



**Texas
Commission
on the Arts**

Investing in a Creative Texas

**Are you ready to apply for
Cultural District Designation?**

WHAT is a cultural district?

A cultural district is the anchor of a recognized, labeled, mixed-use area of a community in which there exists a high concentration of arts and cultural facilities, individual artists and events that are promoted to attract cultural tourists.

WHO should apply for cultural district designation?

Communities with an existing concentration of arts and cultural assets clustered in one walkable area of the city that they want to promote to visitors.

TCA Designated Cultural Districts

- Should be ready for tourists NOW
- Districts should be activated with predicable events
- Visitors to the district should know they are in a special place with interesting things to do and see (arts, culture, restaurants, lodging, and fun)

WHEN are the important dates?

Two dates are significant:

- The deadline for letters of intent to apply for Cultural District Designation is **January 31st** .
- The deadline for the full application for Cultural District Designation is **June 15th** .

WHERE have cultural districts been designated in Texas?

Abilene
Alpine
Amarillo
Arlington
Austin*
Bastrop
Beaumont
Bryan
Canadian
Clifton
Conroe
Corpus Christi
Dallas*
Denison
Denton

El Paso
Fort Worth*
Galveston
Garland
Granbury
Georgetown
Houston*
Huntsville
Laredo
Longview
Lubbock
McAllen
McKinney
Plano
Rockport

Rosenberg
Salado
San Angelo
San Antonio*
San Elizario
Sherman
Smithville
Texarkana
Waco
Wimberley
Winnsboro

- Indicates multiple districts in that community



Are you ready to apply for TCA Cultural District Designation?

You are ready for district designation when:

- There is strong **political support** for the cultural district.
- **District planning efforts reflect the diversity** of your community.
- You know where **funds** are coming from to pay for the district development, promotion and activities.
- There are **marketing and promotion** strategies in the plans for the cultural district.
- There is strong **support** from arts and cultural leaders.
- You have an agency with staff and management capacity to **act as administrative and fiscal agent**.
- You have **access to research and planning** expertise.
- You know **why you need a cultural district**.

What is cultural tourism?

- The travel industry's term describing **travel directed toward arts, heritage, recreation and natural resources.**
- This is not new (*tourists have come to Texas for decades to experience these things*), but it is a good way of **connecting visitors to authentic cultural experiences.**
- These multi-cultural and multi-generation visitors make their travel choices **related to performances, artistic activity, architecture and historical offerings.**
- In Texas, we have **many great cultural destinations.**

What are the types of cultural districts?



Downtown Bryan Cultural District

1. Cultural compounds
2. Arts institution focus
3. Arts and entertainment focus
4. Downtown focus
5. Focus on art production

How to set district boundaries:

- Select a **contiguous** area that is **walkable**.
- Include **lots of arts activity**.
- The artistic resources should play a vital role in the **livability and economic development** of the city.
- The district must be **actively engaged in promotion**.
- Include **restaurants, venues, hotels** and other amenities.

What is walkability?

The built **environment is friendly for people living, shopping, visiting and spending time** in it. Characteristics include:

- It has a **center** – a main street or a public square;
- **Enough people** for business and activity to flourish;
- **Mixed income and mixed use** with affordable housing nearby;
- **Parks and public spaces** to gather and play;
- **Designed for pedestrian use** – buildings close to the street with parking at the back;
- **Close** to schools and workplaces; and
- **Streets designed** for bicyclists, pedestrians, people with disabilities, and has public transit.

Ft. Worth Cultural District



In order to receive cultural district designation, applicants must satisfy the criteria set forth in the TCA Guidelines and demonstrate **high artistic quality**, sufficient **capability**, and strong **impact** in their communities.

Who should plan and develop the district?

Stakeholders:

- Arts organizations, artists and art agencies
- Governmental agencies
- Development authorities
- Business associations



Others to include:

- Chamber of Commerce
- Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Land developers
- Banks
- School districts
- Universities
- Local foundations
- Other nonprofits

Who should lead the district?

Cultural District Management Entity (CDME):

CDME is the organization leading the efforts for the district, convening stakeholders regularly, managing the tracking of visitors, coordinating programming efforts, and marketing of the district as a whole. They serve as the main contact for the district with TCA and are responsible for the district reporting.

