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Introduction

In early 2014, the City of Bay City decided to move forward with the development of a Comprehensive Plan to identify a vision and develop a strategy to implement that vision. The result is the Vision Bay City 2040 Plan. This plan is based on extensive public input and reflects the priorities of Bay City residents. It identifies key challenges facing the community and strategies to address those challenges. The plan is intended as a guide for city-wide action, not just city government. There is opportunity for the entire community to get involved in implementing this plan. Residents cannot wait for city government to address every issue, they need to take ownership and get involved in moving Bay City forward.

Plan Organization

This plan has five major sections. The Introduction provides background on the plan, discusses plan implementation, and provides a summary of the public input. It also has the Vision Statement created to guide planning efforts. The second is the Demographic Analysis, which provides information related to Bay City’s current and projected populations, housing, education, income, employment, and taxes. A plan cannot be successful without a solid foundation of good data to fully understand the community.

The third section includes the various topical chapters addressing the range of issues in the plan. These include the following:

- Land Use
- Housing
- Parks and Recreation
- Downtown Revitalization and Historic Preservation
- Livability and Quality of Life
- Transportation
- Infrastructure and City Facilities
- Economic Development
- Tourism Development

Within these chapters, a series of goals and objectives are identified based on an assessment of Bay City and intensive public engagement. These goals address key challenges and provide background information, best practices, and analysis of the issues.

The fourth section is the Implementation Guide. This is a detailed action plan for making this plan successful. It provides clear action steps for each goal, as well as a timeline, responsible parties, potential partners and stakeholders, as well as potential funding sources. This guide is intended to be used regularly by City staff, City Council, Planning Commission, and others as they make decisions to ensure they are following the plan guidelines. It is also helpful to ensure the plan’s longevity as current leadership changes and new people get involved. The Implementation Guide serves as the tool to ensure this plan does not gather dust on a shelf, but instead is the catalyst for improving Bay City.

The fifth section is the Appendix. Within the Appendix are additional resources to help with plan implementation. They include examples of work from other communities, as well as a Park Inventory. This section should be used as a reference guide to help move the plan forward and answer questions that may arise.

Plan Ownership and Responsibility

Too often, communities reach the end of the planning process and think they are done with the hard work. Developing the plan is really just the beginning; the hard work is in the implementation. A plan is only successful if it leads to action in addressing the challenges identified. When a plan is left to gather dust, the community has not only wasted money, it has wasted the goodwill of the citizens who chose to participate and the momentum developed by the outreach and engagement of the process.

The key to successful implementation is to ensure someone at the city ‘owns’ the plan, keeping it front of City leadership and consistently reviewing it and checking on progress. The logical owner is the Planning Commission. It is tasked as an advisory body to the City Council, providing insight into growth and development issues. Because the plan is intended to guide growth and development, it makes sense for the Planning Commission to be responsible for it. Ownership means they need to regularly review the plan, check in with the responsibility parties, and ensure resources are dedicated where needed to achieve plan goals and objectives.

The Planning Commission can also take their responsibility further and identify plan champions who can take individual responsibility for specific goals and actions in the plan. This is strongly recommended for key goals and objectives that require significant investment and resources. This will help ensure consistent action is taken to move these efforts forward and they are not ignored.

A second necessity for successful implementation is leadership. While the Planning Commission can be responsible for keeping attention on the plan, it requires leadership to actually take action. The Mayor and City Council have to take responsibility for building the necessary support to implement the plan. Despite the significant public outreach in developing the plan, there will still be resistance when the time comes to put public money into plan projects. City Council must exhibit leadership in the face of this resistance and keep the plan as the guide for their actions.

The Mayor, acting as City Manager, sets the tone for City Staff. If the plan is a priority and this is communicated to staff as an expectation, they will take initiative in moving it forward. If the Mayor ignores the plan, staff will follow suit, and implementation will falter.

Finally, citizens must be continually engaged in implementation. There are many opportunities for community organizations and volunteers to take responsibility for goals in the plan. There needs to be consistent outreach and engagement with the public, empowering them to take action and improve their community. Citizens should also be responsible for keeping the plan a priority by attending Council

meetings and ensuring resources are used to implement plan goals. It truly will take all of Bay City working together to make this plan successful.

Public Engagement

Public engagement is a vital part of a successful planning process because it ensures the plan reflects the issues and priorities of the community. Goals and objectives can be tied to what the citizens see as necessary improvements. It also ensures plan implementation can happen because elected officials can make decisions with the confidence of having public support. When there is resistance, they can trust that most citizens will support them because they are following the plan.

The first step in public engagement was the creation of a Steering Committee appointed by City Council. This Steering Committee included residents from across Bay City representing different neighborhoods, communities, and interest group. This group was tasked with serving as the voice of the community throughout the planning process, ensuring that the plan stayed true to Bay City and its residents.

The first step in public input was a Community Survey. This survey was reviewed by the Steering Committee to ensure it was asking relevant questions to capture key issues in Bay City. The survey was available on the internet and also via hard copies at various city facilities. Hard copies were also shared at community events and the senior activity center. There were nearly 1,000 responses to the survey, and survey respondents were from all age groups and parts of town, indicating a good diversity in response. Key findings from the survey included improvements to roads and parks, the need for new jobs and expanded business opportunities, and addressing challenges to quality of life. A full review of the survey results can be found in Appendix A, along with a copy of the survey.

Along with the survey, a series of interviews and focus groups were held to gather in depth information about specific issues and topics. Key community leaders and City Staff were interviewed to identify what they considered to be key challenges facing Bay City. Their insight was seen as important because of their engagement and experience with the community. Focus groups included:

- Community Perception and Quality of Life
- Parks and Recreation
- Tourism
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Downtown
- Infrastructure

These focus groups were an opportunity for residents and staff specifically engaged with an issue to provide insight and information related to that topic. This was important because they brought knowledge and experience specifically related to Bay City and the key issues facing it. A summary of the focus group findings can be found in Appendix A.

Finally, two Town Hall meetings were held to gather input from the community at large. The first of these was at the Civic Center and was well attended. Participants were given an overview of the plan process, a summary of the demographic analysis and survey results, then split into small groups. The groups rotated through five topics to provide insight, including quality of life, economic development, parks and recreation, downtown, and infrastructure. These five topics were the key challenges identified in the survey, so it was important to gather more information on what citizens were concerned about. Once the discussion was complete, participants were given four dots to vote on their priorities.

The second Town Hall followed a similar format. It was held at the request of a citizen concerned with the lack of minority participation at the first meeting. This citizen took responsibility for getting involvement from the African American community, and the meeting was very successful. Issues and priorities from this second meeting closely paralleled those from the first. A summary of the Town Halls can be found in Appendix A.

Throughout the planning process, the Steering Committee stayed engaged, reviewing drafts and providing input. Their participation was critical to the success of this project as they kept the process on track and focused on the needs of Bay City. This group spent many hours in meetings providing additional information, catching errors and omissions, and ensuring the quality of the final product. It is hoped this engagement continues as the plan moves into the implementation phase.

Vision Statement

A Vision Statement is intended to be aspirational and reflect the ideals a city is pursuing. It provides a statement that can rally community engagement and support. For Bay City, the vision is clear...

Bay City, Texas: Clean, Safe, and Prosperous

A Community for all people where dreams are big and results are even bigger.

This vision is the summary of this plan and all it contains. The citizens of Bay City expect a community they can be proud of and are happy to call home. By implementing this plan, they will go far in making this vision a reality.

Conclusion

This plan represents several months of hard work and Bay City should be proud of the effort they put into it and the future it can provide for the community. It is important to remember that the plan is just the beginning of the process. The hard work begins once the plan is adopted and action is taken to implement the plan. It will take on-going work from City leaders, staff, civic groups, and citizens to make this plan successful. While it will not be easy, strong leadership and continued citizen support will ensure success. Bay City has the opportunity and the capacity to make huge changes in its future, and that future begins now.

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Population

Any discussion of the population of Bay City must recognize the significant long term transient population of construction workers and others in the community. These individuals are not captured in Census data, yet have a significant impact on the community and must be considered in any planning process. With the large number of major projects happening in Bay City, such as the Tenaris construction, outages at STP, etc., this will be a significant issue to address in the planning process.

Table 1 Population Growth

	2000	2010	2012 (estimate)
Bay City	18,593	17,614	17,635
Matagorda County	37,957	36,702	36,954

Source: US Census, ESRI Business Analyst

The population of Bay City and Matagorda County declined slightly between 2000 and 2010, but has shown a rebound since the 2010 Census. The rebound in population is likely due to the resurgence in economic activity and new job opportunities being created in the County.

The population projections below utilize data from two sources, the Texas Water Development Board, and the Texas State Data Center. The Data Center only provides data at the County level; however, population trends within Bay City reflect those of the County overall, so it can be expected that growth within Bay City will mirror that of the County overall. The two different methodologies show fairly similar results, with growth expected to be fairly slow and steady over the next few years. It is important to recognize that population projections are based on historic trends, and Bay City’s population actually declined between 2000 and 2010. This decline has influenced the projections to show slower growth going forward. Given the economic activity happening in Bay City, it is likely that these projections are not reflective of current conditions and that the population can be expected to grow faster than shown. Development pressure will first be visible through the Public Works department, as developers begin submitting plans for new subdivisions, apartments, etc. As these plans come in, City Staff must communicate with the Planning Commission and City Council to update them and ensure proper capital planning is done to address this growth.

Table 2 Population Projection

	2012 (estimate)	2020 Texas State Data Center	2020 Texas Water Development Board	2030 Texas State Data Center	2030 Texas Water Development Board
Bay City	17,635	NA	18,797	NA	19,786
Matagorda County	36,954	39,103	39,166	40,611	41,226

Source: Texas Water Development Board www.twdb.state.tx.us and Texas State Data Center www.txsdcenter.utsa.edu

Ethnicity

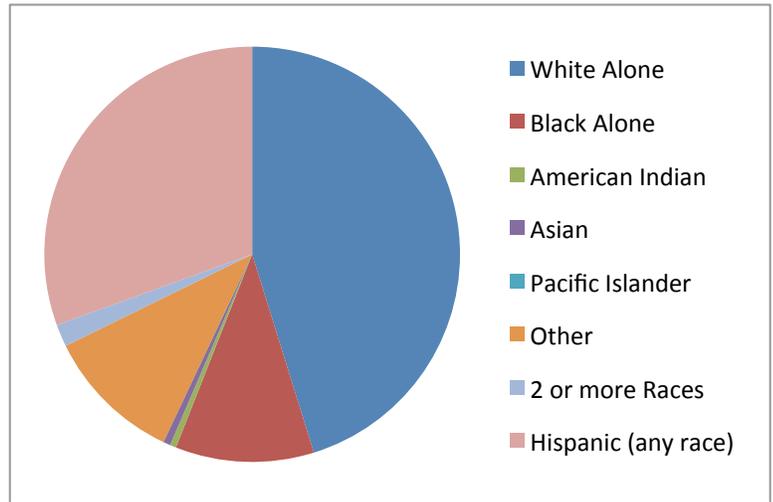
Bay City is fairly reflective of the State as whole in terms of diversity. There are a slightly higher percentage of Hispanic and Black residents in the City than the State overall. This does not reflect the transient population of construction workers and others who are in Bay City long term, but not captured by the Census. This transient population will influence the community, despite not being ‘counted’ as

part of the population. In Census data, Hispanic is considered an Ethnicity, not a race. This means the numbers below will not add up to 100% as individuals can identify as White and Hispanic, etc.

Table 3 2012 Race and Ethnicity

	Count	Percent
White Alone	11,294	65.0%
Black Alone	2,688	15.5%
American Indian	123	0.7%
Asian	140	0.8%
Pacific Islander	5	0.0%
Other	2,679	15.4%
2 or more Races	436	2.5%
Hispanic (any race)	6,631	43.9%

Source: US Census, ESRI Business Analyst



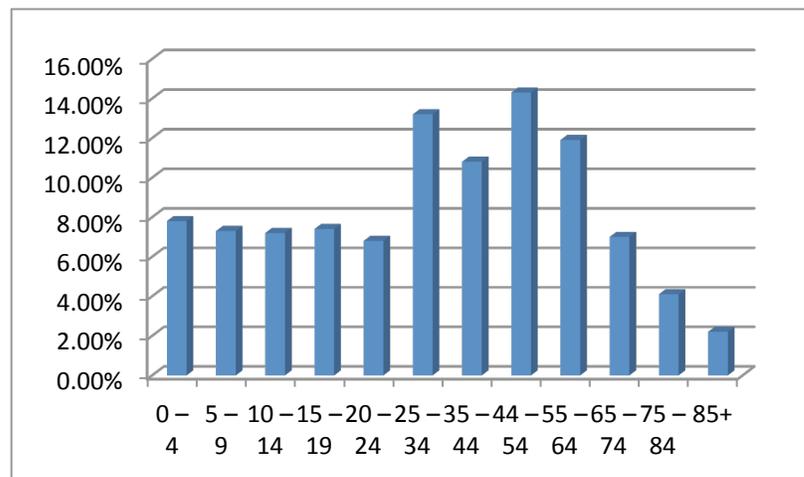
Age

Bay City is a relatively young community, with a median age of 35.2 years. Nearly 50% of the population is between 25 and 64, which are the prime working years. This is an asset for the community to build on, because it indicates an available workforce for new jobs. It also has implications for the school district, parks and recreation, and other community assets because this is also the prime years for people with families who will demand services and amenities in the community.

