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Fort Hancock, Texas Capital Improvement Report

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Fort Hancock, Texas
Capital Improvement Report

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Fort Hancock Capital Improvement Report

Introduction

This report follows up to the research background technical report #2005-03, The Institute for Policy and Economic Development, requested by The Rio Grande Council of Governments (RGCOG). The report 2005-03 and accompanying research were conducted during summer of 2005. One of the main findings, presented in the report, was an extraordinary need for improved decision making capacities; especially concerning urban development and urban planning policies. The concentrated growth of the town is skewed to the east where new subdivisions are being developed rapidly. We concluded that better coordination and cooperative decision making are necessary in order to redirect urban growth. The redirection will work to enhance existing infrastructure, services, and resources in a more efficient and effective manner. This report addresses the existing infrastructure and capital intensive facilities.

First, we provide an overview of county and rural governments' provision of capital facilities, and we also present an inventory of existing capital facilities found in Fort Hancock. Next we report our findings from a community-based focus group conducted in the community, late last year. Finally, we examine the implications of these findings for the local governments and their citizenry. We note the importance of public participation via the stakeholder focus group experience.

Capital facilities: definition, scope and importance of infrastructure

Local capital investments and facilities can play a critical role for the wellbeing of residents located in urban and exurban communities. Sub-state governments are positioned to contribute to the provision, management, and maintenance of these public works investments. We examine, in greater detail, the importance of capital facilities and the respective roles played by, a variety of units of, government. Three descriptive models of capital intensive facilities are employed. The

first depends upon economics, the second is rooted in public administration, and finally the third, utilizes a legal judicial orientation.

Economic rationale

According to economists - capital and labor stocks are responsible for the production which creates wealth by producing outputs¹. Major metropolitan areas also provide wealth because of their labor stocks and capital investments. These areas produce outputs (manufactured goods, agricultural products, services, etc.) that satisfy the basic needs of residents including: residential housing, food commodities, and retail products like clothing, etc.

Capital investments (equipment, financial resources, infrastructure, etc.) and labor (population) when combined produce the goods and services that residents' demand. Public works facilities and community infrastructure investments are also referred as capital facilities. Likewise, they play a key role in the material production of wealth and ultimately the wellbeing of the urban and/or exurban residents. Manufacturers, farmers, merchants, households, etc. require infrastructure investments to produce commercial outputs. In short, capital facilities play a key role in the production of wealth within a metropolitan area.

Throughout time there has been debate over the extent to which governments should supply, fund, and maintain capital facilities. Capital facilities, and most public infrastructure, are natural monopolies. A natural monopoly is said to exist when it is more efficient to have a sole provider instead of having market competition - one populated by several suppliers. For instance, is it economically rational to have two or more wastewater treatment suppliers and systems competing for a client's business? Additionally, a positive benefit associated with publicly funded and provided public works is the opportunity to achieve economies of scale; this is, as the number of users increases the average costs of the operation declines. Furthermore, because capital infrastructure

¹ Adam Smith is responsible for noting that governments need to under take the indispensable provision of public works.

is money intensive—large initial investments are required in order to capitalize the “system of service delivery”. Again, the economies of scale provide governmental units, including special districts, the fiscal capacity to: finance, build, operate, and maintain the public investments.

Public administration approach

Public capital infrastructure and public services, historically, have been provided by units of government. The primary justification for governmental intervention is market failure; this is especially true for expensive capital infrastructure. Publicly consumed goods and services illustrate market failure. A “pure” public good has two primary characteristics: 1) non-exclusivity – meaning, in theory, nobody can be prevented from enjoying the benefits of the good, and 2) it can be jointly consumed. For instance, no citizen can be excluded from using a county or city road and several vehicles can use the same road at the same time. Based on the nature of public goods (non-exclusion and joint consumption) generally the market place or the private sector avoids the provision of public goods and services. Consequently, units of government have intervened and delivered them.

Externalities are another form of market failure and they justify governmental intervention for the provision of capital facilities. Externalities or spillovers can be both negative and positive. A negative externality is when a third party is harmed by the action of a market transaction. Typical negative externalities are pollution and traffic congestion. Generally, government intervenes through taxation and regulation policies. The intervention offsets and/or minimizes the negative impacts. Actions which provide positive spillovers, benefiting the largest number of people at one time are positive externalities. Positive externalities include tax subsidies and incentives.

