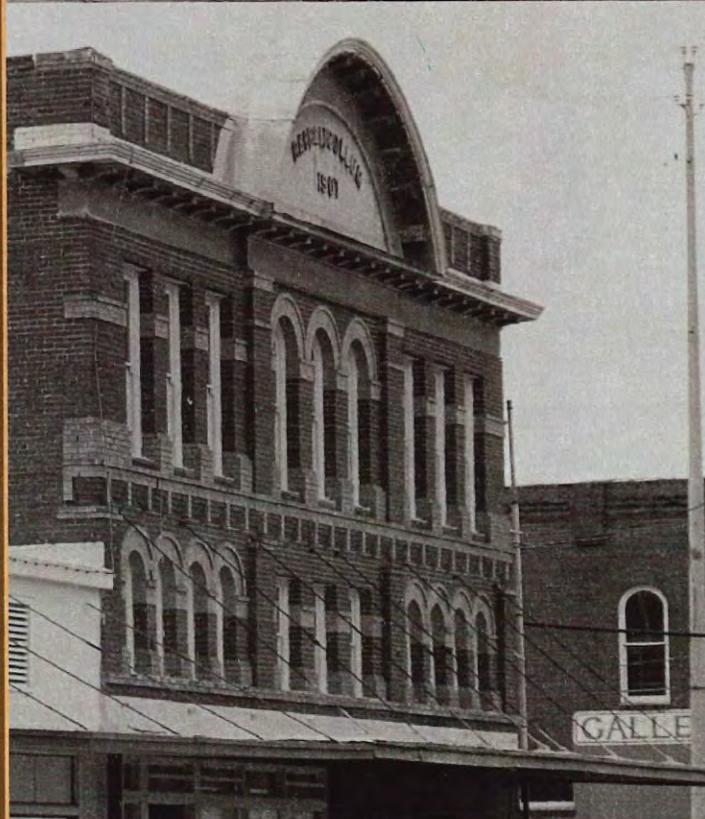
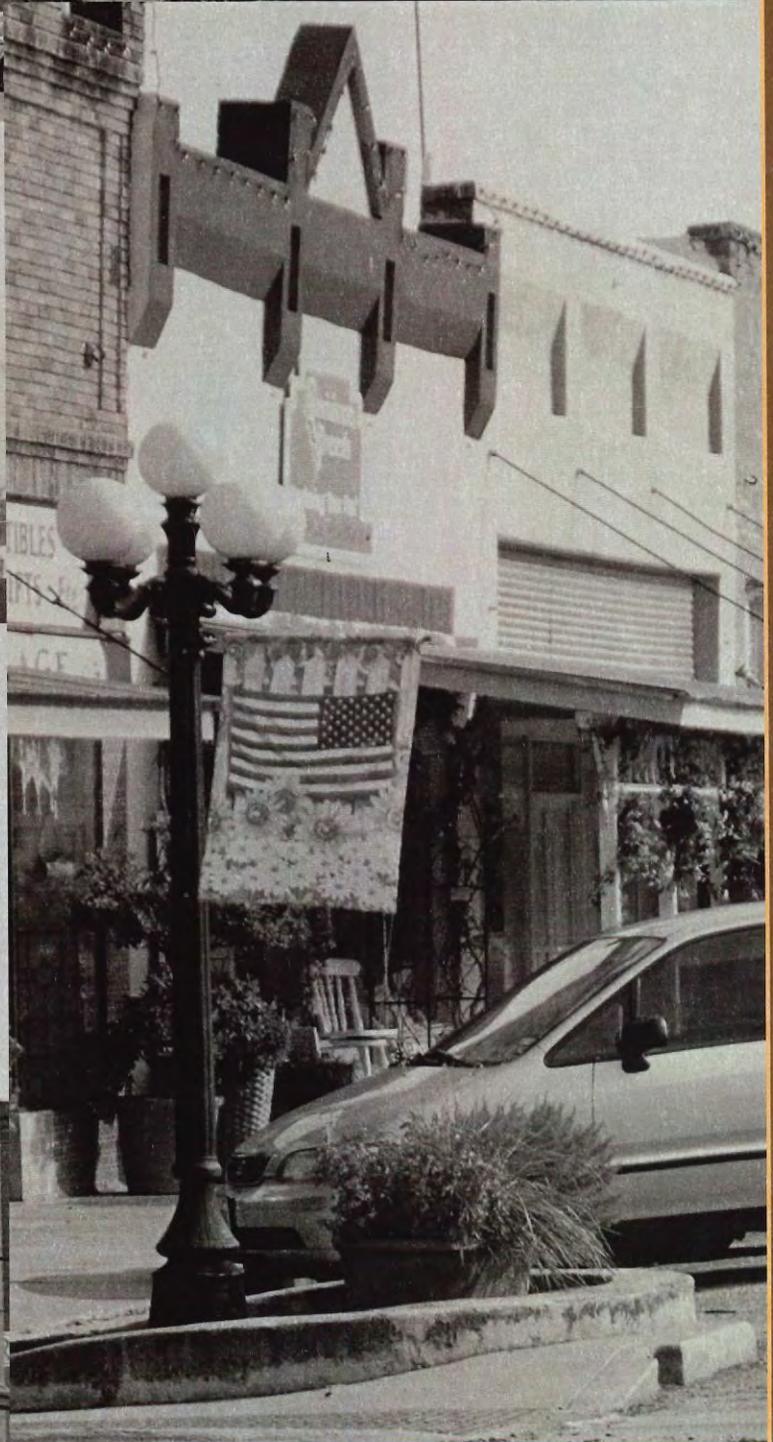
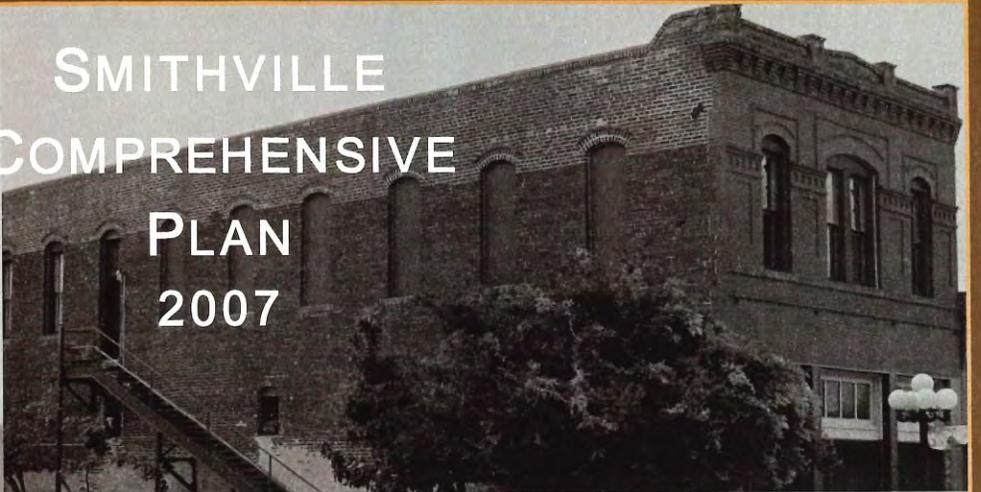
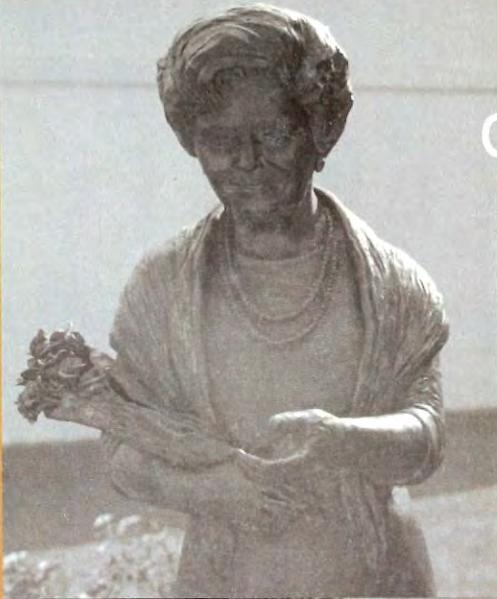


SMITHVILLE
COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN
2007



CITY OF SMITHVILLE, TEXAS

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Prepared by

LOWER COLORADO RIVER AUTHORITY

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Smithville is located approximately 45 miles east of Austin, in southeastern Bastrop County (Illustration 1). With its proximity to Austin, the western half of Bastrop County has experienced rapid growth in the last 10 years. Smithville has seen growth; however, it is not experiencing the same level as the rest of the County. Given the tremendous growth in the region, it is likely that Smithville will soon feel its effects. This comprehensive plan is an effort to help prepare the community for the expected growth and provide tools to preserve the assets that make Smithville the unique and desirable community it currently is.

History¹

The town was originally established by Thomas Gazeley, who settled near the present site in 1827. A community arose around the store he operated and was named Smithville after another early resident. The first church, Smithville Presbyterian Church was founded in 1871. The post office was established in 1876. The arrival of the railroad, first the Bastrop and Taylor, which became the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas ('Katy') drove additional growth.

In 1894, the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad established its central shops in Smithville. The population quickly doubled, and the town was incorporated in March 1895. In 1900 Smithville had a population of 2,577. The population continued to grow until it peaked in the mid-1940's around 4,200. As railroad jobs dried up, so did the town's population, dropping below 3,000 by the 1960's. Since 1990, Smithville has experience steady growth, with the population increasing from 3,196 to an estimated 4,250 in 2005.

Smithville has maintained its rural character and small town charm. Its downtown is lined with historic buildings, many of which house unique shops and other businesses. The area surrounding the central business district is filled with historic homes, the majority of which are well-maintained and attractive. This historic charm and unique character attracted filmmakers for the Sandra Bullock movie, "Hope Floats", much of which was filmed in Smithville. The citizens are very proud of their participation in this movie, and a 10th anniversary celebration is being proposed.

The countryside around Smithville exemplifies the rural character of Central Texas, with rolling hills, ranches, and farms. The Colorado River runs through the City and provides a tremendous opportunity for recreation. There are two state parks connected by a park road in proximity to Smithville as well as several City parks and additional recreation on private land. This heritage is reflected in the rural character of Smithville residents who are committed to maintaining strong ties to the land.

¹ Sources: Texas State Handbook, City of Smithville website (www.smithvilletexas.net)

Physical Geography²

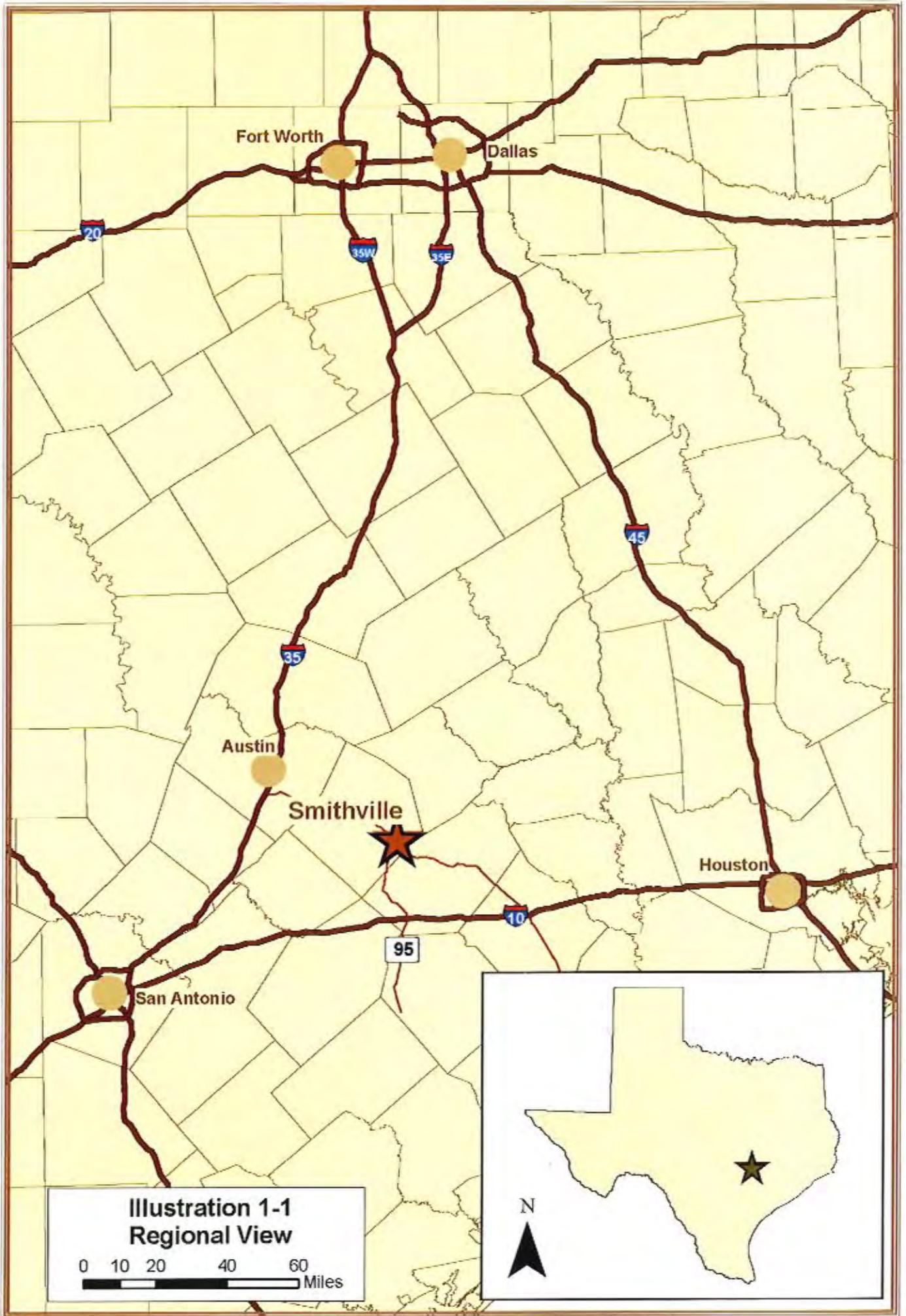
Smithville lies at the northwestern edge of the Gulf Coastal Plain, near its boundary with the Blackland Prairie. It is in the area of the so-called 'Lost Pines' which are the western-most outlier of the thick piney woods that characterize much of East Texas. The terrain has low rolling hills, with a few significant elevation changes, particularly the bluffs along the Colorado River, and the Devil's Backbone, a ridgeline just to the north of town. This balance of topography, forest, and prairie made the region very attractive to early settlers who could farm and ranch the prairie, while having access to quality timber for building homes and other needs.

The Colorado River, the longest river wholly contained in one state, runs through Smithville. This river provides drinking water and irrigation for much of Central Texas and farmers near the coast. Smithville lies over the Carrizo-Wilcox aquifer, which provides much of the drinking water for rural residents of Bastrop County surrounding Smithville. This is typically a reliable source of water, although increasing growth may lead to local availability concerns.

Climate

Monthly Average High Temp _____	July: 96°
Monthly Average Low Temp _____	Jan.: 40°
Annual Average Precipitation _____	37.1"
Elevation _____	324ft.
Growing Season _____	268 days
Prevailing Winds _____	Southeast

² Source: Texas: A Geography, Terry G. Jordan with John L. Bean, Jr. and William M. Holmes



**Illustration 1-1
Regional View**

0 10 20 40 60 Miles

PLANNING PROCESS

In the summer of 2006, City leaders decided it was time to develop a comprehensive plan that would provide guidance on how to protect Smithville from uncontrolled growth while providing jobs and other amenities desired by citizens. The plan would also tie in with a County-wide strategic plan being developed at this time. This comprehensive plan is the result of that effort and includes the following topics:

- Demographic Analysis – Current and projected population characteristics
- Land Use – Description of current land use and a Future Land Use Plan
- Economic Development – Recommendations for increasing employment opportunities and tax revenues for the City
- Community Development – Recommendations for community facilities such as parks, etc.
- Housing – Recommendations for providing quality housing options for all incomes
- Downtown Revitalization – Recommendations for strengthening the Central Business District
- Historic Preservation – Recommendations to preserve and enhance the historic assets of Smithville
- Stormwater Assessment – Recommendations to protect property and water quality
- Development Ordinance Review – Recommendations on updating the subdivision and zoning ordinances
- Implementation Guide – Lists specific actions to accomplish plan goals

The plan is the result of an extensive public input process that is discussed in greater detail in its own section of the plan.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is intended to address all of the different facets of community development in a holistic fashion. Rather than addressing issues such as housing, economic development, transportation, and others individually, the comprehensive plan takes a big picture look at how all of these different issues interact. The goal is to identify projects that can generate the highest return on investment in multiple areas of the community. For example, a plan that only addresses economic development may call for focusing resources on business recruitment. However, if there is a housing shortage, businesses are unlikely to locate to the community. A comprehensive plan avoids this conflict by addressing these issues simultaneously to maximize the benefit to the community.

To be successful, a comprehensive plan must have a strong public input component. If the citizens are not involved in the process, they will not support the plan recommendations and the resources allocated to projects identified in the plan. Also, it is important to understand what the citizens identify as priorities for action because that will engender their support for using limited public resources on projects identified in the plan. Also, in rural communities, like Smithville, city government has very limited staff and resources; involving residents in the planning process will empower them to participate in implementation of the plan.

The comprehensive plan has a series of goals identified during the public input process. Some of these require government action, while others are more geared towards local organizations. Each goal has a series of projects and actions to implement. This implementation process is the key to success for the plan. Implementation is a long term process; some projects can be accomplished in the first year or two, while others will require more time and investment. The plan balances 'quick' victories that will build enthusiasm and support, while leading to larger successes down the road.

The most important consideration is that the comprehensive plan cannot be put on the shelf. The plan reflects the needs and desires of the citizens of Smithville and should be used regularly to guide decision making. Also, the plan must be continually reviewed to ensure it continues to reflect the community. Ideally, the plan is reviewed annually, potentially by the Steering Committee and City Council. Any major changes to the community will likely result in an update to the plan. For example, if a business with 100 employees locates in Smithville it will result in different priorities than are currently addressed in the plan. It will be up to the citizens to stay involved and ensure that decisions are being made in accordance with the plan. They cannot sit back once the plan is adopted and not participate in the process. It is critical for City leaders to see the support of the citizens as they allocate resources to the plan.

Process

The first step in developing the comprehensive plan was creating a steering committee. This committee consisted of private citizens appointed by the City Council to represent the City as a whole. The purpose of the committee was to work with staff from the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) in developing the plan to ensure it reflects the priorities of Smithville residents. The steering committee was involved throughout the public input process and reviewed all aspects of the plan. This group will also take a leadership role in helping to implement the plan by keeping residents involved in task forces and going before City Council to remind them of the plan priorities.

As mentioned above, planning required a focus on public involvement. In September 2006 surveys were sent monthly bills to all Smithville utility customers. The survey (Appendix A) was an effort to determine the 'big picture' of community sentiment and priorities. The survey covered topics ranging from historic preservation, housing, economic development and recreational opportunities. Based on the survey results, five topics were selected for further discussion at the Town Hall meeting held in October. These topics were Community Development, City Services and Utilities, Downtown Revitalization and Historic Preservation, Economic Development, and Wild Card (to provide an open forum for ideas). This meeting allowed residents to identify more specific issues related to these topics and then prioritize them for inclusion in the Plan. Following the Town Hall meeting, a series of focus groups were held to develop programs to address the identified issues. These meetings resulted in a list of projects that the City and other organizations can undertake to implement the plan. Appendix A contains a full list of comments received at the Town Hall meeting along with the voting results along with a detailed explanation of the survey results.

In addition to the public input process, a land use survey was conducted. This survey identified the current land use of every parcel in Smithville and its extra-territorial jurisdiction. This shows how the community has developed over time, where undeveloped land is available, and serves as the basis for the future land use plan. A workshop was held that allowed participants an opportunity to draw their vision of what Smithville should look like in the future. The map created in this workshop is a guide for land use decision making and can serve as the basis for updating the City's zoning code.

The plan was developed based on all of the public input. The goals and recommendations of the plan reflect the priorities of the citizens of Smithville. These recommendations are defined and explained in the body of the plan; however the most important piece in the plan is the last section. The last section of the plan is the implementation guide, which provides a detailed road map to making things happen. It spells out specific actions, timelines, responsible parties, etc. so that anyone can review the plan and identify how projects can be accomplished. This is the section of the plan that should be required reading for all elected officials, city staff, and concerned citizens because it outlines how the plan can be successful.

Once the plan was developed it went before City Council for adoption. By adopting the plan, city leadership commits to utilizing the plan as a framework for decision making. However, responsibility for implementation goes beyond city government. Local organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, Smithville Heritage Society, Downtown Merchants Association, and others must be involved in making the plan successful. Also, citizens must stay informed and involved to ensure the plan is kept current and on the front burner of community action. If nobody serves as a champion for the plan, it will be put on a shelf to gather dust.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS

The most important resource available to a community is its people. As a result, gathering and analyzing data on the population to which the City is responsible is a critical function for knowing and understanding the community. This includes an understanding of the current and projected growth of the community, a socio and demographic profile of the people, and a brief review of data to demonstrate how the community lives.

The following report is a profile of the City of Smithville that includes information on key social and economic statistics such as population growth, industries, housing and workforce trends that are key to understanding Smithville. The purpose of this report is to provide community leaders with unbiased information about strengths and challenges of the community for strategic discussions about the future of Smithville. The analysis is divided into three sections: demographic and socioeconomic factors, employment and industry, and quality of life.

All of the data collected for this analysis was compiled from published information including: federal, state, and local government agencies and private sources.

Population Estimates and Projections

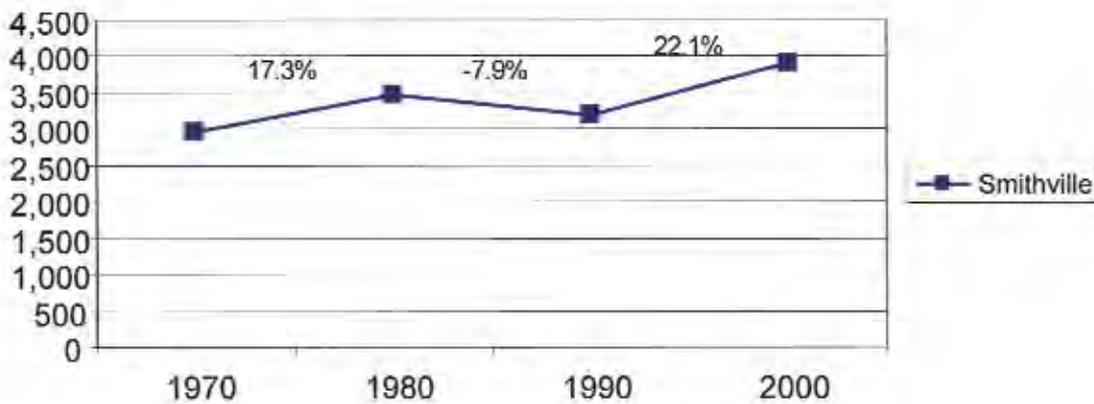
The 1990s brought tremendous growth to central Texas. Bastrop County, one of the fastest growing in the state, grew over 50 percent during the 1990's. Between 1990 and 2000, the City of Smithville grew from 3,196 to 3,901 reflecting an increase of 22.1 percent. This was a marked change from the population decline of the 1980's and the relatively stable population of the prior 30 to 40 years.

Table 2.1: Population, 1970-2000

	1970 Census	1980 Census	1990 Census	2000 Census
City of Smithville	2,959	3,470	3,196	3,901
Bastrop County	17,297	24,726	38,263	57,733

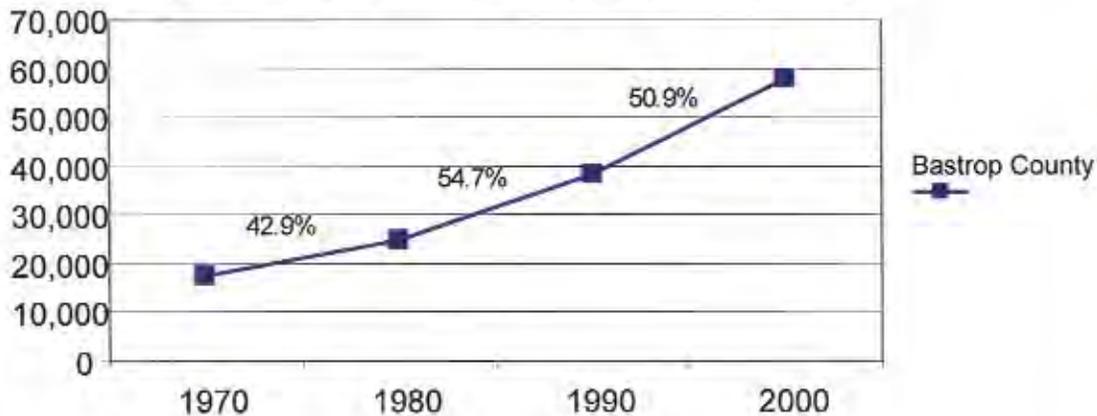
Source: US Census Bureau

Figure 2.1 Census Population and Growth (Smithville) 1970-2000



Source: US Census Bureau

Figure 2.2 Census Population and Growth (Bastrop County) 1970-2000



Source: US Census Bureau

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

The Texas State Data Center provides annual population estimates for cities and counties. The current population estimate for the City of Smithville is 4,275, which represents a 9.6 percent growth since the 2000 Census.

There are a number of different methods for population projection used by various state and regional agencies. In the interest of consistency, the Texas State Data Center projections will be used in this report since they represent the official numbers used by the State.

Table 2.2 Population Projections

	2005	2010	2015	2020
City of Smithville	4,275	5,643	6,379	6,799
Bastrop County	68,957	76,195	87,201	99,453

Source: Texas State Data Center, October 2005 Population Projections (0.5 Scenario)

Using historical growth and percent population data, the population of Smithville may grow to the levels depicted in Table 2.3 and Figure 2.2 by 2020.

AGE

A different understanding of the population can be shown by the age of its residents. The most notable comparison of age cohorts for the City of Smithville, when compared to Bastrop County is for the population 65 years and older. In 2000, nearly 1 of every 5 people in Smithville was over the age of 65, where as Bastrop County as a whole, reported 1 in 10 persons over 65 years.

Table 2.3 Population Percentage by Age (2000)

	Under 19	20-24 years	25 -44 years	45-64 years	65 and older	Median Age (years)
City of Smithville	29.9	4.7	27.2	19.2	19.0	36.8
Bastrop County	30.5	5.0	31.3	22.8	10.2	35.4

Source: US Census Bureau, DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics and National Center for Education Statistics

Over time, this trend is expected to continue, where as the younger age cohorts for Smithville are expected to remain relatively stable or decline, while the older age cohorts continue to increase. This is reflected in the growth rate at Smithville ISD, which has been slower than the City and declined between 2004 and 2006. As the population ages, it will present a growing challenge for the school district for which it will need to prepare.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

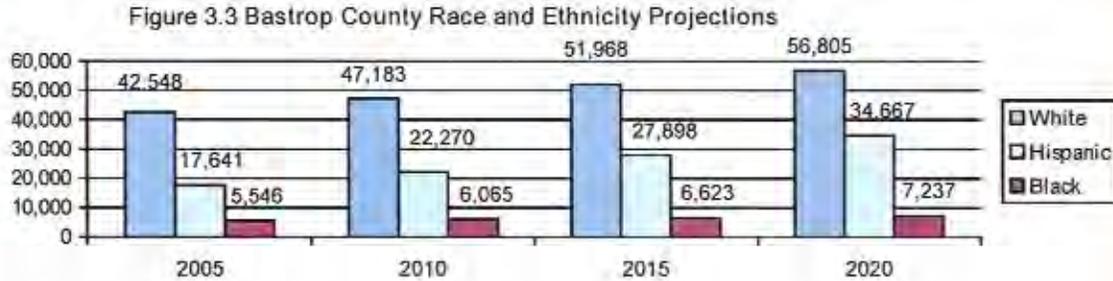
The racial makeup of the City of Smithville is predominately white, with a historical and stable black population and a growing Hispanic influence. In 2000, the Hispanic or Latino population, for the first time was reported as an ethnicity, rather than race. Therefore, a person may identify as White and Hispanic or Black and Hispanic. The percent of the population, in 2000, that identified as Hispanic of any race was 15.7 percent, while 84.6 percent of the population identified as white not Hispanic. Table 2.4 depicts the racial and ethnic distribution of the City in 2000.

