

# WESTSIDE BUSINESS ALLIANCE

## Legacy Corridor Initiative

Fiscal Year 2019

### Westside Development Corporation

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**WESTSIDE**  
DEVELOPMENT  
CORPORATION



**Council District 5**  
Shirley Gonzales

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### A. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In partnership with District 5 Councilwoman Shirley Gonzales, The Westside Business Alliance (WBA) program launched in January 2019 with funding for the Legacy Corridor Initiative provided by the City of San Antonio (COSA). The mission of the program is to promote and preserve Westside Legacy Businesses and to create advocacy networks; by way of organizing small business owners to form business alliances along 10 major Legacy Corridors in the Westside San Antonio. These corridors are:

- Commerce
- Buena Vista
- Culebra
- Zarzamora
- Guadalupe
- Castroville
- Laredo
- Nopalitos
- Colorado
- General McMullen

Small businesses are essential to building robust communities and serve as a cornerstone of a region's cultural and economic fabric. The Westside Business Alliance aims to strengthen the overall local economy by making businesses more resilient and mitigating impending gentrification. The guided formation of advocacy networks empowers owners by promoting projects that positively impact their businesses and communities-at-large. Given the ongoing and upcoming development that is taking place in San Antonio's Westside, it is crucial that small business owners and community stakeholders are properly equipped with the knowledge and resources needed to prepare for, not just the potential impact, but the opportunity for growth as well. Examples of this type of development include the expansion of the University of Texas at San Antonio's (UTSA) Downtown Campus and the restoration of the Westside Creeks.

In Summary, the goals of the Westside Business Alliance (WBA) are to:



Identify and prioritize infrastructure needs to leverage city resources and initiate improvements in the area



Educate and inform small businesses of current and upcoming development projects taking place in the Westside, and the potential impact of this development on local businesses



Connect local, small businesses with organizations that will assist with low-cost business development services and/or low-interest rate business loans



Bridge the gap between businesses and the City of San Antonio by identifying business needs and providing referrals for incentives and funding



Identify Legacy Businesses and take measures to ensure they remain a part of the cultural fabric of the Westside

In an effort to promote and ensure the success of this program, the WDC has created a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)'s with six partner organizations; to cross-promote mutually beneficial programs and opportunities to participants of these respective organizations, listed below:

Organization	Mission
Avenida Guadalupe	During more than 30 years of service, Avenida Guadalupe has enjoyed significant success in both economic and housing development; stimulating business and commerce, while beautifying and restoring the physical and spiritual character, of the Avenida Guadalupe Neighborhood.
LiftFund	Provides credit and services to small businesses and entrepreneurs who do not have access to loans from commercial sources; and to provide leadership and innovation in microlending.
University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) Small Business Development Center	The San Antonio Small Business Development Center provides education and no-cost business advising services to entrepreneurs and people wanting to start their own business.
SCORE	Provides free and confidential business mentoring services to prospective and established small business owners in the United States.
West San Antonio Chamber of Commerce	The mission of the West San Antonio Chamber of Commerce is to advance and promote the economic environment for businesses, to advocate for responsive government and quality education; while preserving the San Antonio Greater Western Sector's unique community characteristics.
La Prensa Texas	Established in 1913, La Prensa Texas is a historic, independently-owned English and Spanish newspaper and online publication.

In addition to the six partners listed above, the Westside Business Alliance is also receiving support from:

### Organization / Company

- River City Federal Credit Union
- The Madonna Center
- University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) School of Public Policy
- Google Fiber
- NALCAB
- Mexican American Unity Council (MAUC)
- Maestro Entrepreneur Center (MEC)
- The West Commerce/Buena Vista Business Alliance
- WestEnd Hope in Action

### City of San Antonio

- District 5, Councilwoman Shirley Gonzales
- Office of Historic Preservation
- Center City Development Office
- Planning Department
- Development Services Department
- Transportation and Capital Improvements
- Economic Development Department

### Additional Supporters

- BB&T Bank
- Broadway National Bank
- Jefferson Bank

## B. SCOPE OF WORK

Anticipated Results	% Complete
Establish at least one (1) alliance per legacy corridor' providing minimum of eight (8) alliances	100%
Identify and capacitate at least 1 - 3 local business leaders to head each corridor alliance	100%
Coalesce groups of at least 10 - 30 business leaders to each legacy corridor	100%
Coordinate at least two (2) coalition meetings	100%
Facilitate the development of a 5-year strategic plan for each legacy corridor	100%

The WDC has expressly partnered with *La Prensa Texas* to conduct research on corridors for specific issues highlighting the culture, history, economics, and present context of corridors. (Appendix B)

## C. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH METHODOLOGY

As part of developing the WBA program, research was conducted to define the mission and vision of the program, as well as best practices to identify metrics and establish a successful program strategy and structure.

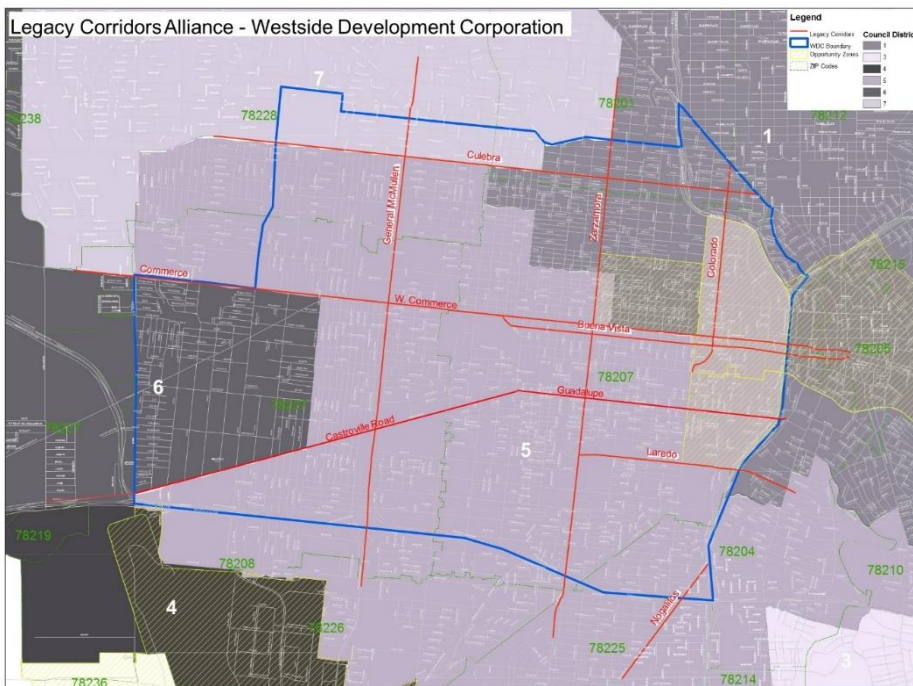
To brand the program, WBA worked with a design artist to create a visually compelling logo that aligned with the overall brand of the Westside Development Corporation while also speaking to the individualism of the program and its potential for growth and longevity. In addition to the standard WBA



logo, two other versions were created specifically for members and legacy business participants. These versions were printed onto window decals and were distributed during each WBA meeting.



Online content includes a WBA program web page that is routinely updated with pertinent program related news and events. There is also an Instagram account ([WestsideBusinessAllianceSA](#)) and Facebook account ([Westside Business Alliance](#)) created specifically to promote the program's activities.



WDC staff worked with the City of San Antonio to design a GIS map specific to selected corridors within the Westside Development Corporation boundaries, to include council district regions, zip codes, and Near West Opportunity Zones.

After an intensive online analysis of businesses in each corridor, a hand's-on approach was taken to conduct corridor research by way of driving and walking tours. Legacy businesses, those that have been in operation for 20 years or longer, are a distinct part of the Westside

business landscape and culture and were specifically identified for target outreach.

Business research included the purchase of a directory of business addresses for each corridor and their respective buffer zones. Based on location and the number of businesses within each corridor, some were chosen to be grouped together and others remained singular.

- Commerce/Buena Vista
- Culebra
- Zarzamora

- Guadalupe
- Castroville
- Laredo/Nogalitos/Colorado
- General McMullen

A calendar of meetings was laid out at the beginning of the year; which included two large group meetings designed for small business owners within all 10 corridors, followed by individual corridor meetings. During these meetings, leaders self-identified or were identified and asked to lead their respective corridors. An end-of-year celebration and resource fair was scheduled to recap successes, discuss the initiatives for the next year (year 2 of the WBA), and connect business owners to resources based on the feedback received throughout the year.

To promote WBA meetings, the WDC conducted accessible, bilingual outreach for each group meeting and individual corridor meetings. Outreach consisted of intensive block-walking, mailout of postcards, and personalized reminder phone calls and emails. Meetings were also advertised via corridor leaders, partners, social media, Eventbrite, as well as the District 5 and WDC newsletter.

## D. OUTCOMES

### Westside Business Alliance Meeting Attendance

A total of ten Westside Business Alliance meetings took place in 2019, with a total of 196 individuals in attendance:

• March 29	Large Group Meeting 1 (All Corridors):	31 Attendees
• May 10	Large Group Meeting 2 (All Corridors):	41 Attendees
• May 28	Buena Vista/Commerce:	16 Attendees
• July 2	Buena Vista/Commerce Follow-up:	24 Attendees
• August 21	Castroville:	7 Attendees
• September 19	Zarzamora:	17 Attendees
• September 26	General McMullen:	11 Attendees
• October 18	Guadalupe:	23 Attendees
• October 24	Culebra:	12 Attendees
• November 7	Laredo, Nogalitos, Colorado:	14 Attendees

There was an overwhelming response to the Westside Business Alliance from business owners, whose businesses have been in operation for more than 20 years, with 49% of participants falling into this category. These businesses are considered Legacy Businesses within the Westside Business Alliance, and also qualify for a nomination as a Legacy Business with the Office of Historic Preservation's (OHP) Legacy Business Program.

The Legacy Business Program of the OHP celebrates businesses that have been in operation for 20 years or more and contribute to the history, culture, and authentic identity of San Antonio. Legacy Business owners receive a window decal that promotes their business as a major destination, marketing and promotional assistance from the OHP, and access to business and financial educational resources. Anyone can nominate a Legacy Business on the OHP's website ([www.sapreservation.com](http://www.sapreservation.com)) or by using the program's hashtag (#LegacyBizSA). All nominations are reviewed on a rolling basis.

Below is an analysis of the WBA meeting participants by *Years in Business*:

Years in Business	Percent (%)
0 (Opening New)	3%
1-5	19%
6-11	14%
12-19	13%
20+	51%

Below is an analysis of WBA meeting participants by *Corridor*:

Corridor	Percent (%)
Commerce/Buena Vista	26%
Culebra	17%
Laredo/Nogalitos/Colorado	14%
Zarzamora	12%
Guadalupe	12%
Castroville	10%
General McMullen	9%

### Overall Outreach

The Westside Business Alliance initially conducted outreach to over 1,200 businesses, but later narrowed that number down based on the deletion of corporations such as banks and nationally based chain restaurants, as well as predatory businesses such as payday lenders.

The current Westside Business Alliance Database is comprised of over 750 Westside businesses that are included in ongoing outreach.

As illustrated in the table below, the corridors with the most potential outreach are Commerce/Buena Vista and Zarzamora:

Corridor	Percent (%)
Commerce/Buena Vista	31%
Zarzamora	23%
Culebra	14%

Castroville	10%
General McMullen	10%
Laredo/Nogalitos/Colorado	9%
Guadalupe	3%

## E. RESULTS

Although each corridor has identified similar needs, particularly in the areas of infrastructure improvements, crime abatement, access to capital, and façade improvements, they are each unique in the sense that long-term corridor goals within these business alliances are heavily influenced by location, history, and individual participants.

The long-term programmatic goal of the WBA program is to empower selected corridors to complete a five-year strategic plan. Based on feedback from business owners, the anticipated timeline of this plan is outlined below:

- Year 1 - 2019
  - Community Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement
  - Establish Vision
  - Define Community Assets (Strengths)
  - Needs Assessment and ID Resources (Weaknesses and Opportunities)
- Year 2 - 2020
  - Continued Community Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement
  - ID Corridor Specific Projects and Engage Resource Partners
  - Address and Solve Short-Term Issues as appropriate
  - Facilitate Action Plan for each Corridor's Short and Long-term Goals (Establish Bond Proposal Projects)
  - Develop Timeline for Submission of 2022 Bond Proposal Projects
- Year 3 - 2021
  - Continued Community Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement
  - Implementation of Short-term Goals
  - Finalize and Submit Bond Proposal Projects
- Year 4 - 2022
  - Continued Community Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement
  - Advocate for 2022 Bond Proposals
- Year 5 - 2023
  - Continued Community Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement
  - Develop Strategy to further strengthen Business Alliances
  - Evaluation

\*Please note that corridor-specific bond proposal projects may have to be included in future bond proposals beyond 2022, in order to achieve desired long-term results for each corridor.



## LEGACY CORRIDOR: Commerce and Buena Vista West Commerce and Buena Vista Business Alliance

Corridor Goal: Create a HUB of businesses and lively community to transform the Commerce and Buena Vista area into a “University Triangle” between educational anchors Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU), St. Mary’s University (SMU), and the University of Texas at San Antonio. Additionally, focus bond proposal to phase 1 between Colorado and Trinity on Commerce St.

As part of the vision session, participants were asked, “How would you like your neighborhood to look over the next 10 years?”

The Strategic Plan aims to further the following vision of Commerce and Buena Vista stakeholders:

- Connected roads
- Complete streets
- Bike friendly
- Residents owning homes
- Jogging trails all the way to St. Mary’s
- Residents and visitors feel safe

Strengths – Commerce and Buena Vista stakeholders identified the following community assets:

- Our Lady of the Lake University
- University of Texas at San Antonio
- Proximity to downtown
- Churches
- Arts
- People

As part of the Needs Assessment, participants were asked, “What are your most pressing concerns as a business and/or property owner?”

These are the top responses:

- Zoning restrictions
- Infrastructure
- Tax increases
- Poor lighting
- Homelessness
- Drugs

The following solutions have been identified by stakeholders:

- Clean property titles of multiple owners
- Slow traffic volume; especially at peak hours to 30 mph or less
- Police substation in area with bike patrol
- Fix lighting by apartments
- Train should be rerouted
- Increase Westside business incentives/waivers

**Summary:** The West Commerce and Buena Vista Alliance (formerly known as The Empresarios) was started by Jaime Macias over seven years ago. He’s taken to the WBA leadership role of this corridor (and adjoining Buena Vista) to ensure that the vision for the area, a “university triangle”, comes to life over the next five years. The “university triangle” is comprised of three major universities that include UTSA, OLLU, and St. Mary’s. The corridor is fully committed to their slogan, *Activating West Commerce One Event at a Time*. Towards this effort, Jaime has established a monthly outdoor market entitled Barrio Bazaar, where local businesses sell goods and services amongst lively entertainment. Being that The West Commerce and Buena Vista Alliance was already established when this pilot project started in January 2019, they have served as an example for the other corridors that are a part of the WDC’s Westside Business Alliance.

## LEGACY CORRIDOR: CULEBRA

### Culebra Business Alliance

Corridor Goal: To develop a meaningful relationship with St. Mary's that creates the opportunity for a partnership that is mutually beneficial for students and business owners.

As part of the visioning session, participants were asked, "How would you like your neighborhood to look over the next 10 years?"

