



# SMITHVILLE Texas

An Economic Development Community Resiliency  
Strategic Plan 2020-2025



# Acknowledgements

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Thanks to Pamela Mundo and her knowledgeable staff at Mundo and Associates, Inc. who provided the technical expertise and economic development consultation that created this report.

Smithville is fortunate for the many community leaders, stakeholders, and interested citizens who provided the thoughtful considerations to enable the consultants to develop a community-driven Mission Statement, Goals, Action Objectives, and Tasks that reflect the desires of Smithville to move forward with the overarching vision of meaningful growth. We thank them all.

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## *1. Executive Summary*

The City of Smithville and the Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce are committed to the vision of maintaining a small-town sensibility and aesthetic while encouraging positive, sustainable, meaningful growth and continuing to improve the quality of life, individual and collective capacity, and standards of living in this terrific community. City, Chamber, and community leadership values include respect, appreciation, and regard for residents and the environment; teamwork and partnerships; open communication; and innovation and entrepreneurship among our business community.



In alignment with this vision and these values, this Economic Development Community Resiliency Strategic Plan for Smithville has been developed through a grant from the Texas Department of Agriculture. This Plan offers recommendations and a proposed plan of action that result from a robust and comprehensive public participation program, the examination of previous plans going back to 1997, an economic profile of the broader Smithville market, a review of the current state of economic development policies and codes. It is a living document, and offers a blueprint for project implementation that includes tasks, champions, and realistic timelines designed to help the Smithville community find a thriving economic and community-oriented future. Following the prescribed plan of action or doing any of the recommended tasks is not required, but the authors of this report have found in our experience that these activities and resources are extremely useful in moving small communities towards their envisioned economic future.

For the Plan to have widespread support throughout the Smithville community, Mundo & Associates launched a four-pronged public participation strategy designed to engage and understand community interests and needs. This strategy included stakeholder interviews, an Open House Design Studio, regular communication and meetings with the Smithville Economic Development Committee (SEDC), and public review and hearing prior to Smithville City Council adoption. Recommendations from participants include:

- Job training and entrepreneurship through a local incubator/maker space to train and employ the workforce within Smithville.
- Housing developments should be in clusters of about 30 units with a mix of housing types for all ages.

- The development along Highway 71 should not include large parking lots, large buildings, big boxes, store chains and signs of typical, large suburban development.
- Development on Highway 71 should include neighborhoods that preserve the downtown area as the Mecca for community shopping.
- Continuing the Downtown Renaissance involves encouraging investment in lodging, housing on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and upper floors along Main Street, restaurants and entertainment venues, and allowing for local product stores and discouraging chain stores.



Previous Smithville plans and studies, adjoining or competing community studies, studies of Bastrop County and a study of the Capital Area were reviewed as a part of the Texas Department of Agriculture's requirements. Highlights from these studies are included in this Plan. Past studies noted that the lack of housing is a limiting factor restricting Smithville's population and job growth. Previous plans projected Smithville's population to be between 6,000 and 8,000 in 2020. In contrast, current Census figures estimate the population to be about 4,000. The Capital Region estimates Bastrop County growth rate at 10% annually. Smithville is growing at less than 3%, which is not enough to sustain a resilient community with adequate economic resources to weather the economic ups and downs while maintaining needed public services for its residents. Previous plans have suggested many projects to increase investment and to encourage quality growth. This Smithville Economic Development Community Resiliency Strategic Plan (2020-2025) focuses on those suggestions and projects that allow for short-term (5-year) achievements, thus enabling new investment dollars and additional population to provide meaningful growth to Smithville's economy. These projects are specifically designed to:

- Market awareness beyond Smithville;
- Develop in-fill housing lots at a rate of four sites per year;
- Market two to four larger residential sites annually including development of the Villages of Smithville site on Highway 71;
- Develop and attract industries within the Smithville industrial park;
- Continue to expand facilities and services at the Smithville Crawford Municipal Airport;
- Overlay design controls for lands along Highway 71;
- Encourage lodging and hotel development;
- Attract a minimum of \$2,000,000 private sector development in the downtown annually;
- Improve the public infrastructure intended to assist private sector development;
- Create an incubator/maker space project in the downtown area; and
- Improve river access along the Colorado River and develop a half-mile trail along Gazley Creek.

The Economic Profile section of this Plan defines the present Smithville market. These facts and data should be used to attract new investment and new customers, create new jobs, and bring new wealth to the economy. Key to its locational advantage, Smithville is easily accessible by highway, rail and air. Commute time to work in Smithville is short. Smithville is adjacent to a major four-lane highway network (Highway 71) and in close proximity to three other major US interstate highways and the SH130 toll road around Austin. Union Pacific Rail Yard in Smithville and three UP rail lines intersect at the Smithville rail yard, which is significant for industries needing rail service. The Smithville Crawford Municipal Airport should be promoted in every marketing and outreach effort.



Smithville's market is greater than the municipal boundaries of the City. The Smithville market includes over 15,000 people, which is a significant number of customers and a great pool from which to attract new investment. The median age of 42 in Smithville is relatively older than in most growing communities, as Baby Boomers and Millennials are the largest generation groups in Smithville. Gen X-ers (only 16 percent of the market population) tend to leave this market for more housing and job opportunities. Although the labor force is relatively well educated in Smithville, the median family income (\$68,438) is slightly below the Texas median family income (\$70,423). The labor force and workforce are diverse and the Smithville market includes a reasonable mix of industries. However, attracting more science/technology/engineering/math (STEM) jobs is important to this community because STEM jobs provide higher wages than retail. At this time, retail is only behind education in the number of civilian employees in Smithville.



Smithville's market includes 1,670 households within city limits; within the 10-mile market, the number of households grows to 5,543. Each household spends about \$24,700 annually on retail goods within both geographic boundaries. Leakage to other markets—that is, cash spent outside city boundaries for common goods—is about 23% primarily due to lack of product availability. In other words, Smithville cannot provide about 23% of the retail goods that most families purchase. Increasing market share (adding retailing options and offering store hours every day each week) requires the support of additional households in the Smithville market. Retail cannot invest without an adequate consumer market. To meet the demand for desired retail opportunities, new jobs, and new tax dollars that provide necessary public services and public infrastructure, the number of houses built in Smithville needs to increase substantially.

To encourage economic opportunity, Economic Development policies, codes, and projects will need to focus on increasing the population growth and new housing beyond 10 units a year. The present level of growth (about 3% population growth and about eight new homes each year) is not sufficient to sustain a

vibrant, thriving retailing sector in the central business district. The community desires a vibrant and thriving downtown. The community also generally desires that Smithville to remain small and charming. The mission of this economic development planning effort is to encourage new, meaningful growth that will enable the City to become resilient and to achieve the desired quality of life while simultaneously sustaining the small-town feel and charm that the community desires. This balance allows the community to achieve its needs and wants with sufficient new investment that sustains and promotes a healthy economy. To implement this vigorous plan over the next five years, stakeholders including many community members have identified and coalesced around seven goals.

1. Increase market awareness beyond Smithville
2. Facilitate a range of housing opportunities
3. Guide development adjacent to Highway 71; encourage hotel and airport development
4. Focus the industrial attraction to the Smithville Industrial Park
5. Continue the Downtown Renaissance
6. Enhance the experience of the Colorado River/Gazley Creek
7. Review the accomplishments and celebrate the success

Action objectives are defined to focus the goals and to achieve them within five years. The tasks identified under each action objective are presented to further define the action and assign responsibility for action. It's all about doing something to achieve the Mission: "Meaningful Growth."

The economic development organization (EDO) leadership needs to be shared among the Mayor, the City Manager, and the Executive Director of the Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce. Key teams of volunteer economic developers from the Chamber's Economic Development Committee (SEDC) and the City will be assigned to eight strategic committees to carry out tasks, annually evaluate accomplishments, and celebrate successes. The teams may need to adjust the tasks as appropriate to achieve the action objectives and goals, or to accommodate changes or differences in the specific goal objectives. The Action Economic Development Teams include the marketing team, incentive team, neighborhood team, Highway 71 development team, housing finance team, downtown development team, Colorado River Park team, and Colorado River/Gazley Trails Team. To be successful, these teams must keep the following in mind before jumping into a project:

- Keep the Mission and Goals ever-present,
- Study the specific, available, desired sites,
- Understand the development capabilities and short-comings of the sites and the project, and
- Discuss how any deficiencies will be resolved.

Success is dependent upon plan execution prior to moving dirt. Keep to the tasks, and keep moving forward.

## II. Public Participation and Outreach Strategy

Public participation and outreach for development of the Smithville Economic Development Community Resiliency Strategic Plan included thirty-four “one-on-one” stakeholder interviews and an accompanying nine question survey, four meetings with the Smithville Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee to discuss issues and review draft sections of the report, a Saturday visioning and design studio, the opportunity to review the draft on the Chamber’s website, and the required public hearing at September Smithville City Council meeting where the Council will have the opportunity to adopt this Plan. These efforts have worked to include as many people in the community as possible to hear their vision, concerns, and ideas for meaningful, sustainable growth for Smithville.

### ***Stakeholder Interviews***

In the initial months of the Strategic Plan, Mundo and Associates, Inc. conducted hour-long, “one-on-one” personal interviews with 35 Smithville leaders, business owners and community stakeholders. These interviews were informal, following a general outline of questions and allowing input and recommendations from each individual. The results showcase the need for housing, downtown revitalization and sustainable development across several sectors intended to preserve Smithville’s small-town charm. Participating stakeholders are listed in the table below.

#### ***Interviewed Smithville Stakeholders***

Judy Bergeron	Ted LeVieux	Judy Paul
Janice Bruno	Adena Lewis	Robbie Rabe
Cheryl Burns	Linda Leibowitz	Scott Saunders, Jr.
Gina Chronis-Bayer	Ron Martin	Valerie Savage
Stefanie Distefano	Susan Martin	Jackie Short
Lisa Duty	Sandy Meyerson	Steve Simmons
Derwin Gipson	Letha Mignon	Mac Simpson
Bill Gordon	Sid Millspaugh	Robert Tamble
Clinton Hille	Joanna Morgan	Gwendolyn Watkins
Sammi Hill	Bernadette Noll	Jeri Nell Winslett
Denise Jensen	Caroline Noya	Jeff Wise
	Sarah O’Brien	Jennifer York

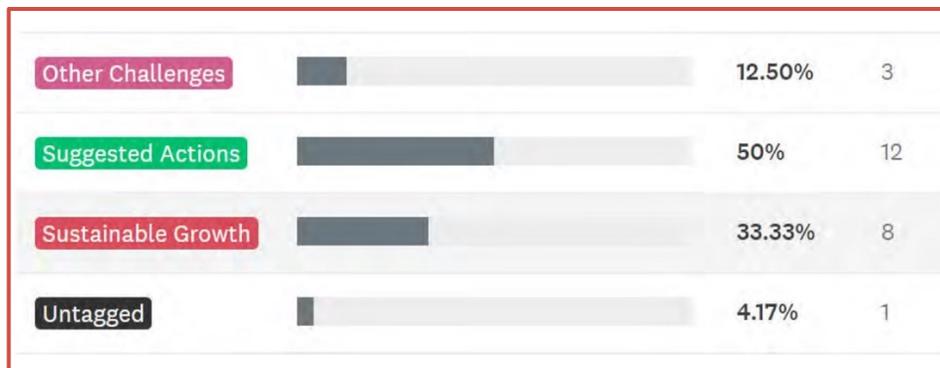
**Question 1:** When asked to list factors that inhibit economic development, these stakeholders focused predominantly on inconsistent growth decisions. These participants were first asked to define the top two

economic development challenges for Smithville. Results show a mix of economic development challenges. The “lack of affordable housing” stood out as the major challenge. When asked to list factors that inhibit economic development, these stakeholders focused predominantly on inconsistent growth decisions. A summary of “Other” challenges illustrate that “sustainable growth” is a common concern.

### Question 1



### Question 1 Summary of “Others”



**Question 2:** Asking the stakeholders to identify the top priority for improving Smithville’s economy brought forth a clear consensus for all who answered. Attracting housing development is the top priority.

### Question 2

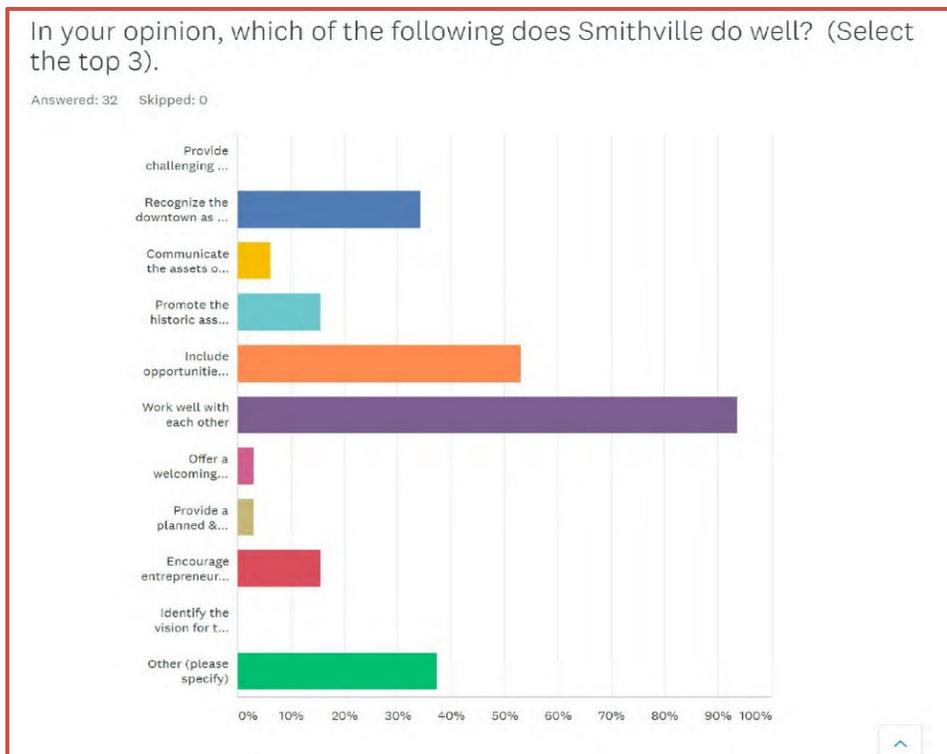
In your opinion, what is the top priority for improving the Smithville economy?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 0

housing Attract development

**Question 3:** Responding to a question about what Smithville does well, respondents clearly noted that the community works well together and collaborates on important issues. Stakeholders also noted that the community provides many opportunities for participation in development efforts. Participants often stated that the city should promote its historic assets and the community needs to encourage entrepreneurship. Clearly, the historic downtown is a special place for all.

### Question 3



**Question 4:** Asked to think of an advertisement about Smithville, the stakeholders were uniform in their response: Smithville is a great small town where people feel good.

**Question 4**

What 2 to 5 words come to mind when you think of an advertisement about Smithville?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 0

great feel small town

**Question 5:** Stakeholders were asked to prioritize new investment. Respondents overwhelmingly noted that housing needs to have primary focus, and development along the highway is important.

**Question 5**

In your opinion what is the most important effort to attract new investment?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 0

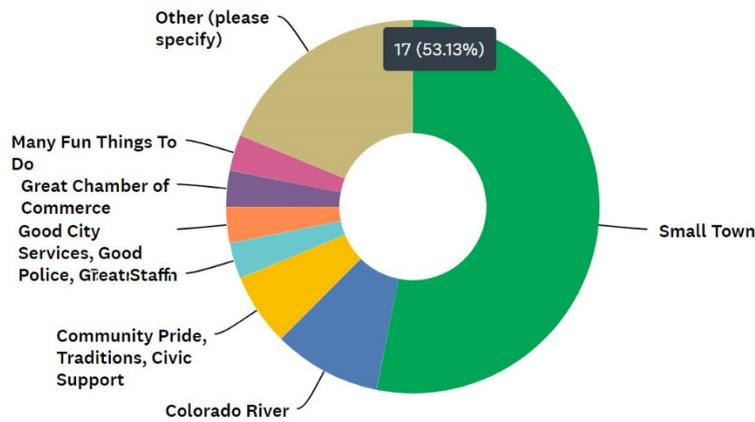
people Hwy housing

**Question 6:** When asked what they like about Smithville, 53%, of the responses indicated that they most like the “small-town” feel and charm of Smithville. The Colorado River is another important community asset. Civic pride, Smithville traditions and civic support are also important characteristics of Smithville.

### Question 6

What do you like best about Smithville?

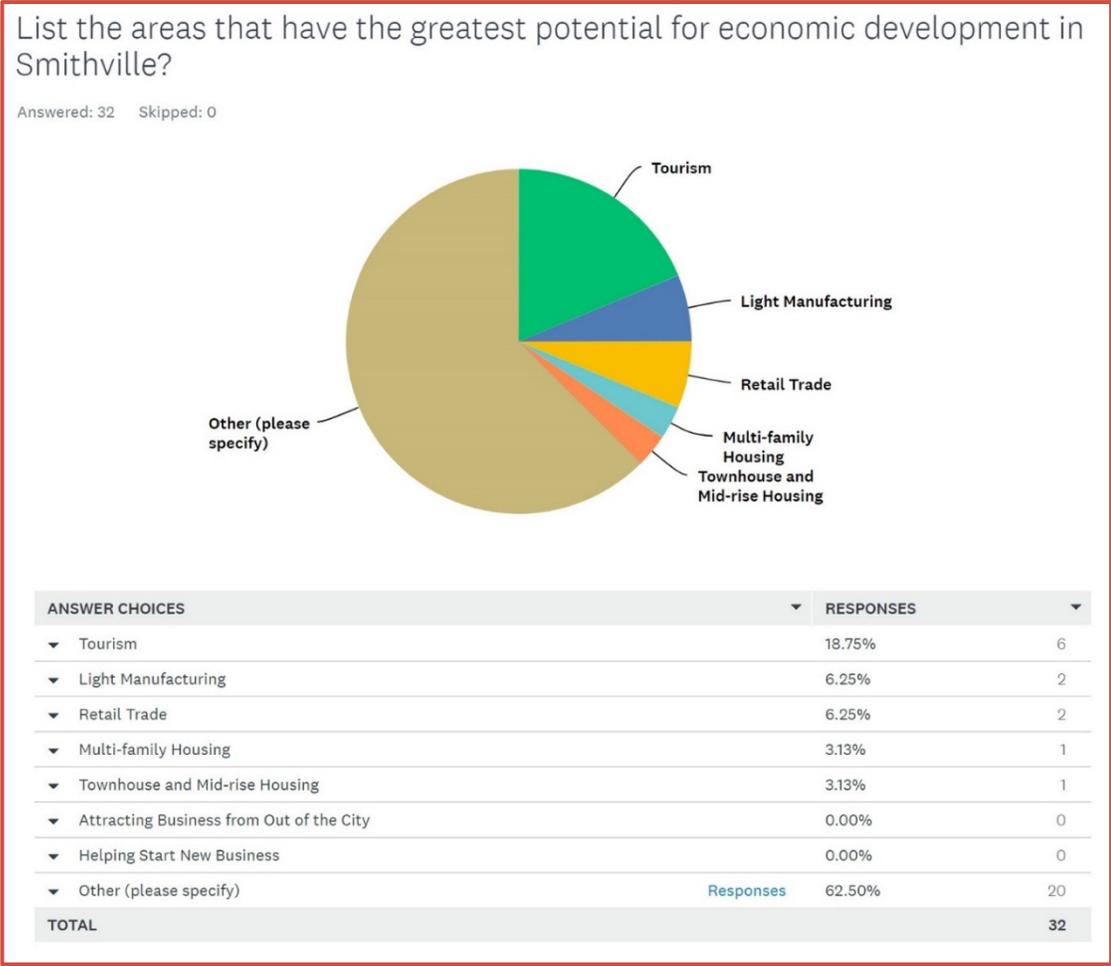
Answered: 32 Skipped: 0



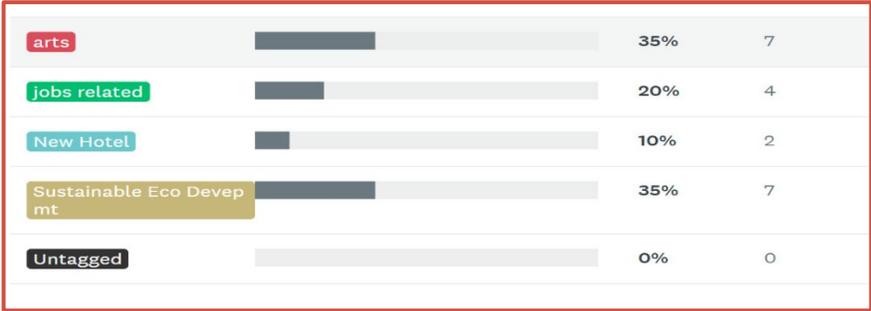
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Small Town	53.13% 17
▼ Colorado River	9.38% 3
▼ Community Pride, Traditions, Civic Support	6.25% 2
▼ Downtown	3.13% 1
▼ Good City Services, Good Police, Great Staff	3.13% 1
▼ Great Chamber of Commerce	3.13% 1
▼ Many Fun Things To Do	3.13% 1
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 18.75% 6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32</b>

**Question 7:** Stakeholders were asked to identify areas of greatest potential, but in contrast to many other questions, there was no consensus. The highest response rate (22% overall) went to two categories captured in “other”: sustainable development and the Arts. Tourism followed at 19% (this survey occurred in December 2019-January 2020 before COVID-19 changed people’s prospects for travel). This was followed at some distance by light manufacturing and retail trade with 6.25%.

