



## GREATER SAN MARCOS VISION 2025 DRAFT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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## PROJECT OVERVIEW

In January 2020, Leaders in Greater San Marcos embarked on a collaborative community and economic development strategic planning process that will make the region a more prosperous, successful, and vibrant place to live, work, and do business. The process has resulted in a new five-year Economic Development Strategy that will be a consensus-based blueprint to guide the community's actions in the years to come. This plan builds upon Vision 2020, which the community developed through a similar process in 2014 and has helped catalyze numerous community improvements in recent years.

The Greater San Marcos Partnership convened the strategic planning process on behalf of its regional community and economic development partners. A diverse Steering Committee comprised of public, private, and non-profit leaders guided the four-phase process.

The five-month process was originally scheduled to conclude in May 2020, but was prudently delayed approximately six months in response to the COVID-19 public health and economic crisis. The process addressed the full range of issues that influence a region's competitiveness, including its talent, education and training resources, infrastructure and mobility, quality of place, resiliency, and so on. The resulting Strategy includes actions and tactics designed to address challenges, capitalize on opportunities, and advance the region and its distinct communities, residents, and businesses forward to a new period of heightened competitiveness and prosperity, and, where appropriate, worked to integrate some of the emerging, though still uncertain, implications of COVID-19.

### STEERING COMMITTEE & TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The strategic planning process was guided by a Steering Committee comprised of regional business and institutional leadership. These individuals reviewed input and research findings, provided feedback, and oversaw the development of a new Economic Development Strategy and corresponding Implementation Guidelines. Their input and oversight was complemented by the support of a Technical Advisory Committee that included representatives from key partners such as local governments, chambers of commerce, educational institutions, and other organizations.

### PHASE ONE: REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Community input is vital to the success of any holistic economic development process. Market Street engaged with as many community stakeholders as possible through individual interviews and an online survey that was open to anyone who lives and/or works in Hays and Caldwell counties. The input process helped to identify the region's opportunities and challenges and helped to determine strategic priorities. This phase took place in January and February 2020.

### PHASE TWO: REGIONAL ASSESSMENT & COMPETITIVE SCORECARDS

The Regional Assessment provides a detailed examination of the region's competitiveness as a place to live, work, visit, and do business. The Assessment weaves qualitative feedback from phase one with deep quantitative and data findings into a set of "stories" that provide a concise narrative of the region's opportunities and challenges and lays the groundwork for future phases of the process. There is also a set

of Competitive Scorecards that provide an objective perspective of the region's competitive position relative to a broader set of competition. This phase took place in February 2020, was paused due to COVID-19, and concluded in early August 2020.

**COVID-19 PAUSE:** In response to the uncertainties and challenges associated with the novel coronavirus, Market Street paused its Vision 2025 efforts in March 2020 and did not re-convene the Steering Committee until early August. This break provided a two-fold benefit. First, it allowed all Greater San Marcos stakeholders to focus on the immediacy of the challenges associated with COVID-19. Second, it also provided the opportunity to incorporate the associated impacts from COVID-19, both challenges and opportunities, in the Vision 2025 Strategy. During the pause, Market Street continued to provide regular contact and support to GSMP staff.

### PHASE THREE: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Based on the key findings from the first two phases of the process, Market Street worked with the Steering Committee to identify holistic, actionable, and measurable strategic recommendations to guide the community's collective actions in the years to come. Examples of best practice programs, policies, and initiatives from communities around the country are included as helpful references. This phase was completed in August and September 2020.

### PHASE FOUR: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

The Implementation Guidelines that accompany this plan help further define how GSMP and its partners can achieve its objectives. The Guidelines prioritize strategic recommendations, define roles and responsibilities of key organizations and partners, determine needed staff and financial capacity, and confirm performance metrics to track progress and success. The Guidelines draw from key takeaways identified in the 2018 Vision 2020 Interim Implementation Assessment, ensuring the community's current approach to implementation is leveraged and built upon, when appropriate, and revised, or adjusted, when necessary. This phase took place in September and October 2020 and concludes the Vision 2025 Strategic Planning Process.

## NAVIGATING COVID-19

Communities across the nation are suddenly faced with a unique set of challenges and economic strain that will likely result in drastic changes to local, national, and global realities, not just economically, but also socially and emotionally. Many businesses have been, and continue to be, in survival mode. Currently, there are significant unknowns as to when and how a "new normal" will occur. At the time of the development of this Strategy, Texas has proceeded to reopen in phases with protective restrictions, but community spread remains as does substantial uncertainty as to when and how the virus may be eradicated.

The March through August 2020 "pause" gave the GSMP and Market Street teams an opportunity to identify some emerging themes for a post-COVID economy and to cautiously incorporate some into this Vision 2025 plan. In the industrial sector, these themes include the "reshoring" of manufacturing, localizing supply chains, and expanding regional direct business-to-consumer distribution networks. In the professional sector, emerging themes include the expansion of remote working, reduced total professional office footprint, increased regionalization of professional offices, greater spacing for desk and office layouts, and an expanded focus on facilities equipped with systems that address items such as air exchange/quality, day lighting, and surface contact control. In the retail sector, the coronavirus pandemic appears to be accelerating prior trends such as the shift toward online sales, local/individual fulfillment of online purchase (i.e., store pickup), and increased digital and hardware technology spending. These sectors show countervailing opportunities and risks for the Greater San Marcos area and are among the areas where the "pause" allowed for a more informed strategy.

Sectors with more uncertainty include the service and hospitality sectors, where many communities' eagerness to return to social interaction has blunted, but perhaps extended, the economic hardship inflicted by the pandemic. Initial signals depict a renewed focus on activated, outdoor spaces which may inform municipal streetscape investment and favor more temperate climates, like Greater San Marcos. With travel continuing to be restricted, shorter stays and more regionalized travel-for-pleasure have fared better than national and business-based travel. International travel remains reduced to critical trips only. Projecting potential structural impacts in travel patterns and tourism is challenging at this time. Digital interaction has enabled the continuance of business in ways that would not have been possible only a decade ago, but a desire for authenticity/experience and digital fatigue are also themes that amplify as the timeline of the health crisis protracts.

Finally, the housing sector tells a two-sided story organized heavily along socio-economic lines. Home sales quickly rebounded and then accelerated past record levels driven by historically low interest rates as higher income households invest reallocated disposable income into homestead-related purchases. Yet, the longevity of this recovery is an open question as supply continues to dwindle as new construction starts lags many months behind demand and material and supply chains continue to be stressed. Meanwhile, increased unemployment and underemployment threatens a potential crisis in the rental and mortgage markets as federal support programs and eviction moratoriums expire. Here again, identifying long-term or structural coronavirus related changes is perilous given the counteracting trends, limited data set, and diverse set of individual decision-makers. That said, housing and transportation issues continue to feature prominently in

Vision 2025 given existing considerations and critical long-term objectives for the region that are expected to endure once these markets stabilize.

It is reasonable to believe that additional impacts upon this Vision 2025 Strategy will emerge subsequent to publication. Market Street Services believes that the Regional Engagement & Stakeholder Input along with the Regional Assessment & Competitive Scorecards are sound and still appropriate as cornerstones of the development of the Vision 2025 Strategy for the Greater San Marcos region. At the same time, we acknowledge that some minor changes/additions/deletions may be required due to the unforeseen impacts from COVID-19. Our team believes that while priorities may shift, the major issues and opportunities identified will not change significantly. As well, Market Street designs its strategies so that they can be "fluid" enough to be adjusted without changing the major tenants of the product as guided by its stakeholders.

With all of this in mind, regional and economic leadership should stay highly attuned in this volatile landscape to make prudent and well-informed decisions. The aforementioned emerging themes should be taken within the context of the highly preliminary understanding of the short- and long-term impacts of COVID-19. As such, only a select few have been explicitly integrated into the Vision 2025 Strategy. More frequently, strategic actions have been made flexible enough for the GSMP staff and leadership to be nimble and adapt to new information and structural change as it becomes more defined over the course of the next five years.

Perhaps more than ever, developing a new strategy for the region is essential for the desired outcomes of a healthy and vibrant economy providing a sustainable quality of life for its businesses and citizens. While there is undoubtedly still uncertainty and challenges ahead, this has been an opportune time to prepare for that new reality and envision the possibilities to leverage existing assets, maximize emerging opportunities, and aggressively address existing and emerging weaknesses and challenges. GSMP has invested in strategic planning efforts over the years that has provided insight and understanding related to the strengths and challenges of Hays and Caldwell counties, which provided the region and its partners with a clear path forward. This effort will ensure that the Greater San Marcos region continues to include the region's various voices, solid research, and consensus building around this roadmap, paving the way for continued success for years to come.

## REGIONAL ASSESSMENT: KEY FINDINGS

This Regional Assessment delivered in August 2020 evaluated the Greater San Marcos region's economic competitiveness and prosperity through the lens of eight chapters, or "stories," that illuminated specific challenges and opportunities while collectively forming a narrative about the region: where it has been, where it is today, and where it is headed. The stories emerged from public input provided by residents and businesses in the Greater San Marcos region, as well as in-depth analysis of data covering demographic, socioeconomic, economic, and quality of life attributes and trends. Below is a brief description of what was included in the Regional Assessment.

### ***A Top Destination for Residents***

While there have been many changes over the past five years, one thing remains constant: the population in the Greater San Marcos region continues to grow rapidly. Between 2008 and 2018, the region added over 80,000 residents and grew by 43.5 percent. The rapid growth is partially attributed to the fast overall population growth in Texas. The state's low cost business environment and abundant job creation make it a magnet for businesses and workers.

Overall, population change is influenced by two factors: natural change (births minus deaths) and net migration (both domestic and international). Net migration reflects the portion of population growth that is most closely tied to a community's relative attractiveness and is the main factor for fueling population growth in fast-growing regions. Nearly 60 percent of the area's population growth is attributed to domestic migration which diversifies the landscape of the population's age and diversity.

### ***Quality of Life and Place***

Quality of life generally refers to the well-being and happiness of a community's residents while quality of place is a product of a community's built and natural environment, its vibrancy, and other physical characteristics. In the beginning of the process Market Street conducted a survey that went out to the public regarding aspects that related to the region's quality of life. Items such as the San Marcos River, social offerings, safety, and family recreation scored positively. Key items for GSMP to focus on included transportation and mobility improvements and housing affordability.

### ***Regional Talent and Commuting Patterns***

Among the comparison communities given in the Regional Assessment, the Greater San Marcos region scored high on education and workforce competitiveness. With this, the educational attainment rate is growing, and the residents are better educated than what they were five years ago. The availability of a skilled workforce was listed the most important factor influencing a community's competitiveness in the modern economy. However, the data shows that many residents are not working in the region. Rather, roughly half are leaving the area for work elsewhere which is resulting in longer commute times. Simply put, the two-county region is not yet a major job center. The fact that the Greater San Marcos region is home to a large pool of talent is a competitive advantage for relocation projects and a marketable aspect for existing businesses expanding in the region.



### ***Economic Growth and Target Sector Performance***

With an ideal location and growing economy, the region has a competitive advantage for future economic opportunities. Overall, employment growth over the past ten years has been steady and GDP has increased. However, while jobs have been growing rapidly in the region, wages have grown roughly the same pace as national wage growth. As wages in Greater San Marcos remain below the state and national averages, growing wages at a more accelerated pace should continue to be a priority for the region.

During the Vision 2020 process, the region completed a target sector analysis to identify which target business sectors the region should focus marketing and other economic development resources in order to attract and grow jobs and investment. GSMP, as the region's economic development organization, focuses its activities around seven targets: Aerospace, Aviation, Security, & Defense; Business Services & Support; Materials Science; Information Technology; Life Sciences; Regional Distribution; and Destination Attraction. While jobs grew over the last five years in Greater San Marcos, aerospace manufacturing declined. However, business service and support; destination attraction; IT; life sciences; material sciences; regional distribution all grew. GSMP will remain focused on existing priorities while pursuing catalyst opportunities in supply chain logistics, Tesla, and the Army Futures Command.

### ***Planning for Quality Growth and Development: Business Climate Factors***

From the survey given to business owners, the region received favorable ratings. The state tax climate, labor costs, cost of utilities, the potential impact of State Highway 130, and local tax climate were seen as advantageous to the region's business climate. However, in order to grow knowledge-based jobs, Greater San Marcos will need to have the necessary infrastructure to support that growth—namely, office space. Also, maximizing the economic impact of the San Marcos Regional Airport remains a top priority for stakeholders who would like to see it reach its full potential.

For the region to improve the availability of a skilled and educated workforce, it will need to attract skilled and educated workers from other places and produce and retain "homegrown" talent. The Greater San Marcos region is part of a larger regional labor shed and benefits greatly from the overall region's ability to attract, retain, and develop talent – from Austin to San Antonio. That said, the Greater San Marcos region and its immediate surroundings are home to education and training assets that have the potential to provide a competitive advantage for economic growth.