The Strategic Plan for Culebra aims to further the following vision of stakeholders:

- Culebra road is repaired from one end to the other
- Businesses have received façade improvements and have well-kept business fronts
- Older or vacant buildings are renovated and are being used in a way that benefits the community
- Street improvements have encouraged walkability; and students from St. Mary's University are continuously frequenting local businesses
- Business owners know about, and are connected, to resources to help them sustain or grow their business
- Culebra is clean, well-lit and walkable
- Homelessness and prostitution are not an issue
- Cultural enhancements
- Positive perception of area

Strengths - Culebra stakeholders identified the following community assets:

- St. Mary's University
- HEB at the corner of 24<sup>th</sup> Street and Culebra
- Accessibility to I-10
- Long-standing, family owned businesses such as La Popular Bakery
- Busy Street/High Traffic
- Proximity to Downtown

As part of the Needs Assessment, participants were asked, "What are your most pressing concerns as a business and/or property owner?"

These are the top responses:

- Water bills are significantly increasing
- Running a business and being able to pay a living wage
- Access to Capital
- Landscaping on Culebra Rd. (i.e. tree trimming)
- Code compliance is strict on brick and mortar businesses and food trucks are not held to the same standard
- Nearby methadone clinic is detracting patrons
- Stray dogs are a safety concern

The following solutions have been identified by stakeholders:

- Identify opportunities for businesses to access capital
- Veteran's programs are a possible avenue for hiring employees for small businesses
- Regular development updates
- Increased policing
- Education and training opportunities to create a skilled workforce
- Youth development programs
- Engage anchor institutions (i.e. St. Mary's)

- Advocate for more funding from the city

**Summary:** Resources for the Culebra Business Alliance include WestEnd Baptist Church and Gilbert DeHoyos, owner of Barrio Barrista. WestEnd Baptist Church attended WBA meetings and offers social services that are open to the public. Gilbert DeHoyos, owner of Barrio Barista and corridor leader, serves as a successful example to other business owners on the importance of tapping into free or low-cost small business development resources to start or expand their business.

Business owners on the Culebra corridor were especially concerned about NW San Antonio Treatment Center that was established within recent years. Although this clinic serves a population of individuals that truly need help, business owners unanimously agreed that their customer base has decreased since the opening of the clinic. Some issues that were noted include long lines of patients waiting to enter the clinic which spill into neighboring businesses or are visible from adjacent businesses. Also, patients that do not have anywhere else to go before or after treatment choose to hang out in the area, oftentimes asking patrons of nearby businesses for food and money and are openly under the influence.

## LEGACY CORRIDOR: Zarzamora Zarzamora Street Merchants Association

Corridor Goal: Re-engage participants of the previously established Zarzamora Street Merchants Association and resolve the transformation of alleyways.

As part of the visioning session, participants were asked, “How would you like your neighborhood to look over the next 10 years?”

The Strategic Plan for Zarzamora aims to further the following vision of stakeholders:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishments that students can go to</li> <li>• Student housing rental opportunities that allow them to live in the Westside</li> <li>• Increase in businesses that serve the needs of the current residents and growing community</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area is clean and landscaped</li> <li>• Vacant properties are remodeled and occupied</li> <li>• Solution for alleyways have been established</li> <li>• Streets are well maintained, safe and free of drug trafficking</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

Strengths - Zarzamora stakeholders identified the following community assets:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active Neighborhood Associations (i.e. WestEnd Hope in Action)</li> <li>• Basila Frocks</li> <li>• BiblioTech West</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cassiano Homes/Cassiano Park</li> <li>• Busy Street/High Traffic</li> <li>• Proximity to UTSA, Our Lady of the Lake and St. Mary’s University</li> <li>• VIA transit route – approximately 1 million passengers every year on Zarzamora</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

As part of the Needs Assessment, participants were asked, “What are your most pressing concerns as a business and/or property owner?”

These are the top responses:

- Façade improvements are needed
- Tax increases
- Access to Capital
- Drug Activity and Homelessness
- Costly permitting and signage for businesses
- Solicitors coming into places of business tend to discourage patronage, especially customers who are coming into the Westside from elsewhere
- Traffic: Merida and Zarzamora and Frio City Road (Train)

The following solutions have been identified by stakeholders:

- Infill development
- Access to city planning efforts
- Database of available commercial properties
- Freeze in tax increases for property owners that can be grandfathered in (commercial and home)
- Program that provides matching funds for business owners to grow or expand their businesses
- Obtain updated demographics data to better serve clientele
- Identify resources that provide small business loans and communications/advertising support

**Summary:** Members of the Zarzamora Street Merchants Association are excited to be working together again and have a positive outlook on the development taking place within their area. Although the area can benefit from traffic calming, the consensus is that a busy street creates the potential for businesses to increase their revenue. VIA's transit route also offers a high volume of pedestrian traffic.

## LEGACY CORRIDOR: Guadalupe Guadalupe Business Alliance

Corridor Goal: Activate Guadalupe Plaza area businesses as originally intended.

As part of the visioning session, participants were asked, "How would you like your neighborhood to look over the next 10 years?"

The Strategic Plan aims to further the following vision of Guadalupe stakeholders:

- Jobs with living wages
- Chicano Park under the bridge
- Open arm market – farmer's market/grocery
- Increased parking
- Clear up abandoned houses
- Residents owning homes
- Jogging trails all the way to St. Mary's
- People feeling safe
- Businesses serving community
- Wi-Fi throughout area

Strengths - Guadalupe stakeholders identified the following community assets:

- Historic Plaza Guadalupe amphitheater
- Generational sense of pride
- Near downtown
- Rinconcito de Esperanza
- Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center
- Museo del Westside
- Avenida Guadalupe
- Pending application process to become a designated cultural district

As part of the Needs Assessment, participants were asked, “What are your most pressing concerns as a business and/or property owner?”

These are the top responses:

- Inflated property costs
- People feeling unsafe
- Tax increases
- Empty lots
- Poor lighting
- Infrastructure needing repair

The following solutions have been identified by stakeholders:

- Clean property titles of multiple owners
- Slow traffic volume; especially at peak hours to 30 mph or less
- Police substation in area with bike patrol
- Fix lighting by apartments
- Train should be rerouted
- Increase Westside business incentives/waivers

**Summary:** Guadalupe business owners and stakeholders are eager to pursue previous plans to activate the Avenida Guadalupe area. Additionally, they are concerned with the impact of the train route which led to the creation of the bridges on Guadalupe, Commerce, and Buena Vista. The main concerns are that the bridges are a barrier to welcoming people into the Westside and take up space that could essentially be used as green space for members of the Westside community. Gabriel Velasquez, Executive Director of Avenida Guadalupe, has identified himself as a corridor leader and his organization, as a resource. The group that gathered for the WBA meeting was energetic, engaged, and passionate.

## LEGACY CORRIDOR: Castroville Castroville Business Alliance

Corridor Goal: Increase business for the corridor through improved infrastructure.

As part of the visioning session, participants were asked, “How would you like your neighborhood to look over the next 10 years?”

The Strategic Plan aims to further the following vision of Castroville Rd. stakeholders:

- Thriving businesses
- Safety streets and sidewalks for pedestrians
- Well-lit streets
- Updated infrastructure

Strengths – Castroville Rd. stakeholders identified the following community assets:

- Historic Cemetery – San Fernando Cemetery II
- Vacant lots – Plenty of space
- Madonna Neighborhood Center
- Longstanding businesses such as Ortiz Pharmacy with customer loyalty
- Las Palmas Shopping Center

As part of the Needs Assessment, participants were asked, “What are your most pressing concerns as a business and/or property owner?”

These are the top responses:

- Inflated property costs
- Empty lots



- People feeling unsafe
- Tax increases
- Poor lighting
- Infrastructure needing repair

The following solutions have been identified by stakeholders:

- Increase store front funding opportunities
- Redo street lines
- Repair dilapidated/vacant buildings
- Encourage “casita” housing improvements
- Address homelessness
- Sidewalk repairs

**Summary:** This corridor needs more attention than other corridors in order to strengthen, although business owners from Ortiz Pharmacy, Porter Poultry, and Egg Co attended the WBA meeting and were seemingly interested. Roger Caballero of the Madonna Neighborhood Center is dedicated to hosting meetings and advocating for the development of the Castroville Business Alliance.

## LEGACY CORRIDOR: Nogalitos, Laredo, Colorado Nogalitos, Laredo and Colorado Business Alliance

**Corridor Goal:** Improve infrastructure and promote community programs that will help both the community and businesses on the corridor to succeed.

As part of the visioning session, participants were asked, “How would you like your neighborhood to look over the next 10 years?”

The Strategic Plan aims to further the following vision of Nogalitos, Laredo and Colorado stakeholders:

- Rent stabilization
- Updated roads, drainage
- Infrastructure
- Access to technology
- More public transportation
- Sensitivity to homeless
- Community art to beautify areas
- Safe place for day laborers
- Plant more trees near streets
- Address oversized utility poles
- Fix low lighting areas
- Address issues of drugs, prostitution and panhandling

**Strengths –** Nogalitos, Laredo and Colorado stakeholders identified the following community assets:

- Produce Row
- Cassiano Park
- Near downtown
- Legacy businesses
- Community
- Maestro Entrepreneur Center

As part of the Needs Assessment, participants were asked, “What are your most pressing concerns as a business and/or property owner?”

These are the top responses:

- Inflated property costs/taxes
- High crime
- Vacant buildings
- Security lights near river
- Homeless
- Infrastructure needing repair

The following solutions have been identified by stakeholders:

- Expand/hire more HUB-zone workers
- Increase access to capital
- Address lighting needs – preferably solar
- Have grants for small business improvements
- Attention to stray animal problem
- Police presence/crime watch

**Summary:** These corridors, small individually compared to other corridors, were selected to focus on as a group for purposes of planning and meeting objectives. Owner of Il Forno Pizza on Nogalitos and manager of Chicho Boys on Laredo were vocal and interested in helping to create social programs that benefited not just their businesses, but the community at large. Programs range from produce programs for the hungry to K-12 initiatives. For their businesses, they are seeking façade improvements, tax incentives, and safety infrastructure improvements that help accessibility and reduce crime.

## LEGACY CORRIDOR: General McMullen General McMullen Business Alliance

**Corridor Goal:** Improve existing business strip facades as well as infrastructure within and around the business strip.

As part of the visioning session, participants were asked, “How would you like your neighborhood to look over the next 10 years?”

The Strategic Plan aims to further the following vision of General McMullen stakeholders:

- Pedestrian infrastructure
- Traffic calming
- Bike mobility
- Beautify area with low-level housing
- Add palm trees back to Las Palmas perimeter

**Strengths – General McMullen stakeholders identified the following community assets:**

- People
- Location
- History
- Culture
- Arts
- Military

As part of the Needs Assessment, participants were asked, “What are your most pressing concerns as a business and/or property owner?”

These are the top responses:

- Inflated property costs
- People feeling unsafe
- Tax increases
- Empty lots
- Poor lighting
- Infrastructure needing repair

The following solutions have been identified by stakeholders:

- Incentives for Las Palmas Shopping Center to invest in itself
- Develop traffic islands for pedestrian access
- Add xeriscape design (a style of landscape design requiring little or no irrigation or other maintenance, used in arid regions)
- Increase store front funds to significant levels
- Invest South on General McMullen
- Encourage Port Authority to invest

**Summary:** There are many small businesses operating from somewhat anonymous retail strips. Owners feel that landlord should “name” the business centers so customers can more easily identify the area, which would help improve business prospects and create a sense of identity. Since there are several businesses within each business strip, there is a captive audience and a special opportunity within this corridor for business owners to organize for hyper local improvements.

## F. LESSONS LEARNED AND CONCLUSION

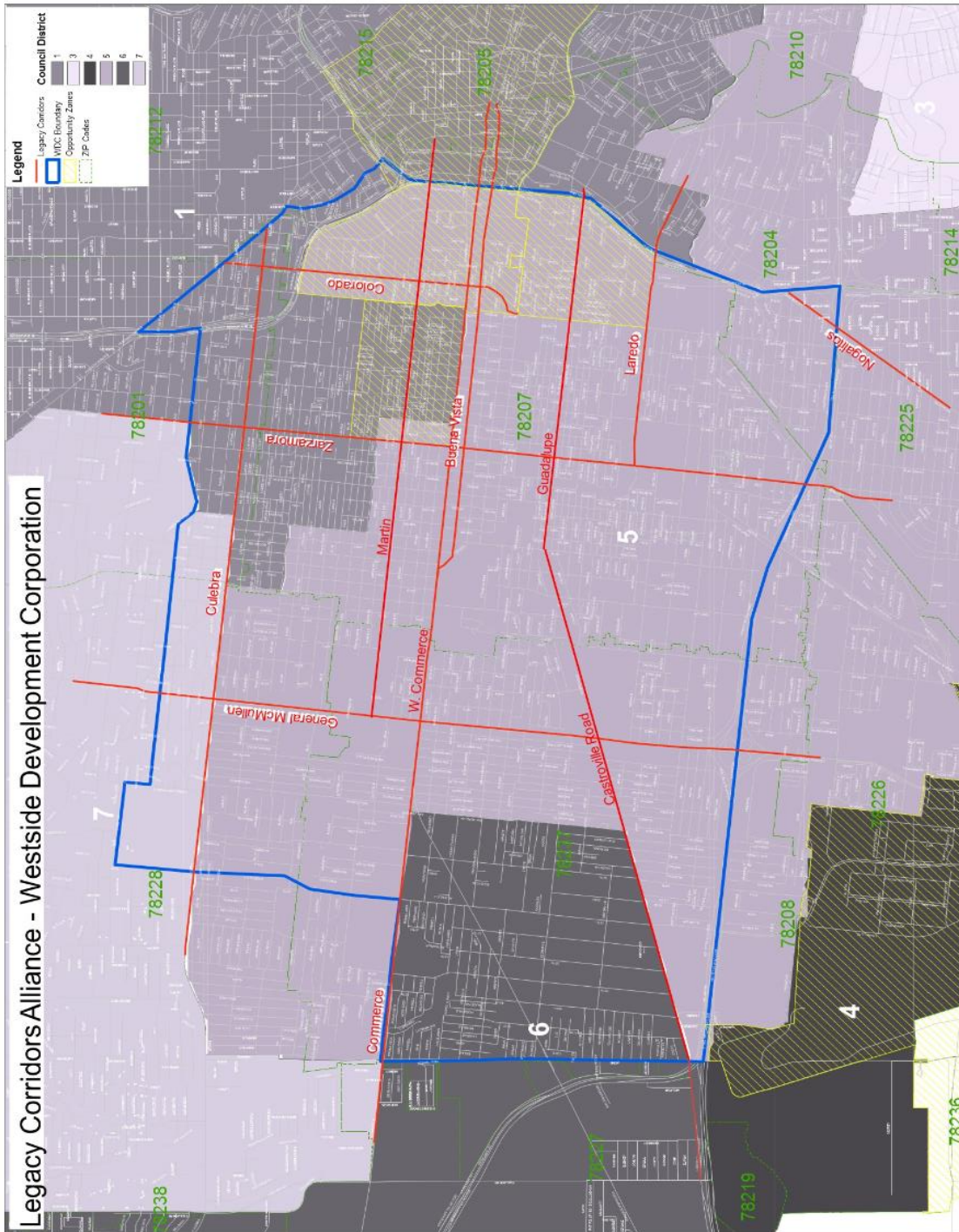
The WDC’s small business development services, coupled with local nonprofit partnerships that offer wrap-around services, are important for the success of individuals interested in opening, sustaining, or expanding a small business. WDC has leveraged these partnerships to achieve maximum participation in the Westside Business Alliance, Legacy Corridor Initiative. Business owners who have benefited from the WDC Loan and Grant Program, or who have received technical assistance from WDC, are now instrumental in leading the business alliances by acting as corridor leaders, providing relevant feedback and conducting outreach. Several examples include Jaime Macias of the West Commerce and Buena Vista Business Alliance, Carlos Gonzalez of the Zarzamora Street Merchants Association, and Gilbert DeHoyos of the Culebra Street Business Alliance.

