

Economic Development

9

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eclesiástico¹, **-ca** *adj* : ecclesiastical, ecclesiastic

eclesiástico² *nm* **CLÉRIGO** : cleric, clergyman

eclipsar *vt* **1** : to eclipse **2** : to outshine, to surpass

eclipse *nm* : eclipse

eco *nm* : echo

ecografía *nf* : ultrasound scanning

ecología *nf* : ecology

ecológico, **-ca** *adj* : ecological —
ecológicamente *adv*

ecologista *nmf* : ecologist, environmentalist

ecólogo, **-ga** *n* : ecologist

economía *nf* **1** : economy **2** : economics

económicamente *adv* : financially

económico, **-ca** *adj* : economic, economical

economista *nmf* : economist

economizar {21} *vt* : to save, to economize on — *vi* : to save up, to be frugal

ecosistema *nm* : ecosystem

ecuación *nf, pl* **-ciones** : equation

ecuador *nm* : equator

Rio Mar

Every day... it's a MOLE day!

MOLE

Almendrado



MOLE

Original



MOLE

Verde

100%
NATURAL
MEXICANO

MOLE

Original



EXISTING CONDITIONS

Market Assessment

Introduction

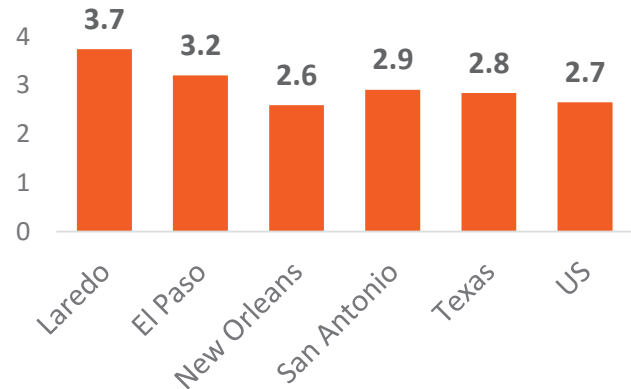
In order to better identify the economic development policies Laredo should pursue, it is important to better understand the economic realities and the potential for growth. Salient information on local demographics and economic performance have guided this investigation into Laredo and provide a foundation for assessing the local business climate. The market assessment that follows will identify and discuss local and regional assets that Laredo would be wise to leverage and the current challenges facing the city to support both short and long term economic sustainability.

Current Economic Climate

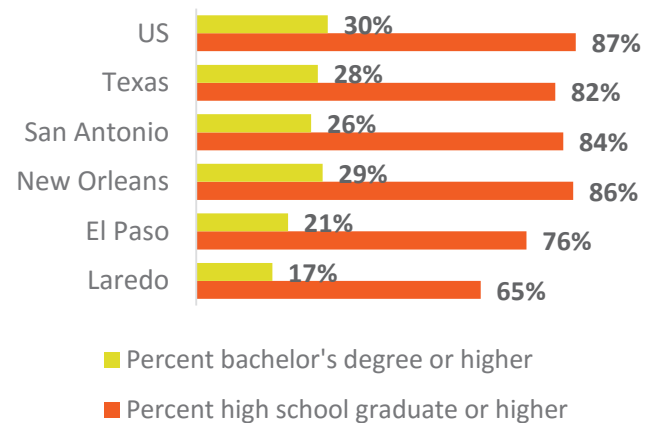
We begin with a summary of Laredo's current economic climate as a way to understand the economic development potential of the city. To ground our assessment, we have benchmarked Laredo with three cities that serve as either competitors for business relocations or expansions or as targets for future growth (in terms of both quality of life and economy). The benchmarks chosen for this market assessment include El Paso, New Orleans, and San Antonio. For most of the information presented in this section, data points for Texas and US are also provided.

Laredo is the smallest Metropolitan Statistical Area (the area selected for the data points presented in this section, unless otherwise noted) amongst the benchmarks. With nearly one more person per household than the statewide average, Laredo also has the largest household size compared to the benchmarks. Degree attainment is low, with the percentage of residents with a high school degree or above only at 65% and over 10% lower for attainment of bachelor's degrees or higher.

Average Household Size (2014)



Degree Attainment (2014)



Source: US Census Bureau

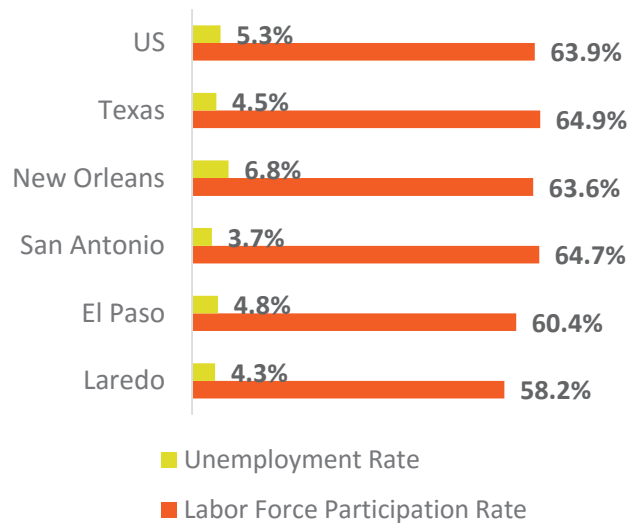
While the unemployment rate is lower than most benchmarks, the participation rate is also relatively low. This likely means that many more in Laredo have decided to stop looking for work. Given that the median age is lower than most cities, this participation figure is not likely due to aging workers leaving the labor force early. Labor force participation in Laredo may simply be a product of incomes not being high enough to offset costs of childcare, transportation, or other costs that workers may endure. Thus, it is important for any economic development policy in Laredo to help create good-paying jobs throughout the city and to strive to bring people back into the labor force.

Residents who are foreign born make up 26% of the total population, which is nearly double the national figure. Only about 15% of those residents have entered into the US since 2010. Immigration is an important factor for the economic health of cities. Immigrants are more likely to start businesses than native-born Americans, which can become a greater benefit for Laredo if investment into entrepreneurship is increased.

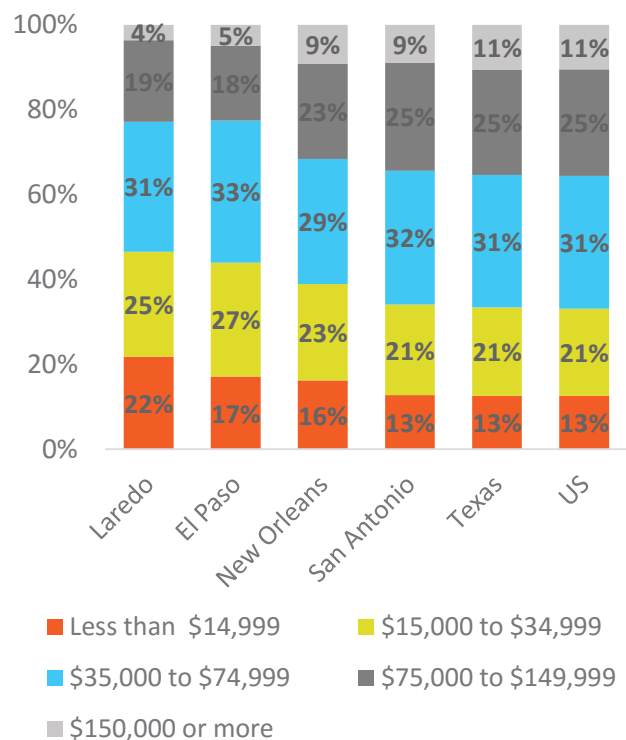
Median household incomes are the lowest amongst the benchmarks, with El Paso not far off. While the total cost of living in Laredo is relatively low, particularly for housing and transportation, this benefit is truly only felt for individuals or businesses moving to Laredo from more expensive markets. While median rents are nearly \$150 less than the state average, lower median incomes can make Laredo an expensive place to live. With an increase in higher-paying jobs and opportunities for skills development, more will be able to see the benefits of relatively low costs of goods and services.

