

## CITY OF TAYLOR TOURISM ASSESSMENT

November 25, 2002

### **City Commissioners, City Manager and Staff;**

On June 11, 2002 a team of Tourism Specialists with the Texas Department of Economic Development came to Taylor for a full day of exploring the natural, historic and cultural attractions as well as the shopping, dining, sports and leisure facilities that are available. They also gathered information about festivals and special events that happen in Taylor and the area.

This presentation is designed to give you a summary of Tourism Specialists findings. The complete report is located in the Community Development Department at City Hall. If you wish to have a personal copy, please feel free to let me know and I will have a copy made for you.

### **Taylor's Strengths:**

#### **Main Street City:**

This program brings pride to downtown businesses and encourages development. Approximately 4 million dollars has been invested in downtown during the past three years. These investments are directly related to the program.

#### **Promotional Literature:**

Taylor – Made For You general brochure, Taylor- Made For You city map, The Texas BBQ Trail brochure, Festivals of Central Texas brochure and Taylor city, chamber, EDC, and school websites all provide information to promote dining, shopping, annual events and other attractions in the area.

It is important to print enough brochures so that the Texas Travel Information Centers will be able to provide these to visitors driving into Texas. (The chamber has received approval to put all of our brochures in these travel centers.)

*Recommendation* – Consider developing a dining guide.

Consider creating a series of tour itineraries to include things that can be done in the Taylor area for one, two or more days.

#### **Regional Cooperation:**

The cities in Williamson County seem to have great support for their economic development projects. More support needs to be generated for tourism and economic development on a regional basis.

*Recommendation* – To ensure support from the community and county, the chamber and Main Street programs need to educate the residents and local officials on the positive

aspects of these programs. Keeping all the communities informed, every step of the way, will ensure the success of tourism and economic development.

**Regional Tourism Organizations:**

Regional Tourism Organizations are an excellent way to partner with other like-minded communities on marketing and promotional activities. This partnering helps to stretch your budget. The Texas Brazos Trail Region, Texas BBQ Trail and Central Texas Bluebonnet Travel Council are all regional organizations which are promoting tourism in their area.

*Recommendation:* Continue your active involvement in these organizations. Grow your membership to strengthen your budget and get Taylor's message to more communities.

**Other Taylor assets:**

Genealogy	Mustang Creek Golf Course
Taylor's location	Taylor Municipal Airport
Taylor's Slogan – Taylor – Made For You!	Historic Homes
Barbecue	Local History
Nature Tourism and Birding	Rowe Valley Restaurant
Stiles Farm	Downtown Taylor
Hidden Cove Cabin	Moody Museum
Granger Lake	Volunteerism and Community Spirit
4A/4B Sales Taxes	RV Park
Farmers Market in Downtown	

**Taylor's Weaknesses:**

**Road Conditions:**

Many roads need repairs. The entrance to Taylor on Highway 79 even needs work.

*Recommendation:* The community needs to take the first step in getting Highway 79 repairs done. The entrance from Highway 79 is a visitor's first impression of the community. Property owners need to be encouraged to keep their areas in better condition. The city may need to invest in plants alongside 79 to help shield some properties from sight.

**Division of Taylor:**

The train tracks divide Taylor. The bridge does little to integrate the two sides of the community.

*Recommendation:* The bridge needs landscaping both on the bridge and below it to create a more cohesive feel. Vacant properties between city hall and the tracks leaves people feeling the town is not thriving.

**Limited Restaurant Operating Hours:**

Taylor does not have sufficient restaurants that are open in the afternoons and evenings or on Sundays.

*Recommendation:* The chamber should work with local restaurants to open on Sundays. Visitors will go to other towns if there are no options for dining.

**Lack of Signage:**

Visitors will not stay in Taylor if they do not know what or where things are.

*Recommendation:* Taylor could benefit from highway signage telling visitors about the city's offerings and where they are located. Directional signage should be added during the downtown redevelopment effort. A survey of local tourists may help determine what attractions need more signage.

**Funding:**

Taylor is like any other rural community in that funding is usually the number one challenge.

*Recommendation:* Make contact with The Center of Community Support at Texas A&M, The State Grants Team in the office of the Governor and the TxDot District Offices to let them know you are seeking assistance. Other offices that may offer help to Taylor are: Texas Commission on the Arts, Texas Department of Agriculture, Texas Parks and Wildlife and the Texas Historical Commission.

**Workforce:**

The availability of trained, able, motivated workforce can be a problem to an industry, including tourism.

*Recommendation:* Consider involving junior high and high school students in Taylor's plans for growth and development. A junior Chamber of Commerce, junior City Council or junior Main Street affords young people the opportunity to contribute to the place where they live and gives them pride and ownership of their city and county.

**Taylor's Threats:**

**Encroachment of Austin** – losing Taylor's rural feel

**Competition vs. Cooperation** – Businesses must talk and share ideas openly

**Aesthetics** – visitors will not stop in a town that does not appear safe, clean or run down.

**Loss of Community Support** – All citizens must be behind the tourism efforts.

**Not Partnering** – On a local, county, regional and statewide level.

**Downtown Development** – Reward visitors with unique shops, attractive buildings and a "hometown experience."

## **Recommendations:**

**Strategic Plan** – Taylor needs to develop a strategic plan for its tourism industry. It should fit with the city and county plans to keep Taylor on the right course for the community's future.

**Prioritize** – Take the Tourism Assessment and decide what goals and plans you will implement.

**Create more Business Development Opportunities** – Insure that developers have adequate information and resources to establish themselves in the community.

**Take the Tourism Self Assessment** – This tool is provided by the Texas Cooperative Extension At Texas A&M.

**Texas Friendly Hospitality Training** – Offer this to businesses locally.

### **Other ideas or suggestions made in this report are:**

- Developing a good mix of businesses so there is something for everyone.
- Develop a Depot area once the new facility is built.
- Keep the overall appearance of the community improving by remaining constant on zoning and municipal code enforcement.
- Think of new ideas and ways to bring events to the county park facility.
- Consider trying to develop more bed and breakfasts in the historic homes district.