

Westside Equitable Economic Development Plan



PROSPER
WEST

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Bienvenidos!

Our Westside community has endured many hardships over the years, but the recent events around COVID-19 have brought unprecedented challenges. Our families and businesses were rocked by closures, layoffs, isolation, general uncertainty, and worst of all, the devastating loss of life. All this has been layered over an area that was already economically-depressed, underinvested, and largely neglected. It has all further revealed and highlighted the inequities that have long-existed and produced the current economic challenges of the Westside. Despite all this, the Westside persists, and continues to show extreme resiliency in the face of great adversity.

The future of the Westside now depends on the fortitude of our community around a shared vision of a prosperous Westside. How we get there from here is offered in the following plan. It has been co-developed by a broad range of stakeholders from across the Westside to chart a path toward long-term success for our community. “How do we bring growth and opportunities to the Westside of San Antonio while still preserving its identity, culture, and the families and businesses that make it unique?” This central question is at the heart of this endeavor.

As much as we'd like to wish otherwise, there is no silver bullet solution. There is no mega-project that will make up for decades of redlining, no housing program that will get people high-paying jobs, and no amount of small business success that will end poverty on the Westside. It is all connected and interdependent. We cannot focus on just one area and hope the rest will work itself out. It requires a balanced, ecosystem-centered approach across all the aspects of our economic landscape – a huge undertaking, but a very achievable one with coordinated, deliberate, and strategic action from all of us.

While planning is critical, it is only the first step. Bookshelves around our precious city are burdened with ambitious plans that will never again see the light of day. This Inclusive Economic Growth Strategic Plan will not be one of them. Instead, it will drive an organizational infrastructure designed to implement this vision for the Westside, not by any single organization but a coalition of partners, stakeholders, and community members.

Prosper West San Antonio is committed to serving as the organizational backbone for this community effort, and we invite you to join us. It will be messy, imperfect, and probably slower than any of us would like, but with enough dedication, the right people at the table, and pure *ganás*, it will all compound into a well-balanced and prosperous Westside for all.

Ramiro Gonzales
President/CEO





Acknowledgements

This Equitable Economic Development Plan was created for Prosper West by HR&A Advisors, an economic development and urban policy consulting firm. The Plan development process depended on sustained engagement with a diverse range of Westside stakeholders and community representatives, who shared their perspectives and provided valuable input to help articulate a vision for future growth and to develop strategies to advance this shared vision for an equitable Westside. The following individuals gave generously with their time to help inform the Plan's recommendations:

Jeffrey Arndt

VIA Metropolitan Transit

Pedro Alanis

San Antonio Housing Trust Foundation

Nikisha Baker

SAMMinistries

Cristina Balli

Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center

Rebeca Barrera

SOMOS Cultura Y Más

Molly Biglari

Haven for Hope

Bill Buhrman

St. Mary's University

Roger Caballero

Madonna Center

Marla Bilonick

National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders

Julissa Carielo

DreamOn Group

John Canales

Kiobassa Provision Company

Susana Cantu

Little Flower Basilica

Joseph Carreon

HOLT CAT

Gilbert De Hoyos

Barrio Barista

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SAY Si

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Rod McSherry

University of Texas at San Antonio

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San Antonio Independent School District

Thomas Mengler

St. Mary's University

George Pedraza

Covenant Multifamily Offices

Jim Perschbach

Port San Antonio

Leilah Powell

LISC San Antonio

Francesca Ratray

YWCA San Antonio

Lorraine Robles

San Antonio Housing Authority

Justin Rodriguez

Bexar County Precinct 2

Leonard Rodriguez

The Center for Health Care Services

Dr. Ricardo Romo

Westside advocate and artist

Simon Salas

Good Samaritan Community Services

Diane Sanchez

Micro:SA

Graciela Sanchez

Esperanza Center

Veronica Soto

City of San Antonio, Neighborhood & Housing Services

John Thurman

Heart of Texas Realty

Ben Tremillo

San Anto Cultural Arts Center

Katie Vela

South Alamo Regional Alliance for the Homeless

Gabriel Velasquez

Avenida Guadalupe

Matt Weber

Grounded Solutions Network

Dan Yoxall

LiftFund

Mari Zavala

Maestro Entrepreneur Center

THE WESTSIDE TODAY

The Westside of San Antonio is a vibrant community made up of distinct neighborhoods, shaped by the many Mexican-American families who have lived in the area for generations. The Westside encompasses a sprawling swath of San Antonio and represents to many the true cultural heart of the city. The Westside today is home to a rich array of small businesses located along bustling commercial corridors, nurtures a nationally known scene for dance, live music, and the visual arts, provides walking trails and green space, offers affordable housing options, and serves as a bastion of Chicano culture. Long-term residents hold a deeply rooted sense of pride for the Westside and rightly celebrate the rich cultural heritage and traditions that continue to define the neighborhood, from its myriad murals to its family-owned restaurants that have been serving Tex-Mex food for decades to the community programming at the Woodlawn Theatre to the eclectic historic architecture found on its streets.

Like many cities across the country, the Westside of San Antonio is at a crossroads—it is a bastion of affordability, and it is beginning to attract new investment and development. It is an area with a clear identity, unique sense of place, and deep cultural importance, that wants to preserve and celebrate this history while improving outcomes for residents and businesses. **This Equitable Economic Development Plan is intended to leverage Westside assets and efforts already underway in order to address existing challenges and serve community needs.** Ultimately, this Plan is an opportunity to put structures in place proactively, so that as investment happens there are tools and plans to mitigate displacement and ensure benefits accrue to existing residents and businesses.

The history of the Westside is a history of resilience. Immigrants fleeing political unrest in Mexico first started settling on the Westside during the early 20th century, and the area prospered as tiendas, churches, restaurants, and theaters opened to serve the neighborhood.¹ This thriving area began to suffer with federal redlining practices in the 1930s, which put racial covenants in place to segregate Mexican residents within Westside neighborhoods. The Alazan-Apache Courts apartment complex, which still stands today, opened in 1941 as one of the first public housing developments in San Antonio, a time when Mexican-Americans were intentionally segregated on the Westside. While the complex was recently slated for redevelopment into a mixed-income community, grassroots organizers on the Westside galvanized to oppose these plans—activists were concerned about displacement and the loss of community, as well as the loss of the complex’s historic architecture.²

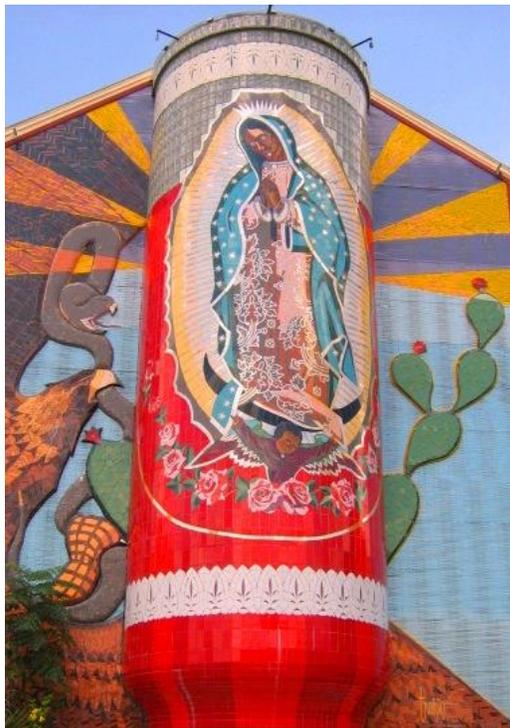
¹ City of San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation. “San Antonio’s Westside: History, Culture, Community.”

² Magdaleno, Johnny. “Mexican-American Preservationists Are Saving San Antonio’s Urban Fabric.” Next City. 04 September 2017.

In addition to historic racial segregation, the Westside is physically cut off from San Antonio's downtown core by major infrastructure barriers. The construction of interstates I-10 and I-35 in the late 1950s, as part of federal urban renewal efforts, destroyed entire neighborhoods on the Westside as historic homes were razed and displaced residents were forced to relocate to other areas of San Antonio. This set off decades of disinvestment, with little public investment leading to crumbling infrastructure and a lack of private development, a history of policy-making decisions that contributed to the continued economic segregation seen on the Westside today.³

