



# PLACE ENHANCEMENT PLAN

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Corpus Christi  
REGIONAL ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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# PROJECT PURPOSE

Over the course of the last five years, economic development professionals have seen a sea change in how companies define what factors are important to them when they conduct site selection activities. Gone are the days where simply having a supply of cheap land and cheap labor was enough to lure large companies. Today, in addition to available property and quality infrastructure, “availability of skilled talent” and “Quality of Life” factor as two of the top four reasons for the last three years of the Annual Survey of Corporate Executives by *Area Development* magazine. While the availability of skilled talent has been a long running top two factor, prior to 2016, Quality of Life didn’t appear at all on the survey. Meaning, corporations are understanding the importance and connectedness of these two factors. Corporations need skilled talent, but talent wants quality places to live.

For the last 100 years, factories would build and people would follow, moving to states and regions to fill those jobs. However, as businesses shifted cheap labor jobs to lower cost countries, skilled talent became a driving factor in location decisions. Simultaneously, talent became more flexible in their ability to find jobs (or create their own.) As a result, quality of life became a driving factor for talent. Corporations seeking this quality talent found themselves needing to locate more to where talent is available and quality of life is high.





## PROJECT GOAL

The goal of the Our Coastal Bend project is two-fold:

- 1) Understand what makes residents in the region feel emotionally connected to their community; and
- 2) Develop a plan to enhance and expand those things about the community that are associated with their connection to help retain and attract residents.

This report highlights those areas which create the most attachment and makes recommendations on how to strengthen those areas.

# BACKGROUND

## Community Survey

### Soul of the Community

The basis of the Our Coastal Bend community survey was the utilization of the survey methodology of the Knight Foundation's Soul of the Community project. This ground-breaking project used research from various disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, public health, economic development, city planning, and social work to confirm resident attachment to place as a key correlate to place success and individual outcomes. Talent retention/recruitment and local economic development are particularly tied to resident attachment.

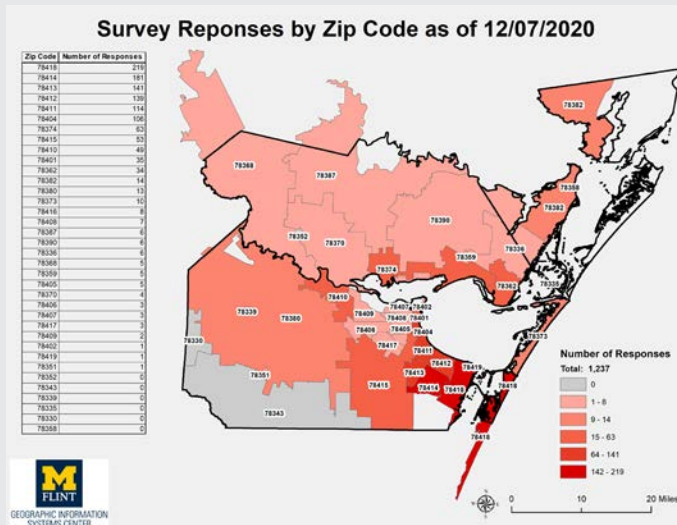


# COMMUNITY SURVEY

## Methodology

The original Knight Soul of the Community survey instrument was adapted for use in the Coastal Bend. Those adaptations were based on previous research revealing key survey questions, overall length of the survey, and customizations of questions requested by the Corpus Christi Regional Economic Development

Corporation (CCREDC.) The resulting online survey was created in Spanish and English. Convenience sampling was deployed until a representative sample was achieved. In this case, the needed representative sample for the generally accepted 95% confidence level and confidence interval at +/- 5 points with a population of approximately 327,000 was 384 valid cases. Additionally, sample weights were created by our methodology partner, University of Michigan-Flint, so the resulting sample would reflect the overall population of the region on key demographic features. A detailed analysis was provided to University of Michigan-Flint who was responsible for data collection and analysis based on the original Knight Soul of the Community project.





**Please answer the following questions based on the current conditions in the Coastal Bend.**

Taking everything into account, how satisfied are you with the Coastal Bend as a place to live?

Extremely satisfied

Somewhat satisfied



## Key Survey Statistics

**1,237  
RESPONSES**

### **TOP ZIP CODES:**

**78418 (219)**

**78414 (181)**

**78413 (140)**

**78412 (139)**

# SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey found the Coastal Bend region has one major strength and two major weaknesses in areas which create attachment.

## STRENGTH

### Family Friendly + Great for Senior Citizens

The Coastal Bend region is widely regarded as family-friendly and a good place for retirees and senior citizens. The region's beaches are a key asset.

## WEAKNESS

### Places to Meet People + Social Offerings

The region lacks social offerings and venues, particularly those geared for people in the 18-34 year old range. These are key for allowing people to meet in non-work settings.

## WEAKNESS

### Government Services + Educational Offerings

The two major areas of concern for residents were the conditions of the roads and quality of municipal water, particularly in the City of Corpus Christi.

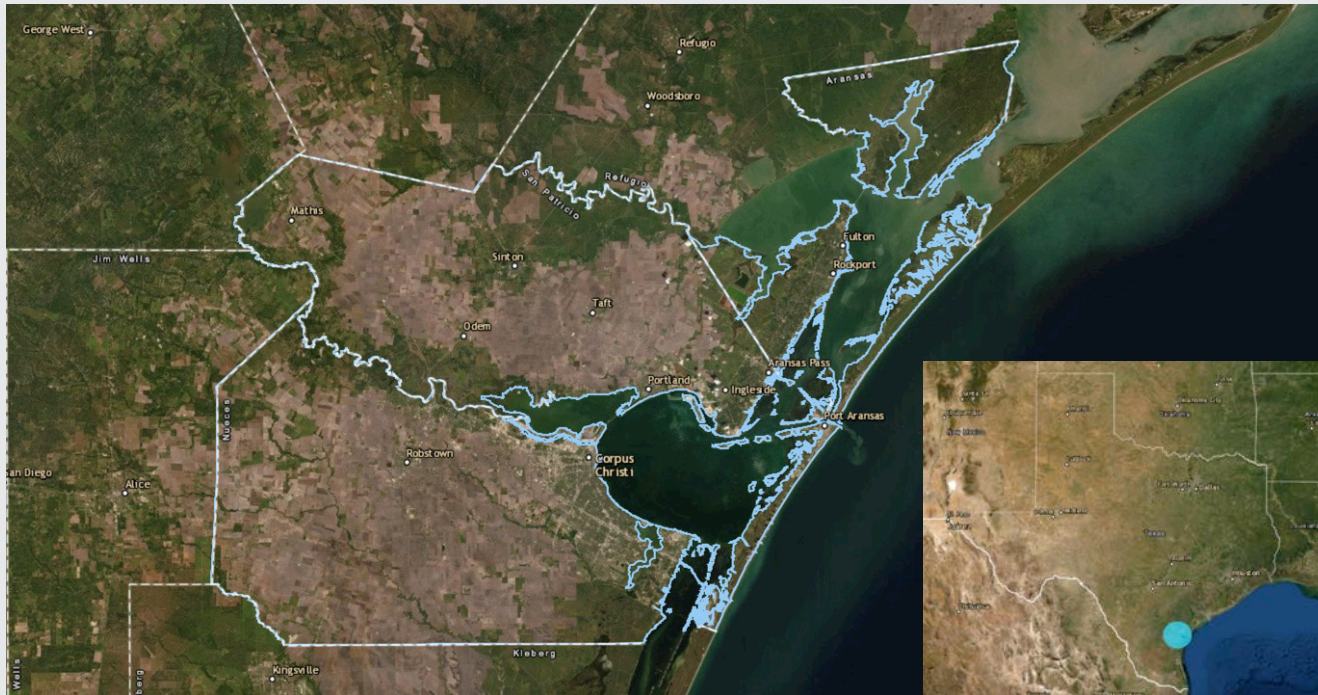


# **PLACE ENHANCEMENT PLAN**



# THE COASTAL BEND REGION

The Coastal Bend region is comprised of Aransas, Nueces, and San Patricio Counties, with a combined population of approximately 463,000. The region's largest city is Corpus Christi with a population of roughly 329,000.



# FIELD ASSESSMENT

## Site Visit, Interviews + Focus Groups

In April 2021, a site visit was conducted by Place + Main Advisors to the Coastal Bend to assess the region's assets in relation to the results of the Phase 1 survey. This visit also served as a baseline assessment for the region's efforts in creating quality places residents want and enjoy living in. This visit includes tours and meeting with various officials in the communities of:

City of Corpus Christi  
City of Portland  
City of Rockport  
Town of Fulton  
City of Port Aransas

Meetings were also held with the leaders of the Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi and Del Mar College to get their perspective on aspects related to talent and place.

Also influential were meeting held with members of the Young Professionals of the Coastal Bend (YPCB.) This group helped provide additional depth on the needs and desires of professionals most closely aligned with the age 18-34 demographic.

## RETENTION + ATTRACTION OF 18-34 YEAR OLD DEMOGRAPHIC

Community leaders have expressed concern about numerous anecdotal stories of young professionals leaving the region. While the demographic data doesn't confirm this, we too heard numerous stories while conducting our field visit, several from young professionals themselves contemplating relocation.

When asked for reasons why they are considering relocation, the most repeated answer was a perception of a lack of professional advancement. Focus group members cited instances where local employers who were hiring had expectations of 10-15 years of experience. Upon further discussion, other factors became apparent. Factors such as housing, walkability, and social offerings all came to the front as well.

Interestingly, when asked what would make the region more attractive to stay, career

advancement was not mentioned. The responses included being able to buy a house and more walkable neighborhoods with commercial centers nearby (Lamar Park was most frequently mentioned).