The legal judicial orientation

The economic rationale and public administration approach do not specify the legal mandates requiring the governmental provision of public goods and services. Rather, these decisions are based upon a mixture of police powers, local tastes and preferences, and political culture. The

10th Amendment of the United States Constitution states that “the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.” The amendment only recognizes two levels of government—the federal government and state governments. In the United States Constitution sub-state units of governments (i.e., municipalities, counties, and special districts) are not mentioned.

Merriam v. Moody’s Executors (1868) is the case law reference used to argue that local governments are the creatures of the states. Consequently, the powers necessary to address local problems and policies must be granted to the sub-states units of government by states. This extension of 10th amendment powers transfers *police power* to states which in turn delegated them to local governments. This power is utilized to ensure “the comfort, safety, morals, health, and prosperity of its citizens...” (Black, 1993). *Eminent Domain* is another example of a state power delegated to local governments; it can be granted completely or limitedly.

Capital Facilities and Intergovernmental Coordination in Texas

Capital infrastructure investments can be viewed as planning tools. Local governments utilize them to ensure “comfort, safety, morals, health, and prosperity of its citizens” (Black, 1993). For instance, water and sewer systems are directly linked to public health; roads enhance economic development and facilitate rapid transportation.

Governments have several options: 1) invest in and provide capital facilities; 2) contract with private sector providers for the provision of the infrastructure; and, 3) transfer the responsibility to the market place while retaining regulatory power in order to protect the public’s welfare and wellbeing. The intergovernmental partners (federal, state and local governments) are responsible for the assignment and coordination of service delivery responsibilities. A basic illustration is as follows: the federal government is responsible for interstate highways (i.e., Interstate-10); state government for state highways (i.e., State Highway 20); and, local units of government provide

roads within their territorial jurisdictions (i.e., Knox Road).

Title 7 of the State of Texas statute entitled “intergovernmental relations” delineates and assigns sub-state planning responsibilities². Specifically Chapter 791 entitled “Interlocal Cooperation Contract” pertains to capital facilities. It specifies the legal terms for local governments to subcontract with other local governments. This provision provides local governments’ convenience and/or financial leverage in the construction of capital facilities.

Table 1. **Texas Government Code for Chapter 791.**

Section Number	Section Title
SECTION 791.021.	CONTRACTS FOR REGIONAL CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES
SECTION 791.022.	CONTRACTS FOR REGIONAL JAIL FACILITIES
SECTION 791.023.	CONTRACTS FOR STATE CRIMINAL JUSTICE FACILITIES
SECTION 791.024.	CONTRACTS FOR COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS FACILITIES
SECTION 791.026.	CONTRACTS FOR WATER SUPPLY AND WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITIES
SECTION 791.027.	EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE
SECTION 791.028.	CONTRACTS FOR JOINT PAYMENT OF ROAD CONSTRUCTION AND IMPROVEMENTS
SECTION 791.030.	HEALTH CARE AND HOSPITAL SERVICES
SECTION 791.031.	TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE
SECTION 791.032.	CONSTRUCTION, IMPROVEMENT, AND REPAIR OF STREETS IN MUNICIPALITIES
SECTION 791.033.	CONTRACTS TO CONSTRUCT, MAINTAIN, OR OPERATE FACILITIES ON STATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM

Fort Hancock, located in Hudspeth County, does not have the population base necessary to support community-wide capital facilities investments. Based on this, the citizenry are forced to select between a variety of providers including a special purpose district, a private corporation, and volunteerism (e.g., hauling water from another location to another location). Table 2 presents an

² State of Texas. *Texas Statutes Government Code*. Retrieved April 4, 2007 from <http://tlo2.tlc.state.tx.us/statutes/gv.toc.htm>.

inventory of existing capital facilities and public services. A quick review of Table 2 illustrates that Fort Hancock relies on volunteers and the neighboring county of El Paso to provide emergency medical services (EMS) and fire protection. The responsibility for water, sewer, and solid waste are dependant on a mixture of providers—special purpose government, private corporation, and Hudspeth County. The balance of the service provision and capital infrastructure responsibilities are addressed by federal and state resources.

