CELEBRATING TEXAS CITIES
For over 100 years, our culture has been one of inclusion, inspiration and innovation.

Our contributions to diverse educational organizations advance our Partners, Customers and Communities.

For more information on diversity at H-E-B, visit www.heb.com
Welcome 2022!

Be Active in TML

Anna – A Community of Neighbors

How a College Football Championship Brought a Community Together

Ready! Set! Rock!

Wylie Will Never Forget

Collaboration is Key to Longview’s Success

City of Shenandoah: Big City Amenities, Small Town Feel

Message from the President

TML News

Risk Pool News

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Career Builder

Instagram Highlights

ABOUT THE COVER

The City of Huntsville celebrates the Sam Houston State Bearkats’ FSC National Championship.
The Texas Municipal League exists solely to provide services to Texas cities. Since its formation in 1913, the League’s mission has remained the same: to serve the needs and advocate the interests of its members. Membership in the League is voluntary and is open to any city in Texas. From the original 14 members, TML’s membership has grown to more than 1,150 cities. Over 16,000 mayors, councilmembers, city managers, city attorneys, and department heads are member officials of the League by virtue of their cities’ participation.

The League provides a variety of services to its member cities. One of the principal purposes of the League is to advocate municipal interests at the state and federal levels. Among the thousands of bills introduced during each session of the Texas Legislature are hundreds of bills that would affect cities. The League, working through its Legislative Services Department, attempts to defeat detrimental city-related bills and to facilitate the passage of legislation designed to improve the ability of municipal governments to operate effectively.

The League employs full-time attorneys who are available to provide member cities with information on municipal legal matters. On a daily basis, the legal staff responds to member cities’ written and oral questions on a wide variety of legal matters. The League annually conducts a variety of conferences and training seminars to enhance the knowledge and skills of municipal officials in the state. In addition, the League also publishes a variety of printed materials to assist member cities in performing their duties. The best known of these is the League’s monthly magazine, Texas Town & City. Each issue focuses on a variety of contemporary municipal issues, including survey results to respond to member inquiries.

For additional information on any of these services, contact the Texas Municipal League at 512-231-7400 or visit our website, www.tml.org.
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Texas City Official,

We’re going to kick off the 2022 year with a great theme for our League’s magazine: “Celebrating What Makes Your City Great.” Where do I start? I could talk all day about what I think makes Houston so wonderful—opportunity, diversity, innovation...the list goes on and on. Don’t believe me? Just give me a call when you’ve got some time on your hands! In all seriousness, I’m excited to hear what other cities have to say about their own greatness; what makes them unique and special. I’m sure there will be an idea mentioned that you may like to use in your hometown. That’s what’s so useful about the sharing that goes on in this magazine.

In this issue, you’ll hear about several innovative ideas that contribute to the betterment of cities all across Texas: model vaccination clinics in Longview, shifting the narrative towards constituents in the City of Anna, a unique tribute to 9/11 firefighters by the City of Wylie, and much, much more.

What makes your city great may be different from other cities, however each of the 1,215 cities in Texas has something amazing to boast about. The bayous of East Texas are different from the mountains of far West Texas, but each are immensely unique. Our citizens deserve greatness in every city. As local leaders, we must continue to seek ways to deliver with city services and quality of life.

As we settle into this legislative interim between the 2021 and 2023 regular sessions, we can’t take our eyes off the prize when it comes to improving Texas cities. Our continued success is our supreme asset at the Texas Capitol. Success can’t be argued with!

Martha Castex-Tatum
Vice Mayor Pro Tem, City of Houston
TML President
Share Your State of the City Address

Texas cities are hard at work making their communities safe and vibrant places to live, work, and play. TML is compiling website links to state of the city addresses to make it easy for you to see what is on the horizon for cities across our great state.

Please send a link to your city’s state of the city address or report to Rachael Pitts at rpitts@tml.org. All links collected will be posted on the TML website at https://www.tml.org/205/State-of-the-City-Addresses.

Our Cure for the Winter Blahs

Do the gloomy days of winter make you want to dive under the covers and stay there until spring? You’re not alone. Stimulate your senses and nurture your spirit at the 2022 Elected Officials’ Conference in Sugar Land! You’ll invest in your personal growth with energizing keynote speakers, and discuss important city issues like local policing, transportation funding, city revenue, extra-territorial jurisdictions, and social media. With lots of time built in for networking, you’ll leave the conference inspired and ready to tackle your city’s challenges. Learn more and register at https://tmlelectedofficialsconference.org.

TML Leadership Academy

Course One: April 6-8, 2022
Course Two: May 11-13, 2022
Round Rock

Embrace the Challenges of Leadership and Change

Your Invitation to Join the 2022 Leadership Academy Class

TML proudly announces its 2022 Leadership Academy – a two-course, six-day program designed to enhance the leadership skills of the elected and appointed officials and staff who serve our Texas cities. Taking place April 6-8 and May 11-13 at the Austin Marriott North Hotel in Round Rock, the Leadership Academy boasts an extraordinary faculty of university professors and leadership experts who will teach you to critique your actions, and develop the competencies you need to be an effective leader. Attendance is limited. Visit www.tmlleadershipacademy.org.

The Importance of Continuing Education for Elected Officials

There are countless issues and laws that elected city officials need to understand to be effective in their governance role. TML offers the training that you need to stay on top of current city regulations and applicable state laws.

The Texas Municipal League Institute (TMLI) rewards you for the many hours you spend on your professional
development. This recognition, for completing a certain number of continuing education units (CEUs) within a calendar year, begins with a certificate of recognition and increases to the Certified Municipal Official (CMO) designation.

You’re already putting in the hours. Allow us to celebrate your hard work and help you claim your CMO or other award designation this year. Look for upcoming offerings on the TML training calendar, and learn more about TMLI at https://www.tml.org/278/Certification-for-Elected-Officials-TMLI.

### TML QUARTERLY TRAINING CALENDAR
#### January-March 2022

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<tr>
<th>January 21</th>
<th>February 10-11</th>
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<tr>
<td>TML Newly Elected City Officials’ Workshop</td>
<td>TCAA Riley Fletcher Basic Municipal Law Seminar</td>
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<tr>
<td>TxPELRA Workshop</td>
<td>TML Small Cities’ Problem-Solving Clinic</td>
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<td>Lake Worth</td>
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<th>February 24-25</th>
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<tr>
<td>TMHRA Civil Service Workshop</td>
<td>TCMA City Management Clinic</td>
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<td>College Station</td>
<td>Granbury</td>
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<th>January 27-28</th>
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<tr>
<td>TCMA William “King” Cole Session 1</td>
<td>TCMA William “King” Cole Session 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>TML-TAMCC Elected Officials’ Conference</td>
<td>TML Small Cities’ Problem-Solving Clinic</td>
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<td>Sugar Land</td>
<td>Lubbock</td>
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IS YOUR CITY R.O.A.D. READY?

Each year, thousands of crashes cause hundreds of deaths and injuries in work zones along Texas roadways. The Risk Pool has designed a program to help ensure that your employees don’t become one of those statistics.

The R.O.A.D. Ready initiative is simple, but it’s sorely needed because working near or on roadways, while necessary, is extremely dangerous. That’s especially true for employees who respond to roadway incidents, conduct roadway repair, or engage in right-of-way operations. But it’s also the case for tasks your employees conduct like debris removal, traffic stops, accident scene response, and graffiti abatement.

Being R.O.A.D. Ready means your city is committed to continuously improving employee safety related to operations near or on roadways. The Risk Pool wants to partner with you to protect property and lives by giving you the needed tools, resources, training, and loss prevention consultation to protect your employees. Your participation will:

• Show that you value employees by making roadway safety a priority, having policies and procedures in place, and by implementing a continuous awareness and improvement program.

• Promote R.O.A.D. Ready by participating in other national roadway, vehicle, or work zone outreach activities such as National Distracted Driving Month, National Work Zone Safety Awareness Month, National Safety Month, and/or National First Responder Safety Program.

• Provide internal roadway safety training, or utilize the Risk Pool’s training programs, to help foster employee awareness of roadway hazards.

The R.O.A.D. Ready program is a voluntary member engagement initiative. If you are interested in the program, please contact your assigned loss prevention representative. In return, each participating member will receive consultative services, resources, and best practices to help reduce the potential impact of roadway exposures.

Contact the Loss Prevention team today at losspreventionmaillist@tmlirp.org or 800-537-6655.

R - Recognize the hazards. Ensure employees are aware of roadway hazards.

O - Observe people, processes, and equipment. Employees need “the big picture” of where people are working, what types of activities are being conducted, and potential risks involved.

