
Hays County
Strategic Policy and
Implementation Plan
2010



OFFICE OF THE HAYS COUNTY JUDGE



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Dear Citizens, Elected and Appointed Officials,

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the first Hays County Strategic Policy and Implementation Plan spearheaded by Hays County citizens and the County Judge's Office. This plan passed unanimously by Commissioners Court on July 6, 2010 for implementation and partnerships. It could not have been done without input from you – our citizenship – and all our partners.

Our partners Chris Holtkamp, AICP and Heather Richardson with Community and Economic Development, LCRA; Tessa Doehrmann with Pedernales Electric, and representatives from Bluebonnet Electric and Texas State University – all were crucial to the success of this plan. Their expertise and guidance throughout the process were invaluable and I cannot thank them enough. LCRA provided expert planning staff members at no cost to the county and its taxpayers, saving us literally thousands of dollars. Thank you.

Two Hays County citizen committees worked very hard to bring this plan to fruition. The first citizen committee studied the need for a county-wide strategic policy plan and presented a report entitled *Hays County Connections 2035* to Commissioners Court. This county will be forever grateful to the Hon. Marilee Wood, chairwoman; the Hon. Steve Klepfer; Jeff Kaufmann; Michael McGown; and Dr. Sally Caldwell, advisor to the committee, for all of their hard work and for kick-starting the process.

The second citizen committee worked on the survey, conducted public meetings and assisted in the writing of the plan. The committee included David Glenn, Whit Hanks, Susan Meckel, Dianne Wassenich, Lisa Wright and Laureen Chernow. For 16 months they kept the plan on track, gathered data, and attended public meetings. Their commitment to the citizen process was what made this plan pertinent to the concerns of the citizens. It will be what makes this plan ultimately successful in meeting the future needs and desires of citizens during the implementation phase.

The future of our county depends on all of us working together toward these common goals. It is incumbent upon us, as citizens, to make sure our elected officials implement the plan successfully. We can assist in the process by spearheading one of the objectives, or volunteering for one of the committees, or periodically asking Commissioners Court for a progress report. As long as we remain committed to our future we will succeed.

Thank you for your past and future work toward making Hays County the best possible place to live, work and play.



Elizabeth 'Liz' Sumter
Hays County Judge

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HISTORY and GEOGRAPHY¹

Hays County is located just south of Austin, the state capitol. There has been human settlement in the area for thousands of years, drawn to the springs in the area. Permanent European settlements started in 1807, when the first settlers came to the San Marcos River. Land grants brought additional settlers, and the first Anglo-American was Thomas G. McGhee. Hays County, officially created on March 1, 1848, and named after John Coffee "Jack" Hays, a famous Texas Ranger. Growth came to the county, especially with the completion of the railroad in the late 1800s. The population stayed nearly unchanged around 15,000 from 1900 into the middle of the 20th century, with a predominantly agricultural economy. Starting in 1960, the population of the county began a steady growth, which exploded in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Environment

Hays County is on the border of two river basins - the Colorado and the Guadalupe. As mentioned, the area has abundant springs, including San Marcos Springs, fed by the Edwards Aquifer and the second largest in the state, and the Trinity Aquifer which feeds Jacobs Well. These springs, and local rivers, are also home to many unique species found only in this area. The Edwards and Trinity Aquifers underlie much of the county and are a major source of drinking water for the region.

The Balcones Escarpment divides the county into two distinct geographical areas: the Texas Hill Country to the northwest, and the Blackland Prairie to the southeast. The mean annual rainfall is 33.75 inches. Average maximum temperature is 96 degrees in July, and the average minimum is 40 degrees in January.

Economy

The economy has changed from its historic basis in agriculture and has diversified over the last 20 years. San Marcos has a strong manufacturing and retail sector, and the retail sector grows with the ever-increasing population. Tourism is also budding with the environmental assets and quaint small towns attracting visitors. Texas State University is a major employer and continues to expand. These assets were instrumental in Hays County's success in weathering the most recent economic downturn, one that proved detrimental to similar communities.

Hays County's proximity to Austin, scenic beauty, lower cost of living, and small town character makes it an attractive destination for newcomers to the region and those wanting to escape the 'big city.' The economy has changed and will continue to change as the county develops its own unique identity rather than simply being an agricultural area or bedroom community to Austin.

¹ Source: Handbook of Texas Online

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

INTRODUCTION

In 2009, Hays County began the development of a Strategic Policy Plan with the goal to create a document that would provide a framework for decision-making for the Commissioners Court. It is intended to be a holistic document that addresses nearly every aspect of County governance and reaches across jurisdictions to enhance coordination between the County, Cities, School Districts, and others. An extensive input process was conducted to ensure opportunities for as much participation from all parts of the county. The goal is to enhance efficiency of service for the citizens of Hays County.

Plan Process

The development process began with an internal assessment of County government. Elected and appointed officials were interviewed to identify their needs and goals over the next several years. This internal assessment was intended to identify existing opportunities and issues for the Commissioners before moving into an open public process. This would reduce the potential for unrealistic expectations by providing a firm foundation of internal needs that must be met to continue providing current services. Identified goals include the need for a new government center, jail improvements, software standardization, satellite office expansions, among others. Across the board, elected and appointed officials were committed to providing excellent service and maximum efficiency to citizens and identified ways to improve service at all levels.

In May 2009 a Leadership Charrette was conducted, bringing together leaders from the Cities, School Districts, Emergency Services Districts, and others to discuss common needs and issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries. Attendees, asked to identify existing and proposed projects in their communities, hoped to impact the rest of the county (such as major transportation projects, etc.) and ways that coordination could be enhanced. This meeting was the first step in building cooperation across the county and will lead to better coordination of activities in the future.

The third step in the input process was a series of focus groups held across the county and with a range of diverse constituencies. These included environmental groups, economic developers, seniors, School District boards, neighborhood groups, developers and land owners, and social service providers. The meetings were intended as a dialogue to gather information rather than a presentation. To facilitate this dialogue a series of questions was asked:

- What are the top issues facing your organization?
- How is your organization responding to growth?
- What new facilities are you planning in the next 3–5 years?
- How can the County assist you with your projects?
- What other issues are facing Hays County?

These meetings were very well attended and a number of common issues were identified including the need for water management, transportation improvements, economic development, and overall growth management.

Finally, an Internet survey was conducted and four open Town Hall meetings were held (one in each Commissioner Precinct) to provide an opportunity for citizens to voice their opinions. These meetings followed a similar format to the focus groups, starting with a demographics presentation then asking a series of questions:

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- Why do you live in Hays County?
- How can those qualities be maintained and enhanced?
- What is the County doing well?
- What challenges do you see facing Hays County?
- What should be done to address those challenges?
- Are you willing to stay involved and active in addressing these challenges?

In addition, there was an exercise in which participants were given “one dollar” to spend on current County activities as well as the opportunity to identify new programs or efforts and how much (if any) additional taxes to fund them.

All of the information gathered from this process has been incorporated into the goals and recommendations identified in this plan. A Steering Committee, appointed by the County Judge, worked with staff from the Lower Colorado River Authority's Community and Economic Development Department to facilitate the input process and develop the plan recommendations.

Plan Recommendations

The plan identifies six broad categories of work. The first is internal projects, which are tied directly to basic County governance, identifies strategies for more efficient work as well as projects that are currently underway or should be undertaken. The other categories were Water and Wastewater, Transportation, Growth Management, Economic Development, and Quality of Life. These are all areas where the County has a direct role to play and can have a tremendous impact on residents. Within each of these categories, a series of Short-, Mid-, and Long-term recommendations were identified that will enable the County to best respond to growth and use limited resources to best serve citizens.

Internal Objectives

Current Activities

- Serve as an information clearinghouse for the County
- Strengthen Internal County Cohesion and Coordination
- Update Voice and data network
- Review of Veterans Affairs
- Jail Improvements / Consider New Jail
- Energy Audit

Short-term (1 – 3 Years)

- Build new government center and consolidate offices
- Inventory and Standardize Software across the County
- Hire an Ombudsman
- Coordinate existing and future County plans (Habitat Conservation Plan, Transportation, Water & Wastewater, Drainage, etc.)
- Coordinate with local plans (City, Watersheds, etc.)
- Centralized Collections and Compliance (Process starting with Courts)
- Centralized Purchasing Process County-wide
- Expand Fleet Services
- Inventory Precinct offices and determine expansion needs

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- Optimize use of Odessey
- Additional District Judge

Mid-term (3 – 5 Years)

- Establish centralized 911 as an independent entity
- Additional County-Court-at-Law

Water and Wastewater

Current Activities

- Water and Wastewater Facility Plan being developed for Western Hays County
- County-wide Drainage Basin / Flood Protection Plan being developed
- Rainwater Harvesting incentives being reviewed and reworked

Short-term (1 – 3 Years)

- Hold a Water Summit with Cities, MUDs, developers, River Authorities, Groundwater Conservation Districts, water conservation and environmental groups, etc.
- Create an annual County Judge's Award for projects that incorporate best water conservation practices (xeriscaping, buffers, conservation, reuse, etc.)
- Support the Edwards Aquifer Authority's efforts to implement impervious cover restrictions
- Increase education and outreach to residents on the importance of water quality and quantity and preservation
- Stay engaged with the Region K and L planning process and ensure the County is appropriately represented
- Establish strong relationship and coordination with existing water suppliers and regulatory bodies
- Explore opportunities for new water supplies in the county
- Participate in the Edwards Aquifer's Recovery Implementation Rules
- Incorporate Watershed Protection plans into Subdivision Rules

Mid-term (3 – 5 Years)

- Work with AgriLife extension and landowners to support Texas Watershed Steward Program, brush management, creekside conservation, and other efforts to protect water quality and quantity
- Continue to purchase sensitive land as financially feasible to protect water quality and quantity and consider incentives for landowners to preserve lands

Long-term

- Utilize Water / Wastewater study as basis for using County authority as Water / Wastewater District

Transportation

Current Activities

- Complete the county Transportation Plan On-going coordination with school districts to ensure adequate facilities

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- Continue participation in Austin-San Antonio Rail project (Lone Star Rail District)

Short-term (1 – 3 Years)

- Ensure strict adherence to County standards to minimize curb cuts along
- Incorporate Water Quality Best Practices into all road projects
- Continue to push for Scenic Road designations
- Consider establishing Park and Ride facilities
- Increase enforcement in high traffic areas

Mid-term (3 – 5 Years)

- Incorporate bike and pedestrian facilities into new and upgraded roads where feasible
- Explore feasibility of Capital Metro service or bus connector to Austin

Long-term (> 5-years)

- Explore the possibility for additional corridors and / or improvements to existing roads across the county to alleviate growing congestion on key roads (RR 12, I-35, US 290, etc.)
- Support development of rail infrastructure and stations to serve commuter rail

Growth Management

Current Activities

- Establish a “One-Stop” Permitting’
- Continue to enforce regulations requiring *Water Availability Studies*
- Adopt and implement the *Habitat Conservation Plan*

Short-term (1 – 3 Years)

- Develop and implement an ETJ Agreements with cities
- Work with cities to focus development in existing urban areas
- Identify ‘Preferred Growth Areas’
- Encourage Cluster and Low-Impact development
- Promote and facilitate the development of pedestrian facilities and increased connectivity in the street network
- Work with TxDOT, developers, and others to focus their mitigation projects where most beneficial

Mid-term (3 – 5 Years)

- Continue working towards authority for the County to regulate land use
- Explore potential for light and noise pollution controls

Long-term (< 5 Years)

- Provide funding for land and development rights acquisition in sensitive areas
- Develop a Transfer of Development Rights program
- Ensure adequate funding to support growth of County personnel and facilities to match growing population
- Leveraging the successful implementation of the *Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)*, develop and implement *Conservation and Development Plan*

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Economic Development

Short-term (1 – 3 Years)

- Build upon and strengthen working relationships with local economic development entities in San Marcos, Kyle, Buda, Dripping Springs, Wimberley, and other emerging locations
- Establish a County-wide Economic Development Policy
- Evaluate development of a County-wide incentive policy to encourage additional business investment in the area.
- Encourage Cities to pursue 'Certified Retirement Community' status
- Coordinate with Chambers of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVB), and any other tourism organizations to promote tourism initiatives through joint marketing efforts, event coordination, and information sharing.

Mid-term (3 – 5 Years)

- Encourage infrastructure development in areas most suitable for economic development
- Work with communities, private property owners, and other key players in Hays County to protect and enhance unique natural features, historic sites, and other irreplaceable physical assets in the county
- Explore efforts to increase access to Community College / Vocational education in county with minimal impacts to taxpayers
- Explore economic development opportunities: recruiting State of Texas offices to Hays County, expand health care opportunities, advanced technology, and clean industry
- Evaluate services and programs to enhance value-added agriculture and promotion of unique natural products
- Develop cycling infrastructure and market Hays County as a cycling destination

Quality of Life

Current Activities

- Continue support for CARTS and explore potential for expanding services
- Continue Support for Non-Profits across the county
- Continue support for EMS Services
- Fund and continue to support the Healthy Communities Coalition

Short-term (1 – 3 Years)

- Support School Districts
- Expand recreation opportunities across the county

Mid-term (3 – 5 Years)

- Provide grant writing support to local non-profits and others
- Explore Healthcare District
- Increased Access to Health Care
- Update Hays County Strategic Plan

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DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Introduction

Hays County has seen explosive growth in the last 20 years. The population has more than doubled, and some cities within the county have grown even faster. Proximity to Austin, scenic beauty, lower cost of living, and quality of life are what attract new residents. Many work in Austin; however, there has been growth in local employment opportunities as well. It is important in any planning exercise to have a firm understanding of the population the plan serves. This Demographic Analysis provides an overview of Hays County and the people who live here.

Current and Projected Population

As this table indicates, the population has more than doubled in the last 20 years, and this growth is expected to continue. Incorporated cities have seen significant growth, particularly Kyle; however, approximately half of all new residents are in the unincorporated areas of Hays County, where there is limited authority to regulate growth. Cities and the County are struggling to manage this growth as demand for services, traffic, etc. surge. This plan is an effort to effectively address these key issues moving forward. Population estimates and projections are a challenge and open to dispute. The Texas Water Development Board also provides estimates and projections; however, they do not have them for every city in the county. These estimates are in the second table below. The estimates and projections are significantly different; it will be up to community leaders and planners to compare the numbers here with their own information (such as utility connections, etc.) to determine appropriate numbers for specific planning projects.

Population Estimates and Projections

| | 1990 | 2000 | 2009 (est.) | % Change 1990 - 2009 | 2014 (Proj.) |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Hays County | 65,614 | 97,589 | 149,264 | 127% | 182,620 |
| Bear Creek | 232 | 360 | 501 | 116% | 619 |
| Buda | 1,481 | 2,404 | 3,298 | 123% | 3,980 |
| Dripping Springs | 818 | 1,548 | 1,770 | 116% | 2,114 |
| Hays | 145 | 233 | 268 | 85% | 329 |
| Kyle | 3,265 | 5,314 | 16,664 | 410% | 22,645 |
| Mountain City | 392 | 671 | 790 | 144% | 1,030 |
| Niederwald | 324 | 594 | 1,310 | 304% | 1,659 |
| San Marcos | 28,832 | 34,733 | 43,182 | 50% | 49,023 |
| Umland | 142 | 386 | 685 | 382% | 896 |
| Wimberley | 2,343 | 3,797 | 4,846 | 107% | 5,796 |
| Woodcreek | 864 | 1,274 | 1,382 | 60% | 1,549 |

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

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| | 2010 (est) | 2020 (proj) |
|------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Buda | 9,338 | 13,971 |
| Dripping Springs (WSC) | 5,325 | 9,308 |
| Kyle | 21,457 | 31,126 |
| Mountain City | 1,019 | 1,187 |
| Niederwald | 1,021 | 1,530 |
| San Marcos | 48,814 | 69,906 |
| Wimberley (WSC) | | |
| Woodcreek | 1,730 | 2,252 |

Source: Texas Water Development Board 2011 Regional Water Plan
 *Not all Cities included in the TWDB projections

As part of the *Habitat Conservation Plan*, a projection for the year 2040 was done. This shows the population of Hays County growing to 375,873, another doubling from today's population. This fits within the expectations of the Austin metropolitan region also doubling its population in that same time frame.

The recent economic slowdown has given some breathing room to Cities and School Districts most impacted by this growth. This window of opportunity can allow the community to lay the groundwork to more effectively manage future growth.

Population Characteristics

The population of Hays County is changing, along with the rest of the State of Texas. The growing Hispanic population affects the needs and priorities of the community. The Hispanic population was also underrepresented in the public input process, so it will be important to ensure their concerns are heard and addressed moving forward. In the Census, Hispanic is considered an ethnicity not a race, so the totals do not add up to 100%.

Race and Ethnicity

| | 2000 | 2009 | % Change |
|------------------|-------|-------|----------|
| White Alone | 78.9% | 74.0% | (-4.9%) |
| Black Alone | 3.7% | 4.2% | 0.5% |
| American Indian | 0.7% | 0.7% | 0.0% |
| Asian | 0.8% | 1.0% | 0.2% |
| Pacific Islander | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| Other | 13.4% | 17.0% | 3.6% |
| Two or More | 2.5% | 3.0% | 0.5% |
| Hispanic | 29.6% | 37.5% | 7.9% |

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

The age of the population also affects the expectations for service and facilities within the county. An aging population places increased demand on public safety resources, medical services, and transportation. While the percentage of young people and those in the 35–44 year cohort is declining, the overall growth of the population means total numbers continue to rise. The continued rise in percentage of older residents reflects the desirability of Hays County as a retirement community, and the growth in medical services in the county complements that.

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Population by Age 2000 - 2009

| | 2000 | 2009 | % of Pop. Change |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| 0 – 4 | 6.3% | 6.7% | 0.4% |
| 5 – 9 | 6.5% | 6.3% | (-0.2%) |
| 10 – 14 | 7.1% | 6.3% | (-0.8%) |
| 15 – 19 | 10.1% | 8.6% | (-1.5%) |
| 20 – 24 | 15.0% | 13.5% | (-1.5%) |
| 25 – 34 | 13.3% | 14.3% | 1.0% |
| 35 – 44 | 15.0% | 12.5% | (-2.5%) |
| 45 – 54 | 12.4% | 13.6% | 1.2% |
| 55 – 64 | 6.6% | 9.8% | 3.2% |
| 65 – 74 | 4.2% | 4.7% | 0.5% |
| 75 – 84 | 2.5% | 2.6% | 0.1% |
| 85+ | 0.9% | 1.1% | 0.2% |
| Median Age | 28.5 | 30.6 | 2.1 |

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Income and Employment

Hays County has seen a steady growth in family income in the last several years. The economic downturn has had an effect on the county, but not at the same level as other parts of the country. The proximity to Austin and a relatively diversified economy have somewhat insulated Hays County.

Median Household Income

| | County 2000 | County 2009 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <\$15,000 | 16.1% | 12.3% |
| \$15,000 - \$24,999 | 11.2% | 8.5% |
| \$25,000 - \$34,999 | 11.8% | 7.9% |
| \$35,000 - \$49,999 | 16.2% | 14.0% |
| \$50,000 - \$74,999 | 19.9% | 21.2% |
| \$75,000 - \$99,999 | 11.9% | 14.0% |
| \$100,000 - \$149,999 | 8.7% | 14.6% |
| \$150,000 - \$199,999 | 2.3% | 4.0% |
| \$200,000+ | 1.8% | 3.5% |
| Median Household Income | \$45,006 | \$59,184 |

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

As mentioned, Hays County has a fairly diversified economy. San Marcos has a strong manufacturing sector, Texas State University, as well as a huge retail base with the outlet malls. Other communities are seeing their retail sector grow with the population growth. Medical facilities are also expanding. This diversity provides a significant opportunity for residents to work within the County. Many still commute to Austin and this is likely to continue. New roads and the planned rail will help to ensure a strong connection to Austin for those residents who commute.

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Occupation

| | County % of Total |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Total Employees | 66,380 |
| White Collar | 63.2% |
| Management / Financial | 14.1% |
| Professional | 23.3% |
| Sales | 11.5% |
| Administrative Support | 14.3% |
| Services | 17.7% |
| Blue Collar | 19.1% |
| Farming/ Forestry / Fishing | 0.3% |
| Construction / Extraction | 7.2% |
| Installation / Maintenance / Repair | 3.1% |
| Production | 4.8% |
| Transportation | 3.7% |

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

The recommendations in this plan will support the efforts of local economic developers to attract and retain quality businesses to Hays County. A strong economy is critical to a community's success by providing tax revenues for local jurisdictions and options for residents to work close to home.

Housing

The explosive population growth in Hays County has led to major growth in housing. The vast majority has been single-family homes, although there has been some multi-family built along the I-35 corridor. This growth has strained roads, water systems, etc. as communities struggle to manage the influx. One benefit to this growth is that Hays County continues to have a diversity of housing at varying price points for residents to have options.

Housing Occupancy 2009

| | # of Units | % of Units |
|----------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Total Housing Units | 55,319 | 100% |
| Occupied | 50,862 | 91.9% |
| Owner | 32,554 | 58.8% |
| Renter | 18,308 | 33.1% |
| Vacant | 4,457 | 8.1% |

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

As this indicates, approximately 8 percent of the homes in Hays County are vacant. Some of these may be vacation or seasonal homes; however, these represent a challenge for the community. Vacant homes can become magnets for crime, vandalism, etc., and should be monitored to ensure they are not havens for bad behavior.

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Home Values 2009

| | # of Units | % of Units |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|
| < \$10,000 | 319 | 1.0% |
| \$10,000 - \$14,999 | 162 | 0.5% |
| \$15,000 - \$19,999 | 255 | 0.8% |
| \$20,000 - \$24,999 | 288 | 0.9% |
| \$25,000 - \$29,999 | 352 | 1.1% |
| \$30,000 - \$34,999 | 309 | 0.9% |
| \$35,000 - \$39,999 | 292 | 0.9% |
| \$40,000 - \$49,999 | 822 | 2.5% |
| \$50,000 - \$59,999 | 1,138 | 3.5% |
| \$60,000 - \$69,999 | 843 | 2.6% |
| \$70,000 - \$79,999 | 787 | 2.4% |
| \$80,000 - \$89,999 | 935 | 2.9% |
| \$90,000 - \$99,999 | 925 | 2.8% |
| \$100,000 - \$124,999 | 2,754 | 8.5% |
| \$125,000 - \$149,999 | 3,071 | 9.4% |
| \$150,000 - \$174,999 | 3,058 | 9.4% |
| \$175,000 - \$199,999 | 2,068 | 6.4% |
| \$200,000 - \$249,999 | 4,256 | 13.1% |
| \$250,000 - \$299,999 | 3,073 | 9.4% |
| \$300,000 - \$399,999 | 3,211 | 9.9% |
| \$400,00 - \$499,999 | 1,470 | 4.5% |
| \$500,000 - \$749,999 | 1,260 | 3.9% |
| \$750,000 - \$999,999 | 401 | 1.2% |
| > \$1,000,000 | 505 | 1.6% |

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Median Home Price 2009

| | Median Value |
|------------------|--------------|
| Hays County | \$174,730 |
| Bear Creek | \$342,222 |
| Buda | \$160,590 |
| Dripping Springs | \$275,987 |
| Hays | \$248,000 |
| Kyle | \$146,222 |
| Mountain City | \$234,722 |
| Niederwald | \$76,154 |
| San Marcos | \$122,786 |
| Uhland | \$145,833 |
| Wimberley | \$226,737 |
| Woodcreek | \$212,083 |

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

As these tables indicate, there is reasonable diversity of housing costs across Hays County. A prospective buyer should be able to find an appropriate and affordable home. This is not to say every part of the county has this diversity. In fact, many parts of the county have a major challenge with housing affordability. The table above shows the median home price in each incorporated city, showing the affordability issue that exists in some of them. Housing

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affordability was not a priority identified in the planning process. Residents show some level of concern with the rise in home prices; however, the economic downturn has moderated this increase to some degree. New policies to manage growth may also have an impact on housing availability and affordability if they are too strict or unreasonable. This plan is an attempt to balance the needs of managing growth while protecting affordability for new and existing residents.

Conclusion

As this chapter indicates, Hays County is a rapidly growing and changing community. Explosive population growth is affecting the roads, environment, and character of the county. Hays County is no longer a rural, agricultural community. It is transitioning into a suburban county while trying to maintain its rural character. Population growth will continue because of the desirability of the county, its proximity to Austin, and the availability of land. County leaders will have to monitor and manage this growth to ensure water quality and quantity, environmental features, and quality of life are protected over time.

