

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

COURTHOUSE CORNERSTONES

2025 TEXAS HISTORIC COURTHOUSE PRESERVATION PROGRAM UPDATE

25
YEARS OF
PRESERVATION

TEXAS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION
REAL PLACES TELLING REAL STORIES



THC CHAIRMAN **JOHN L. NAU, III** ON HISTORIC TEXAS COURTHOUSES

As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program, I am writing to share both our remarkable achievements and our vision for the future of these cornerstones for communities across Texas.

Since the program's inception in 1999, we have successfully restored and rededicated 71 historic courthouses, with six more currently under construction for full restoration, and four about to go to bid. Each of these buildings stands as a testament to our state's commitment to preserving its architectural heritage while driving local economic development.

The impact of these restorations is far-reaching. Our restored courthouses have become powerful engines of economic growth and tourism in their communities, supporting more than 16,000 new jobs, nearly \$1.1 billion in earnings, and almost \$1.5 billion in gross state product.

As we look ahead to the Texas Bicentennial in 2036, these magnificently restored buildings will serve as premier destinations, drawing visitors from across the state and nation to experience our rich history firsthand.

Our Commission was gratified in 2024 to see the incredible rededication event in Mason County that you will learn more about on the following pages. Mason County's journey is inspiring and extraordinary. We look forward to many more celebrations this year as Callahan, Taylor, Upshur, and Wise counties all have plans to rededicate their restored historic courthouses.

When a courthouse is restored, it catalyzes downtown revitalization, creates jobs, generates tourism, and instills a renewed sense of pride in our communities. This is why we must view these projects not as finite restorations but as long-term investments in the future of our counties, cities, and state.

As we move forward, we need your continued support to ensure these landmarks receive both the initial restoration funding they deserve and the ongoing maintenance they require. Our commitment to our historic courthouses extends beyond the ribbon-cutting ceremony to include decades of proper care and preservation.

Thank you for your dedication to preserving Texas' history and architectural heritage. Together, we can ensure these magnificent courthouses continue to serve as both functional government buildings and proud symbols of the Lone Star State's incredible legacy.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "John L. Nau, III". The signature is stylized with a large, flowing "J" and "N", and a distinct "III" at the end.

\$ | HISTORY OF APPROPRIATIONS

\$51.75M

AVERAGE BIENNIAL
APPROPRIATION 1999-2007



55

COURTHOUSES COMPLETED
1999-2007

\$23.4M

AVERAGE BIENNIAL
APPROPRIATION 2009-2023



26*

COURTHOUSES COMPLETED
OR IN PROGRESS 2009-2025

*INCLUDES 4 FULL RESTORATION GRANTS AWARDED JULY 2024

\$125M

THC APPROPRIATION REQUEST,
2026-27 BIENNIUM TEXAS HISTORIC
COURTHOUSE GRANT PROGRAM

Rededicated on June 30, 2001, the
Shackelford County Courthouse in Albany was
the first fully restored building in the Texas
Historic Courthouse Preservation Program.

25 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

THC'S COURTHOUSE PROGRAM CELEBRATES QUARTER-CENTURY ANNIVERSARY

By Susan Tietz, Program Coordinator, Courthouse Preservation Program, Texas Historical Commission

Twenty-five years doesn't seem like that long ago. But certain reminders offer perspective: Y2K panic was settling in. Gas was \$1.22 a gallon. And Ask Jeeves was a popular search engine.

On May 31, 1999, Texas Gov. George W. Bush signed legislation creating the Texas Historic

Courthouse Preservation Program (THCPP), making FY 2025 the 25th anniversary of one of the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) most-recognized programs.

The THCPP's origins can be traced to New Year's Day 1993, when a tragic fire nearly destroyed the Hill County Courthouse in Hillsboro.

The incident inspired concern for Texas' distinctive collection of county courthouses, which have since been listed twice on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 11 Most Endangered Properties.

"There was a growing concern for these treasured historic landmarks, and that eventually spawned one





“
We’ve
enjoyed spending
this 25th anniversary
year celebrating the
courthouses we’ve helped
preserve and making
sure Texans continue to
save these invaluable
resources.”

of the largest preservation grant programs in the country,” says Elizabeth Brummett, director of the THC’s Division of Architecture, which oversees the THCPP. “We’ve enjoyed spending this 25th anniversary year celebrating the courthouses we’ve helped preserve and making sure Texans continue to save these invaluable resources.”