For successful business alliances, program consistency on the general structure of meetings is key to completing deliverables. However, meetings achieve the best results when they are mostly directed by community attendees. Meetings are best attended when held in central and accessible locations specific to each corridor.

WDC is proud to have served as the pilot program host for developing the Year 1 corridor alliances; and looks forward to the continued development of the Westside Business Alliance Program in Year 2. The Westside Business Alliance will continue to utilize community partner outreach, best practices research, and input from business owners and community stakeholders to inform the content and direction of individual corridor endeavors.

The long-term goal of the Westside Business Alliance is that individual alliances are empowered to take ownership of their coalition endeavors; and establish themselves as self-sufficient entities to help guide and inform future development, while protecting the cultural and legacy of the Westside business community.

APPENDIX A: LEGACY CORRIDOR INITIATIVE MAP



## APPENDIX B: CULTURE, HISTORY, ECONOMICS, AND PRESENT CONTEXT

WDC's Westside Business Alliance has expressly partnered with *La Prensa Texas* to conduct research on corridors for specific issues highlighting the culture, history, economics and present context of corridors.

Articles pertaining to each corridor from the following issues are included below:

1. Guadalupe and Castroville
2. Culebra
3. Zarzamora
4. Nogalitos, Laredo, and Colorado
5. Commerce and Buena Vista
6. General McMullen



## GUADALUPE & CASTROVILLE

# LA PRENSA TEXAS

**SAN ANTONIO'S HISPANIC FAMILY OWNED NEWSPAPER**

VOL. 2 • NUM 26      www.LaPrensaTEXAS.com      30 de Junio de 2019

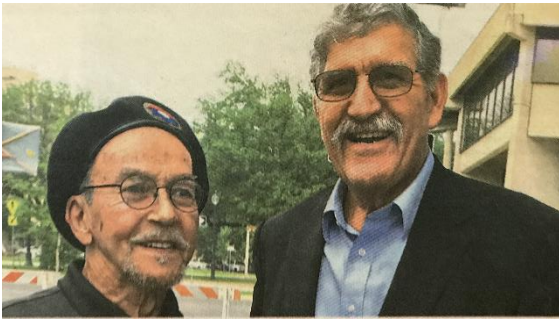


## Guadalupe to Castrovilla

<p><b>U.S. Tariff on Mexico</b> Would Hurt Both Nations</p>	<p><b>Community Council of South Central Texas</b> Will Host A Night Out with Congressman Joaquin Castro</p>	<p><b>Sólo un Pensamiento:</b> Día de la Bandera</p>	<p><b>Spurs Orgullosos del Equipo</b> en Sillas de Ruedas</p>	<p><b>Breaking a Bad Habit</b></p>
<p>By Dr. Ricardo Romo</p>	<p>By Ramon Chapa, Jr</p>	<p>By Steve Walker</p>	<p>Por Sendero Deportivo</p>	<p>By Tammy C. Perez</p>

## *About the Cover Artist, Jesse Trevino and Progreso Drug Store*

(By Dr. Ricardo Romo)



In 1977 Jesse Trevino painted “Progreso” as part of his Westside series, which included several other acrylic paintings from that period. His best-known paintings of that era include; “Raspa Man,” “La Cita Lounge,” and “Liria’s Lounge”. The “Progreso” painting was purchased by public relations guru Lionel Sosa in the 1980s and is part of Lionel and Kathy Sosa’s private collection.

Trevino is perhaps best known for his monumental art mosaic--the “Spirit of Healing” at Christus Santa Rosa and the “Veladora” at the Guadalupe Cultural Community Center. In 1999 Trevino

also painted a beautiful rendition of a Mexican American healer called “La Curandera” for the Texas Diabetes Institute near the corner of Guadalupe and Zarzamora.

Trevino admired the men and women who worked in the Westside and considered small businesses such as “Progreso” to be an important part of the Westside experience. Trevino grew up in the Westside and from an early age drove by or visited many of the sites that he would later choose to paint.

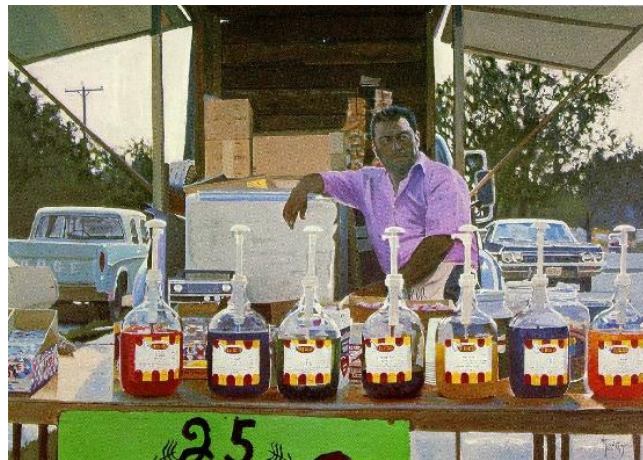
Jesse Trevino’s early interest in art and design led him to Fox Tech where his older brothers had attended. In his early years of art training at Fox Tech High School, Trevino found inspiration in the American portrait tradition.

During his first year at Fox Tech High School, Trevino painted a portrait of Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson which he titled simply “LBJ” (1962). Trevino’s biographer, Anthony Head, whose book about Trevino was reviewed recently in La Prensa, noted that Trevino found inspiration in the work of portrait artist Norman Rockwell.



Trevino is also well known for his numerous portraits of San Antonio’s Westside heroes including Congressman Henry B. Gonzales, community leader Ruben Munguia, and singer and dancer Rosita Fernandez. Trevino has been painting for more than fifty years and fortunately Anthony Head’s publication, Spirit: The Life and Art of Jesse Trevino, provides us with a fuller account of Trevino’s remarkable life.

Jesse Trevino is one of San Antonio’s great living treasures and everyone appreciates his many artistic accomplishments.





## *The Westside's Gateway Businesses*

(By Dr. Ricardo Romo)

Mexican American businesses in San Antonio date back to the early 1850s shortly after Tejanos, as they were called, became American citizens by virtue of the American victory in the war with Mexico.

Latino businesses were generally small family enterprises, and the majority of the initial family-run businesses disappeared by the 20th century. With the exception of Jose Cassiano and his heirs who outfitted cowboys and the cattle drives, we know little about these 19th century San Antonio businesses. This is because the early observers and historians never thought it important to mention them.

This essay is an account of a few of the 20th century Mexican American businesses that contributed to the expansion of the city's Westside. In the 1920s Latinos began moving west from the center of town (Laredito)--and with their movement west, Latino businesses gained new customers by providing services and goods to Mexican immigrants who were arriving in significant numbers during the Mexican Revolution and the 1920s.

Mexican Americans were especially active in the food industries. The B. Martinez Sons Company, which sold tortillas and other corn products, opened its doors in San Antonio in 1896 (initially known as El Azteca Molinos). Located on Leona Street just west of San Pedro Creek, the business is listed today as a tortilla factory and it recently celebrated 123 years of making corn products in San Antonio. The factory, across the street from the Navarro Achievement Center, has a long history. The company was founded by Jose Bartolome Martinez, known as Bartolo Martinez in the 1910s.



Roy G. Martinez, a grandson of the senior Martinez, notes that Martinez Sr. founded his first mill on Dolorosa Street in the heart of Laredito, the first large Mexican barrio of San Antonio. As the mill produced more and more masa (corn) it moved to a larger space on Leona Street where it resides today. On a daily basis, Martinez produced huge volumes of masa, known by its trade name Tamalina, a dehydrated corn flour used to make tortillas, tamales, and corn chips.

Roy G. Martinez and other members of the Bartolo Martinez family credit their grandfather with selling more corn than anyone in the United States in the early 20th century. The family also credits the elder Martinez with commercializing corn chips in America.

Bartolo Martinez was certainly a pioneering Latino businessman of a national stature. He introduced ideas on how to mass produce tortillas to an American market, as well as how to take surplus tortillas and turn them into corn chips. Today there are about 418 tortilla factories in the United States whose sales amount to \$5 billion in revenue annually.

Another businessman in the Westside neighborhood, Fernando Guerra, attended elementary school across the street from B. Martinez Sons Company and went on to the University of Texas to study pharmacy. After his graduation, Guerra worked at the Socorro Drug Store and Navarro Drug Store before opening his own pharmacy on the corner of South Pecos and Guadalupe. Guerra's Drug Store and the surrounding neighborhood were the gateway to the growing Westside of San Antonio.

As San Antonio Westsiders traveled west on Guadalupe Street, passed the Martinez Funeral Home, and crossed the railroad tracks, the three major icons of the Westside--the Guadalupe Theater, the Progreso Drug Store, and Progreso Theater--became visible.

The Progreso Theater opened in the late 1920s just as the film industry converted from silent to “talking” movies. Former Texas State Senator Joe Bernal grew up a block from the barrio theater district and remembers selling candy to customers entering the Progreso Theater in the mid-1930s.

Bernal loved watching movies at the Progreso and would stand near the entrance on Tuesdays and Thursdays when “dos por uno” (two for one) promotions were in effect. He got in free by convincing someone attending the movie alone to include him. On the weekends the Progreso offered popular Hollywood movies featuring Tarzan and Flash Gordon.

Bernal called the corner of Brazos and Guadalupe the “center of my universe.” His father’s cousin, Pedro Bernal, operated the Progreso Drug Store and his family frequented Progreso Cafe, a Mexican restaurant next door owned by Santos Villarreal’s family.

These three businesses were located on Brazos and Guadalupe, across from the well-known Casa Grande Restaurant. After school and on the weekends, Bernal and his friends would stop by Casa Grande or Progreso Cafe next to Progreso Drugs to buy pan dulce. In the late 1930s, Casa Grande was owned by Pancho and Rosa Gomez. No other intersection in the Westside of San Antonio had as much popularity and fame.



Bernal’s Guadalupe neighborhood included the Black Cat taxi stand next to the Guadalupe Theater, as well as the Mexican Christian Institute, a block away on Guadalupe and San Jacinto. Bernal worked part-time at the Mexican Christian Center under the direction of executive director E.G. Luna. Bernal had fond memories of taking woodwork classes at the Inman Center on Colima and San Jacinto which the Mexican Christian Center operated. The Inman Center offered after-school programs in the arts and crafts as well as family counseling.

A major Federal Housing project came to San Antonio in 1938 and changed the landscape of the Westside. By 1939, the land had been acquired to build two large public housing structures in the Guadalupe church Parrish area.



The Alazan Courts were completed in 1941 and the Apache Courts followed that same year. Green Peyton, author of San Antonio: City in the Sun, wrote that the “two projects covered about sixty acres--ten city blocks” providing housing for 1,180 families or nearly sixty-five hundred people.

My own family moved to the new Apache Courts on the southern edge of the housing project in 1941. They did not stay long as my dad joined the Army Air Corp after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and we moved to the back of my grandmother’s grocery store on 900 Leal Street.

In 1941, a construction crew had already demolished Juan Vidauri’s tire shop on the corner of Guadalupe and Brazos streets and had started building the Guadalupe Theater. The famed theatre opened its doors in 1942, just as the Westside was sending its sons and daughters to fight in World War II.

The theater took the name Guadalupe to compliment the well-known Guadalupe Catholic Church located one block north on El Paso Street. Centrally located, the Guadalupe Theater and Guadalupe Church stood at the hub of a newly created commercial zone west of downtown.

There had never been a better time to open a Spanish language theater than in the 1940s. The Guadalupe Theater opened as “La Epoca de Oro” (the Golden Era of Mexican Cinema) was underway. In this famous cinema period, 1936-1958, Mexico’s film industry flourished, and Mexican films gained great popularity in the barrios of the United States as well as in South America and Spain. For the Spanish speaking world, Mexican films featuring great singers, beautiful actresses, and entertaining comedians more than filled the movie void. The Guadalupe Theater featured only Spanish language movies, while the Progreso Theater offered English language movies on the weekends. The Westsiders flocked to the Guadalupe to see Pedro Infante, Jorge Negrete, Maria Felix, and Dolores de Rio, but for many movie fans, young and old, the films by Cantiflas and Tin Tan delighted the most. In the age before television, everyone went to the movies.

The early success of both the Progreso and Guadalupe Theaters demonstrated that Westsiders appreciated neighborhood entertainment venues. While film lovers from the Westside could see movies at the downtown Spanish-language theaters, they actually had a choice of two excellent movie houses on Guadalupe and Brazos streets.

Much has changed in the old commercial hub of the Westside. Today the Guadalupe and Brazos corner is home to the Guadalupe Cultural Center which uses the old Guadalupe theater for cultural events. The Cultural Center has also opened a small gallery at the old Progreso Drug Store. The Progreso Cafe and Progreso Theater closed their doors in the early 1960s and today the buildings are utilized by numerous Guadalupe cultural activists. Near the corner is the well-known Jesse Trevino Veladora sculpture, a new art landmark for the neighborhood.

The entrepreneurial spirit is still thriving in the Westside. Many of San Antonio's 44,000 Latino small businesses are located west of I-35. Westside businesses include small barber shops, pharmacies, funeral homes, raspa stands, and food trucks. Nonetheless, Westsiders continue to spend more and more each year in the larger national chains, such as Family Dollar and McDonald's.



### *Elizondo Flower Shop - Castroville Road History*

(By Rachel Delgado)



WPA interviewed Olga Elizondo Perez, second generation owner, about the family flower shop. The third generation also helps run the business founded in 1924. Olga said that up to the mid-30s, cattle were still herded down Castroville Rd. on the way to the stockyards. When this happened, they had to rush to bring in the tubs of flowers. The original house was added on to and is part of what is 445 Castroville Rd. The Belgian farms came up to Castroville Rd where the cemetery and the Las Palmas Shopping Center are now.

Olga Elizondo Perez's story (from her email): "Since 1921 when Juan and Margarita Elizondo were forced by Mother Nature (the big flood of September 1921) to move to higher ground. That was a lot on Castroville Rd. which they paid \$100 for. Mr. and Mrs. Elizondo had to work pretty hard in order to make the payments. A humble house was built at which Margarita would later add plants and flowers.



About that time, San Fernando Cemetery #2 opened. When people visiting the graves saw her yard, they would stop and ask about buying some of her flowers. She would end up selling a big armful of flowers for 5 or 10 cents. So that's how it all started. I say with a lot of pride and love to everything and of serving our community for all this time. We paid our first business license about 1928. Isn't that wonderful. We love San Antonio and our community!"

Public Comments Business grew on commercial corridor for Westside community. Three generations. It's Westside and supports cemeteries. The family service is of great value. Thanks to San Antonio and our Westside community for giving the opportunity to serve you with great pride from 1925 to the present, our humble business will be there to carry on. Thanks again, Elizondo's / Olga Elizondo Perez the original shotgun house is inside the building. An original wall can be seen from a workroom. It exists for our "ante-pasados" who are buried at San Fernando Cemetery. The affordable flowers and wreaths sold at Elizondo's allowed us to show our respect to our deceased relatives and friends.



## Dreamonoids Westside HI-FI Speaker Shop - Bringing Concert Sound Home

(By Isa Fernandez)



Dr. Joey Lopez, a San Antonio native, received his B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin in New Media, a specialized Act Lab program headed by Sandy Stone, who is well known for being one of the founders of Transgender Studies, a sound recording engineer who memorably worked with Jimi Hendrix, and a former employee of Bell Labs, which was akin in the 50s what Google is today. The core tenants of the Act Lab program were to “make stuff, take risks and be awesome” said Lopez.

