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- Ben Neece, Commissioner
- Michael Lopez, Interm City Manager
We would like to acknowledge the Buena Vida Development residents, local community members and other partners who continue to participate in this process, especially those that provided leverage and support for our Choice Neighborhood Plan, including:

- Apasionados Por La Lectura
- Behavioral Health Solutions of South Texas
- Sofia C. Benavides, Commissioner Precinct
- Brownsville Community Improvement Corporation
- Brownsville Housing Opportunity Corporation
- Brownsville Independent School District
- Brownsville Literacy Center
- Brownsville Ministerial Association
- Brownsville Museum of Fine Art
- Brownsville Wellness Coalition
- Buena Vida Resident Advisory Board
- buildingcommunityWORKSHOP
- Cameron County
- Carlotta Petrina Cultural Center
- City of Brownsville
- City of Brownsville Parks Department
- City of Brownsville Public Health Department
- Code RGV
- Community Development Corporation of Brownsville
- Creciendo con la Familia
- Cummings Middle School
- Filemon Vela, Member of Congress
- Frontera Consulting
- Good Neighbor Settlement House
- Gladys Porter Zoo
- Healthy Communities of Brownsville
- IDEA Public Schools
- JK Medical Clinic
- Kid’s Cafe’s
- Lucio Group
- Eddie Lucio, Jr., State Senator
- Eddie Lucio III, State Representative
- Porter Early College High School
- Proyecto Juan Diego
- Resaca Elementary School
- Reynaldo Longoria Elementary
- 7th and Park
- Taller de Permiso
- Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid
- Tip of Texas Family Outreach
- United Way
- University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
- University of Texas School of Public Health
- U.S. Small Business Administration
- Women’s Business Center of Cameron County
- Workforce Solutions Cameron
- Youthbuild
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
PAGE 1
Includes an overview of the key elements of the Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood Plan

PLANNING PROCESS
PAGE 13
Describes the planning process, which began in September 2016 and will be completed in June 2018.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT
PAGE 33
Provides an overview of the Buena Vida neighborhood, including geographic information and community demographics.
HOUSING STRATEGY
Page 47
Outlines the redevelopment strategy for the Buena Vida property, along with additional off-site housing opportunities.

PEOPLE STRATEGY
Page 82
Describes the people projects relating to health, economic development and education to support the overall Plan.

NEIGHBORHOOD STRATEGY
Page 117
Includes projects focused on improving the physical character, safety and community assets of the Buena Vida Neighborhood.

IMPLEMENTATION
Page 145
Outlines the organizational structure and lead partners for Plan implementation.
Community is much more than belonging to something; it's about doing something together that makes belonging matter.
In true Brownsville fashion, it all started with a fiesta. On September 7, 2016, The Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville (HACB) held an outdoor Choice Neighborhoods (CN) kick-off celebration attended by over 500 local residents.

Since then, over 60 meetings, events and activities have generated incredible excitement and momentum towards positive change in the Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood. Along the way, significant local capacity has been built that will ensure implementation success.

HACB and the City of Brownsville (COB) have partnered to lead efforts to transform the Buena Vida public housing complex (Buena Vida Development) and the surrounding Buena Vida neighborhood into a vibrant and resilient community of opportunity and choice.

Construction of the 150-unit Buena Vida Development was completed in 1940. Due to age, functional deficiencies and small unit sizes, HACB has determined that the Buena Vida Development should be demolished and replaced.
Buena Vida Planning Area
The neighborhood includes significant regional assets, including the Brownsville Museum of Fine Art.

The Buena Vida neighborhood, population 5,245 (2010) is 0.6 square miles in size and is bounded by 6th Street on the west, 22nd Street on the east, Madison Street on the south and I-69 on the north. It is directly adjacent to Downtown Brownsville and within a mile of the International Brownsville Gateway Port of Entry into Mexico. The neighborhood is 97% Hispanic; only 4% of residents speak English in the home. 57% of residents are below the poverty level and 60% have less than a high school education. A 2003 report entitled The Buena Vida Barrio states that “this barrio lacks the social, economic and educational infrastructure to develop a participatory leadership that can assume advocacy roles on its behalf.” This dynamic is quickly changing as a result of the Buena Vida Choice Neighborhoods (CN) planning effort.

Buena Vida’s unique assets include historic residential, commercial and civic buildings and walkable tree-lined streets. Regional amenities include the museums and parks of the Mitte Cultural District, Downtown Brownsville and the university district anchored by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) and Texas Southmost College (TSC), directly abutting the neighborhood on the south.

The Choice Neighborhood Plan builds HACB’s long-term commitment to maximize partnerships to increase the supply of affordable housing, help HACB residents become fully self-sufficient, and contribute to the strength of Brownsville neighborhoods. COB is equally committed to making the infrastructure and economic investments needed to revitalize the Buena Vida Neighborhood.
Buena Vida Community Vision

Executive Summary

RECREATIONAL AMENITIES
INCREASE UTILIZATION OF EXISTING EQUIPMENT
RECREATIVO EXISTENTE
AUMENTAR UTILIZACIÓN DE EQUIPO

MOBILE RESOURCES
GREATER UTILIZATION OF LOCAL AND MOBILES
MAYOR UTILIZACIÓN DE RECURSOS LOCALES Y MÓVILES

HEALTHY EATING
ENCOURAGE BETTER NUTRITION AND MEJORAR HÁBITOS DE COMIDA Y NUTRICIÓN

INTEGRATION
PARTNERSHIPS AND PROGRAMS
STRENGTHEN EDUCATIONAL
FORTALECER ALIANZAS EN EDUCACIÓN E INTEGRACIÓN DE PROGRAMAS

POTENTIAL JOBS
OPPORTUNITIES OF EMPLOYMENT
MEJORAR ACCESO Y VISIBILIDAD DE OPORTUNIDADES DE EMPLEO

BETWEEN LOCAL PARTNERS
CREATE GREATER COORDINATION
ALIANZAS LOCALES
CREAR MAYOR COORDINACIÓN ENTRE ALIANZAS LOCALES

IMPROVE CAREER-READY TRAINING
VOCACIONAL
MEJORAR CAPACITACIÓN Y EDUCACIÓN VOCACIONAL

THEIR CHILDREN
ENHANCE PARENT'S ABILITY TO TEACH PARA ENSEÑAR A SUS HIJOS
MEJORAR HABILIDADES DE PADRES PARA ENSEÑAR A SUS HIJOS

PROGRAMS
STRENGTHEN AND ENCOURAGE TO COLLEGE PROGRAM
PARA ACCESO A EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR

NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS
IMPROVE PUBLIC SPACES AND CONEXIONES BARRIALES
MEJORAR ESPACIOS BARRIALES

_PROGRAMS
DEVELOP ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING
DESARROLLAR PROGRAMAS DE CAPACITACIÓN SOBRE INGLÉS

BETTER TRANSIT SERVICES FOR NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS
PROVEER MEJOR SERVICIO DE TRANSPORTE PARA LOS RESIDENTES DEL BARRIO

IMPROVE AND CONNECT NEIGHBORHOOD SIDEWALKS WITHIN BUENA VIDA
MEJORAR Y CONECTAR BANQUETAS DEL BARRIO CON EL DESARROLLO BUENA VIDA

IMPROVED COORDINATION FOR CIRCULATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS
DEVELOP ENHANCED BICYCLE NETWORK WITHIN THE COMMUNITY
DESARROLLAR UNA RED DE CICLOVÍAS MEJORADA EN LA COMUNIDAD

RESOLVE PRESENCE OF STRAY OR UNSECURED NEIGHBORHOOD DOGS
RESOLVER PRESENCIA DE PERROS CALLEJEROS O DESATENDIDOS EN EL BARRIO

CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS WITH POLICE
CONTINUAR FORTALECIENDO LAS RELACIONES DE LA COMUNIDAD CON LA POLICÍA

CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT FOR VENDING AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP
DEVELOP PUBLIC AND PRIVATE NEIGHBORHOOD ENHANCEMENTS
DESARROLLAR MEJORAMIENTOS PÚBLICOS Y PRIVADOS EN EL BARRIO

EMPHASIZE ARTS AND CULTURE TO STRENGTHEN THE NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK
ENFATIZAR ARTE Y CULTURA PARA FORTALECER LAS REDES DE BARRIO

LIMIT THE SURFACES OF GRAFFITI WITHIN THE COMMUNITY
LIMPIAR LAS SUPERFICIES DE GRAFFITI DENTRO DE LA COMUNIDAD

CREATE A HEALTHIER BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT WITHIN THE COMMUNITY
CREAR UN MEJOR AMBIENTE DE NEGOCIOS EN EL BARRIO

IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOOD LIGHTING
MEJORAR ALUMBRADO EN EL BARRIO

CREATE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE NEIGHBORHOOD ENHANCEMENTS
DESARROLLAR MEJORAMIENTOS PÚBLICOS Y PRIVADOS EN EL BARRIO

continue fortaleciendo las relaciones de la comunidad con la policía

MEJORAMIENTOS PÚBLICOS Y PRIVADOS EN EL BARRIO
DESEARROLLAR MEJORAMIENTOS PÚBLICOS Y PRIVADOS EN EL BARRIO

ENHANCE PARENT'S ABILITY TO TEACH PARA ENSEÑAR A SUS HIJOS
MEJORAR HABILIDADES DE PADRES PARA ENSEÑAR A SUS HIJOS

PRODUCTIVE NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS
RESIDENTS, AND POTENTIAL BUYERS
DESARROLLAR PROGRAMAS PARA AYUDA A PROPIETARIOS, RENTERS, AND POTENTIAL BUYERS

CREATE A HEALTHIER BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT WITHIN THE COMMUNITY
CREAR UN MEJOR AMBIENTE DE NEGOCIOS EN EL BARRIO

IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOOD SPACES TO MEJORAR ESPACIOS BARRIALES PARA

INCREASE UTILIZATION OF EXISTING EQUIPMENT
RECREATIVO EXISTENTE
AUMENTAR UTILIZACIÓN DE EQUIPO

IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY AND VISIBILITY TO ATTRACT HOUSING DEVELOPMENT
MEJORAR SEGURIDAD Y HABITABILIDAD DEL BARRIO PARA ATRAER DESARROLLO RESIDENCIAL

IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY AND VISIBILITY TO ATTRACT HOUSING DEVELOPMENT
MEJORAR SEGURIDAD Y HABITABILIDAD DEL BARRIO PARA ATRAER DESARROLLO RESIDENCIAL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
ENCOURAGE RECREATION
IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOOD SPACES TO

INCENTIVAR ACTIVIDADES DE RECREACIÓN
MEJORAR ESPACIOS BARRIALES PARA

BROWNSVILLE

www.VIVA.network
VIVA Media Group

New Layout - Proof 4
APPROVED
31Jan2017
City of Brownsville
Housing Authority
Our Vision

As HACB, COB, and Buena Vida residents began to work together to create the CN Plan, “Creating Community Connections” emerged as the shared vision. HACB also aligned its staff divisions around the Housing, People and Neighborhood pillars of Choice Neighborhoods (as detailed in HACB’s 2015-2020 Strategic Plan) and built strong working relationships with COB, the local development community and a broad range of service providers.

Our vision for Buena Vida includes connecting HACB residents to the larger Brownsville community and its many assets, and building upon neighborhood history and Buena Vida’s unique local culture to make a positive future possible. This will be accomplished by replacing HACB’s Buena Vida target housing development with mixed-income housing that is better integrated into the fabric of the historic Buena Vida community and providing replacement housing as part of new mixed income developments on sites outside of the Choice Neighborhood that meets resident preferences for homes with access to transportation, shopping and employment opportunities.

Within the revitalized Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood, both new and current residents will celebrate its culture and history, enjoying a physical environment that accommodates pedestrians, bicyclists and visitors from other parts of Brownsville. Buena Vida will truly be neighborhood of choice with strong connections to economic and social opportunities and the richness of the Brownsville region.

We have developed integrated strategic initiatives designed to further our Plan objectives, avoid organizational and programmatic silos, and promote the social and economic integration of target housing residents into the fabric of the revitalized Buena Vida neighborhood as summarized on the following pages.
Proposed Buena Vida Development - Overview
Housing Strategy

HACB and the Community Development Corporation of Brownsville (CDCB) will lead implementation of the Housing Strategy which completely revitalizes the Buena Vida Development site. HACB will be leading the development of the the vacant off-site Poinsettia Gardens property on Boca Chica Boulevard to increase mixed-income housing opportunities. The Housing Strategy replaces the 150 severely distressed public housing units with multi-generational communities totaling approximately 320 units. The new housing will be sustainably designed, constructed and managed to high quality standards around redeveloped and reconnected streets, open spaces and infrastructure. The combination of unit types complies with HUD’s one-for-one requirement, meets the needs of returning Buena Vida residents and the local demand, ensures long-term affordability, and appeals to an economically diverse population.

The Housing Strategy is well-defined and furthers HUD’s core housing goals of the CN program through appropriate scale, density, mix of incomes, and building types while providing the foundation for deconcentration of poverty and improved access to regional assets and economic opportunities. Selected housing elements are based on resident and stakeholder preferences, the profile and needs of existing residents, local need and waitlists for affordable housing, existing market conditions, anticipated demand, and sustainable design principles for revitalization.
Health Strategy

- Inventory and promote medical services available to HACB residents
- Develop an affiliation agreement with the University of Texas Houston School of Public Health to provide health services and education
- Utilize medical clinic space within the former Webb campus
- Conduct breastfeeding classes and education

Economic Development Strategy

- Implement Taller de Permiso Entrepreneurship Program
- Educate the public on available career-ready training programs
- Promote training and employment opportunities related to the development of the Buena Vida Neighborhood Network
- Establish a partnership with Workforce Solutions Cameron
- Ensure that students and parents are computer literate
- Establish a Neighborhood Business Association
- Ensure better inventory tracking of English as Second Language (ESL) programs with partners

Education Strategy

- Continue to strengthen BISD early learning programs
- Enroll HACB families in Early Learning Programs
- Develop a School for Parents program
- Generate a summary menu of school options
- Continue Collaborative Operations with Project RISE
- Continue GEAR UP Program
- Continue supporting cultural music programs
- Create a walking school bus program to after school locations
- Work with parents so they can better guide their child towards higher education options
- Celebrate Road to College (RTC) Participants
- Identify and coordinate with private foundations to establish financial aid for RTC program graduates
People Strategy

HACB is intentionally aligned around the core Housing, People and Neighborhood goals of Choice Neighborhoods. HACB’s Community Service Team is responsible for coordinating supportive services and has been extremely successful in improving and creating new partnerships to bring a variety of programming to Buena Vida target housing residents. The People Strategy led by HACB is designed to:

1. help families experience self-determination, stability and upward mobility with comprehensive case management and service coordination
2. ensure children, youth and adults are physically and mentally healthy with increased access to primary, and behavioral health care, and general wellness services
3. help households become economically stable and self-sufficient by overcoming barriers to jobs, education and training programs according to education level and skills
4. assist area youth gain access to employment
5. make sure children enter kindergarten ready to learn, students are proficient in core subjects, and youth graduate from high school and college career ready

The People Strategy tackles these critical resident needs with a combination of an intensive case management system, programs, services and partnerships with local organizations.

In order to ensure that target housing residents are aware of and benefit from the projects and programs that comprise our People Plan element, HACB is committed to continue working closely with the partners and assist them in their outreach to our residents. HACB is also committed to reaching out to other programs and resources to establish additional partnerships.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Public Safety Projects</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Create the Illuminate Buena Vida Initiative</td>
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<td>• Clean up neighborhood graffiti</td>
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<td>• Continue to strengthen community relationships with police</td>
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<td>• Eliminate issues with stray or unsecured neighborhood dogs</td>
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<th>Spaces and Places Projects</th>
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<td>• Continue to Improve Edelstein Park</td>
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<td>• Develop the Webb Community Wellness Center</td>
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<td>• Start an Educational Community Garden at the Webb Campus</td>
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<td>• Improve Storm Water Infrastructure</td>
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<th>Neighborhood Connection Projects</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Implement Belden Trail Phase 3</td>
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<td>• 14th Street Streetscape Improvements</td>
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<td>• Polk Street Arts and Cultural Walk</td>
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<td>• Implement International Boulevard Complete Streets Improvements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Develop a Buena Vida Transit Improvement Strategy</td>
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<td>• Implement a Buena Vida Technology Plan</td>
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<th>Home Owner, Renter and Potential Buyer Projects</th>
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<td>• Create a Before/After Yard Fix Up Competition and Neighborhood Clean-up</td>
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<td>• Develop an Agreement to Purchase and Reoccupy Vacant Land and Blighted Property</td>
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<td>• Create a Local Foreclosure Prevention Program</td>
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<th>Healthier Business Environment Projects</th>
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<td>• Create a Buena Vida Online Business Directory</td>
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<td>• Develop a Façade Improvement Program</td>
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<td>• Study Feasibility of a Community-Owned Grocery Store</td>
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<th>Arts and Culture Projects</th>
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<td>• Develop a Cameron County Detention Center Mural</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Create a Skate Park with Community Art Under US-69E</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Develop a Community Calendar and Wayfinding Signage</td>
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A governance structure is in place (led by HACB and COB) to coordinate implementation of planned activities by Principal Team Members and supporting partners, resolve issues as they arise, and monitor implementation progress.

Residents and partners identify desired neighborhood improvements at Community Meeting 4.

