

STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

HARLINGEN'S 2020 VISION FOR THE FUTURE

1. WELCOME

Good afternoon. And welcome to Harlingen's 2020 State of the City Address. Thank you to the Harlingen Rotary Club for their decades long commitment to sponsoring this important event for our community. This annual report gives us an opportunity to look in the rear-view mirror and look back at the amount of ground we've covered-- to see clearly what's been accomplished over the last year and for most of the last decade. Thank you to all of you for taking time to be here and to learn more about what our City has been driving towards. It's not only about what your City government has done, but about what our entire community does in working together to build a city we can all be proud of. I am proud of our City and the state of our City is strong. At this time, I would like to recognize our Harlingen City Commission. Commissioner Richard Uribe of District 1, Commissioner Frank Puente of District 2, Commissioner and Mayor Pro-Tem Michael Mezmar of District 3, Commissioner Ruben de la Rosa of District 4 and Commissioner Victor Leal of District 5. Each one of these men work very hard and commit many hours toward continuing to build a greater Harlingen. I thank them for their servant leadership. 2019 was both a year of great accomplishments for Harlingen as well as difficult challenges including the flooding which took place in June of 2019. Striving for great achievements and working to meet challenges are the hallmark of our community and the many great men and women who work for and volunteer in our City.

2. MPO MERGER - HARLINGEN'S LEADERSHIP ROLE

The first major accomplishment of 2019 which is important to note, is the key leadership role the City of Harlingen played in the merger of the three Metropolitan Planning Organizations (the MPOs), and what that means for the future of our region and the City of Harlingen. Our City has long been a leader in the area of developing our transportation system in and to the Rio Grande Valley. The Harlingen Area Chamber of Commerce and people like David Alex and Alan Johnson, Mayors Bill Card and Connie de la Garza worked for decades to bring an interstate system to the Rio Grande Valley. By securing funds to build one overpass at a time, they literally paved the way for Harlingen and the Rio Grande Valley to gain an interstate highway to further economic development. The designation of I-69 and I-2 in the Rio Grande Valley was a huge step forward. The final prize of connecting our Valley's roadways to a continuous interstate in Corpus Christi is now within reach.

In keeping with that vision of a robust transportation system leading to the Valley, and within the Valley, we all realized that more transportation dollars available to our region would increase trade and commerce and improve our quality of life. For decades, there were three metropolitan planning organizations within the Rio Grande Valley – Brownsville, Harlingen-San Benito and Hidalgo County.

These organizations were tasked with helping to guide Texas Department of Transportation officials to identify and prioritize roadway projects throughout their territories. Each of them was a much smaller MPO competing against the larger metropolitan MPOs in Dallas, Houston and San Antonio for discretionary transportation dollars. Of the billions of dollars deployed by TXDOT, about 70% of those dollars are not paid out by formula but at the

discretion of the TXDOT Commissioners. It seemed reasonable to believe that a merger could lead to more dollars flowing into our highway and road systems here in the Valley if we were larger. But, as always, there was a catch. Could the three MPOs trust each other and what would a merger look like once accomplished. Harlingen played a pivotal role in addressing those issues by engaging experts in the transportation field in Austin. They helped us craft an agreement that would lead to merging the MPOs, including an assurance that we would not be swallowed up or marginalized in the wake of such a merger. We would be willing to merge as long as we could be assured that we would not be losing any transportation dollars for our cities that we would otherwise have gotten without the merger. The merger had to be agreed to by each by the three cities Brownsville, Harlingen, and McAllen and also required the Governor's consent. After two years of talk and one year of serious negotiation led by Harlingen, we were able to reach an agreement which created the concept of subregions and subregion allocations of funding. This plan would assure that each of the former MPO regions would receive at least as much funding as they would have otherwise received if they continued as a stand-alone MPO. It seemed that this framework was reasonable and that everyone would join in, but it was not that easy. Judge Eddie Trevino deserves great credit for the leadership role he played to push the merger to a successful conclusion. We didn't play good cop and bad cop with our friends involved in the negotiation. We played bad cop and badder cop. There are clearly lots of people here to recognize for this achievement. Head cheerleader, Commissioner David Garza, Commissioner Gus Ruiz, Senator Lucio and Senator Hinojosa, City Manager Dan Serna, former MPO Director Joel Garza and our Austin attorney Brian Cassidy along with the other cities and counties.

