



Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program

Susan Tietz

Director, Courthouse Preservation Program

*66th Annual VG Young School for County
Commissioners Courts*

February 21, 2024

Courthouses LOST

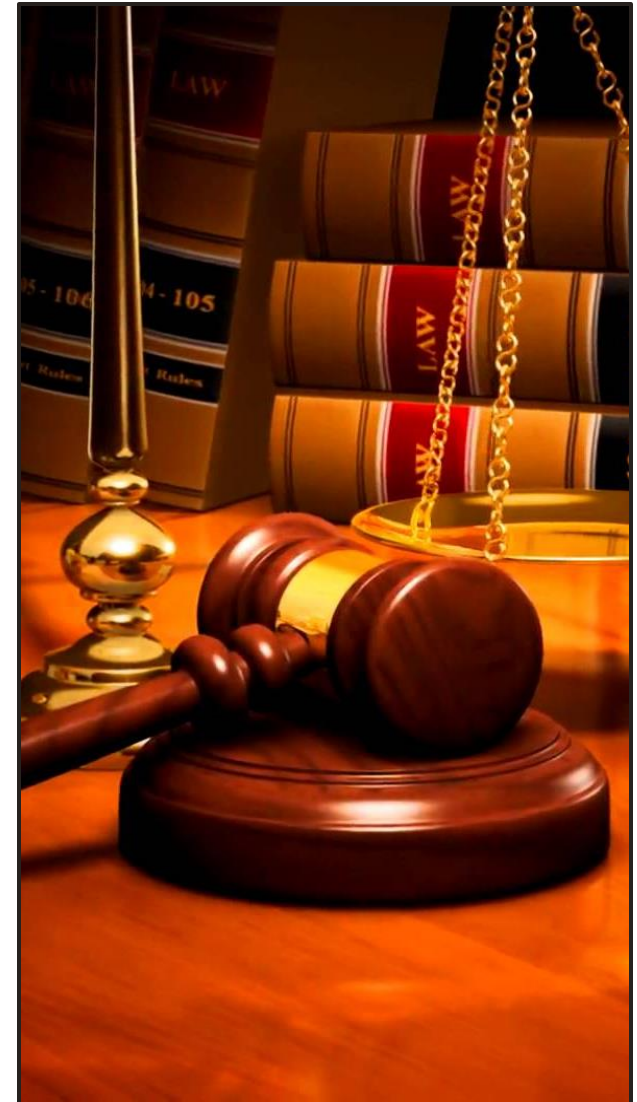
- In the 1920's and 30's, many courthouses were altered as part of the Works Progress Administration and Civil Conservation Corps
- In the 1940's and 50's, over 25 courthouses were demolished in the name of *Post WWII* progress and a desire for a simpler, more modern appearance
- Many courthouses fell into severe disrepair due to neglect and lack of proper maintenance
- Others burned due to outdated electrical systems or arson



Texas Government Code “Courthouse Law”

Chapter 442, Section 442.008 Passed by the 62nd Leg in 1971

- A county may not demolish, sell, lease, or damage the historical or architectural integrity of a courthouse without notifying the commission at least 180 days prior.
- If the commission determines that a courthouse has historical significance worthy of preservation, the commission shall notify the commissioners court of the county.
- A county may carry out ordinary maintenance and repairs to a courthouse without notifying the commission.



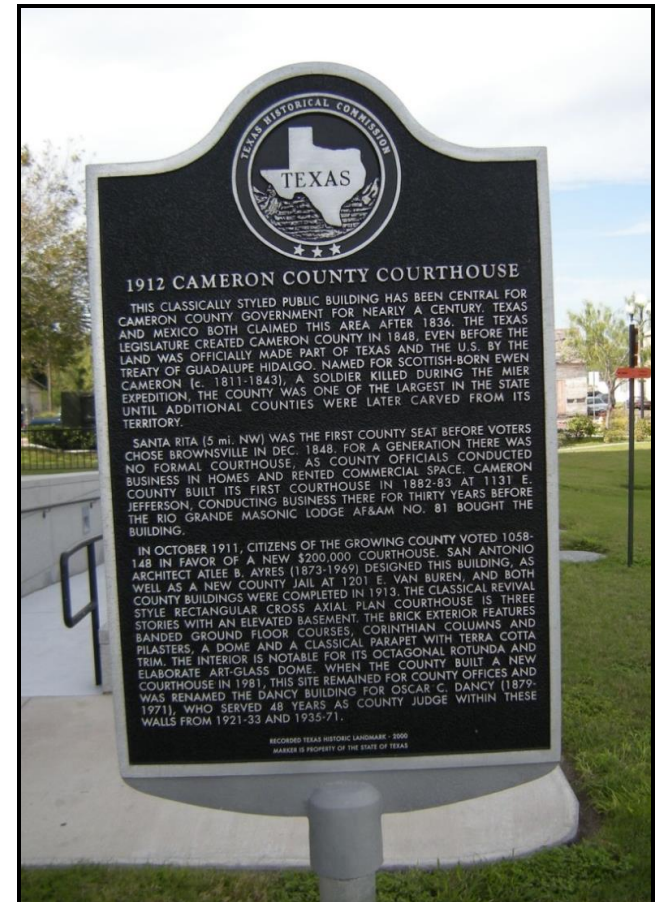
Other Protections for Courthouses

■ Historic Designations

- **State Antiquities Landmark** requires all work beyond maintenance be permitted by the THC
- **Recorded Texas Historic Landmark** requires exterior work be reviewed by THC staff
- **Listing on the National Register of Historic Places** provides national recognition of a property's historical or architectural significance and denotes that it is worthy of preservation