Table 2. **Inventory of Existing Capital Facilities.**

Capital Facilities and Services	Description	Provider
Water services	Fort Hancock Water Control and Improvement District (251 units)	Special purpose government
	Esperanza Valley Water Service Enterprise	Private Corporation
Solid waste	Cerro Alto Composting (5RC type: resource recovery or composting)	County
	Hudspeth County landfill (typem3: closed)	County
Parks	Lovelady Park (1.15 acre)	State of Texas
Roads	State Highway 20	State
	Interstate Highway I-10	Federal
	County Roads	Local/county
EMS/ Clinics	Volunteer force (1 ambulance)	Volunteer
	Grant application for a new ambulance	El Paso County
Fire	Volunteer force	Volunteer & El Paso County
Law enforcement	Sheriff	County
Post office	One USPS facility	Federal

Capital Facilities Needs Assessment

A brief needs assessment of capital facilities in Fort Hancock helps to gage the quantity and quality of public infrastructure investments. An enumeration of existing services indicates whether

or not the capital facilities are available for residents. This is an objective measure. Qualitative indicators are subjective measures dependant upon the residents' perceptions. For example, the tastes of the local water supply.

Access to services

Data for telephone services and plumbing facilities are extracted from U.S. Census Bureau sources. Table 3 displays the variance between the provision of these services in Fort Hancock and the State of Texas. The state data are used to benchmark the relationship between the two service providers. Compared to the State of Texas, the residents of Fort Hancock are underserved. Looking at telephone service please note the percentage of Fort Hancock households are five times more likely to not have telephone service compared the rest of the state.

Table 3. **Telephone Service and Plumbing Facilities by Housing Units in Fort Hancock CDP, Texas**

Tenure by Telephone Service Available	Number	Percent	Percent (Texas)
<i>Housing Units</i>	519	100.0	100.0
With telephone service	445	85.7	96.8
No telephone service	74	14.3	3.2

Tenure by Plumbing Facilities			
<i>Housing Units</i>	519	100	100
With complete plumbing facilities	478	80.5	99.3
Lacking complete plumbing facilities	41	19.5	0.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

Housing units with complete plumbing facilities—are households with hot and cold piped water, a flush toilet, and a bathtub or shower³—is one important indicator of quality of life. It serves as a proxy measure for a local government's capacity to provide basic public health

³ The data on plumbing facilities were obtained from answers to long-form questionnaire Item 39, which was asked on a sample basis at both occupied and vacant housing units. Retrieved on June 19, 2007 from http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/MetadataBrowserServlet?type=subject&id=PLUMBSF3&dsspName=DEC_2000_SF3&back=update&_lang=en

functions. Data reported in Table 3 indicates that two out of ten homes lack these basic services compared to less than one per hundred in the State of Texas.

Furthermore, an examination of house heating fuel data (see Table 4) indicates this preponderant lack of capital infrastructure. In Fort Hancock, approximately ninety percent of the residents rely on bottled, tank or liquid petroleum (LP) gas while the average Texan household is connected to either natural gas or electric utilities.

Table 4. **Type of House Heating Fuel in Fort Hancock CDP, Texas**

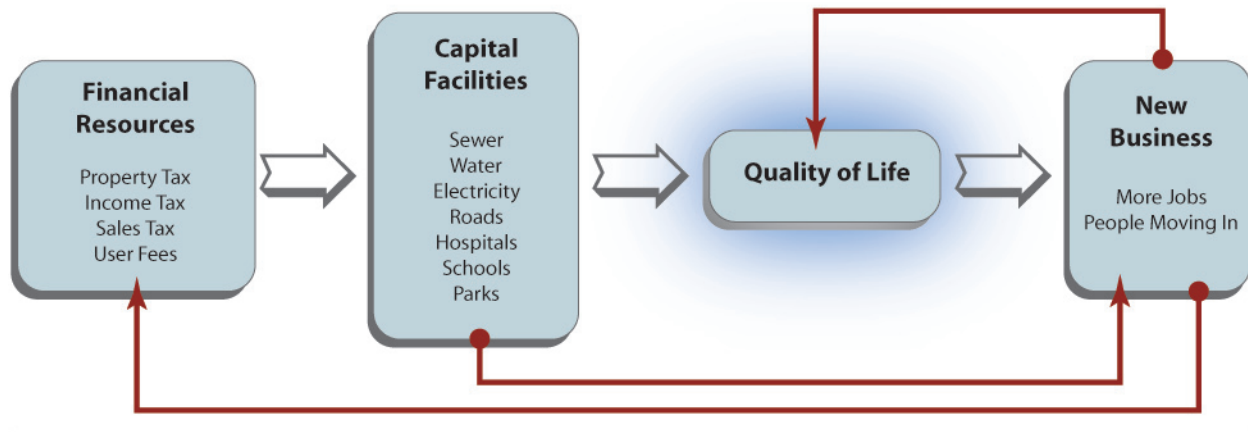
House Heating Fuel	Number	Percent	Percent (Texas)
<i>Occupied housing units</i>	519	100.0	100.0
Utility gas	7	1.3	43.2
Bottled, tank, or LP gas	464	89.4	6.4
Electricity	28	5.4	49.4
Fuel oil, kerosene, etc	0	0.0	0.1
Coal or coke	0	0.0	0.0
Wood	9	1.7	0.4
Solar energy	0	0.0	0.0
Other fuel	0	0.0	0.1
No fuel used	11	2.1	0.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

