



La Molina-Near West Existing Conditions Report

LA MOLINA-NEAR WEST EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The City of Corpus Christi is a beautiful bayfront community with a population of over 325,000 and one of the largest ports in the nation. As the City grows and continues to develop, it becomes increasingly important to ensure that certain older areas are not left behind to become blighted and detrimental to our residents.

Over the past fifteen years, the City, school districts, and others have been planning and investing in the area referred to as La Molina-Near West, which is identified by the maps shown in **FIGURES 1 and 2**. These plans and investments have been intended to revitalize a deteriorating area of Corpus Christi. Despite a revitalization effort and a general understanding of the desired goals, a separate written report for the La Molina-Near West area has never been formally adopted. The purpose of this document is to identify the City's efforts to date along with additional recommended efforts needed to provide a framework for continued revitalization of the area referred to in this report as La Molina-Near West.

Sources for investment in this area began with the Corpus Christi and West Oso Independent School Districts, which have provided quality education services in the area for decades. However, some schools in the area have struggled to achieve a met standard rating through the Texas Education Agency, which is what prompted the School District to increase school investments in the Revitalization Area. The City and School District utilized bond financing approved by voters in 2004, 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2018 for various improvement projects, including school improvements. These capital improvement investments are expected to continue for at least ten more years (until 2028) or until all current and future bond projects are complete. Other investments have been made from federal and state sources, such as the Texas Department of Transportation and the U.S. Department of Housing Urban Development (HUD). As the improvements have taken hold, the private sector has made increasing investments in the area as well.

The infrastructure investments in schools and roadways planned or completed in the Area represent a concerted effort to revitalize the La Molina-Near West Area that has yet to be formalized through an official revitalization plan. The problems identified in this report have been identified through various citizen workshops related to the municipal bonds in which affected local residents had an opportunity to express their views on problems facing the area. Based on the nature of the revitalization occurring in the community, and to increase the potential for future investment, the adoption of this existing conditions report supports ongoing efforts by various entities to revitalize the La Molina-Near West Area.

DESCRIPTION OF AREA

The La Molina-Near West Area, otherwise referred to in this document as the "Revitalization Area", is represented by the map shown on **FIGURE 1**. The area is bounded by SH 358 (South Padre Island Drive) and Saratoga Blvd. to the West, SH 286 (Crosstown Expressway) to the East, Agnes Street to the North, and SH 286 (Crosstown Expressway) to the South. All or a portion of

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seven different census tracts are included within the area, and it is comprised of three zip codes, 78405, 78416, and 78417.

The La Molina-Near West Area has experienced a slight decrease in population within the last 18 years. In 2000, the population was 36,722, then in 2010 it was 36,551, and in 2016 it was 35,792, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The racial and ethnic composition of the Revitalization Area is 85.7% White, 7.7% African American, 10% other race, and 2% two or more races. A majority of the population (89.5%) is of Hispanic or Latino origin of any race while only 10.5% of the population is non-Hispanic.¹ The Revitalization Area includes all or parts of census tracts 8, 9, 10, 16.01, 16.02, 17.01, and 18.01. The median age in the Area is 35.4 years and 75.4% of the population is over the age of 18. The median household income is \$35,152 and 29% of the population in the Revitalization Area has income below the poverty level according to the U.S. Census Bureau 2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Furthermore, the Revitalization Area encompasses the La Molina neighborhood (see **FIGURE 1**), which was the childhood home to the late Tejano music legend Selena Quintanilla. Thus, the area has significant cultural and historic value that is in the City's interest to revitalize. By adopting this document, the City of Corpus Christi is providing continued support for improvements in this historic neighborhood, to enhance quality of life in the area for current and future residents.

CONSIDERATIONS IN IDENTIFYING THE AREA

The Revitalization Area for this report has been identified based on several factors, including physical boundaries such as expressways or major thoroughfares, other boundaries such as zip codes and census tracts, the concentration of recently completed or planned development projects, and a desire to improve and/or revitalize the following areas:

- ❖ **Infrastructure – Transportation, Drainage and Sewer.** Several roads in the Revitalization Area are main arteries to the central business district of Corpus Christi. Streets such as Agnes Street, Old Brownsville Road/Morgan Avenue, Navigation Blvd., and Greenwood Drive connect the Revitalization Area to the central city. Each of these roads had fallen into disrepair, but received substantial improvements within the last ten years, including new asphalt, curb and gutters, sidewalks with ADA compliant ramps, RTA bus pads, utility improvements for storm water mitigation, and new signage and pavement markings. Other roads and side streets in the area will require similar improvements to prevent flooding and improve transportation within the Area.
- ❖ **Social and Recreational Facilities.** Many social and recreational facilities in the Area are older and have fallen into a state of disrepair; however, there has been an ongoing effort to revitalize many facilities. The largest recreational facility in the Area is the Gabe Lozano Golf Center, a 225-acre public golf course that sits along the South side of Old Brownsville Road. The course received bond financing in 2004 for various improvements. Also, several

¹ The U.S. Census Bureau considers race and ethnicity to be two separate and distinct concepts. Race is a person's self-identification with one or more social groups. An individual can be report as White, Black, or African American, Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, or some other race. Respondents may report multiple races. Ethnicity determines whether a person is of Hispanic origin or not. For this reason, ethnicity is broken out in two categories, Hispanic or Latino and Non-Hispanic or Latino. Hispanics may report as any race.

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neighborhood parks identified in this report have received improvements within the last five years, but additional facility improvements are needed within the Revitalization Area to improve quality of life.

- ❖ **Public Safety.** Crime rates in the Revitalization Area vary depending on the neighborhood or corridor, but they are generally lower than the average crime rate for the City. The average crime rate for the City of Corpus Christi is 13% higher than the State average, which is 31.94% (per 1,000 residents). The La Molina-Near West Area is a relatively safe, family-friendly community, but several improvements have been made in recent years to increase public safety within the Revitalization Area. Improved lighting has been added along major thoroughfares, safe exchange places for online purchases have been established, and police patrols have increased in neighborhoods and parks. Continued revitalization of the Area and additional public safety improvements or programs is recommended to further enhance public safety in the Area.
- ❖ **Housing & Blight.** Many homes and businesses in the area are vacant, deteriorated, or have noticeable depreciation. Much of the housing stock and commercial structures are greater than fifty years old and are in significant disrepair. Many vacant properties have high grass, illegal encampments, broken windows and various other potential building/zoning code violations. In addition, nearly half (44.7%) of the total housing units in the Area are occupied by renters, which coupled with low incomes in the area, implies a demand for additional affordable rental housing. There has been an ongoing effort by the City to mitigate this issue, including in 2018 the City provided written support for the construction of three new proposed affordable housing developments in the Revitalization Area to receive Low-Income Housing Tax Credits worth approximately \$16 million. Existing multi-family developments in the area may also be eligible to receive Low-Income Housing Tax Credits in the future, which would significantly contribute to revitalizing the area.
- ❖ **Schools.** There has been a significant emphasis on school quality in the Revitalization Area. The community has centered on improving the school system and schools, which include, Del Mar College's West Campus, West Oso High School, Moody High School, Cunningham Middle School, Garcia and Los Encinos Elementary Schools. Many of the schools in the Revitalization Area were old and in need of renovation when revitalization first began. Some improvements have been made, such as the roof replacement to Moody High School and the addition of Los Encinos Elementary, but additional work needs to be done to meet the educational needs of residents in the area. Access to quality schools is a critical component of community revitalization; therefore, the emphasis on school quality is critical to revitalizing this area.
- ❖ **Public Services.** The Revitalization Area is in need of improvements to Public Services, such as police and fire. Some improvements have been made to facilities outside of the Revitalization Area over the years, but there are a limited number of police and fire stations directly within the Revitalization Area. There are three nearby fire stations, one of which is within the area, and two nearby law enforcement facilities that are intended to serve the area (see **FIGURE 1**). However, area residents would benefit greatly from an additional police and/or fire station. The proposed 2018 bond allocates approximately \$22 million for public facilities that may be used for an additional facility or upgrades to existing facilities.

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The provision of additional services would likely reduce crime and property loss in the Revitalization Area while also improving quality of life.

- ❖ **Business Development.** The economy in Corpus Christi is largely driven by oil and gas and tourism. However, access to retail and other employment is vital to improving economic opportunities for residents in the area. One of the largest employers in the area, a payment processing company called First Data, permanently closed in 2015, resulting in a loss of around 300 jobs according to media reports. The new Del Mar College Workforce Development Center and Emerging Technology building planned for the College's West Campus will contribute to economic development of the area, through workforce training, and is expected to support existing businesses in the area. By focusing on business development and workforce training for emerging technologies, the area will see a significant impact to economic and community development.

