

GUIDING GUADALUPE COUNTY

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Historic population centers are re-aligning, with unprecedented numbers of new residents in Guadalupe County, many of them coming from major Texas cities or other states with different norms of government service, filling up small towns and suburban subdivisions. Over time, this will mean new and different expectations for what kinds of services Guadalupe County provides, and how it provides them. The Texas Legislature's decision to curb annexation authority for Texas cities and to limit other City powers is also sure to affect the County and may make its role in managing development more prominent in the future. At the same time, dramatic changes in technology are driving "disruption" and evolution in customer expectation in every corner of American business – attitudes that are spilling over into local government in everything from fiscal management to elections, from law enforcement to transportation systems.

In March of 2018, the Guadalupe County Commissioners Court approved the development of the County's first-ever Strategic Plan. The Commissioners Court partnered with a consulting team consisting of economists, policy experts, former county officials, as well as professionals experienced in public outreach and facilitation. Together they worked to gather input, insight, and ideas from County staff, leaders, and residents.

The result of this collaboration is the Guiding Guadalupe County Strategic Plan, presented to the Commissioners Court in December 2018. The Strategic Plan is a beginning – a tool, and part of a larger process – to address the challenges and opportunities that will come with what is perhaps the most dynamic change Guadalupe County has known in modern times.

This document is merely a reference guide, highlighting the focus areas and recommendations detailed within the Strategic Plan. If you are interested in viewing the full report, including the complete recommendations list, please visit the Guadalupe County website.

RECOMMENDATIONS GUIDE



INVEST IN COUNTY-WIDE INFRASTRUCTURE

1. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENS PLAN & RESERVE FUND (LOW WATER CROSSINGS & OTHER ISSUES)

The County should establish a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) to be updated annually. The CIP should identify projects in a coordinated fashion for funding in the next fiscal year and identify projects for planning purposes and for potential funding for years into the future. The CIP Process should be conducted in conjunction with the annual budget preparation process and should establish a Capital Reserve Fund to be used as a ready source for funding emergency repairs to existing infrastructure, essential small projects such as low water crossings and facility enhancements.

2. TRANSPORTATION

I. THOROUGHFARE PLAN

The County should update and enrich the its Thoroughfare Plan - or may consider developing a broader "Long Range Transportation Plan" or "Master Transportation Plan." This plan should go beyond mapping to address an array of issues ranging from multi-year maintenance prioritization to future plans for expansion and new construction. This promotes efficient and conservative use of tax dollars as the County grows, and helps ensure an accurate and updated "roadmap" for developers and the County by setting clear priorities and expectations where road construction or right-of-way dedication may be involved.

II. ROW, PRE-CONSTRUCTION COSTS, & "SHOVEL READY" PREPARATION

Guadalupe County could address soft costs (defined as project costs that are not directly related to road construction) in several ways. For instance, once the Thoroughfare Plan is updated, the County could begin acquiring right-of-way (ROW) for future road projects in advance - both through plat dedications when development occurs and also through strategic purchases, ultimately saving taxpayers substantial costs in the long run since population and economic trends indicate that land values in Guadalupe County are likely to grow at a pace faster than general inflation, especially over the long-term.

Preliminary engineering (or even the preparation of full project engineering plans) is another area where it will make strategic sense for the County to plan ahead - and a place where reserve funds from the County's road-and-bridge account could be put to good use.

These types of preparation make the County ready for "shovel ready" grant funding that can become available from state or federal agencies on relatively short notice through the Alamo Area MPO, TXDOT, or other avenues.

III. PRIVATE ROADS

A useful addition to the County's rules would be to require developers who plan to construct private roads to create a Property Owners Association at the time of platting, and to require that POA be given the authority to assess dues and property liens to support maintenance of the private roads. This is no guarantee that the private roads will not fail or that future residents in the area will not petition the Court to accept the roads, but it does at least provide a solid foundation for road maintenance on private roads and will help safeguard both residents along the road and County taxpayers in general from potential problems.

IV. CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS

The County should develop and adopt Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) policy. CSS is a concept, and a process, in which mobility solutions - mostly roads in this case - are designed with their surroundings in mind. The overall community impacts of a project are considered from the beginning. In practice, some people describe it as meaning that roads are designed to serve people and neighborhoods rather than retrofitting existing communities and neighborhoods to adapt to roads.