As we see the progress being made on the \$7 million Spur 54 project between Sam's and Bass Pro Shop, we realize how important access to increased roadway dollars really is to our City and this Region. More roadway projects including those which are not state highways can and should be funded with the increased revenues. Many projects have already been identified like new overpasses on I-2 and I-69, the construction of a new exit ramp to access retail on Lincoln, the reconstruction of Commerce street and many more are all on the horizon.

The significance of the MPO merger in many ways rivals the creation of the new UTRGV out of UT Brownsville, UT Pan American and the Regional Academic Health Center here in Harlingen. The merger of the three MPOs into RGV MPO is another significant step toward our region finding new ways to work together for our mutual benefit.

3. THE JUNE 2019 FLOODS.

Working toward the MPO merger was a challenge leading toward a significant accomplishment.

The June 2019 flood was also a significant challenge for our City, the County and the surrounding communities. This was personal and devastating to many of our neighbors. On the night of June 24th and the early morning hours of June 25, 2019, twelve to fifteen inches of rain fell in the North and Northwest part of our City and County in just three and one-half hours. Some areas saw winds of 60-75 miles per hour and the Arroyo Colorado crested at 22.67 feet, the fourth highest level recorded. Flood waters of 3 to 4 feet inundated roadways and more than 4,000 homes in Harlingen alone sustained water damage. A weather event that is not supposed to occur more than once every 500 years happened twice in just 12 months. The National Weather Service called it a freak, a perfect storm, something that was not even remotely

predicted. Residents affected by the flooding were understandably upset, and, over the course of two town hall meetings, we did our best to explain what had happened, what the City of Harlingen had been doing over the last 10 years to improve our drainage system and what we were currently doing to improve it even further. Our 2008 Master Drainage Plan identified \$35.6 million dollars for storm sewer projects and \$8.7 million for drainage ditch projects. By 2019, the City had completed nearly \$13.5 million dollars worth of these projects. To further improve drainage, the City had identified and was in the process of seeking grant funds for another \$10.6 million of drainage improvements. Our goal was to leverage as much of our local City dollars with FEMA Grant Funding as possible. Some of that grant funding came too late to help last June. The good news is that since our June floods, the City has been awarded a grant for the 9th and 13th Street drainage improvement system. The FEMA Grant is for just over a million dollars and the City will contribute \$1.65 million dollars from its general fund and fund balance. The drainage projects I've just described as completed or underway now total almost \$20 million dollars of drainage improvements -- over the past 10 years, clear evidence of the City's ongoing commitment to improving our drainage system. While no system could have prevented all of the flooding which comes with that much rain that fast, the silver lining of the June flooding is the re-doubling of our efforts to think outside the box for future drainage projects. So, what have we done?

- We immediately developed a partnership with the Harlingen Irrigation District to widen the 13th Street and Dixieland ditches without waiting for federal funding or grant funding actually resulting in significant lower costs for these projects.

- We completed smaller projects on Lake Drive and Becky Lane, Beckham Road and Altas Palmas and Lago Drive.
- Another project consisted of the installation of new drainage lines and flap gates at the Secluded Acres drainage ditch to eliminate reverse flow from the ditch into the neighborhood. The City staff did such an incredible job of coming up with the concept of the flap gates and designing and installing the improvements, that the Texas Public Works Association has awarded it the Inhouse Project of the Year award. More importantly, this will provide immediate relief for future flooding to the hard-hit Secluded Acres area.
- We have also developed new ways to better and more consistently communicate with our partners at the County and at the Cameron County Drainage District #5 to integrate our drainage projects.
- We have maximized our efforts to work with IBWC, the International Boundary Water Commission, to address the long term impact of the Arroyo Colorado as part of the Valley's flood control system and to try to move water away from the center of our City.

Dan Serna, our City Manager, and his team along with our Public Works Department deserve significant recognition for working around the clock to meet the challenge of responding to the flooding, removing debris from our neighborhoods and helping with clean-up. They did a fantastic job in responding to this significant disaster. There are others in the community to thank as well. The volunteers at local churches, Habitat for Humanity, Loaves and Fishes and countless others who helped with dry-out and clean-up of homes. Our hearts continue to go out

to our neighbors who were affected and we hope they know that the City Commission continues to make our drainage efforts a top priority.