TARGETED COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL REVITALIZATION

The La Molina-Near West Revitalization Area has many residential and commercial properties in various levels of disrepair. These structures are in need of renovations or need to be completely demolished and reconstructed. Although the Revitalization Area desires to attract new commercial businesses and housing projects, the emphasis of this report is also concentrated on the renovation or demolition/reconstruction of existing older buildings and improvements to surrounding streets, sidewalks, and other public spaces. The opportunities for targeted commercial and residential revitalization are as follows:

1. Commercial – Attract new businesses and expand or improve existing businesses.
2. Residential – Because of the extent of the affordable housing portfolio resulting from previously depressed economic circumstances, the focus going forward is for continued rehabilitation and redevelopment of the existing housing stock, both multi-family and single-family, along with attracting and promoting market-based housing to the area.
3. Vacant properties – Working with property owners to maintain their properties and restore pride of ownership in residential neighborhoods.

IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS ALREADY COMPLETED IN THE REVITALIZATION AREA

The following improvements and programs have already been completed or implemented in the Revitalization Area. The City and other entities have been working to improve the Revitalization Area over the last fifteen years and the projects listed below reflect more than \$55 million of completed improvements. See **FIGURE 2** for project locations.

I. Infrastructure

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Project #1:

Street improvements to Cliff Maus Road from Old Brownsville Road to Bear Lane, and SH 358 to Rockford Drive. New sidewalks, pavement markings, and storm water drainage. Completed as of November 2017.

Source of Funding:

City of Corpus Christi 2004
Bond

Funding Amount: \$1,858,000



Completed Street Improvements to Cliff Maus Rd
(Google Images)

Project #2:

Reconstruction of Greenwood Drive (phase 1) from Gollihar Rd to South Padre Island Drive. Included reconstruction with new asphalt, curb and gutters, sidewalks with ADA ramps, RTA bus pads, and underground utility for storm water mitigation, new signage and pavement markings. Completed as of November 2017.

Source of Funding:

City of Corpus Christi 2004
Bond

Funding Amount: \$2,760,000



Project Location

(Photo from Corpus Christi City Council Presentation)

Project #3:

Street Improvements to Bear Lane from Old Brownsville Road to South Padre Island Dr. (SH 358). Complete as of November 2017.

Source of Funding:

City of Corpus Christi 2008 Bond

Funding Amount: \$4,200,000



Completed Improvements to Bear Lane
(Google Images)

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Project #4:

Reconstruction of Greenwood Drive (phase 2) from Gollihar to Horne Road. This phase involved the reconstruction of the western portion of Greenwood Drive to a five-lane road with four travel lanes and a continuous left turn lane. Completed in April 2018.

Source of Funding:

City of Corpus Christi 2012 Bond

Funding Amount: \$4,808,000



Completed Greenwood Drive Reconstruction
(Photo from City of Corpus Christi)

II. Recreational

Project #5:

Facility and grounds improvements to Gabe Lozano Golf Course. Work completed as of November 2017.

Source of Funding:

City of Corpus Christi 2004 Bond

Funding Amount: \$2,756,000



Gabe Lozano Golf Course After Renovation
(Photo from lozanogolfcenter.com)

Project #6:

Construction of Greenwood Softball Complex. Includes a clubhouse and four softball fields. Completed as of November 2017.

Source of Funding:

City of Corpus Christi 2008 Bond

Funding Amount: \$2,450,000



Completed Greenwood Softball Complex
(Google Images)

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Project #7:

Addition of new hike and bike trails at Dr. Hector P. Garcia Park (Greenwood Park) to increase health and mobility in the Area. Improvements completed in May 2017.

Source of Funding:

Corpus Christi Metropolitan Planning Organization

Funding Amount: \$310,500



Map of Hike/Bike Trails

(Photo from Corpus Christi City Council Presentation)

Project #8:

Improvements to Westhaven Park on Cliff Maus Drive were completed in September 2017. Improvements included a new walking trail, a multipurpose sports field, new exercise equipment, new lighting, and a new park sign.

Source of Funding:

Nueces County and City of Corpus Christi Parks and Recreation Dept.

Funding Amount: \$300,000



New ADA compliant playground at Westhaven Park

(Photo from Caller-Times)

III. Public Facilities

Project #9:

Greenwood “Ben F. McDonald” Library remodel & facilities improvement. Construction completed as of November 2017.

