

# Washington County Strategic Plan



2012

Prepared by LCRA Community and Economic Development

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## Washington County Strategic Plan

### Introduction

Washington County is at the very beginning of what will likely be a long transition. The rural character that has defined the County since its founding is beginning to fade as growth from the Houston region begins to impact. The opportunity exists now to define the values and priorities for the County to ensure future growth does not detract from the existing quality of life, and to ensure all County residents are served well by their government. County leaders made a decision to prepare for that future by developing a Strategic Plan. This Plan will serve as a framework for decision making, providing a long term focus and prioritized actions. It is not intended as a static document, rather as one that will provide direction yet remain flexible as issues and opportunities change.

The Plan was developed through a multi stage. The first was an internal assessment, which involved one on one interviews with elected and appointed County leaders. This assessment provided key information on current County activities and needs that the public may be unaware of. The second step was a leadership forum that included officials from the County, the cities of Burton and Brenham, Blinn College, School District, and other officials. This meeting provided an opportunity for these groups to discuss common challenges and opportunities to coordinate. One strength of Washington County is the coordination that exists between different levels of government. This results in more efficient service and cost savings for these entities. Finally, a series of Town Hall meetings were held in each Precinct. This was an opportunity to educate citizens on the role and responsibility of County government as well as get their input on challenges facing Washington County. These meetings were well attended and saw good discussion among residents.

All of the input gathered was utilized to create a list of goals and objectives for the Plan. These reflect the opportunities identified during the input process. The Commissioners Court served as a Steering Committee to review the recommendations and ensure they reflected the information gathered. These recommendations will serve the Commissioners Court as they set priorities through their budgeting process and decision making.

The Goals for the Strategic Plan include the following:

- Develop a Facilities Plan
- Address Courtroom Space, Security, etc.
- Develop a Technology Plan
- Review and Update Subdivision Regulations
- Ensure Adequate Public Safety Staffing and Infrastructure
- Develop a Transportation Plan
- Improve Outreach and Communication

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### Recommendations

Several of the recommendations include developing a plan for a specific topic. While it may seem odd that there is a plan to plan, this is critical because this Strategic Plan is intended as a guiding document rather than a specific work plan. While there are actions recommended for each goal, there is much more detail that would be needed to do the work necessary to address facilities, transportation, and technology. This Plan provides the overarching direction for County action, addressing specific topics will require more detailed efforts.

#### Develop a Facilities Plan

Washington County has several buildings and facilities across the County. Many of these buildings have aging utilities, limited space, and other challenges. While County officials have made due and adapted, it will be important to develop a plan to address facility challenges going forward. The objectives for this goal include:

- Inventory entire County infrastructure (HVAC, etc.) to prioritize maintenance / replacement
- Centralize Road & Bridge, Addressing, Floodplain, and Septic Permitting in one location
- Determine future needs based on expected staffing growth, public access needs, etc.
- Determine most cost effective method to manage expected growth

The first step is to inventory existing facilities to identify existing issues and develop a prioritized maintenance and replacement list. Key challenges include aging HVAC units on the Courthouse and obsolete electrical systems. The County maintenance staff (both of them) are challenged to maintain existing systems. Having a prioritized list would help them plan their efforts to minimize disruptions, catch issues before breakdowns occur, and help reduce costs by addressing issues early. The County can also begin to plan for future expenses for replacement equipment, etc. by having a plan in place.

Development is happening across the County, yet there is not a central location where all development management can occur. Builders have to visit several offices to get necessary permits, increasing time and costs. Centralizing these services will benefit the County through more efficient service and help developers through the process. There is discussion of moving the current Road & Bridge facility, when this happens, the new facility should be built to incorporate all development related services.

As the County grows, there will be a need to expand staffing, particularly in those departments that directly work with the public (Sheriff, Clerks, Assessor-Collector, etc.). These employees will require adequate space both for their needs and to allow public access to their offices. The internal assessment identified existing and expected needs for the next few years. This data can provide the initial assessment for developing the needed office space for future needs.

