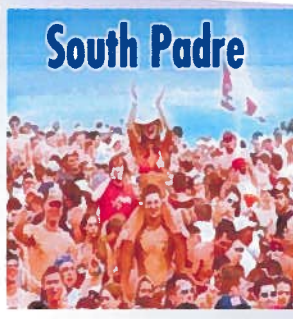
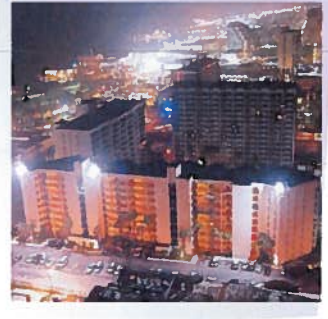


Town of South Padre Island, Texas Comprehensive Plan 2008





Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee

A process that started in April of 2006 and was completed February 2008

Wendy Hauschildt

Nancy Marsden

Leah Thrash

David Horton

Lori Wells

Sally Robey

Glenn McKinlay

Patricia Hernandez-Edelstein

Steve O'Neal

Lucinda Wierenga

Clayton Brashear

John Giesecking

Troy Giles

Mary Helen Flores

Liz Money

Aldermen May 2007 – May 2008

Robert N. Pinkerton, Jr. – Mayor

Phillip Money

Courtney Hayden

Kirk Mills, Mayor Pro-Tem

Jo Ann Evans

Tara Rios-Ybarra

Aldermen May 2006 – May 2007

Robert N. Pinkerton, Jr. – Mayor

Phillip Money

Jim Hoff

Richard Ridolfi, Mayor Pro-Tem

Jo Ann Evans

Tara Rios-Ybarra

Aldermen May 2005 – May 2006

Robert N. Pinkerton, Jr. – Mayor

Fred Mallett

Jim Hoff

Richard Ridolfi, Mayor Pro-Tem

Kirk Mills

Tara Rios-Ybarra

City Staff

City Manager Dewey Cashwell

Public Information Officer Jason Moody

City Planner Cate Ball



Dedication

A process started in April of 2006 and completed October of 2008

Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Wendy Hauschildt | Steve O'Neal |
| Nancy Marsden | Lucinda Wierenga |
| Leah Thrash | Clayton Brashear |
| David Horton | John Giesecking |
| Lori Wells | Troy Giles |
| Sally Robey | Mary Helen Flores |
| Glenn McKinlay | Liz Money |
| Patricia Hernandez-Edelstein | |

Aldermen May 2008 - May 2009

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Robert N. Pinkerton, Jr. - Mayor | Jo Ann Evans, Mayor Pro-Tem |
| Richard Ridolfi | Kirk Mills |
| Courtney Hayden | Tara Rios-Ybarra replaced by Alita Bagley |

Aldermen May 2007 - May 2008

| | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Robert N. Pinkerton, Jr. - Mayor | Kirk Mills, Mayor Pro-Tem |
| Phillip Money | Jo Ann Evans |
| Courtney Hayden | Tara Rios-Ybarra |

Aldermen May 2006 - May 2007

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Robert N. Pinkerton, Jr. - Mayor | Richard Ridolfi, Mayor Pro-Tem |
| Phillip Money | Jo Ann Evans |
| Jim Hoff | Tara Rios-Ybarra |

Aldermen May 2005 - May 2006

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Robert N. Pinkerton, Jr. - Mayor | Richard Ridolfi, Mayor Pro-Tem |
| Fred Mallett | Kirk Mills |
| Jim Hoff | Tara Rios-Ybarra |

City Staff

| | |
|--|------------------------|
| City Manager Dewey Cashwell | City Planner Cate Ball |
| Public Information Officer Jason Moody | |



Chapter 1- Planning Framework

Town of South Padre Island Comprehensive Plan

This Comprehensive Plan document sets forth the Town of South Padre Island's vision for its future physical and economic development. It is designed to give form to the general statement of vision by specifying the necessary steps to accomplish the vision and realize tangible outcomes. Sound planning is equally important for the Town Aldermen, land owners, residents, and the millions of recreational visitors who are attracted to the Island's beaches and abundant natural resources. Most importantly, this plan is intended to accommodate the Island's future growth and seize its economic

development opportunities in a manner that is both livable and sustainable.

Purpose

Why is this plan important? As it is discussed throughout this report, South Padre Island has and continues to experience growth through land development, visitor travel, and redevelopment of existing areas. Island residents and leaders recognize that the Island has finite resources. Based upon recent trends, future growth could exacerbate existing problems well before the Year 2025.

The intent of this Comprehensive Plan is to neither end nor accelerate growth, but to anticipate and manage it so that the Town government, other public agencies, and the private sector are well-equipped to:

1. Maintain the highest quality community living environment;
2. Protect and enhance neighborhoods for Town residents;
3. Invest in appropriately-scaled infrastructure improvements;
4. Provide for the safe, efficient movement of people and goods;
5. Protect the quality of the natural environment and conserve

"Sustainable development is positive socioeconomic change that does not undermine the ecological and social systems upon which communities and society are dependent."

Source: South Padre

- natural resources; and
6. Provide adequate public facilities and services.

"To have a vision means to look ahead: to imagine the future. The ability to imagine or dream the future – to create in our minds something beyond our present reality – is a distinctly human skill. History has shown that seeing something in the mind's eye is often the first step to actually achieving it.

As used in planning, visioning is a process by which a community envisions its preferred future. It chronicles the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of a community and helps citizens agree on what they want their community to become.

If used correctly, this Comprehensive Plan will help Town leaders to evaluate future development proposals and decide if they appropriately reflect the Town's goals and vision for the future.

Plan Development

The planning process involved to create this document has taken a long time. In December 2002 and January 2003, the Town of South Padre Island convened a series of community forums, the purpose of which was to identify citizens' concerns about the Island, and to record and prioritize their views on its future development potential. From these forums and a write-in response from those who could not be present, a clear consensus emerged. These responses formed the basis of the Vision Statement for the Town of South Padre Island which describes the Town in 2020. *(Below is an excerpt from the document. Please see the Appendix for the entire document.)*

A Vision Statement

The Vision is of the Town of South Padre Island in the year 2020. The Vision Statement has been structured under a number of closely-related themes which reflect broad categories of community concerns, as follows:

- Community Character and Quality of Life
- Balanced Growth and Development
- Sound Infrastructure and Transportation
- Community Relations and Governance

South Padre Island 2020

Community Character and Quality of Life

- South Padre Island has transformed its image as a unique seaside community and a first-class resort destination, attracting a balance of permanent and seasonal residents and visitors who come to enjoy its beaches, protected scenic natural environment and its many recreational attractions in a family-friendly small town setting.
- A distinctive "South Padre style" reflects the relaxed seaside ambiance, the climate and international culture and encompasses well-designed buildings, lush landscaping, and themed way-finding signage and lighting.

- South Padre Boulevard has been transformed as an imageable and visually exciting tree-lined corridor. New and retrofitted buildings are harmonious in design, signage is appropriate in scale and understated in design. The visual impact of overhead utilities has been reduced by taking advantage of technological innovations and other opportunities to cost-effectively place utilities underground. Where feasible, excessive front paved areas have been removed and replaced with landscaping and generous sidewalks and bike lanes.
- A new Town Hall, community center, birding center and other public buildings and civic enhancements have set a high standards in exemplifying the "South Padre style" and are widely emulated by new and renovated commercial and residential structures.
- The Town's beaches, parks, playgrounds, beach access points, waterfront promenades, boat ramps and other recreational amenities are well placed and conveniently accessible for residents and visitors. Recreational and sports facilities meet the needs of all age groups and are well-used by the islands growing number of families with children.
- The Town is noted for the cleanliness of its beaches, parks, roadways and public and private properties. The declining number of vacant lots is well kept and free of litter and debris.
- The island's unique natural resources - its beaches and dunes, wetlands, Laguna Madre waterfront and native flora and fauna - are valued and well protected.
- A system of linked parks, greenways, open spaces, water-front promenades, nature trails and areas dedicated to activities such as bird watching and ecotourism are easily accessible by foot or bicycle.
- The transformation of the character and ambience of the island, the presence of longer stay families, more discerning tourists and a commitment to excellence by the Town has in turn created opportunities for greater employment and business opportunities year-round.

Balanced Development

- New regulations and development standards enacted to implement the Comprehensive Strategic Plan are clear and user-

- friendly and have served to streamline the permitting process while “raising the bar” of standards of development quality.
- Tourism has matured and diversified with a year-round orientation, longer stays, a broader array of family attractions and less reliance on Spring Break. The island has developed a wide range of entertainment and amenities, more upscale hotels, shopping and a well-used convention center attracting group visitation from the region and nation-wide. The excesses of Spring Break and Texas Week have been moderated by strict enforcement. South Padre’s reputation and market share have grown, making it a well-known, highly competitive destination for regional, national and international visitors. Hospitality training programs have improved service quality, producing a stable, educated and better paid workforce, while supporting a shift toward a higher end tourism market.
 - Land use patterns have consolidated to form distinct neighborhoods and activity districts through carefully guided new development, infill and redevelopment.
 - Neighborhoods are well defined and consistent in scale and use. Business, shopping and entertainment districts serving both tourists and residents are compact and well-defined. Through shared parking and a well developed pedestrian network, reliance on the automobile for local travel is greatly reduced.
 - The array of housing types has diversified, with single family homes, Townhouses, apartments and condominiums sited compatibly and consistently in scale. With a broad array of amenities such as parks, playgrounds, sidewalks and landscaping, neighborhoods are liveable and attract growing proportions of families and permanent residents.
 - Commercial uses have diversified with a wide array of quality shopping opportunities for local residents and tourists. Tourist-oriented commercial activities such as souvenir shops have diversified and improved in image and are located in close proximity to hotels and entertainment attractions.
 - There are many new attractions and amenities on the island catering to both resident and visiting youths, adults and senior citizens. These include community meeting facilities, a library, eco-tourism and cultural attractions, public tennis courts, and improved public access to marinas and water sports. Travel in

the region and across the border into Mexico is easily arranged with tours available to places of interest

Sound Infrastructure and Transportation

- Traffic congestion has been reduced during special event and peak periods by limiting access in selected areas and by strict and innovative traffic management. Congestion has been reduced by increased availability and convenience of public transit and a convenient network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Deficiencies have been corrected and measures instituted to ensure an adequate supply of potable water and water for irrigation. The supply of electricity is reliable and sufficient to satisfy all local needs. Flooding threats have been reduced in low lying areas through drainage improvements and development standards that reduce standing water and encourage detention and rapid percolation. The Town has the infrastructure capacity and fiscal resources to support planned incremental growth.
- A second causeway has been constructed providing an alternative link to the mainland and improved egress for emergency evacuation. The new causeway respects the delicate ecological balance and recreational functions of the Laguna Madre. The design of the causeway and its approach to the island provides a distinctive image as an entry feature or gateway.

Community Relations and Governance

- The Town has a "Home Rule" type of government, which allows greater control over fiscal matters and public expenditures. This allows for a more stable environment for effective decision-making.
- Town government is well-managed and has instituted measures to ensure fiscal health and remain well-prepared for planned short and long range capital investments.
- South Padre citizens are deeply involved in civic affairs and participate in decisions affecting their current and future lifestyle. City Hall provides effective communication on day to day affairs and the various associations on the island,

representing a wide range of interest, are well supported by citizens of all ages.

- Government, citizens and business and civic organizations continue to collaborate effectively on initiatives to improve South Padre Island.
- Town staff and elected officials are committed to fulfill their obligations to provide high quality services and leadership.
- The Comprehensive Strategic Plan is the key reference for all government decisions, actions concerning budgets, capital spending, regulatory measures and development review and approvals.

Later in 2005, a 12-person Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) was assembled to re-start the planning process using the Vision Statement above as a starting point. The committee met often throughout the process reviewing and editing the chapters provided to them from the consulting planning agency. The individuals committed to this planning process and involved with the CPAC are identified in the acknowledgments at the front of this plan.

This Comprehensive Plan represents more than an extension of earlier plans and previous studies; it has been the product of a considerable amount of original thinking and extensive deliberation. This plan consists of the following elements:

Town Profile (Chapter 2): This element provides an enumeration of existing conditions, issues, and assumptions regarding future growth. It serves as the foundation for the plan's subsequent elements.

Land Use (Chapter 3): This element provides a vision for the future physical form and character of development on the Island. Its purpose is to establish the needed policy guidance for future decisions relating to the type, scale, and pattern of development and its compatibility with the built and natural environments.

Mobility (Chapter 4): This element addresses the Island-wide mobility needs on all levels – from streets to sidewalks and trails to public transit. Fundamental issues in this chapter are the need for improved walkability, efficient traffic movement, and an alternative system to relieve tourism-induced congestion.

Parks and Resources (Chapter 5): This element consists of a plan for protecting the Island's beaches, shorelines, and related ecosystems. Protecting the Island's natural features is of fundamental significance, both as an economic asset and, indeed, for overall sustainability of the built-up community.

Growth & Infrastructure (Chapter 6): This element addresses the needs of parks, utility systems, and other public services to accommodate future growth, while reinforcing the cohesion of the Island's resident community. It also proposes guidelines and initiatives to beautify the Island and enhance the identity of key areas of the Town.

Economic Development (Chapter 7): This element expands on earlier studies to enhance and diversify the Town's economic resources and opportunities. Of significance are the strategies to strengthen the tax base so as to moderate its reliance – and success or demise – on a naturally cyclical economy. The availability of advanced communication technology is fundamental to the success of any economic development program in this age; this element will provide particular focus on the Island's access to and distribution of highest-speed communication resources.

Implementation (Chapter 8): The purpose of this element is to identify a course of policy direction that will guide future investment and management decisions. It identifies those agencies and departments responsible for future initiatives and the processes and time frames for completion.

Mission Statement

Early in the planning process, the CPAC composed the following strong and positive Mission Statement:

South Padre Island is a unique, friendly seaside resort community that values its residents and tourists, preserves and protects the natural environment, and provides for quality sustainable growth and development that is highly diverse and responsive to changing economic conditions.



The Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee played a key role in the development of the plan, ensuring integration of the Island's values and expectations for its future.

Public Involvement

Residents, land owners, business people, and investors all have many and diverse values. In order to enhance the quality of development and livability on the Island, both of which are integral to the overall vision, the continued involvement of these diverse values throughout the planning process was vital.

While much of the public input was received through the regular participation of CPAC members, the Town's Board of Aldermen, Planning and Zoning Commission members, and directors of the Economic Development Corporation, there were other opportunities for general public input to contribute to this plan. These included key person and small group interviews, planning workshops, and public meetings where all citizens were invited to attend

and express their views.

The decision to engage in a comprehensive planning process was done principally to influence the future of the Island, rather than reacting to change. This plan is the product of a deliberate decision to manage future growth and development instead of responding to development on a case-by-case basis without a balanced consideration of Town issues and objectives. It has been many years since the Town conducted a comprehensive planning process and adopted a plan,¹ which emphasizes the importance of the decision and timing to develop and implement this plan.

Use of the Plan

This Comprehensive Plan belongs to the Town and its citizens who generously offered their time and talents to create it. The plan contains many components, such as providing information, identifying existing conditions and characteristics, and influencing future governmental policies and responses.

By its nature, the plan is intended to serve all interests and offer the following benefits:

¹ South Padre Island, Plan 2010, prepared in 1990

1. **Certainty in future actions:** It states the intentions of the Town's governing body regarding future physical development and infrastructure investment.
2. **Development guidelines:** It provides the Town's Board of Aldermen, Planning and Zoning Commission, and others, guidance in policy decisions with the stated goals and recommended actions.
3. **Input to future investment decisions:** It identifies capital improvement needs and priorities that should be used in the Town's annual budgeting and capital planning processes.
4. **Consistency in land use regulations:** The plan serves as a foundation for zoning decisions and subdivision reviews.
5. **Economic development strategies:** It serves as an overall blueprint for the Island's future economic development and enhancement of existing and future businesses.

Planning Area

The geographical planning area encompassed in this plan includes both the incorporated Town of South Padre Island and an outer perimeter area that includes the Town's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) area. Chapter 42 Section 42.021(b) of the Texas Local Government Code provides the Town with a five (5) mile ETJ to the north and to the south, but only on the island (i.e "land") portion of this barrier island. The Town has no jurisdiction of submerged lands, unless those lands have been created lawfully, in uplands within the Town's limits and/or its ETJ.

Summary of Goals

It is important that the specific policy and physical development recommendations contained in the remaining sections of this plan be based on stated community goals. Detailed goal statements are presented in



The form of development on the Island conveys its character and livability.



Retail businesses catering to Island visitors are the current economic mainstay of the community.

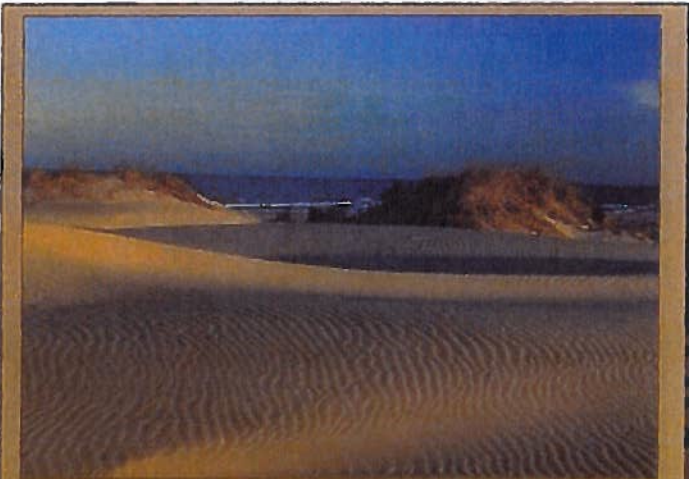
each section of the Comprehensive Plan. A summary listing of these goals is provided below:

Land Use and Community Character

1. New development and redevelopment must add value to the image and appearance of the Island.
2. Future development must be compatible with the character of surrounding areas.
3. Existing neighborhoods should be preserved and enhanced so as to foster a strong sense of identity.
4. A broad variety of housing types and price ranges are warranted to balance the residential market.

Transportation and Mobility

1. The plan must be responsive to the necessity that a second causeway will be constructed north of the Convention Centre. Since the only access to the Island is by bridge, the second causeway should not load Highway 100 or Highway 48.
2. Pedestrian mobility must be improved to enhance the Island's walk-ability and attractiveness for visitors.
3. The use of non-motorized vehicles should be supported on public and private thoroughfares.
4. The transit system must be expanded to facilitate employee commuting and to increase ridership by residents and visitors.
5. Improvements to the transportation system are needed to better accommodate peak traffic and parking demands without spoiling the livability of the community.
6. Parking must meet both public and private objectives while satisfying the daily and peak demands of motorists.



South Padre Island is noted for its scenic beauty due to its ocean and bay views and natural areas.

Parks, Recreation, and Resource Protection

1. Beaches, recreational amenities, and natural areas should be appealing to all persons, including areas for both passive and active recreation and indoor and outdoor facilities.
2. Protection of the environment and preservation of resources must remain of value so as to sustain the natural ecosystem and retain the physical character of the Island.

3. A continuous dune line must be constructed, maintained, and protected from encroachment as protection from high energy events.
4. Indigenous plants and landscape must be preserved and protected so as to sustain the ecosystem, contribute to the economy, and enhance the character and appearance of the Island.

Economic Development and Technology

1. The economy must be diversified so as to stabilize the general business environment and moderate the ebb and flow of the tourism cycle.
2. There must be programs to support existing businesses to ensure they are secure in their investment and remain economically viable.
3. The role of technology is an important consideration in the attraction of businesses and visitors.
4. Opportunities for attracting eco-tourists may improve the local economy through increased stays and spending.

Public Facilities and Infrastructure

1. The long-term availability of utilities must be secured to support the planned growth of the Island. The condition of utility infrastructure must be improved to meet current and future needs.
2. There must be improved agreement and coordination with other agencies responsible for many of the essential services that will be needed by the Island as development continues.
3. Drainage must be adequately planned for so as not to allow development that alters pre-development conditions and creates a flooding burden on adjacent properties.

Plan Implementation

1. The two primary ways for the Town to implement this plan are:
 - to budget appropriate monies and resources for capital items, and/or
 - to update and/or amend existing Town ordinances.
2. Since strict adherence and enforcement of building and development codes is vital to sustain the quality of development, the necessary ordinances must be updated and adopted promptly after acceptance of this plan.

3. Since the City Manager and town staff cannot dedicate appropriate resources except as authorized by the Board of Aldermen through an approved budget, all budgets need to clearly reflect the continued dedication to implement this plan.
4. The City Manager, all Town Directors, all Town Committee members and each of the Board of Aldermen and the Mayor need to review this plan on a yearly basis in order to make decisions that are consistent with the goals and recommended actions.



Chapter 2 Town Profile

Town of South Padre Island Comprehensive Plan

The assessment of demographic and socioeconomic factors provides a snapshot of past and present characteristics of South Padre Island that will help identify potential opportunities and constraints. This profile provides a basis for determining future land use requirements and demands for public facilities and services, while providing background information needed for planning to guide future development in a desirable and fiscally responsible manner.

History

South Padre Island is a retreating barrier island with a rich coastal identity. It was founded on the vision of John Tompkins and plotted in 1950. The community was incorporated in 1973. The first causeway opened in 1954. The updated Queen Isabella Causeway was opened in 1975 and population growth followed.

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to: 1) examine how the Island has grown in terms of its resident population, second homeowners, and visitors; 2) increase familiarity with the characteristics that contribute to the Island's physical and economic development; and 3) identify trends that will influence future growth and development.

The information in this chapter is not intended as a comprehensive assessment of the Town's demographics, but, rather, a guideline. This chapter briefly assesses and compares with the County and State both demographic and socioeconomic trends including historic, current, and projected populations; ethnic and household composition; age and gender; income and poverty level; housing occupancy, tenure, and value; and employment and labor force statistics. This analysis is

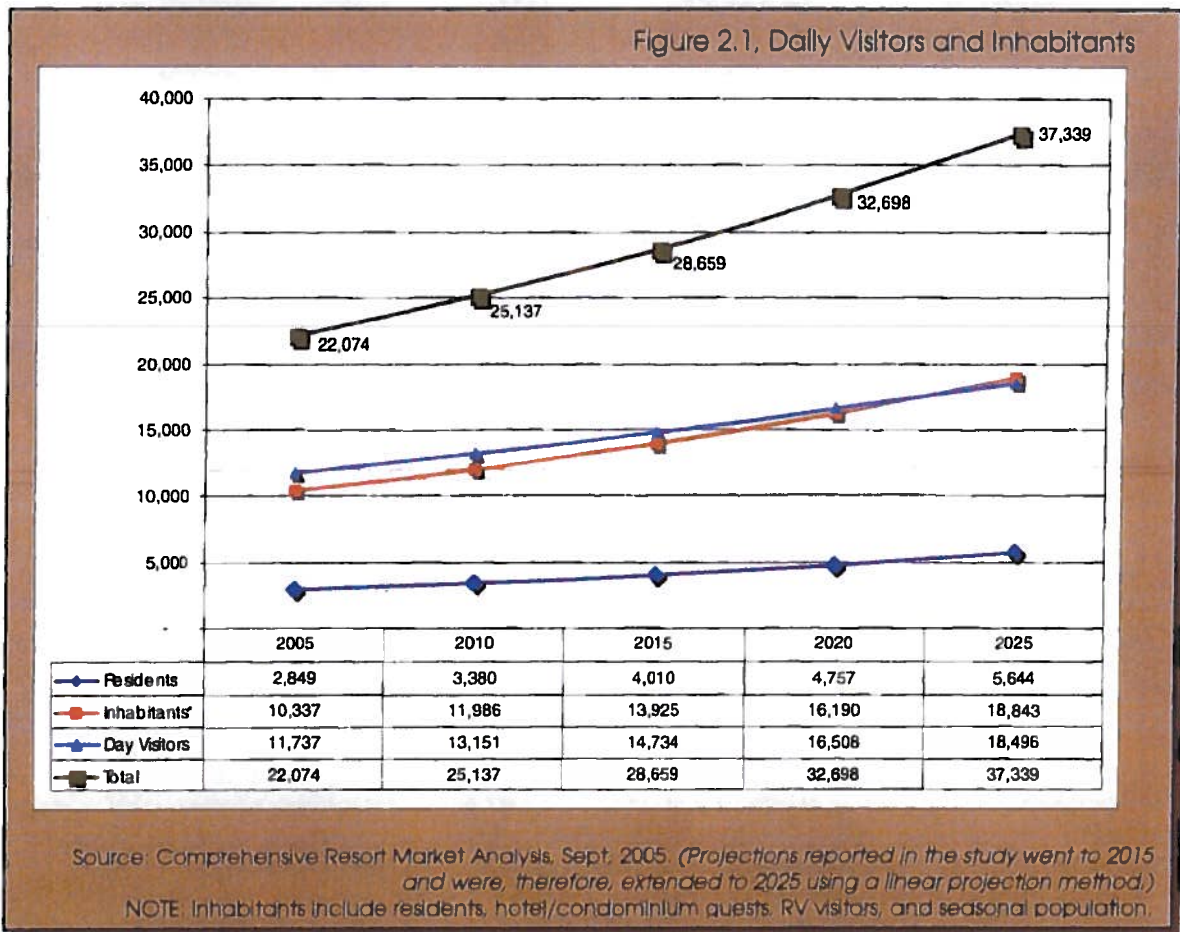
valuable in that it allows assessment of the Town in terms of where it has been in years past, where it stands presently, and where it appears to be headed. County and State information provides a baseline comparison to signify how the Island is doing relative to other proximate jurisdictions. This “big-picture” view enables decision makers and residents to better understand the issues and challenges and, subsequently, develop policies and implementation strategies to proactively manage the future course of the Island.

Population Trends

1. The number of persons claiming South Padre Island as their permanent place of residence increased only six percent from 2000 to 2005 with the addition of 166 new residents.
2. At the same time, neighboring communities such as Pt. Isabel and Laguna Vista experienced greater population expansions. During that period, Pt. Isabel’s population increased ten percent with the addition of over 500 new residents. Laguna Vista’s population increased at an even more rapid 57 percent pace with the addition of 942 persons.
3. The combined population of these three communities increased 18 percent through the net increase of almost 1,600 persons. By 2005, it is estimated that 10,561 persons lived on the south end of the Laguna Madre.
4. The population of the Rio Grande Valley (Cameron and Hidalgo Counties) has also increased at rapid pace, growing from approximately 900,000 to 1,050,000 in five years. The region’s rate of growth was significantly higher than the state as a whole.
5. A comparison of the number of year-round residents to the large number of seasonal residents is significant. These additional inhabitants and visitors will have a substantial impact on land use demands, traffic, parking, and public spaces and facilities during the 20-year horizon of this plan.
6. The baseline residential population on the Island is augmented by the presence of day visitors (11,737 persons), inhabitants (10,337 persons), and employees (3,171 employees)¹ to equal a total of 25,245 persons on the Island daily.