The THC’s Real Places conference in April will continue the

commemoration with a keynote panel on the first 25 years of the THCPP. The THC also recently created a poster that showcases the THCPP’s restored courthouses from the past quarter century.

Since the first THCPP award in 2000, the nationally renowned, award-winning program has attracted 153 participating counties and funded the full restoration of 81 historic courthouses. The THCPP

has also supported the preservation of 25 others through emergency grants to address urgent needs and planning grants to prepare construction documents for future restorations. Matching full restoration grants restore historic courthouses to their original grandeur while providing safer, more secure, energy-efficient, functional, and accessible buildings for their users, rendering them modern and efficient facilities to conduct county business.



“
*Historic courthouses
 are more than just a
 place where people
 take care of county
 business—they
 serve as the heart of
 every county.*
 ”

Over the past quarter century, the State of Texas has appropriated more than \$405 million to the THCPP. Participating counties have added more than \$300 million in matching funds, generating over 16,000 new jobs, nearly \$1.1 billion in earnings, and almost \$1.5 billion in gross state product.

Courthouse restorations also spark historic downtown revitalization

and increase heritage tourism across the state. These striking historic structures—ranging in style from Neoclassical to Art Deco to Midcentury Modern—offer travelers the opportunity to visit areas defined by family-owned businesses, vibrant social gatherings, and a sense of community.

“Historic courthouses are more than just a place where people

take care of county business—they serve as the heart of every county,” Brummett says.

She adds that the THCPP, combined with other THC programs, has been the catalyst that encourages additional public and private investment in historic downtowns across the state. Often, buildings in the central commercial district that were vacant when a courthouse project begins are





occupied by the project’s completion.

The THCPP has also consulted with two courthouse advisory committees to provide feedback about its preservation efforts. As a result, program changes have been made to ensure best practices and improve equity and efficiency in awarding and managing grants of funded projects.

In addition, the THC created the accompanying Texas Historic

Courthouse Stewardship Program. In partnership with generous annual funding from the Texas Land Title Association, it offers maintenance resources and training to help counties preserve their restored courthouses for another century or more by providing training to county officials and facility managers through several annual workshops.

“We’re excited to have the opportunity to celebrate 25 years

of the courthouse program’s growth and many achievements,” Brummett says. “With the strong foundation and support we have now, we expect to be commemorating this program many more years into the future.”



A version of this article previously appeared in the Winter 2024 issue of *The Medallion*.



“
With the strong
foundation and
support we have
now, we expect to be
commemorating this
program many more
years into the future.
”



REBUILT!

MASON COUNTY TRIUMPHS AFTER TRAGIC COURTHOUSE FIRE

By Andy Rhodes, *The Medallion* Managing Editor, Texas Historical Commission

A couple hours before the July 2024 Mason County Courthouse rededication ceremony, a community parade offered a charming preview of things to come. Locals lined the historic courthouse square in support of family and friends on colorful floats celebrating rodeo queens, peach festivals, and veterans' groups.

By 11:30 a.m., the courthouse lawn was packed with nearly 700 of these same well-wishers to celebrate the building's grand reopening. The handsome 1909 courthouse recently underwent a \$17 million restoration project overseen and funded in part by the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program (THCPP).

After the ceremony, Mason County Judge Sheree Hardin happily reflected on the stunning restoration project and the impactful rededication event.

"I believe everyone involved in the ceremony and all who attended were full of pride," she said. "I saw lots of smiles and nods."



Hardin added that she was especially excited about the participation of retired County Judge Jerry Bearden, who dedicated his final years in office to attaining the THCPP grant.

“Though he retired in the middle of the rebuild, he stayed well connected with the project,” Hardin said. “He was the perfect person to cut the red ribbon at the ceremony.”