Finally, the County will have to determine how to most cost effectively pay for needed facilities. Many Counties have developed large, centralized government offices that house most (or all) County offices in one location. Others disperse offices throughout the County. There are pros and cons to both, and the

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Commissioners Court will have to determine which is the best approach for Washington County. The key is to provide adequate public access for necessary services, while ensuring adequate space and facilities for staff.

### Address Courtroom Space, Security, etc.

One of the biggest concerns identified during the internal assessment was courtroom space and security. The four Justices of the Peace currently have to juggle their schedules and work closely with the County Court at Law Judge to find court space for their hearings. There is one (tiny) JP court space available, and it is inadequate. The County Court at Law courtroom is only designed for a 6 person jury, so when 12 jurors are seated, they are on folding chairs and in the way. Courthouse security is another challenge. On court days, prisoners are brought in to the Courthouse through public entrances and wait in a public hallways. There is no segregation from the public. This creates a safety issue for visitors and County staff. The objectives to address this challenge include:

- Developing Video Arraignment
- Consider developing master calendar for court spaces
- Work with Sheriff to mitigate security issues on court days
- Consider long term development of a Justice Center

Video arraignment is a technology that would allow many of the procedural hearings to be done without having to transport prisoners from the jail. Judges could connect to a secure hearing room at the jail from their offices and take care of arraignments and other hearings. This would reduce the need to transport and secure prisoners at the Courthouse, reduce costs for staff, and make the process much more efficient. It would also mean prisoners could be processed and released from County jail faster, thus reducing crowding and costs there.

Because each Court has its own jurisdiction and authority, it may be very difficult to create a master calendar; however, an effort should be made to do so. The different judges should meet on a regular basis to create a schedule based on their caseload, expected trials, etc. While flexibility will be key, at least some accommodation would be possible to ensure all Judges have access to appropriate space for their needs. Because each Judge is elected in their own right, there is no one authority that can make this happen, the benefits would be felt by each Judge.

As mentioned, security is a challenge on days when prisoners are brought to the Courthouse. Video arraignment may mitigate some of this; however, there will remain a need for prisoners to be at Court in person. Some accommodations for staff could include ensuring all offices have locking doors and employees have 'safe rooms' in the event of an emergency. Visitors should be kept from physical contact with prisoners while in the Courthouse. This can be accomplished through supervision, roping off access, etc. There should also continue to be adequate guards with the prisoners at all times and bailiffs in the courtrooms to ensure safety.

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A long term solution that was identified was the development of a dedicated Justice Center. This would be collocated with the Jail to reduce transportation costs as well as minimize security challenges. The Justice Center would have adequate courtroom space for the various Judges, as well as proper facilities for security. This would benefit the County by enhancing safety at the existing Courthouse by keeping prisoners elsewhere, as well as opening up space in that building for other County services.

There are intermediate steps required to accomplish this including relocating the Road and Bridge facility (which would open up the opportunity to co-locate other development services), and ensure the facility is built appropriately to serve the County for many years to come. Funding will also be a challenge. Commissioners will have to determine where the money will come from, either through bonding, or saving over time. County leaders should work closely with the public to educate them on the need for the facility and its importance to ensure their support for moving forward.

### Develop a Technology Plan

Technology offers an opportunity for the County to do more with less. Proper tools can help employees be more efficient and effective, reducing the need to hire more people. Technology also allows better coordination between the Courts and Sheriff departments, County departments, etc. The challenge is finding the appropriate tool to manage County services. There are many different vendors offering products; however, many are very expensive and can be difficult to integrate. That is why developing a plan will be so important, to ensure the County identifies the right tool that will meet its needs. The steps to accomplish this are:

- Create a Task Force to study best practices and determine options for the County
- Utilize this report to focus investment on appropriate technology as upgrades occur

The County could spend a lot of money on a consultant to develop a technology plan; however, there are enough tech savvy people in Washington County that it should be possible to develop internally. A Task Force should be appointed that includes the current IT consultant and representatives from different County departments and technically proficient residents. They would be charged with evaluating different options available for the County and determine the most appropriate tool to adopt. This recommendation would be based on the needs of the County, research into existing solutions, and surveying other Counties for their input on good and bad options.