**Question 7**

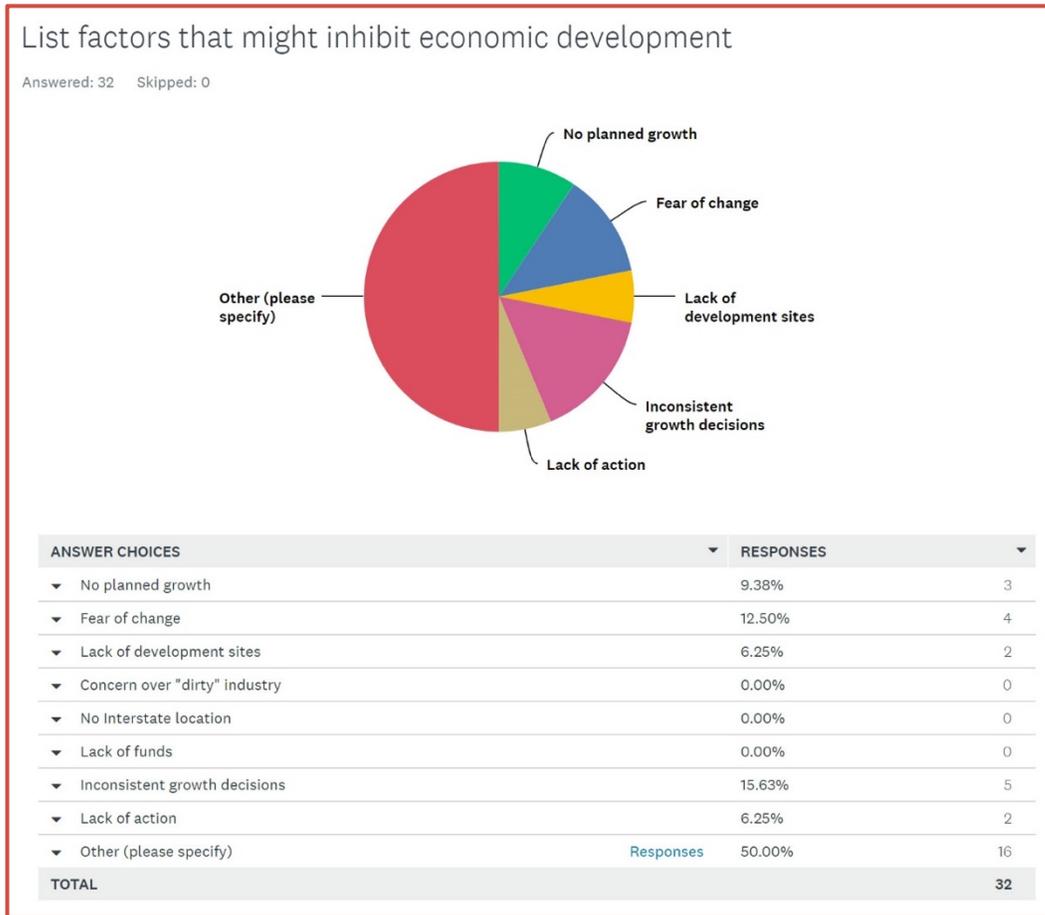


**Question 7 Summary Of “Others”**

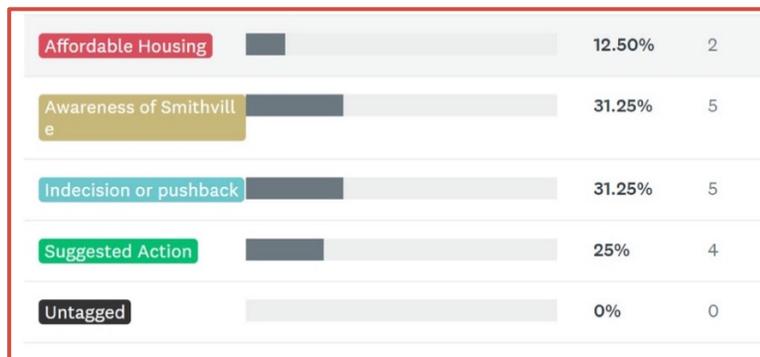


**Question 8:** Stakeholders were asked to list what may inhibit economic development in Smithville. Here 80% of the responses fell into the “Other” category where awareness of Smithville and indecision or pushback were noted as inhibiting development. With 16% of the responses, “inconsistent growth decisions” was noted.

### Question 8



### Question 8 Summary of “Others”



**Question 9:** The last question for the stakeholders was to identify their concerns or points of interest in building an economic development strategic action plan. The lack of growth was a concern and the need for housing a concern.

*Question 9*

List other concerns or points of interest that you feel are important to building an economic development strategic action plan?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 0

growth lack Need city housing development

*Summary of Stakeholder Interviews*

Without a doubt, the citizens of Smithville are enthusiastically involved with their City. Residents, leaders, and stakeholders all have an opinion on the Economic Development Community Resiliency Strategic Plan. The stakeholders easily and uniformly can define what makes Smithville special...it is a great small town. Economic development does not mean growth for the stakeholders.

**1. Housing:** The stakeholders acknowledge that there is a need for all types of housing in Smithville including affordable housing, and diversifying the housing market to be available for a broader segment of the population. The community desires sustainable development that will enhance what makes Smithville special today.

**2. Pillars of the Community:** The community feel, the arts, the downtown and the Colorado River make Smithville unique. Future economic development will need to enhance these pillars of the community.

**3. Sustaining Uniqueness:** Sustaining what makes Smithville special and unique is critical to the future of the City. Stakeholders acknowledge that development will occur particularly along the major highways. Stakeholders desire actions to continue the traditional gridiron street network, with small blocks that are walkable and drawn from the turn of the twentieth century development patterns.

The foundation of this Plan is rooted in meaningful growth that enhances the unique character of this community including Arts programming, the historic downtown business district, and the Colorado River. Stakeholders were concerned about uncontrolled growth that might bring about suburban sprawl; big box stores; shopping centers with large deserts of parking lots; tall, highly illuminated signs that overhang the highway; and lighting that destroys the dark sky.

## ***Smithville Economic Development Committee (SEDC) Meetings***

The Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce established the Economic Development Committee (SEDC) in 2018 to research, evaluate, and possibly implement various programs intended to create economic development opportunities in Smithville. The SEDC has met several times to review progress and assist with the preparation of this Plan, providing guiding comments and suggestions.



The SEDC met on January 28, 2020 to review the results of the Stakeholder Surveys. Due to COVID-19, meetings were suspended until May 26, 2020, when the SEDC met in the new “Zoom” format to review the historic plan section and the Economic Profile, as well as to validate the mission statement and plan goals. At the July 28, 2020 meeting, the SEDC reviewed the Economic Development Policies and Projects, the Implementation Plan, and the Final Report Presentation. A public review of the Implementation Plan section was held on July 30th via a Zoom meeting. A draft of the document has been available on the Chamber’s website since shortly after the public meeting.

## ***Visioning and Design Studio***

Over 80 local residents and children attended the Saturday, February 28, 2020 Open House Visioning Design Studio from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. held at the Smithville Recreation Center. Many people offered suggestions through the seven design stations. The results of this visioning session were similar to those of the stakeholder interviews, but suggestions provided additional detail as to how to keep Smithville a sweet, small town. Several participants also discussed the need to improve access to the Colorado River and to encourage improvements at the boating access facility and Riverbend Park.



Seven Design Stations were placed throughout the room to invite conversation and participation regarding proposed recommendations for the Plan.

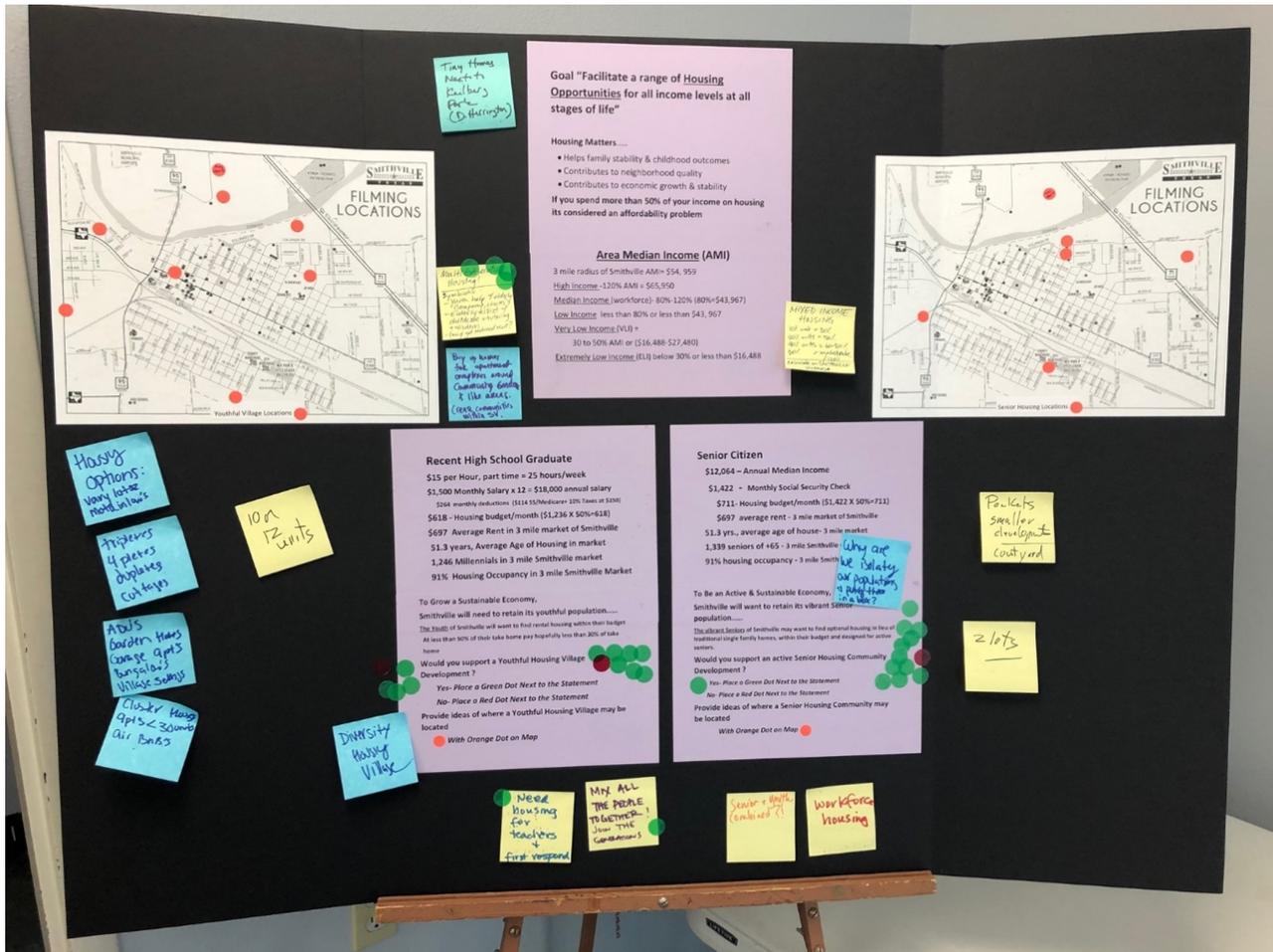
## Station: "Increasing market awareness beyond Smithville"

Participants were invited to create a short tag line to be used to grow interest in investing in Smithville. Although many people took a look at this station, most visitors chose not to participate in it. Few participants took the time to develop a "tagline" to describe Smithville. Comments included; "green thinking," "need a hotel," "No hotel—need a 10-room boutique hotel," "creative hub," "authentic, sustainable, incremental."



## Station: "Housing Design"

The next station dealt with housing and a discussion of the need for housing for all age groups including new high school graduates, senior citizens, and low-to-median income housing is important in a community where the AMI (area median income) is \$43,967. Attendee participation was much higher at this station and many people offered opinions and site suggestions.

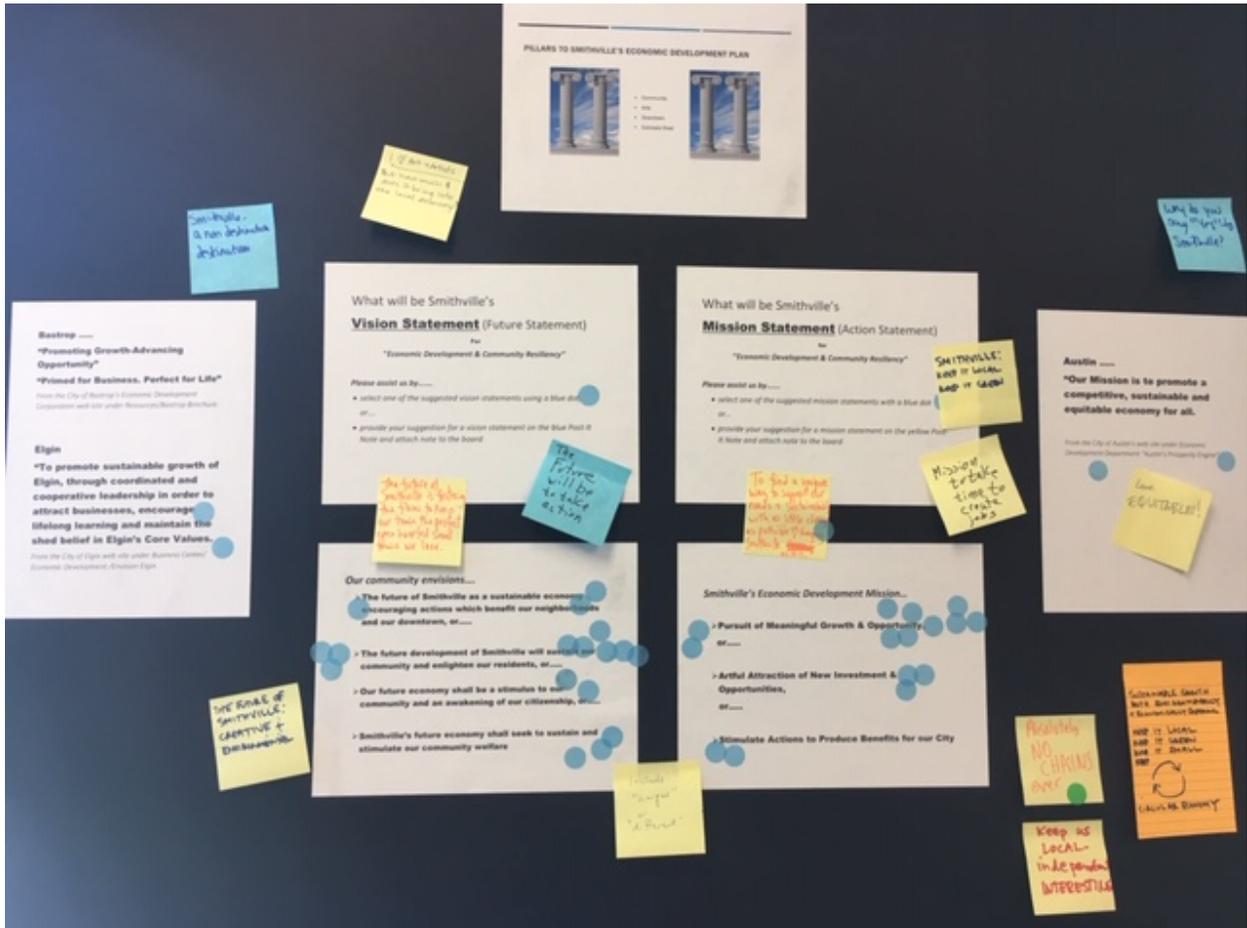


Participants identified the need for housing for teachers, fireman, youth, and workforce. They overwhelmingly requested diversity in housing options and types including duplexes, triplexes, four-plexes, cottages, and tiny homes. Participants asked for a variety of lot attributes and a diversity of housing types on the lots. Several requested that housing clusters of less than 30 units be considered for development. Several reflected on creating a neighborhood or community with gardens and a mix of housing types not separated by age (such as senior housing or youth housing). Others supported housing development focused on young adults to help them stay in Smithville after they graduate from high school. Terms such as “pockets of development,” “smaller development,” and “courtyards” were used. Locations were suggested and will be passed on to the Economic Development Teams working on housing developments.

## Station: "SEDC Mission"

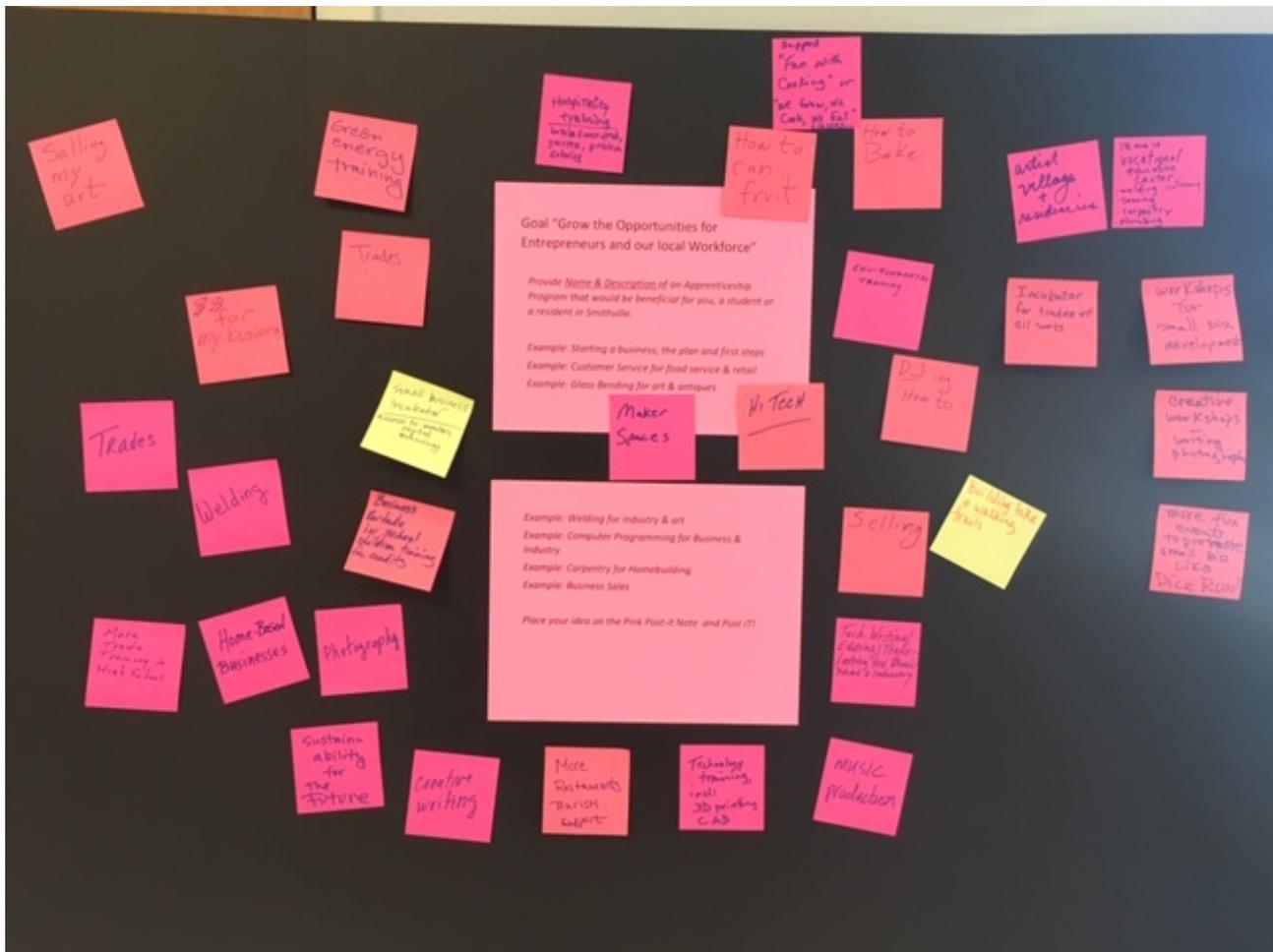
The SEDC Mission design station invited participants to discuss what the Mission of the Economic Development/Resiliency Strategic Plan was to be. Many comments expressed attendees' concerns of growing too much or too fast and losing the small-town feel and charm unique to Smithville. Participants showed their concerns over the need to grow and their fear of losing the Smithville's character. Examples of comments include the following:

- "The future of Smithville is fostering the future to keep our town the perfect open-hearted small town."
- "Smithville a non-distinctive destination."
- "Love the art and artists but how much does it bring into the local economy."
- "Smithville keep it local keep it green."
- "Absolutely no chains."
- "Keep us local, independent and interesting."



