

GUIDING GUADALUPE COUNTY

**2018
STRATEGIC PLAN**



Commissioned by:
Guadalupe County Commissioners Court

Developed by:
Gap Strategies
Texas Perspectives
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GUIDING GUADALUPE COUNTY

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 August 2018. This plan is intended to be used as a guide – it communicates a community vision for the future growth of the County and highlights six strategic recommendations which address the pressing issues and anticipated needs of Guadalupe County.

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PLAN COMPONENTS & DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGIC PLAN

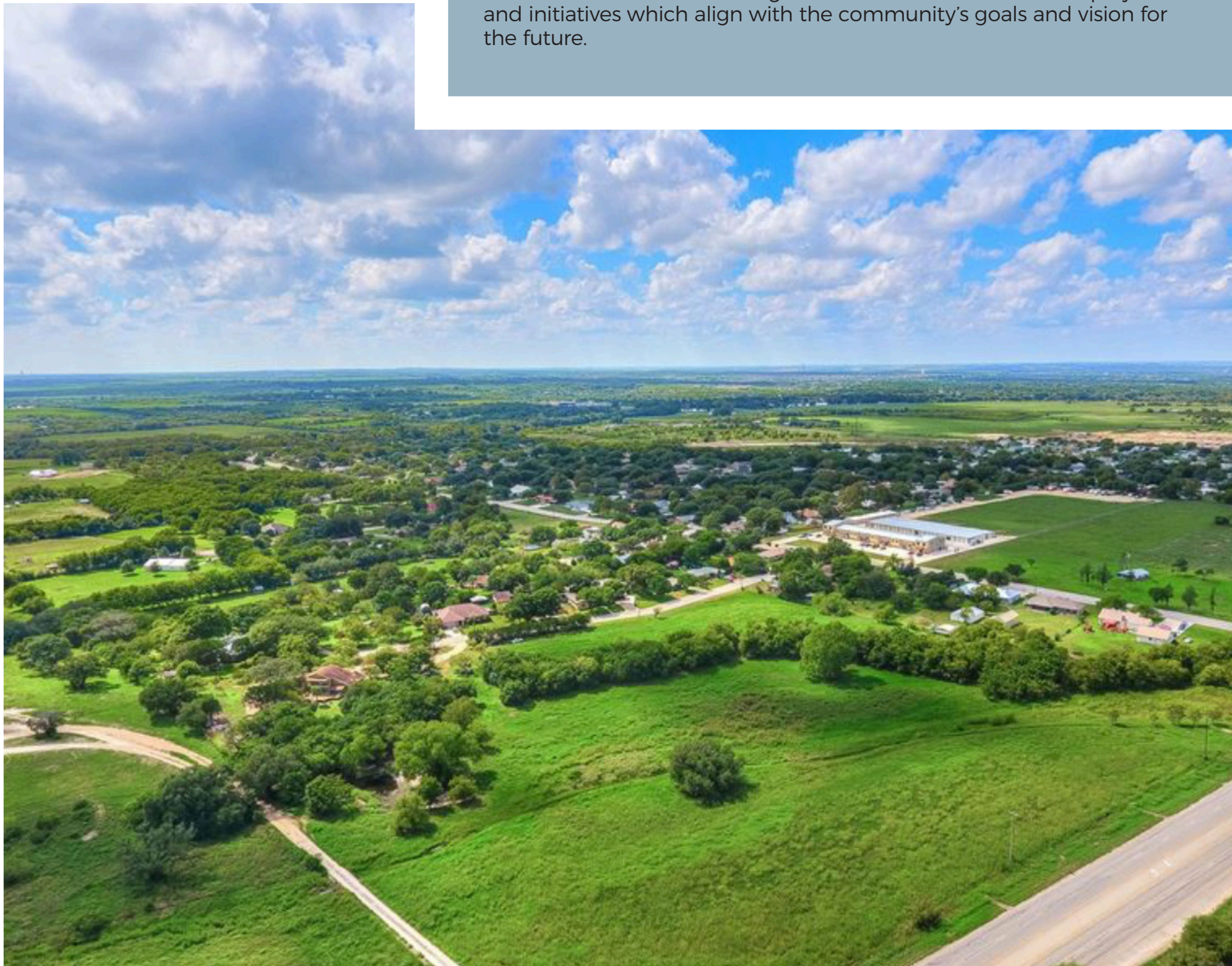
Guadalupe County continues to be ranked as one of the fastest growing counties in the state. Its relatively low cost of living and high quality of life are some of the many reasons why Texans are choosing to call it home. But nestled just east of San Antonio and alongside Interstate 35, Guadalupe County already lies in the path of major regional growth and by 2025, it is expected that the County will have increased in population by roughly the same size as the City of Schertz. This will present its fair share of opportunities and challenges for the community and for the County.

The responsibilities of county government, while limited in scope, continue to be wide-ranging and essential to maintaining public health, safety, and general welfare for its residents. Facing this fast paced growth and an ever-evolving community, Guadalupe County government will play a key role in addressing increased service demands and development needs.

It is important to note, however, that the Guadalupe County Commissioners Court is looking to do this with broad public participation -- in a manner which uses taxpayer money effectively and meets constituents' expectations and long-term vision for the community

WHAT IS A STRATEGIC PLAN?

A strategic plan is a long-term planning tool that details county needs and establishes policy priorities. It serves as a roadmap for County officials and leaders, directing efforts and resources towards projects and initiatives which align with the community's goals and vision for the future.





HOW WAS THE PLAN DEVELOPED?

This strategic plan is the result of more than 4 months of collaborative efforts between the Guadalupe County Commissioners Court and project consulting team. Through comprehensive research and analysis, as well as interviews and workshops with County officials, leaders and stakeholders, the Guiding Guadalupe County team worked to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges facing the County now and into the future.

In addition, Guadalupe County residents were encouraged to voice opinions and concerns at two town halls and through a community-wide survey. It is this participation and engagement of County residents which truly formed the direction and recommendations of this strategic plan.

Below is a list of project components which lead to the development of the Guiding Guadalupe Strategic Plan. Additional information about each component can be found throughout this report and strategic recommendations can be found at the back of this report beginning on pg. 38.

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENTS

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning is not a one step process - nor is it a linear progression from start to finish. It requires a commitment to planning's cyclical nature to constantly review, reassess, and redevelop this strategic plan and those initiatives which grow from it.

Guadalupe County is a dynamic place to live and work and a single document is not able to specify everything that must be done. In the face of rapid growth, this strategic plan should adapt with time and circumstances - it should evolve alongside the community it is intended for. But it is a comprehensive guidebook - the priorities and objectives set out within this strategic plan will help guide the overall direction of Guadalupe County for years to come.

1. 50+ interviews with County officials & leaders
2. Economic Assessment & Forecast Report
3. Two interactive "town halls" in Seguin & Schertz
4. Three surveys: Community, Municipalities, and School Districts
5. Review of city and regional master, comprehensive, thoroughfare, and economic development plans

COUNTY GOVERNMENT & AUTHORITY

GUADALUPE COUNTY

From the roads we drive on to the emergency services we depend on, our daily lives are greatly impacted by a collection of government entities. Most understand government at the city, state and federal levels, but the role of county government is often harder to grasp.

Considered the functional arm of state government, County government not only provides a variety of services for the benefit of their residents, but also administrative services on behalf of the state. These responsibilities include constructing and maintaining roads, recreational facilities and, in some cases, county airports; constructing and operating jails; operating the judicial system; maintaining public records; collecting property taxes; issuing vehicle registration and transfers; and registering voters. And increasingly, county governments are playing a role in the economic development of their local areas.

The powers and duties of a county government, however, are limited to those specifically provided by the constitution and the Texas Legislature. Counties do not possess home-rule status and therefore, have less legal authority than many municipal governments. For instance, counties do not have zoning authority while home-rule cities do. The next page details a few examples of county authority.

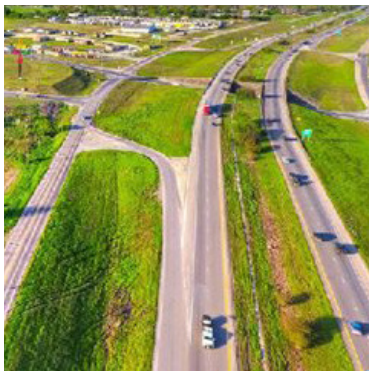


SUB DIVISIONS



Section 232 of Texas Local Government Code details county authority to enforce subdivision regulations within their unincorporated areas through a plat review and approval process. This authority, however, is greatly tied to county permitting of related requirements such as drainage and septic system standards.

TRANS POR TATION



Counties have authority to establish set back lines on public roads (TLGC 232.025), as well as right-of ways and roadway widths required for the arterial and local roads within a subdivision (TLGC 233.032). And looking at county authority through a more regional lense, TLGC 232.102 allows for the creation of major thoroughfare plans in urban counties.

OTHER DUTIES



Counties also perform various other functions including law enforcement and criminal justice. For example, Art. V, Sec. 23 of the Texas Constitution details the sheriff as the chief law enforcement officer for the county and is responsible for operating the county jails and maintaining communications with other law enforcement throughout the county.



Despite limited authority, counties can get creative in how best to serve their residents. Guadalupe County, for example, is one of few counties across the state that has taken on a strategic plan – and done so by involving their citizens in the planning process.

COUNTY ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW



A PLAN DRIVEN BY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Guadalupe County Commissioners Court envisioned a strategic plan created by its residents for its residents. The strategic plan, therefore, was systematically developed through extensive community engagement: stakeholder interviews, workshops, two public “town halls” in Seguin and Schertz, a dedicated project website and Facebook page, and three surveys including one community-wide survey.

These community engagement efforts were supported by both traditional and online outreach. Three press releases, along with almost a dozen articles, appeared in local news outlets detailing the project, the strategic plan, and the various opportunities for residents to provide input.

The project website, which housed town hall information and the community survey, was reached by 4,158 unique visitors. And in addition to the cities, leaders, and local community organizations who linked our project website and survey

GATHERING INPUT & INSIGHT

730

COMMUNITY SUR-
VEY PARTICIPANTS

128

TOWN HALL
ATTENDEES

50+

STAKEHOLDER
INTERVIEWS &

ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT & FORECAST REPORT

A Guadalupe County economic assessment & forecast report was produced by TXP, Inc. members of the project team. The report examines county trends and forecasts key variables, including population, employment, personal income, and housing costs. Although various aspects of the report are informed by state and regional planning entities, population and economic growth projections were independently developed for Guadalupe County. The complete report can be found on pg. 12.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS & SURVEYS

Over 50 stakeholders were interviewed throughout this process, including 25 county officials and department heads and 17 municipal leaders. Three independent surveys were also developed to help inform this strategic plan: a community-wide survey, a municipal survey, and a survey for school districts. Principal findings from this outreach can be found beginning on pg. 22.



on their Facebook pages and websites, four rounds of Facebook advertisements were placed before the town halls and before the community survey was closed.

Additional research and analysis was conducted by the project team and used in conjunction with the input received through town halls to ensure that the Guiding Guadalupe County Strategic Plan was informed through the most comprehensive collection of data. This includes an assessment of city and regional plans, the County budget and tax rate, as well as the development of a Guadalupe County Economic Assessment and Forecast Report.

COUNTY ASSESSMENT

ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

& FORECAST REPORT

PRESENTED BY TXP,

In order to provide context for strategic planning, TXP (as a member of the Gap Strategies team) has been asked by Guadalupe County to provide forecasts of key economic and demographic variables (total population, total employment, total personal income, and employment broken down by major industrial sector) for the community, as well as examine factors that will have an impact on not only aggregate growth, but where growth occurs within the county.

As part of the San Antonio Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), Guadalupe County is connected to the regional economy. However, Austin is a growing influence, especially as an employment site for Guadalupe residents. The peer analysis of comparable counties in the region, therefore, includes the non-core counties in the Austin MSA as well as those in the San Antonio MSA. A similar discussion of the communities within Guadalupe county is also provided. Overall, this effort should be seen as providing a baseline expectation for the local economy going forward, in the process illuminating the variables that will ultimately determine how and where Guadalupe county grows.

STATUS & NEAR-TERM OUTLOOK



+ 27.2%

JOB GROWTH SINCE 2014

WHILE POPULATION GROWTH HAS INCREASED 11.5% SINCE 2014, JOB GROWTH HAS BEEN EVEN MORE RAPID, INCREASING TO 42,013 THIS YEAR, UP FROM 33,021 IN 2014.