4. CITY OF HARLINGEN'S FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE IS STRONG.

As you know, after 14 years of no tax rate increases, the City of Harlingen did increase its tax rate by 4.1 cents per 100 dollars of valuation. The City Commission did so in large part because of the forecasted need to invest more money and resources into our infrastructure such as the drainage projects I just described. That 4.1 cent increase will generate just over 1.4 million dollars in this fiscal year. Our match on the grant for the 9th and 13th Street drainage improvement project will be 1.7 million dollars for just that one project. Even by raising our tax rate to 63 cents, our rate will be 10-15% lower than most other Cameron County cities as well as those in Hidalgo County. It is also worth mentioning that a number of other cities increased their tax rates this year as well including Pharr, Mission, Edinburg, Weslaco and McAllen.

In fiscal year 2019 the General Fund received an estimated \$43,962,000 in revenues with an ending fund balance to our General Fund at just over \$19 million dollars or 151 working days of operational cost. We will be using some of that fund balance to pay for the long term capital expenses for our drainage improvement program. Our strong financial performance was recognized by the reaffirmance by Fitch Ratings of our AA+ rating in which Fitch noted that the rating was based upon: "The City's solid revenue growth prospects, superior financial resilience underpinned by exceptional gap closing capacities and moderate fixed costs." Our City staff does an outstanding job of being fiscally conservative, exercising strong management and implementing good financial policies and practices. Once again, the Government Finance

Officers Association of the United States and Canada once again awarded a certificate for distinguished budget presentation to the City of Harlingen for this last year's annual budget.

5. HARLINGEN'S ECONOMY IS STRONG.

Our City's tax base continues to grow at a fast pace. We added just over 5% to that tax base for fiscal year 2020 bringing us to 3.75 billion dollars up from 3.57 billion dollars the year before. Looking back even a little further shows that Harlingen's tax base has grown just in the last 8 years by nearly a billion dollars. From 3 billion in 2012 to 3.85 billion this year. That's a 27% increase in our tax base-- a remarkable rate of growth for a short period of time. Equally impressive is our skyrocketing sales tax growth. Since the opening of Bass Pro Shops our gross sales tax revenues have shot up from 18.7 million dollars at the end of 2011 to 25.5 million dollars by the end of 2019. That's a 36% rate of growth for retail sales tax in the last 8 years for Harlingen. That growth rate compares very favorably with some of our neighbors such as Brownsville which grew by 18 percent and McAllen which grew by 27 percent.. All strong growth rates, but Harlingen is clearly on top.

So, where is all that growth coming from? Just in the last year our construction permits rose 5%-- an 8 million dollar increase over 2018. Last year saw an arguably record number of new businesses open in our City. Everything from a new corporate headquarters for Texas Regional Bank to a Homewood Suites, Fairfield Inn, new restaurants and more retail like T.J. Maxx breaking ground this year. First Community Bank hit a milestone with over \$500 million in deposits. Valley Baptist made \$10 million in improvements and became a Level 2 Trauma center. Urban Air was a welcome addition to Valle Vista and new ownership of Sun Valley Plaza did an incredible job in its complete transformation.

Since the end of 2011, Harlingen has added over 2.2 million square feet of new retail, restaurant, and commercial space primarily at Harlingen Corners, Cameron Crossing, Harlingen Heights, Stuart Place Crossing, the Ed Carey and Business 77 area. To put that in perspective, that's about 2 Bass Pro Shops per year for 8 years. New business growth has been registered in nearly every corner of our City and it continues. And, local industries like Cardone, ACT, United Health Care and United Launch Alliance have continued to thrive. United Launch Alliance renewed its 5 year lease with Valley International Airport. Since the start up of ULA, that company has had 136 successful launches of its rockets delivering satellites for the United States Air Force and other commercial ventures. The ULA plant proudly displays the photographs of these astronauts who will soon launch from US soil on the Boeing Starliner to be boosted into orbit with an Atlas V rocket partly made in Harlingen. These and other manufacturing and service companies are proud to be in Harlingen, are pleased with the workforce and most importantly are profitable and growing. And most notably, that growth has contributed to what may have been the lowest unemployment rate ever recorded by the Texas Workforce Commission in Harlingen—4.6% in December 2019.

6. VALLEY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT CONTINUES ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO HARLINGEN'S ECONOMIC SUCCESS.

Valley International Airport continues its significant contributions to Harlingen's Economic Success. Passenger enplanements rose 12.19% last year with American Airlines starting service in March 2019 and carrying over 60,000 passengers to and from our airport. And Valley International continues to climb in FAA rankings amongst the nation's Air Cargo

Airports going from 77th in 2017 to 71st busiest cargo airport in 2018. We expect that ranking to continue its upward trajectory when the 2019 numbers are released.

