

Port Aransas Texas

September 16–21, 2018



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Sometimes as Much as Things Change,
They Stay the Same

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About the Urban Land Institute

THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 42,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of providing leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 80 countries.

The extraordinary impact that ULI makes on land use decision making is based on its members sharing expertise on

a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns.

Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. In 2018 alone, more than 2,200 events were held in about 330 cities around the world.

Drawing on the work of its members, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

More information is available at uli.org. Follow ULI on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

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About ULI Advisory Services

THE GOAL OF THE ULI ADVISORY SERVICES is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies.

Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfield redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and are screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a five-day panel assignment is intensive. It includes an in-depth briefing day composed of a tour of the site and meetings with sponsor representatives, a day of hour-long interviews of typically 50 to 100 key community representatives, and two days of formulating recommendations. Long nights of discussion precede the panel's conclusions. On the final day on site, the panel makes an oral presentation of its findings and conclusions to the sponsor. A written report is prepared and published.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, participants in ULI's five-day panel assignments are able to make

accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services panel report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

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In addition, thank you to the many other sponsor committee members and city staff members who made the week

a success, including Mike Berry, Deven Bhakta, Suzette Freeman, Jeff Hentz, Keith McMullin, Wendy Moore, and David Parsons. The panel also thanks David Kim and ULI Houston for their help in answering questions and providing insight to the panel.

Finally, the panel would like to thank the more than 60 residents, business and community leaders, and representatives from Port Aransas and the surrounding area who shared their perspectives, experiences, and insights with the panel over the week.

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Background and the Panel's Assignment

A COMMUNITY WITH A FISHING VILLAGE PAST,

Port Aransas is located on Mustang Island, a barrier island off the southern coast of Texas. One of the major seaside destinations in southeast Texas, Port Aransas is known for its beaches, deep-sea fishing, and village atmosphere. Situated east of Corpus Christi, it is a short ferry ride to the southeast from Aransas Pass.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2016 Five-Year American Community Survey estimates, the city has a population of 3,861 permanent residents, which grows to more than an estimated 100,000 during peak-season weekends. The permanent resident population is generally older, with a median age of 48.7 years, compared to 34.2 years for Texas and 37.7 years for the United States based on 2016 U.S. Census Bureau five-year estimates. Young families with children are also decreasing, as reflected by reported recent declines in resident school enrollment numbers on the island. Considered an affordable beach vacation by many, tourists and vacation homeowners provide an influx of spending in the local economy where 2016 U.S. Census Bureau estimates put the median household income for permanent residents at \$50,741.

The Panel's Assignment

In August 2017, Hurricane Harvey made landfall on the island just north of the community. High winds and storm surge damaged or destroyed numerous homes and businesses. Over the last year, recovery has been active and ongoing. A group of public and private entities, led by the Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce and Tourist Bureau (the sponsor) approached ULI to conduct an Advisory Services panel to provide strategic recommendations on the city's economic potential, housing strategies, and downtown corridor as it continues to rebuild after Harvey.



Port Aransas is a barrier island off the coast of southeast Texas. It is located to the east of Corpus Christi and the southeast of Aransas Pass.

The sponsor posed the following questions to focus the panel's efforts:

- What are the economic drivers for Port Aransas? What competitive advantages does Port Aransas possess that can be leveraged by the city, the chamber, and the community?
- How can the city modify its policies to better align its economic goals with the existing land economics and market position of Port Aransas (specifically through the analysis of the zoning code, comprehensive plan, and parking requirements)?
- What is the current state of workforce and affordable housing in the city, and what steps can the city and development community take to improve the supply of this type of housing? What benchmarks or models can be used to inform the city and community on this issue? Can catalytic sites provide a model for this type of development?

- In the downtown area, what development programs can be undertaken to establish, enhance, and embellish a Port Aransas “main street”? How and where should a “sense of place” be established? Can one or more specific catalytic development sites help a Port Aransas main street, and what steps can the city, the chamber, and the community take to leverage these sites? What are some planning and design strategies that can help the entire island in general and the main street area in particular, specifically with respect to chapter 25 of the zoning code and landscape standards?
- What type of transportation improvements regionally and island-wide should be considered in this effort?
- What are some short-term actions the community can take to move a main-street initiative forward? What long-term investments must be considered to move the main-street initiative forward?
- What funding strategies should the city pursue? What financing mechanisms are needed to fund public infrastructure upgrades?
- How is this effort best organized chronologically? What entities are best suited to oversee the implementation of the effort? Can the panel suggest examples and analogues from other locations that can be helpful in informing this effort?

Key Recommendations and Takeaways

After briefings from the sponsor committee, a tour of the island, and more than 60 interviews with a variety of stakeholders, the panel prepared the following key takeaways and recommendations:

- Port Aransas is projected to continue to grow in population and households. Projections for the next decade indicate that additional housing units and commercial space will be needed. The panel found that socioeconomic and real estate market data were severely lacking and recommends that more robust resources for this

information be collected, maintained, and updated regularly for the city.

- Tourism continues to be the major economic driver for the community. The island currently has no full-service hotels, but the panel found that the city could support the addition of two conference hotels if certain specifications are met. The community could also use an additional boat ramp to reduce crowds at the existing ramp and introduce dry-stack boat storage, which is not currently available on the island.
- Rebuilding efforts should include resilience measures that reduce the impact of flooding, storm surge, and major storm events in the future.
- The city should update its comprehensive plan and include chapters on community vision, resilience, and preserving and strengthening sacred places.
- The panel recommends that the city support visioning efforts through policies and enforcement, including updating the zoning code and development standards, changing height restrictions to story restrictions, revising the sign and landscape ordinance, and preparing design guidelines.
- The panel also supports the current plan to remove the ferry-stacking lanes from Roberts Point Park and support efforts to provide new stacking alignments west of the terminus of Cut-Off Road.
- Enhance mobility and transportation options on the island by improving local street connections and assessing the golf cart supply and demand.
- Consider future transportation options such as ride sharing, scooters, and autonomous vehicles in the Comprehensive Plan. Better understanding of and planning for parking, increased wayfinding to facilitate guest movement, and further branding of Port Aransas through a transit app for the local bus system are examples of what should be analyzed in the near term.

- To encourage long-term rentals, especially when the proposed Housing Finance Corporation provides capital or rental subsidies, the panel recommends that tools be in place to maintain this housing for future permanent residents. Two examples of these tools are development agreements and deed restrictions, including caps on future rents or sales prices.
- Use suggested catalytic development projects as design prototypes for what to focus on for development throughout the city. Focus primarily on streets, parking, beautification, increasing long-term housing, improving urban street fabric, infill development and revitalization, connectivity, and sense of place or placemaking.
- Improve the capacity and expertise of city staff. Consider outsourcing certain tasks that require specialized training, such as building inspections. Integrate the use of technology through staff training, using tools such as geographic information systems (GIS), and improving broadband capacity island-wide.
- Formalize the relationship between the city and the Chamber of Commerce's Economic Resilience Committee (a.k.a. Economic Development Committee).
- Leverage outside talent and passion of both permanent residents and the large population of dedicated seasonal residents.



LAUREN CALLAGHAN/ULLI



LAUREN CALLAGHAN/ULLI

The ULI Advisory Services panel spent five days in Port Aransas learning more about the community, interviewing stakeholders, deliberating on the questions presented by the sponsor, and preparing both a written report and oral presentation.

Recurring Challenges Can Be a Call to Action

SOMETIMES AS MUCH AS THINGS CHANGE, they stay the same. The sentiments reflected in both the 1979 *Texas Monthly* article cited below and in the 1998 visioning exercise express concerns and interests of the community that are still present today.

Port Aransas faces the dilemma of all beautiful places: its very substance and character attract too many people, who then destroy the original lure. To compound the problem, Port Aransas' social institutions—the mayor and the city council, the Planning Commission, police department, medical facilities—may be inadequate, too unsophisticated to meet the challenge. Have the adaptive mechanisms of the community been overwhelmed? Has the citizens' protection of personal freedoms ultimately restricted their own?

—*Texas Monthly*, August 1979

The panel believes that it may be time to update the community's vision of Port Aransas, particularly since 20 years have passed since the last visionary exercise was completed. In addition to providing recommendations related to the key questions identified by the sponsor, the panel provided insight into other items and issues it feels need to be addressed in Port Aransas.

Vision Port Aransas 1998

Areas of focus:

- Landscaping and green space
- Code enforcement and cleanup
- Beach management
- Outdoor activities and amenities
- Multipurpose cultural complex
- Infrastructure
- Charlie's Pasture and marina development
- Miscellaneous (including affordable housing)

Understanding the Socioeconomic and Market Fundamentals

UNDERSTANDING VITAL SOCIOECONOMIC and real estate market trends that are affecting Port Aransas can help planners and economic policymakers identify the potential of and pressure for future land uses and business development opportunities. Successful urban and suburban planning, land use, and development policy can best be described as public action that generates a desirable, widespread, and sustainable private-market reaction. The following market data represent baseline projections of future growth that Port Aransas can take steps to improve or impede.

Socioeconomic

Port Aransas today includes about 4,200 people living in 1,900 households, and employment on the island is estimated at about 4,700. Since 1990, the Port Aransas labor force has grown by 50 workers per year, and population has grown by 70 people in 30 households per year. Over the last eight years, the population increased annually by almost 100 people in 30 households. The Port Aransas employment base is projected to expand by 90 jobs per year with the permanent population growing by 100 people in 45 households.

Residential Real Estate Market

In addition to the permanent population base, Port Aransas has a significant number of seasonal and second homes. Currently, Port Aransas has an estimated 2,260 seasonal and second homes. These units have increased since 1990 by 30 units per year, and they are projected to grow by 50 units per year, thus bringing the total annual projected residential demand to about 110 units per year. Seasonal housing averages an occupancy rate of 35 percent, or 2,300 people annually, bringing the daily population to 6,600.

Regarding housing starts since 1980, Port Aransas averages about 60 single-family units and 50 multifamily units per year, which has been reasonably consistent for the past four decades. The peak amount of residential construction occurred in 1981, with the construction of 76 single-family units and 522 multifamily units. Of the approximately 4,500 units in Port Aransas today, 42 percent are occupied by permanent residents and of these 62 percent are owner occupied while 38 percent are occupied by renters. In addition, on an average day, the hotel and residential units can accommodate about 20,000 people, with 25 percent of this total representing permanent residents.

Housing Units by Type

Type	Share
Single family	63%
Two- to 19-unit complexes	15%
20-unit or more complexes	6%
Mobile homes	7%
RV, boat, and van	9%
Total	100%

Source: THK Associates Inc.

Port Aransas's projected residential demand will average 110 units per year, of which 65 units (60 percent) should be single family and 45 units should be multifamily. Over the next decade, about 350 acres will be needed for single-family units and 30 acres will be needed for multifamily units.