A - Assess the risk level. Are employees working in an open, or partially open, travel lane? Are positive protection devices, such as vehicles or attenuators, in place? Are employees facing the direction of traffic to detect oncoming hazards?

D - Determine the safest course of action. Proactive planning identifies necessary precautions. Simply wearing a vest or putting up flags or signage may save lives.
Municipal Health Coverage Is Different

Health coverage for cities isn’t like health coverage for everyone else. Private enterprise can always turn up the top line to keep up with rising healthcare costs—or at least they can try. Municipal revenue, on the other hand, is pegged to taxes, and on top of trying not to overburden all the residents of the town, taxes are subject to legal limits that for-profit corporations simply don’t have.

What If You Could Do It Without Cutting Services?

For most municipal employers, employee healthcare coverage is one of the top budget items, right after payroll. Across the nation, health insurance rates are rising at least four percent this year, but it could be even higher due to costs associated with COVID-19. Some Medicare supplement plans are going up 15 percent. Severe COVID cases with long-term hospital stays can cost upwards of $500,000. There are also higher overall costs because of testing and vaccine administration, all of which put upward pressure on insurance rates. Looking ahead to 2022, higher insurance costs will force many cities to make some tough choices to balance the budget.

To avoid having to cut other services, municipal employers can offset insurance rate increases by making changes to their benefit plan design such as higher copays or deductibles. While this does cut rates, it also shifts more financial responsibility to the employees which may be unpopular, no matter how necessary it is. A well-designed benefit plan should encourage utilization of low-cost healthcare options, such as primary care and telemedicine, while steering people away from unnecessary use of high-cost emergency room for minor medical issues.

Agents and other salespeople will often tout self-insurance as a panacea for rising healthcare costs. However, self-insurance can expose you to large risks as well. One very large claim, such as a million-dollar cancer treatment or saving a premature baby with everything a neonatal intensive care unit can do, can wipe out an employer’s budget.

Pooling the risk of self-insurance can offset a large cost like that by distributing the expense across many public employers so that each pays a very small amount in monthly plan cost to absorb the high-cost claim. A pool can also provide stop loss coverage for large claims, further mitigating the risk of expensive claims. In general, participating in a health benefits pool provides long-term stability of rates.

Health plans with innovative underwriting methods can insulate you from the impact of large claims by dropping big outliers from your claims experience when calculating your rates. New methods of plan design aim to reduce healthcare costs overall, including employee out-of-pocket costs, by centering regular family doctor visits, putting direct primary care at the heart of the plan. In a direct primary care arrangement, the employee’s monthly contribution to their health plan, or yours on their behalf, covers the cost of all visits to a particular primary care practice, removing the financial barrier to regular care and chronic condition management.

You’re always being asked to do more with less, but with the right partner and creative plan design, healthcare doesn’t have to crowd out your other priorities.

About TML Health Benefits Pool

TML Health Benefits Pool offers health benefits created by Texans exclusively for Texas cities and political subdivisions. TML Health brings together hundreds of Texas public entities to leverage collective purchasing power and risk sharing to stabilize the cost of health benefits and deliver the lowest long-term net costs, while offering additional services such as wellness programs, virtual health checkups, telemedicine, and online and phone enrollment. By sharing in the Pool, TML Health’s members share the rewards of superior health coverage—lower costs, better health outcomes, and more personalized service. ★
Lockhart Invites Community Input on Downtown Project

The City of Lockhart invited participation from community members in its Downtown Revitalization Project by hosting an open house at the First Lockhart Baptist Church-Connection Center. After a short presentation from the City’s consulting engineer and landscape architects, residents were encouraged to walk around and examine conceptual design displays set up throughout the location. Community members were able to visualize the project and speak to project personnel and City staff one-on-one.

The open house was hosted to provide information and engage the public on the Downtown Revitalization Project, which involves proposed upgrades in utilities, drainage, streetscape, parking, hardscape, pedestrian access, and landscaping in the nine-block area around the Caldwell County Courthouse. The project is currently in the design phase. Comments and information received during the open house are being considered as part of project development.
Round Rock City Council Recognizes Local Legends

Historic preservation is important to Texas cities to protect the unique historic and architectural character of our communities, and provide continuity for future generations.

Round Rock, has a robust historic preservation program which includes its Local Legends Award. The City’s Local Legends Award was established in 1991, and has since honored people, organizations, places, and even a book. Following new guidelines in 2021, award recipients are required to have made contributions at least 40 years ago in the areas of historic preservation, history, culture, diversity, and/or heritage. Nominations for the award program are solicited from the public, and a volunteer selection committee made up of Round Rock residents recommends award recipients to the Historic Preservation Commission.

Local Legends are awarded a certificate of recognition and recognized on a plaque that lists all past honorees since the program’s inception. The most recent recipients were Anna Palm and Hope Well School, both recognized as 2021 Local Legends for their contributions to the City’s history.

To learn more about Round Rock’s Local Legends, visit https://www.roundrocktexas.gov.

Victoria Fire Department Celebrates 150 Years of Dedicated Service

If you’ve ever caught a glimpse of the back of the Victoria Fire Department T-shirts, just under the word “Victoria,” you might have noticed that they proudly state “EST. 1871.”

For 150 years, the Victoria Fire Department (VFD) has served the City through fire suppression, emergency medical services, hazardous materials response, swift water rescue, technical rescue, training, fire prevention, investigation, and public education.

The VFD celebrated its 150th anniversary in November with a free-to-the-public open house at Fire Station 4.

The Department was formally organized in 1871 by C.R. Alden, a tradesman who had previous experience with volunteer fire organizations. At the time, the Department operated with a used hand pumper purchased from Mobile, Alabama.

The VFD’s roots go back slightly earlier to the formation of Victoria Fire Company No. 1 in 1869. This volunteer company only lasted a few months. The City of Victoria authorized the formation of a downtown engine house on June 5, 1870. That was when Alden laid the foundation for the current fire department.

Additional fire companies were established through the years, including Fire Company No. 1 (1882), Hook & Ladder Company No. 2 (1882-1883), Protection Hose Company No. 3 (1885), Mechanic’s Hose Company No. 4 (1893), and Salvage Corps Company No. 5 (1931).

For more information, visit https://www.victoriatx.gov/fire. ★
The City of Jacinto City: Proud of Our Past and Focused on the Future

Seventy-five years as an incorporated city is something to celebrate. Situated between the cities of Houston and Galena Park, the City of Jacinto City incorporated in 1946. As 2021 approached, the City’s more than 10,000 residents had been eagerly anticipating its 75th anniversary celebration. Big plans were in the making when the COVID-19 pandemic reared its ugly head. With the shutdown of businesses and large gatherings, the recommendations of social distancing, and the emergence of new variants, it soon became apparent the celebration would be cancelled, postponed or, at best, be just another virtual event.

COVID Takes Its Toll

Jacinto City was hit hard by the virus like everyone else. Early on, the local nursing home was engulfed by COVID cases, having over two-thirds of the patients infected with many losing their lives. Cases among the general population matched what was happening in the rest of the world.

The City usually has a robust senior citizen program that provides congregate meals and social activities every weekday. This all came to a halt due to COVID. While the City still delivered meals to seniors and maintained contact by phone or virtually, it wasn’t the same. The lack of daily physical interaction, such as handshakes and hugs, began taking its toll. Tragically, one of our senior veterans died of suicide. This was one of the lowest points of the pandemic to date. This veteran’s death reminded everyone that the virus was not the only threat the City and its residents were facing.

In an effort to get ahead of the pandemic, Jacinto City began hosting COVID testing sites, dozens of drive-thru food distribution events, and, at the earliest opportunity, eagerly partnered with any organization that could provide the COVID vaccine. In short, the City applied every resource available in order to fight this outbreak.

JACINTO CITY TURNS 75 DURING A PANDEMIC AND STILL FINDS WAYS TO CELEBRATE
Despite these efforts, as of late March 2021, about 12 percent of the City’s population had been infected and 54 residents passed away. Needless to say, the usually upbeat spirit of the community had suffered. There seemed to be no light at the end of the tunnel. But then, the statistics showed improvement. The vaccination numbers climbed, and the infection rate declined. This sparked new hope in City staff and citizens alike.

The Future of the Event: Could and Should It Go On?

As Jacinto City pondered its anniversary celebration, staff thought about its history of facing adversity together. Multiple major hurricanes with their associated flooding events had hit the region in past years. Working together to overcome and recover had shaped Jacinto City. Here was a new opportunity to reinforce the community once again.

