

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.”

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. The Steering Committee has established a financial subcommittee to help with this endeavor.

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, subcommittees and the steering committee in the implementation process.

Introduction

In the summer of 2006, the Bastrop County Commissioners Court initiated the development of a County-wide Strategic Plan to provide direction for the Court's decisions regarding growth in the County. The Commissioners wanted the plan to be based on public input and priorities derived from that input. To accomplish this, the Commissioners appointed a Steering Committee (now the Citizens' Advisory Committee) (CAC), representing a cross-section of County residents. The Lower Colorado River Authority's (LCRA) Community and Economic Development Department facilitated the process.

The Steering Committee organized and publicized five town hall meetings across the County. The meetings began with a brief review regarding the role of County government. There was also a presentation of demographic data illustrating the population growth in Bastrop County over the last few years. Attendees were encouraged voice their opinions on the issues that most concerned them.

The meetings were well attended and obtained a broad range of comments from participating citizens. These comments were aggregated into 15 separate areas of concern. A questionnaire was later distributed to the public and respondents were asked to rank the list of 15 issues derived from the public hearings. Issue rankings from the survey closely resemble the priority concerns voiced by public hearing attendees.

Protecting the county's water quality was identified as the most important issue, both in the questionnaire and from the comments made at hearings. Various issues related to the environment, public safety, transportation, economic development and education were distributed in a very close average ranking. Many of these issues are inter-related, and addressing one set of issues will impact other concerns.

The following discussions review the common themes and explore potential ways of addressing the issues and concerns identified by county residents.

Environmental Quality and Growth Management

Participants in the Town Hall meetings were very concerned about the environmental issues facing Bastrop County, especially in the face of rapid growth. These issues relate to groundwater protection, aquifer recharge, water conservation, land use practices, preservation of farm and ranch land and wildlife habitat, rainwater collection, air quality, and waste disposal. Texas counties have some authority to address such environmental issues.

The three major themes from the public discussions included:

- Water quality protection;
- Preservation of farm and ranch land; and
- Strengthening on-site sewage regulations.

Water quality and quantity was the most important single issue, as well as the most important environmental issue, according to comments and the survey results (Figure 1).

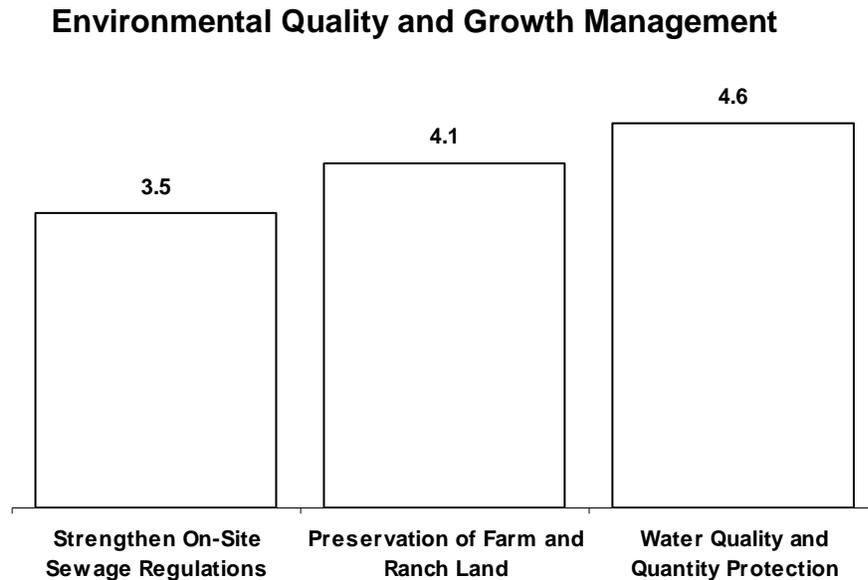


Figure 1

These concerns can be successfully addressed through effective *land stewardship**. Recent State legislation recognizes that land stewardship enhances the state's watersheds by helping to increase surface water and groundwater supplies, and encourages voluntary land conservation practices.

The following recommendations will help to ensure that Bastrop County's natural environment is maintained for future generations and will provide tools to manage growth in the County.

Preservation of Farm and Ranch Land and Wildlife Habitat

Bastrop County's rural character is a significant factor in residents' decisions to live here. This rural character is increasingly threatened by rapid eastward growth from the Austin metropolitan area. Agricultural and undeveloped land is being converted to housing subdivisions at a rapid pace. Current residents are concerned about the loss of this rural character and the negative environmental impacts of development. Many of the participants also viewed the Colorado River as an asset that is not being adequately utilized for tourism and other recreational purposes.

Encourage Continued Agricultural Land Use

To maintain the historic rural character of Bastrop County and to secure the other benefits agricultural lands provide, farm and ranch lands must be preserved. Farms and ranches in conjunction with other working and wildlife lands establish the rural landscape of our communities, provide open space and habitat, act as groundwater recharge zones, pollutant filters between land and waterways, and contribute to the local economy.

Agriculture contributes to the County's economy and requires less investment in public services than residential development. The installation of a residential subdivision's *infrastructure** costs significantly more than the subdivision returns in taxes. Unlike much of the development replacing it, agricultural land uses only 37 cents in services for every dollar paid in taxes whereas subdivisions require \$1.37 in services.

To protect these assets for their economic, aesthetic and environmental benefits, the County should:

- Encourage continued agricultural land uses;
- Preserve agricultural lands and wildlife habitat; and
- Support locally produced food, goods, and products

Conservation Mechanisms Compatible with Development

*Conservation subdivisions** are a growing trend across Texas and the nation. Providing more flexibility in how properties are developed, conservation regulations allow developers to increase the structure density in one area while preserving more of the property as farm and ranch land and wildlife habitat.

Bastrop County is currently developing a Habitat Conservation Plan for the endangered Houston Toad that specifies conservation subdivisions in defined Houston toad habitat. These standards are currently under review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and will serve as a model for conservation subdivisions throughout Bastrop County.

The result of establishing conservation subdivision regulations will be land preserved with little county investment, since developers will be setting land aside in their subdivisions. Public lands that connect to private open space in conservation subdivisions can create a network of protected lands adjacent to farm and ranch land and wildlife habitat across the county.

Nationwide, agricultural lands are being broken up and converted to urban uses. This is also occurring in Bastrop County. Lot size regulations should be reviewed to ensure the efficient development of land to protect the connectivity of natural habitats and the rural character of the County.

