

WALKER COUNTY ECONOMIC RESILIENCE PROFILE

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Introduction

Economic resilience is the ability to withstand and prevent disruptions to the economy. The most common types of disruptions include downturns in the economy or in a key industry; the exit of a major employer; and natural or man made disasters.

Creating a resilient economy requires the ability to anticipate risk, evaluate how risk can impact economic assets, and build the capacity to respond to disruptions.

This profile is intended to provide an overview of the factors affecting the future growth, development and resilience of Walker County and it's economy by providing key data points on the economy, demographics, and other useful information.

Walker County Boundaries

- Walker County
- Other counties
- Top 3 cities
- Major roads

County Seat: Huntsville
Largest City: Huntsville



Walker County Overview

Walker County is in the east Texas Piney Woods. Around 70% of the county is blanketed in pine forest, while a portion in the far west of the county is in Texas Gulf Coastal plain¹. The major watershed is the San Jacinto River and the lower Trinity River. Walker County has shoreline on both Lake Conroe and Lake Livingston. Walker County's population in 2016 was estimated to be 71,484 and is expected to grow to 118,000 by 2040^{2,3}. Walker County has three cities. Huntsville, the county seat, is the most populous with an estimated 41,208 residents. New Waverly (1,018) and Riverside (527) are the other incorporated communities⁴. Major transportation corridors include Interstate 45, U.S. Highway 190, State Highways 19, 20, and 75. The county is served by the Union Pacific Railroad.

Walker County's economy is dependent on the public sector. Approximately 40% of the county's employment

is in public administration⁵. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice is headquartered in Huntsville, and more prisons are in Walker County than any county in Texas. Another major public employer in Walker County is Sam Houston State University. The university serves over 20,000 undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students and is nationally renowned for its criminal justice program⁶. The retail sector continues to grow as the county continues to add residents. The construction sector expansion should track with the county's population growth, new master planned communities have been announced in the southern portion of the county, where residents have closer access to employment centers in Montgomery County. Walker County is home to Sam Houston National Forest, occupying 54,153 acres; it is estimated forestry generated \$7,146,000 in 2009⁸. Walker County has 280,512 acres in agricultural production. The market value of agricultural production in the county is \$34,513,000 annually; with 54% of revenues from crops, and 46% of revenue from livestock production⁹.



Downtown Huntsville has a historical courthouse square.

Recent Disruptions to the Economy

Hurricane Harvey caused flooding throughout Walker County, forcing evacuations across the county. The damages caused by Harvey are still being calculated. Unfortunately, Hurricane Harvey was not an isolated incident. Walker County has been part of six federally declared disasters since Memorial Day of 2015, all of which involved flooding incidents¹⁰. Only 9% of the county residents live in the 100-year floodplain. However, homes built in low lying areas have flooded multiple times. FEMA has not offered to buy these residences, known as multiple loss structures, which are often owned by low-income individuals without flood insurance. Fortunately, most of the businesses in the county have avoided the worst of flood damage. Walker County's dependence on the public sector shielded it somewhat from the Great Recession, although unemployment in the county peaked at 9% in June 2011. Walker County's economy is not as closely tied to the energy industry as the rest of the region, and did not experience the same negative impacts during the 2014-2016 collapse in the price of oil. The 2010-

2012 Texas drought negatively affected crops and cattle production and put the county at risk for wildfires. It also increased maintenance costs as pipes cracked and roadbeds shifted.

Economic Resilience Strategies

Walker County's dependence on the public sector as an economic base has proven to be a reliable source of employment for residents. However, state and federal institutions do not pay property taxes, reducing the tax base for government. Walker County does not have an economic development corporation which would be able to take advantage of emerging opportunities and provide support for existing businesses. An economic development corporation could partner with Sam Houston State University to harness the commercial potential of the research and innovation the university is creating. Walker County's repeated flood incidences affirms the need for a comprehensive drainage plan for the county.

Recommendations

Walker County's economy will be better able to withstand, avoid, and recover from disruptions if it is able to:

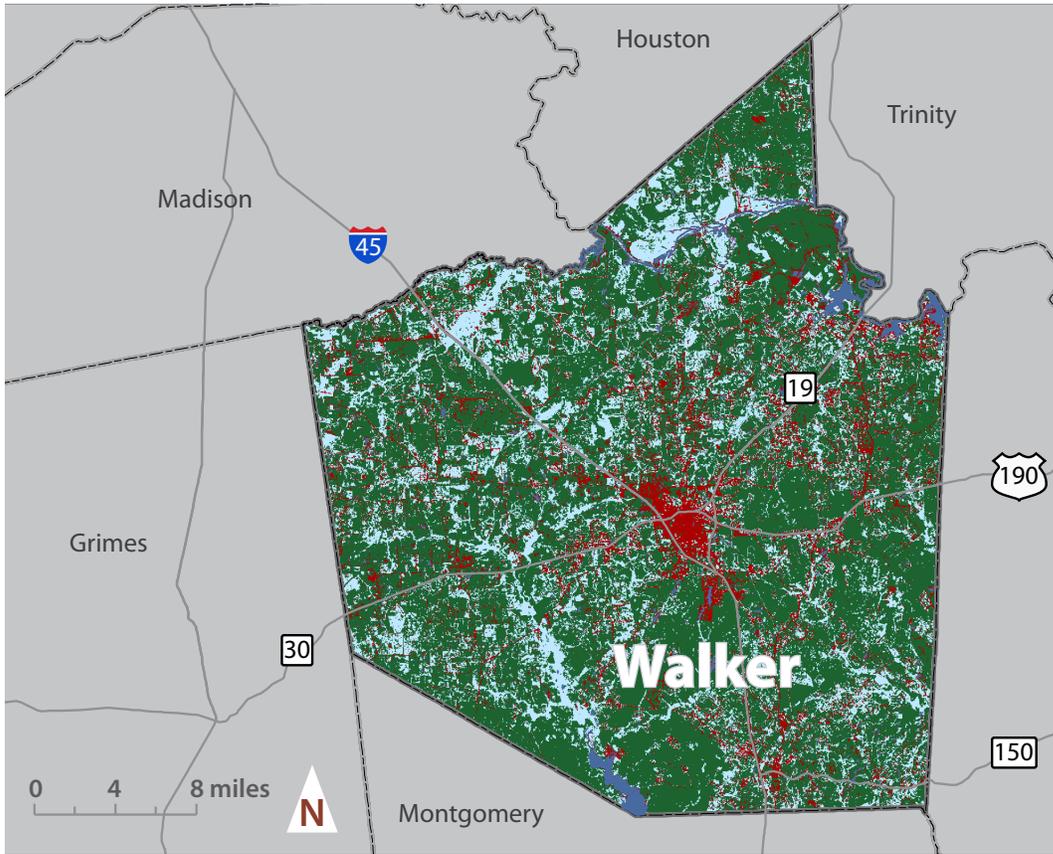
Create a robust economic development corporation to harness economic potential and enhance private sector opportunities

Investigate strategies for better coordinated countywide flood control.

Create a master drainage plan for the county

Develop a business retention and promotion strategy

Land Use and Demographics



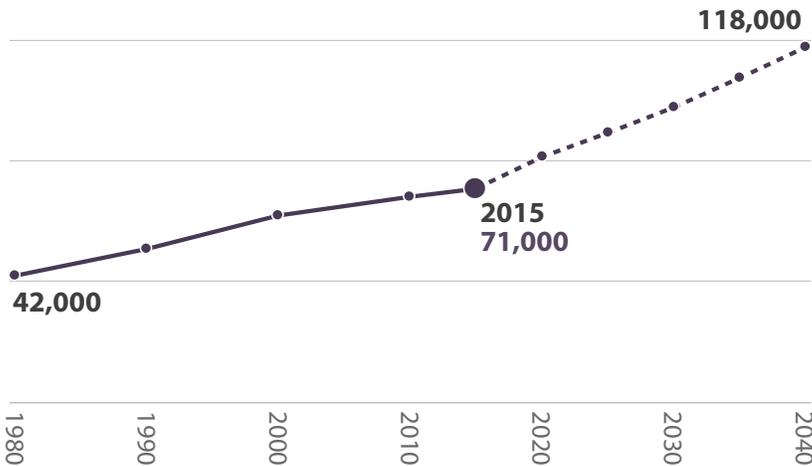
Walker County Land Use

- Other counties
- 1%** Open water
- 11%** Developed Land
- 22%** Wetlands
- 66%** Forest, shrubs, pasture, grasslands, barren lands and cultivated crops

Much of Walker County land area is owned by the State and Federal government.

Population Growth Forecast

Walker County grew by 69% from 1980 to 2015 and is expected to reach 118,000 residents by 2040.



Municipal Populations

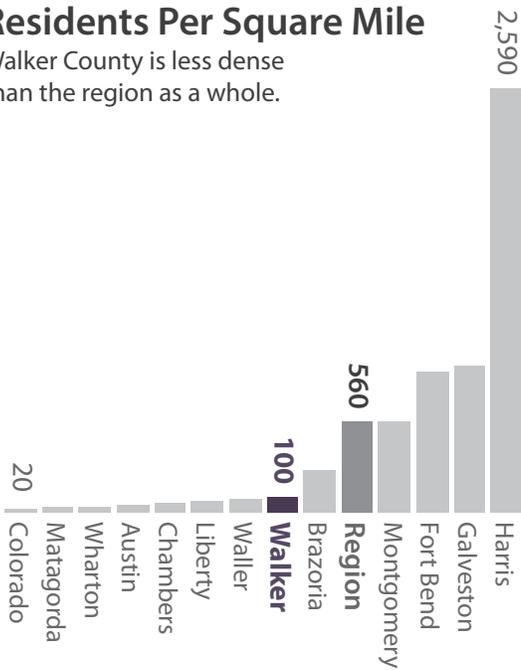
The City of Huntsville is Walker County's largest incorporated municipality.