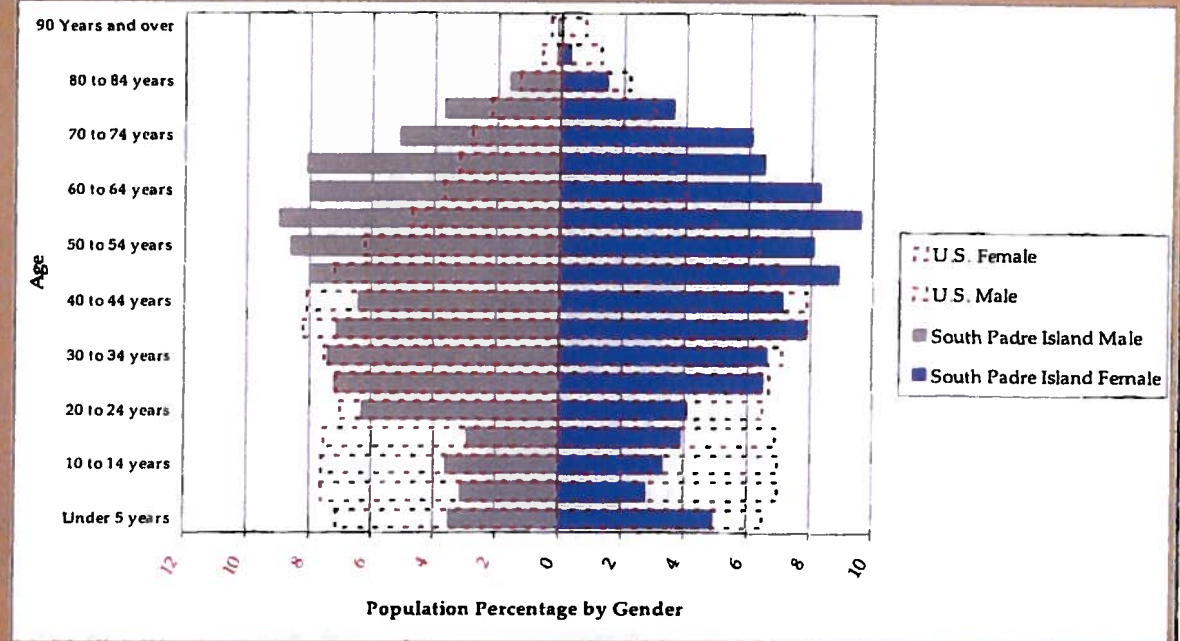
¹ Based on private sector employment in 2004, U.S. Census Bureau (ZIP Code Business Patterns)

- The overall proportions of residents, day visitors, and inhabitants are assumed to remain at similar levels through the Year 2025, as illustrated in **Figure 2.1, Daily Visitors and Inhabitants**, by the roughly parallel line depicting this trend.



- Age groups between 45 years and 80 years are significantly above the national average, as shown in **Figure 2.2, Age Distribution** (following page). Conversely, groups between 0 years and 24 years are significantly below the national average.

Figure 2.2, Age Distribution

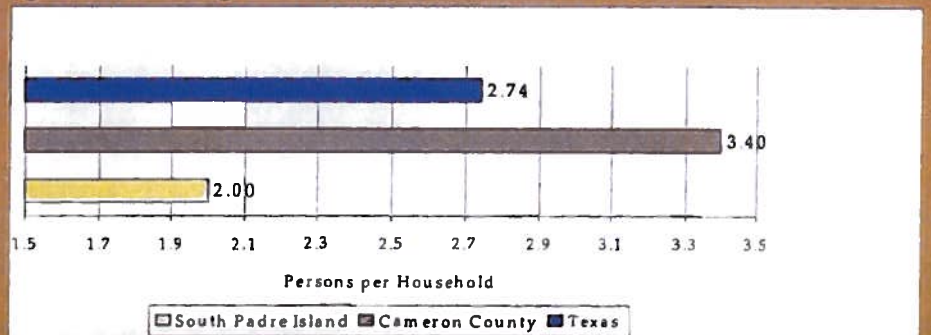


Source: U.S. Census Bureau

NOTE: The components of population change are typically characterized by births, deaths, and migration. Figure 2.3 excludes persons under 20 years of age; those not of working age. An increase in population for these cohorts can, therefore, only be a result of migration.

- Other than the age groups between 0 years and 24 years there is an even distribution between males and females.
- The impact of these age characteristics requires the plan to consider the means for accommodating an older population, such as passive versus active (ball fields, courts, etc.) parks and recreation facilities, pedestrian improvements, etc.
- The average household size is two persons per household versus 2.74 and 3.40 in Texas and Cameron County, respectively (see Figure 2.3, Average Household Size). A small household size inflates the demand for new housing units thereby causing a smaller than apparent population increase. In other words, since there are fewer persons per household there are a greater

Figure 2.3, Average Household Size



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

number of units needed to accommodate a smaller overall population. The results of this are seen in the population projections above.

5. Forty-four percent of South Padre Island's "permanent" residents in 2000 were 50 years of age or older, compared to just 23 percent statewide.
6. Not only does the island have a much larger population share that is 65 years or older (traditional retirement age), but also a higher share of residents in their fifties. For example, 18 percent of South Padre Island residents were 50-59 year of age compared to 10 percent statewide. This may indicate that the island has also become a destination for baby boomers that have either retired early or have chosen to pursue opportunities on the island.

Population Change by Generation

1. An analysis of population change by age cohort reveals the Rio Grande Valley (defined as Cameron and Hidalgo Counties) is becoming an increasing destination for working adults. Each cohort of traditional working age (20-64 years) increased between 2000 and 2005, as displayed by Figure 2.4, **Population Change by Age Cohort**.
2. The net change in the number of working adults living in the Rio Grande Valley was just over 8,800 persons between 2000 and 2005, compared to approximately 35,900 persons State-wide. In other words, the Valley accounted for 25 percent of the State's growth from working adults relocating to the State.
3. South Padre Island's population is classified by the U.S. Census Bureau as predominantly "White" (94.6 percent). The "White" population on the Island is significantly more populous than Texas or Cameron County. See Table 2.1, **Population Classified as "White."**
4. Among the races other than white, "some other race" accounts for 2.8 percent, with much smaller percentages for each of the other races, as shown in Figure 2.5, **Race Other than White**.

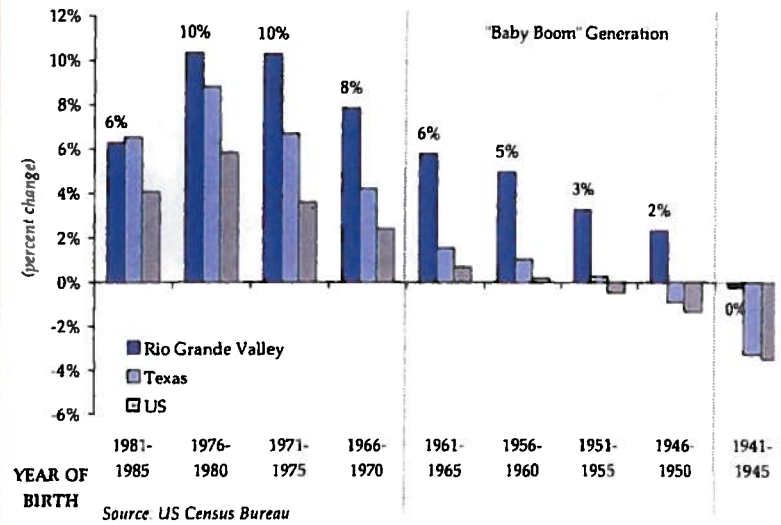
Table 2.1, Population Classified as "White"

| | White | Other |
|--------------------|-------|-------|
| Texas | 71.0% | 29.0% |
| Cameron County | 80.3% | 19.7% |
| South Padre Island | 94.6% | 5.4% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 2.4, Population Change by Age Cohort

Population Change by Age Cohort, 2000-2005



Increase in Baby Boomers, 2000-2005

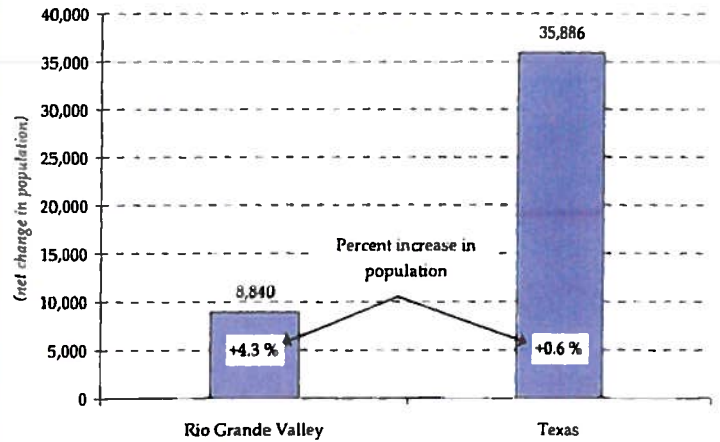
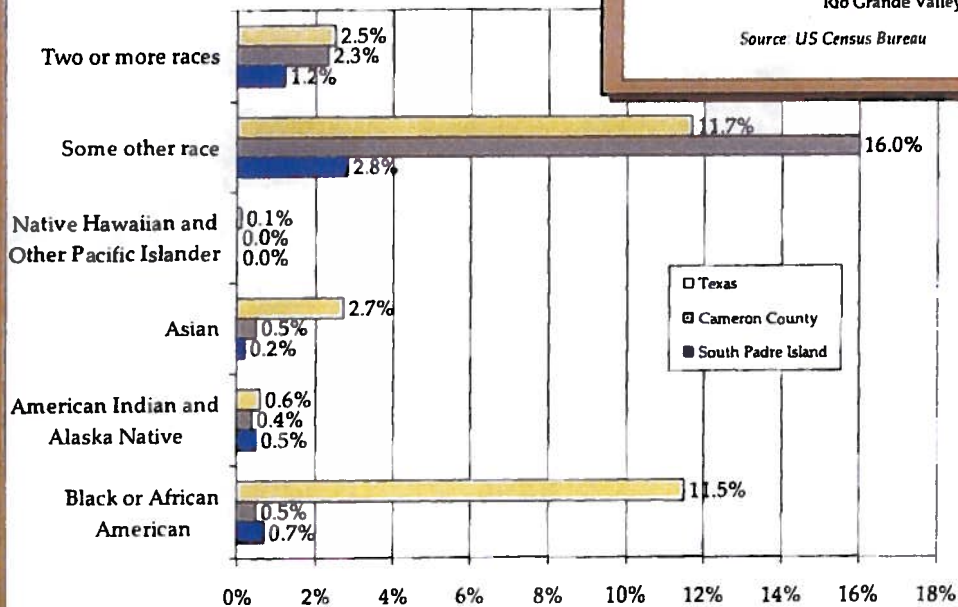


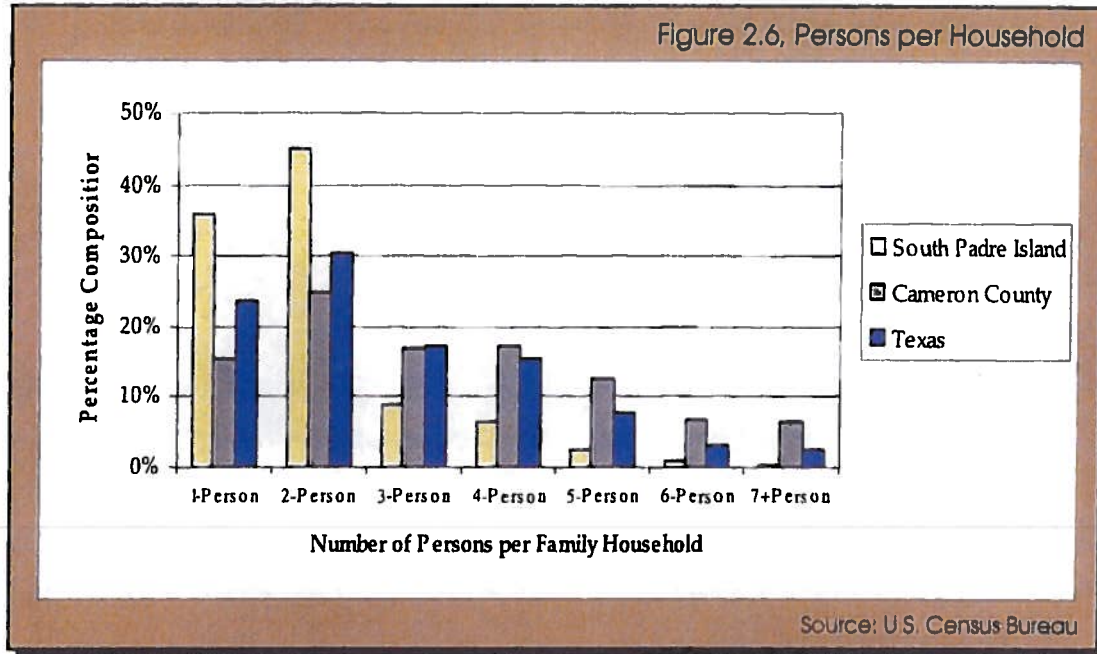
Figure 2.5, Race Other than White



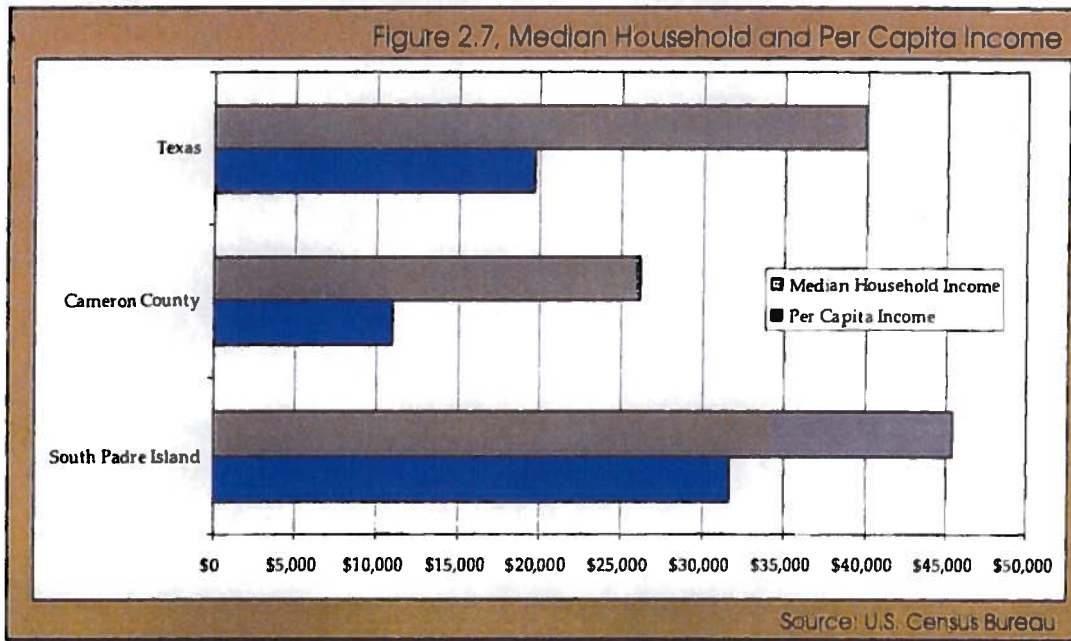
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Household Characteristics

1. South Padre Island has a significantly higher percentage of one-person (35.8 percent) and two-person (45.1 percent) households than Cameron County and Texas, as exhibited in Figure 2.6, **Persons per Household**.

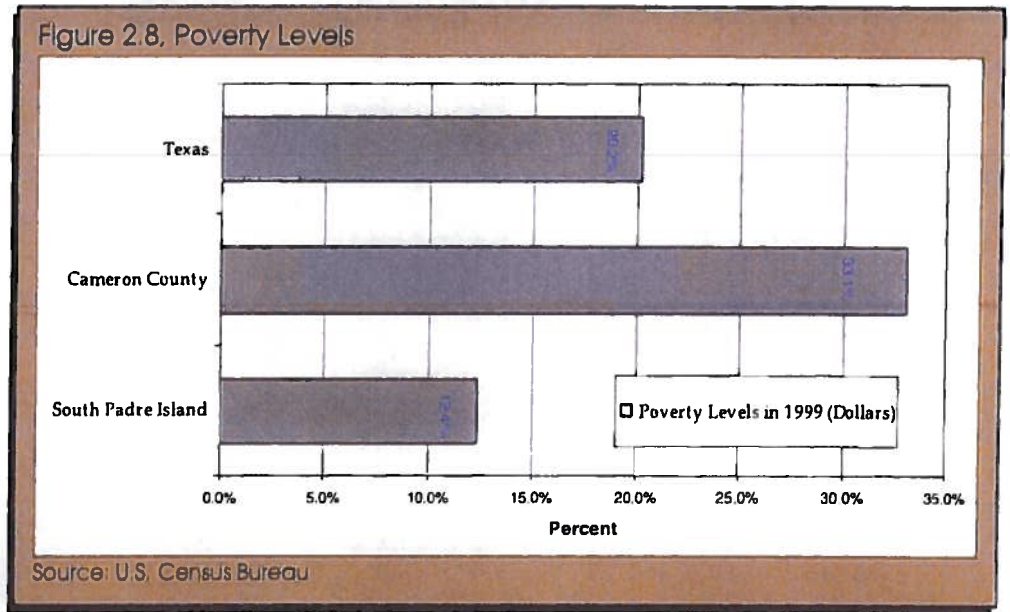


2. Conversely, the Island has a significantly lower – progressively smaller – percentage of three or more person households than the County and State.
3. These percentages indicate small family sizes on the Island, which, again, contribute to a demand for increased housing units without a comparable increase in total population.

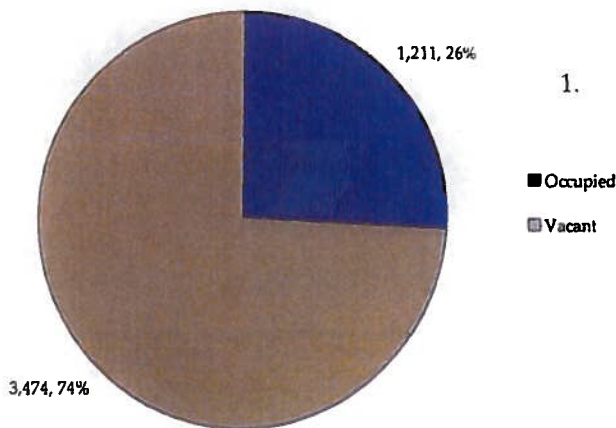


Income and Poverty

1. Per capita income and median household income for South Padre Island (\$31,708 and \$45,417, respectively) are significantly higher than Cameron County (\$10,960 and \$36,155, respectively) and moderately higher than Texas (\$19,671 and \$39,927, respectively), as displayed in Figure 2.7, Median Household and Per Capita Income.
2. With a 12.4 percent poverty level, as shown in Figure 2.8, Poverty Levels, the Island is well below the levels of the State (20.2 percent) and Cameron County (33.1 percent). This is directly attributable to the median and per capita incomes, as well as the type of development and residents on the Island.



South Padre Island Housing Units, 2000

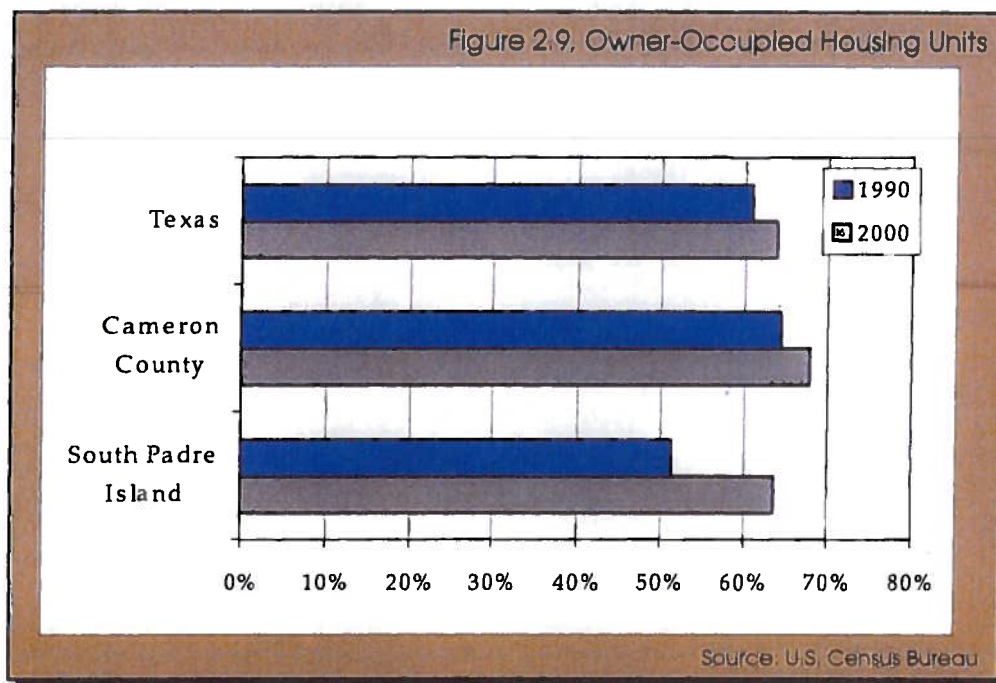


Source: US Census Bureau

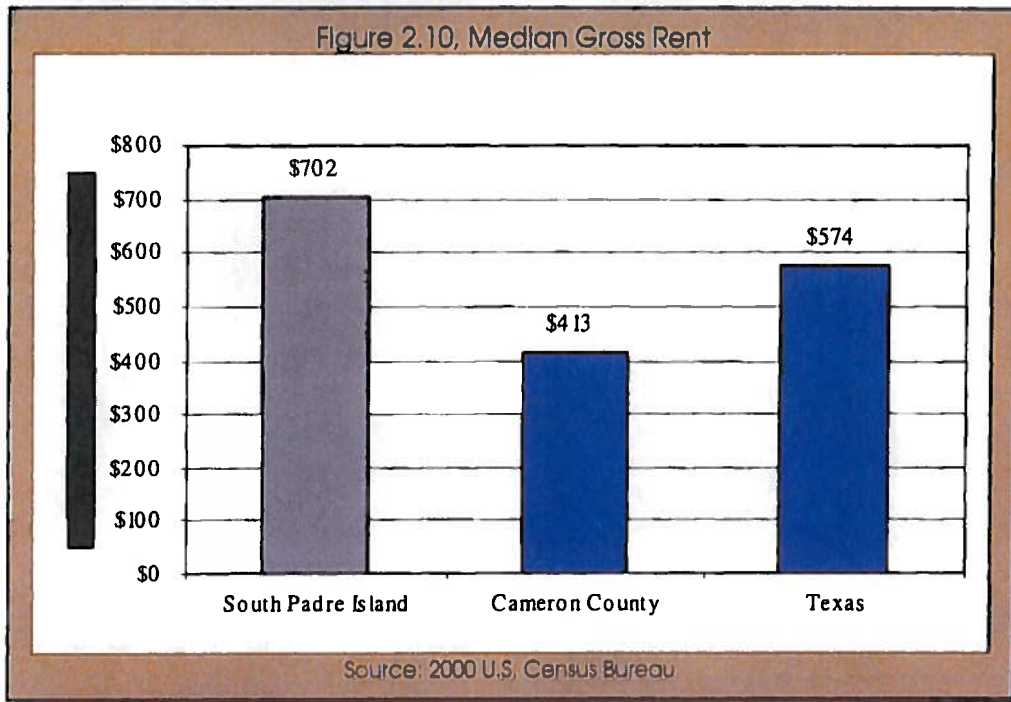
Housing Characteristics

1. Three-quarters of South Padre Island's 4,685 housing units were "vacant" at the time of the 2000 Census. This figure largely reflects the overwhelmingly seasonal use of housing units on the island. (Census definition for vacant: A housing unit is vacant if no one is living in it at the time of enumeration, unless its occupants are only temporarily absent. Units temporarily occupied at the time of enumeration entirely by people who have a usual residence elsewhere were classified as vacant)

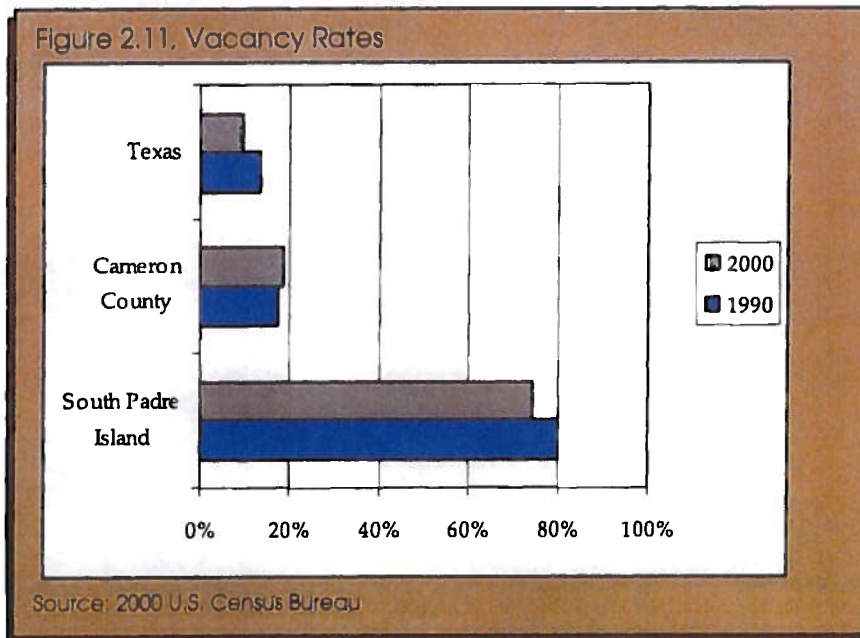
2. In 1990, the Island had a significantly lower percentage (51.4 percent) of owner-occupied units than the State (60.9 percent) and Cameron County (64.4 percent). However, between 1990 and 2000, there was a significant shift in the trend, resulting in positive increases in owner-occupied units: South Padre Island (+12.1 percent), Cameron County (+3.3 percent), and Texas (+2.9 percent).
3. As a result of the increase in owner-occupied units over the course of the last decade, the Island had 63.5 percent owner occupancy compared to 51.4 percent in 1990 (Figure 2.9) below. This is significant for the amount of new investment on the Island, which has contributed to the demand for new units.