Table 2.4 City of Smithville, Population by Race and Ethnicity

Race				Ethnicity	
White	Black	Native American	Asian	Hispanic Of Any Race	Not Hispanic (White alone)
78.0	14.5	0.3	0.4	15.4	84.6

Source: US Census Bureau, DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics

The trends anticipated for the state follow that expected for Bastrop County. In the coming years, the white and black populations are expected to continue a steady increase, roughly 2 percent annually, while the Hispanic population is expected to double by 2020, from an estimated 17,641 in 2005 to 34,667 in 2020.



Source: Texas State Data Center

Though population, race and ethnicity projections are not available from published sources at the City level, insight to the community’s future profile may be sought from historical and current school enrollment data. According to the Texas Education Agency, the percentage of white, black or Hispanic students in Smithville ISD has not dramatically changed over the past decade. The most interesting trend from the student population is the increasing percentage of students categorized as economically disadvantaged.

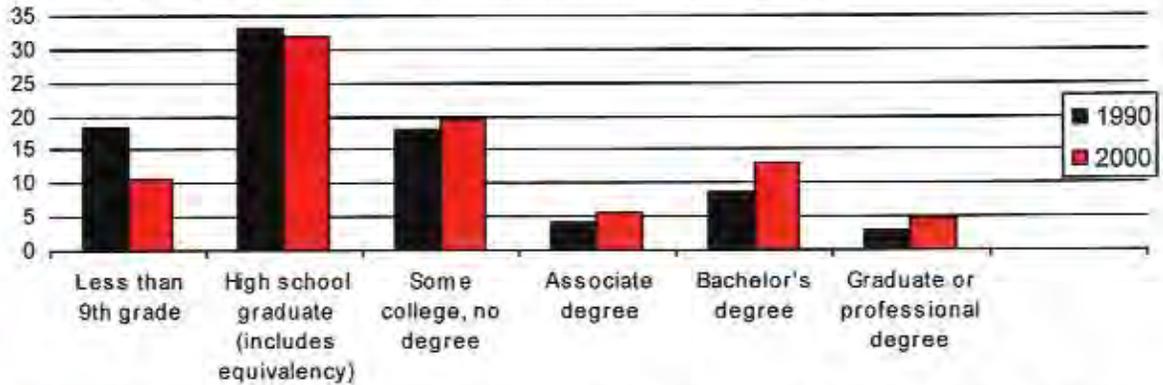
Table 2.5 Student Population Characteristics – Smithville ISD

	1996	2000	2004
Total Students	1,624	1,804	1,895
Percent White	69	71	70
Percent Black	13	11	10
Percent Hispanic	18	19	19
Percent Other	0	0	1
Percent Economically Disadvantaged	44.8	39.6	48.1

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The decennial census provides the most comprehensive information about educational

Figure 3.4 City of Smithville Educational Attainment 1990 and 2000



attainment for a community. According to 2000 statistics, educational attainment in the City of Smithville for persons over 25 years of age has improved since the 1990 Census in all areas. Most significant, in 1990, only 8.5 percent of the city's residents held bachelor's degrees, by the 2000, 13.1 percent reported having earned college degrees. On the other end of the spectrum and equally significant is the percent of persons with less than a 9th grade education dropped nearly 8 percent during the decade, from 18.3 percent to 10.6 percent.

In comparison, Smithville's educational attainment levels for high school fall below that found in the county, state and nation.

Table 2.6 Education Attainment

	High School Graduate or higher	Bachelor's Degree or higher
City of Smithville	74.9	17.8
Bastrop County	76.9	17.0
Texas	75.7	23.2
United States	80.4	24.4

Source: US Census Bureau

HOUSEHOLD AND HOUSING

Data on households and housing characteristics provides additional information about the local population. In 2000, there were 1,658 housing units in the City of Smithville of which 89.2 percent were occupied. As shown in Table 2.8, 66.2 percent of the housing units in the city were owner occupied and the average household size in 2000 was 2.53 persons.

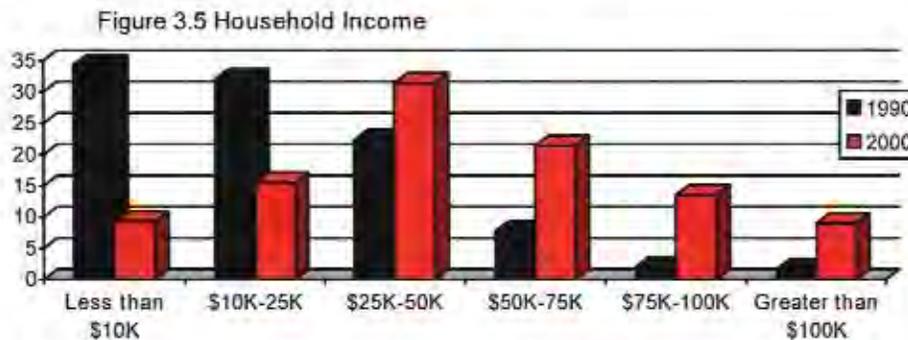
Table 2.7 City of Smithville Selected Household and Housing Characteristics

Total housing units	1,658	Percent housing built 1980-2000	10.2
Percent Occupied housing	89.2	Percent housing built 1960-1980	45.3
Percent of housing units occupied by owner	66.2	Percent housing built before 1939	26.2
Percent of housing units occupied by renter	33.8	Median Home Value	\$82,200
Average household size	2.53	Median year Built	1960

Source: US Census Bureau, QT-H1. General Housing Characteristics

The age of the housing stock reflects the relatively slow growth of the city over the past 40 years. Between 1980 and 2000, an average of 8.5 homes was constructed each year in Smithville. To compare, over the same period of time, 58.9 percent of the county's housing units stock was built at an average of 655 homes constructed each year.

INCOME



The residents of the City of Smithville were more prosperous in 2000 than in 1990. Figure 2.5 is an illustration household income categorized into income ranges. The bars reflect the percentage of households that fall into each range. Over the decade, the total percentage of residents earning under \$25,000 dropped from over 60 percent to less than 25 percent. The number earning over \$50,000 increased from less than 20 percent to approximately 50 percent.

Table 2.8 Income Comparison, 2000 Census

	Median Household Income	Per Capita
City of Smithville	35,586	16,282
Bastrop County	43,578	18,146
Texas	39,927	19,617
United States	41,994	21,587

Source: US Census

EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRY

INDUSTRIES

Data available on business patterns at the city level is the Census Bureau's Zip Code Business Patterns. Table 2.9 shows the county business pattern for zip code 78957.

Table 2.9 Establishments by Industry Sector (Zip: 78957)

Industry Code	Description	Total Establishments
23	Construction	9
31	Manufacturing	12
42	Wholesale Trade	4
44	Retail Trade	19
48	Transportation and Warehousing	5
51	Information	1
52	Finance and Insurance	6
53	Real Estate and Rental Leasing	5
54	Professional, Scientific & Technical services	11
56	Administrative, Support, Waste Management	4
61	Educational Services	1
62	Health care and social assistance	11
72	Accommodation & food services	10
81	Other services (except public administration)	15
99	Unclassified establishments	1

Source: County Business Patterns, 2004

An analysis of the data for the 78957 zip code, which encompasses an area greater than the City of Smithville, shows that the highest number of establishments in the community were retail trade (NAICS 44) in 2004, the most recent year for which figures are available. The business patterns identified twelve manufacturing establishments in Smithville engaged in the following enterprises: food processing, clothing, sawmills, paper and printing, glass products, fabricated metal and electronic component manufacturing.

Table 2.10 Bastrop County Large Manufacturers

Gen-Tex Marine Fabricators Inc	Elgin Cotton Oil Mill Inc
Acme Brick Co	Alcoa
Elgin Butler Brick Co	Deep In The Heart Art Foundry
Griffin Industries Inc	Texas Foam
W S Erectors Inc	Swiftex Inc
Hanson Brick	

Source: Texas Workforce Commission

WORKFORCE

According to the most recent civilian labor force estimates from the Texas Workforce Commission, Bastrop County had a civilian labor force of 34,189 which was an increase of 4,522 people since 2003. This change represented an increase of 15.2 percent over the past 5 years. The employment numbers for the County have kept pace with the growing workforce increasing 13.9 percent over the same period.

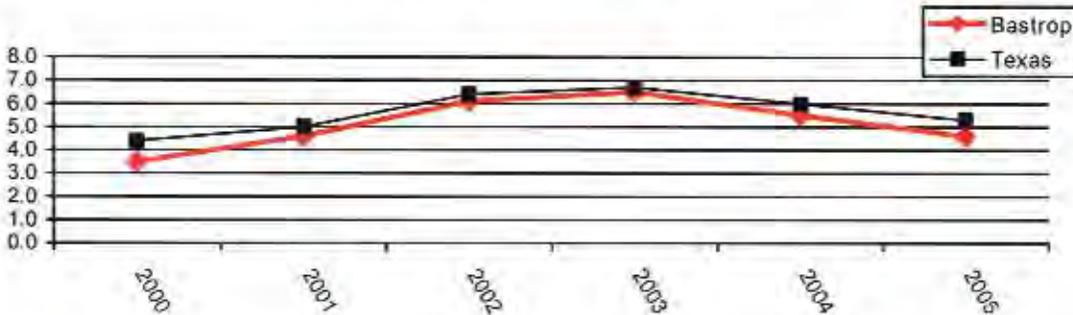
Table 2.11 Averaged County Employment Characteristics

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Civilian Labor Force	29,667	30,468	31,548	32,534	33,201	34,189
Employed	28,635	29,077	29,620	30,434	31,379	32,617
Unemployed	1,032	1,391	1,928	2,100	1,822	1,572
Unemployment Rate	3.5	4.6	6.1	6.5	5.5	4.6

Source: Texas Workforce Commission, Labor Market Information Department. Covered Employment and Wages

The unemployment rate, in Bastrop County, for the past 5 years is provided in Figure 2.6 follows that of the state. The lowest average annual rate for the County, over these years, was 3.5 percent in 2000, while the highest rate, 6.5 percent, was recorded in 2003.

Figure 2.6 County and State Unemployment Rates: 2000-2005



Source: Texas Workforce Commission

Commuters represent another pool of available labor in the area: skilled workers leaving the community for work. According to the 2000 Census, Smithville workers median travel time to work was between 15 and 19 minutes. As seen in Table 2.12, in 2000, Smithville had a workforce of 1,587, of which 717, or 45.2 percent, worked in the City and 1,086, or 68.4 percent, worked within the county. This is significantly different from the County as a whole, where 53 percent of the employees travel to Travis County for employment.

Table 2.12 Smithville Commuting Patterns

Workforce > 16 years of age	1,587	Drive alone to work	1,154
Work in Bastrop County	1086	Median travel time to work	15 to 19 minutes
Work in Smithville	717		

Source: US Census

QUALITY OF LIFE

Quality of life elements are those things which set a community apart from its neighbors and competitors. This section provides an overview of several of the factors which impact quality of life, including education, cost of living, housing costs, crime and access to healthcare.

EDUCATION

Smithville ISD is the school district that serves students living in the eastern portion of Bastrop County. The district has four campuses: Brown Elementary, Smithville

Elementary, Smithville Junior High, and Smithville High School. According to Smithville ISD, district enrollment for August 2006 was 1,842, a decline of 43 students reported during the 2004 school year.

Each year, schools in Texas are rated based on a number of performance measures such as student performance on the state mandated skills test, attendance and passing rates. The generalized ratings in decreasing order are: Exemplary, Recognized; Academically Acceptable, and Academically Unacceptable. The Smithville school district earned an accountability rating of academically acceptable for the years listed below. It is interesting to note, approximately 50 percent of the districts in the state are rated Academically Acceptable.

In addition to these ratings, there are other indicators of school performance. Table 2.13 depicts school performance data for the years 1996, 2000 and 2004. (Note: education demographics are presented in Table 2.6)

Table 2.13 Selected School District Performance Ratings 1996-2004

	School Year		
	1996	2000	2004
Accountability Rating	Academically Acceptable	Academically Acceptable	Academically Acceptable
4 year drop out rate percent	N/A	9.3	2.9
Percent Graduated	N/A	79.8	86.4
Percent Students Passing all standardized tests taken	58.5	78.9	71.0
SAT: Mean Total Score	826	990	941
ACT: Mean Composite Score	19.3	20.6	19.0
Students to Teacher ratio	13.2	13.0	13.1
Total Instruction cost per student	\$2,759	\$3,411	\$4,013

Source: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/snapshot/index.html>

CRIME

In the City of Smithville, in 2001 there were 3 crimes reported for every 100 persons. This statistic is increasing, as the most recent data shows in 2005, 4.7 crimes per 100 persons.

Table 2.14 City of Smithville Crime Statistics

	Aggravated Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Rape	Robbery	Total Reported	Crime Reports per 100
2001	10	27	73	0	1	118	3.0
2003	12	48	160	6	5	238	5.5
2005	17	31	148	5	1	205	4.7

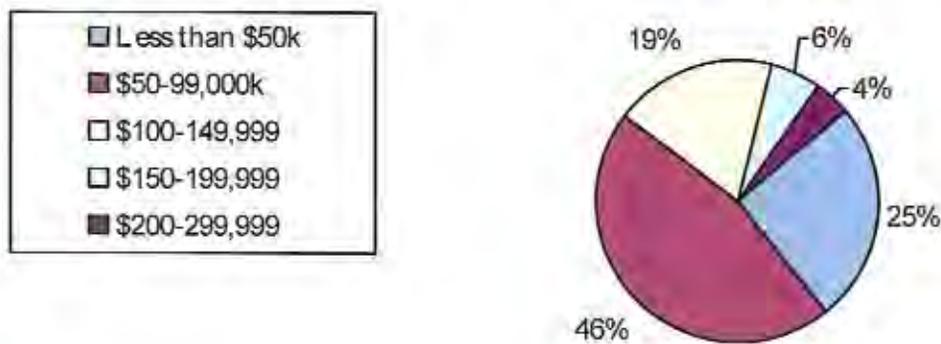
Source: Texas Department of Public Safety

HOUSING VALUE

The rising cost of housing in the Central Texas is an issue of importance for all communities in the area. In 2000, the median home values in the City of Smithville were \$82,200, a value when compared to Bastrop County's \$106,900.

As shown in Figure 2.7, nearly half of the homes in Smithville are valued between \$50,000 and \$99,000, and 1 of 4 homes is valued at less than \$50,000. This may be due to age of the housing stock (Table 2.7) or the influence of manufactured housing where in many cases, ownership of the home does not constitute ownership of the land where the home is placed.

Figure 2.7 City of Smithville Housing Value



Source: 2000 US Census

PROPERTY TAX

One factor that can have a significant impact on cost of living is property taxes. Comparing property taxes between Smithville and neighboring communities is varies widely. Table 2.15 provides estimates of the 2005 property tax rates for cities near Smithville.

Table 2.15 Area Property Tax Rates

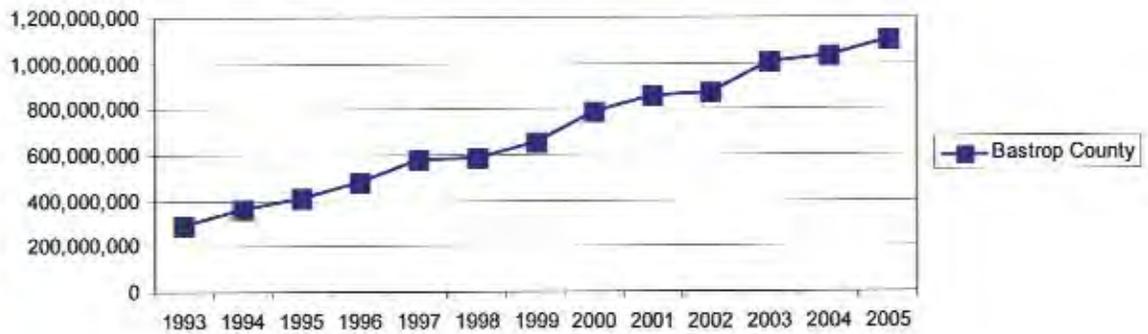
City	City	County	School
Smithville	.440	.633	1.6183
Bastrop	.5835	.606	1.622
LaGrange	.257	.456	1.4025
Giddings	.417	.567	1.6162
Elgin	.694	.633	1.65

SALES TAX

The sales tax is a major source of revenue for taxing jurisdictions in Texas. The state sales and use tax rate is 6.25 percent. Under state law, local taxing jurisdictions are allowed to add up to an additional 2 percent to the state rate, for a maximum combined total of 8.25 percent. This 2 percent local tax can be comprised of a combination of taxes levied by cities, counties, special districts, and transit authorities. The City of Smithville collects 1.5 percent of sales tax and Bastrop County collects 0.5 percent.

Over the past 13 years, the city's gross sales have increased from 33.5 million in 1993 to 46.3 million in 2005. The county has also seen even greater results, increasing sales tax revenues 279 percent since 1993.

Figure 2.8 Sales Tax



INTRODUCTION

Smithville has not yet experienced the explosive growth that is occurring in the western half of Bastrop County. This provides an opportunity for Smithville to establish policies that will ensure growth benefits the community rather than being overwhelmed by unplanned development. The existing zoning ordinance has been a factor in the development pattern of Smithville, focusing commercial and retail development along the highways and industrial along the railroad tracks. The Future Land use Plan identifies where new development should occur and defines policies that can be adopted to ensure the community goals are met as development occurs.

The first step in developing the land use plan is to create a current land use map (Illustration 3.1) identifying how Smithville has developed over time. To accomplish this, a 'windshield' survey was conducted in January, 2007. This involved driving each street in Smithville and identifying the land use for each property in the city limits and ½ mile extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ). Geographic Information System (GIS) software and digital parcel and aerial photography data was used to develop the current land use map. GIS allows for faster and more accurate data creation. This map shows the pattern of current development as well as identifying property that may be suitable for development in the future. The current land use also shows what types of land use is under-represented in the community (i.e. there is very little multi-family residential in the community). The following categories were used to identify the current land use:

- Agricultural – Land that is primarily used for farming or ranching activities
(Includes property that is primarily agricultural but with a residence)
 - Open Pasture – Grass pasture with few trees or shrubs
 - Mixed Grazing – Land with bushes and some trees
 - Row Crops – Land with crops such as wheat or corn
- Commercial – Land that is primarily used for intensive business uses
(Automobile repair shops, large feed stores, etc.)
 - Parking
- Industrial – Land that is primarily used for manufacturing or other very intensive uses (Manufacturing, agricultural processing facilities, etc.)
- Mixed Use – Land that has more than one use (Property with both a residence and office, etc.)
- Office – Land that is used for professional offices
- Public – Land which is owned by government agencies or is used for civic purposes
 - Park
 - Lodge – e.g. Masonic
 - Church
 - City
 - County
 - State
 - Federal
 - School
 - Cemetery

- ROW - Land that has been defined as right-of-way, even if it is not currently developed as ROW
- Residential – Land that is used for dwelling units
 - Single Family
 - Duplex - 2 units per structure
 - Multi-Family - More than 2 units per structure
 - Manufactured Home
 - Manufactured Home Park – 2 or more Manufactured Homes on a lot
 - Lawn – Includes gardens and storage buildings
 - Mixed – More than one type of residence (such as manufactured home and single family on a lot)
- Retail – Land that is used for typically small businesses (i.e., Hair salons)
- Vacant – Land that has no structures and is not being used for agriculture

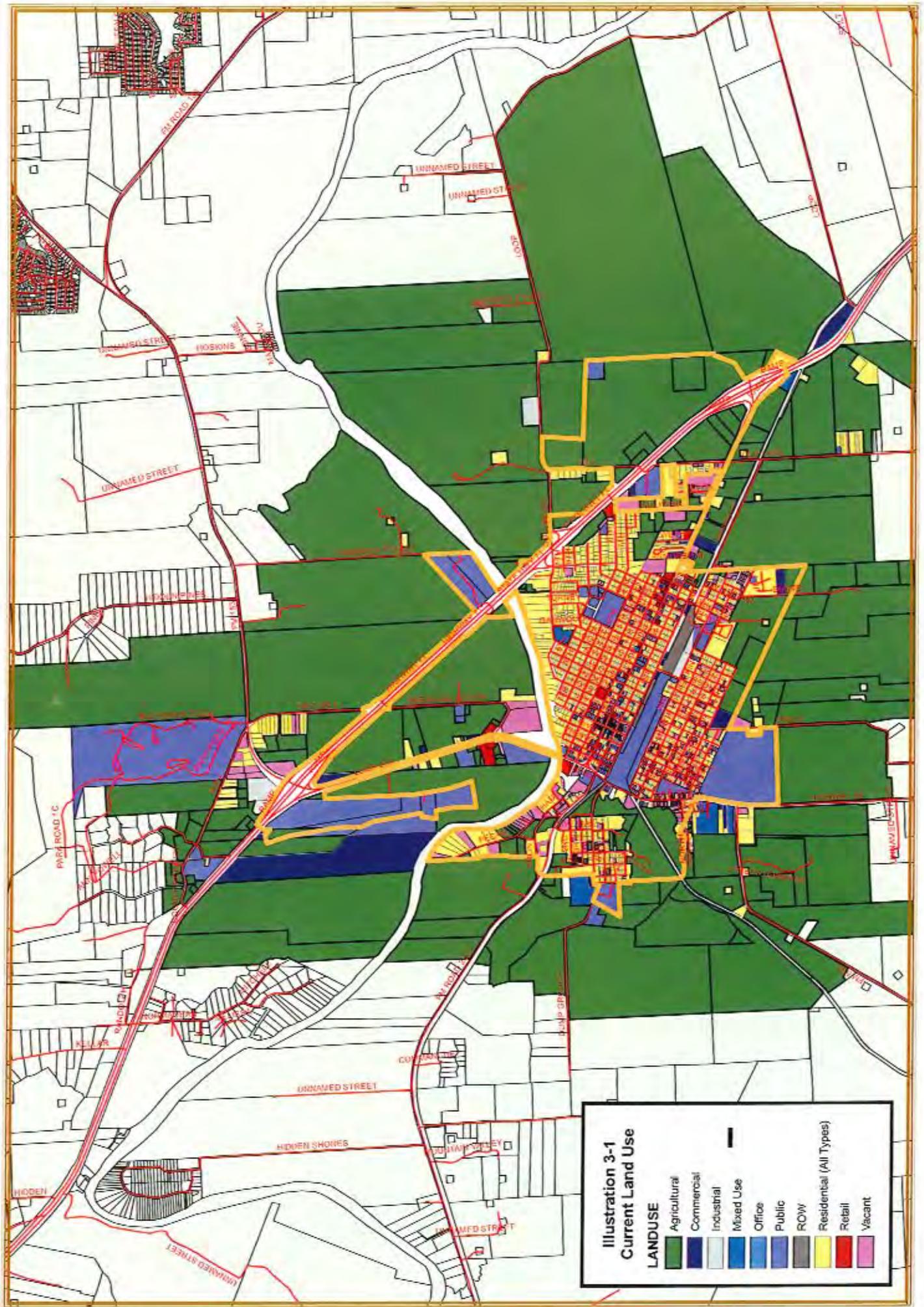
This level of detail is important because it allows for better planning. Future development should be sited where it will have minimal impact on existing land uses (siting industry away from residences, etc.) yet take advantage of existing infrastructure, especially siting growth to minimize the need for wastewater lift stations and other expensive facilities. A land use inventory will also identify those areas in town that may be underserved by community facilities, notably parks and schools. This allows resources to be targeted to those areas to provide maximum benefit to the community.

CURRENT LAND USE

The windshield survey identified land uses for approximately 2,500 parcels covering approximately 11,000 acres, in the city limits and ETJ of Smithville. Most of the area outside the city limits is agricultural. Within the city limits are approximately 2,300 parcels covering 1,325 acres. It may be surprising that even within the city limits agriculture is still the largest single land use, covering approximately 590 acres. Figure 4.1 has a detailed breakdown of land use within the city limits.

Figure 4.1 Current Land Use Acreage (in City Limits)

Land Use	Acres	% of Total
Agricultural	586.2	44.2
Commercial	44.3	3.3
Industrial	62.9	4.7
Mixed Use	36.0	2.7
Office	2.8	0.2
Public	162.0	12.3
Residential	304.7	23.0
Retail	15.0	1.1
ROW	20.7	1.6
Vacant	84.9	6.4



**Illustration 3-1
Current Land Use**

LAND USE	
■	Agricultural
■	Commercial
■	Industrial
■	Mixed Use
■	Office
■	Public
■	ROW
■	Residential (All Types)
■	Retail
■	Vacant

Residential

Smithville has 23 percent of its land in residential use, a somewhat smaller percentage of residential land use compared with other communities of its size. Hallettsville and Schulenburg are both over 30 percent, while Lexington and Bertram are over 40 percent. This smaller percentage is likely due to the fact that Smithville has a large amount of agricultural and vacant land within its city limits that will likely be developed into residential over time.

Within the residential category, there are a number of subcategories describing in greater detail what kind of housing is available. Figure 4.2 describes the specific residential types.

Figure 4.2 Residential Land Use

	Acres	Count	% of Total
Single Family	229	1205	75.2
Duplex	5.0	53	1.6
Multi-family	24.3	17	5.6
Manufactured Home	17.4	140	5.7
Manufactured Home Park*	19.8	15	6.5
Mixed	2.8	2	0.9
Lawn	7.7	60	2.5

*2 or more Manufactured Homes on a single lot

Most of the residential development is in the central part of Smithville, divided by the railroad tracks (Illustration 3.2). The housing south of the tracks is predominantly smaller lots with more manufactured homes than are found in the rest of Smithville. Most of the duplex properties are in a single development on the eastern edge of town.

There is very little multi-family property in Smithville. This is common in small towns and presents a challenge for many communities. The housing plan will discuss this issue in greater detail and provide recommendations on providing a variety of housing options.

Public

Smithville has a higher percentage of public land (12.3 percent) than similar communities because of its publicly owned airport, the number of parks (particulary Riverbend Park), and the property for the new high school.

Churches, Smithville Regional Hospital, Smithville Recreation center, City Hall, and utility infrastructure make up the rest of the public land uses. These properties are found throughout the community, providing service to all areas of Smithville. There are park facilities accessible to all residents without having to cross the railroad tracks or a major road, although not all parks offer the same amenities. The future land use plan will have recommendations to ensure adequate access to public facilities for all residents.

Commercial

Commercial uses are establishments that tend to be more intense uses such as auto repair shops, storage areas, etc. These tend to locate along major roads with good access and are found along Loop 230 and Highway 71. The current zoning supports this pattern of commercial development, focusing the commercial areas on the major roads. The exception is an area east of the Central Business District along 3rd Street. This area has a mix of businesses, with a few residences as well. Commercial establishments tend to have a higher impact on adjacent properties because of issues such as noise, lighting, and traffic.

Mixed Use

Mixed use is somewhat of a catch-all definition, typically identifying those parcels that have a residence and a business. However, in Smithville, there is a large parcel that combines a senior residential facility with medical offices. This one facility is the reason Smithville has a larger than typical amount of mixed use. The rest of the mixed uses include homes with an office, or downtown buildings with residences on the upper floors. As the community grows there may be opportunity for additional mixed use development to provide more multi-family and lower cost housing options.

Right of Way (ROW)

ROW includes undeveloped streets and in Smithville, a large railroad property. This large piece of ROW is in the center of town and serves as storage and access for the railroad.

Retail and Office

Smithville has smaller than average retail and office land use (1.3 percent combined). This reflects the proximity to shopping opportunities in Bastrop and La Grange. Much of the retail and office is found in the Central Business District, and some of this is currently vacant. Brookshire Brothers is the largest retail establishment. Smithville is underserved with retail, and much of what is available is used for antiques and other shopping that may not serve local needs, thus causing residents to drive to Bastrop. The economic development plan will discuss strategies to increase retail opportunity.

Industrial

Within the city limits, there is less than nearly 63 acres of industrial land located along the railroad. This includes a large LCRA Railcar Maintenance Facility. The two largest industries, Spiradrill and UTEX are located just outside the city limits. Because industry tends to be the most intensive use requiring the greatest transportation access, it is appropriate for it to be located in proximity to the railroad and highways. Future industrial development should be focused on these areas as identified in the future land use plan.

