

# City of Yoakum Honored for Its Programs and Efforts

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Since 1995, the Texas Economic Development Council (TEDC) has annually recognized Texas cities for excellence in economic development. In 2005, the City of Yoakum was given the TEDC's Community Economic Development Award (CEDA) in its population category (5,001-15,000).

According to the TEDC, for a city to receive this award, its economic development programs must meet certain criteria. The city's programs must be innovative (show new approaches to different aspects of economic development) and be easily transferable for implementation in other cities with comparable situations. The programs must also show: (1) community commitment and leverage ("The program or project makes it possible for others to achieve greater impacts by joining public/private participation or by intergovernmental or state/local involvement to leverage resources."); (2) measured objectives of the programs' value (including impact on jobs, investments in the community, or tax base additions); and (3) secondary benefits to other areas and aspects of the community.

Cities are grouped into five population categories—less than 5,000; 5,001-15,000; 15,001-40,000; 40,001-100,000; and over 100,000. One city from each category is recognized. Other winners of the CEDA in 2005 were: Category I- Strawn, Category III-Denison, Category IV- Baytown, and Category V- San Antonio.

The City of Yoakum was nominated for the award by the Lower Colorado River Authority based on the variety of the city's programs and issues addressed. Several topics stood out to the TEDC,



including business recruitment/expansion, business retention, and community development.

The TEDC took note of numerous programs that Yoakum had implemented. The city joined the DeWitt County Habitat for Humanity and used grants to address housing needs within the community. Yoakum secured from the Texas Capital Fund two grants that are intended to help the Texas economy by encouraging business development and creating and retaining jobs. With these grants, the city was able to assist two local businesses, Circle Y Saddles, Inc. and Eddy Packing Co., with expanding their plants and hiring additional employees.

Yoakum is also a member of the Texas Department of Agriculture's Texas Yes! initiative, which is intended to promote rural Texas. In 2005, the city became a two-time winner of the Texas Yes! Hardworking Community Award. It approved and implemented a Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan as well as a Downtown Revitalization Project to diversify retail and enhance shopping in the city. According to a 2005 press release by the Texas Department of Agriculture, "By carefully listening to its citizens, evaluating priorities and delivering

results, Yoakum has been successful in maximizing the return on limited resources resulting in increased tax revenues, new investments, and jobs created and retained."

Since winning the CEDA, the City of Yoakum has worked hard to continue and expand its efforts at improvement. The city has become involved with the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs HOME Program, which works to provide safe, decent, affordable housing to low-income families. The city has been approved to build seven new homes through the HOME Owner Occupied Program. This portion of the program is aimed at providing funds for the repair or replacement of single family homes. The city has also begun accepting donations and applications to build the first Habitat for Humanity home in Yoakum.

In addition, the city coordinated a four-county Rural Texas Travel Guide. The guide is aimed at educating travelers about local history and culture, with the additional goal of promoting travel and tourism to the area.

After being recognized by the TEDC, the Yoakum Economic Development Corporation was also given a Service to the Community Award by the Texas Workforce Solutions of the Golden Crescent. Hard work, common goals, and commitment to the community have created an opportunity for the city, counties, Area Chamber of Commerce, school district, hospital, and business to work together in what Yoakum Economic and Community Development Coordinator Patrick Kennedy describes as a "synergistic opportunity not seen in decades". He concludes that, "It is satisfying when others recognize your good work."★