The City realized that the timeline for preparation was getting shorter by the day and that they could not do as many things as they had originally hoped. However, it was decided to forge ahead with some type of anniversary event. The choice was made to eliminate the parade, street dance, and cook-off due to their inherent risk. City leaders felt that they could host a reception for past elected officials, employees, and residents, and use the event to showcase the City’s history.

During a meeting of city senior staff members, concern was expressed regarding social distancing even during the preparation stage. They had hoped to collect memorabilia and historical items from citizens, but knew that some would resist in-person interaction. Social media quickly became the City’s best friend. Staff made a request on multiple platforms asking citizens, past and present, to rummage through family photo albums and old home movies to locate items related to the City’s history.

There was no way to predict the response, but to everyone’s surprise, a trove of historical treasures were shared. One example of something contributed: an eight mm movie of the opening of the city swimming pool in 1952, which included a beauty contest, high diving contest, and speeches by elected officials.
Volunteers Abound and Work Ahead

It is no surprise that volunteers help an event, such as this, run smoothly. It was amazing to see the number of volunteers, both staff and citizens, who gave their time and expertise. With this support, street banners were hung, social media items were posted, and flyers were distributed to those in the senior meal program. A citizen with expertise in graphic design by trade volunteered to create the logo for the event and the invitations.

Addresses were researched, envelopes were stuffed, and stamps were applied. Invitations were mailed to past officials, employees, and others.

Gathering and publishing the City’s history was a monumental task. Photographs, memorabilia, and movies had to be scanned and converted for distribution. These items were loaded onto USB drives that were given to all those in attendance, to senior citizens, and to others after the event.

These drives contained hundreds of pictures, movies, and news articles. They also included graduation pictures from every class of the City’s pre-school program. Additionally, the City’s predecessors published a history book 35 years prior that was converted into PDF format and included on the drive. Based on feedback, this gift has provided hours of entertainment for all Jacinto City residents.

Another item created was a commemorative name badge for all past employees and city officials. Every effort was made to use an original photo from the time of past employment. It listed their name, position, and the year that they became associated with the City.

The Results?

When the anniversary celebration day finally arrived, staff wondered if many would choose to attend. Would those past officials and employees return to renew acquaintances? To everyone’s delight, it was a full house and the event proved to be a tremendous boost to the City’s spirit.

By the start of the program, six of the seven living past mayors were posing for pictures and reminiscing. The City had proclamations from the United States House of Representatives, the Texas State Senate and House of Representatives, and Harris County Commissioners Court. Congresswoman Silvia Garcia and Commissioner Adrian Garcia participated in person and gave uplifting presentations.

During the celebration, all current employees with 20 years or more service to the City were recognized. With 93 total employees, 19 employees received this recognition. As an example, City Attorney Jim DeFoyd was recognized for 54 years of continuous service. He has helped Jacinto City through many difficult issues over the decades and guided the City in the process of becoming home rule in 1981.

At the celebration venue, a free photo booth was provided. Attendees were encouraged to create their own souvenir photos. The usual sunglasses, mustaches, and boas; a decorated picture frame naming the event; and a city entrance sign served as props.

Numerous changes and improvements have been made in the City through the years, so tours by mini-bus were arranged to see the new police station, swimming pool, splash pad, and fire station. Galena Park Independent School District provided tours of the new Jacinto City Elementary School, which replaced the original school built in 1939. The evening ended with a firework celebration that hundreds of spectators enjoyed.

A Look Back

The theme for the event stated “We are proud of our past and focused on our future.” This project has raised the spirits and built hope for the future by reflecting on the past. Looking back on the day’s activities, one can’t help but reflect on the events of the past year. The City mourns those dear ones lost in the pandemic, but, at the same time, looks ahead to the pandemic’s defeat and the continued prosperity of the little city of Jacinto City.
Elected Officials’ Conference
FOR TEXAS MAYORS, COUNCILMEMBERS, AND COMMISSIONERS
February 2-4, 2022 • Sugar Land

Presented by the Texas Municipal League and the Texas Association of Mayors, Councilmembers and Commissioners

TMLELECTEDOFFICIALSCONFERENCE.ORG
(Editor’s note: This is the final part of a two-part Q&A on platting regulations in Texas. The first part appeared in the December 2021 edition of Texas Town & City.)

Q Who may approve a plat application?

A Typically, the authority responsible for approving plats is: (1) the planning commission; (2) the city council, if the city has no planning commission; or (3) both if required by ordinance. Tex. Loc. Gov’t Code § 212.006. City council may also delegate to employees or officers of the city or of a utility owned or operated by the city authority to approve: (1) amending plats; (2) minor plats or replats involving four or fewer lots fronting on an existing street and not requiring the creation of any new street or the extension of municipal facilities; or (3) certain replats that do not require the creation of any new street or the extension of municipal facilities. Id. § 212.0065.

Q What procedures must a city follow to approve a plat application?

A A city’s plat and/or subdivision regulations will dictate the procedures required in approving a plat. Generally, a property owner or developer files a plat application with the city or the planning commission. Tex. Loc. Gov’t Code § 212.008. Following the application deadline, the proposed plat is reviewed by city staff or consultants to determine whether the plat complies with applicable city regulations. The approval of a plat is a ministerial duty and the approving authority must approve a plat if the plat application complies with: (1) the general plan of the city; (2) the general plan for the extension of the city and its roads, streets, and public highways within the city and in its extraterritorial jurisdiction, taking into account access to and extension of sewer and water mains and the instrumentalities of public utilities; (3) a bond required under state law, if applicable, is filed with the city; and (4) any rules adopted governing plats and subdivisions of land within the city’s jurisdiction. Id. §§ 212.005; 212.010. An applicant may choose an alternative procedure adopted by the city if the process allows for a shorter approval period. Id. § 212.0096(a).

If a plat is approved, the approving authority must endorse the plat with a certificate indicating the approval. Id. § 212.009(c). The certificate must be signed by: (1) the approving authority’s presiding officer and attested by the authority’s secretary; or (2) a majority of the members of the approving authority. Id.

Q Is there a deadline by which a plat must be approved or disapproved?

A Yes. The authority responsible for approving plats, whether it is the planning commission or city council, must, within 30 days after the date the plat is filed, either approve the plat, approve the plat with conditions, or disapprove the plat. Tex. Loc. Gov’t Code § 212.009(a). If the city’s plat or subdivision regulations require that a plat be approved by the city council, in addition to the planning commission, the council must act on the plat within 30 days after the date the planning commission approves the plat. Id. § 212.009(b).

A plat is deemed approved unless it is disapproved within the required timeframe. Id. § 212.009(a), (b). If a plat is approved due to the approving authority’s failure to act, the authority, upon the applicant’s request, must issue a certificate stating the date the plat was filed and that the approving authority failed to act on the plat within the requisite period. Id. § 212.009(d).

Q Can a city conditionally approve or disapprove a plat application?

A Yes. The approving authority may conditionally approve or disapprove a plat. Tex. Loc. Gov’t Code § 212.0091(a). If the authority does so, it must provide the applicant with a written statement that clearly articulates specific conditions for the conditional approval or the reasons for disapproval. Id. Each condition or reason specified in the written statement...
may not be arbitrary and must: (1) be directly related to the city’s adopted regulations; and (2) include a citation to the law, including a statute or city ordinance, that is the basis for the conditional approval or disapproval, if applicable. Id. § 212.0093(b).

After the conditional approval or disapproval of a plat, the applicant may submit to the approving authority a written response that satisfies each condition for the conditional approval or remedies each reason for disapproval provided. Id. § 212.0093. The approving authority may not establish a deadline for an applicant to submit the response. Id. Once the approving authority receives the applicant’s response, it must determine whether to approve or disapprove the applicant’s previously conditionally approved or disapproved plat no later than the 15th day after the date the applicant submits the response. Id. § 212.0095.

Q Can the approving authority request or require a plat applicant waive the approval timeframe?

A No. The approving authority may not request or require an applicant waive a deadline or other approval procedure set by state law. Tex. Loc. Gov’t Code § 212.0097. However, upon mutual agreement, the city and the applicant may extend the 30-day approval period for an additional period not to exceed 30 days if: (1) the applicant requests the extension in writing to the approving authority; and (2) the approving authority agrees to the extension request. Id. § 212.009(b-2).

Q Where is a plat filed once approved?