Recent trends indicate strong overall growth in Guadalupe County, as the population has risen faster than the state or nation, and job growth has surged in recent years. Over the past four years, total county population has grown from just over 147,230 to a projected 164,126 this year, a gain of 11.5 percent. Job growth has been even more rapid, with county employment of 33,021 during 2014 rising 42,013 this year, up 27.2 percent. Personal income has kept pace, rising from just short of \$5.9 billion during 2014 to a projected \$7.8 billion this year. Near-term forecasts are driven by demand, created by a combination of proximity to emerging employment opportunities in San Antonio, relatively attractive cost of living (especially related to housing), in-migration to the region, and several substantial economic development relocations. In the short run, there is little on the horizon to suggest these patterns will change significantly, as all indicators point to continued growth over the next several years.

THE NATIONAL ECONOMY

Forecasting over an extended period of time is almost always a “top-down” process, as national trends have an impact on every region, especially in the near-term. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projects that recent legislation—the 2017 tax act and the legislation affecting discretionary spending—will strengthen the momentum in household and business spending. As a result, in CBO’s projections, employment picks up considerably this year, and during this year and next, the unemployment rate falls significantly below the agency’s estimate of the natural rate of unemployment, and inflation and interest rates rise. Beyond that point, rising interest rates and prices, along with the slower growth in federal outlays after 2019 projected under current law, restrain demand and thus lower GDP growth from 2020 to 2026, in CBO’s projections. CBO anticipates an end to that episode of slightly slower growth by 2027. In the agency’s projections, the growth of output rises slightly in 2027, once again returning output to its historical level relative to potential output in 2027 and 2028. Also in 2027, the unemployment rate falls and returns to its historical level relative to the natural rate, interest rates rise, and the rate of inflation is 2 percent.

EMPLOYMENT	2014	2015	2016	2017*	2018+
Natural Resources & Mining	457	384	271	235	295
Construction	2,034	2,310	2,409	2,548	2,563
Manufacturing	6,706	7,080	7,236	7,480	7,689
Trade, Transport & Utilities	6,818	6,643	10,082	11,564	11,888
Information	233	253	265	226	233
Financial Activities	1,037	1,098	1,118	1,134	1,155
Professional & Business Services	2,104	2,313	2,672	3,076	3,162
Education & Health Services	7,236	7,461	7,634	7,911	8,133
Leisure & Hospitality	3,775	3,959	4,306	4,097	4,212
Other Services	1,312	1,290	1,225	1,216	1,265
Public Administration	1,309	1,335	1,355	1,380	1,419
TOTAL	33,021	34,126	38,573	40,869	42,013
POPULATION	147,230	151,164	155,265	159,659	164,126
PERSONAL INCOME (\$000s)	\$5,867,962	\$6,301,673	\$6,767,440	\$7,353,885	\$7,772,887
RETAIL SALES (\$000s)	\$1,447,855	\$1,446,467	\$1,464,726	\$1,443,383	\$1,450,688

Sources: BLS, BEA, Texas Comptroller, TXP. Note: *2017 estimated; +2018 projected

PEER ANALYSIS

Context is an important element of assessing the pattern of growth in Guadalupe County, both in terms of understanding relative strengths and weaknesses and evaluating the community’s overall competitive position within Central Texas. To that end, a peer set consisting of the non-core counties of the Austin and San Antonio MSAs (i.e., excluding Travis and Bexar counties) was used for comparison purposes. The following is an overall competitive assessment of the county’s position vs. its peer set on local variables that drive future performance. Unless otherwise noted, the source is the American Community Survey done by the Census Bureau.

OVERALL GROWTH MEASURES

Guadalupe County is in the middle of the region in terms of most measures of overall activity, including recent population growth, both overall and due to in-migration, job growth, and income.

COUNTIES	POPULATION (2017)	% CHANGE (2010-2017)	EMPLOYMENT (2017)	% CHANGE (2010-2017)
Atascosa	48,981	9.1%	20,295	12.6%
Bandera	22,351	9.1%	9,293	9.8%
Comal	141,009	30%	64,580	29.9%
Guadalupe	159,659	21.4%	74,946	23.8%
Kendall	44,026	31.8%	20,070	30.4%
Medina	50,066	8.8%	20,459	10.5%
Wilson	49,304	14.9%	23,320	17.9%
Bastrop	84,761	14.1%	38,709	19.5%
Caldwell	42,338	11%	17,694	16.2%
Hays	214,485	35.6%	104,634	40%
Williamson	547,545	28.4%	276,071	33.7%



GUADALUPE COUNTY
PER CAPITA INCOME (2016)

\$42,164

Per capita income has risen 24.5% since 2010.



GUADALUPE COUNTY
POPULATION (2017)

159,659

Population has increased 21.4% since 2010 and 75.3% is due to in-migration.

SOURCES: BEA, TXP, BLS, CENSUS BUREAU

ECONOMIC BASE AND LABOR FORCE

Guadalupe county is also middle-of-the pack in terms of labor force capacity, with a high concentration in production activity relative to its peer set.

EMPLOYMENT	% High School	% College	STAAR Test ¹	% Employment in Mgmt. ²	% Employment in Production ³
Atascosa	75.3%	14.3%	69%	25.5%	14.5%
Bandera	86.8%	24.0%	73%	38.2%	7.6%
Comal	91.5%	34.5%	84%	38.4%	8.9%
Guadalupe	88.2%	26.5%	79%	33.5%	15.4%
Kendall	93.0%	39.3%	80%	44.4%	6.8%
Medina	82.5%	19.4%	75%	32.1%	11.2%
Wilson	84.9%	19.3%	78%	31.2%	11.5%
Bastrop	80.6%	18.4%	70%	31.9%	11.2%
Caldwell	79.1%	14.7%	61%	24.2%	15.4%
Hays	88.9%	36.3%	78%	38.2%	8.4%
Williamson	92.9%	39.4%	76%	45.2%	7.8%

¹State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness. Sources: TEA, TXP
²Share of employment in management, business, science, and arts occupations,
³Share of employment in production, transportation, and material moving occupations

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

The transportation infrastructure of Guadalupe county is relatively built-out, as highway miles as a share of centerline miles (indicative of inter-regional connection capacity) and centerline miles divided by land mass (indicative of intra-county roadway network) are both among the most developed counties in the region (lagging only behind the counties of the I-35 corridor).

	Land Area (acres)	Highway Miles	Centerline Miles	Highway as % Of Centerline	Centerline Miles/ Land Area
Atascosa	1,219.5	173.2	1,290.9	13.4%	1.06
Bandera	791.0	62.5	652.8	9.6%	0.83
Comal	559.5	80.3	1,471.4	5.5%	2.63
Guadalupe	711.3	293.1	1,528.9	19.2%	2.15
Kendall	662.5	60.2	682.5	8.8%	1.03
Medina	1,325.4	109.4	1,262.6	8.7%	0.95
Wilson	803.7	123.9	1,191.6	10.4%	1.48
Bastrop	888.2	147	1,380.1	10.7%	1.55
Caldwell	545.3	101.1	849.4	11.9%	1.56
Hays	678.0	71.8	1,489.0	4.8%	2.20
Williamson	1,118.3	210.6	3,322.9	6.3%	2.97

URBAN V. RURAL AND HOUSING COSTS

Growth from both Austin and San Antonio has tended to spread to the north and east, reflecting, among other factors, environmental and topographical conditions. As counties become more urban, housing costs rise, and travel time to work improves.

	% Rural	Median Housing Value	Work Outside County	Travel Time to Work (minutes)	Median Monthly Rent
Atascosa	60.7%	\$93,000	45.0%	30.3	\$763
Bandera	100.0%	\$159,200	55.4%	35.5	\$842
Comal	46.2%	\$207,000	44.0%	30.8	\$1,018
Guadalupe	26.2%	\$169,200	62.0%	27.9	\$966
Kendall	58.2%	\$285,900	45.0%	30.3	\$1,098
Medina	61.6%	\$126,000	55.3%	30.4	\$709
Wilson	55.9%	\$162,300	60.1%	32.7	\$889
Bastrop	63.9%	\$142,100	54.9%	34.1	\$909
Caldwell	42.3%	\$119,400	58.9%	29.7	\$772
Hays	31.7%	\$195,800	46.4%	29.8	\$992
Williamson	12.0%	\$209,400	47.2%	27.4	\$1,120

TRENDS WITHIN GUADALUPE COUNTY

Guadalupe County is really a tale of two local economies. The western side of the county (including Schertz and Cibolo) is fully integrated into the Greater San Antonio regional economy, and its major communities fit the profile of edge cities. With just about three-quarters of residents of those two communities working outside the county (and a mean travel time to work that approaches half an hour), it is clear that many are getting up every day and driving some distance to their place of employment. This has both positive and negative implications. On the one hand, there are much greater opportunities for those with “modern economy” skills in San Antonio (essentially, the ability to process and manage information), which translates into about four out of ten workers in management, arts, and professional services occupations. These jobs are relatively high paying, as the median household income on the western side of the county is \$80,000+, resulting in much higher housing values (and costs) and significantly lower poverty rates. On the other hand, online shopping and the growing tendency to make retail purchases near work have contributed to substantial retail leakage outside the area.

OVERALL GROWTH MEASURES

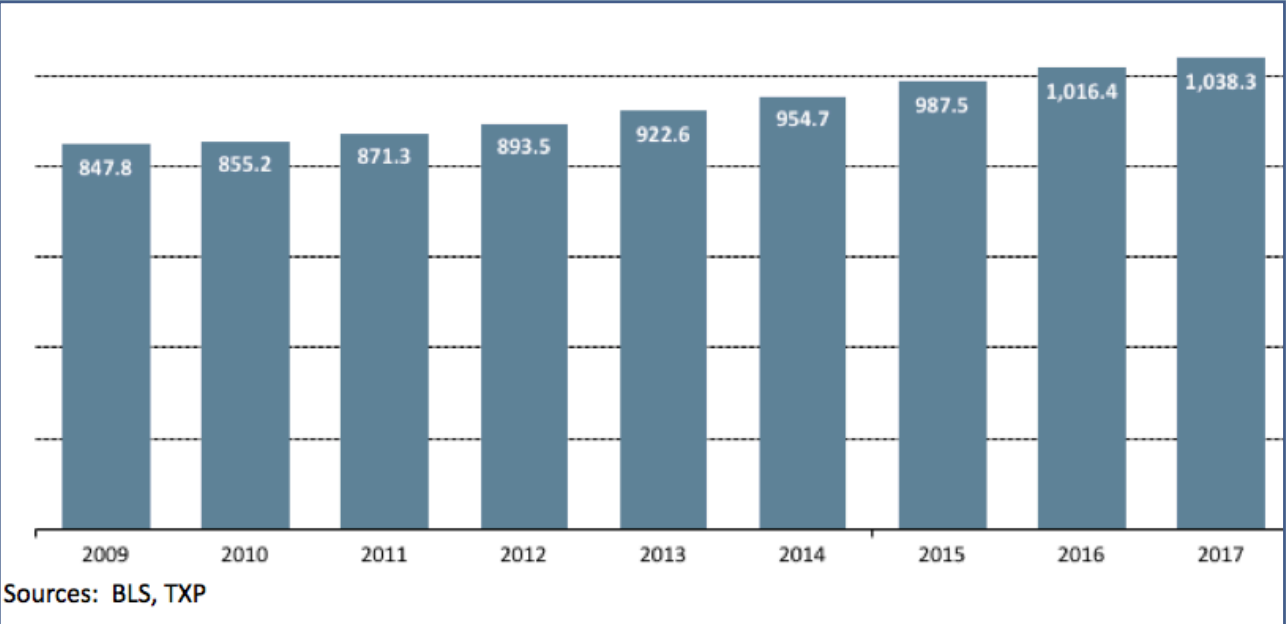
Eastern Guadalupe county is characterized by a more traditional economic base that is more self-contained. Much stronger concentration in manufacturing and a lower level of those traveling outside the county to work indicates that many who live on the eastern side of the county work in the Seguin area. The increased activity at Fort Sam Houston is a positive sign and travel activity remains strong. Going forward, competition for tourist dollars of all kinds is expected to remain fierce, suggesting that continued investment in the tourist infrastructure of the area will be required. Meanwhile, rising incomes



SAN ANTONIO AREA ECONOMY

Reflecting trends across Texas, job growth in San Antonio’s regional economy slowed some during 2017, with the addition of a total of almost 21,900 net new jobs reflecting an annual pace of 2.3 percent. Since 2012, the San Antonio region has added almost 145,000 workers to the job base. Most of the growth is concentrated in consumer related sectors, reflecting continued population gains. Core assets, such as tourism, military, regional commercial centers, and a rising technology sector, are expected to keep growth positive for the foreseeable future, although forces beyond the region may slow the pace over the next several years. The combination of solid demand, an attractive financing environment, and interest from capital sources outside the region has spurred development. In the process, home prices have risen; sales activity is at an all-time high, and a substantial volume of activity remains in the pipeline.

