

Legislation Text

File #: 21-357, **Version:** 1

PRESENTER:

Caleb Chance Gasparek
Historic Preservation Officer

SUBJECT:

HST21-127 Discuss and consider a recommendation to the Texas Historical Commission on an application for the National Register of Historic Places of the Main Plaza in the Downtown Historic District.

DEPARTMENT: Planning & Development Services

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: District 5

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

As a Certified Local Government (CLG), the City of New Braunfels is required to provide a recommendation on any National Register nominations within City limits. A letter was received from the Texas Historical Commission in March, 2021 stating that the Main Plaza has been nominated for the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination includes the rectangular site at the intersection of Seguin Ave. and San Antonio St., including the open area in the center up to the edge of the buildings located on the main plaza (refer to Attachment A).

For a full report compiled by the Texas Historical Commission: [Main Plaza Nomination Form <https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/New%20Braunfels%2C%20Main%20Plaza%20NR%20SBR%20Draft.pdf>](https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/New%20Braunfels%2C%20Main%20Plaza%20NR%20SBR%20Draft.pdf).

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

The history of the Main Plaza largely reflects the history of New Braunfels from its inception in 1845 to the modern day. In 1845, the Plaza served as the center of the original town plan drawn by Nicolaus Zink. The boundaries of the Plaza have remained the same since that time, with its current spatial organization dating to 1897.

The first permanent element of the Plaza was the fountain constructed in 1896. A year later in 1897 curbing, landscaping, and benches were installed. In 1905 the iconic bandstand was completed. By this time the area surrounding the Plaza was sparsely populated with buildings, though beginning in 1912 there was increased density in the Plaza. By the 1920's the area surrounding the Plaza was further urbanized with the proliferation of the automobile, leading to the density that we associate the Plaza with. A restroom was added underneath the bandstand in 1926, raising it above grade, and two war monuments were further erected in the 1930's.

In the 1970's major improvements were made to the Plaza, with a focus on pedestrian access and encouraging commerce. The fountain was refurbished, brick pathways, and major landscaping features were added. It was during this period that the Plaza took on its more oval appearance.

For a complete history of the Main Plaza refer to the Main Plaza Nomination Form.

ISSUE:

The Main Plaza is being nominated under Criterion A, in the area of Community Planning & Development and Social History at the local level under the criteria established by the National Park Service. The period of significance for the Main Plaza is proposed as 1845 to 1971. There are a total of 7 “resources” within the boundaries of the Main Plaza. 5 of the resources are contributing and 2 are noncontributing to the nomination (refer to Attachment A).

Unlike local designation, nomination to the NRHP carries no regulatory restrictions, though the area in question is already located within the City’s Downtown Historic District.

FISCAL IMPACT:

While there is no immediate fiscal impact, Historic Preservation and listing in the NRHP is an effective tool for promoting tourism and fostering economic development.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the listing of the Main Plaza to the National Register of Historic Places.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Main Plaza Boundaries and Resources
- B. Texas Historical Commission Letter
- C. County Letter of Support