

Concept Proposal
By Main Street Advisory Board

An Historical Overlay for
Downtown
Stephenville, Texas

As Stephenville continues to grow, both as a regional shopping hub and through major residential growth, Stephenville citizens have come to recognize the historical importance and character of the downtown square and other downtown commercial areas. The downtown area includes many aspects of our early history – brick streets, and historic buildings dating back to early settlement in the area. The Stephenville Courthouse serves as a focal point visibly positioned in the heart of the downtown square.

While growth and progress are embraced by the community, there is also a strong desire to maintain our historic past and to enhance our downtown so that our citizens still maintain a hometown sense of community. It is apparent that many of our population chooses to shop in outlying communities that have developed and enhanced their historic downtowns. In order to grow more interest in shopping downtown (both from locals and regional shoppers), it is critical that the city of Stephenville develop guidelines to ensure that preservation efforts and property investments are protected by providing direction for future improvements. This can be accomplished by developing an Historical Overlay Plan that focuses on the design and character of development of the downtown square and other businesses that frame the area. An Historical Overlay Plan will

- Provide guidance to property owners and tenants about buildings, their historical significance, and how to maintain them.
- Include ways to address building design, repair, and rehabilitation issues.
- Set guidelines that will not be a rigid set of rules and will not require that buildings be restored to a specific historical period or style.
- Focus specifically on the Stephenville Downtown Historic District.

The Historical Overlay will put in place a design review process to determine if a proposed project meets approved criteria. These criteria will determine appropriateness of a project by addressing concerns such as:

1. Is the integrity of the individual historic structure preserved?
2. Are new buildings, renovations, or additions designed to be compatible with surrounding historic properties?
3. Is the overall character of the Historic Downtown District Overlay protected?

There is no “correct” process for developing an Historical Overlay. Many cities have used different approaches; however, it is critical to start the process to protect our downtown so that downtown is a safe, inviting place for visitors, residents, and workers.