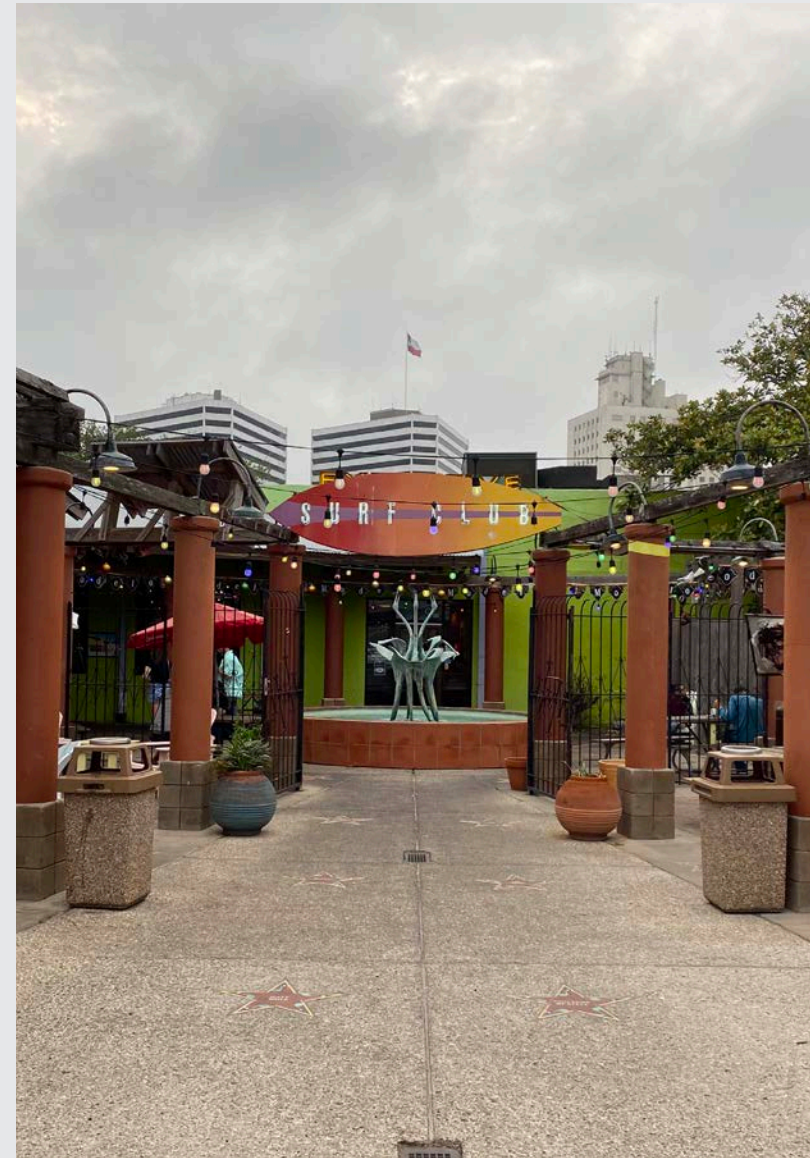
Focus group members also emphasized they did not find the newer housing in the community attractive. They also felt it was too expensive and too "cookie cutter" and difficult to walk anywhere outside the developments themselves.

Based on these conversations, keys to retaining this demographic include:

- Home Ownership
- Walkability
- Diversify Housing Stock

# IMPACT OF COVID ON WORK

During the onset of COVID, there was a seismic shift in almost every workplace. Businesses who had never had employees working from home before were forced to become more flexible and resourceful in how their employees did their jobs. The greatest fear of C-Level suites was that people would not take work seriously. But employees responded. In person meetings and routine travel were replaced with video conferencing. Productivity in numerous cases went up. Suddenly, thousands of businesses have realized they are paying



millions of dollars in rent for office space they don't need in the short-term and may not need in the long-term. Companies from Twitter to Google have stated huge swaths of their workforce may never return to their offices and will work from home permanently. It is believed up to 25% of the workforce will no longer report daily to their former office spaces. This has hastened the importance of the role place plays in economic development.

As talent is now becoming freer to live apart from where they work, it behooves economic development officials to take an active role in quality of life and the connection people feel to their communities. Strengthening talent's ties to their community means helping to retain their workforce and creating a competitive environment to attract new talent.

Local officials have reported a significant uptick in these remote workers coming to the region utilizing either second homes or completely relocating altogether.


With strong broadband capabilities and affordable real estate (in comparison to larger cities and other coastal communities,) the Coastal Bend region is in an ideal situation to capitalize on this new trend in attracting remote workers.



# CURRENT ASSETS + EFFORTS

This report recognizes the ongoing efforts of the region, from counties to cities and towns to institutions and non-profits whose efforts are to improve the community. Many of these efforts are attempting to address the issues of creating better places that promote walkability, address housing, improve their respective downtowns and commercial districts, and create and maintain social and cultural events. There is an important distinction to be made between physical place assets and economic assets. Economic assets are notable independent businesses, institutions of higher educations, or tourist attractions for the purposes of this report. Place assets are those places where residents may frequent in their daily lives.

These place asset efforts are important to increasing resident's attachment to the region. This section will highlight some of the efforts most contributing to creating better places in the region.





## FORMS OF PLACE

The idea of a “place” exists primarily in three different forms: Physical, Activity, and Economic. These three forms comprise how people feel about a place, creating what’s widely referred to as a “sense of place.”

**Physical-** This is the physical form of place. The buildings, landscaping, streetscape, lighting, and furniture all contribute to the physical aspect of a place.

**Activity-** This is what happens in a place. Whether a planned activity like a play, a festival, a farmer’s market, or daily life. What we do within a space contributes to a place.

**Economic-** This is how a place functions and how it is paid for. Whether it’s a public space where tax dollars are used or a private space where businesses are responsible for upkeep or a shared space where public and private sectors come together. This also includes the benefit businesses, residents, and surrounding property owners derive from these efforts.

All of these factors combine to create how we feel about a place and how much we are connected to it. Increasing people’s connection to the region is a major goal of these efforts.

# PLACE ASSETS

## Physical + Activity + Economic

### Physical Assets

The Coastal Bend region is blessed with extensive physical assets. These are the major brick-and-mortar, physical places and things that make up the region's places.

**Waterfront-** With 113 miles of coastline along the Gulf of Mexico, the region's waterfront is both an economic asset for tourism and industry, but is also an attraction for current and potential residents. The region's coastal waterfront is one of the biggest defining characteristics of the area.

**Downtowns-** The region's downtowns, from Corpus Christi to Rockport, leverage density and history to create unique, walkable places that people want. These districts provide both a housing product that's in demand and provide a superior return-on-investment for public infrastructure.





# PLACE ASSETS

## **Physical + Activity + Economic**

**Older Neighborhoods-** While new housing in the region seemingly can't be built fast enough, the region's existing, older neighborhoods near or adjacent to commercial centers are providing a product type residents in the 18-34 year old demographic are clamoring for.

**Available Land-** Both within the City of Corpus Christi and in surrounding communities, there is an abundance of available land that is suitable for a number of uses from industrial to park land to housing.

**Public Control-** The sheer amount of land that is under public control is impressive. None more than the 7.9 miles of coastline the City of Corpus Christi owns. Control of this land is critical to guarantee access to the region's greatest asset for all residents and visitors. Additionally, control of other publicly-owned land is useful for development purposes if/when it is appropriate to develop or redevelop property.

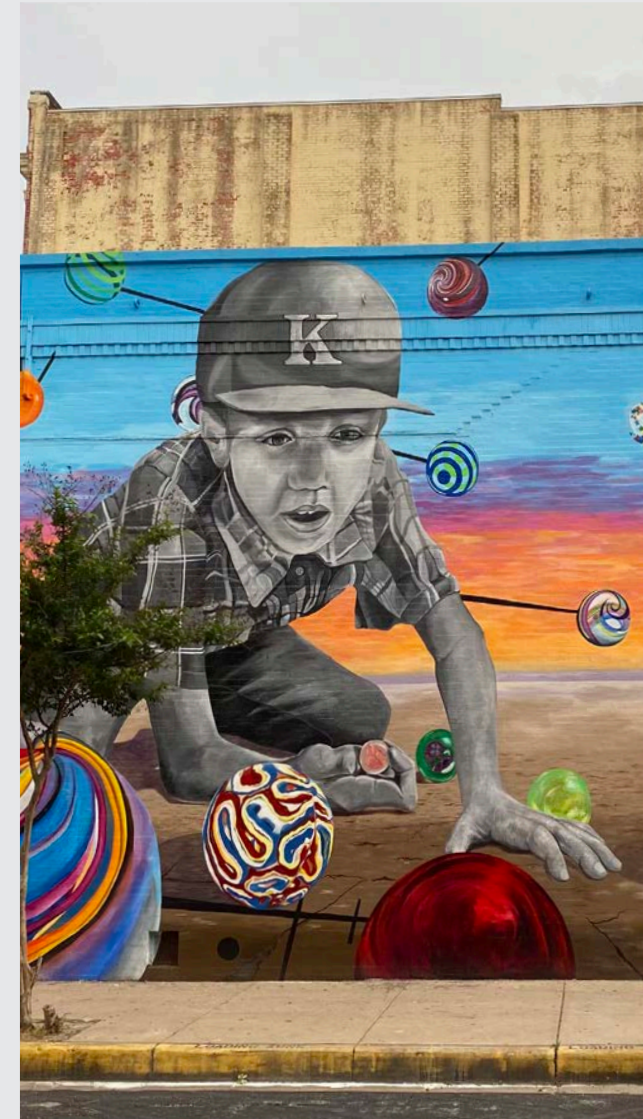
# PLACE ASSETS

## Physical + Activity + Economic

**Public Art-** From murals to sculptures to art exhibits, public art has a strong presence in the region. Art has an ability to take ordinary and dull places and create unique experiences that create an emotional connection with residents and visitors.