San Antonio MSA Total Employment (000s)



throughout the region and tighter linkages with communities on both sides of the Border bode well for all kinds of commercial activity, including provision of specialized professional services.

POPULATION & EMPLOYMENT	Population	Employed	% Mgmt	% Production	Unemployment Rate
<i>Cibolo</i>	25,256	11,208	41.1%	10.1%	5.9%
<i>Schertz</i>	37,597	17,647	40.9%	10.9%	4.4%
<i>Seguin</i>	27,543	11,563	23.5%	24.0%	6.4%
<i>Marion</i>	927	389	18.8%	13.4%	6.9%
<i>Staples</i>	244	110	39.1%	19.1%	5.2%
<i>Santa Clara</i>	807	389	39.6%	10.3%	7.6%
<i>New Berlin</i>	561	264	42.2%	7.2%	1.1%
<i>Guadalupe County</i>	147,313	68,376	33.5%	15.4%	5.2%
<i>New Braunfels</i>	67,097	32,157	33.3%	11.1%	4.4%

INCOME-RELATED	Per Capita	% Poverty	Retail Sales	Sales per Capita	Sales per \$ of Income
<i>Cibolo</i>	\$30,753	5.1%	\$156.8	\$6,207	\$0.20
<i>Schertz</i>	\$32,090	7.4%	\$723.3	\$19,238	\$0.60
<i>Seguin</i>	\$20,910	23.0%	\$485.2	\$17,616	\$0.84
<i>Marion</i>	\$20,808	11.5%	\$11.3	\$12,148	\$0.58
<i>Staples</i>	\$27,458	1.6%	\$0.7	\$2,707	\$0.10
<i>Santa Clara</i>	\$30,678	14.8%	\$1.5	\$1,807	\$0.06
<i>New Berlin</i>	\$34,387	1.3%	\$3.2	\$5,774	\$0.20
<i>Guadalupe County</i>	\$28,310	10.5%	\$1,443.3	\$9,798	\$0.35
<i>New Braunfels</i>	\$27,501	9.5%	33.3%	\$29,951	\$1.09

SUB-COUNTY OTHER MEASURES	Median Home Value	Median Rent	Travel Time to Work (min.)	Work Outside County	Number of Companies
<i>Cibolo</i>	\$206,900	\$1,519	28.6	76.5%	887
<i>Schertz</i>	\$179,000	\$1,128	26.9	72.3%	2,013
<i>Seguin</i>	\$110,600	\$790	19.6	29.4%	2,146
<i>Marion</i>	\$84,700	\$722	33.0	60.5%	NA
<i>Staples</i>	\$117,300	\$955	26.3	77.5%	NA
<i>Santa Clara</i>	\$180,800	\$1,010	27.3	63.8%	NA
<i>New Berlin</i>	\$250,000	\$625	32.3	72.6%	NA
<i>Guadalupe County</i>	\$169,200	\$966	26.2	62.0%	9,841
<i>New Braunfels</i>	\$177,200	\$1,036	24.4	43.0%	6,109

LONGER-TERM OUTLOOK: GUADALUPE COUNTY

The longer-term economic forecast for the county overall remains positive, although the pace may abate. Forecasting over an extended time horizon is more heavily influenced by the “supply” side of the equation, in this case meaning variables like business climate, quality of the school system, transportation and utility infrastructure, availability of developable land, labor force capacity and quality, and recreational and cultural amenities. Over the period from 2020 to 2040, total county population is to reach just under 285,000, up from the 164,126 estimated for this year. Job growth, meanwhile, will add about 30,000 jobs over the next twenty-two years, while total personal income should approximately triple in that same period. Central Texas should continue to be an attractive site for both companies and people to relocate, and Guadalupe county is well positioned to continue to receive its fair share of that growth, as the community stacks up reasonably well against its peer set of counties on most local measures that determine longer-term economic performance.

EMPLOYMENT	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Natural Resources & Mining	411	420	507	567	638
Construction	2,731	3,100	3,515	3,970	4,466
Manufacturing	7,957	8,637	9,317	10,004	10,703
Trade, Transport, & Utilities	12,552	14,326	16,250	18,349	20,643
Information	246	280	318	359	404
Financial Activities	1,195	1,297	1,399	1,502	1,607
Professional & Business Services	3,428	4,165	5,012	5,984	7,096
Education & Health Services	8,676	10,155	11,806	13,655	15,727
Leisure & Hospitality	4,536	5,430	6,447	7,603	8,919
Other Services	1,175	1,287	1,264	1,427	1,606
Public Administration	1,453	1,532	1,595	1,638	1,661
TOTAL	44,359	50,630	57,430	64,846	72,953
POPULATION	173,294	197,792	224,354	253,327	284,996
PERSONAL INCOME (\$000s)	\$8,676,621	\$11,381,077	\$14,836,021	\$19,251,82	\$24,890,682
RETAIL SALES (\$000s)	\$1,538,388	\$1,917,000	\$2,373,996	\$2,926,563	\$3,594,566

SOURCES: TXP

The picture is more complicated within the county. Intra-county growth is somewhat unbalanced, as the western side of the county continues to leverage its better-educated workforce and proximity to San Antonio toward higher-paying jobs and greater income, which in turn attracts new residents to the opportunities and amenities provided. Eastern Guadalupe county, by contrast, is a center of production and job opportunities for middle-skilled workers. This concentration is an area of strength, as many Central Texas communities struggle to accommodate those who do not have a college education and/or are not prepared for the modern, knowledge-intensive economy. However, as is often the case, lower incomes are correlated with higher poverty rates and attendant social issues, including challenges related to school performance.

CONCLUSION

In many ways, Guadalupe county has the best of both worlds at this point, as there are job opportunities for residents of all skill sets. However, many of those opportunities exist outside the county, as almost two-thirds of the community works in a county other than Guadalupe. As the county looks to the future, a challenge is to begin to attract and locate employers that require the labor force capacity of the western side of county. Success in this effort would also address a second challenge, as the county is leaking retail and consumer activity. Some of this is due to the rise of e-commerce, but some can also be attributed to the pattern of shopping in proximity to work, rather than just near your place of residence. Meanwhile, the historic pattern of growth following growth is evident, as the reach of and connection to San Antonio extends further and further east. As this pattern continues, there could be displacement effects on the eastern side of the county, as new higher-end housing could begin to drive prices up in way that could have a crowding-out effect for those already there.

In sum, Guadalupe county in the aggregate has most of the ingredients in place for continued growth and prosperity. The overarching challenge is to manage the process (especially as it relates to infrastructure, transportation, and community amenities that serve as key attractors) to make sure that new activity is balanced and distributed throughout the county in such a way as to maximize the overall level of benefit and sustainability.

LONGER-TERM OUTLOOK

SAN ANTONIO REGIONAL ECONOMY

Continued recovery in the national economy, strong in-migration, and success in business recruitment are just some of the factors contributing to the solid recent performance of the San Antonio regional economy. There is little on the horizon to expect that these trends will not continue.

The national economy influences the outlook for the San Antonio region, as national and international trends are the determinants of success or failure for an increasing number of locally-based firms. In addition to the obvious connection for the bulk of the local tech manufacturing and corporate headquarters, “soft” technology and professional services are also serving broader and broader markets. Tourism is also an important component of the regional economy that responds to external trends. Meanwhile, local consumer confidence is influenced by the overall national situation and outlook. At the same time, the growing appeal of the region as a site for expansion and relocation (of both people and firms) helps the San Antonio area perform “above the line” relative to the U.S. as a whole. Other key factors that will help shape the course of the regional economy include:

- **Continued appeal as a site for corporate headquarters.** A favorable tax climate, proximity to growing markets (especially to the south), good transportation infrastructure, and strong roots in the region for several firms are just some of the factors that have contributed to the San Antonio area becoming an increasingly appealing location for headquarters operations.
- **Maintenance of traditional pillars of the local economy (the military, tourism, regional commercial activity, etc.).** The increased activity at Fort Sam Houston is a positive sign and travel activity remains strong. Going forward, competition for tourist dollars of all kinds is expected to remain fierce, suggesting that continued investment in the tourist infrastructure of the area will be required. Meanwhile, rising incomes throughout the region and tighter linkages with communities on both sides of the Border bode well for all kinds of commercial activity, including provision of specialized professional services.
- **Growth in activity related to aerospace, biosciences, soft technology, business and financial services.** Cluster development continues in all these areas, as each should make an increasing contribution to the local economy over the next ten years. The San Antonio region increasingly is seen as a “value” alternative to Austin for certain firms in this space and should attract more related activity in the future.
- **The strong presence of Mexican money in San Antonio.** About 40,000 Mexicans live in San Antonio, and nearly one-fourth of them may be considered wealthy, says Luis Escobar González, a former Mexico City businessman who opened a Hispanic marketing company in San Antonio.
- **Ongoing labor force development.** Over the longer-term, relatively high birth rates and rapid in-migration create more potential workers, contributing to overall economic growth. However, this “glass-is-half-full” scenario assumes adequate training and skills development, which is by no means a given.

COUNTY ASSESSMENT

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

In early May, members of the project team, led by Marcus Jahns, began meeting with County department heads, staff, city officials, and community leaders to assess the state of Guadalupe County – the organization and its services. These stakeholder meetings tallied over 50 individuals across 16 county offices, 9 cities, and 6 community groups. The product of these efforts is an analysis of the County’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) now and into the near future.

Guadalupe County is located directly in the path of regional growth – and city leaders are enthusiastic about the economic opportunities this may bring. While the major cities have their own Economic Development Corporations working to drum up business, city leaders were outspoken in their support for the County to play an increased role in this area and help present a “unified front” to potential employers. This is not uncommon - Counties across Texas are assuming the leadership position in economic development.

County staff, however, are in preparation mode, knowing full well that this growth also means an increased demand in services. Environmental Health (EH), for example, will see an increase in both septic and floodplain permits, adding to the roughly 650 permits they currently handle each year. Calls and costs associated with law enforcement and emergency services will continue to increase as well. It is worth noting that the County communicates between departments well, with the best example being the effectiveness with which Road & Bridge, EH, and Fire/EMS work with one another. In addition, most departments reported feeling heard by the Commissioners Court and confident in the direction the County is heading.

Despite the aforementioned support from city leaders, there is a visible lack of communication between local government entities. The cities and the County still operate in silos, failing to actively share information, and focusing insularly on issues that may require a more regional or collaborative approach.

County resiliency and its ability to thrive through changing physical, social and economic conditions will depend on the success of local businesses, the availability of financial resources, organization growth, and the willingness of local government entities to work together. The challenge will be moving forward in a way that truly connects all county departments, cities, and constituents to manage growth while maintaining a high quality of life.

“The County is going to grow - so we should be growing with it.”
- Stakeholder

COUNTY ASSESSMENT

BENCHMARKING

Below is a chart which details some growth rankings and financial measurements for 14 counties. The counties below were either chosen based on their proximity or similarity in population size to Guadalupe County. In doing so, we gain some insight into how the County is operating based on size and within a regional context. For example, despite being the 212th largest county in Texas by land area, it is the 28th largest county by population and growing fast - coming in 13th within the state's growth rankings. Despite this influx, the County has one of the lowest debt rates.

It is worth noting that while benchmarking is a helpful comparative process, it should not be used as a standalone tool to evaluate how the County is doing. Discrepancies in county size, organization, services, and regional context make it nearly impossible to make consistent and meaningful comparisons across the board.

