2015 - 2022

La Marque, Texas

Strategic Economic and Community Development Plan

Presented August 10, 2015
Message from the La Marque Mayor
and Chairman of the La Marque Economic Development Corporation

La Marque has a proud history of leadership, accomplishment and success. Recent difficult economic times and hurricane IKE recovery has impacted every community in Galveston County and especially La Marque, however the current economic strength of the county and the state provides a pathway for economic renewal. It is with this vision and commitment that the City of La Marque and the La Marque Economic Development Corporation began an open and honest review of our community’s present conditions, assets and opportunities to serve as a foundation for a bold new Strategic Plan to guide our community to a brighter future.

Economic and community development is more than just infrastructure, jobs, and buildings. It is a pathway to self-sufficient neighborhoods and a fiscally sound City. As the economy continues to improve in the coming years, it is essential that La Marque is recognized for its location, assets and business friendly environment at city hall and across the community.

This Strategic Economic and Community Development Plan is the initial step in a strategy to accomplish this mission. Through the focused use of the City’s human and capital resources the community will see planned and sustainable economic growth and the generation of revenues to address many of the infrastructures and support services needs of our community. The Plan’s activities will result in decisions and investments that are intended to have a catalytic effect on La Marque’s overall economy and City revenues. At the same time, the workforce development partnerships and the community events will help to ensure that economic growth is leveraged to create opportunities and lifestyle improvements for La Marque’s residents, and to develop good-paying jobs available to a well-prepared and educated workforce.

Economic and community development is the responsibility of all of our city’s paid staff and volunteer resources. To be successful every decision, action, plan and procedure engaged in by the City of La Marque and the various community organizations, communities and commissions must have as a prime consideration our city’s future. Success is not measured just in revenues and investment but in the improvement of the quality of life and livelihood for all La Marque residents.

We look forward to working with all of our partners to make this plan a reality. Thank you for your support to this end.

Bobby Hocking
Mayor
City of La Marque

Ron Crowder
Chair
La Marque
Economic Development Corporation
2015 - 2022
La Marque, Texas
Strategic Economic and Community Development Plan
Executive Summary

The City Council of La Marque in cooperation with the La Marque Economic Development Corporation embarked on an open and honest assessment of their city's assets and liabilities with a desire to establish a roadmap to a stronger, more prosperous future. This process engaged over 100 local citizens in a series of interviews and focus groups culminating in a planning charrette clarifying the city's critical issues and agreeing on a series of priority goals. Participants throughout the process universally expressed their commitment to invest their time individually and collectively in accomplishing the agreed upon goals leading to a brighter future for La Marque and its citizens and organizations.

The following is a summary of the critical issues and associated goals identified through this process presented in priority order.

Critical Issues

- Critical Issue 1: Blight Reduction
- Critical Issue 2: The Future of the La Marque Independent School District (LMISD) and quality public education opportunities in La Marque
- Critical Issue 3: Infrastructure Needs
- Critical Issue 4: Community Image
- Critical Issue 5: Economic Development
- Critical Issue 6: City's Human Resources
- Critical Issue 7: Communication
- Critical Issue 8: Youth Engagement
- Critical Issue 9: Volunteer Engagement and Development
- Critical Issue 10: Quality of Life Issues
- Critical Issue 11: New Leadership Development Efforts
- Critical Issue 12: Residential Plan
Community Goals

1. Infrastructure Repair and Replacement Plan
2. Blight Reduction
3. Update and Enforce Code of Ordinances
4. Interstate 45 Plan
5. Communication Plan
6. Water/Sewer/Road Annual $1 Million Investment
7. Community Center Plan
8. Consolidation of LMISD into TCISD
9. Blight Reduction Plan
10. Grocery Store Plan
11. Expanded Tax Base Strategy
12. Economic Development Plan (9 votes)
13. Compensation Improvement Plan (9 votes)
14. Expanded Youth Recreation Program (7 votes)
15. Lemonade Day Plan (6 votes)

The following provides a prioritized listing of the agreed upon community goals.

Priority 1: Infrastructure Improvement Plan

Goal I. A.
- Develop and approve by City Council a five year prioritized listing of infrastructure repair, replacement and expansion priorities of not less than $1 million per year by December 31, 2015.
- This plan will include projected sales tax revenues for five years as a primary source of revenue for financing these expenditures.
- Evaluate the plan annually as a part of the city’s budgeting process and reestablish priorities as needed.

Goal I. B.
- Implement the five year Infrastructure Improvement Plan by investing not less than $1 million per year beginning with FY 2017 through FY 2021 in road, water and sewer major repairs, improvements and expansion.
Priority 2: Blight Reduction

Goal 2. A.
- Develop and approve by City Council a comprehensive, priority based, blight reduction plan for La Marque by December 31, 2015 through the active participation of the La Marque Clean City Commission.
- Evaluate the plan annually as a part of the city's budgeting process and reestablish priorities as needed.

Goal 2. B.
- Based on the priorities established in the approved blight reduction plan, demolish and remove not less than 20 vacant and dilapidated structures each year beginning in FY 2016 through FY 2021.
- Develop and implement a plan to maintain the vacant lots to appropriate standards.
- Develop and implement a plan to recoup the cost of the demolition/clean up from the respective property owners through assessments or sale of the property.

Goal 2. C.
- Complete a comprehensive review of all La Marque city codes and ordinances related to appearance and safety of facilities and grounds for both residential and commercial including both compliance and fines.
- Provide recommendations for City Council consideration for improving the codes and ordinances to strengthen and streamline the city's ability to address issues of blight.
- Complete the code and ordinance review process by June, 2016.

Goal 2. D.
- Develop, fund and implement a plan to enhance code enforcement of issues related to blight reduction in the City of La Marque beginning with the FY 2017 fiscal year.

Priority 3: Interstate 45 Plan

Goal 3. A.
- Develop for approval by Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council appropriate zoning and development guidelines to protect and enhance development along the La Marque Interstate 45 corridor by March 2016.
- Implement the revised guidelines by May 2016.
Priority 4: Communication Plan

Goal 4. A.
- Develop a comprehensive communication strategy including but not limited to web, social media, advertising and print (newsletters) to enhance the ability to communicate the positive news and opportunities available in La Marque.
- Complete the strategy development by November 2015
- Evaluate the implemented communication strategies annually.

Goal 4. B.
- Develop a community newsletter to be distributed not less than 3 times each year beginning with FY 2016.

Priority 5: Community Center Plan

Goal 5. A.
- Create a Community Center Exploration Task Force charged with the responsibility of exploring opportunities for the development of a La Marque community center no later than December 2015.
- Charge the task force with exploring issues related to the potential community center to include but not be restricted to:
  1. Purpose and uses by age group
  2. Recommended resources, amenities and capabilities in priority order
  3. Suggested models
  4. Estimated construction/renovation budget
  5. Estimated operational budget
  6. External grant and private funding opportunities
  7. Potential partnerships
  8. Potential sites or locations including vacant LMISD facilities
- The Community Center Exploration Task Force will report their findings and recommendations to the City Council by September 2016.

Priority 6: Foster the Improvement of K-12 Educational Opportunities in La Marque

As this situation is in the hands of the State of Texas, the participants universally agreed to support the decision and plans that afford the best opportunity for the children of La Marque to receive an outstanding education and the taxpayers to receive the best educational outcomes for the tax dollar invested. No specific goals were presented.
Priority 7: Grocery Store Plan

Goal 7

- Develop and implement a communication campaign directed at decision makers who site new locations for small grocery stores.
- Utilize broad based community support, social media, direct communication and leadership intervention to share the desire to work with grocery store chains to select La Marque as a location for development.
- Create a La Marque Grocery Store Team to plan and conduct this effort in conjunction with area civic groups and the chamber of commerce.
- Develop a plan for review by the La Marque EDC by December 2015 for implementation in 2016.

Priority 8: Expanded Tax Base Strategy

Goal 8

- Develop a plan with specific strategies designed to incent investment in La Marque's commercial and residential tax base.
- Identify and address barriers to now development and construction in La Marque.

Priority 9: Economic Development Plan

Goal 9

- Develop and present for approval to the La Marque EDC a focused economic development plan including basic incentive guidelines for distribution to various site selectors, developers and project managers by December 2015.

Priority 10: Compensation Improvement Plan

Goal 10

- Develop and present for approval to City Council by June 2016 a revised compensation plan for the city employees along with a proposed multiyear compensation adjustment plan to bring current employees in alignment with the new compensation schedules.
Priority 11: Expanded Youth Recreation Program

Goal 11
- Establish a La Marque Youth Recreation Task Force by October 2015 to develop strategies to enhance youth recreation programs and volunteerism to support this effort. Plan to be developed and presented to City Council and invited community leaders by May 2016 with implementation by August 2016.

Priority 12: Lemonade Day Plan for La Marque

Goal 12
- Develop a Lemonade Day program in cooperation with the chamber of commerce, local schools and local business to engage 200 elementary kids annually in this nationally recognized strategy to teach business and life skills by May 2016.

Conclusion

The elected officials, civic leaders and citizens of La Marque have many assets and opportunities upon which to build a vibrant and prosperous community. The participants in this study demonstrated great honesty and candor in recognizing and clarifying their weaknesses and challenges. The participants also demonstrated a deep love and commitment to do the work to build and rebuild the foundation and community of La Marque. As this commitment is sustained, La Marque will see the desired outcomes.
La Marque Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan

Table of Contents

1. Planning Process and Citizen Participation  Page 10
   A. Setting
   B. Citizen Participation Process
   C. Focus Group Meeting Format
   D. Interview Format
   E. Charrette Format

2. La Marque Summary Demographic Data Review  Page 14
   A. Population
   B. Income and Employment
   C. Housing and Cost of Living
   D. Educational Attainment
   E. United States Census Data

3. Citizen Input: Focus Group and Interview Findings  Page 21

4. Planning Charrette Results  Page 33
   A. Critical Issue Identification
   B. Community Goals

5. Recommendations and Conclusions  Page 50
   A. Draft Vision Statement
   B. Draft Mission Statement
   C. Summary
   D. Conclusions and Recommendations

6. Appendices  Page 51
   Appendix 1:  Focus Group and Charrette Handouts
   Appendix 2:  Charrette Report
1. Planning Process and Citizen Participation

A. Setting

La Marque is a community committed to engaging its citizens and leaders in charting a vibrant and prosperous future. The city of La Marque, Texas was founded as a premier residential community for citizens working in Galveston or the petrochemical complex in Texas City. These founding principles remain as strong today as they did during the peak expansion period of the 1960’s and 1970’s. Unfortunately a series of events including hurricanes and economic challenges coupled with the expansion of residential communities to the north and west in Galveston County have inhibited the continual growth and development of the city.

The La Marque Economic Development Corporation in conjunction with the La Marque City Council took the bold step in 2015 to undertake a comprehensive assessment of their community and the creation of a strategic plan to direct their future development and redevelopment efforts. This process was embraced by the city elected and informal leadership with great candor about the challenges they face as well as great optimism and commitment for a brighter future. The participation in this process through the focus group sessions, key informant interviews and the planning charrette was open, honest and energetic. The plan developed was embraced with great consensus and energy for action.

