

Port Aransas Economic Plan 2007-2012

Port Aransas citizens understand the extraordinary potential of their city. "Port A" is a place where people can realize their dreams; where families can enjoy a quality of life that is second to none, and where businesses and organizations can achieve success. All of us can be proud of what Port Aransas stands for in today's Texas. We are a successful, independent city that creates and stirs memories of happy get-away times with family, loved ones, and friends. Our citizens believe in tolerance, justice, and providing a helping hand to the less fortunate. They also desire to live in harmony with nature and protect our natural resources for future generations. As Texas changes, Port Aransas need to work together to make Port A even more prosperous and strong. That's why Port A's city government has developed an element of our comprehensive plan to address the economy. The following is a simple yet strategic, long-term economic plan designed to improve our city's economic prosperity both today and in the future. It will strengthen our city, and show a modern, ambitious and dynamic Port A to Texas.

A Strong Port A in Texas

Port Aransas has arrived: we are fully assuming our role in Texas affairs and we stand on the best economic footing of any beach community in Texas. We are an emerging tourism destination that is taking action to make improvements to our environmental areas evidenced by our 1200 acre Nature Preserve, which sets aside land to keep valuable natural habitats. We need to build a city that is a formidable economic player in Texas. The world economy is changing. New players are emerging as major economic powers. Competition in world markets is fierce. Meanwhile, the nation's baby boomers are set to retire in record numbers and many are sure to be on their way to us, testing our capacity to maintain our island's livability. These are challenges we will meet head-on. And as we adapt, these global changes will bring tremendous new opportunities for Port Aransas.

Advantages We Need to Improve Our Quality of Life

Other cities, all over the world, are developing competitive advantages based on their strengths. Given Port A's social, demographic and economic circumstances, we have the opportunity to create competitive advantages of our own. Our economic plan is focused on creating five advantages that will help us improve our quality of life and succeed in a prosperous Texas.

Tax Advantage:

- The City of Port Aransas will keep property taxes low.

Fiscal Advantage:

- The City of Port Aransas will limit our total government debt, yet anticipate and fund capital projects for infrastructure and facilities.

Entrepreneurial Advantage:

- The City of Port Aransas will continue to keep businesses free from unnecessary regulation and red tape, and seek to reduce business impediments created by any needed interaction with the City.

Livability Advantage:

- Port A's Livability Advantage is something we will really emphasize as we have the greatest place to live, grow up, and work in, anywhere! Our beach, wetlands and natural areas, boating and fishing, shops and restaurants, future golf course, and low-density, friendly, safe neighborhoods are unmatched in Texas beach communities.

Infrastructure Advantage:

- The City of Port Aransas will work with partner agencies to create modern, world-class infrastructure to ensure the seamless flow of people, goods and services across our roads and ferries. We will use our public transit to enhance our business successes and quality of life for our residents and employees. We will also seek to promote healthy and environmentally minded alternatives to automobile transportation through the development of hike and bike trails.

Principles to Shape Policy For Today and Tomorrow

Our economic plan is based on four core principles. These principles will guide policy decisions to improve our quality of life and make Port Aransas a Texas attraction for today and future generations.

- **Focusing government.** The City will be focused on what it does best. It will be responsible in its spending, efficient in its operations, effective in its results and accountable to taxpayers.
- **Creating new opportunities and choices for people.**
The City will create opportunities for people by being a part of the business community, lending our support, advice, resources, and listening to business needs and suggestions. We will be open to economic development proposals that meet our desires for future land use to better the City.
- **Investing for sustainable growth.** The City will invest and seek partnerships with the state, federal government, and the private sector in strategic areas that contribute to strong economies—including environmental initiatives and building modern infrastructure.
- **Freeing businesses to grow and succeed.**
The City will seek to create the right economic conditions to encourage firms to invest and flourish.

Policies and Plans

When city policies and plans are complementary, their positive impact is multiplied. The following are our policies and plans.

Focusing Government

When governments are good at the things they need to do, everyone benefits. Making governments more focused on the things they need to do well will improve services and help build a climate for the overall economy to perform better. The City of Port Aransas City Council will use the following guidelines in their decision making:

- Limit bonded debt to infrastructure and facility needs and keep our maximum maturity rate on those instruments at 15 years or less.
- Keep property taxes low - to no more than two-thirds that of Corpus Christi's rate
- Use unanticipated surpluses to add to reserves and make capital investments
- Keep the rate of growth of program spending, on average, below the rate of growth of the local economy (as defined as sales tax increases from the prior year).
- Review all existing city operations to ensure existing spending is effective, efficient, focused on areas of City responsibility and provides maximum value to the taxpayer.
- Maintain city reserves to a target of 3 months of operating revenue in order to provide easy access to funds to cash-flow a significant portion of a hurricane debris cleanup event.

Creating New Opportunities and Choices for People

Talented, creative business people and are the most critical contributor to a successful city over the long term. The City of Port Aransas City Council will use the following guidelines in their decision making:

- Deliver on the commitment to keep taxes low.
- The City will attract highly skilled workers and will hire, retain, and compensate employees at a level that will provide for synergy in interacting with the business community.
- The City will listen to advice and concerns of its citizens, and business and educational communities. We will modify our policies as needed, and welcome proposals and suggestions to bolster the economy of the City, in conformance with our land use plan.
- Participate in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce and its Economic Development Committee

Investing for Sustainable Growth

Cities have an important role to ensure that their people, businesses and organizations have the advantages they need to succeed on a global scale. Port Aransas is a growing international destination, and as we focus and grow are Texas market, we must keep in mind the desires of the international traveler.

The City of Port Aransas City Council will use the following guidelines in their decision

making:

- Continue its presence at the national and state legislative and agency levels
- Promote a healthier environment and more sustainable economic growth, including the responsible use of our natural resources and effective use of technology.
- Build modern infrastructure that enhances Port A's quality of life and commerce within the city and across our region.

Freeing Businesses to Grow and Succeed

Excessive tax and regulatory burdens, those unnecessary to protect the public, can hold businesses back . These burdens can harm productivity and performance. The City of Port Aransas City Council will use the following guidelines in their decision making:

- Keep property tax rates, fees, and other charges businesses pay low
- Reduce the administrative burden on business by cutting paperwork by 20 percent, and embark on a technological retrofitting of the City's operations.
- Improve the framework for competition through fair and effective local ordinances, rules, and policies.
- Generate a five year financial plan to insure the City is ready to meet its challenges and to provide for tax and fee rate stability and predictability.
- Be open to trade and investment so goods, services, and technologies flow freely and our businesses have ready access to markets to compete in the world.

Implementation and Key Success Factors:

The Will of Port Aransas to Succeed

Long-term economic success requires the discipline to focus on the principles and policies of this plan. It also requires sticking with the plan. That's why it's really a multi-year strategy that will require commitment. Achieving the economic benefits of this plan will take time. For this plan to truly be successful, it will take strong leadership from the City Council, City Manager, and commitment by the private sector and the dedication and energy of Port A's people. By the City doing its part in helping with the local economy, we will grow our standard of living and improve our quality of life. We will create good jobs, prosperity and new opportunities for Port Aransas families.

Thanks

Special thanks and recognition are due to the Department of Finance Canada. This plan is based on their format and ideas in Canada's new government's " Advantage Canada" economic plan (2006).