



## Economic Development Strategic Plan and Related Activities

**UPDATE: August 17, 2025**

**Submitted to:** City Manager, Mayor, City Council, Smithville Economic Development Committee

**Submitted by:** Jill Strube, Ph.D., Director of Economic Development/Grants Administration

### Executive Summary

The City of Smithville, TX (population 4,062 in 2020) is small but energetic, and many individuals and organizations partner together to meet its vision to “maintain a small-town sense of community while encouraging positive growth and continually improved standards of living for the citizens of Smithville, Texas.” This report provides information and analysis related to Smithville’s Economic Development efforts in the past several years, specifically related to the “Smithville, TX Economic Development Community Resiliency Strategic Plan, 2020-2025” and its subsequent update, which were approved by City Council and the Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. As a whole, Smithville has been making progress on each of the Goals as established through this Strategic Plan.

As a small, rural community, barriers and limitations to Economic Development Efforts in Smithville include: 1) the lack of adequate funding for incentive programs or large-scale economic development efforts; 2) the lack of vacant land, adequate acreage, or appropriate existing buildings for the majority of new development opportunities; 3) the need for infrastructure improvements that are expensive and can take many years to complete; and 4) the lack of competitive advantages compared to many larger communities.

Despite these barriers, Smithville has several important assets, key capacities, and an attitude that makes Economic Development programs and projects very successful, including: 1) an extensive ordinance review process that constantly examines opportunities to balance growth with historic preservation and other values; 2) a workforce training center (SWTC Career Tracks) that trains people in this community and the surrounding rural area for jobs that pay living wages, moving them from low-wage, low quality jobs to living wage, high-quality, rewarding careers, and providing a foundation of workers with the skills that existing and incoming businesses need; 3) a City Manager who ensures that all possible incentives are judiciously utilized for win-win-win outcomes for business, city, and community; and 4) Quality of Life projects and programs that enhance the community and help build capacity, while also attracting outside investment and attention from potential residents and businesses. Some of the highlights to this work include:

- Smithville has evaluated over 200 Requests for Information from Opportunity Austin, GSLLI, and other sources just during the last 12 months. These site selectors represent businesses looking to relocate to the Central Texas area. Based on their needs (utilities, existing buildings, land, etc.), Smithville has submitted over 40 proposals for consideration over the past several years. Of those, two site selectors have visited Smithville. As of this writing, one of those is still interested in developing here.
- In 2023, Lorie Vincent (Acceleration by Design) provided an informational series related to economic development and the issues and solutions Smithville could consider while growth is still slow. That

series is still relevant and is available online:

<https://www.ci.smithville.tx.us/289/Economic-Development-Informational-Serie>.

- The Comprehensive Planning process has been undertaken as another step to inform leadership about the direction the City could take for Economic Development. Currently the interactive portal is available for people to leave comments and to learn more about results and recommendations: <https://langfordplanning.com/smithville-rfp>.
- SWTC Career Tracks and the Innovation Center are important means to build community capacity and to provide the most important resource that will attract nearly any business to a community. A properly trained workforce and a robust business community are imperative to the competitiveness of any community that wants to grow its economy. The Innovation Center will provide technical assistance and training opportunities to local small business owners to help them thrive.
- Smithville has experienced several meaningful successes in each of the eight total Goals that were identified in the Smithville, TX Economic Development Community Resiliency Strategic Plan, 2020-2025. Details are discussed in this report.
- Web-based tools have been acquired that will improve the City's ability to market Smithville externally as well as provide data analysis of various efforts related to economic and business development, community capacity, and tourism.

#### Next Steps:

- Review and Update the 2020-2025 Economic Development Plan for 2026-2030
- Identify and examine what Smithville can reasonably "sell" as well as related challenges
- Conduct a feasibility study for hotel/convention center and other targeted business opportunities
- Establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Smithville is an amazing place, where more is possible because this small community works together to achieve greatness. When we all "row together," we are able to help everyone find the success they work so hard to attain. Economic Development needs to involve robust and diverse methods, tapping into the talents of all of our community members for everyone who works, lives, and plays here. The Comprehensive Plan and an updated Economic Development Plan will help all Smithvillians level up to a continuously higher quality of life together with their neighbors.



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## Background

Economic Development is not a linear, easy, or simple process. No one can accomplish anything alone, and it takes an engaged and enlightened community that understands how to set realistic, “smart for us” growth goals to successfully move forward with measured and appropriate economic development programs intended to nurture existing businesses, build workforce capacity, and attract new entrepreneurs and businesses to the area. No blueprint exists that guarantees any given community will be able to navigate economic development that works for everyone. All communities are different and what works in some locations may fail in others.

### Economic Development Community Resiliency Strategic Plan 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 accomplishments & celebrate successes
8. Establish and develop a substantial Workforce Development & Training program

Smithville may not have an Economic Development Corporation (EDC) supported by a portion of sales tax dedicated to economic development activities, but it does have a group of invested, engaged, and hard-working people who come together to help nudge stars into alignment for the betterment of the entire community. It has been my honor and privilege to work with this fantastic team, all of whom are moving Smithville towards sustainable economic development and growth that benefits all residents. Smithville’s primary Economic Development Team currently collaborating in the place of a traditional EDC includes:

- The Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce manages programs designed for business retention and expansion (BRE) and tourism, an important element in marketing Smithville outside of the City.
- SWTC Career Tracks builds community capacity by training individuals for jobs that regional businesses need, establishing a great foundation for existing local businesses as well as building a workforce that will attract new businesses and entrepreneurs to this area.
- The City of Smithville maintains and upgrades infrastructure, oversees zoning and ordinances, supports community-lead boards that guide development (e.g., Planning and Zoning, Historic Preservation/Design Standards), and ensures that quality of life and placemaking projects make Smithville a “community of choice” for all who live here and who may be attracted to move here.

These partners, together with other collaborating organizations, are able to accomplish a great deal towards economic development programming, spreading responsibilities and wearing many hats as necessary to get the job done.

The “Smithville, TX Economic Development Community Resiliency Strategic Plan, 2020-2025” was funded by a grant from the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) in 2019 as a collaboration between the Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce and the City of Smithville. It provided a comprehensive look at previous plans and conducted an extensive public involvement program through seven Community Resiliency Strategic Goals. A subsequent update to the Strategic Plan established Workforce Development and Training as Goal 8 based on the language in the Plan itself and availability of funding to move into this area ([www.ci.smithville.tx.us/DocumentCenter/View/1161/Smithville-Economic-Development-Community-Resiliency-Strategic-Plan](http://www.ci.smithville.tx.us/DocumentCenter/View/1161/Smithville-Economic-Development-Community-Resiliency-Strategic-Plan)).

The Plan was launched before COVID restrictions were lifted, which impacted most of the activities. Many community members signed up to be part of the Plan Implementation Teams; however, the committees lost traction after life started to return to normal after COVID. The Consultant on this Plan (Pamela Mundo) cautioned that such an ambitious plan that relied so heavily on community volunteers would likely hit some ebbs and flows in terms of individuals’ interest, and therefore she provided detailed and specific tasks for these goals to help people gain traction and build on any momentum while their interests and time aligned with the work. Of additional note: the TDA Grants that provided funds for this Plan and for Implementation did not intend nor require that all Goals would be met. TDA staff explicitly stated that this was an aggressive agenda, and that they would be pleased if any movement were taken on just one of the goals. They were and are very excited to be partnering with us on Goal 8 (Workforce Development) through the construction of the new Smithville Innovation Center.

This Economic Development Strategic Plan provided specific advice as to steps to take, resources, and contact information to move forward with the seven initial pillars that were developed through a rigorous community-developed program. City Council adopted the Plan on September 14, 2020 as did the Chamber at their September 2020 Board Meeting. The Update was presented to and adopted by the City Council on July 11, 2022, and approved by the Chamber Board at their July 2022 meeting.

## **Economic Development Realities in Smithville**

Smithville is a small, urbanized municipality in a largely rural community. Many families can trace their local roots through several generations, reaching back to the 1800s. But Smithville welcomes newcomers, and has a history of taking the more progressive path. People here push into the future. The Smithville-Crawford Municipal Airport, MD Anderson, the Recreation Center, the Veterans Memorial Park, and the Workforce Training Center (Career Tracks) are all examples of big ideas that people in this small community made happen. People have faith that these projects will succeed, even where they might not in larger communities. This “git’er done” pragmatic attitude has carried many dreams into reality, making Smithvillians themselves the biggest asset in Smithville’s economic development toolbox. People figure it out. With additional resources and training, more of these dreams will thrive and be sustainable over time.

