

Winter 2017

- FROM BLIGHT TO BEAUTIFUL
- CITIZENS GO DIGITAL
- EDUCATION UPDATE
- DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION**



INSIDE LA MARQUE

The City of La Marque and La Marque Economic Development Corporation are teaming up with local business owners, the school district, the Texas City-La Marque Chamber of Commerce and community advocates to deliver relevant news and important updates to residents and businesses inside our city limits.



STAY CONNECTED

NEWS, UPDATES & FRESH PERSPECTIVES FROM LOCAL LEADERS

LA MARQUE YEAR IN REVIEW

2016 Accomplishments

- 6** NEW POLICE POSITIONS APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL
- 34** FLOATS IN MAGICAL CHRISTMAS PARADE
- 52** DAY WORLD-RENOWNED FESTIVAL, MAGICAL WINTER LIGHTS
- 60** PERCENT SALES TAX INCREASE OVER PAST 5 YEARS
- 90** PERCENT OF KNOWN WATER LEAKS REPAIRED
- 124** NEW HOMES CONSTRUCTED
- 18,000** THOUSAND ATTENDEES AT BAYOU FEST
- 35,000** SQ. FT. SHOWROOM AT MANCUSO POWERSPORTS
- \$34,564,909** IN TOTAL NEW HOME VALUES

I am proud of our accomplishments over the past twelve months and am excited about the promise 2017 brings. These are exciting times for La Marque. Best wishes to you and your family for a healthy, happy and prosperous New Year.

Mayor Bobby Hocking

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THE ROAD TO *Residential Revitalization*

A healthy balance of community dynamics, a rebounding national economy and a steady flow of funding is allowing the City to make substantial progress in the fight against blight and promote restoration efforts in some of La Marque's most historic neighborhoods. Residential revitalization isn't a new concept - City Council, La Marque Economic Development Corporation and City staff have been working on revitalization efforts for more than a decade. The difference is that now, La Marque's landscape is changing. It is changing for the better.

Back in 2008, the La Marque Economic Development Corporation (EDC) funded a study that examined home ownership in the older neighborhoods of La Marque. A citizen survey was conducted at the same time, which revealed residents' desire to demolish run down structures and clean up neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Revitalization Steering Committee was established to determine a community vision and identify how that vision could be realized. The Steering Committee proposed a Five-Year Plan, which was accepted by City Council. Unfortunately, Hurricane Ike, paired with 2009's nationwide economic crisis, delayed the City's large-scale revitalization efforts. On a positive note, the influx of federal disaster funding after Hurricane Ike allowed 200 homes in various neighborhoods to be demolished and rebuilt, which jumpstarted improvement of several residential areas.

In 2015 the EDC invested in a Strategic Economic and Community Development Plan. Again, citizens were surveyed. And, again, overall appearance of the City was said to be the most critical barrier to future development and success of La Marque. Specifically, condemned, vacant and dilapidated buildings were the top priority. Condition of vacant lots, the appearance of roads and ditches followed closely behind.



LA MARQUE'S JOURNEY FROM *Blight to Beautiful*

Along with the volunteer-run Neighborhood Revitalization Steering Committee, La Marque's City Manager created the Revitalization Task Force, which is comprised of the EDC Director, Public Services Director, Fire Chief, Police Chief and Code Compliance Supervisor. Monthly meetings are ongoing, as are status reports to City Council. The goal? Ensure La Marque's future as a thriving community and increase quality of life for citizens in our historic neighborhoods.

GOAL

Focus efforts on blight reduction; make La Marque an attractive place to live and work

VISION

Create clean, safe residential neighborhoods; demolish unsightly dilapidated structures

FUNDING

No tax hikes; federal, state & local funds; proceeds from the sale/lease of EDC properties

ENFORCEMENT

Three City employees solely dedicated to the Neighborhood Revitalization Program and citywide blight reduction; ordinances and codes strengthened and strictly enforced; year-long mowing rotation established for vacant lots

PROGRESS

Blight identification process initiated; 37 structures demolished; ditches and lots cleared

PRIDE

La Marque neighborhoods are returning to their former glory; citizens are celebrating

For information on La Marque's historic neighborhood revitalization please visit renew.cityoflamarque.org.

Last year

Past 60 Days

Planned for '17

Demolished
37
Structures

Mowed
125
Vacant Lots

Tagged
70
Junk Cars

Demolish
18
Structures

Develop
4
Local Lots

Focus on Economic Development

DOWNTOWN LA MARQUE'S CITIZEN-DRIVEN URBAN RENEWAL



BY RACE A. HODGES AND COLLEEN MERRITT

Main Streets America

Main Streets and historic downtowns across America have been witnessing a revival of sorts. Many generations, both young and old, are becoming increasingly attracted to walkable, urban environments in which to live, shop, work, interact and be entertained.

Building upon the uniqueness of La Marque's individual contexts and histories, the La Marque Economic Development Corporation, in cooperation with Texas A&M's Texas Coastal Watershed Program (TCWP), will develop a plan to revitalize our historic downtown.