INTERNAL OBJECTS

Introduction

The projects identified as 'internal' are those most closely related to the core functions of County government as an organization. They are meant to help the organization enhance its efficiency and effectiveness in serving the citizens of Hays County. These recommendations are primarily based on the interview process with elected and appointed officials and the Leadership Charrette. These recommendations can be driven by the Commissioners Court; however, due to the unique nature of County government and the autonomy of its elected officials, it will require the support of those individuals as well to be successful. This plan is based on the input of these officials, not driven by the Commissioners Court, which should encourage participation from all levels of County government.

Current Activities

Hays County has been very active in a variety of projects to move the County forward. This plan is intended to be an overarching plan to coordinate these on-going and newly identified efforts.

Serve as an Information Clearinghouse for the County

Part of coordinating efforts involves creating a shared network of information. The County should work with cities and other jurisdictions to create a centralized, web-based information network to share data both internally and with citizens. This can include major infrastructure projects, important dates (Council and Court meetings, etc.), key contact information, as well as updates on other projects and activities across the county.

Another aspect of this is to establish solid, working relationships between County staff and others. Informal workshops and discussion sessions at staff level should be conducted to encourage networking and relationships to develop. Too often, local jurisdictions see each other as competition rather than partners, which results in minimal cooperation. These informal meetings should lead to more formal leaders meetings, possibly 2 or 3 times a year that would allow elected officials and other leaders to come together and discuss common issues and projects. Residents often do not understand the distinction between City and County government; they simply want effective, efficient service. The stronger the links between City, County, School Districts, and others, the more effective each can be.

Strengthen Internal County Cohesion and Coordination

During the internal assessment, one identified concern was the need to strengthen relationships among departments and elected officials internally. Because of the unique structure of County government, each elected official operates fairly independently, with the Commissioners Court having overall responsibility but somewhat limited ability to influence. The Court should consider an annual planning retreat where all elected and appointed officials come together to prepare for the year ahead. This could lead to collaboration across departments and reduce the competition that occurs at budget time. If leaders could work together to identify priorities and needs, it would result in more effective budgeting. It could also lead to cost savings and efficiencies as common needs and purchases are better coordinated. This should be a high priority for County action to better serve the citizens of Hays County.

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Update Voice and Data Network

The County is currently installing a countywide network and centralized telephone system (VoIP), which will result in considerable savings and a stronger connection between offices. With the tremendous need for information, this is a key project that should be moved along as quickly as possible.

Review of Veterans Affairs

The County Veterans Affairs program provides a critical service to veterans and is experiencing growth in demand for those services. The program has been an example of minimalism, with only one full-time staff member.

Jail Improvements / Consider New Jail

Spending money on the County Jail is typically not a politically attractive activity because taxpayers have little interest in this. However, the State has found serious issues with the County jail that need to be addressed in short order. Commissioners Court will have to include money in the next budget for significant upgrades, improvements, and an increase in maintenance funding to the jail. These improvements may be sufficient to continue using the jail for the foreseeable future ; however, it may be time to consider an alternative.

Burnet County recently opened a new jail at minimal cost to taxpayers. The County partnered with a private firm to build and operate the jail, with the County paying a fee to house prisoners. The jail will also contract with other Counties, the Federal government, and others to house additional prisoners at the facility. This project has provided the County with a new state of the art facility, as well as taken the cost and liability of managing the jail off the County. This can serve as an example of what may be possible in Hays County and should be fully explored by Commissioners Court as an example to solve the jail dilemma. If the decision is to replace the jail, this is one option; however, the Commissioners Court will have to make the decision that works best for Hays County and not rely solely on what works in another county.

Energy Audit

The County recently received a grant for an Energy Audit of all County facilities. This grant will allow the County to do a thorough assessment of its energy use and identify strategies for conservation. This will result in lower utility bills for the County, saving the taxpayers money. This also supports the environmental goals of the County by reducing energy demand. Although the grant will provide some funding for implementation, the Commissioners Court should plan to include additional money in the next fiscal year budget to implement recommendations from the Audit.

Short-term Projects (1 – 3 Years)

Short-term projects are those that demand immediate attention. In some cases, they have already been funded and planned for (government center, Energy Audit). Others are required due to regulatory issues (i.e., jail improvements). These projects will require Commissioners Court to consider them in the next budget cycle and should be considered of high importance.

Build new Government Center and Consolidate Offices

The County has planned and budgeted for a new Government Center that would allow many departments to consolidate into one location. This would be a tremendous benefit to the County because it currently rents or owns many buildings, including several in downtown San Marcos.

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Consolidation would allow for greater coordination between departments, as well as reduce costs for maintenance, security, utilities, etc. It would also be a major morale booster, particularly for those employees in the current Justice Center which was originally intended to be a temporary replacement for the permanent Justice Center.

The building would also benefit the citizens of Hays County by providing many services at one location rather than having to go to many locations. San Marcos would also benefit because many of the buildings currently occupied by County offices could be redeveloped into commercial businesses that will bring in tax revenue and increased visitors into downtown. This project has been discussed and planned for many years and should be implemented as soon as possible.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Finalize Building Plans and Budget 100% CDs | 3 Months | July – September 2010 | Commissioners Court |
| Oversee Construction | 2 Years | July 2010 – July 2012 | Commissioners Court |
| Move to new Offices | 1 Year | December 2011 – January 2012 | Commissioners Court, County staff |

Possible Partners?

Elected and Appointed Officials who will move to new building

How will you measure success?

Substantial completion date by December 2011

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Currently budgeted bond money

Inventory and Standardize Software Across the County

This is a key recommendation that should be implemented immediately. One elected official said when he first started the three computers in his office each had a different version of Microsoft, meaning they could not even connect with each other. This is unacceptable in today's world and should be remedied. The most efficient fix would be to purchase an enterprise license of Microsoft that would cover every computer at the County. This would be a large initial expense (well over \$100,000); however, it would result in cost and frustration savings for employees and better service to citizens. The IT department would also have an easier time with maintenance because systems would be standardized. A rotational system could be established to replace aging computers regularly across the County to ensure all users have adequate equipment. While it is a difficult thing to include the initial cost in an annual budget, the on-going savings will make this investment worthwhile very quickly.

Odyssey is another software tool that has the potential to bring benefits and efficiencies to the Court system; however, it has not been universally adopted and its full benefit realized. Commissioners Court should make efforts to provide adequate funding for training to all potential Odyssey users and strongly encourage its adoption across the board. Again, the increased efficiency will benefit the County and citizens in the long run.

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The Appraisal District is an independent agency that is funded by the different jurisdictions within the County. Currently, the District is not using Geographic Information System software to manage its parcel inventory. The County and other jurisdictions should strongly encourage them to adopt GIS software to be compatible with other users and make their data more accessible to their customer jurisdictions.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|---------------------------|--|
| Utilize IT staff to identify all software being used on County computers | 3 Months | January – March 2011 | IT |
| Determine a common platform for all computers (Windows 7 for example) | 3 Months | July – June 2011 | Commissioners Court, Elected and Appointed Officials |
| Adopt Countywide policy on software and hardware standards | 3 Months | June – August 2011 | IT, Commissioners Court |
| Budget for Enterprise License for Windows | 3 Months | June – August 2011 | Commissioners Court |
| Purchase License and Install County-wide | 6 Months | October 2011 – March 2012 | Commissioners Court, IT |

Possible Partners?

IT Consultant, Elected and Appointed Officials affected by change

How will you measure success?

Enterprise license in place by March 2012

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

~\$150,000 for Enterprise License

Staff Time

General Funds

Hire an Ombudsman

Because the County provides such a broad range of services and in so many different locations, it can be difficult for residents to know where to start or where to go with issues and complaints. The role of the Ombudsman is to be that one point of contact where people can get started or where concerns can be addressed. This person could then take issues to the appropriate departments and work with County staff to address concerns and challenges identified by residents. The Ombudsman could also serve an internal role, providing employees with a place to go with issues.

It is challenging in times of tight resources to consider adding staff; however, this position would result in better service to residents and County employees. It would also reduce the burden on current staff who often have to respond to calls and spend time tracking down the right person. The Court should consider funding this position as resources allow to continue providing optimal service to residents and staff.

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Determine clear role and responsibilities for the position | 3 Months | February - April 2011 | Commissioners Court, HR Officials |
| Determine if it can be an added responsibility for existing staff or if new staff is needed | 1 Month | May 2011 | Commissioners Court, HR Officials |
| If financially feasible, add position into FY 2012 budget | 1 Month | June 2011 | Commissioners Court |
| Hire Person and publicize to staff and citizens | On-going | October 2011 | Commissioners Court |

Possible Partners?

County staff and officials

How will you measure success?

Ombudsman position filled by October 2011 (either with new staff or responsibilities assigned to existing staff)

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Salary and Benefits
General Funds

Coordinate Existing and Future Plans

The County recently completed a *Habitat Conservation Plan*, which focuses on protecting endangered species habitat, as well as a "Greenprint" of the county, which identifies those areas most suitable for development and conservation based on local values and priorities. A transportation plan is being developed internally, a water and wastewater plan will be completed soon, and a drainage plan has also been grant funded and will begin in the western half of the county. All of these plans will have implications on development and growth and to be effective will require a high level of coordination. The County has hired a Planner who is tasked with this effort and is leading the development of the transportation plan. This shows a commitment by County leaders to ensure Hays County is not just developing plans that will sit on a shelf, but will actively implement those plans to manage growth and change.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Identify all relevant existing County plans and Review | 3 Months | July – September 2010 | County Planner |
| Develop Plan Implementation Guide that will ensure that all Plans are referenced in a centralized document. | 3 months | July – September 2010 | County Planner |
| Stay involved with future planning efforts to ensure they reflect existing issues opportunities | On-going | On-going | County Planner |

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Possible Partners?

County staff and officials

How will you measure success?

Plans are coordinated and an implementation guide is developed

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time

General Funds

Coordinate with Local Plans

Several of the cities in Hays County have, or are developing, Comprehensive Plans. There are also watershed protection plans and other plans that have been created for specific areas and projects. Incorporating these into a larger action plan will be critical to success. One of the purposes in developing this county-wide plan is to identify on-going local projects where coordination across jurisdictions will be beneficial. For example, if a City is expanding a two-lane road to four lanes, it would be beneficial if the County or adjoining City knew about it so a bottleneck is not created at the City Limits if the road immediately squeezes back down to two lanes. This type of coordination has happened on an ad hoc basis; however, staff has now taken the responsibility to actively monitor this. Oversight should result in more efficiency and better use of tax dollars through coordination of effort and reduced conflicts.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|----------------------------|---|
| Identify all relevant existing County plans and Review | 3 Months | September - November 2010 | County Planner |
| Determine common issues and recommendations | 3 months | September – JNovember 2010 | County Planner |
| Stay involved with future planning efforts so the County stays informed and can coordinate projects | On-going | On-going | County Planner |
| Establish and maintain working relationships with local staff and officials to ensure on-going County / City coordination | On-going | On-going | County Planner, Commissioners Court, City Staff, ESD, ISD Staff |

Possible Partners?

County staff and officials, City staff and officials

How will you measure success?

Plans are fully coordinated

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time

General Fund

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Centralize Collections and Compliance

This is another area that should be centralized; however, due to the fact that each Judge and Court is independently elected, it can be a challenge. Currently, each jurisdiction has its own philosophy and approach to collections and compliance, which creates confusion and challenges for citizens as well as the County trying to oversee it all. There has been an effort made to begin this process, but just as with the 911 dispatch it will require leadership to change habits and get other elected officials to buy into a unified system. A study showing the benefits of a unified system would be helpful to overcome resistance.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|-------------------------|--|
| Create a task force of affected departments to develop ideas and discussion | 3 Months | July – September 2010 | County Commissioners, Courts at Law, other Courts, Treasurer |
| Determine common issues and recommendations | 3 months | October – December 2010 | Task Force |
| Build support and consensus across departments to support the effort | 6 Months | January – April 2011 | Task Force, Commissioners Court |
| Identify staffing and facility needs (new staff vs. existing staff, etc.) | 6 Months | May – July 2011 | Task Force, Commissioners Court |
| Include in FY 2012 Budget to implement | 4 Months | July – September 2011 | Commissioners Court |

Possible Partners?

Elected and Appointed County Officials, particularly Judges, Justices of the Peace, Constables

How will you measure success?

Centralized System in place by end of 2012

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on staffing and equipment
General Funds

Centralize Purchasing Process

Centralized purchasing will bring cost savings and efficiencies to the County because it would provide one point of contact for major investments and spending. It can also be a tool for standardizing software, computers, etc. Another opportunity this presents is to partner with Cities and other jurisdictions on common purchases, such as computers, vehicles, etc. to get better prices. Again, the goal is efficiency and saving tax dollars. This will be a sensitive issue because elected officials appreciate the autonomy of managing their own purchases; however, centralization has its benefits, will save money for the County and ensure compliance with state and county purchasing rules and regulations. Every opportunity to do so should be explored by the Court and leadership shown to overcome resistance.

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|----------------------|--|
| Create a task force of affected departments to develop ideas and discussion | 3 Months | January – March 2011 | County Commissioners, Courts at Law, other Courts, Treasurer |
| Determine common issues and recommendations | 3 months | April – June 2011 | Task Force |
| Build support and consensus across departments to support the effort | 6 Months | June – December 2011 | Task Force, Commissioners Court |
| Identify staffing and facility needs (new staff vs. existing staff, etc.) | 6 Months | January – June 2012 | Task Force, Commissioners Court |
| Include in FY 2013 Budget to implement | 4 Months | July – October 2012 | Commissioners Court |

Possible Partners?

Elected and Appointed County Officials

How will you measure success?

Centralized System in place by end of 2012

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on staffing and equipment

General Funds

Expand Fleet Services

Currently, many County vehicles are serviced at commercial shops rather than at the central fleet services. This is due in part to a lack of resources to do all the work and the convenience for vehicles located at satellite offices. This is a cost to the County that would be better invested in improvements and expansion to the centralized fleet service. This will be a cultural shift (as many of these projects are) to change employees' behavior. Commissioners Court will have to talk up the benefits, and the fleet services staff will have to prove the efficiency and benefits of having centralized service. Again, this will take time and investment to make successful, and the Court will have to decide if the upfront money is worth the cost savings and efficiency over time.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|---------------------|--|
| Work with Maintenance Staff to Establish Needs and Priorities | 6 Months | January – June 2011 | County Commissioners, Fleet Maintenance, Sheriff |
| Determine if cities, ESDs or ISDs can partner for joint services | 6 Months | January – June 2011 | County, Cities, ESDs, ISDs |
| Determine Needed Facilities and Budget | 3 months | June – August 2011 | County Commissioners, Fleet Maintenance, Sheriff |
| Incorporate in FY 2012 Budget for needed improvements (if feasible, improvements may take several years) | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court |

Internal Objects

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Possible Partners?

Cities, School Districts, ESDs

How will you measure success?

Facilities expanded to serve all county vehicles by end of 2014

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on staffing and equipment
General Funds

Inventory Precinct Offices and Determine Expansion Needs

Many interview participants identified the need for space in the precinct offices as an issue. As population has grown, staff has been added; however, space has often not. A couple of the precinct offices are at capacity and will require expansion in the next few years. There may be options to grow at existing locations, but in some cases new facilities may be required. The Court should work closely with Commissioners and staff to identify a prioritized list of needs and budget accordingly. It can be a challenge to justify spending taxpayer dollars on offices; however, it is necessary to provide services to them and as an aspect of staff morale and keeping quality employees. While the inventory and prioritization should be done fairly soon, it will likely be longer term before major expansion can be done at these sites.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Get staffing needs from department heads and elected officials | 3 Months | January – March 2013 | Commissioners Court |
| Determine priorities for necessary expansions | 3 months | April – June 2013 | Commissioners Court, Department Heads |
| Develop Facilities Plan to Address Needs | 6 Months | June – December 2013 | Commissioners Court |
| Budget as feasible for priority expansions | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court |

Possible Partners?

Elected and Appointed County Officials

How will you measure success?

Facilities Plan in place by December 2013

Approved process in place to ensure adequate office space

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on staffing and facility needs
General Funds, Grants, Bonds

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Optimize Use of Odyssey

The County has adopted Odyssey to help manage processes across County departments. While the program has potential to save time and money, it has not been utilized to its highest potential. County staff recognizes this potential but do not have the training to implement the program to its best use. Training all users will be an initial expense; however, the time and cost savings over time will make this investment worthwhile for the County.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Survey users and determine training needs | 3 Months | July – September 2010 | IT |
| Prioritize issues and strategies to address | 2 Months | October – November 2010 | IT |
| Provide training to all users | 1 Year | 2011 | IT, Training consultant |
| Encourage staff to use to maximize benefit | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, IT |

Possible Partners?

County staff and officials

How will you measure success?

All current staff using Odyssey receive full training
Odyssey use in all appropriate areas by end of 2012

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time
Training Expenses
General Funds

Additional District Judge

Creating an additional Hays County district for a District Judge will require legislative action. With the realized and projected rapid population growth in Hays County, a new court is needed. The new government center is designed with room for new Courts, so that should not be an issue; however, funding for staff, etc. will have to be found when the new Court is created. The creation of an additional Hays County District Court will allow each the Justices to have more specific duties and focus on specific types of cases rather the current "generalist" system.

Because the Legislature meets only biannually, the Court will have to start the process early enough to catch the Legislative session so the process is not delayed for another two years. This should be considered for the 2011 session.

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Identify funding for additional District Judge | 3 Months | July – September 2010 | County Commissioners |
| Develop a Proposal for the Legislature | 3 Months | August – October 2010 | County Commissioners |
| Present the proposal to area elected officials and ask them to sponsor legislation | 3 Months | October – December 2010 | County Commissioners |
| Support legislation in the 2011 Session | 4 Months | January – April 2011 | County Commissioners |

Possible Partners?

County staff, State Legislators

How will you measure success?

Legislation introduced to create new District Judge

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal to develop proposal

Salary, equipment, office space for new Judge

General Funds

Mid-term Projects (3 - 5 Years)

Most of the mid-term projects relate to efforts to reorganize and consolidate some functions of County government and expand facilities to meet growing needs. These may create upfront costs; however, the savings and efficiencies over time make the investment worthwhile. It should also result in better service to the citizens, which should be the goal of County government.

Establish Centralized 911 as an Independent Entity

This effort has begun and should be continued to establish a stand-alone agency to manage County 911 dispatch. The current system is effective; however, it can be more efficient and provide better service as its own entity. This will require leadership from Commissioners Court to overcome potential resistance from the public safety organizations in the county.

Another benefit (and potential partner) is the ability to dispatch school buses from the centralized system. School districts may be willing to participate in this effort to help them better manage their fleet, which would help spread the cost across jurisdictions.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|------------------------------|---|
| Support current efforts that have begun | On-going | On-going | County Commissioners, Sheriff, ESDs, Cities |
| Develop outreach and education to build support for the effort | 1 Year | January 2010 – December 2011 | County Commissioners, Sheriff, ESDs, Cities |

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| | | | |
|--|----------|---------------------------|---|
| Determine facility requirements, staffing, and funding structure | 6 Months | June – December 2011 | County Commissioners, Sheriff, ESDs, Cities |
| Formalize Program, Interlocal agreements, etc. to create agency and incorporate into budgets | 6 Months | January – June 2012 | County Commissioners, Sheriff, ESDs, Cities |
| Open and Operate 911 Dispatch System | 6 Months | October 2012 – March 2013 | New Agency, County Commissioners, Sheriff, ESDs, Cities |

Possible Partners?

County staff and officials, City staff and officials, ESD staff and officials, ISD staff and officials

How will you measure success?

Local jurisdictions buy into the system and show their support by June 2011

Formal Structure, funding in place by June 2012

Agency established and working by March 2013

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on staffing levels, equipment and facilities costs, number of partners involved

General Funds from various agencies, TX Commission on State Emergency Communications, CAPCOG

Additional Court at Law

Creating an additional Court at Law will require legislative action. With the rapid population growth in Hays County, a new court will likely be needed in the next 5 to 10 years. The new government center is designed with room for new Courts, so that should not be an issue; however, funding for staff, etc. will have to be found when the new Court is created. The creation of a new Court would allow Justices to have more specific duties and focus on specific types of cases rather than being generalists as they currently are.

The Commissioners Court should work closely with the County Courts at Law to determine when to start the process for a new Court. Because the Legislature meets only biannually, the Court will have to start the process early enough to catch the Legislative session so the process is not delayed for another two years. This should be considered for the 2013 session.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|-----------------|---------------------------|--|
| Work with current Judges to establish a timeline | 6 Months | January – June 2014 | County Commissioners, Courts at Law Judges |
| Determine funding needs | 6 Months | June – December 2014 | County, Cities, ESD's, ISD's |
| Utilize 2015 Legislative Session to get legislative approval | 4 Months | January – April 2015 | County Commissioners, Legislature |
| Budget for and appoint new Judge and Set up Court Room | 6 Months | October 2015 – March 2016 | Commissioners Court |

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Possible Partners?

State Legislators

How will you measure success?

New Court at Law in place by March 2016

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on staffing and equipment

General Funds

Conclusion

Hays County has seen tremendous growth and now County government has to adjust to accommodate new demands on existing services and expectations of additional services. The internal projects identified in this plan come from interviews with elected and appointed officials and citizens during the public input process. It will require leadership and commitment from the Commissioners Court to accomplish many of these goals because there will have to be money spent and new policies put in place. It will be important to stress the efficiency and cost savings to be gained from implementing these recommendations and making sure officials understand how it will benefit them in the long run. Hays County is taking a proactive approach to its future, planning and preparing for expected growth. The Commissioners Court should continue to be proactive and show the leadership necessary to implement this plan.

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

WATER and WASTEWATER

Introduction

Starting in 2007, central Texas experienced a severe drought. While this has technically ended with recent heavy rains, the need to conserve water and develop new sources remains due to growth pressures and the ever-present potential for another drought. Water resource planning encompasses a range of issues, including water conservation, identifying new sources of water, and land use. A key to water resource planning is developing a coalition between all the players – cities, county, water supply corporations, groundwater conservation districts, river authorities, developers, and citizens.

Current Activities

The County is currently addressing water and wastewater issues in a number of different strategies. The current on-going projects revolve around planning and developing stakeholder groups for implementing water and wastewater programs.

Water and Wastewater Facility Plan being developed for Western Hays County

In 2009, Hays County Commissioners Court began working with the Texas Water Development Board and Hays County water and wastewater service providers to develop a water and wastewater facility plan to address the county's burgeoning growth and diminishing water supplies. The plan is on-going and being conducted by the firm of HDR Engineering.

County-wide Drainage Basin / Flood Protection Plan being developed

The County is working in partnership with Half & Associates to develop a county-wide Drainage Basin/Flood Protection Plan. The plan scope will include defining flooding risk and potential reduction in flood insurance rates, identifying projects to alleviate existing flooding, establishing floor elevations for new construction, identifying where storm water management facilities are required, and encouraging economic development. The study is being implemented and will be ongoing for the next 3 to 6 years.

Rainwater harvesting incentives being reviewed and reworked

Rainwater harvesting is the collection of rainwater off the roof of a building and is touted as an environmental and viable departure from utilizing ground or surface water as a potable water source. Hays County has one of the most progressive rainwater harvesting incentive programs in the country. However, the effectiveness of the incentives is in review and the County is working to strengthen and rework them to promote ubiquitous conservation of water through rainwater harvesting in the county.

Short-term Projects (1 – 3 Years)

Most of the Short-term Projects identified in this plan will not require a significant investment of money from the County. Rather, they are focused on best practices and opportunities to improve water conservation throughout the county.

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Hold a Water Summit with Cities, MUDs, developers, Groundwater Conservation Districts, River Authorities, and water conservation and environmental groups.

There are multiple organizations involved in the regulating water in Hays County, and since no single entity has authority over all aspects of the precious resource, it is important to coordinate efforts as much as possible. The County can facilitate a summit to build and foster relationships between groups that have a specific interest in water in and around Hays County. The purpose of this process is to conduct regular meetings to ensure that all interested organizations are working together towards a common goal, water quality and quantity. This proposed summit can include regular meetings among the various entities to discuss new and on-going projects that impact water. The County's Water and Wastewater Facilities Plan will also provide an opportunity to coordinate efforts as it identifies key issues and recommendations to ensure adequate water availability to a growing population.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|---|---|
| Contact area water and wastewater providers, watershed groups, and others to discuss need for coordination | 1 Month | Upon completion of County water / wastewater plan | County Staff |
| Schedule a workshop to discuss common water and wastewater issues | 3 Months | Upon completion of County water / wastewater plan | County Staff, Water providers, watershed groups |
| Establish on-going working relationships at staff level to coordinate planning and projects | On-going | On-going | County Staff, Water providers, watershed groups |
| Conduct regular workshops with leaders | On-going | On-going | County Staff, Water providers, watershed groups |

Possible Partners?