## Station: "Visioning"

Participants were invited to discuss the need for entrepreneurs and growing the local workforce at this Visioning station. Support was very evident for developing an incubator/maker space training facility.



Examples of their suggestions include:

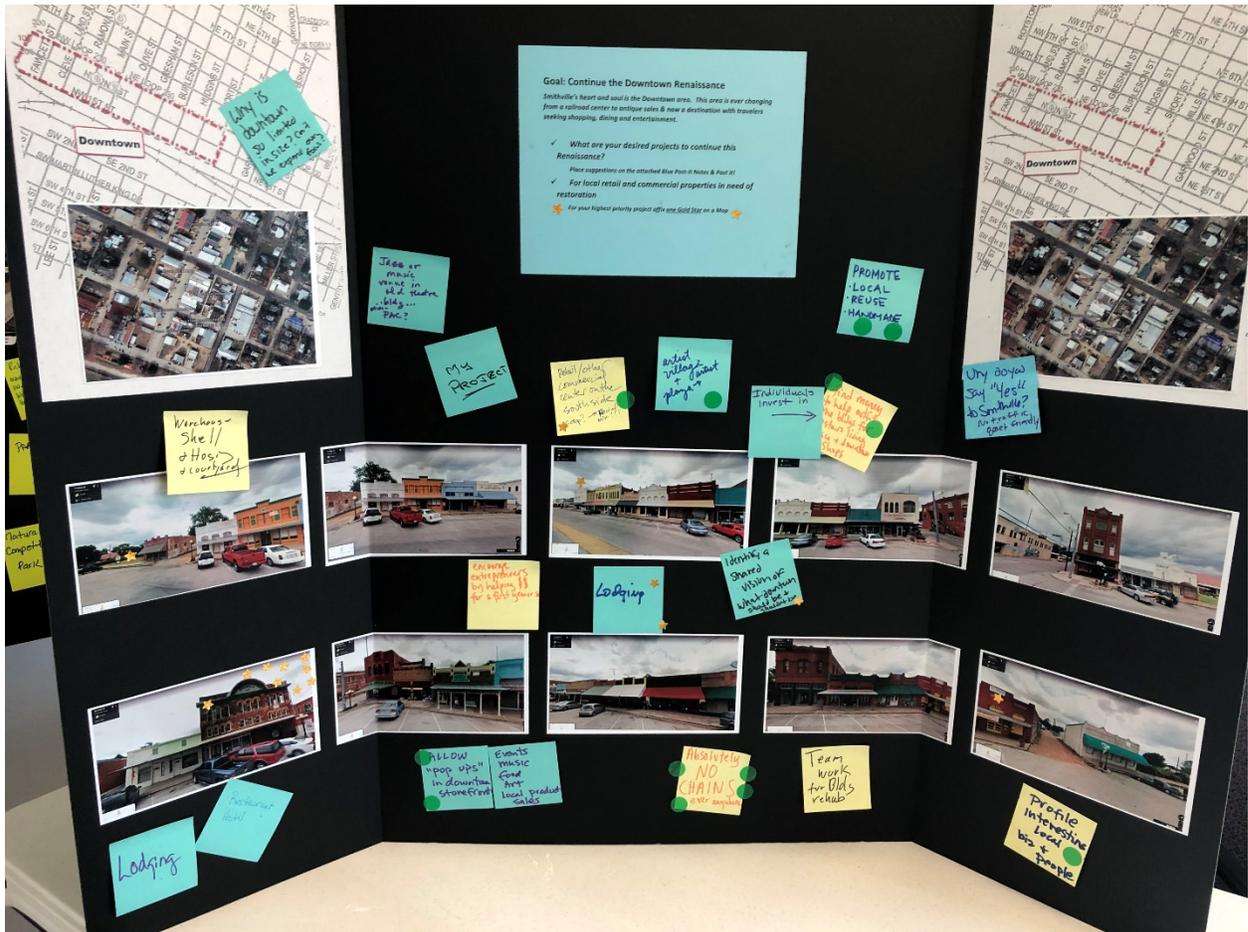
- high tech;
- maker space;
- hospitality training;
- environmental training;
- building bike and walking trails;
- incubator for training of all types;
- workshops for small business training;
- vocational education center for welding, carpentry, plumbing and sewing.





## **Station: "Downtown Renaissance"**

The last visioning station involved a discussion on continuing the Downtown Renaissance. In Smithville as in many other communities, the downtown area must be in continual transformation. In Smithville, the historic downtown has transformed from a railroad center to an antique sales destination and now to an Arts, dining, and entertainment venue.



Participants were asked what is needed in the economic development strategic plan to sustain the Downtown area. Suggestions included establish lodging, restaurants, entertainment venues; allow pop up stores; encourage local product sales (of specific note, not chain stores); and encourage entrepreneurs. Also recommended was:

- "Promote local, reuse and homemade."
- "Find money to help outfit the buildings for upstairs living and downstairs shops"
- "Invest in locals first."

## *Design Studio Summary*

Overall, turnout was excellent and participation was fantastic. The Design Studio participants provided specific insight into what they desire for the future development of the City of Smithville. One participant commented that these visioning ideas need to be implemented. Residents do not want to be surprised by new growth that does not meet the Vision they have explicitly outlined. To sustain the City of Smithville, as a “sweet, small town” will take positive control over the future of the City’s economy. The City of Smithville has survived many natural disasters in the last few years and learned the importance of resiliency. For its economy to move forward, new opportunities need to be provided for the Smithville residents and new investment attracted to enable local citizens to be employed in fruitful efforts. The Strategic Plan needs to provide a path enabling the local citizens and achieving specific goals.



### *III. General Characteristics and Results of Past Plans*

A review of the past studies and plans related to economic and community development in Smithville, adjoining or competing communities, the County, and the region (the “Capital Area”) was required as a part of the grant contract, and offered some insight into past intentions, actions, and proposals.

The Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) estimates that 2.1 million residents currently live in this region. CAPCOG expects Bastrop County to grow by 10% annually. Past plans and other reports have estimated that Smithville’s population may reach 6,715 residents in 2020, or some 76% growth. However, Smithville’s population is presently estimated between 3,800 to 4,000 residents, and without additional housing stock Smithville will be unable to grow further.

The 1997 Smithville Comprehensive Plan states that leaders desire to retain the small town feel of Smithville, but also a discuss the need for job opportunities, parks, recreational opportunities, and a vibrant downtown as well as quality infrastructure and storm water management. The 2007 Comprehensive Plan noted that economic development is the continual process of creation, retention, and reinvestment of wealth. The Adopted Comprehensive Plan of 2012 identified short- and long-term business development tasks as well as other sector improvements in housing, sustainability, transportation, etc. A citizen/shopper survey in 2013-14 noted that 75% would support a \$1 fee on the utility bill to support economic development. A 2017 By the Numbers Economic Development Plan recommended updating the website and the found that the reason most people shop outside of Smithville was due to availability issues. A downtown study communicated the need to update the website and offered ideas for many short, mid-term and long-term projects.

All these planning and reports related to Smithville contain valuable nuggets of economic development strategies and actions. In fact, there may be too many suggestions. The narrowing of priorities, dedicated implementation, and periodic review of accomplishments is needed to successfully and rapidly increase new wealth and new investment growth for Smithville. Ideas are many but action is critical. Success is vital for a sustainable economy. Focusing in on an Economic Development Organization (EDO), marketing to the outside through the one economic development website, housing development, downtown renaissance, industrial park development, airport development, better use of the Colorado River, entrepreneurial and vocational education are goals taken from the previous studies and have been reinforced through the Stakeholder’s Survey and the Design Studio and other public participation efforts.

The Cities of Bastrop and Elgin, both competing cities for new wealth, investment and jobs, are larger than Smithville. Both have a designated EDO (including staff, dedicated website, and other resources). Their plans clearly identify specific projects to be implemented.

Bastrop County plans identify significant residential and commercial growth outside of the cities and in the unincorporated areas of the County. Strategies in agriculture, growth management, transportation, and education will benefit Smithville.

A review of the Smithville plans and those of competing cities and the County and Capital Region follow. The review of these plans provides only summaries of their contents and are intended to highlight the economic development actions needed for the future development of a strategic plan.

## ***Local Smithville Development Plans***

### **1997 City of Smithville Comprehensive Plan**

**Vision:** To be an active, cooperative community maintaining a sense of pride and quality of life for all residents by striving for an economically viable, safe, clean, well-educated and well-planned community with a thriving local economy in small but technology advanced industry and business.

The vision for 2020 included Smithville reaching a population of 6,000 (6,715 in 2020) and a substantial number of employers with 10 to 50 employees in the fields of medical equipment, airport services, furniture, and health care, maintaining its character as a quiet, small town with modern amenities and an expanded tax base. The purpose of the Plan was to provide a Land Use Guide, a Capital Improvements Program and to foster community.

- Existing land use was 30% residential use of which 27% was single family: 1.3% commercial, 7.4% industrial, 3.6% parks, 12.9% open space. Smithville was 70% developed and 30% undeveloped.
- Population was 67% white, 19% black, 14% Hispanic.
- Goals included: Improve housing quality and quantity, increase educational opportunity, maintain and enhance quality of life, advertise regionally, target industry, promote the airport, and use incentives.
- Housing strategies included: update the residential codes, add infrastructure, set criteria for multifamily residential, use CDBG funds for low- to moderate-income housing, use volunteers to rehabilitate housing, and use FHA for subsidized rental housing for the elderly and low/mod income housing. The railroad right of way was to be used for industry and parks.
- Promote Smithville amenities and promote the downtown.
- Develop minimum standards for the downtown.
- Create entrance features into the City.
- Expand the recreational facilities, expand the library, and provide facilities for the senior residents.

- Piggyback upon State and Regional economic efforts, aggressively recruit expanding companies, recruit and attract retirees, research and pursue developers, and assist in developing new businesses.

## 2007 City of Smithville Comprehensive Plan

This plan defines a comprehensive plan as “holistic” that identifies all issues of community development with the goal of establishing projects that can generate the highest return on investment in multiple areas of land use, economic development, housing, community development downtown, and smart code. The plan defines economic development as a continual process of creation, retention and reinvestment of wealth.

### Economic Development Recommendations

- Attract Higher Education Facilities and Programs
- Develop Apprenticeship programs
- Support Existing Employers (survey their needs)
- Develop Shop Home programs
- Develop an Industrial Park utilizing TIRZ to develop
- Establish Incentive programs
- Update website for economic development
- Develop Airport facilities for development
- Tourism (work with the Hyatt)



### **Downtown Development Recommendations**

- Market Retail for the Downtown
- Use Demographics to market to developers
- Provide Incentives to targeted businesses
- Design Building Guidelines
- Provide New Pedestrian amenities including safe sidewalks
- Improve Lighting in Downtown
- Provide Pocket Parks
- Provide Restrooms
- Redevelop Ramona Street
- Utilize TIFs and PIDs to finance improvements

### **Housing Development Recommendations**

- Market for New Development
- Utilize Market Analysis for attracting developers
- Identify Assistance and Incentives
- Provide a Broad Mix of Housing
- Educate Community on need for Workforce and Multifamily Housing
- Maintain Safe Housing Standards

## **2011-2012 City of Smithville “Updated” Comprehensive Plan (Adopted 11/2012)**

Vision and Value Statement originally adopted 9/4/2002 and re-adopted as part of 2011-2012 Comprehensive Plan. “Our Vision is to maintain a small-town sense of community while encouraging positive growth and continually improved standards of living for the citizens of Smithville, Texas. Values included respect, open communication, teamwork and innovation. Leadership philosophy included Focus on customer, invest in workforce and Meet targeted financial and administrative goals.

### **Demographic Analysis**

- Projected 4,155 population in 2016. Growth rate less than County
- Population characteristics noted 66% white, 12% black and 19% Hispanic
- Population characteristics noted nearly 30% are less than 19 years of age and nearly 20% are over 65 years of age
- Population characteristics noted 2010 median income was \$46,522 and 20% of Smithville earns less than \$15,000 annually
- Median home value is \$111,624
- 60% of residents have graduated from High School
- School dropout rate is below State average

### **Business Development Short-Term Recommendations**

- Purchase Blue Highway Information Signs for Business Marketing
- Add “ARTS” to billboard and other marketing campaigns
- Deepen relationship with Hyatt Lost Pines Resort
- Develop Heritage Tourism Program
- Apply for Cultural District Designation
- Tourism is the Key

### **Business Development Longer-Term Recommendations**

- Purchase Trolley
- Develop small industrial parks
- Establish a virtual office/park & work in downtown area and Makers Place
- Develop a business incubator
- Establish an alternate movie venue
- Review and update incentive policy to meet changing expectations
- Host a Taste of Smithville

Other Comprehensive Plan recommendations included historic preservation, sustainability & environmental issues, volunteer development, parks & recreation, education, housing, and transportation. It was noted that half of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan recommendations were accomplished. For housing issues, the plan referred back to the 2007 Plan for recommendations.

## **2013-2014 Economic Development Survey**

The City and the Chamber of Commerce conducted a survey in 2013-2014 and 402 people who shop in Smithville completed the survey.

### **Results of the survey**

- 73.5% agreed that they would support a \$1 fee on the utility bill to be used for economic development
- Targeted businesses desired include department/clothing store, entertainment, restaurants/fast foods and grocer/farmers market
- Strengths of Smithville: beautiful neighborhoods, small town, Colorado River
- Develop a plan to implement the ideas within 5 years
- Create a marketing plan using data provided for selling Smithville to outside investors
- Conduct a public relations plan using data provided for local buy-in
- Continue building a data bank to support investment and development

## 2017 Smithville Development Strategic Plan – Part 1: By the Numbers

This report identified metrics, data, economic development information that is useful for economic development planning and for use by investors and developers contemplating projects for Smithville.

- Population numbers: Smithville is approximately 4,000, the zip code is 9,000 and the Smithville Independent School District (SISD) is 12,000
- Populations of communities in the Smithville Market area include Bastrop, 7,669, Elgin 8,249 and within 30 miles LaGrange 4,666; Giddings 4,957; Schulenburg 2,892; Flatonia 1,565.
- Median Age of Smithville is 42 slightly older than State Average.
- Prime Working Age (25-54) is 32% of Smithville’s Population, Seniors 21% and under 18 years old 26% of population
- 63% of Smithville workers work outside of Smithville
- Median Household Income in 2015 is \$39,330 in Smithville and \$53,889 in US with 42% of Smithville families earning \$24,999 or less (US poverty threshold is \$24,250 for family of 4)
- Number of business establishments has been a steady increase since 2004 growing from 114 to 147 establishments in 2015
- Top Employers in Smithville start with the SISD; however, the City has a broad mix of industry, health care, retailer and more industry than a typical community of 4,000
- MD Anderson Cancer Research, Union Pacific Railroad, Cen-Tex Marine Fabricators, Spiradrill, and Smithville Regional Hospital are major employers in the City.
- The Marginal Propensity to Consume (MPC ) or Impact of total output of Smithville Personal Income assuming a 20% savings equals \$302.4 million per year
- Market value of property in SISD area is continuing to increase from 2011-2016-\$14,508,000
- City tax rate at 0.565987 is comparable competing communities
- Short-term goals: create a website, mission, list of assets/strengths;
- Mid-term goals: hire employee, develop promotional materials;
- Long-term goals: develop a public/private partnership and separately funded organization such as a foundation.

The report noted excerpts from the 2013-2014 citizen survey including 73% of citizens indicated they would support adding \$1 to utility bill for economic development; citizens want a department store, more entertainment, fast food and grocery/farmers market/coop; reason most shop outside of Smithville is availability, strengths of Smithville are its neighborhoods, small town feel, Colorado River and School System; word of mouth and internet are best ways of marketing.

## 2017-2020 Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce Strategic Plan

- The Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce maintains a strategic plan and updates the plan annually. Key elements within this strategic plan include:  
**Vision:** Premier place to live and work with emphasis on small town enhancement “Smithville, a BIG small-town experience”

**Mission:** Prepare for growth and retain existing businesses

**Goals:**

- Enhance member participation and value
- Promote economic & sustainable growth & marketing
- Strengthen the organization

The Chamber's strategic plan includes several objectives to reach the established goals.

The Chamber of Commerce has developed an economic development committee that actively participates in economic development activities. The Chamber has over 72 marketing and meeting events annually. The Chamber, City, Cultural Committee and various community groups work well together. There is an on-going, active partnership working together under the Chamber umbrella.

### **2018 EDA Economic Development Strategic Planning Work Session**

- The EDA disaster grant planning project consisted of interviews with community leaders plus small and large group decision making sessions, a Strengths, Weak, Treats and Opportunities (SWOT) analysis and report prepared with 3 distinct project recommendations.
- \$8.4 million recommended project for the Downtown Redevelopment utilizing a Public Improvement District (PID) to finance the improvements by attracting developers to the downtown buildings and sites and with PID fees and financing pay for the \$8.4m in recommended improvements.
- \$20 million in Storm Water Drainage Project asking to prioritize six storm water drainage projects, designing and constructing these projects
- \$144,000 Housing Analysis and Plan to identify, clear title and then sell 100 vacant properties at \$20,000 to \$30,000 each to a national housing developer.

### **2019 Texas Downtown Association - Downtown Smithville Assessment**

A team of five experts from the Texas Downtown Association provided a one-day assessment of the downtown in Smithville. The report described the methodology of the assessment and the short, mid-range and long-term recommendations. There were many excellent recommendations. The Key recommendations are noted here.

