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#### **Our Mission:**

The mission of the South Plains workforce system is to meet the needs of the region's employers for a highly skilled workforce by educating and preparing workers.

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## **March Newsletter**

### **Lubbock MSA and Regional Unemployment**

Lubbock's MSA unemployment rate for March 2019 is 3.1%, remained the same as February's 3.1%. Midland MSA recorded the lowest unemployment rate at 2.1%, second lowest was Odessa MSA at 2.5% and Amarillo, Austin-Round Rock and College Station-Bryan MSA's recorded the third lowest rate at 2.7%.

\*Employment estimates released by TWC are produced in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. All estimates are subject to revision. To access this and more employment data, visit [Texas LMI](#).

### **Upcoming Events in 2019:**

#### **-South Plains Job Fairs-**

- October 2019 -

Lubbock Memorial Civic  
Center

-10am - 2pm-

#### **-Jobs Y'all Career**

**Exploration and Hiring  
Event-**

**Youth Career Fair ages 14-**

**24**

**-May 8, 2019-**

The TWC Lubbock MSA and South Plains WDA Economic Profiles provide a breakdown of employment by industry. Click on the images to the right to access the profiles.

(Image located on page 3)

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS				
Metro Areas (Seasonally Adjusted)				
Metro Areas	Apr 2017	Monthly Change	Annual Change	Annual % Change
Abilene MSA	68,100	100	700	1.0
Amarillo MSA	121,300	-1,100	1,200	1.0
Austin-Round Rock MSA	1,021,900	-400	29,300	3.0
Beaumont-Port Arthur MSA	164,000	900	-800	-0.5
Brownsville-Harlingen MSA	143,000	100	2,700	1.9
College Station-Bryan MSA	115,900	-400	2,500	2.2
Corpus Christi MSA	192,400	-100	1,400	0.7
Dallas-FW-Arlington MSA	3,582,400	-18,000	99,600	2.9
Dallas-Plano-Irving MD	2,555,000	-15,600	76,600	3.1
Fort Worth-Arlington MD	1,027,800	-3,200	22,600	2.2
El Paso MSA	317,000	400	9,200	3.0
Houston MSA	3,044,300	13,700	44,000	1.5
Killeen-Temple MSA	146,600	500	3,600	2.5
Laredo MSA	104,000	100	2,300	2.3
Longview MSA	96,700	300	-600	-0.6
Lubbock MSA	146,300	-1,000	800	0.5
McAllen MSA	256,700	600	4,900	1.9
Midland MSA	87,800	-100	100	0.1
Odessa MSA	69,800	100	-200	-0.3
San Angelo MSA	48,600	400	-500	-1.0
San Antonio MSA	1,035,600	3,800	24,800	2.5
Sherman-Denison MSA	47,000	100	1,000	2.2
Texarkana MSA	60,200	-500	-800	-1.3
Tyler MSA	106,200	400	2,300	2.2
Victoria MSA	42,000	200	-300	-0.7
Waco MSA	120,400	600	2,200	1.9
Wichita Falls MSA	58,000	400	-100	-0.2

**Highlights**  
(MSA industry data are not seasonally adjusted)

- Seventeen of 26 areas grew in April for a combined increase of 22,700 jobs. Nineteen areas grew over the year, while seven areas contracted.
- The Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land MSA accounted for more than half of all area employment gains over the month. The MSA increased its annual growth rate to 1.5 percent.
- The San Angelo MSA grew fastest in percentage terms with a 0.8 percent April expansion. Per not seasonally adjusted industry data, Retail Trade and Other Services each added 200 jobs over the month, while Government was down 200 positions.
- The Dallas-Plano-Irving MD led in actual and percentage job growth annually. Professional and Business Services led all major industries with 21,000 positions gained, followed by Leisure and Hospitality with 10,900 jobs added.
- The Beaumont-PA and the Texarkana MSAs lost the most jobs annually. The loss of 2,100 jobs in Retail was primarily responsible for the contraction in the Beaumont-PA MSA, while employment losses in Texarkana were spread across industries.