A An approved plat must be filed and recorded with the county clerk in the county in which the tract is located. Tex. Loc. Gov’t Code § 212.004(d). Before a plat may be recorded, the plat must: (1) describe the subdivision by metes and bounds; (2) locate the subdivision with respect to a corner of the surveyor tract or an original corner of the original survey of which it is a part; and (3) state the dimensions of the subdivision and of each street, alley, square, park, or other part of the tract intended to be dedicated to public use or for the use of purchasers or owners of lots fronting on or adjacent to the street, alley, square, park, or other part. Id. § 212.004(b). A plat must also: (1) have attached to it an original tax certificate from each taxing unit with jurisdiction of the real property indicating that no delinquent ad valorem taxes are owed on the real property; and (2) be acknowledged and notarized in the same manner as deeds are. Id. § 212.004(c), (e); Tex. Prop. Code § 12.002.

Q When can a plat be vacated?

A A property owner may vacate (eliminate) a tract covered by a plat at any time before any lot in the plat is sold. Tex. Loc. Gov’t Code § 212.013. The plat is considered vacated when: (1) the approving authority approves a signed, acknowledged document declaring the plat vacated; and (2) the document is recorded in the same manner as the original plat. Id. If one or more lots in the plat have been sold, the plat, or any part of the plat, may be vacated on
the application of all the owners of lots in the plat with approval obtained in the same manner prescribed for the original plat. *Id.* § 212.013(b). Once executed and recorded, a vacated plat has no effect. *Id.* § 212.013(d).

**Q** What is a replat?

**A** A replat is a new plat of all or a portion of a previously approved plat. Replats can either eliminate (vacate) or keep (without vacating) a prior plat. *Id.* §§ 212.013-.014—0155.

A replat of a subdivision or part of a subdivision may be recorded and is controlling over the preceding plat without vacating that plat if the replat: (1) is signed and acknowledged by only the owners of the property being replatted; (2) is approved by the authority responsible for approving plats; and (3) does not attempt to amend or remove any covenants or restrictions. *Id.* § 212.014(a).

Additional requirements apply to certain residential replats if: (1) during the preceding five years, any of the area to be replatted was limited by an interim or permanent zoning classification to residential use for not more than two residential units per lot; or (2) any lot in the preceding plat was limited by deed restrictions to residential use for not more than two residential units per lot.

*Id.* § 212.015. Moreover, additional requirements apply to replatting of subdivisions in cities with a population of 1.3 million or more. *Id.* §§ 212.0145; 212.0146.

**Q** What is an amending plat?

**A** An amending plat is essentially a replat that does not vacate the preceding plat and is for the purpose of addressing minor changes, correcting clerical errors or making minor modifications affecting a limited number of property owners or lots. Tex. Loc. Gov’t Code § 212.016.

An amending plat may be recorded and is controlling over the preceding plat without vacating that plat, if the amending plat is signed by the applicants only and is solely for one or more of the following purposes:

1. to correct an error: (a) in a course or distance; (b) in a real property description; (c) in courses and distances of lot lines between two adjacent lots (if certain requirements are met); or (d) any other type of scrivener or clerical error or omission previously approved by the municipal authority responsible for approving plats, including lot numbers, acreage, street names, and identification of adjacent recorded plats;

2. to add: (a) a course or distance that was omitted; (b) an indication of monuments set after the death, disability, or retirement from practice of the engineer or surveyor responsible for setting monuments; or (c) the location or character of a monument that has been changed in location or character or that is shown incorrectly as to location or character on the preceding plat;

3. to relocate: (a) a lot line to eliminate an inadvertent encroachment of a building or other improvement on a lot line or easement; (b) one or more lot lines between one or more adjacent lots (if certain requirements are met); or (c) to make necessary changes to the preceding plat to create six or fewer lots in the subdivision or a part of the subdivision covered by the preceding plat (if certain requirements are met); or

4. to replat one or more lots fronting on an existing street (if certain requirements are met).

*Id.* § 212.016(a)(1)–(11). The approving authority may approve and issue an amending plat. *Id.* Alternatively, city council may delegate approval authority of amending plats to city staff. *Id.* § 212.0065(a)(1). Approval of an amending plat does not require notice to adjacent property owners or a public hearing. *Id.* § 212.016.

**Q** Does a plat need to be amended so as to change the name of a street?

**A** Not necessarily. State law does not require a plat to name streets. State law only requires that a plat state the dimensions of the subdivision and of each street, alley, square, park, or other part of the tract intended to be dedicated to public use or for the use of purchasers or owners of lots fronting on or adjacent to the street, alley, square, park, or other part. Tex. Loc. Gov’t Code § 212.004.

A city may have additional local regulations or requirements
that are more detailed and require street names rather than simply showing that a street exists. If the city is only changing the street name and not the fact that there is a right of way present, then the city may not need to amend a plat. When in doubt, cities should consult with their local legal counsel.

Q Can a city be held liable for improperly approving a plat?

A It depends. Plat approval is considered a governmental function for which the city is immune from liability. *City of Round Rock v. Smith*, 687 S.W.2d 300, 303 (Tex. 1985) (city’s approval of subdivision plat, as a discretionary function that only governmental unit could perform, was a “governmental function” and city was immune from liability for its alleged negligence in approving plat, which authorized filling of watercourses, allegedly resulting in flooding); see also Tex. Civ. Prac. & Rem. Code § 101.0215(b)(29).

One appellate court did not find a takings claim for an inadvertent mistake or error in approving a plat. See *City of Mason v. Lee*, No. 04-18-00275-CV, 2018 WL 5808260, at *2 (Tex. App.—San Antonio 2018, no pet. h.) (mem. op.) (city was not held liable where plaintiff asserted immunity did not bar their regulatory takings claim because the city engaged in an intentional affirmative action by “illicitly approving the plat”).

However, a plat approved in spite of non-compliance with duly adopted local regulations may be the basis for an estoppel defense against a city if the city has received substantial benefits as result of its own mistake. *City of Austin v. Garza*, 124 S.W.3d 867 (Tex. App.—Austin 2003, no pet. h.) (holding the city was bound to a note on a final recorded plat upon which the city relied for dedications in the face of allegations by the city that it approved the note as a “mistake” since it would be “manifestly unjust for the city to retain the benefits of its mistake yet avoid its obligations”). Because such matters are fact intensive, a city should consult with its local legal counsel. ★
WELCOME 2022!

TML Board Members Share Their New Year’s Resolutions

2021 didn’t play out like any of us thought it would. From the toll of the pandemic to Texas’ unprecedented winter storms, it was a year for the history books. Looking forward to the New Year and opportunities it will bring, we asked some TML board members about their number one resolution for 2022, whether personal or professional. We’re sharing their resolutions with you here, and hope they inspire your optimism and plans for the New Year.

“In 2022, I want to be more intentional about expressing my gratitude. I love receiving handwritten notes so I plan to write more handwritten notes. I also want to make time to leisure read. A good book is like a short vacation. Finally, I also want to spend more time practicing yoga.”

**Martha Castex-Tatum**, Vice Mayor Pro Tem, City of Houston; TML President

"My resolution for 2022 is to work to improve and take better care of my health so that I can hopefully reduce my medication intake and prolong my active life. My plan is to work on two factors:
1. Diet: eat healthier and evaluate my intake
2. Exercise: maintain a daily exercise routine schedule

In the past couple of years, several family members and friends have had medical struggles that they could not overcome mainly due to their poor health. I expect to accomplish and succeed with my resolution so that I can continue to enjoy my family for years to come.

Hello, salad bars. Good bye, Chinese buffets. Welcome back, healthy Tito!"

**Tito Rodriguez**, Councilmember, City of North Richland Hills (TML Region 8)

“My resolution is to pick my word for the year and let that be the way I live in 2022. I have narrowed it down to three which are balance, cultivate, and mindful. Whichever is chosen, I will apply that to alone time, family, friends, and all the things that go with being an elected official."

**Allison Heyward**, CMO, Mayor, City of Schertz (TML Region 7)

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**Allison Heyward**, CMO, Mayor, City of Schertz (TML Region 7)
“My resolution for the New Year is to create more balance in my life. When you love your work as much as I do, it is easy to lose that balance between work, family, and ‘me’ time. I am dedicating myself this year to finding that perfect balance.”

Charles E. Zech, City Attorney, Cities of Pflugerville, Bee Cave, Wimberley, Prairie View, Rollingwood, Santa Fe, Leon Valley, and Fair Oaks Ranch (Texas City Attorneys Association)

“My resolution is QTL. Quality Time Left. Living the best I can. I have no plans on leaving anytime soon, but I recently heard this phrase in an NFL Hall of Fame speech from past Cowboys’ coach Jimmy Johnson and it hit me on what all of that means. So I’m not waiting until New Years, but I do have this as a resolution to have more fun in life and try making everything count.”

Selso A. Mata, AIA, CBO, Chief Building Official, City of Plano (Building Officials Association of Texas)

“My new year’s resolution is to have more time; that is, not to schedule more time or find more time, but to have more time. I need more time to spend with family, to accomplish job-related tasks, for professional and personal visioning, and for me in general. If anyone has time available, please share it with me.”

