

## **Westside Development Corporation (WDC) Strategic Plan**

### **Executive Summary**

On June 8, 2006, the San Antonio City Council approved the creation of a local government corporation called the Westside Development Corporation (WDC). The purpose of the WDC is to create economic development opportunities in a historically underserved area of San Antonio. The City of San Antonio has committed to supporting the WDC through its incorporation and short-term operations. City Council approved funding in the amount of \$600,000 over two years (FY 2007, 2008) to cover operational expenses and market studies.

The target area of the WDC is bordered by IH-35 on the east, IH-10/Hwy 90 West on the south, Acme Rd/ 36<sup>th</sup> Street on the west and Cincinnati Avenue on the north.

A seventeen-member board of directors was appointed by City Council and is comprised of key stakeholders in the area, including universities, small and large businesses, nonprofit service providers, school districts, and residents.

The WDC staff currently resides within the City's Economic Development Department but is expected to eventually establish itself as an independent, non-profit organization. Staff is comprised of 2 full-time professionals and administrative support provided by the City of San Antonio.

The **mission** of the Westside Development Corporation is to foster local economic development, promote the development and re-development of real estate within the target area, create viable urban communities, and preserve the character, culture and history of the area.

The Board of Directors held a Strategic Planning meeting on January 3, 2007 to decide the Corporation's strategic goals and operational priorities. This Strategic Plan was created with a window of 3 years to accomplish the goals stated below. However, this plan is meant to be fluid and may change as market dynamics or needs in the Westside area dictate. It is important to note that "economic development" is comprised of many factors, all of which contribute to raising the economic standards of a community. Factors that affect "economic development" include housing, schools, crime, infrastructure, population growth and access to capital. The Westside Development Corporation was created by the City Council of San Antonio to contribute as a leader, a partner, and a supporter of any initiative or effort seeking to raise the economic standards and improve the quality of life for residents in the Westside of San Antonio.

**Goal 1: Attract new businesses and development through marketing and communication strategies for Westside property, businesses, and service providers.**

The Westside of San Antonio has historically been underserved and lacked resources to effectively market to businesses, real estate developers, and third party service providers. Many stakeholders have relied on internal resources to market its real estate assets, products, or services and the result has been an individualized, fragmented approach. The WDC has the opportunity to create a central repository of information that is available to all Westside stakeholders and markets the area as a whole.

- Strategy 1: Using market analysis completed by COSA EDD staff, identify business types (e.g. apparel, entertainment, bookstores, coffee shops, etc.) that are in high demand but do not currently exist in the Westside. Once identified, create marketing plan to attract those specific business-types.
- Strategy 2: “Westside Property Catalog:” in partnership with COSA Planning Department, complete Land Use Analysis to identify land area/parcels/lots that are underutilized. Once identified, work with commercial property owners to create a catalog of properties and a marketing strategy targeted to the real estate brokerage community, chambers of commerce, Economic Development Foundation, and small businesses. For identified residential parcels, encourage partnerships with affordable housing organizations active in the westside.
- Strategy 3: Utilize WDC and other COSA resources to provide consulting services to institutional landowners. Assistance could include attracting developers for potential joint ventures, adaptive re-use of underutilized commercial property, and identifying affordable housing nonprofit entities to partner with.
- Strategy 4: Create a website to market the mission and purpose of the WDC. Include strategic plan, list of Board of Directors, appropriate maps, etc. Create functionality that allows for the information to be easily accessible, stored, and updated on a regular basis.
- Strategy 5: Track and maintain updated information regarding the following:
  - Key demographic data as updated by sources.
  - City, county and state capital improvement projects in target area.
  - Real estate sales data.
  - City- assisted efforts like NCR, Community Plans, etc.

**Goal 2: Assist key stakeholders with new projects in the Westside utilizing economic development incentives and financial tools of the WDC.**

The amount of new development and related incentives has been disproportionately low for this area of San Antonio. These incentives include tax abatements, waiver of impact fees, and tax increment reinvestment zones, which could serve as the deciding factor for a developer or new employer considering a project in the Westside area. In addition, the

WDC can layer its own financial tools and capacity to stimulate greater volume of activity. The WDC will serve as both an internal and external advocate for new development in the area.