Table 4 2012 Age

	Count	Percent
0 – 4	1,360	7.8%
5 – 9	1,263	7.3%
10 – 14	1,248	7.2%
15 – 19	1,284	7.4%
20 – 24	1,185	6.8%
25 – 34	2,300	13.2%
35 – 44	1,880	10.8%
44 – 54	2,475	14.3%
55 – 64	2,062	11.9%
65 – 74	1,208	7.0%
75 – 84	720	4.1%
85+	377	2.2%
Median Age	35.2	

Source: ESRI Business Analyst



Income and Employment

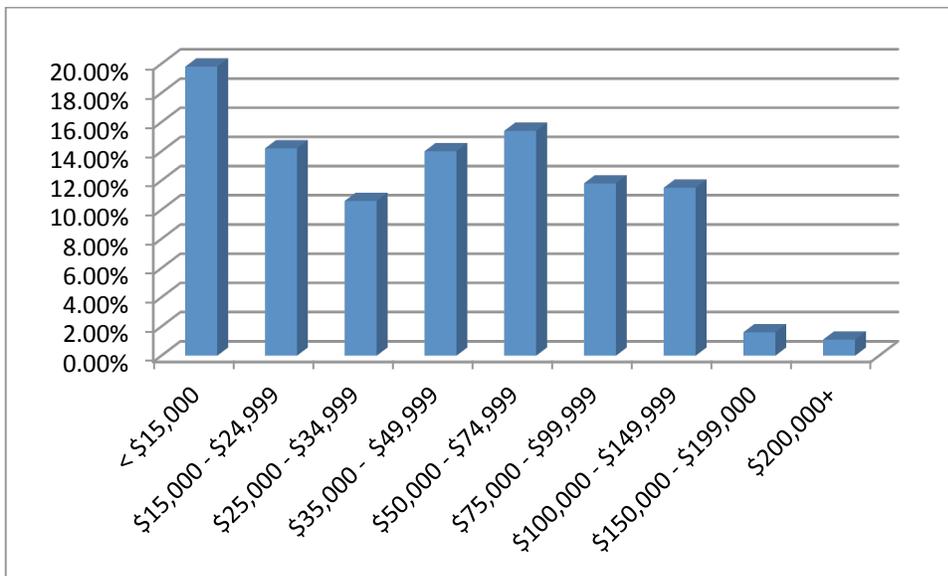
The median income in Bay City (\$39,675) is significantly lower than the State (\$47,622) and even the County (\$40,635). This indicates that many of the well-paying jobs in and around Bay City are not held

by those living in the City Limits. In addition, over 1/3 of Bay City residents make less than \$25,000 per year. This puts a significant strain on public services and is a challenge for the community. It will be important to identify strategies to address this issue and create opportunity for Bay City residents to access local, high paying jobs.

Table 5 2012 Income by Household

	Count	Percent
< \$15,000	1,292	19.8%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	924	14.2%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	689	10.6%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	915	14.0%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	1,002	15.4%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	770	11.8%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	748	11.5%
\$150,000 - \$199,000	105	1.6%
\$200,000+	70	1.1%
Median Household Income	\$39,675	

Source: ESRI Business Analyst



One of the reasons for the low income in Bay City can be found in the table below. Nearly 70% of the jobs in the City Limits are in the Retail and Service industry, which typically has low wages. While there has been tremendous success in economic development within Matagorda County, residents of Bay City have not seen as much benefit from this as would be hoped. It will be critical going forward for the City to continue working to develop the local workforce to compete for the new jobs being created in the region.

Table 6 Employment by Sector

	Business Count	Business Percent	Employee Count	Employee Percent
Total, All Industries	1,102	100%	6,101	100%
Agricultural and Mining	61	5.5%	244	4.0%
Construction	54	4.9%	130	2.1%
Manufacturing	26	2.4%	173	2.9%
Transportation	23	2.1%	136	2.2%
Communication	8	0.7%	97	1.6%
Utility	4	0.4%	253	4.1%
Wholesale Trade	47	4.3%	253	4.1%
Retail Trade	218	19.8%	1,572	25.8%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	106	9.6%	345	5.7%
Services	526	47.7%	2,622	43.0%
Government	29	2.6%	462	7.6%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Housing

Housing is a tremendous challenge for many communities, especially those with characteristics like Bay City. With the population decline between 2000 and 2010, there was a decrease in available homes (8,035 in 2000 vs. 7,856 in 2010 per US Census). In addition, builders will be hesitant to build in a community with a history of population decline because it indicates there will not be a market for their properties. Bay City has taken a proactive approach to encourage housing development and is working with developers to encourage new building. This has shown success in several new projects breaking ground in the area.

Given the large transient population in Bay City, it will be important to work with apartment developers and RV Park developers to address this demand for longer-term housing other than hotels. This is a challenge to address because many residents are resistant to developments of this type, and developers are often wary of making significant investments because the population is not stable. It will be a challenge to meet the demand for this type of housing; however, it is an opportunity for the City.

An area of concern is the lack of homes for sale. Potential new residents may not be able to find suitable homes available in their price range and decide to look elsewhere. Another issue is the large number of ‘Other’ vacant homes. These represent homes that are unoccupied, but not for sale or rent. These may be homes that have been abandoned, held in trusts, or other issues. There needs to be a focus on ensuring these homes are maintained and do not become sources of blight in the community. Code Enforcement should prioritize these properties for attention.

Table 7 2010 Housing Occupancy

	Count	Percent
Total	7,856	100%
Occupied	6,648	84.6%
Owner	3,523	44.8%
Renter	3,125	39.8%
Vacant	1,208	15.4%
For Rent	594	7.6%
Rented – not occupied	16	0.2%
For Sale Only	65	0.8%
Sold – not occupied	20	0.3%
Seasonal Use	68	0.9%
Migrant Workers	2	0.0%
Other	443	5.6%

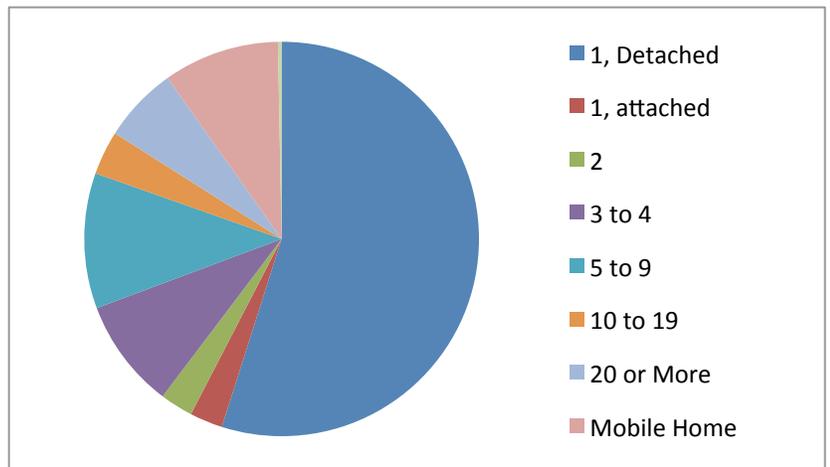
Source: 2010 US Census

The majority of homes in Bay City are single family (54.9%). Bay City is fortunate to have a significant percentage of multi-family homes; however, the low vacancy rates means there are few available for potential residents. The City should continue to focus on developing a diversity of housing options, both multi and single family to ensure adequate opportunities for potential residents. This data comes from the American Community Survey, which is a statistical survey rather than actual count like the US Census. This is why the numbers in this table are different from the other Housing data.

Table 8 2005 - 2009 Housing Units per Structure

	Count	Percent
Total	8,277	100%
1, Detached	4,547	54.9%
1, attached	222	2.7%
2	221	2.7%
3 to 4	742	9.0%
5 to 9	916	11.1%
10 to 19	297	3.6%
20 or More	516	6.2%
Mobile Home	789	9.5%
Boat, RV, Van, etc.	27	0.3%

Source: US Census American Community Survey 2005 – 2009

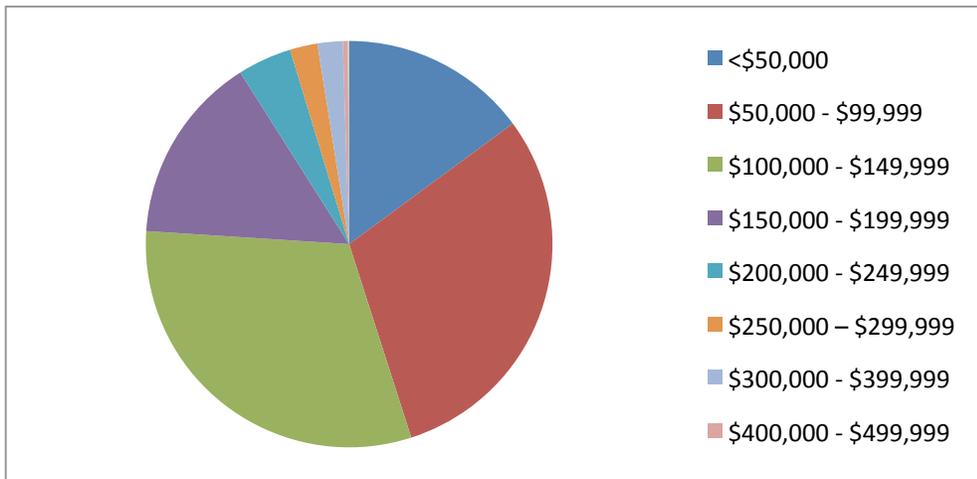


With a median value of \$108,032, a median priced home would be within reach of a family making the median income; however, without a significant down payment, the monthly payment might be a struggle. Also, given the limited number of homes available, it may be difficult for a potential resident to find a suitable home in their price range.

Table 9 2012 Housing Values for Owner Occupied Units

	Count	Percent
Total	3,390	100%
<\$50,000	503	14.9%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	1,023	30.2%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	1,052	31.0%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	507	15.0%
\$200,000 - \$249,999	145	4.3%
\$250,000 - \$299,999	75	2.2%
\$300,000 - \$399,999	68	2.0%
\$400,000 - \$499,999	15	0.4%
\$500,000 - \$749,999	2	0.1%
> \$750,000	0	0.0%
Median Value	\$108,032	

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

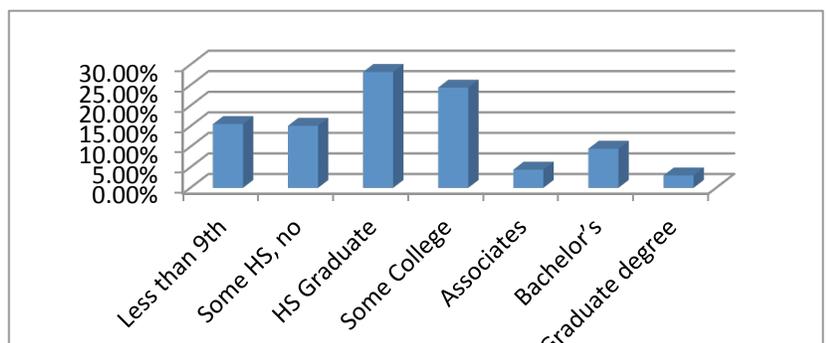


Education

Over 30% of Bay City residents do not have a high school diploma. This presents a tremendous challenge in creating quality jobs because there is not a skilled workforce to recruit from. This low education attainment is reflected in the low household income discussed earlier. Addressing the educational attainment and skills of the local workforce is a key challenge for Bay City. There is work underway, through the partnership with Wharton County Junior College; however, much more needs to be done to get local residents at least a high school equivalency so they can be prepared for the new jobs being created in Matagorda County.

Table 10 Educational Attainment 25 years+

	Count	Percent
Total Pop 25+	11,239	100%
Less than 9th grade	1,737	15.5%



Some HS, no diploma	1,697	15.1%
HS Graduate	3,168	28.2%
Some College	2,744	24.4%
Associates Degree	494	4.4%
Bachelor’s Degree	1,065	9.5%
Graduate degree	334	3.0%

Source: US Census

Taxes

The majority of funding for local governments comes from property taxes and sales tax. Property taxes are collected by a number of entities, with the City, County, and School District being the primary drivers. In addition, there are a number of special districts that collect taxes in all or part of the County. These districts provide specific services and collect taxes to be used within that district’s boundaries on approved projects. Table 11 provides an overview of the taxing districts and the basic rate. Specific information on exemptions, etc. can be found at the County Appraisal website.

Table 11 Property Tax Rates and Entities 2013 (most recent available on CAD site)

	Rate / \$100
City of Bay City	0.56794
City of Palacios	0.85787
Matagorda County	0.32099
Bay City ISD	1.32394
Boling ISD	1.0400
Matagorda ISD	1.16373
Palacios ISD	1.1000
Tidehaven ISD	1.2176
Van Vleck ISD	1.0400
Matagorda County Hospital District	0.2560
Port of Bay City Authority	0.03645
Matagorda County Nav District #1	0.03872
Matagorda County Consv. & Recl. District	0.00522

Source: Gillespie County CAD

The Sales Tax in Bay City is the State maximum of 8.25 percent. Of this, 6.25 percent goes to the State of Texas, 1.0 percent goes to the City, 0.5 percent is for property tax relief, and 0.5 percent is for economic development.

The economic downturn of 2008 resulted in a significant drop in gross sales and sales tax collection in Bay City. While there has been a rebound in the gross sales, the level of sales subject to sales tax has not returned to the same level as in 2008. As the City continues to rebound and see more retail and service growth, this revenue will continue to increase and return to the levels seen prior to the recession.

