



Jeewasmi Thapa

Liberty County, Texas, is experiencing rapid growth and demographic changes that reflect trends in rural areas across the United States. As the nation becomes increasingly ethnically and racially diverse, coupled with an expanding older population, regions like Liberty County are experiencing unprecedented transformations. Between 2022 and 2023, Liberty County's population increased by 5.7%, ranking it among the fastest-growing counties nationwide. This growth is concentrated mainly around the Houston metropolitan area, spreading where a new section of Highway 99 cuts through in Liberty County. These rapid changes present acute challenges, including increased pressures on infrastructure, increased flooding, and the vulnerability of immigrant and low-income populations with limited resources and outreach.

In response to these needs, Liberty County partnered with the Texas Target Communities (TxTC) program to update its strategic plan, a comprehensive roadmap that will guide development decisions for the next two decades. Students in three LAUP students actively involved community members in understanding community needs, developing recommendations that reflect local priorities, and aligning with existing local and regional plans. This presentation explores the critical role of planning in mitigating diverse external threats rural communities like Liberty County face. Drawing from practical experiences and close collaboration with communities through TxTC, this presentation highlight the inclusive plan-making process and ways to engage communities.