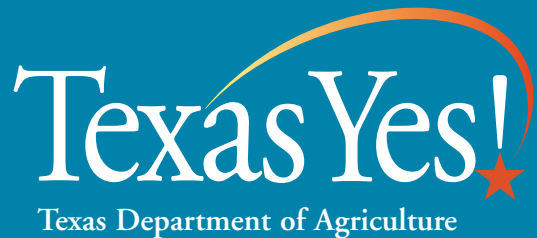


Texas Yes! Rural Beautification Quick-Start Series

Texas Yes! Rural Beautification Quick-Start Kit Series

- Issue I Immediate Steps to Get Headed in the Right Direction
- Issue II Planning for Long-Term Success
- Issue III Building Community Buy-In
- Issue IV Resources to Help Pave the Way

For details on other issues in the series, call (866) 4TEX-YES
or visit www.TexasYes.org.



P.O. Box 12847, Austin, Texas 78711
(866) 4TEX-YES

For the hearing impaired: Voice (800) 735-2988/TTY (800) 735-2989
www.TexasYes.org

Issue No. 4 Resources to Help Pave the Way

*Part four of a four-part
rural beautification
series produced by the
Texas Department of
Agriculture's Texas Yes!
program to market,
promote and support
rural Texas.*



(866) 4TEX-YES
www.TexasYes.org
Texas Department of Agriculture

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Dear Texas Yes! Member:

When we want to impress, we know to put our best face forward. First impressions can be lasting. For rural communities, the importance of making a good first impression can make the difference between visitors stopping to spend time and money or vehicles speeding by without a second look.

Though the term “beautification” may sound like just a nice extra step communities can take after more vital community needs are addressed, it is one of the most critical activities communities can engage in to support economic development and success. Investing in beautification, rural preservation and community economic development programs grows jobs, tourism and business investments for the future of all of Texas.

Your membership in the Texas Department of Agriculture’s Texas Yes! program, created to promote and showcase the best of rural Texas, gives you access to beautification and revitalization expertise and resources from state and federal agencies, as well as to a network of other hardworking rural communities.

We are pleased to offer you this resource as the fourth in a series of Texas Yes! beautification quick-start kits, each designed to build on each other and to provide you with real tools and resources to help your community put its best face forward.

Interested in more information to help pave the way for your community? Give us a call at (866) 4TEX-YES or visit us online at www.TexasYes.org.

Best wishes for your beautification efforts!

Resources to Help Pave the Way

As outlined in Issues I, II and III of the Texas Yes! Rural Beautification Quick-Start Series, rural beautification is a vital community activity that involves both short-term and long-term approaches backed by community support.

But rural communities are not alone in their efforts. Numerous state and federal programs are available to provide funding and support for everything from promotion of rural events and attractions to community cleanup, revitalization, recreation development and preservation.

Texas Department of Agriculture Programs

The Texas Department of Agriculture helps rural communities by increasing rural development opportunities throughout the state. TDA's Texas Yes! program is designed to spotlight the people and places that make rural Texas great.

Texas Yes! Bootstrap Bucks:

The Texas Yes! Bootstrap Bucks program is designed to help promote tourism events and festivals that are supported by Texas Yes! Community Members. Selected Texas Yes! Community Members receive up

to \$2,500 in reimbursable funds to help leverage the dollars available to directly promote a local tourism event or festival. www.TexasYes.org

Texas Yes! Hometown STARS: Texas Yes! Community Members can apply for the Texas Yes! Hometown STARS (Supporting Tourism and Rural Success) program, a competitive matching fund reimbursement program that will help offset the cost of promotional activities associated with marketing local tourism events. The program reimburses communities for half of their promotional costs up to \$10,000. To be considered for funding, interested communities submit project proposals to TDA for review by the Hometown STARS Review Team, an independent panel with expertise in marketing, promotion, media and tourism. www.TexasYes.org

Texas Yes! Bootstrap Marketing

Workshops: Learn the secrets of success for growing tourism in your rural community from nationally recognized experts and homegrown heroes with hands-on experience. Brainstorm ideas in round-table discussions, create connections with other communities and link up with the right resources and funding. www.TexasYes.org

Texas Capital Fund: This program helps rural communities address basic public infrastructure and quality of life needs, revitalize the downtown area and create a sustainable economic base to grow jobs, businesses and tourism in rural Texas. It provides funds to non-entitlement city or county

governments for the creation or retention of jobs through four programs:

- Main Street Improvements
- Real Estate Development
- Infrastructure Development
- Downtown Revitalization

The program is administered by TDA through a contract with the Office of Rural Community Affairs. www.agr.state.tx.us.

Your TDA rural and agribusiness specialist provides localized assistance across the state and can help open doors for you with agencies and programs, as well as other organizations. To contact the field person in your region call (877) 428-7848 or e-mail finance@agr.state.tx.us.

“There are a number of state agencies and programs available for communities to promote their towns or find funding and resources. You simply need to ask. Don't reinvent the wheel. Find out what's out there!”

