PHASE 2: STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION
GUIDELINES (REVISED DRAFT)

WEST MESA INDUSTRIAL PARK AND AIRPORT STUDY
LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Las Cruces, New Mexico has an important but under-utilized regional economic development asset in the City-owned West Mesa Industrial Park and Las Cruces International Airport, both of which are immediately adjacent to Interstate 10, approximately 10 miles west of downtown Las Cruces. At 2,200 acres and 4,900 acres, respectively, the Park and Airport have potential to help move the City of Las Cruces to the next level.

This project assessed opportunities for development at The Park and Airport and identified potential challenges inhibiting their growth. The goal was to generate new investment in the Park and Airport, attract new companies to locate there, and to assist with expansions by existing firms. Targets identified for the Park and Airport should further diversify the regional economy and create high quality jobs. The process outlined herein supported this objective and resulted in the production of a Strategy and Implementation Guidelines.

Stakeholder and public input
Qualitative feedback is a vital component of every Market Street project and was part of the process to identify strategic priorities for the West Mesa Park and Airport. Stakeholder input provided important perspectives and opinions regarding the potential future strategic direction that the City can take with these properties and potential barriers or challenges that may currently exist. Stakeholder and public input sessions involved engaging regional and business stakeholders and tenants of the West Mesa Park and Airport through nine individual interviews, and three focus group meetings with 23 persons participating.

Town hall meetings
Two town hall meetings were planned for persons engaged in the process and other interested parties. The first Town Hall meeting, on Wednesday, November 6, 2019 introduced the process and shared research findings. The second, in January 2020, was scheduled to present the proposed Strategy and recommend Implementation Guidelines.

Phase 1: Economic Assessment and Targets Sector Opportunities
The Economic Assessment will examine the area’s population dynamics and recent changes in economic and workforce composition within the Las Cruces MSA. The Assessment included both public and proprietary data covering demographic, socioeconomic, economic, and workforce composition in Las Cruces to better enable City officials and staff and prospective investors and developers understand the ways in which the region has changed over the previous decades. Stakeholder input informed the quantitative data to create a concise narrative outlining past, current, and future trends impacting the population and economy in Las Cruces.

The Targets section of this report included an in-depth examination of the economic opportunities that have the greatest potential to diversify the economy, retain existing jobs, create jobs for existing and new residents, spur innovation, and raise levels of prosperity. The Analysis gave greater focus to opportunities specific to the areas in and around the City’s West Mesa Park and Airport.
Phase 2: Strategy and Implementation Guidelines

The Strategy itself suggested goals for each key issue area drawn from the research and input. Potential objectives and tactical action steps for each goal area were discussed and explored. The Strategy is inclusive of all recommended actions that the research suggested are necessary for Las Cruces to reach its full potential and around the Park and Airport. The Implementation Guidelines detail how the City of Las Cruces and its partners can advance efficient and effective implementation of the Strategy. Specifically, the Implementation Guidelines will leverage the findings of the Economic Assessment to update the City’s approach to strategy and implementation.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT AND TARGET SECTOR OPPORTUNITIES

The Economic Assessment and Target Sector Opportunities report represents the first phase supporting the project in the development of a new Strategy for the West Mesa Industrial Park and the Las Cruces International Airport (WMIP-A). The Economic Assessment and Target Sector Opportunities report provides a fact-based, detailed analysis of the Las Cruces region’s economic performance, workforce trends, socioeconomic dynamics, and the industry clusters that are driving the regional economy. The quantitative research is supported by qualitative feedback from various stakeholders throughout the community.

The first section of the report – the Economic Assessment – covers a broad range of indicators that assess the region’s historical performance and competitiveness including population growth, workforce quality, talent pipeline, income growth, economic composition, and occupational competencies. The findings indicate that Las Cruces is home to a young population but that it has struggled to attract and retain people and talent over the past decade. Both the population and labor force has grown at a slower pace than that of comparison communities and this has been driven by domestic outmigration of residents.

Stakeholders suggest that Las Cruces is losing its recent graduates from NMSU and residents are leaving the region for job opportunities elsewhere. The share of residents in Las Cruces with a bachelor’s degree or higher is below average and there has been little progress at improving it, despite increased degree output at NMSU. In today’s increasingly competitive and knowledge-based economy, companies in a wide variety of sectors now rate access to a skilled and talented workforce as the top site selection component driving corporate location decisions. The availability of skilled labor has surged to the top of the list of corporate executives’ most important site selection factors since 2006, emerging in importance above labor costs, corporate tax rates, tax exemptions, state and local incentives, and occupancy or construction costs.

With that said, there has been some progress with new programming and initiatives aimed at improving the talent in the region. This includes increased degree output at the region’s higher education institutions, improved graduation rates at Las Cruces Public Schools, new K-12 career and technical training programming, and new initiatives and organizations aimed at increasing the talent pool and skilled workforce in the region. As these new efforts come to fruition, the challenge will be to ensure that there are job opportunities available and a business climate that is favorable for fostering new economic activity.

In the world of economic development, the ultimate goal is to improve the lives of individuals – both existing and future residents – by way of higher standards of living through increased wealth and prosperity. Currently, many residents in the region are struggling. In 2017, the poverty rate in the Las Cruces area was 26.3 percent while the youth poverty rate was 37.5 percent – roughly double the national. For individuals and households, standards of living are closely linked with economic opportunities. But, across a variety of national rankings for top states for business, New Mexico ranks near the bottom. Consequently, New Mexico isn’t on the radar of a lot of site selection consultants and simply “isn’t in the game.” And in the world of economic development, perception is reality.
Although Doña Ana County and the City of Las Cruces were more insulated from the Great Recession and the boom and bust of the oil and gas industry than the state was, regional employment growth has been sluggish over the past decade. At the subsector level, half of the industries in the regional economy have yet to surpass their 2008 employment. The region’s workforce competencies will need to be leveraged to support future job growth. The region’s occupational strengths include agriculture; protective services; education, training, and library; life, physical, and social science; and architecture and engineering. However, Las Cruces possesses a below-average concentration of occupations in business and financial operations; computer and mathematical; and production workers.

A thorough assessment of WMIP-A was also completed in order to help identify industries that have the greatest potential for growth. WMIP-A strengths include land and capacity to grow, many supporting organizations and excellent assets, a good quality of life, temperate climate, interstate accessibility, and proximity to White Sands Missile Range, Spaceport America, two major military bases, the Mexican border. Additionally, FAA has designated New Mexico State University (NMSU) as one of 16 Centers of Excellence for Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) and NMSU’s Physical Science Laboratory is one of seven FAA-approved Unmanned Aircraft Systems Test Sites. NewSpace, Spaceport America, Virgin Galactic and related developments have helped raise regional awareness.

However, tenants and stakeholders reported that basic infrastructure such as sewer is missing and that the lack of available buildings and hangars will hinder development given that as many as 75 percent of regional economic development leads require existing buildings. WMIP-A tenants also complained about slow Internet that will be a deal-breaker for many companies in the 21st century. As technology continues to advance, fast and reliable Internet is a necessity in every industry.

The Target Sector Opportunities section focuses more narrowly on a specific issue: the City’s potential to create new jobs and wealth for its residents through targeted economic development at WMIP-A. In order to improve the economic wellbeing of residents and increase prosperity in the region, more people with a variety of skills need to be able to find good jobs and earn livable wages. To that end, communities around the country are directing finite resources toward the development of “targeted” business sectors that have the greatest potential to grow quality jobs and attract investment, and accordingly, provide the greatest return on investment. The practice of “targeting” has grown as communities have witnessed the advantages that are afforded to companies by such agglomerations or “clusters” while recognizing that resources are finite and must be expended efficiently and effectively to support regional economic development.
Given the infrastructure, geographic location, and the region’s assets, workforce, and training institutions, Market Street recommends that the City focus on three main industries for growth at WMIP-A: aerospace, aviation, defense; advanced manufacturing; and value-added agriculture products. These sectors are representative of the region’s core economic and workforce strengths and provide the best near-term opportunities for growing jobs and investment. A thorough review of the key takeaways and strategic considerations for each of the targets can be found in the full report.
INTRODUCTION

Market Street Services was retained to assist the City of Las Cruces develop a Strategy and Implementation Plan to realize the full potential of West Mesa Industrial Park and Las Cruces International Airport.

The Strategy and Plan include new policies and investments that will be required if the Park and Airport are to fully contribute to the kind of growth and development the City seeks.

Because the Park and Airport are inextricably linked with other regional assets and generating the desired results are dependent on actions by regional and state partners, the plan includes goals outside the Park and Airport, and beyond the resources, capacity and responsibility of the City of Las Cruces.

Fortunately, economic development is a “team sport.” Partners can be attracted to take ownership of parts of this plan—leading on some of the goals, collaborating on others, and endorsing but taking no direct action on still others. Even with limited resources, it is realistic to expect that the whole plan can be accomplished.

Successful communities are those where individuals and organizations—public, private, and non-profit—work together to advance a common agenda. A critical aspect of this work is ensuring that all key partners and the general public understand the importance of the various programs, initiatives, and investments outlined in the strategy and how these actions will have a positive impact on the community’s success and prosperity.