Economic Development efforts include business attraction efforts. Opportunity Austin, GSLI, and other sources send leads from site selectors representing businesses looking to relocate to the Central Texas area. Based on our fit to their business expansion needs (utilities, existing buildings, land, etc.), Smithville has submitted over 40 proposals for consideration since 2020. Of those, only two site selectors have visited Smithville. One of those is still interested in developing here, but faces certain barriers that may prevent his project from getting off the ground. This illustrates the reality that Smithville faces several limitations that make certain kinds of growth more difficult. For example:

1. Smithville has limited funding mechanisms to pay for large economic development projects or establish a robust incentive program. Most municipalities have established Economic Development

Corporations (EDC), quasi-governmental organizations with a mission to manage economic development in the community. These are funded through Type A or Type B taxes, per State law. The State allows municipalities to designate up to a ½ cent towards economic development in its sales tax formula (for more information: [TX Comptroller Information about Type A and Type B taxes](#) – Type B is more versatile). In the 1980s, Smithville voters did not pass either the Type A or Type B Sales Tax to support Economic Development like other cities did in Bastrop County, and since then, no one has championed a campaign in its favor. The municipal portion of sales tax is capped at 2%, and Smithville is at that cap. Therefore, this source would require taking revenue away from other departments. At this time, the City has allocated less than 1% of its entire budget to direct economic development activities (less than \$60,000 is available to spend on Economic Development projects, programs, and tools), making grant writing a true necessity to raise the needed funds for infrastructure, workforce, and quality of life projects. In contrast, Bastrop collects Type B taxes through the ½ cent on sales taxes. In 2024, the Bastrop Economic Development Corporation, which manages those funds, expected about \$4.4M in revenue from that source (see [BEDC 2024 Budget information](#)). Bastrop’s ability to fund staff, launch projects, and aggressively support businesses hinges on this large pot of funds, which is not available to Smithville at this time.

2. The number and type of available properties is limited. Not many commercial/industrial sites are available within City Limits. Existing available buildings are small, relative to what incoming businesses generally demand, and most available structures are not turnkey ready, requiring substantial renovation prior to a business opening their doors. In the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ), legacy properties (not for sale) and high-dollar properties for sale have limited Smithville’s ability to attract new businesses or help existing businesses grow into a larger footprint. That’s not to say it has been impossible. Several small- and medium-sized businesses have become established in Smithville over the past 20 years (see Appendix 1). Additionally, several local businesses have thrived in Smithville for more than 50 years (e.g., Milton’s Fine Furniture, Gipson-Pendergrass People’s Mortuary). However, it is clear from site selection leads that Smithville has little of what many site selectors are seeking.

The table below shows the Opportunity Austin leads and the various reasons that disqualified Smithville from submitting (inadequate Land, Building, Utilities, Other). In total, from January 2024 to August 6, 2025, out of nearly 200 RFIs, Smithville only qualified for 24 opportunities – all of which were submitted, none of which have replied.

<b>Opportunity Austin Leads by Year</b>							
	<b>Total RFIs</b>	<b>Monthly Ave</b>	<b>Land</b>	<b>Building</b>	<b>Utilities</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Submissions</b>
<b>2024 (Jan-Dec)</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>8</b>
		<b>Percentages</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>2025 YTD Jan-now</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>
		<b>Percentages</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>7/15-8/6/2025</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>#s included above</i>		<b>Percentages</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>13%</b>

3. Smithville has been making great strides in improving infrastructure for many years, but is still not at the level many larger businesses require when selecting a site. Drainage is still problematic in many areas, and while wastewater treatment facilities are adequate for the next few years at our current rate, a major upgrade will need to take place before Smithville can court some of the larger companies looking to move to Central Texas.

4. Competition is high for site selection, and Smithville is still too small with too few urban amenities and resources in comparison with other, somewhat larger cities in the region. Companies look for a ready workforce, quality of life, costs to market, and several other factors when they seek to move to a new location. Incentives play a major role in many calculations, and Smithville's budget limitations restrict our ability to offer the kind of incentive package that some businesses have come to expect that larger, more affluent communities can offer.

Despite these challenges, Smithville's "can-do" population is working to ensure that the city is ready for all opportunities as they arise. Smithville is constantly working on the things we can control. Before any bigger boom in this region makes for "off-the-charts" and uncontrollable growth here, these projects will protect the assets that make Smithville unique, and will help the people currently living here to level up and gain needed resources to stave off gentrification and displacement.

1. Smithville has undertaken several rounds of ordinance review to ensure that the rules are written fairly for current conditions and in preparation of anticipated growth. Some of these ordinances have been put in place to protect assets, such as the Historic Commercial District. Others are directed at ensuring new growth does not present a burden on the community, such as foundation height requirements. Some determine what the city should continue to "look and feel" like as a means of ensuring a certain quality of character, such as setbacks and fences.
2. The creation of the SWTC Career Tracks (formerly Smithville Workforce Training Center) provides a direct pipeline to talent for existing and incoming businesses. Workforce is one of the most important determinants in site selection. It is also a means of stabilizing a community and ensuring that residents have a means to continually grow their pocketbook. The upcoming Innovation Center, designed to give local/regional entrepreneurs access to training and resources necessary to ensure that their enterprises will thrive is another way of establishing new jobs and propelling job/business readiness. It is important to remember that every large company was once a small start-up. Investments in local people to help them become successful is win/win/win/win for all – city, businesses, prospective employees, and community. Career Tracks has established the "Create a Job/Save a Job" model, which has been proven to make a difference, and has made Smithville the epicenter for workforce and entrepreneurial training in this rural area. These programs work to grow our small businesses and continually train our workforce for high-wage jobs leading to rewarding careers, leading to more successful outcomes for the families who live here.
3. City Hall is working to ensure all opportunities are taken. Although Smithville's incentives are not on the scale as other, larger communities, the City Manager uses 380 Agreements to ensure milestones and goals are met, providing tax rebates for businesses that meet their obligations. Smithville's lack of red tape in comparison to other communities, and the open door policy at City Hall are other key factors that have helped new businesses make the decision to locate here. Appendix 2 showcases all of the current incentives in Smithville's toolbox.
4. Quality of Life and Placemaking programs, which are designed for residents, are important to attracting outside attention as well. These simple, mainly volunteer-oriented and led, are relatively inexpensive programs that offer terrific benefits for small communities like ours. Economic Development through the Arts (i.e., Cultural District programs) has been extremely successful in showcasing Smithville talent and bringing people together to be creative. The literature and various funding programs prove this is important because a "sense of place" matters to people. It supports and sustains us as human beings. It provides a source of pride and belonging to residents, and it attracts people from outside the community to see what's here. Programs that build community capacity, such as the Community Ownership & Resource Education (CORE) project, help improve

people's lives by providing the information and professional assistance they need to move out of sometimes dire circumstances and protect and preserve the wealth they have to improve the lives of their heirs. Programs that offer solutions to challenges strengthens community, increases trust in government, empowers individuals to step up into leadership positions, and moves people to be great stewards of and advocates for Smithville. Smithville is very fortunate to have an entrepreneurial spirit where people can work to achieve their dreams. Career Tracks and the Innovation Center, which focus on local talent and provide resources needed to be successful and improve their earning potential, are extremely important in ensuring community stability, sustainability, and financial health. This kind of internal growth maintains the fabric of the community, growing wealth among the current residents, who can then withstand any potential forces of gentrification, who are making personal investments in their future that are tied to Smithville, and who are more likely to work through tough times than to leave if some better offer comes along. Angel investors and large companies willing to take a chance on a small, rural town are few and far between, and although the update to the Economic Development Strategic Community Resiliency Plan needs to work to attract them, we should not neglect to support the people who have already set their roots here. Paradoxically, supporting the people already here will then have the effect of attracting others. This is the mechanism for a sustained, sustainable, and practical growth strategy.

A good economic development plan will be a multi-pronged approach, paying attention to the realities on the ground and working to find strategic opportunities and competitive advantages as they arise. It will work to improve existing assets, such as infrastructure, businesses, and workforce, and will make community-wide improvements that benefit people here now and also can attract future new businesses to the area. The current Economic Development Plan does that, and the Team working on the Plan has been making progress across all of the Plan's Goals.

## **Goals Update – Activities Since Plan Launch in 2020**

In relation to this Plan, the City Economic Development Staff together with numerous community organizations and volunteers have done a great deal of work towards meeting all of the Goals. During her informational series, Lorie Vincent of Acceleration by Design noted how far Smithville has come in relation to all of these important pillars of economic development and how Smithville is well ahead of the curve in many aspects compared to other small, rural communities across the country.

### **Goal 1: Increase Market Awareness Outside Smithville.**

1. This task was intended to be primarily undertaken by the Chamber, and their efforts (the 78957 Magazine and Expedition Texas) are part of that strategy. They generally use Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) funds to accomplish this Goal. The City collects these funds and has directed the Chamber to manage them. They must be used to draw tourists to town, and ultimately must show "heads in beds" results.
2. On the City's side, stronger efforts in its social media campaigns draw attention to Smithville. The Community Engagement Coordinator primarily performs this function. His work is consistent, professional, and of exceptional quality. Indications that we are successful in this effort include:
  - DealFront, which monitors the "hits" an economic development website gets, has registered 53 distinct businesses looking at Smithville since May 2024 when it first began monitoring the Smithville Economic Development web pages.
  - Jill Strube was invited to speak on the panel for the Industrial Sector through the Austin Interface Conference in March, 2025, getting Smithville in front of over 100 site selectors and developers.
  - The Smithville Public Library received an unsolicited \$9,000 gift from the Hogg Foundation for their work in providing Mental Health programming for the community in July, 2025.