■ Preservation Easements

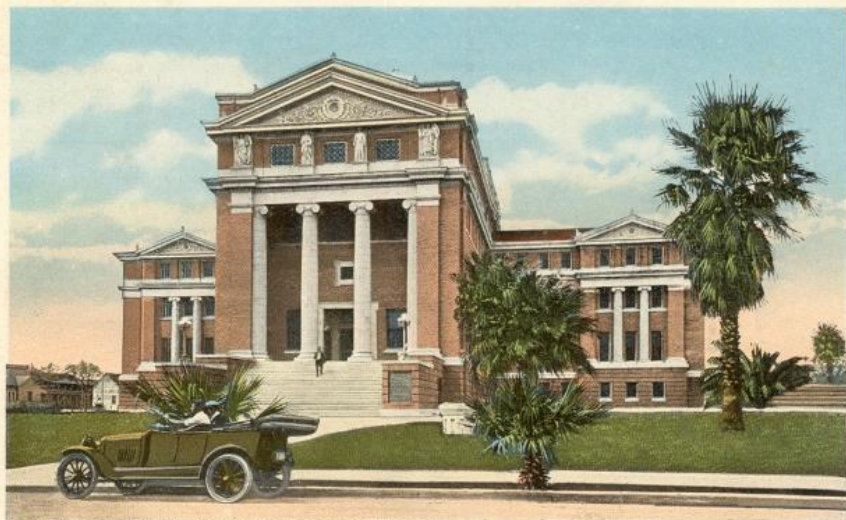
- Most courthouse grant recipients choose to grant a protective easement on their courthouse and its square which requires that the building be maintained and that all work on the building be evaluated and approved by a Courthouse Project Reviewer



Commonly Observed Disrepair



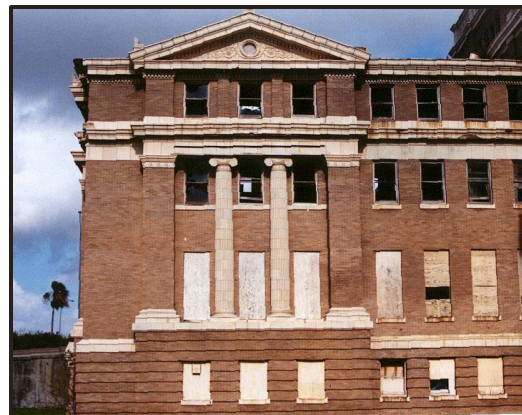
Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program



NUECES COUNTY COURT HOUSE, CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS.