Table 12 Gross Retail Sales

	Gross Sales	Amount Subject to Sales Tax
2008	\$1,129,330,892	\$206,250,221
2009	\$886,306,707	\$168,627,904
2010	\$1,054,681,190	\$165,389,889
2011	\$1,267,010,937	\$180,724,866
2012	\$1,195,880,273	\$188,777,615
Through 3rd Quarter 2013	\$913,418,235	\$140,552,454

Source: Texas Comptroller Office

Hotel and Motel Taxes

Hotels, motels, and bed and breakfast establishments are levied a Hotel / Motel tax. This tax is intended to be used on projects that will put ‘heads in beds’, which means projects need to promote tourism in the community. This can include marketing, festivals and events, and similar projects. In the fourth quarter of 2013, Bay City had 20 properties reporting for the Hotel / Motel tax, totaling 837 rooms and \$1,774,297.84 in taxable receipts. Bay City hotels and motels are full, and many of their occupants are long term. Companies are renting blocks of rooms for employees to be in the area for extended periods of time.

Conclusion

Bay City is a community in transition. After a period of stagnation, there is significant change happening, with tremendous opportunity for growth. New jobs and new opportunities are being created in the area, and this plan will allow the City to harness that opportunity for the betterment of its residents. The population is changing, and it will be important to address those changes and ensure future community development meets the needs of current and future residents

Introduction

The Land Use plan provides the opportunity to map where future development in Bay City should happen. It provides guidance for decision making related to growth and development, and allows for resources to be invested to support the overall vision. While the Land Use plan is not regulatory and does not mandate where growth occurs, it can be used to influence development patterns. And, it allows transportation and other infrastructure improvements to be made in a way that will support the desired development patterns. It can also provide the basis for a Zoning Ordinance if the City decides to implement that.

Plan Process

A workshop was held with participation from City Council, Planning Commission, Steering Committee, City Staff, and citizens. Participants were given an overview of the community, an explanation of the development process, then separated into small groups. Each group created their own Future Land Use map that included residential, commercial, industrial, retail, public, and park uses, along with needed infrastructure. Once each group had finished, each map was presented and discussed. From the small group maps, a composite map was created that best accommodated the vision of each group.

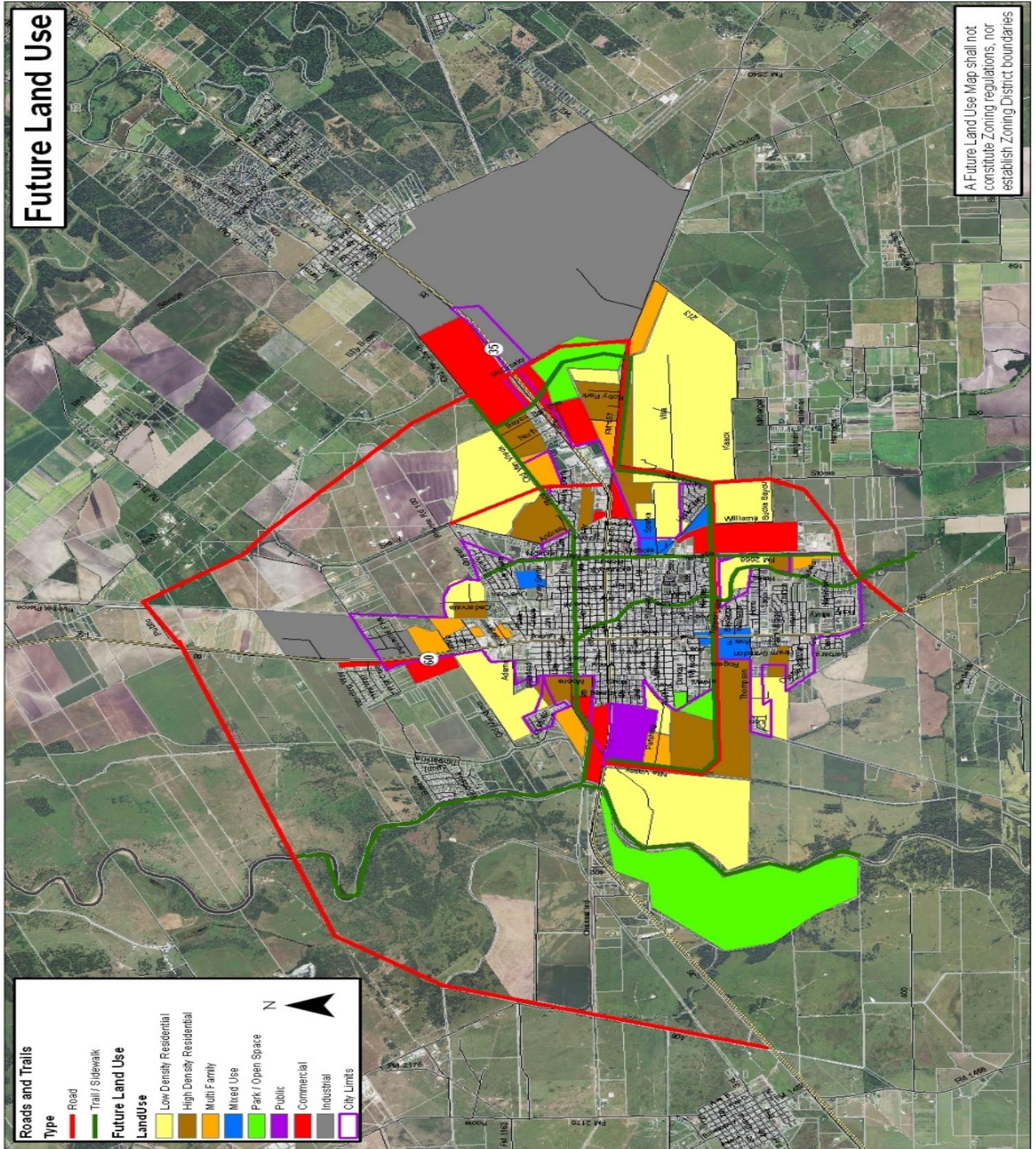
Following the initial workshop, a second workshop was held to further refine the map. This workshop focused on public facilities and infrastructure. This was to ensure that Bay City had adequate facilities to support expected growth and that these were accommodated in the vision. This workshop resulted in the final Future Land Use map (Illustration 1). To implement the vision created in this plan, a series of goals and action steps were identified. These provide the pathway to implementing the vision and should allow the City to move forward to creating the future it desires.

Plan Recommendations

Review and Update Development Process

One of the concerns identified was that the development process in Bay City is challenging. Policies are not made clear, it is not efficient, and developers struggle to get projects through in a timely fashion. This can be a significant challenge for potential businesses, especially smaller ones who do not have the resources to wade through a cumbersome development process. It is critical that this be addressed, and the Planning Commission has already taken steps to do so. There are current efforts underway that should improve the process.

There are many examples of best practices available to use as a starting point. Many communities have faced this same challenge and come up with methods to improve the process to make it more user-friendly. Common policies include ‘one stop shopping’, where all development services are under one roof. Another is to have a single point of contact assigned to each project. This allows the customer to not have to track down many people, but just be able to contact one person who is managing the whole process.



The City of Carrollton has been recognized for its policies and how it has created a streamlined development review process

(http://www.aia.org/aiaucmp/groups/ek_members/documents/pdf/aiap016643.pdf).

The City of Texas City has an on-line handbook that clearly outlines the entire process, providing clear direction for developers in how to move forward (http://www.texas-city-tx.org/economic_development/doc/development_handbook.pdf). It is important to understand that developers are willing to follow the rules and standards, they just need to understand up front what those are, have a clear path through them, and a reasonable timeframe for the process. The more challenging and difficult a process is, the less likely businesses will follow through, especially small ones that do not have the resources for an extended process.

The Planning Commission has begun this process and has made strides in identifying improvements. As they continue, they should utilize the Comprehensive Plan as a resource to identify overall community goals and ensure the development process aligns with them. And, once the changes are made, it is critical to ensure staff has the proper training and supervision to implement the new standards. This should be a priority for the City to ensure staff are well trained and supervised. In addition, if more staff is needed, this should be addressed as well to ensure adequate people to provide quality service.

Encourage Development on Vacant and Undeveloped Land Within the City Limits

Bay City is fortunate to have significant undeveloped and underdeveloped properties within the City Limits. The benefit to these properties is they provide an opportunity for new development in areas already served by city infrastructure and within the taxing jurisdiction. So, any development on these properties represents new revenue without the added costs of expanded infrastructure. In addition, many of the abandoned (or nearly abandoned) properties are blight, and bring down the appearance of Bay City. Turning these properties around should be a priority for action. As these properties turn around, they offer an opportunity for small businesses to thrive in a lower cost environment than new development near Walmart.

The first step is to develop a comprehensive inventory of these properties throughout the city. There are a number of essentially abandoned strip centers along SH 35 and SH 60, but there are also some other opportunities within neighborhoods. These properties are not appropriate for commercial development, but they may be suitable for new workforce housing, to be discussed later. Properties should be prioritized for action based on their location and condition to allow focused attention where it can have the most impact.

For significant properties, it may be worthwhile for the City or Bay City CDC to develop feasibility studies as marketing tools. These studies will outline potential uses, provide renderings of the property after redevelopment, and include marketing studies to justify proposed uses. The benefit to having these is that it can overcome resistance to locating in a space. However, it may require some public investment to implement the vision, as the return for a private investor may not overcome the costs needed to redevelop. The City will have to consider if they want to provide incentives to help make these properties viable. There will also need to be an outreach campaign to the owners of these properties.

Many are sitting on properties waiting for prices to rise as Bay City grows. They are hoping that the market will increase beyond what is reasonable and are allowing their properties to deteriorate as they wait. It is important to reach out to these owners and explain the impact their actions have on the community and attempt to get them to do something with their properties. Aggressive code enforcement is the stick, with regular inspections and citations on properties not up to code. This may leverage some owners into action. The goal is to turn what are currently eyesores into community assets, and there must be coordinated, focused efforts, and a willingness to put resources into it, for this to be successful.

Protect Neighborhood Integrity and Quality of Life

The fundamental role of government is to protect public health and welfare. As Bay City grows, it will be important to ensure existing neighborhoods are insulated from the negative impacts and quality of life is ensured. The recommendations here are simple methods that can have significant impact. The first is to utilize the Subdivision Ordinance to ensure adequate buffering between commercial and industrial uses and residences. Proper setbacks and landscaping can make an enormous difference for the adjacent properties and as the City updates its development process, it should incorporate landscaping and setbacks to mitigate negative impacts.

Lighting is another issue, especially for commercial uses that typically have tall, bright lights. These can have tremendous impacts on adjacent properties. Also, the concept of ‘dark skies’ has become more important for rural communities as light pollution continues to grow. Proper lighting can provide the safety and security necessary without spillover onto adjacent properties or into the sky. Dripping Springs has an excellent example and has recently become the first Dark Skies Certified City in Texas (<http://www.cityofdrippingsprings.com/default.aspx?name=city.generallighting>).

Finally, the Future Land Use map identifies the most appropriate areas for industrial and commercial development. These areas have adequate transportation access and minimal impacts on neighborhoods. This vision should be supported through continued investment in infrastructure to encourage industrial and commercial development in those areas.

Consider Development of a Zoning Ordinance

As mentioned, the Future Land Use plan is not a regulatory document. It provides a vision for how Bay City should grow, but it does not have a mechanism to ensure growth happens in that fashion. The tool to regulate growth is a Zoning Ordinance. Implementing a Zoning Ordinance can be very controversial as residents resist what they see as an infringement on their property rights. If this effort is pursued, it should be undertaken as a long term effort, with significant community education and outreach to build support. It will be key to have strong outreach to overcome misinformation and answer questions residents will have.

A starting point should be a review of other ordinances from similar communities. Some examples include City of El Campo (http://www.cityofelcampo.org/planning_zoning.php). The City of Palacios has a fairly innovative ordinance that takes into account the unique features of its waterfront and allows for

mixed uses in those areas

(<http://z2codes.franklinlegal.net/franklin/Z2Browser2.html?showset=palaciosset>). Bay City may explore how this works to determine if something similar might be effective for those underdeveloped commercial properties, allowing for them to redevelop as mixed use centers. The key to Zoning is to create an ordinance that meets local needs. It does not have to be overly complicated (See City of Lampasas as example

https://www.municode.com/library/tx/lampasas/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIICOOR_CH14A_V_ARTIIIIZOLAUSRE).

Zoning is a tool for city government to implement an overall vision and provide for orderly development. It provides a way to regulate how development happens in a way to minimize negative impacts on current residents; however, it should not be so complex as to deter potential developers. While Zoning is important, there are other challenges more pressing for Bay City that should be addressed, this can wait for a few years while other priorities are acted on.

Conclusion

The Land Use plan is fundamental to the Comprehensive Plan because it provides direction for the physical growth of the community. It is necessary to have a vision for how development should occur in order to meet community goals and protect quality of life. This plan represents an ideal based on citizen input and provides for orderly and meaningful growth. The goals identified are the tools to implement the vision and provide clear direction for Bay City staff and citizens to make the vision a reality.

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Introduction

Housing is one of the more challenging issues facing rural communities. Bay City has particular issues related to housing because it is transitioning into growth mode with new industry locating in town. Because Bay City had been shrinking in population for the prior ten years, there was limited interest from housing developers to build in town. There was no demand for new housing. Now, with Tenaris and other new businesses coming, there is limited housing available to attract those employees to live in Bay City. Homebuilders are now trying to catch up; unfortunately, many potential residents are locating elsewhere because of the lack of housing. It will take time for this to balance out, but there are some things the City can do to encourage housing development and meet the needs of existing and potential residents.