With this data, the Task Force can make a recommendation to the Commissioners Court. While it is unlikely the County can afford the upgrade all at once, it is possible to work in the appropriate direction. This includes making incremental purchases of software and upgrades that are compatible with the tool once it is adopted. This will spread the upfront costs over time and ensure the County moves to compatibility across the board.

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### Review and Update Subdivision Regulations

Counties in Texas are limited in their authority to regulate growth and development; however, there are opportunities to adopt ordinances that are reasonable, yet support quality development. The County has an opportunity to review and update its ordinances to ensure they balance the interests of current residents to protect the rural character and quality of life, while protecting property rights and allowing for continued growth. To do so the County should do the following:

- Establish a Task Force to review and make recommendations for changes
- Consider incorporating cluster development regulations
- Consider incorporating rainwater harvesting regulations
- Support development that provides central utilities
- Encourage growth focused in appropriate areas

It will be important that any changes to development regulations continue to protect property rights and allow for development. A Task Force can be appointed made up of County staff, developers, property owners, and others to reflect the community at large. This group can then research other County's ordinances and best practices to identify what, if any, changes should be made to existing regulations. Additional public input may be worth pursuing once draft standards are identified. This will ensure that standards reflect the values of Washington County residents.

During the public input process, a couple of opportunities were identified. The first was to incorporate so-called cluster development regulations. Cluster development means that buildings are set on smaller lots, leaving the rest of the property undeveloped. So, instead of building 20 homes on 5 acre lots, a developer can put those same 20 homes on  $\frac{1}{2}$  or  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre lots, leaving the remaining property as open space. This is beneficial for the developer because it reduces the costs of development. In addition, the smaller lots benefit in value from proximity to open space. It also allows for centralized utilities rather than requiring each property owner to pay for a well and septic system. Several Texas counties, including Travis and Medina have adopted cluster development regulations. While many residents may fear smaller lots, this type of development actually results in better protection of the rural character and appearance of the County. Rather than hundreds of acres being covered in houses, development is on a smaller footprint and more land is left open.

Another opportunity identified by the public was to encourage rainwater harvesting. This would provide for rainwater harvesting to be incorporated in to new development. The County can set an example by incorporating this into any new County facilities that are built. Some Counties even provide an incentive for rainwater harvesting. Hays County is in process of updating their policy, but before, it would waive the property taxes on the value of a rainwater harvesting system. While an incentive may not be appropriate, there should be standards incorporated into development regulations so developers and property owners are aware of this as an option.

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While not a regulatory fix, the County should encourage developers to incorporate central utilities where feasible. While being more expensive for developers, in the long run, it will benefit the County by reducing dependence on wells and septic systems (and related compliance issues). It will also support clustered development, which will protect open space throughout the County. Centralized infrastructure will also provide opportunities for commercial and retail development, which often cannot be served effectively by septic systems.

Finally, the County should work with developers to focus development in appropriate areas. This may include focusing road improvements in those areas where development is most appropriate. Some Counties have gone so far as to develop 'Greenprints', which are maps showing the development potential of the County based on issues such as floodplains, agricultural use, transportation access, and other factors. The goal is to keep development from spreading haphazardly across Washington County and to protect the rural character of the community. Development that is focused will ensure that agricultural uses and other open space remain.

### Ensure Adequate Public Safety staffing and infrastructure

The fundamental role of government is to provide public safety. Washington County does through the Sheriff Office, a county-wide EMS service, and support for the Volunteer Fire Departments that serve the County. As the County grows, demands on these services will grow and it will be important to ensure continuing support through the following actions:

- Implement the 5 year EMS plan
- Ensure appropriate staffing at the Sheriff Department
- Utilize crime / accident statistics to focus enforcement where necessary
- Continue to support VFD's

The EMS program has developed a detailed 5 year plan that identifies key opportunities and priorities for action. The Commissioners Court should utilize this document in their budgeting process. As funding allows, the recommendations in this plan should be followed to ensure adequate EMS coverage for the County as it grows. It also will lay out when new assets and facilities are needed so the Commissioners can plan long term on future expenditures.