**Neighborhood Strategy**

The Neighborhood Strategy, led by the City of Brownsville, builds upon the People and Housing Strategies to establish programs and development initiatives that support:

1. increased community wealth through employment and education
2. stronger retail, commercial and entrepreneurship opportunities for amenities and jobs
3. reduced blight and increased property values through new foreclosure assistance and home repair programs
4. expanded access to health and recreation, and healthy foods
5. stronger connections within the community and to outside resources including employment
6. a safer, more vibrant neighborhood

Key projects that HACB and COB propose to implement are focused on strategic improvements around the 14th and Polk Street intersection. This area includes both the Buena Vida target housing site and the vacant Webb campus that will be repurposed as a center of opportunity designed to facilitate resident’s ability to expand their vision for the future. Our Neighborhood Strategy will provide the services and amenities that residents need to thrive in a safe, accessible environment.
Planning Process

As co-grantees, the Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville (HACB) and the City of Brownsville (COB) have collaboratively and successfully managed the Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood planning process.

The Buena Vida Choice Neighborhoods (CN) planning process built upon local strengths by engaging target housing and neighborhood residents, local businesses, and organizational partners in a comprehensive and collaborative way. In order to maintain resident involvement throughout the process, HACB committed to at least one “early action” project or engagement event each month. The emphasis on “doing while planning” events and activities has already produced visible and tangible results.

Construction of the 150-unit Buena Vida Development was completed in 1940. Due to age, functional deficiencies and small unit sizes, HACB has determined that the Buena Vida Development should be demolished and replaced.
The September 2016 Buena Vida Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant Award Kick-off Celebration attracted more than 500 target housing and neighborhood residents to a community fiesta. Subsequent activities and events were organized to address the needs identified during the various planning meetings and implement suggestions from target housing residents on activities to strengthen community connections.

Between September 2016 and June 2018, over 50 early action events and activities were held that attracted hundreds of Buena Vida target housing residents and neighborhood stakeholders. These projects support HACB’s ongoing efforts to provide the case management and supportive services for its Buena Vida residents.

HACB’s Buena Vida residents are the core constituency for the Buena Vida CN Plan and had a central role in its development. Since nearly all target housing and neighborhood residents are Spanish-speakers, all planning meetings and engagement events were conducted in Spanish, with English translations where needed. Resident engagement began prior to HACB’s successful CN Planning Grant application. Input from the Buena Vida Resident Board emphasized the importance of transparency and inclusion. Initial issues identified by target housing residents included improved safety, greater economic opportunities, physical site and housing improvements, and additional neighborhood amenities. As a result of these efforts, “Creating Community Connections” became the working theme for the CN planning process.

The Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood Plan revolves around strengthening the bonds of housing and neighborhood improvements with appropriate services, schools, transportation and access to jobs. It supports the redevelopment of HACB’s Buena Vida property within the context of a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization strategy.
HACB repurposed a building at the Buena Vida property as the Choice Neighborhoods Headquarters that officially opened in March 2017 and has hosted a variety of planning events and early action activities.

Community Engagement

Community outreach is a key component of equitable planning and was an ongoing focus of the Buena Vida planning effort. The planning process included dozens of meetings and events. Discussion topics included:

- The Choice Neighborhoods planning and implementation process
- The proposed replacement housing plan
- Planned supportive service activities
- Neighborhood improvement projects and other proposed transformation activities
- Resident relocation
- Re-occupancy plans and policies
- Economic opportunities for low- and very-low income persons

The meetings were organized so that Buena Vida target housing and neighborhood residents could help craft plan elements and achieve consensus through keypad polling and other means of recording resident preferences. The project website (www.buenavidachoice.com) provided opportunities for residents and stakeholders to easily engage in planning and stay abreast of the progress being made. Meeting notices, PowerPoint presentations, meeting notes, the Neighborhood Planning Handbook and the Neighborhood Data Book were posted to the website.

The continuous availability of HACB staff and the work done by the CN Resident Liaisons to engage target housing and neighborhood residents proved to be the most effective means of communication and engagement. Buena Vida target housing residents were asked to envision what a redeveloped Buena Vida property might look like and identifying specific design elements that they would like to see incorporated. This input influenced the design and development team as the replacement housing plan took shape.

Building community connections involved bringing people together to talk with each other about the opportunities and challenges that they and their neighborhood face, hopes for the future, and strategies for overcoming obstacles. As potential ideas were suggested, considered, modified, accepted or rejected, elements of the Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood Plan...
Plan took shape. Financial realities can be expected to impact our ability to accomplish everything that is included in the Buena Vida CN Transformation Plan. Still, having all of the components identified and in place creates a comprehensive roadmap for the future that can be used to direct future investments as conditions change and new financial resources become available.

The Buena Vida CN planning team went above and beyond the meetings needed to create a strong and effective Transformation Plan. HACB committed to organizing at least one “early action” engagement activity each month, beginning with the September 2016 Grant Celebration and Kick-off fiesta. In many months, multiple engagement events occurred. Some focused on improving health through neighborhood walks and connecting residents to fresh food options available at Brownsville’s nearby Farmer’s Market. Other projects focused on transforming Edelstein Park from an uninviting space into a hub of neighborhood activity that boasts free Wi-Fi and an informal neighborhood lending library.

Buena Vida residents identified English classes as a highly desired program in responses to the target housing resident needs assessment survey. In October 2017, Villa Maria (an accredited language institute) began offering a 30-hour, ten week ESL course at the Buena Vida CN Headquarters for Buena Vida residents. Citizenship classes held at the CN headquarters are attracting an average of 40 participants weekly.

The resident outreach effort initially focused on HACB’s Buena Vida residents, and neighborhood residents who live on nearby blocks. As momentum built through early action activities and accomplishments, residents from other parts of the Buena Vida Neighborhood became engaged, with the assistance of organizational planning partners – much like a stone tossed in a pond that ripples outward.

**Resident Liaison Group**

Ten Buena Vida target housing residents were recruited to the core planning team as Leadership and Engagement Liaisons. Following initial facilitation and leadership training, this group of residents administered the target housing resident needs assessment survey and supplemental surveys of neighborhood residents and businesses within the Buena
Residents help to define issues and assets at Community Meeting 2.

Vida Choice Neighborhood. They explained the planning process to other Buena Vida residents, and represented the CN planning team before the HACB Board and at a variety of City meetings. The Liaisons were an invaluable partner in the planning process and are poised to serve a similar role during implementation of the Buena Vida CN Transformation Plan.

Steering Committee

Potential organizational partners convened by HACB as part of the Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant application process continued their involvement as members of the Buena Vida CN Steering Committee. The Steering Committee also included representatives of the Buena Vida Resident Board, neighborhood residents and business leaders. Steering Committee members bring a variety of organizational expertise that supplement HACB's internal capacity. These partnerships are essential to the success of the Plan.

The Steering Committee provided a sounding board for the project planning team and has provided insights into community meeting results and helped to establish the criteria and guidelines for project evaluation. Frank discussions were encouraged to build consensus around the emerging Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood Plan.

Anchor Institution Engagement

There are several facilities within the Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood that meet HUD’s “anchor institution” definition as “place-based entities that have regional significance and are permanently rooted, economic and cultural drivers” that generate jobs, create local business opportunities and contribute in significant ways to the development of human, social and cultural capital. These include the Brownsville Museum of Fine Arts (BMFA), Gladys Porter Zoo, Brownsville Wellness Coalition (BWC), Carlotta K. Petrina Cultural Center and UTRGV. These institutions were important partners in the creation of the Plan. BMFA hosted multiple community planning meetings and UTRGV hosted meetings relating to the EPA Greening America’s Communities process. Carlotta K. Petrina led several arts and music-based programs for target housing residents, many of which were incorporated directly into CN community planning meetings. BWC invited target housing residents to sell their artwork at the weekly Brownsville Farmers Market at Linear Park, while the Zoo expanded children’s
Un Pasado Enriquecedor – Celebrando Historia y Cultura
A Rich Past – Celebrating History and Culture
The planning team worked in collaboration with representatives from the US EPA on equitable development strategies.

programs targeted to local neighborhood youth. These Anchor Institutions are committed to the Buena Vida CN Plan and have provided significant resources towards implementation of People and Neighborhood projects.

**Equitable Planning**

Development of the Transformation Plan emphasized equitable planning – a goal shared by all participants. Aligned with this approach, the CN team applied for and received a grant through the EPA’s Building Blocks - Creating Equitable Development program, this program helps communities evaluate their priorities, work toward equitable development and support community goals for housing, local businesses, jobs, transportation, and preserving opportunities for residents. Experts from the Building Blocks team participated in meetings and workshops in mid-June 2017, focused on identifying and implementing critical neighborhood improvements. This technical assistance strengthened the local commitment to inclusion and empowerment in crafting solutions to identified Buena Vida issues and challenges. August 2017, HACB submitted a successful application to join the ConnectHome Nation program. This opportunity will further efforts to close the digital divide for Buena Vida residents.

**Listening and Learning**

The initial phase of planning included two community meetings to identify issues and assets, orientation sessions for stakeholders and planning partners, key person interviews, and CN working meetings to facilitate coordination with other COB revitalization initiatives. HACB held follow-up meetings with the Buena Vida Resident Board and Resident Liaisons after each community meeting to get feedback and additional input from residents on how to improve the planning process, increase resident understanding and engage more Buena Vida residents. Neighborhood assets identified by residents included: arts and culture, bike trails and outdoor recreational facilities, Dean Porter Park, local businesses, Gladys Porter Zoo, and local churches. Challenges and impediments to neighborhood improvement identified by target housing residents, included vandalism and graffiti, reckless drivers and pedestrian safety, violent and property crime rate, property and infrastructure maintenance, inadequate police presence; lack of street lights, stray dogs, and availability of fresh and affordable food.
Planning Process
Residents participate as part of Vision Open House at the Choice Neighborhoods Headquarters.

Visioning for the Future

The vision that guides the Plan was developed during the Community Visioning Month that began in February 2017. This effort included 14 separate community events culminating in the Our Vision Open House in March 2017 at the new Buena Vida CN Headquarters. Events and activities were organized so that each core generation (youth, adults and elderly) found a voice in visioning activities organized around three themes.

A Rich Past celebrated the history and culture of the Buena Vida community. Activities included:

- A history collage created by the children of Buena Vida, documenting decades of history through the photographs of families that have called the community home
- Visioning kickoff – a community celebration featuring music and food, designed to encourage residents to participate in visioning events
- “A Rich Past Storytelling Event” where long-time residents of the Buena Vida neighborhood came together to tell stories about the neighborhood “back in the day
- A Buena Vida history presentation by professional historians describing the early days of Buena Vida, including its planning, architecture and cultural milestones.

A Livable Present highlighted community assets while identifying and promoting early action projects to improve the quality of life for residents. Activities included:

- Initiation of neighborhood needs assessment surveying of HACB target housing residents, neighborhood residents, and Buena Vida businesses
- Cosina Alegre presentations held at the Buena Vida community kitchen that included healthy cooking demonstrations
- Presentations by organizational partners to provide residents with information about available programs
- The Edelstein Park Better Block Project that brought focus to improving and activating Edelstein Park as a catalyst for larger neighborhood revitalization

A Vibrant Future engaged residents in the creation of a vision to transform the Buena Vida development and surrounding neighborhood. “A Vibrant Future Storytelling Event” brought
Buena Vida Resident Liaisons lead group discussions on neighborhood improvements.

younger and older Buena Vida residents together to tell stories about how they want the neighborhood to evolve and become a better place to live. Children participated in a keypad polling image survey to provide feedback and indicate their preferences for the types of elements that could be incorporated into a redeveloped Buena Vida. Residents of the Buena Vida development came together for a large community meeting focused on providing ideas and feedback on the future of the Buena Vida development, working in teams to help redesign the site. The Visioning Month concluded with a community celebration and open house that featured tours of the of the new Buena Vida CN Headquarters led by the Resident Liaisons, artwork from residents, the results and summary of visioning activities, and the presentation of the CN Stories video.

The event was incredibly successful in building strong momentum leading into the next phase of the project.

Creating Community Connections
This critical step in the planning process was accomplished through topic-based Working Group sessions, Steering Committee meetings, integrated project team meetings, and monthly engagement activities for Buena Vida residents. The agendas emphasized bringing people together and working in a collaborative and supportive manner. HACB held meetings with more than 20 planning partners to discuss the CN planning process and identify opportunities for collaboration. The Resident Liaisons assisted in this effort through the neighborhood business survey and topic-based surveys of neighborhood residents undertaken at community early action events and outreach locations. The strategies included in the Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood Plan address the priority outcomes identified by HUD for the CN Initiative. They respond to the Buena Vida issues and needs identified by residents, and improvement recommendations developed and prioritized by the community.

In September 2017, HACB selected Community Development Corporation of Brownsville (CDCB) as its housing development partner, responsible for refining and implementing the replacement housing plan developed by planning participants.

HACB has leveraged a variety of resources to obtain technical assistance and support. Examples include, EPA’s Building Blocks
Edelstein Park has been a focal point for Early Action Projects throughout the process.

initiative that augmented planning meetings and workshops by focusing on equitable development to generate new ideas for how to encourage economic development and thriving, walkable neighborhoods while maintaining opportunities for affordable housing. The invitation to participate in the ConnectHome program will help HACB secure the resources needed to close the digital divide for public housing residents, including those in the Buena Vida CN. HACB chose to repurpose a vacant building at its Buena Vida property as the CN Headquarters. This facility is used for a variety of supportive service activities and programming.

Working Groups were organized around five topic areas (education and job development; housing and commercial development; neighborhood identity, arts and culture; safety and circulation; and health wellness and recreation) to explore desired outcomes, develop strategies and actions, and structure potential implementation partnerships. Each of the Working Groups included members of the Steering Committee, the Resident Liaison Group and organizational partners. In May and June of 2017, Working Group Meetings engaged more than 50 organizations representing key partners aligned with CN goals. A final round of working group meetings was held in August 2017 to agree on Plan strategies and identify implementation resources, target metrics and implementation partners.

Early Action Projects

Demonstrating to residents that their participation would result in real action was a central element of the planning process. Residents and organizational partners were asked to help identify projects that could be undertaken in the near-term to improve quality of life and foster excitement in the development of the Plan. HACB committed to scheduling at least one “early action” project or engagement event each month. HACB led a number of neighborhood improvement initiatives as the CN Plan took shape, including the revitalization of Edelstein Park. By implementing our “Taking Back our Park” strategy, Edelstein Park is being used more and more frequently by the Buena Vida residents. HACB agreed to host a community event at the park once a month;
Local residents told their neighborhood stories as part of Vision Month activities.

Multiple organizations have partnered on events. Edelstein Park now has a water fountain and Wi-Fi thanks to COB. Another visible neighborhood improvement is the extension of the Belden Trail adjacent to Edelstein Park. HACB, through its Brownsville Housing Opportunity Corporation (BHOC) non-profit subsidiary, committed $50,000 as leverage in conjunction with COB’s grant application to the Brownsville Community Investment Corporation (BCIC) for funding to complete this trail.
The Neighborhood Context section provides an overview of the Buena Vida Neighborhood, including geographic information and community demographics.

Neighborhood Description

Buena Vida is one of Brownsville’s oldest residential areas. Its northern boundary is well-defined by I-69E, an elevated interstate highway with adjacent frontage roads. 6th Street forms a natural dividing line between Buena Vida and large open spaces of the Mitte Cultural District, including the Gladys Porter Zoo and Dean Porter Park, on the west. 22nd Street serves as the eastern boundary of the Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood. Madison Street, its southern boundary, is the recognized northern boundary of Downtown Brownsville and the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) and Texas Southmost College (TSC) campus areas.
Neighborhood Assets
Edelstein Park is a key neighborhood asset and amenity for local residents.

Land Use

Buena Vida and its environs have distinctive assets including historic residential, commercial and civic buildings; walkable tree-lined streets; the museums and parks of the Mitte Cultural District; downtown Brownsville; Texas Southmost College (TSC); and University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). The Mexican border and Brownsville Gateway Port of Entry are also within close walking distance, providing a direct connection to Mexico.

Most of the Buena Vida CN is located within Brownsville’s Downtown Heritage Overlay District. The City has adopted design guidelines that are intended to protect the character of Brownsville’s historic neighborhoods and commercial buildings. These guidelines address existing historic features and materials and provide guidance on appropriate repair, replacement, alteration and new construction, and are intended to supplement the Secretary of Interior’s Standards that govern the Section 106 review process and will apply to the development of new housing built on HACB’s Buena Vida property.

While the Buena Vida neighborhood is generally residential in character, large parts of the neighborhood are currently zoned for general retail or light industrial use. The western half of the neighborhood includes significant public property ownership, including the Cameron County Court and Detention Center.

A building condition survey conducted as an early data collection step in the planning process found that the buildings closest to the Buena Vida property were generally in good to fair condition. Closer to downtown, residential buildings in fair to poor condition were found. A challenge to improving the overall quality of the neighborhood housing stock is attracting private residential investment interest. Transformation of HACB’s Buena Vida property is the necessary catalytic project.
The Good Neighbor Settlement House, one block from the Buena Vida Development, provides important services to families and individuals in need.

Demographic Overview

The Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood is divided between two census tracts. The eastern half of the neighborhood is entirely contained in Census Tract 138.01 and includes the Cameron County Court House and Detention Center. Census Tract 138.02 contains HACB’s Buena Vida property (the designated target housing) and extends beyond the CN boundary on the east toward the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) campus area.

