



Garza County Forum



Sponsored and Facilitated by:
Garza County Office
Texas Cooperative Extension
The Texas A&M University System

Garza County Forum

Introduction

This report presents the results of the Garza County Forum conducted April 12, 2004 in Post, TX. This Forum is part of the Garza County Futures Forum coordinated by the Garza County Extension Office. Such events are being held in every Texas county as part of the Texas Community Futures Forum, a state-wide needs assessment sponsored and facilitated by Texas Cooperative Extension.

Texas Community Futures Forum

County-level involvement in the Texas Community Futures Forum began in January 1999, with Texans from all segments of the population participating. Citizens in every county were asked to study, discuss and define their communities' current and future needs. Because the populations of Texas counties vary widely, within the framework of the Futures Forum a "community" may be a neighborhood, town, county or region.

Texas Cooperative Extension facilitated the partnering of county government, state agencies, organizations, businesses and other groups to gather information about local needs and issues, and then helped organize action teams to address them. This was an ambitious undertaking. It was also a unique opportunity for many groups to work together in meeting the needs of Texans in the 21st Century.

The 2004 Texas Community Futures Forum process builds off of the previous effort to once again gather information about local needs and issues in all 254 counties. This information will be shared with all of Extension's partners and used as the basis for Extension's long-range outreach education plan for 2005–2008. Extension educational programs, which are available to all Texas residents, will be developed in response to community needs and in conjunction with participating partners.

The products and benefits of this process will be many. All of the issues identified locally will be posted on the Internet for county government, state agencies and other organizations and groups to review and use in developing their own strategic plans. The results from all counties will also be compiled and analyzed in light of trend data to create a comprehensive report. This report will be available to all partners in the Texas Community Futures Forum and to others on request. The information will help all groups to more directly focus their activities and resources; it also will reveal areas of common interest in which partnering groups can work together to solve community problems.

Participants in the Garza County Forum

On April 12, 2004, 28 individuals attended the Garza County Forum. They represent a cross-section of county residents, public agencies and businesses in the area. This forum was facilitated by the following individual(s): Julie Neitsch, Greg Jones. Other(s) supporting this effort included: Julie Neitsch, Greg Jones, Thresa Harp, Lee Norma, Crossvette Gonzales.

Purpose of the Garza County Forum

The purpose of the Forum was to solicit and prioritize citizens' opinions about the most important needs and concerns in Garza County. A modified Nominal Group Technique was used to conduct the forum.

The County Forum Agenda

Introductions and Overview: The Forum began with a general session to review the overall agenda, discuss the facilitation process and rules, and pose the question to be considered. Participants were then divided into 2 small groups.

Small Group Session: Participants were asked to respond to the following question:

What are the critical issues facing people in our county over the next five years?

Participants recorded their responses on paper. These items were displayed for all small group participants to see. Items were then grouped and edited by participants to eliminate duplicates and combine similarities. In the last step of the small group session, each person was allocated ten votes (represented by adhesive dots) to be used among the items he or she believed to be the most important. The outcome was a group consensus for the relative importance of the items. The top-ranked items from each small group were reported in the large group session. All items generated in small groups are in appendix 1.

Large Group Session: First, duplicate and similar statements from the 2 group(s) were edited to eliminate redundancies. Using the voting procedure described above, participants then voted for the items they considered most important.

A final step in the process gave the participants an opportunity to identify entities in the county which are best positioned to work on the issues identified. Participants were asked to respond to the following question:

Which entities (agencies, organizations, community groups, etc.) are positioned to best address these issues?

Information from this step was recorded for each of the top-ranked issues. Results of this part of the process are provided below.

Priority Needs in Garza County Identified by Participants in the County Forum

The following table reports the final rank of items generated by the Garza County Forum.

Table 1: Critical Issues and Entities Identified in Garza County, April 12, 2004.

Rank (Vote)	Description	Entities/Organizations Involved
36	HEALTH CARE– Including: Women's Preventative Services; Emergency Health Care; Health care for non-insured and supplemental services.	Covenant Health Systems, Primary Health Care, Community Recovery Center.
33	WATER DEVELOPMENT– Including: Education on conservation, quality, and water quantity.	Texas Water Development, Water District, NRCS, TDA
29	ELDERLY SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE: Including: Assisting with utility bills (gas, electric) and food services. Health and nutrition education and financial/budgeting courses.	Home Health Care, South Plains Community Action
26	YOUTH PROGRAMS– Including: Positive and productive weekend and after school programs. Education on moral and core values and character education.	Schools, churches, MAD-DADS, Summer Recreation
25	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT– Including: Recreation, tourism, housing, motels, apartments, and fire safety at Lake Allen Henry.	City/County, Post Economic Development Corp, Commerce and Tourism, USDA Rural Development, Big Country RCD

Note: Items are the actual and unaltered responses submitted by the participants. Any discrepancy between an item listed here and the same item in the small group listing (see appendices) is due to editing by participants in the general session. The numbers in the Rank column represents the number of votes participants gave to the corresponding item. Higher numbers denote greater importance.

Future Plans for the Garza County Community Futures Forum

The Futures Forum process gives residents of Garza County the opportunity to identify critical issues that affect them, their families, and their communities. Many local and area agencies and organizations want input from local residents to better focus their activities and resources. Working together, such groups can plan individual, joint or coordinated actions to effectively address a county's or community's critical needs.

Appendix

Appendix 1. Small Group Issues

Note: Small group results are reported here as they were submitted; they have not been edited or changed in compiling this report.

Items Identified by Participants of Small Group(s), Garza County Forum, April 12, 2004.

Small Group #	Vote	Description
1	17	ECONOMIC ISSUES: Including housing, apartments, motels, fire protection at Lake Allen Henry
1	13	BUDGETING/SPENDING COURSES FOR YOUTH: Including: budgeting and financial planning classes for jr. and high school age youth.
1	16	FUNDING FOR ELDERLY SERVICES: Including: Assistance for elderly citizens with utilities (gas, electricity, water) and food.
1	11	DRUG PREVENTION AND TREATMENT: Including: Education on the dangers drugs and their effects and what treatments are available for those with an addiction problem.
1	13	FAMILY VIOLENCE: Including: Child abuse and neglect and elderly abuse and neglect. Education, help, and assistance programs available to these individuals.
1	14	YOUTH PROGRAMS: Including: After school programs for those children not involved in extracurricular activities and positive forms of entertainment during weekends.
2	14	HEALTH CARE– Including: Women's preventative health care; emergency health care; health care for noninsured and supplemental services.
2	9	AGRICULTURE DIVERSIFICATION– Including: new technologies and latest techniques in agriculture.
2	23	RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT– Including: recreation and tourism for Garza County.
2	5	COMMUNICATION– Including: Teaching skills on communicating with different audiences of age, class, and social status.
2	27	DEVELOP WATER RESOURCES– Including: Quality, Quantity, and Conservation of water resources.
2	18	YOUTH PROGRAMS– Including: After school and weekend activities for youth, teaching character education, core values, and sound morals.
2	6	HOUSING DEVELOPMENT– Including: Developing new places/spaces so that new homes can be built.