Commercial Real Estate Market

Port Aransas has nine industrial buildings with 63,000 square feet of space that accommodates 190 employees. The industrial market is anticipated to grow by 6,200 square feet per year, and over the next decade it will need about five acres of land.

The Port Aransas retail market includes 148 buildings with 809,000 square feet of space and more than 2,300 employees. The retail market is projected to grow by about 15,000 square feet annually, and over the next decade the retail market will need about 18 acres of land.

The Port Aransas office market includes 19 buildings with 84,000 square feet of space and 420 employees. The Port Aransas office market is projected to grow annually by 4,200 square feet, and over the next decade about four acres will be needed for office uses.

Recommendations

Currently, insufficient socioeconomic and market data are available for Port Aransas. The panel recommends the city develop a database of key socioeconomic and real estate market information that is continually updated. The database should include all census information as well as warehouse, industrial, office and retail space, and hotels and lodging units. In addition, retail sales statistics and an inventory of buildings damaged from the hurricane and needing repairs should be available. Employment statistics and assessors' data should also be readily available. To complete a detailed market analysis of highest and best uses for a property, as many as 200 data sources need to be researched, and the city of Port Aransas should make as many of these available as possible.

Embracing Tourism as a Key Economic Driver

THE KEY ECONOMIC DRIVERS IN PORT ARANSAS

are tourism, boating, universities, and winter Texans (temporary residents who choose to spend several winter months in Port Aransas). Tourism is the leading industry that drives the economy. The local chamber of commerce estimates that up to 5 million visitors come to Port Aransas annually, which averages 13,000 visitors per day.

The summer months are the peak season and as many as 100,000 visitors come to Port Aransas on strategic weekends. With lodging capacity for only about 15,000 people, many of these visitors during peak season are day-trippers or campers. Tourism dominates the Port Aransas economy. Without it, the number of hotels, for-rent condominiums, and restaurants would be far lower.

Port Aransas and Its Competition

The major beach destinations in Texas are Galveston, South Padre Island, and Port Aransas. Galveston has the advantage of being adjacent to Houston and a metropolitan population of 5 million. Further, it has a strong historic heritage dating to the early 19th century and stages well-attended events such as Mardi Gras and Dickens on the Strand. The hotel inventory is large and diverse and caters to all segments of the market. However, the water near the beaches is often muddy, which is caused by outflows from the Trinity River, San Jacinto River, and Buffalo Bayou.

South Padre Island is a popular spring break destination for college students and a resort destination for families. Horseback riding on the beach and ecological tours on the Padre Island National Seashore are popular. South Padre Island sponsors several fishing tournaments throughout the year, including the Texas International Fishing Tournament. Access to the island from the mainland is easy via the Queen Isabella Causeway from the city of Port Isabel,



The historic Tarpon Inn, a well-known hotel located in downtown Port Aransas.

and South Padre Island is served by airports in Brownsville and Harlingen.

Port Aransas offers arguably the best beach in Texas with clear water, a quaint and historic downtown, and excellent restaurants. Furthermore, retail is not overrun with the “brands” that are found in every suburb. The community is also an easy drive from San Antonio, with reasonable drives from Austin and Houston and a manageable drive from the Dallas/Fort Worth area. However, Port Aransas lacks direct air services, and the local airport has limited capacity. Nor does the island have full-service, four-star hotels.

An additional challenge is that largely because of the destruction from Hurricane Harvey, the housing inventory on the island does not have a diverse range of price points affordable to service employees. Housing affordability and workforce housing are discussed later in this report.

Recommendations

Visiting the beach, boating, fishing, bird watching, and exploring the marine research center are primary activities for tourists. The panel believes that recreational opportunities in Port Aransas should be broadened for both tourists and permanent residents. In addition, ecotourism opportunities are worth exploring, and an extension of

these activities could include more classes and tours offered by the University of Texas Marine Science Institute and Texas A&M. Continuing education courses through these institutions can also attract longer-term, retired visitors such as winter Texans.

Other recreational opportunities developed by the private entities might include movie theaters, a bowling center, and other family-oriented activities. Because of Port Aransas's many advantages, if its disadvantages can be addressed, the community can become the high-quality beach destination in Texas.

Lodging Inventory and Performance Profile

Before Hurricane Harvey, Port Aransas had 18 hotels with 758 guest rooms and 55 short-term-rental entities with 1,811 units. Currently, the highest STR Chain Scale hotels listed in Port Aransas are the Hampton Inn & Suites and the Holiday Inn Express, both of which are classified as "upper midscale." Since the hurricane, only the 18-room Old Town Cottages has opened, in early 2018. Conspicuous by their absence are any "upper upscale" hotels, such as Marriott, Hilton, and Hyatt. The Port Aransas Chamber

Port Aransas Hotel Inventory, 2017

Property	Units	Year built	STR Chain Scale
A Laughing Horse Lodge	17	n.a.	Independent
Beachcomber Motel	15	n.a.	Independent
Mariner Inn & Suites	57	n.a.	Independent
Tropic Island RV Resort	38	1978	Independent
Shark Reef Resort/Paradise	37	1980	Independent
Red Roof (former Travelodge)	54	1982	Economy
Seaside Motel*	46	1982	Independent
Amella's Landing Hotel	29	1986	Independent
Tarpon Inn*	30	1987	Independent
America's Best Value	23	1992	Economy
Captain's Quarters Hotel	40	1996	Independent
Best Western Ocean Villa	48	1997	Midscale
Plantation Suites & Conference	50	1999	Independent
Holiday Inn Express (closed 2017)	74	2005	Upper midscale
Alister Square Inn	50	2005	Independent
Days Inn Port Aransas	45	2005	Economy
Hampton Inn & Suites	78	2013	Upper midscale
Place Hotel	27	2017	Independent
Total	758		

Source: Source Strategies; Smith Travel Research, 2018.

*Closed due to hurricane. n.a. = not available.

Port Aransas Hotel and Short-Term Rental Performance

	2017			2016			2015			2014			2013		
	Units	Revenue (millions)	RevPAR	Units	Revenue (millions)	RevPAR	Units	Revenue (millions)	RevPAR	Units	Revenue (millions)	RevPAR	Units	Revenue (millions)	RevPAR
Hotels	783	\$16.33	\$73.98	763	\$16.13	\$64.06	774	\$15.88	\$62.55	776	\$15.79	\$61.79	766	\$14.50	\$57.01
Short-term rentals	1,811	\$39.36	\$77.10	1,799	\$44.52	\$74.98	1,834	\$43.53	\$72.36	1,844	\$47.32	\$77.90	2,004	\$49.85	\$74.93
Total	2,594	\$55.69	\$76.16	2,562	\$60.65	\$71.73	2,608	\$59.41	\$69.45	2,620	\$63.11	\$72.13	2,770	\$64.34	\$69.97

Source: Source Strategies: *Texas Hotel Performance Fact Book*, 2013–2017.

RevPAR = revenue per available room.

of Commerce and Tourist Bureau is pursuing filling this gap through a request for proposals (RFP) and hotel occupancy tax (HOT) rebate process. As of this writing, the chamber has identified two viable candidates.

In recent years, the hotel sector remained stable in inventory, growing at slightly over 0.5 percent per year from 2013 through 2017. This stable inventory facilitated strong revenue growth with revenue per available room (RevPAR), growing at a healthy average of 6.7 percent per year.

Conversely, the number of available short-term rentals generally declined during this period. Revenue growth has been anemic at less than 1.0 percent per year on a per available room basis. With declining inventory and sluggish rate growth, total revenues have declined from about \$50 million in 2013 to about \$40 million in 2017.

Hurricane Harvey profoundly affected lodging rental income through a loss of units. In the quarter following Harvey's landfall in late August 2017, Port Aransas

experienced more than a 50 percent reduction in hotel rooms while short-term rentals declined by over 90 percent. By mid-2018, 508 hotel rooms were available, still only two-thirds the number of rooms available before the hurricane. In addition, short-term rentals were up to only 896 units, or about half the 2017 inventory.

Hotel and Short-Term Rental Revenues

The impact of Hurricane Harvey is even more notable in hotel and short-term rental revenues. The performance of the Port Aransas hotel and short-term rental market from January 1, 2017, to June 30, 2018, demonstrates the impact of the hurricane. First- and second-quarter 2017 revenues were \$8.9 million and \$21 million, respectively. The hurricane made landfall in the second quarter of 2017. Revenues in first-quarter 2018 were \$4.3 million, less than half those of a year earlier, and in the second quarter they increased to \$11.9 million—still just over half the revenues

Impact of Hurricane Harvey on Port Aransas Lodging Industry

	2Q 2018			1Q 2018			4Q 2017			2017		
	Units	Revenue (millions)	RevPAR	Units	Revenue (millions)	RevPAR	Units	Revenue (millions)	RevPAR	Units	Revenue (millions)	RevPAR
Hotels	508	\$4.33	\$93.66	376	\$2.34	\$69.19	341	\$1.55	\$49.49	775	\$16.33	\$73.98
Short-term rentals	896	\$7.59	\$93.08	271	\$1.96	\$80.55	127	\$0.77	\$65.51	1,811	\$39.36	\$77.10
Total	1,404	\$11.92	\$93.29	647	\$4.31	\$73.95	468	\$2.32	\$53.84	2,594	\$55.69	\$76.16

Source: Source Strategies: *Texas Hotel Performance Fact Book*, 2013–2017.

RevPAR = revenue per available room.

Conference Center Proposal

In early August 2018, the chamber of commerce issued an RFP to develop a hotel and conference center. Two viable proposals are now being evaluated. The RFP included a range of requirements, including the following:

- A minimum of 200 hotel guest rooms;
- A minimum of 21,150 square feet of usable meeting and conference space;
- Full-service food and beverage service; and
- On-site parking with sufficient parking spaces.

Constructing a full-service, upper-upscale hotel and convention center as envisioned by the RFP has many benefits.

- **Quality upgrade in hotel inventory:** Currently, Port Aransas has no full-service, four-star, or upper-upscale hotels. Clientele desiring a more luxurious experience must look to condominium rentals.
- **Additional capacity during season:** From Memorial Day to Labor Day, it is a seller's market and a full-service hotel can be expected to sell out at very high room rates.
- **Derived demand during off season:** Although weekends, especially Saturdays, do modestly well during the shoulder seasons of spring and fall, the conference center component of these hotels will allow the properties to attract group business to boost off-season rates and occupancies.
- **Meeting attendees exposed to Port Aransas:** Many attendees at conferences held at the hotel may be exposed to Port Aransas and its many attractions, becoming future tourists, second-home buyers, or both.
- **New permanent residents:** A four-star hotel needs well-paid, experienced management in its various departments. These managers and their families may become permanent residents, thus supporting the city's churches, schools, and organizations.
- **Increased hotel occupancy tax (HOT) revenue:** The project will enjoy 10 years of HOT rebates, but after that period the city will have a significant increase in hotel tax revenue.

of the previous year. This also illustrates the market's gradual recovery, which is not yet complete.

