



**Strategic Plan
2021-2023**



STRATEGIC PLAN 2021 - 2023

Our Strengths, Challenges & Opportunities

Successful strategic planning requires accurate appraisal of both strengths and challenges. Identifying strengths and honest assessment of challenges can provide leveraged opportunities to improve strategic position.

STRENGTHS

When compared to similarly-sized communities the Bastrop area has many clear advantages, including:

- ✓ **Brand** –The Bastrop area has been a central gathering place since its first settlement in 1804. With over 130 historical sites, Bastrop earns its title of “Most Historic Small Town in Texas.” A beautifully tranquil setting along the Colorado River amid the natural beauty of Central Texas’ Lost Pines eco-region, Bastrop’s setting is identified as being in the “Heart of the Lost Pines.”
- ✓ **Proximity** – Bastrop is located near the center of Bastrop County along the lower Colorado River and holds the County seat. The town is centrally located within the heart of the “Texas Triangle” and offers easy access to Houston, San Antonio and Dallas/Fort Worth. Austin is just 30 miles northwest of Bastrop.
- ✓ **Transportation** – Bastrop sits at the intersection of three major divided highways: SH 121, 71 and 95. The significant regional north-south artery SH 130 Tollway is just 20 from the center of town. Ongoing investment in the expansion and improvements of SH 71 is serving to further improve mobility. Rapidly expanding Austin-Bergstrom International Airport is only 22 miles from downtown, and the County is further served by Smithville Crawford Municipal Airport.
- ✓ **Population** – Bastrop County, part of the Greater Austin Metropolitan Area, has a population of about 85,000. This population has increased 47% since 2000, making it one of the fastest growing areas in Central Texas. The population of the City of Bastrop is about 9,000. Median age is about 40 years old, which is slightly higher than other cities in the Austin area.
- ✓ **Education** – There are 10 colleges within 50 miles of Bastrop, the nearest being Austin Community College about 27 miles away. ACC provides night and continuing education classes at Bastrop High School and partners with the Bastrop Independent School District to provide dual-credit opportunities at multiple campuses. Graduates of BISD’s Colorado River Collegiate Academy are awarded high school diploma simultaneously with a 2-year degree from ACC. Of County residents 25 years or older, about 86% have graduated from high school and about 21% have a bachelor’s degree or higher, providing employers with a well-educated labor force.
- ✓ **Labor Market** – The workforce pulls from 5 counties in the Central Texas region, and wages typically average below those in Austin. The local unemployment rate is under 4%, similar to the Texas average.
- ✓ **Industry Sectors** – Construction, Retail Trade, Healthcare and Social Assistance comprise the primary sectors for Bastrop County. The largest employers in the County include Bastrop Independent School Districts, Hyatt Regency Lost Pines & Resort & Spa, Bastrop County, MD Anderson Cancer Center, HEB and Walmart.
- ✓ **Quality of Life** – County residents enjoy the historic charm of downtown Bastrop, a flourishing arts community with cultural attractions, and a retail hub which includes both national and local

stores. The Lost Pines Forest and extensive Colorado River frontage offers hiking, kayaking, boating, fishing and camping opportunities. Bastrop's annual Patriotic Festival and other community events provide food and entertainment for residents and visitors. Local cost of living is 7.5% below the national average; median home prices under \$200K; and a tremendous variety of job opportunities are within a one hour commute. The County is a wonderful place to work, live, visit and raise a family.

CHALLENGES

Bastrop and Bastrop County has challenges, both real and perceived, which must be addressed to ensure a strong economic future. These include:

- ✓ **Brand** – With Austin's nationally visible brand in such close proximity, Bastrop can be seen as less progressive and less attractive. Bastrop's identity is also not yet as strong as other, more densely populated suburban communities in the Austin region. These issues can lead to difficulty in attracting and retaining young professionals to the area.
- ✓ **Business Climate** – The current local regulatory climate is seen by many as burdensome for some businesses with inconsistencies in permitting, extended local approval processes, and other policies and practices.
- ✓ **COVID-19 and Economic Recovery** – The pandemic has impacted businesses throughout the county, especially small businesses, who were hit the hardest, and residents who experienced job losses. Large events and gatherings were also canceled and impacted a loss of community engagement and spending from visitors outside of the county. The impact on Bastrop's economic vitality may take a few years to fully recover.
- ✓ **Local Jobs** – Employment opportunities in Austin or San Antonio are typically higher-paying and require an average commute of 33 minutes or more. Only about 23% of those who live in Bastrop work in the Bastrop area. An estimated 42% of the workforce has "super commutes" in excess of 90 minutes.
- ✓ **Labor Market** – With unemployment rates currently less than 4% it can be difficult for local employers to fill job openings across the entire spectrum of lower, mid-level and upper level skilled positions. Despite a constant flow of students through the region's higher education institutions, the "talent war" lures many young professionals to metro cities that offering more diverse opportunities and amenities.
- ✓ **New Development and Business Expansion** – Low to moderate growth rates exist for many Bastrop businesses due to a lack of capital investment or difficulty in attracting skilled talent for emerging industries. This hinders the growth of enterprises which could satisfy those seeking a more "metro city" environment.
- ✓ **Housing** – The current shortage of housing supply can prevent local employers from attracting talent. It can further prevent a normal move through life and career cycles, making our residential base more transitional. With notable inward migration continuing in Texas, limited housing could mean that Bastrop is missing out on growth opportunities. Many local employers state a large percentage of their workforce lives outside the Bastrop trade area.