B. Citizen Participation Process

The participation in this planning process was exceptional engaging nearly 100 individuals through a series of eight focus groups, a number of individual interviews with key stakeholders and a 3 hour planning charrette engaging over 30 participants. In addition individuals, both group participants and other citizens, provided written feedback to a series of questions and assessment activities as a part of the citizen participation phase. All of this feedback was condensed into a report that was presented to the participants of the charrette process to serve as a foundation for the prioritization of the critical issues and the establishment of community goals. Please see the appendices for additional information on these processes.

C. Focus Group Meetings

The foundation of the community participation phase in this strategic planning process was the focus group process. The leadership of the City Council and the La Marque EDC engaged in an extensive process to identify a diverse group of community leaders from
every walk of life, political affiliation and setting to participate in one of the focus group sessions. Through these sessions critical input was received from:

- The business community
- The faith based community
- The nonprofit community
- The education community
- Long term residents
- Galveston County leadership
- Retirees
- And numerous other community segments

In addition, a focus group session was held with the City Manager and her direct reports to gain the prospective of the staff leadership of the city for this process. The participants represented great diversity along racial, social, economic and political lines and included both long term and short term residents.

Strict confidentiality of individual responses during the focus group sessions was pledged to the participants and maintained in the reporting of the findings. This confidentiality was critical to insuring that the participants felt comfortable to be “brutally honest” in their discussions and responses. Each session lasted two to three hours with additional feedback provided in response to the Focus Group Handout provided in advance the group participants (See appendix 1).

The focus group sessions were open discussions guided by an environmental assessment or **SWOT** analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities). Participants were asked to honestly and openly share their assessment of the city’s internal strengths and weaknesses either orally through the discussions on in writing on the form provided. In addition the participants were asked to identify the external opportunities or trends that the City could capitalize on for greater success as well as the external threats that must be addressed that could negatively impact success if the City and the plan.

In addition to the **SWOT** analysis, the focus group participants were asked to provide orally or in writing their responses to a series of key assessment questions detailed below.

1. What makes La Marque special?
2. Where do you see La Marque in five years?
3. Where would you like to see La Marque in five years?
4. What are the critical issues that the City needs to face over the next five years?
5. What do you see as the key priorities the City should establish in its strategic economic development plan?

6. What economic development issues are most important to you?

The feedback and responses from the eight focus group sessions and the associated written responses were aggregated into a presentation presented at the planning charrette (See Appendix 2).

D. Interview Process

A number of key informants and critical community leaders were engaged in this strategic planning process through individual interviews. The interview format was similar to the process used in the focus group sessions and the same guarantees of confidentiality were secured. The feedback received from the interviews were aggregated with the focus group responses and reported to the charrette participants.

E. Charrette

On May 19, 2015 a planning charrette was held in the workroom behind city council chambers in La Marque. Thirty one individuals representing a cross section of the city leadership including elected officials, city staff leadership, La Marque EDC representatives and key representatives from city boards and commissions participated in this process. These individuals were selected due to the fact that they will be responsible for implementing the goals and recommendations of the plan. Appendix 2 contains the report presented to the participants of the charrette.

The charrette process included a presentation and group discussion of the results from the focus groups and interviews and a brief review of the trend demographic data as a foundation for the subsequent group processes. Following the presentation the group was divided up into five sub groups to complete the following two assignments.

Assignment 1 Critical Issues: Each group was asked to identify the top four critical issues that they determine will have the most profound and sustainable impact on the future of La Marque from each of these perspectives.

- Community Development and Quality of Life Issues
- Community Infrastructure Issues
- Economic Development Issues

Each group was given 15 minutes to identify their four critical issues. Each sub group reported back to the larger group their responses and a consolidated listing of these critical issues was developed.
Assignment 2 Community Goals: Each sub group was asked to identify their top six goals that need to be accomplished over the next seven years addressing the identified critical issues. The groups were asked to focus their goals on strategies designed to create a stronger, healthier, economically prosperous La Marque.

The groups were asked to focus on goals that were:

1. **Attainable** with existing and predicted resources.
2. **Measurable** – providing measurement criteria to determine the success of the goal.
3. **Sustainable** - goals that will make the greatest impact long term.
4. **Comprehensive** – addressing the following perspectives
   - Community Development and Quality of Life Issues
   - Community Infrastructure Investment
   - Economic Development Priorities

Each group was given 15 minutes to identify their goals. Each sub group reported back to the larger groups their responses and a consolidated listing of these goals was developed.

Following the creation of the combined listing of critical issues and community goals each charrette participant was provided 20 colored dots to use in voting for the critical issues and goals that they personally felt were most important for the future of La Marque. Ten of the dots were to be used to express preference among the listing of critical issues with no more than four dots used to vote for any single issue. Ten of the dots were to be used to express preference among the listing of community goals with no more than four dots used to vote for any single goal. Following this voting process a priority listing of critical issues and community goals was developed.
2. La Marque Summary Demographic Data Review

La Marque compared to Texas state averages

- Median house value below state average.
- Unemployed percentage below state average.
- Black race population percentage significantly above state average.
- Median age above state average.
- Foreign-born population percentage below state average.
- Length of stay since moving in above state average.
- House age above state average

A. Population in 2013: 15,154 (97% urban, 3% rural).

- Males: 7,465 (49.3%)
- Females: 7,689 (50.7%)
- Median resident age: 33.9 years
- Texas median age: 34.0 years
- Population density: 1,065 people per square mile
- For population 25 years and over in La Marque
  - Unemployed: 10.1%
  - Mean travel time to work (commute): 25.8 minutes
- 1,402 residents are foreign born (7.7% Latin America).
  - La Marque: 9.2%
  - Texas: 16.5%
B. Income and Employment

Estimated median household income in 2013: $41,679
Compared to Texas statewide $51,704
(Compared to $34,841 in 2000)

Estimated per capita income in 2013: $20,050
(Compared to $17,518 in 2000)

Percentage of residents living in poverty in 2013: 20.1%
(15.5% for White Non-Hispanic residents, 16.7% for Black residents, 29.1% for Hispanic or Latino residents, 4.1% for other race residents, 27.9% for two or more races residents)

Unemployment in June 2014:
La Marque: 6.0%
Texas: 5.5%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEDIAN EARNINGS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS (IN 2013 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS)</th>
<th>La Marque, Texas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BY SEX BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universe: Population 25 years and over with earnings 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey</td>
<td>Estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td>31,833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school graduate</td>
<td>16,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate (includes equivalency)</td>
<td>16,389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college or associate's degree</td>
<td>36,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>57,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or professional degree</td>
<td>52,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male:</td>
<td>30,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school graduate</td>
<td>20,174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate (includes equivalency)</td>
<td>16,497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college or associate's degree</td>
<td>38,178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>76,719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or professional degree</td>
<td>53,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female:</td>
<td>32,716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school graduate</td>
<td>9,597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate (includes equivalency)</td>
<td>16,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college or associate's degree</td>
<td>35,056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>52,688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or professional degree</td>
<td>40,313</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. Housing and Cost of Living

Estimated median house or condo value in 2013: $84,571
(Compared to $57,800 in 2000 in La Marque)
Compared to Texas statewide: $132,000
Median real estate property taxes paid for housing units with mortgages in 2013: $1,794 (1.8%)

Median real estate property taxes paid for housing units with no mortgage in 2013: $1,208 (1.5%)

March 2013 cost of living index in La Marque: 91.9 less than average (U.S. average is 100)

D. Educational Attainment (%) in 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>La Marque</th>
<th>Texas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school or equivalent</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year of college</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or more years of college</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional degree</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate degree</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. United States Census Data

United States Census Data *

* Please note - This data differs in great detail from other data but is presented as the official baseline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>La Marque</th>
<th>Galveston County</th>
<th>State of Texas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land area in square miles, 2010</td>
<td>13.91</td>
<td>378.36</td>
<td>261,231.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons per square mile, 2010</td>
<td>1,042.8</td>
<td>769.9</td>
<td>96.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population, 2013 estimate:</td>
<td>15,154</td>
<td>307,465</td>
<td>26,505,637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population, 2010 (April 1) estimates base:</td>
<td>14,511</td>
<td>291,304</td>
<td>25,146,104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population, percent change - April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2013:</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>2010/2013</th>
<th>2010/2013</th>
<th>2010/2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persons under 5 years</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons under 18 years</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons 65 years and over</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female persons</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White alone</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>80.2%</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and Other</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White alone, not Hispanic</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or Latino</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household</th>
<th>2009-2013</th>
<th>2009-2013</th>
<th>2009-2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living in same house</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>82.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year &amp; over</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born persons</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language other than English</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spoken at home, pct age 5+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>2009-2013</th>
<th>2009-2013</th>
<th>2009-2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate or</td>
<td>83.9%</td>
<td>87.1%</td>
<td>81.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher, percent of persons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age 25+, 2009-2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree or higher</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>percent of persons age 25+,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>2009-2013</th>
<th>2009-2013</th>
<th>2009-2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Per capita money income in</td>
<td>$20,544</td>
<td>$30,926</td>
<td>$26,019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>past 12 months (2013 dollars),</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income</td>
<td>$42,369</td>
<td>$61,877</td>
<td>$51,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons below poverty level</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>percent, 2009-2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Business

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of firms</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>22,869</td>
<td>2,164,852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-owned firms, percent</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian- and Alaska Native-owned firms, percent, 2007</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian-owned firms, percent</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander-owned firms, percent, 2007</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic-owned firms, percent</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women-owned firms, percent</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturers’ shipments, 2007 ($1000) (1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23,480,817</td>
<td>593,541,502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchant wholesaler sales, 2007 ($1000)</td>
<td>82,750</td>
<td>1,761,558</td>
<td>424,238,194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail sales, 2007 ($1000)</td>
<td>168,991</td>
<td>2,750,294</td>
<td>311,334,781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail sales per capita, 2007</td>
<td>$12,136</td>
<td>$9,700</td>
<td>$13,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and food services sales, 2007 ($1000)</td>
<td>19,774</td>
<td>590,991</td>
<td>42,054,592</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1: Counties with 500 employees or less are excluded.

(a) Includes persons reporting only one race.

(b) Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories.