- Strategy 1: Working with COSA's Economic Development Department (EDD), work to secure incentives for new projects that meet threshold of creating jobs, and developing or re-developing under-utilized real estate in the area. Assist EDD staff with the review of materials provided by developers (including proformas, cashflow statements, budgets, etc.) and contribute to the preparation of required internal documents presented for approval to EDD Director and City Council.
- Strategy 2: Utilize financial tools and capabilities of the WDC to assist with new residential and commercial developments and expand capacity of existing Westside stakeholders. Promote funding mechanisms like tax-exempt/ taxable bonds to assist in expediting developments that may not otherwise have access to those tools.
- Strategy 3: Identify new ways to leverage economic development incentives to potentially generate income for the WDC.

### **Goal 3: Enhance the visual appeal of key commercial corridors.**

To assist in the attraction of new business and development, a focus should be placed on improving the visual appeal of key commercial corridors. The corridors identified in previously completed market studies as generating the most commercial activity include: West Commerce (east/west) and Buena Vista St, Culebra Rd (east/west), Castroville/Guadalupe Streets (east west), Zarzamora St (north south), and General McMullen (north/south). As the Westside area grows, other commercial corridors may emerge as priorities as well.

- Strategy 1: Identify sources of capital to assist small/large business owners with façade improvements and/or expansion plans. Create partnerships with commercial banks in the area and small business lenders to increase access to affordable, flexible capital for Westside businesses.
- Strategy 2: Create partnerships with key stakeholders in the Westside also focused on improving commercial areas like St. Mary's University, Our Lady of the Lake University, UTSA, Avenida Guadalupe Association, American Sunrise, and the Basilica of the Little Flower.

### **Goal 4: Incorporate community, neighborhood, and resident groups in the implementation process of the goals of the Westside Development Corporation.**

Too often in the past, the "community" in the Westside has been underrepresented, left out of the process, or unable to access new resources for its benefit. As a result, City Council appointed the WDC Board of Directors as a body representative of multiple institutions, neighborhoods and business interests. In addition, individual directors have staggered Board terms for the purpose of allowing new stakeholders throughout the

Westside to participate in the oversight of the WDC. Without the support of the community, the challenges facing the WDC will be significantly greater to overcome.

- Strategy 1: Reach out to community, neighborhood, and resident groups to brief them on the vision, purpose, and strategic priorities of the WDC. Provide regular updates to the same groups on progress toward achieving results.
- Strategy 2: When applicable, include the input of the community on new projects to create long-term relationships between developers/business owners and their neighbors.
- Strategy 3: Ensure accessibility and open lines of communication between the community and WDC staff.
- Strategy 4: WDC staff should strive to be visible in the community.

**Goal 5: Identify opportunities to attract more San Antonio residents and tourists to the area and promote positive stories about the history and cultural identity of the area.**

The WDC will take a leadership role in creating a strategy to increase traffic (vehicular, pedestrian, and public transit) to the Westside area and highlight positive stories about its residents, public institutions, businesses and historical and cultural identity. The area has much to be proud of and includes attractions and locations that already draw many San Antonio residents to the area. A focus on expanding the draw of outside people to the area will not only have a positive effect on community pride but also on key demographic factors that benefit the community as a whole.

- Strategy 1: Seek assistance and participation from local marketing experts and professionals to “re-brand” the Westside to change stereotypes, market the area’s institutional and cultural assets, and inform the general public about why the area should be valued.
- Strategy 2: Support the ongoing efforts of universities, cultural attractions and nonprofit organizations to attract more attendees to special forums and functions.
- Strategy 3: Seek out new partners that share a vested interest in increased traffic in the area like large employers, sellers of retail goods, restaurants, etc.
- Strategy 4: Create partnerships with local print, radio, and television media outlets to assist as a conduit and dedicated source of positive stories through the Westside community.

**Goal 6: Secure funding for WDC to ensure long-term financial self-sufficiency.**

- Strategy 1: Identify potential sources of income or revenue using financial tools and incentives available to WDC.
- Strategy 2: Secure grant funding commitments from external and internal partners in the Westside.