OPPORTUNITIES

Bastrop and Bastrop County has collective assets which can be leveraged to develop a sustainable and prosperous future for employers and residents, including:

- ✓ **Pro-Business Environment** – Build relationships with new and existing policymakers to advocate for an environment which inspires and supports the local business community.
- ✓ **Collaboration** – Leverage partnerships with the Bastrop Economic Development Corporation, Workforce Solutions, Bastrop ISD, the City and County to implement initiatives benefiting businesses and residents. Work with local school districts and higher education institutions to address specific workforce development needs of employers and increase the awareness of career opportunities in Bastrop.
- ✓ **K-12 Pipeline** – Experiences that showcase entrepreneurship and career opportunities inspire students for a bright and promising future in Bastrop.
- ✓ **New Development and Existing Businesses** – Quality of Life assets can offer “ground floor” opportunities for commercial investment and future growth; and provide resources to existing Bastrop businesses which support their growth initiatives. The announcement of the new Tesla manufacturing site will also bring new jobs and attract businesses and jobs to the area.
- ✓ **Sense of Place** – Because Bastrop’s identity is not directly tied to the Austin brand, Bastrop County enjoys a unique sense of place which should be celebrated along with its more peaceful Quality of Life. Amenities can be developed which hold true to Bastrop’s unique identity and history while directly engaging young professionals and families, enhancing community pride to all who call the area “home.”
- ✓ **Strong Economy** – Significant, ongoing growth in the Central Texas region can and should provide new growth opportunities for the County and City of Bastrop. The larger Austin-area economy also acts as a “shield” to the local economy, meaning the economic swings are less likely to have a negative impact when compared with other similar-sized communities.
- ✓ **Young Professionals** – Bastrop’s median age of 40 years old and higher educational institutions attract many bright and talented individuals. By engaging them through the Chamber, connecting them with career opportunities and developing community amenities, the County could develop the future talent pool needed for employers.

THESE CHALLENGES ARE NOT UNSURMOUNTABLE. WE HAVE A PLAN.

The Bastrop Chamber of Commerce’s 2021 – 2023 strategic plan provides a blueprint to leverage strengths, overcome challenges and capitalize on the opportunities ahead. Chamber leadership and staff have been tasked with facilitating and accomplishing this plan.

Our Vision Statement

The Bastrop Chamber will be recognized as the principle advocate for business, prosperity, and economic sustainability for the Bastrop area.

Our Mission Statement

To improve business prosperity, and thereby the quality of life for all Bastrop area citizens, through leadership, advocacy and collaboration.

Where We're Going

The Chamber's strategic plan is a three-year initiative to promote strengths, expand existing businesses and business opportunities, and significantly improve the economic future for all who call Bastrop County home. Priorities will focus on the following areas:

- ✓ **AMPLIFY VALUE TO MEMBERS** – Provide resources and connections that help our members succeed.
- ✓ **ADVOCATE FOR BUSINESS** – Create an environment where businesses can find success in the Bastrop area.
- ✓ **ADVANCE COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE** – Fortify community connections within the Bastrop area.
- ✓ **ALIGN RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABILITY** — Enhance the credibility and financial stability of the Chamber.

How We Are Going to Get There

PRIORITY AREA: AMPLIFY VALUE TO MEMBERS

Provide resources and connections that help our members succeed.

***Barriers:** Diverse needs of members, not understanding member needs, time poverty, lack of member engagement.*

Objective A: Access to “Circles of Influence” for members.

***Success Metrics:** Number of members contacted for outreach initiatives, percentage of members engaged, attendance at programs and events, number of Chamber referrals for members, member feedback and satisfaction ratings, member retention, net revenue of programs and events.*

Strategy 1: Offer Member-to-Member connections.

Tactics:

- Continue to host onsite and online networking events (i.e., Luncheons, Alive After Five).
- Encourage members to engage in committees with like-minded peers.
- Provide strategic introductions among members.