Source: US Census, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Angelou Economics

Unemployment and Labor Force Participation (2015)



Household Income and Benefits Combined (2014)



SWOT Analysis

Following the market assessment, a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis was performed to better organize our identification of assets and challenges. The items identified in this analysis are found below.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Unique culture & history	Aesthetics of the city
Young workforce, one of the youngest large cities in US	Many neighborhoods in the city stricken with poverty
TAMIU & LCC	Informal housing settlements
World-class hub for trade	Poor health outcomes for residents
Potential to support high-growth	Lack of options for entertainment
Architecturally interesting downtown	City not seen as encouraging new development
Proximity to Mexico	City not seen as partner for arts and cultural community
Sufficient green space	No unified vision for economic development or consistent use of tools or incentives
	Lack of vibrant urban core/significant downtown development
Opportunities	Threats
Passionate citizenry for supporting downtown and history	Changes in international trade agreements
Marketing TAMIU's and LCC's low cost of attendance	Other border communities are savvier at using economic development tools
Promoting amenities of Laredo to attract young professionals and families back to their home city	Continued contraction in oil and gas industry
Access to engineering talent in Mexico and US	Increased congestion and wait times at Port of Laredo
Reviving draw for tourists from Mexico and elsewhere in Texas	Economy largely dependent on trade, not diverse
Diversifying port-related activities and leading port innovations	Crime spilling over the border into Laredo
	Retaining graduates and skilled, young workers

Assets to Leverage

World-class hub for Trade

Laredo is at the heart of not only trade between the US and Mexico, but the flow of goods between the US and many Latin American countries. Amongst land-based ports, Laredo has the highest number of border crossings in the US. A significant amount of NAFTA-based trade, 22% of total trade value, passes through the Port of Laredo. Port facilities are world-class, but it is important to keep innovating and increasing efficiencies so that Laredo maintains a competitive edge.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the Port of Laredo to the local economy, as many business owners and residents rely on the Port's activity. In the past 10 years, while personal vehicle crossings have declined overall, border crossings by truck have increased by 38%. This has helped the local economy grow. As trade becomes a greater focus of public policy at all levels of government, it is important that Laredo advocates for policies that can keep port activity growing so that other industries continue to grow as well.

Young workforce

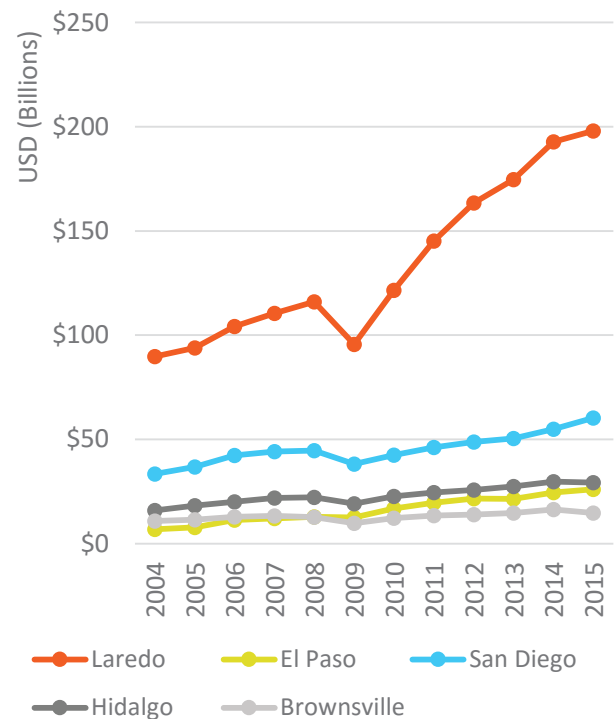
Laredo is one of the youngest large cities in the US. This is a benefit for employers looking to hire entry level workers. While Laredo has increased the size of the High School and College-aged population, the city has seen a 1% decrease in young and early professionals (25 to 44) between 2009 and 2014. This may be due to the fact that some young professionals have found greater job availability in other communities.

Unique culture and history

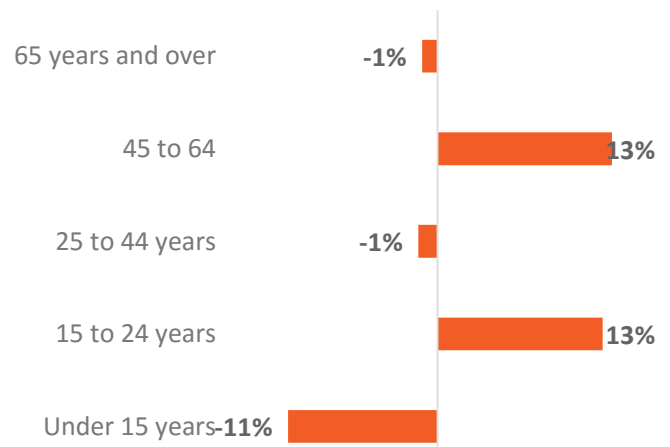
The history and culture of Laredo are unique (its culinary history, artistic community, music, and murals), even within the Texas border region. Outsiders should know more about significant cultural events (like the

Source: US Census Bureau, US Dept of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics

Total Trade Value of Freight by Port (NAFTA)



Age Groups - 5 Year growth (2009 to 2014)



Washington’s Birthday Celebration, the Jamboozie Festival, and the Border Olympics) that could draw them to Laredo. These events bring consumer spending to Laredo and help to contribute to the image of Laredo as a vibrant community. Supporting these events and the arts can help to ensure that Laredo has the ability to attract skilled professionals and new businesses.

Architecturally interesting downtown

Downtowns serve as the “face” of a community. Laredo is blessed with a historic city center and buildings that offer a cultural value to the community. Visitors can sense the history of Downtown Laredo and remark at the architectural beauty of some of the buildings. Organizations that preserve Downtown’s history and manage the district should be promoted and garner greater support. Doing so can build a greater sense of place for Laredo, which will help Laredo compete for skilled workers, and allow for small businesses to flourish in underutilized areas. Many cities throughout the Texas and the nation have revitalized their downtown districts through local investments and state and federal grants for redevelopment projects. Laredo would be wise to utilize economic development tools such as tax increment financing or business improvement districts that can help to spur redevelopment of downtown.

Parks and green space

Parks and green space can provide benefits to the health of residents. These benefits can help workers be more productive and make the community more attractive to new residents. Laredo has a significant amount of park space, which residents value (as found in the stakeholder engagement process). Among the benchmark communities, Laredo lands near the middle. San Antonio, given the size and wealth of historical sites in the community, has invested in building a sizeable inventory of parks. Given the public support for parks and green space, Laredo should continue to plan for and ensure that these amenities are part of new neighborhoods and redevelopment of existing neighborhoods.

Parks and Green Space		
	Park space (acres)	Acres per 1,000 residents
Laredo	1,035	5.7
El Paso	853	1.0
San Antonio	15,337	6.6
New Orleans	2,000	1.6

Source: Various City Parks, Rec Departments, & NRAPS

Benefits of Commercial Growth & Diversification

Every city depends on taxpayers to provide city services. It is important to keep in mind, however, that having the lowest cost per person is not always the best means to successful economic development. Nor does it necessarily mean that the burden to residents will be low. While Laredo’s cost of government per capita is higher than El Paso, it is substantially lower than the two larger benchmark cities. These cities, however, have a greater commercial tax base which can offset costs to residents. Greater expansion of the commercial sector will bring in additional property tax revenues, lowering the property tax burden for residents and allowing revenues to contribute to greater quality of life amenities. It is important that the City view the benefits of commercial growth as an asset to make Laredo a better place to live and work.

Cost of Government		
	General Revenue Fund (FY 2016)	Cost of Government per capita
Laredo	\$177 M	\$723
El Paso	\$369 M	\$550
San Antonio	\$2.2 B	\$1,603
New Orleans	\$602 M	\$1,633

Source: Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, US Census

Challenges to Overcome

Poverty

Poverty is a challenge for Laredo that has implications for the City’s ability to attract and retain businesses. Impoverished communities become and stay economically disadvantaged because of a lack of investment in building financial and social capital. In turn, this leads to a lack of opportunities for skills development and job access. Economic development policies should focus on bringing in good-paying jobs and supporting programs that allow more of Laredo’s residents to contribute to the economic successes of the city. Supporting job retraining programs is essential, as well as utilizing federal and statewide grant programs in targeted areas of Laredo.

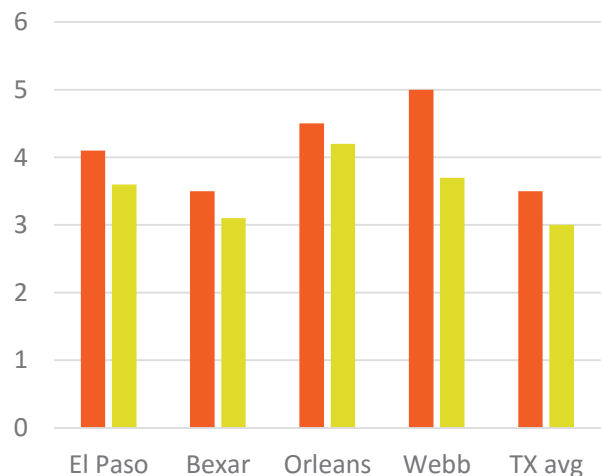
Poor health outcomes

The rate of residents without health insurance is higher than many other places in Texas, which is among the states with the highest percentage of uninsured residents. One of the results of a high uninsured population is that health outcomes will be worse overall. Nearly every type of negative health factor has higher incidence in Webb County. As the chart to the right indicates, residents see about 1.5 more “poor physical health days” over a 30 day timespan compared to statewide average, which results in a less productive workforce. Expanding access to health insurance and promoting healthy habits through employers can begin to help make progress on this issue.