The performance of hotels and short-term rentals in the three full quarters following the storm shows a comparatively greater decline in both number of units and revenue for short-term rentals compared with hotels, indicating their greater vulnerability to weather events.

Recommendations

Although the city leaders are weighing the two proposals to determine which *one* should have the city's support, the panel recommends that, provided they meet the RFP requirements, *both* proposals be selected. Neither proposal should require any subsidy from the city other than sponsorship of a HOT rebate.

Port Aransas currently has no full-service hotels. The market can support more than one such hotel. The two together total 400 guest rooms. During the summer season they can be expected to sell out. To minimize competition between the hotels and expand the reach of their attraction to the group market, the panel recommends the hotels belong to different brand families. If both hotels share the same reservation system and frequent traveler program, they will compete more directly with each other. By having each of the hotels in a different affiliation brand family, Port Aransas would benefit from tapping into multiple loyalty groups. Moreover, although an upper-upscale brand is recommended, a boutique brand such as Marriott Autograph, the Hyatt Unbound Collection, or Hilton Curio would add a lodging alternative not presently available in the market.

Recreational Boating

Recreational boating is one of the major attractions of Port Aransas. The city has an advantage over other fishing areas such as Galveston because the deep water (1,000-plus feet) is only about 60 miles from shore, whereas deep water off Galveston can be more than 100 miles off shore. During the summer months, at least three big off-shore

Texas Gulf Coast Marinas

Market	Marina	Rating
Port Aransas	Port Aransas Municipal Boat Harbor	3.0
	Island Moorings Marina	—
Aransas Pass	Aransas Pass Yacht Club	4.0
	Redfish Bay Boat House	4.2
Baytown	Bayland Marina	4.0
Corpus Christi	Bluff Bay Marina	4.9
	Bluff's Landing Marina & Lodge	4.6
	Corpus Christi Marina	4.4
	Marker 37 Marina	4.4
	Padre Island Yacht Club	4.5
Freeport	Bridge Bait Marina	5.0
	Bridge Harbor Yacht Club	4.5
	Freeport Marina	4.6
	Surfside Marina	4.8
Galveston	Galveston Yacht Basin	4.0
	Pelican Rest Marina	4.6
Hitchcock	Harborwalk Community, Yacht Club & Marina	4.3
Houston	Blue Dolphin Yachting Center	4.4
	Kemah Boardwalk Marina, Kemah	4.4
	Marina Del Sol, Kemah	4.3
	Portofino Harbour Marina & Yacht Club, Clear Lake Shores	4.1
	Seabrook Marina & Shipyard, Seabrook	4.6
	South Shore Harbor Marina, League City	4.5
	Waterford Harbor Yacht Club & Marina, Kemah	4.7
Ingleside	Bahia Marina	4.8
Port Lavaca	Indianola Fishing Marina	4.6
Rockport	Cove Harbor Marina & Drystack	4.2
	Fox Yacht Sales	3.7
	Key Allegro Marina	4.4
	Rockport Yacht Club	4.6
South Padre Island	Sea Ranch Marina	4.0

Sources: Google; Yelp, 2018.

fishing tournaments take place, including the Deep Sea Roundup and bay tournaments almost every weekend.

The city currently has City Marina Harbor with 400 slips and several private marinas. However, both the Port Aransas Municipal Boat Harbor and the Island Moorings Marina were devastated by Hurricane Harvey. In both cases, these facilities are replacing permanent docks with modern floating docks. In terms of capacity, the smallest dock at the municipal facility accommodates boats of up to 40 feet, while the smallest floating dock at Island Moorings will reportedly be for 50-foot vessels. Smaller craft will reportedly also be accommodated at the larger docks and pay a reduced rate based on their length and beam.

Consumer reviews on Google and Yelp indicate the municipal marina scored the lowest of any of the Texas Gulf Coast marinas listed. The completion of the repairs and upgraded floating docks should result in better evaluations moving forward. Island Moorings will complete its renovation and repositioning by the end of 2018 and be fully operational at the beginning of 2019. In addition to its 200 large floating docks, Island Moorings will reportedly have two covered docks that can accommodate 42 boats up to 35 feet in length.

Although some boat owners rent slips throughout the year, use of the marinas is primarily seasonal. Transient boaters can reserve available slips in advance through the SnagASlip app. The strongest demand for slips is during the 110 days between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

Recommendations

Currently, smaller boats face a bottleneck at the boat launching facility near the ferry landing. The panel recommends that an alternative launching area with more ramps, ample parking, and a fueling station be considered. Another option is dry-stack storage for smaller boats. Removing the launching facility from this area would reduce the congestion in the downtown and ferry area.

Envisioning Port Aransas

PORT ARANSAS'S LAST COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

was prepared in 2005 and codified in 2010, and is now out of date, particularly given the many changes that have occurred in recent years and the impact of Hurricane Harvey. The panel believes the time is opportune to begin the update to the Comprehensive Plan. Essential to this update is a robust community engagement process that gathers the collective voice and preferences of residents and visitors.

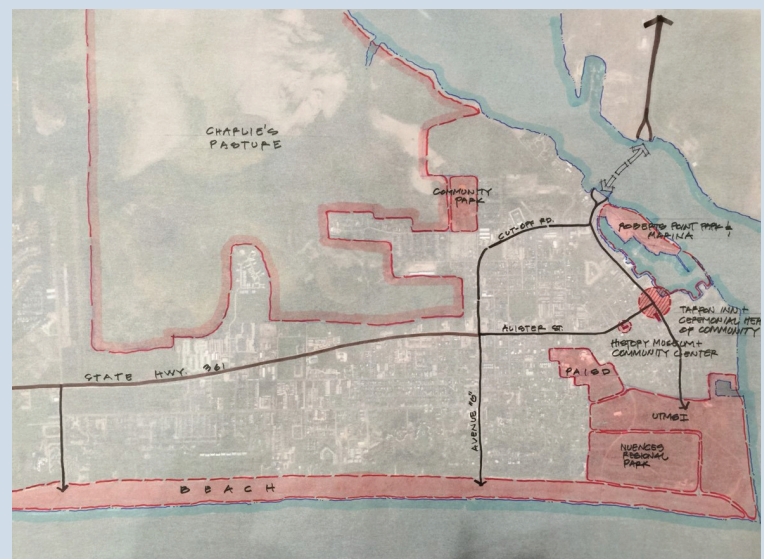
The panel recommends that the update include a chapter on vision and a chapter on resilience. In light of the most recent storm events and observations made by the panel, these are two essential additions to the current document. As part of the update process, and in addition to it, Port Aransas can take several planning-focused efforts described in the following sections to fully realize the community's vision for the city.

Sacred Community Places Provide Identity

The panel asked many individuals during stakeholder interviews which places the community feels are sacred or important to collectively define the soul of Port Aransas. These places can become the thread that helps brand the community, gives it an identity or uniqueness, and is critical to maintaining and holding Port Aransas's position in the marketplace. Losing any of these places erodes that position and contributes to long-term decline. The panel recommends that each of these places should be preserved and enhanced to maintain viability and the function they provide to the character and well-being of Port Aransas.

Stakeholder-Identified Sacred Places

Stakeholder interviews provided the panelists with an understanding of sacred places in Port Aransas that have significance to the community. They include (in no particular order) Charlie's Pasture, the Marina, Roberts Point Park, community park, community center and museum, school complex, Historic Tarpon Inn, intersection of Alister Street and Cotter Avenue in Old Town, University of Texas Marine Science Institute, Nueces County Park, and the beach.



Zoning and Design Guidelines

Port Aransas's vision for a community is expressed in its Comprehensive Plan and implemented through its zoning code and other ordinances that dictate the character and form of the community. Port Aransas is a mixture of old and new buildings with many different architectural styles and landscape approaches. In the panel's stakeholder interviews, Port Aransas was described as “funky” and

“somewhat chaotic,” but allowing individuals and businesses freedom of expression has created a certain charm. The panel also heard that as the town grows, it needs revised standards and guidelines that push for a higher-quality response. The panel’s recommendations related to zoning and design guidelines for Port Aransas follow.

Update Tools That Underpin the Comprehensive Plan and Codify the Vision

The city should provide guidance and quality while allowing for flexibility in approach when updating the plan and guidelines. Specifically, the panel recommends reviewing guidelines for building setbacks that encourage structures to move closer to the street along key arteries such as the Alister Street, Cotter Avenue, and Cut-Off Road/Avenue G roadways. In addition, place parking lots to the side and rear of buildings along those key streets. This will reduce the congestion and accidents that occur with backing-out parking solutions on these main roadways and will allow easier recognition of retail and restaurant signage by passing motorists.

Move from a Height Restriction to a Building-Story Restriction

The panel supports the general low-rise nature of buildings in Old Town and maintaining that environment. However, allowing some buildings to exceed the current 35-foot height restriction is necessary to achieve innovation in new architectural prototypes that allow higher densities within three-story formats.

Furthermore, the need to elevate buildings above the base flood elevation brings pressure to maximize leasable space within the building envelope. The city needs to allow some creativity to encourage new, mixed-use building styles.

Revise the Sign and Landscape Ordinances

Stakeholder interviews indicated that the sign ordinance is too complex to follow and has not achieved the desired intent. Signs are seemingly too large or chaotic in some instances and not scaled proportionally to the size of the building’s facade. Likewise, the landscape ordinance does not achieve or promote adequate landscape coverage to



An example of a city gateway in the city of Twentynine Palms, California.

GLENN FRANCIS OF WWW.PACIFICPRODIGAL.COM, WIKIPEDIA

create a higher-quality environment. It is tied to a point system rather than providing direction to achieve adequate shade protection and design of the interface between public and private property.

Create Design Guidelines That Address Quality as the Most Important Aspect

Port Aransas has many examples, particularly in retail buildings, where long blank walls have no windows or architectural adornments to catch the eye, thereby giving a visually blighted appearance. The panel recommends that the city communicate its desires and intent for design in the guidelines while also giving the designers enough freedom to develop appropriately scaled and attractive projects.

The panel also suggests avoiding dictating themes and instead focusing on massing and form, quality of materials, and pedestrian-scaled approaches for the sidewalk and street. With the removal of many older buildings as a result of Hurricane Harvey, now is an opportune time for the city to revisit the tools that it can use to demand higher-quality design.

Community Gateways and Branding Port Aransas

The major entry points into any community are important to announce one has arrived and give some indication of the character and special nature that makes a place unique. That is particularly true for visitor destinations competing in the tourism market. The panel recommends

Port Aransas consider new signage, monumentation, and landscaping at the city limits for travelers coming from Harbor Island on the northeast and Corpus Christi to the southwest. These places are opportunities to express the brand of the community and set the expectation for tourists seeking authenticity and quality.