Watershed Planning Groups, Environmental Groups, Developers, Property Owners, TWDB, TCEQ

How will you measure success?

Workshop held within 4 months of Water and Wastewater Plan being finalized
On-going planning and coordination for water quality and quantity

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff time

Create an annual County Judge's Award for projects that incorporate best water conservation practices (xeriscaping, buffers, conservation, reuse, etc.)

An inexpensive way of promoting water conservation is to provide an award from the County Judge to individuals who implement a "best practice" for water conservation in the county. The incentive to participate would be publicity and friendly competition. An award is also a good way to stimulate grass roots, self-directed participation in water conservation as opposed to through regulations and ordinances.

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|----------------|--------------------|
| Research other community programs for examples | 1 Month | July 2010 | County Judge |
| Determine Criteria and Process for Awards | 1 Month | August 2010 | County Judge |
| Publicize Award | 1 Month | September 2010 | County Judge |
| Award Recognition | 1 Month | October 2010 | County Judge |

Possible Partners?

Chambers of Commerce, Cities, Commissioners, Local Businesses

How will you measure success?

First Project Recognized in October 2010
 Institute annual recognition thereafter

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal

Support the Edwards Aquifer Authority's efforts to implement impervious cover restrictions

In a meeting of the Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA) in January of 2010, the Authority received a draft of the expanded impervious cover rules for the watershed. National studies have shown that surface water quality decreases with as little as 10% impervious cover within a watershed. Since the Edwards Aquifer is dependent on recharge from streams and precipitation, it is imperative that the quality of surface water, including storm water runoff, remain as high as possible. To provide protection for aquifer water quality, the control of impervious cover on the recharge zone should be more stringently regulated.²

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Continue Relationship with EAA | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court |
| Consider a letter of support or other option to legislature indicating County support | 2 Months | July – August 2010 | Commissioners Court |

Possible Partners?

Cities

² Draft Concept Memorandum for Edwards Aquifer Authority Impervious Cover Rules, 2006.
<http://edwardsaquifer.org/pdfs/news/impervious%20cover%20concept%20memo.pdf>

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

How will you measure success?

New Impervious Cover Standards adopted

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal

Increase education and outreach to residents on the importance of water quality and quantity and preservation

Hays County residents garner information regarding water quality and quantity through a number of sources such as the media, non-profits, and local and regional government agencies. As part of the Water Summit mentioned above and any plan developed towards water resource planning, a public education component should be included. A coordinated effort to engage and inform the public is integral to the success of water conservation efforts in the county.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|-----------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Research Programs in other Communities (LCRA and City of Austin's Program, State's Water IQ) | 3 Months | October – December 2010 | Public Affairs Office |
| Determine best options for the program (website, updates in newsletters, insert in water bills, etc.) | 3 Months | January – March 2011 | Public Affairs Office |
| Begin program and spread the word | On-going | On-going | Public Affairs Office |

Possible Partners?

Cities, Water Utilities, Groundwater Districts, Aquifer Authorities

How will you measure success?

Program in place by March 2011

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time

Stay engaged with the Region K and L planning process and ensure the County is appropriately represented

Hays County is one of the few counties in Texas to be in two water planning regions. It will be important for the County to be an active participant in the long range planning efforts of these entities to ensure local needs are adequately met.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| Ensure County staff and elected officials participate in planning efforts when appropriate | On-going | On-going | County Commissioners, County Staff |

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| | | | |
|---|----------|----------|----------------------|
| Work with other Counties in the Regions to ensure good representation of County interests | On-going | On-going | County Commissioners |
|---|----------|----------|----------------------|

Possible Partners?

Other Counties in Regions K & L, Cities, Water Providers

How will you measure success?

County interests included in regional water planning

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal

Establish strong relationship and coordination with existing water suppliers and regulatory bodies

Similar to some of the other short-term goals, establishing relationships with water suppliers and regulatory bodies is a piece of an overall strategy to facilitating stakeholder buy-in and commitment to water quality and conservation goals. Establishing solid lines of communication and trust between all stakeholders is imperative.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|----------|---|
| Conduct regular regional water meetings | On-going | On-going | County Commissioners, Water Utilities, County Staff |
| Ensure County staff is engaged with Water Utilities and State | On-going | On-going | County Commissioners, Water Utilities, County Staff |

Possible Partners?

Texas Water Development Board, River Authorities, Groundwater Districts, Aquifer Authorities

How will you measure success?

On-going communication and relationship established

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal

Explore opportunities for new water supplies in the county

It is unclear if the population growth in the county can be sustained through a reliance on groundwater without serious effects on water quality and quantity. During the drought of the last few years, wells have gone dry, setting off a scramble to dig deeper and look for alternatives. Some alternatives include pumping water in from adjacent aquifers that have more plentiful water or tapping into surface water supplies. A number of planning efforts are looking at this issue, including a water/wastewater facilities planning study currently underway by the County, and the County should remain engaged and work with the many stakeholder towards solutions for the county's water supply issues.

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Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|----------|---|
| Utilize relationships with suppliers to stay involved with their long range planning | On-going | On-going | County Commissioners, Water Utilities, County Staff |

Possible Partners?

Texas Water Development Board, River Authorities, Groundwater Districts, Aquifer Authorities

How will you measure success?

On-going communication and relationship established

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal

Participate in the Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Rules

The Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program is an effort to develop a plan to protect threatened and endangered species within the Edwards Aquifer. The County should be engaged in this process to ensure the concerns of the County are included in the recommendations and to identify how the County can play a role in implementing the plan.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Ensure staff is participating in this effort to support County goals | On-going | On-going | County Commissioners, County Staff |
| Determine proper role for County in participating in the implementation of the rules | 6 Months | On completion of rules development | County Commissioners, County Staff |
| Update or adopt new regulations as needed to implement rules if feasible | 1 Year | On completion of rules development | County Commissioners, County Staff |

Possible Partners?

Edwards Aquifer Authority

How will you measure success?

New rules adopted if feasible (if County authority allows, etc.)

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal

Incorporate Watershed Protection Plans into Subdivision Rules

There are several watershed protection plans being developed within Hays County targeting specific watersheds. These plans outline best practices and recommendations for enhancing the water quality of those water features. The County should support these efforts by incorporating those best practices into the Subdivision Rules when possible. Given the limited

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authority counties have to regulate development, not all recommendations may be possible to incorporate; however, the County should address those that it does have the ability to control.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| Participate in Watershed Planning efforts to represent County interests | On-going | On-going | County Commissioners, County Staff |
| Determine opportunities for updating County regulations to incorporate Watershed Planning recommendations | 6 Months | January – June 2011 | County Commissioners, County Staff |
| Update ordinances to incorporate recommendations if within scope of County authority | 1 Year | June 2011 – June 2012 | County Commissioners, County Staff |

Possible Partners?

Watershed Planning teams

How will you measure success?

Feasibility of new rules determined by June 2011

If feasible, new rules adopted by June 2012

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time

Mid-term Projects (3 - 5 Years)

Some of the mid-term projects will require funding and planning from the County to implement. However, the long-term benefits are substantial, so they should be considered investments rather than simply costs.

Work with AgriLife Extension and landowners to support the Texas Watershed Steward Program, brush management, creek side conservation, and other efforts to protect water quality and quantity

Another stakeholder in water supply management is the AgriLife Extension office. AgriLife has assisted Hays County's water resource planning efforts by conducting the Texas Community Futures Forum (TCFF), a state-wide needs assessment, which identified water conservation, quality, quantity, environment, protection, and development of resources, and holding rainwater harvesting workshops. In addition, AgriLife can be a resource by supporting the efforts stated in this goal: brush management, creek side conservation, and other projects.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Include Watershed Steward Program in County-wide water conservation education and outreach program | On-going | Once that effort is in place | Public Affairs Office |
| Determine if funding is available to support programs such as brush management, etc. | 3 Months | March – April 2011 | County Commissioners, County Staff |

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|--|----------|-----------------|----------------------|
| If funding available include in FY 2012 budget | 3 Months | May – July 2011 | County Commissioners |
|--|----------|-----------------|----------------------|

Possible Partners?

Agri-Life Extension, land owners, Conservation groups

How will you measure success?

Education and outreach included in new conservation effort

If financially feasible, funding for conservation efforts included in FY 2012 Budget

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal for outreach

Dependent on allocation

General Fund

Continue to purchase sensitive land as financially feasible to protect water quality and quantity

As noted in the Growth Management section of this plan, land use has a direct relationship to water quality and quantity. The Growth Management section outlines plans that are underway and strategies for preserving the most sensitive lands that will have the greatest impact towards water protection. The County should also consider partnering with land owners to preserve sensitive land and properties with significant recharge features or riparian corridors. This can be done at a lower cost to the County over purchasing the land. In addition, land trusts and others organizations may have resources to assist with this effort in partnership with the County and landowners, as has been done on several major properties in Hays County.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|----------|------------------------------------|
| Utilize Greenprint and other resources to identify most suitable properties for conservation | On-going | On-going | County Commissioners, County Staff |
| Identify funding for land purchases (existing bond money, etc.) | On-going | On-going | County Commissioners, County Staff |
| Purchase land as financially feasible | On-going | On-going | County Commissioners, County Staff |
| Work with landowners, land trusts, and others to identify other means of land preservation besides just County purchase (deed restrictions, conservation easements, etc.) | On-going | On-going | County Commissioners, County Staff |

Possible Partners?

Landowners, Land Trusts, Developers

How will you measure success?

Key properties for water conservation identified and preserved

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on amount of land to be purchased

Parks and Open Space bonds, Grants, Public-Private partnerships

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Long-term Projects (> 5 Years)

Long-term projects are just that, and will require additional study before implementation occurs. The purpose of including them is to ensure County leadership at least has these in mind and begins laying the groundwork. These projects will require significant investment of resources and will need strong citizen support to be successful. By identifying them now, the Commissioners Court can begin building the foundation for success in these efforts.

Utilize Water / Wastewater study as basis for using County authority as Water and Wastewater District

The Water / Wastewater study will study the feasibility of the County becoming a utility provider. By taking on that role, the County would have greater control over the distribution of water/wastewater infrastructure throughout the county and subsequently have some control on growth.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Determine legality of County pursuing this option | 6 Months | On completion of County wide study | County Attorney, Commissioners Court |
| Determine appropriate action to take to implement plan | 2 Years | On completion of County wide study | County Commissioners, County Staff |

Possible Partners?

Water Utilities, Groundwater Districts, River Authorities, Aquifer Authorities

How will you measure success?

Feasibility of County becoming provider established within 6 months of Water / Wastewater Plan being completed

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on what action is needed

Conclusion

Ensuring an adequate, clean water supply in Hays County is one of the most important issues the County faces. Water supply is the limiting factor for continued economic prosperity and population growth. The County plans to balance economic goals and environmental mission through proactive planning, facilitating stakeholder buy-in to the process of water resource planning, and a mixture of top-down government solutions mixed with grass roots citizen driven solutions.

TRANSPORTATION

Introduction

Transportation improvements were a key issue discussed during the public input process for this plan. County roads are seeing increased traffic as residents use them as alternatives to I-35 and other State roads. New roads, and improvements to existing roads, are needed to ensure adequate access throughout Hays County. Fortunately, the County recognized the need for road improvements and has passed bonds and made agreements with Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to address many of the most critical areas. Rather than waiting for the State to come in and take care of things, the County has been proactive. This will need to continue given the fiscal issues at TxDOT, the State, and Federal government, as well as the need for improvements now rather than down the line.

Current Activities

As mentioned, the County is currently addressing transportation issues on a number of levels. There is active planning happening and the County is coordinating with regional entities such as Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), which is the overarching transportation authority, and the Lone Star Rail group, which is developing commuter rail between Austin and San Antonio.

Complete the County Transportation Plan

County staff is currently developing a Transportation Plan that will identify priorities for road improvements and other facilities. This plan will coordinate with local jurisdictions as well, including cities and school districts, to maximize coordination of projects and activities. This coordination is vital to minimize the potential for bottlenecks where County and City roads connect and to ensure that the roads for new and expanded school facilities are adequate.

This plan will also help the County in its work with CAMPO to ensure that needed projects are identified for inclusion on CAMPO's long range transportation plan. Inclusion is required for projects that will include State or Federal funding. If the County has a clear direction and reasoning for their projects, it will increase the likelihood for funding from other sources besides County taxpayers.

Coordinate with School Districts

Every school district in Hays County has built new facilities in the last few years, and more schools are being built or planned for. In some cases, these new facilities have created major traffic issues. To minimize this for future projects, the County must actively coordinate with School Districts to ensure County roads are adequate for the locating of schools and that needed road improvements are made.

Continue Participation in the Austin to San Antonio Rail Project

Hays County will likely have two rail stops (San Marcos and Kyle / Buda) on the planned commuter rail connecting Austin and San Antonio. This connection will allow residents living in Hays County much easier access to these employment centers without having to fight traffic on I 35 (or on narrow County roads). The stations also represent a huge opportunity for economic development as mixed use centers may develop around them.

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The Rail District is actively working with the Legislature and others to identify funding for the project, with the major obstacle currently being the need to relocate Union Pacific freight rail. This will require major dollars, and the County should continue its active support of the effort to find funding. Once the project is under development, the County may find opportunities to participate in station development and other projects to help the effort. Because of the major benefits the rail connection can bring, the Commissioners Court should consider providing whatever assistance it can at the appropriate times.

Short-term Projects (1 – 3 Years)

Most of the short-term Projects identified in this plan will not require a significant investment of money from the County. Rather, they are focused on best practices and opportunities to improve transportation that do not involve building roads.

Ensure Strict Adherence to County Standards to Minimize Curb Cuts

Curb cuts and intersections are the biggest factor in reducing the capacity of County roads. Often, a road may be wide enough to handle traffic; however, because of curb cuts and cross traffic, major slowdowns are common. The County has good standards to reduce curb cuts and these should be strictly adhered to. Variances should only be given in rare circumstances when there is no other option for the developer. Every effort should be made to reduce curb cuts by funneling parking lots onto adjacent streets where possible, connecting parking lots to each other, and having shared entries, etc. This will help reduce the need for road expansion by minimizing points of conflict along County roads.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Review existing County standards for curb cuts | 3 Months | July – September 2010 | County Staff |
| Update if needed and ensure all projects adhere to standards | On-going | On-going | County Staff |

Possible Partners?

Developers, TxDOT

How will you measure success?

Curb cuts minimized in new development to maintain efficient traffic flow

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal

Incorporate Water Quality Best Practices into all Road Projects

Protecting water quality should be a major priority for the County. Water is a limited resource in the county and demand is only increasing. It is critical for the County to incorporate best practices for water quality protection in all road projects. This means ensuring contractors, as well as Road and Bridge employees, utilize silt fences and other tools as they work on projects. It may also mean carefully studying the routes of new projects to minimize water quality

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impacts. Roads are a key driver of growth and the County can help to influence where growth occurs by directing road building to those areas where water quality is less of an issue (away from the aquifer recharge areas). While incorporating best practices may cost more up front, it will reduce the County's liability for water quality impairment and help to protect the water supply for residents. The County should review its current standards and update them to reflect best practices for future road projects.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| Research Best Practices for Water Quality protection in Construction Projects | 6 Months | June – December 2010 | County Staff |
| Update Construction regulations and practices to incorporate best practices | 6 Months | January – June 2011 | County Commissioners, County Staff |

Possible Partners?

Construction companies, Developers

How will you measure success?

Water Quality best practices incorporated into all County road projects

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on what action is needed

Road project funds

Continue to Push for Scenic Road Designation

Hays County is a beautiful place and residents want to be able to see that natural beauty as they drive on area roads. There is strong support among residents to minimize the number of billboards in the county. Due to the limited authority of counties, this has to be done through the Scenic Road designation. This designation requires Legislative action which the County has been pursuing for some time. This effort should be continued and citizens brought in to help support it. Scenic Texas can be a strong ally in this effort, along with other non-profits and community groups.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|--|---------------------|
| Contact local State Reps and Senators and ask them to carry legislation | 6 Months | June – December 2010 | Commissioners Court |
| Continue to work with legislators during session to encourage passage | 6 Months | January – June 2011 (on-going if not successful in 2011 session) | Commissioners Court |

Possible Partners?

Neighborhood groups, Scenic Texas

How will you measure success?

Scenic Roads bill passed in 2011 Session

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Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal

Consider Establishing Park and Ride Facilities

Informal car pooling is likely very common in Hays County because so many residents work in Austin. In other metropolitan areas, there is an informal system of 'slug' lines where residents meet at a common location (often a large shopping center) and park to car pool with others. It is a completely organic event where participants typically do not know each other, but it works. This might sound like an odd concept, but it is common and very successful where it is happening. The County can help to foster this type of car pooling by identifying suitable locations where people can meet up to car pool and publicizing this as an option. There are a number of spots in Hays County that would be suitable, particularly in the Kyle / Buda area and San Marcos, which is where most of the commuters live.

This is not an attempt by the County to mandate car pooling, rather it is an opportunity to foster cooperative behavior among residents and give them an option to driving alone to Austin every day. It may be the County identifies a location then works with a local business to provide free coffee and donuts to encourage people to participate. This could be done for a week or two to let people know about it and make it a habit to car pool rather than drive alone. The key is to help get cars off the road, and this can be one small part of that larger effort.

Another opportunity is the shuttles run by Texas State University. These may be an appropriate option for some residents who are able to make connections to get from the shuttle drop off in Austin to their destination. The County can help to promote this service through its website and other communication tools.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|-----------------|----------------------|---|
| Determine if an informal car pooling system is feasible | 6 Months | June – December 2010 | Commissioners Court, County Staff, Cities |
| Identify Locations where Car Poolers could meet (large shopping centers, etc.) | 3 Months | January – March 2011 | Commissioners Court, County Staff, Cities |
| Publicize the Opportunity to Park and Ride | On-going | On-going | Public Affairs Office |

Possible Partners?

Cities, Residents

How will you measure success?

If feasible, informal car pooling established

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal

Increase Enforcement in High Traffic Areas

The Sheriff's Department knows where accidents are happening and where enforcement is needed. Residents can also identify areas where speeding and other unsafe driving is an issue.

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These areas should be targeted for a high visibility, high enforcement campaign targeting unsafe driving. If an area is saturated for a week or two, drivers will begin to instinctively slow down and be more careful in that area. These rolling enforcement crackdowns can target the high traffic, high accident areas first (much like enforcement around schools is always high at start of the school year) then move on to lower concern areas. This type of activity can have a significant impact on accident reduction without the investment of new facilities, signage, etc. Schools and community groups can serve as a conduit for information in identifying priority areas to begin this effort.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Identify key areas based on accidents, resident complaints, etc. | 3 Months | July – September 2010 | County Sheriff |
| Direct enforcement to those areas | On-going | On-going | County Sheriff |
| Publicize the Effort | On-going | On-going | Public Affairs Office |

Possible Partners?

Cities, Residents

How will you measure success?

Decrease in accidents and complaints in targeted areas

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal (just redirecting existing staff)

Mid-Term Projects (3 - 5 Years)

The mid-term projects will require funding and planning from the County to implement. However, the long-term benefits are substantial, so they should be considered investments rather than simply costs.

Incorporate Bike and Pedestrian Facilities in New and Upgraded County Roads

Hays County is already a cycling destination, with riders from across the region converging on the rural County roads. This creates a safety issue because many of these roads do not have shoulders and are often narrow and winding. Coming around a bend onto a pack of cyclists is unsafe for both the drivers and the cyclists. This is something that was identified by citizens as a serious issue that should be addressed moving forward.

The first step in this effort should be an identification of major cycling routes in the county. The Austin Cycling Association (<http://www.austincycling.org/>) would be a good place to start as they have a solid knowledge of the cycling community in Austin and plan rides throughout the region. This list can be used when the County does maintenance or upgrades the roads as they can include a wide shoulder at a minimum to allow for cyclists.

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Down the line, off-street facilities may be appropriate as well. This can include purchasing some additional right-of-way initially to incorporate future facilities. The County should also work with developers to incorporate cycling and pedestrian facilities in new development. Often, new developments are designed with only one or two entrances onto a major road so residents are forced to all converge onto one arterial. By incorporating alternatives, residents may be able to ride or walk to destinations rather than driving.

Funding will be an issue if the County is adding facilities. The County has a grant writer who can be used to help find funding to offset some of the costs. There should also be an education component so residents can understand the benefits of incorporating these facilities into projects and their importance on safety, etc. Because of the concern of residents about this issue it should be a priority for the County in the next few years.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|---------------------|--|
| Identify high bicycle usage roads | 6 Months | January – June 2012 | County Staff |
| If feasible (adequate ROW, etc.) include a shoulder on all new County roads and on major rebuilds on existing roads | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, County Staff, Cities |
| Work with Cities to match facilities with City bikeways, shoulders, etc | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, County Staff, Cities |
| Identify opportunities for off-street trails (work with developers and landowners to create connections) | On-going | On-going | County Staff, Cities, Developers, Landowners |

Possible Partners?

Cities, Landowners, Developers

How will you measure success?

New projects incorporate cycling facilities
Subdivisions incorporate cycling and pedestrian amenities

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on Projects
State and Federal grants, Transportation Bonds, Developers

Explore the Feasibility of Capital Metro service to Austin

Capital Metro has a defined service area and receives 1 cent of the sales tax in its jurisdiction. Because most jurisdictions in Hays County do not have 1 cent available, it is unlikely that the service area can be expanded into the county. However, this does not preclude the County, in conjunction with Cities possibly, from contracting with Capital Metro to provide some level of bus connection to Austin. This could be an Express bus that stops in the Kyle / Buda area and San Marcos before going into Austin. This would give residents an alternative to driving themselves. The costs and potential ridership would have to be fully explored to determine if it's financially worthwhile; however, it is worth exploring the possibility. As traffic and gas prices increase, it may become more attractive for residents to find an alternative to driving, and the County should facilitate this.

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Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|--------------------------|--|
| Work with cities to determine feasibility of contracting with Capital Metro (if no support, then stop here) | 6 Months | January –June 2012 | Commissioners Court, Cities, Capital Metro |
| If there is agreement with cities, contact Capital Metro to discuss terms of service (if too expensive, then stop here) | 6 Months | June – December 2012 | Commissioners Court, Cities, Capital Metro |
| Develop necessary agreements with cities, Capital Metro on routes, payments, etc. | 9 Months | January – September 2013 | Commissioners Court, Cities, Capital Metro |
| Include funding in FY 2014 budgets and begin service | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, Cities, Capital Metro |

Possible Partners?

Capital Metro, Cities

How will you measure success?

Determination of feasibility by December 2012
If feasible then service begins October 2013

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on Agreement with Capital Metro
City and County general funds

Long-term Projects (> 5 Years)

Long-term projects are just that, and will require additional study before implementation occurs. The purpose of including them is to ensure County leadership at least has these in mind and begins laying the groundwork. These projects will require significant investment of resources and will need strong citizen support to be successful. By identifying them now, the Commissioners Court can begin building the foundation for success in these efforts.

Explore the possibility for additional corridors and / or improvements to existing roads across the county to alleviate growing congestion on key roads

There are limited roads that truly serve cross-county traffic. I-35 is the main north-south corridor. US 290 is a major east-west corridor, but is in the northern part of the county. Geography limits the potential for additional east-west connections; however, these are becoming more critical. In addition, roads like 1626 and others are seeing significantly more traffic than they were designed for because they have become alternatives to I-35. The completion of SH 130 will likely encourage growth in eastern Hays County and the need for roads connecting to this major thoroughfare. Expanding roads will be a key need 5 and 10 years down the road as the population continues to grow.

The *County Transportation Plan* will likely include recommendations for expansion of existing roads, or possibly new roads, to help alleviate some of the congestion. It should incorporate the *Habitat Conservation Plan* and "Greenprint" to minimize negative impacts on environmentally sensitive areas. Residents should be involved as well to encourage their support for any new

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roads that may affect their communities. New roads are expensive and can create serious divisions in a community. By having a solid plan and outreach campaign, this resistance can be reduced.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|--|---|
| Utilize Transportation Plan to identify key needs | 6 Months | Upon completion of Transportation Plan | Commissioners Court, County Staff |
| Coordinate with planned developments, Greenprint, Habitat Conservation Plan, City plans | On-going | On-going | County Staff, Developers, Cities, TxDOT |
| Establish education and outreach for proposed new projects | On-going | On-going | Public Affairs Office |
| Determine funding for new projects | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court |

Possible Partners?

