GRIMES COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN

A Strategic Plan Informed and Designed by the Citizens of Grimes County, Texas

Prepared for the Grimes County Commissioner's Court

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And the Grimes County Strategic Planning Steering Committee

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1. BACKGROUND

In May of 2015, the Center for Rural Studies was initially contacted to explore the idea of working with the Grimes County Commissioner's Court to write a strategic plan for the county.   The intention of the plan was to create a document that could serve as a guide that the Commissioners could use to prioritize and inform the actions of the Commissioner's Court over the next five years.   In order to be effective, the plan had to demonstrate a thorough understanding of issues facing the county.   More importantly, it required the voice of the county's citizens to help identify what the priorities should be.

We at the Center for Rural Studies were delighted to hear of the Commissioners' plans, as we believe that good planning can be an effective way to organize strategic thinking.   Writing a good plan is a way of setting forth the ideas and priorities of the citizens, putting them on paper for everyone to be able to read, discuss, deliberate, agree or disagree with, and then working together to find solutions.   At least, this is what an effective plan is "supposed to do."   In our experience, too many strategic plans are dead documents: A great deal of time, money, and effort goes into their writing, and then they quickly fade from memory, or end up on a dusty bookshelf somewhere until it is time to write another plan.   The strategic plans of communities across America are filled with imaginative, innovative ambitions – and sadly, many of these ambitions will never be rediscovered until the next time the plan is opened.

We believe that one of the main reasons good plans end up on the shelf is that they are too often written by consultants and practitioners, and not the citizens themselves.   Consultants and practitioners certainly have good ideas and outstanding expertise in most cases – we would be putting ourselves down if we said otherwise!   The problem is that, too often, consultants write plans *for* communities based in *their* understanding of *best practices.*   We

find this to be problematic. We may be rural community development experts, but how much do we really know about Grimes County? More than citizens of Grimes County? In a perfect world, we would want to create a plan that captures 1) the will of Grimes County citizens based on their expertise of their own county, and 2) our expertise about what works in rural and urban fringe communities based in our research and outreach activities – **in that order.** To create a plan that has a hope of being a living document, acceptable to both citizens and the government alike, with a hope of getting its action items accomplished, **the voice of Grimes County residents must come first.**

We were truly happy when we discovered that the Grimes County Commissioner's Court, and the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, felt the same way we do about getting citizen input. These local leaders not only wanted to create a great plan, but understood that a great plan meant getting citizens involved from the very beginning. Of course, in the real world, it is impossible to get everyone's feedback, or even the feedback of a majority of citizens – the amount of information would be overwhelming even to the most sophisticated social scientists. Also, people are very busy, and showing up to public meetings and filling out forms and surveys takes a lot of time that very few people have these days.

A new and innovative approach was needed to maximize citizen participation without being too taxing on everyone's time, or overwhelming the research team with redundant information – since many Grimes County residents do agree on the central issues facing the county. Over the summer of 2015, the Grimes County Commissioner's Court, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, and the Center for Rural Studies worked together to develop a groundbreaking way of gaining as much citizen input as possible given limited time, resources, and a large and diverse county.

Our collective idea was to create a plan comprised of **as close to 100% citizen feedback as possible.** In other words, the Center for Rural Studies would serve to gather data from citizens, compile and organize that data, determine its feasibility, and present it in a very clear strategic planning document. Our goal was to put as much citizen input into the plan as possible, and as little of ourselves into the plan as possible. Rather, our role was to serve as facilitators of information, and use our expertise in holding public meetings and strategic innovation sessions to open up communication channels. We used our experience as community researchers to accurately collect, refine, organize, and present citizen data. We also conducted research to find out more about the kinds of initiative citizens would like to see in Grimes County. Beyond that, the rest of the plan consists of citizen-oriented data. And, if citizens mentioned something at a public meeting, we tried our best to make sure it was represented in the plan.

On the following pages, it is our pleasure to present your county's plan to you. It was our goal to make the plan simple, clean, brief, and to the point. We not only focus on the issues, but on steps that can be taken to get to action quickly. We not only relied upon citizen input to understand the issues, but also to understand which courses of action make the most sense for addressing each issue. It was also our goal to produce a plan that was rich with data, but could be read easily in under an hour. Rather than presenting pages and pages of dry data and marginally useful information, we are sticking to the essentials, basics, and information necessary to taking action.

It has been an honor to prepare this document for you, and we sincerely hope that you enjoy reading it, learning about what's happening in Grimes County, and most of all: Getting involved with your neighbors to help this plan become a reality. If you were part of our public processes, we thank you for your input and commitment to making a great plan. There is no one right

way to get there, but together, everyone doing what they do best, with citizens and county government working together, can lead to the accomplishment of extraordinary things.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology section describes the steps that were taken to gather information from citizens across Grimes County for the purposes of strategic planning. Each step in the strategic planning process is explained, along with a rationale explaining why each step was completed. The overall process uses a methodology for community-based planning by Theodori[1] as a base, with substantive modifications made through the customized process co-designed by the Commissioner's Court, Strategic Planning Steering Committee, and the Center for Rural Studies.

2.1. Town Hall Meetings

Before we can begin writing a plan, it is critical to know more about the issues that affect Grimes County residents and businesses the most. To do this, our goal was to cast a wide net across the county. In our research, we have come to understand that innovation occurs at the nexus of diversity[2]. This means that, when people come together that think *differently,* the potential of coming up with a better idea improves dramatically. However, so does the potential for conflict. So, we strove to bring a diverse group of people together in an environment where it was safe to share different points

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[1] Theodori, G.L. (2009). *Preparing for the future: A guide to community-based planning.* Huntsville, TX: Sam Houston State University Center for Rural Studies. Available at: http://www.shsu.edu/centers/rural-studies/Outreach.html

[2] Johansson, F. (2004). *The Medici effect: Breakthrough insights at the intersection of ideas, concepts, and cultures.* Boston: Harvard Business Press.

of view. Borrowing from old American tradition, we chose a Town Hall Meeting setting.

2.1.1. Selecting Sites. To bring the process as close to the people as possible, five town hall meetings were scheduled in the months of October 2015, so that individuals from across the county would have an opportunity to have their voices be part of the plan. The five locations were:

October 8: Anderson, TX (public)

October 15: Plantersville, TX

October 20: Bedias, TX

October 22: Navasota, TX

October 29: Anderson, TX (county government)

The first four meetings were intended for all citizens, including residents of Grimes County, and anyone who works, owns a business, or owns property within the county.   The final meeting in Anderson, TX was specifically for county government personnel, since the county government will take a leading role in enacting the plan.

2.1.2. Recruitment.   The Center for Rural Studies reached an agreement with the Grimes County Commissioners and the Strategic Planning Steering Committee that these entities would promote the town hall meetings publicly. As a result, invitations were sent out across the county, and media outlets including the *Navasota Examiner* and local television.   Efforts were made to recruit participants from a wide range of backgrounds across the county.   The Center for Rural Studies suggested that representatives from the following groups be contacted and invited, along with the public appeal to attend:

- Youth/Students
- The Elderly
- The Faith-Based Community (churches)
- Local Government/Public Works
- School District Representatives
- Major Community Groups
- Key Minority Populations/Organizations (African-American, Hispanic)
- Small Business
- Larger Industry

2.1.3.   *Town Hall Process.*   The town hall meetings featured a brief introduction by the Center for Rural Studies facilitators, who introduced their approach to community planning – quite similar to the text you are now reading. Participants were mixed into groups of 8-10 individuals who did not know each other well, and asked to discuss the issues that the county should address over the next five years. The point of this exercise was to be exposed to different points of view, and to be exposed to new ideas on new topics from neighbors. Upon completing the exercise, individuals would write their issues – and any of their neighbors' issues that mattered to them – on a series of 4x6 notecards. These issues were passed in to the facilitators. Some issues were read aloud to give the group a sense of the types of issues being raised by citizens, and to note how common several of the issues are to many citizens. Facilitators ensured participants that all data on the notecards would be considered in the final plan, provided that the issues were relevant to the county.

2.1.4.   *Scope of issues.*   Participants were encouraged to think broadly and creatively about the issues that could be addressed in the county. However, participants were informed that the planning process was limited in scope to those things under the purview of the Grimes County Commissioner's Court: County services (including both new and existing services), and issues of county government and governance. Since issues beyond the scope of the county are unlikely to be resolved without a broader coalition, they cannot be included in the county plan – only those things that the county and its citizens control directly.

Several participants and government officials notified us of a few contentious issues occurring in the area related to infrastructure development, namely the proposed construction of a high-speed rail line, high-tension power lines, and the proposed Highway 249 corridor in Grimes County. Since all planning efforts must focus on those things that the county controls directly, it was

mentioned in every town hall meeting that these state-level issues were not valid for discussion, unless they related to a county-level activity (i.e., creating a local advisory group related to infrastructure issues). It was suggested that all state-level issues be brought to directly to the appropriate state agency. Additionally, issues would arise dealing with economic development at the county level. The Grimes County Commissioner's Court created a special commission to write an economic development plan. Any economic development issues that arose from this series of meetings were referred to the economic development planning board. A special section will appear at the end of this plan discussing the relationship between strategic planning for county services, and broader economic development efforts in the county.

2.1.5. Selecting Delegates. With so many participants across five locations within Grimes County's town hall meetings, it is hard to get absolutely everyone to come back for the next part of the planning process. It is harder still to combine input across that many individuals over the entire course of the process. To maximize input from citizens, but make the process more efficient for citizens (not having to attend many meetings) and the facilitators (obtaining better quality, more accurate data), we instituted a *delegate's process* of voting. To do this, we strove to create a *voluntary, direct democracy* system. Members of each group at the town hall meetings would nominate members of their group, or anyone else at the event, to become *delegates* at future planning meetings. Self-nominations were welcome, as long as the nominee lived or worked in Grimes County. Participants in the town hall meetings were directly challenged by facilitators to conscientiously nominate a *diverse* group of delegates, representing different populations across the community: Diverse age groups, racial groups, members of different religions, employees in different sectors, and individuals with a variety of interests were encouraged to be nominated. We encouraged volunteer nomination because we wanted to ensure that nominees were enthusiastic and committed to the process, and felt a deep sense of

responsibility to attend future meetings. However, all delegates were charged with an important task: They must not only represent their own views, but serve as a true representative of the other views and ideas that they heard in their town hall discussions. Being a delegate is less about representing one's self, and more about representing the total group.

A total of 54 delegates were nominated across all five meetings to represent the broader community in the planning process. Nominee's names were recorded, and their contact information was taken. Delegates were told they would be expected to attend as many of the future planning meetings as possible.

2.1.6. Data Analysis. At this stage, all notecards from all five town hall meetings were collected. Using a qualitative data reduction and coding strategy[3], redundant information (repeated suggestions) and ideas that closely resemble each other were combined into clear issues for consideration. These issues were then combined into general headings. So, as an example, two citizens might have written, "We need better EMS service," and "Not enough ambulances in the county." This would be combined into "Improved EMS/Ambulance service," and might make its way into a category called "Healthcare." Issues were then compiled and brought to the first Delegate's meeting for voting.

List of Categories:
  1) Citizen Communication
  2) County Identity
  3) Internet/Broadband
  4) Security/Law Enforcement

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[3] For a full discussion of qualitative data analysis, see: Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

5) Animal Related Issues

6) County Technology

7) Transit

8) Transportation Management

9) Recreation

10) Natural Resource Development/Land Use

11) Economic Development

12) Critical Infrastructure

13) History/Heritage

14) Ordinances/Local Planning

15) Job Training/Education

16) School District

17) Taxation

18) Social Services

19) Health and Medical

20) Emergency Services

21) County Facilities

22) County Employment Issues

2.2. Prioritizing Issues

2.2.1. Issues meetings. The first two meetings of the delegates occurred on November 18 and December 8, 2015 in the American Legion Hall in Anderson, TX. Anderson was chosen as a central location in which delegates from across the county could easily convene.

The issues meetings used a virtual polling technology called TurningPoint. Each delegate was presented with a "clicker," or a small voting device that looks like a pocket calculator. This technology enabled delegates to vote upon the level of priority that should be given to each issue identified in the

town hall meetings, and compiled by the facilitators. Delegates were able to see the results of the voting instantly.

2.2.2. Process. To make deliberation more productive, facilitators grouped issues into general categories, and listed the specific issues that would be voted upon under each category. These issues were presented to delegates prior to voting. The group of delegates had 5 minutes set aside for deliberation of each category. Since the issues already arose out of the town hall meeting process, it was already determined that each was considered "important" by a member of the community. Deliberation was therefore not permitted to be advocacy for or against an issue. It was restricted to discussion of important information that may affect whether or not something can be in the plan (i.e., issues that the county does not control), or information that may clarify the issue further (i.e., understanding what actions have been taken, legal complications, or more specific definition of the issue). Individuals who wished to speak during the deliberation were required to limit their contributions to 30 seconds.