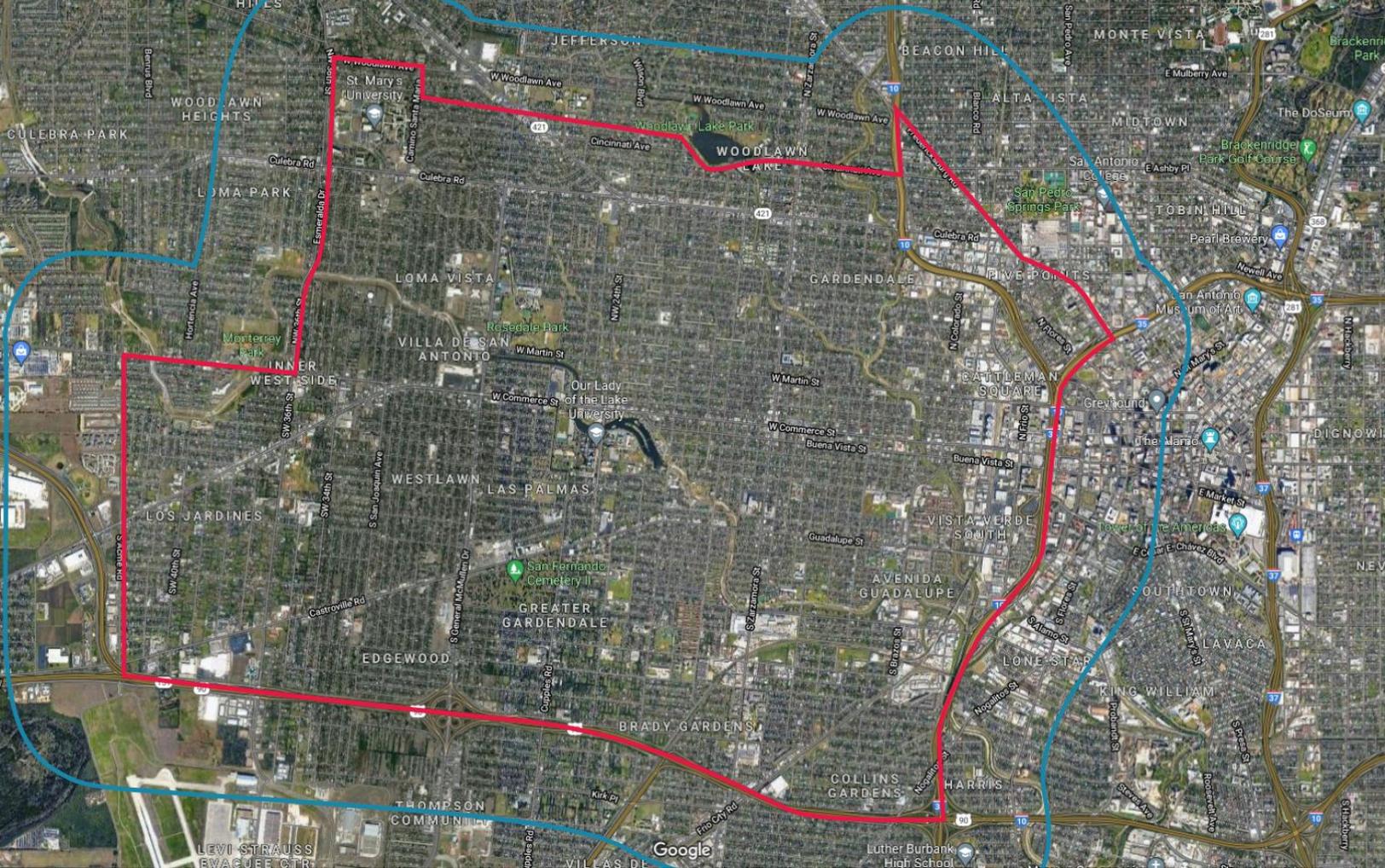
Today, the presence of I-10 and I-35 and the railroad tracks that separate the Westside from downtown make it challenging for residents and visitors to easily access the attractions and assets located on the Westside. In addition to these physical access challenges, the clustered siting of several public facilities, including the Bexar County Adult Detention Center, the Haven for Hope homeless shelter, and the large VIA Centro Plaza bus terminal, has contributed to negative perceptions of safety. This in turn deters both locals and tourists from visiting or learning about the neighborhood, due to perceptions of crime and homelessness on the Westside.

This history of disinvestment and redlining contribute to the economic conditions on the Westside today: when compared to San Antonio overall, residents on the Westside have lower median incomes, lower rates of college graduation, and higher incidences of food insecurity. Despite these challenges, as noted in the City of San Antonio's Westside Reinvestment Plan from 2009, while the Westside "has experienced years of physical and social disinvestment...[the area] has managed to maintain a celebrated culture and history unique to the City of San Antonio."⁴



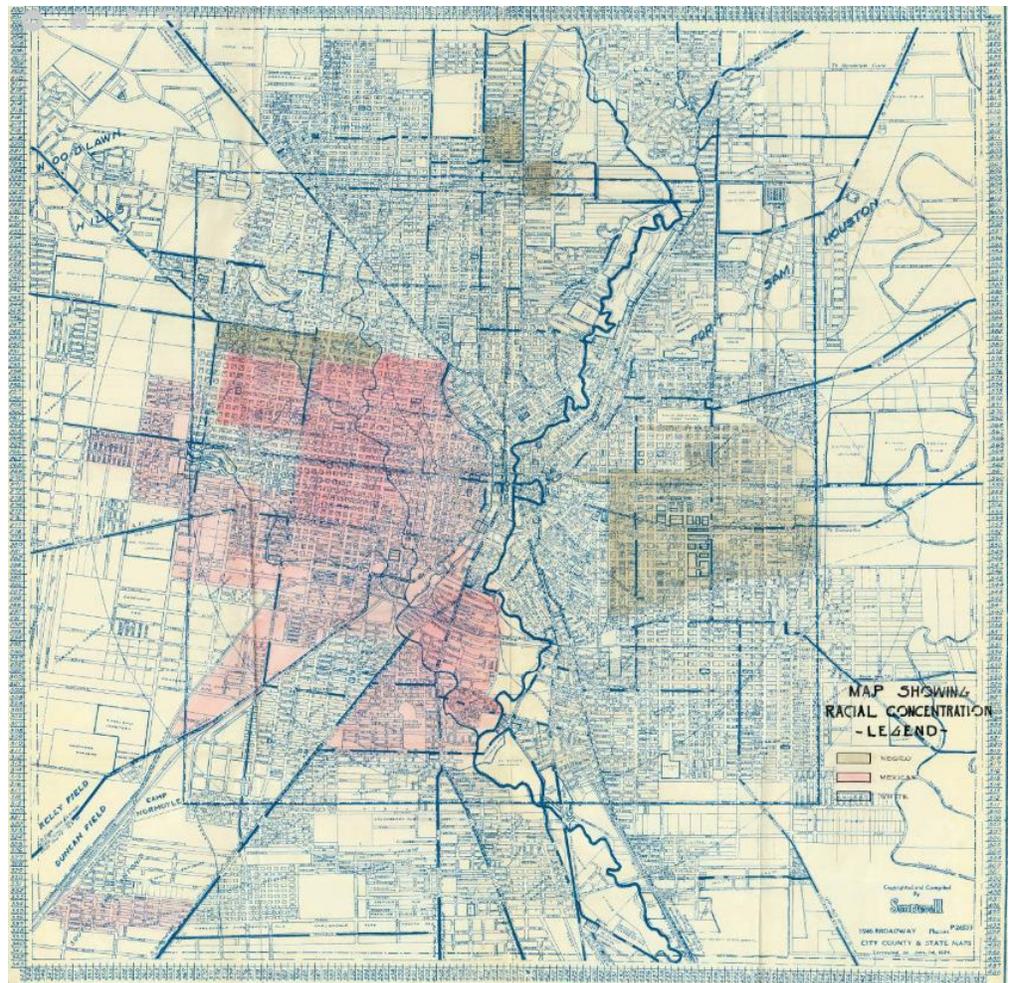
³ Collinger, Benjamin. "San Antonio's Great Divergence: Inequality and Entrepreneurship." *The Contemporary*. 18 April 2018.

⁴ Westside Reinvestment Plan. City of San Antonio, Planning and Development Services Department. September 2009.



The map above (courtesy of Prosper West) shows the 15-square mile area that makes up the historic Westside of San Antonio. The red boundary represents the primary area that Prosper West serves, while the blue boundary highlights a half-mile buffer.

The map to the right (courtesy of the University of Texas San Antonio Special Collections Digital Collections – HOLC Redlining Maps of San Antonio) was produced by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) in the 1930s. The red on the map corresponds to the concentration of Mexican-American residents on San Antonio's Westside. The HOLC labeled the Westside as a "Type D" neighborhood, which was classified as "hazardous" for lending. The redlining of the Westside resulted in denial of mortgages to residents and reinforced racial segregation.



Demographics

The current population of the Westside is just over 105,000 residents. The area is expected to see modest population growth in the near term, growing by 2% to an estimated total of 107,000 residents by 2025.

In keeping with its history as a neighborhood shaped by Mexican-American families, 94% of the population identifies as Hispanic origin, compared to 66% of San Antonio's overall population. The majority of Westside residents (69%) speak Spanish at home. Many of these families have lived on the Westside for generations, with just under 50% of residents living in homes they own.

In terms of income, Westside residents earn nearly 50% less than the city's overall median income, with median household income standing at \$26,000, compared to \$48,500 in San Antonio.

Westside residents also have significantly lower educational attainment than the city overall: nearly half of Westside residents (45%) have less than a high school diploma, compared to 17% citywide. Just 5% of Westside residents hold a bachelor's degree, compared to 27% in San Antonio.

These lower levels of educational attainment limit the job opportunities and economic mobility of residents. Entry level jobs that require a bachelor's degree pay 1.16x more than jobs that require only a high school diploma or equivalent, and 1.89x more than jobs that require no formal educational credential.

Educational attainment on the Westside may also be limited by lack of access to computers and internet service. Access to both the internet and to computers in Westside households is much lower than in San Antonio overall: 44% of households do not have internet access, compared

to 18.5% of households in San Antonio. 22% of Westside households do not have a computer, compared to 9% of San Antonio households.

The Westside also struggles with lower public health outcomes than San Antonio overall, including a lack of access to fresh food, with 34% of the population living more than one mile from a supermarket. According to data from Children at Risk, an advocacy organization that reports statewide research on public policies affecting children, the 78207 and 78237 ZIP codes on the Westside are two of San Antonio's ZIP codes where children are most at risk for food insecurity. All seven ZIP codes cited are in central and south San Antonio, where there is less access to grocery stores and residents tend to have lower incomes. Additionally, life expectancy on the Westside is 5% lower than in Bexar County, where the average is 79 years. While there are many tiendas located across the Westside, they have limited stocks of fresh produce and healthy food options. Although there are citywide initiatives to improve access to healthy food, results are not always evenly dispersed—for example, just one Westside business participates in the Metropolitan Health District's Healthy Corner Stories initiative, which has 21 participating stores across San Antonio.