As the County grows, there will be a need to hire more deputies, corrections officers, etc. Some needed staff is identified in the internal assessment summary in the appendix. The Commissioners should work closely with the Sheriff to balance staffing needs with funding availability. As funding allows, new staff and equipment should be provided.

One option that can help focus public safety investment is to utilize crime and accident statistics to focus enforcement in those areas where it is most needed. The Sheriff Department already has an understanding of where most incidents are occurring and can utilize this information when planning

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patrol areas, time of deployment, etc. This will maximize the effectiveness of existing staff by having them focus their attention where most needed.

Finally, the County should continue its support for Volunteer Fire Departments. This includes providing insurance coverage, support for capital expenses, etc. This is a critical component of their function and should be a priority during budget planning. The County can also provide assistance by helping find grants and other funding opportunities.

### Develop a Transportation Plan

The Commissioners are responsible for roads within their precinct, under the umbrella of a centralized road maintenance system. They are familiar with their roads and key projects to address citizen concerns, safety, and access. A transportation plan will ensure appropriate funding and prioritize projects across the County to help ensure continued access and safety for all residents.

- Identify key improvements to County roads based on safety / connectivity improvements
- Coordinate with School Districts / Cities to ensure coordinated efforts

Commissioners should sit down with the County engineer to identify key needs. Because road improvements are so expensive, there are likely some projects that may benefit one part of the County that are larger than the budget for that precinct. Having an overall plan can help to justify these types of investment because it will identify these needs and prioritize them. It will also ensure that needed projects are allocated fairly across the County. Projects should be identified based on their impact on safety (needed guard rails, signage, lighting, etc.) and their impact on improving connections across the County.

The County should also work closely with School Districts and Cities to ensure projects do not conflict or create unexpected challenges. For example, if the School District plans on building a new school, this will have tremendous impact on roads in the area. There should be joint planning to ensure the County is aware of proposed projects and can work with the District on necessary road improvements to support their work. With Cities, the County needs to coordinate so when a City improves or expands a road, it does not create a bottleneck where the County takes over. There should be regular workshops with the Cities and School Districts to ensure information sharing and coordination.

### Improve Outreach and Communication

One of the key issues identified in the public input was the need for greater communication with citizens. This is a challenge at all levels of government because people tend not to pay attention until an issue directly impacts them. There has to be an effort made by citizens to participate and be engaged in their community. Elected officials can only do so much, but there still needs to be an effort made to keep residents informed.

- Identify community leaders and encourage them to be 'ambassadors' for the County



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- Consider holding regular Town Halls across the County
- Ensure County website is updated and easy to navigate
- Partner with local businesses and others to link to County website
- Utilize local papers and radio to communicate

People may not read the newspaper or listen to local radio; however, they will talk with their neighbors and co-workers. This can be an excellent opportunity to share information. The County can identify engaged citizens and use them as conduits for information and outreach to the community. This can be an informal process where information is shared. County Commissioners and other elected officials can reach out to their constituents and create a network of citizens who can pass along messages and information.

Town Halls can be a great way to share information and get input from residents. These do not have to be for a specific topic or issue, rather they can simply be an opportunity for citizens to gather and have a discussion with their local officials. These can be held at regular intervals across the County, giving residents every opportunity to participate. It is also a great way to educate citizens on the role and responsibility of County government and key issues the Commissioners Court and others are addressing.

The County website is a key tool for community outreach. It is important that it be well maintained, well organized, and regularly updated. It should have links to other local entities (Cities, Chamber of Commerce, etc.) and those entities should also be linked to the County. Having a good website is a great way to provide information at minimal work for the County.