Lopez took that attitude to the University of the Incarnate Word where he ran a convergent media program as a professor. He met future business partner Christian Rios, a student at the time earning his degree in the discipline who shared a love for HI-FI stereo and gaming. Rios refamiliarized Lopez with the San Antonio scene after returning from Austin and they joked about one day starting a HI-FI shop, which Lopez had experience with having helped run Concert Sound, a local HI-FI shop (now located in Austin operating as an importer of electronics) from 2000-2010.

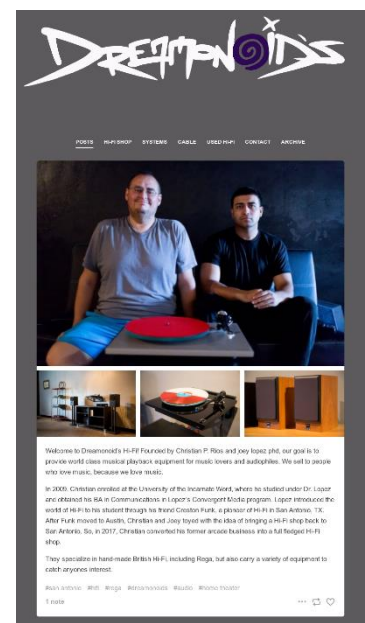
Rios, an industrious student interested in business development, found the building which would become an arcade first, then the HI-FI shop in 2013 after an exhaustive search on the South and West sides of town. The name “dreamonoid” is based off “asteroids, gallika, dream cast...back when I was in college there was Sega-Dream Cast and I was torrenting and a member of demonoids, which was an invite-only torrent site that had some good stuff. And so, one day, I used to DJ in college for extra cash and I need an alias and was on “demonoid” playing Dream Cast and I just googled it and literally, no one has it, so I got the domain name.”

The building is a bright and colorful graffiti-like mural painted by artist Louie Chavez of Laredo. It depicts stereotypes, cartoon characters, a bustier-wearing woman appearing to enjoy music and the phrase “make the city shake.” Prior, the building was home to nonprofit Hope Action Care and was carpeted with many rooms. Rios demoed and cleared out the place, filling it with 20-30 arcade machines, including pinball. Although it was successful, it closed after two and a half years because it wasn’t the vision Rios had hoped for which was to be “a haven for young youths” from the community. Instead, it became more of a hang-out spot for adult males that ended up driving away kids, who had to wait too long for advanced adult gamers to finish exhaustive gaming sessions. With the help of a friend and his former professor, Joey Lopez, Dreamonoids 2.0 was reimagined as the business it is today selling exclusive HI-FI products.

Lopez knew how to get in touch with distributors from his work with Concert Sound and Rios knew how to run a business. They formed a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC), working with a lawyer and a CPA and began the business, advertising solely online. The prices range is 1k to 30k, so they only need a few customers a month to be profitable. They also sell used equipment ranging from “a hundred to a couple of thousands” and can recommend sound systems at all levels for anyone who comes into the shop.

People will come in to see hundreds of records ranging from Beethoven to 2Pac from the private collection of Lopez to hear firsthand the quality of the music they love blasting from handmade sound equipment. I am played a demo of Led Zeppelin’s “Whole Lotta Love” and indeed, it sounded like I was seeing the band play live. So, not only are you paying for world-class quality but for the livable wages paid to the adult artisans working at Rega (the primary brand they sell) who handmade the equipment. Once customers decide on the type of speaker, turntable or stereo they want, Dreamonoids places an order with the distributor and it is delivered.

In addition to working towards the growth Dreamonoids, the team is active in helping the community thrive and other businesses develop. Says Lopez, “There is a network from San Antonio, Austin and College Station that Dr. Joey Lopez helps to “cross-pollinate.” Lopez now has his own lab at Texas A and M and is receiving funding to build a New Media program which focuses on social and cultural issues, such as the intersection of homelessness and meth addiction.



This is a topic he is studying with an addiction physician from Boston to find out “how much of it is mental health, how much of it is drugs, how much of it is homelessness, what’s contributing to the cycle.”

Another is an idea Lopez and Rios are working on is one with Launch SA (the local program focused on educating and supporting small business), which focuses on entrepreneurship at the collegiate level. The goal is to have students work collaboratively with small businesses as a pipeline of resources to help businesses develop. As a professor, Lopez builds his program and promotes community engagement, “so it works serendipitously with what I do.” The duo is knowledgeable about the resources that have helped them, such as the matching grant they received from geographic nonprofit, Westside Development Corporation, to help repair a costly A/C. Lopez and Rios have a 5 to 10- year plan. They are currently in year two going on year three. They did not take a business loan. They went lean, taking a “boot strap approach.... We aren’t looking at our immediate success. We’re looking at building long term, personal relationships with our customers, vendors, and distributors.” 1711 Guadalupe St. San Antonio, Texas 78207 Business Hours: Saturday and Sunday 12-5 PM (Appointments available for other days) 210-880-5706, email Dreamonoids@gmail.com <https://www.dreamonoids.com/> <http://www.rega.co.uk/> Call or visit for best pricing.

### *Puffy Taco Icon - Ray's Drive Inn*

(By Melinda Gonzalez)



“Hello, Welcome to Ray’s!” The friendly and genuine greeting from several employees provides a warm welcome as you enter Ray’s Drive Inn, located on 800 block of Southwest 19th Street and Guadalupe Street, adjacent to Castroville Rd.

Following in his parent’s entrepreneurial footsteps, Raymond “Ray” Lopez opened up Ray’s Drive Inn on the

Westside of San Antonio in 1956. From that moment, the building that was once known as the Cibolo’s Icehouse was transformed into the future home of the infamous Puffy Taco.

In 1982, Ray unfortunately became ill, but was able to sell the restaurant to his brother Arthur “Arturo” who took pride in continuing to craft the Westside San Antonio icon that we all know and love. On November 3, 1992, “Ray’s Drive Inn” received the Official “Trademark” for the “Puffy Taco”. Arturo became known as the “King of Puffy Taco” and passed on his legacy to his children. His daughter Maria Rambo “Lollie” is now partial owner of the restaurant and still owns the house across the street where Arturo was born and raised in.

Ray’s Drive Inn is a special place. You can feel it as soon as you walk in the door. Oldies music plays in the background and you are surrounded by memorabilia that has either been in the Lopez family for generations or has been donated. General Manager, Norma Navarro, fully embraces the history and legacy of Ray’s. You can see it in the way she respects the traditional characteristics that make the restaurant special and leads by the example of hard work guided by corazon. She tells her staff, “Serve with love, don’t serve a plate.”

On June 24, Ray’s survived a grease fire that was thankfully contained to the kitchen. Norma Navarro was shocked to receive the news on a Monday when the restaurant is usually closed but rushed over and did not hesitate to work late to ensure that everything was in place to open up on schedule the following day. The history and memories contained within Ray’s were safe. If you get a chance to walk through the building, you will see pictures and paintings that tell the story of the Lopez family - 3 sisters and 5 brothers - one of which is the owner of Henry’s Puffy Tacos that opened in 1978. In the back room sits Arturo’s beloved truck, which is now retired, but has previously been a fixture in Fiestas’ Battle of Flowers Parade.

Mary Lou Beltran has worked at Ray’s Drive Inn for 14 years and takes pride in knowing that she is part of the history and the future of the restaurant. “The atmosphere, it feels so nice. People come here and they say that they feel like they are at home. It’s a family environment,” says Mary Lou.

Ray's Drive Inn will always be the historic Westside San Antonio icon that has proved throughout the decades that tradition, quality, and love are the cornerstones of delicious food and that feeling of being at home. "These cooks that I have back there have been here over 37 years. Same hands, same cooks. The traditions have stayed. From when they first started, until now," says Norma, General Manager.

Along with other San Antonio staples, Ray's Drive Inn was recently listed as one of the top 25 restaurants to try before you die by the San Antonio Current. In addition to their Puffy Tacos that come with a variety of fillings like picadillo and carne guisada, Ray's Drive Inn offers savory crispy dogs along with a full menu of options you can pair with a cold beer of your choice. There has long been rumors of a rivalry between Henry's Puffy Tacos and Ray's Drive Inn, but to my surprise and honor, I had the privilege of seeing Henry himself walk through the doors of Ray's Drive Inn and sit down for a meal as I concluded my interview with Norma and Mary Lou.

Despite numerous celebrity visits and national attention, Ray's is humble true to its roots. They know their customers and their customers know them. Norma adds, "Arturo never changed anything and stayed true. Ray's is where everything started. This is the original." Follow them on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RaysDriveInn/>



### ***Madonna Center, Inc.***



Madonna Center helps individuals and families improve their daily lives through education, connections to resources, healthy aging and a sense of community. The agency was founded in 1939 by the Sisters of Divine Providence as the Girls' Club of San Antonio and occupied a former residence at 403 Dwyer Avenue.

In 1941, the agency was accepted as a member of the Community Chest, the forerunner to today's United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County. Five "extension units" were set up in 1944 to better serve the membership from several parts of the city. Around the same time groups for women were organized, and when the girls requested co-educational groups, boys were admitted to some of the social clubs. From then on, the Girl's Club emphasized family membership and had groups for adults as well as for boys and girls of every age.

As services continued, the demand was too great for the staff time available and it also became clear that the building was far too small for the membership. A building fund drive was started and was enthusiastically supported by the staff and board of directors and, in a special way, by the members themselves who worked hard on various projects to raise the necessary money. In September 1956 the new building at 1906 Castroville Road opened for fall the program. About the same time, the Constitution of the agency was revised, the board of directors voted to formally change the name of the agency to Madonna Neighborhood Centers. 1906 Castroville Road San Antonio, Texas 78237 (210) 432-2374 [info@madonnacentersa.org](mailto:info@madonnacentersa.org)

### ***La Monita Tortilleria - Third Generation Fresh, Handmade Tamales Worth Driving Out of Town For*** (By Isa Fernandez)

Selma, Texas resident Joe Valdez drives nearly 20 miles into San Antonio routinely and expressly for *La Monita Tortilleria's* masa-based, fresh, never reheated fare. "If it was not good, I wouldn't drive out so far," he went out of his way to tell me upon realizing I was profiling the business. A sweet gentleman, Mr. Valdez is a regular and chats with the friendly staff, some of whom have worked there for 20 years, while he waits for his order. After he gets his order, they wish him a safe drive home and a wonderful weekend. He poses for a photo for me, reciprocates the well-wishes and promises to return.



“This generation takes as much pride as the older generation,” says Richard, telling me about the history of his family-owned business, established in 1952 by his grandfather Henry Garza. In 1976, Henry sold the business to his son Joe, Richard’s father. He ran the business for nearly 20 years until he passed away in 1995. Showing me photos of family that prominently hang on walls, Richard tells me that not only did he lose his father, but a great friend. His mother Ramona took the helm of the business when Henry passed away and in 2015, Richard and his wife Nadine began running *La Monita Tortilleria*, which has since more than doubled in business. Richard and Nadine are a sweet and benevolent couple. Knowing that I am a vegetarian, they ensure I sample their corn-based products, home-made salsas, with ripe avocado.



They recently celebrated their 22<sup>nd</sup> wedding anniversary and have four children ages 14-20 who continuing the family legacy, help on the weekends, which not surprisingly is the busiest time of the week. The Garzas, along with employee and friend Damarys Garza (unrelated), give me a tour of the facility. It is a hands-on operation full of friendly and cheerful staff, excited to show me an 80-year old metal machine that has been in the family for three generations. Each generation has used the machine to make masa out of corn, which was then made into tortillas, tamales, gorditas and other maiz-based specialties. *La Monita Tortilleria* is by any standard, a hands-on operation. Tamales, tortillas, carnitas, barbacoa, menudo, charro beans and chicharones are all hand-made. Special orders of five dozen or more tamales using unique ingredients (for example, vegan “meats”, non-animal-based oils, vegetables, basically any ingredient you could dream of!) can be ordered two-weeks in advance. Their prices are less expensive than average for a dozen tamales and being hand-made, an artisan treat. Be sure to get there before noon on Sundays, because everything sells out quickly and for good reason.

*La Monita Tortilleria* namesake t-shirts along with hojas de maiz for sale fill the interior of glass countertops which are covered in colorful sarapes. Potted plants in mosaic pots large and small line the floors and windows sills, along with silhouettes of pottery-form farm animals. Candy, toy and temporary tattoo dispensers are near benches where customers can wait for orders while the young and the young at heart have fun with their surprise coin purchases. Portraits of cows with kind eyes line the walls, as well as original artwork by local artist Joe Villarreal which depict Latin o families and are available for purchase. *La Prensa Texas* papers are available for customers too and are a favorite among locals, Richard tells me. Meeting customers who demonstrate sincere comradery with owners Richard and Nadine Garza and staff, seeing the business cards of wonderful artist Joe Villarreal and being treated like family...it’s a great indication that *La Monita Tortilleria* is a community staple and legacy business in the truest sense and worth visiting routinely. 3202 Guadalupe St, San Antonio, TX 78207 Wed-Fri (7:00 AM-4:00 PM), Sat-Sun (5:30 AM-3:00 PM) 210-432-0332

***Medicare Solutions, Inc. -  
A Legacy of Caring for Older Adults and People with Disabilities***  
(By Isa Fernandez)

A diagnosis of kidney failure led former Humana insurance agent John Rivera, a Westside San Antonio, Texas native, into the complicated maze of Medicare, Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Disability. The experience fueled his desire to create *Medicare Solutions, Inc.* in 2004. His goal? To help adults 65 and older and people with disabilities seeking assistance avoid the complex web of confusion he faced when seeking services himself.



Branching out from his career at Humana into *Medicare Solutions, Inc.*, John built a dedicated client base by offering what office receptionist Elizabeth Roque described as “above and beyond” services. Staff keep in touch with clients by sending annual birthday and Christmas cards, holding customer luncheons, planning group Bingo nights and even hosting extraordinary group trips out of town. Home visits and after-hour appointments are available if planned in advance, an accommodation especially helpful to clients with mobility and transportation concerns. Anyone needing assistance with understanding complex medical mail are always welcome by dedicated staff, which also includes agent Fernando Sanchez and John’s daughter Monica, who began working alongside her father, founder and President of *Medicare Solutions, Inc.*, in 2012. Services are covered by insurance and are of no-cost to the customer.



In 2016, the unexpected passing of founder John Rivera drove daughter Monica Rivera into the role as President of *Medicare Solutions, Inc.*, continuing her father's legacy of care and her career in serving the community in need. The traditional hands-on approach to customer service begun by her father is still evident today. In working with clients, understandably confused by the process of enrollment, Monica grasps the confusion faced by clients.

*"They're either starting out on Medicare, (or) they're about to be active, they're about to turn 65 (and ask), 'What do I do, do I need Medicare Part B, or do I not? What do I do, how much money is going to be taken out of my Social Security? How can I maybe avoid that cost?' So, we walk them through. We get them set up on either if they want a supplement plan or a drug plan because they will get penalized if they don't get that. And a lot of people don't know that, that they will get penalized if they don't get on a Part C plan or on a drug plan."* She also relayed that *Medicare Solutions, Inc.* will work with people with newly diagnosed disabilities, "sticking with them" during the lengthy two-year requirement of being on SSI Disability until Medicare kicks-in and helping them find out what they can do in the meantime.

Now two years after her father and founder of *Medicare Solutions, Inc.* John Rivera passed away, Monica is honoring her father's dream that she take over the business one day and continue her career path serving others. Today, she is building on the successful foundation begun by her father - beginning with an updated office. Currently, the office is located at 1410 Guadalupe St., #120 San Antonio, TX 78207, but Monica tells me they will soon move to 2014 Hackberry, San Antonio, 78210 to "spread our wings a little bit." The Hackberry office has more parking spaces for clients and also includes a large conference room for special group events. The move will occur in the next few months after all clients are made aware of the change of address through flyers and social media. Ensuring all clients know about the move ahead of time so they can make proper travel arrangements for appointments will help safeguard a seamless transition to the new location, which is especially important to clients who need to make travel arrangements for appointments. With the move, Monica expects to expand the clientele base more broadly, which is a goal anyone concerned about those in need can support.



