

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

Clinton Hille City of Gonzales

Dear Mr. Hille:

Please find the following copy of the Gonzales Community Tourism Assessment Report conducted by state agency members from the Office of the Governor – Economic Development and Tourism, the Texas Historical Commission, the Texas Department of Agriculture, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Texas Commission on the Arts and the Texas Department of Transportation. We hope this report will be a useful extension to the ideas which were generated throughout the visit and will contribute to the growth of tourism in your area in the future.

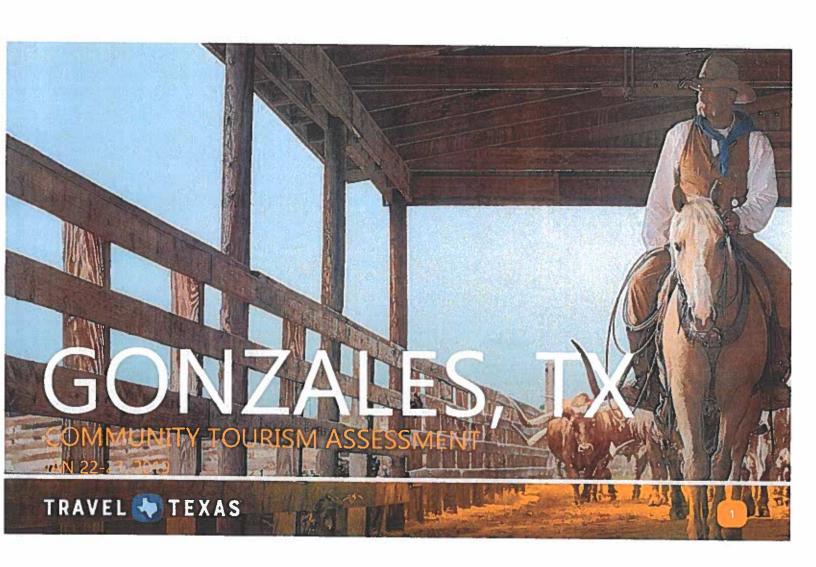
Please extend our appreciation to the residents who gave their time, knowledge and resources to host the assessment activities. Gonzales has many exciting resources available for further tourism development and has great potential to grow as a travel destination in the future.

Tourism staff will continue to be available for any clarifications you may need. For questions or assistance please contact me at 512/936-1834 or cole.hubbard@gov.texas.gov.

Sincerely,

Cole Hubbard
Tourism Research Coordinator
Office of the Governor, Economic Development & Tourism





Importance of Tourism

- Estimated direct travel spending in Texas totaled more than \$74.7 billion in 2017, which directly supported 677,600 jobs and generated \$7 billion in state and local taxes.
- Travel supports jobs across many industry sectors:
 - ✓ Leisure and hospitality
 - ✓ Transportation
 - ✓ Retail trade
 - ✓ Services
 - ✓ Finance
 - ✓ Real estate
 - ✓ Construction
 - ✓ Insurance
 - ✓ Government and others

Importance of Tourism in Gonzales

- In 2017, it was estimated there was more than \$23.7 million in total direct visitor spending within Gonzales. As a result of this visitor spending, an estimated 190 jobs were supported within the city.
- Additionally, tourism generated as estimated \$504,000 in local taxes and \$1.48 million in state taxes in Gonzales in 2017.
- For more information, please visit http://travel.texas.gov/travel-research/. The economic data are updated annually each summer.

Background

A Community Tourism Assessment:

- ✓ Organizes local attractions into an easily referenced report.
- ✓ Provides recommendations for improving community resources based on observations from tourism staff conducting the assessment.
- ✓ Uncovers untapped or underutilized attractions in a community.
- ✓ Encourages regional collaboration and the creation of tourism partnerships.
- ✓ Educates communities on how to develop and promote local tourism attractions.
- ✓ Establishes a foundation for future tourism planning or development efforts.



Background (cont.)

Representatives from the Office of the Governor, Economic Development and Tourism division (EDT), the Texas Historical Commission (THC), the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), and the Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) visited Gonzales, TX over January 22 – 23 and completed an itinerary featuring local tourism attractions and meetings with involved community members.

This report includes many of the ideas generated throughout the assessment and is primarily meant to be an inventory of attractions experienced during the assessment and other aspects of the travel product. Please note that the assessment report may not include all attractions or potential attractions in the region.

Strategic Planning

The findings in this Community Tourism Assessment address many of the strengths and opportunities for continued growth in the Gonzales tourism program. Strategic planning reports are best used as a "living document" designed to be continually revisited and revised based on evolving opportunities rather than a checklist that must be followed.

Report Format

The format of this report will provide an attractions, events and accommodations inventory based upon the assessment itinerary, in addition to an analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT), while discussing other associated elements of the tourism system:

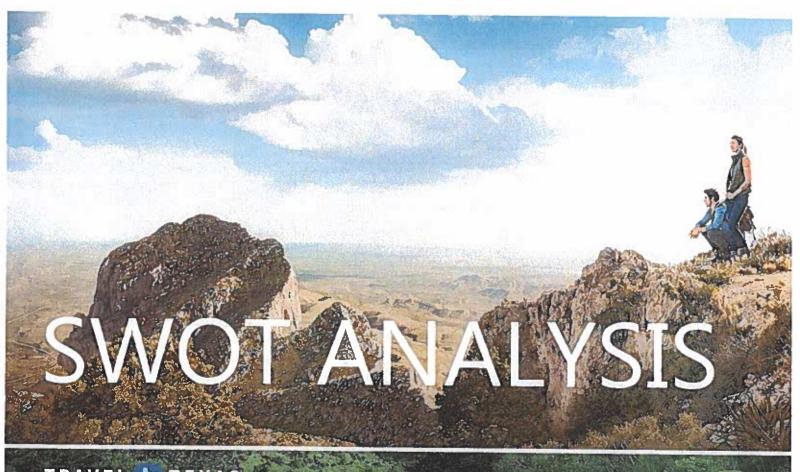
- ✓ Culinary and Dining Experience
- ✓ Lodging
- ✓ Nature Tourism
- ✓ Historic and Cultural Tourism
- √ Shopping Opportunities

Report Format (cont.)

The inventory of Attractions, Events and Accommodations is the primary deliverable of this Community Tourism Assessment.

Index

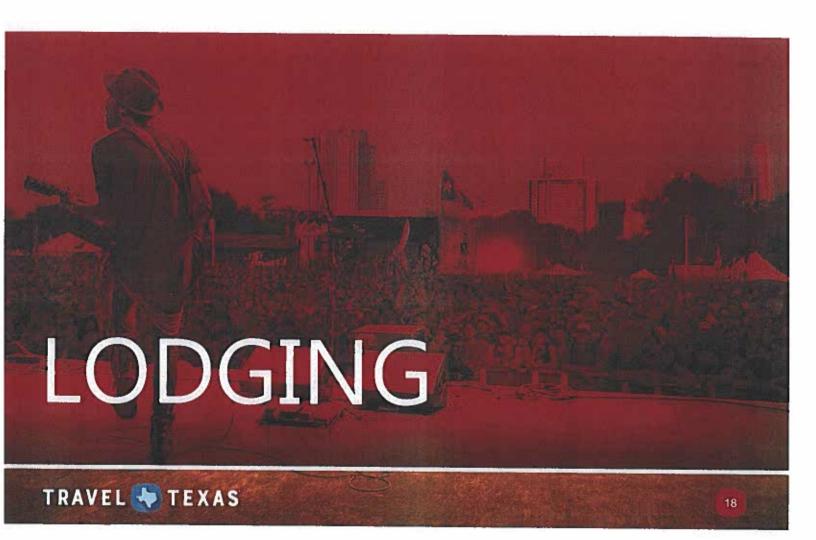
- SWOT Analysis
 - Culinary and Dining Experience
 - Lodging
 - Nature Tourism
 - · Historic and Cultural Tourism
 - · Shopping Opportunities
- Texas Historical Commission (Teresa Caldwell) Notes
- Texas Department of Transportation (Lois Rodriguez) Notes
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (Shelly Plante) Notes
- Texas Commission on the Arts (Jim Bob McMillan) Notes
- Texas Department of Agriculture (Jami McCool) Notes

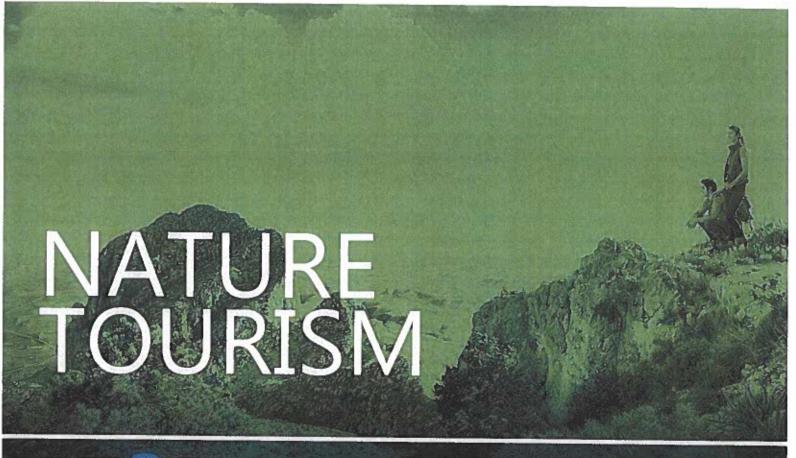


TRAVEL TEXAS

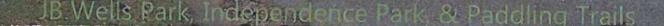
CULINARY AND DINING EXPERIENCE

TRAVEL 🔷 TEXAS





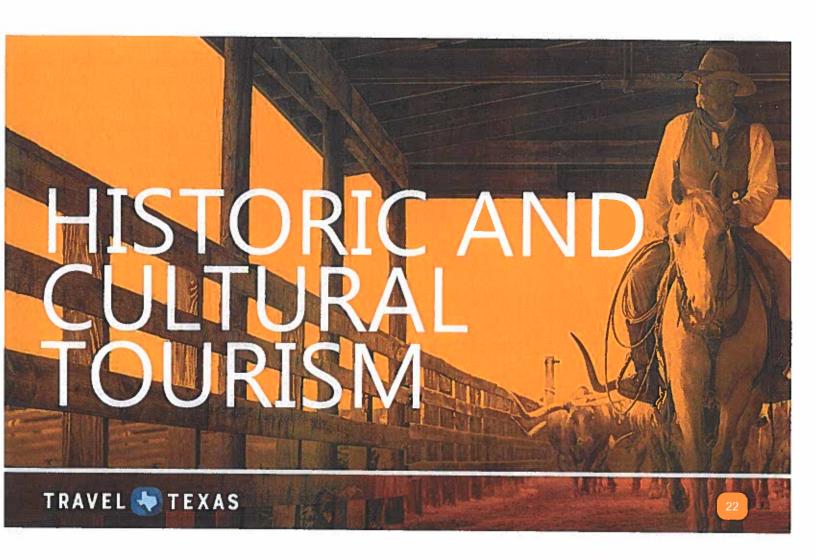
TRAVEL 🦊 TEXAS



Strengths: The parks within and around Gonzales have some great amenities, which can definitely benefit from further promotion. The presence of a paddling trail in particular is a notable strength for Gonzales as this allows for a more diverse tourism experience for those visiting. The large availability of RV spots within the parks is a positive asset to the community as it can attract and reasonably host large groups (similar to the Sisters event).

Weaknesses: These parks could certainly benefit from more promotion within tourism materials. Threats: Under-utilization due to lack of awareness.

Opportunities: The various parks, trails, and green spaces throughout Gonzales need more of a presence within Gonzales tourism materials. While history and culture is certainly the "bread and butter" of the Gonzales product, it is important to also emphasize the ways in which Gonzales is able to differentiate itself from the surrounding communities (many of whom tout similarly strong historic assets). Emphasizing your natural spaces more could serve as this differentiating factor.





Strengths: This is quite a unique attraction to Gonzales given<u>Opportunities:</u> Given the limitations of staffing the Old Jail that the Visitor's Center is located within a historic tourist attraction. While it is perhaps not the most ideal situation for the Visitor's Center, it does provide tourists with a more unique experience to both visit a historic jail while receiving information about Gonzales tourist attractions. The Visitor's Center is well organized and the staff was courteous, knowledgeable, and proper advocates for Gonzales. These types of "front line" tourism workers are essential in communicating both the hospitality afforded within Gonzales while also educating tourists on the many attractions in the Gonzales area. The free tours of downtown is also a

Weaknesses: A huge weakness is this location's inability to Threats: No immediate threats come to mind concerning this be ADA compliant. Also, the museum is typically not staffed, which leads to a less impactful visit to this particular site.

strong amenity offered from this location.

Museum, there is room to provide much more written interpretation throughout the museum. There is a digital board that rotates photos. Perhaps this could be used to create an informational video about the jail that plays, on loop? This could possibly be created with the assistance of the two gentlemen who help with the free downtown tours. As for opportunities for the Visitor's Center, there is more room for an increased online presence. So far, the level of activity is good. However, there is an opportunity for further cross-promotion of other attractions' content. This serves to bolster other amenities within Gonzales while also diffusing the burden of content creation.

location. There is perhaps a loss of educational impact when it comes to the interpretation afforded through the Jail Museum. However, the Visitor's Center is doing an excellent job thus far.

1:00 - 4:00

CHAMBER

Robert Lee Brothers, Jr. Memorial Library

Strengths: This library is clearly a valuable community resource, offering several necessary municipal services. However, there are a couple of amenities that make this location stand out as a potential tourism attraction. First, the extensive rare gun collection in the back of the library stands out in particular as a potential tourism attraction. The fact that tourists are able to visit this collection free of charge further lends to its potential as a prominent tourism destination. The Texas history room and display is also quite interesting and full of rare documents. Both of these attractions pair nicely together when promoting to cultural and historic tourists who are visiting the Gonzales area.

Weaknesses: While both of these attractions are quite interesting, it seems that having a guide with you would be necessary to fully understand and appreciate the assets in each display. As we were accompanied by a guide of our own, it is unclear whether the library provides a staff member to guide tourists through each display.

Opportunities: There is an opportunity for better signage on the outside of the library indicating the various displays inside. The way the library is structured currently, it is not immediately apparent why a tourist driving by would stop at the library. With better wayfinding signage indicating the displays inside the library, this issue could be mitigated. I'm also not sure what kind of social media presence has been implemented for these attractions, but this could be a tool for communicating these attractions' whereabouts.

Threats: Given this is a municipal building, there is no immediate threat to its location. However, this is a potential threat of the stories and history surrounding these historic artifacts being lost. It seems a good deal of their significance is imparted through our tour guide's stories. These stories should be preserved in one way or another, be it written interpretation or training younger generations to guide tourists onsite.

Walking Tour of Downtown Gonzales

Strengths: The walking tour offered for free is a tremendous asset for Gonzales. It allows for the local culture and history to be fully experienced by tourists through the provision of Gonzales' excellent tour guides. Of course, the actual product of the walking tour (i.e. the downtown area itself) has noteworthy historical significance to both the local community and to the state at large. This serves to attract a wider array of tourists to this location.

Weaknesses: While this weakness is largely inconsequential, it should be noted that the small number of guides is a small weakness to this service. It is understood there are two guides total for this service. Therefore, if one or both are unavailable, the service cannot be reasonably marketed to tourists.

Opportunities: There are a couple of noteworthy opportunities for improving this service. Perhaps more obviously, there is the opportunity to train more citizens in this cultural and historic significance of the downtown area. This allows for more tour availability, while also training the "next generation" in the rich cultural education of Gonzales. There is also an opportunity on these tours to further emphasize all there is to do within Gonzales. While the tour is primarily conducted through an educational and historic lens, it would be beneficial to include more information on where tourists can shop, dine, experience nature, etc., during their time within Gonzales.

Threats: Not training additional guides appears to be the largest threat to this service's continuation.

Sam Houston Oak and Pioneer Village

Strengths: These locations provide some unique, immersive experiences within Gonzales' cultural and historic tourism product. The ability to go inside the cabins, examine the artifacts within, and have multiple levels of interpretation onsite allows for maximum retention by visitors. Of course, this then leads to a more memorable experience overall and contributes positively towards word-of-mouth promotion, which has been identified as one of Gonzales' primary "marketing" strategies.

Weaknesses: This location is largely dependent on nice weather given it is a mostly outdoors experience. It could be difficult to attract tourists to these areas when it is raining, overly cold or hot, etc.

Opportunities: I believe these sites are effectively being used for a variety of purposes. In particular, the use of these as the location of various festivals and community events throughout the year is an excellent idea. It allows community members to experience the historical sites up close in the name of attending a festival. For more examples on how to effectively promote and build these attractions further, please reference Teresa Caldwell's section of the report (Texas Historical Commission).

Threats: None. I think these sites are well-utilized by the community to promote and maintain heritage tourism.

Gonzales Memorial Museum and Eggleston House

Strengths: Similar to other historical exhibits
throughout Gonzales, these two attractions lend
to the total narrative of Gonzales' rich cultural
history within the state. In particular, the
provision of the original cannon is a great photo
opportunity for tourists and allows for more
exposure to these locations within social media
networks. The ability to visit these locations for
free is also a notable strength.

Weaknesses: The lack of utilization of the wonderful amphitheater in the back area is a notable weakness and disappointment. Also, there is also room for more written interpretation on the wing of the museum which does not house the cannon. The need for repairs within the Memorial Museum seems to be growing as well.

Opportunities: The outside amphitheater is definitely an area of opportunity when considering the expansion and development of Gonzales' cultural tourism product. This space could be utilized to attract traveling artistic and musical acts. The use of the Texas Commission on the Arts resources could help to see this opportunity into actualization. Additionally, hosting more events within this space brings a wider array of tourists to the site, increasing its overall exposure. There is an opportunity for this site to cross-promote the other attractions within Gonzales as well. This could be as simple as providing informational pieces about the various sites throughout the community.

Threats: Continued dilapidation leading to this site's inability to host tourists.

SHOPPING OPPORTUNITIES

TRAVEL 🥎 TEXAS

Downtown Gonzales

Rather than go through the multitude of stores which we experienced, the shopping experience within downtown Gonzales can be largely summarized by a few notes. First, it is appear that many of the shops downtown are closed on Sunday. As noted elsewhere within this report, this is a large limitation to the tourism product within Gonzales. The desire to promote more weekend trips was discussed by leadership during our visit within the city. However, with so many shops being closed on Sunday, it raises the question of why would a tourist stay the night on Saturday? Sunday remains a pivotal tourism day and tourist attractions (e.g. the shops around downtown) are missing the capital that this additional weekend day can provide. Even providing limited operating hours on Sunday is better than being closed completely. This gives Gonzales the image of shutting down on the weekends. It should also be noted that, if Gonzales' downtown shops won't accommodate these Sunday tourists, surrounding competitors certainly will.

