

City of Laredo

2023 FEDERAL

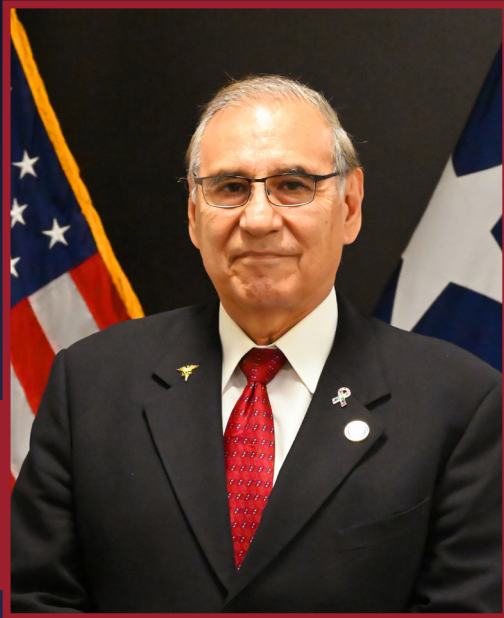
# LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

118 Congressional Session



Adopted by Laredo City Council on January 19, 2023





## MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

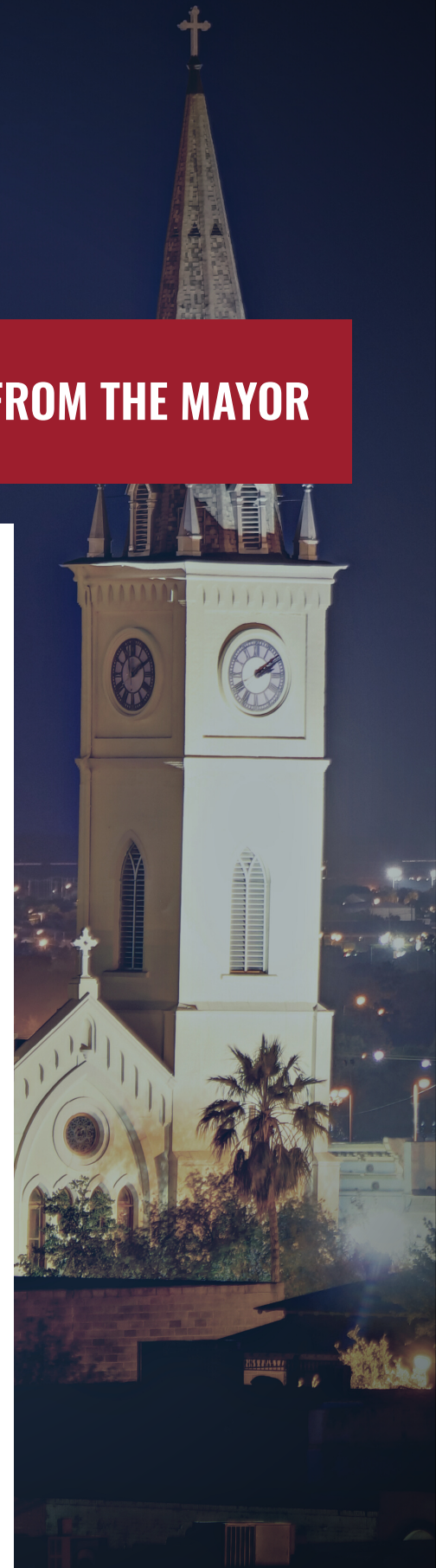
I am Dr. Victor D. Trevino, Mayor of the vibrant and historic city of Laredo, Texas. As Laredo celebrates its 268th anniversary from its founding in 1755 by Capt. Don Tomas Sanchez, it has inherited a rich history and culture as a former territory of the Crown of Spain, and the former Republic of the Rio Grande. Seven independent nations have flown flags over our city throughout our unique history. Needless to say, our incredible history is only matched by our bold and resilient community.

Laredo has a population of approximately 265,000 and is a national and strategic port of entry bordering the great State of Texas and the Mexican States of Tamaulipas and Nuevo León. Nine out of ten Laredoans are bilingual in both English and Spanish, and we are an important world player in international trade. In fact, we are the largest land port in the entire country and the second largest port overall only after the Port of Los Angeles – a sea port.

As a proud Texan and local physician for over 36 years, I am honored to represent a community that is at the crossroads of so many important and evolving topics that impact our nation's economy, culture, and society.

As the City of Laredo continues to enjoy incredible growth, our most critical issues require proper planning and strategies to sustain such growth. I thank you for taking time to review our city's perspective on current critical issues such as public health, infrastructure, international trade, border and homeland security, and much more.

We have a long-standing tradition of creating binational relationships with our international neighbors, by bridging two cities, two cultures and two nations. Our strengths can also be seen in our traditions and celebrations, such as hosting the largest and longest celebration of George Washington in the entire country. I personally invite you to visit us and learn more about our city, Laredo, Texas.





City of Laredo

2023 FEDERAL

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## CITY OF LAREDO - 2023 COUNCIL



**Gilbert Gonzalez**  
District I



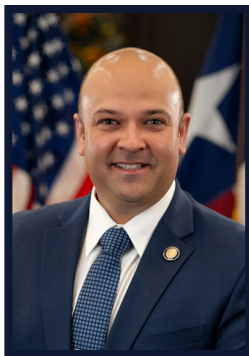
**Daisy Campos  
Rodriguez**  
District II



**Melissa Cigarroa**  
District III



**Alberto Torres, Jr.**  
District IV



**Ruben Gutierrez, Jr.**  
District V



**Dr. David Tyler King**  
District VI



**Vanessa Perez**  
Mayor Pro Tempore  
District VII



**Alyssa Cigarroa**  
District VIII

## CITY OF LAREDO MANAGEMENT

**Joseph W. Neeb**  
City Manager

**Rosario Cabello**  
Deputy City Manager

**Riazul I. Mia**  
Assistant City Manager

**Steve E. Landin**  
Assistant City Manager / Acting Police Chief

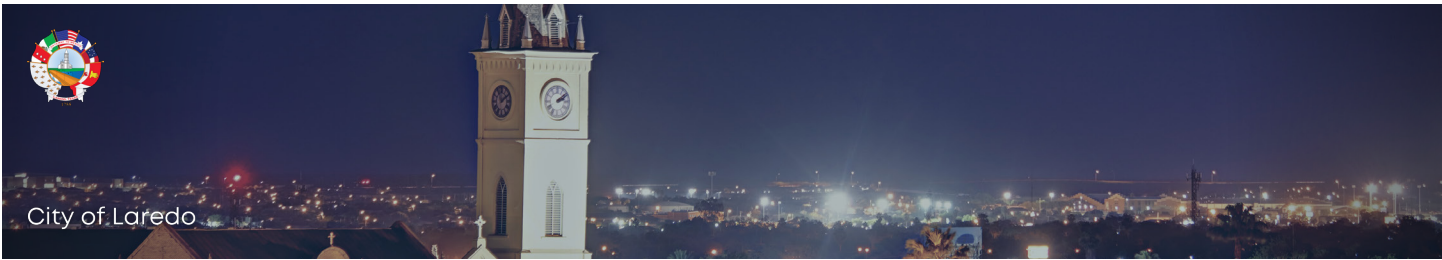




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# 1 | FIRST RESPONDERS / LAW ENFORCEMENT

## Operation Stonegarden Funding

### Background

Historically, the City of Laredo has been a highly favored operational area for Transnational Criminal Organizations to operate. The close proximity of Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, the population density and extensive transportation networks leading to the interior immediately north of the border make Laredo a consistent lucrative target. Border-related crime represents an all-threat environment in that the primary criminal activity drug/human smuggling often results in cross-border criminal organizations and individuals undertaking secondary and frequently, tertiary criminal activities that involve a wider range of crimes such as kidnappings, assaults, murders, money laundering, cross-border weapons trafficking, etc. These criminal activities, when undertaken in the U.S., constitute a threat to homeland security and increase in border violence, subsequently triggering involvement by local law enforcement.

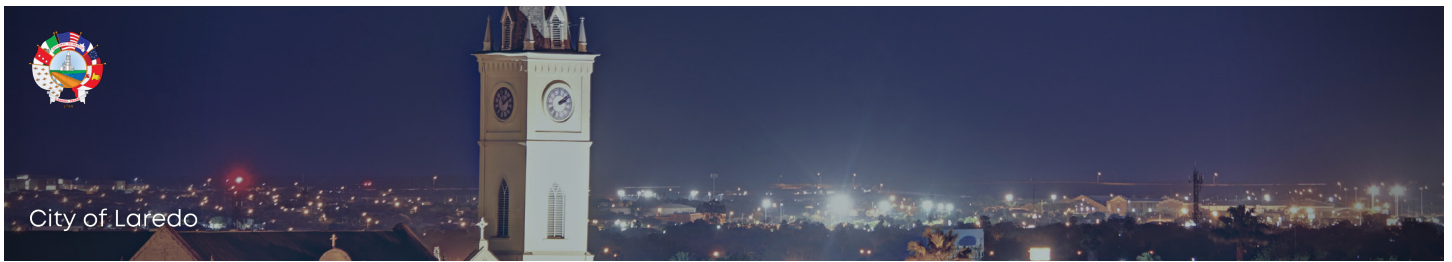
### Situation

The Laredo Police Department’s participation in Operation Stonegarden (OPSG) with the U.S. Border Patrol has been highly successful in achieving its mission to enhance border security. Operation Stonegarden has focused on three operational areas: Prevention of urban assimilation by smugglers, varied interdiction enforcement actions, and surveillance and detection operations in the Laredo jurisdiction. The affected urban areas include those areas immediately adjacent to the Rio Grande frontage/banks that smugglers of illegal contraband and human smugglers transition into in order to avoid detection and apprehension. These same urban areas with river frontage also correspond to United States Border Patrol areas of responsibility. The areas for interdiction include: 1) all major highway ingress and egress arteries, 2) the commercial (bus) transportation hubs located in the downtown area, and 3) the four ports of entry that exist in Laredo. Additionally, surveillance and detection operations have concentrated on local hotels/motels that are frequently used to conduct illicit activities. The objective of these coordinated efforts will continue to target all criminal activities involving illegal narcotics and human trafficking, illegal drug proceeds, illegal weapons possession/transportation, and stolen vehicles and property. Enforcement efforts will also target individuals who are fugitives from justice.

### Solution

Grant funding through OPSG has created vital law enforcement partnerships between federal, state and local entities critical to securing our nation’s border. OPSG’s mission to target border-related crime has allowed communities along the nation’s southern border to be among the safest and economical prosperous. Utilizing a force multiplier approach, CBP, Border Patrol, state and local law enforcement agencies have exercised their unique jurisdictional capabilities in order to collaboratively address border security issues. Continued grant funding from OPSG will help increase capability levels by using these funds towards operations that will target, disrupt, dismantle, and defeat criminal organizations along the Texas border and protect the homeland.





City of Laredo

**Target Agency**

Department of Homeland Security  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
Grant Program Directorate  
800 K Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20472

**Contact Information**

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## **Laredo Police Department- Crime Gun Intelligence Center**

### **Background**

As a border community, the City of Laredo is a highly favorable area for criminal gangs and transnational criminal organizations to engage in their illicit activities. Border-related crime represents an all-threat environment in that the primary criminal activity drug/human smuggling often results in cross-border criminal organizations and gangs undertaking secondary and tertiary criminal activities that involve a wider range of crimes such as kidnappings, assaults, murders, money laundering, cross-border weapons trafficking, etc. The City of Laredo has experienced a recent increase in firearm related crimes such as home invasions and drive-by shootings being carried out by gangs and transnational criminal organizations.

### **Situation**

In an effort to combat this growing threat, the Laredo Police Department (LPD) continues to partner with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF). LPD Task Force Officers assigned to ATF have successfully federally prosecuted numerous cases involving felons in possession of firearms. Additionally, the partnership has been highly successful in dismantling, disrupting and interdicting the increasing flow of firearms and ammunition into Mexico. The LPD/ATF partnership has created strong and successful relationships with local firearms dealers and retail stores resulting in the identification, seizure and prosecution of straw weapons purchases. In 2019, LPD became a participating member of the ATF's National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN). NIBIN takes a 3D image of ballistic evidence and identifies possible matches to evidence from other violent crime scenes, allowing law enforcement to connect separate shooting incidents and help identify those responsible.

### **Solution**

The LPD and ATF partnership has been highly successful but significant gaps in technology and intelligence still occur. The Laredo Police Department is seeking to establish Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC) in the Texas/Mexico Border. A CGIC along the South Texas border will enable law enforcement to be more effective in preventing and prosecuting firearms related crime. The CGIC will allow for comprehensive crime gun tracking, expedited NIBIN examinations, and provide firearms related intelligence for investigations. This will result in intelligence-led enforcement operations and help keep criminals from obtaining and using firearms and stop the flow of firearms into Mexico.

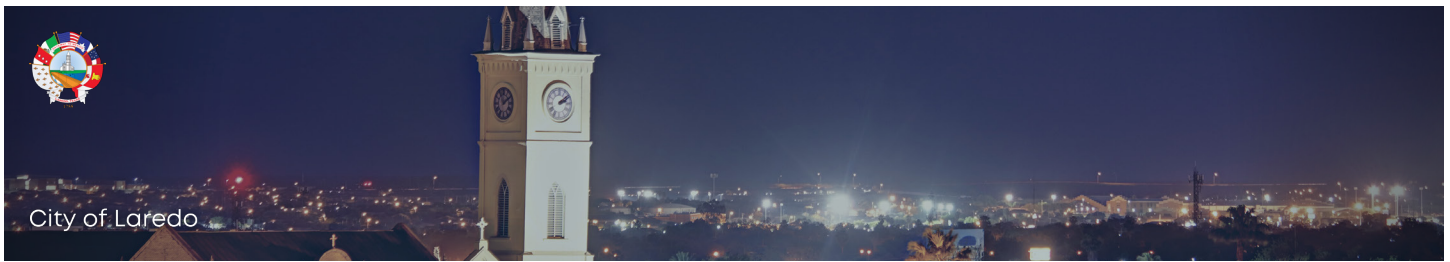
### **Target Agency**

Department of Justice  
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives

### **Contact Information**

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## **COPS Hiring Programs (CHP)**

### **Background**

The Laredo Police Department (LPD) embraces and operates with the Community Oriented Policing philosophy. The Department continuously seeks the community's involvement and participation in preventing, deterring and solving crimes. The community's involvement in fighting crime gives them a sense of legitimacy that their concerns are valued and that their voices are heard by the police. This greatly assists in the dismantling of barriers of uncertainty and public mistrust. The relationship between the community and the Laredo Police Department has been instrumental in keeping a safe border community and a continuous decline in the local crime rate.

### **Situation**

As a border community, LPD is at the front lines of the United States border with Mexico. The northern Mexican border still remains a highly volatile and unstable region due to Transnational Criminal Organizations. Border-related crime represents an all-threat environment in that drug/human smuggling, the primary criminal activity, often results in cross-border criminal organizations and individuals undertaking secondary and frequently, tertiary criminal activities that involve a wider range of crimes such as kidnappings, assaults, murders, money laundering, cross-border weapons trafficking. LPD realizes the negative impact this not only has in the local community but also its far-reaching implications into the United States. With Laredo being a strategic location on the United States/Mexico border, LPD realizes its law enforcement responsibility is not only to suppress and prevent violent crime in the community but to the homeland also. Our city continues to grow at a rapid pace and demand for services continually overwhelms our patrol division. Funding is needed in order to supplement patrol operations and address the specific issues of border violence, illegal immigration and homeland security which the LPD uniquely contends with daily.

### **Solution**

The City of Laredo is seeking funding to hire additional police officers through the COPS Hiring Program. Funding will allow the Department to grow and redeploy personnel and resources to target issues that affect the homeland such as border security, illegal immigration and gun violence. Most importantly is the fact that the augmentation of personnel at such a critical time in terms of economy and security greatly assists in safeguarding our community and nation's safety. Our community is greatly appreciative of the diligent regard DOJ/COPS afforded our concerns regarding border and homeland security issues. Without the COPS funding opportunities that have been awarded the City of Laredo, the City would not have had the ability to lower its crime rate.

### **Target Agency**

Department of Justice  
Community Oriented Policing Services  
COPS Hiring Program  
145 N Street NE  
Washington DC 20530

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## Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness

### Background

Law enforcement mental health and wellness is an integral part for the success of any law enforcement agency. Its importance is not only essential for the mental wellness of law enforcement officers involved in critical incidents. It is also critical to support officers struggling with any aspect of their lives and promoting healthy lifestyles essential for allowing them to thrive in their careers. An alarming rise of suicides among law enforcement officers across the nation has forced many departments to focus on and create programs related to officer mental wellness.

### Situation

The Laredo Police Department (LPD) realizes the importance of law enforcement mental health and has identified a critical availability gap for programs and services available to law enforcement in the South Texas border community. In May of 2019, LPD created its own Peer Support Program. The program consists civilian and sworn employees who are trained to assist employees through traumatic and stressful events. Additionally, peer support members may refer employees to a certified mental health psychologist for additional assistance if required. LPD recognizes that law enforcement mental health and wellness is essential in building resiliency and assisting officers in overcoming the negative aspects of the profession. Healthy and flourishing law enforcement officers have a resilient capacity to perform and positively serve their communities fostering enhanced police and citizen relationships.

### Solution

The Laredo Police Department is seeking funding to sustain and enhance its Peer Support Program. The importance of such programs cannot be overstated. Funding from the national level can assist local programs achieve success and sustain its level of support to the nation's first responders.