**Business Hours:** Monday-Friday, 9:00 AM-4:00 PM. Special appointments on the weekend and home visit appointments are available if scheduled in advance.

**Location:** 1410 Guadalupe St., #120 San Antonio, TX 78207 - moving to new address 2014 Hackberry, San Antonio 210-354-2276 [Mchavarria10@yahoo.com](mailto:Mchavarria10@yahoo.com) Online: [www.wemakemedicareeasy.com](http://www.wemakemedicareeasy.com) (currently under construction).

## CULEBRA

# LA PRENSA TEXAS

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## La Calle Culebra

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## *The Culebra Street Westside A Unique Area*

*(By Dr. Ricardo Romo)*



The Culebra Street corridor is the only community on the Westside where for over a half a century (1930-1980) Latinos, Blacks and Anglos lived in close proximity. In the last fifty years the community has changed dramatically in terms of racial and ethnic mix, but the diverse history of the neighborhood is important. My mother, Alicia Saenz, grew up just south of Culebra Street and lived on Leal and Ruiz during the period 1930-1945. Her dad, Jose Maria Saenz, lived on Ruiz most of his life, two blocks from his son Jesus Saenz, who worked for the railroad and as a garage mechanic before starting his own company, Saenz Electric. My mom's sister, Frances Gonzalez, lived four houses from their dad's house.

My grandfather's eldest son, Jesus Saenz, and his wife joined the Virgil Elizondo family as caretakers of Christ The King church on Leal Street. The Elizondo's had a grocery store across the street from the church which was less than fifty yards from their home. Virgil Elizondo, who became a Catholic priest in the 1960s, went on to head San Fernando Cathedral. He also taught religion for many years at Notre Dame University. I recall going to watch movies in the Christ The King church yards. Along a tall church wall priests and nuns hung a large bed sheet and used a movie projector to show Mexican movies. However, before 1970, few Latinos lived north of Culebra. It was the old Northside. The neighborhood's two schools, Horace Mann Middle School and Jefferson High School, enrolled a largely Anglo majority student population. Irving Middle School enrolled almost all Mexican American students, and the majority of Latinos from the neighborhood went to Tech High School.



This Culebra Street corridor, which in the 1940-1970 era consisted of a vast area between Culebra on the north and Martin on the south, was bordered by Colorado Street on the eastern section and 36th street on the western side. This area remained largely segregated during this period. In the pre-Richard Nixon era, communities across the south vigorously sought to keep the racial divide or Jim Crow segregation in place. In 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court chipped away at segregation when it handed down the Brown vs. Board of Education decision making segregated schools illegal. The civil rights laws of the Lyndon Johnson administration followed, but southern states, Texas included, sought to turn the clock back on racial equality and social justice. The Culebra Street corridor had a unique feature as a Westside community. Culebra Street was a major thoroughfare, but it also served as the racial and ethnic divide between Anglos and Mexicans in the city. Historian David Montejano, who grew up in the neighborhood south of Culebra Street, has elaborated on the growing racial tensions in that part of the city in the aftermath of the 1954 Brown decision. His essay on this topic appears in this issue of La Prensa Texas. The essay previously appeared in the Texas Observer.



Latinos began to cross to the northern side of Culebra Street in the mid-1950s to attend Horace Mann Middle School which was north of Woodlawn Ave. While my family lived on Monterey Street in the Westside, my parents insisted that my brother Henry and I attend Horace Mann instead of Irving Middle School. Henry and I arrived at Mann in 1956, the second year of the educational integration experiment.

Most San Antonio schools were still segregated by residential boundaries for Latinos. Prior to 1954 Blacks attended segregated schools and were restricted from buying property in White neighborhoods. Schools such as

Mann were more than 95 percent white until the school boundaries changed in 1955.

The integration of San Antonio schools, which began in 1954, allowed students from the barrios to attend high schools outside of the Westside. In 1955 Horace Mann enrolled students from the Menchaca Courts (all Latinos) for the first time. The housing project, just south of Culebra Street near 24th had previously sent all of its students to Irving Middle School. In 1956, Horace Mann was over 90 percent Anglo and it seemed to me that less than 50 Latino students were enrolled. The inclusion of Latino students from the southern side of Culebra Street at Horace Mann appears to have introduced social integration problems.

The Garcia family which lived on Blue Ridge near the Menchaca Courts enrolled their oldest son Jesse at Horace Mann in 1957. The following year the Garcia family attempted to enroll their younger son Eddie but were told that



the school district boundaries had changed, and he would have to attend Irving. The city bus which took us from the Westside to Horace Mann then went on to Jefferson High School. There were no African American students at Mann in the 1950s, but they were permitted to enroll at Jefferson High School. Our bus route took us past the Popular and Zarzamora Street intersection where African American students boarded our bus on their way to Jefferson. Despite the limited attempts to desegregate San Antonio schools, the ethnic racial communities remained largely segregated.

The African American community was concentrated in the area between Ruiz and Culebra, largely near the Zarzamora commercial district, known at that time as Lincoln Heights. The origins of the African American community in the west end of San Antonio has an interesting history which may be traced to the immediate post-Civil War era (post 1865) when Dr. Anthony Michael Dignowity, a physician and Czech immigrant, registered city land sales to Black families. Dr. Dignowity, who built his home in the area that is now known as Dignowity Hills in the eastside of the city, was an abolitionist according to Everett L. Fly, San Antonio architect and historian. Fly has documented the sale of residential property in San Antonio to African Americans during the second half of the 19th century.

By the early 1940s, the African American community was centered in one large neighborhood surrounding Lincoln Courts, one of the city's segregated public housing units. Growing up, I visited my grandparents often and would spend the evenings playing basketball at Dunbar Middle School. There, on the basketball courts, I met a young Dunbar middle school student by the name of Warren McVea, who became a Texas football hero. By the time Warren McVea finished high school, he was the African American community's most famous resident. Warren McVea lived two blocks from Dunbar Middle School and two blocks from my grandfather's house. In high school, McVea scored nearly 600 points over three football seasons, including 38 points in a playoff game with Robert E. Lee High School. McVea received 75 scholarship offers, most from out-of-state schools, but McVea's mother convinced him to stay in Texas. McVea is credited with breaking the color barrier in Texas college football when he enrolled at the University of Houston in 1964. At the University of Houston, McVea set a school record as a runner, receiver and kick return specialist with 3,009 career all-purpose yards. He played in the NFL for six seasons earning a Super Bowl ring in the Kansas City's Chiefs 23-7 victory over the Minnesota Vikings in 1970.

The Culebra neighborhood produced many other well-known San Antonians. Over many years the Culebra corridor was home to Latino businessmen and women, musicians, and politicians, including former San Antonio mayor Ed Garza. Former City Councilwoman Mary Alice Cisneros lived in the Culebra Street corridor on Perez Street. Her parents, Porfirio and Annie Perez, raised nine children on income from a grocery store and bakery. They initially sold groceries out of the house, eventually opening the Perez Grocery Store in the late forties.



In a 2007 Texas Monthly story, Mary Alice told reporter Jan Jarboe Russell: "All nine children worked in the store, which became as famous for its role as a mom-and-pop bank and social service agency as it was for its pan dulce and barbacoa." Mary Alice told Russell that as a young girl she remembered "helping customers translate their immigration papers, cashing checks marked with an X for neighbors who could not read or write, as well as stacking groceries, waiting on customers, and working the cash register." She met her future husband Henry Cisneros at a neighborhood baseball game when she was 12. They married seven years later.

The Culebra corridor community has been losing its diversity over the past 50 years and soon the neighborhood will have almost a total Latino population. Located in the 78207-zip code area identified as one of the poorest areas of San Antonio, this region now has a public-school enrollment that is 97.2 percent Latino. The African American population in the Culebra corridor resided largely in the area of Lincoln Courts (Zarzamora to 19th Street) and in the surrounding dwellings between Ruiz and Culebra. Drawing from U.S. Census data, it is estimated that African Americans in this community numbered 1,823 in 2014, a decline of five hundred residents from the previous count in 2010.

Most people consider the Westside a Latino community, but the African American residents have an important history in the Westside that should not be overlooked by historians. Moreover, the Culebra Street corridor is one of the culturally rich neighborhoods that has contributed greatly to the social fabric of the city. Photos from the Dr. Ricardo Romo Family albums.



## *Crossing the Snake*

(By David Montejano)



San Antonio native David Montejano is professor of ethnic studies at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1936-1986*, and editor of *Chicano Politics and Society in the Late Twentieth Century*. To a child in 1950s San Antonio, the segregation of Anglo, black and Mexican seemed like a natural division. I grew up in a West Side neighborhood in the Edgewood School District, one of the poorest in the state and later famous for its successful legal challenge of state education finance. My neighborhood was a poor, working-class enclave bracketed by poorer neighborhoods on three sides. Like much of the West Side, my barrio experienced annual floods and periodic gang violence. Menchaca Courts, a

public housing project and base for the local youth gang, was a few blocks away.

As adolescents, my brother and sister and I had a few run-ins consisting of rock-throwing and verbal insults with the young pachucos of Menchaca Courts. On the fourth side, across a wide thoroughfare, was the middle-class, Anglo North Side. The avenue was Culebra, meaning “snake,” an appropriate name for the line between Anglo and Mexican. I recall as much tension crossing Culebra and walking through the white neighborhood as when walking by Menchaca Courts. My working-class neighborhood afforded views of economic contrast: a checkered pattern within the neighborhood as many families struggled to make ends meet, obvious poverty close by—and across the asphalt boundary of Culebra, what seemed like affluence. In a curious way, my writing reflects this neighborhood perspective.

Some 20 years ago, with *Anglos and Mexicans*, I addressed the racial boundary represented by Culebra Avenue. I wanted to unlock the mystery of segregation. Neither sociology nor history had much to say about this mystery back then. At the time, Texas history was dominated by the likes of Walter Prescott Webb and J. Frank Dobie. If Mexicans showed up in history texts, they usually made cameo appearances as bandits, criminals or immigrants. The absence of serious treatment had fostered a popular amnesia about the Southwest and its long Mexican presence. There was no sense of contradiction in “remembering the Alamo” and portraying Mexicans as immigrants.

Prominent scholars—see Peter Skerry, *Mexican Americans: The Ambivalent Minority*, or Samuel Huntington, *Who Are We?*—have even questioned whether Mexicans experienced racial discrimination and deserved civil rights protections. Given such ahistorical thinking, I wrote *Anglos and Mexicans* to establish the long Mexican presence and describe the changing relations between the two peoples since “the fall of the Alamo.”

One insight came not from my doctoral program at Yale University, but from the city of New Haven where I lived. The people I identified as “Anglo” in Texas were not “Anglo” in Connecticut. My Italian American friends, my Irish friends, my Jewish friends all distanced themselves from the term. Some were emphatic about the matter. In retrospect, this was a humorous realization, but for a 22-year-old Chicano from Texas, understanding that not all “Anglos” were alike—a misperception that issued from segregation itself—was an important discovery. If the identity of “Anglo” carried no purchase in Connecticut, then it was a socialpolitical construction in Texas. If that were the case, “Mexican” identity was likewise a socialpolitical construction whose meaning could vary across space and time. The collapse of internal distinctions within the Mexican American community—thinking all “Mexicans” were alike—was closely associated with the introduction of commercial agriculture in early 20th-century South Texas.

The old Mexican ranch elite, which prided itself on its Castilian European roots, had been displaced by the beginning of the century. The emerging elite was made up of newcomer commercial farmers from the Midwest and the South. Ignorant of Texas history, they drew no distinctions among social classes of the Texas-Mexican community, nor between Texas Mexicans and Mexican immigrants. A Mexican was simply a Mexican. The overlay of ethnicity with social class in the newcomer farm society, in which growers were “Anglo” and workers were “Mexican,” created a sturdy, 20th-century foundation for segregation. *WHILE ANGLOS AND MEXICANS* focused on the making of segregation, *Quixote’s Soldiers* focuses on the social movement that brought down its last political vestiges. In this book, I highlight the struggle for political access and social equality by a mobilized Mexican American community during the late ‘60s and early ‘70s. It is a narrative explanation of the sharp political

challenge “from below” that upset the paternalistic rule of the Anglo elite, with repercussions for the rest of Texas and the Southwest. I argue that the organizing lessons learned in San Antonio continue to influence Latino politics throughout the country.

My experiences growing up in Texas led me to focus on street youths, or *batos locos* (crazy guys), who joined the Chicano movement. Given the popular image of these *batos* as gang members, their politicization intrigued me. As with my previous work, I can trace my fascination to autobiographical moments, in this case to my freshman year in college. When I graduated from high school in 1966, I spent my freshman year at Southwest Texas State College (now Texas State University) in San Marcos. Though hardly more than an hour away by automobile, I felt I had traveled back in time. I was shocked by the blatant, oppressive segregation of the town. Perhaps better said, as an 18-year-old I was learning that segregation was not a natural phenomenon, but the accumulated result of policies and social practices. San Marcos was a Southern town then, with a Western flavor.

One incident introduced me to this reality. As a friend and I walked toward a gas station one night, by the station’s lights we could see five Anglos, in full cowboy attire and obviously drunk, pull in and demand service. The Mexican American attendant, who had started to walk toward the car, declined to serve them after hearing racist insults. The cowboys got out of the car and threatened to show “the Meskin a lesson in manners.” My friend and I, a short distance away in the shadows, had seconds to decide what to do. Out of the dark, in a wide circle, came about 10 *pachucos*. They took off their belts as they walked, picking up rocks and shouting insults. The cowboys climbed into the car as the *chucos* surrounded them and began to kick the automobile. It looked like the cowboys might get a lesson in manners. A couple *batos* looked for something to throw at the windshield. A cop pulled in, apparently in response to the attendant’s call. I expected the worst for the *batos*, but he merely separated the groups and let them go their ways. As the cowboys pulled out, one halfway leaned out a window and shouted, “Remember the Alamo!” The *batos* responded with a volley of insults. The commotion died down, and the *batos* walked into the darkness. The drama was surreal. It was one of those moments that reinforced my curiosity about racial and ethnic relations.

The resistance shown by the *pachuco* youth made me realize my adolescent image of *pachucos* as delinquents was naive. This awareness informs and guides much of my analysis in *Quixote’s Soldiers*. I associate that summer in San Marcos with another moment. Striking farmworkers from the lower Rio Grande Valley marched through town, and I joined them as they made their way to the state Capitol for a Labor Day rally. It was my introduction to Austin. Later I transferred to the University of Texas, where I participated in the hectic movement of the late ‘60s. The anti-Vietnam War movement, the civil rights movement, and the emerging Chicano movement intersected on campus. Social change was all around. Those were frenzied, creative years. Some 30 years later, I have finally written my interpretation of that period—and finished answering the questions I grew up asking about segregation. This article was originally published on Sep 22, 2010 for the Texas Observer and was reprinted with permission from the Author. <https://www.texasobserver.org/crossing-the-snake/>.

### *Delicious Tamales - Legacy Business Selling Traditional and Vegan Tamales Nationally*

(By Isa Fernandez)



Both of my Grandmothers made tamales - my maternal Grandma Concha had her recipe, which used Crisco, not animal-based oils. The recipe was shared with family in a book replete with photos of her and my cousin preparing them at the family dinner table. My paternal Grandmother, Guadalupe, added raisins in hers at times. They were both hands down, better than anything you could buy, anywhere. But today, when an occasion (or just a meal) calls for traditional tamales that could rival theirs of past, I go to *Delicious Tamales* for their vegan black bean, corn, red pepper and cilantro blend version, which is popular with health-conscious and meat eaters alike.