COUNTIES	POPULATION (2017)	POP. DENSITY (mi²)	GROWTH RANKING (TX)	BUDGET (2018)	TAX RATE	M&O	I&S
Atascosa	48,981	40.2	56 th	\$32,061,097	0.6199	\$0.5970	\$0.0229
Williamson	547,545	489.6	6 th	\$191,598,091	0.466	\$0.2990	\$0.1675
Comal	141,009	252	5 th	\$52,229,202	0.357	\$0.2789	\$0.0658
Guadalupe	159,659	224.5	13 th	\$58,551,611	0.3799	\$0.3624	\$0.0175
Kendall	44,026	66.5	3 rd	\$27,035,075	0.4177	\$0.3489	\$0.0637
Medina	50,066	37.8	60 th	\$30,243,653	0.5517	\$0.5219	\$0.0298
Wilson	49,304	61.3	25 th	\$21,698,402	0.473	\$0.4506	\$0.0232
Bastrop	84,761	95.4	26 th	\$37,535,643	0.589	\$0.5138	\$0.0759
Caldwell	42,338	77.6	37 th	\$20,424,447	0.7753	\$0.7072	\$0.068
Hays	214,485	316.3	2 nd	\$152,884,235	0.445	\$0.3204	\$0.1246
Rockwall	96,788	762.1	11 th	\$32,720,827	0.349	\$0.2558	\$0.0939
Kaufman	122,883	157.4	16 th	\$39,317,896	0.5887	\$0.5322	\$0.0565
Ellis	173,620	185.6	21 st	\$63,571,960	0.359	\$0.33073	\$0.0289
Johnson	167,301	230.9	42 nd	\$62,724,041	0.472	\$0.4371	\$0.0348

SOURCES: TEXAS COMPTROLLER, US CENSUS

COUNTY ASSESSMENT

CITY SURVEY

From the beginning, the County knew that city leadership and staff would be uniquely suited to provide insight on the strategic plan. After all, cities are often experts in both planning and constituent communication. The County was particularly interested in the following: the current needs and priorities of the city, population and economic projections, and what role the County should play in planning for the future. To capture this information, the project's consulting team developed a survey that was distributed to the cities of Cibolo, Kingsbury, Marion, New Berlin, New Braunfels, Santa Clara, Schertz, Seguin, and Staples.

The project team aggregated survey responses, as well as cross-referenced answers from the urban cities against answers from more rural cities. As one might expect, priorities such as transit, walk/bike trails, and road expansion and congestion relief were ranked significantly higher by the urban cities. There were no statistically significant differences in rankings for the remaining priorities besides a slightly higher preference for economic development and long-term regional planning indicated by the County's rural communities.

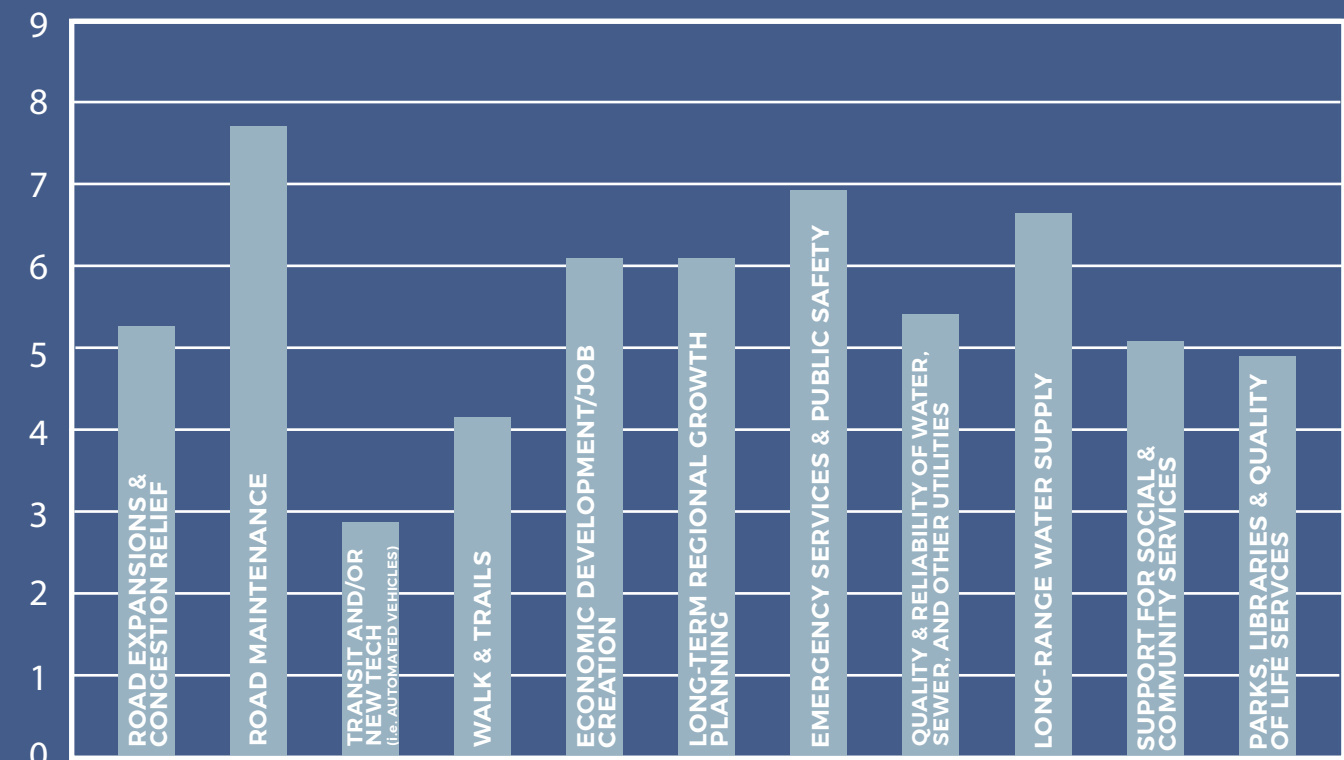
There was a consensus among the municipalities, however, with all nine agreeing that Guadalupe County will continue to grow and “change at a rapid pace in the coming decade”. Eight of the nine feel it is important for the County to “plan for the growth by coordinating transportation and infrastructure” rather than “Keep[ing] taxes as low as possible, even if [it] means squeezing regional services”.

Survey responses indicated a strong dependence upon city-county cooperation with almost all the cities reporting interacting with the County's Sheriff's Office (Law Enforcement), Elections, and Road & Bridge departments regularly.

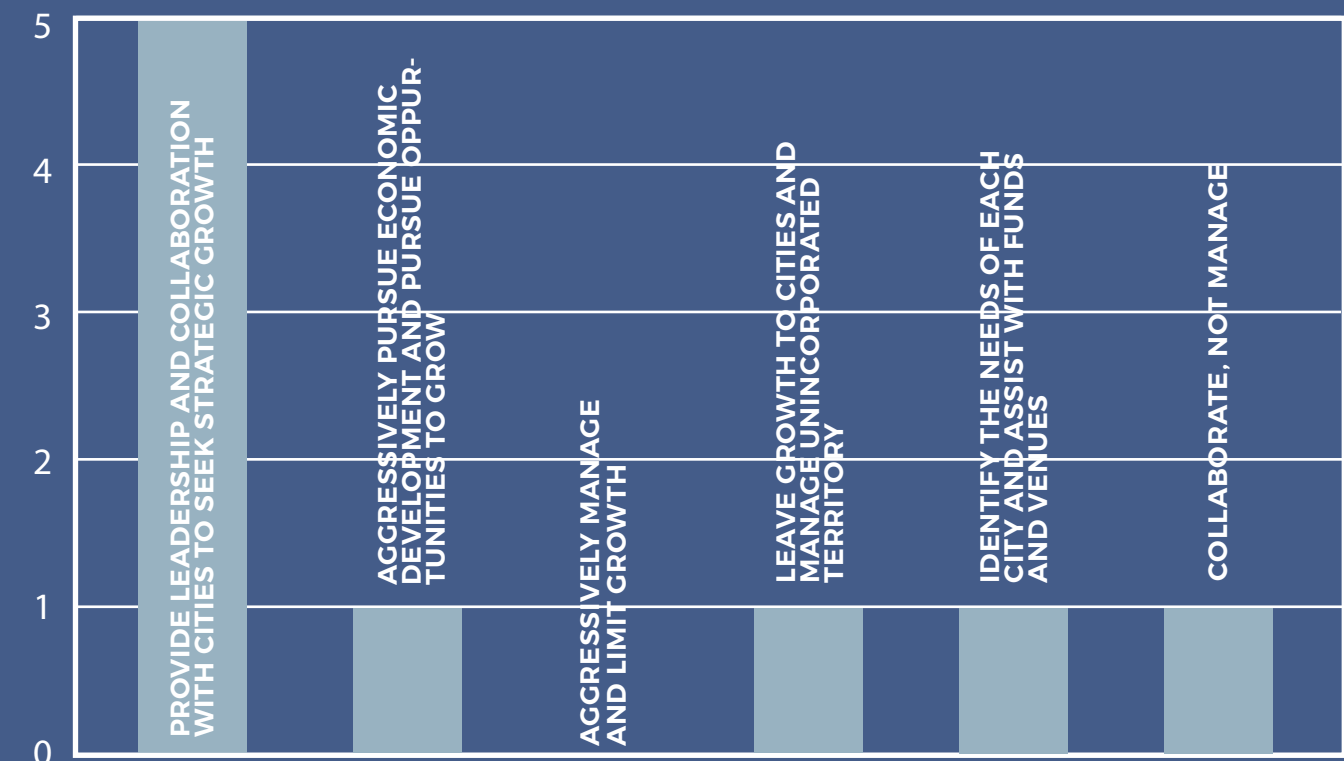
A complete report highlighting major findings was presented to the Guadalupe County Commissioners Court in a public workshop on July 24, 2018.



TOP PRIORITIES, RANKED 1 (LOWEST) - 10 (HIGHEST)



"HOW CAN GUADALUPE COUNTY BEST ASSIST CITIES IN ADDRESSING FUTURE GROWTH?" (ANSWERS TALLIED)



COUNTY ASSESSMENT

CITY & REGIONAL PLANS

Planning is almost second nature for cities. They go through a continuous cycle of preparing, developing, implementing, and retooling master plans and thoroughfare plans. When asked via the project’s city survey, all nine respondents reported regularly referring to at least one city plan, with the average being three. These plans only extend as far as the city limits, but analyzed together, can tell the story of Guadalupe County’s progression over time – the ways in which the County has developed, the changes in community vision and priorities, and the methods of management seen as best fit for the community.

The project team reviewed 10 city and regional plans (listed on the next page) from the following municipal and regional entities. Although not located in Guadalupe County, the project team chose to examine plans from the City of San Marcos as their growth has impacted regional development.

Below is a chart which highlights a number of policy priorities and the ways in which these entities have chosen to prepare and plan for their future. Developing partnerships with other cities, for example, was highlighted in all 10 plans. Across a

variety of services and policy areas, each entity recognized the value of looking for partners and solutions beyond the confinement of their city limits – a sentiment emphasized most recently by city mayors during one of the project’s stakeholder meetings (refer to pg. 22). Shared transportation priorities are highlighted on pg. 30.

- City of Schertz Comprehensive Land Use Plan, 2001
- City of Schertz Transportation Master Thoroughfare Plan, 2017
- City of Cibolo Master Plan, 2016
- City of Seguin Master Thoroughfare Plan, 2017
- City of Seguin Comprehensive Plan, 2008
- City of New Braunfels Comprehensive Plan, 2018
- City of New Braunfels Downtown Plan
- City of San Marcos Transportation Master Plan, 2016
- City of San Marcos Comprehensive Plan, 2012
- Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Alamo Area Council of Governments



*This chart does not fully reflect the work done by the following cities and regional entities and should not be used as an evaluation tool.

	SCHERTZ COMMUNITY · SERVICE · OPPORTUNITY	CITY OF CIBOLO TEXAS	SEGUIN TEXAS	City of New Braunfels	SAN MARCOS	AACOG	AAMPO
ATTRACT BUSINESS & INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
DEVELOPMENT WHICH MAINTAINS CITY/REGIONAL CHARACTER			●				
INCENTIVIZATION OF PARKS & OPEN SPACE	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
STORMWATER & FLOOD MANAGEMENT	●	●		●	●		
DEVELOP INTER-AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS WITH NEIGHBORING CITIES & COUNTY	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
ADVANCE EDUCATION & WORKFORCE				●	●		
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SERVICES	●			●			
INCORPORATE REGIONAL PLANS			●	●		●	●
DIVERSIFICATION IN HOUSING		●		●	●		

COUNTY ASSESSMENT

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

SURVEY

As with city government, planning is also required of school districts, who often conduct their own demographic studies. The project team developed a survey designed to capture information relating to student enrollment projections and transportation needs. This survey was distributed to the County’s 11 independent school districts (ISDs). The following eight school districts completed the survey: Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City ISD, Seguin ISD, La Vernia ISD, Navarro ISD, Marion ISD, New Braunfels ISD, San Marcos CISD, and Nixon-Smiley CISD.

Student enrollment projections were evaluated, with an eye towards those ISDs which are entirely (or mostly) located within the County. By 2025, Seguin ISD and Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City ISD project a 7% and 16% increase

in student enrollment respectively, while Navarro ISD is planning for a 41% increase within the same timeframe. Navarro ISD, San Marcos ISD, Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City ISD, Marion ISD, and New Braunfels ISD are all expecting to undergo some school construction or expansion within the next five years.