The celebratory scene was quite a contrast from the night of February 4, 2021, when Bearden received a call reporting flames billowing out of the courthouse’s second-story window. The fire, later determined

The crowd gathered for the rededication sustained this revitalizing energy and offered enthusiastic cheers for the speakers commemorating the newly restored courthouse. Gathered under towering pecan trees, they admired the new cupola with a reconstructed clock tower, anchored by a Classical Revival pediment and stately columns adorning the entrance.

According to Hardin, the ceremony provided an opportunity for the community to celebrate the hard work, dedication, and sacrifice that many people and organizations invested into the project.

rebuilt furniture in the courtroom.

“It’s breathtaking,” Hardin says. “Several pieces on the judge’s bench are hand carved, making it a real showstopper.”

She added that she greatly appreciated the efforts of the courthouse ceremony committee that orchestrated this summer’s successful event. A local foundation also chipped in by providing a grant to help cover the expenses of a time capsule and the ceremony.

With the restored courthouse now standing as a bright beacon on the



to be arson, destroyed most of the building’s interior while sparing the exterior walls and triple-height columns. The courthouse had already been slated for a THCPP restoration, which provided a slight silver lining: historic furnishings and records were removed and the building had been fully documented.

After the fire, Bearden commented that the community and the building “would be like the mythical bird, Phoenix. The courthouse (will) rise from the ashes!”

“This day was particularly important to me because it symbolized something that I believe wholeheartedly—that good can come from bad,” she said. “There were so many victories in this story.”

She added that feedback about the courthouse has been very positive—most people comment on the colors, which are slightly darker on the exterior and brighter on the interior. Other features that draw attention are the white floor tile, original to the 1909 courthouse, and the

town square, Hardin encourages Texans to visit Mason to experience the building and its surroundings.

“Come see us at the courthouse while you’re here,” she said. “Mason County is full of history!”



A version of this article previously appeared in the Fall 2024 issue of *The Medallion*.

CALLAHAN

Constructed of buff brick with limestone details, decorative columns sit atop a single-story horizontal brick-banded base, framing the double-height window bays. As part of the full restoration, site and roof drainage were improved to prevent water infiltration issues, and new security, fire suppression, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems have been installed. The masonry and terracotta have been repointed and repaired. The building is being brought into compliance with life safety codes and made fully accessible.



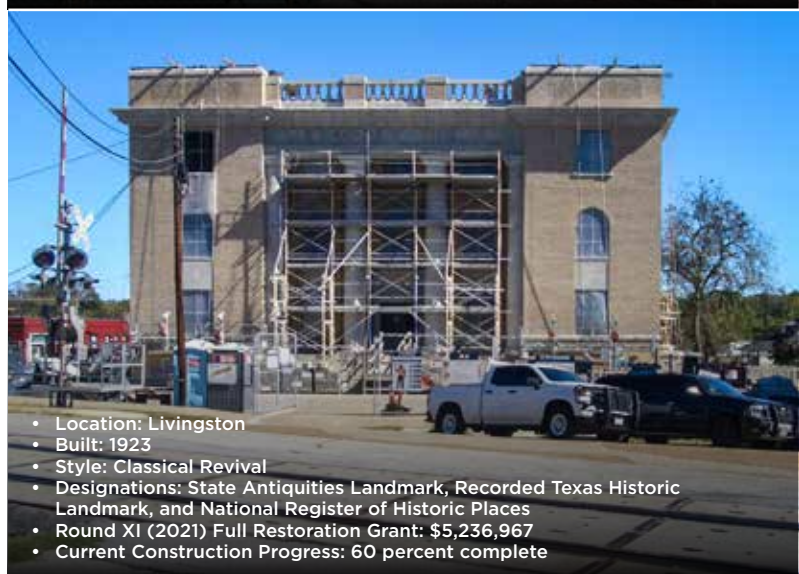
HALL

The courthouse is constructed of dark brick with light cast-stone details and features a base with horizontal brick masonry, a grand entry stair, and a double-height entrance supported by decorative columns. The full restoration includes removal of hazardous materials, a radio tower from the roof, and a cell tower from the lawn, plus sidewalk replacement after regrading the site and waterproofing basement walls. As with all grant-funded full restorations, the building will be code-compliant and accessible, with new, highly efficient mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.