Vacant and Agricultural Land

Undeveloped land makes up over 50 percent of Smithville's total area. Much of this land is in large tracts on the eastern edge of Smithville and around the airport. Some of this land, notably a large tract just south of the 'Hill' is unsuitable for development but would make a good location for passive recreation, such as walking trails. Other prime agricultural land may be appropriate to save from development to protect the rural character of Smithville as it develops. Small, vacant lots may be appropriate to develop as 'pocket' parks to serve neighborhood recreation, with a swingset, benches, etc. It will be appropriate to focus development on the vacant and agricultural land within the city limits because of the limited annexation authority of the city, proximity to existing infrastructure, and increase to the tax base.

SUMMARY

Smithville is a bedroom community that relies on adjacent communities to provide for most of its retail and employment. The land use is predominantly residential and undeveloped, supporting this assertion. There is ample opportunity for Smithville to provide for the expected population growth on land that is currently within its ETJ with a priority on those areas also within its electric service area. The comprehensive plan lays out policies that will enable Smithville to grow while protecting and enhancing its quality of life to become more of a complete community that is not so reliant on its neighbors for services and employment.

FUTURE LAND USE

Communities with a vision can guide growth in such a way to maximize the benefits of development while minimizing the potential negatives associated with it. The future land use plan is the opportunity for the community to define how Smithville will develop to accommodate the anticipated growth. Smithville is not experiencing the explosive growth of western Bastrop County, so now is the time to establish standards to ensure future growth that benefits the community. This will ensure that decisions are made locally rather than being dictated by outside developers who may not have the best interests of the community in mind.

Over the next 15 years or so, Smithville can expect to add approximately 2,500 new residents. Fortunately, there is significant undeveloped land in and adjacent to the current city limits that can accommodate this level of growth. These areas typically are in proximity to existing infrastructure, notably water and sewer lines, that will reduce the costs of serving them. These properties are also within the City's jurisdiction for zoning and subdivision ordinances which mean the City can regulate the quality of development. Good development standards will make Smithville more attractive because prospective businesses and residents will want to be part of quality growth. The future land use plan will identify where new growth should be and recommend strategies to ensure growth meets high standards and is an enhancement to the community rather than a negative.

The Future Land Use map (Illustration 3.3) and recommendations are the result of a workshop held with the plan steering committee, Planning and Zoning Commission, City Council, and City staff. Participants saw a brief presentation on development and then had an opportunity to lay out where new growth should occur in Smithville. The goal was to accommodate the projected growth in those areas most suitable for development, particularly those areas already served with utilities and within the City's electrical service area. The recommendations in this plan will ensure that Smithville can grow while protecting and enhancing the quality of life for current and future residents.

Residential Development

SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

Single family residences are currently the largest developed land use in Smithville and will certainly continue to be as the City grows. Because Smithville is not experiencing the explosive growth of the western half of the County, it is likely that most new home development will be small subdivisions and custom homes rather than large 'spec-built' homes like what is seen in Bastrop; however, the future land use map does identify areas that would be suitable for large subdivisions if the demand were to arise.

The area identified around the airport could become a high end subdivision that incorporates airport access as an amenity. There are examples of this including one in western Travis County. These are growing in popularity because it offers the rural lifestyle people want with the convenience of easy personal air travel. Also, retirees who are pilots would also appreciate this type of arrangement. The area north of town, identified as a golf course subdivision, also provides an opportunity for resort living

similar to Colovista between Smithville and Bastrop. The river and potential golf course are amenities that would attract buyers to this development.

The area between Hwy 71 and Loop 230 and on the eastern edge of town is appropriate for middle income housing, with the potential for higher end homes along the river. These areas are large enough to accommodate a major subdivision, but also could support smaller developments over time. They are also in proximity to existing infrastructure, which will reduce the cost of development and add to the affordability of homes built in these areas.

In addition to the large tracts discussed here, there is ample opportunity for custom homes to be built on vacant lots that are found throughout the city. These will be driven by individual buyers and reflect their needs. It is likely that much of the anticipated growth will be served by this type of building because the projected growth is relatively slow over the next 15 years. If the growth in the western half of the County does reach Smithville, the identified areas are large enough to accommodate a higher growth rate.

MIXED RESIDENTIAL

The zoning ordinance has a Mixed Residential district that allows for more variety in the housing type, including duplexes and manufactured homes. This mix of housing allows for more affordable options for residents and creates mixed income neighborhoods, which benefit the entire community.

The areas identified for this type of development are in the southern and eastern area of town, near existing mixed residential areas. These locations also provide convenient access to existing shopping and services for these residents, as well as proximity to the school and park facilities. This is very beneficial to young families and the elderly who will be the largest consumers of these neighborhoods.

Housing that is affordable for all residents is one of the biggest challenges facing small communities, the Mixed Residential areas allows for this kind of development. Builders can create neighborhoods with a blend of housing types and costs, so there is opportunity for more profit for the builder while providing lower cost housing to the community. Also, residents have the potential to move within the neighborhood as their housing needs change, such as an empty nest couple moving to a duplex to reduce yard and other maintenance.

MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

Smithville has very limited multi-family housing available. Most of this is quadplexes or small units scattered throughout the city. This poses a challenge for the community because it limits opportunities for many potential residents. New school teachers and others are forced to live in neighboring communities because of the limited availability of rental property. Also, residents who cannot afford to purchase a home are restricted.

The future land use plan identifies a large area for multi-family residential development. It is in a high quality location for multi-family development because of its proximity to proposed retail and commercial development, access to a major road (Loop 230) and because it will buffer adjoining residential uses from light industrial and commercial uses. It is unlikely that this entire area will develop as multi-family; however, having a large

area designated ensures that there will be ample land available to support this type of growth.

Commercial and Retail Use

It is logical that the locations for new retail and commercial development (including office use) would be on the major thoroughfares through town and along Hwy 71. These are the locations with the most visibility to passersby and the most access for residents and visitors. This is where prospective businesses will want to be located, so it makes sense to focus development in those areas.

One area of concern with new retail and commercial development is the potential for downtown Smithville to lose more businesses. This plan identifies actions to be undertaken to ensure the downtown maintains and increases its healthy mix of businesses as the town grows. In addition, strip development along thoroughfares can cause major traffic and appearance issues, as can be seen in neighboring communities. Smithville has been fortunate to avoid this for the most part and should establish policies to ensure development along the highway supports the overall goals of an attractive, safe community.

The properties identified for new commercial development are much larger than will likely actually be developed. This presents an opportunity for mixed use development, including residential uses on the second or third floors of retail establishments. There are a few examples of this in downtown, and as the community develops, areas could be identified for mixed use development, particularly at the intersection of Hwy 71 and Loop 230 at the main entrance to Smithville.

In addition to new development along the thoroughfares, the downtown revitalization plan will have recommendations to maximize the potential of Smithville's historic Main Street as a destination for retail and service businesses to serve residents and visitors alike.

Industrial

To support expected growth, Smithville will have to add primary jobs, which are those jobs that bring new money into the community. Industry is the traditional provider of primary jobs; however, industrial uses today are much different from the smokestacks from the past. New industrial uses typically have minimal external affects, and can be located relatively close to commercial and even residential uses. The future land use plan identifies a suitable area for new industry adjacent to existing industrial users and the railroad, which is a key consideration. It is also on Loop 230 at the eastern edge of town in proximity to Hwy 71, which maximizes access for trucks and other vehicles with minimal impact on the community.

Parks and Open Space

The community development plan will have much more detail on the development of recreational amenities; however, it is important to consider the impact of open space on the overall development of Smithville. Parks provide for quality of life and enhance the entire community by providing a visual and physical break from surrounding development. Parks have also been shown to increase the property values of adjacent

properties, so the costs of providing parks can be considered an investment because of the increased property values it creates.

Smithville is fortunate to have several parks and recreational facilities, including ball fields, a skate park, and recreation center. There are also more passive parks and a nearby state park. The river represents a significantly underutilized resource that will be addressed more fully in the community development plan. In addition to the new facilities identified on the future land use map, the City should invest in pedestrian connections throughout the community and increased river access.

The sites identified on the future land use map will serve several needs in Smithville. The first property, located on the western edge of town, just south of 'the Hill' is an area that is unsuitable for major development due to flood potential and topography. This area would best be utilized for passive recreation, such as walking trails. Its location is accessible to nearly half of the community without having to cross the railroad tracks, which can be a significant barrier to some. Also, this area of Smithville is currently underserved with parks, outside the facilities at the high school.

On the eastern side of town, adjacent to the proposed industrial area, is a prime location for a sports complex. These facilities tend to generate light, noise, and traffic, so its proximity to more intense uses, such as industry and the railroad is appropriate. Its location is also accessible to residents south of the railroad tracks, which is a strong benefit.

There is also the proposal for two golf courses to be developed, one a resort style, 18 hole course located north of town that would be the anchor for a high end subdivision, and the other a 9 hole that could be a partnership between the City and the school district. Golf courses can be a significant attraction, and would serve to bring visitors from the Hyatt Lost Pines Resort and communities throughout the area. The 9 hole would allow the high school golf team to practice locally and adjacent to the school, which will keep them from having to drive to courses outside of the community.

In addition to the major facilities identified here, Smithville should encourage the development of pocket parks throughout the city to serve neighborhoods. These could be as simple as a single lot that has a few benches and possibly a playscape. The goal would be to provide some greenspace within walking distance (less than ¼ mile) to all residents of the city. One way to achieve this goal is to establish park set aside standards in the subdivision ordinances. Many cities use this to require developers to provide neighborhood parks. The City of Bertram requires developers to set aside 5% of the total property or \$250 per home for parks. This puts the cost of parks on the developer rather than the City. This ensures new development is adequately served with parks and benefits the entire community as well.

Recommendations

Smithville has an opportunity to define how it will grow and this plan identifies goals to achieve quality growth. The recommendations in this plan provide a clear direction for community leadership to set high standards and ensure that Smithville receives the benefits of development without being overwhelmed by it.

Land Use Goals

ENSURE ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT

The first requirement for growth is to ensure the infrastructure can support it. This includes water, wastewater, and roads. These improvements are also among the most expensive investments for a City, so it is critical to ensure they are well-planned and efficient to maximize limited resources.

Identify and Prioritize Needed Road Improvements

The condition of local roads was mentioned in the community survey and the town hall meeting as being a significant issue. Poor roads is not just an issue for current residents, it can limit a city's opportunity to recruit new business and development as well. The City should make every effort to ensure its roads are safe and well maintained.

The first step is to inventory the entire city street network and determine the condition of all roads. This includes identifying drainage issues, poorly controlled intersections, potholes, etc. Several streets, including 7th, 8th, and 9th Streets were identified in the public input process and could serve as a starting point. This inventory will then be used to identify how funding should be prioritized. Those areas that pose an actual safety hazard should be targeted first for improvements. Once these are complete, those areas that are most traveled, or provide connection to critical facilities, such as schools and the hospital, should be targeted. Finally, the rest can be targeted based on their condition and available funding. Once the streets have reached a base level, the city can be divided into sections and annual maintenance performed on a rotating schedule. This will ensure all streets receive basic maintenance on a regular schedule and reduce the concern among citizens that their neighborhood never receives street improvements.

Identify and Prioritize Needed Water and Wastewater Improvements

Cities cannot grow without adequate water and wastewater infrastructure. The City of Smithville currently has adequate facilities, but will need to make improvements as the community grows. Fortunately, the growth rate is stable enough to allow time for the city to plan and budget for needed improvements over time rather than being forced to upgrade infrastructure to deal with rapid growth.

The City Engineer is very familiar with the system and likely knows where problem areas lie. It will be important for that knowledge to be put into a plan for improvements that is prioritized to ensure the biggest challenges are dealt with first. Also, those areas identified for new development should be targeted for improvements so the city is prepared to deal with new growth rather than having to be reactive. This can include

oversizing any improvements so they can support additional use in the future. Many cities require developers to pay for this oversizing then reimburse them as new development comes on line and taps into the infrastructure.

One key element will be to closely coordinate any water and wastewater line upgrades and repairs with street repairs. It will reduce costs and impacts on the community if these can be coordinated so that newly repaired streets are not torn up to access water lines for upgrades. In the case of emergency repairs this is not possible obviously, but for regular maintenance, scheduled replacement or upgrades, it should be coordinated to maximize efficiency.

Determine Planning Thresholds for Capacity Expansion at Water and Wastewater Facilities

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has standards for when planning should begin to expand capacity. For wastewater this is 75% capacity. Based on the population projections, the city should have a general idea of when that threshold will be reached. The city should utilize this information and begin planning for needed expansions early enough to secure adequate funding, especially grants, that may not be available if the city waits until the last minute. If the city can plan ahead and secure funding, it may reduce the need for major bond issues to pay for expansion. Grants and general budget funds can be identified and set aside to help provide for the improvements.

Monitor Carrizo Wilcox Aquifer to Ensure it Remains Viable as Water Source

Smithville draws its water from the Carrizo Wilcox aquifer, which is typically a reliable, high quality water source. As growth in the area continues, this resource will become more and more utilized to serve growing needs. There is also concern about the potential for groundwater to be pumped outside of the area to serve needs outside of Bastrop County.

The city should be proactive in monitoring the situation to protect the aquifer because of its importance. There should be regular monitoring of well quality and quantity to ensure any issues are caught early. Also, the city should monitor growth and any well permits that may be issued to ensure they are not threatening the city's water supply. The groundwater district should be a partner for the city in its efforts to protect its water supply.

REVIEW AND UPDATE SUBDIVISION AND ZONING ORDINANCES

Smithville is fortunate to have good ordinances regulating development. There are a few opportunities to improve them, but overall they are good tools to ensure quality growth over time. In addition to updating the ordinances, it is a benefit to provide them on the community website. This allows potential developers to access them and begin making determinations on where they want to build based on the existing zoning and ordinances. This reduces staff time with initial meetings to explain city policies because they are publicly available.

Review Ordinances from Other Communities and Identify Best Practices

Rather than reinventing the wheel it is appropriate to research innovative communities and identify what they are doing that may be appropriate for Smithville. One example is the SmartCode development in Leander. This type of code is focused more on the form and appearance of buildings and how they relate to each other rather than regulating the use of the building. Appendix A of the plan is an example of how SmartCode could be implemented in Smithville on the large, triangular property bounded by Hwy 71 and Loop 230.

Update Ordinances to Support Land Use Goals

Because the ordinances are well written and offer opportunity for a variety of development types, there are limited changes that should be made. As mentioned, it would be appropriate to update the Subdivision Ordinance to include a park set aside that would support neighborhood park development. Conservation subdivisions are another tool that provides open space. These are developments where the homes are clustered onto one area of the property and the rest is left as open space. For example, rather than building 50 homes on one acre lots, the builder will put those 50 homes on 20 acres and the remaining 80 acres is permanent open space. This increased density is beneficial for the developer because it reduces the overall infrastructure costs, while the property values can often be as high as the larger lots would be because of the proximity to open space. The community benefits from the open space that reduces stormwater retention needs, and other challenges associated with growth.

The city may also consider design standards, particularly in high visibility areas, such as along Hwy 71 and Loop 230. These standards would ensure growth is attractive and enhances the appearance of the community. Smithville is fortunate now to have limited development on the highway, so it does not suffer from the unattractive and traffic congesting development that is found in adjoining communities. Design standards can address the appearance of buildings, such as requiring stone facades on metal buildings, landscaping for parking lots and buildings, etc. Guidelines can be very strict, such as those in Fredericksburg, or they can be more general. These standards should also address the issue of curb cuts and parking to reduce the number of curb cuts on thoroughfares. These curb cuts reduce safety and traffic flow and large parking lots in front of buildings are very unattractive.

Finally, the issue of housing affordability can also be addressed in the building process. Many communities are utilizing density bonuses and other incentives to encourage developers to include affordable housing in new development. This can include reducing the required lot size if a percentage of homes are set aside for those making the median income or below. This mixing of home values creates stronger communities because lower income residents are concentrated and are more inclined to maintain their properties. They also benefit from increased resale value because their homes are in strong neighborhoods. The housing plan will discuss additional recommendations for providing housing for residents of all incomes.

CONSIDER INCENTIVES TO PROMOTE QUALITY GROWTH

Many cities are using incentives to encourage growth that meets community goals. This includes such things as density bonuses mentioned above and infrastructure assistance. The city should consider what, if any, assistance could be provided to developers who meet the goals of the community. These do not have to be financial outlays, it may be an expedited permitting process that decreases the delay between submittal and approval of projects. Density bonuses and fee waivers are additional ways to provide incentive with minimal direct cost to the city.

If funding allows, the city can consider providing infrastructure assistance to quality new development. This may be through paying for water and wastewater extensions to a site, or helping to pay for needed road improvements. These types of incentives are often offered to prospective businesses, now many communities are offering them to all types of development that meet city goals. This can include providing assistance to those builders who locate in the preferred development areas identified on the future land use map.

Incentives can also be provided to developers that meet overall goals of the community. This can include offering density bonuses in return for developers providing affordable housing. In this case, the maximum lot size may be reduced from 6,000 square feet to 5,000 square feet in return for 10 percent of the homes being made affordable for those at or below median income. Another example may be city assistance with infrastructure if affordable housing is included. The purpose would be to utilize limited city resources in a fashion that provides the most benefit to city residents while still being attractive for potential developers.

Conclusion

Growth in any community is a double-edged sword. It can enhance the quality of life and lead to greater opportunity, or it can overwhelm a town and degrade the quality of life. Smithville has the opportunity to prepare for growth that is on the horizon. It already has strong development ordinances in place, there is now an opportunity to enhance those ordinances and develop policies that will ensure quality growth in the future. Smithville is defining its own future rather than relying on developers and builders, who may be more interested in making money than making a strong community. The recommendations in this plan will prepare Smithville for the expected growth and allow it to manage even faster growth if what is seen in western Bastrop County moves east.

INTRODUCTION

A common misconception is to equate economic development with growth. Growth is usually seen as a more negative experience and economic development is a more positive one. Growth can also be thought of as unplanned, a short-term solution, and imposed upon Smithville by someone (or somewhere) else. On the other hand, economic development should be viewed as planned, a more long-term solution, and done on local terms and at Smithville's own rate of speed.

Many people ask "what exactly is economic development?" It means different things to different people and different communities, but it includes one or more of three things: creation, retention, or reinvestment of wealth. Community development is a component of economic development that consists of preparing communities for the type of business development desired. Business development is the actual creation or retention of jobs, including expansions.

These jobs can take several forms including entrepreneurialism, recruitment of new jobs, retaining existing jobs, expansion of current industries, tourism, and spending money in communities made locally.

RECOMMENDATIONS

One thing should be made very clear from the start – economic development is a continual process. The recommendations contained in this section will definitely get Smithville off on the right foot, but their progress will always be in need of monitoring and adapting depending on what opportunities and challenges come along. New goals will probably emerge that no one even foresees now. Diligence and persistence will be key in keeping efforts on track, and ensuring that good opportunities don't pass by unnoticed.

ESTABLISH HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES IN BASTROP COUNTY

According to the USDA's Economic Research Service, educational attainment in rural America reached a historic high in 2000, with nearly one in six rural adults holding a 4-year college degree, and more than three in four completing high school. As the demand for workers with higher educational qualifications rises, many rural leaders have begun to view local educational levels as a critical factor in job and income growth in their communities.

Ultimately, the strength of the tie between education and economic development is influenced by the extent to which small rural counties lose youths through out migration. The loss of these potential workers from rural areas, as young adults leave for college and work opportunities in urban areas, is a concern that not only Smithville faces. This rural "brain drain" not only deprives local employers of an educated workforce, but also depletes local resources because communities that have invested in these workers' education reap little return on that investment.

Higher educational levels contribute to local economic development in several ways. Two of these ways are extremely important. First, a well-educated workforce facilitates

new ways of producing goods or providing services. Second, prospective employers and new businesses may view a well-educated local labor force as an asset when choosing among alternative locations for new establishments.

Reasons such as the ones stated above underscore the critical importance of finding ways to not only educate and train local youths, but also to keep them in the county as gainfully employed and productive members of the local community. Veterans are another potential beneficiary of higher education; currently over 6,000 veterans have to leave Bastrop County for higher education, which represents a large 'customer' base for a higher education facility.

Work with Opportunity Bastrop group to pursue efforts

As the attraction of higher education opportunities is also a goal for the Bastrop County strategic plan (Opportunity Bastrop County), there should be many ways that Smithville can become part of the solution on a more macro level. In other words, what's good for Bastrop County may be good for Smithville. However, that shouldn't preclude local leaders from pursuing higher education and training opportunities locally. The location of such a facility in Smithville would be of great benefit to the county as well.

Some of Smithville's goals will overlap with those of the Bastrop County plan. This is a good thing, as it reinforces the need for higher education opportunities in the area and the necessity of collaborating with other communities in Bastrop County to achieve those goals.

Contact ACC and Blinn College to establish relationship and explore potential for campus in the County

Smithville and Bastrop County are geographically well-placed to potentially attract a higher education facility to the area. Situated between two acclaimed community college systems, Austin Community College (ACC) in the Austin area and Blinn College in Brenham and nearby Schulenburg, Smithville's location could be desirable to them for expansion purposes.

Both college systems offer associate degree programs as well as workforce training, which could potentially be modified to meet the needs of Bastrop County employers.

For Blinn, the contact is Donald E. Voelter, Ph.D., Blinn College President, and his office number is (979) 830-4112. For ACC, contact Stephen B. Kinslow, Ph.D., at (512) 223-7598.

Strengthen existing relationship with ACC where classes are being offered in Bastrop County

Because ACC is already offering basic college-level courses at the Smithville High School, there is an inroad with them to expand upon the current offering. Discuss the feasibility of making the high school a small satellite campus, such as the one at the Round Rock Higher Education Center (<http://www.rhec.txstate.edu/>), but on a smaller scale. Smithville students can take first and second year college courses locally while working in Smithville. If an Associate's Degree is their ultimate goal, then they could

earn the degree while maintaining employment in Smithville and developing their job-related skills.

As previously mentioned, ACC also offers technical and vocational training. If courses in these areas are not currently being offered in Smithville, pursue potential opportunities to add them to the present curriculum in the future.

Contact Technical Schools to determine their requirements and if it is feasible to recruit a campus to Smithville

Higher education in Smithville and/or Bastrop County is a worthy goal. Another very viable alternative or complement to higher education is technical or vocational training. Training and skill development in this area can put people to work locally in a relatively short period of time – especially compared to four-year degree program at a university. Technical schools can train workers to perform highly skilled and also high paying jobs. These employees will live and work in Smithville and Bastrop County, and will help the economy thrive.

There are several national technical schools that have locations in Austin, and one Texas-based school in Waco. Due to Austin's proximity to Smithville, it is doubtful that a school with full course offerings will place another location so close to an existing one. However, if a great need for specific job training emerges or a high number of potential workers from Smithville can be found, a satellite campus is not out of the question.

Most of the course offerings at the schools listed below include drafting, computer science and technology, telecommunications, electronics, web design, engineering, medical, legal, construction, HVAC, culinary, avionics, and automotive technology programs.

Following are the nearby technical schools and their contact information:

Texas State Technical College
Elton Stuckly, Jr. President
Waco
(254) 867-4800
Elton.stuckly@tstc.edu

ITT Technical Institute
6330 Hwy. 290 East, Ste. 150
Austin, TX 78723
(512)467-6800

Texas Computer Training Institute
3301 Northland Drive, Suite 312
Austin, TX 78731

Texas Culinary Academy
11400 Burnet Rd., Ste. 2100
Austin, TX 78758

Everest Institute
9100 US Hwy. 290 East Building 1
Austin, TX 78754

Consider distance learning center in Smithville with use as a conference center, possibly in partnership with MD Anderson and / or Smithville ISD

With the high costs of business travel, higher education, and now, gasoline, a distance learning center makes a great deal of sense. Its uses are nearly endless, and include tele-conferencing, for-credit college courses, professional development and certification maintenance, continuing education (e.g., language courses, computer courses, etc.), and more. The historic school may provide an opportunity for this type of facility.

Having the M.D. Anderson facility in Smithville could be a drawing card for a facility of this type. If housed at or near that location, it could be utilized by M.D. Anderson staff as well as Smithville and other Bastrop County communities.

One model to consider is The University Center (<http://www.tuc.edu/>), which is housed within the North Harris Montgomery Community College District in The Woodlands. This facility offers limited four-year degree programs from six Houston-area universities including Texas A&M and the University of Houston. Students who attend The University Center can maintain their local residences and local employment, while still reaching their educational goals. This facility is equipped with several distance learning conference and classrooms that can be utilized by the community and other community-based organizations.

WORK WITH ISD TO STRENGTHEN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Local leaders are now faced with two key questions. First, does a better educated and better trained population lead to greater economic growth? Second, are there ways to improve the education that youths receive locally, particularly through improvements in elementary and high schools, to enhance the economic well-being of rural residents and communities?

The answer to both questions is yes. According to a recent USDA study, rural counties with high educational levels saw more rapid earnings and income growth over the past two decades than counties with lower educational levels. Preliminary research demonstrates a connection between better schools and positive outcomes in earnings and income growth for rural workers and rural communities.

Survey business owners to determine needs

There is no other way to strengthen vocational education and workforce training without talking to the ones who would reap the benefits – local business owners. This could be done as a component of a business retention and expansion program (BREP), or as a stand alone piece that seeks to uncover only workforce information.

A likely place to start would be with chamber members or with the City of Smithville permitting office to get a list of businesses based in Smithville. Once the questions have been determined, a short mail survey should be sent to each registered business. Face-to-face survey sessions would be the ideal method, however, this may prove to be impractical depending on the number of businesses to be surveyed and the number of volunteers available to assist.

Be careful what you ask for – Smithville's leadership must be prepared to handle expectations and follow up with the local business community after all the information has been gathered. This will most certainly pique the curiosity of the business owners, and many may be expecting a return on the input they provided.

Support existing DECA program and related internships, etc.

According to USDA's Economic Research Service, school-to-work programs typically include cooperative education, internships, youth apprenticeships, and programs like DECA. Cooperative education and DECA programs are arrangements between schools and employers, and vocational training and work periods during school time to fulfill the cooperative program. Youth apprenticeships require paid work experiences that are coordinated between the school and workplace learning that result in recognized credentials at the end of the program.

Programs like these can provide several advantages to students and the communities where they reside. They reduce some of the struggling that young workers can experience as they enter the workforce. Schools can more easily develop educational programs that meet the needs of the regional employers, and employers can more easily recruit qualified workers.

Provide information to high school students about opportunities in trades

Growing up in any community, most youths only learn about a handful of careers prior to entering the workforce. We all know what teachers do, as well as firemen, doctors, and lawyers. But did any of us ever hear anything about being an accountant, or computer network technician, or HVAC technician? This lack of information makes it very difficult for students to make careful choices when it comes to job opportunities or degree options. Service jobs are also a growing need that could be an opportunity for students. For example, the Hyatt resort has service positions, many of which have high salaries and advancement potential that may provide a career opportunity for students.

There are some ways to help overcome this obstacle – all of which have been used with great success in small communities all over the country.

Youth leadership programs are one way to combat this lack of information. Most successful youth leadership programs are run through an adult leadership program or through a local chamber of commerce. Typically, they last for several months and educate young people about their community and engage them in community involvement. Students learn about city government, public utilities, economic development, health and human services, and more. Aside from exposing students to what it means to be a responsible citizen, youth leadership programs offer several other benefits. They create future leaders in communities, create relationships between youth and local businesses and organizations, and expose students to potential career choices.

Another way to create awareness of career options is to develop a job shadowing program. Job shadowing on a larger scale usually takes place in the summer when students have the time to devote to the program. For a day or a week, a student shadows someone at a local business or company and gets to see the inner-workings of that specific job and place of employment. If the person being shadowed wears a suit and tie, then the student does also. They attend meetings with customers and watch/participate in every aspect of daily job duties of that profession.

On the website <http://jobshadow.org>, several benefits to job shadowing are discussed:

For Students:

- Provides an answer to the questions, "Why do I have to learn this?" and "Would I want to make this job a career?"
- Lets students learn first-hand what it takes to make it in their fields of interest from the people who know best.

For Educators:

- Helps motivate students to learn by demonstrating the tangible applications of classroom lessons

For Employers:

- Helps prepare the future workforce
- Shows students career possibilities in different industries
- Demonstrates a tangible commitment to supporting and improving the community

The last method is more common, but still can be highly effective in creating awareness of and interest in local job and career opportunities among students. That method is simply a career fair. Discuss organizing one with the high school administration and counselor if this is not already occurring. Invite major area employers as well as employers that might have less common job types. The career fair could be one that travels to high schools in all the Bastrop County communities.

Establish apprenticeship program with local trades

The needs of local trades can be assessed during the businesses survey as described earlier in this section. One of the questions could be used to determine which tradesmen are interested in offering apprenticeship programs and are prepared to facilitate them.