As is true for all of Brownsville, more than 90% of residents are white and of Hispanic/Mexican origin. The vast majority of Brownsville residents report speaking Spanish at home (85% of all Brownsville households compared with more than 90% of CN households). More Buena Vida residents report that they speak English less than “very well” (CT 138.01 = 49%; CT 138.02 = 44% vs 36% for Brownsville).

While 99% of Brownsville’s population is found in households, the two census tracts that comprise the Buena Vida CN have a lower percentage of the population in households. The western half of the neighborhood (CT 138.01) includes the Cameron County Detention Center. Inmates are included in the total population, but reduce the percentage of population in households to 88% for this Census Tract. For CT 138.02, approximately 92% of the total population are in households. It is likely that much of the non-household population can be found in student housing located just outside of the Buena Vida.
Neighborhood Bus Routes
The historic Cameron County Courthouse is one of many important vintage buildings within the neighborhood.

Vida CN boundary. Median age is similar to Brownsville’s overall median age of 29.8 (CT 138.01 = 28.2; CT 138.02 = 30.6).

Income, Employment and Mobility
Approximately 69% of Buena Vida households have incomes below $25,000 compared with 41% of all Brownsville households. The unemployment rate in the western half of the neighborhood (CT 138.01) is 2.6%. In contrast, the unemployment rate for the CT 138.02, which includes HACB’s Buena Vida property, is 24.9%; Brownsville’s unemployment rate is 10.9%.

According to an economic development market analysis included in the City of Brownsville’s 2015-2016 Consolidated Plan, there are two business sectors where the share of jobs is larger than the share of workers – “Education and Health Care Services” and “Retail Trade.” This analysis helps to focus investments to sectors with the greatest employment potential. American Community Survey (ACS) data indicates that Buena Vida residents are well represented in these two employment sectors. Challenges to accessing jobs identified during the planning process include language barriers which limit entry into certain employment sectors and transportation to employment centers outside of the immediate neighborhood and adjacent downtown and university employment centers.

Neighborhood Housing and Occupancy Characteristics
Buena Vida’s housing stock is substantially older than that of Brownsville overall. Approximately 70% of Brownsville’s housing stock consists of detached single-family houses, the same
Neighborhood Building Condition - Based on Visual Inspection

- **New**: New building in excellent condition
- **Good**: No defects in building components or building structure
- **Fair**: Minor defects in building components or building structure
- **Poor**: Major defects in building components
- **Vacant**: Building is boarded up or clearly abandoned

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percentage as is found in CT 138.01. The eastern half of the CN (CT 138.02, which includes HACB’s Buena Vida property) is more diverse with 48% detached single-family units, townhouse units (11%), two-flats (13%), 3-4 unit buildings (11%) and 17% in buildings with 5 or more units. In contrast, only 6% of housing in CT 138.01 is found in larger buildings.

Housing units are generally small; more than 60% of units have fewer than 3 bedrooms, compared with less than 40% of units in Brownsville. Roughly 60% of owner-occupied units in the Buena Vida CN are valued below $50,000 compared with approximately 20% of owner-occupied units in Brownsville overall. Median rents in Buena Vida (CT 138.01 = $570; CT 138.02 = $521) are somewhat lower than Brownsville’s median rent of $632. CN households are more likely to be paying more than 30% of household income on rent.

Poverty
Buena Vida residents are much more likely to be receiving SNAP benefits than the City as a whole. CT 138.02 (which includes HACB’s Buena Vida property) has a lower percentage of the population (56%) with health insurance than either CT 138.01 (66%) or Brownsville overall (64%). Approximately 80% of the residents with insurance have public coverage compared with 58% of all Brownsville residents with insurance. Buena Vida residents are much less likely to have a college degree than is generally true of Brownsville residents.
School Enrollment and Educational Attainment

Resaca Elementary School is the only school located within the Buena Vida CN boundary. According to data compiled by the Texas Education Agency for the 2015-16 academic year, school enrollment was 276 students of which all were Hispanic, 270 were economically disadvantaged, 277 were at-risk, and 188 were English language learners. HACB identified 92 elementary age children living at the Buena Vida target housing site, with most attending Resaca. Resaca met 2016 Texas accountability standards and was awarded several distinction designations including Top 25%-Closing Performance Gaps. Faulk has 865 students of which 862 are Hispanic, 856 are economically disadvantaged, 590 are at-risk and 253 are English language learners. The Buena Vida target housing (with 72 high school-age students) is located within the Porter High School attendance area, which also met Texas academic standards. The Brownsville Independent School District (BISD) allows students to choose any district magnet high school. BISD high schools offer dual enrollment programs that allow students to graduate with an associate degree, certification in several vocational fields and/or earn college credit hours. The high schools offer free testing for the ACT, SAT and TSI.
RECURSOS

1. **Arte y Cultura**
   - Presencia de muchos recursos culturales con actividades para niños y adultos: Museo de Bellas Artes, Centro Cultural Carlota Petrina, Biblioteca de Southmost College y del UTRGV, Galería 409 y el Museo de Historia de Brownsville.

2. **Ciclismo y Recreación Exterior**
   - Distancias cercanas en bicicleta y caminando a parques: El parque lineal (al lado del museo), Edelstein, y Washington.

3. **Alberca Dean Porter**
   - Disfrutable y bien equipamiento de recreación, abierto y accesible a todos, muy bueno para familias y niños.

4. **Negocios locales**
   - Múltiples restaurantes familiares y lugares para comer en distancia cercana, muchas opciones de comida tradicional mexicana.

5. **Zoológico Gladys Porter**
   - Único en el Valle; el zoológico tiene actividades educacionales y de recreación para adultos y niños. Un recurso altamente apreciado.

6. **Iglesias**
   - Múltiples iglesias están presentes en el barrio. Buenos espacios para reunir a las familias y convivir con la comunidad.

RETOs

1. **Vandalismo y Graffiti**
   - Principalmente en propiedades abandonadas o descuidadas; los jóvenes son vistos como responsables de éstos y una causa probablemente comentada es la falta de actividades alternativas (de educación o capacitación) para ellos: “tienen mucho tiempo libre”.

2. **Conductores Infractores y Seguridad Peatonal**
   - Muchos conductores no respetan los límites de velocidad y conducen en sentido contrario. Se necesita señalización más visible para los altos y topes para calmar el tráfico y prevenir accidentes.

3. **Crimenes Violentos y de Propiedad**
   - Incidentes de robo constante a casas, la mayoría de los crímenes son relacionados con la propiedad (incluso las personas robando la ropa secándose afuera).

4. **Mantenimiento de Propiedades e Infraestructura**
   - Condiciones físicas pobres de muchas propiedades en el barrio (casas abandonadas y lotes baldíos); tiradero de basura ilegal en los callejones. Infraestructura de transporte en condiciones pobres: no hay paraderos de autobús y las banquetas necesitan reparación.

5. **Falta de Presencia de la Policía**
   - Preocupación general de no sentir suficiente presencia de las fuerzas policiales en el barrio y por eso los altos incidentes de crimen.

6. **Falta de Alumbrado Público**
   - Insuficiente e interrumpido alumbrado público. No se siente seguro caminar en el barrio durante la noche, ni siquiera en las calles principales o cerca de las paradas de autobús.

7. **Perros sueltos o callejeros**
   - Muchos perros sueltos o callejeros son una preocupación. Ambos adultos y niños han sufrido mordeduras caminando en el barrio.

8. **Alimentos Frescos y Asequibles**
   - La tienda HEB es la más cercana para comida en el centro. El mercado ambulante es un recurso reciente y temporal, pero aún así es difícil encontrar alimentos frescos y saludable.
IDEA Public Schools operates a charter school campus serving 1,249 students who are selected through a lottery system. IDEA also was awarded Top 25%-Student Progress and Top 25%-Closing Performance Gaps distinctions by the Texas Education Agency. Both BISD and IDEA Public Schools are long-standing HACB partners.

**Crime Rate**

Most of the Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood (including HACB’s Buena Vida property) is covered by a Brownsville police beat that extends south from I-69E and includes Downtown Brownsville. Total violent crime in this police beat has substantially exceeded that of the City over the last few years, especially for the robbery and aggravated assault categories. Safety concerns identified during the resident engagement activities included the need to improve neighborhood lighting, remove graffiti, strengthen community relationships with police, and eliminate issues with stray or unsecured neighborhood dogs.
The Housing Strategy outlines the redevelopment principles, elements and steps for the Buena Vida property, along with additional off-site housing opportunities.

Overview

The Housing Plan for the 13-acre Buena Vida property seeks to build upon and elevate the cultural history and richness of the Buena Vida neighborhood, as well as its strategic location adjacent to downtown. This chapter includes a description of existing property conditions, a site analysis and a housing design guided by the following community planning principles:

- leverage and celebrate cultural identity and heritage
- create a clear and connected framework for redevelopment
- strengthen connections with the neighborhood
- promote walkable, active and safe open spaces
- support a healthy, resilient and equitable community
Existing Conditions & Site Analysis

HACB’s Buena Vida Development consists of 150 public housing units on 13 acres. This public housing development was built in the 1940s, clearly guided by modernist planning standards. Among the features of the development that reference modernism are:

- Large-scale block: while the adjacent block structure corresponds to the typical downtown grid systems (the average block dimension of 300’x 300’), the Buena Vida development spans over 3 blocks in the Southeast direction and 2 blocks on the Northeast direction.
- Internally organized urban framework: the development provides only two points of access, through Miraflores Street located at the center of the large-scale block and from 14th and 16th Street. These streets also provide parking for residents and visitors.
- Building layout and organization: the majority of the buildings are residential, except for a small collection of community services located on Miraflores and Tyler Street. The buildings are oriented parallel to each other with their main entries located towards 14th and 16th Street. The area between the buildings are dedicated to undefined open space.

The Buena Vida development presents a contrast to the typical neighborhood development pattern, which is organized in blocks and subdivided into traditional residential parcels. The following observations describe the challenges identified for the Buena Vida development regarding walkability, activation of the public realm, sustainable infrastructure, responsiveness to the climate conditions and vital neighborhood life.
Access & Connectivity

• The development relies on two main access points. While this is perceived as a positive aspect because fewer vehicles enter the development, the pedestrian experience is poor, dominated by auto lanes and surface parking.

• The section of 14th Street fronting the development is extremely wide, which represents a barrier for walkability and connectivity to amenities located to the north of the site including bus stops, Edelstein Park and the Mitte Cultural District.

• Parking spaces are primarily located on edge/external streets, including the interior loop drives, and Miraflores Street. Multiple parking spaces have been added or “carved” into the curb over time, but there is not a clear strategy for the locations of these spaces. There is currently no resident parking system in place to ensure convenient reserved parking.

• The pedestrian path layout is organized primarily along the edges of the property. In addition, each unit has a small sidewalk connecting to its main and secondary entrances.
Open Space

• The majority of the open space is dedicated to lawn surfaces that create the front yard and backyard areas of the development. There are a number of mature trees lining the streets, especially the internal loop, that provide expansive shaded spaces important in the climate conditions of Brownsville.

• The front yards of buildings act as a buffer to adjacent streets, especially for units located on the perimeter of the property (14th Street, Tyler Street, Ringgold Street, and 16th Street). While the lawn areas are well maintained, and include a number of small trees, they are not well-utilized by residents for leisure or recreation activities.

• The backyards have more a supportive role for domestic activities, such as air drying clothes and locations for stand alone storage units. While protected from traffic, backyard spaces are underutilized for recreational activities.
Current Site Plan - Buena Vida Development

- Choice Neighborhoods
- Proposed Webb Wellness Center
- Headquarters

BUENA VIDA DEVELOPMENT
CURRENT SITE PLAN
Choice Neighborhoods
Headquarters
Proposed Webb Wellness Center
0 150 300 Feet

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Building Types and Uses

- The Buena Vida development currently includes 50 residential buildings and 3 community service buildings.
- A former residential building located on 14th Street has been repurposed to house the Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood Plan headquarters.
- The vast majority of buildings are 1-story, with four 2-story buildings located adjacent along 16th Street.
- All residential buildings are barracks-style, cinder block construction with flat concrete roofs.
- Residential buildings are organized in terms of number of units in the following way: 1-bedroom units (green) are mostly located in the center of the development along Miraflores Street and along 16th Street. 2-bedroom units (magenta) are primarily located on short-side edges of the development (Tyler and Ringgold Street), and 16th Street. 3-bedroom units (purple) are located on the corners of the development.
Documented Deficiencies

Design Deficiency - Inappropriate site layout: Current city regulations currently require two (2) parking spaces per unit. The property currently features 120 parking spaces and would need 120 additional spaces to comply. It was reported that there is not enough land area on site to provide the additional parking spaces.

Design Deficiency - Inadequate room and unit size: Current unit and bedroom sizes are below current standards and are considered undersized.

Design Deficiency - Traffic flow through the units is poor and is further hindered by rear door encroaching on usable space in the kitchen.

Design Deficiency - Lack of defensible space: Barrack style housing such as observed at Buena Vida does not provide an opportunity for good defensible space design.

Design Deficiency - Buildings are nearly indistinguishable from one another.

Design Deficiency - The current water supply system operates under one master meter and three main supply cutoff valves resulting in the complete shut off of water service to approximately 1/3 of the standing units when repairs are required.
Design Deficiencies

The barracks-style, cinder block construction of the Buena Vida Development presents a number of physical challenges with regard to rehabilitation and modernization to meet current housing standards. The units are small and have no central air conditioning. The property lacks adequate sidewalks making it difficult for residents to maneuver, particularly those with physical disabilities or who are elderly. HACB’s intends to revitalize Buena Vida to effectively meet the needs of current residents and benefit the surrounding community, while incorporating preservation of key building elements and providing green space.

There are fundamental design deficiencies with respect to the target housing that cannot be adequately addressed without substantial rehabilitation or reconstruction, as described below:

- Because it was built as an internally-focused multi-family housing complex, HACB’s Buena Vida property is not well-integrated into the development context of the surrounding neighborhood. The development density is significantly higher than that of adjacent blocks. The lack of convenient parking is a constant resident complaint, with cars parking on adjacent streets and crowding driveways. Many of 150 parking spaces provided on site are located a distance away from residential units. City ordinances require two parking spaces per dwelling unit; thus the development is substantially under-parked.

- Units are small and upgrades required to meet the needs of residents would result in even smaller units. Bedroom sizes are below current standards and lack adequate clothes storage space. New HVAC mechanical systems would require new building chases within units that would further reduce unit size. The property does not feature a common laundry facility; each dwelling unit features a washing machine hookup with exterior clothes lines.

- The Buena Vida Development has poor site lines around building corners and access drives due to the barrack-style housing layout. An almost maze-like design limits self-policing by residents or adjacent neighbors who cannot see into the Buena Vida Development. A lack of central open spaces and gathering places contributes to security concerns and negatively impacts resident socialization.

- Rehabilitation of the original 1940 residential structures can be expected to include environmental remediation requirements. The majority of sewer lines are clay pipe and reportedly cause regular sewer line back-ups. The site also suffers from inadequate storm water drainage. Because the water system operates under one master meter and three main supply cut-off valves, multiple units are impacted when water system repairs are required.

- Buena Vida’s common areas and designated handicapped units are not compliant with the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS) and therefore are not considered fully accessible.
Market Assessment

A Market Assessment, completed in October 2017, focused on support for rental and for-sale housing at the Buena Vida site, and product types that may appeal to households purchasing or renting a home in the Buena Vida Neighborhood. The assessment provides information that can be used to help determine the scale, unit sizes and price points for new housing development and help direct the overall neighborhood revitalization goals of HACB. In addition, an evaluation of non-housing commercial/retail space was conducted to help inform the plan.

Overall, strong demographic support and market demand exist for additional housing. The Market Assessment finds that up to approximately 90 to 140 market-rate units could potentially be supported by 2020 in the Buena Vida Neighborhood and surrounding near northeast side of Brownsville. These units would likely need to be absorbed over a two- to three-year period.

This conclusion assumes that a number of project concepts are developed that offer a variety of unit types, including overall combined mixes of studio, one-, two and some three-bedroom units, with a variety of unit designs and layouts, including townhouse-style units as well as garden-style walk-up units.

Statistically, greater demographic support exists for rental housing, than for for-sale (primary residence) housing. As residential land uses increase in the area, additional community services, restaurants, and shopping options, could be developed to serve the growing residential population. Once the neighborhood as a whole begins to redevelop with a greater choice of resident services, additional for-sale/owner-occupied housing could be supported.
Draft Housing Options

Draft Option 1: Community Campus

Draft Option 2: Four Villages

Draft Option 3: Sister Parks

Draft Option 4: Central Park
Residents worked together to help redesign the Buena Vida Development.

Design Process

Resident-led Housing Design

The preferred housing design for the Buena Vida property evolved after extensive resident engagement and careful consideration of many different options. Several different types of working sessions were held to develop the concept alternatives in collaboration with residents, including a community design charrette and a visual preference survey. The planning team gathered feedback on desired physical street and open space elements, preferences for housing types and densities, and supportive amenities and activities.

During the community charrette, residents were encouraged to discuss aspects of the physical design that would support their current community activities while promoting more vibrant gathering places. Residents also discussed urban elements and strategies to promote a more active and healthy lifestyle, provide enhanced access to public transportation, ensure a safer environment for children and the elderly, and cultivate stronger relationships among residents. Additional aspects of the discussion included the scale and function of streets, traffic calming measures and pedestrian enhancements.

Another significant aspect of the discussions was the idea of fences as a protective element for the housing units, and how other techniques can be applied to achieve the sense of security that residents desire while ensuring a welcoming community character.