Institutional Anchors and Employment

The Westside is home to the highest concentration of nonprofits in San Antonio, with these organizations offering a rich array of services and programs, including small business services, cultural and arts programs, and housing and homelessness services, that benefit both the Westside community and the city overall. While many of these nonprofits originally located on the Westside in response to the structural challenges of disinvestment, segregation and poverty that have shaped the area, they have found success in providing residents with needed support,

preserving historic architecture, and celebrating cultural traditions that make the Westside unique.

The Westside is home to three four-year universities, two independent K-12 school districts, and a workforce development and training center operated by the Alamo Colleges District. These educational anchors, which include the University of Texas at San Antonio, St. Mary's University, and Our Lady of the Lake University, have major economic impacts on the area, as they bring educational and employment resources, draw residents, students, and employees, and attract investment to the Westside. Together, these universities collectively employ nearly 6,000 employees, have \$1.8 billion in combined operating budgets, and hold a total of \$380 million across their endowments.

The Westside's hospitals and healthcare institutions also serve as major employment anchors. These institutions include University Health's Robert B. Green campus, the Center for Health Care Services, and several health clinics, which collectively contribute thousands of jobs to the Westside. The top occupations include home health and personal care aides (3,800 jobs), and registered nurses (1,800 jobs).

Port San Antonio, one of the city's major employers and economic drivers, is also located on the Westside. The Port has transformed the former Kelly Air Force Base into a thriving multi-purpose facility. The closure of the Kelly Air Force Base in 2001 had major negative impacts on the middle class of the Westside, as thousands of jobs and training opportunities were lost. Prior to the decision to close Kelly in 1995, about 15,400 civilians worked at the base, and Kelly was one of San Antonio's largest government employers.⁵ The transformation of Kelly into Port San Antonio

has been a key driver for San Antonio's overall economic development, bringing thousands of jobs back to the area.

Today, Port San Antonio encompasses an aerospace complex, an industrial hub, and a growing innovation campus, with over 14,000 people working at more than 80 businesses. The Port is home to major companies working in key 21st century industries including aerospace, defense, logistics, cybersecurity, manufacturing, and education, many of which offer entry-level jobs as well as workforce development and training opportunities to the Westside community.

Although the Westside is home to a rich array of institutional anchors, the area faces a talent retention and human capital challenge, and it is common for residents to move away after achieving success, due to the limited availability of high-paying job opportunities on the Westside and a lack of diverse housing options that appeal to the middle class.

Residents on the Westside who are trying to access opportunity and high quality jobs also face challenges from limited transit connectivity and long commute times. Although there is a strong existing bus network provided through VIA, buses run infrequently and trips from the Westside to Downtown can take over an hour. Additionally, despite the proximity of the Port San Antonio to Westside neighborhoods, there are no direct transit routes that connect residents to this major employment hub. Reliable and efficient transit connections are essential, as the Westside has more than twice the number of households without a vehicle than San Antonio overall (17% on the Westside, compared to 8% in San Antonio),

⁵ Aldridge, James. "Employment at Kelly is ebbing as closure looms." San Antonio Business Journal. 4 July 1999.

creating challenges for these residents in accessing employment opportunities.

Heritage and Culture

As San Antonio's oldest urban Mexican-American neighborhood, the Westside has helped define and preserve Chicano culture and heritage both in San Antonio and on a national scale. The area was already known as a center for Chicano culture and activism by 1938, when Mexican-Americans on the Westside launched the Pecan Shellers Strike, the largest labor strike in San Antonio's history, which was ultimately successful and led to wage increases for workers. The Westside has continued to play a pivotal role in the Mexican-American civil rights movement, as embodied by the Cesar Chavez March for Justice, an event originally organized on the Westside in the 1990s that continues today.⁶

Cultural anchors like the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center and the San Anto Cultural Arts Center have for decades served as outlets for residents to experience and participate in arts and events that celebrate Chicano artists and culture. Westside festivals and events attract audiences on a national and international scale, including the Tejano Conjunto Festival, which celebrates the Westside's foundational role in shaping a unique class of musicians with a distinct Tejano and Westside sound.

The Westside, despite its history of segregation and poverty, has birthed a robust cohort of artists, activists, and musicians, who are all shaped by the area's rich traditions, deep family roots, and unique sense of place. Walking through the Westside today, bright colorful murals throughout the neighborhood celebrate this history and identity.

Small Businesses

The Westside's small businesses also define the character of the neighborhood and serve community needs. Over 90% of businesses have fewer than 10 employees, with many of these businesses located in clusters along the Westside's distinct commercial corridors, including Buena Vista St., Commerce St., Zarzamora St., Culebra St., and Guadalupe St. These corridors are home to hundreds of multi-generational small businesses that are recognized as legacy businesses by the City of San Antonio's Office of Historic Preservation. The Westside Business Alliance convened a series of meetings in 2019, with a total of 196 individuals in attendance. In a sign of the resilience and long-term viability of small businesses on the Westside, 51% of meeting participants had been in business for more than 20 years.

The most common types of businesses on the Westside include restaurants, automobile repair and service shops and auto dealerships, lawyers and attorneys, beauty salons, construction, grocers, and insurance. Low retail vacancy and retail rents that are on par with the city overall indicate the strength of the existing business landscape.

Impacts of COVID-19 on Small Businesses

Westside businesses, like small businesses across the country, have been impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Visitation at restaurants dropped by 35% from February 2020 to April 2020 as the pandemic began, while visitors to arts and entertainment destinations on the Westside declined by 26%. In addition to impacts on visitation, many small businesses on the

⁶ Suta, Kimberly. "The Cultural Layers of San Antonio's West Side." San Antonio Magazine. July 2021.

Westside are not digitized and therefore struggled to access federal and state resources.

As things are slowly beginning to return to normal, there are positive signs. Visitation to food and beverage outlets is increasing, and Westside assets like Apache Creek, which was the most visited destination during the pandemic, continue to attract people.

Housing

Housing on the Westside is more affordable than in San Antonio overall. The average asking rent per unit on the Westside was \$825 in 2020, compared to \$1,015 for San Antonio overall. The median home value on the Westside was \$66,701 in 2020, compared to San Antonio's \$164,077. Homeownership on the Westside hovers just under 50%, which is on par with that of the city overall.

Projected population growth at a citywide and neighborhood level, combined with development pressure from Downtown, pose challenges to the

area's existing housing affordability. In the last five years (2016-2020), asking rents per unit on the Westside increased by more than twice the citywide rate, with rents increasing by 19% on the Westside versus 7% in San Antonio. Looking back further, over the last ten years (2011-2020), rents on the Westside increased by 29% compared to 22% in San Antonio.

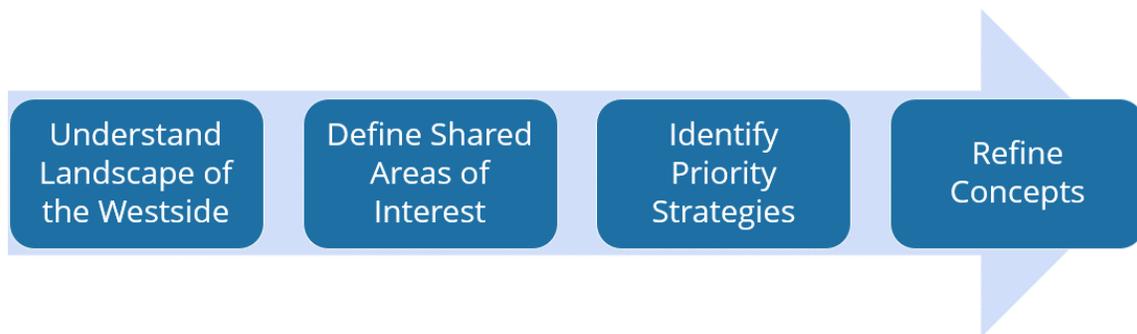
There are therefore real community concerns around gentrification and displacement, as well as opposition to new development: planned residential development projects located within the Opportunity Zone on the Westside have raised fears of existing residents being pushed out. As a result, advocates are calling for new developments to stay within the area's historic two-story height, to rehabilitate existing structures rather than erect new ones that may cause rents to rise and lead to displacement, and to ensure that new development includes affordable units.



PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

This Equitable Economic Development Plan builds on a range of prior plans, recent economic development efforts, ongoing policy discussions, and existing insitutional efforts to deliver a high quality of life for Westside residents.

Overview of Equitable Economic Development Plan Process



HR&A Advisors, an economic development and urban policy consulting firm that works with cities across the country to advance equitable outcomes, was brought on by Prosper West to lead development of the plan. To facilitate the process, HR&A focused on a range of stakeholder engagement activities in order to effectively harness the collective ideas and expertise of the institutions, businesses, nonprofits, and other organizations already working on behalf of the Westside. These engagement efforts were designed to articulate a shared vision for future growth on the Westside, prioritize desired areas of investment, and develop strategies that reflect on-the-ground capacity, community needs, and local perspectives. Strategies and recommendations were further informed and shaped by HR&A’s national perspective on supporting equitable economic development.

Stakeholder Engagement Activities

- **Steering Committee:** A Steering Committee, made up of leaders representing Westside nonprofits, educational institutions, small businesses, major employers, the City of San Antonio, Bexar County, and other invested stakeholders, was created and consulted throughout the plan development process (a total of four meetings were held with Steering Committee members) to establish priorities and to test and confirm strategies.