- The City Manager and Economic Development Director have submitted proposals for over 40 Requests for Information through Opportunity Austin, GSLI, and Day One leads. Of those, two resulted in site visits:
  - July, 2022: Project “ADK Green Living” visited and is still in communication. This 3-phase development project includes a manufacturing factory for affordable, net-zero housing anticipating 100 jobs in year one up to 500 jobs in year five, on-site workforce housing with various amenities, and a hotel.
  - September, 2022: Project “Third Arrow” (a drone manufacturer) visited the Industrial Park in Smithville but did not move forward in this area.

**Goal 2: Facilitate a Range of Housing Opportunities.**

1. During the calendar year 2024, Smithville City Hall accepted permits for 31 new homes, two duplexes (4 dwelling units), and one guest house. Year to date in 2025, permits for 17 new homes and one guest house have been submitted.
2. Then-Councilmember Janice Bruno conducted 11 Housing Huddles in 2022, through which community members from all neighborhoods were invited to talk about their needs. Committee members worked to list available properties for development and redevelopment (per Plan Implementation guidance). This information effectively provides data required for a needs assessment and feasibility study .
3. In December 2024, the Bastrop County Consortium (which includes the City of Smithville) was awarded \$750K from the St. David’s Foundation for their “Housing + Health” initiative (BCCHH) to pay for planning and predevelopment costs for all the work that will need to be done to provide potential properties along with preliminary engineering/environmental assessments to interested developers for subsequent housing projects. The Smithville Housing Huddle information offered the program coordinators and grant managers a great head start for this effort. The Adisa “Listening Sessions” conducted through this project have identified several parcels of land in Smithville that have been submitted to project coordinators.
4. Despite many obstacles, the developer who is seeking land in/near Smithville for a phased development to include a factory for manufactured homes, workforce housing units, and a hotel (which dovetails with Goal 3), still intends on moving forward if land becomes available at a price he is willing to pay. First introduced to Smithville through the Opportunity Austin Request for Information program, this developer has regularly been in contact with City Staff since July 2022.
5. The City Manager is in ongoing discussions with a local developer who is considering a Public Improvement District (PID) for a current project.
6. In 2024, the City was awarded a small grant to help provide resources to community members on the edge of the housing crisis. The Community Ownership & Resource Education (CORE) Program was established to preserve housing for Smithvillians, stabilize our community, and slow gentrification. The Bastrop Law Group took notice of this work, and applied for a grant together with the Rural Whole Health Coalition, which they were awarded to continue these efforts for the next two years.

**Goal 3: Guide Development Adjacent to Highway 71; Encourage Hotel and Airport Development**

1. In early 2024, the City hosted a meeting with a representative from Cobblestone Hotels – a small hotel chain established specifically to meet the needs of small, rural communities. The cost to local investors is over \$1M, making this a difficult direction to take. The first step is to pay for a Feasibility Study (~\$20,000) to determine Return on Investment.
2. The developer mentioned above (Goal 2, #4) intends to build a hotel during Phase 3 of his project if he can find suitable and affordable land.
3. TJ Finn presented the Smithville Economic Development Committee (SEDC) with a proposal for seeking Requests for Proposals (RFPs) from conference center hoteliers.
4. Conversations have begun with Circuit of the Americas (COTA) to begin a helicopter service from Smithville Crawford Municipal Airport for people who would prefer to avoid the highway.

5. Discussions with Bastrop Economic Development Corporation may lead to a “micro Buc-ee’s” to be located at the Airport, making a unique draw for tourists and pilots alike.
6. Together with Bastrop EDC, Smithville met with Representative Cloud to discuss the potential for federal assistance to move forward with key aspects of the Airport Plan, including burying the power lines and extending the runway.

**Goal 4: Focus Attraction to the Industrial Park on Hwy 71.**

1. The City’s Economic Development Director has submitted more than 20 Requests for Information (RFIs) specifically for the Smithville Industrial Park through the Opportunity Austin and GSLI Lead systems.
2. The property owner, Glenn Synnott, has also connected with potential developers/business owners on his own to find appropriate development for that property. At this time, the property owner is in discussions with Tractor Supply and has gone back to Planning and Zoning for a minor replat, which P&Z recommended that Council approve at their 8/11 meeting. With this approval, he will be able to begin construction on a road to serve the Tractor Supply project by the end of 2025.

**Goal 5: Downtown Renaissance.**

1. Despite some recent business closures along Main Street, the City and Chamber are doing everything possible to improve infrastructure (e.g., drainage, sidewalks, street, and lighting) and host stellar events (e.g., Festival of Lights, Jamboree Parade, Music Festivals, Theater and Music in the Park) that attract visitors and potential investment in the area.
2. A TXDOT sidewalk grant funded ramps for better ADA accessibility and required ADA compliance, as well as improved “islands” on the corners along Main Street as well as sidewalks along First street from Main to SH 95, linking the Rec Center to Main and making holiday pedestrian traffic for events like Festival of Lights much more inviting and safer for the many people who wish to walk the distance.
3. The City and Chamber continue to partner making Façade Grants available to Smithville business owners. Since its inception in 2018, this program has awarded \$30,000 to businesses for signage, fresh coats of paint, repair work, and other needed upgrades that dramatically affect curb appeal.

**Goal 6: River, Parks, and Trails Experiences.**

1. During COVID, a committee made of about a dozen interested citizens met over the course of about 15 months to discuss a variety of potential improvements and ideas primarily related to river access. Many discussions included the work of community members to establish a trail at Gazley Creek and to mow and create park space at the city-owned property at the end of Main Street, which this group of volunteers undertook for the better part of three years. Just as two of the members decided to create a more complete “City Parks and Trails Plan” for the Committee to consider, COVID restrictions were lifted. With life after COVID setting in, this project hit a back burner.
2. Representative Stan Gerdes recently announced a \$10M project that would construct a pedestrian/golf cart bridge over Hwy 71, with the intention to connect Riverbend Park with the residential areas on the southwest side of the highway.

**Goal 7: Review Accomplishments/Celebrate Successes.**

1. When the public has been involved (such as It’s Time Texas and the Texas Commission on the Arts programs), the City has made a point of ensuring that the community is invited to a celebration after the project has ended to acknowledge their invaluable efforts in making Smithville a wonderful place.
2. The City has contracted with a firm that will create an Annual Report on its Economic Development activities, projects, and programs for citizens, existing businesses, potential investors, and other stakeholders.

**Goal 8: Workforce Development and Training.**

1. In the spring of 2021, City and Chamber worked with St. David’s Foundation on a grant program that would “stand up” a workforce training center – initially called the Smithville Workforce Training Center,

and now called SWTC Career Tracks. In 2023, Workforce Solutions: Rural Capital Area received funds from the Economic Development Administration for the “Good Jobs Grant” and asked SWTC Career Tracks to manage the four eastern counties (Bastrop, Caldwell, Fayette, and Lee). Since then, more than 500 students have started classes with SWTC Career Tracks. Over half of them have graduated and over 90% of them have been placed in jobs that primarily pay \$18/hour or more. Students can choose from a number of careers in health care, skilled trades, information technology, and finances. They may also train to get their Commercial Driver’s License (CDL). Most recently, a Texas Talent Connections grant provides funds for training in hospitality management and St. David’s Foundation has provided \$2M in funding through the Bastrop County Public Health Department for “Pathways to Economic Stability for the Healthcare Workforce.” Methodist Healthcare Ministries, Greater Fayette Community Foundation, the Smithville Hospital Board, and St. David’s Foundation have together funded over \$3M in the past two years for healthcare workforce training programs, showing their interest and willingness to invest in the rural workforce. Towers Nursing Home and Ascension-Seton Smithville Hospital have greatly benefited as employers that work together to ensure their needs for workforce are met, and well over 150 employers in the region have signed “commitment letters,” indicating their need for and willingness to hire employees trained at SWTC Career Tracks.

2. This Goal was at the forefront of the TDA Implementation grant, which was guaranteed to Smithville as one of the pilot communities by way of their 2019 Planning. Since then, SWTC-Career Tracks has grown extensively. With the addition of the Smithville Innovation Center at the Fawcett property, local entrepreneurs will receive the training and support they need to move their fledgling businesses to the next level, and will help ensure that people willing to invest “it all” in a new business have the resources and information they need before they embark on this ambitious journey.
3. The City of Smithville is a leading partner in the St. David’s Foundation’s two-year grant-funded program “Pathways to Economic Stability for Healthcare Workforce”, which invests in additional workforce training in the healthcare fields and ensures that no less than 125 students each year will get the training they need through SWTC Career Tracks. These students will benefit from resources and mentorship that will lead to job placements in Bastrop County after they graduate from the educational programs.