POLK

Constructed of light brown brick and cast stone, this courthouse features a triple-height entrance, with an ornamental rooftop railing and molding. Foundation waterproofing, window rehabilitation, and roof replacement will eliminate water infiltration throughout the building, while the exterior undergoes major masonry repairs and repointing. New mechanical, electrical, plumbing, audio-visual, and security systems, along with the introduction of a new accessible ramp, will improve safety and functionality.



TAYLOR

Clad in brick, cast stone, and terra-cotta, this courthouse features a double-height bay on each facade that includes decorative half-columns and a band that frames the windows and divides the second and third floors from the building base. The full restoration includes reconstruction of the entry stairs and new exterior doors and windows, as well as the removal of an inserted floor to restore the district courtroom to its original full height. Replacement of outdated audio-visual, security, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems will make the building safer and more useful.



UPSHUR

This courthouse has a tan brick veneer and limestone base with exterior ornamentation featuring fluted, or grooved, limestone panels beneath its stacks of windows, suggesting classical columns. The full restoration includes the installation of a geothermal heat pump that will provide highly efficient heating and cooling. Restoration of brick masonry and steel windows, roof and site drainage improvements, life safety components, and accessibility work will result in a safer, more functional building for county employees and visitors.



WISE

Designed by renowned architect J. Riely Gordon, the courthouse features turrets, a prominent central clock tower, and heavy granite arches with carved red sandstone details. The full restoration includes preservation of the pink granite masonry, terra-cotta ornaments, the active courtroom, and reconstruction of the courtroom balcony that retains much of the original fabrics. New replica windows are being installed on the exterior, while the existing furnishings, doors, and wrought-iron railings are being refinished.



- Location: Abilene
- Built: 1915
- Style: Classical Revival
- Designations: State Antiquities Landmark, Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, and National Register of Historic Places
- Round XI (2020) Full Restoration Grant: \$5,980,000
- Current Construction Progress: 90 percent complete



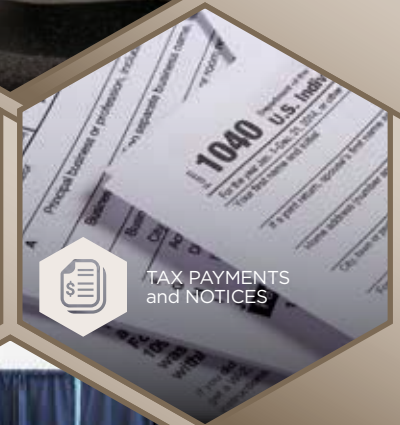
- Location: Gilmer
- Built: 1933
- Style: Moderne
- Designation: National Register of Historic Places
- Round XII (2022) Full Restoration Grant: \$6,195,130
- Current Construction Progress: 50 percent complete