Six of the eight school districts agree or somewhat agree that they interact regularly with local agencies. When it comes to their interactions with the County, they work almost exclusively with the Sheriff’s office and Juvenile Services and advocated strongly for the creation of a Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP).

As schools districts expand, the surrounding road network will continue to be of utmost importance. In fact, 87.5% of survey responses indicated that there are “too little” safe routes for walking and riding bikes, park and playgrounds, sidewalks, and links between schools and neighborhoods in these eight school districts. In addition to these major findings, complete lists of low-water crossings and other transportation concerns were presented to the Guadalupe County Commissioners Court in a public workshop on July 24, 2018.



SCHOOL DISTRICT	LOCATION (COUNTIES)	% CHANGE 2018-2019	& CHANGE 2020	% CHANGE 2025	% CHANGE 2030	STUDENTS ON THE FEDERAL FREE/ REDUCED LUNCH PROGRAM	STUDENTS TRANSPORTED BY BUS WITHIN THE COUNTY
Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City ISD	Guadalupe, Bexar Comal	1%	4%	16%	-	4818	7823
Marion ISD	Guadalupe	-2%	-	-	-	168	716
LaVernia ISD	Guadalupe, Wilson	4%	12%	31%	59%	790	29
New Braunfels ISD	Guadalupe, Comal	4%	8%	32%	62%	3050	906
Navarro ISD	Guadalupe	5%	16%	41%	47%	733	1030
Seguin ISD	Guadalupe	0%	3%	7%	-	5085	2400
Nixon-Smiley CISD	Guadalupe, Wilson, Gonzales, Karnes	2%	-	-	-	280	4
San Marcos CISD	Guadalupe, Caldwell, Hays	2%	5%	21%	35%	5821	330
Comal ISD	Guadalupe, Comal, Bexar, Hays	-	-	-	-	-	-
Luling ISD	Guadalupe, Caldwell	2%	2%	6%	9%	-	-
Prarie Lea ISD	Guadalupe, Caldwell	-	-	-	-	-	-

PROJECTED
GROWTH
& OTHER
MEASURES

COUNTY ASSESSMENT

TRANSPORTATION

Guadalupe County has an extensive road network. It’s regional and intra-county connectivity is among the most developed in the region. Of its 1,822 road miles, the County’s Road & Bridge Department is responsible for the upkeep of about 630 miles – and these roads are being used by more cars and trucks than ever before, requiring road crews to reseal roughly 30-40 miles of road and reconstruct about 5-10 miles each year.

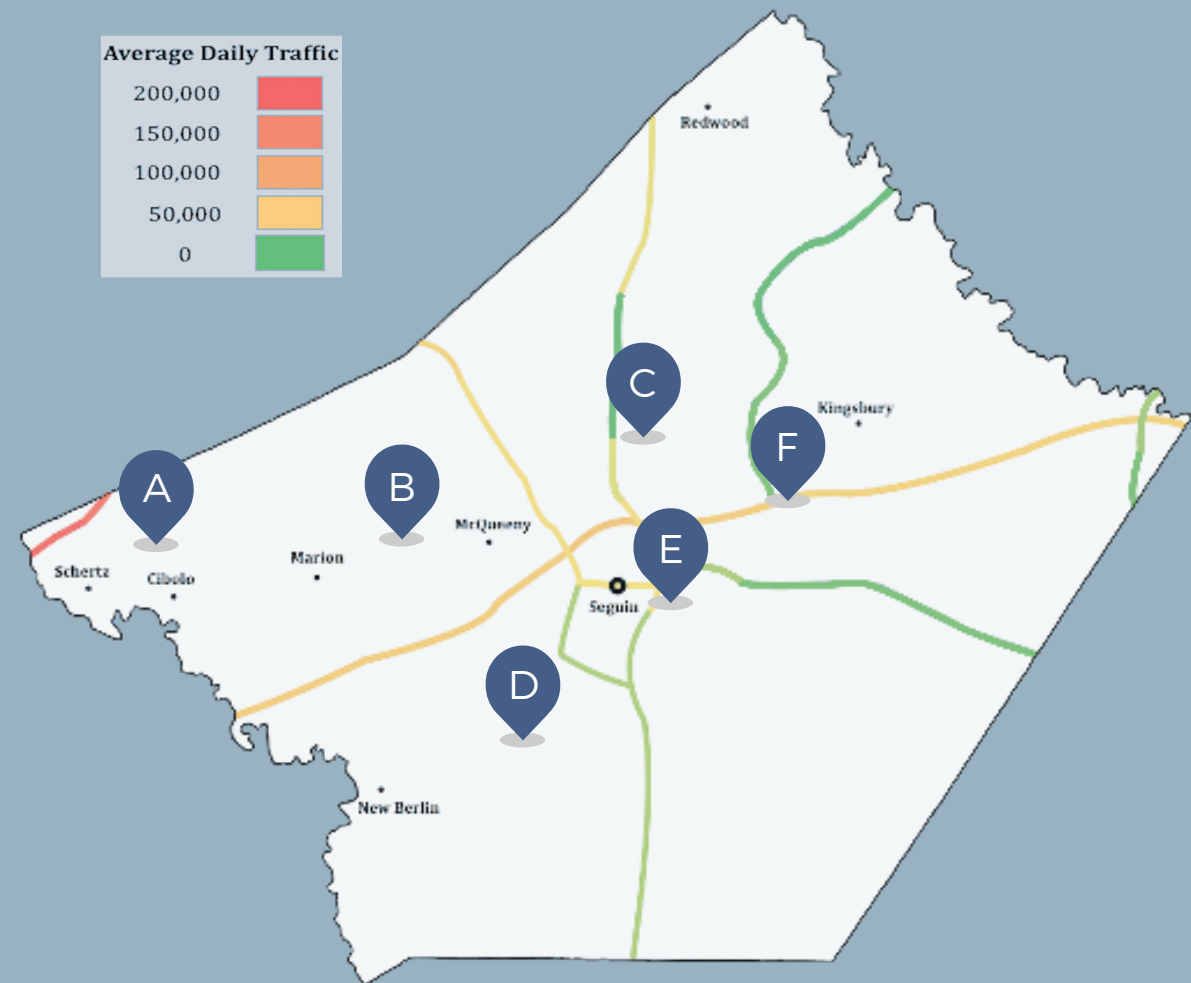
While a majority of County residents commute via car, the transportation needs and desires of Texans are growing – bike lanes, sidewalks, and public transit is becoming increasingly popular across generations.

Road construction and maintenance are often the most visible projects to the average county resident. The implications of a good road network, however, extend beyond constituent communication. It is an essential component to fostering economic development and maintaining adequate emergency services - plus, our ability to get around and connect with others is a significant factor in residents quality of life.

Transportation has been one of - if not the - most popular topics the project team has explored during this strategic planning process. By aggregating information from stakeholder interviews, town halls, the community survey, and city and regional plans, six major transportation concerns emerged:

- Congestion
- Low water crossings
- Narrow road-ways
- Need for connections to major roadways
- Desire for pedestrian walkways
- Changing traffic patterns

Addressing these concerns will pose a challenge as population continues to increase, not just within in the County but regionally. The County must continue to be forward thinking, working to incorporate multifaceted perspectives and educating the public, to help ensure that Guadalupe County remains one of the best places to live and work in Texas.



- A

CONGESTION
Traffic congestion, primarily on the western side of the county, but increasing around Seguin.
- B

LOW WATER CROSSINGS
Guadalupe County has over 200 low water crossings, affecting resident commutes and school transporation.
- C

MAJOR ROADWAY CONNECTIONS
Comments from the town halls emphasized the need for increased connections between major roadways like I-10 and I-35.
- D

NARROW ROADWAYS
Increased bike and truck traffic on county roads that, as one town hall attendee described, are "barely wide enough to handle [a] trailor.
- E

DESIRE FOR PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS
Increased pedestrian walkways and alternative methods of moving throughout the County.
- F

CHANGING TRAFFIC PATTERNS
Increased traffic and congestion are causing car and truck traffic to take alternative routes, sometimes through housing developments.

COUNTY ASSESSMENT TOWN HALLS

Two "town halls" in the cities of Seguin and Schertz, attracted a total of 128 county residents. Attendees were invited to listen to a presentation given by the project team and to engage in several interactive exercises, including voting on future county priorities and initiatives. Voting was done through a variety of methods – via cell-phones, computers, and using sticky-dots. Attendees were also encouraged to ask questions, provide feedback, and communicate directly with the project team and county officials.

Town halls were open to the public, promoted through press releases, social media, the project website, and posted in advance on the marquees and notice boards of the Schertz Municipal Complex and the Seguin City Coliseum.

In the weeks leading up to both town halls, ten press releases and articles appeared in various local newspapers detailing the strategic plan and Guadalupe County’s planning efforts.

Information collected from these town halls were posted on the project website and presented in a public workshop to the Guadalupe County Commissioners Court on July 24, 2018.

PRIORITY STICKY-DOT VOTING RANKINGS

MONEY

1. Transportation
2. Emergency Services
3. Flood Mitigation
4. Economic Development
5. Parks & Open Space
6. Social Services
7. Keep it in the Bank
8. Adult & Juvenile Detention

FOCUS

1. Transportation
2. Emergency Services
3. Economic Development
4. Regional Planning
5. Parks & Open Space
6. Adult & Juvenile Detention
7. Simplify (County "stays out of the way")



PRESENTATION & CELL-PHONE VOTING

Gap Strategies, members of the project team, conducted a presentation which detailed the County’s strategic planning process and preliminary findings from the Economic Assessment & Forecast Report. Real-time cell-phone voting was also used in the presentation which was used to gauge the composition of each town hall audience. The presentation and cell-phone voting results were made available on the project website.



PRIORITY STICKY-DOT VOTING: MONEY & FOCUS

Town hall attendees were given four red "focus" sticky-dots and eight green "money" sticky-dots to place on poster boards with various policy and services areas of which the County is responsible for. Participants were asked to place their red sticky-dots in the policy areas they would like the County to particularly focus on and their green sticky-dots in the service areas they would like to see their tax dollars spent. More than one sticky-dot could be placed on a single board.



TRANSPORTATION MAPS & GENERAL COMMENTS

Attendees were asked to mark-up two county maps identifying their typical commute route, as well as any transportation concerns. A general comments station was set up where attendees were invited to submit any comments or feedback, either related or unrelated to the strategic planning process. 32 comments were gathered and submitted to the Commissioners Court following the completion of the town halls.



COUNTY ASSESSMENT COMMUNITY SURVEY

Working with the Guadalupe County Commissioners Court, the project team developed a Guiding Guadalupe Community Survey. The survey included 20 questions designed to better understand the community's vision for the future. Using several different categories of questions, it explores a range of topics including growth management, transportation, and the role of county government.

The survey was distributed online via the project website, dedicated Facebook page, at town halls, and in paper copy at libraries, county offices, and various other public locations across the county. Links to the survey were housed on the county website, city websites, and shared social media platforms and press releases, generating 730 completed surveys.

The project team aggregated and analyzed community survey responses, cross-referencing a variety of demographic and geographic groupings. The findings are detailed here and were presented to the Commissioners Court in a public workshop on July 24, 2018.

ANALYSIS

The project team evaluated the community survey using the comparative analysis of cross-referencing through the following groupings: length of residence, age, and geographic landscape (urban vs. rural).

Despite Guadalupe County's extensive road network, the survey indicated a growing concern among residents regarding rapid growth and its effect on the county's transportation infrastructure. When asked to identify the causes of road conditions and congestion in the County, the top three responses were influx of new residents (62.3%), deteriorating infrastructure (50.6%), and underinvestment in roads (58.13%). Responses from those between the ages of 18-24 differed slightly as they were less likely to attribute congestion to either an influx or people living/working in the County or economic prosperity.

When asked to identify their greatest priority for the County, those who have lived in the County for 10+ years were more likely to favor cooperation among city, county, and school districts.

In addition, survey respondents were asked to identify from a list of 17 service areas where they would like to see County leaders place their priorities. The top response was county road improvements and maintenance; however, respondents between the ages of 18-24 were more likely to prioritize economic development and support for community services. (It is worth noting that this age group comprised only 1.34% of survey respondents.)