Hugh Walker, Deputy City Attorney, City of Bryan (Texas City Management Association)

“My number one resolution for 2022 is to find some more creative ways to continue bringing our community together. In 2021, we concentrated heavily on issues like our program of improving infrastructure, altering policies and facilities for coping with COVID-19, all while meeting the challenges of maintaining service levels with reduced resources. Now it’s time to find some fun and creative ways to engage our citizens and celebrate those things that make Bridge City great. Be warned: if I come to your city, I may steal some of your ideas!”

David Rutledge, CMO, Mayor, City of Bridge City; TML President-Elect

“My top resolution is to take time to connect with people, both at work and personally. This past year seems to have traveled at light speed and taking real time to make the connections with those around us took a backseat to accomplishing tasks. In 2022, I hope to combine both and make the connections a priority.”

Amanda Campos, City Secretary, City of Burleson (Texas Municipal Clerks Association, Inc.)

“My 2022 resolution is to empower my community. I will look for ways to optimize existing resources leveraging modern technology, to deeply connect with citizens in powerful ways, and to empower city employees to be more efficient and effective so they have time to focus on their mission. My hope is through empowering my community as information providers, verifiers, and consumers, our government can be both more open and effective.”

Marissa Ximenez, Councilmember, City of Floresville (Association of Hispanic Municipal Officials)
Whether you are a city government novice or veteran, the Texas Municipal League (TML) is here to help you succeed in your leadership role. Since its formation in 1913 by 14 cities, our mission has remained constant – to serve the needs and advocate the interests of member cities.

Today, TML serves more than 1,160 member cities. That means about 16,000 mayors, councilmembers, city managers, city attorneys, and city department heads are member officials through their cities’ participation.

Your city is a member. Now what?

It’s time to get involved.

**Grow Your Knowledge Base: Attend a TML Training Event**

TML conducts a variety of conferences, workshops, and webinars to enhance policy-making and leadership skills. These events connect you to solutions, innovation, and inspiration. And in between presentations and panels, you will have many opportunities to network with peers.

The TML Annual Conference and Exhibition is one of the nation’s largest gatherings of city officials. Held in October, the conference includes keynote sessions, workshops, the annual business meeting, and an impressive exhibit hall with more than 350 companies representing products and services that benefit Texas cities.

The League also offers a variety of other training opportunities throughout the year, including the Elected Officials’ Conference (February or March), Newly Elected Officials’ Orientations (January, July, and August), Economic Development Conference (November), Leadership Academy (April and May), Small Town Conference (May), Small Cities’ Problem-Solving Clinics (multiple times a year), Public Funds Investment Act Training (multiple times a year), Budget and Tax Rate Workshops (multiple times a year), Legislative Series (odd-numbered years), as well as virtual webinars and workshops. Check out the full calendar of training opportunities at tml.org by clicking on “Upcoming Events” on the home page.

**Network: Attend a TML Region Meeting**

TML has 15 regions that were formed in 1958 and are the League’s grassroots. Regions work to foster the exchange of information among cities and help the TML Board develop policy that represents the state’s diverse interests. Each region elects officers, including a representative who serves on the TML Board, and conducts meetings at least twice each year.

**Focus Your Training: Get Involved in a TML Affiliate**

The League also has 21 affiliate organizations that represent specific professional disciplines in municipal government. Each affiliate group has its own membership criteria and dues structure that is separate from the League’s and offers a variety of professional development and networking opportunities throughout the year. For a listing of all TML affiliates, go to https://www.tml.org/35/ Affiliates.

**Represent Your Community: Advocate for Your City**

One of the principal purposes of the League is to advance and represent the interests of Texas cities at the state and federal levels.

At the state level, about 25 percent of the thousands of bills filed each session would affect cities in some substantial way. The League makes every effort to assure that bad-for-city bills are defeated and bills that help cities operate more effectively are passed. Your voice before, during, and after a legislative session is a critical part of that effort.

In addition to communicating with your state leaders, TML encourages you to engage in the League’s policy development process. That process begins a full year before the regular legislative session convenes. In non-legislative years, the TML president appoints delegates to a two-day Legislative Policy Summit, where attendees deliberate and make policy recommendations. The final report of the policy summit and any resolutions submitted by the general membership are then considered by the TML general membership at the annual business meeting held during the annual conference. Finally, the TML Board adopts a legislative program based on these approved resolutions.

At the federal level, TML and city officials coordinate efforts through the National League of Cities, the Southern Municipal Conference, and other similar organizations, to ensure Texas cities have a voice in Washington, D.C.

**Lead with Confidence: Reach out to the TML Legal Team**

The League employs full-time attorneys who are available to provide legal information on municipal issues to member cities, as well as example documents to assist cities in drafting ordinances.
and other required legal notices. You can reach out to a TML attorney at 512-231-7400 or legalinfo@tml.org.

**Keep Up with Municipal Information and Trends: Information, Research, and Communications**
Members receive timely and pertinent information through the TML website (www.tml.org), *Texas Town & City* magazine and other publications, the Friday TML Exchange email that includes a legislative update, social media posts, and other emails. The League also offers the Connect News service, a daily email of newspaper clippings of interest across the state.

If there is something that you need but aren't sure where to look, contact TML staff at 512-231-7400 or members@tml.org.

**Discover Solutions: Connect to Private Sector Solutions and Resources**
Through the League’s Business Development Department, TML connects cities with private sector products and services. You can connect to these solutions in the exhibit hall and sponsor wall at the TML Annual Conference and Exhibition and the Municipal Marketplace on the TML website.

**But Wait, There’s More**

**Texas Municipal League Institute (TMLI)**
Calling all elected officials: TMLI is a voluntary certification program that recognizes and rewards elected officials who commit to continuing professional development. This recognition ranges from a certificate of recognition and increases to Certified Municipal Official. Sponsored by TML and the TML affiliate group the Texas Association of Mayors, Councilmembers and Commissioners (TAMCC), TMLI encourages elected officials to learn about their governance roles and city government through a variety of educational opportunities.

**Surveys**
Participate in TML surveys. TML sends several annual surveys that collect information on salaries, water and wastewater rates, taxation and debt levels, and general fiscal conditions.

**Municipal Excellence Awards**
Share your city’s success stories and apply for a municipal excellence award. These best practices awards celebrate the best of city innovation in public works, public safety, communications, management, and city spirit. Applications open at the beginning of each year and close in early June.

**Small Cities Advisory Council**
Did you know that 84 percent of Texas cities have populations below 15,000? The Small Cities Advisory Council (SCAC) is made up of dedicated city elected officials and staff who are committed to spending TML’s limited resources in ways that help small cities. Current programs include training scholarships, Small Cities’ Problem-Solving Clinics, and training sessions at other TML events.

**Youth Advisory Commission Summit**
In February, TML sponsors a summit of youth advisory commissions, providing an opportunity for youth to network, celebrate, and learn. The summit is also open to city officials who are curious about starting a program in their communities.

**Career Center**
TML hosts a job board on its website, and member cities can post for free.

**Directories**
TML maintains online directories of city officials, associate (business) members, and exhibitors and sponsors at tml.org.

**TML Health Benefits Pool (TML Health) and TML Intergovernmental Risk Pool (TMLIRP)**
For more than 40 years, the TML health and risk pools have provided Texas cities with quality coverage specifically designed to meet municipal needs. These pools are separate entities but maintain a close working relationship with TML.

Benefit coverage for municipal employees and their families has become a major expense item in virtually every city budget. Cities throughout the state are holding the line on these costs by participating in TML Health.

TMLIRP works to reduce the cost of property and casualty risks in Texas cities. In addition to providing a stable risk financing system, the TMLIRP offers education to its members to avoid and reduce risks, control losses, and stay informed on other aspects of risk management.

**Ready. Set. Engage.**
TML is committed to helping city leaders meet today’s governing challenges. The League prides itself on almost 110 years of service to Texas cities and looks forward to providing the resources, knowledge, and advocacy to support city officials into the future.

If you have questions about any of the opportunities listed above, visit tml.org, call 512-231-7400, or email members@tml.org. ★
In late 2018, a significant portion of the City of Anna’s leadership team was new to the organization. Bringing together decades of experience from other cities and organizations, our team met together and asked the question “What is the Anna way?” and how can we communicate that better than ever before. Collectively, we wanted our community to feel like a connected community; we wanted Anna to be a community of neighbors. What is a neighbor? A neighbor is a person who lives near another. A good neighbor is like family. You know each other and help each other out when needed. You look out for one another. We set out to redefine our relationship with the community around the concept of “neighbor,” and chart a new standard of communication, engagement, and community building. The concept of constituents as neighbors resonated for us as employees and created an immediate personal connection. Neighbors are not faceless strangers or customers; neighbors are intertwined into our routines and directly impact the quality of life we experience.

