

Taylor Community & Economic Development Initiative Action Plan

It is clear from both the workshops and the surveys that Taylor has the leadership, vision and will to promote itself, leverage its strong heritage and create a prosperous economy while preserving its sense of community and quality of life. As a result, open communication and transparent governance are of paramount importance in order for the community to progress.

The Taylor Community and Economic Development Initiative culminates with this Action Plan that is developed to lead, excite and unite residents, leaders and businesses to aggressively promote and build upon the many natural and acquired assets present in Taylor while preserving the core values.

Goals and action steps focus on these topics:

I. Communication

A1. Goal: Attainment of a unified community vision

II. Infrastructure

B1. Goal: Explore and promote comprehensive planning solutions to repair and maintain city roads.

B2. Goal: Improve the transportation system in Taylor traveling to surrounding cities to enhance the quality of life and economic vitality.

III. Education

C1. Goal: Strive to make Taylor Independent School District known for its extraordinary academic achievements, graduation rates and high college entry scores and the district of choice for students and teachers.

C2. Goal: Ensure that Taylor offers employers a qualified workforce well prepared to meet the needs of existing and future industry within the area.

IV. Business Environment

D1. Goal: Make the City of Taylor known for its business friendly approach that welcomes new businesses with open arms providing consistency and easy access to city staff.

D2. Goal: Develop Downtown Taylor as the heart of the community with diverse offerings that attracts attention and traffic from businesses, tourists and residents.

V. Entertainment

E1. Goal: Expand opportunities in Taylor so that it is appealing to youth, seniors and families, young and old with the abundance of venues offered through sports, recreation, entertainment, education and church.

VI. Marketing

F1. Goal: Align efforts and assets of business, government and educational institutions to market Taylor as the place to live, work and play.

I. Communication

A1. Goal: Attainment of a unified community vision

Based on feedback voiced during community workshops and responses to surveys, leadership issues represent a significant roadblock to successful community and economic development, and as such, need to be addressed immediately in the short-term, as well as with a plan for long-term communication, education and accountability between local government and leadership, and the citizens of Taylor. It was stated that when the problem is understood by all, residents and city leaders will go to extremes to help find solutions.

ACTION STEPS	WHO	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	START
a. Regularly update residents on activities	City, TISD, TEDC, Chamber of Commerce	At least one update given per month by each entity via newsletter, notes, website, email, social media, or meeting	2 nd quarter 2014
b. Hold informal coffee or conversation rounds throughout town	City, TISD, TEDC, Chamber of Commerce	Schedule developed and implemented	2 nd quarter 2014
c. As a united leadership team, schedule numerous presentations with organizations, clubs and town meetings to publically educate the public & readily answer questions	City, TISD, TEDC, Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule developed and held for meetings every 6 months Presentation materials prepared 	3 rd quarter 2014
d.			
e. Expand Taylor 101	City, TISD, TEDC, Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum developed Citizens are invited to register 	3 rd quarter 2014
f. Encourage participation of citizens of all backgrounds to get involved in community organizations and public committees	City, TISD, TEDC, Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations & committees have members from varied backgrounds and ethnicities Open positions are filled by a wider cross-section of citizens 	4 th quarter 2014

II. Infrastructure

B1. Goal: Explore and promote comprehensive planning solutions to repair and maintain city roads.

The top priority for Taylor, as vocalized in the community workshops, questionnaires and surveys was repair and maintenance of the roads. Throughout the feedback sessions and written responses, it was very clear that citizens and leaders desire better roads – paved, smooth, curbed, and uncongested.

The street system is used not only by persons in private vehicles but also by business and city vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists and for the movement of freight and goods. Because of this wide use of the roads, it is critically important that the roadways are repaired and maintained so that citizens and businesses can maximize their economic and recreational productivity. Feedback from city leaders indicated they are committed to improving roads between places people want to live, work and play.

ACTION STEPS	WHO	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	START
a. Develop a comprehensive map to identify the status of city roads	City	Map is developed and available to citizens	2 nd quarter 2014
b. Explore government assistance programs that provide grants or low interest loans to assist with infrastructure project	City	Applications submitted to applicable programs	3 rd quarter 2014
c. Prioritize road improvements by most utilized/visible	City	Prioritized list is printed and available to citizens	1 st quarter 2015
d. Incrementally attack the problem of road repair each year	City	Roads are repaired each year	1 st quarter 2015
e. Inform citizens of status and progress of road repair plan	City	Information is shared via newsletter, notes, website, email, social media, or meeting	1 st quarter 2015
f. Create an in-depth plan to repair roads with a corresponding date for maintenance	City	In-depth plan is written and available to citizens	2 nd quarter 2015

Infrastructure continued

B2. Goal: Improve the transportation system in Taylor traveling to surrounding cities to enhance the quality of life and economic vitality.