Finally, the County should consider how it utilizes traditional media to communicate. Many local officials have a regular column in local papers. This can be used to highlight specific projects, individual employees or departments, or just provide general information. This should be considered as a way to begin sharing information. Radio can be effective for specific issues and projects. Local radio stations are usually willing to have local officials on for announcements and interviews to share information. County leaders should explore all opportunities to reach out and share information with residents.

## Conclusion

This Strategic Plan provides an outline for County action. County leaders can utilize this to guide their decision making. Because it is based on an extensive input process, they can be confident that decisions made based on this Plan will be supported by residents. A Plan is only as good as its implementation. If this Plan is left on a shelf to gather dust it will provide no benefit to the County. It must be kept on the desk and used as a reference as work is being done. It is up to the Commissioners Court and the citizens of Washington County to utilize this Plan as a resource to keep the County moving in the right direction and the values of Washington County residents are reflected in the decisions made by their elected leaders.

## Demographics

### Introduction

Washington County is a rural County that is beginning to see growth from the Houston region. This growth has the potential to change the character of the community, making it more suburban in nature as agricultural land is developed into residential properties.

### Current Population

As this table indicates, the population in Washington County has grown over the last 10 years. This growth has not been equal across the County, the fastest growth has been in the eastern part of the County, closest to the Houston area.

#### Population Estimates and Projections

	2000	2010	% Change 2000- 2010
<b>Chappell Hill*</b>	1,675	1,970	17.6%
<b>City of Burton</b>	312	300	(-3.8%)
<b>City of Brenham</b>	14,828	15,716	6.0%
<b>Washington County</b>	30,373	33,718	11.0%
<b>State of Texas</b>	20,851,820	25,145,561	21%

Source: 2010 US Census \*Chappell Hill is unincorporated, so the Zip Code was used

Population growth is expected to continue, with the expectation that it will continue to be focused on the eastern half of the County and in the City of Brenham. This will create challenges for the transportation system and other infrastructure to ensure continued service to that area. As the table below indicates, there are as many estimates for future population as there are sources. It will be important for the County to track its growth and ensure continued services as the population increases.

#### Projections

	2010	2016	2020
<b>ESRI Business Analyst</b>	33,713	35,580	NA
<b>Texas State Data Center</b>	33,713	34,314 (2015)	35,305
<b>Texas Water Development Board</b>	NA	NA	35,253

### Population Characteristics

In the Census, Hispanic is considered an ethnicity not a race, so a respondent can select White as their race and Hispanic as their ethnicity. This is why the percentages do not add up to 100 percent. As this table indicates, each City has different population characteristics. This can create different expectations for services.

## Demographics

### Race and Ethnicity

	County	Texas
<b>White Alone</b>	74.2%	80.9%
<b>Black Alone</b>	17.6%	12.2%
<b>American Indian</b>	0.3%	1.0%
<b>Asian</b>	1.3%	4.0%
<b>Pacific Islander</b>	0.0%	0.1%
<b>Other</b>	5.0%	7.4%
<b>Two or More</b>	1.6%	1.7%
<b>Hispanic*</b>	13.8%	38.1%

Source: 2010 US Census \*Hispanic is an Ethnicity not a Race

Washington County has a significantly lower percentage of Hispanics than does the state as a whole, while having a higher African American population. This can have an impact on the types of services and expectations of the population. These populations also tend to be underrepresented in any public input process, so their concerns are often not identified and addressed.

Approximately 20% of Washington County's population is over 65. This aging population will drive demand for increased services, which means more expectations on the County. It will be important for the County and Cities to work together to ensure adequate services for an aging population. The age breakdown for the cities was similar to the County.