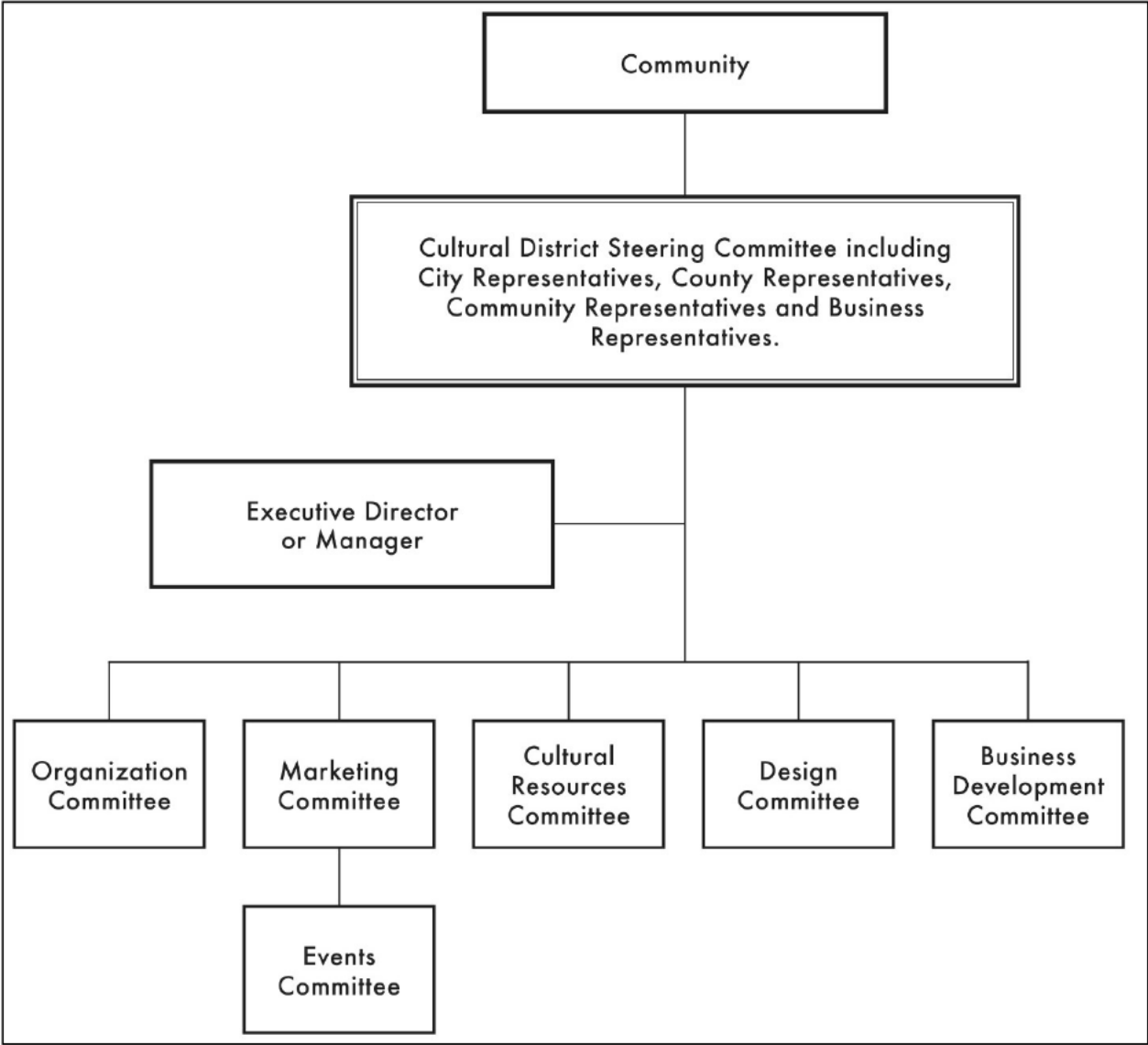
CDME **must** be one of the following:

- Texas-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts organization with cash operating revenues of \$50,000 or more for the past two years as demonstrated by their two most recently filed IRS Form 990s
- A Texas governmental agency or department, or
- A TCA recognized College Arts Institution

Responsibilities of the CDME (Cultural District Management Entity)

- **CDME** is the central contact for the district with TCA.
- **CDME** relays TCA communications to the district members.
- **CDME** verifies annually all nonprofit art organizations headquartered in district and works with TCA to refine list of organizations eligible for TCA Cultural District Project grants.
- **CDME** writes letters of support for all Cultural District Project grant applications from eligible organization in the district.
 - The letter of support is required and should detail how the CDME will promote the proposed grant activities.
 - There is no limit on the number of applications from one district.
- **CDME** files the annual report to TCA on the district visitorship, along with noteworthy district updates, activities, and efforts.
- **CDME** files the 10 year report for the district, which is required for recertification.

Organizational structure for a cultural district:



Letter of intent:

- Letters of Intent are done on a short PDF form found on the TCA website or by requesting a copy from
- districts@arts.texas.gov
- Due no later than **January 31st**
- TCA staff will meet with each of the interested applicants to answer questions and get a sense of where they are in the process.
- Full applications are due June 15th

Setting Expectations: Yours & Your Community's

Many applications for Cultural District Designation are not approved on the first, or even second try. Do not be discouraged. Know that this process is designed to provide applicants with constructive, actionable feedback on how to better position the district for success.

Questions

Contact

districts@arts.texas.gov

512-463-5535 main



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