Advantages of conservation subdivision regulations include:

- Maintaining the rural character of the development;
- Decreased County investment in utility infrastructure and roadways;
- Reduced need for storm water detention structures;
- Preserved habitat and *riparian** buffers;
- A potential to connect adjacent or closely proximate tracts of undeveloped land;
- Encouraging the improvement of wildlife habitat; and
- Providing opportunities to maintain the aesthetic value of major transportation corridors

A *conservation easement** is another method of protecting both private and public land. A conservation easement is a deed restriction similar to a utility or road easement. The landowner and the potential easement holder voluntarily and mutually decide what the landowner wishes to protect. Typically the rights restricted by a conservation easement are development rights, particularly the right to subdivide the land. When a landowner chooses this method of protection, the landowner may receive significant income tax and estate tax benefits.

*Land trusts**, like the *Pines and Prairies Land Trust (PPLT)** ensure that transactions are upheld forever. County governments and other groups can also purchase land or development rights to accomplish these same goals. The land trust can then be used to protect these purchases in the same way as they protect conservation easements. Developers should also be encouraged to improve the habitat quality when feasible, such as removing non-native species, planting native plants, and related activities.

Develop Additional Parks and Greenbelts Across the County

Bastrop County is developing its first county park in the community of Cedar Creek. This addresses concerns identified to provide recreational opportunities and services to unincorporated communities, and to preserve environmental quality. Residents strongly supported expansion of the County's park system.

Not every park has to be a highly developed facility. It may be more appropriate to preserve the land with walking trails, river access points, nature preserves, or wild areas, such as wetlands for nesting birds and migratory bird feeding. Natural areas require less infrastructure and would be appropriate in subdivisions, parks and forest edges.

Greenbelts connecting parks and key wildlife habitats enhance the habitat, and provide connections between communities for hikers, cyclists, and wildlife migration. Park areas along the river encourage use of the river for fishing, canoeing, kayaking, swimming, camping, bird watching and associated concessions important to eco-tourism.

An initial step would be to identify those areas most suitable for parks, greenbelts and river access points. One such project is *Greenprinting**, which is a mapping process. Priorities important to the community can be identified for protection or preservation, thus giving guidance to transportation planning, development permit regulations, routing storm waters, and other development activities.

*Envision Central Texas**, the *Trust for Public Land** and the *Capital Area Council of Governments** are developing a five-county regional Greenprint which will incorporate the recently completed Greenprint for Travis County, as well as information about Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays and Williamson Counties.

The Pines and Prairies Land Trust is a local organization supporting the efforts of Greenprinting in Bastrop County. They have also worked with the County and City of Bastrop to identify and preserve undeveloped and agricultural lands.

Once priority natural areas are identified, funding will become the critical issue. There are costs associated with parks, especially parks with significant amenities that require on-going maintenance, such as ball fields, picnic areas, etc. While there is funding to build a park, there needs to be adequate funding for maintenance operations (if appropriate) and security. These items are issues that the County should consider as it begins to expand the park system.

Land trusts and public-private partnerships can be used to develop and maintain parks, trails and river access points. There are a variety of grant programs and other assistance available to help fund park development. Because of the high level of support for parks among citizens who participated in this planning process, a bond issue could be a possibility.

Partnerships with Land Trusts to Preserve Agricultural Lands and Wildlife Habitat

Bastrop County should encourage land trusts to protect prime agricultural lands and wildlife habitat. This support may be financial, helping to fund their activities, or it may entail accepting ownership of open space or development rights donated by a land trust. The City of Austin and the State of Texas have both benefited from this type of relationship. The Nature Conservancy donated Government Canyon State Park to the State of Texas. This arrangement benefits the land trust because they are no longer responsible for the maintenance of property, and the County benefits by obtaining public recreation areas with minimal cost to the County.

In addition to preserving agricultural lands, the County can support agriculture by promoting it as a viable economic engine for Bastrop County. The County can be involved with promoting Bastrop products locally and throughout the State, similar to the state-level *Texas Yes** program.

* See **Glossary** for additional information

A viable market for agricultural products, particularly value-added efforts such as organic produce, organic grass fed meats and boutique vineyards, provides incentives to sustain the farming industry. Local farmers' markets are a popular and profitable opportunity for the County to support benefiting local producers. Several active markets are currently active in Bastrop County, and should be encouraged.

Efforts should be made to keep appraisal values moderated to help these producers keep their land. Because agricultural lands contribute more in property taxes than they cost in services, the County should explore opportunities to extend the agricultural exemption to reflect these benefits.

Water Quality and Quantity Protection

The population of Bastrop County is growing rapidly; but the water supply is not. Policies developed today, to protect the quantity and quality of water, both surface and ground, are essential to future generations.

The following projects will help Bastrop County address water quality and quantity protection:

- Establish strong working relationships with the Lower Colorado Region Water Planning Group (Region "K"), Lower Colorado River Authority, Aqua Water Supply Corp., Lost Pines Groundwater Conservation District, Municipal Utility Districts and other local entities concerned with water planning issues;
- Identify and preserve significant springs and riparian habitat;
- Add alternative storm water and sewage treatment options to subdivision regulations to enhance storm water retention and sewage treatment; and
- Encourage rainwater retention and collection, along with water conservation.

Support Aquifer Preservation and Protection

Though most of the water supply for the County comes from the *Carrizo/Wilcox aquifer** group, much of the municipal and private water in the County are taken from the shallower *aquifer** immediately below and bordering the Colorado River.

However, the *Colorado River alluvium** aquifer is not recognized by the State as an aquifer and therefore is not afforded the protective measures and monitoring that other minor aquifers in the State receive. Since this shallow aquifer is such an important part of the geophysical and ecological system of the County, the County should take measures:

- To protect and enhance this resource by having it recognized as a minor aquifer; and
- To encourage land management and runoff management that enhances groundwater recharge.

Identify and preserve significant springs and riparian habitat

The County should identify significant springs and other riparian features that contribute to water quality and have potential for nature-tourism. Springs along the river provide a considerable portion of its total flow after it leaves Travis County, especially in times of drought and low water releases from the Highland lakes. This flow supports river floating sports and fishing and dilutes Austin's effluent. Increased ground water pumping may result in these springs drying up and reducing surface water in the Colorado River and other streams in the County.

Preserving undeveloped natural buffers along streams has a significant economic benefit. Preservation retains the ecological value of the streams, reduces flooding, and reduces the need for storm water management because it slows runoff and filters many pollutants before they enter waterways.

These buffers also provide a corridor for wildlife movement as well as human walking trails along streams and the river. Leaving the river in a more natural state will also enhance its attraction for river users.

Establish strong relationship with Lost Pines Groundwater Conservation District and Municipal Utility Districts

Groundwater provides municipal drinking water for most city and rural residents in the County. This groundwater derives from the Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer, which reaches from the Hooper Formation in the west to the Carrizo Formation in the east. It provides water to riverbank terraces and springs along the Colorado as the river flows through Bastrop County.

