

Historical Development Report

Report 1 of 3

City of Taylor

March 2004

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Executive Summary

Three reports have been developed for the City of Taylor, culminating in the Five-Year Economic Development Plan. This *Historical Development Report* is the first of three reports.

The *Historical Development Report* provides the City with a solid understanding of how Taylor has developed into the City it is today, how Taylor's growth and development compares to neighboring communities, and what initiatives it has taken that have had the most favorable results.

The second report, *Baseline Analysis Report*, provides the City with a thorough understanding of the City's strengths and challenges. The information in this document is both quantitative and qualitative, with the qualitative information relying on citizen input received through focus groups, interviews, and surveys.

The third report is the *Five-Year Economic Development Strategic Plan*. This document contains recommended strategies for the City that will lead to an improved economy.

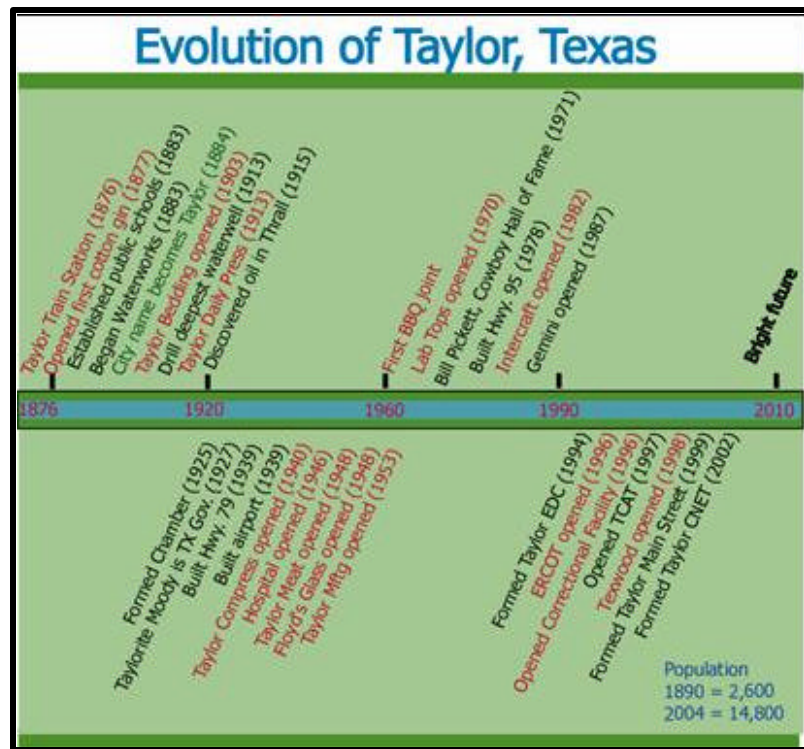
Introduction¹

Before developing any type of community plan, one must first look to the past to understand how a community has developed.

Similar to many Central Texas cities, the City of Taylor began as a railroad depot. In 1876 the International & Great Northern Railway reached a point in the vast open cattle ranges of Central Texas called Taylor Station. This station was named for a railroad official, later called Taylorsville and, finally, Taylor in 1884.

The first cotton gin in Taylor was built in 1877, quickly establishing the community as a Central Texas agricultural hub. Cotton has been one of the mainstays of Taylor's economy since the early 1800s, and its rich soil and the skilled farmers who work it, made Williamson County a leading cotton producer.

Public services began with the establishment of public schools in 1883. In that same year, Taylor Water Works began pumping water from the springs in Murphy Park as well as from the San Gabriel River to a 75-foot high water tower (water had previously been hauled into town in barrels and sold door-to-door). In the summer of 1884, a dog pound was initiated on the public square. A small boy was paid 25 cents for each stray dog he could round up. The City Marshall then sold them back to the owners for \$1, along with a numbered brass dog tag. The revenue was used for completion of a sewer system.



The 1890 census recorded Taylor's population as 2,584. By the turn of the century, Taylor was well established as a trade and transportation center, and more than 200 Taylor residents owned telephones in 1902. In 1913, a 3,260-foot deep artesian well was drilled, the deepest water well in the world at that time, and it remained in use until 1994. The discovery of oil in nearby Thrall in 1915 only served to boost the already booming economy.

¹ Much of the historical references in this section were obtained from the Taylor Chamber of Commerce

Review of Major Factors leading to Taylor's Development

The development of Taylor can be attributed to several factors, including:

- City Annexation that has increased the geographic area of the City
- Transportation projects that have led to better exposure and improved access to markets and increased tourism
- Water and wastewater development and expansion
- Organizational development that supports community and economic development initiatives

Annexation

Taylor has grown from a town of 6,553 acres (10.24 square miles) in 1963 to 8,691 acres (13.58 square miles) in 2003. Several annexations during Taylor's history have changed the size and composition of the City of Taylor, providing city services to new areas that fall within the city limits and expanding the City's tax base.

Transportation

It has been said that the Highway Act had the largest impact on rural America than any other single act or event because new roadways enabled better access to smaller communities. Although, the railroad first opened Taylor to the rest of the world in 1876, highways increased tourist and business access to Taylor, and they provided Taylorites better access to external markets.

Highway 79 was built in 1939 and Highway 95 was built in 1978. Both of these major roadways, as well as the railroad that came to the City in 1876, are the some of the most important factors in the history of Taylor's development.

The airport was originally built in the late 1930s and has undergone several improvements since then, with the last major improvement being completed in April of 2003. Improvements included an additional 500 linear feet of runway (total now is 4,000), an extension of the taxiway along the full length of the runway, a widening of the runway to 75 feet, additional tarmac and 20 more tie-downs.

