

# THE RURAL TEXAN

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OFFICE OF RURAL COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

Spring 2007

## At Issue: TDA's Certified Retirement Community Program

Ready to retire and equipped with an annual spending power of \$2.3 trillion, baby boomers are looking for new digs, with Texas topping the list as the 6th most popular retirement state. The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) has a new program to help Texas communities attract retirees.

### Certified Retirement Communities Gain Marketing Advantage

By Julie V. Kelly, ORCA

Plenty of recreational opportunities, low cost of living, nonexistent traffic, and retirement-friendly tax policies make rural Texas a perfect match for retiring boomers. It's a win-win situation since retirees have lots of mailbox money to feed the little communities, and the communities are hungry for extra revenue and stable populations.

The stakes are high, with the Texas Department of Agriculture reporting that "retirees spend an average \$36,000 a year in their new communities while also paying \$3,000 or more in state and local taxes."

During the next 25 years, 31 percent of the population will turn 55 and

many boomers will relocate when they retire.

To bring those retirees to Texas, the Texas Department of Agriculture now offers the Texas Certified

**"The primary value of CRC designation is community participation in a statewide and nationwide marketing campaign to attract retirees and tourists."**

Retirement Community Program, a new initiative to help Texas communities motivate retirees to relocate to their town. Other states, including Kentucky, Mississippi, Iowa, California and West Virginia,

are also using certification programs to market their rural towns as perfect respites for retirees.

#### Certification

TDA offers a comprehensive certification process that includes workshops, technical assistance from experts in the retirement industry, training for locals in economic development and tourism, and even assistance for the community in a self-evaluation to determine their potential to succeed as a retirement destination. Workshop topics include an overview of the CRC program, application preparation, marketing, advisory boards and long-term plans.

*Continued on back page...*

## Resource Guide

### Assessing Your Community: Will They Really Move Here?

Rural communities interested in becoming a CRC should visit TDA's website at [www.agr.state.tx.us](http://www.agr.state.tx.us). Communities may find it helpful to review the CRC Community Guidelines, which includes a "Retiree Desirability Assessment", designed to serve as the basis for marketing and planning efforts.

The assessment covers community demographics, geography and climate; state and local tax structures; housing availability, security and crime statistics; employment; healthcare and disability services; emergency medical services and hospital systems; nursing care and assisted living facilities; public transportation and infrastructure; continuing education; leisure living and recreation; performing arts, festivals and events; and sports.

Rural communities should also consider evaluating their community using the Rural Viability Index, a self-administered scoring process that assesses a variety of community indicators, online at <http://www.orca.state.tx.us/index.php/Community+Development/Rural+Viability+Index>.

TDA accepts applications for the CRC program on an ongoing basis. The next CRC workshop is scheduled for Fall 2007.

### Additional Resources

TDA recommends that CRC applicants visit the following websites when researching the "Retiree Desirability Assessment" portion of the CRC program application.

#### Ageing Texas Well

[www.agingtexaswell.org](http://www.agingtexaswell.org)

#### US Census quick facts

<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48000.html>

#### County Narratives

[http://socrates.cdr.state.tx.us/CNP/index\\_single.asp](http://socrates.cdr.state.tx.us/CNP/index_single.asp)

#### Councils of Governments

[www.governor.state.tx.us/divisions/stategrants/cogdirectory/view](http://www.governor.state.tx.us/divisions/stategrants/cogdirectory/view)

#### Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities

[www.governor.state.tx.us/disabilities/](http://www.governor.state.tx.us/disabilities/)

#### Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS)

[www.dads.state.tx.us/](http://www.dads.state.tx.us/)

#### Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA)

Rural Viability Index

[www.orca.state.tx.us/index.php/Community+Development/Rural+Viability+Index](http://www.orca.state.tx.us/index.php/Community+Development/Rural+Viability+Index)

### Recent Publications

#### Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

Manual for Small Public Water Systems

[http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/compliance/compliance\\_support/txsmallwater/home.html](http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/compliance/compliance_support/txsmallwater/home.html)

#### Office of Rural Community Affairs

Strategic Plan FY 2007

[http://www.orca.state.tx.us/pdfs/Strategic\\_Plan\\_FY\\_2007\\_2011.pdf](http://www.orca.state.tx.us/pdfs/Strategic_Plan_FY_2007_2011.pdf)

### Nacogdoches County: Breathing Room for Baby Boomers

By Julie V. Kelly, ORCA

Just a few hours away from the grandkids in Houston and Dallas, Nacogdoches offers natural beauty, friendly people and division one football. What more could retirees eager to escape urban chaos ask for?

"We are off the beaten track, but within easy reach," said Bruce Partain, president of the Nacogdoches County Chamber of Commerce.

Nacogdoches' location and quality of life positioned it as an ideal retirement spot and motivated the county to participate in TDA's Certified Retirement Community (CRC) program.

#### Certification Process

The county assembled a citizens' committee that included retirees to evaluate Nacogdoches' ability to compete with other communities on a national level.

The process, facilitated by TDA's certification program, helped to reveal strengths and weaknesses in the community, ultimately providing a roadmap to certification for Nacogdoches. The county became a CRC in November 2006.