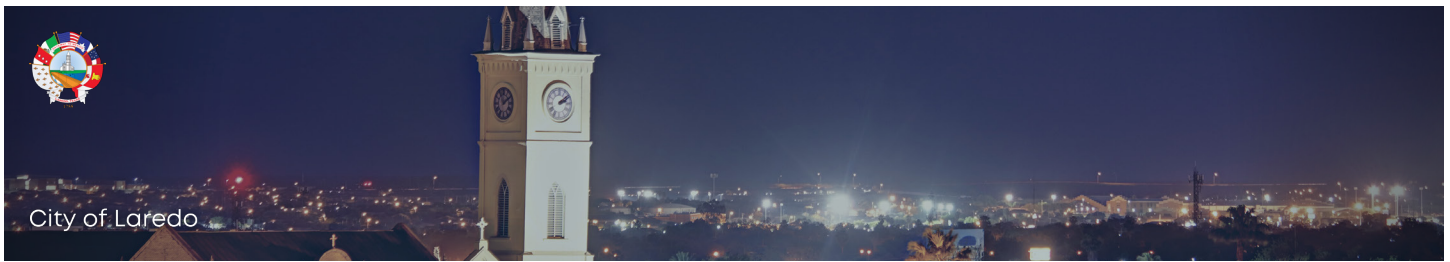
### Target Agency

Department of Justice  
Community Oriented Policing Services  
Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act Program  
145 N Street NE  
Washington DC 20530

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## **Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program to Enhance Emergency Response Needs**

### **Situation Assessment**

The City of Laredo is susceptible to a variety of dangers that threaten our community ranging from border security threats to public health crises. In any case, firefighters are constantly risking their own health and lives to serve our community. However, through it all, the community relies on the City to ensure that first responders have the proper resources and support needed to get the job done and in a safe manner.

### **Background**

Historically, first responders in a community located along the US/Mexico border face unique challenges on a daily basis. One of the current major concerns is border security and the increase in illegal crossing activity therefore working with local agencies is essential. Along with fighting fires, assisting with border security threats or the possibility of dealing with a chemical spill or hazardous materials release into the environment is required of our front line emergency responders. Front line responders working in the South Texas border are also the primary responders to incidents in and along the Rio Grande River, any potential bomb threats reported at any of the four international bridges as well as the increase of drug-related violence in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico which increases the threat of crime and violence that enters our city. Additionally, during the COVID public health crisis, the nation relied on fire service more than ever to provide rapid emergency medical response. In many instances, firefighters were the first healthcare workers that individuals with severe cases of COVID interacted with.

### **Solution**

The City of Laredo is seeking legislative support to augment the safety of the community and the firefighters by providing critically needed resources that will prepare and train emergency personnel to distinguished standards through funding opportunities such as the Assistance to Firefighter Grant (AFG). The AFG Program funding will also supply the department with the tools to enhance operational efficiencies and support community resilience.

### **Target Agency**

U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

### **Contact Information**

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## Support Hospital Preparedness Program Cooperative Agreement

### Situation Assessment

Our region is designated as a Health Professions Shortage Area (HPSA) and Medically Underserved Area with an Index of Medical Underserving (IMU) score of 54.3, limiting the ability to provide life-saving services should a natural disaster or public health emergency arise. The COVID-19 pandemic proved the challenge faced to provide the need for effective solutions to deliver the necessary medical preparedness and response. Our geographical location on the U.S.-Mexico border brings further challenges such as the impact of migration on public services by non-residents, which is not accounted for on the U.S. Census. At present, HPP is located in a region that although it is larger in population, has only a 5- point IMU score difference.

### Background

As the #1 inland port handling over \$240 billion in trade with the world and 5 million trucks daily, Laredo's economy has a vast impact to the Texas economy with the Laredo port of entry handling more than 57.6 percent of land port trade of Texas international trade that enters through the Texas-Mexico border. With a population of 27,419,612, Texas has 20 Health Care Coalitions (HCC's) and 1 Special Pathogen Treatment Center. The COVID pandemic further highlighted the City's underserved medical community and the need to acquire highly trained health professionals such as doctors and nurses. The City of Laredo requested state assistance of over 500 healthcare professionals, hospital equipment, and other resources during the peak of the COVID pandemic in an effort to alleviate the rapid surge of COVID patients in our community as well as rise in hospitalizations. Over the course of many years, the City's Fire/Emergency Management and the Health Department has garnered and maintained strong partnerships with local hospitals, healthcare providers, nursing homes, and long-term care facilities to assure public health response and preparedness to disasters, emergencies, and binational events that are infections/biological, hazardous, chemical and natural. Additionally, the City was awarded a cumulative amount of \$749,219 during a 4-year period, which supported the funding of a Health Educator Supervisor (HPP Director) and a Planner II for the Health Department which provided a critical base for response. However, the new funding program has prevented our City from reaching the previous.

### Solution

The City of Laredo seeks support for funding from the Texas Department of State Health Services through the Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP) in order to improve the quality of life and the overall health outcomes during emergencies. The City of Laredo is the most suitable and most prepared entity to continue to develop the healthcare system preparedness program. The cooperative agreement funding will be used to enhance and sustain healthcare preparedness planning capabilities in Laredo via an extensive network of partners and collaborators.

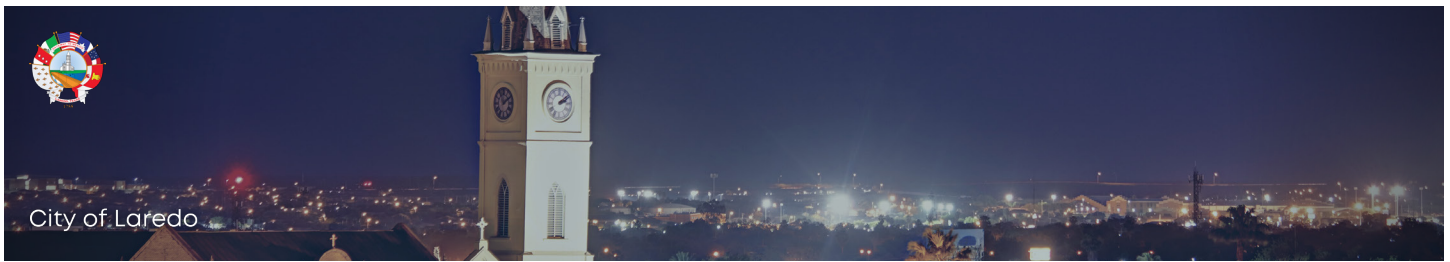
### Target Agency

Texas Department of State Health Services

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## **Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant Award for Laredo**

### **Situation Assessment**

The City of Laredo Fire Department serves a community of approximately 256,153 residents and in 2020-2021 responded to over 29,000 emergency calls. In order to continuously improve fire response times and the overall safety of the community, the City of Laredo Fire Department must be adequately staffed with 24-hour protection and funding must increase in order to keep up with the growing community and new shift in demand. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), cross-trained firefighters make up 38 percent of EMS first responders in the U.S. Ultimately, the goal of fulfilling the mission for the department is key as quicker response times lead to saving lives and property.

### **Background**

Laredo, Webb County, Texas is one of the fastest growing counties in the State of Texas. It covers 3,360 square miles or approximately 2,139,217 acres and quickly continues to outgrow its boundaries. With that being said, there is a dire need to expand and create Fire Station #16 along the northern vicinity of Laredo. The Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant was awarded to the Laredo Fire Department in late 2017 for a three (3) year period. The grant allowed the department to hire twenty-four (24) cadets for staffing purposes which successfully graduated in January 2020.

### **Solution**

In an effort to increase the staffing levels within the Laredo Fire Department, the City of Laredo respectfully requests support for the SAFER grant in order to keep up with the growing community and decrease the average emergency response times for all three districts. The grant will assist with improving the level of service provided by the emergency operations team by allowing the department to remain well-equipped and maintain an adequate number of front-line firefighters.

### **Target Agency**

U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

### **Contact Information**

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## **Mental Health Support for First Responders**

### **Situation Assessment**

First responders respond to numerous disturbing incidents ranging from motor vehicle accidents to hazardous materials response, and active shooter incidents. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the need for emergency response impacting the mental health of first responders attending to the community needs of the sick, the families of individuals that have passed, or other duty-related traumatic exposures, always being expected to function in daily life as usual at the end of their shift. Research shows that almost 70% of first responders do not have enough time to recover in between the traumatic events they experience, and unfortunately, 7% develop clinical depression. The need for research and resources to address mental health programs and networks tailored for emergency first responders is essential in this climate, and fighting the stigma is crucial surrounding misconceptions of mental health in first responders. The National Fire Fighters Foundation states that more firefighters die from suicide than in the line of duty. The International Association of Firefighters states that 1 in 5 firefighters develop PTSD compared to the general population of 1 out of 25.

### **Background**

According to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, firefighters are three times more likely to die of suicide than in the line of duty. For many years, the Laredo Fire Department has provided mental health support through an in-house Peer Support Program for department employees and their families. The Peer Support Team is a non-professional group which consists of three trained team members and a chaplain designated to provide support to employees when personal or professional problems negatively impact their work performance, family, station or their lives. The Peer Support Team is responsible for coordinating the critical incident process, provide follow-up care, as well as several other support functions. Within the past year, our Peer Support Team provided support in three outcries for severe cases. In 2022, 38 firefighters sought help, eight of whom reached out for external support. The Peer Support Team also conducted 19 station visits in the aftermath of critical 911 incidents and assisted with 41 COVID cases. According to the Texas Demographic Center, Webb County is expected to grow approximately 10% by 2050, further increasing the service demand. Unfortunately, the stigma associated with mental health conditions in first responders is prevalent but normalizing first responder mental health is key.

### **Solution**

The City of Laredo supports and seeks funding to expand the Peer Support Program to be able to provide much needed mental health resources and services to our first responders. Accessibility to 24/7 mental health providers and additional resources are crucial for our first responder's health and well-being in order to better serve the community.

### **Target Agency**

U.S. Fire Administration

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

### **Contact Information**

Guillermo Heard, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC

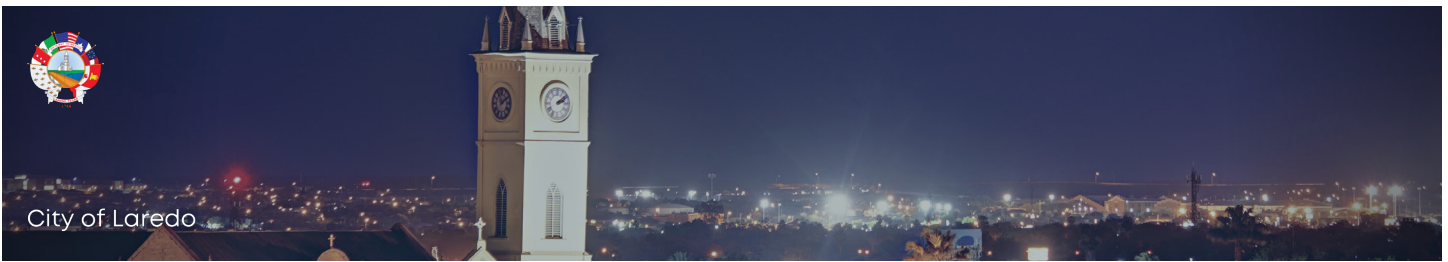
Fire Chief/EMC

Laredo Fire Department

616 E. Del Mar Laredo, Texas 78045

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## 2 | HEALTH

### **SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) A Continued Public Health Emergency**

#### **Situation Assessment**

SARS-CoV-2 has proved tenacious and shifting. The challenges that the United States has faced in preventing the spread and reducing the impact of COVID-19 are in large part the result of inadequate public health preparedness and response. In fact, the United States has suffered more COVID-19 deaths overall than any other country in the world, with disproportionate impacts on people of color and low-income communities. As of January 13, 2023, there has been 666 million cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) worldwide and 6,718,724 resulted in Global Deaths. In Laredo, Texas, there have been 110,369 confirmed cases since the pandemic began. Out of those, 1,067 have resulted in deaths and 3,659-persons have been hospitalized. Since the start of the new year of 2023, we have seen 624 new cases, 11 persons hospitalized and 4 deaths. \$15,585,699 dollars were awarded to Laredo Health to ensure laboratory, epidemiology, public health emergency preparedness, immunizations, communications, and health education and promotion operations were enhanced to support the needs of the community. This funding expanded our workforce, adding 91 jobs. The additional COVID-19 funds have supported Laredo Health's daily operations to prevent COVID-19 and ensure foundational programs and services yet, this level of excellence will end in 2024; subsequently mass layoffs (trained staff) and diminished levels of service will occur.

Yonatan Grad, Melvin J. and Geraldine L. Glimcher Associate Professor of Immunology and Infectious Diseases, said that COVID has not yet been tamed into a common cold; SARS-CoV-2 still seems to spread more efficiently and more quickly than a cold, and it is more likely to trigger severe disease or long-term illness. Subject matter experts continue to inform SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic is still ongoing and of significant concern.

#### **Background**

Public health systems, which address the needs of entire populations, are separate from medical or health care systems, which address individual patients' needs. In the United States, the public health system is dedicated to disease prevention and health promotion through federal, state, and local agencies and departments that track and predict emerging and persistent threats, respond to health risks and events, and promote health through education, intervention, and policy-making. It also identifies and addresses health disparities.

In the wake of an outbreak of coronavirus that began in China in 2019, the SARS-CoV-2 global pandemic exposed the critical weakness within Laredo's public health and health care infrastructure brought to light the critical role the public health workforce has in responding to emergencies. Within a few weeks into the pandemic, there was a critical shortage of capacity at our local hospitals and an overburdened but frail local public health infrastructure. These weaknesses lead our community to a substantial risk for infection, thousands of cases being recorded daily and dozens of deaths within a 30-day period. This unfortunate situation was spotlighted by The New York Times as they published "Laredo, Texas, is enduring the country's worst outbreak at the end of the pandemic's deadliest month (Jan 2021)". The New York Times was correct Laredo, Texas was experiencing some of its darkest moments in recorded history.





## **Solution**

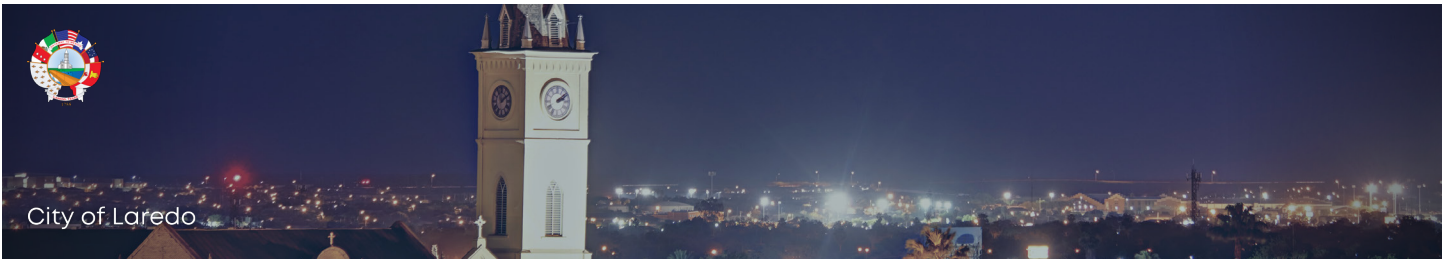
The City of Laredo Health Department is committed to improving services, operations, staff development and sustainability through partnerships. As part of this effort, City of Laredo Health Department will enhance its partnership with schools, higher education institutions, clinics, hospitals, and the regional Workforce Development agency to serve our population and make certain everyone is able to reach their fullest potential. Additionally, to safeguard the existing public health workforce needed to track and predict emerging and persistent threats, respond to health risks and events, and promote health through education and intervention additional funding is needed. To accomplish mission and ensure foundational public health programs and services continue to operate above the standard to prevent COVID-19 and the associated detrimental long-term effects we are requesting \$5.5 million dollars per year for a total of \$11 million dollars over the biennium of direct funding for Laredo Health operations.

## **Target Agencies**

Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA)  
Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
National Institute of Health (NIH)  
Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services

## **Contact Information**

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## Addressing Health Professional Shortage Area and Medically Underserved Area Designations

### Situation Assessment

The city of Laredo in Webb County hold Health Professional Shortage Area and Medically Underserved Area Designations. There is a current shortage of primary care physicians in Texas, and that gap is expected to increase by 2030. While all of Texas is expected to experience an ongoing shortage, Region 11, where Webb County is located, is expected to have the greatest absolute need by 2030. PCP shortage in Region 11 is projected to grow from 423 to 722 in 2030, a 70% increase in shortage. A 2022 geographic analysis ranks Webb County in the bottom 15 counties nationwide for primary care physicians per 100,000 population. Laredo ranked second to last in primary care physicians across all US cities with a population of at least 200,000.

Specialty care in Webb County lags in comparison to similar counties in Texas despite the great need for specialty care. Table 10 shows Webb County has the least amount of specialty physicians in oncology, psychiatry, endocrinology, psychiatry, and cardiology.