In addition to the progress made on the Strategic Economic Development Plan specifically, the following activities bolster these and other Economic Development programs and projects in Smithville.

*Community Engagement Coordinator (CEC).* This position was initially established through a grant from the St. David’s Foundation to establish relationships and build ties with community members across all sectors and geographies in Smithville, including especially People with Lived Experiences and the more vulnerable populations who may not always feel they have a voice at the table. By working with everyone in Smithville, the CEC can take a more accurate temperature for what exactly is needed in our community, can recommend policies and programs that help to grow the economy for all who live here, and can ensure that all opportunities for public involvement, feedback, and information are equitably distributed across Smithville’s entire population. It is normal that people who already feel empowered engage in the system and make their voices heard, but their perspectives can be narrower than the full interests of the entire community. The CEC program helps to ensure that the City can have the full benefit of learning from more perspectives and interests from neighbors throughout the entire community.

The Community Ownership and Resources (CORE) program was a direct development from this work, which was funded through a grant from the Greater Fayette Community Foundation in 2024/25. This program seeks to work with families who are closest to the housing crisis, to make sure their paperwork, taxes, wills, and so on are adequate to preserve their assets and protect generational wealth, working to keep these community members in our community and to raise their standard of living.

*Economic Development Informational Series.* In 2023, the Workforce Training Center and the City contracted with Lorie Vincent (Acceleration by Design) to provide an informational series related to economic development and the issues and solutions Smithville could consider while growth was still slow and steady (available online: <https://www.ci.smithville.tx.us/289/Economic-Development-Informational-Serie>). She was not asked to outline a blueprint for Smithville to follow, but instead provided the information and resources the community needs to make “smart for us” decisions about how to prepare for growth, and what we need to do to best manage the factors within our control. This program was established to lead up to the Comprehensive Plan process to help inform city leaders and community members about what kinds of options are available for consideration in Smithville’s planning process.

*Smithville’s Comprehensive Plan.* A Comprehensive Plan is a "living document" that results from a public process that addresses the long-term vision and policies for future development. A Comprehensive Plan is intended to holistically address all the different facets of community development. Rather than addressing issues such as housing, economic development, transportation, and other issues individually, the Comp Plan takes a big picture look at how all these different issues interact. It is designed to enable a community to enhance the quality of life for all present and future members by describing near-term improvements as well as long-term development; it is a blueprint for growth, designed by community members for community members, to help the city reach its fullest potential for all.

The City of Smithville's Comprehensive Plan is an ongoing blueprint for actions and projects that the community recognizes will improve the quality of life for those who live here and will encourage the kind of growth that the community envisions and will support. This is designed to be a robust public involvement and engagement program. Stakeholders representing many community organizations that reach into various interests across the community have been asked to talk about the issues they see and that they hear about from their constituents. City Staff conduct Community Forums and Surveys on each of the Chapter topics to reach out to additional individual residents for their input. The City’s consultant, Langford Community Management Services (LCMS), has conducted a review of existing Smithville plans and other documents, is considering specific kinds of solutions for issues community members, leaders, and City Staff raise, and will make recommendations for steps forward including potential sources of funding.

In reviewing the many plans that have been part of Smithville’s past, it is worth noting that over 80% of the tasks and projects identified with that plan have been implemented and/or accomplished. Of the portion that was not completed, the vast majority was not actionable due to fiscal constraints, regulatory restrictions, change of circumstance, or some other reason that made the task unnecessary, unattainable, or otherwise not feasible. The goals and activities in all of these plans ultimately are designed to improve the quality of life for Smithville residents, which is an important factor in Economic Development.

## **Summary of Current Web Tools in the City’s Economic Development Toolbox**

In 2024, the City of Smithville invested in several internet products that will allow staff to better assess economic development efforts and activities, as well as to proactively seek Economic Development opportunities. The following table summarizes these tools and provides the relevant URL. Each provides a unique perspective on economic development, allowing for a more robust understanding of activity efficacy and outcomes in Smithville.

<b>Product</b>	<b>Brief Description of Product</b>	<b>URL</b>
Placer.ai	Allows us to draw a geofence around an area/business to find out how many people visited the area during specific times/days since 2017	<a href="http://www.placer.ai">www.placer.ai</a>

Product	Brief Description of Product	URL
GIS Planning	Adds community data and MLS info to Economic Development pages on website – they maintain data and integrate webpages to our existing site	<a href="https://www.ci.smithville.tx.us/279/Community-Overview">https://www.ci.smithville.tx.us/279/Community-Overview</a>
ReSimplifi	Commercial Real Estate Listing Data	<a href="https://properties.zoomprospector.com/SMITHVILLETX">https://properties.zoomprospector.com/SMITHVILLETX</a>
Choose Texas Campaign / GSLI Retail Portal	GSLI provides a Portal to allow members to proactively seek leads of businesses looking for sites as well as tickets for two people (anyone from the community) for about 10 trade shows per year. Cost is split with the Chamber	<a href="https://gslisolutions.com/economic-development/">https://gslisolutions.com/economic-development/</a>
Dealfront	Dealfront is the Go-to-Market Platform for Europe that gives sales and marketing teams everything they need to win leads and close deals. Free account came from GSLI – they send emails about which businesses are looking at our website.	<a href="https://www.dealfront.com/">https://www.dealfront.com/</a>
ScoutCities.com	City profile and any site-selector-relevant info are listed on this site to help selectors find us. Local businesses provide reviews about the city to help recruit businesses. <i>We can have a limited free presence to test the waters before we decide about paying for more – Smithville has been added to the list</i>	<a href="http://demo.scoutcities.com/cities">http://demo.scoutcities.com/cities</a>

## Next Steps

### Review and Update the 2020-2025 Economic Development Plan

The Smithville, TX Economic Development Community Resiliency Strategic Plan and in particular its Implementation Guide should be revisited. The Smithville Economic Development Committee (SEDC) has begun a preliminary review of the Plan. City Council members could work with the SEDC to convene interested community members to review the guidance and learn more details about what has been accomplished already to develop a subsequent Implementation Plan for 2026-2030. This should dovetail with the work currently being done for the Comprehensive Plan to establish a very robust and widely useful means of economic development activities that benefit all.

### Examine what Smithville Can Reasonably “Sell” and Related Challenges

A common misconception is that Smithville has a lot of properties for sale that are not making it out to the site selector community. This is not the case. Smithville’s commercial real estate agents, property owners, and the City’s Economic Development Director and City Manager spend countless hours with prospective investors. People are interested in Smithville from an “organic” perspective – our quality of life, our placemaking efforts, and our good works capture their attention. The limitations mentioned above generally turn them towards other communities. The next step here is to develop a list of vacant properties, properties that are currently for sale, seek key informant interviews to assess exactly what challenges we are facing that make investors reluctant to move their businesses into this area, and develop an action plan to address those issues. As good stewards of public funds, commissioning a low-cost, high ROI study will provide the insight needed to determine whether it is logical to expend tax dollars on a high-salaried individual.

### Conduct A Feasibility Study For Hotel/Convention Center And Other Targeted Business Opportunities

The Smithville Economic Development Committee (SEDC) had identified the need for a middle-range hotel as a target for upcoming development. As with most businesses, hotels know their markets and do their research prior to construction. They are not a “build it and they will come” business. Smithville needs to undertake a feasibility study to understand what we need to do to improve the potential for investors in this space, and what creative potential we can promote at this time – such as our connection to COTA, our proximity to two state parks, and our location as the “heart of the megapolis.”

**Establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) must be readily available, easy to understand, and most directly connected to activities. The following five (5) KPIs are already available and much of this data is already provided to the City Council through a variety of reports. These could be consolidated and provided in a single report every month for Council and the public to review.

Measurement	Current or Future	Metrics (measured monthly)	Data Source
% Grant Award Rate	Currently Measuring and Reporting	# of Applications submitted over # of projects awarded	City Eco Devo Staff
% Submissions Opportunity Austin Requests for Information	Currently Measuring and Reporting	# RFIs Submitted over # Eligible AND breakdown of all OA RFIs	City Eco Devo Staff
# GSLI Pipeline Requests for Information	Currently Measuring and Reporting	# RFIs Submitted AND # RFIs in the Pipeline	City Eco Devo Staff
% of 380 Projects meeting objectives/obligations	Currently Measuring and Reporting	# of 380 projects meeting milestones over total # of 380 projects	City Eco Devo Staff
\$\$ Investments in Community Facilities and Infrastructure	Currently Measuring and Reporting	Dollar value for categories of infrastructure, including general fund, in-kind, and grant funds	City Eco Devo Staff

In the future, City Economic Development Staff may wish to assess the following KPIs in collaboration with SWTC-Career Tracks and the Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce.