The dearth of infrastructure investments handicaps Fort Hancock's economic development capacity. This cycle is illustrated in Figure 1 detailing the relationships between financing, construction of capital facilities, attracting new businesses, and the overall quality of life. The systems model depicted in Figure 1 reveals that local services are depended upon taxes extracted from area-wide business and other state and federal revenue streams. The quantity and quality of capital facilities are dependant upon these fiscal resources. In turn the local quality of life and corporate decisions to relocate in the area are heavily influenced by existing and future capital infrastructure investments. The relationships illustrated in the model are interrelated and have an impact on the overall fiscal health and quality of life in Fort Hancock. In other words, new

businesses creates new jobs, which provide new tax dollars, which can be available for capital facilities, and these investments have the potential to improve area quality of life.

Figure 1. **System Model of Capital Facilities.**



Source: Elaborated by authors.

Public participation

The descriptive analysis based upon Census Bureau data illustrates a perennial economic challenge for rural communities like Fort Hancock. When the population grows, the demand for capital facilities expands thereby creating a large gap between citizens' needs and capital investments available. Fort Hancock, as any other government, faces the dilemma that its residents have so many needs but the government only has limited resources. In light of the scarce resources, the major capital facilities investment question becomes how and where to allocate these resources. One respected approach to measuring a community's wants and needs is to conduct public participation forums. These meetings involve and consult participants by soliciting their opinions and priorities. Additionally, they provide an opportunity for residents to reveal their preferences. The processes of this form of engagement promote citizen buy-in and democratic participation. Prior to presenting our findings from the public forum conducted on November 16, 2006, we explain the research methodology.

Focus Group Methodology

Within the context of focus groups participants are brought together to engage in guided discussions. The format is one that promotes flexibility, captures the face validity of the respondents at that specific point in time, and provides resident preferences distilled from the conversations. Prior to the public forum, the research team from the Institute for Policy and Economic Development (IPED) coordinated with the Rio Grande Council of Governments (RGCOG) and Alianza Para El Desarrollo Comunitario to identify a variety of individuals invited to participate. The list of invitees came from a variety of backgrounds and professions to ensure wide diversity of opinions. Initially twelve [12] individuals perceived to be representative of the community's interests including religious leaders, local elected officials, law enforcement, water utilities, EMS volunteers, school administrators, and average residents were invited. However, the team was pleasantly surprised when approximately 55 people assembled for the forum. Without any advertisements or public postings the "word of mouth" in this tightly-knit community helped to mobilize this unexpected turn-out.

The research team observed several important dynamics: the residents' had pent-up demands and were eager to express their opinions. Further more, the larger group of participants was more representative, in terms of population variance and interests, than the original invitees. Considering that Spanish is the first language for a large percent of Fort Hancock's population the focus group was conducted in English and Spanish with simultaneous translation.

Once the participants were assembled, the team reviewed the goals of the focus group, defined and discussed what was meant by the term *capital facilities*, and outlined the steps involved for the charettes⁴ as illustrated in Figure 2. All participants were divided into one of four subgroups assigned to different tables. Sub-group selection was based on a random process—promoting a more representative distribution of participants. The researchers followed traditional focus group protocol, which promotes smaller more conversational interactions (Step 1, see Figure 2). This

way all members had an equal opportunity to communicate their opinions and preferences.

Open discussions were conducted at each table where participants were asked to identify issues and concerns with regards to capital facilities improvements. IPED team members' monitored participation to make sure each individual had an opportunity to contribute and conversations were not dominated by one or two individuals. The tables cooperatively selected spoke-persons that voiced the members' collective concerns to the research team. The spoke-person also had the responsibility of recording and summarizing their group's majority and minority opinions (Step 2).