One of the concerns voiced at several meetings was the 'over pumping' of groundwater, when more water is taken from the aquifer than is replenished. Currently more water use is permitted than is capable of being recharged into the aquifers from rainwater. With continued population growth, and the potential for groundwater to be pumped to users outside of the County, inadequate aquifer recharge will increase in magnitude and consequences.

Texas law is somewhat unique in that there is little control over groundwater pumping. Typically, property owners have been able to produce and use the water beneath their land. This was not a problem when the population was small and there were not very many wells. More wells being drilled results in more conflict among well owners about the amount of water being pumped versus capacity. Recent legislation will require that water suppliers have water conservation plans that encourage citizens and industries to conserve water

The *Lost Pines Groundwater Conservation District (LPGCD)** is charged with conserving groundwater in Bastrop and Lee counties. Texas law regarding groundwater

* See **Glossary** for additional information

districts and water mining exemptions limit the LPGCD's ability to protect groundwater resources.

Working closely with the LPGCD can ensure that water management in new development minimizes negative impacts on existing well owners and future water supplies. The County's involvement can ensure that desired future conditions for water sources and supplies adequately protect those resources.

Becoming a stakeholder in the work of the Lower Colorado Regional Water Planning Group (LCRWPG – Region K) will help ensure adjacent cities and counties have similar objectives and use per-customer targets. Such conservation plans need to be incorporated into city/county regulations where possible.

Encourage Water Conservation & Rainwater Collection throughout the County

Water conservation and *rainwater collection** are key efforts to help ensure enough water is available to support anticipated development. Regulations that encourage these initiatives can be written for new developments and encouraged in older developments. Other counties are proposing ordinances that might serve as models for the county to consider.

Rainwater collection is becoming more popular as costs have come down on installing new systems. These systems reduce storm water runoff, improving water quality by reducing the amount of contaminated yard waste run-off. Impacts on adjacent property are reduced and costs are reduced for drainage improvements.

Rainwater collection reduces water use because recycled rainwater is used for watering gardens and landscaping, rather than using "new" treated water. It also will help recharge area aquifers because the rainwater is released more slowly during irrigation, providing time to percolate into the aquifer rather than running off into streams and the river during storms.

The County can encourage all new development, especially commercial, to incorporate rainwater collection systems in its design. One opportunity to encourage this may be to review the existing drainage regulations and storm water standards.

Encouraging the use of natural water catchments along roadways and drainage areas will reduce impervious cover and increase groundwater recharge. Subdivision road site planning and construction should be sensitive to natural land contours and avoid wetlands, creeks, and other water sources and increase set backs from these sensitive areas.

Strengthen On-site Sewage System Regulations

Rules developed by the *Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ*)* and implemented by the Commissioners Court are intended to ensure the health and safety of citizens using on-site sewage systems. AS older septic systems fail major problems will

* See **Glossary** for additional information

be created. Since the quality of the ground water can be impacted by poorly operating sewage systems, it is important to strengthen the County regulations to address these issues.

*Municipal Utility Districts (MUD's)** are a common tool used to provide services in unincorporated areas. These districts have limited taxing authority to support water and wastewater infrastructure. Advantages of a MUD are:

- A more effective centralized sewer system compared to individual septic systems on individual lots; and
- Implementation support for conservation subdivision regulations that encourage smaller lot development where individual septic systems may not be feasible.

MUD's are somewhat controversial; however, and the County and cities should work closely with existing and proposed MUD's to ensure they provide adequate service to residents and implement necessary environmental controls.

Transportation Enhancements

More than half of Bastrop County’s workforce commutes to Travis County as thousands of vehicles on county roads travel to highways every day. Other rural residents are often dependent on friends and family for transportation, or are confined to their homes because of a lack of transportation. These issues are tied to a wide range of enhancements that citizens desire for Bastrop County, including

- Better roadways;
- Safety improvements;
- Road maintenance, and
- Transit service improvements.

Surveyed priorities among the issues discussed are illustrated in Figure 2.

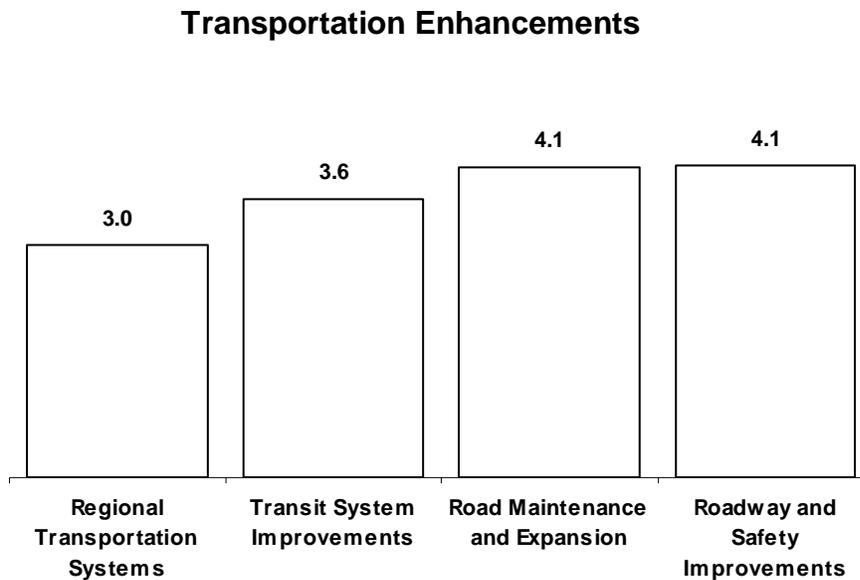


Figure 2

Roadway and Safety Improvements

Road improvements are one of the basic responsibilities of county government. Residents voiced concerns at all meetings regarding the need for wider roads, improved road maintenance, and safety enhancements at intersections. Addressing those areas that are most in need of these improvements is a priority.

Public safety officials and citizens can also work to identify locations in the County that need to be improved. These may be intersections or sections of roads where accidents are common. Once these sites have been identified, a plan can be developed to address the needs.

Stricter enforcement of traffic laws has been a high priority for the Sheriff’s Department and various traffic locations were identified for increased law enforcement presence.

Law enforcement visibility promotes awareness among drivers of the hazards at these locations. Over time, such visibility of enforcement personnel helps to educate motorists, reduce potential risks, save lives, and reduce injuries.

Signage and signals can help to reduce risks. Traffic lights provide definitive control over traffic. Traffic accidents generally increase when traffic signals are installed. However, the severity of the injuries is reduced.

Warning signs alert drivers to approaching curves and other hazards. While traffic lights and signs can be expensive, it is cost effective investment when compared the costs of accidents and emergency response. Prioritizing roadway and intersection improvements will allow distribution of these expenses over time.

