

Bonham/BEDCo 2020 'Top Ten' Development Accomplishment

Covid, CoVid, COVID; the year that was, and the year we ALL could have done without!

In approximately sequential order I hope to re-cap for you BEDCo's series of actions and initiatives to this wholly unprecedented {in 'our' lifetimes} 'global catastrophe.' Keep in mind that while this was, is and remains a community-wide threat to *you and your neighbor's lives and livelihoods*, there are multiple vaccines coming our way – *so please do not get careless now!*

You may not view yourself as particularly vulnerable, or part of *an elevated risk* population segment but whether you recognize it or not, you do know people who are! Keep socially distancing, wash your hand frequently and **wear the darn mask!** If not for your own sake then for the cashier or grocery bagger at the supermarket, the customer service worker at the drive-thru, the delivery driver you see so often just down the block, or those steadfast USPS mail carriers whose route pass by your home, shop, or business five to six times a week with such regularity that we can thoughtlessly take them for granted. **Wear it for the sake and safety of 'our' First Responders**, healthcare workers and other caring for those who may be in crisis! When it is your turn in the weeks and months ahead **be sure to get the vaccine – both rounds** so we all can get back to something approach what we once called 'normal.'

As the pandemic reached north Texas **[#10]** in March, staff granted a 120-day loan repayment suspension (no interest or penalty) to those Bonham manufacturers with 'notes' to BEDCo. This was done earlier enough (before April payments were due) so they could maximize their cash reserve. BEDCo's board unanimously ratified this action. In early April **[#9]** BEDCo underwrote '*Breakfast on us*' as a simple but tangible '*thank you*' to those who help make our own Saturdays more enjoyable! All those Bonham police, 9-1-1 dispatchers, firefighters/EMS, TMC-Bonham staff 'on-shift' and those USPS letter carriers on duty were included. This effort was mounted with the *Breakfast Stop* and *Stay Grounded Coffee Company* who discounted a popular breakfast item or two on their respective menus. Utilizing those organizational structure coupons were provided so that half could be redeemable at each restaurant within a year of that sunny April morning. As the state-wide lockdown was implemented **[#8]** 'our' BTI [BEDCo's Technology Intern (*social-media guru* & BHS grad)] - *Michael* stepped up without any prompting to compile the most comprehensive listing of essential downtown Bonham businesses still open, who had carry-out/curbside pick-up and a myriad of practical information that owners & managers needed us to know, just as we all sought PPE, cleaning supplies, household toiletries and on and on. He provided convenient links to federal, state, and regional resources that saved them untold hours searching the internet!

Amid mounting concerns for the survival of small businesses **[#7]** BEDCo's board meeting via Zoom directed staff to find some way to directly assist these 'Mom & Pop' enterprises. Guided to some degree by examples set by our neighbors and peers across Texas and working very closely with BEDCo's counsel our Emergency Assistance – Round 1 grant program took shape, a task force of the board was established to set the guidelines and a budget amendment was passed by the Directors and ratified by City Council to re-program and supplement BEDCo's advertising and marketing fund into grants. In the first half of May, a total of **\$49,600** was awarded to **31 eligible** Bonham Small Business '**EA – Round 1' grant** applicants in the form of a \$1,600 check to the business for essential business expenses, and 'consistently with the laws of the State of Texas.'

Recognizing the prolonged nature of this pandemic threat **[#6]** BEDCo rolled-out the robustly funded Small Business ‘EA – Round 2’ Loan Program with \$150,000 in funds to loan *eligible* (and creditworthy) Bonham businesses. The maximum loan amount was \$10,000 for 48-months at 0% APR with a 120-day payment deferral. The application period ran through the end of FY2019 {Sep 30, 2019}. We did discover that *even 0% APR loans* in uncertain times attract far fewer ‘*loan*’ applicants than ‘*grant*’ applicants. For all the uncertainty and complexities of trying to run a business during a pandemic try to imagine being a bi-national corporation with expansion plans and a facility already purchased in your *would-be new host community* where the clock is running out on a ‘six figure’ *performance-based incentive* your firm has authorized. Now close the international border between those two bilateral nations to all but essential traffic. You have a glimpse of what the management team at Dairy Manufacturers, Inc (DMI) is coping with. **[#5]** BEDCo’s board approved and the City Council ratified a 16-month extension to the performance agreement with DMI. **[#4]** Somewhat similar situation for Saratoga Investments, LLC although that is for potential commercial instead of manufacturing development. And while there is no international border, there has been unflagging resistance by long-standing prospective ‘*end-users*’ to travel even from the Metroplex to Bonham to evaluate signing on with them to develop **BEDCo Lot 1**. BEDCo approve a 3rd contract extension that the parties will be addressing in February 2021.

Working very closely with our city council and city staff - BEDCo jumped at the opportunity to purchase 122 West 3rd Street **[#3]**. I have heard a wise man say, “*when you own your own land you control your own destiny.*” Whatever that destiny may ultimately be, for Bonham it will involve *re-integrating* our newly restored Fannin County Courthouse into the civic and commercial rhythms of downtown Bonham! Therefore, high on the 2021 ‘*To Do*’ list is inviting proposals [RFQ’s = *Request for Qualifications*] from a broad array of professional and design firms to assist us in developing a **Downtown Bonham Master Plan** that will maximize the cultural, social, and economic benefits for not just Bonham but all of Fannin County!

Serious tangible progress was achieved **[#2A]** this past year in the single-family & multi-family **housing** segments [BEDCo’s *project coordination of the well-executed ‘B-HAP (Public-Private Partnership between ‘select’ Bonham Mfgs’ Roundtable members splitting the cost 50:50 with the City)’ helped spark this, along with NTMWD’s Bois d’Arc Lake initiative!*], **[#2B]** across the **hospitality** arena as ground work continues on the new Best Western Select, in the **[#2C&D]** **retail & commercial** sectors with the new cluster of national chain restaurants, two automated drive-thru car washes along Bonham’s TX Hwy 121 ‘commercial corridor’ as far north as Russel. In 2021 we expect to witness other *incredibly significant expansions and developments* near **Bonham’s US Hwy 82/TX Hwy 121 intersection and frontage!** All this is just over the horizon!

As a community, we have every right to be proud of all these 2020 Top Ten Accomplishments including my personal choice for **[#1]** **Bonham’s** designation in July as a **Texas Film Friendly Certified Community** as announced by Governor Abbott and adhering to the program parameters established by the Texas Film Commission. My own sense of pride in all of these is truly tempered by the sad awareness of the thousands of personal tragedies and losses tied directly to this horrendous pandemic. Even now with vaccinations starting to ramp up, we still witness this virus claiming too many of our fellow Texans. ***Be safe, stay well, healthy, and wise. Wear the mask and recognize the promise 2021 holds for each of us!***

If you have questions related to this press release, please contact Steve Filipowicz, Ofc ph (903) 583-7555 Ext 107, or email; sfilipowicz@cityofbonham.org