

Opportunity Bastrop County

VISION

“To welcome development, improve mobility, and increase health standards as we preserve and protect our historic culture and natural resources.”

The Bastrop County Citizens' Advisory Committee
And
The Citizens of Bastrop County

Acknowledgements

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Opportunity Bastrop County

Bastrop County Strategic Plan

Vision

“To welcome development, improve mobility, and increase health standards as we preserve and protect our historic culture and natural resources.”

The complete text of the **Opportunity Bastrop County Strategic Plan**, including all Appendices and References can be found on-line at www.co.bastrop.tx.us.
For more information, contact Daniel Brown at 512-332-7201.

Executive Summary

Bastrop County is experiencing the most explosive growth in its modern history as the ninth fastest growing county in Texas. This growth is creating challenges as well as opportunities. People choose to live in Bastrop County because of its rural character and county residents are concerned that this rural character be protected while public services and infrastructure are improved.

Though the three incorporated municipalities (Bastrop, Elgin, and Smithville) provide many of the services identified in this plan to their residents, the County's rural nature may require alternative approaches to providing services to citizens in non-incorporated areas.

Bastrop County Commissioners Court began a public process in the summer of 2006 to find out what county residents thought the future of their county should look like. The extensive public input process, including presentations and surveys resulted in a variety of issues and concerns. These concerns grouped generally into five major areas:

Environment And Growth Management
Transportation Enhancements
Economic Development and Education Opportunities
Public Safety
Health Care Services: Low Income, Elderly, and Mobility Impaired

From these areas of concern, two over-arching themes were identified:

- 1). Maintaining the County's quality of life; and,
- 2). Providing adequate services to unincorporated areas of Bastrop County.

Based upon these over-all groupings, the Citizens' Advisory Committee initiated subcommittees that focused on each of the major themes. The subcommittees reviewed the initial plan document from LCRA, comments from the public hearings, and the results of the public surveys.

Using this information, each subcommittee developed a Goal, Objectives and Tactics for each major theme. These Goals, Objectives And Tactics are in the following section.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND TACTICS

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

GOAL:

RETAIN AND ENHANCE THE RURAL CHARACTER OF BASTROP COUNTY WHILE ENCOURAGING GROWTH THAT IS IN BALANCE WITH HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL NEEDS TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE.

Objectives and Tactics:

- 1. To preserve the agricultural and natural aspects of Bastrop County by:**
 - a. Encouraging continued agricultural land uses emphasizing:
 - i. Responsible land use practices;
 - ii. Expansion of farmers' market opportunities; and
 - iii. Partnerships with the County's agricultural industry to enhance the industry's economic viability.
 - b. Developing a comprehensive, science-based map identifying water bodies, farm land, ranch land, and wild land to help:
 - i. Preserve agricultural and livestock land uses;
 - ii. Support water resources and green space preservation; and
 - iii. Guide development of future recreational, residential commercial and infrastructure.
 - c. Allocating County resources to support the County's participation in the Trust for Public Land and Envision Central Texas "Greenprinting" project.
 - d. Implementing public/private partnerships with land trusts and similar organizations to support the protection, preservation, and maintenance of parks, and green spaces.
 - e. Identifying and preserving significant springs and riparian habitat.
 - f. Updating the County Parks and Open Space Plan to include:
 - i. Priorities for Colorado River streamside protection through connecting preserves, trails, and river access points; and
 - ii. Priorities for preserving sensitive habitat and historical and cultural assets.
 - g. Implementing "conservation" subdivision regulations that address methods for encouraging:
 - i. Green space protection;
 - ii. Water conservation measures;
 - iii. Decreased impervious cover;
 - iv. Energy efficient construction; and
 - v. Energy efficient fixtures and appliances.
 - h. Completing and implementing the Houston Toad Habitat Conservation Plan.
 - i. Supporting regional efforts to ensure environmentally safe air quality in the County.