Months Income is Below the Poverty Level (2014)



Poor Physical and Mental Health Days in Past 30 Days (2016)



Source: US Census, County Health Rankings

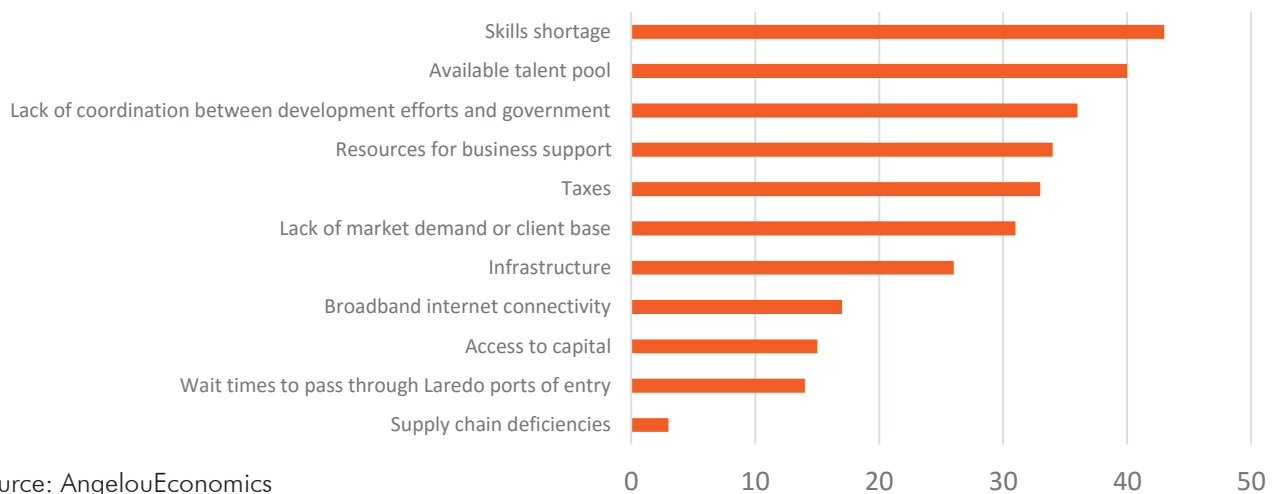
Encouraging new development

Encouraging the development of new businesses is a strong motivating force for economic developers. In a basic sense, cities can help by lowering barriers to starting a business or expanding existing operations. Business incentives, either as qualified tax abatements, grants, or exemptions of certain requirements (such as parking spaces or permitting fees) are one way to encourage new development, but the satisfaction of existing businesses can also play a large role in how successful a city is at growing its economy. In the online questionnaire, only four business respondents reported receiving any sort of economic development incentives from the city and just around 30% reported that they would not recommend Laredo as a place to do business. This sentiment is a clear indication that Laredo should find new solutions to helping the business sector grow. It is key that the economic development strategy for Laredo and this comprehensive plan are used to institute sound and proven tools for business attraction, expansion, and retention.

Consistent economic development policy

Economic development incentives and activities by the City have lacked consistency, due to fact that they have historically not been a well funded or staffed priorities for Laredo. Overall, the business community has voiced support for greater and more consistent use of incentives. The strategy that follows offers guidelines for specific incentives policies that Laredo can use, but, more than anything else, it is important to have a clear and well-communicated policy on how business can apply for the incentives that the City offers.

What are the primary challenges facing your business?



Source: AngelouEconomics

Target Industry Analysis

While it is the goal of economic development to grow all industries that are able to do so, it is important to focus attraction, retention, and expansion efforts on a set group of targeted industries that have the best chance for growth and the best return on investment for the community. Targeting industries also provides a clear message for marketing to site selectors about how supportive local policymakers are for those industries and to how well their strategic planning efforts align with the needs of businesses within those industries.

The process of selecting targeted industries for Laredo begins with an identification of local clusters, followed by a review of national and regional employment trends, a look into assets that may support industry expansion, and how well each industry aligns with the community's goals.

Following the description of the selection process is a discussion of the rationale for choosing each industry, a presentation of relevant industry data, and a score card determining overall competitiveness.

Selection Process

Step 1: Identifying Local Clusters

It is first important to understand the geographic patterns of Laredo's economy. Laredo's US-based workforce is largely commuting within the City. However, the workforce that resides in Nuevo Laredo is sizeable. On an average day, just under 40,000 individuals cross the border into Laredo. Each of the sectors shown to the right are impacted by these flows.

Sector	2015 Employment	LQ
Resource Extraction	2,424	4.61
Transportation & Warehousing	13,162	3.69
Education	12,648	1.47
Retail Trade	14,270	1.20
Health Care	15,235	1.08
Accommodation & Food	9,765	1.07
Business Support Services	5,527	0.89
Wholesale Trade	3,005	0.73
Finance & Insurance	2,889	0.72
Real Estate	939	0.63

Location Quotient (LQ)

A calculated ratio between the local economy and the national economy that indicates industry concentration.

LQ = 1.0 indicates average concentration

LQ > 2.0 indicates a strong cluster

LQ < 0.5 indicates a weak cluster

Step 2: Measuring Opportunities for Growth

Sizeable clusters that experience national growth are displayed in the top right quadrant, as is displayed on the following page. Transportation & Warehousing, Resource Extraction, Health Care, and Education stand out from the pack as sizeable sectors of the economy that have seen national growth.

Step 3: Cataloging the Regional Asset Base







Regional assets support the expansion of certain industries through their ability to lower costs for businesses, develop and attract skilled workers, offer profitable markets for companies to participate in, or connect businesses to a broader range of ideas, suppliers, or other resources. The list to the right is a high-level summary of the major industry assets found in Laredo.

Step 4: Aligning with the Community Vision

Finally, the goals expressed by community members throughout the stakeholder engagement process, along with the overarching goals developed for this economic development plan also factor into the target industry selection process.

The recommended target industries identified through this process are presented on the following page. Underneath each major industry is a set of niches that may provide significant focus for Laredo’s economic development team. These selected target industries will drive promotion efforts and use of business incentives.

Competitive Industry Assets

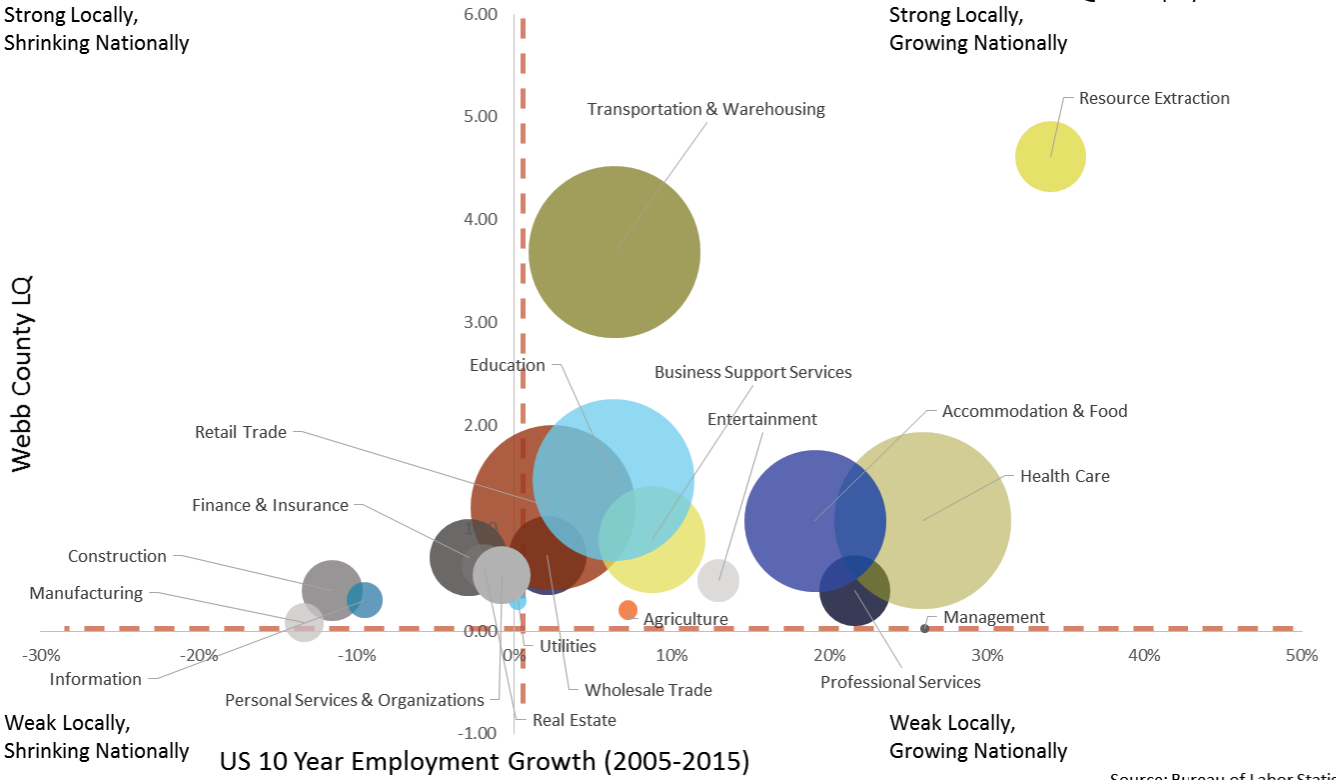
-  **World-class hub for trade**
-  **TAMIU, LCC, & UT Health and Sci. Center**
-  **Large and young market & workforce**
-  **Access to engineering talent in Mexico & US**
-  **Potential to support high growth**
-  **Low cost of living**