- 41,208 Huntsville
- 1,081 New Waverly
- 527 Riverside
- 28,668 Unincorporated

Land Use and Demographics

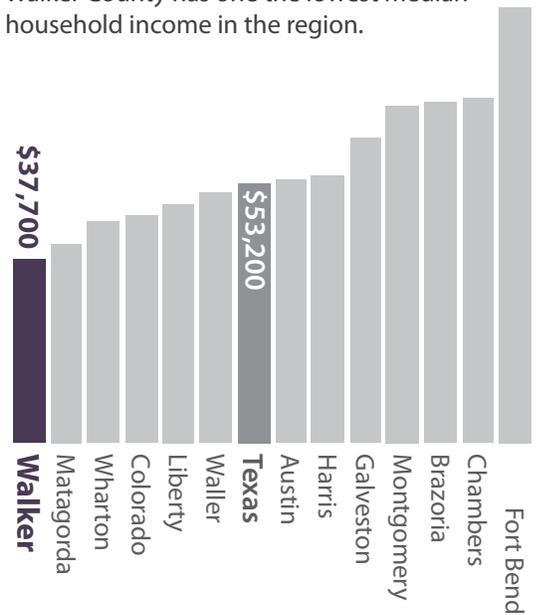
Residents Per Square Mile

Walker County is less dense than the region as a whole.



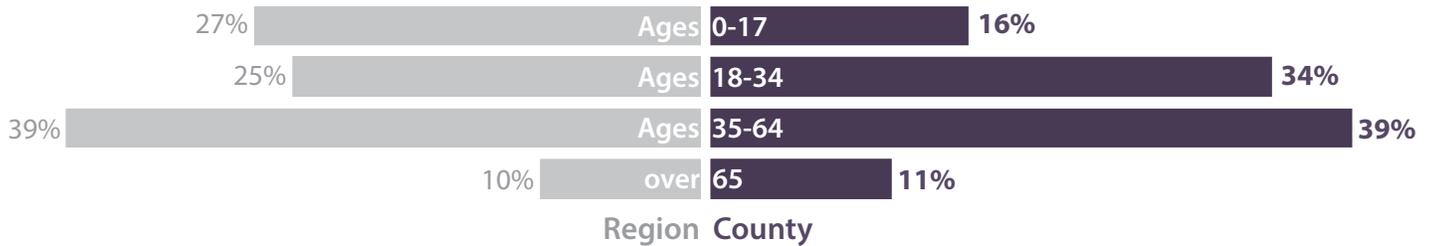
Median Household Income

Walker County has one the lowest median household income in the region.



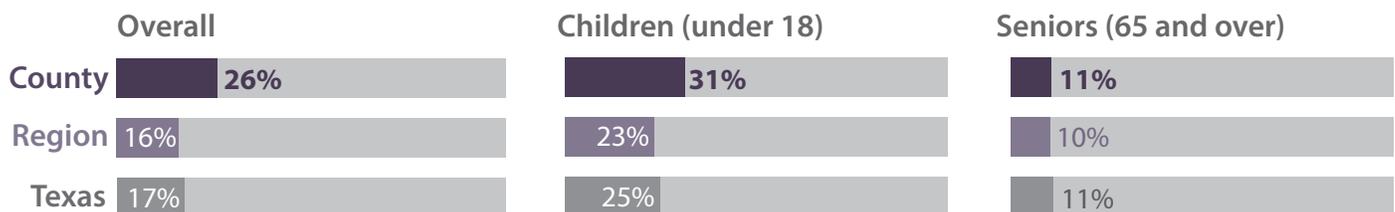
Age

Walker County has a much larger portion of 18-34 year olds than the region.



Poverty Rate

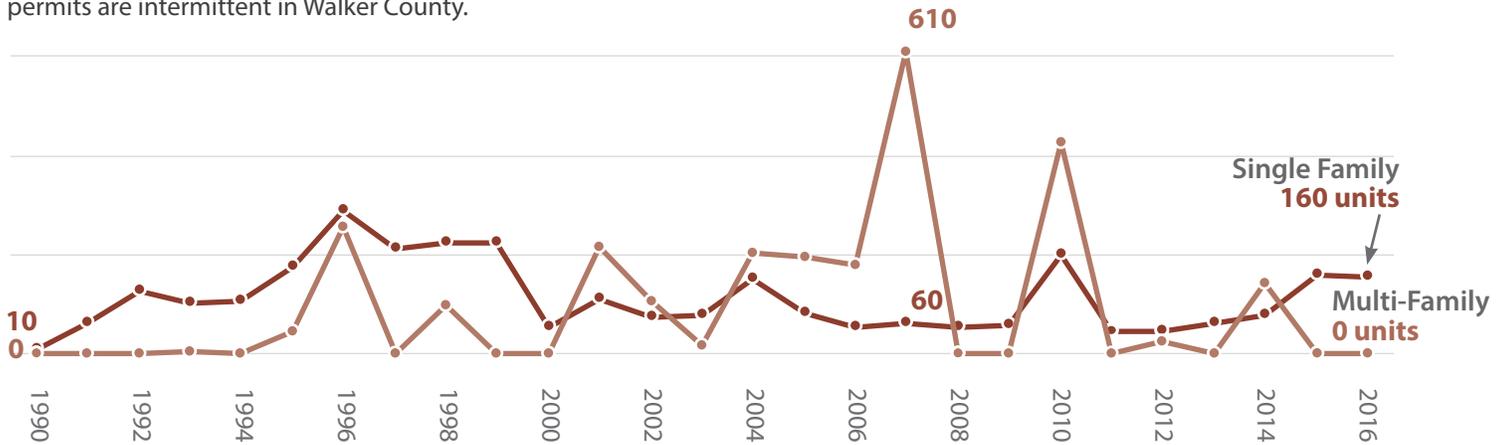
Walker County has a higher poverty rate than the region.