Based on community visioning meetings, four draft options that were developed for the Buena Vida property and are described on the following pages:

1. Community Campus
2. Four Villages
3. Sister Parks
Draft Option 1: Community Campus

This design was organized around a large park space on 14th Street that would open directly to the neighborhood. The park area would be defined by its community uses, including incorporation of the former Webb school campus directly to the west. Several existing buildings would be transformed into new community spaces. Live/work buildings would be situated along 14th Street. Polk, 15th and Taylor Streets would be reconnected through the site, providing smaller blocks consistent with the surrounding neighborhood. Option 1 included approximately 144 apartments and 64 town homes.
Draft Option 2: Four Villages

Option 2 connected 15th Street through the site, while maintaining Miraflores Street. The four blocks created were each centered on a park space that included a community building. Each block would have a variety of housing types, including mixed-use, town homes and apartments organized on the periphery. Residents would have a sense of ownership of the parks, and could aid in their upkeep and activation. Option 2 included approximately 184 apartments and 46 town homes.
Draft Option 3: Sister Parks

This option included two larger central gathering spaces along with a series of community buildings. A pedestrian paseo network would circle the interior of the blocks to create a walking / running trail. The concept connected 15th Street through the site, while maintaining Miraflores Street. Option 3 included approximately 196 apartments and 56 town homes.
Draft Option 4: Central Park

This option included a new street network that would enter the site at Miraflores and 15th Street and would circulate around a new central park space. A street connection would be created by extending 16th street into the development. The design would also provide a large central gathering place for residents. Option 4 included approximately 176 apartments and 60 town homes.
Townhomes and Duplex Homes

Larger Buildings

Private Outdoor Spaces

Summary Responses

1 29%

2 16%

3 42%

4 13%

Summary Responses

1 34%

2 14%

3 5%

4 48%

Summary Responses

1 24%

2 54%

3 10%

4 12%
Desired Housing Designs and Elements

As a key element of visioning, Buena Vida residents were asked to engage in a visual survey of housing designs and potential amenities, using keypad polling. After each survey question, the team engaged in a dialog about why attendees voted the way they did, and what it was about the images that appealed to them. In addition, a meeting was held for Buena Vida youth to help identify preferences for features that should be incorporated, from their perspective. The children provided additional insights into specific amenities that youth of various ages are interested in and would utilize, including a desire for more play structures, water features, public artwork, and community gardens. Some additional highlights from the discussion included:

- Multiple one-level units completely on the ground floor for elder residents.
- Desire for more modern looking buildings, including housing features, bright colors, and balcony elements.
- More private backyard spaces for lower level units.
- Amenities including fitness, daycare and learning spaces.

The preferred housing design for the Buena Vida site, based on resident feedback and feasibility, includes important elements from all of the options. The design is oriented around a large park space opening to 14th Street, and is bisected by pedestrian paseos. Townhomes front the streets and paseos to create a safe, neighborly environment while mixed-use buildings strengthen 14th Street’s role as a community commercial and services center.
Proposed Buena Vida Development - Overview
Planning & Design Principles

New buildings, streets and open spaces developed through the Housing Strategy will be designed with high-quality architecture and site planning to enrich the surrounding neighborhood and promote a mixed-income and mixed-use community.

Leverage and celebrate cultural identity and heritage

Build upon the dynamic and rich history and vibrant culture of Buena Vida residents to create spaces and places that help to strengthen the local identity.

Create a clear, flexible and connected framework for redevelopment

Restore the physical connection with the urban fabric of the neighborhood and redevelop the site with clear yet flexible guidelines for enhanced infrastructure and buildings.

Strengthen connections with the neighborhood

Create physical and programmatic opportunities for the residents to connect to the Buena Vida neighborhood and downtown area, in order to benefit from the existing cultural, educational, economic assets.

Promote walkable, active and safe open spaces

Invest in high quality open spaces and infrastructure that elevates the quality of life of residents by enabling physical activity and multiple options for mobility.

Support a healthy, resilient and equitable community

Design spaces that can be enjoyed by everyone and are inviting to all, places that reflect the past, present and future uniqueness of Buena Vida while promoting a sustainable and balanced community.
Proposed Buena Vida Development - Illustrative Site Plan

Phase 1: 70 Units
Senior Mixed-Income

Phase 2: 99 Units
Family PH

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Sustainability

Sustainable development is a key component of this revitalization plan and is woven into every element of the Housing Strategy. HACB certifies that it will comply with the LEED ND and LEED for Homes Criteria for Buena Vida and other housing sites. Housing, community facilities, recreation and economic development space will be well integrated and ADA accessible. The following elements are represented in site plans, schematic drawings, building sections and elevations to support the Housing Strategy:

• The Plan will incorporate architectural character, design elements and amenities that will attract income diversity and enable the housing to enrich the neighborhood and appeal to various market segments.

• Buildings will be harmonious in scale with streets, outdoor spaces and surrounding structures.

• Unit and room sizes will be adequately and accommodate contemporary families, incorporating sufficient storage needs.

• New housing will encourage compact, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods with an interconnected network of sidewalks, streets and bike routes providing connections to public transportation, retail, parks and open space.

• Sidewalks will be buffered from adjacent streets through the use of greenways with shade trees, crosswalks will be provided to alert drivers to pedestrian and bike activities.

• Housing sites will include opportunities for recreation and appropriate settings for community gathering places.

• Defensible space and “eyes on the street” will be ensured with building entrances fronting on the street, housing overlooking common areas and parks, and clearly defined public and private spaces with appropriate lighting, providing an increased sense of safety.

• Landscape elements will be appropriate to each site’s soils and microclimate while providing shade trees for streets and parking.

• Stormwater management practices such as green roofs, rain gardens, pervious surfaces, bioswales and natural vegetation will be incorporated.
Neighborly Open Spaces

The proposed plan includes the creation of a Central Park located on 14th Street, across from the planned the Webb Wellness Center. The Central Park will be the heart of recreation activities for the redeveloped Buena Vida property, and will include play spaces, an extensive tree canopy to provide shade, multiple vegetation types endemic to the region, and a variety of seating elements designed for all ages.

Connections to the Central Park will be made through smaller open spaces areas and paseos that will provide more intimate park areas while improving stormwater functions with permeable materials and rain gardens.

Connectivity Framework
Active and Friendly Streets

The plan envisions transforming the 14th Street corridor into a vibrant, walkable street including mixed-use development with active ground floor uses. These spaces will provide locations for neighborhood services in close proximity to residents of the community. Uses could include a cafe, pharmacy, hairstylist, restaurant, laundromat, or tailor. Through this development, residents may have an opportunity to start or run their own businesses within walking distance of their homes.

All edge streets will be redesigned to include wider sidewalks, street trees, signage and wayfinding, bioswales, bike facilities and seating areas.
Proposed Buena Vida Development - Illustrative View of 14th Street at Tyler Street
El Paseo Buena Vida: Culturally Vibrant Promenade

A significant feature of the Buena Vida redevelopment is El Paseo. This tree-lined pedestrian promenade, extending through the development on Polk Street and 15th Street, will showcase the cultural, history and vibrant neighborhood life of Buena Vida. Featuring trees framing and shading this pathway, El Paseo will play host to community events and seasonal celebrations through multiple forms of artwork and lighting. El Paseo will be defined by unique paving and canopy structures in some sections. It will also include seating, landscape areas and potentially water features, helping to contribute to stormwater management of the site.

Edge Streets
Street Infrastructure, Parking and Stormwater Management

The redevelopment of Buena Vida provides a great opportunity to enhance street infrastructure and contribute to stormwater management. In order to help alleviate flooding issues, the plan proposes increasing the amount of capture and infiltration of stormwater through the use of elements such as bioswales and rain gardens. Parking areas will include permeable materials to help to reduce heat gain, and improve water management of the site.
Phasing and Relocation Strategy

The Phasing Plan is designed to make the overall Housing Strategy as efficient as possible. The Plan ensures that the project is able to capture a realistic number of new tenants through a sustainable market absorption rate. In addition, the Phasing Plan will help to reduce the costs associated with the relocation of target housing families by insuring new HACB controlled units are available to tenants prior to demolition at Buena Vida. The Plan identifies the following locations for replacement housing units:

**Phase 1: Poinsettia Gardens**

As Phase 1 of the Housing Strategy, HACB recently submitted an application to the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) for an allocation of 2018 Competitive 9% Low Income Housing Tax Credit for the new construction of 150 units of replacement housing at Poinsettia Gardens. The Poinsettia Gardens site, currently under design, is located in East Central Brownsville on one of the city’s main thoroughfares, Boca Chica Boulevard. The site is located adjacent to a H-E-B Grocery and is 1/2 mile from a Walmart Supercenter, multiple financial institutions, and fitness centers. Poinsettia Gardens is also highly accessible, with direct trail and interstate access. The site is located in close proximity to Victoria Heights Elementary School, Canales Elementary School, Faulk Middle School and Porter Early College High School, all of which met the state standard for the 2015-2016 school year.

Poinsettia Gardens is located directly adjacent to Tropical Gardens at Boca Chica, a recently-constructed 158 unit development, also funded through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program.

Housing at Poinsettia Gardens is being planned to utilize the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program through a Commitment to enter into a Housing Assistance Payment (CHAP) from Buena Vida.
Mixed use with commercial on first floor and residential above

Townhomes elevation

Schematic Elevations - Proposed Buena Vida Development
Phase 2: Buena Vida Senior Housing
Phase 2 development at Buena Vida will include 70 units of senior housing, including 40 market rate units and 30 RAD units. The senior housing will be developed on the blocks between Polk, Tyler, 14th and 16th Streets. Phase 2 will also include construction of six small park spaces as well as mixed-use development along 14th Street.

Phase 3: Buena Vida Family Housing
Phase 3 development at Buena Vida will include 99 RAD family units. The senior housing will be developed on the blocks between Polk, Ringold, 14th and 16th Streets. Phase 3 will also include construction of the two paseos, the central park, nine smaller park spaces as well as mixed-use development along 14th Street.

To ensure a successful relocation process, HACB will host several meetings before the 90-day notice to tenants to advise them of the relocation services and their benefits. HACB will provide onsite case management, counseling and referrals to comparable homes. In addition, HACB staff will conduct home visits with the tenants to evaluate their unit search. Transportation for tenants that request assistance in unit search, flat relocation assistance to connect utility services and furniture moving expenses will be provided and covered by HACB. Tenants will have the right to return to the Buena Vida neighborhood once construction is complete. Onsite case management will be provided Monday thru Friday and at least one Saturday monthly by HACB, until all residents are successfully relocated.
Proposed Poinsettia Gardens Development - Building Elevations

1. TYPICAL FRONT & REAR ELEVATION

- Roof pitch is 5:12

2. TYPICAL SIDE ELEVATION

- Exterior wall material:
  - 10% metal siding
  - 30% brick
  - 60% cementitious siding

Note: 9 ft. ceiling HTs. typical to all units
Redevelopment Considerations

HACB and the Community Development Corporation of Brownsville (CDCB) will lead implementation of the Housing Strategy which completely revitalizes the Buena Vida Development site. HACB will be leading the development of the the vacant off-site Poinsettia Gardens property on Boca Chica Boulevard to increase mixed-income housing opportunities. The relocation and phasing strategy have been created to mitigate negative effects on existing Buena Vida residents.

The Housing Strategy replaces the 150 severely distressed public housing units with multi-generational communities totaling approximately 320 units. The new housing will be sustainably designed, constructed and managed to high quality standards around redeveloped and reconnected streets, open spaces and infrastructure. The combination of unit types complies with HUD’s one-for-one requirement, meets the needs of returning Buena Vida residents and the local demand, ensures long-term affordability, appeals to an economically diverse population, and can meet the LEED-ND Stage 1 Conditional Approval requirements.

The Housing Strategy is well-defined and furthers HUD’s core housing goals of the CN program through appropriate scale, density, mix of incomes, and building types while providing the foundation for deconcentration of poverty and improved access to regional assets and economic opportunities. Selected housing elements are based on resident and stakeholder preferences, the profile and needs of existing residents, local need and waitlists for affordable housing, existing market conditions, anticipated demand, and sustainable design principles for revitalization.

The Strategy builds on the significant existing assets, chief among them the Webb campus, adjacent to the Buena Vida Development, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV), the Mitte Cultural District, and HACB’s strong partnerships with public agencies and private organizations working to improve the neighborhood.
Additional Infill Housing Opportunities in Proximity to the Buena Vida Development
Demolition versus rehabilitation
Because of their vintage character HACB/CDCB strongly considered rehabilitation of existing Buena Vida Development buildings. Ultimately, it became apparent that rehabilitation was not feasible, given the costs involved, as well as the desire for comprehensive site planning improvements including new parks, paseos, and mixed-use development. To help signify the past, HACB/CDCB is planning the adaptive reuse of a prominent 2-story building along 16th Street as new community space. Public art in and around the site will also help tell the story of residents that have lived in the community for generations.

Rationale for unit and bedroom mix
The unit mix was designed to reflect the current unit mix at Buena Vida while ensuring the feasibility of each phase to absorb new units into the Brownsville rental market.

Project Based RAD for replacement units
HACB has received a Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) Program Commitment to enter into a Housing Payment (CHAP) award letter for Buena Vida. HACB will elect to utilize the Project Based Vouchers (PBV) option to finalize this RAD transaction. HACB proposes to utilize these PBVs to support the off-site relocation and post-revitalization re-occupancy for current Buena Vida residents. The PBVs will help to ensure the long term feasibility of the project. HACB’s high overall occupancy rate prevents the project’s 150 relocating residents from relocating to existing off-site public housing units. HACB will coordinate with the RAD Transaction Manager to ensure that Uniform Relocation Act regulations are met. We will implement a relocation plan that will further fair housing by expanding housing opportunities for residents; providing detailed information regarding the relocation process in order for residents to make informed decisions regarding said matter and utilizing different options and types of relocation assistance available.
04 Housing Strategy
Site visits with residents and members of the Steering Committee were fundamental for discussion about redevelopment strategies.

**Leveraging of neighborhood resources**

Planned Neighborhood projects focus on improvements to the 14th Street (north/south) and Polk Street (east/west) intersection. The Buena Vida target housing site and the vacant Webb campus sit at this key intersection, creating an opportunity to unlock Buena Vida’s incredible development potential and strategically position the campus as a neighborhood activity hub. Leveraging of these resources will further our vision of “Creating Community Connections” by making key assets such as Linear Park, Brownsville Farmers Market, Edelstein Park, International Blvd. and 14th St. businesses more accessible.

**Providing a broad range of incomes**

Brownsville is located in a region that has the highest poverty rate in the nation. The national median income is $57,230 compared to $19,704 for the Buena Vida census tract. A family that earns the median income in this census tract is well below Federal Poverty Guidelines. Adding 64 units at 60% or higher AMI at the Buena Vida site significantly increases the income level of the tenants, which has tremendous potential to improve the surrounding neighborhood. For all three of the proposed relocation sites, incomes will be mixed within buildings and throughout the property to ensure a vibrant and diverse mix of residents.

**Property Management**

HACB is negotiating with a property management company to serve as the manager for all housing developed in the Plan. The property manager will prepare a written Management Plan that specifically addresses how on-site and supervisory staff will work with residents and Case Management Staff, to ensure housing stability for residents.
The People element of our Plan is centered around enhancing opportunities and access to those opportunities for Buena Vida residents. This element outlines three broad initiatives focused on health, economic development and education. Each of these areas address critical gaps and needs identified throughout our planning process. HACB will serve as the People Implementation Lead, supported by the Brownsville Independent School District (BISD) as our Principal Education Partner, along with a broad range of organizational partners.

Overview

The People Strategy describes projects relating to health, economic development and education to support the overall Plan.
Health Strategy
- Inventory and promote medical services available to HACB residents
- Develop an affiliation agreement with the University of Texas Houston School of Public Health to provide health services and education
- Utilize medical clinic space within former Webb campus
- Conduct breastfeeding classes and education
- Conduct farm-to-table cooking programs for kids
- Zika Pregnancy and Birth Defects Program
- Vector Habitat Education and Outreach
- Organize a neighborhood soccer program
- Establish Buena Vida walking and cycling groups

Economic Development Strategy
- Implement Taller de Permiso Entrepreneurship Program
- Educate the public on available career-ready training programs
- Promote training and employment opportunities related to the development of the BVN Network
- Establish a partnership with Workforce Solutions Cameron
- Ensure that students and parents are computer literate
- Establish a Neighborhood Business Association
- Ensure better inventory tracking of English as Second Language (ESL) programs with partners

Education Strategy
- Continue to strengthen BISD early learning programs
- Enroll HACB families into Early Learning Programs
- Develop a School for Parents program
- Generate a summary menu of school options
- Continue Collaborative Operations with Project RISE
- Continue GEAR UP Program
- Continue supporting cultural music programs
- Create a walking school bus program to after school locations
- Work with parents so they can better guide their child towards higher education options
- Celebrate Road to College (RTC) Participants
- Identify and coordinate with private foundations to establish financial aid for RTC program graduates
The Buena Vida Paper Orchestra led off many of our Community Meetings.

Buena Vida Residents

HACB’s Buena Vida property is currently home to 632 residents, including 95 seniors, and 103 who are disabled. There are 123 households with 282 children between birth and age 18; 68 children are not yet in school, 92 attend elementary school, 50 are in middle school and 72 are in high school.