After the deliberations were completed, delegates used clicker technology to vote, in succession, on each issue raised within each category. Data were immediately available to the audience of delegates on the projector screen.

2.2.3. Data Analysis. Following the issues meetings, low priority scores were subtracted from high priority scores (with medium priority being treated as a neutral category). This created a final percentage that could be ranked, from high consensus that the issue is a high priority issue, to high consensus that the issue is a low priority issue. This list of prioritized issues can be found below:

ISSUE	HIGH PRIORITY(%)	MEDIUM PRIORITY(%)	LOW PRIORITY(%)	X Priority
Improved 2-Way Radios for EMS	80%	20%	0%	80%
Better Internet Speed	88%	3%	9%	79%
Internet Reach/Service to All of County	85%	9%	6%	79%
County Website Updates	75%	25%	0%	75%
Enforce Burn Ban	74%	21%	6%	68%
County Animal Shelter	71%	21%	9%	62%
Digitize County Records	73%	15%	12%	61%
Promotion of County Wide Events	62%	32%	6%	56%
Enforcement of Weights and Loads on County Roads	65%	24%	12%	53%
Reactivate 391 Commission	67%	12%	20%	47%
Construction of New County Facilities	59%	28%	14%	45%
More EMS	59%	28%	14%	45%
Retrieve Tax Dollars from Oil Drilling for Roads	67%	10%	23%	44%
Lower Property Taxes for those Over 65	59%	26%	15%	44%
Merit-based Pay System	53%	37%	10%	43%
Establish Priority System for Road Repair/Paving	60%	23%	17%	43%
Better Connection between High Schools and Technical Schools	59%	24%	18%	41%
Build Stronger Communication Across All County Services	53%	32%	15%	38%
County Wide Directory of Resources	50%	37%	13%	37%
Subdivision Codes/Zoning and Enforcement of Codes Regarding Development	65%	6%	29%	36%
Hire a County Animal Control Officer	59%	18%	24%	35%
Better Compensation for Retaining Top Employees	40%	50%	10%	30%
Better Online Security for County Offices	50%	29%	21%	29%
4-Way Traffic Light 90 and 1696	44%	32%	24%	20%
Pave New Roads	41%	38%	21%	20%
Code Enforcement of Garbage Dumping	31%	56%	12%	19%
Employment/Job Placement Programs	47%	24%	29%	18%
Health Inspection of Food Services	41%	35%	24%	17%
Keep Parks and Green Space a Priority in Development Plans	35%	47%	18%	17%
Better Supervision/Better Quality Road Crews	37%	43%	20%	17%
Provide Better Software to County Empoyees	29%	56%	15%	14%
Branding of Anderson as County Seat	36%	39%	24%	12%
Provide Transit for the Elderly and Disabled	38%	35%	26%	12%
Create Rural Emergency Department	44%	21%	35%	9%
Senior Center with Adult Care Programs	38%	32%	29%	9%
Building Fire Code Enfrocement	30%	47%	23%	7%
Major Improvements of Existing County Facilities	30%	43%	27%	3%
Improve Mental Health Services	32%	35%	32%	0%
Widen 1774 from Todd Mission to Plantersville	30%	30%	39%	-9%
Branding of County with Slogan	24%	41%	35%	-11%
Increase County Employee Training and Staff Development Offerings	18%	50%	32%	-14%
Citizen Trade School for Professions	12%	59%	29%	-17%
Farmer's Market	21%	41%	38%	-17%
Better Online Security in General	29%	24%	47%	-18%
Hire a Grant Writer	27%	27%	47%	-20%
Community Homeless/Transition Living Shelter	24%	32%	44%	-20%
Increase Wild Hog Management Efforts	26%	26%	47%	-21%
Review County Waterways for Recreational Use	18%	41%	41%	-23%
Lower Speed Limits on 90 and 1696	15%	47%	38%	-23%
Cut Limbs on County Roads	25%	25%	50%	-25%
Decentralized Medical Clinics/Ensure Medical Care Across Whole County	18%	38%	44%	-26%
Better Invovlement of Boys and Girls Club	12%	48%	39%	-27%
Emergency Operations Center	10%	53%	37%	-27%
Navasota River Park	15%	41%	44%	-29%
Centralized County Register	7%	55%	38%	-31%
Decentralize Some County Positions	21%	28%	52%	-31%
Recycling Center	20%	27%	53%	-33%
Work To Provide Better Healthcare Options to Poor Citizens	15%	35%	50%	-35%
Expand County Business Hours	13%	37%	50%	-37%
Consolidated Polling Places	13%	37%	50%	-37%
Secondary 911 Dispatch	17%	23%	60%	-43%
Park Programs for Youth and Seniors	12%	32%	56%	-44%
New Citizen Directory/Information Just for New Residence	3%	43%	53%	-50%
County Wide Information in Spanish	11%	25%	64%	-53%
Water Treatment Plant	3%	0%	57%	-54%
Move Asphalt Equipment into Area Instead of Dumping/Spreading	3%	38%	59%	-56%
Create Advisory Panel	13%	17%	70%	-57%
Hire a County Manager	10%	17%	73%	-63%

All issues with a positive priority score (more delegates who felt that it was a high priority issue than a low priority issue) can be found in green. These issues were retained for further voting in the strategies meetings. Issues in orange had a negative priority score (more delegates who felt that it was a low priority issue than a high priority issue). These will still be included in the plan, but treated in a special section dealing with "future issues." One item – Improving Mental Health Services – was neutral: a true medium priority issue. With a such a large number of issues that received a positive priority score, mental health services will be treated as a "future issue" in this round of the plan.

2.3. Determining Strategies and Timeframes

2.3.1. Strategy Meeting. The Grimes County strategy meeting was held on January 26, 2016 at the American Legion Hall in Anderson, TX. Similar to the issues meetings in format, the strategy meeting is intended to go beyond *what* the priorities are, but also to determine *what to do* about them. Delegates also voted on an appropriate time frame for each issue: short-term, medium-term, or long-term. In our experience, most strategies for addressing local issues fall into one of five of the following categories:

a) Taxes and fees: Can we get more money to pay for stuff?
b) Incentives (have to be paid for): What can we get other people to do?
c) Rules and regulations: What can we make other people do?
d) Choices and priorities: What can we do without, to get what we want most?
e) Teamwork and efficiencies: Can we get more if we share or work together?

Delegates only voted on items that were deemed to be "higher priority," or that had more "high priority" votes than "low priority" votes in the first two meetings. Our goal was to determine which general categories of action were

considered the most favorable, so we could tailor recommendations from each section to what the citizens felt was the most appropriate path(s) forward.

2.3.2. Process.   The process was the same as the issues meetings, except there was very little time allocated for deliberation, since this had been done at the issues meetings. Delegates were able to get right to voting, voting once for the amount of time they felt addressing the issue would take, and once for choosing the category of strategy that they felt was most appropriate. Unlike voting on issues or time frames, where only one answer was possible, delegates were able to vote for as many solution categories that they liked. For some issues, a combination of strategies may be the most effective.

2.3.3. Data Analysis.   Data analysis for this stage was similar to the data analysis following the issues meeting. First, it was our goal to determine the appropriate time frame for each issue, from those that could be handled immediately to those that would take a much longer time. Delegate votes for long-term issues were subtracted from delegate votes for short-term issues (with mid-term issues being treated as neutral). This created a final percentage that could be ranked, from high consensus that the issue is a short-term issue, to high consensus that the issue is a long-term issue. This list of timeframes can be found below:

ISSUE	SHORT-TERM(%)	MID-TERM(%)	LONG-TERM(%)	Y Timeframe
Improved 2-Way Radios for EMS	88%	10%	2%	86%
Better Internet Speed	50%	34%	16%	34%
Internet Reach/Service to All of County	55%	23%	21%	34%
County Website Updates	77%	19%	4%	73%
Enforce Burn Ban	86%	10%	4%	82%
County Animal Shelter	22%	60%	18%	4%
Digitize County Records	46%	36%	18%	28%
Promotion of County Wide Events	52%	28%	20%	32%
Enforcement of Weights and Loads on County Roads	69%	20%	10%	59%
Reactivate 391 Commission	82%	6%	12%	70%
Construction of New County Facilities	18%	27%	55%	-37%
More EMS	65%	21%	15%	50%
Retrieve Tax Dollars from Oil Drilling for Roads	64%	22%	14%	50%
Lower Property Taxes for those Over 65	71%	12%	17%	54%
Merit-based Pay System	56%	32%	8%	48%
Establish Priority System for Road Repair/Paving	64%	27%	9%	55%
Better Connection between High Schools and Technical Schools	43%	43%	14%	29%
Build Stronger Communication Across All County Services	86%	10%	5%	81%
County Wide Directory of Resources	67%	24%	9%	58%
Subdivision Codes/Zoning and Enforcement of Codes Regarding Development	53%	29%	18%	35%
Hire a County Animal Control Officer	44%	33%	22%	22%
Better Compensation for Retaining Top Employees	25%	55%	20%	5%
Better Online Security for County Offices	70%	18%	11%	59%
4-Way Traffic Light 90 and 1696	45%	30%	25%	20%
Pave New Roads	20%	50%	30%	-10%
Code Enforcement of Garbage Dumping	80%	12%	7%	73%
Employment/Job Placement Programs	19%	50%	31%	-12%
Health Inspection of Food Services	60%	31%	10%	50%
Keep Parks and Green Space a Priority in Development Plans	30%	38%	33%	-3%
Better Supervision/Better Quality Road Crews	73%	22%	5%	68%
Provide Better Software to County Empoyees	54%	36%	10%	44%
Branding of Anderson as County Seat	73%	10%	18%	55%
Provide Transit for the Elderly and Disabled	61%	32%	7%	54%
Create Rural Emergency Department	40%	43%	17%	23%
Senior Center with Adult Care Programs	29%	56%	15%	14%
Building Fire Code Enfrocement	69%	17%	14%	55%
Major Improvements of Existing County Facilities	31%	43%	26%	5%

It can be seen from the table above that most issues that were identified as "high priority" were also identified as "shorter term" issues. Only four issues were marked as being "longer term" issues: Keeping parks and green space a priority, paving new roads, creating employee/job placement programs, and building new county facilities. While it is likely that Grimes County can move forward with these longer-term issues over the next five years, it is the consensus of the delegates that these are important, ongoing issues that will likely take more than five years to accomplish. These four issues will be treated in a special section called "ongoing issues."

Not every issue requires the same approach, and this is clear from the responses of the delegates when selecting a mix of strategies for addressing each issue. Since delegates were able to select more than one category of

strategy, it is possible for more than one strategy option to rise to the top. This mix of strategies will frame our recommendations for addressing each issue later in the analysis. The mix of strategies selected for each option can be found below:

ISSUE	TAXES/FEES	INCENTIVES	RULES/REGS	CHOICE/PRIORITY	TEAMWORK/EFFICIENCY
Improved 2-Way Radios for EMS	25%	19%	8%	29%	20%
Better Internet Speed	9%	25%	15%	29%	22%
Internet Reach/Service to All of County	9%	37%	10%	23%	21%
County Website Updates	11%	21%	7%	24%	38%
Enforce Burn Ban	9%	5%	47%	8%	32%
County Animal Shelter	18%	17%	20%	24%	21%
Digitize County Records	12%	17%	13%	26%	32%
Promotion of County Wide Events	3%	16%	5%	24%	53%
Enforcement of Weights and Loads on County Roads	16%	13%	46%	6%	20%
Reactivate 391 Commission	1%	1%	7%	40%	51%
Construction of New County Facilities	24%	18%	5%	32%	21%
More EMS	19%	19%	9%	33%	19%
Retrieve Tax Dollars from Oil Drilling for Roads	15%	10%	51%	9%	14%
Lower Property Taxes for those Over 65	11%	11%	33%	30%	16%
Merit-based Pay System	8%	12%	25%	23%	31%
Establish Priority System for Road Repair/Paving	11%	16%	16%	29%	29%
Better Connection between High Schools and Technical Schools	0%	23%	3%	24%	50%
Build Stronger Communication Across All County Services	3%	8%	11%	22%	56%
County Wide Directory of Resources	5%	3%	6%	29%	56%
Subdivision Codes/Zoning and Enforcement of Codes Regarding Development	12%	12%	45%	14%	17%
Hire a County Animal Control Officer	23%	18%	15%	29%	15%
Better Compensation for Retaining Top Employees	16%	21%	8%	34%	21%
Better Online Security for County Offices	8%	16%	21%	32%	23%
4-Way Traffic Light 90 and 1696	10%	17%	18%	37%	18%
Pave New Roads	26%	14%	7%	41%	14%
Code Enforcement of Garbage Dumping	11%	18%	52%	7%	11%
Employment/Job Placement Programs	0%	21%	4%	21%	54%
Health Inspection of Food Services	15%	12%	52%	9%	12%
Keep Parks and Green Space a Priority in Development Plans	1%	13%	45%	14%	26%
Better Supervision/Better Quality Road Crews	6%	19%	23%	17%	34%
Provide Better Software to County Empoyees	12%	18%	4%	43%	24%
Branding of Anderson as County Seat	4%	9%	0%	32%	56%
Provide Transit for the Elderly and Disabled	15%	14%	7%	25%	38%
Create Rural Emergency Department	13%	26%	3%	29%	30%
Senior Center with Adult Care Programs	8%	23%	8%	25%	38%
Building Fire Code Enfrocement	13%	8%	48%	6%	25%
Major Improvements of Existing County Facilities	19%	18%	0%	42%	21%

We would like to point out that the delegates felt that many of the highest priority issues can be addressed without having to raise taxes or increase regulations – many are issues that can be addressed through stronger collaborations, teamwork, improvements in current operating efficiency, and reprioritizing current funding levels where possible.

