



Ken Johnson

A Message from the MCEDC President *Working Together to Improve Our Community*

The Matagorda County Economic Development Corporation, Bay City Community Development Corporation, and the Bay City Chamber of Commerce & Agriculture - separate entities - one goal: *to build a better future for all the citizens of Matagorda County.*

These entities are working together towards that goal, but each have a different focus. Economic Development seeks to attract, develop and retain environmentally acceptable businesses and industry to the county. Community Development works to bring in higher education opportunities, as well as housing and retail businesses to Bay City, while one area of focus for the Chamber is countywide tourism and attractions.

Together these entities have become a recipe for success. One example of this success that has greatly benefited the community is the United program. Economic and business leaders, and many volunteers have worked hard over the past several years to improve the quality of life and infrastructure in and around our county. This edition of the MCEDC newsletter focuses on the United program, detailing its history and accomplishments. The next phase of the United project is being planned, and I encourage you to be a part of the excitement. Be looking for meeting times and dates and get involved in the future of Matagorda County.

“United” Program Succeeds and Grows *Making Great Strides in Bay City & Matagorda County*

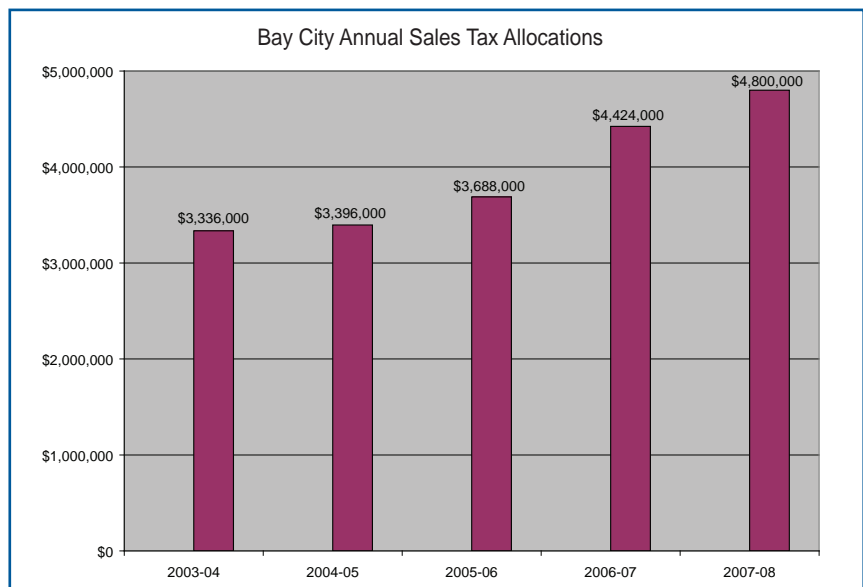
Success deserves to be celebrated! Bay City and Matagorda County have reason to celebrate the successes of two phases of the “United” program. Both have benefited greatly from this program funded primarily by the Bay City Community Development Corporation (BCCDC). The scope of the program has grown with each new phase. It is now ready to begin Phase III.

Phase I —

The initial “Bay City United” program was formed in 2002 by then Mayor Charlie Martinez to address an alarming drop in city sales taxes and double digit unemployment. Facilitated by planners from LCRA, community leaders developed a series of projects to be addressed. The projects were: high unemployment, uncoordinated tourism activities, truck and train traffic through Bay City, challenges for struggling local businesses and improvements to the appearances of Bay City and Matagorda County.

Phase I Successes —

Three years later sales taxes were up, unemployment was down, a new countywide committee was coordinating tourism activities, a new *Visitors Guide* was underway to be placed at state welcome centers, the Nile Valley Drive by-pass was under construction, old signs had been removed, improvements were underway around the Courthouse Square, and new tourism signs ordered. New projects were needed as the first ones were successfully achieved.



United Continued:

Phase II —

Community leaders were asked in 2005 to build on the earlier Phase I successes by brainstorming around the question: “*What headlines would you like to read in the paper in the years 2010 to 2015?*” Some of the responses were:

- Unemployment down to 3%
- Downtown district on National Register of Historic Places
- All downtown buildings full
- Creation of quality jobs and educational opportunities
- Matagorda Beach new hotspot for tourism
- 4-lane highway access to Matagorda County
- Matagorda Wellness Center opens
- New housing development with parks opens next to mall
- Local shops have successful year of record profits
- Sales tax receipts are through the roof

The program name and focus was expanded to “*Bay City-Matagorda County United.*” The ideas were condensed into four project areas with action activities under each. Four committees were established under a steering committee headed by Joseph Enoch. The committees were: Community & Retail Development, Business Infrastructure, Tourism Infrastructure and Higher Education Opportunities.

Dedicated volunteers worked on the action items assigned to the committees. After three years, we can report that Phase II of the “*BC-MC United*” program has also enjoyed remarkable success.

