

TEXAS TARGET COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

OUR STORY

WHO ARE WE?

Texas Target Communities—the university’s community-engaged learning and research program partners with:

- **low-capacity communities across Texas to assist them with needs that would otherwise go unmet and**
- **faculty and students to leverage research, courses, and other university resources.**

TxTC embodies teaching, research, and service. We dedicate our service to Texans by listening, learning, validating, documenting, organizing, motivating, and propelling. That is our charge: to cultivate tomorrow’s leaders beyond the classroom, to uncover new stories that necessitate research, and to serve Texans with our presence.

Jaimie Masterson, Director

OUR MISSION:

To facilitate the transformation of communities from high-risk (or low opportunity) to equitable, resilient, and adaptive by mitigating threats to the economy, environment, and culture.

OUR GOALS:

TxTC has worked with **90 low-capacity communities**—rural cities and counties, inner-city neighborhoods, and non-governmental organizations—to reveal and validate persistent problems, illuminate strengths, identify promising strategies, and enable emerging opportunities.

We aim to:

- **Foster quality service-learning experiences for the next-generation workforce.**
- **Provide quality products for communities that would otherwise not realize their full potential.**
- **Connect faculty to a network of community engagement leaders to pursue research.**

OUR VALUES:

- We respect local knowledge and the community fabric.
- We desire strategic and equitable community economic growth.
- We believe in the preservation and restoration of environmental systems.
- We uphold principles of participatory and collaborative governance.
- We believe in nurturing the health and capacity of people.
- We seek to promote informed development decisions.

We have been taking action and staying committed since 1993



OUR PROCESS

WHAT DO WE DO?

We form long-lasting relationships in our matching process

Creating Partnerships with Purpose

COMMUNITY CATALYST

- Shifting development patterns
- Changing environments
- Experiencing social disorganization

Catalysts inspire, mobilize, or empower community leaders, stakeholders, and residents to address issues, solve problems, and achieve common goals.

Catalysts mobilize action in a community.



TEXAS TARGET COMMUNITIES

- Listening and collaborating
- Envisioning and strategizing
- Encouraging and propelling

Texas Target Communities **serves as a bridge to connect** communities to untapped university resources (i.e. faculty and students).

We believe every community contains capacity, talents, and strengths that, when nourished, surface and collectively contribute to a better future.



STUDENTS AND FACULTY

- Assessing and collecting
- Researching and learning
- Documenting and organizing

University faculty and students work hand-in-hand with community partners to **mobilize knowledge** in course assignments (as “engaged-learning”) and research efforts (as “engaged research”).



MAINTAINING THE PARTNERSHIP

We understand community issues don't take breaks. TxTC welcomes an open line of communication with partnered communities after we complete deliverables. We commit to being an available adviser, sounding board, and coach for communities as they achieve their goals.

ENGAGED-LEARNING

experiential education that meets a community, partner, or client need.

ENGAGED RESEARCH

research, data collection, and/or knowledge generation with the community in a collaborative way to tackle a societal issue.

“Once you join the Texas Target Communities family you are family forever”





Each project is not a box to check, but a quilt to stitch together the multitude of voices, opinions, hopes, and dreams within communities.



ENGAGING THE PUBLIC



To better understand the range of community issues and opportunities, TxTC staff advises and designs community engagement strategies and processes, including conducting public outreach, facilitating meetings and workshops, and garnering input within the community.

DEVELOPING TANGIBLE ACTIONS



With community feedback, students and faculty explore a range of strategies based on promising practices. Together, the university and community identify and prioritize recommendations within plans as goals, objectives, actions, and policies, or design recommendations. To assist with implementation we organize action steps with timelines, financing opportunities, and responsible action leaders.

COLLECTING, ASSESSING, DOCUMENTING



Students and faculty gather primary or secondary data, such as, information on population characteristics, economic conditions, infrastructure capacity, housing conditions, community facilities, environmental hazards, and site inventory.