4. As displayed by Figure 2.10, Median Gross Rent, the rent on the Island is \$702 per month, which is significantly higher than the State median (\$574) and the Cameron County median (\$413). This is expected for a resort destination of tourists and visitors.
5. In both 1990 and 2000, the Island had a significantly higher (close to 60 percent higher) vacancy rate than the State or County. This is not unexpected though due to the amount of seasonal living.



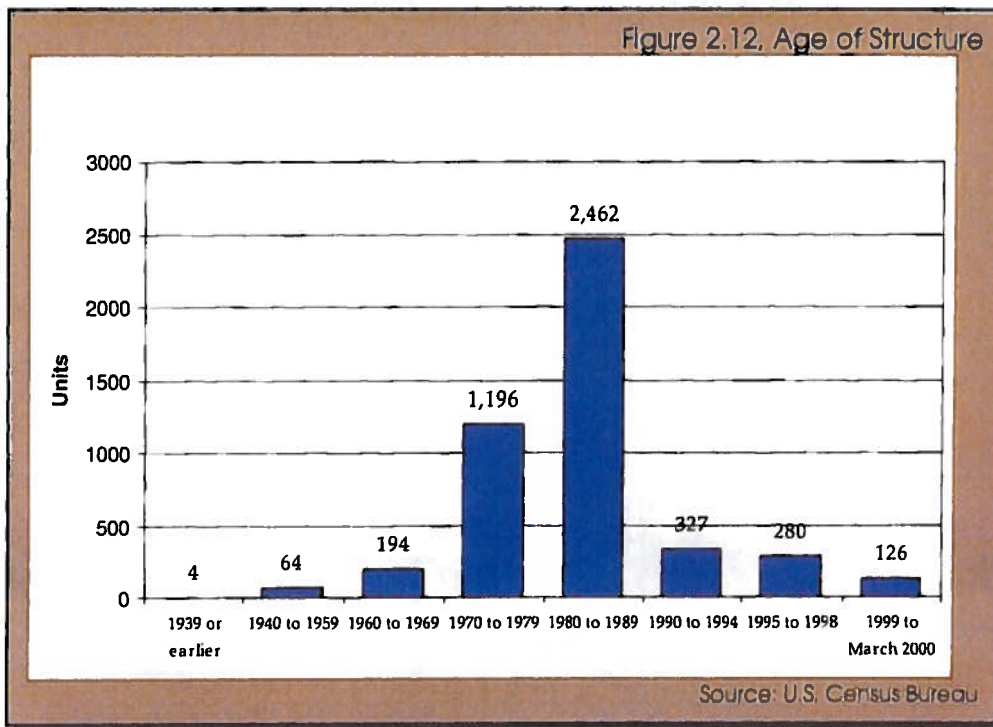
6. Between 1990 and 2000 there was a decrease in the percentage of seasonal units, from 74 percent in 1990 to 59.5 percent, as shown in Figure 2.11, Vacancy Rates. This shift mirrors the increase in the number and percentage of owner-occupied units. This is a very positive trend for the Island; its implications are reflected in increased daily traffic, parking, and other observed impacts.



7. In 2000, of all vacant housing units, the percentage (59.5 percent) on the Island is comparable to that in Cameron County (52.5 percent) while being significantly more than the State (22.7 percent).

8. As exhibited in Figure 2.12, Age of Structure, nearly 26 percent

of the housing stock on the Island was built during the 1970s,



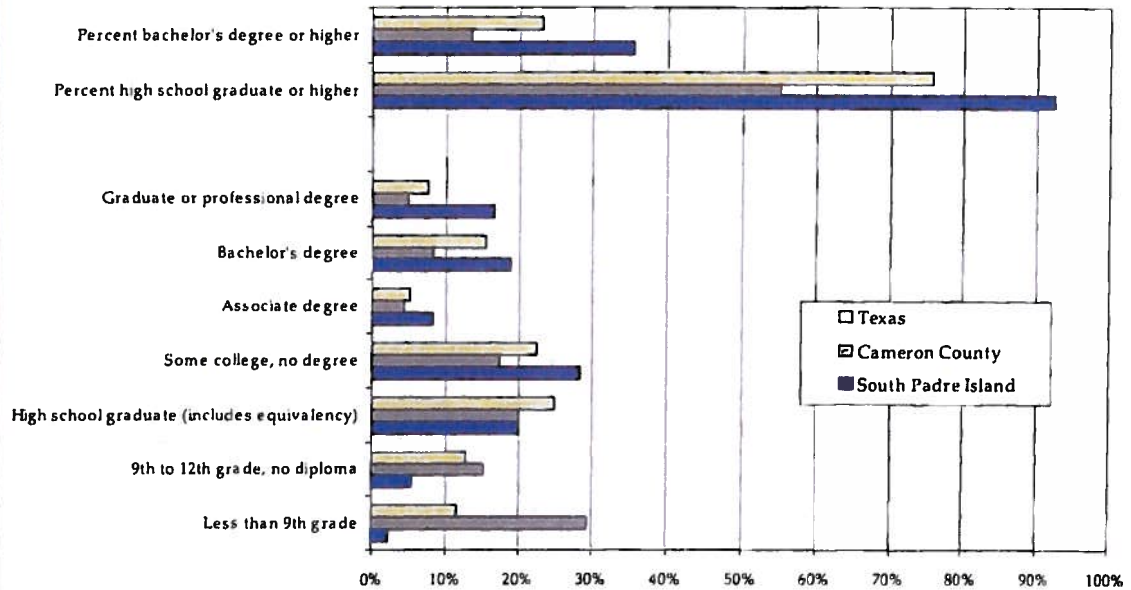
meaning it is around 30 years old. This is significant since structures generally begin to exhibit signs of wear and require updating and significant structural improvements after 10-20 years. Therefore, many of these structures may begin to be remodeled and/or redeveloped, particularly considering escalating land costs.

9. Approximately 53 percent of the housing stock was built during the 1980s, meaning that these structures are now approaching 15 to 25 years of age and beginning to require updating and ongoing maintenance.
10. Only 5.6 percent of the housing stock was built before 1970, much of which is likely to be replaced or reconstructed in the near term.

Educational Profile

1. South Padre Island, on average, has higher educational attainment than both Texas and Cameron County, as shown by **Figure 2.13, Educational Attainment**.
2. The low percentages of categories "Less than 9th grade" (2.2 percent) and "9th to 12th grade, no diploma" (5.4 percent) relative to the County and State indicate that residents of the Island tend to have a higher level of education.
3. The Island leads in each of the categories from "Some college, no degree" (28.5 percent) to "Percent Bachelor's degree or higher."

Figure 2.13, Educational Attainment



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

- These educational characteristics are indicative of the mature population on the Island (i.e., retired professionals), as well as their socioeconomic status, which correlates with many of the other statistics, i.e. income, household size, etc.

Transportation

- As shown in Table 2.2, **Vehicle Availability**, a majority (52.7 percent) of housing units on the Island have one vehicle present. An additional 39 percent have two vehicles per housing unit.
- Five percent of the housing units on the Island do not have a vehicle available, as reported to the U.S. Census. This means that there are 232 units that rely on walking, bicycling, public transit, or other persons for their means of travel. Assuming two persons per household this accounts for 464 persons.

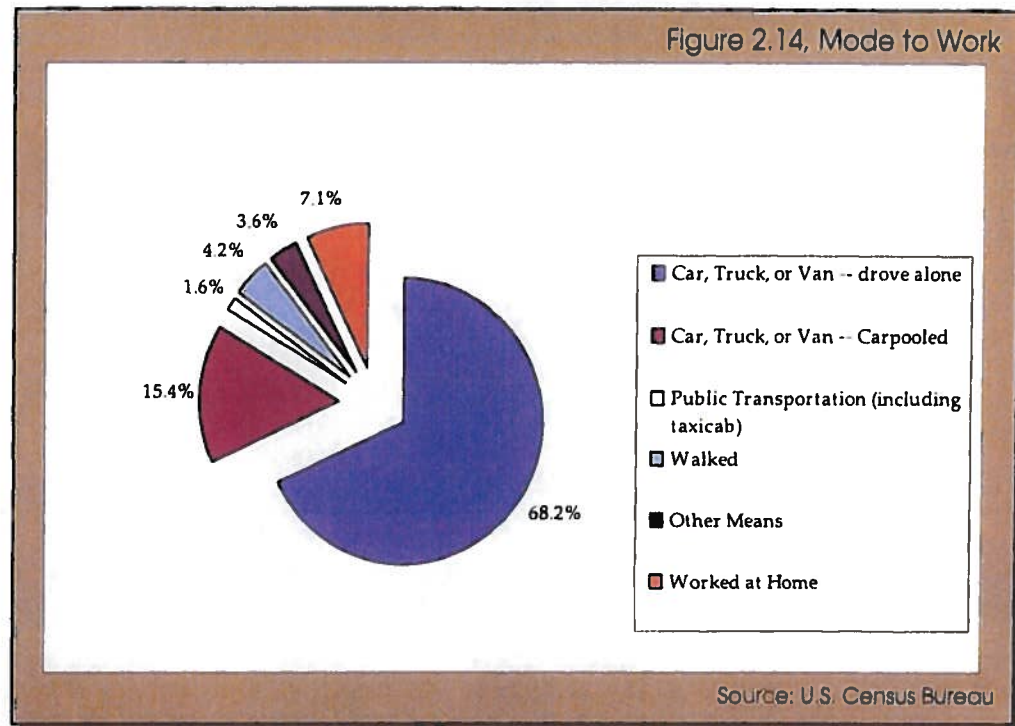
Table 2.2, Vehicle Availability

| Vehicles Available/Unit | Percent |
|-------------------------|---------|
| None | 4.9% |
| 1 | 47.8% |
| 2 | 39.0% |
| 3 | 8.0% |
| 4 | 0.0% |
| 5 or more | 0.4% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

- As displayed by Figure 2.14, **Mode to Work**, 83.6 percent of the Island residents commute to work in a car, truck, or van. Of these commuters,

68.2 percent commute alone, below the national average of 75.7 percent.



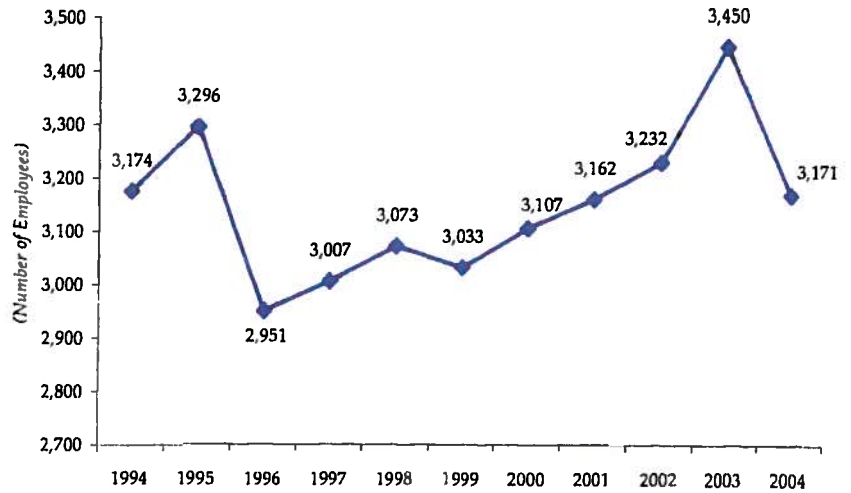
4. Residents who worked from home (7.1 percent) are more than double the national average (3.3 percent). This is an economic development opportunity as outlined in *Chapter 7, Economic Development*. It also created a market opportunity for live-work, mixed-use units on the Island.
5. In addition to those who work from home, 4.2 percent of these commuters walk to work on the Island, higher than the national average of 2.9 percent. This correlates to the number of units without a vehicle present.
6. Due to a lack of regional transit for work trips, only 1.6 percent commutes to work via public transportation. As pointed out in *Chapter 4, Mobility Plan*, this is an opportunity and priority for the Island.

Employment Trends

1. Available data indicate two large year-over-year employment decreases: 1995-1996 and 2003-2004. South Padre Island enjoyed steady job growth between those two periods.
2. From 1994 to 2004, the number of private sector jobs located in ZIP code 78597 (South Padre Island) remained virtually unchanged. During the same period, the number of private sector jobs increased 27.6 percent throughout all of Cameron County and 25.8 percent State-wide. (See *Figure 2.15, Private Sector Employment and Job Growth*.)
3. ZIP code level employment data are collected only once per year in mid-March due to the lack of seasonal trends during that time of year in a typical community. Unfortunately, mid-March

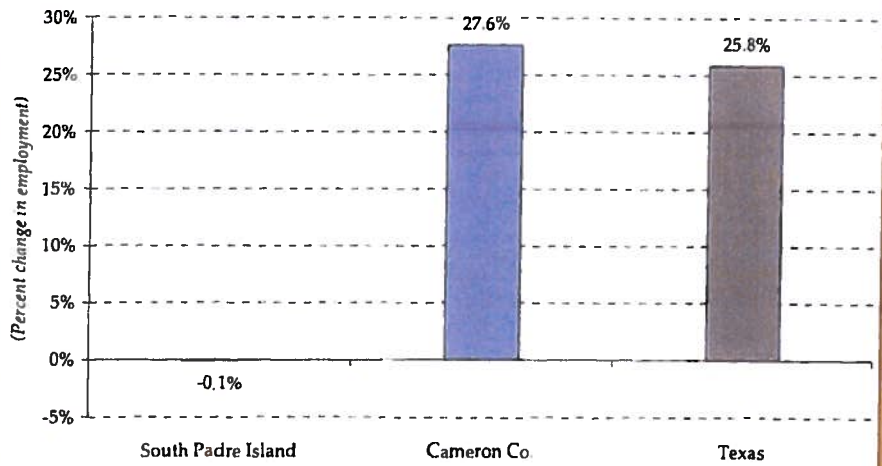
Figure 2.15. Private Sector Employment and Job Growth

**South Padre Island Private Sector Employment
(mid-March in ZIP 78597)**



Source: US Census Bureau (ZIP Code Business Patterns)

Private Sector Job Growth Comparison, 1994-2004



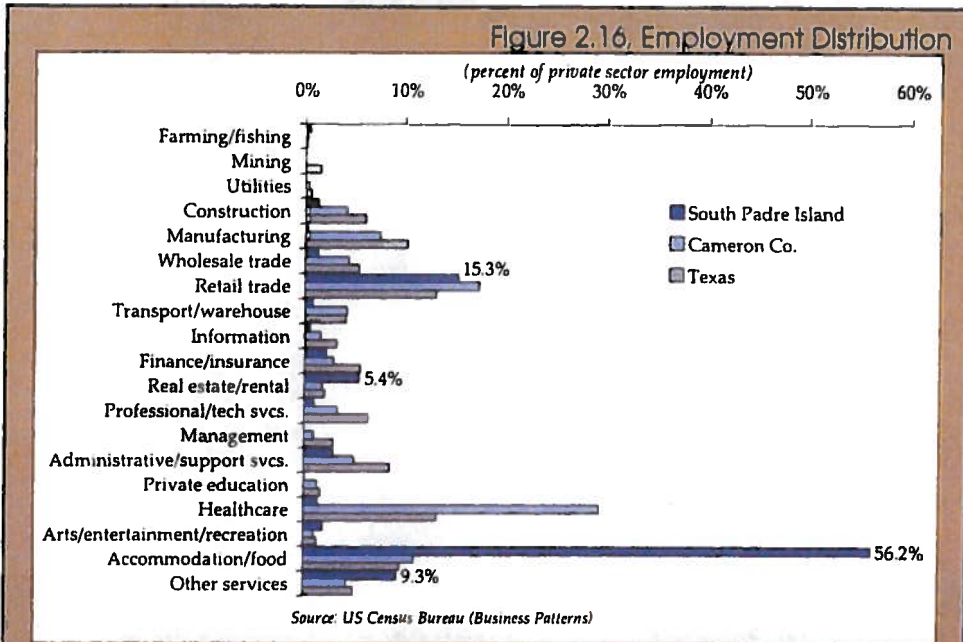
Source: US Census Bureau (Business Patterns)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (Business Patterns) and TIP Strategies, Inc.

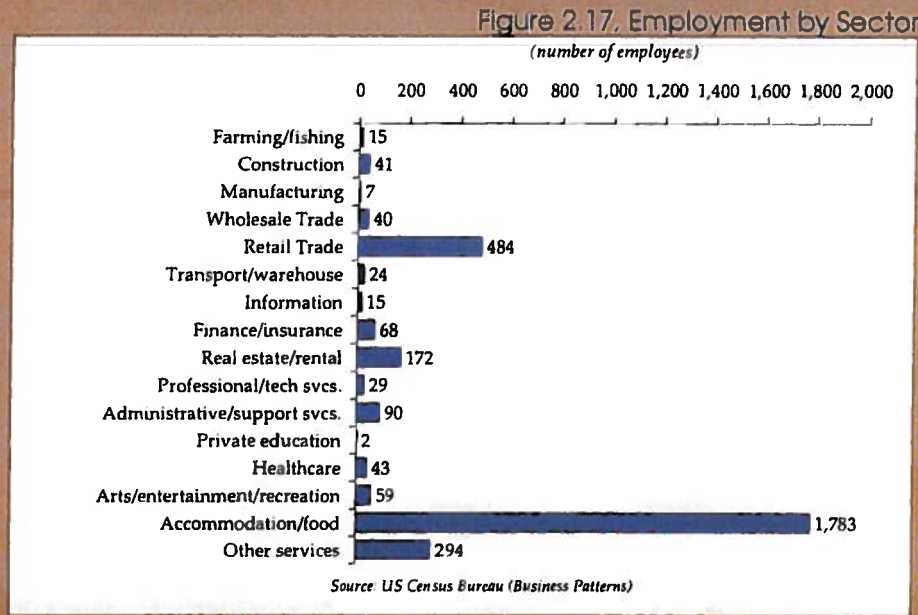
in South Padre Island may not be indicative of employment patterns for the remainder of the year due to the timing of Spring Break.

Employment Distribution

1. The distribution of the number of jobs by employment sector reveals that the local economy is very dependent on tourism, especially during mid-March. For example, as shown in **Figure 2.16, Employment Distribution**, 56 percent of all private sector jobs on the Island were recorded in the Accommodations and



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (Business Patterns) and TIP Strategies, Inc.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (Business Patterns) and TIP Strategies, Inc.

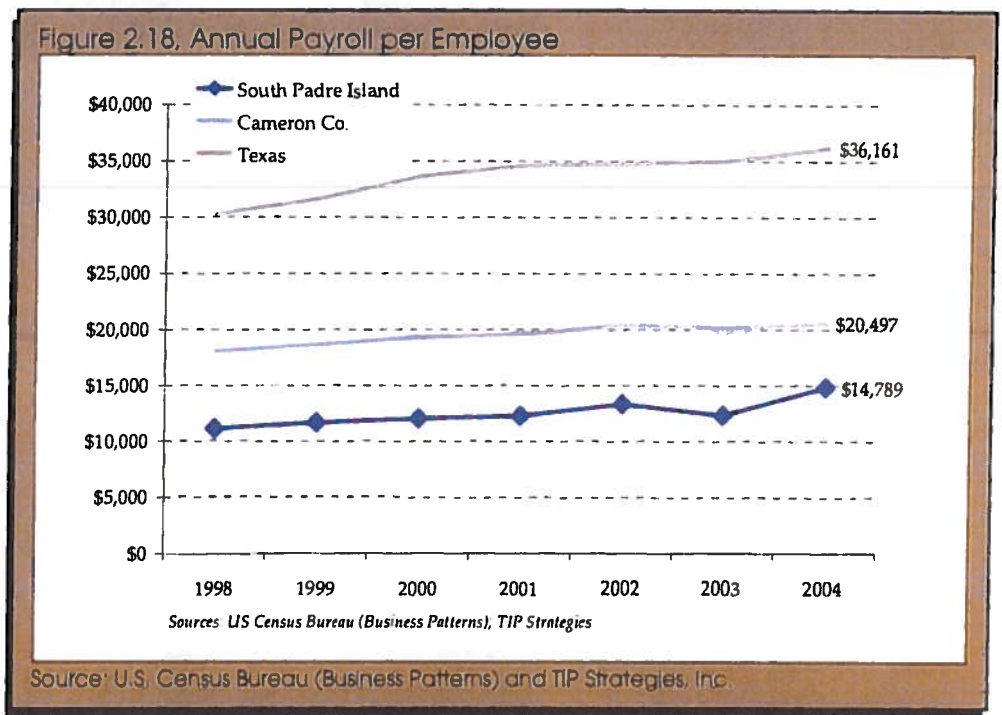
Food Services (hotels and restaurants) sector. An additional 15 percent of jobs were in Retail Trade.

- Given the Island's status as a tourism destination, as shown by Figure 2.17, Employment by Sector, the low share of workers employed in Arts/Entertainment/Recreation is surprising, and, thus, provides an economic opportunity.
- Slightly more than 5.4 percent of jobs located on the Island were in the Real Estate sector, which is more than twice the

percentage in Cameron County or State-wide. This indicates the strong role that real estate development and sales play in the local economy.

Local Area Payroll

1. In 2004, exhibited by Figure 2.18, Annual Payroll per Employee, the average annual payroll per private sector worker was \$14,789 on the Island, compared to \$20,497 County-wide and \$36,161 State-wide.
2. This discrepancy in wages is likely due to the high concentration of jobs in Accommodations and Foods Services, which is a low-paying sector. In addition, it is common for waiters and waitresses to not report their tips. Regardless, the



average annual payroll on South Padre Island increased \$3,700 from 1998 to 2004, a greater dollar amount than County-wide.

Regional Occupation & Wages

1. An analysis of occupational data for the Rio Grande Valley (Cameron and Hidalgo Counties) reveals that the highest paying jobs in the region are typically in Management, Professional, and Technical fields, which tend to require advanced training and higher education. On average, these professions pay approximately \$46,000 per year in the region (Figure 2.19, Occupational Employment & Wage Estimates).

Figure 2.19. Occupational Employment & Wage Estimates

| | Employment | % of Total Employment | Avg. Ann. Wage | Net chg. 2002-2012 | % chg. 2002-2012 |
|---|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|
| ALL OCCUPATIONS | 310,020 | | \$26,034 | 72,700 | 21.9% |
| MANAGEMENT, PROFESSIONAL & TECHNICAL | 74,930 | 24.2% | \$45,967 | 27,550 | 28.6% |
| Management | 10,120 | 3.3% | \$67,097 | 4,150 | 21.3% |
| Business and Financial Operations | 5,670 | 1.8% | \$41,816 | 2,100 | 27.6% |
| Computer and Mathematical | 1,440 | 0.5% | \$45,368 | 1,000 | 35.7% |
| Architecture and Engineering | 1,540 | 0.5% | \$42,422 | 600 | 23.5% |
| Life, Physical, and Social Science | 1,000 | 0.3% | \$42,993 | 350 | 26.9% |
| Community and Social Services | 3,520 | 1.1% | \$35,683 | 1,400 | 28.0% |
| Legal | 1,460 | 0.5% | \$59,588 | 450 | 20.9% |
| Education, Training, and Library | 31,790 | 10.3% | \$35,821 | 10,800 | 30.0% |
| Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media | 2,170 | 0.7% | \$28,379 | 600 | 21.1% |
| Healthcare Practitioner and Technical | 16,220 | 5.2% | \$58,055 | 6,100 | 36.4% |
| SERVICE | 86,170 | 27.8% | \$16,716 | 24,400 | 30.7% |
| Healthcare Support | 15,880 | 5.1% | \$16,265 | 5,950 | 48.8% |
| Protective Service | 9,480 | 3.1% | \$32,093 | 2,650 | 32.9% |
| Food Preparation and Serving | 27,370 | 8.8% | \$14,457 | 5,000 | 19.0% |
| Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance | 10,130 | 3.3% | \$15,987 | 2,100 | 18.3% |
| Personal Care and Service | 23,310 | 7.5% | \$13,738 | 8,700 | 40.7% |
| SALES & OFFICE | 84,770 | 27.3% | \$21,636 | 11,450 | 13.7% |
| Sales and Related | 32,460 | 10.5% | \$21,317 | 6,050 | 16.8% |
| Office and Administrative Support | 52,310 | 16.9% | \$21,835 | 5,400 | 11.3% |
| "BLUE COLLAR" | 64,160 | 20.7% | \$21,058 | 9,250 | 12.8% |
| Farming, Fishing, and Forestry | 3,550 | 1.1% | \$13,391 | 900 | 12.9% |
| Construction and Extraction | 12,100 | 3.9% | \$21,869 | 2,750 | 18.6% |
| Installation, Maintenance, and Repair | 11,160 | 3.6% | \$25,114 | 2,250 | 19.8% |
| Production | 15,620 | 5.0% | \$21,206 | 150 | 0.9% |
| Transportation and Material Moving | 21,730 | 7.0% | \$19,668 | 3,200 | 14.4% |

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2005 Wages & Employment estimates for Cameron and Hidalgo Counties); Texas Workforce Commission (Occupation projections for Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy Counties)

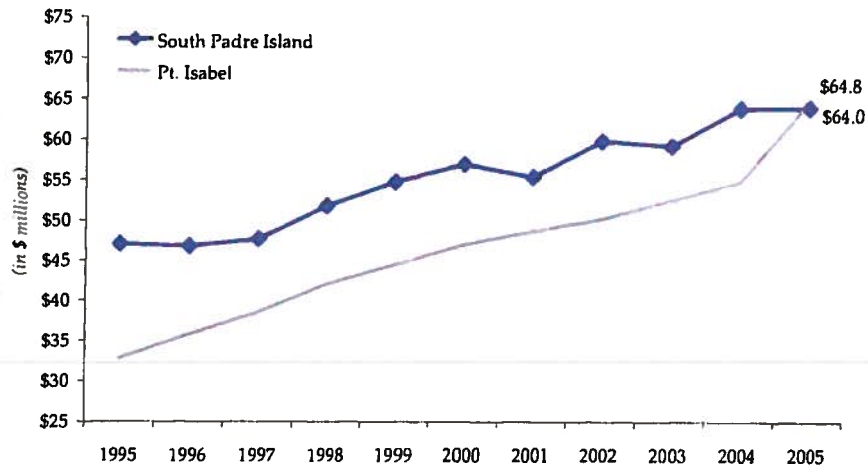
Within this broad category, however, can be found some occupations that pay even higher rates, including Management (\$67,097), Legal (\$59,588), and Healthcare Practitioner and Technical (\$58,055).

