

www.texasyes.org

Texas Yes!

Texas Department of Agriculture

March 2006

SPECIAL FOCUS: MASTER PLANNING THE FUTURE

Success is not in the plan – it's in the Master Plan. That's the inside secret shared by Texas Yes! member communities where passionate, innovative leadership and a clear vision for the future are preserving the character of rural Texas while growing business, tourism and jobs for all of Texas.



From Susan Combs, Commissioner

This special issue features a virtual conversation with a panel of rural planning professionals who answer the most frequently asked questions about the Master Planning process. The expert panel includes:

Tom Austin, economic development director, Uvalde

David Hoover, AICP, president, Texas

Chapter, American Planning Association; director of planning and development, City of Allen

MaryAlice Torres-MacDonald, associate professor, College of Architecture, Texas Tech University; Texas Tech University Community Design Laboratory

Jeff McCoy, executive director, Van Horn Economic Development Corporation

What is a Master Plan?

A Master Plan is:

- A community's collective vision for the future.
- A process of identifying important trends, shared values and effective solutions.
- A long-term guide to manage growth, protect resources and preserve the character of a community.
- All of the above.

While program and project plans address targeted needs and short-term deliverables, a Master Plan is more of a statement of the community's values which should influence policy and decision making.

An effective Master Plan is a broad working document that looks 10-15 years ahead while evolving as the community constantly assesses its needs, matching those needs realistically with its resources and values. The plan

addresses land use, town character, historic and cultural resources, open space and recreation, natural resources, housing, economic development, transportation and infrastructure.

Why is a Master Plan important for rural Texas communities?

Hoover: Rural communities should develop comprehensive plans for many of the same reasons that other cities do. The planning process involves the citizens of the community in determining the future direction or vision of the community. Once developed, the plan provides a consistent guide for making decisions about growth and development. It also allows them to be prepared in the event that urban and suburban sprawl begins to encroach on their boundaries.

Torres-MacDonald: A Master Plan is essentially a visual strategic plan for the future. Creating a Master Plan allows the community

to think through the more difficult issues of growth and development, resulting in visual changes that create the quality of life characteristic of small cities. It is a visualization of what the town desires to become.

What are the essential elements of a Master Plan?

Hoover: The basic elements of a comprehensive Master Plan include future land uses, transportation, parks and recreation, public facilities and utilities. In addition, each community should address the issues most important to its citizens. These issues may be housing, the environment or economic development. Issues common in rural and small towns may include preserving agricultural lands, maintaining rural character and scenic areas, and revitalizing and protecting small downtowns.

Who should be involved in the planning process?

Torres-MacDonald: The Master Plan process involves all groups that would be classified as stakeholders of the community. This may be done through public forum "charettes" (collaborative, inclusive, intensive work sessions) that are facilitated by outside professionals experienced in community design and Master Plans.

Hoover: The planning process should be open to everyone. Residents, business owners, land owners, public agencies and non-profit groups are some examples.

Torres-MacDonald: Often there are groups critical to the process in some communities that might not be seen as critical in others. This is where the unique circumstances of the individual community come into play.

Why is community involvement important to success?

Hoover: The plan should be used to develop a community that the citizens want. Without adequate involvement, the plan may not represent the true interests of the residents and may lead to controversy.

Torres-MacDonald: The issue is really about ownership. We all want to live in a community that makes us feel connected. Making decisions about the future of our city is not about asking a consultant to come in and tell you what to do. Rather, it is about utilizing the consultant as a facilitator and expert. Their job is to listen to what the community needs and then make recommendations about how those needs can be met in a way that creates not only a strong sense of place, but brings about quality of life supported by economic stability and growth.

What resources are available?

Your TDA rural and agribusiness specialist provides localized assistance and can help open doors for you with state and federal agencies, as well as other communities and organizations. To contact the field person in your region call (866) 4TEX-YES or e-mail finance@agr.state.tx.us.

For more ideas and planning resources, go to www.TexasYes.org.

- ★ TY Event Starter Kit
- ★ TY Beautification Guide
- ★ TY Member Search

Hoover: The American Planning Association has a Small Town and Rural Planning Division to promote and provide opportunities for discussion in this area. For more, go to: www.planning.org/smalltown.

The annual conference for the Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association is in Corpus Christi this year on October 18-21, 2006 and the national conference for the American Planning Association is in San Antonio from April 22-26, 2006.

Additional information can be found at www.txplanning.org.

Torres-MacDonald: Recommended reading for the Master Plan process as well as some overall approaches to community design might include:

- ★ *Community by Design*, by Kenneth Hall and Gerald Porterfield
- ★ *The Urban Design Handbook*, by Urban Design Associates
- ★ *The Regional City*, by Peter Calthorpe and William Fulton
- ★ *Placemaking: Developing Town Centers, Main Streets and Urban Villages*, by the Charles Bohl for



The "Texas Yes!" quilt celebrates the growth and prosperity of rural Texas towns, cities and counties, and was unveiled in a ceremony at the 2004 State Fair of Texas. To exhibit this quilt and others in the Texas Department of Agriculture's Quilt Collection, please contact Mary York, TDA's state marketing coordinator for Fiber at (512) 463-8289 or mary.york@agr.state.tx.us.

RALLYING AROUND RURAL TEXAS!

the Urban Land Institute
★ *Charter for the New Urbanism*, by the Congress for the New Urbanism

In addition, the Texas Main Street Program of the Texas Historical Commission, the National Main Street Center of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Texas Downtown Association are all resources for communities seeking to make positive changes.