By doing so, the County would also give itself an additional tool when negotiating with state and regional entities, such as TXDOT. TXDOT is increasingly aware of and open to this type of design process. Having the policy on the books gives the Commissioners Court a point of reference - and leverage - when discussing design guidelines for state projects and regional funding. That could be important for local neighborhoods or constituents who want the opportunity to discuss design ideas with TXDOT before a project is underway, and promote a more collaborative approach to transportation network-building. It should also give the County a useful reference for working with the growing cities within the County, especially since - given the diversity of Guadalupe County - it may be appropriate to use different routing strategies, or different road profiles, in different parts of the County.

V. INNOVATIVE FINANCING & PARTNERSHIPS

Guadalupe County should be open to potential financial partnerships with TXDOT and other entities, including local cities. Currently, the County enjoys a strong state road network, but congestion is growing on key arterials as the County grows. Citizens expressed concern about

these congestion and safety issues during the planning process. In the last few years, the Texas Transportation Commission and TXDOT have moved increasingly toward a model where counties and cities that hope to see expedited improvements on state roads are expected to share more of the financial burden. That may mean engaging in innovative financing partnerships with TXDOT or other arms of the state if the County wants to convince TXDOT to invest heavily in local roads. Williamson County, Hays County, and some counties in the greater Houston area have entered into “pass through financing” agreements, and other types of contracts, to get roads built without resorting to tolls. Project scoring through Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) for federal funding is also often tied to community “skin in the game.” This may not be an immediate issue for Guadalupe County, but it is something that needs to be considered as part of the County’s longer strategic positioning.

In addition to “pass through financing”, the County should be open to other innovative techniques. For instance, rather than granting tax abatements to developers in association with economic development projects, the County may wish to consider establishing Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ) where appropriate to provide infrastructure improvements necessary to attract developers and private investment. A portion of the increased revenues derived from increased appraised property values and resulting property taxes created by new development within the TIRZ could be used to finance the infrastructure improvements. Other innovative approaches can be developed in association with economic development projects under Section 381 of the Texas Local Development Code.

VII. TRANSIT & ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

This isn’t the top priority for most citizens nor for County officials. But over the longer term, the County may want to incorporate ideas about how, when, and if it needs to incorporate “multi-modal” options into County planning – whether that be for County arterials, for new state projects, or for developer projects in certain high-density areas. It can’t be emphasized enough that county roads are not city streets, and constituents should not expect the same standards, something members of the Commissioners Court recognize. But over time, it may be useful to begin formulating policy for these as dense “city-like” subdivisions and special districts develop within unincorporated portions of the County. Transit, too, is likely to be an issue on the horizon. Some of the County’s cities are already beginning to discuss inner-city or intra-city transit service, and the chairs of the Alamo Area MPO and the Capital Area MPO have publicly discussed possible transit links between the two urban areas (even though talks of the Lone Star Rail project between Austin and San Antonio have long died out). Any such regional transit project is likely to pass through or near the western part of Guadalupe County, and offers potential for both congestion relief and economic development. Again, this doesn’t require short-term action from the County until more concrete plans develop within the region but this is something for the County to be alert to and ready to take on when and if the time comes.

3. DRAINAGE, STORM WATER, AND FLOOD MITIGATION

The County’s statutory authority in managing drainage and flood control is limited. The County’s role is primarily limited to drainage issues related to the construction and maintenance of County roadways and through review and comment process as part of the platting subdivisions and new developments. Low water crossings and bridge expansions on County roadways deserve specific attention. As growth continues and as cities’ authority and ability to deal with urban problems such as local drainage and street flooding, these issues become a bigger concern to the County in the unincorporated areas. The County should continue to work closely with the school districts because it involves school bus safety particularly in high growth areas impacted by increases in population and storm water volumes.

4. NATURAL RESOURCE PLANNING & CLIMATE RESILIENCY

The County cannot consider the future of its water and storm water infrastructure without evaluation and preparation of its natural resources. The County’s ability to withstand growth is inherently linked to its environmental infrastructure. Within the narrow parameters of county authority, Guadalupe County is encouraged to preserve and protect its lakes, streams, and open space as these are simpler methods of improving water quality, floodwater retention, and groundwater recharge – and can simultaneously be used to satisfy state and federal environmental requirements.

