

2021 Texas Economic Forecast and Impact on Cities

Lisa Craven, Deputy Comptroller and Chief of Staff, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

Lisa has more than 27 years of state service, having worked in both the Texas Senate and House of Representatives. She served as Chief of Staff for then-Senator Hegar from 2007-2014, worked in the House of Representatives from 1989-2007, and began her career as a Capitol tour guide in 1986. Since January 2015, Lisa has served as Chief of Staff for Comptroller of Public Accounts Glenn Hegar.

Lisa has a bachelor's degree from the University of Texas at Austin. When she isn't busy volunteering for a school or community organization, she can be found following Longhorn sports, especially in the fall. Lisa and her husband, Eric, are the proud parents of two daughters, Caroline and Elizabeth.

Plan for Your City's Economic Development

Bill Longley, Legislative Counsel at the Texas Municipal League

Bill Longley graduated from the University of Richmond in 2004 with a degree in political science and sociology. In 2007, he received his law degree from the University of Texas School of Law. Bill worked as a law clerk at TML while in law school. Prior to working for TML, Bill served as an Assistant Attorney General in the Open Records Division of the Office of Attorney General.

In his 12 years at TML, Bill has worked on various legal and legislative issues as they relate to Texas cities. He co-authored the TML Revenue Manual and TML Economic Development Handbook and has spoken on numerous topics, focusing on economic development, municipal revenue, open government, and elections.

Type A and Type B Economic Development Corporations and City Councils

Charles E. Zech, Partner, Denton, Navarro, Rocha, Bernal & Zech, P.C.

Charlie received his law degree from the St. Mary's School of Law in 1998. In addition to his law degree he holds a bachelors's degrees in economics and finance, and a master's degree in public administration. Charlie currently serves as City Attorney and General Counsel for multiple local government entities across the State of Texas. He is a shareholder in the law firm Denton, Navarro, Rocha, Bernal & Zech P.C. with offices in San Antonio, Austin, Houston, and the Rio Grande Valley. He is a proud veteran of the United States Navy.

Chapter 380 Economic Development Agreements, the Right Stuff?

Christopher L. Nichols, The Nichols Firm, LLC

Christopher L. Nichols "Chris" is the principal and founding attorney of The Nichols Firm, PLLC. Opened in February 2016, the firm represents the continuation of Chris' legal practice focusing on municipal and administrative law, economic development, property and homeowner associations, real estate development and land use, and general counsel and litigation services. Prior to opening the Firm, Chris practiced for almost nine years with Randle Law Office Ltd., LLP, and about five years with a Houston boutique product liability firm. Chris is a native of Texas, born in Texarkana and raised in northeast Texas's piney woods. Chris attended the Texas Tech University School of Law. After passing the Texas Bar, he began his legal career in Houston. Chris, his spouse, and their two dogs - Cash and Ellie - live in Houston's Museum District.

Downtown Redevelopment Panel

Holly Gray-Moore, Associate Principal, Pacheco Koch

Holly has been actively involved in public service for more than 17 years. Her expertise has included working with council members on city home rule charters, municipal fundraising efforts, community outreach, and economic development issues. Holly upholds Pacheco Koch's company philosophy of community involvement by remaining deeply ingrained in the activities of various local communities, both as a citizen and a governmental representative. She has worked with various city councils and staff to assist in evaluating and hiring city staff.

Holly has served on the Roanoke City Council since 2002 and as the mayor pro tem for the past 13 consecutive years. She's a lifetime Roanoke resident and has served as chair of the Roanoke Charter Commission, is a charter member of the Roanoke Historical Board, and is the past chair for Arts Council Northeast (a local arts council).

Kim Buttram, Economic Development Director, City of Cedar Hill

Kim Buttram was named the City of Cedar Hill's new Economic Development Director, starting in March 2020. She brings more than 20 years of economic development, marketing, and real estate experience to Cedar Hill. Prior to her move to Cedar Hill, Kim served four years as assistant director of economic development at the City of Mesquite. She has worked in Texas throughout her career, also serving successfully in the cities of Mesquite, Greenville, and Forney.

Stephen Mason, Mayor, City of Cedar Hill

Prior to his election as mayor in May 2019, Stephen Mason served as the city council member in Place 5 for nine years, three of those as mayor pro tem. Before his service on the city council, Stephen chaired the Planning & Zoning Commission. He served on the Cedar Hill Comprehensive Planning Committee, the Chamber of Commerce Executive Board, the Best Southwest Board of Directors, and the Lake Ridge Elementary Sitebase Committee. Stephen served on the Texas Municipal League Board of Directors from 2013 to 2017 and is a graduate

of Leadership North Texas. He is President of Mas-Tek Engineering, which provides geotechnical engineering and construction materials testing services.