Water and Wastewater

The City began serving water in the early 1900's. By 1929, the city had 16 miles each of water and wastewater mains and the ability to produce 1.8MGD of well water. The City's first and only surface water treatment plant came online in 1994. The plant currently has a capacity of 4.9MGD. The City began providing wastewater treatment service in the 1920s. The wastewater treatment plant was expanded in 1996 to a capacity and permit rating of 4MGD.

Community and Economic Development Organizations








It is important to understand who has been responsible for community and economic development in Taylor. The development of a community's economy can be attributed to several factors, including the ones mentioned above. However, leadership and

organizational development play a major factor in the types of businesses that develop within a community and in the number of jobs that are created.

Every community should have the same basic approach to economic development, including a focus on tourism, expansion of existing business and the development of new business. Additionally, community development is an integral component of economic development that ensures sufficient infrastructure is available for businesses, schools are performing well to meet labor force needs, and parks and other quality of life factors are continually being updated to meet the needs of individuals and families.

Therefore, the formation of community and economic development organizations to address these issues is crucial to a community's success. Taylor has several organizations that have been formed during the last century.

The chart below lists these organizations, their primary purpose, and when they were established.

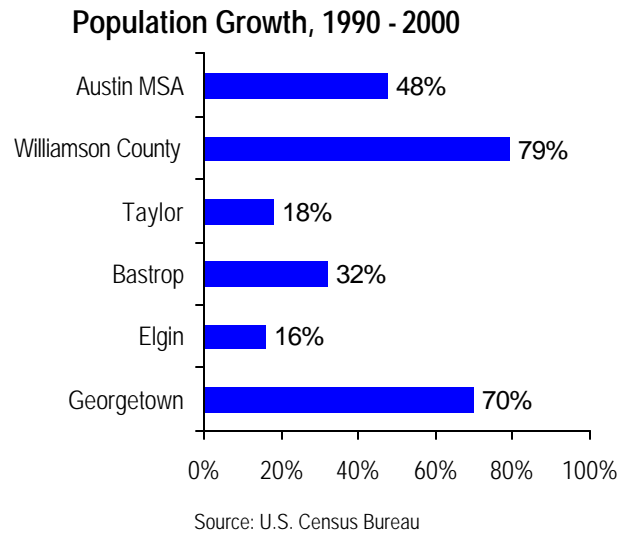
Organization	Primary Purpose	Year Established
City 	Development of Infrastructure and improvements in Quality of Life	1884
Taylor ISD 	K-12 Education	1967 (first public school founded in 1883)
Chamber of Commerce 	Business retention, events and tourism	1925
TEDC 	Business retention and recruitment	1994
Main Street 	Downtown business retention and recruitment, and tourism	1999
Temple College 	Secondary Education	1997
Taylor CNET 	Telecommunication Infrastructure	2002

Relationship of Taylor to Region

Understanding how a city compares to neighboring communities is important when undertaking any community planning initiative. This comparison provides insight into how other communities have grown in contrast to Taylor.

Population

Population growth in the Austin MSA has mostly been to the north. During the 1990s exceptional growth was seen along I-35 in Round Rock and Georgetown. Taylor’s growth during the same period was much slower but is likely to reach similar rates as northern cities continue to develop their commercial bases and new housing developments begin in Taylor.



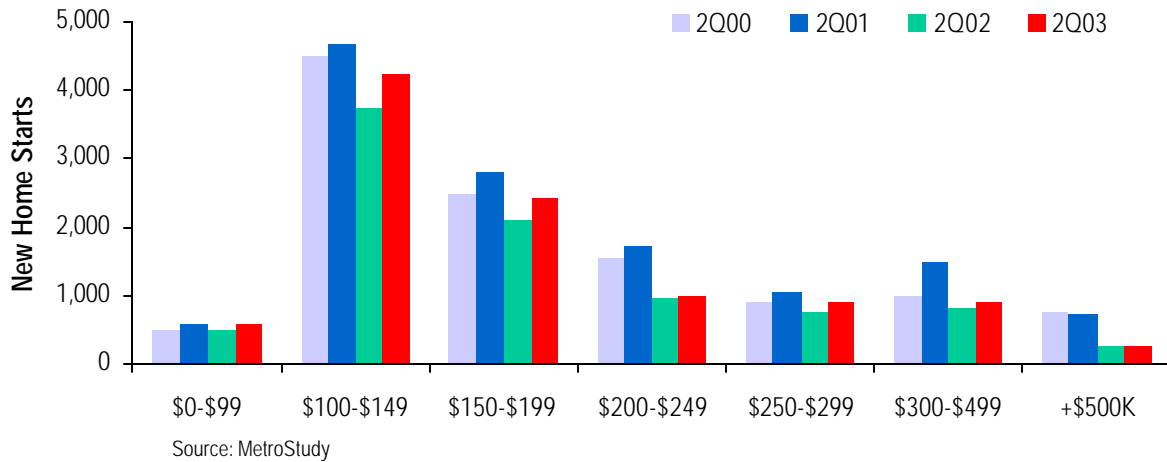
Taylor has seen increases in population in both early and late career age groups. Comparing metro and benchmark trends, Taylor was the only one to see significant gains in its early career population.