D: Suppressed to avoid disclosure of confidential information

F: Fewer than 25 firms

FN: Footnote on this item for this area in place of data

NA: Not available

S: Suppressed; does not meet publication standards

X: Not applicable

Z: Value greater than zero but less than half unit of measure shown

Source: U. S. Census Bureau: State and County Quick Facts, Data derived from Population Estimates, American Community Survey, Census of Population and Housing, County Business Patterns, Economic Census, Survey of Business Owners, Building Permits, Census of Governments
3. Citizen Input: Focus Group and Interview Findings

The focus groups and interviews were organized to gather strategic input from each of the major sectors of the community including:

- The business community
- The non-profit and faith based communities
- Civic organizations leadership
- City of La Marque staff leadership
- Countywide current and former elected leaders
- Current and former La Marque elected leaders.
- Active community and city volunteer leaders
- Educational leaders

The focus group attendees were reflective in age, race and community tenure of the general La Marque community and represent, individually or through organizations, a commitment to invest their time and resources in the successful economic future of La Marque. Their opinions and visions of the community varied widely as did their evaluation of various community assets and opportunities. Participation in the group sessions varied from a low of four participants to a high of nine. The groups participated actively in the process and expressed open and honest opinions (brutal facts) within a commitment to individual and group confidentiality. What was said in any session was to remain confidential to the participants in the session. All results are presented in the aggregate with no comments, assessments or opinions identified with any individual participant or focus group.

Each of the focus group participants was asked to provide their open and honest responses in an environmental assessment of La Marque or SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). The following provides a combination of the input, suggestions, opinions and thoughts shared during the environmental assessment portion of the focus groups activities. The input is organized into groupings of similar thoughts.
Strengths

La Marque’s Location
- Hub or Center of Galveston County
- The protection afforded by the levy
- Vacant land to develop especially along I-45
- Development opportunities west of I-45
- Proximity to area industry
- Proximity and Access to UTMB
- Access to the beaches and area recreation
- Land to redevelop in the interior of the city especially along already developed major transportation routes (e.g. FM 1765)
- Great climate – ability to recruit from the north

Community Commitment and Pride
- A genuine love and appreciation for La Marque as their home town – a sense of community pride and ownership among some residents
- Commitment to restore La Marque to the past glory
- Small town pride
- Community desire to change, improve and grow
- A clear understanding of what type of community La Marque desires to be and what types of jobs and investment we desire to recruit and expand
- La Marque history and tradition
- La Marque Cougar football
- A strong sense of ownership and pride especially in the long term residents
- Folks proud to call La Marque home
- La Marque Cougar Pride in the city not just the schools and team
- A history or legacy of accomplishment and success to build upon

La Marque Human Capital
- Visionary citizens
- Good, committed leaders and citizens that want to see and help facilitate needed change for a better future for La Marque
- Good potential labor pool
- Active LMISD Board of Trustees
- Active and committed community volunteers
- Committed Mayor
- New folks with new ideas coming to the new residential development areas
La Marque Community
- The right size community – not too small – not too big
- Small town size and feeling
- Strong faith based community
- Low crime rates
- Strong Civic Clubs
- Diversity - racial, social, economic
- Great potential as a retirement town
- Community “ripe” for and encourages business development

City Management and Operations
- Aggressive, well supported, well respected and talented city economic development staff and structure (La Marque Economic Development Corporation)
- Small town feeling and operation including limited traffic and ease of getting things done at city hall.
- Low tax rates
- Good City Manager
- Good Police Chief
- Good public safety operation
- Good and effective city management
- Good city department heads in the new administration
- Pro economic development mindset

City Resources
- Good foundation infrastructure
- Highland Bayou park
- Carbide Park
- The La Marque EDC
- Tax incentives available from the EDC/City
- Beautiful trees
- Omega Bay development

General
- Bayou fest
- Good work environment and culture
- College of the Mainland
- New housing developments in the city providing new residents
- A community ripe for internal redevelopment
- Business development (Walmart, Sam’s, etc.)
- The potential to redevelop the older outlet mall
- No traffic congestion
- Low property values – La Marque is a good buy for residential and commercial property and buildings
- Low cost of Living

Weaknesses

City Appearance and Infrastructure
- Blight is rampant
- Poor water, sewer and drainage infrastructure
- La Marque looks “scary” giving the perception of an unsafe, high crime community.
- Appearance of Texas Avenue and the interior of the city including city facilities.
- Too many vacant buildings
- Too many dilapidated structures that need to be torn down
- Condition/appearance of city homes, streets, sidewalks, businesses, and government buildings especially the landscaping
- Lack of a landscaping code and enforcement
- Too many dead end streets
- Poor condition of roads
- Ugly City - nothing looks good – no point of pride physically in the city.
- The condition of the FM 1765 and Highway 3 intersection
- Lack of adequate street lighting

La Marque Independent School District
- The poor performing La Marque Independent School District including the image, board of trustees, faculty and staff (exclusive of Superintendent Watkins), facilities, performance and overall perception
- LMISD enrollment decline especially in the younger age classifications
- LMISD leadership and Board of Trustees failing to recognize and be truthful about the academic quality and performance of the schools
- Local politics infused into the LMISD issues
- Ineffective school board leadership
- Racial issues driving the LMISD issues
- LMISD leadership and Board of Trustees failing to put the education of the students as a higher priority than saving their jobs or their school district
• Old and empty LMISD campuses and building are an eye sore and send the message of a declining community

**Community Attitudes and Commitment**
• Inner city culture and vision
• Tolerant of the current state and of disorder
• Decline in city pride and interest
• Older community leaders resistant to change - desire to go back to the “good old days” in La Marque
• Residents who have given up on La Marque
• Lack of interest in the future of La Marque
• Racial divide – growing cancer impacting every issue and plan in La Marque
• A lack of commitment or desire to work for a better La Marque among many especially the younger families and shorter tem residents. A flight as opposed to fight mentality.
• Complacency
• Lack of unity
• Lack of drive
• Lack of a sense of community
• Lack of hope
• Apathy for the future of La Marque by the population under the age of 65
• Tunnel vision
• Divided community effort and vision racially, socially, economically and by age
• Too many personal agendas among various groups within the city.
• Silo mentality – only interested in my issues or my priorities.

**City Elected and Appointed Leadership**
• City Council infighting producing negative results
• Poor community perception of the city council
• City leaders do not follow the letter and spirit of the City charter – role of the City Council and Mayor not respected and followed
• No new emerging leaders – same folks serving over and over again in city leadership – no new ideas or commitment – no leadership transition or succession plans
• Lack of new or younger candidates for boards and elected positions
• City Staff and City leaders (elected and appointed) not always on the “same page” on priorities and issues
• Negative perception and lack of trust of the elected and appointed leaders by the staff and negative perceptions and lack of trust of the staff of the elected and appointed leaders - not universal but often stated.
• Poor inner-city communication between the city and the residents and within the city
• Lack of transparency in city government.
• Zoning and building codes not enforced

City Staff and Operations
• City staff is being held accountable for items and goals that they are not their responsibility
• Poor city management and staff leadership
• Poor inner-city communication between the city and the residents and within the city
• Lack of capability, experience and skills of city staff
• Lack of transparency in city government.
• Negative perception and lack of trust of the elected and appointed leaders by the staff and negative perceptions and lack of trust of the staff of the elected and appointed leaders - not universal but often stated.
• Performance is discouraged within city management
• Lack of staff training and professional development
• Hiring the “best folks we can afford”
• High staff turnover
• Lack of scheduled maintenance
• Zoning and building codes not enforced
• City Staff and City leaders (elected and appointed) not always on the “same page” on priorities and issues
• Diversity of the city staff
• City staff feels “beat up” by city leadership and residents
• Difficulty in the development process – paperwork processes difficult and follow-up support lacking

Demographics
• Income divide
• Low income of majority of the residents
• The attraction of low income population due to cheap housing
• Too many residents living one government check at a time
• Lack of programs/service leading to residents self sufficiency
• High unemployment
- Ike refugees from public housing in La Marque
- The “you owe me” mentality of some residents
- Aging of the community
- No new young families moving to La Marque
- Younger folks especially young families moving away
- Educational attainment of residents
- Social divide of the city
- Racial divide of the city

**Community Perceptions**
- The poor current La Marque “Brand” or Image
- Long term poor perception from those outside the community of La Marque based on the problems and performance of the LMISD
- Poor perception of the city by the long term residents
- Perception as a bedroom community
- Poor external perception of the City of La Marque
- La Marque is an embarrassment
- Perception of and/or reality of high crime

**General**
- Failure to share/communicate our successes
- Lack of primary residential support businesses including grocery stores, restaurants, health care, retail
- Primary support sales tax revenue going to adjacent communities
- Drug use and crime
- Lack of water reuse plans
- No true economic drivers
- Lack of planning
- Reactive not proactive policies and actions
- No regional thought
- Limited land - cannot expand - land locked
- Lack of Galveston County interest, support and involvement

**Residential Resources**
- Declining real estate values
- Age of homes
- Lack of residential redevelopment efforts
- Lack of new residential opportunities
- Limited housing inventory
• Inability to sell a home - no buyers
• Limited home ownership Lack of family involvement
• No family culture
• Decline in youth sports programs
• Decline in service club activity
• Nothing for older youth to do

Family Support
• Limited home ownership
• Lack of family involvement
• Decline in youth sports programs
• Decline in service club activity
• Nothing for older youth to do

Opportunities

Location
• Vacant, affordable land with great access especially the old golf course land and adjacent tracks.
• Outstanding transportation opportunities through I-45, Highways 146, 6 and 3. The best transportation corridor and location in the entire region.
• Proximity to Houston
• Dual rail access and service provided by BNSF and UP producing competitive rates.
• I-45 trickle down investment - the gradual movement of residential/service and retail opportunities along the corridor from Houston past 646 to La Marque. (long term prospect)
• Proximity to good paying jobs.
• “Leakage” development from Lago Mar and other surroundings cities including Galveston.

Trade
• Proximity to the regional ports (Houston, Texas City and Galveston) and the potential future container port and rail bridge to Pelican Island as well as the potential of the expanded Panama Canal.
Oil, Gas and Petrochemical Related

- Proximity to abundant sources of oil and natural gas from the regional shale operations
- DOW expansion and redevelopment and use of the adjacent land in La Marque

Medical and Health Care

- Proximity to University of Texas Medical Branch-Galveston and the opportunity to develop medical related business and industries along the I-45 corridor on sites protected by the levy possibly in conjunction with the regional specialty chemicals industries
- Opportunities for medical supply/support and biomedical related business opportunities in conjunction with UTMB and UT Health Houston.

Tourism

- Potential La Marque tourism support. Build upon and partner with Galveston in supporting their growing cruise and tourism industry.
- Support Hotels and parking.
- Proximity to and opportunity for tourism support development including casinos if legalized
- Support and build upon the potential of the dog track as a destination venue.
- Build, market, brand in conjunction with the La Marque and surrounding community festivals including Mardi Gras and Dickins on the Strand

Residential

- Development opportunities for senior living with affordable land protected by the levy, close to the medical resources of UTMB and Houston and a good safe quality of life.
- West side residential development opportunities

Commercial

- Opportunities for alternative energy projects and related green technologies
- Opportunities for distribution, sub assembly and light manufacturing.
- Good support from area commercial and industrial partners
- Distribution, Warehouse and storage facilities protected by the levy.
- Technology/NASA related business development
General
- The strong and growing regional and Texas economy especially in trade and petro/specialty chemicals
- The opportunity to rebrand La Marque
- Small changes produce a big result in a small town like La Marque
- The opportunity to fix, eliminate and/or merge the La Marque Independent School District. The opportunity to remove this barrier to local community and economic development success and move forward especially with residential development.
- The opportunity to attract foreign investment due to the proximity to Houston, the regional industrial complexes, transportation hubs (land and rail and port) and inexpensive land
- Opportunity to engage the community’s youth and regional young professionals in the redevelopment of La Marque.
- Water including (effluent) reuse for commercial purposes and desalination potential.