So while this is the City’s strategy for The Park and Airport, its successful implementation will depend on it being embraced, adopted and worked on with the City’s many economic development partners.
STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

—TARGET—
Pursue Development Offering Best ROI

- Grow and Expand Existing Businesses
- Attract New Firms and Investment
- Support Small Business and Startup Growth

—PLACE—
Prioritize Improvements at Park and Airport

- Take Advantage of First Impressions
- Recognize That Without Infrastructure It’s Just Land
- Don’t Forget the Amenities
- Improve Transportation Linkages

—MARKET—
Manage, Brand & Sell Park and Airport

- Get Serious About Development
- Build Something to Sell
- Utilize Best Practice Marketing Programs and Tools
- Rebrand West Mesa Park
- Establish a Team of Champions
- Make Las Cruces Known for Ease in Doing Business

—CHALLENGE—
Overcome Real & Perceived Obstacles to Development

- Help New Mexico Become a Magnet for Business
- Optimize Alignment of Regional Talent Pipeline
- Expand Continuing Education and Training for Adults
- Do Something About Poverty
SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Following is an overview of the four goals, 17 objectives, and 50 action items:

1. **TARGET: Pursue Development Offering Best Return on Investment**
   
   **A. Grow and Expand Existing Businesses**
   
   1) Establish pilot Business Retention & Expansion program at the Park and Airport
   
   2) Utilize BRE findings to identify opportunities for expansions and business attractions
   
   3) Advocate for a more robust region-wide BRE program, building on success at the Park and Airport
   
   4) Assist manufacturers and value-added agricultural products companies improve their competitiveness, product base, and productivity
   
   **B. Attract New Firms and Investment**
   
   1) Elevate Las Cruces’ position as a leader in the UAS world
   
   2) Help MVEDA staff present Park and Airport for business relocations
   
   3) Market niche specializations and target industries that lead to new jobs and investment
   
   4) Maximize opportunities related to Spaceport America
   
   5) Capitalize on Virgin Galactic’s success
   
   **C. Support Small Business and Startup Growth**
   
   1) Promote existing resources for entrepreneurs and small businesses
   
   2) Connect with commercialization efforts at NMSU
   
   3) Match businesses with researchers and practitioners at Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension Service

2. **PLACE: Prioritize Improvements at the Park and Airport**

   **A. Take Advantage of First Impressions**
   
   1) Improve entrances and landscaping throughout the Park and Airport
   
   2) Update City buildings at Airport
   
   3) Make Park and Airport a model for sustainability
   
   4) Begin the Virgin Galactic space experience at Airport
   
   **B. Recognize That Without Infrastructure, It’s Just Land**
1) Maintain and upgrade all existing infrastructure
2) Aggressively market sites with all infrastructure in place
3) Adopt Build-Ready Standard as "Las Cruces certification" for sites
4) Have plans ready to extend infrastructure to other sites in the Park and Airport

C. Don’t Forget the Amenities
   1) Address need for more varied food options
   2) Pursue a hotel
   3) Build walking / bike trails and outdoor seating

D. Improve Transportation Linkages
   1) Construct the highway to Santa Teresa
   2) Extend rail into the Park
   3) Bring transit to the Park and Airport

3. MARKET: Manage, Brand and Sell the Park and Airport

A. Get Serious About Development
   1) Hire economic developer for Park and Airport
   2) Clarify City policy on property pricing and lease rates
   3) Develop a formula for awarding incentives
   4) Fast-track projects through City departments
   5) Waive plan review and construction permit fees

B. Build Something to Sell
   1) Get a flex space complex on the market in Park
   2) Build a hangar at Airport for small aviation manufacturers or maintenance firms
   3) Secure a funding stream for improvements

C. Utilize Best Practice Marketing Programs and Tools
   1) Use the Internet to best advantage
   2) Participate in MVEDA marketing initiatives
   3) Install “For Sale” or “For Lease” signs on available sites

D. Rebrand West Mesa Industrial Park
   1) Give the Park a new name to link it more closely with Las Cruces

E. Establish a Team of Champions
1) Engage owners and managers of businesses at Park and Airport

2) Expect partners to advance Strategy

3) Be broker-friendly

F. Make Las Cruces Known for Ease in Doing Business
   1) Eliminate administrative barriers that impede industrial development

4. CHALLENGE: Overcome Real and Perceived Obstacles to Development

   A. Help New Mexico Become a Magnet for Business
      1) Lobby for state initiatives to get New Mexico’s rankings up

   B. Optimize Alignment of Regional Talent Pipeline
      1) Continue to leverage and advance education and training programs
      2) Support The Bridge of Southern New Mexico
      3) Develop and leverage new intern and apprentice opportunities

   C. Expand Continuing Education and Training for Adults
      1) Incentivize adults without college degrees to further their education, gain new skills
      2) Reach adults with limited English proficiency

   D. Do Something About Poverty
      1) Expand the City’s excellent commitment to sustainability to include education, health, and financial security
      2) Organize a collaborative approach to set goals and measure progress
1. TARGET

PURSUE DEVELOPMENT OFFERING BEST RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The Assessment and Targets report, issued in November 2019, underscored how growth in the regional economy and labor force has stalled in recent years. Today, the Las Cruces region is faced with domestic outmigration, low educational attainment rates, and high poverty rates. Further, the region’s economy remains highly concentrated in just a few sectors, and continues to be highly dependent upon government spending.

In order to reverse negative trends, balance and strengthen the economy, and make progress at improving wealth and prosperity in Las Cruces, the City and its economic development partners should emphasize attracting and supporting companies providing high wage, quality jobs for existing and future workforce—especially recent graduates of New Mexico State University, Doña Ana Community College, and area high schools.

In a November 2019 Brookings report, “Meet the Low-wage Workforce,” Fellow Martha Ross and Research Analyst Nicole Bateman observed, “Labor market conditions are not acts of God or inevitable. They are shaped by policies, investments, institutions, and norms… which can be changed—although, admittedly, it is rarely easy or quick to do so.”

In this Strategy for the Park and Airport, Market Street Services suggests a set of target business sectors around which the City and its local, regional, and state partners can align and focus resources.

Specifically, these targets were identified as the sectors that offer Las Cruces the greatest potential to create new jobs at WMIP-A through targeted economic development activities in the near-term, or over the next five years. Given the WMIP-A’s infrastructure, geographic location, and the region's assets, workforce, and training institutions, Market Street recommends that the City focus on three main industries for growth at the Park and Airport:

- Aerospace, Aviation, and Defense
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Value-added Agriculture Products

Within the aerospace target, unmanned aerial systems (UAS) and NewSpace are particular niche specializations that should be marketed and pursued. These sectors are representative of the region’s core economic and workforce strengths and provide the best near-term opportunities for growing jobs and investment within the aerospace industry. In order to move Las Cruces forward in diversifying and advancing the regional economy, the City must take a multifaceted approach to foster growth in the target sectors at WMIP-A. This includes continuing and expanding programming that supports target sector development through the three legs of the stool of economic development – existing business retention and expansion, new business attraction, and entrepreneurship – as well as ensuring that there is a skilled workforce available for current and future employers. Some of the initiatives in this section are specific to WMIP-A while others are more holistic in nature. Whether the actions directly or indirectly impact WMIP-A, they all aim to
strengthen the target niches and spur economic activity in Las Cruces thereby strengthening opportunities at the Park and Airport.

Just Who Is Responsible For This Work?

Following are Objectives and Implementation Action Items for the first goal, TARGET: Pursue Development Offering Best Return on Investment.

Some of these items are obviously the responsibility of the City’s Economic Development Department and with the support of the Department Manager, other City departments, and available funding, they can be added to the Department’s work plan and undertaken. These tasks are indicated with three stars—★★★

Other action items are not solely the responsibility of the Economic Development Department. But they are in the plan and if the plan is adopted, it is in the Department’s interest to see them addressed. When they are added to the Department’s work plan, the assigned staff person should seek out City departments; local, state or federal entities; non-profit organizations; educational institutions; and/or for-profit businesses with whom the Economic Development Department can work to complete the task. So the Department is a partner—in some cases, if desired, the lead partner—but without authority to act independently. These tasks are indicated with two stars—★★

Finally, there are items—some very important—that are clearly beyond the responsibility of the Economic Development Department. The Department Manager should seek individuals, other departments, organizations or private entities to champion these items. It is anticipated that the Department would have limited direct responsibility in working on these items beyond expressing the view that they affect the City’s ability to create jobs and wealth. These tasks are indicated with one star—★

A. Grow and Expand Existing Businesses

In order to foster growth within the target niches, Las Cruces must help local firms remain in the community and prosper by supporting their growth and competitiveness. Research shows that small businesses and existing businesses drive the majority of job growth within regional economies. Historically, small businesses have created three-fourths of new jobs in the U.S. economy, and studies have shown that up to 80% or more of net new job growth comes from existing businesses. Small and existing businesses are the backbone of any strong regional economy and must be maintained to foster additional job and investment. (See also TARGET, C)

Keeping a business in a community is less costly than attracting a new company, so retention and expansion efforts are efficient and effective means to generate jobs and development. Therefore, the first priority for growing the Park and Airport is to grow and expand existing businesses—identifying and addressing problems, introducing programs and services available in the community, and responding to requests for specific assistance. As relationships are built, the owner or manager of the existing firm will more likely choose to expand in Las Cruces instead of responding to overtures from competing communities. Satisfied existing businesses can also be a community’s
best ambassadors when recruiting new firms to the area as well as serving as a source of leads when seeking new firms to recruit.

1. Establish pilot Business Retention & Expansion program at Park and Airport—

   Since a region-wide BRE program requires leadership, partnerships, and time, it is recommended that a pilot program be organized under the direction of the City’s Economic Development Department to call on owners and managers of businesses located in the Park and Airport.

   a. Establish the BRE visitation team to include DACC, NMSU, Workforce Connection, City regulators, utilities, MVEDA, and chamber of commerce

   b. Make initial calls on all businesses located in Park and Airport in year one

   c. Put in place a mechanism to record and respond on all issues identified and to report on the success of the program

   d. Utilize BRE findings to identify opportunities for expansions and business attractions

      See Best Practice: Business Retention Programs (IEDC)
      See Best Practice: Business Retention Programs—Five Modules
      See Best Practice: Business Retention Visit Leads to $3.5 billion expansion in Austin

2. Utilize BRE findings to identify opportunities for expansions and business attractions—

   a. Work with existing businesses to determine whether suppliers or other connected firms could benefit from locating in Las Cruces at WMIP-A

   b. Evaluate the feasibility of a “supply chain mapping” initiative to match local suppliers with local buyers and identify potential prospects for recruitment

   c. Using relationships established through BRE activities, enlist executives, owners, managers, and other key representatives from existing businesses to support expansion and business attraction efforts

3. Advocate for a more robust region-wide Business Retention & Expansion program, building on success at Park and Airport—

   a. Identify a leadership organization to take ownership of a region-wide BRE program. A successful approach requires a formal, collaborative program involving multiple organizations (e.g. MVEDA, Las Cruces Chamber) that can influence the business climate and respond to employer needs. A best-practice BRE program should seek to understand the challenges and opportunities that existing businesses face, building up a “knowledge base” of issues, opportunities, and threats to specific firms, industries, and/or the community’s overall business climate as a whole

   b. Organizational partners must then work collaboratively to alleviate barriers to competitiveness
c. **Encourage education on trade and exporting opportunities**

4. **Assist manufacturers and value-added agricultural products companies to improve their competitiveness, product base, and profitability—**
   
   a. **Identify and connect promising small- and mid-sized firms with New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partnership (New Mexico MEP)**
   
   b. **Seek and/or provide financial support to assist manufacturers with upgrading equipment and systems and incorporating new technologies that improve efficiencies**
   
   c. **Provide technical assistance to help manufacturers incorporate new technologies and expand operations to more advanced manufacturing opportunities (e.g. research and development, design, repair, sales) in the advanced manufacturing value chain. Principal partners: Doña Ana Community College and NMSU**

B. **Attract New Firms and Investment**

While the bulk of new job creation is driven by existing businesses and new startups, business recruitment is an important and highly visible component of a successful economic development program. In Las Cruces, the City funds MVEDA to recruit companies and market the region. MVEDA looks to the City as a product developer. The Park and Airport are primary products. The City and MVEDA must show that Las Cruces is “open for businesses” by supporting economic growth through attraction efforts.