	Early Career (25-44)			Late Career (45-64)		
	1990	2000	Change	1990	2000	Change
Austin MSA	37.1%	35.3%	-1.8%	14.7%	18.8%	4.1%
Williamson County	37.0%	35.6%	-1.4%	15.0%	19.1%	4.1%
Taylor	27.9%	29.2%	1.3%	17.2%	19.4%	2.2%
Bastrop	30.3%	29.4%	-0.9%	17.2%	23.1%	5.9%
Elgin	28.0%	28.2%	0.2%	16.4%	18.3%	1.9%
Georgetown	30.0%	27.2%	-2.8%	15.5%	21.6%	6.1%

Housing

Approximately 1,000 new homes are being built in Taylor in three new developments. However, the quality of the new housing stock may not appeal to the young professionals the city is trying to attract. Estimates by McMakin and Associates put the average price of new homes in Taylor between \$110-125,000. While at the low end of the distribution, these prices are in line with housing development in the Austin MSA and are appealing as starter homes. These new homes are providing ownership opportunities to Taylor's current workforce, which local employers believe is building stronger ties to the community and reducing employee turnover. However, more higher-end housing or higher quality multifamily housing could attract more young professionals to reside in Taylor.

Austin MSA Annual Starts by Finished Home Price, 2000-2003



Demographics

Taylor has a rich cultural heritage absent in many of the high growth communities in Central Texas. Over one-third of Taylor residents are Hispanic, and almost one-tenth of the population has Czech ancestry.

Also noteworthy is Taylor’s Median Household Income (\$38,549), significantly lower than Georgetown and Bastrop, and somewhat lower than Elgin.

	Austin MSA	Williamson County	Taylor	Bastrop	Elgin	Georgetown
Population						
1990	846,235	139,547	11,486	4,041	4,918	16,678
2000	1,249,778	249,967	13,575	5,340	5,700	28,339
% Change	47.7%	79.1%	18.2%	32.1%	15.9%	69.9%
Race & Ethnicity						
White	72.5%	82.4%	67.9%	72.3%	85.4%	85.4%
Black or African American	8.0%	5.1%	14.2%	17.0%	3.4%	3.4%
American Indian / Alaskan Native	0.6%	0.5%	0.5%	0.7%	0.4%	0.4%
Asian	3.6%	2.7%	0.3%	1.0%	0.7%	0.7%
Some Other Race	12.8%	7.2%	15.0%	7.0%	8.4%	8.4%
Two or More Races	2.6%	2.1%	2.1%	1.9%	1.8%	1.8%
Hispanic	26.2%	17.2%	34.1%	17.8%	18.1%	18.1%
Czech	1.6%	2.7%	9.8%	1.2%	2.2%	2.2%
Age Distribution						
0-4	7.4%	8.5%	7.8%	7.9%	6.6%	6.6%
5-13	12.6%	15.2%	14.7%	12.8%	12.3%	12.3%
14-17	5.4%	6.3%	6.1%	6.0%	5.7%	5.7%
18-24	13.4%	8.1%	9.0%	7.5%	10.9%	10.9%
25-34	18.3%	16.8%	14.5%	13.6%	12.5%	12.5%
35-44	17.0%	18.8%	14.7%	15.8%	14.7%	14.7%
45-54	12.5%	12.6%	12.1%	14.3%	12.2%	12.2%
55-64	6.3%	6.5%	7.2%	8.8%	9.4%	9.4%
65+	7.4%	7.6%	13.9%	13.9%	16.0%	16.0%
Median Age	31.0	32.5	33.4	36.5	31.9	36.9
Average HH size	2.57	2.82	2.74	2.46	2.98	2.52
Incomes						
Median HH Income	\$48,950	\$60,642	\$38,549	\$40,212	\$38,750	\$54,098
Per Capita Income	\$24,516	\$24,547	\$16,683	\$19,862	\$16,698	\$24,287
Mean Commute Time (minutes)	25.5	28	25.3	30.7	28.8	25.2

source: U.S. Census Bureau

Labor Force

	Austin MSA	Williamson County	Taylor	Bastrop	Elgin	Georgetown
Labor Force*	797,934	167,715	11,673	3,392	3,730	16,088
Unemployment Rate*	4.8%	4.1%	6.9%	8.5%	7.9%	4.9%
Growth, 1990-2003	63%	110%	110%	77%	76%	110%
Average Wage, 2001	\$39,322	\$31,668	\$24,701	\$21,240	\$23,515	\$27,645

source: Texas Workforce Commission; Census Zip Code Business Patterns
 *November, 2003

Taylor has a labor force about three times the size of Bastrop and Elgin but smaller than that of Georgetown. The number of people in the labor force has grown considerably since 1990, at the same rate as both Williamson County and Georgetown. Unemployment is high relative to the rest of the county but normal for a small rural town. Above average unemployment and a low cost of living has kept Taylor wages low.

Tax Rates

	Taylor	Bastrop	Elgin	Georgetown
Property Tax Rate, County + City	\$1.2071	\$1.0631	\$1.3333	\$0.7609
ISD Tax Rate	\$1.6100	\$1.6080	\$1.5891	\$1.7300
Combined Property Tax Rates	\$2.8171	\$2.6711	\$2.9224	\$2.4909
Sales Tax Rate*	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	1.75%