Plan Recommendations

Continue Existing Policies to Support New Housing Development

There are existing policies in place to encourage new housing development. The Bay City CDC offers to help with interest payments on homes that are built and remain unsold. Fortunately, this has not been needed as spec homes have been bought as soon as available. In addition, the City provides infrastructure assistance for potential development. While this is a significant incentive, there have been issues with implementation. Some of the developers have said that City work has not been completed on time and has delayed projects. If this is the case, it needs to be addressed immediately. If the City is going to offer assistance, it has to be timely and meet developer needs. Otherwise, it becomes a disincentive as time is money for developers.

As with any incentive process, there should be a regular review of what is offered and its effectiveness. This is to ensure that public resources are used effectively to provide for the community. It also helps ensure the incentives being offered match the needs of those being served. This is key to a successful incentive program and should be part of the regular work cycle of the Bay City CDC and the City.

Develop Marketing Plan for Bay City to Developers

The Bay City CDC serves as an effective advocate for Bay City, recruiting new businesses to the area. The Chamber of Commerce effectively markets for tourists to visit. There has not been as much attention focused on attracting homebuilders to the area. This is critical to create new housing in Bay City and bring new residents to the area. The target is regional builders in the Houston area and those operating in Matagorda County already. These are close, have some knowledge of the community, and are more likely to respond to the growth in the area. New employers should also be contacted to encourage their employees to live locally. This can be done through existing 'Welcome Wagon' activities and by introducing business leaders to community and school leaders who can pitch the benefits of living in Bay City.

Senior housing is another critical need in Bay City. There is a need for additional senior living facilities, targeting the 'active' senior population and those needed more intensive care. The benefit of

encouraging this type of housing is that it also provides jobs for caregivers, medical staff, and more. With the medical center and growing medical community, Bay City can be a very attractive destination for a senior living facility. This should be a priority target for the Bay City CDC and City to market to and work to recruit.

Review Regulations to Encourage 2nd Floor Residences in Downtown

Downtown living is a growing trend and Bay City is uniquely positioned to capitalize on it. There are a number of two story buildings in the CBD that can be utilized for this, as well as redevelopment that will provide multi-family housing in the area. This is great for a downtown because it provides customers for local businesses as well as 24 hour activity that can reduce crime and safety issues. During the public input process, it was mentioned that there have been issues when property owners have tried to develop second floor businesses. The review and inspection process was a huge challenge, with already approved work being unapproved at follow on inspections and other issues. These issues need to be addressed, with a clear process to follow and proper training and implementation from City staff.

The City of Brenham has an effective policy encouraging downtown living; it can serve as a model for Bay City as it reviews its ordinances (<http://cityofbrenham.org/mainstreet/>). The North Downtown Plan also provides insight into this, and as that plan is implemented, it will benefit the whole downtown by encouraging new development in the area.

Develop Volunteer Network to Provide Basic Home Maintenance to Low Income, Elderly, and Others

Implementation of this goal is an opportunity for residents to get involved and take action to address issues in their own neighborhoods. The program can be run through local churches, which can serve as the clearinghouse for assistance requests and volunteer organization. The Ministerial Alliance has representation from most of the major churches in town and can be the catalyst for moving this effort forward. Providing assistance with basic home maintenance and upkeep will improve the overall appearance of Bay City, help protect neighborhood quality, and be a way to build community spirit and engagement. Those in need can make a request to their local church and the network can identify the most appropriate team of volunteers to respond and address that issue.

In addition to organizing volunteers, there should be outreach to local businesses to provide materials, tools, and assistance. This may be asking the local hardware store to donate paint for a home to be repainted, or possibly a local contractor working for a day to repair a leaking roof. Most businesses recognize the need for community involvement and are willing to participate, they just need to be asked. If they can help with a specific project and be recognized for it, most will do so.

An excellent program to use as an example is the ‘Love Where You Live’ effort in Plano. In this program, the City identifies neighborhoods facing challenges related to property maintenance, crime, engagement, etc. and have a focused effort to address them. The City coordinates with churches and other groups to ‘adopt’ homes in the targeted neighborhoods for work days that provide basic maintenance and clean up. The events culminate in block parties to celebrate success (<http://www.plano.gov/652/Love-Where-You-Live>).

Make Land Available for Habitat for Humanity, Southeast Texas Housing Corporation, etc.

There are several organizations that will provide low cost housing in communities, but they typically require land to be donated or made available at very low cost. Bay City has many residents who would benefit from this type of housing, and there is property that can be made available to support it. As part of the vacant land inventory discussed in the Land Use chapter, property suitable for housing should be identified. These may be individual lots with abandoned homes, or vacant properties in existing neighborhoods. Using this list, the City can partner with the other taxing entities to acquire these properties through tax foreclosure. This is a time consuming process, but worth pursuing.

As land is assembled and cleared for development, Habitat for Humanity and others can be contacted to come into the community. The benefit to Bay City is that properties that are currently blighted and detracting from neighborhoods can become assets as families move into new homes and begin paying taxes. This should be a priority for action, and the County has agreed to take a leadership role in this effort.

Conclusion

Bay City is at a transition point from an extended period of stagnation to one of potentially significant growth. The challenge is that housing development lags economic growth, and many potential residents look elsewhere to live because of a lack of available housing. It is likely that business development in Bay City will lead to renewed interest from homebuilders, especially as other recommendations in this plan are implemented. Bay City should be aggressive in addressing its housing issues, and the recommendations identified here are an excellent start to providing for the diverse housing needs of the community.

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Introduction

Bay City is fortunate to have a large number of parks throughout town providing a tremendous opportunity for access to residents. The two primary parks (LeTulle and Riverside) serve as regional attractions as well as serving local needs. There are challenges within the park system, notably with adequate facilities and maintenance; however, there has been heightened attention and resources devoted to the parks that has begun to have an impact. The recommendations in this chapter build on this momentum and provide additional opportunities to improve parks for all Bay City residents.

Plan Recommendations

Develop a Parks Commission and Friends of the Parks Organization

There is not an organization in Bay City tasked with overseeing and representing the park system. A Parks Commission would serve a role similar to the Planning Commission, providing oversight and direction for the park system and advocating for it with City Council. The Parks Commission would be appointed by City Council and provide advisory service to it. They would be tasked with developing a vision for the parks and ensuring adequate resources are made available to it.

A Friends of the Parks organization would fill a different role. This would be a non-profit tasked with fundraising and advocacy for the parks. This organization would be able to search for grant funding, develop corporate sponsorships, and other means to generate resources to support the parks. It can also take responsibility for recruiting volunteers for park activities, maintenance, and clean ups. There are many examples in communities that can be a model for Bay City (Murphy, TX <http://www.murphytx.org/432/Friends-of-the-Park>). Having a Parks Commission and Friends of the Parks would help focus attention on the parks, find more resources for park improvements, and ensure city parks are serving all residents.

Partner with ISD to Make Facilities Available for Public Recreation

One of the issues that came up repeatedly during the public input process was the missed opportunity of the ISD facilities, and how they could fill a gap for supervised recreation. The challenge is that the ISD cannot just open the doors and allow anyone to come play, there are policies set by the Board that require security, supervision, and cost recovery. Because of the costs in making the facilities available, they have not been for several years.

There may be an opportunity to revise ISD policies to be more flexible in allowing for use of facilities, while still protecting their interests. Also, the City should review its budget to determine if funding may be available to support opening these facilities. There may be an opportunity for sponsorships with this as well, allowing local businesses to sponsor ‘basketball night’ at the school. The Friends of the Parks could adopt this as an initial project once they are created.

In the short term, the City and ISD should continue communication on this issue to identify potential solutions. In the short term, the City could fund the costs associated with having the facilities open until

a longer term solution can be found. This is especially important during the summer, when there are limited supervised opportunities for young people.

Prioritize Needed Improvements at Existing Parks

Parks staff have been developing a Park Facilities Inventory (See Appendix A), as well as identifying needed improvements at each park. This is the first step in developing a full Parks and Open Space Master Plan that provides full insight into developing and maintaining a strong park system. A Master Plan also allows the City to pursue grants from Texas Parks and Wildlife and other entities.

Whether or not the City pursues a full Master Plan, it will be important to utilize the developed priority list in setting funding and expectations for parks staff going forward. Having the list will ensure limited resources are used most effectively to address the most urgent concerns and make improvements that will have the greatest impact for park users.

Given the need for new and updated facilities across the park system, Bay City leaders may consider a bond election or certificates of obligation to provide a large funding source to address many concerns. Given the City just issued CO's for road improvements, it may need to wait a few years. Typically, park bonds receive significant support from residents and this may be an opportunity down the line to undertake some of the larger projects identified in this plan.

Identify Additional Funding Sources for Park Improvements and Programs

As mentioned, the Friends of the Park organization, once started, can take ownership of finding additional funding; however, there are some opportunities that can be undertaken immediately as well. The first is to revise the Subdivision Ordinance to allow for a 'fee in lieu' of the parkland dedication grant. Currently, developers are required to set aside some of their property for park space when they develop. This is an effective way to acquire parkland across the city to support new development; however, without adequate funding, this property is not utilized well and becomes a burden. A fee in lieu allows developers to give money instead of land. This allows the city to utilize these funds for maintenance and improvements at existing parks where it can be more beneficial than simply acquiring more parkland. This should happen as part of the current development review efforts already underway.

Park staff is already developing a formal naming and sponsorship policy to encourage local businesses and citizens to sponsor and donate to the parks. This program will standardize how parks are named and how sponsorships will be recognized. This will help with outreach to local businesses and individuals to support parks going forward.

Initiate New Recreation Programs for Youths and Adults

The public input process identified a lack of recreation opportunities for youth and adults as a serious issue in Bay City. Parents spoke of a lack of opportunity for their children to be engaged in sports, adults identified a lack of sports leagues for them, and the seniors commented on a desire for additional services beyond what is offered at the existing senior center. This presents a challenge for the City

because there is already limited staffing, as exhibited by the lack of lifeguards to keep pools open daily, as well as financial resources to sponsor events.

There should be a coordinated effort to work with residents to identify what programs they want to see, and begin building support to implement them. This will include finding volunteers to help organize and staff activities, as well as funding to pay for them. Funding can come from general funds, program fees (although these will have to be kept low to attract participation), and sponsorships. This is a program the Friends of the Park group should take on as a priority once it is established.

Develop Sidewalk and Trail Connectivity Throughout Town

The Future Land Use plan identifies a network of trails and sidewalks connecting primary destinations throughout town. This represents a long term opportunity to make investments to improve connectivity and make Bay City accessible to those without cars. It is a long term vision utilizing drainage ways, abandoned rights of way, and other features to make connections. It will require significant investment to create these off road trails; however, the investment will be worthwhile over time to enhance quality of life and make Bay City a more attractive destination for investment and residents.

A shorter term opportunity is to provide on street bike lanes as part of the current road improvement effort. Where the existing street is wide enough, bike lanes should be included in any new or rebuilt road. This provides safety for cyclists and is an effective traffic calming tool as well. It is also very low cost, especially when implemented as roadwork is already being done. This should be standard policy for the City to include bike lanes on road projects to expand connections throughout town.

Develop a Sports Complex

Long term, the City should consider developing a modern sports complex. Regional tournaments represent a tremendous tourism opportunity, attracting large number of visitors and lots of money to communities with adequate facilities to support them. A new facility might also build interest and participation in local leagues from residents, helping them become more successful.

Sports complexes are a large investment for any community, and require significant planning to be successful. There is also the challenge of funding, not just to build the facility but to maintain it. These challenges would have to be overcome and are the reason why the City should focus resources on its existing facilities before pursuing this goal.

Develop a Community Recreation Center

Another long term goal is the development of a community recreation center. There is a need for a facility that can provide recreation and education opportunities for residents of all ages. It will require significant planning and investment to be successful and should be undertaken with a solid plan in place. There are a number of examples of communities that have successfully developed these types of facilities. The City of Burnet developed the Galloway-Hammond Recreation Center as a public – private partnership, with funding for development primarily coming from private sources. The City operated and staffed the facility, with on-going funding provided by the non-profit. The facility is now operated by

the YMCA, but still serves the entire community
(http://www.cityofburnet.com/parks_recreation/parks_rec_index.htm).

Programming will be another key issue for the center, it should provide programming for all ages, especially seniors and youth. It will take a significant expansion of parks staff to manage this type of facility, which is why partnerships are so important. Local organizations can help with staffing and programming at the facility, providing additional resources than just the City. Before undertaking the development of a community center, there should be significant planning to ensure the facility meets community needs and there is an adequate support structure in place to make it successful.

Develop a Park at SH 35 and the Colorado River

Bay City is fortunate to have two major parks on the Colorado River, providing access to this asset. A third river park at SH 35 and the river would allow for additional access to the river and additional programming, such as canoe trips that connect the parks. There is already a TPWD boat ramp at this site, but the area currently is not well maintained, nor attractive. A detailed plan should be developed indicating how the property could be developed and with what amenities. This is the basis for fundraising and action to actually acquire the property and build the park.

Given the number of parks the City has, and the need for improvements at them, this is another long term goal. Based on community input, improvements to existing parks, a sports complex, and a community recreation center are all more pressing needs before another park is developed. This is an excellent long term goal, and should remain as a goal to pursue.

Conclusion

Bay City is blessed with a large and diverse park system. Facilities provide access to the Colorado River, camping, sports, and more. This asset is currently in need of significant investment as many facilities are dated and in need of upgrading or replacing. There is more attention being focused on the park system and staff is addressing immediate concerns and challenges; however, there is a need for additional resources to address larger issues. The recommendations in this plan are an attempt to help build a broader foundation for investing in City parks, through the creation of support mechanisms (Parks Commission and Friends of the Parks) and by creating additional funding sources. Parks are a critical element in quality of life and having a thriving parks system will make Bay City better for its current residents and a more attractive destination for new residents as well. Investing in the park system should be viewed as an investment in Bay City as a whole, helping to implement the community vision identified in this Comprehensive Plan.