The distinctive written assessments from each of the four subgroups were then posted in the front of the room for review and additional discussion. Recorded preferences were aggregated into like categories and dimensions (Step 3). The spectrum of capital investment preferences included: water; EMS; streets and roads; health clinic; sewer; parks; recreational facilities; jobs; transportation; library; law enforcement; and, postal services.

After the preferences were posted, the researchers described the idea of cumulative voting – all participants were asked to think about the capital investment they desired the most. Said differently, of all the categories, which one do you consider most important? The facilitators provided each participant with five [5] votes (five red dots) and instructed them to allocate the votes based upon their personal priorities (Step 4). For instance, if the participant felt strongly about one category they could allocate all five votes to that specific category or distribute them across the various categories.

When voting was completed, researchers and participants discussed the distribution and ranking of capital investment interests (Step 5). After a quick visual inspection major patterns became discernible. Intensity of opinion was observed and consensus emerged. The votes were tallied and discussed.

⁴ This charette are intensive work sessions focused on achieving specific goals using specific techniques to collect "raw data."

Figure 2. **Focus Group Methodology Steps**



STEP 1

The four diverse and representative groups organized.



STEP 2

Group members discuss capital facilities wants and needs.



STEP 3

Record preferences posted by category.



STEP 4

Participant allocation of votes.



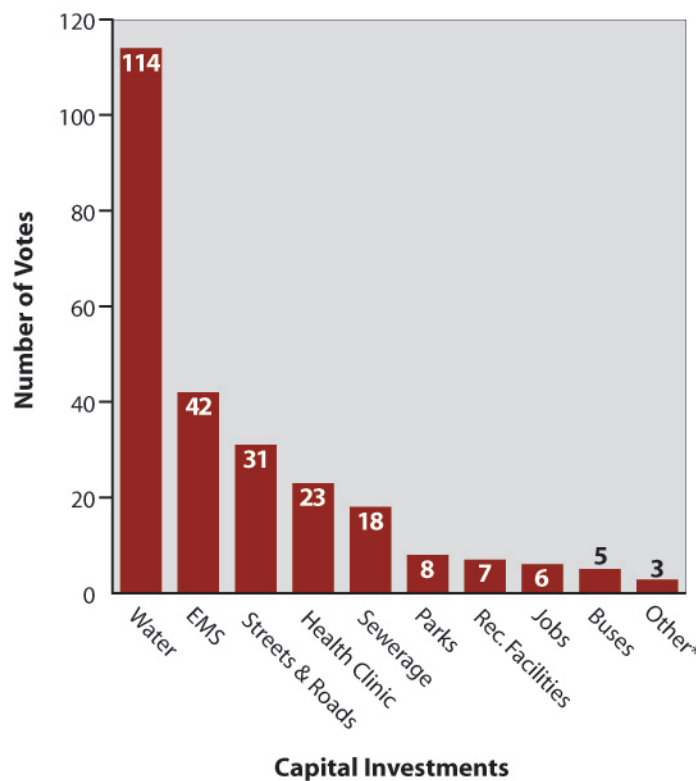
STEP 5

Votes counted and findings discussed.

Findings

A total of 257 votes⁵ were cast and recorded. Please note in Figure 3 that residents' ranked *water* as their highest priority. Water captured 44.3% of the tallied votes. The second priority was *Emergency Medical Services (EMS)* however the variance between the preferences for water and EMS was approximately two-thirds less. The drastic drop illustrates a single major preference communicated at the focus group. The preferences for the other investments decline gradually for the remaining categories. All preferences for capital improvements are reported and examined prior to the research team's overall recommendations.

Figure 3. **Residents' Preferences for Capital Improvements**



Notes: Other includes library, law enforcement, and postal service - these categories received one vote each.

Source: Public Forum.

⁵ Note 52 voters were counted. Not all individuals allocated their five votes.

Water

The vast majority of Fort Hancock residents identified water as their capital infrastructure investment priority. One way to think about the intensity of the issue is on average each participant allocated at least two votes for this category. Participants emphasized that a considerable number of households do not have access to potable, clean running water. We are concerned that this is related to the Census Bureau data reported in Table 3.