Making tamales is labor intensive - you must soak corn husks, mix corn masa by hand and spread it over wet hojas (corn husks) and carefully mix spices that will be added to the filling - various meats, beans, sometimes even vegetables and fruits for desserts, which are molded into a tamal and then steamed until cooked. *Delicious Tamales* owner Valerie Gonzalez did this annually in her hometown of Laredo, Texas like so many of us with her grandmother, aunts, cousins and six siblings.

After completing her bachelor's degree in Social Work in Austin, TX, where Gonzalez was active in the Chicano movement, she came to San Antonio in 1979 to complete her master's degree in Social Work from Our Lady of the Lake University, where she received a full scholarship, (the now defunct "Chicana Scholarship"). Bridging her love of serving the community with family, she invested \$500 to open *Delicious Tamales* in 1980, with a second location opening in 1983. Today, she runs the successful business with her daughter, Herlinda Lopez, operating seven locations and even shipping products nationwide (1-800-TAMALE-1).

The success of the business is attributed to the fast-paced and over-scheduled lifestyles that make the age-old, time-dense tradition of preparing tamales with family less practical. *Delicious Tamales* is the leading manufacturer of tamales in San Antonio, producing 3.8 million individual tamales per year from its 30,000-square foot factory, located on Culebra Rd. All tamales are gluten free, with the exception of the dessert tamal, which includes raisins, pecans and coconut. The dessert tamal, along with the jalapeno and cheese and the vegan tamal (a by-product of the local "Por Vida" health program which approached *Delicious Tamales* five years ago about producing a vegan tamal, which uses canola oil instead of traditional animal oil), are only available on weekends, unless they are special ordered a day in advance.

The Culebra location also has a restaurant, which opened in 2003, that serves traditional food like tacos, plates, rice, beans, sides, menudo and barbacoa. The interior of *Delicious Tamales* is decorated with flower-painted arched hallways that display the years of accolades received (Express-News Readers' Choice Awards, Current "Best of San Antonio" Award, write-ups from AARP, the San Antonio Business Journal, and others. Walls display tamal husks fashioned into Mexican dolls, countertops that have flower baskets made of husks and hanging husk ornaments held by colorful ribbons. There are full-size, plastic sheet art of Mexican folklorico dancers and mariachis on walls and doors and Loteria cards underneath glass on the dining tables, where the San Antonio Spurs decal graces the napkin holder.

As a Latina-owned business, *Delicious Tamales* has become, over thirty plus years, a staple to the San Antonio community. And Gonzalez and Lopez, the mother and daughter owners of *Delicious Tamales*, are mentors to the small business community and the community at large, sharing their story of success and love of community by giving back through the "Laredo Martin High School Scholarship" for students from the Laredo, Texas high school (where Gonzalez graduated from), as well as through multiple fundraising programs that benefit community members living in and around San Antonio.



At 65, Gonzalez is in her fourth year of training with Cross Fit, the intensive constantly varied, high-intensity exercise training philosophy that coaches people to improve their physical well-being and cardiovascular fitness, which appears to be one secret to her success in thriving in a fast-paced environment as the owner of a multimillion dollar family business, co-run by Gonzalez and her daughter and protégé, Herlinda Lopez.

1330 Culebra Rd., San Antonio, TX 78201; 210-735-0275 <https://delicioustamales.com> 210-735-0275 or nationwide, 1-800-TAMALE-1.

### ***Barrio Barista Coffeehouse - Caffeinating and Revitalizing the Westside***

(By Isa Fernandez)



"Que Sera, Sera," the Spanish phrase popularized from the famed Doris Day song (which translates to "What will be, will be"), is painted in blue cursive outside *Barrio Barista Coffeehouse*. The message sets the relaxed, familial tone of the popular coffeehouse revitalizing the Westside. Established by entrepreneur Gilbert De Hoyos, Sr. the original *Barrio Barista Coffeehouse* building structure has been through many iterations and two De Hoyos generations. In 1968, Jose De Hoyos, Gilbert's father, bought the building and turned it into *De Hoyos Meat Market*. The market ran until 1983, then it "became an icehouse, a bar, and a bar" says De Hoyos. During this time, working in contract manufacturing in Mexico City, Gilbert was asked to be a part of a pharmaceutical marketing association which provided FDA and quality control training. In hindsight, this experience helped inform the successful execution of an idea he had in 2012 to create *Barrio Barista Coffeehouse*. After spending nearly two years preparing the building and business plan, doors opened on February 14, 2014.

Today, *Barrio Barista Coffeehouse* has become a legitimate happening spot not just for nearby St. Mary's University students, but for the community at large who congregate for fresh coffee, culture and conversation. I ran into two Latina academics, Dr. Adrianna M. Santos, assistant professor of English at TX A&M University and Dr. Nicole A. Lopez while waiting to talk to Gilbert Sr. and Gilbert Jr. about the coffeehouse. We spoke at length about finding a venue to share Dr. Lopez's profiles of the mariachi community (her father is a member) and the needed intersection of meditation and the working class.

Certainly a popular venue for graduation parties, weddings, baby showers and other special events, the space seats 70 to 80 comfortably, not counting the outdoor patio area that was added in 2015 with the support of Westside Development Corporation, which provided a matching grant and assisted with blueprints, building permits and related fees. There are a variety of seating styles - bar stools, where you can see your coffee be made while chatting with the barista, standard chairs situated at large tables for big groups, comfortable sofas framing coffee tables with reading materials (including *La Prensa Texas*) and booths, each equipped with a smart television, (reminiscent of the now old-fashioned "tabletop jukebox machines" that allowed diners to play music at individual booths). Guests also have access to free WIFI, chess and checker boards and weekly open-mic poetry readings every Wednesday night, 7-10PM, which is soon to be accompanied by live brass music ("Jazz and a cup of Joe").

Coffee beans are purchased from the oldest roasting company in San Antonio, "What's Brewing," and roasted fresh on a weekly basis, a must-have for true coffee aficionados who know that the first seven days is the best time to brew and drink fresh roasted coffee. In addition to cappuccinos, macchiato, lattes, espressos, and other standard coffee fare, there are also popular beverages like coconut water, orange, beet and green fresh-squeezed juices, fruit smoothies, Mexican hot chocolate and teas.

*Barrio Barista Coffeehouse* is also notably, "home of the Barbacoa Cheese Sandwich" (a Gilbert Jr. creation of Texas toast with barbacoa, avocado and cheese, voted the "Best Cheese Sandwich in Texas" by Yelp reviewers as profiled by Buzzfeed - <https://bzfd.it/2fFsaT4>) and "Horchata coffee," the latter which I tried and loved. There are also of course, accompanying pastries and a great menu of edibles made in a full kitchen. There's breakfast fare - tacos, croissants, blueberry flapjacks, (which I vow to return for), sweet potato hash, veggie omelets and pecan raisin oatmeal. Lunch fare includes vegan and regular burgers, barbacoa, bean and cheese and even vegan tacos filled with a variety of grilled vegetables. Weekday specials are also available offering traditional fare such as meatloaf, pot roast and chicken salad sandwiches. To-go orders (coffee is \$1), gift cards and student discounts are also available.

Gilbert Sr. and his family have decorated the interior and exterior with fencing material and other pieces kept from a brief stint working in the demolition industry, adding to the genuine authenticity of the spot. Inside, a light projector sends rays of transforming, colorful lights to the ceiling while jazz music plays in the background, keeping the mood light and fun. There are unique items like a slot machine (called "BEAT IT"), paintings for sale from local artists (Schwarzenegger as "The Terminator" is one and others with messages like, "Love your colores," and "A smooth sea never made a skilled sailor"). There is a framed photo of Jose De Hoyos with the HEB founder, acknowledging the roots of the coffeehouse, a black and white poster of Marilyn Monroe lifting weights on a bench in a bra top and jeans. There's also a mix of unique items encased in glass by the entrance including a quote from 1920s actress Mae West that reads, "When I'm good, I'm really good, and when I'm bad, I'm better". Vintage typewriters and coffee machines from all eras line sections of walls. Social media presence, graphics (such as a computerized coffee cup in black with a red and white background made to resemble the United Farm Workers flag) and espresso art design are the stead of Gilbert Jr., who left his career in banking to work full time at *Barrio Barista Coffeehouse*.



Witnessing the success of *Barrio Barista Coffeehouse*, Gilbert Sr. was asked why he didn't create the coffeehouse in gentrified South Town. He told me that it was "always his intention to open it in the Westside in order to create a place for the community to go to that would help enrich and revitalize the community. My purpose in life is to serve others and to be my brother's keeper. Everyone should have purpose in life and mine is business and in ministry," De Hoyos tells me. This is otherwise known as "BAM" (business and ministry), which is not affiliated to organized religion and only promotes helping your neighbors. As such, he is a "advocate of the coffee community



association, which exists on national and local levels. I see this generosity of spirit in action at the Westside Development Corporation “Westside Business Alliance” initiative kick-off meeting, when I caught Gilbert Sr. offering to guide a young entrepreneur interested in opening a coffeehouse like his that would serve as a genuine place for the community to gather. In fact, he urges “anyone looking to start a coffee business to contact him,” for guidance and comradery. In the future, Gilbert Sr. would like to expand *Barrio Barista Coffeehouse* to sell cold press juices, herbal remedies and provide franchise opportunities to the community he serves.

Business Hours: CLOSED MON-TUE; Open Wed-Sun 8AM-3PM. Kitchen closes at 2pm. <https://www.barriobarista.coffee/> 3735 Culebra Rd., San Antonio, Texas 78228; 210-519-5403  
Follow Barrio Barista on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook

### ***The History and Legacy of Culebra Meat Market***

(By Melinda Gonzalez)

In 1983, the first and original Culebra Meat Market at 2800 Culebra Road opened its doors. Since then, the store has expanded to include 17 locations across San Antonio, faithfully serving their customers by remaining open 365 days a year, 7 days a week.

Barbacoa and Big Red are weekend staples at your nearest Culebra Meat Market, but all week long they serve carnitas and chicharrones, along with quality specialty cuts of meat such as finger ribs, polish sausage, rib bone-in brisket, and whole chickens. Seasoned cuts of meat are also available and save time for those who are ready to cook the meat right away.



Original owner, Ezequiel Ramirez, was born in San Jose Del Resplandor, Leon Guanajuato, MX. At the age of 16, he was taught the business of buying and selling of cattle by his father. Mr. Ramirez worked as a cattle broker until he was 30, then transitioned into the construction industry and continued his career in that field after moving to San Antonio in 1968. More than 20 years later he returned to his true calling and opened Culebra Meat Market with his son, Javier Ramirez. He chose the original location because it was in the same neighborhood his family lived in.

Mrs. Sara Ramirez, the wife of Ezequiel, offered her complete support and was the backbone of the store’s success. Javier’s daughter Sara Ramirez says with a smile, “She would bring them to work and bring them food. To this day she still goes to the stores

and checks-in.”

Sadly Mr. Ezequiel Ramirez passed away in February of 2003, but the legacy of his business success has been carried on by his family. He and his wife had a total of 13 children, who all at one point or another have managed a Culebra Meat Market store. Currently, Javier continues to manage Culebra Meat Market #1 with his daughter Sara Ramirez, while other stores are managed by Javier’s brothers Noe, Manuel, and Victor Ramirez.

Culebra Meat Markets feature a full-service Panadería (bakery) where you can pick up pan dulce (Mexican sweet bread), doughnuts, cookies, corn, and flour tortillas, and even tamales. Shop for everyday food staples that include frozen foods, fresh produce, drinks, wines, dry goods, baking goods, and a full line of products under the popular and delicious Goya brand. Don’t feel like cooking? Most Culebra Meat Markets also offer an in-house taqueria, always ready to serve up your breakfast and lunch favorites. The granddaughter of Ezequiel Ramirez, Sara Ramirez, sees the continued expansion of Culebra Meat Market into locations that are convenient for their customers. She says, “We’re here to serve San Antonio and our community.” Be on the lookout for the newest Culebra Meat Market which is set to open in September off Southcross and I-35.

Business Hours Monday-Saturday 7 a.m. 10 p.m. Sunday 7 a.m.-9 p.m.

## *Custom Made Piñatas by Las Princessas*

(By Isa Fernandez)



Mario and Consuelo Izarraras grew up making piñatas in their hometowns of Michoacán and Coahuila, Mexico. As children, both Christmas and New Year's celebrations were times when the family would create piñatas together. Consuelo fondly remembers her father forming the base of the celebratory piñatas and her mother and siblings working together to add the intricate detail and decorations, a routine she and her husband of 24 years Mario follow today.

After moving to the United States, the artistic couple began selling piñatas in 1995 which were imported from their hometown. However, as demand grew and customers began asking for specific requests, the Izarraras began creating piñatas themselves, just as they had when they were children with their families. Challenging themselves creatively and meeting consumer demand, Mario uses bamboo to form the body and Consuelo decorates piñatas with colorful, light, sheered paper cut to create intricate piñata textures.

Take any idea to the Izarraras, parents to three daughters (who inspired the business name "Las Princessas") and one son, and they will create a custom-made piñata down to the detail for you. This could be anything from a Trump rendering with its laughable (yet completely realistic) hot salmon pink skin tone

and dingy, movable yellow hair, to a snarling Godzilla displaying its serrated teeth. There are guitars, dinosaurs of all shapes and sizes, various Disney princesses, even iconic Spiderman in black and red suiting hanging upside down from the ceiling. There are standard sharks, donkeys, animals, sports items and many a decorative shape to choose from. Las

Princessas also sells custom-made centerpieces, balloons, confetti eggs, "artículos religiosos" and gifts at wholesale and retail prices. They offer party packages and provide a 10% military discount for active and retired military, as well as Facebook friends. Have a request for a specific piñata not already made? Take a photo and in one to two weeks, your piñata will be ready. Prices range \$5 to \$80 depending on size and intricacy. Look for the cobalt blue and yellow castle-style building with lipstick red fort trim (with a cursive "Las Princessas" business sign across the front of the building) known for its façade of colorful hanging piñatas, pictured on this week's cover, painted by artist Ana Fernandez. The venue has also been used by filmmakers who too have been captured by its unique and colorful ambiance. Location: 1306 Culebra Rd., San Antonio, TX 78201 Business Hours: Monday-Sunday, 9AM-6PM Phone: 210-314-8005 LA CALLE.

## *Hundreds of St. Mary's Students to Volunteer at Local Nonprofits*

(By Jennifer Lloyd)



One of incoming students' first activities at St. Mary's University is to join about 800 St. Mary's community members – students, faculty, staff and alumni – to volunteer across San Antonio. The biannual service event called Continuing the Heritage took place last Saturday, Aug. 24.

The service event brings together the University community to volunteer for projects, such as cleaning up graffiti; improving nonprofit facilities through painting, yard work and office cleanup; sorting and organizing donations for various nonprofits; and working and spending time with children. Texas First Lady Cecilia Abbott, honorary chair of

the 2019 Governor's Volunteer Awards, and One Star Foundation announced this month the 10 recipients of the 36th annual Governor's Volunteer Awards.

St. Mary's University garnered the Higher Education Community Impact Award at the University level. This award honors the exemplary service of individuals, groups and organizations that have made a significant and measurable contribution to their communities through service and volunteering. This follows recognition from

Catholic Charities of San Antonio earlier this year, for which St. Mary's University earned the organization's Partner School Volunteer Recognition Award.

In 2010, the University won the U.S. President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll's top-ranking Presidential Award. Volunteers gathered on the Flex Field at The Park at St. Mary's at 7:30 a.m. for an opening ceremony, which featured breakfast and prayer, before beginning their morning of service.