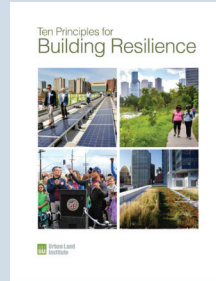
Hurricane Harvey and Resilience

The panel witnessed the tremendous community effort expended to bring Port Aransas back to normalcy following Hurricane Harvey. Much of the debris has been cleared, and many buildings are actively undergoing renovation. Although short-term issues remain, such as clogged or blocked stormwater and roadway basins, signs of progress are visible throughout the island. Larger projects such as Cinnamon Shores are moving ahead with additional phases of construction, and new slips in the city's marina are being added.

That said, the community has lost population and resident student enrollment. Port Aransas also experienced a loss of smaller residential buildings that supplied some level of affordable housing for lower-income households. Building resilience moving forward will mean adding jobs and affordable housing for working families, maintaining a viable student population, managing the natural lands and

ULI Resources on Resilience

Rebuilding after Hurricane Harvey presents an opportunity to include a range of resilience measures in new and existing buildings to prepare for any future natural disasters.



ULI has a variety of resources available on resilience topics, including *Ten Principles of Building Resilience*, which considers the economic, environmental, and social factors that contribute to resilience and how the concept of resilience translates to the private sector, municipal decision-makers, and communities.

systems to absorb shocks, and harnessing technology to better inform the citizenry of potential threats.

Every effort should be made to describe and understand vulnerabilities to the natural systems for the citizens most at risk and to redefine where and how to build before the next cataclysmic event. As the water temperatures increase in the Caribbean and Gulf waters, the risk of future shocks to Port Aransas can only increase.

Potential Future Projects

The panel was made aware of several places that could potentially contribute to the success of Port Aransas going forward. Harbor Island across the Ship Channel was described as a place that could potentially accommodate new uses, most notably industrial uses associated with seawater desalinization or oil exports.

The panel supports new job generation, particularly jobs that can pay wages higher than the service industry. However, the city should be in active discussions with the Port Authority and other landowners on Harbor Island to seek uses and companies that are compatible with the tourism and fishing industry.

A planned airport runway extension is being considered to allow additional light-plane access and hangar parking. The panel supports this action within the constraints of the surrounding wetlands. With the proliferation of newer, expensive homes on the southern part of the island, demand may exist from business owners and higher-income families to seek air access to Port Aransas.

Enhancing Resident and Visitor Mobility

PROVIDING RESIDENTS AND VISITORS with sufficient and efficient methods of getting from one point of interest to another can increase quality of life and support larger economic goals. Fostering both requires understanding existing limitations to the transportation infrastructure within a community as well as identifying plans and approaches that meet the needs of a diverse range of users with varying priorities.

Existing Limitations

The panel recognizes that some congestion is bound to occur on an island as both visitors and residents attempt to exit and enter by vehicle, particularly on crowded summer weekends. Stakeholders described lengthy wait times to exit the island, with traffic lined up beyond the ferry-stacking lanes in Roberts Point Park and well onto Cut-Off Road and Cotter Avenue. This congestion can also occur during weekdays, greatly extending the commute time for service employees exiting the island toward Aransas Pass. Vehicles wait in the park area, idling engines for long periods of time and blocking pedestrian access to the shoreline.

The panel recommends the city continue to pursue the redesigned stacking facility west of the current loading area and remove it from the waterfront park area. Although this strategy may cause other issues as vehicles navigate different left-turn movements, it has the potential to alleviate some of the confusion with boat trailer access to the boat ramp, reportedly the most highly used boat ramp in Texas.

Recommendations for Future Mobility in Port Aransas

To address the existing limitations for resident and visitor mobility in Port Aransas and plan for the future, the panel identified the following recommendations.

Add a Road Connection between State Highway 361 and Cut-Off Road

The city included a proposed roadway to the north and west in its previous Comprehensive Plan as a means of alleviating traffic at the Alister Street and Cut-Off Road intersection. The panel supports the roadway connection only if impacts to the wetland environment can be adequately mitigated.

Similarly, the panel recommends that additional opportunities be created to provide better local roadway connections to distribute internal traffic movement evenly. This is particularly the case for the northern portion of the island, including Alister Street, Avenue G, Cut-Off Road, and Cotter Avenue. The area with the most potential for local street reconfiguration is between Cotter Avenue and Avenue A.

Analyze Carrying Capacity for the Proliferation of Golf and Beach Cart Vehicles

The panel heard from local stakeholders that the city may need to examine whether additional permit facilities should be granted for cart-rental establishments. Carts provide an alternative method of movement on the island and are cherished by many who live in and visit Port Aransas. The panel recommends the city examine whether the supply of carts meets the demand, and if so, work with commercial property owners to consider alternative modes.

One issue noted by stakeholders is the number of both large trucks and SUVs combined with golf carts on city streets that pose safety risks when sharing the same roadway. In addition, for those establishments that have not already done so, the panel recommends that future cart owners and establishments move toward electric rather than gas-fueled engines and explore publicly and privately accessible charging stations.

Plan for New and Future Transportation Options

The island will see many different forms of transportation in the future as technology evolves. These new forms might include electric-powered scooters, electric-powered bikes, and autonomous vehicles. The panel recommends the city examine this issue in its Comprehensive Plan update and prepare approaches that consider dedicated travel ways for carts, scooters, and various forms of bicycle innovations on all streets.

Take Action on a Parking Management Plan

Stakeholder interviews and panel observations noted the parking congestion that occurs most notably on streets where short-term rentals are permitted, as well as portions of Old Town. These areas are reflected in the R2 and Tourist Zones in the City Zoning Code. The proliferation of vehicles on streets with no parking spaces can cause life-safety concerns related to evacuation and fire and emergency personnel access.

The panel recommends a parking management plan be prepared that examines where parking is permitted and how it is enforced. In areas near high concentrations of restaurants, bars, and retail establishments, on-site parking may be inadequate for a variety of reasons. The panel also recommends adding surface-lot parking in the Alister Street/Cotter Avenue area, which will give residents and visitors the option to park once and make multiple walking trips to downtown establishments for goods, services, and entertainment. Parking lots should



An example of wayfinding signage in Augusta, Georgia.

allow for parking of cars, light trucks, and golf carts and be clearly marked for first-time visitors. If the demand for parking exceeds supply, a parking structure could be considered at a later date.

Prepare a Wayfinding and Signage Plan

Cities or communities that have a high concentration of visitors benefit from having a simple and clear signage program that directs people to key destinations. In Port Aransas, a signage program could include the beach, Old Town, parking areas, the waterfront park, and Charlie's Pasture nature trails and staging areas.

The panel recommends hiring a consulting firm to prepare the plan and provide graphic options for consideration of the scale and character of the signage to be implemented. The design of the signs should also be responsive to the Port Aransas brand and be of a similar character to



An example of spots designated for golf carts in a traditional parking lot.

the material selected for other public improvements and amenities, such as street lights and benches.

Identify Boat Mooring Limitations at the Updated Public Marina

Recreation surveys taken by island residents indicated that the number-one activity in Port Aransas is fishing. The central marina facility, located at the harbor adjacent to the ferry access, is undergoing improvements and will ultimately accommodate larger vessels to meet that demand. However, additional marina mooring space for smaller vessels will be needed as the community grows. The panel recommends the city partner with other private marinas, such as Island Moorings, in the short term to examine capacity to accommodate small watercraft.

Enhance the Island Transit Service

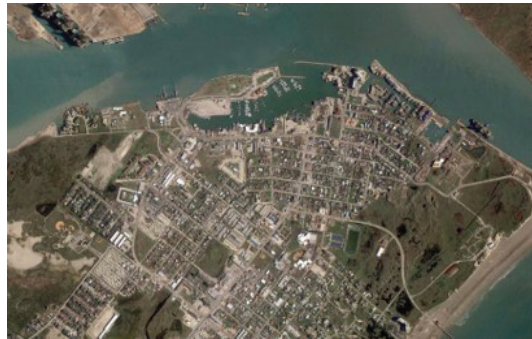
A small bus service, the Padre Island Connection, currently serves the island from Corpus Christi to the south to the Harbor Island park-and-ride to the north. This service is

important to workers who cannot afford automobile ownership. As the community grows and expands in the coming years, bus service should be maintained and upgraded.

The panel recommends that the city work with the transit agency to ensure the service provides the maximum headways (time between busses) feasible while still stopping at the appropriate high-job-concentration areas. In addition, the bus service that uses the ferry crossing should be given a dedicated lane for priority boarding. A transit app that is linked to the service would help users understand routes and timing and would thereby enhance the service.

Defining Downtown and Enhancing a Community Asset

THE SPONSOR AND COMMUNITY stakeholders identified downtown Port Aransas as an important community asset that could be an economic hub of activity and represent the heart of the community. The panel asked stakeholders to further define downtown Port Aransas, reviewed the existing land uses and street grid, and toured the area to experience it firsthand. Through this process, the panel made a series of observations and recommendations on ways to enhance this community asset.



As part of the panel process, the sponsor asked the panel to look at ways to revitalize its downtown, including the Old Town area shown here.

Old Town Improvements

The panel proposes a series of improvements to the Old Town area to enhance and connect existing activity centers and provide a template for similar improvements throughout the island.

Add a Public Plaza to Denote the Community's Ceremonial Heart

Community stakeholders expressed the desire to have a public square or gathering place near the intersection of Alister Street and Cotter Avenue. Currently, a small plot of vacant land fronts several entertainment venues at the northeast corner of that intersection.

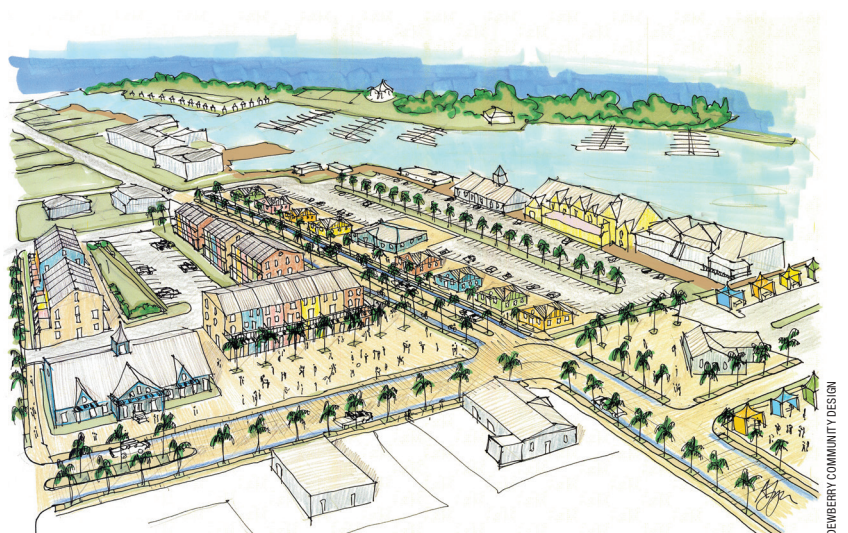
The panel believes this location is ideal for a multiuse plaza that could be fronted by a small restaurant and include enough space to anchor art shows, a farmers market, and small musical events. When appropriate, these events and activities could also occupy portions of Cotter Avenue.