2.4. Presenting the Plan for Public Feedback

Prior to the presentation for public feedback, the facilitation team met one last time with the Commissioner's Court for a "walk-through" of the plan. The

purpose of this meeting was to identify any action items identified by the delegates that may already be in progress, so they could be noted in the report. It was also important to scrutinize the plan one last time to ensure that all suggestions by the delegates fall under the purview of the county, and do not run afoul of any legal obligations the county may have to other entities, governmental or otherwise.

The final stage is to present the plan in a public setting, both to explain the outcomes of the plan to a public audience, but also to give citizens an opportunity to express their thoughts about the plan. This will include any final feedback, ideas, or anything critical the facilitators and delegates may have inadvertently skipped. After these changes are made, the final version of the plan will be presented to the Grimes County Commissioner's Court, and made publicly available.

3. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF GRIMES COUNTY

For the purposes of strategic planning built on a model of citizen feedback and interaction, the basis of this analysis for the base rates of population begins with the 1990 Census (US Department of the Census). While other growth patters as well as past census records would normally be reviewed in precise details, a project built on current citizen presented need, does not require this level of robust review, as the earliest census presented (1990) gives us the growth variant necessary to understand modern issues that face Texas rural counties.

3.1. Population Overview

According to the United States Department of The Census the 1990 total population of Grimes County Texas was 18,828, with a total adult (Over the

Age of 18) population at 13,889 or 73.8%, and a recognized senior citizen (Over the age of 65) population of 2,582 or 13.7%. Ten years later, the 2000 Census places the population of Grimes Count at 23,552 which is 4,724 or a 25.09% population increase in the ten year increment, however categories referring to adults, one over 18 an the other of senior citizen had growth rates of 3,286 or 18.54% and a 656 or 25.4% respectively. It must however be noted that the overall percent in the two adult population categories did not change that much in reference to the overall population with the over 18 category only showing an overall increase of 1.4% of the new total of 23,552 and the senior citizen category held constant at 13.7% of the stated 2000 Census total.

From the baseline population reported in 1990 (18,828) the largest population spike occurs between the 1990 and 2010 Census, in this 20 year span of modern population analysis the population of Grimes County Texas increased by 7776 citizens or a 41.30%. While a population spike over 20 years can be broken down into the 25.09% (4,724) from 1990 to 2000 and a 16.20 % (3,052) from 2000 to 2010. Once again, in the above age 18 adult categories we see numeric a numeric increase from 17,715 to 20,545 or 2830, which again, is a 15.9% increase in the category, but in reference to overall population growth, only represented a 2.02% increase from 75.2% to 77.2%. Further regarding the of adults over age 65, the increase from 2000 to 2010 is 434, which results to 13.40 in the category, but the actual growth of the senior citizen population in reference to all population expansion was .1%.

The last thing that has been analyzed is the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS) data, that according to the United States Bureau of the census at the publication for this plan, should only stand as populations estimates, and they are projections derived from pervious patterns of growth and sources other than the official census itself, which will not be measured again until 2020. However, from these estimations presented in the most recent ACS, we

can deduce that Grimes County Texas continues to grow from its baseline 1990 population of 18,828 to what was presented in 2014 at 27,172, which shows and overall growth in 24 years of 44.31% or 8,344 in total citizens growth over the period to time analyzed and recorded for the purposes of community planning. Again with an over 18 population increase from 2010 to 2014 of shows an increase of 649 persons or 3.1% increase, with only a .08% increase when looking at overall 2010 to 2014 estimated population growth. Interestingly enough however, the categorical adult measure of over age 65, had an interesting upturn in the four years (2010 to 2014) of 676 or an 18.40% exclusively in this category. However, when compared with overall population growth over this 4 year period, the percentage of senior citizens went up from 13.8% of the total population to 16.0% in just four years.

	Total		**Over 18**		**Age 65 and Over**
1990	18828	13889	73.8%	2582	13.7%
2000	23552	17715	75.2%	3238	13.7%
2010	26604	20545	77.2%	3672	13.8%
2014*	27172	21194	78.0%	4348	16.0%

A closer analysis of the increase in youth population is always necessary as an evaluation tool for measuring impacts on schools, social services, youth programming, and juvenile justice. The 1990 Census shows a base youth population of 4,939 or a total population percentage of 26.2%. In 2000 that increased by 898 youth or 18.2% from the 1990 base to a total of 5,837 youth. However after the initial 18.2% categorical increase, the youth population growth then becomes flat. The growth within the youth category alone from the 2000 to the 2010 Census, only showed an increase of 3.8% with a total population percentage decrease of 1.4% from 26.2% to 24.8%. Further analysis shows the trend continuing with a 2010 to 2014 decrease of 81 citizens or a .13% categorical decrease with an overall young citizens total population decrease of .8%.

Percent of Total Population

1990	4939	26.2%	
2000	5837	24.8%	Overall population decrease of 1.4%, Categorical increase of 18.2%
2010	6059	22.8%	Overall population decrease of 2.0%, Categorical increase of 3.8%
2014	5978	22.0%	Overall population decrease of .8%, Categorical decrease of .013%

3.2. Racial and Ethnic Growth Pattern Overview

While it does not have a major impact on this level of inquiry, it should be noted that The United States Department of the Census changed racial categories with the 2000 and thus allotted for survey respondents to identify more than one racial category. However, for the purposes of Grimes County Texas, we see the multi – racial variable begin in 2000 with 388 people of 1.6% of the population then increase to 576 or 2.2% of the population, with the American Community Survey projecting a 2014 estimate of 408 or 1.5 of the total in overall 2014 population predictions and thus, this category will not be reviewed again in this report.

As with the majority of The State of Texas and the United States as a whole, those of Hispanic Origin, regardless of racial identity show the most consistent growth pattern of this analysis. The 1990 Census begins with a base of those identifying as being of Hispanic Origin at 2657 or 14.4% of the total population of Grimes County. The categorical increase between the Census years of 1990 (2657) and 2000 was 1,121 persons or 42.19%, allotting for a total Hispanic population of 3,787. Much like what we saw in our original overall population growth research, if we overview Hispanic population growth in Grimes County from 1990 to 2010 of 2995 or a 100.13% categorical increase, and an overall population percentage increase of 6.8%, therefore the information perfectly solidifies that Hispanics do in fact represent the highest level of growth among racial and ethnic categories of Grimes county citizens.

While population growth among Hispanic citizens of Grimes County is reflective of the national trend of in constant expansion, the population changes in the African American community at the county level show an opposite, or almost flat population growth effect. From the 1990 base African American population at 4614 or 24.5% of the total county population, we see a numeric movement forward of 86 person in the 2000 census, but this figure accounts for a deduction in the overall population percentage of 4.5%, from 24.5% to 20.0%. In this population sub – category, based on racial makeup, the time between the 2000 and 2010 census saw the most critical population change for 4700 African American citizens to 4390 or a change of -310 citizens, this represents an overall population percentage change of 3.5%.

(To : graphic)

	White (all)	Black / African American	Native American[1]	Other[2]	Two +[3]
1990	12879 68.4%	4614 24.5%	52 .03%	1283 6.8%	NA

	Hispanic Origin[4]
	2657 14.4%

	White (all)	Black / African American	Native American	Other	Two +
2000	16909 71.8%	4700 20.0%	76 .03%	1479 6.3%	388
1.6%					

	Hispanic Origin
	3787 16.1%

	White (all)	Black / African American	Native American	Other	Two +
2010	19409 72.9%	4390 16.5%	139 .06%	2090 7.8%	576
2.2%					

	Hispanic Origin
	5652 21.2%

	White (all)	Black / African American	Native American	Other	Two +
2014*	21846 80.4%	4483 16.5%	244 .9%	2173 8.0%	408
1.5					

	Hispanic Origin
	6195 22.8%

The economic indicators that are listed below show various aspects of both personal and industrial fiscal comparatives. While Grimes County, in reference to state wide data regarding Median Household an per capita income shows an income gap it is however important to note that when reflected against the neighboring rural counties of Brazos, Madison, Walker, Waller and Washington there is no significant statistical difference as these counties are more apt to be a reflection of the personal income potential of the region.

*The Median Household income divides the income distribution into two equal groups, one group of households having incomes above the median, and other group having incomes below the median. While the Per Capita Income is reflective of the verge obtained by dividing aggregate income by total population of an area.

(To Graphic / Table)
State
52576

Per capita
26513

Brazos
39060
Per Capita 22243

Grimes
46652
Per Capita 20858

Madison
 40879
Per Capita 15222

Walker
38903
Per Capita 16571

Waller
 50939
Per Capita 22654

Washington
49236
Per Capita 23727

3.3. Income Information

Below is a detailed Grimes County Wide analysis of income by year with both Median (Explained above) as well as mean. As is clearly defined by the Census Bureau of the United States, mean household income is obtained by dividing total household income for the entire county by the total number of county households. Further, the table below (After 2009) also shows that mean family income (two or more blood related persons in the same residence) as well as mean married income, or the total of all married household units income divided by the total number of married households.

(To table)

2007	Median	Mean	Family	Married
	42729	50030		

2008	42327	54988	
2009	35987	52271	48199	67236
2010	41293	56407	49646	68700
2011	41726	57019	50920	70777
2012	44902	60440	51563	71651
2013	46127	61441	51900	72474
2014	46652	60589	52576	73913

Mean Family Income by Racial or Ethnic Group (2010 Census)
White Alone   63981   Mean Retirement Income 20591

Black / African American
Mean Family Income: 31081   Mean Retirement Income: 19717

Native American
Mean Family Income: 59433   Mean Retirement Income: 25210

Some Other Race
Mean Family Income: 58836   Mean Retirement Income: 5251

Two or More Races
Mean Family Income: 52704   Mean Retirement Income: 25210

Hispanic or Latino
Mean Family Income: 41324   Mean Retirement Income: 10475

	Grimes County	**State Of Texas**
	Unemployment Rate[5]	
2006	5.3%	4.9%
2007	4.6%	4.3%
2008	5.1%	4.8%
2009	8.6%	7.6%
2010	8.9%	8.1%
2011	7.8%	7.8%

2012	6.4%	6.7%
2013	5.9%	6.2%
2014[*]	4.8%	5.1%

Persons in Poverty... Grimes County 18.6%   State of Texas 17.2%
(2014 Estimate/ US Department of the Census)

The information below reflect some business information and practices by outlining types of business establishments in a tabled comparison of The United States, Grimes County Texas and the State of Texas. As is outlined, an establishment is a single physical location at which business is conducted or where services or industrial operations are performed. Paid employment (Mid-march employment) consists of full- and part-time employees. The Census further states that payroll includes all forms of compensation, such as salaries, wages, commissions, dismissal pay, bonuses, vacation allowances, sick-leave pay, and employee contributions to qualified pension plans paid during the year to all employees. For corporations, payroll includes amounts paid to officers and executives; for unincorporated businesses, it does not include profit or other compensation of proprietors or partners. The latter category of a non - employer business is one that has no paid employees, yet has annual business receipts of $1,000 or more ($1 or more in the construction industries), and is subject to federal United States income taxes. And lastly, the "All Firms" listing Includes all nonfarm businesses filing Internal Revenue Service tax forms as individual proprietorships, partnerships, or any type of corporation, and with receipts of $1,000 or more. The end categories of gender, minority and veteran status owned firms seek to highlight the economic health and wellbeing of firms owned by these defined groups. (The United States Bureau of the Census, 2016).