It is important to remember that the Master Planning process comes out of a larger process of community strategic planning. The work we do at Texas Tech University's Community Design Laboratory is geared towards assisting rural communities in these efforts and allows us to also contribute to the broader education of the students in the field of architecture. It is a great way to introduce students to the realities of small communities in Texas.

For more, go to:
www.arch.ttu.edu/cdl.

INSIDER SECRETS

The devil is in the details: Even the grandest project depends on the success of the smallest components. This applies to the broader Master Planning process as well as project planning. Bill Elliott, president of Hopkins County Chamber of Commerce, is quick to identify volunteers as the biggest secret to the success of the world Champion

Hopkins County Stew Contest which now grosses \$50,000 annually. But it's the spreadsheets developed to manage all the event details that drive a smooth planning process. Supporting activities for the major tourism event are detailed on spreadsheets in chronological order with precise dates for completion of each step and links to other pending actions. One of 100 volunteers is then identified to carry out "each piece of the event puzzle." The spreadsheets are updated before and after the event. This same formula for success has been used successfully for other activities.

It's never too early to plan. It's an event 100 years in the making for Robstown in Nueces County at the geographic center of the Coastal Bend region – the 2007 centennial celebration. Planning has been underway since 2005 with subcommittees focused on promotion and communications, volunteers, event projects, infrastructure, budget and fundraising and security. Festivities will run throughout 2007 and include the best of small town Texas – livestock and horse shows, fireworks, a fair, fiesta, ice cream social and more.

MASTER PLAN SNAPSHOT:

Colleyville
Prairies and Lakes Region
Tarrant County
Approximate population: 22,000

A Master Plan sets forth a community's goals and recommends actions that will make the community a good place to live, work and visit. The plan outlines a strategy to ensure that the community grows in an orderly, well thought-out fashion and that the needs of the community will be met.

Why Prepare a Master Plan?

- ★ To shape the future physical arrangement of the community.
- ★ To establish a community vision.
- ★ To ensure economic stability and predictability.
- ★ To prepare for future demographic and economic changes.
- ★ To provide opportunities for citizen input regarding public issues.
- ★ To avoid surprises by understanding assets and liabilities.
- ★ To provide an impetus for community action.
- ★ To provide guidance for land use decisions.
- ★ To provide information to the citizens.

For more, go to www.colleyville.com and click on *Community Information, Master Plan*.

Uvalde

Hill Country Region
Uvalde County
Approximate population: 16,000

Uvalde's 2000 Master Plan.

- ★ Baseline Analysis
- ★ Goals and Objectives

- ★ Transportation and Thoroughfare Plan
- ★ Infrastructure Plan
- ★ Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan
- ★ Housing Strategies
- ★ Future Land Use Plan
- ★ Urban Design and Implementation Strategies

Committees of community volunteers are beginning a review of the 2000 Comprehensive Plan and are linking a new Historic Preservation Plan to the Master Plan with help from the Texas Historical Commission's Visionaries in Preservation Program. Tom Austin, city economic development director, notes the VIP program will help Uvalde determine where it is now and where it wants to go. University of Texas at Austin Landscape Architecture School students spent the 2005 fall semester completing an urban design plan for the community and a streetscape study of Getty Street (Highway 83), one of Uvalde's major thoroughfares.

For more, go to: www.uvaldetx.com.

Van Horn

Big Bend Region
Culberson County
Approximate population: 2,500

By looking both inward and outward, Van Horn has sharpened the focus on its long-term vision.

Looking inward: Workshops with local businesses owners, city/county staff, civic groups and

opinion leaders in the community have identified internal strengths, created a collective vision for the future and determined priorities for development.

Looking outward: Recognizing the power of partnerships, Van Horn is working regionally to grow tourism, attract employers and address community development needs.

An external consulting firm is working with the community to facilitate the planning process, create a detailed implementation matrix and support execution efforts.

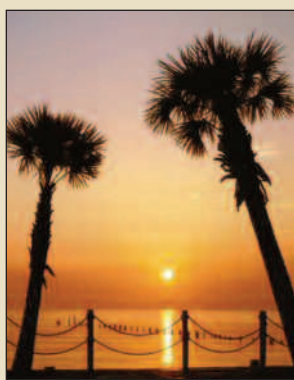
"For many years, Van Horn operated under a program that relied upon the accomplishment of one good idea after another, but lacked a cohesive master plan to tie these good ideas into an all-inclusive strategy and goals," notes Jeff McCoy, executive director, Van Horn Economic Development Corporation. "Now, we are executing a strategy that leverages the very good studies/reports from the past and incorporates our community's vision for itself. We remain ever mindful of the dependences among various initiatives, making the most of each opportunity and considering the ramifications of results of each move – not just for Van Horn but for our region as a whole."

Bootstrap Marketing Workshop Series III

Kemah, May 15-16, 2006

We're turning up the heat on rural tourism!

You won't want to miss this incredible workshop series from the Texas Department of Agriculture in cooperation with the Office of the Governor, Economic Development & Tourism! Topics will include event planning, budgeting and sponsorships, minimizing risk, measuring and investing returns, and of course opportunities to meet and greet your fellow rural Texas community leaders. Look for all the details on our Web site at www.texasyes.org or call (866) 4TEX-YES for details.



“These are the times in which a genius would wish to live... Great necessities call out great virtues.”

– Abigail Adams,

First Lady of the United States (1797-1801)

Texas Yes!
Texas Department of Agriculture

P.O. Box 12847

Austin, Texas 78711

March 2006 Edition