Cities, Developers, CAMPO, TxDOT

How will you measure success?

Necessary improvements identified
Congestion reduced

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on Projects
Road bonds, TxDOT funding, Federal funding

Support Development of Rail Infrastructure

As discussed in the Current Activities, there is a planned rail link being developed between Austin and San Antonio which may have tremendous impact on Hays County. The County is actively involved in the planning and advocating for this and should continue this. In addition, the County should start considering what, if any, action should be taken to help fund the effort. Major funding will be needed to move Union Pacific freight services off of the existing rail line. This would benefit Hays County in several ways beyond just commuter rail. San Marcos and other communities are bisected by the rail and this creates major traffic snarls, as well as public safety issues with response access. Moving the freight rail will improve these issues. While the County cannot, and should not, be the primary funder, there may be a need for some funding to help resolve this issue. In addition, the County may consider participating in the development of stations for the rail. These stations can become new economic and residential centers as they develop and will require significant infrastructure investment. There is ample time to plan for this project; however, the County should be thinking of how it will participate in the development of this critical infrastructure.

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Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Stay engaged with Rail planning efforts of the Lone Star Rail District | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, Lone Star Rail District |
| Determine what funding (if any) the County can provide | 6 Months | When Rail planning reaches that stage | Commissioners Court |
| Consider partnership with cities for station development | 1 Year | When Rail planning reaches that stage | Commissioners Court, Cities, Lone Star Rail District |

Possible Partners?

Lone Star Rail District, Cities

How will you measure success?

Rail Service started
Stations in place
New development around stations increasing tax base

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on Agreement with Lone Star Rail and level of support for station development
City and County general funds, Transportation bonds
Long-term Goal: Ensure adequate connectivity to major corridors across Hays County.

Conclusion

Transportation is one of the core functions of County government and is one of the major expenses as well. Maintaining adequate transportation infrastructure requires constant attention and investment. Hays County has been proactive in planning and funding for road improvements; however, it is challenged by the explosive growth. The County should continue its focus on transportation investment while also being supportive of alternatives such as rail and bus transit that may in the future alleviate some of the burden on County roads.

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GROWTH MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Growth management is an umbrella term for applying multiple strategies to affect where and how development occurs within a region. Growth management policies and initiatives work to mitigate problems that arise from unregulated growth, such as incompatible land uses, habitat and view-shed destruction, and increased cost in the provision of infrastructure (roads, water, wastewater). County governments have limited regulatory authority to affect land use. They do not have the power to zone nor – outside of road construction – do they supply infrastructure for development.

However, Hays County has been proactive in planning and designing programs to control growth to meet their economic and environmental goals. For example, Hays County has participated in “*Greenprinting*,” a land suitability analysis that identifies where development should occur to ensure adequate wildlife habitat, aquifer recharge and water quality, and retention of agricultural and open lands. In Hays County, growth management projects also aim to improve and expedite the development review process and negotiate consensus regarding administrative oversight of development between the numerous municipalities’ jurisdictions within the county.

Current Activities

At this time there are three projects related to growth management within the county. The first is to move all permitting functions to one location, thus streamlining the process for developers. Second, continue enforcing the regulations regarding water availability studies for new development; and third, is to adopt and implement a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP).

Establish “one-stop” permitting

County governments have the authority to review and approve subdivision plats for development outside of cities’ extraterritorial jurisdictions (ETJs). Permit review is a bureaucratic, complicated, and time consuming process. Actions by governmental agencies to streamline the process are typically welcome in the development community. One such step undertaken by Hays County is moving all permitting functions to one location thereby establishing a “one-stop” permitting process. This will enable applicants to address any permitting issues without having to travel to separate locations. In addition, Commissioners’ Court recently approved a reduction in required materials for qualified applications. This is an attempt to further improve the application process.

Continue to strictly enforce regulations requiring *Water Availability Study*

The three-year drought from 2007 to present has certainly impressed upon the citizens of the county the need for water planning. Currently, any developer submitting a plat for permitting must provide a *Water Availability Study* to show there is available water to meet the demand of their development. This requirement, an important tool for countywide water resource planning, should continue, even if the drought dissipates. The County should also consider water availability as it relates to environmental needs to maintain aquatic habitat with increased demand.

Adopt and Implement *Habitat Conservation Plan*

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In 2005, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) awarded \$753,750 to the County to develop a regional *Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)*. The goal of the plan is to provide guidance towards the conservation of habitat for endangered species and to protect water resources in the face of high population growth and subsequent development in the county. The County should consider incorporating the portions of the Habitat Conservation Plan into other planning efforts such as the Countywide Transportation Plan. Also, the County can consider adding an update on the current status of the incorporated plans.

Short-term Projects (1 – 3 Years)

Most of the Short-term Projects identified for growth management will not require a significant investment of money from the County; however, significant time expenditure of staff and elected officials may be required.

Develop and implement ETJ agreements with cities

County governments in Texas have the authority to review and approve subdivision plats outside the extraterritorial jurisdictions of the municipalities. The counties and cities can enter in an arrangement wherein the counties conduct permitting within a city's ETJ. With such an arrangement, the County's regulations will be enforced. Hays County will review existing permitting agreements with all the municipalities in the county. This review should ensure that there is minimum, uniform permitting processes applied throughout the county to promote quality development.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|-------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Determine County goals for ETJ Agreements | 3 Months | July – September 2010 | Commissioners Court, County Staff |
| Schedule workshops with Cities to discuss issues | 6 Months – 1 Year | March 2011– September 2011 | Commissioners Court, County Staff, Cities |
| Develop Agreements with Cities that meet County and City goals | 1 Year | September 2010 – September 2011 | Commissioners Court, County Staff, Cities |

Possible Partners?

Cities

How will you measure success?

ETJ Agreements with all Cities by September 2011

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time

Hays County will work with cities to focus development in existing urban areas

Housing developments outside of established urban areas - commonly referred to as *Greenfields* – pose a set of problems for local government, including: 1) the cost of providing services such as water, sewer, libraries, fire, and police is typically greater than the property

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taxes collected; 2) roadways may lack the capacity to handle the increased vehicle load; 3) conflicts with agricultural and industrial uses; and 4) loss of habitat or open space. Therefore, the County has a vested interest in facilitating growth within the cities. The role of the County should be to establish a dialogue with the cities to provide education on the benefits of reducing Greenfield development.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|---------------------------------|---|
| As part of ETJ discussions, educate cities on importance of focused development | 1 Year | September 2010 – September 2011 | Commissioners Court, County Staff, Cities |
| Focus infrastructure improvements to facilitate in-fill development | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, County Staff, Cities |

Possible Partners?

Cities

How will you measure success?

Fewer acres of undeveloped land turned into subdivisions

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time

Identify "preferred growth areas"

It is impractical and undesirable that a moratorium on Greenfield development be imposed; however, through a number of tools, the County can help to guide development into areas suitable for growth. The County has done a lot of work analyzing where those areas are through "greenprinting" and the development of the *Habitat Conservation Plan*. Perhaps the first step to a comprehensive implementation of growth management policies is to ensure that all the plans that will affect development within the county are in sync (e.g. the transportation plan works with the habitat plan). This effort can be expanded to include a review of all Cities' comprehensive plans to ensure that their transportation, land use, environmental, and housing goals support the County's.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|------------------------------|---|
| Utilize Habitat Conservation Plan, Greenprint, Transportation Plan, etc. to determine most suitable locations for development | 1 Year | Upon completion of all plans | Commissioners Court, County Staff, Cities |
| Focus infrastructure improvements to encourage development in desired areas | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, County Staff, Cities |

Possible Partners?

Cities

How will you measure success?

Fewer acres of undeveloped land turned into subdivisions

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Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time

Encourage Cluster and Low-Impact development

Cluster development is one model for the subdivision of land that is currently at the vanguard of the environmental movement. Essentially, the idea is to centralize the housing and commercial development - as well as roads and other infrastructure - in a small, high-density portion of the tract thus leaving large, open-space commons for use by all of the landowners. This model for development reduces infrastructure costs and the affect of storm water drainage. The high densities of the developments may increase affordable housing and potentially work better with regional public transportation networks. The County currently has a cluster development or conservation subdivision permit, but it is underutilized. Efforts should focus on how to promote this option and make it more attractive to developers.

Another opportunity is for the County to encourage developers to incorporate low impact development standards in new subdivisions. These are developments that focus on minimizing stormwater runoff by managing it at the source. Rather than installing costly drainage facilities, such as containment ponds, stormwater is managed through on-site landscaping and terrain features that allow for stromwater infiltration, detention, and evaporation. These types of development can be more cost effective for the developer because they are not paying for major infrastructure like a detention pond, and are more attractive because they incorporate more landscaping and natural features.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|-------------------------|---|
| Promote Existing Conservation Subdivision opportunities | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, County Staff |
| Consider incentives for cluster and low-impact developments (density bonuses, utility assistance) | 1 Year | January – December 2011 | Commissioners Court, County Staff, Cities |

Possible Partners?

Cities

How will you measure success?

Increase in number of clustered developments

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time

Where appropriate, promote and facilitate the development of pedestrian facilities and increased connectivity in the street network.

After World War II with advent of the automobile, subdivisions in America underwent a change; in general, entrances to low-density housing developments were limited to a collector street or two, with most of the housing constructed on cul de sacs. The result of this pattern is that daily trips to the store, school, work, and friends are too long or unsafe for walking or biking and thus require driving. This has led to a set of problems that some would argue range from childhood obesity to social disconnect as people remained ensconced in their cars and houses.

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There is a movement afoot to change how subdivisions are built. One tenet of the movement, known as Traditional Neighborhood Design or New Urbanism, is to increase the connectivity and safety of the street network and provide dedicated pathways for pedestrians and bicycles. The County can incorporate these ideals into their subdivision rules by insuring sidewalks and certain standards for connectivity are met. In addition, linear parks and rails-to-trails should be incorporated into the County's Parks and Recreation Plan.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| See Transportation Section | | | |
| Review County Subdivision Regulations to ensure they have adequate connectivity requirements | 3 Months | August – October 2010 | County Staff |

Possible Partners?

Cities

How will you measure success?

More access to pedestrian facilities

Less congestion on major roads

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on Improvements

Road bonds, general funds

Ensure that environmental mitigation projects by TxDOT, businesses, developers, and others are planned and will focus where most beneficial.

Government agencies, corporations, developers, and other entities can be required to implement environmental programs or projects as retribution for actions that may have denigrated the environment. These projects are an opportunity for the County to accomplish environmental goals that, perhaps due to lack of funding, it could not address otherwise. Therefore, this goal proposes that the County be prepared to coordinate any mitigation efforts by an external entity with its list of environmental projects to ensure the greatest leveraging of mitigation funds.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Identify needed environmental projects utilizing watershed protection plans, Greenprint, and other resources | 6 Months | January – June 2011 | Commissioners Court, County Staff |
| Contact TxDoT, developers, and others who may be needing to do mitigation and inform them of desired projects | On-going | On-going | County Staff |

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| | | | |
|--|----------|----------|--------------|
| Focus mitigation to accomplish overall goals | On-going | On-going | County Staff |
|--|----------|----------|--------------|

Possible Partners?

Developers, Texas Department of Transportation, Cities

How will you measure success?

Mitigation projects focused on areas of identified need

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time

Mid-term Projects (3 - 5 Years)

The mid-term projects will require funding and planning from the County to implement. However, the long-term benefits are substantial, so they should be considered investments rather than simply costs.

Continue pushing for additional County authority to regulate land use and development

In 2009, the Hill Country County Coalition, a group of counties within the Hill Country, worked to change State law and allow the State to provide counties limited land use powers. Hays County was a part of this initiative, which failed. Many of the County's environmental and growth management goals could be achieved through the powers of land use control. Therefore, the County should continue to join in the efforts to change the State's statutes.

One tool currently available to the County that will help to ensure quality development is the adoption of the International Fire Code. The County currently has a Fire Marshal, which is required, and is considering the adoption of this code, which would establish minimum standards for building throughout the County. This would also establish minimum standards for development across jurisdictions.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|----------|---------------------|
| Continue Participation in Hill Country Association | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court |
| Work with State Legislators to push legislation expanding powers | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court |
| Adopt and enforce a Countywide Fire Code | On-Going | On-Going | Commissioners Court |
| Educate and Outreach to citizens on importance of expanded authority | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court |

Possible Partners?

Developers, Cities, State Legislators, Other County Elected Officials

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How will you measure success?

New Authority granted to better manage development

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time

Hire a Conservation Coordinator to manage Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and other conservation efforts

Ensuring that the *Habitat Conservation Plan* is implemented will require the efforts of a dedicated staff position. The County should hire a Conservation Coordinator with knowledge of ecology, biology, and government practices. Part of the scope of employment should be identifying and procuring funding for implementation of projects identified in the plan.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Identify budget availability for additional staff | 3 Months | July – September 2011 | Commissioners Court |
| Allocate budget for additional staff | 1 Month | October 2011 | Commissioners Court |
| Hire new Staff person | 3 Months | January – March 2012 | Commissioners Court |

Possible Partners?

County Staff

How will you measure success?

New Coordinator hired by March 2012

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on Salary and Benefits

General Funds

Explore potential for light and noise pollution controls

Light pollution is any adverse effect of artificial light resulting in decreased visibility of the night sky, glare, light trespass, elimination of habitat, and energy waste. In rural counties, one intrusion of development is light pollution from housing and commercial development. This loss can be countered by regulation of the types of lighting used and education to change people's habits regarding night time lighting.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Research opportunities for implementing controls | 6 Months | January – June 2011 | County Staff |

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| | | | |
|---|----------|----------|-----------------------|
| Educate and communicate need for light and noise pollution controls to developers and property owners | On-going | On-going | Public Affairs Office |
|---|----------|----------|-----------------------|

Possible Partners?

Developers, Property Owners

How will you measure success?

Reduced Light Pollutions

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time

Long-term Projects (> 5 Years)

Long-term goals require large amounts of resources in time, study and funding to become a reality. The purpose of including them is to ensure County leadership can begin to lay the groundwork: identify funding and resources and solicit citizen support. Implementing long-term goals typically spans multiple administrations, so by identifying them now, the Commissioners Court can begin building the foundation that, if required, can be carried out by others to ensure success.

Provide funding for land and development rights acquisition in sensitive areas

Hays County citizen's desire to manage the growth in the county to ensure that adequate land is preserved for habitat, water quality, and other goals noted above. Acquiring development rights is one method of securing lands which will remain undeveloped. The key word in the goal is "sensitive areas." The County has laid the ground-work through various studies (HCP) to ensure that there is a rational scientific approach to the acquisition of lands to meet the stated objectives.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Continue utilizing current bond money to acquire sensitive properties | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, County Staff |
| Work with land trusts and property owners to secure additional lands | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, County Staff |
| Consider additional funding for purchases | 1 Year | When current funding is exhausted | Commissioners Court |

Possible Partners?

Land Trusts, Property Owners, Developers

How will you measure success?

Sensitive properties (water quality, habitat, etc.) preserved

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

As much as voters will support

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Bonds, State and Federal Grants, Land Trusts, Property owner donations (of land or development rights)

Develop a Transfer of Development Rights program

A Transfer of Development Rights program provides developers with incentives to not develop in “environmentally sensitive areas” by allowing additional development in areas that are already built up or are not environmentally sensitive.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Utilize HCP and Greenprint to identify environmentally sensitive lands | 6 Months | January – June 2013 | Commissioners Court, County Staff |
| Research programs to determine best practices for TDR | 6 Months | January – June 2013 | County Staff |
| Establish a trade value and procedures | 6 Months | June – December 2013 | Commissioners Court, County Staff |
| Develop program and begin 'marketing' to developers and property owners | 6 Months | January – June 2014 | Commissioners Court, County Staff |

Possible Partners?

Land Trusts, Property Owners, Developers

How will you measure success?

Sensitive properties (water quality, habitat, etc.) preserved
Program established by June 2014

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time

Ensure adequate funding to support growth of County personnel and facilities to match growing population

To continue to provide an excellent level-of-service to the citizens of Hays County, the staffing and funding of services must grow to match demand, which is typically driven by population growth.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|----------|-----------------------------------|
| Conduct regular workshops with County Staff to identify staff, equipment, program needs before beginning budget process | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, County Staff |
| Continue to prioritize programs based on plans and to respond to new needs | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, County Staff |
| Maintain adequate tax rate to support County programs | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court |

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Possible Partners?

County Staff

How will you measure success?

Adequate staffing levels are maintained to provide service.

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on programs, services, etc.

Leveraging the successful implementation of the *Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)*, develop and implement *Conservation and Development Plan*

The HCP is an excellent starting point for the County's environmental mission. However, the HCP could be grown into a Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program. The description of the program is from the United States Department of Agriculture website:

The Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program is reauthorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill). The RC&D program increases opportunities for volunteer, locally elected, and civic leaders in designated RC&D areas to plan and complete projects for resource conservation and community development. Program objectives focus on "quality of life" improvements achieved through natural resources conservation and community development. Such activities lead to sustainable communities, prudent land use, and the sound management and conservation of natural resources.³

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Research other communities for best practices | 6 Months | January – June 2014 | Commissioners Court, County Staff |
| Identify funding for consultants to help with process (or ensure adequate County staff) | 3 Months | June – August 2014 | Commissioners Court, County Staff |
| Fund and Develop plan | 1 Year | January – December 2015 | Commissioners Court, County Staff |

Possible Partners?

Land Trusts, Property Owners, Developers

How will you measure success?

Conservation and Development Plan adopted in December 2015

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

\$50 - \$100,000 for consultant-led effort

Conclusion

³ http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Programs/rcd/pdf_files/RCD_2009_factsheet.pdf

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Hays County is at a crossroads. The last decade or so of strong population growth has created a sea-change to the economy, demographics, and culture of the county. Balancing growth and economic development with strongly held ties to rural lifestyle, values, and landscape is not an easy role to manage. The goals identified in this plan certainly make it clear that a studied, logical approach to conserve and preserve open space in the county for habitat protection, water quality, and other reasons is a priority for the citizens.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

The Hays County government has played a meaningful role in fostering and promoting the quality of life for its citizens by efficiently providing services that enable economic growth and development of the area. Economic development is a critical component of the County's overriding purpose: improving the quality of life for all Hays County residents.

Participants at the various town hall meetings, focus groups, and in one-one-one interviews are supportive of the County engaging in strategically focused economic development activities that raise living standards for the citizens of Hays County.

Hays County spans urban, rural, and suburban development patterns. It is home to a diverse citizenry with income levels ranging from wealthy to disadvantaged. The County has benefitted all of these constituency groups in efficiently formulating and implementing its day-to-day programs and services. The opportunity and challenge going forward will be for the County to continue to deliver efficient policies and programs to benefit all segments of the economy.

The economic development powers given to county governments in Texas is outlined and codified in Section 381 of the Local Government Code. Counties are granted broad authority and flexibility to engage in all manner of economic and community development activities.

As a practical matter, however, counties in Texas have exerted limited powers when it comes to economic development. Typically, counties defer to local economic development entities on the day-to-day, grassroots level of economic development. This is due to the fact that counties have fewer resources for economic development and broader mandates and responsibilities than most local governments.

County governments can play a major "deal closing" role in the business recruitment arena when it comes to attracting large, desirable, primary employers. This happens when counties are asked to participate in financial incentive packages when recruiting the likes of Samsung, Motorola, and Dell. The most common form of county incentive is ad valorem property tax abatements.

Finally, counties can and do make the difference between success and failure in local economic development efforts by fostering a pro-business climate and culture. Counties also set the tone and stage for economic development by laying a solid economic foundation for future progress in critical areas like transportation, long-term infrastructure, and favorable business climate.

Short-term Projects (1 – 3 Years)

Build upon and strengthen working relationships with local economic development entities in San Marcos, Kyle, Buda, Dripping Springs, Wimberley, and other emerging locations. Hays County can serve as a bridge and connection to these local economic development offices and thereby promote cooperation in terms of attracting new business investment to Hays County. The County should know local economic development priorities and activities; in each instance, Hays County can leverage its limited resources to make maximum contribution to local efforts. The County has contributed financially to the Greater San Marcos Economic

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Development Plan and has set aside additional money for implementing that plan. This is one example of a strong partnership.

The County should hold quarterly or twice-yearly luncheon meetings to collaborate with Economic Development Offices on topical matters, successes, opportunities, and impediments to future growth and development. The County can also serve as point of contact and advocate for major Hays County businesses -- especially those businesses located in the County but outside the purview and control of cities and communities.

Most local communities have established business retention and expansion programs and interview and survey their major employers on at least an annual basis to determine priorities, opportunities, and problems. Businesses located outside community ETJ are often overlooked and may not benefit from State and Federal incentive programs to build businesses. The County can establish a Hays County Business Roundtable to liaison and coordinate with large private sector primary employers and those primary businesses not linked into local economic development efforts. It is recommended that this effort should start small, say with the 10 largest primary employers. The number of businesses can be ramped up over time.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|--------------|--|
| Continue participation in local economic development planning (i.e. the Greater San Marcos plan) | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, County Staff |
| Conduct regular workshops with local economic development entities (quarterly or semi-annual) | On-going | October 2010 | Commissioners Court, County Staff |
| Establish a Hays County Business Roundtable to bring together large employers across the County | On-going | January 2011 | Commissioners Court, business owners, local eco dev entities |

Possible Partners?

Cities, Businesses, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Corporations

How will you measure success?

Hays County grows reputation as business friendly community
New Businesses locate in Hays County

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time

Establish a County-wide Economic Development Policy

Hays County has a strong base of existing businesses and has successfully attracted new businesses in response to its rapidly growing population. Many of these jobs have been in the service and retail sector, which often provides low wage, part time employment. Many of the cities have active economic development programs and it is expected that they will continue to be the forerunners in economic development efforts. The County should consider adopting an economic development policy that will support the local efforts. It is important to have a policy in place before a major prospect enters the picture to ensure standards are in place and not be influenced by the desire to land a big company. The County should work closely with its

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citizens, utilizing economic development professionals as advisors to develop a policy that will position Hays County as a leader in economic development.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Commissioners Court establishes committee charge and appoints a citizen based committee with an advisory sub-committee | 1 Month | August 2010 | Commissioners Court, County Planner |
| Committee reviews current policy and formulates a new policy | 4 Months | September – December 2010 | Commissioners Court, County Planner |
| Utilize the policy when conducting economic development activities | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court |

Possible Partners?

Cities, Businesses, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Corporations

How will you measure success?

Hays County grows reputation as business friendly community
New Businesses locate in Hays County

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time

Evaluate development of a County-wide incentive policy to encourage additional business investment in the area.

The County does not have a formal incentive policy at this time. It has provided incentives to several new businesses locating in the County including an HEB warehouse and Grifols. Economic development is a very competitive endeavor and much of the preliminary site selection work is done before the community is even contacted. Having an incentive policy in place that a site selector can access is key to keeping Hays County on the "short list" for business relocation. An incentive policy can include the following:

- (a.) Ad valorem property tax abatements for desirable and targeted new businesses,
- (b.) Freeport tax exemptions to inventory critical companies,
- (c.) Sponsor and apply for Texas Capital Fund grants and loans for business recruitment and expansion projects, and
- (d.) Chapter 381 Local Government Code programs and agreements for new and expanding businesses.

To be successful, the County should develop its policy to complement existing policies at the cities and ensure that any incentive will meet established goals for the County. It should also include strict "clawback" provisions that will protect the County from a business that does not meet agreed upon performance goals.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Research Best Practices from other Counties | 6 Months | January – June 2011 | Commissioners Court, County Staff |

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| | | | |
|--|----------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Work with Cities to evaluate best policy | 3 Months | June – August 2011 | Commissioners Court, County Staff |
| Adopt Incentive Policy and Promote | On-going | September 2011 | Commissioners Court |

Possible Partners?

Economic Development Corporations, Governor’s Office of Economic Development

How will you measure success?

