



2020 ANNUAL
REPORT

Scenic Texas

a year's overview

2020 | 35 YEARS OF SCENIC TEXAS

While we quietly celebrated our 35 years of existence in 2020 as the world endured an unprecedented pandemic, what became most apparent is that Scenic Texas and our mission has never been more relevant than it is today.

As people turn to nature for their mental and physical well-being, they are taking stock of their community green spaces. Our signature **Scenic City Certification Program (SCCP)**, which not only establishes visual environment standards but addresses community planning needs, is especially relevant as Texans find themselves investing more time in their neighborhoods and community-wide initiatives. Now, in its 11th year, the SCCP boasts 85 certified cities and 18 program partners, including our newest partner, the American Society of Landscape Architects Texas.

Our advocacy work also gained momentum in 2020. By focusing on sound scenic policies at the Capitol, the courts, local governments and beyond, Scenic Texas is making strides across the state. This year we championed the protection of more than 250 acres of trees from destruction by TXDOT, the submission of an Amicus Brief in *Rabbit Hill vs. Texas*, and legal support efforts in the City of Austin appeal of the 5th Circuit Court opinion that could allow for statewide digital billboards.

From an internal perspective, we made historic progress such as welcoming **10 new board members, launching a new website and membership program**, raising \$305,000 towards our goal of \$500,000 in our **More Scenic Texas Campaign**, and implementing a **proactive legislative agenda** that includes putting Texas on the map of the National Byways Program.

In 2021, we are looking to continue our growth trajectory. Scenic Texas goals include a successful Texas legislative session for good scenic policies, growing the scenic movement in chapter strength and membership, expanding staff to include a SCCP Program Manager, and closing out the More Scenic Texas fundraising campaign. Thank you for joining us on our journey and supporting our efforts to preserve and enhance the Lone Star State's public space.



Sarah Tober
Scenic Texas Executive Director

SCENIC TEXAS BOARD

THE AWESOME PEOPLE BEHIND THIS NONPROFIT

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FORT WORTH

PHILIP GOULD
HOUSTON



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FORT WORTH

CECE FOWLER
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AUSTIN

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TAYLOR STEEN
HOUSTON



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CASEY SLEDGE
WILLIAMSON COUNTY

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VICE CHAIR, AUSTIN

Advisory Board

Kenneth L. Barr (Fort Worth), David Bernsen (Beaumont), Harlan Crow (Dallas), Christopher M. Harte (Austin), Albert “Boo” Hausser (San Antonio), Karen Huber (Spicewood), Jodie L. Jiles (Houston), Mavis Kelsey (Houston), Charla Borchers Leon (Victoria), Perry Lorenz (Austin), John L. Nau, III (Houston), Ann Lilly (El Paso), Lee Jackson (Denton)

2019-2020

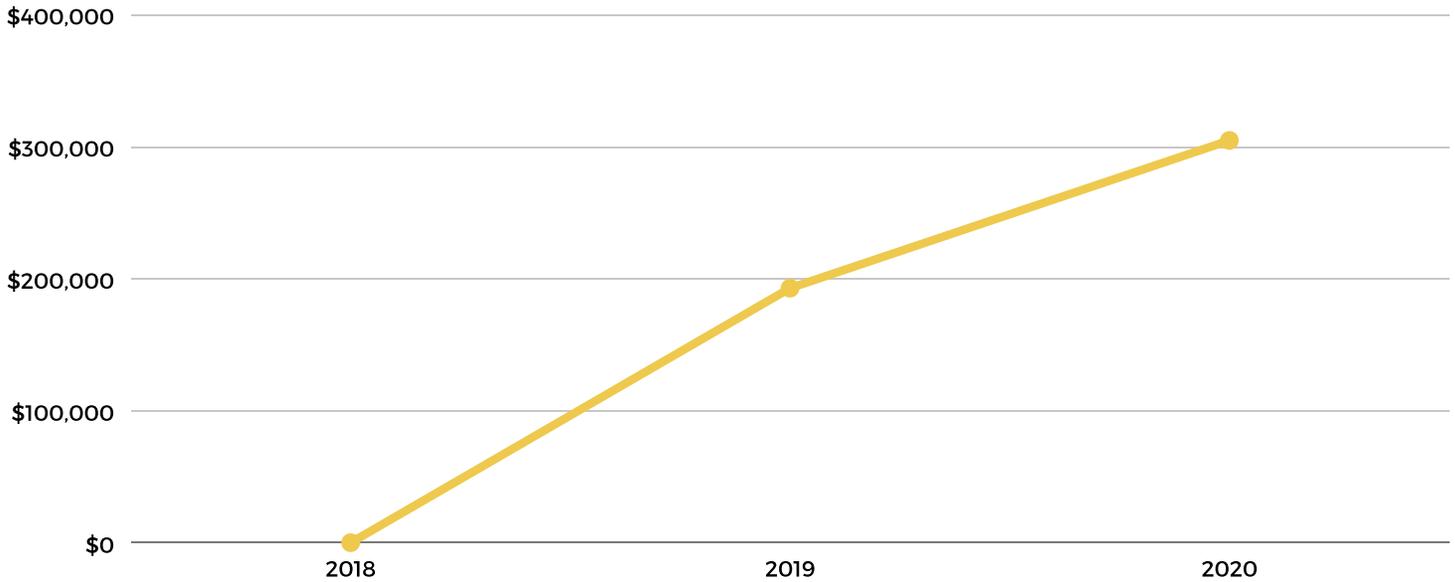
FISCAL HEALTH

Although the nonprofit sector has endured a woeful blow due to the worldwide pandemic, Scenic Texas has continued to make progress. Scenic Texas has 100% fiscal participation by the board and employees.