Housing

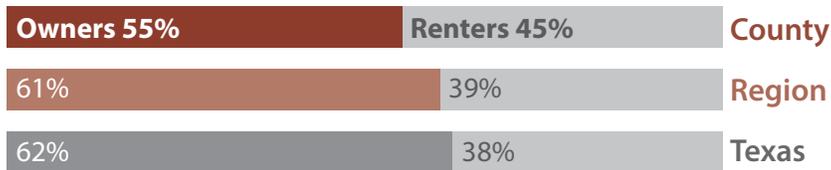
Building Permits Issued

Both single-family and multi-family construction permits are intermittent in Walker County.



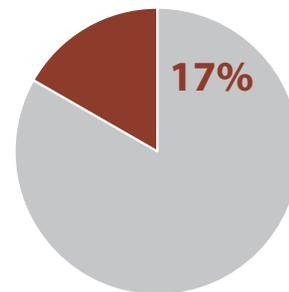
Housing Tenure

Walker County has a lower rate of homeownership than the region or the state.



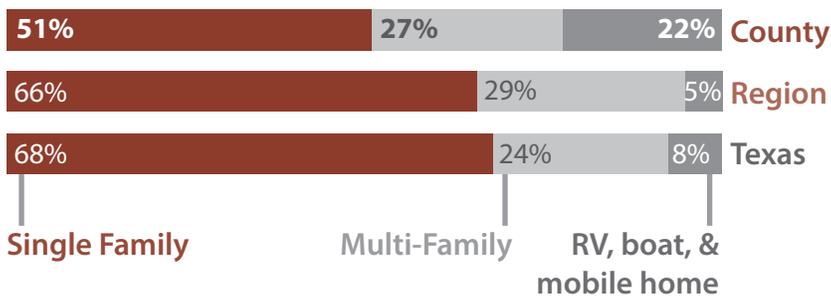
Vacant Housing Units

Around 17% of Walker County's housing units are vacant.



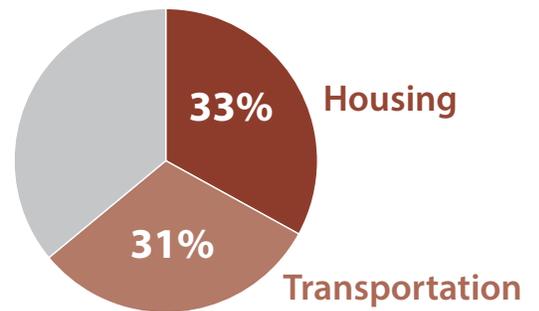
Housing Type

Walker County has a higher rate of multi-family and RV, boat and mobile homes than the region or state.



Living Costs

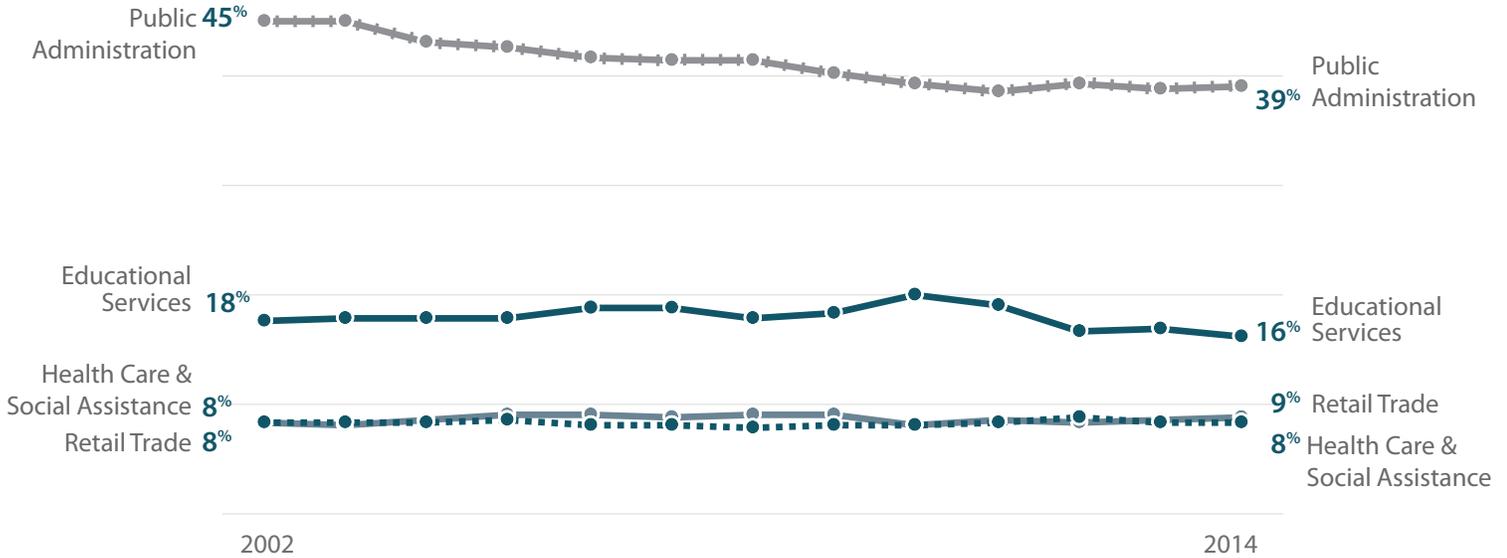
Walker County households spend 64% of their income on transportation and housing.