Incentive Policy in place by September 2011

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time

Encourage Cities to Pursue “Certified Retirement Community” status

The Certified Retirement Community Program, managed through the Texas Department of Agriculture, provides a “stamp of approval” for a community to meet the needs of its retirees and visitors. This includes health care, education, safety, entertainment and other factors. There is an application process and assessment by TDA to achieve this status. Growth in Hays County has brought additional medical services, retail, and other opportunities to serve an aging population, making the region more attractive to retirees. Having this stamp of approval would be another marketing tool for Cities to attract this population.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who’s Responsible? |
|--|----------|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| Conduct an informative workshop with City leaders on benefits of program | 1 Month | November 2010 | Commissioners Court, County Staff |
| Encourage them to pursue this | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, County Staff |

Possible Partners?

Cities, Texas Department of Agriculture

How will you measure success?

1 or more communities becomes certified

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal

Coordinate with Chambers of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVB), and any other tourism organizations to promote tourism initiatives through joint marketing efforts, event coordination, and information sharing.

The County can hold quarterly or semi-annual luncheon meetings with Chambers of Commerce, CVBs, and other interested tourism partners to coordinate activities and maximize effectiveness in tourism activities.

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Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|--------------|---|
| Conduct regular workshops with tourism entities to coordinate activities and foster cooperation | On-going | January 2011 | Commissioners Court, County Staff, Chambers of Commerce |
| Utilize County website as central clearinghouse for information with links, etc. to local websites | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, County Staff |

Possible Partners?

Cities, Chambers of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureaus

How will you measure success?

Increased Tourism in Hays County

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal

Mid-term Projects (3-5 Years)

Encourage Infrastructure Development in Areas most Suitable for Economic Development

The County is working on a number of infrastructure plans that will identify key infrastructure needs and recommendations to address them. Ensuring adequate infrastructure will make Hays County more attractive to potential businesses and should be a priority for the County moving forward.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|----------|--------------------|
| See "Identify Preferred Growth" within the Growth Management Section | | | |

Work with communities, private property owners, and other key players in Hays County to protect and enhance unique natural features, historic sites, and other irreplaceable physical assets in the County

The County should identify property owners and key players to begin dialogue on a possible strategy. It should also solidify relations with Austin and Travis County to the north and major communities and counties to the south. It always makes sense to partner with and collaborate with those neighbors who have more resources.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------|--------------------|
| See Growth Management Section | | | |

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Explore efforts to increase access to Community College / Vocational education in County with minimal impacts to taxpayers

Local school districts have already established a relationship with Austin Community College and are offering credit courses to students. Hays County can support this effort and add value to recruitment efforts in Kyle, Buda, San Marcos, and other Hays County communities.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Support Efforts of Local School Districts | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court |

Possible Partners?

School Districts, Austin Community College, Vocational Schools, Texas State University

How will you measure success?

Community College and Vocational Education facility open in Hays County

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal for County

Be vigilant to economic development opportunities: recruiting State of Texas offices to Hays County, expanded health care opportunities, advanced technology, and clean industry.

Residents want the County to encourage quality job creation for residents. These are the types of companies that people want: clean, non-polluting, high paying, technology-oriented jobs. The County should continue to partner with local economic development professionals to target these businesses.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Promote Hays County as alternative location to State Legislators and other State elected officials | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court |
| Identify potential sites and market those | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, Cities |

Possible Partners?

Cities, Economic Development Entities, State Officials

How will you measure success?

State offices expand in Hays County

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal

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Evaluate services and programs to enhance value-added agriculture and promotion of unique natural products.

There are also other unique agriculture products grown here including truffles, lavender, and other crop products. These ventures typically are very mindful of water and other environmental concerns. The County should encourage these activities and provide support where possible to boost alternative crops.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|-----------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Work with local producers to determine local products, existing marketing strategies, etc. | 6 Months | January – June 2014 | County Staff |
| Work with cities to encourage Farmers Markets and other events to make local products available | On-going | On-going | County Commissioners, Cities |
| Provide information on available programs and assistance to local producers | On-going | On-going | County Commissioners |

Possible Partners?

Cities, Ag producers, Texas Department of Agriculture, Farmers Markets

How will you measure success?

Increased demand for local products
Farmers able to maintain their livelihood

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal

Develop bicycling infrastructure and promote Hays County as a cycling destination.

Hays County is already a bicycling destination, with cyclists from Austin and other areas coming to enjoy the scenic beauty and quiet roads. Unfortunately, this has created safety issues on some County roads that do not have shoulders for the cyclists. Participants in the focus groups and town halls identified this as an issue. As the County performs maintenance and upgrades to County roads, cycling facilities should be considered and installed where feasible. This can simply be adding a shoulder to the road; it does not have to be a major investment.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Develop cycling facilities as feasible on new and upgraded County roads | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court |
| Contact area cycling clubs and talk with them about cycling in Hays County | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court |
| Put links to local cycling routes and other cycling resources on County website | 3 Months | August – October 2010 | County Staff |

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| | | | |
|---|----------|----------|--------------|
| Encourage local shops to carry cycling products | On-going | On-going | County Staff |
|---|----------|----------|--------------|

Possible Partners?

Cities, Local Cycling clubs, business owners

How will you measure success?

Cycling increases in Hays County
Measure and calculate cycling safety

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on added facilities

Conclusion

Hays County is fortunate to have a diverse economy that has weathered the economic downturn fairly well. The County has positioned itself to support economic development at the local level and is seen as a partner by the local practitioners. The County should continue to play this role and review its policies to ensure it is meeting the needs of local businesses and continuing to make Hays County an attractive destination for new business.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Introduction

Quality of life is an important issue to every county resident but can often mean very different things to different groups of people. This planning process includes several quality of life functions that will help to ensure public safety, improved mobility, expanded recreational opportunities, and healthy and vibrant communities.

An area's quality of life can also impact economic development efforts. A high quality of life leads to a healthy and productive workforce and can help to attract and retain desirable businesses.

In the town hall meetings and focus groups, Hays County residents consistently listed quality of life as something that should be maintained and improved. Many residents moved to Hays County because of the high quality of life that exists in the area. To their credit, Hays County leaders understand the importance of maintaining a high quality of life and have actively contributed to this goal.

Current Activities

Continue Support for CARTS and Explore Potential for Expanding Services

As Hays County grows, transportation within the County will become a bigger challenge. Solutions to relieve highway congestion, improve traffic flow, develop commuter rail, and increase pedestrian usage will be at the forefront of County planning efforts.

Another important component of transportation in Hays County involves the Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS). CARTS provides transportation services in seven counties (including Hays County) and the non-urban areas of Travis and Williamson counties. Because it is funded through an interlocal agreement with these nine counties, the CARTS budget is directly dependent on the tax revenues of these counties. That, coupled with declining Federal and State transportation funding, creates a gap that will likely continue to widen for the foreseeable future.

To compound the situation, there is an increasing need for expanded CARTS services in Hays County. Williamson County has already done extensive research into potential solutions and funding mechanisms for increasing the reach of CARTS in that county. These solutions are available in a report called "*Williamson County Public Transportation Planning Study.*"

The study details several possibilities, including new routes, different types of routes (local, regional, on-demand, etc.), scheduling changes, etc. Also included in the study is an examination of different possible funding streams to help provide this expanded service.

Continue Support for Non-Profits Across the County

The non-profit sector in Hays County plays a significant role in the quality of life of residents. Non-profits work with the public sector to deliver the programs and services that county residents need. Non-profits and the public sector are natural partners in this role because each bring unique knowledge, expertise, and resources which work together to support Hays County residents. Support for senior centers, libraries, and the women's shelter were consistently ranked at the top of the list by Hays County residents.

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Hays County already provides support to several local non-profits by allocating funds that help these organizations extend their budgets, and thus, outreach efforts. Because of the shrinking pool of funds available from Federal and State sources, local non-profits are facing gaps in their ability to provide services to an ever-increasing clientele.

Since increases in County funding may not always be possible, the County should help foster a more collaborative environment to help meet local needs. Resources are limited. Collaboration and cooperation could help to ensure that these resources will be efficiently utilized through eliminating duplication, identifying priorities, combining resource opportunities, and for targeting services where they are most needed.

Continue Support for EMS Services

During the town hall meetings and focus groups, Hays County citizens consistently rated public safety as a top priority. Fire and EMS services rank the highest within this topic. As the County continues to transition from a rural/suburban county to one that is increasingly urban, it begins to face more and more public safety challenges and pressures. To meet these challenges, Hays County must provide sustained and ongoing investment. The coordination and collaboration of several local, regional, and State public safety partners will also be needed. Because public safety is a priority, Hays County must ensure that the EMS services are equipped to meet current and future County needs. Areas to address include proper infrastructure, training, funding, technology and communications systems, and staffing.

Fund and Continue to Support the Healthy Communities Coalition

Health care is a critical issue facing many residents in Hays County. The Healthy Communities Coalition is a service that helps to provide affordable health care in the county. This partnership should be continued because of the cost savings to the County it provides.

Short-term (1-3 Years)

In addition to Hays County's current efforts, there are several ways that Hays County can improve the quality of life in the short-term. These efforts will have a significant impact on Hays County residents by helping to fill an immediate need.

Support School Districts

An educated and skilled workforce is an essential element in creating economic development opportunities. Simply stated, quality schools attract businesses and people. Hays County is already home to many highly-educated and highly-skilled workers, and businesses in the area reap the benefits of this talented workforce.

Texas State University plays a key role in preparing tomorrow's workforce. Opportunities also exist within the K-12 grades to align education and training programs with local business needs to ensure that all potential workers are well-prepared for working in the growing Hays County economy. Hays County should encourage collaborative efforts between educators; area schools, community colleges and universities; and local businesses and industries to develop specific steps to help meet regional needs.

Ideas for this group to consider include the following:

- Increasing the use of technology applications in all levels

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- Implementing multiple pathway approaches to prepare students for careers and college
- Strengthening the links between education providers and the business community
- Gathering data on workforce shortages and skill gaps use the collected data to improve educational and training programs
- Beginning career awareness programs such as job shadowing, internships and apprenticeships, dual credit classes, and career counseling

In addition to their primary role of educating local students, schools can also help provide some social services in conjunction with the County and local non-profit organizations. The Family Learning Centers in the San Marcos ISD are one such example. Through their adult education, early childhood education, parenting, and English as a Second Language (ESL) offerings, many local families are receiving the information and assistance they need to become more productive families and citizens. Recreational programming could also fit in this category. Organized recreation activities promote exercise and provide opportunities for families to interact.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|----------|---------------------------------------|
| Serve as an advocate and promote schools to citizens | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, School Districts |
| Consider joint use buildings and other facilities to share costs | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, School Districts |
| Consider holding regular workshops with school districts to ensure coordination of efforts and planning | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, School Districts |

Possible Partners?

School Districts, Residents

How will you measure success?

Greater coordination of effort between County and School Districts

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal

Expand Recreation Opportunities Across the County

The population increases anticipated in Hays County will create a huge need for parks, open space, and recreational opportunities. The County must act now to ensure that enough public land is available to provide opportunities for people to enjoy the outdoors and to prevent congestion and sprawl.

In addition to their aesthetic beauty, parks and open space provide many other benefits. They encourage healthy living through active lifestyles, help preserve local culture and heritage, help manage growth, and enhance tourism and recreational opportunities. Hays County can begin this initiative by working with the cities to purchase and set aside land that can be developed into parks, open space areas, and trail systems within the next few years.

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Certain parts of the county have a higher need for park development. Eastern Hays County, particularly east of I-35, is an area that should be targeted for the development of parks and open spaces. According to the *Central Texas Greenprint for Growth, Conservation, and Economic Opportunity for Hays County*, most of the public park land exists within the cities in the form of neighborhood parks. The "Greenprint" has already identified high priority areas for park development in the unincorporated parts of eastern Hays County, so this document should be used to guide future efforts. Additionally the Hays County Parks and Open Space Master Plan needs to be updated and further developed. This process should start soon. With expected growth due to the creation of Tollway 45 East, expansion of State Highway 21 and the 130 Corridor to the east, the County should plan for protecting open space as development occurs.

Hays County residents have shown their support for parks initiatives by approving bond elections. However, the County cannot continue to tap into the same funding stream time and time again. In addition to bond elections, Hays County could explore several other funding options:

- Enter into cooperative agreements with cities to share the costs and responsibilities
- Seek donations of land from private landowners and businesses
- Apply for grants from Texas Parks & Wildlife
- Land acquisition
- Park development or renovation
- Acquisition and development of multi-jurisdictional recreation areas
- Recreational trail projects

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|--|----------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Identify underserved areas for parks and recreation amenities | 1 Year | January – December 2012 | Commissioners Court, County Staff |
| Work with Cities to coordinate park development efforts | On-going | On-going | County Staff, Cities |
| Encourage developers to include parks in new developments | On-going | On-going | County Staff, Cities |
| Purchase land and develop parks as funding allows, focusing on underserved areas | On-going | As funds allow | Commissioners Court, County Staff |

Possible Partners?

School Districts (for shared facilities), Developers, Cities

How will you measure success?

Access to parks and open space throughout Hays County

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on land and facilities

Parks and Open Space bonds, State and Federal grants, local fundraising

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Mid-term (3-5 Years)

Some of the other ways to improve the quality of life for Hays County residents require a longer commitment of time, as well as a larger investment of shared resources. As the County continues to grow, its population will also become more diverse. The County will need to enact programs and policies that will benefit this growing and diverse population of residents.

Provide Grant Writing Support to Local Non-Profits and Others

Because County funds are limited, it is essential to explore other areas of funding to augment the County's budget for specific public projects. Hays County has recognized this need internally through the work of the Grants Administration Department. It is their job to identify and obtain supplemental financial resources to support Hays County's strategic goals.

For projects where the County's strategic goals overlap with those of other organizations, this department may be tapped to assist local non-profits with grant writing services. Hays County could also take a lead role in sponsoring or conducting grant writing seminars that will give local non-profits the tools they need to identify and obtain their own potential grants. Several organizations already provide grant writing seminars and workshops, and might be available to host them in a Hays County location. Organizations include the Texas Historical Commission and Regional Foundation Library.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Work with local non-profits and others to determine their needs | 1 Year | January – December 2012 | County Grant Writer |
| Determine policy for providing assistance | 3 Months | January – March 2013 | Grant Writer, Commissioners Court |
| Begin providing assistance | On-going | On-going | Grant Writer |

Possible Partners?

Non-profits

How will you measure success?

Local non-profits receive more grants

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time, potential for additional staff if demand is great

General Funds

Explore Healthcare District

An opportunity the County should consider to help with growing health care demands and costs is the establishment of a regional or Hays County specific Healthcare District. This District would have taxing authority to raise funds to pay for services and facilities to provide healthcare to residents of Hays County. Travis County and Austin recently created a healthcare district, and part of the agreement was that the City of Austin reduced its property taxes by a commensurate amount to what the new district would charge. This was because, with the district in place, Austin would no longer be funding those services. An agreement like this may

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make the creation of a Healthcare District more palatable to residents who may resist an increased tax burden.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|-----------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Work with the Healthy Community Coalition to discuss process and pros and cons of establishing a District | 6 months | January – June 2011 | Commissioners Court |
| Establish an education and outreach program to gather public input | 18 months | June 2011 – December 2012 | Commissioners Court |
| Conduct an election to establish District if there is community support | 5 Months | January – May 2013 | Commissioners Court |

Possible Partners?

Cities, Health care providers, Health/Community Coalition

How will you measure success?

Health District established (if supported) by May 2013

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time

Increase Access to Health Care

Access to health care services is a major component of quality of life. In addition to helping citizens maintain a healthy lifestyle, preventative and primary care can be less expensive in the long run than emergency services and long-term medical care.

Hays County has several health care facilities and organizations that work to provide care and services to Hays County residents. Their ability to reach every citizen in every part of the County is limited because of budgetary constraints, geographic distribution of facilities, and residents' transportation challenges.

Mobile healthcare clinics could be a potential solution for increasing access to health care to underserved populations and in rural areas where public transportation is lacking. Most mobile healthcare clinics provide services comparable to those offered in a physician's office, such as routine exams, children's wellness checks, screenings, prenatal care, and family medicine. The County should seek collaborative agreements with medical programs from area colleges and universities to provide supervised training for their students as they provide care in mobile clinics.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|----------|--|
| Ensure budget for indigent care continues to grow with need (if financially feasible) | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, Indigent Health Care |
| Work with local providers to encourage their provision of assistance | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, local health care providers |

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| | | | |
|---|--------|-------------------------|--|
| Consider offering mobile health clinics to provide preventive care (could be in local facilities or purchasing a mobile clinic bus) | 1 Year | January – December 2014 | Commissioners Court, Indigent Health Care, local health care providers |
|---|--------|-------------------------|--|

Possible Partners?

Local Health Care Providers, School Districts

How will you measure success?

Residents have access to basic medical care

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on need
General Funds, State and Local grants, Local fundraising

Update Hays County Strategic Plan

A plan should provide a set of goals and objectives to move the County forward; however, it must be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure it reflects on-going issues and opportunities. For example, if a major company were to relocate to Hays County, it might change some aspects of the plan and generate a new focus on infrastructure to a particular location, etc. The plan is a framework for decision-making and must be kept current and reviewed frequently. With a dynamic growing population, new data should be collected and citizens should continue to assist the County with establishing new goals and objectives.

Implementation

| Actions | Duration | Timeline | Who's Responsible? |
|---|----------|----------|---|
| Ensure new staff and elected officials are introduced to the plan when coming on board | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, County Staff |
| Review plan at least annually, particularly at budget workshops to ensure goals are being addressed | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court, County Staff, LCRA |
| Update plan at least every 3 – 5 years | On-going | On-going | Commissioners Court |

Possible Partners?

Cities, School Districts, Residents, LCRA

How will you measure success?

Plan is incorporated into all aspects of County decision making
Plan stays current and reflects priorities of community

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal

Conclusion

As this chapter illustrates, quality of life is important to the citizens of Hays County. Through the planning process, groups and individuals identified public safety, improved mobility, expanded recreational opportunities, and healthy and vibrant communities as key quality of life

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components. Following the outlined actions, will allow administrators to create and sustain a county that welcomes citizens and offers resources for the development of an improved lifestyle. In the past, Hays County leaders have shown illustrated that quality of life is a high priority. This goal will help in further expanding and developing resources to enhance the success of these endeavors.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this document is present suggestions and ideas to help maintain or improve the overall quality of life for the citizens of Hays County. It can serve as a guide for future development of policy, rules, and regulations; furthermore, the suggestions and action plan is a direct product of the public input and evaluation process. As the introduction states, "this document is intended to be a holistic document that addresses nearly every aspect of County governance and reaches across jurisdictions to enhance coordination between the County, Cities, School Districts, and others." Proposed actions outlined in this comprehensive plan were derived from the aforementioned Plan Process of internal interviews, public surveys, focus groups, and town hall meetings.

This plan is an attempt to address the common issues and concerns identified by residents while maintaining the need to exercise fiscal discipline by the County. Many of the projects identified will require minimal financial investment from the County, some will require financing, and others may result in cost savings over time. It will be up to the Commissioners Court to address these recommendations and make this plan reality. The citizens of Hays County also have an obligation to stay informed and involved over time to ensure their recommendations are addressed. If citizens do not continue to participate, this plan may not be realized and an opportunity to prepare for the future and move the County towards common, supported goals will be lost.

APPENDIX A - Leadership Charrette

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Hays County Leadership Charrette

On May 15, 2009 nearly 50 elected and appointed officials from cities, school districts, emergency service districts, and other jurisdictions from across Hays County met at the Wimberley Community Center. The meeting was part of the on-going Strategic Policy Plan being developed by Hays County Commissioners Court. The plan will help the Court determine future policies and actions to manage expected growth. The Charrette was a forum for local officials to provide their input into what their communities are planning for and how the County as a whole can better coordinate efforts to better serve citizens.

The meeting was facilitated by staff from the Lower Colorado River Authority who is working with Pedernales Electric Cooperative to develop the plan. Small group sessions were facilitated by students and faculty from Texas State University. The meeting began with an overview of the process and introductions from Judge Sumter followed by a Demographic Analysis developed by LCRA. During lunch, County staff provided an overview of major County projects that are underway including Road and Bridge projects, Open Space initiatives, and others. Following lunch, participants were divided into smaller groups and asked to address plans within their jurisdictions related to Infrastructure, Land Use, Economic Development, and Quality of Life.

Based on initial feedback from participants, the workshop was successful because it provided an open forum for the discussion of ideas and common issues as well as an opportunity to establish and strengthen relationship among County leaders. One outcome is the idea of conducting these types of events more regularly over time to ensure solid communication and coordination among the various jurisdictions and organizations within Hays County.

Common Themes

Despite the different jurisdictions and focus of the participants, there were common themes identified by participants during the break out sessions. This reflects that the challenges facing Hays County affect the entire County, not just one organization. It will also take coordination and cooperation among all the entities to address many of the identified issues.

The common themes identified by participants include:

- Water – quantity and quality
- Transportation – Roads and Transit (rail, etc.)
- Housing
- Parks and Open Space
- Wastewater
- Housing
- Economic Development

Many of these issues are being addressed by the County. There is a Water and Wastewater plan being developed for the western part of Hays County, a Transportation Plan is being developed and the Habitat Conservation Plan has recently been completed. In addition, many communities are addressing these issues as well through the development of Comprehensive Plans, economic development plans and other projects. Part of the goal for this plan is to help coordinate all of these efforts and ensure communities work together on projects that may impact their neighbors. This project and other planning happening at the County level will address many of these issues, the recommendations below are a starting point of actions the

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County can take immediately to continue the conversation started at this meeting and build on it for the future.

Recommendations

This meeting is just one step in the on-going planning process; however, some recommendations can be identified based on the input from the participants. These are opportunities for officials from across the County to work together to address common concerns and issues that affect everyone in Hays County.

ESTABLISH A COUNTY-WIDE INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE

An opportunity identified by participants was the creation of a central clearinghouse for meetings and other information across jurisdictions. This would provide a 'one stop shop' for residents looking for information on posted Council, Board, and other official meetings, as well as a forum for entities to share what is happening in their communities.

A page on the County website could fairly easily be created that would incorporate a County wide calendar of meetings and events. The challenge is keeping it current and ensuring all participating groups provide the necessary information for the calendar. One option may be to create a page that users can edit to allow those responsible to post their own information. This would reduce the responsibility for County staff; however, it may create different challenges having many users accessing the page.

Beyond just a centralized calendar, the website could also be used to share information on projects that communities are undertaking that may affect other communities or jurisdictions. This includes where new schools, fire stations and other facilities are proposed as well as major infrastructure projects. It is especially important in communities like Buda and Kyle and others that share large borders and where projects in one city may directly impact another.

Part of the communication effort should include on-going meetings between jurisdictions and entities. These do not have to be large, formal workshops like this one, rather they can be informal lunches or other meetings where officials and leaders can discuss projects and issues. Social media may offer another forum for sharing information, with community blogs and other forums for the sharing of ideas and information. Any tool that can be adopted across the County to share information and ideas should be explored and utilized.

COUNTY SUPPORT AND REPRESENTATION

County Commissioners already serve on many regional boards representing Hays County at the regional level. This representation should continue and these Commissioners should work closely with the local communities to ensure their concerns are addressed at the regional level. This is especially important in transportation issues where projects such as the Austin – San Antonio Commuter rail may have a tremendous impact on communities where stops are located. New highways (such as SH 45 and other toll roads) also impact communities and the smaller communities in eastern Hays County likely do not have the staff or resources to adequately prepare for those impacts. The County can help these communities by keeping them in the loop of proposed projects that will impact them.

COUNTY COORDINATION AND FOCUS

Another opportunity for the County is to help coordinate activities across jurisdictions. One example is economic development. Many of the cities have economic development organizations that drive business development and job creation in their communities. While this is beneficial, it is important to realize that economic development affects the entire County. A

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new business in San Marcos may create housing demand in Buda and Kyle, and vice versa. While the County should not take ownership of economic development it can serve a coordinating role to ensure all communities, particularly the smaller ones without economic development organizations can benefit. The role of the County should solely be one of coordinating efforts and ensuring everyone is pulling in the same direction rather than being the driving force behind these efforts.

Conclusion

As mentioned, this workshop is just one step in the overall development of the County Strategic Policy Plan. Input from this meeting will be incorporated into the internal assessment that has been conducted as well as the focus group and Town Hall meetings that will be held in the coming months. Based on all of the input a final plan will be developed that will address the priorities of the entire County. This plan will not just be for County government, rather it will include opportunities for local jurisdictions and others to take ownership of the plan and help move it forward.