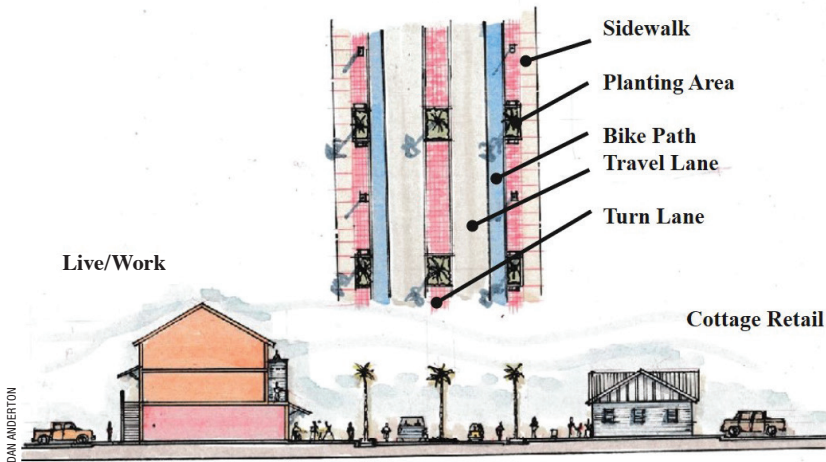
Many successful small towns celebrate their older districts with street fairs on a dedicated weekly or monthly basis. These events promote walking in the public right-of-way and are important for allowing the arts and music community to be expressive and increasing the number of patrons at restaurants, particularly during off-peak times.

Focus on Streetscapes That Add Shade, Vegetation, and Parking

To support additional public use of the plaza and Old Town streets, shade and accent trees, low vegetation, sidewalks, and crosswalks denoted with different paving materials are needed. The panel recommends planting a defined street canopy of palm or other accent trees along Alister Street, Cotter Avenue, and Cut-Off Road to denote the areas that support many of the community's restaurants, civic places, and commercial establishments. The number of wide sidewalks separated from the street by treed safety areas,

This model of the design concepts surrounding the intersection of Alister Street and Cotter Avenue illustrates what additional development with thoughtful design guidelines might help cultivate in the heart of the Old Town area.





Left: A visualization of a potential street design for the area at Alister Street and Cotter Avenue shows support for several modes of transportation, including sidewalks that are set away from the edge of the street next to planting areas that can provide shade and accent trees.

Right: The intersection at Alister Street and Cotter Avenue is already a hub of activity during peak season. The panel believes this intersection has the potential to become the heart of Old Town through the addition of a multiuse plaza, a mix of building uses, and additional parking so visitors and residents are encouraged to leave their cars or golf carts and walk.

special pervious paving, and site furnishings such as benches and lighting should increase closer to the Alister and Cotter intersection, thereby denoting its importance as the ceremonial heart of the community. This same progression should also occur through changes in sidewalk and crosswalk paving material.

Cotter Avenue can still allow left-turn movements, but a special center lane paving with periodic palm tree planters can lessen the perception of wide, pedestrian-challenging streets. Narrower secondary streets also move sidewalks away from the street edge by putting a tree-planted grass or stone safety strip between the sidewalk and the street. Moreover, all streets should include bike and alternative transportation lanes as part of the right-of-way. The Cotter and Alister design should be considered a prototype for street and public space improvements, and the design elements put in place here should be transferred to future improvements throughout the city.

Infill Additional Commercial Businesses and Provide a Link to Roberts Point Park

The panel recommends cultivating additional retail and other commercial businesses along Cotter Avenue, moving west and extending northward to the harbor front where redevelopment is feasible. This area would include revised parking lots and places to inquire about fishing charters, dolphin watching, birding activities, and other community



events to strengthen the existing entertainment district. A water taxi could be added to take both residents and visitors from this area to the northern side of the harbor, thereby making it more easily accessible by foot. This added access would increase visibility for local businesses on both sides of the harbor.

Old Town Mixed-Use Development Design Concepts

The following design concepts focus on specific areas in Old Town. However, the broader design ideas and tools are appropriate to implement for development throughout Port Aransas.

Introduce Mixed Uses along Cotter Avenue

The panel recommends incorporating mixed uses along Cotter Avenue, such as buildings with retail on the first floor and housing at affordable price points on upper floors. The addition of cottage-style buildings for retail fronting Cotter Avenue is also recommended to help screen surface parking lots and strengthen the pedestrian experience while still allowing visibility to existing buildings at the back of the lots. Additional retail space in this area presents the opportunity for a larger range of retail options, such as an independent bookstore or candle store, both of which were mentioned by residents during interviews.



DAN ANDERTON, GOOGLE



DAN ANDERTON

Far left: A mix of two-story buildings with first-floor retail space and second-floor residential, as well as cottage retail providing visual coverage for surface parking, can further bolster the activity at the intersection of Alister Street and Cotter Avenue.

Left: An example of cottage-style retail space as suggested for the area along Cotter Avenue.

Reconfigure the Streets and Parcels between Avenue A and Cotter Avenue

The large triangular parcel that has been used for recreational vehicle (RV) parking is for sale and provides a great opportunity for the city to both complete the street grid in that area and add permanent housing units affordable to the workforce. The panel estimates the parcel could support as many as 46 units of one- or two-story shotgun-type housing. This number of units is based on the same density configuration as the project behind the Post Office, which is taking advantage of the Flexible Unit Development (FUD) ordinance. In addition, 400 to 450 public parking spaces can be added in this area for trucks, cars, and carts, using the proposed configuration.



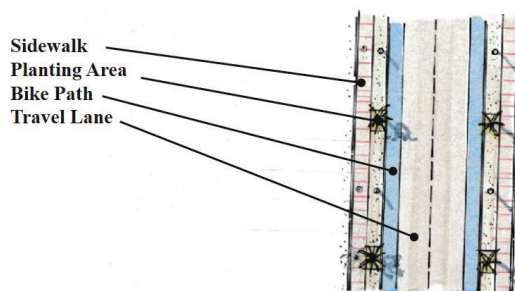
DAN ANDERTON, GOOGLE

A parcel at Avenue A and Cotter Avenue presents an opportunity to reconfigure the street grid and support the development of housing units and additional parking.

Redesign Portions of Roberts Point Park

The panel recommends using the park for more events, both programmed and unprogrammed. The addition of a band shell or stage with electrical power to host musical events for several thousand people could be incorporated in this area, further enhancing the draw of Port Aransas as a destination experience.

Likewise, the area could be used for informal soccer or football games, or perhaps sand volleyball courts could be established to host regional tournaments. Other popular events could include bicycle criteriums and 10-kilometer races during the months when the weather is suitable for rigorous outdoor exercise. Events that gather the birding community could also be staged in the park.



An example of neighborhood street design that incorporates multiple modes of transportation, supports pedestrians, and adds street vegetation.



DAN ANDERTON

The panel suggests that Roberts Point Park, a popular location for many waterfront activities in Port Aransas, could accommodate more public amenity space and parking for both guests and residents.



The panel encourages the community to celebrate the waterfront and expand the use of the park beyond fishing and boat excursions. The existing boat launch parking area could be reconfigured to allow small kiosk vendors and a public boardwalk to activate the waterfront and make it more accessible to residents and tourists.

The parking lot should be organized for maximum efficiency of boat trailer and vehicle parking and should introduce

shade trees to reduce the heat island effects and make the lot more pleasant for day parking. A future alternative pedestrian crossing of the marina such as a swing bridge should be considered or a water taxi with a stop located in the parking lot area.

How to Get It Done

This section of the report recommends a variety of planning initiatives and physical changes that will transform the Old Town area. Dozens of discrete tasks and actions are needed to make this transformation a reality. Although ultimately the private sector will substantially complete development and redevelopment of properties, the panel believes it incumbent upon the city to lead this effort. To do so, city leadership must begin the process of informing, organizing, and planning the critical paths toward completion.

Identifying and Meeting Housing Needs

THE SPONSOR AND THE CITY IDENTIFIED workforce and affordable housing, particularly for local business employees, as an issue. The panel was asked to evaluate the need for this type of housing on Port Aransas and strategies to support meeting that need. To understand housing need, planners and land use professionals identify and understand the current market, the balance or imbalance of supply and demand, and mechanisms providing additional housing to meet the established need.

Market Demographics

The Port Aransas market consists of many types of households, such as singles, families with children, one parent with children, and childless couples. Income earners in these households include service workers, young teachers, professionals, business owners, and retirees who have decided to live in Port Aransas to meet their lifestyle choices. However, some members of younger generations, including millennials, gen X, and gen Y, have elected to commute and drive 30 to 40 miles on Highway 361 from neighborhoods in Corpus Christi or the closer Aransas Pass area because of pricing, product type, and lifestyle choices instead of living in Port Aransas. The drive to Corpus Christi may take 30 to 45 minutes in the morning and 45 to 60 minutes in the afternoon depending on traffic. Those going to Aransas Pass may incur longer commutes caused by the backup at the ferry. To understand the cost of living off-island and working in Port Aransas, a further analysis of combined housing and transportation costs would need to be conducted and then compared to the cost of living and working in the city. The ULI Terwilliger Center for Housing has conducted many such studies and is a valuable resource that could be accessed.

Workforce and Affordable Housing Defined

Workforce housing for this discussion can be defined as housing for households who make 80 to 120 percent of median income. The median income in 2016, based on five-year U.S. Census Bureau estimates for Port Aransas, is \$50,741. This type of housing would be for households that make between \$40,592 and \$60,889 per year, including teachers, police, and other types of professionals.

For this discussion, *affordable housing* is defined as housing for households who make 60 percent of median income and lower. This means households earning \$30,445 per year or less in Port Aransas, which typically includes positions such as service workers, part-time workers, and teacher's aides.

Workforce and Affordable Housing Demand

Although national, state, and metropolitan statistical area household statistics are available, the panel did not have enough local data, especially after the impact of Harvey, to provide a solid and specific recommendation on housing demand for these households. One of the key action items moving forward is to develop better data to assess housing demand and supply issues.

The panel recommends that the city compile detailed data on the remaining housing inventory, the number and type of vacant parcels, and the nature of the permanent and seasonal workforce. One tool to gather workforce data is to conduct a survey of employers and employees to determine the gap between housing demand and supply. With these data the city will be better prepared to create a plan to address housing needs, including what type of housing,

where it should be located, and whether it is rental or for sale. This survey can also provide insight into what housing alternatives best fit the needs of those households.