A broad range of programs and services are available to Buena Vida residents, including nutrition and cooking classes provided by the Brownsville Wellness Coalition, the Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood Paper Orchestra sponsored by Carlotta K. Petrina, parenting classes, HACB’s afterschool tutoring program, summer programs at the Brownsville Museum of Fine Arts, Gladys Porter Zoo and Sam’s Swimming Pool, HACB Reading Club, citizenship classes (Projecto Juan Diego), ESL classes (Villa Maria), Workforce Solutions Cameron Mobile Lab, Valley Care Clinic’s Mobile Lab, Mano a Mano Health Education (BCHC New Horizon Medical Center), HACB Road to College, Mexican Consulate Community Outreach Program, and Youth Selective Services (Behavioral Health Solutions), among others. The Carlotta K. Petrina Cultural Center, Brownsville Museum of Fine Arts, Good Neighbor Settlement House and several churches all have facilities within the CN footprint. BISD also owns the historic Webb School property adjacent to HACB’s Buena Vida site, that until recently housed BISD’s Career and Technical Education Center, which has moved to the former Cummings Middle School campus, located along the 6th Street CN boundary.

Resident Needs Assessment Survey

The Buena Vida target housing resident needs assessment survey took place in March 2017. The survey included 89 questions covering household composition, background and length of tenancy; resident satisfaction; programs and services; education and skill development; housing redevelopment and relocation preferences; technology; safety and security; shopping; health; employment; transportation; financial; and social network. Approximately 73% (110) of Buena Vida target housing households responded. More than half of the survey respondents had lived at Buena Vida for more than five years, with 84% indicating that they were very satisfied with living at HACB’s Buena Vida property and did not experience barriers to accessing HACB...
programs or services. 46% of respondents indicated that they participated in the monthly resident meetings. Respondents also indicated whether they and their families participated in HACB services and programs. English classes and computer skills were identified the types of training that would be most beneficial for adults. The survey results were used to establish baseline metrics, identify potential service gaps and prioritize needs.

**People Plan Leadership**

HACB is intentionally aligned around the core Housing, People and Neighborhood goals of Choice Neighborhoods. HACB’s Community Service Team is responsible for coordinating supportive services and has been extremely successful in improving and creating new partnerships to bring a variety of programming to Buena Vida target housing residents. Funding for the current supportive service activities have come from a variety of sources, including small community grants, partnerships with different entities that leverage the cost of some supportive services, and through the Brownsville Housing Opportunities Corporation (BHOC) which is a non-profit under the umbrella of HACB. HACB’s strategic goal is to leverage resources with external stakeholders to maximize the quantity and quality of community services. HACB will work with its strategic partners to implement the following health, economic development and education strategies.

**Health Strategy**

Poor health can make it more difficult to obtain and maintain employment. It can adversely impact academic success and it can keep people from positive social interactions. The challenge is to engage people in changing unhealthy behaviors and ensuring access to health care services. Unhealthy environments can have physical (lack of sidewalks, lack of places to exercise, lack of healthy food options) and social (crime, pollution, domestic violence, substance abuse, cost, access to medical care) components. Strategies developed to address these obstacles focus on improving health care access, wellness education, and providing the neighborhood infrastructure needed to support healthy lifestyles.
## Health Strategy

**OUTCOME:** CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULTS THAT ARE PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY HEALTHY

**Strengthen health and educational partnerships and integrate programs**

| Impact Statement & Expected Outcome(s) | • 569 or 90% of target residents have a place of healthcare where they regularly go, other than an emergency room, when they are sick or need advice about their health  
• 442 or 70% of target residents have health insurance |
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<tr>
<td>Needs Assessment Baseline</td>
<td>70% of survey respondents say that members of their household are in good health, overall; 35% indicate that everyone in their family has health insurance; 44% indicate that all members of their household have seen a doctor in the last year for a physical exam/check-up; 52% currently have a dentist in Brownsville.</td>
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| Strategy | 1. **Inventory and promote medical services available to HACB residents.** Currently, there is a lack of understanding regarding basic medical services that may be available to residents, which contributes to low percentages of residents visiting a doctor or dentist for exams and check-ups. An easy to understand handout or guide will be produced that includes a map showing local clinics, hospitals, doctors, dentists and mobile clinic times and locations in both Spanish and English. The handout will be updated annually and distributed to HACB residents and the broader community. A central location at the Buena Vida Development will be host health-related events and classes.  
2. **Develop an affiliation agreement with the University of Texas Houston School of Public Health to provide health services and education.** By leveraging this and other University of Texas programs, HACB will be able to provide health services and education for residents and increase the number with health insurance. These education efforts could take place on-site, at the nearby UTRGV campus, or in another convenient neighborhood location. |
| Residents Served | This strategy is intended to serve approximately 632 or 100% of target housing residents and approximately 1,311 or 25% of neighborhood residents. |
| Service Provider | • Texas Southmost College  
• Brownsville Wellness Coalition  
• Brownsville Community Health Center and Su Clinica Familiar  
• University of Texas School of Public Health/Brownsville Branch  
• La Union del Pueblo Entero (LUPE)  
| Strategy 1 Lead | Strategy 1 Support | Strategy 2 Lead | Strategy 2 Support |
Greater utilization of local and mobile resources

| Impact Statement & Expected Outcome(s) | • 316 or 50% of target residents utilize mobile health resources on-site at the Buena Vida development.  
• The clinic space at the former Webb campus becomes a center for local health programs. |
| Needs Assessment Baseline | • 85% of target housing residents say they visit a family doctor or clinic in Brownsville when they or a family member are sick.  
• 25% report that lack of transportation prevents household members from doing to the doctor or dentist for regular checkups. |
| Strategy | 1. **Utilize medical clinic space within former Webb campus. HACB will work with owner Brownsville Independent School District (BISD) to provide access to portions of the school building, including a fully-furnished medical clinic space.**  
This space could be utilized by health partners and other service providers for check-ups and basic health care services.  
Residents within the Buena Vida neighborhood will receive priority for appointments. |
| Residents Served | This strategy is intended to serve approximately 632 or 100% of target housing residents and 2,622 or 50% of neighborhood residents. |
| Service Provider | Potential partners include:  
• University of Texas School of Public Health  
• BISD  
• La Union del Pueblo Entero (LUPE)  
• Valley Baptist Medical |

### HH Members in Good Health

70% from needs assessment out of 110 respondents

### Unable to See Doctor or Dentist for Lack of Transportation

25% from needs assessment out of 110 respondents

### Have Enough Money for Food

44% from needs assessment out of 59 respondents
### Encourage better nutrition and health eating

#### Impact Statement & Expected Outcome(s)

316 or 50% of target residents engage in better nutrition and healthy eating options.

#### Needs Assessment Baseline

Of 59 needs assessment responses, 24, or 41% say that someone in their household has diabetes; 53% indicated that someone has high blood pressure; 38% of survey respondents indicated that they use SNAP benefits; 44% of target housing respondent households indicated that they always had enough for food.

#### Strategy

1. **Conduct breastfeeding classes and education.** Partners will conduct classes at the Buena Vida Development centered on the benefits and techniques of breastfeeding. The classes will promote the nutritional aspects of breastfeeding and emphasize the cost savings for mothers.

2. **Conduct farm-to-table cooking programs for kids.** This strategy builds on local Mexican-American culinary traditions to introduce healthy farm-to-table elements to make delicious food. Local partners will conduct classes at the Buena Vida Development geared toward children ages 8-12. Aside from gaining basic kitchen skills, kids will be exposed to fresh and healthy food choices that they can make at home to share with their families. Children from the Buena Vida development will receive priority for slots.

#### Residents Served

This strategy is intended to serve approximately 505 or 80% of target public housing residents and 3,147 or 60% of neighborhood residents.

#### Service Provider

Potential partners include:
- Brownsville Wellness Coalition
- Proyecto Juan Diego
- BISD
- Infant and Family Nutrition Agency

| Strategy 1 and Strategy 2 Lead | Strategy 2 Support
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<td>Strategy 1 Support</td>
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## Continue to address Zika Crisis in Buena Vida

### Impact Statement & Expected Outcome(s)
In November of 2016, Brownsville, Texas had its first reported case of the Zika virus. The Zika virus is acknowledged through the World Health Organization as a “significant public health challenge.” In addition, Dengue Fever and Wet Nile Disease also occur in the city. This ongoing strategy seeks to eliminate the spread of the Zika virus in the City of Brownsville.

### Needs Assessment Baseline
As of February 2017, 6 reported cases of the Zika virus have been identified in the City of Brownsville. Most of these were detected in the Buena Vida Neighborhood.

### Strategy
1. **Zika Pregnancy and Birth Defects Program.** Brownsville’s unique community profile and semi-tropical weather requires year-round mosquito surveillance, demonstrating the necessity for Zika support. This ongoing project, awarded in January 2017 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, will continue to focus field support from the City of Brownsville Health Department in assisting pregnant women and children that have tested positive for the Zika virus. This project brought the services of Mr. Henry Presas, a Zika Outreach Nurse to the community.

2. **Vector Habitat Education and Outreach.** In collaboration with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Border Environment Cooperation Commission, the City of Brownsville Health Department is working to improve the surveillance of mosquito populations through teaching the trainer, expanding mosquito-surveillance activity in Brownsville, and establishing an application to facilitate reporting of illegal dumping and mosquito concerns. The goals are to improve the health of residents and share knowledge from EPA researchers so that other communities can implement best practices concerning vector control and illegal dumping by facilitating communication between the community and the Public Health department in locating stagnant water sites.

### Residents Served
This strategy is intended to serve approximately 632 or 100% of target public housing residents and 5,245 or 100% of neighborhood residents.

### Service Provider
Potential partners include:
- City of Brownsville Health Department
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Border Environment Cooperation Commission
- Brownsville Public Utilities Board

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<th>Strategy 1 and Strategy 2 Lead</th>
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<th>Strategy 2 Support</th>
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<td>Strategy 2 Support</td>
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### Increase utilization of existing recreational amenities

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<tr>
<th>Impact Statement &amp; Expected Outcome(s)</th>
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| • Existing parks, open spaces, paths and recreational amenities are well-frequented by neighborhood residents.  
• Amenities are safe, comfortable and accessible for all. |

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<tr>
<th>Needs Assessment Baseline</th>
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| • Of 100 survey responses, 36 or 36% say they get at least 30 minutes of physical activity in a typical day.  
• 57% indicated that they would be more likely to exercise if there was a neighborhood gym; 21% would be more likely with additional walking paths |

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<td>1. <strong>Organize a neighborhood soccer program.</strong> To provide significant athletic activities for local teens, HACB and local partners will work to establish a recreational Buena Vida soccer league using existing open spaces such as the former Cummings Middle school grounds, fields on the campus of UTRGV, or other vacant spaces, including the Webb campus gym. Businesses and local service providers will be encouraged to help sponsor teams; residents can volunteer as coaches and referees. Local teens not currently involved in after-school sports programs will be given preference for slots in the leagues.</td>
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<td>2. <strong>Establish Buena Vida walking and cycling groups.</strong> Residents have indicated that they feel safer and more motivated to walk when they are in a group. The Buena Vida Resident Liaisons would organize and plan weekly outings, gradually reaching farther distance in order to reach group fitness goals. Outings will typically be held in the mornings or evenings when weather is coolest and utilize neighborhood routes with existing or improved sidewalks. Residents will be encouraged to work with local bicycle groups to establish a cycling club to take advantage of Brownsville’s rapidly improving neighborhood bicycle infrastructure through weekly rides.</td>
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<th>Residents Served</th>
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<td>This strategy is intended to serve approximately 474 or 75% of target public housing residents and 1,311 or 25% of neighborhood residents.</td>
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<th>Service Provider</th>
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| Key partners include:  
• City of Brownsville Parks and Recreation Department  
• Buena Vida Resident Liaisons  
• AARP  
• Family Dollar  
• BISD  
• Mend Program  
• Catch Program  
• Girls on the Run  |

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<th>Example 1 Lead</th>
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<td>Strategy 1 Lead</td>
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<td>Strategy 2 Lead</td>
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<td>Strategy 2 Support</td>
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### Typical Day with 30 Minutes of Physical Activity

From Needs Assessment

36%
Economic Development Strategy

Economic empowerment is a multi-faceted topic. It includes making sure that residents have the skills needed to obtain jobs and advance in their careers. It also involves linking small, neighborhood businesses to the tools and resources they need to thrive.

Poor reading comprehension, low math skills and lack of English language ability keep many potential workers out of the applicant pool, including those who have a high school diploma or GED. Technology has changed job requirements, making reading and math essential. Job applicants may also lack the soft skills needed to succeed in the workplace – knowing how to dress and act in a professional environment, civility, understanding the difference between how you act with family and friends and how to act with co-workers and customers. Failed drug screenings, bad credit, mental and physical health issues, and criminal backgrounds are also impediments to employment.

Individuals may not know what they are good at and may have no idea of the types of employment opportunities that are available to them. Others lack the encouragement or financial resources needed to take advantage of the range of continuing education and career training opportunities that are available. Lack of neighborhood support can cause local businesses to fail. Overcoming this obstacle involves improving safety, bringing residents back to the neighborhood to support new businesses and making sure that new neighborhood businesses are providing the types of services that residents want and can afford. Impediments to creating neighborhood-based businesses include poor credit that makes it hard to access start-up capital, and support networks to help grow micro-businesses. Facilitating community business networking was viewed as a critical element in the effort to improve the opportunities for neighborhood business growth within the Buena Vida neighborhood.

Our economic development initiatives involve working with our economic development partners to address the challenges described above.
OUTCOME: HOUSEHOLDS ARE ECONOMICALLY STABLE AND SELF-SUFFICIENT

Develop English language training programs

| Impact Statement & Expected Outcome(s) | • 270 or 90% of target residents between the ages of 0-18 obtain professional level English language skills  
• 151 or 60% of target residents between the ages of 18-64 obtain professional level English language skills |
| Needs Assessment Baseline | • Out of 100 responses, 57% say that English classes would be of most benefit or interest to the adults in their household. |
| Strategy | 1. **Ensure better inventory tracking of English as Second Language (ESL) programs with partners.** English skills are critical for workforce development and expanding the local job market for residents. This Strategy is intended to create a directory and inventory of ESL programs that are available to local residents in and around the Buena Vida neighborhood as a first step in identifying whether new programs need to be established, or if existing programs can be expanded. Through this Strategy, target housing and neighborhood residents will have a better understanding of the schedules, potential costs and levels of ESL teaching that they may be able to undertake. |
| Residents Served | This strategy is intended to serve approximately 421 or 67% of target public housing residents and 1,311 or 25% of neighborhood residents. |
| Service Provider | Potential partners include:  
• Brownsville Literacy Center  
• Villa Maria Language Institute  
• Brownsville Independent School District  
• IDEA Public Schools  
• Texas Southmost College | Strategy 1 Lead  
Strategy 1 Support  
Strategy 1 Support  
Strategy 1 Support  
Strategy 1 Support |

**ENGLISH TRAINING MOST BENEFICIAL OUT OF 100 RESPONDENTS FROM NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

57%
### Improve career-ready training

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<tr>
<th>Impact Statement &amp; Expected Outcome(s)</th>
<th>• 227 or 90% of target residents between the ages of 18-64 are earning a wage income.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Needs Assessment Baseline</td>
<td>• 41% of respondents currently have a household member working full-time.</td>
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<td>• 44% currently have a household member who is unemployed.</td>
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<td>• 23% are currently self-employed.</td>
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<td>• 43% currently have a bank account.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>1. <strong>Implement Taller de Permiso Entrepreneurship Program.</strong> Taller de Permiso is a community and cultural activist led campaign to demystify and reimagine current city permitting processes to support small business and informal economies in the Buena Vida neighborhood. This project will create a Buena Vida Neighborhood Permiso toolkit and resource library.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. <strong>Educate the public on available career-ready training programs.</strong> Today’s jobs demand more than a person typically learns during their high school career. Moreover, the changing shape of jobs across all business sectors demands the skills that have been learned in the past be updated and new skills acquired. For some positions this means earning a degree and for others a certification. Growth in regional businesses including the Port of Brownsville and Space X will continue to increase demand for a well-trained workforce.</td>
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<td>3. <strong>Promote training and employment opportunities related to the development of the BVN Network.</strong> The Buena Vida Neighborhood (BVN) digital infrastructure network proposed in the Neighborhood Plan will engage students on elements of internet connectivity including how to configure, maintain, and support the equipment that provides access to the neighborhood. By teaching students early and tying that into a career path in technical support and troubleshooting, students can create jobs for themselves such as help desk and support agents, service call technicians, and computer support specialists. Through advanced technical training, such as the successful boot camps and coding camps that CodeRGV has been offering in the Rio Grande Valley for the last 4 years. Frontera can teach, train, certify, and find meaningful employment for these students. Working with the Texas Workforce Commission and the United States Department of Labor, Frontera can help enroll qualified students in apprenticeship certification and place them in jobs locally. This strengthens the local economy, improves the Rio Grande Valley tech sector, and provides next-generation employment for students and future generations of the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents Served</td>
<td>This strategy is intended to serve approximately 253 or 40% of target public housing residents and 1,049 or 20% of neighborhood residents</td>
</tr>
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*Continued on following page...*
Potential partners include:

- Taller de Permiso
- Brownsville Independent School District
- Brightwood College Brownsville
- Workforce Solutions Cameron
- South Texas Vocational Technical Institute
- Youthbuild Brownville
- Texas Southmost College
- Women’s Business Center of Cameron County
- Frontera Consulting
- CodeRGV

Service Provider

Strategy 1 Lead
Strategy 2 and Strategy 3 Lead
Strategy 2 and Strategy 3 Support
Strategy 2 Support
Strategy 2 Support
Strategy 2 Support
Strategy 2 Support
Strategy 2 Support
Strategy 3 Lead

44%

Households with unemployed member
Out of 110 respondents from needs assessment

People Strategy
Improve access and visibility of potential jobs; improve coordination among local partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Statement &amp; Expected Outcome(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The annual income of target households (excluding those households who cannot work due to being elderly or disabled) is $14,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 75% of local businesses have a website or social media page</td>
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<tr>
<th>Needs Assessment Baseline</th>
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<tr>
<td>• The annual income of target households is currently $8,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>• From 47 businesses polled, 35% indicated that they currently have a website or social media page</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Establish a partnership with Workforce Solutions Cameron.</strong> Workforce Solutions Cameron is the local workforce partnership organization serving Cameron County residents and businesses. HACB and Workforce Solutions will develop a formal partnership to provide services to target housing residents. Materials will be developed for distribution to help residents understand what jobs are in demand and the educational or technical path required to pursue these options.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Ensure that students and parents are computer literate.</strong> Computer literacy refers to the ability to use computer programs in an effective manner. Computer skills are increasingly important as many companies depend upon computerized technology to get work done. Residents will have a better chance of being successful in a workplace if they are able to navigate computers and use common or specialized computer programs. This Strategy includes additional education services focused on target housing residents, especially adults.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Establish a Neighborhood Business Association.</strong> Through conversations with local commercial establishments and key partners, we learned that local businesses lack adequate organization, leading to low rates of communication and collaboration. The mission of the Buena Vida Business Association would be to promote and maintain the integrity of neighborhood businesses through economic development, beautification and maintenance, and interaction with governmental agencies and community groups. The Business Association could also ensure an online presence for local shops and restaurants.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Center for Education and Economic Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>• HACB</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Code RGV</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Brownsville Independent School District</td>
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<tr>
<td>• UTRGV</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Downtown Main Street Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Brownsville Chamber of Commerce</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Frontera Consulting</td>
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<td>Strategy 1 Lead</td>
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<td>Strategy 1 Support</td>
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<td>Strategy 3 Lead</td>
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A Luche Libre event held at Edelstein Park brought the community together for fun and back to school activities.

