Case Study 2: Fort Bend County

When Public Control Works — A Model for Waller County's Future

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Background

Fort Bend County — one of the fastest-growing regions in Texas — faced the same challenge Waller County faces today: how to manage rapid growth in **unincorporated areas** without letting private developers take over local taxing power.

Rather than rely on developer-controlled districts, **Fort Bend County voters established a public system** under Chapter 387 of the Texas Local Government Code. It allowed unincorporated communities to fund critical infrastructure through a 1 % local sales tax **— avoiding property-tax increases, heavy bond debt, and private governance.**

Instead of one county-wide district, Fort Bend residents established **multiple voter-approved districts** over time, each covering a specific unincorporated area.
Only the communities that voted yes participate, keeping the process local and accountable.

How the Fort Bend CAD Works

- **Created by voters —** Each district begins with a local election and public consent.
- **Managed by Commissioners Court —** Funds are handled by elected officials in open meetings, not private boards.
- **Focused on public benefit —** Projects target road safety, drainage, and emergency response.
- **Audited and transparent —** Spending and contracts are posted publicly for residents to see.

Results

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

- **Real investment, real results.** *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 its dedicated 1 % local sales tax.
- Those funds have improved mobility, reduced flooding, and supported emergency-service access in unincorporated communities — **without new property-tax burdens or bond debt.**
- All budgets, maps, and project details are published through Fort Bend County's transparency portal, giving residents clear visibility into where their money goes.

It's proof that a well-run, voter-approved district can fund growth responsibly while keeping every penny publicly accountable.

Lessons for Waller County

When the voters keep the power, everyone benefits.

Waller County now faces the same fork in the road:
either keep local revenue under county oversight, or leave the door open for **developer-controlled MMDs** to claim it.

Fort Bend shows that when communities act first, the county — not developers — sets the priorities.
Roads get built, drainage improves, and emergency services expand because the money stays public.

Takeaway

Fort Bend's experience proves that growth works best when it's managed by voters, for the community.
Transparent oversight. Measurable results. Long-term local benefit.

Waller County can follow that same successful path —
Vote YES to keep our penny local and our future in public hands.