Although some households will always prefer to live in Aransas Pass or Corpus Christi, one of the major assets of Port Aransas is its high ranking for its public school system. The high quality of education offered may be one of the key enticements to bring new families to Port Aransas.

Market Pricing

Rents in Corpus Christi might range from \$600 to \$750 per month for a one-bedroom older apartment and from \$800 to \$1,200 per month for a two-bedroom older apartment, based on stakeholder feedback. In Port Aransas, stakeholders indicated that those rents may go as high as \$1,800 per month for comparable product. One way to bridge this gap is to provide a rent subsidy for households that matches the rents in Corpus Christi and Aransas Pass.

Households interested in purchasing homes typically look for more space and more bedrooms to accommodate their family. Housing in Corpus Christi and Aransas Pass may range from \$175,000 to \$250,000 according to stakeholders, depending on the neighborhood and other characteristics. In Port Aransas the pricing for new product may be within those ranges, but the homes for sale may be smaller in size and bedroom count. This can make Port Aransas less desirable to some households who might prefer a different lifestyle not offered in Port Aransas in their price range. One way to incentivize new homebuyers to purchase in Port Aransas is to provide some form of down-payment assistance, reducing the cost to enter the market.

Current Housing Projects

The panel was made aware of several projects that have the potential to provide additional housing at a range of price points. The following is a cursory analysis of these efforts.

New City-Initiated Apartment Project

The panel was provided a market study that indicated Port Aransas could accommodate a project of up to 200 units to be located on 13 acres of property at the airport on Highway 361. The city indicated the number of units discussed with the developer will most likely be between 140 and 180 instead of 200. The cost per unit is reported to be about \$96,000. Given this unit range and price per unit, the total cost of this development would be \$13,440,000 to \$17,280,000. However, the panel could not determine if this cost is for only construction without land and other development costs. Therefore, the panel recommends that a complete development budget be provided to complete a thorough feasibility analysis.

The design proposed is a suburban-style apartment with two stories of living space over a garage in about 10 buildings. The target market is working individuals, winter Texans, seasonal workers, and persons earning \$28,887 per year or more. The economic analysis provided indicates the proposal is a market-rate rental apartment. Without controls through a development agreement or a deed restriction, the city has no way to ensure that this project will always serve long-term or permanent residents. Moreover, any apartment owner needs to be cognizant of federal discrimination laws in selecting tenants. The current financing proposed for the project is a long-term, low-cost lease. The city might consider using tax-exempt bonds and tax credits to make this project affordable to either 20 percent of the households or 100 percent of the households who will live in the units under various federal and state programs that are currently in place. To facilitate the use of these tools, the city will have to work with a government agency such as the proposed Housing Finance Corporation.

One additional challenge with this proposal is its location, which is not walkable, so the resident will have to drive a car, golf cart, bicycle, or scooter or take a bus to work. Also, the market study indicates that the unit mix is too heavily weighted to one-bedroom units; therefore, the panel recommends fewer one-bedroom units and more with two bedrooms.

The panel recommends that the city limit its funding involvement in this project to the long-term, low-cost lease and keep the contemplated \$8 million of capital designated for use by the Housing Finance Corporation available for alternative housing uses described in the next section. Such a concentration of its scarce capital may not result in the ideal long-term outcome of housing permanent residents. Putting “all your eggs in one basket” is a bigger risk than a more diversified strategy of investing capital in multiple projects of varying product types addressing different needs and lifestyles.

Project near Post Office

A new project is under construction behind the U.S. Post Office on Nautilus Street. It falls within the FUD ordinance and has about 30 units of for-sale housing with pricing the panel believes to be between \$180,000 and \$220,000. These are both one- and two-bedroom units.

Port Aransas Independent School District Housing Project

Port Aransas Independent School District (PAISD) purchased a property adjacent to its high school parking lot for a proposed housing project for entry-level teachers. PAISD is planning up to four units without parking because it can dedicate parking spaces in its parking lot to the units. The panel’s observation is that this proposed project is a good example of how to conceive of an infill project targeted to a specific audience and immediately adjacent to work. This is a live/work type of housing to meet the needs of a new teacher. The units are anticipated to be either two bedroom/two bath, or three bedroom/two bath.

Discussion is taking place about providing a subsidy in the first year of employment for housing, which would increase over time. This subsidy program could become a model for other projects in Port Aransas for employees of businesses where the business owner or the Housing Finance Corporation could provide similar financial assistance. Ultimately, the teacher is anticipated to move to another housing type as household needs change, thus making the unit available for another new teacher.



TOWNE/RE/UTL

The flexible unit development at Nautilus and Ninth streets in Port Aransas is an example of the type of still housing option the panel supports.

This proposed project would also score high on a walkability index, which is one of the new ways to evaluate desired housing for the workforce. Because it is not car dependent, alternative modes of transportation may be considered and incorporated into the product design. These alternatives need to be considered as part of the city’s planning and zoning codes.

Housing Finance Corporation

The funds available through the proposed Housing Finance Corporation are reported to be \$8 million. The panel recommends using these funds to invest in many projects instead of just one project and to provide housing subsidies to families who qualify.

The corporation could provide investment capital in the form of grants, loans, or equity participation to assist a property owner or developer to build a new project or to renovate an existing building. In addition to capital for new projects, the city should consider providing ongoing rental assistance or subsidies to renters and downpayment or other loan/equity structures for home purchasers.

Alternative Housing Strategy

Another way to approach housing for a range of households with different needs and desired housing types is to produce several new projects in more infill locations in the northern part of the island near many of the business and tourist activities. This approach reflects a scattered-site development housing strategy instead of a concentration of

Left: An example of shotgun-style housing units.

Right: An example of a retail or residential cottage-style unit.



units in one larger housing project. The alternative product types on scattered sites come in a range of forms, including FUD and Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) ordinances, housing units provided by the support of the local business community to house their permanent and seasonal employees, new housing currently under construction or proposed by the local development community, and landowners who may be enticed by the vision to enhance their community.

In addition, potential exists to contract with University of Texas Marine Science Institute to rent dorm rooms for seasonal workers. Other creative ideas may work in an infill strategy on one or more of the vacant lots in the community at the northern end of Mustang Island.

As part of this infill strategy, new housing products and alternative infill sites such as the following need to be considered and should be included as part of the discussion.

Shotgun Cottages

These dwellings are typically 20-by-40-foot homes with 800 to 1,200 square feet of living space. The typical configuration is two-bedroom/two-bath or small three-bedroom/two-bath units, in one or two stories.

Live/Work Attached Unit

This type of housing includes a mixed-use unit with retail and a dwelling unit. It includes commercial construction for the ceiling as a platform for the townhouse above. Thus, the dimensions for retail on the bottom floor could

be flexible widths with depths up to 45 or 50 feet. The residential townhouse above could be 16 feet wide and 38 to 40 feet deep. The resulting two-story townhouse could be between 1,200 and 1,300 square feet, allowing for two-bedroom/two-bath or three-bedroom/two-bath configurations that could house families or multiple single people. These units could accommodate households of six to 12 people per unit, depending on design.

Retail or Residential Cottage

A cottage is typically a 600- to 900-square-foot unit with a one-bedroom/one-bath or two-bedroom/one-bath configuration, one story in height with or without a loft.

Old Cottage Inn Model

This model is an estimated 855-square-foot unit. All units are two bedrooms with two full baths. One of the bedrooms has bunk beds, so the single-story cottages can sleep eight people with a sofa bed. Without the sofa bed, the unit sleeps five or six people.

Recreational Vehicles

RV parks already exist in Port Aransas and currently include permanent residents; however, they are on wheels and mobile at any time. These units should be considered as part of the lifestyle choices of many permanent residents and the transient population in both existing and potential new proposals. In an existing RV park in Port Aransas, the spaces currently rent for \$480 to \$540 per month, and about 60 percent of the spaces are provided to permanent residents.

A project for this type of housing unit is reported to have been proposed, and it should be evaluated as part of the broader strategy to add to the affordable housing stock. The project may require up to \$600,000 of capital, which could be provided by the Housing Finance Corporation with the stipulation that a significant portion of the spaces be made available for long-term permanent residents.

Mobile Homes

Mobile homes are more permanent than RVs because they are installed without wheels. One way to enhance this form of affordable housing, which is popular for seniors, is to add landscaping standards and adequate open space. To incentivize existing mobile home parks to enhance their image by upgrading to the new standards, some form of loan program could be offered through the Housing Finance Corporation. Port Aransas most likely has exemplary mobile home parks that could be a guide for the type of park the city would like to promote.

Accessory Dwelling Units

ADUs are allowed by Port Aransas zoning ordinance on single-family detached lots. The units may range in size from 250 square feet to a maximum of 600 square feet. In addition to stick-built product, prefabricated modular products such as Kasita micro homes from Austin and other companies are now available. Prices for these units can start at \$80,000 and increase with size. The benefit of this type of unit is a full-time, live-in person on site for a homeowner who lives in Port Aransas on a part-time basis. The renter would be an asset to the owner for safety and security.

Stilt Houses

The new units under construction next to Stephanie's Stuff store and the Seafood and Spaghetti Works restaurant—called Port Aransas Fish Camp—are an example of stilt houses. This development consists of 20 units on stilts with a two-story townhouse above and parking below. They are reported to be two-bedroom/one-bath units with about 650 square feet of space. They are for sale and are reportedly priced starting at about \$190,000.

Recommendations to Support Affordable and Workforce Housing Options

The panel recommends scattered infill sites because they provide the opportunity for more flexible types of units at different price ranges both for rent and for sale. This also allows for a wide range of lifestyle preferences. To encourage long-term rentals, especially when the Housing Finance Corporation provides either capital or rental subsidies, tools will be needed to maintain this housing for future permanent residents. Possible ways to do this include development agreements and deed restrictions such as caps on future rents or sales prices. If some other form of subsidy, such as fee waivers, is used, the subsidy should be structured so the contractor pays the fee but the owner gets the credit rebate after a certificate of occupancy is issued.

Tools the Housing Finance Corporation can pursue include those discussed in the following sections.

For-Sale Housing

A new home purchaser could use money from the Housing Finance Corporation's "downpayment fund" plus additional funds from other sources. This downpayment funding would supplement a conventional mortgage with a typical 80 percent loan-to-value loan to provide an equity loan equal to 17 percent of the purchase price, for example. In this example, the purchaser would have to make a downpayment of only 3 percent of the purchase price and pay little or no interest for the loan. This type of structure could be modeled after VA and FHA loan documents.