Apprenticeship programs for high school students, while not as common, are extremely effective ways of training young workers for a skilled trade prior to entering the workforce. Most apprenticeships begin as the student is entering his/her junior year of high school. They allow students to work towards a career in a skilled trade, earn credentials, and complete secondary education in a two-year period of time. With both a diploma and the skills to get the job done when they graduate, these students have a big head start.

After being hired, many apprentices will, because of their skills, be asked to train new apprentices, or will find opportunities to manage operations, start their own businesses, or use their experience as a base for technological or engineering studies at a college or university.

SUPPORT EXISTING EMPLOYERS

Consider this: 70% to 80% of all new jobs created will come from companies already located in Smithville. Many communities make the mistake of focusing on mainly recruitment of new companies and their associated new jobs when given the task of job

creation. Doesn't it make more sense to keep the primary focus local, and help existing businesses grow and become more profitable? This is not to say that there should be no recruitment efforts at all. Determine what proportion of retention and expansion vs. recruitment is best for Smithville.

A Business Retention and Expansion Program or BREP can take many forms and be successfully completed with varying levels of resources, manpower, and time. A BREP has a simple, yet powerful goal: to understand the needs of local business and industry, and to provide all available assistance to help these existing businesses expand and prosper. Typically, a BREP seeks to identify business obstacles and works to remove them. Through this process a community's business climate may be improved, which can result in expansions of existing businesses.

Survey business owners to determine their needs and concerns

As mentioned in the goal on strengthening vocational education and workforce training opportunities, surveying local businesses can provide a great deal of information. The survey itself can take many forms, from face-to-face meetings, to E-mail surveys, to mail surveys, and finally, to a focus group setting. All methods are effective – it will depend on Smithville's leadership to determine the method that will work best.

Questions will be designed to assess local business opinions of the business climate, the ease or difficulty of doing business in Smithville, what could be done to make their business more successful, workforce issues, infrastructure constraints, supplier opportunities, and whether or not Smithville should expand its economic base.

Following the business survey, all responses should be recorded, analyzed, and summarized in a final report.

Determine what, if any, assistance the community can provide

Based on the findings of the business survey final report, the City of Smithville and the other community-based organizations (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, local economic development corporation, Main Street, etc.) can then begin the process of determining what is feasible to offer to local business that would address their issues and concerns. This can be done through a task force appointed by the city council.

Develop a strategic plan for action to address any issues that result from the survey process. Solutions can run the gamut from an immediate local action such as installing a turn lane in front of a business, to long-term needs that must be addressed through legislation at the state or federal level.

The goal in this process is to improve the community's business climate, which will hopefully result in expansions of existing businesses. Further, a healthy existing business base will be the sort of place new businesses will want to relocate.

'Shop at Home' program to encourage residents to patronize local stores

A Shop at Home program is also discussed in the Downtown Revitalization section of this document. However, some further program examples are included here as well.

One program is Shop Local Rewards. By visiting local businesses, consumers can be entered into a monthly drawing for a \$100 (or some other predetermined dollar amount) "Shop Local" gift certificate redeemable at any participating business. As a way of saying "thank you" to community members for shopping local, 10% of the participation fees paid by businesses are set aside for beautification efforts in the community.

Another example is "Chamber Bucks" or "Chamber Checks" that can be redeemed by any participating business. The program is designed to keep dollars local and drive potential buyers to chamber businesses by using "Chamber Bucks". Here's how it works:

- Participation is free for Merchant chamber members
- All Chamber members are automatically enrolled
- "Anytown 'Chamber Bucks' Accepted Here" window clings will be distributed
- "Chamber Bucks" act just like checks -- merchants accept & redeem for cash at Anytown National Bank.

Still another example of a Shop at Home program is a Gift Certificate Program. In an effort to make it easier for local consumers to shop at home, chambers can make use of a Chamber of Commerce Gift Certificate Program. The program is designed to be very simple:

- A consumer purchases a \$10, \$15 or \$25 gift certificate (or nowadays, an electronic gift card) from the Chamber office.
- The consumer redeems the gift certificate at any participating Chamber of Commerce member business.
- The participating business redeems the gift certificate at the Chamber office for its cash value.

"Shop at Home" programs do not need to be overly complicated or cumbersome. They are intended to make local shopping easier and more popular for consumers, so research existing programs on the Internet or talk to other chambers who have implemented successful programs. This is an excellent example of not needing to reinvent the wheel. Find a program that seems appropriate, and adapt it to meet local needs.

Continue on-going interaction with business owners to ensure they feel the support of the community and leaders are aware of what is happening with the business

The BREP process does not end with the strategic action plan. The summarized results should be communicated to all of the businesses that participated in the survey, as well as any actions or solutions the city intends to implement. Nothing can damage this effort more than dropping the ball at this stage. These local businesses have chosen to invest in Smithville, and they must believe that Smithville is investing in them. This can only be demonstrated by continual and open, two-way communication, and appropriate follow-up. The city and the task force should also continue to monitor progress and results, and communicate them so that the program can remain effective.

EXPLORE THE POTENTIAL FOR AN INDUSTRIAL PARK

Some members of the community may find typical manufacturing companies objectionable or undesirable businesses to locate in Smithville. If this is the case, incubators could be a more palatable use for buildings in the industrial park.

Business incubators are viewed as a key means to strengthen local economies because they help more new businesses survive the precarious early years. Thus, municipal governments often fund and support business incubators as a way to increase the number of companies in a community. This, in turn, increases the number of better-paying jobs and broadens the tax base. There are also efforts underway in many communities to establish business incubators that will establish and strengthen the local entrepreneurial climate.

Business incubators can take many forms. Many incubators involve technology-based companies, while others might be medical or pharmacological research companies. One Texas community is even beginning a culinary incubator program that would attract small companies with a focus on food or food products. The companies would share a commercial kitchen and other common office supplies and services.

Contact the National Business Incubation Association or NBIA via their website at <http://www.nbia.org> for information and resources on business and technology incubators.

Identify potential funding for a park

Without the ability to enact (and make use of) an economic development sales tax, funding an industrial park could prove problematic. However, there are still some things that could be explored here. Following are some potential sources of funds for acquisition of the land and subsequent improvements:

- Solicit the donation of land from local property owners as a tax benefit. The city would then need to run utility infrastructure to the property if it wasn't pre-existing. The county also owns land formerly owned by the Industrial Foundation which could become the nucleus of an industrial park.
- If the city were able to acquire some donated property, additional funding could come from the sale of sites at the newly designated industrial park location.
- While this would take a great deal of time, the city could allocate funds from general revenue.
- The city could participate in the State of Texas Industrial Revenue Bond Program (IRB), which offers financing of capital projects consisting of industrial and manufacturing plants and other projects that qualify. This program is designed to provide tax-exempt or taxable financing for eligible industrial or manufacturing projects as defined in the Development Corporation Act of 1979 (Act). The Act allows cities, counties, conservation and reclamation districts to form non-profit industrial development corporations (IDCs) or authorities on their behalf. The purpose is to provide bonds for projects within their jurisdictions. More information is available at http://www.governor.state.tx.us/divisions/ecodev/ed_bank/irb_program.

- Lastly, tax increment financing (TIF) and a tax increment reinvestment zone (TIRZ) could be utilized. More information about TIFs and TIRZs is below.

TIF is a financing tool used to attract development or redevelopment to areas that are currently not benefiting from private-sector investment. The area in which TIF is being used is known as a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ).

TIRZs act as economic stimuli to surrounding areas. By leveraging private investment for certain types of development within a targeted area, TIFs can be used to finance new and/or enhanced public improvements and infrastructure. These improvements and infrastructure, in turn, attract additional private investment in surrounding areas.

Tax increment collected in a TIRZ can only be used in certain ways as specified by Texas statute. These uses, known as "eligible project costs", include the acquisition and construction of public works, public improvements, and new public buildings. They also include rehabilitation costs of existing buildings, financing costs, and administrative costs.

The cost of improvements to the area is repaid by the contribution of future tax revenues by each taxing unit that levies taxes against the property. Specifically, each taxing unit can choose to dedicate all, a portion of, or none of the tax revenue that is attributable to the increase in property values due to the improvements within the reinvestment zone. The additional tax revenue that is received from the affected properties is referred to as the tax increment. Each taxing unit determines what percentage of its tax increment, if any, it will commit to repayment of the cost of financing the public improvements.

Identify location for a park

The Smithville Industrial Foundation is listed on the Smithville website as owning 6.9 acres. It is located about a mile from the Smithville Municipal Airport and adjacent to the Union Pacific Railroad tracks in the center of Smithville. Properties adjacent to the site include a city warehouse to the south and an active industrial area to the north. If this site is unsuitable, or an additional site is desired, the comprehensive planning process identified other potential locations.

As a part of this comprehensive planning process, several maps were developed that highlight existing and future use of land. Land near or adjacent to existing manufacturing facilities has good highway access, and rail access would be key criteria to identify for an industrial park.

In the land use workshops, a future land use map was developed that identified potential parcels of land that could be used for industrial purposes. One of these parcels could be targeted for use as an industrial park. Similarly, land adjoining the airport might make a good site for an industrial park. However, only certain types of businesses would be appropriate for this location.

ESTABLISH AN INCENTIVE POLICY FOR RECRUITMENT AND EXPANSION

It is a good idea to have a base incentive policy in place whether a business is asking for incentives or not. Once there are agreed upon terms and performance measures, local leaders will be in a position to act quickly when a business inquires, and thus, not risk missing out on a great business expansion or relocation opportunity.

The base incentive policy could be set up to establish minimum requirements for jobs and investment. In other words, if a company came to Smithville with a certain number of jobs and investment, they would receive "X" incentive. If they exceeded the minimum, then there would be room to negotiate from the base incentive package. This would apply to expansions as well as new businesses.

Incentive programs should not be a "free lunch" for companies interested in relocating to Smithville or expanding current operations. Any incentive packages developed for both retention and expansion should be based on well-defined measures of performance, such as number of new jobs created or retained, amount of capital investment added, etc.

Work with County and school district to set common standards

Since property tax abatements are one of the more commonly-used incentive tools, it is imperative that the Smithville ISD administration is on board. The school district must fully understand the tie between attracting business and the ability to employ high school graduates at home. Wherever possible, try not to succumb to the "brain drain" previously discussed, where students who receive the investment of an education leave town for job and career opportunities. By offering incentives that will help attract new businesses and encourage existing ones to expand, more local job opportunities are available for Smithville ISD students following graduation.

Put this way, the school district may be more willing to play a role. School district property taxes can also be abated, so there must be a willing partner in the school administration for this to work properly.

Establish 'two-tiered' system that rewards existing businesses for expansion

The first tier, Tier 1, could be for established local businesses who wish to expand their existing operations. Established businesses often represent the best option for a community's economic renewal, so it makes good sense to first work toward ensuring their success and growth. Since job creation and investment are likely to be lower for an existing business/industry, the incentive package offered (compared to recruiting a new business) should be proportionally lower.

Tier 2 would be set up for new businesses that are usually bringing a higher level of new employment and capital investment to the community. The incentive scale should slide up in this case.

Another tier of incentives, or Tier 3, could also be provided to new businesses that conform to targeted industries or businesses Smithville would like to recruit. Thus, if the company is one that is highly desired and sought after, it could receive a different level of incentive package than the other two tiers.

Local Incentive Examples:

- Property tax abatements – Eligible developments can be given abatements up to 100% (or an agreed upon percentage) based upon the new tax base value the project will add and based upon the number and type of jobs the project will save or create.
- Municipal Grants – The City of Smithville may provide loans and grants of city funds as well as city employees and equipment to promote economic development projects within the city. Eligible projects may receive sales tax grants, franchise fee grants, utility line extensions, etc.
- Revolving Loan Funds – The fund offers small businesses financing of up to a certain dollar amount for fixed asset financing or working capital purposes in cooperation with the banking community. The interest rate offered for this type of loan is typically lower than the prime, with variable terms depending on the use of funds.
- Employee Training Incentives – The City of Smithville could serve as a liaison to local job training and career centers offering training for specific types of workers needed in the existing workforce for an expansion or relocation.

State Incentive Examples:

- The Texas Enterprise Fund can be used for a variety of economic development projects, including infrastructure development, community development, job training programs and business incentives (http://www.governor.state.tx.us/divisions/ecodev/ed_bank/tefund).
- The Texas Capital Fund Infrastructure and Real Estate Programs provide a way for an eligible applicant to receive funds to make infrastructure and/or real estate improvements to support a specific business that is expanding or beginning operations in the applicant's jurisdiction. The business must create or retain jobs for Texans (http://www.agr.state.tx.us/agr/program_render/0,1987,1848_6050_0_0,00.html?channelId=6050).

Update community website to provide accurate and thorough information

The Smithville website (<http://www.ci.smithville.tx.us>) is critically important to update, and on many different levels. In its current format, pertinent information gets lost too easily and its appearance is not user-friendly. Too much and too many different types of information are housed within one web location, which makes it confusing to Internet visitors. This is not the desired reaction.

For the business community, community information such as the Smithville community profile is somewhat readily available. This could still be improved upon.

For visitors, however, relevant tourist information is much harder to find. Most consumers will try to find the local chamber of commerce website for tourist information, unless the community has a convention and visitor bureau. In smaller communities, like Smithville, the chamber usually fills that role.

In a Google search for "Smithville Texas Chamber of Commerce", <http://www.smithvilletexas.net> is among the first of the results produced. This is the chamber page. There is very limited information available on events, despite the fact

that there is actually a very good calendar on the main City of Smithville page. A link back to that calendar could be easily set up. The most troublesome thing, though, is that there is no link to information on Smithville's attractions or things to do in the area, lodging, restaurants, etc. on the main page of the Chamber's site. Visitors have to know to look at the business directory to find that type of information. For many potential visitors, this is simply too much. Why not make it as easy as possible for them to get information about Smithville so that they can visit and spend money in town.

One very positive aspect of Smithville's Internet function is the many free wireless locations throughout town. This is appealing to the entrepreneurial community or creative class as well as visitors.

INCREASE TOURISM

As mentioned in the historic preservation section, tourism can be an extremely important form of economic development – especially in small and rural Texas communities. The Governor's Office of Economic Development and Tourism states that in 2005, traveler volume to Texas grew to 203 million travelers – the highest ever on record. About 70 percent, or 143 million travelers, were leisure visitors to Texas. Business travel to Texas accounted for the remaining 30 percent, or 60 million travelers.

These travelers spend a great deal of money while visiting Texas. In 2005, total direct travel spending was \$49.2 billion. This represents a 10.8 percent increase over the preceding year. This spending by travelers results in money in the pockets of local businesses, state and local tax revenues, and jobs. In 2005, travel spending in Texas directly supported 514,000 jobs with earnings of \$14.6 billion. Spending directly generated at least 100 jobs in 171 of Texas' 254 counties.

Can there be any doubt why attracting tourists to Smithville is so important?

Continue to hold events, such as Thunder on the Colorado and Duathlon

Events are a big driver of visitor traffic to rural Texas communities, especially those that are multi-day events. Events that last for more than one day, or takes up a significant part of one day, are much more likely to generate overnight stays. In addition, they also result in increased expenditures in food and beverage purchases, entertainment, and other expenditure categories. If Thunder on the Colorado and the Duathlon do not currently meet the above criteria, consider extending them to get the full benefit of having a visitor come to Smithville.

Bike rallies, such as Thunder on the Colorado, are growing in popularity around the country. Due to the extremely high costs of purchasing these motorcycles, the clientele is not the "Hell's Angels" group of days gone by. Rather, they are increasingly high paid professionals who enjoy riding their bikes and appreciate being accommodated by rural communities. Because of the professions of the bike rally attendees, there is often a proportional amount of local spending that they generate. This group can be a very lucrative one to attract.

Duathlons, triathlons, and adventure races are very popular activities for sports enthusiasts and are sweeping the nation at a phenomenal rate. Their popularity continues to rise and new events spring up on seemingly a daily basis.

If the success of the current Duathlon warrants, Smithville should consider adding adventure racing to its athletic arsenal. The United States Adventure Racing Association (www.usara.com), located in Austin, states that there are currently about 300 sanctioned races in the United States and about 20 in Texas.

One of the reasons that adventure racing is so popular is that it emphasizes teamwork and there is a strong social/networking tie in the sport. Adventure racing clubs have popped up all over the country whose members train, compete, and socialize together. There are currently 17 such clubs in Texas including the following near Smithville:

- Adventure Club San Antonio
www.adventureclubsa.com
Tony Rico
tony99rico@aol.com
- Austin Adventure Racing Team
www.austinadventureracingteam.com
Debbie Richardson
advrace@pdg.net
- Team Xterra (Austin)
www.teamxterrasports.com
Victor Sauers
v_sauers@worldnet.att.net

Many of these races have themes that can increase the level of interest and excitement in the hosting destination. Fayetteville, AR hosts the "Lewis and Clark Urban Adventure Race", Huntsville, TX hosts the "Texas Jailbreak Adventure Race", and Bastrop, TX hosts the "Big Chill 24-Hour Adventure Race". Most of these events are held in local/regional parks or state park facilities that feature a water element such as a lake or river.

Market Smithville amenities at trade shows and other events

Smithville is in an envious position geographically compared to other parts of the state. There are at least three regional tourism groups and one countywide group that market the attractions of their individual regions to the traveling public.

LCRA's Colorado River Trail (<http://www.lcra.org/coloradorivertrail>) is involved in a handful of trade show opportunities throughout the year. All are focused directly on the consumer, and include a regional or targeted demographic focus. Shows are distributed throughout the state geographically to cover the Dallas-Fort Worth metro area, the Houston metro, Austin, and South Texas. Targeted demographics include Winter Texans, heritage tourists, outdoor enthusiasts, and the military. Participation in these shows is offered to Colorado River Trail communities free of charge.

The Texas Historical Commission sponsors heritage tourism regions all over the state. Bastrop County is one of only a few counties located in more than one region. Thus, Smithville would have opportunities to participate in cooperative marketing efforts in both the Texas Brazos Trail (<http://www.texasbrazostrail.com>) and the Texas Independence Trail (<http://www.texasindependencetrail.com>) regions.

Within Bastrop County is the BEST group, or Bastrop, Elgin, Smithville Texas. Since cooperative efforts are at this group's heart, pursue continued marketing opportunities with them to further stretch marketing dollars.

Work with Hyatt to establish connection to get visitors to Smithville

The Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort and Spa presents Smithville and Bastrop County with an incredible opportunity. The trick, however, is creating and promoting the right set of attractions to get Hyatt guests to want to leave the property.

With all the things to do on the Hyatt property itself, Smithville must focus on the unique and unexpected to attract these visitors to the area. A lot can be done here, and the following are just a few ideas.

- Make downtown Smithville a primary destination for dining, shopping and entertainment in Bastrop County. Focus on unique, locally-owned experiences that can't be found in "Everytown, USA". While the Hyatt has several dining options, visitors would be enticed to visit a fun or quaint local establishment to get a meal they can't find anywhere else. The same thing holds true for shopping and entertainment venues. Focus on the smaller boutiques instead of chain stores, bar and grills, the Hyatt visitors probably have in their own home towns.
- Like Bastrop is already doing, highlight local recreational activities such as canoe or raft trips on the Colorado. Rising Phoenix Adventures in Bastrop has created a niche by offering tours that are longer than or different from the ones offered at the Hyatt. They have also diversified their business by adding bicycle rentals. What can Smithville do that is either something the Hyatt doesn't offer, or capitalizes on a deficiency in the Hyatt's activity offerings?
- Once there is some developed tourism product to offer them, partner with the Hyatt to promote these products to Hyatt guests. Steve Dewire, Hyatt's General Manager, has expressed a great deal of interest and enthusiasm in promoting offsite venues for his guests to enjoy. He wants his guests to be happy and stay with the Hyatt as long as possible, so if guests are offered something he can't, he will promote that.

Market river access and activities when established

Aside from offering fun things to do for residents and visitors, recreational opportunities have an economic benefit as well. According to USDA's Economic Research Service, every type of recreation county (e.g., winter, water, mountain, etc.) in the United States has a slightly higher median household income than the average for all other non-metro counties. Recreation counties also have a distinctly higher share of adults who have a 4-year college degree or higher. Thus, these counties seem to have brighter economic prospects than many non-metro counties that depend on traditional rural and small town industries. Developing the recreational opportunities along the river and that connect Smithville to the state park, might prove to benefit more than just quality of life.

Whatever recreational opportunities are developed – hike and bike trails, river access for canoes and kayaks, etc. – this investment in the community must be promoted. This can be accomplished in several ways: 1) via the tourist information found on the new and improved website, 2) included on local promotional brochures, 3) included on

pedestrian information kiosks, 4) included in a local wayfinding effort, 5) taken to tourist-oriented trade shows, and much more.

Establish weekend availability for tourism information

The chamber of commerce may find it difficult to be fully staffed and operational 7 days a week. Even with help from local volunteers, this may prove to be very difficult. If this is the case, consider installing some type of all-weather information kiosk located on the grounds of the chamber building. It could be stocked with Smithville brochures and maps so that visitors, who came when the chamber was closed, would not be turned away empty handed. Some examples of outdoor information kiosks are found on the following page.



Consider establishing tourism information radio or partnering with Bastrop

Another means of promoting local attractions to Smithville visitors is through tourist information radio. This method is not likely to bring visitors from out of town, unless there is a great deal of promotion along the highway as traffic approaches Smithville. However, signage could be installed that asked visitors to tune to station "X" for Smithville travel information.

They could hear prerecorded messages about upcoming events, be directed to a festival currently going on, provided directions to local attractions, and be informed about the local history.

Check into the availability of unused air space on both the AM and FM bands to determine if this is feasible to do on your own. Being so close to Bastrop, there might be a way to partner with them to provide Smithville with some air time on the Bastrop station.

In the beginning, perhaps, Smithville's information on the Bastrop station could be tied to a specific festival or event. If this method is successful, then consider branching out with a Smithville tourist information radio station.

DEVELOP AIRPORT PLAN TO BETTER INTEGRATE THIS ASSET INTO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

The Smithville-Crawford Airport is an ideal location for continued light industrial and commercial development. The key transportation factors are already in place, including air, highway, and nearby rail, and the area is already thought of as being an industrial location. These factors, in combination with nationwide trends, make an airport industrial park development a great fit.



Example of a commercial building located at an airport

An Airport Development Plan would help to promote the City of Smithville and attract potential companies who want to relocate their businesses. The development plan should provide for schematic design for the commercial buildings and industrial/manufacturing buildings, as well as the types of businesses would be considered appropriate to locate there. This development plan would then be a tool that Smithville can use to give prospective business a glimpse of what the future holds for the industrial development.

Determine what uses are allowed in proximity

Check on the current zoning for the land on the existing airport site as well as surrounding properties regardless of their availability. Most surrounding property is likely zoned as agricultural. On the airport site itself, light industrial uses, commercial, and aviation-related uses would probably be acceptable.

Work with adjacent property owners to determine availability of land

Since there is little to no available land for development held within the current airport site, the only choice is to expand. This may take time, as the desire by surrounding property owners to sell or donate property may not exist. However, it is never too early to begin these conversations with current land owners. Over time as land becomes available, the City of Smithville should look very closely at purchasing it for development purposes.

Work with airport management to establish goals for development

The city must work very closely with airport management to ensure that any additional use of the airport land and potentially the surrounding area does not conflict with its primary use as an airport. Any new development should “fit” within what Smithville considers to be acceptable new business-related developments and with what is appropriate to locate near the airport.

When developing goals for development at the airport site, there are several things to consider. Other communities and airport developments can really be a resource here. On the following page are a collection of ideas from airport industrial park developments around the country.

- Create schematic building configurations to provide a vision of how the airport industrial park development could appear in the future. The building square footages and configurations would be modified and designed specifically for the clients who would be locating in the airport industrial park development.
- Facilities which require airport runway access should consider areas available closest to the runway.
- Facilities that require railroad access can be situated in areas of the property with the best access to rail. A railroad spur could be provided for easy railway loading and unloading.
- All necessary utilities (water, gas, electric, and sanitary sewer) should be located within close proximity to possible buildable areas.
- Consider Special Use Zoning that would enable the use for principle businesses facilities such as warehousing/storage facilities and office/showroom development, fronting the Airport's main access road.
- Some recommended uses include aviation-related businesses, light industrial, start-up incubator businesses, commercial (including office park) businesses, industrial technology park, service sector, transportation, lodging, and public uses.
- Aesthetic enhancements should be made in the development of the industrial park including buffer strips and screening between commercial and light industrial uses and aviation-related uses of the site. This will soften the visual impact of the buildings and provide noise buffers and privacy.
- Consider uses of the site that are intended to create employment and business opportunities to complement and not compete with existing employment opportunities in Smithville.

CONCLUSION

Smithville has many of the pieces necessary to complete the local economic development picture. Some of the pieces are already in place, while others have yet to be fully utilized to their greatest potential. Build upon what already exists, but keep an eye to the future.

What is it that will give Smithville that competitive edge over other communities in the area? Will it be attracting higher education and workforce training? Or maybe it will be growing and expanding existing companies in Smithville? Or still yet, maybe an industrial park or airport development is in Smithville's future. Or maybe tourism development is the answer? The truth is that probably a combination of all these areas of economic development will provide Smithville with a successful mix of opportunities to help the local economy prosper and thrive.

INTRODUCTION

Housing growth in Smithville has reflected the slow population growth. As mentioned in the Baseline Analysis less than 9 houses per year (on average) have been built in the community between 1980 and 2000. The average household size is approximately 2.5; if this remains constant, nearly 1,000 new homes will be required to be built over the next 15 years or so to accommodate expected growth. Given the slow rate of growth over the last 30 years, this is a dramatic increase in housing development for the city. It will be important to establish policies to ensure development meets the needs of current and future residents and provides adequate housing options at all levels of income, from those looking for a first home, to those wanting to retire in a luxury home.

CURRENT HOUSING CONDITIONS

Housing Age and Condition

Nearly half of the homes in Smithville were built before 1960, and nearly 90 percent were built before 1980. This means that the housing stock in Smithville is aging, which can lead to higher maintenance costs and deterioration of the overall housing stock. As part of the land use survey, each residential unit was assigned a condition based on the following definitions:

Standard – Little or no defects. Any defects can be corrected with regular maintenance.

Deteriorating – Defects beyond the scope of regular maintenance. Defects must be repaired if the unit is to continue being safe. Examples include holes, missing or rotting materials, and deep wear.

Dilapidated – Exhibits critical defects and is in need of extensive repairs or possibly demolition. Home does not provide safe or adequate shelter. Examples include sagging roof and holes and cracks in roof, foundation, or walls.

Despite the average age of the homes, the vast majority are in standard condition (Figure 5.1). Of single family homes, less than 4 percent are considered dilapidated, and several of these are homes that have burned and not yet been rebuilt. One area of concern is the high number of deteriorating and dilapidated manufactured homes found throughout the community. Dilapidated homes do not provide adequate shelter and can be a health and safety hazard for residents. Every effort should be made to strictly enforce all applicable codes and standards to ensure adequate, safe housing for all residents.

Figure 5.1 Housing Condition

Housing Type	Standard	Deteriorating	Dilapidated
Single Family	86.2%	9.9%	3.6%
Duplex	90.6%	3.8%	5.7%
Multi-family	94.1%	0%	5.9%
Manufactured Home	68.7%	20.7%	10.7%
Total	84.4%	11.0%	4.5%

Smithville has had success in receiving state grants that can be used to renovate or even replace dilapidated homes and this program should be continued.

Housing Price and Availability

Housing values in Smithville reflect the age of the housing stock, with 25 percent valued under \$50,000 and 70 percent under \$100,000 (see Figure 7 in Baseline Analysis). Despite the high number of homes valued under \$100,000 there is still a large segment of the population that is paying over 30 percent of their income on rent or mortgage. Table 5.2 shows the breakdown of rents and mortgages as a percentage of household income. Unfortunately, the most recent data is 1999, so it may be somewhat different at this time, but it is likely a good representation of existing conditions.

Table 5.2 Rent and Mortgage as Percentage of Income

Percentage of Income	Mortgage	Rent
< 15%	42.6%	20.7%
15 – 19%	16.9%	13.7%
20 – 24%	12.4%	9.7%
25 – 29%	6.3%	9.1%
30 – 34%	9.2%	9.5%
> 35%	11.8%	28.8%
Not Calculated	0.7%	8.7%

Source: 2000 US Census

Nearly 40 percent of renters are paying more than 30 percent of their income in rent each month. This is a challenge for these residents and is likely a result of the limited multi-family housing available. This is a key area of concern as Smithville grows because of the limited options for lower income residents to find affordable housing.