Nicholas G. Nelson, RLA, Associate Principal, Pacheco Koch

Nick is an Associate Principal at Pacheco Koch, who has practiced and taught landscape architecture for more than 19 years. Having worked on projects throughout the United States, Nick's expertise has emerged in designing places that create exceptional experiences. With extensive practical knowledge to accompany his design acumen, he exceeds his clients' expectations for public projects that include trails, parks and park master plans, green ribbon design, urban framework planning, and public spaces.

Brian D. O'Neill, PE, CFM, Principal, Pacheco Koch

Brian is a Principal at Pacheco Koch and oversees the Pacheco Koch Fort Worth office. He has more than 26 years of experience in civil engineering planning and design, including preparation of plans, specifications, and estimates, construction management, and administration. His experience is primarily focused on municipal public works projects involving the design of utilities, roadways, and drainage projects. He has considerable experience in complex paving, drainage design and engineering analysis, and water and sewer systems, and leading the public meetings that accompany those projects.

Jack Thompson, Assistant City Manager and Economic Development Director, City of Crowley

Jack Thompson is currently the Assistant City Manager for the City of Crowley. He oversees Economic Development, Community Development, and Public Works, which includes streets, water and wastewater, parks, animal control, fleet maintenance, and Human Resources. Jack has extensive experience in establishing and operating special financing districts such as tax increment financing and public improvement districts from his previous employment as the Owner and Principal of Orasi Development. He also has conducted economic development strategic plans, marketing plans and assisted numerous cities in business attraction, redevelopment, and downtown/Main Street development.

LaShondra Stringfellow, Planning Director, City of Cedar Hill

LaShondra Stringfellow is the Planning Director for the City of Cedar Hill. She has 20 years of planning experience in the Texas municipalities of McKinney, Arlington, League City and Dallas. She was the Planning Manager at League City when the staff was awarded the Texas APA Planning Awards for Current Planning (2006) and the Comprehensive Plan (2011). She has managed major code amendments for zoning and subdivision ordinance re-writes, city-wide rezoning, gas well drilling, alcoholic beverage uses, commercial design standards, and food deserts. She is currently updating Cedar Hill's Comprehensive Plan to guide growth in a way that enables the city to realize its vision "to be a city within a park" and facilitating implementation of the Downtown Plan.

Retail: The Great Comeback Story

C.Kelly Cofer, Founder and CEO, The Retail Coach

C. Kelly Cofer leads The Retail Coach with more than 25 years of experience in all aspects of retail real estate and economic development. Kelly's professional background encompasses market research and site selection, advisory and leasing services, and property brokerage and development for leading national and regional retailers and restaurants in more than 150 cities throughout the United States.

Aaron Farmer, President, The Retail Coach

Aaron Farmer brings knowledge of the most current research on retail and marketing trends to The Retail Coach. Prior to joining the company, he was employed in marketing research and retail development where he worked on projects for some of America's leading retailers and restaurants, including FedEx, Kinkos, Sally Beauty Supply, Adidas, Concentra, and the National American Association of Subway Franchises. Aaron's expertise touches on each step of a project from the initial trade area determination to the actual recruitment of retailers. He holds a degree in marketing from Texas A&M University and an MBA from Texas A&M University-Commerce.

Emerge Stronger: Cultivating Vibrant Communities and Local Economies with the Resources You Have

Kevin Shepherd, Founder, and CEO, Verdunity

Kevin is the founder and CEO of Verdunity, a Dallas based consulting firm that helps cities quantify and close resource gaps and cultivate strong, healthy communities with the resources they have. He and his team offer planning, engineering, and coaching services that focus on fiscal sustainability, resource stewardship, incremental development, and community-led implementation. Kevin co-hosts the Go Cultivate! Podcast and is a lead facilitator for their Cultivate Community workshops and coaching programs.

Monte Anderson, Councilmember, City of Duncanville

Monte Anderson is President of Options Real Estate, a brokerage, management, and development firm in the southern Dallas county area. He is an active advocate, teacher, and speaker for the Incremental Development movement and is currently serving his first term on the city council in Duncanville, Texas.