61%
campaign completion

22%
funds raised in 2020

A More Scenic Texas Fundraising Campaign Progress



A special thank you to our 2020 major gift donors:

Amon G. Carter Foundation, Carol J. and R. Denny Alexander Foundation, Mavis and Wendy Kelsey, Meta Alice Keith Bratten Foundation, and Prosperity Bank

In 2021, Scenic Texas will host the inaugural annual fundraiser event the Ride for Scenic Texas. This event is expected to help boost funds for operations and elevate the Scenic Texas brand with outdoor enthusiasts.

PROGRAMS & EDUCATION



Baytown (New) | **Bronze**
 Celina (New) | **Platinum**
 Princeton (Ranked Up) | **Bronze**
 Lakeway (Ranked Up) | **Platinum**
 Belton (Re-certified) | **Gold**
 Cuero (Re-certified) | **Gold**
 Granbury (Re-certified) | **Gold**
 Marble Falls (Re-certified) | **Gold**
 Sealy (Re-certified) | **Gold**
 South Padre Island (Re-certified) | **Gold**
 Sugar Land (Re-certified) | **Gold**
 Westlake (Re-certified) | **Platinum**
 Georgetown (Re-certified) | **Platinum**
 Missouri City (Re-certified) | **Platinum**
 Pflugerville (Re-certified) | **Platinum**
 Magnolia (Re-certified) | **Recognized**
 Pilot Point (Re-certified) | **Recognized**
 Irving (Re-certified) | **Silver**
 Nassau Bay (Re-certified) | **Silver**

In 2020, the Scenic City Certification Program (SCCP) added two new cities, one new program partner (American Society of Landscape Architects-Texas), one new advisory council member (Dr. Steven Pedigo from UT Austin), and re-certified or upgraded the status of 17 cities. The SCCP recognizes cities for their demonstrated commitment to high-quality scenic standards for public roadways and spaces. 85 cities in Texas are now certified in this nationally recognized, one-of-a-kind model.

1 MILLION TREES ACROSS TEXAS

We launched the 1 Million Trees Across Texas program led by Scenic Texas member Bill Brock. The goal of this project is to plant native trees and shrubs along roads and highways around the state. Our first planting took place in San Marcos in partnership with the San Marcos River Foundation and Lady Bird Wildflower Center.

Because we work with TxDOT's Green Ribbon Program, we know millions of trees and shrubs have been planted in Texas for carbon attainment near densely populated areas. However, there are areas of Texas that still have the need for native landscaping and tree planting.

We'll be looking for volunteers, donations of saplings, and local partners to help us execute our project in the coming years. As we identify our next locations, we'll be reaching out in search of community partners. If you'd like to sponsor a tree-planting initiative in your community, please contact Scenic Texas at info@scenictexas.org.



2019-2020

COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Scenic Texas is finding innovative ways to partner and create alliances that make a maximum collective impact. Through work with scenic partners like Hill Country Alliance, Raasin in the Sun, TreeFolks, and Lady Bird Wildflower Center, we are able to make a greater difference without adding to overhead costs. Through the scenic chapters and affiliates throughout the state, Scenic Texas is able to extend the vision for a more beautiful state through the implementation of our mission on a local level.

Work being executed by chapters in Austin, Fort Worth, the Hill Country area, and Houston includes streetscape enhancements, median plantings, expansion of public green space, promotion of SCCP and community policy reform.

Cities featuring Scenic Texas chapters and affiliates include: Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Galveston, the Hill Country, Houston, and San Antonio.

Scenic City Certification Program Partners



ADVOCACY

Scenic Texas and our chapters all over the state work closely with the Texas Legislature, Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), and local community government to advocate for thoughtfully designed and landscaped highways, funding for landscaping and tree plantings, protection from new billboard construction, and the enforcement of existing laws. Through effective advocacy at the state and city level Scenic Texas makes real change by amplifying the voices of our local chapters and Texas communities.

In 2020, Scenic Texas filed an Amicus Brief in the Rabbit Hill vs. State of Texas case where a billboard owner argued for the state to cut down trees that interfered with his "viewshed," a visual environment asset. This would have been a dangerous and expensive precedent for Texas had the billboard owner won, considering how many trees along the highway and cities could interfere with the view of billboards and the profitability of these distractions to drivers.

In Spicewood, we helped Rep. Vikki Goodwin and five other Texas House Representatives try to put a stop to billboards being erected in and around cemeteries. Our cemeteries should be considered sacred public space, much like parks, and should never be a place for advertisements.

Scenic Texas has been leading the effort to stop the arbitrary doubling of the clear zone in the Rights-of-Way in the TxDOT Atlanta District located in East Texas. This decision to increase the clear zone to 60 feet will mean that 250 acres of pinewood trees will be clearcut and a precedence will be set for future TxDOT projects across the state.

We are the voice for a more scenic Texas at the Capitol and across the state. Scenic Texas is the only nonprofit focused on preservation and enhancement of the Lone Star State's visual environment.

Priorities

For 2021 State Legislative Session

- 1  **PROTECT DARK SKIES**
- 2  **UPHOLD BILLBOARD STANDARDS**
- 3  **GREEN RIBBON PROGRAM STEWARDS**
- 4  **SCENIC HIGHWAY DESIGNATIONS**
- 5  **LOCAL CONTROL OF CITY ORDINANCES**



LOOKING AHEAD TO 2021

Our movement to prioritize our visual environment is strong—and it's growing! We hope you'll join us this coming session in telling the Texas Legislature we want nature and our built environment to exist in harmony, and we're counting on them to strengthen laws that will support our mission.

Scenic Texas

TALK TO US

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