Water quality was frequently mentioned as a primary concern. The water delivered by the Fort Hancock Water Control and Improvement District was perceived as “undrinkable” and of the poorest quality. Several individuals stated that they prefer to use the water for bathing purposes in light of the poor quality and potential health risks. Alternatives to this infrastructure problem included purchasing bottled water. Some residents went as far as transporting their water from households being served by Esperanza Valley Water Service Enterprise, which uses a reverse osmosis method to treat their water.

Many residents complained about the expense of water services provided by Fort Hancock Water Control and Improvement District. When compared to Esperanza Valley Water Service Enterprise, residents stated their bills were considerably higher. They desired similar quality of water at a more reasonable price. Based upon these criteria, residents developed the notion that the Fort Hancock Water Control and Improvement District is mismanaged. They wanted the operations to be more transparent and the water board members more accountable.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Fire department, emergency medical, and law enforcement personnel can provide emergency medical services in rural counties if properly trained. However, in Fort Hancock there are no paid fire and emergency medical providers. The fire protection and rescue services consist of only volunteers, and when emergency situations are beyond their capacity the El Paso County EMS provides additional support. Residents stated that two major liabilities are the lack of fire

hydrants and an adequate fire station. Recently, the Fort Hancock EMS was awarded a grant for a refurbished fire truck and updated equipment to replace aging emergency vehicles.

Streets and Roads

Knox Avenue, which crosses the town in a north-south direction, is the only paved street in town. Consequently the residents noted that lack of paved streets was a major problem. Typically rural roads are hazardous because of extensive dust; this is especially true during the windy season. Another indicator of poor road and street quality is the lack signage and relatively poor lighting. Flood control and drainage are also serious problems for vehicle mobility since water accumulates resulting in potholes and accessibility problems. During our site visit in November 2006, we observed a county road grader remedying problems caused by recent flooding.

Health Clinic and Pharmacy

Residents indicated that they lacked access to basic health care and pharmaceutical services. El Paso, Texas, which is about 40 miles west of Fort Hancock, has the closest medical services and retail pharmacies. The U.S./Mexico Border: Demographic, Socio-Economic, and Health Issues Profile I⁶ provides contextual data and documents the underlining issue; poor quality of preventive health care common along the US-Mexico border.

- In 2000, about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the border population lived within a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). This problem is an acute one with 70% of Texas-Mexico border population residing in the HPSA.
- The US-Mexico Border ranks 51st per capita in the number of health professionals.
- Latinos are the most uninsured population (32%) in the United States. Among Latinos, Mexican Americans (38-45%) and immigrant subgroups (40-60%) constitute the highest percentage of uninsured population.
- About 14% of the US-Mexican border county population is pre-diabetic. An estimated 74% and 70% of men and women respectively are overweight or obese

⁶ La Fe Policy and Advocacy Center. (2006). *The U.S./Mexico Border: Demographic, Socio-Economic, and Health Issues Profile I*. Retrieved April 4, 2007 from http://www.borderhealth.org/files/res_805.pdf.

- The leading cause of death among US-Mexican border county residents is heart disease.
- The US-Mexican border counties rank 2nd in incidence of tuberculosis, and 3rd in deaths due to hepatitis.

Sewer Infrastructure

Based upon the non-existence of sewer services (sanitary wastewater treatment) residents commented their standards of living resembled “third world” conditions. Residents emphasized that they did not have access to a centralized system. The negative externalities associated with this lack of capital infrastructure investment included terrible odors, potential contamination of underground water supplies, and other problems associated with using septic tanks. In light of the fact that wastewater treatment systems are one of the most expensive capital investments, new subdivisions located in the east side of town are also installing septic tanks.

Parks and Recreation

Further down on their priority listing participants expressed their desire to have more parks and recreation facilities available. Currently, Lovelady Park owned by the State of Texas is the only public park. It is primarily a rest area located along State Highway 20. In a creative fashion, public school facilities are also opened for recreational opportunities. Compounding this issue is the lack of a community center but when the focus group meeting was conducted, Alianza Para El Desarrollo Comunitario, lead by Mr. Daniel Solis, were making and laying the first rows of abodes for the new community center.

Public Transportation & Jobs

Several participants communicated interest in public transportation. Historically, American cities are overly reliant on private modes of transportation. The one group dependent upon public transportation in the United States are the impoverished citizens located in the densest urban areas—such as downtown districts. A relationship exists between job location and public transportation accessibility, which helps to explain that less desirable jobs tend to be located along

public transportation routes. Rural in nature Fort Hancock will not have public transportation in the foreseeable future - jobs opportunities will probably remain quite limited for individuals lacking access to private vehicles.

