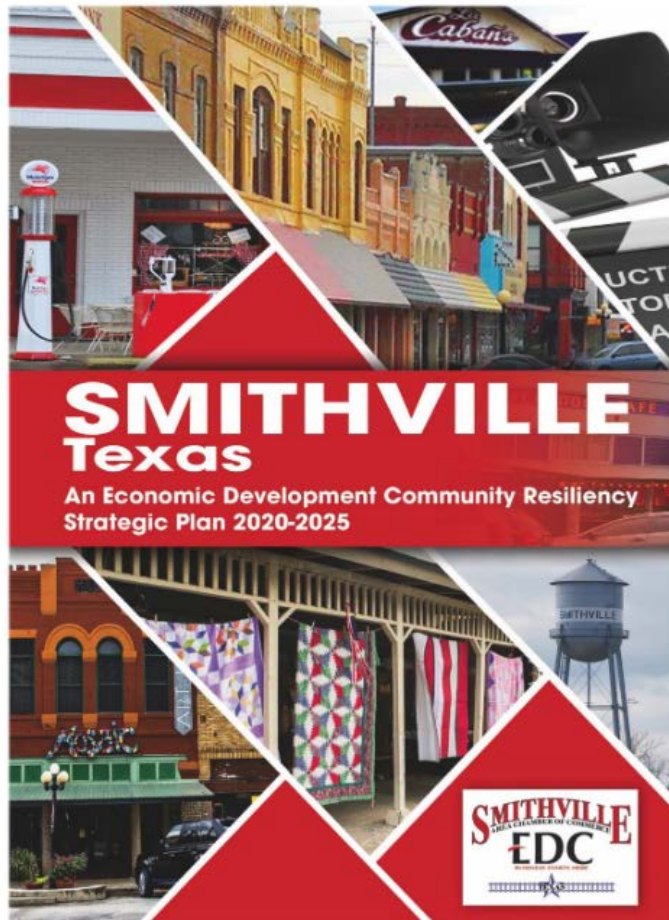


# UPDATE TO THE “SMITHVILLE, TX ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY RESILIENCY STRATEGIC PLAN, 2020-2025”

July 2022



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

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

*The original plan is located here:*

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

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

July 2022

## Background

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

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

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

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

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

## Conclusion

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

# Appendix A

## SEDC Parks/Trails Subcommittee Meeting

January 6, 2021

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

### Agenda:

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

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

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

### Links from Julia:

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

### Elgin Parks Links:

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

### Riverside/Main Street Park:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The SEDC Subcommittees are:

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

For more info on the SEDC Subcommittees and the Eco Devo Plan that was adopted last fall, please see: <https://growthzonesitesprod.azureedge.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/1657/2020/09/Smithville-TDA-EDP-ReportV2a.pdf>

[illegible]

## Housing Subcommittee Meeting

January 28, 2021

**Attending:** Joanna Morgan, Sarah O'Brien, Janice Bruno, Sandra Callaghan, Alexis Peck; Douglas Leyendecker, Robert Tamble, Taylor Homuth, Jeannie Ralph, Catherine Bohot, Lisa Moguel, Denise Jensen, Jill Strube, April Daniels

**Next meeting:** February 25, 1:30PM

## Agenda

- Introductions
- Choose a Chair (Letha had to step down)
- Review of SEDC Plan (<https://growthzonesitesprod.azureedge.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/1657/2020/09/Smithville-TDA-EDP-ReportV2a.pdf> p. 52-53 and p. 62-63)
- Discussion of SEDC Tasks/Timeline
- Assessment of Available Properties – April Daniels
- Tiny Home Community Project – Janice Bruno
- HOME Grant / Proposal to Keep Residents in Homes – Jill Strube
- BCC “Won’t you Be My Neighbor” Educational Campaign – Jill /April
- Schedule Next Meeting

## SEDC Plan Review (P52-53)

- Inventory Residential Land Tracts
- Network with Realtors / Contractors
- Find Financing Tools
- Build Network of Major Developers and Affordable Housing Corporations
- Run TIRZ scenario
- Find Available Local Lots
- Check out local zoning barriers
- Develop Financial Incentive

**NOTES:**

- Janice met a guy named Chris who has already started to make an inventory
- In the CHAT: Be careful on the contact Janice just mentioned. One of my land owners in Smithville was approach by an "investor" turned out to me an Unlicensed RE agent who



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

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

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

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

#### **Tiny Homes project**

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

### **Question on “Capella” project**

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

### **HOME Grant**

- Habitat for Humanity
- Keeping people in their houses

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

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

### **Announcements**

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

# Smithville Economic Development Committee

## Subcommittee Members

Based on the Mundo Community Resiliency Strategic Plan (2020)



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

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