County	Oncology	Neurology	Endocrinology	Cardiology
Webb	4	7	2	9
Hidalgo	24	33	12	45
Nueces	16	20	6	46
Cameron	10	26	4	22
El Paso	43	29	11	57

Provider Specialty per 100,000

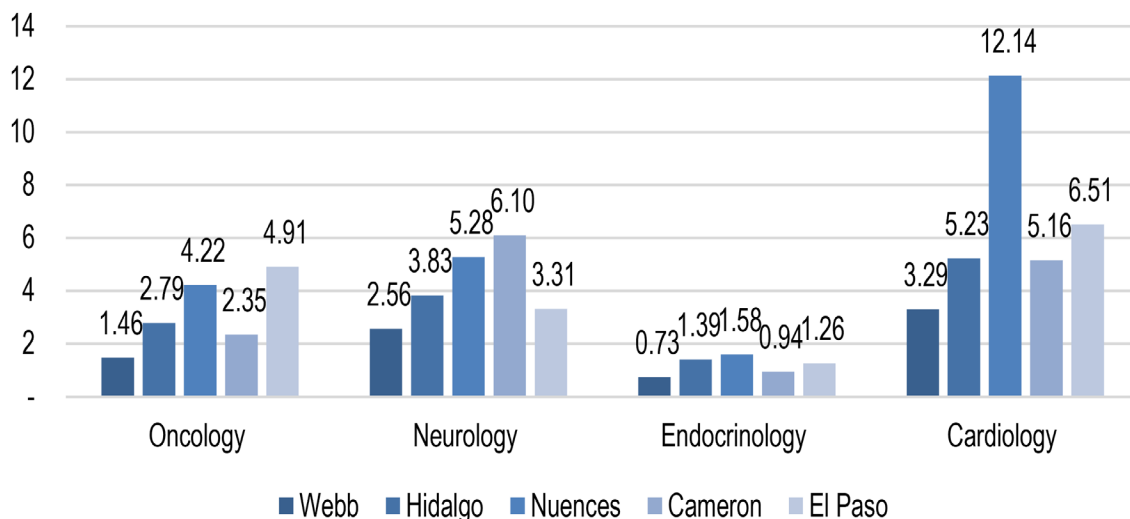




Chart 17 shows these specialties per 100,000. Even considering population size, Webb County still comes last across four similar Texas counties.

There is a substantial medical service capacity gap and need in Webb County. Table 9 below shows column “HPSA FTE Short,” which indicates the number of full-time equivalent providers the county needs to adequately meet provider-to-population ratio needs. Webb County is currently short 20 full-time employees (FTE) primary care providers, 30 FTE dentists for low-income populations, and 11 FTE mental health providers. All designations were formulated in 2019 and updated in 2021. Note that psychiatrists are the only designated mental health providers (as opposed to counselors and other professionals) for an HPSA designation in Texas.

Discipline	HPSA Name	Designation Type	County Name	HPSA FTE Short	HPSA
<b>Primary Care</b>	Webb County	Geographic HPSA	Webb County	20	14
<b>Dental Health</b>	LI-Webb County	Low Income Population HPSA	Webb County	30	19
<b>Mental Health (psychiatrist only)</b>	Webb County	Geographic HPSA	Webb County	11	18

The provider ratios for Webb County and the US in 2019 are listed in the table below. Laredo has almost twice the population-to-provider ratio for PCP and dentists. Mental health provider shortage is worse still, with nearly three times the Texas average. Laredo ranked last across the country in provider supply. The shortage will continue to grow based on Texas projections of a 2% annual increase for primary care service through 2029.

Clinical Care Provider	Webb County	Texas	US
<b>Primary Care Physicians</b>	3,290:1	1,630:1	1,310:1
<b>Dentists</b>	3,120:1	1,660:1	1,400:1
<b>Mental Health Providers</b>	2,550:1	760:1	350:1

To summarize a broad range of healthcare services were difficult for Medicaid and uninsured patients to access, including assisted living supports. Specialty care is especially limited in cardiology, endocrinology, and psychiatry. No inpatient psychiatric capacity. Lack of adequate healthcare facilities. Laredo needs better healthcare infrastructure.

### Background

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) developed a mapping system to identify and designate Medically Underserved Areas (MUAs) and Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs). MUAs are geographic areas and populations with a lack of access to primary care services, high infant mortality, high poverty, and a high elderly population. Medically Underserved Populations (MUPs) are specific populations that may face barriers to health care. Examples include people experiencing homelessness and people who are eligible for Medicaid.



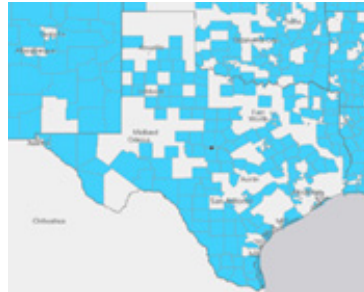
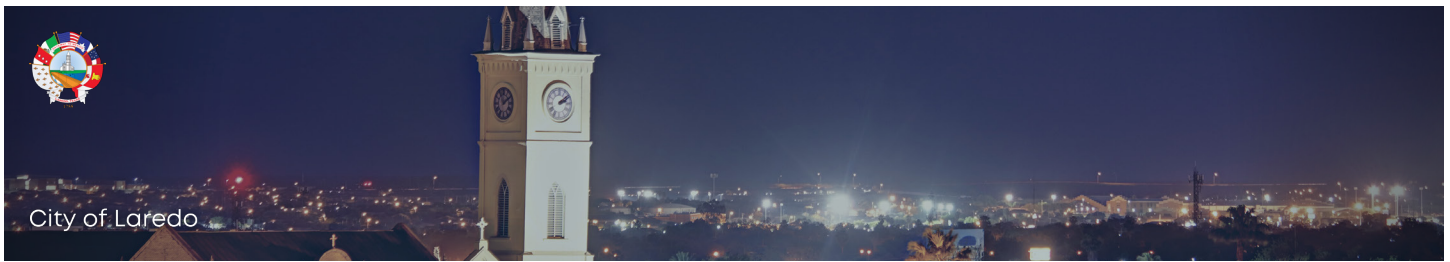


Figure 2 indicates designated MUA/Ps (blue clusters) in Texas during 2020 and highlights areas where healthcare services are needed.

A Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) is a geographic area, population, or facility that severely lacks primary care, dental, or mental health providers. The designation is based on a score of 0-25 for primary and mental health and 0-26 for dental, with 25/26 being the highest degree of shortage. Table 8 on page 23 shows Webb County's current HPSA scores for primary care, mental health, and dental services for low-income populations.

The Texas Department of State Health Services studied the supply and demand for healthcare workers in Texas and released its latest report in early 2020. The criterion for identifying critical shortages in Region 11 was a projected FTE deficit greater than 100. While every region of the state is projected to have shortages of certain physician specialties over the next ten years, those shortages vary by region. Region 11 is projected to face critical shortages of physicians specializing in anesthesiology, family medicine, pediatrics, and psychiatry.

The average hospital bed per capita in the United States is 4.2 beds per 1000. In Laredo, the average hospital bed per 1000 is a staggering low 1.5 beds. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCDE), Laredo compares in bed capacity with countries like Colombia (1.7 per 1000) and Costa Rica (1.14 per 1000). This is concerning, as Laredo also functions as a medical hub for the counties of Zapata, Jim Hogg, and surrounding areas. The closest hospital from Laredo is more than 120 miles away. Funding and resources are needed to support and improve routine and mass care to coordinate and secure public health, health care, and mental/behavioral health services.

### **Solution**

To overcome Laredo's (Webb County) Health Professional Shortage Area and Medically Underserved Area designations funding support is needed to grow and obtain talent for the community. The following are solutions direct funding for healthcare will support:

1. Strengthen partnerships among providers to leverage resources and improve access
2. Increase preventative and specialty care access
3. Address stigma for mental health services
4. Increase community health workers efforts to bolster health literacy in high-risk communities
5. Provide transportation services for individuals in more distant areas of the city



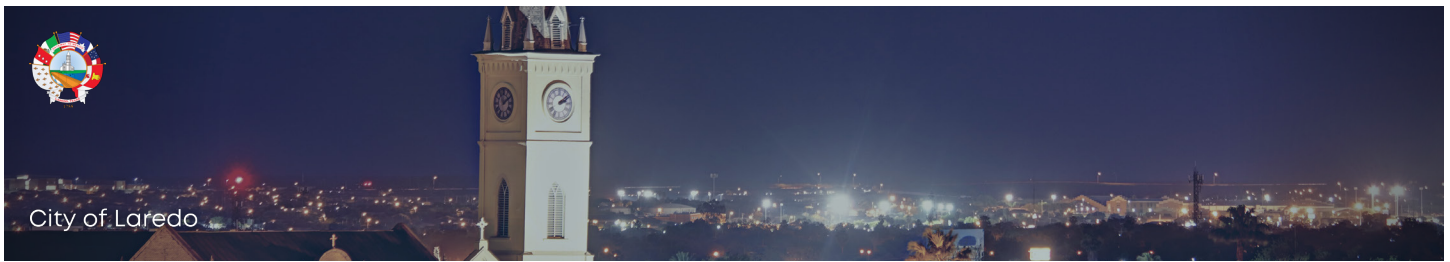
In order to improve quality of life and overall health outcomes through effective vertical and horizontal integration of health, Laredo needs to increase hospital bed capacity. Discussion has been facilitated with Webb County about a hospital district and the City of Laredo has started a Municipal Hospital Authority Ad-Hoc Committee to start the conversation of expanding healthcare and mass care. This endeavor requires funding and partnerships across Federal, State, County, and City resources. The establishment of a City/County public hospital will provide our community with the access to care it sorely needs. This will also provide an opportunity to collaborate with universities, non-profit organizations, and a wide array of already available programs and resources to improve our community quality of life and bring the Laredo region to the next level of healthcare.

### **Target Agencies**

U.S. Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Department of Medicaid and Medicare  
Health Resource and Services Administration (HRSA)  
National Institutes of Health (NIH)  
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)

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## **Addressing Local Food Desert Designation**

### **Situation Assessment**

The City of Laredo seeks assistance in addressing the Local Food Desert Designation that affects parts of our community. These “food deserts,” or long stretches of city blocks dominated by fast-food restaurants and drug stores, without a grocery store or garden in sight. Laredo residents should have immediate access to affordable and nutritious food. Limited access to nutritious food and relatively easier access to less nutritious food may be linked to poor diets which ultimately lead to obesity and diet-related diseases. This issue is crucial for our community as these factors contribute to health concerns in our community plus add to the factors that keep the community economically segregated.

### **Background**

The biggest food desert in our community is the downtown area. On Sunday June 26, 2016 HEB closed its store on 1002 Farragut in the heart of downtown Laredo. This closing resulted in the only full grocery store removing itself from the downtown community. The closest grocery store is another HEB that is almost two miles away and requires the crossing of a major interstate highway which is unsafe for non-automobile-based transportation. The loss of this grocery store resulted in the unavailability of a daily supply of fresh groceries for that part of our community. There are a few convenience stores, however, their model for selecting food to sell creates an inequitable availability of healthier food options for lower income residential neighborhoods.

In September of 2017, the City of Laredo published the Comprehensive Plan V2017.9 which calls for “Initiate research, policies, and programs that increase food security, improve health outcomes, and create social and economic opportunities to attempt to ensure that every resident has access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food. Perform Community Food Assessments to determine where “food deserts” exist in Laredo. Target food deserts as areas to start focusing food production, farmers’ markets, and small community-based grocers. (Policy 7.5.2)” That was followed up with a community wide workshop in January of 2018 that resulted in the creation of a Food Policy Council to address Community Food Security to include Food Deserts.

### **Solution**

The City is seeking economic development tools and site facilitation to promote the location of grocery stores within close proximity to underserved areas. In conjunction, the city could work with local transit providers to facilitate access to food shopping for low-income residents through incentives.

### **Target Agency**

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

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## **Assistance on Assessment of Ethylene Oxide Emissions; Air Quality Monitoring**

### **Situation Assessment**

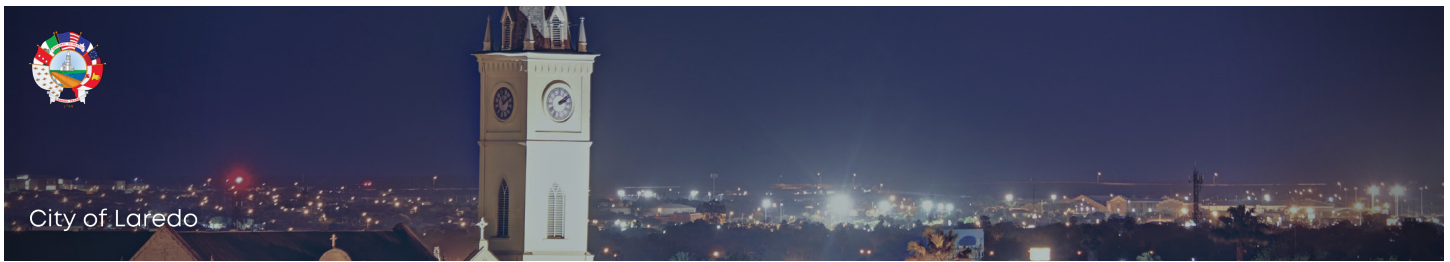
The City of Laredo seeks assistance in monitoring general air quality monitoring and specifically ethylene oxide emissions from commercial medical sterilizers and the potential health effects of exposure on the general public.

Ethylene oxide (EtO) is a flammable colorless gas used as a sterilizing agent in creating certain plastics and medical equipment. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the gas is considered highly toxic and carcinogenic. Chronic exposure to ethylene oxide may cause damage to the brain and nervous system and can increase the risk of lymphoid cancer for males and breast cancer for females, as well as developmental risks for pregnant mothers and young children. The emission of such gas is of great public health concern in our community as it extends over a long period. The City of Laredo and the EPA believe all persons are entitled to safe air. EtO is a known carcinogen gas and can be removed with the proper technology. The EPA recently concluded that ethylene oxide was thirty times more carcinogenic to people who continuously inhale it as adults and fifty times more carcinogenic to those exposed since birth. Although the findings are worrisome, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality conducted a study and found the emission of EtO was less toxic than what the EPA was reporting, thus modifying the standards and allowing plants to emit more chemicals than the suggested amount of EPA.

This issue is crucial for a community like ours that has been medically underserved for so long. The healthcare risks brought from the emission of EtO are far too severe to our community, especially for children. Laredo's Midwest Sterilization plant released far more ethylene oxide on average than any other sterilizer plant in the country during five years covered by an analysis by ProPublica, which using data reported by Midwest to the EPA.

### **Background**

Recently, an issue regarding ethylene oxide emissions from a medical sterilization plant located in Laredo, Texas, has been brought to the Laredo City Council's attention. At issue is the concern of ethylene oxide emissions released from the Midwest Sterilization facility and the possible long-term health effects from exposure to this chemical determined to be a carcinogen to humans by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The City of Laredo is aware that the EPA is currently reviewing the National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) for ethylene oxide for commercial sterilization operations; however, there has not been a final rulemaking by EPA. As the federal agency that oversees and permits air emissions, the City is requesting that the EPA assist and/or provide resources for air quality monitoring to adequately determine the ethylene oxide emissions from this facility. Monitoring emission levels will allow the City of Laredo to assess better the health risks they pose to families living near and around the sterilization facility. The City of Laredo acknowledges the importance and urgency to raise public awareness at all levels and promote and facilitate actions to improve air quality, bearing in mind that clean air is important for the health and livelihood of our community. As our local community becomes more concerned about the levels of EtO being emitted to our community we are encouraged to further our efforts to improve air quality to protect human health. Air quality monitor equipment will allow us to survey EtO emissions in our community due to the thousands of pounds of EtO that have been released and are being released in the Laredo city limit atmosphere. Better access to emission levels may also aid the EPA in cre-



ating tighter standards of the suggested emission levels. Furthermore, as a port community the ability to monitor carbon monoxide, lead, ozone, and particulate matter caused by the thousands of daily idling semi-trucks in our community is of significant concern. Above all, collecting data will allow the City of Laredo access to accurate information sufficient to manage human health and environmental risks.

**Solution**

The City is seeking guidance as well as funding for air monitoring stations to assess the classic six air pollutants and the levels of ethylene oxide released from commercial sterilizers.

**Target Agency**

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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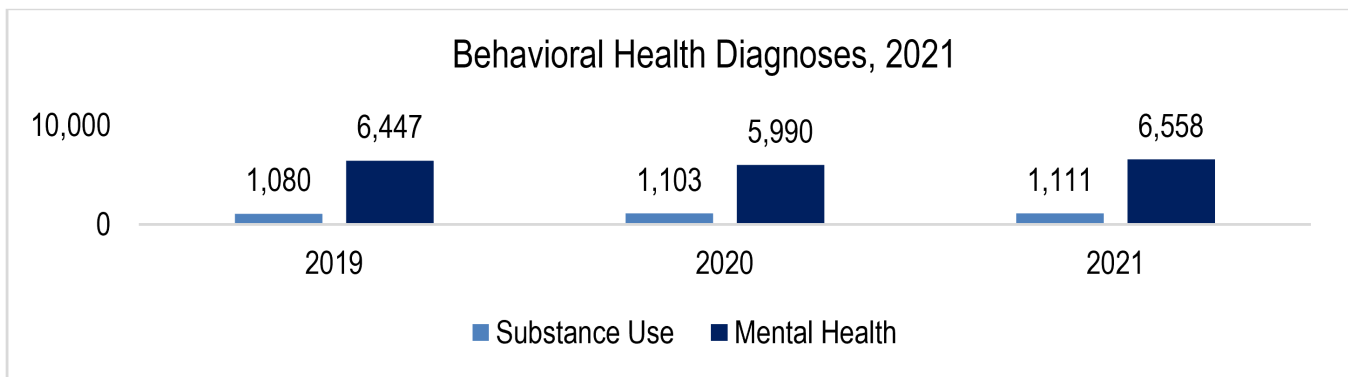
## Substance Abuse/Misuse and Mental Health Programs Capacity Building

### Situation Assessment

Laredo and other U.S./Mexico border communities face serious behavioral health, substance abuse and co-morbidity challenges that merit behavioral health screening, preventive, detoxification services, rehabilitation, and treatment. This is even more critical with the opioid and suicide crisis that affects our nation, now being seen in Laredo, becoming increasingly detrimental to the Laredo community which historically lacks mental/behavioral health care professionals, proper facilities, and treatment.