From 9 a.m. to noon, they served the following: • Catholic Charities of San Antonio, at the Guadalupe Community Center, St. Stephen's, St. P.J.'s Children's Home and Seton Home; volunteers will clean up the food pantry, clothes closet and the community garden, sort donations and help beautify the campuses. • No Graffiti SA, at several locations, volunteers will split into smaller teams to pull off stickers and paint over graffiti on dumpsters, retaining walls, etc. • Roy Maas Youth Alternatives, at various sites in San Antonio and Boerne, more than 140 volunteers will assist in multiple capacities – from painting the Family Counseling Center and the gymnasium to sorting items at the Thrift Store. • The Dream Center, at 2903 W. Salinas St., about 50 volunteers will help hand out food and clothing, paint and help with yard work. • Haven for Hope, at 1 Haven for Hope Way, volunteers will assist with cleaning and maintenance efforts at the Courtyard and Transformational Campus. • Family Services Association, at 3014 Rivas St., volunteers will assist with painting and play with children at the center.





## ZARZAMORA

# LA PRENSA TEXAS

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## Zarzamora

<p><b>About the Cover Artist</b> Victor Tello</p>  <p>Courtesy of Centro Cultural Aztlan</p>	<p><b>Porfirio Salinas</b> Early Artist of the Westside</p>  <p>By Dr. Ricardo Romo</p>	<p><b>Alonso S. Perales</b> San Antonio Civil Rights Activist and Attorney</p>  <p>By Dr. Cynthia E. Orozco</p>	<p><b>Rebirth of Zarzamora Merchant's Association</b></p>  <p>By Isa Fernández</p>	<p><b>West End Hope in Action</b> Serving the Zarzamora Corridor and Beyond</p>  <p>By Melinda Gonzalez</p>
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## *The Rebirth of the Zarzamora Merchant's Association*

(By Isa Fernandez)

Approximately twenty (20) stakeholders comprised met Thursday, September 19<sup>th</sup> at the *Los Angeles Tortilleria, Bakery and Restaurant* on 300 N. Zarzamora Street for the first Zarzamora Merchant's Association Meeting. The gathering comprised of business owners, community members, City of San Antonio departmental staff and UTSA College of Architecture, Construction and Planning department heads was meant to encourage stakeholders from the corridor to get connected and be a part of the new growth and development on the West Side.



The idea for the Zarzamora Merchant's Association was first born through the conversations of Carlos Gonzalez (Co-Chair for the West End Hope and Action, a coalition of community organizations that meet bi-weekly to organize actionable community initiatives) and Martin Vasquez, the late owner of *Los Angeles Tortilleria, Bakery and Restaurant*. The two met in 2011 when Carlos was teaching citizenship classes at *Academia América*, the 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization where Martin, originally from Zacatecas, Mexico, was a student at the time. The two saw an overlap of community and economic development specific to corridors with Martin opening the first *Los Angeles Tortilleria, Bakery and Restaurant* on Zarzamora in January of 2007 and Carlos working with the community. The idea was to "take investment and resources to improve the business climate for businesses on Zarzamora street," said Gonzalez.

However, after Martin unexpectedly passed away in 2013, the Zarzamora Merchant's Association project paused. It wasn't until City of San Antonio District Five Councilwoman Shirley Gonzales created the Legacy Corridor Business Alliance program which aims to help small businesses thrive on the Westside (specifically ten corridors which were strategically selected - Buena Vista, Castroville Rd., Colorado, Culebra, Guadalupe, General McMullen, Laredo, Nogalitos, West Commerce and Zarzamora), that the idea for the Association was reborn.

The Legacy Corridor Westside Business Alliance (WBA) program is administered by Westside Development Corporation (WDC), a 501 (c) (3) created in 2006. The mission of WDC is to "foster economic development, promote the development and redevelopment of real estate within Westside San Antonio, create viable urban communities, and preserve the character, culture and history of the Westside." WDC President and CEO Leonard Rodriguez says that he is "especially encouraged to see that businesses are excited about working collectively as a team to seek tangible improvements." The impact of the support for the Zarzamora Merchant's Association and its parallel corridor coalitions, cannot be overstated, Carlos adding that I make sure to add that his group "appreciates the leadership of WDC in the larger picture of San Antonio's growth and development."

*The Los Angeles Tortilleria, Bakery and Restaurant* has grown into two (soon to be three) restaurant locations - Zarzamora/Travis, Commercial Avenue/Hutchins and new location Jackson Keller/Blanco which is opening soon, and is run by Martin's wife Alejandra and their children, including son Miguel who attended the first Zarzamora Merchant's Association meeting.

***West End Hope in Action Serving the Zarzamora Corridor and Beyond***  
(By Melinda Gonzalez)



The West End Hope in Action (WEHA) organization is a coalition that serves the San Antonio West Side and West End neighborhoods, with boundaries that roughly lie between Culebra, Colorado, Martin, and General McMullen Streets. The organization was formed in 2010 with the help of an AARP grant and the willingness of a core group of leaders who grew and developed the

organization around being responsive to the needs of its residents. With the assistance of the Neighborhood First Alliance, a community meeting was held with Police Chief McManus in 2012. Everyone was pleasantly surprised as resident after resident poured into the meeting. With over 200 individuals in attendance, the room was packed with only standing room available. McManus vowed at this meeting to forge and continue a partnership with WEHA focused on one of the organization's top priorities, crime reduction and prevention. Through a series of walk and talk sessions led by McManus and WEHA leaders, every household in the West End area was visited over a 3-year period and residents have been trained on ways to report and fight crime in their block.

Another top priority for the organization was the need for youth services. In January 2019 and after an eight-year uphill battle, WEHA was able to return the Parks and Recreation program back to the West End area. To date, WEHA has forged alliances with area churches, the San Antonio Independent School district, the Bexar County Sheriff and's office, City Councilpersons Roberto Trevino and Shirley Gonzales, the Westside Development Corporation, as well as numerous local nonprofits providing services in the area. WEHA is an officially recognized neighborhood association and hosts the city's largest National Night Out event, an annual community building national campaign that promotes police- community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to make our neighborhoods safer, more caring places to live. This year's West End area National Night Out is scheduled for Tuesday, October 1st from 5:00 - 7:30 PM and will be held at the West End Park located at 1401 N Hamilton Ave, adjacent to the Frank Garrett Community Center where the organization meets every other Friday. For both the event and meeting, all are always welcome to attend.

***Celebrating the 90th Anniversary of the Basilica Cornerstone***  
(By Isa Fernandez)

The Discalced Carmelite Friars of San Antonio will host the celebration of the Basilica's past, and preview of its future on Saturday October 12. A reception at Little Flower School will begin at 5 p.m. followed by the program and dinner at 7 p.m. Cecilia Abbott, First Lady of Texas, will be the keynote speaker. Randy Beamer of News 4 will serve as our emcee. Fuerza Flamenca dancers will perform the finale of the evening. The ceremonial blessing of the foundation stone, a symbol of Christ, was held on Oct. 15, 1929, with Archbishop of San Antonio, Arthur Drossaerts and the Discalced Carmelite friars of the Province of St. Therese, which today still administers the Basilica.



The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower is dedicated to serving the community as a sacred space and place of spiritual pilgrimage and apostolic activity, where persons of all faiths can renew their commitment to God and grow in their journey of faith. The church provides a variety of religious services for the entire Archdiocese of San Antonio, with countless visitors from around the city and tourists to the city as well as 950 registered parishioner families. Dedicated in 1931, the Shrine is on the National Register of Historic Places and was elevated to the status of Basilica in the Catholic Church by Pope John Paul II in 1998. The Basilica is one of only 86 in the United States and one of only four in the state of Texas bearing the papal designation of Basilica,

the highest permanent designation for a church. Known as centers of spiritual and apostolic activity for the Catholic faithful, basilicas are traditionally required to hold historical, architectural and artistic value and significance as an active center of pastoral liturgy.

Dedicated to St. Therese of Lisieux, known as “The Little Flower,” the Basilica was built during the Great Depression (1929-31) by Spanish Discalced Carmelite friars to promote devotion to St. Therese following her 1925 canonization. Today the Discalced Carmelite friars of San Antonio continue are a community of five friars; they are one of five communities within the San Antonio-based Province of St. Therese, a group of 15 Friars. The friars promote the spirituality of St. Therese and other Carmelite saints through their work at the Basilica. Today, the Shrine stands as a monument to the great faith of devotees of St. Therese.

The Basilica is a treasury of art, master craftsmanship, and relics. The Shrine’s numerous stained-glass windows, installed beginning in the 1930s, tell the stories of the lives of Carmelite saints. The Basilica is home to three first-class relics of The Little Flower and a first-class relic of the saint’s parents, St. Louis and St. Zelig Martin. The Little Flower Parish Conference of St. Vincent de Paul Society serves an average of 70 families in the community per month by providing assistance with utilities, rental, prescription payments and food.

The Basilica is also a premium music performance venue and was an official Tricentennial venue in 2018. As such it has many opportunities to serve the community and support local arts and culture. Numerous special events are held annually at the Basilica that are presented free and open to the community, including traditional Mexican music and dance programs, children’s day and King’s Day programs. The Basilica also collaborates with local nonprofit groups for performances of classical and sacred music.

A Westside institution for 90 years, the Basilica exemplifies the neighborhood’s unique heritage and identity as a center of Hispanic culture. The church’s iconic golden domes are a reminder of the Westside’s legacy that makes it a vital part of San Antonio’s past and present. A preserved and eventually restored Basilica will also lay the cornerstone to the cultural renewal and preservation efforts in course on behalf of the historic Westside.

Please RSVP to the event by Oct. 1. Individual tickets cost \$100 and a full table of 8 costs \$800.

Tickets can be purchased online at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cornerstone-for-the-future-90th-anniversary-of-the-basilicas-cornerstone-tickets69289192841?aff=efbeventtix&andfbclid=IwAR3Q39tstPIZKtQQXYoaWOJrjdqwqETAfy53FkplYnbJN1bZGJjEVDaYjhbQ>.

Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower is located at 1715 North Zarzamora Street San Antonio, TX 78201. For more information, contact the Administration Office at (210) 735-9126



## NOGALITOS, LAREDO &amp; COLORADO

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## Calles Nogalitos, Laredo, Colorado

**Rudy's Feed Store  
Inducted to City's  
Legacy Business  
Program**



By Melinda Gonzales

**Museo del  
Westside Planning  
Update**



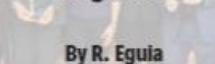
By Sarah Zenaida Gould, PhD

**Viva Vegeria: San  
Antonio's First  
Vegan, Gluten-  
Free Tex-Mex**



By Isa Fernández

**Maestro Center  
Honors Cohorts  
and Ambassadors  
Launches  
Community  
Magazine**



By R. Eguia

**Early Chicano  
Murals of San  
Antonio**



By Dr. Ricardo Romo



## ***Business Serving and Preserving Latino Culture with Artistic Plant-Based Cuisine to Change the World***

(By Isa Fernandez)



Vegan food by nature is colorful and creative. So, Viva Vegeria, San Antonio's first vegan, gluten-free Tex-Mex restaurant, (which has for nearly ten years, been serving and preserving Latino food and culture with "artistic" plant-based cuisine), is no different. The colorful vegan restaurant was the dream of original founder and culinary chef Fred Garza-Guzman who tells me he was "kicked out of culinary school my last year because I refused to eat meat."

As a vegetarian (near-vegan) myself for most of my life, I consider that a badge of honor and a testament to the altruistic reason Garza-Guzman had become a passionate vegan: "I could see that people in the world were starving, the rainforest was being stolen (to raise) farm cattle. I wanted to do something to help mother nature. Even if it was small, I believed and believe it will make a difference," he told me. Indeed, countless scientific studies back up the fact that a plant-based diet helps to dramatically promote environmental conservation efforts and improve human health (as well as saving innumerable animal lives) more than any other decision we can make as consumers. Garza-Guzman's decision to become vegan was also important to his late grandmother Rosalie Garza, whom he says "found ways to cook me vegan food. At over 80 years old, she began experimenting with vegan cooking. She was a sweetheart!" Together, they shared a dream to "create a place where everyone could eat and come together despite dietary needs." Sadly, the restaurant opened August of 2011, just a month after Rosalie passed away.

Originally located at 8407 Broadway, the restaurant received immediate good press concerning the nutritious gap it filled for vegans and the health minded. It was also noted for its colorful contribution to Latino culture by promoting the work of local artists whose work was displayed on walls and sold. When I visited, there were portraits of Ray Charles, a myriad of religious icons and iconography, Frida Kahlo, comic book heroes and Dia de los Muertos themed paintings displayed. They were also applauded for the positive impact on the community by offering healthy vegan meal preparation classes to the public.



In 2016, the restaurant relocated to 1422 Nogalitos, where there was more parking, an accessible entrance, a spacious interior, a large garden room that doubles as a meeting space and a tropical, pet-friendly outdoor patio area. That same year, Garza-Guzman sold the Viva Vegeria to restaurateur Bennie Gonzalez, a Piedras Negras, Mexico native who moved with his family to the US in 1971. Now owner of Viva Vegeria for nearly five years, Gonzalez too is passionate about a plant-based diet, saying it has improved his health and is helping him avoid the hereditary health problems that cut his father's life short so he "can be around for his grandchildren." He and his staff, chef Gabriela Estrada and restaurant manager Karime Flores, whom he calls "the heart and soul of the restaurant," were exceptionally kind to me, sharing an assortment of their most popular fare for review - *Tacos al Carbon* with meat replacement, onions, green peppers; *Chilaquiles* with red and verde salsa; Charro beans and Mexican rice (exceptional with onions, green peppers and carrots); *Vegan Mole Enchiladas* made with peanut sauce; *Mushroom Chicharrón Tacos* filled with grilled portabella mushroom, white onions, cilantro, carrots and bright purple cabbage, was another favorite for me. Gonzalez was excited to tell me how the cheese is made for three varieties of nachos sold (*Classic*, *Picadillo* and *Luchadora*, which is loaded with protein, quinoa, kimchi). It includes "potatoes for texture, carrots for color," he told me. Anyone interested in pursuing imaginative, healthy cooking should take note and visit for inspiration.

Tamales by the dozen, aquas frescas, topo chico, jarritos and kombucha and an assortment of cupcakes (churro-flavored, chocolate, pumpkin, pistachio and chocolate-peanut butter) are also available. Gonzalez says that brunch on Saturday and Sundays are the busiest days, with the Chilaquiles plates, which come with refried black beans and a cupcake of your choice, selling quickly. With downtown nearby, Gonzalez estimates 60% of customers are from outside of San Antonio, since noticing that many arrive by taxis from nearby downtown hotels.

A member of the Southtown Arts District, Viva Vegeria was selected by in 2018 as KSAT 12's "SA Pick's" for "Best Vegan Food" restaurant. They also received five stars from HappyCow, a national company reviewing vegan restaurants in order to "provide a guide to healthy vegetarian food, natural food stores, vegan-friendly options nearby, recipes, and travel." With reason to be confident and Wi-Fi available, customers are asked to "support us with your reviews and photos" online. A "Shop Small - support small business" decal is on the entrance door, along with the various delivery methods available. BYOB customers are welcome, too.

Viva Vegeria is closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays so that Gonzalez can spend time with family who reside in Houston. **Business Hours:** Monday 11am-5pm, Thurs - 11am-5pm, Friday-Sat, 11am-8:30pm and Sunday 11am-5pm. <http://www.myvegeria.com>. Visit Viva Vegeria, 1422 Nogalitos Street, San Antonio, TX 78204. Phone 210-465-9233.