- Stakeholder Interviews: A series of one-on-one phone conversations were held with Westside stakeholders to further understand the Westside landscape, including its strengths, challenges, and opportunities, and to identify common areas of focus across stakeholder groups.
- Survey of Organizations: Prosper West disseminated a survey to more than 50 Westside businesses and nonprofits to assess the existing initiatives, programs, and services of Westside organizations and to define shared areas of interest and investment priorities.
- Thematic Roundtables: Stakeholders were convened for thematic roundtable conversations (a total of 21 attendees participated across four roundtable discussions). The themes—small business support; housing, preservation, and development; education and workforce development; and arts, culture, and placemaking—were based on investment priorities identified by survey respondents. The roundtables were an opportunity to identify priority strategies and surface actions Prosper West and its partners can take to advance identified priorities.



STRATEGIES

The **Equitable Economic Development Plan** is organized around **five primary goals that reflect community aspirations for the future of the Westside**. These goals have overlapping aims, and the strategies contained in this Plan are therefore interconnected. Strategies included in this Plan reflect priorities and perspective gathered via stakeholder engagement and are intended to leverage existing strengths while meeting identified need.

Overarching Goals



Creating Quality Employment Opportunities: Improve job access and create new career ladders for Westside residents, while attracting and retaining talent in the area.



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities: Target investments and physical improvements to support quality of life for Westside residents.



Preserving Affordability: Protect existing affordable housing and prioritize the needs of existing residents and businesses amid growth and new development.



Supporting Small Business: Provide resources, including financial and technical assistance, to support the many small and legacy businesses on the Westside.



Celebrating Heritage and Culture: Amplify and preserve the Westside's rich Mexican-American history and heritage.

The Westside covers a vast geographic area that encompasses a diversity of neighborhoods and a range of commercial corridors. The strategies contained in this Plan are intentionally broad and not meant to suggest a one-size-fits-all approach to the needs of Westside communities. Rather, the Plan builds on a shared vision for future growth to set a path forward, providing a guide for Westside stakeholders to invest in their communities to support local residents and businesses.

Common themes emerged throughout the plan development process around the types of actions needed to support the Westside. These recurring themes, which surfaced frequently in stakeholder discussions, underly the Plan's priority goals and inform strategies for implementation:

Strategy Themes:

Communication: Improve how information is disseminated to residents and businesses within the Westside and from the Westside to the City overall.

Coordination: Work collaboratively with partners and advocates to target programs and resources to address community needs and reduce duplication of efforts.

Physical Improvements: Invest in the Westside's infrastructure, public realm, and open spaces to strengthen the community and support economic prosperity.

Investment: Marshall resources, including establishing new funds and equity strategies, to support targeted investments and grow community wealth.

To support implementation and community priorities, strategies contained in this Plan are intended to:

- Leverage existing assets and **support physical transformation** of the Westside.
- **Mitigate displacement** and ensure new investment and **growth proceeds equitably** and to the benefit of residents and businesses.
- **Support the many legacy small businesses** on the Westside in recovering from the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Plan is ultimately intended to guide Prosper West and its partners as they move forward with collective efforts in support of existing residents and businesses on the Westside. To support implementation, each strategy includes considerations around next steps, partners, and timing. Prosper West and its partners should use the Plan to advocate for needed public support, to secure funding from public and private partners, and to shape collaborative economic and community development initiatives and programs. As recommendations are implemented, Prosper West and its partners should regularly review progress on achieving desired outcomes by referencing the goals and strategies of this Plan.

Goal 1

Creating Quality Employment Opportunities

Strategies in this section are designed to address existing challenges on the Westside in terms of access to quality employment, which impacts income and quality of life. There are jobs available in San Antonio, yet many Westside residents are not aware of these opportunities or perceive themselves as unqualified for these positions. Stakeholders stressed that strategies focused on awareness and training are needed, while measures to improve transit and access to childcare are key to addressing major barriers to employment.

- 1.1 Design a jobs awareness and outreach campaign
- 1.2 Provide general and industry targeted career training
- 1.3 Advocate for improved transit access
- 1.4 Advocate for a new park and ride center
- 1.5 Increase availability of high-quality, affordable childcare
- 1.6 Provide flexible schedules, night options and onsite childcare for career training



GLORIA



Strategy 1.1 | Design a **jobs awareness campaign** and coordinate on targeted outreach efforts around existing opportunities.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities



Preserving Affordability



Supporting Small Business



Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

A lack of awareness currently hinders Westside residents from accessing job opportunities that exist. To remedy this challenge and link residents with quality careers, major employers, including the Port of San Antonio and area hospitals, should collaborate and implement an awareness campaign designed to address misconceptions in the Westside community about job barriers and qualifications.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Prosper West to host a table at community events across the Westside to promote available job opportunities and encourage Westside residents to apply for open positions.
- Prosper West to convene major employers to solicit their participation in designing and implementing an awareness campaign.
- As part of the awareness campaign, these major employers should coordinate existing outreach efforts to target Westside residents through a variety of channels, including job fairs, to advertise existing job openings that provide on-the-job training and do not require higher education credentials. This should include tying job fairs to existing community events to reach people where they are.

PARTNERS

Prosper West, in coordination with major employers like the Port of San Antonio, Westside Education and Training Center (WETC), health care providers and institutions (University Health System, Center for Health Care Services), and higher education institutions (Alamo Colleges, UTSA, Our Lady of the Lake, St. Mary's)

TIMING

Near-Term (1-2 years)

Employment Awareness Campaigns & Targeted Job Training | National Precedent

West Philadelphia Skills Initiative, Philadelphia, PA

Since 2010, the West Philadelphia Skills Initiative has partnered with local employers to help them fill vacancies with local unemployed and underemployed residents. West Philadelphia, home to assets like the University of Pennsylvania, Drexel University, and other medical and research anchors, is also home to some of the city's most underprivileged neighborhoods, where unemployment rates can exceed 25% and up to 40% of residents live in poverty. The Skills Initiative is managed by the University City District, a nonprofit business improvement district, and is funded entirely through philanthropic contributions. The program is designed to connect West Philadelphia residents with quality jobs that already exist in their own communities. The Skills Initiative's recruitment, selection, and training activities are flexible and tailored to specific employer needs. Employers who partner with the Initiative identify vacant positions, agree to interview program graduates, and give program graduates priority when making hiring decisions. Trainings for residents run between four to 26 weeks and are designed to train participants in the skills needed for existing job openings. All trainings incorporate on-the-job learning and modules that build technical and soft skills. On average, 95% of graduates achieve a job placement with a post-program hourly starting wage of \$15.49, and 83% of graduates retain their employment for 12 months post-graduation.





Strategy 1.2 | Provide **training** in general career preparedness and in high-demand industries.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities



Preserving Affordability



Supporting Small Business



Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

Training in general career preparedness (basic computer skills, office communication, baseline professional expectations), combined with targeted trainings for careers in high-demand industries, can help prepare Westside residents for new job opportunities they can qualify for even without a higher education credential or relevant past experience. There should be a particular focus on training residents for careers in San Antonio’s growing IT and healthcare sectors.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Employers and local schools to coordinate on identifying existing skills gap and opportunities to design curriculum that will address this mismatch and prepare students for job openings.
- Employers and workforce development providers to invest in trades training based on in-demand skills.
- Employers, schools, and workforce development providers to invest in outreach campaigns about existing training programs.

PARTNERS

Local high schools (Edgewood ISD, San Antonio ISD), Universities (UTSA, Our Lady of the Lake University, Alamo Colleges, St. Mary’s University), employers in the IT and healthcare sectors, workforce development providers like WETC

TIMING

Near-Term (1-2 years)



Strategy 1.3 | Advocate for improved transit access to help reduce commute times.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities



Preserving Affordability



Supporting Small Business



Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

While the Westside is well-served by several bus lines operated by VIA, the infrequency of buses can make it difficult to access employment hubs in a timely manner. There is therefore a need to advocate for improved transit access to help reduce commute times from the Westside to schools and major employment hubs like the Port of San Antonio.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- City officials and VIA leaders should meet to discuss potential for improved bus connections between the Westside and Downtown, such as new bus rapid transit lanes, more frequent service, and/or express routes.
- The Port of San Antonio and other major employers should explore funding and potential partnerships that expand access to ride-share services and provide vouchers for taxis for residents of the Westside.

PARTNERS

Major employers, City of San Antonio, VIA Metropolitan Transit

TIMING

Medium-Term (2-5 years)



Strategy 1.4 | Advocate for a new park and ride center to improve access to employment centers from residential neighborhoods.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities



Preserving Affordability



Supporting Small Business



Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

The physical disconnect that separates the Westside from Downtown, and the difficulties in getting to the Port despite its proximity to the Westside, act as barriers that make it harder for Westside residents to access jobs. Establishing a new park and ride center on the Westside is one way to address this challenge and help improve access from residential neighborhoods to employment centers. VIA currently operates seven park and ride locations across San Antonio, offering nearby residents free parking and an easy way to commute to their jobs. While 83% of Westside households have access to a vehicle, none of the existing park and ride centers are located on the Westside.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Convene stakeholders to discuss possible locations for a new park and ride center, with a focus on a central location convenient to the majority of Westside residents.
- Work with VIA and the City to understand necessary steps, including zoning considerations and permitting needs, to create a new park and ride center.