Economy

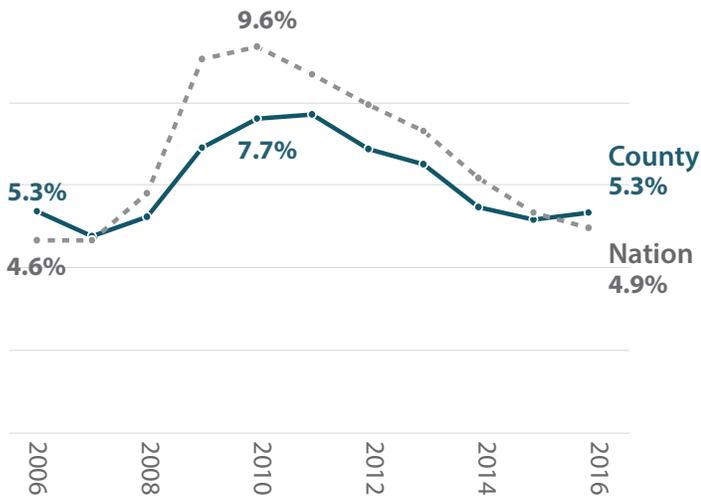
Top Industries by Percent of Overall Jobs

The Public Administration industry employs a much larger portion of Walker County workers than any other industry, at nearly 40% of all county employment, down from 45% in 2002.



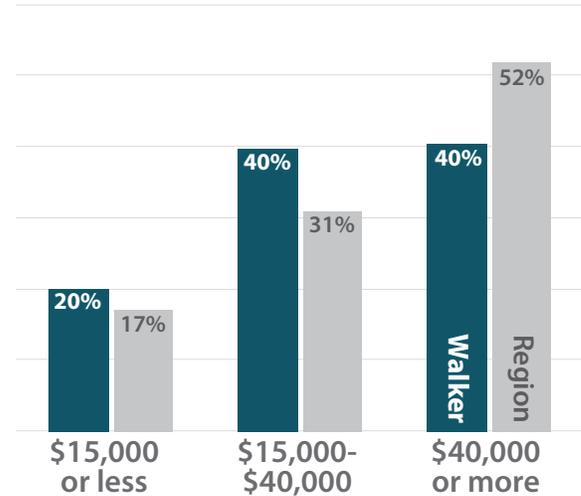
Unemployment Rate

Walker County's unemployment has been lower than the national average until 2016.



Earnings of Residents

Only 40% of Walker County residents earn more than \$40,000 annually, a lower percentage than the region.



Education, Hazard Risks, and Commute

Median Earnings by Educational Attainment

A Walker County resident with a graduate or professional degree makes, on average, \$37,900 more than a resident with less than a high school education annually.



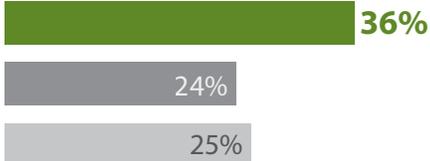
Educational Attainment

A lower percentage of Walker County residents have a bachelor's degree or higher than the region and state.

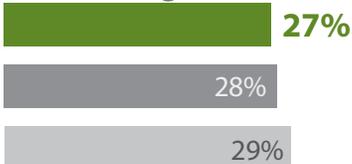
Less than High School



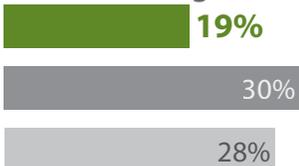
High School or Equivalent



Some College or Associate's

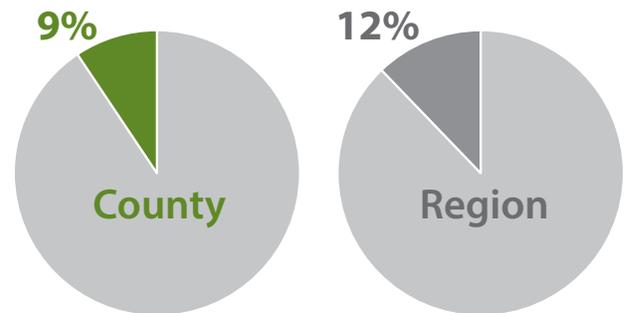


Bachelor's Degree or More



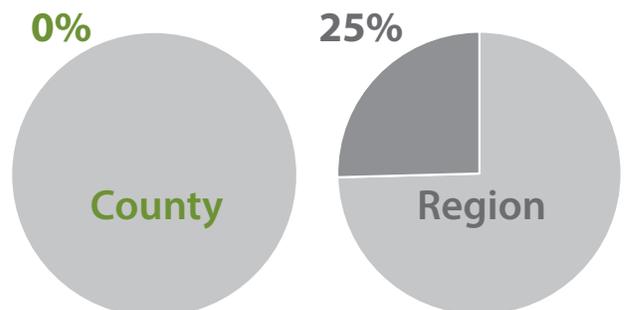
Residents in 100-year Floodplain

A smaller percentage of Walker County residents live in a 100-year floodplain than the region.