### Population by Age

	County
<b>0 – 4</b>	5.2%
<b>5 – 9</b>	5.4%
<b>10 – 14</b>	5.8%
<b>15 – 19</b>	7.6%
<b>20 – 24</b>	4.1%
<b>25 – 34</b>	8.6%
<b>35 – 44</b>	10.1%
<b>45 – 54</b>	17.2%
<b>55 – 64</b>	16.7%
<b>65 – 74</b>	10.7%
<b>75 – 84</b>	7.0%
<b>85+</b>	1.4%
<b>Median Age</b>	45.6

Source: 2010 US Census

### Income

Washington County residents median income is significantly lower than the State overall. This creates a challenge for the County to ensure quality of life and continued services that are an increasing challenge for counties as the State continues to push more responsibility to counties without additional resources.

## Demographics

### Median Household Income

	County	Chappell Hill	Burton	Brenham	Texas
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$43,809	\$40,924	\$41,163	\$42,221	\$51,960
<b>Per Capita Income</b>	\$20,479	\$20,967	\$19,328	\$20,149	\$39,493

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

### Housing

One strength of Washington County is that there are homes that remain affordable for residents making the median income. While there may be an issue of condition or location that affects their desirability, overall residents should be able to find a home they can afford. There are also a significant number of vacant homes in the County. While some of these may be second homes, this still may create a challenge for the community to ensure vacant homes do not become an eyesore or safety issue. As the table indicates, housing varies widely across the County. Chappell Hill has the most expensive homes (likely due to overall lot size since the zip includes large homesteads), while Brenham has the most renters (likely due to Blinn College students). Housing is not a huge challenge for the County, and not a major responsibility; however, an understanding of the housing situation in the County is beneficial.

### Housing Type

	County	Chappell Hill	Burton	Brenham
<b>Total Units</b>	15,514	991	194	5,768
<b>Occupied</b>	84.0%	82.8%	75.8%	89.4%
<b>Owner</b>	71.8%	83.3%	60.4%	53.7%
<b>Renter</b>	28.2%	16.7%	15.4%	35.7%
<b>Vacant</b>	16.0%	17.2%	24.2%	10.6%
<b>Median Value</b>	\$126,549	\$157,398	\$110,811	\$130,769

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

### Conclusion

Washington County is changing, and will continue to change in the future. Growth is focused on the eastern half of the County. This increases the demand for services and infrastructure, which can lead to challenges as the County struggles to balance its investments for all residents. County leaders have the opportunity to define community values and set the direction for growth as it happens. This Plan outlines the opportunities to shape growth so it benefits Washington County rather than detracting from its character and quality of life.

## Internal Assessment Questions

February 23, 2012

**Subject: Strategic Policy Planning Questions**

The following questions are intended to facilitate department heads and other County leaders to think about their current and expected needs. This will be the basis for interviews to gather information that will be used to develop an internal assessment of County government as part of the County wide strategic planning process. We are interviewing all elected officials and department heads in Washington County to identify key issues and challenges facing them in their work. Please take a few minutes to review these questions to prepare for your interview.

1. What are the three main functions of your department?
2. What are your fiscal needs to carry out these primary functions?
3. What new resources (personnel, equipment, etc.) will your department need over the next 3 – 5 years?
4. What about over the next 10 years?
5. What is your relationship with other governmental entities (cities, state agencies, etc.)?
6. What is your 'wish list' of additional resources that would help you improve service to Washington County citizens?
7. How much coordination is there across the County departments and officials?

Your thoughtful input will provide the foundation for this plan and ultimately impact the citizens of Washington County. We will be scheduling interviews in the next few weeks to give each of you an opportunity to discuss these questions in more detail and offer any additional insight that will be useful in the internal plan. These interviews should take less than an hour and are a key component in creating a guide for the County moving forward.

The overall County Strategic Plan will include this internal assessment as well as a public input process. The internal assessment will give us information to help educate the public on the role of County government, what the County is currently working on, and what County officials see as needed to ensure continued quality service.

Also, if you have any kind of plan for your department, please bring a copy with you for us to incorporate in our planning process.