Measurement	Current or Future	Metrics	Data Source
Adoption of sustainable development goals	Potential Future Data	# Organizations that have adopted sustainable development goals	Chamber & SWTC-Career Tracks
Workshops provided to business owners/entrepreneurs	Potential Future Data	# Business Workshops hosted by all local entities, possibly by category	Chamber & SWTC-Career Tracks
Outbound Marketing*	Potential Future Data	# Outbound Campaigns with any tracking available	City Eco Devo Staff
Inbound Marketing*	Potential Future Data	# Inbound Campaigns with any tracking available	City Eco Devo Staff

\* “Outbound Marketing” is the traditional “push” marketing – costly with low ROI (for example: trade shows, email blasts, and cold calling). “Inbound Marketing” is the art of using social media and website content to spread brand awareness and attract people to engage with your messaging (source: <https://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/2989/inbound-marketing-vs-outbound-marketing.aspx>)

As a measure of how well the community is doing (not to be utilized as performance-based measures for staff), the following measures can be tracked over time, looking into the past 3, 5, or 10 years as data allow, and continue to monitor into the future (potential data source URLs are provided in Appendix 3).

Measurement	Current or Future	Metrics	Data Source
Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT)	Currently Measuring	Dollars Collected	TX Comptroller
Sales Tax	Currently Measuring	Dollars Collected	TX Comptroller
Jobs created/retained	Potential Future Data	# Jobs per FTE	SWTC-Career Tracks programming
Average salaries	Potential Future Data	\$ Salary Averages for key job categories	Census

<b>Measurement</b>	<b>Current or Future</b>	<b>Metrics</b>	<b>Data Source</b>
Unemployment rate	Potential Future Data	% Unemployment Rate for County/City residents	Bureau of Labor Statistics (Bastrop County) Census (City of Smithville)
Educational attainment	Potential Future Data	%s by Education Categories	Census
New business applications	Potential Future Data	# of New Business Applications (for 78957)	TX Comptroller
Sustained businesses	Potential Future Data	# of these businesses still active in subsequent years	City Eco Devo Staff
Traffic Counts	Potential Future Data	Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) Count	TX Dept of Transportation

## **Conclusion**

Smithville is an amazing small, rural city where more is possible because the community works together to achieve greatness. When we all “row together,” we are able to accomplish great successes for everyone. Economic Development needs to involve robust and diverse methods, tapping into the talents of all of our community members for everyone who works, lives, and plays here. The Comprehensive Plan and an updated Economic Development Plan will help all Smithvillians level up to a continuously higher quality of life together with their neighbors.

## Economic Development Consultant Reviews

Several economic development consultants have offered the following testimonials on the work we are doing as a community and a team in ensuring that Smithville is “doing the right things” and “doing the things right” in our efforts to prepare for upcoming economic development while also attending to current needs. These professionals offer an outsider’s perspective to help us see the forest when we tend to get bogged down from looking at all the trees.

>>>>>>>

The City of Smithville is a shining example of a community that not only embraces quality growth but proactively plans for it. Through their visionary 2020-2025 Economic Development Community Resiliency Plan, Smithville has laid a strong foundation to address both current and future opportunities. This plan demonstrates the city's commitment to sustainable growth, economic diversification, and community well-being.

Their close partnership with the Smithville Workforce Training Center ensures that local and regional talent is prepared to meet the needs of evolving industries, providing businesses with a skilled and ready workforce. Additionally, their collaboration with the Smithville Chamber strengthens the city's economic ecosystem by fostering business development, supporting local entrepreneurs, and creating a vibrant community where businesses and residents thrive.

I have worked with the City, the Workforce Center, and the Chamber in various capacities over the past 20+ years. With strategic initiatives already underway and strong partnerships in place, Smithville is well-positioned to navigate its growth and enhance its role as a regional leader in economic development.

Alysia

*Proud to be an instructor at Texas BEDC, February 11-14, 2025.*

Alysia A. Cook, PCED, IOM  
Opportunity Strategies LLC  
PO Box 50101  
Austin, TX 78763  
(512) 963-2263  
[OpportunityStrategies.com](http://OpportunityStrategies.com)

>>>>>>>

It has been a joy and privilege to work with the City of Smithville and the Economic Development department in educating, brainstorming and identifying ways to grow the city in a smart and intentional way. Throughout my time there, including nine (9) workshops and community meetings, I found the residents of Smithville to be enthusiastic, earnest, committed and anxious to learn about ways to preserve and grow the home that they love. In addition, new ideas, wishes and strategies were heard and shared. While Smithville faces many of the challenges that all rural communities are facing around the country, I found the leadership and the volunteers to be thoughtful, open and willing to learn new and creative ways to both preserve the city’s heritage, welcome new tourism dollars and residents into the city and be mindful of many ways the city can grow from within, including small business development. I truly enjoyed working closely with the economic development team, the City Manager and the City Council to explore the assets, barriers, opportunities and resources that are available to this dynamic community. Smithville is in an excellent

location to benefit from the high growth taking place in the region. I believe that it's possible to honor your history and build for the future. I see great things ahead for the City of Smithville.

Lorie Vincent, CEcD  
President | Founder  
ACCELERATION by design

>>>>>>>

I first had the privilege of working with Jill Strube as an economic developer in Bastrop County, and I have continued to be impressed by her professionalism, dedication, and ability to bring people together.

Jill's leadership is critical for ensuring that Smithville takes full advantage of the tremendous economic activity and opportunities across Bastrop County.

Jill's collaborative spirit, strategic thinking, and tireless commitment to her work have positioned Smithville to not only participate in the region's growth but to thrive. Her efforts go beyond day-to-day tasks; she is actively shaping a vision for the community's future and ensuring Smithville remains a competitive and attractive destination for businesses and families.

If you're evaluating Jill's value, I can say without hesitation that she is a vital asset to Smithville's success, helping to turn opportunity into meaningful progress for the entire community.

Sincerely,  
Super Dave Quinn, CEcD  
Founder, Day One Experts  
Managing Partner,  
Day One Experts  
(214) 775-0617  
[www.D1Experts.com](http://www.D1Experts.com)

## **Jill Strube, Ph.D., Curriculum Vitae**

August, 2025

### **EDUCATION**

#### **Florida International University, Miami, FL (1995 to 2002)**

December 2002: Graduated, Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration (GPA: 3.88).

Fields of study: Policy analysis, sustainability of urban systems, economic development, Geographic Information Systems, evaluation research, and performance measures.

**Dissertation Title:** [Fiscal and Organizational Determinants of Transportation Outcomes: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis of Sustainability Factors.](#)

Major Professor: Dr. Howard Frank

Accelerated Ph.D. program: Awarded Masters of Public Administration, April 2000.

Awarded a \$15,000 HUD Doctoral Dissertation Grant (2000-2002),

Awarded a \$500 Scholarship from the Berlin Foundation (1998).

#### **University of Wisconsin at Madison (Fall 1986 to Spring 1991)**

Bachelor of Arts May 1991. Graduated with honors, with a double major in Sociology and Spanish. Awarded the William F. Vilas Scholarship, 1986. Additionally attended several courses at the University of Wisconsin at Green Bay (Fall 1986—concurrent high school credit, and Summer 1987).

#### **Universidad de Sevilla, Spain (Fall 1989 to Spring 1990)**

Immersion in Spanish through a year abroad with the Council for International Educational Exchange.

#### **Selected Training in Economic Development and Grant Work**

- Texas Department of Transportation: Local Government Projects Coordination (certified since 2012)
- Texas Municipal League: Grant Writing (2014)
- Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX): Basic Economic Development Course (2015)
- Census: Census Data for Grant Writers (2017)
- University of Texas at Austin: IC2 Institute - Regional XLR8 Program (2020)
- Bastrop Chamber of Commerce: B.E.S.T. Leadership Training (2021-22)
- Additional educational experiences through conferences/convenings, such as: International Economic Development Council (IEDC), Texas Economic Development Council (TEDC), Texas Downtown Association (TDA), Stand Up Rural America, Texas Municipal League (TML), and Opportunity Austin.
- Proficient in Economic Development software tools including [Placer.ai](#) and Global Site Locator Industries (GSLI), as well as Microsoft Office, Canva, Asana, BaseCamp, SeeMyLegacy, etc.

### **PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE**

#### **City of Smithville**

##### **Population about 4,000, located in the heart of rural Texas**

##### **Director, Economic Development/Grants Administration** January 2021-present

Provide training opportunities for community development and capacity building for people in this rural area. Develop various plans and documents related to economic development and public participation. Continue to find resources for the City and for the community. Implement programming related to community development and infrastructure improvement. For example: Support workforce development through Career Tracks (formerly Smithville Workforce Training Center) and the Business Support Center (Innovation Center); nurture Cultural District activities including projects funded through the Texas

Commission on the Arts; build sidewalks for connectivity in this small town as well as other infrastructure projects (drainage, wastewater).