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Charrette Raw Notes

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Quality of Life

Preservation of Open Space – Connections
Parks and Recreation Opportunities
Shooting Sports Complex
Bicycling / multi use trails

Neighborhood Schools

Efficient Transportation

Placeholder Status for South Hays Fire
Facility Location decisions
Pressure on schools for facility use

Centralize 911 Dispatch

Facility and Government Partnerships

Coordination for disaster response
Access to entire County –
Practical redistricting
Strengthen interlocal agreements

Arts and Cultural Resource Depository

Water Quality and Quantity, streamflow

Healthcare and Information (affordability and insurance)

Economic Development

Desired Employment
Alternative Energy
Tourism
Healthcare / Senior Living
Agritourism

Sustainable Economic Development
County level economic development initiatives

Knowledge spillovers and partnerships with TSU

Affordable Housing

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Expand Job Base beyond retail

Career and technical education expansion

Retaining TSU grads

Land Use

Wise and Sustainable

Expand County power (zoning)

Inter-agency coordination for permitting

Community impact and education
Impact Fees

Developer Impact fees for school districts / ESD's

Infrastructure

Water Recycling – avoid long hauls / gray water

Gets schools out of wastewater business

Better road redundancy

Forward transportation planning

Inter-agency coordination

Mass Transit (bus and paratransit)

Alternative transportation
Bike corridors
Pedestrian safety

New fee structures for non-water pumping wells

Privatization of water suppliers

Economic Development

Natural Resources

ISD's

Tourism

Manage Growth

Funds allocation

Cluster Zoning

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Interlocal Agreements

County wide planning

Top Issues

Water

Roads

Wastewater

Workforce / Affordable

Open Space

Create dialogue

Outside Audit

Find Better Examples

Comprehensive County side plan

Affordable Housing

Inadequate Infrastructure

Inadequate Revenue

Research and Development

Incentives

Creative Class

Tele commuting

Maintain Quality of Life

Quality of Life

Security

Small Town Mentality

County – City dialogue

Infrastructure

Scarcity of Water

Impact Fees

County wide planning

Transportation

Coordination between Cities, County, TxDOT, CAMPO

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Balance components and sequencing

Managed Growth

Cluster Zoning

Tax incentives for jobs

Synched plans

Political clout

Increased division

No growth

Land Use and Infrastructure

Major Projects

Road Bonds

Comp Plans – Mountain City, Kyle, Buda

SewerSystem in Mountain City

TSU – S I 35 Technology Park (city / university collaboration)

I 35 improvements in Buda and Kyle

Precinct 2 County offices

Uhland and Buda wastewater improvements

Plum Creek Watershed Protection plan

Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer District

Managing Drought

Regulations and rules

Water quality management

Desalinization plant

Work with methane from landfill

Reinstate SH 45 funding

How County can help

County Comp Plan – help cooperation between communities

Grant writing

Open lines of communication / information provider

Resource database

Resolutions of Support

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Make sure communities are well represented in regional plans

Central point of contact at County level, information, public relations

Starting point for research

Economic Development

Plum Creek Phase 2 – pedestrian friendly, retail

Seton Hospital

Research Center at Texas State

Growth in Round Rock and possibly North San Antonio

Commuter Rail Development

Alternative Transportation / bike lanes

New Theater complex at TSU

Athletics possibly moving to Bowl Division

Buda – challenges of retail development

TSU Quality of life student housing, faculty and staff housing (outside San Marcos)

Emergency Services – challenge of covering new development

ACC – San Marcos / Hays County / Round Rock

Addressing substandard housing problems and lack of infrastructure

Kyle Industrial Park

Private Water supply corporations not good enough

How County Can Help

Calendar of meetings County wide – along with agendas

Work with County to bring in larger developments (Seton)

Regional Development – keeping regional development the focus

Regional website, County Clerk, county wide agendas

Information group / website for incoming businesses (Chamber type)

Regional / County infrastructure development – work with providers
Better cooperation among them

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Quality of Life

Emergency Services

Integrated 911 Dispatch Center for County
20 – 25 years behind other I 35
Communities / Counties
Kyle calls transfer out of the County

Improved ambulance service

O site improvements / expansions to jail or new jail for County use

Future development of housing – coordinate issues

Transportation connectivity throughout County – roads in the cities connecting to other communities

Better funding for libraries or funding satellite libraries
80% of users at Buda library from County
Healthcare funding – older population (northern part of County)

Public transportation for elderly

Open space partnership between County and cities
Each community needs to participate, not rely on county providing it for whole population

Education and understanding of the importance of open space
Water quality
Better planning of open areas / water recharge

Countywide master plan / linear parks system

Soccer field does not equal open space

Green belt system connect open space throughout the County

How County Can Help

Money

Communication throughout County

Comprehensive Plan

More to enhance local emergency services
Improve local involvement
Location improvements

EMS Board needs better representation county wide

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APPENDIX B - Notes from Focus Groups

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San Marcos ISD Board July 6, 2009

Summary: School district has a range of challenges facing it including growing low income and English deficient population. Big steps have been taken, every school is new or recently renovated, major partnership with ACC and other higher ed providers, growing vocational opportunities (Culinary and Credit Union programs at HS, and others). Perception of district is a challenge, need to find ways to raise awareness and support for schools and the job they are doing.

Top Issues Facing District:

- Growing low income population
- Growing population with English deficiencies
 - Increased staffing, teachers hired from Mexico
- Growing population but not enrollment
- Robin Hood – not sending money yet, but likely soon
- Administrative facilities inadequate
- Transportation Improvements
 - Planned improvements to E McCarty Lane near HS
 - I 35 and Wal Mart / 21 Loop eventually
 - Lp 110 – 2nd phase
 - County Rd coming South from HS (Old Bastrop HS)
- Challenge of sharing good news about district
 - 95% of grads accepted to college
 -

Response to Growth

- All schools new or recently renovated
- New Elementary School near Martindale in next 3 – 5 years
- Teacher training
- Teachers hired from Mexico to help with changing population and needs
- Working with TX State to change programs to help focus kids on programs where employment is needed
- ACC has space in town / Dual Credit program
- Adding Parent Center to all campuses to help families
 - Provide information and outreach on services and programs
- Have Family Resource Center
 - Family living and language education for all ages
 - GED and English classes
- San Marcos Education Foundation
- Potential for November ballot to join ACC district
- Bobcat Promise (under \$35K can attend Tx State for free)
- Gary JobCorp – VO Tech
- Considering 'Academy' approach to allow students to pick interest and 'career path' and focus curriculum in that path
- Vo Tech growing (Culinary and Credit Union programs)

New Facilities

- New Administration Building is needed

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- No new schools needed now, but could change quickly
- Growth likely to be focused south and east in district

County Role

- Serve as cheerleader for the district and help share good news
 - Outreach and education from officials to promote ISD's
 - Education needs to be a priority – primary and post-secondary
 - Explore partnership with ISD
 - Buildings and Facilities
 - Vehicle Maintenance, etc.
 - Communication and Collaboration
 - Particularly with approved developments so district knows where growth is happening
 - Other major projects that may impact schools (major employers, etc.)
- Quality education is key selling point for County eco dev, etc

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Buda Senior Group July 9, 2009

Summary: Seniors view Hays County as a great place to live and are supportive of public safety in particular. They appreciate the quick response of public safety. Transportation and roads were seen as a key issue with expansion of County roads seen as a priority and also the need for transit, especially in the rural areas. Water was another key issue with concerns to protect this critical resource.

Why do you live in Hays County?

- Jobs / Employment
- Family
- Its not Austin
- School District Quality
- Lower Taxes (used to be also heard)
 - Senior Exemption but not freeze currently
- Cheaper Electricity
- Good place to retire
- People – good folks
- Low Crime

How can those qualities be maintained and enhanced?

- Expand County Roads
 - Enforce No Passing on Right
- Train Overpass – not one in Buda currently
- Protecting water quality and quantity in face of growth
 - Landscaping, swimming pools, wells
- Bigger Senior Center
 - Matching funds from County to help expansion?
 - Move Pct 5 Office and give building to seniors
- Transportation / Transit opportunities for outside City Limits
 - Get folks to appointments / services

What is County doing well?

- Good sheriff and police
- Good fire protection and EMS
- Recent bond package for road improvements
 - Need update on progress with this
 - Truck bypass bridge being built in Buda, Main St Bridge being expand
 - 1626 – bond project to improve

What challenges face Hays County?

- Traffic
- Health Care for low income
- Housing for Low Income Seniors (and others)
 - Garden Homes, Townhomes as alternative
- Appraisals do not match market

What Should be Done?

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

- US Post Office building in downtown Buda going to be available – opportunity for shared community facility
- Protecting water resources
- Stay ahead of road improvements
- Need improvements to RR 12 and State Hwy 21
- Bicycle Access – safety of drivers and cyclists on County roads, cycling access in San Marcos
 - Requirement for insurance, licensing, fee, for cyclists
- Transportation accessibility

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Environmental and Conservation Focus Group July 17, 2009

Summary: Population growth places a real strain on the county's ability to sustain and manage its natural resources such as water, wildlife, and open space. The conservation focus group values these natural resources and is concerned about the trajectory of environmental degradation occurring in the county. The group sees the county playing an important leadership role in shifting that trajectory. The group wants the county to provide a unifying vision through a comprehensive plan and – when provided the authority – develop and implement regulations to manage growth and promote environmental ideals such as conservation, smart growth, and sustainable land management.

Headlines yr2019:

1. Water shortage results in all-time high water bills!
2. County passes ordinance to mandate xeriscaping!
3. County's renewable energy portfolio exceeds goals!
4. Hays County firm develops technology to remove nutrients from wastewater!
5. County announces moratorium on residential development!

Priorities:

1. Preserve large tracts of undeveloped land:
 - a. Preserve land that is in the aquifer recharge zone
 - b. Preserve land that is contiguous in order to provide and preserve wildlife corridors
2. Preserve small tracts of undeveloped land:
 - a. Provide education and financial support to foster environmental stewardship of small tracts.
 - b. Provide incentives to landowners.
3. Review and amend "antiquated" subdivision regulations
 - a. Ensure subdivision regulations foster Rainwater Harvesting
 - b. Ensure subdivision regulations allow for vanguard of landscaping and infrastructure design to slow and purify storm water runoff on-site.
4. Incentives
 - a. Reimburse transaction costs for conservation easements
 - b. Create a "purchase of development rights (PDR)" program to create deed restriction on undeveloped land to ensure it remains agricultural or open space.
5. Planning
 - a. County-wide planning
 - b. Create a "holistic view"
 - c. Ensure there is the power to enforce recommendations – particularly land use.
 - d. Work towards partnerships
 - e. Build support for ground water district
 - f. Build on success of the Green Space Bond initiative
6. Growth management
 - a. Manage density – smart growth
7. Continue the dialogue about how to be good stewards of the land and water.

**Wimberley Senior Citizens
July 20, 2009**

Summary & Remarks from Meeting Facilitator

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Wimberly seniors cherish the place where they live and want to do what is necessary to maintain their enviable environment and quality of life. Of paramount concern is future water supply and ensuring that future development is managed and directed in a way that will ensure long-term sustainability. This group was especially positive about the County's track record of providing services to residents in an efficient and economical manner. There is recognition also that the State Legislature needs to empower Hill Country counties to better provide for its citizens and to keep up with the unprecedented population growth trends.

Why do you live in Hays County?

- Natural beauty, low population density
- Location -- close to Austin but not too close
- Laidback country lifestyle
- Shopping, artisans, cultural attractions such as glass-blowing
- Health care, excellent public schools, employment

How best to maintain the qualities that drew you to Hays County in the first place?

- Enacting appropriate laws and regulations to maintain quality of life
- Protect natural resources and natural environment
- Require developers to adhere to sustainable development practices
- Ensure appropriate level of infrastructure and transportation for future needs
- Encourage development of local "services" such as retail, grocery stores, etc
- Continue providing great EMS, Fire and Police protection
- Redouble efforts to ensure future water supply

What is Hays County government doing well?

- Does great job of protecting public health and welfare by providing outstanding EMS, Fire and Police protection
- Does a good job of recycling, could we do more?
- County does great job with administering criminal justice system
- While not widely known, the County provides health care services in a very efficient manner using very limited financial resources

What challenges do you see facing Hays County?

- Long term availability of water supplies
- Controlling rapid growth. This can be rationalized and managed by controlling lot sizes, enforcing building standards
- Providing needed services in an economical manner to an aging population group
- Providing good jobs and employment opportunities
- Encouraging diverse groups of people to work together for common goals
- Maintaining excellent public school system

What can the County do to address these future challenges?

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

- Continue efforts to get State Legislature to enact legislation empowering County government to positively impact future development
- Explore possible ways to assist with Meals on Wheels program
- Elected officials should continue with efforts such as conducting these community visioning and citizen input meetings
- Voters need to hold elected officials responsible and accountable

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Kyle Senior Citizen Meeting
July 21, 2009

Summary & Remarks From Meeting Facilitator

Kyle seniors are mostly content and quite complimentary of County government and County elected officials. The exceptional quality of life that drew people to Hays County originally is however facing pressure from rapidly expanding population. Critical issues going forward:

- (a.) ensuring future water availability and efficient use of water resources
- (b.) keeping pace with growth and economically providing roads and highways, public safety, education, and assorted infrastructure needs to serve a growing population
- (c.) achieving a workable balance between growth & development and environment & quality of life

Why do you live in Hays County?

- Family and children
- Get out of Austin and away from Austin taxes
- Open and welcoming attitudes toward newcomers
- Nature, water and wildlife
- Available, reasonably priced land
- Great weather and less crowded than big cities
- Small town atmosphere
- Employment and job opportunities

How best to maintain the qualities that drew you to Hays County in the first place?

- Take care of and manage mobility issues
- Keep up with the growth
- Set aside and preserve open spaces, green areas
- Plan for growth
- Keep plans current and timely
- Accommodate current residents
- Achieve balance between economy and environment
- Be known as "a place for business"
- Make sure medical care keeps up with demand and the needs of the people
- Water is a huge issue; got to act now to guarantee the future
- Gray water is an unappreciated resource; need to better utilize it
- County could maybe play an outreach role in rainwater collection & reuse
- Can we incentivize rainwater collection with rebates, etc
- Conserve water -- utilize xeriscaping and native grasses
- Can the County encourage installation of residential grey water systems
- Same with periodic "bleeding" of fire hydrants -- couldn't this water be used
- Annexation -- proceed with caution
- Need to control developers and development impacts
- Education in this regard is critical
- Important to maintain community/county identity and integrity

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

What is Hays County doing well?

- Constituents count in Hays County
- County is open, listens to constituents
- The County does a great job running/administering elections
- County cares about residents – this public/citizen input process is a great example
- The County really excels at Fire, Police and EMS services
- Good at Parks & Recreation
- Growth is being managed in a thoughtful manner
- County delivers good value for the tax dollar
- In the future, it will be a real challenge to provide services to rapidly expanding population
- Education system in Hays County is a model -- one of best in the country

What challenges do you see facing Hays County?

- Water availability and usage
- Reuse of waste water and gray water usage
- Limited aquifers and sense that we're running out of water
- Expanding roads and highways to accommodate growing population
- Specific roadway concerns: Burleson and I-35, Highway 150 West, railroad crossings, clearing brush and overgrowth from road easements
- Recycling -- could the County do this on a county-wide basis
- Litter control
- Services have to keep up with growth....
- Maintain services, but do it in an economical way

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Economic Development / Chambers of Commerce July 23, 2009

Summary: Water and Transportation are the two biggest challenges facing Hays County. Planning to address these issues should be a top priority because of its potential impact on economic development and quality of life. Cities are taking the leadership role in economic development and see the County's role as providing coordination and oversight to benefit the entire County rather than assuming a lead role. Tourism is also an opportunity where the County can provide some assistance in building tourism.

Top Issues:

- Transportation
 - 80% Dripping Springs traffic going to Austin
 - 45 / Mopac Extension is key improvement
 - 290 Improvements
 - Maintenance of roads with expansion of City Limits
 - 4 lane roads turning into 2 lanes at city limits
 - 1626 and 967 key issues
 - Need County wide transportation plan with cities and TxDOT involvement
 - Safety of overpasses on I 35
 - Need railroad overpasses
 - Toll Roads appropriate when carrying through traffic
 - 130 will spur growth in eastern section of County
- Water
 - Surface water is needed
 - Water plan should be done
 - Small systems challenged to respond to growth and provide for large employers / development
 - Out of State buyers for smaller systems
 -

How is your Organization Responding to Growth?

- San Marcos developing regional economic development plan
- San Marcos has economic development plan with workforce development as key priority
- Kyle exploring partnership with Capital Metro
 - Park and Ride
 - Creative options to help Cap Metro expand Service area
- Commuter Rail will be huge asset
- Kyle Eco Dev plan
 - Focus on partnership with ACC to provide higher learning options
- Dripping Springs targeting clean, green, retail and tourism services
 - New residents drawn to Hill Country, good schools
- Buda will see growth from toll road expansions
- San Marcos exploring form based zoning code

New Facilities

- San Marcos exploring 'green – tech' business park
- Kyle also exploring business park

How can County Assist?

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

- Ensure smaller communities have opportunity to participate and partner with larger communities
- Transportation and Water Planning
 - Explore possibility for tapping Carrizo Aquifer
 - Partnership with Hays, Guadalupe, Comal, Caldwell
 - Protect flow from Edwards (Trinity already overtapped)
- Partner with cities for incentive policies
 - San Marcos BREP has policy in partnership with County
- Explore loop around Dripping Springs
- Partner with cities to recruit businesses
- County can provide coordination between city eco dev groups / facilitate meetings and activities for common issues and solutions
- Establish a County wide task force to explore issues
 - How County should spend limited resources for Eco Dev
 - Establish incentive policy at the County level
 - Help cities respond to business needs
- Eliminate Freeport tax
 - Key issue in recruitment
- County wide website with Tourism inventory / calendar
 - Provide resources and information to potential visitors
 - Make County website about more than just taxes and court documents
 - Work with cities to give visitors a reason to stay in County longer

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Dripping Springs Senior Citizen Meeting August 19, 2009

1. Why do you live in Hays County?

- safe place
- wonderful people here
- to be close to family
- beautiful scenery
- low property taxes
- laid back and relaxed atmosphere
- good schools
- good library (Dripping Springs)
- good shopping opportunities coming
 - in Dripping Springs, there are new stores opening
- less congestion and traffic than in Austin
- good senior center
- we need more medical services/health care in Dripping Springs (on that side of the county)

2. How can these qualities be enhanced and maintained?

- maintain strict building standards (City of Dripping Springs)
- enact water restrictions to maintain water supply
- allow only zero landscaping (native, drought-tolerant plants only)
- limit water usage on lawns
- LCRA needs better treatment of water (in Dripping Springs)
 - and lower prices
 - the pressure is too low too
- need public transportation into Austin
 - maybe a park and ride lot for Capitol Metro
- need an additional traffic light on Hwy. 290 near the post office and high school
- a turn lane is also needed on Hwy. 290 throughout Dripping Springs
- speed limits on Hwy. 290 through Dripping Springs should be lower
- need to fix the traffic light at Hwy. 290 and Nutty Brown Road

3. What is Hays County doing well?

- other than the Sherriff's Office, not sure what the county does
- the Sherriff's Office is a problem too
 - not equally responsive to all parts of the county

4. What are the challenges facing Hays County?

- how to get building owners to maintain/update their property to keep the community (Dripping Springs) looking nice
- WATER

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

- wastewater treatment
 - it is still needed in some areas
 - it will help spur commercial development
- high electric rates (residential)

5. How should we address these challenges?

- zero landscaping to help conserve water
- local government controls
 - limit size of new subdivisions to help conserve water supply
 - water use restrictions
- schedule regular town hall meetings (Dripping Springs)
 - could answer questions and provide updates
 - would be a good venue for public input
- water conservation
 - require restaurants to ask customers if they want water to drink rather than just bringing it automatically

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Dripping Springs Independent School District August 25, 2009

Biggest Issues

- Unpredictability of current situation
- Current tax structure of district – most of ISD is single family, limited commercial development District is 'property rich' despite lack of commercial
- Coordination with City is a challenge
- Lack of water and wastewater infrastructure (ISD is in water and wastewater with systems at schools)
- Growth is focused on waterlines and land is expensive
- Authority to levy impact fees would be helpful but requires legislative action
- Roads
- Communication – being good stewards of public money
- Move to more suburban character district from rural focus

Managing Growth / New Facilities

- Focus on communication from Board
- New website is great asset
- Strong parent groups at schools, stay active and involved
- Good planning place for new facilities and needs
- Growth at Middle School and High School
- Next bond will include 1 ES and 1 MS
-

Needs

- Need for infrastructure to accommodate new schools (road, water, wastewater)
- Need to plan for where new schools will go to ensure proper infrastructure in place
- Comprehensive Transportation plan would be helpful
- 290 Improvements are helpful but slow
- New schools will be in the County, so roads will be partnership
- Look to North / South and East / West alternatives to 12 and 290
- Affordable housing – teachers driving from Austin, etc.
- Overlapping jurisdictions – lots of folks with influence over developers

Other

- (heard from citizen) New subdivision regs will shut down development
- Water Quantity – need to move folks off ground water
- Elder care / Access to Healthcare
- County and City focused on parks, need to budget to maintain

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Hays Consolidated ISD September 10, 2009

Summary: Challenges facing the district include bridging the achievement gap, managing growth (although downturn has given some breathing room) and addressing the changing face of the workforce. Environmental considerations are important especially related to transportation (costs as well). Increase coordination across jurisdictions.

Top Issues Facing District:

- Achievement gap – difference in performance across ethnic and income lines
- Growth – 48% since 2003 – 2004 – 750 new kids this year alone (less than in past few years)
- Planning and preparing for bond elections (takes a while)
- Changing nature of workforce – more commuters
- Lack of multi family housing is an issue (housing seems to be affordable to most, but lack of multi family limits some)
- Environmental Considerations – want to move away from auto dependency, LEED certification for buildings
- Improvements to Rhode Lane in Neiderwald between 21 and Goforth

Response to Growth

- Bond election likely in 2012 or maybe 2013 with new Admin bldg, 2 or 3 Elementary schools, new middle school, likely new high school
- Property owned for likely HS location on 967 will require road improvements (some already done), water and wastewater infrastructure going in now
- Partnerships with developers to provide land for schools (easy for ES, ok for MS, difficult for HS)
- Land available for Admin bldg next to Performing Arts Center, donated by Plum Creek
- Desire to better coordinate across jurisdictions – make school buildings more multi functional, look to share space in Admin Bldg to reduce costs to taxpayers (shared space with precinct offices?)
- Create value added facilities for communities, not single purpose school buildings
- ACC Partnership being developed – strong leadership in community with task force of community leaders in place
- Schools need to be a player in holistic approach to combating social issues
- Need to foster better partnership with SMISD

New Facilities

- New Administration Building is needed
-

County Role

- Serve as cheerleader for the district and help share good news
 - Outreach and education from officials to promote ISD's
- Education needs to be a priority – primary and post-secondary
- Explore partnership with ISD
 - Buildings and Facilities
- Communication and Collaboration
 - Particularly with approved developments so district knows where growth is happening

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- Other major projects that may impact schools (major employers, etc.)
- Quality education is key selling point for County eco dev, etc.

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Environmental and Conservation Focus Group September 2009

Summary: The Developers, Real Estate, and Large Land Owner's focus group feel that water resource and growth management as currently practiced in Hays County is detrimental to the residential and commercial growth in the county. The county and water conservation districts have implemented policies – such as a minimum 6 acre lot size – that have negatively impacted the development community. Equally, the citizen's divisive and divided vision of for growth in the county creates a difficult climate in which to do business. Developers are attune to citizen's environmental and growth concerns and, during the meeting, offered and discussed a range of ideas such as New Urbanist design, regional commuter rail, and centralized water systems for large-lot Greenfield development as antidotes to the current situation.