Threats

Community Perceptions and Attitudes
- Overall external poor perception of the city
- Negative talk and perceptions becoming the reality
- The external “Toxic City” Perception
- Too many residents focused on the past and trying to regain the “Old La Marque”
- Local community resistance to change
- Those individuals and groups working against La Marque’s future for their own personal gain or position of power.
- Perception that La Marque is on “life support”
- Community fear from crime and negative trends.

General
- Lack of accountability
- Changing demographic trends of the city
- High percentage of city and school district employees do not live in La Marque or call this community “home”
- Unreported crime
- Small size of the city and the resources required to make systematic and substantial change and investment
• The community of La Marque getting older (age of population) and gradually the community just dies off.

LMISD
• LMISD future - either dissolution of the school district or, if the district, is saved the long term outside negative perception of poor performance that will linger regardless of improvements
• LMISD Board unwilling to change
• LMISD poor campus leadership
• LMISD losing school campuses

Environmental
• Hurricanes – the reality of the impact of loss of life and property and the external perception that investment or living close to the coast is not wise.
• Hazardous cargo moving through the city
• Problems or major events at the area chemical/fuel plants
• Ability to respond to natural or industrial disasters including financial, physical and emotional needs

Economic
• Labor Unions and Strikes
• Growth in Dickinson, Santa Fe, Hitchcock and Lago Mar further impacting the retail and residential viability of La Marque
• Expansion of the Lago Mar development restricting the development of the I-45 frontage in La Marque
• Weak tax base getting weaker
• Limited commercial tax base
• I-45 development bypassing La Marque
• Lack of demand for La Marque commercial and residential real estate depressing further the local tax base and limiting the ability to sell or lease property in La Marque

Resources
• Water treatment and water distribution system needs and regulations
• Availability and/or future cost of water
• Cost/environmental requirements of sewer treatment
State and National

- Divided community, state and nation on racial and economic lines
- Stricter environmental policies impacting area industry
- Unfunded federal and state mandates especially environmental and water
- Higher windstorm and flood (Biggert-Waters) insurance rates due to the federal policies restricting area development

International

- Extended low crude prices limiting investment in new plants
- Terrorism especially at the area plants

Questions posed by the Focus groups to be considered included:

- What are the needs for the businesses, residents and visitors/travelers along I-45 in La Marque?
- Why Visit La Marque?
- Why should I live in La Marque?
4. Planning Charrette Results

The La Marque Economic Development Corporation in conjunction with the La Marque City Council hosted a planning charrette Tuesday May 10, 2015 from 6 pm to 9 pm in the City Council Chamber work room. Thirty community leaders representing the La Marque City Council, the La Marque Economic Development Corporation and a variety of city boards, commissions, neighborhoods and employers gathered for the event. The charrette is an intensive planning session providing participants the opportunity to collaborate on a vision for the city as well as establish priority goals for accomplishing this vision. The participants were engaged, active and honest in their assessment and feedback. The results, as presented below, were received with consensus support.

The purpose of the event was to receive a presentation of the results from the various focus groups, interviews and data reviews completed as a part of the strategic planning process from February 2015 through May 2015. In addition the Charrette was designed to identify critical issues that will impact the future of La Marque and to identify priority community goals to direct community investment, strategies and decisions.

The outline of the charrette can be found in appendix 2 and is contained in the PowerPoint slides used to guide the event. The following is a presentation of the results of the charrette and associated group processes.

A. Critical Issue Identification

Following a presentation of the environmental assessment results (SWOT Analysis – Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities) completed during the focus group and interview process, the participants in the charrette divided up into groups of four to six participants to discuss and clarify the critical issues or facts impacting the positive and progressive future for La Marque. Each of the groups were asked to utilize the results reported from the focus groups and interviews as presented as well as the reported trend data to identify the top three to five critical issues facing La Marque. The groups were asked to identify issues that do or would have a profound and sustainable impact on the future of La Marque from the perspective of:

- Community Development
- Quality of Life
- Community Infrastructure Investment
- Future Economic Development Success
Following the development of the list of critical issues from each group a master list of issues were developed representing all the participants. Each individual was given the opportunity to prioritize these issues by placing votes (via colored dots) on the issues they felt constituted the greatest challenge or need for the community at that must be addressed with priority investment and action to improve the future for La Marque. Each participant was provided 10 total votes to be used during this prioritizing process with a maximum of four votes to be place on any single issue. A master listing of rank order critical issues was developed through this process.

- **Critical Issue 1: Blight Reduction** (receiving 41 total votes).
- **Critical Issue 2: The Future of the La Marque Independent School District (LMISD) and quality public education opportunities in La Marque** (receiving 39 total votes).
- **Critical Issue 3: Infrastructure Needs** (receiving 32 total votes).
- **Critical Issue 4: Community Image** (receiving 29 total votes).
- **Critical Issue 5: Economic Development** (receiving 25 total votes).
- **Critical Issue 6: City Human Resources** (receiving 23 total votes).
- **Critical Issue 7: Communication** (receiving 19 total votes).
- **Critical Issue 8: Youth Engagement** (receiving 18 total votes).
- **Critical Issue 9: Volunteer Engagement and Development** (18 total votes):
- **Critical Issue 10: Quality of Life Issues** (16 total votes):
- **Critical Issue 11: New Leadership Development Efforts** (15 total votes):
- **Critical Issue 12: Residential Plan** (5 total votes):

The following issues were identified as the most critical and are presented in priority order.

**Critical Issue 1: Blight Reduction** (receiving 41 total votes).

The overall appearance of the city was determined to be the most critical barrier to future development and success of La Marque. The groups expressed concern that initial negative perspectives and opinions of La Marque were often developed and reinforced by the excessive blight and that these inaccurate and negative opinions of the city were detrimental to the city’s future success. The blight generated a perception of high crime, high poverty and a city that was declining both in the minds of visitors and residents alike. The groups also expressed the opinion that the blight was a disincentive for responsible property owners to maintain their properties to a higher standard due to the fact that the appearance of their properties was negatively impacted by the poor condition of neighboring properties. The concern of the ability to create a positive first impression of La Marque or mitigate a negative first impression due to the blight was also expressed.
The potential remedy of enhanced code enforcement for both land and improvements was discussed as a critical blight reduction related strategy.

Of special note and discussion were the following blight characteristics:

- **Condemned and vacant and dilapidated buildings:** Clearly the top priority was addressing this component of blight. These structures were identified both as unsightly and unsafe and a breeding ground for criminal behavior. The demolishing and removal of these structures especially along the major community arteries of FM 1765 (Texas Avenue), Highway 146, Highway 3, Bayou Road, Cedar Drive, Interstate 45 and FM 519 was expressed as the major blight related concern. In addition the discussion of the vacant La Marque Independent School District campuses was identified as a significant concern sending a negative message regarding the “health” of the La Marque community. The limited potential for efficient reuse of these specialized facilities fostered discussions of demolition or renovation should enrollment warrant.

- **Landscaping:** The condition of vacant lots and the resulting “eyesore” was discussed in great length. The ability via stronger code enforcement and direct city intervention (cleaning) to improve the appearance of unimproved property was discussed in great length. Of particular noted was the appearance of road right of way, ditches and other properties owned or managed by the city. The groups suggested that this could be an initial area of priority with the city leading by example to reduce blight.

- **Other Issues:** The groups identified a number of other blight related issues that needed attention including broken and overgrown sidewalks; need for stronger signage ordinances and approval processes; the potential for a paint partnership to address private property conditions and the need for a substantial, well lighted and landscaped welcome sign along Interstate 45.

**Critical Issue 2: The Future of the La Marque Independent School District (LMISD) and quality public education opportunities in La Marque** (receiving 39 total votes).

The future of La Marque is directly tied to the provision of quality public education within the city. This was the clear and unanimous opinion of all charrette participants. The ability to address this issue is in the hands of a limited group of individuals including the State of Texas, the LMISD Trustees and the LMISD teachers/administrators and
students. General community support for the future of LMISD was shared by the charrette participants but an equally important message of bringing this issue to closure regardless of the final outcome was also shared. The clear priority expressed was the need for a definitive long term plan for quality educational opportunities within the city limits of La Marque and closure to the uncertainty and negative media surrounding this highly visible and media driven process. The issue is larger than quality education and the future for the local students and includes branding/marketing the La Marque community for economic and community development opportunities as well as fostering La Marque as a location for residential development especially for families.

**Critical Issue 3: Infrastructure Needs** (receiving 32 total votes).

The charrette participants expressed concern for the current and future infrastructure needs for the city of La Marque. Included in these discussions were roads, water, sewer, drainage and amenities. These discussions included the investments that must be made to both support current operations (residents and businesses) as well as new infrastructure that must be installed to foster expanded development.

Of special note and discussion were the following infrastructure issues:

- **Water:** The discussions regarding water centered on the availability of water sources and the needed improvement for water distribution to current and future developments.
- **Sewer:** The potential cost for environmentally required changes to the treatment plant and the maintenance of existing pumps and lift stations. In addition the cost to extend sewer for potential new development was expressed as a concern
- **Roads:** The condition of current roads especially in the older neighborhoods was expressed as a critical issue
- **Drainage:** The condition of drainage ditches and the need for continual maintenance and clearing was discussed both from an aesthetic and operational perspective.
- **Amenities:** A general discussion of community amenities was discussed as a critical issue related to overall community development. Of particular interest and concern were amenities for youth especially older youth and the need for a youth community center.
Critical Issue 4: Community Image (receiving 29 total votes).

The top two critical issues identified by the participants had both a primary and secondary component. The secondary component in both cases impacted negatively the image of La Marque both for current residents and for individuals/business interests outside the city. The participants indicated that the perceived negative image of La Marque due to both external appearance of the city and the recent negative publicity surrounding the LMISD was a critical factor that needed to be addressed. The image of La Marque was identified by the group as a barrier for both residential and commercial/business expansion.


The participants expressed support and positive encouragement for the work of the La Marque Economic Development Corporation and the leadership involved. The critical issue expressed however was over the lack of success measured in both foundational jobs created and tax (sales and property) revenue. The stagnate tax base both in terms of new property added to the tax rolls and declining values severely limits the ability of the city to address priority issues such as blight and infrastructure improvements. The need to grow the tax base with new investment through expanded and aggressive economic development efforts and incentives was expressed as a critical issue for the future of La Marque.

Critical Issue 6: City Human Resources (receiving 23 total votes).