**Public Space + Parks-** Both within the City of Corpus Christi and in surrounding communities, there is an impressive amount of public parks, public space, and publicly-owned facilities at the disposal of residents and visitors. These spaces and parks provide for common areas of the community where residents and visitors can gather, recreate, and create a connection to the region.

**Marinas-** As a coastal region, the area has a number of quality marinas. These marinas provide opportunities for residents and visitors to experience the water via craft and provide an opportunity to attract talent who have an interest in maritime activities.





# PLACE ASSETS

Physical + **Activity** + Economic

## Activity Assets

Part of the key to quality places is not just the physical places but the programming that occurs there as well. Having planned and coordinated events creates the time and place for interaction of either the general public or targeted groups.

**Farmer's Markets-** These formally organized marketplaces serve as a connection to surrounding agricultural producers while also providing a place for residents to mingle and interact. They provide both access to healthy food options and support entrepreneurs.

**Festivals + Events-** From large scale events like Buc Days to monthly Art Walks to smaller events like Birding on the Boardwalk, these festivals and events create opportunities for residents to come together and have shared experiences. These shared experiences help create personal connections within the region.

# PLACE ASSETS

Physical + **Activity** + Economic

**Art Exhibits-** The role of arts and culture in the community as a placemaking activity is an important one, particularly those that highlight local artists. These efforts help create connections within the community beyond economics.

**Indoor Exhibits-** Given the heat of the summer months in Texas, having ample indoor exhibits allows for continued interaction around arts and culture within a more temperate environment. Whether in a formal gallery or in a “pop-up,” or temporary, location, these exhibits can activate underutilized spaces and also drive foot traffic to nearby businesses.

**Outdoor Exhibits-** These types of exhibits can use anything from sculptures to murals to temporary installations. These exhibits can also showcase local talent or host visiting works of arts or performances.





# PLACE ASSETS

## Physical + Activity + **Economic**

### Economic Assets

Often overlooked in terms of placemaking, a region's economic assets, or the private-sector businesses or attractions that are located there, also contribute to a sense of place. They create unique experiences that differentiate the region from other places and provide a sense of pride for the community.

**Independent, Locally-Owned Businesses-** While many community leaders often see national chains as status symbols, it is local independent and locally-owned businesses that boost a community's sense of place. National chains strive to create a consistent customer experience whether in Corpus Christi, New York, or Seattle. This often results in identical store layouts and identical products. While this provides for a consistent experience, it doesn't differentiate the region from other regions at all. It is these locally-owned independent businesses that build off of the region's culture and

# PLACE ASSETS

## Physical + Activity + **Economic**

uniqueness. In addition, locally-owned independent businesses add to the economic base of the region by preventing net profits from leaving the area and going to headquarters and shareholders in places like Bentonville, Arkansas, and Minneapolis, Minnesota.

**Restaurants-** These businesses are often a direct reflection of a region's culture, heritage, and diversity. As the region looks to retain and attract residents, the role restaurants play reflects both the diversity of the community and create unique experiences play an important role.

**Retail-** While national retail stores are useful to give existing and prospective residents access to products they would expect in a major metro region, the presence of local retail gives residents and visitors alike unique retail and entertainment options.





# PLACE ASSETS

## Physical + Activity + **Economic**

**Higher Education Institutions-** These institutions are critical to both the development of place and the ability to attract and retain talent to the region. Each institution has specific strengths that they bring to the region.

**Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC)-** The regional location of Texas A&M University, TAMU-CC brings almost 12,000 students to the region and is ranked the #1 “College By the Sea” by Best College Reviews. With its main campus on an island on the east side of the core of Corpus Christi, the University recently purchased a building downtown Corpus Christi and has stated a desire to become more involved in helping downtown regain its vibrancy. As a significant property owner and economic engine in its own right, it is well positioned to do just that. From additional classroom and office space to a thriving incubator, the university is ready to play a bigger part in creating quality places.

# PLACE ASSETS

Physical + Activity + **Economic**

**Del Mar College-** While best known in economic development circles as one of the best job training partners in the country, Del Mar College is on the precipice of making a large splash of its own with the creation of its Southside Campus Project. This new campus will be located on 96-acres on Corpus Christi's growing Southside. The campus will feature the college's Architecture and Drafting Technology; Biology, Biotechnology and Biomanufacturing (bio-sciences); and Hospitality and Culinary Arts programs. In addition, Del Mar's main campus is host to two art galleries, its acclaimed music venues, and multiple theatres that boast hundreds of exhibits and performances every year.





# PLACE ASSETS

## Physical + Activity + **Economic**

**Port of Corpus Christi**- Possibly the single largest contributor to the regional economy is the Port of Corpus Christi. It is a major gateway to domestic and international commerce. It's connectivity to the interstate system and rail access make it an ideal partner for any business looking for maritime shipping access. The Port of Corpus Christi is also a major property holder in the region, a majority of which is waterfront. This makes them both a major player in larger economic development efforts as well as placemaking. Like other regional institutions, the port is also looking to become a partner in redevelopment, where appropriate.

## EXISTING PLANS + PLANS IN THE WORKS

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A number of public entities from smaller towns in the region to prominent regional players in the metro area have several major plans in the works that are place-focused. This section will highlight those plans and underscore the importance of key features and benefits of the respective plans.



## City of Corpus Christi

The City of Corpus Christi is in the midst of creating plans for several neighborhoods in the city. Completed plans include Area Development Plans for Downtown, the Southside, Flour Bluff, London and Padre/Mustang Island. In addition, the City is currently working with consultants on creating plans for Downtown Gateways Visioning Plan, Historic Preservation Plan, North Beach Eco Park, Parks & Recreation Plan, Uptown Corridors Revitalization Plan, and Westside Area Plan. These plans are critical to help guide the city and its continued development into the future.

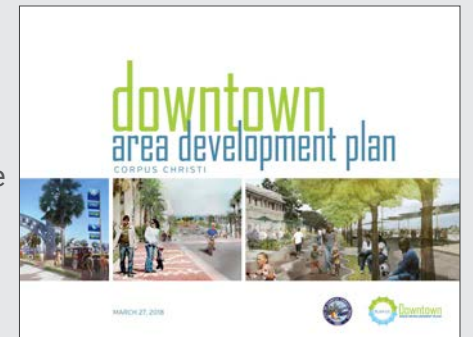


**City of Corpus Christi- Downtown Area Development Plan**

Of all the Area Development Plans the City has undertaken, this plan for Downtown is perhaps the most important. It encompasses a large and diverse geographic area and downtown is a barometer of the overall economic health of the region. Its success is vital to place efforts in the region.

**Key Elements:** The plan addresses numerous key areas for redevelopment in the city’s core, including North Beach, Sea District, Marina Arts District, Bayshore Neighborhood, Washington-Coles, Hillcrest, and Uptown. The plan’s main themes are solid, but of particular importance are: Encourage market-driven development; Create more housing choices; and Reconnect neighborhoods.

**Key Challenges:** The scale of the redevelopment is certainly a challenge. With development momentum happening in the city’s Southside, mainly due to greenfield conditions, shifting excitement back to the city’s core will be difficult. Some of the recommendations within this area plan, like those in other plans following, contain very expensive projects that will need to be prioritized and capitalized.



### City of Corpus Christi- Southside Area Development Plan

This is one of the most critical plans for the future of the city as the southside is experiencing the fastest growth with an influx of housing and commercial development.

**Key Elements:** The Area Development Plan lists the key elements of this area plan as: Mix of commercial retail, restaurants, and services; Walkable area that creates a sense of place and destination; Connection between Bill Witt Park and Del Mar College Southside Campus; Improved streetscape; Community gathering space; Entertainment options

**Key Challenges:** The Southside's current development pattern does not follow many of the elements described in the Key Elements section, particularly around creating walkable areas that create a sense of place and destination.

Del Mar College's campus development can help rectify this, but the continuing development pattern will need intervention and direction to create the stated vision. Commercial areas are in typical strip mall development fashion with setbacks and a focus on car dependency. Creating density through mixed-use development along the corridors along with more pedestrian-friendly infrastructure will help create more walkable neighborhoods and a sense of place.



### City of Corpus Christi- Flour Bluff Development Plan

As one of the more fully developed areas of the city, Flour Bluff represents an opportunity to serve existing residents and redevelop some sections to increase the community's sense of place to create more walkability and density.

**Key Elements:** The Area Development Plan lists the key elements of this area plan as: Schools; Crosswalks; Walkable area that creates a sense of place and destination; Pedestrians walking on the sidewalk and using the crosswalk; Biking on the one-way cycle track

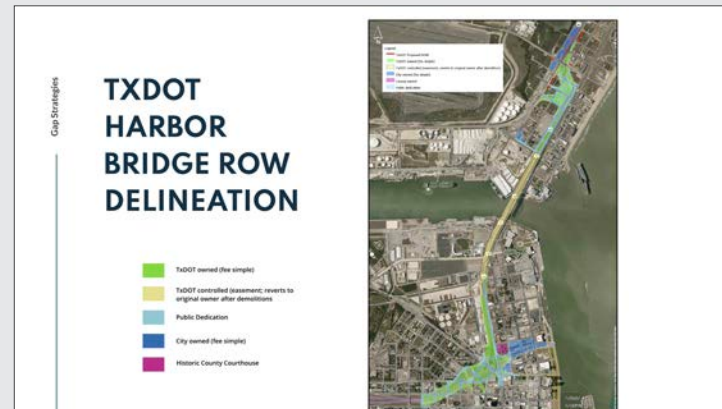
**Key Challenges:** Unlike areas that are still developing, there are unique challenges to working in mostly built environments. Retrofitting walkable elements becomes more difficult and changing how people commute presents new challenges. As developers focus on emerging areas of the city, such as the Southside or London, garnering interest from larger developers will become more difficult. Packaging sites and property assembly will be more critical for these areas of the community.



