



Texas Commission on the Arts
 Cultural District Designation
 Jim Bob McMillan, Deputy
 Director
 PO Box 13406
 Austin, TX 78711-3406

**CREATIVE
 WACO**

Fiona Bond,
 Creative Waco,
 PO Box 1104,
 Waco, Texas, 76703

January, 2016

Dear Commissioners,

Please find below our letter of intent to submit an application for Downtown Waco to be designated a Texas Commission on the Arts Cultural District. This is a natural next step for our City, which is flourishing as never before, with artistic and cultural vibrancy, aspiration and optimism. In preparing this application, we have come to recognize that Waco shares key features with some of the world's great cultural centers. Waco is a strategic river crossing, underpinned by a rich history. It is a regional, national and international center of learning, has a broad-based economy, a diverse population and agriculturally productive land. We hope to demonstrate that Waco is already a cultural destination with much to offer and a solid plan to grow that identity further. We hope this letter will allow us the opportunity to show that Downtown Waco is ready to take its place with pride alongside the brightest and best Texas Cultural Districts.

Yours truly,

Janette Bell North East Riverside Neighborhood Assoc

Harland D White Waco Spirit of Hope WC

Adri Friles City of Waco

[Signature] Waco Poets Society / ITWOW

Jack A. McGurney De PETER Museum

Harry & Sarah McKeenan Community College

PH "Doc" Anderson State Rep Dist 36

Elaine Daughters - State Rep "Doc" Anderson's Office

Ben Jones CENTRAL NATIONAL BANK WACO COMMUNITY BANK

Bob Selden

Doreen Ravenscroft Waco Catholic District

W Dana Mayor, Waco

Chris McEwen Creative Waco BOB

Charles Olson Creative Waco, Chair

Andrea J. Barfield City Center Waco

Fiona Bond CREATIVE WACO

WACO CHAMBER of COMM

Steve Kearney CTAC

Michael [unclear] (CTAC)

Bob [unclear] (ARTIST BRIAN BROGONZY)

Anthony [unclear] (out on a limb dance)

Erin [unclear] Waco Civic Theatre

Tommy Lou Davis Baylor University

Meg Gilbert The Art Center of Waco

Megan E. Leppard The Art Center of Waco

Tara [unclear] The Art Center of Waco

Debra Santos

WACOAN MAGAZINE

Don Davis

HISTORIC WACO PENNONTIAN

History of District

In 400 words or less give a brief description of the history and development of the cultural district and the key players in the development including organizations, government, artists, and businesses. (Letters of support from key players will be a part of the full application form.)

The strategic crossing of the Brazos River at Waco, in the heart of Texas, is a natural gathering place. Named for the Native American Hueco tribe that flourished there, the significance of this location can be discovered through the archaeological and fossil record at the Mayborn Museum and newest National Monument, Waco Mammoth Site.

In 1868, Thomas Griffith built an experimental suspension bridge across the Brazos in Waco, as part of the famous Chisholm Trail. His design reportedly became the prototype for the Brooklyn Bridge. Today, this iconic bridge, flanked by public art, lies at the heart of Waco's Downtown Cultural District, joining our East and West historic Main Street neighborhoods, and representing the diverse cultural influences that shaped our history and characterize Waco's aspirations.

In 2004, then-Mayor of Waco, Mae Jackson, began a "Community Visioning" process, catalyzing cultural and artistic aspirations. Through community consultation involving the City Council, the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce, higher education, community groups and corporate partners, it was clear that the people of Waco had vision beyond cosmetic and infrastructural necessities. The visual and performing arts were recognized as being vital to the prosperity of the City. There was new investment to create public spaces for art, festivals and events, fuelled in part by a local Tax Incremental Fund and Public Improvement District.

Waco's arts professionals united in 2011 to form the Waco Arts Alliance, building a shared vision to focus development and activity into a more defined cultural district. This led to the formation of Creative Waco in March 2015, a non-profit corporation tasked with overseeing the Cultural District Program and becoming the City's Arts Agency. Our Mayor and City Manager, elected officials, leaders from our Chambers of Commerce, "City Center Waco" Downtown Development Corporation, Mainstreet District, Historic Foundation, Museums Association, Public Improvement District, neighbourhood associations, Convention and Visitor Bureau, education institutions, and local businesses have joined Creative Waco and Waco Arts Alliance to research and visit Cultural Districts in Texas and beyond, realizing that we already have a vibrant, expanding, Downtown Cultural District to promote.

Waco Downtown Cultural District spans Waco's natural artery – the Brazos River, and its distinctive historic Main Street neighborhoods on each side. Its boundaries match Waco's Public Improvement District, which incentivizes creative enterprise, embraces the concentration of activity and where key attractions are connected by the "DASH" free bus service.

Cultural District Description

In 400 words or less give a brief overview of what the cultural district has to offer the community and visitors, the location of the district within the community, and the events and activities scheduled to occur in the cultural district. On a separate page, include a map (computer generated or hand drawn) of the cultural district as it relates to the community as a whole.