### ***Innovation and Entrepreneurship***

Texas State University already has a culture of innovation and was among the first to include patents and commercialization as criteria for tenure. The university's entrepreneurial mindset, combined with its emerging research capacity, has enabled it to be more nimble than more mature research universities that often get stuck in such status quo. This approach is evidenced by the establishment of seven university research centers each with applied focus that strongly aligns with regional economic development. For example, the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment establishes data-driven best practices for preserving and utilizing the valuable resource of fresh water, and the Translational Health Research Center has initiatives focused on community health and economic resilience to minimize the impact of public health emergencies. Other Centers at Texas State focus on additional areas critical to economic development, such

as school safety, public-private partnerships for technology innovation, advanced materials research and development, and state-of-the-art agriculture.

Diversifying and strengthening the regional economy will require a balanced approach to regional economic development, and a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem is a key component to diversifying and strengthen the regional economy. Data on small business and entrepreneurial activity indicates that the region has been successful at fostering growth in new and small businesses. Areas of emphasis such as creating a more business-friendly environment through greater ease of permitting, additional incentives, and more affordable commercial real estate were mentioned as necessary to enhance capacity. Additionally, a greater focus on small business retention and greater collaboration with regional partners must be areas of intentionality for Hays and Caldwell counties. The Science, Technology, Advanced Research (STAR) Park is a Texas State University initiative that supports the success of new start-up companies in the technology sector and aligns private sector innovation and job creation with university strengths.

# VISION 2025 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The strategic framework and recommendations presented in the following pages were derived from several sources with the strategic implications presented in the Regional Assessment in mind. Partnerships with other organizations, which will be identified in the forthcoming Implementation Guidelines, will be key to continuing the success that the Greater San Marcos region has achieved with focused and consistent efforts built upon strong research and supported by voices throughout the region. The recommendations included in this Strategy are a combination of the Market Street team’s experience and observation of programs and initiatives in communities across the nation, as well as valuable feedback from stakeholder input, inclusive of focus groups, interviews, staff engagement, small group feedback and strategic planning workbook notes from the August 5 Steering Committee meeting.

This draft Strategy, once finalized and approved, will set the direction for the next five years of the region’s collective economic development prioritization and activity. The framework provides a high-level structure of the key issues that the region is working to address and helps stakeholders quickly and effectively communicate the region’s economic development goals. Once solidified, the framework also provides a clear structure for implementation activities. The framework should reflect the issues that the region seeks to affect at a high level through strategic action.

Best practices can be found in the Appendix of this document. References to each best practice can be found next to the relevant strategic action throughout the Strategy.

Before determining the direction of the next leg of this journey, reviewing past strategic frameworks is helpful to understanding the journey that the Greater San Marcos region has traversed over the last decade. In 2009, the strategy that was developed from an initiative led by the City of San Marcos and its economic development team, Economic Development San Marcos, resulted in the creation of the Greater San Marcos Partnership. In 2015, the Vision 2020 Strategy identified five primary “goals” that provided structure for GSMP’s efforts over the past five years. These goals and the accompanying graphic are as follows:

**Goal 1: Define and Promote the Greater San Marcos Value Proposition**

**Goal 2: Support Quality Growth in Export-Oriented Target Sectors**

**Goal 3: Optimize the Local Talent Base**

**Goal 4: Accommodate and Manage Quality Growth**

**Goal 5: Create Destination Appeal**



Collectively, the themes that emerged from research, public input, and Steering Committee feedback demonstrates to the Market Street team that the Greater San Marcos Vision 2025 Economic Development Strategy can reasonably be organized around four of these, adjusting the first and fourth areas to reflect the changes in the landscape that have resulted from progress that has been made since 2015:

1. Support Quality Employment Growth
2. Optimize the Local Talent Base
3. Accommodate and Manage Quality Growth
4. Enhance Community Appeal

The following graphic displays a potential visual representation of the four proposed goal areas, highlighting the interconnectivity of all areas. As the illustration also highlights, **regionalism** should always be at the core, understanding that it has been a vital component to GSMP's efforts.



# Goal 1: Support Quality Employment Growth

Economic development is often discussed as a three-legged stool—Business Retention and Expansion; Small Business Development and Entrepreneurship; and Business Recruitment and Attraction. All three legs of the economic development stool are paramount to a balanced approach to economic development. Data reveals that nationwide, existing businesses and new startups account for the bulk of job creation within most communities, and existing businesses and newly recruited businesses drive capital investment. Small businesses provide an outlet and, with the right supports in place, add options for existing and prospective talent.

Based on the results from the past five years listed below, it is apparent that Greater San Marcos has a strong framework that has garnered clear success. In the five years since the launch of Vision 2020, GSMP has helped to create over 5,400 jobs and spur over \$551 million of committed capital investment in the region.

## ECONOMIC SCOREBOARD

	Announced Jobs	Capital Investment
2016	2,685	\$195,452,500
2017	742	\$55,700,000
2018	690	\$211,500,000
2019	115	\$51,750,000
2020	1,250	\$37,000,000
<b>Grand Total to Date</b>	<b>5,482</b>	<b>\$551,402,500</b>
<i>Annual Average</i>	<i>1,096</i>	<i>\$110,280,500</i>

This section focuses on proposed recommendations related to building on the region’s success by focusing on each leg of the economic development stool.

### ***Business Retention and Expansion***

In many communities, a significant portion of new capital investment and new job creation come from existing businesses. It is essential to a healthy economy that the entity charged with sustainable economic development prioritizes and invests in addressing the needs, concerns, and interests of existing companies. Ensuring that the business climate is conducive to continued growth and development should be a major focus of GSMP.

It should be noted that sometimes, expansions from existing companies do not get the "attention and praise" like an announcement from a company relocating to the region. Some might even assume that it is natural or a given that existing companies will expand in the region. GSMP understands that this assumption is not in line with the reality of how businesses operate and has demonstrated over recent years that responding to the needs of existing business is a priority. An effective Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program gathers valuable information from existing businesses, and the gained knowledge should be leveraged to

assist the public sectors in developing sustainable policies and procedures that will enhance the tax base and benefit both the public and private sectors.

Due to the current and unpredictable state of future developments of our nation and the world due to COVID-19, Market Street advises that GSMP prioritize BRE and the robust recruitment of vendors and suppliers for existing and newly relocated businesses for the first two years of implementation. The current operational plan should also emphasize supporting the survival of area businesses experiencing increased uncertainty.

## STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

1. Continue to strengthen business retention and expansion efforts in the region. **(Relevant Best Practice: BP #1)**
  - ✓ Ensure that visitation rosters, schedules, and surveys based on Greater San Marcos' target sectors are optimal.
  - ✓ Continue to ensure that GSMP consistently updates its BRE database with pertinent information.
  - ✓ Add GSMP staff capacity to support BRE visitation and response efforts and to adequately reflect GSMP's commitment to supporting existing businesses.
2. Ensure that BRE throughout the region is cohesive.
  - ✓ Convene local economic development practitioners to discuss coordination needs, including desired level of GSMP support, shared data needs, etc., to determine the need for case-specific formal procedures.
  - ✓ Develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between GSMP and local economic development partners in the region to ensure appropriate BRE outreach is practiced in all areas of the region by local partners, and information gathered from BRE outreach is shared among local and regional economic development practitioners when appropriate for the benefit of existing businesses throughout the region.
3. Utilize BRE data to support the full mission of GSMP.
  - ✓ Leverage the BRE database to inform cluster-mapping efforts to identify opportunities to in-source purchases currently made outside the region
    - Through BRE visits, identify services and products currently available within the region but for which existing businesses are outsourcing and make those connections.
  - ✓ Identify opportunities for "local-sourcing" to the region's entrepreneurs as well as buyer-supplier networks that could lead to recruitment opportunities.
    - This is a vital component to maximizing the Tesla announcement. Identifying and targeting those companies that will benefit from close proximity to Tesla or already supply Tesla with parts and components is a worthwhile investment of time.
4. Form a U.S. Army Futures Task Force, driven by Texas State University, to proactively and quickly respond to Army Futures needs in order to maximize related investment and private sector employment

attraction in Greater San Marcos. Texas State University's longstanding expertise in applied research, combined with its ongoing, intentional work within the Defense Innovation Ecosystem and Army Futures Command leadership, positions Greater San Marcos in a distinctly advantageous manner.

- ✓ Ensure that there are current or former military personnel involved with the Task Force to provide insight into issues that need approaches that vary from civilian approaches to an economic development lens.
- ✓ Encourage relevant training for GSMP's BRE staff to promote effective delivery of services and remain mindful of opportunities in Austin and San Antonio.
- ✓ Consistently seek participation of Army Futures Command in relevant public, private, and institutional committees, programs, and events.
- ✓ Identify opportunities to adapt or leverage Army Futures funded technology or innovation for private/civilian purposes, in an authorized manner, such as NASA's Technology Transfer Program.

### ***Small Business Development and Entrepreneurship***

There are several existing entities that assist small businesses and entrepreneurs in Greater San Marcos. At times, it can become very confusing as to what entity to contact, and small businesses can become frustrated with the time and effort needed to get answers to their questions. The Texas State Small Business Development Center, Austin Score, and Central Texas Angel Network are existing and impactful resources available to help small businesses. It is also vital that Greater San Marcos prioritize entrepreneurship and ensure that it is a hot spot for growing businesses. With major assets such as the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship as well as the increasing awareness of the Texas Innovation Corridor, Greater San Marcos must seize and create opportunities to widen its stake as a hub for innovation and commercialization as well as a place that those startups can remain and continue to grow.

## STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

5. Form a task force to review current resources available to small businesses and entrepreneurs and develop a regional inventory. **(Relevant Best Practices: BP #2, 3, & 4)**
  - ✓ Develop a One Stop Shop that coordinates all resources, both public and private, to assist small businesses.
  - ✓ Establish a pre-seed microloan program to open up entrepreneurship to individuals who lack access to traditional capital.
  - ✓ Work with partners to effectively connect entrepreneurs with technical assistance providers, key regional contacts, intellectual property attorneys, and sources of entrepreneurial expertise.
6. Conduct inter-city entrepreneur visits to observe and experience best practice programs.
  - ✓ Seek highly effective accelerators, business competitions, funding tools, conferences, technical assistance and support programs, and networking organizations in nearby metros and across the U.S. from which to learn.

7. Advocate for Texas State University funding and partnership opportunities, understanding that its economic impact on the region makes it one of the region's greatest assets.
  - ✓ Work with Texas State to identify and pursue potential programmatic collaborations that can enhance Greater San Marcos target-sector-development strategies.
    - Collaborate with partners, including existing businesses, to expand regional entrepreneurial infrastructure, including incubators, accelerators, co-working space, and research space.
    - Systematically cross-reference BRE and Attraction databases with applicable Texas State professors, thought leaders, and departments to accelerate collaboration opportunities.
  - ✓ Form an Advisory Task Force that serves as a collaborative entry point for Texas State University's seven research centers of excellence to provide input while informing GSMP strategy and execution.
    - The Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship has a particular opportunity for GSMP to serve as a cornerstone for development of innovation and job growth for the region.
    - As evidenced by the focus on materials science development, another target cluster could be developed in the future that leverages Texas State's areas of excellence and other institutional strengths in a critical and opportunity-rich area and fosters related growth in new company formation and the expansion of existing companies. STAR Park is a very unique incubator and accelerator. Enhancing its capability could be a foundation for additional quality development for the region, state, and nation.
  
8. Promote youth entrepreneurship through comprehensive programming and a business incubator and/or makerspace for high school and technical students pursuing advanced degrees.
  - ✓ This program could be positioned within the Gary Job Corps and/or be an initiative of Austin Community College, which could make the program accessible to all students in all districts through dual enrollment.

***Business Recruitment and Attraction***

GSMP's mission is to enhance the Greater San Marcos region with quality new investments and job sustainment and growth, which in turn provides resources to enhance the quality of life for all of its citizens. GSMP has developed a regional approach to economic and community development with support from the public and private sectors within Caldwell and Hays counties. There are both similarities and differences between Hays and Caldwell counties, including the diversity of business and industry types as well as the diversity of resources to meet the various needs of citizens and businesses. This diversity provides tremendous opportunities for GSMP to offer existing, new, and prospective companies a variety of options to meet present and future needs. One of the key needs is for GSMP to address how to leverage the assets for each city and county, ensuring that each economic development opportunity is best served. Eventually, the ultimate decision for a new location should depend upon the one that best meets the company's needs.