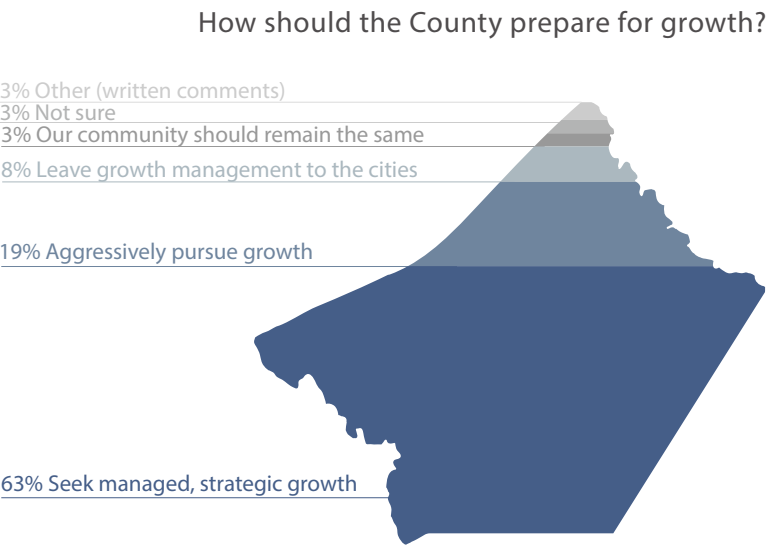
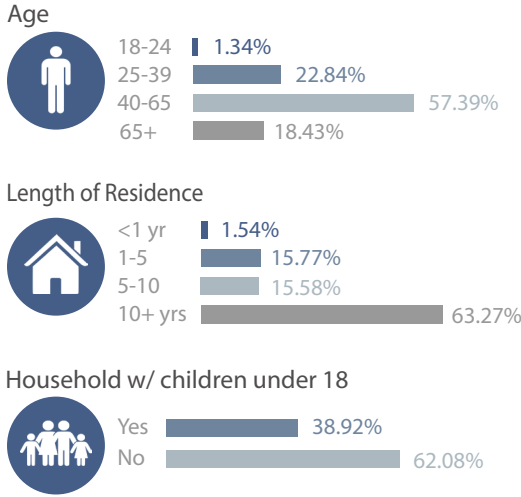
As the County prepares for rapid growth and increased demand on services, survey participants were asked to rate, on scale 1-5 (with 5 being willing to pay), their willingness to pay increased taxes in order to fund certain services. Those who have lived in the county for less than a year, were slightly less likely than their fellow citizens to prioritize law enforcement and rehabilitation/prevention programs and more likely to prioritize regional water and future growth planning.



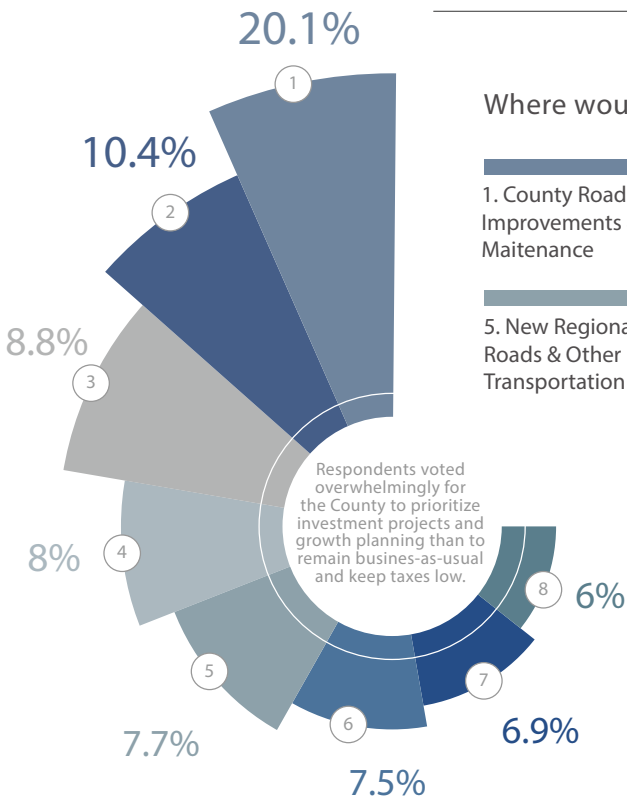
Despite these findings, the project team found few statistically significant differences between these cross-tabs - and no differences between urban and rural residents. This is evidence of a remarkably cohesive community vision.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

730 RESPONDENTS



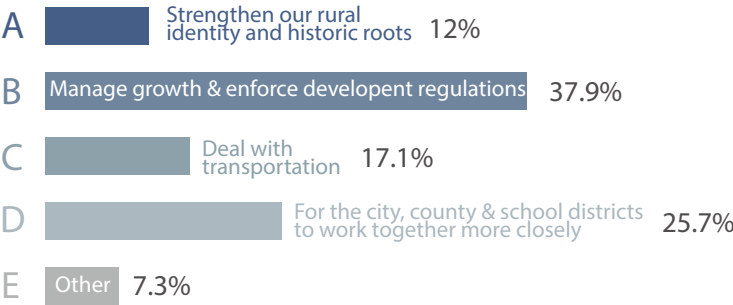
FOCUS & PRIORITIES



Where would you like to see County leaders place their priorities?



It's important for the County to...



believe that "Guadalupe County is likely to grow rapidly and we should prepare now for that."



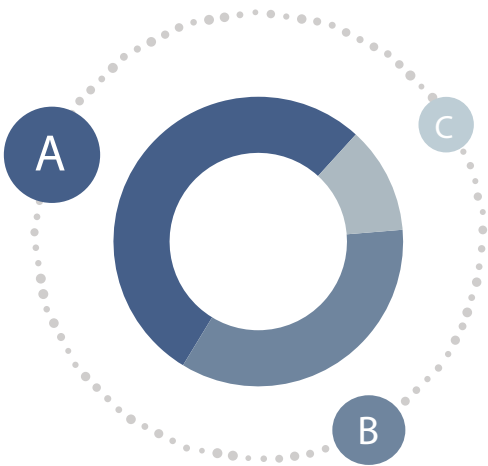
Agree with the statement, "Preservation of things like trees, open spaces, and roads designed to reflect our community 'character' and heritage are important to me."



Agree or somewhat agree with the statement, "The County is listening to me and doing a good job."

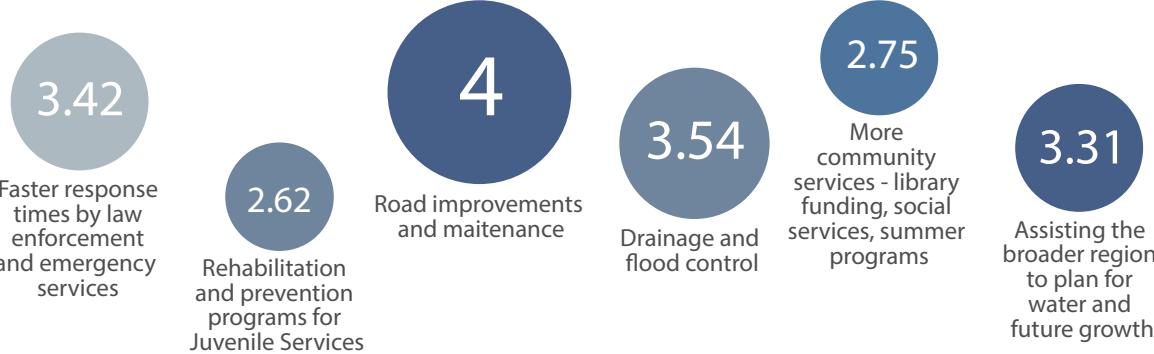
FUNDING

Choose what best represents your point of view:



- A The most important thing is to make sure Guadalupe County invests in infrastructure and forward thinking projects that will help point growth in the right direction.
- B The County should strive to keep low taxes but it's time to balance that with investing in new projects and initiatives that are past due.
- C I know there may be a lot of things the County needs but I think the number one priority should be keeping taxes low.

Which of these services would you be willing to pay increased taxes for in order to fund? (Scale 0 - unwilling to pay to 5 - willing to pay)



GUIDING GUADALUPE COUNTY

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Guadalupe County is strategically located at the confluence of Interstate 10, Interstate 35, and State Highway 130 between two major metropolitan areas. This is one of several factors that contribute to projections that the County will continue to add people and jobs at a brisk pace over the next couple of decades. The challenge for County leaders will be to manage how this projected growth affects County services and operations, and to balance how the benefits – and challenges – of change are distributed throughout the County.

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. This 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.

Recommendations and focus areas in this plan stem from a detailed assessment of the County's current population, community needs, government operations, and projections of likely future scenarios. From this, the County and its planning team have identified six key strategic areas – or policy buckets – where the County can focus on a variety of initiatives.



INVEST IN COUNTY-WIDE INFRASTRUCTURE

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

Currently the County has various project lists that the Commissioners Court reference when making decisions regarding infrastructure and capital projects. Instead, the County should establish a Capital Improvements Plan, to be updated annually, which identifies projects in a coordinated fashion for planning purposes and funding in the next fiscal year and years into the future. In this manner, the County may spread capital costs over multiple years in an organized fasion and provide a plan for getting projects ready for any potential bond package, should the Commissioners Court deem it appropriate. Again, the CIP Process should be conducted in conjunction with the annual budget preparation process and take into consideration changes in cost estimates, priorities, environmental issues etc. The first year of the CIP should be funded each year in the annual budget as a capital expense. taking into consideration changes in cost estimates, priorities, and environmental issues, etc.

In conjunction with CIP planning, the Commissioners Court should establish a Capital Reserve Fund. Revenue sources for funding may include funding from other reserve funds or designated sources as the Commissioners Court deems appropriate. For example, the County Judge in his proposed FY 2018-19 Budget has earmarked \$500,000 as matching funds for transportation projects.

Funding from the Capital Reserve Fund could be used for a multitude of purposes – as a ready source for funding emergency repairs to existing infrastructure, essential small projects such as low water crossings and facility enhancements, or for getting projects ready for a bond package by funding soft costs such as conceptual design, environmental studies, and engineering. Such bond projects would help spread costs over time, allowing future residents to share in the cost of growth. This is not on the immediate horizon, but something for the County to begin considering as the population grows over the next 3-7 years.

2. TRANSPORTATION

Providing for roads and transportation is one of the core functions of county government. It was also the highest priority for citizens who participated in the strategic planning process – both those who attended town hall meetings and those who filled out community surveys. Those who attended the town halls cited transportation as the place they most wanted to see the Commissioners Court focus their attention, and survey respondents said transportation was the service they are most willing to pay additional taxes to support. Transportation service – and leadership – was also a common theme among city and school stakeholders interviewed as part of the strategic planning effort.

In rapidly urbanizing counties such as Guadalupe County, transportation can be a more complex undertaking than in more traditional county settings in, say, rural west Texas. Maintenance of existing county roads is still an issue, but Guadalupe County's location raises other issues, including coordination with fast-growing cities and a dynamic metro area and looking ahead at future road expansions or turn lanes to accommodate new schools. It may mean supporting economic development and manufacturing logistics, and accommodating farmers who need access to agricultural fields. It may also mean coordinating with TXDOT, school districts, and new types of subdivisions, filling the transportation gaps between cities, and maintaining the rural character still important to so many Guadalupe County residents. It's not just simply a mobility issue, it is also a public safety issue, a law enforcement issue, and a medical services issue.

The Commissioners Court has proven adept at dealing with problems in transportation. What's more, as noted earlier in this plan, the County's high number of paved roads and high number of state highway lane miles are significant assets. Still, as the county grows – and as transportation challenges become even more complex, there are several strategic opportunities that will arise and that should be highlighted as part of the Strategic Planning process.

I. THOROUGHFARE PLAN

The County's Major Thoroughfare Plan was developed in 2012, and consists primarily of a detailed map of proposed projects. It was a useful tool and has served the County well but it is time to update and enrich the plan. The County may consider developing a broader "Long Range Transportation Plan" or "Master Transportation Plan." This would put Guadalupe County in the top tier of metro and suburban counties that are evolving the way counties consider and act on transportation issues - giving the County added leverage and authority when dealing with TXDOT and within the Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (where the County already plays an active role, with a seat on the Transportation Policy Board).

A Long Term Master Transportation Plan for Guadalupe County – or a detailed update of the Thoroughfare Plan – could go beyond mapping to address an array of issues ranging from multi-year maintenance prioritization to future plans for expansion and new construction. This could complement the County's economic development efforts, and

enhance planning with local municipalities. It could be particularly useful in prompting long-range planning in conjunction with growing school districts where administrators are planning for new schools in previously undeveloped parts of the County. A long-range transportation plan promotes efficient and conservative use of tax dollars as the County grows, and should help keep the Commissioners Court, the County Road Administrator, and County staff focused on common objectives. It could aid with long-term budget forecasting and setting expectations for the public. Development of the plan is also likely to help members of the Court and staff focus on policy questions and strategic growth questions. Finally, it 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

Mentioned previously, funding of preconstruction costs or "soft costs" are typically defined as project costs that are not directly related to road construction. This can include costs such as right-of-way acquisition, engineering, utility relocation, or fence replacement.