Strategy 2: Provide opportunities for members to learn and share best practices.

Tactics:

- Leverage members' expertise in blog posts and as speakers for webinars and programs.
- Provide opportunities for members to learn from one another through educational programs and roundtable discussions.

Strategy 3: Provide concierge services for business development.

Tactics:

- Survey the needs of businesses to identify areas of concern for business development.
- Meet with businesses that have roadblocks or questions that impact expansion or impediments to open their business.
- Offer a Lunch & Learn from the experts about the City permitting process.

Objective B: Increased visibility for our members.

***Success Metrics:** Attendance at programs and events, sponsorship and advertising opportunities, web page visits and links for Chamber Online Business Directory, number of Chamber referrals for members, member feedback and satisfaction ratings, member retention, net revenue of programs from events.*

Strategy 1: Promote members to the Bastrop community and beyond.

Tactics:

- Continue to provide Ribbon Cuttings/Grand Openings celebrations.
- Continue to provide sponsorship opportunities for members.
- Continue to promote our members through our online Business Directory & Community Guide.

Strategy 2: Educate members on Chamber benefits and help access them.

Tactics:

- Member Information Center (MIC) training sessions.
- Chamber Membership Benefits 101.
- One-on-one meetings with members to discuss benefits.
- Develop an Engagement Guide that provides info on various Chamber committees, events and services (example:
<https://www.austinchamber.com/upload/files/HowToEngage.pdf> and
<https://www.austinchamber.com/upload/files/2017-Engagement-Guide.pdf>).

Strategy 3: Showcase member success stories.

Tactics:

- Member testimonials and videos on the value of Bastrop Chamber membership.
- Begin a Member of the Week social media campaign.
- Continue to provide Ribbon Cuttings/Grand Openings celebrations.
- Continue to provide sponsorship opportunities for members.

Strategy 4: Enhance the value of membership.

Tactics:

- Member testimonials and videos on the value of Bastrop Chamber membership.
- Review tiered membership model and adjust benefits, as needed.
- Collect member feedback on benefits and ideas on how to enhance value.

PRIORITY AREA: ADVOCATE FOR BUSINESS

Create an environment where businesses can find success in the Bastrop area.

Barriers: Growth concerns, lack of access to information for business leaders, perceptions not based on facts, fear of change.

Objective A: An informed business community on issues.

Success Metrics: Web traffic and access to advocacy info on Chamber websites, attendance at advocacy events, member and stakeholder feedback, outcomes on bond initiatives.

Strategy 1: Support initiatives that offer positive impact.

Tactics:

- Advocate for community partner initiatives that also benefit the business community.
- Partner with other chambers in the area and statewide to influence policy at all levels of government.

Strategy 2: Create interactive information sharing platforms.

Tactics:

- Offer Candidate Forums where businesses and policymakers can engage.
- Use social media and other technology to share information with the business community.
- Send out an annual survey to identify member concerns and Chamber priorities.

Objective B: Strong collaboration with policy makers.

Success Metrics: Attendance of policymakers at Chamber-hosted events, attendance at advocacy events, member and stakeholder feedback, outcomes on policy initiatives.

Strategy 1: Serve as a liaison between the business community and policymakers.

Tactics:

- Meet with businesses that have roadblocks or questions that impact expansion or impediments to open their business.
- Offer a Lunch & Learn from the experts about the City permitting process.

Strategy 2: Educate and influence policymakers to support pro-business policies.

Tactics:

- Offer a Lunch & Learn from the experts about the City permitting process.
- Share business concerns and issues with policymakers.
- Partner with other chambers in the area and statewide to influence policy at all levels of government.

Objective C: Smart, intentional growth.

Success Metrics: Member and stakeholder feedback, outcomes on advocacy initiatives.

Strategy 1: Build coalitions to influence intentional growth.

Tactics:

- Partner with chambers and other organizations in our area to support managed growth initiatives.
- Support the improvement and expansion of infrastructure (roads and utilities).

Strategy 2: Expand Bastrop's geographic footprint.

Tactics:

- Meet with Bastrop County policymakers to consider annexations and other initiatives to protect the encroachment of other town jurisdictions on Bastrop borders.
- Support initiatives that expand Bastrop County and protect Bastrop assets and access.

PRIORITY AREA: Advance Community Excellence

Fortify community connections within the Bastrop area

***Barriers:** Perceived conflicts and misalignment among organizations, competition for access to influencers and revenue opportunities, history among different organizations and leaders.*

Objective A: Sense of community.

***Success Metrics:** Feedback from community partners and other Bastrop area stakeholders, social media campaign participation, number of booth sales, attendance at community engagement events.*

Strategy 1: Provide events that drive community engagement.