#### **Short-term Recommendations**

- Articulate a vision for the downtown: whom does it serve?
- Go for it as an Arts destination
- Communicate better
- Commit to one calendar that is up to date city/chamber/cultural activities
- Keep city/chamber/cultural websites up to date
- Keep economic metrics up to date

- Develop allies and partners
- Key in on attracting short term visitors from Buescher State Park (42,000 annually)
- Increase downtown occupancy

### **Mid-Range Recommendations**

- Work with vacant property owners on occupancy issues
- Allow pop up shops and displays
- Encourage co-advertising and marketing
- Target retailers and services providers from adjoining cities
- Build and Utilized incentives for attraction of retailers and service providers
- Establish Eco-tourism and link to Colorado River paddle trails and State Park trails

### **Long-term Recommendations**

- Plan to include housing options in the downtown
- Plan for overnight lodging options in the downtown
- Prepare a long-term capital improvements program for water, sanitary sewer and storm sewer facilities in downtown
- Improve Colorado River access
- Develop a shop local program
- Develop infill design guidelines

## ***Area Economic Development Plans***

### **Elevating Bastrop – 2019 City Economic Development Action Plan**

This plan was completed in three phases: 1) Discovery (identifying the product-Bastrop); 2) Analyzing the Needs and Issues; and 3) Strategy and Recommendations.

#### **Recommendations included:**

- Strengthen Bastrop to compete for new investment by developing a Spec Building, attracting a Tech College, develop a Sports Destination, create an Entrepreneurial Center
- Tell the Story by updating the website, enhance social media, focus on area brokers and real estate developers, target consultant calls, execute a process for lead generator and profiling targets
- Execute Effectively by creating a one-stop shop permitting office.

#### **Assets:**

- Central location, 30 minutes from Austin-Bergstrom International Airport
- Cost of labor is competitive

- Attractive office sites
- Local economic development staff and organization
- Available capacity of water and sanitary sewer
- Local incentives
- Major shopping and local restaurants
- Appearance of Central Business District

### **Challenges**

- Lack of skilled manufacturing labor force
- Lack of fully served office sites and flex space
- Lack of low interest loans and grants for small business
- Lack of venture capital
- Local public-school test scores
- Business permitting process and costs
- Lack of apartments
- Level of crime
- Lack of medical facilities

## **2004-2010 Envision Elgin-Community Development Strategy**

The City of Elgin developed a strategic plan for community development; it focuses on workforce development, new business development, retention of businesses, sustainable growth and downtown.

### **Workforce Development Strategies**

- Elect to be part of the ACC district
- Hold regular meetings with higher education partners
- Educated HS students on higher education opportunities and benefits

### **New Business Development Strategies**

- Survey workforce skill needs
- ID future industrial land
- Research targeted industry food manufacturing, biotech, Toyota suppliers, furniture manufacturers, business services, telecommunication and call centers
- Participate in regional recruitment initiatives

### **Retention of Existing Businesses**

- Provide business educational enhancement courses
- Establish a formal business visitation program

- Develop hospitality and customer service training course
- Establish a buy local campaign
- Develop “Welcome to Elgin Fact Sheet” to identify local goods and services

### **Sustainable Growth**

- Prepare a commercial corridor land use plan
- Limit driveway access on commercial corridors
- Plan to build sidewalks and bike trails
- Continue infrastructure maintenance and development including storm water management
- Increase housing opportunities at all income levels

### **Downtown Development**

- Continue the Main Street Program
- Use video to tell the story
- Develop a heritage walking tour
- Develop Railroad property

## **2017 Opportunity Bastrop County Review**

County Commissioners updated their 2007 Strategic Plan with this 2017 Review. Growth has increased by 15% since 2007 despite 1,600 residences destroyed in the 2011 complex fire. Since the 2010 Census, approximately 3,145 residential permits have been issued in unincorporated areas along HWY 71, SH 21 and SH95 between Bastrop and Camp Swift. Additionally, 127 commercial development permits were issued during this same period. Areas of Further Consideration included the following:

### **Environmental Quality & Growth Management**

- Encourage continued agricultural land uses
- Support locally produced food, goods and wildlife
- Develop a Parks Master Plan and Open Space Policy

### **Transportation Enhancement**

- Plan a comprehensive roadway system
- Plan a transit system
- Plan pedestrian & bicycle projects

### **Economic Development and Educational Opportunities**

- Establish a technical or vocational college
- Increase awareness of importance of School District student achievement

## **2018 Capital Area Council of Governments – Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**

Update report noted that the region has grown to 2.1 million residents with Bastrop County expecting to achieve double-digit population growth in the future. Growth is mostly by migration into the region. Job growth annually exceeded 30,000 jobs; however, 50% of those jobs were in lower skilled and lower incomes (\$20,000-\$40,000). Accommodations and food service were the top industry at 10.3% followed by retail trade at 10.3%. Professional scientific and technology is 9.9% of the jobs in the Capital Area. Challenges include the cost of housing rising 28.4% in 5 years.

### **Strategies include**

- Workforce development postsecondary and vocational to raise income
- Entrepreneurship to accelerate new firms and new business growth
- Economic Resilience to expand exports, diversity the industry clusters, reduce water use and ozone level reductions
- Place building with new design criteria for development, reduction in commuting and investments in downtowns

## *IV. Economic Profile*

### ***Definition of the Smithville Market***

Defining Smithville's market is an integral part of this Economic Development Community Resiliency Strategic Plan. The Economic Profile helps define today's market for brick and mortar retail establishments. Elements presented in the Economic Profile may be used to attract new investment into Smithville. New investments and new customers create new jobs and bring new wealth to the economy of Smithville. Recommended policies, goals, and strategies are to be considered to enhance the municipal tax and revenue base, as well as to increase the retail potential and opportunity for new job creation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the economy of Texas and Smithville. How much this crisis will impact the market and the economic profile is yet to be seen. The Texas Comptroller estimates a 9.3% decrease in state sales tax during March/April 2020, noting that it was too early to identify the impact on local sales tax. However, the principles of economic development and an economic profile remain the same with or without a health crisis or natural disaster. Although Smithville has had its fair share of disruptions and disasters over the past several years, the basic principles of economic development remain the same regardless of the circumstances. It is vital to have an active marketing effort that attracts and welcomes new investment that adds to the economy of Smithville.

Today, investment decision-making is conducted with information from the Internet. The economic facts need to be front and center on all the Smithville websites. Smithville will need to market its economic assets to those potential investors and retailers through vigorous use of the Internet. Economic Development sections of community websites need to be the informative source of economic assets. Active use of all social media is critical. Websites across sectors should highlight Economic Development so that those looking for information do not need to drill down more than one click of the City and Chamber Websites. Site selectors, investors, developers, and small business entrepreneurs want quick and easy access to the economic facts. These facts need to be front and center on all the Smithville websites.

### ***Market Profile Facts and Data***

The facts presented with this Economic Profile are a condensed and updated version of information provided in several of the recent studies and plans of the City. Those studies are available electronically on the City website. This Economic Profile is a selection of the key facts used, by investors, to choose Smithville or to move on to another location that meets the needs of the proposed project. This Economic Profile sets the stage for planning of economic development and community resiliency. Despite the COVID-19 crisis,

investment decisions are being made right now. Smithville needs to prepare for those opportunities. The following sections highlight important Economic Profile facts which need to be used in all marketing and updated regularly.

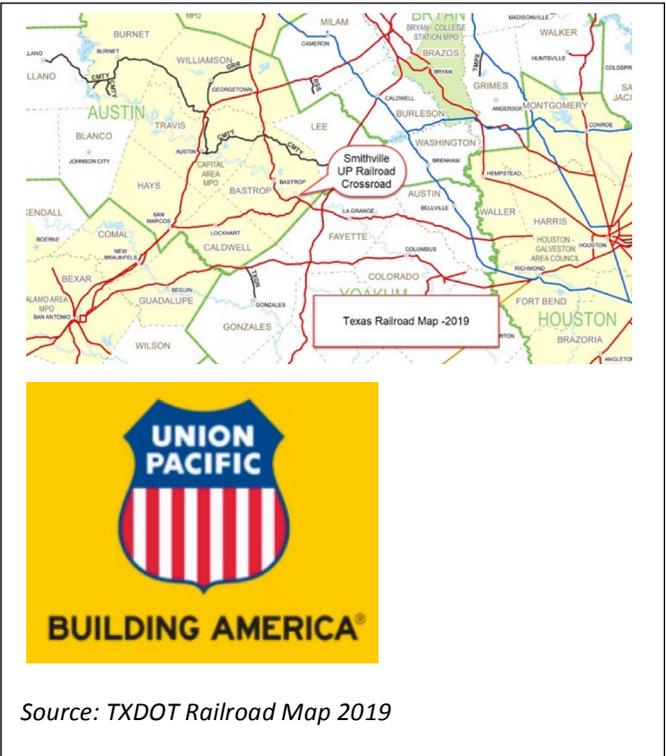
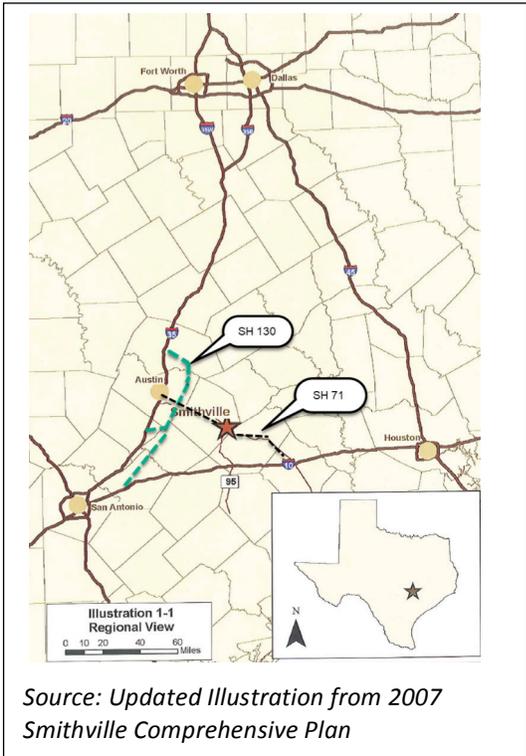
**Smithville is Easily Accessible by Highway, Rail, and Air**

**Highway Access:**

- Smithville’s Central Texas location is ideally within the Texas Interstate Triangle (IH 35/45/10)
- Smithville is on HWY 71 (four lanes)
- Smithville is within 30 miles of the SH- 130 Tollway
- Smithville is within 45 miles of IH-35 in Austin
- Smithville is within 120 miles of Houston via IH 10

**Railroad Access:**

- Union Pacific (UP) Railroad has three main lines intersecting at the Smithville UP rail yard.



**Air Access**

- Smithville Crawford Municipal Airport has a 4,000-foot lighted runway.



- Austin Bergstrom International Airport is within 34 miles of Smithville on Hwy 71.

The average travel time (“commute”) is a useful economic fact to identify the market area for attracting workforce. Smithville’s short commute time of 20 minutes will have a potential labor force of 12,232. A manufacturer looking to locate in Smithville will utilize the labor force number to predict the ability to attract a workforce from this labor force pool of candidates.

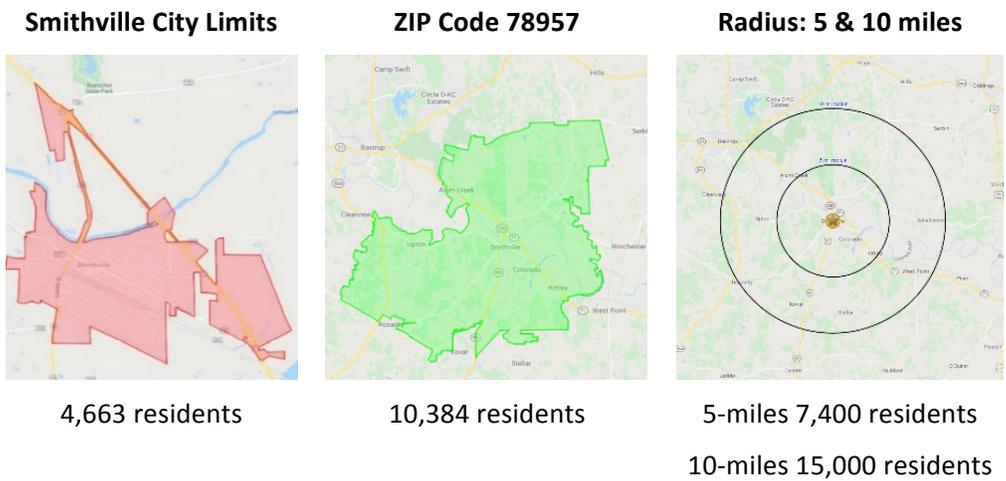
**Labor Force with 20-minute Commute**

Market Location	Average Commute Time	Labor Force in Market
Smithville	20 minutes	3,712
10-mile radius	20-24 minutes	12,232

Source: SITES USA Applied Geographic Solutions, TIGER Geography

**Smithville’s “Market” Population of 15,000**

The market of Smithville may be defined as the population being served. For Smithville, in 2019, the population may be identified as the residents within the following:



Smithville’s market extends beyond the city limits. The political limits of a community do not necessarily reflect shopping habits or employment locations. Its reasonable to assume that the Smithville market may include the 15,000 population from within 10 miles for shopping specialty items or labor market for local manufacturers and Union Pacific Rail Yard. For the average essential household needs, the 5-mile radius market of 7,400 people is appropriate. Also useful is knowing the Smithville ZIP Code market of 10,384 postal customers. The ZIP Code area is not quite as large as the population within the 10-mile radius.

Depending on the retail use, the Smithville market size varies from 4,663 to 15,000. Travelers or commuters using Hwy 71, Bastrop residents looking for specialty shops, and rural residents outside of Smithville come to shop the Smithville stores and shops. Smithville residents enjoy the walkability of

Smithville, and many prefer to shop local. Knowing the customers you serve helps to define the revenue base of your market.

**Smithville Market Population**

	2019	US Census 2010	US Census 2000	2019 Density per sq. mile	Projected 2024	Projected Annual Growth 2019-2024
<b>Smithville</b>	4,663	3,817	3,816	1,262	5332	2.9%
<b>5-mile radius</b>	7,394	6,295	6,164	94	8,538	3.1%
<b>10 -mile radius</b>	15,049	17,217	12,061	48	17,127	2.9%
<b>78957 ZIP Code</b>	10,384	9,067	8,406	55	12,007	3.1%

*Note the 2020 US Census will be available after December of 2020  
Source: SITES USA Applied Geographic Solutions, TIGER Geography*

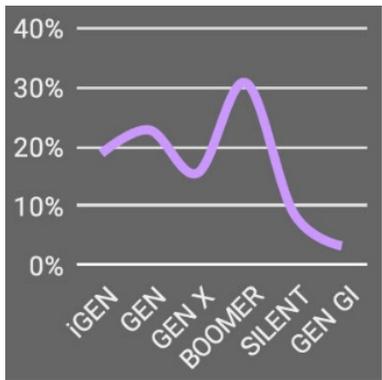
**Generations of Shoppers**

Baby Boomers and Millennials are the largest generation groups within the City and within the 10-mile market. Retailers will notice these generation groups and adapt their retail locations to meet these customers. While Baby Boomers may be past their peak retail shopping days, their Social Security dollars are important to the personal services market. Millennials are a notable workforce group when targeting technology and the Arts or STEAM (science, technology, engineering, Arts, and math training). Smithville’s economic development policy should include efforts to retain the Millennials and Gen X-ers to sustain the retail economy and to add new investment wealth with new jobs and new STEAM businesses and industry.

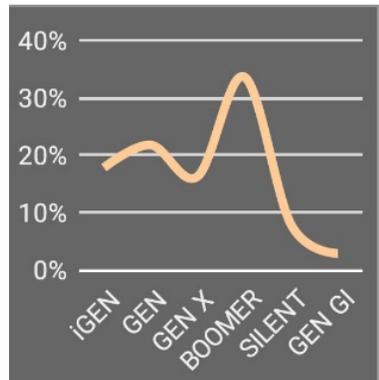
The median age in Smithville and the surrounding market area is in the 40s. Most retail companies look for a median age in the mid-30s (Millennials). This population age group is new families with young children and active shoppers. With the older median age, Smithville is more a market for personal services, dining out, travel, and tourism. Retailers will also look to the iGen population (14 and younger) for their retail customers. A suggested economic development practice is increasing the retail customer market by making an effort to attract younger families via more affordable housing.

- Median Age, City of Smithville: 42
- Median Age, 5-Mile Radius: 44
- Median Age, 10-Mile Radius: 45
- 31% to 36% of market population: Baby Boomers (ages 50 to 74) who are close to or entering retirement
- 20 to 23% of Smithville market: Generation 9/11 Millennials (ages 15 to 34), just beginning careers and seeking more affordable housing
- 18% of the market: iGen (under 14 years)
- 16% of market population: Gen X (ages 35 to 50) of prime working age. Millennials and Gen X-ers are leaving Smithville market for more housing and job opportunities in the Austin area; the dip in the curves in the charts below illustrates their flight

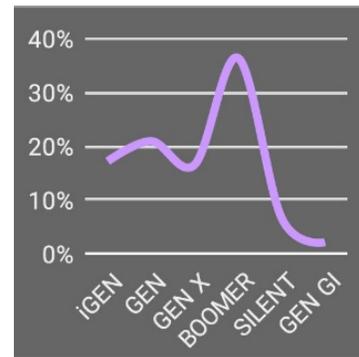
**City of Smithville**



**5-mile radius from City Center**



**10-mile radius from City Center**



Source: SITES USA, Applied Geographic Solutions, TIGER Geography

### **Educational Attainment and Income**

The population base of Smithville and its 5- and 10-mile market include a significant percentage of a well-educated labor force. The policy of the Smithville economic development plan should consider marketing to the STEAM industries for prospective employers.

- High School Graduates make up 34% of City of Smithville residents, 30% of the residents in the 5-mile market and 30% of the Smithville 10-mile market residents.
- College plus Bachelor and Graduate Degree residents in the City make up 51% of the population, 53% of the 5-mile market and 58% of the Smithville 10-mile market residents.

(Source: 2019 SITES USA- Applied Geographic Solutions- TIGER Geography)

Smithville’s income levels are near the state average; in order to exceed that average, Smithville will need to attract more housing and job opportunities. Jobs that exceed state income averages in turn will attract more retail and sales tax generating commerce. This attraction effort is important to assist in developing a balanced and sustainable tax base for the community. From a manufacturing, arts, science, and technology viewpoint, Smithville has an opportunity to attract workforce that is not requiring the competitive or higher paying wages of the nearby Austin and Houston markets. Note the income levels have provided Smithville and its immediate area with two Federal economic development incentives: New Market Tax Credits and Opportunity Zones.

#### **HOUSEHOLD INCOME-MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME CLOSE TO STATE AVERAGE**

	<b>Smithville</b>	<b>Texas</b>
<b>Median Family Household Income</b>	\$68,438	\$70,423
<b>Per Capita Income</b>	\$29,073	\$30,143
<b>Population with Social Security</b>	17%	25%
<b>Mean Social Security Income</b>	\$17,821	\$18,553

**Median Earnings for worker**

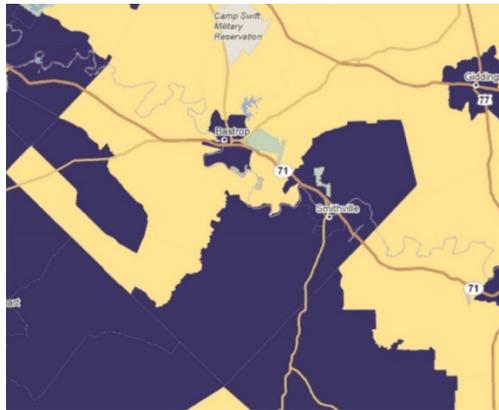
\$32,246

\$30,887

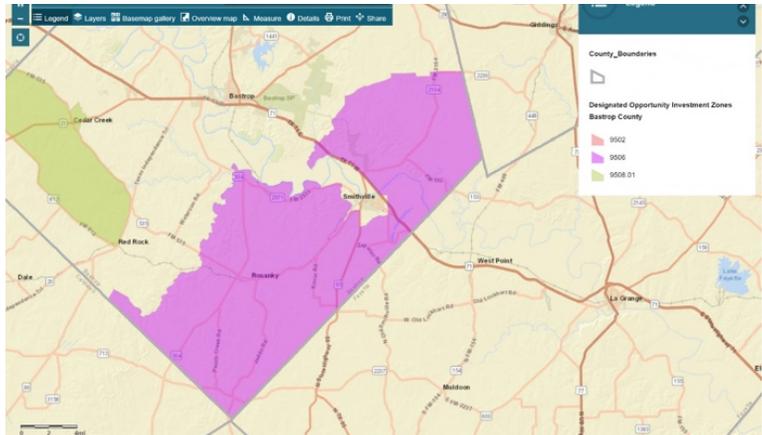
Source: US Census Bureau, 2018 AMC

### ***New Market Tax Credits Smithville in Census Tract 3506***

Federal New Market Tax Credits, for new investment and new development, may be obtained when developing in the City of Smithville and Census Tract 3506. This Census Tract 3506 is to the south and to the west of Smithville. Federal Opportunity Zone Tax Credits for new investment and new development, may also be obtained when developing within Census Tract 3506.



