

# CITY OF PORT ISABEL

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

### PLANNING PERIOD 2005-2015

APRIL, 2005

#### C. CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

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The data, information, analysis, and recommendations presented herein are exclusively for planning and budgeting purposes and do not constitute engineering analysis or detailed cost estimates. Engineering for each of the recommended tasks are beyond the scope of these studies and should be performed in the customary fashion as projects are defined and implemented.

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## **C.1. INTRODUCTION**

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As mentioned in a previous Chapter a comprehensive planning study is a process used to develop a master plan around which a community can implement an orderly growth as well as provide remedial measures for improving the quality of life in the community. A properly prepared Plan provides a framework around which a community can develop optimal use of its resources while continuing to provide adequate infrastructure and services to its residents. With regard to the **Central Business District (CBD)**, this is especially true; however we must first learn what a Central Business District is and where it is located. The most common definition is as follows: The CBD or downtown is the central business district of a city, usually characterized by a concentration of retail and commercial building. Although applicable to any city, the term is usually referred to larger cities. The CBD usually is recognizable by a higher-than usual urban density as well as the biggest or tallest buildings in a city. It is usually located near the geographic center of the city. (This may change as cities grow and expand their boundaries by annexations.)

### C.1.1 Survey of Existing Central Business District

The Central Business District (CBD) in the City of Port Isabel is difficult to specifically identify as a “central business district” because the business activities are not confined to a single dominant site.<sup>1</sup> Historically, the downtown area was along Garcia Street when it was the road approaching the Old Causeway to South Padre Island. The downtown area today is identified as the area along both sides of Highway 100 from the Causeway west to the boat Channel. The CBD was surveyed and a listing of business is listed in Table C-1. The CBD area along with its inventory on existing land use, street right-of-way, street sidewalks and condition of buildings are depicted in Table C-2 and Table C.3. The actual CBD area is depicted in **Map C-1** entitled Central Business District Map.

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<sup>1</sup> Port Isabel Community Profile 1984

**TABLE C-1  
Pavement Conditions**

Condition	Estimated Linear feet	Percent of Total
GOOD	2,890	59.6%
FAIR	1,700	35.1%
POOR	260	5.3%
Total	4,850	100%

**TABLE C-2<sup>2</sup>  
Existing Street Width Rights of Way and Pavement widths.**

Street Name	Street Construction	R-O-W Width (LF)	Street Length (LF)	Street Width (LF)	Curb & Gutter (LF)
Maxan—Garcia to Yturria	Concrete	70	1700	38	3400
Garcia—Hwy. 100 to Maxan	Concrete	60	120	38	240
Travana—Hwy. 100 to Maxan	Asphalt	60	300	30	600
Manautou—Hwy. 100 to Maxan	Asphalt	60	400	30	1333
Longoria—Hwy. 100 to Maxan	Asphalt	60	120	38	240
Musina—Hwy. 100 to Davis	Asphalt	60	700	30	1400
Yturria—Hwy. 100 to Alley	Asphalt	70	150	30	300
South Shore (Gomez)—Hwy 100 to Houston	Asphalt	50	260	30	520
Trevino—Hwy. 100 to Houston	Asphalt	50	260	30	520
Garcia—Hwy. 100 east to alley	Asphalt	60	120	38	240
Travana—Hwy. 100east to alley	Asphalt	60	120	30	240
Manautou—Hwy. 100 east to alley	Asphalt	60	120	30	240
Longoria—Hwy. 100 east to alley	Asphalt	60	120	38	240
Musina—Hwy. 100 east to alley	Asphalt	60	120	30	240
Yturria—Hwy. 100 east to alley	Asphalt	70	120	30	240
South Shore—Hwy 100 east to alley	Asphalt	50	120	30	240

The sidewalks in the CBD were classified as either poor, average or good. With regard to sidewalk in an around the Central Business District, there are areas that are paved over, but are not sidewalks per se; however these areas are used as sidewalks or pathways. The sidewalks located on State Highway 100 can be classified as being in average conditions. The City recently completed a sidewalk and landscaping project for certain sections of the Hwy. 100 corridor. The project reconstructed the sidewalks from Garcia Street to Manautou Street and included additional landscaping. Phase II of the project should continue thru to the Channel Bridge or the limits of the CBD. The project is entitled the

<sup>2</sup> Cruz-Hogan Consultants, Inc., 2004 and Study results by RGA Consultants, Nov. 2004

*El Paseo de Santa Isabel* and was funded by Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). Although the overall sidewalk ‘system’ is average in condition, it is recommended that Phase II of this project continue as soon as practical to complete the system with a more aesthetic looking scheme, perhaps brick, or some other material to complement the area.

