



City of Rockdale

Communities as Startups Final Report

Value Proposition, Strategic Priorities,
and Action Plan • June 1, 2022

Rockdale



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Rockdale Community as a Start Up (CASU) Planning Summary
Conducted by the Coastal Bend Business Innovation Center
Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi
Final Report
June 2022

Introduction

The CASU model is a collaboration with communities that takes a customized view of a community and assists in facilitating its future. The model utilizes principles used in the world of fast moving, results achieving start ups and applies them to a community. The desired outcome is to develop a community that more readily identifies opportunities and increases the chance of achieving them. The project strives to develop economic resilience and diversification, enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and build a framework for rapid development of future economic vitality.

Project Overview

The project, entails documenting the current state of the community from an economic perspective, and facilitation of the future state of the community by defining community identity and developing implementation strategies to achieve the future state. The identification of the community identity, aspirations, and strategic actions are essential to enhancing quality of place and the entrepreneurial ecosystem. At the entrepreneurial level, this involves aligning community priorities with emerging entrepreneurial opportunities and enhancing resources and infrastructure to prepare for future business and economic development. The Communities as Start Ups project drives near stage, diverse, economic development, longer term economic recovery from the COVID-19 disaster as well as develops resilience to this and other natural disasters or changes in the community's economy.

Workshop Delivery

The workshop series was conducted for the City of Rockdale, Texas during January – May 2022 and included:

1. Development of community identity
2. Defining community aspirations
3. Development of community action plan
4. Development of unit-level and stakeholder action items to support community action plan
5. Discussion of the benefit of multipurpose facility in enhancing the entrepreneurial ecosystem and as a jobs training resource
6. Creation of a Talent Connect Framework to enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem and connect employers to job training resources

CASU Workshop Outcomes

The CASU workshops produced outcomes that include the development of a (1) community value proposition, (2) strategic priorities, and (3) a strategic action plan to achieve strategic priorities, quality of place, the entrepreneurial ecosystem and enhance resources supporting business and economic development.

Rockdale Value Proposition

Rockdale, Texas is a friendly, people-centered community that offers high quality schools, affordable cost of living, ample real estate suitable for development, and proximity to the Austin technology cluster.

Rockdale's Future Value Drivers

- Small town feel
- Welcoming and friendly
- High quality schools
- Safe

Key Strategic Priorities

1. Housing Availability
2. Modernized Utility Infrastructure
3. Workforce Development
4. Public Safety
5. Downtown Revitalization and Corridor Beautification Projects

1. Strategic Priority: Housing availability

- Provide developers with vacant lot map
- GIS utility map
- Developable land-city (industrial park 160 acers, water and sewer)
- 1 home builder
- Low comp value
- \$27.4 Million water infrastructure project-completion 2025
- Ample water availability

Unit Level Actions: Housing availability

- Conduct housing study
- Multi-family housing
- Industrial park conversion to residential and sale
- Development of new school with new residential developers
- Develop community marking campaign
 - Small town feel
 - Welcoming & friendly
 - Low crime
- Rockdale showcase-developers invited
- Development of board of realtors
- Distribute utility map
- End permits for RV Parks
- Penalties for absentee owners
- Comprehensive survey of existing housing and categorize as habitable or uninhabitable
- Map of development opportunities with voluntary annexation
 - Water for sewer
 - Expand Rockdale CCN

2. Strategic Priority: Modernize utility infrastructure

- GIS utility mapping project
- \$27.4 Million water line/sewer Project 2025
- \$4 Million drainage grant 2025
- Sewer/water ccn
- Cable provider broadband expansion

Unit Level Actions: Modernize utility infrastructure

- Initiation of \$27.4 Million water infrastructure project
- Prioritize cast iron, asbestos leaks
- Initiate utility assessments in growth areas
- Lender financing tools to support development

3. Key Strategic Priority: Workforce development

- Temple College collaboration
- Conversion of hospital to CTE center
- STEM programs in Rockdale
- TWC financial resources
- TEAM center funding
- Apprenticeship program
- ISD career planning/dual credit with Temple College
- Training ground for new teachers, police officers and public works. Come to learn here and move on for better pay.
- Adult Education
- Career Path program-once trained where will students or adults go to work
- Need more communication with community and leaders regarding current status of programs and opportunities with in school district and the plans that are in progress for education and training including adult education
- Collaboration with major employers

Unit Level Action: Workforce development

- Fund a feasibility study for a rural IT Center
- RISD collaboration and grant proposal with Temple College to convert hospital building to teaching facility
- TWC financial resources
- Involvement of larger private sector employers

4. Strategic Priority: Public safety

- Lack of personnel leads to only being able to be reactive not proactive.
- \$15-\$20 K under salaries compared to BCS, Waco, Temple, Hutto
- EMS, Fire, 911 dispatch, support staff minimal
- Drug interdiction difficulty and poverty levels are high
- Former collaboration with DPS
- Grants are available but need future budget to absorb costs
- Use of ordinance to discourage undesirable behavior