Federal New Market Zones



Federal Opportunity Zone (pink)

### ***Service and Professional Labor Force and Occupations***

In Smithville, those 16 and over may be classified as part of the labor force. However, we find that only 75% of the labor force has occupations. This may be reflective of the Baby Boomers who are retiring and living in Smithville. It can also mean that there are fewer jobs for those in the younger age groups. Similar percentage-of-labor-force to occupation is seen in the 5-mile and 10-mile markets.

Slightly more of the Smithville occupations are white-collar. Within the 5-mile market slightly more are in the blue-collar occupations. In the 10-mile market, the breakdown is even between white- and blue-collar occupations. Service occupations are the predominant types in Smithville and in the 5- and 10-mile markets. Professional occupations are the second largest category, which may reflect the scientists and researchers at the MD Anderson Cancer Research Center. Sales and Production are the next two largest occupation groups in all three market areas. These sales and production occupations reflect the retail and manufacturing activities of Smithville.

#### **Labor Force and Occupations**

<b>2019</b>	<b>Smithville</b>	<b>5-mile market</b>	<b>10-mile market</b>
<b>Labor Force age 16 and over</b>	3,712	5,984	12,243

<b>Occupied Population</b>	1,959	3,269	6,878
<b>% of Labor Force</b>	47%	45%	44%
<b>Blue Collar</b>	49%	52%	50%
<b>White Collar</b>	51%	48%	50%
<b>Management</b>	3%	11%	13%

**Occupation Types**

<b>Professional</b>	24%	20%	19%
<b>Service</b>	30%	29%	26%
<b>Sales &amp; Office</b>	19%	16%	17%
<b>Farming</b>	3%	1%	2%
<b>Construction</b>	8%	10%	10%
<b>Production</b>	13%	13%	13%

*Source: SITES USA Applied Geographic Solutions, TIGER Geography*

### ***Smithville's Diverse Workforce***

The workforce in Smithville is diverse and skilled. Workers are predominately employed in education, retail, arts and entertainment, transportation. and professional/scientific. For Smithville, the workforce industry types that exceed Texas averages include retail, arts and entertainment and transportation fields. The professional & scientific field is also high for a city the size of Smithville. Smithville is developing as an Arts community, which provides a unique, invigorating community spirit. With the significant presence of cancer research and advanced manufacturing technology, an advantageous community market of very skilled scientific workers is readily available.

### Workforce in Smithville by Industry Type

	Smithville	% of civilian employed	Texas	% of civilian employed
<b>Education</b>	357	18.9%	2,805,186	21.6%
<b>Retail Trade</b>	317	16.8%	1,483,375	11.4%
<b>Art &amp; Entertainment</b>	218	11.6%	1,192,224	9.2%
<b>Transportation</b>	188	9.9%	741,256	5.7%
<b>Professional, Scientific</b>	162	8.6%	1,480,493	11.4%
<b>Public Administration</b>	128	6.8%	525,017	4.0%
<b>Finance &amp; Insurance</b>	108	5.7%	862,041	6.6%
<b>Agriculture &amp; Forestry</b>	103	5.5%	407,019	3.1%
<b>Manufacturing</b>	101	5.4%	1,116,997	8.6%
<b>Construction</b>	88	4.7%	1,088,705	8.4%
<b>Other Services</b>	46	2.4%	673,193	5.2%
<b>Wholesale Trade</b>	41	2.2%	380,277	2.9%
<b>Information</b>	30	1.6%	229,841	1.8%
<b>Total Civilian Employed</b>	1887	100%	12,985,625	100%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2018 AMC

### Major Employers in Smithville

Business in City of Smithville	No of Full Time Employees	Type of Business
Smithville Independent School District	261	Education
Ascension Seton Regional Hospital-Smithville	120	Health Care
Towers Nursing Home	110	Health Care
Union Pacific Railroad (UP)	75	Transportation
City of Smithville	71	Government
Brookshire Brothers	60	Retail Grocery
Cen-Tex Marine Fabricators	30	Metal Fabricator
Business in Market Area of City-outside of City Limits	No. of Full Time Employees	Type of Business
MD Anderson Cancer Research Park	175*	Science
Bastrop County Precinct 2	82	Government
Buescher & Bastrop State Parks	45	Recreation
Spiradrill	43	Water Drilling Equipment
K & H Fabricators	29	Metal Fabricators

Source: Local Interviews and Reports

\*52 from MD Anderson live in Smithville.

As with the workforce, Smithville’s major employers represent a broad range of business types. The retail and arts businesses are generally smaller businesses. The larger businesses tend to cluster into the education, health care, rail transportation, metal fabrication, and science industries.

It is not unusual for a smaller community to have the local school district as the top employer. Smithville also has larger employers in health care with the acute care hospital and a new nursing home. Union Pacific (UP) has a major economic presence in the City employing 75. The Smithville UP office and rail yard is their employment point. Three major rail lines extend from the Smithville rail yard. The Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) Rail Fleet Maintenance facility is located in Smithville, employing nine people and maintaining the coal rail cars that feed the Fayette Power Plant. Three local metal fabricators are located in Smithville with a total of 102 employees. This cluster of manufacturers may be helpful to attract new manufacturers. The MD Anderson Cancer Research Center is a significant professional and scientific industry. In the future, it may be relocated to Houston and the 111,000 square feet of facilities at the Buescher State Park 117-acre site and its 175 research workers are valuable economic assets. These 52 research workers, who live in the Smithville area, may be entrepreneurial candidates creating potential startup companies. A policy of this economic plan should emphasize that the Research Center site should be a top marketing priority. Loss of the skilled workforce would be significant.

Mixologie and Bone Spirits distillery represent new up and coming manufacturers in Smithville, adding to a list of businesses, like the Omega Bronze Foundry, that have an entrepreneurial spirit that has been

nurtured in Smithville. While not yet top employers, these new companies need to be encouraged to grow and prosper in Smithville adding to the diversity of manufacturing.

**Two State Parks Add Customers To The Local Economy**

Buescher and Bastrop State Parks, adjacent with one another, are just on the outskirts of Smithville. The total 45 employees and the total 65,000 to 75,000 annual visitors make considerable economic impacts. Smithville should continue to capture these visitors to shop in the city. Encouraging visitors of the Parks to visit Smithville should be a prioritized, concerted and serious marketing effort. As a daily average, Buescher State Park sees 49 day visitors and 68 overnight visitors during the year. This is a significant customer base.

<b>Potential Recreational Visitors</b>		
	Total Day Visitor Days	Total Overnight Visitor Days
Buescher State Park	17,703	24,868
Bastrop State Park	56,712	40,179
<b>Total</b>	<b>74,415</b>	<b>65,047</b>
Buescher Average visitors /day/yr.	49	68
Both Parks Average visitors /day/year	204	178

Source: Texas A & M University Dept. of Recreation, Park & Tourism Sciences, 2018

**An Analysis of Local Revenue**

The overall revenue of the City has been growing. During that last five years, total revenue has increased by 16%. In that same time, property taxes have increased by 44%. Sales tax received from the retail sales rose 22% in the last five years. Despite the COVID-19 crisis, Smithville has seen an increase in sales tax revenues likely due to an increased number of people staying local to shop for groceries and sundries at Brookshire Brothers, 7-11, and the wide variety of other shops.

<b>Smithville Retail Sales Tax vs Total Revenues</b>			
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>% CHANGE</b>
Smithville	\$10,412,499	\$12,128,639	16
<b>Sales Tax Revenues</b>			
Smithville	\$520,000	\$635,000	22
<b>Property Tax</b>			
Smithville	\$1,056,990	\$1,518,201	44

Source: City Annual Budget Report Metrics

The Smithville Independent School District (SISD) general fund has seen a five-year growth rate of 16%. Total revenue over the five-year term has grown by 19%. Further, the school district is experiencing growth

in student enrollment. According to SISD Superintendent Cheryl Burns, enrollment swelled by 40 students in the 2019-20 school year when typically, SISD could count on adding 10 to 11 new students. In 2019-20, SISD enrolled 1,854 students. In 2019, the District invested in a new Junior High School and a new Multi-Purpose Athletic Complex due to community support for a bond to pay for these improvements. College credit hours are offered as well as technical education in several fields. According to the Texas Education Agency’s January 2020 District Annual Report, SISD achieved an “A” rating in Superior Accreditation Status, a “B” Accountability Rating, and meets the requirements for the Special Education Determination Status for the 2018-19 school year.

**SMITHVILLE ISD GROWING IN TAX BASE AND STUDENTS**

<b>Smithville ISD</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>% CHANGE</b>
<b>General Fund</b>	16,915,779	18,923,398	16
<b>Total Revenue</b>	18,991,106	22,694,371	19

*Source: SISD Budget Reports*

***Smithville’s Retail Market***

The retail market in Smithville is 1,670 households. Each household spends an average of about \$2,058 monthly on retail goods, adding to \$24,700 annually. The total annual City of Smithville consumer expenditure for retail goods is \$41,242,320. At a City sales tax rate of 2%, the potential sales tax revenue is about \$824,846. Actual City sales tax revenue is budgeted at \$635,000, showing is a gap of \$189,846, between the potential sales tax revenue and the actual City sales tax revenue. This gap of 23% is the “leakage” of retail sales tax dollars that residents are spending at other retail locations outside of the City or through on-line shopping.

### Monthly Household Consumer Expenditures

	Smithville	% of Total	5-Mile Radius	% of Total	10-Mile Radius	% of total
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	\$4,355		\$4,955		\$5,000	
<b>Non-Retail</b>	\$2,296	53	\$2,613	53	\$2,631	54
<b>Retail</b>	\$2,058	47	\$2,344	47	\$2,369	47
<b>Shelter</b>	\$920	21	\$1,043	21	\$1,047	21
<b>Transportation</b>	\$793	18	\$904	18	\$916	18
<b>Food &amp; Beverage</b>	\$647	15	\$735	15	\$739	15
<b>Health Care</b>	\$377	9	\$429	8	\$433	9
<b>Utilities</b>	\$332	8	\$376	8	\$377	8
<b>Entertainment</b>	\$243	6	\$278	6	\$282	6
<b>Household Operations</b>	\$170	4	\$194	4	\$196	4
<b>Apparel</b>	\$152	4	\$173	4	\$174	4
<b>Furnishings &amp; Equipment</b>	\$151	4	\$173	4	\$175	4
<b>Contributions</b>	\$138	3	\$158	3	\$161	3
<b>Education</b>	\$123	3	\$142	3	\$141	3
<b>Gifts</b>	\$101	2	\$116	3	\$118	2
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	\$82	2	\$94	2	\$95	2
<b>Personal Care</b>	\$58	1	\$66	1	\$67	1
<b>Personal Insurance</b>	\$30	1	\$34	1	\$35	1
<b>Tobacco</b>	\$28	1	\$32	1	\$31	1

*Source: US Census ACS updated through Sites USA, Applied Geographic Solutions, TIGER Geography*

In the regional market (within the 10-mile radius), retail expenditures grow to a monthly amount of approximately \$2,400 per household. This 10-mile market has approximately 5,543 households so that is a monthly expenditure of \$13,303,200 or annually \$159,638,400. Reaching this potential customer base to capture more these retail expenditures through a “Shop Local” marketing program is a wise policy.

The total retail expenditures are 47% of the monthly consumer expenditures per household. This 47% of household expenditures is constant either within or outside the City limits. Thus, for economic development purposes, to increase investment in retail the total number of households needs to be increase through aggressively attracting new residential developments. The economic development policy must include a priority on housing prior to or in combination with the marketing of new retail establishments. Today in Smithville, retail establishments are open usually three or four days. Shop owners feel that they need more shoppers to be open six or seven days a week. The demand for expenditures in retail is related to the number of household and housing units.

## ***Housing Market***

Housing has been identified as a major issue since at least the 1997 Comprehensive Plan, and Smithville is at a crossroads to take the opportunity to meet an expected demand for new housing. is an opportunity for attracting new housing, The number of housing units is growing by approximately eight homes each year, and the vacancy rate is at 8%, which does not leave room for much movement in the housing market. Some new growth in housing will be the new 50-lot subdivision, the Hurta River Estates, where lots vary in size from ½ acre to 12 acres. At the time of this writing, 20 lots have been sold and homes are under construction, and no other residential developments underway. Smithville should take advantage of the “buzz” about Smithville and seek developers to consider building new housing along Highway 71. The SEDC and other interested parties need to increase their awareness of familiarity with the financing tools and options to fund infrastructure for these sites. New rooftops bring new people who are new shoppers to help sustain the retail base of the community.

The “Village of Smithville,” a proposed mixed-used development, stalled due to limitations on providing a sanitary sewer extension to the development. That particular project sought to incorporate multi-family housing with commercial development in a large planned development. Public involvement associated with this Plan as well as with previous Smithville surveys and plans made clear the desire for more housing but not necessarily in large quantities within city limits. Development like the proposed “Village” along the Hwy 71 corridor could meet the demand from Austin and Bastrop for more affordable, diverse housing opportunities. More housing brings new shoppers, which improves the retail market. The estimated \$1,000,000 for a sanitary sewer needed for the Village of Smithville project might have been financed by tax increment financing (TIF). With TIF financing, the cost can be financed and paid off over 30 years through the incremental increase in property values generating taxes from the development. It is probably not feasible to develop north of Hwy 71 without some financing assistance due the cost and need for infrastructure. A mixed-use development at the Village of Smithville site should be studied to anticipate the financial impact of the project and its ability to generate tax values to assist in financing the needed public sewer. This development site should be given significant marketing priority. Such a development could assist in providing new housing options vital to Smithville economic health.

In Smithville, owners occupy 67% of the existing housing, and in the local market owners occupy an even higher percentage of existing housing. Diversifying the housing stock to allow for more types of housing and to encourage renters will be important to the continued vibrancy and growth of the community. Different age groups desire different housing options. Millennials and retirees are known to desire leasing their housing. Both generations are significant in Smithville and have voiced a desire to have different housing options. Millennials and Gen X-ers are generational groups are leaving Smithville due to a lack of housing options. The total number housing units in the 10-mile market has decreased.

### Housing Occupancy

	Smithville	5-Mile	10-Mile
<b>Population (2019)</b>	4,663	7,418	15,063
<b>Households (2019)</b>	1,669	2,696	5,543
<b>Housing Units (2019)</b>	1815	3,050	6,339
<b>Housing Units (2010)</b>	1732	3,037	6,394
<b>10 yr. growth</b>	0.5%	<1%	<1%
<b>Owner Occupied</b>	67%	72%	78%
<b>Renter Occupied</b>	33%	28%	22%
<b>Vacant</b>	8%	12%	13%

*Source: SITES USA Applied Geographic Solutions, TIGER Geography*

Smithville can boast of two Historical Districts: The Downtown Central Business District and the Residential District in the area north of Loop 230. The City is also designated as a Cultural District, a Union Pacific Train Town, and a Preserve America City. These designations bring relevancy to the community's historic areas and encourage the restoration of homes and buildings. With a limited supply of the homes, the historic home improvements bring value and increase demand. Vacancy in the historic district is limited and prices are rising. The Sunnyside neighborhood to the south of the rail lines is also experiencing a renaissance where available lots are scattered throughout the neighborhood. When the title to ownership is clear, Sunnyside lots are selling, and new housing is being built there. The SEDC should put emphasis on marketing these available lots.

## *V. Economic Development Policies, Codes, and Projects*

### **Meaningful Growth, Especially Attracting Younger Families, is a Necessary Mission**

Based on the Stakeholders Surveys, the Visioning and Design Studio, the review of Past Plans, and the Economic Profile, it appears that to sustain the Smithville economy, leaders will need to encourage meaningful growth and positive investment. The existing population growth of 2% to 3% and housing unit growth of fewer than 10 units a year will not generate enough dollars to overcome inflation, create a seven-day retail shopping demand, or provide tax revenues sufficient to sustain the community to overcome those misfortunes of health or nature that arise periodically. Several site-based opportunities for housing, retail, and industrial growth are available now and ripe for development. These opportunities should be given priority, and factor into the following recommended Economic Development Goals and Strategies:

### **Increase Market Awareness Beyond Smithville**

To attract new investment, Smithville will need to proactively market beyond its city limits. Despite the clear competition for those important investment dollars, Smithville is well poised to take advantage of the opportunity to attract those investments.

- 1. Economic Development Website.** Make use of virtual marketing tools including website economic development pages on the websites of the City and Chamber of Commerce. This is the most important initial step to take. Other social media venues are also vital ways to inform the market. A simple tri-fold pamphlet and one-page flyer are introduction tools needed.
- 2. Regular Contact and Marketing of State and Regional Economic Development Agencies.** Smithville partners need to increase their efforts to collaborate with and respond to outside economic development agencies from the state, region, and major economic development entities including the Union Pacific Railroad and the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA). This marketing effort includes attending meetings and trade shows, making planned visits or having regular phone conversations, and responding to request for site information and prospect locations. It is important that opportunities for Smithville economic development is on the minds of these agency officials. The certification of Smithville as an EDO (Economic Development Organization) with the Governor's Office of Economic Development is essential to receiving prospect information. Meeting regularly with the Austin Chamber's Economic

Development Staff is also important. Smithville must make it a priority to partner with the MD Anderson Cancer Research Center real estate agency of University of Texas. Likewise, The Texas A & M University and the RELLIS campus should be contacted. These organizations and others should be included in Smithville's marketing program. A schedule of regular outside contacts of at least one per day is essential. An email address list of outside influencers should be developed. Monthly e-newsletters to these key partner representatives should be developed.

- 3. Attend two to three trade shows annually.** Smithville should attend retail market events such as Austin Live, the International Council of Shopping Center/Red River Deal Making, and the North Texas Commercial Association of Realtors trade shows. Smithville should be there with a marketing booth to inform the retail, development and investment market about Smithville opportunities. The booth may initially consist of two pull-up banners that include information about the Smithville market. Training on how to conduct marketing at trade event is available through companies that develop the banners for trade shows.
- 4. Preparing a Property Inventory.** What investment opportunities are available in Smithville? An inventory of 10 to 20 available properties should be prepared. The inventory sheet is a tool to allow an investor initial information. These inventory sheets shall have enough information so that an investor may have owner contact information, price of the property and what shovel ready elements are at the site. What elements are not shovel ready are features that the economic development program will have to consider assisting with to attract the investors. The inventory of property needs to be placed on the Economic Development website pages. Inventory sheets should be prepared for the Villages of Smithville site, Smithville Industrial Park, and the Sid Millspaugh condo-hotel project and other downtown buildings.
- 5. Incentive Development.** A more aggressive understanding and preparation of local incentives for attracting new investment must be developed. To get beyond 2% to 3% growth, the City will have to be creative on the use of incentives. It is important to think of incentives as an important tool that will provide a return on the City's investment rather than a give-away program. Cost/benefit impact analysis is needed for each project and to better understand how the incentive will function. Initially, educating the decision-making bodies of the community on the steps for and differences in the available local incentives is critical. Understanding how to calculate a cost/benefit analysis and how to read it are equally important. Running project scenarios with request for incentives and then cost/benefit analysis will be important training to undertake. Decision-makers cannot decide on incentives at the moment an opportunity presents itself—these incentives need to be in place prior to the arrival of a given prospect.

