

## Legislation Text

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File #: 20-282, Version: 1

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Presenter/Contact

*Applicant: Emma Wetz, A-1 South Texas Sign Erectors  
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**SUBJECT:**

HST20-065 Discuss and consider a request for a Certificate of Alteration to construct 2 freestanding signs and 1 attached sign on the property currently addressed as 199 Main Plaza, located in the Downtown Historic District.

**BACKGROUND / HISTORIC CONTEXT:**

**Case No.:** HST20-065

**Applicant:** A-1 South Texas Sign Erectors (Emma Wetz)  
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**Owner:** Comal County (Tom Hornseth)  
100 Main Plaza  
New Braunfels, TX 78130  
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**Staff Contact:** Caleb Gasparek, Assistant Planner  
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The subject property is an irregularly shaped lot with frontage on E. Mill St., Main Plaza, and E. San Antonio St. The site is approximately 1.8 acres and is the location of the Comal County Landa Annex building. The site is currently owned and operated by Comal County and is under renovation.

The Landa Building was originally constructed in the 1970's as a bank. The building has stylistic influences from the New Formalist style of architecture with its monumental form, flat roof, recessed entry, and modernized classical features such as arches, columns, and colonnades. Additionally, New Formalist architecture was often utilized for government, institutional, and civic buildings. The building is in the Downtown Historic District and a 2008 survey by the Texas Historical Commission found the building to be a non-contributing resource at the time.

**REQUEST:**

The applicant is proposing to construct 2 freestanding signs and 1 attached sign on the property. Both bases for the freestanding signs are existing; the applicant is proposing to add a new sign face to each of the existing bases.

The attached sign, called the Main ID, or MID in the application, is located on the main entrance of the building fronting Main Plaza and San Antonio Street. The MID sign features colored gold brass lettering and measures 2 feet tall and is approximately 40 feet in length. The proposed sign will read "Comal County Landa Annex."

The first freestanding sign, called the Tertiary ID, or TID in the application, is located towards the rear of the property fronting Mill St. There is currently an existing base at the proposed location with no sign face. The applicant is proposing to add an aluminum clad sign face that will result in a monument sign 2 feet, 7 inches in height, 8 feet in width, and 2 feet in depth. The sign face features a maroon background with white lettering with the seal of Comal County. The proposed sign will read "Comal County Landa Annex." In its submitted form the sign is in compliance with Section 106 "Signs" of the New Braunfels Code of Ordinances.

The final freestanding sign, called the Primary ID, or PID in the application, is located at the front of the property adjacent to San Antonio Street. There is currently a large existing masonry arch that will serve as the base. The masonry arch measures 30 feet, 4 inches in height, 17 feet in width, and 5 feet in depth. The proposed sign face will be suspended inside the arch with a vertical clearance from the bottom of approximately 12 feet, 6 inches. The proposed sign will read "Comal County Landa Annex" and features the seal for Comal County. In its submitted form the PID sign is considered non-conforming to the City's current sign code. The existing masonry arch is considered a free-standing piece of art. Adding signage to it makes it subject to the City's current sign code. The size of the sign face by itself is approximately 132 square feet. Therefore, in addition to Historic Landmark Commission's decision on the requested certificate of alteration, the proposed PID sign will require approval of a conditional sign permit to be considered by City Council. The applicant has submitted a conditional sign permit application that mirrors the certificate of alteration request, which will be considered by City Council with the Historic Landmark Commission's decision on the certificate of alteration request.

#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Alteration for all 3 signs as the proposed signs do not detract from the character of the Downtown Historic District or the non-contributing subject property. Staff considers the addition of the sign face to be an acceptable use of the existing masonry arch.

In considering approval of a Certificate of Alteration, the commission considers the following criteria:

- (1) Every reasonable effort shall be made to adapt the property in a manner which requires minimal alteration of the building, structure, object, or site and its environment. *The proposed signs are appropriate additions to the site and require minimal alterations to the building.*
- (2) The distinguishing original qualities or character of a building, structure, object, or site and its environment shall not be destroyed when possible. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible. *The building has been surveyed as non-contributing. Furthermore, modifying the use of the existing monumental sized arch does not detract from its reflection of New Formalist architecture.*

(3) All buildings, structures, objects, and sites shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis and which seek to create an earlier appearance shall be discouraged. *Alterations to the existing sign bases and to the main structure do not create a false sense of history.*

(4) Changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building, structure, object, or site and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance shall be recognized and respected. N/A

(5) Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship which characterize a building, structure, object, or site shall be kept where possible. *The proposed signs will not detract from the character of the building.*

(6) Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material shall reflect the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplications of features, substantiated by historical, physical, or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other buildings or structures. N/A

(7) The surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that will damage the historic building materials shall not be undertaken. N/A

(8) Every reasonable effort shall be made to protect and preserve archeological resources affected by, or adjacent to, any project. N/A

(9) Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural, or cultural material, and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the property, neighborhood, or environment. *The proposed signs are compatible with the character of the building and its use.*

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Application
2. Location Map
3. Photographs of the Subject Property
4. Applicant Submittal Documents