Webb County Clusters

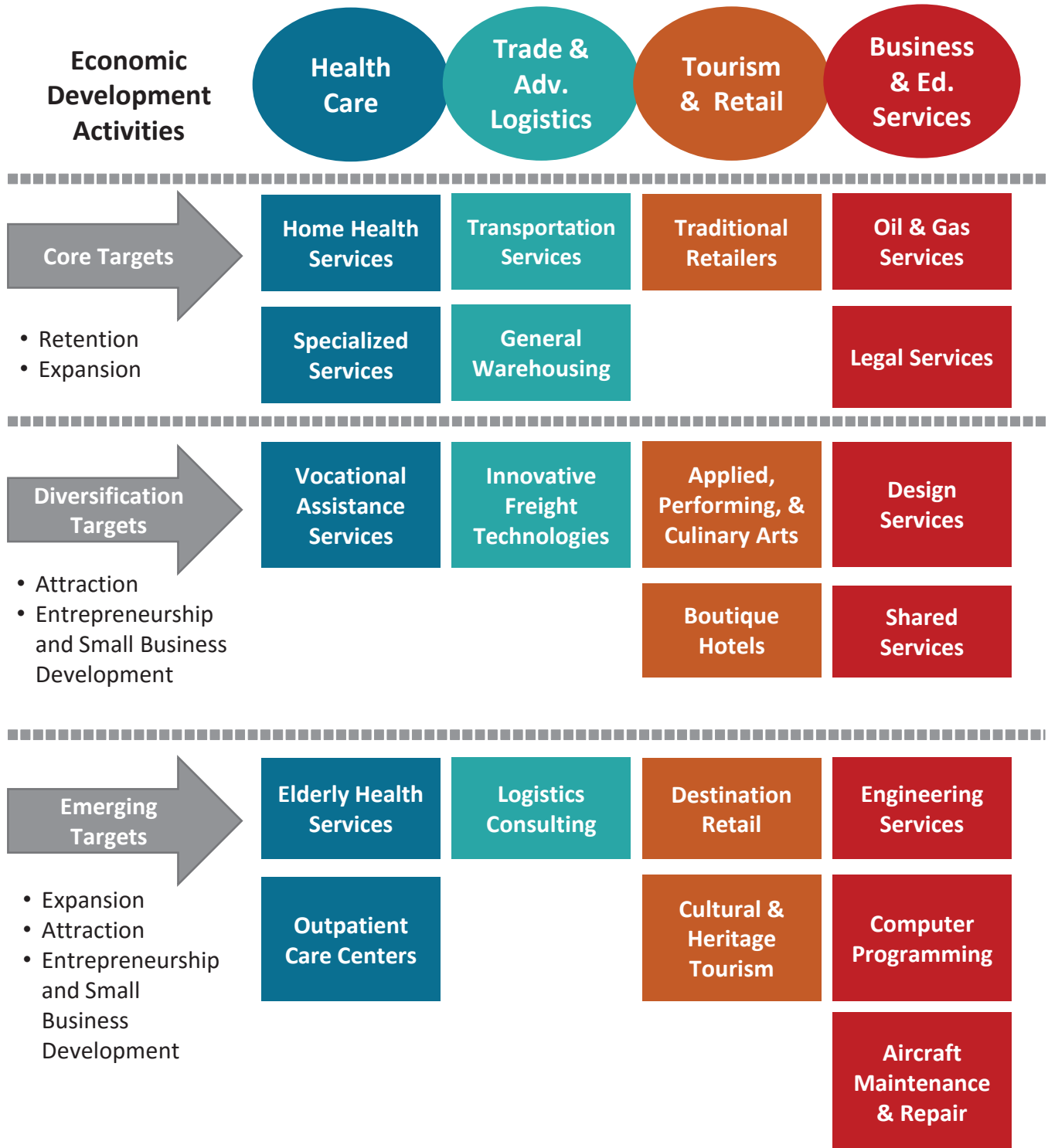
Strong Locally,
Shrinking Nationally

Strong Locally,
Growing Nationally

Bubble size = County
Employment



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics



Target Industry Analysis - Health Care

Rationale

Health Care not only includes ambulatory health services and hospitals, but elderly care and social assistance services. Within the last few years there has been a significant increase in employment in Webb County. Business establishments, however, have remained steady.

The niches within the Health Care have been identified due to the assets and needs of the community. Within **home health services**, new technologies continue to change how patients receive care and how health care professionals monitor their well-being. **Specialized services** and **outpatient care centers** have seen significant local growth, and should continue to do so as more individuals gain access to health insurance. **Vocational assistance providers** may help to connect residents to retraining programs and other information to get them back in the labor force.

Webb County Snapshot

2015 Employees: 14,100
2015 Total Payroll: \$407 M
2015 Establishments: 522

Industry Criteria:

- Access to sizeable market
- Existing medical industry presence
- Skilled workforce
- Proximity to colleges and universities
- Proximity to research institutions

Areas of Growth				
Industry Component	Webb County 5 yr	Webb County 10 yr	US 5 yr	US 10 yr
Ambulatory Health Care Services	X	X	X	X
Hospitals	ND	ND	X	X
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	ND	ND	X	X
Social Assistance	X	X	X	X

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, AngelouEconomics; ND = No data available

Industry Scorecard

Competitive Analysis					
Assessment Rationale	Community Factor	Leading	Strong	Lacking	Weak
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support from educational institution on building talent pipeline 	Workforce				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ample sites for industry development 	Land Availability				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure and capacity to support industry in place 	Utilities				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local institutions understand needs for industry 	Public Policy Support				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activity currently limited 	Research & Development Assets				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis shows Laredo less competitive on wages and building costs 	Cost Factors				

Target Industry Analysis - Trade & Advanced Logistics

Rationale

Trade and Advanced Logistics is a significant piece of Laredo’s economy. After a considerable dip during the Great Recession, employment rebounded and showed sizeable growth from 2014 to 2015. A similar trend appears in business establishments.

The key to niche development for this industry is to realize potential through staying ahead and encouraging innovation. The need for **warehousing** continues to rise, and expansion in this niche is vital to meeting demand. Attracting the most **innovative freight technology** companies can ensure that other border ports don’t make significant inroads to the detriment of Laredo. Finally, **consulting services in logistics** will continue to see expansion as the market for goods in the US grows.

Webb County Snapshot*

2015 Employees: 13,500
 2015 Total Payroll: \$505 M
 2015 Establishments: 1,000

Industry Criteria:

- Skilled workforce
- Proximity to interstate highways
- Availability of low cost land
- Low utility and labor costs
- Public policy support

Areas of Growth				
Industry Component	Webb County 5 yr	Webb County 10 yr	US 5 yr	US 10 yr
Truck Transportation	X	X	X	X
Other Transportation	X	X	X	
Support Activities for Transportation	X	X	X	X
Warehousing and Storage	X	X	X	X
Commodity Contracts & Trade Financing	X	X	X	X

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, AngelouEconomics; ND = No data available

Industry Scorecard

Competitive Analysis					
Assessment Rationale	Community Factor	Leading	Strong	Lacking	Weak
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong, experienced workforce Greater private sector ties to educational institutions can show more students the industry's opportunities 	Workforce	●			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demand for warehouse space growing at faster rate than supply 	Land Availability			●	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficient capacity and infrastructure in place 	Utilities		●		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public policies support industry expansion, but greater cooperation between City and industry groups will help to keep Laredo competitive 	Public Policy Support		●		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutions in place, but greater support and funding can lead to greater returns 	Research & Development Assets			●	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant savings in wages and property taxes seen in capital intensive segments of the industry 	Cost Factors		●		

Target Industry Analysis - Tourism & Retail

Rationale

Tourism & Retail can become a high growth industry if continued support is given to small business owners and redevelopment projects and if current market conditions remain stable. Recent trends suggest slower pace of growth, but still above 2% annually. Tourism and Retail business establishments have seen considerably more erratic growth, yet are now at their highest.

