Assessment of Hill Country Land Use:

Records at the County Level

**Prepared by: Loma Environmental Strategies**

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**1. Introduction**

 The lack of land use policies in rural areas throughout Texas provides unique problems to governmental and independent organizations that attempt to evaluate land use changes over time. Not only does the lack of land use policies hinder the consolidation and processing of information, it hinders the ability of concerned groups to project future development and to assess probable impacts on regional lands. The focus of this proposed project is to work with the Hill Country Alliance (HCA) to assess land use information for the seventeen counties of the Hill Country. Through analysis of the available data our organization will develop recommendations on how information can be standardized to eliminate inconsistencies in data formats. The objective will also facilitate an efficient means by which the regional information can be consolidated to provide pragmatic spatial and temporal data with the goal of enhanced public awareness of developmental impacts on the Hill Country.

**2. Proposal**

 **2.1 Analysis of Land Use Data Collection Methods in the Hill Country**

A fundamental aspect of this project is to determine how counties in the HCA study area keep records of, and track, land use in the Texas Hill Country. Since counties in Texas do not have zoning authority there are not central county offices with systems dedicated to tracking land use.

 **2.1.1 Data**

Collected data will be the result of responses to a questionnaire distributed to the 17 counties concerning their methods of land use tracking. Some of the data that will be evaluate are: current standards for Tax Appraisal Districts record keeping, land development codes, and legal documents about appraisal districts in Texas.

 **2.1.2 Methodology**

Interviews will be conducted with the Tax Assessor/Collector office in each county and their responses will be recorded. Field research will be conducted at select county offices to assess their records and observe firsthand how the offices operate.

 **2.1.3 Implications**

From this research an understanding will developed on how each county manages and communicates land use information. Even though there is not a central department for land use, the appraisal district has an interest in documentation of tax status of parcels, and county commissioners’ records of platting could serve as an indicator of land use.

 **2.2 Pilot Test and Analysis of Subdivision Growth in Hays and Blanco Counties**

The secondary goal of this project is to analyze the change in platted subdivisions in Hays and Blanco counties since the 1980’s

 **2.2.1 Data**

Digital records of subdivisions plats, provided by the HCA, will be used in conjunction with more current records obtained through consultation of county records on subdivision plats.

 **2.2.2 Methodology**

A data set will be created for subdivision features with the following attributes of:

 Subdivision name

 Date of plat

 Date of construction

 Number of lots

 Acreage

 Two feature classes, one for Hays county subdivisions and another for Blanco county subdivisions will be used in this analysis.

 **2.2.3 Implications**

Utilization of spatial analysis and maps will display the increase in the number of subdivisions in the test counties; furthermore, the increase in the subdivided land units compared to the land parcels can be evaluated proportionally over time.

 **2.3 Budget**

 **Data Collection**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Total Hours** ([10 hours/week \* 2 weeks \* 2 consultants] + [5 Hours/week \* 2 weeks \* 1 mgr.] + [7 hours \* 2 weeks \* 1 asst.mgr.]) = **64** |  |  |
| Hourly Pay…………………………………………………………..................... $35.00 |  |  |
| **Total……..…………………………………………………………………………… $2,240.00** |  |

Total Hours 10

 **Data Analysis**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Total Hours** ([10 hour/week \* 8 weeks \* 1 consultants] + [8 Hours/week\* 8 weeks\*1 analyst] + [5 Hours/week \* 8 weeks\*1mgr.] + [7 hours \* 8 weeks \* 1 asst. mgr.] = **240**  |   |  |
| Hourly Pay……………………………………………………………............. $45.00 |  |  |
| **Total……..…………………………………………………………………………. $10,800.00** |  |