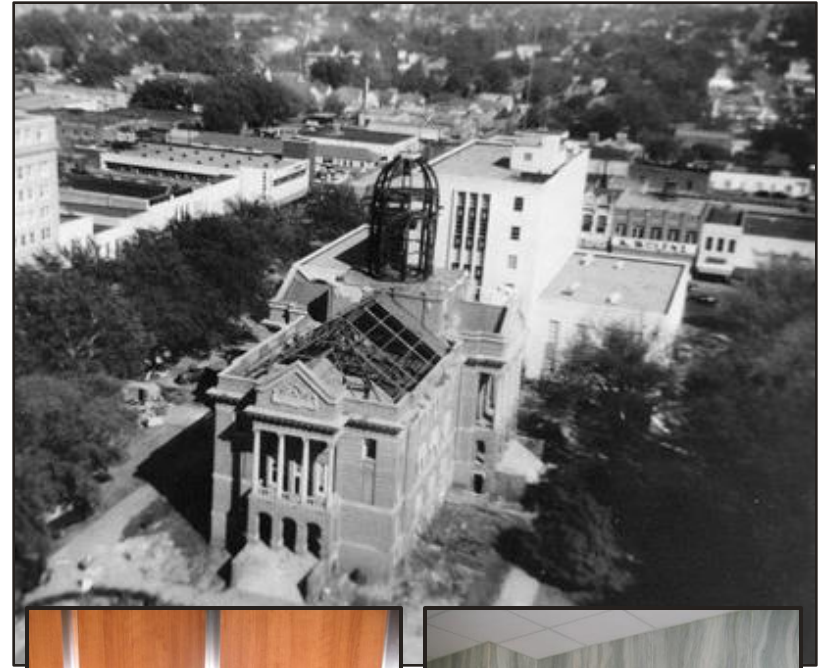


Nueces County Courthouse 1914
Corpus Christi
Abandoned Since 1977



Courthouses THREATENED

Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program



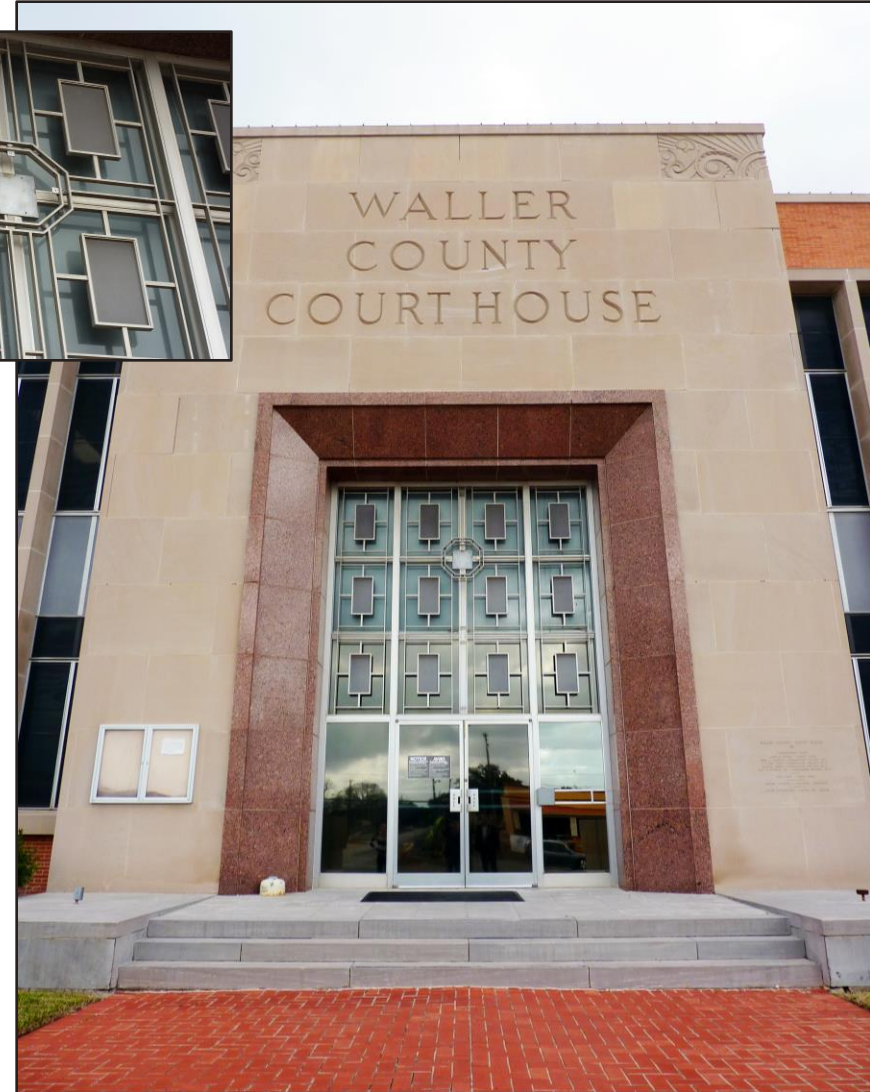
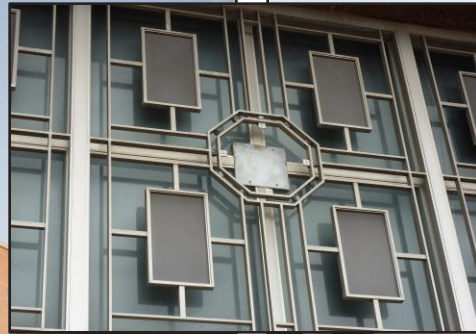
Smith County Courthouse 1954 Tyler

Courthouse Slated for Demolition
In 2026 as Part of a Downtown Project

Courthouses THREATENED



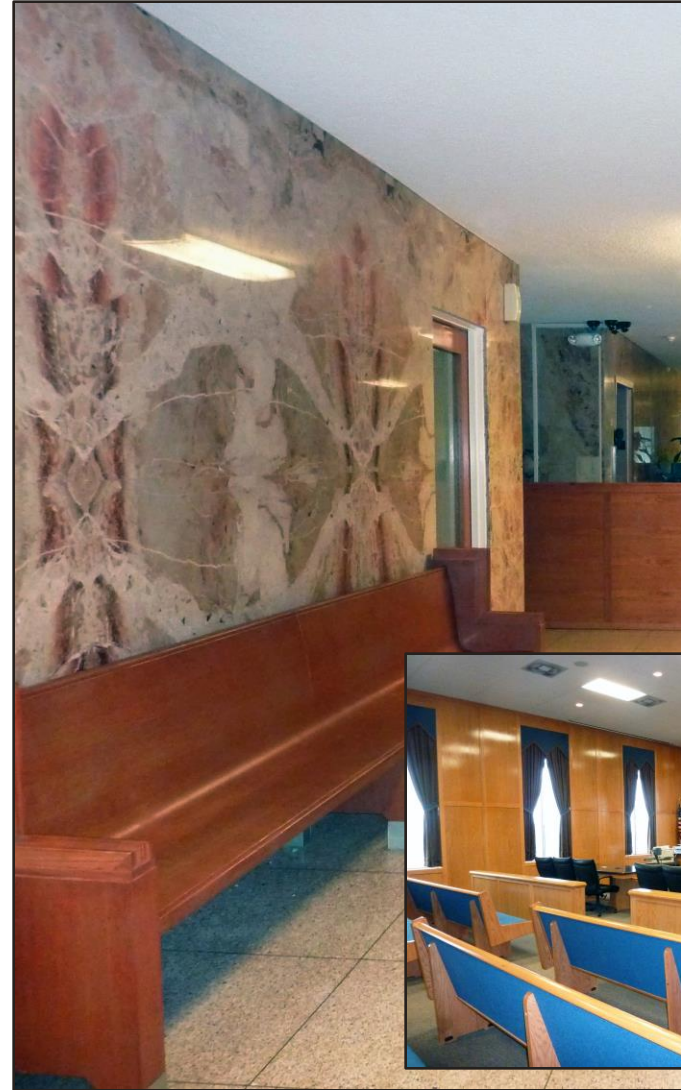
Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program



Waller County Courthouse 1956
Hempstead

DEMOLISHED January 2024

Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program



Waller County Courthouse 1956
Hempstead

DEMOLISHED January 2024

A Wake-Up Call



Hill County Courthouse 1890

Hillsboro, Texas

America's 11 Most Endangered Places



In 1998, Preservation Texas nominated Texas' 225 historic courthouses for inclusion on the list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places selected by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

For the first time ever, NTHP chose a large collection of buildings to represent one of the 11 most endangered structures in America. The courthouses were recognized again on the 2011 list.