Introduction

Many rural communities face the challenge of an abandoned Central Business District. Bay City is fortunate to have a thriving downtown, with few vacancies and a solid mix of businesses serving locals and tourists. This success is supported by the Main Street program, which brings knowledge and resources to the downtown to foster economic viability. Bay City is also blessed with a number of historic buildings and sites, which can be leveraged to promote tourism to the area. The unique heritage and identity created by the historic buildings and thriving downtown cannot be duplicated. The recommendations in this chapter will build on these assets and the existing strength in Bay City's central business district to foster continued success in this area.

Plan Recommendations

Improve the Appearance of Downtown

While downtown Bay City is an asset, there are some challenges, and one of them is the overall appearance of the area. Some of the buildings are in need of cleaning and façade improvements, vacant lots could be maintained better, and related issues. The first priority should be the appearance of public buildings in the area. These should serve as an example to the community and be clean and well maintained. County and City officials should ensure funding is available for basic upkeep to their buildings as they are the example.

Other opportunities to improve appearance include providing more landscaping throughout the downtown. The challenge is the needed maintenance and watering; however, this can be an opportunity for local business owners and civic organizations to step up and participate in these efforts. More trash cans can also be installed to help reduce litter in the area, along with strict enforcement of no littering.

Longer term, there are some communities that have implemented tax abatements to support building maintenance and improvements. The City of Round Rock has implemented this policy to encourage downtown building owners to improve their buildings (<http://www.roundrocktexas.gov/home/index.asp?page=1962>). These efforts are intended to support the downtown, making it more welcoming for residents and visitors to come spend time and money.

Conduct Regular Events in Downtown

There have been many on again off again efforts to conduct regular events in downtown, and there are some on-going events underway. There is evidence that the current downtown activities are becoming dated and less effective than they have been, so it is probably time to review them and see if they can be revitalized or potentially replaced with new ones. It may be that putting some effort into these existing programs, attracting new vendors and activities may reinvigorate them and make them a greater draw than they are currently. This would be easier than creating all new events and should be a priority.

There are a number of existing assets that can be the basis for downtown events. This includes Bay City ISD, which could provide band and choir events on the Square. Local merchants could get together for sidewalk sales and similar events as well. Movies on the Square could be popular, especially on Spring or Fall weekends when the weather is nice and it gets dark fairly early. Families could come down and get food at area restaurants and enjoy an outdoor movie. The Main Street Board should take ownership of pursuing this effort, identifying potential programming and building support for it. Other community partners should be identified to help with this to create a community-wide effort.

Encourage Business Owners to Stay Open Later

For the most part, businesses in downtown close around 5:00 PM. While there are a few businesses open later, there is limited reason to visit downtown in the evening. Business owners will justify closing because of the lack of customers, and it creates a self-reinforcing cycle. Because businesses are not open, people do not go downtown, so there is no reason for businesses to stay open. The other recommendations in this plan will help address some of these challenges. Having events downtown will bring people to the area, providing reason for businesses to stay open. Also, encouraging residential uses in downtown will bring people there in the evenings, providing customers. These efforts will justify business owners staying open by ensuring it is economically viable to bear the costs of longer hours.

Utilize Historic Assets in Bay City

Historic tourism is a growing trend, with visitors wanting to experience authentic places. Bay City has a number of historic buildings and sites that contribute to its unique identity and can serve as an attraction for potential visitors. The first step is to develop an inventory of the historic assets in and around Bay City. This Historical Society is the proper entity to do this work, as it has the knowledge and experience. Walking and driving tours can be developed to promote visits to these sites. Technology allows for smart phone apps to be created that can provide info on buildings and sites. While funding would be needed to develop these apps, it might be more cost effective than printing paper maps and keeping those updated.

Another asset would be an oral history of Bay City. Volunteers could be used to interview senior citizens to hear their insight and stories of Bay City in the past. These histories could be utilized in the historic tours to provide firsthand accounts of activities at the tour sites. It also represents a tremendous resource for the community to have that knowledge from long time citizens captured. It can provide context and insight into challenges facing Bay City today.

Implement the North Downtown Plan

The North Downtown Plan is an excellent resource for expanding the downtown and adding additional assets and attractions to the area. Implementing this plan will build on the strengths of the CBD and generate more activity in the area. It can also help to address some challenges such as parking, etc. that have been identified. The key to this effort will be funding. It will take a substantial and sustained investment to see this effort through; however, the improvement it will bring to Bay City is worth the investment.

Provide Sidewalks Throughout Downtown

In order to foster more activity downtown, there is a need to provide access throughout the area. While most of downtown has sidewalks, there are several areas without them. Installing sidewalks in these gaps will help improve pedestrian access and circulation in the area. It will also help address parking concerns because people can park somewhat further away and still have safe access to their destination. As with most things, resources will be the biggest challenge. Providing adequate funding will be difficult, especially with all the other projects and priorities facing Bay City. Improving sidewalks in downtown should coincide with other improvements to the area and as development occurs in vacant lots and buildings in the central business district (CBD).

Update the Wayfinding and Signage Plan

There has been investment in signs along the main thoroughfares into downtown; however, there is a need to expand this to serve other community destinations. The first step should be to review the ‘brand’ used in signage to ensure it is current and reflects the community. An inventory of destinations should be developed as well, including downtown, parks, museums, parking etc. The key to any wayfinding is to ensure visitors can find their destination, so starting with the destination in mind is critical.

Once the inventory is complete, determining where signage is needed must happen. This should be primary entrances into town and at key intersections throughout town, providing clear directions. In addition, there should be consideration for pedestrians, providing signs at scale for pedestrians to find their way around downtown especially. Once the plan is developed, implementation can occur as funding becomes available.

Identify Parking Opportunities

Parking problems are actually a good problem to have because it means people are visiting the downtown and patronizing businesses in the area. If parking is not an issue, it means nobody is going downtown. The easy fix to downtown is to encourage downtown business owners and employees to not park in front of their own (or their neighbor’s) business.

Shared parking is another opportunity, where businesses open at different hours or with different peak times can share the same lot. This is especially helpful with banks, which are open during the day and Saturday mornings, leaving their lots available in the evenings. This can be addressed by working with area owners to ensure lots are available.

Restriping street parking can provide more spaces with minimal costs. This may involve TxDOT on state highways, but can be an option. A more cost intensive option is to acquire vacant lots and develop them as parking lots. This is a long term investment, especially as the North Downtown project moves forward. This can create needed parking to support a thriving downtown.

Develop Public Restrooms

Another long term goal, and one that support downtown activities, is the development of public restrooms. Location is key; the restrooms have to be accessible and visible to visitors. This ensures people know they are available and helps mitigate vandalism and other challenges because they are supervised. Restrooms are an important asset to a thriving downtown, but represent a challenge in maintenance and cleanliness. It will be important to have a plan in place to fund regular maintenance and frequent cleaning to ensure the bathrooms are an asset and not a detraction. Funding will likely come from Main Street, possibly helping to support City staff to actually provide maintenance and upkeep.

Conclusion

Downtown has historically represented the heart of a community, providing a gathering place for residents and visitors alike. Bay City is blessed with a strong downtown, home to a variety of businesses and activities. The recommendations here build on that strength and are an opportunity to leverage the asset to even more success. The projects here and the North Downtown Plan are a roadmap to success, creating a destination that will foster business and community success.

Introduction

Livability and quality of life is fundamentally related to every aspect of this plan. The entire plan is intended to address community challenges and improve quality of life for current and potential residents. This chapter is somewhat of a catch-all, providing a home for a variety of goals that will address various issues. The recommendations will address key concerns heard during the public input process, and these should be considered key priorities for action by community leaders. Improving quality of life will make Bay City better for its residents and make it more attractive for potential businesses and residents in the future.

Plan Recommendations

Develop a pro Bay City and BCISD Program

One of the common themes heard throughout the public engagement process was the negative perception of Bay City at large, and the ISD specifically. Despite many positive things happening, the perception of many residents is not positive. This is a significant challenge because that perception influences how outsiders perceive the community and will influence their decision to locate elsewhere. It will take a concerted effort to overcome this, as it has been a consistent theme heard in other Bay City planning processes for many years.

The first step should be to develop a relentless communication campaign highlighting the positives of the City and ISD. Every media outlet should be saturated with stories, tweets, posts, etc. highlighting the great things happening around the community. The City and ISD already have staff dedicated to communications, and these efforts should be supported.

A complementary effort should be to utilize community leaders as advocates for the City and ISD. Individuals can play a significant role as advocates, providing positive opinions to counteract negative views. People tend to respond more to personal connections than other media, so having these advocates is key to success. The City and ISD should utilize Council and Board members, employees, and others to help advocate for their organizations and speak out about the good things each are doing.

Finally, there must be a response to legitimate concerns and issues identified by the public. When problems are identified, prompt, thorough response is the way to minimize negative feedback. If residents see that the City and ISD are actively addressing their concerns, they will be more positive about the organizations. If they see problems ignored or swept under the rug, they will continue to hold negative views and be vocal in their negativity.

Provide Consistent, Fair Code Enforcement

Code enforcement is the opportunity to control issues that negatively impact quality of life. Typically, code enforcement focuses on public health and welfare issues like abandoned cars and homes, weeds and vermin, etc. The City recently moved this to the Police Department. This move was intended to provide additional resources and increased focus on this.

While enforcement is necessary, there should also be education and assistance to property owners to ensure they come into and stay in compliance. This can include providing information to owners on the rules and regulations, and opportunities for help. Code enforcement does not have to entirely be confrontational; instead it can be collaborative efforts to address issues and help residents and businesses come into compliance.

Conduct Regular Community Clean-up Events

Community clean-up events provide an opportunity to build community engagement and spirit by bringing residents together to clean up their neighborhoods. Often, these events turn into community celebrations, as the morning is spent working and then neighborhood parties celebrate the accomplishment. The City can be a catalyst for these activities, but they should be led by community organizations and volunteers. The City can participate by providing disposal facilities and working on public facilities as part of the community wide effort.

The City should also be proactive in ensuring the solid waste provider fulfills its contract by providing adequate bulk trash pick-up, brush collection, and related services. There is a need to communicate with residents that these services are provided and they should take advantage of them. Another opportunity may be for the City to provide a dumpster at a City facility for residents to dispose of bulk items as needed. The challenge with this is monitoring to ensure hazardous wastes are not left there and the site remains clean and maintained. A coordinated effort to address community appearance will help improve quality of life and perception of Bay City from residents and visitors alike.

Address Issues with Perception of City Government

Related to the overall negative perception of Bay City is the perception that City government is not effective and efficient. This came out of conversations at the Town Hall meetings, with focus groups, the survey, and in interviews. The perception is a lack of leadership and an inability to provide basic City services like adequate roads and park maintenance. This presents a significant challenge because it will be hard to build support for the projects identified in this plan if the community does not see City government as effective.

The first step to address this is for the City Council, Mayor, and staff leadership to hold annual or semi-annual workshops. This would be the opportunity to set expectations for the year and define metrics towards achieving City goals. The Council's role is to define policy and direction for City staff to implement. The Mayor, acting as City Manager, must set the expectations for staff, properly supervise staff, and ensure the Council's policy is implemented. A breakdown in trust and communication between Council and Mayor makes this very difficult. Regular workshops to clearly define expectations and set policy can mitigate this.

The next step is to ensure City staff is properly managed. This falls on the Mayor as City Manager. The Mayor should serve as an example to City employees and set expectations high for serving City residents. Expectations and standards must be clearly communicated and failure to meet expectations must be dealt with promptly. It will take time to overcome this perception; however, it is vital to create

an atmosphere of success and regain community trust in government. City leadership must recognize this and make an active decision to address it. This will be necessary to ensure success in implementing this entire plan and to promote Bay City as a destination for new residents and businesses.

Encourage Development of Volunteer Groups

Many of the goals in this plan rely on volunteers, whether it is helping paint a neighbor's home or serving on the Parks Commission. Having a network of volunteers to help with community projects is critically important. This network of engaged citizens will also serve as a catalyst to fostering a more positive community perception. As they participate in the community and see good things happening, they will share that with their friends and neighbors.

There are a number of resources available on how to develop a successful volunteer program. The Chamber of Commerce should consider establishing a volunteer committee that would be tasked with increasing the number of volunteers and establishing a program to train and coordinate them. This would help the Chamber, but also the community as a whole by creating a cadre of people who can be called upon to participate. Another successful tool is to create Task Forces for specific projects across the City. People are more willing to volunteer if they have a specific task and timeline to work within. These small groups can be very effective in addressing specific needs, then disband until those volunteers are needed again. This also helps with avoiding burning out volunteers as they can tackle specific tasks they are particularly interested in, rather than feeling like they have to participate in everything. A good volunteer program is a vital tool for quality of life because engaged citizens are happy citizens. When people are involved in their community, they feel better about where they live and are empowered to change the things they do not like about it.

Conclusion

The biggest challenge facing Bay City is the negative perception held by so many of its residents. This adversely affects not just residents, but is shared with others, creating a negative image of Bay City with outsiders as well. This negativity means many potential residents will choose to live elsewhere, rather than becoming part of Bay City. The recommendations identified in this chapter offer an opportunity to address that perception head-on. While Bay City has many strengths and assets, there are significant challenges as well. It will take a community-wide and multi-faceted effort to address them. Building community engagement and support will be critical for this plan to be a success.