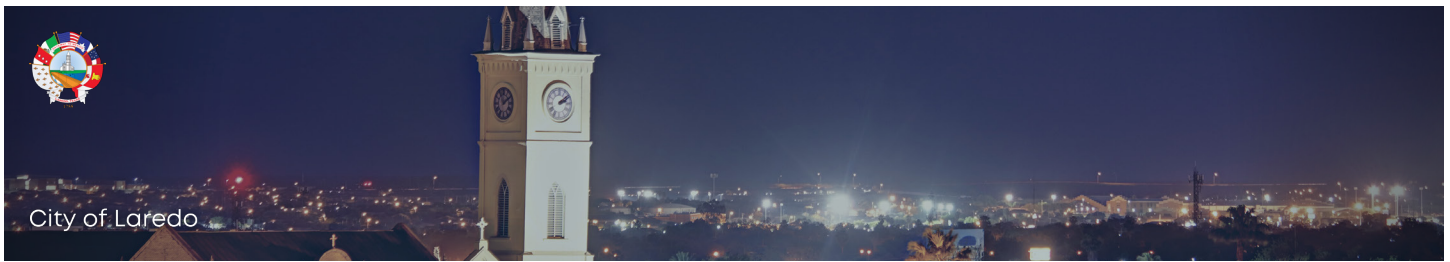
Substance use and mental health (behavioral health) needs have been and continue to grow in Laredo, including co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorder (SUD). Research shows that over 60 percent of adolescents in community-based substance use disorder treatment programs are diagnosed with a mental illness. Most participants were unemployed, not looking for work, had less than a high school education, and had a household income between \$0-\$9,999. Participant ages varied evenly between the age of 30-60+. Laredo currently does not have detoxification or rehabilitation services for the population.

A report developed by our local FQHC demonstrates the growing diagnoses for behavioral health services in the last three years. A dip in diagnoses for 2020 was attributed to COVID. Numbers are expected to rise across all community clinics for 2022.



Psychiatric patients admitted to an emergency department face long wait times to be admitted to a psychiatric facility. Emergency departments are not designed or equipped for psychiatric treatment, and psych patients often experience worse health outcomes in the ED. Not only do patients fare worse in the ED, but it is far more expensive. Inpatient psychiatric patients remain in the ED 3.2 times longer than non-psychiatric patients resulting in an average cost of \$2,250 per patient bed. It costs the ED more and prevents other patients from utilizing the ED. The top five mental health and substance use (MHSU) diagnoses in ED visits for Texas resulting in an inpatient admission are:





1. Alcohol-related disorder
2. Depressive disorders
3. Schizophrenia spectrum and psychotic disorders
4. Bipolar and related disorders
5. Trauma and stressor related disorders

To transition to fully integrated care, the City of Laredo Health Department (CLHD) offers an array assessments and tools to help identify individuals suffering from co-occurring disorders. This integrated treatment approach that has provided improved and increased detection and diagnosis of behavioral health issues, but access to behavioral health and substance disorder services are still a challenge as Laredo currently does not have a current resident adult psychiatrist in city limits.

Laredo requires added resources to support a comprehensive detoxification facility and access to in-person psychiatric services within city limits. Currently, those seeking such services would have to be referred to resources 150 to 500 miles away. Increased access to psychiatric in-person, telemedicine and telepsychiatry services are in dire need for our community to address health profession shortages and to guarantee continued access and linkage to care.

### **Background**

Addressing social determinants of health requires integrated behavioral health services along with chronic disease prevention. Increasing adolescent and elderly cases of suicide, bullying, mass shootings, and depression together with co-occurring disorders such as substance use and other illnesses, requires early detection, treatment and prevention. In Laredo and along the U.S./Mexico border, which is an area historically underserved by specialty providers and trained health support staff, this challenge is further compounded by existing socio-economic conditions, lack of early preventive and primary care, and limited behavioral health services. Adding to the problem is the accessibility to opioids and other drugs along the U.S./Mexico border, as well as cultural, generational, economical and psychosocial factors that may facilitate substance use and deter someone from seeking help for behavioral health issues.

Data collected from Aug 1, 2018- June 30, 2019, through the Laredo Health Department indicates mobile outreach teams found 659 potential crisis cases based on the PHQ-9.3. Additionally, 153 individuals were found having current thoughts that they would be better off dead or hurting themselves in some way; of these 12 cases required immediate hospitalization due to voicing a plan. This data translates to 33% of the population served requiring linkage for mental health services, with 7.7% voicing current suicidal ideations or plan. As of 2021, there have been 37 confirmed suicides recorded with ages ranging from 14 to 71 years of age.

There is a substantial medical service capacity gap and need in Webb County. The number full-time (FTE) equivalent providers Laredo needs to adequately meet provider-to-population ratio needs includes 11 FTE mental health providers. All designations were formulated in 2019 and updated in 2021. Note that psychiatrists are the only designated mental health



Discipline	HPSA Name	Designation Type	County Name	HPSA FTE Short	HPSA
<b>Primary Care</b>	Webb County	Geographic HPSA	Webb County	20	14
<b>Mental Health (psychiatrist only)</b>	Webb County	Geographic HPSA	Webb County	11	18

providers (as opposed to counselors and other professionals) for an HPSA designation in Texas.

The provider ratios for Webb County and the US in 2019 are listed in the table below. Laredo has almost twice the population-to-provider ratio for PCP and dentists. Mental health provider shortage is worse still, with nearly three times the Texas average. Laredo ranked last across the country in provider supply. The shortage will continue to grow based on Texas projections of a 2% annual increase for primary care service through 2029.

From 2021 (19) to November of 2002 (37) a 95% increase of overdose deaths have been observed. Unfortunately, we are likely to observe 100% by the end of the calendar year. During 2022:

- 311 Overdose Calls
- 157 Overdose Reports
- Ages range 13 to 72 years of age
- 35% are opioid related

The need for increased behavioral health services and a detox center in our community has become notable, as these numbers continue to rise. Substance use and behavioral issues require swift action from Federal, State, and Local agencies to prevent more health, social, and economic complications from these issues. Prevention, education and treatment via an integrated health care model would be the solution to promote wellness and improved quality of life.

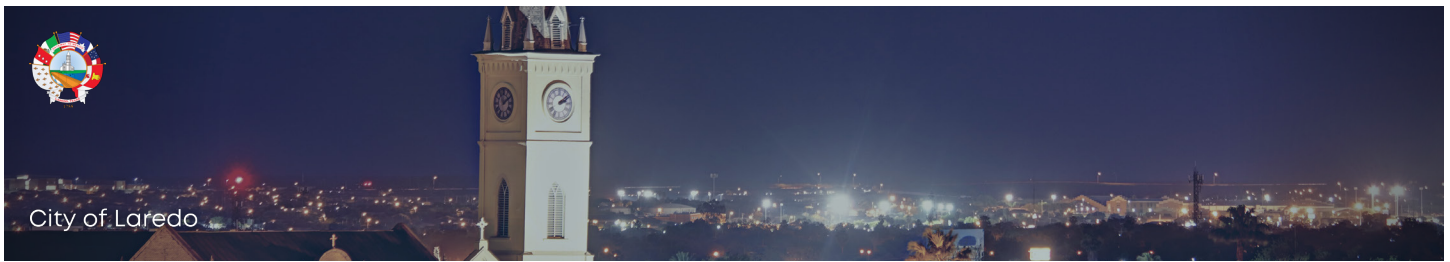
The ongoing pandemic has forced many healthcare services to transition towards telehealth, offering web-based or telephone services to supply care. This is a chance for our community to secure services typically not found within our city limits. However, access to these remote services requires technology and infrastructure to continually support the delivery of care, especially to those most in need.

**Solution**

To better address substance use, the City of Laredo created a Drug and Alcohol Commission to promote drug prevention and awareness. Commission successes include updating a directory of local providers and services, surveying gaps in services, asking for input from stakeholders, and researching funding opportunities.

The City of Laredo and Webb County have committed to setting up a detoxification facility; however, funding is needed to adequately sustain the operations and services for this endeavor.

The City of Laredo Health Department currently offers telemedicine and telepsychiatry services, but increased challenges



in sustaining the proper technological infrastructure while also assuring that low income, un-insured and underinsured patients have the adequate devices to receive care is an incremental challenge. Securing added resources to recruit psychiatrists and ensure telehealth to those most in need is needed to see long-term improved health outcomes.

The City of Laredo's goal is to obtain funding for the items below with legislative assistance:

### **Substance Abuse/Misuse**

1. Allocation of additional resources for behavioral health care to include prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation in outpatient, residential and rehabilitation service as well as acute care treatment. Funding emphasis should also be given onsite crisis intervention by the Mental Health Authority to assist first responders through assessment and recommendation.
2. Funding of Naloxone training for all first responders and public health responders to address Opioid crisis.
3. Funding to address prevention, detox, treatment and rehabilitation services including the creation of a detox and rehabilitation in-patient facility for youth, women and men. This would also reduce care by law enforcement for non-offenders as well as reduce hospital burden for non-hospitalization needs.
4. Support pilot projects on the US/Mexico Border (Laredo) to fully integrate behavioral health and substance abuse services within public health and primary care wellness services, including telemedicine and telepsychiatry services.
5. Support youth prevention and intervention services including cultural and gender sensitivity training as well as health care related to sexually transmitted diseases, teen pregnancy, and HIV.
6. Training and continued discussion among, healthcare providers, law enforcement and community partners and stakeholders regarding prescription responsibility, stigma reduction, focusing on prevention and treatment, alternate programs to relieve burden on law enforcement and hospitals, and enhancing and expanding services through telehealth.

### **Mental/Behavioral Health**

1. Case Management: Services that help an adult, child or adolescent, or caregiver gain and coordinate access to needed care and services. These services are primarily site-based.
2. Pharmacological Management: Services to treat the signs and symptoms of mental illness through use and management of psychoactive drugs. Services are provided by a physician or other prescribing professional.
3. Counseling (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy): Services to reduce symptoms of mental illness and increase ability to perform activities of daily living. Services include individual, family and group CBT therapy and recovery or treatment planning to improve recovery and resiliency.
4. Counseling (Cognitive Processing Therapy): Services to reduce or remove symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder in adults, including military veterans. Services include individual CPT therapy and recovery or treatment planning to improve recovery and resiliency.
5. Medication Training and Support: Services to provide information about medications and their possible side effects.
6. Psychosocial Rehabilitative Services: Services to help a person develop and maintain relationships, occupational or



educational achievement, independent living skills and housing. Services include social, educational, vocational, behavioral and cognitive interventions provided by a person's treatment team.

7. Skills Training and Development: Training to help a person with serious symptoms of mental illness get and improve skills to successfully participate in the community.

### **Target Agencies**

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

United States Department of Health and Human Services

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)

US/Mexico Border Health Commission

National Institute of Health (NIH)

National Institute on Drug Abuse

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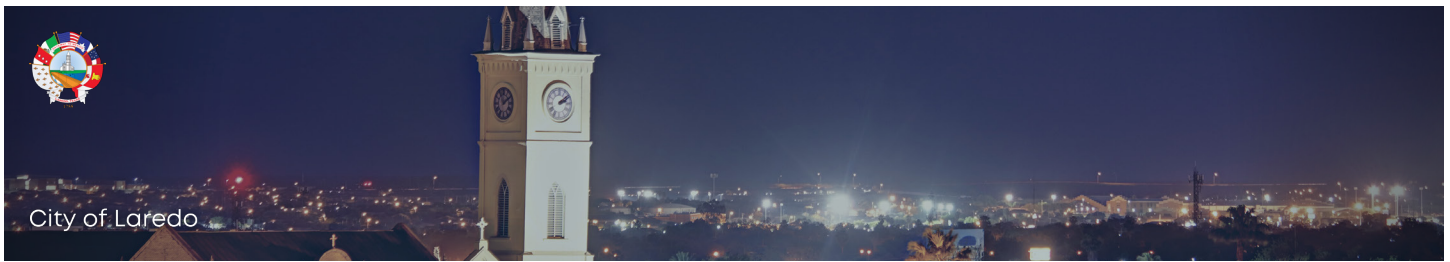
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## **Designate a Regional Public Health Fund to Support Foundational Public Health Services, Programs and Security for the Texas-Mexico Border**

### **Situation Assessment**

Border Public Health Programs lack direct federal funds to support the growing need of foundational public health programs and service. It is imperative to establish a Federally Designated United States-Mexico Border Public Health Fund to ensure foundational public health programs and service. This is especially important as funding for the region continues to be level funded and stagnant for surveillance, foundational public health services (immunizations, food safety), public health preparedness and response, and chronic disease prevention. Specifically, the Public Health Prevention Fund (PHPF), the Public Health and Health Services Block Grant (PHHS), Early Warning Infectious Disease Surveillance (EWIDS), Tuberculosis Control, and HIV Prevention funds have been reduced or eliminated. This affects the US/Mexico border's health security and public health due to emerging diseases, control and prevention response to current, emerging, new and highly infectious diseases, and other international public health threats.

### **Background**

Public Health disease control, prevention, regulatory services, emergency response and preparedness and border health security are critical to ensure the health and safety of all residents of the City of Laredo, County of Webb, State of Texas, and the United States of America. The City of Laredo Health Department (CLHD), Cameron County Health and Human Services, Hidalgo County Health and Human Services, and El Paso City County Health and the Texas Department of State Health Services maintain a history of partnering to safeguard against disease entry into Texas and the United States. This region is a high-risk area for disease and public health threats given its bi-national and international vulnerability. The threat of disease, if not contained on the Texas/Mexico Border, has the potential of multiplying rapidly across Texas and the entire United States. Also, contributing to our vulnerability, are the many sectors of our Texas/Mexico Border Region that remain medically underserved. We continue to have drastic shortages in the health professions and lack adequate resources for response and containment of public health emergencies. Yet, for many, public health continues to serve as the medical home for preventive primary care, maternal child health services, immunizations, and dental care adding significantly to our responsibility in core public health services. Consequently, the role of Public Health on the Texas/Mexico Border is that of health care delivery, public health disease control (communicable and non-communicable), and public health homeland security.

Local health departments are bearing more of the local response utilizing local resources for core public health services and continuing to provide services for those regional areas without local public health support. For the state's safety, we must maintain international border public health readiness for prevention, surveillance and safety. Today, public health response to disease control, disaster management, foodborne disease management and enforcement (due to illegal food entry and selling) is even more important. Historically, resources have not been provided equitably. Local health departments along the Texas-Mexico border are currently providing over 80% of the public health services. To continue to provide core public services, additional resources are needed by local health departments.



As such, additional funding support for core public health services in the border region is needed with emphasis placed on:

1. Communicable Disease- Epidemiology, surveillance, disease investigation, mitigation, control, intervention and prevention.
2. Environmental Health – Food safety management, environmental health hazards prevention, enforcement and vector control and zoonosis as well other emerging and new threats
3. Chronic Disease Prevention – Evidence-based interventions and health promotion
4. Enhanced Laboratory Testing – Early detection/identification/confirmation
5. Health Equity – ensuring regional health wellbeing (access to healthcare, medication and vaccine)
6. Enrichment of partnerships and communications between local and bi-national entities to ensure border health security along the U.S./Mexico border

## **Solution**

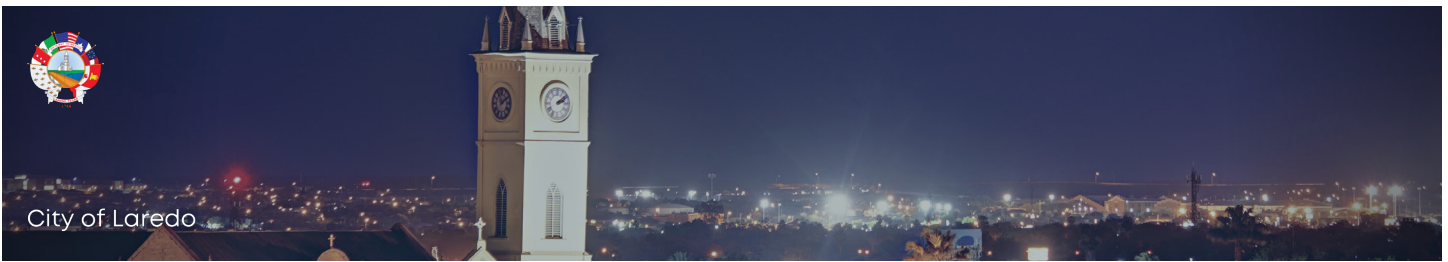
Progress is ongoing thanks to awards received from SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic, but funding resources are coming to an end and will. Border health departments will revert back to limited resources specifically, for border health security, infrastructure, personnel, surveillance, and local laboratory capacity. These initiatives can best be addressed through a special public health fund that targets Public Health Readiness, Response and Intervention along the Texas-Mexico Border. An allocation of an additional \$600,000 per health department per year at minimum, totaling \$4,800,000.00 for the biennium would facilitate and ensure foundational public health programs and service implemented (expanded) during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic such as additional primary healthcare, access to vaccinations, enhanced surveillance, and laboratory response resources continue.