	State of Texas	United States	Grimes County
Total employer establishments, 2013	7,488,353	405	547,1901
Total employment, 2013	118,266,253	6,010	9,663,5671

Total annual payroll, 2013	5,621,697,325	249,820	468,417,086[1]
Total employment, percent change, 2012-2013	2.0%	-1.9%	3.3%
Total non-employer establishments, 2013	23,005,620	1,892	2,039,732
All firms, 2012	27,626,360	2,333	2,356,748
Men-owned firms, 2012	14,844,597	981	1,251,696
Women-owned firms, 2012	9,878,397	792	866,678
Minority-owned firms, 2012	7,952,386	487	1,070,392
Nonminority-owned firms, 2012	18,987,918	1,710	1,224,845
Veteran-owned firms, 2012	2,521,682	169	213,590
Nonveteran-owned firms, 2012	24,070,685	1,972	2,057,218

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census populations (www.census.gov [October 2015]).
1.   Native American Includes American Indian and Alaska Natives
2.   Other is defined as Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders and all others.
3.   Two or more races indicated a person is included in more than one race group; it was introduced as a new category in the 2000 Census.
4.   Hispanic population is not a race but rather a description of ethnic origin; Hispanics are included in the five racial groups.
5.   U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.
6.   Per capita personal income (dollars) - This measure of income is calculated as the total personal income of the residents of an area divided by the population of the area.
7.   ** All 2014 data and income projections for 2013 are based on population estimates that have yet to be confirmed.

4. PRIORITIES AND TIMING

Through the convocation of town hall meetings, deliberation by delegates who represent their fellow citizens, and the use of clicker voting technology,

the Grimes County delegates process produced the following list of issues to be addressed in the county over the next five years. Delegates voted on three separate sets of items:

a) The priority that should be given to each issue: high, medium, or low. High priority issues are those that deserve immediate attention from the county government, while low priority items can wait until later.

b) The timeframe in which the issue can be effectively solved: short-term, medium-term, or long-term. Short-term issues can generally be solved within a year. Medium-term issues can be solved in about 2-5 years. Long-term issues go beyond the scope of this plan, but are listed here to recognize that these are ongoing problems. Even short-term solutions may contribute to solving long-term issues, or parts of those issues.

c) The appropriate strategy that should be chosen to address the issue. This will be covered in the next section, when each issue is presented.

Data were collected from delegates across three meetings (two issues meetings and one strategy meeting). We have taken these data and produced a scatterplot to illustrate the priority and timing given to each issue. Issues can be divided into four quadrants:

1) Shorter-term, higher priority

2) Longer-term, higher priority

3) Shorter-term, lower priority

4) Longer-term, lower priority

However, here we are only focusing on Quadrants 1 and 2 – higher priority items, as these were the focus of the delegate strategy meetings. For the higher priority items, Quadrants 1 and 2 can be seen below:

Quadrant 2

Quadrant 1

Priorities and Timing
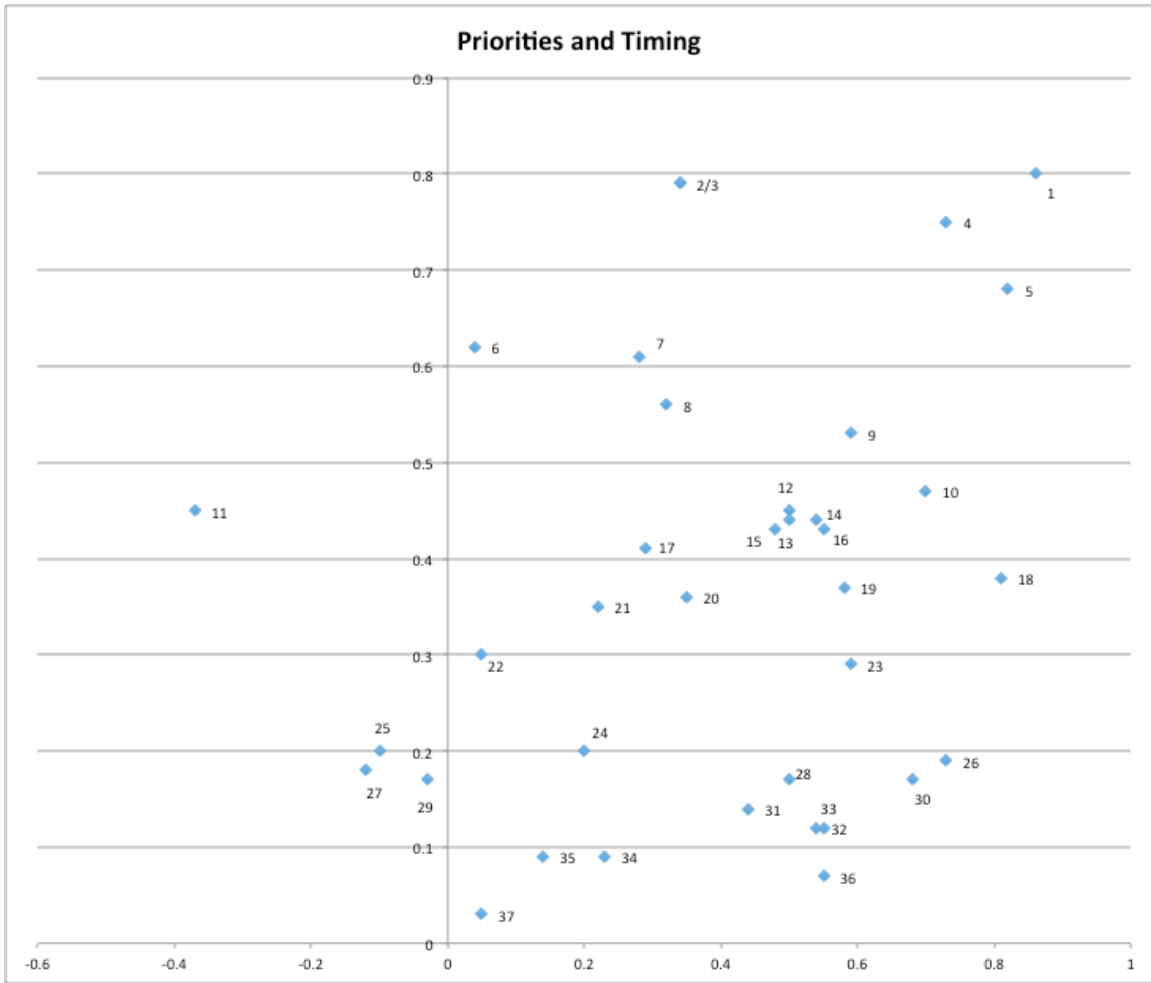
DATA POINT	ISSUE	DATA POINT	ISSUE
1	Improved 2-Way Radios for EMS	20	Subdivision Codes/Zoning and Enforcement of Codes Regarding Development
2	Better Internet Speed	21	Hire a County Animal Control Officer
3	Internet Reach/Service to All of County	22	Better Compensation for Retaining Top Employees
4	County Website Updates	23	Better Online Security for County Offices
5	Enforce Burn Ban	24	4-Way Traffic Light 90 and 1696
6	County Animal Shelter	25	Pave New Roads
7	Digitize County Records	26	Code Enforcement of Garbage Dumping
8	Promotion of County Wide Events	27	Employment/Job Placement Programs
9	Enforcement of Weights and Loads on County Roads	28	Health Inspection of Food Services
10	Reactivate 391 Commission	29	Keep Parks and Green Space a Priority in Development Plans
11	Construction of New County Facilities	30	Better Supervision/Better Quality Road Crews
12	More EMS	31	Provide Better Software to County Empoyees
13	Retrieve Tax Dollars from Oil Drilling for Roads	32	Branding of Anderson as County Seat
14	Lower Property Taxes for those Over 65	33	Provide Transit for the Elderly and Disabled
15	Merit-based Pay System	34	Create Rural Emergency Department
16	Establish Priority System for Road Repair/Paving	35	Senior Center with Adult Care Programs
17	Better Connection between High Schools and Technical Schools	36	Building Fire Code Enforcement
18	Build Stronger Communication Across All County Services	37	Major Improvements of Existing County Facilities
19	County Wide Directory of Resources		

The county should focus on Quadrant 1 first. This is what we like to call "low hanging fruit," or relatively simple issues that can be fixed quickly – but are very important to citizens. Solving these problems first means checking items

off the list quickly. We recommend against tackling problems that are too complex (longer-term) because efforts can quickly become bogged down due to the amount of time and resources necessary to solve the issue. The same is true for lower-priority items: Even if they are easy to fix, few citizens will be excited to fix an issue that most people do not see as a priority. Low priority items (not listed here) are unlikely to be addressed in the next 5 years, but may be important enough to keep in the plan if they were important enough for citizens to mention them in the first place. These issues may reappear in the *next* round of strategic planning in five years.

By focusing on shorter-term, higher priority issues first, the county is taking a strategy that ensures a few "quick victories" for the county. Getting as many quick victories as possible is what good strategic planning is all about!

5. A NOTE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In parallel with the county strategic plan, Grimes County has also convened an Economic Development Planning Committee, under the leadership of Sarah Korpita, Community Development Director for the City of Navasota. Economic Development is a broad category of activities aimed at ensuring the economic stability, growth, and viability of a community, county, or region. According to the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), economic development encompasses three major areas:

- Policies that government undertakes to meet broad economic objectives including inflation control, high employment, and sustainable growth.

- Policies and programs to provide services including building highways, managing parks, and providing medical access to the disadvantaged.

- Policies and programs explicitly directed at improving the business climate through specific efforts, business finance, marketing, neighborhood development, business retention and expansion, technology transfer, real estate development and others (IEDC, 2016; p. 3).

Additionally, economic development generally has three primary goals, all of which contribute to increases in local revenue and job growth:

- Promoting industrial recruitment and the relocation/expansion of businesses from outside the community or region.
- Promoting the retention and expansion of existing businesses within the community or region.
- Promoting the launch of new businesses within the community or region.

It is important to mention economic development in the county strategic plan, as many of the issues and recommendations in this plan directly and indirectly impact economic development efforts in Grimes County. Directly, participants in the town hall meeting mentioned issues like expanding the middle class job base and attracting new industry as important issues. These suggestions will be sent to the Economic Development Planning Committee for consideration. But, other issues affect economic development indirectly, including infrastructure improvements, new services, improved accessibility, and anything that improves local quality of life. All of these attributes make Grimes County more attractive to businesses and employees alike. Great places to live also make great places to work, and great places to launch, relocate, or expand a business.

[Insert logo] **EcoDev Note:** When you see this logo and header, we are taking a moment to describe how this particular issue will not only improve local life in the county, but can also contribute to the overall economic development of Grimes County.

6. PLANNING FOR THE ISSUES

Through the convocation of town hall meetings, deliberation by delegates who represent their fellow citizens, and the use of clicker voting technology, the Grimes County delegates process produced the following list of issues to be addressed in the county over the next five years. We begin by analyzing issues that were ranked as high priorities by the delegates, and also can be addressed in a shorter time frame (within the next five years).

1. Improved 2-Way Radios for EMS

Category

Emergency Services

What is it?

2-Way radios are critical for EMS and other emergency personnel to communicate with one another.

What is the current situation?

Currently, the 2-way radios used by emergency personnel are aging, and need to be replaced.

What is already happening?

Grimes County has already initiated a grant process, with some grants monies awarded for the purchase of new 2-way radio systems. A second round of funding is currently in the works.

Grimes County is also looking into getting rid of dual-band radios in favor of more modern equipment.

Current 2-Way Radio systems and dispatches can be viewed here:

https://www.radioreference.com/apps/db/?ctid=2615

What needs to happen?

New radios can be purchased from a number of suppliers. [Include current estimates]

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Choice and Priority (29%) and Taxes and Fees (25%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to improve 2-way radios for existing EMS in Grimes County.

Specific recommendations for future action

- Grimes County is already taking action to acquire grant funding for new emergency radio equipment.
- It is recommended that Grimes County periodically evaluate the functionality of these radios, and begin planning now for the purchase of new equipment for the next round.
- Radios are a small expense compared to other government expenses. A simple line-item or escrow account for the purchase of future emergency telecommunications equipment is recommended. This corresponds with the citizen recommendation for making emergency telecommunications equipment an ongoing priority.

- The County may also consider a very small EMS equipment fee on county services, as this strategy was also raised by citizens.

2. Better Internet Speed

Category

Internet/Broad band

What is it?

Insufficient internet access is a problem affecting many rural areas. Part of the problem not only has to do with poor access – but poor quality access even when internet options are available.

What is the current situation?

Our analysis shows that, in major parts of the county, internet speeds and quality lag well behind other parts of the United States, even when internet is available. While satellite and cable internet are common alternatives, these can be expensive for the consumer, and still not provide the same quality as fiber.

Comparison to different internet providers in:
1) Anderson   http://broadbandnow.com/Texas/Anderson
2) Navasota   http://broadbandnow.com/Texas/Navasota
3) Bedias   http://broadbandnow.com/Texas/Bedias

There is currently no comparison data available on Iola or Todd Mission.

What is already happening?

- Grimes County is currently working with U.S. Phone to improve both phone and fiber connectivity for county offices, which will lead to some centralized improvement (up to 100 Mbps) for county facilities.
- Brazos Valley Council of Governments is currently acquiring funds to install a fiber ring across the entire COG territory, including Grimes County. This will lead to substantial upgrades in service and speed across the region within 2-3 years. Broadband access will be available for residents and businesses under this plan.

What needs to happen?