The Brazos River is flanked by one of Texas' largest municipal parks. Cameron Park and Brazos Park East not only connect Waco's cultural assets via popular hike/bike trails, but provide an ideal outdoor venue for festivals and outdoor events, including Cinco de Mayo Fiesta, Brazos Nights concerts (May/June/July), Waco Cultural Arts Festival (September), Waco Wine and Food Festival (October), and numerous concerts and events throughout the year. East of the River, Juneteenth Carnival and Art on Elm and West of the river, Celebrate Waco and Waco Wonderland are organized annually, providing opportunities for local performers and visual artists as well as those from further afield. In 2015, Waco's first foodtruck festival drew crowds of 6,000+ and increasingly, football game days at Baylor University's new riverside stadium provide a festival-like atmosphere downtown, where parking and free shuttle services bring new visitors.

Within the Cultural District are several museums with collections of national significance (Dr Pepper Museum, Texas Ranger Museum and the Masonic Grand Lodge), 4 Historic Home Collections, 2 libraries (each with strong cultural programs), many facilities for arts and events (Waco Hippodrome, Waco Convention Center, Indian Spring Park, Brazos East, Phoenix Ballroom, Palladium, Backyard Grill, outdoor stage at Magnolia Silos and the Paul Quinn Campus), a thriving twice-weekly riverside Farmer's Market, artisanal foodtrucks, and a burgeoning number of art and craft boutiques featuring work by local artists, artisans, and makers. There are also many locally owned restaurants, live music bars, two craft breweries and the award-winning Balcones distillery.

Public art and a growing number of murals further enliven the city center, which is also home to a number of local performing arts groups who use downtown venues (including those listed, plus churches, the Masonic Grand Lodge, and other public spaces). These include Waco Symphony Orchestra (with top soloists, including Chris Botti, Joshua Bell and YoYo Ma), Waco Civic Theatre, Central Texas String Academy, Youth Choir of Central Texas, Central Texas Choral Society, Waco Jazz Orchestra, Waco Community Band, Waco Youth Symphony, Jubilee Theatre, Joy's School of Dance, Jenni Holley Dance Studio, Out on a Limb Dance Company, ITWOW Poetry Collective, Nuestra Vox, Waco Poets Society, Baylor Opera, a film society, and numerous smaller groups and performances typical of a lively university city.

Strategic Plan

In 200 words or less give three to five strategic goals for the cultural district, a short explanation of the goal, and the timeframe expected for completion.

Waco's Cultural Strategy grew from a process of community-wide visioning and consultation. It shares common goals and strategies between civic, cultural, business and education sectors. There are three overarching goals:

Goal 1: Grow and support successful, sustainable arts organizations in Waco.

This goal addresses the needs of arts and cultural organizations throughout the Waco area, recognizing that our downtown vibrancy depends on a diverse ecosystem of successful artists, performers and teachers. (Current, 5-year and ongoing targets).

Goal 2: Develop a hub of cultural activity in downtown Waco to attract residents, businesses and tourists.

This goal is specific to the development of Waco's Cultural District.

Specific programs under way include:

- Free public transportation linking key attractions (launched 2015)
- Cultural District application (2016)
- Integrated marketing (launched 2015),
- City Center calendar and lifestyle site (launched 2013).
- Artistic wayfinding (Summer 2018)
- Main Street improvements (launched and ongoing)
- Doris Miller public art project (December 2017)
- Linked programming and marketing (e.g First Fridays, festivals, etc.) (launched and ongoing).

Goal 3: Engage the creative sector in revitalization, entrepreneurship, education, and economic development

This is a long-term goal engaging our arts, cultural, business and higher education communities to find innovative ways to keep creative graduates and entrepreneurs in Waco and help them start successful businesses. (current, 5-year and ongoing targets).

Marketing Plan

In 200 words or less outline plans for marketing the cultural district and the events and activities scheduled to occur in the district.

Waco has successfully piloted cultural destination marketing initiatives during recent years. The goal is to inform citizens and tourists about the myriad "things to do and see", inspiring citizens to become promoters and tourists to become regular visitors.

Launched:

- Themed advertizing around events/programs to promote Waco as a cultural destination (e.g. festivals, YoYo Ma performance, "Viva Waco" Latin art)
- Testing calendar and social media approaches and outlets
- "Meet Downtown Waco" social media & advertizing campaign
- "Wild about Waco" events & attraction training for hospitality industry employees
- Reviewing convention and visitor services through consultation
- Cultivating TV & media contacts for arts and events
- Using Baylor archive to create Waco History app
- Analyzing visitor behavior and data through "Arts & Economic Prosperity 5" survey