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Introduction

One of the consistent themes heard from the public was the terrible condition of roads in Bay City. Residents complained about roads in general and identified specific issues as well. In addition, the issue of congestion, especially on SH 35 was identified as a challenge. The City is in the process of addressing some of these issues with \$4,000,000 in certificates of obligation for road improvements; however, there is need for additional work to ensure safe, efficient transportation throughout Bay City.

Ensure Adequate Funding for Road Maintenance and Expansion

As mentioned, the City has a major road improvement effort underway. This project has identified key roads for improvement and should result in the worst areas seeing relief. While this is a major effort, there is still need for additional work across the City. There should be a concerted effort to identify additional funding for projects. This may come from savings in other areas of government or possibly property tax increase, but there needs to be more money found for road projects. The City should actively partner with TxDOT, Matagorda County, and the ISD as well to share costs where possible. This is needed both for residents' quality of life, but also to maintain Bay City as a viable destination for new business. If prospects see congestion and poorly maintained roads, they may choose to look elsewhere.

Create Alternative Routes through Town

There are few alternatives for through-town traffic besides SH 60 and SH 35. Most of the traffic is funneled to these highways because there is no viable route otherwise. The Future Land Use map identifies several roads that can serve as alternate routes, helping to mitigate traffic on the highways. The City should investigate what improvements would be needed to smooth traffic flow and make them as funding allows. The goal is not to turn these routes into high speed thoroughfares, but instead to improve traffic flow along them so residents can use them instead of getting on the highway. Improvements could include replacing stop signs with roundabouts, minimizing sharp curves, etc. These routes would not be for trucks and related traffic, but serve as an alternate route for residents to get around town more conveniently. This will significantly impact traffic on SH 60 and SH 35 by keeping local traffic off these routes allowing the through traffic easier access.

Develop Loop Around City

A long term goal is to create a loop around Bay City to allow through traffic an unimpeded trip. Bypasses often face resistance because local businesses worry the loss of traffic will hurt them. Bay City is fortunate to have a strong core, and a strong mix of businesses that will continue to attract traffic even with a loop. A route for the loop has generally been identified on the Future Land Use map; however, this is intended only as a general guide, not an actual route. Much more detailed planning and analysis will have to happen before any route is selected.

Funding will be a huge challenge in this effort. Any planning should begin with developing funding resources before moving forward. It is likely that TxDOT, Matagorda County, and Bay City would all be involved in the project. A threshold of traffic volume should also be established to determine the appropriate time to begin moving forward. The key is to gauge it so that the loop is completed before

traffic becomes hopelessly clogged. Building a loop is a long term effort that will be many years in the future; however, given the time it takes to complete this kind of work, it should not be ignored too long.

Conclusion

Road improvements were the biggest hot button issue in this planning project. Residents are frustrated with the condition of local roads and want to see something happen. The City has heard this and is addressing it through a major road improvement effort. While this project will go a long way to mitigate the worst issues, there are others that will need on-going work. The City should explore all options to develop additional funding for road improvements and make every effort to stay in front of this issue going forward. This includes long range planning for improvements that may not be needed for a decade or more.

Introduction

During the public input process, there was limited concern identified regarding water, wastewater, and other City facilities. Much attention was given to roads and parks, but the other infrastructure was not seen as a huge priority. This does not mean it can be ignored; the City needs to ensure water and wastewater infrastructure can support expected growth, while City facilities are adequate as well. The recommendations identified in this chapter are based on recommendations from City leadership and staff.

Prioritize Needed Improvements to Wastewater System

The City is currently running video cameras through the wastewater system to identify areas needing repair. This is a critical project because it can identify issues before failures occur and allow for preventative maintenance. The results from this effort should be used to target improvements. As roads are being rebuilt, this is also an opportunity to make improvements to the wastewater and water systems while the roads are torn up. This can save costs rather than having to rework the roads twice if the utilities are not addressed at the same time.

There is also a need for better mapping of water and wastewater facilities. This should be a priority because it is vital to know where things are to better respond to failures and maintenance issues. This is also important for planning future improvements because building off the existing infrastructure requires a solid knowledge of where it is and what exactly is already in the ground to build from.

Future requirements for expansion of wastewater include the need for a line parallel to Nile Valley Rd to the Tenaris site. This line will help build redundancy to the Tenaris plant and also provide service to future development along Nile Valley Rd. In addition, in the next several years, it can be expected that planning will have to begin on a wastewater plant expansion. TCEQ regulations require planning to begin when a plant reaches 50% capacity and for construction to begin at 75% capacity. Because of the time and funding needed to complete wastewater expansion, this should be on the radar screen for City leadership in the next several years.

Prioritize Needed Improvements to Water System

Bay City is fortunate to have a reliable and adequate water supply. Unlike many Texas communities, there is not a pressing need to find new water sources. There are still several areas of need in the water system, including maintenance and upgrades to all the City's elevated and above ground water tanks. These facilities are vital to quality water service and funding should be set aside to address issues with these facilities in the near future. Another need is for a booster pump in the northwest area of town to improve water pressure in this area.

Longer term projects include a water line along Nile Valley Rd to the Tenaris site. As with the wastewater line, this will improve redundancy of service to Tenaris and support future growth along Nile Valley Rd. There is also planning underway for two new wells to provide additional capacity and security

in water provision. One is located at the Tenaris site and will provide water to this area, while the second is on the north side of town in the industrial park.

Develop a Drainage Study for Bay City

A drainage study is an important tool for planning future development. It lays out the drainage pattern for the community and identifies management strategies to address drainage challenges. Bay City should coordinate with the Drainage District to secure funding to conduct a study for the entire City. This study would help develop a long-term vision for drainage management, identifying needed projects and improvements. It would allow the City to begin planning for public infrastructure that might be needed as well as adopt policies to ensure private development adequately provides for drainage management. This is vital because of the drainage challenges facing Bay City.

Another opportunity this presents is for Bay City to take responsibility for drainage requirements in new development. Currently, developers have to work with the drainage district, and there was significant input on this. Most people we spoke with said this presents a significant barrier to development because the district is so difficult to work with. Having it under City authority would allow for a more efficient process and encourage more development to happen.

Consider Low impact Development Standards

Low impact development standards are intended to provide for on-site stormwater management through more ‘natural’ methods. Rather than building a giant concrete pond to catch runoff, developers can utilize rain gardens, swales, pervious concrete, and other methods to capture and store runoff on site. This can be a much lower cost and more attractive alternative to conventional stormwater management practices. The Low Impact Development Center has a wealth of resources on LID principles and tools for implementation (<http://www.lowimpactdevelopment.org/links.htmv>).

If the City moves forward with this policy, it should consider an outreach and education campaign to build support. Because this is fairly new, it may meet resistance from those unfamiliar with it and wary of how effective it may be. In addition, the City may consider incentives to support this type of development. If these policies are adopted, it will save the City money on major stormwater facilities, and may offset the costs of incentives for developers to embrace this effort.

Redevelop City Facilities

As Bay City grows, there will be a need for City facilities to be updated as well. The Fire Department has already outgrown its current facility and is parking one of its trucks outside because there is no indoor space available. The Future Land Use map identifies an area that is appropriate to relocate the Fire Department, providing them with adequate facilities and allowing the Police Department to expand at its current site. The City should also consider consolidating some of its maintenance and storage facilities that are scattered across town. A space in the north industrial park would be suitable and provide for more efficient management.

Spending money on new or expanded City offices and facilities is often controversial. Residents may feel the City is ignoring bigger issues while spending money on itself. Given the projects identified in this plan, it is recommended that these facilities be considered a longer-term effort. Other projects should take priority because once residents see that their needs are being addressed, they will become more supportive of needed improvements to other City facilities.

Conclusion

Bay City is fortunate that its infrastructure and facilities provide adequate service and are not presenting any major challenges. There are current efforts underway to identify and address challenges in these systems and ensure adequate service for the long term. City facilities are aging and there is a need for expansion; however, there are higher priorities demanding City attention and resources. Over time, once other issues are addressed, the City can develop a facilities plan that clearly identifies needed improvements and the detailed recommendations to address them.

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Introduction

Bay City has enjoyed various Economic Development achievements over the years and has been successful in the recruitment, retention, and expansion of new business, as well as having helped several local businesses get started by aiding local entrepreneurs. Bay City is a community where businesses large and small are served by a variety of Economic Development organizations dedicated to helping them thrive and prosper.

Existing employers such as STP, LyondellBasell, Oxea, McAda, and new employers such as Tenaris and Dunn Heat Exchangers contribute significantly to the area tax base and employ thousands of regional workers. It's not just industrial investment that makes a difference, though; it's other employers like Matagorda County, Bay City, several ISDs, the Medical Center, retailers like Wal-Mart and HEB, and small locally-owned businesses, as well.

With all that is going well, there are areas for improvement. This plan makes the assumption that existing organizations will continue typical Economic Development responsibilities and activities such as attracting new investment from elsewhere into the Bay City/Matagorda County area, working with existing industry to retain existing jobs, and assisting entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs in opening and growing local businesses. The following recommendations are specific goals above and beyond those typical performance expectations, reflecting opportunities for enhancing and strengthening the area's economic development assets.

Plan Process

Meetings were held with representatives of Bay City CDC, Matagorda EDC, Main Street, Bay City Chamber of Commerce, City of Bay City, Workforce Solutions, local large industry leaders, small business owners, the Comprehensive Planning Steering Committee, and other community leaders. Participants were asked questions about the economic development processes, systems, protocols, and outcomes and they shared opinions and ideas for improvement.

A set of goals and strategies were identified for recommendation. These provide the roadmap to implementing improvements to the economic development process.

Plan Recommendations

Foster Continued Economic Development Teamwork

Feedback from various stakeholders in the economic development process indicated that projects are handled with professionalism and goodwill. However, it was noted that there is room for improvement in the varying entities working together to guard against over-promising and under-delivering on incentives and agreements. Commitments to companies on what incentives they can/will receive should only be offered after authority is granted to make such commitments. Incentive offers must always be presented on paper so there is no ambiguity regarding what is being offered. Companies weigh their

options of location decisions based on many factors, one of which is the incentive package offered by each community. These companies must have full faith that what they are being offered is both accurate and unwavering.

One industry executive interviewed noted that “The Bay City/Matagorda team lacked experience and was not as proficient as other competing locations in other states. Some in the community may be too focused on the dollars and not on the true value an industry can bring to the community over time.”

The first recommendation under this goal is to establish an Economic Development Roundtable (consisting of the 5 entities: Bay City CDC, Matagorda County EDC, Bay City Chamber, Bay City Main Street, and City of Bay City Mayor and Building Permit/Inspection Department) that meets quarterly to discuss current activities and genuinely share information. These quarterly meetings are intended to be strictly for awareness and leveraging knowledge purposes; no training, no planning, etc. This Roundtable group is also the ideal vehicle by which to also discuss future needs for industrial park(s), spec buildings, land acquisitions, workforce concerns, wage disparities, etc.

Bay City also needs to establish an Economic Development Sales Team. This is comprised of area resource providers with whom a prospect/prospective company may come into contact or from whom they may require information. In addition to the Bay City CDC and the Matagorda County EDC, the Sales Team includes the City Permit Officer, Building Inspector, Workforce Development professionals, Mayor, School Superintendent, Police Chief, Fire Chief, Head of Public Works, existing industry leaders, etc. The purpose of forming a Sales Team is to get everyone “on the same page” regarding future economic development projects and processes. This will help achieve some of those local industry leader recommendations of improving proficiencies and committing only to what can be delivered.

This team should complete a Sales Team Training/Recruitment Readiness Workshop that includes the Basics of Site Selection/Elimination, Dos & Don'ts of Working with Prospects, Keeping your Promises, and a Mock Prospect Visit to hone their skills for future actual prospect visits. This group needs to establish a strong “can-do” attitude for future prospects and their projects. There are many firms who provide these Sales Team Training services to help prepare communities for working together on future projects.

Design and Implement a Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) Program

A Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) Program is a tool with which economic development entities can formally build relationships and better serve existing industries. A BR&E Program officially combines visits to existing businesses with a systematic interview process using economic development leadership and community leadership. The purpose is to discover and create opportunities for job growth and/or expanded investment from within existing industries.

Studies show that most new jobs in most communities come from businesses already located there, and it is important to remember that 100% of all job losses come from existing businesses. It is more likely that an existing business will add 10% new jobs than it is that a community can attract a new business to bring that same number of new jobs from another city. A BR&E helps foster relationships with decision makers who have already invested in a community and works to maximize their satisfaction with being located there. It helps assure them that they need to remain in the community they located and to consider them first during any opportunities for expansion.

A BR&E ensures solid community support which helps investors share information with economic development professionals to help improve the overall economy as well as their business and industry.

Realizing that this is a portion of the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Bay City, it is nevertheless recommended that a BR&E Program be led by Matagorda County EDC so that the effort can be comprehensive by encompassing the entire county and the Cities of Bay City, and Palacios. A quality BR&E should be led by the organization with the largest geographical breadth in a region. This is to ensure efficiencies from the existing industry standpoint, unity from a prospective industry standpoint, and to leverage information and resources.

A BR&E also is used to seek out opportunities for the community to recruit the suppliers and end-use markets of existing industries. It begins to connect the dots between what is and what could be.