- Occupational projections provided by the Texas Workforce Commission indicate that higher paying fields will also tend to be the fastest growing through 2012. For example, Management, Professional, and Technical occupations are expected to add over 27,000 jobs from 2002 through 2012, a 28.6 percent growth rate. This would equal nearly 38 percent of all new occupations throughout the region.
- On average, low-paying "Blue Collar" occupations are expected to add the smallest number of new jobs in the region.

Retail Trade

1. During the last ten years, taxable retail sales in South Padre Island climbed steadily, reaching \$64 million in 2005, a 36 percent increase over 1995 (**Figure 2.20, Retail Sales Comparison**).
2. By comparison, taxable retail sales in Port Isabel increased 98 percent during the same period and surpassed South Padre for the first time in 2005. This City's large 2005 increase was undoubtedly related to the opening of the Super Wal-Mart that year.
3. During the same period, the number of retail outlets located on the Island decreased from 222 in 1995 to 181 in 2005, while the number of stores in Port Isabel increased slightly (**Figure 2.21, Comparison in Number of Retail Outlets**).

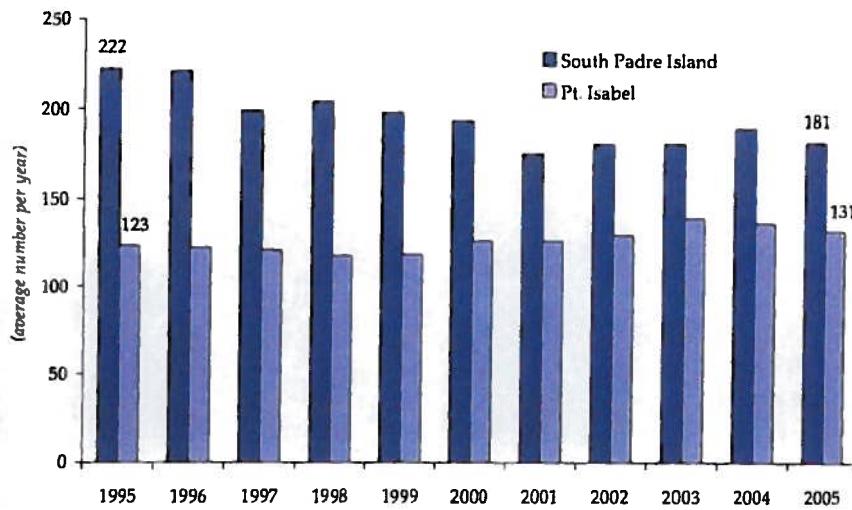
Figure 2.20, Retail Sales Comparison
(amount subject to sales tax)



Source: Texas Comptroller's Office

Source: Texas Comptroller's Office and TIP Strategies, Inc.

Figure 2.21, Comparison in Number of Retail Outlets



Source: Texas Comptroller's Office

Source: Texas Comptroller's Office and TIP Strategies, Inc.



Chapter 3 Land Use

Town of South Padre Island Comprehensive Plan

The purpose of the Land Use Plan is to achieve a preferred and sustainable future for South Padre Island. The plan identifies goals and policies that will enhance South Padre Island's quality of life, respect its unique natural environs, preserve its beautiful setting, and support complementary economic growth and

development.

Premise

Four interacting and inseparable themes are fundamental to sustainable and appropriate Land Use policies and goals:

1. Preserving and enhancing the Quality of Life.
2. Advancing economic growth and development.
3. Creating and preserving a Sense of Place.
4. Preserving our natural assets.

Land use and development of South Padre Island must balance these themes in all its applications.

The Quality of Life

South Padre Island values a welcoming, open, eclectic, tolerant, and relaxing feeling where residents and visitors enjoy an entertaining, interesting, physically active, safe, orderly, and simple life style.

Economic Development

Tourism, real estate development, construction, restaurants, retail trade, and the service industry are key components of a strong economy. A sound, sustainable community relies on strong economic growth to provide jobs, products, services, and a steady revenue source for funding government services and community enhancement.

A Sense of Place

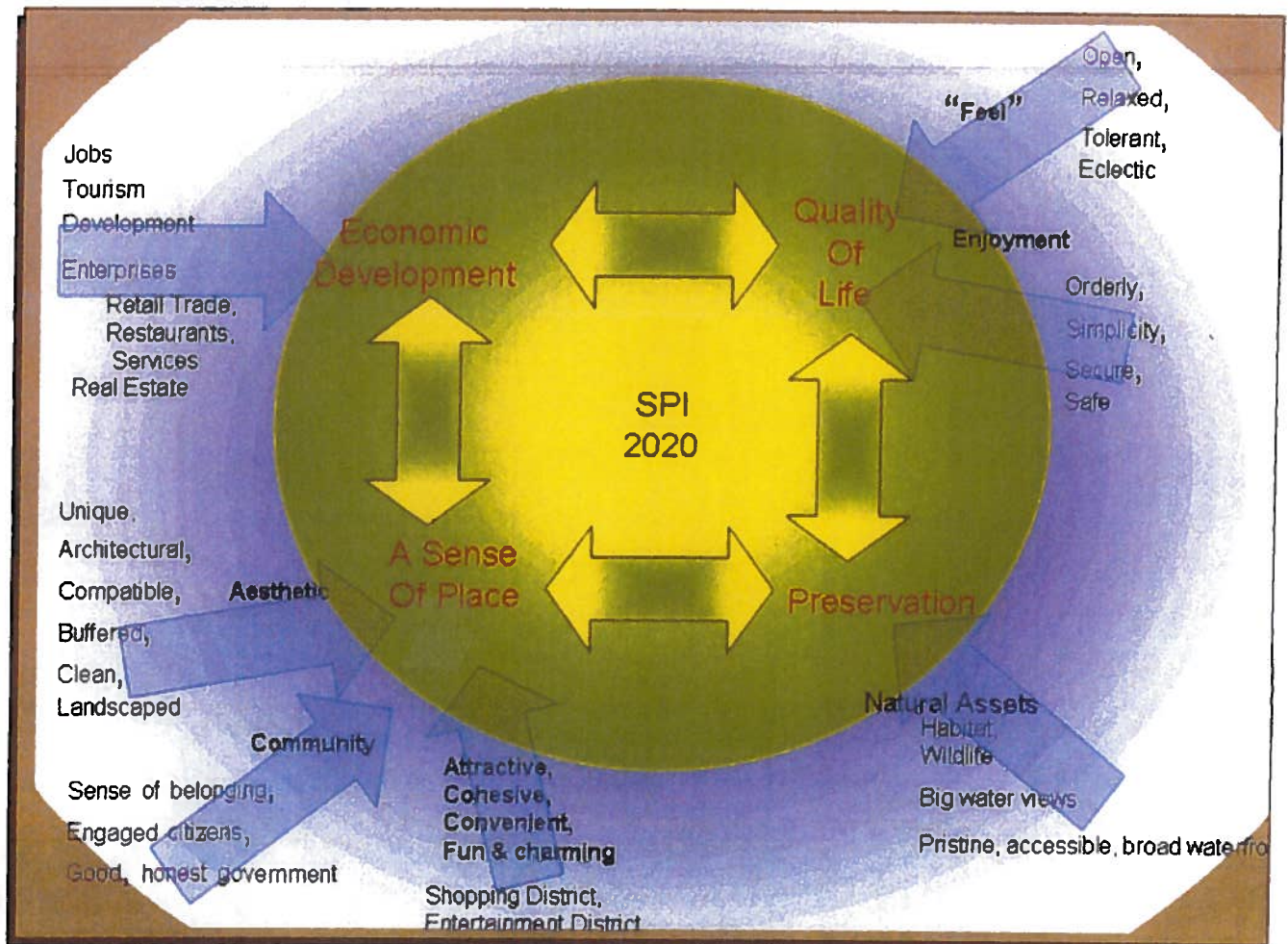
South Padre Island is a unique, naturally beautiful, clean, and cohesive town. It is architecturally interesting with visually attractive environs. Residents are engaged in their community and government and enjoy a sense of belonging. Visitors are drawn to its destination resort qualities and its fun shopping and entertainment districts.

Preservation

The abundance of natural beauty defines the Island: its easily accessible pristine and protected beaches and bayfront, grand vistas, diverse wildlife, marine life, and marine and wetland habitats.

Inseparably Connected

The diagram below demonstrates the reliance of each theme upon all the others to complete a sustainable future plan for South Padre Island. Natural asset preservation contributes to the sense of a unique and beautiful place, which adds greatly to the quality of life and, all taken



together, provides the basis for the "value proposition" for investment and economic development. A strong economy is fundamental to the quality of life, funds preservation efforts, and draws people to the community where they create a sense of place. The intermix of forces is inseparable.

Goals

This policy framework intends to serve as a decision-making guide for the Board of Aldermen, Town staff, and the Planning and Zoning Commission as they implement the Comprehensive Plan. Actions and policies should coincide with the four fundamental themes for a sustainable, preferred future for South Padre Island and consider economic, environmental, and social impacts.

- 3.A. Land uses should harmonize so as not to detract from the enjoyment and value of surrounding properties.
- 3.B. Land uses should concentrate similar uses and densities. Where mixed uses are the intended use, the physical appearance should be cohesive and coordinated.
- 3.C. Commercial and residential development should encourage a walking and bicycling convenience and experience.
- 3.D. Development zoning patterns should provide for suitable transitions and buffering between land uses and densities.
- 3.E. To preserve views and enhance values, in the northern extraterritorial areas of the Town, development should favor more dense, high-rise buildings on the inland center of the Island and mid-rise and low-rise structures toward the Bay and Gulf shores.
- 3.F. Development or redevelopment of "infill" lots, within a zone, should consider similar scale and density of surrounding properties.
- 3.G. High-density housing development should be concentrated where roadway and utility infrastructure and off-street parking can support it.
- 3.H. Development should favor districts over strip centers.
- 3.I. Small-scale neighborhood retail and service facilities should be located at the edge of neighborhoods at busy intersections.
- 3.J. Development should preserve and enhance the physical environment and natural features of the Island. Nature reserve areas, greenbelts, and open areas should be set

- aside for preservation and recreation and to be used as buffering areas.
- 3.K. Public beaches and bayfront shores, dunes, views, access, and ecological health should be proactively preserved and protected.
 - 3.L. Zoning should be flexible enough to allow for building alternatives that provide open space and views.

Recommended Actions

Standards of Land Use

- 3.1. Preserve the conformity and integrity of the existing development
- 3.2. Provide for increased buffering between zoning districts
- 3.3. Allow increased flexibility while also establishing improved minimum standards
- 3.4. Streamline the review and permitting process
- 3.5. Collaborate with neighbors and property owners prior to altering present land uses in a zoning district

Appearance & Redevelopment of Existing Structures and Properties

- 3.6. Develop and implement a "Main Street" enhancement program
- 3.7. Enhance the standards and appearance of public rights-of-way and properties
- 3.8. Provide for reuse and redevelopment of older and under-utilized structures
- 3.9. Establish and enforce landscaping requirements

Development and Preservation

- 3.10. Improve the quality appearance of new development
- 3.11. Protect sensitive lands and conserve natural resources
- 3.12. Use incentives and bonuses to encourage enhancements, preservation, and open space
- 3.13. Encourage imaginative and "unique" subdivision designs.
- 3.14. Accumulate land throughout the Town to facilitate the building of additional public tourist attractions such as: parks, bay front access, facilities with educational exhibits, an amphitheater,

performing arts theater, historical museum and public boat ramps.

- 3.15. Encourage "Green" development and enhancement (energy, waste handling, renewable resources)

Plan Implementation

- 3.16. Amend the development ordinances to implement this plan
- 3.17. Continue to enforce Town ordinances and regulations consistently and equally
- 3.18. Establish a review process to assess and re-evaluate the plan every five years, or sooner as needed
- 3.19. Add an emergency beach re-nourishment strategy to the Town's Emergency Management Plan that, in advance, sets up a coordinated response from the Brownsville Navigation District, the Army Corp of Engineers, the Texas General Land Office, and any other agency or party whose participation is needed in order to begin immediate recovery action after natural disasters.

THE IDEAL

The four themes, the policies recommended, and the goals targeted intend to define and encourage development and land use on South Padre Island that by 2020 would have the following ideal characteristics:

1. An attractive, close together, walk-able shopping districts
2. A community commons area: gathering, market, recreation, nature
3. Grand vistas of Gulf and Bay
4. Attractive, interesting architecture and layouts
5. Attractive, charming, aesthetic main street
6. Wildlife (bird, marine, other) preserved and increased
7. Wide, clean, accessible waterfront, beaches
8. Broad use of renewable energy, conservation
9. More permanent residents
10. A greener island, lush native vegetation
11. Integration of SPI into RGV and border life; inclusiveness
12. Full, year round employment
13. Strong year round economy, tourism
14. Family owned/original local character businesses

15. Clear and equally applied rules and regulations
16. Open spaces and public parks
17. Entertainment district
18. Recreation venues
19. Pedestrian-, cyclist-friendly paths and roads
20. Uncongested roads
21. Fun mass transit
22. Events, festivals, concerts, more arts, culture
23. Increased basic services, including medical
24. Transparent, effective, responsive, democratic, ethical, government
25. Safe, peaceful
26. Involved, engaged citizens
27. Small Town feeling
28. Open, eclectic, inviting, embracing community



Chapter 4 Mobility

Town of South Padre Island Comprehensive Plan

Due to the uniqueness of this barrier island and its growing popularity as a place to live and visit, the term transportation conveys a different meaning. In light of new development and continuing growth in visitation, the plan for future mobility is of essential importance. In addition to improvements to the street system, there must be a renewed focus on walking, bicycling, and transit. The plan devotes increased attention to all modes of transport. A well-planned and designed transportation system will also contribute to the character of the Island and its quality of life.

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to plan for the short-term demands and long-range mobility needs of the Island. Its transportation system is unique and, thus, requires a different approach. While the street system will remain important, so is each of the other modes. Walking and bicycling deserve increased attention to establish them as a viable alternative to the vehicle. Coupled with a sound pedestrian system is a reliable, convenient, and highly accessible public transportation system. Complementary options include taxicabs, pedicabs, and water taxis. Therefore, the plan for enhanced mobility must balance all transportation modes.

This chapter includes the Town's long-range plan for developing an efficient roadway network. This will be an increasingly important means of planning as development expands northward into the extraterritorial jurisdiction and to tie into the proposed second causeway. The plan will be a guide for securing rights-of-way and upgrading and extending the network of streets throughout the 20-year planning area. Transportation infrastructure must be planned well in advance of development to ensure orderly and timely improvements as the mobility and access needs continue to increase.

A Thoroughfare Plan assures development of the most efficient and appropriate street system necessary to meet existing and future travel needs. Its primary objective is to ensure that adequate rights-of-way are preserved on appropriate alignments and of sufficient width to allow the orderly and efficient improvement of the thoroughfare system.

Mobility Issues

The following mobility issues need to be addressed:

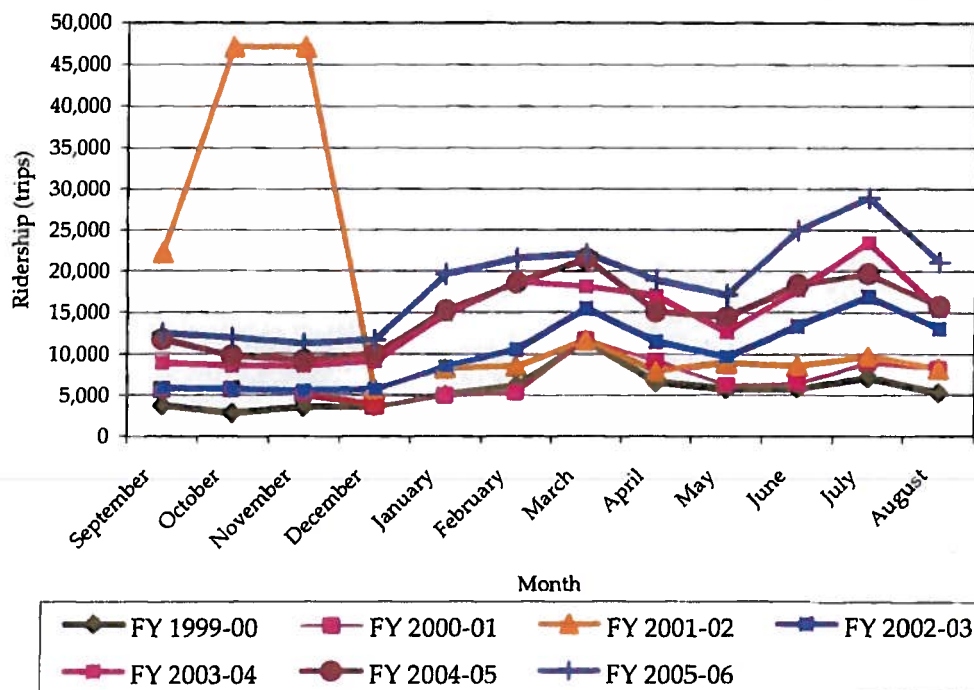
1. **Improved causeway access to the Island:** In 2004, there were 7.8 million causeway crossings, which are projected to reach 9.8 million by the Year 2015 and 11.5 million by the Year 2025.¹ This projection indicates an increase from 21,370 to 31,507 average crossings per day, which reflects a 147 percent increase. With the breach of the Queen Isabella Causeway in September 2001, the need for a second causeway became more apparent than ever. While the location of a new causeway is yet to be determined, there remains diligent study for environmental clearance. The location of the new causeway is critical to the future of the Town of South Padre Island. The only island location that will serve the current and future needs of the Town is north of the Convention Centre. From there, the location of the causeway should cross the Laguna Madre to Holly Beach on the mainland side, and tie into Farm Road 510 and Farm Road 106, giving direct access to Expressway 77/83 in San Benito and the Harlingen International Airport. The corridor should not be Highway 100 or Highway 48; both highways become frequently congested with traffic, which will create serious problems in the event of emergency evacuation of the island. The second causeway will provide congestion relief for the Queen Isabella Causeway, improve hurricane evacuation, and facilitate economic growth. Continuous planning and networking with other planning authorities is essential to mitigate the probable impacts of this project on the Island's natural and built environments.
2. **Public Amenities:** Public way-finding signage needs to be installed to give directions for general destinations, goods, and services. Introducing shaded walkways, rest areas, benches, and public art will create an environment conducive to walking.
3. **Improved Local Transit Usage:** Since 1999, the average monthly ridership on The WAVE has increased 223 percent, from 5,514 to 12,314 riders, as displayed in **Figure 4.1, Ridership on The WAVE**; yet, there still remains a significant latent demand by of thousands of daily visitors. In addition, there are roughly 6,000 employees on the Island, many of whom commute daily from throughout the Valley. Seizing this demand as a means to reduce vehicle trips, congestion, and parking demands is an opportunity, as well as a challenge. Keeping pace with the vehicle and infrastructure needs and requisite funding will require added resources. Another opportunity exists to convey a fun, friendly

Dependence upon the automobile has not come without cost – a cost that is being realized in the form of increased taxes, reduced levels of public services such as police and fire protection, less affordable housing, degradation of green space and environmentally sensitive areas, pollution of air and water, and many other

¹ Comprehensive Resort Market Analysis, THK Associates, Inc., September 20, 2005

and interesting image of the Island through the type of vehicles purchased and used (i.e. trolley buses or trolley look-alike buses, or double decker buses), and the construction and design of transit shelters.

Figure 4.1, Ridership on The WAVE



Source: Town of South Padre Island

4. **Enhanced Pedestrian Environment:** The volume of daily visitors heightens the importance of pedestrian mobility. The density of development and the proximity between many origins and destinations makes walking a viable option; however, for it to be an attractive option, pedestrian ways must be safe, convenient, and inviting. Overcoming challenges such as high-traffic streets, driveways, public streets, and a lack of sidewalks on the side streets, must become a priority.
5. **Safe and Efficient Traffic Movement:** Efficient traffic movement is essential to the economy and contributes to the experience of visitors and the quality of life of residents. The street system must be designed to effectively convey traffic on an ordinary day, as well as during peak periods. The traffic carrying capacity of each street must be preserved and/or enhanced for the system to operate efficiently. Because of the linear nature of the island and its natural constraints, relatively few options exist to expand the street system.

GOALS

The Cameron County RMA was formally established on September 30, 2004. Their purpose is to provide the area with an opportunity to significantly accelerate needed transportation projects. The RMA is working closely with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) on the second causeway to South Padre Island, which is one of their top two current priority projects.

Goals and Recommendations

Access to the Island

- 4.A. Continue to be involved in the feasibility studies and in the planning process for the second causeway.
- 4.B. Continue to work to assure that the second causeway is located north of the Convention Centre and that it integrates into the local transportation system as seamlessly as possible.
- 4.C. Implement sensitive planning and stewardship of the causeway environs
- 4.D. Include pedestrian and bicycle access across any bridge(s)
- 4.E. Expand transit opportunities within the Valley, to and from the Island, to form a network of transit routes, focusing especially on connections with the area airports

Recommended Actions

- 4.1. Appoint a liaison to the Cameron County Regional Mobility Authority (CCRMA) to regularly attend their board meetings.
- 4.2. Support regional planning and inter-agency cooperation to improve valley wide transportation to the island, access to the airport, and public education regarding such services.
- 4.3. Upon completion of the preliminary alternatives and environmental analyses² and again at the stage of the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS), contract a planning consultant to conduct an independent assessment of the analyses and findings and outline the probable impacts. The purpose of this evaluation is for continuous review and advanced planning commensurate with the recommendations of the causeway studies.
- 4.4. Develop and periodically review the Town and the RMA's Thoroughfare Plan(s) and make amendments as the final alignment(s) is/are determined.
- 4.5. Prepare comments during the mandated public comment period for the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS).
- 4.6. Make definitive plans to meet with owners of property north of The SHORES Subdivision in an effort to educate them on the Goals of this plan, specifically in regards to the Town's

² This study, commissioned by the RMA, was commenced in January 2007.

Thoroughfare Plan, to see how the Town can assist in the design phase of the development process.

Improved Pedestrian Friendliness

- 4.F. Provide a safe and attractive environment for walking and bicycling
- 4.G. Encourage transportation forms other than the automobile
- 4.H. Develop walking and biking paths that are coordinated with existing businesses, residences, street infrastructure, and transit opportunities and that contribute to the character and identity of the Island and the individual corridors on which the paths are located.

Recommended Actions

- 4.7. Coordinate with TxDOT to request funding for the reconstruction/replacement of the sidewalks and landscaping on Padre Boulevard.
- 4.8. Prepare a landscape/hardscape design plan along each of the public rights-of-way. The plan should specify native plant materials, hardscape surface treatments, irrigation, pedestrian and street lighting, and signage.
- 4.9. Enhance existing bike lanes on major thoroughfares; promote bike use and add bicycle racks at beach access points and public facilities, and encourage businesses to do the same.
- 4.10. Develop a capital sidewalk improvement plan. The highest priority is Padre Boulevard followed by Gulf Boulevard and the east-west connectors planned for full median access. Laguna Boulevard would closely follow in priority. The remaining east-west streets are a secondary priority.
- 4.11. Consider a redesign of Gulf Boulevard to include, possibly, a serpentine alignment within the public right-of-way. The plan should consider the following: sidewalks, landscaping, signage, and trolley stops; parking on the west side of Gulf Boulevard; parallel parking in low-density areas; and diagonal parking in higher-density areas.



Xeriscape promotes creative approaches to water conserving landscapes by helping people improve their landscapes and reduce the need for water, maintenance, and other resources.

- 4.12. Coordinate with the Cameron County Regional Mobility Authority (CCRMA) and TxDOT to accommodate an eight-foot, barrier-separated walkway/bikeway on the second causeway.
- 4.13. Consider implementing traffic calming measures where needed.
- 4.14. Clearly delineate sidewalks, trails, and bike lanes.
- 4.15. Amend the subdivision regulations as follows:
 - a. Require sidewalks on both sides of arterial and collector streets and one side of local streets. Consider the use of alternative materials that are sturdy yet pervious.
 - b. In all new subdivisions, encourage pedestrian easements between properties that abut an open space, at the end of cul-de-sacs, and with streets greater than 600 ft in length.
 - c. Develop right-of-way and pavement cross sections for all street types, including alternatives for Planned Development Districts (PDDs) and defined situations, i.e. changes in density, etc.
 - d. Incorporate specifications for crosswalk improvements including pavement texturing and/or striping, signage and warning lights, pedestrian and bicycle actuated signals, and curb cuts and handicap accessible ramps.
- 4.16. Require sidewalks crossing driveway entrances to comply with accessibility standards. Furthermore, require that the sidewalk is constructed with a unique surface and/or color to alert motorists to the crossing and to serve as a design feature.
- 4.17. Initiate plans to construct a boardwalk along the shoreline of Laguna Madre within the entertainment district. Connect it with a larger pedestrian network across the Island.