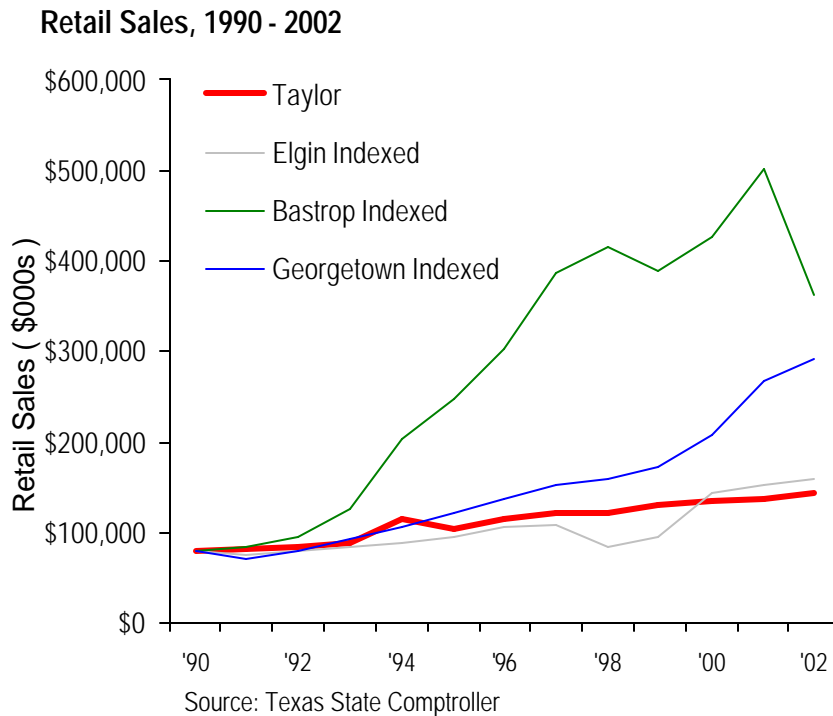
source: Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

*Bastrop County has a half cent sales tax. Rates are county and city combined.

Compared to its benchmarks, Taylor is a high tax-rate community. The comparison is somewhat skewed since Georgetown has such low taxes. Additionally, Georgetown benefits from having its own electric utility, which can be used to “subsidize” its tax rate. Georgetown ISD, however, is the school district with the highest rate. Taylor’s combined City, County and ISD tax rate is \$2.8171, making it lower than Elgin’s \$2.9224 but higher than Bastrop’s \$2.6711 and Georgetown’s \$2.4909.

Retail Sales

The following graph shows Taylor’s retail sales trend as well as the benchmarks indexed to Taylor’s 1990 sales. By setting each city’s 1990 sales figure to Taylor’s value then allowing them to grow at their actual rates of growth, direct comparisons can be made between towns. It is as if they all started from the same point in 1990. Comparatively, Taylor has seen slow but steady growth in retail sales. As seen in the graph, Bastrop and Georgetown saw remarkable growth in retail sales throughout the 1990s. Bastrop also saw a large drop following the 2000 recession.



Retail Sales

	Taylor		Georgetown		Elgin		Bastrop	
	Gross Retail Sales	Avg Annual Growth	Gross Sales	Avg Annual Growth	Gross Sales	Avg Annual Growth	Gross Sales	Avg Annual Growth
1990	\$80,182,164	--	\$206,624,146	--	\$56,438,529	--	\$66,636,927	--
1995	\$104,529,459	6.1%	\$315,939,415	10.6%	\$67,088,270	3.8%	\$206,216,815	41.9%
2000	\$133,923,547	5.6%	\$539,740,615	14.2%	\$100,903,030	10.1%	\$353,308,115	14.3%
2002	\$142,984,092	3.4%	\$753,317,067	19.8%	\$111,474,768	5.2%	\$301,802,380	-7.3%

source: Texas State Comptroller

Education

Taylor ISD has a poor reputation in the region despite remarkable graduation rates and average scores on standardized tests. The school district is rated “acceptable” and is comparable to other area school districts. Average teacher experience remains high despite lower salaries, possibly a result of teachers’ attachment to the community and the lower cost of living in Taylor.

Low test scores may be a product of the large proportion of minority students and non-English speaking households. Statistically, these groups under perform on standardized tests. While this fact should be acknowledged, it does not overcome the public’s perception of local schools.

Improving student performance is not just about focusing on standardized tests. Better schools is a very long range objective and one that the ISD has been working on for the past few years to build a strong foundation and curriculum development for better schools in upcoming years

2002-2003 School District Performance

	Number of Students	Student/Teacher Ratio	Average Teacher Salary	Avg. Teacher Experience
Taylor ISD	3,122	14.1	\$36,687	11.3
Austin ISD	78,155	14.5	\$40,212	11.1
Georgetown ISD	8,511	12.6	\$37,525	12.6
Elgin ISD	3,005	13.5	\$38,301	11.1
Bastrop ISD	7,233	14	\$39,793	10.6

source: Texas Education Agency

	Mean SAT Score	Mean ACT Score	Graduation Rate
Taylor ISD	939	19.1	85.8%
Austin ISD	1041	20.4	75.7%
Georgetown ISD	1086	18.2	88.2%
Elgin ISD	968	19.2	84.2%
Bastrop ISD	980	18.9	78.8%

source: Texas Education Agency, Class of 2000

TAKS 2002 - % of Students Meeting Panel Recommendation

	Reading	Science	Mathematics	All Tests
Taylor ISD	66.3%	36.9%	52.7%	41.2%
Austin ISD	68.6%	41.3%	54.3%	44.4%
Georgetown ISD	82.0%	56.0%	72.7%	60.5%
Elgin ISD	65.8%	36.3%	42.4%	32.4%
Bastrop ISD	68.6%	37.9%	55.1%	42.9%