## **Target Agencies**

Health Resource and Services Administration (HRSA)  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
Centers for Children, Public Health Preparedness, Chronic Disease, Tuberculosis and HIV  
Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)  
Office of Global Affairs, Office of the Americas  
Office of Policy and Planning  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, Division of International Health Security  
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
Department of Homeland Security  
United States Food and Drug Administration

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## Laboratory Response Network Certification

### Situation Assessment

Rapid laboratory detection along the Texas/Mexico Border is paramount for early detection and intervention, disease control, especially for new and emerging (SARS-CoV-2- Variants of Concern (VOC)) diseases and to prevent spread. This is part of the health and bio-security response. Currently Laredo Health's laboratory capacity is not certified by the Texas Department of State Health Services to serve as a Laboratory Response Network (LRN) lab to detect bioterrorism agents, emerging and novel public health threats and emergencies and other public health threats. Laredo has a biosafety laboratory level III (BSL III), that was built in partnership with DSHS with the intent of becoming an LRN to enhance laboratory capacity on the Texas/Mexico Border; this would enhance our response to current and new biological threats. This certification will also facilitate Food Emergency Response Network (FERN) approval to reduce the risk of foodborne threats.

### Background

The Texas/Mexico Border is a target and must assure both homeland and health security for safety and protection against all public health urgent threats and bioterrorism. Laredo is an international border and the number one inland port of entry with 40% of all US inland goods passing through Laredo's four international bridges, and the third largest customs district in the nation. With new trade agreements with Mexico, Central and South America, China, Europe, air travel and air cargo; trade and migration, there is a high threat level for public health risk. Trade, migration and population enhance the health security need to all hazardous threats by current, emerging and new diseases and bioterrorism on the Texas/Mexico border. Some of these potential threats are: Migration (Unaccompanied children and Central American migrants released into our communities), new diseases/highly infectious such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) (SARS-CoV-2 (VOC) & SARS-CoV-1), Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), H9N7 subtype, novel influenza strains, Ebola as well with continued threats (Dengue Virus, Botulism, Ricin, Anthrax), and current Multi-drug Resistant and infectious diseases (Tuberculosis, foodborne illness, E. Coli, chemical exposure).

Because Laredo has one of the highest threat levels in the state, we ask for funding to support our Laboratory Response Network (LRN) designation. This would help us obtain our LRN designation as previously discussed with the Commissioner of Health. This will allow us to proceed with final approval from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). We continue to comply with all requirements to maintain Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) certification. New funding is being requested from DSHS, and as well other federal agencies to sustain the LRN. Our 4,000 square foot facility provides clinical, environmental, and bio-safety lab III (BSL-3) testing and detection. As an LRN, we can conduct biological testing for critical health bio-threats and other public health emergencies (SARS-CoV-2). DSHS has supported our laboratory through federal funding for pandemic response since August 2020 in the amount of \$3,870,221.00, available through June 30, 2024 after a one-year, no-cost extension. The City of Laredo Health Department requires sustainable support for operations and continue to protect our border community, through daily operations, and continued capacity building for laboratory and public health emergency response.



## **Solution**

Previous dialogue with CDC and DSHS has established that LRN designation is possible for Laredo, if new sustained funding is secured. CDC has certified our BSL-3 for over 9 years, and the laboratory is also approved for select agents. In 2019, certification for high complexity testing was issued by CLIA, meeting all requirements for LRN approval. Approximately \$1,000,000 is needed for the first year of LRN operations, including equipment, reagents and supplies, personnel, and designated LRN pathologist oversight. Subsequent annual funding is approximately \$1,000,000.

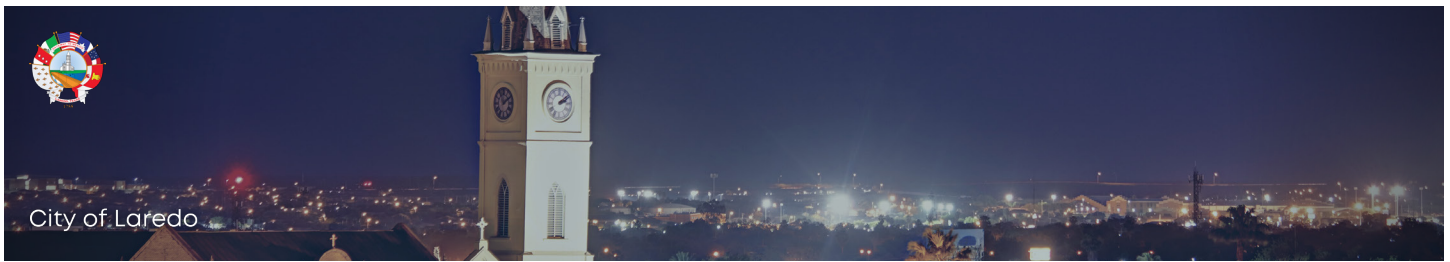
## **Target Agencies**

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
Food and Drug Administration (FDA)  
Department of Agriculture (USDA)  
National Institute of Health (NIH)

## **Contact Information**

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## Services for the Aging

### Situation Assessment

The 2020 U.S. Census released in June estimates the nation's 65-and-older population has grown rapidly, by over a third (34.2% or 13,787,044) since 2010, driven by the aging of Baby Boomers born between 1946 and 1964. According to July 2021 population estimates, Laredo is comprised of a population of 256,153. While Laredo is younger than the nation, with a median age of 28.7, our community historically lacks the data, infrastructure and services to provide care and support to our population. More so, we currently do not have enough data and services on chronic degenerative disease, including dementia, Alzheimer's, and heart disease, for Mexican Americans of the Southwest/South Texas and US/Mexico Border. Laredo has recently secured a collaboration with University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio on a clinical module for geriatric care; however, this is only a fraction of the resources needed to address emerging issues for our aging population. This is particularly important since we remain medically underserved, lacking neurological, psychiatric, geriatric, family medicine, nutrition, oral hygiene, rehabilitation, injury prevention, and social support services.

### Background

In the next three to five years, the population 65 years and older of the United States/Mexico Border will surpass 15% of the total population. Based on current U.S. Census estimates, the current population of older aged adults is approximately 35,638, or 13%. There are two paradigms of growth along the border: one within the 0-5 age demographic and the other of over 65 years of age. Much of the efforts to date have been directed to women and children, but the infrastructure and services for the aging also need to be addressed. This includes health care, nutrition, dental, injury prevention, behavioral health and chronic disease management. Chronic disease management is crucial, as diabetes rates are significantly higher than the state rate of 11.0%; currently at 25.8%. Research has shown the risk of dying from diabetes is higher in our region: 38% higher; and it is higher for both men and women than in the state: about 32% and 43% higher, respectively. Even more startling, is that diabetes hospitalizations are higher for men in the region than in the state and they were higher for persons aged between 45-74 years and older. While there is currently not enough data on the Mexican American/Latino population as to degenerative diseases (dementia, depression, heart disease) and injuries, it is safe to assume that complications and comorbidities derived from high prevalence of chronic disease adversely impacts this demographic. There is a need to increase access to care and resources to address wellness, specifically in residential and care facilities. During 2022, 136 COVID-19 associated mortalities were reported in Laredo, Texas. Of these reported mortalities, medical history reported 5.1% with Alzheimer's and or Dementia, 8.8% with heart disease and 19.9% with diabetes. Now more than ever, resources are needed to care for our aging population, including a plan on infrastructure needs to provide wellness and physical support (parks, walking, and physical activity for the elderly, rehabilitation, short and long-term care facilities).

### Solution

Working with our local council of governments and in partnership with the University of Texas Health San Antonio, we have started a wellness and prevention effort to enhance diagnosis and treatment for dementia, Alzheimer's and other degenerative diseases in Laredo. More is needed to care for the health of our ageing population and their care takers. We continue to seek grant opportunities with the Administration for Community Living and hope this will initiate a dis-



ease self-management evidenced base foundation to improve the health and care of older adults (chronic disease, injury, nutrition and behavioral health).

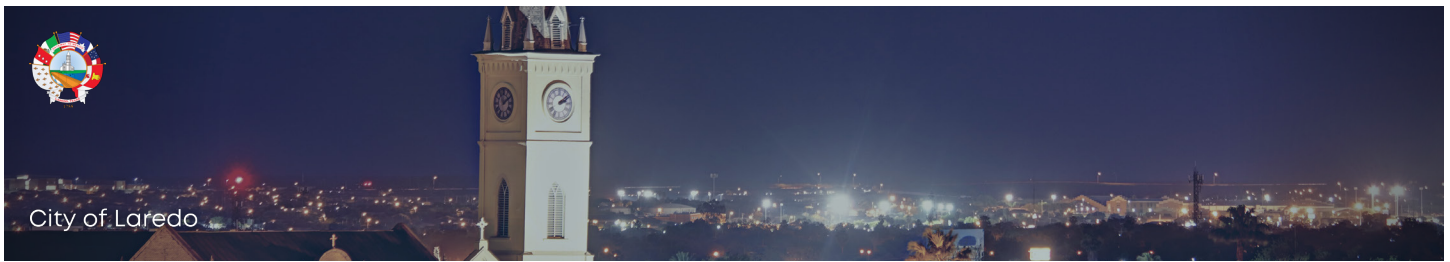
Fighting chronic disease and other degenerative diseases is a priority at the City of Laredo Health Department. We need to accelerate and improve care and services for older adults living with chronic disease, and their families. The Laredo Health Department currently operates a Diabetes Empowerment Education Program, CDC Prevent T2 Diabetes Prevention Program and the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program. If provided, funding we will enhance evidenced based curriculums such as falls prevention, disease self-management and the continuation of our Chronic Disease Self-Management program to target older adults and their caregivers. Transportation is a barrier for older adults in seeking services. These funds would allow outreach directly to senior residential homes and community senior centers to offer education and increase health literacy levels. The City of Laredo Health Department would like to request \$250,000 in order to fund these efforts through hiring new staff and reach further community members.

### **Target Agencies**

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)  
HHS Office on Aging  
HHS Administration for Community Living  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
National Institute of Health (NIH)

### **Contact Information**

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## **Serving the Uninsured/Underinsured – Ensuring Access to Healthcare**

### **Situation Assessment**

As the State of Texas ended the DSRIP -1115 Waiver program that has been in effect for the last 12 years, supplying healthcare to the under/uninsured becomes a significant public health concern and potential crisis. The safety net that stood for this program allowed our organization to provide essential primary care services for the most vulnerable in Webb County. Not only did the DSRIP - 1115 waiver supply healthcare within our community, but it also allowed our agency to expand our early detection of chronic and infectious diseases, such as Diabetes, Hypertension, COVID-19, Influenza. Detecting disease and providing early access to preventive healthcare for the residents along the border is essential for our community, the state and nation as Laredo is beginning of I-35 corridor.

The high uninsured rate (30.3%) and persons living in poverty (29.1%) profoundly affect health outcomes for the border residents. Adverse healthcare outcomes such as congestive heart failure and end-stage renal disease represent one of the most expensive expenditures in healthcare that could be prevented or delayed by funding primary care programs. Systems-thinking level healthcare requires a cost-efficiency analysis so that programs like this one can prove that a dollar spent on prevention is a well-spent dollar. Social determinants of health that affect the population we serve have their unique challenges as it relates to healthcare access such as: transportation, language, mental health, constant patient mobility, and poor social support. These barriers are nearly impossible to overcome without proper funding for uncompensated healthcare.

### **Background**

Laredo has a diabetes prevalence of 25.8% and a prediabetes prevalence of 39.3%; 65.1% of the population has abnormal glucose readings. The Southern Texas-Mexico border is a high-risk area for noncommunicable diseases since we have close to 15,000 border crossings a day, and our international trade puts our community at risk for new infectious agents from all over the world. We continue to be the number one inland port in the Country. Yet, we continue to be a medically underserved health profession shortage area with inadequate resources to respond to our current and upcoming health crisis. Consequently, the role of Public Health on the Texas/Mexico Border is that of health care delivery, disease control, and health security. The final goal of this proposal is to develop a local network of providers with multi-funding solutions for the region.

As such, additional funding support is needed with emphasis placed on the following:

1. Unduplicated first-time medical encounters
2. Level funding for providers that become part of the network that offers care for the uninsured,
3. Prevention and health promotion,
4. Laboratory testing for early detection and confirmation, and
5. Enhancement of partnerships and communications between local and bi-national entities.



## **Solution**

The number of uninsured individuals is expected to rise over the following years. To address the rising uncompensated care in our community and reduce unnecessary hospital visits due to limited access to primary care providers, the City of Laredo Health Department proposes a shift towards value-based care models. A version of the DSRIP 1115 waiver model must continue as it is considered essential for border health. This action is contingent on the State of Texas yet, funding healthcare expansion and support can be achieved by direct funding from the federal to municipal government. Direct funding would emphasize public health foundation programs and services such as, access and linkage to healthcare, chronic and infectious prevention, outreach, and education targeted to address morbidity and mortality as it affects our specific geography and demographic with culturally appropriate methods. Awards of \$1,500,000.00 for local jurisdictions will help improve public health's upstream approach maintaining a proactive method instead of a reactive. Funding and support are necessary to create and solidify this infrastructure for value-based care, ultimately providing better health outcomes and wellness in our community.

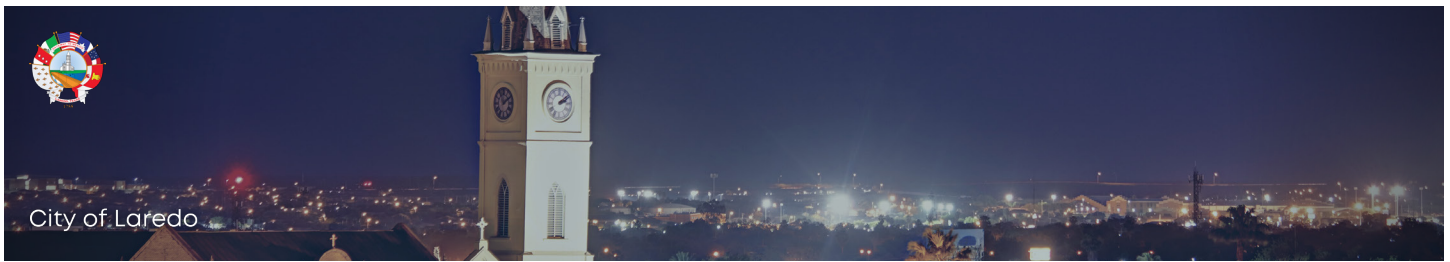
## **Target Agencies**

U.S. Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Department of Medicaid and Medicare

## **Contact Information**

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### 3 | WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

#### **Alternate Water Supply for the Laredo Region**

Water sustainability is imperative for the socio-economic prosperity of our region. From an economic standpoint, secure and better access to additional water sources is critical and heavily attached to sustainable economic growth.

As the number one inland port on the U.S-Mexico border, more than \$240 billion in trade crosses through Port Laredo, handling nearly 60% of all Texas-Mexico trade and generating almost 500,000 direct and indirect jobs in Texas. Laredo historically has relied on the Rio Grande for its source of raw water and has approximately 62,000 acre-feet of municipal water rights. The City currently operates two surface Water Treatment Plants (WTP) with a combined capacity of approximately 85 million gallons per day (MGD). At 65-MGD, the Jefferson WTP has always been the largest plant supplying most of the City. El Pico WTP, rated for 20-MGD. The backbone of Laredo's water system starts with pumping water from the Rio Grande, which is then treated at the Jefferson and el Pico WTP. The water is then distributed thru transmission lines ranging from 20- to 36-inches and then through booster pump stations and storage tanks into smaller pipelines leading to each neighborhood. The average daily consumption during 2021 was approximately 35-MGD and peak demand for 2021 was 53-MGD. The number of connections as of June, 2022, were 73,000. The system consists of approximately 1,108 miles of transmission and distribution lines. About 30% of the lines are older than 40 years and needs replacement. From 2019, City of Laredo had to issue several Boil water notices due to water quality and major transmission line break.

The City's current need for next five years is about \$600 million in water & sewer improvement and current water rate structure can only support 60% debt capacity. Recently city had submitted 14 applications in the amount of \$218 million to the Texas Water Development Board but was not successful to make the list to qualify for the funding application. Also, in August, 2022, City council approved about \$125 million Bond sale to address some needed improvements to the system immediately.

The City has relied almost entirely on the Rio Grande for its water supplies. This supply should be sufficient to meet the City's water needs through the year 2040 with its existing water rights. As the City's water demands are expected to continue increasing, a predicted 2070 shortfall of existing supply versus anticipated demand is over 22,000 AF/yr. However, if the City growth or water needs exceed the Region M projections, additional water supply could be needed earlier than estimated.

Since the Rio Grande River is Laredo's main source of water supply, there exists the potential of an event, continuous drought or act that would cause an unexpected outage, preventing the City from diverting its water supply from the River. For many years, the Laredo City Council and City management have recognized these vulnerabilities. Efforts continue to identify a viable water supply source (Secondary Water Supply) that could provide a sufficient supply during emergency conditions triggered by an outage of the Rio Grande supply.