Guadalupe County could address soft costs 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. In many cases, acquiring land now in a fast-growing County could save 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. Although the County is in a strong financial position with a low debt burden and good public credit rating, they got there by taking a conservative financial stance and will likely continue to do so - meaning, if debt is to be used the County will take into consideration the cost of issuance and interest costs over time.

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. By engineering select projects in advance – partly or wholly – the County can expedite projects, save money in the long run, and better take advantage of grant opportunities, especially if this is combined with planning for utility relocation.

Together 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. It also helps prepare the County for economic development opportunities, public-private partnerships, and partnering opportunities with cities or school districts. Finally, early engineering and ROW negotiation can help the County get reliable budget numbers for future road projects.

This effort would need to work closely with an updated Thoroughfare Map or Long Range Transportation plan, and could be implemented over several years. The County is not “behind” on this but it may offer an opportunity to “get ahead” of growth. In time, most growing counties require bond elections to keep pace with transportation projects. Guadalupe has very little current debt and no bond package on the immediate horizon, but if it does become necessary to have a bond package, having solid engineering estimates and, possibly, even prepared plan sets can help with budgeting, prioritizing, and public education about pros and cons of bond projects.

III. PRIVATE ROADS

The county allows developers to construct private roads in new subdivisions, and, in its subdivision regulations, lays out appropriate standards for private road construction. 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. Though this is not a common requirement in County regulations, it is being successfully used by several suburban and metropolitan counties throughout the State.

IV. CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS

Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) is a relatively new concept in Texas. The term refers to a concept, and a process, in which mobility solutions – mostly roads in this case – are designed with their surroundings in mind. It can be a very useful tactical and strategic tool for counties, and offers heightened relevance in Guadalupe County where so many residents expressed interest in preserving natural features and the historic character of the County as it grows.

Using CSS, 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.

Roadway projects using a context sensitive design approach should serve people first. That sounds obvious but many road designs in the past, particularly on a regional level in many areas of the United States, were designed primarily to move cars efficiently (sometimes at the expense of all else), instead of being designed to improve quality of life for the people living in the area the road would serve. It is important to move people efficiently, of course, particularly in a fast-growing county like Guadalupe but in recent years an increasing number of communities have decided that other factors – speed controls, noise prevention,

preservation of trees, protection of historic small towns or landmarks, safeguarding of rivers or critical farmland, perhaps bike or pedestrian uses, even economic development – should be part of the roadway equation. Things like bridge construction, appropriate lane sizing, drainage protections and low-impact-design are often part of a Context Sensitive design process.

Because projects based on CSS are built around community needs and goals, an underlying tenet of such policies is a commitment to community input early in the process, and to sharing information throughout. That may require more time and investment up front but it can provide crucial savings in time and money later in the process – and result in strong community buy-in, not to mention a better, more targeted project. Guadalupe County does not need lengthy or highly complex Context Sensitive policy details. Rather, a resolution from the Commissioners Court expressing a commitment to context-sensitive design practices, and a brief policy statement expressing some of the County’s goals would be sufficient for now. As the County grows, more detail can be added. The initial policy should be careful to limit the process to major projects and/or new construction.

By developing and adopting a Context Sensitive Solutions policy, the County would also give itself an additional tool when negotiating with state and regional entities, such as TXDOT. While Context Sensitive policies and procedures are still more common in other states, 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.

Context sensitive standards and design techniques, ways in which communities can best preserve aesthetic, history, and natural landscape by integrating quality design into traditional transportation goals, are referenced in various state Department of Transportation manuals.

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 a community's “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.

VI. ROAD STANDARDS AND HIERARCHIES

The County addresses issues such as right-of-way and lane widths in its Thoroughfare Plan (Map) and its subdivision regulations. It could be beneficial to revisit and refine these with the changing nature of the County in mind and taking into account context sensitive design (item IV). Ideally, these would be coordinated in an overall transportation plan. For instance, the County’s subdivision regulations (Article VIII, Construction and Drainage Requirements, page 28) already includes distinct standards for developer-built roads – one for Arterial/Collector streets and one for Connector/Local streets. This would put Guadalupe County well ahead of many Texas counties.

However, the naming conventions, categories and standards don’t fully match what is in the existing Thoroughfare Plan. As large subdivisions become more prevalent in the unincorporated areas of the County, it will be useful for the County to ensure these categories match precisely, and to develop preferred lane widths, right of way widths, and construction specifications based on use, including some uses that are not yet incorporated into the rules, such as turn lanes and deceleration lanes. The County may also wish to devise traffic count standards or other projected traffic analysis criteria that help govern what requirements will be triggered. This could be done-in house but is probably best accomplished using at least some outside engineering or planning consultation, since the road department operates on a very lean and efficient budget and some of this is specialty work. The expense will be saved many times over if the County has the tools in place to make sure

that, for instance, the developer of new “mega-subdivision” is required to right-size a road from the start, rather than the County having to retrofit it later. This is also a way for the County to begin addressing congestion issues “up front” as the County grows and the subdivision landscape changes, by ensuring that its thoroughfare Plan and its subdivision rules accommodate forward-looking planning.

VII. TRANSIT & ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

There is little demand evidenced in the community participation for immediate transit options in Guadalupe County. Guadalupe County does not have the housing density, the infrastructure, or a tradition of transit to support this type of service in most of the County, certainly not today. There was interest in the community surveys in more options for pedestrians, for walking and biking within the County. 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 multimodal roads as denser 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.

This doesn’t require short-term action from the County until more concrete plans develop within the region. New forms of transportation technology will affect this equation as well over the next few years. In the meantime, 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

Results from the Community Survey indicate respondents are willing to commit tax dollars to drainage and flood control. On a scale of 0 to 5, with 5 indicating “willing to pay”, respondents ranked drainage and flood control at 3.54, second only to transportation which scored 4.0 in their willingness to raise taxes to fund enhancements.

Once again 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 also 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.

To address planning for drainage and flood control, it is important to understand that Guadalupe County lies within eight drainage basins. These drainage basins form the basis of a natural collection and transmission system for drainage, storm water and flood waters which ultimately end-up in the Guadalupe River and the Gulf of Mexico. All of these drainage basins, except one (Mill Creek) extend beyond the Guadalupe County limits. Accordingly, any plan to deal with Guadalupe County drainage and flood control involves a regional approach and collaboration among many agencies including the Guadalupe Blanco River Authority (GBRA).

There are discussions in the Texas House of Representatives at this time to facilitate the development of regional flood control plans that will require coordination among counties, cities and other local agencies and special districts. The Bexar Regional Watershed Management Partnership is the only one of its kind in the State so far and may be a good example for Guadalupe County to follow. It is a collaboration between Bexar County, the San Antonio River Authority, the City of San Antonio and 20 suburban cities.

Better regional management of drainage, storm water and wastewater treatment facilities flows within individual watershed basins can also play a major role in water supply. For example, in one week during Hurricane Harvey, 34 trillion gallons of rain water fell across Texas. If only a fraction of those flows could be captured and stored above or below ground, it could have a significant impact on water supply issues not to mention the flood control benefits. This issue will also be discussed in the Water and Wastewater component of this plan.

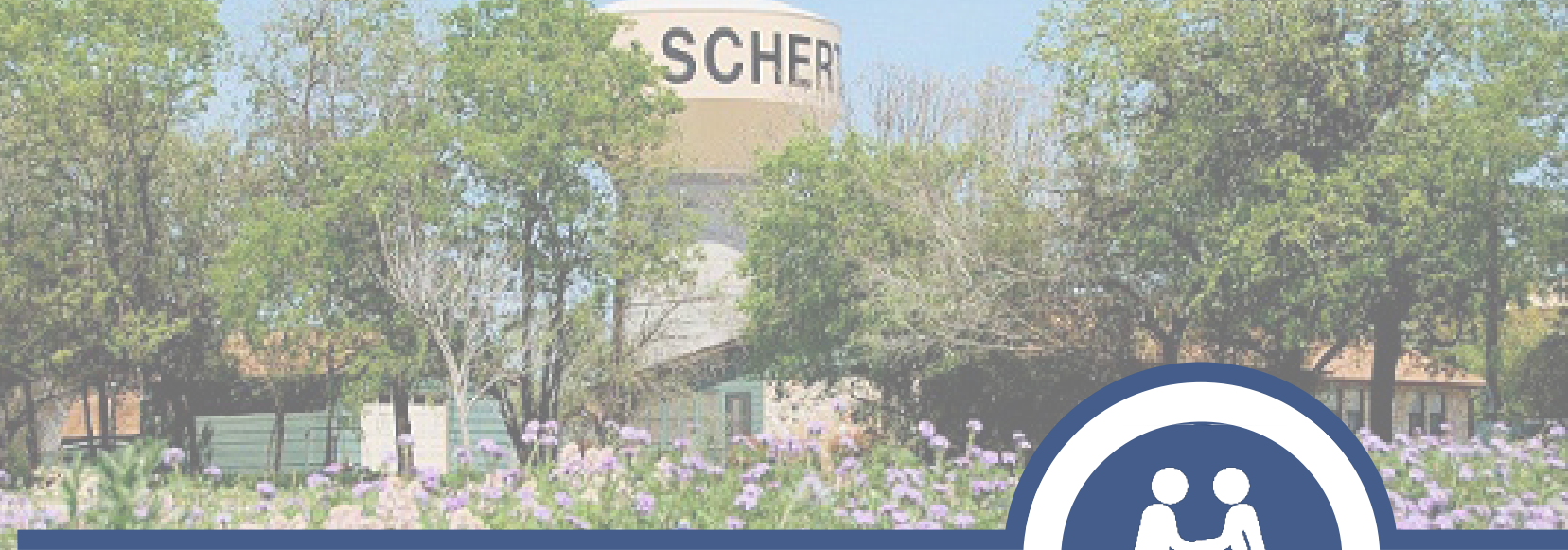
A specific issue raised during the strategic planning process was the impending failure of the hydroelectric dams operated by GBRA on the Guadalupe River, four of which are located in Guadalupe County. The dam at Lake Wood in Gonzales County has already failed negatively impacting property owners on the Lake. If this were to continue into Guadalupe County it would have a devastating impact on property owners and local ad valorem tax values and revenues.

4. NATURAL RESOURCE PLANNING & CHANGING WEATHER PATTERNS

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 changing weather patterns as communities are experiencing 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

The County already plays a supportive role in economic development, joining with cities to support recruitment efforts through incentives and other measures. But there is room for the County to become a stronger leader in economic development, and both County residents (through community surveys) and City officials (through interviews and city surveys) indicate a strong interest in seeing the County assume this role.

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. RE-USE AND REVITALIZATION

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.

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

Another option the Commissioners Court may consider, instead of the creation of the position recommended above, is to 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. There are a number of models that have been implemented throughout the State (including the Schertz/Seguin Municipal Corporation). 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 parks and open space as a way to address multiple strategic objectives with a single solution. Developing a network of parks and open space will not only help preserve the County's rural aesthetic, but helps maintain a high quality of life for residents and substantial component to attracting economic development its natural resources as both a tool for economic development. In addition, it's also a natural and low-cost method to help with flood control and drainage.



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. However, it also inhibits the amount of taxable value per linear foot of road and in some cases, could help induce sprawl - and thus, indirectly drive up the cost of road construction and maintenance. Similarly, it can prevent certain innovative development styles, including "cluster development." This is a policy decision with 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

A significant concern articulated throughout the strategic planning process by stakeholders, particularly among public officials, cities, and development interests, relates to the inability or unwillingness of some utility districts to provide service within the limits of their Certificates of Convenience and Necessity (CCN) or extend service where it may be deemed appropriate. This is seen by some as a deterrent to orderly growth and may be contributing to substandard development in the unincorporated areas and the proliferation of septic systems thereby creating future environmental concerns. It may also have contributed to work-around solutions to provide services and meet developer needs that will be expensive and difficult to overcome in providing more efficient and less cumbersome regional solutions in the future.

Special Utility Districts (SUD) as well as Customer Owned Utilities were

originally created to provide water to rural areas to meet the needs of agricultural and domestic use in low population density areas and were never intended to meet the needs of high density urban development. These utilities were granted CCNs that provide them the exclusive right to provide water and/or wastewater service within the whole or parts of their jurisdiction. There lies the challenge. Guadalupe County has been thrust into an environment where by it is one of the fastest growing counties in the State. What may be in question is the adequacy and efficiency of some of these rural systems.