EXPLANATION: AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND LOW-INCOME HOUSING

The concept of affordable housing is not the equivalent of low-income housing. Low-income housing traditionally is housing that is provided, through government subsidies, for residents that make 30 to 50 percent of the local median income. In Smithville, the median household income is \$35,586, which means low-income housing is for those making \$10,675.80 to \$17,793 annually. Affordable housing on the other hand relates to the concept of housing affordability relative to income. Based on national precedent, experts recommend that a family dedicate no more than 30 percent of their income to housing related expenditures. If a family has to spend more than this 30 percent threshold on housing expenditures because quality inexpensive homes are unavailable, and the family earns between 30 and 100 percent of the median income, they are arguably in need of affordable housing assistance.

With a median household value of \$82,200, a Smithville family would have to earn approximately \$2,577 per month (\$30,920 annually) to pay 30 percent of their income for housing. This includes tax and insurance, but not utilities. With a median income of \$35,586, this means that a family earning the median income can purchase a median priced home in Smithville. Despite this, there is still 21 percent of homeowners who are paying over 30 percent of their income on their mortgage. As mentioned, renters are paying an even higher percentage of their income for rent, reflecting limited rental options.

As for availability, approximately 90 percent of the homes in Smithville are occupied (Table 2.7 in Baseline Analysis). Of the remaining, many are not available for sale or

rent for a variety of reasons. An informal search on realtor.com identified 57 properties for sale in Smithville ranging from a \$550,000 downtown building with a loft to \$48,900 for a 3 bedroom, 1 bath home. This is obviously not a full inventory of available homes; however, it is an indication of what potential homebuyers can expect. The rental market is even tighter, with many participants in the public input process identifying this as an issue. Representatives from the school district said many of their teachers are forced to live in Bastrop or La Grange because of the lack of rental housing available in Smithville.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Housing is a fundamental need of any community, and to be truly vital, there must be housing available for residents of all incomes. The housing goals identified in this plan will move Smithville forward on achieving a diversity of housing for all current and future residents. This will create a foundation for economic growth as well as businesses seek to locate in a community with amenities and homes for their employees.

ENCOURAGE NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

This is a very general goal; however, there are specific actions that can be undertaken to achieve it. Housing should be considered another aspect of economic development, so many of the actions to encourage housing development are the same as would be used to recruit businesses.

Utilize Demographic Analysis to Market Smithville to Developers

Smithville's demographics show positive growth for the future and can be used to attract potential developers. In addition, Smithville boasts an exemplary quality of life, with excellent recreational facilities, schools, and other amenities to attract potential residents. This information should be pulled together to create high quality marketing materials that are suitable for presentation to developers and businesses alike. With the rapid growth in Bastrop County as a whole, there are a number of large developers in the area that can be a starting point for a marketing effort. The Chamber of Commerce, or other suitable group, should take a leadership role in this effort.

Identify What, if any, Assistance can be Provided

Just as communities provide incentives to businesses, many are beginning to offer assistance to residential developers. This can include reduced tap or permitting fees, or even infrastructure assistance. The city may pay for needed on-site infrastructure to encourage new housing. This level of assistance can be provided if the developer agrees to set aside a percentage of homes for lower income residents, such as those at 80 percent of the median income. Another option, as discussed in the land use plan, is to work with developers to oversize infrastructure when they install it. The city may provide that money as the development happens then be reimbursed as more development occurs that taps into the oversized utilities. This allows the city to prepare for growth and not have to do even more expensive retro-fitting of utilities that were not built large enough to support growth.

Another incentive may be to offer density bonuses for development that meets specific goals. The City of Livermore, California allows for higher densities for builders who set

aside a minimum of 20% of new homes for those making 80% of the median income. The benefit is that the higher densities bring down the costs and increase the number of homes sold, which allows the builder to still make a profit while offering some properties at a lower price to the buyer. Builders that set aside 20% of the homes for low-income residents also qualify for Low Income Housing Tax Credit which can reduce their federal income taxes. This kind of incentive does not cost the city any direct money and contributes to housing diversity, which is a key goal.

Encourage a Broad Mix of Housing Types

The city's zoning ordinance has a variety of housing types allowed; however, they are not all utilized at this time. The future land use map identifies several areas for residential development, it will be important to ensure a broad mix of types to meet the changing needs of Smithville.

One option growing in popularity is 'garden' or patio homes that typically have zero lot lines and common open space. These are very popular with elderly residents who want to downsize and have minimal yard maintenance. The city has a zoning designation for this, it should be utilized to ensure there is land defined for this type of development. Townhomes, duplexes, and similar housing types could be built in conjunction with garden homes to provide a further mix of housing. This increased density will result in lower costs and less land being developed overall to accommodate expected growth.

Multi-family housing is a critical need as well. This is an area where the city may have to take a more active role to encourage this type of development. The marketing materials and activities discussed above should be targeted to multi-family developers to build in Smithville. There may also be opportunities for multi-family development in conjunction with commercial and retail growth. There is some residential use in downtown, and this could be expanded. Also, new commercial growth on Loop 230 or Hwy 71 could have a residential component as part of it. This could either be townhomes serving as a buffer between shops and single family residential, or apartments on second floors above shops. This type of development is what happened historically and is regaining popularity in developments across the country. The city should review its ordinances and ensure they allow for mixed use development of this type. The Planned Development District would also be a likely tool that would be used for this type of building.

SUPPORT WORKFORCE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Many of the recommendations discussed above, including density bonuses and mixed use housing, will result in lower cost housing becoming more available in Smithville. There are some additional actions that can be undertaken to encourage more of this type of housing to meet growing needs.

Establish Relationship with Central Texas Housing Finance Corporation and Other Agencies that Provide Low Cost Housing

There are a variety of non-profits and public agencies that are involved with housing development and Smithville has worked with them in the past. The Central Texas Housing Finance Corporation will actually come into the community and build homes, provide homebuyer education for potential buyers, and market the property. Typically,

the city has to provide the land for these homes and they do the rest. One potential source for these lots is through tax foreclosures.

The city should work with the tax appraisal office to determine lots that have unpaid taxes and may be available for foreclosure. The city can then work with the county and school district to acquire those properties and make them available for redevelopment. There are many benefits to this, the first being that delinquent properties are returned to the tax rolls, and will increase tax revenues. The second is that many of these properties are likely poorly maintained and are a blight on the community. Redeveloping them for homes provides much needed housing to the city as well as improving the quality of life for adjacent property owners.

Habitat for Humanity is another resource for providing lower cost housing. Again, the same method can be used to acquire land to make available for Habitat. The city may also work with property owners to have land donated for Habitat homes to be built. The owner would receive the benefit of a tax write-off while the community would get low cost homes.

These efforts will likely result in in-fill housing being developed on vacant lots or those with dilapidated homes on them. In-fill development should be a focus because these lots are already served with utilities and are within the city's electric service territory. In addition, these properties may be a health and safety hazard if they are not maintained. One issue with the development of these lots is that they may not be in conformance with the zoning code due to their size, shape, etc. In that case, a variance would be necessary for these to be developed. The city should work with owners and potential builders to clarify the process and make it as easy as possible for in-fill development to occur.

Educate Citizens on Need for Multi-family and Higher Density Housing

Many residents in small communities are opposed to multi-family housing because they are concerned it will impact the rural character they love. It will be important to educate citizens on the impact that a lack of housing options has on the city and how it affects teachers, police officers, and others who may be forced to live elsewhere.

This negative perception can be combated by ensuring quality design for higher density and multi-family projects. Well designed projects, particularly those with parking that is out of site, etc. can blend very well in existing neighborhoods and not negatively impact the community. In addition, ample studies have shown the benefits of mixed income neighborhoods, so the city can use this information during any public hearings to reduce potential opposition. Illustration 5.1 is an example of well-designed density that would provide lower cost housing without harming the appearance or quality of life for Smithville.

Illustration 5.1

The land use plan also identifies a suitable area for multi-family development that will allow for development in an appropriate location. This is an area with adequate road access and proximity to services to ensure that increased traffic has minimal impact on adjoining properties. The recommendations will increase community support and buy-in for multi-family development.



MAINTAIN HOUSING STANDARDS FOR HEALTH, SAFETY, AND APPEARANCE

Even more important than increasing the overall housing supply is ensuring that existing housing provides safe, healthy shelter for all residents. This is a challenging issue, especially with the age of many homes in Smithville. This should be a top priority for the community to ensure all residents have safe shelter. This will not only increase the quality of life for all existing residents, it will protect property values and enhance the attractiveness for prospective businesses.

Strictly Enforce All Ordinances to Maintain Housing Quality

Code enforcement is the first line of defense in maintaining housing appearance and quality. The city ordinances define basic standards that must be met by all homes. There should be an aggressive enforcement program to ensure that all homes are up to code and are well-maintained. The land use survey identified the condition of all homes and this can be a starting point for enforcement.

In addition to strict enforcement, there should be an education component to inform people of the negative impact their deteriorating property has on the community as a whole. This can include newspaper stories and outreach at community meetings. If residents understand how the community is impacted they may be more likely to maintain their properties.

Provide Assistance to Property Owners to Maintain Their Properties

Many residents are simply unable to maintain their property due to lack of money, age, or other issue. These residents should be able to find assistance to maintain their homes rather than just being punished.

Volunteer programs are becoming a popular way to address these properties. Smithville is fortunate to have a strong volunteer ethic, and existing civic groups, high school clubs, and churches can be a great resource for this type of effort. Churches can be used as a point of contact for those in need. They can request assistance at the church, which will then identify a volunteer group to provide needed assistance. This may be having a couple of high school kids do lawn work on a weekend, or it may be the Lions Club repairing the roof. Local businesses can be tapped to donate materials, etc. for the projects. Another option may be a community 'barn-raising' type event where the whole community can pitch in to work on projects across the town.

The goal is to help property owners maintain their properties without having to resort to fines and other punishment, especially in those cases where there are underlying reasons for the lack of maintenance. Community volunteers are a tremendous resource to provide needed assistance throughout Smithville.

Identify Funding to Renovate or Replace Dilapidated Housing

Smithville has had success receiving grants from the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs to renovate or replace dilapidated homes. This program should be pursued because of the many benefits it provides. It benefits homeowners by providing them with safe housing, and the community benefits because the overall appearance is enhanced. In addition to TDHCA grants, the city should pursue other opportunities that

may be available to help property owners maintain and enhance their homes. There are a variety of private foundations and other organizations that can be tapped for this type of assistance.

CONCLUSION

To be sustainable, a community must have a diversity of housing. All residents must have the opportunity to find adequate, affordable housing to meet their needs. The recommendations in this plan identify strategies that will ensure this mix of housing is developed as Smithville grows. It will require the entire community working together, including property owners, developers, and current residents to support development that meets these goals. New homes will be built but without a plan they may not be what is most appropriate and what will provide for the long term needs of Smithville.

INTRODUCTION

Community development is a broad category; however, it can be easily defined as those projects that enhance a community's quality of life. While these activities can be dismissed as not a fundamental priority they are actually critical to the economic vitality of a city. Expenditures on community development should be considered an investment rather than simply a cost for city government. As the economy is changing, quality of life is becoming a major factor for prospective businesses as they determine where they want to locate. It is no longer only an issue of what city has the best incentives; companies want parks and open space, recreational activities, and other amenities in the communities where they locate. This helps them attract and retain the best employees, leading to greater success for the business. Quality of life helps a city attract and retain the best businesses, leading to a stronger economy and greater sustainability.

The quality of life in Smithville is very high according to the community survey and town hall meeting. Residents appreciate the small town atmosphere and amenities that are available to them. This includes the recreation center, skate park, numerous city parks, Beuscher State Park, and the Colorado River. In addition to recreation, citizens appreciate the educational opportunities provided by Smithville ISD and the quality of education. They also feel that Smithville is overall a very safe community and a great place to raise a family.

This community spirit is an excellent indicator of the great things available in Smithville; however, there are opportunities to make additional improvements to further enhance the quality of life. The public input process identified several priorities that should be pursued to make Smithville an even better community for its residents and even more attractive to potential residents and businesses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations identify projects for the entire community to rally behind. They will increase the quality of life for all residents and make Smithville a truly vibrant and successful community with activities for residents and visitors of all ages. While some projects will require an investment from the city, some can be addressed for minimal costs.

INCREASE RIVER ACCESSIBILITY

The Colorado River is a largely untapped resource that can become a major attraction for Smithville. River recreation is tremendously popular and communities up and down the river are benefiting from it. Smithville should make every effort to get people to the river and provide services for them. The following actions will accomplish this goal and lead to increased tourism and investment in Smithville.

Enhance the Park at the North End of Main Street

This park is currently the only potential river access point in downtown Smithville. It currently is not well developed and does not provide access to the river. It does provide an



overlook to the river; however, most of the property is severely overgrown and is not inviting. Because of its location in downtown improvements to this area should be a priority for community action. The boundaries of the park should be clearly delineated to minimize trespassing. Parking should be clearly designated for visitors to reduce the impact on adjoining property owners. Finally, there should be increased amenities at this park including access to the river, and additional benches and tables. The area should also be cleared and maintained to enhance the connection to the river.



In addition to park improvements, the park must have a stronger connection to downtown. Currently, there is limited signage that would draw visitors to the park. Also, there is no clear pedestrian connectivity from downtown to the park. It would be good to develop a strong connection between the park and downtown because it would encourage visitors to spend more time (and hence more money) in Smithville. Improvements could include sidewalks the entire way to the park, or at least a designated walkway. Good signage would also direct people to the park. Signage will be discussed in more detail later in this plan.

Having a natural area in downtown provides many benefits, including providing a respite from the urban character of downtown. It will also attract additional visitors who may have no interest in downtown initially but will visit to access the river. These visitors may decide to have a meal or do some shopping while they are there, even if that was not their intent in coming downtown.

The river park also offers an opportunity to provide an access point for river recreation. Currently, there is only the boat ramp near the VFW Hall that allows people to get on or off the river easily. If an access point could be developed at this park, canoeists and kayakers would be able to stop and patronize downtown businesses. Improvements to this park should be a priority because of the huge potential this park provides to increase the attractiveness of downtown Smithville and bring in new visitors to the community.

Utilize Gazley Creek for Access to River

Gazley Creek is another location that could be developed as a river access point. It is located on the northwest side of town and would be an excellent starting point for a day float trip that could end at the Main Street Park or Riverbend Park. It would also allow outfitters and other river users an access point for longer trips from Bastrop or to go further downstream.

The area around Gazley Creek also offers an opportunity for the development of a larger passive park facility that could include walking trails, picnic facilities, and other amenities. The area to the south of the confluence of Gazley Creek and the Colorado River is identified in the future land use plan as an area for this kind of park. This entire area connected with trails would be a tremendous benefit to the community and serve as a tremendous attraction. Illustration 6.1 is a map showing the potential connectivity along the river by development at Gazley Creek, the Main Street park and Riverbend. It also shows potential trail development throughout the community that is discussed later in this plan.

Greenways Plan

2007 Smithville Comprehensive Plan

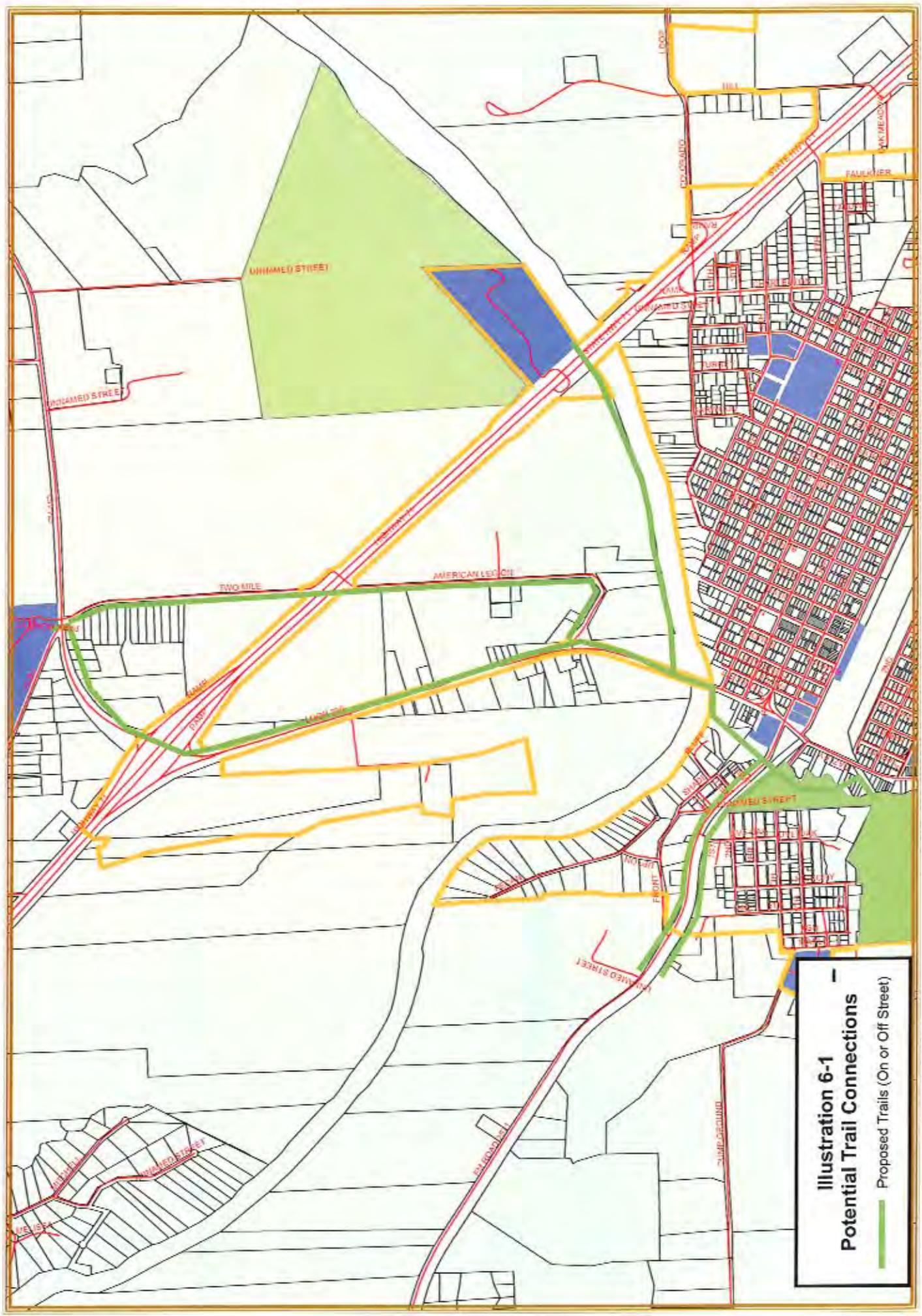


Illustration 6-1
Potential Trail Connections
— Proposed Trails (On or Off Street)

Develop Additional Boat Ramps

There is currently one boat ramp, that is apparently not the best, located near the VFW Hall. When TxDOT builds the new bridge across the river it is reported they will install an additional ramp at that location. In addition to this facility, there could be an additional boat ramp put in to increase river access. There is a potential location near Riverbend Park that may be suitable for development. Any boat ramp will require good access to the river and adequate land for parking and access for trailers. This would benefit the city by making it more attractive for fishermen and others wanting to be on the river.

Establish Stronger Relationship With River Outfitters

As river access is improved there will be a need to establish relationships with river outfitters to encourage them to use Smithville as an access point for their trips. The Chamber of Commerce should contact existing outfitters in Bastrop and other communities to determine what their requirements are and ensure those are met as river access points are developed. This would ensure that Smithville becomes an attractive location for the outfitters.

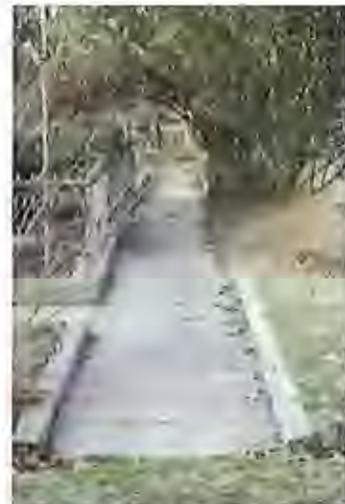
An additional opportunity is to establish multi-sport activities that utilize the river and other amenities. Bastrop is already a destination for bicycling, both road and mountain biking. One option may be to develop an itinerary of mountain biking at Rocky Hill Ranch in the morning and relaxing on a float trip during the afternoon. Road cyclists could ride from Smithville to Bastrop between Beuscher and Bastrop State Parks then float back down the river to end their day. Recreation tourism is hugely popular and the raw materials to establish this in Smithville are available. These amenities would attract visitors and serve residents alike.

INCREASE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND AMENITIES

Many Smithville residents do not have access to a car; these are not just young people, but the elderly and disabled. These residents are often unable to safely access community facilities because of a lack of safe places to walk. In addition, walking is a popular form of exercise and many residents currently walk through town nearly every day. Rather than spending money to develop a walking track that is really a single purpose facility, these resources could be spent on making improvements throughout the city that will make walking an attractive option for all residents, both as exercise and access.

Identify Common Pedestrian Routes Through Town

The first step in developing pedestrian access is to identify where people are currently walking. Obvious destinations include schools, parks, especially the skate park, and downtown. These should be starting point for designing the pedestrian network. The future land use plan also identifies where new growth may occur that will drive additional pedestrian needs. This is especially true of the multi family and mixed residential areas which are major sources of pedestrians.



The purpose in identifying where people are trying to walk to and from is critical to prioritize where improvements should be made. This will allow limited resources to be targeted to those areas most in need.



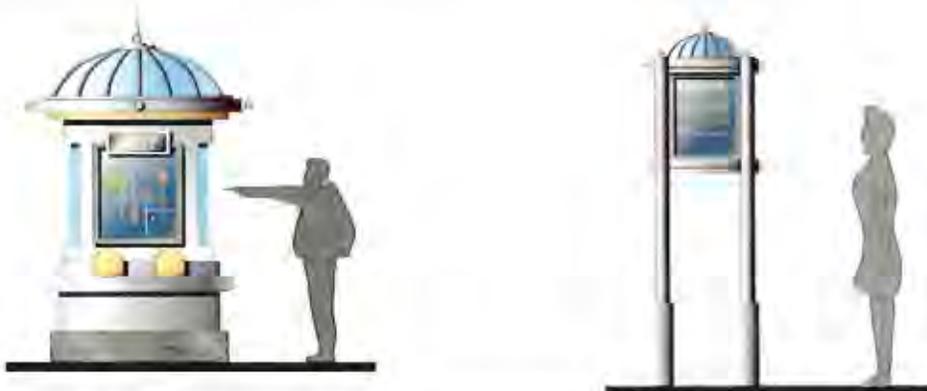
Identify and Prioritize Needed Improvements to Enhance Pedestrian Connectivity

Once the routes have been defined the next step is to determine what, if any improvements are needed. It may not be necessary to install sidewalks throughout, a simple designation (see picture) may suffice on lesser traveled roads. The idea of marking roads is to raise driver awareness that pedestrians may be present.

There may be some areas of town, particularly on busy streets, that will require sidewalks or other off street facilities to accommodate pedestrians. This will require significant investment and should be considered a longer term goal for the city. New sidewalks should be installed first in those areas that will provide the most benefit, such as connecting the Main Street park with downtown and improving access to schools.

Lighting is another key component to pedestrian safety. This is not to say Smithville should be lit up like a stadium, but key intersections and areas should be well lit to enhance safety in the evening. This includes areas where people will tend to congregate at night, such as downtown and the recreation center. Intersections should also be illuminated for safety.

Finally, signage and 'wayfinding' is a consideration for improving pedestrian access throughout town. Key walking routes should have signage geared toward pedestrians. This would include directional signs and possibly additional information about sites in town. Historic buildings and locations could have a kiosk explaining their significance as part of the overall wayfinding signage.



Good signage will help visitors navigate through town and may attract them to places they would not have known to visit. It also will serve the purpose of making drivers aware that they are in a pedestrian zone and should be more careful. The idea of improving pedestrian access is to make Smithville safer for existing residents who are

unable or unwilling to drive, as well as make it more attractive to visitors who want the experience of strolling through a small town.

Identify Potential Trail Development

In addition to increasing the connectivity within the developed parts of Smithville, there are many areas that could be connected through the development of a trail network. Riverbend Park and Beuscher State Park are two destinations that should be targeted, along with developing a trail that follows the Colorado River. The map included in this plan identifies potential trail routes along with destinations that would be connected. A well-developed trail network that connects with the pedestrian network in town will provide a unique asset for Smithville that will increase its tourism potential and serve existing residents.

Areas that can be utilized for trails include floodplains that are unsuitable for other types of development. Also, easements can be acquired for trail access across property that will not require acquisition of the land to build the trail. A quality trail network will build Smithville's reputation as a recreation destination and will complement development of the river as a resource.

Identify Funding for Trail and Pedestrian Improvements

The biggest challenge to implementing these recommendations is funding. The city has limited resources to devote to projects of this type, and the necessary improvements far exceed available money. The city should be creative in how it develops these projects and utilize a broad range of resources to pay for necessary (and desired) improvements.

One opportunity is to work with developers to encourage them to include trails and sidewalks in new development. If the city adopts a park set aside requirement in the subdivision ordinance these amenities could count towards that. Property owners could also be asked to donate easements on their property for a trail route. This would benefit the city by reducing the cost of trail development, serve as matching funds for grant applications, and the owner may receive a tax write off for the value of the donated easement.

There are numerous state, federal, and private grants that can be utilized to help pay for trails and pedestrian improvements. If the trail network connects different facilities in town, such as schools, parks, shopping, etc. they tend to score higher on many grant applications. These connections can also open the door for transportation funding that may not be available for strictly recreational trails. The resource guide included identifies grant resources the city can pursue.

Finally, local fundraising and sponsorship can be utilized. While it can be a challenge to ask citizens for funding for projects, it can be very successful. The City of Burnet had great success getting sponsorships and fundraising for a local recreation center. They had a 'Buy-a-Brick' program that recognized contributors with a brick in the sidewalk of the facility. This type of program can be very successful in raising funds. Residents, clubs, and businesses can also 'adopt' a section of trail once developed to help maintain and keep it clean. This would reduce maintenance costs for the city and increase citizen buy in for the trails. This support will keep them in better condition and encourage citizens to use the network. This use will enhance the safety of the trails as well

because if people are there all the time then there will not be an opportunity for trouble makers to take advantage.

ESTABLISH ADDITIONAL RECREATIONAL AMENITIES

Smithville is well served with its existing park system; however, there are opportunities to expand amenities to serve different needs and access issues in the community. The goal is to provide a system of parks that meets the needs of users of all ages and interests. This means having some type of open space in proximity to every resident, even if its only a single lot that has a small playground or a few picnic tables. These small parks can become a cherished part of a neighborhood as a gathering place for children and entire families.



WHITT JOHNSON PARK

There is often a fear that these types of neighborhood parks can become a source of trouble for a neighborhood. They can serve as a congregating point for ne'er-do-wells and troublemakers. This can be avoided through good park design that keeps all areas of the park visible from adjoining streets and by people using the park regularly. If the park is not well visited it can become a source of trouble; however, if it has amenities people want it will be used and not be a problem.