Planned

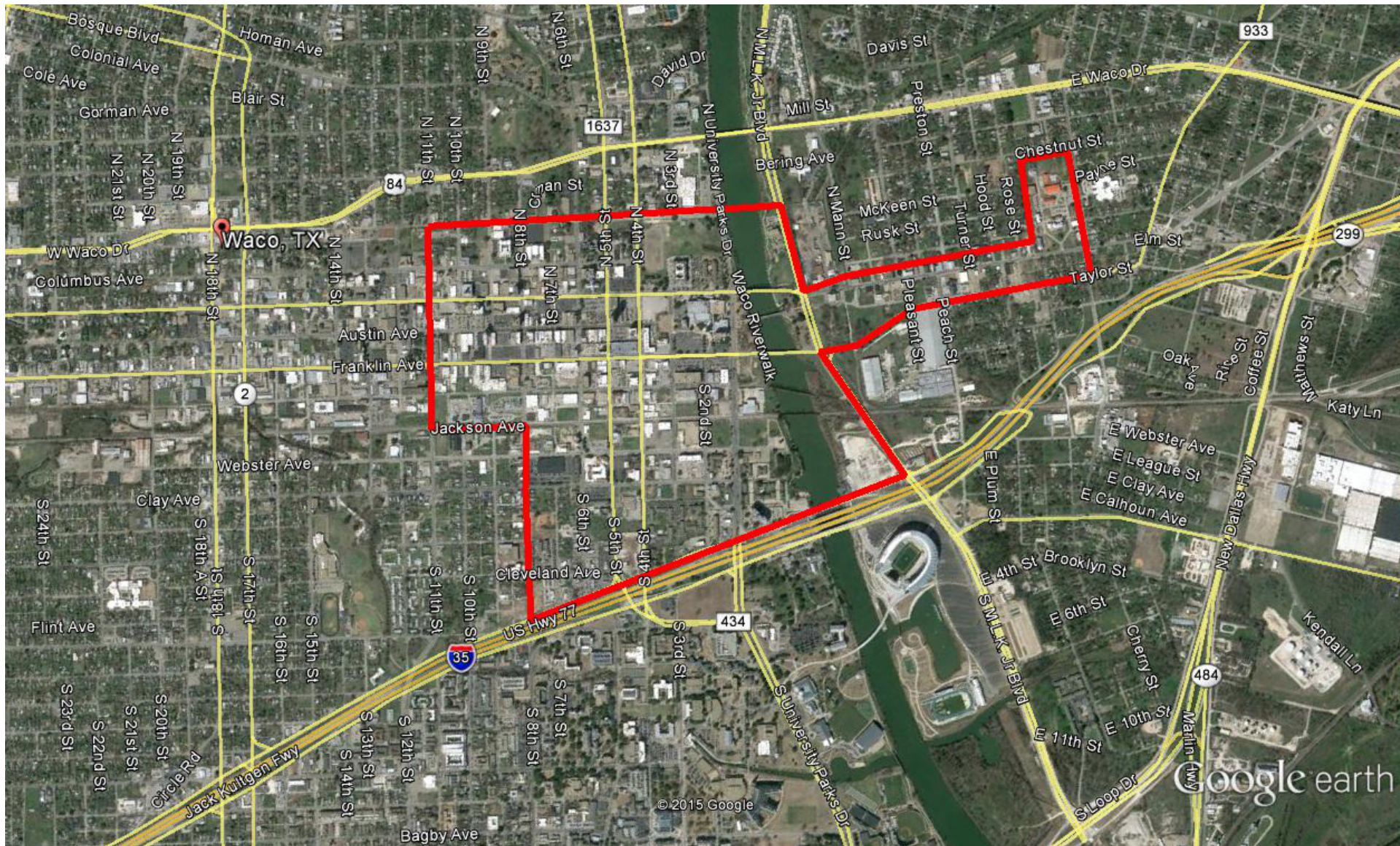
- Supporting & improving event information, calendars, directories, etc.
- Branding downtown cultural district as part of cultural destination marketing strategy
- Adopting CVB consultation marketing recommendations
- Developing joint marketing for arts and cultural organizations.
- Leveraging Baylor game days, Magnolia Silos, convention events and festivals to cross-promote visitor attractions.
- Promoting events and businesses that complement Convention Center program
- Using vacant buildings for "pop up" arts initiatives
- Increasing the reach of regular and promotional activities (e.g. First Fridays, Festivals, etc.)

Management Structure

In 200 words or less outline a description of the management structure for the cultural district, staff, and how the decision making process for cultural district will occur. Consider brief job descriptions for management, marketing, information technology and artistic staff. Indicate whether these positions will be paid or volunteer.

The Waco Cultural District will be led by Creative Waco and managed by a Cultural District Committee which will include representatives from key stakeholders, including the community at large, local government agencies, business, education, and arts sectors. The prototype for this group already exists as Waco's Cultural District Task Force.

Oversight will be shared. City Center Waco (Waco's Downtown Development Corporation), responsible for development of Waco's Main Street, City Center, and Public Improvement District, will be responsible for physical maintenance of the Cultural District. Creative Waco, the local arts agency responsible for Waco's Cultural Strategy, will oversee the planning and execution of programming and activities within the district. Together with Waco's Convention and Visitor Bureau, local IT and event listing businesses, and Chisholm Crossing (the Cultural District calendar site), this partnership will undertake marketing and promotion of the Cultural District, its events and activities.



Google earth



Map showing proposed Cultural District Boundary for Downtown Waco, Tx. This is also a Public Improvement District and incorporates Waco's Main Street and Historic District zones, offering multiple incentives for cultural initiatives. Attractions in the district are connected by a free "DASH" bus service.