That's not all. VIA is continuing to maintain its terminal building in top form as the Valley's premier airport with new air conditioning, a new lobby roof, terrazzo floor improvements, new passenger boarding bridges and upgrades needed to keep up with our increased air service and carriers along with improved food, beverage and gift amenities. And how about that 44 foot long High definition advertising display in the main lobby. The screen will be used to market our now six airlines and attractions for our visitors.

Most exciting is that VIA has reached an agreement with the FAA to fund an extension of the main runway. Already the Valley's longest runway at 8300 feet, the extension will take the runway to 9400 feet in length which will allow the increased use of wide-body air cargo aircraft.

Congratulations to Director of Aviation Marv Easterly and his team and especially our Airport Board Chairman Nick Consiglio and the entire VIA Board for these great achievements in 2019.

2019 also marked two bittersweet moments with the passing of SWA Founder Herb Kelleher and his and our longtime friend, Mr. Harlingen David Alex. I guess it was somehow fitting that David and Herb both left us last year. We honor David at the Chamber of Commerce. And this year we found a couple of ways to honor Herb Kelleher with this sign at the airport concourse ----- and this mural in our downtown. Thank you to both of our dear friends.

7. UTRGV SCHOOL OF MEDICINE INSTITUTE OF NEUROSCIENCE AND NEW SURGICAL RESIDENCIES AT VBHS.

Also continuing its growth pattern is the UTRGV School of Medicine's footprint in the City of Harlingen with its ceremonial groundbreaking of the Institute of Neuroscience in November. Announced two years ago, this incredible addition to the medical school has now completed its planning phase and hired a nationally known research scholar Dr. Ihsan Salloum coming from the University of Miami to be its first director. On 35 acres of land initially acquired by the Harlingen Economic Development Corporation and nurtured by the South Texas Medical Foundation, this research and clinical facility was made possible in large part by the Legacy Foundation's \$15 million grant to fund it. Another \$15 million dollars is being invested by the University of Texas System Permanent University Fund (the PUF). The 32,570 square foot two story building will house clinicians and scientists in an interdisciplinary environment where they can interact to develop and test new ideas for behavioral health and neurologic care. UTRGV President Guy Bailey said "The Institute for Neuroscience is a game changer for the Rio Grande Valley Over time, specialties available at the institute will include cerebrovascular disease, neuromuscular disease, memory disorders, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy and other neurodegenerative diseases associated with aging and behavior health.

And just last week, we saw another historic gift made by the Legacy Foundation to the UTRGV-SCHOOL OF MEDICINE: \$38 MILLION—the largest single gift ever to UTRGV or higher education in —for new diabetes research efforts, enhancements to research at the Neurosciences Institute and the development of a surgical residency program at Valley Baptist Health Center producing 4 new surgical residents a year for Cameron County.. We know that 67% of doctors stay in the communities in which they train during their residency and that bodes well for the future of health care in our community. Thank you to the Legacy Foundation and

Valley Baptist Medical Center for their partnership and continued support of the Valley's School of Medicine.

8. UTRGV GENERAL EDUCATION CAMPUS AND HCISD EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL.

Last month, the Harlingen City Commission unanimously approved a gift of 6 acres of land to the UTRGV for the purpose of their establishment of a general education campus in Harlingen. This is a partnership with the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District's Early College High School and will allow students to take dual enrollment courses for both high school and college credit. Once these students have completed high school, they could choose to complete their four- year university studies in one of several majors to be offered by UTRGV right there on the same campus. Think of it—a four-year UTRGV degree without ever having to leave Harlingen. And because of UTRGV's innovation, families making less than \$75,000 per year can complete that degree tuition free. That's right. Tuition free. This innovative partnership was the subject of a special presentation by Harlingen's own UT Regent Dr. Nolan Perez and Dr. Art Cavazos at a meeting of the University of Texas Chancellor's Council Executive Committee last month. The city of Harlingen is proud to support this unique partnership. Congratulations to UTRGV and the best school district board in the state-- HCISD—literally named the best school district board in Texas. And congratulations to Board President Dr. Nolan Perez who last year was named to the University of Texas System Board of Regents—just the third regent ever named from the Rio Grande Valley. Thank you for your leadership Dr. Perez.