Similarly, local governments are finding it increasingly necessary to prepare for what the military and others are calling “Climate Resiliency,” as changing weather patterns are causing more intense periods of heat and higher probabilities of severe storms. This could affect infrastructure and road planning, crew scheduling, landscaping, flood mitigation, and what standards the County chooses to use for things like low water crossing standards or new bridge standards for developer-built roads in or near floodplains.



GROW THE ECONOMY WHILE PROTECTING LOCAL CULTURE AND HERITAGE

1. ENHANCE THE COUNTY'S ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

I. COORDINATE REGIONAL EFFORTS AND SUPPORT CITIES

Local cities, economic development corporations, and Chambers of Commerce could use a regional coordinating force – Guadalupe County, for instance – to act as a clearinghouse for information and to promote the county region as a whole, in something of the same way that the Greater San Marcos Partnership works for a regional community, including several cities and the counties of Caldwell and Hays.

II. RE-EXAMINE EXISTING INCENTIVES AND RECRUITMENT POLICIES

To be a regional leader and coordinator, the County needs to develop “next level” policies and procedures for business recruitment and incentives, with detailed policies and benchmarks focused on incentivizing quality jobs and increased tax base that will benefit all of Guadalupe County while preserving local heritage. How to manage incentives, including potential tax abatements, and also be fair to existing local businesses, is always challenging. In addition, the County will need to include analysis and safeguards to ensure that abatements or other incentives are “net positive” for the County over time and are not over-used in ways that could constrain the County’s ability to grow its tax base – especially since the County already grants generous tax exemptions to senior citizens, a policy that makes it difficult for residential property tax growth to match service-demand growth as County population increases.

III. OTHER INNOVATIONS, SUCH AS RE-USE AND RENOVATION

Among other, more innovative options, the County might include encouraging occupation and reuse of historic buildings through a minimal property tax relief in areas targeted by the County for revitalization – or contributing resources to make older buildings more energy efficient and therefore less expensive to operate, and balancing the distribution of these fairly throughout the county.

IV. FUND A POSITION TO MANAGE EFFORTS

To accomplish the strategies in this section, it is time for the County to consider investing in an economic development coordinator to work under the County Judge’s direction, or perhaps under the Commissioner’s Court.

2. CREATE AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Create a Guadalupe County Economic Development Corporation consisting of the major economic development players/stakeholders in the County, which could perhaps include additional private sector participants as well. It is anticipated that formation would include reviewing applicable examples that provide best practices to guide the mission and focus, structure, governance, financing and program of work that the Corporation would entail. As part of that effort an analysis should be conducted to determine local stakeholder roles, capacity and willingness to participate as well as determine potential initial seed funding, possible revenue streams and other sources of finance (such as grants) that could be brought to bear. This will in turn guide the program of work and give focus to the Corporation’s possible role in the financing of catalyst capital projects designed to inspire economic development and job creation.

3. WORK FORCE DEVELOPMENT

In the planning team’s discussions with economic development professionals during the assessment process, one recurring theme was the need for a skilled

and well trained labor force matched to the needs of both existing enterprises and those new businesses wishing to locate here. Some believe this to be the number one deterrent to job creation and economic development. While this is outside the traditional scope of County responsibility, and no one is suggesting the County should take primary responsibility for worker training and workforce development, the Judge and Commissioners Court could help foster a county-wide, cross-agency collaborative approach to address the problem. For example, the County could work with the Central Texas Technology Center to develop strategies to prepare workers and match worker (or communities) with employers in need of specific skills.

4. PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

The County should consider its natural resources as both a tool for economic development, and as one possible way to help with drainage, flood control, and environmental requirements that might otherwise inhibit infrastructure development and other construction associated with economic development.



FOSTER SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1. LOT FRONTAGES

This is an issue raised by the planning team, not necessarily to recommend any change but to foster discussion. The County’s subdivision regulations currently require large minimum road frontages, as high as 200 linear feet. This has clear advantages for driveway maintenance and can be a tool in preserving rural character. It helps limit pernicious flag lots. But it also inhibits the amount of taxable value per linear foot of road, could in some cases help induce sprawl (and thus, indirectly drive up the cost of road construction and maintenance), and could prevent certain innovative development styles, including “cluster development.” This is a policy decision and there is no right or wrong answer, only a right answer for Guadalupe County. It is presented here as an example of how larger transportation and land development questions intertwine – and how these policy questions will beg for constant attention as the County grows and changes.