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## Internal Assessment Summary

### Washington County Internal Assessment

Washington County is beginning the transition from a rural County to a more suburban character. County government will have to adapt to accommodate this change and the different expectations and demands placed upon it. The County Commissioners have been extremely careful in their budgeting, working very hard to maintain the existing tax rates while providing good service to citizens. This has been effective for a number of years; however, it has led to a bit of a backlog for needed equipment and staffing. There is also a need to review, update and formalize policies to ensure consistent service across different departments and elected officials.

#### Recommendations

The biggest challenge facing the County is technology. There are several systems being used by different County agencies. Some of these coordinate; however, there is not consistent linkage between all of the departments. The County should consider hiring a technology consultant to conduct a full Technology Assessment to identify opportunities for improvement and to help determine the best solution. It will require a significant investment from the County to adopt a coordinated technology solution; however, the potential for cost savings and efficiency justify the expense. The phone system should also be included in the technology review.

Courtroom space is the other top challenge. Currently, Justices of the Peace have extremely limited space available for hearings. The existing courtrooms are also inadequate for 12-person juries. Courtroom security is essentially non-existent.

Staffing needs also have been identified and need to be addressed. Current staff is essentially maxed out. The County population and workload has grown and current staff is making due to handle the increased need. Technology can provide some help; however, there will need to be additional staff hired in several County departments.

Facilities will also need to be reviewed. If the County moves forward with a Justice Center or other County facility, it should be planned to accommodate expected growth and other County offices. A Facilities Plan would be a useful tool to identify long range needs and recommendations to meet growing need for space and staff.

Finally, all County policies should be reviewed and updated to ensure they meet current needs. This particularly includes Human Resources policies. Constable positions also need some level of standardization for staffing, equipment, etc. to ensure consistent service across the County.

Included below are the most immediate needs identified during our interview process. A more complete summation will follow and the final plan will incorporate specific goals and recommendations.

Short Term needs (1 – 3 years):

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## Internal Assessment Summary

### Facilities / Equipment

1. Technology Assessment – identify opportunities for system improvements and how to coordinate systems (police and courts, etc.), identify best software tool to accomplish goals, computer replacement standards / schedule
2. Additional Courtrooms – technically in violation of rules because JP courts (except Pct 3) not meeting in their precincts, challenge for Courts to do business
3. Preventative Maintenance – HVAC is well beyond expected life cycle of the air conditioner – supposed to replace every 20 years and the current unit is over 27 years old
4. Phone system appears to lose calls in the system
5. Most patrol cars will soon need replacement
6. As the Red Cross building is closing, a new location is needed to store emergency equipment (cots, food, etc.) until emergencies arise
7. 5 Cardiac Units for EMS
8. Facility Security (especially courthouse)

### Personnel

1. Sheriff's department lost 3 workers a few years ago – an admin assistant, investigator, and patroller – these need replaced asap.
2. Part time evidence tech
3. Full Time Supervisor for EMS
4. 1 Staff in HR (or possibly new technology could delay needed staff, though not stop the need in the mid-long term)
5. 1 Staff at Tax Assessor / Collector
6. 1 Part-time Maintenance Staff (Full time preferred)
7. Additional clerks for JP Courts (possibly part time / shared positions)
8. Warrant Clerk (part-time)
9. Full-time Elections Administrator

### Policy

1. Floodplain development process to reduce non-compliance of development
2. Review and Standardize policies for Constables
3. Increased coordination and communication across departments / consider regular dept head workshops
4. Review HR policy, specifically sick-time policy
5. Conduct Pay Review to ensure competitiveness with other nearby County and City governments

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## Public Input Summary

### Washington County Leaders Forum

On Friday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, leaders from across Washington County met to discuss opportunities and challenges facing the County. The meeting was part of the Strategic Plan being developed that will help guide County decision making going forward. Participants were from County government, the Cities of Burton and Brenham, the community of Chappell Hill, Blinn College, and Burton and Brenham ISD's. The workshop was intended to not just identify challenges but also opportunities for the different entities to coordinate efforts and jointly address common issues.