Some road sections and intersections may need to be redesigned to make them safer and operate more efficiently. This would entail a long-term effort and a significant financial investment. A prioritized list of roadway improvements will allow the County to set a long term Capital Improvement Program budget and begin implementing needed improvements. These improvements may require a bond program to serve the growing population.

Road Maintenance and Expansion

A number of roads still need to be paved. Poorly maintained roads are safety hazards, as well as an impediment to economic development. New businesses want excellent road access and may hesitate to locate where adequate mobility does not exist.

Developing a County Roadway Plan will enable the County to evaluate roads to determine what types of roadway construction are needed. Such a countywide roadway plan would integrate with the street and highway plans of local cities and adjacent cities and counties. It will identify types of roads, rights of way requirements, pavement width needs, and other construction requirements based on anticipated traffic loads.

Incorporating the environmental impacts of existing road improvements as well as new road development as major design and location factors in road plans will support the emphasis the community has placed on environmental conservation.

Because most highways are under the jurisdiction of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), highway improvements must be coordinated with this agency. A prioritized list of the County's needed road improvements, including funding sources, will enhance potential support from TxDOT.

An opportunity exists to coordinate this type of comprehensive roadway plan with a new TxDOT program for improving rural transportation. Such an integrated planning process would encourage a common system of roadway development throughout the area.

All major maintenance and road widening/expansion should be coordinated with other improvements to reduce costs and repetition of work.

Transit Service Improvements

Bastrop County is served by *Capital Area Rural Transit Service (CARTS)**, which provides beneficial but limited service. Many residents, particularly the elderly and disabled, often have no means of getting to needed services. Increasing traffic and rising gas prices make commuting more challenging and residents are looking for alternatives to their daily drive to work. These are significant challenges facing residents, and the County should be creative in finding appropriate solutions. Some recommendations are discussed below.

Provide Additional Car/Van Pooling and Park & Ride Locations

With so many Bastrop residents commuting to Travis County every day, an opportunity exists to establish car and van pools, reducing the number of cars on the road and decreasing commuter expenses. Development of car and van pools is a low cost, simple program for the County to use to address traffic issues. The overall goal is to reduce the number of single occupant vehicles driving on US 290 and SH 71 every morning and evening. Businesses may be able to organize pools from within their own organizations, but County support for the process will be beneficial.

Defined parking locations allow residents to “park and ride” by developing shared rider/driver arrangements. Locations should be developed in the Bastrop, Elgin, and Smithville areas. The Park and Ride facility in Manor offers an opportunity for Bastrop County to promote an existing program. Information campaigns could highlight locations, availability, and advantages of ride sharing.

Encourage Volunteer Driver Programs

There are already volunteer driver programs across the County that serve residents who do not have access to a car or who no longer drive themselves. The American Cancer Society has a volunteer system that provides transportation for those in need of cancer treatment. This program could be a model for the development of other driver programs in the County.

A new non-profit organization, Faith in Action, is being created to provide volunteer assistance, and they are providing drivers to those in need of transportation. The County could be involved in this effort by encouraging involvement by more organizations and serving as a clearinghouse for those needing assistance.

Expanded County Transit Services

A totally new countywide transit system is a cost-prohibitive option. A more cost effective alternative is to expand and improve the existing CARTS system. By proactively working with the CARTS Board and CAPCOG, the County can identify ways to improve service, provide additional funding, and better serve the needs of county residents.

It is critical to identify routes that would maximize the connectivity of the County and provide services to those most in need, particularly for residents needing transportation from home to work, medical appointments, and other activities.

Commuter Rail Service

*Capital Metro** is currently planning commuter rail service to connect Leander to downtown Austin. There are also plans underway to expand this system into other areas of central Texas. While Bastrop County is not part of Capital Metro service area, there is an opportunity to establish a rail connection between Elgin and Austin. This connection could reduce the traffic flows on US 290. Commuter rail would encourage new development adjacent to rail stations, as has been seen in Dallas suburbs around DART stations. Mixed use and higher density development around these stations could help reduce development in other parts of the County. In addition, these developments support additional retail and business opportunities that bring new tax revenues to the cities and county as well as encourage tourism by increasing access from the Austin area.

The City of Elgin has already initiated discussions with Capital Metro and others to explore planning and implementation of rail service to the northern part of the county. This effort should be fully supported by the County.

Regional Transportation System

Bastrop County is part of the *Austin-San Marcos Statistical Area** and actively participates in the *Capital Area Planning Council of Government (CAPCOG)** and Envision Central Texas. The County is integrally connected to Travis County. At this time, it is not part of the *Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO)**, which directs federal transportation planning and construction funds. Since a strong connection already exists between Bastrop County and CAMPO counties, it is logical for Bastrop County to join CAMPO and receive some of its benefits. Membership allows the County to participate in long range transportation planning, to access additional road construction funds, and to have greater participation in decision-making. Membership would ensure that the needs of Bastrop County are incorporated into the larger regional planning efforts.

If Bastrop County does not become part of CAMPO, it could consider forming a *Regional Mobility Authority (RMA)**, alone or in cooperation with other adjacent

* See **Glossary** for additional information

counties. An RMA could open up many of the same benefits that membership in CAMPO would bring, with the County in a leadership role.

However, it is recommended that the County pursue membership in CAMPO, since it would be more effective to take advantage of the connections and coordination already in existence in CAMPO.

Economic Development and Educational Opportunities

Economic development and education are integrally connected because providing a well-trained workforce is one of the biggest attractions for new businesses. All of the recommendations in this plan will positively impact quality of life and make Bastrop County more attractive to prospective businesses.

The key will be for the County to coordinate efforts among the three cities to reduce competition among them for businesses, and to encourage the creation of higher education opportunities in the County. Rather than taking the lead on economic development, the County should support the efforts of the cities, each of which is very active in this area. Development in any one city will positively impact the County as a whole. To do this, the County should:

- Establish a strong relationship with Bastrop, Elgin, and Smithville Economic Development groups;
- Promote tourism development; and
- Encourage higher education opportunities in Bastrop County.

Surveys ranked these concerns as shown in Figure 3.