*Shanon Biggerstaff, Executive Director
Ozona Chamber of Commerce*



SPOTLIGHT
on
SUCCESS

L E V E L L A N D

Though new sidewalks and pretty plantings alone are not enough to spur economic development, beautification is one of the first steps in the “packaging” or marketing of a community. Appropriately named for its uninterrupted landscape, the face of Levelland’s downtown has changed. New downtown parking and landscaping funded by the city and through TDA’s Texas Capital Fund Main Street Improvements Program have helped to lower downtown building vacancies. Getting the buy-in and support of local businesses during planning helped build the foundation for further developments: several property owners have made building improvements, the old downtown theater is under renovation and businesses have relocated from the highway to the downtown square. In another revitalization effort, the only “hill” in town is now reshaped to accommodate outdoor seating with a covered pavilion over the edge of the lake so the lake is the background to any performance. Funded by the city and Texas Parks and Wildlife, reservations for weddings and special events are already on the calendar. For a “treasure in itself just waiting to be discovered,” go to www.levelland.com.

Additional State Agencies and Programs

Economic Development and Tourism Division, Office of the Governor:

EDT promotes Texas as having the best business climate in the nation and provides many economic development tools to assist local communities in acquiring capital to recruit expanding or relocating firms and to inspire job creation. The division also markets the state as a premier tourism destination through extensive marketing and public relations efforts and an award winning advertising campaign. Many opportunities are available for communities to partner with the state and feature their community as a tourism destination. For more information:

www.governor.state.tx.us/divisions/ecodev and www.traveltex.com.

Office of Rural and Community Affairs:

Assures a continuing focus on rural issues, monitors governmental actions affecting rural Texas, researches issues and identifies possible solutions, and is a coordinator and provider of rural-focused state and federal resources.

The Community Development Unit addresses community needs with funds provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. www.orca.state.tx.us

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality:

Strives to protect our state’s human and natural resources consistent with sustainable economic development. Grants are awarded to regional and local governments for municipal solid waste management projects through the state’s Regional Solid Waste Grants Program. TCEQ allocates funds to the state’s 24 councils of governments (COGs) to administer this program with pass-through grants for local or regional projects falling within eligible funding categories. Eligible funding categories are specific to each COG, but may include projects for litter, illegal dumping cleanup and recycling projects. For more information about pass-through grants available in your area, contact the COG representing your region. To find your regional COG: www.tceq.state.tx.us/permitting/waste_permits/waste_planning/wp_

grants.html#contact or www.txregionalcouncil.org/regions.php.

Texas Department of Transportation:

Administers the Statewide Transportation Enhancement Program under the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. A statewide competitive program, funds are provided on a reimbursement basis of up to 80 percent of allowable costs. The governmental entity nominating a project is responsible for the remaining cost share including all cost overruns. To be eligible for consideration, all projects must demonstrate a relationship to the surface transportation system through either function or impact, go above and beyond standard transportation activities and incorporate one of the following categories:

1. Bike and Pedestrian Facilities
2. Safety/Education for Pedestrian and Bicyclist
3. Acquisition of Scenic and Historic Properties
4. Scenic and Historic Highway Programs
5. Landscaping and Beautification
6. Historic Preservation
7. Historic Transportation Facilities

8. Preservation of Abandoned Railway Corridors
9. Control and Removal of Outdoor Advertising
10. Archaeological Planning/Research
11. Environmental Mitigation
12. Transportation Museums

For example projects and contacts: www.dot.state.tx.us/des/step/introduction.htm. For other programs including Landscape Cost Sharing, Incentives Awards and Adopt-A-Highway for Landscaping: www.dot.state.tx.us/des/landscape/program.htm.

Texas Historical Commission: Focuses on historic preservation. THC staff consults with citizens and organizations to preserve Texas’ architectural, archaeological and cultural landmarks. Recognized nationally for its preservation programs, THC employs experts in archaeology, architecture, history, economic development, heritage tourism, public administration and urban planning. The agency is an invaluable source for preservation and restoration information and guidance. Texas Main Street and Visionaries

Additional State Agencies and Programs *(cont.)*

in Preservation programs listed below are just two of many resources offered.

The Texas Main Street Program is affiliated with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and is among the most successful downtown revitalization programs in the nation. It has assisted more than 130 Texas cities resulting in the private reinvestment of more than \$860 million in Texas downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts, the creation of more than 18,200 jobs and 4,600 new businesses. Selected communities receive various forms of assistance and training. The city must hire a full-time Main Street manager and fund the full-time program for a minimum of three years. Across the nation, Main Street programs return about \$35 in reinvestment for each dollar that a community invests in the operations of their local programs.