Phase II Successes —

Community & Retail Development

Committee – D.C. Dunham, Executive Director of the BCCDC, led this committee. It commissioned studies to identify retailers whose demographic markets most “*fit*” the spending patterns in Bay City and Palacios. The committee successfully recruited several targeted retailers to Bay City and Palacios using the new demographic spending information. The committee worked with downtown merchants on marketing, signage and refurbishing building fronts with repairs, paint and awnings. The Courthouse Square is well on its way to having all of the buildings filled with retail shops, attractive store fronts and even some new second floor living units. New retail and service businesses and motels have opened in Bay City and throughout the county.

A new Business Development Center opened in 2007 to help existing businesses, budding entrepreneurs and

young businesses. It provides financial plan assistance, business management education and marketing plan assistance for new and existing businesses that need help with growth, obtaining financing, marketing or business management issues. A core group of successful business entrepreneurs provides mentoring to new Business Development Center members. Business information seminars are offered through the Chamber for existing businesses. Hardeman Park was developed with a new Teen Center and recreation fields. The first phase of the Nile

“*After three years, the United program has enjoyed remarkable success.*”

Valley by-pass was completed. Wellness Matagorda completed a walking trail.

Business Infrastructure Committee—

Owen Bludau, Executive Director of the Matagorda County Economic Development Corporation, heads this committee. One of its goals is recruitment of new industries. STP’s \$6 billion plus expansion project is being heavily supported by the committee. The large Exelon Nuclear project was successfully recruited, before its chosen site proved unfeasible. Four more industries have selected local sites and are



The Community & Retail Development Committee worked with the downtown merchants on marketing, signage and refurbishing building fronts. The *I Skream Company* is just one of the businesses that took advantage of this program.

getting permits and financing for them to construct plants. Two local industries are planning expansions. These projects should add 1,200 permanent jobs and bring many construction workers into the county. They will increase our non-residential tax base by billions of dollars. The committee is recruiting builders and developers to provide new housing to support the new employee needs of STP and the other coming industries.

A subcommittee has made great strides in developing a Geographic Information System (GIS) database of publicly available information that will assist local government offices, economic development recruitment, property ownership data searches and similar activities that need access to information on Matagorda County. The database is not yet completed. In cooperation with the Matagorda County Appraisal District, the committee plans to have a good quality database available on the internet within a year.

More than 1,000 new houses and apartments of various types and price ranges will be needed over the next eight years to offer new employees housing choices. The committee continues working with existing and new industries to identify the schedules, housing price ranges and housing preferences of new employees that are recruited for positions here. It is seeking developers and builders to help local construction firms meet the housing demands that are coming in the time frames needed.

Mayor Knapik heads the committee's effort to obtain high speed, wireless broadband access. It is beginning in Bay City and will be expanded outward into the county. The Matagorda area already has received wireless broadband access from AT&T. This service will become increasingly needed as most homes will use the internet and emails for business and personal services.

Tourism Infrastructure Committee – Mitch Thames, President of the Bay City Chamber of Commerce & Agriculture heads this committee. With his team, he was successful in transitioning a volunteer countywide tourism committee effort to the recently formed Matagorda County Convention and Visitors Bureau (MCCVB). The next addition of the *Matagorda Visitor's*



The Matagorda County Visitor Information Center is open 24 hours-per-day and houses tourist information such as maps, brochures, newsletters and other items of interest on local attractions.

Guide, which lists every tourism entity in the county, will be distributed to state welcome centers and all local motels by January 2009. The MCCVB advertises our community in magazines, billboards, radio and television spots with funding from a collaboration of local sources. We now have a full blown promotional campaign publicizing Matagorda County as *"Your weekend getaway destination!"* throughout much of Texas.

"BC-MC United" obtained a grant from the Lower Colorado River Authority to build an information kiosk in front of the Museum. The Visitor's Center is open 24 hours-a-day and provides maps and information on local attractions. Information is also available to visitors at the Chamber office.

New tourism signage is being installed throughout the county. Writers and photographers are invited for custom tours to encourage them to write articles about our attractions. New festival events have been added throughout the county and these are advertised outside the area to bring in more visitors. Local entrepreneurs have developed packaged-style tours for visitors and more are being encouraged to do so.

Higher Education Opportunities Committee – Under the leadership of Judge Nate McDonald, we have gone from a handful of Wharton County Junior College students in a temporary facility to a permanent 20,000 square foot state-of-the-

art educational center. BCCDC spent \$4.5 million to purchase and renovate an 82,000 square-foot eyesore into a remarkable educational facility. Approximately 190 students are enrolled in its Process Technology and newly developed Nuclear Power Technology programs. Almost \$2 million has been pledged to fund equipment and operations of the facility. Part of the building is being used by the STP expansion team to house nearly 100 new design team employees. Obtaining qualified employees is critical to keeping and attracting industry. This *"grow your own employees"* program provides opportunities for residents to gain skills needed for new jobs, to upgrade from existing jobs, and to give our children opportunities for good employment in their home county.