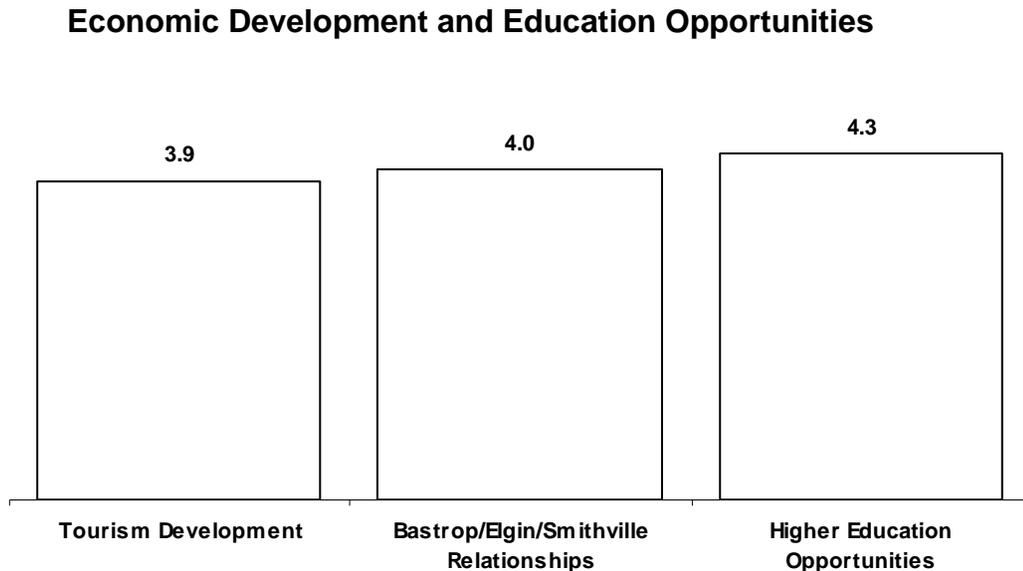


Figure 3

Establish a Strong Relationship with Bastrop, Elgin, and Smithville Economic Development Groups

Bastrop County does not need to take the lead in economic development activities since there are strong programs in each of the cities. The County already cooperates with the cities on their economic development activities and should continue to do so.

A county level partnership in economic development enables a more successful regional approach. New businesses locating in Elgin, for instance, provide spin-off benefits to other cities as employees of new businesses may choose to live and shop in the other communities. In addition, all residents of Bastrop County will benefit from the increased sales and ad valorem tax dollars that can fund County services.

Another opportunity for the County is to establish consistent and well thought out incentive policies for new businesses. This will ensure a common approach to incentives and reduce the opportunity for unfairness in the process. In addition, an established policy will reduce the possibility of ill-informed decisions that might leave the County and cities with unsuccessful investments. Once the policy is established, economic development organizations can incorporate it into their marketing plans and materials.

An incentive policy should associate developer eligibility for incentives to how effectively the project addresses recommendations from this plan, such as:

- Including rainwater collection systems in new buildings;
- Reducing impervious cover (parking lots, etc.);
- Preservation of streamside buffers or other habitat;
- Road and intersection improvements;
- Partnerships with area schools for training and internships; and
- The potential number of local jobs.

The goal is to develop a policy that will provide benefits to the County and cities as well as to the prospective business. This can minimize potential negatives from development and improve the quality of life for all residents.

Tourism Development

Bastrop County is one of the most historic areas of Texas, and in conjunction with the Colorado River, these advantages provide a strong basis for tourism development. Many participants identified the Colorado River as an underutilized resource for economic development in Bastrop County. These assets helped attract the new Hyatt Lost Pines Resort, a tremendous economic benefit to the entire County.

Agricultural tourism is also growing in popularity. Vineyards in the Fredericksburg area are major tourist draw. Blanco County is developing a lavender industry to attract tourists. Bastrop County has an opportunity to work with local producers to establish agricultural tourism opportunities.

With the river, agriculture and the history of Bastrop, Elgin, and Smithville, the County is a true tourist destination and can utilize those assets as a significant economic development tool. The benefit of tourism is that visitors do not typically require significant public investment. Tourists come, spend their money, and go back home, leaving behind dollars in local pockets where it most benefits the entire community.

The recommendations in this plan, particularly those relating to the preservation of agricultural lands, streamside preservation, and the development of river access points will help to build the tourism industry in the County.

Another key to both economic development and to improving the quality of life in the County is a strong emphasis on culture and the arts. Seen by artists, artisans and community leaders as a catalyst, the arts can be a key to the revitalization of downtown districts and communities.

Attracting artists on a local, regional and national basis to relocate to historic areas can revitalize and preserve neglected structures, increase the tax base, expand tourism, and financially benefit existing businesses. Additionally, an active culture and art scene is intrinsic to the quality of life many businesses need to attract top-level executives and well-educated workers.

Encourage Higher Learning Opportunities in Bastrop County

Employers usually want a well-trained workforce before locating in a community. They want to know that there is a pool of available qualified employees before making the investment. Having a higher education facility in Bastrop County will significantly increase the County's attractiveness to new employers. Existing businesses benefit from the potential for workforce training at the educational facility.

Bastrop County is in the Austin Community College (ACC) district, which was established by the State of Texas. Currently, Bastrop County residents do not pay the property tax for ACC and do not receive the benefits of its local district services. ACC has an established relationship with the school districts; though there is not a local ACC campus.

The consistent support throughout the public input process for higher learning suggests the pursuit of joining ACC might be desirable. There has already been some discussion with ACC as to a possible facility location, potential costs, and other issues. It will be important to have a solid plan in place before approaching voters so that they fully understand the costs and benefits and can make an informed decision on joining ACC.

Several state universities have also begun to expand to new sites throughout the state. Texas State has located a campus in Round Rock that co-locates ACC and Temple Junior College. Texas Tech has established a campus in Fredericksburg and other smaller cities. Blinn College has several campuses, including one in Schulenburg.

This suggests there may be an opportunity for the County to work with the cities to encourage the location of a satellite campus of a major college in Bastrop County. The City of Bastrop would likely be the focus of attention due to its central location; however, Elgin or Smithville may be attractive due to land and development costs. The County should explore this possibility in partnership with the cities.

Another opportunity may be the development of a Technical School in Bastrop County. The County could support this effort by providing financial assistance, including help to fund a building, equipment, or other assistance.

Local school districts can be a tremendous asset in this effort. They already work with some local businesses to offer training and internship opportunities, and these should be expanded. They may be able to work together to provide additional technical training or services to support a technical school in Bastrop County.

The County could also coordinate with the cities to develop an incentive package that would entice a school to come. Local businesses could participate and benefit from workforce training opportunities. The County should serve as the facilitator for this process and build the coalition that will attract a school.

Public Safety

Of all the issues discussed in this plan, public safety is the most fundamental role of County government. Residents deserve to be safe and secure in their homes, knowing that emergency services are available when needed. This is also where the County spends most of its money, so it is critical to ensure the best service is provided for the money. The County provides excellent service and resources for law enforcement, and over the last several years, has purchased a new brush truck for each volunteer fire department in the County.

Bastrop County is also taking a lead role in establishing Emergency Services Districts to secure additional financial resources for fire suppression services.

The following recommendations will also help to address public safety concerns in the County:

- Review crime and accident reports and adjust patrols if necessary;
- Continue support of Volunteer Fire Departments and Emergency Service Districts; and
- Improve Emergency Medical Services.

Figure 4 illustrates the ranking of these concerns from the written surveys.

