

The Courthouse repairs are still needed. Here is an opportunity to get some state funds. The issues relative to the Courthouse will NOT fix themselves. They will only get worse and costs will continue to rise.

THC Courthouse Preservation Grant Applications Open February 2024

\$45 Million Appropriated, Grant Cap Raised to \$10 Million

The Texas Historical Commission's (THC) award-winning Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program (THCPP) will open its next grant cycle in February, but now is the time for county and city governments to confirm their grant program eligibility and take note of important deadlines leading up to the grant application deadline.

Counties or cities that own a building that is over 49 years old and functions or previously functioned as the primary seat of county government are eligible to participate.

For 2024, Round XIII grant applicants are eligible to receive up to \$10 million. The 88th Texas Legislature appropriated \$45 million for the 2024-25 grant cycle and raised the grant cap for the THC's courthouse grant program from \$6 million to \$10 million.

The THCPP provides partial matching grants supporting the restoration of historic county courthouses. The program awards three types of grants:

- Planning grants to produce architectural plans and specifications for a future full restoration;
- Construction grants to fully restore a historic courthouse; and
- Emergency grants to address critical issues endangering a historic courthouse or its occupants, including damage caused by natural disasters.

The Round XIII grant cycle will open in early February 2024 with application materials available online. To be eligible to apply, counties or cities must have a THCPP-approved master plan filed with the THC before April 5, 2024. Please note that master plan preparation requires hiring a professional preservation consultant, typically an architect, and takes about four to six months to prepare.

An outline of master plan requirements along with the THCPP Round XIII timeline for submitting applications, construction plans and specifications, and new preservation master plans is available on the THC's website at www.thc.texas.gov/thcpp. Recently adopted Courthouse Advisory Committee Recommendations and subsequent programmatic changes are also available at this site.

Grant applications are due by 5 p.m. on Monday, May 13, 2024. Public comment will be received at a hybrid in-person/online Architecture Committee meeting held in mid-July, with location and date to be announced. The THC will announce grant recipients and awards at its Quarterly Meeting planned for July 26, 2024. ★ - Article courtesy of the Texas Historical Commission

About the THCPP

While restoring the courthouse's original architectural integrity is an important goal of the THCPP, improved accessibility, fire safety, energy efficiency, and upgraded/improved security, mechanical, communication, electrical, and plumbing systems for these historic structures are other benefits the program offers to county governments and communities who participate in the program.

The program also offers real world benefits beyond the facility itself in the form of improved quality of life, employee satisfaction, and economic impact.

"Approaching its 25th anniversary, the courthouse program continues to demonstrate the success of the state and local partnership to revitalize historic downtowns," said Courthouse Preservation Program Coordinator Susan Tietz. "Courthouses are community centerpieces that, when restored to their original splendor, inspire pride, provide safer and more functional spaces for their users, and often spark economic development and heritage tourism in the surrounding district."

Since its creation in 1999, the program has worked with more than 136 counties and awarded more than \$360 million to fully restore 78 courthouses and provide smaller grants to assist with emergency and planning projects. Courthouse preservation projects have created more than 13,300 jobs in Texas, generated nearly \$970 million in gross state product, and returned about \$57 million to Texas state and local governments through tax revenue. Restored courthouses reinvigorate historic downtowns and promote heritage tourism, a \$9.2 billion industry in Texas.

The THC also provides ongoing support and training to county staff for maintenance and upkeep of their restored courthouses through the Texas Courthouse Stewardship Program. For more information about the THCPP, contact the THC's Architecture Division at 512-463-6094 or visit www.thc.texas.gov/thcpp. ★