Residents in Hurricane Evacuation Zone

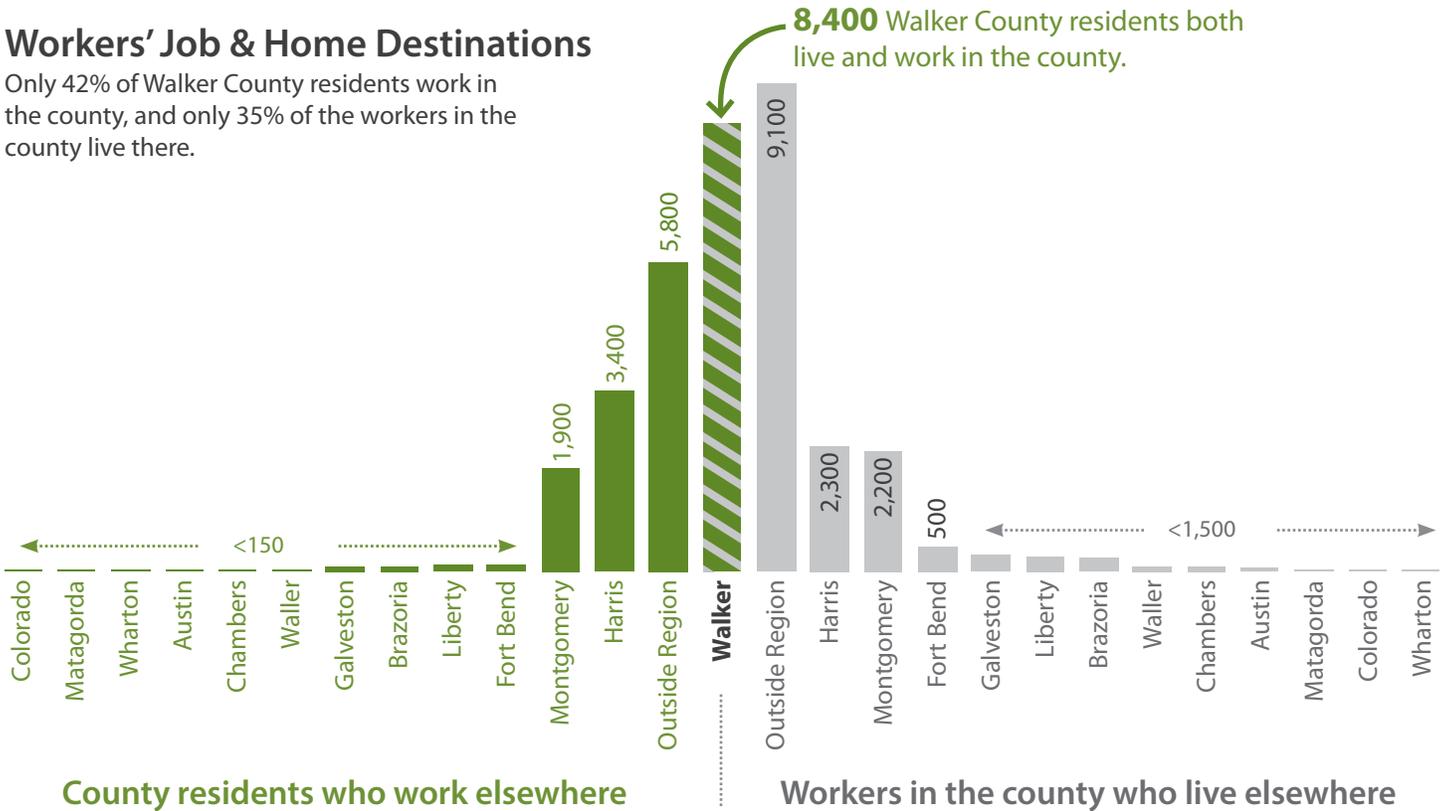
No Walker County residents live in a hurricane evacuation zone, as opposed to 25% of the region's residents.



Education, Hazard Risks, and Commute

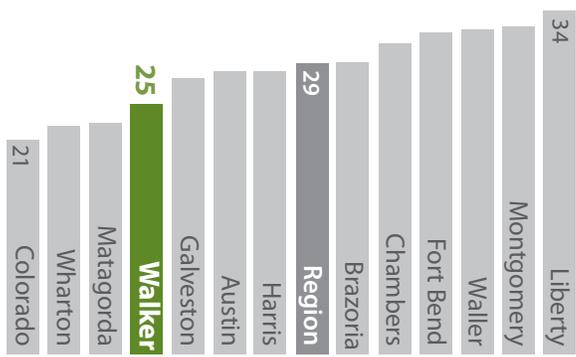
Workers' Job & Home Destinations

Only 42% of Walker County residents work in the county, and only 35% of the workers in the county live there.