Expand Local Transit Services

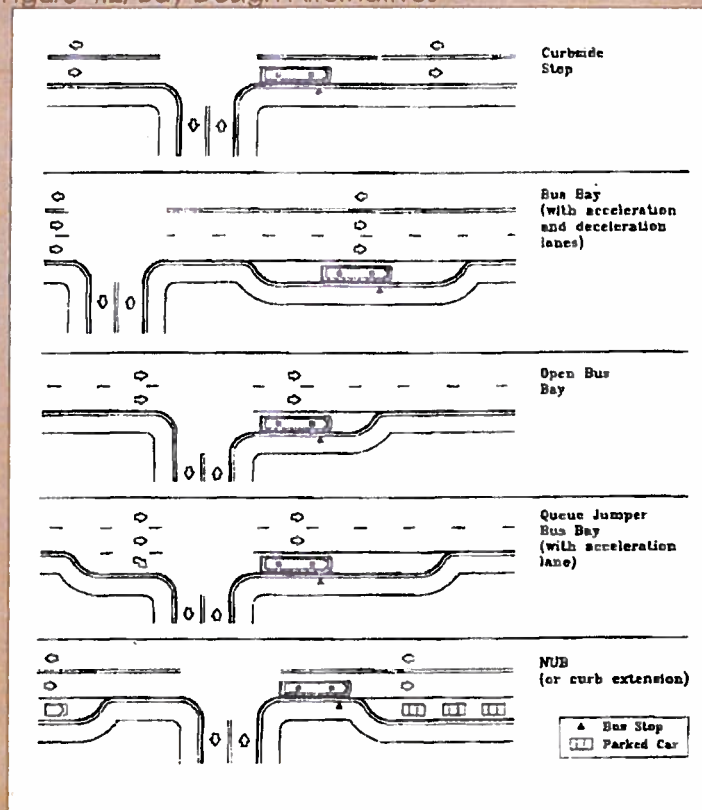
- 4.I. Increase ridership on The WAVE by both residents and visitors
- 4.J. Expand public transportation options
- 4.K. Improve transit facilities
- 4.L. Identify potential funding sources
- 4.M. Improve regional coordination and communication among transit providers
- 4.N. Increase public awareness of transportation services

GOALS

Recommended Actions

- 4.18. Seek coordinative opportunities for expanding the reach of The WAVE through increased interface with other transit providers and neighboring communities.
- 4.19. Devote increased attention to the regional transit coordination committee sponsored by TxDOT, including interlocal agreements and joint use arrangements with other providers. Seek shared services such as employee recruitment, training, and licensing programs; and vehicle procurement, transfers, and maintenance.
- 4.20. Investigate the feasibility of commuter routes from Brownsville and Harlingen-San Benito for employment transportation. Conduct an intercept survey to solicit information as to commuter trip purpose, origin and destination, and other factors. Utilize the survey to target the market area and potential users for use of a commuter service. Encourage employers to develop a rideshare program where employees are matched with one another to carpool to work.
- 4.21. Work with TxDOT to develop design standards and to determine possible sites to install bus pull-out bays (refer to **Figure 4.2, Bay Design Alternatives**) along Padre Boulevard. Mark transit stops as appropriate. Such improvements are also advisable along Gulf and Laguna Boulevards.
- 4.22. Improve transit stops by incorporating sidewalks, curb cuts, handicap accessible ramps, non-slip surfaces, marked signed and/or signaled crossings.
- 4.23. Explore the feasibility of a multi-use facility that may serve as a new transit vehicle storage facility for The WAVE and a public parking garage, along with mixed retail, office, and upper floor living uses. The facility may also serve as a center for taxicab, pedicab, and water ferry operators, a commuter service, and tour operators.
- 4.24. Solicit private enterprise to initiate

Figure 4.2, Bay Design Alternatives



Source: Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Report 19, Federal Transit Administration



The design of transit shelters contributes to their visibility and can relate to the Island's identity.

added public transportation services, with start-up funds, low-interest loans, and other financial incentives.

- 4.25. In order to continue to strive to improve the service, the following should be conducted on a yearly basis:
 - a. Evaluate the performance of the fixed route and establish service standards;
 - b. identify route modifications and new routes;
 - c. identify infrastructure needs;
 - d. research coordinative opportunities with other area providers;
 - e. analyze commuting patterns and assess the feasibility of commuter routes;
 - f. analyze fuel alternatives;
 - g. recommend vehicle types and specifications; and
 - h. recommend revenue options and funding strategies.
- 4.26. Solicit the involvement of the arts community in the design of custom transit shelters that relate to the identity of the Island.
- 4.27. Develop a shelter replacement program beginning on Padre Boulevard followed in priority by the stops with the highest use and public visibility.
- 4.28. Request businesses to participate in funding expanded transit services. As an incentive, offer parking credits to reduce the required parking commensurate with their employee and patron use.
- 4.29. Execute a marketing campaign to inform the public as to The WAVE and its schedule, the connection in Port Isabel, and future service expansions. Accommodate Island employees followed by daily visitors and tourists. The marketing should include a web-based campaign, transit kiosks, and way-finding signage for stop locations.

Efficient and well-managed traffic

- 4.O. Preserve the traffic carrying capacities of roadways by preventing encroachments on the public right-of-way and limiting the number of driveways.
- 4.P. Ensure suitable street infrastructure commensurate with traffic demands and volumes
- 4.Q. Plan In advance for an efficient street network
- 4.R. Implement up-to-date transportation policies and standards
- 4.S. Enhance street right-of-way appearance and contribution to Town character

GOALS

Recommended Actions

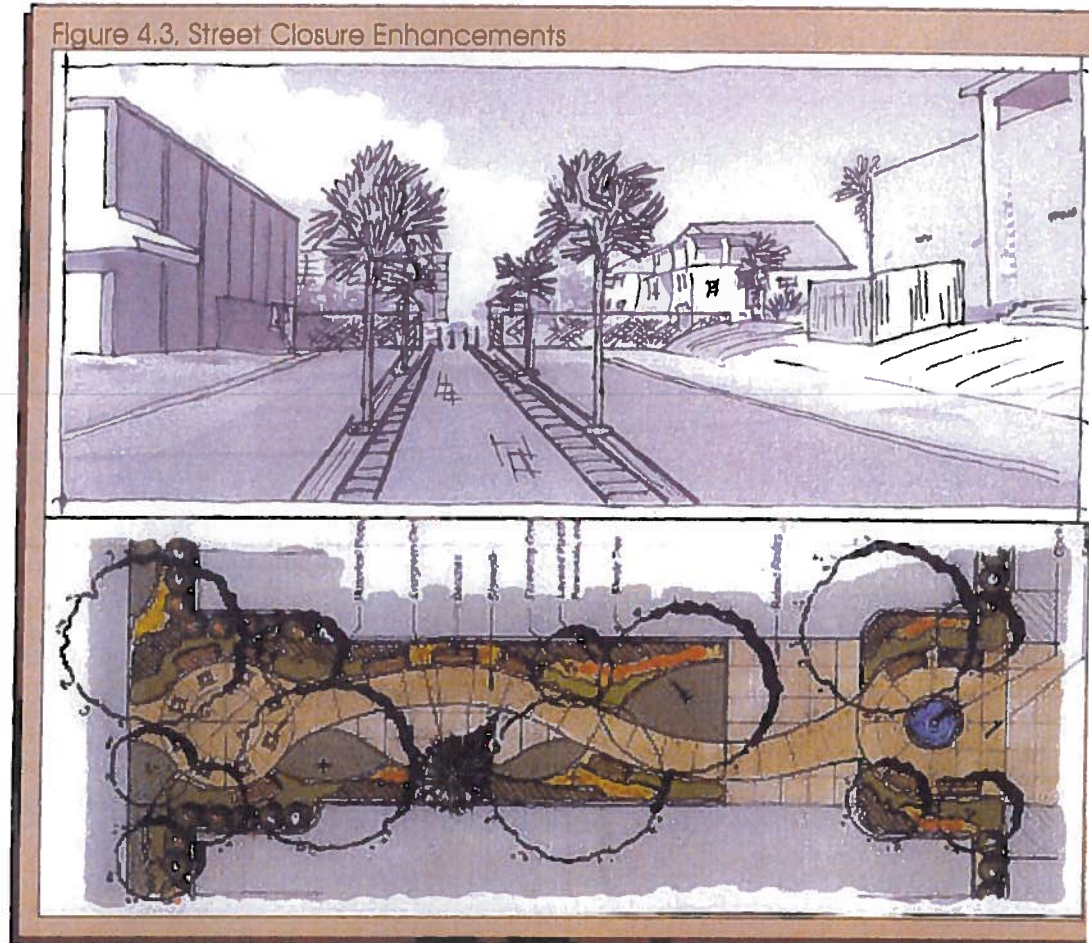
- 4.30. Amend the subdivision regulations as follows:
- a. Require private streets to conform to public street standards.
 - b. Allow varying local street widths in the Planned Development District (PDD), whereby the number of dwelling units and the average lot frontages determine the street right-of-way, pavement width, parking lanes, and sidewalks.
 - c. Incorporate the traffic impact report (TIR) provisions now located within the Standards and Specifications for the Acceptance of Public Improvements.
 - d. Require a general development plan for multi-phased development, which ensures compliance with the policies of this plan. Authorize the Town to develop small area street plans to allow staff to determine a street layout plan for areas warranting special study.
 - e. Require shared driveways and cross-access easements between abutting nonresidential and high-density residential properties.
 - f. Incorporate provisions for other types of plats as allowed by State law, including minor plats, replats, vacating plats, development plats, and amending plats, to offer streamlined review, which, in many cases, can be handled administratively.
 - g. Require gated communities to conform to the Town's Thoroughfare Plan to assure any and all streets necessary to allow for multiple paths of travel, whether public or private, are kept open for the public's use.
- 4.31. Adopt driveway regulations to restrict their number, location, and spacing, street intersections, and median openings. The regulations should provide for parallel access roads and/or cross access easements as methods to minimize the number of driveways.
- 4.32. Coordinate with TxDOT to identify opportunities for consolidation of driveways and other means of access other than directly from Padre Boulevard. As displayed by **Figure 4.4, Access Consolidation**, vacating right-of-way may reduce the number of access points from three to one without affecting property ingress/ egress.
- 4.33. Coordinate with TxDOT to put in signs, street lighting, and crosswalks where warranted as area travel volumes increase along Padre Boulevard.
- 4.34. Improve street lighting, especially along the side streets.

Joint access means a shared driveway that may serve more than one parcel. **Cross access** is a drive providing access between two or more contiguous sites so the driver need not enter the public street. A **parallel access road** is an auxiliary road located on one side of an arterial street for providing access to the abutting properties.

Street Closures / Cul-de-sacs

“Street Closures/ Cul-de-sacs” are neither good nor bad per se; however, location can transform each into real problems for residents. The Town’s policy regarding street closures should be a function of location, and the policy decision in each area should respond to clearly defined objectives.

Figure 4.3, Street Closure Enhancements



Location, Location, Location

In evaluating the utility of street closures, the Town can be considered as two distinct areas: 1) residential / multi-family and 2) entertainment / commercial. The utility of street closures varies among these areas.

Residential Areas: Single and Multi-family

Closing east-west streets in the current residential areas presents various issues. These concerns include increased traffic flow on the adjacent and nearby through streets and possible taking or restricting of private property. The increased traffic will have an impact on property values. The closed streets might also be more attractive to pedestrians going to and from the beach, thus

increasing the pedestrian traffic on a closed street. The increased vehicle and pedestrian traffic could change the character of each neighborhood.

Entertainment and Commercial Areas

Closing streets in the entertainment and/or commercial areas may serve a legitimate business interest. The Town should consider first, the public health, safety and welfare and then the desires of the businesses in the area before deciding to close streets seasonally, by time of day, or for special events.

Traffic and Access Management

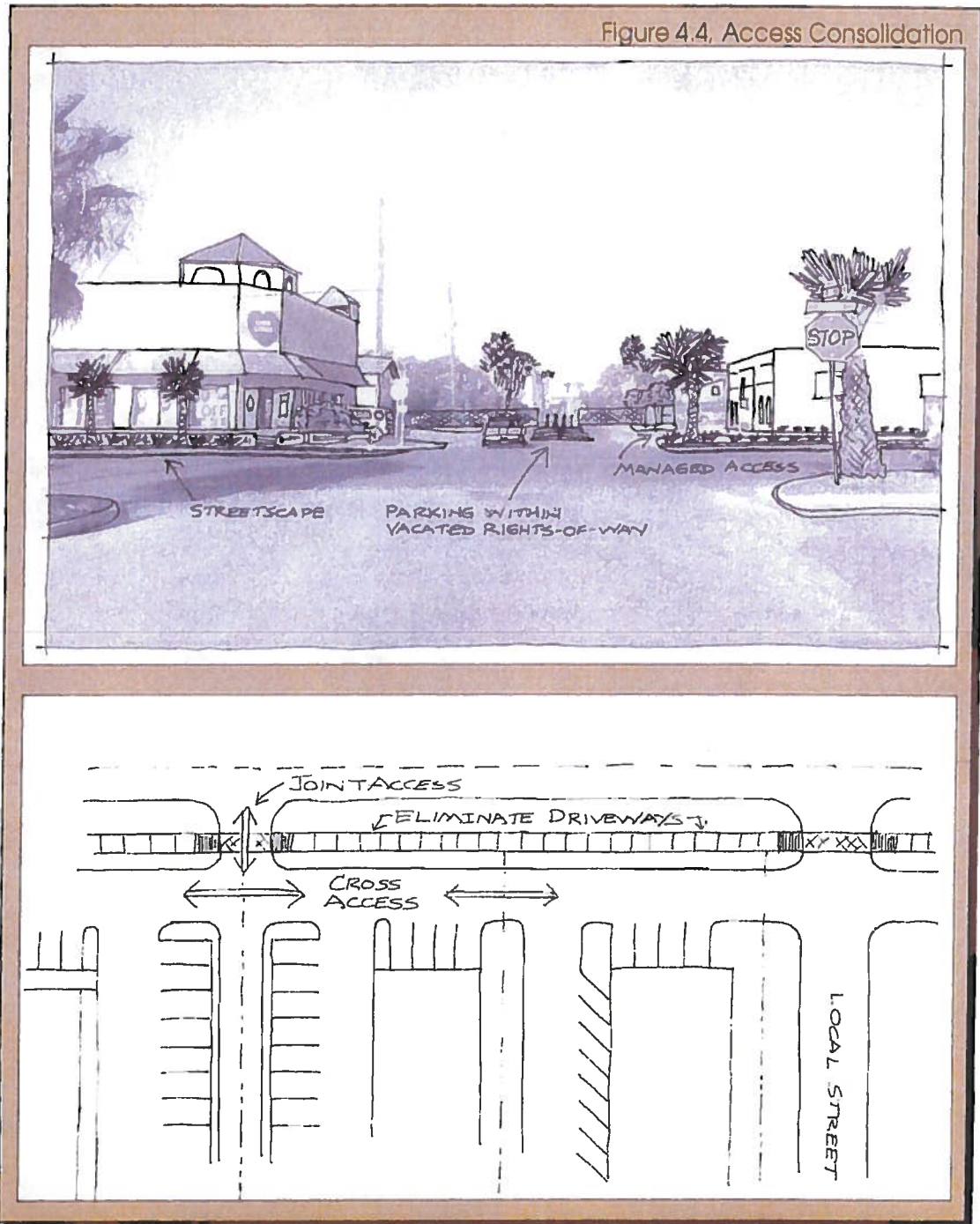
Essential to managing the efficiency of each of the three boulevards is preserving their traffic capacities. Even though these roadways are designed to carry a certain volume of traffic, there are situations that affect their efficiency including:

1. the number of driveways;
2. head-in parking resulting in vehicles using the public right-of-way to maneuver into and out of parking spaces;
3. lane width;
4. synchronization of signals, which will become important as signals are added;
5. number of cross street intersections;
6. allowance for deceleration/acceleration at major access points of ingress and egress, such as The Shores Development; and
7. the presence or nonexistence of a center turn lane or median.

Of relevance to this plan is the management of access along each of the boulevards. There are many examples of head-in parking being accessed by the public right-of-way. While these are required spaces, the Town needs to seek other ways to provide an equivalent number of spaces in a more efficient configuration, such as parallel or diagonal parking. There appears to be an opportunity to convert 90 degree head-in spaces to 60 degree diagonal parking, allowing an access aisle on site rather than using the street.

While the one block grid of cross streets maximizes access, it allows disruption of traffic flow on Padre Boulevard. Additionally there are a number of driveways accessing Padre Boulevard and Gulf Boulevard which impede traffic flow. One option is to terminate some of the cross streets; distinct neighborhoods would form without having all

Figure 4.4, Access Consolidation



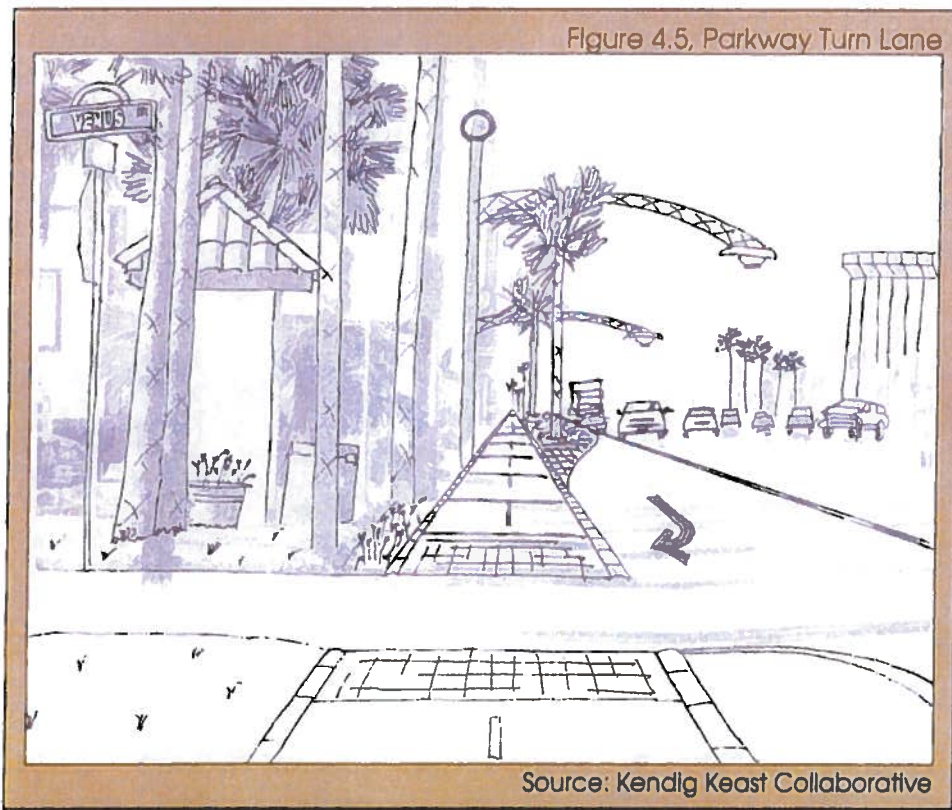
the cut-through traffic. The intersection with Padre Boulevard would then provide shared access to the two abutting properties (businesses), allowing the existing driveways to be closed. A solution for new development is shared driveways. Similarly, cross access between properties is also highly effective.

Access management will become increasingly essential as growth continues to occur. If implemented and properly utilized, access management will effectively manage congestion; protect the capacity

of future streets by controlling access at the time of development; and greatly limit the need for future costly right-of-way acquisition and street widening.

The following access management strategies may be used:

1. Coordinate with TxDOT. Access management along Padre Boulevard must involve TxDOT. Through coordinated efforts, such as the design and improvement of medians, access management may greatly improve the efficiency of this principal arterial roadway.
2. Separate conflict points. Driveways must be spaced such that they are a sufficient distance from the street intersections.
3. Remove turning vehicles from through travel lanes. Left and right turn lanes provide for the deceleration of turning vehicles. A portion of the shoulders along Padre Boulevard may be used for turn lanes at street intersections, as displayed in Figure 4.5, Parkway Turn Lane. Note, however, that this concept may not work if the shoulder of Padre Boulevard is converted to bike lanes, as they are along the southern portion of the Island.
4. Establish design standards - Design standards should address the spacing of driveways, dimensions and radii, sight distance, and the length of turn lanes.



5. Locate and design traffic signals to enhance traffic movement. As more signals are added along Padre Boulevard their spacing and synchronization will become essential.
6. For Commercial Properties, encourage shared driveways, unified site plans, and cross access easements. Joint use of driveways for commercial properties will reduce the number of access points along Padre and Gulf Boulevards, which will reduce congestion, improve travel safety, and delay costly improvements. Such driveway arrangements also encourage shared parking.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Routes and Crossings

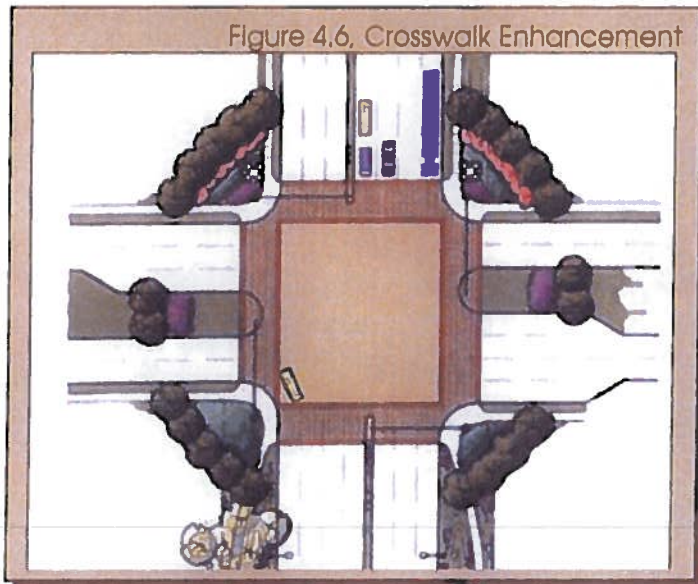
As a resort and visitor destination, sidewalk and trail use is much higher on the Island than elsewhere. To meet the demands, a complete network of sidewalks and trails is needed. The network must link each of the major origins (neighborhoods, hotels/motels, condominiums, RV resorts, etc.) and destinations, such as shopping areas, the entertainment district, parks, and the convention center. Doing so will enable residents and guests to walk or bicycle rather than driving their vehicles.

A prioritized sidewalk and trail network includes:

1. Reconstruction of the sidewalks on both sides of Padre Boulevard. The minimum width should be eight feet and must comply with the Federal accessibility standards. The sidewalks should contribute to the design of the corridor and the alternatives for siting the sidewalks should improve pedestrian safety and increase landscaping.
2. Delineation of a combined eight-foot sidewalk/bikeway along Gulf Boulevard. Due to its proximity to the beach, individual sidewalks and bikeways may or may not be warranted; however, conveniently placed bike racks should be encouraged within all bicycle corridors. To minimize costs, this pedestrian/bicycle corridor can be within the existing 40 feet of paved surface. It must be clearly marked by pavement striping and signage and it must be separated somehow from the travel lanes.
3. Where there are beach accesses, a sidewalk needs to be installed on at least one of the side streets north or south of the beach access in order to connect the beach accesses to Padre Boulevard and eventually to Laguna Boulevard. The Town should base their decision for the sidewalk location on existing

conditions/businesses located along Padre Boulevard and the side streets.

4. Construction of sidewalks on one side of each of the local streets between Padre Boulevard and Laguna Boulevard.



Crosswalk Improvements

All crosswalks must be clearly delineated. Given the Island's environment, thermal plastic striping or other durable and visible materials are recommended. Newly constructed streets and intersections should include crosswalks.

Thoroughfare Plan

The Town needs to develop and design a Thoroughfare Plan to ensure an orderly transportation system (not only streets, but also pedestrian ways and hike/bike trails) and to provide efficient traffic flow within the Town and the Town's ETJ. Additionally, north and south primary arteries must be designed to accommodate traffic levels associated with seasonal high demands and potential evacuations due to hurricanes or other emergency situations. Multiple north/south streets need to be planned to address these needs, obviously, based upon geographic constraints.

The Thoroughfare Plan should be designed to reduce or eliminate sources of traffic restrictions encountered during normal scheduled maintenance and seasonal community activities. By keeping in mind the needs for multiple paths of travel, a well-designed street layout can be developed.

Benefits of Thoroughfare Planning Include:

- Preserving **adequate rights-of-way** for future long-range transportation improvements.
- Minimizing the **amount of land** required for street and highway purposes.
- Identifying the **functional role** that each street should be designed to serve in order to promote and maintain the stability of traffic flow and land use patterns.
- **Informing citizens** of the streets that are intended to be developed as arterial and collector thoroughfares so that private land use decisions can anticipate which streets will become major traffic facilities in the future.
- Providing information on **thoroughfare improvement needs** which can be used to determine priorities and schedules in the Town's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and capital budget.
- **Minimizing the negative impacts of street widening and construction** on neighborhood areas and the overall community by recognizing where

Street design should conform to State and local standards and be of proper design to allow the use of fire fighting vehicles, trash collection, and other traffic normally expected for the end use of the particular developed area.

Future large private developments should be encouraged to provide multiple access points to main arterial streets and to adhere to minimum street standards adopted by the Town of South Padre Island.

Future developments of any thoroughfare system should be designed to avoid any negative impact to sensitive wetlands or wildlife habitat. The system should include the recommendations of the Town of South Padre Island Comprehensive Plan relating to public areas, wherever possible, and said Plan would be subject to approval of the South Padre Island Planning and Zoning Commission and final approval by the local elected officials.

Parking Plan

The parking demands within the Town are unique because of the cyclical nature of the economy, and to some extent, the type of development. This circumstance presents a challenge on occasions when the demand exceeds the available supply. There are also varying needs among different parkers depending on their trip purpose, destination, and duration. The Town needs to develop and implement a comprehensive parking program that meets the needs of both residents and visitors in order to manage the parking supply and demand while mitigating cumulative impacts. Ultimately, a well developed parking program will assure an adequate parking supply in appropriate and convenient locations.



Chapter 5 Parks & Resources

Town of South Padre Island Comprehensive Plan

The Island offers many amenities including pristine beaches, the Laguna Madre Bay, and an abundance of flora and fauna. With the growing popularity the Town has experienced, though, comes development pressure. And development, if not well-managed, may disturb the very resources that attract residents and visitors. Development can impact habitats and alter natural forms – a process that can have devastating impacts. Protection and conservation of resources is essential to sustain the ecological systems and ensure long-term economic success.

Purpose

South Padre Island is one of many barrier islands located along the Gulf Coast and is separated from the mainland by the Laguna Madre Bay. It is characterized by broad beaches, vegetation-stabilized dunes (increasingly), expansive wind-tidal flats, wash-over channels, brackish and salt-water ponds and marshes, and black mangrove communities. South Padre has an important role in the coastal ecological system and as a protective barrier for ocean-bearing storms.

Tourism is the largest industry and, thus, the most significant contributor to the economy. This industry is based upon the natural resources that attract both residents and visitors. Ongoing success will rely, in part, on the existence and preservation of these natural resources.

The purpose of this element is to ensure protection and conservation of natural resources, allowing for their continued use and enjoyment by future generations. Development interests of land owners and economic development opportunities must be balanced with a commitment to resource conservation.

The greatest long-term threat to the health and productivity of the State's Bay and Estuary systems is diminished freshwater inflows. The Lower Laguna Madre Bay System is designated as a priority system for water quality improvements in the 2005 Land and Water Resources Conservation and Recreation Plan.

Accordingly, 1.6 miles of the Town's beaches are eroding at an average of eight feet per year, while 2.4 miles of beaches are accreting at rates averaging up to two feet per year. Historically, accretion has occurred in the south; however, short-term erosion rates show that the south is eroding, the middle of the Island has sporadic accretion, and the northern-most portion, although experiencing long-term erosion, is accreting. The slowing of erosion rates is primarily due to re-nourishment efforts.

Source: The University of Texas Bureau of Economic Geology

Texas has one of the highest rates of coastal erosion in the country, which can be detrimental to beaches and increase the risk to beachfront structures. In response to this the Texas Legislature created the Coastal Erosion Planning & Response Act and put the General Land Office in charge of its administration. The Coastal Erosion Fund provides funding for a two-year period to fend off the forces eroding Texas beaches.