Revitalization of Downtown Laredo can have massive benefits for this industry, but retailers, entertainment venues, and hotels will need to be attracted in the near term to support revitalization efforts. **Performing arts** is a niche identified by many residents as particularly important for future growth. Attracting this niche requires affordable, but walkable neighborhoods, and organizational support. **Destination retail** are shops that offer unique or artisanal goods. These retailers can compliment other local tourist activities. Similarly, target **restaurants** that promote the culinary identity of Laredo.

Webb County Snapshot

2015 Employees: 23,600
 2015 Total Payroll: \$488 M
 2015 Establishments: 1,200

Industry Criteria:

- Dependable workforce
- Natural, historic, and cultural assets
- Accessibility
- Hotel space
- Low business costs
- Growing local market

Areas of Growth				
Industry Component	Webb County 5 yr	Webb County 10 yr	US 5 yr	US 10 yr
Retailers	X	X	X	X
Arts, Culture, and Recreation	X	X	X	X
Accommodation	X	X	X	X
Food Services & Drinking Places	X	X	X	X

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, AngelouEconomics; ND = No data available

Industry Scorecard

Competitive Analysis					
Assessment Rationale	Community Factor	Leading	Strong	Lacking	Weak
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some employers report a lack of soft skills, but overall few concerns about local competitiveness 	Workforce				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets needs for new development, but infill development sites may need additional public support to become feasible 	Land Availability				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets industry demands 	Utilities				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater support needed for artists, artisans, and culinary businesses throughout the community 	Public Policy Support				

Target Industry Analysis - Business & Educational Services

Rationale

Business and Educational Services encompass a large sector of the economy in terms of the scope of the industries' activities, but occupy a relatively small corner of Laredo's economy. Many of these companies are small businesses and rely heavily on the specialization of the employees for success. Some unreliable data has led to employment appearing more volatile than what the industry is likely seeing. Using the establishment's figure, growth has been steady, but significant.

Although the oil & gas industry has seen recent declines statewide, there will continue to be need for **oilfield service** companies in the Eagle-Ford-Shale region. **Software development** and **creative arts** are two industries that residents of Laredo highlighted for business attraction. **Design services** and **computer programming** can help support these sectors of the economy. **Engineering and legal services** compliment businesses found in the Trade & Adv. Logistics target industry. Finally, the infrastructure is in place for attraction of the **aircraft maintenance and repair** industry.

Webb County Snapshot

2015 Employees: 2,500
2015 Total Payroll: \$77 M
2015 Establishments: 210

Industry Criteria:

- Skilled workforce
- Proximity to client businesses
- Small business support
- Telecommunications infrastructure
- Proximity to colleges and universities
- Business incubator or accelerators

Areas of Growth				
Industry Component	Webb County 5 yr	Webb County 10 yr	US 5 yr	US 10 yr
Computer Design	X	X	X	X
Business Services	X	X	X	X
Legal & Financial	X	X	X	
Education Services	X	X	X	X
Other Professional & Technical Services	X	X	X	X

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, AngelouEconomics; ND = No data available

Industry Scorecard

Competitive Analysis					
Assessment Rationale	Community Factor	Leading	Strong	Lacking	Weak
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping talented young professionals is a hurdle identified by numerous stakeholders 	Workforce				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As with Tourism & Retail, policies that support redevelopment downtown will allow for greater competitiveness 	Land Availability				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets the needs for this industry 	Utilities				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programs supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses could help to make Laredo more competitive 	Public Policy Support				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some institutional support for related activities, but lacking capacity for innovation 	Research & Development Assets				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While local wages offer cost savings, real estate prices are less competitive for office space 	Cost Factors				

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Stakeholder Engagement

Introduction

Any good planning process involves engaging local residents and providing them with a means for voicing their ideas and opinions. For economic development planning, it is important to understand not only how residents view the current state of the economy and governance, but to describe their aspirations for the local economy. The process of engaging stakeholders in Laredo included both a survey of the current conditions and a visioning exercise on the city's potential. Online questionnaires received 830 responses to a survey of residents and just under 170 responses to a survey of businesses. One on one interviews and focus groups engaged over 120 stakeholders as well.

Resident Survey Feedback

Online respondents skewed older and more educated than Laredo's populace. Whereas the median age in Laredo is 28 years, nearly 60% of respondents were 35 or older. While 60% of Laredoans have no more than a high school degree, over 90% of respondents reported having some college experience or professional degree.

The table below displays respondent feedback on important quality of life and economic development issues. Respondents were asked to, first, measure the importance of each factor and, second, to rate the city's performance on each. Public schools, jobs, and parks and recreation are the most important factors according to respondents. The city's aesthetics, infrastructure, and available jobs had the widest gaps between importance and satisfaction.

Resident Comparison of Importance vs. Satisfaction			
	Importance (1 - 5)	Satisfaction (1 - 5)	Difference
Quality of public schools	4.8	2.86	1.94
Available jobs	4.67	2.45	2.22
Parks and rec	4.65	2.6	2.05
Affordable healthcare	4.62	2.45	2.17
Aesthetics	4.61	2.3	2.31
Cost of living	4.6	2.45	2.15
Infrastructure	4.56	2.28	2.28
Affordable housing	4.51	2.33	2.18
Creative and cultural arts	4.41	2.34	2.07
Employee compensation	4.38	2.5	1.88

Business Survey Feedback

Professional services, Retail, Creative Arts, and Entertainment were the among the most common industries respondents represented. Just under two-thirds employ under ten workers. 43% of respondents have been in business in Laredo for 25 or more years.

The table below displays business survey respondents feedback on a similar list of quality of life and economic development issues. Access to customers, ability to attract and retain skilled employees, and quality of life are the most important factors to businesses. In general, the gaps between their measure of importance and satisfaction are smaller than for residents. Ability to attract and retain skilled employees saw the widest gap by far and received the lowest average satisfaction rating.

Summary

There are a few common themes that both the online questionnaires and focus groups and interviews identified. Those include the desire for increasing the opportunities for a quality education and promoting skills development, along with the desire to use economic development principles to help increase the quality of life and job opportunities in Laredo.

As mentioned, the information gathered through this process has allowed for a more pointed investigation of Laredo's economic development potential and the identification of targeted industries.

Business Comparison of Importance vs. Satisfaction			
	Importance (1 - 5)	Satisfaction (1 - 5)	Difference
Access to customers	4.52	2.8	1.72
Ability to attract and retain skilled employees	4.22	2.03	2.19
Quality of life	4.18	2.49	1.69
Quality of public schools	4.05	2.7	1.35
Entrepreneurial environment	4.04	2.42	1.62
Utilities and infrastructure	4.04	2.41	1.63
Community appearance	3.99	2.35	1.64
Operating costs	3.95	2.74	1.21
Cost of living	3.91	2.38	1.53
Broadband internet connectivity	3.9	2.63	1.27

STRATEGIES

Increasing the Capacity for Economic Development

The market assessment and target industry analysis pinpoint the assets, challenges, and markets for growth for Laredo. It is clear that Laredo has strengths and assets that can help build greater industry diversification and help to increase access to good-paying jobs. This includes the local education institutions (TAMIU and LCC), the Port of Laredo and the business and activity that it brings, a young workforce, and the unique culture and history of the city.

As for challenges, they are clear as well. Poverty, health, and the lack of economic development planning in the past have the potential to hinder progress to industry expansion. These challenges can be overcome, however, through a community-wide effort to support the cause of economic development and through the City's commitment to utilizing economic development tools that can help attract a diverse set of businesses and build a greater capacity for entrepreneurship.

The recommendations that follow need to be supported not just by the City of Laredo and the economic development community, but by civic groups, educational institutions, business leaders, and individuals passionate about the betterment of their city. Each step will require collaboration, local expertise, and support to be accomplished. Building an engaged coalition for this economic development strategy is of utmost importance to achieve these goals.

Strategies

- Proactive Economic Development
- Promote Regional Cooperation
- Spur Entrepreneurship
- Cultivate a Vibrant Community

Proactive Economic Development

Proactive economic development is a long term investment in the community. It is best achieved when professionals, tasked with supporting existing businesses and pursuing new ones, find ways to strengthen local human capital and institutions. In this capacity, Laredo has many assets to put economic development as a top priority. Local educational institutions, trade and business groups, and community pride can be better utilized for the ends of economic development.

The following policies can serve as a means to develop a sustained economic development culture in the city. This can be led by both a new Economic Development Liaison working for the City of Laredo and through a commitment to fully funding and staffing the Laredo Development Foundation. These are the steps that will allow Laredo to better compete for new businesses and utilize tools that other cities in Texas and throughout the US have found effective.

An update to this economic development strategy should be pursued within 5 to 6 years after adoption of the plan. Continuing to undertake this exercise is vital to the economic sustainability of Laredo. Ongoing and formal review of the progress made toward the goals of economic development is also key.

Provide increased funding and sustain support for economic development activities

To sufficiently support economic development activities, and to follow through on the recommendations included in this document, the City of Laredo and the private sector should contribute more financially to ensure that the potential for job growth is not limited.