In addition to current efforts, the best opportunity to improve broadband speed in the county is to work with current incumbent providers (often called "ILECs") to improve bandwidth in the county. A study may need to be completed demonstrating the county's broadband needs, and ensuring that upgrades would be profitable for the ILEC.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Choice/Priority (29%)
Incentives (25%)

Specific recommendations for future action

Grimes County, via BVCOG, should engage in regular communication about the proposed internet speed improvements for Grimes County, and with internet service providers to continue to emphasize a demonstrated need.

3. Better Internet Reach to All of County

Category

Internet/Broad band

What is it?

Similar to Issue #2 regarding better internet speed, many parts of Grimes County cannot currently access high-speed internet, instead having to rely on a variety of sub-standard internet options (or none at all). This is a common problem facing many rural communities, as mainstream broadband providers tend to provide conduit to high-population density areas with more customers.

What is the current situation?

Grimes County currently has 23 separate internet providers, but many parts of the county have few options other than DSL, cable, satellite, or mobile broadband. These types of broadband internet provide sub-standard internet speeds, at costs that may be relatively higher than fiber. Additional information on speed and cost of internet service can be found at the following link:

http://www.connectedtx.org/sites/default/files/connected-nation/Texas/ctx_planning_report_final_web.pdf

What is already happening?

See Issue 2, Better Internet Speed, for a complete description, as these two issues are closely related.

What needs to happen?

A similar strategy to improving broadband speed may need to be taken, involving a partnership between Grimes County, BVCOG, and internet service providers.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Incentives (37%) were the most popular strategy for improving internet speeds.

Specific recommendations for future action

While internet reach is related to internet speed (both would be improved by the installment of a new fiber line through the county), there are a few important differences.

- Given the rural nature of Grimes County, the County should initiate discussions with BVCOG to determine the routing of fiber rings. Fiber rings may benefit more populated areas of the county, but a "middle-mile" strategy will be needed to ensure that access reaches the rural Northern half of the county.
- The fiber provider can be formally contacted to describe the proposed coverage in the county, including middle-mile options for rural residents.
- Tax incentives and abatements could be considered for ILECs and fiber ring developers in Grimes County, ensuring that costs and barriers to get fiber out to rural areas remain minimal.

Economic Development ****

Salaries adequate to keep appropriate skilled employees.
Economic Development
Middle management jobs
Attraction of Industry

4. County Website Updates

Category

Communication

What is it?

The County's website can serve as a portal for county residents and businesses to connect with happenings around Grimes County. It can also serve as a "connector" across different county agencies and institutions, ensuring that there is a smoother flow of events and information across the county.

What is the current situation?

The county website is functioning, but would benefit from upgrades including a cleaner, simpler interface, and more connectivity across institutions and groups within the county.

What is already happening?

Grimes County is already aware of the website issue, and is looking forward to improving the site.

What needs to happen?

Overall, the website would benefit from a more modern, streamlined interface that is easy for anyone to access. The amount of information available on the website, including information from other groups and institutions within

Grimes County, could have better representation on the site. The site can serve as a way to coordinate events and activities across the county, and promote these activities and events. It can continue to improve its role as a central portal for all county business, and for providing citizens with important information.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Teamwork and Efficiency (38%) is the strategy most favored by citizens to make necessary Grimes County website updates.

Specific recommendations for future action

Updating the county website is a fairly simple task compared to others on the list, which may be why delegates ranked this item both a high and a short-term priority. As the citizens have recommended, most of this work can be done by making good connections across the county, and by employing existing resources. Grimes County should consider:

- Creating a small website or task force made up from county employees to address the redesign issue.
- Utilizing the task force to reach out to county groups and agencies including the school district, Chamber of Commerce, faith-based groups, major community organizations, and any other group that typically hosts events. These groups can create a coordinated, online community calendar with links to event pages and resources.
- Identifying which community resources and information are difficult to find on the website. The task force may reach out to citizens through a simple survey to determine the places that the website can be improved.

- Hiring a good web designer to redesign the current site, or use someone in-house with the appropriate skills. A good web designer can do a complete site redesign or update, typically at a competitive rate. The high value produced by the new, easy-to-navigate site and better access to information could be well worth the cost.

5. Enforce Burn Bans

Category

Ordinances/Local Planning

What is it?

Local municipalities have the authority to impose regulations on burn bans in their geographical areas. Burn bans are instated to ensure the safety of those within a community. The lack of burn ban enforcement could lead to issues of public health and/or environmental harm.

What is the current situation?

While burn bans in Grimes County do exist, it is perceived that they are not strictly enforced. Burn bans have been enacted various times in the past, but residents still notice burning occurring during declared burn bans.

Outdoor burn ban rules, regulations, and offenses are demonstrated here:

http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/assets/public/comm_exec/pubs/archive/rg422_lgg-1.pdf

<u>What is already happening?</u>

In 2015, a 90-day burn ban was issued throughout Grimes County due to lack of rain, high temperatures, and a significant threat for wildfires. Burn ban procedures were implemented, including placing signs around the county to announce that a burn ban had been put into effect. It was also announced that starting outdoor fires while the burn ban was in place would be considered a misdemeanor. There were multiple locations where signs were stolen, posing an imminent threat to public safety by removing the means of one avenue of informing citizens, potentially creating issues of miscommunication and legality.
More information on this implementation can be found here:

http://www.navasotaexaminer.com/news/article_f9e15ef2-3ba6-11e5-bca9-d7b92572b4bd.html

There is also a statement regarding burn ban status on the Grimes County website: http://www.co.grimes.tx.us/. While this statement is necessary as one way of informing the public, not everyone in Grimes County may have the means of accessing the internet to check the status.

<u>What needs to happen?</u>

Better communication of existing burn ban enforcement is needed to demonstrate the success of current efforts. A continued focus on enforcement and regulation of burn bans would ensure heightened safety of county citizens and protect against both environmental and public harm.

<u>What strategies are most favored by citizens?</u>

Rules and Regulations (47%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to enforce burn bans in Grimes County.

Specific recommendations for future action

Currently, Grimes County already reports and investigates all instances of burn ban violations. Over 60% of reported violations are issued tickets. However, many citizens of Grimes County continue to believe that burn bans are not enforced. To remedy this situation, Grimes County should consider:

- Posting burn bans clearly on the county website to improve awareness. It is possible that many violations are simply due to a lack of knowledge that the ban is in effect, and web announcements are one more delivery.
- A targeted "Check the Ticker" public service announcement, that encourages citizens to always check the website to see if burn bans are in effect before doing *any* burning. The intention of this initiative is to build habits of verifying the legality of all burning first, which may reduce the number of offending burns.
- Clearly communicating all violation enforcement statistics (names may be withheld) via the updated county website, to demonstrate the effectiveness of enforcement efforts to date.
- Continue to make the enforcement of burn bans a top priority for law enforcement.

6. County Animal Shelter

Category

Animal Related

What is it?

An animal shelter provides a facility for citizens to bring strayed animals for adoption and promotes the safety of un-claimed animals by giving them food and shelter until they are claimed. An animal shelter also fosters animal control by taking animals off of the streets.

What is the current situation?

Grimes County is currently lacking no-kill animal shelters and needs more animal shelters in general.

What is already happening?

Navasota has a small animal shelter that is only available to those within Navasota city limits. This excludes all other communities within Grimes County and services a minute portion of the entire county. The shelter in Navasota has become inadequate in serving the needs of the small area it operates in due to animal overcrowding and low adoption rates. A few articles detailing overcrowding at the Navasota shelter can be found here:

http://www.kbtx.com/home/headlines/Navasota-Animal-ShelterOvercrowded-Desperate-for-Pet-Adoptions-231198411.html

http://www.kagstv.com/News/KAGSNews/ID/6419/Navasota-Animal-Shelter-Tries-to-Reduce-Stray-Animal-Problem-in-Grimes-County

Two years ago, a petition was started for a county wide no-kill animal shelter in Grimes County. The shelter would be beneficial to the Grimes County

community because it would address the issue of animal overcrowding at the Navasota location, provide spay/neuter and vaccination assistance, and ease citizen frustration. A story on this petition can be found here:

https://www.change.org/p/city-of-navasota-and-grimes-county-texas-implement-a-county-wide-no-kill-animal-shelter#petition-letter

There is also an existing charitable, nonprofit organization called Animal Acres that helps animal rescue operations in Grimes County.

http://www.navasotaexaminer.com/news/article_cad10dc8-4efe-11e4-9967-63a7d30ba838.html

http://www.nonprofitfacts.com/TX/Animal-Acres-Of-Grimes-County.html

The next closest animal shelter is in Bryan, TX and follows the Aggieland Humane Society policy of euthanasia.

http://www.theeagle.com/news/local/couple-requests-change-to-aggieland-humane-society-s-euthanasia-policy/article_c68f4a84-39ed-11e4-8c8c-f3b59ba61187.html

Grimes County is already considering building an animal shelter in Anderson using property behind the Sheriff's Department. A young leader within Grimes County, [name of delegate], is coordinating this effort as a service project. As such, Grimes County is also seeking opportunities for USDA funding, and determining estimates for the construction cost. Some concern remains, as current estimate exceed $100,000. Efforts to determine if the

current shelter in Navasota could be expanded have been considered, but this may not be a viable option due to space and cost concerns.

What needs to happen?

A no-kill animal shelter in Grimes County would discourage the current euthanasia policy, provide more space to hold animals, and increase animal control by providing strayed animals a place to be cared for until claimed.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Choice and Priority (24%) and Teamwork and Efficiency (21%) are the strategies most favored by citizens for establishing a no-kill county animal shelter in Grimes County.

Specific recommendations for future action

The animal shelter initiative is already making use of teamwork, and is currently at the cost estimate and grant-seeking phase of the project. Grimes County should continue to support this multi-lateral initiative, and should also consider the cost of ongoing facilities maintenance beyond construction in its accounting.

7. Digitizing County Records

Category

County Technology

What is it?

County records are official documentations of birth, death, marriage and sometimes divorce records. Counties have the ability to dictate how such records are documented and stored. Records are typically kept in various forms such as paper files, images, indexes, microfilm, and books. See the following for more information:

https://www.peoplesmart.com/county-records

What is the current situation?

Many Grimes County records, especially historical records, are currently kept as physical copies and are not available to view online.

What is already happening?

May 15 & 26, 2015, discussions were held to take action to approve 5 year plan that enables Grimes County to digitize early records (1846 – 1967). Docket No. 09-9137 outlines approval of local e-filing rules for the District of Grimes County.

What needs to happen?

The digitization of Grimes County Records would ensure ease of access for county citizens, allow for more secure preservation of accumulated information, and enhance the overall quality of the organization and documentation process. This information could be organized through a web portal on the updated county website.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Teamwork and Efficiency (32%) are the strategies most favored by citizens on the issue of digitizing county records in Grimes County.

Specific recommendations for future action

Grimes County, with the assistance of Grimes County Clerk, David Pasket, may consider creating an internship or work-study program for high school and college students to digitize existing county records. This solution would not only save money on labor costs, but would provide opportunities for young people within the county government and utilize the talents of a generation with high digital literacy. This may not only create relationships between young pre-professionals and the county, but can provide exposure to the county's rich history.

8. Promotion of County Wide Events

Category

County Identity

What is it?

Promotion of county-wide events fosters citizen participation and support, as well as encourages widespread attendance, supports local commerce, and generates a heightened sense of community.

What is the current situation?

Many citizens in Grimes County are unaware of the numerous county-organized events that take place due to the lack of widespread promotion.

What is already happening?

Navasota has an online calendar that publicizes events happening within the city. The Navasota Grimes Chamber calendar can be found at the following link:

http://navasotagrimeschamber.com/calendar

Other events happening in Grimes County are usually either promoted through flyers or postings on a small scale or through word-of-mouth.

What needs to happen?

Grimes County event promotion would encourage heightened attendance and a substantial increase in citizen participation.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Teamwork and efficiency (53%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to address promotion of county wide events.

Specific recommendations for future action

A county-wide calendar of events modeled after the one utilized by Navasota could better promote events and encourage widespread participation throughout the county. This calendar could be an integral part of the updated Grimes County website. Grimes County should consider:

- Working with the Navasota Grimes Chamber as a basis for the community calendar, striving to incorporate events from groups and

organizations across the community. This will be more effective than starting from scratch.

- Ensure that the calendar contains clickable links to webpages and social media pages for the events themselves, so citizens can easily access them.
- Create an online "write-in" system for posting community events. An existing member of the county staff with website administration access should be made responsible for checking all incoming events and posting them accordingly.
- Examine other community calendars as a helpful guide, including Austin County http://www.sealyevents.com/, and Rosebud, TX http://www.townplanner.com/rosebud/tx/events.

9. Enforcement of Weights and Loads on County Roads

Category

Ordinances/Local Planning

What is it?

Every county is required by state law to have a set of regulations regarding weights and loads on county roads. Enforcement of such regulations ensures the prevention of harmful damage to roads and safety of travelling vehicles.