PARTNERS

VIA Metropolitan Transit, major employers, City of San Antonio

TIMING

Long-Term (5+ years)



Strategy 1.5 | Increase availability of **high-quality, affordable childcare.**

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities



Preserving Affordability



Supporting Small Business



Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

Given the lack of affordable, quality childcare on the Westside, which is frequently cited as one of the biggest barriers to employment, there is a need and desire to pursue creative partnerships and models to address this challenge. To explore potential ways to scale up childcare access on the Westside, local institutions and business partners should convene a working group to discuss a path forward. This should include advocating for expansion of the Pre-K 4 SA model, increasing city, county, and state public funding allocations to support affordable access to childcare, and ensuring that zoning and code requirements do not place onerous burdens on entrepreneurs interested in opening childcare centers in residential or mixed-use buildings.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Partner with Pre-K 4 SA to open another Education Center on the Westside and seek Pre-K 4 SA Competitive Grants to increase the quality and access of early childhood programs located on the Westside.
- Convene meeting with City and County stakeholders to discuss zoning and code requirements that govern types of spaces where childcare centers can be housed.
- Partner with property owners and childcare providers to explore the viability of hosting small-scale childcare centers in vacant retail space on the Westside.

PARTNERS

Westside childcare providers and daycares, Pre-K 4 SA, owners of vacant retail space, interested local institutions and businesses

TIMING

Near-Term (1-2 years)

Expanding Availability of Quality Childcare | National Precedent

City Supported Childcare, Fort Collins, CO

Since 2018, the City of Fort Collins has been actively engaged in addressing barriers to childcare and the City Council identified affordable and accessible childcare as one of their top priorities for 2019-2021 to ensure that childcare “is not a career and lifestyle limiting factor.” To that end, the City is providing direct funding to help childcare providers expand their reach, including a long-term, reduced-rate lease to a nonprofit childcare provider for use of a city-owned property. The City is also providing funding support to a workforce program at Front Range Community College that recruits students pursuing early childhood education accreditation to become classroom teachers and provides scholarships and mentoring support to increase the local supply of high-quality early childhood specialists.





Strategy 1.6 | Offer flexible schedules, night options, and onsite childcare for trainings and workforce development offerings.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities



Preserving Affordability



Supporting Small Business



Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

Expand the schedule of trainings and workforce development programs offered on the Westside to provide flexible schedules, night options, and onsite childcare, to enable more Westside residents to take advantage of existing resources.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Convene WETC and other workforce training providers to review existing schedules and identify gaps in terms of when offerings are available.
- Explore opportunities to partner with childcare providers to enable parents to attend trainings.

PARTNERS

Prosper West, WETC and other organizations offering workforce trainings

TIMING

Near-Term (1-2 years)

Goal 2

Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities

Strategies in this section are intended to improve the quality of life for Westside residents, while laying the foundation for long-term economic vitality by investing in the physical realm and in placemaking activities. Strategies to make focused infrastructure improvements, enhance the pedestrian experience, and activate existing open spaces will benefit residents, attract visitors to Westside businesses, and enhance the area's built environment and unique sense of place.

- 2.1 Launch a promotion and marketing campaign for the Westside
- 2.2 Prioritize infrastructure and placemaking investments
- 2.3 Establish a group or committee of stakeholders for activation of outdoor amenities
- 2.4 Support creation of a Public Improvement District
- 2.5 Explore potential for a new Westside TIRZ and/or expand existing TIRZ





Strategy 2.1 | Launch a promotion and marketing campaign to improve public perceptions of the Westside.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Creating Quality Employment Opportunities



Preserving Affordability



Supporting Small Business



Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

For some, perceptions of the Westside have negatively impacted the area as a place to visit. To help overcome these perceptions, Prosper West should work in a convening role with small businesses and artists to launch a targeted promotion and marketing campaign. These promotion and marketing efforts should be positioned to help drive more foot traffic to existing businesses, and to advertise available space to attract new tenants, new residents, and new investment.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- A Shop/Visit local campaign, designed with community input, can help attract residents from other parts of San Antonio to patronize businesses and restaurants located on the Westside.
- Existing local cultural assets, including public art and murals, concerts, artisans, and festivals, should drive marketing efforts to authentically celebrate the Westside and increase visitation and support businesses.
- Partners should develop and install signs to support self-guided walking tours, allowing visitors from San Antonio and beyond to better understand the history and cultural significance of the Westside.

PARTNERS

Cultural organizations (SAY Si, Esperanza Center, SOMOS Cultura Y Más, Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, NALCAB, NALAC, San Anto Cultural Arts Center), small businesses, artists, local Chambers of Commerce

TIMING

Near-Term (1-2 years)



Strategy 2.2 | Prioritize infrastructure and placemaking investments to improve pedestrian access and experience around the Westside.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Creating Quality Employment Opportunities



Preserving Affordability



Supporting Small Business



Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

Given its history of disinvestment, there is a need and justifiable rationale for municipal investments to improve physical infrastructure and support placemaking on the Westside (e.g. funding for streetlighting, benches, sidewalks, and other beautification improvements). Public support from the City, County, and from new federal sources of funds should be prioritized in the near term to improve pedestrian access along the Apache Creek trail (the most visited Westside destination throughout the pandemic). Prosper West and its partners should also pursue short-term activations of existing assets to enhance vibrancy, such as installing decorative lights above the two bridges into the Westside, investing in clean-up and improvements at Rosedale Park, and developing a space for food trucks and a kayak rental program at Elmendorf Lake. Investments should also be made to improve water quality at Woodlawn and Elmendorf lakes, so that these assets can realize increased recreational use.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Stakeholders will need to convene and define specific projects, including scale of investment needed, desired improvements, and anticipated impacts.
- Partners will need to collectively lobby the relevant city and county agencies to make the case for why investment on the Westside should be prioritized.
- Partners will need to identify funding opportunities needed for implementation of desired improvements (see Strategies 2.4 and 2.5 for potential funding mechanisms).

PARTNERS

Prosper West, private developers, Westside Creeks Restoration Project, City of San Antonio, property owners, nonprofits

TIMING

Near to Medium-Term



Strategy 2.3 | Establish a **group or committee** of interested stakeholders to plan for ongoing activation of outdoor amenities.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS

Creating Quality Employment Opportunities

Preserving Affordability

Supporting Small Business

Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

Activating existing assets on the Westside—including its parks, lakes, and trails—will improve quality of life for residents and help attract visitors from outside the neighborhood, who can then in turn patronize local restaurants and businesses. To fully activate these assets and enhance the public realm, a needed first step will be the establishment of a group or committee of interested stakeholders and organizations to oversee activation and programming of outdoor amenities on the Westside.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Invested stakeholders will need to establish a dedicated funding source to fulfill these intentional activations, which could potentially come by establishing a Public Improvement District (see Strategy 2.4).
- Invested stakeholders should engage with residents and business owners to determine the types of programming the community desires.
- The capacity and expertise for overseeing activation and programming of Westside assets will need to be developed. This could involve training existing staff and/or sourcing the right skillset from an outside organization that does not currently operate on the Westside.

PARTNERS

Westside Creeks Restoration Project, Department of Parks, City of San Antonio, business owners

TIMING

Near-Term (1-2 years)



Strategy 2.4 | Support the creation of a Public Improvement District (PID) to fund public improvements and programming.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS

Creating Quality Employment Opportunities

Preserving Affordability

Supporting Small Business

Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

To fund the marketing efforts, public improvements, programming, and other recommendations of this Plan, Westside stakeholders will need to identify sustainable sources of revenue and funding. A public improvement district (PID) represents one such potential funding mechanism. In a PID, property owners and businesses self-organize to enact an additional tax assessment applied within specific boundaries. The assessment creates a sustainable funding source to pay for services to benefit residents, visitors, and businesses in the area (e.g. security, cleaning, marketing, programming). The San Antonio City Council would need to approve a proposed PID designation for the Westside, and then approve a service and assessment plan and budget on an annual basis. A Westside PID would establish a sustainable source of revenue needed to fund public improvements and programs recommended in this Plan on a long-term basis.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Prosper West and its partners should work with Westside property owners to pursue an advocacy campaign to support the creation of a PID. As part of this effort, Prosper West should lead education sessions to highlight benefits of a PID and how establishment of a Westside PID can support collective goals.
- Prosper West should lead a survey of property and business owners to assess interest in PID participation and to determine priorities for types of services and improvements these owners most want to see.

PARTNERS

Prosper West, Westside property owners, San Antonio City Council

TIMING

Medium-Term (2-5 years)



Strategy 2.5 | Explore potential to establish a new **Westside TIRZ** or to expand the existing TIRZ that covers much of the Westside.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS

			
Creating Quality Employment Opportunities	Preserving Affordability	Supporting Small Business	Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

Creating a tax increment reinvestment zone (TIRZ) is another tool to sustainably fund recommendations in this Plan, including infrastructure improvements and funds to preserve affordability. Under Texas law, a municipality can designate a TIRZ to fund public improvements like streets, parks, utilities, and other infrastructure in order to attract private investment and development to the area. There is already an existing Westside TIRZ that covers a portion of the area Prosper West serves, so there is an opportunity to either create a new TIRZ or to expand the existing TIRZ to fund improvements. In these tax increment finance (TIF) projects, public improvements and subsequent development raise property values within the TIRZ, and the incremental property tax value collected is then used to fund the projects. While TIF funds are traditionally used to cover infrastructure improvements, TIF can be used to pay for affordable housing projects. A new Westside TIRZ could be set up to dedicate all or a portion of incremental revenue towards an affordable housing preservation fund, a community land trust, and/or expansion of home repair programs (see following section for a range of affordability strategies).