This is why it is recommended that Laredo hire an Economic Development Liaison to help new business prospects navigate through all necessary approvals

and requirements. The City of Laredo should provide sufficient and sustained funding for a team of economic developers at the Laredo Development Foundation, while continuing to engage the private sector to invest in economic development and planning for the creation of a 4B corporation, as outlined in Laredo’s Economic Development Strategy.

Staffing is a key part of ensuring that investments into economic development are effective. The International Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) and CDFA (Council of Development Finance Agencies) are two professional organizations dedicated to economic development that can offer access to talent and training.

A city’s ability to attract new industries can be transformed by supporting a team of skilled economic development professionals and providing them with the necessary tools to incentivize development and investment. This team can not only help to attract and retain jobs, but build bonds between local institutions and leaders to create policies that build a better business climate. Supporting these efforts is not a one-time investment, but a continued and responsive investment directly tied to the capacity of the community to build a sustainable economy.

Business incentives for expansions and relocations, and other investments in commercial and residential development, should be guided through a transparent and well-communicated framework that specifies how to qualify and the City agencies that are responsible for review of such developments. The City of Laredo should work with Webb County to ensure that both jurisdictions utilize a consistent approach to providing tax incentives.

Property tax abatements are one key tool that the City can offer to spur development and expansion for new and existing companies. To become more competitive, tax abatement should be offered for a 10 year term, instead of 5 years. Job creation requirements for projects should also be lowered to the following:

Example Property Tax Abatement Policy	
New Full Time Jobs	Percentage of property tax abatement (for 5 year term)
25 to 50	25%
51 to 100	50%
101 to 200	75%
Over 200	100%

Additionally, projects should also be able to qualify for an additional year of abatement if they offer wages at 110% of the industry average. This can help to incentivize employers to increase wages. Finally, additional years can also added for projects that are developed in designated areas of the city, such as commercial centers in lower-income neighborhoods and portions of downtown.

Tax-Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZs), a statewide tax-increment financing tool, allows for the use of additional property tax revenues to be used for public improvements. In some areas of Laredo, additional development of public infrastructure is needed and would help to stimulate growth. Consider implementing these zones to incentivize commercial and residential development. The decision to utilize this tool should be made on the merits of each project and instituted in a consistent manner, while also meeting with the vision and goals outlined in this comprehensive plan.

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) or Public Improvement Districts (PIDs) are special purpose districts that levy property taxes to provide for infrastructure improvements and city services in a given area. Many downtown, Main Street, or neighborhoods throughout Texas utilize PIDs to promote economic development and livability. Laredo should consider creating these districts in Downtown and in central city neighborhoods to promote development and job expansion.

Take Care of Local Businesses

The local businesses that currently call Laredo home are one of the greatest assets that city has to furthering local job growth. Understanding how to enable them to realize their potential for expansion and additional investment is key.

The economic development team should survey business owners and managers to understand their short and long term outlooks, the obstacles for their growth, and their utilization of local business support services. The broad findings of these surveys can be communicated to the local community to get a sense of the local business climate.

It is important to not only survey businesses, but to identify the challenges that these businesses see and look for ways to improve policies that can mitigate them. Working with local institutions and community groups can help Laredo be better able to find solutions.

Apart from surveys, visiting local employers can show that the community is committed to their success. Local officials and economic developers should be involved to support these efforts.

Lastly, it is often that local real estate developers and business owners express frustration with the permitting and approval process in their community. The best way to address this issue is for City staff to host semi-annual meetings with the development community to explain the development process and any recent changes, to answer questions, and be responsive to any issues brought to light.

Bring Business and Institutions Together to Support Target Industry Cluster Development

Developing industry clusters is best promoted by engaging business and institutions to work together. This is not simply a task for an economic development team, but for the community as a whole. When properly communicated, promotion of Laredo's target industries and niche sectors serve as guides for site location consultants looking to Laredo for development projects. They also serve as a way to organize efforts within the community to get the public and private sector to collaborate on cluster development.

A task force composed of industry leaders, academics specializing in related fields, and workforce developers can offer guidance to the City and the economic development team on the best ways to address broader issues impacting cluster development. This group can meet on a quarterly basis to assess progress and develop new strategies for success.

Enhancing workforce development efforts can also embolden cluster development. Twice a year the economic development team can bring together workforce development professionals and interested business owners to bring more awareness to the programs offered for workforce development. This event and more consistent communications on these programs can encourage businesses to take advantage of them.

Having a strong pipeline of skilled workers is important for both existing and prospective businesses. Working within the Trade & Advanced Logistics industry can offer workers a stable and rewarding career, yet many in Laredo's schools do not clearly see the degree path to this career or how they can earn advanced degrees or certifications to provide for them increased economic mobility. This is why a "seamless" degree program, that shows students a clear degree path and career outcomes and that ensures transfer of course credits between institutions, can attract additional workers to the Trade & Advanced Logistics industry.

Educational institutions, employers, and workforce development professionals should come together to better understand the skills that are needed for various in-demand or hard to fill positions. Once these skills are determined, educational institutions should work to build training programs or coursework to existing or new degree tracks. Collaboration between high schools, community colleges, and universities is necessary to ensure that students can meet the outcomes needed for industry or continuing education. Finally, marketing each program so that high school students, or students at any point on their path to a degree, can see a clear path to a job in the industry will be needed to ensure success.

Market Laredo's Strengths and Assets

Marketing Laredo is a key aspect of proactive economic development. Site selectors and business owners need to know not only about the benefits of locating in the city, but to understand the significance of the economic activity within the city, the assets Laredo can offer to developing their business, and the strengths of the community.

Participating in these sort of conferences, namely hosted by the IEDC and Site Selector's Guild, can allow the economic development team to raise the city's status in the economic development community and put themselves in front of potential projects. Similarly, trade shows and conferences can help to build networks within the target industries. While not all companies attending will be looking to expand or relocate, they can help to increase the recognition and understanding of Laredo's appeal to businesses. A full Laredo Economic Development Strategy includes a selection of these conferences.

Teams of local businesses and local officials can offer testimonials to the appeal of Laredo's business climate when meeting with companies in other markets. A short

guide to conducting these tours is found below.

An informative economic development website describing local assets, target industries, and available real estate should be created. Some of the best examples of an economic development website include the Charleston Regional Development

Best Practice

Conduct Marketing Tours

- Identify industries and geographic areas to target
- Develop tour marketing collateral
- Build a team of private industry leaders, government officials and university leaders to attend tours
- Select tour dates
- Arrange meetings
- Post visit follow up & thank you
- Add tour contacts to newsletter distribution list
- Follow-up periodically by phone
- Invite top potential contacts to FAM (familiarization) visit

Alliance (www.crda.org) and GO Topeka (www.gotopeka.com). These sites offer a clear guide to site selectors on what industries have been able to prosper in the region and what they are looking to help grow through available incentives, along with images of available sites and buildings. The ability to have visitors sign up for a community newsletter focused on economic development is also a good way to market to site selectors and business owners.

Finally, a strategy for proactive economic development in Laredo will be best served by reviewing progress on each of these recommended initiatives and updating the community of the successes for economic development and the work that still needs to be done to reach the goals set out in this chapter. An annual "Scorecard" event can be held to grade the progress of the community to spur a more sustained push toward implementation.

Promote Regional Cooperation

Economies operate in a larger scale than the jurisdictions set for them. Laredo, and the surrounding region, understands this better than most places, given the importance of international trade to the local economy. Yet, Laredo has not built considerable structures of cooperation on a regional scale with Nuevo Laredo.

It is up to both communities to better understand the economic linkages between the two cities, build relationships between community groups, and advocate as a region to their respective state and federal governments.

Formalize Relationship with Nuevo Laredo on Economic Development

To cement a lasting regional partnership, a more formal economic development relationship with Nuevo Laredo should be pursued. A local leadership group can fill this role. The group should be made up of representatives from both cities. While each city may have slightly different priorities for local development, regional priorities can be identified that tackle regional issues, such as workforce, education, and cluster development.

Marketing as a region is essential in economic development today. It provides a more comprehensive look at the true economic development capacity of an area and indicates forward-thinking planning. Laredo and Nuevo Laredo should begin to develop a regional marketing plan that highlights the strengths and assets of each community. Jointly marketing to companies in other cities will show a greater dedication to regional economic development and offer connections to a wider variety of businesses.

Data is key to understanding the true state of the regional economy. Communities that span national borders tend to have a tough time providing regional data given the impediments of differences in collection methods and a lack of organized efforts to collect this information in the first place. Undertaking the building

of a database of regional business indicators should be pursued with academic institutions in both cities, but TAMIU can be the catalyst for this effort.

Advocate as a Region to State and Federal Governments

Advocacy efforts to state and federal governments can also promote regionalism by supporting projects and initiatives that tackle regional economic development.