Market Street acknowledges and applauds GSMP's recent recruitment successes. Despite the current global pandemic, GSMP continues to celebrate ongoing wins, including recent announcements by Amazon regarding two new facilities being located within the region (in Kyle and Buda) and the recent Tesla gigafactory announcement in nearby Travis County. These are testaments to the work that GSMP and other



regional stakeholders have done and continue to do. Our recommendation is that in the first two years of Vision 2025 implementation, the focus be on BRE efforts, especially those that support the success of newly recruited companies, as well as continuing to target companies within existing, well-defined target sectors. After the national economy has recalibrated, it will be important to undergo a new target business analysis to determine necessary changes in existing target sectors and to identify new targeting opportunities. Particular opportunities also exist within areas that have recently accelerated, including supply chain logistics, Tesla's recent relocation announcement, and Army Futures Command. Additionally, opportunities exist for GSMP to bolster regional cooperation on all economic development efforts, a worthy undertaking that warrants intentionality.

For example, Tesla is anticipated to create 5,000 direct jobs. The additional jobs from their Tier 1, 2, and 3 suppliers could reach over an additional 5,000 jobs. GSMP should focus additional resources to take advantage of the opportunities and address challenges related to Tesla. The potential of attracting over 10,000 new jobs is a game changer for the region and potentially one of the biggest economic development impacts that the region has ever experienced. Tesla will expect tremendous support and direct involvement in meeting their needs before, during, and after construction and start up begins. Once suppliers are selected, the time schedules for delivery dates for products will be very tight, putting even more pressure on the entire region, including Hays and Caldwell counties. Anticipating future needs and ensuring that they can be met in a timely manner will require foresight, expertise, and cutting edge approaches.

In the development of this Strategy, there was discussion related to whether or not a new and revised target business sector review is needed. Because of the unprecedented impacts of COVID-19 on the national economy, the accuracy of projections related to employment and future business climate for new investment is questionable. Market Street recommends that GSMP revisits undertaking an updated target business study in 24-36 months, once the market has settled and adjusted to new economic realities. In the meantime, GSMP has a strong foundation and can strengthen its processes, procedures, and partnerships to prepare for a continued thriving future. Additionally, this is an opportunity to further coordinate strategically to enhance growth and investment in key job and activity centers throughout the region in order to provide jobs closer to residents, which both fosters job creation within Greater San Marcos and alleviates traffic concerns. This section provides potential recommendations on how to continue reinforcing the region's recruitment efforts.

## STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

9. Ensure GSMP's targeted approach to business recruitment directs resources toward the most cost-effective marketing methods.
  - ✓ Conduct a review of GSMP's economic development marketing program to ensure it aligns with industry best practices.
  - ✓ Ensure that all components of economic development marketing, including the GSMP website, social media presence, outbound events, inbound events for site consultants and prospects, earned media strategies, and printed collateral, are meeting high standards.

10. Provide a forum for each public investor entity to highlight their assets during GSMP Board and Investor Meetings.
  - ✓ Parameters could be developed that guide the short and concise presentations. These could highlight strengths and possible weaknesses, allowing for open discussion and awareness to assist the entity and GSMP to forge an even stronger working relationship.
  - ✓ Consider holding select GSMP Board and Investor Meetings in the municipality being featured, further demonstrating the commitment to understand and demonstrate the importance of each major locale within the region.
  - ✓ Continue to review the makeup of the GSMP Board to ensure that the key leaders who support regionalism are at the table.
  
11. Work with local economic development partners in the Greater San Marcos region to proactively coordinate business recruitment marketing budgets and travel schedules on an annual basis to ensure that regional economic development resources are managed and utilized efficiency and effectively.
  - ✓ Schedule one-on-one meetings between GSMP and local economic development partners to discuss and determine GSMP's role and each locality's need for regional recruitment support from GSMP.
  
12. Develop a communication system related to project requests for information.
  - ✓ When available and appropriate, once a final decision is made regarding RFI, a recap of the key parameters for the decision should be communicated to regional partners providing valuable feedback to communities on how to improve and regarding limiting factors.
  - ✓ Realizing that some information might be confidential, it is still important for the areas that were not selected to gain insight for future competitiveness. For example, if the availability of water was a key factor, then the community that is still waiting to expand their system might understand the importance of having it done and ready for the client if they want to be more competitive.
  
13. Once appropriate in the current climate, consider holding a "red carpet tour" throughout the region on an annual basis to provide an opportunity to highlight key assets within Greater San Marcos. **(Relevant Best Practice: BP #5)**
  - ✓ Invitations would be sent to site selection consultants, state and regional developers, and potential prospects.
  - ✓ GSMP board members and investors could be paired with the invitees during the bus tours, recreational activities, and meals. This would provide the members with first-hand experience in selling the region and further enhance their direct involvement with one of the key aspects of GSMP's roles.
  
14. Develop a comprehensive master plan for the growth of international business investment in Greater San Marcos. **(Relevant Best Practice: BP #6)**
  - ✓ When appropriate, work closely with the Austin Chamber to market internationally, potentially including participating in marketing missions and developing relationships with foreign-based

economic development representatives.

- ✓ Integrate local efforts when possible with state efforts led by the Texas Economic Development Corporation, including foreign travel and state-affiliated international marketing offices.
  - ✓ Engage international companies to consider STAR Park as an entry point for collaboration and business operation into the United States.
  - ✓ Assist targeted local firms with international market-building and growth of product exports.
    - Support continued linkages between existing firms and prospective international customers, sister regions, representatives of foreign trade organizations and offices, and overseas industry groups.
    - Host foreign trade representatives, international delegations, foreign regional economic agencies, and consulate generals and connecting them with Greater San Marcos businesses.
    - Partner with the U.S. State Department and U.S. Embassies in key foreign markets to connect industry sectors, create economic strategies, and further trade opportunities.
15. Create an action plan to proactively leverage the Texas Innovation Corridor as a catalyst for future development in Greater San Marcos.
- ✓ Utilize emerging growth areas of the University, especially those within the seven Research Centers, as a catalyst for economic development.
    - Work to engage the expertise and capabilities across the university, including the unique characteristics and focus at STAR Park, as an accelerator for technology and innovation and an industry collaboration of applied and translational research.
  - ✓ Continue to market, alongside Texas State University, the Texas Innovation Corridor brand and value proposition collaboratively across partners to a national audience. Consider partnering with neighboring communities, particularly in Comal and Guadalupe counties, to jointly market the Texas Innovation Corridor.

## Goal 2: Optimize the Local Talent Base

A skilled, trained workforce is the #1 essential factor in shaping a region's economic competitiveness in today's economic environment. To sufficiently address this issue, there must be a holistic approach that encompasses every piece of the talent pipeline. Existing and new efforts must be considered in order to achieve a workforce that is prepared for current and future opportunities.

It was noted that there is a disparity among internships and certificate programs between Hays and Caldwell counties. While both use the Austin Community College as a resource, area school districts have demonstrated remarkable innovation in this area. Hays CISD has developed career and technology education programs in 19 different disciplines offering some sort of certification in each. They have issued over 4,000 certificates and provided a more advanced worker entering the workforce. This is not to "pit one system against another" but to show how different systems operate and some of the results from the various approaches.

As well, Texas State University is a clear asset for the region in both talent and workforce development as well as in the pursuit of talent retention. Ensuring that Greater San Marcos has a strong and accessible pipeline from Pre-K to various post-graduate training options to career will result in a stronger workforce and an employer base that is more confident about its future workforce.

The state is working to help develop more aggressive workforce options. Workforce Solutions has formed a Workforce Development Board for nine counties, including Hays and Caldwell. The strategic planning process that Workforce Solutions is facilitating will be a vital piece of the puzzle as it relates to the region's workforce development needs, and it is intended that the resulting workforce strategy complements the Vision 2025 Strategy.

### STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

1. Create a regional Education and Workforce Council to ensure that current and future workforce needs are identified and address, building upon the work of the existing Education Task Force. **(Relevant Best Practice: BP #7)**
  - ✓ Include key decision makers from the public and private sectors and from the existing Education Task Force to ensure coordination between short-term activities and long-term goal setting.
  - ✓ Develop a strong and consistent framework for collaboration and/or coordination between education and training institutions (including all Pre-K-12 districts, Gary Jobs Corps Center, Austin Community College, Alamo Community College, Central Texas Community College, and Texas State), private businesses, and social service providers.
  - ✓ Annually assess educational assets and identify gaps in service and programming while also creating regional coordination mechanisms to ensure students throughout the region have access to programming and initiatives that have proven impactful, including dual enrollment, career pathways, and career academies, and to reduce redundancy where possible.

- Ensure that all districts have the support needed to effectively manage online and distant learning, particularly during and after COVID-19.
    - Support efforts to expand broadband (see Goal 4) in order to narrow the digital divide among students in the region.
  - ✓ Connect businesses with education providers to identify opportunities for new degree and certification programs and curricula that support business growth.
    - Survey existing businesses about their experiences with education providers to develop focused goals to meet employer needs.
    - Create a one-stop shop and/or toolkit for existing and new employers to connect with education providers and vice versa.
    - Reduce training times within reason to fill open positions with local talent as quickly as possible.
  - ✓ Create additional ways to connect regional high school students to regional employers, such as hosting an annual job fair to connect seniors with local employment opportunities (2020 launch planned but canceled due to COVID-19).
  - ✓ Assist in coordinating programs through GSMP's workforce development partners that focus on connecting at-risk service sector employees with relevant skills training required by existing businesses and attracting future employers that provide more economically stable employment opportunities.
2. Combine the efforts of the San Marcos Area Chamber of Commerce and GSMP in the continuation of a regional education and workforce development summit. In 2020, plan to host it virtually.
- ✓ Assure representation and participation of all localities in the region at the Summit.
  - ✓ Pursue robust follow-up from the Summit, potentially including case studies of how employers are leveraging resources highlighted during the event in their operations and measurable improvements in talent recruitment.
  - ✓ Determine the need and/or viability of year-round programming, such as workshops on specific relevant topics in workforce development, particular those related to at-risk or underemployed populations.
3. Align new and existing programming to engage at-risk students and their parents. **(Relevant Best Practices: BP #8, 9, 10, & 11)**
- ✓ Work with a wide range of partners to coordinate an array of programming and services to help students and families remain on track toward college and careers.
  - ✓ Develop or expand mentoring services, internship and apprenticeship programs, programs to assist families with financial aid process, workshops for parents, and an outreach campaign to reengage dropouts.
  - ✓ Consider working with relevant partners to identify need for programming for children facing mental health issues.

4. Engage Greater San Marcos businesses in adopting programs and policies that encourage and support employees in furthering their education.
  - ✓ Pursue the creation of policies and programs such as establishing flexible working hours, creating tuition reimbursement programs, tying promotions and pay scales to educational attainment milestones, and providing access to career and credit counseling.
  - ✓ Develop programming that provides upskilling to underemployed individuals or recent high school graduates who are neither working nor in school who need additional targeted training to obtain higher paying jobs. **(Relevant Best Practice: BP #12)**
  
5. Create a community-wide internship initiative to help employers identify emerging talent and to attach young professionals to Greater San Marcos. **(Relevant Best Practices: BP #13 & 14)**
  - ✓ Encourage employers to take a pledge to create additional internship positions.
  - ✓ Establish a website to aid in the matchmaking process between potential candidates and openings by working with key departments at Texas State, Austin Community College, Alamo Community College, Central Texas Community College, Gary Jobs Corps Center, and even institutions outside of the immediate region to identify promising students nearing completion of a degree.
  - ✓ Particular opportunity exists to retain talented Texas State University graduates by growing and promoting meaningful employment pathways within Greater San Marcos. Actively pursue a co-op model between Texas State and regional companies to develop a new pipeline of talent in the region.
  
6. Continue to build resources that support young professional community engagement, leadership, and retention in the region. **(Relevant Best Practice: BP #15)**
  - ✓ Identify companies or target sectors that hire a high percentage of entry-level positions fulfilled by recent college graduates that align with core degree programs at Texas State University.
  - ✓ Develop employer resources and tools to build practices that retain and attract young talent.
  - ✓ Host community-wide events that recognize and support young professional community and employer engagement.
  - ✓ Empower the San Marcos Young Professionals network to work on economic and community development projects that are specific to their needs.
  - ✓ Create a mentoring program to pair mid-career professionals with established executives and established entrepreneurs to help mid-career professionals successfully navigate through career progression.

## Goal 3: Accommodate and Manage Quality Growth

As Greater San Marcos focuses on improving, enhancing, and adding to its “product,” it must ensure that its infrastructure and business climate are conducive to supporting quality growth. Infrastructure-wise, mobility was referenced repeatedly as a top priority. With the projected growth and development for the region, finding ways to address the future transportation needs will demand creativity with bold and visionary leadership.