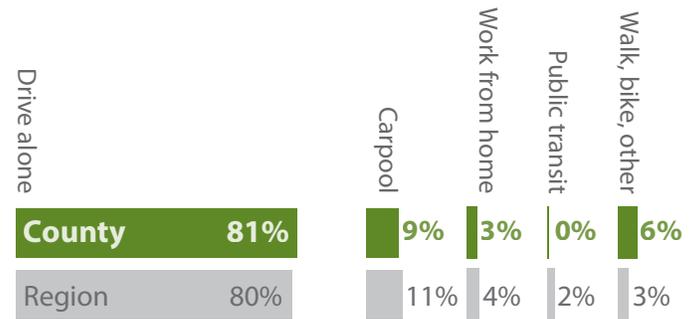
Mean Commute to Work (minutes)

Walker County workers have a shorter average commute than the region as a whole.



Commute Mode to Work

Walker County workers have a similar commute split as the region, but with more walkers and cyclists.



Economic Clusters

A cluster is a concentration of related businesses that make the area more competitive in those industries. Clusters exist where a set of related industries in a given location reach critical mass. Clusters enhance productivity and spur innovation by bringing together technology, information, specialized talent, competing companies, academic institution, and other organizations.

Traded clusters are groups of related industries that serve markets beyond the region in which they are located. Local clusters, in contrast, consist of industries that serve the local market. They are prevalent in every region of the country, regardless of the competitive advantages of a location.

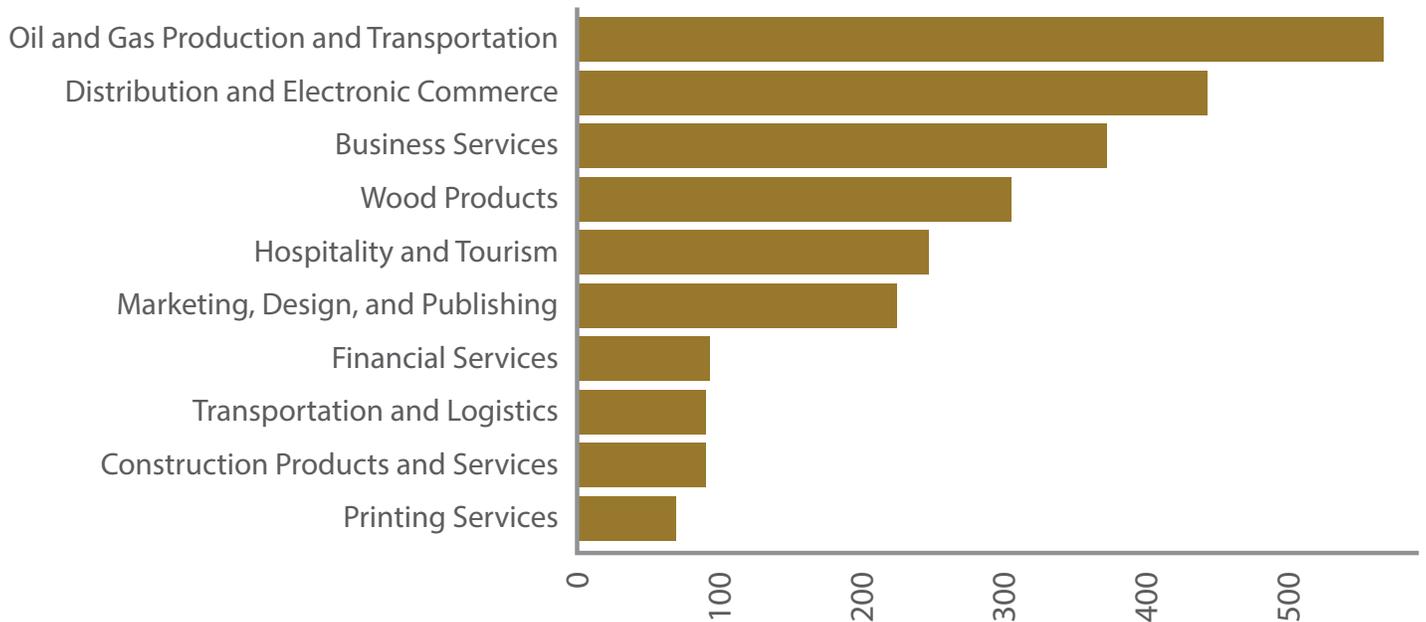
Traded v. Local Clusters

This diagram demonstrates the county's split between the traded and local sectors of the economy, based on 2014 data from the U.S. Census.



Employment by Cluster

This bar graph demonstrates Walker County's employment by each cluster. It is based on 2014 data from the U.S. Census.



Local Planning

These plans highlight efforts in Walker County to plan for disaster recovery and economic resiliency.

Walker County Hazard Mitigation Plan



Walker County is currently developing a Hazard Mitigation Plan for release in 2019. Walker County participated in the 2011 Update of the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Regional Hazard Mitigation plan was created in 2006 by the Houston-Galveston Area Council, the Texas Division of Emergency Management, and 85 local

governments. The comprehensive plan identifies regional hazards and vulnerabilities, and includes over 300 mitigation projects that could be implemented within the region.