Five Main Priorities:

1. Water
 - a. Regulations: Overlapping and confusing regulatory agencies.
 - b. Lack of water: Parts of the county are not on surface water.
 - c. Centralized Water Resource Planning: County needs to have a centralized water District.
 - i. County needs to complete its Water/Wastewater Study
 - ii. 5-10 year planning periods are too small – need to look 40 years out.
 - d. Conservation:
 - i. Incentives for RWH
2. Land Use:
 - a. Planning
 - i. What will growth look like?
 - ii. What will be the population density
 - iii. Planning should look take holistic approach and deal with transportation, land use, and water
3. Vision, Consensus, and Dialogue
 - a. Create positive vision of what you want - not just what you don't want
 - b. Plans are a living document.
 - c. Find consensus between Pro- and No-Growth factions.
 - d. Find consensus of vision between the East and West Section of the County
 - e.
4. Transportation:
 - a. Promote multi-modal transportation
 - i. Railroads and bikes
 - b. Develop East – West Corridor
 - c. Keep toll roads – good way to pay for roads
 - d. Keep local control over decisions on roadways.
 - e. Develop and plan for the 281 corridor because the growth in that corridor is higher than the I-35 corridor.
 - f. Develop the 130 SE to Sequin parallel LCRA easement for the power lines.
 - i. If the green space is a priority the county should buy the land to set aside. (No one discussed other methods of creating green space).
 - g. Plan roads carefully to not adversely affect water quality.
5. Education and Economic Development
 - a. Tax plan to pay for goals.

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- i. Develop the I-35 corridor for tax base and eco dev driver.
 - b. Promote the benefits of New Urbanism and TND
 - i.
- 6. Non-profits and Civic Action Groups

SWOT by Category

Strengths/Opportunities

Overview:

1. Growth is increasing tax base which will improve services in specific health care in the county.
2. I-35 corridor is the tax-base generator for the county
3. Open space – lot of undeveloped land.
4. Work force is highly educated and skilled
5. Commuter line
6. Integrate TSU into the economic development.
7. A strong support for rainwater collection.
8. Location – close to Austin and San Antonio
9. Low labor costs
10. Low cost of living
11. Green development permit – cluster development
 - a. Not enough incentives
12. Growth in Satellite campuses
 - a. Tech incubator in Wimberley
 - b. ACC expand into Hays
13. Eco Tourism
 - a. Preserve natural resources for tourism
 - b.

Threats/Weakness

Overview: The primary weakness to the county's growth is overlapping and uncoordinated regulatory agencies creating a permitting process which is confusing and difficult to negotiate

Other weaknesses and threats include:

1. On the positive side, there is a lot of human capital in the western part of the county. Human capital in the form of intelligent, effective individuals with training and education to make a difference in the community. However,
 - a. It is difficult to get them involved.
 - b. There isn't the economy and industry in those areas to take advantage of that capital.
 - i. Perhaps they work in Austin then live in Hays.
 - ii. How can the county tap into that pool of talent.
2. The public want to "stop growth".
 - a. Growth is a force that cannot be stopped.
 - b. The government efforts to manage growth "artificially" create more harm than good.

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- c. Hays Co. regulation overly strict:
 - i. Impervious cover laws most stringent in the U.S.
3. What are we doing to encourage people to Hays County?
4. There is no "community" in the county.
 - a. Dripping Springs one big sprawling suburb.
 - b. No "there" there.
 - c. Fredericksburg zoning: no more than ten establishments in certain districts (zones out Starbucks)
5. Water availability:
 - a. Transfer line goes through County
 - b. Lack of regional planning
 - c. Centralized water for large-lot develop is difficult due to Hays Trinity GW.
 - d. Regulatory barriers to transfer water between basins hamstrings regional water planning efforts.
 - e. New clean water act may make all water belong to Feds.
 - f. Dam Blanco river
6. Resistance to growth:
 - a. Division within the community.
7. 6-acre minimum lot size rule.
 - a. Increases the cost of homes – lack of affordability
8. Not enough policies for incentives for:
 - a. Rain water harvesting
 - i. Underground water district has the ability to Tax in which the
 - b. Green development.
 - c. Purple pipe – gray water
 - d. Reuse or gray water
 - e. Western part of the county has the money to develop these water conservation methods while the east side does not.
9. Hays Co water/wastewater authority
 - a. Is this organization functioning
 - b. One of three counties in the state with this authority.
10. Wireless Internet and telecommunications
 - a. Satellite v. cable
 - b. Bad west/ good east
 - i. Verizon or Time Warner do not provide fiber optic.

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

San Marcos Council of Neighborhood Associations November 5, 2009

Summary: Development concerns and water quality/quantity are two highly anticipated challenges facing San Marcos Council of Neighbor Associations (CONA). The group worked to develop the [San Marcos Horizons Plan](#) and feel that the City of San Marcos (City) is not taking the necessary steps to adhere to the plan. CONA feels that the City supports, and often encourages, development that will result in flooding and compromise water quality/quantity. The group would like to see Hays County (County) help to preserve quality of life and property value by working with the City to enforce subdivision regulations, create jobs, and manage growth (including Texas State University). CONA members also discussed transportation and connectivity within San Marcos as issues the County can work to resolve.

What are the top issues facing your organization?

- Lack County regulations in neighborhoods that reside outside of City jurisdiction
- Jobs – lack of
- Roads – connectivity within City
- Schools – need to be incorporated into neighborhoods
- Low number of high school graduates within economically disadvantaged groups
- Sidewalks and bike lanes
- Code/development enforcements

How is your organization responding to growth?

- Working with the City of San Marcos to enforce regulations hoping to control issues created by absent property owners and student residents
- Wish the City of San Marcos would implement the San Marcos Horizon Plan

What new facilities are you planning in the next 3 – 5 years?

- Bike Paths
- Government center – will be built and be in threat of flooding
- Open space with trails that connect

How can the County assist with your projects?

- Talk about the issue of density and mid-rise buildings with people in the city (will help prevent flooding and development on recharge zone)
- Push development east (concern: will eliminate downtown activity)
- Help move development east by putting in roads and infrastructure
- Development east will prevent downtown flooding
- Become advocate for rail relocation
- Help with public transit
- Fund “city” services – the County can help share the cost burden of common facilities and services currently provided by the city – Example: library
- Make County bike and pedestrian plan but coordinate it with the City of San Marcos

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What other issues are facing Hays County?

- Jobs for influx of population – need sustainable jobs
 - Like the idea of medical and hospital jobs
- County, City of San Marcos, and Texas State University (University) need to work together to create jobs that the University is able to fill with new graduates
- Create and develop a sense of student belonging within the City of San Marcos and Hays County. Create the type of place that students feel vested in and do not plan to leave after graduation.
- Help University develop research programs
- Where does the University want to go and how and the County help.
- Create Jobs with benefits for local residents
- County use financial incentives to encourage economic development

What does the County do well?

- Parks – easier for the county to work with city to purchase parks
- Recently updated subdivision regulations and pushed to legal limits
- Purchased Spring Lake Preserve
- Roads

What more can the County do?

- Work to preserve historical landmarks
- Ranch Road 12
- Lobby and regulate subdivisions outside city limits

Other

- Edwards Aquifer enacted impervious cover limits
- Hays County cities need to get their own police force
- Support Commuter Rail
- County needs to work to protect safety, quality of life, and property values

Judge wanted to know why they lived here:

- Small town
- River
- University
- Born and raised
- Low cost of living
- Austin became too large and lost small town feel – moved to San Marcos to escape growing large town

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Hays County Social Services Focus Group Notes

Question 1:

- San Marcos needs a loop
 - Lacks transportation infrastructure
- Social services “infrastructure” has stayed flat during population growth
- Existing facilities are already cramped
- Need to move facilities/services to where growth is occurring
 - Especially if population is low income
- There is no place for low income folks to spay/neuter pets in the county
- Lack of facilities for any social services, especially in smaller communities and especially for low income
- Need expanded rural public transportation
- Varied hours needed at existing facilities to assist low income and shift workers
- Lots of low income folks located in areas where there are no services
- Jurisdictional changes/issues related to 2010 census
 - Could limit funding opportunities. Where currently eligible for funding, might not be after census redraws jurisdictions.
- Need affordable health care
- Need affordable housing
- Need safe/clean housing
- Big need for strategic plan with cities, county and non-profits to address needs of people in poverty
- How to address the homeless population?
 - There is only one shelter
- Cities have capped funding on social services
 - No sense that this will change
- Growth is fostering a lack of “community” or social support structure
 - Not inter-connected
- Non-profits are already strapped for cash and could use assistance from the County
 - Don't push them (non-profits) under the rug
- Form a larger social services association/coalition to create a louder/larger advocate voice
- Getting harder to find qualified volunteers
- Would like to hire staff person to handle existing volunteers
- Increasing population + flat growth of services + recession = doors getting beaten down on social services providers
 - Increasingly difficult to keep up with demand
 - Need to plan for the worst
 - Need to take social services infrastructure investment seriously
- County needs to look at how they utilize the indigent health care program
- Lack of job training for non-college bound
- Austin Community College (ACC) tuition in Hays County is triple the in-district tuition rate
 - Should consider joining ACC district
- Lack of preventative activities for youth
- Lack of affordable childcare
 - Also lack of flexible childcare (e.g., shift workers)
- Increasing rate of violent crimes

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- Due, in part, to economic crisis
- Need for legal aid
- Increasing homelessness
 - No continuity of service – children moving in and out of programs
- State/federal funding is unpredictable
 - Makes it hard to plan for the future
 - Costs continue to rise
- Can't compete with for-profit entities and cities for workers
- Neglect is also increasing
- Funding is limited for in-relative care for children
 - There is funding for foster care, though
 - Puts a burden on law enforcement and investigation ability
- CPS has a tremendous caseload and high staff turnover
- Income is not keeping up with the cost of housing
- Need for affordable rental housing
- Lack of mental health services

Question 2:

- Using technology where possible
 - Web-based applications and forms
- Mobile outreach to areas with high need
 - Influenced by lack of transportation in rural areas
- Working with Kyle Chamber to reach out to new residents for volunteer pool
 - Pizza Hut is putting flyers on pizza delivery boxes
- Libraries are training people on computer use (Internet, etc.)
 - Free Internet there
 - Folks can't afford Internet at home due to economy
- Need more Internet access resources for libraries and senior/community centers
- Developing a workforce education program in partnership with providers and major employers
- Hays County Women's Shelter is opening a new family violence center and expanding services in the old space
 - Increased space will create opportunities for internships and increased services
 - Still housed in San Marcos and not adequate coverage in the county
- Could create partnerships between Kyle and Buda to collectively address common issues
- City of San Marcos has a "buffer" board between social services and city council to address social services issues
 - Unacceptable and must change; needs restructuring
- Public funding entities (cities and county) need quantifiable numbers to justify funding
 - Rebuttal: County needs to do a better job at giving advance notice and explaining purpose of meetings where non-profits can present and request funding

Question 3:

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- CARTS is working on regional/intra-city and intra-county bus service (in their 9-county region)
- Food bank and a consortium of non-profits are planning a capital campaign to build on a 29 acre tract of land
 - Land is in southeastern part of the county and not near areas of poverty/need
 - Currently looking for existing warehouse space to move into now
- PALS is planning a free/low-cost spay and neuter clinic in the county
- All 5 public libraries are planning to expand
- The money to purchase the land in Kyle for a new library was approved
- Lack of interaction with Texas State University and social services providers
- 16 units of transitional housing and a childcare center are planned
- CommuniCare is opening a large clinic in Kyle (Medicaid accepted) also dental and OBGYN
 - There is a similar clinic already in San Marcos

Question 4:

- Recognizing that services are centered in San Marcos, while the need is in other parts of the county
- Work with cities to coordinate social services funding
- Pull together services available to county residents in a directory or website
- Take a leadership role in addressing the social services need in the whole county
- Provide some connection within the bisected geography and social geography
- One person can only write so many grants
 - Can the County hire an additional staff person to help meet this need?
- More coordination of all the plans that are needed to apply for funding
 - Some required plans come from other entities which you have no control over
- Increase investment in social services funding (the County should)
 - Has been flat
- Using County indigent health care program more effectively
- Is there a role for the County Health Department to play?
- Really take it seriously
- The County should be a partner and help determine solutions/resources
- County should coordinate a council of social services providers to create partnerships, pool resources, find solutions, etc.
- Develop a dedicated revenue stream to fund social services countywide
 - A tax?
- Is there a state agency that can work with the County to address "colonia" issues in Hays County?
 - TDHCA?
- What was done with the stimulus money that Hays County received?
- Any coordinating council that is created must be productive and useful
 - Needs resources, objectives, and accountability
- Number of home-bound seniors is growing, but so are the costs of providing meals
- Hunger is a countywide issue
- Utility assistance to help with costs is needed
 - Not enough manpower to get assistance to those who need it
 - Keep base rates low for those who don't waste water and power

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Question 5:

- Look to the future
 - Capture solar and wind power and collect rainwater when abundant
- Flooding is a big issue and often occurs in low income areas
 - Big increase in pavement will make it worse
- Adjust codes and regulations to accommodate and encourage conservation
 - There is currently no incentive to do so now
- Break out of the “poverty mentality” and realize we can do more
 - We could be a model – well-positioned to be that already

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

APPENDIX C- Town Hall Meetings and Tax Dollar Spending Exercises

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Wimberley Community Center Town Hall Meeting November 10, 2009

Summary: Development concerns and water quality/quantity are two highly anticipated challenges facing the individuals at the Hays County Town Hall meeting held at the Wimberley Community Center on November 10. About 15 participants expressed concern for the preservation of the natural beauty and finding ways to control water use in Hays County (County). Participants supported the idea of the County receiving and exercising development restrictions. In short, the public felt that County officials should have more control over unincorporated areas of the county. This will help with development concerns, building on aquifers, and smart growth.

Water Issues:

- County should work to develop incentives to promote rain water harvesting
- Sub-division ordinances implemented by the County should encourage rain water harvesting
- Need for water conservation and education
- Education on smart vegetation, rain water collection
- City/County partnerships on water conservation
- Raise public awareness – provide awards, educate, public recognition
- Strengthen groundwater districts.
- Increase county authority on land use issues
- Establish rules to manage water regarding county use
- New water supplies – bring from other areas
- Develop infrastructure to replace water from aquifers (re-charge)
- County should establish funds available to purchase development rights to prevent building on aquifers
- Transfer of development rights to County to regulate development
- Capture surface water with dams
- County should develop programs to prevent ranchers and farmers from selling land to developers.
- Raise awareness of water and water conservation importance
- Encourage public entities to harvest water – schools and public buildings
- Work with ranchers to develop ways to prevent water damage (cows in rivers)
- Make regulations and policies to use captured rain water
- Regulations to use water efficiently
- Capture on aquifer pumping – County should support ground water districts

Transportation

- Work to get cooperation with the state to manage speed limits. Need lower speeds in populated areas. Work with TXDOT
- Education on speed issues: damage to roads and vehicles, gas usage, and danger to pedestrians
- County try to get authority to control development on highways - Preserve rural areas
- Keep state highways rural, scenic roads. Roads include RR 12, 2325, 250, ect.
- Bottle new: east of 35 on 80 towards Luling at Walmart – sync lights to prevent problems
- Prohibit billboards on roadways – preserve hill county beauty
- Maintain existing roads; don't build new roads on aquifers

Growth Management

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

- County needs more authority to steer and direct growth into areas with water and roads already in place. Steer growth with incentives (\$\$)
- Jobs, rail, homes, ect built on 35 corridor – leave the west part of the county for scenic views, tourism, and water preservation
- Appropriate Jobs:
 - low environmental impact
 - need educated workforce, vocational workforce, not minimum wage jobs
 - technical workforce – country can play a role in bringing jobs to area
 - renewable energy jobs
 - agri-tourism
 - research – develop tax incentives – think tanks and software
 - distribution opportunities on 35
- County role in Economic Development?
 - Focus incentives on “good” jobs – more than minimum wage
 - Support local businesses
 - Encourage agriculture, ranching, and farming
 - Discourage housing on fames
- More high density on 35, urban feel in eastern part of County – rural, scenic look western part of County
- Build and direct compact cities – make cities pedestrian friendly
- Leave unincorporated County without development – preserve

Quality of Life

- Best practices for Hill County development manual – discuss conservation and housing
- No 4 lane highways
- Keep Texas “Rustic” – distinct look of small towns
- No Lakeway – preserve unique feel
- Keep density housing on 35 near newly developed rail line – not in Hill Country – rural, character housing in Hill Country
- Administrators and elected officials should view County as three distinct areas:
 - 1. Dripping Springs – unique with LCRA water resources
 - 2. IH 35 – developing and growing communities with jobs and rail
 - 3. Hill Country – environmentally sensitive (preserve)

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Chapa Middle School Town Hall Meeting November 12, 2009

Summary: Development, Hays County (County) authority, agriculture exemptions and incentives, and farmland preservation were issues discussed at the Hays County Town Hall meeting held at the Chapa Middle School on November 12. In total, sixteen citizens participated in the meeting and focused their discussions on the need to preserve family farms, which, in effect, will conserve water and aid in congestion/development problems. The group felt that it is important for the County to provide incentives for construction of stock tanks and promote agriculture. They voiced concern about transportation and the difficulties of commuting across the County and into Austin. Water issues focused on impervious cover causing flooding and poor water quality provided by Monarch. In addition, there seemed to be no support of a County economic development plan; instead, citizens feel the County should serve as a referee between the cities and encourage development by supporting current efforts underway. Participants feel that in order to preserve quality of life, the County must work to insure that rural character is maintained by promoting low density and working to protect family farms and open space.

Water Issues:

- Kyle has surface water
 - How can entire County get access?
 - County should investigate
 - Monarch in not responsive
- High prices and low water quality (Monarch)
- Storm water management and flooding is now an issue
 - Impervious cover is causing run-off
- County should be more involved with water planning
 - More responsive to public opinion than private companies
- Drainage in subdivisions (unincorporated areas) should be priority
- County can/should be very pro-active when water permits request changes
- County grants for farmers/ranchers to build stock tanks – will result in water conservation

Transportation

- 217 improvements needed – bottleneck (in progress)
- Dacy Lane taking too long
 - Four schools within three miles
- Maintenance is the issue on County East Side
- Only options out from North side of the County is Mopac, IH 35, and neighborhood roads
 - Access is limited
 - Need major connector roads
- Connections to Toll 130 will become an issue as it is built
 - Especially when development comes into that area
- No Rapid Rail
- Park and Ride with some sort of transportation system
- Commuter rails is the future
- Park-n-rides for commuter rail could make traffic worse
- Commuter rail must be more efficient
- County should control rail and not cities

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

- Eliminates competing politics
- Key road projects should incorporate bike lanes
 - Those with lots of pedestrian use
 - Some road just need shoulders (Example: 150)

Growth Management

- Need more senior housing areas
- County should continue to push legislature for more authority/control of growth in unincorporated areas
- Some advantages and disadvantages to more County authority for growth management
- Should focus on subdivision management
- County's current legislative agenda for more authority is an adequate start
- County could be more aggressive in economic development
- Look for compatible industries and supplies
- County's economic development cold could be more coordinating and assisting the cities' endeavors
 - County should think regionally and see what is going on between the cities
 - Bring cities to the table and referee

Quality of Life

- Q of L refers to rural character and low density
- Preserve agricultural and natural open space
- Preserving smaller parcels
 - Provide agricultural/wildlife exemptions
 - Incentives for preserving family farms
- A thriving agriculture base is important
- Water quality interferes with quality of life
 - MUDs pump wastewater into creeks
 - Plum Creek wastewater improvements underway
 - County should support improvements
- County should help support existing watershed plans in new developments
- Tourism development – city should help coordinate
- County should support green energy development and use

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Dripping Springs City Hall Town Hall Meeting November 19, 2009

Summary: Hays County (County) held the fourth, and final, town hall meeting at Dripping Springs City Hall on Thursday, November 19. The meeting shared many of the general themes of the other three public input opportunities. In short, citizens voiced concern about water availability and encouraged the County to provide financial incentives for water conservation and rain water collection. Public safety was the primary discussion topic around transportation; bike lanes, shoulders, and pedestrian friendly roads dominated the discussion. In short, the public looks to the County to protect quality of life by managing growth, conserving water, and preserving the natural habitats of the area.

Water Issues:

- Support rain water collection – use money incentives
- Incentives and encourage zero-scraping and native vegetation
- Money for retro-fitting water collection systems
- Identify recharge areas and preserve
- Save open space
- Educate on water issues
- County bring surface water into area
- Build water recreation area – lake
- Work to protect water quality – exercise County authority
- Enforce regulations to prevent heavy water use buildings
- Educate developers with guidelines for environment friendly development
- Encourage grey water for irrigation from homes

Transportation

- Rumble Strips on county roads (specifically Fitzhugh Road)
- Incorporate shoulders and or bike lanes
- Designate “bikeways” long term planning goal
- Connect key roads with bike trails
- Coordinate between jurisdictions (plan together)
- Develop feeder roads and set land aside
- Preserve right-of-way on highways
- Satellite offices to keep people working in rural areas – help prevent traffic
- Build park and ride systems
- Preserve scenic byways – no multi story buildings and billboards
- Mail boxes on roads – who is responsible
- Develop “packet” for new homeowners to include information about regulations, building suggestions, ect.
- Reseed highways with wildflowers
- Create pedestrian friendly byways
- Illuminate key intersections; make them safe

Growth Management

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

- Attract retired community
- Mixed use – multi level development
 - In Dripping Springs at Old Fitzhugh Road
- Promote agri-tourism – wineries (consider water issues)
- Recreation
- Housing:
 - Not a County problem
 - County work to improve quality of life and attract people to build homes
 - Low income, affordable houses
 - Share tax base within industrial
 - Diversify tax use
- More density on 35 (flat land) rather than hills

Quality of Life

- Small towns = walkability
- Rural = quite, dark
- Residential lighting control
- Preserve natural environment
 - Keep density within city
 - Keep rural area natural with small roads, farms, and wildlife
- Authority over noise

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

San Marcos Police Department Town Hall Meeting November 17, 2009

Summary: The Precinct 1 Hays County town hall meeting was held at the San Marcos Police Department on November 17, 2009. Only about ten citizens participated in the discussion and focused their comments on water conservation and quality of life issues. In short, participants feel that Hays County (County) administrators should use incentives to encourage "smart development" and work to preserve quality of life. There seemed to be a consensus that many people live in Hays County because of the type of life they are able to live; therefore, changing the County too much would make citizens unhappy. Preserving the quality of life will result in citizens who plan to remain in Hays County if development does not change the small town, rural atmosphere. Transportation, water supply, and employment were other areas of discussion.