9. HARLINGEN BREAKS GROUND ON DESTINATION PARK.



The development of a school of medicine for our City and our Region has always been driven by the desire to improve the quality of life for the people of our community. In keeping with that goal of improving the quality of life, our Community Improvement Board led by former City Commissioner Jessie Robles and the City Commission approved the expenditure of community improvement fund dollars (the 4-B Board) for the development and redevelopment of Fair Park into a Destination Park. The \$3.3 million dollar phase one of the Lon C. Hill Destination Park is under construction and includes an entry court, center plaza, water features, landscaping and new parking. This new park improvements would not have been possible without a million dollar grant from Texas Parks and Wildlife championed by our State Representative Oscar Longoria. We are grateful to Representative Longoria for this and his leadership on the House Appropriations Committee. Other quality of life projects completed in 2019 were the \$309,000 in improvements at Vestal Park including the City's fifth all inclusive playground and the Boggus Family Teen Room at the Harlingen Public Library courtesy of the Boggus Family and the Junior League of Harlingen which provided \$165,000 for those improvements. The City of Harlingen has been recognized for its leadership in promoting the health and wellness of the community through the It's Time Texas Challenge. For the second year in a row, the City of Harlingen won first place in its division. This is a wonderful partnership between the City, the Mayor's Wellness Council, Healthy Harlingen and the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District. We continue the challenge this year and hope to once again be the champion for health and fitness for cities in our division.

10. BAXTER BUILDING OPENING

Another Harlingen Community Improvement Board project came to fruition with the grand opening of the Baxter Building. It was a great day for our downtown when 28 individuals and families moved into apartments developed by MRE Capital. Over \$4 million dollars in private investment was made by MRE to restore this iconic and historic landmark in our City's downtown. After nearly 40 years of vacancy, dereliction and vandalism, this beautiful new building stands in the place of an eyesore. It proves that some things are worth saving. The Community Improvement Board's investment in this project was less than \$350,000 after the sale of the building to MRE Capital. Now, the building is back on the tax rolls. Bill DeBrooke was quoted by the Valley Morning Star as saying: "From the standpoint of the downtown business it will be a plus. It's going to add more people to the mix eating at downtown restaurants and shopping at downtown businesses. The more people live here, the more sense of community. The more people that live downtown, the better community we build." Thank you, Bill, for your vision and thank you to the 4B Board for their support of this vision. It's also important to note here that our entire downtown is thriving with an occupancy rate of over 90%.

11. HARLINGEN CONVENTION CENTER A SUCCESS.

It is hard to believe that another quality of life project supported by the Harlingen Community Improvement Board has been opened for almost one year: the Harlingen Convention Center. I'm pleased to report that the reception of this building has been universally positive. You'll also be pleased to know this center has been used by a wide variety of organizations, educational institutions, businesses and individuals. Everything from UTRGV and TSTC commencements, Idea Public Schools and UTRGV School of Medicine Nursing meetings and trainings, bank shareholders meetings, quincienieras and much, much more at this facility has

occurred over the past eleven months. The last quarter of the fiscal year exceeded budgeted revenues by 56% and the first full quarter of this year revenues have exceeded projected revenues by 12%. The convention center is currently projecting revenues for the first full year of operation to be slightly higher than the budgeted revenues. And, that's without the on-property hotel having yet opened. As you can see, the five story Hilton Garden Inn, is looming large here at the Convention Center. BC Lynd is investing \$13.5 million dollars to build the 149 room upper scale hotel which should be complete in August of 2020. As you know, this will be the largest hotel in Harlingen and this will be the only convention center with an attached hotel in South Texas. We look forward to the Convention Center's continued success.

12. PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENTS ARE STRONG AND HARLINGEN IS SAFE.

Great economic development and improved quality of life projects would not mean much if we did not continue to live in a safe community. Keeping the community safe is the number one priority of the Harlingen Police Department. That's why the department continues to implement proactive enforcement activities to address crime trends. Chief Kester believes that training officers is a viable component for the success of this mission. Officers and Supervisors regularly attend data driven approaches to crime and traffic safety training that allows officers to continue executing proven strategies and prevention of crime year-round. Violent crime in the City of Harlingen in 2019 was down slightly from 270 to 264 incidents and property crime was about even at 2890 incidents in 2019 and 2814 in 2018. Both of these statistics are well below our ten year rolling average. Statistically, we can continue to say that Harlingen is a very safe City in which to live. On June 12, 2019, Chief Kester named Miriam Anderson as the first female Assistant Chief of the Harlingen Police Department in which she has served for 22 years.