HOUSE BILL 1341

*An act relating to implementation of a
Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program
to fund the preservation of historic courthouses through
grants or loans*

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.

Section 442.001, Government Code, is amended to read as follows: Sec. 442.001.

DEFINITIONS [DEFINITION].

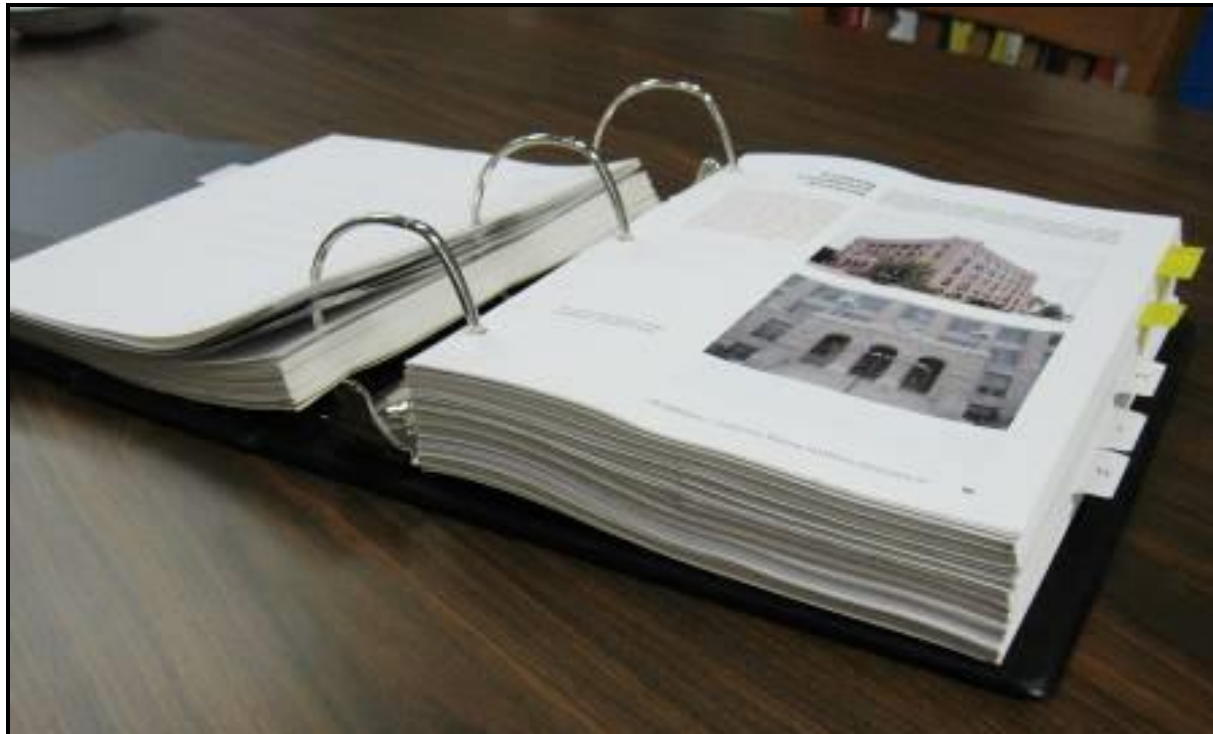
In this chapter:

- (1) "Historic courthouse" means a county courthouse that is at least 50 years old.

- (2) "Historic courthouse project" means a project to preserve or restore a historic courthouse.

Courthouse Master Plan

- First Step Required to Participate
- Since the program's inception, the THC has received 151 Master Plans and 142 have been approved



Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program

**3 Types of GRANTS
Up to \$10 Million
Per County**

FULL RESTORATION GRANTS

GRANTS TO FUND FULL RESTORATION
OF THE EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR

Construction grants are awarded for the full restoration of a courthouse to a particular historic period while rehabilitating and upgrading the building to current codes and functional requirements.

15%
min. match

PLANNING GRANTS

GRANTS TO FUND THE PRODUCTION OF
CONSTRUCTION BID DOCUMENTS

Planning grants are awarded for the production of 95% complete architectural plans and specifications which are used as "blueprints" for a future construction project. Planning grants typically precede a construction project.