Water Issues:

- Impervious cover and flooding issues
- County should work more with Texas State regarding better landscaping, irrigation, and water use
- Bridge over Sink Creek at Lime Kiln Road
 - For emergency access
 - County should protect recharge zone by preventing road from becoming a highway
- How to educate on land management issues to protect water quality? County should address.
- Keeping San Marcos Rive flowing and health. It is importation to the residents of San Marcos.
- Encourage Edwards Aquifer authority to do impervious cover regulations
- Protecting watershed features
 - Buffering
 - Do this in water development codes
- Other future water supplies
 - Especially for smaller towns
 - San Marcos already working on this
- No water in SH 130 area
 - Growth should be east if aquifers are to be protected
- Continued rainwater collecting incentives
- Encourage rainwater collection in neighborhoods
 - Incentives
 - Outreach and education
 - Support for stricter regulations on well and septic spacing

Transportation

- Should be balanced
 - Need new roads, but also need to provide alternate transportation
 - Bike lanes, rail, public transportation
- Look at systematic approach to alternate transportation development
 - People liver here, how do we get them "there"
 - Holistic

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

- Sink Creek/Lime Kiln Road – bridge
- Expanded public transit option in the County
- Side walks, bike lanes, shoulders are needed in high pedestrian use areas
 - 621, 123, 12, Fulton Ranch Road
 - Look into grants for pedestrian trails
- County can be a big voice in advocating commuter rail
 - Must move freight rail to east
 - Need internal circulation routes from rail stations
- Need connecting roads from 130; especially in East Hays

Growth Management

- Get state agencies to relocate and expand offices in to Hays County
- Must maintain quality of life
 - Live here (at lower salaries) because of the desired quality of life
- Target office space and laboratories
 - Resident requirements
- County should partner with cities and local economic development efforts
 - Certain projects require County to take the lead
- County should enforce residential building codes
- Water conservation measures
- Encourage smaller houses and lots
- Many water issues apply here
- Spend money on existing infrastructure
- Make County a great place to more a business
- County could encourage clustered subdivisions
- Envision Central Texas – Plan D
- Encourage development on major highways

Quality of Life

- Don't provide incentives to large manufacturing development on recharge zone
- Target "appropriate" businesses and push them to best locations for development
- Look into technology sector for growth of jobs
- Business development will follow growth
 - Focus on quality of life for residents
- Need more college level jobs
 - So don't have to drive into Austin
- Lengthen "hike for a day" to 5 Mile Dam Park
- Act now to conserve "got spot" locations identified in the Green Print
- Need to improve services to rural poor
- After school activities
 - Especially teenagers
 - More places/parks for kids to hang out
 - Pocket and neighborhood parks should be all over the County
 - County should provide neighborhood incentives
- Deer prevention
- Feral hogs are big contributors to poor water quality
- Back to paper ballots – no voting machines
- Bring in training facilities for public safety sector
 - Will serve as an economic development opportunity

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

- County and local public safety will be better trained
- County could prevent flooding of development
- Preserving historic and older buildings and trees both in and out of city limits
- County can help preserve agricultural land with conservation easements, etc.
- Create gathering places
 - Encourage multi-generational interaction
 - Could be outdoor areas
- County can do more park planning and create places like Reimar Park in Travis County
 - Bike trails, rock climbing, conservation easements
- County should generate recreational opportunities and options
- High probability of seeing people you know
- Low traffic
- Alternative transportation methods
- Mixed use development
 - Update zoning codes to encourage this
- Locate retail services in new subdivisions
- Lighting standards

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Spending Exercise 1

\$10.25 total spending of existing tax dollars

New County Activities

- Open Space / Parks - \$165 (\$20, \$20, \$10, \$30, \$50, \$25, \$10)
- Water Quality Protection Land - \$80 (\$20, \$20, \$10, \$30)
- Residential Water Conservation Incentives - \$20
- Housing Authority / Affordable Housing - \$120 (\$50, \$20, \$50)

Health and Human Services (32% of total revenue)

- Youth Services - \$1.30 total (13% of total revenue)
- Personal Health Services - \$.95 total (9% of total revenue)
 - Scheib Opportunity Center - \$50 / year new taxes
- Basic Living Services - \$1.05 (10% of total revenue)
 - Hays County Area Food Bank - \$20 / year new taxes

Government Services

- Grants Administration - \$2 / year new taxes

Public Safety (19% of total revenue)

- Fire and EMS Services - \$.85 total (8% of total revenue)
- Community Volunteer Emergency Services - \$.70 total (7% of total revenue)
 - \$10 / year new taxes
- Animal Services - \$.45 total (4% of total revenue)

Law Enforcement (4% of total revenue)

- Law Enforcement Programs - \$.45 total (4% of total revenue)
 - School Resource Officers – 1 vote to stop funding
 - DPS License and Weight – 4 votes to stop funding
 - TABC – 5 votes to stop funding

Justice System (5% of total revenue)

- Family Law Judge \$.50 total (5% of total revenue)
- Indigent Defense - \$60 / year in new taxes (\$50 and \$10)

Transportation

Development Services

Recreational Services

Other Services (38% of total revenue)

- Texas Agri Life Extension - \$.80 (7% of total revenue)
- Libraries - \$1.00 (11% of total revenue)
 - \$45 / year new taxes (\$20 & \$25)
- Hays / Caldwell Women's Center - \$.60 total (6% of total revenue)
- Senior Centers - \$.35 total (3% of total revenue)
- Economic Development / Planning Groups- \$.45 total (4% of total revenue)
- Cultural Programs - \$.80 total (7% of total revenue)
 - Wimberley Institute of Cultures – 1 dot to stop funding

Spending Exercise 2

This is the 1st meeting that was different from the other 3, so the numbers are a little different

\$7.55 total spending of existing tax dollars

New County Activities

- Walkable Cities / Pedestrian sensitive development - \$20 / year new spending

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

- Multi modal transportation hubs (bike lanes) - \$75 / year new spending (\$50, \$5 and \$20)
 - Open Space / County Parks - \$100 / year new spending (\$5, \$10, \$5, \$40 and \$40)
 - Purchase of Development Rights to protect Water Quality and Quantity - \$160 / year new spending (\$100 and \$60)
 - Commuter Rail - \$50 / year new spending
 - Full Chapter 36 GCD - \$35 / year new spending (\$15 and \$20)
 - Funding HTGCD - \$2.00 / year
 - Stop Funding State Highways – 2 votes
- Health and Human Services (13% of total revenue)**
- Youth Services - \$.35 total (5% total revenue)
 - Personal Health Services - \$.35 total (5% total revenue)
 - 2 votes to end funding for Veteran's Affairs
 - Basic Living Services - \$.20 (3% total revenue)
- Government Services (11% of total revenue)**
- County Judge – \$.05 total (1% total revenue)
 - Debt Service - \$.05 total (1% total revenue)
 - Elections Administration - \$.15 total (2% total revenue)
 - Equipment - \$.10 total (1% total revenue)
 - Grants Administration - \$.40 total (5% total revenue)
 - IT - \$.10 total (1% total revenue)
- Public Safety (21% of total revenue)**
- Emergency Management - \$.05 total (1% total revenue)
 - Fire and EMS Services - \$.60 total (8% of total revenue)
 - Community Volunteer Emergency Services - \$.70 total (9% of total revenue)
 - Animal Services - \$.25 total (3% of total revenue)
- Law Enforcement (2% of total revenue)**
- Law Enforcement Programs - \$.15 (2% total revenue)
 - SWAT – 4 votes to stop funding
 - TABC – 2 votes to stop funding
- Justice System (4% of total revenue)**
- Family Law Judge \$.20 total (3% total revenue)
 - County Court at Law \$.10 total (1% total revenue)
- Transportation (1% of total revenue)**
- Road and Bridge - .05 total (1% total revenue)
- Development Services (14% of total revenue)**
- Subdivision Management - \$.50 total (7% total revenue)
 - Septic Permitting - \$.25 total (3% total revenue)
 - Flood Plain Management - \$.30 total (4% total revenue)
- Recreational Services (5% of total revenue)**
- 5 Mile Dam \$.35 total (5% total revenue)
- Other Services (31% of total revenue)**
- Texas Agri Life Extension - \$.40 total (5% total revenue)
 - Historical Commission - \$.15 total (2% total revenue)
 - Law Library - \$.05 total (1% total revenue)
 - Libraries - \$.50 total (7% total revenue)
 - Economic Development / Planning Groups \$.20 total (3% total revenue)
 - Hays County Crime Stoppers - \$.25 total (3% total revenue)

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- Cultural Programs - \$.30 total (4% total revenue)
- CARTS - \$.35 total (5% total revenue)
- Hays / Caldwell Women's Center - \$.10 total (1% total revenue)

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Spending Exercise 3

\$10.00 total spending of existing tax dollars

New County Activities

- Open Space / Parks - \$100 (\$20, \$20, \$10, \$30, \$50, \$25, \$10)
- Environmental Protection - \$100

Health and Human Services (17% of total revenue)

- Youth Services - \$.45 total (5% total revenue)
- Personal Health Services - \$.70 (7% total revenue)
- Basic Living Services - \$.50 (5% total revenue)

Government Services (5% of total revenue)

- Debt Service - \$.10 total (1% total revenue)
- Grants Administration - \$.10 total (1% total revenue)
- IT - \$.10 total (1% total revenue)
- Janitorial - \$.05 total (1% total revenue)
- Courthouse Security - \$.05 total (1% total revenue)

Public Safety (21% of total revenue)

- Fire and EMS Services - \$.80 total (8% total revenue)
 - \$35 / year new spending (\$10 and \$25)
- Community Volunteer Emergency Services - \$.50 total (5% total revenue)
- Animal Services - \$.80 total (8% total revenue)
 - \$10 / year new spending

Law Enforcement (17% of total revenue)

- Traffic Control - \$.10 (1% total revenue)
- Law Enforcement Programs - \$1.60 total (16% total revenue)
 - \$20 in new spending (\$10 and \$10) for overall Law Enforcement
 - Drug Task Force - \$8 / year new spending

Justice System (2% of total revenue)

- Court Collection - \$.05 total (1% total revenue)
- Family Law Judge - \$.10 (1% of total revenue)

Transportation

Development Services (8% of total revenue)

\$.75 total (\$.35 Subdivision Mgmt, \$.10 Septic, rest general) (8% total revenue)

- \$100 / year new spending + 1 tax increase with no amount

Recreational Services (4% of total revenue)

\$.35 total (3.5% total revenue)

Other Services (39% of total revenue)

- Texas Agri Life Extension - \$.45 (5% total revenue)
 - 2 votes for add'l tax revenue, but no amount written in
- Libraries - \$.30 (3% total revenue)
 - 2 votes for add'l tax revenue, but no amount written in
- Hays / Caldwell Women's Center - \$.90 total (9% total revenue)
 - \$125 / year in new spending (\$25 and \$100)
- Senior Centers - \$.70 total (7% total revenue)
 - \$50 / year in new spending
- Economic Development / Planning Groups - \$.25 total (3% total revenue)
 - 1 vote to stop overall
 - 1 vote to stop Corridor Council

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

- Cultural Programs - \$.30 total (3% total revenue)
 - 3 dots to stop funding overall
 - Wimberley Institute of Cultures –2 dots to stop funding
 - Calaboose African American Museum – 4 dots to stop funding

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Spending Exercise 4

\$14.25 total spending of existing tax dollars

New County Activities

- Open Space / Parks - \$186 (\$50, \$50, \$36, \$50)
- Water Quality / Planning - \$106 (\$20, \$36, \$50)

Health and Human Services (23% of total spending)

- Youth Services - \$1.05 total (7% total spending)
 - \$20 / year new spending
- Personal Health Services - \$1.45 (10% total spending)
 - \$50 / year new spending
 - Veterans Administration - \$150 / year new spending (\$50 and \$100)
 - Scheib Opportunity Center - \$30 / year new spending
- Basic Living Services - \$.90 total (6% total spending)
 - Nosotros La Gente – 1 vote to stop funding
 - CARTS - \$10 / year new spending

Government Services

Public Safety (26% of total revenue)

- Fire and EMS Services - \$2.25 total (16% total spending)
 - \$305 / year new spending (\$100, \$75, \$50, \$40, \$20 and \$20)
- Community Volunteer Emergency Services - \$.95 total (7% total spending)
- Animal Services - \$.65 total (3% total spending)
 - 6 votes to stop funding gov't trappers

Law Enforcement

Justice System (4% of total revenue)

- Family Law Judge - \$.55 total (4% total revenue)
 - 1 vote to stop funding

Transportation

- Road and Bridge - \$90 / year in new spending (\$50 and \$40)

Development Services (13% of total revenue)

\$1.90 total (13% total revenue)

Recreational Services

- 1 vote to stop funding 5 Mile Dam

Other Services (33% of total revenue)

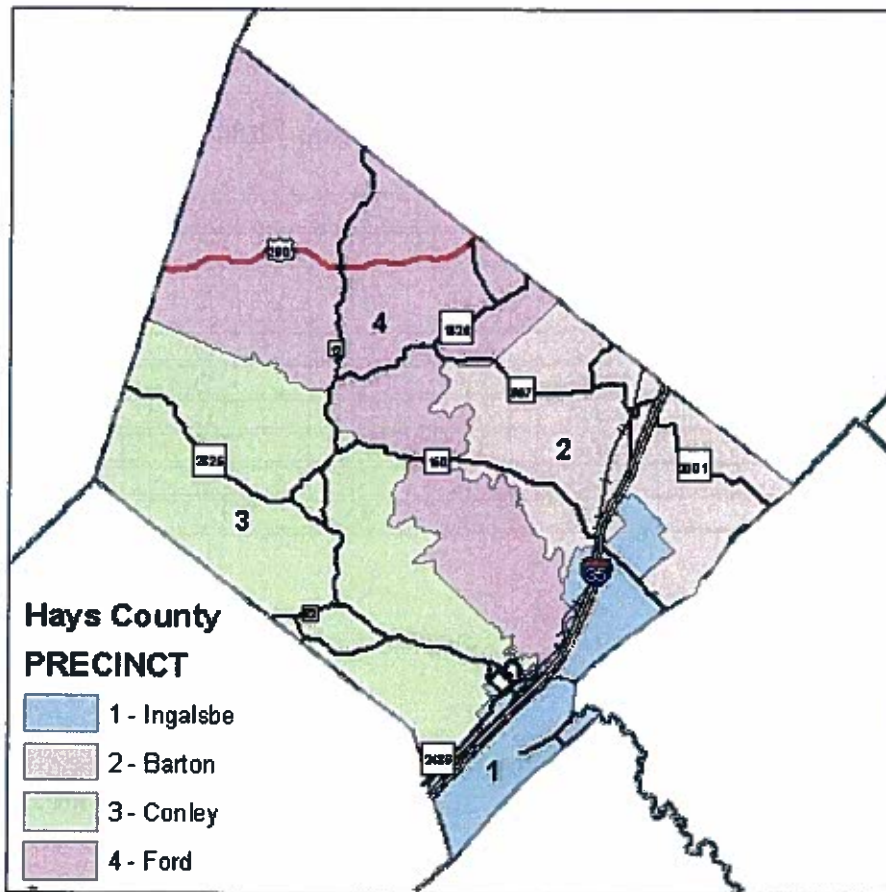
- Texas Agri Life Extension - \$.80 total (6% total revenue)
- Libraries - \$.70 (5% total revenue)
- Hays / Caldwell Women's Center - \$.30 total (2% total revenue)
 - 1 vote to stop funding
- Senior Centers - \$.70 total (5% total revenue)
 - \$50 / year in new spending
- Economic Development / Planning Groups- \$1.10 total (8% of total revenue)
- Cultural Programs - \$.95 total (7% total revenue)
 - Wimberley Institute of Cultures – 5 dots to stop funding
 - Calaboose African American Museum – 5 dots to stop funding

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

APPENDIX D - Countywide Survey and Results

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

Hays County Survey



1. **Which Commissioners Precinct do you live in?** Refer to the map above and circle the appropriate answer
___ 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ Not Sure ___ Outside the County
2. **Do you live in the City Limits of an Incorporated City?** ___ Yes ___ No
3. **If Yes, in what City do you live?** _____
4. **How many years have you lived in Hays County?**
___ Less than 2 years ___ 2-5 years ___ 6-10 years

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11-20 years

More than 20 years

5. **Why do you live in Hays County?** Please circle the answer that best represents your feelings

| | Agree Strongly | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Disagree Strongly |
|------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| Relatives/Family Heritage | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| Location / Proximity to Austin | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| Hill Country / Natural Environment | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| Rural Character | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| Job opportunities | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| Recreational Opportunities | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| Good place for families | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| Schools | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| Other | AS | A | N | D | DS |

6. **How old are you?**

Under 18 18 – 34 35 – 49 50 – 64 65 or over

7. **If you are employed, where do you work?** Please check the city where you work

Dripping Springs Austin Wimberley San Marcos Buda

Kyle Niederwald Umland New Braunfels San Antonio

Unincorporated area of Hays County Unemployed Retired Other

Hays County Strategic Policy Plan

8. Hays County should focus its resources on...

| | Agree Strongly | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Disagree Strongly |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| Managing Growth | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| Conserving Natural Resources | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| Improving Roads | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| Providing Public Transit Options | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| Expanding Housing Options | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| Protecting Water Quality and Quantity | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| Helping Existing Businesses | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| Protecting Public Health and Safety | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| Business Recruitment / Development | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| Other | AS | A | N | D | DS |

9. Please Rank the Following Issues in Order of Priority:

- ___ Water Quantity and Quality
- ___ Road Improvements
- ___ Parks and Open Space
- ___ Sheriff
- ___ Emergency Management
- ___ Fire / EMS
- ___ Property Taxes
- ___ Affordable Health Care
- ___ Senior Services
- ___ Housing Affordability
- ___ Public / Rail Transportation

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10. Please Rate the Following:

| | Agree Strongly | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Disagree Strongly |
|---|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| County authority is adequate to ensure responsible growth | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| Cities and County are working together | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| The County is a responsible steward of tax revenues | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| Elected County Officials are responsive to the Citizens | AS | A | N | D | DS |
| County Employees are responsive and provide good service | AS | A | N | D | DS |

11. What is the best thing about Hays County?

12. What do you think are the most important things to consider and address as this process moves forward?

11. Town Hall Meetings will be held Tuesday, Nov 10th, Thursday, Nov 12th, Tuesday, Nov 17th and Thursday, Nov 19th across the County. Do you Plan to Attend a Town Hall Meeting? ___Yes ___No

Thank you for taking time to provide input on the future of Hays County! These results are completely anonymous and confidential and will be used to make the Comprehensive Plan reflection of the goals and values of the citizens of Hays County.

Community Survey

This is a public opinion survey being sent to you from Hays County to get your input on the issues and opportunities facing our community in the next several years. This is part of an on-going process to develop a Strategic Policy Plan to help guide the County.

Please Complete the Survey by Monday, October 26th

Town Hall meetings will be held Tuesday, Nov 10th, Thursday, Nov 12th, Tuesday, Nov 17th, and Thursday, Nov 19th across the County to allow an additional opportunity for public input as well. Further details will be on the County website (www.co.hays.tx.us) and in other media, so please stay informed and participate in these meetings.


This is your opportunity to make your opinion known and help shape the future of Hays County. Your participation is vital to ensure the Plan reflects your concerns and priorities! Please make every effort to attend the meetings.

The survey is completely anonymous and confidential.

Survey Results



Hays County Survey Results

The image shows a vertical sidebar on the left side of the table. It contains the LGRA logo at the top, followed by the text "814 Responses to the Survey".

| What Precinct do you live in? | | |
|-------------------------------|--|---------------|
| Precinct 1 – 9.8% | | 59 responses |
| Precinct 2 – 20.0% | | 121 responses |
| Precinct 3 – 32.8% | | 198 responses |
| Precinct 4 – 29.1% | | 176 responses |
| Not Sure - 6.3% | | 38 responses |
| Outside of County – 2.0% | | 12 responses |



Do you live in an Incorporated City?

Yes – 49.7%
No – 50.3%

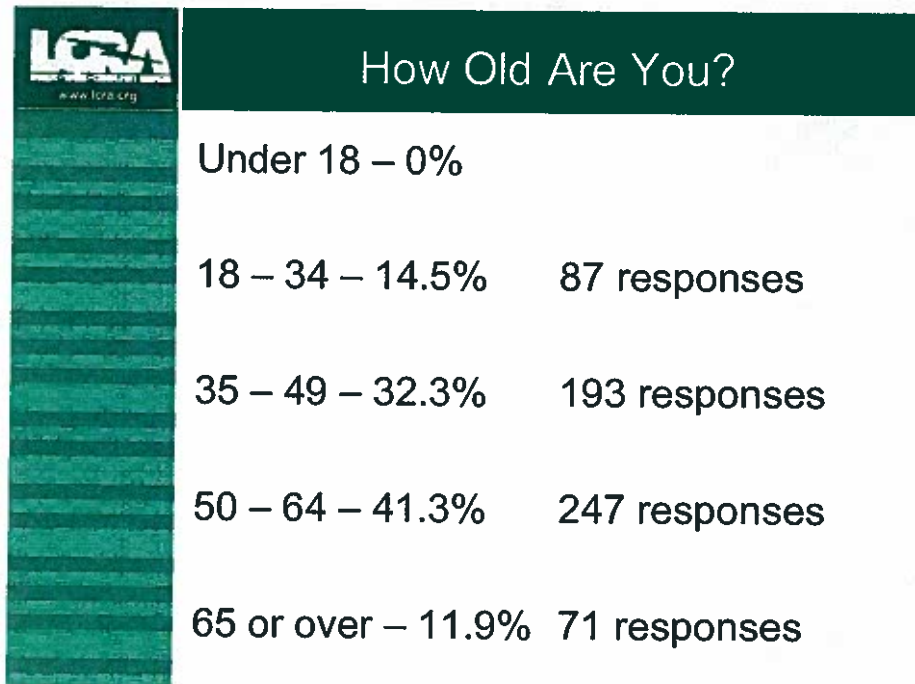
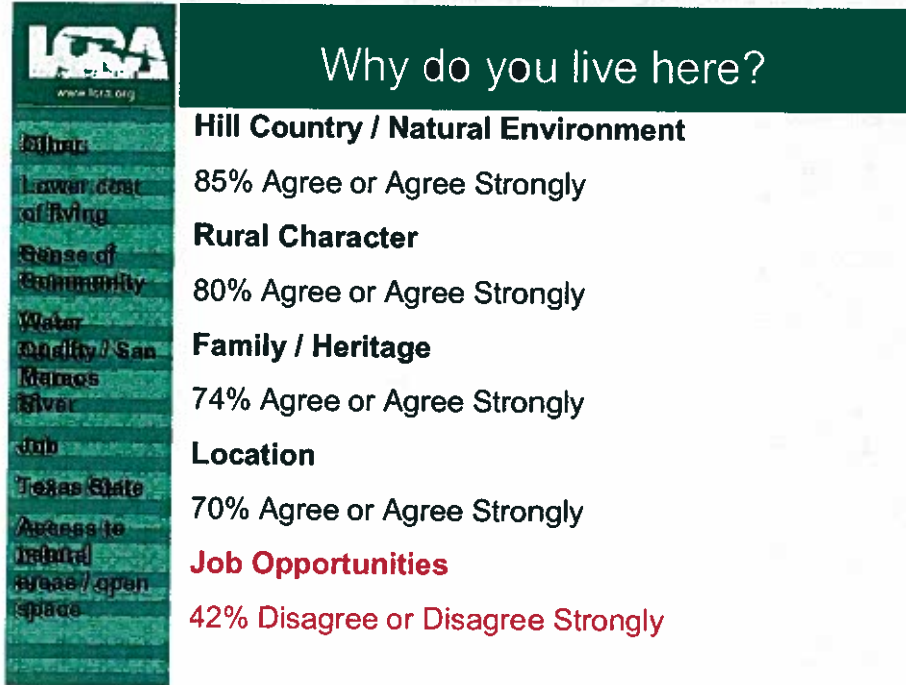
Which City?

Buda – 28 Dripping Springs – 20
Kyle – 59 Mountain City – 21
San Marcos – 95 Wimberley – 30
Woodcreek - 22



How many years have you lived here?


Less than 2 Years – 6.1%
2 – 5 Years – 19.7%
6 – 10 Years - 21.2%
11 – 20 Years – 25.0%
More than 20 Years – 28.1%



Hays County Strategic Policy Plan


| Where do you work? | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| Other | Dripping Springs – 6.1% |
| Work from Home | Austin – 24.8% |
| Work Regionally | Wimberley – 5.9% |
| Johnson City | San Marcos - 22.7% |
| Region | Buda - 2.3% |
| Self-employed | Kyle - 7.6% |
| | Niederwald - 0.2% |
| | Uhland - 0.3% |
| | New Braunfels - 0.5% |
| | San Antonio - 1.0% |
| | Unincorporated area - 2.4% |
| | Unemployed - 1.7% |
| | Retired - 14.7% |
| | Other - 9.7% |

| County should focus resources on | |
|---|--|
| Other | Protecting Water Quality and Quantity |
| Urban Development | 91% Agree or Agree Strongly |
| Countywide Water | Conserving Natural Resources |
| Managing growth | 88% Agree or Agree Strongly |
| Protection of rivers | Managing Growth |
| Reduce tax burden | 87% Agree or Agree Strongly |
| Restoration opportunity | Protecting Public Health and Safety |
| Limited government | 84% Agree or Agree Strongly |
| High Neutral vote | Improving Roads |
| Housing, only 25% Agree or Agree Strongly | 74% Agree or Agree Strongly |
| | Helping Existing Business |
| | 64% Agree or Agree Strongly |
| | Providing Public Transit* |
| | 45% Agree or Agree Strongly |
| | Expanding Housing Options* |
| | 38% Disagree or Disagree Strongly |
| | Recruiting New Business* |
| | 49% Agree or Agree Strongly |



Prioritize the Following

- 1 Water Quantity and Quality
- 2 Road Improvements
- 3 Parks and Open Space
- 4 Sheriff
- 5 Emergency Management
- 6 Fire / EMS
- 7 Property Taxes
- 8 Affordable Health Care
- 9 Senior Services
- 10 Housing Affordability
- 11 Public / Rail Transportation



Rate the Following

County Employees Provide Good Service
52% Agree or Agree Strongly only 10% Disagree

Elected Officials are Responsive
37% Agree or Agree Strongly 28% Disagree

Responsible Steward of Tax Revenues
30% Agree 44% Neutral 25% Disagree

County Authority is Adequate
35% Agree 22% Neutral 37% Disagree

Cities and County are working together
26% Agree 40% Neutral 33% Disagree



Best thing about Hays County?

- Natural / Rural Environment (rivers, hills, beauty)
- Proximity to Austin and San Antonio
- Slower lifestyle / Small Town Character
- Its not Austin
- Safety / Low Crime Rate
- Texas State
- Good place for families
- People