This data is then used to create various types of assessments and reports such as, existing conditions report, housing needs assessment, economic report, hazard vulnerability assessment, site analyses, crafting scenarios, and assessing transportation networks, among other things.



OUR PROJECTS

HOW DO WE DO IT?

NOLANVILLE

The City of Nolanville is a small town located 10 miles east of Fort Cavazos, one of the largest army bases in the country. In 2014, a partnership formed to develop the city's first Comprehensive Master Plan. The projects and partnership enabled Nolanville to achieve several milestones such as completing over 90% of the original comprehensive plan action items, obtaining over \$3 million in grants, and accomplishing numerous projects.

Five years later, at the request of the city to update the successful comprehensive plan, the ENDEAVR initiative also brought innovative ideas to the city. ENDEAVR is an ambitious project to re-envision how small towns utilize technology. Ideas were developed with community feedback by interdisciplinary students in urban planning, landscape architecture, visualization, computer science, and civil, electrical, and mechanical engineering. In total, 120 students and 9 faculty have worked alongside the city.



SECURED \$3 MILLION IN GRANTS TO IMPLEMENT THE STUDENTS' RECOMMENDATIONS (PRIOR TO THIS THE CITY HADN'T APPLIED FOR ANY GRANTS)



SPARKED A MINDSET SHIFT

TxTC's process sparked a mindset shift among the community and city staff and created momentum for future action. Reflecting on the city's experience in 2014, the city manager described this shift:

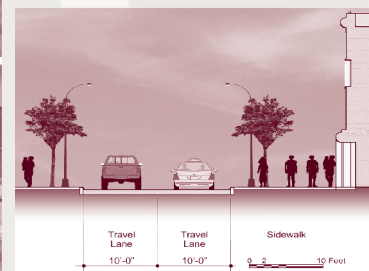


With the TxTC involvement with the city and all the task force meetings, it just really brought up the excitement. And people were thinking about possibilities instead of just the same old [mindset], 'they'll never change' or 'it's always been that way,'

We have a different reputation now for Nolanville. We experiment, we research, and we don't think we're too small to do things now; we believe we can do these things because we are small.

Working toward being a 'smart' city gives us an identity we didn't have before,

-NOLANVILLE'S CITY MANAGER

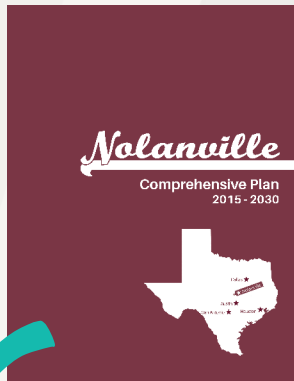




FOSTERED A CULTURE OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION



As part of the comprehensive plan, TxTC launched Nolanville's first ever community-wide public engagement effort. The series of task force meetings fostered social networking and a culture of civic participation. Now there are regular community events, like the 5k Fox Trot, the Train Hop Jamboree, Keep Nolanville Beautiful Clean Up days, and more.



ESTABLISHED A POSITIVE REGIONAL IDENTITY

Before TxTC came to Nolanville, community members felt they did not have a well-established identity. According to the city manager, Nolanville was known only as a small bedroom community.

Through projects such as the revamped Monarch Park, walkability and "complete street" improvements, and the success of the ENDEAVR project, the city has become known as "the community that cares" and has gained a positive reputation in the region.

IMPROVED COMMUNITY FACILITIES

In addition to improving the 10-acre Monarch Park with amenities—such as a basketball court, splash pad, butterfly garden, walking path, ball fields, and Boys and Girls Club building—Nolanville completed drainage and "complete street" improvements to enhance walking and biking.

HELPED LEVERAGE OVER \$3 MILLION IN GRANT FUNDING



The small city received significant funds to invest in park and walkability improvements, a new community center, main street improvements, and a recycling program through the Keep Nolanville Beautiful program. The projects and plan allowed the city to meet many grant requirements. The city manager emphasized that:

It's that comprehensive plan that has provided a wealth of amenities that the city now enjoys, and we're really thankful for it... When I first got here, the annual budget was under a million dollars. Over the course of this comprehensive plan, we easily received \$3 million dollars in grant funding.