2. WATER AND WASTE WATER SERVICES

Guadalupe County should promote the development of a regional wastewater treatment plan designed around the natural drainage basins and perhaps coordinate its development with the proposed drainage and storm water regional plan.

An initial step in regional wastewater planning should be projection of potential effluent return flows at various milestones of development within the major drainage basins of the County. It should also identify potential

users of the treated effluent and in doing so work with regional partners such as CPS Energy-San Antonio, SAWS and GBRA. Such an analysis would form the basis and potentially identify funding for a more comprehensive Regional Wastewater Master Plan and could be produced at a very low cost since the base data is readily available and can be analyzed easily. The scope of a Regional Wastewater Master Plan should include more in-depth and detailed effluent projections, project demand of identified users of the treated effluent for reuse and conservation, identify potential treatment sites within drainage basins, delineate potential transmission routes to collect and transfer effluent to its ultimate use and develop cost estimates and funding strategies for construction of the necessary infrastructure.

The County should also assume a larger role in regional water and wastewater planning and strategy in order to fulfill its role in fostering sustainable growth and development. The County's role will become more important as more development occurs in unincorporated areas and the authority of cities is further curtailed. Accordingly, the Commissioners Court should designate a liaison to monitor water and wastewater issues and represent Guadalupe County at regional water and wastewater meetings in which it has a strategic interest such as Canyon Regional Water Authority (CRWA), GBRA, Guadalupe County Ground Water Conservation District, Schertz/Seguin Municipal Corporation and Texas Water Development Board Region L. The liaison should report to the Court regularly activities within the region. In the future the Judge and Commissioners Court should consider strengthening this function if justified by providing additional resources to support this very important function.



FURTHER STRENGTHEN REGIONAL COLLABORATION

1. LOOK FOR REGIONAL PARTNERS

Guadalupe County should explore all opportunities for partnerships – in planning, policy development, and legislative advocacy. There is strength in numbers.

2. SUPPORT WATER & WASTEWATER PLANNING

The County is being asked by its residents and city leaders to play a more prominent role in managing growth, economic development, and water availability. This will require water and wastewater planning and, although not a primary county responsibility under state law, the County should consider supporting these efforts as a coordinating entity. The planning team recommends meeting with water utilities to communicate the community's vision for area development.

3. BE A FACILITATOR/CONVENER

Building upon the previous recommendation, it will be increasingly important for the County to fill the role of facilitator or convener amongst regional affiliates on a variety of issues - not all of which may be within the County's scope of authority but all of which will directly impact the lives of Guadalupe County residents and will benefit the County to remain clued in to these discussions.

4. ON-GOING CITY-COUNTY COOPERATION

There is both support from the county residents and a strong willingness from the cities to see City-County cooperation and collaboration. The Commissioners Court should continue to foster these partnerships and strengthen relationships with city leaders.

5. POSSIBLE JOINT SERVICES

The County greatly values the partnership it has with the City of Seguin in co-funding the Guadalupe Regional Medical Center (GRMC), one of the most innovative joint service ventures and the only city-county owned hospital in Texas. The benefits of the GRMC reach beyond the walls of the facility in that it has encouraged business development in the surrounding area developing a small hub for medical practitioners. The project team recommends exploring other joint service opportunities. One such example may be collaborating with schools and local social organizations on juvenile prevention and intervention programs.

6. JOINT INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT GROWTH PLANS

In anticipation of significant growth in student enrollment, many of the County's school districts are planning for construction and expansion projects over the next five years. Guadalupe County should work alongside school districts to address transportation concerns on county roads (i.e. low water-crossings or road expansions) before the completion of those projects.

7. REGIONAL AND STATE RELATIONSHIPS

Guadalupe County should explore ways in which to develop and strengthen regional and state relationships. While the County Judge is on the board of the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG) and the Transportation Planning Board for the Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (AAMPO), the County may also want to think about having the Road Administrator participate in related regional boards and workshops as a County delegate and continue to foster a working relationship with TXDOT.



EXPLORE MODELS FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES

1. EMERGENCY SERVICE DISTRICTS

Although Guadalupe County and its associated communities are to be commended for the level of collaboration it has established through inter-local and mutual aid agreements in the delivery of emergency services, the Commissioners Court, working through its Fire Marshall, should evaluate the current system and explore the feasibility of creating one or more Emergency Service Districts (ESDs).