**TABLE C-3<sup>3</sup>**  
**Existing Sidewalks**

Street Name	Sidewalks/walk area	Condition
Maxan—Garcia to Yturria	√	Average to poor
Garcia—Hwy. 100 to Maxan	√	Average
Travana—Hwy. 100 to Maxan	√	Good
Manautou—Hwy. 100 to Maxan	√	Good
Longoria—Hwy. 100 to Maxan	√	Good
Musina—Hwy. 100 to Davis	√	Poor
Yturria—Hwy. 100 to Alley	√	Poor
South Shore (Gomez)—Hwy 100 to Houston	None	n/a
Trevino—Hwy. 100 to Houston	None	n/a
Garcia—Hwy. 100 east to alley	None	n/a
Travana—Hwy. 100 east to alley	None	n/a
Manautou—Hwy. 100 east to alley	None	n/a
Longoria—Hwy. 100 east to alley	None	n/a
Musina—Hwy. 100 east to alley	None	n/a
Yturria—Hwy. 100 east to alley	√	Poor
South Shore—Hwy 100 east to alley	√	Poor
Hwy. 100—Garcia to Manautou	√	Good
Hwy. 100—Manautou to Channel Bridge	√	Poor

### C.1.2. Traffic Control Devices

The only traffic control devices are located on State Highway 100. These consist of digitally control actuated traffic lights. The lights are located on the following intersections. Hwy. 100 at South Shore, Musina and Garcia. The remainder streets are controlled by a series of standard stop and yield signs. The system does not appear to be synchronized. The synchronization of these traffic control devices would allow traffic to precede without causing any unnecessary traffic delays, particularly such as those created during Spring Break. Synchronization would help eliminate the need for additional foot police personnel at these intersections during these unusually high traffic volume days.

<sup>3</sup> Cruz-Hogan Consultants, Inc., 2004 and Study results by RGA Consultants, Nov. 2004

### C.1.3. On and off-street Parking and Building Conditions

A drive-by wind-shield survey basically concluded that the City has adequate parking for all business related activities and for all public facilities during normal business days. The construction standards contained in the City's Subdivision Ordinance is quite adequate for parking space needs as long as it is followed and enforced. Most businesses appear to have adequate off-street parking, however businesses located in older buildings typically rely on on-street parking. Some restaurants, for example have only four or five spaces available for their customers, but have over twenty tables to serve them. The City of Port Isabel has provided ample parking around the Lighthouse, but additional off-street parking should be planned since the area businesses typical use this parking for their customers. During the tourist seasons, there is a shortage of parking spaces. With few vacant lots available in the CBD, this effort should begin immediately. Local efforts should be taken however to try to locate future public parking areas in the perimeter of the CBD. This would serve two proposes, 1) it would save "quality retail land for future businesses to build, expand or relocate and therefore increase the City's tax base and 2) it will "develop" current vacant lots that are not appropriate for other uses and create a 'pedestrian business interest cycle.' (People might have to walk by different businesses to get to where they were going to.)

A visual inspection of the exterior of the buildings located in the CBD was conducted by a Certified Building Inspector. His conclusions without conducting a physical inspection, was that most buildings appear to be in average to above-average conditions. The exceptions appear to be the older buildings located in CDB Block 26.

### C.1.4. Traffic Volumes

The only traffic counts currently available for the CBD are those for the traffic flows going and coming via the Causeway. (See Table C.4 and Table C. 5) As evidenced by these counts, a very large volume of traffic flows directly through the Port Isabel Central Business District.