What is the current situation?

Grimes County is currently lacking in sufficient weight and load enforcement, leading to poor road and driving conditions.

What is already happening?

There is an existing set of weight and load restrictions (as well as penalties and offenses) that can be viewed here:

http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/TN/htm/TN.621.htm

https://www.txdps.state.tx.us/cve/wtlawtable.htm

There are also a set of permit restrictions in place for Grimes County that can be viewed here:

http://www.txdmv.gov/component/k2/item/1749-bryan-district-permit-restrictions

Timber companies that are active in and around Grimes County have already requested the construction of culverts to facilitate transport. Additionally, the county Road and Bridge Department is already making weight and load enforcement a priority by proactively bringing in companies to price road improvements.

What needs to happen?

More strict regulation of existing weight and load restrictions, heavy load highway improvements, along with installment of a new scale at a central location in the county, would ensure better road conditions and a safer driving environment in Grimes County.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Rules and Regulations (46%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to address the issue of better weight and load enforcement on Grimes County roads.

Specific recommendations for future action

It is challenging to enforce weight and load violations without a scale for enforcement purposes, although progress is already being made in improving roadways for heavy load vehicles. Grimes County should consider the following:

- Coordinate activities with DPS to share a scale at a strategic location within Grimes County.
- Continue making road improvements a priority.
- Dedicate some law enforcement to weight and load enforcement when these new improvements become available.

10. Reactivate 391 Commission

Category

Ordinances/Local Planning

What is it?

A 391 Commission is a sub-regional entity that allows a region to work together in order to congregate, discuss, make plans for, and find answers to address issues of concern within their communities. The 391 Commission is recognized by the state and requires certain government agencies to coordinate around specific issues and answer questions regarding the issues of concern. Such a commission allows communities and citizens there-in a

bigger voice on pertinent issues – such as issues regarding transportation, sewer and water, roads, and infrastructure – within their geographical jurisdiction. (Information on definition of 391 Commission found here:

https://indytexans.org/tag/391-commission/

What is the current situation?

Currently, Grimes County is lacking a 391 Commission as it was deactivated in the recent past following the death of Commissioner Finke.   After this unfortunate event, Judge Ben Leman asked all cities within Grimes County about their interest in participating.   The cities have reported not being interested in joining the 391 Commission.   However, there is considerable citizen support for reactivating the Commission, which gives regional governing bodies more control over local land use decisions.

There is also significant debate over the legality of a 391 Commission, and whether it would be recognized by the state as a valid governing entity as it is currently defined.   James Allison, esq., offered a legal opinion to the Gillespie County Commissioners challenging the idea that the Commission could be considered a legal entity with recognized decision-making power. Naturally, 391 Commissions have existed in the past, but it is still uncertain whether they would be an effective means of increasing citizen control over land use issues.

What is already happening?

Citizens are interested in and actively communicating the potential of reactivating a 391 Commission in Grimes County, and several have launched advisory groups supporting the creation of a Commission.

What needs to happen?

Put simply, the establishment of a 391 Commission is a contested issue. Questions still remain about the legality of such an organization, its effectiveness, and whether or not political will exists at the local level – which is necessary to form a 391 Commission in the first place.   Even if a Commission is created, in Mr. Allison's legal opinion, the Commission can coordinate activities with state agencies, but cannot supercede their decisions. The question remains, then, of what a 391 Commission can realistically accomplish.   These are all questions that must be answered and communicated widely across the county. It is also an opportunity to open a constructive discussion about citizen participation in land use planning issues.

It is required that two or more cities or counties, or the combination of both, be active in the 391 Commission organization. Two or more cities within Grimes County must come together to form such a group. There must be local elected officials participating in the formation of, as well as the continuation of, the 391 Commission as they would be the appointed delegates to ask questions of other state agencies regarding existing county issues. These elected officials would also assist participating Grimes County citizens in planning for addressing various county issues, growth, and future inquiries.   391 Commissions require legal oversight for activation, and this must be done formally through the Commissioners Court, and with respect to superior legislation at the state level.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Teamwork and Efficiency (51%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to address the issue of reactivating a 391 commission in Grimes County.

Specific recommendations for future action

The 391 Commission presents a challenging conflict between the will of citizens and the limits of the law. While it is beyond the scope of this plan to settle this discourse – something that should be done formally through the Commissioners Court and legal due process – it is clear that more information is needed to settle the feasibility of a 391 Commission for an interested public. Grimes County should strongly consider making the acquisition and public communication of such information a priority by:

- Requesting a formal legal opinion from the Governor's office or an appropriate state agency on the current powers and limits of 391 Commissions

- Communicating this opinion, Mr. Allison's opinion, and any other information pertaining to the legal powers and limits of 391 Commissions publicly

- Holding a public Q&A session with a government attorney about the powers and limits of a 391 Commission, open to the public and to municipal government officials

- Continuing to foster open discourse, and openness to arguments on multiple sides of land use issues

Additionally, citizens may want to express their views in ways other than a 391 Commission. Often times, simple political activism on any side of a local land use issue can be very influential if done in the spirit of democracy and raising awareness, especially by:

- Formalizing citizen advisory groups, and participating in civil discourse, public information campaigns, petitions, lobbying, and appealing directly to state-level lawmakers

- Distributing information and generating interest in land use issues via social media

- Maintaining a credible and civil tone in all outreach activities, and a spirit of openness to and inclusivity of groups with differing viewpoints
- Embracing opportunities to engage in public debate on issues pertaining to land use

11. Construction of New County Facilities

Category

County Facilities

What is it?

Grimes County facilities are outdated and unsuitable to work in due to lack of repairs and significant infrastructural issues.

What is the current situation?

Grimes County government buildings are currently in poor condition, leaving many employees with degrading health and increasing concern for the future. The dated facilities create unnecessary hardships and stunt the potential for improvement and growth.

What is already happening?

Grimes County is currently conducting a comprehensive maintenance assessment of all Anderson-based facilities. The county government is also preparing a Powerpoint video presentation with voice-over explaining all problems with the current facilities. This video will be posted to the website to inform the public about the need for improved facilities. Additionally, as a

result of the strategic planning process, a Commissioners Court meeting was held to discuss potential resolutions to the facilities problem.

What needs to happen?

Substantial county funds will need to be raised for the construction of new county facilities. While the renovation of current facilities was raised in this report, citizens of Grimes County felt it was a lower priority than building new, more effective facilities, while preserving historic architecture like the original courthouse.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Choice and Priority (32%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to address the need for construction of new county facilities in Grimes County.

Specific recommendations for future action

While choices and priorities may raise some funds for the new county facilities, a project of this magnitude will require substantive funding. Along with the traditional funding mechanisms available to counties, Grimes County should also consider seeking targeted grant funding for local facilities improvements, such as Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs). It is recommended that Grimes County utilize the updated county website as a means of sharing progress and plans for this initiative.

12. More EMS

Category

Emergency Services

What is it?

An Emergency Medical Service (EMS) is an integrated system of services providing medical care and transportation to patients with serious, imminent conditions. More EMS may be needed on an ongoing basis as Grimes County continues to grow, to meet the medical needs of citizen's county-wide. Additionally, the citizens have suggested the construction of a new EMS substation in the Northern portion of Grimes County to offer better service to rural areas.

What is the current situation?

There is a perception that an insufficient emergency medical care is available in the county.

What is already happening?

Recently, a third ambulance was added to the local EMS fleet, where before there were only two. This recent change substantially increases EMS capacity. There is also currently a health center in Navasota that provides emergency medical services such as 24 hour emergency care, fitness and wellness, imaging, inpatient care, laboratory services, occupational therapy, and physical therapy among others. Information of Navasota Health Center found here:

http://www.st-joseph.org/grimes.

What needs to happen?

EMS capacity has recently been improved in the county, but due to the high priority given to this issue by residents, Grimes County should continually reassess the need for EMS. This is especially true in parts of the county that are aging faster, such as the more rural Northern half of the county, as older populations have a greater need for emergency medical services. An EMS substation in the Northern portion of the county may solve some logistical issues by reducing response times in remote areas.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Choice and Priority (33%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to meet address the need for more EMS in Grimes County.

Specific recommendations for future action

Grimes County should periodically reevaluate their need for EMS about every five years. With rapid growth occurring in the county, and the number of older residents expected to increase, the county must stay ahead of these population trends. It is recommended that Grimes County conduct a brief study to evaluate current response times in the county to ensure they are reasonable, given the large size of the county. We also recommend a demographic evaluation of the county in five years time to identify whether EMS capacity should again be increased.

Additionally, Grimes County should consider the construction of an EMS substation elsewhere in the county, and request an estimate to determine how much this would cost. If the cost is reasonable, Grimes County should consider giving a higher priority to this facility.

13. Retrieve Tax Dollars from Oil Drilling for Roads

Category

Taxation

What is it?

Oil and gas development provides substantial revenues to the state and county government, but drilling activity also puts considerable strain on county roads through the transportation of heavy equipment. Special tax revenues can be used to augment the current roads and bridges budget to improve road maintenance in heavy drilling areas.

What is the current situation?

There has been a significant rise in the number of oil drilling rigs in rural areas throughout Texas, including in Grimes County. Such oil drilling rigs prove to generate substantial amounts of revenue for both the county and the state, allowing for a significant boom in the economy for counties with oil drilling sites. While the counties with oil drilling are benefiting monetarily, county roads are suffering. There is a rise in the number of vehicular accidents in counties with lots of oil drilling. Specifically, the death toll in counties with substantial amounts of drilling is up 18%. Money generated from oil drilling can be used to pay for infrastructure improvements, including repairing roads. (Information on the death toll and oil drilling was found here:

https://stateimpact.npr.org/texas/2014/05/13/trickle-down-counties-say-oil-money-for-roads-not-enough/

and

http://www.kbtx.com/home/headlines/Oil-Boom-Brings-Millions-to-Brazos-Valley-247418521.html

What is already happening?

Grimes County is located in the Eagle Ford Shale area of Texas where notable amounts of oil drilling takes place. Thus, Grimes County is prospering in the oil & gas sector of the economy and generating ample amounts of funds as a result of such drilling. Drilling-generated funds are typically allocated to various sectors of the county to be used for specific purposes.

Information of Grimes County and the Eagle Ford Shale found here:

http://eaglefordshale.com/counties/grimes-county-tx/

To address the issue directly, a county Roads and Bridges administrator is already proactively reaching out to all large industrial drilling companies in the area with upcoming projects, and negotiating terms up front for any road damages. The administrator is also pursuing any damages discovered where the county had no prior knowledge of damage, and seeking fair compensation for road and bridge repair.

What needs to happen?

A strong, ongoing focus on up-front negotiations of road and bridge compensation with heavy industry is a way to ensure that oil and gas drilling continue to occur, without affecting the county's investment in high-quality roads and bridges.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Rules and Regulations (51%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to address the issue of retrieving tax dollars from oil drilling for roads.

Specific recommendations for future action

With a Road and Bridge Department administrator already taking steps to seek compensation and negotiate fair remuneration for damages, Grimes County is already off to a great start on this issue. It is recommended that this issue remain a conscientious, strategic focus for the Road and Bridge Department over time.

14. Lower Property Taxes for those Over 65

Category

Taxation

What is it?

The citizens of Grimes County have requested lower taxes for residents over age 65.

What is the current situation?

All property taxes have already been frozen for citizens over 65 years of age, prohibiting any sudden or unexpected increases. Homestead exemptions also exist for elderly and disabled residents through the State of Texas. More information on this exemption can be found here:

http://comptroller.texas.gov/taxinfo/proptax/exemptions/age65older_disabled_faq.html

What needs to happen?

While not actually lowering property taxes, freezing tax rates for citizens over age 65 is an important first step to reducing this population's tax burden.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Rules and Regulations (33%) and Choice and Priority (30%) are the most favored strategies by citizens to address lowering property taxes for those over 65 in Grimes County.

Specific recommendations for future action

To truly lower property taxes for those over age 65, the county will need to find additional revenue from elsewhere. With increasing growth in the county, the county government may eventually consider diminishing property taxes for older residents – replacing these lost funds with increased revenues from residential and business development in the south of the county. However, the county should routinely monitor its demographic profile to remain aware of "population bulges." Large groups of individuals turning 65 at once could create a surprising loss of revenue, even if the current property tax freeze is maintained. Conversely, a population bulge of younger residents may also invigorate tax revenues.

Grimes County should also provide links to programs offering tax relief to older residents that may already be in place. One such example is the Texas homestead exemption listed above. In general, a resources section for older residents would help senior citizens navigate government programs designed for them. This idea can tie directly into the creation of a more comprehensive and accessible county directory of services, mentioned later in this report.

15. Merit-Based Pay System

<u>Category</u>

County Employment

<u>What is it?</u>

Merit-based pay is a type of payment system that is also known as pay-for-performance. It involves raising the pay of employees based on their performance as a worker. The criteria for raising pay is usually determined and assessed by the employer. The definition of Merit Pay can be found here:

http://www.dol.gov/general/topic/wages/meritpay.