The participants expressed concern for the balance between the demands placed on the La Marque city employees and the size of the city workforce. The consensus of the participants was that the limited city budget simply does not provide sufficient human resources to meet the expected demand for productivity and outcomes. In addition the current city salary structure does not adequately compensate the current city workforce leading to high levels of employee turnover and great difficulty in attracting talented and experienced employees to La Marque. It is noted that the participant group included a number of current full time city employees.
Critical Issue 7: Communication (receiving 19 total votes).

Frustration was expressed by the participants that a lack of communication and communication tools were present in La Marque to inform the residents and outside interests of the plans, opportunities and “good news” in La Marque. The participants discussed the success of previous communication strategies and tools in keeping the residents informed and involved and the positive outcomes resulting from these efforts. A lack of effective communication was perceived to impact community image, teamwork, partnerships, community involvement and overall community success.

Critical Issue 8: Youth Engagement (receiving 18 total votes).

The participants expressed concern over the lack of opportunity for and engagement of the youth in La Marque. The future of the city is predicated on the development of the next generation and the ability to attract new resident families to La Marque. Both these assessments require an active, successful and comprehensive youth engagement strategy. Issues such as the decline in youth team sports participation, the challenges with the LMISD and the lack of a facility and programming directed at children and especially older youth were noted for action. Lack of youth engagement programming was also cited as a potential reason for both declining school populations and limited growth in the attraction of new families to La Marque.

Critical Issue 9: Volunteer Engagement and Development (18 total votes):

Tied with youth engagement for the number of votes (18), the participants expressed concern over the declining number and engagement of volunteers in efforts focused on the improvement of La Marque and the community’s quality of life. It was noted that volunteer engagement has declined nationwide (see note 1) over the last decade across the country and that this trend is not unique to La Marque. The trend was especially acute in city efforts including the participation in boards, committees and commissions. Most of the volunteer members serving the city have extended experience in multiple settings over extended periods. While this was also noted as a strength in terms of experience, the lack of "new faces and fresh ideas" was expressed as a hindrance to long term city success. The lack of volunteers to support youth and civic engagement activities and the lack of participation in local civic clubs was noted as a trend of major concern.

Note 1: Recent study (2014) by the Corporation for National and Community Service indicates that Texas ranks 43 out of 50 states in volunteerism with less than 23% (national average of 36%) of residents indicating that they volunteer in civic, religious, educational or social events or organizations a 3% drop from figures reported in 2011.
Critical Issue 10: Quality of Life Issues (16 total votes):

Closely aligned with Critical Issue 8 (youth engagement) was a concern addressed by the participants for the development of various venues, programs and services focused at enhancing the quality of life factors in La Marque. Of particular concern were venues and programs designed to serve families especially younger families. Participants expressed the competition from other communities within Galveston County with perceived enhanced "quality of life" opportunities and the impact this can have on business and residential recruitment efforts. Participants recognized the value of amenities such as Highland Bayou Park and programming such as Bayou Fest as examples of efforts to be enhanced and replicated. The lack of a youth center was expressed by numerous participants as a significant weakness in quality of life resources in La Marque.

Critical Issue 11: New Leadership Development Efforts (15 total votes):

Closely aligned with Issue #9 (Volunteerism) and Issue #8 (Youth Engagement) was the concern with leadership development. The participants indicated that "the same leaders are used over and again". The lack of formal or informal efforts to insure effective leadership succession in critical efforts in La Marque was noted. The ability to attract, engage, mentor and prepare the next generation of La Marque leadership was cited as a concern. The participants indicated a perceived lack of interest in individuals within the community to aspire to leadership roles in the community.

Critical Issue 12: Residential Plan (5 total votes):

Clearly the lowest rated critical issue by the participants was the lack of a plan to encourage individuals to move to La Marque or to incent expanded residential development in the community. Many participants indicated that addressing the issues of blight and the school district will result in residential growth. Participants indicated a desire to develop a residential plan including various stages of housing (price, square footage, amenities, etc.) from starter homes through family homes to "empty nesters" to foster residential growth in a variety of categories.
B. Community Goals

Following the identification of the critical issues facing La Marque, the participants in the charrette divided up into groups of four to six participants to identify the critical community goals that must be accomplished to insure a strong future for La Marque. Each group was asked to identify their top six goals that they determined must be accomplished over the next five to seven years to create a stronger, healthier, economically prosperous La Marque. The groups were directed to provide goals that were:

- **Attainable** with existing resources
- **Measurable** providing recommended evaluation criteria to determine the success of the goal
- **Sustainable** with existing or realistically projected resources and revenue providing long term impact
- **Comprehensive** addressing community development, quality of life, community infrastructure investment and economic development priorities.

Following the development of the list of community goals from each group and consolidating similar goals a master listing was developed. Each individual was given the opportunity to prioritize these goal statements by placing votes (via colored dots) on the goals they felt most critical and that posed the greatest opportunity for the future of La Marque. Each participant was provided 10 total votes to be used during this prioritizing process with a maximum of four votes to be place on any single issue. A master listing of rank order goals was developed through this process. The listing is as follows:

1. Infrastructure Repair and Replacement Plan (37 votes)
2. Blight Reduction (36 votes)
3. Update and Enforce Code of Ordinances (30 votes)
4. Interstate 45 Plan (30 votes)
5. Communication Plan (27 votes)
6. Water/Sewer/Road Annual $1 Million Investment (16 votes)
7. Community Center Plan (14 votes)
8. Consolidation of LMISD into TCISD (13 votes)
9. Blight Reduction Plan (12 votes)
10. Grocery Store Plan (11 votes)
11. Expanded Tax Base Strategy (9 votes)
12. Economic Development Plan (9 votes)
13. Compensation Improvement Plan (9 votes)
14. Expanded Youth Recreation Program (7 votes)
15. Lemonade Day Plan (6 votes)

The following provides a prioritized listing of the agreed upon community goals:
Priority 1: Infrastructure Improvement Plan

Clearly the topic that received the greatest attention during the goals discussion with the participants was in the area of infrastructure needs. Each of the groups ranked this area of attention at or near the top of their goal recommendations. Two separate goal infrastructure statements were identified during the process including:

- Priority 1: Infrastructure Repair and Replacement Plan (37 votes)
- Priority 6: $1 Million Annual Water/Sewer/Road Investment (16 votes)

As these priorities are obviously linked they are presented together.

Goal I. A.
- Develop and approve by City Council a five year prioritized listing of infrastructure repair, replacement and expansion priorities of not less than $1 million per year by December 31, 2015.
- This plan will include projected sales tax revenues for five years as a primary source of revenue for financing these expenditures.
- Evaluate the plan annually as a part of the city’s budgeting process and reestablish priorities as needed.

Responsible Parties:  Mayor, City Manager, City Council
Resources Required:  staff time, engineering resources
Evaluation Measurements:
  1. Plan completed, approved by City Council, posted on the City’s web page by the approved deadline.
  2. Annual review, modification and approval of the plan by the City Council no later than September 1 of each subsequent fiscal year through FY 2022

Goal I. B.
- Implement the five year Infrastructure Improvement Plan by investing not less than $1 million per year beginning with FY 2017 through FY 2021 in road, water and sewer major repairs, improvements and expansion.

Responsible Parties:  Mayor, City Manager, City Council
Resources Required:  $1 million annually, staff time, engineering resources
Evaluation Measurement:  Annual report presented to City Council by the City Manager and posted on the city’s web page documenting the actual infrastructure projects competed or under contract and the amounts invested.
Priority 2: Blight Reduction

Equal to the commitment to infrastructure improvement was the commitment to making La Marque a more attractive place to live and work through a focused effort to remove blight. The following goal statements related directly to this effort

- Priority 2: Blight Reduction Program (36 votes)
- Priority 3: Update and Enforce Code of Ordnances (30 votes)
- Priority 9: Blight reduction Plan (12 votes)

As these priorities are obviously linked they will be presented together.

Goal 2. A.
- Develop and approve by City Council a comprehensive, priority based, blight reduction plan for La Marque by December 31, 2015 through the active participation of the La Marque Clean City Commission.
- Evaluate the plan annually as a part of the city's budgeting process and reestablish priorities as needed.

**Responsible Parties:** Mayor, City Manager, City Council

**Resources Required:** staff time, engineering resources

**Evaluation Measurements:**
1. Plan completed, approved by City Council, posted on the City’s web page by the approved deadline.
2. Annual review, modification and approval of the plan by the City Council no later than September 1 of each subsequent fiscal year through FY 2022

Goal 2. B.
- Based on the priorities established in the approved blight reduction plan, demolish and remove not less than 20 vacant and dilapidated structures each year beginning in FY 2016 through FY 2021.
- Develop and implement a plan to maintain the vacant lots to appropriate standards.
- Develop and implement a plan to recoup the cost of the demolition/clean up from the respective property owners through assessments or sale of the property.

**Responsible Parties:** Mayor, City Manager, City Council

**Resources Required:** budgeted resources, staff time, engineering resources
**Evaluation Measurements:**  Annual report presented to City Council by September of each year beginning with September 2017 providing a listing and photograph of each structure removed and each lot cleared along with a detail of the expenses associated with the processes.

**Goal 2. C.**
- Complete a comprehensive review of all La Marque city codes and ordinances related to appearance and safety of facilities and grounds for both residential and commercial including both compliance and fines.
- Provide recommendations for City Council consideration for improving the codes and ordinances to strengthen and streamline the city’s ability to address issues of blight.
- Complete the code and ordinance review process by June of 2016.

**Responsible Parties:** Mayor, City Manager, City Council City Staff  
**Resources Required:** staff time  
**Evaluation Measurement:**
1. Approval by City Council by June 2016 of a revised set of codes and ordinances designed to enhance enforcement of issues related to blight.

**Goal 2. D.**
- Develop, fund and implement a plan to enhance code enforcement of issues related to blight reduction in the City of La Marque beginning with the FY 2017 fiscal year.

**Responsible Parties:** Mayor, City Manager, City Council City Staff  
**Resources Required:** Additional budget resources for additional staff and operations  
**Evaluation Measurement:**
Annual report presented by the City Manager in September of each year beginning with September, 2018 providing a listing of all code enforcement actions completed during the year including an accounting of expenses incurred and income realized through fines and sales.
Priority 3: Interstate 45 Plan

Participants discussed the present and future potential of the Interstate 45 frontage within the city limits of La Marque especially as it relates to commercial and retail development. The desire to protect and manage this valuable resource for the future economic impact to the city was a high priority for the participants.

Goal 3. A.
- Develop for approval by Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council appropriate zoning and development guidelines to protect and enhance development along the La Marque Interstate 45 corridor by March 2016.
- Implement the revised guidelines by May 2016.

Responsible Parties: Director of Economic Development, La Marque EDC, City Manager, Planning and Zoning Commission, City Council

Resources Required: staff time

Evaluation Measurement:
Revised guidelines approved by the EDC, City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission.

Priority 4: Communication Plan

The participants indicated great frustration in the inability to communicate with the residents of La Marque and other interested parties the plans, needs and activities within the city. The website was noted as one source of information with limited usage. Many individuals shared the value of the former La Marque newsletter. The need for a comprehensive communication strategy was noted to support many of the other priority goals of the city.