- Enforcement of fees and truancy

Unit Level Action: Public safety

- Ordinance enforcement to place homes on tear down list
- Extend commercial vacant building ordinance to residential properties
- Require full kitchen for any property renting to resident for 30 days

5. Strategic Priority: Downtown revitalization and corridor beautification projects

- Substandard property renovation/removal
- Code enforcement
- TXDot project completion
- Communication with TXDot
- Redesign issues
- Need for a park
- Need for funding opportunities

Unit Level Action: Downtown revitalization and corridor beautification projects

- Identify best practices of other communities for resolving substandard/abandoned property
- Enforcement of available use zoning regulations
- TXDot redesign at intersection
- Downtown corridor revitalization
- City assumes responsibility for maintaining curb through sidewalk and everything in between
- Evaluate state of retailing and brick and mortar structures
- City ordinance prohibiting churches in downtown area
- Have a workshop with MDD and City Council on creating a Main Street program. Who Owns downtown?
- Complete the E. Cameron corridor project-need implementation schedule.

Workshop Series Overview

Workshop 1:

An introduction to the CASU Model and briefing on next 4 workshops.

- Facility 5 key words that describe Rockdale
- Draft of Value proposition statement
- Discuss survey one and next workshop on community aspirations

Workshop 2:

Review survey results of the Community aspirations Survey and revisit value proposition statement.

Community Aspirations Process

- The Rockdale Rotary Club provided a database of 35 email addresses to the Coastal Bend Business Innovation Center (CBBIC).
- 2 emails returned as undeliverable
- 33 email invitations were sent and assumed available for response

- Three waves of invitations were sent out requesting responses to a survey sponsored by the Rockdale Rotary Club and the CBBIC between 2 February and 18 February 2022.
- A total of 20 survey responses were received and recorded with a total of 18 surveys were included in the analyses and 13 surveys totally completed.
- Two major focus areas of the survey were:
 - Community Aspirations
 - Small Business Challenges and Concerns

The Rockdale residents aspire for a community that is/has:

- Safe and Protected
- Led by Cooperative Community Leaders
- Good Employment Opportunities
- Access to Healthcare Facilities
- Good Labor Availability
- High Quality Schools
- Broadband access
- Reliable energy and water services

Workshops 3 and 4:

Develop a community-level action plan supported by unit-level and stakeholder strategies to achieve community strategic priorities.

Community Aspirations refer to the community resident’s shared goals, beliefs, and expectations. There are different categories of aspirations, each provide a greater understanding of the community.

Aspirations of Survey Respondents	Aspirations of Workshop Members
Public Safety	Easy to do Business in Rockdale
Employment Opportunities	Great Location for new businesses
Cooperative Community Planning	Strong School System
Modern Public Utilities	Availability for skilled labor training through Temple Community College
High Quality School System	Relaxed Lifestyle
Access to Healthcare	Kind and People Centered
Friendly and Supportive	Pride in Community

Workshop 5:

TEAM Center Concept

The TEAM Center Concept is designed to help communities attract, nurture, maintain, and encourage startups or small businesses to enhance job creation and economic prosperity.

- Aligning and Investing in Relevant Technology
- Encouraging and Empowering Entrepreneurship
- Focusing On Strategic Advantages

- Providing Makers With Resources

The TEAM Center is a location, a philosophy, and an economic culture for collaboration, information sharing, focused training, and innovation.

The TEAM Center Concept Helps:

- Leverage available and potentially underutilized resources.
- Identify and attract investment opportunities that drive economic growth.
- Create a purposeful socialized environment for learning, sharing, building, communicating, and testing ideas, knowledge, and projects.
- Enhance new business formation that expands the equity of the community in relevant, aligned, desired, and focused economic development.

Strategic Overview of the TEAM Center Concept Focuses:

- **Technology:** The businesses, products, services, and infrastructure that make life easier or solve community problems.
- **Entrepreneurship:** The people, businesses, products, and services that exploit opportunity for the purpose of creating value, delivering value, and capturing value.
- **Advantage:** The specific economics, location, scale, raw materials, or unique resources, assets, or capabilities that provide the community with superiority against market rivals.
- **Makerspace:** The facilities and platform where the community can share interests, gather to work on projects, exchange ideas, engage special equipment, or increase skills, techniques, and knowledge.

Essential Steps to Create the TEAM Center Concept:

- **Identification:** Assess the as-is state of the community in relation to each of the four pillars.
- **Specification:** Estimate the facilities, programs, demand, and funding.
- **Acquisition:** The process of obtaining the facilities, equipment, partners, and community support.
- **Exploitation:** Planning and modeling the business performance to include management, marketing, use procedures, obligations, and accountability.
- **Operation:** Launching and operating the functional center to serve the community.

Workshop 6:

Talent Connect Framework Workshop

Presentations by the Texas Workforce Commission and Workforce Solutions highlighting employee training grants available to businesses of all sizes in Rockdale.