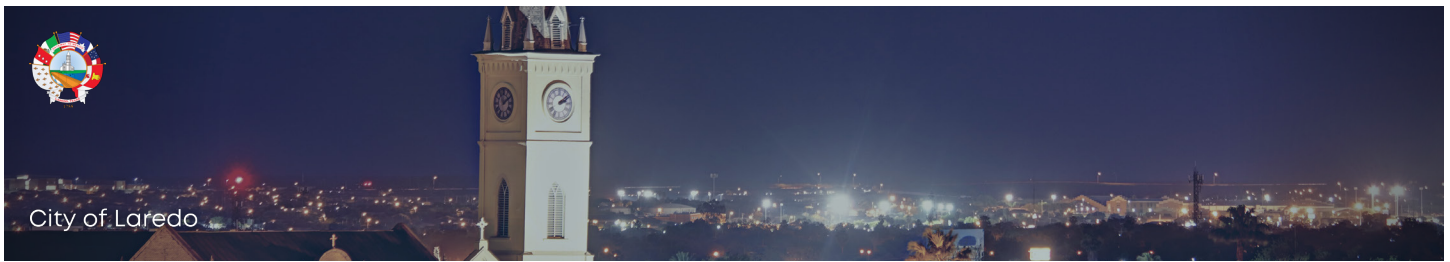
City’s consultant is working on identifying potential secondary sources, characterize them in terms of potential supply for short-term (emergency outages) and for long-term supply (supply needed for future growth), and provide information and recommendations regarding additional evaluations needed to move forward with implementing a secondary supply source. Over the past 20 to 25 years, the City has investigated various water supply alternatives involving groundwater resources including importing fresh groundwater, developing local or nearby brackish groundwater sources, and implementing aquifer storage and recovery (ASR). The consultant will present their preliminary findings during September City Council meeting for Council actions. But any alternate supply of water, will be cost prohibits within the existing water rate structures and will need State of Texas help.

If City of Laredo is facing these challenges, the other community is in the same situation. The growth is also putting additional pressure on the community. There is not enough money to maintain the system, plan for replacement and future growth without significant rate increase. Inflation and shortage of personnel in utility sector is creating a serious issue for proving services to the customers and meet the state requirements. The communities need State of Texas leadership in this critical infrastructure regarding the Water & sewer. Without a regional groundwater collection, we are putting at risk the economic competitiveness of investment, job creation and trade at Port Laredo. Without efficient water infrastructure, the wide-ranging impact of international trade could be severely impacted.

A regional groundwater collection, conveyance and delivery project is needed to transport the groundwater to water demand centers. The cost to construct pipeline system and operate delivery of water supply will be significant, well beyond the resources of any single city or entity along the Rio Grande. The resources of Texas and the Federal Government are needed to make it viable, and the benefits it provides, a reality. The City of Laredo Draft Integrated Water Master Plan estimated the capital cost of Groundwater collection and conveyance pipeline from Val Verde and Kenney County to Laredo to over \$700 Million dollars. Val Verde and Kenney Counties can provide large volumes of high-quality groundwater. It is a regional problem being faced by the Rio Grande communities and requires a regional solution.

Establishing a facility within the Southern portion of the Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer would be located in northern Laredo. This facility would consist of a well field consisting of groundwater wells and the brackish water would be treated in a desalination plant facility with a capacity of 30 million gallons per day. The estimated cost for the facility would cost as follows:

DESCRIPTION	ESTIMATED COST (MILLIONS)
Brackish Desalination Plant:	\$300
Pump Station:	\$60
Storage Tank:	\$32
Wells:	\$30
Pipeline:	\$75
<b>Total Cost:</b>	<b>\$497</b>



The above would create a new water treatment plant utilizing the available groundwater in northern Webb County just north of Laredo. This facility would access the Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer. The facility would be connected to the existing water distribution system and supplement the flow needed in the future if the Rio Grande would be unable to provide raw water for providing potable water to the City of Laredo residents. Assistance regarding a long term financial plans for the water development projects to include the fresh ground water and brackish water desalination projects and ultimately a regional sea water desalination plant for the south Texas. The funding needs to be significantly increase so communities can access through grants, low interest loan and combination of both. There should be different categories of funding for the alternative water development projects.

**Target**

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

**Contact Information**

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## 4 | COMMUNITY / ENVIRONMENT

### HUD Entitlement Programs: CDBG & HOME (Funding Maintenance or Increase)

#### Situation Assessment

On the National level, both the Community Development Block Grant and the HOME Investment Partnership Program Grant continue to face treats of funding cuts. The City of Laredo continues to stress the importance of both of these programs by either maintain previous years funding or increase funding amounts. A reduction of funds would have a devastating effect on the low to moderate-income citizens of this community and throughout the nation.

#### Background

Since 1975, the City of Laredo, Texas has received Community Development Block Grant Funds, which have been directed towards activities that benefit low to moderate-income persons. In Addition, these funds have been utilized to finance infrastructure improvements, water/sewer, drainage improvements, sidewalks, rehabilitation of City’s older housing stock, the construction and enhancement of recreational parks/facilities, construction of police substtions, code enforecme-ment activites and graffiti removal services, demolition of substandard units, and for the provision of public services in our community.

Despite these improvmenets, the City remains in dire need of funding in order to continue to assist its impoverished ccommunity residents. The U.S estimates as of July 1, 2021 indicated that the median income for households in the City of Laredo was \$55,603 as compared to \$67,321 for the State of Texas and \$69,021 for the nation. The Community Survey also indicates that 22.2% of individuals in Laredo live in poverty.

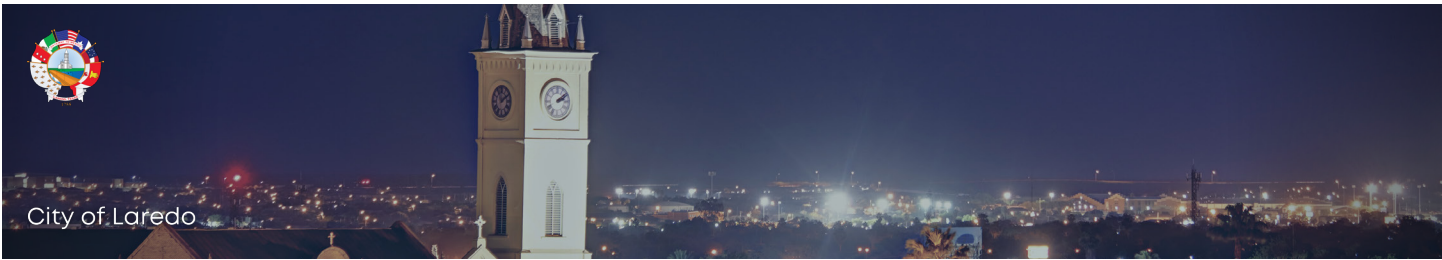
In turn, the City’s HOME and CDBG program funds have been directed toward creating affordable housing thru home-ownership programs, construction and rehabilitation of rental units, and tenant based rental assistance programs. These affordable housing programs are crucial to the low and moderate income residents in the community. There is a great need for safe, decent, and affordable homes available for this population.

#### Solution

The Community Development Block Grant Program and the HOME Program must continue at their present or at increased levels of funding, thereby allowing cities to continue to provide much needed help to their communities. We are requesting legislators vote against any proposed cuts in CDBG and HOME. We are also requesting support on statutory changes for the CDBG and HOME Programs.

- CDBG: adding new construction of housing and the designation of fair housing activities as eligible program activities
- CDBG: Aligning the CDBG labor standards threshold with the HOME Program and amending the Davis- Bacon threshold





City of Laredo

- HOME: Increasing Program Administration caps, Eliminating the CHDO set-aside requirement and Permanently eliminating the 24 month commitment deadline.

**Target Agency**

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

**Contact Information**

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## **HUD Entitlement Programs: ESG & ESG-CV (Funding Maintenance or Increase)**

### **Situation Assessment**

On the National level, the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program continues to face threats of funding cuts. The City of Laredo continues to stress the importance of this program by either maintaining previous years funding or increasing funding amounts. A reduction of funds would have a devastating effect on the low to moderate-income citizens of this community and throughout the nation.

### **Background**

The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act of 2009 (HEARTH Act) amended the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, revising and renaming the program to the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program. The change in the program reflects the change in the program's focus to assisting people to quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis and/or homelessness.

The City of Laredo, Texas receives ESG Funds which are directed toward engaging homeless individuals and families living on the street, improving the number and quality of emergency shelters for homeless individuals and families, helping operate homeless shelters, providing essential services to shelter residents, rapidly re-housing homeless individuals and families, and preventing families and individuals from becoming homeless.

Despite these programs, the City remains in dire need of funding in order to continue to assist its homeless residents. The last complete point in time count conducted in early 2022 estimated a total of 348 residents in our community experiencing homelessness. The U.S Census estimates also indicates that 22.2% of individuals live in poverty, which is likely to grow our homeless struggles.

In turn, the City's ESG and ESG-CV program funds have been directed towards growing capacity and services with the help of the communities Homeless Provider agencies in our city. With the creation of The Laredo-Webb County Coordinated Entry Process we have achieved breakthroughs in providing assistance to our Homeless residents. But there continues to be a great need for services and shelter for this population.

### **Solution**

The Emergency Solutions Grant Program must continue at their present or at increased levels of funding, thereby allowing cities to continue to provide much needed help to their communities. We are requesting legislators vote against any proposed cuts in ESG funding.

We are also requesting support on statutory changes for the ESG Programs to increase the 24-month expenditure deadline to align with our other entitlement grants such as HOME or CDBG.

### **Target Agency**

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

### **Contact Information**

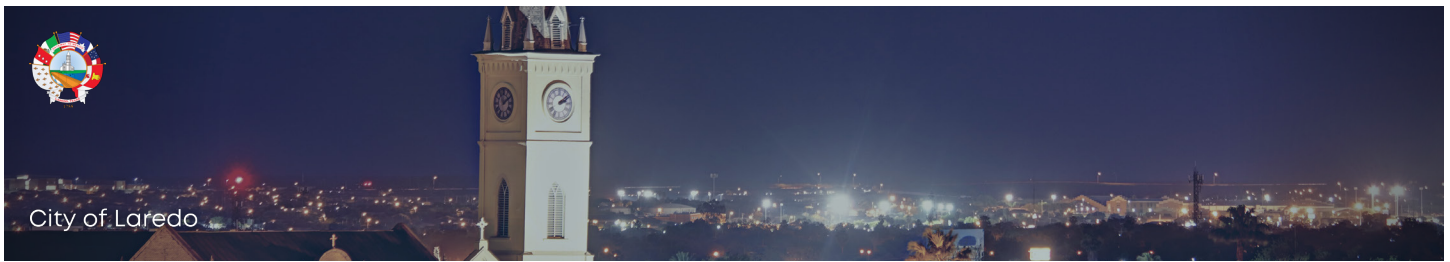
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## **Support for Increased Funding and Expanded Programs that Support Environmental, Recreational, and Water Conservation Projects**

### **Situation Assessment**

The state comptroller forecast that there will be at least an extra \$27 billion in available funding. The City of Laredo supports legislation for increased and equitable access to funding for parks, recreation and conservation projects that provide affordable access to public parks and nature as recreation options. Increased trails, parks and natural access to natural areas enhance the quality of life and has a direct positive socio-economic impact. State funding of parks secures the viability of state parks, and it has a direct positive impact on local parks that Texans value and love. The City of Laredo supports:

- Adequate funding and grant programs for maintenance and operation of recreational areas, natural areas, monuments, endangered species sanctuaries, and trails.
- Adequate funding for infrastructure projects that involve the beautification and development of recreational areas.
- Extended state and federal funding to assist with developing and maintaining local parks, recreational trails, and natural areas.
- Partnerships with eligible entities to develop programs that aim at increasing the affordable access to outdoor recreational areas
- Adequate funding for conservation and preservation projects that improve the quality of life of our residents.
- Promotion of economic development derived by the spin-off effect of increased recreational areas.

Increased funding for parks and recreational areas is crucial in the enhancement of quality of life, which leads to socio-economic growth and increased jobs.

### **Background**

The City of Laredo along with 20+ private and non-profit organizations are partnering in the development of the Binational River Conservation Project. The project proposes a 6.3 river mile park as an ecological restoration project, one that will re-establish the river's ecosystem, revitalize the economy, add cultural assets, such as public art, and attract tourism on both sides of the river, transforming the space into a distinctive international landmark that joins two communities and nations into one.

The City of Laredo seeks to identify and support increased funding and equal access opportunities for the restoration and conservation of this unique international landmark.

**Target Agency** National Park Service

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## **Rio Grande Basin – Chacon Creek Legislative Authorization & Next Phase Funding**

### **Situation Assessment**

The City of Laredo seeks congressional authorization to complete the Chacon Creek study undertaken by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the purpose of providing flood control, natural habitat conservation and linear park development.

### **Background**

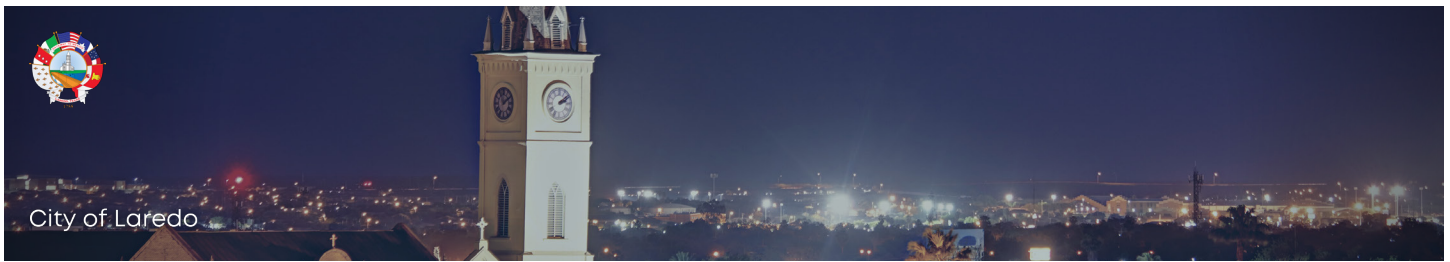
Chacon Creek is a tremendous natural resource for Laredo with economic, recreational and educational potential, but a history of neglect, and illegal dumping of materials and debris mask this potential. Carter & Burgess, a strategic consulting firm, prepared a multi-objective master plan, which defined the creek's 100-year floodplain, proposed targeted channel improvements to relieve flooding and maintain the overall natural character of the waterway and incorporate passive/active recreation facilities. Rather than build a 200-foot-wide concrete channel over the entire 4.5 miles of the corridor, as was suggested in a previous study, Carter & Burgess proposed targeted terraced channel enlargements over a much shorter distance – less than 4,000 feet. This action would accentuate green spaces, preserve the creek's natural course, and minimize impact on wildlife and wetlands, while providing the most cost-effective flood mitigation. These channel improvements require the removal of approximately 50 homes located in the 100-year flood plain. However, upon completion of the proposed improvements, the reduction in 100-year floodplain elevation will remove approximately 250 homes from the floodplain. Workshops and public hearings were conducted and helped answer citizens' questions about the master plan and other issues, while including the public in the design process.

The project would provide flood risk management, ecosystem restoration and recreational amenities to Chacon Creek in the eastern part of the City of Laredo, Texas. The flood risk management component of the project will consist of the permanent evacuation of 73 residential structures along Chacon Creek. The vacated flood risk management lands will be used for recreational amenities. The ecosystem restoration component will include 16.75 acres of wetland restoration and 401 acres of riparian restoration. The project provides \$1,075,100 in annual flood risk management and recreational benefits, with a total annual economic benefit of \$1,453,900 (annual net benefits of \$295,200). Moreover, the project's ecosystem restoration component would result in an increase in 248 average annual habitat units over the no-action alternative. The overall benefit-cost ratio is 1.35 at 2.75 percent and 0.70 at 7 percent. Total project first cost is \$51,973,300 with Federal participation at 60% and the City's participation at 40%.

The project is fully supported by the local sponsor because Chacon Creek is the last unaltered tributary to the Rio Grande within the city limits of Laredo and has tremendous potential to be a valuable environmental, recreational and educational amenity for the area and the region.

The proposal also addressed leisure and cleanup issues. Laredo city leaders envision the creek offering recreational, educational and economic opportunities. A multi-objective approach would create "people spaces," while developing amenities, such as a hike and bike trail system and perhaps, a regional park. The plan emphasizes ecosystem restoration, transforming a once-abandoned area littered with tires, barrels and pallets into a year-round attraction for citizens and





visitors. In addition, the plan recommends park benches be placed along the routes, creating natural habitat zones to study and admire indigenous vegetation. Similarly, the Chacon Creek Project includes enhancing existing babbling brooks and preserving acres of native plants and trees. Developing this natural treasure would generate hundreds of acres of new recreational and educational parklands. Moreover, it would yield important by-products, such as eliminating illegal dumpsites, improving water quality and drawing attention to the city's natural resources.

An Independent External Peer Review (IEPR) occurred in early FY 2011 on a near-completed draft report. The Corps' Fort Worth District was addressing IEPR comments and preparing the report for public review and comment when work was suspended due to lack of a study authority. Routine schedule maintenance occurred for the remainder of FY 2011 and through FY 2012.

As part of Section 7001 of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 (WRRDA 2014) it requires the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to publish a notice in the Federal Register to request proposals from non-federal interests for proposed feasibility studies and proposed modifications to authorized USACE water resources development projects or feasibility studies. The City of Laredo had previously submitted the Chacon Creek Feasibility Study reauthorization proposals to the Army Corps of Engineers in December 1, 2014. However, the project lacked authority and although the Fort Worth District and Corps Headquarters had worked with the sponsor's Congressional delegation to secure a study authority, the project remained unauthorized. In order to resolve this issue, the City of Laredo, through Section 203 of WRRDA 2014, hired Tetra Tech to complete the feasibility study at the City's expense. The City submitted the complete Feasibility Study to the U.S. Assistant Secretary of the Army –Civil Works (USASA-CW) for review in August of 2018. The report has been reviewed and found to be feasible by the USASA-CW and has been reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for clearance for Congressional action. The project was included in the WRRDA 2021 bill which requires the City to complete a Review Assessment.