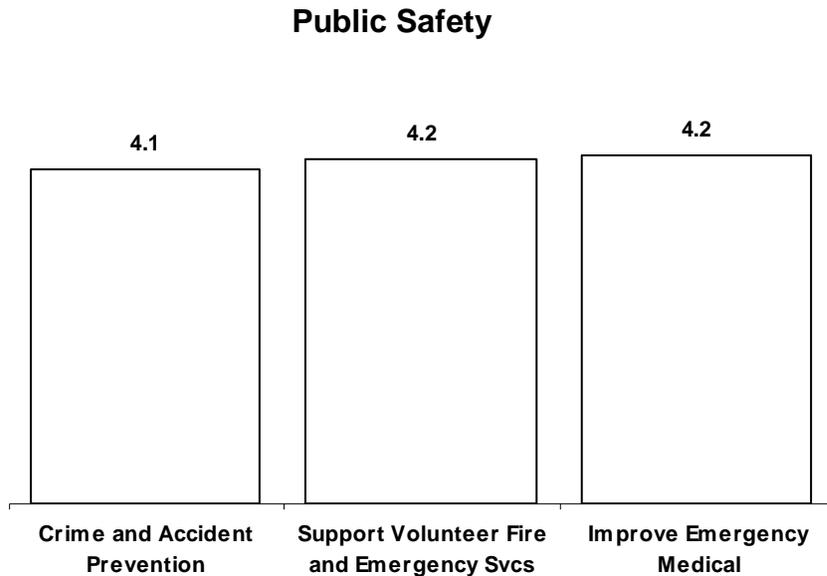


Figure 4

Crime and Accident Prevention

There are a limited number of deputies on patrol at any given time, and they cannot be everywhere at once. The Sheriff's Department regularly reviews incident reports to identify patterns that may require additional attention from deputies on patrol. A priority for the Sheriff has been to keep the deputies actively patrolling their districts and building relationships with citizens. This allows greater trust and communication from citizens.

One struggle has been to fill open positions for deputies. The County has been challenged to fill vacant positions. There is an on-going effort to maintain the number of staff needed to ensure public safety.

The Neighborhood Watch Program has been shown to reduce crime in neighborhoods where the program is active. The County partners with neighborhood groups to get programs up and running and should continue this effort. An option may be to provide radios to these groups to give better contact with deputies. This program could serve as an extension for the Citizens on Patrol (COP) program that is already established. This provides additional 'eyes on the street' and trained volunteers to assist the Sheriff department in its duties.

Continued Support of Volunteer Fire Departments and Emergency Service Districts

As mentioned, the County has shown strong support for the Volunteer Fire Departments (VFD's) and in the creation of *Emergency Service Districts (ESD's)**. This support should continue in the future. ESD's provide a funding mechanism that may increase the paid staff in the County. The only paid firefighters in Bastrop County are employed by the Elgin ESD and ESD #1 in the southwest part of the county.

As the population grows, it will be more important to increase the availability of paid commissioned firefighters to respond to the County's growing needs. An ESD will provide a stable funding mechanism for fire services.

The County should work with the fire departments not already in an Emergency Service District to determine the feasibility of bringing an ESD referendum to residents. The County should highlight the benefits of an ESD in improved service and response times to increase support for their creation throughout Bastrop County.

The County's role in economic development is also a support for VFD's. Residents working in Bastrop County may be more willing to become volunteer firefighters since they are more invested in the community than they would be as commuters.

Improve Emergency Medical Services

The County and the three cities currently have a contract with Guardian EMS to provide emergency medical services. They are also reviewing ways to improve these services, especially in the area of response time. With increased population and more traffic on the roads, it is important that quality emergency medical services be provided. While response times may be different in the County than in the cities, the rural residents need to be able to rely on a reasonable response time for these important services.

Health Care Services: Low Income, Elderly, and Mobility Impaired Residents

The County provides services for those residents least able to support themselves. The needs of these residents may get lost as Bastrop County struggles to deal with the rapid growth it faces. In addressing the need for health care, the County should support programs that provide the highest quality care. The CAC’s Health Care Subcommittee, reviewing the public contributions to this section, determined the County should consider implementing a survey to determine health care needs in the county. The survey could provide guidance in the development of medical services, including psychiatric and eye care.

Recommendations for lower income health care services include:

- Provide support to community clinics in Bastrop, Elgin, and Smithville; and
- Explore the potential to establish mobile health clinics to serve rural areas.

Written surveys ranked these two recommendations as identical priorities (Figure 5).

Low Income Health Care Services

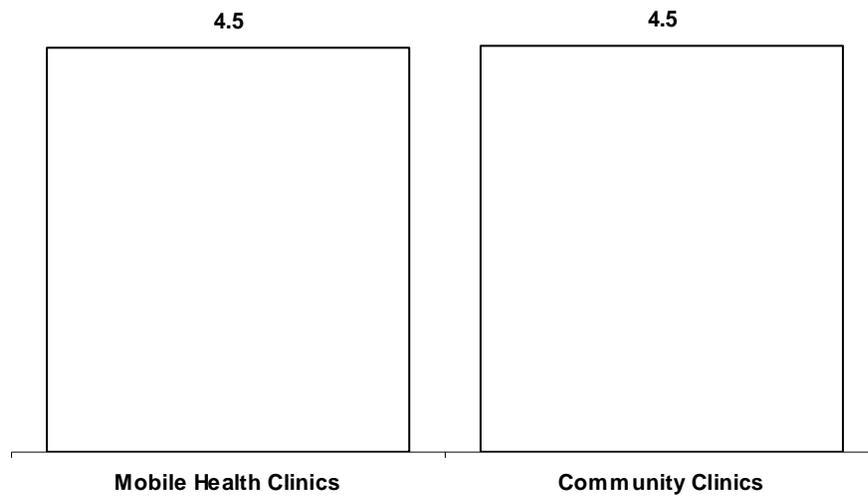


Figure 5

Provide Support to Community Clinics in Bastrop and Smithville and Explore Potential to Open a Clinic in Elgin

The most cost-effective way to support residents’ health is to provide make preventative medicine available. The availability of affordable primary care services enables people to get treatment before a situation requires a visit to the emergency room. Community clinics provide minor emergency care and preventative care that reduces emergency room visits by catching problems early, or allowing those with non-critical needs (such as flu, etc.) to receive care there rather than the hospital.

The County should continue to support these clinics as much as possible. If feasible, the County could provide funding that would expand the hours of the clinics on the weekends or later in the evenings, again to reduce emergency room visits. Evening and weekend hours will provide out-of-county commuters access to preventative care.

Elgin currently does not have a clinic, requiring residents to travel to Bastrop or Austin for care. County support for the development of a clinic in Elgin would be a beneficial strategy.