Goal 4. A.
- Develop a comprehensive communication strategy including but not limited to web, social media, advertising and print (newsletters) to enhance the ability to communicate the positive news and opportunities available in La Marque.
- Complete the strategy development by November 2015
- Evaluate the implemented communication strategies annually.
Responsible Parties: Mayor, City Staff TBD
Resources Required: staff time, printing, postage, consultant services
Evaluation Measurements:
1. Communication strategic plan developed and presented to the City council for approval by December 1, 2015.
2. City Manager to provide a written report annually in December of each year evaluating the effectiveness of the communication strategic plan.

Goal 4. B.
• Develop a community newsletter to be distributed not less than 3 times each year beginning with FY 2016.

Responsible Parties: City Staff TBD
Resources Required: staff time, printing, postage,
Evaluation Measurement:
1. City Manager to provide a written report annually in December of each year evaluating the distribution and effectiveness of the community newsletter

Priority 5: Community Center Plan

The participants discussed the need for a community center to address numerous quality of life and youth services/engagement concerns. The need for a "Community Center" location that provides identity to the La Marque community and recreational and social opportunities for the residents was deemed an important priority. Concerns over funding the acquisition, construction and operation of such a center were noted.

Goal 5. A.
• Create a Community Center Exploration Task Force charged with the responsibility of exploring opportunities for the development of a La Marque community center no later than December 2015.
• Charge the task force with exploring issues related to the potential community center to include but not be restricted to:
  9. Purpose and uses by age group
  10. Recommended resources, amenities and capabilities in priority order
  11. Suggested models
  12. Estimated construction/renovation budget
  13. Estimated operational budget
  14. External grant and private funding opportunities
15. Potential partnerships
16. Potential sites or locations including vacant LMISD facilities

- The Community Center Exploration Task Force will report their findings and recommendations to the City Council by September 2016.

Responsible Parties: Mayor, City Manager, City Council, City Staff TBD
Resources Required: Staff time, local/area travel to see other centers
Evaluation Measurement:
The Community Center Exploration Task Force will present their recommendations for city council review by September 1, 2016

Priority 6: Consolidation of LMISD into TCISD

Clearly the most significant critical issue impacting the future of La Marque is the future of the La Marque Independent School District. The participants expressed a great need for closure in this issue as well as frustration in the inability to directly engage in this state driven process. The participants presented a desire to include closure to this issue as a priority goal in this process however neither the City of La Marque, the La Marque EDC or residents in general have little to no direct engagement in this process. As such, no goal is presented in this plan directly related to the future of the La Marque Independent School District with the caveat that this plan will be amended once this critical issue is resolved at the state level.

Priority 7: Grocery Store Plan

The desire to have a grocery store located within the city limits of La Marque in addition to the Walmart and Sam's development was paramount in the minds of many of the participants. This issue transcends the convenience for this retail service to a foundational hole in the fabric of the community. Many small cities in the region most notably Santa Fe and Hitchcock are struggling with this same concern. The participants indicated a desire for the city of La Marque to implement a campaign directed at attracting a grocery store in the manner that has proved success for other communities of similar size.

Goal 7

- Develop and implement a communication campaign directed at decision makers who site new locations for small grocery stores.
• Utilize broad based community support, social media, direct communication and leadership intervention to share the desire to work with grocery store chains to select La Marque as a location for development
• Create a La Marque Grocery Store Team to plan and conduct this effort in conjunction with area civic groups and the chamber of commerce.
• Develop a plan for review by the La Marque EDC by December 2015 for implementation in 2016.

**Responsible Parties:** La Marque EDC  
**Resources Required:** Volunteer Task Force Members, Staff Time, Printing  
**Evaluation Measurements:** Campaign implemented by January 2016 with a successful decision secured for a new grocery store by January 2018

**Priority 8: Expanded Tax Base Strategy**

Recent stagnation in the tax base for La Marque has negatively impacted the city's ability to invest in needed services and infrastructure. The participants indicated a desire to see a targeted effort to increase the city's tax base by 20% by 2020.

**Goal 8**
• Develop a plan with specific strategies designed to incent investment in La Marque's commercial and residential tax base.  
• Identify and address barriers to now development and construction in La Marque

**Responsible Parties:** La Marque EDC, Mayor, City Manager,  
**Resources Required:** staff time  
**Evaluation Measurement:** Certified tax rolls for the FY 2021 year will report a 20% increase in the tax base for La Marque compared to FY 2016

**Priority 9: Economic Development Plan**

Participants indicated a strong desire to expand efforts to incent job growth and capital investment in La Marque. While the work of the La Marque EDC and staff was respected and appreciated, the participants desired to see increased investment in these efforts and
a definitive incentive plan developed that could be marketed to potential investors and site selectors.

**Goal 9: Economic Development and Incentive Plan**

- Develop and present for approval to the La Marque EDC a focused economic development plan including basic incentive guidelines for distribution to various site selectors, developers and project managers by December 2015.

**Responsible Parties:** La Marque EDC, Economic Development Director  
**Resources Required:** Staff Time  
**Evaluation Measurement:** Economic Development Plan developed and approved by the La Marque EDC.

**Priority 10: Compensation Improvement Plan**

Participants indicated a desire to address the human resources challenges of the City of La Marque both in terms of adequate compensation and employee recruitment and retention. Participants indicated that the best way this issue could be addressed was by developing a new compensation improvement plan for the City of La Marque.

**Goal 10**

- Develop and present for approval to City Council by June 2016 a revised compensation plan for the city employees along with a proposed multiyear compensation adjustment plan to bring current employees in alignment with the new compensation schedules.

**Responsible Parties:** Mayor, City Manager, City Council City Staff  
**Resources Required:** Staff Time, Consultant  
**Evaluation Measurements:** The new compensation plan and implementation schedule will be presented to the City Council by June 1, 2016

**Priority 11: Expanded Youth Recreation Program**

The decline in youth recreation programs and opportunities was cited by the participants as a major deficiency in the quality of life metrics for La Marque. In addition to the
resources required to run these programs the lack of volunteer leaders and coaches was identified as a major barrier to the success of these efforts.

**Goal 11**

- **Establish a La Marque Youth Recreation Task Force by October 2015** to develop strategies to enhance youth recreation programs and volunteerism to support this effort. Plan to be developed and presented to City Council and invited community leaders by May 2016 with implementation by August 2016.

**Responsible Parties:** Mayor, City Manager, City Staff  
**Resources Required:** Staff Time, Volunteer Task Force Members  
**Evaluation Measurements:** Plan is completed and approved by the La Marque Youth Recreation Task Force and City Council by May 2016.

**Priority 12: Lemonade Day Plan for La Marque**

This idea was presented by one of the groups during the session. Lemonade Day is a national effort to develop business and entrepreneurial skills in elementary aged children. The program serves over 1 million children each year teaching business skills, life skills and mentorship. Galveston is home to one of the largest Lemonade Day programs in the country serving nearly 1000 children in 2015. The program in La Marque would be supported by this effort.

**Goal 12**

- **Develop a Lemonade Day program in cooperation with the chamber of commerce, local schools and local business to engage 200 elementary kids annually in this nationally recognized strategy to teach business and life skills by May 2016.**

**Responsible Party:** City Manager  
**Resources Required:** Volunteer Leaders, Volunteer Mentors, Program Materials  
**Evaluation Measurements:** The active participation of 200 children in the La Marque Lemonade day program by May 2017.
5. Recommendations and Conclusions

A. Draft Vision Statement

The La Marque is recognized as the hub of Galveston County and a desirable, progressive and business-friendly community within which to locate and conduct business.

B. Draft Mission Statement

We will achieve our vision by:

1) Ensuring efficient and predictable business planning, zoning and permitting processes and focused and effective economic development incentives and services.

2) Creating and sustaining a safe, clean, green, and fiscally sound business environment that benefits residents, businesses, and the region;

3) Promoting La Marque for its central location, prime business sites, great climate, and excellent transportation, water, and public safety services; as well as for other strengths that distinguish La Marque from other municipalities, such as its proximity to the petrochemical complex, the regional international ports and the city of Houston; civic participation; and history.

4) Actively recruiting and retaining businesses, especially supporting emerging sectors that create quality, good-paying jobs.

5) Fostering an educated and job-ready local workforce by driving the improvement of the academic performance of La Marque students and by connecting businesses, learning institutions, and community agencies.

C. Conclusion

The elected officials, civic leaders and citizens of La Marque have many assets and opportunities upon which to build a vibrant and prosperous community. The participants in this study demonstrated great honesty and candor in recognizing and clarifying their weaknesses and challenges. The participants also demonstrated a deep love and commitment to do the work to build and rebuild the foundation and community of La Marque. As this commitment is sustained, La Marque will see the desired outcomes.
Appendices

Appendix 1:  Focus Group and Charrette Handouts

Appendix 2:  Charrette Report
Appendix 1: Focus Group and Charrette Handouts

La Marque, Texas
Strategic Planning Process 2015
Focus Group Handout

The La Marque Economic Development Corporation in conjunction with the Mayor and City Council reached consensus on the need for a new strategic plan to guide the economic and community development efforts of our hometown. In support of this strategic planning effort we appreciate your participation in this focus group session. Please find below the questions we will consider during the focus group session.

As an important leader in our community your input is critical to the success of this process and the effectiveness of the resulting plan. Your honest and thoughtful input is appreciated. Please add additional sheets if necessary.

Your individual responses will be kept confidential and viewed only by our planning consultant Dr. C. B. Rathburn. Only collective responses without names will be reported. Please email your completed responses to C. B. Rathburn at RathburnPlanning@gmail.com or place your completed questionnaire in a sealed envelope and address it to:

Alex Getty  
Executive Director  
La Marque Economic Development Corporation  
La Marque City Hall  
1111 Bayou Road  
La Marque, TX 77568

Thank you for your participation in this important process guiding the future of our city.
Environmental Assessment or SWOT analysis
*(Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities)*

Please share your assessment of the city’s internal strengths and weaknesses in the space provided. Please also share your opinions on the external opportunities or trends that the City could capitalize on for greater success as well as the external threats that must be addressed that could negatively impact our success.

1. **Strengths** - Strengths are the internal qualities, resources and abilities of the City and community that enable us to accomplish our goals. How can we utilize each *Strength*?

2. **Weaknesses** - Weaknesses are the internal qualities, characteristics and resource limitations of the City and community that limit us from accomplishing our goals and achieving our full potential. How can we mitigate or eliminate each *Weakness*?

3. **Opportunities** - Opportunities are those trends or activities external to the city that will enhance our success in achieving our goals. How can we make use of each *Opportunity*?