Given the City’s limited financial resources and staff capacity, the Strategy recommends that the City’s Economic Development Department should advocate with MVEDA to seek relocations and expansions at the Park and Airport. It should also support MVEDA in strengthening its working relationship with organizations that have more resources for marketing and relationship building at the state and national level. This includes state and regional economic development entities, utility companies like El Paso Electric, and other powerful economic development partners that can “funnel” projects to the City of Las Cruces.

1. **Elevate Las Cruces’ position as a leader in the UAS world—**
   
   a. **Work with NMSU’s Physical Science Laboratory (PSL) to maximize the Unmanned Aircraft Systems Flight Test Center and support its goals**
   
   b. **Support organizers of the Unmanned Aircraft Systems Technical Analysis and Applications Center Conference (UAS TAAC) to enhance the event and raise its profile nationally**
   
   c. **Collaborate with PSL and other partners to create a more robust website with information on the region’s UAS activities and opportunities**
   
   d. **Research and review other FAA-designated UAS Test Site websites to benchmark the Las Cruces website**

2. **Help MVEDA staff present the Park and Airport for business relocations—**
a. As the most knowledgeable person in the City on specifics related to Park and Airport, the City’s Park and Airport Economic Developer should conduct site visits for prospects; participate in marketing missions; provide answers re sites available, infrastructure and soils; pricing and incentives; and make introductions to representatives of utilities, workforce training, and key City staff (See also MARKET, A-1)

3. Market niche specializations and target industries that can lead to new jobs and investment—
   a. Develop marketing materials that can be distributed and/or language that can be incorporated into partner organizations materials. The material should include up-to-date information on the WMIP-A’s attributes (See also MARKET, C)

4. Maximize opportunities related to Spaceport America—
   **
   a. Support the Aerospace States Association New Mexico and Ambassadors for Spaceport America to advance the region’s commercial space industry
   
   b. Work with partners and Virgin Galactic to identify additional opportunities to support the Spaceport
   
   c. Promote Las Cruces as a destination for companies in the commercial space industry

5. Capitalize on Virgin Galactic’s success—
   **
   a. Although there don’t appear to be any short-term requirements at Virgin Galactic that could be met at WMIP-A, the company’s growth could change that
   
   b. Be alert to future opportunities that could include suppliers, companies providing payloads and locating testing firms at the Airport

C. Support Small Business and Startup Growth

A strong entrepreneurial ecosystem is comprised of many individuals, organizations, and institutions that support startup activity and small business growth. Each entity has programming in place to support creating an environment that allows information and ideas to flow and flourish freely and new ventures and businesses to launch with ease. Las Cruces is home to a research institution, NMSU, which is a significant advantage in today’s economy. Public universities are the 21st century economic engines comparable to what the steel mills were in the early and mid-20th century. A public research university affords the community the opportunity to foster research commercialization, an entrepreneurial culture, and other supporting factors that can create new jobs and advance the regional economy forward.

Such competitive advantages should be effectively leveraged to attract new businesses, foster growth in the region’s existing businesses, and support the City’s entrepreneurial culture. In Las Cruces, NMSU’s Arrowhead Center serves as the single portal to link researchers and entrepreneurs with marketable opportunities, as well as to help researchers turn scientific discoveries into intellectual property. Together with partners, the City should work to enhance its business climate and assistance services that support new business formations in the target sectors at WMIP-A. (See also TARGET, A)
1. Promote existing resources for entrepreneurs and small businesses—
   - This includes:
     - Las Cruces Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Doña Ana Community College
     - Finance New Mexico
     - Arrowhead Center
     - SCORE, and
     - Other business assistance programs

2. Connect with commercialization efforts at NMSU—
   - Work with Arrowhead Center to identify firms that need more space and help these new firms grow and scale locally at properties at WMIP-A

3. Match businesses with researchers and practitioners at Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension Service—
   - Facilitate collaboration between value-added agricultural businesses at The Park and NMSU Agricultural Experiment Station and Agricultural Extension Service for research, training and staffing
2. PLACE

PRIORITIZE IMPROVEMENTS AT WEST MESA INDUSTRIAL PARK AND AIRPORT

West Mesa Industrial Park dates back to the acquisition of the first parcel of property from the Bureau of Land Management in 1982. The dream of an industrial park to accommodate new companies providing good jobs is now coming up on 38 years old. Over nearly four decades, fewer than 20 companies have located at the Park. It is clear that the Park has yet to reach its full potential.

Companies of all sizes and industries choose to locate in industrial parks for a variety of reasons: to enhance their image, for opportunities for collaboration, because it's in the right location, and for the availability of a trained and trainable workforce. In order for WMIP-A to attract companies, it will need a good dose of improvements.

Just Who Is Responsible For This Work?

Following are Objectives and Implementation Action Items for the second goal, PLACE: Prioritize Improvements at West Mesa Industrial Park and Airport.

Some of these items are obviously the responsibility of the City’s Economic Development Department and with the support of the Department Manager, other City departments, and available funding, they can be added to the Department’s work plan and undertaken. These tasks are indicated with three stars — ★★★

Other action items are not solely the responsibility of the Economic Development Department. But they are in the plan and if the plan is adopted, it is in the Department’s interest to see them addressed. When they are added to the Department’s work plan, the assigned staff person should seek out City departments; local, state or federal entities; non-profit organizations; educational institutions; and/or for-profit businesses with whom the Economic Development Department can work to complete the task. So the Department is a partner—in some cases, if desired, the lead partner—but without authority to act independently. These tasks are indicated with two stars — ★★

Finally, there are items—some very important—that are clearly beyond the responsibility of the Economic Development Department. The Department Manager should seek individuals, other departments, organizations or private entities to champion these items. It is anticipated that the Department would have limited direct responsibility in working on these items beyond expressing the view that they affect the City’s ability to create jobs and wealth. These tasks are indicated with one star — ★

A. Take Advantage of First Impressions

In today’s business environment, the competition for West Mesa Industrial Park and Airport may be hundreds or even thousands of miles away. That means it’s not enough for West Mesa to measure up to the local standard since it is likely being compared to some of the best parks in the nation. So what’s the City to do? Start by looking at the Park and Airport with fresh eyes.
1. Improve entrances and landscaping throughout the Park and Airport—
   - The beautified medians, completed in 2017 are populated with boulders, swales, native plantings and a roadrunner sculpture. Perhaps because of the flat terrain and the size of area at the entrance, the medians, and the right-of-way, it’s not enough to make the desired impact.
   
   a. Supplement the landscaping with additional drought-tolerant and heat-resistant trees, shrubs, and grasses and hardscape similar to that used in 2017 to make a statement
   
   b. Likewise, the landscaping on roads leading to and through the Airport needs supplemental treatment. Note: Landscaping and signage at Rea Boulevard at Robert Larson Boulevard (the Interstate access road) is the most attractive area in the Park and Airport
   
   c. Update and be consistent with all signage at entrances and throughout Park and Airport

2. Update City buildings at Airport—
   - Retrofit and maintain City-owned buildings at the Airport to achieve LEED certification for existing buildings
   
   b. Track performance in energy, water, waste, transportation, indoor air quality, toxin free environment and occupant satisfaction and create a display to post results
   
   c. Develop interior signage standards to present Las Cruces in a most favorable light

3. Make Park and Airport a model for sustainability—
   - Help businesses address climate change, utilize clean energy, and operate with resiliency
   
   b. The City will utilize solar and wind to power City-owned buildings at Airport and/or purchase 100% renewable energy
   
   c. The Park and Airport will be a model for water conservation, e.g. harvest rooftop rainwater; utilize swales in parking areas, and where paved, utilize permeable paving; retrofit restrooms with low flow faucets, two-button toilets, and waterless urinals; reuse graywater for landscaping
   
   d. Require xeriscape / sustainable landscaping. Follow City’s Sustainability guidelines

4. Begin the Virgin Galactic space experience at Airport—
   - Improve the arrival experience for space passengers, family and friends arriving at Las Cruces International Airport for Virgin Galactic space flights. The Airport facilities at Las Cruces don’t have to be as “glitzy” as Virgin Galactic has built at Spaceport America, but they should make a good impression for these space tourists
   
   b. Collaborate with Visit Las Cruces CVB to prepare hotels, restaurants and attractions for new visitors with high expectations
B. Recognize That Without Infrastructure It’s Just Land

1. Maintain all existing infrastructure—
   a. Streets to be maintained to industrial use standard in Park
   b. Data and communications: The City should negotiate with fiber provider to extend fiber optic network with Gigabit Internet speed service throughout the Park and Airport

2. Aggressively market sites with all infrastructure in place—
   a. Priority for Airport: Aviation / Aerospace. Property can be leased
   b. Priority for Park: Aviation / Aerospace, Advanced Manufacturing, and Value-added Agriculture. Property can be leased or sold
   c. Market pre-permitted sites for aviation projects in Airport and industrial projects in Park
   d. Where infrastructure is not in place, City should have plans ready so that the site can be ready for occupancy within X days (60-90 days)
   e. Note: These are City-owned properties and the City should be able to control development schedules

3. Adopt Build-Ready Standard as “Las Cruces certification” for sites—
   a. Streets – Meets industrial standard
   b. 3-Phase Power – Served by 3-phase power adequate to support industrial-commercial usage
   c. Water and Sewer – Water and sewer lines are in place and capable of serving industrial users
   d. Gas – Gas line in place to site capable of serving industrial users
   e. Telecommunications – Served by a telecommunications provider able to provide T-1 or greater service

   See Best Practice: Build-ready Standards

4. Have plans ready to extend infrastructure to other sites in Park and Airport—
   a. Road Access –A plan must be in place to extend access to property. Documentation of a road extension plan that includes cost and funding details must be provided
b. **3-Phase Power** – The site should be served by 3-phase power adequate to support industrial / commercial usage

c. **Water and Sewer** – Water and sewer lines capable of serving industrial users, must serve the site and/or the industrial park in which it is located. A commitment letter from the utility provider must be provided that includes a written plan detailing cost estimates, funding plan and development schedule

d. **Gas** – Gas line capable of serving industrial users must serve the site and/or the industrial park in which it is located. A commitment letter from the utility provider must be provided. That includes a written plan detailing cost estimates, funding plan and development schedule

e. **Telecommunications** – The site must be served by a telecommunications provider able to provide T-1 or greater service

C. **Don’t Forget the Amenities**

Despite a good economy, many companies find it difficult to find and retain good employees. Providing amenities will help make the Park and Airport a more desirable workplace setting. Another place to eat lunch would be a quick win and improve existing tenant satisfaction.