This Downtown Revitalization Plan will explore ideas for "smart growth" – a pattern of dense, walkable, and mixed use development typical of historic American cities – and opportunities for building these concepts into La Marque's downtown. Professor John Jacob of the TCWP,

based in Clear Lake, has been championing this style of community planning as a way to develop a sense of place and stimulate economic and social vitality. Through building upon the historic assets of La Marque, this planning effort will capture a community driven vision for the downtown, while including concepts of smart growth, green infrastructure, LEED principles and community vitality.

The planning project will be broken into three phases. **Phase 1** is planned to begin in January and consists of analysis of existing conditions, including local regulations, development patterns, design conditions and other current characteristics of the state of the downtown. **Phase 2** will seek input from the community, such as design and streetscape preferences, to develop a vision for what the area could be. **Phase 3** will output a final plan, complete with visual renderings of streetscape

PHASE 1

WINTER 2017
Study of Existing Conditions

PHASE 2

SPRING 2017
Establish the Vision

PHASE 3

SUMMER 2017
Planning

IMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES

alternatives, design options and an action plan for implementing the plan. Once the planning process is complete, construction begins.

Why Not the West Side?

There is no denying that most of La Marque's development is happening west of I-45. But, that doesn't mean the City should abandon its historic business hub and quaint neighborhoods.

"Some cities have abandoned their downtowns, only to regret it down the road," said Alex Getty, La Marque Economic Development Executive Director. "In La Marque, we are fortunate to have a tremendous amount of daytime employment and activity downtown. The long-term goal is for the area to continue as a stable economic engine. We hope the improvements strengthen community pride and quality of life for residents and our guests. We are excited about the possibilities and look forward to what the future holds!"

Citizen-Driven Development

La Marque citizens have an opportunity to shape tomorrow's Downtown La Marque. Participation in focus groups, the upcoming City Council Workshop and online surveys is encouraged and appreciated. City officials have a vision of a vibrant, bustling urban core that incorporates La Marque's rich history and heritage. Imagine Downtown La Marque with sidewalks, gas lampposts, busy boutiques and an array of dining options. What do you see Downtown?

For information, please visit downtown.cityoflamarque.org.



COMMUNITY SURVEY

DOWNTOWN.CITYOFLAMARQUE.ORG
Questions? Dial (409) 938-9255.

STAYING CONNECTED IN A DIGITAL WORLD

ASK THE TECH GUY: HOW DO I KEEP UP WITH WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE CITY?

The City of La Marque provides a host of digital tools and services, custom tailored for the citizens of La Marque. Some citizens still prefer to chat on the phone or visit us at City Hall, and we are here for you! But, there are options that save time and provide instant updates when you need information fast.

The City underwent an ambitious website redesign project and launched mobile app two years ago.

"Sure, we wanted our new website to be user friendly and pleasing to look at but our motivations ran deeper than that," said Kyle Hunter, City of La Marque IT Analyst.

"We needed easy-to-use solutions that would help our citizens stay informed. The site and mobile app were built around Request Tracker and **it has changed the way we do business at the City.**"

Consider cityoflamarque.org your command center for staying connected to the City. Using the search bar in the top right corner is a quick way to find information. Hovering over the "How Do I" drop down menu shows how to connect to services like Request Tracker, Connect CTY and Notifications.

REQUEST TRACKER

Request Tracker is a powerful tool developed to help citizens report concerns and get real-time updates on what's being done about it.

"Citizens can report everything from trash collection to traffic to code enforcement," Hunter said. "Creating an account is easy and the benefit for citizens is direct communication with the City."

Once a ticket is submitted in Request Tracker, citizens are updated every step of the way, including a notification when the project has been completed. Citizens also choose how they want to be contacted. The system will send updates via phone call, text message or email - or all three.

Hunter said citizens can thank City Council and City Manager Carol Buttler for Request Tracker.

"Mrs. Buttler saw this technology work well for other cities and she wanted to give our citizens that same level of connectivity," said Hunter.

NOTIFICATIONS AND NEWS FLASH

News flash is the most common method of communication when the City of La Marque is dispersing information to citizens, the surrounding communities and the press. Registration is easy; sign up online, choose your preferred method of communication, choose categories and then sit back as community news, calendar updates, weather updates, city alerts and agenda postings come rolling in.

CONNECT CTY

CTY is a phone-based notification system used to inform citizens about urgent weather, shelter in place, evacuation, power outage and street closures. Up to five devices per household can connect and be immediately notified via call or text.

PAY ONLINE

Utility Billing can take payments during business hours, water bills can be paid online and the kiosk is available outside City Hall 24/7. Court fees can be paid online, as well.

GET SOCIAL

Follow the City of La Marque on Facebook, NextDoor, Twitter and YouTube.

La Marque Library is on Facebook and Twitter and the Police Department is on Facebook.

"Digital services only work if our citizens use them," Hunter said. "We would love to see more people take advantage of the tools we have available. We want all our citizens to stay informed and communicate with us, especially during times of emergency. We do our best to it as easy and hassle-free as possible."