Closing Thoughts

Gonzales has some strong tourist attractions and has made tangible steps in the correct direction of developing a successful tourism program. One thing is abundantly clear -Gonzales has a unique mix of strong historic and cultural tourism amenities and has engaged municipal offices which are dedicated to seeing the tourism program's success. Some strategic steps which can be taken now are the development of less prominent tourism amenities (i.e. arts, nature/parks, etc.) as well as partnering with Travel Texas on a strategic co-operative advertising effort (see next slide for additional resources). There is a need for delegating beautification efforts and arts development to the appropriate parties throughout the community. Tourism is a group effort - it cannot thrive with only one agency significantly contributing. Furthermore, it is advised to utilize strategic and targeted marketing efforts towards Gonzales' "drive markets" (e.g. San Antonio and Austin areas) as these will contribute to the large portion of visitation to the area. There are several well-developed pieces to the tourism program so far. The key now is to join these together underneath a common vision for tourism to the area and to inform tourists of the tourism product through targeted marketing tactics.



Additional places to start exploring available resources are the state agencies which conduct tourism development and/or marketing programs. Links to agency websites with the latest information are provided on the following slides.



Office of the Governor, Economic Development & Tourism - http://gov.texas.gov/ecodev/

- Texas Film Commission http://gov.texas.gov/film
- Texas Music Office http://gov.texas.gov/music/
- Texas Economic Development https://texaswideopenforbusiness.com/

Travel Texas, located within the Office of the Governor, Economic Development & Tourism - http://www.travel.texas.gov

- Texas tourism resources including advertising, marketing and research activities can be found on the industry site listed above.
- For all Travel Texas research reports, including hotel assessments, economic impact figures, and visitation estimates, please email TravelTexas.Research@gov.texas.gov
- For full co-operative advertising and marketing opportunities available through Travel Texas and for access to the Travel Texas Marketing Plan, please visit https://travel.texas.gov/advertising-marketing/



Texas Commission on the Arts - http://www.arts.texas.gov/

 Overviews of TCA grants and other resources can be found in the banner menu of their homepage.

Texas Parks and Wildlife - http://tpwd.texas.gov/

Available TPWD grants and assistance for communities can be found online at http://tpwd.texas.gov/business/grants/

Texas Historical Commission - http://www.thc.texas.gov/

 Information on THC community development programs, including the Texas Main Street Program, can be found at http://www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/community-development



Texas Department of Transportation - http://www.txdot.gov/

 The following link directs to the Travel Division and current information on their programs: http://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/travel.html

Texas Department of Agriculture - http://www.texasagriculture.gov/

Community assistance programs offered by TDA, including Go Texas, can be found at:
 http://www.texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/IAmACityCountyCommunity.aspx





Section 2 – Texas Historical Commission Notes By Teresa Caldwell

GONZALES HERITAGE TOURISM ASSESSMENT

Teresa Caldwell - Texas Historical Commission

What is Heritage Tourism?

Cultural heritage tourism as defined by the National Trust for Historic Preservation is "traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes historic, cultural and natural resources."

Understanding America's heritage and exploring distinct communities continues to grow in importance in attracting the traveler. More people are seeking travel experiences that connect them to local culture and unique stories. This is good news for Gonzales. Travelers want to visit places that showcase their past and dynamically weave their traditions and historic built and environmental fabric into contemporary life. Places that value preservation as a core community development tool often become ideal destinations for travelers seeking heritage tourism experiences.

What Benefits Does Heritage Tourism Offer?

Studies on the characteristics of heritage tourists reveal them to be an attractive audience. These high value visitors spend more on accommodations, shopping, entertainment and dining than any other type of tourist. If this group has a quality experience, they tend to come back more often than other tourist segments and tell their friends about the place.

How Does Heritage Tourism Fit with Current Community Planning Activities?

By working in communities across the country, the National Trust has developed five guiding principles to create a sustainable heritage tourism program:

- 1. preservation and protection of resources
- 2. focus on quality and authenticity of place
- 3. collaboration
- 4. balancing the needs of residents with those of visitors
- 5. investing in your stories and finding creative ways to interpret them

Think of heritage tourism as an opportunity to show off all the things that make Gonzales special through its great historic places, stories, traditions and people. These qualities contribute to a community's "sense of place." Defining sense of place is challenging because it is not attributable to one thing. It is the charm, authenticity and evolving cultural activities, it is the well cared for historic downtown or neighborhood, it is the parts of the community you can see, touch and use, but it is more than the built and natural environment. It is the heritage of the people(s) who settled an area combined with contemporary community life. It is what makes Gonzales a great place to live, work and visit.

Issues related to parking, walkability, wayfinding signage, streetscapes, greenspaces, the night skies, hike and bike trails, walking paths, and paddling trails allow avenues for providing broader interpretation of the city's historic and contemporary stories. Community histories are not static, and modern activities related to community development, cultural traditions, arts and entertainment, and outdoor recreation are part of a continuum that contributes to the continued vitality and growth of the city that is attractive to residents and visitors alike.

There are many opportunities to weave the stories of Gonzales into the daily lives of residents and visitors, extending the reach of your museums, and giving people new ways to connect with the built

environment. Some of those recommendations are included below, but instead of undertaking interpretive endeavors on a case-by-case basis, it would be useful to develop a master interpretive plan that works in partnership with other planning schemes including the city's marketing plan and Strategic Tourism Plan which allows for consideration of interpretive strategies in the early stages of new development.

If stories are your product, an interpretive plan serves as a roadmap for telling them in a meaningful way. If done correctly, interpretive planning does the following:

- defines themes and stories of community for visitors and residents,
- facilitates the utilization of natural, physical, historical and cultural resources and stories which might otherwise be ignored or overlooked,
- coordinates the interpretive development efforts of stakeholders eliminating duplication, and
- enhances optimal use of available physical and financial resources within an area or region.

Thoughtful interpretive planning efforts can have an important impact on larger community goals of maintaining the historic downtown as the heart of Gonzales, attracting new residents to your community and county, developing new visitor audiences, and engaging them as investors in the stewardship of your city and county.

Capitalize on your heritage tourism assets

For a community of its size, Gonzales is extremely fortunate to have an exceptionally large collection of heritage tourism assets and cultural resources, as well as the unique distinction of being the site where the first skirmish of the Texas Revolution took place, a title that no other place can claim! An assessment of the heritage tourism resources that were visited during the Office of the Governor site assessment trip follows:

1. Downtown Gonzales Area, including Historic Main Street

STRENGTHS: *Gonzales Main Street is a recognized program of the City of Gonzales and the Texas Historical Commission that works to make Gonzales' downtown a vibrant and prosperous center of the community by utilizing historic buildings and structures for living, shopping, dining and entertaining Gonzales' residents and visitors. *The downtown area is rather large (consisting of two of the town's seven public squares!) and contains a fairly attractive collection of historically significant buildings many of which are still being used in some capacity. Downtown Gonzales is comprised of a good retail mix of businesses for visitors and residents, although there are still many empty buildings that need renovation and occupation by retail, restaurants, and lodging for locals and visitors alike. *There are many special events throughout the year that take place downtown. *Parts of the downtown area are fairly well-maintained and attractive, but downtown beautification efforts should include the entire Main Street district to ensure the whole area is enticing for visitors, as well as residents. (SEE CONCERNS and OPPORTUNITIES)

CONCERNS: *Continue to ensure that the historic integrity of the downtown area is at the forefront of any downtown revitalization efforts by preserving and/or restoring historical structures and improving exterior facades when necessary to help define and maintain an authentic sense of place for visitors, as well as residents. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) *Ensure that the empty buildings downtown are filled with tenants who contribute to the economic vibrancy of Gonzales and appeal to visitors and residents alike, such as retail establishments, restaurants, living space and lodging. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) *There are safety concerns regarding the walkability of some sections of downtown sidewalks, as well as crossing highways to patronize businesses and heritage sites in all parts of downtown. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES)

*Although there are some entertainment options downtown, additional opportunities are warranted. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) *Lack of wayfinding signage guiding potential visitors to sites. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) *Unified beatification efforts (such as landscaping/planters and nice trash cans) would make the downtown area more attractive to visitors. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES)

OPPORTUNITIES: *Continue to strive for a vibrant mix of retail, restaurant, residential, and professional services to occupy historically significant structures and draw residents and visitors downtown by recruiting different business types there. *Develop varied downtown promotions to add an extra incentive for visitors to stop downtown and shop in Gonzales and the greater Gonzales area. *Develop cooperative print ads for downtown merchants to advertise the entire downtown area (and beyond) to visitors. As a participant in the Texas Historical Commission's Texas Main Street Program (TMSP) (http://www.thc.state.tx.us/preserve/projects-and-programs/texas-main-street), a downtown revitalization program, you help ensure that the downtown area flourishes. As a designated Main Street, Gonzales is eligible for a number of services, including site visits, technical advice, and design assistance. Ensure that your Main Street manager is taking advantage of these services! Many Main Streets that are part of the TMSP have become destinations themselves because visitors flock to communities that value their historic downtowns and are willing to invest in them. *Interpretive signage on Main Street relaying the history of the area and how it came to be would be helpful to educate visitors about its importance, as well as give them an additional reason to go downtown and perhaps stay a little longer. *Portions of the downtown square are not walkable and crosswalks on high pedestrian corners in downtown are sorely needed to make visitors feel more comfortable crossing the road (and it would be safer!), which would be beneficial to all parties-visitors, the County, the City, and the businesses. *Ensure that the entire downtown area is well-maintained and attractive, and features unified beautification efforts (such as landscaping/planters and nice trash cans).

*All tourists love to eat and drink, especially the heritage tourist. Family-owned, local ethnic restaurants, coffee shops and tea rooms are especially popular with heritage tourists and are preferable to chain restaurants. This makes sense since heritage tourists want to experience the "local flavor" of your community. Gonzales has a good selection of locally owned restaurants downtown for a community of its size, including the Running M Bar and Grill, Come and Take It Bar and Grill, Bella Tavola Italian Restaurant, Sweet B's, Gonzales Food Market, and Guerra's Grill & Catering, among others. And even though it is not downtown, Baker Boys BBQ, named one of the 50 Best BBQ Joints in Texas by Texas Monthly magazine, is another Gonzales restaurant that is certainly worth the drive. The addition of a tea room and/or a bistro, a coffee shop, and more restaurants featuring local fare could further entice heritage travelers to stop or stay longer in downtown Gonzales. And an upscale restaurant downtown would especially appeal to heritage tourists.

*No one likes to **shop** more than the heritage tourist, especially in specialty and antique stores and shops featuring local crafts. Downtown Gonzales has at least seven antique stores including the unique Discovery Architectural Antiques, as well as a good variety of Texas boutiques, and several more shopping opportunities, where visitors love to spend their money, *Recruit additional boutique, antique and/or specialty stores to downtown Gonzales to keep heritage tourists in town even longer. *Develop varied downtown promotions to add an extra incentive for visitors to stop downtown and shop. This is something that can be done through your Main Street manager. *Farmer's Markets are a great way for visitors to support local growers and producers, and get fresh produce, honey, eggs and other wares in the process. Gonzales should advertise its Farmers Market better so visitors have a chance to take advantage of it if they so desire.

- *What are the **entertainment** options in your downtown district and elsewhere? There are currently a few entertainment activities and other forms of amusement that visitors can take advantage of downtown on a regular basis including the Long Branch Saloon and the historic Lynn Theater which shows first run movies, as well as special events and concerts. However, additional family friendly entertainment options would be optimal.
- *Are the shops in Gonzales **open regular hours**? Nothing is more frustrating to a heritage tourist than to travel to a site or store during regular business hours and find out that it is not open. Establishing and then following posted hours of operation is essential for maintaining visitor satisfaction. *And there should be shopping, eating and entertainment establishments open after 5 pm each day to keep tourists from leaving your community at night. Gonzales is lucky to have several eating and drinking establishments open at night including the Running M Bar and Grill, Come and Take It Bar and Grill, Bella Tavola Italian Restaurant and the Long Branch Saloon. Just remember, if downtown Gonzales rolls up its streets in the evening, then neither your visitors nor residents will have no choice but go elsewhere for goods, food and amusement!
- *Businesses in Gonzales that meet the criteria should consider applying for a **Texas Treasure Business award**, a THC program which recognizes Texas businesses that have been in operation 50+ years. For additional information and the application, go here: http://www.thc.state.tx.us/preserve/projects-and-programs/texas-treasure-business-award. Once businesses have taken advantage of this program, they can leverage the award in promotions and other ways.
- *Develop additional self-guided walking and driving tours to include information about community, county and statewide history and the architectural styles of significant buildings and cultural assets, including, but not limited to historic homes, historic churches and cemeteries. There is currently a Walking Tour of Historic Gonzales brochure, which is a good start, although inclusion of a map would make the document much more useful! The website also indicates that there is a driving tour, although it does not appear to be available from the Gonzales Travel website. Development of additional thematic tours could help visitors learn more about Gonzales's history, as well as appeal to specific visitor segments, and hopefully entice them to stay longer. Alpine has developed an historic walking & windshield tour that can be used as a model and information about their tour can be found here: http://www.historicalpine.org/historic walking tour.htm.
- *Guided walking and step-on driving tours of historic Gonzales are offered upon request by two local historians (Paul and Leon) when they are available free of charge, which is a wonderful service to offer! Don't be afraid to charge for the tours as visitors generally will not hesitate to pay for a guided tour. If you don't wish to charge a flat fee then at least give visitors an opportunity to tip their tour guides. Most visitors expect to do so and passing the hat at the end of a tour is an easy way to raise much needed funds for the museum and/or visitor center (or whatever organization/s you wish). And think about recruiting and training the next generation of storytellers/tour guides to ensure that these tours are available to visitors for years to come.
- *Cemetery tours (both led by guides dressed in period attire and self-guided) are becoming increasingly popular and are an excellent way to learn about the community's history, as well as architectural styles of its headstones. Gonzales has a number of historic cemeteries where tours would be appropriate. New Braunfels is one community that offers cemetery tours. For information about their tours, see http://spasswalkingtours.com/historic-cemetery-tour/. And Save Austin's Cemeteries holds an annual

Murder, Mayhem and Misadventure Walking Tour at Historic Oakwood Cemetery. Details on this event can be found here: https://www.sachome.org/events/mmmtour.html.

- *Continue embracing new technology when developing walking and driving tours. Printed materials will always be needed by some visitors so their availability should not be eliminated, but options should continue to be developed to serve those who use smart technologies regularly, especially younger travelers. Smart phone applications provide opportunities to enhance these stories through the use of photographs and voice narration, including historic neighborhoods and significant architecture, and also give broader access to cemeteries for users. The Gonzales, Texas Tour App is a great start, but visitors have to know about it, it must work and be kept up-to-date or it risks becoming a liability instead of an asset as users may become frustrated and not return to the platform, or Gonzales.
- *Continue enhancing access to city and county stories by developing QR Walking Tours in Gonzales. QR (Quick Response) codes are bar codes that allow you to link to events, text and website URLs. QR codes are fast becoming more common and can be used as a (free) storytelling mechanism to engage tourism audiences. Bibisi (http://www.bibisicorp.com/) has created heritage tourism based QR tours in Texas. San Antonio has a QR Historical Landmarks Tour consisting of 12 landmarks, and New Braunfels also has a QR History Tour including their cemetery. Using historic photos and a compelling storyline, include a QR tag that connects through a mobile device to the rest of the story, plus a link to the modern use website of the building or event. BeQRious.com is one site that generates QR codes and provides tracking analytics. Learn about this new way of exploring our world at http://www.begrious.com/.
- *The paranormal ghost hunting tour that commences at the Long Branch Saloon is a good way to keep visitors downtown at night in Gonzales. You might also wish to add a more traditional guided ghost tour to the mix. It does not have to be entirely historically accurate as long as that is stated up-front. It is a ghost tour after all! Granbury does a nice job with its Granbury Ghosts & Legends tour that features a walking tour of Granbury's historic downtown square led by a guide dressed in Civil War attire or other period clothing. Additional information is also available on their audio tour. Visit https://www.visitgranbury.com/listing/granbury-ghosts-%26-legends-tours/6137/ to learn more.
- *Offer hospitality training that includes a heritage education component. Hospitality training is often used to prepare front line employees to successfully interact with the public. Expand the traditional thinking about hospitality training as Gonzales develops tourism products and invite a wide range of citizens to learn about those experiences first hand. Work with Gonzales Tourism, Gonzales Main Street, Gonzales Economic Development, Gonzales CVB, City, Chamber, Gonzales County Historical Commission, Old Jail Museum and Visitor's Center, Pioneer Village, Gonzales Memorial Museum, Robert Lee Brothers, Jr. Memorial Library and other partners to host opportunities for everyone from front line employees, business owners, museum staff and volunteers and city and county employees to participate in mini-familiarization (FAM) tours to learn about existing and new heritage tourism places and activities. The city of Beaumont's Destination Training is designed to educate and inspire a renewed sense of pride in that community. Learn more about this award-winning program at http://www.beaumo-ntcvb.com/about-beaumont/about-the-cvb/hospitality-training/. And Seneca McAdams, executive director of the Texas Independence Trail Region, is a certified hospitality instructor. (SEE Regional and Statewide Heritage Tourism Resources at the end of the report.)

*Signage, Entryways, Restrooms, Sidewalks and Crossings! Signs direct visitors to your community and the sites within it, and they advertise it to others. Therefore, both directional and on-site signage are crucial for ensuring good visitor experiences. Gonzales could benefit greatly from a wayfinding system

to help guide visitors guide from attraction to attraction. This signage will decrease trip stress for your visitors because they will be able to find your sites more easily, and it will also increase the amount of time that many visitors spend in Gonzales because the signage will lead them to sites and attractions they did not previously know about. (Figure 1) It may also help residents find your community's attractions! Since Gonzales is part of the Main Street Program, your manager can get wayfinding recommendations from other Main Street managers for companies that would fit your needs in providing this type of service at a reasonable price, as well as ways to work with TxDOT! The TMSP office can provide information on this topic as well. Gonzales' entrance corridors and gateways are also in need of a cleanup and facelift. Visitors make impressions (both good and bad!) about you based on the attractiveness of your entryways and signage since they are the first things that they see upon entering



Figure 1. Wayfinding signage in downtown Atlanta, GA

your community, therefore a beatification plan to address these issues should be developed. Downtowns that value their visitors also provide accessible **public restrooms** for their comfort. You must also ensure that your **sidewalks** are truly walkable and **crosswalks** are added to help get visitors to the shops and sites on all sides of downtown, as well as in other parts of Gonzales where you wish to encourage foot traffic. If you expect visitors to walk, then you must provide a safe way to do so or they may only make one stop or simply not stop at all on their way out of town!