## Nueces County

Nueces County has been active in planning for the completion of the Harbor Bridge and the impact it will have on the community.

Using consultants Gap Strategies, the County examined not just what the impact of the new bridge landing will have on downtown Corpus Christi, but how it and surrounding land can be leveraged to create a better sense of place to benefit residents and visitors.



### Nueces County- Harbor Bridge Gateway Project

The single largest redevelopment concept in the region, this aggressive plan for real estate surrounding the soon to be decommissioned and demolished Harbor Bridge reimagines a portion of the central city and leverages key assets while creating a vision of new highly walkable public spaces and new private development.

**Key Elements:** This plan envisions a world-class pedestrian walkway and multi-modal transportation through a newly created thoroughfare. Redevelopment of the long-vacant county building and the creation of new multi-story, mixed-use buildings are also welcome additions.

**Key Challenges:** Coordination of TXDOT, the City of Corpus Christi, and the County will be critical for land assembly, as will finding developers willing to redevelop the courthouse building and build new structures.

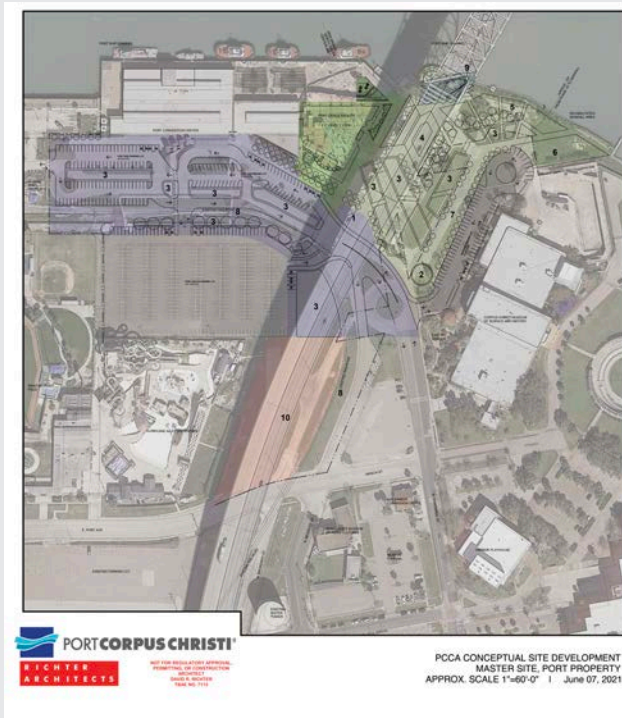


## Port of Corpus Christi

The Port of Corpus Christi has also been active on the redevelopment of the existing Harbor Bridge. As a major property owner of the region's waterfront, their efforts to increase public access and enjoyment of the waterfront are very positive. Their reimagining of part of the landing of the existing Harbor Bridge includes building a pedestrian friendly area between the Port Convention Center and Museum of History and Culture.

**Key Elements:** This area would also include a plaza, public artwalk promenade, channel overlook, food truck court, and space for private development.

**Key Challenges:** Coordination with TXDOT, the County, and City on projects of this scale are often challenging. However, this particular project appears to be straightforward.

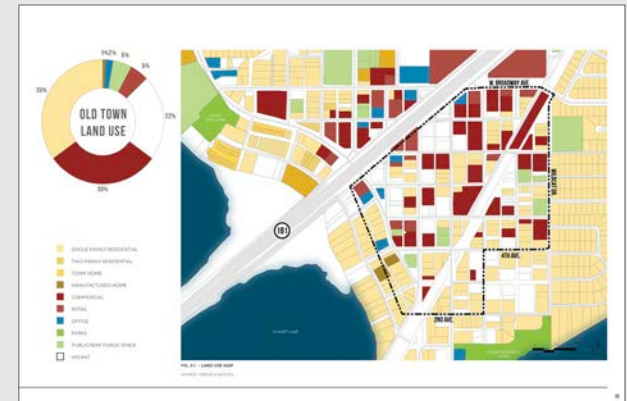


### City of Portland- Old Town Plan

As the second largest community in the region, the City of Portland is an important player in creating quality places in the region. The City has a history of supporting auto-oriented development, but has recently understood the need to create a more walkable community. Their efforts to create an “Old Town” Portland is a prime example.

**Key Elements:** This plan envisions a walkable, mixed-use district that creates a true “center of town” the community can rally around. From a conceptual central public area to local small businesses that are walkable to surrounding neighborhoods, this plan looks create a true sense of place.

**Key Challenges:** Redevelopment of a built environment is always difficult. Multiple lot ownerships, potential brownfield conditions, and overall costs of projects of this scale are all significant challenges.



### OBJECTIVES

The City of Portland has shown consistent effort in revitalizing the Old Town District, and has implemented a variety of zoning regulations, among other strategies. In addition, there is public support for new, high-quality development in the area.

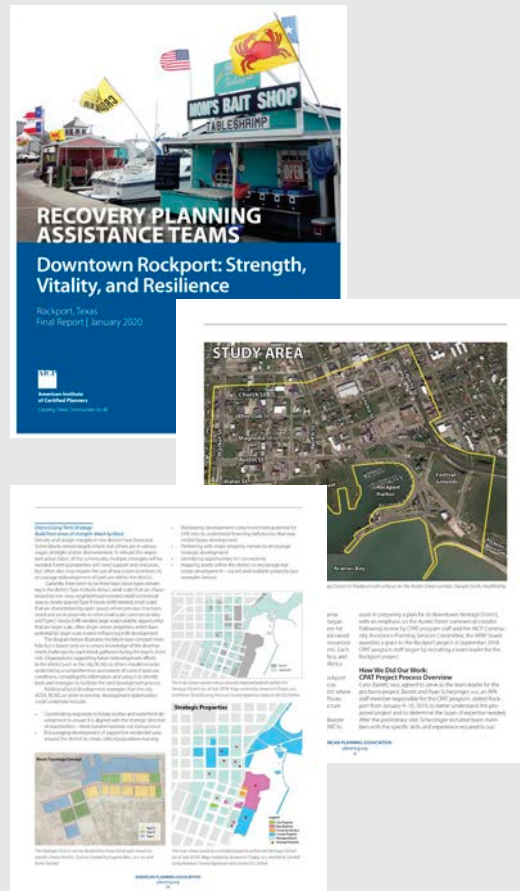
- Position Old Town as a cultural, social, and mixed-use hub for the Portland community while protecting the residential character in the district
- Plan a mixture of uses oriented primarily to Portland residents, and secondarily to tourists and regional visitors
- Create a strategy for the establishment and management of public spaces that encompass a variety of appealing activities
- Foster positive and relevant uses in the development of the district that are favorable to the vision for the area
- Recommend infrastructure investments which encourage a vibrant and walkable district that supports sustainable returns for taxpayers
- Build the foundation for the rebranding of the district to attract local, regional, and out-of-town users

## City of Rockport- Downtown Plan

In the wake of Hurricane Harvey, the City of Rockport received a downtown plan courtesy of the American Planning Association's Community Planning Team. This downtown plan focused on recovery and resiliency in the face of natural disaster.

**Key Elements:** The Downtown Plan focuses on a combination of public improvements such as streetscape improvements, creation of public parks, placemaking and public art, new sidewalks, wayfinding and marketing, as well as private investments made by property and business owners.


**Key Challenges:** Future flooding and storms pose a considerable threat to the downtown and community at large. Additional challenges include a lack of a shared vision for the downtown and local economy.





# PLACE ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

This section focuses on the recommendations to enhance place- Aesthetics and Community Assets, Social Offerings, and Economic Offerings and Social Connectedness of the region. Recommendations contained herein are designed to address both general conditions of the region and those communities who actively participated in the field visit portion of our research. These recommendations are intended to address the improvements the region and specific communities can make in order to strengthen residents' connection to their place.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Coastal Bend region is blessed with a significant number of assets. Yet, there is a perception the region doesn't retain talent. Whether it is young people eager to move away or professionals eager to transfer out of the region after a few years or transferred employees not wanting to stay. These recommendations are intended to be larger guiding principles for all communities within the region to embrace.

As the largest city in the region, Corpus Christi's role in creating quality places cannot be understated. From established places like downtown and older neighborhoods like Six Points, Lamar Park, and Flour Bluff to newer areas of development like the Southside and London, the City has the challenge of revitalizing older areas with the built in infrastructure of "good place" with the demand of development pushing to the newer areas of development. The City's recent and ongoing planning efforts for each of the parts of the

city are well researched, had substantial input from residents and are an excellent example of how a community's planning department should function.

These recommendations are intended to build off of the existing efforts, highlight key areas, and make suggestions in addition to these existing plans.