The county anticipates a hefty return on investment in the next



Plants grow great in East Texas! The annual plant sales held by the Pineywoods Native Plant Center and the Stephen F. Austin State University Arboretum are popular events for retirees in Nacogdoches. Those organizations also welcome seniors as volunteers. Photo credit: Bruce R. Partain, Nacogdoches County Chamber

five years. Nacogdoches raised half of the fee required to participate in the CRC program through corporate donations, a commitment indicative of the value of retirees, estimated at 3.7 factory jobs.

#### Why not go it alone?

Although the county could have marketed itself to retirees on its own and without the CRC designation, they chose to participate in TDA's program.

"There's great power in regional and statewide marketing," said Partain. "Nacogdoches actively cooperates with other East Texas communities in tourism and economic development. Being part of a statewide retiree marketing effort will add another powerful element to our resources."

## Certified Retirement Communities

Continued from front page...

The process is extensive and time consuming. Duncanville reported that it spent "nearly 500 hours" preparing for certification. Nacogdoches assembled a team of citizens that included retirees to spread the burden of research and preparation.

### Marketing Campaign

The primary value of CRC designation is community participation in a statewide and nationwide marketing campaign to attract retirees and tourists. Given the low cost of application, the greater of either \$5,000 or \$0.25 multiplied by the population of the community, the program offers an exceptional value. TDA has ample resources to reach out to a large

target audience, such as retiring baby boomers; rural communities could not expect to equal these marketing efforts on their own.

In addition to marketing, the process rewards applicants by revealing community strengths and weaknesses and stimulating improvements within the community. For example, Winnsboro, designated a CRC this May, has made changes to its tax policies to attract retirees to the city, and plans other improvements. In a letter of support, Ronny Knight, Winnsboro city administrator, said, "We are upgrading our infrastructure to accommodate our new growth and to meet the ongoing expansion of our hospital."

## ORCA's Grants Clearinghouse

Online at [www.orca.state.tx.us](http://www.orca.state.tx.us)

ORCA's new online Grants & Funding Clearinghouse focuses on grant resources of special interest to rural Texans. The site provides rural communities, grant seekers, and grant writers with current grant funding opportunities; tools for grant writers; and resources for nonprofits and community-based organizations.

The web page includes a rural grants update featuring continuously updated rural grant opportunities; a section specifically for rural hospitals; information on grant search tools and links to data research tools that ORCA considers helpful to grant researchers; information on nonprofit resources; and grant writing tools.

*The Rural Texan* will report on a new or significant grant or tool each quarter. In this issue of the newsletter, ORCA premieres Texas eGrants, the State of Texas' new website dedicated to grant researchers.

Launched April 1, 2007, the Texas eGrants website enables researchers to easily and quickly search for and view the details of competitive funding announcements available through dozens of Texas state agencies.

Researchers may search by a variety of criteria, including geographical focus of the grant. You may access the Texas eGrants website at <http://www.texasonline.state.tx.us/tolapp/egrants/search.htm>, or from a link on ORCA's Grants & Funding Clearinghouse at <http://www.orca.state.tx.us/index.php/Home/Grants+Clearinghouse>.



*Where rural Texas comes first.*

As the state agency dedicated solely to rural Texas, ORCA makes the broad resources of state government more accessible to rural communities. The agency ensures a continuing focus on rural issues, monitors governmental actions affecting rural Texas, researches problems and recommends solutions, and is a coordinator and provider of rural-focused state and federal resources.

***"Becoming a retirement community is a natural fit for rural communities. The benefit of TDA's certification is the ability of the program to reach a large target audience with a professional marketing campaign; this is a great value to the community."***

Charles S. (Charlie) Stone  
ORCA Executive Director

*The Rural Texan* is a free publication of the Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA). To subscribe, call ORCA toll free at 800-544-2042 or e-mail Julie V. Kelly, Editor, at [orca@orca.state.tx.us](mailto:orca@orca.state.tx.us).

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## Braggin' Rights

Does your rural community have an economic development success story to share? ORCA would like to feature your story in *The Rural Texan*.

Please e-mail a brief description of your story, along with your contact information, to Julie V. Kelly at [orca@orca.state.tx.us](mailto:orca@orca.state.tx.us). Include "success story" in the subject line.

## 2007 Executive Committee Meetings

May 31-June 1 Austin  
July 26-27 Austin

Executive Committee meeting dates and locations are subject to change. Please visit ORCA online at [www.orca.state.tx.us](http://www.orca.state.tx.us) to confirm times.

Meeting agendas are set one week prior to each meeting and are posted online.

## ORCA Executive Committee

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Sweetwater: 325-236-9672

Vernon: 940-553-3556

## ORCA's Mission:

"To assist rural Texans who seek to enhance their quality of life by facilitating, with integrity, the use of the resources of our state so that sustained economic growth will enrich the rural Texas experience for the benefit of all."



***"With strong support from the Texas Department of Agriculture, and a robust and expanding market in retiring baby boomers, becoming a Certified Retirement Community is a very promising enterprise for rural Texas."***

Michael Waters  
Chair, ORCA Executive Committee

## In this issue of *The Rural Texan*: TDA's Certified Retirement Community Program

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