

# **Economic Base Study**

## **Report 2 of 3**

---

***City of Taylor***

March 2004

# Index

---

**Introduction** **Page 2**

**Industry Assessment** **Page 5**

**SWOT Analysis** **Page 12**

- *Business climate*
- *Economic conditions and foundations for future development*
- *Workforce and education*
- *Infrastructure strengths and limitations*
- *Economic development efforts*
- *Quality of life*
- *Central Business District (CBD)*

**Economic Impact Analysis of County Park** **Page 31**

---

**February 2004**

This Economic Base Analysis Report examines Industry Composition, Barriers to Development, Business Climate, Workforce and Education, Quality of Life, Infrastructure, and Economic Development Efforts of the City of Taylor.

The analysis is both qualitative and quantitative. The report is based on consultant observations as well as input from the community, and supported by research.

This report is meant to be an assessment of Taylor's readiness to mount an economic development campaign that will generate job growth and improvements in the overall economy. The goal of this interim report is to have a clear understanding of Taylor's assets and areas of potential that can be built upon and better marketed.

Additionally, this report contains an economic impact assessment of the East Williamson County Park on the City of Taylor.

The final recommendations and strategies are found in Report Three, Economic Development and Marketing Plan. All three reports can be found at the Library, City Hall, and TEDC offices.

Thank you for your input.

Angelos Angelou, Principal  
Sean Garretson, AICP, Project Manager  
Nicole Urbis, Marketing Strategist, Co-project Manager  
Travis Warziniak, Research Manager

**AngelouEconomics**

## **Introduction**

The first phase of developing a plan of action for improving Taylor's economy is to build a baseline for Taylor to learn what issues need to be addressed and the strengths that must be promoted to make the city conducive to economic growth. A total of eight focus groups and more than 30 interviews were conducted throughout Taylor, with more than 200 individuals providing input. This qualitative input has been combined with extensive research on key economic and demographic issues impacting Taylor and the region.

In addition, AE has worked closely with Wilbur Smith Associates (WSA) during the community input phase to ensure that comprehensive information is analyzed. As a result of participating in this SWOT and Visioning Session, held on January 26, AE gathered supplemental information from 75 individuals related to economic development, tourism, and the central business district.

As a summary, individuals in this session noted that for economic development, TCAT, highway access, and cost of doing business are major strengths. Many stated that the roads desperately need repair before any substantial business growth occurs and the physical image needs to be improved. Top opportunities are to hire a public relations specialist to co-ordinate advertising and promotion for Taylor, grow downtown, and retain "smart" workers. A major threat mentioned was loss of residents.

This report begins with a quantitative assessment followed by a qualitative assessment of Taylor's readiness in five key areas that are integral to the community's economic development effort:

- **Business Climate**
- **Infrastructure and Land Use**
- **Workforce and Education**
- **Quality of Life**
- **Economic Development Efforts**

The evaluation of each area is based on economic and demographic data as well as information gathered in focus groups, phone interviews, surveys and the economic development workshop.

## **Key Findings**

Although we provide in depth analysis throughout this report on several variables, some of the most important points are described below:

### Potential

Potential is one of the first descriptors that come to mind when considering Taylor. Not only are major transportation projects (SH 130, SH 45 and the extension of Chandler Road) going to have a significant impact on the city but also the East Williamson County Park, the new HEB / Wal-Mart, as well as the TEA-21 grant for downtown and expanded community college programs will all positively impact the community. Potential also applies to the downtown. Many individuals wish that the downtown would be as

energetic and dynamic as it was 35 years ago. After the TEA-21 grant is implemented (2004/05), the downtown will improve in appearance.

Education:

Taylor's K-12 education can be improved upon. Several superintendents have served TISD over the past decade, and the district remains fairly stable at this point in time. The current school board and staff have worked behind the scenes to improve basic necessities such as ensuring the curriculums from grade level to grade level are aligned. These types of non-cosmetic improvements, although absolutely essential, are rarely seen or understood by the general public. TISD also seems poised to begin to make other, more tangible improvements. Having spoken with high school leaders and students, it is very apparent that there are lots of opportunities for improvements that will improve the interest in Taylor and the school. Some of the more important areas for the community to focus on include developing more sophisticated career counseling programs geared towards non-college options and developing entrepreneur training for high school students. Additionally, as TISD considers new high school facilities, TISD may wish to look at non-traditional models such as Natomas, California (<http://www.natomascharter.org>).

Temple College at Taylor (TCAT) is a major economic resource for the city, and recent plans for improvements will only make this facility an enhanced learning environment for Taylorites as well as others in the region. This is a major asset to the community. Leaders may wish to pursue more partnering opportunities with TCAT in such areas as small business development.

Entrepreneurial Environment

This is one area that Taylor needs to explore and develop. There are very few programs in place in Taylor to support a budding entrepreneur. TCAT has a "start your own business" program in Temple, but there are no significant incubators or training programs that exist in Taylor to support small business. Additionally, there are no junior achievement or junior entrepreneur programs at TISD. This is an area that Taylor must address to become successful in the new economy.

Quality of Life

The quality of life in Taylor is low key, and relatively safe. Shopping options will improve, but restaurant and retail options still remain low, relative to neighboring communities. Facilitating the sale of liquor in restaurants and bars will aid in Taylor's ability to attract certain types of restaurants.

The East Williamson County Park will provide ample recreational opportunities to residents and tourists, but developing teenager specific recreational programs are a must for the city. Examples include the possibility of developing a skateboard park in the empty swimming pool at Murphy Park and developing a recreational youth complex. Additionally, Taylor should look to the downtown area as an Arts and Entertainment District for the city.

Marketing

Over the last few years, leaders in Taylor have focused on forming trusted relationships with each other. This foundation and readiness to market Taylor will help the city

succeed in the next phase of marketing. Taylor has many assets to tout, including Taylor CNET, dedicated workforce, TCAT, airport, proximity to Austin, Main Street City, historic buildings, community festivals, and a diverse ethnic population.

However, there are areas that need improvement. The physical appearance of the city, entertainment, perception, and need for balanced development throughout the entire city are current challenges. Marketing efforts need to balance improving weaknesses and building awareness of Taylor's assets to local businesses and citizens, target industry businesses, and tourists.

Community Feedback

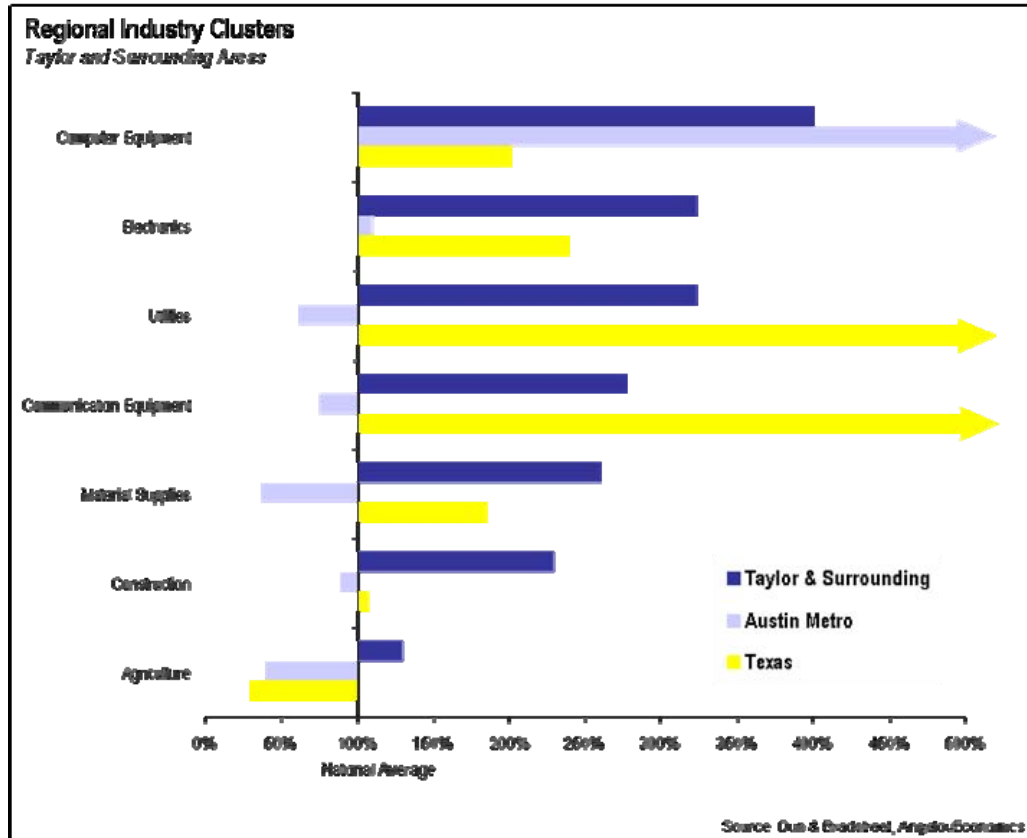
A "Quality of Life" survey was completed by the City of Taylor (see Appendix in Final Report) covering a wide range of issues provides some valuable insight into what the community perceptions are and what the community feels are the most important issues to address. Below are some of the major points that relate to economic development:

- ◆ **45% of respondents think the quality of life in Taylor is about the same, 35% believe that the quality of life is getting better, and 14% think it is getting worse.**
- ◆ **Almost 50% of the survey respondents chose increasing business activity downtown as the biggest priority for the community.**
- ◆ **Nearly 92% of respondents feel that Taylor is safe.**
- ◆ **67% of respondents have Internet access (including access at home, library, school, Taylor CNET, and other public access points)**

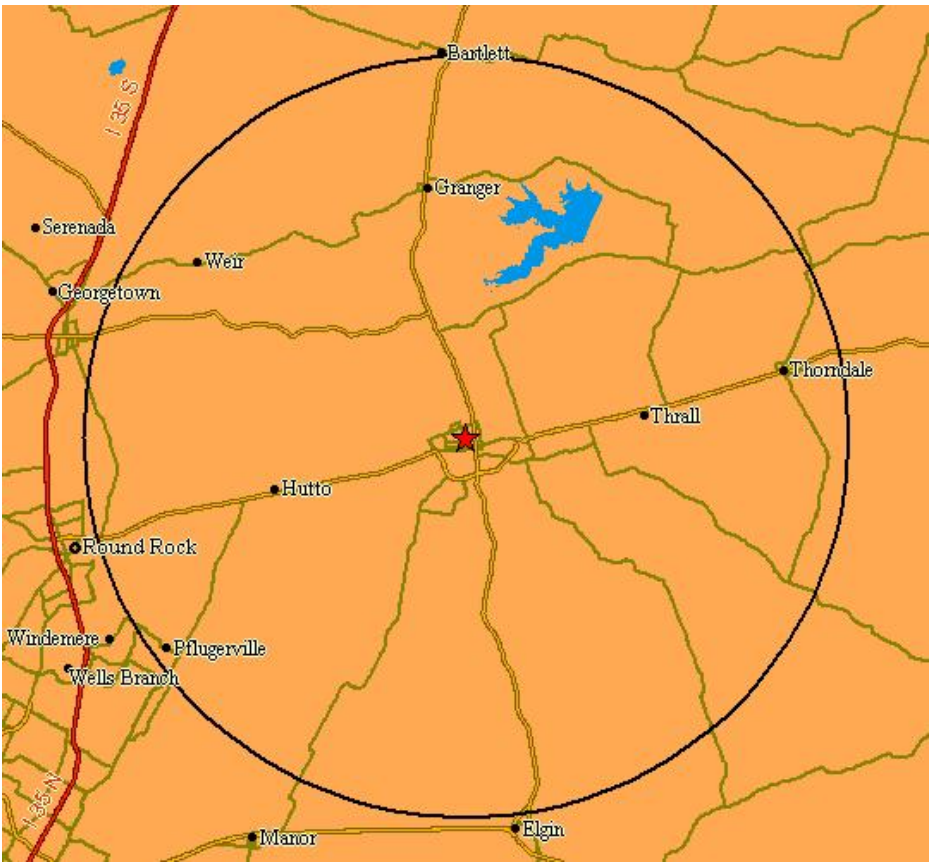
An on-line survey was also used to gather community input. Information gained from both surveys was used while forming final recommendations for the *Economic Development and Marketing Plan*.

## Industry Assessment

To define Taylor's industry base, AE uses a cluster analysis methodology that identifies existing sets of industries, assesses their performance, and evaluates their potential as future growth industries for the city. In contrast to approaches that focus exclusively on individual industries, industry cluster analysis considers sets of inter-related industries. Inter-related industries are those that share markets, suppliers, technologies, and labor. In addition, we will examine the types of industries that a community like Taylor can recruit based on the markets each industry serves, including local, state, national, and international markets.



A cluster analysis was done for the City of Taylor in a 1999 update to its Economic Development Plan. Five years later, many of the same clusters remain dominant. In this analysis, a number of surrounding communities were included with the Taylor data in order to capture regional effects. More than ever Taylor has an open economy and is influenced by its neighbors.



The area examined stops just short of Round Rock and is heavily influenced by computer equipment companies. While Dell is not included, its presence has produced a number of smaller tech companies and Dell vendors. Other clusters, such as electronics, utilities (heavily influenced by ERCOT, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas), and communication equipment have also helped build up high tech around Taylor.

This geography shows Taylor's unique situation. Taylor is a small rural town, with characteristics much different than the MSA; likewise, Dell's presence in Round Rock would make county-level data meaningless. City-level data is heavily influenced by a few large employers, and thus does not paint an accurate picture of the resources available for economic development.

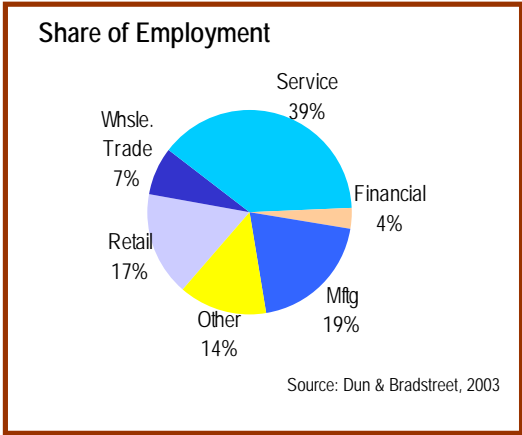
Material Supplies was the strongest cluster listed in the 1999 report. This cluster is still an important part of the local economy due to a number of concrete, brick, and stonework companies. Other dominant clusters are also based around natural resources, including traditional agriculture.

Rapid growth in new homes has increased construction employment in recent years. This trend is likely to continue as the northern part of the MSA continues to develop.

**Current Employment**

The cluster analysis in the previous section examined concentrations of employment relative to the national average. Raw employment figures paint a slightly different picture of the local economy. These figures show the importance of Taylor's service, retail, and manufacturing sectors.

**The service sector is the largest employer in Taylor, accounting for 39% of all jobs.** In areas with relatively small economic bases, area hospitals and schools tend to be major employers as is the case in Taylor. **Both Johns Community Hospital and Scott & White are tremendous assets to the City of Taylor.**



Taylor also has a strong manufacturing sector with several quality employers. The Burnes Group (formerly Intercraft), which manufactures picture frames, employs approximately 135 full-time and 35 part-time employees. There are also strong linkages between companies. The parent company of Texwood, for example, is the largest customer of LabTops, which makes laboratory countertops to go on the companies' case work. Texwood employs 90 people; LabTops employs over 200 people.

ERCOT pays some of the highest wages in Taylor, with salaries between \$25,000 and \$100,000. The current facility employs about 315 people with plans to add another 100.

The table at right shows average annual wages by industry for Williamson County; unfortunately, detailed wage data is not available at the city level. Local employers report two different views of local wages. Manufacturers benefit from a large pool of low-wage labor, giving Taylor manufacturers a cost advantage. High skilled employers like ERCOT, however, report difficulties in filling positions with local labor and must offer high wages in order to compensate for employee commuting.