The plan identified 17 mitigation actions for Walker County:

- Install permanently mounted 60 KW generator on a concrete pad at KSAM Radio Station to provide continuous broadcast services to the County.
- Install permanently mounted 600 KW generator on a concrete pad to ensure continuity of critical services at Walker County Courthouse.
- Install permanently mounted 100 KW generator on a concrete pad at offices of Courthouse Annex Building #3 to provide continuous critical services to County.
- Install permanently mounted 50 KW generator, three phase, on a concrete pad at the offices of the Walker County District Attorney's Office to provide continuous Critical services to the County.
- Install Outdoor Early Warning System for New Waverly and Riverside to provide early warning of an impending disaster or an event that would affect life and/or property.
- Structural retrofitting - harden facility at the Walker County Criminal Justice Center.
- Create defensible space per Walker County County-Wide Wildland Protection Plan around buildings in Elkins Lake, Lost Meadows, Smith Hill/Gospel Hill Community, Forgotten Forest, Sunset Lake, and Club Lake Watson Lake Subdivision.
- Mobile hospital.
- Mobile command post.
- Obtain contingency fuel source to refuel generators and equipment to maintain continuity of government,

emergency response and critical services.

- Multi-purpose high water rescue/dive team/patrol boat.
- Finish fiber optic communications project.
- Implement flood/weather warning systems (5).
- Construct an animal shelter that will house animals of all kinds and size for use during events where sheltering will be needed.
- Construct two new 7,000-square-foot self-sufficient, self-contained storm shelters as we are a State Storm Shelter Hub.
- Purchase automatic high water (flood) indicators to notify public that flash floods are imminent.
- Construct safe room with generator at KSAM radio station.

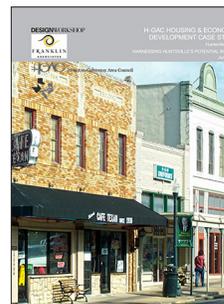
An Economic Development Strategic Plan for Huntsville, Texas



The purpose of An Economic Development Strategic Plan for Huntsville, Texas, is to provide the City of Huntsville and area economic development partners with guidance for pursuing opportunities to achieve long-

term growth and economic vitality in the community. This plan offers a host of goals, objectives, and actions to support Huntsville's long-term economic development. While these recommendations are valuable for Huntsville, these recommendations are not focused on resilience.

Huntsville Housing and Economic Development Case Study

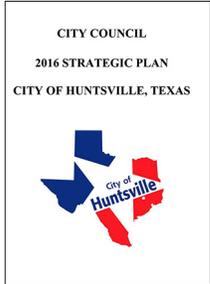


The Huntsville Housing & Economic Development Case Study was developed to provide local officials and citizens with a clear framework for implementing strategic projects that build upon and strengthen Huntsville's excellent quality of life to create jobs, spur high quality and diverse residential development, and expand retail options. The City of Huntsville and Walker County as a whole, have a job/housing imbalance. A large portion of the new housing development in Huntsville is geared towards students, which are a transient population. This exacerbates the issue

Local Planning

of developing strong and stable neighborhoods that are affordable for

Huntsville Strategic Plan



Strategic planning is the process an organization follows to articulate a vision for the future and establish a direction in making decisions and allocating resources to achieve the desired outcomes. The Huntsville Strategic Plan is meant to provide a road map for success that will lead families and new businesses to Huntsville to join an outstanding

community where good governance and sound management provide the best that life has to offer. The strategic plan articulates Huntsville's vision, mission, and values.

Huntsville Horizon Comprehensive Plan



The Huntsville Horizon Comprehensive Plan is designed as a framework for the future development of the City and its two-mile planning jurisdiction over the next 20 years and beyond. It is intended to guide the community's decisions regarding its future physical and economic development. This plan identifies goals, policies and actions for elected and appointed officials, members of advisory committees, civic groups and organizations, directors and staff, and citizens to use as decisions are made and the community's vision is achieved.

Data Sources

Walker County Overview

1. Texas A&M Agrilife Extension
2. U.S. Census
3. Houston-Galveston Area Council
4. U.S. Census
5. Texas State Historical Association
6. U.S. Census
7. Sam Houston State University
8. Texas Forest Service
9. USDA Census of Agriculture

Recent Disruptions to the Economy

10. FEMA

Graphics

County Boundaries Map. Houston-Galveston Area Council, 2017.

County Land Use Map. Houston-Galveston Area Council, 2017.

Population Growth Forecast. Houston-Galveston Area Council, 2017.

Residents Per Square Mile. Houston-Galveston Area Council, 2017.

Age. U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table B01001.

Median Household Income. U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table S2503.

Poverty Rate. U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table S1701.

Building Permits Issued. U.S. Census Bureau, Building Permits Survey, 1990-2015.

Housing Tenure. U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04.

Vacant Housing Units. U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04.

Housing Type. U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04.

Living Costs. Center for Neighborhood Technology 2013 H+T® Index.

Top Industries by Percent of Overall Jobs. U.S. Census Bureau, 2002-2014, OnTheMap Application, Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program.

Unemployment Rate. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, 2006-2016.

Earnings of Residents. U.S. Census Bureau, 2014, OnTheMap Application, Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program.

Median Earnings by Educational Attainment. U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table B20004.

Educational Attainment. U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table S1501.

Residents in 100-year Floodplain. Houston-Galveston Area Council, 2017.

Residents in Hurricane Evacuation Zone. Houston-Galveston Area Council, 2017.

Workers' Job & Home Destinations. U.S. Census Bureau, 2014, OnTheMap Application, Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program.

Mean Commute to Work (minutes). U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table S0802.