source: Texas Education Agency

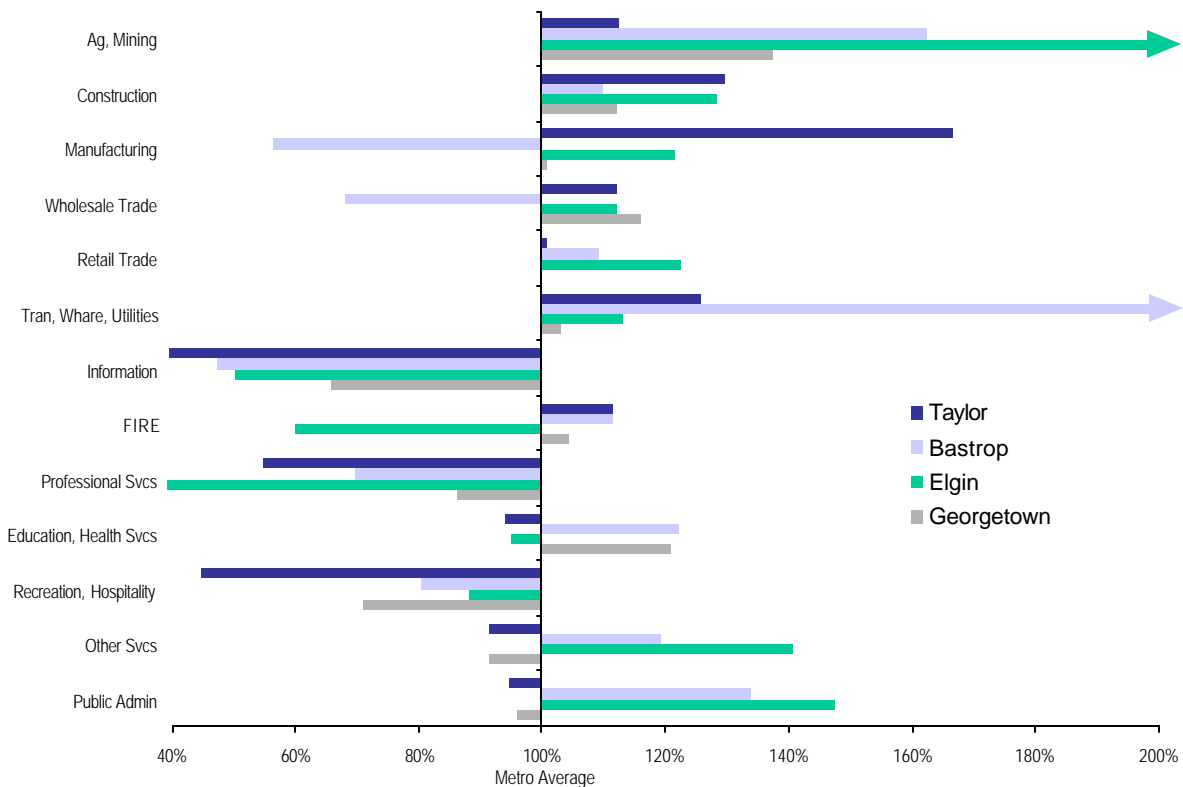
Industrial Makeup

The following chart shows the comparative advantage of Taylor’s workforce. The bars measure the ratio of percentage of residents employed in each industry to the percentage of metro residents employed in that industry. For example, the proportion of Taylor residents working in manufacturing is more than one and a half times that of the metro average. Information, on the other hand, is a major employer in the Austin metro, yet few of the rural communities have strong clusters of Information Technology workers. All of the benchmark communities are seeing new housing developments, leading to above average concentrations of construction workers.

While Taylor has a rich tradition in agriculture than the metro average, Taylor’s labor force in agriculture is relatively much less than its benchmarks. **The highest location quotients for resident employment are in manufacturing and transportation, warehousing, and utilities.**

Employment Location Quotients

Taylor and Benchmark Cities Compared to MSA



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; AngelouEconomics

Review of Past Economic Development Reports and Plans

The City of Taylor has undertaken several planning studies during the last eight years in order to develop strategies to improve its economy. The reports that AE has reviewed include:

- Economic Development Plan (1996) and Economic Development Plan Update (1999)
- Texas Main Street Program Resource Team Report (1999)
- Tourism Assessment (2002)

In this section, AE provides an overview of each report with a summary of those recommendations that were implemented. The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of several key strategies that have worked for the City of Taylor and to better understand why certain strategies have not been successful for the City.

Economic Development Plan (1996) and Economic Development Plan Update (1999)

AE developed Taylor's 1996 Economic Development Plan and the 1999 Economic Development Update. The 1999 plan incorporates original findings while suggesting new strategies for Taylor. Because the goals of the 1996 and 1999 plans contain many recommendations that are dependent on one another, AE will analyze these reports together in the section below. Both plans contained recommendations focused on four goals:

- **Community Development**
- **Marketing and Image Building**
- **Targeted Industry Recruitment**
- **Workforce Development and Education**

Overarching Recommendations

1. Focus the community's economic development (ED) efforts on growth industries that can take advantage of Taylor's proximity to Round Rock, Austin, and the Austin Bergstrom International Airport.
2. Develop a targeted recruitment strategy based on higher wage industries linked to the job skills of students attending Temple College at Taylor and local residents employed in Austin.
3. Taylor can position itself as a dynamic community for ED projects by creating a new "image" and aggressively marketing the city.
4. Taylor should broaden its definition of ED projects to include beautification, downtown development, and education.

The following is a summary of activities listed by goal that the City of Taylor undertook to address strategies identified in the 1996 and 1999 plans.

Community Development

Both plans placed a heavy emphasis on community development. Taylor needed to make improvements in education, infrastructure, and business retention efforts before devoting substantial time to recruitment efforts.