### **Aesthetics and Community Assets**

#### **Downtown Corpus Christi + Surrounding**

**Neighborhoods-** A healthy and vibrant downtown Corpus Christi is critical to keeping and attracting talent to the region. Every successful metropolitan area in the United States has a vibrant downtown core. Downtown has seen several housing projects come online in the last few years to some success. Continuing this success with additional housing will result in additional retail and restaurant opportunities as these businesses follow housing units. Nearby

## RECOMMENDATIONS

connected neighborhoods should also be prioritized. These are the places that are already walkable and need additional investment. Neighborhoods like Hillcrest and adjacent Six Points are being eyed by younger residents as potential investment options for housing due to their relative affordability and proximity to downtown. Public investments in maintaining and improving infrastructure, like roads and lighting, will make them more attractive to potential residents. The City's Area Development Plan for Downtown has a number of projects for enhancing place, but those projects that promote more housing downtown and improving and connecting to adjacent neighborhoods should be prioritized.

### *Recommended Action*

**Housing Strategy:** The Downtown Core and surrounding area currently has approximately 800 households. This number should be dramatically increased



### **BEST PRACTICE:**

Canalside Park (Buffalo, NY)

*The Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation used a “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper” approach to activating an underused park along the Buffalo waterfront. Their efforts started with the low-cost utilization of dozens of moveable chairs that allowed residents and visitors to group together however they wanted.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS



### BEACHFRONT ACTIVATION IDEA:

Conceptual Rendering by Warren Hyde

*This semi-permanent trailer design creates a mobile option to allow for beach side bar service. A community could lease ground space to an entrepreneur to utilize a trailer like this or could own and operate it itself. The mobile aspect is ideal for communities in the Coastal Bend who may want to activate beach front space but have concerns with permanent structures due to flooding.*

over the next ten years, adding 2,000 units. While this number may seem high at first, with the projected population increases, this would represent only 2% of the total number of housing units in the city.

**Public Park Improvements-** The Coastal Bend region has an impressive supply of public spaces. From promenades to parks to plazas, there is no shortage of public places. Continuing to make physical improvements to these spaces can help increase their use, and create deeper community connection.

### *Recommended Action*

**Improvements:** Using semi-permanent and permanent improvements from waterfront/ beach seating to leasable spaces for restaurants and beach front bars, will help create further social interaction.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

**Harbor Bridge Landing-** With the soon to be demolition of the existing Harbor Bridge, the landing footprint of these areas will need to be addressed. This is perhaps one of the largest redevelopment sites in the region, though it rarely is thought of in those terms due to its linear nature.

*Recommended Actions*  
**Redevelopment Plan:** Nueces County's plan, along with the Port of Corpus Christi's plan for its land in the immediate area, should be pursued. Both of these complementing plans create unique places, development opportunities, and vastly improve the walkability of the area.

**Direct + Connecting Flights Increased-** The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in seismic shifts in how businesses operate. As the world returns to normal, it is anticipated as much as 25% of the workforce will not return to offices

and will continue work remotely. This allows for communities along the Coastal Bend who have already seen an influx of remote workers to retain those workers permanently. However, in order to be successful in retaining these workers, they must be able to easily connect to flights that can take them where they need to be for business. The Corpus Christi International Airport currently has several flights per day to both Dallas and Houston. While those serve as significant hubs, further connecting flights to other hubs, notably Denver (Southwest Airlines) and Atlanta (Delta Airlines,) should be a primary goal.

*Recommended Actions*  
**Expanded Destinations:** Regional leadership should press expansion to Denver for Southwest first, as it is likely more feasible since that airline already serves the region. However, longer-term, regional leadership should also recruit Delta flights to Atlanta as well.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Neighborhood Node Development-** Residential development within the region is happening at a fast and furious pace. The region's real estate prices, in comparison to Houston or Austin, are extremely reasonable and people are looking to take advantage of that for either a primary or secondary residence. As this new housing is built, it is being dominated by an auto-focused design. Meaning, a car is virtually required to be able to comfortably enter or leave these new neighborhoods. This severely limits walkability not just within these developments, but to surrounding commercial as well. Both national data and local focus groups confirm a growing desire for walkable neighborhoods. Places where residents can walk from their home to restaurants and retail offerings and back comfortably, without feeling unsafe. Historically, people are willing to walk 1/4 to 1/2 mile as a casual walk to these types of places. Focus should be made to



### **BEST PRACTICE:**

Village of Providence (Huntsville, AL)

*Built from 2003-08, the Village of Providence is a Traditional Neighborhood Development which created a walkable, mixed-use district, surrounded by new neighborhood development, entirely within the city of Huntsville boundaries.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

create walkable connections to nearby commercial, with the commercial being pedestrian-friendly as well. Considerations for cyclists should also be made. Simple improvements such as bike racks in these commercial centers can go a long way. These considerations, walkability for nearby residents and bike racks for cyclists, have the additional benefit of reducing car traffic and need for parking.

### *Recommended Action*

**Developer Recruitment:** Developers who do these types of developments should be recruited to the region and incentives provided, such as tax increment financing, when appropriate.

**Mixed-Use Developments-** In conjunction with the previous recommendation, the region should be encouraging more mixed-use development. These types of



### **BEST PRACTICE:**

Legacy Town Center (Plano, TX)

*Built between 2001-06, Legacy Town Center in Plano, Texas, created mixed-use infill by building a town center in an existing office park. It has immediate walkability to 84 restaurants and shops as well as a Marriott hotel.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

developments tend to have a commercial use on the first floor with residential on floors above. These do not have to be high-rise types of development. For more urban areas like downtown Corpus Christi, they could be 6-10 stories. But for smaller communities, like Rockport, they could be 2-4 stories. National market data suggests these types of real estate products are also in demand by baby boomers and millennial generations. This type of development also promotes walkability by having built-in customers on-site for commercial tenants. These mixed-use developments could be built as either rentals or condos.

### *Recommended Action*

*Appropriate Zoning:* The City of Corpus Christi already has a zoning overlay district to allow for this, but the smaller communities in the region should follow suit by creating similar zoning districts to encourage mixed-use development.

### *Recommended Action*

*Developer Education:* There is a need in the region to help educate and give technical assistance to prospective small scale developers. Developing the region's real estate development entrepreneurs will help both the physical and economic areas of place within the region. There are numerous places ripe for redevelopment, but larger scale developers are focused on much larger projects and not infill or scattered site development. Creating an army of local developers will help generate local wealth from an active real estate market as well as create more locally-focused product. National organizations such as the Incremental Development Alliance can provide these types of trainings.

### *Recommended Action*

*Mixed-Use Financial Incentives:* Improving the density of the community is imperative to creating a more walkable environment. Tools such as tax increment financing to help developers

## RECOMMENDATIONS

pay for infrastructure like sidewalks, public spaces, and site prep should be considered and marketed.

**Blight Removal-** The region has several notable blighted properties. In addition to these higher visibility properties, there are numerous smaller ones at the neighborhood level. Effectively dealing with blight is the hallmark of a well-run community. However, dealing with these properties is not always simple.

The two most common causes of blight are A) Under capitalization of the owner(s) or B) Lack of concern about the property. Addressing these two areas should be the first steps in addressing blight.

### **Recommended Action**

**Loan Programs:** Addressing the potential under capitalization, or simply the lack of funds, of property owners to remediate



### **BEST PRACTICE:**

Blighted Property Redevelopment Program (Knoxville, TN)

*Originally funded with a federal Empowerment Zone grant in 2010, this loan program has been highly successful. It has leveraged the original grant and repaid loan funds to spur 18 projects in vacant or blighted structures.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

the blighted condition is a straight-forward step to remove blight. Priority in this category should be given to owner-occupied structures and be targeted at specific neighborhoods where blight is most prevalent.

### *Recommended Action*

***Stricter Code Enforcement:*** While loans help address under capitalization, strict code enforcement addresses a lack of concern about the property. Keeping close watch of vacant and blighted property, and properly disincentivizing their lack of maintenance through enforcement, is key to addressing these properties.

### *Recommended Action*

***Vacant Property Registration Ordinance:*** This type of ordinance mandates that once a property is vacant, the owners have six months to register the property with the city and list it for lease or sale. Failure to do so results in compounding financial penalties. If unpaid, they become liens on the property and become justification for tax foreclosure.



### **BEST PRACTICE:**

Downtown Vacant Property Registration Ordinance (Dallas, TX)

*The Dallas ordinance requires owners of downtown vacant buildings to register their properties and pay a registration fee of \$75, an inspection charge of \$185, and a small additional fee per square foot of the building. Owners must submit a plan detailing a time schedule for correcting violations, a maintenance plan, or plans for renovations or sale of the building. The owner is required to submit an updated plan at least once every six months. Violations of the ordinance can result in criminal penalties, civil fines ranging from \$500 to \$2,000, and administrative penalties. The owner must carry commercial general liability coverage with a minimum combined bodily injury and property damage limit of not less than \$2,000,000 annually.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Recommended Action*

**Redevelopment Authority:** Combating blight requires a level of flexibility and nimbleness. The City of Corpus Christi should create a unified Redevelopment Authority charged with identifying blighted properties and preparing them for redevelopment. This agency could be funded by either general fund or by managing a number of yet-to-be-created tax increment financing districts that are hyper-focused on blight in specific neighborhoods and districts, but may be too small to be standalone organizations.

**Road Construction + Pothole Repair-** A region as auto-dependent as the Coastal Bend should make road maintenance a high priority. The City of Corpus Christi in particular has numerous projects underway. Road replacement and maintenance are some of the basics of city functions. Ensuring roads are usable and in good condition is a direct reflection of the economic health of a community.

### *Recommended Action*

**Pothole Patrol:** The City of Corpus Christi should address potholes within 72 hours of receiving a complaint.

### *Recommended Action*

**Road Work Warranties:** The City of Corpus Christi should require all road contractors to include a warranty for work completed. While work warranties tend to make initial project costs higher, they reduce overall spending by guaranteeing work for a specified time, reducing the overall time between projects.