30%
min. match

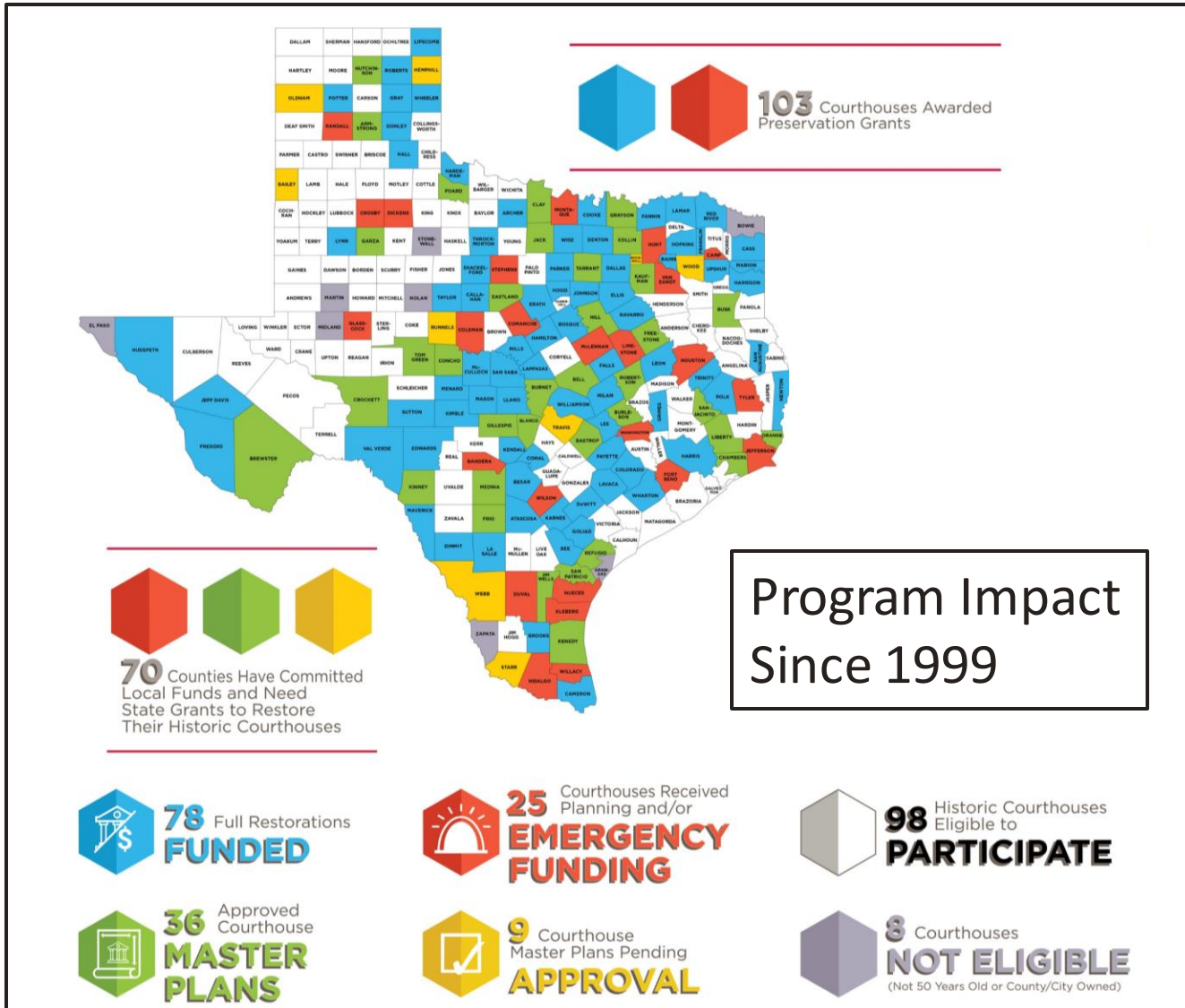
EMERGENCY GRANTS

GRANTS TO FUND CRITICAL NEED

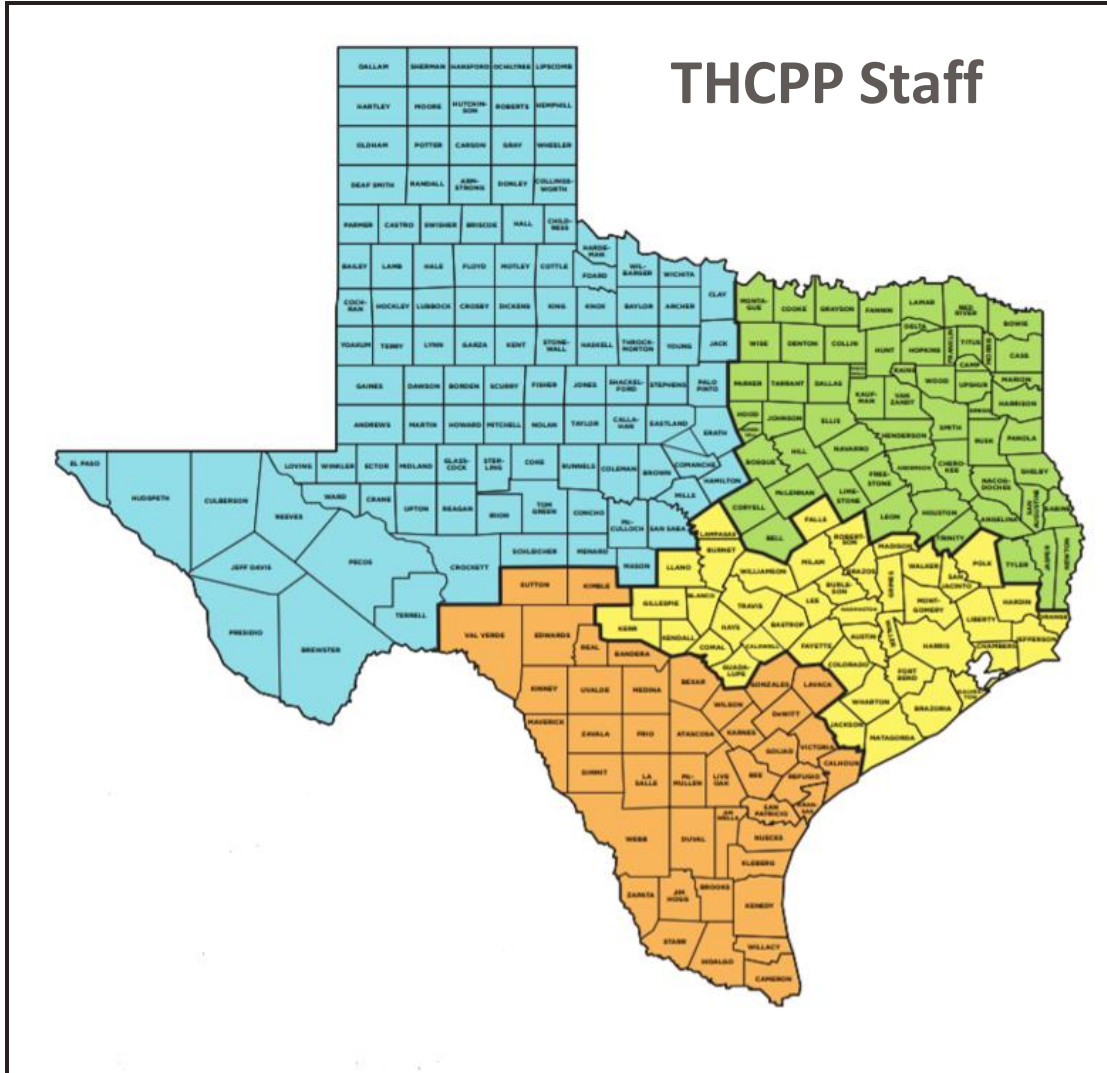
Emergency grants are awarded to address critical issues endangering the courthouse or its occupants. These grants are awarded on the basis of need and program funding availability.