With the blessing of a growing population comes the associated stress on Greater San Marcos’ infrastructure. From Millennials to Boomers, trends demonstrate a clear preference for less auto-dependent mobility, embracing proximity to their neighbors (density), shorter commute times, and areas that provide access to safe, well-connected sidewalks and multiple modes of transportation. In Greater San Marcos, roughly half of residents rated the region’s traffic congestion as poor or below average, and 71.2 percent rated the region’s public transit capacity unfavorably. Nearly 60 percent of survey participants rated the region’s ability to access shows, restaurants, and services without using a car as poor or below average. Likewise, 50.7 percent rated the region’s quality and connectivity of sidewalks as poor or below average and San Marcos scoring a 38 (out of 100) on WalkScore.

Additionally, the lack of supply of office inventory was a top concern mentioned frequently during the research phase. As a result of Vision 2020 and a clear issue with needed spec industrial investment, industrial space was expanded; the opportunity in Vision 2025 lies in the office arena. To achieve the transportation future favored by residents and broader trends, care should be taken to locate office space in more integrated and connected areas, and not solely in isolated office parks. The locality of office investments will also be critical toward cementing the region’s national brand as the Texas Innovation Corridor. Creating thriving downtowns and mixed-use centers that integrate research and office facilities has been demonstrated to cultivate interdisciplinary thought exchange and enhance innovation. This concept is core to concepts such as the Brookings’ Institutes “Innovation Districts” that promote pedestrian-oriented mixed-use, employment centers over single-purpose and isolated research parks.

In this regard, Greater San Marcos may have an emerging advantage as companies seek more regional office locations that can provide walkable, urban amenities in more affordable, less congested markets still proximate to multiple MSAs. Furthermore, targeting SH130 for development presents a meaningful opportunity, particularly in light of Tesla’s recent gigafactory announcement, which will be located just north of Caldwell County in Eastern Travis County. This goal is a prime area for strengthening regional collaboration and working together to pursue infrastructure projects that will benefit the whole of the region with a collective voice and a coordinated strategy.

## STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

1. Conduct an enhanced site inventory review that is perpetually and actively maintained in GSMP's regional database. **(Relevant Best Practices: BP #16 & 17)**
  - ✓ GSMP's website should be updated at least quarterly with any inventory changes.
    - Ensure that the following information is available: Available building space, size of developed land tracts that are "shovel ready," availability/cost of water, availability/cost of sewer, specifics on the availability and cost of other utilities at the site/building, and current maps accessible electronically with appropriate information.
    - Inventory conditions at key sites and buildings to ensure that they are ready to accommodate likely development.
    - Examine planning/zoning and other regulatory conditions, site access, environmental conditions, building condition, etc.
  - ✓ Gaps in product offerings should be identified and addressed, ensuring that there are options throughout the region for a variety of needs.
    - Intentionally leverage emerging mixed-use employment centers, such as Plum Creek, Whisper, Trace, and the SH130 Corridor, as these assets did not exist in shovel-ready form during Vision 2020.
    - Work with partners to create additional broadband-ready, turn-key office space to accommodate the business community, working with developers who have an appetite for spec or build-to-suit office product.
    - Identify downtown properties throughout the region for redevelopment and marketing opportunities.
    - Work with partners to develop office space in complete, mixed-use, and connected employment centers in Hays and Caldwell counties, creating more availability and providing lower cost options outside of Austin proper.
  - ✓ A summary of each review should be provided to GSMP's investors to ensure that there's a clear awareness and understanding of the region's product.
  
2. Ensure the region is proactive and effective in its regional transportation and infrastructure planning and implementation efforts. **(Relevant Best Practice: BP #18)**
  - ✓ Participate in multi-metro collaborative efforts to advance legislative priorities, infrastructure projects, and other investments of significance to Central and South Texas and the I-35 Corridor.
  - ✓ Create a regional committee comprised of key officials who work on transportation, land use, and infrastructure issues. The committee should meet quarterly to discuss coordination and collaboration efforts as well as issues and projects that have impacts on the rest of the region.
    - Identify and prioritize projects and collaboration opportunities that benefit the region as a whole, particularly those related to improvement to major corridors and interconnectivity.



- Create a regional connectivity plan that focuses on linking mixed-use employment centers throughout the region, prioritizing roadway capacity for logistics and distribution and shifting commuting and personal traffic to other modes.
- Coordinate the creation of a robust low-impact regional transportation network infrastructure that includes protected bike lanes, continuous sidewalks, and commuter trails, including those within parks and other forms of open space. **(Relevant Best Practices: BP #19 & 20)**
- Develop programs that encourage carpooling and disseminate best practices on implementing traffic demand management strategies, such as flextime, car/fleet sharing, remote work, etc., as appropriate.
- Identify organizations that can analyze the effects of existing land-use policy on the regional transportation network to inform land-use planning at the municipal level that is supportive of the desired transportation outcomes of the region.
- ✓ Advocate as a collective for the acceleration of transportation improvements in Greater San Marcos with the Capital Area Metropolitan Area Planning Organization (CAMPO) and the Texas Department of Transportation that align with the objectives of the region.
  - Use a stronger voice to ensure priority Hays and Caldwell County transportation projects are included in long-range and short-term Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) plans developed by CAMPO and the Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization.
  - Integrate recommendations that result from the in-process CAMPO San Marcos Platinum Planning Study.
- ✓ Advocate as a collective for regional mass transit projects and lobby for state and federal funding for priority superregional projects such as a Texas Innovation Corridor Passenger Line (rail or dedicated Bus Rapid Transit) linking the Greater San Marcos area to both the Austin and San Antonio cultural and economic hubs without adding to existing roadway congestion.
  - Include associated routes that connect western (Hays) and eastern (Caldwell) communities to the lines that connect the Austin and San Antonio MSAs.
  - Develop a unified message for integrating Greater San Marcos systems with those of Austin’s CapMetro and San Antonio’s VIA Metropolitan Transit, especially pending major November 2020 ballot initiatives in both municipalities.
  - Encourage transit-oriented development while engaging Texas State as an accelerator for mass transit options.
  - Evaluate the success of the upcoming Texas Central high-speed rail project and be prepared to advocate for Greater San Marcos inclusion in any subsequent lines connecting the Texas Triangle (Houston, Dallas, and Austin/San Antonio).
- ✓ Explore ways to expand the success of SH130 for the entire region.
  - Evaluate infrastructure challenges and needs and work with the relevant locality and/or property owner to address the most pressing needs to ensure site competitiveness.
  - Identify opportunities to match existing properties with the recruitment of suppliers for Tesla and other large employers, as referenced in Goal 1.

- Advocate for greater connectivity between I-35 and SH130.
3. Advocate for the expansion and optimization of the San Marcos Airport. **(Relevant Best Practice: BP #21)**
- ✓ Support the completion of the Master Plan update and move forward on resulting recommendations.
    - Support Texas Aviation Partners in their effort to fund, through public means and/or innovative public-private partnership, the capital improvements necessary to maximize the airport's potential.
  - ✓ Assess current land-use guidelines and availability of site-based incentives to gauge applicability to priority development scenarios.
  - ✓ Aggressively support the completion of infrastructure improvements to the San Marcos Air Rail and Truck (SMART) Terminal, which will be one of the only rail-served industrial parks in Central Texas.
  - ✓ Harness the increased importance of domestic supply chain, as well as the Greater San Marcos region's advantageous geography, to champion the pursuit of meaningful freight traffic.
4. Fully market the San Marcos Airport along with both nearby international airports as critical assets for the region.
- ✓ Educate local economic development partners about the assets and infrastructure currently available at the airport as well as planned projects in order to provide selling points to include in bids.
  - ✓ Further incorporate the San Marcos Airport as a regional asset into existing marketing materials.
  - ✓ Create external promotional materials that highlight that opportunities for development at the Airport.
5. Encourage communities to invest in broadband infrastructure – potentially including a free public wireless network – to facilitate job creation and talent retention and attraction. **(Relevant Best Practices: BP #22 & 23)**
- ✓ Free public wireless internet can serve multiple purposes beyond infrastructure and access; deployment would support the area's positive image and identity, contribute to an entrepreneurial climate, and enable new business activities.
  - ✓ Empower a Broadband Task Force with the development of recommendations to improve high-speed internet access throughout the San Marcos Region. Consider a public-private approach to support the deployment and maintenance of infrastructure. Potential exists to identify one or more corporate or non-profit partners; many corporations have sponsored wireless deployment in communities around the country, including but not limited to Grande, CenturyLink, Charter (Spectrum), SpaceX (Starlink), Google, AT&T, and Comcast.

## Goal 4: Enhance Community Appeal

A strong economic development program relies on a community's "product," which consists of its workforce, existing sector composition, location, infrastructure, sites and buildings, place-based assets, and other factors. This goal area focuses on the quality of life and place, which is vital to the sustainability of communities. Aesthetics are very important, and development can occur that integrates science, conservation, and other best practices to mitigate negative impacts, enhance the built environment, and preserve natural habitat and bioregions. Best practices across the country could provide insight regarding sustainable yet impactful development that both separate and, where appropriate, sensitively integrate the natural and built environments.

The San Marcos River is one of the Greater San Marcos' strengths. Other rivers, creeks, and trails also add to the region's quality of life factors. There need not be "winners and losers" when growth and development are carefully planned. When asked to rate the following aspects of the region's quality of life, the top five areas were: shopping opportunities, recreation amenities for families, nightlife opportunities, dining opportunities, and sense of person and property safety.

Downtown development and vibrancy is an important component to any holistic economic development program. As a place-based approach, downtown development is often broad in the types of functions that are involved; efforts to make downtown areas attractive to residents, businesses, and visitors can require addressing zoning regulations, urban design guidelines, public safety, and infrastructure improvements. Bringing businesses, residents, and visitors will help create jobs, stimulate investment, and raise property values. For the Greater San Marcos region, ensuring that the various downtown areas throughout the region are vibrant and inviting serves several purposes: to create job centers within the region that offer opportunities to its residents that are closer to home, which can contribute to alleviating traffic concerns; to provide options to residents throughout the region and prospective residents who have varying desires for urban, exurban, and suburban living, including density and variety of shopping and eating spaces, community gathering spaces, live-work-play lifestyle options, and the ability to drive to one location and walk to fulfill various needs; to support density-driven development needs that can serve to increase the overall tax base; and more. All communities within Greater San Marcos have made great strides in this regard since Vision 2020, and much opportunity exists in the years to come.

Additionally, the availability of housing and its affordability is crucial to allow the Greater San Marcos region to continue to prosper. The lack of workforce housing in Hays and Caldwell counties, especially in downtown, needs to be addressed by regional partners. Further, an effective approach to reducing the number of commuters on the road is to tackle the lack of housing so that workers can live and work in the same county. While GSMP is not directly engaged in programs and activities on each of these, there are several other partner organizations and agencies that are. Quality of life and place impact GSMP's ability to be more effective, and it encourages partner organizations and agencies to make these issues that stakeholders identified as challenges as a priority. Lead partners will be identified in the next phase of this process.

## STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

1. Develop a regional asset review and community scoreboard. **(Relevant Best Practices: BP #24 & 25)**
  - ✓ Research best-practice communities that have developed a community scoreboard to track trends related to various aspects of quality of life and successfully communicate to stakeholders improvements that have been achieved.
  - ✓ Track trends in education attainment, crime, residential building permits, commercial and industrial building permits, charitable giving, water and sewer permits, attendance at arts/cultural events, acres of parkland, etc. Other key indicators will be identified in the Metrics section of the Implementation Guidelines.
  - ✓ Publish the regional asset inventory and community scoreboard as a part of a marketing campaign that highlights the region as an ideal place to live for various demographics.
  
2. Support key decision makers from the public and private sectors to develop an affordable and/or workforce housing plan that takes into account the varying needs of each municipality within the region. **(Relevant Best Practices: BP #26 & 27)**
  - ✓ The task force should review past and present housing studies, review the local regulatory environment, and advocate for changes that will enhance the delivery of affordable and/or workforce housing throughout Greater San Marcos.
  - ✓ Explore potential for innovative housing/neighborhood design, such as pocket neighborhoods, more compact housing typologies, new construction methods, and/or materials to expand the supply of affordable housing units.
  - ✓ Review existing zoning and building codes to assess the potential for more compact, connected housing developments.
  - ✓ Create a regional program to incentivize new and existing homeowners through subsidized loans and architecture/design services to rehab high-quality housing stock in need of repairs and updates.
  - ✓ Integrate the cost of transportation into regional measures of housing affordability to measure the true impact to educational, economic, and social opportunity driven by housing availability (e.g. H+T Affordability Index).
  
3. Encourage adoption of a program of highly targeted neighborhood beautification and revitalization. **(Relevant Best Practice: BP #28)**
  - ✓ This type of program provides enhanced government services, such as public safety, inspection, public works, parks and recreations, etc., in a small area over a short period of time.
  - ✓ Encourage localities to create volunteer initiatives to engage residents in community care.
  - ✓ Advocate for proactive displacement prevention programs, such as local tax policy reforms that limit property tax escalation in excess of inflation in areas at heightened risk for resident displacement.
  