Rental Housing

The city can provide subsidies to each owner who rents to a long-term resident with a one-year lease term, which is typical in most rental apartments. The Housing Finance Corporation could provide funds to the landlord for the gap between the market rent and the rent that the tenant can afford, based on some measure like the market rate issued annually by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban

Development and using a process similar to Section 8 or low-income housing tax credit project qualification procedures. These processes are standard in the industry for other affordable housing projects, and this program should be modeled after those in use in the state of Texas rather than inventing a new mechanism. Again, the source of funding would be the Housing Finance Corporation and potentially enhanced by other sources. Another funding source might be a community foundation. To keep a government entity out of the rental housing business, the “rental assistance” fund used for the affordable or workforce rental housing pool could be managed by a condominium management company.

Implementing the Recommendations

THE PANEL REPEATEDLY HEARD FROM stakeholders about the challenges related to the recovery from Hurricane Harvey. At the same time, stories of “Harvey heroes” and the efforts of residents and community leaders were also many. The collective passion for Port Aransas is evident, and great momentum has been established to move forward with concluding the recovery and addressing pre-Harvey issues.

Almost universal agreement existed on several issues, most notably completing the recovery of city and school facilities. The community has a great opportunity to build upon the relationships formed during recovery to move Port Aransas forward. The panel recommends that the city, the chamber, and the citizenry come together, regardless of opinions on individual projects, to evaluate the recommendations in this report and begin implementation. These efforts can and should run concurrent with the ongoing recovery. An opportunity still exists to influence rebuilding efforts, and the city should move forward with updating the Comprehensive Plan and its elements. The plan is perhaps the only way to affect what Port Aransas will look like in 20 years.

Focus on Structures for Success

The panel recommends four primary ways to improve efficiency and effectiveness to achieve larger goals outlined in this document and through recommendations: staffing, outsourcing, technology, and partnerships.

Staffing

The panel recognizes a desire exists to keep the staffing levels “lean and mean.” However, expanding the quantity and quality of the staff is necessary to fully implement these recommendations. Although the panel is not suggesting a large staff, the current staffing level is unsustain-

able. The current staff has been challenged with storm recovery while keeping up with the demands of day-to-day work.

Although the day will come when the city is no longer in recovery mode, the city should take this opportunity to improve the capacity and expertise of city staff. Port Aransas needs to attract and keep talent by recruiting from a wide pool and investing in staff training. Staff should be hired in their area of expertise. Any willing, available body should not be used fill a position. The city should recruit professionally credentialed staff and not have a single person filling multiple disparate roles. A small staff needs to be nimble and flexible, but the right person for the right job is critical. The city must have staff with the talent, expertise, and desire to make processes work from the public’s point of view.

Outsourcing

Outsourcing is a tool, if properly applied, that may solve the problem of the high cost of government services while also dealing with service-level challenges. Two common ways of outsourcing exist: through interjurisdictional agreements and through contracting with vendors. For example, the current water and sewer provision is functionally interjurisdictional outsourcing, since it is done through an authority. When interjurisdictional outsourcing is not practical or possible, tasks and program areas can be outsourced to vendors. Many small towns outsource inspections, code enforcement, and information technology. The panel believes that these three areas are opportunities for improvement in delivery of services and improved outcomes.

Technology

Local governments increasingly use information technology to make informed decisions, enhance services, and

communicate with the public. The panel has experienced some internet connectivity challenges that would severely affect the ability to telecommute, limiting opportunities to attract an entire segment of high-wage earners. Therefore, the broadband internet technology should be upgraded to make it state of the art.

Furthermore, the city's website is woefully inadequate. It does not have to be the website of a big city, but it does need to include basic information about how to do things in Port Aransas. For example, a property owner should know more about demolition than to remember to have the utilities capped.

The panel noticed that the only data about the city on the website is the 2010 population and number of registered voters. Even that information is buried in a side bar about the history of Port Aransas. The chamber's website is full of great information for residents and tourists and that effort need not be duplicated. However, information is missing from both places. For example, the Beach Safety tab on the city's site has useful, if scary, information about dangerous marine life. It does not have any information about the location and hours of lifeguards, which is also a beach safety issue.

Many communities use online plan submittals and inspection requests to streamline the permitting and developing process. Numerous products on the market are designed for small jurisdictions. In addition, communities large and small have embraced the use of GIS, which is about much more than creating maps. It is a tool that allows complex analysis of tabular data in a geographic context. It can be effectively used in asset management, public works projects, maintenance, emergency management, and perhaps most important, in disaster recovery. GIS is also often the repository of socioeconomic data. This information can be made available to the public through a portal system, allowing access to data and maps and facilitating informed decisions and choices. Making this information readily available will free staff time by making personal interaction on simple fact-gathering exercises unnecessary.

Partnerships

The physical improvement recommendations in this document will need organizational infrastructure to move forward. Many individuals and organizations are doing great things in Port Aransas, and the love for this place is obvious. As in many small towns, individuals are seemingly involved in every cause. Therefore, a danger exists of competition for time, treasure, talent, and funding.

The community needs to develop an organizational infrastructure—a core group of people working together on implementation. The efforts of this group would include matching projects to funder's priorities to leverage public investment and provide ongoing focused stewardship. Port Aransas has been successful with informal partnerships, task forces, and community groups and individuals working together in the aftermath of the hurricane. As Texans and Port Aransas, formality or layers of bureaucracy may not be a priority or desirable. However, the city does need to formalize, adopt, and implement the visions created for the future of the community.

The panel also recognizes that the chamber of commerce has an active Economic Development Committee. The panel believes the committee's charge should be broader than attracting new business and therefore should be renamed the Economic Resilience Committee. Because the chamber effectively serves as the economic development office of the city, the relationship between the chamber and the city should be formalized.

Identify Sources of Funding to Facilitate Success

The panel recognizes that many of the recommendations in this report cost money. Numerous potential funding sources should be investigated. Following are sources the panel believes can be useful for implementation, but the list is not exhaustive.

Tax Increment Financing

Tax increment financing (TIF) dedicates the increase in property tax revenue in a defined district to fund infra-

structure and amenities in that district. The city currently has no TIF districts or projects. The city should explore whether such funding could be used for some of the projects mentioned in this report. Recognizing that Port Aransas's schools are one of the community's most precious assets, the city must weigh the opportunity to leverage TIF funding for capital projects against the potential impact on school funding.

Public/Private Partnerships and the "Grace Economy"

The panel was impressed by the efforts of individual employers and organizations to address housing issues. The innovation demonstrated by the school district could be replicated using public/private partnerships where the city could purchase land and make it available to developers to build workforce housing. However, if public funds are used, two deed restrictions should apply. One, no short-term rentals, and two, any resale profits should be limited through an index to keep the housing affordable upon resale.

The community should also tap into the humanitarian tendencies of Port Aransas. The trailers that were provided through the Episcopal Church after Harvey demonstrate that people are willing to fund housing. The need for workforce housing is not the same crisis as the need to provide housing after a hurricane, but it is a crisis nonetheless. Many employers in resort communities have recognized the importance of having housing for their workforce. Bringing these people together could form new partnerships.

Landlords Willing to Provide Year-Round Housing

Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, has a housing problem it named "the Vineyard Shuffle." There is no shortage of affordable housing between November and March, but there is a crisis between April and November when prices can be more than eight times higher. This forces year-round residents to cram into housing for the summer or to live off island. The island is only accessible by a ferry ride that can take 45 minutes. Some landlords will rent their properties only year-round. They are losing potential

income. However, they are ensuring that their employees or their child's teacher has a place to live year-round, and they make the decision to value that over income. This approach could be applied in Port Aransas.

Dedicated Realty Transfer Tax

In New Jersey, a portion of the realty transfer tax is dedicated to several special funds, including the Shore Protection Fund and the Affordable Housing Fund. The continued rise in real estate values and the fact that real estate investment is, in fact, the business of the island, this source of funding could be a powerful tool that can be leveraged for both capital projects and maintenance of public facilities.

Bonding

The implementation of the recommendations in this document should result in increases in sales and real estate taxes. Revenues from these taxes could be dedicated to funding bonds to finance various projects.

Regional Development Corporation

The skate park in Port Aransas received \$134,000 in funding from the Regional Development Corporation (RDC). This organization may be in the position to provide funding for other eligible projects.

Hotel Occupancy Tax Revenue

Although the enabling legislation limits the uses of these funds, an analysis should be done to see whether any current expenses could be financed through this source to free up existing city funds.

Permitting Fees

Ensure that fees cover the cost of providing the service. This can make outsourcing of this service self-funding.

Housing Finance Corporation

Establish a nonprofit housing corporation to fund land acquisition. A housing finance corporation could be an important tool for the city to grant tax incentives for workforce housing.

Sales Tax on Short-Term Rental Units

Use the funds from a tax on sales of short-term rental units (excluding hotels) to finance a Workforce Housing Trust Fund. New Jersey is currently considering such a bill, which could be used as a model for this approach.

Property Taxes

Another source of funding is property tax revenue. Additional funds generated by raising this tax can be used to support the recommendations in this report.

Conclusion

AFTER HURRICANE HARVEY, the sponsor reported that the majority of business owners in the city returned to make repairs and reopen. Although recovery takes time, the commitment to Port Aransas and the passion for the beach life that is the heart of this community are major strengths. Even before this most recent weather disaster, the community had longstanding challenges inherent in

a tourist-based economy and a vacation destination. The panel's hope is that by implementing the recommendations, both broad and specific, Port Aransas will have a framework for protecting what residents and visitors love most while laying the foundation for increased economic success moving forward.

About the Panel

Rick Dishnica

Panel Chair

Point Richmond, California

Dishnica is president of the Dishnica Company LLC. The Dishnica Company was formed in 1999 to pursue his individual investment goals, to develop infill housing both for rent and for sale in the San Francisco Bay area, and to provide real estate and management consulting services to the real estate industry. Most of his work has been in the entitlement and development of residential properties in the San Francisco Bay area for his own account and as a consultant. From 2008 to 2012 Dishnica focused his activities on providing workout consulting services for two major clients, a residential developer and a real estate lender. In 2012 he refocused his business to develop, rehabilitate, and reposition rental and for-sale housing and is actively pursuing other residential investment opportunities.

An executive vice president and the chief operating officer of American Apartment Communities, a privately held real estate investment trust, from 1994 through March 31, 1999, Dishnica was responsible for all apartment operations, development, and rehabilitation. Until its merger with United Dominion Realty Trust on December 7, 1998, American Apartment Communities owned and managed directly or through subsidiaries, 54 apartment communities containing a total of 14,141 units in nine states. The total asset value as of the date of the merger was \$787 million. Another portfolio containing an additional 4,000 units was retained to continue the business of American Apartment Communities.