Various groups already exist to advocate for economic development issues with local priorities in mind, including the Laredo Development Foundation, Laredo-Webb County Regional Mobility Authority, along with the City and County leadership. Pursuing regional priorities for advocacy can help to strengthen regional ties. Coordinating economic development efforts is the first step to begin a campaign for regional issues.

Lastly, one key way to promote regional cooperation is through grassroots efforts in conjunction with community organizations. Not only should the leadership, advocacy groups, and economic developers be thinking on a regional level, but so should residents. This “bottom-up” approach to regionalism can help apply needed pressure for community leaders to stay committed to regional cooperation and a healthier regional economy. The Laredo Development Foundation and City should inform community groups about the issues they are advocating for, such as infrastructure improvements, and push for a greater understanding of the policies that can help progress their economic development goals.

Work Within Broader Region to Promote Cluster Development

Beyond Nuevo Laredo, there will be other partnerships that the City of Laredo, the Laredo Development Foundation, educational institutions, or others may decide to form in order to promote one or more industries. Laredo has already done a good job seeking out these partnerships (with the Port of Corpus Christi, institutions in Monterrey, etc.) and should continue to do as they come about. The City should encourage and support these efforts.

Within the broader region, such as South Texas or the I-35 corridor, Laredo can develop partnerships to share best practices, collaborate on marketing or advocacy for their target industries, or share data. The work already done toward this effort is a good start, but should expand to additional partners, local clusters, and institutions.

The “SWAT” team created for industry recruitment purposes can also serve as ambassadors to create relationships with other communities and for promoting the economic development success of Laredo. It is important to hold regular sessions with these team members to update them on new development projects in Laredo or new programs for economic development.

Spur Entrepreneurship

Economic development should not only be guided by attracting new businesses and retaining current ones, but by creating the infrastructure for entrepreneurial success. Entrepreneurs need access to capital, shared business services, and expertise. Building incubator/accelerator spaces, developing a network of Angel investors, and promoting entrepreneurship in schools are a few key steps to a better entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Laredo should also market itself as a place where logistics innovations occur. This can be accomplished through traditional marketing and relationship building within the logistics industry, but by also further developing a knowledge base around logistics.

Invest in entrepreneurial infrastructure

Entrepreneurial support require “hard” and “soft” infrastructure. Hard infrastructure includes the physical spaces needed for startups. Soft infrastructure, on the other hand, includes networks of Angel investors, mentors, and young professionals that can support entrepreneurs. Both of these kinds of infrastructure are important for success.

Laredo should play to the economic strengths currently found in the city. The institutional knowledge in logistics is high, as well as activity in the sector. Thus, an incubator or accelerator space that specialized in logistics or technologies for logistics companies would be a wise investment.

Angel investor networks are helpful in creating a “go-to” base of financial support for startups. Begin by reaching out to successful entrepreneurs in Laredo that are interested in providing capital to startups from local incubators or to companies within specific sectors of the economy. A community the size of Laredo can begin by building a fund of \$1 to \$2 million.

A young professionals group can not only help to provide a voice for young residents or means for networking, but can help to provide access to business services and mentors for aspiring young entrepreneurs.

This group can start informally, but offer networking and seminar events to build a membership base. It should also be a priority to connect this group to any existing groups in Nuevo Laredo.

Organizations such as Junior Achievement and the Kauffman Foundation offer programs that promote and introduce an entrepreneurial mindset to students. Laredo should consider utilizing these programs to instill an entrepreneurial drive in the community.

Training for coding and programming is an important asset for today's economy. Private enterprises offer these programs across the nation. Laredo should look to partner with one of these companies to help develop the skill set of the local workforce and to potentially build a supply of labor for technology startups.

Market Logistics Industry Innovations

Laredo needs to become better known as a significant hub for the logistics industry. Although data clearly supports this claim, much of the broader public understanding of Laredo's significance to international trade pales in comparison to other port cities. Better marketing Laredo as a hub for logistics can be done in two ways. First, to build up the expertise of Laredo in logistics industry knowledge and, second, to further connect Laredo with logistics industry innovations.

Along with the other target industries, Laredo should build a presence at logistics industry trade shows and conferences. This is not only a means for attracting business, but marketing the successes of Laredo's logistics sector.

Innovative logistics companies and startups in Laredo should be celebrated for their successes. Informing the residents of Laredo through articles produced by the economic development team and developing case studies for outside marketing purposes can help to build the case for entrepreneurs to start their business in Laredo. Involving local media in a reoccurring segment on the economic development success of

Laredo, or to highlight innovative local businesses, is key to marketing to both local and national audiences.

An annual conference on global innovations in logistics can be developed in partnership with trade groups, TAMIU, and LCC. Bringing logistics industry analysts and professionals to Laredo can serve as a way to show them what the community has to offer for the industry. This event can also include a business plan competition or pitching event organized by local business leaders in the industry and local incubators.

Any new development, or redevelopment of existing properties, that increases the commercial activity between the two communities should be supported, not only as a way to grow the economy, but as a way to innovate in how border communities build border crossing facilities. A mixed-use development along the border can show how border crossings can truly be great places that celebrate international trade and connectivity.

Cultivate a Vibrant Community

Laredo is a city with an impressive culture and history. However, there are many improvements that can be made to better the local quality of place, which will aid in Laredo's ability to attract and retain talent. Improving downtown is a good place to focus improvements, but other areas of the city should not be ignored. Economic development tools can be used to incentivize developers of new neighborhoods in order to achieve the urban design goals defined by the citizens. Artistic and culinary businesses would do particularly well in downtown and other established or newly developed commercial nodes in Laredo.

Additionally, to continue to attract talent, Laredo needs to make housing more attainable and build walkable, diverse neighborhoods. There are a number of methods that can be explored to make it easier for residents to purchase a home. Likewise, Laredo should strive to engage residents and push for "quality" in local business and governance. Local leaders in business and government should champion the community's success to further instill community pride.

Bring Investment and Community Support to Downtown and Inner-City Neighborhoods

Downtown is an important piece of Laredo's history and of the stories shared by many residents. While it may be difficult to recapture the place downtown once had in the commercial and culture life of the city, investment, and community support can lead to a revitalized downtown that serves as the enduring image and communal space of Laredo.

Downtown and the neighborhoods that surround it have the potential to see greater development of denser, mixed-use buildings which, with necessary public infrastructure improvements, can build supply of housing connected to amenities and City services. Downtown and nearby neighborhood projects can be incentivized through fast track permitting or the waiving of certain permitting fees. Finding ways to connect building owners and developers to grants

and loans for rehabilitation can also help lower the burden of cost for some projects. Laredo should do all it can to support redevelopment of its downtown, including revising existing development codes.

Additionally, the economic development tools afforded to the City of Laredo, such as TIRZ, neighborhood empowerment zones, PIDs, and maintenance/management districts can help to pay for public infrastructure to incentivize new downtown businesses and mixed-use developments, as well as development in inner-city neighborhoods. The current municipal management district in downtown Laredo should be activated to support existing businesses and increase the potential for investment in downtown. The use of all of these economic development tools, however, should follow the vision and be consistent with the goals of this comprehensive plan.

Grant programs for improving building façades should be fully supported to incentivize building owners to maintain their properties. Additional, beautification programs, PIDs, or maintenance/management districts can help to ensure that streetscapes remain both walkable and appealing to visitors and potential business owners.

The City of Laredo should support the promotion of downtown events, and thereby downtown businesses, to the broader community. Events of every size should be supported to continue to expand the base of consumers for the downtown. Community events and festivals, along with unique local businesses, offer a greater sense of place for visitors of downtown. These kinds of amenities can attract consumers to downtown and help to build a base of support for new and existing businesses.

There are ample opportunities for redevelopment of this site, and the City should consider projects that have public benefits. The City should create a development plan in consultation with the community's and neighborhood's vision for the site through a town hall or charrette meeting.

Building a downtown Wi-Fi zone can be explored as a means of attracting downtown visitors and foot traffic. Although many would not likely travel to downtown because of Wi-Fi access, it would add an additional amenity for consumers and, perhaps, extend their time in the downtown area. Downtown businesses, who may see benefits from the development, can be asked to contribute to a fund for developing a downtown Wi-Fi network.

These investments into downtown Laredo and the central city, along with other key investments recommended in this comprehensive plan, can be pursued the development and approval of “Quality of Life” bonds. City leadership should begin by prioritizing specific investment with broad community support.

Ensure that Residents can Find Attainable Housing

Housing is a key consideration for maintaining a skilled workforce. The City can be more proactive on addressing the challenges that face residents.

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are set up to allow residents to purchase a home and lease the underlying land. This set up makes the cost of homeownership more affordable. Generally, CLTs purchase homes in specific areas of a city to ensure that neighborhoods remain affordable for residents. The City of Laredo should explore this option to maintain affordability.

Simply put, a city’s development code should enable the development goals of the community. To allow for a more vibrant community with various attainable housing options, new development and redevelopment need to be feasible. This means that the requirements for these projects needs to help keep them financially viable, while ensuring safety and quality. The City of Laredo should look to revising the existing code to meet the needs of the comprehensive planning goals and to create a separate set of requirements for downtown rehabilitation projects.