4. Determine the feasibility of establishing a land bank to acquire, hold, improve, and divest properties in order to improve neighborhood vibrancy.

5. Leverage Texas State University's tremendous strengths, including its economic and cultural assets, which present remarkable opportunities for Greater San Marcos. The GSMP can play a unique and central role in partnering with the University in order to amplify these strengths, while also working to mitigate potential growing pains related to the University's beneficial presence.
  - ✓ Support partners' efforts to work with Texas State closely to understand and balance housing and transportation demands.
    - Advocate for additional state funding and/or public-private partnership opportunities to support additional student housing as needed to reduce the demand on affordable housing.
    - Discuss potentially competing property interests with Texas State officials to reach agreement on appropriate spaces for student housing as they relate to workforce housing goals.
    - Encourage and support Texas State in implementing policies that help to reduce traffic congestion and the need for additional parking infrastructure, such as creating the city-wide transportation options and downtown employment opportunities that allow the University to adopt a policy limiting the number of parking permits granted to freshmen and other students living on campus.
    - Continue to partner with the City of San Marcos to improve public transportation, bike, and micro-transit infrastructure for students that connects the campus to housing, employment, and other frequently visited areas of the region. **(Relevant Best Practice: BP #29)**
  - ✓ Leverage Texas State assets, including university arts and athletics, to support the momentum of economic development efforts in the region.
6. Build public support for public-private partnerships and other public incentives and investments that significantly enhance quality of place.
  - ✓ Establish a "business case" for specific quality of place investments, including fiscal impact and non-monetary benefits.
  - ✓ Launch awareness campaigns around specific investments, working with businesses, advocacy groups, neighborhoods, elected officials, and other leaders to communicate importance of public investments and making a business case for a potential return. Directly address concerns through education and examples of best practices from successful communities.
7. Continue to support downtown vibrancy and development throughout the region. **(Relevant Best Practices: BP #30 and #31)**
  - ✓ Encourage municipalities to develop or refresh downtown master plans and plans for other urban areas.
    - Address areas such as streetscaping, pedestrian access, parking, zoning, urban design guidelines, and so forth.
    - Identify the characteristics that will make these areas special and representative of the local community, and leverage existing community assets.
    - Identify and leverage community assets in each locality that can serve as "anchors" around which to focus development.

- ✓ Identify potential funding and implementation options for the downtown plans.
    - Identify additional opportunities for public/private partnerships.
    - Investigate the feasibility of using tools such as tax increment financing, business improvement districts, and local option sales taxes.
  - ✓ Continue to support the development and/or redevelopment of housing and neighborhood amenities in downtown areas and other in-demand areas throughout the region.
  - ✓ Seek opportunities for fostering arts and culture in the downtown areas.
    - Support arts and culture through methods such as monthly art crawls, public art competitions, and other events.
8. Lead internal and external marketing messages among various entities in Greater San Marcos to present a cohesive community image and maximize impact of messaging. **(Relevant Best Practices: BP #32 & 33)**
- ✓ Secure partners such as the municipalities and counties, chambers of commerce, the convention and visitor bureau, police departments, public school districts, Austin Community College, Texas State, etc.
  - ✓ Work together to identify common themes and align internal and external marketing without sacrificing organization-specific messaging needs.
  - ✓ Seek out opportunities for earned and paid media spots that highlight the region’s quality of place amenities.
9. Adopt a multi-platform strategy to communicate positive news and developments locally within Greater San Marcos.
- ✓ The strategy should utilize traditional media and public relations, social media, word of mouth marketing, etc., to communicate positive developments, announcements, accomplishments, and upcoming events on an ongoing basis.
  - ✓ Actively communicate the importance of development for the region when development takes place, realizing that not everyone in the region understands, remembers or appreciates the theory that "a rising tide floats all boats." When new jobs and capital investment occur, everyone in Greater San Marcos benefits directly or indirectly, but this fact will be lost unless it is highlighted on a frequent and intentional basis.
10. Formally protect natural resources throughout the region.
- ✓ Create a committee responsible for identifying the region’s most pressing environmental concerns and advocating for regional protections while also communicating where opportunities for development and re-use exist. The committee should include a representative from Texas State’s Meadows Center for Water and the Environment.
    - Map existing and potential natural, passive, and active recreational property.
    - Commission a parcel inventory and existing land use analysis to assess all possible developable land near natural assets and prescribe priority use and re-use opportunities for these properties.

- Map priority properties for conservation and identify potential funding mechanisms for acquisition of conservation easements or other mechanism to preserve critical natural lands.
  - Develop a memorandum of understanding between localities that outlines foundational zoning and land use controls for future developments that conserves the region's natural resources, including the San Marcos River, other bodies of water in the region, the Hill Country, Black Land Prairies, parklands, and other areas.
  - Establish goals regarding the amount of available greenspace in the region and ensure that these goals are incorporated into the comprehensive planning efforts of the region's localities.
11. Continue to embrace, support, and promote the emerging tourism and destination appeal that has organically developed in certain communities within Greater San Marcos, and particularly in Western Hays County.
- ✓ Serve as a resource and advocate for the communities and businesses in this growing sector, as work to build upon the Texas Hill Country's emerging national prominence as a tourism destination.

## APPENDIX: BEST PRACTICES

Market Street maintains an extensive library of best practice programs, processes, organizations, and efforts for application to key competitive opportunities and challenges identified through our comprehensive research process. Best practices recommended to inform the Greater San Marcos Vision 2025 Economic Development Strategy were selected based on their specific relevance to actions and efforts the community can pursue. Ultimately, local leadership should use these best practices as potential programmatic models or idea generators to inform strategic efforts custom-tailored to the Greater San Marcos Region.

### BP #1: BUSINESS FIRST (RICHMOND, VA)

<https://www.grpva.com>

Launched in 2006, Business First is a collaborative, regional, existing business retention and expansion (BRE) program of the Greater Richmond Regional Partnership (GRP) and its local government partners. Professional economic development staff and trained volunteers from the business community interview CEOs and other top company officials to fully understand the company's competitiveness and its long-term prospects for growth. Interviews cover a wide range of topics and findings include hiring prospects for the next year, perceptions of the regional workforce and specific skill shortages, projected sales, and business climate issues. The data allows the GRP to gauge the health of the regional economy, develop an early warning system to foretell potential future layoffs, and provide targeted solutions to existing businesses. Typical services offered through Business First visits include:

- Expansion support;
- Connection to state and local incentive programs;
- Workforce recruiting and training;
- Financing;
- Business planning;
- Coordination of municipal services; and
- Downsizing prevention and management.

### BP #2: LAUNCHPGH.COM (PITTSBURGH, PA)

[LaunchPGH.com](http://LaunchPGH.com)

Launchpgh.com is an online portal operated by the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh (URA) that connects entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs in the Pittsburgh area to the entrepreneurial resources they need to thrive. The website is both visually appealing, intuitive, and comprehensive in the information it provides to connect area entrepreneurs with an extensive network of business opportunities. The website provides a guide to starting a business in Pittsburgh, a "Funding 101" guide, and key information about available resources, upcoming events, and other areas of interest to current and prospective entrepreneurs. This includes detailed information about funding available at various stages, as well as resources from



coworking spaces to incubators and accelerators to mentors. A specific portion of the site is devoted to the needs and interests of the maker community. The website was an IEDC “Gold” winner in 2015 for the category of Special Purpose Website for a community with a population of 200,000 to 500,000 people.

### BP #3: REVOLVING LOAN FUND PROGRAM (PHARR, TX)

[pharr-tx.gov/business/revolving-loan-fund-program/](http://pharr-tx.gov/business/revolving-loan-fund-program/)

Communities across the country have successfully utilized revolving loan funds (RLFs) to further a variety of aims such as downtown redevelopment and small businesses growth. According to the Council of Development Finance Agencies (CDFA), an RLF is, “a gap financing measure primarily used for development and expansion of small businesses. It is a self-replenishing pool of money, utilizing interest and principal payments on old loans to issue new ones.” RLFs represent flexible tools that can be used in combination with more conventional tools such as loans that can be obtained on the private market. (Some RLFs, however, are designed specifically to support individuals who cannot access traditional sources of capital.) Typical uses for RLF loans include operating capital, acquisition of land and buildings, machinery and equipment, startup costs, and so on.<sup>1</sup> An example of a revolving loan fund in Texas may be found in the City of Pharr, where the Pharr Economic Development Corporation operates an RLF designed to assist small and emerging firms with gross revenues of less than \$1 million and that employ 50 or fewer employees.

### BP #4: KCSOURCELINK (KANSAS CITY, MO)

[www.kcsourcelink.com](http://www.kcsourcelink.com)

KCSourceLink connects entrepreneurs looking to start, grow, and accelerate their businesses in the Kansas City 18-county bi-state metro area to resources, including over 240 business-building organizations, coaches, funding, and education and helps coordinate events for entrepreneurs, like Global Entrepreneurship Week. KCSourceLink also monitors Kansas City's entrepreneurial ecosystem by measuring outcomes, working with resource partners to fill gaps in resources, and bringing national resources to the community through grants such as the i6 Challenge and the University Center grants from the Department of Commerce EDA.

KCSourceLink maintains an up-to-date online smart directory of entrepreneurial support organizations and the region's most comprehensive business calendar, connecting the organizations to one another to foster collaborations and encourage efficiency. It also operates a triage center, where staff works one-on-one with businesses to understand the needs of the business and creates a Personal Action Plan for each business at no cost to the business. KCSourceLink also offers a Resource Navigator® that allows businesses to conduct their own customized online searches for the network resources in the region that can meet their needs.

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<sup>1</sup> For additional information from the CDFA, see: <https://www.cdfa.net/cdfa/cdfaweb.nsf/pages/revolving-loan-funds.html>

## BP #5: EAST ARKANSAS CROSSROADS COALITION FAMILIARIZATION TOUR

<http://www.crossroadscoalition.org>

The East Arkansas Crossroads Coalition, a regional partnership for economic development in the Arkansas Delta, hosted a three-day visit in cooperation with the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, Woodruff Electric, and Entergy Arkansas for industrial site selection consultants from Missouri, Florida, and Louisiana. The purpose of the tour was to directly market the Delta to key consultants unfamiliar with the region's assets for business. In addition to touring various sites and buildings within the Crossroads region, the site selectors met top Arkansas officials, including the governor, and were shown elected leaders, agency directors, utility providers, regional economic development organizations, and community based economic development groups are able to unite and work together to promote economic development in the region.

## BP #6: METRO INDIANAPOLIS EXPORT PLAN (INDIANAPOLIS, IN)

[https://79c56998667fd435ff83-1eb1d3222c68cb94adf4f31dca264c65.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/2018/01/3817-FDI-Report-9.20\\_forweb.pdf](https://79c56998667fd435ff83-1eb1d3222c68cb94adf4f31dca264c65.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/2018/01/3817-FDI-Report-9.20_forweb.pdf)

As part of the Global Cities Initiative, a joint project by the Brookings Institution and JP Morgan Chase, the Indy Chamber conducted extensive market research, regional business surveys, and in-person interviews to develop a regional plan to grow exports and develop a global strategy for economic development. The resulting export market analysis, assisted by Butler University and the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, identified four objectives to support and grow the region's exports:

1. Increase efficiencies in the Metro's supply chain, focusing on logistics;
2. Increase number of exporting companies by 20 percent by 2020;
3. Reduce transportation costs for Metro Indy firms; and
4. Increase international awareness and build a global reputation.

## BP #7: GREATER WICHITA PARTNERSHIP BUSINESS EDUCATION ALLIANCE (WICHITA, KS)

<https://www.kansas.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/article219328685.html>

The Business Education Alliance was created in 2012 and brings together businesses, public school districts, nonprofits, and local colleges and universities to align education and business "to cultivate a globally competitive workforce for the region." The program's mission is "aligning education and business communities to ensure a productive workforce needed for sustained economic growth for the region." The organization's 2016 Action Plan is directed at the focus areas of Literacy; Workforce Development; Workforce Readiness; Certificate and Degree Attainment; and Policy.

## BP #8: PARENT UNIVERSITY (MESA, AZ)

[mpsaz.org/parentu/](https://mpsaz.org/parentu/)

With the philosophy that parenting is a continuous learning process and that the foundation for a child's education is laid at home, the Mesa Public School system launched a Parent University program in 1987.<sup>2</sup> The diverse offering of sessions and workshops, held in junior high school auditoriums and other local school sites, now boasts attendance rates of 4,000 parents annually. Programming is offered in both English and Spanish. The program is publicized through radio announcements, target fliers, brochures sent home with every student, and announcements in the monthly district newsletter. Topics for sessions are relevant, often specifically requested by parents, and led by local and national speakers and experts. In 2016, Parent University offered approximately 46 courses during its fall semester.