### **Solution**

The City is currently working with USCOE – Fort Worth District on completing the required review assessment to move the project into the construction phase.

### **Target Agency**

Army Corps of Engineer

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## Support for Mechanical and Biological Removal of Invasive Carrizo Cane Along the Rio Grande

### Situation Assessment

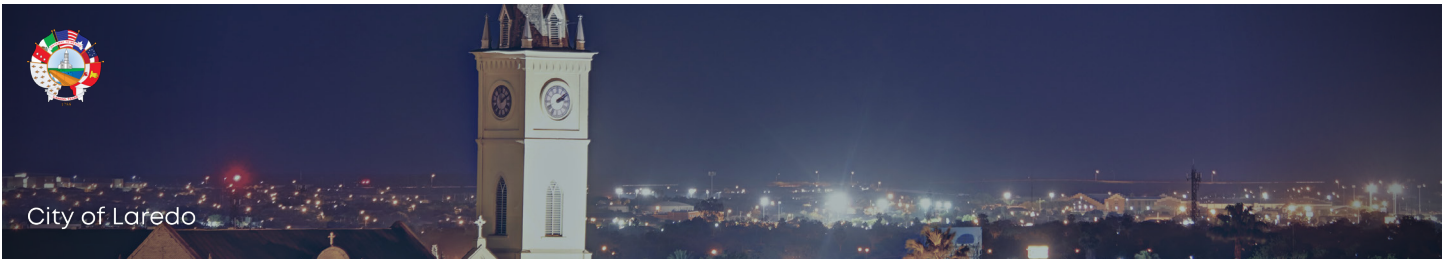
The highly invasive carrizo cane (*Arundo donax*) along the Rio Grande and its tributaries poses issues for border security, control of cattle fever ticks, water quantity supply and creates serious issues for communities that depend on the Rio Grande for water. The City of Laredo is interested in continuing in partnering with federal agencies such as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to utilize biological and mechanical means to reduce the biomass of this invasive cane species (*Arundo donax*) along the Rio Grande to ensure that the river has adequate water supplies for our region and that this natural barrier continue to be leveraged as a secure area along the southern U.S. border.

### Background

*Arundo donax*, known as, giant reed or carrizo cane, is an exotic and invasive biological control agent weed of riparian habitats in the southwestern U.S. and northern Mexico. *Arundo* dominates these habitats which leads to loss of biodiversity; stream bank erosion; fire hazards; increased costs for chemical (\$5000 per acre) or mechanical control along irrigation canals and transportation corridors. Other ills include the reduction of access and visibility of the international border for law enforcement personnel, increased risk of cattle fever tick incursion. It further competes for water resources in an arid region where these resources are critical to the environment, agriculture and urban users. This invasive giant reed is listed as a noxious weed by the Texas Department of Agriculture and also appears on the Invasive Plant Atlas of the United States. Biological control, using insect agents from the native range of *Arundo* in Europe may be the best option for long-term and widespread management. Three biological control agents (*Arundo* wasp, *Arundo* scale, and the *Arundo* leafminer) have been released and established in the United States and Mexico.

Additionally, mechanical topping of the *Arundo* has been integrated with the biological agents to suppress the growth of *Arundo*. This technique has been studied and implemented by the USDA along 558 miles of the Rio Grande, where a reduction of 2.5 million tons of cane biomass was observed (a reduction of 22%). This resulted in the conservation of approximately 6,593 acre feet of water per year (calculated using the Seawright model for water conservation), with a savings of \$4.4 million per year in agricultural water.

By expanding these efforts, the region stands to increase the conservation of water, thus, ensuring those acre feet of water can be available for distribution to the inhabitants of the region for consumption, ranching, and agriculture. The proposed action will enhance the lives of our City's 265,000 residents and help ensure Laredo's future economic success, which is contingent on having a healthy and plentiful water source.



## **Solution**

The City of Laredo seeks funding to implement this program.

## **Target Agencies**

United States Department of Agriculture;  
Department of Homeland Security;  
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

## **Contact Information**

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## **Flood inundation modeling and real-time water quality of the Rio Grande Watershed in the Laredo, TX Area**

### **Situation Assessment**

The Rio Grande is one of the principal rivers in the southwestern United States and is a vital water resource to communities in South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley. It is the fourth longest river in the United States with its headwaters beginning in Colorado and discharging into the Gulf of Mexico near Brownsville, Texas. In Texas, the Rio Grande serves as part of the natural boundary between the United States and Mexico. As the population on both sides of the border continues to grow increasing demands on both water quantity and water quality of the river poses challenges for all stakeholders. There are several priority areas along the Rio Grande in South Texas that are underserved, and decision makers in the region need a better understanding of the water resources from both an upstream and downstream user perspective.

The area of Laredo and Nuevo Laredo is one area experiencing growth and pressure on the existing water resources. The City of Laredo is vital as an economic center along the Rio Grande and is the busiest inland port along the U.S.-Mexico border. The port of Laredo handles over 50 percent of U.S.-Mexico trade. About 2 million commercial trucks cross the bridges between Laredo and Nuevo Laredo each year shipping goods that will travel to more than 60 countries.

Laredo and Nuevo Laredo in Mexico draw all of their water from the Rio Grande. Runoff and discharges from nonpoint and point sources of potential contamination such as agriculture, industry, and wastewater are increasing areas of concern. Water is a key economic driver in the lower Rio Grande, and thus identifying and understanding water issues is critical for future development. Lastly, Laredo is also in an area where drought is routine, and flooding is a serious threat. In July 2010, the area experienced devastating flooding from heavy rains caused by Hurricane Alex. Understanding and improving the health of the lower Rio Grande is the key for future growth, protection of ecological habitat, ecotourism, and flood protection for South Texas and its cities. The Laredo area of the Rio Grande is a priority area to focus on for the future of the river.

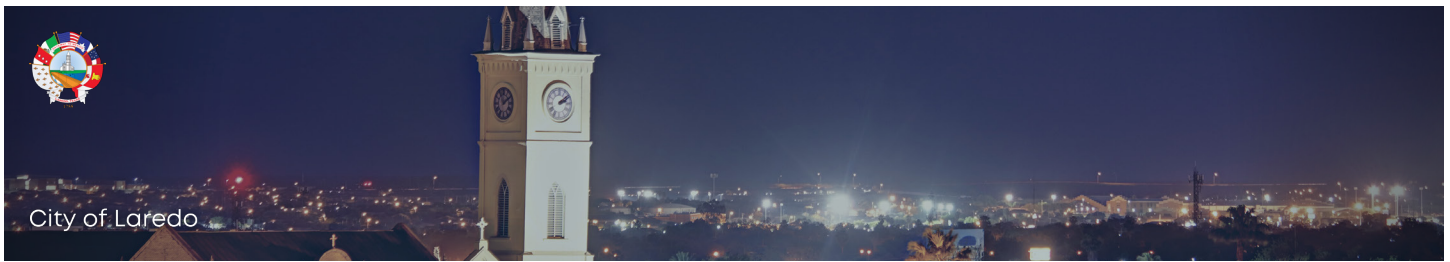
### **Background**

Currently, there are no real-time water-quality monitoring stations on the lower Rio Grande in the proposed study area that would allow stakeholders and resource managers to view concentrations and loads of chemical constituents in real-time on the web (for example, data every 15 minutes). Currently the IBWC does operate three streamflow gaging stations on the Rio Grande River near Laredo/Nuevo Laredo, but they do not provide real-time water-quality data.

In addition, discrete sampling for more complex contaminants in the river such as metals, pesticides, and new emerging compounds of concern (such as pharmaceuticals and wastewater compounds) is lacking.

Moreover, there is limited information on how various municipal and industrial discharges (wastewater effluent), urban runoff, population growth, and urban development might affect the water quality of the River. Nitrate, salinity, dissolved oxygen, temperature, pH, and turbidity are all water quality parameters of concern for river health. Technology is now available to measure these parameters directly in real-time. Planners and managers need to know whether the river water quality is improving or getting worse and need this information to help focus the use of limited available resources. A real-time monitoring network, coupled with periodic water-quality sampling, would provide the data needed to better understand possible water-quality concerns and establish baseline conditions for potential analysis of future water-quality.





ity trends. Spatial and temporal trends for both concentrations and chemical loads are needed for modeling, particularly with respect to future growth. Real time water quality combined with real time water flow can provide new tools for river managers and planners. These real-time data displayed on the web would allow rapid access by the many agencies and stakeholders.

Lastly the City of Laredo lacks a flood-inundation modeling system that can be used to help prepare emergency responders for flooding and flood inundation. The City is vulnerable to large rain events particularly from hurricanes as has been shown in the past. Simulation models are needed to demonstrate the effects of possible scenarios in the area for emergency managers such as flash flooding and for development in the watershed.

### **Objectives**

The first objective of this project is to provide resource managers with better capabilities to monitor real-time Rio Grande streamflow and water quality conditions by incorporating existing IBWC gages, additional streamflow gaging, and water-quality sensors to the existing network. This information will provide insight to better understand the effects of withdrawals and discharges, support management of water allocations, and enhance public safety during flood events. The new work would leverage and build on existing resources providing new tools for all stakeholders to better meet their objectives.

The second objective is to develop a program of periodic water-quality sampling at the new proposed monitoring stations. Periodic water sampling will provide a more comprehensive analysis of about two hundred constituents to supplement the data provided by real-time monitoring. This information will help water managers understand which contaminants are of most concern to the region and where managers can focus resources to improve overall water-quality conditions for the City of Laredo and surrounding communities.

The third objective of the project is to develop a flood-inundation modeling system that will help resource managers assess potential risks associated with flooding events along the River. The modeling system also can help managers and the public be better prepared for flooding by development of flood-inundation maps that are linked to the USGS real-time streamflow gages.

### **Solution**

The City of Laredo seeks funding to implement this program.

### **Target Agencies**

United States Department of Commerce - USGS; Department of Homeland Security - FEMA

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## 5 | PLANNING / INFRASTRUCTURE

### Laredo World Trade Bridge Expansion

#### Situation Assessment

The City of Laredo seeks a Presidential Permit for the construction of a second span of the World Trade Bridge. The current interpretation and application of Executive Order 13867 (EO 13867) is causing lengthy delays in approving Presidential Permit applications for international bridges and the lack of clarity related to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) clearance process.

#### Background

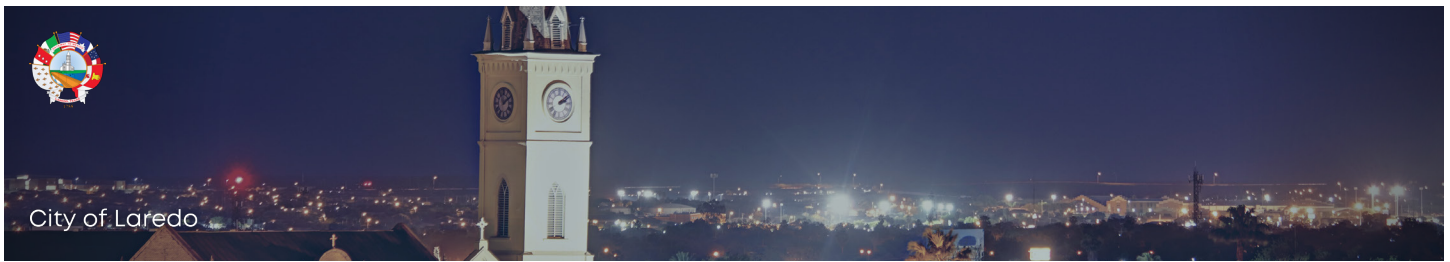
The Port of Laredo serves as the largest inland port on the U.S./Mexico border, crossing more than \$248.50 billion of goods annually. The goal of the Expansion Project is to provide efficient and effective mobility of goods between the two nations. Growth in trade and related services, coupled with dramatic economic and population growth on both sides of the border, has increased border traffic on Laredo's World Trade Bridge. As such, the City proposes to add two additional lanes to the existing Bridge and to construct eight (8) additional lanes of new bridge beginning immediately down-river and adjacent to the Mexican toll plaza crossing diagonally across the river to directly connect to the U.S. commercial pre-primary queuing lanes. This expansion of the existing bridge and the construction of the new bridge span will increase the number of lanes at the World Trade Bridge from eight (8) to eighteen (18).

The permit process was modified in 2019 to provide that the issuance of a permit was not conditioned upon completing the required environmental reviews under NEPA prior to submission and approval of an Application for a Presidential Permit. This change was made because of the time it takes to complete a review under NEPA. According to a 2022 analysis conducted by the White House Council on Environmental Quality, it takes an average of 4.5 years to complete an environmental impact statement under NEPA.

It appears that the original interpretation and application of EO 13867 has been reversed and there is now a requirement for a completed environmental clearance document before reviewing and/or approving any permit applications. This change was made after several permit applications had been filed, leading to confusion, and delaying critically needed infrastructure projects.

Environmental protection is a fundamental necessity, and the review under NEPA should remain a requirement, but conditioning permit review and/or approval on a completed environmental clearance document has significant economic implications and exacerbates the supply chain issues that we have been experiencing since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the tremendous congestion related to international trade across the border.

The U.S. negotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) to increase trade with our neighbors, which is even more important as we work to lessen our reliance on



China. However, to do so we must be able to efficiently move goods and products across our land borders, in particular international bridges, along the U.S.-Mexico border.

As trade increases across the Americas, congestion on our border bridges is leading to longer crossing times, which in turn hurts the U.S. economy. The recently enacted Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to fund modernization, expansion, and improvement projects to ensure goods and products can be transported reliably and effectively across our border. Unfortunately, the requirement to complete the review under NEPA before a permit is approved means that bridges at our ports of entry which are in dire need of improvements, appear to be ineligible for funding opportunities through the IIJA.

### **Immediate Support Being Sought**

The City of Laredo asks that the review under NEPA be a simultaneous requirement and not a prerequisite for the review/issuance of a Presidential Permit, as recent precedent has provided. This is a timely issue in need of immediate attention so that the City of Laredo doesn't unnecessarily further delay projects and expansion opportunities that are needed now.

### **Target Agencies**

- White House
- U.S. Department of State
- CBP
- GSA
- FHWA
- Congressional Delegation (particularly Rep. Henry Cuellar)

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## **Funding Support for New Maintenance and Operations Facility**

### **Situation Assessment**

The City of Laredo and El Metro Transit System are requesting funding for the architectural design, building, buses, and amenities for a new Bus Maintenance, Operations, and Administration building for the second phase of the Project.

### **Background**

The new Operations, Maintenance, and Administration facility will house buses, refueling, administration, operations, and maintenance for the next twenty-five (25) years when the transit fleet has approximately 100 buses and 40 vans and support vehicles. The current severely overcrowded and outdated maintenance garage will be replaced with a new facility that should be located in an area more properly zoned for its bus activities. The land has been acquired and platted which is exactly 23 acres.

### **Solution**

The City of Laredo and El Metro Transit System have been awarded earmarks of \$9.8 million for Phase I of the new maintenance/operations facility. The City completed the design with a contracted engineering firm for Phase I. Since, the estimated total cost of the project is over \$35 million; additional funds are needed in order to complete Phase II – Maintenance Building and the Administration Building. El Metro is asking for federal financial support of \$25 million to complete this project.

### **Target Agency**

Federal Transit Administration

### **Contact Information**

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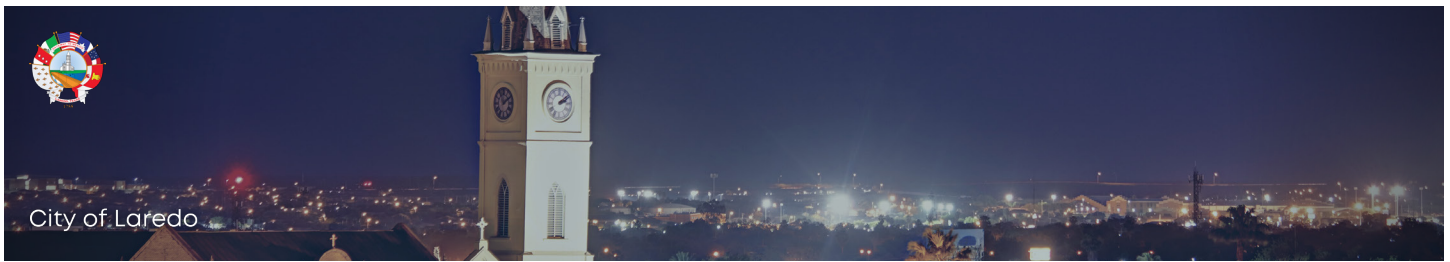
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## **Relating to the Importance of Addressing Congestion and Mobility Issues and the importance of Increased Funding for Transportation & Connectivity Infrastructure**

### **Situation Assessment**

The City of Laredo seeks and supports effective transportation solutions necessary to improve inner-city connectivity, safety and adequate transportation infrastructure to continue strengthening Texas competitive advantage in international trade. Increased funding for infrastructure projects is crucial to address the increase in border crossings and significant freight traffic and offer safe and appropriate routes to relief non-commercial traffic to address major challenges such as:

- Growing congestion
- Deficient connectivity
- Transportation challenges by both commercial and non-commercial vehicles

### **Background**

As the #1 Inland port handling over \$240 billion in trade with the world and 5 million trucks daily, transportation is the backbone of Laredo's economy and a vast impact to the Texas economy with Laredo port of entry handling more than 57.6 percent of land port trade of Texas international trade that enters through the Texas-Mexico border. Based on the latest Texas Comptroller's estimate, trade activity in Port Laredo affected more than 474,000 net jobs in Texas.