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Prosper West will need to engage the City to understand the potential and the process for creating a new TIRZ. This will necessitate studying the total anticipated revenue-generation potential of a new TIRZ on the Westside.
- Prosper West and the City will need to ensure structures and requirements are in place to dedicate all or a portion of TIRZ increment value into an infrastructure fund and/or for use to preserve affordability in other development projects.

PARTNERS

Prosper West, City of San Antonio

TIMING

Medium-Term (2-5 years)

Public Improvement Districts | National Precedent

NoMa Business Improvement District, Washington, DC

The NoMa BID started at the impetus of existing property owners who came together and self-funded to hire consultants to develop a BID business plan. Large property owners understood that the empty lots and lack of sidewalks in NoMa, among other issues, were holding back the potential of the area. The group presented their plans and gained support from other property owners, business owners, and residents by emphasizing the value of transportation infrastructure, planning, marketing, safety, and hospitality. NoMa has since been recognized for its catalytic investments in partnership with District government, such as funding pedestrian improvements along major avenues within the BID. The BID also partners with the NoMa Parks Foundation as the area has become heavily residential with a greater demand for open space. The NoMa BID creates a strategic plan every five years to establish goals based on qualitative and quantitative input. Much of this input comes from a community engagement survey sent out every two years. In order to get as much participation as possible from a wide range of stakeholders, staff members talk to people on the street and in public spaces, post on their website and send out community newsletters.



Goal 3

Preserving Affordability

The Westside remains one of the last areas of affordability in San Antonio, where low rents and home prices have enabled families to live for generations. Strategies in this section are intended to preserve affordability for residents and businesses as the area faces future growth and new development, recognizing that the preservation of affordability is essential to maintaining the identity and culture of the Westside. Policies, programs, and structures must be put in place to preserve existing affordable housing, support home ownership, and ensure new development includes affordable units and limits displacement of neighborhood residents. In addition, strategies are needed to support existing small businesses, their ability to remain in and expand on the Westside, and to enhance their long-term viability as new investment comes to the neighborhood.

- 3.1 Develop a program to acquire title-challenged properties and restore ownership
- 3.2 Advocate for city funding to support ADUs and expansion of repair programs
- 3.3 Expand existing program to purchase and rehab single-family homes
- 3.4 Plan and set up a community land trust and communal ownership structures
- 3.5 Convene organizations to set up a preservation fund
- 3.6 Develop a unified land strategy
- 3.7 Establish an organization to develop properties on the Westside and reinvest profits in the community





Strategy 3.1 | Develop a program to acquire title-challenged properties and restore ownership to households.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Creating Quality Employment Opportunities



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities



Supporting Small Business



Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

Many Westside homes have been passed down within a family over generations, yet many current occupants lack clear title and ownership to the home. This makes it difficult for occupants to finance needed repairs and creates challenges when occupants want to sell. A program to help restore ownership in these instances will assist residents who want to remain in their homes. The program would be voluntary and require consent from the current occupant. Prosper West and City staff, assisted by outside legal counsel as needed, would work with the current occupant to resolve heir and title issues, with the ultimate goal of returning clear ownership to the occupant.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Prosper West and other invested stakeholders should work with the City to develop a program designed to acquire properties where owners don't have clear title, extinguish all claims and other issues, and restore clean ownership to households.
- Once established, Prosper West and its partners will need to market the program to ensure residents are aware of this new source of support and understand the process and its benefits.
- To ensure success and uptake, the program will need to be implemented by a trusted community partner who has capacity to work with households throughout the process.

PARTNERS

Prosper West, City of San Antonio

TIMING

Medium-Term (2-5 years)



Strategy 3.2 | Advocate for city funding to support ADU construction and expansion of home repair programs on the Westside.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS

 Creating Quality Employment Opportunities	 Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities	 Supporting Small Business	 Celebrating Culture and Heritage
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THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

Current zoning on the Westside allows for the construction of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) by-right for owner-occupied properties, and ADUs can help generate rental revenue for property owners and increase the availability of affordable housing stock. ADUs also offer an option for multiple generations to live on the same property in separate structures. However, there is a lack of awareness around ADUs amongst Westside residents; working with the City to dedicate funding to support ADUs on the Westside is needed. In the same vein, many homeowners on the Westside are unaware of city programs and resources available to support needed repairs. Expanding these programs to target the Westside can help better meet existing need.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Work with the City’s Neighborhood and Housing Services department and nonprofits in the housing space to educate residents about ADUs and to link residents with sources of municipal and nonprofit funds to support ADU construction.
- Augment technical assistance provided to Westside residents to help them apply for existing City home repair programs such as Under 1 Roof and Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (OOR) Program. Pursue modifications to current eligibility requirements to increase the number of households served (for example, OOR requires that homeowners be U.S. citizens and have a clear title).

PARTNERS

City of San Antonio Neighborhood & Housing Services

TIMING

Medium-Term (2-5 years)

Homeowner Repair Programs | National Precedents

West Orange Housing Rehabilitation Program, NJ

The West Orange Housing Rehabilitation Program (WOHRP) is funded through developer fees and offers low and moderate-income homeowners loans of up to \$35,000 at zero percent interest to assist in home repairs and basic improvements. The loan is forgiven for homeowners who stay in their home for 12 years.



Homeowner Rehabilitation Program, County of Fayette, PA

The Redevelopment Authority of the County of Fayette's Homeowner Rehabilitation Program assists low and moderate-income homeowners through the provision of no-interest rehabilitation loans, up to \$22,500. Examples of eligible repair work include repair and replacement of roofs and furnaces, new electric or plumbing, replacement of windows and doors, and general stabilization and safety improvements. Homeowners are required to use pre-approved contractors.





Strategy 3.3 | Expand existing acquisition and rehabilitation program to purchase and rehab single-family homes on the Westside.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Creating Quality Employment Opportunities



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities



Supporting Small Business



Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

While the Westside has many affordable housing options, the area lacks diversity in its building stock, particularly for working professionals looking to purchase homes. Prosper West, through its Casa Bella program, is leading efforts to address this gap on the Westside. The program is currently seeking funds to begin operations, and will focus on purchasing aging single-family homes, making repairs and upgrades, and selling to families at around 80% AMI. These investments to repair aging housing stock support overall physical improvements and quality of infrastructure, while providing a critical supply of homes attractive to working professionals, helping to retain talent on the Westside.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Prosper West will need a sustainable source of capital to begin operations of Casa Bella, its acquisition and rehabilitation program. Prosper West should engage the City to gauge their interest in establishing a preservation fund, and to identify potential philanthropic partners and lending institutions that may be interested in contributing to the fund’s capital stack.
- Prosper West will need to survey real estate market trends and available single-family properties to identify the homes to purchase, rehab and re-sell to working families.
- Prosper West should engage with nonprofits like Our Casas and Housing Neighborhood Services that operate similar programs in San Antonio, in order to learn best practices and pursue potential partnerships to collaborate on the Westside.

PARTNERS

Prosper West in coordination with City of San Antonio Neighborhood & Housing Services; nonprofits like Our Casas and Housing Neighborhood Services

TIMING

Near-Term (1-2 years)



Strategy 3.4 | Plan and set-up a **community land trust and support communal ownership structures** to preserve both residential and commercial affordability.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Creating Quality Employment Opportunities



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities



Supporting Small Business



Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

Preserving affordability and increasing ownership opportunities for longtime residents and businesses is essential to maintaining the character of the Westside and ensuring an equitable future. Westside stakeholders are currently exploring the potential to establish a community land trust (CLT) as one such way of creating affordable ownership opportunities.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Convene interested groups to discuss potential models and how they meet the needs of the Westside, including a community land trust, rent-to-own programs, and financial assistance to support business conversions to cooperatives.
- Collaborate on developing a vision and strategic focus for the community land trust, including whether or not to have a geographic focus (e.g. prioritize land acquisition in areas with highest risk of gentrification or remain agnostic on where land is acquired).
- Identify funding sources to support property acquisition and designate a lead entity and governance structure to oversee the land trust. Funding sources could include revenue from a TIRZ (see Strategy 2.5), grants from philanthropies, and/or state and local allocations.

PARTNERS

Prosper West in coordination with City of San Antonio Neighborhood & Housing Services, LISC, Esperanza Center

TIMING

Near-Term (1-2 years)

Community Land Trusts and Models of Ownership | National Precedents

Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, Roxbury, MA

Concerned about gentrification pressures, Dudley residents organized amongst themselves to create a comprehensive plan and a shared vision for a new, vibrant urban village. To secure development without displacement, DSNi worked with the city to secure eminent domain authority, purchase vacant land, and protect affordability.

This process led to the creation of a community land trust. Today, the once garbage-strewn lots in the area have been rebuilt with quality affordable houses, parks, playgrounds, gardens, community facilities, and new businesses.



Houston Community Land Trust, TX

The Houston Community Land Trust, formed in 2018, is designed to protect affordability in the city's Third Ward neighborhood. The HCLT builds new homes on abandoned properties acquired by the Houston Land Bank. As of mid-2019, thanks to city subsidies that averaged approximately \$100,000 per home, 17 houses have been completed on sites scattered throughout the neighborhood. The homes can be sold for significantly less than a traditional, market-rate house, with three-bedroom homes priced at approximately \$75,000. To be eligible to purchase one of HCLT's homes, a family's household income cannot exceed 80% AMI.



Rent-to-Own Program, Milwaukee, WI

Through a collaborative rent-to-own program, Impact Seven and Layton Boulevard West Neighbors have rehabilitated vacant residences in Milwaukee. The program allows low-income residents to pay an affordable rent for 15 years and receive a credit toward a down payment if they choose to buy the house after that time.