Hotel Ava  
3201 South Loop 289  
-4:00pm - 7:00pm-


**-Jobs Y'all Career  
Exploration Events-**  
September 2019

For 8th graders  
Dates/time/locations still  
pending

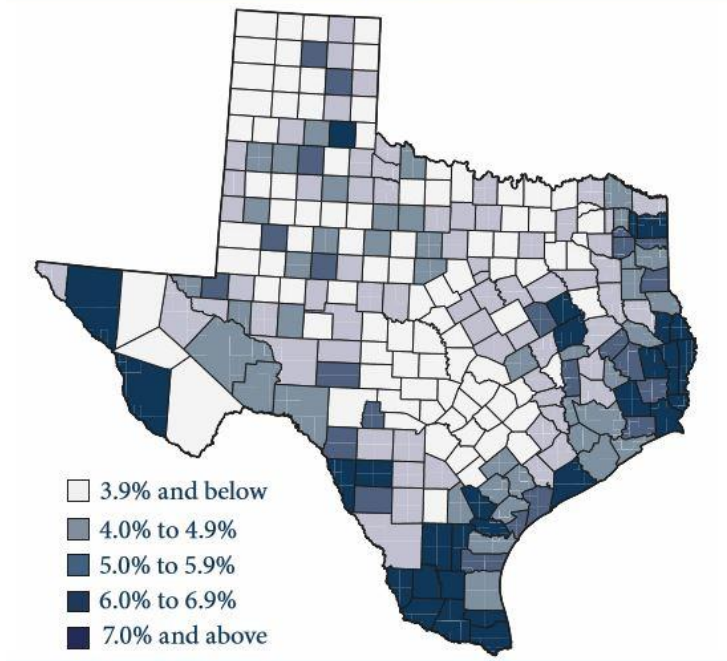
**- South Plains Career  
Expo -**  
~ October 22, 2019 ~  
Lubbock Memorial Civic  
Center  
- 8:00am - 12:00pm -

**Hiring Red, White & You**  
Veterans Job Fair  
- November 7, 2019 -  
-10:00am - 2:00pm-

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## County Unemployment Rates



(Image located on page 6)

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**Click image to  
view full report:**

Lubbock Metropolitan  
Statistical Area (MSA)



[Click image to view full report:](#)  
 South Plains Regional  
 Workforce Development Area

Lubbock												
	January 19				February 19				January 20			
Area	Jan Total	Jan Total	Jan Total	Jan Total	Feb Total	Feb Total	Feb Total	Feb Total	Jan Total	Jan Total	Jan Total	Jan Total
State	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073
Lubbock	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073
Health care	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073
Manufacturing	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073
Education	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073
Government	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073
Retail	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073
Food and beverage	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073
Professional services	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073
Finance	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073
Information	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073
Transportation	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073
Other	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073	108,073

[Click image to view full report:](#)  
 Lubbock LAUS  
 County-by-County  
 Unemployment Rates

# New net-zero capable community brings many megawatts of solar to the Lone Star State

**By Billy Ludt, assistant editor of Solar Power World | April 26, 2019**

About 150 people a day move to Austin, Texas, and developers have looked eastward to give these new residents proper housing. East of the city are highways and undeveloped land — forest, rolling green hills and wildlife sanctuaries. But emerging from this land is a 7,500-home, master-planned community called Whisper Valley.

It will be comprised of seven villages that will be built in phases on plots of more than 2,000 acres of Texas land, with sections designated for residential and mixed-use homes as well as planned retail spaces. Shared

spaces like a wellness center, swimming pool, organic gardens and 700 acres of open space will also be available to Whisper Valley residents. There will even be a middle and elementary school in the development.



*Freshly built homes in the Whisper Valley development east of Austin, Texas await or sport rooftop solar arrays. The net-zero capable community will boast 7,500 homes upon completion. Francis Solar*

Whisper Valley is a reported \$2 billion, 15-year project that broke ground in July 2017. What makes it remarkable is not only the sheer number of houses being built, but that all of them are capable of zero carbon output.

“This project is massive,” said Steve Elmore, VP of business development at Francis Solar, the company that will install solar on all Whisper Valley homes. “There are home builders that offer standard solar, sure, but 7,500 master-planned homes is massive. This project is in Texas. When it comes to solar markets, Texas

is never on anyone's mind. But there's incredibly low-cost electricity here in Texas and most of the south."

The state lacks subsidies for solar, but the developer can promise some initial ROI through the federal investment tax credit for early home buyers.

When completed, the solar arrays on the homes here will add up to a combined output of 37.5 MW. Along with solar PV, each home will use geothermal energy.

### **'Net-zero capable'**

If Whisper Valley homeowners practice proper energy usage, they won't have an electric bill. In addition to renewable energy, the houses are outfitted with electric vehicle charging stations, Google Fiber high-speed internet and Nest security systems. Prices for a home in Whisper Valley start in the low \$200,000s and go up from there, and the fees for the solar and geothermal systems are packed into a single mortgage.

Francis Solar is tackling the thousands of solar home installations over nearly a decade with a flexible approach, out of necessity, and in-house management software. The program tracks each active and completed install down to what components were deployed and includes pictures of progress, too.