Explore the Potential for Mobile Health Clinics

As discussed previously, most county residents may not have access to community clinics. The feasibility of establishing mobile health clinics to serve rural areas communities is a recommended strategy. Proposed clinic services could include health screenings, physicals, and regular physical exams. Sick residents could also receive basic care, such as antibiotics.

County leadership should research other areas where mobile health clinics have been created to determine an estimate of costs and necessary resources. This will allow the County to develop a preliminary budget and determine income sources. Coordinating with existing medical service providers will be vital to the success of the project.

The County would need to help to promote this service and encourage residents to participate to ensure some measure of financial breakeven. A sliding fee scale for charges will help recoup some of the cost.

Consider Other Alternatives

Telemedicine is another opportunity that the County could support for both the mobile clinics and the community clinics. The County may be able to obtain financial assistance for needed equipment to connect these facilities to the hospitals in Smithville and Bastrop and, potentially, Austin-area hospitals. With access to a broader range of medical expertise, expanded local services could be provided. This may help reduce the number of patients who have to travel out of the county hospital care. Telemedicine also improves the quality of care, and may reduce clinic support costs for the County.

A future possibility may be the creation of a Health Services District (HSD). Such districts have taxing authority and the funds can provide additional medical service resources. Initiating an HSD entails a public referendum to approve the additional taxes and would be a challenging undertaking.

Conclusion

The challenges facing Bastrop County seem huge at first glance. But the opportunities are just as large. The massive growth the county is experiencing brings people with new ideas and fresh energy to meet growing problems and to grab new opportunities. In addition, our current “old timers” bring wisdom and history to honor and retain the rural character of the county.

This plan documents the local challenges voiced by participants and suggests potential solutions. A solid action plan has been created by “taking the pulse” of residents around the county and by getting input for the future direction for the County. It identifies specific actions that community leaders can pursue to serve everyone.

However, the responsibility does not rest with government alone. The Commissioners Court can provide general direction for this process to move forward by involving more County residents in the implementation of the plan’s recommendations. But for it to be successful, residents must participate in the process. They should be in contact with members of the Commissioners Court to support their priorities. Citizens should also become involved in Volunteer Fire Departments, neighborhood watch groups, Community Centers, churches, schools and other community groups. They can participate in citizen groups around the county to spread the word about this plan and start working on the actions identified in the plan.

Residents also need to understand the true costs of services that the County provides and the benefits gained, when asked to pay higher taxes. Improved services and infrastructure will result in increased economic development and bring new revenues to help support them. Keeping farm and ranch lands and wildlife habitat intact, for example, is cheaper for the County than supporting the infrastructure for subdivisions, and is the key to maintaining the rural character that is so important to current residents.

This plan is intended as a guide to the future of Bastrop County. Residents and leaders should embrace the initiatives identified in the plan and work to make them successful. If the plan is implemented, current and future residents will continue to enjoy the rural character and quality of life that makes Bastrop County the unique place it is.

GLOSSARY

Alluvium – deposits of sediment laid down by streams, other flowing water and runoff processes.

Austin-Bastrop River Corridor Partnership (ABRCP) – a partnership of public and private entities the mission of which is: To support sustainable development and a healthy riparian ecosystem along the Austin to Bastrop river corridor. The goals are public awareness, sustainability and riparian management. Participants include: the City of Bastrop, City of Smithville, Bastrop County government, Pines and Prairies Land Trust, Environmental Stewardship, Rising Phoenix Adventures, Nature Conservancy, National Park Service, Lower Colorado River Authority, Texas Parks and Wildlife Service, City of Austin, Austin Parks Department, Trust For Public Land, Park Springs Neighborhood Association, Cook Canoes and others. This group meets monthly and is open to all. The Partnership has developed and published a vision for the future of the Colorado River titled “*Discovering the Colorado: A Vision for the Austin-Bastrop River Corridor*”.

Austin-San Marcos Statistical Area – a U.S. Census Bureau term designating a geographic area with at least one urbanized area of at least 50,000 or more in population, plus adjacent territory that has high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured by commuting ties. Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis and Williamson Counties are part of this Statistical Area.

Aquifer – underground body of water whose exact dimensions are unknown

Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) – the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Hays, Travis and Williamson counties. Its purpose is to coordinate regional transportation planning with the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Capital Metro), the Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS) and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). MPO’s are designated for all urbanized areas having a population greater than 50,000. CAMPO is by a board composed of state, regional and local officials.

Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) (formerly known as CAPCO) – organized in 1970, serving a 10-county area including Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Hays, Lee Llano, Travis, and Williamson Counties, with primary focus as planner, advocate, and coordinator of initiatives that, when undertaken as a region, can be more effective and efficient. Mission Statement: To be a catalyst for regional planning and implementation through effective utilization of resources resulting in enhanced quality of life and economic prosperity for our citizens.

Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) – established in 1973, the Metropolitan Planning Organization for Travis, Hays and Williamson counties governed by the Transportation Policy Board comprised of state, regional, and local officials; the purpose of CAMPO is to coordinate regional transportation planning with counties, cities, Capital Metro, Capital Area Rural Transportation, and Texas Department

of Transportation, and other transportation providers and to approve the use of federal transportation funds in this region; the main products are the Long Range Transportation Plan and the short range program.

Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS) – a Rural Transit District formed through inter-local agreement by nine county governments. The district includes all of Bastrop, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Hays and Lee counties, and the non-urbanized areas of Travis and Williamson counties. CARTS delivers transportation services to 169 communities.

Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer – major aquifer supplying water to much of Bastrop County.

Citizens’ Advisory Committee (CAC) – a committee set up by the Commissioners Court to develop a vision for the County to guide growth development.

Colorado River Alluvium – alluvium associated with the Colorado River that runs from Travis County down to Wharton County.

Commissioners Court – the general governing body of county government in Texas. Its principal functions are administrative and legislative, with limited judicial authority

Conservation easement – a transfer of usage rights creating a legally enforceable land preservation agreement between a landowner and a municipality or land trust for the purpose of conservation. Restrictions are binding on all future landowners. These easements are typically placed on land that cannot be developed due to floodplains, slopes, sensitive environmental features, or particularly scenic or historic sites on the property.

Conservation Subdivision – a significant variation from the traditional subdivision design and review process, an open space design or green version of clustering, whereby developers are allowed to build houses on smaller lots and leave larger portions as undisturbed, protected open space.

Emergency Services District (ESD) – ESDs are political subdivisions established by local voters for the purpose of raising money through ad valorem taxes on all real property located within the district. Some ESDs use sales taxes to help fund the district. The ad valorem and sales taxes support ESD services designed to protect life through the provision of emergency rescue and ambulance services. ESDs also protect property from fire through fire services.