Identify Potential Sites for New Parks

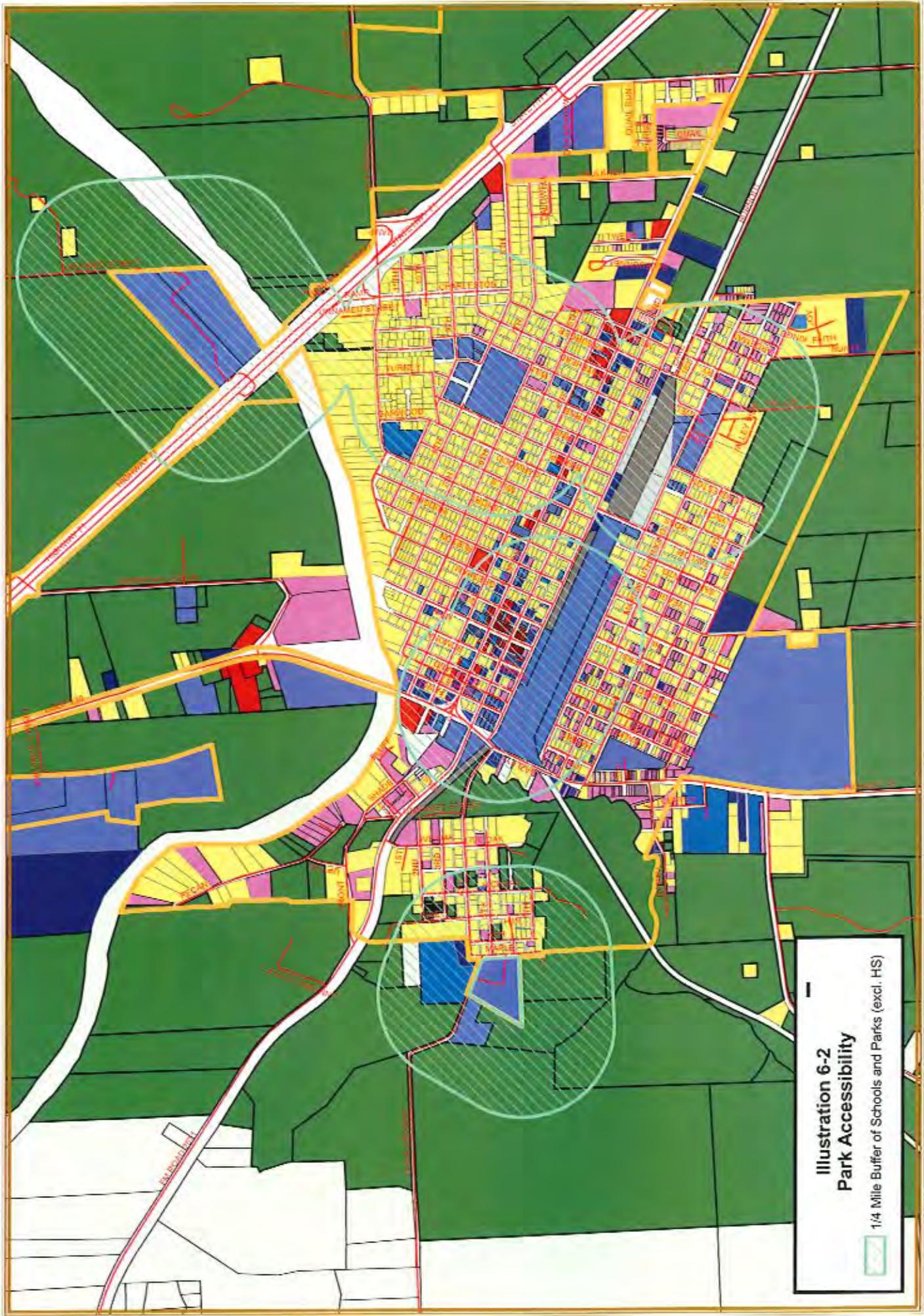
The future land use plan identifies sites that should be considered for new parks. One area is on the western edge of town just south of the 'Hill'. A sports complex was recommended in the southeast near the railroad tracks and proposed industrial area. This is a suitable location because of the traffic, noise, and lights generated by a sports complex. Other facilities include proposed golf courses near the high school and in the northeast of town across Hwy 71. This diversity of locations, along with existing parks will ensure there are parks across the town.

The next step will be to locate potential 'pocket park' locations. These should be focused on areas in proximity to where people live. As discussed, these should not be large parks, simply a small area that can be a center for the surrounding neighborhood. Illustration 6.2 has a $\frac{1}{4}$ radius circle around existing parks in town (including the elementary school). It shows two areas with limited access, on the far south end of town, and the north central area of town. These areas should be the focus for identifying where a pocket park could be developed that would serve these neighborhoods.



Establish Park Requirements in the Subdivision Ordinance

This recommendation is mentioned in the land use plan but deserves more discussion. A park set aside would move the burden of providing new parks to developers who are building new subdivisions in Smithville. The benefit is that new parks would be developed as needed to serve new development and would be paid for by the developers rather than the city having to pay for them. The drawback is that the costs



**Illustration 6-2
Park Accessibility**

1/4 Mile Buffer of Schools and Parks (excl. HS)

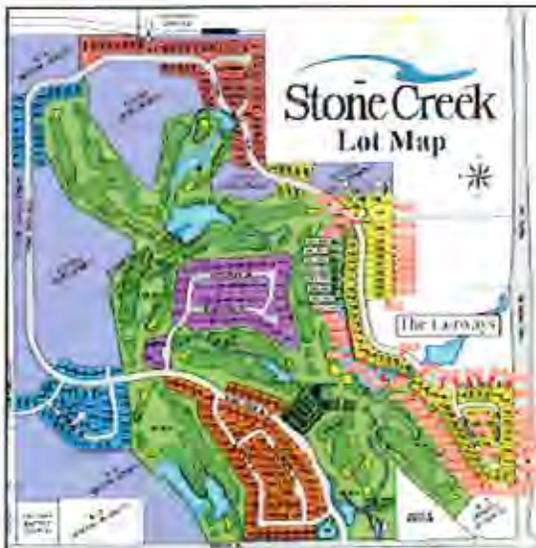


would be passed along to the homebuyers, thus adding to the cost of new homes. Typically though, this is not a huge cost for the developer, depending on the standards imposed for the set aside. As mentioned, the City of Bertram has a 5 percent set aside or \$250 per home. This does not create an undue burden because the total area required to be set aside is minimal. The city should work with property owners and citizens to determine if this requirement should be added to the subdivision ordinance. People may be more agreeable if it is limited to larger projects, for example, subdivisions with 20 or more homes or projects over 50 acres. This would minimize the burden on small property owners or developers that may be challenged to design a profitable project that includes a park set aside.

Consider Developing Golf Courses

There are quite a few golf courses in Bastrop County; however, there is not one in Smithville that can serve the eastern area of the county. Golf continues to grow in popularity and a high quality golf course will attract visitors to Smithville. A golf course can also serve as the anchor for an upscale development that could have high end homes and upscale condominiums to serve executives and retirees looking for a quality community to call home.

The future land use plan identifies an area that is suitable for an 18 hole golf course development on the north east side of town. This site has significant river frontage and is adjacent to the existing Riverbend Park. This is a good location for a large development of this nature and could become a unique destination for Smithville. This type of project is something that would likely be undertaken by a private developer, although there is an opportunity for the city to partner. An option may be for the city to help develop the golf course in return for it being a public access course and the developer would still be able to design it and build homes around it.



If a golf course is developed, there is an opportunity to partner with other courses to market Bastrop County as a true golf destination. Golf enthusiasts could spend a long weekend at the Hyatt Lost Pines resort and enjoy golf on several courses throughout the county. It would be worth exploring the potential for a Bastrop County Golf Pass that could be purchased to provide rounds of golf at multiple courses. This would encourage long term stays and money to be spent in the community.

An option that would serve a need in Smithville is for the city to develop a public 9 hole golf course. A site just south of the school has been identified for this that would allow the high school golf team easy access to the course for practice. Currently, they have to go out of town to practice. This course would also serve local residents who may be unwilling to spend the money to play at one of the major courses, but would appreciate a short, inexpensive round of golf. A golf course like this would increase the variety of recreational amenities in Smithville and would enhance the overall quality of

life for all residents. As mentioned, the park system should be designed to accommodate a range of needs, and a 9 hole golf course could be developed fairly quickly, and at a not unreasonable cost.

EXPLORE THE POTENTIAL FOR A COMMUNITY POOL

The citizens of Smithville want a community swimming pool. This was made very clear through the public input process, both as comments on the mail survey and at the Town Hall meeting. A swimming pool can be a great asset but it is also expensive to build and more importantly to staff and maintain. Careful consideration should be given before moving forward with this project to ensure the city has a good funding mechanism to pay for the project over time.



Establish Funding Mechanism and Plan for Developing and Maintaining a Pool

The expense of building a pool is usually not the biggest challenge because of the opportunity for grants and sponsorships to help defray the costs. It is the on-going expenses of maintenance and staffing that are the problem. There are few grants that pay for these expenses, most are for capital improvements only. Before moving ahead, the city should establish a long-term funding mechanism to

help defray these costs. This can include annual memberships and day use fees, similar to what is charged at the recreation center. These would not likely cover all the costs, but would help offset some.

The City of Burnet has a successful model with the Recreation Center they have developed. A non-profit partnered with the city to develop the facility which is owned and staffed by the city. The non-profit continues to provide financial assistance to cover the costs associated with the center. This is a model that could work for Smithville in developing a pool. A non-profit could raise funds that it donates to the city which would be responsible for staffing, etc. The City of Brenham has an elaborate swim center that is sponsored by Blue Bell Ice Cream. This provides more than just a basic swimming pool, it has many amenities that make it attractive for all ages and swim abilities.

The city should also explore a partnership with the school district to help spread the cost of a pool. The school district may be a willing partner in developing a facility and could provide land and other assistance. This would also generate more use for the pool. In addition to the school district, the city should work with the senior living facility to get them involved. The pool could be designed to be used for therapy and water aerobics that would benefit seniors.

The site for the pool should be one that is accessible to the maximum number of residents. The area by the high school has been discussed in conjunction with the 9 hole golf course. This is easily accessible by car, but would have limited access for pedestrians or bicyclists. Many would



have to cross the railroad track to get to the pool. The benefit to this location would be easy access to the school for students to use for sports and other activities.

The idea is to be creative so the entire cost of the pool does not rest with city government. There are many avenues that can be pursued to help fund a pool and given the importance to the community, this should be a priority.

PROTECT AND ENHANCE COMMUNITY APPEARANCE

While most of this plan has focused on recreational amenities (and projects that can involve substantial financial investment) this goal will allow for action at a minimal cost. It focuses on recommendations that will protect and improve the community, making it more attractive and safe for current and potential residents. A clean, attractive community has a huge impact on the success of economic development activities and in the overall quality of life.

Strictly Enforce All Ordinances to Protect Community Appearance

The city has the authority to maintain the health and safety of the community through code enforcement. The city already is doing this and should continue to strictly enforce its ordinances. The future land use plan that identifies deteriorating and dilapidated housing can serve as a starting point to prioritize areas for enforcement. The survey did not identify commercial buildings that are deteriorating; however, the code enforcement officer is likely familiar with these properties already.

An enforcement campaign can begin with education to inform property owners of the negative impact their property has on their neighbors. This can include letters and photographs of the offending property sent to the owners. Some communities are more aggressive and put large signs up on property that is not up to code with the owners name on it and a pronouncement that the property is not in compliance. This public shaming often has more impact than just sending letters and notices. Smithville is doing a good job in this area and should build on its success to ameliorate those remaining properties that are not in compliance.

Maintain All Public Property

If the city expects private citizens to maintain their property, it should set an example by properly maintaining all public lands, rights of way, and other facilities. This is another area where the city is already doing good work, so it should continue to ensure adequate budget to maintain property. Also, as other facilities recommended in this plan are developed the maintenance budget will have to expand accordingly to ensure new facilities are well kept, safe, and attractive.

Reinvigorate the 'Yard of the Month' and 'Business of the Month' Programs

Most people appreciate public recognition for their good deeds. These types of programs recognize those property owners who set an example for maintaining and enhancing their properties. This program can be run through the Chamber of Commerce as part of their outreach. Recognition could include signs that can be placed in the yard, write ups in the newspaper, and possibly gift certificates or other prizes. The main reward is the recognition more than an actual prize. This type of program would

not have to be very expensive or time-consuming to manage and would provide an immediate, visible success from this planning process.

Establish Design Guidelines

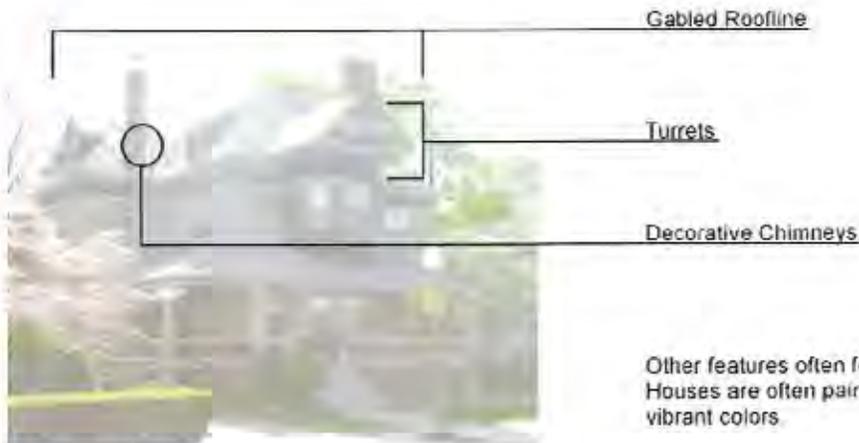
New development should blend with the existing character and appearance of the community. The appearance of buildings and their relation to one another is critical in creating an attractive community that will encourage people to visit and even move there. Design guidelines are a tool that can be used to ensure new development is appropriate and attractive. These guidelines can be as simple as requiring mason or other facades for the frontage of metal buildings, or go so far as to dictate the color a building can be painted. In the case of Smithville, it is recommended to take a moderate approach. The downtown area will be covered by a historic preservation ordinance, so these guidelines should focus on those areas not included in the historic district. This includes the area along Hwy 71 and Loop 230.

Conventional Strip Mall Design



Any design guidelines should be developed through a public process that involves property and business owners and other citizens. A review of other communities' guidelines should be conducted as well to identify best practices. The guidelines should be clear and reasonable so as not to inhibit development. Design guidelines should focus on commercial development at this time, because that will likely be more supported by residents than imposing guidelines on residential development. There is also the opportunity to encourage good design through incentives, such as allowing for an expedited review process or infrastructure assistance if projects implement good design. The goal is to protect the unique character and heritage of Smithville so it does not become 'Anywhere, USA' as can occur when development standards are not used.

Many communities are using graphic design books rather than text for their design guidelines. These are easier for developers to use and provide much better direction than a thick book of rules and regulations. This image is an example of how a design book would provide direction to a developer. The idea is not to regulate every detail, but rather to provide a range of opportunity for a developer to create a unique project with its own identity that still fits into the overall image of Smithville.



CONCLUSION

The list of projects identified in this plan may seem daunting at first glance. This should not be a deterrent to action; the implementation guide provides a timeline for developing these projects that takes into account financial realities and citizen priorities. Additional recreational opportunities will encourage a healthier, more active community. Citizens will be involved in their neighborhoods and interact with one another at the park, or walking through the community. The appearance of Smithville will be maintained and enhanced as owners fix up their homes and businesses. New businesses will be developed that are in character with the rest of Smithville and are well designed. The unique character of Smithville will be protected as the community grows. By following through, the city will enhance the already high quality of life in Smithville and make it a truly vital, sustainable community that residents will be proud to call home.

INTRODUCTION

Cities across the country are developing pedestrian friendly, mixed use 'downtowns' in an effort to recreate an asset that Smithville is fortunate enough to already have. These faux downtowns are designed with the best assets of historic downtowns, including quality design, apartments above retail uses, and a focus on people rather than cars. Smithville has not yet experienced the tremendous retail growth on Hwy 71 so downtown has been able to maintain its position as the center of the community. This plan identifies strategies that can be pursued to strengthen downtown Smithville. The goal is to make it a true destination that serves residents and visitors alike and will attract people from across the region to spend time and money in Smithville.



In order to accomplish these goals it will be important for a strong partnership to be developed that brings the assets of the city, Chamber of Commerce, downtown business owners and others together. There is too much for one organization to undertake alone and without working together, this plan will not be implemented. The plan lays out projects that will protect the historic character of downtown Smithville and strengthen the business climate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Many of the goals identified for downtown revitalization tie into goals for economic development and community development. They are part of a larger effort to protect and enhance the overall economic vitality and quality of life in Smithville. As such, these activities should not be considered as individual projects but rather as part of the larger community effort and implementation should be done accordingly. This would mean that instead of simply improving the sidewalks downtown, the effort should include improvements that will allow people to walk to downtown. Simply focusing on one area rather than a holistic approach will not achieve the overall objectives of the comprehensive plan.

ENCOURAGE RETAIL DEVELOPMENT ON MAIN STREET

To be a true destination, there must be a broad mix of retail establishments on Main Street. A successful downtown will have businesses that can attract visitors while still appealing to residents. Downtown Smithville is still the retail center for the community, with businesses that cater to residents and visitors; however, there are several vacant buildings and opportunities for additional retail to increase the success and vitality of downtown.

Utilize Demographic Analysis to Market to Prospective Business Owners

The first step in attracting new business is to determine what businesses are appropriate. The demographic analysis identifies many characteristics of residents that can be the starting point to target retailers for recruitment. This information can also be provided to entrepreneurs who may be interested in starting a local business. They can utilize this information in their business planning to determine their market niche. The Chamber of Commerce can take the lead in hosting seminars for prospective business owners to provide them with the demographic information and other assistance that can help them get a business off the ground. In addition, the demographic data can be provided to franchises and chains to encourage them to locate in Smithville. The city is currently making some efforts in this direction to encourage some desired retail development. This type of activity should be continued and expanded.

A retail leakage analysis would also be beneficial to identify how much money Smithville residents spend outside of the community. This information can be used in conjunction with the demographics to help build a business case for a new business. If it can be shown that there is a significant market for a desired service or product, it is more likely that a business will become established to serve that need.

Encourage Shop at Home to Support Existing Retailers

Many Smithville residents are likely not aware of all the services and products that are available in their local stores. The Chamber of Commerce already does promotion and marketing and this should be continued and expanded to encourage residents to spend their money locally. Small local businesses often do not have a marketing budget and struggle to get the word out. By pooling resources, the Chamber can help maximize the limited resources available to get the word out. This can include regular inserts into the local paper, Chamber mixers, and other activities already under way.

Another important Shop at Home tool is to educate residents on the impact local spending has on the overall economy. Dollars spent at local businesses stay in the community and are reinvested locally rather than being lost. This money pays salaries for local residents and is spent at other local businesses. Sales tax is another major consideration. Every dollar spent outside of Smithville means the city does not collect sales tax on that dollar. This can be a significant source of revenue for city government and increasing local sales tax will provide more resources for local projects. The Chamber and city can both take an active role in educating citizens on this to encourage them to patronize local businesses.

New businesses will be more likely to open in Smithville when they see that existing businesses have strong community support. A Shop at Home program will make existing businesses more successful, increase local revenues, and make Smithville more attractive to prospective businesses. This is a beneficial cycle that will increase the overall economic vitality of the community and enhance the quality of life for existing and future residents.

Consider Incentives to Targeted Businesses

New businesses face many challenges, not the least of which is finding the money to get started. Other challenges include business planning, marketing, and overall management. This offers an opportunity for the city and Chamber to offer assistance to these businesses to help them get started.

One option may include financial assistance, such as helping pay the rent for a new business. There could also be a low interest loan program set up with local banks to provide reduced cost loans to prospective businesses. This would reduce the financial constraints on a new business and allow them time to become successful. The money for this could come from a special fund set up by the city, or a coordinated effort by local banks to establish the loan pool and then each would have the opportunity to administer those loans on a revolving basis. The La Grange Economic Development Corporation offers a 20 percent match up to \$1,000 dollars for façade improvements. Even an investment of \$10,000 from the city could result in significant improvements to downtown if business owners are encouraged to invest in their properties.

Beyond just financing the Chamber of Commerce can offer in-kind assistance, such as by arranging seminars to help business owners. These may include topics such as Personnel Management, Marketing, Hospitality, and Merchandising. There are a number of speakers and experts that can be utilized to help with this effort. One resource that should be considered is the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE). This is a group of successful business leaders who provide counseling and advisory services to entrepreneurs. The Small Business Administration is another resource. The Chamber should work with neighboring communities, state and regional agencies, and others to develop a series of business training opportunities that will help local entrepreneurs build a successful business.

ESTABLISH DESIGN GUIDELINES

This effort has been discussed in the community development plan. If the city adopts a Historic Preservation Ordinance, it will likely contain design guidelines for the downtown area. As discussed these can be as stringent or lenient as is appropriate based on local input and concerns. Any design guidelines should serve to protect the integrity and



appearance of downtown and ensure compatible design. This does not mean that any new development has to mimic existing architecture, rather it should have common elements and structure so as to complement existing buildings. The First National Bank building is an excellent example of compatible design because it has similar features to the historic buildings without duplication.

The same process identified in the community development plan should be followed to ensure community support for any guidelines that may be established. To help encourage business owners to utilize the

standards, incentives should be considered. These may include grants or low interest loans to help offset the costs associated with following the guidelines. Non-financial incentives can include an expedited review process so permits are approved and work can be done faster. The idea is to promote compatible design so new development blends with the existing fabric of downtown Smithville.

IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES DOWNTOWN

A successful downtown is geared for pedestrians rather than automobiles. This means there are amenities and features that encourage people to spend time walking between stores rather than just parking right in front of their destination and leaving immediately after their purchase. Lighting, benches and landscaping are all factors; however, the biggest inducement to people walking is a lively and vital downtown. People do not like to walk past empty, boarded up shops, and especially do not want to walk past parking lots. Smithville is fortunate to not have many vacant lots or parking lots along Main Street, which means the attention can be focused on smaller projects to enhance walkability.

Ensure Sidewalks are Safe and Connect to the Rest of the Community

The community service plan identifies opportunities for improving the overall pedestrian connectivity in Smithville. Improving sidewalks downtown should be part of this overall effort to encourage people to walk downtown and stay once there. The first step is to inventory the sidewalks to determine where there may be unsafe conditions, such as large cracks or uneven tiles, or where sidewalks do not exist. Any safety hazards should be addressed immediately. With a completed inventory any needed enhancements can be budgeted for, focusing on the areas of greatest need. This includes establishing a clear connection to the park at the north end of Main Street.

Ideally, safe, wide sidewalks will run from one end of Main Street to the other. This will allow visitors to park at one end of town and walk throughout downtown safely and conveniently. This will encourage them to spend more time and therefore more money in Smithville. It will also allow residents access to downtown because of the pedestrian connections established. People will be able to walk or ride their bikes from their homes to downtown businesses.

Identify Lighting Needs to Cover All of Downtown

Lighting can be a controversial issue because many residents do not want their community lit up like a football field. This issue can be addressed by installing appropriate lighting and designing it to reduce light pollution. The city has appropriate lighting throughout downtown already. Additional lighting is also installed on some of the buildings to light them. This should be encouraged to produce ambient light that will make downtown more attractive and enhance a 'safe' feeling for pedestrians.



Lighting will become more important as downtown becomes more of an evening destination. Ideally there will be visitors and residents patronizing businesses into the evening. As new businesses begin to move in, and downtown becomes more of a destination, this will begin to happen. Currently, most businesses close fairly early, so

there is little reason for anyone to be downtown at night. A truly vibrant, exciting downtown will have traffic and visitors at all hours, thus increasing the need for lighting.

Identify Potential for 'Pocket Parks' in Downtown

While people are attracted to downtown because of its mix of businesses, architecture, etc. there is still a need to provide a greenspace to break up the hardscape on the street. This small park can provide a break for pedestrians and a destination for people to come downtown. There are parks at each end of Main Street, which is a tremendous asset in attracting people. There are vacant lots along Main Street that may provide the opportunity for a 'pocket park'.

A small park should include seating, tables, and landscaping to make it an attractive destination. This could be an area for visitors to enjoy lunch from a local restaurant, or families to spend an hour playing. It could also provide an area for entertainment, such as a band, that would attract visitors. Movies in the park are another option that would bring people downtown in the evenings. A small park in the middle of Main Street will become a unique asset to the overall development of downtown.

Provide Additional Restrooms Downtown

Currently, the only public restrooms downtown are in Railroad Park and City Hall (when it is open). In order to make downtown a true destination where people are encouraged to spend time, new restrooms should be provided. These should be located near the busiest area of downtown so they are easily accessible and visible. The city and Chamber can partner to identify an appropriate location and identify funding to help pay for the maintenance and cleaning of them once installed. The funding section will have more detail on how to pay for needed downtown improvements.

HOLD MORE EVENTS DOWNTOWN

To be successful, downtown revitalization must create a variety of reasons for people to want to come to the Square. Events and activities will attract people that would otherwise not come downtown. This will introduce them to the businesses on Main Street so they will know what is available. The idea is to give people a reason to come downtown so that the businesses will benefit from the increased traffic.

Conduct Regular Events Downtown

Many communities use live music as a draw with local bands giving free concerts to bring visitors into downtown. If these are held in the evening, businesses would be encouraged to stay open later to serve those additional visitors. The concerts could also



be coordinated with the Hyatt Lost Pines Resort so they could shuttle guests from the resort in to Smithville for the concert. In addition, sidewalk sales with all businesses participating would be a draw. These could be held in the evenings with the businesses providing drinks and snacks to patrons. Again, the idea is to introduce new people to downtown and attract more attention to the businesses available. Farmers Markets are

also growing in popularity and would serve the dual purpose of bringing people downtown and providing income and exposure for area farmers.

Larger events can also attract visitors to downtown. The recent Guinness World Record attempt for the largest gingerbread man is an example of a large event that brings people from all over Central Texas to downtown Smithville. These events can be somewhat problematic for business owners because there can be parking and other conflicts that keep people from their business during these events. This can be overcome by working with business owners to ensure their concerns are addressed and reminding them that the more people exposed to downtown will lead to more patronage in their stores.



The goal of all of these efforts is to generate a positive image of downtown Smithville and get people thinking of it as a destination for entertainment. No event will be successful without a marketing campaign to make people aware of what is happening. Business owners should cooperate to develop a publicity campaign to promote their businesses and downtown in general. These can be regular mailings, newspaper inserts, and radio commercials to spread the word. Also, the businesses can work with the Chamber of Commerce to ensure that the Chamber website is informative, accurate, and updated regularly. This website is vital to downtown marketing because it is available to such a wide audience. Banners are another tool to promote Main Street, they can be used to promote businesses and events. The city should also work with businesses to develop signage along the thoroughfares that identify what is downtown and make it easy for people to get there.

REDEVELOP RAMONA STREET

A long term goal for Smithville should be the redevelopment of the Marhil property on Ramona Street into a complement to Main Street (Illustration 7-1). Having a secondary hub will increase the attractiveness of downtown by providing a wider variety of shopping and service opportunities. The property is currently owned by the City in trust for the other taxing entities. The lease can be terminated if the tenant does not meet the performance expectations in the lease agreement. In the long term, this agreement should be reviewed and if there is an opportunity to terminate, it should be considered to open the property for redevelopment. Redevelopment would be a long term process because it requires the termination of the lease, building demolition, and site preparation before any type of redevelopment can occur. The Chamber of Commerce and / or city could partner with the property owner to market the property for redevelopment. The city could provide some incentive by offering to help with demolition costs and appropriate infrastructure to make the property suitable for development.

Remove Buildings and Open the Street

If the city pursues this objective, the first step would be to remove the existing buildings and facilities on site. This could be accomplished by the city, or in partnership with the



Illustration 7-1
Romona Street Property

property owner. There may be an opportunity for the city to acquire the property through tax foreclosure or other means. Having ownership would give the city control over what is built and ensure that it provides the greatest benefit to Smithville. This would remove an eyesore and an anchor on development and make the entire area more attractive. A blighted property affects the entire area around it, not just the individual property so it is important to ameliorate these when possible.

Removing the buildings would make it possible to reconnect Ramona Street through to First Street. The area is also large enough to create a mixed use project that could incorporate high density housing and retail. This would serve the need for lower cost housing and additional retail. Having full time residents in downtown would help other businesses and provide 24 hour activity that would invigorate the area. Downtown residences are a booming trend in cities of all sizes and the Ramona project could provide this opportunity in Smithville.

Encourage Redevelopment of the Property

Once the property has been made ready for redevelopment, the city and Chamber can actively market the property. This may involve contacting potential developers and providing them the demographic and marketing information about Smithville and the property specifically. It may also involve an agreement to provide incentives for redevelopment. This may include infrastructure assistance or other incentives as appropriate. If successful, this could provide a tremendous asset to Smithville as a whole by creating a vibrant, mixed use anchor for downtown.



The location of this property with its proximity to Railroad Park, Main Street, City Hall, and other community amenities make it suitable for greater density and mixed use development that incorporates retail and service with residential. Two and three story buildings with retail on the ground floor and residences above would be appropriate and blend with the character of buildings on Main Street. This type of development would provide additional housing opportunities for various incomes and increase the number of people in the downtown area throughout the day and night, thereby increasing its attractiveness for retail and enhancing the safety of the area.