Parent University is funded through a small registration fee for participants, grants, partnerships with local nonprofit agencies like Mesa United Way. Scholarships are available for those parents who are unable to meet the registration fee.

## BP #9: FINANCIAL AID SATURDAYS (AUSTIN, TX)

[austinchamber.com/education-talent/college-ready-now/financial-aid-saturdays](https://austinchamber.com/education-talent/college-ready-now/financial-aid-saturdays)

The Austin Chamber recognized that much of the region's highly educated population was the result of immigration for high-technology sector jobs and University of Texas–Austin enrollment. In addition, while higher education enrollment increases were keeping pace with overall population growth in the Austin metro, degree attainment would need to be double in order to fill current and future demands for educated workers. With the support of three local school districts, six higher education institutions, and 12 community organizations and companies, the Austin Chamber developed the 20,010 by 2010 program to boost local higher education enrollment by 30 percent over 48 months. The goal was to grow total regional enrollment in institutions of higher education by 20,010 by 2010.

Financial Aid Saturdays continued the legacy of the 20,010 program by providing free assistance to Central Texas high school seniors, prospective and current college students, and parents and guardians needing help to complete federal and state financial aid applications. The Chamber organized and trained volunteers to make calls, answer questions, and walk students and their families through the process of applying for financial aid in face-to-face events held on Saturday. In the first phase of the program, the Chamber's more than 200 volunteers assisted over 500 families in filing FAFSA applications. A series of Financial Aid Saturdays events are now held annually during the college-application season.

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<sup>2</sup> Mesa Public Schools. "History of Parent University" Mesa Public Schools. 2016. Accessed December, 6<sup>th</sup> 2016 at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3vu91yYQEP-S2hmd0tBN01QeWs/view>

Due to the success of Financial Aid Saturdays, the Austin Chamber created the Direct-To-College Achievement plan, a multi-chamber, multi-school district, and multi-business compact that sought to enroll 70 percent of Central Texas' Class of 2016 directly in a higher education institution. The Chamber estimates that approximately 88 percent of the student body enrolled in nine school districts participating in the program will need to submit a financial aid application in order to achieve their goal.

## BP #10: DREAM IT DO IT (OKLAHOMA)

<https://www.facebook.com/DreamItDoItNEOklahoma/>

Developed by OK2Grow, the Dream It Do It program cultivates the next generation of makers, builders, and manufacturing workers by showcasing career opportunities available in the manufacturing sector. Through classroom visits, internships, job shadowing, educator and student tours of manufacturing facilities, career fairs, and collaborative training programs, Dream It Do It alters negative perceptions of manufacturing careers held by many students, parents, and educators. Along with providing direct experiences through factory tours, internships, and job shadowing programs, Dream It Do It provides supportive materials aimed at educating students about the real manufacturing workplace environment. Such instructional materials include lesson plans covering manufacturing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, designing and building a robot, and designing and building a shoe along with practical, non-manufacturing specific lesson plans on professionalism, teamwork, problem solving, and critical thinking.

In 2016, nearly 16 students across nine school districts participated in "signing day" where local companies provide paid internship opportunities to rising juniors and seniors during the semester. Local public partners are highly engaged in "signing day," the city of Tulsa employed 15 students at its municipal garage in 2016.

## BP #11: CINCINNATI YOUTH COLLABORATIVE (CINCINNATI, OH)

[cycyouth.org](http://cycyouth.org)

For over 30 years, the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative (CYC) has actively engaged the business community, the Cincinnati Public Schools, and local organizations and governments to take a collaborative approach to tackling dropout rates and empowering children and young adults to succeed in education, career, and life. The program offers one-on-one mentoring for students as young as second grade and continues on through high school. Mentors are expected to meet with their mentees once a week for at least a year. They also offer tutoring services, college advisors, and career specialists in an effort to keep students in school and on the pathway to success. In 2014, CYC had 40 dedicated staff members, 1,300 volunteers, and 59 corporate partners. Overall, 2,900 students were served, and the program had tremendous success. Reports show that 96% of senior students in CYC programs graduated from high school, and 88% of seniors successfully transitioned to college, career, or military.

## BP #12: UPSKILL HOUSTON (HOUSTON, TX)

[houston.org/upskillhouston/](http://houston.org/upskillhouston/)

In 2013, the Greater Houston Partnership, an association of business leaders representing 1,200 member companies in 11 counties, created a task force of 79 leaders from large companies, education and training providers, workforce and economic development entities, and social services. The task force in turn developed UpSkill Houston, an industry-led effort to “better align the supply of middle skills labor to employers’ needs creating a robust workforce pipeline.” The program seeks to increase the number of available workers that are have the necessary skills to support the region’s seven key sectors: Petrochemical Manufacturing; Industrial and Commercial Construction; Healthcare; Port, Maritime, Logistics; Utilities; Advanced Manufacturing; and Oil & Gas—Upstream and Midstream. UpSkill Houston’s work focuses on closing the skills gap in the region and aligning collective efforts. It pursues three fundamental objectives:

- Attract unemployed and underemployed Houston residents and youth to advanced technical and craft careers across the region—in part by raising awareness of and changing perceptions about these careers.
- Train individuals in the technical and employability skills necessary for success—using curricula built around industry demand and aligned across the sector for portability.
- Place and retain these workers on career paths that reward those who continue to upgrade their skills and mentor those who need a little support.

UpSkill Houston provides resources, structure, and convening opportunities to foster region- and sector-wide collaboration among employers and educational institutions, as well as training and service providers (community-based organizations and government agencies).

## BP #13: GREATER GRADS (OKLAHOMA, OK)

[greatergrads.com](http://greatergrads.com)

Greater Grads is an initiative of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber’s Education and Workforce Development division. It launched in 2006 to build Oklahoma City’s talent base by connecting Oklahoma graduates—a vital component of the City’s future workforce—with employers in the Oklahoma City region. These connections will help Oklahoma City’s flourishing economy, creating even more opportunities in the years to come. Upon recognizing that the Oklahoma City region was experiencing brain drain and that it is home to over 120,000 college students every year—with regional higher education enrollment as large as Boston or Philadelphia—the Chamber launched a targeted effort necessary to focus those students on opportunities available to the locally.

The program consists of three parts:

- ✓ InternOKC summer program: Interns can be enrolled in this four week series that includes a kick-off session and four lunch sessions that highlight the benefits of living and working in the Oklahoma

City region. This fosters peer networking and provides resources to help students transition from college to career.

- ✓ Greater Grads Career Fair: The career fair is held each spring with more than 100 recruiters from local companies. A link on the Greater Grads website provides attendees with resume and interviewing tips to maximize their success and efficiently utilize the time of participating employers.
- ✓ Website for graduates and employers: This website focuses on promoting Oklahoma City to recent college graduates and young professionals and connecting them with jobs available at local businesses.

In just the first six months of the site's launch, traffic increased by 300 percent. Site data shows that the average length of stay is 10 minutes, which is 400 percent above Greater Grad's goal of two minutes (generally considered the standard benchmark for successful sites). Ten internships were posted on GreaterGrads.com at its launch; now the website features over 100 during peak intern hiring periods.

A year after Greater Grads' debut, a partnership was formed with the Alliance of Emerging Professionals (AEP), Oklahoma City's young professionals group. These recent college graduates returned to their campuses to promote the Greater Grads program and website to college students during monthly AEP social events.

Greater Grads is one of the primary programs of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber's Education and Workforce Development department and a direct tactic of the Chamber's economic development strategy. It is staffed by a full-time manager of education and outreach programs.

## BP #14: CAMPUS PHILLY (PHILADELPHIA, PA)

<http://campusphilly.org/>

Campus Philly is a nonprofit organization that fuels economic growth by encouraging college students to study, explore, live and work in the Greater Philadelphia region. The organization helps anchor students in the Philadelphia area by connecting them with employers for internships, building their networks, and investing in the community. Through the Open Arts program, thousands of students are given free tickets for 60 arts venues in the region. The Student Leaders Network features over 450 students eager to explore neighborhood development, build leadership skills, and form a cross-campus network of leaders. The Inclusive Leadership Conference is a full-day leadership conference that attracted 339 students from 24 schools. The Campus Philly website hosts internship and career fairs for college students and employers as well as managing an online job and internship portal.

## BP #15: TULSA'S YOUNG PROFESSIONALS AKA "TYPROS" (TULSA, OK)

<https://www.typros.org/>

Tulsa's Young Professionals was founded by the Tulsa Regional Chamber in 2005 in response to the region's "brain drain" of new graduates and young professionals to other cities and states. The mission of Tulsa's

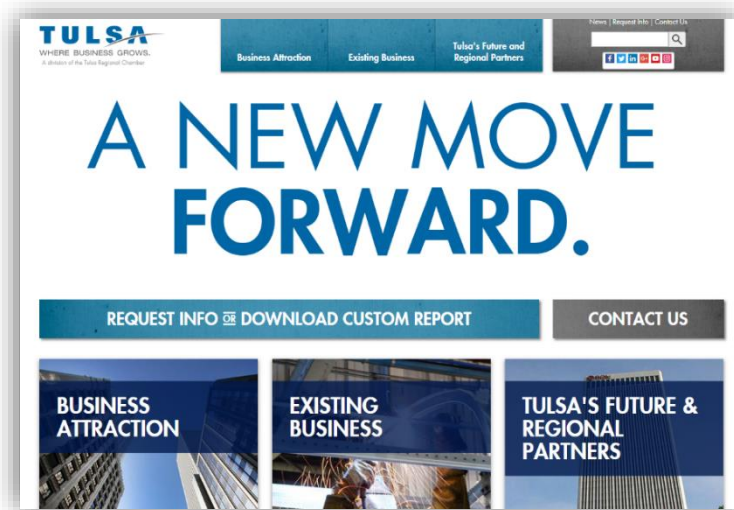
Young Professionals is to attract and retain young talent in the Tulsa region while also establishing Tulsa's next generation of business and community leaders. TYPros has grown to more than 7,000 members. The organization is a key component of the Tulsa Metro Chamber's regional economic development plan, Tulsa's Future, now on its third campaign.

To ensure that the group was maturing into an active facilitator of community change, TYPros developed "work crews" allowing young professionals to have a collective voice and impact on a number of community concerns and initiatives. TYPros has organized work crews around the following issues: Business Development, Colleges & Universities, Community Ambassadors, Community Redevelopment, Diversity, Government Relations, Next Generation Leadership, Special Events, and Sustainability. The Government Relations Crew organized has organized legislative days in which they rent buses and take a large consistency of young professionals to the state capital for a day of meetings with state representatives from the region. The Diversity Crew promotes greater diversity within TYPros membership while hosting a number of events to promote dialogue about diversity in Metro Tulsa.

In 2009, TYPros hosted numerous brainstorming sessions to discuss the vision for redevelopment in downtown Tulsa. Members raised more than \$12,000 for community initiatives, supporting the group's various volunteer efforts. The group also raised money to donate a 12-foot sculpture to the City which is currently displayed in a park in downtown Tulsa. In 2010, TYPros launched The Forge, a business incubator specifically targeting young professionals. Other major programs of TYPros include Street CReD, an annual event that focuses on community redevelopment in a specific neighborhood each year by "showing what Tulsa can become when it creates the change it wants to see," a board internship program, and TYPros Foundation (TYPF), started in 2014. The mission of TYPF is "Bridging economic development with efforts to create a sense of place." Many events raise money for TYPF's strategic projects to accomplish its mission.

## BP #16: GROWMETROTULSA.COM (TULSA, OK)

[growmetrotulsa.com](http://growmetrotulsa.com)



GrowMetroTulsa.com is the primary economic development website for the Tulsa region. The website houses a number of print collateral materials available for download including brochures on each of its target industries and its award-winning general purpose print brochure, Grow in a Vibrant Region, a multi-purpose full-color brochure highlighting Tulsa and the surrounding region.

The Tulsa Regional Chamber's digital marketing campaign was recently recognized by IEDC in its 2017

Excellence in Economic Development awards. The Digital Marketing Campaign was a very successful, low-cost per contact marketing program that created online ads promoting GrowMetroTulsa.com to a highly targeted group of individuals. Print and digital marketing efforts included outreach to site location consultants, real estate staff, and companies considering relocation. In 2016, they mailed business development post cards highlighting the diverse and growing region to more than 1,100 consultants and national contacts. Additionally, more than 1,000 site location consultants received the Tulsa’s Future monthly consultant newsletter focusing on new business announcements and quality of life amenities.