**TABLE C-4<sup>4</sup>**  
**SPI Causeway Daily Traffic Counts**

<b>MONTH</b>	<b>Eastbound</b>	<b>Westbound</b>
January 2004	9,403	9,330
February 2004	11,098	11,060
March 2004	13,597	13,594
April 2004	10,824	10,778
May 2004	11,062	11,108
June 2004	13,222	13,279
July 2004	16,246	16,321
August 2004	11,638	11,915
September 2004	9,237	9,171
October 2004	9,100	9,021

**TABLE C-5**  
**SPI Causeway Monthly Traffic Counts**

<b>MONTH</b>	<b>Eastbound</b>	<b>Westbound</b>
January 2004	291,480	289,215
February 2004	244,118	243,313
March 2004	353,531	353,446
April 2004	313,906	312,565
May 2004	342,911	344,335
June 2004	395,658	398,375
July 2004	603,624	505,953
August 2004	349,125	357,444
September 2004	277,095	276,127
October 2004	273,008	270,623

<sup>4</sup> 2004 SPI Causeway Counts, TxDOT, January thru October Only

## **C.2. CENTRAL BUSINESS PLAN ANALYSIS**

A drive-by survey was conducted of the area described as the Central Business District (CBD). The survey identified all existing business buildings and their locations. A listing of each business identified is located in the following Table C-6. The businesses are identified by name and each has a corresponding block number designating it's location on **Map C-1.A**.

<b>TABLE C-6 Central Business District Business</b>			
<b>Block Number</b>	<b>Business Name</b>	<b>Block Number</b>	<b>Business Name</b>
<b>1</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Super Video</li> <li>2. Dolphin Docks Deep sea fishing</li> </ol>	<b>14</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sea &amp; Sun Hair Design</li> <li>2. Matas Sea Food Market</li> <li>3. vacant building</li> <li>4. NAPA Auto Parts</li> <li>5. Game Room</li> <li>6. Surf's-On Soup Shack</li> </ol>
<b>2</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coastal Winds Gifts Boutique</li> <li>2. Virginia's Hair Fashion</li> <li>3. Rusty Pelican Home Décor</li> <li>4. Nail's at Virginia's</li> <li>5. Lighthouse Deli</li> <li>6. Dazzles Fashion &amp; More</li> <li>7. Lighting Center</li> <li>8. Isla Carpets</li> <li>9. Ice-cream Factory</li> </ol>	<b>15</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. First National Bank</li> </ol>
<b>3</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coleman-Heinze Insurance</li> <li>2. Allstate Insurance</li> <li>3. Treehouse Productions</li> <li>4. Michael Edge Etc.</li> <li>5. P.I. Museum (Public)</li> <li>6. P.I. Dental Assoc.</li> <li>7. Fly Shop</li> <li>8. Gulf Seafood #2 (vacant)</li> </ol>	<b>16</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Post Office</li> <li>2. Light house Chiropractic</li> <li>3. REX Cleaner</li> <li>4. Tuxedo Rental</li> <li>5. Speedy Tax Refunds</li> </ol>
<b>4</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lost Galions Seafood Restaurant</li> <li>2. Watermill Express</li> <li>3. First National Bank of S.P.I.</li> </ol>	<b>17</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Marcello's Italian Restaurant</li> <li>2. Lighthouse Laser Car Wash</li> <li>3. Cameron County Building</li> <li>4. Vacant</li> <li>5. Los Carricitos Restaurant (vacant)</li> <li>6. Passions Gift Shop</li> </ol>
<b>5</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Circle K</li> <li>2. Woolverton Realty</li> <li>3. Inter-Ceramic</li> <li>4. Port Isabel Barber Shop</li> <li>5. Vida Beauty Salon</li> </ol>	<b>18</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Public Lighthouse and park</li> </ol>
<b>6</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. BT's Sports Pub &amp; Grill</li> <li>2. Port Isabel Discount</li> <li>3. L &amp; J AC</li> <li>4. Rex Cleaners(vacant)</li> </ol>	<b>19</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Beefeaters Steakhouse</li> <li>2. Bay View Grill / Blue Bell Ice Cream</li> <li>3. Welcome Aboard Gift Shop</li> </ol>

