

Megan Henderson, executive director at City Center Waco, has served many communities by overseeing vital programs for cities' success and values how locals' wellbeing is affected. Henderson enjoys personal involvement in Waco by attending church, volunteering with her daughter and spending time in the community.

"I really like to sit out in my front yard and exchange pleasantries with my neighbors as they walk by," Henderson said. "I really deeply engage with the physical space and want to be part of protecting it and making it better and hope that it speaks to other people and helps them feel connected to Waco."

Through her job, Henderson is able to cultivate and enhance Waco. City Center Waco encourages real estate development downtown and in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Henderson's job is to figure out how to do that while bringing about positive changes through communication with community members.

"We like to say that what we do is engagement, planning, accelerating and steering," Henderson said.

Henderson said the most direct way City Center Waco encourages people to enjoy Waco and get involved is by working through the Public Improvement District.

"We're not creating promotions for small businesses, the businesses are creating their own promotions, we're just amplifying their voice," Henderson said. "Because if a business is doing something that might bring people downtown, what we want is to bring people downtown and get them really moving around the space, interacting with the space, enjoying the space."

Locals can personally be part of the work City Center Waco does and help figure out what to do with public spaces and contribute in visioning for them through groups of community volunteers.

“If people really just are interested in downtown and want to get involved, there are Public Improvement District Committees and City Center Waco Committees that they can join and actually contribute to the decision making,” Henderson said.

Henderson said people can get involved in Waco by participating in the river clean ups Keep Waco Beautiful does, encouraging people as they participate in races or enjoying and helping maintain the park systems.

“Cleaning up doesn’t sound fun, but it is, because you’re outside and you’re on the river and it’s just beautiful,” Henderson said.

Henderson enjoys and loves Waco for the scenery on her daily drives to and from work crossing the river and also for the people in the community she can connect with.

“It’s the space and the people,” Henderson said. “I could have a day in Waco where I didn’t talk to another human being, but I’m continually delighted by the things around me. Waco is a beautiful place to be, but similarly, I could be in my office all day and not get out at all and because of the variety of people that I talk to and interact with I am continually delighted all day long.”

Henderson said you’re not “stuck in a bubble” in Waco.

“Waco is big enough that there’s a big variety of experiences to be had, and its small enough that you can taste that whole variety,” Henderson said.

To have the greatest impact, Henderson said, find things that speak to a sense of purpose and utilize personal skills and talents.

“I think that when you’re doing something that changes you and makes you more fully yourself – that pulls out all of those things about you that make you, you – and puts them in the

service of something larger than yourself, that's impact," Henderson said. "And I think that Waco is a place where people are doing that and that that's one of its defining characteristics."