**Litter-** In numerous conversations during the field visit, it was revealed there is a large amount of concern over common littering. Littering is the ultimate lack of community connectedness. It shows a blatant disregard for the community, the environment, and the law. A community that cannot keep itself picked-up and presentable will likely not be successful in keeping talent.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Recommended Action*

*Anti-Litter Campaign:* The region should make a concentrated effort to eliminate or minimize littering. There are two major ways to do this A) a public relations campaign and B) “Adopt-A-Spot” programs.

A) Public Relations Campaign- Creating a series of promos/advertisements of local notable personalities encouraging people not to litter should be created. Use of slogans like “Don’t trash our town,” “Let’s clean up this city,” or some other phrase can help make people more aware of the problem and what they can do to help.

B) “Adopt-A-Spot”- Modeled after the popular “Adopt-A-Highway” programs, this allows local businesses or groups to adopt streets, parks, or other public places to organize monthly clean-ups. In exchange, the groups receive supplies and recognition on signage in the area.



### **BEST PRACTICE:**

Adopt-A-Street (Little Rock, AR)

*A joint program of the City of Little Rock and local non-profit, “Keep Little Rock Beautiful,” the Adopt-A-Street program has been very successful in keeping neighborhoods clean. Businesses or organizations apply to adopt three (or more) blocks of a street and organize monthly clean-ups.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Public Art-** There are a number of murals and public art offerings around the region. From murals to sculptures, public art helps give personality to a community and the region. These offerings, whether temporary or permanent, create positive memories for residents and visitors alike.

### *Recommended Action*

#### *Expand + Bundle Public Art Offerings:*

Expansion of public art, with a focus on interactive art or art people can touch or pose with for pictures, should be a priority. Bundling these public art offerings into an “Art Trail” can help bring visitors to the communities to find these gems.



### **BEST PRACTICE:**

Public Art Program (El Paso, TX)

*The Public Art Program for the City of El Paso was adopted by City Council in 2006 as an effort to integrate public artworks throughout the City of El Paso. The Public Art Ordinance sets aside 2% from every Capital Improvement Project budget for the acquisition of art for municipal property. Since its inception, the Public Art Program has strived to offer the local communities and neighborhoods a distinctive sense of place.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Social Offerings

**Orientation for New Residents-** It is often difficult for new residents to come into a community and become both acclimated with the geography and comfortable making connections with people. If the region wants to be successful at retaining and attracting talent, getting people quickly familiar with the community and comfortably making connections, both professionally and personally, will be key.

#### *Recommended Action*

##### *Create a Community Onboarding/*

*Familiarization Program:* The CCREDC, the Chamber, and Visit Corpus Christi (VCC), and major employers should partner to develop a program to welcome new residents, provide tours of the region, and connect them to key organizations within the community.

#### *Recommended Action*

##### *Relocated Employee Concierge Program:*

The CCREDC, the Chamber, VCC, and major employers should partner to create a hotline or SMS-based service to



#### **BEST PRACTICE:**

Detroit Experience Factory (Detroit, MI)

*Detroit Experience Factory uses immersive storytelling to educate locals and visitors about Detroit's people, places and projects. They offer both public tours and work with major employers to create customized offerings. The program has taken over 130,000 people on experiential tours of Detroit since launching in 2006.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

connect newly relocated residents to key community resources and businesses.

**Home Ownership Assistance-** In our conversations with young professionals, there was a strong desire to participate in home ownership in the region. However, many are still early in their careers and not earning enough to buy a home outright. The Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation offers down payment assistance of up to 5% of a loan amount for low to moderate incomes, which many young professionals qualify for.

### *Recommended Action*

#### *Matching Program for New Home*

**Owners:** The City could create a matching program in targeted neighborhoods with high rentership to help return houses to owner-occupied. The community's young professionals want to own homes in the community, but lack the resources to purchase a home. Making this group homeowners, and giving them a financial

stake in the success of the neighborhood, incentivizes them to stay in the community.

**Central Event Calendar-** Having an easy to access calendar of events is critical to having residents and visitors know what is going on in the community. The “there’s nothing to do here,” narrative is important to change to create a more social environment.

### *Recommended Action*

#### *Better Utilization of VCC Calendar + Social Media Presence:*

VCC has a good calendar of the events happening in the region. However, it is likely incomplete due to a lack of awareness of its existence with numerous other entities. Getting word out of this tool and the events VCC promotes would help tremendously. In addition, VCC could use social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to further promote upcoming events. Promoting these events on social media allow them to be easily shared in individual networks.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Increased Festivals + Events-** In addition to a central and better utilized calendar, offer more festivals and events for visitors and residents to enjoy. These festivals and events should be a variety of types, from large regional festivals to smaller, neighborhood-level events.

### *Recommended Action*

#### *Festivals + Events Grant Program:*

VCC should create a Festivals + Events Grant Program, offering small seed grants to help create additional offerings to attract visitors and residents to the region. These additional festivals and events should seek to be unique offerings that offer authentic one-of-a-kind experiences and/or celebrate the heritage of the community.



### **BEST PRACTICE:**

Festivals & Cultural Events Support Fund (Asheville, NC)

*The Festivals & Cultural Events Support Fund Grant Program was launched in 2016 by the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA) and is designed to provide financial support for events that both serve the residents of Buncombe County and the visitors who travel to the Asheville area for the sense of authenticity and welcoming spirit that the destination exudes. Grants range from \$1,000-\$5,000.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Economic Offerings + Place Connectedness

**Trailing Spouse Employment-** One of the reoccurring challenges that has been expressed is the difficulty trailing spouses have finding employment in the region. If a spouse cannot find a job, often that leads to people leaving the region.

#### *Recommended Action*

***Create a Trailing Spouse Talent Matching Program:*** The CCREDC should partner with Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend to create a program designed to connect trailing spouses to employment opportunities in the region. This partnership can leverage the relationships of both organizations to connect to major employers as well as new companies locating to the region.



#### **BEST PRACTICE:**

MyPartner Career Network (Vail Valley, CO)

*The Vail Valley Partnership and High Country Human Resource Association created the MyPartner Career Network, a “trailing spouse” initiative. The MyPartner Career Network allows local businesses to collaborate to help find employment, when needed, for spouses or partners of prospective high-value employees hired from out of the region, who are often costly and time-consuming to replace.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Connection to Higher Education-** One of the keys to making the region more competitive for talent is by developing a culture of education beyond high school. This is not just four year degrees, but to two-year degrees and certificate programs as well. Creating direct pipelines to existing jobs and higher education opportunities should be one of the highest priorities for the region's workforce. Utilizing the existing systems at Del Mar College and TAMU-CC is the quickest way to continue to create these connections.

### *Recommended Action*

***Create the Coastal Bend Promise:*** The CCREDC, in partnership with the Chamber, Del Mar College, TAMU-CC, and major employers should create the Coastal Bend Promise, modeled after the Dallas County Promise. This program would help stop the drain of students going elsewhere as well as create a formal pipeline from local high schools into training and degree programs at each institution.



### **BEST PRACTICE:**

Dallas County Promise (Dallas, TX)

*Dallas County Promise is a coalition of school districts, colleges, universities, employers, and communities that have joined forces to help more Dallas County students complete college and begin careers. All eligible graduates have the opportunity to earn a last-dollar scholarship that will cover any gap between what a student's state and federal financial aid cover and the cost of tuition at a Promise Partner college.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Recommended Action*

#### *Support Higher Education Expansion-*

The region is home to two institutions, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC) and Del Mar College. Both of these institutions have been active in the community and their efforts should be fully supported.

*TAMU-CC Downtown Presence-* The university's recent purchase of a building downtown is a major first step to have a greater university presence downtown. By using this building for classes, offices, and incubator space, the university is taking a more hands-on approach to their presence downtown. Their further involvement should be encouraged and the potential of additional projects should be explored. Having a major educational institution as an anchor in the downtown could be very beneficial to help leverage

additional investment not just by the university, but be a signal to private developers that downtown is the place to invest.

#### *Del Mar College's Southside Campus-*

Not to be outdone, Del Mar College is making a major investment in the city's Southside neighborhood. Their new campus, as part of a voter-approved \$139 million Capital Improvement Project bond, will utilize almost 250,000 square feet of new buildings on 96 acres. This campus will help transform the Southside by using its land resources to help make the area more walkable while providing world-class facilities to house their biosciences, architecture, hospitality and culinary programs.

## COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS: PORTLAND

The City of Portland is the region's second largest city. Located across the bay from Corpus Christi, Portland has become the main source of economic growth in the northern part of the region. Like many first ring suburbs, Portland has seen extensive expansion from national retail chains.

Recognizing the need for a better sense of place for its residents, City leadership has undertaken an extensive planning process to create a more walkable town square concept. This project will give the City of Portland a true heart of the community that is not as reliant on cars for its residents. The planning process is still underway and in its final stages. Our team has reviewed a draft of the plan and believe it sets forth a solid path forward. Our recommendations are intended to compliment these activities and will focus on this new redevelopment area.

### **Aesthetics and Community Assets**

**Old Town Development-** The City's proposed Old Town Development, which would create a more traditional town square look and feel to the community, is the single most important place activity the City has undertaken. Creating this Old Town concept will be a huge step forward in creating a quality place. While the city has plenty of sidewalks, the feel and scale of the overall community makes owning a car mandatory. Having a town square that is walkable allows for people to live nearby and feel comfortable enough to be able to not need a vehicle.