**System Management**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Project Manager** |  |  |  |  |
| Total Hours………………………………………………………… 50 |  |  |
| Hourly Pay…..…...………………………………………………… $70.00 |  |  |
| Pay………….………………………………...……………………… $3,500.00 |  |  |
|  **Assistant Project Manager** |  |  |  |  |
| Total Hours……………………………………………………….. 30 |  |  |
| Hourly Pay…..…...………………………………………………. $60.00 |  |  |
| Pay………….………………………………...……………………… $1,800.00 |  |  |
|  **Web Master** |  |  |  |  |
| Total Hours………………………………………………………. 16 |  |  |
| Hourly Pay…..…...………………………………………………. $50.00 |  |  |
| Pay………….………………………………...……………………… $800.00 |  |  |
| **TOTAL………………………………………………………………. $6,100.00** |  |

 **Equipment Cost**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Supplies ($100/workstation \*4 workstations)……………………….. |  $400.00 |  |
| Maintenance ($200/workstation \* 4 workstations)……………….. |  $800.00  |  |
| Depreciation | ([$4,500/workstations \*4 workstations] /36[Equipment Life] \* 2.5 months equipment will be in exclusive use for project | $1,250.00 |  |
| **Total……………………………………………………………………………………… $2,450.00**  |  |

 **Travel**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 200 miles at $0.40/mile………………………………………….…..………….. $80.00 |  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **TOTAL COST ……………………………………………………………….. $26,170.00** |  |  |

 **2.4 Timetable**

 **1 - Data Collection:** September 24- October 29

During Data Collection we will contact the counties and conduct interviews; data from Hays and Blanco counties will be inspected. The first two weeks the full team will work to find data sources. The following two weeks analysts will move in to the next phase.

 **2 - Pre Processing Data:** October13-November 7

In this step verification of completeness and correctness of data will be evaluated; this will include development of metadata. Half the team will continue working on collecting additional data and filling gaps.

 **3 - Data Analysis:** October 17-November19

Analysis will consist of writing the report on the counties’ status of land use tracking, as well as working the data for the subdivisions in Hays and Blanco counties. As each member completes the collection and pre processing phase the group will transition into full analysis.

 **4 - Data Interpretation:**  November 17-December 3

 This phase will focus on the creation of the final report and the compilation of results.

 **2.5 Final Deliverables**

Our deliverables will include; a report detailing the conditions of how land use records are kept at the county level with recommendations for standardizing; maps demonstrating subdivision growth and location in Hays in Blanco counties, data table for subdivisions showing the name, date of platting, date of construction, acreage, and number of lots.

**3. Conclusion**

This study intends to identify the current limitations of public resources in classifying land use and land cover outside city limits within Texas Hill County counties. Information from county offices, appraisal districts, and official public records will be used to assess information about current land use. Along with research of present information systems in place, Loma Environmental Strategies will suggest how an information portal of standardized land use practices could enable citizens and officials of Texas counties to properly monitor land use and change. Ultimately, the goal of the land classification portal will help encourage smart growth and preserve the aesthetic qualities of the Texas Hill Country.

Development and population growth has increased considerably within the Texas Hill Country in the recent years. Location of development is based on many criteria, but access and right-of-way to land is a logistical necessity. Loma Environmental Strategies is also interested in understanding where residential development has occurred in counties near major transportation arteries. Areas west of I-35 in Hays County and those east of US 281 in Blanco County have seen a considerable increase of development. Rural residential development of large tracts of land (+20 acres) for the past twenty years will be researched to understand any direction or trend that has occurred within Hays and Blanco County and possibly forecast any future development.

**4. Participation**

**Jason Arbogast** – Manager

Summary Purpose

Scope References

**Stanislaw Moszynski** – Assistant Manager

Editing Methodology

Implications Final Deliverables

Logo

**Chris Robertson** – Analyst

Data Methodology

Implications Budget

Timetable Final Deliverables

**Joseph G. Butler** – Data Management

Participation References

PowerPoint Webmaster

**5.** **Resources**

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Valle, David. Hays Central Appraisal District. [Online]. September 24, 2008.

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<http://www.esri.com/>

USGS. USGS: Science of Changing the World. [Online]. September 17, 2008.

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