1. **Address need for more varied food options**

   Recruiting food trucks to come to the Park could be a first step toward creating a more desirable Park and to make working at the Park more attractive. No one likes bland food, and lunch breaks with co-workers can foster a sense of community. Not only would this help attract workers but it would help retain them as well. It’s important to offer a variety as well as a friendly, open setting.

   a. **Start with Food Truck Friday or Tuesday, for example**

   b. **Make it easier to get a license to operate a food truck**

   c. **If food trucks are successful, build a food truck courtyard with parking, tables and shade structures**

   d. **Attract a commissary to serve food trucks / ghost restaurant / virtual restaurant**

   e. **Longer term, it is reasonable to expect that one or more restaurants can be attracted to the Interstate frontage at exit 132 and in the Airport terminal**

2. **Pursue a hotel**

   A mid-range or budget hotel at exit 132 would serve tourists driving through southern New Mexico along I-10 and travelers with business in the Park and Las Cruces, providing meeting space and likely a restaurant.

   a. **Reserve two sites at Park and Airport for hotel development. Erect signs indicating availability of sites for hotel**
b. Establish favorable pricing or long-term land lease for hotel

c. Seek support of Las Cruces CVB, NMSU and a private hotel developer. Survey private sector employers such as Virgin Galactic about their needs

3. Build walking / bike trails and outdoor seating—

   To bring a positive vibe to West Mesa Industrial Park and the Airport and fresh air to employees, the City should develop walking and bike trails and fitness stations. Outdoor seating would also allow people to enjoy their breaks, and create an open environment many industrial parks lack. This is an amenity to be used to market the Park and Airport. So while it may be viewed as a linear park, its priority should not be compared to other neighborhood parks.

   a. Develop a plan to construct the trails over two to four years

D. Improve Transportation Linkages

1. Construct the highway to Santa Teresa—

   A direct highway connection linking West Mesa Park and Airport to the county’s other industrial park in Santa Teresa would be advantageous to businesses targeted in this strategy and international businesses seeking to locate near the southern border but attracted to a more urban, university community.

   a. Collaborate with Santa Teresa officials to advocate for the highway and lobby the State and Doña Ana County to secure funding for its construction

2. Extend rail into the Park—

   a. Determine feasibility of extending rail into West Mesa Park to serve existing firms and to attract companies requiring rail access

   b. Lobby (and support) Doña Ana County to take the lead in pursuing rail connection of the region’s industrial and airport facilities at West Mesa and Santa Teresa, an opportunity cited in the county’s One Valley, One Vision 2040 Plan¹

   c. If feasible, secure funding and construct the rail spur

3. Bring transit to the Park and Airport—

   Gas prices, traffic, and owning a car can be circumvented from the stress of a Park/Airport employee’s life if good public transportation is available.

   a. Make a case for Road Runner transit service to Park and Airport

¹ One Valley, One Vision 2020 Plan, page 24
   https://donaanacounty.org/sites/default/files/maps/OVOV_2040_HQ.pdf
b. Lobby for state and federal funding and grants

c. Until such time as a bus line can be extended to West Mesa, the City should establish the Commute with Enterprise discounted vanpooling program through “NM Go!” to serve employees of firms at the Park and Airport.

See Best Practice: Ride Sharing Program Offered in Las Cruces
3. MARKET

MANAGE, BRAND AND SELL PARK AND AIRPORT

West Mesa Industrial Park, including the developable property at Las Cruces International Airport, is a 1,820-acre general-purpose industrial park that has attracted some 20 businesses since the property was acquired from the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management in 1982-85. The City of Las Cruces has long believed the Park can help expand and diversify the local economy and provide new jobs, but the slow pace of development suggests that it is time to get serious about attracting companies to the Park and Airport.

Accordingly, the third element of the Strategy is to aggressively Market the Park.

Just Who Is Responsible For This Work?

Following are Objectives and Implementation Action Items for the third goal, MARKET: Manage, Brand and Sell Park and Airport.

Some of these items are obviously the responsibility of the City’s Economic Development Department and with the support of the Department Manager, other City departments, and available funding, they can be added to the Department’s work plan and undertaken. These tasks are indicated with three stars—★★★

Other action items are not solely the responsibility of the Economic Development Department. But they are in the plan and if the plan is adopted, it is in the Department’s interest to see them addressed. When they are added to the Department’s work plan, the assigned staff person should seek out City departments; local, state or federal entities; non-profit organizations; educational institutions; and/or for-profit businesses with whom the Economic Development Department can work to complete the task. So the Department is a partner—in some cases, if desired, the lead partner—but without authority to act independently. These tasks are indicated with two stars—★★

Finally, there are items—some very important—that are clearly beyond the responsibility of the Economic Development Department. The Department Manager should seek individuals, other departments, organizations or private entities to champion these items. It is anticipated that the Department would have limited direct responsibility in working on these items beyond expressing the view that they affect the City’s ability to create jobs and wealth. These tasks are indicated with one star—★

A. Get Serious About Development

The City of Las Cruces funds the Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance (MVEDA) to be its sales and marketing entity to attract companies to the city including to the Park and Airport.
However, the City needs somebody within its Economic Development Department who wakes up every morning focused on managing, branding and selling the Park and Airport.

1. Hire Economic Developer for Park and Airport—
   The City needs a full-time point person whose job it is to represent Park and Airport with economic development partners (See also TARGET, B-1) and to implement this 2020 Strategy for the Park and Airport.
   a. The Economic Developer—Park and Airport would be most knowledgeable person in City on specifics related to Park and Airport (e.g. sites available, infrastructure, soils, and incentives)
   b. The Economic Developer—Park and Airport should function as an ombudsman for businesses locating at Park or Airport to ensure that permitting occurs without bureaucratic delays (See also TARGET, A-4)
   c. The Economic Developer—Park and Airport would be responsible for implementing this Strategic Plan
   d. The Economic Developer—Park and Airport would be in addition to the Airport Administrator and would advocate for Park and Airport properties with MVEDA and other economic development partners, and with the City’s Land Management Office and other City departments

2. Clarify City policy on property pricing and lease rates—
   a. City Administration should provide and continually update guidelines on pricing sites at Park and lease rates at Airport so economic development point person can speak with authority with prospects on sale or lease of properties

3. Develop a formula for awarding incentives—
   a. $X amount per job created or retained. $X amount per job at percentage above median. $X for specific industries locating in Park or at Airport. Also needed are policies for clawback if employment / investment not met

4. Fast-track projects through City departments—
   a. This is City-owned land. Prospects should expect fast-track permitting
   b. Notwithstanding the important role the Economic Developer—Park and Airport will play as an ombudsman for businesses locating at Park or Airport (See also MARKET, A-1-b, and MARKET, F-1-b), the entire Economic Development Department should continually advocate for fast-track and hassle-free permitting by the City

   See Best Practice: Ease of Permitting

5. Waive plan review and construction permit fees—
a. This is an incentive for development on City-owned sites at the Park and Airport the City wants to develop

B. Build Something to Sell!
West Mesa Park has land available for development. But MVEDA officials cite the absence of existing buildings in the Park and Airport as a major challenge. Seventy-five percent of MVEDA leads require an existing building.

1. Get a flex space complex on the market in the Park—

   This should be the City’s highest priority for West Mesa Park based on feedback reporting that Las Cruces misses projects because most prospects are looking for existing facilities and there are no speculative facilities at Park and Airport.

   a. The City should aggressively seek a private developer to construct a flex space building to be marketed to target industries in the Park, and an industrial hangar at the Airport

   b. Failing at attracting a private developer, the City should be the developer of last resort for this speculative facility

   c. The flex-space complex should be developed with units in a range of sizes—e.g. spaces from 5,000 to 65,000 square feet—to accommodate companies from start-ups to relocations with operations from office to manufacturing to warehousing. This kind of flexibility would be ideal for the targeted industries identified

   d. Find a way to fast-track design-build construction of facilities for businesses.

   See Best Practice: Flex-space Complex

2. Build a hangar at Airport for small aviation manufacturers or maintenance firms

   a. Based on inquiries received at MVEDA, Airport Manager and others, determine the size and configuration that would be most marketable for multiple tenants

   b. Aggressively seek a private developer to construct the hangar

   c. Failing at attracting a private developer, the City should be the developer of last resort for this speculative facility

3. Secure funding stream for improvements—

   a. Given that the Park and Airport are City-owned and the best sites for the target industries identified, and because these targets would create the jobs needed to attract and retain the desired workforce, the improvements recommended herein should merit funding through the City’s General Fund

   b. Other funding should also be pursued including through a Tax Increment Development District (TIDD). A first step would be to determine how much revenue could be generated from a TIDD at the Park and Airport
c. There are five Qualified Opportunity Zones (QOZ) within Las Cruces including one at the Park and Airport. The City should explore pre-approving a Qualified Opportunity Fund to attract a developer to construct a flex space building or other priority project in the Park or Airport.

C. Utilize Best Practice Marketing Programs and Tools

Properly utilized, the Internet is the single best marketing tool for industrial parks such as West Mesa Park. It enables businesses and site selectors to compare a great number of potential sites at little cost and without disclosing who is doing the search until such time as the prospect is ready for a site visit. Of course, a poorly designed website without the required information can result in a park being eliminated even if it otherwise met the site qualifications.

1. Use the Internet to best advantage—
   
   a. The City should develop or cause to be developed a website to market the Park and Airport to be housed on the City’s las-cruces.org website, and with links from Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance’s mveda.com website, State of New Mexico sites and other sites as appropriate.

   b. The Park and Airport site should include user-friendly marketing maps, detailed maps showing infrastructure, graphics, photos, description of available amenities, list of tenants, and benefits to businesses.

   c. It is not necessary to make a decision on rebranding the Park (see objective D. Rebrand West Mesa Industrial Park) to develop these website improvements. The marketing maps and other features proposed are needed now and can be modified when the new brand is introduced.

   See Best Practice: Websites

2. Participate in MVEDA marketing initiatives—
   
   a. Economic Developer—Park and Airport to represent Park and Airport in meetings between MVEDA and prospects; assist with site tours and briefings; arrange meetings between prospects and tenants on doing business in Las Cruces and at the Park and Airport; and provide the most complete information regarding sites available, utilities, soils, and incentives.