One of the top recommendations was for Taylor to recruit a college, which the community achieved by bringing **Temple College** to Taylor in 1997. Temple College at Taylor (TCAT) provides academic courses for an Associates degree, plus workforce training and continued education classes. An expansion currently underway will allow TCAT to expand its offerings and enrollment.

Taylor obtained a grant from the State of Texas Telecommunication Infrastructure Fund (TIF). Taylor leaders successfully formed **TaylorCNET**, a collaborative partnership between the City of Taylor, Taylor ISD, Taylor Economic Development, Williamson County, the Taylor Housing Authority, Johns Community Hospital, Taylor Chamber of Commerce and Temple College at Taylor. This type of community partnership is a model for other communities to emulate. TaylorCNET manages the city's wireless high-speed Internet infrastructure and has 14 public access points throughout the city along with a state-of-the-art distance access facility. TaylorCNET gives the city a competitive advantage to economic development by providing leading edge technology.

Another recommendation in the 1996 plan was for the city to conduct a **vitality survey**. A group of Taylor organizations conducted a survey in January 2004. This survey information was used in the development of the Comprehensive Plan.

In 1999, the City of Taylor was designated as a **Texas Main Street City**. Only 88 Texas cities have received this designation. The City and TEDC partnered to provide funding for the Taylor Main Street Program.

Additional community improvements that Taylor has made since 1996:

- Street improvements, specifically Davis Street and aesthetic improvements to City Hall.
- Improvements to Bull Branch Park
- New county park
- Airport improvements
- Obtaining TEA-21 Grant to make major improvements to Central Business District (CBD)

Marketing & Image Building

One of the first steps to building a community's image is to form trusted relationships with local organizations that promote economic development. For over two years, leaders of the TEDC, Taylor Main Street Program, Taylor Chamber of Commerce, City of Taylor, and many other local organizations have been meeting monthly to discuss economic development, community development, marketing, and other opportunities to improve Taylor. As a result of building this **team foundation**, these organizations collaborate well and are committed to a unified approach. Each organization has already committed to working together to implement the 2003 Economic Development and Marketing Plan.

Taylor is still known as an agricultural community, but this industry sector is becoming less dominant as Taylor diversifies into manufacturing and technology-based industries. Taylor's image within the community has improved over the last five years; however the image with neighboring communities still needs to be improved. Some say that in the past Taylor had a "redneck" image. Today, individuals view the city as one with unlimited potential. Taylor invests a great deal in marketing to local businesses and citizens. These efforts contribute to a better image and enhance services to local companies, which assist the TEDC in retention efforts. Local business investments and volunteerism with the Chamber has increased substantially over the last five years. The Chamber has annual banquets every January to recognize local employers and individuals.

Economic development marketing involves the promotion of community services to citizens. The City and TEDC's quarterly newsletter is a great example of successful local press relations.

Taylor has improved its regional cooperative marketing efforts by building relationships with Chambers and EDCs in the region, including Elgin, Georgetown, Leander, and Round Rock. The TEDC and Chamber of Commerce devote time to networking with regional economic development colleagues to discuss ways to promote the entire county.

Target Industry Recruitment

As the 1999 plan states, Taylor has sizeable concentrations of material supplies, retail, electronics, health services, agriculture, and computer equipment employment. Some of Taylor's current major employers are Texwood, ERCOT, and Laboratory Tops, Inc. The target industries recommended for Taylor included professional services, telecommunication equipment, software development, multimedia/data processing, and semiconductors. This section will discuss Taylor's efforts in growing these industries, as well as other industries.

Taylor has had a fair share of successes during the last eight years. The TEDC has helped several companies, including Texwood, Alliance Chemical, Williamson County Equipment, Gemini, and Laboratory Tops, to expand their facilities and train their workforce. The TEDC has worked with Taylor businesses that have invested nearly \$100,000,000 in plant and equipment and created over 1,000 jobs within the city since TEDC's inception in 1994.

More recently, Basler Electric Co., and Laboratory Tops, Inc. have expanded their operations in Taylor. ERCOT’s recently announced expansion of 75,000 square feet will bring \$12 million in investment and 100 new jobs to the city. The Correctional Institution was also developed in the late 1990s. The City also partnered to expand the capacity of a lift station that will serve HEB and Wal-Mart in their recent expansions.

The following chart² illustrates the success that the City has had with business recruitment and expansion:

Year	TEDC Investment Company	TEDC Investment Community	Appraisal Value	Jobs Created/Retained	Average Hourly Salary
1995	\$88,980	\$38,669	\$3,465,993	112	\$10.48
1996	\$63,067	\$209,453	\$24,783,266	194	\$9.00
1997	\$46,425	\$174,768	\$5,368,311	218	\$13.78
1998	\$177,013	\$89,003	\$2,327,375	140	\$13.04
1999	\$87,438	\$306,170	\$38,746,960	240	\$29.84
2000	\$431,175	\$474,558	\$3,753,182	51	\$15.15
2001	\$143,770	\$578,669	\$803,024	8	\$11.28
2002	\$46,284	\$388,452	\$64,318	2	NA
2003	\$83,622	\$216,486	\$3,000,000	51	NA
Total	\$1,167,774	\$2,476,228	\$82,312,429	1016	\$15.53

Workforce Development and Education

Education is a key factor that business leaders and site selectors review when deciding to expand or relocate. As stated under the Community Development section, the City has made significant improvements to the educational resources available in the City by partnering with Temple College to establish a satellite campus in Taylor. Recommendations in previous plans called for TEDC and Temple College to assist local employers by providing interns. This has not yet been implemented.