2. To ensure a sufficient quantity of clean water for the County's future by:

- a. Developing and maintaining effective involvement with the Lower Colorado Water Planning Group, the Lower Colorado River Authority, Aqua Water Supply Corp., the Lost Pines Ground Water Conservation District, and other pertinent organizations planning for future water supplies.
- b. Preserving water capacity and quality in the County's underground aquifers by encouraging land stewardship practices to:
 - i. Enhance the amount and quality of water reaching aquifers and re-charge zones; and
 - ii. Decrease run-off and erosion.
- c. Obtaining official designation and protection for the Colorado River alluvial aquifer, a major water source for the County.
- d. Protecting aquifer recharge zones by:
 - i. Reducing the amount and placement of impervious cover; and
 - ii. Securing protective conservation easements.
- e. Keeping the river, streams, and watersheds clear of debris and contaminants.
- f. Regulating the commercial sale and/or export of groundwater.
- g. Requiring developers to provide proof that water supplies are adequate to meet the development's needs through build-out.
- h. Developing and implementing standards and incentives for residential and commercial water harvesting, including
 - i. Rainwater collecting systems;
 - ii. Gray water collection and distribution systems; and
 - iii. Water run-off capture and re-use systems.
- i. Exploring the feasibility of creating a County water and/or wastewater district.
- j. Strengthening on-site septic system regulations.

TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT

GOAL:

DEVELOP A COUNTY-WIDE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM THAT PROVIDES SAFE AND EFFICIENT MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE AND GOODS BY UTILIZING A COMPREHENSIVE NETWORK OF STREETS AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS THAT ARE SCALEABLE AND SUSTAINABLE AS THE POPULATION GROWS.

Objectives and Tactics:

- 1. To develop a county-wide roadway system that would integrate street and highway plans of cities, the county, state, and regional agencies to provide safe and efficient travel by:**
 - a. Participating in the TXDOT- County Roadway System Planning Project.
 - i. Creating a consolidated county-wide roadway plan developed by the county using the following inputs:
 1. County roadway plans,
 2. Bastrop street plans,
 3. Elgin street plans,
 4. Smithville street plans,
 5. State highway plans,
 6. County independent school districts,
 7. Rural communities, and
 8. Emergency service organizations.
 - ii. Developing and adopting a County Capital Improvement Plan to coordinate the implementation of the County Roadway System with participating agencies.
 - b. Developing project plans to solve short-term needs of county roadways by
 - i. Identifying and proposing solutions addressing:
 1. Existing road conditions,
 2. Adequate signage,
 3. Traffic control devices,
 4. Conflicts at high accident locations, and
 5. Safe operations at congested intersections.
 - ii. Identifying locations based on need and connectivity for pedestrian and bicycle routes.

2. To develop a county transit system that would serve people in communities and rural areas of the County and provide mobility with cities in the County and the region by:

- a. Assessing current conditions and making recommendations related to the need for jobs, health care, educational, and recreational opportunities.
- b. Identifying, recommending, and developing different types of transit services related to:
 - i. Bus systems,
 - ii. Light rail system,
 - iii. Car/van pooling, and
 - iv. Volunteer driver programs.

Economic Development & Educational Opportunities

GOAL:

COORDINATE AND DEVELOP A REGIONAL APPROACH TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BY WORKING WITH THE CITIES' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS.

Objectives and Tactics:

- 1. Develop a policy that will provide economic benefits to the County and cities as well as to prospective businesses as the population grows by:**
 - a. Maintaining a strong working relationship with Bastrop, Elgin and Smithville planning and/or economic development functions to:
 - i. Establish common and well thought out incentive policies for new businesses; and
 - ii. Promote and encourage established businesses.

- 2. Develop a policy to leverage the County assets to advance tourism of Bastrop County, utilizing identified assets such as:**
 - a. Colorado River, the Lost Pines, and other natural features;
 - b. Historical sites and areas;
 - c. Agricultural tourism;
 - d. Events; and
 - e. Arts and culture.

- 3. Support the County School Districts in their efforts to improve academic results by:**
 - a. Supporting and encouraging the Independent School District's involvement with the Central Texas "Education Equals Economics (E3)" initiative;
 - b. Increasing public awareness of the importance of education; and
 - c. Increasing the Independent School District's awareness of the importance of academic achievement with regard to the economic development of the community through presentations to the ISD Board of Directors.

- 4. Encourage higher learning opportunities in Bastrop County by:**
 - a. Supporting the efforts to establish an Austin Community College campus in Bastrop County; and
 - b. Soliciting the establishment of public and private vocational and technical schools within the County.

Public Safety and Emergency Services

GOAL:

ENSURE THAT THE PUBLIC SAFETY NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY ARE MET THROUGH THE DEPLOYMENT OF NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED STANDARDS OF CARE OR OPERATION WHILE MAINTAINING FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY.

Objectives and Tactics:

- 1. To address citizens' public safety issues by:**
 - a. Identifying specific citizens' concerns; and
 - b. Developing action plans to guide elected officials.

