

## **Blanco County Conservation Initiative**

### **Best Practices for Developments and Landowners in Blanco County**

#### **Why Best Practices**

Significant development is occurring in Blanco County and across the Hill Country, as the region is recognized as one of the top areas to live and visit in Texas. Without thoughtful planning, development has the potential to adversely impact the natural infrastructure of the Hill Country that makes it such a desirable area, including our dark night skies, water availability, natural landscape, native animals and vegetation, and rural character. Growth and wine tourism, with increasing demands on water supply, could also threaten the viability of existing farms and ranchland.

Best Practices for Developments and Landowners in Blanco County were developed by BCCI in response to a grass roots effort by over 200 people concerned about the effects of developments on Blanco County. The top concerns were prioritized into four subcategories: Ground and Surface Water Conservation, Landscape and Wildlife Conservation, Night Sky Preservation, and Preservation of Agricultural Production and Protection of Rural Character and History. BCCI then surveyed existing literature on approaches to address these concerns. The best practices summarize practical approaches that can be used to successfully address the concerns. They contain brief summaries of key issues that should be considered during planning along with links to more detailed resources that can be used to create actionable plans.

These best practices are intended to be evergreen. We will update them as new information becomes available and to reflect community feedback. Please consider adopting these best practices, as appropriate, for your own property and as you interact with developers, government officials and conservation organizations.

#### **How to Use the Best Practices:**

- Developers should be encouraged to adopt the best practices in any development plans.
- POA's should implement some of the best practices, such as allowing rainwater harvesting and requiring dark-sky-compliant lighting, into deed restrictions, covenants and by laws.
- Landowners can adopt best practices in their land management plans.
- Government officials can encourage adoption of the best practices throughout Blanco County and where appropriate, reference best practices in County/City resolutions, ordinances, and development rules.

## **Best Practices for Developments and Landowners in Blanco County**

**Ground and Surface Water Conservation:** Ground and surface water are limited and precious resources in Blanco County. Developments should strive to maintain healthy waterways, conserve water, and maintain good surface and groundwater quality.

- *Developers and landowners should identify and protect aquifer recharge features.*
- *Rainwater harvesting should be used where practical to supplement or replace the need for groundwater and reduce strain on public water systems.*
- *Sustainable landscaping should be used to promote water capture and minimize irrigation water requirements.*
- *Minimize or do not discharge treated wastewater into pristine stream and rivers. Consider alternatives including repurposing gray water for irrigation and use of drain fields. If discharge cannot be avoided, treat to lowest practically achievable phosphorus levels.*
- *Adhere to drought -stage water restrictions.*

**Landscape and Wildlife Conservation:** Protect the diverse landscape, native vegetation, and wildlife of Blanco County.

- *Maintain healthy riparian habitat along rivers and streams. Consider setting aside green space along waterways in development plans.*
- *Avoid clear cutting. In addition to oak trees, many other native trees, shrubs, and grasses are critical to maintaining a healthy and diverse landscape.*
- *Prevent damage to oak trees that could cause Oak Wilt.*
- *Adopt practices to minimize fire risk.*
- *Conserve open spaces and scenic views and other areas of unique beauty and character using approaches such as establishing more parks and greenways.*

**Night Sky Preservation:** The dark night sky is one of the outstanding features of Blanco County

- *Landowners, businesses, and developers are encouraged to adopt dark sky lighting practices. Subdivisions should adopt dark sky lighting practices in deed restrictions.*

**Preservation of Agricultural Production and Protection of Rural Character and History:**

- *Consider strategies such as voluntary, negotiated conservation easements to preserve agricultural lands.*
- *Prevent damming of seasonal creeks and tributaries that have historically been used for agriculture and livestock.*
- *Minimize community disruption and the impact of traffic from new developments.*
- *Identify and preserve historic and archeologic sites and features.*
- *Promote the history and rural character of Blanco County*