



2019 – 2024 Lower Rio Grande Valley Regional Strategic Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Regional Strategic Plan facilitated, planned and prepared by the Lower Rio Grande Development Council

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Introduction

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC), the regional council of governments, facilitates, prepares and updates the Regional Strategic Plan every two years in advance of the Texas Legislative Session. The purpose of the plan is to provide an inclusive, data-driven, multi-perspective guide for the unified vision and goals of the region.

The foundation of the Regional Strategic Plan is derived from the “regionally-owned” planning process known as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). This process is a key responsibility of LRGVDC as the federally-designed Economic Development District (EDD) by the U.S. Department of Commerce -Economic Development Administration.

The Regional Strategic Plan is developed through a comprehensive planning process involving extensive research, surveys, data analysis, and numerous discussions with leaders, stakeholders and public citizens across the region. The objective of the plan is to provide a platform for program development, unified legislative advocacy, and to guide the future planning for the region’s health, safety, general welfare, and economic prosperity.

The 2019 – 2024 Regional Strategic Plan is comprised of five domains which interconnect a spectrum of community service priorities to include:

- Economic Development
- Health & Human Services
- Public Safety
- Community Development & Environmental Services
- Transportation

Each domain is equally vital and codependent. Through effective planning, collaboration and service delivery, each domain ensures our residents and visitors the highest quality of life now, and for many years to come.

Economic Development



Vision Statement

As a highly desirable place to live, work, and visit, the Lower Rio Grande Valley will ensure regional prosperity and a premier quality of life by sustaining a balanced and resilient international economy, developing an educated, qualified workforce and providing enhanced opportunities for commercial, industrial and entrepreneurial growth.

Goals

- A.** Support essential public and higher education, as well as workforce development programs to successfully prepare a well-educated, highly-skilled professional and technical workforce to meet the demands of regional industry growth.
- B.** Expand urban and rural economic and workforce development projects through strategic regional collaboration, expansion of resources, and funding of private, public and industry-targeted partnership initiatives.
- C.** Enhance regional perception through marketing and communication strategies, highlighting the region's geographic, environmental, and established assets to strengthen quality-of-life dynamics for current and potential residents and visitors.
- D.** Preserve the abilities of municipalities and jurisdictions to cultivate vibrant, competitive and livable communities by supporting flexible and local decision-making with regards to factors such as tax-base development, revenue limits, unfunded mandates, and infrastructure expansion.
- E.** Enrich international competitiveness by endorsing foreign trade and direct investment policies and opportunities.
- F.** Strengthen economic resilience through the advancement of emerging high-tech and high value industries (e.g., healthcare, manufacturing, skills-trade, etc.), reinvestment of agricultural/aquaculture, and programs for effective disaster recovery.
- G.** Improve regional economic disproportionality through diversified strategies to cultivate rural and small business incubation, entrepreneurial innovation, information technology infrastructure, and access to capital.

Health & Human Services



Vision Statement

The Lower Rio Grande Valley shall improve, coordinate and maintain a locally-based system of resources and services such as access to quality health care, comprehensive care for vulnerable individuals, and accessible services to safeguard a livable, healthy, and safe community for persons of all ages.

Goals

- A.** Enhance access to quality health care by expanding the current network of public/private service delivery systems for improved public health, disability management and disease prevention for medically vulnerable individuals.
- B.** Enrich community health, safety and wellness through program support for quality nutrition, food-access, physical activity, obesity prevention, medical self-care and the promotion of active lifestyles.
- C.** Support the development of a comprehensive strategy to provide the necessary support and resources for our local aging population.
- D.** Promote expanded community resources and services for vulnerable and underserved populations such as Veterans, ex-offenders, homeless individuals, and those with chronic mental and physical health conditions in the region.
- E.** Support the development and expansion of medical education, research, training and comprehensive trauma facilities to ensure the region is equipped with medical professionals and resources required of a populous region such as the RGV.
- F.** Promote enhanced civic engagement and social inclusion across all ages by expanding volunteer opportunities, cultural diversity activities and fostering multi-generational interaction.