And this year for the first time in 30 years the Harlingen Fire Department conducted its own fire academy offering continuing training courses internally at a cost savings to the City. The Fire Department also made history this year by welcoming the first female firefighter to the Department .Bree Rios joined the department that her father had been a part of for more than 20 years. Congratulations Assistant Chief Anderson and Firefighter Rios.

13. 2020 CENSUS CRITICAL FOR THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY.

The last thing I would like to discuss with you today is the 2020 Census and how vitally important it is for our community and our Region to stand up and be counted. Getting a reasonably accurate count is more than about getting more representation in Austin and Washington, but it is about that. It is about more than getting more federal funding through Community Development Block grants, but it is about that. It is more than about putting a population number on our city limit signs, but it is about that. It's about the rest of the Texas and the rest of the country hearing us and seeing us. It's about businesses and industry looking at whether to locate in any given region or city because we meet their minimum population standards. If you want that certain restaurant or that certain retail shop or that certain employer to locate in our City, we need to be counted.

And we know that in Harlingen and in other parts of Cameron County, we have been grossly undercounted. In 2010, the U.S. Census said Harlingen had 64,849 residents despite our own estimates being at 75,000. Since then, the State Demographer's office, with some help from Harlingen, has estimated that Harlingen has 68,328 residents or a 5.4 percent increase since 2010-2019. That compares reasonably with Brownsville's increase of 6.1 percent for the same time frame and Cameron County as a whole having an estimated 4.8 percent increase.

But look at this. Even the state demographer says that Cameron County only gained 22 new residents from 2018 to 2019. Does that make sense to you? It certainly doesn't to me and I'm sure it doesn't make sense to Judge Trevino.

The City of Harlingen has done its own analysis of our population growth using the same factors used by the State Demographer. Using data from Cameron County and the 9-1-1 District office, we estimate that we have 32,063 households in Harlingen including apartments and houses. Using the standard recognized multiplier per household of 2.95, that would bring our population estimate to 94,596. Likewise, AEP says we have 32,637 individual residential connections. Using that same multiplier of 2.95 per household, it gives you a total population of 96,279. The census likes to deduct 15% for some reason and if you do that we would still have an estimated population of over 81,000. Do your own analysis. How many of you think there are more than 5% more shoppers at HEB than there was 10 years ago? Raise your hand.

I submit that these numbers are important to business—your business. And we have got to do a better job of counting so that we can all be heard. That's why working with the school district and other partners in Cameron County and our Community, the Complete Count committee will be going door to door in some neighborhoods where we know there has been an undercount. I intend to go door to door with our Commissioners. Firefighters are going to go door to door. The School District will make a push with their students. There will be TV ads, a concert and other publicity to raise awareness. But we need your help. We need you to help make the count a priority. And we need you make sure that we all get counted. Because we all count.

14. CLOSING.

It has been an outstanding year for our City. And it has been a decade full of growth and accomplishment. In just eight years, we have seen our tax base grow by 27%, our retail sales tax grow by 36%. We've added 2.2 million square feet in new retail, commercial and restaurant space in 8 years. We've added new airlines, increased our boardings, invested over \$20 million in our airport and increased our standing as a cargo port. We have grown UTRGV and the School of Medicine's footprint in our City from 40 acres to 80 acres with new buildings and programs underway. We have redeveloped our downtown and filled 90% of that space. We live in a safe city and a city with a great quality of life with all inclusive playgrounds and new amenities like park improvements and this convention center.

It's been a great decade for Harlingen. But our vision for the future is even brighter. Our goal is to continue to grow retail, continue to create more jobs in new industries, increase higher ed opportunities, keep improving our parks, building up our airport by extending even further the Valley's longest runway, developing new roads, keeping our city safe and insuring the best drainage system we can provide.

It's thanks to you—all of you who live, work and play in the great City of Harlingen—that Harlingen is thriving. Our industries, our healthcare providers, our small businesses, our educators and our volunteers and non-profits make Harlingen strong and keep us growing. Thank you. And thank you to the men and women who work for the City of Harlingen including the Waterworks and Airport for everything they do day in and day out to contribute to our quality of life.

One final thanks. To my wonderful wife Anita—thank you.

God Bless the United States of America and this great State of Texas. God Bless you all and
God Bless the great City of Harlingen.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Boswell, Mayor
City of Harlingen

February 20, 2020