### *Chicho Boys*

(By Isa Fernandez)



As a nearly vegan Latina who works promoting small businesses in the downtown area, I am always on the look-out for businesses that sell locally sourced fresh produce (like mango cups, avocados, fresh garlic and guava!) at fair prices. Chicho Boys Fruit Market, located at 1631 S. Laredo Street, exceeds that criteria in spades. Family-owned and operated since 1995, Chicho Boys is a Westside legacy business began by Patricio Gonzalez, (known as "Chicho") whose plan was to create an "economical alternative to shopping for fruits and vegetables." Still in operation all these years later by his children John, Paul, Nando and Gina, the store is indeed an alternative to the larger corporate supermarkets in town.

Going there is always an experience. There is an outside portion of the market and an inside, which is chilled to keep produce crisp and fresh. Atop the produce counters rest traditional Mexican décor, including talavera mariachi frogs, aged wagons and black and white photos of the Gonzalez family which line the walls even higher, honoring the history of the market. The staff are friendly and knowledgeable. General Manager Gilbert Weaver is a wealth of information about the family history, the products sold in the store and about how fruits and vegetables are grown, even detailing a recent visit to a pineapple plantation in Hawaii, still awe struck (I'm adding this to my travel plans). He also shared referrals to juicers in town, ultra-marathon, triathlon and general running clubs and of course, information on the benefits of the fruits, vegetables and spices sold. Additionally, he relayed the many incentives to shopping at Chicho Boys - they take competitor's coupons and offers a standard 10% off discount for military, fire and police.

This dedication to family, customers and the community at large extends to its business model, as it nearly exclusively sells products from South Texas and Mexico and other independent retailers. Included among the products are - *Ladybug* cookies, granola, scones and seasonal pies, *Buddha's Brew* beverages which use traditional fermentation methods and are handcrafted out of Austin, and jams from Arkansas in flavors like Jalapeno Strawberry, Apple Peach or Blueberry Raspberry and paletas from San Antonio's very own *El Paraiso*. Mexican candy and spices from *Don Juan* from Laredo, Texas line the walls next to fresh produce that includes unique seasonal and hard to find fruits and vegetables such as dragon fruit, rambutan, guava, starfruit, lychees and purple potatoes, known for their disease-fighting phytonutrients and reducing inflammation. Local honey from *Fowler's Texas Pure Honey* from La Vernia, TX is one of the increasingly popular items sold at the store - a spoonful of locally sourced honey is said to stave off allergies.

Chicho Boys also creates and sells its own items including candied apples, its proprietary blend of Chile powder, typically used on fruit cups, as well as standard and/or organic fruit and vegetable baskets, trays, and striking iconographic T-shirts promoting the family business. Store hours are Monday - Saturday, 9:00 am-6:30 pm. Support local business, the local economy and your health by getting your produce from a true local legacy business!

<https://www.chichoboys.com/> (210) 225-7557  
1631 South Laredo St., San Antonio, TX 78207



***Maestro Entrepreneur Center  
Maestro Center Honors Cohorts and Ambassadors Launches Community Magazine***

Community members gathered at the Maestro Center earlier this month to honor the latest cohort to complete their 12-week entrepreneurial program. Participants learned about resources and skills that support an array of businesses from food trucks to accessory makers to electrical contractors.

Winners of the 12 days of giving fundraising effort were recognized. Maurice Bridges gathered the most amount of funds. The group of community upstanders exceeded their 50,000-dollar goal by over 700 dollars. Medals were awarded to the ambassadors and Maestro Center Founder, Julissa Carielo offered some works of wisdom and appreciation for their efforts.

Finally, Waldinei Lafaiete presented the first ever, Maestro Magazine. Lafaiete looked dapper and full of joy as he clicked through the pages of the new magazine that highlights arts, marketing, business and travel.



COMMERCE & BUENA VISTA

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## Commerce to Buena Vista

**Tres Nuevas Leyes que Afectan a San Antonio**



Por Councilwoman Ana Sandoval

**The Rise of Latino Prospect Hill**



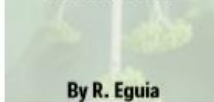
By Dr. Ricardo Romo

**Las Ventas de Casas en San Antonio Siguen Subiendo este Verano**



—Por Marcie Hernandez—

**Roots of Change Community Garden Work Days at the Southwest Workers Union**



By R. Eguia

**Fruta Nativa: Callicarpa Americana**



Por Rachel Cywinski



## The Rise of Latino Prospect Hill

(By Dr. Ricardo Romo)



San Antonio's social and cultural history has been enriched over the years by its many Latino neighborhoods. Many of them date back to the World War I era of the 1910s. From 1910-1940 most Latinos lived in the Westside, a community that extended from the Missouri Pacific Railroad yards to San Fernando Cemetery #2 on Castroville Road. The boundaries on the south extended to Frio City Road and the community spread north to Culebra Road. This is an essay about the evolution of Prospect Hill, an early ethnic neighborhood initially comprised of residents from German and East European background.

I lived in Prospect Hill and witnessed firsthand much of the Latinization of "Anglo" Prospect Hill. The Sosa family were pioneers in the movement of Latinos to Prospect Hill. Roberto Sosa married Cristina Jimenez in 1938, the same year that he opened Prospect Hill Cleaners on Commerce Street. At that time, he was only 21 years old. The cleaners were two blocks from my house

on Monterey Street and in the 1950s, we often saw Lionel and his brother Robert Sosa when we stopped to drop off or pick up clothes at the cleaners.

Prospect Hill Cleaners was at the heart of the commercial district of Prospect Hill. The family-owned business was across the street from the original David Crockett Elementary school and near the fabled Walter's Drug Store. The cleaners were also only a few doors from a popular feed store and Winn's variety store. Lionel Sosa was born in family quarters located behind the cleaners. He attended Lanier High School and upon graduation from high school he went into the advertising business and eventually opened his own company with offices downtown.

His dad remained in the cleaning business, which every year became more competitive. As large cleaners began offering lower prices and pick-up service, Prospect Hill cleaners closed its doors in the early 1960s. Prospect Hill extended from the Alazan Creek to Hamilton, just west of Zarzamora. The boundaries of the old Anglo areas of the neighborhood were clearly defined--Durango Street on the south and Travis Street to the North. When the Centeno Grocery store opened in Prospect Hill in 1948, the Centeno family were following the path of Sosa and several other Latino entrepreneurs.

Jose Centeno, a Laredo native, came to San Antonio in 1914 and worked in a dry goods store. He learned the grocery business and in 1928 he opened a small store on Rivas Street, part of the northwest section of the Latino Westside. Business was good, even during the Great Depression years. In the mid-1940s Centeno began looking for property in Prospect Hill. The Centeno store on Commerce Street was one of the largest grocery stores in the city with parking for 500 cars. Centeno, with its large meat department, bakery and fresh produce, attracted Latino customers from throughout the Westside. Their proximity to the Alazan-Apache Housing units also made shopping easier for the 1200 families living in the courts. Centeno eventually opened four other stores, including a giant store on Castroville Road near 24th Street. Jose Centeno trained his two sons, Joe Centeno Jr. and Eloy Centeno to manage the business.

From 1948 to 1970, the Centeno family rose to the top of most successful Latino businesses of San Antonio. Prospect Hill also had numerous Latino-run restaurants, none more popular than the Paul Marie. The idea for a drive-in restaurant with carhops came to Oscar Rodriguez Sr. when he landed in California as he returned from World War II. He tasted a crispy dog in California and concluded that it would be a popular dish in San Antonio. He was right. According to Paula Allen of the Express-News, Paul Marie had been a tavern in the 1930 and 1940s.

When Rodriguez opened the new Paul Marie in the late 1940s, he added carhop service and the crispy dog. Soon after his grand opening, Rodriguez met Zulema, one of his carhops. They married and moved to Saunders Street, one block north of his Durango Street restaurant. He lived not far from Pete Cortez, founder of the Mi Tierra restaurants. In its twenty-year existence, Paul Marie was a popular hangout for Lanier High School students as well as for those attending Central Catholic. It is likely that Hope Andrade, former Texas Secretary of State, who also lived on Saunders Street, would have eaten a crispy dog there or would have spent a few leisure moments there as a teen. For nearly 100 years, Commerce and Buena Vista Streets have been the main thoroughfares of

Prospect Hill. From its founding at the turn of the century to 1960s, Prospect Hill had many prominent residents, including state and local politicians and millionaires. Carol Burnet, a Hollywood movie and television star in the 1950s, grew up on Buena Vista Street and attended Jefferson High School.

II. The Romo Family Odyssey in Prospect Hill In the post-World War II years, Latinos began to move out of the Westside into neighborhoods that were ethnically different. When my parents moved to Prospect Hill in 1950, they were following a path opened by my dad's mother, Maria Saenz Romo. We called our grandmother Abuelita Romo. She was the matron head of the Romo clan. She began the move north across the dividing line of Durango Street in the late 1940s. It was a planned move. Abuelita Romo arrived in San Antonio in 1916, just in time to prepare for the birth of my father Henry Romo who was born in early 1917. She and her husband Benito Romo came to San Antonio via the cotton fields of Kyle, Texas where they had been employed as farmworkers.

After the birth of my dad, my grandparents decided to make their life in San Antonio and moved to El Paso Street. In a very good way, my grandmother was clannish. She loved being close to her family and somehow convinced everyone she loved to live close by. For this essay, I consulted with some of the 38 Romos who lived within two blocks of one another in Prospect Hill. After moving to El Paso Street, which is part of the Guadalupe Street district, Abuelita Romo helped relocate her mother to her neighborhood. By the early 1940s when my parents got married, Abuelita Romo lived across the street from one brother and sister and down the block from her mother and older brother.



By the 1950s, all the Romos had moved north to Prospect Hill. The entrepreneurial spirit in the Romo-Saenz families made possible the move north to Prospect Hill. Abuelita Romo learned her profession-- the art of delivering babies-- from a seasoned midwife. It was indeed an art, and few gained the skills needed to be successful in such a delicate health profession, and one of the oldest professions for women. In my grandmother's era, few families on the Westside could afford hospital stays because of the medical costs. Doctors seldom delivered babies in the Westside. In Abuelita Romo's era, there were dozens of midwives living and working in the Westside of San Antonio. I have been told by many who worked with my grandmother or after her, that she was one of the best in the city.

When I was in my twenties and I applied for a copy of my birth certificate, I was told by a city officer that my grandmother had delivered thousands of babies in the Westside. My grandmother worked as a midwife for nearly 50 years. She trained my mother's sister who delivered me. Aunt Julia also delivered several of my brothers. Abuelita delivered all twelve of her youngest son's children and most of her siblings' children. When Abuelita Romo bought a home on Saunders Street, my dad followed with the purchase of a home a block away on Monterey Street. Abuelita Romo bought a second home on Saunders, where her oldest son Benito Romo moved in the late 1940s. Soon another of her sons, Arnulfo Romo, moved across the street from her, as did her daughter, Yolanda.

Three dozen Romos eventually lived within two blocks from my grandmother's house and that of my parents. The Romo family move north across the dividing line of Durango Street was only five blocks, but to me as a seven-year-old, it appeared to be a move of many miles. When we arrived in our new home on Monterey Street there were only a few Latinos on each block. To the west on our street lived the families of former San Antonio city manager Alex Briceno, former San Antonio mayor Henry Cisneros, and the famous San Antonio artist Jesse Trevino. They all grew up on Monterey Street. Ethnically, Prospect Hill changed in the decade of the 1950s. While several of our Anglo neighbors left for the suburbs, a few Anglo teens who remained on our street became lifelong friends.

By the mid-1960s the Latinization of Prospect Hill was nearly complete. My elementary school, Sacred Heart Catholic School, had some Anglo students, but not many after 1960. All my memories of growing up in the Prospect Hill neighborhood are good. Today Prospect Hill is over 90 percent Latino. I enjoy returning to my old neighborhood even though only a few Romo families still live there and many of the old family businesses are gone, replaced by national fast food franchises.

## City of San Antonio Buena Vista Corridor Project June 2019 - March 2020

The City of San Antonio (COSA) Buena Vista Corridor project is currently underway and is expected to go through March 2020. Work, designed to improve pedestrian connectivity on Buena Vista Street between Frio Street and Santa Rosa Street, includes new sidewalks, lighting enhancements and the installation of a HAWK signal at Buena Vista Street and S. Leona Street. As part of the project, COSA will permanently close the Buena Vista Street entrance to the Cattleman's Square parking lot on Monday, July 1, 2019. The W. Commerce Street and I-10 frontage road entrances are now open and can be used to access the parking lot. For additional information, reference the attached map or contact COSA's project officer, Joey Doctor, Capital Projects Officer for TCI - City of San Antonio at 210.207.8415 or by email at [joe.doctor@sanantonio.gov](mailto:joe.doctor@sanantonio.gov). More information about Transportation and Capital Improvements (TCI) can be found at [www.sanantonio.gov/tci](http://www.sanantonio.gov/tci). General inquires can be sent to PO Box 839966 San Antonio, Texas 78283-3966, to reach them directly call 210-2078022.

### Just a Thought West Commerce and Buena Vista Corridor

(By Steve Walker)



Here are some interesting statistics pertaining to the 7.1 acres that face W. Commerce, and Buena Vista, and Alazan Street and Las Moras Street on the opposite sides. The current Total Population within a mile is 25,688, within 3 miles, 179,506 and 5 miles, 443,196. Employees number 19,731 within a mile, 125,662 within 3 miles and 193,508 within 5 miles. The numbers for total businesses within 1 mile is 1,240, 3 miles 8,188 and 5 miles 14,430.

Notice how the numbers increase drastically as you move away from West Commerce and Buena Vista? Look at average household income is \$33,339 within a mile, within

3 miles 51,475, and within 5 miles \$51,934. Is there is a pattern here? Total Consumer Spending in the area is \$116.9M within a mile, \$1.2B within 3 miles and \$2.9B within 5 miles.

These statistics are amazing for sure. Moving onto the median Age of people living within the one-mile area is 34.1 while in the three-mile radius it is 35.1 and within the five-mile radius 33.7. Finally, the Percent College Degree or above within 1 mile is 2%, within 3 miles 9% and 5 miles 8%. Location does make a difference!!! Compare the West Commerce and Buena Vista Corridor with say Balcones Heights, which is approximately 7.1 in the area as well, shows a contrast.

Most know Balcones Heights as the home of Crossroads Mall. As of the census of 2000, there were 3,016 people, 1,437 households, and 708 families residing in the city. The racial makeup of the city was 69.66% white, 5.37% African American, 1.56% Native American, 1.13% Asian, 0.03% Pacific Islander, 17.41% from other, and 4.84% from two or more races. Hispanics made up the difference. I lived there for nineteen years till 2008 when I became the Justice of the Peace for four years. I also served as a Councilman for 8 years as well with 3 Hispanics.

In the city, the population was spread out with 23.7% under the age of 18, 14.5% from 18 to 24, 33.1% from 25 to 44, 19.5% from 45 to 64, and 9.2% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 32 years. For every 100 females, there were 107.1 males. The median income for a household in the city was \$21,452, and the median income for a family was \$27,074. Males had a median income of \$21,209 versus \$18,944 for females. The per capita income for the city was \$13,529. About 18.1% of families and 21.1% of the population were below the poverty level, including 23.6% of those under age 18 and 15.2% of those were 65 or



*Courtesy of the Collection of Tim Palomera*

over. Lyndon B. Johnson Elementary, 6515 Commerce St. is part of the corridor. Some of their statistics include: Proficient Reading 44% state average: 44% Math 44% State average: 47%, Writing: 35%, State average: 32.

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## GENERAL MCMULLEN

\*\*\* Please note that **General McMullen (1 corridor feature)** issue is pending release until the end of December 2019.