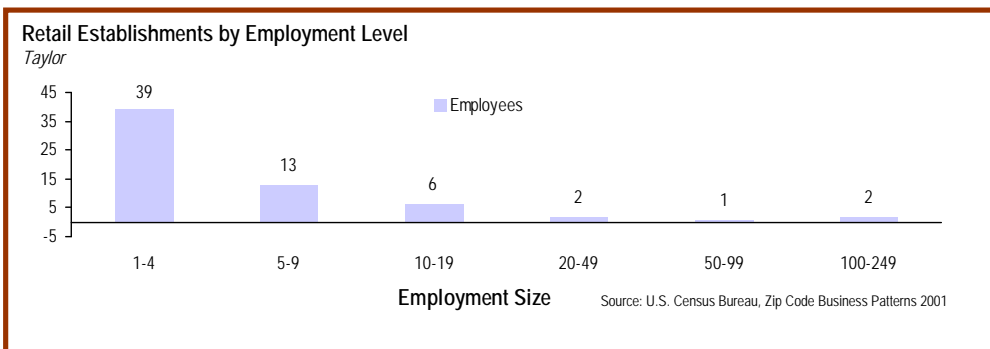
Industry	Average Wage
<b>Natural Resources and Mining</b>	<b>\$36,300</b>
<b>Construction</b>	<b>\$35,700</b>
<b>Manufacturing</b>	<b>\$41,200</b>
<b>Trade, Transportation, and Utilities</b>	<b>\$57,200</b>
<i>Utilities</i>	<b>\$47,600</b>
<i>Wholesale Trade</i>	<b>\$90,800</b>
<i>Retail Trade</i>	<b>\$23,200</b>
<i>Transportation and Warehousing</i>	<b>\$29,100</b>
<b>Information</b>	<b>\$42,600</b>
<b>Financial Activities</b>	<b>\$41,700</b>
<b>Professional and Business Services</b>	<b>\$32,000</b>
<b>Education and Health Services</b>	<b>\$29,000</b>
<i>Educational Services</i>	<b>\$28,200</b>
<i>Health Care and Social Assistance</i>	<b>\$28,900</b>
<b>Leisure and Hospitality</b>	<b>\$12,600</b>
<b>Other Services</b>	<b>\$22,500</b>
<b>Public Administration</b>	<b>\$34,900</b>

source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002

**Retail**

The retail industry in Taylor is worth examining in greater detail. Generally, retail is considered a locally serving industry, with support coming from the pockets of local citizens. For this reason, the state recently limited the types of economic development funds that can go directly to attracting retail. However, Taylor currently has very few retail options and so large portions of local dollars are being spent elsewhere. Building up local retail, therefore, becomes important to building up the local tax base and providing basic amenities to local residents. The City should obtain specific information on potential retailers that would be a good fit in Taylor.

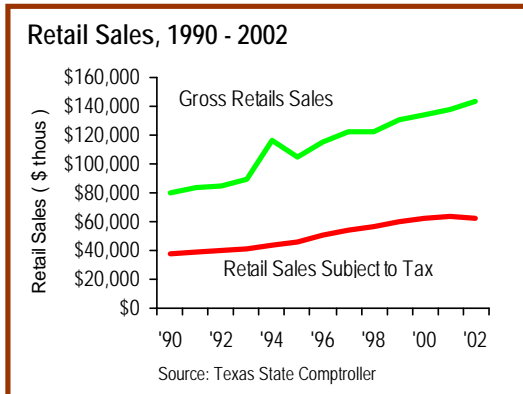
Small stores (with fewer than 5 employees) overwhelmingly dominate retail in Taylor. In fact, these small businesses make up over 60 percent of total retail employment. The largest retail employers in Taylor are Wal-Mart and HEB. Wal-Mart's recent expansion is forcing HEB to do the same. Wal-Mart will more than double in size to 155,000 square feet and plans to add another 175 employees. HEB will expand to 68,000 square feet and will add 50 employees.



Retail also directly brings revenues into the City of Taylor through a 2 cent sales tax, a half cent of which is for 4A economic development efforts.

Retail sales have been increasing steadily over the past decade, but at rates slower than neighboring cities. Furthermore, retail sales subject to taxation represent a relatively small share of total retail sales.

With the expansion of HEB and Wal-Mart, sales tax revenue will rise considerably. Studies have shown that large retailers have the power to draw shoppers from a wide area, significantly impacting the communities in which they build.

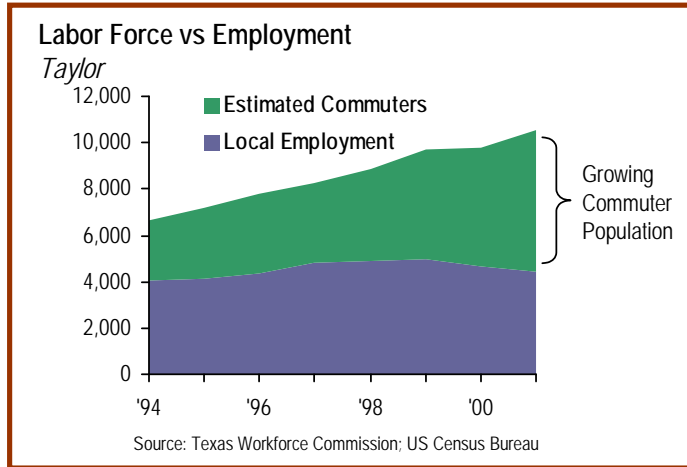


Many of Taylor’s clusters are developing, in the sense that a few large companies account for a majority of total industry employment. **The top six manufacturers, for example, account for almost 95 percent of local manufacturing jobs.** The top four wholesalers account for almost 63 percent of the industry’s total employment.

<b>Business</b>	<b>Employees</b>	<b>% of Total Employees in Industry</b>
<b>Agriculture, Mining</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Construction</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Transportation and Public Utilities</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Public Administration</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Wholesale</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>100%</b>
Wright Distributing Co.	30	8.00%
Taylor Meat Co.	25	6.67%
Total	<b>55</b>	<b>14.67%</b>
<b>Services</b>	<b>2050</b>	<b>100%</b>
Taylor Independent School District (including schools)	520	25.37%
Johns Community Hospital	200	9.76%
Don Hutto Correctional Center (Corrections Corp America)	160	7.80%
Sweetbriar of Taylor (Advanced Healthcare Tech)	150	7.32%
Total	<b>1030</b>	<b>50.24%</b>
<b>Manufacturing</b>	<b>1140</b>	<b>100%</b>
Laptops	200	17.54%
Intercraft Company	150	13.16%
Accurate Inc.	140	12.28%
FloydCo	94	8.25%
Texwood Furniture	90	7.89%
Gemini Inc	90	7.89%
Transit Mix Concrete & Mtl Co.	70	6.14%
Taylor Bedding Company	67	5.88%
Total	<b>701</b>	<b>61.49%</b>
<b>Retail</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>100%</b>
Walmart	140	16.65%
HEB Groceries	150	17.84%
Maxwell Plymouth (Maxwell Chrysler Plymouth-Dodge)	80	9.51%
Meyer Enterprises	50	5.95%
Golden Fried Chicken (Bo Stover Enterprises Inc.)	45	5.35%
Total	<b>465</b>	<b>55.29%</b>
<b>FIRE (Finance, Insurance, Real Estate)</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>100%</b>
City National Bank of Taylor	56	32.56%
McMakin & Associates Inc.	12	6.98%
Total	<b>68</b>	<b>39.53%</b>

source: Dun & Bradstreet, 2003

Labor Force



The above picture shows the difference between employment levels in Taylor and the local labor force. Local employment stood at 4,400 while there were 10,600 residents employed. Unfortunately, employment figures are not entirely comparable across sources, but the difference in the two numbers gives a rough estimate of residents that travel outside of the city for work.

The increase in commuter population is due to a number of factors, including a higher willingness of metro residents to commute long distances and an increase in employment opportunities in North Austin and Williamson County.

Labor Force Composition by Sex			
	Both Sexes	Male	Female
Population 16 years and over*	15,699	7,745	7,954
Labor force participation rates**	60.1%	67.2%	53.6%

source: \*DemographicsNow 2003 estimate; \*\*U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

<b>Employment by Industry</b>	
<i>Taylor</i>	
Accommodation and food services	6.00%
Admin, support, and waste management service	3.70%
Agriculture forestry fishing and hunting	0.50%
Arts entertainment and recreation	1.50%
<b>Construction</b>	<b>8.10%</b>
<b>Educational services</b>	<b>10.00%</b>
Finance and insurance	4.70%
Health care and social assistance	7.70%
Information	3.80%
Management of companies and enterprises	0.00%
<b>Manufacturing</b>	<b>14.00%</b>
Mining	0.30%
Other services (except public administration)	4.70%
<b>Professional scientific and technical services</b>	<b>8.60%</b>
Public administration	7.40%
Real estate and rental and leasing	2.30%
<b>Retail trade</b>	<b>11.10%</b>
Transportation and warehousing	2.40%
Utilities	0.70%
Wholesale trade	2.50%
source: US Census Bureau, 2000	

Manufacturing is the largest industry in which *residents are employed*, regardless of whether they work in Taylor or commute out of the city. Retail and educational services also each make up more than ten percent of the resident labor force. Despite Taylor's agricultural reputation, very few Taylorites actually work in the agriculture industry.