Inside La Marque was resurrected to offer a quarterly look at what's happening at the City. We're planning to send City news in water bills this year, as well. If you have ideas on other ways City staff should communicate with citizens please email cmerritt@cityoflamarque.org.



La Marque Education Update

WHO SAYS YOU CAN'T GO HOME?

Dr. Flo Adkins and Sharon Williams grew up in La Marque. They are both La Marque High School graduates. They have family in town and they both came home to serve as principals when La Marque schools merged with Texas City Independent School District. Now, they are back in their hometown and making big changes that will have a lasting impact for generations to come.

LA MARQUE ELEMENTARY

Sharon Williams became the principal of La Marque Elementary in July of 2016 and hit the ground running. To date, she's worked with Texas City ISD to make major improvements to the library, overhaul the cafeteria and add a shiny new computer lab. Over Thanksgiving break, four new teachers came onboard, reducing class sizes from 26-30 students down to an average of 22 students.

"After Thanksgiving, students came back to a Second First Day of School," Williams said. "Some students changed classes so we went all out with campus tours and showcased our new cafeteria layout."

Principal Williams isn't stopping there. She pioneered a new, safer dismissal process and launched Cougars Who Care, a behavior incentive program. Williams has a weekly video segment called "Talk About It Tuesday" planned to launch this winter. She'll use Facebook Live to interact with parents, sharing tips, school news and details about upcoming events. Williams said she is honored to be back in La Marque schools during this important time and blessed to be able to give back

to the community she loves.

"I grew up in La Marque so I understood the uncertainty felt by community members and parents during the transition to Texas City ISD," Williams said. "I get to see firsthand those uneasy feelings shift to confidence as parents see steady improvement in student behavior, academic performance and school spirit. Parents are engaged, our kids are excelling and the administration at Texas City ISD continues to go above and beyond to provide for our schools."

LA MARQUE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Under the direction of Dr. Flo Adkins, students in 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades benefit from the innovative teaching style founded at the Ron Clark Academy. The highly acclaimed teaching format that has received national and international recognition. Students, parents, staff and community members work together to create a family environment for learners.

"The Ron Clark teaching structure paired with Texas City ISD's dedication to continuous improvement is creating a new environment at La Marque Middle," said Adkins. "The sense of community on campus grows stronger every day. I can see our downhome values and Cougar pride shining through in our academics, and extracurricular involvement."

Adkins said Texas City ISD is doing a great job of

building trust with former La Marque ISD families, students, parents and local citizens. The focus is shifting to moving forward and ensuring our students excel.

La Marque Middle School started an aggressive recruitment program for fine arts, band and choir starting in the 5th grade. Fall and spring sports have had an uptick in participation as well as surging numbers for AB Honor Roll and Citizenship Awards.

"Texas City ISD staff works as hard as they can, as fast as they can to provide resources for students and teachers," Adkins said. "We have new computers, new printers and clever touch boards, which all lend themselves to modern digital learning environments that are so important for kids today."

COUGAR PRIDE

Adkins and Williams agree that Texas City ISD has been incredibly supportive and they are both thrilled to be back home. Steady improvement is the name of the game for these principals as they simultaneously walk down memory lane and help shape the future for the next generation of Cougars.



DR. FLO ADKINS

SHARON WILLIAMS

INSIDE LA MARQUE

Prsrt Std
US Postage
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Permit No. 15
La Marque, TX



1111 Bayou Road
La Marque, TX 77568



To: Postal Customer

City News & Updates **WHAT'S HAPPENING, LA MARQUE?**

Community Garden Planned Downtown

The La Marque Garden Club is starting a community garden at the La Marque Economic Development Corporation building, 1130 1st Street. Club members will give one of the raised flower beds an overhaul this winter, then plant herbs and vegetables in the spring. When it's time to harvest, the bounty will be free to the community. La Marque Garden Club is the City's oldest civic organization. New members are welcome, as are volunteers for the community garden. For information call Colleen Merritt at (409) 938-9255. What would you like to see planted this spring?

COP Program Protects Our Neighborhoods

The La Marque Police Department and the Citizen's Police Academy Alumni Association are working together through the City's Community Oriented Policing (COP) program to identify potential problem areas in our neighborhoods. If you have an issue in your neighborhood that needs to be addressed, download the La Marque Citizen Problem Reporting form cityoflamarque.org/FormCenter. COP is designed to develop deeper relationships between officers and citizens of La Marque. Preventing crime is a big job! We depend on our citizens to keep us informed.

HEATING UP: La Marque's Central Fire Station Groundbreaking Planned for February

This is a big deal! The Central Fire Station is City of La Marque's first-ever capital project developed, accepted, funded, and soon to be constructed for a public safety entity. The project includes two buildings, the Central Fire Station at 1000 Salt Grass Point Boulevard and the Administration Building at 5201 Texas Avenue. A groundbreaking ceremony is tentatively planned for February. Please follow the City website for updates.

"This is a milestone for the City. These facilities will have incomprehensible positive impact on the delivery of quality public service across La Marque, directly affecting the preservation of life and property in our community." - Gerald Grimm, La Marque Fire Chief

