



**GREATER FORT BEND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL**

For Immediate Release
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NEWS RELEASE

Greater Fort Bend Economic Development Council Snags National Corporate Real Estate Award

*--Fort Bend EDC Receives Global Innovator's Award
for GIS system designed to decipher the viability of development sites,
in minutes--*

Fort Bend County, Texas (October 21, 2003)—The Greater Fort Bend Economic Development Council (Fort Bend EDC) was selected as the recipient of the Global Innovator's Award given each year by CoreNet Global, the world's premier professional association for corporate real estate leaders. At the CoreNet Global Fall Summit in Atlanta, Georgia October 14, the award was presented to the Fort Bend EDC in front of over 3,000 attendees, including 750 corporate real estate executives.

From more than 100 applicants, twelve finalists were selected to present their innovations in August 2003 at Harvard University before a panel of senior corporate real estate professionals and leading educators. And from the finalists, five winners were chosen, including Toyota, Sprint, Ford Land, the U.S. Army and the Fort Bend EDC, the only Texas contender.

The Fort Bend EDC won in the Innovations by Communities/Economic Development Organizations category with its one-of-a-kind Geographical Information System (GIS) innovation as applied to the site selection process in economic development

The Council has used its knowledge of technology and economic development and “bundled” software, hardware, and data, creating its own innovative methodology for doing economic development work. The award-winning GIS software application is fitted with a 72-inch, touch-sensitive “SMART” screen connected to a customized computer system. The GIS system uses a base map, which is a digitized aerial photograph of Fort Bend County, and displays selected “layers” of information on top of the color aerial.

This economic development tool assists site consultants, brokers, corporate real estate executives, and developers in performing site selection and feasibility research. Site-specific research that used to take nearly three weeks to complete can now be accomplished in a matter of minutes; therefore, saving its clients time and money.

The user can select and overlay multiple layers at a time and decipher in minutes whether or not a specific site is suitable for a particular development. A few of the 50-plus layers include roads, highways, city limit and extraterritorial jurisdiction boundaries, topography, water features, county mobility plan, pipelines, electrical distribution lines, potential hazards, traffic counts rail lines, utility districts, potential wetlands, flood zones, school district boundaries, soils, property ownership abstracts, planned communities, historical sites, multi-family complexes, retail big box availability and office buildings.

The volumes of information needed for this innovative tool were provided by the Fort Bend County GIS Consortium, a public/private partnership of governmental entities and private businesses with geographic data to share. George Culver, a

GIS specialist at LJA Engineering & Surveying, Inc., served as a consultant on the project and installed the numerous data layers into the system.

“Without the Consortium, this exceptional project could have never become a reality,” said Herb Appel, President of the Greater Fort Bend Economic Development Council. “Now, because of this cooperative effort, site consultants, brokers, users and developers can now identify potential sites, research all infrastructure availability and narrow down their search criteria in one session with a staff member using the GIS system. This has the potential to revolutionize the way the entire economic development industry does business. We believe the process of identifying and utilizing shared information between the units of government, the Fort Bend EDC and the private sector will lead to increased revenues and decreased expenses for all concerned.”

CoreNet signifies a global Corporate Real Estate Network. As a global learning organization, it is the industry thought and opinion leader. CoreNet Global is the only group that convenes the entire industry.

Now in its fourth year, the prestigious Global Innovators Award recognizes the best of innovation in the strategic management of corporate real estate. There are five award categories in the program, designed to recognize innovation and the creative application of new ideas. These categories include innovations in corporate real estate and workplace management, innovations in community service, innovations by communities/economic development organizations, innovations by service providers and innovations by new players in corporate real estate.

"Greater Fort Bend's GIS tool is on the leading edge of innovation in economic development," said Tim Venable, in charge of the Global Innovator's Award for CoreNet Global. "The judges clearly saw this tool as the kind of ground-breaking innovation that the award is designed to recognize."

This year's twelve finalists included Beck-SBC Communications, Deutsche Bank, Ford Land, Gensler-Volkswagen of America, Greater Halifax Partnership, Johnson Controls, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Prudential, Sprint, Toyota, U.S. Army and the Greater Fort Bend Economic Development Council.

"We are especially proud for this project to be in the ranks of the winners, as the resources available to the EDC for a project like this are minimal compared to the other contenders," added Appel. "It was the hard work of those who were committed to creating this tool that made it possible. With sheer innovator's desire to create something that was beyond what was currently available, we can now provide the most complete knowledge to our viewers and developers- not just information but knowledge."

The Greater Fort Bend Economic Development Council has assisted in more than 100 relocations and expansions into Fort Bend County. This has resulted in additional tax valuations of \$1.3 billion and 14,700 jobs. Various factors contribute to attracting a wide spectrum of industry to Fort Bend County, such as high education attainment levels, a skilled work force, training opportunities, 40+ planned communities and a quality of life that is second-to-none.

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