2. Gonzales Memorial Museum and Eggleston House

STRENGTHS: *One of eight 1936 structures created to memorialize the Texas Revolution, the Gonzales Memorial Museum feature two exhibit wings, a reflection pool, amphitheater, mosaic mural, and monument to "The Immortal 32 Gonzales Defenders of the Alamo" and the "Old Eighteen," "Come and Take It" cannon defenders. (SEE CONCERNS and OPPORTUNITIES) *One wing of the museum commemorates Gonzales' fallen Alamo defenders and the infamous October 2, 1835 "Come and Take It" confrontation in which Texas settlers successfully defied Mexican troops to seize the colony's small cannon. The adjacent wing describes life and times after the Texas Revolution. (SEE CONCERNS and OPPORTUNITIES) *Gonzales' oldest structure, the Eggleston House is a two-square "dog-run" constructed of Texas walnut logs. It was relocated from its original site overlooking the nearby Guadalupe River and is one of the state's first designated Recorded Texas Historical Landmarks. *Visitors to Eggleston House can hear its story via audiotape, when it is working. (SEE CONCERNS and OPPORTUNITIES) *Sufficient street parking on both sides of the museum grounds. *Free admission fee. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) *Adequate size for population served. *Good operational hours; Monday through Saturday, 10am – noon and 1pm – 5pm; Sunday, 1pm – 5pm. Closed major holidays. *Interesting collection of historically significant artifacts and displays. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) *Friendly, knowledgeable staff and welcoming atmosphere. *Self-guided and guided tours. Guided tours are available for groups by advance appointment. *A limited gift shop with items for all ages that relate to the museum's mission and enables visitors to contribute financially to the museum. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) *Limited rotating exhibit space. (SEE CONCERNS and OPPORTUNITIES) *Provides public outreach and programming for children and adults including educational school programs/tours. (SEE **OPPORTUNITIES)**

CONCERNS: Gonzales Memorial Museum: *This architectural and historically significant asset is in need of extensive repair primarily because the city of Gonzales does not have the funds to restore the 1936 building. *The priority repair should be the roof as without a sound roof, there is imminent danger that further damage will be done to the interior of the building, as well as the artifacts and exhibits housed there. *Failure to do nothing over time will result in the rapid deterioration and eventual demise of this exceptional resource. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) *Professionally developed exhibits are warranted if you want the facility to offer first class visitor experiences. *Additional interpretation of the exhibits, artifacts and memorabilia for those who don't want a guided tour would increase the visitor experience. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) *The exhibit display cases are static so there is little incentive for repeat visitation to the actual museum if not participating in a special event or educational program. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) *Several artifact and display labels are difficult to read, lack adequate interpretation and were improperly affixed to individual artifacts. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) *Ensure that original paper items, photographs and textiles are properly displayed to avoid accelerated artifact deterioration. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES). *Theme continuity of south wing exhibits is disjunct. Attention to the historical story line is distracted by the large and incongruous displays of antique firearms and prehistoric arrowhead collections, both of which have little or no interpretation. *Window lighting is unfiltered. *Oversized display cases and wall and floor cases obscure and detract from the architectural beauty and embellishments of the Centennial building interior. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) Eggleston House: *Ensure that the audiotape telling the story of the house is in good working condition. It was not working at the time of my visit.

OPPORTUNITIES: *Pursue grant and other funding opportunities to restore the 1936 Centennial building, *One potential funding source is the Texas Preservation Trust Fund. TPTF investment earnings are distributed as matching grants to qualified applicants for the acquisition, survey, restoration, preservation or for the planning and educational activities leading to the preservation of historic architectural and archeological properties and associated collections of the State of Texas. Competitive grants are awarded on a one-to-one match basis and are paid as reimbursement of eligible expenses incurred during the project. The Fiscal Year 2020 grant application guide is now available. Additional information about this THC grant can be found here: http://www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/projects-andprograms/texas-preservation-trust-fund. *Utilize the museum exclusively to tell the story of Come & Take It with artifacts and through professionally developed exhibits. *Add additional interpretation of the exhibits, artifacts and memorabilia for those who don't want a guided tour. *Inclusion of an area for rotating exhibits would give visitors and locals who have been to the museum a reason to come back several times a year. *Once you have upgraded your exhibits, do not hesitate to charge reasonable entrance fees to recoup some of your costs. Visitors generally expect to pay for high quality visitor experiences. *Remove cases that detract from or obscure the building's features, recreate the designers' intended sense of interior volume and light. Removal of obstructing cases will also help provide needed working space. *Cull collections to the essentials for telling the story of Gonzales' contributions during the Texas Revolutionary period and afterwards. *Remove all tape and residue from artifacts. Use pedestals and plex boxes of all sizes to display small items. Create environments that tell stories. Use freestanding panels to create traffic flow and flexibility of design. Remove or reduce the content of the firearms collection, cull the Indian artifact collection and correctly label projectile point styles and flint tolls with dates, usage and provenance. Seek assistance from local Texas Historical Commission archeological stewards. Information can be found here:

http://www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/projects-and-programs/texas-archeological-stewards . *Loan culled artifacts to Pioneer Village. *Ensure that you archive original paper items and photographs; display only copies and properly display textiles. For more information on collections care and exhibit development, go to the THC's Museum Services at http://www.thc.state.tx.us/preserve/projects-and-

programs/museum-services. *Continue offering appropriate on and off-site educational opportunities and special events to audiences of all ages. *Continue to prominently display visitor information for other Gonzales and regional attractions at the entrance of the museum. *Add gift shop items for all ages that relate to the museum's mission and enables visitors to contribute financially to the museum. *Make regular use of the museum's amphitheater. Establish it as an open-air venue for concerts, historical talks and performances.

3. Gonzales County Jail Museum and Visitor's Center

STRENGTHS: *Built in 1887 of brick and designed by architect Eugene T. Heiner, this architectural treasure was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975 and designated as a State Antiquities Landmark in 1981. The structure was in use as a jail until 1975 and currently houses the Gonzales Chamber of Commerce & Agriculture (who will be relocating to a more suitable building in the near future), and the Gonzales County Historical Commission who operates the rest of the building as a museum and gives tours when present. (SEE CONCERNS and OPPORTUNITIES) *Sufficient street parking. *Free admission fee. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) *Adequate size for population served. *Decent operational hours; Thursday through Saturday, 10:30am – 3:30pm in January & February; Tuesday through Saturday, 10:30am – 3:30pm in March - December. *Excellent potential resides in the structure, the memories of its inhabitants (on both sides of the cell bars), as well as the museum's law enforcement collections, and public records to assemble a lively picture of Gonzales County's law-and-order heritage. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) *Friendly, knowledgeable staff. *Self-guided and guided tours. Guided tours are available for groups by advance appointment. *A very limited gift shop. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) *No rotating exhibit space. (SEE CONCERNS and OPPORTUNITIES) *Provides some public outreach for children and adults including educational school programs/tours. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES)

CONCERNS: *Although much work has been done in the past few years, interpretive and conservation issues are still pervasive in this architecturally significant jail including poor labeling methods, inadequate signage, no temperature controls, improper display of original photographs, paper and textiles, and unclean displays. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) *Additional interpretation of the exhibits, artifacts and memorabilia for those who don't want a guided tour would increase the visitor experience. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) *The exhibit display cases are static so there is little incentive for repeat visitation to the actual museum if not participating in a special event or educational program. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES)

OPPORTUNITIES: *Continue engaging in various fundraising and other activities to help improve the interpretation and displays. *Continue exploring non-traditional partnerships to raise funds through activities like space rental, special events (such as a 1950s style Jailhouse Rock party) and/or docent led jail tours. *Host open houses at the jail so residents and visitors can understand its history and work to help preserve it. *Expand the offerings at the gift shop to include items for all ages that relate to the museum's mission and enables visitors to contribute financially to the museum. *Continue to prominently display visitor information for other Gonzales and regional attractions at the entrance of the museum. *Add additional interpretation of the exhibits, artifacts and memorabilia for those who don't want a guided tour. *Inclusion of an area for rotating exhibits would give visitors and locals who have been to the museum a reason to come back several times a year. *Utilize the museum exclusively to tell the law enforcement story of Gonzales County with artifacts, interpretation and exhibits. *Avoid displays of original photos and documents. For more information on collections care and exhibit development, go to the THC's Museum Services at http://www.thc.state.tx.us/preserve/projects-andprograms/museum-services. Consult THC Museum Services staff for additional tips on museum revamping projects, funding sources and contact with other jail-house museums in Texas that have succeeded in dealing with the structural and design constraints that are inherent in the conversion of

old lockups. *Catalog jailhouse graffiti; continue interpreting the cells without changing their condition. *Interpret the Sheriff's office realistically, as if it were still in use. In the lobby area, continue to install general exhibits highlighting the jail, former law enforcement figures, incidents and building history. Use pedestals and plex boxes of all sizes to display small items. Create environments that tell stories. Use freestanding panels to create traffic flow and flexibility of design. *Once you have upgraded your exhibits, do not hesitate to charge reasonable entrance fees to recoup some of your costs. Visitors generally expect to pay for high quality visitor experiences. *Continue offering appropriate on and off-site educational opportunities and special events to audiences of all ages.

4. Historical driving tour, including First Shot of the Texas Revolution Monument Site, First Shot Battleground, Braches House and Sam Houston Oak (part of the First Shot Monument District), and Gonzales Pioneer Village Living History Center

STRENGTHS: *The iconic sites included in the historical driving tour are a pivotal part of the Texas independence story and deserve to be recognized as such. Signage leading visitors from site to site is lacking. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) First Shot of the Texas Revolution Monument and First Shot Battleground: The interpretive signage at the First Shot Monument site is extremely helpful for setting the context of the Texas Revolution. *Braches House and Sam Houston Oak: The 1840 plantation style house became a stop for wagon trains and stage coaches. On this site is a large oak tree that will forever be known as "the Sam Houston Oak" because it is the location where the general and his army camped the first morning of the "Runaway Scrape" after Gonzales was ordered to be burned. Access to the site is by appointment only and a small fee is required. The Braches House looks good from the outside, but the interior needs extensive repairs. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) Gonzales Pioneer Village Living History Center: A five-acre preserve for historic Gonzales architecture, Pioneer Village features 12 relocated structures from the 19th century. Pioneer Village volunteers regularly conducts individual site interpretations, living history and pioneer skills programs for school children and visitors. And walk-in visitors are always welcome. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES)

OPPORTUNITIES: *Directional signage is sorely needed to guide visitors to each of these sites especially since several of them are outside Gonzales' city limits. First Shot of the Texas Revolution Monument and First Shot Battleground: Additional interpretation at the First Shot Battleground would be helpful. The only indication that this is an important historic site is a small marker which seems very sad sitting out on a small patch of land in the middle of the road. If there is ever an opportunity to acquire the land around the marker, please consider purchasing it and installing additional interpretation of the site. *Braches House and Sam Houston Oak: *Ensure that visitors are aware that the house and tree are not open to the public without prior arrangement. However, if it is OK for visitors to go to the site with the knowledge that they won't be able to go inside the gate but can take pictures of the house and oak tree from the road, please let them know that as well. The interior of the house is in desperate need of extensive repairs. If the house can be restored in some capacity, it could be utilized for a variety of uses including meetings, parties, weddings and other special events to recoup some of the restoration costs. Gonzales Pioneer Village Living History Center: Continue utilizing the site for special events as a fundraising mechanism, along with donations, grants and interest-bearing endowment fund, admissions, gift sales, and annual special events, as well as conducting outreach to school children.

5. DuBose Gun Collection and Vickie Bushong Document Collection in the Robert Lee Brothers, Jr Memorial Library

STRENGTHS: *Both collections are located in the Robert Lee Brothers, Jr Memorial Library, the city's public library, and are open during regular library hours. *DuBose Collection*: *The DuBose Collection is the largest private collection of guns and militaria on display in the US. The exhibit is impressive, even if

you aren't particularly fond of firearms, and contains many rare and one-of-a- kind items. *Self-guided tours. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) *Vickie Bushong Collection:* *The Vickie Bushong Collection is the largest private collection of Texas Revolutionary Documents on display. The Collection is quite remarkable and includes original documents signed by Santa Anna, Davey Crockett, William B. Travis, and Sam Houston, among others, as well as original photographs of Quanah Parker. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES)

OPPORTUNITIES: *Ensure that both collections are featured prominently in all promotional materials, on the website and in advertising campaigns since the library is not a usual stop for a visitor, and make sure you include examples of some of the documents, firearms and artifacts that you will see to give those visitors a better understanding of the impressiveness of the collections and encourage them to stop by and view them while in Gonzales. And the Vickie Bushong Collection should be included in all promotional activities of Texas Revolution sites. *Revise the rack card to include additional information on the collections themselves, i.e. some of their most important firearms, artifacts documents, instead of devoting the majority of the text to Charles DuBose and Vickie Bushong. DuBose Collection:
*Additional interpretation of the guns and other artifacts in the collection is warranted and would increase the visitor experience exponentially especially for those who aren't gun enthusiasts. At a minimum, there should be a booklet available to visitors describing each firearm and artifact in the collection much like is done for the documents in the Vickie Bushong Collection. If funds are limited then only provide one copy for on-site use.

6. J.B. Wells Park, Independence Park and/or other Gonzales area parks or undeveloped park areas OPPORTUNITIES: *Consider developing hike and bike trails to serve multiple purposes in J.B. Wells Park, Independence Park and/or other Gonzales area parks or undeveloped park areas. Some of these parks may be better suited for this purpose than others. *Utilize low-tech interpretive choices like signage and maps, giving hikers and bikers rest areas that serve as health and history stops. Aransas County is doing this on their hike and bike trail from Rockport to Fulton. Collectively known as Aransas Pathways, more information can be found here: http://aransaspathways.com/category/hike-bike/. (Figure 2) And in Maryland, the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation has designed its new bikeway using a similar format. You can explore more here: http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dte/Resources/Files/2014-06-25-20BTT-20Wayside-

http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dte/Resources/Files/2014-06-25-20BTT-20Wayside-20Boards.pdf . (Figure 3)



Figure 2. Interpretive signage along the Aransas County hike and bike trail from Rockport to Fulton.

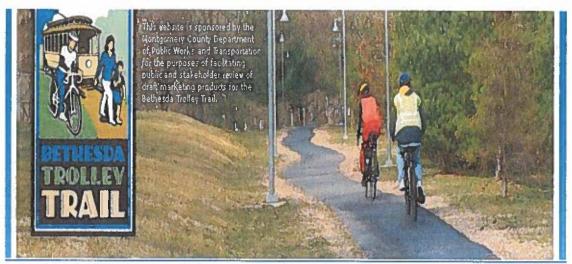


Figure 3. The Bethesda Trolley Trail displays interpretive signage at historical stops for hikers and bikers.

7. Accommodations, including Belle Oaks Inn

STRENGTHS: *There is a good number and variety of lodging opportunities in Gonzales and the surrounding area. There are currently eight hotels and motels, two boutique hotels and six traditional Bed & Breakfasts and Inns in the Gonzales area. (SEE OPPORTUNITIES) *Belle Oaks Inn is a beautifully restored magnificent Louisiana Plantation Style mansion that sits among centuries old Live Oaks and tranquil gardens surrounding a reflecting pond and pool. The guest rooms are handsomely appointed with fine antiques each with private bathrooms, and offers nice amenities such as coffee makers, refrigerators and televisions that aren't available in most B&Bs at an extremely reasonable room rate per night. The inn also offers a delicious gourmet breakfast with the finest hospitality. Belle Oaks Inn is truly a destination in and of itself and is the type of historic lodging that heritage tourists seek out in communities.

OPPORTUNITIES: *Development of an additional boutique hotel and more Bed & Breakfast offerings will encourage more heritage tourists, high value visitors, to spend the night in Gonzales as these tourists are looking for unique accommodation experiences. *Recruitment of a high-end chain hotel, when possible, will also attract heritage tourists and others looking for a more upscale experience.

8. Downtown Gonzales area including Historic Main Street, 1885 Gonzales County Jail Museum, Confederate Square, Church Square, Military Square, Market Square, George Davis' Peach Orchard-Gonzales Cannon Burial Site, Indian Fort, Buffalo Crossing Monument, Site of "First Confrontation", Campsite Marking Start of San Jacinto Campaign, Riverside School, First Shot Monument District, Robert Lee Brothers, Jr Memorial Library, 1896 Gonzales County Courthouse, 1838 Gonzales City Cemetery, 1870 IOOF Cemetery, 1850 Green DeWitt Cemetery, Jewish Cemetery, Masonic Cemetery, Sam Houston Oak and the Braches House, Pioneer Village Living History Center, location on the historic Chisholm Trail, 1914 Oak Forest Bridge, Independence Park, J.B. Wells Park, James Bailey Wells Home, 1863 Fort Waul, and Historic Driving and Walking tours, including historic homes OPPORTUNITIES: *Although most of these historic, cultural and natural assets are not destinations unto themselves, the resources in totality are extremely enticing for a heritage tourist, especially one interested in the Texas Revolution. Expanding the authentic and unique heritage offerings at each of these sites and then packaging them together could equal an experience that visitors would thoroughly enjoy! *To attract additional heritage tourists, consider ways of interpreting the natural heritage and

history, such as through the use of interpretive panels and rack cards, as time and resources permit.

*Leverage Gonzales' location on the historic Chisholm Trail, the major Longhorn cattle route in Texas for livestock from 1867 to 1884, to draw a different audience segment to your community. *Ensure that the sites are featured prominently in all promotional materials, on the website and in advertising campaigns, including the First Shot Monument District. *Cross promote the heritage aspect of these experiences with the natural heritage and the variety of activities each of them offers to present a more complete picture of what is available to visitors. *Strategically placed interpretive panels provide another opportunity to convey the stories of places where history occurred, but no physical evidence remains. *Create thematic and time specific itineraries based on your assets to help visitors more easily plan a trip to Gonzales. Consumers are stretched thin these days and the more ideas you can give them up-front, the higher the likelihood they will visit your community. *Consider packaging some or all of these experiences for visitors as half day, day long, or two-day experiences through the American Bus Association (http://www.buses.org/). The motor coach, travel and tour industry creates jobs, provides access for rural communities, and contributes to environmental sustainability. Provide step-on guides to tell the historic significance and other stories of these resources.

*Continue developing dynamic programming for children at Gonzales Pioneer Village Living History Center, Gonzales Memorial Museum and elsewhere. You have built-in audiences of children and their parents and the opportunity to start building the next generation of preservationists who understand and value their community. Take advantage of it by providing age appropriate events and activities downtown! *Ensure that whatever products are developed from these various experiences are featured prominently in all promotional materials, on the website and in advertising campaigns.

*Gonzales' visitor website (http://www.gonzalestx.travel/) is comprehensive but is not presented in an graphically pleasing or easy to read format and is short on useful and specific information that visitors want before deciding where to travel. This is important because potential visitors could get frustrated if the information that they seek isn't right at their fingertips and might simply move on to another destination! *Gonzalestx.travel does not link to nor work in concert with the visitor information provided on the Chamber of Commerce & Agriculture's website here: https://gonzalestexas.com/visitor-information/ which is extremely confusing for visitors. *And the Events calendar is trying (and failing) to be all things to all people as it is filled with local events for residents, as well as larger events for visitors, many of which are short on specifics. *Visit Palestine has done a good job addressing the needs of visitors with their website, which can be found here: https://www.visitpalestine.com/. *Ensure that the website is mobile friendly. Consumers, for the most part, are no longer interested in mobile apps for community wide information but do require mobile responsive websites. Include thematic and time specific itineraries on your website to help different visitor segments plan their trip to Gonzales. *Keeping the Tour Gonzales Texas Facebook page relevant, up-to-date and responding to inquiries in a timely manner is also essential for engaging current and potential visitors.

*Additional signage is needed throughout Gonzales and on-site to inform travelers of the existence of these assets and to direct visitors to sites in the First Shot Monument District, especially those that are out of town. *Although visitor information is displayed prominently in the Chamber of Commerce and several other locations, displaying local brochures of the sites, restaurants and shops to potential visitors at other sites where visitors stop, including your antique stores and specialty shops throughout the community is also important. Gonzales is missing a huge opportunity if it doesn't provide tourism information at these venues.