Issues

The following issues emerged during the course of developing this plan:

1. **Protection and enhancement of the beach and dunes** – As one of its greatest assets, the beach is the highest priority for ongoing nourishment and protection against both natural and artificial (human-caused) erosion. Doing so requires pro-action to maintain a continuous dune line and prevent erosion-contributing influences. Without continuous planning and advanced preparedness, the beach and dunes will be increasingly vulnerable – as will the ecosystems they support and the development they help to protect.
2. **Sustaining the quality and environmental value of Laguna Madre** – The Laguna Madre Bay is a valuable resource that has great commercial, recreational, and conservation value. The Bay provides for a variety of recreational and eco-tourism opportunities, including boating, fishing, and bird watching. Preserving the Bayside and its marine and natural habitats, including the extensive seagrass beds, is important to sustain fish and wildlife populations and the tourism industry. Enhancing water quality is also important, as a healthy aquatic system is necessary to support Bay functions. Population growth is threatening the system with dredging, spoil removal, and excess nutrients. High concentrations of nutrients come from urban development and runoff. Together with other jurisdictions, the Island may better manage water quality by controlling nonpoint source pollution.
3. **Sustainability of habitats and valuable, native flora and fauna** – Coastal wetlands are valuable natural resources that provide many ecological and economic benefits, e.g., flood control, improved water quality, erosion control, wildlife habitat, and recreation. However, they are disappearing due to erosion, subsidence, rising sea level, and/or being filled in and built over to accommodate development. Along with the protection of valued lands, open views, and natural amenities, other natural areas and open spaces also provide areas for native vegetation, recreation, nature viewing, and habitat for wildlife. Protection and enhancement of these resources are instrumental to environmental conservation, providing for recreational and ecotourism opportunities and for long-term growth of the economy. Natural Resources and Priority Protection Areas are shown in Figure 5.1, **Natural Resources**, and Figure 5.2, **Priority Protection Habitat Areas**.
4. **Parks and recreation facilities** – The Island provides for many nature-based recreational and tourism opportunities; however, these amenities can be enhanced to provide more trails, neighborhood parks and gathering areas, and recreational

facilities and programs. While the visitor population is likely content with beach and water activities, residents have different needs, which were clearly articulated through the visioning process. Due to the nature of the population and the environment, the design of facilities must be unique. Providing for recreational needs may be accomplished through conservation of open space and protection of resources and valuable areas.

Goals and Recommendations

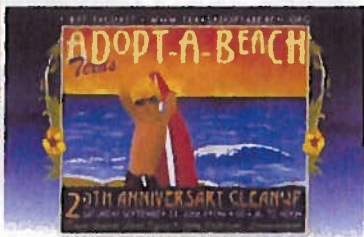
Beach and Dunes

- 5.A. Secure funding for beach renourishment. Ongoing funding for beach maintenance should be established as a line item in the Town's budget.
- 5.B. Protect the dune system from erosion and artificial damage
- 5.C. Adhere to strict enforcement policies for dune trespassers
- 5.D. Dedicate funding for beach and dune development and maintenance
- 5.E. Create, preserve, and enhance access to beach

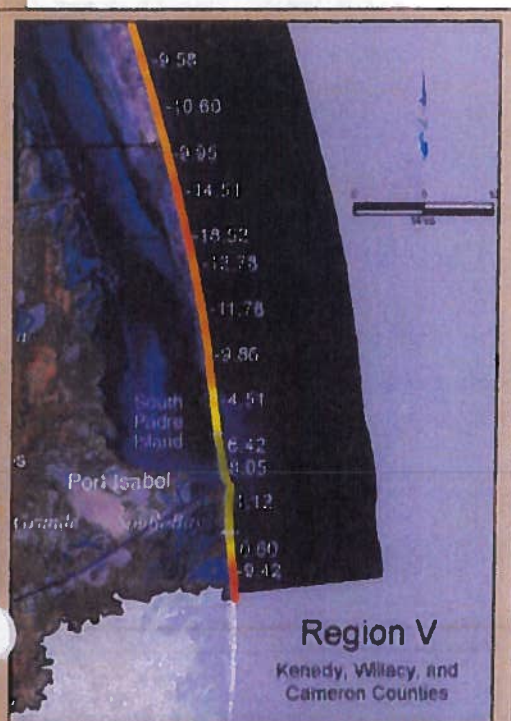
Recommended Actions

- 5.1. Construct or reconstruct two-way walkovers at all designated beach access points. Simultaneously, construct directional barriers to prevent breached access to the dunes.
- 5.2. Install interpretive signage along the walkovers and dune line for environmental education as to the function and value of the dune system and the purpose of its protection. The Town should keep at least two beach access points in the raw state for the purpose of education and enjoyment as dune preserves.
- 5.3. Actively involve beachfront owners and managers in the public education and enforcement of illegal dune access.
- 5.4. Encourage joint construction of walkovers and boardwalks when feasible.
- 5.5. Provide at least two ADA walkovers where and when feasible.
- 5.6. Establish or strengthen an ongoing, regular dune maintenance program. Continue to leverage access to State and Federal funds to continuously sustain this activity.
- 5.7. Seek legal counsel as to the ability to use park land dedication requirements as a means of beach and dune protection and development. Further, research whether fees collected through an in-lieu of dedication program may be used as a source of funds for beach/dune development and maintenance.

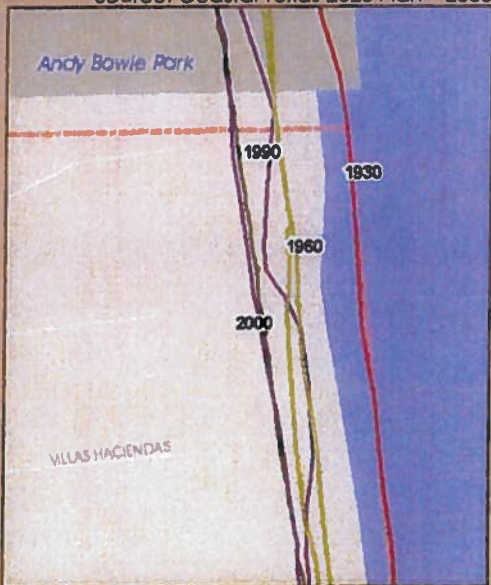
GOALS



- 5.8. Consider seeking legislation due to the unique and different needs of the Island.
- 5.9. Regularly repair, re-nourish, and eliminate gaps in the dune line via dredging and/or hauling of sand.
- 5.10. Develop an aggressive program to re-vegetate bare dunes, including assistance from and partnership with local groups and agencies.



Average Annual Shoreline Change Rate
Source: Coastal Texas 2020 Plan - 2005



Historical Shoreline Data

Source: Bureau of Economic Geology,
University of Texas Austin, Kendig Keast

- 5.11. In coordination with the General Land Office (GLO), annually re-map the dune protection line. Subsequently, monitor the change and act accordingly. Review and amend the dune protection line as necessary and applicable.
- 5.12. Promote public education regarding dune protection and beach cleanliness via signs and print media.
- 5.13. Evaluate all options and the feasibility and means for controlling erosion.
- 5.14. Evaluate and embrace Beach Management Practices (BMPs), drawing from programs and experiences of other coastal communities.
- 5.15. Implement a "Leave nothing but footprints" campaign or a similar slogan.
- 5.16. Investigate and support alternatives to beach raking.
- 5.17. A percentage of the Town's budget should be set aside for the restoration of beach quality sand on an on-going basis, so that funds are available whenever the channel is dredged or a high quality sand source is found for on-going beach renourishment.
- 5.18. A Memorandum of Understanding should be developed with the Brownsville Port Authority to ensure that when the channel is dredged, South Padre Island will have access to that sand.
- 5.19. An on-going contract with a hopper dredge company should be established to assist with obtaining this sand.
- 5.20. A conduit system across the island should be considered to assist with sand placement.
- 5.21. The Town should create a separate, autonomous entity (i.e. Beach Manager) that will oversee and monitor the care of the beach and the dunes. This person/position should be on the city payroll but answer to the environmental concerns of the beach first.

Laguna Madre

- 5.F. Protect the Laguna Madre as a valuable resource
- 5.G. Recognize and support the multiple functions of the Bay
- 5.H. Enhance water quality to conserve habitat and minimize health risks
- 5.I. Heighten management to preserve the quality of the Bay
- 5.J. Continue maintaining and beautifying street ends
- 5.K. Protect public access
- 5.L. Impose, support and enforce rules of practical safety for the beach and Bay, and provide education and enforcement of water safety practices for the Bay / Tompkins Channel areas.

Recommended Actions

- 5.22. Prioritize and secure funding to implement the recommendations and philosophies outlined in the Ad Hoc Bay Area Task Force Report, such as:
 - a. Continue maintenance and beautification of not only street ends on the Bay within the public street right-of-way, but any and all existing public facilities (including bulkheads and retaining walls on City property).
 - b. Explore the possibility of a multi-purpose recreational area with boat ramps on the south end of Town;
 - c. Explore the possibility of a multi-purpose recreational area on the northern end of Town oriented toward non-motorized light craft (kiteboards, wind surfing, kayaks, etc.) possibly in conjunction with Cameron County;
 - d. Providing additional public boat ramps in-lieu of permitting private docks beyond the rights-of-way and Town limits toward Tompkins Channel.
 - e. Work with appropriate governmental authorities to establish a no-wake zone in the Tompkins Channel and prevent the encroachment of private docks into the public right-of-way and into Tompkins Channel.
- 5.23. Develop a recreational use plan, identifying associated facilities and improvements to facilitate its implementation, e.g. marina improvements and the requisite dredging.
- 5.24. Reduce water quality impacts as a result of non-point source pollution by:
 - a. Participating in regional water quality management efforts.
 - b. Establishing runoff controls and requirements for construction sites.
 - c. Preparing a stormwater management plan.

GOALS

- d. Adopting structural and non-structural Best Management Practices for controlling the quality of runoff.
 - e. Adopting a stormwater management ordinance that requires pre-treatment of stormwater prior to discharge off site.
 - f. Controlling pollution from marina operations, including runoff from parking and maintenance areas.
- 5.25. Prepare a Bay area management plan to address the long-term conservation and sustainability of wetlands, erosion, water quality, natural habitat areas, and recreational opportunities on the Bay.

Wildlife Habitat and Flora and Fauna

- 5.M. Conserve environmentally sensitive lands
- 5.N. Support the economy through nature preservation and ecotourism
- 5.O. Conserve marine and other habitats to ensure environmental quality
- 5.P. Protect and aggressively restore native flora and fauna
- 5.Q. Protect wetland resources through regulatory controls and voluntary conservation and restoration
- 5.R. Improve public education outreach regarding the ecological values of wetlands and plant species

Recommended Actions

- 5.26. Identify, inventory, and map primary and secondary conservation areas in coordination with the General Land Office, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and other agencies. Conservation areas may include wildlife habitat, dunes, beaches, wetlands, scenic view areas, and areas that provide linkage.
- 5.27. Support conservation of existing wetlands and oppose development and other activities that destroy those wetlands.
- 5.28. Establish an open space acquisition program and identify funding sources for acquisition. Consider public funding

sources, public/private partnerships, park land dedication and fee in-lieu provisions, and/or nonprofits like the Trust for Public Land.

- 5.29. Coordinate with the land owners to the north to request voluntary dedications of sensitive land for public purposes. Enter into a development agreement to secure their



Laguna Madre Bay provides for a number of amenities including wildlife viewing, boating, and fishing.

development interests regarding annexation and allowable development rights.

- 5.30. Require a certain percentage of landscaping and bufferyard plant materials be of a native species.
- 5.31. Adopt landscape preservation provisions to protect significant populations of native flora and fauna.
- 5.32. Consider revising the landscape ordinance to prevent the installation of undesirable and/or invasive plants and trees as part of the required landscaping installed for new development.
- 5.33. Limit impervious surface allowed per site or per developed subdivision.
- 5.34. Require the use of vegetated buffers adjacent to wetlands and sensitive areas.
- 5.35. Implement strategies to protect seagrass beds, which is an important marine habitat for finfish and shellfish, including:
 - a. Establish a no-wake zone.
 - b. Improve channel access to developed portions of the Island, with appropriate signage and enforcement.¹
 - c. Develop an education and outreach program regarding the importance of seagrass beds and measures to avoid or, at a minimum, mitigate impacts by boaters.
- 5.36. Prepare a public education program to provide information about wetlands and their importance to the environmental system and economic well being of the Island.
- 5.37. Establish a system of incentives for wetland preservation, including tax incentives, funding and assistance with preservation, density bonuses, and market advantages (ecotourism).
- 5.38. Amend the development ordinances to include strategies for avoidance, minimization, and mitigation of wetlands. Strategies include clustered development, as well as water gardens, rain barrels, pervious pavement, and vegetated swales, among others.
- 5.39. Encourage on-island mitigation for all new developments, where necessary, and identify potential mitigation sites.
- 5.40. Coordinate with the GLO in mitigating and proactively planning for oil spills and other environmental occurrences. Organize a volunteer group that may be dispatched for clean-up assistance.
- 5.41. Consider local tax abatement or other incentives for preservation of heavily vegetated properties.

"Submerged seagrass meadows are a dominant, unique subtropical habitat in many Texas bays and estuaries. These marine plants play critical roles in the coastal environment, including nursery habitat for estuarine fisheries, a major source of organic biomass for coastal food webs, effective agents for stabilizing coastal erosion and sedimentation, and major biological agents in nutrient cycling and water quality processes."

Source: Seagrass Conservation Plan for Texas, 2000

¹ Coastal Texas 2020 Plan

- 5.42. Adopt an ordinance allowing property owners to apply to have their property designated as a "Natural Habitat Area". The purpose and policy of the ordinance is to preserve and protect the island's remaining natural habitat, for animals, especially birds. Land designated as NHA would be subject to different mowing guidelines. Enforcement and disputes should be processed through the city manager or his designee, subject to review by the Board of Aldermen, and finally to municipal court. The ordinance should separately address matters in the current town and new development (up north). Within the town, developed and undeveloped land may be subject to different guidelines. Among the criteria for qualifying for NHA status would be to maintain a specified minimum amount of approved native plants. Financial incentives, tax credits or abatement, should be offered.

Parks and Recreation

Providing for neighborhood-focused parks and recreational programs and activities is important to the quality of life for those who live on the Island. While their intent is not to attract tourists and visitors, they may still supplement the nature-based recreational amenities on the Island. Parks are also well documented as contributors to the economic health and value of the community. Currently, the three County parks meet much of the need for larger-scale community facilities.



Trails and separated pathways are important to facilitate safe pedestrian activity.

Existing Facilities

Existing park facilities include Water Tower Park, which is a one-half acre park with a basketball goal and bleachers, a playscape, and three covered picnic tables. Additional facilities include a road island with two covered picnic tables and a pavilion (Morningside Park) and the Island Gateway. In addition are the three County parks located at the northern and southern ends of the Island. Isla Blanca Park consists of 305 acres, has approximately one mile of Gulf beach frontage, and is located in Cameron County Precinct 1. This coastal park is located at the southern tip of South Padre Island and provides public beach access, over 600 Recreational Vehicle rental spaces, and two picnic pavilions with immediate frontage to the Gulf of Mexico and one on the Laguna Madre Bay. This park also provides many retail concessions, such as a water park, full

service marina with boat sales, clothing retail, restaurants, beach rental concessions, and fast food concessions.

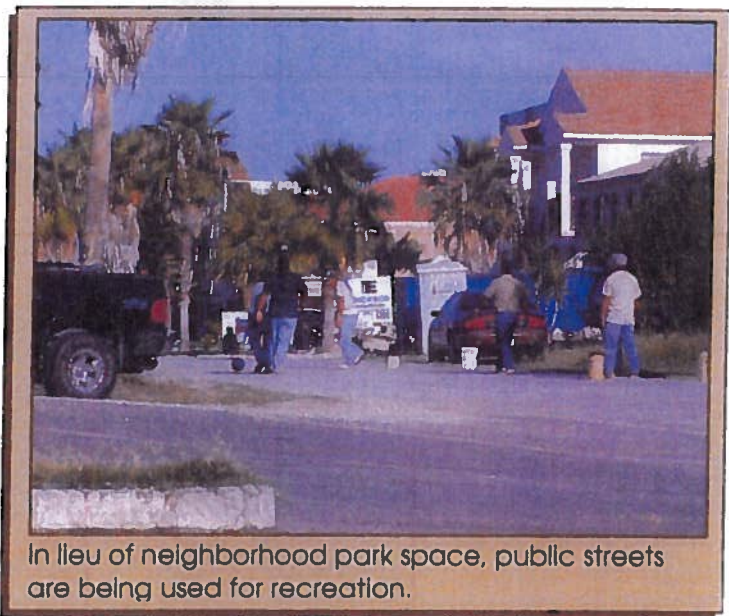
Andy Bowie Park consists of approximately 225 acres located just north of the South Padre Island Town limits and is also located in Cameron County Precinct 1. This park is also known as Beach Access #2 and provides pedestrian beach access, two picnic pavilions that accommodates groups of 150 per pavilion, a beach rentals concession, a fast food concession, 18 Recreational Vehicle rental spaces and two restrooms with showers.

E. K. Atwood Park, also known as Beach Access #5, consists of 2.43 acres and is also located in Cameron County Precinct 1. This park provides vehicular beach access and accommodates approximately 90 persons under a covered picnic pavilion. This park also provides restrooms and showers with a walkway for pedestrians to access the beach.

The popular Laguna Madre Nature Trail, located adjacent to the Convention Center, is also owned by the County. The South Padre Island Nature and Birding Center will also be available, although this will primarily attract tourists.

Park Standards

To satisfy diverse individual interests and ensure adequate and equal opportunity, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) recommends the standards illustrated in Table 5.1, **Development Standards**. The Island is unique, though, which warrants modification of the standards to reflect the extent of available public amenities, the type of development, and the user characteristics. Therefore, following are the recommended standards:



In lieu of neighborhood park space, public streets are being used for recreation.

Table 5.1 Development Standards

| Component | Use |
|--------------------------|--|
| Mini-Park | Use: Specialized facilities serving concentrated or limited population or specific group such as tots or senior citizens. |
| | Service Area: Less than ¼-mile radius |
| | Desirable Size: 1 acre or less |
| | Acres per 1,000 population: 0.25 to 0.50 |
| | Site Characteristics: Within neighborhoods and close to apartments, townhouses, or housing for the elderly. |
| Neighborhood Park | Use: Area for intense recreation activities such a field games, court games, crafts, playgrounds, skating, picnicking, wading pools, etc. |
| | Service Area: ¼- to ½-mile radius, serves a neighborhood area |
| | Desirable Size: Minimum five acres |
| | Acres per 1,000 population: 1.0 to 2.0 |
| | Site Characteristics: Suited for intense development, easily accessible, centrally located in neighborhood, with safe walking and bike access; may also be a school playground. |
| Community Park | Use: Areas of diverse environmental quality may include intense or combined recreation areas such as athletic complexes, large pools, and areas for walking, viewing, sitting, picnicking, etc. May include natural features such as water bodies in area for intense development. Easily accessible to all areas of the community. |
| | Service Area: 1- to 2-mile radius (serves several neighborhoods) |
| | Desirable Size: 10 to 50 acres |
| | Acres per 1,000 population: 5.0 to 8.0 |
| Linear Park | Use: Area for hiking, biking, jogging, horseback riding, canoeing, and similar off-street activities. |
| | Service Area: No applicable standard |
| | Desirable Size: Width should be sufficient to protect resources and provide maximum use and safety. |
| | Acres per 1,000 population: Variable |
| | Site Characteristics: Man-made corridors such as utility rights-of-way, greenbelts, ridgeline or bluff areas, water bodies, ditches, canals, and abandoned rail lines. |

1. **Mini-parks** are generally provided on site in the form of pools, tennis courts, exercise facilities, and beach volleyball, among an assortment of other offerings. To ensure adequate on-site facilities, there should be requirements and standards for development over a certain density.

2. **Neighborhood parks** represent the most significant needs. Since 74 percent of the housing units are part-time, it is recommended that the standard be 0.50 acre per 1,000 residents.
3. **Community parks** continue to be necessary within Town limits. Although the Town has the county parks on the north (Andy Bowie) and the south (Isla Blanca), the Town still needs to provide additional facilities for our residents and visitors.
4. **Linear parks** are warranted, but unreasonable for the current Town limits. To the north, they may be achieved within the required open space requirements integrated into the zoning districts (as proposed). Density bonuses may be used to offset the required open area. This, however, assumes annexation and the imposition of zoning or use of development agreements. The standard for community parks may be reduced to 3.5 acres per 1,000 residents, coupled with provision of linear parks consistent with Town requirements.

Needs Assessment

Displayed in **Table 5.2, Existing and Future Needs**, is the amount of park acreage needed to meet the demand of the current and projected populations. Based on a standard of 5.5 acres per 1,000 persons, 1.4 acres of neighborhood parks and 14.25 acres of community parks are needed. Currently, the Town has 0.5 acres, meaning there is a deficiency in neighborhood parks of one acre. The Town has sufficient acreage in community parks to meet the needs in the Year 2025. As growth continues, additional neighborhood park acreage will be needed. By the Years 2015 and 2025, the Town will need an additional one and one-half acres and two acres of neighborhood park land, respectively. Although there is sufficient acreage within the three

Table 5.2, Existing and Future Needs

| Classification | Standard (acres per 1,000 persons) | Existing Acreage | 2005 ¹ | | 2015 ² | | 2025 ³ | |
|-------------------|---|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| | | | Required | Surplus/ Deficient | Required | Surplus/ Deficient | Required | Surplus/ Deficient |
| Neighborhood Park | 0.5 | 0.50 | 1.43 | (0.93) | 2.00 | (1.50) | 2.23 | (1.73) |
| Community Park | 5.0 | 266.00 | 14.25 | 251.50 | 20.05 | 245.50 | 22.28 | 243.72 |
| TOTAL | | 266.50 | 15.68 | 250.60 | 22.05 | 244.00 | 24.51 | 241.99 |

Note: The acreage for Morningside Park and Gateway Park is not included as neighborhood parks.

1 - Based on a population of 2,849 (Comprehensive Resort Market Analysis, 2005)

2 - Based on a population of 4,010 (Comprehensive Resort Market Analysis, 2015)

3 - Based on a population of 4,455 (Texas Water Development Board, 2025)

GOALS

County parks to meet the Island's long-range needs, a community park will be needed in the northern development area due to the distance from Andy Bowie Park, as shown in *Figure 5.3, Park Service Area and System Plan*.

In addition to the acreage of parks, their location is also an important consideration. Neighborhood parks should be within one-quarter mile for residents. Due to the linear nature of the Island, the typical one-mile service area for community parks has been linearly elongated. Therefore, the three County parks, together with neighborhood parks in the center of the Island, may offer suitable coverage for the existing development.

Parks and Recreation

- 5.S. Design unique parks to meet the needs and desires of residents
- 5.T. Provide adequate park land concurrent with new development
- 5.U. Provide a system of trails and pathways connecting key destinations across the Island
- 5.V. Provide indoor facilities and recreational programming
- 5.W. Improve access to the Laguna Madre Bay

Recommended Actions

- 5.43. Acquire by dedication or fee simple purchase neighborhood parkland within the identified deficiency areas displayed in *Figure 5.3, Park Service Area and System Plan*. Also, acquire community park acreage north of the Town limits. Seek to acquire this land within five years to avoid escalated land costs.
- 5.44. Coordinate with the County to preserve or acquire a portion of Isla Blanca Park for public park land in the event it sells.
- 5.45. Amend the zoning ordinance to require on-site amenities for developments having 15 units per acre or more.
- 5.46. Amend the subdivision ordinance to include the dedication of public beach access locations as well as public parks for property platted north of the The SHORES.
- 5.47. Consider a tax abatement or lease on undeveloped land for use as multi-use recreational fields.
- 5.48. Develop a backbone system of trails in the area north of the Town limits, which would be required and modified as development occurs.
- 5.49. Conduct design and development workshops for the needed future parks to prepare a master development plan for each

- property. Resident participation is essential to ensure development that is compatible with their needs.
- 5.50. Establish a park land dedication and fee in-lieu ordinance. This would require private development or public dedication of land concurrent with new development and consistent with the standards of this plan. The fee amount must be equivalent to the value of dedication and/or private development. It must include minimum facility and development standards.
 - 5.51. Develop a community center with indoor and outdoor facilities, which could facilitate recreation.²
 - 5.52. Enhance existing beach access points to include additional amenities such as public showers and restrooms, drinking fountains, benches, small play areas, and/or small picnic pavilions as per the recommendations of the Beach and Dune Task Force.
 - 5.53. Continue to maintain and upgrade existing parks.
 - 5.54. Improve existing boat access ramp locations along the Bay to include landscaping, benches, picnic tables, and/or other amenities. Seek a Boat Access Grant through Texas Parks and Wildlife.

² The recommendation for a community center was stated in the 2000 Parks Master Plan and the 2010 Implementation Plan.



Chapter 6 Growth & Infrastructure

Town of South Padre Island Comprehensive Plan

The near-term efforts of the Island to manage the pattern, arrangement, and timing of future development – consistent with its economic development agenda – will determine its ability to maximize its value and secure quality, sustainable development outcomes. Growth management refers to a proactive approach for guiding development to occur at a time and in a manner by which the Town can feasibly provide adequate facilities and services.

Purpose

Growth that is not managed or adequately planned for often leads to inefficient development in the undeveloped areas of the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). These areas often lack adequate street infrastructure, utilities, and other services like parks, trails, and police and fire protection. On a day-to-day basis, the Island is faced with the challenge of balancing investment decisions between the maintenance of existing infrastructure, facilities, and services. Inefficient growth exacerbates this situation, often leading to costly service and infrastructure provisions. While growth of the Island appears inevitable, its pattern, types, density and location can be effectively managed through advanced planning, sound infrastructure investment policies, and adequate coordination of development with the timely provision of adequate utilities and services. Well managed and fiscally responsible growth will contribute to the economic health of the Island and, ultimately, enhance quality of life.

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate and compare the anticipated infrastructure and facility needs against future growth and provide direction in managing it in a fiscally responsible manner. In coordination with the land use task, this element identifies

recommendations and policies that direct growth in a responsible and sequential manner – first to areas that have adequate and readily available infrastructure and then to areas currently beyond the Town limits, as needed to meet the land use demands through the Year 2025.

Growth and Development Issues

The following issues are central to the ability of the Island to effectively manage its development and growth in a wise and sustainable manner.

