

Taylor taps Angelou for economic review

BY GISELLE GREENWOOD
AUSTIN BUSINESS JOURNAL STAFF

The City of Taylor has hired AngelouEconomics Inc. to conduct a six-month economic development and marketing study. The project will help craft a five-year economic plan for the Williamson County suburb.

The city is paying the Austin economic consulting firm \$50,000 to identify the city's strongest characteristics and form a plan for what types of industries are best for the city.

AngelouEconomics is setting up a Web site, (www.growingtaylor.com), to gather recommendations, marketing strategist Nicole Urbis says. Beginning in January, AngelouEconomics will post an online survey on the Web site.

"We strive to get as many people involved" as possible, Urbis says. "We try to get a lot of citizen input so that, as we go forward, the community really has a say."

AngelouEconomics' study will be part of an overall plan, says John Nelson, Taylor's economic development director. The city has hired Wilbur Smith Associates Inc., a South Carolina consulting firm, to develop the plan.

Nelson says that although the city had commissioned economic development studies in 1996 and 1999, Taylor has changed drastically in the past five years.

"Three years into our comprehensive plan, we decided that things have changed enough that we should update our previous

economic development plan," Nelson says.

Being located in one of the country's fastest growing counties has helped Taylor, but neighboring cities that are closer to Austin have been attracting more attention.

"Taylor has been kind of overshadowed by Georgetown, Round Rock and Hutto, so we're trying to grow [Taylor's] identity," Urbis says.

Still, Taylor hasn't been without its economic victories.

The city recently announced Basler Electric Co. and Laboratory Top Inc. would locate operations in Taylor. In September, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas Inc. announced it would undertake a 75,000-square-foot, \$12 million expansion in Taylor.

Another win for the city was corn flour producer Harimasa LLC, which plans to spend \$10 million on a plant in Taylor that will employ 85 people.

For small towns like Taylor, establishing an identity is crucial in attracting economic development, Waco economist Ray Perryman says.

"Smaller cities need to define what makes them unique and develop their plan around those strengths," Perryman says.

"There are many different ways a city can gather its sense of identity," he says. "Some have built their identity around retail, their downtown area or their historic districts."

Email **GISELLE GREENWOOD** at (ggreenwood@btzjournals.com).