However, Taylor ISD has created a program to train students to become certified in phlebotomy that has encouraged many students to pursue nursing degrees. Taylor High School has improved its facility by building a technology center and providing classes for high school students to become more familiar with technology advances.

Texas Main Street Program Resource Team Report (1999)

The Taylor Main Street Program (TMSP) operates as a city department and works under the rules outlined by the Texas Historical Commission (THC). The Taylor Main Street’s mission incorporates the four major areas of the THC approach. Taylor Main Street

² Chart provided by TEDC

does an effective job of communicating its mission and vision by stating them on its Web site and through local advertisements in the Taylor Daily Press.

The TMSP Resource Team Report provides guidelines and recommendations to enhance and promote downtown Taylor. These recommendations are aimed at the TMSP. Recommendations cover the following topics:

- **Organization**
- **Marketing and Promotion**
- **Economic Development**
- **Heritage Tourism**
- **Historic Preservation and Landscape Architecture**

Organization

Since receiving the Main Street designation in 1999, Taylor has hired a director and assembled an advisory board. The TMSP has not developed a newsletter, but it does inform and include local citizens in planning meetings and uses local media to advertise and communicate projects.

Marketing and Promotion

Some of the TMSP merchants use the theme “In Downtown Taylor” in marketing materials. Some also use “As friendly As a Texas Smile” as a slogan. This organization promotes downtown restaurants and retailers by printing a directory twice a year. Business sponsors cover a majority of the cost of this promotional tool and it is distributed through downtown establishments, City Hall, and at regional meetings / events. The bookstore downtown distributes a large portion of these brochures to locals and tourists.

Economic Development

TMSP works closely with the TEDC and Taylor Chamber to provide incentives for businesses looking to expand or relocate downtown. The city has a historic overlay zoning district. TMSP pursues businesses that would be a fit for downtown Taylor, finding a balance between community development and tourism and encourages working relationships among various cultures. Most economic development efforts have helped downtown establishments to expand and market.

Heritage Tourism

To market downtown, there is the Taylor Bloomin’ Festival, their largest annual event, and Christmas Stroll. This is their fifth year to sponsor the Bloomin’ Festival. Last year’s festival was more successful and profitable than previous years. TMSP also cooperates with the Chamber of Commerce on several brochures to promote tourism.

TMSP works with the Texas Brazos Trail, but it needs to meet with more regional visitor centers and hotels so that they send tourists to Taylor.

Historic Preservation and Landscape Architecture

To its advantage, TMSP has used the historic downtown buildings as a major asset in marketing communications.

Taylor Main Street Program joined with Keep Taylor Beautiful and repainted benches in Heritage Park last summer. TMSP has worked with many establishments downtown to improve storefront displays and make downtown more attractive.

The Cottonseed building on the corner of 4th and Main Street and the 4th Street Station have been filmed and aired on Restore America and Extreme Homes. This type of marketing gains national publicity among a targeted audience.

Tourism Assessment (2002)

Market Texas Tourism developed this report for the City of Taylor.

The Tourism Assessment Report provides recommendations, in a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) format, to enhance its image and promote Taylor to tourists. These recommendations are aimed at the Chamber and TMSP. Recommendations cover the following topics:

- **Improve Landscaping and Signage**
- **Market Local Restaurants, Parks, and Attractions**
- **Strengthen Regional Relationships and Jointly Promote**
- **Host Festivals**

Overall, this report lists over 50 recommendations for Taylor to consider, and the city has done an effective job of implementing top priority recommendations. The Taylor Chamber of Commerce, along with TMSP, led implementation of the recommendations outlined in the Tourism Assessment. They have made progress and use this on a daily basis when deciding how to promote tourism in Taylor.

One major recommendation was for Taylor to work with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to obtain more highway signage so that tourists can easily find the city. This recommendation still needs to be addressed.

The Taylor Chamber of Commerce does a good job of balancing tourism and local business marketing activities. There is collaboration with local and regional organizations to promote the Texas Brazos Trail and BBQ Trail. In fact, the Chamber and TMSP periodically host the Brazos Trail Board meetings. The City is also taking initial steps to promote parks. Market days are held during the week and the recommendation to have this during the weekend should be reconsidered. Taylor has not held any special events at Granger Lake to draw in tourist, but this is something to consider since the lake is an asset for the area.

Taylor has made big strides when it comes to jointly marketing the city. The City, TEDC, Chamber of Commerce, and Taylor Main Street Program jointly host a “fly-in” event annually that attracts 300 – 400 pilots from Central Texas. The Chamber and TMSP provide welcome packets at the airport and meet and greet pilots on “fly-in” days. This has turned into a great free community event. It also increases revenue for local retail, restaurant, and motel businesses in Taylor.

The Chamber has developed several joint brochures to promote Taylor and the surrounding cities. For instance, the BBQ Trail brochure that is currently being printed features John Kelso, Columnist with the *Austin American Statesman* and is an attractive marketing tool. Taylor and Bastrop Chambers jointly market by distributing a “No Dim Bulbs Here” flyer through local business establishments and other regional events. This piece promotes Christmas lights and parades in Granger, Taylor, Coupland, Elgin, Bastrop, Hutto, and Thorndale.