**Availability of Raw Materials**

About 30 percent of the land in Williamson County is prime farmland. Mineral resources include dolomite, limestone, sand, gravel, oil, and gas. Twenty-two years ago the county produced 16,271 barrels of crude oil and 355,000 cubic feet of casing head gas. Among other minerals that play a part in the county economy, limestone is produced as crushed limestone, dimension limestone, fieldstone limestone, and pulverant limestone; sand and gravel are also marketed. Cotton is yet another material that has not only been a traditional cash crop in the Taylor area but also continues to be exported out of the Taylor railroad station.

## SWOT Analysis

This analysis is a qualitative assessment of Taylor’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to community and economic development. This information has been gleaned from consultant observations as well as from input received in interviews, surveys, and focus groups.

### Business Climate

AE defines “business climate” as the capacity of the public sector to support business expansion and development opportunities. Typical factors that help shape a community’s business climate are listed below. An analysis of each factor follows.

*Overall, the business climate in Taylor is good. Taylor has experienced several significant events that will change the city dramatically, including the ERCOT, HEB, and Wal-Mart expansions. However, the City must continue to promote industrial and retail activity to lighten the tax burden on its residents and businesses. Additionally, one area that is a weakness but that can be easily overcome is the lack of an entrepreneurial environment. Finally, with the location of Taylor and all of the major regional infrastructure projects that are being completed in the area, Taylor will become an ideal place to do business and to start a business. Taylor’s incentive programs could be better tailored for existing businesses and start up businesses that will enhance the average wages and elevate Taylor’s image in the region. Leadership in Taylor has come together very well for specific projects such as CNET and Temple College at Taylor, but leadership and the community at large seem reluctant to embrace change.*

### Tax Rates - composed of property taxes levied by the City, County and school district

As illustrated below, tax rates in Taylor are relatively high compared to some of the benchmarks, but compared to Elgin the tax rates are competitive. This will continue to be an issue for the City since so many other infrastructure improvements (e.g., continued street repair/maintenance) will need to be made and the City relies heavily on property tax income.

	Taylor	Bastrop	Elgin	Georgetown
Property Tax Rate, County + City	\$1.2071	\$1.0631	\$1.3333	\$0.7609
ISD Tax Rate	\$1.6100	\$1.6080	\$1.5891	\$1.7300
Combined Property Tax Rates	\$2.8171	\$2.6711	\$2.9224	\$2.4909
Sales Tax Rate*	\$0.02	\$0.02	\$0.02	\$0.0175

source: Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

\*Bastrop County has a half cent sales tax. Rates are county and city combined.

### Regulatory Climate - the length, complexity, and consistency of the permitting process and the responsiveness of city officials and staff towards business development

Most everyone that AE has spoken with regarding the permitting process speaks very highly of the City staff. However, businesses have repeatedly expressed a concern that it is difficult to get an answer from the City on several different issues regarding permitting.

One issue that was heard more than a few times is that the City is not “business-friendly.” Some of this perception may be due to incentives that a new company received versus incentives that an existing company received. Nevertheless, this is an opportunity for the City to address through more internal marketing efforts.

**Location** - *the access to major highways, airports, seaports, and to metropolitan areas*

Location was one of Taylor’s historical strengths in the railroad era but the cities located on major highways I-35 have developed, while Taylor’s growth has stagnated.

Taylor is at the intersection of State Hwy 95, U.S. Hwy 79, and FM 973. Additionally, new infrastructure, such as SH130 and SH45 will positively impact Taylor.

**Communication and Collaboration** - *communication and cooperation between public and private sectors on initiatives*

Although Taylor businesses receive a newsletter, the City has no formal way to communicate to the business community about how it is addressing big issues that impact business. Some cities hold a monthly mayor’s breakfast or business roundtable meeting to communicate with the business community.

The TEDC and Chamber do host job fairs that support the business community. Businesses we have spoken with find these to be very useful.

As mentioned above, leadership in Taylor is great – there is a deep commitment, aggressiveness, and cohesiveness among community leaders that has served the community well on projects such as TaylorCNET and Temple College at Taylor. However, the leadership does not have a unified vision for what they want Taylor to become. Nor, do leaders share a unified vision for how certain areas of town (e.g. South/West Taylor, Downtown) should develop. Furthermore, AE has heard repeatedly that new residents and businesses have a hard time succeeding in Taylor. By embracing change and newcomers, the leadership in the community can help new businesses succeed and new residents feel more welcome.

**Entrepreneurial environment** - *the availability and/or access to business incubators, research and development facilities, financing and business advisory networks*

The entrepreneurial environment is one of the biggest weaknesses yet best opportunities for Taylor. Currently, very few grant resources are available for individuals wishing to start their own business. Additionally, there are no local angel investor networks, although there are regional resources. Taylor does have a few

individuals who have started their own business, not including retail. Some of the reasons these individuals have started their business here include: affordability, market needed, (housing, land, buildings) and telecommunications infrastructure.

AE also found that very few resources are devoted to developing business-to-business relationships or business-to-youth relationships. This is yet another good opportunity for the City.

**Incentive policy** - *includes tax abatements, permitting fee waivers, and utility hook-up waivers*

Due to the nature of the 4A legislation (that created the TEDC), the TEDC must primarily assist heavy commercial and manufacturing-based businesses. The City and County have also provided tax abatements to induce companies to locate and/or expand in Taylor. However, a more concentrated effort to focus on existing businesses, and small businesses should be considered. The TEDC and the City have utilized sales tax rebates for businesses. This is a creative incentive to generate retail activity. Much of the incentive assistance that the TEDC provides is in site development costs (e.g. roads, sewer, and water to support business development).

What AE has found is that very few of the businesses' upper management live in Taylor. One area that could be explored is to have a residency incentive for new jobs for certain tax abatements (e.g. requiring a certain percentage of employees live within the ETJ of Taylor after 2-3 years of operations). Rather than recommending a flat 110% of average wages in that industry in Williamson County, the City could consider a sliding scale of tax abatement per average wage, with a higher abatement for a higher wage.

The City can continue to facilitate private investment by making significant aesthetic improvements in areas of town that need investment. The areas that should now be identified as strategic investment zones should be: 1) downtown, 2) south Taylor, and 3) 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (the US Hwy 79 entrance to Taylor). The northern section of the city will continue to be developed through private investment without much public subsidy.

**Workforce & Education**

AE defines this component as the skill sets of the available labor pool and the programs of organizations involved in workforce development. The organizations include K-12 education, community colleges, universities, and workforce development boards/organizations. Factors that shape Taylor’s workforce and education capacity are listed below. An analysis of each factor follows.

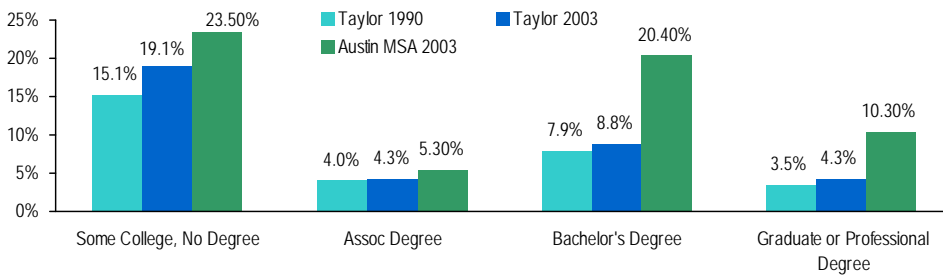
*Workforce and education in Taylor is in a period of transition. High School superintendent turnover during the last decade has hurt the ISD’s image and effectiveness. However, the school has made significant “behind the scenes” improvements that will serve the district and its students well, yet there still remain several areas that could be improved upon to elevate the students’ and District’s success. TCAT has also played a significant role in the city during the last few years, and is poised to begin expansion into health sciences. This will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the community if leveraged correctly. TCAT can also have an impact on developing an entrepreneurial environment if the other partners can embrace this type of fundamental change in the way that the City views economic development.*

**Educational attainment levels** - This factor analyzes the percentage of residents that have received high school, bachelors, or advanced degrees. The higher percentage of residents with bachelors degrees the greater the potential to support high-skilled, high wage jobs.

The attainment of some college but no degree has increased substantially in Taylor since 1990. However, attainment of an Associates Degree, Bachelors Degree or Graduate Degree has only slightly increased. This will be a factor in Taylor’s ability to attract industry that requires a more highly educated labor force.

**Educational Attainment Comparison, 1990 vs. 2003**

Adults 25 years or older



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Demographics Now estimates

Taylor ISD has a poor reputation in the region despite remarkable graduation rates and average scores on standardized tests. The school district is rated “acceptable” and is comparable to other area school districts. Average teacher experience remains high despite lower salaries, possibly a result of teachers’ attachment to the community and the lower cost of living in Taylor.