Matagorda County United Phase III —

A Phase III is being planned to continue the progress that has been made in the two previous phases.

John O'Connell, TAMU AgriLIFE Extension Service, surveyed the community to help plan for the growth of Bay City and Matagorda County. Over 90% of respondents wanted to be included in the process of change for the community. Change is coming and the "United" program is looking for your input. If you would like more information or a copy of the *"Bay City – Matagorda United"* Phase II plan, call 979-245-8081 or email dcunham@cityofbaycity.org.

The Matagorda County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) Board represents all of Matagorda County and consists of 11 appointed members from five public entities - Matagorda County, the Bay City Community and Palacios Economic Development Corporations, Navigation District #1, the Port of Bay City Authority - and the four Chambers of Commerce from Bay City, Matagorda, Palacios and Sargent.

The MCEDC is focused on recruiting new industrial and commercial businesses and tourism infrastructure developers to Matagorda County. The Bay City Community Development Corporation recruits retail businesses to Bay City and helps existing retailers expand.

MCEDC Board Members:

- Ken Johnson - Palacios EDC - President
- Mayor Richard Knapik - BCCDC -VP
- V.L. Bowers - Palacios Chamber - Secretary
- George Harrison - Port of BC - Treasurer
- Mayor Joe Morton - Palacios EDC
- Mark Ludwig - Bay City CDC
- Judge Nate McDonald - Comm. Court
- Susan Mitchell - Matagorda Area Chamber
- Debbie Morris - Navigation District #1
- Muriel Tipps - Sargent Chamber
- Mitch Thames - Bay City Chamber

- Owen Bludau - Executive Director
- Lisa Tew - Communications Director

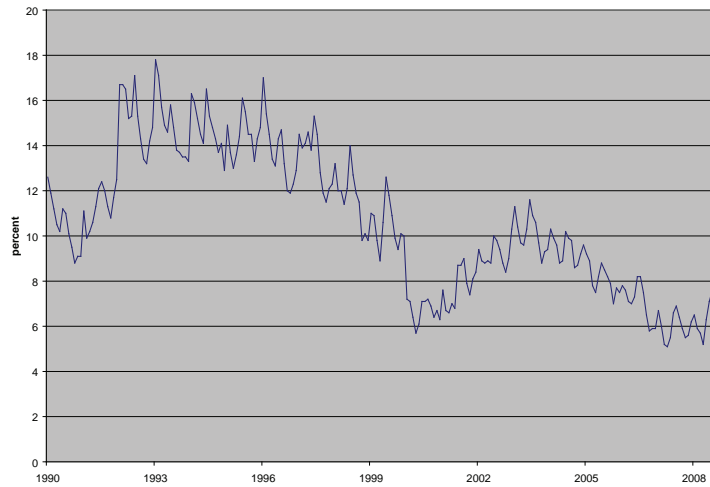
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 Bay City Community Development Corp
 D.C. Dunham, Executive Director
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Economic Indicators:

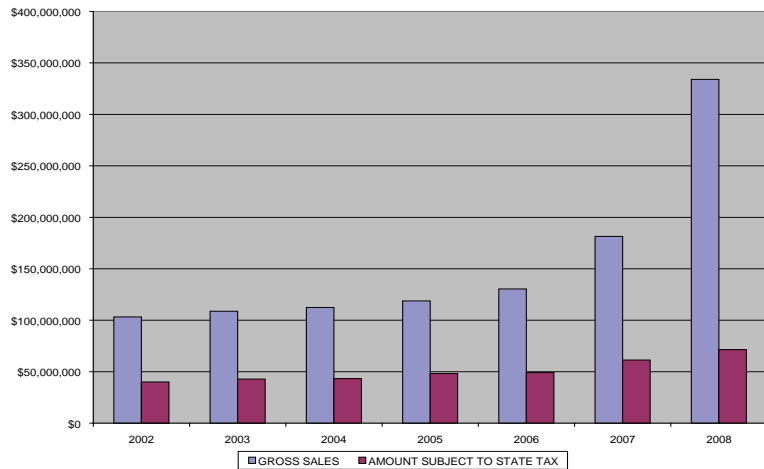
Matagorda County Unemployment Rate to Date

Source - U.S. Department of Labor: Bureau of Statistics



Matagorda County Sales Tax Report - All Industries/2nd Quarter

Source: Window on State Government - Texas Comptroller's Office



The MCEDC promotes economic development using the county's assets of multiple natural gas lines, rail service by two providers, barge service on the Intracoastal Waterway and Colorado River channel, a nuclear power plant and large transmission grid, abundant river and groundwater supplies, large tracts of flat land, no zoning, air quality attainment and a business welcoming attitude. For more information go to www.mcedc.net.

This newsletter is published three times per year and distributed by the MCEDC.

For questions or comments, please contact Lisa Tew at (979) 245-8913, or ltew@co.matagorda.tx.us.

Or write:
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*Matagorda County . . . where opportunities abound
 in a vibrant community rich with rural charm and natural resources.*