Having a positive approach to Tax Increment Financing (TIF), setting a Tax Abatement Policy, and determining the steps needed for a successful 380 incentive development agreements are important investments not giveaways. Setting up Council training sessions, involving the Council in the prospecting decision early, and knowing when to encourage City investment is vital. Seeking funds from outside the City in the form of grants will be important, and local incentives are also an important part of the investment. Most incentive tools show positive returns if properly analyzed and used. Prepare a list of those incentives and place them on the web page.

## **Facilitate a Range of Housing Opportunities**

New options for housing are needed for all income levels at all stages of life. Increased housing units are necessary to grow the market; sustain a seven-day commerce and retailing week; provide adequate workforce housing for new manufacturing, science and technology; and to eliminate the outmigration of Smithville Gen X-ers. Millennials and iGen generations are seeking alternative options to the detached, single-family housing. Senior citizens may want more and different housing options than presently in Smithville including assisted living and senior living communities. Affordable housing options are also needed for those who spend more than 30% of their income on housing. Clearly, the demand is high for housing options other than detached single-family home. At \$68,438, the City's median household income and average household spending of \$920 a month on shelter may not be high enough to attract new development without subsidies. Developers today may have difficulties financing and developing housing with low lease rates. Affordable housing with subsidies may be necessary for a large segment of residents whose income does not allow them to spend more than \$920 a month.

- 1. Inventory Residential Land Tracts.** Identify two to four tracts of land over 50 acres in or near Smithville suitable for new housing development and begin to study the market feasibility of these tracts for developer-based housing options. Get to know the development numbers and obstacles to development.
- 2. Network with Realtors and Contractors.** Hold discussions with area realtors and housing contractors on the feasibility of the selected tracts and identify market obstacles to their development.
- 3. Find Financing Tools.** Research rural housing finance to overcome market obstacles for development of the selected tracts. Research and identify the market issues that are obstacles to development.

4. **Build Network of Major Developers and Affordable Housing Corporations.** Seek out major housing developers in the Austin market to review the four options and to learn of other market factors preventing this development.
5. **Run a TIRZ scenario.** Conduct a Tax Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) project and financial feasibility plan for providing \$1,000,000 of sanitary sewer to the “The Villages of Smithville” site.
6. **Find Available Local Lots.** Seek out four individual lots in Smithville suitable for affordable housing options and study their feasibility of development on an individual basis. Research rural housing finance for these sites.
7. **Check out Local Zoning Barriers.** Review the zoning ordinance and city codes for obstacles that discourage unique solutions and opportunities for affordable housing solutions. Look for opportunities to allow for secondary suites on single-family lots, second-floor residential on retail lots, multi-generational housing, backyard guest homes, and tiny home sites or other barriers to affordable housing.
8. **Develop a financial incentive.** Create a tool or tools to attract contractors in affordable housing for individual lots in Sunnyside.

## **Focus the Industrial Attraction Effort to the Highway 71 & SH95 Industrial Park**

Smithville has identified a site for future industrial development to diversify its economy and provide opportunities for employment. Utilities are available at the 69 acres of industrially zoned land. The marketing efforts should now turn to development of this property and site locations.

1. **Begin to seek a developer and users for the property.** Present owners of the property require the property to be sold in one piece. This site will most likely need a developer to seek out users or to divide the property into lots. Contact area and regional industrial brokers to seek out industrial developers. Contact Regional Economic Development Agencies, Governor’s Office of Economic Development and State incubator organizations such as The RELLIS Campus of The A & M University. Respond to Governor’s Office of Economic Development prospects as well as those from the Austin Chamber. Work with the Union Pacific Economic Developer and the LCRA Economic Development Department for prospects.
2. **Prepare a virtual speculative building.** Nothing works better than an example of a reasonably sized building and site plan for the site. Seek out opportunities for digital renderings by prospective builders that would have an interest in building in this industrial park.

- 3. Interview local manufacturers.** Local manufacturers have suppliers and customers that may have an interest in locating nearby. Periodically check with the local manufacturer to find potential prospects. Follow up on those prospects.
- 4. Provide Industrial Development Information at the Airport.** Always look for opportunities to partner and link with interests that may overlap. Provide marketing information about the industrial park at the Smithville-Crawford Airport.
- 5. Add Industrial Park to Property Inventory.** Include the industrial park in the inventory and feature the park on the economic development web pages.

## **Guide Development Along Highway 71, Encourage Airport Development & Hotel Development**

Large, open tracts of land are scattered all along HWY 71. Growth and development along this major highway that connects Austin eastward through Bastrop and past Smithville, foretell of the coming development demands. Residents have voiced concerns of too much development, excessive use of signs, and unattractive shopping centers that cater to the automobile rather than feature the human scale, providing a walkable environment.

- 1. Design Standards for a HWY 71 Overlay Zone to create neighborhoods, not sprawl.** The city could encourage smart growth that is walkable by nature and includes a mix of uses to discourage the excessive sprawl seen of common suburban growth. An overlay zone on HWY 71 is recommended for the Zoning Ordinance to control the development patterns. Encourage walkable housing with commercial development to serve the neighborhood and traveler.
- 2. Develop a marketing Campaign for a Hotel.** Few lodging facilities are available between Bastrop and La Grange. HWY 71 traffic exceeds 70,000 cars per day. The Smithville industries including Union Pacific railroad need hotel services during the week. The two State Parks have average day and camping visitors that justify a market for a hotel on HWY 71 in Smithville. Utilize the economic profile numbers to contact a series of hotel real estate divisions to educate those decision-makers about the Smithville market. Two-acre sites along HWY 71 also need to be identified as candidate hotel sites.
- 3. Continue to develop the Smithville Crawford Municipal Airport.** Plans for the Airport need to be continued as a key location feature of Smithville and Bastrop County.
- 4. Work with realtors on land tracts.** Most of the property along HWY 71 is in large tracts. Some of those tracts are ready for market, others are not. The economic development program for Smithville needs to be aware of these land tracts and their owner's goals. As these tracts reach

the market the City should work with the Realtors on their development plans and infrastructure needs, providing incentives when possible to guide the development.

## **Continue the Downtown Renaissance**

Smithville's historic downtown is continually undergoing change, but throughout the past 100+ years, it has successfully remained the center of community life. Continuing to focus on downtown enhancement is part of economic sustainability for the community.

- 1. Target two building improvement projects.** While there are many buildings that could be enhanced, overall retailing and use of the downtown has been active. Rather than redevelopment, a targeted approach of specific buildings should be considered. Focus the effort on two buildings with their revitalization and restoration rather than a massive effort that may undo the historic nature of the downtown. Select two buildings and the willing building owners to develop an inventory of the building's features and potential uses. For the buildings obtain estimates of the restoration/construction requirements and conduct a market analysis comparing costs to the revenue from the potential rental income. Evaluate the obstacles to achieving the restoration and seek solutions through incentives to overcome those factors obstructing the revitalization of the buildings.
- 2. Develop and post the inventory of available downtown properties for sale and for lease.** Utilizing the economic development website, begin to develop a property inventory of available downtown properties. If realtors have listings and a graphic presentation, use their presentations as part of the Inventory. Keep the inventory up to date and keep building the inventory as information is provided.
- 3. Prepare list of downtown infrastructure improvements.** Prepare a listing of needed water, wastewater and storm sewer improvements that are necessary for buildings to be utilized or increased in their utilization. Work with the building owner and City on a capital improvements plan for the downtown. Take advantage of partnering with the building owners as improvements are made and new jobs created. Work with the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program to facilitate infrastructure and building improvements.
- 4. Consider housing opportunities with building revitalization.** Ground, second and third floor housing opportunities should be incorporated into the building revitalizations and development of open lots within and adjoining the downtown. Work with building owners, Realtors and State

agencies to incorporate housing whenever possible since this housing adds customers to the downtown retail market.

5. **Prioritize working with local investors on development projects.** As a downtown investor express interest in investing in their project, prioritize this potential investment. The new investment brings those critical dollars to the economy. Make this investor's project a top priority and begin the process of obstacle elimination to bring the development project to reality. Set a goal of at least two development projects over \$1,000,000 in the downtown per year and work toward that goal. Select one or two investors in the first year of this plan and work with them to jump-start their developments. The new investment dollars can transform the downtown renaissance. Keep the renaissance invigorated.
6. **Grow the opportunity for a Maker Space in a downtown building.** Within the well-educated, art and science-oriented population of Smithville are startup entrepreneurs looking for space to start and test their ideas and projects. The historic downtown Smithville has buildings with higher ceiling and with historically industrial past. These buildings are ideally suited to begin the development of a Smithville Maker Space. Identify four possible maker space sites and review their feasibility to creating a maker space project. Within the first year, select the site(s) and begin to work on the process of organizing and planning the maker space organization.

## Enhance the Experience of the Colorado River

Smithville's largest natural feature is the Colorado River. Citizens are asking for more access to the River and desire to be able to celebrate this natural feature.

1. **Plan enhancement of the boat landing off Loop 230/SH 95.** Utilizing a Boat Access grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) begin to plan improvements to this site. Then build upon those boating improvements to expand the natural enjoyment of this area including picnic tables, family children areas, art under the highway bridge, nature trails and educational opportunities such as bird watching areas and wildflower nature site enhancements. Improve the visibility and sign for the entrance to the boat launching facility from the Highway.
2. **Enhance river access at Vernon Richards Riverbend Park.** Again, utilize TPWD grants for improvements to river access at the park. Incorporate the park features and events into the River access and build upon this natural feature.
3. **Plan for a Main Street Colorado River Park.** Citizens are asking for this facility, and there is a need to begin to clarify the land ownership at the end of Main Street and access to the River.

This natural area has attracted support from citizens, and it is an excellent opportunity to prioritize the effort. Look for opportunities to begin this process. This space is unique to Smithville and deserves to be restored. Lady Bird Park in Austin is a shining example of riverfront restoration. The opportunity is here for Smithville to begin. Consider seeking funds from the LCRA community grant to begin building the Park.

- 4. Trail development along the Colorado River.** Again, take every opportunity to plan for the beginning of walking trails on the Colorado. Property rights, easements and similar property ownership issues need to be examined. Trail access opportunity needs to be discussed with property owners along the Colorado River. The vision has been set in place. Now is the time to build upon this vision each year. Community enhancements such as these trails will add to the downtown and to the community and are stimulants to attract adjoining development opportunities.



## *VI. Strategic/Resiliency Implementation Plan*

The Smithville Economic Development Community Resiliency Strategic Plan consists of four overall elements: 1) the public participation-outreach strategy; 2) the historical review of development plans; 3) the economic profile; and 4) the implementation plan. The implementation plan element is the final element of the Strategic Plan.

This plan recognizes the recommendations of the Smithville stakeholders, the desires of community citizens. It also recognizes the history of past actions and plans of the City, the economic characteristic and economic potential. The implementation plan set forth the Mission of the Strategic Plan: enabling Meaningful Growth. This Mission Statement is sustained by FOUR pillars as defined and professed by citizen participants. These pillars make Smithville unique and establish its Plan as a reflection of the City: 1) The Community; 2) the Downtown; 3) Arts Programming; and 4) the Colorado River. The SEVEN goals have a one- to five-year focus. The action objectives under each goal will help to achieve the goal through the tasks identified. Important to the success of this plan is annual review and celebration of achievements. Tasks may change after these reviews; however, the goals should remain in place for five years. Smithville's resiliency and its ability to change, recover, grow and sustain its economy is based on its elasticity and the overall plan moving forward, adapting and overcoming the obstacles, addressing diversity in an economic and social sense and listening to the desires of all the citizens to provide meaningful growth and opportunity. The Plan is to be a joyful journey and celebration of achievements.

### *The Mission / Why We Plan* ***“Meaningful Growth”***

#### **Pillars of the Plan**

(Foundation of Implementation Efforts)

- Community
- Downtown
- Arts
- Colorado River

#### **Goals:**

(1 to 5-year focus)

- Increase market awareness beyond Smithville

- Facilitate a range of housing opportunities
- Guide development adjacent to SH71; encourage hotel and airport development
- Focus the industrial attraction to the SH71/SH95 Smithville Industrial Park
- Continue the Downtown Renaissance
- Enhance the Experience of the Colorado River/Gazley Creek
- Review the Accomplishment and Celebrate the Success

### **Action Objectives**

(Overall, 5-year paths leading to meeting the goals)

- Described in the following pages

### **Tasks**

(Annual to 5-year activities of the plan; tasks may change each year)

- Described in the following pages

### **Subcommittees**

(Assigned through the Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce)

- Marketing Team
- Incentive Team
- Neighborhood Housing Team
- Highway 71 Development Team
- Housing Finance Team
- Downtown Development Team
- Colorado River Parks Team
- Colorado River/Gazley Creek Trails Team

Each of the seven (7) goals for the Smithville Strategic Economic Development/Resiliency Plan are supported with Action Objectives, which provide the path to meeting the goals in five (5) years. Tasks under each action objective are the annual activities of the Teams to implement the objectives that will then meet the goals.

## ***GOAL No. 1: Increase market awareness beyond Smithville***

**Action Objective:** Prepare economic development website & brochure.

1. Task: Chamber of Commerce create, update and utilized website section exclusively for economic development. Monthly add to and update. \$2,500 annually.

2. Task: Chamber of Commerce creates digital tri-fold brochure and one-page economic development advertisement and keeps up to date. \$1,500 annually.

**Action Objective:** Organize marketing team, develop network of public agency contacts and schedule contacting of the network

1. Task: Organize marketing team of three to five city and chamber officials and utilize the team to schedule calls, hold regular zoom meetings, visits and prepare quarterly Constant Contact newsletter.
2. Task: Develop a 30 second to one-minute elevator speech about the advantages of investing in Smithville. Change out the speech quarterly.
3. Task: Build the network of key County, State, Regional Public Officials, plus Federal Agency and Development Agencies officials. Plan a contact a day (one a week per marketing team member) marketing Smithville and building the development network for Smithville. Tell the story of why to invest in Smithville. Document the call, name, email or phone and discussion. Share documentation with the marketing team. Key State Officials include the State Representative and State Senator and their staff, State agencies and their staff including the Governor's Office of Economic Development, Texas Department of Agriculture, Texas General Land Office, Texas Water Development Board, Austin Area Chamber of Commerce, Capital Area Council of Government, University of Texas Real Estate Office, Texas A & M RELLIS Campus, Lower Colorado River Authority, Union Pacific Railroad. Add in years two through five Federal and County Agencies to build the network for Smithville's development. Annually build a list of 100 key public agency officials for the network.

**Action Objective:** Develop a network of private sector development interests.

1. Task: Marketing team to build the network of key private sector stakeholders, investors, developers, Realtors, and large property owners. Plan one contact a day (one a week per marketing team member) to discuss Smithville and the community's interest in new development. In the initial year begin the contacts with local investors, local Realtors, local property owners and builders/developers. Each year add more outside contacts to this list. Document the calls, name, email or phone and discussion. Share documentation with the marketing team members. Plan quarterly Constant Contact email to this key private sector network participants. Annually develop a list of 100 key private sector contacts. Send this network the Smithville Economic Development newsletter through Constant Contact.

**Action Objective:** Attend Statewide or regional marketing events.

1. Task: Marketing Team to attend 2 to 3 trade shows or similar marketing events (virtually or in-place) annually. Invite local property developers and Realtors to participate.
2. Task: Chamber to develop Smithville marketing booth display of table covering with logo, pull up banners, and material handouts for marketing events.
3. Task: Plan to attend Austin Live (Retail trade show), ICSC Deal Making (International Council of Shopping Center Red River Deal Making) and North Texas Commercial Association of Realtors annual trade show events. Begin to work on virtual and digital displays and techniques due to the COVID-19. Seek out unique marketing events in unfamiliar opportunities that may assist in marketing Smithville. Include events related to the State Parks and recreation, agricultural, education and technology. Plan on \$2,500 to \$5,000 annually for this effort.
4. Task: Attend trade show training provided at no cost by Trade Show companies that provide trade show displays.

**Action Objective:** Prepare a property inventory (What is available and shovel ready for development, sale, or lease).

1. Task: Ask area Realtors to provide their electronic graphic of the information that they have for properties for sale, lease, or development. Have the Chamber place these information graphics on the economic development website. Share with the marketing team to be sure this team is aware of the investment and development opportunities in Smithville.
2. Task: Marketing Team to prepare information sheets for property where owner has not employed a Realtor. If the property is for sale add it to the inventory with an information sheet and graphic location.
3. Task: Keep the inventory up to date and add 10 properties per year to the inventory and Chamber website. Include commercial, industrial, and residential developments.

**Action Objective:** Prepare a formal development incentive plan as an investment objective.

1. Task: Organize an Incentive Team; three from the City and Chamber of Commerce economic development committee to prepare the menu of incentives that Smithville will want to have available for development project attraction.
2. Task: Review consultants such as Impact Data Source and their fees and services for cost/benefit analysis (direct and indirect costs and benefits) and become prepared to utilize this or other services to review incentive options as projects become available.
3. Task: Prepare a quick analysis system, in Excel format, of a sample project impact including size-acres, size-building, value of property and value of new construction, value of property tax from land, value of property tax from new construction, and estimate of potential sales tax all at year

one plus years 5 and 10. Utilize the format to review the existing values of property and the new value of taxes from improvements against the cost of an incentive. Run sample scenarios to test the analysis for a quick review of a potential project against the cost of the incentives that could be offered.

4. Task: Review business incentive opportunities at the local, state and federal levels including the existing façade improvement program, a policy on tax abatement, tax increment financing, 380/381 economic development incentive agreements, Freeport tax exemption, goods-in-transit exemption, use of Municipal Management Districts and Neighborhood Empowerment Zones, funds available through Texas at the Governor’s Office of Economic Development and other Texas Agencies see...<https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/business/IncentivesOverview.pdf> . The Texas incentive funds include HB 1200 value limitation and tax credit, Texas Enterprise Zone, Texas Enterprise Fund, Skills Development Fund, Events Trust Fund, plus other opportunities. At the Federal level, the “new” Opportunity Zone tax credits offer a new opportunity for properties adjoining Smithville.
5. Task: Introduce a menu of incentive opportunities and the impact analysis of when to use an incentive to City Council. Develop and provide to Council an annual training session to discuss why to invest in incentives and select one or two opportunities annually to review and incorporate into the marketing of new investment in Smithville.

## ***GOAL No. 2: Facilitate a range of housing opportunities***

**Action Objective:** Market available City in-fill residential lots

1. Task: Organize a Neighborhood Housing Team of four members from the Chamber’s Economic Development Committee.
2. Task: Neighborhood Housing Team to annually target four City-infill lots from Sunnyside neighborhood and neighborhoods outside of the Historic Preservation zone.
3. Task: Neighborhood Housing Team to analyze and report the market advantages, barriers, and lot price for the list of target City-infill lots with data gathered from the property owners, City offices and Realtors. Prepare detail reports on the four properties as to ownership, asking price, available utilities, zoning, photos, and map of location.
4. Task: Neighborhood Housing Team to identify and meet with 6 local and area homebuilders to discuss and promote the four City-infill lots. See listing in Chamber of Commerce Directory for

homebuilders to contact. Be sure to have accurate and up-to-date information concerning the in-fill lots for the meeting.

5. Task: By the end of 12 months, Neighborhood Housing Team to report to the Chamber's Economic Development Committee the results of the analysis and homebuilder interviews for the City in-fill lots. Note the opportunities and barriers for each property.
6. Task: Neighborhood Housing Team to continue the annual marketing of City in-fill lots each year following steps identified above, eliminating the lots determined to be unfeasible for development, and adding new in-fill lots for study and analysis.