### **Immediate Needs to Alleviate Traffic & Enhance Connectivity**

The City of Laredo seeks to identify and support increased funding opportunities for transportation infrastructure projects to improve safety, mobility and continue the movement of goods to the world. Increased funding for transportation infrastructure is critical to:

- Withstand commercial traffic congestion
- Reduce fatalities
- Enhance pedestrian infrastructure in areas with persistent poverty
- Support the trade and transportation industries
- Build more resilient transportation and connectivity systems that align with Laredo's growth
- Create jobs and boost economic development
- Update transportation and connectivity infrastructure in the mature neighborhoods throughout the City.

### **State Target Agency**

U.S. Department of Transportation

### **Contact Information**

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## **Funding for Laredo International Airport Improvements**

The Laredo International Airport (LRD), Texas is an important cargo hub; consequently, there exists a continued need to enhance safety, security, and capacity in support of the U.S. trade industries. Port Laredo is the No. 1 inland port in the nation, and the 2nd largest overall U.S. Port of entry.

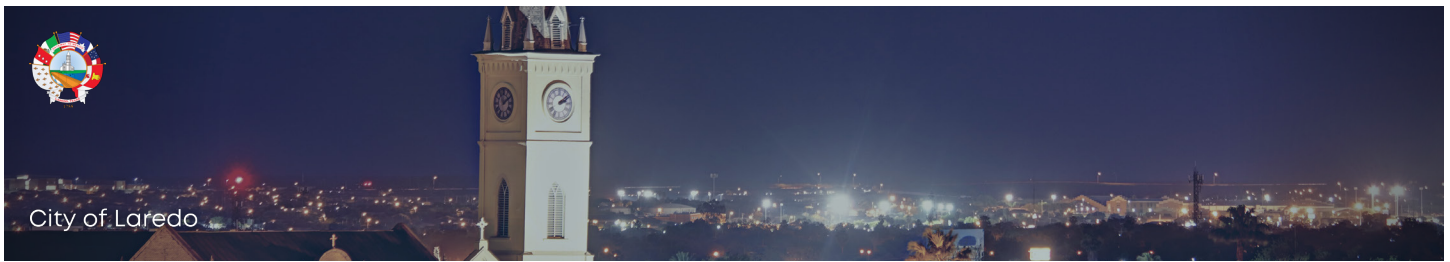
Modernization and Capital Improvements of the Laredo International Airport (LRD) is vital to the City of Laredo, region, and nation. The Airport is an economic generator and adds value to the international trade and is strategically located to add global significance. Airport Capital Improvements are essential to making this airport and region more competitive in terms of international trade opportunities and help to favor economic expansion and job growth.

The Laredo international Airport (LRD):

- Has increased air traffic operations in the last 5 years.
- Ranked 5th in the U.S. handling air cargo to/from Mexico. Industries represented in terms of air cargo include auto parts, automotive electronics, electrical and aerospace with auto parts being the No.1 commodity.
- Has U.S. Customs (CBP) on site 24/7 processing.
- Invested in 3.2 million in the construction of an onsite Federal Inspection Services Facility (FIS) that houses both U.S. Customs and Mexico Customs under one roof.
- Is the only airport in the U.S. with Mexico Customs agents on-site 24/7 to pre-inspect southbound air cargo activities.

Major initiatives included in the upcoming projects include:

- 1) Terminal Improvement Program and Baggage Handling System
- 2) Airfield Improvement – New Lighting system
- 3) Airfield Improvement – Replacement of EMAS
- 4) Airfield and Operational Safety – Expanded Tower Hours



## **Funding for Laredo International Airport Improvements – Terminal Expansion and BHS**

### **Situation**

The layout of the existing terminal building, being renamed to the Henry Cuellar Terminal (as decided per City of Laredo City Council in November 2022), creates an unsafe environment for passengers because the queue space between the top of escalators and the passenger security screening checkpoint is not adequately sized. Additionally, the process for the screening of baggage would be significantly enhanced and reduce overcrowding in the ticketing area with a new baggage handling system (BHS).

### **Background**

Laredo International Airport (LRD) continues to work closely with the Texas Airports District Office (ADO) in Fort Worth, Texas to develop and implement LRD's Airport Capital Improvement Plan (ACIP). Currently, LRD five-year capital improvement plan identifies the need for terminal expansion to allow room for mandatory items such as pet relief area and relocation of the TSA security checkpoint. The airport also has the support of regional TSA leadership for relocating the TSA security checkpoint.

### **Solution**

The current layout was designed pre-9/11 and with new security regulations, the airport is unable to maintain a safe environment for passengers that are cueing for the security checkpoint. We would request support from the FAA with funding for terminal improvements and expansion program to support a safer environment with improvement layout of a new security screening checkpoint. Additional improvements to the terminal are intended to include a new baggage handling system, to improve the layout, flow and efficiency of baggage screening. Additionally, and compliance issues with ADA will be completed as part of this program.

### **Target Agencies**

Federal Aviation Administration – Terminal Expansion

Transportation Security Administration – Baggage Handling System

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## Funding for Laredo International Airport Improvements – Lighting System

### Situation

Laredo International Airport provides necessary and integral air service and connectivity to the air transportation system, region, and country. To do so, the airfield must provide landing surfaces (runways) and integrated instrumentation, lighting systems and navigational aids that meet the needs of the aircraft regularly operating at the Airport.

Reliable air passenger and cargo service during all weather is vital to the success of the Laredo International Airport (LRD), the airport tenants and the City of Laredo. Navigational Aids (NAVAIDS) are an essential element in ensuring flight access to the airport as much as possible during all types of weather situations. Loss of flights due to poor weather conditions greatly affects the airport and their tenants. Reliable access to the airport is important to airlines and cargo carriers for them to expand and grow their businesses at the Laredo International Airport.

### Background

LRD has one Instrument Landing System (ILS) approach on Runway 18R. This approach allows aircraft to land in low visibility conditions (fog) when visibility is as low as ½ mile. If the ILS is down at any time, or if Runway 18R is closed such as during construction, aircraft cannot land at LRD and are diverted to other airports. This results in loss of revenue to the airport, airlines, and cargo carriers.

LRD is currently served by four major airlines, Allegiant, American, United and Aeromar. LRD is also served by FedEx, UPS, DHL as well as numerous smaller air cargo carriers. During construction projects on Runway 18R/36L, in which the runway is closed, no ILS approach is available during low visibility conditions. This requires aircraft be diverted from LRD resulting in loss of passenger and cargo services for the period the airport is closed due to weather.

Laredo International Airport (LRD) continues to work closely with the Texas Airports District Office (ADO) in Fort Worth, Texas to develop and implement LRD's Airport Capital Improvement Plan (ACIP). LRD will be working with the ADO regarding solutions to this problem so they can be included on the ACIP.

### Solution

Runway 18L has a RNAV (GPS) approach which allows aircraft landing with visibility conditions down to ¾ of a mile. Construction of a Medium Intensity Approach Light System with Runway Alignment Indicator Lights (MALSR), on Runway 18L would allow for a RNAV approach with the same visibility minimums as the ILS (down to ½ mile).

A backup approach is needed when the ILS is down due to construction or other circumstances. Installation of a MALSR on Runway 18L would allow an RNAV approach to be developed with minimums down to ½ mile. This would provide an additional approach during low visibility conditions eliminating the need for aircraft to divert from LRD. We would ask for support from the FAA with funding for installation of a MALSR on Runway 18L.

**Target Agencies:** Federal Aviation Administration

### Contact Information

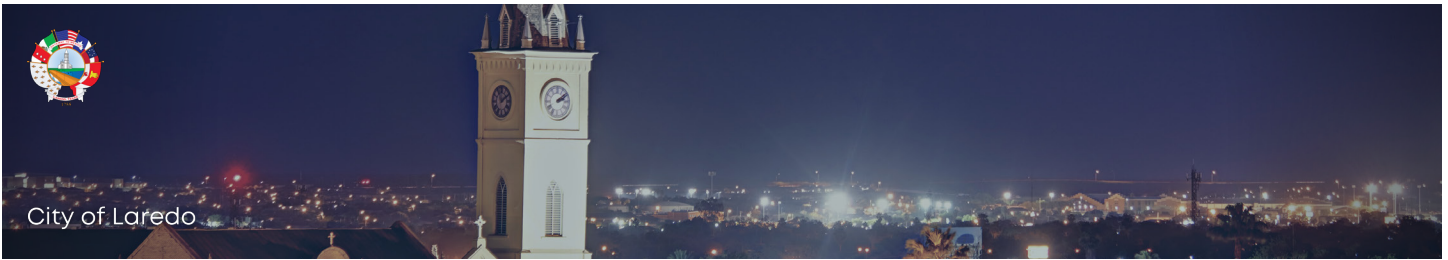
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## **Funding for Laredo International Airport Improvements – EMAS**

### **Situation**

Laredo International Airport provides necessary and integral air service and connectivity to the air transportation system, region, and country. To do so, the airfield must provide landing surfaces (runways) that meet the needs of the aircraft regularly operating at the Airport.

LRD has Engineered Material Arresting System (EMAS) installed at one of the runway ends, which is designed to stop aircraft that inadvertently travel off the end of a runway. serves to crush the weight of an aircraft travelling off the end of the runway. The EMAS provides a resistance through the crushed material that decelerates the aircrafts and brings it to a safe stop within the confines of the overrun area. An EMAS Inspection was completed on October 12, 2020. The report noted deficiencies in the current EMAS such as cracks, severe depressions, and damages to vertical side wall. The existing EMAS system has reached the end of its design life and needs to be replaced.

### **Background**

Some airports have EMAS installed when adequate safety margins are not physically available between the end of a runway and certain obstructions. At LRD, Runway 36L has an EMAS system. The system was installed in (YEAR), has exceeded its useful life and is in poor condition; extensive maintenance is necessary to keep the system operational. The current EMAS blocks are no longer in production which makes replacement of them difficult.

Due to the location of Saunders Street off the end of the runway, a full runway safety area is not feasible. And EMAS is needed to meet FAA standards and safety requirements. If the EMAS is not replaced and becomes unusable, the airport would need to relocate Runway 36L threshold. Resulting in loss of usable runway or adding additional runway on the (opposite) Runway 18R end. These options would have substantial cost and operational impacts to the Airport.

### **Solution**

LRD needs to replace the existing with a new EMAS for one that will provide an improved level of safety and meet the needs of the airport. Construction of a new EMAS is on the Airports ACIP and the City is requesting support to fund the project so it can move forward.

### **Target Agencies**

Federal Aviation Administration

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## **Funding for Traffic Control Tower Improvements and Extended Hours of Operation**

### **Situation**

The City of Laredo seeks FAA's approval to extend the operational hours of the Contract Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) at the Laredo International Airport (LRD) to 24 hours seven days a week. Robinson Aviation (RVA), Inc. operates LRD's contract ATCT. This facility is currently open Monday through Sunday from 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 midnight. Current staffing consists of one supervisor and five (5) controllers. An additional 42 hours per week is needed to maintain a 24/7 operations at this airport. Additionally, the Laredo International Airport Air Traffic lacks a radar site and clearance airspace designated to address safety concerns and continue support the growth in commerce.

### **Background**

The City of Laredo, has received multiple requests from trade industries to operate LRD's ATCT at 24/7. In December 2018, auto manufacturer, Ford and various cargo airlines requested that Laredo's ATCT be open 24/7 in order for their manufacturing plants to operate at peak and/or maximum efficiencies. The additional hours are of national interest due to TIME-CRITICAL deliveries for expanding U.S. trade industries. Additionally, operate the Laredo ATCT at 24/7 will significantly enhance safety, efficiency, security, capacity and aviation related activities.

The Laredo International Airport Air Traffic Control Tower also lacks a radar site. The current radar sweep is 27 miles to the east in Oilton, TX and consistently is having maintenance issues leaving no radar for the airport. The radar feed broadcast causes long delays as it is routed from Oilton, TX to Houston Air Route Traffic Control Center then to the screens in Laredo. Further, because the radar is so far away only about 8 degrees of its sweep covers Laredo International Airport Class D airspace. The rest of the sweep covers irrelevant areas to airport traffic. An updated radar would dramatically improve safety, but it would also allow for better monitoring of traffic coming across the Contiguous U.S. ADIZ. By comparison, the El Paso International Airport is situated on the Southern Border with Class Charlie airspace. The annual air traffic count in El Paso for 2018 was 92,122, Laredo received a higher count of 97,189.

### **Solution**

The City of Laredo, Texas respectfully requests that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) extend the operational hours of the Contract Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) at the Laredo International Airport (LRD) from 18 hours to 24 hours daily; install an ASR-11 Digital Airport Surveillance Radar (DASR); and change Laredo's airspace from Class D to Class C.

### **Target Agencies**

Federal Aviation Administration

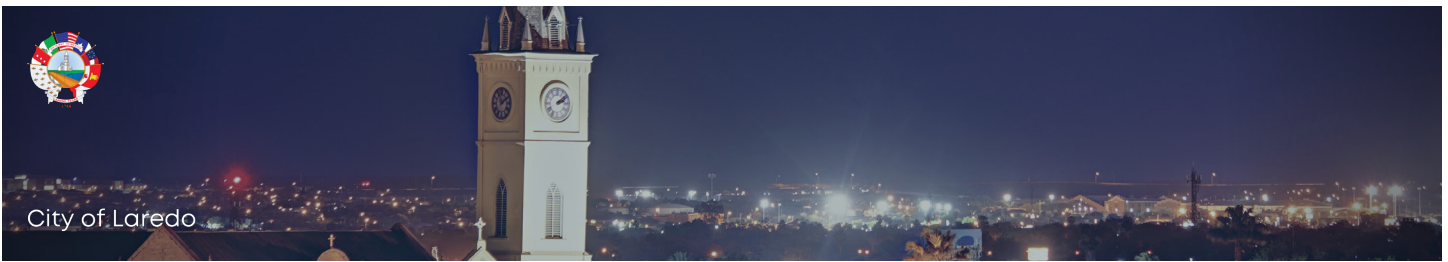
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## **Corpus Christi Street Widening, Drainage, & Utility Replacement– 2023 RAISE Funding Request**

### **Situation Assessment**

The City of Laredo seeks agency approval to develop Corpus Christi Street with Complete Streets, new active and public transportation enhancements, and improve the public infrastructure for the purpose of preparing the area to promote reinvestment and economic development.

### **Background**

Corpus Christi Street presents several transportation challenges that include pedestrian safety, walkability, and access to public transportation. The Corpus Christi Street right-of-way (ROW) is 20 varas (55.56 feet) wide and based on current standards, the ROW width would be classified somewhere between a local street (50' ROW) and a local collector (60' ROW). The street is utilized and striped for 2-way traffic with left turn lanes at signalized intersections. These left turn lanes greatly reduce and narrow the lane for vehicles overtaking passengers in the left turn lane. The street also currently has signalized intersections that either have extremely faded, worn out, or nonexistent crosswalk infrastructure, or that have no adequate sidewalks.

An engineering analysis and report was conducted for the corridor to integrate current City of Laredo Comprehensive Plan policies, recommendations and initiatives while combining with current City of Laredo Planning and Design requirements for infrastructure. The full Engineer's Report was conducted by Crane Engineering in March 2022 and focused on (21) blocks along the corridor. The report included a full traffic study by AC Group, a Geotechnical Report by Terracon Consultants, and the overall analysis comprised review of all infrastructure including public and private utilities, street and drainage, traffic signals, existing site conditions, transit bus routes, pedestrian access including ADA compliance, and existing ROW encroachments. Results from the analysis showed various deficiencies and transportation challenges along the corridor and the City proposed to address these challenges by upgrading, replacing and enhancing existing water and wastewater demand, storm drainage, and street capacity.

The city has already invested nearly \$4 million dollars to begin the first phase of the project consisting of the first (4) blocks from Cedar Street east to McClelland Street. Contracts for this phase of the project have already been awarded and construction on this phase is expected to begin on or before March 1, 2023. Additional federal funding for this project will help the City complete the project in a timely manner and open up a new and improved transportation corridor. Funding assistance will develop and complete the remaining (17) blocks of the corridor and helping prepare the area to promote reinvestment & economic development, complete streets that support driving, ADA enhancements, walking, bicycling, and public transit, promote walkability, improve public infrastructure, develop Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to reduce congestion, infill empty lots, and expand Neighborhood Empowerment Zones (NEZ) to guide redevelopment of the corridor. All these elements are listed in the City of Laredo VIVA Laredo Comprehensive Plan. A link to the plan can be accessed at [oTSmhV8bSNiGxXB9ayc5\\_Plan VIVA Laredo\\_ First Edition\\_Second Revision.pdf](https://www.laredo.gov/Portals/0/Planning/VIVA_Laredo_Comprehensive_Plan_VIVA_Laredo_First_Edition_Second_Revision.pdf).

### **Solution**

The City is currently working to submit the 2023 RAISE grant application to support the completion of this project.



**Target Agency**

United States Department of Transportation

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