1. **Managed Growth and Annexation** – The Town currently has an ETJ that extends to the Brazos Santiago Pass on the south end and five miles on the north. The Town is experiencing development pressures to the north. An opportunity exists to ensure that new development is orderly and fiscally responsible through the imposition of the subdivision regulations and, possibly, the use of annexation and zoning. While annexation will be important in controlling the quality and type of development, it must be strategically planned and undertaken in a staged and deliberate manner, annexing only those areas necessary to accommodate or exercise authority over premature future growth. Promoting growth and annexing areas beyond what is needed to accommodate the population by the Year 2025 can result in increased traffic and a loss of Town character. A staged and sequential approach to annexation concurrent with the adequate provision of services and infrastructure will result in fiscally responsible development.
2. **Capacity to Support Future Development** – New development must be supported with utilities and infrastructure including, among others, water and wastewater, drainage, and roadways. While the Town does not have direct control over the provision of utilities, they must continue to work closely and coordinate with the Laguna Madre Water District to ensure provision of water and wastewater in a timely, logical, and sequential manner. Increasing capacity of the Town's infrastructure can be accomplished not only by increasing the size of plants and extending lines, but also by optimizing efficiency and the sustainable use of resources through compact development and promotion of infill development, adaptive reuse of under-utilized structures, and redevelopment. Roadways and improved transportation can be controlled through the Town's subdivision ordinance and within the Town's ETJ. A number of issues have been discussed within Chapter 4 (Mobility) of this plan. Of particular importance in this chapter is the location of the Second Causeway, and the expansion of public transit (The WAVE) as a means to get people to/from the Island.

3. **Provision of Adequate and Feasible Public Services** – As growth continues, the organization and administration of the police and fire departments must change as well to accommodate increased calls and demands for service. This change will warrant additional space, equipment, personnel and facility needs.
4. **Effective Stormwater Management** – Drainage is a continuing issue on the Island; current drainage problems occur along sections of roadways, and between individual lots. Problems can be attributed to the flat topography, the non-curbed street sections, insufficiently sloped road profiles, and the frequency or nonexistence of storm inlets. Some areas within Town experience heavy ponding and flooding during rain events. Storm drainage on east-west cross streets must be addressed by re-grading the ditches and swales during regular maintenance and improving site development standards. As development occurs, the impervious surface coverage will increase.

Managed Growth

- 6.A. Continue to coordinate fiscally responsible and well-managed growth with the provision of adequate public facilities and services
- 6.B. Develop a staged annexation strategy to accommodate future growth and development over the next 20 years

Recommended Actions

- 6.1. In coordination with the land use plan and zoning map determine the requisite future growth area that is appropriate and adequate to

A Well-Managed, Sequential Approach to Growth

This plan emphasizes a management plan that promotes infill development and the sequential timing and phasing of annexation and development. This does not mean growth will be limited, but rather encouraged in a managed and fiscally responsible fashion that seeks to promote economic development initiatives, while preserving the natural assets and character of the Island, increasing efficiency, and reducing costs of providing services and facilities.

Benefits of managed growth include:

Adequate and efficient provision of services

As growth continues to occur, municipal services and facilities will need to be extended to emerging growth areas. This will result in the need for additional staff, equipment, and facilities including police substations and fire stations. Advance planning and the sequential timing of annexation will allow the Town to adequately prepare to serve these areas.

Fiscally responsible provision of utilities

Annexation and growth plans should be highly coordinated with the Laguna Madre District's ability to provide adequate water and wastewater services. The further development occurs away from existing services, the more costly and inefficient utility extensions and provision of services will be. While developers currently pay for utility extensions, maintenance of the system is the responsibility of the district. A number of improvements will have to be made to meet the projected growth (see Water and Wastewater section that follows).

Efficient and effective thoroughfare system

Growth and sprawl leads to an increase in traffic congestion and the resulting need for transportation improvements. Encouraging a logical and sequential pattern of growth promotes a more compact form of development and helps minimize constraints placed on the transportation system.

Preservation of natural assets and Town character

Preservation of natural assets is instrumental in the continued economic growth and vitality of the Island. Development patterns that focus on infill and redevelopment and encourage clustering and compact development will contribute to maintaining these highly valued natural areas. It

GOALS

accommodate development to the Years 2015, 2020, and 2025. This area is where capital improvements and services should be directed.

- 6.2. Develop an annexation plan to strategically annex land in advance of development.¹ Based on the projected acreage demands for individual land use types² and the projected future population, **Table 6.1, Land Capacity and Annexation Needs**, displays the total acreage demands by land use type, the currently available acreage, the resulting deficiency of vacant land inside the Town limits, and the current land capacity by land use type (in years).
- 6.3. Periodically update **Table 6.1** and use it in decision making as to whether annexation is necessary and warranted. Generally,

Table 6.1, Land Capacity and Annexation Needs

| Use Type | Total demand, 2007 2025 (in acres) ¹ | Existing Vacant Land | Year 2025 Deficiency | Current Capacity (in years) |
|----------------------|--|----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Single Family | 382.5 | 79.3 | 303.2 | 3.1 |
| Multi-Family | 162.3 | 143.8 | 18.5 | 13.3 |
| Recreational Vehicle | 34.8 | 24.3 | 10.5 | 10.5 |
| Hotel/Lodging | 41.7 | 24.6 | 17.1 | 8.8 |
| Office/Retail | 99.7 | 106.7 | -7 | 16.1 |
| Marina | 23.2 | 14.5 | 8.7 | 9.4 |
| Total | 744.2 | 393.2 | 351 | 7.9 |

¹ Comprehensive Resort Market Analysis, 2005

direct new development to occur on infill parcels and areas immediately adjacent to the Town limits before significant territory is annexed. This will allow maximum efficiency of existing infrastructure. Exceptions must comply with the annexation policies and criteria provided later in this chapter.

- 6.4. Coordinate the long-term capital improvement plan with the annexation plan to ensure the availability and capacity of "full municipal services" within two and one-half years from the date of annexation. This must be closely coordinated with the Laguna Madre Water District's long-term plan for provision of water and wastewater service.

¹ Since there are fewer than 100 tracts of land within the future growth area, an annexation service plan is not required (Sec. 43.052, Texas Local Government Code).

² Comprehensive Resort Market Analysis Study, 2005

- 6.5. Assess the feasibility of providing “full municipal services”³ and weigh them against the anticipated revenues of each annexation proposal.

Capacity to Support Future Development

- 6.C. Support a sensible development pattern that minimizes impacts and costs to public facilities and infrastructure.
- 6.D. Support a second causeway located north of the Convention Centre.
- 6.E. Support and improve on transit (The WAVE) to, from, and on the Island.
- 6.F. Manage adaptive reuse, infill development, and intensification in certain areas.
- 6.G. Coordinate with the Laguna Madre Water District to ensure adequate water and wastewater facilities.
- 6.H. Promote water conservation measures and incentives.

Recommended Actions

- 6.6. Utilize the Future Land Use Plan to guide decisions about annexation and zone change requests, consistent with the staging of adequate public facilities and services.
- 6.7. Periodically update the study to quantify the demands and needed acreage of different uses. Subsequently, amend the land use plan and zoning ordinance accordingly. In this way, the Island can optimize the use of its land without infringing on the rights of adjacent properties or compromising Town character.
- 6.8. Meet quarterly with the Laguna Madre Water District to coordinate their capacity improvements and utility service provision with the growth plan of the Island. The infrastructure program must encourage a logical sequencing of contiguous development.
- 6.9. Coordinate with the Laguna Madre Water District to establish a water conservation program including conservation rate structures, water accounting (large volume user audits) and loss control, landscape efficiency, water use restrictions, rebates and incentives, reuse and recycling, and public education.
- 6.10. The Town should support year-round shuttle service to and from the Valley International Airport in Harlingen, and the

“The District is an area of explosive growth potential, particularly north of South Padre Island and west of Laguna Vista. Spring and summer tourism can result in extended periods of peak water usage greatly in excess of the usage by the permanent resident population. As a result of existing needs, unanticipated and unprecedented rate of growth, the District has historically experienced a situation of trying to keep up with needs and demands of the system. The planning and design of water facilities in tourist areas differ from the standards or average design criteria for relatively permanent population communities. Water systems must be designed to accommodate peak population conditions during any day of a month.”

³ “Full municipal services” include police and fire protection; emergency medical services; solid waste collection; and operation and maintenance of streets and street lights, parks, and any other publicly-owned facility, building, or service. Section 43.056(b), Texas Local Government Code

GOALS

Brownsville / South Padre Island International Airport in Brownsville. If private enterprise options are not viable, then the town should strongly consider the feasibility of providing the shuttle as part of The WAVE service.

- 6.11. Amend the zoning ordinance⁴ to encourage xeriscaping for the purpose of water conservation.
- 6.12. Amend the landscaping regulations to encourage the use of bio swales rather than raised parking islands.
- 6.13. Explore the feasibility and options for making greater use of treated effluent for irrigation purposes (parks, medians, etc).
- 6.14. Set aggressive, yet reasonable, targets for reductions of household consumption of potable water based on historical use trends, availability and ease of installation of low-cost conservation technologies, and expansion of green water systems for irrigation.
- 6.15. Encourage residents to replace conventional fixtures in pre-1992 housing units with low-flow fixtures. Consider utility bill inserts with coupons for low-cost, low-flow shower fixtures, which can be paid by the water utility or through a partnership with local home improvement stores.

Provision of Adequate and Feasible Public Services

- 6.I. Continue to provide adequate public services including public works, fire and police protection.
- 6.J. Continue to support the needs of the Public Works, Police and Fire Departments to ensure adequate protection of the population

Recommended Actions

- 6.16. Prepare annual estimates of the daily population and review and adjust police and fire staffing needs as necessary and warranted.
- 6.17. Identify and acquire a site for a police substation to the south, and eventually north, to accommodate annexation.
- 6.18. Identify and acquire sites for new fire stations to the north and south, concurrent with future development.
- 6.19. Plan and budget for additional fire and police staffing and the requisite vehicles, equipment, and facilities.
- 6.20. Establish an asset management system for all Town vehicles and equipment, with regular service scheduling and a standardized replacement and procurement program.

⁴ Sec. 20-21, Required Landscaping, Town Code of Ordinances

Drainage

- 6.K. Employ best management practices
- 6.L. Improve storm water management systems

Recommended Actions

- 6.21. Evaluate and amend as needed the requirements for on-site detention/retention.
- 6.22. Prepare a storm water management plan to quantify existing and projected demands, capacity deficiencies, and needed capital improvements.
- 6.23. Amend the zoning ordinance to better control building, impervious cover, and the ratio of open space and landscape surface.
- 6.24. Prepare a drainage master plan to prioritize improvements, particularly for Gulf and Laguna Boulevards and each of the east-west streets.
- 6.25. Amend the development ordinances to:
 - a. Require the use of best management practices in collecting, storing, and conveying storm water.
 - b. Accomplish improved water quality. Options include clustering or contribution to a community stormwater system (known as avoidance); water gardens, rain barrels, and swales (minimization); or retention/detention (mitigation).

GOALS

Water and Wastewater

The Laguna Madre Water District provides water and wastewater service to the Island and Port Isabel, the Village of Laguna Vista, and the unincorporated area of Laguna Heights.

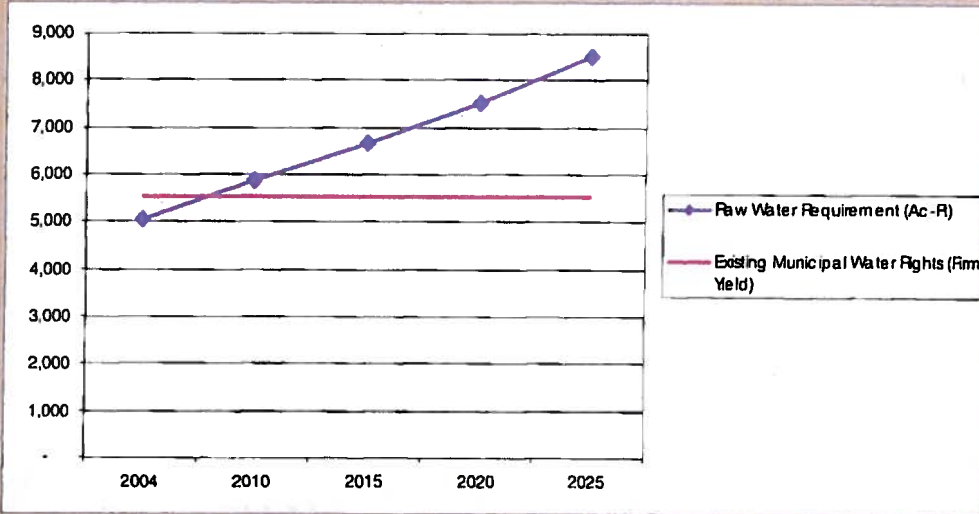
Water

The District maintains its own water supply system from the Rio Grande River to two water treatment plants (WTPs) located in Port Isabel (WTP#1) and Laguna Vista (WTP#2). WTP#2 supplies the Island and Laguna Vista. The current total capacity of both plants is 9.1 million gallons per day (MGD); however, WTP#1 is planned for closure, with a planned upgrade of WTP#2 from five to ten MGD.

Based on a 2.5 percent growth rate,⁵ to accommodate present and future growth, the district will have to complete several water supply, treatment, and distribution projects including purchasing additional water rights and providing for additional potable water capacity.

⁵ Comprehensive Plan for Water and Wastewater Facilities, Laguna Madre Water District, 2004

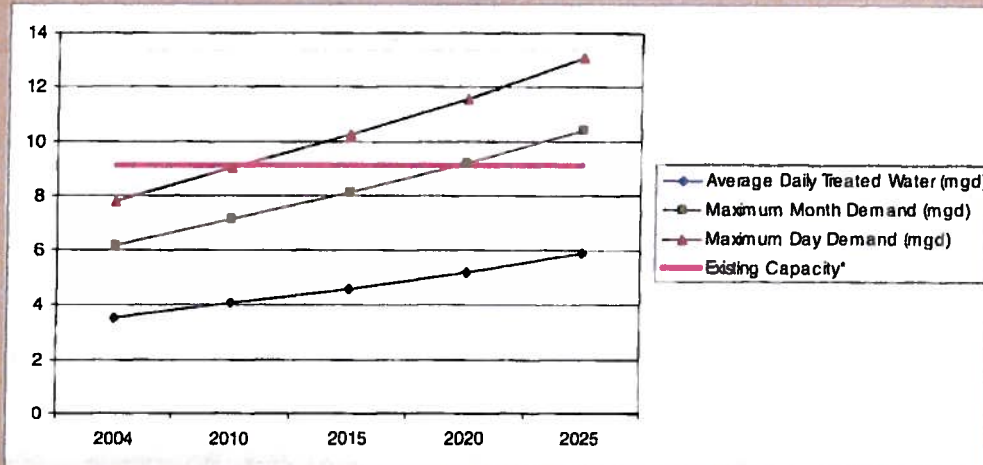
Table 6.2, Raw Water Requirements



Source: Table 6.1, Recommended Water Rights, Comprehensive Plan for Water and Wastewater Facilities, Laguna Madre Water District, 2004

NOTE: Over the next 20 years, the district will have to purchase an additional 3,500 acre feet of water rights.

Table 6.3, Water Treatment Plan Capacity



Source: Table 4.3, Summary of Projected Water Use, Comprehensive Plan for Water and Wastewater Facilities, Laguna Madre Water District, 2004

NOTE: Currently, the water plants are at 85 percent treatment capacity. In five years, they will be at 90 percent capacity based on 10 MGD. The District will need additional water treatment capacity of at least 2.0 MGD to satisfy short- and long-term needs.

The plan considered four options to obtain additional capacity:
Implement seawater desalination.

1. Purchase water from the Southmost Regional Water Authority.
2. Implement brackish groundwater desalination.
3. A 7.0 MGD expansion of Surface Water Plant No. 2 (instead of 5.0 MGD expansion).

Currently, the district is undergoing a pilot study for a 1 MGD seawater desalination plant on the north part of the Island. The study will determine its feasibility. Based on the seawater desalination

option, below are the water needs and priorities:

Immediate Needs (2005-2007):

1. Abandon Water Plant No. 1
2. Water Plant No. 2 Expansion of 5.0 MGD.

3. Conversion of existing 16" raw water line to potable transmission line.
4. Rehabilitation of Port Isabel Elevated Storage Tank.
5. Connection of Laguna Heights Elevated Storage Tank to Mainland.
6. Begin Seawater Desalination evaluation process to include: well field or sea water intake and discharge locations, test well drilling, right of way permits, discharge permit, preliminary design.

Short-Term Needs (2007-2010)

1. Seawater Desalination Phase 1 – 1.0 MGD.
2. 0.3 MG elevated storage tank west of Laguna Vista.
3. 0.3 MG elevated storage tank north of South Padre Island.
4. 16" waterline interconnection at Old Causeway in South Padre Island.

Long-Term Needs (2010-2025)

1. Seawater desalination phase 2 – 1.0 MGD.
2. Additional water treatment capacity needed until the Year 2025.

Wastewater

The district has four wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs), including two on the Island (3.35 MGD). The two plants include Isla Blanca (2.6 MGD), which treats the wastewater in the southern part of town, and Andy Bowie (0.75 MGD) for the northern area. Both plants discharge their treated effluent into the Laguna Madre.

The growth potential is in the area of the Andy Bowie plant, which will require expansion to accommodate future growth. The current potential for a 30-day flow exceeds the plant's current treatment capacity. Short-term needs include expansion of the plant to 1.5 MGD, which would satisfy the needs to the Year 2020. The Isla Blanca plant has sufficient capacity to treat the wastewater generated within its sewershed boundaries at full development. Improvements are needed to the collection system in both areas.

Annexation

Generally, annexation should occur prior to or concurrent with development to properly plan for and coordinate the extension of adequate public facilities and services. The following goals should be considered in guiding the Town's decisions for annexation:

GOALS

- 6.M. Establish criteria to consider the suitability and fiscal benefits of annexation.
- 6.N. Manage the long-term pattern of growth in a fiscally responsible manner, while balancing market demands and economic development objectives.
- 6.O. Coordinate future growth with infrastructure and public service investments such that the pattern and timing of development occurs in a fiscally responsible manner.
- 6.P. Annex in compliance with the policies of this plan.

Recommended Actions:

- 6.26. Update and revise the Town's annexation plan once Home Rule is established, and develop an associated service plan to allow methodical expansion and maintenance of Town facilities and public services (in coordination with the Laguna Madre Water District where determined feasible and beneficial).
- 6.27. Maximize the efficiency of the existing infrastructure. Growth should first be directed toward vacant lots and under-utilized lands before the growth area is considered for annexation.
- 6.28. Commit capital facilities and public services in accordance with the Town's growth plan.
- 6.29. Use fiscal impact analyses to assess the projected costs of providing public services and weigh them against the anticipated revenues of each annexation and development proposal. The intangible benefits of annexation, such as the ability to impose the Town's zoning authority, should also be closely evaluated.
- 6.30. Consider negotiated agreements in lieu of annexation to provide for interim service arrangements, cost-sharing or fee mechanisms, and adherence to the Town's development standards, where short-term annexation is not feasible.

Disaster Recovery

In addition to implementing the Town's Emergency Management Plan, provisions need to be put in place to help property owners recover from catastrophic events as quickly as possible, especially in the event of a natural or man-made disaster that causes significant damage, such as damage from hurricanes, high winds, high waves, earthquakes, off-shore oil or gas spills, etc.

- 6.Q. Include ordinances that address disaster recovery.
- 6.R. Establish Contracts and Memorandums of Understanding before a disaster happens.
- 6.S. Improve upon communication systems for residents, business owners, tourists, and the Town in order to assure easy access to necessary information following a disaster.

Recommended Actions:

- 6.31. Property owners should have the ability to put up temporary structures to live in, or for local businesses to continue operations, while cleaning up the damage and rebuilding formerly existing structures.
- 6.32. They should be allowed to temporarily put unscreened dumpsters on the property.
- 6.33. Consideration should be given to allowing the placement of these temporary structures within the Town's right of way, and existing parking lots, even if this causes a temporary reduction in parking that does not meet the parking requirements that are existence under normal circumstances.
- 6.34. Whenever possible, effected businesses should be allowed to remain open, utilizing temporary structures, and temporary access to utilities through the use of generators, port-a-potties, and bottled water to the extent that public safety allows.
- 6.35. Review and maintain contracts with private trash and brush removal vendors prior to the occurrence of a disastrous event to ensure that these services are significantly increased to respond to increased need for removal of debris.
- 6.36. Contracts should be put in place with dredge companies and trucking companies that can manage large volumes of sand so that the Town can act quickly in response to any incident involving a large loss of sand on our beach.
- 6.37. The Town needs to stay current with innovations in sand placement techniques and develop contracts with legitimate companies that can provide those services, especially in event of a disaster (i.e., post-disaster recovery).
- 6.38. Establish Memorandums of Understanding with the federal government, the State of Texas, Cameron County, and the Brownsville Port Authority to allow for quick response following a disaster.
- 6.39. Maintain and update as necessary, the Town's emergency website (<http://www.spiemergency.com>), which has links to other websites and pertinent phone numbers. The site also has

downloadable content such as evacuation routes, the FEMA homeowner's plan, pet plan, storm tracking, and special assistance information.

- 6.40. The frequently asked questions on the Town website should include information regarding the addresses for emergency shelters as soon as this information becomes available.
- 6.41. Include updates and links to TXDOT's recovery plan, the Laguna Madre Water District's recovery plan, the utility companies' recovery plans, as well as to FEMA and SBA assistance.
- 6.42. Maintain and update pet rescue information on the town website.
- 6.43. An information sheet containing pertinent information should be available at town hall.
- 6.44. Once open, the CVB will need to implement an ad campaign to inform the public that businesses and the beach are open.
- 6.45. The Town should establish different locations for obtaining needed information for residents, tourists, and business owners.



Chapter 7 Economic Development

Town of South Padre Island Comprehensive Plan

The Town's economy is based on its subtropical beach location and its two primary economic engines - tourism and real estate - are a function of its location. The Island's location is also its weaknesses in a place prone to hurricanes, and whose commerce is seasonal.

The Town's Economic Development Policy has three primary goals:

1. Develop a year-round economy with increased residents and tourists
2. Support sound fiscal policies.
3. Support an environment friendly to residents, tourists, and businesses.

Suggestions, ideas and policies that will help achieve these goals

are reviewed below.

Reaching a consensus on economic development is the first step necessary to develop attainable goals and strategies. Effective economic development planning occurs within the context of collaboration and partnership. Additionally, economic development policy for the Town of South Padre Island should be judged by how well the community can create a business environment that will elicit a positive response from tourists, customers, and private investors. The most common method for measuring the effectiveness of economic development is by counting new jobs. The nature of the South Padre Island economy, however, presents a unique challenge for traditional economic development standards. As a result, a more inclusive set of metrics must be used to gauge the community's economic development progress. These include the number of new business startups, retail sales, sales tax collected, hotel/motel taxes collected, value of new construction, and appraised property values.

Purpose & Methodology

This chapter is the result of the combined work of an economic development study done in 2005 by TIP Strategies ("TIPS") (Austin, TX) for the town's Economic Development Corporation, and the CPAC committee. The original TIPS study is in the Appendix.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the Town of South Padre Island and area economic development partners with guidance for pursuing opportunities to achieve long-term growth and economic vitality. A number of issues are raised in this plan. Some issues raised in this plan have an indirect impact on the economic development of South Padre Island and lie beyond the direct responsibility of the Town, but are still included because they are considered important and worthy of consideration. Failure to address them will ultimately weaken the Towns' economic vitality.

This economic development chapter is divided into the following two sections:

1. Discussion of trends affecting economic development opportunities in the Town of South Padre Island.
2. Goals and recommended actions to leverage and improve economic development within the Town.

A. Trends Affecting Economic Development

Economic and Demographic Assessment

TIP Strategies, Inc. conducted an economic and demographic assessment of the community and the surrounding area in an effort to arrive at a common understanding of the most significant trends affecting South Padre Island. The following data analysis from secondary sources is presented in the context of the regional economy in order to understand South Padre Island's economic base, its relative position within the Rio Grande Valley, and to uncover potential opportunities to enhance the economic vitality of South Padre Island.



The consulting team (TIP Strategies, Inc.) relied on the most current and accurate data sources (proprietary and public) covering those factors that most clearly reflected South Padre Island's recent economic performance. This analysis included the following:

1. A review of existing economic and demographic data, including population growth, employment growth and distribution, payroll, retail sales, and home ownership; (data and analysis included in Chapter 2)
2. Tours of South Padre Island sites to better understand its economic development product from a real estate standpoint; and
3. Focus group meetings and workshops with area residents and business leaders to establish priorities for appropriate goals and objectives.

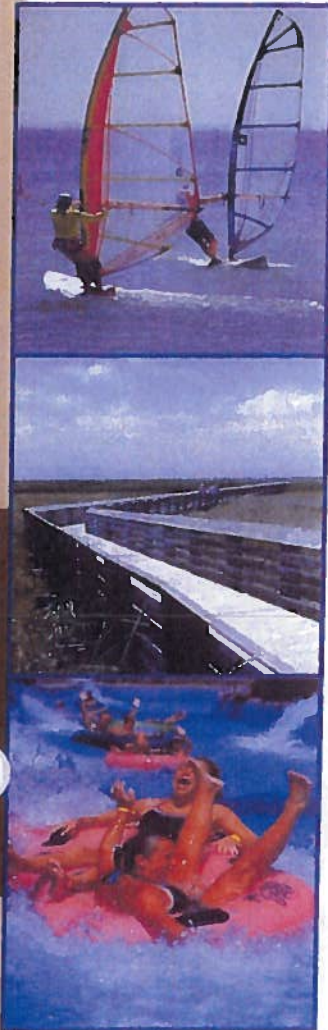
Key Findings

The local economy is almost entirely dependent on tourism. The vast majority of jobs on the island are in accommodations, food services, and retail trade. At the same time, the island has a higher than average number of jobs associated with real estate. Employment growth on the island, however, appears to have remained limited during the last ten years.

The current boom in condominium construction on the island would seem to contradict estimates that show a slowly growing population. The most current reliable housing data from the 2000 Census, however, indicate that three-quarters of all units on the island were vacant. In other words, much of the community's housing units are primarily used as seasonal residences. A very large share of the condo units under construction are intended for seasonal use by retirees and investors from northern Mexico. This interpretation of the data was reinforced through interviews with local stakeholders who were familiar with the local real estate market.