### **Recommended Action**

**Support + Incentivize Old Town Development:** Once the planning phase is complete, the City of Portland should be proactive in finding a developer to create the Old Town project. A project the size and scope of Old Town will likely require incentives and significant cooperation of the City.

## COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS: PORTLAND

These incentives should include the use of tax increment financing to help with public infrastructure and demolition, where appropriate.

### *Recommended Action*

*Infill Development:* Outside of the proposed Old Town development, there are several vacant lots within the built city where infill development could benefit the city and provide additional housing or commercial opportunities. These sites should be marketed to potential developers for either single infill projects or scattered site development for multiple projects. Adding density to the city through infill development will help bolster the area's business climate.



### **BEST PRACTICE:**

Mashpee Commons (Mashpee, MA)

*Mashpee Commons was the first retrofit of a strip retail center into a traditional town center that for over thirty years has provided the surrounding 23 square-mile suburban community of Mashpee, MA, its walkable urban node.*

## COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS: PORTLAND

### Social Offerings

#### Recommended Action

**Integration of Public Art:** The City of Portland has a wide array of programming across the community. Further integration of public art (sculptures, murals, statues) throughout the community could help lend personality and character.

### Economic Offerings + Place Connectedness

#### Recommended Action

**Small Business Development:** The City of Portland has a large presence of chain retail and restaurants. In order for its Old Town Development to be successful, it will need small independent businesses to locate there and be successful. The City should partner with the Small Business Development Center to market and host regular trainings.



#### BEST PRACTICE:

Art Alley (Searcy, AR)

*The Art Alley project is part of a larger series of murals throughout downtown Searcy created by local non-profit ThinkART. The project transformed an unattractive alley into a regional tourism draw featuring more than a dozen micro-murals.*

## COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS: ROCKPORT

The City of Rockport, with a walkable downtown, independent retailers, and public art, is one of the best “places” in the Coastal Bend. It’s historic buildings, quirky shops, colorful art, and marina bring character and personality to this small waterfront community. While it is still recovering from both Hurricane Harvey and a global pandemic, it is still a bustling place with locals and visitors alike.

There are certainly challenges here, with the constant threat of serious storms, which can cause considerable damage and vacant properties, some as a result of these storms. However, it’s high character make it an attractive place, well positioned to make a comeback.

### **Aesthetics and Community Assets**

**Former HEB Site-** The biggest opportunity in the city is the former HEB site downtown. This approximately four-acre site represents the single largest available parcel. While there have been several attempts to redevelop this site in the past, current real estate prices give more probability to this site being redeveloped in the near future. The goal of the site should be to serve the current full-time residents of Rockport and create new full-time residents. The structure should be 3-4 stories, mixed-use, with commercial on the first floor and residential above. A site of this size could potentially add 50+ new residential units to the downtown and help spur new retail and restaurants.

## COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS: ROCKPORT

### *Recommended Action*

*Support + Incentivize Redevelopment of the former HEB Site:* Rockport officials should proactively work the owners of the HEB site to develop a quality infill project or assist with the transition of the property to a new owner. The City should strongly consider the use of incentives

### *Recommended Action*

*Support + Incentivize Infill Development:* Aside from the HEB site, there are several other empty lots in the downtown area. These too should be mixed-use, though likely much smaller in scale. Limiting these structures to 2-3 stories would likely best fit the character of the area. The City should also proactively work with the owners of these lots and seek development of small scale mixed-use buildings.



### PROJECT IDEA:

Gun Barrel Center (Boulder, CO)

*Creating a mixed-use building, integrating apartments on the upper two floors and retail on the bottom, would be a great fit in downtown Rockport. This type of “gentle density” would help add needed housing in an aesthetically pleasing format.*

## COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS: ROCKPORT

### **Economic Offerings + Place Connectedness**

#### *Recommended Action*

#### *Economic Development Strategy:*

There does not appear to be a defined economic strategy to target the types of businesses the community needs and how to improve the economic conditions it has within its control. As part of this strategy, the community should conduct a survey of residents to determine the types of businesses residents would like to see and then compare that to market information to determine what types of businesses would be beneficial and financially viable.

#### *Recommended Action*

#### *Implementation of the Downtown*

*Resiliency Plan:* As noted earlier in this report, the City of Rockport benefitted from a plan created by the American Association of Planning. This plan addressed numerous ongoing issues within the downtown that should be addressed from flooding to community support to funding of ongoing redevelopment efforts.

## COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS: FULTON

The Town of Fulton, while small in comparison to some neighboring communities, still contributes to the region's sense of place. The waterfront downtown area is home to several restaurants, which are well known among both residents in the region as well as visitors.

Because of the community's relatively small size, it is often lumped in with neighboring Rockport, which comes with both advantages and disadvantages. The main advantage, of course, is proximity to a larger population base and a sharing of organizational resources, like the Chamber of Commerce.

### **Aesthetics and Community Assets**

**Infill Opportunities-** Downtown Fulton has a few undeveloped lots on either end of the downtown. These present a development opportunity. These infill buildings should fit with the overall feel of downtown and be no more than 2-3 stories tall with commercial on the first floor and residential above.

### *Recommended Action*

#### *Support + Incentivize Infill Development:*

The Town of Fulton should proactively work with the owners of these lots and seek development of small scale mixed-use buildings.

**Pedestrian Access-** The couple of blocks of the downtown area are quite walkable. Beyond the immediate downtown, however, the sidewalks terminate.

### *Recommended Action*

**Increase Pedestrian Friendliness:** Extending sidewalks down Fulton Beach Road, past Palmetto Avenue, will help better connect the existing resort and neighboring restaurant to the rest of the downtown. This will also make the vacant lots on this end of downtown more attractive.

## COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS: FULTON

### Social Offerings

#### *Recommended Action*

The Rockport-Fulton Chamber does a good job of promoting activity in the downtown area. The community should look to partner with other smaller communities to ensure there are enough festivals and events to have something occurring every week during the year.

### Economic Offerings + Place Connectedness

#### *Recommended Action*

*Small Business Development:* The community should be regularly talking with local businesses to determine their needs and hosting workshops to assist in areas of need for them. In addition, working with the Small Business Development Center to host quarterly workshops for those residents who are interested in starting their own businesses.



## COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS: PORT ARANSAS

The City of Port Aransas is in the position of having both a popular high traffic commercial area that is considered the traditional Port Aransas, but also fast growing resort area on the edge of town. These new resorts, like Cinnamon Shore, are attractive, high density, and provide a small-town experience within themselves.

Port Aransas' biggest challenge is the proliferation of short-term rentals. Many existing houses are being purchased for this purpose and much of the new construction is using this model as well. This severely limits the ability of the community to retain and attract long-term residents. Additionally, the City has done extensive planning in the past, but most of these plans are more than 15 years old and should be updated to reflect today and revisit what the community wants based on current needs and challenges.

### **Aesthetics and Community Assets**

**Pedestrian Safety-** In what can be considered "downtown," there are ample sidewalks, but not pedestrian friendliness. With the number of curb cuts (or driveways off of the main roads) pedestrians have to constantly be aware of traffic looking to turn off of the main road.

### ***Recommended Action***

***Increase Pedestrian Friendliness:*** Limiting curb cuts should be a priority, as well as widening the sidewalks to help encourage residents and visitors to walk more.

### **Social Offerings**

From Sandfest to fishing tournaments to nature walks, the community does a good job of creating activities and programming to create opportunities for people to interact.

## COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS: PORT ARANSAS

### Economic Offerings + Place Connectedness

#### *Recommended Action*

*Housing + Short-Term Rentals:* As mentioned early, the biggest challenge Port Aransas has is the lack of attainable housing for existing and prospective residents. The City should consider designating sections of the community where short-term rentals should not be allowed and actively recruit developers to build housing (single family, missing middle, multi-family, and mixed-use) for the purpose of maintaining full-time residency. Not addressing the pressure short-term rentals out on the market will lead to a significant population decrease, threatening the ability of local businesses to attract and retain employees and the school district to keep and attract students.


#### *Recommended Action*

*Additional Resorts:* With the success of resort projects like Cinnamon Shores, encouraging further development of these types of properties should be a high economic priority for the city. The City should work with existing property owners to streamline the development process to further encourage this dense, walkable type of resort destination.



# PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Unlike activities like tourism, industrial recruitment, or workforce development, place development does not fall under the primary responsibility of any one entity in the region. Instead, each community is responsible for the development of their own places. However, since place encompasses not just public realm, but the private too, there is a need for partnership and communication. This section will layout the potential partnerships at the regional and local levels to help improve communication and understand the roles of the various entities.



## POTENTIAL PARTNERS: REGIONAL

### “Our Coastal Bend” Regional Place Partnership

The need exists to first and foremost improve communication among the various local and regional entities who work in the placemaking arena. This includes public entities, non-profits, and private businesses. This partnership is not intended to be its own separate entity but an annual or semi-annual gathering of the groups below to update each other on their respective plans, gain insight and ideas, and be a resource to improve respective efforts.