**Action Objective:** Market larger land tracts for residential development

1. Task: Organize HWY 71 Development Team of five City Staff/Chamber Economic Development Committee members.
2. Task: HWY 71 Development Team to identify two to four land tracts suitable for residential development by residential development companies. Identify the actual landowner(s); Realtors (s) size of tract; zoning; water and sewer utilities, if available; access to SH71; location in Opportunity Zones or New Market Tax Credit zones; and land price offered or requested. Team to include the Village of Smithville site as one of the four tracts to be examined.
3. Task: HWY 71 Development Team to analyze and report the market advantages, barriers and land price with data gathered from the land tract property owners, City offices and Realtors. Prepare a short report on each property.
4. Task: HWY 71 Development Team to identify and meet with four Austin area homebuilders, Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation (non-profit) to discuss the market feasibility of the selected two to four residential tracts identifying opportunities and note information provided on loss of opportunity of any land site presented. Ask the homebuilders for names of investors and developers who precede the homebuilder in the development process. Begin the contacting process by contacting D. R. Horton-America's Builder [www.drhorton.com/contactus](http://www.drhorton.com/contactus) 521 345 4663-builder for Express, Emerald, Freedom, and DR Horton homes. Contact Pulte Homes [www.pulte.com](http://www.pulte.com) 512 399 2980 Builder for Centex, Del Webb, DiVesta, John Wieland Homes and Pulte Group, Inc. Contact Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation [ddanenfelzer@tshc.org](mailto:ddanenfelzer@tshc.org) 512 477 3562. Contact Multi-family developer including Lonestar Development Partners [info@ldpre.com](mailto:info@ldpre.com) 737 222 5333 and Lincoln Property Company 800 Sugaree Ave Austin, TX 78757 512 643 4563. Be sure to have accurate information on sites to present as well as up-to-date City demographic and housing information.

5. Task: HWY 71 Development Team to build a marketing network of investors, developers, builders, contractors, and public agencies that will assist and participate in residential development in Smithville. Meet monthly with one from this network.
6. Task: HWY 71 Development Team to report to the Chamber's Economic Development Committee the results of the analysis and marketing of the residential land tracts within 12 months.
7. Task: Continue the annual marketing of residential properties each year following steps identified above, eliminating the lands determined to be unfeasible for development, and adding new lands for study and analysis.

**Action Objective:** Find financing tools

1. Task: Organize a Housing Finance Team, of four from the Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee, Smithville Housing Authority, local banks, Mayor and City Staff.
2. Task: Research on-line the definitions and understanding of low -moderate income for Bastrop County including Smithville via US Housing and Urban Development Department.
3. US- HUD Bastrop County (including Smithville) 2020 MFI (Median Family Income) \$97,600
4. Low/Moderate Income is 80% of MFI or \$78,100
5. Very Low Income is 50% of MFI or \$48,800
6. Task: Housing Finance Team to research on-line the qualifications and deadlines for housing development and infrastructure grants available through these offices....
  - ✓ Texas Department of Agriculture-Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs
  - ✓ Texas Department of Agriculture- CDBG (Community Development Block Grant for Rural Texas)
  - ✓ Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation
  - ✓ Texas Water Development Board
  - ✓ Texas Governmental Land Office
  - ✓ US Department of Agriculture
1. Task: Housing Finance Team to meet with the Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation to alert them of the interest of Smithville and to gain information on their particular capabilities to assist Smithville in finding developers or incorporating workforce/affordable housing options in development and to learn about land banking for in-fill lots. Discuss feasibility of the Villages of Smithville land site.
2. Task: Housing Finance Team to meet with contacts from the other agencies noted to establish a relationship and to get on the mailing lists and alerts for grant information and training.

3. Task: Housing Finance Team to prepare short fact sheets on the most feasible grant options for Smithville in-fill and larger tracts and present financing facts to the Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee and the other housing subcommittees. Keep the information up-to-date and available on Chamber website.
4. Task: Housing Finance Team to research Grant Station for available grants from foundations and private sector such as below....

“Local Initiatives to Advance Affordable Housing Supported”

[United States Conference of Mayors: CommunityWINS Grant Program](#)

The CommunityWINS (Working/Investing in Neighborhood Stabilization) Grant Program, administered by the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) and funded by Wells Fargo, supports local nonprofits in promoting long-term economic prosperity for municipalities by advancing housing affordability solutions. The awards recognize outstanding mayoral-based initiatives that can assist their city in reducing the cost burden of housing and increase access to safe, affordable places to live. USCM members may nominate up to three programs run by nonprofit organizations that address housing affordability solutions to increase availability and affordability of rentals, transitional housing, and/or sustainable homeownership. Two awards in each of the following four population categories will be given in 2020: Metropolitan Cities (one \$300,000 and one \$100,000 award); Large Cities (one \$200,000 and one \$75,000 award); Medium Cities (one \$150,000 and one \$50,000 award); and Small Cities (one \$75,000 and one \$50,000 award). All programs must be initiated with the full support of the mayor to be eligible, including those developed and implemented in collaboration with the private sector, community groups, and other partners. The application deadline is October 9, 2020. Visit the USCM website to review the CommunityWINS Grant Program guidelines.”

**Action Objective:** Develop financial incentives

1. Task: Housing Finance Team to investigate incentive opportunities to encourage housing development in Smithville.
2. Task: Review the existing Zoning Ordinance and City Codes for obstacles that discourage and encourage housing development. Consider if housing development on the second floor of commercial buildings and in the back yards of single-family lots is available without significant

regulation changes. Review if manufactured housing developments and tiny home developments may be considered and provide site criteria to encourage housing options in acceptable locations. Review if duplex and four-plex housing is possible on traditional single-family lots.

3. Task: Run a TIRZ scenario through Council to aid in understanding of this financing tool to assist in infrastructure and other public improvements.
4. Task: Review incentive tools that may be useful for residential development including 380 agreements, tax abatements, credit/refund/waiving of city fees and permits, participation in infrastructure development and costs. Encourage development of tools to encourage in-fill affordable housing in Sunnyside neighborhood.
5. Task: Review incentive tools with City Council to understand the Council's goals and concerns.

### ***GOAL No. 3: Guide development adjacent to HWY 71; encourage hotel development and airport development.***

**Action Objective:** Develop design standards for an HWY 71 Overlay Zone to create neighborhoods not suburban sprawl.

1. Task: Identify the properties within Smithville that would develop with access to SH71.
2. Task: Research three overlay zones, including sign control, from cities that control their highway development and obtain example of zoning controls.
3. Task: Prepare a proposed overlay zone for SH71. Consider a consultant to prepare this overlay zone proposal being a planner and architect. Approximate cost \$7,500.
4. Task: Have City Council consider adoption of the design standards.

**Action Objective:** Develop a marketing campaign to attract a hotel.

1. Task: Identify approximate 2-acre sites along HWY 71 for a hotel and prepare an inventory sheet of owner, price, and site features.
2. Task: Prepare a list of hotel chains that have hotel products that are like hotels in LaGrange and Bastrop.
3. Task: Utilizing the economic profile prepared with this report, the Marketing Team to contact hotel chains and inform the hotel chains of the interest of Smithville to attract a hotel. Provide at least two site locations and list of major employers and employees for the contact of the hotel chains. One site to be within the Village of Smithville site.
4. Task: Continue the networking with the hotel chains until a project is obtained.

**Action Objective:** Continue development of the Smithville-Crawford Airport

1. Task: City of Smithville to prepare a digital brochure of the Airport, hangers, and aviation facilities available for lease, and future development plans. Place on economic development website of the Chamber.
2. Task: Marketing Team to utilize the Airport as a marketing feature for all prospect visits and promotions.
3. Task: City of Smithville to develop an inventory sheet for placement on the Chamber Economic Development web page for specific hanger leasing features available at the Airport.
4. Task: City of Smithville to continually review availability of aviation facilities improvement grants to provide opportunities for the airport expansion.
5. Task: Marketing Team to meet with State and Federal aviation agencies and interests at least bi-monthly to continue the market awareness of the Airport.

**Action Objective:** Market with property owners of land tracts along HWY 71 and in Opportunity Zones.

1. Task: Marketing Team to identify all the property owners and their contact information for property within the Opportunity Zones and along HWY 71 within and adjacent to the City.
2. Task: Schedule contacts with each of these property owners annually by the Marketing Team.
3. Task: As these properties become represented by Realtors add the contacting of these Realtors semi-annually.
4. Task: Marketing Team to become aware of the Texas Capital Fund, the EDA CARES Act funding and the TIF/TIRZ financing tool for expansion of infrastructure to these properties as they develop.

## ***GOAL No. 4: Focus the industrial attraction to the SH71/SH95 Smithville Industrial Park***

**Action Objective:** Attract an industrial developer for the Industrial Park

1. Task: Marketing Team, in their contacting of State and Local agencies, local and area industrial Realtors, seek out interests and additional developer contacts who may be interested in the development of the industrial park site and attraction of industrial user (s). Monthly contact an industrial Realtor from Austin.

**Action Objective:** Develop industrial marketing tools to enhance the attraction effort.

1. Task: Marketing Team to apply to the Governor's Office of Economic Development to obtain a Smithville Economic Development Organization certification to receive the statewide prospect notifications that are suitable to the Industrial Park site.
2. Task: Prepare a virtual rendering of a speculative building that is sized and suitable for the Smithville Industrial park site. Use the virtual rendering as a marketing tool. Cost is approximately \$ 3,000.
3. Task: Marketing Team to interview the local manufacturers to become informed of the local industrial company needs and to seek out suppliers and customer that may have an interest in locating near a local industry and within the Smithville industrial park. Monthly the marketing team should interview one major employer and manufacturer.
4. Task: Chamber of Commerce to develop information brochure on the Smithville Industrial Park for placement at the Smithville Airport and other locations where prospective investor may obtain information on the Industrial Park.

## ***GOAL No. 5: Continue the Downtown Renaissance***

**Action Objective:** Develop and implement the plan for an office remote workplace solution with small business incubator and a "Maker Space" for art and technology innovations.

1. Task: City to apply for EDA CARES Act funds for renovation of city- owned property into a remote workplace office providing small business counseling and "Maker Space" for arts collaboration and technology innovations.
2. Task: Reach out to local artisans, innovators and inventors who would mentor at the Small Business incubator and Maker space.
3. Task: Plan the management of the space
4. Task: Market the space for use by residents and students starting businesses.

**Action Objective:** Target two to four building improvement projects annually.

1. Task: Organize a three-member Downtown Development Team of the Chamber Economic Development Committee to champion minimum of two improvement/renovation projects and assist the owners with issues that the Chamber and City may work together to resolve. Consider the old Pine Hotel project as one of the present-day projects.
2. Task: Downtown Development Team to inventory lease available or for sale downtown buildings. Prepare property inventory data sheets or Realtor information graphics for placement on the Chamber Economic Development web page. This Team would include keeping downtown

inventory sheets up to date, adding and removing those as applicable from the web page. Goal would be to have at least 5 inventory sheets annually on the web page.

3. Task: Downtown Development Team to seek out two residential rental opportunities in the downtown and begin to resolve solutions to providing the housing in the downtown. Goal would be obtaining four to six rental units annually. Consider the old Pine Hotel project as one of these projects.

**Action Objective:** Market for Investors for Downtown Properties

1. Task: Downtown Development Team to work with the Marketing Team and local Realtors to seek out new property investors for purchasing the properties the downtown. Goal is to attract at least \$2,000,000 investment dollars annually for new property purchases for developments.

**Action Objective:** Develop a plan to upgrade infrastructure in the downtown

1. Task: Downtown Development Team to prepare a list of public improvement infrastructure improvements including water, wastewater, and storm water needed for building improvements to move forward. Advocate for placement of these infrastructure needs on the City Capital Improvements Program. Work with the City to seek out public agency grants and private sector collaboration to accomplish the infrastructure improvements.
2. Task: Investigate and consider applying for funding of the “2nd Street to Gazley Creek” storm water sewer through the CDBG-Texas Capital Fund, EDA CARES Act funding or the Texas Water Development Board funding to facilitate new development in the downtown.

## ***GOAL No. 6: Enhance the experience of the Colorado River and Gazley Creek***

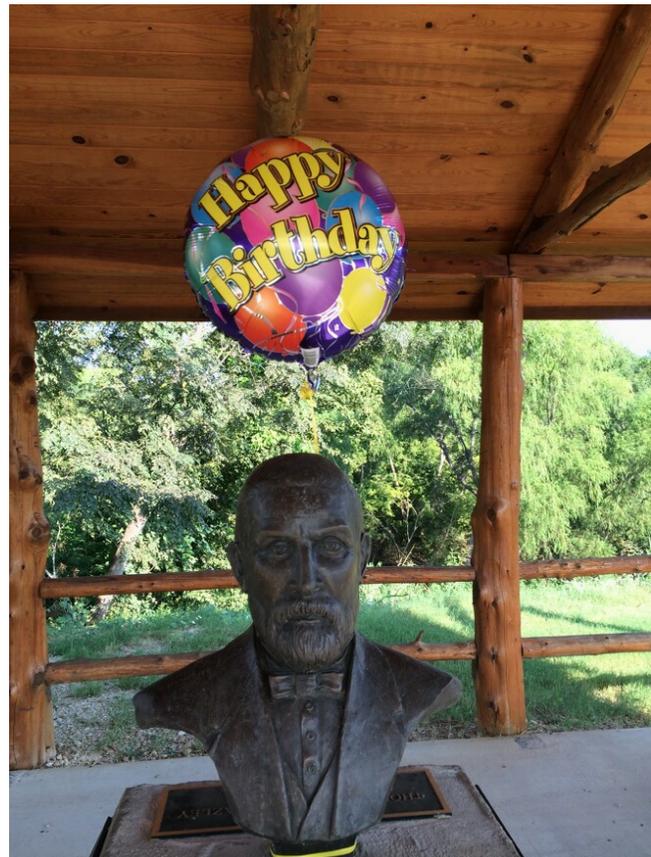
**Action Objective:** Annually plan for enhancements of the boat landing areas at Loop230/SH95 and at Vernon Richards Riverbend Park.

1. Task: Organize a Colorado River Parks and Recreation Team of four from the Chamber Economic Development Committee and one member from the City.
2. Task: Initial Year-Plan for enhancements to these boat landing areas including boat landing improvements, signage from the highway, wildflower areas, art for amazement, nature trails and bird watching sites, picnic tables and family-oriented improvements to the site that improve access to the Colorado River. Involve citizen surveys and needs assessment participation in the planning. Prioritize the plan elements over 5 years. Emphasize low maintenance and low-cost improvements. Formalize the plan with a report and market the plan to the local community.

3. Task: Year Two and annually-see grant applications from Texas Parks and Wildlife through their boating access, trails, and small community grants.
4. Task: Create a 501(c)3 fund and involve opportunities for citizen participation in the improvement grants through cash donations and in-kind services. Set an annual fund-raising goal of \$1,000 in cash.
5. Task: Yearly seek out private sector recreational and COVID-19 grants for the park improvements through Grant Station [www.grantstation.com](http://www.grantstation.com) and through area foundations from big box stores and corporations.
6. Task: Report Annually to the Chamber of Commerce the accomplishments of the tasks identified.

**Action Objective:** Annually plan for trail development along the Colorado River/Gazley Creek.

1. Task: Organize a Colorado River/Gazley Creek Trails Team of three from the Chamber Economic Development Committee and two from the City.
2. Task: Initial Year, identify on a map, the property owners along the Colorado River and Gazley Creek and meet with these owners to determine the possibility of access to a trail.
3. Task: Year Two: Begin investigating the optional property rights available to allow for a public trail along the Colorado River and Gazley Creek. Seek opportunities for public access from local streets to a trail. Prepare documentation explaining access rights available to property owners including fee simple, conservation easements, and Texas Parks and Wildlife leasing through the Texas River Access & Conservation Areas Program.
4. Task: Plan for the trail along the Colorado River and Gazley Creek working with the City to establish trail development standards including trail width, paving and trail accessories including signage and rest areas.
5. Task: By year three, assist the City to



begin to acquire trail access through available property rights. Seek out Texas Parks and Wildlife Department trail grants.

6. Task: Year Four and annually, begin to construct trail features as property rights are acquired.
7. Task: Year Five. celebrate the opening of ½ mile of trail

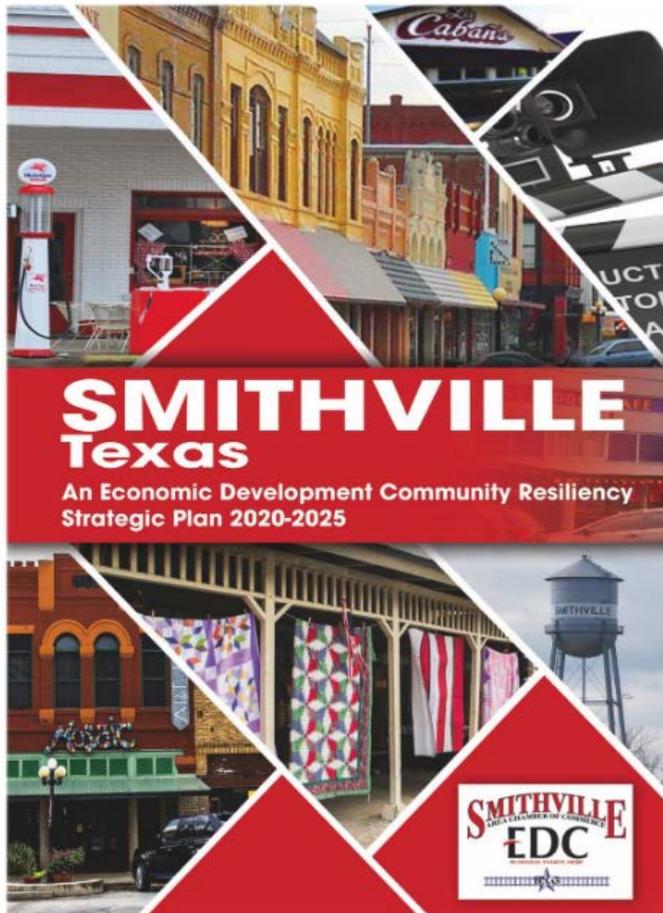
## ***GOAL No. 7: Review accomplishments and celebrate success annually***

**Action Objective:** Plan for an Annual Review

1. Task: Review the tasks annually and eliminate the unnecessary, add new tasks and adjust tasks based on in-the-field experience and Team recommendations
2. Task: Plan a Smithville Annual Pin Award for Team volunteers who contribute more than 40 hours of volunteer time annually.

# UPDATE TO THE “SMITHVILLE, TX ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY RESILIENCY STRATEGIC PLAN, 2020-2025”

July 2022



*Respectfully submitted to Smithville City Council, Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, and Smithville Workforce Training Center by Jill Strube, Director of Economic Development/Grants Administration for the City of Smithville*

*Adopted/Approved by Smithville City Council, Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, and Smithville Workforce Training Center during their respective meetings in July 2022*

*The original plan is located here:*

[http://easyedit.ci.smithville.tx.us/filemanager/files/comprehensive\\_plan/Smithville\\_TDA\\_EDP\\_ReportV2a.pdf](http://easyedit.ci.smithville.tx.us/filemanager/files/comprehensive_plan/Smithville_TDA_EDP_ReportV2a.pdf)

# UPDATE TO THE “SMITHVILLE, TX ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY RESILIENCY STRATEGIC PLAN, 2020-2025”

July 2022

## Background

In the fall of 2019, the City of Smithville in partnership with the Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce received a \$30,000 grant from the Texas Department of Agriculture for an Economic Development/Community Resiliency Strategic Plan. Mundo & Associates was contracted to do the research, interviews, public “visioning” meetings, and survey work needed to develop this plan and establish goals and tasks. The “Smithville Texas Economic Development Community Resiliency Strategic Plan” for 2020-2025 (hereafter, the “Mundo Plan”) was the result.

The primary finding was for Smithville to consider projects that would support “Meaningful Growth” – in other words, growth that is mindful of the needs and concerns of residents and supports community values. According to their discussions with community members: “City, Chamber, and community leadership values include respect, appreciation, and regard for residents and the environment; teamwork and partnerships; open communication; and innovation and entrepreneurship among our business community.”

Through this effort, the Mundo Plan established that the community considers four “pillars” to be the foundation for work to be done in Economic Development: Community, Downtown, Arts, and the Colorado River. It provides Goals and Tasks that center on these concepts, and recommends that the City and Chamber work to establish several volunteer subcommittees (as part of the Smithville Economic Development Committee under the Chamber) to start working towards the Economic Development that would be possible in those areas.