	Mean SAT Score	Mean ACT Score	Graduation Rate
<b>Taylor ISD</b>	939	19.1	85.8%
<b>Austin ISD</b>	1041	20.4	75.7%
<b>Georgetown ISD</b>	1086	18.2	88.2%
<b>Elgin ISD</b>	968	19.2	84.2%
<b>Bastrop ISD</b>	980	18.9	78.8%

source: Texas Education Agency, Class of 2000

Low test scores may be a product of the large proportion of lower income families and students. Statistically, these groups under perform on standardized tests. While this fact should be acknowledged, it does not overcome the public's perception of local schools.

**TAKS 2002 - % of Students Meeting Panel Recommendation**

	Reading	Science	Mathematics	All Tests
<b>Taylor ISD</b>	66.3%	36.9%	52.7%	41.2%
<b>Austin ISD</b>	68.6%	41.3%	54.3%	44.4%
<b>Georgetown ISD</b>	82.0%	56.0%	72.7%	60.5%
<b>Elgin ISD</b>	65.8%	36.3%	42.4%	32.4%
<b>Bastrop ISD</b>	68.6%	37.9%	55.1%	42.9%

source: Texas Education Agency

Improving student performance is not just about focusing on standardized tests. Improving schools is a very long-range objective and one that the ISD has been working on for the past few years. TISD is continuing to build a strong foundation and curriculum development for better schools in upcoming years.

**K-12 Educational Facilities** - *academic performance, community support, computer access and training programs, workforce training programs, and condition of buildings.*

This discussion will focus mostly on the high school facilities. However, AE has heard and seen that K-8 education is good. Not only are many of the facilities new, but also test scores in these grades are competitive with some of the neighboring communities.

The high school is an old facility, built in the 1960s. Even though enrollment is declining district-wide, the high school enrollment is steadily increasing. TISD will need to find a 30-50 acre site for a new high school.

TISD’s biggest challenges will be in providing for its highly diverse student population and the large percentage of students whose parents commute outside of Taylor for work. More than 50% of the students are Hispanic and more than 50% of the labor force commutes outside Taylor for employment. TISD must address two important questions that will affect future performance. First, how does TISD modify its programs to best

address the difference in providing education to non-English speaking individuals? Second, how does TISD involve the parents who get home late after their commute and are often too tired to play an active role in their child's education?

Facilities/Faculty

Many schools across the nation have developed curricula that prepare students for standardized state assessment tests rather than on the skills that will best prepare students for the future. TISD was no exception to this during the late 1990s. In addition, high superintendent turnover did not lend itself to making continuous improvements at TISD. Therefore, the focus for the recent administration has been on aligning the curriculum so that, for example, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers know what kids are learning in 1<sup>st</sup> grade and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade so that the curriculum in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade is aligned with the other grades. This is a basic yet important strategy but is not recognized by the general public.

TISD has a very good Even Start program designed for any parent whose children are seven years of age and under who want to speak English. TISD would like to expand this model to a broader range of people and would consider developing a joint program where kids and adults both can attend. The end result is for adults to become proficient in English and obtain employment.

TISD has a goal of becoming exemplary by 2005. This should be a community-wide goal rather than just the goal of the District administration. The children also want to be able to brag about graduating from a school that has a good reputation.

Diversity

As mentioned above, more than half of the student body is Hispanic, yet very little Spanish language training and diversity training has been provided to teachers and staff.

Technology

Although the classrooms have become more high tech, TISD could better utilize the Taylor CNET. One of the more innovative programs that TISD offers is one in which laptops are made available to all students that do not have one at home. They can be checked out and taken home. Teachers also have sets to use in classrooms for special projects. At other campuses, computer laboratories are available for teachers and students. Portable electronic notepads are also available for students to take with them on field trips.

Career/Entrepreneurial Development

Although an internship program has existed since the 1980s, the program has several students in retail, and the program is not geared towards any specific industry targets.

A co-op program - working ½ days tied to vocational courses - is also available to students. Several students we spoke with enjoy this program and wish it were more readily available to other students. Co-op participation in Health occupations seems to be the most popular and will continue to be a program that is taken advantage of as TCAT expands curriculum into health sciences.

TISD also received an endowment from a farm in Hutto that has been set up for students that want to become registered nurses. This scholarship should pay for the first two years.

The most alarming piece of information heard from several students is that the counseling services are geared almost entirely to college preparation. This is an area that should definitely be modified to meet the changing demands of the new economy. TISD, TCAT and TEDC should consider meeting regularly to discuss the issue of Advanced Placement (AP) courses at TISD versus dual credit courses offered at TCAT and how these efforts could be better coordinated.

**Higher Education and Workforce Education - access to area universities and community colleges' facilities and training programs.**

The Temple College at Taylor (TCAT) is an asset for Taylor. In just a few years, TCAT has built a community college program in Taylor that serves the entire area. TCAT is completing their Phase II plans, which will double the size of the facility and provide lab space for science and nursing programs.



*TCAT Advanced Training Facility*

Some areas of opportunity and concern include:

1. CNET and TCAT seem to be competing for services. This may just be a perception, but there is an opportunity to improve coordination between the two and communicate this to the community.
2. The faculty at TISD may not be aware of all the programs at TCAT. We heard from several students that some faculty discouraged students from taking courses from a community college.
3. The nursing program could become a huge advantage for Taylor. However, thought should be given to how to retain these students in the region if there are not enough health care jobs within the city.

**Infrastructure and Land Use**

AE defines this component as city, county and regional transportation, utilities, telecommunications, and site-specific infrastructure to support business expansion and development. Factors that help shape Taylor's infrastructure are listed below. An analysis of each factor follows.

*Taylor is still an affordable environment within the growing Central Texas region. However, this opportunity will quickly diminish as new transportation projects (namely, SH 130, SH 45, and a regional airport) are completed over the next five years. All of these projects will be in close proximity to Taylor, making Taylor as a place to do business an even more attractive opportunity. Taylor CNET, although touted as a model in Texas, can still be improved upon in terms of its application for residents and businesses in Taylor.*

**Land - costs and availability of commercial and industrial land**

Taylor has several shovel ready commercial and industrial sites with available utilities, including:

- Mustang Creek Industrial Park (65 acres remaining)
- Southpark (50 acres remaining)
- Walnut Creek (87 acres remaining)
- Airport (several sites still available)
- Land on Hwy 79 near KC Hall (40 acres remaining)

These sites are in a very good location and are affordable compared to neighboring Austin. Marketing of these sites could be improved.

**Transportation infrastructure - City transportation infrastructure that includes roads, airports, and rail infrastructure.**

The streets within Taylor are in very poor condition, with only a few exceptions. City neglect over many years has left the present City staff and elected officials with a serious problem that exceeds the City's current financial capacity. The condition of city streets has come up as the number one issue in almost every discussion that AE has had with Taylor residents and businesses.

The absence of public transportation in Taylor would not normally be an issue within a city the size of Taylor. However, residents without their own transportation in the South and West of town are forced to either walk several miles or purchase their groceries at a convenience store, since there are very few retail options and city services within these areas of town.

**Rail**

Taylor is at the intersections of the Missouri Pacific and the Missouri, Kansas and Texas (all operated by Union Pacific). Both passenger service (via Amtrak) as well as freight services is available in Taylor. Taylor could be the starting point

for the Commuter Rail line that is being discussed in the region. Taylor should be actively involved at the regional level in these discussions.

Existing Airport

The Taylor Municipal Airport serves Taylor and Williamson County and is owned by the City of Taylor. The facility is at an elevation of 583 feet and located about two miles from downtown Taylor. The airport is also equipped with an instrument landing system and a 4,000-foot lighted runway. Texas has four hub airports--more than any other state. A courtesy car is available for use in Taylor on a first-come first-served basis.