As of August, 2025: Over 400 grants have been submitted since 2009, with an overall success rate of 58% yielding over \$23M in resources to this community.

**Grants Administrator** February 2009 to 2021

Responsible for developing strong partnerships and collaborating with various local, county, state, and national agencies and organizations to improve the quality of life for residents in Smithville and Bastrop County by seeking the means of bringing more recognition and resources, monetary and otherwise.

**City of Smithville Milestones at a Glance**

Timeline	Activity
Feb 2009	Hired at the City of Smithville as the Grants Administrator (part time until 2011, then full time, salaried)
2013-2014	Led an Economic Development Committee to discuss Smithville's needs for economic development, culminating with the 2014 <a href="#">Economic Development Survey</a> .
2015	Completed Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) "Basic Economic Development Course"
2017	Started attending Opportunity Austin and Austin Chamber of Commerce Regional Partners lunches, Quarterly Investors meetings, and other programs.
2020	With April Daniels (Chamber), managed grant activities related to the <a href="#">Economic Development Community Resiliency Strategic Plan</a> as a partnership between the City and the Chamber through a planning grant from the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA).
Feb 2021	Promoted to Director of Economic Development & Grants Administration – includes supervision for the Community Engagement Coordinator.
July 2021	St. David's Foundation funded the first \$100K to establish the Smithville Workforce Training Center (SWTC), currently called "Career Tracks" and serves Bastrop, Fayette, and Lee Counties. Subsequent grant awards include an Economic Development Administration (EDA) Good Jobs Challenge grant award of over \$5M, a Texas Talent Connects grant of \$250K, and a St. David's Foundation grant for (\$2M total) towards Employment Pathways for the Health Care Workforce.
July 2021	St. David's Foundation funded the first two years of the Community Engagement Coordinator position including salary/fringe and programming dollars. Subsequently, the City Council added it permanently.
2023	Awarded a \$1M+ grant from the Texas Department of Agriculture for Implementation of a project connected to the 2020 Economic Development Plan – used to construct the Smithville Innovation Center.
2023	With April Daniels (then with the SWTC), contracted with Lorie Vincent (Acceleration by Design) to provide nearly monthly sessions about various aspects of economic development that were open to the public and recorded for future reference, especially for subsequent Comprehensive Plan activities.
2024-2026	Support with Langford Community Management Services (LCMS) on the current Comprehensive Plan, convening the Stakeholder Committee, scheduling Community Forums, gathering data from surveys, and providing editorial recommendations through the live Portal ( <a href="https://langfordplanning.com/smithville-rpc">https://langfordplanning.com/smithville-rpc</a> ).
2025	Awarded \$2.7M for the latest sidewalk project from Texas Department of Transportation, providing in total over \$7M for sidewalk infrastructure for people needing safe pedestrian passage. This and a TXDOT sidewalk at SH 95 will complete a circular route that will connect all parts of the City.

**ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE**

**University of Texas, Austin**

**Public Policy Institute: Program Coordinator** January 2006 to January 2011

Provided research and analysis for a variety of projects related to public policy in Texas, developed research instruments, and ran statistical models. Supervised five to six Research Associates each semester. Managed all aspects of Conference coordination, including booking the venue, arranging for catering, budgeting all expenses, and organizing transportation and lodging for attendees. Copy edited and formatted conference papers for academic publications and college text books.

**Department of Government: Lecturer:** January 2005 to 2007

Responsible for course design, textbook selection, syllabus development, exam preparation and other duties as required to teach undergraduate level courses: "Statistical Analysis in Political Science" (GOV 391L), and "State Politics and Public Policy" (GOV 335N).

### **Florida International University, Miami**

**Metropolitan Center: South Florida Regional Data Center (SFRDC):**

**Assistant Director:** January 2004 to December 2004

Wrote grants and contracts for projects that funded staff and students for the Metropolitan Center. Sought funding, data sources, and partnerships to establish the SFRDC. Procured funding, coordinated tasks, supervised students, and wrote final reports for various projects, including several public participation outreach assignments for the Miami-Dade Metropolitan Planning Organization, an affordable housing study for the City of Key West, a homelessness study for the City of Miami, and a community impact study of Punta Gorda after Hurricane Charlie.

**Institute of Government: Metropolitan Center:**

**Senior Research Associate:** Aug 2002 to Dec 2003 / **Research Associate:** Jan 1999 to Aug 2002

Both as a "Research Associate" and as "Senior Research Associate": Worked with a team to write various grant applications for research projects. Generalist researcher assigned to multiple projects at both centers. Responsible for collection, manipulation, and analysis of data from multiple sources and in various formats. Sources ranged from electronic to hard copy and included demographic, socio-economic, health, financial, and law enforcement data. Used a variety of analysis techniques including statistical, geo-spatial, and qualitative techniques. In addition, as a "Senior Research Associate," supervised up to 14 graduate and undergraduate students on various projects.

**School of Policy and Management:**

**Visiting Professor:** Aug 2002 to Dec 2004 / **Adjunct Faculty:** Apr 1998 to Aug 2000

As Visiting Professor: Prepared and taught master's level courses "Quantitative Methods for Urban Research" (URS 6155), "Special Topics in Public Administration: The Sustainable City" (URS 4931), and undergraduate course "Introduction to Urban and Regional Issues" (URS 3001). As Adjunct Faculty: Prepared and taught master's level course, "Applied Statistics for Urban Study" (URS 6155).

**College of Urban and Public Affairs: Academic Advisor:** August 1995 to December 1996

Responsible for advising undergraduate students enrolled in the departments of Criminal Justice, Health Services Administration, and Public Administration as to their programs of study, career opportunities, and other issues of their concern. Duties included various administrative responsibilities ranging from updating academic records to processing of graduation documentation. Streamlined paperwork processes, created brochures and informative materials, processed course schedules, and created Excel spreadsheet forms.

## **SELECTED VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE**

### **Smithville Community Gardens**

[www.facebook.com/TheSmithvilleCommunityGardens/](http://www.facebook.com/TheSmithvilleCommunityGardens/)

**Volunteer and Board Member:** 2010-present (Secretary, 2019-present)

The Smithville Community Gardens was established in 2009 as an innovative way to turn vacant properties into productive land, creating park-like spaces where community members can go to meditate as they pull weeds and plant vegetables, where anyone can harvest the bounty of the produce, and where truant teens and adults needing community service hours can go to get mentorship and do some good, honest work with

their hands to help them get on a better path. Work to ensure the success of this program through grants and fundraising efforts; as secretary, manage minutes and post them to Google Docs.

### **Smithville Empty Bowl Project**

[www.smithvilleemptybowl.org](http://www.smithvilleemptybowl.org)

**Coordination and Logistics:** 2011-present

The Empty Bowl idea for a fundraiser for food pantries started in Michigan in 1990. In 2011, three Smithville nonprofits came together to follow their example. The Lost Pines Artisans' Alliance, the Smithville Food Pantry and the Smithville Community Gardens have been working this annual event ever since. In the past few years, the Angels Unaware school backpack program (providing backpacks full of food on Fridays for students who might otherwise go hungry on the weekend), and the Smithville Community Clinic have joined to make this program a full health and wellness project. Local restaurants donate soup. Students in the local school district create bowls for all guests to keep as a reminder of all the empty bowls in the world.

### **Lost Pines Artisans' Alliance / Cultural District**

[www.lostpinesartisansalliance.org](http://www.lostpinesartisansalliance.org) / [www.facebook.com/SmithvilleCulturalDistrict](https://www.facebook.com/SmithvilleCulturalDistrict)

**Cultural District Liaison for the City of Smithville:** 2013-present

The Texas Commission on the Arts requires that a governmental agency partner with a local nonprofit arts organization to be designated a "cultural district" through their program. In September, 2013, Smithville's Richard D. Latham Cultural District became the 25th Cultural District in the state. As the City Liaison: keep records, apply for and manage grants, supervise projects like the Youth Banner program, the Historic Coloring Book, public engagement programming, Center renovation, and otherwise work to ensure the success of the District.

### **Smithville Education Foundation**

[www.smithvilleeducation.org/home](http://www.smithvilleeducation.org/home)

**Board Member:** 2017-2025 (Treasurer, 2021-2025)

The Smithville Education Foundation was established in 2010 after the Texas Legislature cut the local Independent School District's budget by about 15% to provide assistance in the arts for younger ages and to provide funds for teachers through a grant program. Coordinated the Enrichment Days program, assisted with the Innovative Teaching Grant program, and as Treasurer, accountable for all payments and receivables.

### **Smithville Robotics Booster Club**

[www.facebook.com/FRC5503](https://www.facebook.com/FRC5503)

**Board Member:** Secretary, 2021-2023

The Smithville Robotics Booster Club supports the Smithville High School Robotics Team in their efforts to teach students about teamwork, business basics, electronics, engineering, coding, and "coopertition" – the ability to be more competitive through cooperation. During this time, the team went to compete at State each year. As secretary, kept track of activities and efforts and posted minutes to Google Drive.

