

Bastrop's Real Estate Edge? It's Not Just Land

A national award to a UT Austin professor signals a deeper trend.

THE DATA

\$50,000

McGraw Prize Award Amount

The prize honors transformative education leadership in lifelong learning.

Michael Webber, a UT Austin professor of mechanical engineering and public policy, was awarded \$50,000 for his work expanding public understanding of energy systems through scalable educational platforms. This recognition underscores the growing value of knowledge infrastructure—digital, accessible, and widely distributed—as a competitive asset in modern economic zones.

Source: University of Texas at Austin Cockrell School of Engineering • Published September 17, 2026

<https://cockrell.utexas.edu/news/texas-engineer-michael-webber-wins-mcgraw-prize-in-education/>

01

Education as Infrastructure

The fact that a UT Austin energy educator was honored for nationwide impact shows that Texas is recognizing the economic value of accessible, high-quality education. Bastrop's proximity to Austin's research engine—and its own growing tech workforce—positions it to benefit from this shift: a county where learning is embedded in the fabric of economic development.

02

The Hidden Asset: Learning Scalability

This suggests that counties with strong ties to scalable education platforms—like those developed by UT Austin researchers—are not just attracting jobs, but building resilience. In a world where automation and AI are reshaping labor, the ability to rapidly upskill workers through accessible, gamified, and real-world-aligned learning is becoming a primary economic advantage. Bastrop is uniquely positioned to lead in this new paradigm.

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Diane Hart Alexander, MBA, MHA

Chair & CEO, ALEX Companies

Designated Broker, Alexander Tiffany Southwest, LLC dba ALEX.realestate, et.al.

Texas License #574877-B · Broker License #565194-BB

diane@alex.realestate · +1 713.591.9902



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