Since 1982, Dishnica was also an executive vice president of the Klingbeil Company, predecessor to American Apartment Communities, with operating responsibilities for the western United States. During this period he was

directly responsible for the development of 304 apartment units in San Francisco and involved in three other apartment projects comprising 1,012 units also in the San Francisco Bay area. He was responsible for obtaining lower floater tax-exempt bond financing for all of these projects, a new financing technique for financing apartments in the 1980s. All of these projects were in infill locations. From 1989 to 1993, he also served as the chief financial officer and chief operating officer of K/W Realty Group, a Klingbeil-affiliated company in the for-sale housing business where he saw the joint venture development of 42 subdivisions with over 4,000 units of for-sale housing in major metropolitan markets.

From 1980 to 1982, he was a principal of Comstock Ventures Limited, a real estate venture capital company. From 1978 to 1980 he was vice president of Fox and Carskadon Financial Corporation where he was responsible for the solicitation, analysis, negotiation, and management of real estate development joint ventures. From 1973 to 1978, he was an assistant vice president with Union Bank in San Francisco, with responsibility in the areas of commercial lending, real estate construction lending, and loan workouts. Before his employment with Union Bank, he served as an officer in the U.S. Navy. Dishnica received his MBA from the University of Southern California in 1974 and his BS from Ohio State University in 1968.

He is a trustee of the Urban Land Institute, a past member of the ULI Governance and Nominating Committee, and was on the Advisory Board of the ULI Rose Center for Public Leadership. He has served in many other leadership positions at ULI. He is also a member and was a director of the National Multi-Housing Council. He was an independent director of BlackRock Apartment Value Fund III. He serves on various boards and committees reflecting his interests in education and public service.

Daniel Anderton

Gaithersburg, Maryland

Anderton is currently employed by Dewberry, a national planning, engineering, and architectural firm, and is responsible for community planning and urban design within the company. He has worked for architects, engineers, landscape architects, and horticulturalists throughout his career, giving him a unique and holistic perspective of community planning and urban design.

Anderton has served in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan region for more than 30 years and has been directly involved in the creation of communities with services in all aspects of land use planning and physical planning including comprehensive and master planning, urban and mixed-use planning, site planning, redevelopment planning, affordable housing, rezoning, subdivision planning, small town revitalization, and landscape architecture. He has proven project management experience in the applicability of planning, zoning, subdivision, and landscape architecture. He also has extensive experience with local and state government development review processes and effective working relationships with local and state agencies, boards, commissions, and public officials in multiple jurisdictions.

His goal is to create communities that are comfortable, sustainable, and inclusive to a wide demographic of residents and business owners while also being marketable for either public or private developers. He takes care to ensure that a conceptual design's integrity and density are maintained through the planning process. By carefully planning floor/area ratio and densities, providing for a mix of diverse building and product types and phasing, and incorporating traditional and neo-traditional styles, his community developments are poised to capture the needs of the market and a wide cross section of prospective renters, buyers, and shop owners.

Anderton has been involved with, and completed, hundreds of projects involving direct interaction with citizens, developers, planning boards, county councils, mayors,

public utilities, state highway officials, and other involved parties. The juggling of everyone's interests throughout the completion of a plan or project is extremely important. The desire is to make it through the design and planning process with the majority of stakeholders feeling as though they have succeeded in having their personal vision incorporated into the community.

He graduated with a bachelor's of landscape architecture and environmental planning from Utah State University in 1983 and a master of landscape architecture degree from the University of Illinois in 1985.

Daniel Conway

Aurora, Colorado

Conway is a real estate marketing and research authority specializing in residential, commercial/industrial, and golf course developments. He has had over 40 years' experience as an urban land economist and is a frequent guest speaker for economic associations and trade organizations. Conway is a member and frequent speaker to the Urban Land Institute. He has been a real estate and urban land economic honorarium instructor at the University of Colorado and at the University of Denver. He has published many articles, including the CCIM magazine piece "Market Analysis, the Road to Profit, Prosperity and Peace of Mind." His other professional and community activities have included membership on the board of directors of a federally chartered national bank and membership of the Mile High Transplant Bank. He also participated on the Archbishop's Inner City Sun School Committee to assess the future needs of elementary education in the inner city of Denver.

For the last 25 years as president and director of economics and market research for THK Associates, he has conducted numerous residential, commercial, industrial, and golf course economic feasibility and market studies, socioeconomic impact assessments and financial planning studies in all 50 of the United States, as well as a number of foreign countries.

Projects of particular interest include an international market center and industrial market analysis for the Dove Valley Business Air Park in Arapahoe County, a residential and related uses market analysis for several major developments in Douglas County including the 1,342-acre Parker City site, and numerous golf course feasibility studies throughout the country. Specific communities where Conway has completed a wide range of research and analysis include Las Vegas and Reno, Nevada; Oxnard, Palm Springs, and Carmel, California; Kansas City, Missouri; Oklahoma City and Tulsa, Oklahoma; Austin, Texas; Albuquerque and Santa Fe, New Mexico; Seattle, Washington; and Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona.

Conway frequently testifies as an expert witness for litigation in market and urban economic feasibility analyses, lost profits and value analyses, and has been qualified as an expert witness in numerous states including Colorado, Arizona, New Jersey and Texas.

Most recently, he has gained recognition as a sought-after speaker on the golf course development circuit. His numerous presentations at the Crittenden Golf Development Expos have been widely attended and universally applauded. His book *The Cost and Revenues of a Unique Golf Club* has furthered his reputation as one of the industry's leading authorities. Under Conway's guidance, THK Associates completes over 75 golf course feasibility studies and golf driving range market studies and appraisals each year.

Allen K. Folks

Sacramento, California

Folks is a registered landscape architect and urban designer with experience in urban revitalization and community planning assignments. In 34 years of practice, he has been responsible for a variety of assignments, including the preparation of plans for new towns and existing communities, transit-oriented development areas, reuse of military bases, design of corporate and civic campuses, and public open space planning. He usually directs teams

of engineers, environmental scientists, and economists to address urban problems with solutions that have a creative vision and are economically feasible.

Before joining Ascent, a multidisciplinary practice headquartered in Sacramento, California, in 2016, Folks spent over 28 years working at EDAW and AECOM in the San Francisco, Sacramento, and Singapore offices. From 2012 to 2015, he led the AECOM SE Asia Business Line for Buildings and Places, with management responsibility for over 110 staff in Singapore, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, and Manila.

Folks has been involved with the revitalization of urban and suburban environments in many cities in the western United States and in Southeast Asia. He has prepared urban design plans for specific areas or neighborhoods of Portland, Sacramento, San Francisco, and Salt Lake City, as well as Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Ho Chi Minh City, and Manila. In many of those assignments, the focus was on developing a meaningful and impactful public realm as the organizing armature for private-sector investment. Folks has led community visioning exercises for public-sector agencies and developer-led consortiums. He has lectured in the United States and Asia on the benefits of transit-oriented development and livable cities. Folks is an instructor at the University of California, Davis, in the Land Use and Natural Resources Program.

He is a member of the American Planning Association, the American Society of Landscape Architects, and the Urban Land Institute, where he has been chair of ULI Sacramento and has been a member on several national product councils, including, most recently, the Transit-Oriented Development Council. Folks has participated in 15 ULI Advisory Services panels to assist in solving downtown and neighborhood redevelopment issues. He is a graduate of Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania.

John Keeling

Houston, Texas

Keeling is executive vice president of Valencia Group, a firm specializing in the development and operation of full-service, independent hotels. In addition to management, the company provides development, branding, and repositioning services. Keeling and the Valencia development team are currently pursuing the development of hotel projects in Fort Lauderdale, Savannah, New York, and Washington, D.C. Existing properties are located in Austin, Houston, and San Antonio, Texas, and San Jose, California.

Before joining Valencia, Keeling was senior vice president and managing director with PKF Consulting, president of Hospitality Advisory Services, and president of Hospitality Transactions Inc. Before that he was regional managing partner with Laventhol & Horwath. Earlier, Keeling was a manager for Marriott Hotels & Resorts at locations in Washington, D.C., Chicago, and Dallas.

During his 36 years of hotel management, development, brokerage, appraisal, and consulting, Keeling has provided hotel development consulting services and managed a diverse assortment of projects, including hotel market studies, highest and best use studies, and project financing. His areas of specialization and relevant experience include development and repositioning of full-service hotels, workouts and repositioning of troubled hospitality assets, financial structuring of complex real estate projects, and hotel asset management.

Keeling is a recognized authority on hotel matters and has been quoted in the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *Business Travel News*, *Hotel & Motel Management*, and numerous weekly business journals and daily newspapers. He was named an Honorary Alumnus of the Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management at the University of Houston. Keeling was given a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Hotel & Lodging Association of Greater Houston and a Distinctive Service Award by the Austin Hotel & Lodging Association.

He has been inducted into the exclusive Counselors of Real Estate.

Keeling has lectured numerous times at the Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management at the University of Houston. He guest lectured on hotel design issues and served on the project review panel at the Rice University School of Architecture.

He received a BA from the University of California at Los Angeles, and he has an MBA in hotel, restaurant, and institutional management from Michigan State University. He is a certified public accountant and member of the Appraisal Institute (MAI).

Donna Lewis

Fernandina Beach, Florida

Lewis retired in 2015 after serving as planning director for Mercer County, New Jersey, for 20 years. In her capacity as director, she oversaw transportation and infrastructure planning; open space, historic, and farmland preservation (administering a dedicated tax that generated \$15 million annually); land development review and redevelopment planning; and anything else that came along.

Mercer County is geographically and economically diverse and includes Trenton, the state capital, and Princeton, a classic small town. The county also has large contiguous agricultural areas and traditional suburbs. Planning for this diversity required specific knowledge and expertise in a wide variety of planning areas.

Lewis managed the award-winning restoration of the Louis Kahn Bath House in Ewing, New Jersey, the former site of the Jewish Community Center, listed on the National Register of Historic Places and featured in the movie *My Architect*, written and directed by Nathaniel Kahn, the son of the architect Louis Kahn. She was instrumental in the restoration and interpretation of the Petty's Run Archaeological Site, a pre-Revolutionary War steel furnace used to make weapons for the Patriots.

Lewis also participated in the team that built Mercer County Waterfront Park, home of the AA Trenton Thunder, a New York Yankees affiliate.

She served on the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Transportation Needs of National Parks and Public Lands Committee and the TRB Access Management Committee. She has participated in two National Cooperative Highway Research panels and in the national scan of best practices in highway access management. She is a past member of the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council, an advisory board to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. She also served on the Central Jersey Transportation Forum Steering Committee and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. Lewis has sponsored two ULI Advisory Services panels and served on many Advisory Services panels and a ULI Land Use Policy Forum.

She is skilled at negotiation and conflict resolution.

Lewis holds bachelor's degrees in political science and English from the College of New Jersey and a master's degree in city and regional planning from Rutgers University. She is a New Jersey–licensed Professional Planner and a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners.

In 2015, she retired and relocated to Fernandina Beach, Florida, where she serves on the city Planning Board and Fernandina Beach Main Street Organizational Committee.

A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report



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