Library, Postal Service and Law Enforcement

Currently Fort Hancock residents enjoy access to a public library, a United States Postal Services office, and a county sheriff's substation. With only one vote cast for each of these services it's rather obvious that the respondents were not aware of these or wanted enhanced delivery.

Summary

The Census Bureau data and the data collected at the residents' forum substantiate the existing deficits of capital facilities and documents residents' priorities and preferences related to future infrastructure investments. Like most rural communities in Texas located along the US-Mexico border Fort Hancock is woefully low in public services and the requisite infrastructure necessary for their delivery. The merits of this public participation forum are as follows: 1) preferences and opinions from a wide cross-section of the community were voiced, debated, categorized, and prioritized; 2) the word of mouth (snowball sampling technique) potentially attracted community members predisposed to not engaging in other forums of participation. This is especially true for non-English speakers, undocumented residents, and those in the lowest socioeconomic levels; and, 3) the unexpectedly large turnout might indicate the community's concerns, interests, and sense of urgency associated with much needed capital improvements.

The community desires extremely basic infrastructure investments essential for public health, wellbeing, and to an extent community/economic development. Their priorities are water delivery, management, operations, and maintenance; and EMS enhancements. The research team utilized community input and further analyses to develop the recommendations.

Recommendations:

Fort Hancock Water Control and Improvement District is legally restricted to supplying water to 251 out of 579 homes. This limited capacity handicaps future development. Consider the following alternatives revise legal barriers in order to permit expanded coverage; and, investigate a potential service agreement, between the Esperanza Valley Water Service Enterprise and the Fort Hancock Water Control and Improvement District, targeted at improving water quality and expanding coverage.

Quite a few participants expressed a need for transparency in the management of Fort Hancock Water Control and Improvement District. Negative perceptions might be mitigated through increased stakeholder participation and board membership. The residents need to be informed and educated about the management, operation, and maintenance (MOM) of the water utility.

In addition to the funding sources, with the exception of regular water bills, Fort Hancock Water Control and Improvement District should explore other revenue streams. They are encouraged to expand their search for federal and state grants especially ones designated to provide technical assistance for MOM improvement. The Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC), a binational agency with substantial expertise in providing technical assistance and infrastructure financing, has additional grants-in-aid opportunities for Fort Hancock.

Recognizing that Fort Hancock qualifies to receive assistance from BECC⁷ the community is encouraged to pursue funding for water related projects. Their extensive infrastructure portfolio, mandated by binational agreement, also funds projects for water pollution control, wastewater treatment, municipal solid waste management, hazardous waste, water conservation, water and sewer systems hookups, and waste reduction and recycling. Projects related to air quality, transportation, clean and efficient energy, and municipal planning and development, including

⁷ Border Environment Cooperation Commission. (2007). *General Information: BECC Background*. Retrieved on April 4, 2007 from <http://www.cocef.org/background.htm>.

water management, have recently been added to BECC's mandate.

In regards to emergency services the volunteer department is commended for their accomplishments. The EMS volunteer workforce is encouraged to continue and expand their training and revenue sources so they may offer uninterrupted high quality services. Until the force reaches appropriate capacity continue to coordinate and depend on support services provided by El Paso County. Planners designing future improvements to the emergency services infrastructure would benefit from using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to identify strategic locations for fire hydrants; to locate residential, commercial, agricultural, and public properties; to map streets and roads; and, to catalog existing infrastructure.

Conclusion

Assuming the Fort Hancock community continues to expand in size and population the existing infrastructure and capital facilities will be stressed beyond their capacity. In the future if capital infrastructure stock is not maintained and expanded then the existing problems, noted by residents, will proliferate. Lacking adequate capital investments, the residents' quality of life will be compromised. Another negative externality flowing from the inadequate investments is very limited potential for additional community/economic development.

Intergovernmental partnerships and maintained collaborations are critical for the continued provision of public goods and services. Such scarce resources command public prioritization demonstrated at the focus group – the capital investments associated with water services are paramount. The robust turnout and active community engagement bodes well for long-term planning and capital infrastructure development in Fort Hancock.

APPENDIX A. Participants' Votes.