We changed the narrative in Anna so that we no longer have citizens, residents, and customers. We are a community of neighbors, because we want a community of connection and respect. Good neighbors communicate well, are caring and equitable, and invest in the community they live in.

That investment has proven valuable in Anna. In the summer of 2019, city staff and volunteers worked with Play By Design to construct a new playground at Sherley Heritage Park. The park was donated to the City by the long-established local Sherley family. Recruited only by word of mouth and social media, neighbors flocked to the park to volunteer to construct the playground within a single week.

“The building project gave people a chance to work together. People who perhaps did not know each other all came together, each with a different skill level, and lent a helping hand,” said City Manager Jim Proce. “When they see each other at the grocery store or at church from now on, they’ll have a special connection that they would not have had before.”

As a city, we strive to develop programs around the concept of cultivating a relationship with our neighbors and improving each person’s livelihood. Our conversations and “neighbor” services are influenced by our perspective...
of the person we’re communicating with. The rules of engagement change immediately when you’re speaking with your neighbor rather than a resident or constituent.

During the planning of National Night Out 2021, a nationwide community policing event, staff weighed the options of hosting a large community event open to everyone or pivoting to small neighborhood-centric block parties for the campaign. Ultimately, the decision was driven by the desire for neighbors to connect intimately on their own street. We want everyone to know the families on their block, and feel comfortable conversing and caring for each other. In a city with 15 neighborhoods and homeowner associations, we were thrilled to have four official block parties registered and more than 900 neighbors gather together in a single night.

As a way to communicate openly and effectively with our neighbors, we offer telephone town halls as needed to discuss hot topics and answer as many questions as possible within an hour. We held a telephone town hall last spring to discuss several bond propositions on the ballot and how they would impact the community. More than 600 neighbors joined the call to ask questions and listen in. This was significantly higher than the number of people who could attend a city council meeting or had previously attended an in-person public input meeting in our town.

Similarly, we hosted a telephone town hall about our water rate increases and water quality report in the summer. More than 400 neighbors engaged in the conversation by calling in. As a result, we received negative feedback from only a handful of neighbors regarding the new water rates. Our staff was able to reach out to each person individually to address their concerns.

Ultimately, shifting the narrative from constituents to neighbors has changed the perception of how we view the work we do for our community, why we do it, and how well we do it. Complaints are accepted as worthwhile concerns, and implementing new programs or policies are opportunities to meet a necessary need that will improve the quality of life.

From our recruiting and onboarding to evaluations and event planning, neighbors are the center of the conversation and have changed the rules of engagement for the City of Anna.
Nestled within the Piney Woods of East Texas is the City of Huntsville, home of General Sam Houston and Sam Houston State University. When the COVID-19 pandemic kept university students home for virtual learning in the fall of 2020, things just didn’t feel the same among the quiet campus streets. What once was a booming parking lot full of tailgating college football fans was now a lonely slab of concrete. The Sam Houston Bearkats delayed their football season until the spring semester of 2021 in order to compete for a NCAA championship.

When the players took the field in February, albeit unique timing, college football was back in Huntsville. With masks in tow and social distancing guidelines in place, the community took to the stands to cheer on their Bearkats. The spotlight shined on Huntsville’s unique spring football atmosphere, and football fans across the country tuned in to national broadcasts to watch the Bearkats battle their way through the season. After an undefeated regular season, Sam Houston secured the home field advantage for
the playoffs and the road to the championship was coming through Huntsville. Local businesses proudly decorated their storefronts with Bearkat orange, and the community welcomed fans from opposing teams from New Jersey, North Dakota, and Virginia. After defeating each opponent from across the country and with a perfect 9-0 record, the Bearkats would be competing for the NCAA FCS National Championship.

Huntsville was the perfect pitstop for Houston-based alumni as they made their way to the championship game in Frisco. Some fans who weren’t able to attend the game made the trip to Huntsville just to be among their fellow Bearkats and feel the community pride that the citizens of Huntsville had in their team. After weather delays and stressful third down conversions, every Bearkat fan watching the game erupted with joy when the clock hit zero and the Bearkats came out with a 23-21 victory. The NCAA FCS National Championship trophy was coming to Huntsville for the first time in history.

The talk among the town was immediately about how the community could show support for their champions. Plans for a city-hosted parade were initiated, and local businesses signed up to decorate their vehicles and create championship caliber floats. Staff from the City of Huntsville and Sam Houston State University collaborated throughout the following weeks to put on a celebration parade. The Huntsville Fire Department partnered with neighboring fire stations to help transport the team in style. Over 50 floats including community organizations, local businesses, and public service representatives led the team through fan-filled streets to downtown Huntsville where the master of ceremonies waited to introduce the national champions. As confetti rained down, the community felt excitement and joy all around them.

Sam Houston State University is an integral part of what makes Huntsville feel like home for so many. With over 21,000 students enrolled, the City recognizes that what makes Huntsville great isn’t just the residents who have lived there all of their lives; it’s also the students who decided to choose Huntsville as their home. ★
“If you can’t beat them, join them,” the saying goes.

And join them is what the City of Port Lavaca did.

It started this past May with a Facebook post and photo of some children throwing rocks in Lavaca Bay. The problem was, these weren’t just any rocks, they were landscape rocks enhancing a newly renovated area of Bayfront Peninsula Park.

The post was initially met with some backlash, but the tides quickly turned and the community banded together to embrace children being children. Community members also saw it as an educational opportunity and chance to highlight the newly enhanced park features and showcase plans for the future.

Banding together and making the most of every opportunity is something Port Lavaca does well. Striking while the iron was hot, volunteers mobilized to put together an impromptu festival in eight days.
“This created quite a level of excitement in our community,” said Tania French, Port Lavaca events coordinator. “So we decided, ‘why not have some fun with it?’ One of our team members came up with a great idea and we ran full steam ahead.”

Port Lavaca wanted to highlight and educate the community about the Bayfront project during the rock festival with a presentation, rock toss contests, a Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson look-alike contest, and a drive-in movie.

The City did not use the park’s new limestone rocks, instead a truckload of rocks was donated specifically for the event by the parents of the children who threw the first stones. Hand-painted rocks embellished with “Rock Festival ‘21” were placed throughout the park to be picked up as souvenirs.

“I was excited to see the community band together to celebrate the improvements that the City is making to our Bayfront Peninsula Park and recognize that all of us - citizens and City staff alike - have a part to play in keeping these improvements maintained and contributing to our quality of life,” said Jody Weaver, Port Lavaca city manager.

Eight days of planning and community support paved the way for a festival unlike any other. While community support is not new to Port Lavaca, the City didn’t expect to make headlines and news broadcasts across the country as major news outlets quickly picked up the story laying the foundation for Rock Festival 2022.

For more information about Port Lavaca’s celebrated festival, contact Tania French at 361-920-9788 or tania@portlavacaevents.com.
"A couple of hours later when both of the towers had fallen, it hit home that the world I lived in would never be the same," said Wylie Fire Rescue Captain Andrew Johnson.

The world was never the same for anyone after September 11, 2001. This was the day the World Trade Center in New York City collapsed after being struck by two hijacked commercial planes, killing over 2,700 people.

Three hundred and forty-three of those people were firefighters. Wylie is helping ensure the lives lost that day are not forgotten. In August 2021, after months of submissions and discussions, the Wylie Public Arts Advisory Board, Wylie City Council, and a selection panel chose the final art submission titled "Never Forget."

The piece will pay homage to the 343 firefighters who lost their lives on 9/11. The artwork will be permanently displayed at Wylie Fire Station 4, currently under construction, and scheduled to open in spring 2022.

“I have a daughter that was not alive when 9/11 happened," said Captain Johnson, a 10-year veteran of Wylie Fire Rescue and a member of the selection panel. "When she drives by, she'll know what it is, and that's what I wanted."

Johnson's involvement in the fire station's public art piece was happenstance. He overheard discussions about a potential sculpture and mentioned to Fire Chief Brandon Blythe that the theme should have something to do with "9/11." Blythe agreed.

From a young age, Johnson knew he wanted to be a firefighter. That decision was solidified for him on September 11, 2001, when he watched, along with classmates, as the Twin Towers burned.