3. Install “For Sale” or “For Lease” signs on available sites—
   
   a. It’s not high tech but “For Sale” signs indicate activity and may generate prospects.

D. Rebrand West Mesa Industrial Park

Many stakeholders observed that the industrial park is far from other development in Las Cruces and that this distance has hindered its growth. One way to increase the citizens’ ownership of the Park would be to rebrand it as Las Cruces Industrial Park that would say, “It’s our industrial park.” Other names that should be considered are Las Cruces Business Park, and Las Cruces Commerce.
Park. Rebrand the Park also presents an opportunity to further tie the Park and Airport. Perhaps the two entities could be marketed as Las Cruces International Airport and Industrial Park.

The biggest place named “Mesa” in the U.S. is the city in Arizona. The size of Mesa, with a population of approximately 500,000, suggests that the industrial park in Las Cruces might be assumed to be located in Arizona. Within New Mexico, there are more places using the name “West Mesa” in metro Albuquerque including a high school, open space, aquatic center and the famous West Mesa serial killer murders. On the other hand, the biggest place named “Las Cruces” is the city in New Mexico.

Since the goal is to market the Park and Airport to local, state and national firms—most of whom will have no knowledge of West Mesa Park, the recommendation is to use Las Cruces in the name of the park to capitalize on the greater recognition that exists for the “Las Cruces” than “West Mesa.”

1. Give the Park a new name to link it more closely to Las Cruces—
   
   a. Rebranding the Park would be most effective if other improvements are implemented simultaneously. Erect signage saying, “Coming Soon: Las Cruces Industrial Park” with a new logo and announcing improvements including flex-space available, sites with industrial infrastructure, landscaping, trails, and more!

E. Establish a Team of Champions

Downtown development was a clear goal of City administration and had its champions. Likewise, the Park and Airport need their champions.

1. Engage owners and managers of businesses at Park and Airport—
   
   a. One-on-one visits by the Economic Developer—Park and Airport with owners and managers of businesses at the Park and Airport presents an opportunity to cultivate champions/advocates for implementing the Strategy

   b. The BRE program (See TARGET, A-1) will help identify leaders and issues that by calling on members of the tenants association

   c. As champions emerge and become more engaged, the City could formalize the group into a non-profit association to address issues and advocate for the Park and Airport

2. Expect partners to advance Strategy—

   a. The City’s economic development partner, Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance, is charged with marketing the City and its properties for new businesses and expansions. Accordingly, the City should work with MVEDA to advance this Strategy for developing the Park and Airport

   b. Other partners include State of New Mexico Economic Development, New Mexico State University and Arrowhead Center, and Doña Ana Community College

3. Be broker-friendly—

   ***
a. Reach out to local and national brokers who can be invaluable in leasing, purchase and sale transactions in the Park and Airport. Recognize that strong relationships with the broker community can pay big dividends.

F. Make Las Cruces Known for Ease in Doing Business

One of the troubling discoveries during the focus groups and interviews was the extent to which businesspersons viewed Las Cruces (and New Mexico) as a difficult place to do business. Cited specifically were the time it takes to submit plans, receive comments from the inspector, and fix the issues commented on expecting to receive approval to go ahead with the project, only to receive another one or two wave of comments. Time is money and businesses say it takes considerably longer in Las Cruces than it does in El Paso, for example.

The City can overcome this obstacle to development by putting a focus on improving customer focus.

1. Eliminate administrative barriers that impede industrial development—

   a. At Tahoe Reno Industrial Center, site of Tesla Gigafactory, grading permits issued within 7 days of application; Building permits issued within 30 days of application; Roads and all utilities (power, gas, fiber, water, wastewater, reclaimed water) are in place and built for industrial capacity. Is a similar schedule realistic for Park and Airport?

   See Best Practice: Ease of Permitting

   b. The Economic Developer hired to market sites at the Park and Airport can shepherd projects through the City’s approvals and permitting process, but the goal should be to make it easier for all businesses to locate and do business in Las Cruces (See also MARKET, A-1-b and MARKET, A-4-b)
4. CHALLENGE

OVERCOME REAL AND PERCEIVED OBSTACLES TO DEVELOPMENT

The focus of this Strategy is to identify the opportunities and challenges associated with West Mesa Industrial Park and Las Cruces International Airport and to recommend action required to realize their full potential for economic and community development. The presumption is that the City of Las Cruces and its Economic Development Department will act on these recommendations and that, over time, the goal will be achieved.

Some obstacles identified in the course of this work, however, are beyond the scope of this study and addressing them will require a region-wide commitment by public and private sector entities and their leaders. They are summarized below.

Just Who Is Responsible For This Work?

Following are Objectives and Implementation Action Items for the fourth goal, CHALLENGE: Overcome Real and Perceived Obstacles to Development.

Some of these items are obviously the responsibility of the City’s Economic Development Department and with the support of the Department Manager, other City departments, and available funding, they can be added to the Department’s work plan and undertaken. These tasks are indicated with three stars—★★★

Other action items are not solely the responsibility of the Economic Development Department. But they are in the plan and if the plan is adopted, it is in the Department’s interest to see them addressed. When they are added to the Department’s work plan, the assigned staff person should seek out City departments; local, state or federal entities; non-profit organizations; educational institutions; and/or for-profit businesses with whom the Economic Development Department can work to complete the task. So the Department is a partner—in some cases, if desired, the lead partner—but without authority to act independently. These tasks are indicated with two stars—★★

Finally, there are items—some very important—that are clearly beyond the responsibility of the Economic Development Department. The Department Manager should seek individuals, other departments, organizations or private entities to champion these items. It is anticipated that the Department would have limited direct responsibility in working on these items beyond expressing the view that they affect the City’s ability to create jobs and wealth. These tasks are indicated with one star—★

A. Help New Mexico Become a Magnet for Business

New Mexico is hurt by low rankings among the states as a place to live and to do business. This is in part because the state shares a border with Texas, the fastest growing major state and regularly among the top ranked states for business, and other top states for business: Arizona, Colorado and Utah.
For instance, as this report was being finalized, Texas was ranked a strong second place, behind North Carolina, for business according to a report from Forbes Best States for Business. Neighboring states in the top 10 were No. 3 Utah, and No. 9 Colorado. New Mexico ranked No. 48.

Other rankings where Texas, Arizona, Colorado, and Utah fared considerably better than New Mexico were Chief Executive magazine — Texas No. 1, Arizona No. 7, Utah No. 11, Colorado No. 12, and New Mexico No. 31; and Area Development magazine ranked New Mexico No. 7 out of the eight Mountain states.

1. Lobby for state initiatives to get New Mexico’s rankings up—
   a. Enhance and leverage a competitive environment to create jobs, develop the tax base and provide incentives for business development
   b. Back new legislation such as the 2013 Jobs Package, which made significant changes in New Mexico’s competitiveness as a business destination
   c. Talk up “among lowest property taxes in the nation,” and “lowest effective corporate income tax on manufacturing” according to Ernst & Young, and “zero inventory tax”

B. Optimize Alignment of Regional Talent Pipeline

The lines between economic development and workforce development are increasingly blurred, as the availability of talent has become a top site selection consideration for company relocations. This is an important factor both in influencing new growth though business attraction as well as retaining existing businesses. The region’s low educational attainment rates and workforce deficiencies will make it difficult to attract prospect firms, but the existing education and training institutions provide Las Cruces with the tools that it needs to reverse these workforce deficiencies and change the region’s trajectory.

1. Continue to leverage and advance education and training programs—
   a. Support the target sector workforce needs including through career pathways, postsecondary programming, and LCPS career academies

2. Support The Bridge of Southern New Mexico—
   a. Connect business and education providers and optimize existing and emerging STEM programming (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics)
   b. Ensure post-secondary programs and high school curricula support target business growth and introduce young people to job opportunities

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2 https://www.forbes.com/best-states-for-business/list/#tab:overall
3. Develop new Intern and Apprentice Opportunities—
   a. Collaborate with the MVEDA, regional chambers of commerce, The Bridge of Southern New Mexico, and other business community and education and training partners to launch an internship initiative
   b. Work with employers and existing student-employment efforts at higher education institutions to create an inventory of existing internship and apprenticeship opportunities
   c. Encourage tenants at WMIP-A to expand and/or develop internship and apprenticeship opportunities
   d. Work with higher education institutions to expand or establish cooperative education programs

C. Expand Continuing Education and Training Options for Adults

The Economic Assessment found that over the past five years there has been an increase in the share of residents seeking postsecondary education. This is a positive step towards improving the available talent in the region and increasing the City’s competitiveness as measured by its educational attainment rate. Additional efforts to support student success at postsecondary institutions should be explored. At the same time, encouraging individuals to further their education and/or acquire other in-demand skills could have a significant and lasting impact on the community’s long-term workforce competitiveness.

1. Incentivize adults without college degrees to further their education, gain new skills—
   a. Work with public and private partners to fund incentives for adults to earn GEDs, certificates, two- and four-year degrees, and other needed forms of education and training; prioritize the most in-demand skills
   b. Work with local employers to offer incentives for existing employees to further their education and training, including flexible work hours and pay raises upon completion
   c. Assist local companies with seeking and securing funding under the state’s JTIP program

2. Reach adults with limited English proficiency—
   a. Engage with groups such as those interested in changing careers and other traditionally underserved or underrepresented groups that would benefit from “upskilling” or completing a degree

D. Do Something About Poverty

One of the comments made at the Town Hall in November concerned the data presented on poverty in Las Cruces: “I was taken aback by the high rate of poverty,” a City official said, “especially among our children.” The youth poverty rate in Las Cruces was 37.5% in 2017 and it’s not changing much
for the better. The city had the lowest five-year percentage point change when compared to El Paso, Tucson, New Mexico and the USA, down just 1.7 percentage points for childhood poverty. (See Figure above.)

Reducing poverty is not the primary responsibility of the City’s Economic Development Department, nor was it addressed in the City’s request for this study. But Market Street Services has helped many communities develop holistic economic development strategies that go far beyond attracting new businesses. The cornerstone of our work is the belief that economic development is about improving the lives of all individuals.

So in addition to the other real and perceived obstacles addressed in this section, we recommend that priority be given to doing something about poverty.