Community Development & Environmental Services



Vision Statement

Through effective services, education and preservation efforts, we shall strive for the healthiest environment where urban and rural community growth ensures residents safe and sustainable community development, housing opportunities, appropriate infrastructure development and proactive planning for the conservation of the Region's vital agricultural and natural resources.

Community Development Goals

- A.** Expand the availability of suitable and affordable housing options for all valley families and residents.
- B.** Ensure appropriate housing and resources are available to under-served populations which may include economically disadvantaged, elderly, displaced women and children, veterans, and individuals with chronic mental and physical health conditions and disabilities.
- C.** Support homelessness prevention by ensuring adequate and accessible emergency shelter and transitional housing resources and programs.
- D.** Promote and protect Fair Housing rights for all residents of the Rio Grande Valley.
- E.** Expand fair-cost broadband access to rural and high-poverty areas of the region to allow residents more equitable access to internet and online-based resources and services.
- F.** Preserve the abilities of municipalities and jurisdictions to implement locally-beneficial policies and infrastructure development with regards to factors such as building codes, green preservation, housing policy, annexation, and zoning regulation.

Environmental Services Goals

- A.** Encourage innovative and sustainable projects and programs which promote environmentally sustainable development.
- B.** Promote recycling and waste reduction through development of effective disposal systems for sewage, solid waste, tires, brush and hazardous materials.
- C.** Support bi-national water conservation measures and improve awareness and understanding of water quality and water quantity issues, and how these issues collectively relate to flood management, drainage infrastructure, water quality standards, and economic development.
- D.** Address flood management and drainage infrastructure strategies as a region by emphasizing collaboration and partnerships, especially when creating new and future projects.
- E.** Protect, conserve and restore regional ecosystem and fragile native habitats.

Public Safety



Vision Statement

To ensure optimal public safety and protect all persons throughout the region public safety personnel such as emergency managers, first responders, criminal justice, homeland security, 9-1-1 telecommunicators, and law enforcement will work collaboratively, with optimal training and resources to prevent, protect, respond and recover from threats.

- A.** Ensure regional public safety agencies and personnel maintain optimal access to critical equipment, resources, and technological advancements.
- B.** Enhance and provide sufficient resources to improve the capability of local governments, communities and individuals to prepare for, respond and recover from emergency and weather-related events and incidents.
- C.** Ensure the development of highly-qualified public safety professionals by providing quality education, training, continuing professional developmental, and instructional resources.
- D.** Provide a reliable, resilient and sustainable regional emergency communication and 9-1-1 network to include interoperable radio communications, advancements in technology, mobile contingency strategies, and Next-Gen 9-1-1 infrastructure.
- E.** Enrich the bi-national coordination and capacity of border communities to promote, prevent, and respond to public health issues such as opioid addiction, maternal health, and infectious and/or degenerative diseases.
- F.** Support programs and resources to address public safety concerns such as school-safety action-planning, juvenile-related delinquency, gang-related criminal activity, violent crime prevention, and human and drug trafficking.
- G.** Encourage the establishment of additional facilities, support groups and programs to address drug/alcohol abuse, chronic mental health, suicide prevention, victims of violent crime, senior neglect, and child abuse.

Transportation



Vision Statement

Through effective planning and service delivery, people and goods shall be able to move throughout the region safely and efficiently by using a seamless multi-modal transportation network.

Goals

- A.** Establish a seamless transportation system to increase connectivity and accessibility for people and freight, emphasizing regional planning efforts to meet the growing population demands of the region and ensure strategic development of urban and rural areas.
- B.** Further adopt and implement multi-modal transportation infrastructure, policies and resources such as sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, pedestrian paths, rideshare systems, and transit corridors to develop healthier, safer, livable communities.
- C.** Preserve and improve existing transportation infrastructure and systems to ensure the safety and security for motorized and non-motorized users.
- D.** Support flexible and sustainable transportation resources such as a regional transit authority (RTA), freight and light rail infrastructure, and adaptable right-of-way and traffic regulation policies to support the region's growing population.
- E.** Ensure environmental sustainability, energy conservation and preservation of natural resources through coordinated state and local planning and economic development.
- F.** Expand infrastructure and resources for international land, sea, and air ports-of-entry to enhance economic development opportunities and ensure safe, secure and efficient transportation of people and freight.