While South Padre Island's permanent population is growing at a slower pace, nearby Port Isabel and Laguna Vista have seen their respective populations increase much more rapidly. These trends would indicate that South Padre Island's high prices are forcing potential and current residents to live on the mainland, making it part of a larger urbanized area at the lower end of the Laguna Madre. For example, the growth in retail sales on the Island has begun to lag behind those in Port Isabel, which appears to be emerging as the retail trade center for the area through the recent location of a Wal-Mart Supercenter and other retailers and restaurants.

The Rio Grande Valley is emerging as a major metropolitan area. According to Census Bureau estimates, the population of the two-county area (Cameron and Hidalgo Counties) topped 1 million residents for the first time in 2005. It is no secret that the Valley is growing rapidly. But the nature of the region's recent growth-and the resulting changes in its future character-may be understood by only a few. For example, the two counties accounted for 25 percent of the



state's growth in its baby boomer population from 2000 to 2005. This would indicate that the Valley's economy is providing sufficient job opportunities to attract an age cohort that is in its prime earnings period. Moreover, occupational employment projections indicate that nearly 40 percent of new jobs in the Valley are expected to be in high-paying managerial, technical, and professional fields.

Implications

Together, these trends imply that both South Padre Island and the Rio Grande Valley have reached a strategically significant juncture in their development. While the community is located on an island geographically, TIP Strategies believes that South Padre Island's long-term economic development potential will be limited without the recognition that the community is part of a larger region. In other words, these data imply that the resources for many of South Padre Island's greatest opportunities - from an economic development perspective- can most easily be found in the Valley. Skyrocketing real estate prices have rendered the community unaffordable to the vast majority of persons working on the island, including many working professionals. As a result, South Padre Island is no longer an isolated and affluent enclave in a poor region. Instead, it is inextricably linked through commuting ties and spending patterns with its neighbors across the bridge. An understanding that South Padre Island is only one part of the greater Laguna Madre area should lead to greater cooperation with Port Isabel and Laguna Vista.

At the same time, the emergence of the Rio Grande Valley as a major metropolitan region will hold strong influence over South Padre Island's long-term economic opportunities. For example, the influx of active adults working in higher paying professional careers to the Valley indicates that some of the island's greatest opportunities for increased visitor spending may lie closer to home. Developing South Padre Island as a unique destination-- one that can compete with the growing number of retail, dining, entertainment, and recreation opportunities throughout the remainder of the Valley -- is critical to enhancing South Padre Island's year-round economy

Economic Development SWOT

TIPs Strategies, Inc. conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis for South Padre Island to develop a common framework for understanding the town's economic development related issues. This assessment was based on interviews, site visits, data analysis, and the team's experience. The following summary captures the major findings from this analysis:

Strengths

1. Renewed attention from developers
2. Destination for retirement
3. Destination for tourism
4. Sun and surf
5. Proximity to airports in Harlingen and Brownsville
6. Local arts community
7. Passionate leadership

Weaknesses

1. Appearance of Padre Island Boulevard
2. Limited retail and dining
3. Distance from airports in Harlingen and Brownsville
4. Limited roadway access to island
5. Housing costs

Threats

1. Competition from other beach communities in Texas and elsewhere along Gulf Coast
2. Continued stagnation in retail sales
3. Unmanaged development
4. Congestion on roads and beach
5. Divided leadership

Opportunities

1. Padre Island Blvd. make-over
2. Growth in the Valley's population and status
3. Changing nature of retirement (i.e., zoomers)
4. Amenities that match "zoomer" interests
5. Regional entertainment and fine dining demand
6. Growth of neighboring communities
7. Joint marketing of Laguna Madre area assets and amenities

The Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee also discussed the Town's economic Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities and developed the following:

Strengths

1. Location
2. Climate
3. Water proximity
4. Proximity to Mexico

5. Inexpensive labor pool
6. Recreation – SPI is a major regional recreation area
7. Water sports, Fishing, Ecotourism, Outdoor Cultural Diversity
8. Winter Texans
9. Broad spectrum of international visitors
10. Eclectic local culture, atmosphere, fun friendly/informal, relaxed
11. Economic generator for the Valley

Weaknesses

1. Location - susceptible to natural disasters
2. Housing costs / property rentals
3. Limited transportation to/from airport
4. Limited retail and dining, lack of upscale retail, lack of shopping / farmers market
5. Restrictive ordinances (signs, events)
6. Seasonal nature of tourism
7. Lack of a downtown; no town center
8. Unmanaged development

Threats

1. Natural / Unnatural Disaster to ecology (i.e. Red tide, Hurricanes, Oil spills, Beach Erosion)
2. Occasional congestion on the beach, on the roads
3. Spending and increased taxes
4. Increasing amount of unmanaged development
5. Possibility that oil/gas drilling and wells will be located close to Town.
6. Possibility that wind farms will be located close to Town
7. Fluctuation of the economy
8. Interdependency between US/Mexican economies

B. Goals and Recommended Actions

Both TIP's and the CPAC committee agree that developing a year-round economy is a priority; the committee considers it the first priority.

Meeting the economic development goals outlined in this plan will strengthen South Padre Island's position as a leading destination on the Gulf Coast, setting it on a course for long-term economic growth and vitality. The Town of South Padre Island and area economic development allies should recognize that these goals are part of a programmatic approach to economic development. Lack of support for one of the goals may hinder progress in another. Policies and program activities should be considered within the overall context of that programmatic approach and the variety of factors that can influence long-term economic growth in South Padre Island.

- 7.A. Develop a diversified economy in order to increase spending on the Island throughout the year.
- 7.B. Encourage more permanent residents and businesses.
- 7.C. Continue to market the Island to targeted populations - locally, regionally, and nationally
- 7.D. Support regional marketing by partnering with the Laguna Madre communities
- 7.E. Support an environment that is friendly to residents and businesses.

GOALS

Recommended Actions

Marketing

- 7.1 Continue to market the Island to the Rio Grande Valley, northern Mexico, and Texas. Targeted local marketing could encourage locals to "Rediscover the Island!"
- 7.2 Develop new national markets and continue to target identified market segments likely to enjoy South Padre Island as a destination.
- 7.3 Continue to identify and target consumer populations for the various recreational activities and businesses the island offers (i.e., kite boarders, windsurfers, ecotourists, Winter Visitors, arts/artists, music, culture enthusiasts, athletic competitors, etc.)

More Residents and Businesses

- 7.4 Continue to work to increase the number of permanent and seasonal residents that make South Padre Island home. More permanent residents will augment retail spending at shops and restaurants on the island.
- 7.5 Position South Padre Island as a destination for a niche market within the broad boomer demographic: *zoomers*, who tend to be more affluent, active, and tend to start their own business or a second career upon "retirement." To better position itself as a destination for zoomers, and other technology-related professionals, South Padre Island should:
- a. Raise awareness of the island as a business and retirement destination among individuals who participate in professional associations (e.g., legal, financial, accounting, management, etc.).
 - b. Establish a professional network organization for entrepreneurs to raise awareness of the community's commitment to supporting startups. (e.g., Institute of Senior Professionals).
 - c. Work with local and regional media to ensure local entrepreneurial success stories are published.
 - d. Continue to market in statewide media the town's entrepreneurship program to attract "lone eagles" (successful professionals who might be leaving larger metropolitan cities and setting up business operations in smaller, slower-paced communities).
 - e. Market the Island as a potential re-location, second-career destination to convention attendees.
 - f. Establish a local volunteer program through which local business professionals and/or retired entrepreneurs can assist with the Island's marketing efforts.
 - g. Create a brief profile and coherent and coordinated marketing message to assist the volunteers in promoting South Padre Island's positive aspects.
 - h. Create a formal mechanism through which volunteers could refer leads.

Diversified, year-round economy

- 7.6 Establish the Island as a premier destination for entertainment, culture, and fine dining. To do so, the Island will need to offset and/or leverage our location disadvantage (so far away) by providing unique and high quality products and/or entertainment venues.

- 7.7 Support the enhancement of the entertainment and cultural district (District C-2) on the Island to ensure it is a safe, clean, pedestrian friendly and family friendly destination.
- a. Develop a conceptual site plan for the district as a means for promoting the idea of the district to private investors - both regionally and nationally – in order to reduce potential expense burdens on the Town.
 - b. Establish an organizational structure and local funding options for the entertainment district (e.g., redevelopment authority, public improvement district, tax increment finance district, etc.).
 - c. Construct a Town-owned or privately managed parking garage when needed.
- 7.8 Continue to showcase the Arts and promote live music on South Padre Island. Consideration should be given to:
- a. Expand upon the number and kinds of art festivals encouraged/provided for local and regional artists. Encourage local and regional artists to host collaborative shows and events.
 - b. Support forums (digital; brick and mortar) for local artists to display their works.
 - c. Support concurrent events and festivals to expand joint-promotional opportunities, and co-promote festivals with other Laguna Madre area communities to increase traffic and raise the profile of all Laguna Madre communities.
- 7.9 Review and where necessary, revise town ordinances to allow for activities involved with outdoor arts and craft fairs, and outdoor exhibits (i.e. street vendors, displays/signage, and what constitutes a “special event”).
- 7.10 Continue to market the island's unique character and assets aggressively. Capturing the South Padre Island experience, distilling it into a marketing theme and capitalizing on its message is critical for economic development efforts. The island's eclectic style is a valuable economic commodity.
- 7.11 Position South Padre Island as a destination for eclectic experiences, including beachcombing, ecotourism / bird-watching, fishing, surfing, diving, arts and entertainment, unique shopping and dining, etc.
- 7.12 Support the development of a retail strategy for existing businesses and for the attraction of new specialty boutiques and niche retailers that are characteristic for South Padre Island.
- a. Develop an inventory of properties along Padre Boulevard.

- b. Create an information packet, including the sites inventory, to provide to commercial brokers and individuals seeking to establish retail on the island.
 - c. Continue to survey consumers (area and regional residents and tourists) to determine their shopping patterns and retail needs, as well as their perceptions of South Padre Island.
 - d. Continue to meet with existing island retailers to better understand their product offerings, customer profiles, store traffic, as well as their needs and challenges in their present locations.
 - e. Continue to provide on-going business workshops and seminars for existing retailers and restaurants to communicate a common interest in the retailers' continued growth and success on the island.
 - f. Provide Retail Opportunity Workshops should for those entrepreneurial-minded persons interested in opening a retail business in South Padre Island.
- 7.13 Continue to work to bring people to the island during the "off-seasons" with festivals and events such as water sport activities, a Christmas Mercado, music festivals, etc.
- 7.14 Enhance business assistance and entrepreneurship efforts.
- a. Meet regularly with current and potential entrepreneurs to better understand issues affecting their business decisions.
 - b. Advocate for entrepreneurs by meeting with area taxing entities to ensure they have a strong understanding of how their decisions might influence business investment decisions.
 - c. Advocate for an increase in assistance to local entrepreneurs and help address their issues and challenges.
 - d. Promote networking opportunities and functions for area professionals.
 - e. Facilitate financing for entrepreneurs, including consideration of the development of a revolving loan fund; encourage local lenders to offer small business loans (and strengthen their Community Reinvestment Act ratings); and leverage existing state and federal program that offer business startup assistance (e.g., Small Business Development Center, etc.)
 - f. Consider the expansion of high speed internet and wireless telecommunications on the island to support startups.

Regional Marketing

- 7.15 Market Port Isabel, Laguna Vista, and the remainder of the Laguna Madre area as part of South Padre Island's "product."

- 7.16 Increase coordination of planning efforts with Laguna Madre area communities to meet shared challenges and leverage common strengths.
- a. Continue requesting and/or hosting a meeting with community leaders from Port Isabel and Laguna Madre to express South Padre Island's interest and willingness to work as a partner with its neighbors and begin to identify shared policy concerns (i.e., housing, transportation, education, etc.).
 - b. Hold monthly meetings through which updates on progress can be held. This forum should also be used to establish trust and goodwill and to develop a foundation from which future progress can be built.
 - c. Attempt to develop a common vision among these community leaders for the Laguna Madre area as whole.
 - d. Develop a common position among South Padre Island, Port Isabel, and Laguna Vista on the various challenges facing these communities.
 - e. Leverage common economic development goals to establish a coordinated marketing message for the Laguna Madre area.
- 7.17 Participate in Valley-wide economic development efforts to raise awareness of South Padre Island. Area economic development alliances should focus efforts on enhancing the island's profile as a regional economic development partner. This activity may serve as a medium for marketing the community to business professionals who might choose to shop or personally invest on the island.
- a. Assist in promoting economic development initiatives in other Valley cities and towns.
 - b. Offer to host "developer days" and/or other regional economic development promotional events as a means of assisting Valley partners and a method of drawing attention to the Island's assets among prospective decision makers.

Environment for Residents and Businesses

- 7.18 Support ordinances, events and policies that enhance the Island's economic development potential.
- 7.19 Recognize the interdependent relationship that exists between residents and businesses.

C. Arts, Culture & Historical Preservation - A Means to Help Improve the Town's Economy

Arts

Arts in any community add a sense of community spirit, creativity and uniqueness. Artists as citizens add richness and interest to the community. Art education and presentations offer activities for both residents and guests. The arts can celebrate our natural surroundings and educate about their needs. On South Padre Island visual arts, creative writing, theater and music could provide year round tourist attractions with no ecological ramifications or disturbance to the public. The richness of the island experience can only be enhanced by extending a welcome to artists and art events.

GOALS

- 7.F. Encourage and support outdoor art events.
- 7.G. Affirm that arts in our community are an important part of our island experience and encourage creative outlets.
- 7.H. Work with the CVB to continue to incorporate local arts into their functions such as special events, historical preservation and marketing and to continue to support artists and art events in the community.

Recommended actions:

- 7.20. Review and update all Town ordinances to allow for the above goals.
- 7.21. Use the CVB website to promote local artists on its website and encourage art events to support arts in our community. The CVB should continue to allocate appropriate funds and services to promote and market arts in the community.
- 7.22. Create a juried show of bird and nature themed art to be exhibited at the new World Birding Center on South Padre Island.
- 7.23. Establish a public location that can be made available as a place to have arts and crafts sales, farmers markets and art displays.
- 7.24. Continue to fund public art.
- 7.25. Seek locations that may serve additional purposes and provide space for art education and organizations.
- 7.26. Develop a space committed to art exhibits, classes and studio space.

Historical Preservation

While South Padre Island is a relatively young town, the island itself has a fascinating history that reads like an adventure novel. Few guests and residents know the details of our shipwrecks, natives, pirates and even our development into a town. Our rich history can and should be presented as an enriching and educational tourist experience. By so doing, we will collaborate as a community, which will instill pride in our Town and our history.

- 7.I. Place historical plaques and markers at beach access points creating a "historical walking tour". This would make for interesting tourist experiences, add artistic interest to beach access points and encourage walking and biking. These markers could discuss some of the interesting points of island history such as the Singer family experience, the native tribe, the Spanish shipwrecks and more.
- 7.J. Support and enrich the new historical presentation area to be located in the new city hall. Adding local stories and community information will be a wonderful display as well as a cohesive community activity.
- 7.K. Preserve the architectural history of South Padre Island. South Padre does not benefit from the architectural history that other communities have. In our climate, buildings do not last long and economic growth and re-development often change the landscape. However, the history of business and home construction is fascinating. Our "classic beach houses" and early businesses may be gone or rapidly disappearing but, a historical reference should be created to preserve their stories.
- 7.L. Use CVB funds to create historical areas of interest and activities for visitors and residents alike in as much as State law will allow.

Recommended Actions

- 7.27. Continue to expand the efforts of the Historical Preservation Committee.
- 7.28. Develop strategies to fund historical preservation initiatives with the Hotel-Motel Tax, Town funding, and public donations.

Island Culture

South Padre has a unique culture which is defined in our vast differences and eccentricities. We are an unusual community in that our residents are all from different geographical backgrounds and ethnic cultures. We are an eccentric group of creative individuals who embrace the relaxed tropical atmosphere of the island. By defining our culture and having pride in it, we can preserve it. The "Keep Austin weird" campaign served to unify a community around a simple sentiment of acceptance and creativity. This sort of expression bonds a group with common culture. The report provided by TIPS Strategy recommends this kind of cultural marketing, which is reflected in the current "Be yourself here" campaign by the Adkins Agency.

- 7.M. Define our culture. It may not be a slogan or a t-shirt campaign; it may be a community tag line that expresses our cultural uniqueness.
- 7.N. Celebrate the culture as part of special events and community events.

Recommended Actions

- 7.29. Sponsor more cultural events, which can be anything from supporting local surfers to allowing local artists to display their coastal art.
- 7.30. Do not take ourselves too seriously. Culture and community personality do not develop from policy and regulation, but rather on an attitude that permeates everything from architectural style to language.
- 7.31. Allow our citizens to express their uniqueness. From these freedoms, fun cultural events, unique businesses and wonderful personalities will emerge and a cultural movement develops.

Conclusion

The island must be a nice place to live, to visit and to do business. The Town's future depends on its tourist and real estate economy and the extent to which it can convert a seasonal commercial season to a year-round economy. In the long-run, however, the Town should always keep in mind that growth and development should take place in a sustainable manner.



Chapter 8 Implementation

Town of South Padre Island Comprehensive Plan

With the vision in place, the Town should now direct its resources toward plan implementation. This element establishes general priorities and sets forth a process to ensure the plan is implemented and kept current over time. In order to be successful in implementing this plan, there should be a consensus of direction and a commitment to act. Directly associated with implementation is the designation of responsibilities for action, enactment of specific strategies to accomplish the goals of the plan, and guidance as to the process for updating the plan

periodically.

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to integrate the elements of the plan and to provide a clear path for sound decision making. Implementation is an essential step in the plan development process. It requires the commitment of the Town's leadership, including the Mayor and Board of Aldermen, Planning and Zoning Commission, other Town boards and commissions, and Town staff. It is also necessary for there to be close coordination with and joint commitment from other organizations that significantly influence the Island and its growth and development, including:

1. Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT);
2. Cameron County;
3. Neighboring cities such as Port Isabel and Laguna Vista;
4. Laguna Madre Water District;
5. Convention and Visitor's Bureau;
6. Economic Development Corporation; and
7. Chamber of Commerce;

8. Other organizations, agencies, and groups.
9. The private development community;

Each preceding chapter of this plan outlines specific issues to be addressed to achieve what is envisioned by Town residents, business's and land owners. In response are a significant number of recommended actions that relate to regulatory changes, programmatic initiatives, and capital projects. While these recommendations are comprehensive and intended to be accomplished over the 20-year horizon of this plan, near-term strategies should be put in place to take the first step toward implementation. These strategies should then be prioritized, with decisions as to the sequencing of activities, the capacity to fulfill each initiative, and the ability to obligate the necessary funding. Those deemed as top priorities and viewed as feasible in the short term should be placed in a five-year action plan. In addition to implementing these targeted strategies, the broader policies set forth by the plan text and maps may be used in making decisions related to the physical and economic development of the Island.

Plan Implementation

1. The two primary ways to implement this plan are:
 - to budget appropriate monies and resources for capital items, and/or
 - to update and/or amend existing Town ordinances.
2. Since strict adherence and enforcement of building and development codes is vital to sustain the quality of development, the necessary ordinances must be updated and adopted promptly after acceptance of this plan.
3. Since the City Manager and town staff cannot dedicate appropriate resources except as authorized by the Board of Aldermen through an approved budget, all budgets need to clearly reflect the continued dedication to implement this plan.
4. The City Manager, all Town Directors, all Town Committee members and each of the Board of Aldermen and the Mayor need to review this plan on a yearly basis in order to make decisions that are consistent with the goals and recommended actions.

Priority Goals

Chapter 3: Land Use

The purpose of the land use is to achieve a preferred and sustainable

future for South Padre Island. Chapter 3 identifies goals and policies that will enhance South Padre Islands quality of life. The Board of Aldermen and the Planning and Zoning Board should review the Town's current zoning ordinances in the context of the priorities stated within the Land Use Chapter 3 of the Comprehensive Plan and determine if there are any changes needed.

Recommended Actions

Standards of Land Use

- 3.1. Preserve the conformity and integrity of the existing development
- 3.2. Provide for increased buffering between zoning districts
- 3.3. Allow increased flexibility while also establishing improved minimum standards
- 3.4. Streamline the review and permitting process
- 3.5. Collaborate with neighbors and property owners prior to altering present land uses in a zoning district

Appearance & Redevelopment of Existing Structures and Properties

- 3.6. Develop and implement a "Main Street" enhancement program
- 3.7. Enhance the standards and appearance of public rights-of-way and properties
- 3.8. Provide for reuse and redevelopment of older and under-utilized structures
- 3.9. Establish and enforce landscaping requirements

Development and Preservation

- 3.10. Improve the quality appearance of new development
- 3.11. Protect sensitive lands and conserve natural resources
- 3.12. Use incentives and bonuses to encourage enhancements, preservation, and open space
- 3.13. Encourage imaginative and "unique" subdivision designs.
- 3.14. Accumulate land throughout the Town to facilitate the building of additional public tourist attractions such as: parks, bay front access, facilities with educational exhibits, an amphitheater,

performing arts theater, historical museum and public boat ramps.

- 3.15. Encourage "Green" development and enhancement (energy, waste handling, renewable resources)

Plan Implementation

- 3.16. Amend the development ordinances to implement this plan
- 3.17. Continue to enforce Town ordinances and regulations consistently and equally
- 3.18. Establish a review process to assess and re-evaluate the plan every five years, or sooner as needed
- 3.19. Add an emergency beach re-nourishment strategy to the Town's Emergency Management Plan that, in advance, sets up a coordinated response from the Brownsville Navigation District, the Army Corp of Engineers, the Texas General Land Office, and any other agency or party whose participation is needed in order to begin immediate recovery action after natural disasters.

Chapter 4: Mobility Plan

Transportation infrastructure must be planned well in advance of development to ensure orderly and timely improvements as the Town's mobility and access needs continue to increase.

Recommended Actions

- 4.1. Support state and regional efforts to explore the feasibility of a second causeway north of the Convention Centre.
- 4.2. Develop and periodically review the Town and the RMA's Thoroughfare Plan(s) and make amendments as the final alignment(s) is/are determined.
- 4.3. Develop a Capital Improvement Plan to address the installation of sidewalks, crosswalks, and the redesign of Gulf Boulevard for improved pedestrian mobility and safety.
- 4.4. Develop a safer pedestrian environment by installing crosswalks at set intervals along Padre Blvd., and developing a plan to add sidewalks in busy pedestrian areas.
- 4.5. Improve safety for bicycles and other non-motorized modes of travel by clearly delineating bicycle lanes along Padre Blvd., Gulf Blvd., Laguna Blvd., and select cross streets which align with the crosswalks on Padre Blvd.
- 4.6. Work with regional planning authorities, public and private stakeholders to develop airport shuttles, and improved access to the Island.
- 4.7. Increase access public transportation by expanding the hours of

- availability and the areas that the WAVE or other public transportation options travel to, by working with other Laguna Madre area communities to expand bus stops to meet the needs of service industry workers, local residents, and tourists.
- 4.8. Add covered bus stops with benches at set intervals, and utilize public art, native plants, and historical markers to beautify these stops.
 - 4.9. Coordinate with Port Isabel to improve traffic flow during peak seasons.
 - 4.10. Consider traffic calming techniques in problem areas.

Chapter 5: Parks and Resources

The tourism industry is based upon the natural resources that attract both residents and visitors. Ongoing success will rely on the existence and preservation of these natural resources.

Recommended Actions

- 5.1. Preserve and protect the beach and the dune system.
- 5.2. Preserve and protect the Laguna Madre Bay.
- 5.3. Conserve environmentally sensitive lands and protect local fauna.
- 5.4. Improve and protect the parks and recreational facilities to meet the needs of residents and tourists.
- 5.5. Hire a Beach Manager (Coastal Resource Manager) to focus on the beach: beach maintenance, grants for improvements to beach access, and keeping tabs on beach renourishment opportunities and grants.

Chapter 6: Growth and Infrastructure.

While growth on the Island appears inevitable advanced planning of the infrastructure is needed. The following issues are central to the ability of the island to effectively manage its growth, infrastructure, and development in a wise and sustainable manner.

Recommended Actions

- 6.1. Coordinate with utility providers to ensure continued quality services that meet the needs of the island as it grows.
- 6.2. Prioritize infrastructure improvements to support growth.
- 6.3. Support new technologies to improve island life (i.e. Green technologies, desalinization, artificial reef).
- 6.4. Encourage drainage improvements and promote the use of porous surface rather than asphalt.
- 6.5. Insure public and private road and utility easements are developed and maintained.

Chapter 7: Economic Development

Residents and leaders of the Island are fully aware of the importance of its continued economic development. They realize it must reinforce the Island's development objectives, complement other local businesses, and offer gainful employment opportunities for Island residents.

Recommended Actions

- 7.1. Develop a diversified economy in order to increase spending on the island throughout the year.
- 7.2. Encourage more permanent residents and businesses.
- 7.3. Continue to market the island to targeted populations – locally, regionally, and nationally.
- 7.4. Support regional marketing by partnering with the Laguna Madre communities.
- 7.5. Support an environment that is friendly to residents and businesses.
- 7.6. Encourage and support outdoor art events.
- 7.7. Affirm that arts in our community are an important part of our island experience and encourage creative outlets.
- 7.8. Work with the CVB to continue to incorporate local arts into their functions such as special events, historical preservation and marketing and to continue to support artists and art events in the community.
- 7.9. Continue to expand the efforts of the Historical Preservation Committee.
- 7.10. Develop strategies to fund historical preservation initiatives with the Hotel-Motel Tax, Town funding, and public donations.

Plan Amendment

This plan must remain flexible and allow for adjustment to change over time. Shifts in political, economic, physical, and social conditions and other unforeseen circumstances will influence the priorities of the Island. As growth continues, new issues will emerge, while others may no longer be relevant. Some action statements may become less practical, while other plausible solutions will arise. To ensure that it continues to reflect the vision and remains relevant and viable over time, the plan should be revisited on a routine basis, with regular amendments and warranted updates.

Conclusion

In April 2006, the 12 member CPAC committee was appointed by the Board of Aldermen and worked diligently until February 2008 to complete the plan. The committee represented a diverse group of local individuals from a cross section of the community. The committee

recognizes that implementation of this plan will require considerable sums of public funds, and the dedication of staff and elected officials to see it unfold. The committee recommends that the Board of Aldermen prioritize the plan's recommendations at their annual strategic planning sessions and allocate necessary funds as they become available to implement the plan. The committee also recommends the Town provide for adequate public hearings to inform the public about the information contained in this Comprehensive Plan, and to receive public comments. (See Appendix Attached)