He recalls watching footage from that day and hearing the din of continuous beeps from Personal Alert Safety System devices. Firefighters wear these devices that beep when motion goes undetected for a prolonged period of time. Johnson thought, "There are a lot of dead firefighters in there."
For Johnson, “Never Forget” is a way to pay tribute to those firefighters who gave their lives.

“People say this is the greatest loss of life we’ve ever experienced,” he said. “What if it wasn’t the greatest loss of life, but the greatest rescue of all time? How many of those people wouldn’t have made it out, and how many more would have died?”

Terrence Martin, an artist based in Sacramento, California, is the one bringing the tribute to life. The artwork will imitate the iconic look of the Twin Towers with two aluminum columns that feature a unique sensory experience.

“I don’t want people wondering what the message is that we’re trying to get across,” said Martin. “It works from a distance, but when you get up close you realize there’s much more to see and feel.”

The artwork will feature an actual piece of the towers placed in each aluminum tower. A piece the viewer can touch as an interactive component Martin is calling the “Window of Remembrance.” An outline of the maltese cross will be laser-cut into each column, acting as the ‘window’ for visitors to reach in.

According to Martin, many pieces of the towers were originally housed in New York at the John F. Kennedy International Airport. The particular piece Martin is using for his sculpture was donated by fellow artist, Jim Galluchi, who also submitted a proposal for consideration.

“The whole experience is topped off with the fact that you can reach into the center of the sculpture and touch a piece of the World Trade Center,” said Martin. “Usually it’s a visual component that yields emotion, but when you can combine that with a tactile experience, to me that drives the concept to an ultimate level.”
The artwork will also feature all 343 names of the firefighters who lost their lives laser-cut into the aluminum. From a distance, the names will mimic the windows of the towers. At night, the inside of the sculpture will be illuminated by a red-orange glow, representing fire.

"Normally it would take a song that reaches a lot of people or a movie, but as an artist you’re able to do this for years on end, touch strangers and you’re not even there," explained Martin.

"It’s an unbelievable feeling to leave that legacy behind and provide that for people."

In the early 1990s, Martin lived in New Jersey for a stint, just across the Hudson River. He would often travel to New York City and take the train into the basement of the World Trade Center. He describes the experience as wild and awe-inspiring.

"It’s not something you forget and it gives you more motivation to share that experience, in some way, with people," said Martin.

He also recalls seeing the towers sway in the wind some days, being struck by the majesty of it all. Martin is experiencing what some may call a "full-circle moment" having lived near New York City and being a frequent visitor to the towers, and now building a replica sculpture that will be a memorial for 9/11.

"There will be a point in time where there won’t be many people left that have experienced the towers," said Martin. "A lot goes around in my mind when I think about that day and my experience there, and I’d like to think about how those experiences played a part in my design and the final acceptance of this piece."

The piece will debut in spring 2022 when Fire Station 4 is scheduled to open.

City of Wylie Public Art Program

The City’s support for accessible and appealing public artwork is more than a commitment to city beautification; the 13 installations reflect Wylie’s strong sense of community and history. From the program’s outset in 2006, City officials were adamant that citizens contribute to the process, having a voice and seeing the projects come to fruition.

Funding for public art projects includes vendor booth fees and sponsorships from City events, and one percent of capital improvement project fees. A Public Arts Advisory Board determines the location and budget for each piece. An open call to artists is issued, and a selection committee, made up of board members, citizens, consultants, artists, and City staff, narrows the list of artists to two or three semifinalists. The public is invited to view the presentations and provide input on the final selections. The selected artist and concept is given final approval by the Public Arts Advisory Board and City Council. ★
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COLLABORATION IS KEY TO LONGVIEW’S SUCCESS

By Richard Yeakley, Multimedia Specialist, City of Longview

On any given Friday night in the fall, Longview residents dress in their team’s colors and support one of the four independent school districts within the City limits. These citizens may live in either Gregg or Harrison Counties. They may have family who have called Longview home since it was established 150 years ago, or they recently arrived to take positions with new industry or retired to Texas.

In spite of these outward divisions, Longview’s greatest strength and the source of its recent accomplishments comes from its ability to work cooperatively. County, city, and school agencies work closely together to improve the quality of life for residents, and nonprofit and commercial businesses engage regularly in public-private partnerships to improve the community they call home.

Several recent initiatives including a COVID-19 vaccination hub, the dedication of a Cultural District through the Texas Commission on the Arts, and various new parks and recreation amenities highlight the value of this collaborative mindset that is shared throughout the City.

In January 2021, COVID-19 vaccines were finally becoming available and the State was taking steps to provide shots for Texans. Longview leaders were disappointed to learn a neighboring county was being considered as the only primary clinic for the entire area.

Seeking to enhance the level of service to our residents and surrounding area, Gregg County Judge Bill Stoudt, Longview Mayor Dr. Andy Mack, CHRISTUS Good Shepherd CEO Todd Hancock, and Longview Fire Department Chief and Emergency Management Coordinator J.P. Steelman flew to Austin, where they and Texas Rep. Jay Dean, a former Longview mayor, met with state agencies.

The result of the coordinated effort was the Gregg County Mega Vaccine HUB, which during the course of its operation provided more than 70,000 doses of the COVID-19 for Longview residents and countless more who traveled to Longview after hearing about the well run clinic.

The clinic was one of the first of its kind in the state and was used as a model for other vaccination initiatives. The City of Longview was able to secure support from the state for this program due to the united front presented by leaders from across the city.

“The success of the clinic was visible evidence of many years of small choices that made the collaborative effort possible. Longview, Gregg County, the State of Texas, and CHRISTUS Good Shepherd had made a conscious effort through recent decades to be team players together and build the kind of trust it took to pull off this endeavor,” Longview Mayor Andy Mack said. “Partnerships like this aren’t built overnight, and I’m grateful for all the leaders who have developed the relationships that we are reaping the benefits of today.”
Another example of the collaborative spirit of Longview in action is the City’s recent procurement of a Cultural District through the Texas Commission on the Arts. In 2018, the Longview Chamber of Commerce coordinated an Inter-City Trip to Waco, where, among other things, Longview residents learned about the cultural district program and its value to the Texas community.

Several attendees returned from the trip with a desire to bring the program to Longview and began the process, which ultimately led to a portion of downtown Longview, Mobberly Avenue, and the LeTourneau University campus being designated by the state agency.

What’s more, the process brought together cultural arts organizations from across the community in a new organization named Arts!Longview, which oversees the district and helps individual organizations coordinate their efforts.

Some initiatives of Arts!Longview are immediately visible including murals, sculptures, and other improvements. However, the most important work of the organization is helping the ballet, museums, symphony, library, arboretum, theaters, bands, and many other organizations work together in bringing their gifts to the community.

One recent example revolved around Harry Potter, which included a downtown ArtWalk, a Longview Symphony concert, a day-long event at the Longview Arboretum and Nature Center, programming at the Longview Public Library, and much more.

Another visible change in the community has come to the city’s parks and recreation amenities through public-private partnerships.

“We have an active community that is interested in our parks system. Many recent improvements have come about because groups of residents had a vested interest in creating a place to participate in the sport or game they love,” Parks and Recreation Director Scott Caron said.

Located at Ingram Park, the Dodson Action Sports Complex is the result of a public-private partnership in which the City of Longview provided $40,000 in funding to match the amount raised by community volunteers. The skate park was named the Dodson Action Sports Complex in honor of Brian Dodson, who led the volunteer and fundraising effort. The Dodson Action Sports Complex is designed for skateboards, scooters, inline skates, and BMX freestyle bikes, and is open to both experienced skaters and beginners. The park was designed and constructed with the help of East Texas native Morgan Wade, who is a professional BMX rider and X-Games gold medalist.

At Hinsley Park, a group of pickleball enthusiasts petitioned the city to convert two tennis courts into six pickleball courts. The Longview Pickleball Club solicited donations and hosted tournaments to raise money to purchase nets, resurface and paint the courts, and install wind screens. Ongoing fundraising efforts are taking place to provide additional lighting at the courts, and regular club meetups draw dozens of residents on a weekly basis.

The Longview Disc Golf Association is a private group of disc golf enthusiasts who have planned, funded, and installed three disc golf courses at the city’s parks and recreation facilities with a fourth course underway. These courses are now home to several annual tournaments, which draw visitors from across the state and nation.

The COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic, Arts!Longview Cultural District, and public-private park partnerships are just a few examples of the many ways that Longview has been successful due largely to the shared value of working collaboratively. As Longview moves into its next 150 years, this spirit of teamwork gives us confidence in many future successes for years to come. ✨
Shenandoah is a two square mile city with 3,100 residents that sits across I-45 just north of Houston and is adjacent to The Woodlands. For such a small city, Shenandoah has a unique story to tell.