Strategy 3.5 | Convene organizations as potential lending partners to set up a **preservation fund** to purchase Westside properties and maintain affordability.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Creating Quality Employment Opportunities



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities



Supporting Small Business



Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

The Westside is home to naturally-occurring affordable housing. Much of this stock is decades old and in need of repairs. A preservation fund is one way to support needed repairs while maintaining affordability, so that even if new development occurs and rents rise, these older properties remain affordable.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Convene potential partners, including local banks and community financial institutions, that may be interested in acting as lending partners to set up and capitalize a preservation fund.
- Explore potential fund focus areas, which could include acquiring and rehabbing existing properties or acquiring vacant and underutilized properties for new construction.
- Identify a potential fund administrator, which could be a community development corporation or a community development financial institution (CDFI).

PARTNERS

Prosper West, City of San Antonio, financial institutions and CDFIs

TIMING

Medium-Term (2-5 years)



Strategy 3.6 | Develop a **unified land strategy** to attract new investment to the Westside and remediate vacant and underutilized properties.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Creating Quality Employment Opportunities



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities



Supporting Small Business



Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

It is widely accepted that growth and investment will be coming to the Westside. Adopting a proactive approach to development can help ensure that new investment accrues to the benefit of existing residents and businesses. A land strategy is one tool to support economic and community development goals on the Westside, whereby stakeholders create a vision, strategy, and identify opportunities for long-term investment. A unified land strategy can help market available parcels for development, encourage growth in underinvested neighborhoods, and when parcels are publicly-owned, ensure development aligns with community priorities. A land strategy for the Westside can act as an indirect incentive to catalyze investment and redevelopment.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Prosper West and its partners should proactively identify and market available parcels for development, with an emphasis on publicly-owned land. The many churches on the Westside that own property represent a key partner to involve as part of this conversation.
- As part of the land strategy, Prosper West and its partners will need to define and set expectations around community benefits that will be required of developers (e.g., affordable housing minimums, open space requirements, minority business participation).

PARTNERS

Prosper West, in coordination with LISC, Westside churches

TIMING

Long-Term (5+ years)



Strategy 3.7 | Establish an organization to **develop properties** on the Westside and **reinvest profits** to support the community.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Creating Quality Employment Opportunities



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities



Supporting Small Business



Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

There is an identified need for a nonprofit organization that has in-house capacity to develop real estate projects on the Westside and then reinvest those profits back into Westside neighborhoods. The self-development of affordable and mixed-income residential projects will allow profits to be reinvested back into the Westside to support programs and community needs.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Prosper West is interested in potentially acting as a developer, which would require building significant internal capacity to have the needed expertise to develop properties and turn a profit, a process that takes time. As Prosper West embarks on its own strategic planning exercise, leadership should explore the right structure to fulfill this community development function—this could be developing in-house capacity or establishing partnerships with organizations that already have developer capacity, establishing fee-developer relationships, and/or soliciting development partnerships for specific projects.
- Redevelopment and new construction projects will need to include affordable components to ensure that projects do not lead to displacement.

PARTNERS

City of San Antonio, private developers, affordable developers (e.g., Mexican-American Unity Council), lending institutions

TIMING

Long-Term (5+ years)

Community Development | National Precedents

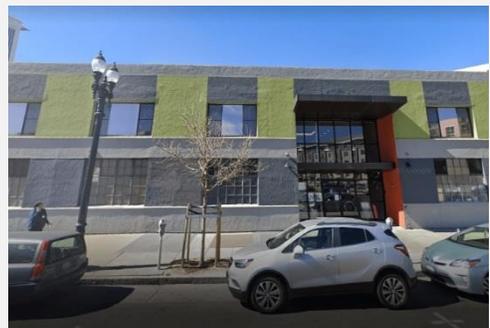
Chicanos por la Causa (CPLC), a statewide CDC in Arizona

Chicanos por la Causa was founded in 1969 as part of the Mexican-American civil rights movement, and today provides direct services to residents in Arizona, as well as in Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas. CPLC wholly-owns and manages mission-driven for-profit subsidiaries, including development, construction, and realty firms. The income from these real estate firms fund CPLC's other charitable initiatives and programs—including behavioral health services, early childhood education programs, and advocacy efforts to support community needs. Under its real estate division, CPLC builds, sells, and manages affordable and market-rate single-family housing (in 2016 CPLC built 39 new construction single-family homes). CPLC also provides leasing and property management services for affordable and market-rate multifamily, currently managing over 2,000 multifamily rental units, with an emphasis on properties that provide very low-income seniors with independent living options.



East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC), Bay Area, California

As part of its mission to build healthy, vibrant neighborhoods with and for the diverse populations of the East Bay, EBALDC develops and manages affordable residential and commercial spaces for residents and local businesses. EBALDC has been active for over 45 years and has developed affordable housing, commercial, mixed-use and mixed-income projects in Oakland, Emeryville, and San Pablo. In addition to new development, EBALDC acquires existing multifamily properties and preserves affordability through its Housing Acquisition Fund, allowing residents to stay in their homes. As a mission-driven nonprofit, EBALDC provides residents of its properties with access to community building and organizing trainings, youth programs, financial counseling, and workforce trainings to generate income and wealth building within these neighborhoods.



Goal 4

Supporting Small Business

The Westside is home to hundreds of small businesses that serve the community, provide essential services, and add character and vibrancy to neighborhoods. Many of these businesses have been around for decades and are family-owned businesses that have been passed down over the generations. Strategies in this section are intended to support these small and legacy businesses, particularly as they recover from the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a particular need to assist businesses, many of which are not digitized and do not have an internet presence, in accessing available recovery resources from federal and state sources of relief.

- 4.1 Create a one-stop shop for small businesses
- 4.2 Collaborate on an approach to targeted marketing campaigns
- 4.3 Create a position dedicated to developing and managing a retail and corridor strategy
- 4.4 Identify existing, vacant, affordable commercial space to market to diverse businesses





Strategy 4.1 | Create a one-stop shop for small businesses that connects them to available resources and provides needed support.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Creating Quality Employment Opportunities



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities



Preserving Affordability



Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

While organizations on the Westside offer a rich array of services designed to support small businesses, many businesses are unaware or hesitant to access these resources. Concerted outreach and marketing efforts can help improve use of existing resources and connect businesses with needed supports.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Prosper West should devote financial resources and staff capacity to serve as a one-stop shop for small businesses located on the Westside. In this role, Prosper West should act as a conduit to lead direct outreach activities and to connect businesses to other San Antonio organizations that offer support.
- To improve utilization of services, Prosper West will need to address the barriers that prevent small businesses from accessing resources, which include a lack of awareness of different programs, a distrust of government assistance, and difficulties in navigating digital resources.
- A PID can help finance Prosper West’s activities to connect businesses with existing resources.

PARTNERS

Prosper West in coordination with Maestro Entrepreneur Center, LiftFund, YWCA, River City Federal Credit Union, San Antonio Area Foundation, LISC

TIMING

Near-Term (1-2 years)



Strategy 4.2 | Collaborate on a streamlined approach to **targeted marketing campaigns** that inform businesses of available funding and cross-promote available resources.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Creating Quality Employment Opportunities



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities



Preserving Affordability



Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

As described in Strategy 4.1, there are an array of resources on the Westside dedicated to supporting small businesses. Intentional coordination between nonprofits, municipal leaders, and other providers of financial and technical assistance can help increase the impact and reach of these available resources.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Prosper West and other stakeholders involved in small business support services should partner to develop targeted marketing campaigns that inform businesses of available funding and other sources of assistance. This should encompass a specific campaign around Federal sources of support as funds become available through any new rounds of stimulus funds.

PARTNERS

Maestro Entrepreneur Center, LiftFund, YWCA, River City Federal Credit Union

TIMING

Near-Term (1-2 years)



Strategy 4.3 | Create a full-time position dedicated to developing and managing a retail and corridor strategy.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Creating Quality Employment Opportunities



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities



Preserving Affordability



Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

The Westside is home to many retail businesses located on a diverse range of corridors, each of which has distinct needs. A full-time position at Prosper West dedicated to developing and managing a retail and corridor strategy for the Westside can help existing businesses reach a broader audience via branding and marketing activities.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- The retail and corridor manager position should oversee marketing, branding, and event planning, designed to drive visitation to Westside businesses. In this capacity, they will act as a liaison for existing businesses.
- The position should also coordinate with the City, the local Chamber of Commerce, and other economic development stakeholders to support business recruitment and expansion activities.
- Funding for the position could come via PID revenues.

PARTNERS

Prosper West, the City of San Antonio, Chamber of Commerce, business owners

TIMING

Near-Term (1-2 years)



Strategy 4.4 | Identify existing vacant, affordable commercial space and work with partners to market the space to diverse businesses.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Creating Quality Employment Opportunities



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities



Preserving Affordability



Celebrating Culture and Heritage

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

The desire to ensure commercial affordability, coupled with the existence of vacant retail spaces, creates an opportunity to attract a diversity of businesses to the Westside.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Prosper West will need to first identify existing vacant spaces that have affordable rents.
- Prosper West will need to work with landlords, the City, and the County to market these spaces specifically to small businesses owned by minorities, as a way to support wealth-building and ownership opportunities for Westside residents.
- As part of this effort, Prosper West can explore creating a subleasing program, whereby the CDC enters into a long-term lease for commercial space and then subleases the space to business tenants on terms that are more flexible than those typically offered in a commercial lease.