-NOLANVILLE'S CITY MANAGER

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

- 2021 W.K. Kellogg Award for Exemplary Community Engagement given by the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities.
- 2021 Smart 50 Award Recipient: ENDEAVRide: Taxi + Telemedicine For Vulnerable Populations In Small and Rural Communities, Nolanville, Texas
- 2020 American Planning Association - Texas Chapter, City of Nolanville: Gold Achievement Award in Implementation



OUR PROJECTS

HOW DO WE DO IT?

T.E.J.A.S

T.e.j.a.s. has been engaged with the Manchester neighborhood for over 20 years. The Manchester neighborhood is at particular risk and is one of the most polluted communities in the Houston area.

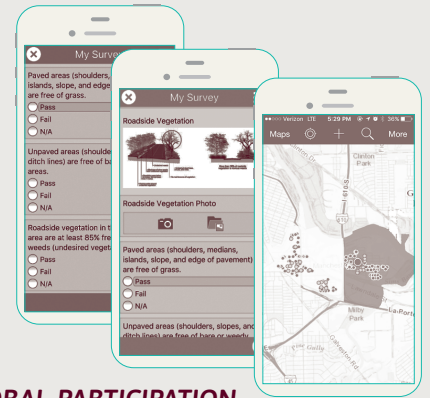
In particular, t.e.j.a.s. educates individuals on health concerns arising from environmental pollution and offers community building skills and resources for action.

Since 2014, Texas A&M University (TAMU) has worked alongside the Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services (t.e.j.a.s.), a non-profit in Houston, to jointly investigate and document persistent vulnerabilities at the nexus of chronic pollution, natural hazards, as well as chemical and non-chemical stressors. Together, along with local high school students and teachers, the partnership collected data on a range of complex environmental issues, educated residents, and developed solutions to reduce exposure and contamination.

The partnership will be sustained with additional grants under development to further reveal and document health outcomes from environmental toxins. With additional funding, the partnership dreams of re-imagining environmental stewardship in the state by establishing a network of early- to mid- career advocates to convene and strategize on the environmental challenges of Texas.



Furr Highschool Students in Houston I.S.D



FOSTERED MULTI-SECTORAL PARTICIPATION

TAMU researchers and students (in public health, urban planning, landscape architecture, and engineering) and t.e.j.a.s. collected data with high school students as “citizen scientists”.

They collected soil, air, and ash samples at various times from 2015 to 2019, including immediately after the 2015 Tax Day floods, the 2016 Memorial Day floods, Hurricane Harvey in 2017 and the ITC fire in 2019.



It opened my eyes to what is going on in our community

--LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT



The research validated community concerns and revealed increased risk of exposure to heavy metals found in drinking water and standing surface water and reduced general physical health scores. Classes of TAMU students and community members co-developed landscape architecture and green solutions based on environmental and health assessments and community desires. TAMU learned the value of specialized community engagement staff, the need for a thoughtful methodological approach to engagement, the importance of cultural competency training for students and faculty, the involvement of residents to increase community participation, among others.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

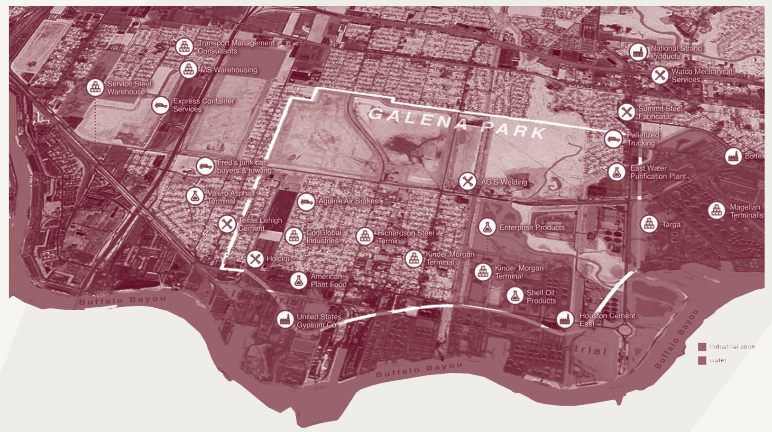
- 2023 W.K. Kellogg Foundation Community Engagement Scholarship Award given by Association of Public & Land Grant Universities.