Community

The City started as a small bedroom community and incorporated in 1974 to avoid annexation by Houston. In the decades that followed, Shenandoah has been part of the growth of south Montgomery County.

Residential areas west of I-45 have a mix of longtime residents who know the history and keep community traditions alive, along with newcomers who flock to Shenandoah for its quality of life and low cost of living. The City hosts local events throughout the year, some of which have been going on for over 20 years. An active civic club provides a great volunteer base for staging these special events. Residents work to maintain the small town feel and consider it part of the City’s identity.

Shenandoah was also home to David Vetter, the “bubble boy,” who lived a very public life until passing away in 1984 from Severe Combined Immune Deficiency. His story captured the world’s attention at a time when children usually didn’t survive a year with this condition. Because of the lessons from David’s life, the David Center at Texas Children’s Hospital was established, helping thousands of children with immune deficiencies over the years. His story is part of the fabric of Shenandoah.

The City has a thriving commercial base that is concentrated east of I-45 with 50 restaurants, 12 hotels, and extensive retail stores. These businesses provide a strong sales tax revenue stream which allows Shenandoah to keep property taxes and utility rates at the lowest level in the county. The sense of community along with the urban conveniences make the city a great place to live.
Public Safety

Shenandoah has a small geographical footprint, but its location on a major interstate and a daytime population close to 10,000 creates the need for a larger police force. The City has 26 sworn officers and one civilian administrative employee. Under new leadership in the last year, the police department has become very innovative. They launched a department Facebook page which has gained 1,365 followers in less than a year. They also started various community outreach programs, including mentoring at-risk juveniles and rewarding students who get good report cards in school.

The Shenandoah Police Department manages the combined cultures of small town community and busy commercial corridor very well. The department has a community resource officer who makes personal contact with citizens and businesses. He checks on elderly residents, escorts school buses in the mornings to make sure children are safe, and works to resolve conflicts. While keeping watch over the City’s neighborhoods, the department works hard to patrol the commercial areas along the interstate, which brings criminal activity from outside the community.

Shenandoah police are tough on crime, but they are also well loved for their community facing side. Residents know many of the officers by name and help foster a relationship of sharing information and reporting concerns.

City Council supports the police department’s efforts and ensures that they have the tools they need to do their job. They recently approved a large pay scale increase for the department to help them remain competitive in recruiting and retention.

Commercial Development

Ten years ago, the City put a new comprehensive plan and integrated development code in place to shape how development progressed. After the phenomenal growth over the last decade, Shenandoah is working through the painstaking process of updating them both. The City is almost at buildout, with little available land for development unless annexation occurs. The focus has expanded to include re-development of areas with aging commercial properties. Revisions to the development code will take into account any necessary zoning adjustments that will encourage that re-development. The results of this process could serve as an important guide to other small cities.

City officials are also focused on larger scale projects, including a roadway project called David Memorial Drive, a nod to young David Vetter. The project crosses three jurisdictions: Shenandoah, Montgomery County and the City of Conroe. The road is partially constructed and currently extends close to Shenandoah’s northern city limits east of I-45. The county section contains wetlands, which has involved a three year process to pursue permitting from the Corps of Engineers. Due to the complexity of the project, it has taken additional time to finally get to a point where completion of the road could occur in the next year or so. It will provide an important north/south alternative to the I-45 service road, which has very heavy traffic and is prone to flooding.

MetroPark Square, a major 69 acre mixed use development is also in progress east of I-45. The project includes retail, restaurant, hotel, and indoor recreation. As the development builds out, it will offer multi-family residential and additional retail, lodging, and dining. There is also a central plaza area for outdoor activities. Once completed, MetroPark will be the flagship development for Shenandoah.

Over the years, Shenandoah has become a hub of medical providers, with a large Memorial Hermann Hospital campus in the city limits and other major hospitals such as St. Luke’s, M. D. Anderson, Texas Children’s Hospital, and Methodist Hospital all just outside the city limits. Numerous smaller medical providers are in the City as well. These facilities fill an important need and also support Shenandoah’s hotels, restaurants, and other businesses.

With steady tax revenue and strong, united leadership, Shenandoah is well positioned for continued success. The City is very fortunate to have no serious problems, and every accomplishment is progress for the residents and businesses. The unique mix of small town quality of life and a large commercial area, along with a strong public safety program, and responsible, well-managed development make the City attractive for home buyers and businesses alike.
I’m a firm believer in using data to guide city planning. It works.

Years ago, in another city, we conducted a citizen survey every other year to identify key issues among citizens, measure our performance, and use the learnings to chart a sound course for our city. The survey provided good information. It became an indispensable resource for our city.

Now, in a new role and in a smaller city that didn’t have the same budget or staffing, I still wanted to conduct effective research that didn’t require the same resources. I wanted great data at my fingertips that would empower my staff as they evaluated options and made decisions.

I’ve also considered social media monitoring (which has become popular for cities of late), pursued by many industries for more than a decade as an intriguing way to mine consumer sentiment. A major difficulty with social media analysis is that public sentiment varies widely, can grossly exaggerate the opinions of a passionate few, and is flighty, subject to the emotional whims of the moment. Social media analysis is also very expensive, especially for what you get.

That’s why I return to quantitative surveys or qualitative research like online focus groups. There’s a sound, systematic process to it that’s proven to give an accurate assessment and rationale to public and employee sentiment. Despite its merits, I’ve also found cons, such as

- **Cost.** Some research companies charge tens of thousands of dollars, depending on the survey length, number of responses, and backend analysis/reporting.
- **Do-it-yourself pitfalls.** Despite the rise of good, self-administered platforms like Survey Monkey, at the end of the day, we end up doing the designing, the fielding, and the analysis to save a little money. And I ask myself, are my questions really that good? Is the data actionable? Is it worth the time of our team?
- **Sample.** Are we getting a statistically sound and accurate read?

I’ve done research for many years, and thought you might benefit from this short checklist for doing city research right.

- **Find an independent researcher with long experience across many industries.** I like it when a researcher has also done private sector work with companies like PepsiCo, Coca-Cola, KFC, Honda, or Chase. Even globally. It shows they’re credible. It shows they really know their business. They can bring a fresh perspective, independence, and expertise to city research.
- **Look for a researcher who collaborates with you.** That collaborative approach will help meet your needs and assure you don’t end up with useless data on the backend that disappoints.
- **Find a researcher who knows how to make streamlined and efficient surveys.** A good, streamlined, turnkey citizen survey with an online dashboard that reports the learnings should cost less than $10,000, and some researchers know how to do it.
- **Develop a survey instrument that’s focused on the areas of your city that matter most.** Don’t squeeze everything into one survey. Keep it short, under 10 minutes in length. Then, residents won’t mind taking it again in the future.
- **Make sure it is designed for mobile.** Over 50% of your residents will complete the survey on their phones. Research providers say their surveys work on any device, but are they designing for mobile in the first place? If not, many residents may have a frustrating experience on their phones.
- **Finally (and possibly foremost), make sure the research measures performance.** What’s the use of trying to improve when you don’t know exactly where to improve and how your city’s measuring up? We require a gap analysis (importance vs performance). It is critical to identifying where to focus your time, energy, and budget.

To this last point, here are two examples:
One of our top gap areas in a recent resident survey was water planning and conservation which is very important but rated poorly. So, I spoke with my staff and soon discovered how many initiatives we had going on with water planning and conservation. That put me at ease with what we were actually doing. The issue wasn’t about planning but with communication and messaging. We needed to get the word out and showcase our water planning and conservation efforts. Because we weren’t telling the real story, others negatively shaped public perception.

The other example involves brush pick up. Prior to the survey, a sizeable portion of residents weren’t satisfied and suggested several ways to improve our brush pick-up service. The survey didn’t indicate heavy dissatisfaction across the city, but enough to get my attention. And so I asked staff from multiple departments to review our current service and come back with recommendations. They recommended that we make no changes to the service, especially since altering the current service would require additional staff and time.

I then asked staff to review the survey results and offer recommendations. After reviewing the data and discussing further, their perspective shifted. They came back with a solution that reduced the number of staff hours required to manage it. And it expanded the number of options for residents. Having data at our fingertips helped us solve a budding problem in a better, more efficient way.

Community research lets us focus. It provides facts that compel us to action. In this case, we’re moving forward with initiatives considered in the past that had been left dormant until now. The learnings have now become a strategic source we reference in our city budgeting and planning.

Whether you’re a big believer in research or just considering it, filling in your knowledge gaps with data from a trusted partner will give you confidence that the direction you take is worth your time, effort, and money.★

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