<u>What is the current situation?</u>

Grimes County does not currently employ a merit-based pay scheme.

<u>What is already happening?</u>

Grimes County employees are familiar with and expressing an interest in being paid based on merit. Simultaneously, the Human Resources coordinator, Lucy Pope, is teamed up with a number of other individuals in the county to alter the existing pay structure in Grimes County in order to change the way pay increases and promotions happen. This process is in its very early stages and requires significantly more work and attention before it is ready to be implemented across the county. But, the process will lead to the creation of a comprehensive compensation structure, where floor and ceiling pay ranges are established for each position and guidelines are set forth establishing the

criteria for how their compensation can increase. Job descriptions have already been collected from each department, and Grimes County is now in the process of finding comparable job descriptions (with appropriate pay ranges) for each job type. The Commissioners Court expects to receive the findings of this analysis in April 2016, with a workshop to discuss the findings sometime in May 2016. Some recent information on Grimes County job structure found here:

http://www.navasotaexaminer.com/news/article_ab954d94-e092-11e5-a267-d7efbde56a8e.html

What needs to happen?

Current efforts to address this issue directly are already in progress.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Teamwork and Efficiency (31%) were the strategies most favored by citizens to address the issue of merit-based pay in Grimes County.

Specific recommendations for future action

There are ample advantages to the merit-based pay system including, but not limited to, motivating employees by providing rewards for individual performance, increasing the bottom line by encouraging confidence to meet and exceed company expectations, and retaining employees by providing security in that employees who are rewarded for hard work are more likely to stay. Some advantages of a merit-based pay system can be found in this article:

http://smallbusiness.chron.com/advantages-merit-pay-24332.html

Grimes County is already in the process of altering the job structure to move towards merit-based pay. Each county employee has been assessed and placed in categories based on current compensation. The focus on conducting market-based research is also critical for ensuring that county employees are paid competitively, which will attract and retain top governmental talent in the future. While a lower priority, keeping salaries competitive was another issue raised by the citizens of Grimes County, in order to attract and retain top employees.

16. Establish Priority System for Road Repair

Category

Critical Infrastructure

What is it?

Roads in Grimes County are in dire need of repair due to poor conditions. A priority repair system is critical to identify specific targets in road reparation.

What is the current situation?

Many roads in Grimes County are in need of repair and upgrades, and a great many more are still dirt roads. While it is not feasible to pave every road in the county in short order, there is a local perception that road repairs and upgrades are not being prioritized.

What is already happening?

More and more roads are paved in Grimes County every year, but given current budgets, only about 10 miles of roads can be paved (over 400 miles of unpaved roads still exist in the county). Additionally, these paved roads must be continually maintained. While some county citizens may not realize it, the county currently maintains a comprehensive list of road repairs and upgrades, prioritized by need. Grimes County has increased their Roads & Bridges budget for 2016 to help address the problem, while creating a drainage crew to address drainage issues on many county roads.

What needs to happen?

We believe that if citizens are made more aware of county road paving and repair priorities, that they will have a better sense of how their tax dollars are being put to work. Additionally, it will stimulate more constructive discussion about which roads should be prioritized, as citizens become aware of which roads are receiving attention.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Choice and Priority (29%) and Teamwork and Efficiency (29%) are the strategies most favored by citizens in establishing a priority system for road repair in Grimes County.

Specific recommendations for future action

The county website is an excellent way to make citizens aware of current road paving priorities, especially if these are enhanced by maps. It provides citizens with important knowledge of how their tax dollars are being spent, and brings them into the process of how road and bridge decisions are made.

Grimes County may also wish to optionally reevaluate its current prioritization system. One excellent resource for conducting cost-benefit analyses of repair priorities can be found below:

http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/repair-priorities-2014.pdf.

17. Better Connection between High School and Technical Schools

Category

Communication

What is it?

Technical schools provide a legitimate alternative to attending a formal university while still fostering pertinent skills needed in order to obtain a stable job. The communication between high schools and technical schools would lead to more opportunities for young people to acquire necessary skills as well as become stable and successful after high school.

What is the current situation?

Currently, there is not sufficient communication between high schools and technical schools.

What is already happening?

Brazos Valley Council of Governments (BVCOG) has already approved the acquisition of a building in College Station for vocational and technical training. This central facility can serve as a resource for local students to engage in a practical education.

Also, in Grimes County, the [group] group has created an externship program in 2015, where high school teachers work at a company in the summer for one week to learn about industry.

What needs to happen?

The creation of a pipeline of communication between local high schools, vocational/technical schools, county government, BVCOG, and local industry. This pipeline may even grow into a multi-institutional task force or interest group charged with improving the scope of educational opportunities within the county.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Teamwork and efficiency (50%) are the most favored strategies by citizens to address better communication between high schools and technical schools.

Specific recommendations for future action

Of the issues raised so far, this one has the greatest range of possibilities for future action. Grimes County has the opportunity to become a leader in providing relevant vocational and technical education that is directly targeted to the needs of local industry. Such efforts may also have the effect of retaining young talent within the county, as skills are tailored to the kinds of jobs already available locally. It is suggested that Grimes County:

- Convene local leaders from high schools, technical schools, the county government, BVCOG, and local industries (including small businesses) for a networking event.

- This networking event should be directed at broadening and deepening connections across local institutions.
- The networking event can stimulate the creation of a multi-institutional task force charged with developing new programs for student exchange.
- This task force may consider a variety of programs that give additional exposure to both local industry (small and large business), as well as vocational and technical educational schools.
- Topics can range from maker, craft, and computer/robotics fairs, to entrepreneurship competitions and creative brainstorming sessions for new ventures young professionals can launch with their new skills.

18. Build Stronger Communication across All County Services

Category

Communication

What is it?

Communication is essential for the prosperity of any community. It fosters positive relationships and healthy partnerships, as well as discouraging misunderstanding.

What is the current situation?

Currently, there is a perceived lack of communication among county services that leads to misunderstanding, redundant work, and general inefficiencies.

What is already happening?

The Commissioners Court has already begun holding managerial workshops for each county department that reports to it.   This will help avoid misunderstandings and lack of accountability.

What needs to happen?

Occasional county employee events, especially co-learning events (educational and instructional seminars) – as well as occasional social events where relationships can be built – are great ways of opening up conversation while keeping employees up-to-date on new ideas and techniques.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Teamwork and Efficiency (56%) are he strategies most favored by citizens to build stronger communication across all county services in Grimes County.

Specific recommendations for future action

Regular managerial workshops are a major step to improving communication across departments.   In addition to these workshops, Grimes County may eventually investigate activities that simultaneously build skills across departments, and that lead to more efficient brainstorming and ideation. This infusion of creativity can often lead to simple solutions that solve complex problems using teamwork. One suggestion for doing this might be reserving one afternoon each quarter (or even twice a year) for a cross-departmental partnership event, to evaluate ways that Grimes County could improve the procedures it has in place (beyond just sharing information about what is happening), and learning more about each others' roles and skills.   Such

events must produce actionable outcomes to be effective, and build direct accountability behind those outcomes.

19. County-wide Directory of Resources [EcoDev Logo]

Category

Social Services

What is it?

A directory of resources would provide the communities within Grimes County a means for locating certain programs, organizations, and otherwise within the county. A directory of resources typically includes regional services ranging from day care and rehabilitation programs to recreation and travel. Some even include job postings within the area.

What is the current situation?

Grimes County is currently lacking a comprehensive directory of resources.

What is already happening?

There has been widespread interest and support shown for a county directory of resources as it would provide the Grimes County community with easy access to a large pool of resourceful information.   Grimes County is already exploring ways to incorporate information about resources along with the Chamber of Commerce, as part of the Economic Development planning committee.

What needs to happen?

Communication across county services – as identified in the previous section – would allow for the identification of programs, organizations, jobs, etc. that could be added to a directory of resources for Grimes County.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Teamwork and Efficiency (56%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to address the issue of creating a county-wide directory of resources in Grimes County.

Specific recommendations for future action

A webpage for the Grimes County Directory of Resources on the county website should be created. Resources should be categorized and alphabetized to ensure easy navigation. Links and contact information should be provided for each resource added.

To provide some examples of good directories, the following list includes numerous directories of resources that provide exceptional examples for Grimes County, such as:

- Baltimore County Directory of Resources

  http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/aging/publications/resources.html

- Alameda County Directory of Resources

  https://www.acgov.org/government/acrd.htm

- Ventura County Directory of Resources

  http://www.ventura.org/dcss/community-resources

20. Subdivision Codes/Zoning and Enforcement of Codes Regarding Development

Category

Ordinances/Local Planning

What is it?

As Grimes County continues to grow rapidly, it will be increasingly important to manage county growth through the enforcement of codes relating to subdivisions. While zoning is a municipal activity, the county currently has codes ensuring that new subdivisions are constructed in a way that make it possible for the county to provide services, to provide for adequate green space, and to ensure proper spacing of homes and businesses.

What is the current situation?

With increased growth in the county, the need for subdivision codes to coordinate development is likely to increase sharply.

What is already happening?

The Commissioners Court has already held managerial workshops relating to subdivision code enforcement, in order to improve enforcement strategies.

The county currently has one employee who splits subdivision coordination with one other county job. At some point, Grimes County plans to split this into two positions, to ensure one full-time subdivision coordinator.

<u>What needs to happen?</u>

A full-time subdivision coordinator will allow for greater enforcement of subdivision codes.

<u>What strategies are most favored by citizens?</u>

Rules and Regulations (45%) were the strategies most favored by citizens in addressing the issue of subdivision codes, zoning, and enforcement of codes regarding development in Grimes County.

<u>Specific recommendations for future action</u>

- Subdivision Codes/Zoning and Enforcement of Codes Regarding Development
  - Grimes County
    - April 15, 2013. County suing landowner. http://www.navasotaexaminer.com/news/article_042db8d6-a380-11e2-80c5-0019bb2963f4.html
  - Navasota
    - Planning and Development. http://www.navasotatx.gov/p/getconnected/community-development-/249

21. Hire a County Animal Control Officer

Category

Animal Related

What is it?

A county animal control officer can coordinate the recapture of stray animals, enforce animal ordinances, and the elimination of invasive pests and species harmful to humans. This officer can also serve as the outreach arm of the proposed animal shelter.

What is the current situation?

There is currently no county-wide animal control officer in Grimes County.

What is already happening?

Navasota has a hired animal control officer that enforces animal control ordinances and cares for animals placed in the Navasota animal shelter. While this is beneficial to the City of Navasota, it excludes all other communities within Grimes County. A list of the current Navasota animal control officer duties and related information can be found here:

http://www.navasotatx.gov/p/getconnected/236

The lack of animal control in the county has also led to some debate over the issue. Two opinions can be found here:

http://www.navasotaexaminer.com/opinion/article_c4276e2a-7d94-11e5-8e4e-6f64b6997d09.html

http://www.navasotaexaminer.com/opinion/letters_to_editor/article_7bbe a5f6-8805-11e5-a8a0-9fd711dd67ed.html

What needs to happen?

A county wide animal control officer would benefit the entirety of Grimes County by ensuring enforcement of animal control ordinance such as rabies vaccination requirements, maximum number of animals per household, control of dangerous animals, and other related requirements.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Choice and Priority (29%) and Taxes and Fees (23%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to address the issue of hiring an animal control officer for Grimes County.

Specific recommendations for future action

Due to the high level of concern expressed by citizens around this issue, an animal control officer is a high priority for job creation within the county government structure. Some of the revenue necessary may come from the county's existing growth, but in this case, taxes and fees may be raised on specific, animal-related items within the county [i.e., hunting licenses? Fishing permits? Other animal licenses? Spaying and neutering within the county?]. Even a small fee, spread across many individuals, may make up the difference for this critical county position.

22. Better Compensation for Retaining Top Employees

Category

County Employment

What is it?

It is perceived that Grimes County employees are not earning competitive salaries compared to the general employment marketplace. This discrepancy leads to the potential for exceptional county workers to either seek better compensation for work elsewhere.

What is the current situation?

Some Grimes County employees may earn less than market value for their positions, and there is limited opportunity for merit-based increases.

What is already happening?

This category is closely related to Issue 15 dealing with merit-based pay increases. The same review of the overall county pay structure will also address where county employee salaries fall compared with average ranges in the employment marketplace.

What needs to happen?

A thorough review of county employment structures compared to market-based averages.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Choice and Priority (34%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to address the issue of better compensation for top employees.

Specific recommendations for future action

We recommend that Grimes County continue with the same set of recommendations set forth in Issue 15 dealing with merit-based pay.

23. Better Online Security for County Offices

Category

Internet/Broad band

What is it?

Online security is vital to ensuring privacy and protection for individuals while they are online.

What is the current situation?

Existing online security in Grimes County is providing inadequate privacy and protection for county employees, leaving them open to the potential for virus infection through means such as unprotected internet ports and scam emails, breach of firewall, and compromising of important data and files.