<b>7</b>	1. Chevron Service Station 2. Lack's Fine Furniture 3. SI Creations 4. Accents	<b>20</b>	1. Pirate's Landing Restaurant
<b>8</b>	1. Causey's Liquer 2. Circle Drive-In Grocery Tropical Home Furniture	<b>21</b>	1. Fishing Pier
<b>9</b>	1. R&R Bait Stand 2. The Tarpon Shirts 3. Bridge View Flowers 4. Port Motel 5. Cuevas Sea Food Market	<b>22</b>	1. Vacant Building 2. Country Primitive Candle Co. 3. Alamo Sacred Groups Specialty Roast 4. Lighthouse Gifts & Shirts 5. Vacant 6. Purple Parrots Gift Shop 7. Someplace Else Antique 8. Port City Mercantile
<b>10</b>	1. DoubleDay (Bar & Grill) 2. Fisherman's Restaurant 3. White Sands Motel , Restaurant and Marina	<b>23</b>	1. City Hall 2. Manuel's Mexican Restaurant
<b>11</b>	1. Dairy Queen 2. Joe's Master Service Center	<b>24</b>	1. Ybarra's Tire Buster 2. Valdez Tortilla's 3. David's Auto Wash 4. Gulf Sea Food Oyster Bar 5. Antonjito's Daisy Mex. Restaurant 6. Law Office—Sandy Hall
<b>12</b>	Vacant	<b>25</b>	1. Arcade Penny's From Heaven 2. NFC Loans 3. Abraham Lincoln Bookstore 4. Curve's 5. Atlantis Carpet & Tile 6. Kwik Wash Laundry
<b>13</b>	1. Seagull Import Jewelry 2. South Texas Gutierrez Ins. Agcy.	<b>26</b>	1. Twin's Beauty Salon 2. Vacant Garage 3. Vacant Building

### C.2.1. Central Business District Inventory

The study found that there are over ninety different businesses located within the district. These businesses vary from gift shops to barber shops to restaurants and banks. Most appear to be locally owned, 'mom and pop' businesses. The businesses are well diverse throughout the District and although a rearrangement is not necessary, City Economic Planners should develop a 'downtown' business plan where adequate parking facilities for the demand is there and more diversity is located throughout the District. Store facades should be better managed and additional aesthetic improvements should be planned. Most of the existing buildings are occupied with less that five percent vacant. This translates to a ratio of 84 to 3; occupied buildings versus vacant ones.



Of the total developed acreage in the City or 388.05 acres, 81.31 acreages are comprised of commercial lands. Of this amount approximately almost half, approximately 33 acres are located in the Central Business District. Of these, only two lots are vacant or not developed in the entire CBD Block 12 which is comprised of twelve, twenty-five foot wide lots. The total vacant lot area amounts to less than one acre of the total available commercial land located in the CBD.

### **C.3. CENTRAL BUSINESS PLAN**

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#### **C.3.1 Goals and Objectives**

**Goal One:** Implement the various elements of the Economic Development Plan.

- 1) Adopt the Economic Development Plan.
- 2) Create an Economic Development Department within the Chamber of Commerce and dissolve the Economic Development Department from the City.

**Goal Two:** To develop a plan to improve store fronts or facades and make better use of alleys and areas behind buildings for parking or other related use.

**Goal Three:** To develop a marketing plan which is based on its tourist attractions and disseminate those assets on a continuous and sustainable cycle on a regional, state, national and international basis.

**Goal Four:** To make the historic nature of the Central Business District a major focus of this marketing strategy.

**Goal Five:** To use much due diligence in any analysis leading to the use of its flexible debt base to generate bond to incur debt to build or develop commercial properties for public use or to attract/sustain private initiatives.

**Goal Six:** To develop or maintain construction and development policies and practices which are considerate of the unique ecology within and outside of the boundaries of the Central Business District.

**Goal Seven:** Improve the infrastructure and quality of life to support growth in tax base and jobs.

- 1) Create a Master CBD Plan Authority to monitor the progress of the Plan.
- 2) Engage a Consultant to evaluate funding sources.

**Goal Eight:** Retain and expand existing business.

- 1) Determine the specific needs of existing businesses.
- 2) Design incentive packages which assist and help existing businesses meet their specific needs.

**Goal Nine:** Develop a small business enterprise center in collaboration with the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College that provides continuous technical assistance and support to existing and new businesses so that they may be competitive and survive.

**C.3.2. Central Business District Planned Improvements**

The Central Business District development should have three major elements: 1) infrastructure improvement to provide improved access and capacity to the District 2) retain and expand existing businesses, and 3) attracting new and appropriate business. Table C-7 depicts the necessary improvements required to achieve this goal.