As the Mundo Plan states, community-wide support was extraordinarily important in ensuring that the economic development programs and activities the community at large could support to some degree, potentially enthusiastically. The Mundo Plan describes their public participation strategy, designed to involve as many key stakeholders and general residents as possible, as well as several of the most salient recommendations from participants (below).

For the Plan to have widespread support throughout the Smithville community, Mundo & Associates launched a four-pronged public participation strategy designed to engage and understand community interests and needs. This strategy included stakeholder interviews, an Open House Design Studio, regular communication and meetings with the Smithville Economic Development Committee (SEDC), and public review and hearing prior to Smithville City Council adoption. Recommendations from participants include:

- Job training and entrepreneurship through a local incubator/maker space to train and employ the workforce within Smithville.
- Housing developments should be in clusters of about 30 units with a mix of housing types for all ages.

- The development along Highway 71 should not include large parking lots, large buildings, big boxes, store chains and signs of typical, large suburban development.
- Development on Highway 71 should include neighborhoods that preserve the downtown area as the Mecca for community shopping.
- Continuing the Downtown Renaissance involves encouraging investment in lodging, housing on 2nd Street and upper floors along Main Street, restaurants and entertainment venues, and allowing for local product stores and discouraging chain stores.

Based on discussions and surveys of the Smithville community, the Mundo Plan provides a set of Recommended Subcommittees, which would be coordinated through the Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce:

- Marketing Team
- Incentive Team
- Neighborhood Housing Team
- Housing Finance Team
- Highway 71 Development Team
- Downtown Development Team
- Colorado River Parks Team
- Colorado River/Gazley Creek Trails Team

The Mundo Plan also recommends the seven (7) goals for the Smithville Strategic Economic Development/Resiliency Plan and includes Action Objectives, providing blueprints that would allow for the Smithville Subcommittees to reach the goals in five (5) years.

- GOAL #1: Increase market awareness beyond Smithville
- GOAL #2: Facilitate a range of housing opportunities
- GOAL #3: Guide development adjacent to HWY 71; encourage hotel development and airport development.
- GOAL #4: Focus the industrial attraction to the SH71/SH95 Smithville Industrial Park
- GOAL #5: Continue the Downtown Renaissance
- GOAL #6: Enhance the experience of the Colorado River and Gazley Creek
- GOAL #7: Review accomplishments and celebrate success annually

### **Progress of Subcommittees and Plan Goals**

At the time, it was determined that April Daniels, Executive Director at the Chamber of Commerce, and Jill Strube, Director of Economic Development/Grants Administration would coordinate the Subcommittee efforts, focusing on two issues first, and trying to integrate other Subcommittees (“Teams”) as capacity and time allowed.

The recommended Goals and Teams were initially modified to fit the interests and expertise of the groups that coalesced around the two topics that had the most support from the community from the very start: Housing and Parks.

The “Neighborhood Housing” and Housing Finance” Teams were consolidated into one Subcommittee to address **Goal #2** (Facilitate a range of housing opportunities). The Subcommittee was still in discussion over its name during the entire time the group met due to a variety of concerns about various terms

(affordable, workforce, market rate, etc.). The last name under consideration was the “Diverse Housing” Subcommittee to reflect the need for a wider variety of types of housing to accommodate people of differing means and phases in life (single, family, senior, etc.). Letha Mignon was the Volunteer Chair for the first several months. Janice Bruno and Jeanie Ralph were the Co-Chairs in the last several months before the Subcommittee lost momentum in March, 2021. At that time, the Subcommittee had made plans to survey vacant properties to discuss possibilities for housing and potential for a more diverse style and price point for development in those areas.

To best address **Goal #6**, the “Colorado River Parks” and the “Colorado River/Gazley Creek Trails” Teams were similarly consolidated, and the scope expanded to be a “Smithville Parks and Trails” Subcommittee. The Subcommittee were considering several ideas and were in the process of working on a draft Parks/Trails Plan in late 2020/early 2021, having asked Julia Cleary, Bastrop County Planner, to discuss the County’s Parks Plan. Ryan Savage presented the framework and several concepts at the February 4, 2021 subcommittee meeting (view the presentation here: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/22kt3n7ipam9e7z/Parks%20%26%20Trails%20Mtg%20Feb%202021.mp4?dl=0>). The last meeting was called for May 7, 2021, but had to be canceled, and was not rescheduled.

Appendix A provides the latest notes from the meetings that were held for both Subcommittees, as well as a list of people who had signed up to be involved in Subcommittee activities. The City/Chamber anticipate reaching out to the people who had initially expressed interest in these programs and send them the notes to attempt to begin the process again. The City’s Community Engagement Coordinator, a new hire in November, 2022, will be integral in ensuring that the coordination necessary to harness volunteer energy on these and other projects is not lost.

In the meantime, the Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce has continued to support **Goal #1** (Increase Market Awareness Beyond Smithville”) through a wide variety of activities, including for example launching a new “Visit Smithville” tourism website, distributing “Visitor Information” Directories throughout the State of Texas and into regional markets, enhancing the “Economic Development” pages on the Chamber’s home [www.smithvilletx.org](http://www.smithvilletx.org) website, and coordinating project and community profile fliers for use in Austin Chamber Regional Partnership calls for proposals for various development projects.

**Goals #3 and #4** (development along Hwy 71 and development at the Industrial Park) have been sporadically addressed, most specifically through the Austin Chamber Regional Partnership calls for proposals. However, these have not been supported through the Subcommittee structure.

Various Chamber programs have been undertaken to address **Goal #5** (Downtown Renaissance), such as the Façade Grant program, wayfinding signage, and Keep Smithville Beautiful and beautification projects. The Cultural District, supported by the Chamber, City and Lost Pines Artisans Alliance, has continued to provide downtown Arts programming like the Sculptures on Main and Youth Banner programs. Additionally, the Chamber and City have worked with downtown and other business owners on signage and sound ordinances to enhance the downtown experience.

**Goal #7** (annual review of accomplishments and celebration of success) has not been a priority at this time. Although we all understand the need to recognize our volunteers and our work, it is difficult to find the time necessary to reflect and consider another event. Once we are able to reinvigorate the standing subcommittees, we will look again at Goal #7 with stronger intention.

## Shifting Focus to Workforce Training: A New Goal (#8)

Workforce is mentioned 22 times in the Mundo Plan, yet did not become one of the goals. For example, the Mundo Plan discusses the Visioning station at the Open House Design Studio: “Participants were invited to discuss the need for entrepreneurs and growing the local workforce at this Visioning station. Support was very evident for developing an incubator/maker space training facility” (“Mundo Plan” Page 20). Clearly, as a rural area, workforce training is of paramount importance—it was, in fact, one of the Chamber’s Strategic Plan components prior to COVID-19, and became even more important as the pandemic took hold of the country and made a sea-change in the world of employment.

Despite its absence in the Mundo Plan, a great surge of community support and financial investment facilitated a workforce-focused partnership between the City and Chamber that has resulted in the clear need to add it as **Goal #8: Development of Workforce Training programming**. The St. David’s Foundation very generously awarded a grant for seed funds to establish the Smithville Workforce Training Center (SWTC) to begin training operations in ESL, GED, Medical, and Skilled Trades, and it will soon be implementing training in Information Technologies. Given the focus and success of the SWTC, it is an important addition to the Mundo Strategic Plan. The list of partners and course offerings (below) showcase the success of this project. To date, 150 students have enrolled and 42 have graduated.

		512.237.1108 Fb: Smithville Workforce Training Center Instagram: Smithville Workforce Center www.smithvilleworkforcetrainingcenter.com	
<b>Primary Partners:</b> Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce City of Smithville Smithville Community Clinic		<b>Current Funding Partners:</b> City of Smithville St. David’s Foundation Smithville Hospital Authority Union Pacific Foundation Bastrop County Accountable Communities for Health (BCACH) Born Again Emporium Community Action Inc. Rural Capital Area Workforce Solutions	
<b>Staff:</b> Executive Director: April Daniels Director of Programs: Stewart Burns Director of Operations: Leah Stinson		<b>Other Resources:</b> Scholarship Funds from Local Businesses Leadership Austin: Reporting/Consulting Rural Capital Area Workforce Solutions	
<b>Board of Directors:</b> Jill Strube, Chair Janice Bruno, Vice Chair Joanna Morgan, Secretary Micah Oliver, Treasurer Anthony Barrientos Doug Berryann Alan Butler Willy Culberson Debbie Denny David Edwards Daniel Hirna Sharlene Scheler Diana Villalobos Charlotte Seidel Linda Wilson		<b>Course Offerings to Date:</b> Certified Nurse’s Assistant (CNA) Phlebotomy Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) HVAC Plumbing GED/ESL Software Training (QuickBooks, Microsoft Office Word, Microsoft Office Excel, Bookkeeping)	
<b>Facility Partners:</b> City of Smithville 400 Flavocett / Riverbend Park Pavilion First United Methodist Church 403 Olive St. Smithville Community Clinic Dental Bus /House of Ruth 404 Flavocett/ 300 Lynch St.		<b>Course Offerings Planned for FUMC Medical:</b> Medical Assistant Dental Assistant Dental Hygienist Patient Care Tech Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) Registered Nurse (RN) Paramedic	
<b>Educational Partners:</b> Austin Community College Community Action Inc. Central Texas Allied Health Institute Towers Nursing Home Texas Public Service Training Academy		<b>Courses Offered and Planned for Riverbend Park Show Barn:</b> HVAC Electrical Plumbing Welding	
Last updated: June 22 (LS)		Stewart Burns, Director of Program: 512.581.1930 Leah Stinson, Director of Operations: 512.332.6850	

## Conclusion

The partnership between the City of Smithville and the Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce continues to build and grow stronger through these projects and programs that continually work to improve the quality of life for all in the city and throughout the region. With the addition of the Workforce Training Center as Goal #8 and with the intention to revive the subcommittees for Housing and Parks/Trails in the near future, the Mundo Plan will continue to be a blueprint to ensure that economic development and community resiliency are in the forefront of consideration. With this Plan, Smithville will thrive through thoughtful, considered, and “Meaningful Growth.”

# Appendix A

## SEDC Parks/Trails Subcommittee Meeting

January 6, 2021

**Attending:** April Daniels, Ryan Savage, Sandra Callaghan, Joanna Morgan, Ron Martin, Julia Cleary, Bruce Hahn, Brian Wells, Susan LeVieux, Judy Paul, Sarah O’Brien, Robert Tamble, Ted LeVieux, Michele Rutherford, Jeri Winslett, Valerie Savage, Adena Lewis, Jack Page, Maggie Leary, Bill Rutherford

### Agenda:

- Julia Cleary – Bastrop County Master Plan
- Smithville Parks Plan (Tabled – another meeting will be scheduled in about 2 weeks)
- Sign Inventory/Needs Assessment (Tabled)
- Park Map/Brochure (Tabled)
- Riverside Park Discussion

### Julia Cleary’s presentation (shared separately):

- Master Parks Plans are required for many grants, especially for larger communities
- Update to the Master Parks Plan concentrates on unincorporated areas of the County
- Parks Plan going to Commissioners’ Court and then will be open for public review and comment for 30 days
- Received a Planning Grant for technical advice
- Any questions, ask Julia!
- Trust for Public Land has done a lot of background work and might be worth exploring working with them since they already have a lot of the data already

### Links from Julia:

The NRPA Metrics (which replace the traditional “park standards” can be found here - <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/ParkMetrics/>. We extracted data just for Counties between 20,000 and 250,000 residents using their interactive tool which can be found here - <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/research-papers/agency-performance-review/>

### Elgin Parks Links:

- <https://www.cityofelgin.org/246/Parks>
- <https://www.cityofelgin.org/1059/Biking-Walking>

### Riverside/Main Street Park:

Vision of the Park? Basically, better access to the Colorado River for the community. Ted LeVieux’s group developed a proposal to make it a nature preserve to keep it a quiet park that would help people enjoy the nature downtown – a balance from the more formal park at the other end of Main Street (Gazebo/Railroad Park). This Park would be more along the lines of a quiet Nature Preserve.

Neighbors are not opposed outright to the idea of a park there. They expressed their appreciation that the park is being maintained, and that it looks so much better. But they have several concerns including erosion now that the hill has been exposed – parts of the old retaining wall are falling down. The neighbors need to be involved. They are not in favor of cutting into the hill or of maintaining a path that starts at the top of the hill due to concerns about private property, issues with theft, and dogs, but are possibly interested in developing the road out coming in from Olive. It is important to remember safety considerations before opening the park to the public. For example, golf carts going on down there. Since there currently are no rules or policing, it won't be long before someone starts running around with ATVs down there. Also, any action to open the park will directly affect neighbors, for example in potential costs for fences. The City needs to consider parking, fencing, signage, etc. In particular, neighbors are concerned about the switchback trail that starts at the top of the hill because it is not clear where the City Property starts and where Private Property ends.

This area is in the floodway (not floodplain – it will flood), and those considerations are also important. Because it is City-owned property, any concerns about safety and liability ultimately rest with the City, and things like policing and security also needs to be a part of the plan.

>>>> WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FLOODPLAIN AND A FLOODWAY?

A floodplain is comprised of the floodway and the floodway fringe. ... A floodway is the primary conveyance area of a channel's cross-section that is the natural conduit for flood waters. The floodway must remain open in order to allow flood waters to pass. <<<<<<<

This project is one of many that need to be considered in a more comprehensive Parks Plan. There should be a healthy balance between the needs of the community and the concerns of the neighbors, and everyone is invited to the table to make sure that anything the City of Smithville does is done with a good public participation element and works through all concerns.

It will be important to have a Smithville Parks Plan (we are the only municipality in Bastrop County that does not already have one), which will help ensure that the community as a whole is well-served. Also, it will be important to show a community-driven plan when it comes time to seek grant/foundation/outside funding.

A note on Signage: Signage is a priority of the Chamber, and we need to do an assessment of what we have and what we need. We had a start on the Wayfinding Signs around town and want to continue to provide them. Also, we'd like to look into more "historical marker" signs for places like Overlook Park and other park spaces. Please contact April if you want to be involved on signage.

The next meeting in the SEDC series is the Housing Meeting on January – please contact us so we can get you on the list if you are interested.

The SEDC Subcommittees are:

1. Housing
2. Parks/Trails
3. Downtown Renaissance



was looking for property to turn around and wholesale it...bait and switch basically. ASK him all questions first.

- Janice: The gentleman that came to my home twice is Chris from Austin and stated he is an investor
- Jeannie – if he is a private investor, this may not be a problem, and he won't have to be licensed
- Jeannie: Challenges with Inventory – when Smithville proper is priced correctly, it sells quickly and easily, but homeowners
- Most in demand: \$250K-\$300K, and even lower – so many people working in restaurants who have to live somewhere else or live with four roommates
- We have difficulty holding on to school district employees because they need to live and work in their own school district.
- We need to figure out a way to tell our story to help people decide to invest here – both people who already live here and people who want to come to Smithville
- Been selling Smithville as “Mayberry” so we need to keep the small-town charm
- Need to make sure we deal with policies as well (such as parking)
- Parking CBD is all onsite parking – no requirement of numbers of spaces for residential (grandfathered since 2018)
- City manager and Council are all on the same page of keeping small-town charge etc
- Joanna is looking to this committee to make recommendations about zoning and ordinances to help make sure we are going in the right direction
- These meetings are designed to help make changes to existing city policy/ordinances that may be unintentionally providing roadblocks to development – this is where to make recommendations and such from a citizen's point of view

#### **Getting an inventory is our number one task –**

- BCAD and Drive By
- Jeannie can say what's on the MLS for anything
- Centralized place for the information to feed into it as a committee
- Jean Reimenschnieder has a service that works on this

#### **Tiny Homes project**

- 2.2 acre tract at the end of Bluebonnet
- Could put a small community there
- Housing authority may be doing something to use this for collateral, but Rhonda told her to put together a proposal and put in a bid for the property
- Outside city limits, but could be a great location for tiny homes
- Homes for sale – affordable
- Right behind Jeannie Ralph's property
- Need a proposal in quick before they make a decision about it
- Tiny homes need to meet City Council ordinance – over 700 sq feet

### **Question on “Capella” project**

- It is in City limits and has been zoned as a planned development district
- The Capella group has since broken up, and a new developer is working on developing a portion of the property, which would have a strip mall with a convenience store and a fast-food chain
- There has been no update in 3 months
- This is a great opportunity for someone to develop that for multi-housing/affordable housing

### **HOME Grant**

- Habitat for Humanity
- Keeping people in their houses

### **Be Your Neighbor Educational Campaign**

- Push back from community
- Scares developers from coming in to develop

### **Announcements**

- Covid Testing at 109 Taylor Free today
  - Chamber TDEM office program – rapid testing kids – not administering but will make tests available for people who want them
- Concern on Colorado/Short
  - Asbestos abatement was done
  - 24 SF1 homes planned to be built where old hospital/towers was
- Water Line that will change things along Loop 230 American Legion Road – game changer for development

# Smithville Economic Development Committee

## Subcommittee Members

Based on the Mundo Community Resiliency Strategic Plan (2020)



Name (First)	Name (Last)	Organization	Housing	Parks/ Trails	Downtown Renaissance	HWY 71/ Industrial Park	Marketing	Incentives
Natalie	Atwater	South Side Sanctuary	x					
Linda	Bauer	TWS Sports						
Shawna	Bridgman	Sage Resort						
Janice	Bruno	Smithville Community Clinic	x					
Jenny	Busche	Community Member	x					
Jerry	Callaghan	Callaghan Inc	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sandra	Callaghan	Callaghan Inc	x	x	x	x	x	
Gina	Chronis-Bayer	Chevron						
Cindy	Cogdell	Community Member		x				
April	Daniels	Chamber (co-chair)	x	x	x	x	x	x
Stefanie	Distefano	Community Member						
Bill	Gordon	COS: Council						
Jami Smith	Hanchey	Rising Phoenix		x				
Gina	Hightower	Hightower Realty	x					
Clinton	Hille	Prosperity Bank						
June	Hood	Community Member		x				
Tom	Hudson	Subway						
Fran	Hunter	Bastrop County Tourism/Eco Devo						
Denise	Jensen	Community Member	x					
Kathy	Kasper	Community Member interested in Main St. Park						
Ted	LeVieux	Community Member	x	x	x	x	x	x
Susan	LeVieux	Community Member						
Adena	Lewis	Bastrop County Tourism/Eco Devo		x	x			
Doug	Leyendecker	Community Member	x					
Ron	Martin	Community Member		x				
Susan	Martin	Community Member		x				
Natasha	McClinton Roberts	Oak Tree Realty Group	x					
Letha	Mignon	Community	x			x		

Name (First)	Name (Last)	Organization	Housing	Parks/ Trails	Downtown Renaissance	HWY 71/ Industrial Park	Marketing	Incentives
Lisa	Moguel	GCG	x					
Joanna	Morgan	2020 Mayor (City Council in 2022)	x		x	x		x
Ana	Murray	SISD					x	
Bernadette	Noll	Community Member		x	x			
Caroline	Noya	Chamber						
Sarah	O'Brien	Collaborative Development Collective	x					
Bridgette	Padget	Chamber						
Jack	Page	City of Smithville Parks Director		x				
Judy	Paul	Community Member		x				
Teri	Quance	Quance Development						
Jeanie	Ralph	Jeanie Ralph Group	x					
Michele	Rutherford	Homeowner / Community Member		x				
Valerie	Savage	Savage Consulting Group		x	x	x		
Ryan	Savage	Savage Consulting Group		x		x		
Elaine	Seidel	All City Real Estate	x					
Jacki	Short	EH Mercantile				x	x	
Steve	Simmons	Honey's Pizza						
Mac	Simpson	Chamber						
Jill	Strube	COS/Chamber (co-chair)	x	x	x	x	x	x
Robert	Tamble	COS: City Manager	x	x	x	x	x	x
Gwendolyn	Watkins	Totally Hooked	x					
Brian	Wells	Civil Engineer		x				
James	Wimbley			x				