The first step is for the Matagorda EDC to establish a BR&E Team. That would definitely include the Bay City CDC and representatives from all across Matagorda County. It would be idea to have a 5-7 member team that consists of the following qualities:

- Follows directions
- Active listener
- Curious/inquisitive nature
- Conducts meaningful follow-up on other projects
- Likeable personality
- Able to communicate with and relate to many diverse types of people

For political reasons, the team should not include any city, county, or state elected officials. The team should consist of 4 regional team members in addition to the 2 paid leaders at Matagorda EDC & Bay City CDC. Recommendations for areas are:

- Bay City/Tenaris region
- Palacios/STP/Port region
- Sargent/East region
- Matagorda/LyondellBassell region

The second step in building a BR&E is for this team of 6 leaders to work together to design the survey tool that will be used in face-to-face interviews with local industry executives. They will need to design interview questions that include “predictive data” discussions. Those types of questions are ones that the team cannot Google the answer to. They are questions that ask things like “what is the future of your industry?,” “what is the future of your business in that industry?,” “ what keeps you awake at night?” This team will likely spend 6 month developing the survey design, the interview questions, the list of industries to visit first, and the protocols for information recording and follow-up.

It is recommended that the team leader secure quotes from BR&E Software providers such as the Synchronist Suite from Blane Canada Ltd., and Executive Pulse’s package. It is valuable to know how much BR&E software costs to own and use before the team can decide if they plan to request a budget to acquire one.

The next step is to establish an interview schedule, decide who is interviewing which companies, schedule appointments and begin the interview process.

Data is collected, cataloged, and analyzed by the Team on some regular meeting timeline: monthly or quarterly. In the analysis of the data collected, the Team will meet to discuss problems or challenges they uncovered, upcoming events or changes at existing facilities, employee concerns expressed, trends recognized, and any other pertinent information that better serves the businesses.

Follow-up steps are carefully orchestrated and the Team must fulfill any promises made for assistance or information or other requests. The follow-up and reporting process is the final and most critical process of the entire BR&E. Every industry visit must include follow-up actions and a written report. It is worse to conduct the interviews and never follow-up than to never have asked them how to help in the first place.

For more in-depth information and to attend a workshop that includes detailed specifics, survey templates, interview questions, proven best practices, and real-world examples, it is recommended that at least two team members attend BR&E training through www.brei.org.

Company executive interviews and follow-ups must be done by team members who have been trained in the BR&E Process. Right away, existing businesses will feel more valued, concerns of stakeholders will begin to come to light, and economic development professionals will begin to build a dossier of knowledge. Longer term, a BR&E Program increases new job creation, facilitates competitive

improvements, and establishes a reputation in the site selection sector that Bay City is serious about taking care of businesses.

Resurrect or Redesign & Reintroduce “Shop Bay City First” Campaign

Bay City needs a robust and dynamic Shop Local Campaign to educate residents about what goods and services can be purchased in town and encourage them to shop with locally-owned businesses rather than patronizing out-of-town or online businesses. From one of the recommendations in the Bay City United Plan, the Bay City CDC established one and named it “Shop Bay City First,” but it isn’t currently being advertised or marketed to residents. This can be resurrected or an entirely new campaign developed.

It is important to evaluate what worked well in the previous campaign, what needs to be different, and why it is no longer being used. Applying those lessons learned to a resurrection or reiteration of that campaign will make the implementation stronger. Establishing a Shop Local campaign must start with the merchants. They must be involved in the design of the program and asked what they would like to see in a Shop Local campaign. Often times, merchants need to be educated about the benefits of participating in such a campaign to better understand the financial and relationship benefits to their businesses.

The first step is to decide which organization will be the lead in owning the campaign. Then the decision must be made as to whether it is most beneficial to resurrect the former “Shop Bay City First” campaign, slogan, and logo, or do develop something new from scratch. Is it more beneficial to capitalize on name recognition or more beneficial to establish a clean slate?

The elements and benefits of the campaign must be developed next. This is where stakeholders will determine what the campaign looks and feels like, what the benefits of being a participating merchant are, and how to market the message to local residents that shopping local is best. Investigate other communities to determine best practices for such Shop Local campaigns. Paris, Texas has established an extremely successful Shop Local campaign that awards one lucky shopper \$10,000 cash at the end of the holiday shopping season. Details of the Paris, TX campaign are on page 10 of this document:

http://classic.edsuite.com/proposals/proposals_188/144_1_dec_2011_and_jan_2012_news_letter_final_hq.pdf

Following the creation of the program, robust marketing to local residents must occur. They must be made aware of items they may not know are sold in their community. They must be informed about the benefits to local families when they shop with them, and be told the downside of online shopping and driving to other nearby larger communities to shop. Studies show that when residents become aware of why shopping locally is important, they tend to do so.

Some entity needs to provide the Texas Friendly Hospitality[®] or other Customer Service Excellence Workshops to local merchants and their front-line employees. Topics recommended include how to dress, how to behave, assisting customers, dealing with difficult customers, going the extra mile, parking issues, store hours/days of operation, etc. The purpose is to improve the overall the shopping and dining experiences for locals and tourists, while equipping local merchants with tools to retain their business and help them prosper. The ideal time for merchants' employees to be exposed to Customer Service Excellence training is within 60 days before a local festival /event that draws shoppers.

Both the Shop Local campaign and the Customer Service workshop should be tied into and coordinated with the Downtown Merchants Association's "Christmas on the Square" annual event. The Shop Local campaign coordinator should consider implementing an "Elf on the Square" event. That is where someone places an elf (from the Elf on the Shelf game) in a different local merchant's store each day between the day after Thanksgiving until Christmas Eve. They take a photo of the elf and post it on the Shop Local or other Facebook pages and people guess where the elf is located. The first one to guess correctly each day wins some small prize and/or the chance for a larger prize. Hammond, Louisiana Chamber of Commerce does this and more information can be found here:

<https://www.facebook.com/hammondchamber/posts/288503637935314>

An effort should be made to return www.shopbaycityfirst.com to its original intended purpose of encouraging local residents to shop locally before shopping out of town or online. In recent years, it has become a fishing website that is routed to www.matagordabay.com.

Foster a Strong Environment for Entrepreneurial Development

Bay City CDC & the University of Houston Coastal Plains Small Business Development Center (SBDC) are housed in the same building to help provide a one-stop-shop for entrepreneurial development. However, there is a need to build a more robust partnership between these two organizations to offer more frequent outreach to potential entrepreneurs. Several current Bay City business owners interviewed did not know of the SBDC or their services.

More actively market the SBDC's services such as How to Start a Business, How to Write a Business Plan, One-on-One Consulting, Software Training, Workshops, etc. These services should be marketed to existing business owners in their business and should be marketed to potential business owners in their homes (via newspaper ad, Facebook ads, Facebook posts from Bay City CDC & the SBDC Pages.) Promote CP-SBDC and their services through a newspaper article/column focused on starting a new business in Bay City showcasing advice, tips, pitfalls to avoid, and testimonials from business owners.

Advertise CP-SBDC and their services in every vacant storefront window. High School art students can earn community service hours by painting SBDC information in the windows of vacant storefronts around town. SBDC contact information as well as "Can't you imagine your business here?" or "Can't you imagine a new (fill in the blank with any needed business) going in here?" should be painted on the windows to get potential entrepreneurs thinking about an investment.

Create a community Entrepreneurs' Roundtable that introduces current entrepreneurs to one another and can be a forum to invite potential entrepreneurs. This roundtable is used to discuss issues and solutions of owning your own business, learning from the mistakes of others, and a general sharing of information.

Actively Market the Bay City Area to the State of Texas Film Commission

The filming industry is a profitable economic development pursuit for many communities, but Bay City does not have a formal effort to recruit film projects to the area. The State of Texas has a Film Commission whose job it is to market Texas to Hollywood producers and site selection scouts. Years ago budgets were sufficient for Film Commission employees to travel the state shooting photography and video for their files, but now State budgets are restricted to mostly marketing what is gathered and cataloged by select communities. It is now a responsibility of a community if they want to showcase items for consideration for films.

Filming could include feature films, short films, documentaries, music videos, commercials, movie trailers, episodic television, still photos, and more. Movie producers are not always looking for the most beautiful scenic shots. They also need interesting interiors and exteriors of buildings, unexpected architectures, construction sites, and otherwise considered undesirable properties such as landfills, blighted neighborhoods, and abandoned buildings. They are looking for something unique that they cannot find in Anytown, USA.

It is recommended that Bay City CDC or other City Staff make a list of interesting or unique assets around the community. Then download the Film Friendly Texas Sample Guidelines at http://governor.state.tx.us/film/film_friendly/sample_guidelines and review carefully. If after reading the guidelines, leaders are interested, it is recommended that they schedule a meeting and go visit with Texas Film Commission Staff to learn more and understand the still photography and videography specs necessary to submit film files to the Commission for their files.

If after that face-to-face meeting in Austin, leaders are still interested in pursuing film projects, the next step is to enlist the help of professional and amateur photographers and videographers to shoot and submit material to Bay City CDC for submission to the Film Commission.

It is advised to visit some Texas communities that have been successful in the film industry. Communities like Austin, Smithville, Buda, Frisco, and Kilgore have proven themselves as Film Friendly and will be willing to share advice to Bay City about their experiences and what they've learned along the way. Take advantage of learning from others who have already paved their way to success in film.

Finally, it is recommended to learn the federal and state incentives, and to research what local economic development incentives other communities in Texas and other states have provided. Some Texas project incentives information can be accessed at: <http://www.texasbusinessincentives.com/>.

If this becomes a serious economic development interest over time, it may be time then to consider taking the steps to Bay City becoming a “Film Friendly Texas Certified Community.” That certification provides training and ongoing assistance from the Film Commission helping communities work with production folks, crews, as well as other project assistance. It serves as an indicator that those communities are skilled at and dedicated to serving the film industry.

Conclusion

There are many things being done well in Bay City that have led to several diverse economic development success stories. Businesses have flourished there for generations and it is an attractive community for new businesses today. As any community with accomplishments, Bay City can learn lessons from past experiences and enter a cycle of continuous improvement. Economic Development is one of those endeavors that never ends; it’s a process, not an event.

By implementing these five Economic Development recommendations, Bay City can become an even better place to live and work. These five goals detail efforts that will not only lead to improved unified teamwork, job retention and expansion, keeping local dollars local, growing new businesses locally, and establishing Bay City as a film destination; it also helps solidify Bay City’s place in the state and country as Business-Friendly and helps local families prosper.

Introduction

Tourism is an economic driver not only for Bay City, but for Matagorda County and the region. Bay City and Matagorda County attract a diverse group of visitors to the area ranging from retirees and senior citizens to families with young children (and everything in between). The reason for this wide variety in visitors is the diversity in attractions and activities in the area. Visitors can enjoy outdoor recreation activities including fishing, boating, kayaking/canoeing, beach activities, camping, golf, hunting, and much more. The area is also rich in Texas historical and cultural activities.

Being centrally located in Matagorda County, Bay City is in the fortunate position of having the majority of the hotel rooms in the area. As such, it can be a “hub” for the many activity “spokes” located in the county. However, this is also somewhat detrimental in that Bay City itself is only home to a few of the attractions and activities that bring people to the area. Thus, Bay City is in the unique position of being the hub of the county without being the tourism hub.

The Tourism plan provides the opportunity to begin focusing on Bay City’s tourism potential. This section will outline specific recommendations that can help increase visitation and length of overnight stays.

Plan Process

A focus group of area tourism industry stakeholders was held to gauge their perceptions of the Bay City tourism industry. Stakeholders from Bay City and Matagorda County discussed opportunities and challenges facing Bay City related to tourism development and marketing in the future.

Following the focus group, a series of individual interviews was held with representatives of specific tourism industry sectors. The interviews were designed to dive a little deeper into how to improve on and diversify Bay City’s tourism attractions. Included in these interviews were representatives from the lodging, attractions, outdoor recreation, and downtown sectors.

Input from the focus group, the individual interviews, and the public survey were used to help develop the tourism recommendations below.

Plan Recommendations

Since many of the tourism attractions in Matagorda County are outdoors, Bay City can provide the answer to the question, “What’s next?”. After a day (or more) spent in the great outdoors at the beach, fishing, birding, kayaking, etc., many visitors will want to do something else. Many of these visitors will want attractions and activities that can be done fully or partly indoors. Bay City could provide those activities.

With this in mind, the Tourism Recommendations take a three-pronged approach:

- 1) Answer the question, “What’s next?”
- 2) Develop attractions and amenities that complement the already successful outdoor recreation opportunities
- 3) Develop programs and services that improve the visitor experience

1) Answer the question, “What’s next?”

Create a Lively Downtown Atmosphere

When asked to provide answers to the “what’s next?” question, many of those interviewed could see Downtown Bay City as someday being **the** answer. Most recognized the strides made in downtown that have significantly improved the shopping and dining possibilities. However, several aspects of downtown could still be improved upon.

Every entry point into Bay City takes travelers through downtown. Visitors literally have to drive through it. Why not make them want to stop? Downtown’s appearance was addressed in the section on Downtown Revitalization and Historic Preservation, however, it is an important piece in the Tourism Recommendations as well. Downtown was noted as having a “utilitarian” feel to it. Much of this can’t be helped due to building design, etc. However it is possible to create a lively downtown atmosphere by adding color.

The easiest way to add color and an instant festive atmosphere is to install seasonal flags and banners on existing light poles. Downtown Indy has developed an Outdoor Banner Program that outlines specific criteria for adding banners, the types of banners, and on which poles the banners can be installed (<http://www.indydt.com/banners.cfm>). Beverly (MA) Main Streets has a similar program, but uses it to feature local artists (<http://www.beverlymainstreets.org/banner-program-92.html>). Banner programs such as these could be used to keep downtown colorful and vibrant, be seasonal in nature, or even to promote specific events.

Another way to create a lively atmosphere in downtown is to decorate the windows of vacant storefronts. A project like this can actually serve many purposes. Not only does it add color and life to downtown, it can involve often underutilized arts and service groups, and assist in reactivating these vacant spaces as productive local businesses.



