



# Case Study: Fort Bend County (Texas)

## Voter-Approved District Model — Governance & Infrastructure Outcomes

Updated February 2026

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### Background

Fort Bend County — one of the fastest-growing regions in Texas — faced a challenge similar to that experienced by many rapidly developing counties: how to fund infrastructure and public services in **unincorporated areas** without ceding **taxing authority** to **private developer districts**.

Rather than rely on developer-controlled districts, **Fort Bend County residents approved a public district framework** under **Chapter 387 of the Texas Local Government Code**.

This approach allowed unincorporated communities to fund **roads, drainage, and public safety** through a **locally approved 1% sales tax** — avoiding additional **property-tax burdens**, heavy **bond debt**, or **private governance structures**.

Instead of forming one county-wide district, Fort Bend residents established **multiple voter-approved districts** over time, each covering a specific unincorporated area. Only the communities choosing to participate were included, preserving **local control** and **public accountability**.

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### How the Model Works

- **Created by voters** — Each district begins with a local election, ensuring public consent and legitimacy from the outset.
  - **Managed by County Government** — Funds are administered through the **Commissioners Court** in **open meetings**, rather than by private boards tied to development interests.
  - **Focused on public infrastructure** — Projects prioritize county infrastructure needs in unincorporated areas - including mobility, drainage, and emergency services.
  - **Audited and transparent** — Budgets, projects and expenditures are **publicly reported**, supporting **overweight and accountability**.
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## Documented Outcomes

Fort Bend's **public district framework** has become a **statewide example of transparent, voter-driven growth management**:

*Fort Bend County Assistance District #1* alone lists **13 public projects totaling more than \$20 million** in planned road, drainage, and safety improvements — all funded through **local sales-tax revenue**.

These investments have supported **mobility upgrades, flood-risk reduction, and public-safety access** in fast-growing unincorporated communities — **without new property-tax burdens or bond debt**.

Because projects are approved through **county governance structures**, infrastructure planning is **coordinated across departments** rather than fragmented among multiple private districts.

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## Relevance for Waller County

Like Fort Bend, much of **Waller County's growth** is occurring in **unincorporated areas** where infrastructure must be funded and governed without municipal structures.

Fort Bend demonstrates how a **voter-approved district framework** can allow counties to guide infrastructure investment while retaining **public control of taxation and development priorities**.

This stands in contrast to **developer-controlled district models**, where governance and fiscal authority may not be directly accountable to residents.

As Waller County continues to evaluate long-term growth strategies, the Fort Bend example illustrates how district structure influences **oversight, funding stability, and infrastructure coordination**.

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## Why This Matters for Local Taxpayers

Public district frameworks provide counties with a **stable, voter-approved funding source** for infrastructure in unincorporated areas.



Such tools allow communities to support growth-related infrastructure through **local economic activity** rather than relying solely on **property taxes** or **long-term borrowing**.

Maintaining **public control of revenue** and **project decisions** helps ensure **transparency, coordination, and equitable infrastructure investment** — issues directly relevant to **rapidly growing counties like Waller County**.

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## Takeaway

Fort Bend County's experience illustrates how **governance structure** influences long-term infrastructure outcomes.

When **taxing authority** and **project oversight** remain **publicly accountable**, counties can fund growth sustainably while maintaining **transparency** and **fiscal stability**.

For counties experiencing development pressure — including **Waller County** — district structure is not merely administrative. It shapes **infrastructure delivery, public trust, and financial risk** over time.

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