*Develop a regional heritage tourism itinerary with other Gonzales County communities that are within an hour or so drive to Gonzales that have some heritage and cultural assets, but no or little lodging. This regional approach could be a win-win for all communities involved by enticing tourists to visit every

community in the itinerary (some which travelers might not visit otherwise), spend money, and return to Gonzales to spend the night. This regional approach is actually the basis of the Texas Heritage Trails Program (THTP). A good example of a regional heritage tourism itinerary was a Partnership Grant that the THTP funded in 2002. (Unfortunately, due to a greatly reduced agency budget, these grants are no longer offered.) The project was titled "A Trail of Three Cities" Heritage Driving Tour and was a tri-city heritage tourism brochure for the Main Street Communities of Mount Vernon, Mount Pleasant and Pittsburg in East Texas. The mission of the project was to target the heritage tourist, foster cooperation between the three cities, and retain the tourist in the region for a longer period of time, thereby increasing tourism traffic and revenue. At the time of submission, only one of these communities had lodging - Pittsburg. The brochure featured points of interest in and between the three cities and provided a mapped driving tour designating historic sites along the "trail" between the three cities. When completed, it was a 9" x 3" full color, glossy tri-fold publication. The brochure was very popular and has been updated and reprinted through the years although it is currently not available. The THC does have a single copy of the brochure should you be



interested in seeing it, and/or using it as a model for a Gonzales/Gonzales County regional heritage tourism itinerary.

*Empower the City of Gonzales, Gonzales Main Street, the Gonzales Chamber of Commerce, Gonzales Economic Development Corporation and others involved in tourism to be ambassadors for Gonzales through mini FAM tours of area attractions and hospitality training. (SEE Downtown Gonzales Area).

9. Gonzales Historic and Cultural Events

STRENGTHS: *There are currently at least 13 annual events and festivals that take place in Gonzales, many of them historic and cultural in nature, including the well-known Come and Take It Celebration, which is a sufficient number for a community of its size. (SEE CONCERNS and OPPORTUNITIES) *The first ever Come & Taste It- Craft Beer, Wine & Art Festival took place in April 2018. *There is a desire by city leadership to create additional events to encourage more "heads in beds". (SEE CONCERNS and OPPORTUNITIES)

concerns: *Creating additional events for the primary purpose of putting "heads in beds" is no sustainable in the long run. Staff and volunteer burn-out, as well as disruptions for "regular" vi residents are real concerns if too many events are planned in a community. There is also the fear that many of your festivals are targeting the same audience so they will become less likely to attend brand new festivals and events. *Read about the top eight trends regarding the future of festivals here: https://www.eventbrite.com/blog/academy/the-future-of-festivals-8-trends-you-need-to-know/.

OPPORTUNITIES: *Instead of creating new events and festivals, consider adding more "value added" aspects of current events to encourage visitors to spend an additional night, such as special behind the scene tours, meet and greets with special guests/entertainers, and/or historical writers workshops.

Gonzales Investment Areas

In order to make Gonzales a tourism destination to rival other similarly sized communities, such as Georgetown and Goliad, leadership must invest in two things: your story and your community.

Your Story: Come and Take It is the compelling storyline of Gonzales and a considerable investment of time and resources is needed to ensure you are engaging visitors in the most dynamic, entertaining and educational ways to retain them and recruit others. Since heritage tourists spend more money than other types of tourists, they expect all of their experiences to be high quality and first rate. If you expect these visitors to come to Gonzales more than once, you must invest in the primary location where your story is told by restoring the 1936-37 Gonzales Memorial Museum and Amphitheater (built with funds allocated by the Texas Centennial Celebration and the Works Progress Administration), and redesigning its exhibits in a more visitor friendly and professional way using first-class interpretation since it also houses your most significant artifact, the Come and Take It cannon. Look at the Layland Museum of History in Cleburne (http://laylandmuseum.com/) and the Williamson Museum in Georgetown (http://williamsonmuseum.org/) to serve as examples of what the Gonzales Memorial Museum could aspire to be with professionally developed exhibits. Tie the museum back to other Texas Revolution sites, including site of the First Shot of the Texas Revolution Monument, First Shot Battleground and the Sam Houston Oak by investing in additional interpretation and development at those places as warranted. Utilize the amphitheater for historical re-enactments and other events, as appropriate. Additional landscaping on the museum grounds is also warranted since the building in and of itself is rather stark. Contact a university landscape architecture department for assistance in developing a community-wide landscape plan. Develop restoration and funding plans for significant historic sites in Gonzales, including the Gonzales Memorial Museum and Amphitheater.

Your Community: Heritage tourists want to visit communities that value their heritage and project a positive image for all to see! Gonzales has a way to go on this one. In addition to beautifying downtown, which is expounded upon above, the entire city could use a facelift. You are fortunate that the city still owns the land that makes up the original seven public squares laid out in the center of town established in 1825 when Gonzales was formed. (The 49 original blocks and seven public squares now form the first Texas History Museum District, which needs to be promoted better.) However, with this comes a responsibility to care for these areas. These open spaces that provide a corridor into the heart of Gonzales and your parklands should not only be maintained, but beautified, cemeteries cleaned, and entryways landscaped. The City of Austin has developed comprehensive General Management Guidelines for cemeteries based on a Preservation Treatment Approach which can be found here: https://www.austintexas.gov/cmp . Continue your pursuit as a Certified Local Government through the Texas Historical Commission (http://www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/projects-andprograms/certified-local-government) to help better protect your historic resources. Once you receive this designation, Gonzales will also be eligible for grants to help you develop and sustain an effective local preservation program critical to preserving local historic resources (http://www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/projects-and-programs/certified-local-government/grant-information). Beautifying Gonzales not only improves its image for visitors, but also makes the community a better plants. residents to live, work and play as well. Right or wrong, the image of a city directly ties back to its cless and how inviting it is for visitors. Beautifying the entire community through quality of life ordinances, efforts and landscaping will help Gonzales project a positive image. Visitors, as well as residents, will appreciate your efforts.

Regional and Statewide Heritage Tourism Resources

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) plans and implements heritage tourism activities across the state through the Texas Heritage Trails Program (THTP). This initiative fosters preservation and economic development by encouraging communities, especially rural ones, to work together to promote Texas' historic and cultural resources. (Figure 4)

The THTP facilitates local assistance and promotion through 10 heritage regions that stretch across the state. Regional organizations partner with the THC to facilitate individual site development and involvement of regional communities as well as promotion of the entire region as a heritage tourism destination.



Trails Regions.

Gonzales is part of the Texas Independence Trail Region. Board meetings for

the Independence Trail Region organization are paired with opportunities to learn about topics related to heritage tourism development through workshops and educational seminars, as well as visiting other towns in the region. Gonzales has been a partner off and on since the region's inception. Gonzales Tourism Director, Clint Hille, is currently on the Independence Trail Region board of directors and Gonzales was the host city for the highly successful 2019 Texian Rally. I applaud Clint for his service on the board and encourage other interested parties in Gonzales to continue attending Independence Trail Region board meetings and other events arranged by the region and serving on the board of directors. This will allow the community to become more involved by working on specific Independence Trail Region projects that may be of particular interest to the city and county.

Gonzales should ensure that heritage and cultural events are listed on the Texas Independence Trail Region website calendar of events which can be accessed at http://texasindependencetrail.com/events for additional exposure to potential visitors. This is a free service and Gonzales currently does not take advantage of this opportunity as there are no Gonzales event listings on the statewide calendar.

Contact Seneca McAdams to learn more about the current initiatives of the Texas Independence Trail Region, to collaborate on additional ways Gonzales can participate, and determine how the Independence Trail Region can continue to serve and promote your visitor programs.

Texas Independence Trail Region

Seneca McAdams, Executive Director 2305 South Day St. #208, Brenham, TX 77833 Office/Cell: 281.239.9235

info@texasindependencetrail.com www.texasindependencetrail.com

THC heritage tourism staff is available to answer questions regarding the Texas Heritage Trails Program or to consult about heritage tourism. Tourism and marketing specialists can assist communities and sites with heritage tourism needs.

Texas Heritage Trails Program

Community Heritage Development Division Texas Historical Commission

P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276 Phone: 512.463.6092; Fax: 512.463.5862 Email: community-heritage@thc.texas.gov

Website: www.thc.texas.gov

The Heritage Tourism Guidebook

Learn more about the benefits of partnerships and heritage tourism for the community by reading and distributing a resource offered by the Texas Historical Commission (THC), the *Heritage Tourism Guidebook*. This guide will walk the reader through the National Trust for Historic Preservation's four-steps of tourism development:

- 1. Assess the potential
- 2. Plan and organize
- 3. Prepare, protect and manage
- 4. Market for success

Following each of these steps will ensure careful planning based on community needs. The Guidebook is available as a PDF download from the THC web site at http://www.thc.texas.gov.

Section 3 – Texas Department of Transportation Notes By Lois Rodriguez

STRENGTHS

Gonzales is rich with possibilities. The community has a historic base of buildings that cannot be duplicated elsewhere. And you have a solid foundation of Texas history for which to hang your hat. The community is perfect for the heritage tourism that you tout.

Location is a great daytrip from Houston, San Antonio or Austin, among other places.

I also believe in the leadership that is currently in place is poised to take Gonzales to the next level.

Things to be very proud of – brag ruthlessly about it, even.

- The crucial "Come and Take it" aspect of Texas' history
- The only centennial museum still owned by a municipality.
- A 'Pioneer Village' depicting life in the Gonzales Colony throughout the nineteenth century.
- · An earthen fort, built during the American Civil War
- Texas' only Historical Museum District
- Cool Old Jail Museum
- Lots of downtown parking (comparatively)
- The HotRods and Hatters can be huge (and you know that)

You are doing a lot of things right, including participating in Texas Downtown Association and the Main Street Program, networking at events like Unity Dinner (hopefully getting some shared feedback from other communities).

WHO'S AT THE TABLE

Gonzales' growth will depend greatly, not only on who the key players are, but that the key players are working cooperatively. This will be a concerted effort and there should be little, if no, gaps in communication. Strongly suggest that key players – Clint, Genora, Daisy, Barbara ... - meet regularly to establish community goals and to keep the conversation going as progress is made toward those goals. Progress will not happen without all hands on deck.

BRANDING

Gonzales has a strong hook to build upon – Come and Take it. And local businesses and residents seem to embrace that, so that's a wonderful start. Work to solidify that brand Create a sense of place for visitors to gravitate. How do you plan to sell/market Gonzales?

The community also has its antiques and historic homes market, too. Where does that fit in to the branding? Or does it? This is something that must be established – a uniform brand and logo that identifies the community. This is not just for appearance sake, but because you have to know what the community's identity is before you can successfully market it.

Uniform presentation of branding on all aspects regarding Gonzales/tourism. Websites, advertisements, tourism pamphlets, signage in the community, downtown banners, businesses,

and more should all adopt this branding/logo and use it in marketing (branding/logo guidelines established and adhered to). Your community also needs some huge welcome mat that says "Welcome to Gonzales!" Even if it doesn't say welcome, the point is, how will visitors know they've arrived?

The stretch of 183 in Gonzales coming from Austin, at least, could use sprucing up and there seems to be opportunity to include entry into the city. (Code enforcement goes a long way to help clean up community.)

I see a logo of a cannon. Is that strong enough? Does that let a visitor get a concept of what Gonzales is? Will they recognize it?

Make Gonzales' story in Texas history easily consumable in marketing efforts. We'd like to think everyone knows their Texas history, but ...

HOSPITALITY TRAINING

Hospitality training programs are available (https://agrilife.org/texasfriendly/), or you can set up your own (get someone locally certified as a hospitality trainer if there isn't one already), but it's crucial that your front-line ambassadors — hotel, restaurant, shop employees, etc. — be well trained in hospitality and well-versed on Gonzales' offerings.

The treatment that visitors receive at these establishments can make or break all the hard work you all do.

Make sure these front-line ambassadors know what Gonzales has to offer. Perhaps offer fam tours (much like we received) to these employees. That way, when someone asks what there is to do in town, they have solid answers.

Work with hotel chains to see if they will allow you to provide local pamphlets for visitors. I may have heard that they do not. Try to make them understand how they benefit from it. If that does not work, then simply provide a binder of information for hotel employees to be able to refer to when answering guest questions.

Build a genuine relationship with hotel managers. They should feel an integral part of Gonzales' tourism plan.

Getting community buy-in is important. The more you get in on supporting Gonzales, the more it will show to visitors.

WALKABILITY OF DOWNTOWN

Pedestrian street crossing signals

Consider walkability factor of downtown. It may seem like a non-issue, but crossing signals are important to making pedestrians feel safe about walking downtown. There's a steady flow of traffic running through there, and I think it would help pedestrians know you want them there, too.

Historic Downtown Gonzales

If I go to GonzalesTravel.travel and look for information on Historic Downtown Gonzales, I get a pretty good loop that goes to nowhere. I know the information exists on the site, but with that header, we should be able to find a definitive bit of information here about what makes it special.

Needs: Content to briefly explain what makes it special, then highlights of the local (emphasis on those relevant to tourists) businesses, buildings, history and events that make this particular acreage of Gonzales a worthwhile (and walkable) stop.

http://www.gonzalestx.travel/business/historic-downtown-gonzales

Downtown Appeal

What makes residents come downtown. Building a vibrant community for residents usually translates to things visitors will enjoy, too.

Downtown Space

Give them reasons to be there, create the things that residents and visitors are asking to have:

- Curated Farmers markets (no junk sales)
- Food trailers. Make it a weekend event like a Food Trailer Tailgate, for example, to draw interest. Repeat if successful.
- Outdoor film screening. Kid or family-friendly films that give residents something to do
 with their children. Food trucks or encourage picnic lunches. Just create the space for
 them. They will fill it.
- Play day for youngsters. Again, create the space of kid games, races, activities etc. with help from a school or teachers group.
- Encourage existing groups to find ways to host a downtown event that brings life there.
- Ask businesses to make the sidewalks more appealing to foot traffic. Outside table set up would be great for the restaurants, for example. Seeing people experience downtown will encourage more to do so.
- Reward strong store displays.

Invite community organizations to adopt a street for beautification (with assistance in keeping it uniform – identical planters, etc.

EDC

EDC is a treasure that not every community has. The EDC's Small Business Incentive Grant, Mainstreet Business Improvement Grant and more are wonderful assets toward building up downtown, especially. Have a vision for downtown, put it out there and let the businesses fall in line.

EDC's featured properties.

Make a sales pitch on the featured properties to entice, beyond a photo. Make a suggestion for what might be great there (what you'd like to see, even). Include information on each listing

(even if the answer is the EDC) on where to go for more information. Remove any obstacles from having people get to you.

http://www.gonzalesedc.org/business/332-st-george

You may be aware of these, but there are some additional grant options listed here on the Texas Municipal League site. https://www.tml.org/grants

Meet with key players of the community to establish which businesses will serve the community, and downtown especially, and work give the EDC a guide to work toward.

OPPORTUNITIES

Come and Take it Monument by Pompeo Coppini – what other sculptures did he do? What makes him famous? Where can other examples of his work be seen? Make it not only about what it symbolizes, but also raise interest and value in it by also spotlighting the sculptor. Apologies if this information is there, but I didn't not see that sign if it exists.

Publicity

The historic homes are fabulous, with a few affordable ones on the market, even. Couldn't hurt to make a pitch to Chip and Joanna Gaines to step out of their comfort zone and explore a home in your area. They are currently working on a "castle" in Waco. They may be interested in a challenge to branch out.

Gonzales native Bill Stubbs in a noted interior designer. It's been a while since his last book, but maybe invite him as a guest of honor for a special event during a homes tour program, and pitch the angle to media (outside your area) and architectural/design magazines to help build some extra attention to your treasures. Some will need to be educated on who he is, but they'll get that he's from Gonzales and he's an expert in this stuff. Ideally, he'll market his presence, too, to his fan base.

Passport to Gonzales/Itineraries:

A easy-to-follow guide to Gonzales - all in one or broken into categories for historic homes, historic sites, Come and Take it Tour, etc. Providing easy guides/itineraries to experience Gonzales. Packaging it makes it easier for visitors to follow and to put it all together, rather than a scattering of sites.

Break itineraries down by days to set a reason for them to stay more than one night.

Regional marketing to improve your assets – market as daytrips, but establish Gonzales be home base for overnight stays.

Get the branding down first, because any new guides produced going forward should wait until you have a solid Gonzales brand/logo.

EVENTS/ACTIVITIES

Meet with local non-profits and community organizations to get their input on regular activities. Encourage organization to take on an event – with some city support - to fill quiet months of the year (leaving Goliad Days and the HotRods and Hatters event as highlights of their respective months). This would help take the weight off the usual city event planners. Ideas:

- Extra special October Ghost Tour/event on the Square (Halloween event)
- Back in time picnic hosted at Eggleston House grounds or the grounds of the Sam Houston Oak and Pioneer Village. Encourage people to pack a picnic and enjoy period music, some players dressed in period garb hosting lawn games and craft demonstrations. Bring Gonzales' history to life.

How do you see someone spending the day in Gonzales? Who is coming now? And from where are they coming?

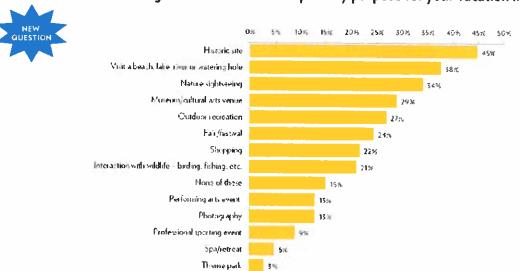
Texas Highways readers are known to act on what they read in the pages, which is exactly what we want set out to do – encourage travel in the state. We asked readers what appeals to them most. The main answers are things Gonzales can get behind. In order of interest, they said:

- Historic Site Gonzales has this is droves.
- Beach, lake, river or watering hole Maximize publicity of river usage. Establish a
 paddling trail with proper signage and promotion. Promote the river that you have as a
 source of activities/experiential travel.
- Nature sightseeing
- Museum/cultural arts venues
- Outdoor recreation Independence Park seems underutilized. Maybe create disc golf
 course and have a local qualified source offer, at least initial, lessons to encourage
 participation and get it going. Seeing people use the park aids in the vision of Gonzales
 as a place to be. Downtown is key, but occasional events or finding ways to promote its
 use (Easter at the park just reminding people to be there).
- Fair/Festival Make the most of the HotRods and Hatters. It's going to draw a new group of visitors and Gonzales needs that infused energy to go along with those interested in the community's history. Create more Gonzales-centric events that will be of interest to residents, but invite all the visitors you can. You want destination events.
- Shopping Tout antique shopping, promote local businesses, create a shopper's guide
- Birding/Fishing, etc. Give birders guides to what they can find in Gonzales. Highlight hotspots. Offer a birding checklist, etc. Reach out to those groups, easily found on Facebook.
- Performing arts
- Photography Reach out to photo enthusiasts (and locals) and give them subjects to cover in Gonzales. Use those images to create content for your social media sites.
 Instagram is perfect for this, too. Note hashtags comment below. Get others to create that image content that will publicize Gonzales.