Government	Quasi-Government	Non-Profit	Education
City of Corpus Christi	Port of Corpus Christi	CCREDC	TAMU-CC
City of Portland	Corpus Christi Downtown Management District	United Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce	Del Mar College
City of Rockport		Visit Corpus Christi	
City of Port Aransas		Rockport-Fulton Chamber of Commerce	
Town of Fulton		Portland Chamber of Commerce	
Nueces County		Port Aransas Tourism Bureau & Chamber of Commerce	
San Patricio County			
Aransas County			

## POTENTIAL PARTNERS: CORPUS CHRISTI

### City Place Coordination


The City of Corpus Christi is by far the largest community in the region. At any given time, there are numerous place-related projects occurring at multiple levels. With so many activities in one community, the need for coordination and communication is high. We recommend city, and even downtown, specific coordination meetings on a quarterly basis involving the following entities:

Downtown	Citywide
City of Corpus Christi	City of Corpus Christi
Nueces County	Nueces County
Port of Corpus Christi	Port of Corpus Christi
Corpus Christi Downtown Management District	TAMU-CC
TAMU-CC	Del Mar College



# SUCCESS MEASURES

“How will we know if we’re successful?” This is a question asked by every quality organization who undertakes a new endeavor. Place Enhancement efforts are no different. This section will address the potential ways to measure if efforts to create a stronger sense of place and attachment are working.



## Aesthetics and Community Assets

Action	Priority	Timetable	Cost	Difficulty	Responsible Entity	Supporting Entity	Success Measure
Housing Strategy (Add 2,000 units)	••• High	5-10 Years	\$\$\$	••• Difficult	City of Corpus Christi	Downtown Management Board	2,000 units constructed and occupied
Public Park Improvements	•• Medium	12-24 Months	\$\$	• Easy	City of Corpus Christi	Downtown Management Board City Parks + Rec	Three projects created semi-permanent space created
Harbor Bridge Landing	••• High	3-5 Years	\$\$\$	••• Difficult	Nueces County	Port of Corpus Christi City of Corpus Christi	Bridge demolished; public space activated
Expanded Destinations	•• Medium	2-3 Years	\$\$	••• Difficult	Corpus Christi International Airport	CCREDC VCC Chamber	Daily flights to Denver and/or Atlanta
Neighborhood Node Development	••• High	12-36 Months	\$\$\$	•• Medium	City of Corpus Christi	CCREDC	One New Urbanist Development Under Construction
Developer Recruitment	••• High	12 Months	\$	•• Medium	City of Corpus Christi	CCREDC	Host 2-3 Developers of New Urbanist Projects

## Aesthetics and Community Assets

Action	Priority	Timetable	Cost	Difficulty	Responsible Entity	Supporting Entity	Success Measure
Appropriate Zoning for Mixed-Use	• • • High	12-24 Months	\$	• Easy	City of Portland City of Rockport City of Port Aransas Town of Fulton		Zoning allows for and encouraging mixed-use adopted
Developer Education	• • Medium	12-24 Months	\$	• Easy	Downtown Management Board	City of Corpus Christi CCREDC	Training series for prospective developers conducted
Mixed-Use Financial Incentives	• • • High	12-18 Months	\$\$	• • Medium	City of Corpus Christi	CCREDC	Incentives created and promoted
Blight Removal Loan Program	• • Medium	1-3 Years	\$\$	• • Medium	City of Corpus Christi		3 Blight Redevelopment Loans Made
Stricter Blight Code Enforcement	• • • High	12 Months	\$	• • Medium	City of Corpus Christi		25% reduction in blighted properties
Vacant Property Registration Ordinance	• • • High	12-18 Months	\$	• • Medium	City of Corpus Christi	Downtown Management Board	Vacant Property Registration created + used

## Aesthetics and Community Assets

Action	Priority	Timetable	Cost	Difficulty	Responsible Entity	Supporting Entity	Success Measure
Redevelopment Authority	•• Medium	2-4 Year	\$\$\$	••• Difficult	City of Corpus Christi	CCREDC	Redevelopment Authority created + funded
Pothole Patrol 72-Hour Response	••• High	12-18 Months	\$\$	• Easy	City of Corpus Christi		Pothole complaints responded to within 72-hours
Road Work Warranties	•• Medium	2-3 Years	\$\$	•• Medium	City of Corpus Christi		Warranties for road work included in all appropriate contracts
Anti-Litter Campaign (Public Relations)	• Low	12-36 Months	\$	• Easy	City of Corpus Christi	Downtown Management Board VCC	Campaign created; Reduction of litter
Anti-Litter Campaign (Adopt-A-Spot)	•• Medium	12-24 Months	\$	•• Medium	City of Corpus Christi	Downtown Management Board VCC	Adopt-A-Spot program created; 10 areas identified + adopted
Expand + Bundle Public Art Offerings	•• Medium	12-24 Months	\$\$	•• Medium	VCC	City of Corpus Christi Downtown Management Board	Art Trail created; three new public art pieces created

## Social Offerings

Action	Priority	Timetable	Cost	Difficulty	Responsible Entity	Supporting Entity	Success Measure
Community Onboarding/ Familiarization Program	• • Medium	12-24 Months	\$	• • Medium	CCREDC	VCC Chamber Major Employers	Program created and tours given 4x per year
Relocated Employee Concierge Program	• • Medium	12-24 Months	\$\$	• • Medium	CCREDC	Chamber Major Employers	Program created, staffed
Matching Grant Program for New Home Owners	• • Medium	12-24 Months	\$\$	• • • Difficult	City of Corpus Christi		Matching grant program created, funded
Better Utilization of VCC Calendar	• • Medium	12-18 Months	\$	• Easy	VCC	Chamber CCREDC Community Orgs	Increased usage of VCC calendar/ social media by 33%
Festivals + Events Grant Program	• Low	12-24 Months	\$\$	• • Medium	VCC	City of Corpus Christi	Grant program created, five grants given for new events

## Economic Offerings + Place Connectedness

Action	Priority	Timetable	Cost	Difficulty	Responsible Entity	Supporting Entity	Success Measure
Trailing Spouse Talent Match Program	• • Medium	2-3 Years	\$\$	• • Medium	CCREDC	Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend	Program created, six trailing spouses connected
Coastal Bend Promise	• • • High	2-3 Years	\$\$\$	• • • Difficult	CCREDC	TAMU-CC Del Mar College Major Employers City of Corpus Christi Corpus Christi Independent School District	Program created offering up to two free years of college or certificate-based training
TAMU-CC Downtown Presence	• • • High	3-5 Years	\$\$\$	• • • Difficult	TAMU-CC	Downtown Management Board	Additional investment and office space created
Del Mar College Southside Project	• • • High	2-3 Years	\$\$\$	• • Medium	Del Mar College	City of Corpus Christi	Campus Completed

## City of Portland

Action	Priority	Timetable	Cost	Difficulty	Responsible Entity	Supporting Entity	Success Measure
Old Town Development	• • • High	3-5 Years	\$\$\$	• • • Difficult	City of Portland		Three buildings connected to the Old Town plan developed
Infill Development	• • Medium	2-3 Years	\$\$	• • Medium	City of Portland		Two infill developments created
Integration of Public Art	• • Medium	3-5 Years	\$	• • Medium	City of Portland		Three pieces of public art created
Small Business Development	• • • High	12-24 Months	\$	• • Medium	City of Portland	SBDC/Del Marr College	Quarterly training sessions held

## City of Rockport

Action	Priority	Timetable	Cost	Difficulty	Responsible Entity	Supporting Entity	Success Measure
Support + Incentivize Former HEB site	• • • High	2-3 Years	\$\$\$	• • • Difficult	City of Rockport	Rockport-Fulton Chamber	Site redeveloped
Support + Incentivize Infill Development	• • • High	2-3 Years	\$\$\$	• • • Difficult	City of Rockport	Rockport-Fulton Chamber	Two infill projects completed
Create Economic Development Strategy	• • Medium	12-24 Months	\$	• • Medium	City of Rockport	Rockport-Fulton Chamber	Economic development strategy created
Implement Downtown Resiliency Plan	• • Medium	3-5 Years	\$\$\$	• • Medium	City of Rockport	Rockport-Fulton Chamber	50% of plan implemented

## Town of Fulton

Action	Priority	Timetable	Cost	Difficulty	Responsible Entity	Supporting Entity	Success Measure
Support + Incentivize Infill Development	• • • High	2-3 Years	\$\$\$	• • • Difficult	Town of Fulton	Rockford-Fulton Chamber	One infill project completed
Increase Pedestrian Friendliness	• • Medium	2-3 Years	\$\$	• • Medium	Town of Fulton		Sidewalks connecting both ends of the downtown area to surround areas installed
Festivals + Events	• • Medium	12-18 Months	\$	• Easy	Rockport-Fulton Chamber	Town of Fulton	Festivals + Events plan created
Small Business Development	• • • High	12-24 Months	\$	• • Medium	Rockport-Fulton Chamber	SBDC/Del Mar College	Trainings offered 4x a year

## City of Port Aransas

Action	Priority	Timetable	Cost	Difficulty	Responsible Entity	Supporting Entity	Success Measure
Increase Pedestrian Friendliness	• • Medium	2-3 Years	\$\$	• • Medium	City of Port Aransas		20% reduction in curb cuts, wider sidewalk standards adopted
Housing + Short-Term Rentals	• • • High	2-3 Years	\$\$\$	• • • Difficult	City of Port Aransas		Owner-occupied housing only of community identified and zoned
Additional Resort Communities	• • • High	3-5 Years	\$\$\$	• • Medium	City of Port Aransas		Two additional resort or significant phase additions opened

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Aransas County Partnership	City of Portland	Port Corpus Christi
Art Center of Corpus Christi	City of Rockport	Portland Chamber of Commerce
Art Museum of South Texas	Coastal Bend Business Innovation Center	Rockport/ Fulton Chamber of Commerce
City of Corpus Christi	Corpus Christi Independent School District	Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
City of Corpus Christi Arts and Cultural Commission	Del Mar College	Young Business Professionals of the Coastal Bend
City of Corpus Christi Downtown Management District	Nueces County	
City of Corpus Christi Parks and Recreation	Padre Island Business Association	

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