PARTNERS

Landlords, City of San Antonio Economic Development, Bexar County Economic & Community Development

TIMING

Near-Term (1-2 years)

Goal 5

Celebrating Heritage and Culture

People who call the Westside home are rightly proud of their neighborhood and traditions. The Westside plays an important role in Chicano culture on a national stage, from helping to incubate the Mexican-American civil rights movement in the 1960s to fostering a rich music scene where the legacy of Tejano music and the Westside sound live on. Public art and murals throughout the neighborhood, as well as a roster of events and festivals, celebrate this heritage and culture. Strategies in this section are intended to support the Westside's existing arts and culture scene, including marketing campaigns to expand attendance at events and festivals, and provide financial assistance to support artists working on the Westside.

- 5.1 Initiate a media and branding campaign
- 5.2 Support pursuit of a cultural district designation
- 5.3 Provide financial support and subsidy to arts and placemaking efforts
- 5.4 Create a community calendar and interactive map for Prosper West's website





Strategy 5.1 | Initiate a **media and branding campaign** to market local arts and culture events to improve visibility and public perceptions of the Westside.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Creating Quality Employment Opportunities



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities



Preserving Affordability



Supporting Small Business

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

The Westside is home to a diverse range of cultural and arts events, yet they are not known beyond the immediate area. A marketing campaign to bring visitors from San Antonio and beyond, which could also address existing misconceptions about safety on the Westside, as well as demonstrate the impact that arts and culture have on economic development, can be an important public relations tool.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Local artists should help lead the development of the media and branding campaign, to ensure these local voices shape the message and brand used to advertise Westside events.
- A Westside PID could provide needed revenue to support development of the media and branding campaign.

PARTNERS

Local artists in partnership with cultural organizations, including SAY Si, Esperanza Center, SOMOS cultura y mas, Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, NALCAB, NALAC, San Anto Cultural Arts Center

TIMING

Immediate-Term (<1 year)



Strategy 5.2 | Support pursuit of a **cultural district designation** from the Texas Commission on the Arts.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Creating Quality Employment Opportunities



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities



Preserving Affordability



Supporting Small Business

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

Arts groups on the Westside are currently pursuing a cultural district designation from the Texas Commission on the Arts, which would allow arts groups within the district to access new sources of federal and state funding. Pending the decision on an official designation, improved coordination between arts and cultural groups on the Westside can help increase the impact and reach of offerings.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Cultural and arts leaders should continue to support pursuit of the cultural district designation from the Texas Commission on the Arts, an effort currently being led by Say Si.
- As part of deliberate coordination efforts, cultural and arts leaders should collaborate on branding and marketing of events and offerings (see Strategy 5.1).

PARTNERS

Local cultural organizations (SAY Si, Esperanza Center, SOMOS cultura y mas, Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, NALCAB, NALAC, San Anto Cultural Arts Center)

TIMING

Medium-Term (2-5 years)



Strategy 5.3 | Provide financial support and subsidy to arts and placemaking efforts that drive economic development.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS

Creating Quality Employment Opportunities

Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities

Preserving Affordability

Supporting Small Business

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

Arts and cultural groups play an important role in creating vibrant places on the Westside that benefit community members, support businesses, and attract visitors. Providing financial support, such as subsidized artist residencies, grants for public art, and an arts resource center, can ensure the longevity of these assets while recognizing the key role the arts play in driving economic development.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Arts and cultural groups should work with small businesses and economic development groups to discuss sources of financial support and subsidies available to support arts and placemaking efforts on the Westside.
- As federal resources become available through pandemic relief funding and infrastructure funding, Prosper West and other economic development groups should assist arts and cultural groups in accessing these resources, particularly for placemaking improvements (e.g. public art, outdoor seating, event space).
- Prosper West can also assist arts and cultural groups in accessing other public sources of support, including CDBG dollars distributed at the local level. There is an opportunity to forge new partnerships between community development and arts groups to advocate for public funding support for the arts.

PARTNERS

Small businesses, economic development/non-arts groups

TIMING

Near-Term (1-2 years)

Cultural and Arts Districts | National Precedents

Zona Cultural, San Antonio, TX

The Zona Cultural is a unique district in downtown San Antonio rich with history and cultural and art centers. The district encompasses 44 contiguous blocks on the west-end of downtown where San Antonio has its roots and where the city first began. The area has a vibrant public art program, historical architecture, and a lively calendar of festivals and events. This area is an extension of the downtown Riverwalk area. A recent State designation recognizing Zona Cultural as a certified Cultural District has helped galvanize support from local stakeholders and has given greater cachet to Zona Cultural.



North Shore Community Development Corporation, Roxbury, MA

The North Shore CDC uses a community-focused development model to invest resources into low-income or distressed neighborhoods on the North Shore to improve the quality of life for residents. The CDC is committed to the community through affordable housing, economic and youth development, community engagement, and urban art, and has served over 3,000 individuals through programming and installed 75 large scale murals in the areas they serve.



Financial Support for the Arts | National Precedent

Denver Urban Redevelopment Authority Project Art, CO

DURA's Project Art policy requires all redevelopment projects receiving tax increment finance (TIF) funds to dedicate 1% of DURA's financial obligation toward each redevelopment project for public art that must be installed on site. The value of the artwork determines the method of approval by DURA. For projects with an art budget of less than \$50,000, DURA's art review staff will approve the artwork. If the budget is between \$50,000 and \$100,000, DURA's art review staff must make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners for approval of the project's artwork. For a budget over \$100,000, an art committee will be formed to evaluate potential artwork and present a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners for final approval.





Strategy 5.4 | Create a community calendar and interactive map on Prosper West's website to showcase the breadth of events and opportunities on the Westside.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER GOALS



Creating Quality Employment Opportunities



Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities



Preserving Affordability



Supporting Small Business

THEMES

- Communication
- Coordination
- Physical Improvements
- Investment

DESCRIPTION

A community calendar and interactive map hosted on Prosper West's website can help Westside residents, as well as people from San Antonio and beyond, keep up with happenings on the Westside. The community calendar will provide users with an up-to-date snapshot of new and upcoming public events and festivals, while the interactive map will showcase real estate development, public bond projects, major assets and cultural amenities, as well as layers that show the boundaries of different place-based zones, including opportunity zones, TIRZ, reinvestment zones, and the proposed cultural district. The calendar and map can be deployed as tools in conversations with people who are interested in investing on the Westside.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- Prosper West will need to identify a funding source to support creation of the calendar and map and to maintain these tools via regular updates.
- Prosper West will need to coordinate with a breadth of Westside organizations to ensure it provides a complete roster of events and programs.
- The interactive map can be used to support development of a unified land strategy (see Strategy 3.6) to highlight development opportunities that benefit from place-based incentives.

PARTNERS

Prosper West, with support from funders

TIMING

Immediate Term (< 1 year)

Moving Forward

This summary table highlights the interconnected nature of strategies to support an equitable future for the Westside. Ultimately, this Plan is intended to guide Prosper West and its partners in advocating for public and private support, advancing existing initiatives, and creating new programs to meet community need. As recommendations are implemented, Prosper West and its partners should regularly review progress on achieving desired outcomes by referencing the goals and strategies of this Plan.

	Goal 1 Creating Quality Employment Opportunities	Goal 2 Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities	Goal 3 Preserving Affordability	Goal 4 Supporting Small Business	Goal 5 Celebrating Heritage and Culture
1.1 Design a jobs awareness and outreach campaign	●			●	
1.2 Provide general and industry targeted career training	●				
1.3 Advocate for improved transit access	●	●			
1.4 Advocate for a new park and ride center	●	●			
1.5 Increase availability of high-quality, affordable childcare	●			●	
1.6 Provide flexible schedules, night options and onsite childcare for career training	●			●	
2.1 Launch a promotion and marketing campaign for the Westside		●		●	●
2.2 Prioritize infrastructure and placemaking investments		●		●	●
2.3 Establish a group or committee of stakeholders for activation of outdoor amenities		●		●	●
2.4 Support creation of a Public Improvement District		●		●	●
2.5 Explore potential for a new Westside TIRZ and/or expand existing TIRZ		●	●		

	Goal 1 Creating Quality Employment Opportunities	Goal 2 Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities	Goal 3 Preserving Affordability	Goal 4 Supporting Small Business	Goal 5 Celebrating Heritage and Culture
3.1 Develop a program to acquire title-challenged properties and restore ownership			●		
3.2 Advocate for funding to support ADUs and expansion of home repair programs		●	●		
3.3 Expand existing program to purchase and rehab single-family homes		●	●		
3.4 Plan and set-up a community land trust and communal ownership structures			●	●	
3.5 Convene organizations to set up a preservation fund		●	●		
3.6 Develop a unified land strategy		●	●		
3.7 Establish an organization to develop properties and reinvest profits in the community		●	●		
4.1 Create a one-stop shop for small businesses	●		●	●	
4.2 Collaborate on an approach to targeted marketing campaigns			●	●	
4.3 Create a position dedicated to overseeing a retail and corridor strategy			●	●	●
4.4 Market vacant, affordable commercial space to diverse businesses		●	●	●	

	Goal 1 Creating Quality Employment Opportunities	Goal 2 Enhancing Infrastructure and Public Amenities	Goal 3 Preserving Affordability	Goal 4 Supporting Small Business	Goal 5 Celebrating Heritage and Culture
5.1 Initiate a media and branding campaign				●	●
5.2 Support pursuit of a cultural district designation		●			●
5.3 Provide financial support and subsidy to arts and placemaking efforts		●		●	●
5.4 Create a community calendar and interactive map for Prosper West's website		●		●	●

Westside Equitable Economic Development Plan



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