4. **Threats** - Threats are those trends or activities in our environment external to the city that limit or inhibit our success in achieving our goals. How can we mitigate or limit the impact of each *Threat*?
# Focus Group Discussion Questions

1. **What makes La Marque special?**  

4. **What are the critical issues that the City needs to face over the next five years?**

2. **Where do you see La Marque in five years?**  

5. **What do you see as the key priorities the City should establish in its strategic economic development plan?**

3. **Where would you like to see La Marque in five years?**  

6. **What economic development issues are most important to you?**
Parking Lot Issues

Issues of concern that you feel need to be addressed in La Marque so that the community can reach its full potential

Other Comments, Suggestions, Additions or Concerns

Any other input you would like to provide that you feel is important the development of a comprehensive economic development plan for the City of La Marque

Please feel free to send your responses to this questionnaire and any other additional comments to C. B. Rathburn at RathburnPlanning@gmail.com at your convenience. Thank you for your input and participation
#1 Critical Issues

You have heard the results from the focus groups and interviews and a brief review of the trend data that represents La Marque today. From all this input identify the top three critical issues that will have the most profound and sustainable impact on the future of La Marque from each of these perspectives.

**Top three issues only!**
You have 12 minutes to complete this task.

- Community Development and Quality of Life Issues
- Community Infrastructure Issues
- Economic Development Issues

#2 Community Goals

From the presentation of the top critical issues facing La Marque, please identify your group’s **top six goals that need to be accomplished** over the next seven years to create a stronger, healthier, economically prosperous La Marque? Focus on goals that are:

1. **Attainable** with existing and predicted resources?
2. **Measurable** – please give the measurement criteria you would recommend to determine the success of this goal.
3. **Sustainable** - Goals that will make the greatest impact long term.
4. **Comprehensive** – addressing the following perspectives
   - Community Development and Quality of Life Issues
   - Community Infrastructure Investment
   - Economic Development Priorities

**Top 6 only!** You have 14 minutes to complete this task.
Parking Lot - Unfortunately the time allotted for the charrette does not allow for detailed discussion of specific ideas, issues, or concerns that may come up. To insure that your critical issues or great ideas are not lost we invite you to take a few minutes to describe your issue, idea or concern on this sheet and submit it to the facilitator along with your name, email address and phone number so that we can get additional information following the session. All ideas are encouraged and are appreciated.

Dr. C. B. “Bix” Rathburn at RPC can be reached at RathburnPlanning@gmail.com
Appendix 2: Charrette Report

La Marque Strategic Planning Charrette Session

What is a Charrette?
A charrette is an intensive planning session where citizens collaborate on a vision for development. It provides a forum for ideas and offers the unique advantage of giving immediate feedback to the plan developers. More importantly, it allows everyone who participates to be a mutual author of the plan.

La Marque Strategic Planning Charrette Session

Strategic Planning Compared to City and Town Planning

1. Strategic planning isn’t as focused on maps, physical conditions, design, etc.
2. Strategic planning is focused on identifying assets and opportunities and mitigating weaknesses and threats to our future success.
3. A 50,000 foot - long term view
4. Strategic planning inherently leads to implementation discussion.

La Marque Strategic Planning Charrette Session

• Thank You for your time
• Purpose
• Two Hours Max
• Confidentiality
• Stockdale Paradox
• Handout Written Responses
• Parking Lot
• Limitations

La Marque Charrette Session

Parking Lot
Unfortunately the time allotted for the charrette does not allow for detailed discussion of specific ideas, issues, or concerns that may come up. To ensure that critical issues or great ideas are not lost we invite you to take a few minutes to describe your issue, idea or concern on one of the blank sheets of paper in the room and to submit it to the facilitator along with your name, email address and phone number so that we can get additional information following the session. All ideas are solicited and are appreciated.

Dr. C. B. “Bix” Rothburn can be reached at RothburnPlanning@gmail.com

La Marque Strategic Planning Charrette Session

• Basic Data Review
• Focus Group Session Results
• Draft Vision Statement
• Critical Issues
• Goals
• Priorities
• Next Steps
MEDIAN EARNINGS
IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS (IN 2013 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS)
BY SEX BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
FOR THE POPULATION 25 YEARS AND OVER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Men (Median)</th>
<th>Women (Median)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some college or associate's degree</td>
<td>$33,353</td>
<td>$23,464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>$44,305</td>
<td>$26,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>$57,936</td>
<td>$29,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional degree</td>
<td>$81,567</td>
<td>$39,227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree or higher</td>
<td>$54,608</td>
<td>$28,921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree or higher</td>
<td>$80,000</td>
<td>$34,712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional degree or higher</td>
<td>$103,000</td>
<td>$41,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree, Master's degree</td>
<td>$78,000</td>
<td>$34,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional degree, Master's degree</td>
<td>$103,000</td>
<td>$41,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Sources:
1. Counties with 500 employees or less are excluded.
2. Includes persons reporting only one race.
3. N/A indicates the area is in place of sale, not available.
4. Suppressed to avoid disclosure of confidential information.
5. Fewer than 50 firms.
8. Data derived from the U.S. Census Bureau, State and County QuickFacts. Data derived from the American Community Survey, Census of Population and Housing, County Business Patterns, Economic Census, and Survey of Business Owners. Data derived from Building Permits, Census of Governments.

La Marque Strategic Planning Charrette Session
The Data Speaks

La Marque Strategic Planning Focus Group Session
Environmental Assessment SWOT Analysis

La Marque Strategic Planning Focus Group Session
SWOT Assessment
- Raw Responses
- Beliefs
- Perceptions
- Feelings VS Facts
STRENGTHS OR ASSETS

Location
- Hub or Center of Galveston County
- The protection afforded by the levy
- Vacant land to develop especially along I-45
- Development opportunist west of I-45
- Proximity to area industry
- Proximity and Access to UTMB
- Access to the beaches and area recreation
- Land to redevelop in the interior of the city especially along already developed major transportation routes (e.g. PM 1765)
- Great climate – recruit from the north

Community Commitment and Pride
- Small town pride – a sense of community pride and ownership among some residents - A genuine love and appreciation for La Marque as their home town
- A clear understanding of what type of community we want to be and what types of jobs and investment we desire to recruit and expand
- La Marque history and tradition
  - Long term residents with a sense of community and ownership for making La Marque better
  - A strong sense of ownership especially in the long term residents
  - A history of accomplishments and success to build upon
  - Commitment to restore La Marque to the past glory
- Community desire to change and grow
  - La Marque Cougar football

La Marque Human Capital
- Visionary citizens
- Good potential labor pool
- New folks with new ideas coming to the new residential development areas
- Committed leaders, community volunteers and citizens that want to see and help facilitate needed change
- Active and committed Mayor
- Active LISD Board of Trustees
**STRENGTHS OR ASSETS**

**La Marque Community**
- Diversity - racial, social, economic
- The right size community – **not too small – not too big**
- Small town size and feeling
- Strong faith based community
- Great potential as a retirement town
- Strong Civic Clubs
- Community “ripe” for and encourages business development
- Low crime rates?

**STRENGTHS OR ASSETS**

**City Management and Operations**
- Aggressive, well supported, well respected and talented economic development staff and structure (La Marque Economic Development Corporation) - Pro economic development mindset
- Small town feeling and operation including limited traffic and ease of getting things done at city hall.
- Low tax rates
- Good City manager - Good and effective city management
- Good Police Chief - Good public safety operation
- Good city department heads in the new administration

**STRENGTHS OR ASSETS**

**City Resources**
- Good **foundation** infrastructure
- Highland Bayou and Carbide Parks
- The La Marque EDC
- Tax incentives available from the EDC/City
- Beautiful trees
- Omega Bay development

**STRENGTHS OR ASSETS**

**General**
- No traffic congestion
- Low Cost of Living
- Good work environment and culture
- Low property values – La Marque is a good buy for residential and commercial property and buildings
- College of the Mainland
- New housing developments in the city providing new residents
- Bayou Fest
- A community “ripe” for redevelopment
- Business development (Walmart, Sams, etc.)
- The potential to redevelop the older outlet mall

**WEAKNESSES OR LIABILITIES**

**Weaknesses are INTERNAL attributes, assets or resources to the city and areas that the City has some degree of control over.**
- Internal
- Negative
- Harmful

**WEAKNESSES OR LIABILITIES**

**City Appearance and Infrastructure**
- Blight is rampant
- Poor condition of roads, water, sewer and drainage infrastructure
- La Marque looks “scary” giving the perception of an unsafe, high crime community.
- Too many vacant buildings and dilapidated structures that need to be torn down
- Appearance of Texas Avenue and the interior of the city including city facilities.
### Weaknesses or Liabilities

**City Appearance and Infrastructure**
- The condition of the FM 1765 and Highway 3 intersection
- Lack of adequate street lighting
- Lack of a landscaping code and enforcement
- Condition/appearance of city homes, streets, sidewalks, businesses, and government buildings especially the landscaping
- Ugly City - nothing looks good – no point of pride physically in the city.
- Too many dead end streets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>SWOT Analysis Report</th>
<th>Harmful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Demographics**
- Income divide
- Social divide of the city
- Racial divide of the city
- Low income of majority of the residents
- The attraction of low income population due to cheap housing
- Too many residents living on government check at a time
- Lack of programs/service leading to residents self sufficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>SWOT Analysis Report</th>
<th>Harmful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**La Marque Independent School District**
- The poor performing La Marque Independent School District including the image, Board of Trustees, faculty and staff (exclusive of Superintendent Watkins), facilities, student performance and overall perception
- LMISD leadership and Board of Trustees failing to recognize and be truthful about the academic quality and performance of the schools
- LMISD enrollment decline especially in the younger age classifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>SWOT Analysis Report</th>
<th>Harmful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Community Attitudes and Commitment**
- Inner city culture and vision
- Divided community effort and vision racially, socially, economically and by age
- Decline in city pride and interest
- Site Mentality – only interested in my issues or my priorities.
- Residents who have given up on La Marque/Lack of interest especially the younger families and shorter term residents. A flight as opposed to fight mentality.
- Older community leaders resistant to change - desire to go back to the "good old days" in La Marque

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>SWOT Analysis Report</th>
<th>Harmful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### WEAKNESSES OR LIABILITIES

**Community Attitudes and Commitment**
- Tolerant of the current state and of disorder
- Complacency
- Lack of unity
- Lack of drive
- Lack of a sense of community
- Lack of hope
- Tunnel vision

**Internal SWOT Analysis Report**
**Harmful**

### WEAKNESSES OR LIABILITIES

**City Elected and Appointed Leadership**
- City Council infighting producing negative results
- Poor community perception of the city council
- City leaders do not follow the letter and spirit of the City charter — role of the City Council and Mayor not respected and followed
- No new emerging leaders — same folks serving over and over again in city leadership — no new ideas or commitment — no leadership transition or succession plans
- Staff - Elected Leaders Relationship Negative perception and lack of trust.

