



FULSHEAR IS POSITIONED FOR GROWTH

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The City of Fulshear, located just 20 minutes west of Houston, is a town with a rich history. Established in 1824, the community has a proud tradition of farming and ranching. For years, the quiet, tight-knit community remained relatively untouched by the population growth of the Houston metro area. But things changed drastically.

In the early 2000's, affluent Houston residents seeking a respite from the hectic pace of city life discovered Fulshear's hidden charm. Fulshear Community and Economic Development Director Cheryl Stalinsky

recalls that when she came to the city in 2006, there were approximately 900 residents. Today, the population is more than 8,000, nearly a 900% increase in eight years. In fact, Fulshear is currently the fastest growing community in Fort Bend County.

More growth is on the way, with 13 master planned developments either in process or coming under development agreement. At build-out, the city's population is projected to be 69,000.

With such rapid growth, Fulshear city

leaders suddenly faced questions about the city's future, specifically how to create a vibrant shopping and dining sector to support the needs of residents. The city was rich in land but needed to recruit retailers and developers willing to invest in new construction.

Local leaders were also concerned about recruiting the right type of retail to the city. They envisioned Fulshear as a community where "small town charm meets urban sophistication," and wanted to recruit retailers and restaurants that matched the lifestyles



of the city's affluent residents. The city even adopted the tagline, "Fort Bend County's Premier Address."

Finally, even though dramatic growth was taking place, the current rooftop count was still relatively small. Fulshear needed a way to show businesses the true potential of the city's trade area. The solution? Analytics.

While analytics have been used by retailers and other businesses since the early 1990s, their application for local governments was not immediately apparent. But over time, forward-thinking local governments began partnering with analytics firms to conduct in-depth analyses of consumers in their trade areas. The data-mining techniques yield insights into the "psychographics" of residents – how they spend their money, where they like to shop and dine, and their overall lifestyles. Analytics also provide insights into the buying power and preferences of people in the surrounding trade area, rather than just the political boundaries of the city. Ultimately, the results can be used to match the community with specific retailers and restaurants that will meet the needs and preferences of local consumers.

For the City of Fulshear, analytics helped confirm many observations about the retail potential of the city and its trade area. Armed with this validation, city leaders wasted no time putting the data to use.

Fulshear integrated the wealth of information into their presentations and marketing materials for prospective new businesses and began using the customer analytics on a daily basis to educate developers about the opportunities available in the community.

Fulshear also loaded portable thumb drives with a presentation that tells the story of the community in pictures and numbers, as well as statistics that are relevant to the business being recruited. The thumb drives have

become Fulshear's "calling card" and have proven to be effective tools in the economic development process.

Ultimately, the analytics have helped Fulshear sell an entire corridor of new retail development. Cheryl notes that the data-driven insights allow the city "to tell a story that you couldn't tell otherwise," a story that has proven to be extremely attractive to investors.

Today, developers and investors come to Fulshear weekly requesting information on opportunities. There are currently several retail developments in process and the city is welcoming not one, but two grocers that were recruited using the analytical approach. The largest retail center will be home to a 98,000 square foot H-E-B grocery store, with a surrounding 199,000 square feet of retail at the corner of Cinco Ranch Boulevard and FM1463, adjacent to the more than 3,200 acre Cross Creek Development.

Other businesses including Starbucks, Children's Lighthouse, Orange Leaf Yogurt, Community Coffee Shop, a well-known upscale restaurant, and several clothing and shoe retailers, have also been recruited.

While Fulshear's days as a small Texas town appear to be drawing to a close, city leaders are confident they are laying a solid foundation for a bright future. ★

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