ESDs are political subdivisions of the State of Texas that deliver fire and emergency medical services to local populations upon voter approval. ESDs are increasingly becoming the mechanism for adequate emergency service funding, increased levels and quality of service, and development of more tailored operational systems which match the needs of a particular area.

Through this evaluation, factors that should be assessed include density of population in potential service areas, assessed property values and projections for growth in the future, location of potential service facilities, projected response times and other factors the Fire Marshall and Commissioners Court may deem appropriate.

2. EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

The Commissioners Court has recognized the importance of excellent emergency service communications and has earmarked \$1.5 million in the FY 2018-19 Budget as an installment for addressing countywide emergency service radio communications. It is recommended that the County continue expeditiously with its assessment and procurement process to obtain a reliable, effective and sustainable communication system for all agency components of Guadalupe County emergency service delivery.



PREPARE THE COUNTY ORGANIZATION & FACILITIES FOR IMMINENT GROWTH

1. RECRUIT & RETAIN A HIGHLY QUALIFIED WORKFORCE

As the County grows, adds more staff, and functions become more complex – the County will need to increase its focus on human resources, especially considering the current competitive job market in the greater San Antonio area. Currently, human resource management is divided among the Human

Resources Department (HR), the Office of the Treasurer and each of the operating County offices and departments. This has become a source of conflict and disruption at times, something not uncommon in Texas counties.

To develop and keep top performers who will bring maximum value to taxpayers, the County should develop a consistent and uniform system across all departments for employee evaluation, performance measurement, and career steps. Though state law imposes some obstacles, the County might establish a system of rewards for performance or innovation, and the County needs a clear, uniform and defensible set of policies to address ineffective or poor performance.

Employee development could be more coordinated and is lacking in some areas. Many County leaders and department heads are addressing these issues within their own staffs, and Texas counties across the state have often struggled to bring uniform personnel policies to the County government – where authority is decentralized and partially controlled by various levels of independent elected officials. Even so, it is time for Guadalupe County to move further in that direction, and there are models among urban and urbanizing counties to use for guidance.

As for pay, the planning team found that, for the most part, employees believe that County compensation and benefits are fair within the context of available resources. There are, however, instances of complaints regarding the County's ability to be competitive in the market, particularly related to law enforcement, detention and dispatching, as well as complaints regarding compaction of salaries between lower grade employees and management level employees. Past County compensation policies that prescribed a flat dollar amount adjustment to the pay plan, while understandable, contributed to this compaction. The Commissioners Court may wish to re-examine this policy prior to taking any action regarding compensation in the new budget, or at least in the FY 2020 budget.

Compensation and benefits rank extremely high as threshold determinates in any organization's ability to recruit and retain high quality candidates for employment. The County has not conducted an outside comprehensive review of its compensation and benefits programs since the mid 1990's. Compensation should be market based. No single market applies to all positions in the County organization. Some positions are strictly local, others are regional, some have a statewide orientation while some may be national. With the County's current size and growth potential, it probably makes sense now for the County to contract with a qualified professional HR consulting firm to assist with this analysis. The scope of service should also address merit and performance pay, employee development and training and employee empowerment. The Commissioners Court may wish to appoint an Employee Advisory Committee, or a subcommittee of department heads and elected officials to contribute to this effort. Representation on the Committee should represent a good cross section of the County.

2. HIRE KEY POSITIONS TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT.

The challenge of rapid growth and development is being demonstrated in demand for professional and skilled positions within the County organization. As demand in this rapid growth environment for more and increasingly complicated transportation and drainage systems and other infrastructure increases, the demand for professional skills within the County organization to plan, design, review and supervise construction and in some cases finance improvements becomes increasingly evident. At some point it also becomes more cost effective to provide these skills internally rather than outsourcing the provision of these services.

Our internal assessment and benchmarking with peer counties identified a number of key essential positions which should be incorporated into the Guadalupe County organization at various points during the planning horizon:

- Purchasing Agent
- County Engineer
- County Project Manager
- County Budget Officer

3. EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE LONG TERM SERVICE DELIVERY AND PRODUCTIVITY

Our assessment of technology resulted in varying levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the County's application of technology due in part to the County's reliance on canned systems provided by either the State or purchased by the County through private vendors such as Tyler Technologies Inc. What is needed is a more in depth review than can be made in this assessment.