*Francis Solar was contracted to install a rooftop solar array on every home in the Whisper Valley development. Upon completion, the total solar output will be an estimated 37.5 MW.  
Whisper Valley*

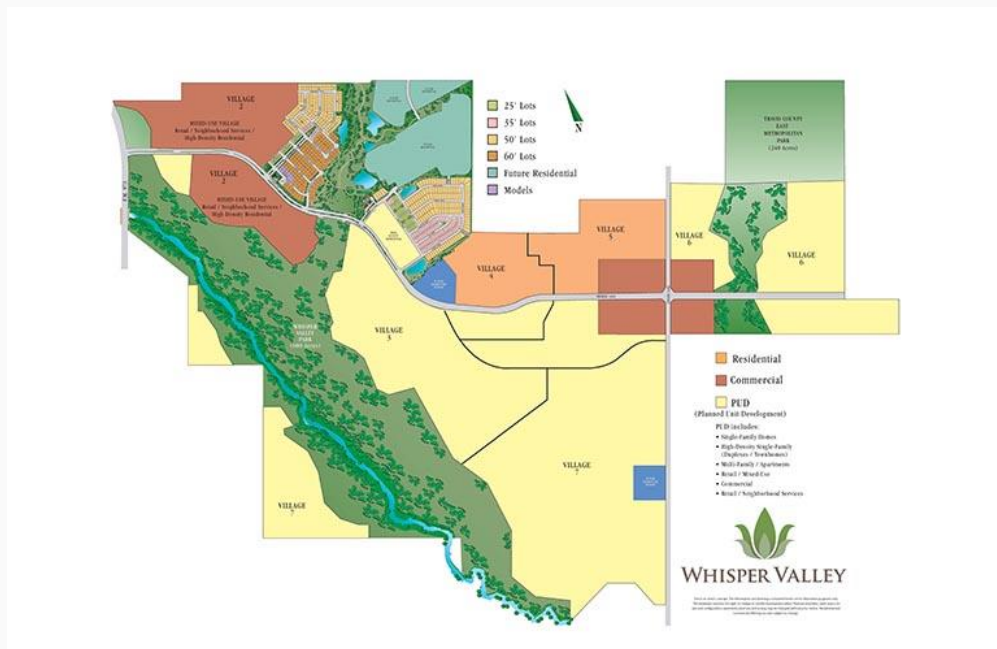
“I can pick one [home] randomly that’s in construction right now and I can see right here that the flashings are completed,” Elmore said. “I have every single data point about every single home. I could tell you exactly how many kilowatt hours it will produce, how many panels on which group and what type of rail arrangements. I have photos of every single step that’s been taken.”

Francis Solar has 80 different rooftop installation designs that can apply to a single floor plan of a Whisper Valley home. With the layout options available to buyers, and interfacing with five different home builders, the resulting number of possible floor plans is in the hundreds. So, keeping component counts down and working with proven products is necessary to maintain uniform kilowatt output per home and streamline installations, Elmore said.

“There’s a lot of ideas of the week out there in terms of racking. That’s where a lot of innovation is trying to happen, and maybe on a boutique basis, a lot of that is very interesting,” he said. “But in a community that has to be built consistently and at a low cost and a high standard and high warranty over the next decade, that’s totally different. At the risk of being a little cheesy here, it’s the difference between a pop song and The Beatles, and we kind of needed The Beatles here.”

The installer formed a product partnership with Quick Mount PV and is using its QRail and L-Mount mounting and racking systems on all homes. The mounting and racking system has sold over 14 million units with a roof flashing that has no reports of leaks and has a 25-year warranty, which were big selling points for Francis.

“We think about the crews that Francis Solar puts on the roof — how they have to manage the project — and in this case put thousands of shingle mounts on the roof, and how to do it quickly while also making sure that they’re installed correctly,” said Yann Brandt, CEO of Quick Mount PV. “That’s a never-ending process for us.”



*A map of what villages will comprise Whisper Valley. Whisper Valley*

The arrays also include Canadian Solar CS6K 275-watt modules, Fronius inverters and Tigo Energy optimizers. Each array is energy storage- and EV-charger-compatible.

## Looking forward



As the Whisper Valley project progresses, construction will begin on multi-family units, and the developer is considering using larger, shared PV systems to help power them.

“We feel like we’ve grasped the model from the single-family perspective,” said Douglas Gilliland, president of project developer Taurus of Texas, a branch of Taurus Investment Holdings. “Now we’re looking at multi-family and right behind that will be designing our first village of retail services and commercial services and we’ll be bringing the same commitment to green investment to that as well. The entire community will embrace that lifestyle on that technology.”

Gilliland said the developer took inspiration from the California legislation mandating all new homes be built with solar power.

“The real estate industry needs to keep evolving. We’re stewards of the land. We’re also the agent of change inside cities,” Gilliland said.

If successful, the Whisper Valley model could be the beginning of a trend toward net-zero homebuilding, with or without a state mandate.



*A street view of houses at Whisper Valley. Each home is outfitted with solar panels, a geothermal system, Google Fiber internet, an electric vehicle charging station and Nest home security system. Residents of Whisper Valley will have access to 700 acres of green space and parks, community pools, wellness centers, schooling and shopping districts within the development. Whisper Valley*

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## Texas private sector employers has added 262,300 jobs over the year

*State unemployment rate is 3.8 percent in March*

AUSTIN – Texas adds 22,600 seasonally adjusted nonfarm jobs in March. March marked the 107th consecutive month of annual growth for total nonfarm employment.

Read the full [press release](#).

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### Sources:

[Texas Labor Market Review](#)

<https://texaslmi.com/api/GetHomeLinks/TLMR>

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