1. Expand the City’s excellent commitment to sustainability to include education, health, and financial security—
   *  
   a. Education—Ensure that more low-income residents in Las Cruces graduate high school, complete a college degree, or earn a workforce certificate
   b. Health—Help Las Cruces residents live healthy lives and access the best care anywhere
   c. Financial Security—Measurably increase the percentage of Las Cruces households earning incomes that provide financial security

2. Organize a collaborative approach to set goals and measure progress—
   *
   a. Support and encourage the governmental entities, non-profit organizations, and dedicated staff and volunteers who are already engaged in addressing poverty
   b. Provide resources and tools to make their work more effective
   c. Celebrate success with each other and the public

See Best Practice: Overcoming Poverty
IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND TIMELINES BASED ON PRIORITIES

Following is a best effort to date to prioritize the implementation guidelines of the Strategic Plan over a four-year time period. The Economic Development Department, under the leadership of its director, will coordinate with other City department heads and private sector partners. Marketing sites at the West Mesa Industrial Park and Airport will be managed by a new staff member (Economic Development Manager-Park and Airport). The new staff member will also coordinate all Park and Airport programs not assigned to other staff. The Airport Manager will manage tasks related to physical improvements at the Airport.

Legend: ● = Start task / incremental progress; ○ = Complete task; □ = Continuing task

The column at right lists principal partners to work with the Economic Development Department to advance these goals.

Note: The consultant has not met with the proposed partners to get their commitment to work on these goals but all entities participated in the process leading to the development of the Strategy.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal / Objective / Task</th>
<th>20</th>
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<th>Economic Development Department’s Principal Partner</th>
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<td><strong>TARGET: Grow and Expand Existing Businesses</strong></td>
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<td>Establish pilot BRE program in Park/Airport</td>
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<td>Advocate for robust BRE programming</td>
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<td>Utilize BRE findings to ID opportunities</td>
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<td>Assist manufacturers with services</td>
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<td>Elevate City’s leadership position in UAS</td>
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<td>Help MVEDA present WMIP-A for relocations</td>
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<td>Capitalize on Virgin Galactic’s success</td>
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<td>Support existing resources for entrepreneurs</td>
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<td>Connect with commercialization at NMSU</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>NMSU Arrowhead Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match businesses with Ag Experiment Station</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>NMSU Ag. Experiment Station, Extension Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### PLACE: Take Advantage of First Impressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal / Objective / Task</th>
<th>'20</th>
<th>'21</th>
<th>'22</th>
<th>'23</th>
<th>Economic Development Department’s Principal Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve entrances / landscaping</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update City buildings at Airport</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>Public Works; Engineering &amp; Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model for Sustainability</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>Office of Sustainability / Airport Tenants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin space experience at Airport</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>Visit Las Cruces CVB / Virgin Galactic / Airport Tenants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### PLACE: Recognize That Without Infrastructure, It’s Just Land

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal / Objective / Task</th>
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<th>'22</th>
<th>'23</th>
<th>Economic Development Department’s Principal Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintain and upgrade existing infrastructure</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>Public Works: Streets Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressively market sites w/infrastructure</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>MVEDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopt, utilize Build-Ready standard</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plans ready to extend infrastructure</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>Public Works: Engineering &amp; Architecture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PLACE: Don’t Forget the Amenities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal / Objective / Task</th>
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<th>'21</th>
<th>'22</th>
<th>'23</th>
<th>Economic Development Department’s Principal Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address need for more varied food options</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>Park Champions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursue a hotel</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>Park Champions / CVB / NMSU / VIRGIN GALACTIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build walking / bike trails, outdoor seating</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>Parks and Recreation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PLACE: Improve Transportation Linkages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal / Objective / Task</th>
<th>'20</th>
<th>'21</th>
<th>'22</th>
<th>'23</th>
<th>Economic Development Department’s Principal Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construct the highway to Santa Teresa</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>MVEDA / City Manager / Legislative Delegation / NMDOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extend rail into the Park</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>Quality of Life / RoadRunner / Commute with Enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring transit to the Park and Airport</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>MVEDA / City Manager</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MARKET: Get Serious About Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal / Objective / Task</th>
<th>'20</th>
<th>'21</th>
<th>'22</th>
<th>'23</th>
<th>Economic Development Department’s Principal Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hire economic developer for Park/Airport</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarify City policy on property pricing, leases</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>MVEDA / City Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a formula for awarding incentives</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>MVEDA / City Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast-track projects through City departments</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>Community Development / City Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waive plan review and construction permits</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>Community Development / City Manager</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MARKET: Build Something to Sell

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal / Objective / Task</th>
<th>'20</th>
<th>'21</th>
<th>'22</th>
<th>'23</th>
<th>Economic Development Department’s Principal Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get flex space complex on market in Park</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>Private Developers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build a hangar for small aviation manufacturers</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>MVEDA / NMSU PSL / Private Developers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure a funding stream for improvements</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>MVEDA / City Manager</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MARKET: Utilize Best Practice Marketing Programs and Tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal / Objective / Task</th>
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<th>'22</th>
<th>'23</th>
<th>Economic Development Department’s Principal Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participate in MDEDA marketing initiatives</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>MVEDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use Internet to best advantage</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>MVEDA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MARKET: Rebrand West Mesa Industrial Park

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal / Objective / Task</th>
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<th>'22</th>
<th>'23</th>
<th>Economic Development Department’s Principal Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give the Park a new name to link w/Las Cruces</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>Park and Airport Tenants</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### MARKET: Establish a Team of Champions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal / Objective / Task</th>
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<th>'22</th>
<th>'23</th>
<th>Economic Development Department’s Principal Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engage owners, managers of businesses</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>Park and Airport Tenants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expect partners to advance Strategy</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>All City Departments and Private Sector Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be broker-friendly</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>Commercial real estate professionals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MARKET: Make Las Cruces Known for Ease in Doing Business

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal / Objective / Task</th>
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<th>'22</th>
<th>'23</th>
<th>Economic Development Department’s Principal Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eliminate admin barriers impeding dvlpmnt</td>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>City Manager / Community Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal / Objective / Task</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Economic Development Department's Principal Partner</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHALLENGE: Help New Mexico Become a Magnet for Business</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>City Mgr / Legislative Delegation / Private Sector Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobby for state initiatives to get NM rankings up</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td>All City Departments and Private Sector Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHALLENGE: Optimize Alignment of Regional Talent Pipeline</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to leverage, advance edu / training</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>All Private Sector Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Bridge of Southern New Mexico</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>All Private Sector Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop intern / apprentice opportunities</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>All Private Sector Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHALLENGE: Expand Continuing Education and Training Options for Adults</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dona Ana Community College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentivize adults w/o degrees</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>All City Departments and Private Sector Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach adults with limited English proficiency</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>All City Departments and Private Sector Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHALLENGE: Do Something About Poverty</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All City Departments and Private Sector Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability: include edu., health, security</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>All City Departments and Private Sector Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize collaborative approach for goals</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>All City Departments and Private Sector Partners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PERFORMANCE METRICS

Measuring performance is a critical component of any economic development initiative. Metrics are an important factor in helping implementation partners and the community in determining if implementation is having the desired impact and producing sufficient return on investment.

Market Street recommends that the City of Las Cruces track two distinct types of metrics:

1. **Core Community Measures**: These metrics represent regional outcomes that will be impacted by effective implementation of strategic recommendations but are also influenced by many other factors outside the control of any implementing organization or single strategic initiative. They seek to measure the regional performance in key demographic, socioeconomic, economic, and quality of life indicators that the strategy seeks to impact.

2. **Strategic Activity Measures**: These metrics are more closely tied to the tactical recommendations in the strategy and are more directly influenced by the implementation effort. In some cases, these data are not currently being collected so a source will need to be identified or developed to track performance of these indicators.

**Core Community Measures**

Core Community Measures are “topline indicators” that help determine whether Las Cruces is making progress and moving in the right direction. These metrics measure the overall performance of the City of Las Cruces and are not tied to any one initiative. Many of these metrics are already being tracked the Economic Development Department and are among those included in the City of Las Cruces Economic Outlook quarterly report. For example, the growth in the nonfarm payroll employment is not tied to one specific initiative yet it will capture how successful the region has been at attracting, creating, and growing jobs in the county.

The community should continue to benchmark its progress on these key metrics relative to the state and nation to account for any external trends such as economic cycles. Potential Core Community Measures that should be monitored include:

- Total employment (and by target sector)
- Average annual wage (and by target sector)
- Per capita income
- Poverty rate
- Childhood poverty rate
- Annual net migration
- Labor force growth rate
- Percentage of all adults (age 25+) with a bachelor’s degree or higher
- Percentage of all adults (age 25+) with a high school diploma or less
- High school graduation rates
- Number of new business licenses issued

**Strategic Activity Measures**

These metrics include both performance and activity measures and help the region to measure its progress related to the specific goals of the Strategy. The City of Las Cruces should work together with partners to track and report metrics. Potential additional metrics include:
TARGET: Pursue Development Offering Best Return on Investment

- Number of WMIP-A existing business site visits conducted annually (#)
- Prospects identified and contacted from WMIP-A BRE findings (#)
- Manufacturers and value-added agricultural firms assisted (#)
- Job creation from expansion projects (and by target sector) (#)
- Job creation from relocation projects (and by target sector) (#)
- Number of new projects (expansion and relocation) (#)

PLACE: Prioritize Improvements at the Park and Airport

- Entrances improved (yes/no)
- Landscaping projects completed (#)
- Infrastructure maintenance projects completed (yes/no)
- Available sites with all infrastructure in place (#)
- Sites with plans ready to extend infrastructure (#)
- Food options available (#)
- Contacts with hoteliers regarding hotel at WMIP-A (#)

MARKET: Manage, Brand and Sell Park and Airport

- Economic developer hired (yes/no)
- Property pricing resolved (yes/no)
- Flex-space complex (announced/under construction/completed)
- Hanger for manufacturer (announced/under construction/completed)
- Funding stream approved for improvements (yes/no)
- Number of leads generated from new marketing tools / materials (e.g. new website) (#)
- Vacancy rates at WMIP-A (% available)
- Tenant satisfaction of WMIP-A amenities (% favorable)
- Tenant organization established; percentage engaged (yes/no; %)
- Contacts with brokers regarding WMIP-A (#)
- Survey rating, ease of doing business with City; 85% favorable or better (%)  

CHALLENGE: Overcome Real and Perceived Obstacles to Development

- State national rankings (#)
- Number of internship and apprenticeship opportunities
- Degree completions by program area and institution—certificate, two-year, four-year, graduate (#)
- Measures identified to track education, health and financial security of citizens (#)
CONCLUSION

This Strategic Plan for the West Mesa Industrial Park and Las Cruces International Airport was developed by Market Street Services with input from local stakeholders and based on a comprehensive economic and community assessment including extensive statistical research. Our findings and recommendations are organized into four key opportunity areas, and include four goals, 16 objectives, and 43 implementation action items to ensure that the Park and Airport contribute to a more prosperous and vibrant greater Las Cruces.