- 2. To identify the resources which will empower public safety entities within the county to carry out their mission by:**
 - a. Identifying existing resources within law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services;
 - b. Determining future needs based upon geographically-based projected growth;
 - c. Improving efficiency and effectiveness through the enhanced use of technology;
 - d. Evaluating the need and potential for expanding Emergency Service Districts for fire protection throughout the county; and
 - e. Evaluating the need and feasibility of a county Emergency Medical Service.

- 3. To develop alliances to enhance the community's quality of life by:**
 - a. Identifying existing programs or partnerships that effectively and efficiently provide public safety services; and
 - b. Developing ways of integrating these into the county's services.

- 4. To recruit and retain qualified public safety personnel by:**
 - a. Developing incentives to attract and retain qualified professionals;
 - b. Offering a competitive compensation package;
 - c. Enhancing training and career development tracks; and
 - d. Maintaining challenging and rewarding opportunities allowing individuals to develop to their full potential.

- 5. To identify standards of care or operation for each public safety discipline.**

Health Care Services

GOAL:

EXPANDED PRIMARY HEALTH CARE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR LOW INCOME, ELDERLY, AND MOBILITY IMPAIRED RESIDENTS

Objectives and Tactics:

- 1. To provide primary health care services for uninsured and under insured residents by:**
 - a. Determining the feasibility of developing clinics similar to the Lincoln Clinic in other areas of the county;
 - b. Determining the feasibility of developing public primary care clinics in Bastrop, Elgin, and Smithville;
 - c. Determining the feasibility of operating mobile primary care clinics throughout the county; and
 - d. Determining the potential for partnerships with county hospitals.

- 2. To expand the availability of mental health, dental, and eye care in the county by:**
 - a. Actively recruiting a qualified psychiatrist to serve the county on either a full time or part time basis;
 - b. Recruiting dentists into the county who will provide affordable payment plans or other alternative payment devices for under and uninsured residents; and
 - c. Recruiting optometrists into the county who will provide affordable payment plans or other alternative payment devices for under and uninsured residents.

- 3. To determine the overall health service needs of county residents by:**
 - a. Implementing a medical services needs survey, including:
 - i. Physician recruitment needs by specialty;
 - ii. Adjunct health care professional needs;
 - iii. Specialized treatment needs; and
 - iv. Disease/diagnosis-specific education.
 - b. Developing specific tactics to address the identified needs.

Implementation

The real success in planning is not based on the quality of the plan; rather, it is in the implementation of the plan recommendations. If a plan sits on a shelf gathering dust, it does no good to anyone. This plan in particular, because of the significant public input, should not be allowed to go unimplemented. It will require the involvement of concerned citizens, County leadership, cities, school districts, and other organizations to be successful; however, the plan is very doable if the community works together.

Based on comments from the public, members of the Steering Committee and the Citizens' Advisory Committee have been actively involved in developing this plan and have identified with many of its recommendations. These individuals can serve as a resource for implementation, by identifying additional individuals and resources to bring to the table.

Working with the Commissioners Court, the Citizens' Advisory Committee should be expanded and develop "task forces" to address the many technical and financial aspects of projects identified in this plan. These task forces should be representative of different constituencies from across the County that will be affected by various projects and programs in the plan. This would include developers, farmers, ranchers, business owners, school officials, city planners, mayors, and others. Each project will have its own group of stakeholders who can work together to implement the plan. The Citizens' Advisory Committee can serve as a clearinghouse to monitor activity and keep the Commissioners Court informed of activities.

People are more likely to get involved with clearly defined projects that they can see result in some level of success. This plan identifies specific activities that people can rally behind and accomplish without feeling like they will be committed forever. The Citizens' Advisory Committee should work with various commissioners and the Commissioners Court to establish working groups that reflect the County as a whole to ensure on-going public involvement and support for the effort.

One of the most critical concerns is the fiscal impact of various components in the plan. While many of the recommendations are not high dollar projects or programs, some do require a significant investment to implement. Any project should begin with a financial analysis to determine if there is money available for the project, where the money may come from, and what the project's on-going costs will be. Task forces must understand the financial implications of their projects and can justify the cost, or find ways to offset the cost to the County for projects in order to be supported.

Another critical component to implementation involves the members of the Commissioners' Court. Vocal support and active involvement in the public forums by members of the Court will significantly enhance the ability of the task forces, sub-committees and the steering committee in the implementation process.