<b>TABLE C-7 CBD Development Costs</b>			
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>TASK</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ESTIMATED COST IN (\$1,000'S)</b>
YEARS 1-2	1	Hold Public Forums to inform public of Plan. Eliminate Economic Development Department from the City.	-36
	2	Immediately create an Economic Development Department within the Chamber of Commerce to promote growth of existing businesses and solicit new business.	25
	3	Develop surveys for use to entertain and implement business assistance program.	1
YEARS 3-5	1	Hold Public Forums to inform public of Plan and its progress.	
	2	Start Infrastructure construction improvement.	
		1) Evaluate drainage problems on Maxim Street and make necessary improvements.	150
		2) Evaluate off-street parking needs and make necessary improvements.  Evaluate store front improvements and contract for professional services.	100  40
3	Prioritize other infrastructure improvements	5	
YEARS 6-10	1	Hold Public Forums to inform public of Plan and its progress.	1
	2	Continue Infrastructure improvements as planned.	100
	3	Implement incentive programs and continue working with Chamber of Commerce for marketing the City.	35

**Map C-2** depicts the redevelopment of the existing CBD area in relation to the formulated goals and objectives.

#### **C.4. SOURCES OF FUNDING**

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In addition to seeking economic development grant funds and planning the use of economic development sales tax revenue, there are a variety of other funding and incentive sources for economic development. Information on programs is listed and generally described below.

##### **C.4.1. TEXAS CAPITAL FUND REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

This economic development program is designed to provide financial resources to non-entitlement communities. Funds can be utilized for real estate development to assist a business which commits to create and/or retain permanent jobs, primarily for low and moderate income persons. This program encourages new business development and expansions located in non-entitlement communities. More information may be obtained from the Texas Department of Agriculture at 512/936-0281.

##### **C.4.2. TEXAS CAPITAL FUND INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM**

This economic development program is designed to provide financial resources to non-entitlement communities. Funds can be utilized for public infrastructure to assist a business which commits to create and/or retain permanent jobs, primarily for low and moderate income persons. The CITY OF PORT ISABEL 2003 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN program encourages new business development and expansions located in non-entitlement communities.

##### **C.4.3. STATE OF TEXAS SMALL BUSINESS INDUSTRIAL REVENUE BOND PROGRAM**

The State of Texas Small Business Industrial Revenue Bond Program is designed to provide tax-exempt financing to finance land and depreciable property for eligible industrial or manufacturing projects. The Development Corporation Act allows cities, counties, conservation, and reclamation districts to form non-profit industrial development corporations or authorities on their behalf. Their purpose is to issue tax-exempt and taxable bonds for eligible projects in their jurisdictions. The industrial

development corporation acts as a conduit through which all of the monies are channeled. Generally, all of the debt service on the bonds is paid by the business under the terms of a lease, sale, or loan agreement and as such does not constitute a debt or obligation of the governmental unit, the industrial development corporation or the State of Texas.

#### C.4.4. TEXAS ENTERPRISE ZONE PROGRAM

The purpose of the Texas Enterprise Zone Program is to encourage job creation and capital investment in areas of economic distress by removing unnecessary governmental regulations, offering tax incentives and targeting other economic programs to businesses located in these areas.

#### C.4.5. US ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (EDA)

The EDA has several grant and loan programs available to local governments which may be used for economic development purposes. The Public Works Infrastructure Grant program offers grants ranging from \$150,000 to \$2,000,000 for improvement/expansion of the local infrastructure systems if it facilitates business development. There is matching requirement of up to fifty percent depending upon the specifics of the project. More information may be obtained from the EDA office in Austin at 512/916-5461.

#### C.4.6. RURAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES OF THE US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (RDS)

Several programs are available to local governments. First, Commercial Lending Program's Business and Industrial Guaranteed Loans program may be used for a variety of business improvements projects. Grants are available from \$750,000 to \$10 million with matching as required by the participating lender and the RDS. The Intermediary Re-Lending Program Loan is used to finance business and community development projects in rural areas with populations under 25,000 persons. Finally, the Community Facility Program offers grants ranging from \$750,000 to \$10 million with up to thirty-three percent matching funds. Potential borrowers must have been denied funding from all other sources. More information can be obtained from RDS at 254/742-9700.

Graphic Illustrations of Table C-1, C-4 and C-5.