We recommend that the County continue to invest in technology to improve service delivery and performance but before doing so MIS and the user departments must agree on a strategy and plan for moving forward with agreed upon goals and outcomes. The first step in such a process may be for the Commissioners Court to appoint a Technology Users Advisory Committee, consisting of representative County Departments working with MIS to develop such a plan.

4. EMPLOY FINANCIAL FORECASTING AND PLANNING

Multi-year fiscal forecasting has long been recognized by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) and the bond rating agencies as an important management tool. Forecasting has become even more important today with the rapidly changing economics and demographics of our metropolitan areas.

Long range financial forecasting is an inexpensive and effective means of providing advance information to policy-makers to assist them in taking strategic action prior to the occurrence of problems and to help them better plan for the future. In most cases, long range fiscal forecasts may be prepared using Intel spread sheet technology and predetermined assumptions approved by policy makers. Although unfunded State and federal mandates are difficult to predict, fiscal forecasting techniques allow policy-makers to ask "what if" questions to deal with these issues should they occur. As the Texas Legislature continues to curb the authority and financial capabilities of cities, fiscal forecasting may be used as an early warning device to propose legislative or other action. The County may also wish to use fiscal forecasting as a tool to assess the impact of tax exemptions and tax abatements on future revenues.

The County should move to have a multi-year revenue and expenditure forecast prepared prior to the beginning of the FY 2019-20 Budget Preparation Process. The forecast should be used to identify any surplus or shortfall in funds over the multi-year planning horizon. This will give the County time, to make adjustments should the need arise and to set the context for the coming budget preparation process to be used by Elected Officials, Department Heads and others requesting funding. The multi-year forecast should be updated annually and incorporated into the County's budget Process and Financial Policies.

The first year rendition of the multi-year forecast should be limited to three years given the rapidly changing demographics of the County associated with growth. It is very difficult to forecast with any degree of accuracy in this environment beyond three years.

5. CREATING A UNIFIED ORGANIZATION WITH STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Outlined above are a number of recommendations intended to create a more unified and strategically managed County organization. To succeed, it must have the broad based support of the County leadership and respect and buy in from the employees and other stakeholders. Organizational change must come from within.

As the County becomes more and more urban, the roles of County elected officials will shift. The roles of the County Judge, Commissioners and other elected officials must shift from hands on operational involvement to policy direction, performance and collaboration. These policy makers must set clear goals with desired outcomes and measurable objectives. Routine decision making should be pushed to the lowest levels possible or customer service and responsiveness become a bureaucratic nightmare. Technology can help but it is not a panacea and in fact, it can become a means of avoiding accountability and may stifle creativity.

County elected officials and department heads should focus more on policy direction, performance and collaboration. There needs to be a means of linking rewards and consequences to good and bad performance. This is perhaps something the proposed Classification and Compensation Study recommended earlier can address. Policy makers must learn to empower

and rely more on their employees and reward good and creative performance. Policy makers and managers should provide clear direction, support, and take remedial action when necessary but hold their employees accountable.

6. FACILITY NEEDS AND 143 ACRES MASTER PLAN

In recent years, the County has done a tremendous job steadily addressing priority facility needs in a prudent and proactive manner – while keeping the burden off of taxpayers by maintaining the tax rate. The remodel of the County Courthouse, construction of the Justice Center, and most recently, the acquisition of the former Reidel Furniture building are all improvements that will help the County keep up with the increased service demands. The County, again, judiciously purchased 143 acres located off of I-10 (across from the County Sheriff's office and Road & Bridge Department) in anticipation of eventual expansion of the County's correctional facility. This isn't the only County department, however, who has outgrown their space. Environmental Health, for example, can no longer function efficiently in the Road & Bridge building, relying on the facilities showers as storage space. It would benefit the County to develop a master plan for this land, taking into account inter-department interaction to ensure efficiency and easy constituent communication. (Intertwined responsibilities of Environmental Health, Road & Bridge, and Fire/EMS and wide-spread dependency on GIS)

This master plan does not require plans for a complete build-out – in fact, it shouldn't until more concrete development occurs within the region. This master plan should be revisited and adjusted to reflect the changing needs of the County. Until this time, the County can maintain the unused land as open space or as ag land, providing feed for local farmers.

7. JUSTICE SYSTEM (JUVENILE DETENTION AND THE COURTS)

The scope of this strategic plan only allowed for a cursory look at the County's justice system and therefore, the Commissioner's Court should look into performing a needs and assessment study on the Courts and Juvenile Detention (and associated programs).