Transportation Plans

Several transportation projects in the local area will have an impact on Taylor:

1. **Increasing mobility on U.S. Hwy 79.** Construction started this year to add a turn lane between Hutto and Taylor along U.S. Hwy 79. Construction on this roadway will take two years.
2. **SH 130.** This construction project is estimated to be the second largest construction project in the western hemisphere. 130 will intersect Hwy 79 near Hutto – approximately seven miles from Taylor limits. It is expected to be completed in 2007.
3. **SH 45.** The intersection of SH45 and SH 130 will be approximately 15-20 miles from Taylor. This intersection will be one of the highest growth areas in the region. It is estimated that more than 2 million square feet of office space is being planned at this intersection.
4. **CR 973.** This road is a very good alternative for commuters to Austin. The road empties out on Hwy 290 near Manor and provides easy access to U.S. Hwy 183 and a direct route to Austin Bergstrom International Airport. Growth along this corridor is inevitable.
5. **Chandler Road.** This road is envisioned to become not only the north loop around Taylor, but also a major thoroughfare to North Round Rock, Marble Falls, and continuing as CR 619. Chandler Rd. will also relieve the congestion from U.S. 79.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

**Telecommunications** - *bandwidth capacity or transmission speeds and access to businesses and residents*

Taylor CNET has been touted in the state and nationally as one of the premier community networks, yet residents and business owners throughout town do not see the direct benefit to them of the network. CNET has 14 public access points throughout town, a community wide Web site, and free computer training. CNET has partnered with Skyvue USA who provides ISP service for the area.

CNET's market is both residential and business, but needs to try to capture more of the business community, including regional business opportunities. Wireless technology is line of site dependent, and tree cover tends to cause a problem with this technology. However, Taylor will be a beta testing site for a new Motorola radio that should help solve this problem. Motorola has done a press

release on CNET and is about to do another article as well. This leads to wonderful awareness of Taylor’s assets.

CNET can target people that do training videos or even political campaigns. WebX and Webmeetings are examples of services to consider growing. Some of CNET’s service offerings for businesses may be cost prohibitive, especially when other organizations in town (e.g. TCAT) may have similar services at a lower price.

CNET could develop a better collaboration with TISD.

Opportunities for CNET include:

- ◆ ERCOT could use CNET conference site or infrastructure for meetings
- ◆ Consider as a model application of a community network in other areas of the country
- ◆ Work with the city and ISP to market services to regional targeted audiences

**Utilities - a measure of the rates, capacity, and access to water, wastewater, electric, and gas services for commercial and industrial customers**

Even though the market for electricity in Taylor is open to competition, consumers in other municipalities in the Austin metro area with non-deregulated markets pay much less. Water prices in Taylor are also among the highest in the region, because even though Taylor charges a lower per-volume price, it imposes hefty monthly service fees. However, in the still largely non-competitive natural gas market, Taylor has one of the lowest prices in the metro area, both for residential and small commercial / industrial customers. These prices for Taylor water will change dramatically as a result of a recent agreement between the City of Taylor and a regional utility. This change should prove to be a positive one for future business costs in Taylor. Additionally, the cost for disposal of wastewater in Taylor is slightly below the metro average.

Electric Power

Electric service was deregulated in Texas in the 1990s, so that generation, transmission, distribution and retail sales were separated into different companies. Retail electric customers in most areas of Texas, including Taylor, have had a choice of providers since 2002.

The Public Utilities Commission lists nearly 40 retail service providers in the Taylor area. A comparison of rates and rate programs for non-residential customers is

<b>Residential Electricity Rates</b>	
Average price for 1000 kWh per month, after fees and surcharges	
<b>Deregulated Carriers Competing in Taylor</b>	
ACN Energy, Inc.	\$95.50
Cirro Energy	\$90.00
Direct Energy, LP	\$96.00
Entergy Solutions Ltd.	\$88.00
First Choice Power, Inc.	\$95.00
Gexa Energy Corp	\$88.30
Green Mountain Energy Company*	\$108.60
Reliant Energy*	\$99.00
TXU	\$101.00
<b>Highest</b>	<b>\$110.60</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>\$98.35</b>
<b>Lowest</b>	<b>\$88.00</b>
<b>Non-deregulated Carriers in the Austin MSA</b>	
Austin Energy	\$86.31
City of Georgetown	\$71.40
Bluebonnet Co-op	\$70.00

available at the official PUC Web site, Texas Electric Choice.

The State's power grid is administered by the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, Inc. (ERCOT), which dedicated a \$32.5 million control center in Taylor in November 2002. ERCOT serves approximately 85 percent of the state's electric load.

Distribution and transmission in the Taylor area is provided by ONCOR.

Water/Wastewater

Taylor operates both water supply (source is Lake Granger) as well as wastewater treatment for the City. The City has plenty of capacity to serve future residential and business demands for both water provision and wastewater treatment. However, as stated above, a recent agreement between the City of Taylor and the Brazos River Authority (BRA) will not only decrease rates, but also increase capacity.

Taylor operates a looped water system serving an area of approximately 12 square miles and 5,000 customers. The current system's capacity is 4.8 million gallons per day with a storage capacity of 2.5 million gallons. Other communities also have a minimum monthly charge that is comparable to Taylor.

<b>Water</b>		
Price for Consumption in Gallons with a 3/4" tap		
	1,000	5,000
Taylor	\$19.50	\$26.25
Round Rock	\$18.24	\$25.88
Austin Single Res.	\$2.20	\$19.19
Multi Res.	\$3.99	\$19.95
Com.	\$4.42	\$22.10
Ind.	\$3.93	\$19.65
Georgetown in-city service	\$2.25	\$11.25
out-of-city service	\$2.60	\$13.00
<b>Average</b>	<b>\$9.25</b>	<b>\$19.32</b>

The wastewater treatment facility has a system capacity of 4.0 million gallons per day.

<b>Wastewater</b>		
Monthly, in Gallons, for a 3/4" tap		
	1,000	5,000
Taylor	\$12.07	\$23.14
Round Rock	\$13.76	\$21.40
Austin Single Res.	\$5.70	\$22.69
Multi Res.	\$7.49	\$23.45
Com.	\$7.92	\$25.60
Ind.	\$7.43	\$23.15
Georgetown	\$14.85	\$27.25
<b>Average</b>	<b>\$11.95</b>	<b>\$23.88</b>

Natural Gas

TXU Gas is the distributor for natural gas in Taylor. It has competitive programs to serve business and industrial customers.

<b>Natural Gas</b>				
Price per Million Cubic Feet				
<b>City</b>	<b>Distributor</b>	<b>Res.</b>	<b>Sm. Com/Ind*</b>	<b>Lg Com/Ind*</b>
Taylor	TXU	\$10.049	\$7.871	-
Austin	TGS	\$10.847	\$9.049	\$8.657
Austin	TXU	\$11.332	\$10.025	-
Georgetown	TXU	\$10.188	\$8.473	-
Round Rock	TXU	\$10.252	\$8.340	-
Elgin	Reliant	\$11.191	\$8.924	\$8.207
Bastrop	Reliant	\$11.622	\$9.019	\$7.644
<b>Average</b>		<b>\$10.783</b>	<b>\$8.621</b>	<b>-</b>

\* Definition of "small" and "large" customers varies by distributor.  
Some do not make the distinction.

## Economic Development Efforts

AE defines economic development efforts as the activities of local, regional and state organizations involved in any form of economic development activity. Factors explored include: external promotion and marketing, internal promotion, and resource allocation. An analysis of each factor follows.

**External promotion** – *Any activities aimed at developing the image of a community to non-residents and companies. External promotion efforts include marketing or public relations, and can be aimed at expanding or relocating companies, skilled workers, entrepreneurs, site selectors and other business influencers, and tourists.*

**Successful communities find the right balance of both internal and external activities to get the most return – awareness and business.** External marketing is vital to diversifying Taylor's economy and will make a big impact on the community by providing more jobs, reducing commute times, increasing sales tax revenue, and improving quality of life.

Until this point, Taylor has not embarked on a targeted external marketing campaign. Non-residents and target companies outside of Taylor that receive information on the city, are faced with numerous messages with no co-ordinated strategy behind it. Haphazardly marketing Taylor confuses target audiences. This is why we recommend one single, powerful theme and approach that will apply for all audiences.

By having a brand that states the unique character and leadership standing of the city, Taylor will generate interest and demand. Some descriptors that individuals have used while promoting Taylor include: "potential," "affordable," "laid-back," "connected," "not Austin," and "changing." AE will collect additional input from the community via surveys and will conduct a marketing workshop to define Taylor's new brand. **It is wise for all organizations and individuals marketing the city to use the new theme.**

Even though the organizations promoting the city have Web sites for external audiences to obtain information on specific products and services, there is a need to have a more cohesive message, better integrated Web sites, and launch a targeted campaign so that the optimal audiences are enticed to visit or locate in Taylor.

**Web sites are a primary vehicle that external audiences use to obtain information on cities.** These audiences include tourists, business executives, entrepreneurs, real estate developers, and citizens. When using Web search engines, like Google™, and searching for "Taylor, Texas," "Taylor Economic Development," and/or "City of Taylor, Texas," several sites pop-up.