What is already happening?

There has been a rise in awareness of the need for better online security programs among county officials and a movement towards planning for

meeting such a need. Grimes County already contracts with CountyTechs for its IT needs, that already provide comprehensive security monitoring and tech support.

What needs to happen?

Online security programs are reasonably inexpensive, and can be purchased from a number of suppliers.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Choice and Priority (32%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to address the issue of better online security in Grimes County.

Specific recommendations for future action

Grimes County should work with CountyTechs to establish stronger security protocols that are well-communicated among county employees through trainings. It may also be beneficial for Grimes County to implement a series of online security trainings for county employees that discuss how to identify potential threats, what to do when threats are identified, and how to supplement online security programs by actively engaging in safe online behavior as mentioned above. One such online security training resource can be found here:

https://www.sans.org/online-security-training/

More in-depth recommendations for online security can be found here:

http://www.referenceforbusiness.com/small/Inc-Mail/Internet-Security.html

24. 4-Way Traffic Light 90 and 1696

Category

Critical Infrastructure

What is it?

The citizens have asked for a four-way traffic light at the intersection of highways 90 and 1696.

What is the current situation?

There is currently no traffic light, and traffic lights are a municipal issue.

What is already happening?

No progress has currently been made on this issue.

What needs to happen?

Grimes County should coordinate efforts with the Mayor of Bedias to prioritize this issue that was determined to be important across the county, as many county residents pass through this intersection.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Choice/Priority (37%) was the most favored strategy chosen by the citizens of Grimes County for addressing the traffic light issue.

Specific recommendations for future action

Grimes County should work directly with the City of Bedias to address this issue, as Bedias is responsible for maintaining this intersection.

25. Pave New Roads

Category

Critical Infrastructure

What is it?

Quality roads are critical to maintaining the safety of individuals who use them and ensuring efficient transportation. Grimes County contains over 400 miles of unpaved roads, that can create safety issues, including air quality issues from dust.

What is the current situation?

There are currently a substantial number of unpaved roads made of loose gravel/dirt. In some circumstances, there are no paved roads leading to essential destinations. Such conditions cause inefficiency, unnecessary time-consumption, and often a threat to safety.

What is already happening?

Grimes County already has a prioritization system for paving new roads in the county. About 10 miles of unpaved roads are paved each year.

What needs to happen?

Grimes County could do more to communicate to citizens how dirt roads are being prioritized for paving.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Choice and Priority (41%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to address the issue of paving new roads in Grimes County.

Specific recommendations for future action

The recommendations for paving new roads are the same as those found in Issue 16 for establishing a priority system for road repair.   Since such a priority system exists, it would be beneficial to citizens to see current road paving priorities featured on the county website, so residents and businesses can see their tax dollars at work.

26. Code Enforcement of Garbage Collection

Category

Ordinances/Local Planning

What is it?

What is the current situation?

While there are garbage collection codes in Grimes County, they are not strictly regulated or enforced.

What is already happening?

There are a number of garbage collection sites in Grimes County and a set of codes for garbage collection in place.

Garbage collection site information can be found here: http://tools.cira.state.tx.us/users/0057/docs/COLLECTION_SITE_INFO_040910[1].pdf

What needs to happen?

Garbage collection codes in Grimes County should be more strictly regulated and enforced.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Rules and Regulations (52%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to enforce garbage collection codes in Grimes County.

Specific recommendations for future action

- Code Enforcement of Garbage Collection
  - Grimes County
    - Environmental/Permits Reprehensive Debbie Stringer. http://www.co.grimes.tx.us/default.aspx?Grimes_County/Permits
    - Address for the citizen collection sites in Grimes County. See attachment.

27. Employment/Job Placement Programs

Category

Job Training/Education

What is it?

What is the current situation?

What is already happening?

What needs to happen?

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Teamwork and Efficiency (54%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to address the issue of employment and job placement programs.

Specific recommendations for future action

- Employment/Job Placement Programs
  - Grimes County

> ▪ Employment opportunities.
>   http://www.co.grimes.tx.us/default.aspx?Grimes_County/HR

28. Health Inspection of Food Services

<u>Category</u>

Ordinances/Local Planning

<u>What is it?</u>

<u>What is the current situation?</u>

<u>What is already happening?</u>

<u>What needs to happen?</u>

<u>What strategies are most favored by citizens?</u>

Rules and Regulations (52%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to address the issue of health inspection and food services.

<u>Specific recommendations for future action</u>

- Health Inspection of Food Services
  - Grimes County
    - No information

29. Keep Parks and Green Space a Priority in Development Plans

Category

Recreation

What is it?

What is the current situation?

What is already happening?

What needs to happen?

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Rules and Regulations (45%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to keep parks and green space a priority in development plans.

Specific recommendations for future action

- Keep Parks and Green Space a Priority in Development Plans
  - Grimes County
    - No information

30. Better Supervision/Better Quality Road Crews

Category

Critical Infrastructure

What is it?

Supervision of road crews is essential to ensuring safe, quality services in Grimes County.

What is the current situation?

While supervision of road crews in order to ensure safe and quality road crew services is expected, there has been a lack of regulation implemented in assuring such quality services.

What is already happening?

There are currently rules in place to ensure supervisory and quality road crew services, however such rule are not sufficiently implemented, regulated, and maintained. This often leads to inadequate conditions of road crew services.

<u>What needs to happen?</u>

Rules and Regulations regarding the supervision of road crews in Grimes County should be considered to a greater degree and more strictly enforced.

<u>What strategies are most favored by citizens?</u>

Rules and Regulations (45%) are most favored by citizens to address the issues of supervision and quality of road crews in Grimes County.

<u>Specific recommendations for future action</u>

As mentioned in issue #33, Greg Blake is the current road and bridge administrator in Grimes County. People such as this may be contacted and informed of existing issues with road crew quality and supervision. Such communication and understanding could bring to attention existing conditions that may have been previously unknown, and lead to more strict enforcement of current rules and regulations. Such communication could also lead to improvement and positive alterations or additions to withstanding rules and regulations in order to allow for better supervision of road crews. This increased attention to supervision and regulation of road crews may ultimately lead to satisfactory quality of road crew services in Grimes County.

Greg Blake Contact Information can be found here:
http://www.co.grimes.tx.us/default.aspx?Grimes_County/Road

31. Provide Better Software to County Employees

Category

County Technology

What is it?

Updated software is critical to the efficiency and quality of county employee performance.

What is the current situation?

Software used by Grimes County employees is outdated and unable to sufficiently accommodate current demands.

What is already happening?

A demand for better software has been raised by Grimes County employees, and this demand is being considered by county officials.

What needs to happen?

Software development services can be acquired through various suppliers.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Choice and Priority (32%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to address the issue of providing better software for Grimes County employees.

Specific recommendations for future action

Software development companies should be sought out and better software provided for Grimes County employees.

Potential resource for software development in Grimes County:
- http://blazecms.com/welcometoblaze/websiteresources/pageid/20883/name/grimes-county-software-development

32. Branding of Anderson as County Seat

<u>Category</u>

County Identity

<u>What is it?</u>

The seat of any given county is represented as the administrative center of the county in which the county government is housed (including the courthouse, sheriff's department, etc.).

<u>What is the current situation?</u>

Anderson is currently identified as the county seat for Grimes County, though this is not widely known.

<u>What is already happening?</u>

The Grimes County Courthouse is located in Anderson and is recognized as a Texas Historic Landmark. The Sheriff's office and records directory are also housed in Anderson. These government locations legitimize Anderson as the Grimes county seat.

<u>What needs to happen?</u>

Anderson should be more widely marketed as the county seat in order to ensure awareness and recognition.

<u>What strategies are most favored by citizens?</u>

Teamwork and efficiency (56%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to brand Anderson as the county seat.

<u>Specific recommendations for future action</u>

33. Provide Transit for the Elderly and Disabled

<u>Category</u>

Transit

<u>What is it?</u>

<u>What is the current situation?</u>

<u>What is already happening?</u>

What needs to happen?

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Teamwork and efficiency (38%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to provide transit for elderly and disabled.

Specific recommendations for future action

- Provide Transit for the Elderly and Disabled
  - Grimes County
    - Brazos Transit District has Demand and Response rides for Grimes County. http://www.btd.org/DemandResponse.htm

34. Create Rural Emergency Department

Category

Emergency Services

What is it?

What is the current situation?

What is already happening?

What needs to happen?

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Teamwork and efficiency (30%) as well as Choice and Priority (29%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to create a rural emergency department.

Specific recommendations for future action

- Create Rural Emergency Department
  - Grimes County
    - No Information

35. Senior Center with Adult Care Programs*

Category

Social Services

What is it?

A senior center would provide a safe place for the elderly in Grimes County to reside, as well as to engage in activities aimed at keeping them active and social.

What is the current situation?

There is currently one senior center – The Sunshine Center – located in Anderson, Texas. The Sunshine Center is aimed to serve those age 60 older in Grimes County.

The Sunshine Center frequently holds fundraisers to raise money for programs such as free lunches and fellowship days at which the elderly are encouraged to socialize with others in the community.

What is already happening?

There are no current plans to develop additional senior centers in Grimes County.

What needs to happen?

There is a need for additional senior centers to be established in Grimes County in order to accommodate the large number of elderly individuals residing there.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Teamwork and efficiency (38%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to address the issue of a senior center with adult care programs.

Specific recommendations for future action

36. Building Fire Code Enforcement

Category

Ordinances/Local Planning

What is it?

Fire codes are set in place to safeguard against the potential for a fire to start in a certain space. Enforcement of fire codes ensures that each safety measure is being taken to prevent fires from happening at any given time. The failure to enforce existing fire codes presents a risk for fire and threat to the safety of individuals within the area.

What is the current situation?

While there are fire codes in place for buildings in Grimes County, they are not strictly regulated or enforced.

What is already happening?

There are a number of fire stations throughout Grimes County (Navasota, Iola, Whitehall, and Plantersville) available for services when a fire is started. There are also building fire codes currently in place.

The existing building fire code can be seen here: http://www.grimesiowa.gov/Portals/0/pages/ordinances/Chapters/chapter154%20-%20Fire%20Code.pdf

Fire Stations that are present in Grimes County can be found at each of these sites:
- Navasota

- o Fire department. http://www.navasotatx.gov/p/getconnected/240
- Iola
  - o Volunteer fire department. http://www.firedepartment.net/directory/texas/grimes-county/iola/iola-volunteer-fire-department
- Whitehall
  - o October 20, 2011. Whitehall fire department accepted as county entity. http://www.navasotaexaminer.com/news/article_3a498f8a-fb43-11e0-9a15-001cc4c03286.html
- Plantersville
- Volunteer fire department. http://www.firedepartment.net/directory/texas/grimes-county/plantersville/plantersville-stoneham-volunteer-fire-department

What needs to happen?

Building codes in Grimes County should be more strictly regulated and enforced through routine procedures and checks.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Rules and Regulations (48%) are the strategies most favored by citizens to enforce building fire codes in Grimes County.

Specific recommendations for future action

Fire code compliance, enforcement, permitting, building plans, protection system plans, and inspection are not only essential to have within the county, but are critical to enforce through avenues such as routine checks and permitting.

There are numerous resources to aid in the creation/continuation of fire code enforcement protocols. These resources include, but are not limited to:

- http://www.fireengineering.com/articles/print/volume-166/issue-01/features/code-enforce-critic-success-fire-prevent-prog.html
- https://www.bexar.org/642/Code-Enforcement-and-Inspections
- http://www.nfpa.org/codes-and-standards/document-information-pages?mode=code&code=1730

Grimes County Permit Office Staff could aid in permit implementation for satisfactory building fire code compliance. Contact information can be found here: http://www.co.grimes.tx.us/default.aspx?Grimes_County/Permits

37. Major Improvements of New County Facilities

Category

County Facilities

What is it?

Major improvements to Grimes County facilities are critical as they are in poor condition and unsuitable to work in.

What is the current situation?

Much like issue #29, the county buildings in Grimes County are currently in poor condition, leaving many employees with degrading health and increasing concern for the future. There is currently mold spores, leaks, and other structural damages to most of the existing county buildings. There have been little to no efforts extended to make essential repairs.

What is already happening?

There has been little effort to date in addressing the issue of poor county facility conditions, however substantial discussion has been generated focused on the need for major improvements.

What needs to happen?

Major improvements to county facilities in Grimes County should be made, including hiring contractors to assess damages and provide quotes, as well as acquiring necessary services to make needed repairs.

What strategies are most favored by citizens?

Choice and Priority (42%) are the strategies most favored by the citizens to address the issues surrounding county facility improvements in Grimes County.

Specific recommendations for future action

Contractors should be located, contacted, and scheduled to assess existing damages in county facilities and quotes should be acquired estimating the costs for repairs. After the original assessment, services should be sought out and rendered to majorly renovate county buildings.