IDENTIFY FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES TO PAY FOR IMPROVEMENTS

The projects identified in this plan are not inexpensive. They will require a significant investment from the community to be successful. In order to make the plan a reality, the city should look at all opportunities for funding to help accomplish the list of goals.

Identify Grants That May Be Suitable

There are grants available for many of the projects identified in this town. Money for sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities can often be found through Texas Department of Transportation, federal and Texas Parks and Wildlife grants. Texas Department of Agriculture has funding that can be used for festivals, farmers markets, etc. There are also grants from the state and federal governments and private foundations that can be used for historic renovations and related projects. The city should consider hiring a grant writer to pursue this type of funding to help with prioritized projects. A grant writer typically is paid through an administrative fee on any grants received so it would not be an upfront cost for the city.

Explore Local Fundraising

Local businesses and residents typically bear the brunt of fundraising for everything from soccer to Scouts, so it can be a challenge to fundraise locally. However, there may be opportunities for this if it is part of a large, community effort that will benefit the entire community. There are many successful programs that are used to help raise money. Local businesses and families can sponsor a lamppost or a bench and receive recognition with a plaque on the bench. 'Buy a Brick' programs are very popular and recognize contributors with a brick that has their name. The city should explore all of these options to help fund needed downtown improvements. Because this is a priority of the citizens, they should support these efforts.

Explore Potential for Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone or Public Improvement District

Funding options that the city may consider to revitalize downtown are to create a Public Improvement District or a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone. These are tools that will generate funds solely for downtown improvements and can be used to fund building improvements, pedestrian enhancements, burying utilities, rent assistance, public restrooms, and other projects.

A Public Improvement District (PID) is an additional property tax that is imposed on properties in the district. This additional tax is used for downtown improvements. To establish a PID, over 50% of the property owners in the proposed district would have to support to effort. Austin has a PID for the 6th Street area that exempts properties valued under \$500,000. This allows those owners with smaller properties to avoid paying higher taxes. An exemption may be appropriate in Smithville, and could be set based on local needs. This may mean the exemption is set at \$100,000 so any property valued at less than that is exempt from the additional tax.

A Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) is similar to a PID, except that it does not require an additional property tax. Rather, it uses any additional tax revenues generated by higher values on property in the TIRZ created by public improvements to the area. For example, if the city created a TIRZ, they could issue bonds to build new sidewalks and bury the utilities. Based on these improvements, properties in the TIRZ would increase in appraised value. The taxes generated on that increased value would be used to pay off the bonds.

While these programs are a reliable source of funding for downtown improvements, they are often contested by property owners unwilling to increase their taxes, and others in the city who resent tax dollars spent solely to benefit downtown properties. As with many of the recommendations in the comprehensive plan, this would require outreach and education to the public so they realize the benefits of implementing these programs.

CONCLUSION

Smithville is fortunate to have a strong downtown with a mix of businesses that serve local and visitor needs. The recommendations in this plan will help build on that success to create an even more vibrant and thriving Main Street. The overall goal is to increase visitation downtown for residents and tourists alike. The mix of businesses will have to be flexible to accommodate the different needs of these targets; however, there are many examples of successful downtowns that can be a starting point. The Ramona Street project offers an opportunity to create a downtown anchor with residences and businesses. Events and activities will bring new people downtown and expose them to the charms of Main Street. Pedestrian improvements will tie into larger community improvements to increase the walkability of the entire city. This plan will help make Smithville a true destination for all of Central Texas attracting visitors from across the region. It will also increase the quality of life and economic vitality which will make Smithville a desirable place to live and work for all ages and interests.

INTRODUCTION

Historic preservation has many advantages, but most of all, it makes good sense. Protecting older buildings in the commercial district and historic neighborhoods is a smart investment of time and money because these buildings and homes are aesthetically appealing, they are useful, and they help us understand ourselves as individuals and as a nation.

Historic districts, both residential and commercial, are the most visible indicator of community pride. They can either be an asset or a liability in the effort to recruit new residents, new businesses, and tourists to your community – and keep the ones you already have. Through their architecture, these historic buildings and homes tell the story of your community's history. Historic preservation is a way to pass on this legacy to future generations.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Historic preservation can sometimes be a contentious issue in small communities. There is a sense of "big brother" trying to tell property owners what they can and can't do in maintaining and utilizing their historic properties. In reality, historic preservation can open many doors when it comes to participation in government-sponsored programs and in funding opportunities. The regulatory aspect of historic preservation is not intended to keep people from using historic buildings. On the contrary, the regulations are in place to ensure that future generations will get to use them as well. The recommendations that follow will allow Smithville residents to ensure that their past will remain a vital part of their future.

ESTABLISH HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE

A preservation ordinance protects historic properties by officially recognizing historic areas, buildings and sites as local historic districts and landmarks. Owners of these locally designated properties get approval from a locally appointed board for exterior changes, additions, new construction, relocation or demolition, so that changes complement the historic appearance of the building and its surroundings. Any restrictions put in place are comparable to the many zoning and housing subdivision regulations in place across the country. Big cities and small towns alike have found these laws to be an effective tool in protecting historic places from such undesirable fates as demolition for surface parking lots or deterioration through neglect.

Work with Owners in the Historic District to Determine Their Concerns and Issues

Form a task force or historic preservation steering committee by canvassing all the local stakeholders to determine who has interest in the future of Smithville's historic areas. Include merchants, business owners, property owners, and residents. Contact the mayor and other local government officials, the city planning department, city economic

development officials, and other organizations, such as the chamber of commerce or merchants association.

Once a task force has been formed, determine the best way possible to obtain information about concerns and issues. What works best for one community might not be the best fit for yours. Suggested forms of information gathering are a written survey that is sent in the mail, face-to-face interviews, community forums or meetings, or smaller focus group meetings with people representing similar interests (e.g., residents of historic homes, property owners, business owners in the commercial district, etc.). Bring everyone possible to the table now. The wider the group of people who are included, the easier it is to get the information you need for the preservation ordinance build support for it later.

Contact Texas Historical Commission for Input and Examples of Ordinances

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) has several programs that are specifically designed to help communities plan for historic preservation. Two of these programs will be especially helpful for Smithville as you move forward in this process – The Visionaries in Preservation and Certified Local Government programs are intended to provide you with the tools and resources to be successful in protecting your historic properties.

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Now that the concerns of local residents and business owners are known and you have received assistance from the Texas Historical Commission, you are ready to design the historic preservation ordinance. The task force could again be utilized by designing a draft ordinance to present to the Smithville City Council. The following steps are purely suggestions on items that could be included in the historic preservation ordinance:

1. Determine the area to be contained in the historic preservation ordinance. Will it apply to only certain properties or to entire historic districts?
2. Determine the types of skills or professions desired to be appointed members of the local Historic Preservation Commission.
3. Develop criteria for appropriate and allowable changes or additions to historic properties.

4. Determine the appropriate color palette that is indicative to the architectural style and historical period of the historic properties.
5. Approve or deny applications for Certificates of Appropriateness based on historic preservation standards and the goals and objective best suited to the Smithville community.

UTILIZE HISTORIC ASSETS IN ATTRACTING TOURISTS

The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines cultural heritage tourism as traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes cultural, historic and natural resources. The beauty of heritage tourism is that we don't necessarily have to travel far to find it. Texas has a wealth of history, heritage, and culture just waiting to be shared with the traveling public – and they want to learn about it.

According to a 2005 study called *Tourism Works for America* conducted by the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA), 471 million Americans included a heritage and cultural activity in their travel plans during 2005. Heritage and cultural travelers also:

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There are many valuable resources available on developing heritage tourism programs. Not the least of which are those offered by the National Trust. They have developed five guiding principles that, if followed, will help to make your heritage tourism program a success:

1. Collaborate – Successful cultural heritage tourism programs bring together partners who may not have worked together in the past.
2. Find the Fit – Balancing the needs of residents and visitors is important to ensure that cultural heritage tourism benefits everyone. It is important to understand the kind and amount of tourism that your community can handle.
3. Make Sites and Programs Come Alive – Competition for time is fierce. To attract visitors, you must be sure that the destination is worth the drive.
4. Focus on Quality and Authenticity – Quality is an essential ingredient for all cultural heritage tourism, and authenticity is critical whenever heritage or history is involved.
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Well-interpreted sites teach visitors their importance, and by extension, the importance of preserving other such sites elsewhere. Perhaps the biggest benefit of heritage

tourism is that it provides ways for a community to prosper economically while holding on to the characteristics that make it special.

When developing local heritage tourism sites and programs, remember that you don't have to reinvent the wheel. There are lots of good ideas out there just waiting to be repurposed to fit the situation in Smithville. Many good ideas and resources from other state governments, federal government departments, and organizations can be found at <http://culturalheritagetourism.org/CulturalHeritageToolkits.htm>. Other resources are housed on the THC's web site in the Heritage Trails program section at <http://www.thc.state.tx.us/heritagetourism/htprogram.html>.

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The actual promotion of the walking tour must occur on two levels – 1) marketing of Smithville as an historic destination, and 2) marketing of Smithville's historic products once visitors have arrived.

Travelers who aren't already in town probably won't come to Smithville solely because you have a walking tour. The tour must be a part of the larger historic theme that is presented to the traveling public. Your historic assets should be included and emphasized in Smithville promotional materials that are distributed, or if funds allow, develop a brochure on Smithville's historical assets that can be used as a complement to the more comprehensive Smithville brochure or visitor guide. Using history, heritage, or culture to help you tell Smithville's story gives visitors more of a reason to come than just a walking tour alone.

Good venues for brochure distribution are in the regional chambers of commerce, visitor centers in larger towns that can feed you visitors (e.g., Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau), the Texas Department of Transportation's Travel Information Centers at major highway entry points around the state, and in the many travel shows geared toward attracting consumers to your town.

Once you have succeeded in getting the visitor to town, you can then engage in a variety of activities that could help promote the walking tour. Be sure to place the walking tour brochure/map in places that visitors would be likely to frequent. Examples include the chamber of commerce, popular restaurants, other attractions, gas stations, and convenience stores.

With attractions or other tourist-oriented local businesses, consider an "adopt an attraction" program. Rather than front line staff having to be well-versed on everything to see and do in town, attractions and businesses can be "adopted" by another attraction or business. The process is that one attraction adopts another until every attraction or tourism-related business in town has an attraction that can refer visitors to it when

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Develop Additional Materials on Historic Assets

This goal can be achieved in three steps – 1) interpreting the historic asset(s), 2) determining the method of delivery, and 3) drawing upon Smithville's rich historical fabric. There may only be three steps, but a great deal of time and effort is contained within each one.

1) Interpretation

People want more than simply to see interesting architecture, hear about the building's original use, or learn who built in/lived in it. That information is useful and should be included, but don't stop there. Today's traveler wants more than that – they want to be entertained and engaged. Thus, your tour has to tell them a story and it has to do so in a way that relates to them.

This is called interpretation. Rather than translating one language to another, this type of interpretation is defined as materials and activities that answer basic questions and provide information about a historic site, theme, or artifact. To help out with this, ask yourself a series of questions about the site or artifact. Use the six Ws and three Cs to help guide the discussion.

WHAT happened here? **WHO** did **WHAT** to **WHOM**? **WHERE**, exactly, did all this happen? **WHEN** did it happen? **WHY** did it happen and **WHY** should I care? Finally, **WHAT** resulted from **WHAT** happened here? The three Cs cover much the same ground. What are the **CAUSES** of the event(s) that happened here? What **CONSEQUENCES** occurred because of these event(s)? And, finally, what was the larger **CONTEXT** for these events? All history may be local, but there is a larger setting for everything. These are the basic questions you should be able to answer for every visitor to your site. Of all these, the most important question is, "Why should I care?"

2) Delivery

Once you have determined what story to tell, the next step is to decide whether new tours or other products will be guided or self-guided. The information will be nearly the same, but its delivery will be structured very differently. Due to a finite amount of volunteers/staff, some guidelines for developing self-guided tours are presented.

Consider the following list of interpretive materials and guidelines, provided by the Texas Commission on the Arts, where staff and/or volunteers are not directly involved in communicating with visitors:

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3) Draw upon Smithville's historical fabric

Smithville has several themes that can be explored when developing new heritage tourism products. Dig deep into local archives, consult local historians, and peruse any local history books that may have been written about the history of Smithville as well as Bastrop County. Don't forget about tying the local history to the bigger picture.

Some thematic possibilities include the following ideas:

1. Smithville's association with the various railroad companies and lines that came through town, the depot building, and the railroad shops
2. History of the Buescher family and the State Park
3. Colorado River and how it has affected residents over the years (e.g., pre- and post- dams and Highland Lakes, etc.)
4. Gazley Creek and its importance to residents for fun and recreation
5. Local color – nothing is more interesting to people, than interesting people. Look at the popularity of the book *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* by John Berendt. The book is full of local Savannah color and lore.



Whatever is decided upon, keep in mind the interpretive guidelines. Just because something is historical, doesn't automatically make it interesting or appealing to visitors. Tell the story and make it relevant to the traveler of today.

CONCLUSION

Heritage tourism is a very viable tool to develop that can help attract visitors to town. As previously stated, heritage travelers tend to spend more money than other leisure travelers and stay longer per visit. These are good visitors to have in your town. By following the guidelines contained in this section, Smithville can make major strides in developing new products, improving existing ones, and telling your stories in an effective way so that you become an attractive destination for heritage tourists.

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3. Colorado River and how it has affected residents over the years (e.g., pre- and post- dams and Highland Lakes, etc.)
4. Gazley Creek and its importance to residents for fun and recreation
5. Local color – nothing is more interesting to people, than interesting people. Look at the popularity of the book *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* by John Berendt. The book is full of local Savannah color and lore.



Whatever is decided upon, keep in mind the interpretive guidelines. Just because something is historical, doesn't automatically make it interesting or appealing to visitors. Tell the story and make it relevant to the traveler of today.

CONCLUSION

Heritage tourism is a very viable tool to develop that can help attract visitors to town. As previously stated, heritage travelers tend to spend more money than other leisure travelers and stay longer per visit. These are good visitors to have in your town. By following the guidelines contained in this section, Smithville can make major strides in developing new products, improving existing ones, and telling your stories in an effective way so that you become an attractive destination for heritage tourists.

Goal: Ensure Adequate Infrastructure to Support Development
Objective: Identify and Prioritize Needed Road Improvements

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Conduct street inventory to determine condition of all city streets	3 Months	October – December 2007	City Staff
Hold Town Hall meeting to present results and hear citizen concerns	1 Month	January 2008	City Staff
Develop prioritized list of road improvements, starting with those areas that are safety issues	3 Months	January – March 2008	City Staff
Develop budget for needed improvements	1 Month	April 2008	City Staff
Implement road improvement plan	On-going	On-going	City Staff

Possible Partners?
 Bastrop County, Texas Department of Transportation

How will you measure success?
 Street improvement plan adopted and work begun by May 2008
 Roads are consistently maintained and improved

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?
 Dependent on identified improvements and amount of work to be done
 State and Federal grants may be available, partnership with County, potential bonds

Goal: Ensure Adequate Infrastructure to Support Development
Objective: Identify and Prioritize Needed Water and Wastewater Improvements

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Work with City Engineer and staff to identify areas in need of upgrades and improvements	3 Months	October – December 2008	City Staff, City Engineer
Utilize future land use plan to prepare for where growth is likely to occur	On-going	On-going	City Staff, City Engineer
Develop policy to 'oversize' new utility lines when feasible to support additional future growth	3 Months	October – December 2008	City Staff, City Engineer, City Council
Coordinate activities with street plan to minimize conflicts and reduce potential for a newly repaired street to be torn up for water or wastewater repairs	On-going	On-going	City Staff, City Engineer
Develop Capital Improvements Plan to coordinate repairs and upgrades and budget accordingly	3 Months	April – June 2008	City Staff, City Council

Possible Partners?

Developers

How will you measure success?

Capital Improvement Plan adopted by June 2008 for FY 2009 budget cycle

Utilities routinely oversized when installed to serve future growth

Upgrades and improvements coordinated with street repairs

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

\$10,000 - \$25,000 for Capital Improvement Plan

Dependent on amount of upgrades and improvements necessary

State and Federal grants

Bonds and / or Certificates of Obligation

Goal: Ensure Adequate Infrastructure to Support Development
Objective: Determine Planning Thresholds for Capacity Expansion and Water and Wastewater Facilities

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Utilize Demographic Analysis to estimate when population will reach threshold for expanding treatment capacity	1 Month	October 2007	City Staff, City Engineer
Include this in the Capital Improvements Plan to ensure it is budgeted for appropriately	3 Months	April – June 2008	City Staff, City Engineer

Possible Partners?

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Texas Water Development Board

How will you measure success?

Needed improvements included in Capital Improvement Plan and budgeted accordingly

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

\$10,000 - \$20,000 for engineering studies for facility expansion
 \$250,000 - \$1,000,000 for expansion depending on need

Goal: Ensure Adequate Infrastructure to Support Development

Objective: Monitor Carrizo Wilcox Aquifer to Ensure it Remains Viable as Water Source

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Work with groundwater district, Aqua Water, and others to monitor pumping and other activities related to the aquifer	On-going	On-going	City Staff, area water providers

Possible Partners?

Aqua Water, developers, other water providers

How will you measure success?

Carrizo Wilcox is maintained as viable water source

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time

Goal: Review and Update Subdivision and Zoning Ordinance
Objective: Review Ordinances from Other Communities to Identify Best Practices

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Contact area cities and look on the internet for similar communities and review their ordinances	3 Months	October – December 2007	Planning Commission, City Attorney
Identify what, if any, updates should be made to existing ordinances	3 Months	January – March 2008	Planning Commission, City Attorney
Conduct Town Hall meetings and workshops with property owners, developers, and citizens to get their feedback and input on potential changes	3 Months	April – June 2008	Planning Commission, City Attorney, City Council

- Possible Partners?
LCRA Community and Economic Development Department, other communities
- How will you measure success?
Recommendations for improvements presented to City Council in June 2008
- Estimated funding needed and possible sources?
City Attorney fees

Goal: Review and Update Subdivision and Zoning Ordinance

Objective: Update Ordinances to Support Land Use Goals

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Utilize recommendations from Planning Commission and update ordinance	3 Months	June -- August 2008	City Attorney, Planning Commission, City Council
Present draft ordinances to public in Town Hall meetings	3 Months	September -- November 2008	City Council, Planning Commission
Adopt new ordinances to reflect goals of Comprehensive Plan	1 Month	December 2008	City Council

Possible Partners?

LCRA Community and Economic Development Department

How will you measure success?

New Ordinances adopted by December 2008

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

City Attorney fees, Staff Time

Goal: Consider Incentives to Promote Quality Growth

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Review other communities' policies to determine best practices	6 Months	January -- June 2008	City Staff, Planning Commission
Determine potential budget for any incentives to be considered	3 Months	June -- August 2008	City Staff, Planning Commission, City Council
Determine what will be required from the developer to receive incentives (such as affordable housing or park set asides)	3 Months	June -- August 2008	City Staff, Planning Commission, City Council, developers
Determine if an incentive policy is appropriate for Smithville	3 Months	September -- November 2008	City Council
Develop incentive policy if it is found to be appropriate	3 Months	January -- March 2009	City Council

Possible Partners?

Developers, other communities, Bastrop County

How will you measure success?

Incentive plan considered by November 2008
If appropriate, then adopted by March 2009

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on incentives offered, many incentives may not require outlay of funds, but may be a reduction in fees, etc.

Goal: Establish Higher Education Opportunities in Bastrop County

Objective: Work with Opportunity Bastrop County to Pursue Efforts

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Identify representative to work with Opportunity Bastrop County Steering Committee	3 Months	September -- November 2008	Steering Committee
Provide information and assistance to the group as needed to market Bastrop County	On-going	On-going	Steering Committee

Possible Partners?
Opportunity Bastrop County

How will you measure success?
Relationship with Opportunity Bastrop County established
Smithville considered as location for higher education facility

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?
Minimal

Goal: Establish Higher Education Opportunities in Bastrop County

Objective: Contact ACC and Blinn College to Establish Relationship

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Utilize demographic analysis and partnership with Opportunity Bastrop County to sell Bastrop County	3 Months	January -- March 2008	Steering Committee
Establish on-going dialogue and partnership with the institutions	On-going	On-going	Steering Committee
Review any assistance that may be offered to recruit a satellite campus or distance learning center	6 Months	March -- September 2008	Steering Committee

Possible Partners?

Opportunity Bastrop County, Austin Community College, Blinn College

How will you measure success?

On-going relationship established with each institution

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal

Goal: Establish Higher Education Opportunities in Bastrop County

Objective: Strengthen Existing Relationship with ACC

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Work with ACC to identify new opportunities for distance learning at Smithville ISD	3 Months	January – March 2008	ISD
Identify any needed improvements or investments to expand offerings, such as equipment upgrades, etc.	3 Months	March – June 2008	ISD
Budget for improvements and make needed investments	1 Year	June 2008 – June 2009	ISD, School Board
Determine if classes could be expanded to non-ISD students (adults, students from other ISD's, etc.) or offer classes needed by local employers	3 Months	April – June 2009	ISD, local businesses
Market ACC classes to ensure strong participation	On-going	On-going	ISD

Possible Partners?

Austin Community College, local businesses

How will you measure success?

Relationship with ACC strengthened

20 percent increase in students participating in ACC classes
5 new classes offered

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

\$10,000 - \$25,000 for equipment and other upgrades

State and Federal grants, private foundation grants, technology grants from Dell, etc.

Goal: Establish Higher Education Opportunities in Bastrop County
Objective: Contact Technical Schools to Determine Feasibility of Locating a Campus

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Work with local businesses to determine their training needs and what, if any, assistance they may be willing to provide	3 Months	June ~ August 2008	Steering Committee
Determine what, if any, assistance the City may provide	3 Months	June ~ August 2008	Steering Committee, City Staff, City Council
Contact Technical Schools with gathered information and demographic data	1 Month	September 2008	Steering Committee
Establish on-going, long-term relationship with tech schools to continue dialogue	On-going	On-going	Steering Committee

Possible Partners?
 Smithville ISD, Opportunity Bastrop County, local businesses

How will you measure success?
 Data gathered by August 2008
 Technical schools contacted and relationship established by September 2008

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?
 Minimal to establish relationship

Goal: Establish Higher Education Opportunities in Bastrop County
Objective: Consider Distance Learning Center with MD Anderson and / or Smithville ISD

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Contact MD Anderson and School District to see what facilities may already exist	1 Month	January 2008	Steering Committee
Determine what partnership will look like	6 Months	January -- June 2008	Steering Committee, ISD, MD Anderson
Determine what facilities or equipment are needed (new building, equipment upgrades at existing facility, etc.)	3 Months	June -- August 2008	Steering Committee, ISD, MD Anderson
Determine what, if any, assistance businesses, City, etc. may provide to establish the facility	6 Months	September 2008 -- February 2009	Steering Committee, ISD, MD Anderson, City Council
Establish budget and fundraising plan to develop facility	3 Months	March -- June 2009	Steering Committee, ISD, MD Anderson, City Council
Fundraise for facility	1 Year	June 2009 -- June 2010	Steering Committee, ISD, MD Anderson, City Council
Build and maintain facility and publicize it	1 Year	June 2010 -- June 2011	Steering Committee, ISD, MD Anderson, City Council

Possible Partners?

Local employers, Austin Community College, Blinn College, Round Rock Higher Education Center

How will you measure success?

Feasibility of center determined by June 2008

Budget established by June 2009

Facility built by June 2011

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

\$50,000 - \$100,000 for upgrades to existing building or classroom if feasible

\$300,000 - \$750,000 for stand alone facility

State and Federal grants, private foundations, local fundraising, business sponsorships and partnerships

Goal: Work with ISD to Strengthen Vo-Tech and Workforce Training

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Survey business owners to determine their needs	6 Months	August 2008 – February 2009	Steering Committee, Smithville ISD
Support existing DECA program, internships, etc.	On-going	On-going	Local businesses, Smithville ISD
Provide information to students about careers in the trades	On-going	On-going	Local businesses, Smithville ISD
Establish job shadowing program	6 Months	January – June 2009	Smithville ISD, local businesses
Establish apprenticeship program with local trades	6 Months	January – June 2009	Smithville ISD, local businesses

Possible Partners?

Local Businesses, ACC, Trade Schools

How will you measure success?

Stronger relationship established between businesses and school district
 Students provided information on variety of job opportunities
 Internships and other training opportunities established for students

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on breadth of program, likely minimal because so much is already offered by the ISD
 Local business support for interns and job shadowing

Goal: Support Existing Businesses
Objective: Conduct a Business Retention Expansion Program

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Identify appropriate facilitator for Business Retention Expansion Program (Chamber of Commerce, City, etc.)	3 Months	January -- March 2008	Chamber of Commerce, City Staff
Develop business survey (should be in coordination with training survey identified above) and interviews with local business owners	3 Months	June -- August 2008	Chamber of Commerce, City Staff
Determine what, if any, assistance can be provided	2 Months	August -- September 2008	Chamber of Commerce, City Staff
Develop plan to address issues identified in the BREP survey	2 Months	September -- October 2008	Chamber of Commerce, City Staff

Possible Partners?

LCRA Community and Economic Development Department, local businesses

How will you measure success?

BREP conducted by August 2008
 Plan developed to implement BREP recommendations by October 2008

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal to deliver BREP program (if LCRA is used)
 Costs to implement plan dependent on needs identified in the plan

Goal: Support Existing Businesses
Objective: 'Shop at Home' Program

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Develop Shop Local Rewards that will give prizes for shopping locally	3 Months	September – November 2008	Chamber of Commerce, local businesses
Establish 'Chamber Bucks' program that can be redeemed locally	6 Months	January – June 2009	Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, local banks
Conduct regular advertising and events to highlight local shopping opportunities	On-going	On-going	Chamber of Commerce, local businesses

Possible Partners?
 Other area Chambers of Commerce to participate, local businesses, local financial institutions

How will you measure success?
 5 percent increase in sales tax revenues
 Local businesses report increased local traffic and increased revenue

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?
 Minimal to establish programs
 \$200 - \$500 / month for advertising

Goal: Support Existing Businesses

Objective: Continue On-going Interaction with Business Owners

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Continue regular Chamber events, such as ribbon cuttings, mixers, etc.	On-going	On-going	Chamber of Commerce
Establish regular opportunity to meet with City staff in informal setting such as a breakfast or coffee on quarterly basis	On-going	On-going	Chamber of Commerce, City Staff
Conduct regular business interviews and surveys to ensure business owners have open communication	On-going	On-going	Chamber of Commerce

Possible Partners?
Business owners, City Staff

How will you measure success?
Business owners feel local support and share concerns and issues

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?
Minimal to establish communication

Goal: Explore the Potential for an Industrial Park

Objective: Consider Potential for a Business Incubator

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Contact the National Business Incubation Association	1 Month	January 2009	Chamber of Commerce, City Staff
Gather information on requirements for a successful incubator, including contacting cities with them	6 Months	January -- June 2009	Chamber of Commerce, City Staff
Determine feasibility of establishing local incubator	3 Months	June -- August 2009	Chamber of Commerce, City Staff
If feasible, develop budget and requirements for incubator	4 Months	August -- December 2009	Chamber of Commerce, City Staff
Work with local businesses and higher education partners to develop incubator program	6 Months	January -- June 2010	Chamber of Commerce, City Staff
Fundraise for incubator development	1 Year	June 2010 -- June 2011	Chamber of Commerce, City Staff
Build and operate incubator	1 Year	June 2011 -- June 2012	Chamber of Commerce, City Staff

Possible Partners?

Local businesses, Smithville ISD, ACC, Blinn College, other area universities

How will you measure success?

Feasibility of incubator determined by August 2009

Budget and plan developed by December 2009

Incubator established by June 2012

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

\$250,000 - \$2,000,000 depending on size and programs offered at incubator

Goal: Explore the Potential for an Industrial Park
Objective: Explore Feasibility of Industrial Park and Develop if Appropriate

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Identify Potential Funding for an Industrial Park	6 Months	June -- December 2008	City Staff, Industrial Development Foundation
Review use of Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone funding, issuance of bonds, etc.	6 Months	June -- December 2008	City Staff, Industrial Development Foundation
Identify Location for a Park using Future Land Use Plan	1 Month	January 2009	City Staff, Industrial Development Foundation, Property Owners
Develop Budget and Plan to Develop Industrial Park	3 Months	January -- March 2009	City Staff, Industrial Development Foundation
Build and Maintain Industrial Park	1 Year	March 2009 -- March 2010	City Staff, Industrial Development Foundation
Market Industrial Park to Potential Business Prospects	On-going	On-going	Chamber of Commerce, City Staff

Possible Partners?