Beverly Main Streets 2013 Winter Banner Winner by Linda Szydłowska



Downtown Fairbanks (Alaska) has initiated a program that seeks to do all three (<http://downtownfairbanks.com/tag/public-art/>). Their program features a single theme and then requests RFPs from local/area artists to visually interpret that theme on the

windows of vacant storefronts in downtown. Artists compete for the privilege to design all vacant windows. The Window Project in Fairbanks reproduces the art as vinyl window clings, but other mediums such as paint or window displays could also be used.

Projects such as these can draw attention to spaces that are available for rent or purchase, and can also become a temporary form of public art that utilizes downtown buildings as the canvas. Arts groups from Bay City ISD, local art guilds, and professional artists could all be tapped to participate. The art could be done according to a set theme, such as the Fairbanks example, show local history, or could depict the inside of the store as if it were occupied. Materials could include paint, vinyl clings, foam core, canvas, and others. This could also serve as a catalyst to a possible new downtown arts event (e.g., an unveiling ceremony and arts festival, etc.).

**The Window Art Project, Downtown Fairbanks
Alaska**

Attract More Unique Downtown Retail, Dining, and Night Life

Adding color and life to downtown will definitely make people stop and look. However, the only things that will make them stay or prolong their visit are unique downtown retail, dining, and night life experiences.

Downtown Bay City has seen a great deal of improvement in this area over the last few years. Restaurants like K-2 Steakhouse, The Fat Grass, and Main Street Coffee Bar are popular and are patronized by locals and visitors alike. Retail stores featuring unique offerings such as Homestead are creating foot traffic and repeat business to downtown. With the addition of The Fat Grass, live music and nightlife can consistently be found downtown. Despite these improvements, downtown still doesn't completely answer the "what's next?" question. From a tourism perspective, there is still not enough to do downtown to keep people there for more than a couple of hours.

Based on feedback from tourism industry stakeholders and from the public in the Bay City survey, additional retail and restaurant options are highly desirable business recruitment target areas. To be successful and sustainable, these new enterprises must cater to locals as well as visitors. This can often be a difficult balance to achieve.

According to the Governor's Office of Economic Development and Tourism, shopping is the third most popular activity among all trips to Texas. The only activities rated higher than shopping are visiting friends and family and culinary or dining experiences. Two of the three most popular tourist activities in the state are lacking in downtown Bay City.

Successful additions to downtown will complement existing retail, dining, and nightlife offerings, offer unique products and experiences, and will draw upon local/regional influences. Tourists are attracted to unique retail because they are looking for things that can't be found back home or that evoke a sense of place. Suggested retail additions include specialty outdoor recreation stores, boutiques, menswear, bookstores, art galleries, etc.

Similarly, visitors seek out local dining experiences that can't be found at home or in chain restaurants. The "farm-to-table" movement, which focuses on locally or regionally produced food, is taking the nation by storm and showing no signs of fatigue. Matagorda County is an ideal location for a locally-sourced restaurant that features beef, seafood, rice, and other regionally produced crops. Other suggested culinary experiences for downtown include upscale seafood restaurants, places for lunch, and bakeries.

And finally, visitors to Bay City need something to do in the evenings. There are many options to occupy their time during the day, but the city and downtown lack nightlife options that would appeal to visitors. Additional live music venues to the patio at The Fat Grass, upscale bars, and wine bars would provide locals with evening options for entertainment and another outlet for spending money locally.

Some of this retail, dining, and nightlife is already happening in downtown. But this organic process is often too slow. Some cities have seen success in incentivizing the types of businesses they feel are either lacking or desirable (or both) in specific areas. Bay City could employ this tactic to encourage the types of retail, dining, and nightlife businesses that are desired in the downtown.

The incentives can take various forms, but all can provide sales tax growth and create jobs for local citizens. The City of Highland Park, IL has developed a sales tax rebate program that is offered to both new and existing qualifying retail businesses (<https://www.cityhpil.com/documents/18/47/2012%20SALES%20TAX%20REBATE%20PROGRAM%20GUIDELINES%20AND%20DESCRIPTION.PDF>). The City established what types of projects are eligible, as well as specifically laying out the conditions in which the rebates will be provided. In addition to actual money, other types of incentives are offered for qualified retail projects by the City of Oklahoma City (<http://www.theallianceokc.org/sites/default/files/files/documents/Retail%20Policy%2006262008%20v121.pdf>). Their incentives can include public infrastructure improvements, assistance with the permitting and zoning process, site acquisition and preparation, and expense reimbursement.

Enhance/Create Regular Downtown Events

As noted in the section on Downtown Revitalization and Historic Preservation, downtown events can be a reason that people want to come downtown. Currently Market Day on the Square is the only regularly scheduled downtown event. Many local stakeholders have expressed the need to update Market Day, which could attract a different type of visitor.

The easiest way to update Market Day is to update the vendors. Focusing on higher quality, unique merchandise will attract visitors who are inclined to spend more money. Consider doing some "secret shopping" at some other successful Market Days to get some fresh ideas. Market Days in Georgetown, Wimberley, and Boerne have reputations for quality merchandise and high attendance. Ask for the contact information of vendors who would be a good fit at Market Day on the Square and begin to solicit their attendance. Over time, Market Day on the Square will be transformed into an event that is well-attended and regarded.

Adding live music can also aid in freshening up Market Day on the Square. The courthouse plaza could be used as a built-in stage for musical performances ranging from the high school band to popular regional acts.

Create Large Quarterly Events

Larger scale downtown events can also be used to bring in visitors. There are currently no such events in downtown. The focus here should also be on higher-end offerings and local flavor that will bring in visitors with high disposable incomes. If quarterly events are too cumbersome to manage, consider a large event two to three times per year instead.

These events could be a great way to forge or strengthen partnerships with the local art, artisan, and music community. Events that combine art, artisan goods, food, wine, and music in various ways are usually quite successful. Examples include a wine walk paired with an arts festival, a music festival featuring local food offerings, an alfresco dining event paired with music, or a food and wine festival.

2) Enhance Outdoor Recreation

Enhance the Tourism Attraction Mix

There are a large number of outdoor recreation activities available in Bay City and Matagorda County. Focusing on complementary activities will help broaden the opportunities available for visitors to enjoy and capitalize on an already successful mix of tourist activities. Additionally, it would provide things for families with children to do during their stay in the area.

Visitors already enjoy hunting, fishing, kayaking, golf, birding, and more in the Bay City/Matagorda County area. Offering more activities that are similar in nature will keep visitors in the area longer. Bay City could capitalize on these existing activities and the natural features of the area by working to attract outdoor recreation businesses to locate within the city limits rather than in the county.

Specific outdoor recreation enterprises could include canoe/kayak outfitters in Riverside Park, miniature golf, driving range, shooting range, water park, and a dive shop.

Additional indoor recreation and entertainment activities might also help lengthen trips and provide a nicer experience for visitors. Suggested indoor venues include a roller skating rink/sports arena and a movie theater. A multi-use sports arena is a good alternative to a simple roller skating rink. The Austin Sports Arena in Round Rock is a good model (<http://www.austinsportsarena.com/>).

Incentives similar to the ones covered in the retail section could be implemented to aid in attracting desirable recreation and entertainment businesses.

Develop Bay City/Matagorda County Tour Packages

It's easy to overlook the things we see every day as common or uninteresting. However, tourists don't have the same opportunities. A growing trend in tourism is to incorporate real experiences into

otherwise typical vacations. Travelers want to see how things work or get a behind-the-scenes peek into something that is uncommon where they live.

Matagorda County is ripe with potential for experiences like these. There are many visitors who would love to visit a working cattle ranch, and maybe even get the chance to participate in a ranching activity. Other possibilities include behind-the-scenes tours of a rice farm or a cotton operation. Still others could be guided birding tours on private land.

Once these possibilities are identified, the cooperation of the owners/operators will need to be secured. A potential perk for them is the chance to diversify traditional farm or ranch income. The X-Bar Ranch in El Dorado, TX has been so successful at diversifying for tourism that a large percentage of their efforts have been shifted to non-traditional ranch activities due to the income potential.

Once these tours and experiences have been developed, then add them to the existing marketing messaging about things to do in Bay City and Matagorda County. Booking could be handled centrally through the Matagorda County Convention and Visitor Bureau or through a local Bay City travel agent.

One possible market for these new experiences is the senior citizen tours based out of the Houston precincts. Below is a list of web resources for these groups:

<http://hcp1.net/Programs/Transportation.aspx>

<http://www.hcp2.com/community-transportation/transportation-senior>

<http://www.hcp4.net/senioradult/daytrips/>

Attract Developments for Winter Texans

Additions to RV resorts and Winter Texan campgrounds could help to sustain an already robust senior citizen visitor market in Bay City. Riverside Park has 40 campsites with full RV hookups and a few privately owned campgrounds round out the supply of RV facilities available in Bay City proper. Other RV campgrounds also exist in other locations within Matagorda County.

Becoming a Winter Texan destination will take time. The Rio Grande Valley has a head start that spans decades. But the similarities in the two destinations cannot be overlooked. Just like the Rio Grande Valley, Bay City has great winter weather, is close to the coast, features an abundance of outdoor activities that are popular with Winter Texans (e.g., birding and golf), and has the medical infrastructure necessary for that demographic.

What is lacking is the sense of community that is strong at the RV resorts and campgrounds in the Rio Grande Valley. The “low-hanging fruit” for this goal would be to begin developing activity centers, organized activities, and building a real community for long-term winter residents. Developing additional RV resorts would then follow.

Begin by collecting zip code data at Bay City tourist attractions like the Matagorda County Birding and Nature Center, Matagorda Bay Nature Park, Rio Colorado Golf Course, and at the privately-owned RV

campgrounds. Identifying the origins of Winter Texans who are currently visiting the area will provide a pool of potential targets who may be interested in a more prolonged stay. Many Winter Texans who visit the Rio Grande Valley RV campgrounds hail from the same area and enjoy wintering together.

The activity centers and RV campgrounds in the Rio Grande Valley often provide amenities like billiards, craft rooms, fitness centers, dancing, horseshoe pits, dog parks, wood shops, and more. They are literally a home away from home – a community.

3) Improve the Visitor Experience

Provide Customer Service/Destination Training

An ongoing challenge for many destinations is providing consistently excellent customer service to visitors. Various factors influence this, but staff turnover and a lack of customer service training resources are often the biggest. Two Texas communities have cracked the code by combining customer service training with destination training to front line staff, tourism managers, and locals. Customer service problems were mentioned by almost every tourism stakeholder interviewed, so this is a needed step toward improving the overall visitor experience.

Denton, TX created a program they call “Denton Originals”. This program combines live and online customer service training for front line and management staff with mystery shopping, a recognition program, and opportunities to familiarize employees with all that Denton has to offer visitors. A brief description of the Denton Originals program is included in the Appendices.

Beaumont, TX takes a slightly different approach with their Destination Training program (<http://www.beaumontcvb.com/about-beaumont/about-the-cvb/hospitality-training/>). Over the last several years, over 2,300 tourism employees and local residents have gone through this program and are helping to spread southern hospitality and information to Beaumont visitors. Beaumont provides hospitality training with tours of local attractions to better equip the tourism industry and local residents to assist visitors.

Maximize the Use of the Local Hotel Occupancy Tax

The primary function of the local hotel occupancy tax is to market the destination to visitors. There are several other legal uses of the tax that could be enlisted to help pay for tourism programs and infrastructure. Consider conducting an evaluation of existing hotel occupancy tax expenditures to ensure that opportunities are not being overlooked (e.g., sports facilities). This guide from the Texas Hotel and Lodging Association and the Texas Municipal League provides excellent information on what cities need to know to administer the tax (https://www.tml.org/legal_pdf/Admin-localHotelTax.pdf).

Capitalize on Downtown Web Assets

The Internet is often where visitors will get their first impressions of a community. These impressions can be the reason that visitors choose one destination over another. Therefore, it is vital to provide current and relevant information in a visually pleasing format.

Bay City has a few web assets that currently provide downtown-specific information to visitors and locals. All of these assets are in need of improvements. These improvements can help visitors make informed travel decisions and improve their experience while they are in town.

The first thing that must happen is to decide which website will be the primary source of downtown information for visitors. This site should include events, shopping and dining guides, and generally keep people up to date on the fun things to see and do in downtown. All other sites should prominently link to this site when describing downtown.

The Main Street pages on the City of Bay City’s website

(<http://www.cityofbaycity.org/index.aspx?nid=24>) provides mainly information on the Main Street program itself (e.g., mission and vision statements, façade grant program, how to adopt a planter, etc.). A link to a brochure for downtown merchants is available, but is not current.

A second site (<http://visitbaycity.org/our-downtown/>) is more consumer-facing and offers information that would be appealing to visitors. This is probably the site that should be promoted to visitors for downtown information. Improvements to this site should include more specific and detailed downtown information. For example, the links for shopping and dining go to the Matagorda County Tourism website which lists all shopping and dining outlets – not ones located specifically in downtown. Visitors who are unfamiliar with the community will have to take the time to search every address to determine if the place they want to visit is located in downtown or somewhere else in Bay City.

Regardless of which site is selected to provide downtown information to visitors, it should be kept up to date and be widely promoted.

Conclusion

Bay City has a solid foundation with regard to tourism. It is a wonderful destination for outdoor recreation enthusiasts and attracts visitors of all ages. The goals included in this section will help Bay City improve the visitor experience, attract more visitors, and keep them in the destination longer. The longer visitors stay, the more money they spend. This revenue can then be reinvested into the tourism industry to fund ongoing improvements.