The Lights Trail brochure is distributed through statewide welcome centers and at regional events such as the Motorcycle Rally, which attracts 3,000 plus each year. Taylor, along with 15 other Central Texas Chambers, jointly produces “Festivals of Central Texas 2003,” a brochure that promotes three annual events for each city. This is distributed throughout the State and has generated interest with individuals who reside along the I-35 corridors from San Antonio to Dallas. A major accomplishment for the Chamber was to secure the Texas Downtown Association for a mid-year conference and meeting.

As for the biggest annual events, the annual BBQ cook-off draws in the most tourists, approximately 7,000 per year, over a two-day timeframe and the Christmas parade brings in about 4,000. The garden club bazaar attracts about 2,500.

The Tourism Assessment recommends that Taylor have a festival with local employers and a film festival. Although Taylor has had movies filmed in the city, they have not had any festivals to expand this opportunity.

The TEDC, TMSP, and Chamber visit surrounding cities to learn from them and discuss ways to jointly promote the region.

Review of Past Marketing Efforts

Taylor has made numerous improvements in the city's attractiveness to economic development.

The **TEDC's** purpose is to retain and recruit targeted businesses to the city. Two ways that the TEDC measures success is by job creation and retention, and tax base increases. The organization primarily uses a Web site and brochures to convey its services. The TEDC's Web site contains valuable information for a business client and prospect. The photos and streaming video add a personal touch and enables Web visitors to become more familiar with what the city offers. However, the Web site and brochures don't always have the same look and feel. Being consistent and professional will lead to increased awareness and an improved perception over time.

A strong asset of the TEDC's marketing efforts is its leadership and professionalism when dealing with clients, partners, and prospects. Another strength of TEDC's marketing efforts is public relations. The City and TEDC newsletter does an excellent job of informing residents on important economic development issues and successes.

The **Taylor Chamber** is successful at promoting services to local businesses, events to citizens, and tourist attractions to individuals residing outside of Taylor. The use of a Web site as the primary communication tool is excellent. The online business directory, ShopTaylor.net does a fantastic job of providing information and recognizing local businesses. Showcasing a business of the month also builds enthusiasm and encourages local companies to continue to improve. The Chamber's events calendar is another good tool for citizens to use to get information on festivals. By recruiting citizens to help promote Taylor, the Ambassador program has enabled the city to have a much larger successful marketing team. The Chamber has made great strides by working with regional peers to promote the region. This collaborative effort will greatly improve awareness of Taylor as a place to visit or do business. The "Taste Texas' Best BBQ Legends" and "Festivals of Central Texas 2003" are two attractive and effective brochures. An area of improvements that the Chamber could facilitate is business to business marketing.

Since 1999, **Taylor Main Street Program's** strong leadership and marketing have positively impacted downtown improvement efforts. The Taylor Main Street Program supports redevelopment of downtown through historic preservation, education, economic development and heritage. The Taylor Main Street Program Web site is succinct and provides information on its mission and vision, as well as its services. It also markets local festivals and provides awards to recognize outstanding local citizens and businesses. One of the major assets of this organization's site is that it promotes commercial property that is available downtown and lists specific incentives to entice expansion or relocation.

The City of Taylor promotes services to residents, including local government, police, tax abatement, utilities, building permits, and community development. These services contribute to the quality of life in Taylor. The community development arm of the city strives to continuously make improvements to public places so that Taylor is a more aesthetically appealing city. The city is making an investment in Taylor's physical outlook by developing a new comprehensive plan. The City Manager's online newsletter

is a good way to communicate progress. Listing photos and contact information of each city council member is also helpful to citizens and adds a personal touch. This Web site provides relevant information and links to other organizations' sites, but the site's look should be refined and expanded to include an economic development focus.

The **Taylor Independent School District and Temple College at Taylor** provide education to local and regional individuals. Both entities have Web sites to communicate the role of education and specific programs offered.

TaylorCNET is one of the city's biggest assets. This entity helps residents and businesses with their technological needs by providing affordable wireless Internet access and technology training. It does an effective job of communicating services to citizens. The Web site, brochure, and local press articles provide relevant and interesting information. The site provides similar information to the Chamber, but it also has an online community job listing. This could better be promoted to citizens in the job market. TaylorCNET represents collaboration, success, and innovation, and the city should continue to market this as a top strength.

Williamson County government is another entity that promotes Taylor when it comes to economic development. Taylor City officials and the TEDC have a good working relationship with the county. However, when logging onto the county's Web site, <http://www.williamson-county.org> and clicking on Taylor to get information, the page is not available. For Web visitors using this site to get information on Taylor, this could be very discouraging.

Over the last year, Taylor has received positive regional **publicity**. The *Austin Business Journal* published several articles on businesses that were expanding and locating in Taylor. This type of publicity leads to increased awareness of the City of Taylor. Taylor is fortunate to have the support of the local paper, *The Taylor Daily Press*, and regional radio stations. The Newcomer guide that the paper distributes annually is a nice addition that informs new residents of city assets and attractions. **To be even more competitive, Taylor should strive to triple the amount of articles it places with regional media and in industry publications.**

The City of Taylor is fortunate to have many organizations marketing economic development and tourism. To stand out and make a bigger impact, Taylor should promote a single, unique message in every marketing activity. While researching current marketing, several **themes** are used to promote Taylor, Texas. Themes include: "Made For You," "A place to grow," "Select sites," and "In pursuit of excellence." This is confusing to an audience that receives thousand of messages from communities across the nation. It's also important to note that Taylor, Michigan uses this same theme to promote itself.



To conclude the marketing assessment, Taylor organizations use Web sites as a primary communication tool. Each organization has developed and distributes brochures, some of which are over two years old. Taylor has established some good relationships with regional media companies.