30 or 50%
min. match

Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program



Texas Courthouse Stewards Roundtable Discussion



Susan Tietz, AIA
Courthouse Preservation Program Coordinator
512-463-5860



Mallory Miller
Courthouse Program Specialist
512-463-8821



James Malanaphy, AIA
Courthouse Project Reviewer
Northeast Texas
512-475-3285



Eva Osborne, RA
Courthouse Project Reviewer
West Texas
512-305-9109



Tania Salgado
Courthouse Project Reviewer
South Texas
512-463-6088



Dan Valenzuela
Courthouse Project Reviewer
Central/Southeast Texas
512-463-6268

Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program

ECONOMIC



- Since 1999, 13,300+ jobs created through courthouse preservation projects
- Generated nearly \$791 million in revenue
- Generated almost \$970 million in gross state product
- Restored courthouses reinvigorate historic downtowns and promote heritage tourism, a \$9.2 billion industry in Texas
- Increased downtown property values
- Increased downtown occupancy
- Increased utility savings from new, energy-efficient systems

ENERGY EFFICIENCY/ SUSTAINABILITY



- New, more efficient mechanical and electrical systems
- Installation of insulation and weatherized windows/doors
- Decrease in water usage with new plumbing systems/fixtures

MAINTENANCE



- More manageable maintenance due to all-new finishes, sealants, and building infrastructure
- Counties receive post-restoration maintenance training

Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program



ACCESSIBILITY

- ADA-accessible parking and building access (sidewalk and ramps)
- Wheelchair accessibility (elevator, ramps, seating, accessible-height counters, and handrails)
- Signage and other accommodations for the visually impaired
- And many more compliance requirements of the Texas Accessibility Standards



SAFETY

- Brought up to code compliance
- Installation of fire detection, notification, and suppression systems
- Replacement of outdated electrical systems (reduces fire risks)
- Installation of lightning protection
- Installation of security systems
- Improved air quality



FUNCTIONALITY

- Improved audio-visual systems and courtroom functionality
- Improved courtroom acoustics
- Improved technology/network systems
- Improved document and file storage, with better temperature/humidity control



QUALITY OF LIFE

- Restored courthouses instill community pride as centerpieces
- Courthouse lawns and squares serve as event/festival spaces
- Restoration projects increase employment in construction industry and strengthen skills of craftspeople in specialty trades

22 Scoring Criteria for Evaluating Applications

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Designations | 9. County Records | 17. Local Support |
| 2. Age | 10. Fix Changes | 18. Compliance |
| 3. Architecture | 11. Master Plan | 19. Overmatch |
| 4. Significance | 12. Full Restorations | 20. Plans & Specs |
| 5. Endangerment | 13. Prior Deed | 21. County Revenue |
| 6. Integrity | 14. THCPP Deed | 22. Longevity |
| 7. Current Use | 15. County Support | |
| 8. Future Use | 16. Local Resources | |

Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program



Wharton County Courthouse 1889
Wharton, Texas

Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program

State wants county to preserve courthouse

By RON SANDERS
MAY 09 1990

Staff architects with the Texas Historical Commission say they will do what is necessary to convince the commissioners court here to preserve the 101-year-old Wharton County Courthouse.

"We would certainly take issue with the suggestion that it be torn down," said commission architect Rick Lewis, who plans to inspect the building himself later this month. "Every effort should be made to save it."

His comments follow Saturday's recommendations by the historical commission to add 34 Wharton properties and two historical districts to the National Register of Historic Places.

The Wharton County Courthouse and the east side of Monterey Square were to be an additional district, but the commission's State Board of Review tabled it while meeting in Austin.

It did not appear to table it because County Judge I.J.

Irvin Jr. informed the authorities Saturday that the commissioners court is against the nomination. Staff architect Tory Laughlin-Taylor said the board delayed action because it thought that the other three sides of the square should be included.

"We believe that the courthouse is worthy, and there is some urgency in getting it listed," Laughlin-Taylor said. She hopes that the courthouse, even by itself, will be approved as soon as next month.

The urgency appears to be in reaction to Wharton County commissioners, who are considering whether to replace the courthouse or renovate it. The commissioners recently hired an engineer for \$45,000 to study the soil to see if the sinking and cracking walls can be stopped. Indications are that commissioners are split on tearing down the building.