## BP #17: AUGUSTAVABUSINESS.COM (AUGUSTA COUNTY, VA)

augustaVAbusiness.com

Augusta County’s 2016 redesign of its Economic Development website is a living extension of the County’s economic development efforts. The site offers real-time accessibility for industrial prospects, site selection consultants, existing or new businesses looking to build or expand, small business, and entrepreneurs.



Augusta County’s growth, agricultural foundation, workforce, location and access, and speed-to-market as well as educational and healthcare systems all influence the positioning statement – Augusta County, VA: where industrial growth meets exceptionally beautiful living.

Augusta County Economic Development won a Gold Excellence in Economic Development Award for its website, [augustaVAbusiness.com](http://augustaVAbusiness.com), a project in the category of General Purpose Website of the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) in 2017. The website provides all of the necessary information on

starting, locating, and expanding a business in the county such as sites and buildings, incentives, demographics, and small business resources. Additionally, there is information on quality of life and target industries. Its resources include downloadable infographics, overviews, and reports with relevant information on the workforce, target sectors, transportation, and overall key indicators. Users are also able to make customized reports that compile the requested information into one seamless PDF.



## BP #18: GREATER DES MOINES CAPITAL CROSSROAD GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE (DES MOINES, IA)

<http://www.capitalcrossroadsvision.com/central-iowa-code-consortium/>

Members of the Greater Des Moines Capital Crossroads strategy's Governance implementation committee decided they wanted to create sustainable systems and processes for collaboration across governments for multiple program and project opportunities. After the initial inventory and discussion process, the committee drilled their work down to the identification and advancement of government collaboration opportunities. The result of this effort was the Local Government Collaboration Project, a non-binding agreement between 15 cities and three counties in Central Iowa to formalize a process for collaboration and process consolidation based on opportunities for reducing costs, redundancies, complexity, and time commitments. Seventeen local governments signed a resolution in support of the Project, agreeing to meet and discuss collaboration opportunities that arise after particular "trigger" events.

Two operational areas – Public Works and Fire/EMS – were selected to launch the work of the Collaboration Project. From these categories, four pilot projects were chosen to advance the Project and prove its value. Volunteer teams were created to oversee initiatives in Right of Way; Debris Management; Fire/EMS Officer Development and Training; and Unified Codes. The work of the Unified Code team effort has evolved into the Central Iowa Code Consortium, a collaborative effort between all participating communities to review code changes, recommend changes to these codes, and produce a metro "model" code for all communities to consider through their local code adoption process.

## BP #19: MACON CONNECTS (MACON, GA)

[newtownmacon.com/macon-connects/](http://newtownmacon.com/macon-connects/)

Macon, Georgia is a town 80 miles southeast of Atlanta with a population of around 150,000. In 2016, the community launched, Macon Connects, an initiative that stemmed from the city's 2015 downtown master plan, Macon Action Plan (MAP), a comprehensive strategy to guide change and growth in the urban core. Macon Connects is a collaboration between the downtown Macon economic development nonprofit, Newtown Macon, Macon-Bibb County, Macon Urban Development Authority, Main Street Macon, the Better Block Foundation and 8 80 Cities.

After conducting public outreach, it was clear that residents overwhelming wanted more mobility options in Macon, ones that would allow residents to be less car-dependent. In September 2016, Macon Connects conducted a pop-up lane experiment to demonstrate to city officials the positive changes that designated bike lanes can have on the community. With more than 80 volunteers, the group installed the pop-up network which consisted of over five miles of connected bike infrastructure and formed the world's largest pop up bike network. For the week that the pop-up ran, ridership on the lanes jumped to over 200 riders per day, and along the four corridors, bike counts increased from as little as 5.5 times to as much as 18.6 times the normal ridership level without the bike infrastructure. Illustrating that if you build it, they will ride, the temporary experiment resulted in the implementation of permanent bike lanes in downtown. In addition to

a few permanent bike lanes being built, every time a road is paved, it is evaluated to see if a bike lane can be added.

## BP #20: BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE (CARMEL, IN)

[carmel.in.gov/living/fun-things-to-do/bike-carmel](http://carmel.in.gov/living/fun-things-to-do/bike-carmel)

Carmel, Indiana is a city of approximately 91,000 located just north of Indianapolis. A highly desirable suburb, the community boasts educational attainment rates that are well above the national average and offices of corporations such as Geico and CNO Financial Group (formerly Conseco). It has been recognized as the #1 best place to live in America by CNNMoney and Niche. The community has long placed an emphasis on alternative transportation and walkable mixed-use developments. It employs an alternative transportation director in its Planning & Zoning department and operates programs such as a bike share and bike safety classes. But the most significant investment the community has made has come in the form of infrastructure such as multi-use paths. In 2008, the city designated Carmel Access Bikeways, a network of bike routes and loops that connect various amenities and neighborhoods throughout the community. The community is recognized as a Bronze Level Bicycle Friendly City by the League of American Bicyclists. In addition to bicycle infrastructure, Carmel has also implemented infrastructure that promotes walking while making conditions safer for both pedestrians and motorists. As an example, in 2017 it approved a \$13.4 million upgrade that reduced the number of automotive travel lanes and added roundabouts to a key road through its downtown. It also added multi-use paths, protected bike lanes, and highly visible pedestrian crosswalks.

## BP #21: SUGAR LAND REGIONAL AIRPORT (SUGAR LAND, TX)

<http://www.flysgr.com/>

The Sugar Land Regional Airport, located in Sugar Land, Texas, approximately 20 miles southwest of Houston in Fort Bend County had been in operation in the same location since 1952. In 1990, the city of Sugarland purchased property, formerly known as "Hull Field," to operate as an enterprise fund. The City of Sugar Land is deeply committed in investing in the airport's continued growth and success. Major additions have included an 85-foot Air Traffic Control Tower in 2001, a 20,000-square-foot terminal in 2006, and a T-hangar complex in 2009. Other investments have included new taxiways and aprons, an advanced radar system, and an automated weather operation system.

The airport's development began with Dr. Don Hull, who originally purchased the field in the early 1950's. The airport continued to development and expand into the 1960's and 70's, including the addition of a new runway, new terminal and hangar facilities, and a new taxiway. In 1988 the City of Sugar Land began negotiations for the purchase of the airport from the county, completing the purchase in December 1990. The airport is now a self-sustaining enterprise. The revenue generated by the airport continues to promote its controlled development.

Today, the airport is the fourth largest in the Houston area and the foremost general reliever airport in the southwest. The airport focuses on corporate aviation and contributes to the local economy by providing

jobs, corporate access to local markets, access to air transportation services, and facilities to house aviation departments. More than 100 Fortune 500 companies use the airport on an annual basis.

## BP #22: CHATTANOOGA MUNICIPAL BROADBAND (CHATTANOOGA, TN)

<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/chattanooga-was-a-typical-post-industrial-city-then-it-began-offering-municipal-broadband/>

In 2010, Chattanooga, Tennessee became the first city in the nation to be wired for 1 gigabit-per-second fiber-optic Internet service by a municipality. The city's municipal power company, EPB, set out in 2007 to modernize the city's power grid and realized it could lay every customer's home for fiber-optic cable at the same time. Since then, EPB has taken tens of thousands of Internet customers from Comcast, by offering higher speed plans for a significantly lower cost.

This initiative has been such a game changer in Chattanooga that dozens of other towns and cities have begun their own municipal broadband networks, providing faster and cheaper service than private companies. Chattanooga has attracted dozens of tech firms to the city that take advantage of the fast connections for ventures such as telehealth application development and 3D printing. The municipal broadband has also served as a catalyst for downtown development.

## BP #23: CONNECTING FOR GOOD (KANSAS CITY, MO)

<https://cfg.pcsforpeople.org/>

When Google Fiber announced that it would make Kansas City its first gigabit fiber city, Connecting for Good, Inc. was established to ensure that all citizens can access broadband Internet, regardless of their incomes. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit, Connecting for Good bridges the Digital Divide in Kansas City by assisting under-resourced residents with affordable connectivity, refurbished PCs & digital literacy training.

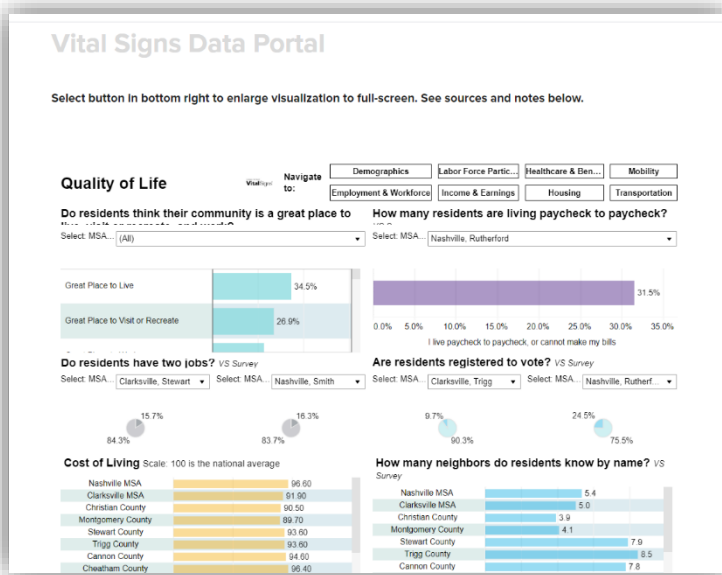
Since its inception in 2012, Connecting for Good has built and installed over 60 internet networks for low-income KC community partners; refurbished and sold for as little as \$50 each, over 2,000 donated computers; provided training to over 15,000 low-income Kansas City residents; created customized curriculum; provided access to hundreds of available courses for topics ranging from youth STEM to technical certifications; and supported over 100 non-profit partners with technical support and computer repair.

## BP #24: VITAL SIGNS (NASHVILLE, TN)

<https://www.nashvillechamber.com/research/data-visualization>

<https://www.nashvillechamber.com/public-policy/vital-signs>

Beginning in 2013, the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce has released a Vital Signs report and provided an online data portal that highlights various data indicators and trends for the Nashville Region. Vital Signs allows the Chamber and its partners to identify successes, forecast emerging regional issues and challenges, particularly those that impact the region’s well-being and quality of life, and introduce community-driven solutions to address them.



The Chamber’s Research Center leads the data collection for the project, and the Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC) is the Chamber’s lead partner in the effort. The Vital Signs Action Team, which is composed of regional business and community leaders, leads a yearlong process of leadership discussion, priority-setting, and action. Vital Signs research is also integrated into the Chamber’s annual Leadership Study Mission to a peer city, where they learn what other cities are doing to address similar issues. While this platform is not economic

development-specific, the effort does coordinate where possible with the region’s economic development program, Partnership 2020.

The data portal allow users to look at particular data points for the region as a whole, but also for each county within the region. The portal features data indicators that are publicly available, as well as those that are proprietary data and those that are tracked by the Chamber through various surveys.

## BP #25: CARPEDM (DES MOINES, IA)

[seizedesmoines.com](http://seizedesmoines.com)

Launched by the Greater Des Moines Partnership, CarpeDM ([www.SeizeDesMoines.com](http://www.SeizeDesMoines.com)) is a website that acts as a one-stop shop for new and prospective residents of the Greater Des Moines Area. CarpeDM provides a wealth of information for relocating residents including a relocation guide, local school and higher education systems, detailed neighborhood information as well as links to neighborhood resource organizations, and bus and air service infrastructure in the Greater Des Moines Area. Perhaps CarpeDM’s strongest feature is its integration of the professional networking site LinkedIn. While browsing the

interactive website, prospective new residents can connect with community members who have volunteered to be ambassadors for certain topic areas and local programs. For instance, new residents desiring to learn more about the Young Nonprofit Professionals Network of Des Moines can easily select an ambassador and connect with them through LinkedIn. To assist in generating content, the Greater Des Moines Partnership has leveraged the Greater Des Moines community by adding a “contribute content” feature. Once registered, CarpeDM users can create their own profile, connect with ambassadors through LinkedIn, add pages, edit content, and submit photos. The site also provides opportunities for users to get connected to job opportunities.

## BP #26: CENTER CITY HOUSING INCENTIVE POLICY (CCHIP) (SAN ANTONIO, TX)

[sanantonio.gov/CCDO/IncentivesandPrograms/CCHIP](http://sanantonio.gov/CCDO/IncentivesandPrograms/CCHIP)

In 2012, San Antonio created the Center City Housing Incentive Policy as an incentive system focused on encouraging housing redevelopment within the greater downtown area. The incentives sought to promote new housing and activate the downtown through financial incentives for historic building rehabilitation, residential development, mixed-use retail and commercial space.