Here are a few sites that appear at the top of the list:

- <http://www.ci.taylor.tx.us/> - very simple, portal site
- <http://www.ci.taylor.tx.us/taylorcity/employment.html> - City employment opportunities
- <http://www.tayloredc.com/> - TEDC's home page

- <http://www.taylorcnet.org/>- Taylor CNET's home page
- <http://www.cityoftaylor.com/> - City of Taylor, Michigan

Taylor has done a good job of linking organizations' sites to one another. For instance, from the simple, portal site, you can access the TEDC and Taylor Chamber of Commerce sites very easily. Nevertheless, redeveloping the portal site into the city, making it more pleasant for Web visitors and also revising each organization's site to "look" like they are part of the same city, will improve Taylor's message and present the city in a more appealing manner.

The marketing plan lists techniques that will attract Taylor's external audiences in a cost effective manner. This plan will incorporate each organization in Taylor's marketing objectives and be a unified approach to promote the city. It is extremely important for Taylor to follow-through with the marketing plan. The city must market itself externally so that it is recognized as an attractive location for business development.

**Internal Marketing** – *Aimed at increasing awareness of and support for economic development within the local community. Successful internal activities are aimed at local businesses, media, and educators and result in a unified "voice" promoting a community as a good place for living and doing business.*

**Internal marketing builds understanding, support, and excitement regarding the importance of economic development, where Taylor is, and where it is heading.** Winning communities market "at home" first and build a team of citizens to help the city market to external audiences.

Once the city has a new marketing plan, Taylor should inform the community and train individuals to market the city using the new brand. All citizens should market Taylor. It is not just the responsibility of the Chamber of Commerce, Main Street, or TEDC.

Internal marketing also includes improving the city's economic development product, building community awareness, and expanding local businesses. Retaining local employers and the workforce is sometimes overlooked. Taylor should market to entrepreneurs residing within the community to inform them of resources that can help them start a business in Taylor. Improving relationships and providing better service to existing businesses is just as important as recruiting new businesses. Better training for the workforce is also an internal effort to improve.

Taylor is fortunate to have the support of the *Taylor Daily Press* and the City newsletter that reaches approximately 5,000 residents. **The use of local media and personal meetings are good avenues for "building local awareness."** However, Taylor needs to improve communication within the city. Readership of the local newspaper does not reach all of the local audiences. Many residents and local businesses commented that they do not feel like the city informs them on important issues and this needs to be addressed.

**Taylor should consider internal marketing first and then balance internal and external activities. Reach out to more of the population and encourage**

**citizens to attend future promotion training seminars that will get everyone speaking in the same tone.**

**Take advantage of the *Taylor Daily Press* (TDP) agreeing to publish routine updates on economic development so that more citizens will be informed on economic development progress. Identify other vehicles and locations to “get the message out.”** The TDP reaches over 1,500 households. The City’s quarterly newsletter reaches more than 4,500 households. Both of these mediums can be used for internal marketing efforts.

**Resource allocation** – *How effectively economic development funds are being used to generate new investment and long-term economic health within the community.*

The TEDC and Taylor Chamber of Commerce fund current marketing activities for the city. With the new Market Taylor Committee and potential new Downtown Merchants Association, Taylor will have additional resources to market the city. A majority of the current marketing funds comes from the motel / hotel occupancy tax and 4A sales tax.

**Quality of Life**

AE defines this component as issues that influence an existing or potential resident to reside or a company to expand or relocate in a particular area. Factors that help shape Taylor’s quality of life are the following:

*Taylor’s quality of life is very similar to Elgin’s in terms of its affordability and easy pace of life. The housing and land values are still very affordable, it is a relatively safe community, and most health care issues can be dealt with locally or within a quick commute to Round Rock or Georgetown. Areas of concern for Taylor are lack of retail and fine dining, as well as recreational opportunities. The new Williamson County Park will certainly give Taylor an advantage over other similar cities in the region, but the restaurant and retail issue is of critical importance to address. Taylor should work to address any barrier to retail/restaurant growth such as facilitating restaurants to serve alcohol.*

**Safety** - A low crime rate percentage is a positive indicator on a community’s quality of life.

Nearly 90% of survey respondents feel that Taylor is a very safe environment. The external image of Taylor is that it is not a safe community. Articles in the American Statesman and on local television news channels portray a poor image of Taylor. Yet, statistics show that Taylor is safer than many other Central Texas communities, and their police stops reflect the local demographics. While Austin has recently grappled with racial profiling, Taylor is a model for policing. This is the type of good press that Taylor should capitalize on in the future.

Taylor has 30 police officers working towards improving safety. Although Taylor has an image within the region as a high crime area, the table below illustrates that, besides the high murder rate per 100,000 people (which equates to only “1” actual murder in 2002), Taylor’s total crime per 100,000 is less than Elgin, Hutto, and Austin, yet still higher than Georgetown, Round Rock and Pflugerville.

Police Jurisdiction	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Auto Theft	Total
Georgetown PD	3.40	6.80	37.20	94.60	277.00	1459.40	145.30	2023.60
Pflugerville PD	0.00	5.90	11.70	76.20	433.70	1881.40	146.50	2555.40
Round Rock PD	0.00	31.30	48.50	101.80	435.30	2131.30	90.80	2839.20
<b>Taylor PD</b>	<b>7.10</b>	<b>63.50</b>	<b>35.30</b>	<b>204.50</b>	<b>500.70</b>	<b>2129.90</b>	<b>105.80</b>	<b>3046.80</b>
Elgin PD	0.00	16.80	33.60	285.50	1142.10	1881.10	168.00	3527.00
Hutto PD	0.00	0.00	0.00	918.80	459.40	2220.50	153.10	3751.90
Austin PD	3.60	37.80	171.20	255.00	1006.30	4332.30	457.10	6263.30

Source: Texas Crime Report (2002), Texas Department of Public Safety  
 (http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/crimereports/02/ch9.pdf)  
 \* Crimes are Rate per 100,000

Improving Taylor’s image regarding safety is of utmost importance. The above figures do not paint a great image for the city, but compared to larger cities like Austin, Taylor is a safe community.

**Retail choice** - *The measure of a community's access to a range of retail options including restaurants, grocery stores, cleaners, auto shops, and clothing stores.*

The lack of retail choice is not only one of the big issues for residents but it is also one of the biggest issues for businesses and the City. For example, many employers have told us that they travel to Round Rock for business lunches, and house their clients in hotels outside of Taylor due to the lack of restaurant and hotel choices in Taylor.

By the end of spring or early summer, Wal-Mart will open its expanded facility. HEB's expansion will also be completed this summer. Both of these facilities will undoubtedly increase sales tax revenue for the City, but also provide increased retail opportunities for Taylorites. Pad sites in front of these stores will also offer additional retail opportunities.

**Health care** - *The community's access to clinics, hospitals, and other medical facilities.*

Taylor is fortunate to have Scott and White clinic as well as Johns Community Hospita,, a not-for-profit facility, and Johns Community Health Center. These facilities serve most of Taylor's health care needs, and many residents still use hospitals outside of town for certain specialty care as well as obstetrics.

**Community image** - *The external image of a community – defined by building and streetscape architecture and placement of commercial and industrial properties in relation to residential areas.*

After surveying local citizens and business managers and talking with regional leaders, Taylor is perceived to have a negative image. Even though Taylor's image within the community has improved over the last five years, this perception is reality and outweighs the "positive feelings."

The City of Taylor has the opportunity to re-brand itself. A new brand can be used to change this perception and help Taylor grow. However, improving Taylor's image will require more than a marketing theme. It is up to city leaders, residents, and local businesses, to improve the image of Taylor. Making downtown sidewalks, streets, and property more pleasant, promoting TISD's achievements, and being friendly to patrons of local businesses are some ways to improve Taylor's attractiveness.

**Diversity of housing stock** - *A key factor in helping a community attract and retain companies and their higher skilled workers.*

The diversity of housing has increased over the past few years. Taylor has a very good stock of early 20<sup>th</sup> century housing that is still affordable. Additionally, Taylor has plentiful multifamily housing and affordable single-family housing. Only recently has Taylor experienced a growth in new single family housing with ranges from \$90,000 to \$130,000. This is an obvious immediate market for Taylor; however, the city lacks new high-end housing (>\$250,000). Without growth in this housing segment, and without advances in education, it will be

difficult for Taylor to convince upper management in existing and new businesses to live in Taylor.

High-end housing has not historically sold well in Taylor. For example, The Hills at Mustang Creek has only sold 12 lots since August of 2001. AE has heard that many potential buyers are concerned about purchasing homes in Taylor because of the negative perception of schools, streets, and taxes. (The average house price in the Hills at Mustang Creek is \$200,000.) Given the potential market in Williamson County for higher end housing, this could prove to be an opportunity for the city if aggressively pursued.