Laredo should look for ways in which local ordinances may hinder residents who desire to rent out portions of their homes, which may add a wider variety of housing options and lower the costs of homeownership. Again, an expanded effort to update the City’s development codes may be beneficial for implementing this strategy.

A private equity fund to acquire and preserve affordable housing in Laredo should also be considered. These kinds of funds also can deliver adequate returns to investors, while sustaining lower prices for affordable housing.

The City should consider creating an incentive policy to encourage redevelopment and allows for the development of affordable housing. Incentives to consider are property tax abatements, waiving permitting fees, parking reductions, or density bonuses.

Encourage Community Engagement

Community engagement is not only important to the quality of life in Laredo, but for the economic development of the city. The recommended actions for this strategy will not only further the goal of cultivating community vibrancy, but can help to further the overall economic development strategy of Laredo.

This event, informed by the progress identified by the task force, can help to keep the public informed and engaged in the process of implementing the plan. This group should meet with the City of Laredo, the economic development team, and others to inform them on the progress being made. These events can help to sustain momentum for public support and engagement with the plan’s implementation.

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award is a nationally-recognized award for excellence in performance in all sectors of the economy. Leaders in the community should push for businesses to pursue this award or to develop a local council on quality business practices in order to spur engagement in the community from the business sector.

Support Applied, Performing & Culinary Arts

Promotion of arts, culture, and restaurants, for many cities, contributes to the overall quality of life for residents and the positive impressions of visitors. Laredo has a history of and should do more to support these kinds of businesses because of the benefits they provide for workforce attraction and retention efforts.

Lowering barriers for arts and culinary businesses to open up is key to stimulating the growth of the industry. Fee waivers, fast track permitting, and a review of development codes can help.

Residents involved in the arts and cultural community of Laredo should have a platform to speak with a clear voice. Developing an arts council or board is one way to help become more flexible to the needs of this industry. This board can help to encourage and support additional public art within the community.

Many of Laredo's festivals and sporting events draw large crowds and are well attended by those from outside the region or from across the border. Major events can seek reimbursement from the state of Texas based on out of state spending by attendees. Working to increase attendance for existing events (such as the George Washington's Birthday Celebration or the Border Olympics) can ensure that these events qualify for the program (the Events Trust Fund) and allow them to expand and do more to promote Laredo.

One hurdle for enabling and sustaining an artistic community is being able to offer housing and workplace options that are affordable and appealing. Organizations such as Artspace find opportunities for live/work spaces for artists in communities and help to make these developments feasible and sustainable. The City of Laredo should look to programs such as these to ensure that the housing supply can support the artistic community.

Art in public spaces and in private establishments contributes to the overall aesthetic of the city and can help to increase a feeling of local pride. Many cities

have plans and programs for displaying public art (as is discussed below), but it is also important for the economic development community to connect businesses with local artists to help find ways to display their work. In many cases, artists are entrepreneurs and small business owners. Support from the broader business community is key.

Best Practice

Art Saint Paul

In 2009, the City of Saint Paul enacted a Public Art Ordinance, drafted by Public Art Saint Paul at the request of the City Council. Public Art Saint Paul's projects arise from City Artist, Creative Grounds and Stewardship programs. They are produced by Public Art Saint Paul in partnership with the City of Saint Paul and a host of artistic and organizational partners. Projects play out citywide over an extended arc of time; they span the breadth of contemporary public art practice, coming forth in multiple media as temporary installations, permanent works, and art events.

An underlying principle in the Public Art Ordinance holds that artists should be involved from the earliest stages of conceptual planning, and continue through project design and implementation. Through the Ordinance artists add their perspectives and insights to the City's plans and capital project designs, as well as create public art for capital projects. The Ordinance encourages performances, installations, events and other temporary works. It also embraces Public Art Saint Paul's privately-funded City Artist Program, with City Artists curating major projects that play out citywide over a long arc of time.

After its adoption and with grant support from Saint Paul Cultural STAR and others, Public Art Saint Paul worked with a City staff working group to develop Guidelines and a Technical Manual to guide Ordinance implementation.

For more information, visit:
<http://publicartstpaul.org/projects/>

GOALS & POLICIES

Overall Goal

Build greater industry diversification, increase access to good-paying jobs, and enhance the capacity for entrepreneurship through a commitment to utilizing economic development tools and further private sector engagement.

Proactive Economic Development

Goal 9.1: Increase the capacity for and ability to pursue investments and opportunities for job growth.

Policy 9.1.1: Hire an Economic Development Liaison.

Policy 9.1.2: Utilize a well-communicated and transparent framework for incentives.

Policy 9.1.3: Utilize Tax-Increment Financing districts and business improvement districts to spur development.

Policy 9.1.4: Conduct annual surveys of businesses.

Policy 9.1.5: Identify challenges found in these surveys and promote improvements.

Policy 9.1.6: Conduct annual visits to major employers with a team of local partners.

Policy 9.1.7: Hold semi-annual meetings with development community.

Policy 9.1.8: Promote awareness of workforce development programs to employers on a semi-annual basis.

Policy 9.1.9: Package logistics and supply chain management degrees as “seamless” educational offerings.

Policy 9.1.10: Cultivate stronger relationships and goal alignment between educators and employers.

Policy 9.1.11: Participate in economic development and site selection conferences.

Policy 9.1.12: Attend trade shows and conferences related to target industries.

Policy 9.1.13: Organize “SWAT” teams to aggressively market the city to potential employers.

Policy 9.1.14: Develop an effective web site catered to site selectors.

Policy 9.1.15: Review and grade progress on an annual basis.

Promote Regional Cooperation

Goal 9.2: Allow for a more coherent vision of the region to be developed.

Policy 9.2.1: Create a leadership group to discuss regional economic development priorities on an annual basis.

Policy 9.2.2: Build a regional marketing plan for business recruitment.

Policy 9.2.3: Create regional business data hub at TAMIU.

Policy 9.2.4: Develop communications strategy to build public support for economic development issues through allied community organizations and social media.

Policy 9.2.5: Seek partnerships with cities in the broader region to cooperate on economic development initiatives.

Policy 9.2.6: Utilize “SWAT” team of industry experts to promote economic development.

Spur Entrepreneurship

Goal 9.3: Provide the necessary environment for local, regional, and international entrepreneurs to find success in Laredo.

Policy 9.3.1: Support global business incubator/accelerator specialized in logistics and associated technologies.

Policy 9.3.2: Organize an Angel fund to support entrepreneurs.

Policy 9.3.3: Create a regional young professionals/entrepreneurs group.

Policy 9.3.4: Strongly promote entrepreneurial education at K-12 and institutions of higher education, with connections to target industries.

Policy 9.3.5: Create or attract a coding school.

Policy 9.3.6: Build presence of Laredo at industry trade shows and conferences.

Policy 9.3.7: Market existing innovative companies and startups.

Policy 9.3.8: Hold an annual global conference on innovations in logistics.

Policy 9.3.9: Consider new developments or redeveloping properties adjacent to border crossings as mixed-use, free-trade commercial centers.

Policy 9.3.10: Encourage the development of higher bandwidth networks throughout the city especially those servicing the target industries identified herein.

Cultivate a Vibrant Community

Goal 9.4: Strengthen the quality of place and build greater community engagement.

Policy 9.4.1: Provide greater support for downtown projects, especially those that encourage downtown living, mixed-use development, and “smart growth” ideals.

Policy 9.4.2: Continue to fund façade improvement grants, NEZ, TIRZ, and MMD that help business owners maintain market and buildings.

Policy 9.4.3: Promote downtown businesses and events that help to create a “sense of place”.

Policy 9.4.4: Leverage downtown HEB site and create development plan.

Policy 9.4.5: Consider offering free Wi-Fi in downtown.

Policy 9.4.6: Fund major improvements through “Quality of Life” bonds.

Policy 9.4.7: Consider developing a Community Land Trust to lower the cost of homeownership and support development of micro housing.

Policy 9.4.8: Revise development code to incentivize development of mixed-use, walkable, neighborhoods and to encourage rehabilitation of underutilized buildings.

Policy 9.4.9: Ensure proper flexibility in code an occupancy limits to allow residents to rent out portions of their homes.

Policy 9.4.10: Partner with private sector to set up a community affordable housing fund.

Policy 9.4.11: Develop a new infill incentive policy to encourage “smart growth”.

Policy 9.4.12: Create a community drive toward quality.

Policy 9.4.13: Direct incentives to applied, performing, and culinary arts businesses through fee waivers and fast track permitting.

Policy 9.4.14: Create and support an arts and culture board.

Policy 9.4.15: Work to expand existing festivals and sporting events.

Policy 9.4.16: Look into attracting development of artist housing, such as Artspace.

Policy 9.4.17: Encourage art in public places and in businesses.