Comments from the feedback groups strongly favored alternatives to traveling to cities outside of Taylor, especially to Austin. Many people work in Austin and surrounding cities. The Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS) provides limited service connecting Taylor to surrounding communities, however currently the schedules may not be conducive to getting to and from Austin on a daily basis.

Amtrak operates a platform only station in Taylor; no ticket office or enclosed waiting area. One can board the train each morning going north and each afternoon going south. This would not be a feasible mode of transportation to get to and from work each day.

MetroRail currently has nine stations with the northernmost one in Leander and the remaining ones in Austin. Those using MetroRail are able to get to and from work or school or ride for personal reasons. Additionally, MetroBus and MetroRapid have stops north of Austin, near Pflugerville that persons can ride to get into Austin for work or school.

ACTION STEPS	WHO	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	START
a. Research access to and eligibility for Regional Mobility Fund as a way to pay for multi-modal transportation solutions	City, Taylor EDC, Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determination of funds availability Application submitted to fund projects 	1 quarter 2015
b. Study cost and location of multi-purpose train/bus station	City, Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed study Decision made to move forward or not 	2nd quarter 2015
c. Examine cost and options for CARTS expansion of fixed routes within and outside of Taylor	City, Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Options identified Determination made on options 	3 rd quarter 2015
d. Investigate possibility of MetroRail expanding to Taylor	City, Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results of investigation are noted Decision made to move forward or not 	4 th quarter 2015
e. Research viability of Amtrak becoming full service in Taylor	City, Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results of investigation are noted Decision made to move forward or not 	1 st quarter 2016

Education

C1. Goal: Strive to make Taylor Independent School District known for its extraordinary academic achievements, graduation rates and high college entry scores and the district of choice for students and teachers.

Another top priority vocalized in surveys, community workshops and follow-up conversations was the educational system in Taylor. Residents want a more balanced system where the emphasis is academics first, followed by more attention given to art, theater and music and then athletics. High School students expressed their enthusiasm for the new high school and enjoyment in playing sports, but feel overall expectations are too low; both of how the students feel about themselves and what school officials expect of them. They also believe guidance given to them for after graduation needs to start sooner – before their senior year.

Citizens, city leaders and students were united in their vocalization that Taylor will attract and maintain businesses by having a highly productive and competitive workforce. With enriching educational opportunities for all citizens, Taylor will attract and retain a well-educated population, sustaining a vibrant workforce that is adaptable to an evolving economy. Primary and post-secondary curricula that emphasizes the needs of local businesses and emerging markets, will give students a reason to stay in Taylor.

ACTION STEPS	WHO	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	START
a. Inform the public of advancements made in graduation rates and college entry scores	Taylor ISD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation materials prepared • Update given via newsletter, notes, website, email, social media, or meeting 	2 nd quarter 2014
b. Ensure career planning & counseling is offered and available to all incoming freshman and throughout high school	Taylor ISD	All students have a career plan documented prior to their senior year	3 rd quarter 2014
c. Assess interest in reviving Young Life at Taylor High School	Taylor ISD, Taylor EDC, Chamber of Commerce, City	Interest level is identified and decision made to start or not start program	3 rd quarter 2014
d. Support and promote programs aimed at improving high school graduation rates and college enrollment	Taylor ISD, Taylor EDC, Chamber of Commerce, City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program(s) adopted • Graduation rates increase yearly • College/technical school enrollment increases yearly 	4 th quarter 2014

ACTION STEPS	WHO	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	START
e. Invite citizen input on evaluation of academic, extracurricular and athletic offerings	Taylor ISD, Taylor EDC, Chamber of Commerce, City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey instrument developed • Input sought through survey • Input compiled • Results shared with public 	1 st quarter 2015
f. Identify extracurricular activities where volunteers are needed to help organize and support	Taylor ISD, Taylor EDC, Chamber of Commerce, City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer needs identified • Volunteers recruited, screened and trained • Volunteers are paired with activity 	2 nd quarter 2015
g. Support Taylor ISD in establishing and developing academic programs that are relevant to industry needs	Taylor ISD, Taylor EDC, Chamber of Commerce, City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance provided to get industry input • Program(s) developed and implemented 	4 th quarter 2015

Education continued

C2. Goal: Ensure that Taylor offers employers a qualified workforce well prepared to meet the needs of existing and future industry within the area.

Throughout the feedback phase of the project, citizens vocalized the importance of higher education that is easily accessible and of high caliber. Temple College has been in Taylor for almost two decades and is now a part of the East Williamson County Higher Education Center (EWCHEC). EWCHEC has a facility in Taylor and a larger building recently built in Hutto, a few miles down the road. In addition to college courses, EWCHEC also houses the Legacy Early College High School. EWCHEC is seen as a valuable quality of life asset in Taylor.

