

# Sarah O'Brien



## DESTINATION CHAMPION COALITION BUILDER STORYTELLER & PLACEMAKER CATALYST FOR CHANGE

- Pragmatic & Strategic
- Collaborative Problem Solver
- Visionary
- Nonprofit & NGO Leadership
- Catalyst for Change
- Urban Placemaking
- Crisis Communications
- Economic & Downtown Revitalization
- Consensus Builder
- Fiscally Responsible
- Public Relations
- Government & Community Relations
- Purpose Driven
- Creative Leadership Style
- Thought Leadership
- Data-Driven Decision Making
- Coalition Creator
- Mentor & Motivator
- Public Speaking
- Destination Development

"Sarah O'Brien was the only person we'd met who had even considered the question." *Tony Horowitz Spying on the South*

Sarah is an award-winning passionate public servant & community champion with over 15 years local government and NGO management experience. Known as a creator of experiences, collaborator of ideas, collector of people, and a coordinator of chaos, Sarah's energy and passion is boundless and contagious. Sarah achieves success through a strong commitment to purpose, cultivating cross-sector collaborations, empowering and inspiring those around her. Committed to inclusive engagement, storytelling, authentic connections, nurturing relationships, practicing collective impact principles in all aspects of city building, leveraging creativity, building community and understanding sense of place Sarah understands what it takes to catalyze change. Sarah understands how to overcome the challenges that cities, local governments and communities of all shapes and sizes face in today's dynamic, digital and data driven society. Sarah is proudest of the people and places she has engaged, empowered, and inspired throughout her life. A catalyst known as an expert generalist, she regularly speaks at the state, national, and international level on a variety of topics.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**Founder & Principal**  
*Collaborative Development Collective*  
January 2019 - Present

**Hospitality & Downtown Director**  
*City of Bastrop*  
October 2017 - December 2018

**Public Information Officer**  
*City of Bastrop*  
August 2017 - December 2018

**Tourism & Promotions Director**  
*City of Marshall*  
May 2015 - April 2016

**Engagement Director**  
*Centex Image Designs*  
February 2019 - Present

**Senior Staff: Planning & Development**  
*City of Bastrop*  
May 2018 - October 2018

**Interim Convention Center Director**  
*City of Bastrop*  
November 2016 - January 2017

**Communications Director**  
*City of Nacogdoches*  
October 2015 - May 2015

**Executive Cabinet Member**  
*City of Bastrop*  
July 2017 - December 2018

**Communications Director**  
*City of Bastrop*  
October 2017 - December 2018

**Main Street Director**  
*City of Bastrop*  
April 2016 - December 2018

**Main Street Director**  
*City of Nacogdoches*  
April 2008 - May 2015

## TEAM RESULTS

Served as a catalyst and champion for the City of Bastrop's first Hospitality & Downtown Department - created to diversify revenue sources, work towards fiscal sustainability, and deliver purpose and vision centric results.

- Responsible for the Main Street Program, Convention Center, special event permitting, cultural arts, hotel occupancy tax distributions, digital media and crisis communications programs for the City of Bastrop, concurrently.
- Developed a robust crisis communications strategy and increased social media reach and engagement by 97%
- Oversaw a 3.3 million-dollar budget, grew a staff of 1.5 FTE (FY 17) to 11.5 FTE (FY 19)
- Tripled downtown special event revenue FY 16- FY 18 and doubled convention center usage FY 17-FY 18

Inspired and rallied a community, region and state in support of the #mybastrop Small Business Revolution Campaign.

- Used innovative and grass roots public relations strategies to generate 54 hard news stories which resulted in 14.7 million digital media impressions for a total earned media value of \$253,000 in less than 60 days
- Received video endorsements of support from the likes of Governor Greg Abbott and Road Tripper Chet Garner
- Inspired and empowered an 87 year old community member and dozens of small business owners to hashtag with the best of them

Grew community capacity and enhanced organizational bandwidth by serving as a valued member of the City of Bastrop's Executive Cabinet and as the strategic and tactical representative for the City's varied partnership base.

- City Liaison and community champion for the creation of Visit Bastrop, the community's first 501 c (3) Destination Marketing Organization
- Researched, developed and implemented the first known Main Street Manager Assessment Center to ensure proper succession planning for the Bastrop Main Street Program
- Coordinated RFQ development and planning process for the Bastrop Cultural Arts Master Plan
- Oversaw communication and engagement efforts for the launch of the Building Bastrop initiative, a comprehensive overhaul of the City's land-use regulations tied to fiscal sustainability and sustainable development patterns.