Envision Central Texas (ECT) – organization started in 2001 to address growth issues in the 5-county region that includes Bastrop County. The mission of ECT is: To assist in the public development and implementation of a regional vision addressing the growth of Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis and Williamson counties, with an emphasis on land use, transportation and the environment. By working with the people of Central Texas to build a consensus, we can preserve and enhance our region’s quality of life, natural resources and economic prosperity. This non-profit began by holding many public meetings to get

a vision of how the citizens in Central Texas what our area to look in the future. ECT is now working on these ideas in partnership with policy makers and individuals.

Flood plain – low land bordering rivers and streams and subject to flooding.

Gray water – water from household sinks (except kitchen), baths and washing machines that is recycled for other uses such as gardening.

Greenbelt – area of undeveloped land around a residential area or community that is used to preserve open space and the natural environment and also help prevent urban sprawl.

Greenprinting – term used by the Trust for Public Land. Greenprinting is a mapping technique used to identify geographic and environmental characteristics such as: already protected lands, endangered species designated habitat, major and minor drainages, flood plain, water features (aquifers, rivers, lakes, creeks, springs, commercial wells), historic areas, land of special community interest, major bird flyways and wildlife migration paths and others. Priorities important to the community can then be identified for protection or preservation, giving guidance during planning for transportation, permitting developments, routing storm waters, or other development activities. Envision Central Texas has started a special fundraising campaign to create a 5-county open space.

Groundwater – water that is below the surface of the ground as an aquifer or underground stream. Wells draw groundwater up for drinking and other uses.

Impervious cover – examples are: artificial structures, construction materials, pavement, which replace naturally pervious ground and cause the soil surface to be sealed, eliminating groundwater infiltration and natural groundwater recharge.

Infrastructure – the large-scale public systems, services, and facilities of a county that arte necessary for economic activity, including power and water supplies, public transportation, telecommunications, roads and schools.

Land Stewardship – the practice of managing land to conserve or enhance suitable landscapes and the ecosystem values of land. Land stewardship includes land and habitat management, wildlife conservation, and watershed protection with such practices as runoff reduction, prescribed burning, managed grazing, brush management, erosion management, reseeding with native plant species, riparian management and restoration, and spring and creek-bank protection.

Lower Colorado Region Water Planning Group (LCRWPG) (Region “K”) – created by Texas Water Development Board in 1998, one of 16 regional planning groups developing 50-year water plans. Region K serves 14 counties: Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Colorado, Fayette, Gillespie, Llano, Matagorda, Mills, San Saba, Travis, Wharton and parts of Williamson and Hays. The purpose of the Group is “to provide comprehensive regional water planning and to carry out the related responsibilities placed on regional water groups by state law”. LCRA acts as the group’s administrative agency to manage records and apply for state grants.

Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) - established in 1933, LCRA's Mission is to: Provide reliable, low-cost utility and public services in partnership with our customers and communities and to use our leadership and environmental authority to insure the protection and constructive use of the area's natural resources. LCRA is conservation and reclamation district operating with no taxing authority.

Lost Pines Groundwater Conservation District (LPGCD) - established under Texas Water Code to provide for conservation, reservation, protection, recharging, and prevention of waste of groundwater, thus protecting the water supply for Bastrop and Lee Counties.

Land Trust – a non-profit corporation that preserves natural areas and conservation resources by holding land in trust with prohibitions against development. An example is the Pines and Prairies Land Trust.

Mitigation – alleviation or relief from anything painful, harsh, calamitous, such as mitigating your rural property to prevent damage from wildfires by trimming trees, doing native landscaping and removing fuel hazards.

Municipal Utility District (MUD) – a voter-approved entity with taxing authority and authorized by the TCEQ to provide water, sewer, drainage and other services within its boundaries. A publicly elected Board of Directors administers MUDs.

Opportunity Bastrop County (OBC) – a planning process initiated by the Bastrop County Commissioners Court. The Vision developed through the process is intended to guide future growth in Bastrop County.

Pines and Prairies Land Trust (PPLT) - a local non-profit land trust whose mission is: To protect significant open space, and natural historic, and cultural resources, and to preserve the quality of life for current and future generations through educational programs and through owning and protecting easements and land. The PPLT service area is Bastrop, Caldwell, Fayette and Lee County. The board is made up of volunteers from the four counties.

Rainwater Collection – generally, a system designed to capture rainwater from the roofs of buildings. The water is then transported through gutters and other pipes into cisterns or tanks, where it is stored until needed. The water collected can be used for irrigation, laundry, hygiene, or even potable water, depending upon the materials used and the treatment undertaken by the homeowner.

Regional Mobility Authority (RMA) – an organization authorized under the Texas Transportation code and operates under rules adopted by TxDOT. An example is the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority, created to improve the transportation system in Travis and Williamson counties, using “multi-modal transportation solutions that reduce congestion and create transportation choices.”

Riparian – refers to the bank area on either side of a natural course of water.

Surface water – water above the surface of the ground, such as a lake or river.

Sustainability – capability of building environmentally balanced land-use systems that can be maintained at an effective level indefinitely; using resources so that they are not depleted.

Sustainable society – one that can be sustained indefinitely by its environment, does not use up essential parts of its environment that cannot be regenerated.

Sustainable development – development that attempts to cause the least possible permanent harm on the environment and resource base.

Texas Commission for Environmental Quality (TCEQ) - the environmental agency for the State. Its mission is “to protect our state’s human and natural resources consistent with sustainable economic development.” Its goal is “clean air, clean water, and safe management of waste.”

Texas YES! – an initiative from the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) designed to promote the growth and prosperity of rural Texas towns, cities and counties. It is a broad-based membership program similar to TDA's **GO TEXAN** marketing campaign. It is a program to educate the public about all that rural Texas has to offer and encouraging rural communities to share and promote successful ideas.

Trust for Public Land (TPL) - a national land trust with offices in Austin. The mission of TPL is: The Trust for Public Land conserves land for people to enjoy as parks, gardens and other natural places, ensuring livable communities for generations to come.

Acronyms

ABRCP – Austin-Bastrop River Corridor Partnership
CAC – Citizens’ Advisory Committee
CAMPO – Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
CAPCOG – Capital Area Planning Council of Governments-State Planning Region 12
CART – Capital Area Rural Transit Services
DART – Dallas Area Rapid Transit
ECT – Envision Central Texas
ESD – Emergency Service District
LCRA – Lower Colorado River Authority
LCRWPG – Lower Colorado Region Water Planning Group (“Region “K”)
LPGCD – Lost Pines Groundwater Conservation District
MUD – Municipal Utility District
OBC – Opportunity Bastrop County
PPLT – Pines and Prairies Land Trust
Region K – Lower Colorado Region Water Planning Group
TCEQ – Texas Commission for Environmental Quality
TPL – Trust for Public Land