**Internal SWOT Analysis Report**
**Harmful**

### WEAKNESSES OR LIABILITIES

**City Elected and Appointed Leadership**
- City Staff and City leaders (elected and appointed) not always on the “same page” on priorities and issues
- Poor inner-city communication between the city and the residents and within the city
- Lack of transparency in city government.
- Zoning and building codes not enforced regularly

**Internal SWOT Analysis Report**
**Harmful**

### WEAKNESSES OR LIABILITIES

**City Staff and Operations**
- Limited city management and staff leadership - Hiring the “best folks we can afford”
- Diversity of the city staff
- High staff turnover
- City staff sometimes feels “beat up” by city leadership and residents
- Lack of transparency in city government.
- Lack of staff training and professional development
- Lack of scheduled maintenance
- City staff is being held accountable for items and goals that they are not their responsibility
- Difficulty in the development process — paperwork processes difficult and follow-up support lacking

**Internal SWOT Analysis Report**
**Harmful**

### WEAKNESSES OR LIABILITIES

**Community Perceptions**
- The poor current La Marque “Brand” or Image
- External perception of La Marque based on the problems, publicity and performance of the LMISD
- Poor perception of the city by the long term residents
- Perception as a bedroom community
- Poor external perception of the City of La Marque
- Perception of and/or reality of high crime

**Internal SWOT Analysis Report**
**Harmful**

### WEAKNESSES OR LIABILITIES

**General**
- Limited land - cannot expand
- Lack of primary residential support businesses including grocery stores, restaurants, health care, retail
- No true economic drivers
- Primary support sales tax revenue going to adjacent communities
- Lack of planning
- Drug use and crime
- Reactive not proactive policies and actions
- Failure to share/communicate our successes
- No regional thought
- Lack of Galveston County interest, support and involvement

**Internal SWOT Analysis Report**
**Harmful**
WEAKNESSES OR LIABILITIES

- Declining real estate values
- Difficulty to sell a home - no buyers
- Age of homes
- Lack of residential redevelopment efforts
- Lack of new residential opportunities
- Limited housing inventory
- Limited home ownership
- Declining family culture
  - Decline in youth sports programs
  - Decline in service club activity
  - Nothing for older youth to do

In general, SWOT Analysis Report Harmful

OPPORTUNITIES

Location
- Vacant, affordable land with great access especially for the oil and gas industry and adjacent markets.
- Outstanding transportation opportunities through I-45, highways 146, 6 and 3. The best transportation corridor and location in the entire region.
- Proximity to Houston
- Dual rail access and service provided by SMX and UP producing competitive rates.
- I-45 trickle down investment - the gradual movement of residential, local and retail opportunities along the corridor from Houston past 610 to La Marque. (Long-term prospect)
- Proximity to good paying jobs.
- "Leakage" development: Texas City and other surrounding cities including Galveston.

In general, SWOT Analysis Report Helpful

OPPORTUNITIES

Medical and Health Care
- Proximity to University of Texas Medical Branch-Galveston and the opportunity to develop medical related business and industries along the I-45 corridor on sites protected by the levy possibly in conjunction with the regional specialty chemicals industries.
- Opportunities for medical supply/support and biomedical related business opportunities in conjunction with UTMB and UT Health Houston.

In general, SWOT Analysis Report Helpful

OPPORTUNITIES

Tourism
- Build upon and partner with Galveston in supporting their growing cruise and tourism industry.
- Support hotels and parking.
- Support and build upon the potential of the dog track as a destination venue.
- Build, market, brand in conjunction with the La Marque and surrounding community festivals including Mardi Gras and Dickens on the Strand.

In general, SWOT Analysis Report Helpful

OPPORTUNITIES

Trade
- Proximity to the regional ports (Houston, Texas City and Galveston) and the potential future container port and end bridge to Pelican Island as well as the potential of the expanded Panama Canal.
- Oil and Gas and Petrochemical Related
  - Proximity to abundant sources of oil and natural gas from the regional shale operations.
  - DOW expansion and redevelopment and use of the adjacent land in La Marque.

In general, SWOT Analysis Report Helpful
**OPPORTUNITIES**

**Residential**
- Development opportunities for senior living with affordable land protected by the levy, close to the medical resources of UTMB and Houston and a good safe quality of life.
- West side residential development opportunities

**Commercial**
- Expanded support from area commercial and industrial partners
- Opportunities for distribution, sub assembly and light manufacturing.
- Distribution, Warehouse and storage facilities protected by the levy.
- Technology related business development related to NASA
- Opportunities for alternative energy projects and related green technologies

**General**
- The strong and growing regional and Texas economy especially in trade and petro/specialty chemicals
- The opportunity to rebrand La Marque
- Small changes produce a big result in a small town like La Marque
- The opportunity to improve the La Marque Independent School District. The opportunity to remove the barrier to local community and economic development success and move forward especially with residential development.

**General**
- The opportunity to attract foreign investment due to the proximity to Houston, the regional industrial complexes, transportation hubs (land and rail and port) and inexpensive land
- Opportunity to engage the community’s youth and regional young professionals in the redevelopment of La Marque.
- Water including (effluent) reuse for commercial purposes and desalination potential.

**THREATS**

Threats are:
- External
- Negative
- Harmful
- Competitive
- Not under direct control by the city

Internal/External Perceptions and Attitudes
- The external “Toxic City” poor perception - negative talk and perceptions becoming the reality
- Fear from crime and negative trends - Perception that La Marque is on “life support”
- Too many residents focused on the past and trying to regain the “Old La Marque”
- Local community resistance to change
- Those individuals and groups working against La Marque’s future for their own personal gain or position of power.
**THREATS**

**General**
- Small size of the City and the resources required to make systematic and substantial change and investment
- Changing demographic trends of the City
- The community of La Marque getting older (age of population) and gradually the community just dies off.
- Lack of accountability
- High percentage of city and school district employees do not call this community “home”
- Unreported crime

**External**  SWOT Analysis Report  Harmful

**THREATS**

**LMISD**
- LMISD future - either dissolution of the school district or, if the district is saved the long term outside negative perception of poor performance that will linger regardless of improvements
- LMISD resources, demographics, leadership, staffing, facilities, losing campuses

**External**  SWOT Analysis Report  Harmful

**THREATS**

**Environmental**
- Hurricanes – the reality of the impact of loss of life and property and the external perception that investment or living close to the coast is not wise. Is La Marque ready for another like?
- Hazardous cargo moving through the city
- Problems or major events at the area chemical/fuel plants
- Ability to respond to natural or industrial disasters including financial, physical and emotional needs

**External**  SWOT Analysis Report  Harmful

**THREATS**

**Economic**
- Recession
- Growth in Dickinson, Santa Fe, Hitchcock and Lago Mar further impacting the retail and residential viability of La Marque
- Expansion of the Lago Mar development restricting the development of the I-45 frontage in La Marque
- Weak tax base possibly getting weaker
- Limited commercial tax base
- I-45 development bypassing La Marque
- Labor Union Problems and Strikes
- Lack of demand for La Marque commercial and residential real estate depressing further the local tax base and limiting the ability to sell or lease property in La Marque

**External**  SWOT Analysis Report  Harmful

**THREATS**

**Resources**
- Water treatment and water distribution system needs and regulations
- Availability and/or future cost of water
- Cost/environmental requirements of sewer treatment

**External**  SWOT Analysis Report  Harmful

**THREATS**

**State and National**
- Divided community, state and nation on racial and economic lines
- Stricter environmental policies impacting area industry – *Clean Air Act Changes Coming*
- Unfunded federal and state mandates especially environmental and water
- Higher windstorm and flood (Bigger-Waters) insurance rates due to the federal policies restricting area development

**External**  SWOT Analysis Report  Harmful
THREATS

International
- Extended low crude prices limiting investment in new plants
- Terrorism especially at the area plants

External SWOT Analysis Report Harmful

THREATS

Internal/External Perceptions and Attitudes
- The external “Toxic City” poor perception - negative talk and perceptions becoming the reality
- Fear from crime and negative trends - Perception that La Marque is on “life support”
- Too many residents focused on the past and trying to regain the “Old La Marque”
- Local community resistance to change
- Those individuals and groups working against La Marque’s future for their own personal gain or position of power.

External SWOT Analysis Report Harmful

Final Thoughts and Input

La Marque Strategic Planning Focus Group Discussion Questions

SWOT Analysis

La Marque Strategic Planning Focus Group Session Discussion Questions
- What Makes La Marque Special?
- Where do you see La Marque in five years based on the current trends?
- Where would you like to see La Marque in five years?
- What are the critical issues that La Marque needs to face over the next five years?
- What do you see as the key priorities that La Marque should establish in a strategic economic development plan?
- What economic development issues are most important to you?

Final Thoughts and Input

Questions posed by the Focus groups to be considered included:
- What are the needs for the businesses, residents and visitors/travelers along I-45 in La Marque?
- Why Visit La Marque?
- Why should I live in La Marque?
La Marque Strategic Planning Charrette Session

**DRAFT Vision Statement**

**VISION STATEMENT**

The La Marque is recognized as the hub of Galveston County and a desirable, progressive and business-friendly community within which to locate and conduct business and raise a family.

La Marque Strategic Planning Charrette Session

We will achieve our vision by:

- Ensuring efficient and predictable business planning, zoning and permitting processes and focused and effective economic development incentives and services.
- Promoting La Marque for its central location, prime business sites, great climate, and excellent transportation, water, and public safety services, as well as for other strengths that distinguish La Marque from other municipalities including its proximity to the petrochemical complex, the regional international ports and the city of Houston, civic participation and history.

La Marque Strategic Planning Charrette Session

We will achieve our vision by:

- Creating and sustaining a safe, clean, green, and fiscally sound business environment that benefits residents, businesses, and the region;
- Actively recruiting and retaining businesses, especially supporting emerging sectors that create quality, good-paying jobs like ... ????? To be determined
- Fostering an educated and job-ready local workforce by driving the improvement of the academic performance of La Marque students and by connecting businesses, learning institutions, and community agencies.
**Group Assignments**

**#1 Critical Issues**

You have heard the results from the focus groups and interviews and a brief review of the trend data that represents La Marque today. From all this input identify the top three critical issues that will have the most profound and sustainable impact on the future of La Marque from each of these perspectives. Top three issues only! You have 12 minutes.

- Community Development and Quality of Life Issues
- Community Infrastructure Issues
- Economic Development Issues

**#2 Community Goals**

From the presentation of the top critical issues facing La Marque, please identify your group’s top six goals that need to be accomplished over the next seven years to create a stronger, healthier, economically prosperous La Marque. Focus on goals that are:

1. **Attainable** with existing and predicted resources?
2. **Measurable** – please give the measurement criteria you would recommend to determine the success of this goal.
3. **Sustainable** - goals that will make the greatest impact long term.
4. **Comprehensive** – addressing the following perspectives:
   - Community Development and Quality of Life Issues
   - Community Infrastructure Investment
   - Economic Development Priorities

Top 6 only! You have 14 minutes to complete this task.

**#3 Prioritize the Critical Issues and Community Goals**

You have two sets of dots 10 dots each. Use the dots to prioritize the critical issues and the dots to prioritize the community goals. You can place as many as 4 dots on any single issue or community goal to indicate your preference for this selection. You must use all 10 dots.

You have 5 minutes to complete this task.

**Next Steps**

- Thank You
- Report Preparation
- LMEDC and City Council Review
- Metrics Established
- Final Report
- Parking Lot Issues