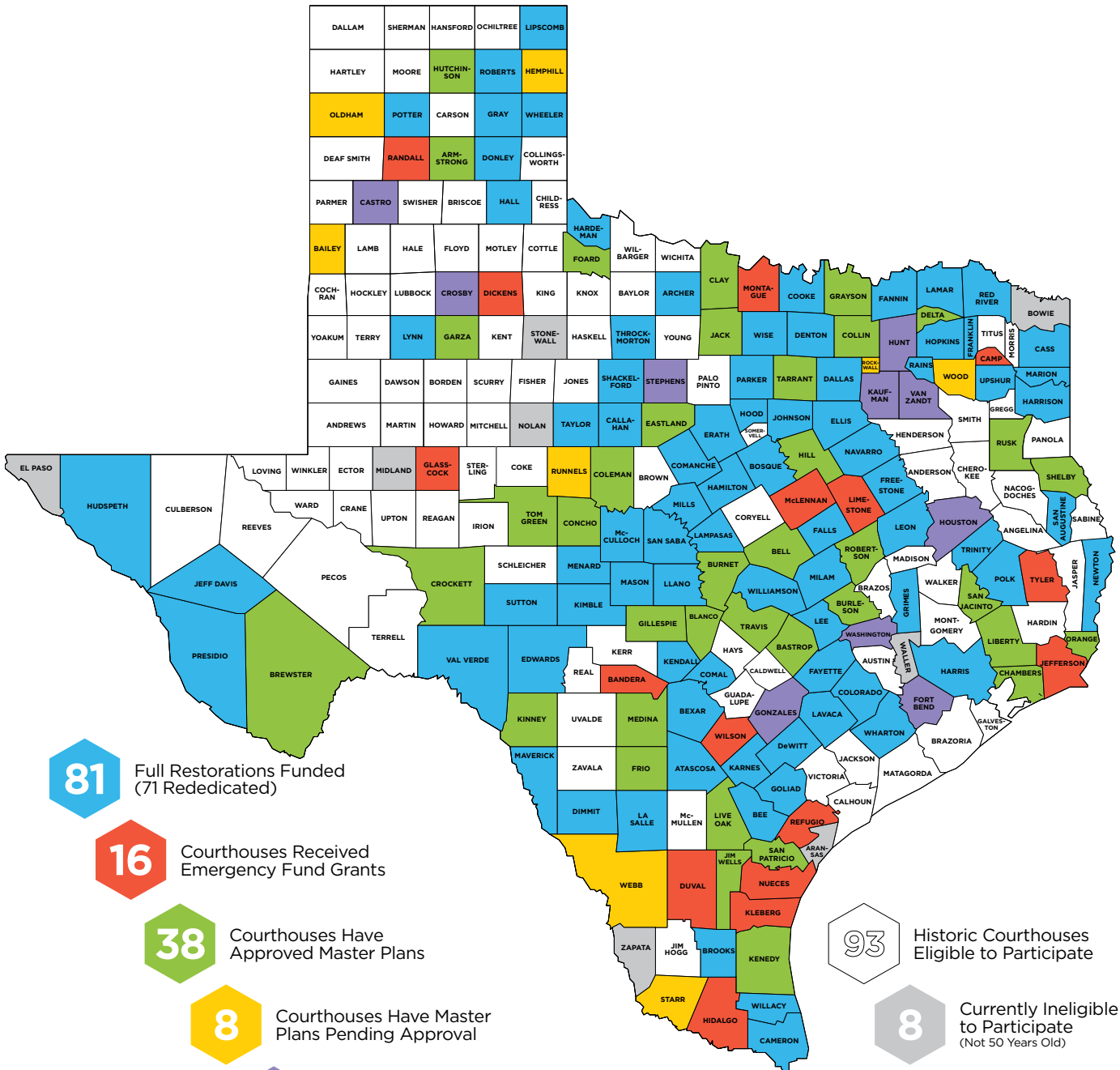
- Location: Decatur
- Built: 1896
- Style: Richardsonian Romanesque
- Designations: State Antiquities Landmark, Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, and National Register of Historic Places
- Round XII (2023) Full Restoration Grant: \$8,427,445
- Current Construction Progress: 80 percent complete

COUNTY COURTHOUSES

A FOUNDATION OF STATE SERVICES



TEXAS HISTORIC COURTHOUSE PRESERVATION PROGRAM



107 Courthouses Awarded Preservation Grants



72 Counties Have Committed Local Funds and Awaiting Full Restoration Funding to Restore Their Historic Courthouses

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT STATUS AND FUNDING 2025

FULLY RESTORED COURTHOUSES

County	City	Rededicated	Yr Built
Archer	Archer City	5/12/05	1891
Atascosa	Jourdanton	6/14/03	1912
Bee	Beeville	5/20/06	1913
Bexar	San Antonio	7/14/15	1896
Bosque	Meridian	9/22/07	1886
Brooks	Falfurrias	2/26/10	1914
Cameron	Brownsville	10/17/06	1912
Cass	Linden	2/18/12	1861
Colorado	Columbus	5/17/14	1891
Comal	New Braunfels	1/22/13	1898
Cooke	Gainesville	11/12/11	1911
Dallas	Dallas	5/15/07	1892
Denton	Denton	11/6/04	1896
DeWitt	Cuero	10/27/07	1896
Dimmit	Carrizo Springs	11/18/04	1884
Donley	Clarendon	7/4/03	1891
Edwards	Rocksprings	7/5/14	1891
Ellis	Waxahachie	10/4/03	1897
Erath	Stephenville	8/20/02	1892
Falls	Marlin	10/16/21	1940
Fannin	Bonham	3/10/22	1889
Fayette	La Grange	6/25/05	1891
Franklin	Mount Vernon	9/20/14	1912
Goliad	Goliad	12/4/03	1894
Gray	Pampa	4/12/03	1928
Grimes	Anderson	3/2/02	1894
Hamilton	Hamilton	4/28/12	1887
Hardeman	Quanah	5/9/14	1908
Harris	Houston	8/23/11	1910
Harrison	Marshall	6/20/09	1901
Hood	Granbury	10/27/12	1891
Hopkins	Sulphur Springs	12/7/02	1894
Hudspeth	Sierra Blanca	7/3/04	1920
Jeff Davis	Fort Davis	11/8/03	1910
Johnson	Cleburne	12/1/07	1913
Karnes	Karnes City	4/7/18	1894