TRAVEL BEHAVIOR

Primary purpose for vacation

Q. Which of the following activities have been a primary purpose for your vacation in Texas?



Source 201/ Smith Johnson Reader Survey

SOCIAL MEDIA

No matter what you do in your community, use your website and social media to market it widely and proudly. Trust that there's a bigger audience outside of the city boundaries that would love to know what Gonzales has to offer.

This, alone, will do wonders to help whatever efforts you embark on. And be sure to stick to the subject of visitors and travel. As in, feel free to talk about downtown revitalization as it affects visitors, but not as it pertains to routine city business.

Hashtags

At a quick glance, I've seen #gonzalestx and #comeantiqueit, but I've missed seeing #comeandtakeit?

Set a set of standard hashtags and use them consistently. Encourage businesses, residents and visitors to use them, too. Ask for photos on your social media sites. Ask for specific photos if you like. Reshare the best photos on social media to generate content and to help publicize Gonzales.

Be consistent on Facebook. It's essential. At least once a day if possible. Some social media tips are included in case that is helpful.

Instagram is your best bet for additional social media efforts, if possible. BOTH are strong marketing tools and

Analyze and tweak all marketing efforts – from social to print. Know what works and learn from efforts.

GonzalesTxTravel site

Visuals are essential, but it's just a directory with no local expertise. Take the opportunity to show people shopping at some of the antique shops, at Discovery, Angels and Outlaws, Sweet Bs, shop to showcase some of the unique finds. Pick the best opportunities. Don't worry about who owns what or who is a member of the chamber.

If this is the Gonzales Travel page and not the Chamber page, there's no need to include A-line Auto Parts, AutoZone, Family Dollar, Greg's Computers, liquor stores and other businesses that you can find in any number of other communities. This is your chance to show what sets Gonzales apart.

I imagine active shots of a nice scoop being served, a shopper holding up/looking at a colorful option (or trying on an accessory -hat/scarf,etc.) at Angels and Outlaws; someone fascinated by a rare find at an antique store; serious shoppers finding the perfect door at Discovery Artictechrual antiques; Botas Matamoros?

Driving Walking Tour

You list sites, but how about creating a map to put those sites into perspective. Otherwise, it's the equivalent of an non-curated directory. Your expert advice will help break these down into manageable drives/walks if they can place them easily.

Plus, there needs to be an explanation to say: Gonzales has Historic homes, and (whatever makes your number of sites special) and spend a day walking or driving to see each. Pamphlet available at Visitor Center?

"Home of the Come and Take it Cannon" font is difficult to read. If you came upon the site and didn't know it was that, it would be difficult to make it out./

GET ONLINE

Encourage local businesses to be online. That is where visitors go to find information. If they don't find it, they can just assume it does not exist. So many businesses and attractions do not seem to have websites. Even a basic one.

At least have a FB link where information can be shared and visitors can interact by sharing thoughts, photos of themselves at the place.

TOUR GUIDES

Your tour guides were priceless, but if Gonzales' history is to be at the forefront of its identity, there needs to be more than two history experts on hand. Consider a tour guide training certification program where that historic knowledge is dispersed and can be maintained. Don't run short on storytellers. The more the better.

FREE PUBLICITY

TxDOT's Travel Information Division offers several ways to share your community's information with the target traveling audience. Resources (information attached) include listings in the Texas State Travel Guide, Texas Highways Events Calendar, free placement of Gonzales pamphlets/materials at the 12 Texas Travel Information Centers across the state. Use these free resources to get out Gonzales's message. Because they reach people already looking to travel, they are especially effective tools.

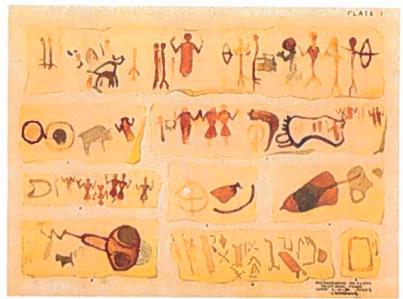
RECAP on NEEDS

- Branding/Identity
- Restaurants. Plus, encourage restaurants to establish a small seating area in front of their business so that it helps add "life" to downtown. Passersby will be drawn to the place that looks like others are enjoying it.
- Diversity of shops. You have some great ones now, so support and encourage them as
 best you can and work for others to come. Visitors would like to have at least 5 stops in
 the downtown area to just make a day of it. Parking is not a concern.
- Better crosswalks to encourage foot traffic
- More Downtown activities. Give them reasons to be there. Signs of life breeds more signs of life. An active downtown will help it grow. Events and activities are ways to do that without any structural changes.
- Web/social media presence That's the first stop for most people.
- Regional/County-wide partnership to maximize attractions

Building Your Social Media Family and Maximizing Your Social Media Reach

BACKGROUND

In Paint Rock, Texas, cliff walls are adorned by complex pictographs — messages shared by Native Americans as art, stories and documentation of their surroundings. The messages were, no doubt, powerful, useful and a strong contributor to the culture of the day. It's likely that some wall sections had more clout than others. It's human nature to want to



share stories just as it is human nature to gravitate to the better ones.

Today, we have more advanced tools for writing on our "walls", but we are still competing to tell the better story. Only now, we're doing it on a global scale. So, what stories are you telling? And is your audience listening?

PROBLEM

Businesses have gotten on the social media bandwagon, but too many are just along for the ride, or they're chasing their tails trying to master each new social networking service that comes along. The strategies presented here aim to help put you in the driver's seat and steer the results in your direction, even as the road ahead curves, dips, rises and presents a few obstacles.

SOLUTION

1. Social Media Strategy

First, establish a social media strategy. It's crucial to have a well-thought out strategy that ties into your objectives and target markets.

Like charting a course for a destination, you need a roadmap and the tools to get you there. You need a strategy to guide you and help you know when you're headed in the right direction.

If a strategy is not in place, you're not alone. Create one.

About 82 percent of tourism business are participating in social media but getting very limited results. The reason is that they don't have a well thought out strategy that ties in to their objectives and target markets.

To develop the strategy, you must ask/answer a few questions.

What is your objective? What do you want to achieve through social media? How can you do that in the most efficient and inexpensive way? Who are you trying to reach?

Presumably, your objective is to build an online community that you can connect with and reach out to on a regular basis through social media to increase your database, promote your community, build your brand, share a promotion and, on occasion, make a sales pitch.

Being clear of your message/focus will help you stay on point and relevant. Your postings should reflect that message. People will come to have expectations, and you'll lose them if those expectations are not met.

Be the expert and go-to resource for Gonzales. Own it!



2. Brand Messaging

Branding is not what you want it to be; it is what people perceive it to be.

Figure out how you want to be perceived and then post, respond and share accordingly.

Depending on resources, there may be one or many people posting on your organization's behalf. That social media staff is on the front lines of branding. Establish a tone that is reflective of your business. **All postings should be in one, unified voice**

that embodies that brand. No one should see "the man behind the curtain," nor do you don't want your organization to sound schizophrenic.

3. Social Media Calendar

A great time-management tool to implement is a social media calendar. Planned postings ensure consistent coverage, give you the opportunity to look at your postings more thoughtfully and strategically, and give you an overall picture to ensure you're staying on point with your objective.

Other posting possibilities will arise, and there is always room for those last-minute postings that come with being as timely and relevant as often as possible, but a base calendar is the foundation.

3. Monitor and Tweak

Every post and action should be evaluated on its own merits. Take note of whether a posting or website content is receiving great or little response. Analyze, tweak and/or eliminate the failures. Reproduce the formulas that are successful. Those patterns speak for the audience, and you have to listen to what the audience wants.

Always write in a way that connects with YOUR audience. When your audience can begin to count on you to give them what they want, and feel like you are truly addressing them and not just sending automated jargon, they will keep coming back. In turn, you win their loyalty.

Don't be afraid to experiment. It's one posting. But stay in touch with what works.

4. On Target

Invest in target advertising offered in social networking services like Facebook. It targets the audience you want to reach and can be successful and putting your brand in front of many new faces. Be strategic about what you promote, such as bigger picture items with greater appeal. Also, pay attention to audience response. If a posting proves particularly popular with your followers, it could have the power to draw in a new batch of loyal followers. Take the readers' cue and boost it.

5. Be genuine. Be Social.

Don't just DO social. Be social. Take the time to build relationships with your followers. Be friendly, accessible, informative, impactful, focused and responsive. When someone shares a thoughtful comment, return the favor. People like feeling like they have been heard.

These are conversations that must be nurtured before you'll see results. Just being online is not enough. That expectation for you to be online is already there. You have to go beyond.

- 93 percent of Americans believe a company should have a social media presence.
- 85 percent believe a company should be active with its customers in social media.
- 56 percent feel a stronger connection with the companies they interact with on social media.

It's not difficult to make simple, friendly talk. Here is a simple question to engage the readers and some small feedback to show we are engaged in a two-way conversation.



So those are the basics. Now, how do you decide which platforms you'll use, which tone is best, how often you should post and more?

TIPS AND TRICKS



Where shall I go?

It's daunting when you consider all the possible social media networking services. There's so much! But don't allow yourself to be overwhelmed. With your social media strategy in place, this will be easy to answer.

Based on the objective you've established, which social media networking service aligns best with your social media strategy and target audiences? What are the top platforms that are best suited for your message?

Facebook, for sheer numbers, is worth time and effort. In the current climate, Facebook is still a must.

Instagram is perhaps the second most popular social media site at the moment. With capabilities to tell stories, share videos and engage in the kind of quick audience grab, Instagram lets the shorter-attention-span audience use the same amount of post viewing time to scan several of your stories and photos. They are also kind to reward the good stuff with shares.

But numbers aren't the only factors.

Because consumers have an insatiable appetite for video, YouTube is as much a given as Facebook. If you are able, maximize use of YouTube. It is the second largest search engine. Create a video channel if you don't have one and maximize your use of it. Post videos to your Facebook and other social media sites, too.

To maximize time investment, additional platforms should be considered carefully. Stick with Facebook, Instagram. Then, if able, YouTube and Twitter as first choices. Focus on providing quality, not quantity, with regard to content.

Ask yourself, what works best for your mission?

What shall I do?

Build strong brand identity by connecting with consumers and drawing traffic to your community website via informative and engaging content. What you share must be interesting, relevant, shareable and, above all, useful.

Communicate in a friendly, conversational tone.

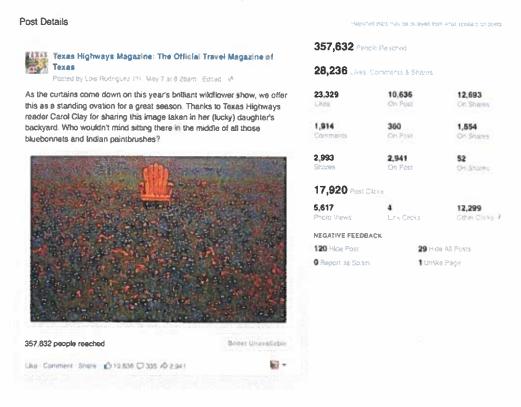
Treat each posting as a potential show stopper. Whatever parameters you have for any given platform – 140 character tweet to a blog – make it pop. Make it interesting enough to make readers want to take action.

Make sure the content is relevant to your area of expertise. You've pulled together an audience and they're tuning in. Will they get what they came to find?

Once your postings are relevant, interesting and fun, they also become shareable.

Get Visual

Include a visual element with **every** posting. The more compelling, the better. As the saying goes, "a picture is worth a thousand words." That's certainly more than the 140 character limit of Twitter. Consider its shareability factor. You want readers to like a posting, but you want them to share it, too. That gets your brand out there. Each share multiplies your reach exponentially.



This photo posting is an example of how that works on many levels. It is a reader-submitted photo. This was an unsolicited submission made possible because the relationship between the magazine and photo hobbyists has already been established. This also speaks to interactivity, it's of a popular subject (wildflowers), it's relevant (Texas), and it's compelling enough that others want to share the image with others. Be sure your brand/name is clear so those receiving the shares know it has come from you.

With nearly 11,000 likes and 2,900 shares, this simple posting netted a reach of 357,376 people. That's a success. And its shelf life is at least a weeklong or more as the shares continue to trickle.

How much would that reach have set you back on your marketing budget? Wouldn't residents and visitors to your community also like to share some of their fun photos from your area? Photo enthusiasts are everywhere.

Visual elements are effective because communication is received in three ways. Visual makes up 55 percent of that, followed by vocal/tone (38 percent) and verbal/actual words (7 percent). So photos and videos equal better visibility, so to speak.

Even so, there are many visuals for users to weed through online. There's more chatter than ever on the social media airwaves, and it's truly challenging to have your voice heard.

Make the Connection

Drawing an audience in is one challenge. Keeping them will hinge on your ability to hold a conversation.

By nature of the beast, a business' social media goal includes some monetary pay off, whether you're selling a destination, a hotel night or a product. In order to do that affectively, businesses need to understand that a key part of easiel media



need to understand that a key part of social media is about being social.

Genuine engagement with your social media following helps build trust, respect and loyalty. Your audience and fellow influencers then feel confident and compelled to help spread your message through shares, retweets, repins, likes and more. In essence they become ambassadors for your brand. But don't assume that, because they have already chosen to follow you, that they're loyal.

It takes time and commitment to follow and participate in the conversations on your social media pages, but it's as important as the messages you post. A true conversation is a two-way street. Invite readers' opinions and respond in kind. Acknowledge thoughtful comments.

Show appreciation and stroke the audience's ego, have fun with them and ask their opinions.

Respond and participate in the conversation.

View the exchange as customer service and give followers the best customer service experience possible. Those positive experiences translate into compelling word-of-mouth. Again, that's more ambassadors for your brand.."

As your following grows, you'll find your audience becomes a community where they start sharing with each other. This best-case scenario is your goal, and it makes your job easier.

Handle Negatives in a Positive Manner

Of course, this also entails dealing with more negative comments. Like any group of people, there will be those who are unhappy or combative about almost anything. It becomes your task to keep the conversation focused and free of drama. A skilled communicator can turn the situation around in a respectful way that does not instigate more negativity. The lesson learned early in life is crucial here: "If you can't say anything nice ..." One mishandled social media response has the power to dismantle all the good work you've done in one viral chain of postings. That's why it's important that you trust the ones handling social media.

If you've developed a solid community, you'll find other followers are good at self-policing the site, which leaves you off the hook. Someone else will say what you're thinking.

Some may have valid complaints. Always be prepared to address those complaints. Don't ignore or delete valid complains. That smacks of censorship and creates distrust from readers.

Bad news travels at the speed of a tweet, so smart organizations need to prepare before their next crisis. That means, being ready to address issues immediately in an open and honest way. Whether clarifying a situation or acknowledging error, doing so promptly puts the subject to bed sooner. Left alone for a long period could allow the situation to fester and grow into a bigger issue to tackle.

Monitoring conversations online helps give businesses the heads up to immediately address and minimize the impact of any negative publicity. The way it is handled/addressed goes a long way in instilling trust and respect. Be 100 percent professional. You are speaking as a community.

The Words You Use: Are your Marketing Efforts Effective?

Roger Brooks, CEO of Destination Development International, Inc. says 97 percent of all community-based marketing efforts – brochures, websites and even social media – are ineffective.

"We are now exposed to 5,000 marketing messages a day – far more than the mind can absorb – so we filter out anything that does not appeal to us directly."

He says one solution to standing out above others is to stop marketing destinations and start selling experiences.

When people do an online keyword search, they search, first, for an experience such as



kayaking, hiking, diving or dining. The destination is secondary, at best.

There also are "words that most are using that Brooks says we should never use if we want to grab the attention of consumers. Words and phrases such as "explore," "unique," "fun for the whole family," "Best kept secret" and "Something for everyone."

"It's not that you're doing anything wrong, but you're doing what everyone else is doing," Brooks says, adding that it's no way to get noticed or to stand out from the crowd. (See appendix for "Words To Avoid")

WHO WILL DO IT?

Establish social media practices and policies as part of your social media strategy. Select staff with appropriate customer service and social skills to do the best job possible.

In-house or Outsource? No one can have as much a vested interest or passion in your community than you. If at all possible, keep the social media tasks in house.

This is, of course, just the overview. The details of social marketing look more like this ... but all in good time.

POSTING IDEAS

- Polls or questions: What's your favorite thing to do in ----?
- Post a branded image. Create a shareable graphic that includes your branding. Works great for holidays, but can be used for any shareable quote (still related, in some way, to your objective).

4.191

769

311

5,599

43 Hide All Posts

O Unlike Page

Other Clicks /

On Shares

On Shares

On Shares

266,368 People Reached

6.347

Likes

832

3,382

Shares

2,053

Photo Views

7,675 Post Clicks

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK
244 Hide Post

O Report as Spam

Comments

10,561 Likes, Comments & Shares

2.158

63

On Post

On Post

3,071

23

Link Clicks

On Post



March 7 - Edited 2 - 4

#DaylightSavingTime begins Sunday. Don't forget to move your clock ahead one hour! #TexasHighways #SpringForward



266,368 people reached

Boost Unavailable

Like Comment Share 1 2,156 🖵 56 🖒 3,071



- A simple "Good morning!" or "Thank you." It's a chance to bond with readers, build on that love of Texas and help pull us all together by asking them to share what their part of Texas (the world) looks like.
- Quotes: Inspiring or funny quotes that are relevant to your community.



335,104 People Reached 35,138 Likes, Comments & Snares 29,658 11,763 17,895 5,767 315 On Post 3,713 3,568 145 3,082 Post Cacks 3,082 NEGATIVE FEEDBACK 235 Hole Post @ Report as Spam O Undice Page

- Spotlight destination hotspots. Sell it with compelling pictures.
- Share old photos from your archives (Throwback Thursday) or "This Day In History" type of posts. You had a post with upwards of 10 archive photos. Each of those could have stood on their own. And it's not too late to post them separately. Pick a day and schedule some archive photos for a few weeks or more out.
- Give new life to old information, such as promoting itinerary suggestions. And updating and repromoting them as you see fit.
- See what's trending on Twitter and participate in any conversation that's you can tie to your community. You can be fun/creative about it, too. Example, on Veterans Day, the top hashtag may be #VeteransDay. Create a posting about the Audie Murphy museum and add the #veteransday hashtag to your posting. Then, your posting will show up for anyone in the world searching under that #VeteransDay hashtag. Or maybe the popular hashtag that day is simply #takemeaway. You could do a post about a spa day in town or day at the park. Then include the trending hashtag. Again, people searching the top hashtag will be directed to your posting. That means more eyes from unexpected places.
- Re-share one of your popular blog postings, itineraries, or any popular content
 you have. Blogs are pretty essential content, though. Find a schedule that can be
 managed and have a blog posting about something that makes the community
 special. Not a local newsletter, but something that both locals and visitors can
 appreciate about what makes your community special. Fun facts, little known
 secrets, history of ... etc. all make fascinating content.
- After asking a question in a posting, write a blog post and promote the
 collective results/answers. "Our readers say ---- is the best place to get
 barbecue in ..." and give those that are new to the topic a chance to chime in by
 asking, again, "Do you agree with the results?"