### **Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce**

[www.facebook.com/FRC5503](https://www.facebook.com/FRC5503)

**Board Member:** 2017-2023 (Executive Board: 2019-2023)

Served on the Executive Board as Incoming Chair, Chair, and Outgoing Chair (2019-2021) and as Secretary (2022-2023). Also served as the co-chair for the Keep Smithville Beautiful and the Smithville Economic Development Committees. Worked to enhance member benefits through partnerships for an educational series with the Smithville Public Library; to provide funding through grants for a variety of projects, including COVID relief to businesses, wayfinding signage, and community education; and built partnerships with other

organizations and local businesses. Assisted in a wide variety of events, including Festival of Lights, Airing of the Quilts, Annual Banquet, Music in the Park, and much more.

### Grants Administration Summary – Awards: February 2, 2009-August 6, 2025

Fiscal Year	# Applications	# Awarded	Pending	% # Success Not Incl. Pending	Average #/Month
2008-2009 (part-time, Feb-Sep)	19.0	11.0	0	58%	2.4
2009-2010 (part time)	15.0	7.0	0	47%	1.3
2010-2011 (Veterans Park)	14.0	7.0	0	50%	1.2
2011-2012	28.0	14.0	0	50%	2.3
2012-2013	20.0	13.0	0	65%	1.7
2013-2014	37.0	21.0	0	57%	3.1
2014-2015	30.0	12.0	0	40%	2.5
2015-2016	32.0	21.0	0	66%	2.7
2016-2017	19.0	11.0	2	65%	1.6
2017-2018	32.0	23.0	0	72%	2.7
2018-2019 (Note 4)	34.0	16.5	0	49%	2.8
2019-2020	32.0	17.0	0	53%	2.7
2020-2021	27.5	11.8	0	43%	2.3
2021-2022 (Eco Devo added)	22.0	19.5	0	89%	1.8
2022-2023	15.0	6.5	0	43%	1.3
2023-2024	16.0	13.5	0	84%	1.3
2024-2025 (YTD)	17.0	8.0	7.5	84%	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>409.5</b>	<b>232.75</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>2.1</b>

### Grants Administration Summary – Funding: February 2, 2009-August 6, 2025

Fiscal Year	\$\$ Requested	\$\$ Awarded	% \$ Success	Average \$\$/Month	# Months
2008-2009 (part-time, Feb-Sep)	\$666,713	\$70,182	11%	\$8,773	8
2009-2010 (part time)	\$962,743	\$433,110	45%	\$36,093	12
2010-2011 (Veterans Park)	\$2,970,560	\$269,063	9%	\$22,422	12
2011-2012	\$4,856,327	\$453,414	9%	\$37,785	12
2012-2013	\$1,726,124	\$1,100,940	64%	\$91,745	12
2013-2014	\$4,617,534	\$3,884,813	84%	\$323,734	12
2014-2015	\$1,835,805	\$152,963	8%	\$12,747	12
2015-2016	\$722,384	\$763,924	106%	\$63,660	12
2016-2017	\$6,166,973	\$171,148	3%	\$14,262	12
2017-2018	\$3,095,394	\$242,016	8%	\$20,168	12
2018-2019	\$105,035,060	\$187,300	0.2%	\$15,608	12
2019-2020	\$1,488,931	\$3,489,689	234.4%	\$290,807	12
2020-2021	\$2,222,719	\$1,478,616	66.5%	\$123,218	12
2021-2022 (Eco Devo added)	\$9,037,889	\$6,273,480	69.4%	\$522,790	12
2022-2023	\$1,004,748	\$1,182,945	117.7%	\$98,579	12
2023-2024	\$1,152,677	\$392,600	34.1%	\$32,717	12
2024-2025 (YTD)	\$9,867,875	\$7,103,938	72.0%	\$710,394	10
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$157,430,457</b>	<b>\$27,650,141</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>\$139,647</b>	<b>198</b>
<b>Total minus Withdrawn (Note 2)</b>	<b>\$157,430,457</b>	<b>\$23,030,579</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>\$116,316</b>	<b>198</b>

## Notes to Grant Summary Tables

**NOTE 1:** Typically, it takes three to six months to find out whether the application was approved or denied. Some applications will be pending through to the following fiscal year. For example, in FY 2015-16, the amount of funding awarded exceeds the amount of funding requested; several grants requested in FY 2014-15 were awarded in FY 2015-16, and three TXDOT projects requested in FY 2018-19 were awarded in FY 2019-20.

**NOTE 2:** The CAMPO Award of \$3.4M for the SH95 project in FY2013-14 was returned due to issues related to costs and utilities. In 2018, our district TXDOT office was awarded funds for the project. The 2019 USDA Grant/Loan program of \$1.9M was withdrawn in 2020 because SB-1512 provides the legal means for the State to fund all utility costs, which was not possible previously. Currently, TXDOT is managing the project completely, and expects to break ground in January, 2026. This will ultimately mean over \$14M in infrastructure improvements to the area, which has happened because the City initiated the project through that grant program, making sure the need got on TXDOT's radar.

**NOTE 3:** In 2024-25, St. David's Foundation awarded two large grants to Bastrop County: 1) \$750,000 for the Housing + Health initiative, and 2) \$2,000,000 for the Pathways to Economic Stability for Healthcare Workers.. Although the City received \$15,000 and \$12,000 respectively for direct services related to grant management, benefits to the Smithville community are tremendous. The Housing + Health program will focus on providing needed housing options for the entire county, including current Smithville residents, potential new residents, developers, and property owners. The Pathways grant provides a majority of funding to Career Tracks, the workforce training center located in Smithville, and will benefit over 250 individuals and their families throughout Bastrop County.

**NOTE 4:** Several Two-Stage applications have been submitted since 2019. The first phase was considered "0.5" and the second phase was considered the other "0.5" so that the two phases together would equal one application. If the grant was denied in the second stage, it remains "half" approved. If both phases are approved, the grant is considered fully awarded and counts fully as one application.

**According to Google:** "What is a good grant writing success rate? ... (People are) often surprised to learn that on average, one in every 10 grant proposals is accepted. That's an average grant writing success rate. That means many grant writers have a lower grant writing success rate and many have a higher one."  
([www.professionalgrantwriter.org/learn-rejected-grant-proposal](http://www.professionalgrantwriter.org/learn-rejected-grant-proposal))

**APPENDIX 1**  
**New and Expanding Businesses in Smithville (including ETJ)**  
*Not a Comprehensive List*

Business attraction, retention, and expansion does not happen in a vacuum. New businesses are attracted to an area that provides needed and desired amenities, workforce, market share, and other value-added quality of life programming and projects. The open door policy at City Hall and relative lack of red tape, making it easier to start up and build a business, has been a vital element of economic growth and development. Below is a list of some of the businesses that have decided to make Smithville their home base over the past 20 years. This list includes only the businesses that are still in business, and is not comprehensive.

<b>Opened</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Other Info</b>
TBD	Birdsong Bar and Patio	1200 NW Loop 230	"A bar with sports"
TBD	Celebrations!	110 Main Street	Currently remodeling the space for home decor/wine bar experience
TBD	Venue Space (old Gindlers)	205 Main Street	New owner renovating the space
2025	Mutt's Last Stand	205 Loop 230	Local start-up business
2025	Quinto Patio	114 NE 2nd Street	Expansion business from Bastrop
2025	Panama Rose / Twig	216 Main Street	Local start-up business
2025	Frontier Bank	107 NW Loop 230	Expansion of regional bank
2025	Bubby's BBQ	320 NW Loop 230	Moved to a larger space within months of arrival
2024	Studio Hair Salon	104 NW Loop 230	Local start-up business
2024	Bluebonnet Room	115 Main Street	Local start-up business – family owned building for over 100 years
2024	Scene 77	104 NW Loop 230	Local start-up (first called Picket Fence)
2024	Anytime Fitness	314 Main Street	Franchise
2024	Monarch Food Truck	307 Royston Street	Expecting to move into old Zimmerhanzels
2023	Vivid Studio	306 Main Street	Local start-up business
2023	Smokesville	202 N W Loop 230	Retail business
2023	WJC Constructors	600 N W Loop 230 Unit A	Expanded into space on Loop 230
2023	Texas Trails	219 Main Street	Expansion of Bella's Cottage
2022	Prizer Gallery	212 Main Street	Expansion from Austin
2022	Van Zandt Real Estate	304 Main Street	
2021	Carpenter/Storage	105 Ramona Street	Across from Katy House / Hope Floats