Source of Funding:

City of Corpus Christi 2008 Bond

Funding Amount: \$1,500,000



Remodeled Ben F. McDonald Public Library

(Photo from www.cclibraries.com)

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Project #10:

Greenwood Wastewater Treatment Plant improvements to reduce nuisance odors and risk of flooding, including the purchase of an Eco-Filter system for odor control and an ultraviolet (UV) electrical system to maintain TCEQ compliance standards. Construction began July 2016 and completed in October 2017.

Source of Funding:

City of Corpus Christi Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

Funding Amount: \$2,204,800



Greenwood Wastewater Treatment Plant Eco-Filter
(Photo from City of Corpus Christi)

Project #11:

Construction of new wastewater lift station near the intersection of West Point Road and Old Brownsville Road to serve development in the area. Project was completed in 2017.

Source of Funding:

City of Corpus Christi Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

Funding Amount: \$1,200,000



W Point Rd Wastewater Lift Station
(Google Maps)

IV. Housing

Project #12:

Construction of Buena Vida Senior Village apartments located at 4650 Old Brownsville Rd. The apartments have 100 affordable units funded by Low-Income Housing Tax Credits awarded in 2008. Construction completed in 2010.

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Source of Funding:

Texas Department of Housing and
Community Affairs
(TDHCA)/Private

Funding Amount: \$9,462,975



Buena Vida Senior Village Residences

(Photo from www.buenaVIDASeniorvillage.com)

V. Schools

Project #13:

Construction of new Los Encinos
Elementary School on Frio Street
East of Greenwood Drive.
Completed in September 2017.

Source of Funding:

Corpus Christi Independent School
District 2014 Bond

Funding Amount: \$22,800,000



Completed Front Entrance

(Photo from CCISD 2014 Bond Update Presentation)

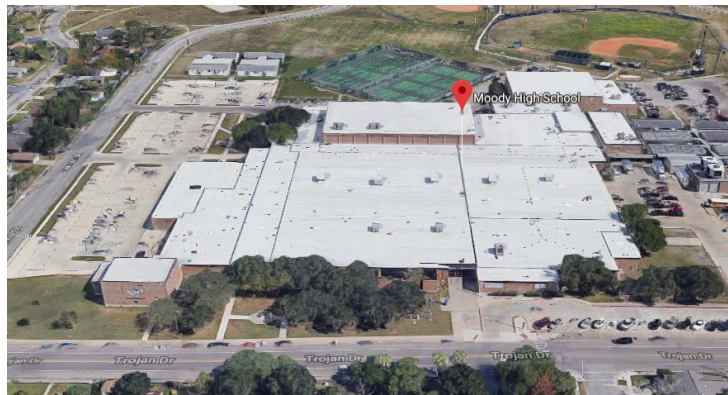
Project #14:

Moody High School Roof
Replacement. Project completed
December 2017.

Source of Funding:

Corpus Christi Independent School
District 2014 Bond

Funding Amount: \$2,851,798



Moody High School Completed Roof Replacement

(Google Images)

IMPROVEMENTS AND PROGRAMS PLANNED FOR THE REVITALIZATION AREA

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The following improvements and programs are proposed or planned for the Revitalization Area. Over \$54 million of improvements are expected to be implemented in the next three to five years. See **FIGURE 2** for project locations.

I. Infrastructure – Street & Highway Improvements

Project #15: Street and sidewalk reconstruction and improvements to Gollihar Road between Greenwood Drive and SH 286 (crosstown expressway). Improvements include resurfacing, painting, and increased storm water management. Construction is targeted for completion by December 2021.

Source of Funding: City of Corpus Christi Proposed 2018 Bond

Funding Amount: \$3,750,000

Project #16: Street and sidewalk reconstruction and improvements to Frio Street/Dorado Street/Hacala Corridor between Greenwood Drive and Martin Street. Resurfacing and storm water management. Construction is targeted for completion by December 2021.

Source of Funding: City of Corpus Christi Proposed 2018 Bond

Funding Amount: \$1,600,000

Project #17: Reconstruction of SH 358 (South Padre Island Drive) to enhance safety and increase mobility, including ramp and signage improvements. The project encompasses a 5-mile stretch of SH 358 from Leopard Street to SH 286 (crosstown expressway). Construction is targeted for completion by the fall of 2021.

Source of Funding: Texas Department of Transportation (TX DOT)

Funding Amount: \$8,900,000

II. Schools

Project #18: Del Mar College West Campus Improvements. Improvements include a new Workforce Development Center building, which will provide specialized training for employment in Coastal Bend industries, and an expansion of the West Campus Emerging Technology Building. The facilities will provide 24,000 square feet of additional instruction space to the campus. The project is currently under construction.