OUR PROJECTS

HOW DO WE DO IT?

GALENA PARK

Galena Park, located in Harris County, is an industrial port with over 130 pipelines running through it. The area has been through severe environmental disasters in recent years, including Hurricane Harvey in 2017 and a chemical facility fire in 2019. This incident caused almost a dozen tanks to catch fire and release dangerous chemicals into the air, water, and ground. Researchers from Texas A&M monitored the area and collected data, which led to the EPA allocating funding for further investigations—resulting in a three-year project to improve the resilience of Galena Park from hurricanes and flood-induced releases of metals and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). The project’s developed an action plan for the City of Galena Park and is a great example of trans-disciplinary collaboration between scientists, academic researchers and practitioners from multiple disciplines, public institutions, city, and governmental agencies.



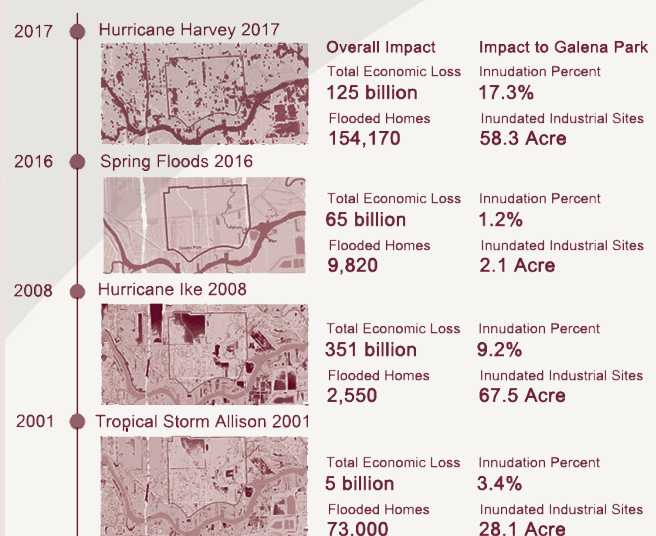
THE CITY RECEIVED \$3.5 MILLION FOR THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AT GALENA PARK FROM THE BIPARTISAN OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS BILL.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

- 2022 TX-ASLA “Merit Award”. American Society of Landscape Architects, Texas Chapter (TX-ASLA). “Pipe Dream: An Adaptive Green Infrastructure Model.” Urban Design Category. Graduate Student: Tianyi Wang



Severe Flood Events in Galena Park



TEXAS TARGET COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

OUR TRACK RECORD

In our last 10 years of taking action and staying committed we accomplished the following:

\$12 Million in Student workforce value

(Student working hours X national volunteer rate)

500,000 Student Working-hours

(Credit hours X 3)

250 Community Meetings



150 Faculty Members



100 Courses



2000 Students



STUDENTS' THOUGHTS

It opens your eyes to the difficulties [in communities] and prepares you for your future work.

It reinforced my master's thesis and work in the Latino community that Latino planners are heavily needed as Latino communities need to be part of the process.

You learn how to work with many different people and organizations on a single project.

This was a great opportunity to see first-hand what community planning looks like.

LET'S CONNECT

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P: 281.748.5872

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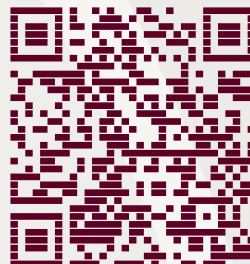


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