DESTINATION MARKETING WORDS AND PHRASES TO AVOID

"When it comes to community-related marketing efforts, a full ninety-seven percent of all destination marketing and advertising is ineffective," says destination marketing expert Roger Brooks. "Think city, county, state, province, region, or even a country. Billions are spent every year trying to attract new residents, business investment, economic development and tourism. And billions are wasted every year because the message is mundane, overused, and just like everyone else.

Here are 40 words and phrases Brooks says need to be avoided, at all costs, If you want to create destination marketing messages that stick.

- Explore
- Discover
- Unique (so overused it's come to mean "just like everyone else")
- Four season destination
- · Fun for the whole family

- Naturally fun (anything with the word "natural" in it)
- Something for everyone (have you ever gone anywhere because they had something for everyone?)

- Outdoor recreation (name a place that doesn't have this)
- Unlike anywhere else
- · So much to see and do
- Where the seasons come to life
- Historic downtown
- Center of it all (have you ever gone anywhere because it was the center of anything?)
- · Best kept secret
- We have it all
- Experience...
- Visit (name of destination)
- Beauty and heritage
- Gateway (a gateway is something you pass through to go somewhere else)
- · Close to it all
- Right around the corner
- Your playground
- So much history

- So much to offer
- · The place for all ages
- ... and so much more
- Home away from home
- A slice of heaven
- It's all right here
- Recreation unlimited
- The perfect getaway (or place)
- · The place for families
- Start your vacation here
- Recreational paradise
- Take a look!
- A great place to live, work and play (the most overused slogan in the world)
- Location, location
- Open for business
- Your adventure place (anything with the word adventure in it)
- Unique shops & restaurants

Brooks asks, "Could all of these apply to you? Could these fit virtually anyone anywhere? No wonder our messages are falling on deaf ears."



EDITORIAL CONTACTS & FREE LISTING INFORMATION LITERATURE DISTRIBUTION & LOW COST SIGNAGE



TEXAS HIGHWAYS MAGAZINE

Contact: Emily Stone, Editor

emily.stone@txdot.gov / 512-486-5861

Story & News Submissions

Contact: Magazine Staff letters@texashighways.com

SUBMITTING STORY IDEAS AND NEWS TO TEXAS HIGHWAYS

Make sure Texas Highways knows what's happening in your community

Submit story ideas and news to www.txdot.gov/business/partnerships/travel-industry-partners/editorial-submission.html or letters@texashighways.com for consideration.

Along with sharing news tips and story ideas for the print edition, your information could also be used on TexasHighways.com, featuring regular Texas travel news web stories, and through the magazine's social media outlets

Tip: Include photos with submissions. There is no guarantee of use, but when space allows, quality photos are considered. This means extra attention to the community. In some instances, as with the Events Calendar, the photo could become a cover image.



TEXAS EVENTS CALENDAR

Contact: Jane Kellogg Murray, Editor Jane.Murray@txdot.gov / 512-486-5876

Free Listing Submission Deadlines

Winter Events (Dec, Jan, Feb): Due by September 1
Spring Events (Mar, Apr, May): Due by December 1
Summer Events (Jun, Jul, Aug): Due by March 1
Fall Events (Sep, Oct, Nov): Due by June 1

SUBMITTING FREE EVENT LISTINGS

To submit events for consideration for use in the printed quarterly Texas Highways Events Calendar, the monthly Texas Highways magazine, www.traveltex.com and www.traveltex

<u>www.TexasHighways.com</u> under the "Events" tab. To receive quarterly event deadline reminders, sign up here: http://texashighways.us9.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=3d23d3d86e36f5f7a6b4ad72d&id=a05f97ce95

Submitting events through the event submission form will generate a confirmation receipt and also will let you know when it's approved for use in our listings. Events must be open to the general public and of interest to a wide audience of travelers to be listed in the calendar. All listings are subject to review and editing to meet publication Guidelines.

If you have many (10+) event listings to send, and you have them in table format (such as an Excel or .CSV file), our database now allows for bulk upload of your listings directly into our database. Just make sure your table has the information we require—city, event name, dates, etc.—in separate columns. Download our template here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/081RyCBQVOA8zNkZBT3hsNTYwdzA/view

You may also send events to <u>texasevents@txdot.gov</u>. Please keep in mind that our system doesn't offer confirmations for event receipt/approval when events are sent by email.

All event listings sent to us MUST include: Name of the event, City in which it occurs (or nearest city), EXACT DATE(S) of the event, Location/venue of the event (please include exact address if known), Phone number(s), website or email the public can call for more information (must include at least one), A brief description of the event (can either be a list of activities or a couple of sentences—we will format).

Events received by deadlines are included in the Texas Highways Events Calendar and online listings, and are considered for Texas Highways magazine (which uses a partial selection of all events received). We cannot guarantee that events received after deadline will be listed in the quarterly calendar or our database, but we make every effort to get them in.

For more on Events Calendar submissions, visit: https://sites.google.com/site/texaseventscalendar/submissions



TEXAS STATE TRAVEL GUIDE

Contact: trv_guide@txdot.gov Email trv_guide@txdot.gov for database access Editorial Deadline: Updates are accepted year round May 30th deadline for the following years printed Guide

SUBMITTING EDITORIAL UPDATES TO TEXAS STATE TRAVEL GUIDE

Texas State Travel Guide features more than 450 cities and 3,000 attractions separated into manageable regions. It is a perfect tool for the Texas traveler. Listings are free for qualifying communities and attractions. Use our fast and reliable database tool to access your city's current information, make changes and instantly send them to travel guide editors to review and approve.

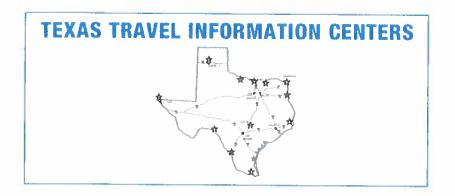
Database: http://webhost.lightspoke.com/txdottstg/txdot_login.pv

Username: TRV_Guide@txdot.gov

Password: texas2014travel

Email TRV Guide@txdot.gov with any questions

Tip: All Texas State Travel Guide listings and digital versions of the Guide are available online at TravelTex.com



DISTRIBUTE COMMUNITY INFO AT TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTERS

The <u>Texas Travel Information Centers</u> serve more than two million visitors annually. Travelers stopping at the centers have access to approximately 5 million pieces of travel literature each year, making the Travel Information Centers the largest outlet of travel literature in Texas.

Organizations are encouraged to share information about their community/attractions by distributing magazines, brochures, rack cards and other promotional pamphlets through the centers. Visit https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/travel/tourism/display-literature.html for criteria and more information.





LOW-COST SIGNAGE

LoneStar Logos, in partnership with the TxDOT, offers eligible businesses highway signage in the form of Tourist-Oriented Directional Signs (TODS). They're an effective, affordable means to increase traffic to particular businesses in rural Texas (populations of 5,000 or less). The large, blue TODS are TxDOT-approved, and they provide your company name while showing the direction and distance to your location.

To qualify, your business must have a major portion of income derived from visitors residing further than 50 miles. It must provide modern restroom facilities and drinking water and be clean and in good repair. It should also be located in a city or area with a population of 5,000 or less, provide walk-up services and/or public tours (not open by appointment only). Lastly, it must be an independent enterprise that is not part of a franchise or national chain.

Qualifications include businesses such as wineries and agritourism that are independent with the majority of their income derived from visitors. For more information, visit http://www.lone-starlogos.com/?tods

Section 4 – Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Notes By Shelly Plante

Gonzales Tourism Assessment: Nature Tourism

Submitted by: Shelly Plante, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Shelly.plante@tpwd.texas.gov; 512-389-4500

Strengths to Gonzales as a whole:

- Strong historical ties and heritage sites; key historical locations that are target sites to visit for many heritage tourists.
- Heritage tourism is truly the heart of Gonzales (as it should be!) and that shows as soon as you step foot in town.
- Great lodging and restaurants
- Gas station options
- Wonderful shopping in and around downtown giving visitors plenty to do between historic sites, walking/driving tours, and great food.
- Amazing community support and knowledge
- Strong publications and maps for tourists to tour the town on their own, see the sites that interest them.
- App for the town to show people the sights, lodging, food, and other options
- Easy to navigate (and find) website that has great images and is well-organized. Love the maps
 with sites to help guide you! The Visitors Center page has a huge call-out aimed at businesses
 that might want to sponsor an ad, though, instead of information that a visitor would find
 helpful. This could be much more inviting and informative for the visitor audience instead of
 potential sponsors.

Weaknesses:

- Gonzales should take better advantage of the natural landscape opportunities throughout town.
 There is a huge crossover between the nature and heritage tourists and their interests.
 Improving the natural attractions will only help improve the whole package Gonzales has to offer.
- The butterfly garden wasn't mentioned as a tourist opportunity at all in our tour, but it's right off the downtown squares and could easily have some interpretive signage for the plants as well as inviting signs to the public recognizing it as its own mini-destination and place for some downtime. I could envision native plant sales or art events among the butterfly plants. I couldn't find any information about it online, so this is definitely a place with great opportunity!

Nature Tourism Opportunities around Historic Sites:

- When updating major historic sites (such as the Gonzales Memorial Museum), take the
 opportunity to add native landscaping to the design plan and include in the overall budget to
 make the whole site more inviting and beautify the space while also paying attention to the
 local ecology of the region.
- The entire area from Gonzales City Park, down through the property with the Horace Eggleston House, and to the Memorial Museum could become a great local park in the heart of the town. Planning and budgeting for native landscaping and looping trails would give nature tourists a place to enjoy nature along with history while also giving local a wonderful place to walk their dogs, play with their kids, etc. Ideas:
 - o Add butterfly and hummingbird gardens.

- O Utilize grants to help fund these projects. Two sources that spring to mind and might be a great fit would be the Local Parks Grants and the Recreational Trails Grants from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department: https://tpwd.texas.gov/business/grants/recreation-grants/grant-programs. The staff in the grants program is available to answer any questions and help find the best fit for your town's needs.
- It may be worth contacting the Guadalupe County Master Naturalist Chapter to see if they might be willing to work with you on any of the your landscaping projects or if they could work with your Master Gardeners on any projects (https://txmn.org/guadalupe/).
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Local Park Grants
 (http://tpwd.texas.gov/business/grants/recreation-grants/about-local-parks-grants)
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Recreational Trails Grants
 (http://tpwd.texas.gov/business/grants/recreation-grants/recreational-trails-grants)
- o Great Texas Wildlife Trails, Prairies ad Pineywoods East: Tawakoni Loop https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wildlife/wildlife-trails/ppwe/tawakoni-loop
 - Currently Lake Tawakoni State Park is a site on this loop
- o Texas Paddling Trails https://tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/boat/paddlingtrails/
 - Program that highlights beginner paddling trails throughout Texas. Applications to the program can be found online: www.tpwd.texas.gov/paddlingtrails.
- If you aren't already, start collecting email and zip codes from all visitors at the CVB to develop an email list for email marketing. You can send out information to visitors about upcoming festivals, events, attractions based on time of year/seasons, etc. on a regular basis (quarterly? Seasonally? After you determine your annual activities you can better create an email calendar that makes sense for you). Also add an email sign-up on your website to keep people in the loop.
- Create an internal event calendar to better see what the community has going on with bigger events/happenings throughout the year. This will help guide regular communication to your visitors via the email list suggested above. Retaining existing visitors is much easier than growing new visitors and a calendar will help you make the case that folks should come back throughout the year to see what Gonzales has to offer. Example event simple event calendar:

| Attraction | jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | hin | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Hunting | X | Х | | | | | | | | | X | X |
| Bird Migration | | | X | x | X | | | | X | x | X | |
| Whooping Crane Festival | | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| HummerBird Festival | | | | | | | | | X | | | |
| Hazel Bazemore Hawk Watch | 1 | | | | | | | | X | X | X | |
| Canoeing & Kayaking | | | X | Х | X | X | X | Х | X | Х | X | |
| Fishing | X | Х | X | Х | X | Х | X | Х | X | Х | X | Х |
| Heritage Holiday Events | | | | | | | | | | | X | X |

Huge Nature Tourism Opportunity: Canoeing and Kayaking Tourism

- There are amazing paddling opportunities all around town and within a very short drive. If looking at new events or audiences to attract to your area, I would start here!
- You could start with a day-long event during the Texas Water Safari to coincide with when support teams are mingling around, hanging out and waiting for their teams to arrive at the checkpoint. Reach out to these folks if you aren't already this is a ready-made audience that is not on the river and it only there to support folks floating/paddling through. You could give them a reason to stay in town for the night, eat at your restaurants, shop, visit your sites. If it's successful (and you start collecting emails from paddlers at the event that you tag as such in your email list mentioned above) you could then reach out to them for any future paddling events you might decide to put on moving forward. And you have a local canoe business that might want to help! It's a great opportunity.

Here are all of your paddling assets from what I could find:

Texas Paddling Trails

More than 45 miles worth of certified Texas Paddling Trails within 30 miles:

Independence Paddling Trail (Gonzales) - 2.6 miles

Come and Take It Paddling Trail (Gonzales) - 11 miles

Guadalupe Valley Paddling Trail (Cuero) - 13.8 miles

Luling Zedler Mill Paddling Trail (Luling) - 6 miles

Seguin Paddling Trail - Lake Seguin (Seguin) - 4 miles

Seguin Paddling Trail - Nolte Lake/Lake Meadow (Seguin) - 8.4 miles

If you enlarge the radius to within 75 miles, approximately 90 additional miles worth of certified Texas Paddling Trails are added:

Lady Bird Lake Paddling Trail (Austin) - 11 miles

El Camino Real Paddling Trail (Bastrop) - 6 miles

Wilbarger Paddling Trail (Bastrop) – 14.3 miles

Columbus Paddling Trail (Columbus) - 6.5 miles

Goliad Paddling Trail (Goliad) - 6.6 miles

Mission Reach Paddling Trail (San Antonio) - 8 miles

Saspamco Paddling Trail (San Antonio) - 12 miles

Victoria Paddling Trail (Victoria) - 25 miles

14 Certified Texas Paddling Trails within 75 miles of Gonzales encompassing 135 miles of paddling opportunities!

Texas Water Safari

The Texas Water Safari is billed as the "World's Toughest Boat Race" and is an annual race via the San Marcos and Guadalupe rivers, from Aquarena Springs in the college town of San Marcos, to the shrimping village of Seadrift on the Texas coastline, a total distance of 260 miles. The first official race was held in 1963, and it is run annually on the second Saturday of June. The primary requirement is a

boat powered only by human muscle. Racers must take all equipment needed with them, receiving only water, ice and food along the way.

Check-in deadline at Independence Park in Gonzales: 4:00pm on Sunday, June 9, 2019 (and the corresponding date in future years)

Lou's Canoes, Gonzales, TX

Great news! You have your very own canoe/kayak livery right there on the river to help serve tourists interested in paddling opportunities.

One final thought:

In addition to paddling, you should organize a section of the website and app for wildlife viewing/nature tourism. You can include the paddling opportunities above (although they might merit their own section) as well as wildlife viewing, hiking, camping, and other nature tourism opportunities nearby.

Wildflower watching is big in this part of the state as are some of your nearby sites. Having a state park right up the road is a great opportunity! Here are the sites we have listed on the Great Texas Wildlife Trails already - you can start with promoting these and then expand as you're able to develop the park area around the Memorial Museum, the butterfly garden, etc. This is something you could be bundling up for your visitors in addition to the already amazingly packaged heritage sites!

Great Texas Wildlife Trails Sites Nearby:

Palmetto State Park

Central Texas Coast map, site #CTC 029

This site is open daily, and developed camping is available at the site.

An entrance fee or donation may be required.

Continue north from Cuero on US 183 to Gonzales.

Gonzales is known as "The Cradle of Texas Independence." The first shot for Texas independence was fired here in 1835, and many artifacts from that era are displayed in local museums. The park is located 14 miles north of Gonzales within the palmetto swamps of the San Marcos River, and offers a striking change from the rather arid grass and brush country to the south. A number of eastern woodland species nest within the park, including Prothonotary and Kentucky warblers, Northern Parula, and Indigo and Painted buntings. The poultry farms in Gonzales County attract numbers of Crested Caracara, and roosting flocks of caracaras in the park and the surrounding woodlands in winter are often immense.

(830) 672-3266; www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/palmetto

Latitude: 29.5975, Longitude: -97.5846

Cuero

Central Texas coast map: site #CTC 028

This site is open for day use only.

Drop by the DeWitt Historical Museum (312 East Broadway) and DeWitt County Wildflower Association (located at the museum) for information about areas for viewing (and photographing) the spring wildflower displays.

The grasslands of this region are renowned (at least among birders) for winter sparrows, and roadside birding is a rule here. Venture out from Cuero onto the backroads and bird the fence and hedgerows. In the brush of Karnes County, a number of South Texas thornscrub species reach their northeastern range limit (for example, Least Grebe, Pauraque, and Olive Sparrow).

Latitude: 29.0876, Longitude: -97.2656

Lockhart State Park

Heart of Texas East map, site #HOTE 066A

This site is open daily, and developed camping is available at the site.

An entrance fee or donation may be required.

To reach the park, go 1 mile south of Lockhart on US 183 to FM 20; then travel southwest on FM 20 for 2 miles to PR 10 and continue 1 mile south on PR 10.

Lockhart State Park boasts 263.7 acres, with a pool, picnicking, camping, fishing, hiking, a nature study and a nine-hole golf course. Wildlife includes deer, coyotes, bobcats, foxes, raccoons, opossums, armadillos, nutria, rabbits, squirrels, many varieties of birds and several types of snakes.

(512) 398-3479; www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/lockhart

Latitude: 29.8502, Longitude: -97.6979

Monument Hill and Kreische Brewery State Historical Prairies and Pineywoods West map, site#PPWW 007

This site is open for day use only.

An entrance fee or donation may be required.

From the Business 71 and Hwy. 77 intersection in La Grange, travel 3 miles south on US Hwy. 77 to Spur 92. Turn right (west) on Spur 92 for 0.25 mile to the park entrance on the right (north). Located high above the Colorado River, the park includes 36 acres of unique natural habitats offering spectacular views of the meandering Colorado River, associated bottomlands and the city of La Grange. Facilities at the park include a nature and historical trail, picnicking and a small playground for the kids. A monument and tomb serve as remembrance of the Texans who perished during the Battle of Salado Creek with Mexican forces and the ill-fated Meir Expedition during the mid-1800s. The historic Kreische Brewery, the first commercial brewery in Texas, and homestead are also located at the facility. The uncommon habitat present represents the northern edge of the Oakville Escarpment, marking the boundary between the upland post oak woodlands and the grasslands of the Fayette Prairie. As such, the habitat is comprised of a blend of eastern species within the post oak woodlands/prairies and western species deposited from the Colorado River from the Hill Country. Vegetation series include little bluestem-Indiangrass and post oak-blackjack oak. While visiting, expect to see white-tailed deer, gray fox, White-eyed Vireo, Red-bellied Woodpecker and Texas alligator lizard. Migratory species include Pileated Woodpecker, hawks, Bald Eagle, wintering waterfowl, bluebirds, Turkey Vulture, caracaras, kites and American Goldfinch. The nature trail provides a shaded opportunity to view the songbirds and wildlife.

The edge of the park includes a 200-foot sandstone bluff that opens to spectacular views of the Colorado River. Two scenic overlooks offer impressive views of the brewery remnants and vistas of the city of La Grange and Colorado River.