There have been discussions to combine and consolidate some of these water supply systems. The County should be supportive of the examination of these alternatives if it enhances the adequacy of infrastructure and improves the efficiency of the countywide water supply systems.

Wastewater presents a much more complicated challenge. Our research indicates that there is not a “decertification” process for CCNs. A CCN may be changed through two different methods: 1) amendment and 2) Streamline Expedited Release (SER). Both are complex and involve the property owner petitioning the Texas Public Utility Commission (PUC). The amendment process deals with a property owner going through the entire original process of applying for a new CCN. Once completed, the new amendment will override the former CCN. The SER process involves property owners petitioning the PUC if all of the subject property is owned by the same owner, the deed or deeds to the property total at least 25 contiguous acres and the subject property is not receiving adequate service from the certified utility.

Perhaps a more long term regional solution is in order.

As with drainage, storm water and flood control, it is important to understand that Guadalupe County lies within a number of major drainage basins described in the previous section of this plan. Not only do these drainage basins serve as a natural collection system for drainage, storm water and flood waters these basins can serve a useful and valuable purpose in collecting treated effluent from wastewater treatment facilities for reuse for other purposes.

This coupled with the legal principle that ownership of treated effluent remains with the original producer of ground water and is not State owned water even if discharged into a State stream or drainage way. This creates great value for Guadalupe County since most of the water being used in municipal systems is ground water based and is subject to being recaptured and being used for other additional purposes such as industrial cooling; irrigation for agriculture, parks, golf courses and public green belts; stream flow enhancement; aquifer recharge; subsidence mitigation and other uses. The economic value of this treated effluent could serve as an incentive to potable water utilities to participate in a regional market for treated effluent to enhance their revenues and encourage concessions regarding development within their CCNs where appropriate.

Guadalupe County should promote the development of a Regional Wastewater Master Plan designed around the natural drainage basins

discussed in the previous section 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, San Antonio Water System (SAWS), and the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (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

Few, if any, public policy issues are confined to jurisdictional boundaries. Guadalupe County's transportation issues, for example, are impacted by regional development in the neighboring counties of Bexar, Comal, and Hays - and as such, they will require regional solutions. Guadalupe County already, through a number of mechanisms, participates in regional planning and information exchange. As the community continues to experience rapid growth, the County will need to find additional opportunities in which to expand upon and strengthen those regional connections. The more involved Guadalupe County is regionally, the greater potential it has to strategically manage its growth.

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. Building upon an earlier recommendation, 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. It 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 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

As with transportation, emergency service is a core function of county government. Unlike some governmental services which are discretionary and can be increased and decreased easily in accordance with the availability of resources, the level of emergency services must be maintained at an acceptable level to meet humanitarian concerns.

Of those who participated in the town hall meetings, participants ranked emergency services second, only behind transportation in terms of where the Commissioners Court should focus its attention. Emergency service (law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services) response times, availability of individuals to staff volunteer fire departments and the inability of emergency service agencies to communicate effectively via radio were common concerns raised by citizens, staff, and public officials during the strategic planning process.

1. EMERGENCY SERVICE DISTRICTS

The County currently spends roughly \$1.8 million on inter-local emergency service contracts, relying on city fire and emergency medical services (EMS) to cover much of the county. City services are straining to keep up, issues of municipal taxpayer equity, and for some living in the unincorporated areas, this has resulted in substandard response times. Many of the County's more rural residents are totally dependent upon volunteer fire departments – many of which are struggling to respond to calls while balancing low recruitment rates and volunteers with full-time jobs.

A proposed solution has been the creation of one or more Emergency Service Districts (ESD). ESDs are political subdivisions of the State of Texas that deliver fire and emergency medical services to local populations upon voter approval. The authority for creation of ESDs was approved by the voters through a State Constitutional Amendment in 1987 (Texas Constitution Section III Article 48-e).

The statutory authority for the enabling legislation to create ESDs is found in Chapter 775 of the Texas Health and Safety Code.

ESDs have been used effectively in rapid growth areas of the State to respond to the demand for emergency services. The Texas State Association of Fire and Emergency Districts (SAFE-D) reported that in February 2016 there were 316 ESDs across 93 counties. 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. ESDs can provide service in a variety of ways – some contract with independent providers, some function as the service provider themselves, some support all-volunteer departments, and even more support a combination of professional and volunteer departments.

To generate funding, ESDs have the power to levy property taxes up to \$.10 per \$100 of property valuation. In the Guiding Guadalupe Community Survey, an overwhelming 65.51% reported they would support new tax levies on “Emergency service districts in certain clearly defined areas of the county requesting needed enhancements to improve fire, EMS and/or police services and response times.” ESDs also have the potential to help increase property values and lower insurance rates.

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 ESDs.

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.

It should be noted that of those responding to the Community Survey more respondents ranked keeping taxes low as their highest priority (8%) versus 6.9% who saw emergency services as their highest priority. A number of Guadalupe County mayors have indicated concerns regarding raising taxes to create ESDs.

2. EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

A reliable, effective, and sustainable communication system is essential to all emergency organizations: law



To establish an ESD, a petition signed by at least 100 voters in the proposed district must be presented to the Commissioners Court for review. If the ESD is deemed feasible and necessary by the Commissioners Court, an election is called in which the voters within the proposed district must elect to create the ESD. A board of 5 commissioners is then appointed by the Commissioners Court and will govern the ESD as an independent entity from the county.

enforcement, fire suppression and rescue or emergency medical service. Accordingly, Guadalupe County has initiated an assessment of the County's existing radio system. The review includes multiple County departments and functions including the Sheriff, the four Constables, the Fire Marshall, the seven Guadalupe County Volunteer Fire Departments and the Public Works support function. The existing system is 18 years old and uses technology which may not be vendor supported in the future raising questions as to its future sustainable. There have been complaints regarding coverage in certain areas of the county and ease of interoperability among regional agencies. The system consists of 350 pieces of radio equipment, dispatch consoles and a number of radio towers across the County.

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. The overall cost of the project has been roughly estimated to range up to over \$7 million depending on the various alternatives and enhancements selected.

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

The population of Guadalupe County is projected to grow to 285,000 over the next 20 years, an increase of about 73%. In order for the County to meet the demand for service delivery, new and expanded infrastructure and customer service facilities, the County organization must begin planning now.

1. RECRUIT & RETAIN A HIGHLY QUALIFIED WORKFORCE

Guadalupe County employees are generally viewed as congenial, courteous, cooperative, helpful and responsive. As a group they possess a real sense of customer service.

To maintain that reputation over time – 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. Although the County has utilized benchmarking data in determining compensation policies during the annual budget process from the Texas Association of Counties (TAC) and spot comparisons with other specific public agencies in the region, this analysis does not go far enough. 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**
The Commissioners Court has authorized a Purchasing Agent in the FY 2017-18 Budget. The County should fill this position with a qualified applicant as quickly as possible.
- **County Engineer**
A common theme we heard throughout the assessment process is that the County should authorize and hire a full-time County Engineer. This theme has been repeated by County Department Heads, municipal officials and staff and outside stakeholders. This theme was also confirmed through benchmarking with comparable counties. The Commissioners Court should budget and proceed with hiring a County Engineer as soon as possible. If financial constraints do not permit a full-time County Engineer the County should designate an engineer of record and outsource these services to an outside consulting engineer on an hourly basis. The important thing is that the County have professional engineering services available on call.
- **County Project Manager**
Over the years, the County has been very fortunate to have members of the Commissioners Court who have had the appropriate skills to manage facility construction projects. As the composition of Court may change, this important management function should not be left to changes in political tenure but should be driven by professional considerations and management standards. There is also an issue of “steering and rowing” which will be present in a later section of this report. The focus of the County Judge and Commissioners is also shifting to policy direction and away from day-to-day operations as urbanization and growth continue. The County should move to budget and hire a County Project Manager as the number and complexity of facilities increases. We recommend the County hire a County Project Manager within the next two to three years or sooner should demand require. As an interim measure, the County may wish to combine the duties of a County Project Manager with those of the County Engineer recommended above.
- **County Budget Officer**
Section 111.062 of the Texas Local Government Code authorizes counties with a population over 125,000 to appoint a County Budget Officer. In counties of more than 225,000, the County Auditor serves as Budget Officer (Section 111.032). Although Guadalupe County is authorized to hire an appointed Budget Officer it has not. The County continues to function with the County Judge serving as Budget Officer. Guadalupe County population is projected to reach 225,000 in approximately twelve years which is within the planning horizon of this Strategic Plan. The County should begin to plan for the transition to an appointed Budget Officer which would free the County Judge to focus more on policy leadership and collaboration. This issue will be discussed in more detail in a later section of this Strategic Plan.

The County Budget Officer could also perform other functions within the County such as economic development and guide the development of performance measurement and improvement.

As an interim step to provide research capabilities to the Commissioners Court, the County may wish to investigate the use of interns to provide public administration, economics and planning skills. Area universities at the graduate level can provide an ample supply of such individuals at relatively low or no cost. These efforts could be enhanced with training and coaching.

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.

There are examples of technology innovation. Voting Centers are a clear example by allowing voters the latitude to vote at any County voting site on election day rather than only at their designated precinct site. This real-time technology is projected to reduce the number of voting sites, reduce costs, and improve voter turnout. We believe that this "real time technology" has application for use by other County departments, particularly in field operations such as Road and Bridge, Environmental Services, and fire inspections and can result in significant savings and future cost avoidance.

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. Our metropolitan areas are being increasingly influenced by national and international economic trends and the demographics of these areas are also changing rapidly. As Americans seek more room to live and more affordable housing they are moving beyond the traditional suburbs to the farthest edges of our metropolitan areas. Thus is the case in Guadalupe County. The cities of Schertz, Cibolo, and New Braunfels have been experiencing this growth for some time. The City of Seguin is beginning to feel the impact of this population surge.

This rapid growth in the outer ring of our metropolitan areas is creating disproportional demands for public infrastructure and services when compared to growth in the tax base that remains more or less rural in character. Unfortunately, commercial economic development that usually follows rooftops lags behind demand for services and infrastructure to meet the needs of the rapidly growing population. Accordingly, assessed values and retail sales, the underlying source of income to local governments to finance needed improvements in service delivery and infrastructure, also lags behind demand. This situation is compounded for counties that are pretty much dependent on property taxes.

Community policy-makers, who anticipate, understand, and plan for these trends will be better prepared to meet the financial challenges associated with these changes and develop strategies to anticipate problems and enhance their economic and financial position.

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, as well as respect and buy in from the employees and other stakeholders. Organizational change must come from within.

In addition, stakeholders are going to have to understand and respect the roles of all involved, be willing to work together and trust each other. That can only come through collaboration and cooperation.

As the County becomes more and more urban, the roles of County elected officials shift as well. 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 stifling 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 a low 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. (For example, the intertwined responsibilities of Environmental Health, Road & Bridge, and Fire/EMS or the wide-spread organization 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. However, 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 agriculture land 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 planning team recommends that the Commissioner's Court look into performing a needs and assessment study on the Courts and Juvenile Detention (and associated programs).

GUIDING GUADALUPE COUNTY NEXT STEPS

This initial Strategic Plan is a milestone for Guadalupe County. But it is an overview – a step into long-range planning, not the end of a journey.

Guadalupe County can use this document to create a more detailed action plan to guide the County in specific policy areas and to establish overall priorities and timetables. The planning team recommends:

1. Guadalupe County establish a citizen advisory committee to assist Commissioners Court (could be facilitated or not) in prioritizing the initiatives presented here, and to champion implementation. This could be an “outside” group or stakeholders from within the County; or, ideally, include some of both.
2. Establish performance goals, objectives, reasonable timelines and benchmark measurements for success. While some costs are alluded to here, another phase of work (by the County or consultants) to assign more specific costs to some functions will be necessary.
3. The County use its Strategic Plan as a “guiding star” for department heads that report to Commissioners Court, and for all County departments in the budget process.
4. This plan and subsequent follow-ups be shared widely with the public (for instance, via the County website).
5. The Commissioners Court and public recognize this as a dynamic, “living document” that articulates consensus – and background reasoning – for the County’s strategic position on a number of key issues; but, also recognize that it should be subject to change and revision as circumstances change and new challenges arise. Accordingly, the County should review the strategic plan (and the benchmarks and priorities that grow out of it) every few years, and engage in a thorough planning update at least once every decade – and perhaps more frequently during periods of exceptionally high population growth and change.