A variety of issues were identified; these can be combined into a few common themes. These include:

- **Public Safety**
  - Fire Protection (growth straining VFD's)
  - 
  - Animal Control
  - EMS Staffing (especially related to growing elderly population)
  - Mental Health Resources
  - Medical Facilities / Physicians
- **Transportation**
  - Funding for new projects
  - County Road System (coordinate thoroughfare planning with City)
  - Additional Loop around Brenham
- **Water and Wastewater**
  - Water Supply
  - Water and Wastewater Infrastructure
  - Centralized infrastructure for more densely developed areas
- **Economic Development**
  - Job Creation
  - Countywide Access to High Speed Internet
  - Maintaining an Adequate Workforce
  - Access to Vo Tech and workforce training opportunities
- **County Facilities**
  - Justice Center
  - Courthouse Security
  - Relocate Road and Bridge
  - County Staffing Levels
  - Courthouse Maintenance
  - District Judge for Washington County
- **Growth Management**
  - Rising Development Costs
  - Support Balanced Growth
  - Better Coordination between City and County for growth in ETJ
  - Management of growth in unincorporated areas



## Public Input Summary

- Septic System management
- Billboards and County Appearance
- County-wide Coordination and Communication
  - Long Term Thinking to plan
  - Community unified to address common issues
  - Regular visits / meetings across jurisdictions to support one another
  - Regular communication across jurisdictions
  - City / County agreements revisited every 2 years
- Other Issues
  - Lack of resources in Burton
  - Burton ISD growing but City is not

Based on this list, participants were asked to prioritize the issues. Each was given four votes to place on those challenges they thought most critical. Based on the voting, the following were identified:

- Justice Center / Courthouse Security
- Access to High Speed Internet
- Water Supply
- Road Funding
- Fire Protection

Each of these issues was discussed in greater detail to identify opportunities to address them. The ideas are included here and will be incorporated into the final recommendations for the Strategic Plan.

### Justice Center

- Identify Suitable Location (Road & Bridge site is ideal but would require moving them)
- Identify Facility Needs and Design
  - Courts and Offices
  - Secure Holding Area
  - Attorney Rooms
- Identify Potential Funding
  - Bond Election
- Identify Staffing needs for Split offices (District and County Clerks)

### Courthouse Safety

- Set up Video Arraignment (in process)
- Consider full time Sheriff or Bailiff on site
- Funding is available through dedicated fund
- Balance security with 'small town feel'

### Access to High Speed Internet

- Opportunity for wireless high speed through partnership with Texas A&M (Burton exploring this)
- Need wireless towers to broadcast (work with cities and other water suppliers for access)
- Create a task force to coordinate issues and work to address

## Public Input Summary

### Water Supply

- Education and Outreach on importance of conservation, rainwater harvesting, xeriscaping, etc.
- Explore more opportunities for wastewater reuse (City selling treated effluent for road projects is example)
- Consider incentives for inclusion of rainwater harvesting (tax phase in for value of system)
- Support development of additional surface water
- Review subdivision ordinance to incorporate best practices for water conservation and reuse

### Road Funding

- County Thoroughfare plan that coordinates with City plans
- Countywide partnership to push TxDOT for attention and support
- Identify connecting roads that can be improved to reduce local traffic on highways
- Hazardous Cargo runs by schools and hospital
- Outer Loop
- Increased pressure on County roads due to growth
- Cloverleaf is huge issue

### Fire Protection

- Outreach and education to generate support and more volunteers for VFD's
- Continue funding and insurance support
- Explore possibilities for assistance with paperwork management
- Explore partnerships with VFD's for EMS substations
- Water supply at Airport
- Consider ESD

As mentioned, Washington County is on the cusp of tremendous change. The transition from rural county to suburban is beginning and this will create new challenges. County leaders should take time to meet with leaders from counties that have made this transition to learn from their experience. Ellis and Bastrop Counties are two that have faced explosive growth and have handled it with different degrees of success. Rather than waiting for the wave, Washington County leaders should take every opportunity to learn best practices to manage what is coming.