(979) 968-5658; www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/monument-hill-kreische-brewery Latitude: 29.8883, Longitude: -96.8771

Section 5 – Texas Commission on the Arts Notes By Jim Bob McMillan

Gonzales Tourism Assessment Report

Jim Bob McMillan, Deputy Director Texas Commission on the Arts

There is potential for increased cultural tourism in Gonzales. One of the biggest obstacles is the lack of effective promotion of the community assets to visitors that might be interested in visiting the city. Most of the marketing that is currently in place seems to be geared around bringing a community audience to events and attractions. The first and most difficult job is putting a rope around all of the attractions, events and activities that are taking place in Gonzales, and allowing visitors the one-stop shopping portal that is very much needed. There are a lot of things happening in Gonzales, and that is part of the problem, the big picture needs to be edited to concentrate on the elements that have the potential to draw the biggest number of visitors and to engage residents.

I would suggest developing cohesive design elements to reinforce the since of community and things that tie attractions together and tell the story of Gonzales as the first logical step. This first step would include developing a strategic plan concentrating on your tourism assets and making sure that it includes marketing objectives and strategies, a plan to develop and find the resources to implement the plan and assignment of who will be responsible for tasks moving forward.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Great community story
- History and authentic places that are an active part of the community
- Good location geographically
- Beautiful setting with a lot of natural resources
- Plenty of recreational opportunities
- Some existing arts facilities including museum, library, and amphitheater.
- Hotel and lodging space available
- A variety of annual events

Weaknesses

- · Lack of awareness of what Gonzales has to offer by general public outside of the city
- Lacking signage to direct visitors to assets
- Hotel and lodging space available during the week
- Annual events and much activity seem dependent on the same pool of volunteers and leadership
- The Expo Center has limitations when it comes to attracting a wide variety of visitors
- Very few individuals are trained and willing to be tour guides for visitors
- Not aware of an overarching organization that oversee growth and development of the arts
- Lacking in places where artists can showcase and sell their work

Opportunities

- Development of an annual historically based theatric offering
- Using the Expo Center for dinner theater, small and intimate concerts during the week
- Use the Crystal Theater more and reinvigorate the adult community theater company

- Develop a film festival at Crystal and Lynn Theaters and perhaps the church(s) nearby that might focus on Texas history, The Alamo, and new work by Texas filmmakers
- The Long Branch is fulfilling a role as a cultural center/bar currently, but it may not be inviting to some
- Development of artist studios above Main Street Market Place and other vacant buildings
- Create live and work space for artists and creators in existing buildings in the central city
- The DuBose Collection at the Robert Lee Brothers Memorial Library is wonderful and could be of great interest
 to visitors but it needs more interpretation and context for drop in visitors; the collection fits well with the "first
 shot" and "come and take it" themes of the community and should be capitalized upon
- The Vickie Bushong Collection at the Robert Lee Brothers Memorial Library is a great asset; it needs
 interpretation and context in order for it to be more of a compliment to the historical assets in Gonzales
- Develop hospitality and tour guide training for community volunteers
- Conduct familiarization tours for local and area citizens that will allow your tour guides to get some practice and familiar the community with the assets of Gonzales
- The First Shot Site is in need of interpretation; perhaps you could develop a podcast or reenactment and post it
 online so that visitors can listen to when they get to the actual place where it all happened
- Podcasts could be a good way to enliven several other sites —Old Jail Museum, Eggleston House, Sam Houston
 Oak and others
- Smaller gatherings like workshops for writers, visual art workshops, and film or video workshops could all take place during the week and help fill local lodging facilities
- Use the space a local hotels and motels or the Expo Center for a "Create Your Own Business Plan" workshop for artists and small retail businesses; this could be promoted regionally or statewide and bring in visitors to the city
- Build the public art and mural collection in public areas of the city; this can be a way to beautify some buildings, and offer artists and others a place to showcase art
- Commission a mural for that would hang at the rear of the stage at the amphitheater at the Gonzales Memorial Museum; it should be executed on non-permanent materials (stretched canvas or wood panels) that would not damage the historical integrity of the facility; the mural could serve as a backdrop for many events and help tell the story of the story of Gonzales
- Investigate the creation of a cooperative gallery for local artists and art lovers in city's central zone

Threats

- Annual events seem dependent on the same volunteers and leadership
- The community does not seem aware of the economic impact that has on a community
- The landscaping and public areas of the city are not very welcoming and need sprucing up; putting an effort into these areas could make visitors feel more welcome and encourage them to stop and explore
- The museum and amphitheater are in need of repair and seem to be neglected; this facility is one of the best opportunities for Gonzales to tell its story and create events and activities that will attract visitors.

Using Art and Cultural Assets to Reinforce a Sense of Place in Gonzales

Arts and culture strategies help to reveal and enhance the underlying identity — the unique meaning, value, and character — of the physical and social form of a community. This identity is reflected through the community's character or sense of place.

A community's sense of place is not a static concept; rather, it evolves and develops over time, reflecting the spectrum of social values within and around the community. In this way, the community character of a city, county, town, or

neighborhood can be seen as a story or narrative of a place. Planners and community members can come together to reveal and burnish this narrative through:

- an articulation of the historic, cultural, economic, and cultural context of the community;
- a commitment to the reinforcement and enhancement of the community's identity; and
- the implementation of policies, regulations, and incentives that support and enhance this evolving identity.

Awareness of community identity and character is strengthened by the consideration of all community interests in decision- making processes; the integration of arts and cultural resources with civic visioning programs; and the balancing of the inherent conflicting nature of past, present, and future social values.

By using the arts and cultural assets to tell the story of your community, you can accomplish several goals:

- Help visitors and residents understand the community better and give it context;
- Reinforce a sense of place and celebrate the character of the community;
- Empower community involvement through the implementation of this framework; and
- Develop long-term and sustainable arts and cultural programming.

Conducting an artistic and cultural inventory will allow Gonzales and the surrounding area an opportunity to assess its historic, cultural, economic, and social context. These inventories include the identification, assessment, and mapping of a community's artistic and cultural resources. Conducting such an inventory allows planners to play a role in revealing the creative assets of a community. This effort is stronger if it is done in collaboration with other stakeholders, such as artists or representatives from cultural institutions. Arts, cultural, and educational institutions are particularly skilled at capturing these special qualities and helping citizens understand their community through new eyes. An inventory can often be the first step in discovering the character of the community by conducting a guided visioning exercise that engages residents from all segments of a community's population in an interactive, creative process of developing a vision for the future of the community.

A comprehensive artistic and cultural assessment and inventory combines quantitative and qualitative methods and includes a variety of stakeholders — such as artists, residents, and community cultural workers. A comprehensive inventory may include the following:

- population and demographic information
- local social and architectural history
- languages spoken
- food culture
- unique customs
- current landscape
- scale of existing buildings (residences, as well as commercial, governmental, and institutional buildings)
- public spaces
- transportation infrastructure
- temporary markets and fairs
- patterns, colors, and materials of buildings
- natural resources
- native plants
- street, business, and community signage
- art forms
- special places

- local educational institutions (colleges, universities, etc.)
- arts institutions (museums, theaters, historic homes, etc.)
- galleries

It is also important to take a look at the cultural landscape by assessing the following areas:

- religious organizations or places of worship
- informal gathering spaces (beauty salons, cafes, parks, corners)
- sports or recreational clubs or teams specific to an ethnic or cultural community
- social or cultural clubs
- restaurants, grocery stores, or specialty stores that serve or sell products specific to an ethnic or cultural community
- arts and cultural venues or public art that celebrate a specific ethnic or cultural heritage
- nonprofit organizations that serve a specific ethnic or cultural community
- festivals or parades that express or celebrate the heritage or the presence of an ethnic or cultural community
- places where people can purchase books or music relating to an ethnic or cultural community
- major institutions or parks that celebrate the cultural heritage of an ethnic or cultural community
- books, websites, or tours that speak to or about an ethnic or cultural community2

Community character is something a community has inherently, not something that can be applied like makeup. It is conveyed by not only by buildings and public spaces but a whole range of elements: residences of all sizes and scale; commercial, government, and institutional buildings; street cross-sections; street furniture and graphics; public places, large and small; ceremonial buildings; informal activities such as street markets and fairs; and the food, language, and personalities that contribute to a community's narrative. By understanding and reinforcing its community character a city can flourish civically and economically.

Development of Annual Theatric Production at the Gonzales Museum Amphitheater

Creation of an original script and production for an outdoor theater space is usually a tall order. In Texas, most people will look toward the production of Texas Outdoor Musical, performed in the Pioneer Theater at Palo Duro Canyon State Park. The secret of its success is the setting for the production, the "Texas-sized" scale of the story and the mixture of drama, comedy and music. It attracts visitors because it has something for everyone. The Institute for Outdoor Drama https://www.outdoor-theatre.org/ is a good resource and convenes a regular conference for those entities interested in developing a script and a production for their community. The website lists 15 productions in Texas including Texas Frontier Trails in Graford, Texas. The secret behind the successful productions around the state and across the country is first and foremost a solid script, a stellar cast and substantial investment in the production, cast and marketing efforts. There are successful outdoor theater productions within a reasonable driving distance from Gonzales in in Salado, Dallas, Round Rock, Wimberley, Kerrville and Glen Rose. It might benefit the group interested in mounting the production to schedule a visit to these places and then calling TCA to get an introduction to production companies in individuals that might help in the planning and implementation of this idea.

Arts and Cultural Activity that Could Increase Visitors to Gonzales

The amphitheater should be used for concerts, storytelling and children's entertainment on a more regular basis. The Texas Commission on the Arts can assist through the Texas Touring Roster http://www.arts.texas.gov/artroster/roster/roster/ and a grant program for fee support called Arts Respond Performance Support https://www2.arts.state.tx.us/tcagrant/TXArtsPlan/CC6.htm

Plein air is the act of painting outdoors. A weekend is full of creative time, personal instruction, fresh food, and artist camaraderie and taught by a professional plein air artist. Arrive early in order to catch the morning light. The artist will provide demonstrations, instructional exercises, and one on one attention throughout the morning. The afternoon and the following day are available for students to continue work on their painting at the farm. The class is open to all skill levels and media. Lunch on Saturday is included in the class fee. Sunday is a day to return to the garden for continuation of work from the day before during outdoor painting sessions.

Plein Air Juried Exhibition

Invite 40 or more plein air artists from across the nation that work in various mediums to capture the outdoor sights and scenes of Gonzales. The week will include an invitation for visitors to view artists working on pieces inspired by historical or scenic sites in the City; an exhibit/sales gallery, live demonstrations, a Quick Draw on the downtown squares, sunrise and nocturne painting, a student competition and a nationally recognized judge presenting the award winners.

Nooks and Crannies: A Photography Workshop Gonzales Gardens and Independence Park

Explore local gardens with an eye for the unusual detail. After a brief introduction, and the opportunity to hear the history of the gardening in Gonzales, photographers will enjoy photographing the unusual features of the local gardens without the bustling crowds. The workshop will include class time for photography and invite participants to participate in an online platform for lively discussion and critique as a follow up to the class.

Concerts and events

Consider partnering with local schools and/or universities to present intimate concerts in a variety of locations in Gonzales. These could be small musical ensembles or soloists, or larger groups in a chapel, a cemetery or other historic site. By featuring the regional musicians and performers, Gonzales could save money and gain exposure for the school arts and music programs and experience for students.

Scavenger Hunt for Historic Places and Artifacts

Develop a series of questions or details that students/children have to find in order to receive a prize (donated from a Gonzales business).

Create a Story, Poem or Illustrated Book

Have students (both young and older) develop stories inspired by the history of Gonzales. The stories could be about the adventures the characters they create after visiting historic sites, or perhaps a visit to the Robert Lee Brothers Memorial Library and Vickie Bushong Collection or DuBose Collection.

Writers Retreat

Offer a week long retreat for writers of specific genre who could gather in Gonzales. These could be themed with the time of the year or for specific genre types (poets, romance writers, mystery writers, etc.). This could be marketed through writers groups around the state and they might be able to assist in sharing the cost of producing the event. Some resources include:

Writers' League of Texas http://www.writersleague.org/

The Writer's Garret http://www.writersgarret.org/

Northeast Texas Writers Organization

http://writing.shawguides.com/NortheastTexasCommunityCollegeNETWOAnnualConference

Austin Songwriters Group http://austinsongwritersgroup.com/

Dallas Area Writers Group http://www.dallaswriters.org/

Dallas Songwriters Association https://dallassongwriters.org/

State Funding for Arts Entities

The Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) has funding for arts organizations in Texas. In order to apply for TCA funds, entities must establish an online grant account. All applications are received electronically through this TCA grant portal. Any arts entity that has not established an account with TCA can do so. Nonprofit arts organizations should email or fax a copy of their IRS letter of determination to webapp@arts.texas.gov or 512/475-2699. Be sure to include a phone number and contact name so TCA staff can call to set up a user name and password. Know that DUNS numbers are required for all applicant organizations. Any other type of organization or individual should call our offices at 512/463-5535.

TCA grant programs that will be of interest include:

<u>Arts Respond Performance Support</u>: This program provides professional artist fees to schools, libraries, and nonprofit organizations for hiring an artist from the TCA Touring Roster to do a performance. These applications are funded based on a percentage of contracted fees. https://www2.arts.state.tx.us/tcagrant/TXArtsPlan/CC6.htm

Arts Respond Project Support: This program provides project assistance grants on a short-term basis and may include administrative costs directly related to the project. Projects must address ONE of the following priority areas: Education, Health and Human Services, Economic Development, Public Safety and Criminal Justice, and Agriculture and Natural Resources. https://www2.arts.state.tx.us/tcagrant/TXArtsPlan/ARP.htm

<u>TCA Touring Roster:</u> The Texas Touring Arts Program is designed to ensure that all Texans have the ability to enjoy performances by outstanding Texas-based companies and artists in their own communities. The Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) provides grants to help with the costs of bringing in companies and artists from this roster for performances. http://www.arts.texas.gov/artroster/roster/

Any questions can be directed to Jim Bob McMillan, Deputy Director at 512-936-6572 or imbob@arts.texas.gov.

Encourage Pop-Up Art Galleries and Craft Retail in Gonzales

Pop-Up Retail Stores and Art Galleries are short-term venues that display work by designers, photographers or other artists or retailers. These pop-up shops can even be set up on a part-time basis as part of a sharing economy with other related businesses. They are becoming extremely popular because they allow immense flexibility, while not requiring a large commitment of time and money. A pop-up gallery or store can be a great option for retailers, boutique shops, local artists and designers and even real estate agents. Pop-ups allow galleries of all sizes to expand their programming, test out a new city or neighborhood, and explore non-traditional exhibitions. An inexpensive and easy way to temporarily increase the gallery's footprint while avoiding the commitment of a long-term lease and staffing, this model offers flexibility, minimal overhead, and an additional revenue stream. Here are some things to take into consideration:

- 1. **Establish your goals:** Pop-up galleries serve myriad purposes and it's important to set clear expectations from the start to ensure that the investment is a success. Your goals can also be specific to the artists that will be featured.
- 2. Pick the right location and time: Select an area that will appeal to your target audience. Timing is also important; opening during a community event or an art fair may draw a larger audience.
- 3. Think outside the "white box": A white-walled exhibition space is always a great starting point, but consider non-traditional spaces as well. Ask people if they have access to free or affordable locations that they may be looking to expose or market in a new way.

- Create a budget: Although less expensive than a long-term space, don't forget all of the details required to launch a new gallery. Create a budget and prepare in advance to ensure the best chances to make a profit and achieve your goals.
- 5. Negotiate: Ask questions about what is included in the space and negotiate your lease or handshake agreement.
- 6. Check your insurance and permits: Your policy may have security or liability requirements that you need to meet in order to get insurance coverage at your temporary location.
- 7. **Have a clear message**: While a pop-up is a great time to explore experimental ideas or programming, make sure it represents the vision of the community and the artists.
- 8. Focus on what you do best: Consider hiring someone to manage the day-to-day operations of the pop-up so you can focus on selling art and building artist relationships.

Developing a Local Arts or Cultural Plan as a Springboard for Development and Leadership in Gonzales

A Cultural Plan for Gonzales would be an important roadmap for this effort to continue. To assess cultural needs – to put all other community development needs and strengths within the larger framework of cultural development – is a relatively new concept. It translates into a belief that culture, different in each community, is the sum total of everything that shapes the way of life in that town. By looking at local culture, by assessing the local cultural strengths and resources and by taking a hard look at the cultural gaps and needs, we can begin the process of planning for better, more vibrant communities.

Once discovered, a community's cultural resources become building blocks for every aspect of city development, from schools to main street redevelopment, from community social services to tourism. Likewise, cultural needs that are pinpointed can lead to a transformation and revitalization of programs and organizations throughout the community.

The cultural needs assessment process is not Band-Aid treatment for surface cultural problems. Rather it pushes us to look behind the surface problems. For example: Low attendance at a local concert series might be the surface problem, but only an indicator of a larger cultural issue that could be anything from the series' appeal to only a small segment of the population, to a lack of music education programs in the schools and a lack of adult arts enrichment programs.

Perhaps the facility that the orchestra plays in is considered unappealing or unsafe at night. Or maybe the idea of attending live performances of music, dance or theatre has been lost over a period of many years during which time the community residents turned to other leisure activities.

In digging for these clues, the real picture of the community's cultural identity and needs emerges. Only then can the development of a community cultural strategic plan be effective. There are a series of Cultural Planning Templates following this section.

Cultural Planning Survey Templates

Preliminary Assessment Questionnaire

(For interviews or group meetings)

| Name of group/organization: | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| espondent(s): | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| e are currently involved in the preliminary stages of a community-wide cultural assessment with the idea of developing | | | | | | |
| cultural district. We need your input to help us identify key issues and priorities. Please take a few moments to | | | | | | |
| omplete the survey and return it to us at the address below. Thank you. | | | | | | |

For individuals:

- 1. What does the term "arts and culture" in our community mean to you?
- 2. What are the key strengths of our community's arts and cultural activity?
- 3. What are its weaknesses?
- 4. What are the major issues around the subject of arts and culture in our community?
- Is there other community development or planning issues that you feel might relate to arts and cultural needs or planning (for example, neighborhood revitalization, special population group needs, school system needs, facility development, etc.)
- 6. Would you be willing to work, as a volunteer on this community cultural assessment and/or a cultural district?

For arts and cultural organizations:

- 1. What are the three most pressing issues facing your organization's future development?
- 2. What resources do you need to accomplish your goals over the next five years?
- 3. What, if any, facility needs to you have that are not currently being met performance space, exhibition space, rehearsal space, workspace, storage space? Please describe:

Arts-Related Business Profile

Sources for this information may include arts, entertainment and cultural organizations, including local performing arts organizations, museums, commercial galleries, dance studios, framing and art supply stores, artist's studios, arts teachers, cinemas and other entertainment facilities.