Education Strategy

The Buena Vida education strategy ensures that youth and their families are fully connected to Brownsville’s improving and expanding educational resources, enrichment programming and supportive services needed to break the cycle of poverty. Our education initiatives also focus on connecting parents with the educational resources that they need to support the success of their children along and targeted economic self-sufficiency programs. Children represent roughly half of the residents who live at the Buena Vida Development. A safe climate for learning must be provided at home, in school and in the community. Currently, some students don’t feel safe in the neighborhood, especially walking to and from school and other activities. Concentrated poverty means that children often lack regular access to positive role models who can demonstrate the success that is possible through education. Highlighting career-ready training as an intergenerational activity helps to connect the dots so that family members understand the links between education, employment, and becoming economically self-sufficient.

Parents often feel that education is the school’s responsibility and that they don’t need to play an active role. This challenge is addressed by supporting parents who may not have had positive educational experiences when they were students. Engaging parents and keeping them involved with their children’s academics is essential so that their children thrive academically.

Younger parents with small children need well-paying jobs to afford quality day care with rigorous, early learning components. Older children can find themselves missing school to help care for family members or younger siblings. Implementation of the Education Strategy builds on the expertise of our Principal Educational Partner, the Brownsville Independent School District (BISD), as well as local organizational partners and educational assets that have been built over many years. Also providing direct support in connecting families to educational programs will be a Community Revitalization Specialist, who will be hired by BHOC.
**Early Learning**

The 148 occupied households in Buena Vida include 80 children ages 0-5. Responses to the Needs Assessment Survey indicated that out of 110 respondents, 8 families have children ages 0-5 that are currently enrolled in early learning programs. When asked what prevents residents from enrolling their children in daycare or preschool programs, respondents indicated that a distrust of childcare workers, that an adult is available to keep the children during the day, or the cost of services was the primary issue. BISD believes that the key to academic success is early education and early intervention. In 1999, BISD began providing full-day Pre-kindergarten program for four year old students, funded through the Texas Education Agency’s (TEA) competitive Pre-kindergarten Expansion Program. At that time, 17 out of the 33 elementary schools participated in the full-day initiative. By the 2008-2009 school year, 25 elementary schools had the Pre-kindergarten program in place. One year later, BISD began providing a full-day Pre-kindergarten at all of its elementary schools.

BISD, HACB’s primary early learning partner, has high standards in hiring highly-qualified early childhood teachers that includes a bachelor’s degree and two state certification exams. These teachers receive professional development in the areas of researched-based instructional routines, bilingual strategies, and provide horizontal and vertical curriculum alignment that will support the state and the district’s academic accountability. In 2015, the BISD Curriculum and Instruction department garnered a two-year, $1.9 million High-Quality Prekindergarten Grant that focused on certain enhanced quality standards related to curriculum, teacher qualifications, academic performance, progress monitoring, and family engagement. Strategic objectives included:

1. Engagement of Pearson Our World of Learning (OWL) curriculum to ensure fidelity to the implementation of the updated 2015 Prekindergarten Guidelines
2. Early Childhood certification for all Prekindergarten teachers to facilitate high-quality instruction in their classrooms
3. Commitment to student assessment through the newly Texas Education Agency (TEA) approved CIRCLE Progress Monitoring System (C-PM)
4. Establishment of a Parent Advisory Leadership (PAL) Team comprised of a representative from each campus recruited by the Principal and Parent Liaison, Curriculum and Instruction (C&I), Special Services and Parental Involvement Program Administrators and Curriculum Specialists, and community members including a family doctor.

BISD Parental engagement has shown consistent growth. At the district level, parents are encouraged to participate in various year-round parent events including: a Welcome Back District Parent Fair, Campus Weekly Parent Meetings, CPR trainings, Campus Monthly Parent Meetings, The H-E-B Grocery Read 3 Program, and personal messages from the Superintendent of Schools in English and Spanish. BISD is committed to partnering with HACB to address the needs of target housing families both prior to and during relocation and revitalization. HACB staff will work with all families with young children who are moving to a new location to promote enrolling their children in a high-quality Early Learning program. HACB also commits to assisting families in completing the paperwork to qualify them for free or reduced price programs. Case Managers will also assist families in obtaining transportation if it is needed and will closely work with every family that has children age 0-5 with a goal of enrolling at least 65% of them in a high-quality early learning program during relocation and post-revitalization.
The resident needs assessment survey results indicate that only 26% of adults have a high school diploma / GED or higher. The children of these Buena Vida families are at a high risk for continuing a pattern of low academic achievement. Our education strategy is intended to connect students to educational programs that increase school retention, keep students in high school and help them graduate. BISD will work closely with HACB and other partners to ensure that the schools serving the Buena Vida neighborhood are high-quality or on a path to becoming a high-quality school. In June 2016 a BISD Strategic Plan was approved to facilitate further student success and ensure that all students meet and/or exceeding state and national standards of achievement while graduating college ready and prepared to excel in their respective career choices. In 2017-2018, the former Cummings Middle School campus located at the western edge of the Buena Vida neighborhood became home to both the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Center and the Brownsville Learning Academy (BLA) High School. This move will provide additional classroom space for over-age BLA High School students, allow expansion of CTE programs for all BISD students, and expand CTE programs to increase licensure and certificate offerings for BLA High School students.

BISD and community partners such as Workforce Solutions Cameron have plans that set the stage for the future through innovative ideas including creation of a trade school for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) professions. BISD is currently in Year Two of collaborative operations with Region 1 Educational Service Center with Project RISE (Region One Incentive Strategies for Educators). This five-year, multi-million dollar grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education establishes an effective human capital management system (HCMS) and Performance-based compensation system (PBCS) at two BISD schools (Porter ECHS and Faulk Middle School). The goal of the grant is to increase all students’ academic achievement, graduation rates and facilitate college enrollment.
**OUTCOME:** CHILDREN ENTER KINDERGARTEN READY TO LEARN

**Improve access and quality of early learning programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Statement &amp; Expected Outcome(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>- 52 or 65% of target resident children, from birth to kindergarten entry, are participating in center-based or formal home-based early learning programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 15 or 90% of target resident children in kindergarten who demonstrate at the beginning of the program or school year age-appropriate functioning across multiple domains of early learning as determined using developmentally appropriate early learning measures.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Needs Assessment Baseline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Of target resident needs assessment survey respondents, 8 families have children ages 0-5 that are currently enrolled in early learning programs.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Continue to strengthen BISD early learning programs.</strong> Every summer, an early childhood bilingual enrichment program is offered to Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten students. BISD recently applied for the Texas School Ready-CLI Engage, an innovative research-based program grant that provides additional instructional to BISD early childhood teachers. The program goal is to provide a strong knowledge base of early childhood development and quality instruction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Enroll HACB families into Early Learning Programs.</strong> HACB Case Managers will work with families to link them to high-quality early learning programs available through BISD and other providers, helping to arrange transportation to programs, if necessary, and assisting with applications and support materials needed for documentation.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Residents Served</th>
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<tr>
<td>This strategy is intended to serve approximately 80 or 13% of target public housing residents and 786 (15%) of neighborhood residents.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Service Provider</th>
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<tr>
<td>Potential partners include:</td>
<td>Strategy 2 Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>- BISD</td>
<td>Strategy 2 Lead</td>
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<tr>
<td>- HACB</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Neighbors In Need of Services, Inc. (NINOS) Head Start</td>
<td>Strategy 1 Lead; Strategy 2 Support</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Enhance parent’s ability to teach their children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Statement &amp; Expected Outcome(s)</th>
<th>15 or 90% of target resident children in kindergarten who demonstrate at the beginning of the program or school year age-appropriate functioning across multiple domains of early learning as determined using developmentally appropriate early learning measures.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Needs Assessment Baseline              | • Of 25 responses from households with children, 7, or 28% have adults that read to their young children (under age 8) daily.  
• Of 49 responses from households with children, 41, or 83% have adults that feel comfortable helping their children with homework. |
| Strategy                               | 1. **Develop a School for Parents program.** Through the CN planning process, we identified a need for additional educational programs for Buena Vida parents. The School for Parents Program is based on the idea of supporting parents as children’s learning models. Parent’s attitudes about education can inspire children and show them how to take charge of their own educational journey.  
2. **Generate a summary menu of school options.** Brownsville has a range of local options for primary and secondary education. From discussions with residents, it became apparent that these options may not be known and considered by Buena Vida parents. A simple, easy to understand guide would be developed with a bilingual menu of available options ranging from early childhood education to higher education, along with descriptions, potential fees and other information to help parents understand what may be available for their children. This guide would be updated annually to reflect any changes to school information and programming. |
| Residents Served                       | This strategy is intended to serve approximately 410 or 65% of target public housing residents and 2,360 or 45% of neighborhood residents. |
| Service Provider                       | Potential partners include:  
• NINOS Head Start  
• IDEA Public Schools  
• BISD  
• University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley  
• Apasionados Por La Lectura  
• Texas Southmost College  
• Buena Vida Resident Liaisons |

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*Strategy 1 Lead*  
*Strategy 1 Support*  
*Strategy 2 Lead*  
*Strategy 2 Support*
### OUTCOME: CHILDREN ARE PROFICIENT IN CORE ACADEMIC SUBJECTS

**Ensure continued improvement of local BISD schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Statement &amp; Expected Outcome(s)</th>
<th>• 140 or 80% of target resident students at or above grade level according to state mathematics and English language arts assessment in at least the grades required by the ESEA (3rd through 8th and once in high school).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needs Assessment Baseline</td>
<td>• Of 93 resident needs assessment survey respondents, 24 (26%) have adults living in the household with a high school diploma / GED or higher.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Strategy                              | 1. **Continue Collaborative Operations with Project RISE.** BISD is in Year Two of collaborative operations with Region 1 Educational Service Center on Project RISE (Region One Incentive Strategies for Educators). This five-year, multi-million dollar grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education establishes an effective human capital management system (HCMS) and Performance-based compensation system (PBCS) at two BISD schools (Porter ECHS and Faulk Middle School) that serve the Buena Vida Neighborhood. The goal is to retrain and retain staff and increase student academic achievement, graduation rates and college enrollment.  
2. **Continue GEAR UP Program.** BISD in collaboration with UTRGV and other education partners, has begun implementation of a multi-million dollar Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant to assist 2017-2018 7th grade Faulk Middle School students graduate from high school and complete their first year of college at UTRGV. |
| Residents Served                      | This strategy is intended to serve approximately 300 or 47% of target public housing residents and 1,311 (25%) of neighborhood residents                                                                                                                                     |
| Service Provider                      | Potential partners include:  
• BISD  
• HACB  
Strategies: Strategy 1 Lead; Strategy 2 Lead; Strategy 1 and 2 Support                                                                                                                                         |
### Impact Statement & Expected Outcome(s)
- 140 or 80% of target resident students at or above grade level according to state mathematics and English language arts assessment in at least the grades required by the ESEA (3rd through 8th and once in high school).

### Needs Assessment Baseline
- Of 47 responses from Buena Vida households with children, 26, or 55% have children that participate in after school programs.

### Strategy
1. **Continue supporting cultural music programs.** Anchor institution Carlotta K. Petrina Cultural Center has provided dynamic music and cultural programs for Buena Vida children throughout the CN planning process, with students from Carlotta Petrina programs have performed at many community meetings and other events. This strategy ensures that the De Colores Program, the Recorder Choir and the Paper Orchestra continue to grow providing young people with the opportunity to learn and love music.

2. **Create a walking school bus program to after school locations.** A walking school bus program will link the Buena Vida target housing site to the Downtown Recreation Center, the Carlotta K. Petrina Cultural Center and the Brownsville Museum of Fine Art. Currently, some younger residents are reluctant to walk alone through parts of the neighborhood due to fear of stray dogs, crime and traffic. The walking school bus would make it easier and safer to access local resources. The group would be led by Buena Vida Resident Liaisons, who would also help to promote the program to local families.

### Residents Served
This strategy is intended to serve approximately 300 or 47% of target public housing residents and 1,311 or 25% of neighborhood residents.

### Service Provider
Potential partners include:
- City of Brownsville
- City of Brownsville Parks Department
- Buena Vida Resident Liaison Group

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**55%**

*OUT OF 47 RESPONDENTS FROM NEEDS ASSESSMENT*
Neighborhood Strategy

The Neighborhood Strategy includes projects focused on improving the physical character, safety and community assets of the Buena Vida Neighborhood.

Overview

COB will lead implementation of the Buena Vida Neighborhood Strategy. The Neighborhood Strategy builds on existing neighborhood assets, the expertise of Principal Team Members and partners, Buena Vida’s central location, historic character and cultural resources as the framework for revitalization. HACB used active and ongoing community engagement to build consensus around the “Creating Community Connections” vision. A major element of the Neighborhood Strategy is the focus on improvements to the 14th St. (north/south) and Polk St.

Buena Vida residents helped develop the strategies and projects described in the Neighborhood Strategies section.
Neighborhood Projects

1. Improve public spaces and neighborhood connections
   - Continue to Improve Edelstein Park
   - Start an Educational Community Garden at Webb Campus
   - Improve Storm Water Infrastructure (Throughout Neighborhood)

2. Develop programs to help owners, renters, and potential buyers
   - Create a Before/After Yard Fix Up Competition and Neighborhood Clean-up (Throughout Neighborhood)
   - Develop an Agreement to Consider Purchasing and Reoccupying Vacant Land and Blighted Property (Throughout Neighborhood)
   - Create a Program for Local Foreclosure Prevention (Throughout Neighborhood)

3. Ensure better promotion and visibility of local businesses while creating a healthier business environment within the neighborhood
   - Create a Buena Vida Online Business Directory (Throughout Neighborhood)
   - Develop a Façade Improvement Program (Throughout Neighborhood)
   - Study Feasibility of a Community-Owned Grocery Store (Site Unidentified - Most Likely on International Boulevard)

4. Emphasize arts and culture to strengthen the neighborhood network
   - Create a Skate Park with Community Art Under US-69E
   - Develop a Mural on the Walls of the Cameron County Detention Center
   - Develop a Community Calendar and Wayfinding Signage

5. Develop enhanced bicycle network within the community
   - Implement Belden Trail Phase 3

6. Improve and connect neighborhood sidewalks within Buena Vida
   - Implement Complete Streets Improvements to International Boulevard

7. Provide better transit services for neighborhood residents
   - Develop a Transit Improvement Strategy for Buena Vida (Throughout Neighborhood)

8. Ensure a digitally connected community
   - Implement a Buena Vida Technology Plan (Throughout Neighborhood)
Public Safety Projects
• Create the Illuminate Buena Vida Initiative
• Clean up neighborhood graffiti
• Continue to strengthen community relationships with police
• Eliminate issues with stray or unsecured neighborhood dogs

Spaces and Places Projects
• Continue to Improve Edelstein Park
• Develop the Webb Community Wellness Center
• Start an Educational Community Garden at the Webb Campus
• Improve Storm Water Infrastructure

Neighborhood Connection Projects
• Implement Belden Trail Phase 3
• 14th Street Streetscape Improvements
• Polk Street Arts and Cultural Walk
• Implement International Boulevard Complete Streets Improvements.
• Develop a Buena Vida Transit Improvement Strategy
• Implement a Buena Vida Technology Plan

Home Owner, Renter and Potential Buyer Projects
• Create a Before/After Yard Fix Up Competition and Neighborhood Clean-up
• Develop an Agreement to Purchase and Reoccupy Vacant Land and Blighted Property
• Create a Local Foreclosure Prevention Program

Healthier Business Environment Projects
• Create a Buena Vida Online Business Directory
• Develop a Façade Improvement Program
• Study Feasibility of a Community-Owned Grocery Store

Arts and Culture Projects
• Develop a Cameron County Detention Center Mural
• Create a Skate Park with Community Art Under US-69E
• Develop a Community Calendar and Wayfinding Signage
Neighborhood Projects were prioritized by residents at Community Meeting 4.