Tactics:

- Continue to plan and deliver the Annual Patriotic Festival.

Strategy 2: Support other community events.

Tactics:

- Include community partner events on the Chamber's Calendar.
- Board and staff attend partner events to show Chamber support.
- Cross promote events among community partners.

Objective B: Alignment of community partners.

***Success Metrics:** Collaborations among community partners, attendance at community engagement events, feedback from community partners and other stakeholders.*

Strategy 1: Encourage involvement of local businesses and non-profits.

Tactics:

- Build public-private relationships to benefit the Bastrop area.

Strategy 2: Collaborate with community partners.

Tactics:

- Create joint event with community partners.
- Attend community partner events.
- Cross promote events among community partners.
- Invite partner organizations to present at Chamber board meetings to allow partners to provide updates on their initiatives.

Objective C: Leadership pipeline for the Bastrop area.

***Success Metrics:** Number enrolled in BEST Leadership Program, engagement of BEST Leadership alumni in community initiatives, feedback from program participants and community partners.*

Strategy 1: Facilitate opportunities leadership development.

Tactics:

- BEST Leadership Program Service Project.
- Re-launch the Bastrop Young Professionals group.

Strategy 2: Be a catalyst to influence leadership in action.

Tactics:

- BEST Leadership Alumni projects.
- Coordinate two service projects yearly by the Bastrop Young Professionals.

PRIORITY AREA: ALIGN RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Enhance the credibility and financial stability of the Chamber.

***Barriers:** Lack of awareness of the Chamber's roles and its impact on Bastrop and the County, lack of enough resources to implement longer-term initiatives from the strategic plan, need for a larger pool of leadership talent for Chamber committees.*

Objective A: Organizational excellence.

***Success Metrics:** Member and community partner feedback, monthly and annual net financial results, board and volunteer engagement, staff satisfaction and longevity.*

Strategy 1: Increase operational efficiencies.

Tactics:

- Identify opportunities to do more through technology.
- Research new technology programs and tools.
- Continue offering professional development opportunities for Chamber staff (i.e., IOM, ACCE, TCCE, CCCE events and BEST Leadership Program).
- Continue to provide internship opportunities at the Chamber.

Strategy 2: Be an agile organization.

Tactics:

- Annual review of programs and outcomes and decide which ones to sunset the next year.
- Identify opportunities for innovative programming.
- Review and refine disaster-planning strategies.

Strategy 3: Leverage the diversity and strengths of Bastrop area leaders.

Tactics:

- Recruit for diversity representation from both businesses and the community.
- Use the BEST Leadership, ambassadors and committees as a talent recruiting pool.

Objective B: Streams of sustainable revenue

Success Metrics: Revenue line items, monthly and annual net financial results, amount of reserves.

Strategy 1: Leverage a 501(c)3 foundation for grant and initiative opportunities.

Tactics:

- Set up Chamber foundation and identify its purpose.
- Apply for corporate, government and foundation grants.
- Create fundraising campaigns for cause initiatives.

Strategy 2: Continue being financial stewards of member investments.

Tactics:

- Board review of annual budget and monthly financial outcomes.
- Six months of reserves as an asset.
- Financial audit conducted every 3-years and reviews on off years.

Objective C: Strong Chamber brand.

Success Metrics: Accreditation rating, member and community feedback, media recognition, board and staff feedback, operational impact from implementing industry best practices, completion of checklist items.

Strategy 1: Recognized as Best-in-Class in the industry.

Tactics:

- Explore, benchmark, and implement best practices in the industry.
- Achieve U.S. Chamber accreditation.
- Submit applications for Best Place to Work in Bastrop County and other local awards.
- Submit applications for best practices for TCCE, ACCE and other industry events.
- Highlight the Chamber's achievements.

Strategy 2: Share the Chamber story.

Tactics:

- Social media campaigns about the Chamber, how it serves and highlight outcomes.
- Post the Chamber's strategic plan on the website and increase awareness about the plan.
- Provide quarterly infographic on Chamber achievements.

Summary

For the 2021 – 2023 strategic plan to be successful, engagement and involvement from a broad base of community leaders is required. The Bastrop Chamber of Commerce will provide staff support and overall management of this plan, but execution of these priority goals and the opportunity to succeed relies on volunteer leaders who directly work to enhance the level of engagement among our members.

This plan is distinguished by its aggressiveness, transparency and commitment to evaluating progress by established benchmarks. Achieving its goals will require strong leadership, dedication, commitment and broad collaboration. We will know which goals we are achieving and those that need more attention, but your support is critical to making it happen. We look forward to you joining our efforts to keep **Bastrop County the BEST place to live, learn, work, and play in Central Texas.**

Chamber Board of Directors

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