The as-of-right incentive program offered to eligible projects City of San Antonio Water System (SAWS) Impact Fee Waivers, up to a 15-year Real Property Tax Rebate (City ad valorem taxes only), up to \$7,500 per housing unit in a Low-Interest Loan (2% interest rate, forgivable in the Central Business District) and a Mixed-Use Forgivable Loan of up to \$20 per square foot of commercial office space and up to \$25 per square foot of retail space. Due to the as-of-right nature of the program, eligible projects qualified for incentives under CCHIP if they fell within the Greater Downtown Area and met the density requirement of at least 16 housing units per acre (or 8 units per acre for adaptive reuse or historic rehabilitation projects).

Between 2012 and 2017, there were 64 developments with 6,543 housing units and CCHIP awarded developers with over \$97 million worth of incentives. The program was considered a success in that it achieved 89 percent of its goal to create 7,500 housing units in downtown by 2020. In December 2017, a temporary moratorium was placed on administrative approvals of the CCHIP agreements. The system was halted in order to shift policies from a housing-first strategy into one that focuses on affordable housing.

## BP #27: WORKFORCE HOUSING INITIATIVE (MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD)

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DHCA/housing/singlefamily/mpdu/index.html>

In communities where real estate is expensive or limited in supply, there frequently exists a “gap” – a lack of available options for workers who cannot afford market-rate housing but earn too much to qualify for traditional forms of assistance. In response, many localities have focused on “workforce housing” that can enable members of the local economy to live close to where they work. Among the most active communities in this space is Montgomery County, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, D.C., which operates two programs.

The first is carried out through “inclusionary zoning” – a requirement that new developments with at least 50 units set aside 12.5 to 15 percent of the inventory as Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDU) which are available for rent or purchase to households earning less than approximately 70 percent of the area median income. For households that earn too much to qualify for these units, Montgomery offers the Workforce Housing Program, which provides for-sale residences and townhomes at a below-market scale. The MPDU program has created an average of 418 units each year since 1978.

## BP #28: BETTER BLOCK PROGRAM (NEW KENSINGTON, PA)

[betterblock.org](http://betterblock.org)

Borrowing from core principles developed by the Better Block Foundation, community residents of New Kensington held their first Better Block event in May 2015. The inaugural event hosted a wide array of activities including live entertainment, pop-up shops, food and street vendors, and special events in existing commercial space. According to Better Block New Kensington, approximately 2,000 individuals visited the downtown area of New Kensington during the inaugural event. While the event is held on a single day of the year, Better Block New Kensington has had a lasting impact on the city’s downtown area. Since its first event in 2015, 10 new businesses have opened in downtown storefronts, attracted by the renewed excitement and attention that downtown New Kensington received due to the Better Block program.

The Better Block Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to educating, equipping, and empowering communities and their leaders to reshape and reactivate built environments in order to promote healthy and vibrant neighborhoods.

## BP #29: RIDE SHARING PROGRAM OFFERED (LAS CRUCES, NM)

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/new-mexico-department-of-transportation-partnering-with-enterprise-to-provide-commuting-solution-300900301.html>

The New Mexico Department of Transportation in partnership with Commute with Enterprise will offer discounted vanpooling options through the “NM Go!” program in Farmington, Santa Fe, Los Lunas, and Las Cruces. The program expands regional transportation options by allowing commuters to obtain a 25 percent discount off the monthly cost of vanpooling if they agree to share their rides.

Enterprise provides the qualifying vehicles including crossovers, SUV’s, minivans, and large passenger vans. Roadside assistance is also provided, which ensures commuters can leave work at unscheduled times worry-free. Participants can determine if they will join an existing group or create a new one.

“NM Go!” operates 26 routes with more than 130 passengers per day and aims to grow to more than 650 passengers daily by the end of the year. To date, ‘NM Go!’ has taken more than a 100 cars off the roads.

## BP #30: COLUMBUS, GA DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

The City of Columbus, Georgia began its comprehensive downtown revitalization efforts in the 1980s by forming Uptown Columbus, Inc. and starting a Business Improvement District (BID), a self-taxing district that would devote funds to beautification, streetscaping, and public safety to improve the vitality of Uptown Columbus.

Just a few years later, the City opened the first phase of the Chattahoochee RiverWalk, a 22-mile paved walking and biking trail that follows the Chattahoochee River through the Columbus region and serves as an anchor amenity (a riverfront boardwalk) in Uptown Columbus. Shortly thereafter, Phenix City, Alabama (located across the Chattahoochee River from Columbus) opened a 3,500 seat riverfront amphitheater in 1996 directly across the river from Uptown Columbus, a first step in many towards bi-state, regional collaboration on riverfront activation.

That same year the Olympics were hosted in Atlanta, Georgia, just 90 minutes away from Columbus. At the time, a suitable venue for Olympic whitewater canoeing/slalom was not available in Georgia and an alternate location was secured in nearby North Carolina. This sparked a vision among John Turner, the third-generation leader of W.C. Bradley Company, based in Columbus: what if the Chattahoochee River could be transformed into the world's greatest urban whitewater experience? What began as a seemingly infeasible idea was advanced over the course of many years of diligent conversations with various local, state, federal stakeholders including two state governments, two city governments, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration among many others. Nearly fifteen years later work began on the conversion of the river to an urban whitewater course. Two dams were removed and the river was rerouted during construction. The roughly \$24 million project was financed by \$13 million in private contributions, \$5 million from the City of Columbus, and \$5 million from the Corps of Engineers. The final result – the largest urban whitewater course in America at 2.5 miles completed in 2013 – has received global acclaim, won the American Planning Association's Excellence in Economic Development Planning Award in 2014, and has been featured in numerous national publications.

Meanwhile, Uptown Columbus was undergoing another transformation driven by immense investment from its largest institution of higher education. Columbus State University is home to nearly 7,000 undergraduate students. The University's main campus is located roughly six miles from Uptown Columbus. The University intended to develop new facilities to support its performing arts program, and realized that Uptown Columbus - outside of its main campus - could be a potential location for new facilities. The City and the private sector came together in the early 2000s to develop a new performing arts center, the \$86 million RiverCenter for Performing Arts. After much planning, the University relocated its Art, Music, Theatre departments to Uptown Columbus, co-locating with the new RiverCenter and developed complementary student housing. The University also partnered with the City to create new greenspace in Uptown, Woodruff Park, which serves as a gateway to the Chattahoochee RiverWalk. Adjacent to the park and the RiverWalk are a few major revitalization projects, including the conversion of the old Eagle and Phenix Mill into condos, apartments, and a restaurant space located above the old mill's water wheel in the middle of the Chattahoochee River, and accessible via pedestrian bridge.

The City has also recently established a tax allocation district (TAD) to encompass Uptown and provide another financing mechanism to support redevelopment efforts. TADs enable tax increment financing (TIF) whereby property values are frozen at a certain level within the boundaries of the district and all future incremental property tax revenues are devoted to support redevelopment and infrastructure needs in the district.

## BP #31: GREENVILLE, SC DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

<http://www.saveourgateways.com/HowGreenville.php>

Having a strong urban core has been a top priority for the City of Greenville, South Carolina. For over 30 years, the city has teamed with the private sector to create unique development partnerships, stimulating a major revitalization of the central business district that has had far-reaching impacts.

With the most impressive strides being made over the last 10-15 years, Greenville's downtown transformed from abandoned warehouses and empty storefronts to having a thriving central business district, with up-scale restaurants, high-end residential condos and lofts, numerous events, and major new mixed-use developments, consisting of office, residential, hotel, and retail uses, scattered throughout downtown. The sustained momentum is, stunning for a small southern city of just under 60,000 residents.

Greenville's Economic Development Department played an integral role in the downtown development activity. Focusing on key anchor developments, unique natural assets, a multitude of cultural amenities and attractions, and steady residential growth, the city has utilized its economic and physical strengths, and those of the region, as critical components of the revitalization process. Both local government and private enterprise understand the development process, realizing that a partnership based on mutual respect between both private and public sectors is often the best approach to achieve successful developments.

As Greenville took steps to re-establish its downtown, the city invested strategically in properties, following a plan to develop major anchors in the downtown area and filling in the areas in between with deliberately chosen private sector investors. Greenville took advantage of its small downtown and expanded the activity centers in a logical and connected progression based on a formula which included retail, office, residential, entertainment, and family needs. What set Greenville apart in the early days was its commitment and understanding that there would have to be a successful alliance of public and private investment. Greenville understood that it was necessary for the public sector to step forward to provide the impetus for private investment to occur.

Greenville leaders focused on a master plan that outlined a strategy for implementation that has been modified and adapted over the years to re-fleet changing market conditions. There was a willingness to try new approaches, take risks, make mistakes, and learn from the successes and the failures.

Greenville's first anchor and first major public/private partnership was the Greenville Commons, which incorporated a Hyatt Regency Hotel, convention center, office complex, and parking garage. A dedicated group of Greenville businessmen put their investment at risk to ensure that this project happened. The city



purchased the land, built the convention center and parking garage, and leased the air rights for the hotel and office building. The hotel atrium was considered a city park.

The Peace Center for the Performing Arts stabilized a less than desirable part of town and linked downtown to a hidden asset—the river, waterfall, and park. The center included the addition of major facilities, renovated several historic structures into productive space, and gave people a reason to come downtown at night and on weekends. The Peace Center is a perfect example of the beauty of a public/private partnership, with a lead gift given by a prominent local family, and the entire community lending support in a myriad of ways. For its part, the city acquired the property (primarily through tax increment financing) and provided the landscaping and amenities. Eminent domain, typically used sparingly in Greenville, was necessary to secure some of the property.

Greenville's next major anchor required a different approach. The historic West End of downtown was blighted, yet strategically connected. Even after completing streetscape improvements and providing low interest loans, the private sector was reluctant to invest. With a private donation of neglected, historic buildings, the city took the risk of developing the West End Market, a major 45,000 square foot destination for residents and visitors alike. Recognizing that private investments would not be taking the lead in developing in this location, the city assumed the developer role, along with the attendant financial and market risk, to create a facility with office, retail, restaurants, artisans, and a traditional fanner's market, all in a festive and park-like setting. The financing structure required the pooling of a number of sources: tax increment financing, a HUD Section 108 loan, grants, city general fund dollars, and even the sale of personalized bricks. The city took on a significant risk but learned firsthand the private side of a deal. The West End Market was sold in 2005, yielding a net profit to the city to invest in other projects. The establishment of the Market led to an arts and entertainment district of restaurants, theaters, and the Governors School for the Arts, a year round residential school for the arts and humanities attracting high school students from across the state.

Other developments have included the Poinsett Plaza Hotel, the West End Baseball Stadium, and RiverPlace (a collection of buildings along the Reedy River with office buildings, residential condos, restaurants, artist studio spaces, and an interactive water feature). The transformation of downtown Greenville has resulted in positive earned media, increased population and tax revenue, and other opportunities for innovative projects.

## BP #32: EARNED MEDIA/PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY (CHATTANOOGA, TN)

Ever since Walter Cronkite called Chattanooga the “dirtiest city in America” in the 1970s, the community has been focused on changing both its local realities and also external perceptions. Beginning in the 2000s, the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, partnering with the region’s Convention and Visitor’s Bureau, contracted with a national public relations firm to try to change the outside perceptions of Chattanooga as a declining industrial city with few modern assets for companies, talent, or visitors.

Focusing on strengths such as its revitalized downtown, America’s first city-wide gigabit fiber network, emerging entrepreneurial climate, and other assets, the public relations (earned media) strategy has seen

notable success. Since implementing the strategy, the Chattanooga region has been featured in hundreds of business media placements with more than 1 billion impressions worldwide in a wide range of national, regional trade and online outlets including The Wall Street Journal, New York Times, The Economist, Fortune, CNN, Fox Business News, CNBC, and The Huffington Post. The tourism and visitation campaign was also effective, with nearly 1 billion impressions showcasing Chattanooga in outlets such as ABC News, Birmingham Parent, Baltimore Sun, Chicago Tribune, Delta SKY, Forbes.com, Georgia Magazine, National Geographic Weekend, Preservation, and Southern Living.

### BP #33: "WE DON'T COAST" CAMPAIGN (OMAHA, NE)

<https://www.omahachamber.org/wedontcoast/>

Largely to overcome Omaha's "flyover" community perception, the Greater Omaha Chamber launched a regional brand and image initiative based upon extensive research showing that Omaha ranks highly against other metro areas across the country but lacked an identity. The Chamber convened thousands to create a cohesive, recognizable brand that sought to communicate the region's attributes, character and "can do" spirit. We Don't Coast was launched as a multi-faceted campaign to use across the region to share greater Omaha's story; positively communicate its character; and grow, retain, and attract business and talent. The campaign was presented a 2015 ACE: Award of Excellence by the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives. Though it is not exclusively an internal brand, the We Don't Coast initiative in Omaha was nevertheless intended to serve both an external and internal awareness-building purpose to positively commute the attractiveness and distinctiveness of the greater Omaha region.