Irvin, although he could not be reached for comment, seems to believe that the courthouse has been modified extensively enough since the 1930s that the building's his-

toric significance has been compromised.

He hand delivered commissioners court minutes to Austin on Saturday to show that it voted unanimously to oppose the National Register designation on April 30.

Precinct 3 Commissioner Arvid Schoeneberg, who made the motion, served on a committee that recommended courthouse replacement in the late 1970s. He said the committee then also concluded that the building does not have historical significance.

The state architects disagree, noting that the historical commission voted to include the building in the National Register in the late 1970s. However, it was not listed because renovations done in the 1930s had not yet reached a threshold 50-year mark.

"The building has not been changed that much in the last 15 years," said Lewis.

(See HISTORIC, Page 6-A)

State, county officials meet on courthouse

By RONALD K. SANDERS
Journal-Spectator News Editor

Clinton White plans to do lots of listening and little talking this afternoon.

White plans to be among those present at the 2 p.m. commissioners court meeting where staff members of the Texas Historical Commission will talk with local officials about the future of Wharton County's 109-year-old courthouse.

Not only is he a longtime resident of Wharton County, but he's also on the 18-member Texas Historical Commission that's appointed by the governor.

County commissioners have asked the THC to consult with them before they hire architects or engineers to evaluate the feasibility of future use of Wharton County's three oldest buildings. The meeting will be in the County Court Building, 103 S. Fulton St.

"We need to know if there will be any restoration funds available and, if so, are they on a matching funds basis," Precinct 3 Commissioner Phillip Miller said.

The THC's executive director, Curtis Tunnell, and staff architectural consultant, Jaime Wise, are expected to be present, along with the THC's Jay Firsching and Delvin Shelton, representing the Texas Courthouse Alliance.

Although White will be the highest ranking THC member there, he said he wants to remain in the background as much as possible.

"I don't have a major role."

White said. "Right now, I don't have all the facts. I intend mostly to listen. It's like a jury trying to decide without a trial."

White is uncertain whether the Wharton County courthouse matter will ever come to the commission for a vote, but he'll decide his stance at that time after receiving all the facts.

The county courthouse is a protected Texas Archeological Landmark, meaning it can't undergo major remodeling or demolition without a state permit.

The commissioners court is seeking proposals from architectural firms to perform a cost-benefit analysis of either continuing to use or demolish the courthouse.

The proposals will be considered next month.

The study will also include the former Wharton County Jail and the Old Agriculture Building.

However, downtown property owner Lynda Nichols recently nominated the former jail and old ag building for protected landmark status, too.

"The Texas Historical Commission is unbiased, they could give (the commissioner's court) a lot of guidance," Nichols said. "We've got to get off the idea of building a new courthouse, and fix what we've got."

Still, members of the commissioner's court insist they only want what's best for the county.

"I want to do what's right," said

See THC, Page 4A

Courthouse gets national recognition

(Continued from Page 1-A)
Commissioners Court are saying they might even be turned into a parking lot.

If the current courthouse is torn down and a new one built on the same site, the Burger block could become parking area.

At the commissioners' request, Williams has drawn plans for a courthouse on that site, but he neither favors building it there nor thinks a parking lot is badly

needed so close to the facility.

Williams said demolition of the Burger buildings would cause an "ugly mess" politically, but he noted there is no law to stop it if the county gives due notice.

The Texas Legislature in April passed a law that could require notice for demolition of privately owned structures that are historically significant in some way. But the rules to enforce that law have

not been written, Jensen said.

When enacted, that law will encompass the Burger buildings as well as the Old Jail Building, which Williams also said should be demolished.

The commissioners court has given notice of possible courthouse demolition, a requirement of another state provision called the "courthouse law." Notices for demolition of other buildings have not been issued.

The present courthouse and the downtown Wharton area were nominated to the national register on May 5, 1990, by the Texas Historical Commission.

The nomination was opposed by the Wharton County Commissioners Court, although Commissioner Carl Nichols believes the vote to oppose it was taken dubiously.

The nomination was approved

in Washington on Nov. 11 of this year, with the announcement made Monday by the Texas Historical Commission.

Wharton County

Community & Commissioners Court Divided

Wharton, Texas

Benefits of Courthouse Preservation and Stewardship



Wharton County Courthouse 1889
Wharton, Texas





Wharton County Courthouse 1889
Wharton, Texas



Wharton County Courthouse - Economic Impact Study by Texas A&M University

- **Economic**
 - Revitalized Historic Downtown – 80% Occupancy Up from 30% Pre-Project
 - Number of Downtown Events Doubled
 - Average Increase in Property Value – 280%
 - Improved Productivity of Building Occupants
 - Increase in State and Local Construction Jobs
 - Decrease in Annual Maintenance Costs
 - Increase in Development Opportunity
- **Environmental**
 - Restoration of Historic Louvered Shutters – Reduced HVAC Load
 - Reduced Energy Costs by 60%
 - Footprint Reduced by 20% - Reducing Impermeability and Increasing Green Space
- **Social**
 - Greater Public Access and Building Safety
 - Increase in Downtown Activity and Reduction in Crime
 - Increase in Public Involvement and Educational Opportunities
- **Visual**
 - Pedestrian Scale Sensitivity and Improved Streetscape
 - Dramatically Improved Condition of the Appearance of the Building

Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program



Harrison County Courthouse 1901

Marshall, Texas

Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program



Harrison County Courthouse 1901
Marshall, Texas

Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program



Fannin County Courthouse 1889

Bonham, Texas

Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program



Fannin County Courthouse 1889

Bonham, Texas

Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program



Navarro County Courthouse 1905

Corsicana, Texas

Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program



Navarro County Courthouse 1905
Corsicana, Texas

Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program



Denton County Courthouse 1896

Denton, Texas

More than 130 revitalization projects have been completed in and around the courthouse square since the courthouse restoration.