Bastrop County, property owners, existing business owners

How will you measure success?

Feasibility of Industrial Park determined

If feasible, park is developed by March 2010

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Dependent on size and amenities

\$500,000 - \$1,500,000 to acquire land and run utilities to property

TIRZ finance district, bond issuance, passage of 4A Sales Tax (would require existing sales tax to be reconfigured to allow for money to go to 4A)

Goal: Establish an Incentive Policy for Recruitment and Expansion

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Work with County and School District to Establish Standards that will Benefit Community to Qualify for Incentives	6 Months	January -- June 2008	City Staff, Chamber of Commerce
Study best practices of other communities' incentive policies	3 Months	June -- August 2008	City Staff, Chamber of Commerce
Establish 'two-tiered' system that rewards existing businesses for expansion	3 Months	September -- November 2008	City Staff, Chamber of Commerce
Update Community Website to provide complete, accurate, and current information on Smithville	3 Months	September -- November 2007	

Possible Partners?
Existing businesses, LCRA Community and Economic Development Department

How will you measure success?
Incentive Policy established by November 2008
Website updated by November 2007

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?
Minimal to Establish Incentive Policy
\$2,000 - \$10,000 to upgrade and improve website

Goal: Increase Tourism

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Continue to hold regular events such as duathlon, Thunder on the Colorado, etc.	On-going	On-going	Chamber of Commerce
Market Smithville at trade shows and other events	On-going	On-going	Chamber of Commerce
Work with Hyatt to bring visitors to Smithville	On-going	On-going	Chamber of Commerce
Market river access and amenities when developed	On-going	On-going	Chamber of Commerce
Establish weekend availability of tourism information through kiosk, signage, volunteers at Chamber office	6 Months	September 2007 - February 2008	Chamber of Commerce
Consider establishing tourism information radio or partner with Bastrop	3 Months	September - November 2007	Chamber of Commerce

Possible Partners?

Regional Trail groups, LCRA Community and Economic Development, area Chambers of Commerce, local businesses

How will you measure success?

10 percent increase in tourism spending over 3 years

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

\$1,000 - \$5,000 for information kiosk available on weekends

\$1,000 - \$5,000 annually for radio

Goal: Develop Airport Plan to Integrate this Asset into Economic Development

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Determine what uses are allowed in proximity to airport	3 Months	January – March 2008	City Staff
Work with property owners to determine availability of land	On-going	On-going	City Staff
Establish development plan with airport officials	6 Months	March – September 2008	City Staff
Establish funding for improvements to airport and area to prepare for development	When feasible	When feasible	City Staff

Possible Partners?

FAA, LCRA Community and Economic Development Department, property owners

How will you measure success?

Airport plan developed by September 2008

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal to develop plan if working with LCRA

Goal: Encourage New Housing Development

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Market Smithville to housing developers using Demographic Analysis	On-going	On-going	Chamber of Commerce
Encourage a broad mix of housing types through education and possible ordinance updates	On-going	On-going	Chamber of Commerce, City Staff

Possible Partners?
 Developers, citizens, property owners

How will you measure success?
 Increase in homes available at all price ranges

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?
 See Land Use section for Incentive discussion
 Minimal to market the community

Goal: Support Workforce Housing Development

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Establish relationship with Central Texas Housing Finance Corporation and other agencies that provide low cost housing	1 Year	January - December 2008	City Staff
Identify lots that can be made available for redevelopment through tax foreclosure, etc.	6 Months	January - June 2009	City Staff
Educate citizens on need for multi-family and higher density housing	On-going	On-going	City Staff

Possible Partners?

Central Texas Housing Finance Corporation, Habitat for Humanity, Cen-Tex Development Corporation

How will you measure success?
Increase in affordable homes

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?
Minimal for marketing and education
Legal costs to foreclose properties
\$5,000 - \$20,000 to make lots development ready

Goal: Maintain Housing Standards for Health, Safety, and Appearance

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Strictly enforce all ordinances to maintain housing quality	On-going	On-going	City Staff
Work with local churches and service groups to establish volunteer effort to help maintain properties	6 Months	September 2007 – February 2008	City Staff, civic organizations, churches
Identify funding to renovate or replace dilapidated housing	On-going	On-going	City staff

Possible Partners?

Civic groups, churches, service organizations

How will you measure success?

Volunteer group available to assist in home maintenance, landscape work, etc.
3 homes each year are renovated or replaced

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

\$100,000 - \$125,000 for housing replacement
Minimal for volunteer work

TDHCA grants, private foundation grants, state and federal grants

Goal: Increase River Accessibility
Objective: Enhance the Park at the North End of Main Street

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Clearly delineate boundaries of the park	3 Months	October -- December 2007	City Staff
Clearly designate parking sites	3 Months	October -- December 2007	City Staff
Develop amenities plan for adding benches and other facilities to the park	6 Months	January -- June 2008	City Staff
Budget for improvements to the park	3 Months	June -- August 2008	City Staff
Add amenities to the park	1 Year	January -- December 2009	City Staff
Improve pedestrian connection to downtown with sidewalks or other designated walking trail	1 Year	January -- December 2010	City Staff
Add water access point, such as dock, to allow access to the water	1 Year	January -- December 2011	City Staff

Possible Partners?

Lower Colorado River Authority, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Local Businesses, Local Citizens

How will you measure success?

Trespassing and impacts, such as parking, on adjoining properties reduced
 Benches and other facilities added by end of 2009
 Clearly designated connection to downtown by end of 2010
 River Access developed by end of 2011

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

\$5,000 - \$10,000 to clearly delineate boundaries and parking
 \$25,000 - \$200,000 for amenities to the park
 \$50,000 - \$250,000 for pedestrian connection depending on if sidewalks or other form
 \$25,000 - \$100,000 for dock at river depending on size
 City budget, State and private foundation grants, local fundraising and sponsorships, bond issue

Goal: Increase River Accessibility

Objective: Utilize Gazley Creek for Access to the River

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Identify ownership issues along Gazley Creek	3 Months	January – March 2009	City Staff
Develop an improvement plan for the area, including budget	6 Months	March – September 2009	City Staff
Identify funding and fundraising opportunities for the new park	3 Months	October – December 2009	City Staff
Fundraise and budget for park development	9 Months	January – September 2010	City Staff
Develop Park	1 Year	January – December 2011	City Staff

Possible Partners?

Lower Colorado River Authority, Texas Parks and Wildlife, local businesses and property owners, local outfitters

How will you measure success?

New park developed by end of 2011

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

\$250,000 - \$2,000,000 depending on land availability and amenities to be developed

City budget, State and private foundation grants, local fundraising and sponsorships, bond issue

Goal: Increase River Accessibility
Objective: Develop Additional Boat Ramps

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Identify locations for additional boat ramps	3 Months	January -- March 2008	City Staff, outfitters, property owners
Develop funding for additional boat ramps	6 Months	March -- September 2008	City Staff
Apply for grants and other assistance	1 Year	January -- December 2009	City Staff
Develop boat ramps as funding allows	On-going	On-going	City Staff

Possible Partners?

Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Department of Transportation, Lower Colorado River Authority

How will you measure success?

New boat ramps developed in next 5 years

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

\$200,000 - \$500,000 per boat ramp depending on land acquisition and other amenities
 State and local grants, city budget, bond issue

Goal: Increase River Accessibility
Objective: Establish Strong Relationship with River Outfitters

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Contact area outfitters to encourage them to utilize Smithville in their trips as amenities improve	On-going	When amenities developed	Chamber of Commerce
Incorporate river access into on-line and other marketing materials	On-going	When amenities developed	Chamber of Commerce
Encourage local entrepreneurs to establish outfitter businesses in Smithville, such as biking and kayaking	On-going	On-going	Chamber of Commerce
Hold river-centric events to celebrate amenities being developed and encourage people to come to Smithville for the river	On-going	When amenities developed	Chamber of Commerce

Possible Partners?

Area outfitters, neighboring cities and Chambers of Commerce

How will you measure success?

Smithville included in outfitter trips as amenities are developed
 1 new outfitter business created
 Local businesses see increase in river-oriented visits

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time to contact outfitters
 \$500 - \$2,000 to update marketing materials as amenities added
 \$10,000 - \$25,000 to conduct events

Goal: Increase Pedestrian Safety and Amenities
Objective: Identify Common Pedestrian Routes Through Town

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Utilize land use map and other materials to identify potential destinations, such as schools, Main Street, etc.	1 Month	January 2008	City Staff
Inventory existing pedestrian facilities in these areas, such as sidewalks, benches, etc.	3 Months	February -- April 2008	City Staff

Possible Partners?

School District, local businesses, Chamber of Commerce

How will you measure success?

Inventory developed by April 2008

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time to develop inventory

Goal: Increase Pedestrian Safety and Amenities

Objective: Identify and Prioritize Improvements for Pedestrian Connectivity

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Develop prioritized list of improvements based on safety and use, focusing on those areas most utilized by residents, particularly children (to the parks and schools).	3 Months	April – June 2008	City Staff
Identify appropriate locations for information signs and kiosks and what will be included on them	3 Months	April – June 2008	City Staff
Develop budget for needed improvements	2 Months	June – July 2008	City Staff
Begin developing improvements as funding allows	On-going	On-going	City Staff

Possible Partners?

Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Department of Transportation

How will you measure success?

Pedestrian Improvements being made starting FY 2009

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

\$150,000 - \$1,000,000 depending on scope of needed improvements (over long-term)
Texas Department of Transportation, Texas Parks and Wildlife

Goal: Increase Pedestrian Safety and Amenities
Objective: Identify Potential Trail Development

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Utilize maps from Comprehensive Plan and other sources to identify appropriate routes for trails to connect community features and enhance river connection	6 Months	June – December 2009	City Staff, Steering Committee
Prioritize new trail development	3 Months	January – March 2010	City Staff, Steering Committee
Contact property owners to determine potential for easements or other access to property for trail development	1 Year	March 2010 – March 2011	City Staff
Develop budget for trail development	6 Months	March – September 2011	City Staff
Begin trail development as budget allows	On-going	On-going	City Staff

Possible Partners?
 Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Department of Transportation, Lower Colorado River Authority

How will you measure success?
 Trail plan developed by March 2010
 Trail development begun in 2012

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?
 \$100,000 - \$125,000 per mile of crushed granite trail
 State and local grants, bond issue, fundraising and sponsorships

Goal: Identify Funding for Trail and Pedestrian Improvements

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Consider hiring a grant writer to identify and apply for appropriate grants	6 Months	January -- June 2011	City Staff
Establish policy to encourage developers to provide pedestrian amenities and trail connections in new development	6 Months	January -- June 2008	City Staff, City Council
Contact local businesses for potential sponsorship (Adopt a Trail type program)	6 Months	January -- June 2011	City Staff
Consider local fundraising opportunities	On-going	On-going	City Staff

Possible Partners?

Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Department of Transportation, Lower Colorado River Authority, ISD, local businesses

How will you measure success?

Fundraising plan developed by June 2009

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time to develop campaign

\$500 - \$2,000 for recognition gifts and advertising

Grant writing fee (typically paid for through the grant)

City Budget

Goal: Establish Additional Recreational Amenities

Objective: Identify Potential Sites for New Parks

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Utilize maps in Comprehensive Plan to identify potential parks locations	1 Month	January 2008	City Staff, Steering Committee
Prioritize underserved areas in town for new 'pocket' park development	6 Months	January – June 2008	City Staff, Steering Committee
Work with property owners in prioritized areas to determine if a site may be donated or provided at reduced price for use as a park	1 Year	June 2008 – June 2009	City Staff
Develop budget for parks improvements and additions	1 Year	June 2009 – June 2010	City Staff
Identify funding opportunities and fundraise	1 Year	June 2010 – June 2011	City Staff
Begin developing parks as budget allows	On-going	On-going	City Staff

Possible Partners?
 ISD, Neighborhood groups, citizens, property owners

How will you measure success?
 Potential park sites identified by June 2008
 Parks under development by 2011

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?
 \$100,000 - \$250,000 per pocket park depending on land availability and amenities

Goal: Establish Additional Recreational Amenities

Objective: Establish Park Requirements in Subdivision Ordinance

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Contact other communities who have similar requirements to determine their effectiveness and impacts on development	6 Months	January -- June 2008	City Staff
Work with citizens and developers to determine if it is appropriate to incorporate	6 Months	June -- December 2008	City Staff
Develop appropriate standards for Smithville	3 Months	January -- March 2009	City Staff
Adopt updated subdivision ordinance and promote new standards to developers	3 Months	March -- June 2009	City Staff, City Council

Possible Partners?

Developers, citizens, Lower Colorado River Authority Community and Economic Development Department

How will you measure success?

If appropriate, new standards adopted by June 2009

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time
 City Attorney fees
 City Budget

Goal: Establish Additional Recreational Amenities

Objective: Consider Developing Golf Courses

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Determine if it is financially feasible for city to develop 18 hole golf course	6 Months	June -- December 2008	City Staff
Determine what, if any assistance, could be provided to a private golf course developer (in conjunction with residential development)	6 Months	January -- June 2009	City Staff, developers
Identify appropriate location, using future land use map and other resources	6 Months	June -- December 2009	City Staff, developers
If feasible, develop budget and funding tool for 18 hole golf course	1 Year	January -- December 2009	City Staff, developers
Begin developing golf course	2 Years	2010 -- 2011	City Staff, developers
Study feasibility of 9 hole public course	6 Months	June -- December 2008	City Staff
Work with ISD for funding	6 Months	January -- June 2009	City Staff, ISD
Develop 9 Hole course, possibly adjacent to school	1 Year	January -- December 2010	City Staff, ISD

Possible Partners?
Developers, property owners, ISD

How will you measure success?
Feasibility of 18 hole golf course determined by end of 2009
9 hole course developed by end of 2010

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?
\$300,000 -- \$1,000,000 for 9 hole course depending on land availability, size, etc.
\$2,000,000 - \$5,000,000 for 18 hole course

Goal: Explore the Potential for a Community Swimming Pool

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Identify what type of pool would be most appropriate (indoor vs. outdoor, etc.)	6 Months	January -- June 2009	City Staff, Steering Committee
Identify location for pool that would provide best access for potential users	3 Months	June -- August 2009	City Staff, Steering Committee
Establish partnership with ISD, hospital, etc. to provide facilities they can benefit from and determine funding assistance	4 Months	September -- December 2009	City Staff, Steering Committee, ISD, Hospital
Establish funding mechanism and plan for developing and maintaining a pool	1 Year	January -- December 2010	City Staff, Steering Committee
If funding is available, develop pool	2 Years	2011 -- 2012	City Staff

Possible Partners?

ISD, area senior living facilities, local businesses, Texas Parks and Wildlife

How will you measure success?

Feasibility of pool determined by December 2009

Funding in place for pool by end of 2010

Pool developed by end of 2012

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

\$2,000,000 - \$5,000,000 depending on amenities, size, indoor vs. outdoor, etc.

State and local grants, bond issue, local fundraising and sponsorships

Goal: Protect and Enhance Community Appearance

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Strictly enforce existing ordinances	On-going	On-going	City Staff
Maintain all public property	On-going	On-going	City Staff
Reinvigorate 'Yard of the Month' and 'Business of the Month' program	3 Months	September – November 2008	Chamber of Commerce
Establish Design Guidelines for new development	1 Year	January – June 2009	City Staff, developers

Possible Partners?

Developers, business owners, citizens

How will you measure success?

Poorly maintained properties are cleaned up and maintained
Property owners recognized for maintaining high appearance

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time

Goal: Encourage Retail Development on Main Street

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Use Demographic Analysis to market Smithville to prospective business owners	On-going	On-going	Chamber of Commerce
Encourage Shop at Home	On-going	On-going	Chamber of Commerce
Consider incentives for targeted businesses	1 Year	January – December 2008	Chamber of Commerce, City Staff

Possible Partners?

City, existing local businesses

How will you measure success?

3 new retail businesses open in downtown

Existing businesses see increase in sales and traffic

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time

Incentives dependent on what is appropriate

City and Chamber of Commerce budgets, fundraising

Goal: Improve Pedestrian Amenities Downtown

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Identify unsafe conditions of existing sidewalks and where no sidewalks are available	3 Months	April -- June 2008	City Staff, downtown businesses
Identify lighting needs to cover all of downtown	3 Months	April -- June 2008	City Staff, downtown businesses
Identify potential for 'pocket parks' in downtown	6 Months	January -- June 2008	City Staff, downtown businesses
Provide additional restrooms downtown	1 Year	January -- December 2009	City Staff, downtown businesses, Chamber of Commerce

Possible Partners?

Chamber of Commerce, business owners

How will you measure success?

Pedestrian amenities improved and connected to overall pedestrian improvements

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

\$500,000 - \$1,000,000 for all needed improvements

Tax Increment Reinvestment District, bond issue, local fundraising

Goal: Hold More Events Downtown

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Conduct regular small events, such as concerts, sidewalk sales, etc.	On-going	On-going	Chamber of Commerce, downtown business owners
Conduct large events on a regular basis	On-going	On-going	Chamber of Commerce, downtown business owners
Develop marketing campaign to promote downtown	6 Months	January -- June 2008	Chamber of Commerce

Possible Partners?

Downtown Business owners, City

How will you measure success?

Regular events held downtown

Downtown businesses see increase in business and traffic

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal for small events, such as concerts, \$10,000 - \$25,000 for large events \$5,000 - \$10,000 for marketing campaign

Chamber of Commerce, local sponsorships and fundraising

Goal: Redevelop Romona Street

Objective: Remove Buildings and Reconnect the Street

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
End lease, or do not renew when current lease expires	End of Lease	End of Lease	City Staff
Determine budget to remove existing buildings	3 Months	After end of lease	City Staff
Remove buildings and make ready for development	1 Year	After end of lease	City Staff

Possible Partners?

Current lessor, developers

How will you measure success?

Properly available for redevelopment within 2 years after end of lease

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

\$250,000 - \$750,000 to make site ready for development

Potential developers, bond issue, city budget

Goal: Redevelop Romona Street

Objective: Encourage Redevelopment of the Property

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Contact potential developers and market property	On-going	On-going	Chamber of Commerce, City Staff
Determine what, if any, incentives are appropriate, including donation of land from city to developer, long-term lease, etc.	6 Months	When property ready for redevelopment	City Staff

Possible Partners?

Developers, property owners, business owners

How will you measure success?

Redevelopment plan in place within 3 years after property ready for redevelopment

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal for marketing campaign, mostly staff time

Dependent on what incentives will be provided (if land is given away, there will be no out of pocket expense)

Goal: Identify Funding Opportunities to Pay for Improvements

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Consider hiring a grant writer	6 Months	January – June 2008	City Staff, Chamber of Commerce
Explore local fundraising	6 Months	January – June 2008	City Staff, Chamber of Commerce
Explore potential for Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone or Public Improvement District	6 Months	January – June 2008	City Staff, Chamber of Commerce

Possible Partners?

Downtown property and business owners

How will you measure success?

On-going, long-term funding identified for downtown improvements

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

\$1,000 - \$5,000 for recognition and other promotion of fundraising

Grant writing fee (typically paid for through the grant)

City and Chamber of Commerce budgets

Goal: Establish Historic Preservation Ordinance

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Contact Texas Historical Commission for information and assistance	1 Month	January 2008	Historical Commission, City Staff
Work with property owners and citizens to address their concerns and issues with ordinance	6 Months	January -- June 2008	Historical Commission, City Staff
Develop ordinance that addresses local concerns and issues	6 Months	June -- December 2008	Historical Commission, City Staff

Possible Partners?

Texas Historical Commission, historic property owners, County Historical Commission

How will you measure success?

Historic ordinance adopted by end of 2008

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Staff Time and Attorney Fees to develop ordinance

Goal: Utilize Historic Assets to Attract Tourists

Actions	Duration	Timeline	Who's Responsible?
Research other community programs to identify best practices	6 Months	January -- June 2008	Chamber of Commerce
Market existing historic building walking tour	On-going	On-going	Chamber of Commerce
Educate business and property owners to help 'sell' historic assets	On-going	On-going	Chamber of Commerce
Develop additional materials on historic assets, such as informational kiosks and handouts	1 Year	January -- December 2009	Chamber of Commerce

Possible Partners?

Historic property owners, business owners

How will you measure success?

Increase in tourism related to historic buildings and assets

Estimated funding needed and possible sources?

Minimal for research and education

\$1,000 - \$2,000 for additional marketing materials

\$1,000 - \$5,000 per kiosk depending on style and features

INTRODUCTION

Traditional zoning is based on the concept of separation of uses, where residential uses are in one place, businesses somewhere else, schools and other facilities in a third place. This focus on separation of uses made sense when the goal was to protect human health and well-being from the negative impacts such as pollution, noise, and odors. Today's typical development pattern of individual subdivisions with internal collector roads that lead to an arterial lined with strip malls is the result of conventional zoning.

Today, there is an effort underway to return to more traditional community patterns, like what is found on Main Street, Smithville. Economic changes have allowed for this because few businesses today have the negative external impacts of businesses in the past. There are few 'smokestacks' to be found in cities, instead business has become technology and service oriented. This allows for a new type of development where businesses and residences are found in proximity and people can live and work in the same neighborhood. The SmartCode is a tool that is being implemented to create a better development pattern that provides a mix of uses, more density, and better design.

What is SmartCode¹?

Unlike conventional zoning, which focuses on the specific use of a property, SmartCode focuses on the form of a building and how it relates to its location. It is intended to create compact, walkable, mixed use communities with a mix of uses. It is not intended as a 'one size fits all' solution, rather it provides for a transect approach that leads from rural to urban development with appropriate standards for each transect. In the transect model, certain forms of development are appropriate depending on which transect it is in. For example, a large lot, single family home is appropriate in a more rural setting, while a 3 story building with retail on the ground floor and apartments above would not be.

SmartCode offers flexibility and options to the community and developers because it provides for a broad range of design and uses. Rather than requiring all of a property to be developed as a 'monoculture' of single family homes on ¼ acre lots, SmartCode would allow that same property to be developed into some single family homes, some businesses, and some multi-family homes. Because the SmartCode is design focused, this mix of uses would be designed in a fashion that allows them to be compatible and functional.

The basis of SmartCode is the transect, which is sequence of different development intensities ranging from undeveloped rural to very intense urban uses. SmartCode defines 6 transect zones:

- T-1 Natural Zone – undeveloped lands not suitable for development
- T-2 Rural Zone – sparsely settled, primarily agricultural
- T-3 Sub-Urban Zone – low density, suburban residential
- T-4 General Urban Zone – Mixed use, but primarily residential
- T-5 Urban Center Zone – Higher density mixed use
- T-6 Urban Core – highest density

¹ SmartCode Version 8.0

Within each of these transects, different building types and design standards would be utilized to ensure development was appropriate to the area. For example, in the Urban Core, large lot single family homes would not be allowed. Instead, 4 or 5 story buildings with no setbacks would be required. The transect concept also allows for variety depending on the larger context of the project as well. What would be considered a T-5 Urban Center development in Smithville (similar to what is already existing along Main Street) would be found in the T-4 General Urban zone of a larger city, such as Austin. This allows the individual community to develop standards and design guidelines that reflect their priorities and concerns rather than being a one size fits all code.

Rather than replacing a city's conventional zoning, SmartCode would be an additional tool that could be utilized for specific properties or projects. In some communities, it is used almost like a Planned Unit Development zoning, where specific projects fall under the jurisdiction of the SmartCode. Some communities that have implemented SmartCode are Leander, as part of its Transit-oriented Development around the commuter rail station, and Sarasota, Fl. The full SmartCode handbook can be found on the following website <http://www.smartcodecomplete.com/learn/downloads.html>

SMARTCODE EXAMPLE

The approximately 377 acre triangular property bounded on the west by Loop 230, the north and east by Hwy 71, and the south by the Colorado River (Illustration A-1) is a property that is ideally suited for redevelopment using SmartCode principles. It is located between two major roads, including the primary entrance to Smithville. This provides excellent access to the site and would support fairly intense development with minimal traffic impacts on the rest of the community. The site has a mix of topography from bluffs along the river to extremely flat at the northern tip. It is within the desired growth area of Smithville and is served by infrastructure. While there are a few buildings, and a substation, on the property, most of it remains undeveloped. In addition, this appendix is only intended as an example of SmartCode development and is not in any way an attempt to regulate development of this property. The idea is to show what the SmartCode is and how it can be implemented using this property only as an example.

Transects

SmartCode is intended to be applied to properties large enough to support a range of transects. The idea is to include at three different transects in each project to assure a mix of uses and development styles. The example property offers an opportunity to incorporate four of the different transects, ranging from T-1 Natural Zone to T-5 Urban Center. These transects generally flow from T-1 Natural along the Colorado River to T-5 Urban Center at the intersection of Loop 230 and Hwy 71 (Illustration A-2). The transects reflect the physical characteristics of the site as well as transportation access, visibility, and other factors.



T-1 NATURAL ZONE

The natural zone (approximately 40 acres) logically falls along the Colorado River where the topography and flood potential make it unsuitable for development. This area is also very scenic and provides a viewshed for properties across the river in the main part of town. It will also provide for trail development along the river that is identified in the future land use plan. This trail would connect

Riverside Park to the rest of the city. Studies have shown that properties in proximity to open space have much higher values than similar properties. This will benefit the homes developed in the T-3 zone adjacent to this area.

T-3 SUB-URBAN ZONE



The Sub-Urban zone (approximately 133 acres) should not be confused with conventional suburban development which is typically rows of cookie cutter houses (see adjacent picture). Rather it is an area of pre-dominantly single family homes that are built to complement their surroundings and the property characteristics. They may be homes on varying sized lots, with different setbacks and relationship to the

street. The idea is to maintain a feeling of the natural environment in which the homes are located. Rather than leveling the property and removing all vegetation, as much of the native plants are kept and replanted rather than replaced with non-native species. This kind of development will result in a stronger sense of place and connection to the community because it will reflect what is unique about it rather than looking like any other suburb in the country.



T-4 GENERAL URBAN ZONE

The General Urban zone is intended as a mixed use zone that is primarily residential in nature. This is the largest zone defined in this example at approximately 144 acres and reflects the nature of Smithville as a whole. This zone would allow for the development of higher density residences, such as townhomes, and business development along the highway frontages (areas that are not suitable for single family homes) while having smaller lot single family homes in the interior of the property. This type of development is more urban in character than the T-3 and typically has wider sidewalks, narrower streets and is geared more towards pedestrians. The T-4 zone is adjacent to the most intensely developed area and provides a buffer from this area and the more rural T-3 zone to the south. The higher density in this area, within walking distance of the T-4 zone will provide a larger market for businesses locating in the area.



Illustration A-1 Example Property

0 237.5 475 950 1,425 1,900 Feet



Illustration A-2 Transects



Transect

- T-1 Natural Zone
- T-3 Sub-Urban Zone
- T-4 General Urban Zone
- T-5 Urban Center Zone





T-5 URBAN CENTER ZONE

This is the most intensely developed area, which makes sense given its location at the intersection of two major roads. This area will have the highest density and most mix of uses, with a focus on businesses rather than residences. In this zone it is appropriate to have three to five story buildings that front directly onto wide sidewalks, rather than buildings set back behind parking lots. This area is also the most pedestrian oriented. The goal is to have residents from the entire property able to access this area without driving, and those who drive to

it can park and walk to their destination. The entire 56 acres is within a ¼ mile radius, which is the distance most people are willing to walk.

Development in this area would be similar to what is already found on Main Street, Smithville; however, it could be somewhat more intense with buildings that are one or two stories taller than those found in the historic area of town. This intensity would be appropriate for this area because it is adjacent to existing historic areas and is located at a major intersection. A vibrant, urban center would create a strong entrance to Smithville and be a unique asset that would complement the historic character of the community.



CONCLUSION

The idea of transect planning is to create a seamless transition from one zone to the next. It is not intended for there to be a sudden break from single family homes to three story apartments. Rather, what might be appropriate is for large lot single family to transition into smaller lot single family then into two story buildings, etc. Also, transitions that happen at the rear property line, so that properties are back to back rather than facing, are also more appropriate when possible.

The final image is a very general development plan that reflects SmartCode principles for the example property. Obviously, this is only intended as an example and should not be used as more than an illustration of what development could look like. It is very unlikely for a single project to encompass all 377 acres of this property; however, this plan represents a vision of what the property could look like if the city were to pursue SmartCode development as the community grows.

Illustration A-3 Development Plan

