chefs to establish the menu and prepare the food. Denise also sets the budget and purchases all the needed supplies and then coordinates with downtown business owners for set-up and waitstaff. She holds the event on Sunday evening to ensure that shop owners are available to volunteer as waitstaff. Tickets sell out every time and patrons are blown away by the service provided by downtown business owners.

We value these ladies and all their selfless work. They've made a huge impact on this community and touched the lives of many! It's an honor and pleasure to see downtown represented so well.



(Left to right) Barb Coleson, Dee Dee Roe, Denise Webb, Claudette Hatfield, and Tammy Sharp.

CALENDAR

FRIDAY 7.7

- La Grange: Live Music & Summer Movie Nights on the Square (7-11 p.m.)
- Rockwall: Night Owls Late Till 8! (5-8 p.m.)

SATURDAY 7.8

- Brenham: Hot Nights Cool Tunes Concert Series (7-11 p.m.)
- Denton: Yoga on the Square (9-10 a.m.)
- Hillsboro: Downtown Flea Market (9 a.m.-1 p.m.)
- La Grange: Live Music & Summer Movie Nights on the Square (7-11 p.m.)
- San Marcos: Art Squared Art Market (9 a.m.-4 p.m.)

THURSDAY 7.13

- Elgin: Sip Shop & Stroll (5-8 p.m.)
- Rockwall: Night Owls Late till 8! (5-8 p.m.)

FRIDAY 7.14

- Georgetown: Music on the Square (6:30-8:30 p.m.)
- Waxahachie: Summer Moonlight Movie (9-11 p.m.)

SATURDAY 7.15

- Brenham: Hot Nights Cool Tunes Concert Series (7-11 p.m.)
- Denton: Yoga on the Square (9-10 a.m.)

SATURDAY 7.16

- Elgin: Beach Party (10 a.m.-2 p.m.)

FRIDAY 7.21

- Georgetown: Music on the Square (6:30-8:30 p.m.)

SATURDAY 7.22

- Brenham: Hot Nights Cool Tunes Concert Series (7-11 p.m.)
- Denton: Yoga on the Square (9-10 a.m.)

FRIDAY 7.28

- Farmersville: Music in the Park (7:30-9:30 p.m.)
- Georgetown: Music on the Square (6:30-8:30 p.m.)

SATURDAY 7.29

- Denton: Yoga on the Square (9-10 a.m.)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Main Street managers, new and experienced, board members, and Texas Main Street Program staff recently held their summer Professional Development in San Angelo. (Top left) New managers and board members attended and completed new manager training. (Top right) Jon Schallert was the keynote speaker and presented at the Fort Concho National Historic Landmark. (Bottom left and right) Fort Concho site manager, Bob Bluthardt, gave a tour to managers and board members.

Websites of Interest

- **Advisory Council on Historic Preservation:** www.achp.gov
- **African American Heritage Preservation Foundation:** www.aahpfdn.org
- **(The) Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation:** www.ahlp.org
- **(The) American Institute of Architects:** www.aia.org
- **American Planning Association:** www.planning.org
- **American Society of Landscape Architects:** www.asla.org
- **(The) Cultural Landscape Foundation:** www.tclf.org
- **(The) Handbook of Texas Online:** www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online
- **Keep Texas Beautiful:** www.ktb.org
- **League of Historic American Theatres:** www.lhat.org
- **National Main Street Center:** www.preservationnation.org/main-street
- **National Park Service:** www.nps.gov
- **National Trust for Historic Preservation:** www.preservationnation.org
- **Partners for Sacred Places:** www.sacredplaces.org
- **Preservation Easement Trust:** www.preservationeasement.org
- **Preservation Directory.com:** www.preservationdirectory.com
- **Preservation Texas:** www.preservationtexas.org
- **Project for Public Spaces:** www.pps.org
- **Rails-to-Trails Conservancy:** www.railstotrails.org
- **Scenic America:** www.scenic.org
- **Texas Department of Agriculture:** www.TexasAgriculture.gov
- **Texas Commission on the Arts:** www.arts.texas.gov
- **Texas Downtown Association:** www.texasdowntown.org
- **Texas Folklife Resources:** www.texasfolklife.org
- **Texas Historical Commission:** www.thc.texas.gov
- **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department:** www.tpwd.texas.gov
- **Texas Rural Leadership Program:** www.trlp.org
- **Texas State Preservation Board:** www.tspb.state.tx.us
- **Urban Land Institute:** www.uli.org