(east/west) intersection. The Buena Vida target housing site and the BISD’s Webb campus sit at this key intersection. The synergy of these sites provides an opportunity to unlock Buena Vida’s incredible development potential. The strategically located Webb campus can become a neighborhood activity hub. Improvements further our vision of “Creating Community Connections” by making key assets such as Linear Park, Brownsville Farmers Market, Edelstein Park, International Blvd. and 14th St. businesses safer and more accessible.

Public Safety Projects

Safety and security were identified by residents as the highest priorities for neighborhood improvement. Of 107 Buena Vida target housing residents who participated in the Needs Assessment survey, 57% have safety concerns. These concerns and potential solutions were discussed in community meetings, youth meetings and working group sessions to develop strategies and projects for reducing crime, dealing with stray dogs, community policing, building trust between residents and the Brownsville Police Department, code enforcement to address vacant lots and buildings, and lighting improvements needed to create a safer environment. In addition to these overarching public safety issues, discussions focused on providing supportive services to several target populations. Issues that arise from dysfunctional families often spill out into the neighborhood. Young single mothers head many Buena Vida neighborhood households and their children often lack adequate parental support. Intergenerational parenting programs are critically needed to improve behavior and promote safety. Many of our People Strategies are intended to increase economic opportunity,
Brownsville PD participated throughout the planning process, which will have a direct effect on reducing future crime rates.

Our neighborhood strategies to improve public safety have both physical and programmatic elements that embrace a wide range of community policing and engagement. Continuing to strengthen community relationships with the COB Police Department is a key outcome for the overall neighborhood safety effort. Our safety projects are designed to improve the appearance of the neighborhood by directly addressing issues with graffiti and vandalism.

Many of the real and perceived safety problems of residents will be addressed with the new development on the Buena Vida site, since the design incorporates Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles (better lighting, open view of public spaces, strategic placement of shrubs/trees, direct access to dwellings, etc.), an evidence-based approach.

The goal is to reduce the violent crime rate and lower the number of target housing residents with safety concerns from 57% to 25%. Out of 103 responses, 95% feel safe during the day and 63% feel safe at night. Out of 100 participants, 60% cited graffiti as a key safety issue.
## Public Safety Projects

### Strategy

1. **Create the Illuminate Buena Vida Initiative.** Inadequate lighting was cited by neighborhood residents as contributing to safety concerns. Since then, a full assessment of lighting has been completed by the City of Brownsville. Of 103 resident needs assessment survey respondents, 95% feel safe during the day, but only 63% feel safe at night. Additional lighting will improve visibility for pedestrians relative to vehicle traffic. This project takes a comprehensive approach to illuminating the neighborhood through both public and private lighting improvements. COB and its partners will evaluate and repair lighting infrastructure including street lights and lights within parks. An additional focus will be on alleys, many of which contain residential units, and coordination with public works to trim trees that block lighting. A porch-lighting element will be incorporated where residents are given energy efficient bulbs and take a pledge to illuminate the fronts of homes and yards. A focused, evening social event will be held in and around Edelstein Park to promote lighting improvements in a fun and interesting way, utilizing glowing balloons, movie / art projections, and other features.

### Key Partners

- City Police Department
- City Fire Department
- City Public Works
- City Grants Department
- Public Utilities Board - PR Department
- Department of Energy
- UTRGV Student Affairs
- Gladys Porter Zoo
- HACB

### Funding Opportunities

- Etna Foundation Grant
- National Night Out
- HACB Capital Funding - Emergency Safety and Security Grant

### Next Steps

**0-6 Months**

- Coordination with City Lighting Study to prioritize Buena Vida
- Etna Foundation application

**6-12 Months**

- Coordinate with National Night Out
- Tree trimming - 14th from Madison to Downtown
- Change the light - Change the World at HEB grocery
- Coordinate with Zoo lights in December 2018
- Spring Break 2019 evening event at Edelstein Park

**+1 Year**

- HACB Capital Funding - Emergency Safety and Security Grant
### Project

2. **Clean up neighborhood graffiti.** Of 100 target housing needs assessment survey responses, 60% cited vandalism and graffiti as the safety issue of most concerned. The Brownsville Police Department will work with local partners and volunteers on a targeted Buena Vida graffiti cleanup effort. This will include the creation of a clean team which will focus on key sites. COB will explore the acquisition of resources including paint and supplies to help volunteer groups remove graffiti from private property. Property owners will be asked to sign a waiver granting permission to clean up graffiti. After each clean-up, groups will be asked to report the number of volunteers, hours worked, and square footage where graffiti was removed to COB for tracking. The Police Department and Principal Education Partner BISD will be engaged to better hold young taggers accountable.

3. **Continue to strengthen community relationships with police.** The Brownsville Police Department generally has a positive relationship with Buena Vida residents. Officers have made a particular effort to reach out to Buena Vida target housing residents through participation in community events and maintaining a high visibility in the community. The Needs Assessment survey found that of 106 responses, 78% have “some trust”, or “a lot of trust” in the Brownsville Police. This project is designed to continue to strengthen these connections by evaluating projects such as educating residents on the 546-HELP Hotline and creating youth-centered events with the Brownsville Police Department.
Neighbors weighed in on Edelstein Park Improvements.

Spaces and Places Projects

Leveraging and connecting recreational amenities is key to the neighborhood revitalization. Desired outcomes include the increased use of existing recreational amenities such as Edelstein and Linear Parks, the Downtown Recreation Center, the vacant Webb campus, local school athletic fields and other open spaces through physical design improvements and enhanced programing for all ages. Our Neighborhood Strategy builds on recent bicycle infrastructure investments and creatively developing underutilized sites, to include the open space under US-69E. Key outcomes will include increased park space per capita, improved attendance at existing community facilities, and health indicators of target housing residents. Metrics will be tracked by COB.
## Spaces and Places

### Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Strategy</strong></th>
<th><strong>1. Continue to Improve Edelstein Park.</strong></th>
<th><strong>Key Partners</strong></th>
<th><strong>Funding Opportunities</strong></th>
<th><strong>Next Steps</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|              | The Resident Needs Assessment survey showed, 72% of 107 respondents strongly agreeing that neighborhood parks and recreational facilities positively contribute to quality of life. When HACB began the planning process, Edelstein Park was seen as a place to avoid. Successful early action projects including the Better Block initiative focused on improving and activating Edelstein Park, as a catalyst for larger neighborhood revitalization. This project builds on the incredible momentum generated during the planning process to continue low-cost improvements, community engagement activities, and programming for neighborhood and cultural events. Edelstein Park is now a vibrant neighborhood activity hub. COB, HACB and partners, including Youth Build, will engage and empower young residents in designing and installing additional park improvements including potential solar lighting and a splash pad. Our Polk Street Arts and Cultural Walk project design will improve the corridor which fronts Edelstein Park, while expanding pedestrian connectivity for local residents. The focus has broadened to include identifying resources and strategies to improve adjacent residential properties, ensuring the catalytic nature of this public space investment. | • Good Neighbor Settlement House  
• BISD  
• Healthy Communities of Brownsville  
• bcWorkshop | • Youthbuild  
• City of Brownsville  
• City Parks Department  
• HACB | • Committed City CDBG funds of approximately $200k  
• Committed Parks Department funds of approximately $29k | • Local grants available for water filtration |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Next Steps</strong></th>
<th><strong>0-6 Months</strong></th>
<th><strong>Next Steps</strong></th>
<th><strong>6-12 Months</strong></th>
<th><strong>Next Steps</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CDBG grant agreement</td>
<td></td>
<td>Procurement for physical improvements</td>
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</table>
### ADDITIONAL PROJECTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Project</strong></th>
<th><strong>Details</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Establish the Webb Community Wellness Center.</strong></td>
<td>Webb Elementary, established in 1916, was the third public school in Brownsville. It closed as an elementary school in 1993 and served as BISD's Career and Technical Education (CTE) center until CTE classes were moved to the recently closed Cummings Middle School (also in the Buena Vida Neighborhood) in the Summer of 2017. The vacant campus sits directly across from the Buena Vida Development and can be adapted for community use. HACB is working on an agreement with Principal Education Partner BISD, focused on renting and repurposing portions of the campus. Several People and Neighborhood strategies and projects of the Plan are centered on the adaptive reuse of this site including the planting of a community garden, use of the existing medical clinic space for health programs and the gymnasium for athletic activities. The historic courtyard area can be adapted as a Mercado (market) for local vendors and entrepreneurs, classroom space could be used for classes geared towards target housing residents, kitchen areas could host cooking demonstrations and a food pantry. Due to the historic significance of the original school building, funding is needed to maintain and update the space for these community uses. HACB has estimated that the cost for the first phase of rehabilitation to portions of the existing buildings is $24,000.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Start an Educational Community Garden at the Webb Campus.</strong></td>
<td>Principal Education Partner BISD currently owns the vacant Webb campus located on 14th Street across from HACB's Buena Vida property. This facility can anchor a variety of activities including the conversion of the Webb facility into a Community Wellness Center. During a visioning meeting in February 2017, approximately 50 children from the Buena Vida development were polled on desired open space areas; 36% indicated that a community garden was their top preference. Partners led by the Brownsville Wellness Coalition (BWC) who developed the Tres Angeles community garden, located in the Buena Vida CN footprint, confirmed a need for added gardens. The Webb facility would be ideal, due to the location and the refrigeration amenities within the building. This project design will facilitate the implementation of a garden within the property with the emphasis to create a strong connected relationship with the new mixed-income Buena Vida Development. Implementation of this project will improve target housing resident access to fresh, healthy, local food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>4. <strong>Improve Storm Water Infrastructure.</strong> This project is designed to evaluate local infrastructure conditions relating to storm water and flooding while developing a strategy for green infrastructure improvements in flood-prone areas. Besides mitigating flooding, landscaping and greener streets create inviting, walkable infrastructure that can catalyze small business growth. Green infrastructure opportunities exist in numerous places as part of streetscapes, vacant lot treatments, community gardens, and on existing commercial and residential lots. COB will lead and track the success in new implementation, maintenance, and capacity strategies for the neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14th Street - Buena Vida Frontage

Existing Property Line

Existing Business

Vacant Lots

Infill Residential or Mixed-Use Development

14th Street - Buena Vida Frontage - Desired

Potential Buena Vida Redevelopment

14th Street - Typical Condition

South of E Tyler Street

14th Street Improvement Concept
Neighborhood Connection Projects

Buena Vida can become a truly walkable and vibrant place. Through the CN planning process, HACB residents rated neighborhood sidewalk conditions, establishing a baseline for connectivity improvements. Our Neighborhood Strategy includes complete streets improvements to 14th and Polk Streets to create a pedestrian-friendly and strong north-south and east-west axis. This strategy furthers the Lower Rio Grande Valley Active Transportation and Active Tourism Plan, a collaboration of ten municipalities to develop and promote active transportation. Key outcomes will include tracking the decrease in pedestrian/auto accidents in the neighborhood. Metrics will be tracked by COB.

Buena Vida has a growing bicycle network that is beginning to change the way people get around. These projects reflect the goals of the City’s Bicycle and Trail Master Plan, which envision Brownsville as a vibrant, healthy city where residents have many mobility options, one of which is a strong system of on- and off-street bicycle and pedestrian corridors. Key outcomes will include the increase in local bicycle and pedestrian traffic on or around the trail project. Metrics will be tracked by COB.

Many Buena Vida residents rely on B Metro transit service. The Neighborhood Strategy seeks to increase transit access and usability by directing transit route planning to the neighborhood, designing and installing well-lit bus stops, and achieving the correct balance of off-street parking within the redeveloped Buena Vida target housing property. Outcomes include increased ridership for B Metro services. Metrics will be tracked by B Metro.
Internet access is an issue for low-income families due to cost and gaps in the broadband infrastructure available to serve the neighborhood. The Resident Needs Assessment survey showed, 80% of respondents don’t have a computer at home or lack internet access; 62% cite cost as the main reason they lack internet connectivity, and 33% don’t know how to connect to the internet. HACB’s recent invitation to the ConnectHome Nation, an innovative program to end the digital divide in public housing across the United States, will foster the creation of a digitally connected community. Key outcomes include increased internet activity among housing residents; metrics will be tracked by HACB.

HACB staff participate in local student mentorship program.
1. **Implement Belden Trail Phase 3.** In 2013, COB began construction on one of the first recreational trails in Brownsville – Belden Trail. Since then, in partnership with several entities, including BCIC, the Belden Trail was built and extended into the Downtown and the edge of the Buena Vida neighborhood. Approximately $275,000 of dedicated funds will be used to convert an abandoned rail line easement into a cycle and pedestrian trail as Phase 3 of Belden Trail. The rail easement is located between 10th and 12th Streets and will connect East Tyler Street to East Fillmore Street in the heart of Buena Vida. The trail’s location will also benefit from proximity to Edelstein Park and the redeveloped HACB Buena Vida target housing site. Residents using the trail will have a safer and more direct way to get to local jobs. The new section of the trail is intended to serve as a linear park, with landscaping, natural areas, and historical markers. The completion of the Belden Trail will improve resident access to a safe area in which they can enjoy outdoor physical activity that can lead to improved health outcomes.

**Key Partners**
- Brownsville Community Improvement Corporation
- Brownsville Housing Opportunity Corporation
- City of Brownsville

**Funding Opportunities**
- Brownsville Beautification Funds

**Next Steps**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>0-6 Months</strong></th>
<th><strong>6-12 Months</strong></th>
<th><strong>+1 Year</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assess potential connection to Battlefield Trail along expressway frontage</td>
<td>Trail construction</td>
<td>Improve access and connections to Edelstein Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveying and predesign work</td>
<td>Evaluate glow tiles and solar panels along trail</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess bike connection on Ringold and Polk Streets</td>
<td>Install significant lighting along trail</td>
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Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood Plan 127
2. **14th Street Streetscape Improvements.** 14th Street currently acts as Buena Vida’s “main street” and has high numbers of pedestrians and bicyclists heading downtown, or visiting various businesses along the corridor. Conditions along portions of the Street typify neighborhood disinvestment including a lack of street trees and landscaping, cracked or missing sidewalks, dilapidated buildings and vacant properties. Recent reinvestments in other portions of the corridor, include the La Plaza bus terminal, Family Dollar, the renovated La Frontera Carniceria and the new La Plaza Adult Day Care Center. HACB, residents and stakeholders, see the potential for making 14th Street a safer, more attractive corridor and a focal point for reinvestment. While the majority of 14th Street north and south of the target housing site includes two 14-foot drive lanes, the three blocks between E Tyler and E Ringgold Streets are significantly wider, with two 14-foot drive lanes, a 15-foot turn lane and a 9-foot parking lane creating major pedestrian safety issues. The street width, along with the lack of street trees, encourages motorists to speed through this stretch. The Resident Liaison Group conducted preliminary parking counts showing that the left-turn lane was lightly used throughout the day. Based on this, the HACB team met with COB transportation engineers. COB agreed that reconfiguration and streetscape improvements are needed, and would be pursued. The 14th Street Streetscape Improvement Project will redesign and reconfigure the street to create two narrower drive lanes with on-street parking. The additional public right-of-way will feature wider sidewalks, street trees, landscaping and public art. Pedestrian crossings will be enhanced to create a safe connection between the target housing site and the future Webb Community Wellness Center. These streetscape improvements will provide an attractive “face” to the revitalized Buena Vida property.

3. **Polk Street Arts and Cultural Walk.** Residents identified Polk Street as a vital link to connect the assets of the Mitte Cultural District, the Buena Vida Development, Edelstein Park, and the shops and services on International Boulevard. Polk Street is also a critical connector to the proposed Webb Community Wellness Center. Polk Street will be reestablished as a pedestrian-only paseo through the redesigned Buena Vida target housing site. Leveraging the prototypical streetscape designed developed through the 2017 Greening America’s Communities program, COB will implement this project with the assistance of its local partners. The Mitte Cultural District will effectively be extended to the Buena Vida target housing site and beyond, creating a catalyst for private residential and commercial reinvestment.
### ADDITIONAL PROJECTS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Implement International Boulevard Complete Streets Improvements.</strong> Brownsville was one of six communities to receive technical assistance with sustainable design strategies by the U.S. EPA under its 2016 Greening America’s Communities program. EPA provided assistance to add green infrastructure along the International Boulevard corridor between I-69 and the Gateway International Bridge. This will assist in transforming the U.S.-Mexico border and transportation corridor by enhancing its aesthetic appeal and connecting the Gateway International Bridge. COB is committed to leading implementation of these plans as part of the Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood effort.</td>
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<td>5. <strong>Develop a Buena Vida Transit Improvement Strategy.</strong> According to residents, there are significant gaps in the local transit infrastructure including lack of bus shelters, benches, and ADA-compliant curb cuts. B Metro is currently leading the Brownsville Transit Plan process, which is evaluating the design and performance of existing B Metro and Metro Connect services, including ridership for every bus stop on each route. Community meetings, focus groups, and online surveys are being used to identify service gaps, transit needs, and improvement opportunities. COB and B Metro will provide data on resident needs and challenges relating to transit operations. Following the service evaluation phase, service improvement scenarios will be shared with the community. Final recommendations will be based on community feedback and anticipated resources.</td>
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<td>6. <strong>Implement a Buena Vida Technology Plan.</strong> The Buena Vida Community Technology Plan will empower residents by connecting them digitally. HACB will lead development of the Buena Vida Network (BVN) with technology partner Frontera Consulting to create a multipoint network. Once connectivity is established to each of the base locations, the BVN can be used to feed high-speed connectivity to Wi-Fi Hotspots, parks, community centers, local businesses and residences. Equipment will be installed at Wi-Fi Hotspot locations to broadcast a reliable and secure Wi-Fi compliant network to the surrounding area.</td>
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The Plan seeks to have a positive effect for homeowners and renters in the Buena Vida neighborhood.