Check off all available data as it has been obtained:

- Planning documents or goals, capital campaign plans, by cultural organizations or entertainment businesses, including:
 - > Audience projections and marketing expenditures
 - New program plans
 - Facility creation/expansion plans
 - Fundraising
 - Financial status/organizational health
 - > Relevant data distributed by professional organizations that local groups belong to
 - Business and enrollment sales/trends
- Galleries, artist studios, artist supply stores
- Performing arts schools and studios
- Visual arts classes
- Volunteer involvement of activity
- Number of people employed by arts businesses (full or part time)
- Impact of arts, entertainment, cultural organizations, and business on the local economy:

| | Total amount spent on salaries and benefits: \$ |
|---|--|
| | > Total amount spent on services/expenses channeled back into the local economy (building maintenance, |
| | equipment, etc.): \$ |
| • | Total direct spending by the community on the arts: |
| | > Admissions and arts sales revenues: \$ |
| • | Level of involvement from all demographic sectors of the community |

Cultural activities may be a major component of the local economy, but not acknowledged as such. This data may encourage local government support of cultural activity, or may lead cultural organizations to band together as an "industry" to lobby for community recognition.

Artists Profile

Sources for this information may include local and state arts councils, arts groups and arts teachers associations, or may be solicited by an "artists alert" information campaign.

Check off all available data as it has been obtained:

- 1. Number of artists working in the community and surrounding area:
 - Professional or self-designated artists
 - Teachers of the arts
 - Avocational artists (membership in leagues, clubs, etc.)
- 2. Artist income information
- 3. Status of artist facilities, studios, and workspaces:
 - Availability of studios or workspaces
 - Location, cost, and accessibility to the public
- 4. Status of artist service and/or membership associations:
 - Types of services
 - Outreach to community
 - Organizational strength

Documentation of the work needs of artists is a first step in developing campaigns for support, new programs, and new facilities. An artists' cooperative or organization may become recognized as a necessity to provide artists with a central service, exhibition, or lobbying organization.

Cultural Facilities Profile

This data may be collected from cultural organizations, civic groups, the school department, and artists.

Check off all available data as it has been obtained:

- List and description of existing facilities for:
 - Performances
 - Exhibitions
 - Cinema or media exhibition
 - Multi-purpose use
 - Festivals
 - Other (explain)
- Plans by any community groups to develop new facilities:
 - Zoning, financial, and planning considerations
 - Information pertaining to utilization of existing facilities
 - Existing facilities that could be converted or used differently for cultural activities

A need for specific types of arts spaces may be linked to new building or redevelopment projects, or you may be able to connect groups looking for places to present with appropriate sites and facilities.

Artists' Questionnaire

Questions to be asked of artists and artisans who pursue cultural activities for their livelihood (poets, writers, filmmakers, craftspeople, printers, etc.)

Note: These questions may be asked by phone, in interviews or group meetings.

Name of Respondent

- 1. What is your artistic discipline?
- 2. Do you define yourself as a professional or avocational artist?
- 3. Describe your professional training and experience as an artist.
- 4. In round numbers, how much income did you make from your work as an artist in the past year?
- 5. My work as a professional artist represents:

Under 50% of my annual income as reported to the IRS

- 50 59% of my annual income as reported to the IRS
- 60 69% of my annual income as reported to the IRS
- 70 to 79% of my annual income as reported to the IRS
- 80 89% of my annual income as reported to the IRS
- 90 100% of my annual income as reported to the IRS
- 6. What, if any, professional support do you need?
- 7. What, if any, professional support is needed by your colleagues?
- 8. Does the community offer you the necessary resources to work at, support, and show your work? Why or why not?
- 9. What issues within the community affect your ability to work at your art?
- 10. What attributes or strengths of the community have a positive effect on your art?
- 11. What could make the community a more desirable place for working artists to live?

Community Activity Questionnaire

Note: Questions to be asked by personal or phone interview to randomly selected groups.

| Na | ame of Respondent | |
|----|---|--|
| 1. | How important to you are the arts and culture that are available. Very important Moderately important Not important | ilable here? |
| 2. | Are you satisfied with the ways you can spend your leisure Yes OK Not much to do | time here? |
| 3. | How do you feel about the amount of arts activities that are Plenty available Moderate amount available Limited amount available | e available for you and your children? |
| 4. | What kinds of arts and cultural activities seem to be most not not be most not not not not not not not not not no | reeded in the community? — Literary activities — Library programs — Historic programs — School art programs — Community theater — Folkloric events — Public art |
| 5. | How often do you attend a cultural event such as a play, a c Once or twice a year Three to five times a year Five to ten times a year More than ten times a year | concert, a museum, a reading, a folk festival, etc.? |
| 6. | How do you obtain your information about cultural and leis enough to take advantage of these activities? Why or why not? | ure time activities? Is your information timely |
| 7. | Do you use resources in surrounding communities to meet would you participate in more activities if they wer | |

Section 6 – Texas Department of Agriculture Notes By Jami McCool

Analysis, from an Agricultural perspective:

Overview: The history of Gonzales is well preserved, documented and the city offers numerous monuments, displays and attractions for the public to easily access. Gonzales offers tourists the opportunity to see these historic heritage sites with mapped out routes, exceptional tour guides, and also offers several unique dining and shopping venues (antiques, home décor and more). The Gonzales, Tx app and the QR codes available for self-guided tours are a great way to apprise visitors of all Gonzales has to offer, along with Chamber/City Calendar of events on their website. The two downtown squares are unique in that the City of Gonzales has room to hold large events to draw visitors to the downtown area. Currently, the Gonzales County Expo Center/Arena hosts a large amount of rodeos and agriculture-related events throughout the year which helps to promote area agriculture. There are numerous agricultural operations (ranching/farming/feedlot/feed supply stores) within the county which can be viewed as assets for the local economy and which can help to promote the county's agriculture heritage as well. There is also a Farmers Market located near the city's health complex.

One of the best assets that Gonzales has going for the city is the strong community leadership and involvement from the group we met with while there - the City Mayor, Director of Tourism, EDC Director, Main Street Director and the Chamber staff, and other city staff - all who care deeply about the community. Their goals for this community to strive to be more economically successful by attracting more tourists to discover this wonderful heritage destination city are significant and commendable. Gonzales is fortunate to have so many great assets that can help bring in more tourism to the city.

ASSESSMENT NOTES:

Day One: Tuesday, Feb 22, 2019

Gonzales Chamber of Commerce

Strengths: The Chamber has a great resource in the Chamber of Commerce staff. The Chamber staff offers a wealth of knowledge on local areas of interest and referrals to excellent local tour guides. The tourism guides and brochures (historic monuments, walking and driving tour pamphlets etc.) are all excellent sources of information for the tourist. The Chamber location is centrally located to the two main squares in town (very convenient) and is actively involved in organizing many events, specifically the "Come and Take It Festival". The Chamber's program to encourage high school seniors to promote Gonzales is also a great strategy. Weaknesses: Small space within the Chamber to promote Gonzales and equally small space for brochures/Gonzales Come and Take It items for sale. There is little room for larger tour groups to gather and listen to Chamber staff inside the building. More space needed to enhance the great job they are doing as the city's hub for information.

Opportunities: The Chamber's future move to a nearby building with much larger space availability will enhance the visitors' experience to learn more about Gonzales.

Strengths: Unique architectural building located near the courthouse and the downtown squares. The museum is a unique example of early Texas jail architecture and prisoner quarters. Weaknesses: The museum has minimum tour hours – these could be expanded and promoted and could be used in variety of different capacities to help promote Gonzales Opportunities: Due to the history and uniqueness of this building, if tours could be established on a routine basis, along with stops at other historical areas/monuments, it would be a great draw history buffs to Gonzales as well as students engaged in learning Texas history

Lunch at Running M Bar and Grill

Strengths: Great restaurant with wonderful menu selections, located on the downtown square. Great place for meetings, and for tourists in downtown area to enjoy lunch or dinner in the heart of Gonzales. Parking is plentiful on the downtown area on the square. Restaurant can facilitate larger groups.

Weaknesses: Parking may be an issue during a major downtown event.

Opportunities: Engage and advertise to visiting touring groups headed to Gonzales

Downtown Tour of Gonzales

<u>Antique Mall:</u> Vast array of antiques and collectibles sure to keep the antique shopper busy for hours.

<u>Angels and Outlaws:</u> Very unique boutique in the heart of downtown on the large square; offers local shoppers the opportunity to shop local, forgoing crowded urban shopping venues. <u>Dilworth Inn:</u> Boutique hotel offering unique amenities for tourists and business travelers to Gonzales; offers a unique place to stay for a traveler wanting to stay in the heart of downtown Gonzales.

<u>Main Street Marketplace:</u> A vast array of items to browse through, and a great location off the square.

<u>Sweet B's</u> Great location and very well appointed shop on the square offering sweet treats and unique gifts to visitors to the center of downtown.

<u>Longhorn Saloon:</u> Interesting saloon near the square that has a truly "old Western feel" <u>Vintage Charm:</u> Another antique shopping experience; Chamber could offer an "Antique Trail" to follow while in Gonzales with all the numerous antique locations in the city.

<u>Come and Take It Bar and Grill:</u> Great location to end the day and chat about the day's events and sightseeing locations. Could easily host larger groups within facilities if pre-arranged with Bar.

Bella Tavola Italian Restaurant

This Italian restaurant is located just off the downtown square in the heart of city and provides great Italian-style food for tourists for lunch/dinner options while they are shopping the downtown area or attending local events.

<u>Hotel:</u> The hotel was very clean with well-appointed rooms. The rooms with the kitchenette would be great for families or visitors staying for a few days.

<u>Downtown squares</u>: Overall a very inviting square with a great array of shopping, dining and business centered around both squares. Opportunity: Partner with local groups that need

community service hours (ex: 4-H/FFA) to take on a beautification project within the downtown square.

Day Two: Wednesday, Feb 23, 2019

Robert Lee Brothers Jr. Memorial Library Dubose Gun Collection & Bushong Document Collection

Strengths: A wonderful exhibit of guns collected by Charles Dubose. A must see for gun collectors. The Bushong Document Collection is a great exhibit within the Robert Lee Brothers Jr. library and offers a great historical perspective via these documents. This exhibit alone is a Texas treasure and a must see when visiting Gonzales. The laminated brochure is a nice promotional piece.

Weaknesses: Small rooms in the Dubose exhibit area but larger crowds can utilize part of the library while waiting to tour the gun exhibit.

Opportunities: Maybe an opportunity to promote to gun enthusiasts to "Come and See" this unique gun collection en route to a gun show located nearby (San Antonio).

Historical tour with Paul Frenzel at First Shot Site

Strengths: Offers a beautiful, scenic drive en route to the First Shot Site. The route offers historical significance in the saga of Texas history and should be a point of interest to anyone visiting or living in Texas and also gives visitors a great look at Gonzales county agricultural endeavors/ranches. Paul Frenzel as a local tour guide is a Gonzales treasure, as he recites interesting facts and tidbits of Texas History along the tour and is very knowledgeable. The monument on highway is impressive and gives great information on the First Shot site and history of Texians. Small plaque at site by river, erected by local High School, is meaningful and thoughtful, and gives homage to the First Shot.

Weaknesses: Monument on First Shot site off the beaten path and away from the city. Area by the river plaque could be possibly be enhanced in the future.

Opportunities: This site, although an out of the way location from center of Gonzales, should be a must on any historical tour to anyone visiting Gonzales.

Brachas House & Sam Houston Oak

Strengths: The house is a great example of early Anglo American pioneer structures in Texas and a great historical site of the Sam Houston Oak tree. The stately Sam Houston Oak tree is a significant point of interest in Texas history and would interest avid Texas history buffs and photographers from the road.

Opportunities: Private house and grounds, private organized tours.

Strengths: Pioneer Village is a gem of a great local resource and destination. Pioneer Village is an excellent asset to Gonzales and a very unique historical area that would capture the attention of any Texas history or pioneer enthusiast. Pioneer Village gives tourists a historical glimpse into pioneer life along with artifacts, schoolroom, church and more. Used for local festival, which attracts more visitors to the area.

Weaknesses: Smallish parking lot

Opportunities: Seek out additional ways to advertise to and utilize this pioneer venue for

groups traveling across Texas.

Baker Boys BBQ

Strengths: Restaurant was conveniently located on Highway 90, main thoroughfare through town. Great local restaurant to grab a Texas BBQ style lunch while touring historic venues around Gonzales, or between shopping antiques/shops in city or recreating at one of the parks in the area. Courteous staff, local BBQ flavor and efficient serving makes for a great restaurant. Opportunities: Could advertise or promote the restaurant as a lunch destination before heading out for a day of historical tours, shopping or attending local events. Based on the generous seating area within the restaurant (and patio area), the restaurant could be utilized as meeting point for tourist groups or a gathering point to meet up.

Gonzales Memorial Museum

Strengths: A treasure of a historical museum with wonderful stately monuments, a large reflecting pool, and a large outdoor stage. The museum is also a great resource of artifacts and photos of Gonzales' Texas heritage. The museum docent is a wealth of knowledge about Gonzales' history and can engage visitors with his facts regarding the history of the cannon, and other artifacts within the museum.

Weaknesses: Needed improvement on grounds and landscaping.

Opportunities: Opportunity to improve landscaping on grounds would improve the appeal and provide for a scenic area to draw tourists to an impressive museum and monuments. Perhaps there could an opportunity that the outdoor stage could be advertised as a venue to host a variety of organizations and businesses and draw more people to utilize the location. Foster relationships with national entities to provide opportunities to promote the museum as a must see tourist location for all Texas historical enthusiasts.

Driving Tour of JB Wells Park, Independence Park, Paddling Trails, Gonzales Expo and arena Strengths: Beautiful recreational area, open all year. Spacious park with opportunities for picnicking, running, and sports teams. The river itself offers many opportunities for kayaking, canoeing, fishing for outdoor enthusiasts. The park was not crowded and offered ample space

for enjoying nature, and for sports enthusiasts to partake in various activities. The Gonzales arena and Expo is a great asset for Gonzales to bring in large groups for a variety of ag related and other events.

Weaknesses: Parts of the park indicated need for additional beautification and maintenance. Opportunities: Partner with Texas Parks and Wildlife or any organization that has promotion and programs for parks. Perhaps visit with the Texas Water Safari group to see how to engage followers/families of the Water Safari participants. Promote the park to tourists to get away and enjoy nature and focus on various select team sports organizations as a great location to enjoy the facilities that this park has to offer. The Expo Center is very appealing to large groups searching for an indoor air-conditioned facility.

Downtown Shops Tour:

Discovery, Wild Plum Antiques, Shear Designs, Hearty Gourmet, Laurel Ridge Antiques /Bed and Breakfast

Strengths: These stores offer a great variety of products, services and gifts. Discovery offers unique and vast resources for home interiors. The Hearty Gourmet has an intriguing store window which invites shoppers to stop in and browse. Laurel Ridge is a nicely appointed and quaint bed and breakfast with a treasure of gifts on first floor and great for a small group of visitors headed to Gonzales for a weekend stay. Wild Plum Antique store is unique and offers a great shopping opportunity for that person looking for unique antique items.. Shear Designs offers a unique shopping venue along with salon services.

Weaknesses: Off the downtown squares shopping district; no signage to direct visitors to these sites for shopping.

Opportunities: Promoting the unique shopping districts of Gonzales (ex: antiques/homeowners/cooking enthusiasts) could be a way to bring in more tourism (non-historical) to Gonzales. Brochures/website information that target shoppers to come to Gonzales to "Come and Shop It". Directional colorful signage on the two squares directing shoppers to this area would be helpful.

Resources available from the Texas Department of Agriculture include:

Community Development Block Grants(CDBG) for governmental entities, established to

help communities by providing decent housing and suitable living environments, and expanding economic opportunities principally for persons of low-to moderate-income: https://texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/RuralEconomicDevelopment/RuralCommunityDevelopmentBlockGrant(CDBG).aspx

- Downtown Revitalization and Main Street Programs
 Address the objective of eliminating slum or blight conditions in the downtown area of
 the community by the following objectives. The assistance must be for public
 infrastructure improvements, which will aid in the elimination of a slum or blighted
 area.
 - http://www.texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/RuralEconomicDevelopment/RuralCommunityDevelopmentBlockGrant(CDBG)/CDBGResources/Applications/DRPMS.aspx
- Certified Farmers Market, a certification and promotion program that provides a variety
 of benefits for Texas producers and consumers. Benefits for Consumers Farmers
 markets give consumers access to locally grown, farm-fresh produce and other goods, as
 well as the opportunity to interact with the people who grow their food. Community
 Farmers markets offer many communities a unique way to access food, while also
 having a positive impact on the local economy:
 http://www.gotexan.org/LocateGOTEXAN/CertifiedFarmersMarkets.aspx
- Certified Retirement Community Program, a certification and promotion program
 that ensures each certified community can meet the living, employment/volunteer,
 health, entertainment, education and safety needs of its citizens and visitors all the
 things that make Texas a great place to retire:
 http://www.retireintexas.org/
- Texas Capital Fund, helps support rural business development, retention and expansion by providing funds for public infrastructure, real estate development, or the elimination of deteriorated conditions: https://texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/RuralEconomicDevelopment/TexasCapitalFund.aspx
- State Office of Rural Health, serves the health needs of rural Texas, SORH Staff work
 closely with local health care providers, county leaders and state partners to support
 access to quality health care for rural Texans. SORH works to assist rural health
 providers through a variety of programs including information and referral, assistance
 with medical license applications, grants and educational awards that are available to
 individual clinicians, health care institutions and other organizations:
 https://texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/RuralEconomicDevelopment/StateOfficeofRuralHealth.aspx

 Grants, various funding opportunities are available to farmers/ranchers, universities and schools, non-profits and private entities in the county: https://texasagriculture.gov/GrantsServices/GrantsandServices.aspx

Summary of TDA recommendations to assist the city of Gonzales tourism:

- TxCDBG Funds are available to apply for to help with city and county infrastructure improvements. These funds can ensure that the proper infrastructure is in place for future economic development and tourism.
- Texas Capital Funds are available for projects that support rural business development and real estate development. The Texas Capital Fund can help promote business retention and new business opportunities.
- The Young Farmer Grant program helps to grow and support Texas Agriculture. The Young Farmer Grant can assist new and current agriculture producers to create agricultural business ventures and to help to grow an operation that also impacts the community.
- The Farmers Market located in Gonzales should consider joining the GO TEXAN Certified Farmers Market Program to help with marketing and promotion of the market. The Certified Farmers Market program will list the Farmers Market on TDA's website and provide an asset to help promote tourism in Gonzales County.
- The State Office of Rural Health within TDA can help support access to quality health care.
- GO TEXAN can promote Gonzales through our marketing outlets, calendar events and social media opportunities. The State Fair of Texas would be a great place to promote the City of Gonzales. TDA has a building to help promote products and communities.
- Any local businesses that produces a Texas product and is looking for an opportunity to
 market or promote their products should consider joining the GO TEXAN program.
 Additionally, if Gonzales is interesting in inviting GO TEXAN members to participate in
 local major events as vendors, this opportunity can be included in the GO TEXAN
 Newsletter sent out to GO TEXAN membership and the event can also be placed in the
 calendar of events section in the quarterly GO TEXAN E-zine.

Once again, thank you very much for the opportunity to visit and tour the city of Gonzales. I thoroughly enjoyed the two day tour, and visiting the major points of interest and Texas heritage sites within Gonzales. I am your TDA Field Representative and look forward to working with the city leaders in the future and will work hard to help you in any way that I can.