County	City	Rededicated	Yr Built
Kendall	Boerne	4/10/10	1870
La Salle	Cotulla	1/26/13	1931
Lamar	Paris	9/3/05	1917
Lampasas	Lampasas	3/2/04	1883
Lavaca	Hallettsville	9/11/10	1899
Lee	Giddings	10/8/04	1899
Leon	Centerville	7/1/07	1887
Lipscomb	Lipscomb	9/11/21	1916
Llano	Llano	6/15/02	1892
Lynn	Tahoka	6/20/19	1916
Marion	Jefferson	7/3/21	1912
Mason	Mason	7/13/24	1910
Maverick	Eagle Pass	10/13/05	1885
McCulloch	Brady	9/5/09	1899
Menard	Menard	11/11/06	1932
Milam	Cameron	7/4/02	1892
Mills	Goldthwaite	8/27/11	1913
Navarro	Corsicana	7/9/16	1905
Newton	Newton	12/8/12	1903
Parker	Weatherford	6/4/05	1886
Potter	Amarillo	8/18/12	1932
Presidio	Marfa	1/5/02	1886
Rains	Emory	10/17/10	1909
Red River	Clarksville	10/26/02	1884
Roberts	Miami	6/2/12	1913
San Augustine	San Augustine	11/20/10	1927
San Saba	San Saba	1/23/20	1911
Shackelford	Albany	6/30/01	1883
Sutton	Sonora	6/11/02	1891
Throckmorton	Throckmorton	3/12/15	1891
Trinity	Groveton	7/22/11	1914
Val Verde	Del Rio	7/23/04	1887
Wharton	Wharton	8/4/07	1889
Wheeler	Wheeler	10/16/04	1925
Williamson	Georgetown	12/8/07	1911

CURRENT FULL RESTORATION GRANTS

County	City	Status	Yr Built
Callahan	Baird	In Progress	1929
Comanche	Comanche	In Progress	1939
Freestone	Fairfield	In Progress	1919
Hall	Memphis	In Progress	1924
Kimble	Junction	In Progress	1930
Polk	Livingston	In Progress	1923
Taylor	Abilene	In Progress	1915
Upshur	Gilmer	In Progress	1933
Willacy	Raymondville	In Progress	1922
Wise	Decatur	In Progress	1896

PARTICIPATING COURTHOUSES AWAITING FULL RESTORATION FUNDING

CURRENT PLANNING PROJECTS (SHOVEL-READY BY ROUND 14)

County	City	Status	Yr Built
Castro	Dimmitt	In Progress	1940
Gonzales	Gonzales	In Progress	1895

PREVIOUS PLANNING PROJECTS (SHOVEL-READY)

County	City	Status	Yr Built
Crosby	Crosbyton	Complete	1914
Fort Bend	Richmond	Complete	1909
Houston	Crockett	Complete	1940
Hunt	Greenville	Complete	1929
Stephens	Breckenridge	Complete	1926
Van Zandt	Canton	Complete	1937
Washington	Brenham	Complete	1939

CURRENT EMERGENCY PROJECTS

County	City	Status	Yr Built
Donley	Clarendon	In Progress	1891
Duval	San Diego	In Progress	1916
Refugio	Refugio	In Progress	1917
Washington	Brenham	In Progress	1939