EWCHEC in Taylor is operating out of a remodeled building downtown, across from City Hall that is visible by anyone traveling through downtown. Part of one road has been closed and portable buildings moved in to house the various classes. The portable buildings and temporary road closure are seen as unattractive and an eye-sore to many.

ACTION STEPS	WHO	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	START
a. Promote involvement of private sector in creating internships or job shadowing opportunities	Taylor ISD, Chamber of Commerce, Taylor EDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internships and job shadow opportunities are created All students wanting above paired and placed 	3 rd quarter 2014
b. Strengthen relationship with EWCHEC partners to secure and expand programs offered in Taylor	Taylor ISD, Chamber of Commerce, Taylor EDC, City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment from EWCHEC of intent to stay in Taylor More courses/programs offered 	3 rd quarter 2014
c. Market educational opportunities to businesses interested in moving to Taylor	Taylor ISD, Chamber of Commerce, Taylor EDC, City	Marketing materials highlight EWCHEC, Legacy, Taylor ISD and private schools	4 th quarter 2014
d. Invest in a new facility for EWCHEC in Taylor	Taylor ISD, City	New facility	1 st quarter 2016
e. Remove portable buildings downtown and open the street once a new facility is built/remodeled	Taylor ISD, City	No portables downtown and street is open	2 nd quarter 2016
f. Increase number of students allowed to attend Legacy	Taylor ISD	Enrollment and graduation numbers increase yearly	2 nd quarter 2016

Business Environment

D1. Goal: Make the City of Taylor known for its business friendly approach that welcomes new businesses with open arms providing consistency and easy access to city staff.

Based on feedback voiced during community workshops and written questionnaires, working with the city to open or expand a new business is a major roadblock. Because of this perception and the effect it has on economic expansion and diversification, immediate actions to address this are paramount.

ACTION STEPS	WHO	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	START
a. Building permit procedures and regulations are easily understood and accessible	City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written procedures are shared Feedback 	2 nd quarter 2014
b. Business development process is written and accessible	City	Written process is available to anyone	2 nd quarter 2014
c. Information shared with citizens on how to access and utilize the city's appeal process	City, Chamber of Commerce, TEDC	Procedures are shared through all mediums – verbally and in writing	2 nd quarter 2014
d. Staff are available and willing to assist developers and business owners	City, TEDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of contacts with developers Feedback 	3 rd quarter 2014
e. Incentives are consistently and fairly distributed	City, TEDC	Comparison of incentives given to small and large businesses and location	3 rd quarter 2014
f. Value input given by committees when given charge by the City	City	Action taken on input given	4 th quarter 2014
g. City leaders visit with leaders from other cities that are known for business friendly environment and extraordinary customer service	City, Chamber of Commerce, TEDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visits made Improvement in City customer service seen through survey responses 	1 st quarter 2015

ACTION STEPS	WHO	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	START
h. Annual survey conducted of city services and customer service	City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys conducted • Corrective action taken based on feedback 	2 nd quarter 2015
i. Seminars held for developers/builders and current business owners on “Opening/Expanding Business in Taylor”	City, Chamber of Commerce, TEDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminars offered every 6 months • Number of attendees • Requests for more information 	3 rd quarter 2015
j. Recruit and encourage development of niche industries (manufacturing) to serve specialized markets	TEDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify niche industry • New manufacturer is recruited and open for business 	1 st quarter 2016

Business Environment continued

D2. Goal: Develop Downtown Taylor as the heart of the community with diverse offerings that attracts attention and traffic from businesses, tourists and residents.

Based on Taylor’s Community Assessment and natural and acquired assets, the downtown area is ripe for continued revitalization. Steps have already been taken to improve the comfort and appearance of downtown with green spaces and landscaping, the repair of 2nd street, and improvements to Heritage Park. The recent purchase and remodeling of a cornerstone building, the McCrory-Timmerman Building, has enthused local businesses and residents. The many historical buildings are interesting, attractive and have a past that can amplify them as landmarks for Taylor.

Comments from workshop participants and in surveys strongly favor more revitalization and development downtown. Citizens, including the youth, envisioned a pedestrian friendly downtown with places to eat, read, drink coffee, shop, hear music and spend time and money. There was pride heard in statements reflecting Taylor has a defined “downtown area”, unlike recent growth in surrounding communities. The Taylor economy stands to ultimately benefit from business expansion and beautification of its downtown area.