“Once we did the restoration, I believe that was the key to the revitalization of Denton. It was huge for us because we created a showplace ...that triggered businesses wanting to come to Denton and open up downtown.”

Danny Brumley, Denton County Facilities Director.

Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program



“Only in Texas!
A visual delight.”

—Mr. & Mrs. Greg Franklin
Houston, Texas

**“We loved touring your beautiful
courthouse, eating the best tamales
in the world, and shopping!”**

—Catherine Sak
Texas Downtown Association

**“Thank you for
the wonderful tour
and history lesson.”**

—Martin Griffin & daughter
Joan, Sacramento, California

**“We spent time with our friends in San Augustine
on Tuesday and even on that chilly, cloudy day,
their renovated courthouse was a ray of light.”**

—Mary Turner,
Texas Forest Trail Region Executive Director



Trinity County Courthouse

“Awesome!”

—Bill & Linda Hillert
Dawsonville, Georgia

**“Not a week goes by that I don't have out of town
visitors to the courthouse. They come from all over
the country—and the world! If I have time,
I give them a tour.”**

—Atascosa County Judge Diana Bautista, Jourdanton, Texas

**“Beautiful
building!!!”**

—James & Mauree Keman
Cornwall, England

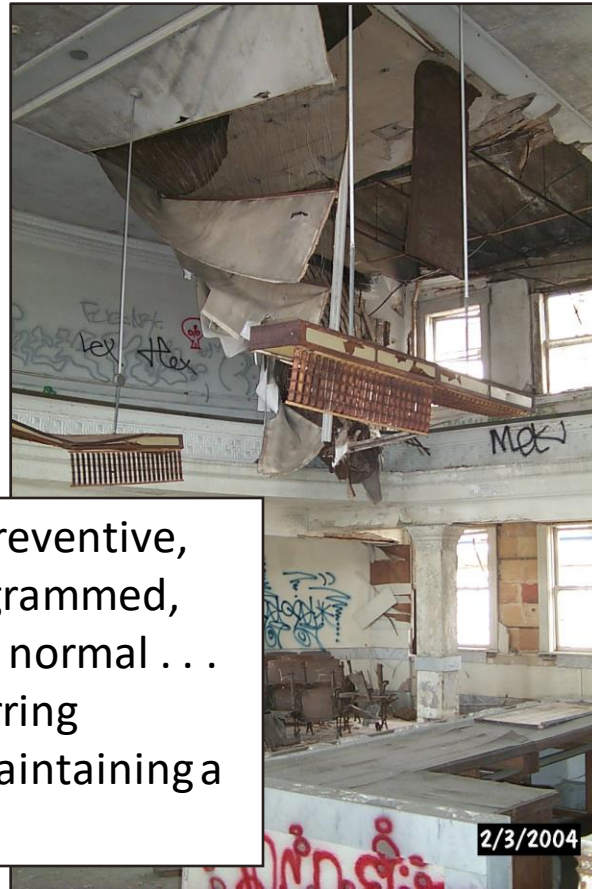
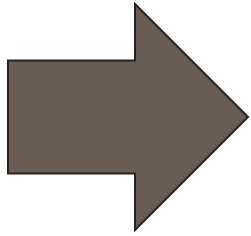
*“Great
preservation
of history!”*

—David & Lucille
Cavendar, Luverne, Alabama

Tourism is the third largest industry in Texas. It generates 53.8 billion dollars a year with leisure travel making up 38.2 billion of those dollars generated. Fourteen percent of leisure travelers visit cultural and historical destinations, representing 5.3 billion in expenditures. Texas ranks third in number of visitors and 2nd in number of cultural tourists.

Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program

**Annual Estimated Maintenance Cost:
1% to 4% of the Property Value**



Maintenance: predictive, preventive, preventative, planned, programmed, scheduled, cyclical, routine, normal . . . these are all terms for recurring activities associated with maintaining a building in good condition.



Benefits of Courthouse Preservation and Stewardship

Our Stewardship Program

Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program

Texas Historic Courthouse Stewardship Program and the Training it Offers is Funded by the *Texas Land Title Association (TLTA)*

Stewardship Training is hosted by the THC for County Facility Managers, Judges and Commissioners

- 2-3 Regional Workshops Per Year
- Annually as part of the THC's yearly conference *Real Places*
- TLTA funds travel expenses, meals and speaker honorariums
- One Stewardship Award is Presented Annually to a County that Demonstrates Outstanding Care and Maintenance of their Historic Courthouse. The Honor is Accompanied by a Monetary Award of \$1500



Introduction to the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program

Courthouse Maintenance Handbook also
funded by the Texas Land Title Association

CONSULTANTS:

McCoy Collaborative

- Nancy McCoy, FAIA, FAPT
- Nicky DeFreece Emery, AIA

Architectural Conservator

- Fran Gale, FAPT, FAIC

Consulting Engineer/Reed Wells Benson

- Ken Fulk, PE

Available on the THC's Website, on the
Courthouse Stewardship Program's Webpage

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

HISTORIC COURTHOUSE MAINTENANCE HANDBOOK



Benefits of Courthouse Preservation and Stewardship

Questions?