



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW DOES THE SCENIC CITY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM WORK?

Any Texas city may apply to the Scenic City Certification Program (SCCP) for an objective review of existing municipal infrastructure ordinances as they relate to public roadways and public spaces. The evaluation compares these standards to the Scenic City model devised by Scenic Texas and the 18 SCCP Partner organizations. Assessment is points-based, with every applicant receiving a detailed, scored evaluation. Official Scenic City Certification can be earned by cities that score at the upper level and meet these three standards: permitting system for on-premise signs, a landscaping or tree-planting program and a prohibition on new billboards.

WHAT DOES THE EVALUATION COVER? The evaluation reviews every applicant's existing ordinance and code language in these areas:

- **Streetscapes**
- **Sign controls**
- **Parks, trails and open spaces**
- **Litter and graffiti prohibition**
- **Lighting standards**
- **Utility and cable line programs**
- **Design integrity**
- **Landscaping**
- **Dumpster screening**
- **Unique municipal features**
- **Special programs**

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION?

Assessment: Every city that submits an application to the SCCP earns a detailed, scored evaluation.

Analysis: The application, evaluation and certification process is overseen by the state's top associations with missions that align with the Scenic City standards.

Diagnostic: The evaluation forms a basis for a municipalities continual review and appraisal of its current standards and development plans.

Communication: Participation in the Scenic City Certification Program serves as a platform to educate citizens on the impact of local regulations.

Economic Development: The evaluation supports municipal planning and economic development efforts.

Recognition: Authorization to use custom logo; press and social media announcements; October special event (during TML week).

Value: Through this intentional community planning for growth process, the city and residents come together in order to achieve high quality of life standards and economic development opportunities.

HOW AND WHEN DOES A CITY APPLY? A required first step is an orientation phone call with staff to review all aspects of the application process and respond to application questions. Cities receive login credentials to access the online application upon completion of the orientation.

IS THERE AN APPLICATION FEE?

The application fee is \$749 for a five-year certification. Cities must reapply after five years for a new evaluation in order to retain certification.

DO WE APPLY EVERY YEAR? HOW LONG DOES THE CERTIFICATION LAST? Certification is for five years. Cities must reapply after five years for a new evaluation in order to retain certification.

WHAT IF WE IMPROVE OUR SCENIC STANDARDS WITHIN THE FIVE YEARS? After initial certification, a process that facilitates "ranking up" at more frequent intervals exists.

ARE THERE ANY MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS THAT MUST BE MET IN ORDER TO BE CERTIFIED?

Every applicant that completes an application and can demonstrate the city has 1) landscaping or tree planting program 2) a system to issue on-premise sign permits and 3) prohibits new billboards will receive a detailed, scoresheet evaluation. Cities that earn points in the upper range can earn Scenic City Certification.



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HOW DO WE PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF THE CITY'S PROGRAMS?

For each evaluation criterion with which the applicant city complies, check the box on the left and provide a link to the supporting documentation in the box on the right. Only official ordinances, city-sanctioned laws, and official programs are considered demonstrated evidence. We cannot accept photographs, statements of fact or promotional materials. A city cannot default to state law. See our Example Ordinances, which will direct you to cities that have scored highly on a criterion.

WHAT COUNTS AS EVIDENCE?

Only current ordinance language, municipal code citations, and official programs are considered evidence. Photographs, statements of fact, and promotional materials are not considered sufficient to earn points. We are looking for city-sanctioned laws, codes, and programs. If your city's code is online via Municode or Franklin Legal, you may directly link to the code.

AFTER WE APPLY, WHAT CAN WE EXPECT?

After a city submits an application, the Scenic City evaluation team and the Program Council review and score. A first review score is issued to all applicants, who are then invited to review for errors (broken links, incomplete elements, human error) and make corrections. After this period, a final evaluation and score sheet is issued.

HOW IS A CITY SCORED?

Each application is evaluated independently from other cities, against the Scenic City model. It is a credit-based, not debit-based, evaluation. In other words, the evaluation starts at zero and points are earned across all 75+ criteria.

WHAT DO THE LEVELS OF CERTIFICATION MEAN? There are five levels:

Platinum (90+% of possible points)

Gold (80-89% of possible points)

Silver (70-79% of possible points)

Bronze (60-69% of possible points)

Recognized (50-59% of possible points)

I RECEIVED MY CITY'S SCORE. WHAT'S NEXT?

After you receive your city's score, whether you have been certified or not, we strongly urge you to review our evaluation. Scenic City evaluations show where cities have earned full points and provide clear

guidance to make ordinance language stronger. The Scenic City Certification Program provides a critical evaluation designed to help Texas cities identify the gaps, strengths, and weaknesses in their ordinances and regulations related to public roadways and public spaces. This Program's overall mission is to give each applicant city the tools to improve its scenic standards.

WHAT IF WE APPLY, BUT DO NOT CERTIFY?

You will receive a detailed evaluation showing where you did not earn full points and suggestions of how to make your ordinances stronger and more effective. Your city is invited to apply again during the next evaluation period.

HOW DOES A CITY "RANK-UP"?

Ranking-up means that a city that earns Scenic City Certification may reapply before the fifth year of certification. The fee is \$300 instead of \$749, and a city only needs to submit criteria that have changed since the initial application. You are simply increasing the number of points you received for the relevant criteria on your initial application.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER 5 YEARS OF CERTIFICATION?

After 5 years Scenic City certification expires, a city must reapply to retain Scenic City Certification. Using its certification score sheet as a guide, the city can increase points and rank-up by adopting new or improved standards.

ARE THERE RESOURCES TO HELP GUIDE THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

Schedule a pre-application orientation (informative and mandatory in order to obtain log-in credentials to access the application form). Many cities have used the Scenic City Program as a benchmark so that they know which of their ordinances are not written as strongly or as clearly as they could be. Some cities adopt new or rewritten ordinances before applying so as to score better. The way your city uses this Program and its tools are up to you!

Contact us at info@sceniccitycertification.org
We are here as a visual environment resource to Texas cities!