ACTION STEPS	WHO	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	START
a. Focus on growing the downtown area	City, Chamber of Commerce, TEDC	Continued support of Main Street Program	2 nd quarter 2014
b. Promote tourism and cultural and heritage assets	City, Chamber of Commerce, TEDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing Plan developed Marketing materials highlight downtown assets Historical components are preserved 	2 nd quarter 2014
c. Continue city-supported policies providing incentives to downtown investments	City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Businesses know about incentives Incentives are awarded to downtown businesses Improvements seen in appearance of downtown businesses New small businesses are open 	2 nd quarter 2014
d. Increase assistance to retain and expand existing businesses	City, Chamber of Commerce, TEDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active adherence to Business Retention & Expansion plan No business closures One business per year expands downtown 	4 th quarter 2014

ACTION STEPS	WHO	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	START
e. Review distribution of hotel/motel tax	City, Chamber of Commerce, TEDC	Use of hotel/motel tax increases tourism in downtown	4 th quarter 2014
f. Partner with state and national agencies to help fund downtown projects	City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan developed • Applications submitted • Outside funds received 	1 st quarter 2015
g. Establish public/private partnerships to promote growth of downtown		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships developed • Funds are maximized 	2 nd quarter 2015
h. Invest in entrepreneurship and innovation	City, Chamber of Commerce, TEDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor program established • Support system developed • New businesses are open 	3 rd quarter 2015

Entertainment

E1. Goal: Expand opportunities in Taylor so that it is appealing to youth, seniors and families, young and old with the abundance of venues offered through sports, recreation, entertainment, education and church.

Taylor offers year- round access to lakes, parks, the sports complex, event center and the hike and bike trail with the ease of getting around constant. Input from the feedback sessions clearly indicated a desire for more entertainment, specifically eating establishments, a recreation center, music and arts venues, dancing, and a place for youth to hang-out. These amenities all relate directly to the quality of life wanted by residents of Taylor. A key consideration for families and businesses when considering a move to Taylor hinges upon the setting in which they can live, work and play. With Taylor’s proximity to several Major Metropolitan Areas, it is an ideal place to visit and spend time.

ACTION STEPS	WHO	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	START
a. Market outdoor assets to neighboring communities to bring in outside revenue	City, Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing Plan developed Marketing materials highlight assets Tourism increases each year 	2 nd quarter 2014
b. Consider proposals related to entertainment options submitted by 7 th Street Campus Taskforce	City, Chamber of Commerce, TEDC, Taylor ISD	Increase in number of entertainment venues	3 rd quarter 2014
c. Maximize use of outdoor assets to plan events for all ages	City, Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional events planned and executed Increased participation by community residents 	3 rd quarter 2014
d. Engage the youth of Taylor to help shape the growth and opportunities	City, Chamber of Commerce, TEDC, Taylor ISD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More youth are involved in committees and volunteer activities 	4 th quarter 2014
e. Invest in entrepreneurship and innovation	City, Chamber of Commerce, TEDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentor program established Support system developed New businesses are open 	3 rd quarter 2015
f. Begin a Taylor Youth Leadership Program	City, Chamber of Commerce, TEDC, Taylor ISD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program developed Youth recruited Graduates recognized 	1 st quarter 2016

Marketing

F1. Goal: Align efforts and assets of business, government and educational institutions to market Taylor as the place to live, work and play.

Taylor has much to offer residents and visitors – proximity to other cities, centrally located in Texas, natural and acquired assets, highway access to and around in Taylor, educational opportunities, businesses and many conveniences. Feedback indicated Taylor could do a better job promoting itself outside of Taylor. To maximize effectiveness of marketing however, any consideration of marketing must include cooperation among those local entities responsible for outreach, promotion and economic development. A Marketing Plan establishes a sense of place and identifies the unique attributes that will attract visitors to Taylor and community events. Taylor will benefit by having those representing the city to have a unified voice when promoting the city.

ACTION STEPS	WHO	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	START
a. Develop a unified Marketing Strategic Plan to include traditional and online marketing	City, Chamber of Commerce, TEDC, Taylor ISD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing Plan developed and implemented Spokespersons are trained to deliver a unified message 	3 rd quarter 2014
b. Create marketing materials	City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials developed, printed and distributed Online marketing implemented 	2 nd quarter 2015
c. Coordinate events planned with surrounding communities	City, Chamber of Commerce, TEDC	Calendar annotates regional events	2 nd quarter 2015
d. Increase number of events planned in Taylor	City, Chamber of Commerce, TEDC, Taylor ISD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events are advertised in media outside of Taylor Tourism increases annually 	3 rd quarter 2015
e. Host periodic summits to “show off” Taylor’s assets	City, Chamber of Commerce, TEDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual event Interest in Taylor increases 	4 th quarter 2015