**Recreation and Entertainment-** *A key factor for families with children who may be considering moving as part of business relocation or for a rural environment in which to raise their children. This factor also considers cultural and recreational amenities.*

A separate study on parks in Taylor is currently being conducted as part of the Comprehensive Planning effort. Therefore, AE will not focus too much discussion on parks. However, there are several areas that could present opportunities that are worth discussion here:

1. Skateboard Park. Several individuals, most noticeably from the youth focus group, have discussed the possibility of converting the swimming pool in Murphy Park into a skateboard park. AE believes that this is certainly worth looking into. However, studies have shown that if a skateboard park is developed it should be designed and developed by premier skateboarders. This will not only ensure safety of the facility, but the facility will then become a draw for both residents and tourists.

2. Heritage / Cultural / Art Center Downtown. The downtown should be transformed into the Arts and Entertainment District for Taylor. There is an extraordinary history of cultural diversity in the city, but it is rarely celebrated. Additionally, there is a big push throughout the nation to develop more fine arts and performing arts facilities for residents and tourists. This is a great opportunity for Taylor. One example of a type of establishment that could work well in downtown includes a microbrewery.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

3. Utilize Labor from Prison and/or Drug Rehabilitation Center. The City and County should be utilizing individuals from both of these facilities on a daily basis. This is not only "free" labor, but it also provides workforce skill enhancement opportunities for these individuals. They could be working on such areas as:

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

- ◆ Beautification – litter clean up, tree/shrub plantings.
- ◆ Housing Development – infill housing development for a new housing non-profit that is established.
- ◆ Building demolition – for dilapidated structures.
- ◆ Street improvements/enhancements
- ◆ Private sector – supplement work by outsourcing certain manufacturing.

**Central Business District (CBD)**

The central Taylor CBD encompasses 44 square blocks in downtown Taylor. This area was full of business activity 35 years ago. The advent of larger retail businesses drew the downtown customer away and Taylor's downtown has yet to be reinvigorated.

In 1999, Taylor became a Main Street community and went through all of the motions that Main Street communities go through to improve the CBD. With the help of a Main Street Coordinator, several initiatives have been accomplished including a grant program for façade enhancements, a business newsletter and funding to improve certain roadway sections of the CBD (TEA-21 grant).

Many business owners are frustrated with the way that the TEA-21 grant (a \$1.2 million federal grant) has been handled and remain impatient for the grant funds to be used to make the necessary improvements downtown. Desired improvements include: sidewalks and street enhancements, period lighting and crosswalks, as well as tree and landscape improvements. All of these improvements will draw renewed interest in the downtown.

Taylor is also in the process of developing a Historical Designation for the entire CBD that will provide added incentives to prospective investors in downtown. Taylor hopes to have the historic district designation within 16 months.

Taylor needs to develop a very unique image for the downtown. Traditional downtowns cannot compete with a big box retailer or some of the new "Town Centers" being developed in Hutto or Taylor. **An Arts and Entertainment District in Taylor's downtown would provide a unique image to both tourists and Taylor residents.**

Successful CBDs maintain information on existing landowners, tenants, and business owners to use in their day-to-day operations and for prospects considering the city. Taylor was not able to quickly produce this information. This is an area to improve immediately to help the downtown reach its potential.

Taylor needs to improve communication, marketing, and collaboration of downtown business owners with other organizations throughout the City. Taylor should consider pooling downtown business owners' resources to jointly market to tourists, in Central Texas, throughout the State, and then to appropriate markets. AE heard in several focus groups that downtown businesses are ready to campaign and get more locals to buy in Taylor, along with a campaign to attract more outside traffic to the city. This marketing effort should be incorporated to the overall economic development plan. Activities to market to various audiences will need to be prioritized to ensure that Taylor has an optimal approach.

### Economic Impact Study of the Eastern Williamson County Park on the City of Taylor

The economic impact of the new Williamson County Park could be tremendous, but the success of the park will depend heavily on effective management and marketing.

Since most of the park's site plan has not yet been built, several assumptions were made in order to perform this analysis. Many of these assumptions are based on recommendations to build the park as planned.

Numerous studies have estimated the impacts of parks and fairgrounds in counties across the country. It is estimated that a park in Williamson County will draw over 400,000 people throughout the year, including 80,000 people during events sponsored by the Taylor Rodeo Association, 30,000 people during a county fair, and thousands through little league sports. The average user will live within 100 miles of the park. An important assumption in the model will be Taylor's ability to capture visitor spending on restaurants. The average overnight or full day visitor is expected to spend \$35 per day on food.

**Williamson County Park Impact Summary**

<b>Direct Effects</b>	Wages	\$540,000
	Jobs	20
	Retail / Concessions	\$2.7 Mil
	Sales Tax	\$54,400
<b>Indirect Effects</b>	Retail	\$970,000
	Sales Tax	\$10,400
	Property Tax	\$27,000
	Retail Jobs	27

- The park is expected to create 20 direct jobs, with \$540,000 in direct wages.
- \$2.7 million will be directly spent at the park through ticket sales and concessions.
- Taxes on this spending are estimated at \$54,400 annually.
- The park will add another \$970,000 in indirect retail sales at local businesses, supporting about 27 local retail jobs.
- Indirect tax impacts include another \$10,400 in sales tax and \$27,000 in property tax to the city and school district.

**Breakdown of Impacts**

**1. Intramural and Little League Sports**

Little league sports have very little direct impact on the local economy, as concessions are likely to be operated by volunteers and represent a small part of Taylor's overall retail sales. However, visitor spending while in town can be significant. It is important to realize that the impact of the park is highly dependent on facility utilization and the ability to draw people from neighboring communities to the park. Increasing the number of leagues and tournaments will increase the impact considerably.

- We estimate that 60 percent of sports families will come from outside of Taylor, and each family will spend an average of \$7 on items such as gas, concessions, and food.
- Based on estimates of park capacity and utilization rates, an expected 90,000 visits will be made to the park by nonresidents, leading to \$630,000 in added local spending and over \$5,000 in sales tax revenue.

**2. YMCA**

The YMCA has the largest potential impact for the City of Taylor. Not only will it add an important quality of life amenity, but it also creates jobs, which in turn increases spending on retail and homes.

The planned YMCA will have 40,000 square feet, three meeting rooms, and the potential to add an indoor pool. The facility is assumed to have an average of 20 yearly fulltime equivalent employees with an average salary of \$27,000. The total annual economic impact of the YMCA is estimated to be:

- \$540,000 in local wages, which will largely be spent on homes and retail
- \$140,000 in local retail spending, leading to \$1,200 in added sales tax revenue
- \$18,500 and \$8,600 in local property tax revenues to the school district and city, respectively

**3. Williamson County Fair**

To date, Williamson County does not have a fair. AE recommends this as a use for the park.

- It is estimated that a county the size of Williamson County will be able to draw 30,000 people for a two-week fair.
- Concessions sales for such an event are estimated to be \$810,000, or \$27 per person, and create over \$16,000 in added tax revenue.

**4. Pavilion used and rented by Taylor Rodeo Association**

The Rodeo Association has plans to rent the pavilion for 20 weeks out of the year, with an estimated attendance of 4,000 for a two-day event.

- Rodeo representatives estimate \$1 million gross revenue from rentals, charging \$12 per person.
- Another \$900,000 will be generated in concession sales
- Rodeo events will bring in \$38,400 in sales tax revenue.

**5. RV Park**

There are 50 RV sites planned for the park. It is estimated that, at least in the early years, usage will be low except for event weekends. It is assumed that the park will be at full capacity during each of the 20 weekends planned by the Rodeo Association and during the fair, with the average length of stay being 3 days. It is understood that the RV park will not fill to capacity on every rodeo weekend; however, this assumption is designed to capture unspecified use for non-rodeo weekends.

- One of the park's most significant contributions is its ability to bring people into the city. An estimated 2,000 people will stay at the park each year, spending a total of 6,000 visitor days in Taylor.
- Provided Taylor can capture a majority of spending on meals, city restaurants and grocery stores should see sales increase by \$200,000, bringing in \$2,000 in sales tax each year.

**6. Civic Center**

This facility is sited adjacent to the YMCA facility on the site plan. Although AE did not measure the impact of this facility, it could prove to be a tremendous benefit to the City if developed for tourism and conventions. Additionally, it should be owned and run by the City. The city could contract out some of the work and administration but ownership by the city will give some flexibility yet control of the quality of venues.