<b>Opened</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Other Info</b>
2020	Spade Roofing	600 NE Loop 230 Suite C	Expanded business into space on Loop 230
2020	Driven Auto	203 NW Loop 230	Local start-up business
2020	Liquor Depot	200 NW Loop 230	Franchise
2019	Tita's Taquerias	702 Gazley Street	Local start-up business
2018	Consuela's	110 NW 2nd Street	Expansion out of Austin
2018	Smithville General Store	108 NE 2nd Street	Local start-up business
2017/2022	Your Mom's / Hope Floats	109 NW 2nd Street, Bldg #2	Local start-up, have been working to improve their building every year
2017	Iron Tiger Gym	100 Main Street	Local start-up, opened at 316 Main, and moved to 100 Main in 2022
2016	Golden Girls	114 Main Street	Sold to a new owner (2025)
2016	LPAA Gallery on Main	206 Main Street	Nonprofit retail shop sharing space in a local business on Main
2015	Mixology	660 NW Loop 230	Originally a home-based business, now selling scents all over the country
2014	Larry's Barbershop	600 NE loop 230, Suite B	Local start-up business
2014 (est.)	Front Room Wine Bar	116 Main Street	Local start-up business
2014 (est.)	Gramma's House Nursery	306 Gazley Street	Local start-up business
2013	Olde World Bakery	112 Main Street	Business first arrived in Smithville from Bastrop in 2013 and sold to Cammy Snyder in 2016
2012	Omega Bronze	902 SE 2nd Street	Local start-up business / City Investment in support for a traditional Economic Development project
2011 (est.)	El Mexican Grill (formerly Mexico Lindo)	1307 Loop 230	Local start-up business, family owned
2009	Samantics Squared	206 Main Street	Local start-up business
Unknown	My House Barbershop	509 Gazley Street	Local start-up business
Unknown	Taqueria Piquante	2652 Gazley Street	Local start-up business

It is also important to remember that Smithville has a business climate that has allowed several local businesses to thrive for generations, including Gipson Pendergrass People's Mortuary and Milton's Fine Furniture, which were established over 50 years ago, and Pease Custom Floors and Pocket's Grille, which first opened in Smithville nearly 30 years ago. The Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce is an institution with a history going back over 100 years. Smithville is built on small businesses. Business retention and expansion (BRE) efforts pay off in the long run. Shop local. It makes a difference.

## APPENDIX 2 Incentives and Permitting Process



The City of Smithville has many advantages, including quality of life, ease of access to several large urban centers and affordable commercial property. In addition, the City of Smithville may provide additional rebates or variances, subject to city council approval.

Additionally, the SWTC Career Tracks offers training assistance on a case-by-case basis, and can individualize curriculum depending on business needs.

### **GUARANTEED**

- No personal income tax
- No corporate income tax
- Right-to-work state

### **LOCAL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE BASED ON APPROVAL**

- Chapter 380/381 Agreements
- Streamlined Permitting and Fee Waivers
- Double Freeport Tax Exemption (County and City, not School District)
- Foreign Trade Zone No. 183

### **STATE OF TEXAS BUSINESS ASSISTANCE BASED ON APPROVAL**

<https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/business/IncentivesOverview.pdf>

- Texas Enterprise Fund
- Texas Capital Fund Infrastructure/Real Estate
- Texas Enterprise Zone Program
- State Sales and Use Tax Exemptions
- Workforce Skills Development Fund

### **TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

#### **Economic Development Opportunities**

[www.texasagriculture.gov/Grants-Services/Grants-and-Services](http://www.texasagriculture.gov/Grants-Services/Grants-and-Services)

[www.texasagriculture.gov/Grants-Services/Rural-Economic-Development](http://www.texasagriculture.gov/Grants-Services/Rural-Economic-Development)

- Rural Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- State Trade Expansion Program (STEP)
- Texas Rural Business Fund (TxRBF)
- Agricultural Development District
- Broadband Accessibility
- Trade and Business Development Regional Staff
- Rural Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

### **US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA)**

#### **Rural Development Business Programs**

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs>

- Business and Industry Loan Guarantees
- Energy Programs
- Rural Economic Development Grant and Loan Program

Last revised: 3/31/25 (JS)



## Basic Building, Renovating, Remodeling Permitting Process

### WHAT REQUIRES A BUILDING PERMIT

New homes, home additions, fences, decks, patios, carports, deck/patio covers, storage buildings, external garages, pools. Commercial and Industrial Construction undergoes a similar process and may require additional consultation. If unsure, ask.

### WHAT DOES NOT REQUIRE A BUILDING PERMIT?

Internal renovations, roofing, internal and external painting, HVAC system installation, and similar projects currently do not require a building permit. **HOWEVER: External painting in the Historic District DOES require a Certificate of Appropriateness; contact City Hall.**

### Step 1: Contact City Hall.

Visit or call City Hall (located at 317 Main Street, phone: 512.237.3282) to discuss your project and pick up copies of rules and ordinances that affect your project.

***NOTE: Starting a project without a permit can be expensive and frustrating! Without necessary permits you may receive fines and a requirement to cease work. You may be required to tear down what you have already built and start the process from scratch, or both. Please make sure you have an approved permit, when required, before beginning any work within the city of Smithville.***

### Step 2: Provide details and drawing of the project.

Upon understanding of the requirements and regulations that pertain to your project, provide your plans:

- Submit a to-scale drawing (scale of 1/8" to 1') not smaller than 8"x10" showing your exact plans. Use either a plat/survey (preferred) or detailed to-scale hand drawing to indicate the desired improvements and other required information.
- Include your personal contact information for the City to reach you for questions or discussion related to issuance of the permit.
- Show the location of property lines/pins and where the project will be located in reference to these markers to determine setbacks. The City is not responsible for locating your property pins.
- Show the location of other structures on the property relative to the proposed addition or renovation.
- Indicate the dimensions and calculated square footage of the project and the distance from all property lines.
- Indicate which direction is north.
- Describe how the building or addition will be used and where the water, sewer, and electrical lines will connect to existing city utilities (when necessary).

Failure to provide clear, adequate, and legible information will result in additional inquiries by the City and possible unnecessary delays.

Permits will not be issued until plans are approved by the Building Official and building plan review can take up to ten (10) complete workdays. *Workdays start the day after you turn your information in to the City office.*

317 Main Street / PO Box 449 / Smithville, TX 78957 / 512.237.3282  
[www.ci.smithville.tx.us](http://www.ci.smithville.tx.us)

*Last revised: 10/04/2022*



**Step 3: Determine who will do the work.**

Many people hire contractors and licensed/bonded professionals (plumbers, electricians etc.) to complete projects on their property. These professionals will work with City Hall to ensure work is done properly to code. This can avoid complications and confusion.

An individual can do foundation, roofing, and carpentry work themselves whether the property is their homestead or not. If you are working on your own homestead, it is possible to do most electrical and plumbing work without hiring a licensed plumber or electrician. However, a licensed plumber is **always required** for all gas related work. If the property is not your homestead, you **MUST** hire a licensed plumber and/or electrician for electrical and plumbing projects. To pull a permit and do work on your own homestead without using a licensed plumber or electrician you must have a signed and notarized affidavit on file at City Hall.

Work will be inspected periodically by the Building Inspector. Generally, inspections will include:

- Foundation and framing inspection
- Rough-in plumbing and electrical inspection
- Final inspection

You must call City Hall and give 24-hours' notice to request an inspector at each stage of construction.

**Step 4: Hook up City utilities (when needed)**

A deposit or tap fee (on a new installation only) must be paid to connect the water, sewer, and electrical systems of the property. The Utility Department must be contacted to determine where lines are needed to connect to the existing services. Determine the date you will need to be connected and call City Hall at least three (3) weeks before needed. The Utility Department will connect the system(s) within that time. **\*\*\*New electrical lines or upgrades are required to be underground\*\*\*.** Once fees are paid, a work order will be submitted.

In some cases, a Certificate of Occupancy, may be required before utilities can be connected for full service.

**NOTES:**

City ordinances and adopted building codebooks are available for review and located online at: [www.ci.smithville.tx.us/city-government/ordinances](http://www.ci.smithville.tx.us/city-government/ordinances).

Paper copies are available at the Smithville Public Library and City Hall. For City or Building Code questions, the Building Inspector and relevant City staff will try to assist.

City staff CANNOT design or determine the best way for you to do your project. They CAN help you interpret the City Code and other regulations pertaining to your project, advise you of the requirements, and inspect the work when completed.

If you have any questions, please call City Hall at 512.237.3282.

## APPENDIX 3

### Outside Data Sources for Suggested Community Performance Indicators

- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) County Unemployment Data:  
<https://www.bls.gov/lau/tables.htm#mcounty>  
Labor force data by county, not seasonally adjusted, October 2023-November 2024(p):  
<https://www.bls.gov/web/metro/laucntycur14.txt>
- US Census Bureau: [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)
- Texas Comptroller (Hotel Occupancy Tax, Sales Tax, and Business Startups by Zip Code):  
<https://comptroller.texas.gov>
- Texas Department of Transportation AADT Traffic Count Map:  
<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/6c0166bfc5144afe83926a3a529a8d03>