The Visionaries in Preservation Program empowers Texas communities to shape the future of their historic preservation efforts through visioning and planning and provides training and assistance tailored to achieve local preservation goals. Through the Texas Historical Commission, communities can build partnerships among diverse groups and interests; foster preservation leadership; develop unified preservation goals and action plans; receive priority status for local training and assistance from THC; and enhance capability to secure grants and funds for preservation projects. A complete THC Grant Guide is available online. Grant programs include

Texas Preservation Trust Fund Grants, Certified Local Government Grants (enabling communities to develop quality preservation programs) and the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program. www.thc.state.tx.us

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department:

Acts as a partner in hundreds of communities across the state through its grant and assistance programs. TPWD's grant programs help to develop parks, conserve natural resources, preserve historical sites and provide access to water bodies. Community Grants are offered to meet the recreation needs of small Texas communities with a population of 20,000 and under. The grant provides 50 percent matching grant funds (maximum \$50,000) to eligible municipalities and counties for development or beautification of parkland. Eligible projects include trails, camping facilities, ball fields, boating, fishing and hunting facilities, picnic facilities, playgrounds, swimming pools, beautification, restoration, gardens, sports courts and support facilities. The TPWD nature tourism coordinator works with communities who are interested in realizing the economic and conservation benefits of developing nature tourism. Communities can benefit from free site visits, assessments, technical and marketing guidance and goal-setting assistance. www.tpwd.state.tx.us

Texas Commission on the Arts:

Provides funding for a variety of arts-related activities, including visual and literary art, film, music, dance and theater. TCA grants provide financial support for projects that exemplify cultural tourism. www.arts.state.tx.us

Other Resources

AmeriCorps: Provides financial support through grants to public and nonprofit organizations that sponsor service programs to meet critical community needs in education, public safety, health and the environment. Sample activities include tutoring and mentoring youth, building homes and restoring parks. www.americorps.org

Keep Texas Beautiful: A nonprofit affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, works in cooperation with the Texas Department of Transportation and some 320 communities statewide, empowering Texans to take responsibility for improving their environment. www.ktb.org

Natural Resources Conservation Service: Part of the USDA, provides conservation planning and technical assistance to individuals, groups and local governments in developing and implementing conservation plans that protect, conserve and enhance natural resources. www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov

Rural Resource Teams: Texas Rural Partners' program assists communities with their community assessment phase. The goal is to provide teams of TRP members and volunteers to assist rural communities with locally conceived and driven development strategies. www.texasruralpartners.org

Texas Community Futures Forum:

Facilitated by Texas Cooperative Extension since 1985, provides long-range program planning with local

citizen involvement. TCE facilitates the partnering of county governments, businesses and other groups to gather information through citizen forums about local needs and issues and helps organize action teams to address them. <http://futuresforum.tamu.edu>

Texas Downtown Association: Has almost 400 members involved in more than \$1 billion in downtown revitalization projects. Along with the Texas Historical Commission, the association co-hosts an annual training and education conference. The organization's Anice Read Fund provides grants to downtown projects in eight association member communities across Texas. Projects have ranged from assistance with historic railroad depot and visitor center restorations to scholarships for training downtown managers. www.TexasDowntown.org

Texas Rural Leadership Program:

Creates and delivers effective leadership development programs for rural Texas. The program is committed to providing small communities in Texas with the working tools for community revitalization with the ultimate goal of developing strategic plans for economic development. www.trlp.org

Also check with local universities and colleges, which may provide consultation services.

Put the Power of Texas Behind Your Rural Community!

Texas Yes! is an initiative launched by the Texas Department of Agriculture to help market and promote rural Texas. A broad-based membership program, Texas Yes! creates a single rallying call for rural Texas, educating the public about all that rural Texas has to offer and encouraging rural communities to share and promote successful ideas. There is no cost to join.

Member benefits for rural communities include the following:

Matching fund opportunities

- ☛ Texas Yes! Hometown STARS Program
- ☛ Texas Yes! Bootstrap Bucks Program

Marketing

- ☛ Statewide Texas Yes! promotional campaigns
- ☛ Online events calendar
- ☛ Online rural destination guide
- ☛ Use of the Texas Yes! service mark

Information

- ☛ Marketing and rural tourism workshops hosted across the state
- ☛ Guidebooks on event planning, downtown beautification and more
- ☛ Regular newsletters with action-oriented information
- ☛ E-mail alerts for the latest news and dates

Networking

- ☛ Contacts and programs at other state and federal agencies
- ☛ Online member database
- ☛ Secrets to small town successes from other Texas Yes! members

Recognition

- ☛ Hardworking Community Awards Ceremony
- ☛ Statewide Texas Yes! media coverage
- ☛ And more!

For all the details on Texas Yes!, call (866) 4TEX-YES or visit www.TexasYes.org.

Beautifying your rural community is a vital and on-going endeavor. Whether it's small changes within the community, planning for long-term economic success, calling on resources to help with the process or building community buy-in, TDA is here to help with all your efforts. In addition to the four-part Rural Beautification Quick-Start Series, we're here to address any questions or comments regarding your rural beautification projects. Contact us at (877) 428-7848 or e-mail us at finance@agr.state.tx.us.