PREVIOUS EMERGENCY PROJECTS

County	City	Status	Yr Built
Bandera	Bandera	Complete	1891
Callahan	Baird	Complete	1929
Cameron	Brownsville	Complete	1912
Camp	Pittsburg	Complete	1929
Dickens	Dickens	Complete	1893
Glasscock	Garden City	Complete	1894
Goliad	Goliad	Complete	1894
Hidalgo	Hidalgo	Complete	1886
Houston	Crockett	Complete	1940
Hunt	Greenville	Complete	1929
Jefferson	Beaumont	Complete	1932
Kimble	Junction	Complete	1930
Kleberg	Kingsville	Complete	1914
Lee	Giddings	Complete	1899
Limestone	Groesbeck	Complete	1924
Lipscomb	Lipscomb	Complete	1916
Mason	Mason	Complete	1910
McLennan	Waco	Complete	1901
Milam	Cameron	Complete	1892
Montague	Montague	Complete	1913
Nueces	Corpus Christi	Complete	1914
Polk	Livingston	Complete	1923
Randall	Canyon	Complete	1908
Tyler	Woodville	Complete	1891
Upshur	Gilmer	Complete	1933
Willacy	Raymondville	Complete	1922
Wilson	Floresville	Complete	1884

MASTER PLAN STATUS

County	City	Status	Yr Built
Armstrong	Claude	Approved	1912
Bailey	Muleshoe	Pending Approval	1925
Bastrop	Bastrop	Approved	1883
Bell	Belton	Approved	1884
Blanco	Johnson City	Approved	1916
Brewster	Alpine	Approved	1888
Brooks	Falfurrias	Approved	1914
Burleson	Caldwell	Approved	1927
Chambers	Anahuac	Approved	1936
Clay	Henrietta	Approved	1884/1911
Coleman	Coleman	Approved	1884/1956
Collin	McKinney	Approved	1874/1927
Concho	Paint Rock	Approved	1886
Crockett	Ozona	Approved	1902
Delta	Cooper	Approved	1940/1976
Eastland	Eastland	Approved	1928
Frio	Pearsall	Approved	1904
Foard	Crowell	Approved	1910
Garza	Post	Approved	1923
Gillespie	Fredericksburg	Approved	1939
Grayson	Sherman	Approved	1936
Hemphill	Canadian	Pending Approval	1909
Hill	Hillsboro	Approved	1890
Hutchinson	Stinnett	Approved	1927
Jack	Jacksboro	Approved	1940
Jim Wells	Alice	Approved	1912
Kaufman	Kaufman	Approved	1956
Kenedy	Sarita	Approved	1917
Kinney	Bracketville	Approved	1910
Liberty	Liberty	Approved	1931
Live Oak	George West	Approved	1919
Medina	Hondo	Approved	1892/1937
Oldham	Vega	Pending Approval	1915
Orange	Orange	Approved	1937/1965
Robertson	Franklin	Approved	1883
Rockwall	Rockwall	Pending Approval	1940
Runnels	Ballinger	Pending Approval	1889
Rusk	Henderson	Approved	1928
San Jacinto	Coldspring	Approved	1917
San Patricio	Sinton	Approved	1928
Shelby	Center	Approved	1885
Starr	Rio Grande City	Pending Approval	1939
Tarrant	Fort Worth	Approved	1895
Tom Green	San Angelo	Approved	1928
Travis	Austin	Approved	1930/1966
Webb	Laredo	Pending Approval	1909
Wood	Quitman	Pending Approval	1925

THE BENEFITS OF RESTORED HISTORIC COURTHOUSES



ECONOMIC

- Since 1999, 16,000+ jobs created through courthouse preservation projects
- Generated nearly \$1.1 billion in earnings
- Generated almost \$1.5 billion in gross state product
- Restored courthouses reinvigorate historic downtowns and promote heritage tourism, a \$10.4 billion industry in Texas
- Increased downtown property values
- Increased downtown occupancy
- Increased utility savings from new, energy-efficient systems



ACCESSIBILITY

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



SAFETY

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



ENERGY EFFICIENCY/ SUSTAINABILITY

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



MAINTENANCE

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



FUNCTIONALITY

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



QUALITY OF LIFE

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