# CERTIFICATIONS

**Texas Friendly Instructor**  
Texas A&M Extension Service

**Community Leadership Graduate**  
Bastrop, Nacogdoches, Cleburne

**Public Information Officer**  
Federal Emergency Management Agency

**Marketing & Finance, Administration Certificates**  
Destination Marketer Program

**Bachelor of Science**  
B.S. Hospitality Administration  
Stephen F. Austin State University  
Nacogdoches, 2005

**Texas Association of Municipal Information Officers**  
Dallas-2020

**Cameron Chamber of Commerce**  
Keynote Speaker - 2020

**International Placemaking Week (PPS)**  
Conference Presenter - 2019

**Customer Experience Training**  
La Grange - 2019

**Tiny Home Forum, Moderator**  
Smithville - 2019

**Texas Association of Planning (APA)**  
Conference Presenter - 2019

**Texas Travel Industry Association (TTIA)**  
Tourism College Guest Speaker - 2019

**Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU)**  
Open Innovation Speaker - 2019

**Main Street America (NMSC)**  
Conference Presenter - 2020 2018, 2016, 2013, 2012

**Texas Downtown Association (TDA)**  
Conference Presenter - 2019, 2017, 2015, 2014, 2013, 2011

**Texas Convention & Visitors Bureau (TACVB)**  
Conference Presenter - 2018 & 2017

**Texas Historical Commission Real Places (THC)**  
Conference Presenter - 2017

**Texas Main Street Summer & Winter Training**  
Conference Presenter - 2017, 2016, 2015, 2008

**Galveston Area Council of Governments (HGAC)**  
Workshop Speaker - 2016

**Texas Municipal League Annual Conference (TML)**  
Conference Presenter - 2015



## SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

## SERVANT LEADERSHIP

**Texas Downtown Association**  
**Board Member**

January 2018- Present

**President**

January 2013-2015

**Vice President**

January 2014-2015

**Board Member**

January 2013

**Smithville Historic**  
**Design Standards Board**  
**Board Member**

July 2017- Present

**Hospitality Administration**  
**Society**

**Alumni Advisor**

Stephen F. Austin State University  
2005-2013

## HONORS & AWARDS

**Edna Tea Garden Recipient**

*Distinguished Alumnus Hospitality*

Stephen F. Austin State University, 2013

**Outstanding Leadership Award**

*Hospitality Administration Department*

Stephen F. Austin State University, 2004

**President Awards**

*Texas Downtown Association*

#mybastrop-2018

Imagine the Possibilities-2012

**The Nutty O'Brien Sandwich**

*Dolli's Diner*

Nacogdoches, 2014

**Rookie of the Year**

*Zonta Club of Johnson County*

Cleburne, 2006

## DESTINATION CHAMPION

**Small Business Revolution**

Bastrop, 2018

**Great Places of Texas**

Bastrop, 2018

**Film Friendly Designation**

Marshall, 2016

Nacogdoches, 2009

**Garden Capitol of Texas**

Nacogdoches, 2014

**Rand McNally Best of the Road**

Nacogdoches, 2011

**First Ladies Texas**

**Treasure Award**

Nacogdoches, 2012

**Strategic Planning:**  
Elgin Chamber of Commerce  
Brady Chamber of Commerce

**Destination Assessments & Marketing Plans:**  
Midland CVB, Garland CVB

**Economic Impact Teams:**  
Georgetown Convention & Visitors Bureau,  
Brady Chamber of Commerce,  
Gonzales Chamber of Commerce

**Commercial District Plans & Downtown Training:**  
City of Southside Place, City of Palestine,  
La Grange Visitor's Center

**Marketing, Design & Engagement:**  
Black Tree Ranch, Dead People's Stuff,  
Centex Image Designs,  
BombShell Betty Shop

**Entitlements & Development:**  
Structure Development, Stewardship Strategies

**Texas Downtown Association Assessment Teams:**  
2020- West Columbia  
2019- Smithville  
2017- Garland  
2014- Ovilla

## CONSULTANT AND PROJECT EXPERTISE

**Main Street Resource Teams:**  
2016-Buda  
2012- San Augustine

## CURRENT PROUD MEMBER OF:

Engaging Local Government Leaders  
Ticco

Texas Downtown Association

Our Town Matters Alliance

Round Top Chamber of Commerce

Incremental Development Alliance

Smithville Housing Committee

Smithville Development Committee

Stephen F. Austin Alumni Association

## PAST MEMBER OF:

Bastrop Chamber  
Bastrop County Historical Society  
Marshall Chamber  
Nacogdoches Chamber  
Texas Travel Industry Association  
Texas Association of Municipal Information Officers

Main Street America  
Preservation Texas  
Texas Association of CVB's  
Project for Public Places

Strong Towns