Source of Funding: Dell Mar College 2014 Capital Improvements Bond

Funding Amount: \$23,400,000

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**Del Mar College West Campus
New Workforce Development Center Front Entrance Rendering**
(Turner | Ramirez Architects)



**Del Mar College West Campus
New Emerging Technology Building Expansion Rendering**
(GIGNAC | Architects)

III. Business Development

- Project #19:** Construction of new Fairfield Inn & Suites at the corner of S. Padre Island Dr. and Old Brownsville Rd. (522 S. Padre Island Dr.). Based on the building permit filed with the City's Development Services Department, the hotel is targeted for completion by September 2018.
- Source of funding:** Private
- Funding Amount:** Not identified

IV. Housing

- Project #20:** The City of Corpus Christi determined a need for more affordable housing within the Revitalization Area. As a result, the City Council provided written support for three Low-Income Housing Tax Credit developments in the La Molina-Near West Area. TDHCA typically awards at least one project per year in Corpus Christi and *Avanti at*

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Greenwood is the project which received a tax credit award on July 26, 2018.

- *Village at Greenwood*, 81-unit new construction located on Greenwood Dr. between Holly Rd. and Saratoga Blvd.
- *Avanti at Greenwood*, 81-unit new construction located on Greenwood Dr. between Holly Rd. and Saratoga Blvd.
- *Casa De Manana Apartments*, 99-unit reconstruction.

Source of funding: Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA)
Funding Amount: \$16,162,600 (*avg. development cost per housing project*)

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CONTINUED PLANNING FOR THE REVITALIZATION AREA

The improvements and programs described in this report are examples of previous and current activities implemented to revitalize Corpus Christi's La Molina-Near West community. However, the City will continue to create opportunities to establish programs, identify funding sources, or provide improvements that will revitalize the area, uplift the neighborhood and supporting area businesses to continue the cycle of improvement and avoid future deterioration. The City Planning Department will be working with the community to update the Westside Area Development Plan in Fiscal Year 2018-2019.

ANTICIPATED RESULTS

The initiatives described in this report will work towards reversing existing deterioration in the neighborhoods of the Revitalization Area, improve the aesthetics of the area, provide additional infrastructure for accessibility and development, increase the tax base, support existing businesses, and attract additional businesses, which will lead to increased economic opportunity for those living and working in the Revitalization Area.

Each initiative in the Revitalization Area, whether already completed or planned for the future, supports a framework that will improve this area. By combining resources from the City, County, Federal, School District, and the private sector, the Revitalization Area will achieve major economic infusion. Because many of these resources have already been spent or allocated, the City is confident that the projects and programs will continue to be fully implemented as intended.

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FIGURE 1

LA MOLINA-NEAR WEST REVITALIZATION AREA



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FIGURE 2

LA MOLINA-NEAR WEST REVITALIZATION PROJECTS



Completed Improvements

1. Street improvements to Cliff Maus Rd. (\$1,858,000)
2. Reconstruction of Greenwood Drive Phase 1 (\$2,760,000)
3. Street improvements to Bear Ln. (\$4,200,000)
4. Reconstruction of Greenwood Drive Phase 2 (\$4,808,000)
5. Improvements to Lozano Golf Course (\$2,756,000)
6. Construction of Greenwood Softball Complex (\$2,450,000)
7. Construction of new hike/bike trails (\$310,500)
8. Improvements to Westhaven Park (\$300,000)
9. Greenwood “Ben F. McDonald” Library Remodel & Improvement (\$1,500,000)
10. Greenwood Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements (\$2,204,800)
11. Construction of Wastewater Lift Station at W Point Rd. (\$1,200,000)
12. Construction of Buena Vida Senior Village Apartments (\$9,462,975)
13. New Los Encinos Elementary School (\$22,800,000)
14. Moody High School Roof Replacement (\$2,851,798)

Planned Improvements

15. Street and Sidewalk Improvements to Gollihar Rd. (\$3,750,000)
16. Street and Sidewalk Improvements to Frio/Dorado/Hacala Street Corridor (\$1,600,000)
17. SH 358 (South Padre Island Drive) Reconstruction (TX DOT) (\$8,900,000)
18. Del Mar College West Campus Workforce Dev. Center & Emerging Tech. (\$23,400,000)
19. Construction of New Fairfield Inn & Suites (*funding amount not identified*)
20. Proposed new multi-family affordable housing (\$16,162,600)