Implementing the plan—as well as continuing to redevelop downtown Las Cruces, further improving the region’s Pre-K thru postgraduate educational resources, strengthening linkages with federal military installations and Spaceport America, emphasizing sustainability, and contributing to a better business image for Las Cruces and New Mexico—will help Las Cruces overcome its No. 1 failing: its persistently high rate of poverty.

The plan begins by pursuing targets for development in the Park and Airport. The practice of strategically targeting economic development resources to those sectors that are best positioned to drive job growth and wealth creation is an important characteristic of any best practice economic development strategy. Simply put, resources are limited and cities must be thoughtful and intentional when investing limited resources to ensure the highest possible return on investment.

Other elements of the plan are to prioritize improvements at the Park and Airport; manage, brand and market the properties; and overcome real and perceived obstacles to development. The area’s recent economic and demographic trends portend significant challenges and they will not be improved in the short run. In the second decade of the 21st century, or in most recent rankings, Las Cruces trailed its benchmark regions—El Paso and Tucson—and the USA, in such vital measures as population growth, employment rate, and median household income. As further evidence of the problems facing the region, a November 2019 report from Brookings, “Meet the Low-Wage Workforce,” identified the 20 metros with the highest shares of workers earning low wage and found Las Cruces to be No. 1 with 61.9% of workers who are low wage.\(^4\)

Stakeholders believe the region will prosper going forward based on good quality of life, low cost of living, low labor costs, temperate climate, an increasingly vibrant downtown Las Cruces, Organ Mountains / Desert Peaks, and the great outdoors. But the most important and heretofore elusive regional asset is good, high-paying jobs.

Implementing this strategy won’t fix all of the region’s problems. However, it will provide Las Cruces with marketable sites for new and expanding businesses and industries that pay good wages and salaries and can attract well-educated and highly trained persons to the region including many who were educated and trained here and left for better opportunities elsewhere.

Summary of Major Shortcomings at West Mesa Park and Airport

1. No existing buildings for sale or lease

\(^4\) Brookings analysis of 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-year Public Use Microdata Samples
1. Solution proposed in Strategy (See MARKET, B-1)

2. No existing hangars for testing / manufacturing
   a. Solution proposed in Strategy (See MARKET, B-2)

3. No direct highway access to border
   a. Solution proposed in Strategy (See PLACE, D-1)

4. No rail or multi-modal facilities
   a. Solution proposed in Strategy (See PLACE, D-2)

The City of Las Cruces and its Economic Development Department are to be commended for undertaking this study and for their commitment to implement its recommendations. Likewise, stakeholders support the Park and Airport as an important economic development priority for the City.

Market Street Services appreciates the opportunity to consult with the City of Las Cruces on this project and looks forward to being of assistance in the future.
TOP FIVE ACTION ITEMS

After reviewing the Strategy including Goals, Objectives and Implementation Action Items, the City of Las Cruces Economic Development Director asked Market Street Services to identify the top five action items that the Economic Development Department staff should pursue first.

As the reader might assume, in a plan with four major goals, 17 specific objectives, and 50 implementation action items, narrowing the work to just five top priorities is difficult. Nevertheless, the following action items rise to the top and we submit them as top priorities in year one.

These Action Items are all in the purview of the City’s Economic Development Department and with the support of the Department Manager, other City departments, and available funding, can be added to the Department’s work plan and undertaken.

1. **Hire Economic Developer for Park and Airport**—
   (MARKET, A-1)
   
   The City needs a full-time point person whose job it is to represent Park and Airport with economic development partners and to implement this 2020 Strategy for the Park and Airport.
   
   a. *The Economic Developer—Park and Airport would be most knowledgeable person in City on specifics related to Park and Airport—e.g. sites available, infrastructure, soils, and incentives*
   
   b. *The Economic Developer—Park and Airport should function as an ombudsman for businesses locating at Park or Airport to ensure that permitting occurs without bureaucratic delays*
   
   c. *The Economic Developer—Park and Airport would be responsible for implementing this Strategic Plan*
   
   d. *The Economic Developer—Park and Airport would be in addition to the Airport Administrator and would advocate for Park and Airport properties with MVEDA and other economic development partners, and with the City’s Land Management Office and other City departments*

2. **Get a flex space complex on the market in the Park**—
   (MARKET, B-1)
   
   This should be the City’s highest priority for West Mesa Park based on MVEDA reporting that Las Cruces misses projects because most prospects are looking for existing facilities and there are no speculative facilities at Park and Airport.
   
   a. *The City should aggressively seek a private developer to construct a flex space building to be marketed to target industries in the Park, and an industrial hangar at the Airport*
b. Failing at attracting a private developer, the City should be the developer of last resort for this speculative facility

c. The flex-space complex should be developed with units in a range of sizes—e.g. spaces from 5,000 to 65,000 square feet—to accommodate companies from start-ups to relocations with operations from office to manufacturing to warehousing. This kind of flexibility would be ideal for the targeted industries identified

d. MVEDA reports that local developers can’t commit to build a new facility in the time required. Find a way to fast-track design-build construction of facilities for businesses.

3. Eliminate administrative barriers that impede industrial development—
   (MARKET, F-1)  
   **

   The Economic Developer hired to market sites at the Park and Airport can shepherd projects through the City’s approvals and permitting process, but the goal should be to make it easier for all businesses to locate and do business in Las Cruces.

4. Establish pilot Business Retention & Expansion program at Park and Airport—
   (TARGET, A-1)  
   **

   Since establishing a region-wide BRE program requires leadership, partnerships, and time, it is recommended that a pilot program be organized under the direction of the City’s Economic Development Department to call on owners and managers of businesses located in the Park and Airport.

   a. Establish the BRE visitation team to include DACC, NMSU, Workforce Connection, City regulators, utilities, MVEDA, and chamber of commerce

   b. Make initial calls on all businesses located in Park and Airport in year one

   c. Utilize BRE findings to identify opportunities for expansions and business attractions

   d. Put in place a mechanism to record and respond on all issues identified and to report on the success of the program

5. Improve entrances and landscaping throughout the Park and Airport—
   (PLACE, A-1)  
   **

   a. The beautified medians, completed in 2017 are populated with boulders, swales, native plantings and a roadrunner sculpture. Perhaps because of the flat terrain and the size of area at the entrance, the medians, and the right-of-way, it’s not enough to make the desired impact

   Supplement the landscaping with additional drought-tolerant and heat-resistant trees, shrubs, and grasses and hardscape similar to that used in 2017 to make a statement

   b. Likewise, the landscaping on roads leading to and through the Airport needs supplemental treatment. Note: Landscaping and signage at Rea Boulevard at Robert Larson Boulevard (the Interstate access road) is the most attractive area in the Park and Airport
c. Update and be consistent with all signage at entrances and throughout Park and Airport

Quick Wins

Implementing a strategy to both dramatically change the physical attributes of a major community asset (such as West Mesa Industrial Park and Airport) and to attract investment and jobs (by more fully realizing the asset’s potential) one should expect it will take considerable time and resources.

Building momentum to sustain a long-term initiative such as this one would benefit from some quick wins. So we submit these action items as examples of smaller but important successes that can be accomplished by the Economic Development Department early in the implementation process—successes that will show that change is coming.

1. Address need for more varied food options—
   (PLACE, C-1)
   ⭐⭐⭐
   Building a food court area—or even hiring food trucks—could be a first step toward making working at West Mesa more attractive. No one likes bland food, and lunch breaks with co-workers can foster a sense of community. Not only would this help attract workers but it would help retain them as well. It’s important to offer variety as well as a friendly, open setting.
   a. Start with Food Truck Friday or Tuesday, for example
   b. Make it easier to get a license to operate a food truck
   c. To make it more permanent, build a food truck park
   d. Attract a commissary to serve food trucks / ghost restaurant / virtual restaurant
   e. Longer term, it is reasonable to expect that one or more restaurants can be attracted to the Interstate frontage at exit 132 and in the Airport terminal

2. Use the Internet to best advantage—
   (MARKET, C-1)
   ⭐⭐⭐
   a. The City should develop or cause to be developed a website to market the Park and Airport to be housed on the City’s las-cruces.org website, and with links from Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance’s mveda.com website, State of New Mexico sites and other sites as appropriate
   b. The Park and Airport site should include user-friendly marketing maps, detailed maps showing infrastructure, graphics, photos, description of available amenities, list of tenants, and benefits to businesses
c. It is not necessary to make a decision on rebranding the Park (See MARKET, D) to develop these website improvements. The marketing maps and other features proposed are needed now and can be modified when the new brand is introduced.

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**Identify and Work With Partners to Advance Major Priorities**

Early in the implementation process—perhaps in year one but certainly in years two and three—the Economic Development Department should reach out to potential public and private sector partners to build support for undertaking and accomplishing some of the major, longer term priorities that have the potential to move Las Cruces to the next level.

These priorities, three are listed below, are not solely the responsibility of the City’s Economic Development Department and, in some cases, they are clearly beyond the Department’s responsibility. However, joining with other entities as a partner and advocate for action will be an important expression of support that will help keep the task front and center.

1. **Elevate Las Cruces’ position as a leader in the UAS world—**
   *(TARGET, B-1)*
   
   **a.** Work with NMSU’s Physical Science Laboratory (PSL) to maximize the Unmanned Aircraft Systems Flight Test Center and support its goals
   
   **b.** Support organizers of the Unmanned Aircraft Systems Technical Analysis and Applications Center Conference (UAS TAAC) to enhance the event and raise its profile nationally
   
   **c.** Collaborate with PSL and other partners to create a more robust website with information on the region’s UAS activities and opportunities
   
   **d.** Research and review other FAA-designated UAS Test Site websites to benchmark the Las Cruces website

2. **Incentivize adults without college degrees to further their education, gain new skills—**
   *(CHALLENGE, C-1)*
   
   **a.** Work with public and private partners to fund incentives for adults to earn GEDs, certificates, two- and four-year degrees, and other needed forms of education and training; prioritize the most in-demand skills
   
   **b.** Work with local employers to offer incentives for existing employees to further their education and training, including flexible work hours and pay raises upon completion
   
   **c.** Assist local companies with seeking and securing funding under the state’s JTIP program

3. **Expand the City’s excellent commitment to sustainability to include education, health, and financial security—**
(CHALLENGE, D-1)

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a. Education—Ensure that more low-income residents in Las Cruces graduate high school, complete a college degree, or earn a workforce certificate

b. Health—Help Las Cruces residents live healthy lives and access the best care anywhere

c. Financial Security—Measurably increase the percentage of Las Cruces households earning incomes that provide financial security
Addendum: Best Practices

**Best Practice: Build-ready Standards**

A Kentucky Build-Ready Site allows companies the opportunity to bypass much of the red tape required when establishing a new location by addressing needs and concerns before they arise. This proactive preparation of sites allows for quick decision site selection.