Homeowner, Renter and Potential Buyer Projects

Improving the current neighborhood housing stock is critical to the Buena Vida’s long-term viability. The mixed-income redevelopment of HACB’s target housing property will have a catalytic effect and stimulate additional private and public reinvestment. Better communication with landlords, enhanced City code enforcement, land banking strategies and use of innovative tools developed in tandem with local financial institutions are key elements of this neighborhood housing strategy. COB is committed to blight reduction and evaluating the existing zoning code to help attract private development to Buena Vida. Promotion of the neighborhood as a walkable, mixed-use environment will reduce the need for cars and associated parking areas, leading to more sustainable and affordable redevelopments. Key outcomes include increased residential property values and homeownership. Metrics will be tracked by COB.
Homeowner, Renter and Potential Buyer Projects

| PRIORITY PROJECT | 1. Create a Before/After Yard Fix Up Competition and Neighborhood Clean-up. 43% of neighborhood survey respondents stated that the top physical issue with their homes was related to landscape and property maintenance. As a result, HACB, COB and its partners will organize a before/after yard fix up competition to recognize residents who are making improvements to their properties. In tandem with this event, COB will work with local residents and partners to organize a neighborhood clean-up of public spaces, alleys, and vacant property. The goal is to improve the overall appearance and identity of the Buena Vida Neighborhood. The competition will include a start up gift card for participants, education on yard and landscape maintenance and prizes and recognition for winning entries. |

| Strategy | 1. Create a Before/After Yard Fix Up Competition and Neighborhood Clean-up. 43% of neighborhood survey respondents stated that the top physical issue with their homes was related to landscape and property maintenance. As a result, HACB, COB and its partners will organize a before/after yard fix up competition to recognize residents who are making improvements to their properties. In tandem with this event, COB will work with local residents and partners to organize a neighborhood clean-up of public spaces, alleys, and vacant property. The goal is to improve the overall appearance and identity of the Buena Vida Neighborhood. The competition will include a start up gift card for participants, education on yard and landscape maintenance and prizes and recognition for winning entries. |

| Key Partners | • YouthBuild, the Brownsville Beautification Committee • Habitat for Humanity • Keep Brownsville Beautiful • Brownsville Historic Commission • City Forester • City Planning Department |

| Funding Opportunities | • Home Depot • Lowes Foundation • Neighborhood Beautification Funds • McCoy’s Hardware |

| Next Steps 0-6 Months | • Promoting competition and getting word out |

| Next Steps 6-12 Months | • Identify additional partners and funding opportunities • Identify specific incentives • Begin contest |

| Next Steps +1 Year | • Complete contest • Publicize results and evaluate future applicability |
2. **Develop an Agreement to Purchase and Reoccupy Vacant Land and Blighted Property.** As part of the CN planning process, HACB and Partners assessed vacant properties within 2-3 blocks of the Buena Vida target housing site; the result was the potential development capacity of approximately 150 units. Many homes in the Buena Vida CN are aged and in disrepair. COB, HACB and CDCB will develop an agreement to consider purchasing vacant property and renovating homes within the area. This improvement effort will work in tandem with the overall Housing Strategy to promote reinvestment and revitalization.

3. **Create a Local Foreclosure Prevention Program.**

HACB’s current Housing Counseling Program offers individual credit counseling, pre-purchase counseling, financial counseling and foreclosure intervention and default counseling. HACB and Partners will work to strengthen the existing HACB program and the CDCB’s La Puerta program to provide counseling services focused on avoiding foreclosure, detecting where residents are in the foreclosure process, finding available options and connecting owners to regional or state programs that can provide further assistance.
Creating a move vital 14th Street corridor will provide additional opportunities for local businesses.

Healthier Business Environment Projects

The 50+ small businesses within the neighborhood are an integral part of Buena Vida. Several projects are proposed that are supported by the results of the neighborhood business survey and market assessment. Desired outcomes include recruiting new businesses, improved neighborhood branding, marketing and promotion and an enhanced online presence. Key outcomes include, increased business revenues and number of businesses in the neighborhood. Metrics will be tracked by COB.
## Healthier Business Environment Projects

### Strategy

1. **Create the Buena Vida Online Business Directory.**

   Businesses within the Buena Vida neighborhood are typically small, locally-owned enterprises. According to a survey conducted in April 2017, approximately 67% of businesses in the area lack an online presence for advertising or selling their goods or services. This project will help to address this issue by creating an online directory of local businesses, highlighting the services they provide, listing their location and contact information, and potentially linking to reviews on sites including yelp.com or angieslist.com. This project will also include educational opportunities for local business owners. Ultimately, the goal is to help businesses gain exposure while drawing outside customers to the Buena Vida neighborhood.

### Key Partners

- Frontera Consulting
- Brownsville Economic Development Council
- Taller De Permiso
- Texas Southmost College
- United Way
- Small Business Association
- Wells Fargo - Community Wins

### Funding Opportunities

- Business Exp (Small Business Grant)
- Utilize Opportunity Zones Designation
- Wells Fargo - Community Wins

### Next Steps

#### 0-6 Months

- Create handout describing project for distribution
- Develop comprehensive list of businesses within the neighborhood

#### 6-12 Months

- Organize overall campaign for effort
- Connect and dialogue with local businesses
- Kickoff project with small business expo
- Begin to develop online directory
- Tell stories of businesses through filmed interviews
- Organize social media presence

#### +1 Year

- Offer classes to local businesses on website creation and management
- Assist businesses on launching of websites
- Integrate businesses with yelp.com, angieslist.com and other review-based sites
2. **Develop a Façade Improvement Program.** Business owners and residents agree that the appearance of commercial areas within the Buena Vida neighborhood can be improved. A survey of 46 local commercial establishments conducted as part of the CN planning process indicates that 41% would be willing to participate in potential grant or loan opportunity programs. The façade improvement program will encourage property owners and businesses to improve the exterior appearance of their buildings and storefronts via financial incentives such as a matching grant or loan, a tax incentive or design assistance. Since the Buena Vida Neighborhood is a designated local historic district, design assistance could enable and ensure that building modifications comply with the City’s historic district guidelines. Partners for this program include YouthBuild and Keep Brownsville Beautiful.

2. **Study Feasibility of a Community-Owned Grocery Store.** The neighborhood has limited access to healthy affordable food. This will be exasperated with the announced closing of a small family-owned grocery store on International Boulevard. Residents have indicated they are interested in studying the potential feasibility of a community-owned cooperative grocery store. Partners could include the Brownsville Wellness Coalition as well as national entities such as the Food Co-op Initiative, a non-profit foundation supported by established co-ops and CDS Consulting Co-op.
Seniors sell their paintings and pottery at the Brownsville Museum of Fine Art as part of the Art from the Heart Exhibit.

**Arts and Culture Projects**

A large portion of the target neighborhood is part of the Mitte Cultural District. Anchor Institutions including the Gladys Porter Zoo and the Brownsville Museum of Fine Art were heavily involved in the CN planning process. Desired outcomes include enhanced cultural programming that appeals to local residents, strengthening creative entrepreneurship opportunities, connecting and enhancing recreational assets and arts programs, fostering destination tourism and enhancing the overall neighborhood aesthetics. Key outcomes include the increase in attendance at Mitte Cultural District sites and increased property values. Metrics will be tracked by COB.
# Arts and Culture Projects

## Strategy

1. **Develop a Mural on Cameron County Detention Center Walls.** The Cameron County Detention Center sits 2 blocks west of the Buena Vida target housing development and 3 blocks from Linear Park (the heart of the Mitte Cultural District). With its blank concrete construction and razor wire, the walls of the Detention Center present an unattractive and foreboding face to the neighborhood, especially to homes on Tyler and 12th Streets. Led by HACB and COB, local public arts organizations will design and paint a mural on the perimeter of the Detention Center that highlights the culture of the community in a colorful and attractive manner. By improving the physical environment in this area, property owners surrounding the Detention Center may be encouraged to reinvest in their homes and businesses. Through collaboration with the Detention Center, the mural project could also act as a arts-based rehabilitation program for inmates, especially those skilled at graffiti and street art. The mural should highlight local history, culture and nature in a dynamic and attractive way.

## Key Partners

- Cameron County
- Carlota Petrina Cultural Center
- Neutra House
- YouthBuild
- Local residents
- Sherwin Williams

## Funding Opportunities

- National Endowment for the Arts grants
- Brownsville Housing Opportunity Corporation Funding

## Next Steps

**0-6 Months**

- Develop overall proposal for artwork
- Begin to identify volunteer resources

**6-12 Months**

- Share proposal with partners and media
- Begin preparations for mural

**+1 Year**

- Completion of mural
2. **Create a Skate Park with Community Art Under US-69E.**

   Residents have indicated that the large open area under US-69E should be activated and made more attractive. Ideas generated during community and working group meetings focused on utilizing this location as a skate park for local youth and teens, in tandem with a community art project. COB and its partners will reach out to local skateboard and public arts communities to discuss the viability of this project. In the interim, current infrastructure will be evaluated to identify ways to make the area safer and more pedestrian friendly. Partners could include the Texas Amateur Athletic Federation.

3. **Develop a Community Calendar and Wayfinding Signage.** This project is intended to make it easier for residents to know what activities and events are happening in the neighborhood and improve directional signage to places of community importance. HACB will identify a location within the neighborhood for this use. Residents have suggested a digital community calendar so that it can be easily updated with scheduled events. Wayfinding signage will list walking and bicycling times to key locations in order to help encourage active transportation in tandem with public way improvements. Possible partners include the Center for Civic Engagement at UTRGV, Frontera Consulting and YouthBuild.
Implementation

Organizational Framework

With consensus secured around the core People, Neighborhood and Housing components of the Transformation Plan, the focus shifted to implementing its projects and programs. Implementation partners began to reach out to HACB with offers to expand services and/or develop pilot programs to meet the needs identified by Buena Vida residents. These initiatives build upon the success of early action events throughout the planning process.

The Draft CN Plan was presented to Buena Vida target housing residents and neighborhood stakeholders for ratification in October 2017, and enthusiastically embraced by the community.
Buena Vida Choice Leadership Team
HACB (People), COB (Neighborhood), Community Development Corporation of Brownsville (Housing), and Brownsville Independent School District (Education)

**Housing**
- CDCB

**Key Partners**
- Buena Vida Resident Liaisons
- UAH Property Management
- bcWorkshop

**Neighborhood**
- COB

**People**
- HACB

**Education**
- BISD

**Key Partners**
- Buena Vida Resident Liaisons
- UTRGV
- Brownsville Museum of Fine Art
- Carlotta Petrina Cultural Center
- Gladys Porter Zoo
- COB Parks and Recreation
- Brownsville Wellness Coalition
- bcWorkshop
- Brownsville Community Improvement Corporation
- BISD
- Good Neighbor Settlement House
- Cameron County
- Brownsville Community Improvement Corporation
- Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid
- 7th and Park
- Lucio Group

**Key Partners**
- Buena Vida Resident Liaisons
- Brownsville Museum of Fine Art
- Carlotta Petrina Cultural Center
- Gladys Porter Zoo
- Brownsville Wellness Coalition
- Brownsville Ministerial Association
- Good Neighbor Settlement House
- Kid’s Cafes
- Proyecto Juan Diego
- Women’s Business Center of Cameron County
- COB Parks and Recreation
- COB Public Health
- UT School of Public Health
- JK Medical Clinic

**Key Partners**
- Buena Vida Resident Liaisons
- Brownsville Literacy Center
- Creciendo con la Familia
- BHOC
- Workforce Solutions Cameron
- Taller de Permiso
- Frontera Consulting
- Code RGV

Governance Structure - Organizational Framework
HACB (Lead Applicant) and COB (Co-Applicant) successfully led development of the Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood Plan through a collaborative and inclusive community planning process. HACB and COB have agreed to continue this partnership to implement the Plan.

We have successfully leveraged resources and engaged residents and organizational partners to address issues identified through the resident needs assessment survey, and have implemented early action activities that have made noticeable improvements in the Buena Vida Neighborhood. HACB, COB and our other implementation partners are committed to continuing to build the capacity of neighborhood residents to provide meaningful feedback during implementation and actively engage in the neighborhood transformation process. The roles of Principal Team members of the Buena Vida Choice Leadership are introduced below.

HACB will serve as the People Lead tasked with ensuring that Buena Vida target housing residents fully benefit from the strategies outlined to improve health, economic self-sufficiency and educational success.

COB is the Neighborhood Lead and will continue to enhance public safety and improve the physical environment of the Buena Vida Neighborhood.

Housing Lead the Community Development Corporation of Brownsville (CDCB) is a private, 501(c) (3) non-profit community housing development organization (CHDO) that is experienced in providing affordable housing in the form of mixed-finance and mixed-income single-family, new construction; single-family preservation; multifamily development; realty services, mortgage-lending services; and down payment assistance.

The Brownsville Independent School District (BISD) is our Principal Education Partner. BISD is the largest employer in the Rio Grande Valley and serves a population of almost 46,000 students. BISD has partnered with HACB on a number of initiatives and has committed to take on a larger role as the Buena Vida CN initiative transitions from planning to implementation.
Residents share neighborhood assets at Community Meeting 2.

**Governance Structure**

Implementation of the Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood Plan requires the long-term commitment of a variety of partners. As shown in the Organizational Chart, the Buena Vida Choice Leadership Team will be led by HACB, COB, CDCB and BISD.

HACB will have primary responsibility for overseeing implementation of all elements of the Plan. HACB will be responsible for convening regular meetings of the Leadership Team, which includes all Principal Team Members to coordinate implementation of planned activities, resolve issues as they arise, and monitor progress through data collected by Principal Team Members. HACB and COB will share responsibility for holding Principal Team Members accountable for performance, addressing failure to perform and conflict resolution. HACB will be the final authority for issues related to the Housing and People components of the Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood Plan. COB will be the final authority for issues related to the Neighborhood component of the Plan.

Through the CN planning process, HACB has strengthened relationships with long-standing service partners and brought a variety of new service providers and resources to the table. The expanded programming has benefited Buena Vida target housing residents directly and has expanded opportunities for low-income residents throughout the Buena Vida Neighborhood. To build on this momentum, working committees will be convened and will meet on a regular basis to coordinate implementation activities.

The Leadership Team will have the responsibility for reporting progress, problems and proposed solutions to other team members and their oversight committees. Each Implementation Entity has agreed to chair subcommittees for their respective areas of involvement (Neighborhood, Housing, People, and Education) and will be responsible for activities and outcomes. The Implementation Subcommittees will include organizational partners and stakeholders, including resident representation. These subcommittees will be tasked with bringing information on activities, achievements and issues/concerns back to the Leadership Team for discussion and resolution.
Recent Revitalization Activities

The implementation strategies detailed in the Buena Vida Choice Neighborhoods Plan are part of a continuum of efforts by the City of Brownsville (COB) and HACB to improve conditions for Brownsville residents. In 2014, Brownsville was named by the White House Council on Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) as a SC2 location, a designation that brought technical assistance to help implement a variety of infrastructure improvement initiatives and advance education, human capital and public health for better outcomes. Brownsville’s SC2 liaison was a key participant in the CN planning process. Buena Vida is also designated as a Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). COB has a Strategic Alliance Memorandum in place with SBA to encourage entrepreneurship and economic empowerment through increased collaboration on entrepreneurial and financial education for local veterans and small business owners.
Buena Vida residents recognized at the Brownsville Museum of Fine Art’s Art from the Heart Exhibit.

Impact of the Transformation Plan

Brownsville’s Choice Neighborhoods team has already made great strides in leveraging opportunities to transform the Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood, break down barriers and link Buena Vida to other nearby assets and resources. Our ability to build consensus, fine-tune redevelopment plans through input from residents and City departments, and evaluate and refine the implementation strategies with the help of our organizational partners will ensure long-term success and impact. We will continue to engage Buena Vida residents by

1. including HACB and neighborhood residents on implementation

subcommittees that will be led by the Housing, Neighborhood, People and Education Implementation Leads, and

2. hosting regular implementation update sessions for City officials, HACB’s Board, the Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood and the broader Brownsville community.

The Buena Vida Choice Neighborhoods Team is committed to continuing to build upon evidence-based strategies and/or national models that will help us achieve our transformation goals. We will work to attract new investment and other resources that will truly make Buena Vida a community of choice and opportunity. We will continue to leverage the local resources that are available to us to access other funding opportunities to implement the Buena Vida CN Transformation Plan, as we have demonstrated during the CN planning process that we have the ability to do.