



Patric Schneider

Claire Maxwell, president of the Taylor Conservation and Heritage Society, and her team spent two years preparing the lengthy application that garnered the National Register of Historic Places status.

Taylor joins National Register of Historic Places

City officials hope to capitalize on status by adding to downtown ambiance

By RAFAEL MITTFELDLT

After almost two years of preparation, work and waiting, Taylor is finally reaping the rewards.

A section of the city's downtown area will be listed as a historic district in the National Register of Historic Places. The register, operated by the U.S. Department of the Interior, is a federal compilation of thousands of areas across the country considered by the National Park Service to be worthy of preservation.

The part of Taylor that made the list is roughly bounded by Washburn Street on the east and Vance Street on the west. Fifth Street and First Street make up the block's north and south borders, respectively. More than 80 buildings are included in the

area.

Making the list will open doors for Taylor, said Claire Maxwell, president of the Taylor Conservation and Heritage Society, which submitted the application.

"First of all, you get the prestige of being on the National Register list," she said.

But the inclusion also enables properties to be eligible for certain federal funding.

"Anybody who does work on buildings [included in the district] is able to get tax credits for restoration works," Ms. Maxwell said. The taxes are on the federal level, she said, and the "credits are significant."

In addition, restoration projects can qualify for grants more easily, she said, because the worth of the buildings already has been established.

"National Register properties are always at the top of the list for grants," Ms. Maxwell said.

Jean Johnson, Taylor's Main Street manager, said the new listing also would have an impact on the city itself.

"We think it's going to be a wonderful help in marketing our downtown area as a destination," she said. "It's going to give us a shot in the arm."

Taylor has been working to revitalize its downtown since urban sprawl began to hit the area and more people moved to Taylor's outskirts, Ms. Johnson said.

"It's hard to maintain the downtown area, because people don't come there anymore," she said. "I wouldn't say that it's

Turn to TAYLOR, Page 4A

TAYLOR

Status offers grant, tax assistance

Continued from Page 1A

decayed so much, but we have vacancies, businesses have come and gone.”

But now, she hopes the older buildings that people once dismissed will be able to attract residents and visitors alike.

The city also plans to capitalize on the new distinction by creating a more historic ambiance downtown, said Ms. Johnson. Officials plan to build new street lamps and install landscaping, sidewalks and benches, all with a historic flavor.

Because downtown sits at the intersection of two major state highways, SH 29 and SH 95, Ms. Johnson said she hopes drivers passing through will be compelled to stop and browse downtown.

The Heritage Society hired consultant architectural historian Monica Penick in 2003 to help draft the application. In March of 2004, she began researching each of the buildings in the downtown area, taking pictures and learning their histories.

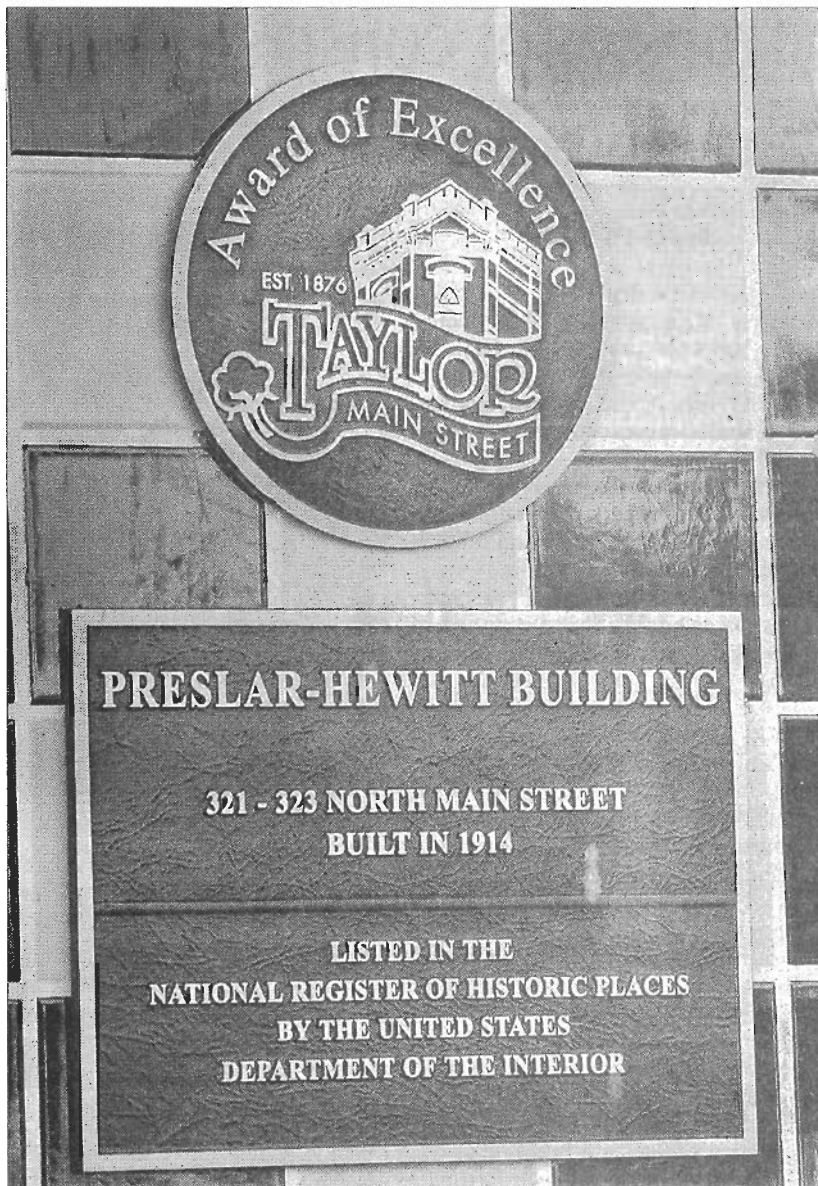
She compiled all the information into an application that was submitted to the Texas Historical Commission at the beginning of September.

“They filter nominations for the National Register at the state level,” Ms. Penick explained.

The commission helped the Heritage Society and Ms. Penick polish the application, which was then sent to the National Park Service.

Taylor officially was added to the list on October 26, and was notified on November 4.

Ms. Maxwell credited several others with their help in obtaining the



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A plaque pronouncing the National Register of Historic Places designation already has been placed on the Preslar-Hewitt Building in downtown Taylor.

designation. In addition to Ms. Johnson, she said Calvin Jayroe pushed to get the process underway.

“Calvin Jayroe really was the ramrod on this whole thing,” she said.

The Taylor Economic Development Corporation, Wal-Mart Foundation and City National Bank helped with the grants that enabled the Heritage Society to hire Ms. Penick, she said.