**Site Prep**

Site Control – Site and tract of building pad where proposed building is to be developed must have simple ownership clear of any encumbrances.

Plat – A plat of the property must be prepared by a licensed surveyor. Plat must show restrictions, building setbacks and easements. Plat also must illustrate land topography.

Zoning – Proposed property must be located in a principal use zone for industrial or mixed uses. If community has no zoning, then covenants or surrounding uses must be conducive to industrial use.

Building Pad – The site must have completed a building pad that would allow for the construction of a building, with a minimum size of 50,000 square-feet, expandable to 100,000 square-feet or more that could be built on the tract. The tract must be graded to include the area of the proposed building and any proposed expansion. A licensed engineer must certify the pad construction.

Aerial Imagery – Current aerial image of the property must be provided.

Environmental Studies – All necessary environmental studies must be completed and on file. All studies must state that the property is clear of any environmental issues that might inhibit development on the tract. Necessary environmental studies include:

- Phase 1 Environmental Study
- Geotechnical Study
- Archeological and Historical Site Assessment

Not required if site is already zoned and prepared for industrial use

Strongly encouraged if site has not previously been zoned and prepared for industrial use, or if the site is suspected to contain historical significance or artifact(s).

Stream and Wetland Mitigation – All streams and wetlands on tract must be cleared and mitigated. The development plan must clearly define how streams and wetlands can be avoided.

Site Plan – local government must approve a site plan of the property. This plan must show the building footprint, locations of all utilities, parking areas, contours, erosion control, etc.
Permits / Approvals – All permits and approvals required by state and local government must be completed with documentation. Necessary permits and approvals and the responsible organizations are:

- Storm Water Construction Permit – Energy and Environment Cabinet
- Utility Line Extension Permit (if necessary) – Energy and Environment Cabinet

Infrastructure

A Build-Ready site must have the following infrastructure available:

Check to see if something is missing here

Building Plans

While a Build-Ready site will not have an actual building, the following requirements for a building must be met:

Preliminary Design – Detailed architectural plans for interior and exterior of building with real cost estimate and construction timeline must be provided.

Construction Plan – The community must identify a process by which the project would move forward to construction. Plan may include a bid process to identify a contractor.

Cost and Schedule Projections – First cost estimates with detailed and realistic timeline for work must be established.

Project Funding – Detailed plan for how project would be funded and completed must be provided. Buildings must be marketed as for sale, lease or both. For a building to be marketed for lease, the community must provide documentation of ability to finance the proposed building. If adequate documentation is not provided, then the proposed building can be marketed as for sale only.

Rendering – Color renderings of proposed building must be provided for marketing purposes.

Source: Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development • (800) 626-2930 • ThinkKentucky.com

The Michigan Build Ready Sites program, announced in April 2019, is intended to assist with the development or enhancement of industrial sites to help them get closer to having Vetted Site Standards and make them more competitive during the site selection process.

Best Practice: Business Retention Programs (IEDC)

By Louise Anderson, Sr. Associate, International Economic Development Council, Washington DC

Business retention and expansion is the foundation of effective economic development. It makes little sense to invest time and resources to recruit new businesses while losing others due to lack of attention to changing needs or emerging obstacles. An effective retention and expansion program is based on accurate
knowledge of the business community and constant communication. The program should be prepared to help businesses with expansion of current sites and facilities, assistance in identifying and preparing sites for expansions that require relocation, and assistance with regulations and permits related to planning, zoning and building.


Best Practice: Business Retention Programs—Five Modules

From Purdue University, Purdue Extension, West Lafayette IN

Module 1: Organize Task Force

- Form a BR&E Taskforce: The Task Force, which should include diverse stakeholders in parity with the community's demographics, will be involved in gearing up for and implementing the BR&E program.

- Schedule and Hold Task Force Meetings: The Task Force discusses what industries or businesses should be targeted (such as Main Street businesses, Stage 1 and Stage 2 firms or industries/companies associated with a specific sector or cluster) and works on developing the questionnaire that the businesses and industries will be asked to complete. A list of businesses/industries to be surveyed is developed.

Module 2: Gain Support

- Assess Community Readiness: Each Task Force member will invite another community stakeholder to attend part of one of the Task Force meetings where they will jointly determine the readiness of the community for the BR&E program by using a "scorecard" method. If necessary, strategies will be employed to heighten community readiness before pursuing a BR&E program.

- Announce the Local BR&E Program: Information about the BR&E program will be shared through a variety of media outlets selected by the taskforce.

Module 3: Gather Information

- Distribute Questionnaires: Surveys will be sent out to each of the businesses/industries selected for the BR&E effort by the Task Force. Follow-up mailings will be sent to those who have not responded. Once all surveys are returned, individual Task Force members will be assigned to the selected businesses/industries, according to the companies' preference.

- Conduct Site Visits: Selected businesses/industries that have agreed to be part of the BR&E program will be contacted to determine availability, and visits will be conducted by the BR&E Coordinator and the preferred member of the Task Force.

Module 4: Analyze Results

- Enter and Analyze Response Data: Both quantitative data (from the online surveys) and qualitative data (from the site visits) will be entered into the software program and analyzed.
• Identify and Address Red Flags: Information items collected from the surveys and during site visit interviews that raise "green flags" and "red flags" will be addressed by the Task Force. The Task Force will determine which specific strategies to use to address these issues.

Module 5: Report Findings

• Prepare Report on the BR&E Program: A brief report will be written by the Purdue coach, identifying areas of strength as well as specific areas of concern revealed during the study (with regard to supporting existing businesses/industries in the community).

• Communicate Results: Results will be shared with the general public in a well-publicized community forum, by the media or via any other appropriate outlets that the taskforce designates.


Best Practice: Business Retention Visit Leads to $3.5 billion expansion in Austin

For 12 years, the traffic signal at the corner of East Parmer Lane near the entry of Samsung Austin Semiconductor in Northwest Austin has routinely operated. Just like every other traffic light of its kind, it helps travelers flow safely and efficiently through an intersection. It improves mobility for all daily roadway travelers who go by it and likely don’t give it a second thought. Yet, this particular signal is different. It has a history. It’s arguably the most valuable traffic light in America because it played a key role in landing the most significant company expansion in Austin’s history. It’s hard for most to remember it now, but the story of that traffic light started with a plea for help in 2005 during one of Opportunity Austin’s early business retention and expansion meetings.

Source: https://www.austinchamber.com/blog/opportunity-austin-business-retention-yields-big-results-for-austin-texas-region

Best Practice: Ease of Permitting

At Tahoe Reno Industrial Center, site of Tesla Gigafactory, grading permits issued within 7 days of application; Building permits issued within 30 days of application; Roads and all utilities (power, gas, fiber, water, wastewater, reclaimed water) are in place and built for industrial capacity

Source: http://tahoereno.com

Best Practice: Flex-space Complex

Diablo Industrial Center is a 499,720 square foot industrial center located Las Vegas, Nevada. With units ranging between 5,000 and 65,000 square feet, Diablo offers an exceptional mix of small flex-space and large warehouse space to fit business needs.
Area Amenities

- One mile from McCarran International Airport, I-15 and I-215
- Three miles from the Las Vegas Strip
- Three-phase power to meet peak load demands
- All warehouse space has 24’ clear height
- M-1 zoning
- 1.6:1000 parking ratio


**Best Practice: Overcoming Poverty**

Prosper Waco is an innovative approach to community work that consolidates and builds upon the efforts of existing nonprofits and community leaders to measurably improve the lives of the people in the Greater Waco community.

This collective impact model brings together key leaders and organizations in the areas of education, health and financial security to comprehensively:

1. Identify and quantify challenges facing our community
2. Articulate a shared vision
3. Establish measurable goals
4. Facilitate implementation of strategies to address each challenge
5. Monitor progress against each goal
6. Share data and resources necessary to accomplish our collective goals
7. Engage a broad spectrum of community partners (including recipients of services) in the design of its work.

By encouraging collective impact strategies among leaders in city and county government, businesses, nonprofits, healthcare, education, social services, foundations, and churches, the Prosper Waco initiative will build on and steadily increase the effectiveness of current efforts that address community challenges. The strategy is to raise awareness among all members of the community, focus alignment of mutually reinforcing activities for more effective outcomes, and increase levels of engagement of individuals and organizations to bring about measurable and sustainable change in citizens’ health, education and financial security.

Source: [https://prosperwaco.org/our-mission/](https://prosperwaco.org/our-mission/)
Best Practice: Ride Sharing Program Offered in Las Cruces

SANTA FE— A new commuting solution will soon be available in Farmington, Santa Fe, Los Lunas and Las Cruces. The New Mexico Department of Transportation in partnership with Commute with Enterprise will offer discounted vanpooling options through the “NM Go!” program.

The program expands regional transportation options by allowing commuters to obtain a 25-percent discount off the monthly cost of vanpooling if they agree to share their rides.

Enterprise provides the qualifying vehicles including crossovers, SUV’s minivans and large passenger vans. 24 hour roadside assistance is also provided along with a guaranteed ride home, which ensures commuters can leave work at unscheduled times worry-free. Participants can determine if they should join an existing group or create a new one.

“NM Go!” currently operates 26 routes with more than 130 passengers per day and aims to grow to more than 650 passengers daily by the end of the year. To date, ‘NM Go!’ has taken more than a 100 cars off the roads. Cabinet Secretary Michael Sandoval says, “The department is really excited about the program. Not only does it provide an affordable, convenient alternative to commuters while reducing congestion and carbon emissions, it also reduces stress and allows for more free time.”

Commuters interested in joining the program can visit www.commutewithenterprise.com The more people that ride, the better the chances of the program becoming self sustaining through federal transit formula grant funds. NMDOT Transit and Rail Director, David Harris says, “Our goal is to have this program eventually running on its own. It’s a cost-effective way to get to and from work safely.”

Source: The Grant County Beat, 16 August 2019

Best Practice: Websites

Best practice websites include Alliance Texas and Arrowhead Center. Both provide the kind of user-friendly maps, graphics, photos, description of available amenities, list of tenants, and benefits to businesses.

Source: Alliance Texas: https://www.alliancetexas.com
Source: Arrowhead Center: https://arrowheadcenter.nmsu.edu/program/arrowhead-park/